Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: year ending June 2020

Latest population estimates for the UK by country of birth and nationality, covering the period up to the year ending June 2020.

Notice

21 May 2021

In July 2021 we plan to revise the weighting process for the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which will include taking into account changes in the non-UK population from available administration data. In August we will be doing the same with the Annual Population Survey (APS). We will then subsequently publish ourpopulation of the UK by country of birth and nationality output.

Table of contents

1 . Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on these estimates

The estimates in this release are based on data from the Annual Population Survey (APS), which is comprised of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and sample boosts in England, Wales and Scotland (further information on this can be found in the Measuring the data section). Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, all face-to-face interviewing for the LFS was suspended and replaced with telephone interviewing.

This change in mode for first interviews has changed the non-response bias of the survey, affecting interviews from March 2020 onwards. Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey explains the methods used to adjust the data to account for this.

LFS responses are weighted to official population projections to account for the distribution of the population as well as the level of the projections. However, it is important to note that these projections are not able to take into account unusual events, for example the coronavirus pandemic. For more information on this see the Measuring the data section.

Due to these factors, caution should therefore be applied when interpreting the data. Work is currently underway to explore further improvements to the weighting. More information can be found in the Strengths and limitations section.

2 . Main points

- In mid-2020, the non-UK-born population was 9.2 million and the non-British population was 6.0 million; both decreased by 246,000 and 231,000 respectively since the previous year, following relative stability since 2017.

- This was mainly because of a reduction in EU8 and EU2 populations, which have fallen by 125,000 and 57,000 respectively for those born in these countries.

- Polish has continued to be the most common non-British nationality and India is still the most common non-UK country of birth.

- England experienced different trends to the rest of the UK; accounting for the overall decreases in the non-UK and non-British populations.

- London remains the region with the largest proportion of non-UK born (35%) and non-British (21%) population.

3 . Analysis of the population of the UK by country of birth and nationality

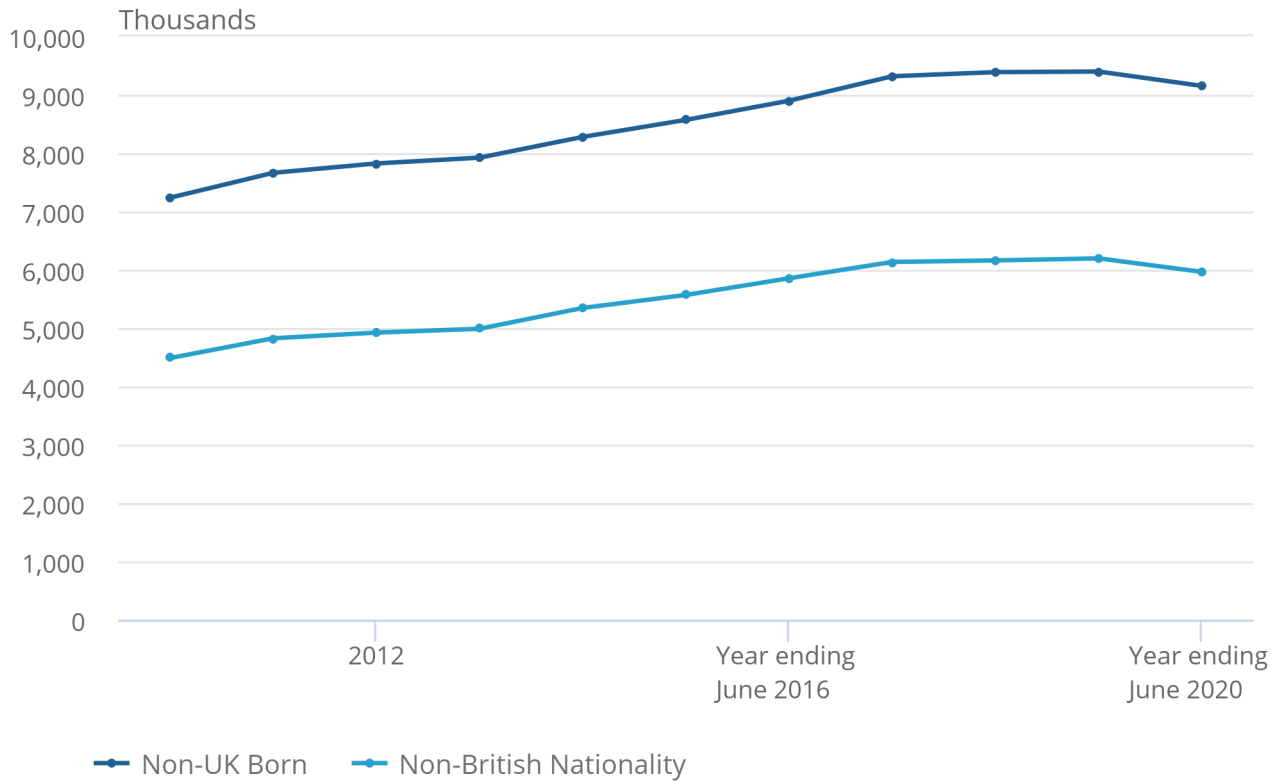## Non-UK population has decreased following previous stability

In the year ending June 2020, the non-UK-born population was 9.2 million and the non-British population was 6.0 million; both decreased by 246,000 and 231,000 respectively since the previous year, following relative stability since 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Non-UK born and non-British populations declined in the year ending June 2020 following a period of relative stability since 2017

Estimates of the non-UK-born and non-British resident population of the UK, 2010 to year ending June 2020

Figure 1: Non-UK born and non-British populations declined in the year ending June 2020 following a period of relative stability since 2017

Estimates of the non-UK-born and non-British resident population of the UK, 2010 to year ending June 2020

Thousands

Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. Estimates are in thousands.

2. For comparability of trends mid-year estimates have been used where available. Prior to year ending June 2016 calendar year data has been used.
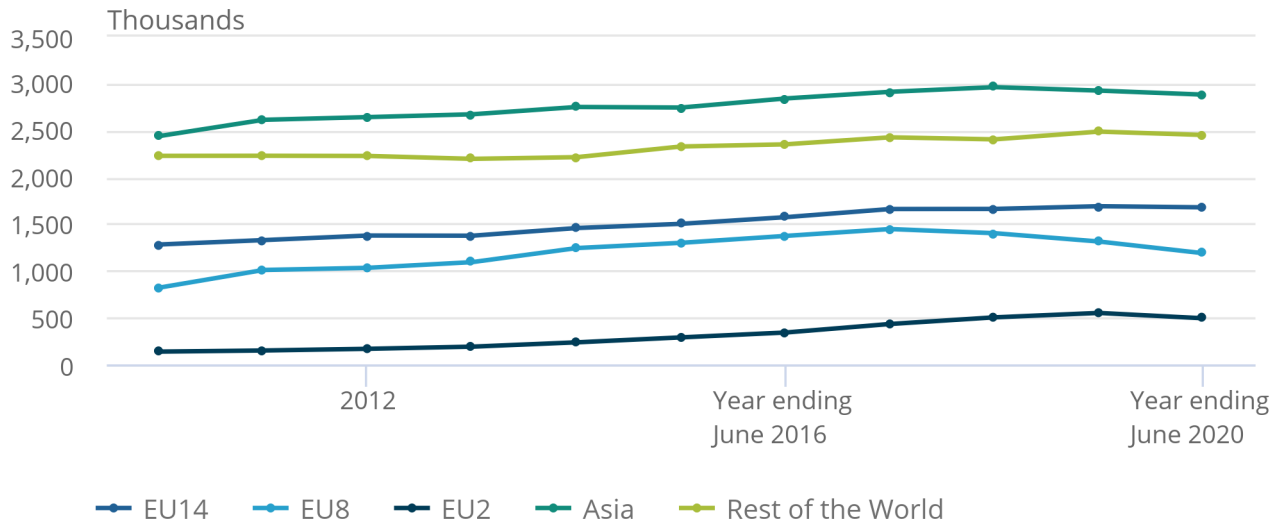
This was mainly because of a reduction in EU8 and EU2 populations, which have fallen by 125,000 and 57,000 respectively for those born in these countries.

Figure 2: UK population of those born in EU8 countries has continued to decrease, accounting for the majority of the fall in the non-UK-born population

Estimates of the non-UK-born resident population of the UK by country of birth, 2010 to year ending June 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey

Notes:

1. Estimates are in thousands.

2. For comparability of trends mid-year estimates have been used where available. Prior to year ending June 2016 calendar year data has been used.

Figure 3: UK population of EU8 nationals has continued to decrease, accounting for the majority of the fall in the non-British population

Estimates of the non-British resident population of the UK by nationality, 2010 to year ending June 2020

Figure 3: UK population of EU8 nationals has continued to decrease, accounting for the majority of the fall in the non-British population

Estimates of the non-British resident population of the UK by nationality, 2010 to year ending June 2020

Thousands

EU14   EU8   EU2   Asia   Rest of the World

Source: Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey
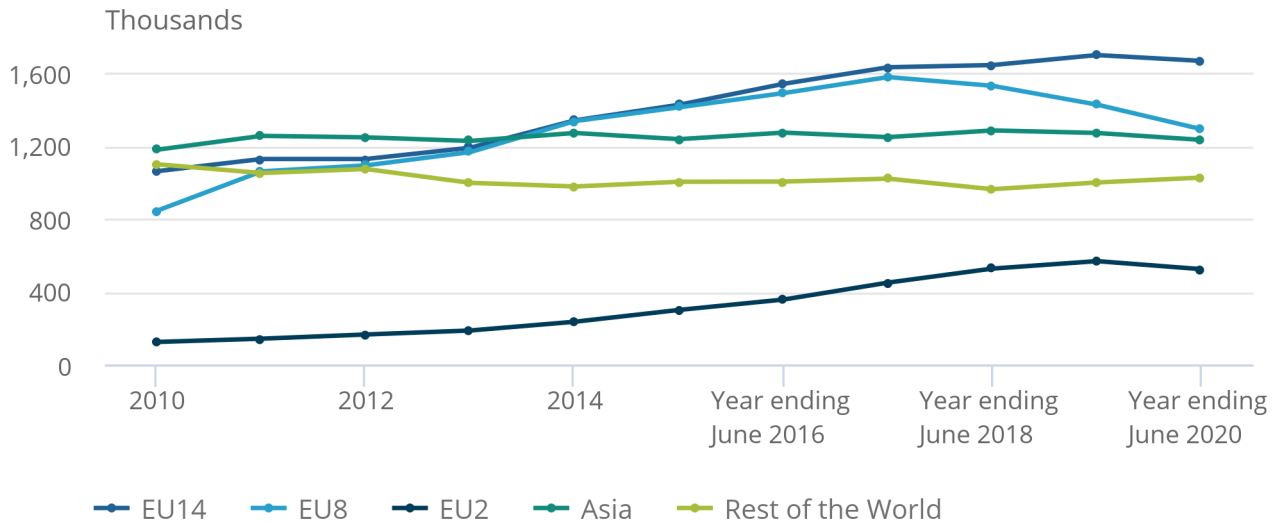
Notes:

1. Estimates are in thousands.

2. For comparability of trends mid-year estimates have been used where available. Prior to year ending June 2016 calendar year data has been used.

When looking by reason for migration, a reduction in the number of those born outside of the UK with a main reason for migration for work accounted for the majority of the overall decrease, with 125,000 less than the previous year. This is similar to trends seen in the recent estimates of the labour market activity of the resident populations in the UK by country of birth and nationality.

These changes follow the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which alongside other factors such as the UK exiting the European Union, may have influenced the behaviour and decisions of the non-UK population living in the UK.

An increase in the UK-born and British population has been observed in the year ending June 2020. However, it is important to note that responses are weighted to official population projections to account for the distribution and level of the population as seen in the projections. These projections are not able to take into account unusual events, for example the coronavirus pandemic.

Therefore this increase in the UK-born and British-born population is mainly a reflection of this methodology, however, it is possible that other factors including small-scale rises in the population may have also contributed, such as individuals returning to the UK. For more information on this see the Measuring the data section.

LFS responses are weighted to official population projections. The survey is not used to estimate changes in the size of the overall population. Even if the population does not move in line with expectations, LFS estimates will still continue to sum to the original population projections used to weight the survey.

In the year ending June 2020, the number of people with an EU8 nationality was 1.3 million and was mainly accounted for by those holding Polish nationality. This was similar to levels seen in 2014; it has fallen since peak levels in 2016 and 2017.

When looking at year-on-year change, while the Annual Population Survey (APS) gives a good indication of changes in the UK population it should not be used as a measure of migration flows. This is because of the potential influence of other factors, for example, the APS not including non-UK residents living in halls of residence. Our recent work on understanding different migration data sources shows our latest understanding on the coherence of these data sources and the steps we have taken to adjust our survey estimates.

Despite the recent decrease, Polish has continued to be the most common non-British nationality in the UK since 2007. Like last year, India is still the most common non-UK country of birth, the second time since 2015 that Poland has not been the most common. The countries of birth and nationalities making up the top five remain the same as for 2019.

Table 1: Population of the UK for the five most common countries of birth and nationalities, year ending June 2020

Country of Birth			Nationality		
Country	Estimate	Confidence Interval (±)	Country	Estimate	Confidence Interval (±)
India	847	48	Poland	815	47
Poland	746	45	Romania	404	33
Pakistan	519	37	India	361	31
Romania	370	31	Republic of Ireland	321	29
Republic of Ireland	364	31	Italy	311	29

Source: Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey

Notes

1. Estimates are in thousands.

Non-UK populations vary across Great Britain

The proportion of the population in local authorities who were born outside the UK, or who held non-British nationality, varied across Great Britain. The interactive maps (Figure 4) allow you to explore these patterns in more detail.

In the year ending June 2020, England experienced different trends to the rest of the UK; accounting for the overall decreases in the non-UK-born and non-British populations from the previous year. This was largely because of reductions in the population of individuals from the EU; however, England also experienced a fall in the non-EU population. For example, residents in England born in non-EU countries reduced by 114,000 to 5.2 million in the year ending June 2020. Whereas, a rise in the non-EU born population was seen in Wales and Scotland, while Northern Ireland remained stable.

These trends varied by region of England, with the largest decreases in London and the West Midlands. The accompanying dataset provides more detailed breakdowns.

London remains the region with the largest proportion of non-UK-born (35%) and non-British (21%) population.

Figure 4: Population of non-UK-born and non-British nationals varies across Great Britain

Percentage of non-UK-born and non-British national populations in Great Britain, by local authority, mid-2020

Data download

Notes:

1. Data is unavailable for the districts of Northern Ireland.

Annual Population Survey data are based on a survey. It is not possible to survey all people resident in the UK, so these statistics are estimates based on a sample, not precise figures.

4 . Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality data

Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality
Dataset | Released on 14 January 2021

UK residents by broad country of birth and citizenship groups, broken down by UK country, local authority, unitary authority, metropolitan and London boroughs, and counties. Estimates from the Annual Population Survey.

Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: individual country data
Dataset | Released on 14 January 2021

UK residents by individual countries of birth and citizenship, broken down by UK country, local authority, unitary authority, metropolitan and London boroughs, and counties. Estimates from the Annual Population Survey.

5 . Glossary

Country of birth

This refers to the country in which a person was born. A person's country of birth cannot change, which means it gives a more robust estimate of the resident population change over time than nationality.

Nationality

This refers to that stated by the respondent during the interview. It is possible that a person's nationality may change and so may be different to their country of birth. There are three main reasons for differences between nationality and country of birth:

- as those born abroad remain in the UK they often apply to become British nationals

- some people born abroad have British nationality; for example, this may be the case for people whose parents were in the military services and were based abroad when they were born

- some people born in the UK to migrant parents take the nationality of their parents.

EU8 country grouping

These are the eight Central and Eastern European countries that acceded to the European Union (EU) on 1 May 2004. These countries are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

EU2 country grouping

These are the two countries that acceded to the European Union (EU) on 1 January 2007. These countries are Bulgaria and Romania.

6 . Measuring these data

Estimates of the population of the UK by country of birth and nationality are based upon data from the Annual Population Survey (APS). The APS is a survey of households in the UK and does not include most communal establishments, so will exclude students living in halls of residence who have non-UK resident parents.

The APS, which began in 2004, is a continuous survey, comprising waves one and five of the Labour Force Survey (LFS), supplemented by sample boosts in England, Wales and Scotland to ensure small areas are sufficiently sampled.

The LFS weighting methodology takes into account the distribution of the population that are derived from population projections, which are based on published mid-year population estimates, as well as the magnitude of the projections. In the interests of timeliness, population projections are used to generate the initial population totals for weighting. However, the population projections are not able to take into account unusual events, for example, the coronavirus pandemic. For more information on the weighting using population projections, please see the background and methodology section of the LFS user guide.

We are transforming our migration statistics, making use of all available data to provide a richer and deeper understanding of migration. We have revised our approach for transformation because of the current situation around the coronavirus (COVID-19). More information is available in our population and migration statistics transformation published on 26 November 2020.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Population by country of birth and nationality QMI](#).

[Following the end of the EU exit transition period on 31 December 2020](#), the UK statistical system will continue to collect and produce our wide range of economic and social statistics. We are committed to continued alignment with international statistical standards, enabling comparability both over time and internationally and we will work with users of statistics to make sure they have the data they need to support the decisions they have to make.

7 . Strengths and limitations

The Annual Population Survey (APS) is a household survey and so does not cover most people living in communal establishments, some NHS accommodation, or students living in halls of residence who have non-UK resident parents. As a result, the population totals used in APS estimates are not directly comparable with mid-year population estimates, which refer to the entire UK population. The APS is weighted to be representative by age, sex and geography and as such has no control totals for country of birth and nationality. The APS sample design also means there is a notable time lag.

All estimates produced are subject to sampling variability - [confidence intervals](#) are used as a measure of the precision of the estimate. As the number of people available in the sample gets smaller, the variability of the estimates that we can make from that sample size gets larger. Estimates for small groups, which are based on smaller subsets of the APS sample, are less reliable and tend to be more volatile than for larger aggregated groups. Therefore, users are advised to be cautious when drawing conclusions from estimates that are broken down to smaller groups, for example, country, nationality, age or local authority.

Coronavirus and Labour Force Survey estimates

The estimates in this release are based on data from the [Annual Population Survey (APS)](#), which is comprised of waves one and five of the [Labour Force Survey (LFS)](#) and sample boosts in England, Wales and Scotland.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the suspension of face-to-face interviewing on 17 March 2020, we had to make operational changes to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), particularly in the way that we contact households for initial interview, which moved to a "by telephone" approach. These changes resulted in a response where certain characteristics have not been as well represented as previously and is evidenced in a change in the balance of type of household that we are reaching. In particular, the proportion of households where people own their homes in the sample has increased and rented accommodation households has decreased.

To mitigate the impact of this non-response bias, in October 2020, we introduced housing tenure into the LFS weighting methodology for periods from January to March 2020 onwards. While not providing a perfect solution, this redressed some of the issues that had previously been noted in the survey results, however this may still have some impact on these estimates. Work is currently underway to explore further improvements to the weighting, including using additional variables and more detailed breakdowns by tenure.

More information can be found in [Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey](#) and in this [blog](#).

Caution comparing migration estimates from different survey sources

The APS is not designed to measure Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) flows but does give insights into changes in our population. As part of our transformation programme, a number of differences have been identified when making comparisons between migration data from the APS, Labour Force Survey (LFS) and International Passenger Survey (IPS).

Our [report into the coherence of migration data sources](#) discusses the differences in what each survey tells us about migration flows and provides a better understanding of the reasons for these in the wider context of our transformation work. The [adjusted LTIM and IPS estimates](#) are our best available estimates of migration flows. These are available for the period up to year ending March 2020, when the IPS was suspended on 16 March 2020.

More information on our plans to develop admin-based migration estimates is available in our [population and migration statistics transformation overview](#) published on 26 November 2020.

Caution comparing population by country of birth and nationality estimates with administrative data sources

Before drawing conclusions based on comparisons between different sources, users should carefully consider:

- the coverage of each source (that is, all people, all people living in households and all applications for a specific service)

- the date to which the sources refer

- information about the quality of the source

In February 2020, we published an [article](#) outlining why the population estimates by country of birth and nationality cannot be directly compared with [figures from the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)](#). For further information on the differences between these two datasets, please refer to this article.

8 . Related links

Transformation of the population and migration statistics system: overview
Article | Updated 26 November 2020
Latest update on our population and migration statistics transformation journey.

International migration and mobility: what's changed since the coronavirus pandemic
Article | Released 26 November 2020
Bringing together a range of data sources on international migration and mobility patterns since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey
Article | Released 13 October 2020
The impact of changes made to the Labour Force Survey in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the methods used to adjust the data.

Coronavirus and non-UK key workers
Article | Released 8 October 2020
New insights on non-British nationals and non-UK-born in the workforce between 2017 and 2019, including those who could be considered as key workers in the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Migration Statistics Quarterly Report
Statistical Bulletin | Released 27 August 2020
A summary of the latest long-term international migration estimates for the UK for the year ending March 2020. Data from the Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) are also included.

Note on the difference between ONS population estimates by nationality and Home Office European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) statistics
Article | Released on 24 February 2020
This note covers the comparison of ONS population estimates by nationality to European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications data published by the Home Office. It explains why caution is needed in comparing these two sets of statistics and sets out what is happening within the ONS to improve our understanding of international migration.

Understanding different migration data sources: August progress report
Article | Released 21 August 2019
Examining the issues with comparing the UK's various migration data sources, our follow-up report to explain the differences between these sources.