

Statistical bulletin

# Internal migration, England and Wales: Year Ending June 2015

Residential moves between local authorities and regions in England and Wales, as well as moves to or from the rest of the UK (Scotland and Northern Ireland).



Contact:  
Nicola J White  
migstatsunit@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Release date:  
23 June 2016

Next release:  
June 2017

## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Things you need to know](#)
3. [Tell us what you think](#)
4. [Moves between local authorities in England and Wales](#)
5. [Cross-border moves](#)
6. [Characteristics of movers](#)
7. [Area](#)
8. [International comparisons](#)
9. [Where can I find more information?](#)
10. [References](#)
11. [Background notes](#)

# 1. Main points

There were an estimated 2.85 million residents moving between local authorities in England and Wales between July 2014 and June 2015. This is the same level shown in the previous 12-month period.

There were 53,200 moves from England and Wales to Northern Ireland and Scotland, compared with 45,600 from Northern Ireland and Scotland to England and Wales. This means there was a net internal migration loss for England and Wales of 7,600 people.

For the total number of internal migration moves the sex ratio is fairly neutral; in the year to June 2015, 1.4 million (48%) of moves were males and 1.5 million (52%) were females.

Young adults were most likely to move, with the biggest single peak (those aged 19) reflecting moves to start higher education.

Of the English regions, London had the highest rate of internal migration net outflow (9.1 per 1,000 residents as at mid-2014). The region with the highest rate of internal migration net inflow was the South West (5.5 per 1,000 residents as at mid-2014).

## 2. Things you need to know

This bulletin summarises total moves, moves by age, moves by sex and moves by area.

Internal migration is defined as residential moves between local authorities and regions in England and Wales, as well as moves to or from the rest of the UK (Scotland and Northern Ireland). It excludes moves within a single local authority, as well as international moves into or out of the UK.

These internal migration statistics exclude some moves into and out of the armed forces and prisoners, which are predominantly men.

Figures for total flows across the borders of England and Wales (either to or from Scotland and Northern Ireland) are agreed with National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) respectively. This is because the figures are adjusted to take account of differing methods in the respective countries.

Age of internal migrants is based on age at mid-2015 (specifically 30 June) rather than age at date of move – this enables the statistics to integrate with our mid-year population estimates. This provides an approximation of what percentage of people move at each age.

The move totals in the bulletin text are rounded to the nearest hundred. The underlying data tables contain unrounded figures

The statistics are based on a combination of several administrative datasets and represent the best available source of information on internal migration. Over time data sources change and new data sources become available. We are researching improvements to the current methods and intend to introduce them in 2018. Our [internal migration methodology page](#) has further information on how our internal migration estimates meet your needs along with information on the data sources, methods and their fitness for purpose, including strengths and limitations.

The statistics have a wide range of uses across central and local government, as well as academia and business:

- the Office for National Statistics (ONS) use these data in population estimates and projections
- central government uses them to inform policy-making and resource allocation to local authorities, who in turn use the statistics to help estimate the demands on their services – for example, the number of school places required
- clinical commissioning groups use them to help forecast requirements for health services, particularly for maternity and geriatric services
- various universities research internal migration: for example the University of Leeds, the University of Manchester and Newcastle University
- providers of services across the public and private sectors: for example, housing associations, developers and utility companies may use internal migration statistics to predict demand for their respective services in their area
- the media may use them to inform articles and debate on migration and related topics

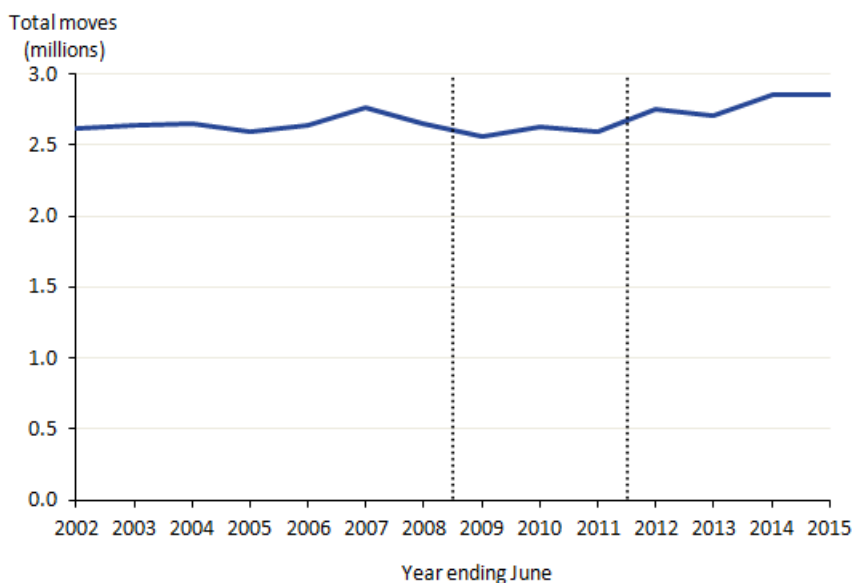
### 3. Tell us what you think

This publication is intended to meet your needs and provide an interesting summary of the main messages in the data. But are we achieving this? If you have any comments on what you like, what you don't like, or what we could do differently, please let us know at: [migstatsunit@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:migstatsunit@ons.gsi.gov.uk).

### 4. Moves between local authorities in England and Wales

In the 12-month period between July 2014 and June 2015, there were an estimated 2.85 million residential moves between local authorities in England and Wales. This is the same level shown in the previous 12-month period.

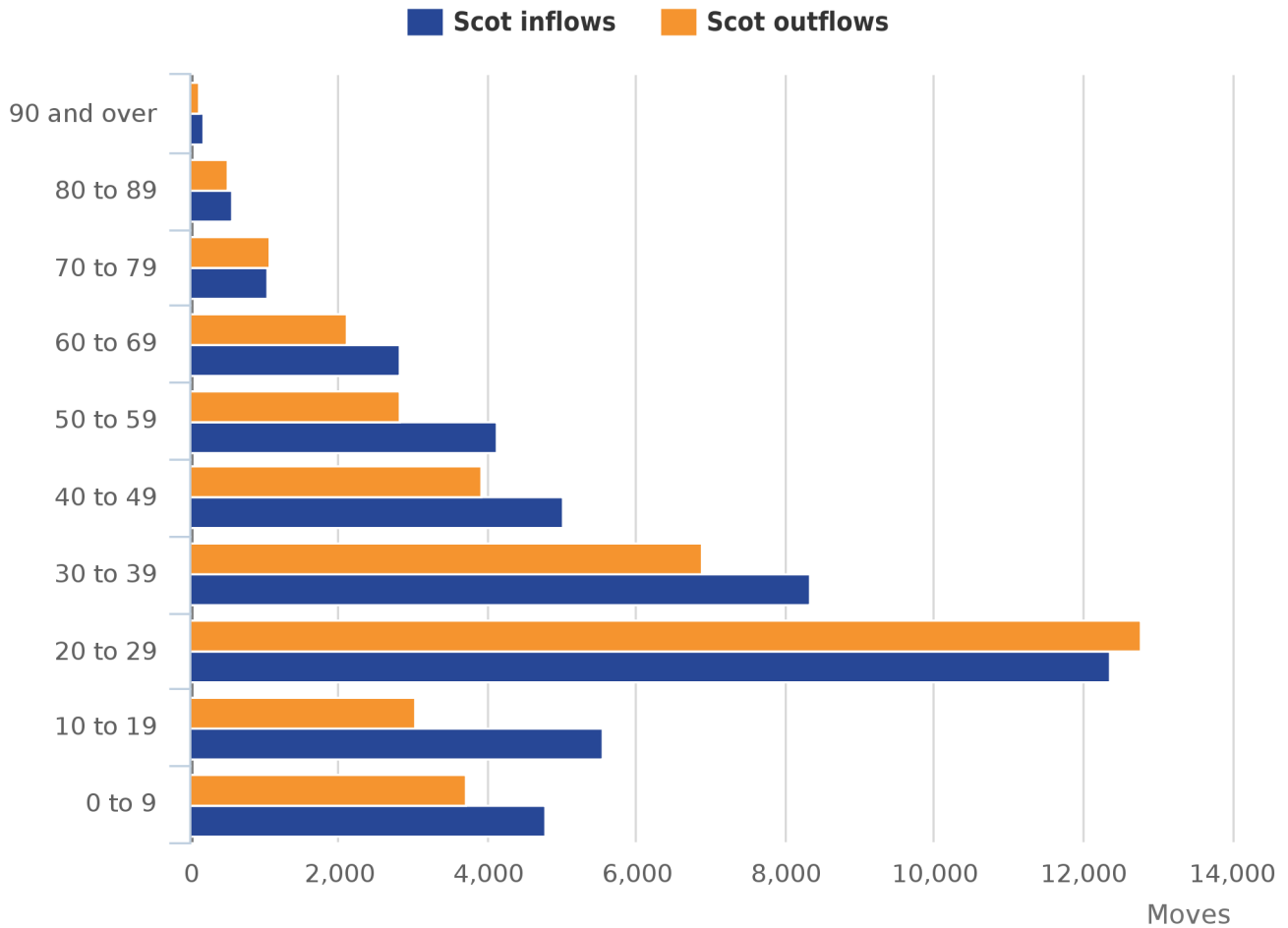
**Figure 1: Total moves between local authorities in England and Wales, years ending June 2002 to June 2015**



## 5. Cross-border moves

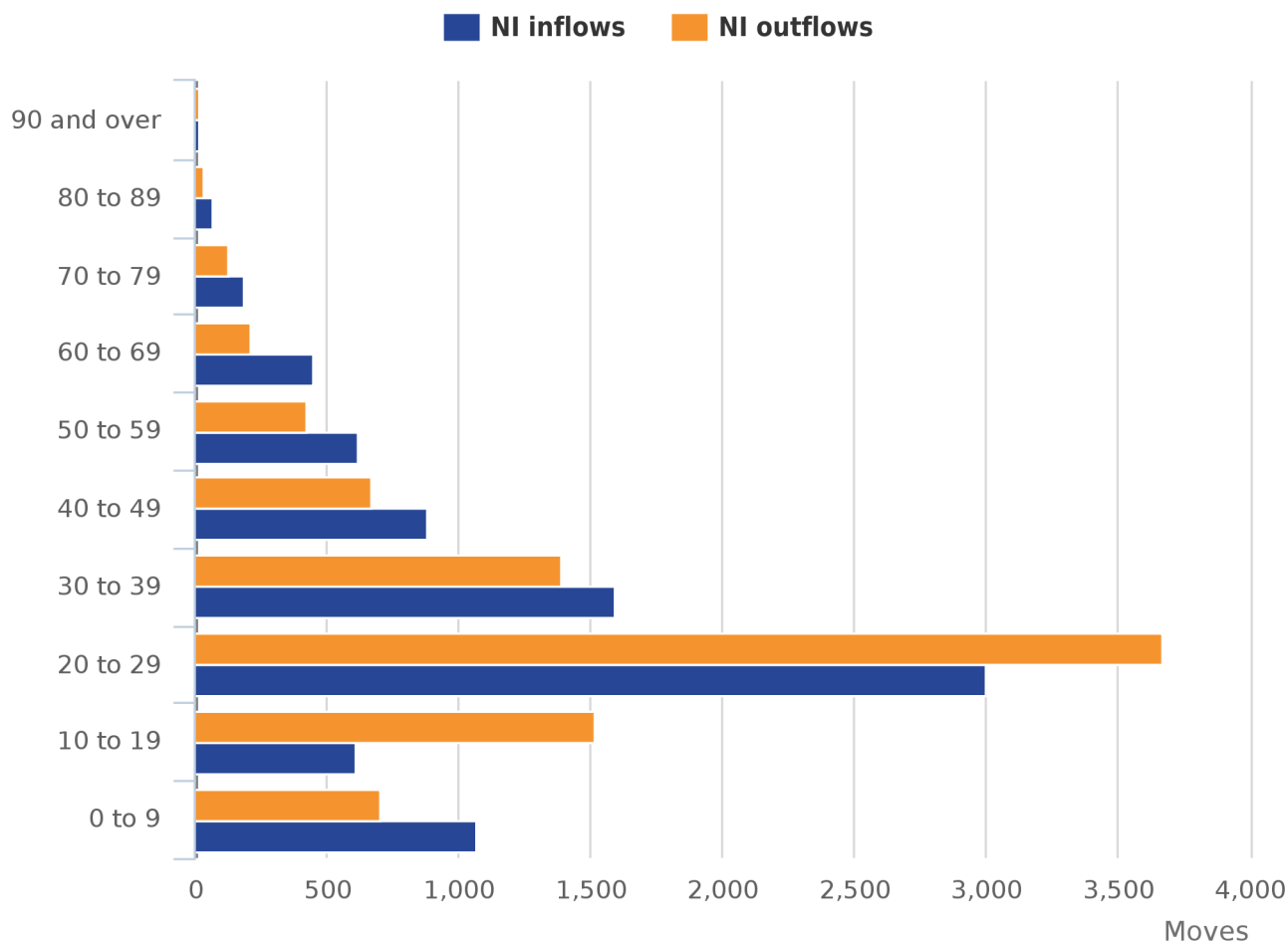
Cross-border moves are those where people move, in either direction, between England and Wales (combined) and Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Figure 2a: Cross-border moves to and from Scotland by age, year ending June 2015



Source: Office for National Statistics

**Figure 2b: Cross-border moves to and from Northern Ireland by age, year ending June 2015**



Source: Office for National Statistics

Net cross-border moves refer to the difference between flows from England and Wales into Scotland and Northern Ireland and the flows from Scotland and Northern Ireland into England and Wales. In the year ending June 2015, the net number of cross-border moves was -7,600 (meaning more moves took place out of England and Wales than into England and Wales). This is a change compared with the net flow from the previous 12-month period (-8,900). Flow levels are largest for residents aged 20 to 29. This trend is consistent with the age characteristics of movers within England and Wales ([section 6](#)).

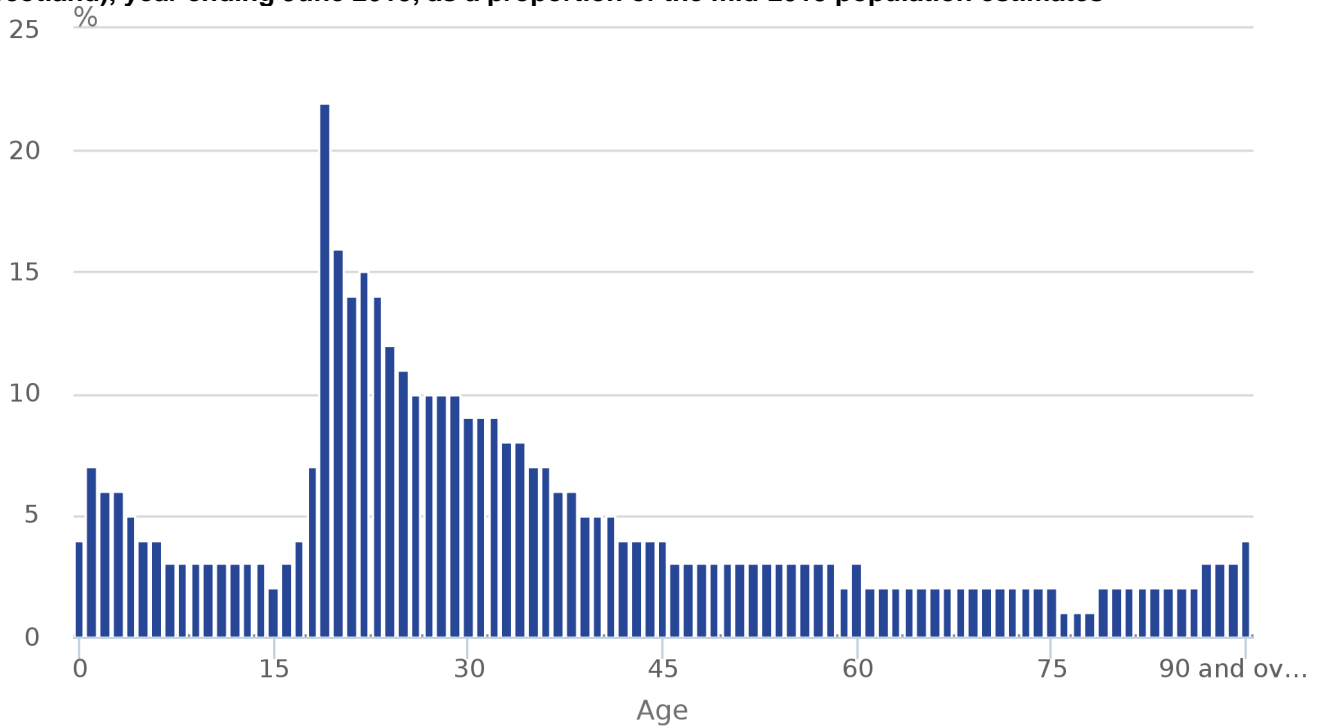
Estimates of internal migration moves for areas within Northern Ireland are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA); please visit the [NISRA website](#) for more information. Estimates of internal migration moves for areas within Scotland are produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS); for more information please visit the [NRS website](#). A [comparison of ONS's, NISRA's and NRS's methods](#) is available.

## 6. Characteristics of movers

In this section we look at internal migration in the year ending June 2015 by age, sex and area.

## 6.1 Age

**Figure 3: Moves into local authorities in England and Wales (including moves from Northern Ireland and Scotland), year ending June 2015, as a proportion of the mid-2015 population estimates**



Source: Office for National Statistics

### Notes:

1. Age of internal migrants is based on age at mid-2015 (specifically 30 June) rather than age at date of move – this enables the statistics to integrate with our mid-year population estimates. This provides an approximation of what percentage of people moved at each age. However, the percentages will not be exact because:
  - many people's age at mid-2015 will have been 1 year older than when they moved. This will have had particular impact at age 0 (approximately half of people who moved aged 0 will have been aged 1 by mid-2015) and at student ages.
  - some people will have moved more than once during the year.
  - some people will have moved during the year, but no longer live in England and Wales by the end of the year, either because they have moved elsewhere or died. These people will be included in the internal migration data but not in the population estimates.

Figure 3 shows a comparatively high likelihood of moving for very young children. Part of this may be simply because their parents are at an age where moving is still common. The addition of children to a family may also lead to a move, however, once children are at school moves are much less common, potentially because of the disruption it would cause the children as well as the parents who may be at an age where they're settled into their career.

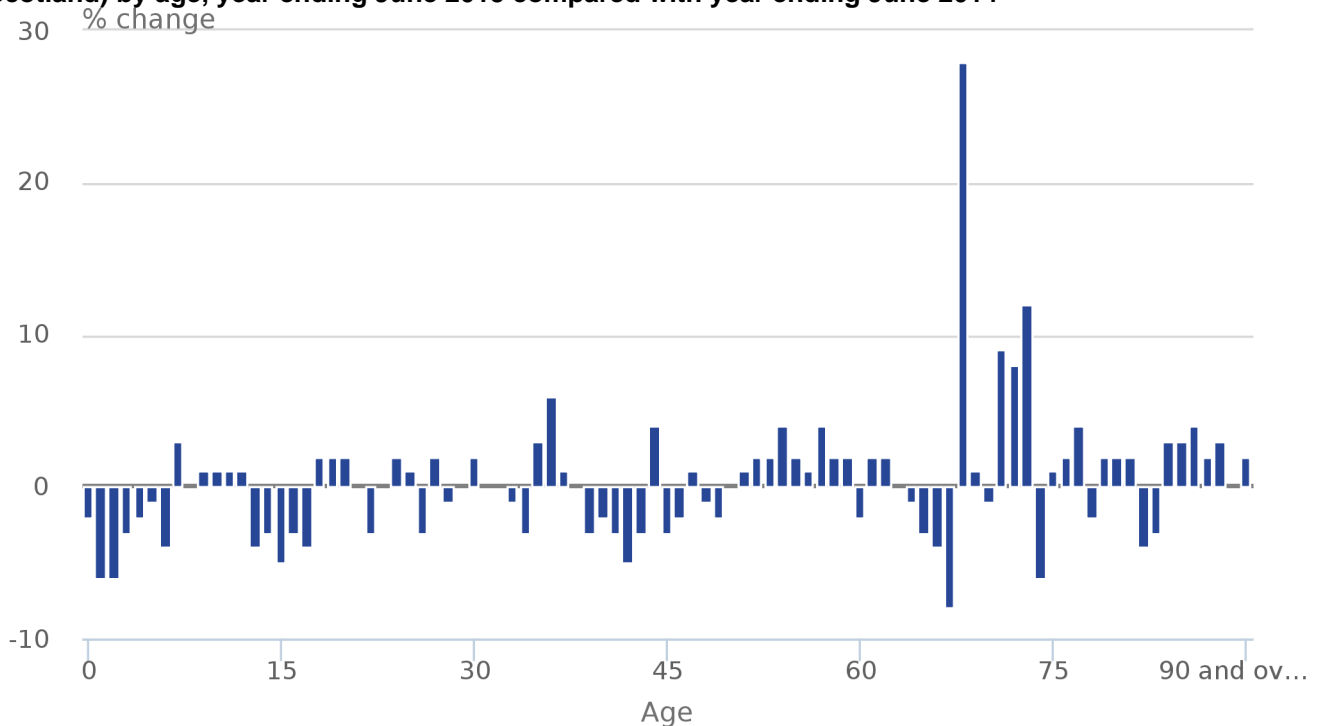
It is in early adulthood where most moves occur, with the peak age for moves being 19, the main age at which people leave home for study. There is another smaller peak at age 22; in many cases this will reflect graduates moving for employment, further study, returning to their home address or moving in with a partner.

Levels of movement remain comparatively high through those aged in their 20s and 30s but gradually decline with age. This may reflect people becoming more settled in their employment, in an area or in relationships, as well as because they have school-age children.

However, from those aged in their late 70s onwards, the proportion of people moving rises slightly. There are many reasons why people of this age may wish to move, including being closer to their family, downsizing, or to access support and care.

Figure 4 shows how the latest data have changed in percentage terms compared with the previous 12-month period. The largest increase is at age 68 (an increase of 28% (3,000 moves), due partly because of the large increase in the total number of 68 year-olds in the UK (up 178,000 from the previous 12-month period) as people born in the baby boom following the Second World War reach that age.

**Figure 4: Percentage change in internal migration moves (including moves from Northern Ireland and Scotland) by age, year ending June 2015 compared with year ending June 2014**



Source: Office for National Statistics

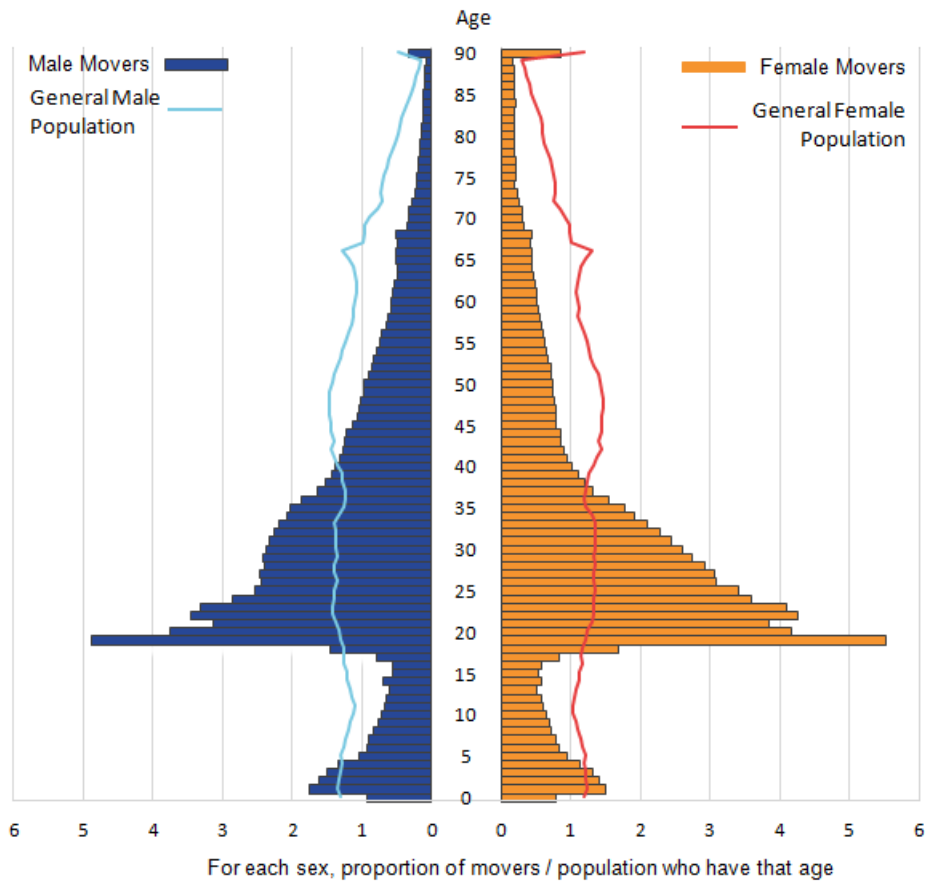
Notes:

1. "Age" is age at mid-2015.

## 6.2 Sex and comparison with population

Another way of considering the age and sex profile of internal migrants is to consider how it compares with the age and sex profile of the general population. For the total number of internal migration moves the sex ratio is fairly neutral; in the year to June 2015 around 1.4 million (48%) of moves were by males and 1.5 million (52%) were by females.

**Figure 5: Population pyramids showing movers into local authorities in England and Wales (including moves from Northern Ireland and Scotland), year ending June 2015, and the total population of England and Wales, mid-2015**



If the solid pyramid is wider than the outline pyramid, people at that age had a higher propensity to move. This applies to very young children and adults aged between 19 and the late 30s. For all other ages the outline pyramid is wider than the solid pyramid, these people have a lower propensity to move.

Figure 5 also shows that among older people there were more female movers than male movers – in fact 67% of movers aged 80 or over (and 75% of movers aged over 90) were female. This reflects the fact that 61% of the UK population aged 80 and over (71% aged 90 and over) is female and is likely to be enhanced by the higher likelihood of females to be widowed.

## 7. Area

The following comparisons consider internal migration at regional and local authority level. There are several other factors which will influence total population change in an area, including births, deaths and international migration. This means that total population change will not necessarily be in the same direction as net internal migration. Information on total population change in the year ending June 2015 is available in the [mid-2015 population estimates](#) publication.

### 7.1 Region

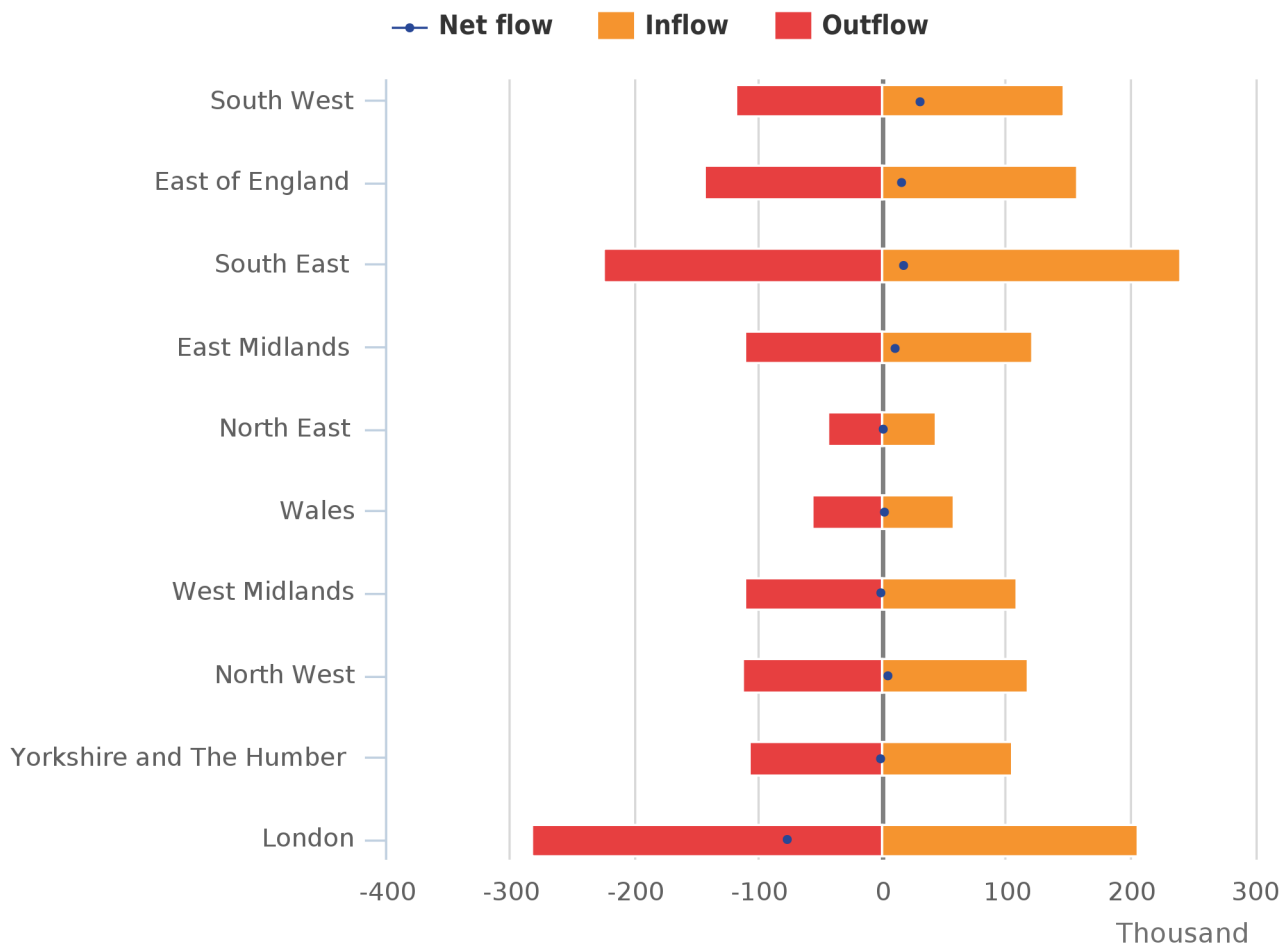
Figure 6 and Table 1 show that the 2 regions with the highest numbers of moves in and moves out are London and the South East. These regions also have the largest population and by comparing net moves per thousand population we can take account of the effect of population size. The main messages are:



- regions in the south of England had greater net change than regions in the north of England during the year ending June 2015
- except for London, regions in eastern and southern England had a positive net internal migration flow; the region with the highest rate of net migration inflow was the South West (net of 5.5 moves in per 1,000 mid-2014 population)
- the North East had the smallest inflows and outflows with an absolute net change of -0.2 thousand (indicating a net rate per thousand population of -0.1)
- London had significantly the largest rate of net internal migration flow and also the largest net change in relation to population size (net of 9.1 moves out per 1,000 mid-2014 population)

[Previous years' internal migration estimates](#) show that this general pattern of a large net outflow from London and a large net inflow to other parts of southern and eastern England has existed for a number of years.

**Figure 6: Internal migration moves (including cross-border moves), year ending June 2015, for the regions of England and the country of Wales**



**Source: Office for National Statistics**

**Notes:**

1. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
2. Aggregating figures: Regional netflows may be added together but not regional inflows and outflows, as the totals will include moves between those regions. If you require such totals you are advised to derive them from our matrix of interregional flows.

**Table 1: Internal migration moves (including cross-border moves), year ending June 2015 and mid-2014 population estimates, for the regions of England and the country of Wales**

Area	Mid-2014 population (thousands)	Net moves per thousand population
South West	5,423.3	5.5
East of England	6,018.4	2.4
East Midlands	4,637.4	2.0
South East	8,873.8	1.8
North West	7,133.0	0.5
Wales	3,092.0	0.3
North East	2,618.7	-0.1
West Midlands	5,713.3	-0.4
Yorkshire and The Humber	5,360.0	-0.4
London	8,538.7	-9.1

Source: Office for National Statistics

Table 1 shows the number of internal migration moves into and out of the regions of England and Wales (including moves to or from Northern Ireland or Scotland) in the year ending June 2015. The table is presented in order of net moves per thousand mid-2014 population. The mid-2014 population is used because it is the starting point of the year ending June 2015.

## 7.2 Local Authority

In total there were 216 local authorities with more people moving in than out, of which 85 had a net inflow of more than 5 per 1,000 population (mid-2014). Most of those are in regions that also had a higher net inflow: South West, East of England, South East and East Midlands. However, some local authorities in all of these regions experienced a net outflow, demonstrating that there is considerable within-region variation.

Conversely, there were 132 local authorities with more people moving out than in, of which 43 had a net outflow of more than 5 per 1,000 population (mid-2014). London had a particular concentration of local authorities with high net outflows, reflecting the high net outflow for the London region overall. An important explanation for this is that many parents with young children [move out of London](#). London is also the most common [region of first residence for international migrants to the UK](#) and some of these may later move to other regions, potentially also with children. Similar factors may also contribute to the high net outflows from many provincial cities.

## 8. International comparisons

Making international comparisons of internal migration statistics is not straightforward. Complications include:

- different data sources for creating internal migration statistics, which may also have different levels of quality
- different frequencies of production: UK statistics are available on an annual basis, but this is not true for all countries
- different definitions of what constitutes internal migration
- different geographic structures and sizes of geographic areas; in theory 2 countries could have the same number of people changing address but have differing internal migration totals because one country has larger regions or local authorities than the other

However, [Bell et al \(2015\)](#) have developed “national migration intensities”, which are intended to provide reasonably comparable estimates of levels of internal migration levels in different countries. These suggest that there is considerable variation around the globe but that the intensity in the UK, although fairly high, is lower than in countries in North America, Oceania and Scandinavia. Countries in Asia, Central America, and southern and eastern Europe typically have lower migration intensities, while the picture in Africa and South America is varied.

## 9. Where can I find more information?

This statistical bulletin is part of our [Internal Migration by Local Authorities in England and Wales, Year Ending June 2015](#) publication. The publication includes:

- [detailed internal migration moves dataset](#); this provides information on moves between every pair of local authorities by age and sex, allowing you to do your own detailed analysis
- [square matrices](#) showing the total number of moves between each region and each local authority; as well as the 9 English regions, the regional matrix includes the other 3 UK countries: Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- [tables of total inflows, outflows and netflows for each region and local authority](#) (total flows for the country of Wales are included in the regional table)
- table of [inflows and outflows for each region and local authority by sex and 5-year age group](#) (flows for the country of Wales are included in the regional table)
- table of [all moves by age and sex](#)
- [Internal Migration Questions and Answers, year ending June 2015](#)
- [Internal Migration Estimates Methodology Document June 2015](#)
- [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#)

The [mid-2015 population estimates publication](#) contains an analysis tool which includes internal migration inflows, outflows and netflows for each local authority, broken down by sex and single year of age up to 90 and over. The publication also contains country, region, county and local authority internal migration inflows, outflows and netflows; these are in Table MYE3.

## 10. References

- Bell M, E Charles-Edwards, P Ueffing, J Stillwell, M Kupiszewski and D Kupizewska (2015): [Internal Migration and Development: Comparing Migration Intensities Around the World](#). Article published in Population and Development Review 41(1), March 2015. Note that you must be a subscriber to access the online article.
- Campos C, A Dent, R Fry and A Reid (2011): [Impact of the recession](#). Office for National Statistics (ONS). Article published in ONS (2011): Regional Trends 43, July 2011.
- Higher Education Standards Agency (HESA) (2015). [Statistical First Release 224](#). Table 1.
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2013): Analysis of internal migration research series, years ending June 2009 to June 2011.
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2014a): [A look at male and female movers by age \(year ending June 2013\)](#).
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2014b): [2011 Census Analysis: How Have Living Arrangements and Marital Status Changed in England Since 2001?](#)
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2014c): [Focus on London moves \(year ending June 2013\)](#).
- Office for National Statistics (ONS): [Inflation and Price indices](#).
- Office for National Statistics (ONS): [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#).
- Office for National Statistics (ONS): [Employment and Labour Market](#).
- Office for National Statistics (ONS): [Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#).
- Smallwood S and K Lynch (2010): [An analysis of patient register data in the Longitudinal Study – what does it tell us about the quality of the data?](#) Office for National Statistics. Article published in ONS (2010): Population Trends 141, Autumn 2010.

## 11. Background notes

1. Local authorities include all unitary administrations (unitary authorities; metropolitan districts, London boroughs and the City of London) as well as the districts in non-metropolitan areas where there is a 2-tier (county-district) structure.
2. Estimates of internal migration moves for areas within Northern Ireland are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA); please visit the [NISRA website](#) for more information. Estimates of internal migration moves for areas within Scotland are produced by National Records of Scotland (NRS); for more information please visit the [NRS website](#). A [comparison of ONS's, NISRA's and NRS's methods](#) is available.
3. We publish the detailed dataset and the various summary tables to make the maximum amount of information available to you and allow you to do your own analysis as required. However, we may produce custom tables to order, subject to legal frameworks, resources and agreements of costs. Please get in touch if you have any enquiries. The [ONS charging policy](#) is also available.
4. Our internal migration estimates are National Statistics. This means they have been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as compliant with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). They were first assessed in 2009 (Assessment 8) and were re-assessed in 2013 (Assessment 267). The assessment reports are available on the [UK Statistics Authority website](#).
5. We have produced these National Statistics to high professional standards and released them according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.
6. Should the statistics in this release need to be revised or corrected at any point, we will do this in line with the [ONS Revisions and Corrections Policy](#).