

Article

# Living abroad: British residents living in the EU: April 2018

Latest available data on British residents living in the EU, including Eurostat data for 2017.

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Release date:  
16 April 2018

Next release:  
To be announced

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# 1 . Main points

- 784,900 British citizens live in the EU, excluding the UK and Ireland on 1 January 2017.
- Three countries were very popular – 69% of British citizens living in the EU lived in Spain, France or Germany in 2017.
- Two-thirds of British citizens living in the EU, excluding the UK and Ireland, are aged 15 to 64 years, and more 15- to 64-year-olds live in Spain than any other EU country.
- The EU has not been the most common destination for Brits choosing to emigrate; 33% of all British-born emigrants living outside the UK in 2017 lived in Australia or New Zealand, 28% lived in the US or Canada and 26% in the EU – of which 6% lived in Ireland.
- By comparison, 49% of French-born emigrants living outside France were living in the EU in 2015 and 44% of German-born emigrants living outside Germany were living in the EU.
- More British men (53%) live in the EU than women - the greatest difference is in Lithuania, where 85% of the British people are male.

## 2 . Statistician's comment

"Spain continues to be the hotspot for the three-quarters of a million Brits living in the EU. However, the EU as a whole is not the most popular destination for British expats, with more than half preferring to live in English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, US and Canada."

Jay Lindop, Deputy Director of Migration Statistics (@JayLindop\_ONS)

## 3 . Introduction

In January 2017 we published an article on this topic entitled [What information is there on British migrants living in Europe?: January 2017](#). Now, more up-to-date data about British citizens living in the EU are available, and more detailed analysis has been conducted using data from the 2017 European Labour Force Survey. These data have not been produced by us.

This final article follows the [Living abroad series](#), which provided more information on British citizens living in the EU and EU citizens living in the UK, where these data were available.

These articles have been created in response to an increased user need for data about the people most likely to be affected by the UK's decision to leave the EU. It presents the available statistics to estimate the numbers of British citizens living in the EU.

## 4 . How do we define "British residents"

This article focuses on long-term residents – those people who intend to or have lived abroad for one year or longer.

This doesn't include those spending part of the year abroad. According to estimates of [Short-Term International Migration](#), there were 729,000 visits made by British citizens to the EU for between 1 and 12 months in the year to June 2015. Of these visits, 87% were for "Other" reasons, which include holidays and travelling; visiting or accompanying family and friends; working holidays; medical treatment; and religious pilgrimage. For some individual countries, information on short-term migration (those spending 1 to 12 months living abroad) is available in the individual country reports from the [Living abroad series](#).

The statistics in this article use a "British citizen" definition to identify long-term residents, as this is considered the most useful in identifying those most likely to be affected by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

This is particularly the case when compared with the use of a "country of birth" definition of a migrant, which can miss some groups of citizens. Differences in the use of these two definitions are fully explained in the January 2017 report, [What information is there on British migrants living in Europe?](#)

Citizenship can change over time, and multiple citizenships can be held. The ways that multiple citizenships are dealt with are different between the different data sources in this report. For more information, please see the 'Quality and methodology' section.

This article does not include an estimate for Ireland because citizenship is not a suitable definition and so the data would not be comparable. Irish and British citizenships are complex. There are many dual nationals and there are further, unknown, numbers of those who have rights to citizenship in both countries but have not yet exercised one of them. There have also been increases in applications for Irish citizenship of which it is not yet possible to take account in the available data. Common Travel Area arrangements apply to movements between the UK and Ireland. The available estimates for Ireland, reporting using a country of birth definition, were covered fully in the [Living abroad: Ireland](#) report.

This article uses [United Nations Migrant Stock 2017](#) data to add context to the article. These data are only available on a country-of-birth basis, so are not directly comparable with other data sources used in this article. They are used to understand the relative size of migrant populations.

## 5 . Where are British citizens living in the EU?

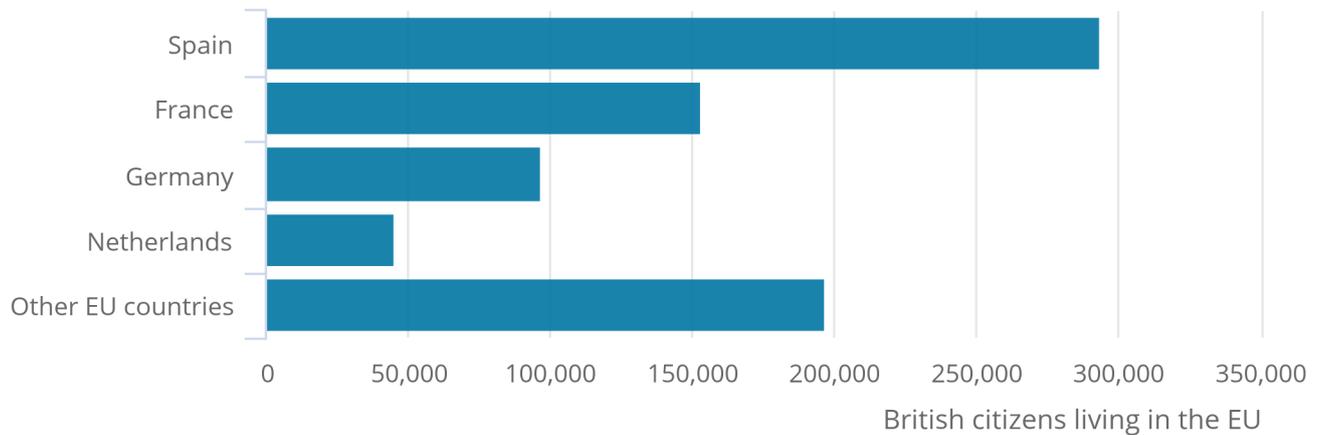
On 1 January 2017 there were an estimated 784,900 British citizens living in the EU, not including those resident in the UK and Ireland.

Our release, [What information is there on British migrants living in Europe?: January 2017](#), which reported on the 2011 European censuses, estimated that 778,200 British citizens were living in the EU, not including those living in the UK and Ireland. These two sources use different methods of collecting data, so are not strictly comparable. However, an analysis of the European Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from 2011 to 2017, for countries where data is available over this time period (see Appendix 1), shows that there has been little change in the estimates of British citizens living in the EU in the last six years.

In 2017, 69% of British citizens living in the EU lived in Spain (37%), France (19%) or Germany (12%). The largest portion, 293,500, lived in Spain.

**Figure 1: Estimates of the number of British citizens living in the EU, by country, 2017**

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**Source: Eurostat European Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2017 and 2016, and European census data 2011**

**Notes:**

1. For Greece there are no 2017 EU LFS data, so 2016 EU LFS data have been used.
2. For Malta and Cyprus there are no 2017 LFS data, so European census data from 2011 have been used.

Of the 784,900 British citizens living in the EU, 66% (518,000) were of working age (15 to 64 years), 26% (207,300) were aged 65 and over and the remaining 59,600 were aged under 15 years.

Comparing this to the population of the UK, according to the 2016 [population estimates](#) – 64% were of working age, 18% were aged 65 and over and 18% were aged 15 and under. This shows that the population living abroad features more retirees and fewer children than the general population of the UK.

Age compositions of British citizens within each country vary, as shown in Figure 2.

The highest proportions of British citizens of working age, aged 15 to 64 years, are in Finland and the Czech Republic (88% and 87%, respectively). British citizens aged 15 to 64 years outnumber those in older age groups in all countries of the EU.

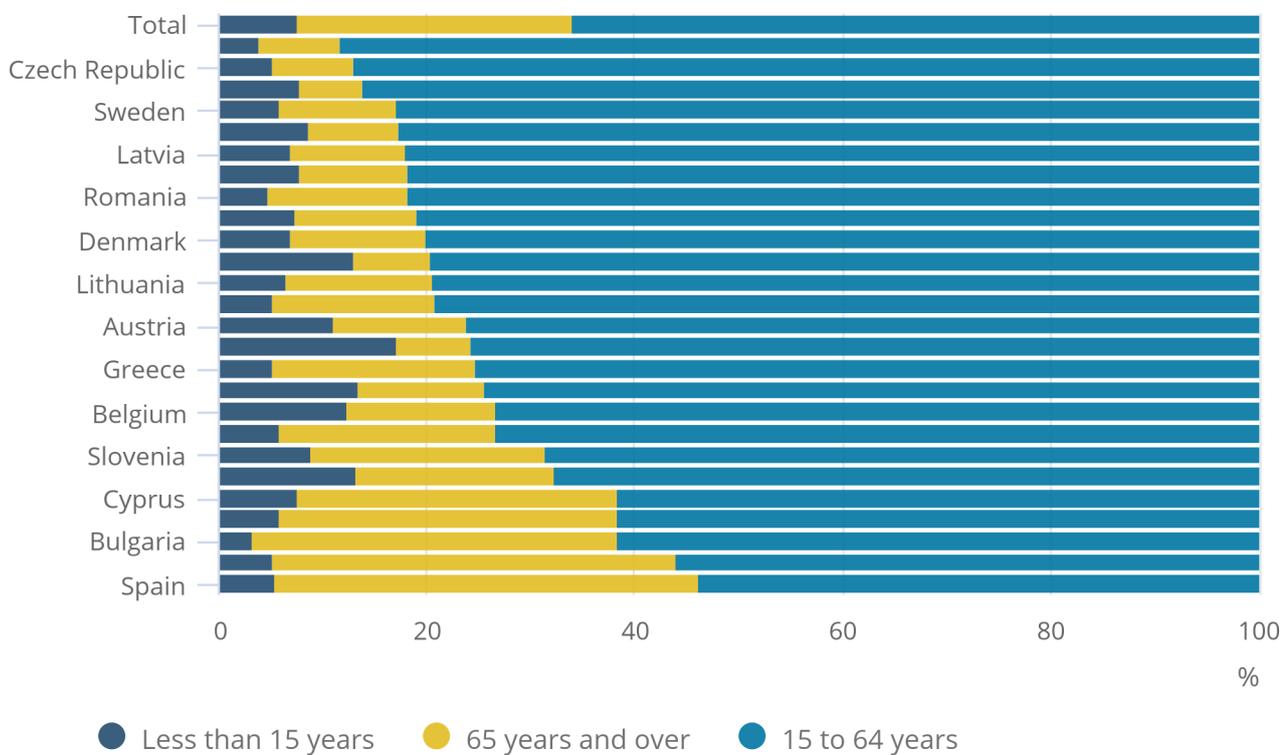
Many British citizens spend their retirement in sunny southern European countries; 41% of the British population in Spain and 39% in Portugal were aged 65 years and over. Other countries with a high proportion of people aged 65 years and older were Bulgaria, Malta and Cyprus.

For British citizens living in France, 19% were aged 65 years and over, 68% were aged 15 to 64 and a relatively large proportion (13%) were under 15 years old. More British children (20,100) live in France than anywhere else in the EU, accounting for 34% of British children living in the EU.

Estimates of children in these data are likely to be those who have moved with their parents, or are born in the country of residence. In this data, dual national children would be counted as nationals of the country they live in, so British-French children living in France would be counted as French.

**Figure 2: Age distribution of British citizens living in the EU, 2017**

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Source: Eurostat European Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2017 and 2016, and European census data 2011

Notes:

1. For Greece there are no 2017 EU LFS data, so 2016 EU LFS data have been used.
2. For Croatia, France and Poland, only total estimates are available for 2017 EU LFS data; these have been distributed using 2011 European census data to create estimates by age.
3. For Malta and Cyprus there are no 2017 LFS data, so European census data from 2011 have been used.

## 6 . Where in the EU are the different age groups living?

These interactive maps (Map 1) show the proportion of British citizens who are in each age group, in each of the 26 countries in the EU. Spain is the most common country of residence for all age groups.

More 15-to 64-year olds live in Spain than any other EU country.

**Map 1: The proportion of British citizens, in each age group, by their country of residence in the EU**

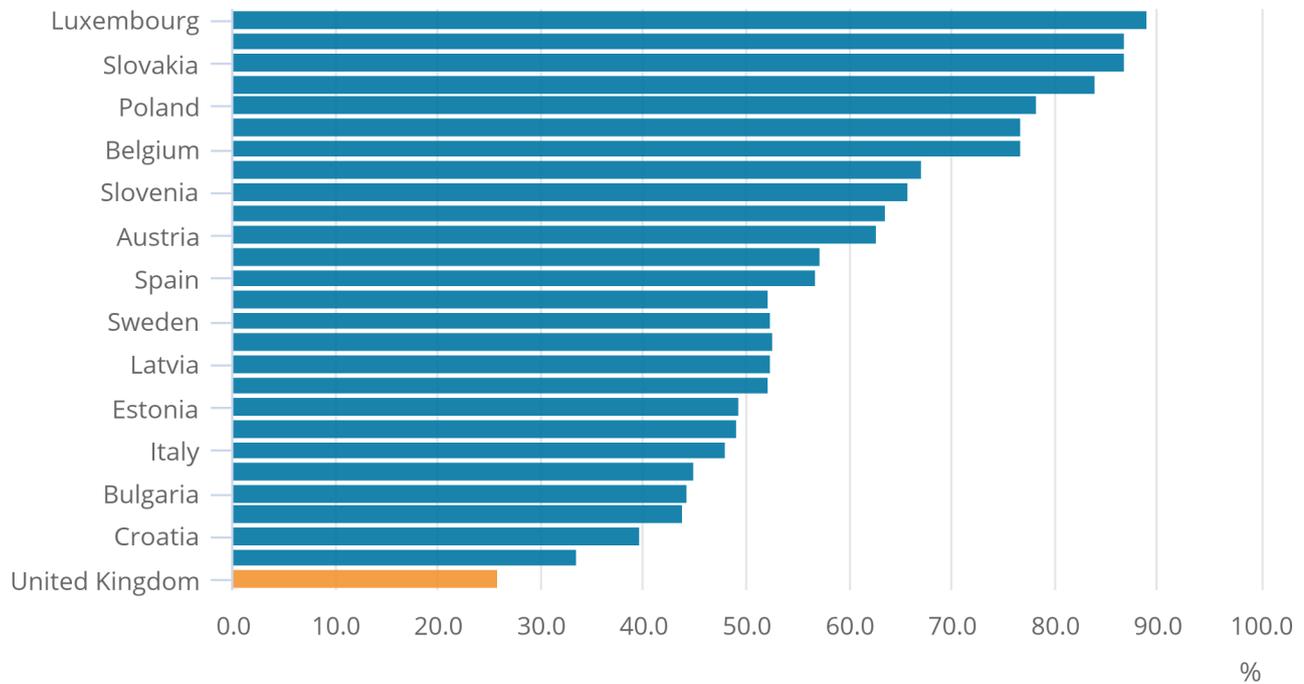
## 7 . Do British citizens migrate to the EU more or less than other EU countries' citizens?

[United Nations \(UN\) migrant stock data from 2017](#) shows which countries migrants from each country in the world choose to live in. It is estimated on a country-of-birth basis, so is different to the Eurostat citizenship data, but provides useful context to this report.

UN Migrant stock data for 2017 shows that 26% of migrants who were born in the UK and living abroad were living in another EU country (6% of which lived in Ireland). The UK had a smaller proportion of emigrants living in another EU country than any other EU country. By comparison, 44% of those born in Germany emigrate to another EU country, and 49% of those born in France.

**Figure 3: Proportion of UK migrants living in another EU country, by country of birth**

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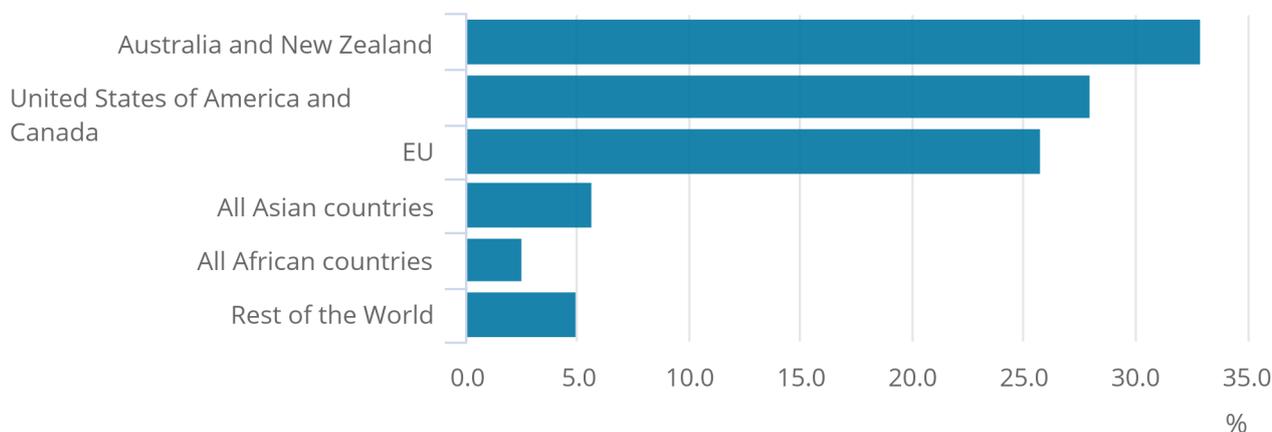


**Source: United Nations migrant stock, 2017**

The most common destinations for the 4,921,300 UK-born emigrants were Australia and New Zealand (home to 33% of all UK-born emigrants). The next most common destination is Northern America (15% in the US and 13% in Canada), accounting for 28% of UK emigrants.

**Figure 4: Proportion of all UK-born citizens living abroad, by place of residence**

Figure 4: Proportion of all UK-born citizens living abroad, by place of residence



Source: United Nations migrant stock, 2017

## 8 . More British men live in the EU than British women

Comparing the numbers of men with the numbers of women who choose to live abroad can show interesting insights about the type of migration that is occurring. Generally speaking, more men migrate than women, both to and from the UK, as can be seen in [estimates of international migration](#).

Overall, the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for 2017 show there are more British males (53%) than British females (47%) living in the EU. As a comparison, the UK population is estimated to be 49.3% male and 50.7% female, according to the [mid-2016 Population Estimates](#).

This pattern of British people living in the EU varies. The greatest difference is seen in Lithuania, where 85% of the British people living there are male. In Estonia, 81% of the British population is male, and in Finland and Latvia it is 80%. One reason for this might be that British men are more successful at finding work in these countries.

There are only four EU countries with more females than males: Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta. Greece has the highest proportion of females to males with 58%. These are countries where a high proportion of British citizens are in older age groups. Women have a longer life expectancy than men, which leads to older age groups having a higher proportion of females.

## 9 . Quality and methodology

## More information on the data sources used in this report

### European Labour Force Surveys (Eurostat)

The Eurostat 2017 data are based on data about the population of each country on 1 January submitted to Eurostat by each country. This refers to the usually resident population ("A person who moves from their country of usual residence for a period of at least 12 months") and is either based upon population registers or the last population census of that country adjusted according to population change figures (the method used by the UK). Both population estimates and census data record those long-term migrants who have lived or intend to live in the EU for more than a year. It doesn't estimate those who live in the EU for shorter periods of time, or who split their time between the EU and the UK. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

### Population estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2016 (ONS)

The mid-year estimates refer to the population on 30 June of the reference year and are published annually. They are the official set of population estimates for the UK and its constituent countries, the regions of England and Wales and local authorities.

The estimates account for long-term international migrants (people who change their country of usual residence for a period of 12 months or more), but do not account for short-term migrants (people who come to or leave the country for a period of less than 12 months). A combination of registration, survey and administrative data are used to estimate the different components of population change.

For more information, please refer to our [Annual mid-year population estimates QMI](#).

### UN migrant stock 2017

The [United Nations \(UN\) migrant stock](#) contains estimates of the total number of international migrants by country or area by sex, age and origin. Estimates refer to 1 July of the reference year. Most of the data used to estimate the international migrant stock by country or area were obtained from population censuses. Additionally, population registers and nationally representative surveys provided information on the number and composition of international migrants.

In estimating the international migrant stock, international migrants have been equated with the foreign-born population whenever this information is available, which is the case in most countries or areas. In most countries lacking data on place of birth, information on the country of citizenship of those enumerated was available, and was used as the basis for the identification of international migrants, thus effectively equating, in these cases, international migrants with foreign citizens.

The availability of data on total migrant stock, as well as on the age and origin of international migrants, differs significantly between major areas. The estimates of the total migrant stock take into account the estimated size of the total population in the country of destination based on the World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision. Specific country circumstances – such as sudden in- or out-migration due to conflict, economic booms or busts, and major changes in migration policies – were also taken into consideration.

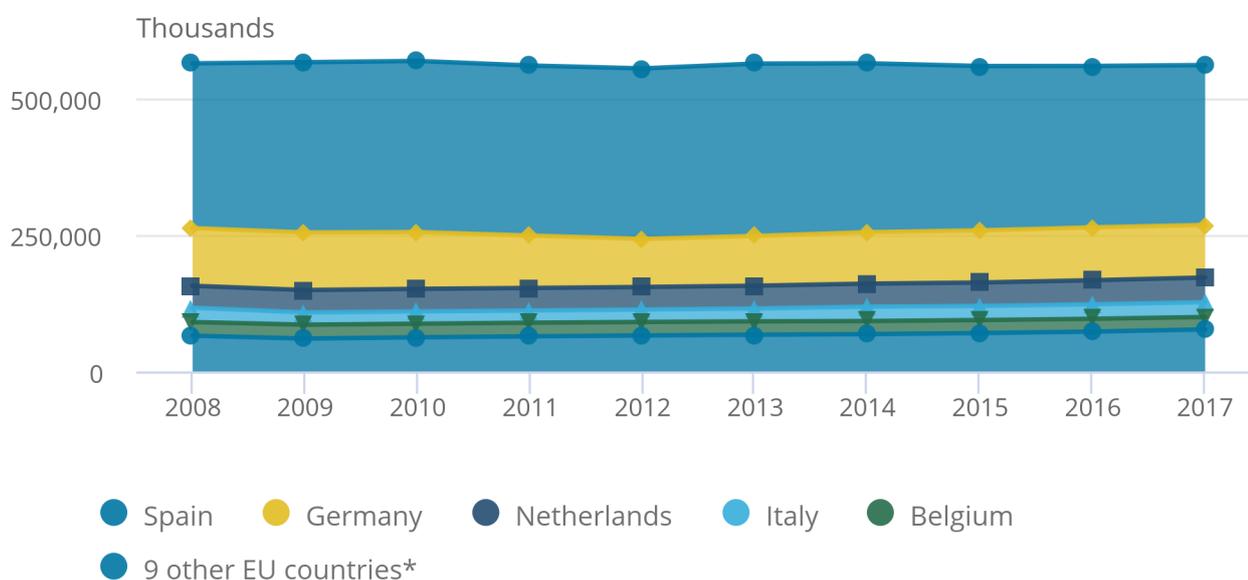
For more information, please refer to the [United Nations Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision Documentation](#).

## 10 . Appendix 1

Figure 5 shows the estimates from European Labour Force Survey (LFS) data for the years 2008 to 2017, for countries where data is available over this time period. It shows that since the 2011 round of EU censuses, there has been little change in the estimates of British citizens living in these European countries.

**Figure 5: Number of UK citizens resident in EU countries, 2008 to 2017, for countries for which data is available in every year**

Figure 5: Number of UK citizens resident in EU countries, 2008 to 2017, for countries for which data is available in every year



Source: Eurostat European Labour Force Survey 2008 to 2017

Notes:

1. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden