



## Non-EU immigration

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Non-EU immigration: MW 466

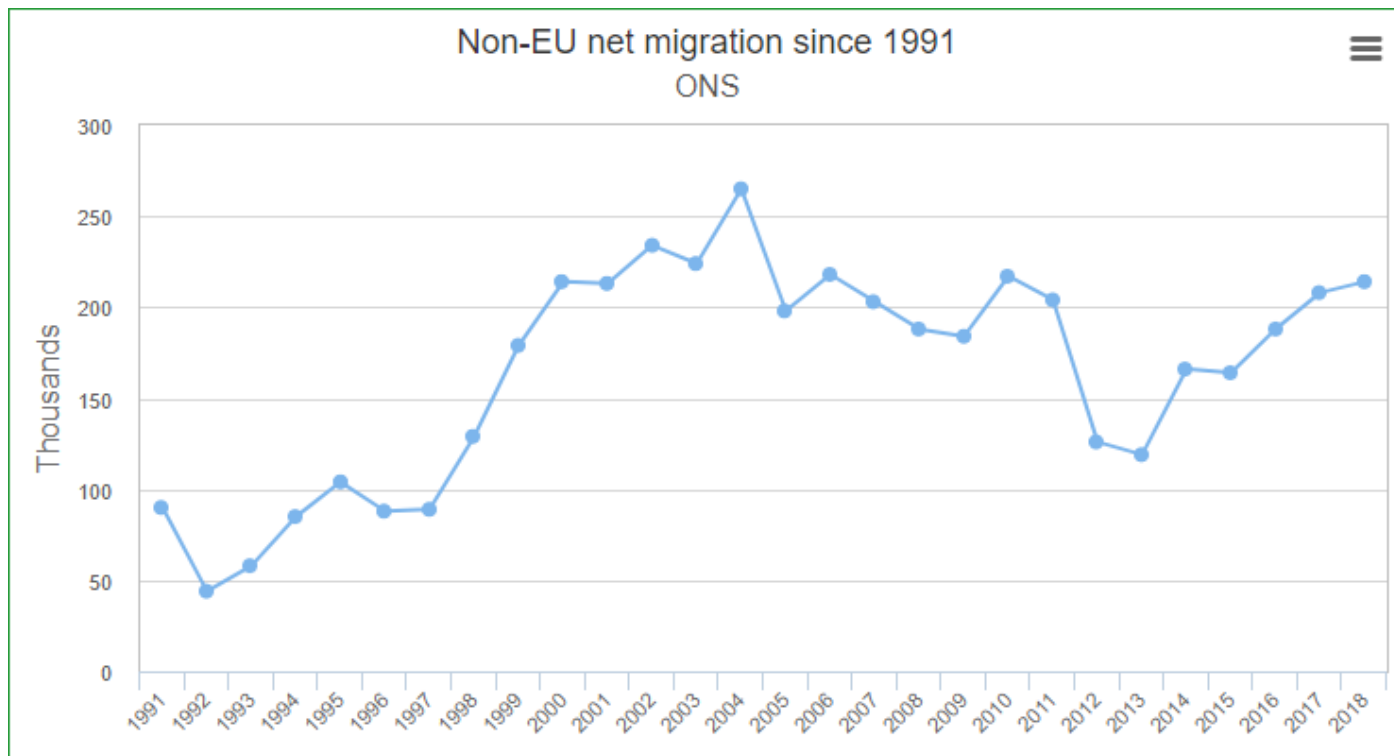
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- Annual non-EU net migration has more than doubled, from 89,000 in 1997 to 214,000 in 2018 (par.1).
- The non-EU born population has increased by just under two million since 2004. It now stands at nearly six million (par.3).
- Nearly half of non-EU born residents (or some four million people) say they came to the UK for family-related reasons (par.8).
- The non-EU migration stream includes migrants from a mix of countries who exhibit very different economic characteristics (par.10).
- There is a considerable body of research on the fiscal impact of immigration and all analysis suggests that non-EU immigrants in the UK cost the UK taxpayer many billions each year.
- In 2018, Dame Louise Casey warned the government that the UK was *'sleepwalking into an increasingly segregated country'*. About 60% of the public wish to see a reduction in immigration (par.16).
- The public are more concerned to see reductions in levels of non-EU - rather than EU - immigration, according to research by the LSE (par.18).
- During the 2017 General Election, the government made a promise to *'bear down'* on non-EU immigration (par.20).
- Yet, in their current form, the government's post-Brexit immigration proposals carry a serious risk of increasing it (par.22).
- Non-EU net migration may have been overcounted by up to 20% in recent years. This results from uncertainties surrounding the accuracy of the International Passenger Survey (par.31).

# Current estimates of non-EU net migration

1. As figure 1 below shows, non-EU net migration has risen from 89,000 in 1997 to 214,000 in 2018. The 2018 level of 214,000 was made up of gross non-EU inflows of 325,000 and gross non-EU emigration of 111,000.

Figure 1: Non-EU net migration since 1991 (ONS).

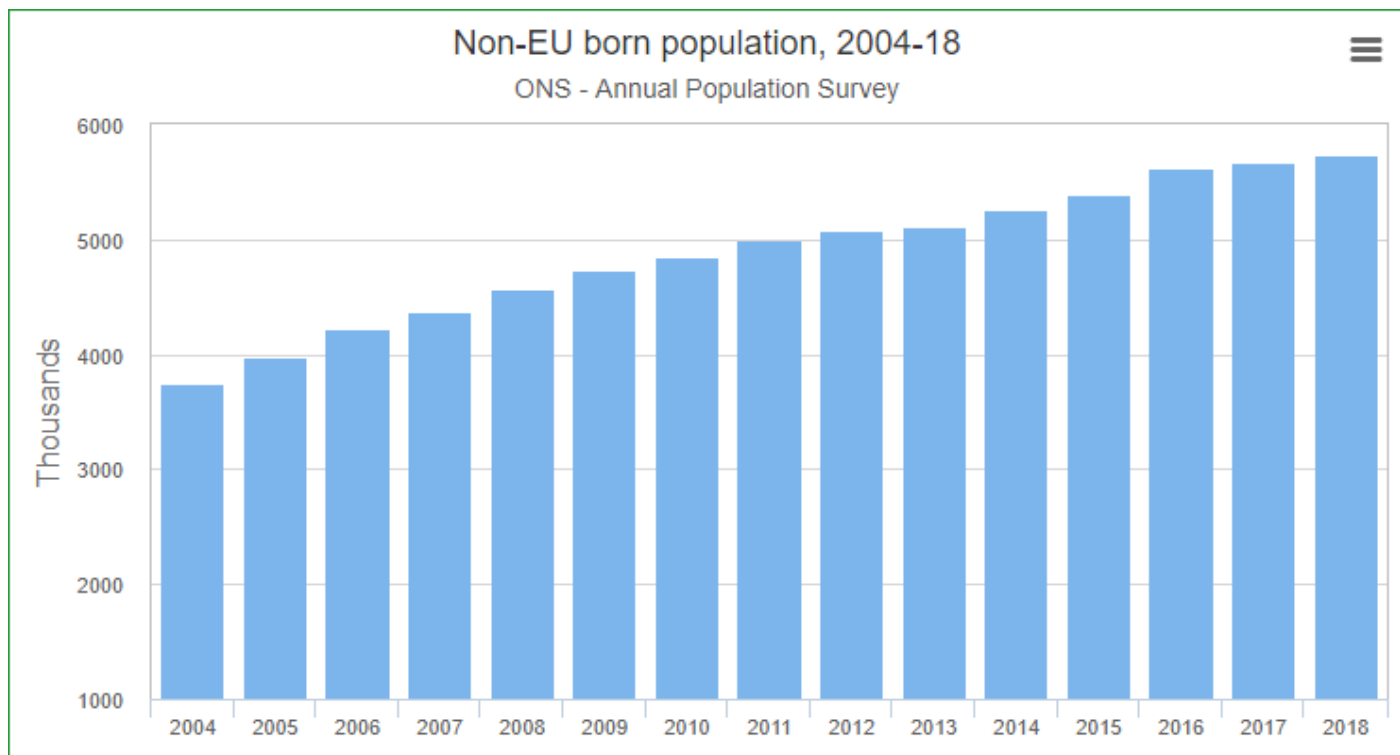


## The UK's non-EU born residents

2. The ONS produces an Annual Population Survey with estimates of the resident population of the UK. The figures exclude those in student halls and other communal accommodation.

3. They suggest that the non-EU born population increased by **just under two million** since 2004 (from nearly four million to 5.7 million) – see figure 2 below. In 2018, the 5.7 million non-EU born people residing in the UK accounted for 61% of the total overseas-born population of 9.3 million.

Figure 2: Non-EU born population, 2004-18 (ONS). Annual Population Survey.



## Where do the UK's non-EU born residents come from in the world?

4. In 2018, more than half (3.1 million or 54%) of the UK's 5.7 million non-EU born residents came from two regions of the world – South Asia (which accounted for 1.8 million people or 31% of the total) and Sub-Saharan Africa (which accounted for 1.3 million people or 23% of the total).
5. The next three largest categories – accounting for nearly 1.3 million people in total - were Central and South America (9%), the Middle East and Central Asia (7%) and South-East Asia (6%).

## For what reason did non-EU born residents come to the UK?

6. The ONS breaks down annual population survey figures into main reasons for migration.
7. Because these exclude students in halls who do not have a UK resident parent and those in other types of communal accommodation, they are likely to underestimate the share of those who came to the UK for study-related reasons.

The 'other' category may include asylum seekers.

8. The figures suggest that, in 2018:

- **49%** of non-EU born residents of the UK (4 million people) came to the UK for **family-related** reasons. The largest proportion of these residents are from South Asia.
- **20%** of non-EU born residents of the UK (2.8 million people) came to the UK for **work-related** reasons. The largest proportion of these residents are from South Asia
- **16%** of non-EU born residents of the UK (1.2 million people) came to the UK for **other** reasons. The largest proportion of these residents are from Sub-Saharan Africa.
- **15%** of non-EU born residents of the UK (1.2 million people) came to the UK for **study-related** reasons. The largest proportion of these residents are from South Asia

## Economic characteristics of non-EU migrants

9. While much of the debate regarding the economic characteristics of migrants is conducted in terms that distinguish between EU and non-EU migration, the picture of labour market outcomes is not simple.

10. Both groups contain a mix of countries from which migrants to the UK exhibit very different characteristics.

11. Within the non-EU cohort:

- The group of migrants in the UK from India, South Africa and the 'Anglosphere' exhibit strong economic characteristics – they have high rates of employment at good wages and low rates of benefit claim.
- Migrants from Africa, apart from South Africa, have overall employment rates and wages on a par with the UK-born, but much higher rates of benefit claim.
- Migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh have lower rates of employment combined with lower wages and higher rates of benefit claim.

12. For more on the economic characteristics of different migrant groups, see our paper: '[Economic characteristics of migrants in the UK](#)'.

## Cultural impacts

13. In December 2016, the government's then-integration czar Dame Louise Casey produced a study detailing some of the cultural challenges that are linked to the impact of mass immigration from around the world.

14. She noted that some areas of the UK were struggling to cope with the pace and scale of change.

15. She said in her report: *“Inequalities and divisions are persisting and appear to be worsening in more isolated communities where segregation, deprivation and social exclusion are combining in a downward spiral with a growth in regressive religious and cultural ideologies.”* See the Casey Review [here](#).

16. Dame Louise warned the government that the UK was *‘sleepwalking into an increasingly segregated country’* in March 2018 and [reiterated](#) her call for the government take urgent action to address these growing divisions. The government’s Integration Strategy Green Paper, also produced that month, can be read [here](#).

## Public opinion on non-EU immigration

17. A clear majority of the public (about three in five UK adults) told a range of opinion pollsters in 2018 and 2019 that they would like the overall level of immigration to be reduced (see our [paper](#)).

18. Meanwhile, [research](#) by the LSE suggests that ***the public want to see the level of non-EU immigration reduced*** even more than they want the level of EU immigration to be cut.

19. While voters were content to have a level of EU net migration of between 40,000 and 110,000 (it is currently at about the mid-point of this range – 74,000), they wanted non-EU net migration of between 35,000 and 85,000 per year (it is currently well over twice the upper level of this range - at 214,000).

## Government policy on non-EU immigration

20. The Conservative Party made a promise in their 2017 General Election manifesto to ***‘bear down’*** on the level of immigration from outside the European Union (p.54 of [manifesto](#)). This was accompanied by a pledge to reduce the overall level of net migration from more than 200,000 to the ‘tens of thousands’.

21. However, in December 2018 the government put forward proposals for the post-Brexit immigration system which are bound to increase the level of non-EU immigration.

22. These include proposals to remove the cap on work permits and lower both the skills threshold and the minimum income requirement, while abolishing the labour market test which ensures there are no UK workers available for jobs before applicants are recruited from overseas.

23. There were also suggestions of a new temporary low-skilled route for workers from around the world. These would be limited to eleven months at a time, thus keeping them out of the main immigration statistics.

24. The government have also so far failed to provide estimates of the impact that these proposed changes would have on non-EU inflows (for our own estimate of the impact, see [here](#)). We have called on the new Home Secretary to produce and publish such estimates in advance of the Immigration Bill’s passage through Parliament.

25. However, analysis by ourselves and by the *UK for a Changing Europe* finds that these proposals would likely lead to an increase in the level of non-EU arrivals for work. **Such an outcome would clearly fly in the face of the government’s clear 2017 manifesto promise.**

26. Boris Johnson's government has suggested it will build upon these White Paper proposals and implement an Australian-style points-based system that delivers 'control', 'fairness' and recognises the 'contribution of migrants'.

27. It is unclear as yet what exactly this would mean in terms of future visa arrangements. Depending on the specific arrangements, such systems can be used to reduce or increase the level of immigration.

28. We have put forward a number of suggestions for how the level of non-EU immigration could be reduced – see our August 2018 [paper](#).

## Limitations in the data

29. The Office for National Statistics have [acknowledged](#) that the main tool that it has used to measure immigration - the International Passenger Survey or IPS (which dates back to the 1960s) - has been 'stretched beyond its original purpose'.

30. For this reason, the ONS says that it is working towards moving away from overreliance on the IPS and that it aims to 'put administrative data at the core of population and migration statistics in 2020 and beyond'.

31. Indeed, a comparison of different datasets indicated that non-EU net migration may have been overcounted in recent years by as much as 46,000 per year (for more, see this August 2019 ONS [bulletin](#) and also please read our July 2018 paper: '[Possible undercounting of EU and overcounting of non-EU net migration](#)').

32. Despite this the ONS has [said](#) that, for the time being, IPS remains the 'best available' source of information by which to measure long term international migration.

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