

Statistical bulletin

Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: August 2018

A summary of the latest official long-term international migration statistics for the UK for the year ending March 2018, published by Office for National Statistics (ONS). Data from the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are also included.



Contact:
Nicola Rogers
migstatsunit@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1329 444097

Release date:
23 August 2018

Next release:
29 November 2018

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Statistician's comment](#)
3. [Things you need to know about this release](#)
4. [Trends in international migration](#)
5. [Migration patterns for EU and non-EU citizens](#)
6. [Work is the most common reason people come to the UK](#)
7. [Trends in non-EU immigration for study](#)
8. [How many people are granted asylum or protection in the UK?](#)
9. [Building our understanding of the migration evidence](#)
10. [Links to related statistics](#)
11. [Quality and methodology](#)

1 . Main points

To fully understand migration, we need to consider all available data sources. On this basis, our best assessment is that around 270,000 more people came to the UK than left in the year ending March 2018, so long-term net migration has continued to add to the UK population.

Net migration has fallen from the peak levels seen in 2015 and 2016 and has remained broadly stable since. Underlying this period of stability, long-term immigration and long-term emigration have remained broadly stable at around 610,000 and 340,000 respectively in the year ending March 2018.

Although the estimates show an increase in long-term net migration over the latest year, this was due to an [unusual decrease in the International Passenger Survey estimates for student immigration in 2016](#), that was not seen in other data sources, and which our quality work suggested was an anomaly. We therefore do not recommend that users make year-on-year comparisons over this period and instead look at the broader evidence and longer time series.

EU net migration was at its lowest level since 2012 but continues to add to the UK population, with around 90,000 more EU citizens coming to the UK than leaving in the year ending March 2018.

The estimated number of EU citizens coming to the UK to work has continued to decrease. The main decrease between 2016 and 2017 was in EU citizens looking for work, but much of the most recent decrease can be accounted for by a fall in the number coming to the UK for a definite job over the last year, particularly citizens of EU15 countries.

2 . Statistician's comment

"Today's figures show that around 270,000 more people are coming to the UK than leaving, so net migration is continuing to add to the UK population. Net migration has been broadly stable since peak levels seen in 2015 and 2016.

"Looking at the underlying numbers we can see that EU net migration has fallen, as fewer EU citizens are arriving in the UK, and has now returned to the level last seen in 2012.

"Much of the recent fall is in people from the western European countries that make up the 'EU15' group coming to the UK for a definite job. Previously we had seen a decline in the number of EU citizens coming who were looking for work, however, this seems to have stabilised."

Nicola Rogers, Centre for Migration, Office for National Statistics.

Follow ONS Director of Migration Statistics [@JayLindop_ONS](#)

3 . Things you need to know about this release

As Office for National Statistics (ONS) set out in September 2017, the [context for our work is changing](#). Our role as independent government statisticians is to meet the demand from users of the statistics – in this case, a clear understanding of the latest trends in international migration and improving the evidence base to provide more information on the impact migrants have while they are in the UK.

Working jointly with statisticians from across the Government Statistical Service (GSS), including the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), we have continued to draw strength from a wide range of sources to provide a better picture of international migration in this release. As we continue to improve our understanding of administrative data, our future reporting will aim to integrate evidence from further sources where appropriate. This forms part of a larger GSS transformation plan to meet user needs and begin to put administrative data at the core of evidence on migration. We provided an [update on these plans](#) in July 2018.

The reporting period for the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) data in this release is year ending March 2018. For ease of comparison, visa data from the Home Office and National Insurance number (NINo) data from DWP are included for the year ending March 2018 to cover the same time period as the IPS and LTIM estimates. Labour market data are included for the period April to June 2018. Home Office [Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2018](#) and DWP [National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals to June 2018](#) were released today (23 August 2018) and provide an update on the figures included in this bulletin.

Definitions and terms

ONS migration statistics use the [UN recommended definition of a long-term international migrant](#): “A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.”

The [Long-Term International Migration \(LTIM\) estimates methodology](#) describes how data from the IPS and other sources are used to create LTIM estimates. LTIM estimates are based on IPS data, but with additional adjustments made for migrants not included in the survey, such as asylum seekers. Some estimates are only available based solely on IPS data.

Because of the nature of illegal migration it is not possible to quantify accurately the number of people who are in the country illegally. For this reason, we do not produce estimates on the size of the illegal migrant population. However, some may be included in the stocks and flows of migrants in our data.

Data sources

Throughout this release we have used the best available sources of information to come to our assessment of what is happening to migration. Where we talk about our best assessment we have rounded to the nearest 10,000 so as not to give the impression of a level of precision that may not be appropriate. LTIM estimates continue to be rounded to the nearest 1,000 but are shown with confidence intervals that represent quantifiable uncertainty. In the tables, we have continued to include the year-on-year change as we know some users find it helpful. However, we advise against focusing on this and instead encourage users to look at the longer-term trends.

Sources used include: Home Office administrative data, ONS labour market data, Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data and DWP information on registrations for new National Insurance numbers (NINos), although previously published analysis has shown that [this last source will also include short-term migration](#). The sources of data included in this release are not directly comparable but taken together provide a better indication of trends than any single source alone. This assessment is included as well as our usual information on LTIM and the IPS. The full rationale for this approach is explained in the [Report on international migration data sources: July 2018](#), which sets out our latest understanding of the quality of IPS migration estimates.

IPS estimates for the year ending September 2016 saw a decrease in the number of non-EU citizens arriving to study, which was not reflected in the most comparable Home Office student visa data or HESA first year student enrolments data. Our [IPS quality assurance work](#) suggests that this was an anomaly caused by sampling variability. Due to this unusual pattern, we recommend that users look at the broader evidence and longer time series, rather than making year-on-year comparisons.

As a result of this data anomaly, we have produced an illustrative revised trend for the IPS non-EU student immigration estimate. For the year ending September 2016 estimates onwards we have taken the year-on-year percentage change in Home Office non-EU long-term student visa data and applied this rate of change to the IPS estimates for non-EU immigration for study. The illustrative revised trend shows a relatively stable pattern over this time period for IPS non-EU student immigration.

As non-EU student immigration feeds into overall immigration and net migration estimates, we have also produced illustrative revised trends for these estimates. The adjusted trends are shown as dashed lines in Figures 1 and 2. These are for illustrative purposes only and we have not made any changes to the published figures. We plan to review this over the next few months and consider whether a formal adjustment should be made. We would welcome views on this and encourage users to email us at migstatsunit@ons.gov.uk.

In this and the previous bulletin, we have included a new approach to our charts that aims to give a clearer illustration of the sampling uncertainty associated with the IPS estimates. The graduated shading around the central estimates represents the associated uncertainty distribution, based on the 30%, 60% and 95% confidence intervals. The highlighted central estimate is the most likely value, whilst the values towards the upper and lower limit are possible but less likely. Other sources of uncertainty, for example, due to limitations of the survey methodology, are not represented. Going forward, we will be working with the University of Cambridge to explore how best to show the uncertainty associated with both the survey and administrative data sources that measure the different elements of migration. For further information on confidence intervals, please see [International migration methodology](#).

Specific notes for this release:

- all of the LTIM and IPS estimate changes detailed in the release are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless specifically stated otherwise
- EU estimates exclude British citizens; citizens of countries who were EU members prior to 2004, for example, France, Germany and Spain, are termed the EU15; Central and Eastern European countries who joined the EU in 2004, for example, Poland, are the EU8; EU2 comprises Bulgaria and Romania, who became EU members in 2007
- rolling year estimates for LTIM and IPS are produced quarterly for year ending (YE) March (Quarter 1), YE June (Quarter 2), YE September (Quarter 3) and YE December (Quarter 4)
- LTIM and IPS data for 2017 and Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2018 are provisional; there is usually [minimal change between provisional and final data](#)

Full details of terms and definitions can be found in the [International Migration – terms, definitions and frequently asked questions](#).

4 . Trends in international migration

To fully understand migration, we need to consider all available information. On this basis, our best assessment is that around 270,000 more people came to the UK than left in the year ending March 2018, so long-term net migration has continued to add to the UK population. Underlying this, long-term immigration and long-term emigration were around 610,000 and 340,000 respectively.

The Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates (Table 1) showed a small increase in net migration compared with the previous year, but this was due to unusually low immigration estimates for students in 2016 in the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which were not seen in other sources and which our [quality work suggests was an anomaly](#). Therefore, our best assessment of net migration is that it has fallen from the peak levels seen in 2015 and 2016 and has remained broadly stable since.

Table 1: Latest estimates of Long-Term International Migration, UK, year ending March 2018

	YE March 2018	95% CI	Change since YE March 2017
Immigration	614	+/-38	+29
Emigration	344	+/-26	+3
Net migration	+271	+/-46	+28

thousands

Source: Office for National Statistics, Long-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. We do not recommend users make comparisons year on year and instead look at the broader evidence and longer time series, which allows a better assessment of trends.
2. None of the changes are statistically significant at the 5% level.
3. The estimates given are the sum of the EU, non-EU and British citizenship groupings.
4. All estimates are provisional.
5. Estimates may not add up due to rounding.
6. YE = year ending, CI = confidence interval.

To account for the unusual pattern in immigration for study, we have produced an illustrative revised trend for immigration and net migration (Figure 1). The adjusted figures were calculated by applying the year-on-year percentage changes in Home Office non-EU long-term student visa data to the IPS estimates for non-EU immigration for study. The resulting additional immigrants were then added to overall immigration and net migration estimates. More information can be found in [Section 3](#) of this bulletin.

Figure 1: Long-Term International Migration, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

5 . Migration patterns for EU and non-EU citizens

EU net migration continued to decline from the peak in the year ending June 2016 (+189,000) to +87,000 in the year ending March 2018, its lowest level since 2012. However, non-EU net migration has returned to a similar level to that seen in 2011, following an overall increase since the year ending December 2015 (Figure 2). We advise users to avoid looking at the latest year-on-year change and instead look at the broader evidence and longer time series following unusual patterns seen for non-EU student immigration in 2016.

Figure 2: Net migration by citizenship, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

The number of EU citizens who came to the UK in the year ending March 2018 was 226,000 (Table 2). This was lower than levels seen in 2015 and 2016 but was at a similar level to the year ending June 2017 and 2014 estimates. The number of EU citizens leaving the UK (138,000 for the year ending March 2018) has remained stable following a previous increase between the years ending September 2015 and September 2017.

Non-EU immigration (316,000) was at a similar level to that seen in 2011, following an overall increase since the year ending September 2015. As reported in July 2018, [the latest estimates follow an unusual pattern of non-EU student immigration](#) in the year ending September 2016, so comparisons with the year ending March 2017 are not recommended and longer-term trends should instead be considered. Emigration of non-EU citizens has remained stable over the last few years.

Table 2: Immigration and emigration to and from the UK by citizenship, UK, year ending March 2018

Thousands

	Immigration			Emigration		
	YE March 2018	95% CI	Change since YE March 2017	YE March 2018	95% CI	Change since YE March 2017
Total	614	+/-38	+29	344	+/-26	+3
British	72	+/-13	-2	124	+/-13	-9
EU	226	+/-26	-19	138	+/-20	+17
(of which) EU15	115	+/-18	-16	70	+/-15	+12
(of which) EU8	45	+/-11	-5	47	+/-11	+2
(of which) EU2	57	+/-13	-2	19	+/-7	+3
Non-EU	316	+/-24	+50*	81	+/-10	-6
(of which) Asia	202	+/-17	+41*	45	+/-7	-4
(of which) Rest of World	97	+/-15	+7	29	+/-7	-5

Source: Office for National Statistics, Long-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. We do not recommend users make comparisons year on year and instead look at the broader evidence and longer time series, which allows a better assessment of trends.
2. Statistically significant change at the 5% level is indicated by an asterisk. However, the non-EU increase is accounted for by the unusual pattern of student immigration seen in 2016.
3. EU other and Other Europe citizenship groupings are not included as separate groups in the table but are included under the EU and non-EU totals.
4. All estimates are provisional.
5. YE = year ending, CI = confidence interval.

More detailed Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates of immigration, emigration and net migration by citizenship over time, along with confidence intervals around all the estimates can be found in Table 1 and Chart 1TS in the [accompanying datasets](#).

6 . Work is the most common reason people come to the UK

For the year ending March 2018, work continued to be the main reason that people migrated long-term to the UK, with 253,000 people arriving for work (Table 3). This made up 41% of all immigration in the year ending March 2018.

Table 3: Long-term immigration to the UK by main reason, year ending March 2018

	Thousands		
	YE March 2018	95% CI	Change since YE March 2017
Work	253	+/-26	-19
Definite Job	176	+/-21	-10
Looking for Work	77	+/-14	-9
Study	191	+/-21	+52*
Accompany or Join	77	+/-14	-3
Other	57	+/-7	-6
No reason stated	37	+/-11	+7

Source: Long-Term International Migration, Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. We do not recommend that users make comparisons year-on-year and instead look at the broader evidence and longer time series, which allows a better assessment of trends.
2. Statistically significant change at the 5% level is indicated by an asterisk. However, the indicated increase in immigration for study is inconsistent due to unusually low immigration estimates for students in 2016 from the IPS, which were not seen in other sources and which our quality work suggests is an anomaly.
3. 'No reason stated' included non-response and the non-specific responses 'immigrating' and 'returning home to live'.
4. All estimates are provisional.
5. YE = year ending, CI = confidence interval.

Migration to the UK for work increased between 2012 and the year ending June 2016 to a peak of 312,000, but has been decreasing since. This decrease has been largely accounted for by a fall in the number of people arriving in the UK looking for work, which was 77,000 in the year ending March 2018, down from 130,000 at the peak in the year ending June 2016.

This fall was due mainly to fewer EU citizens coming to the UK looking for work, with the number more than halving between the year ending June 2016 and the year ending June 2017 (Figure 3). This decrease was seen across all EU groupings (Figure 4a). The number of EU citizens arriving looking for work now appears to have stabilised at around 35,000 per year, except EU8 citizens where the decline has continued (Figure 4a).

Figure 3: EU and non-EU long-term immigration for work-related reasons, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

The number of people migrating to the UK with a definite job was 176,000 in the year ending March 2018. This has been broadly stable since 2014. However, for EU citizens, there has been a fall over the last year in the number of people coming to the UK for a definite job (down 24,000), particularly citizens of EU15 countries (down 20,000) (Figure 4b). The number of EU citizens coming to the UK for a definite job is now back to a similar level as seen in 2014, at 86,000 in the year ending March 2018.

Figure 4a: EU15, EU8 and EU2 long-term immigration looking for work, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

Figure 4b: EU15, EU8 and EU2 long-term immigration for a definite job, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

As EU citizens require a National Insurance number (NINo) to work in the UK, NINo registration data can be used to provide another view of work-related immigration. NINo data include both long and short-term migrants so [the numbers aren't directly comparable](#), but they can provide useful insights into general trends. The NINo data have shown a similar trend to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) data, with a decrease since the year ending December 2016 in the number of NINo registrations to EU citizens (Figure 5). We will continue to monitor this trend across both data sources.

Figure 5: EU work-related long-term immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

For non-EU citizens, IPS estimates of immigration for work can be compared with NINo registration data and Home Office data on work visas. Differences between Office for National Statistics (ONS), Home Office and NINo data are described in [Comparing sources of international migration statistics](#). Figure 6 shows only work visas issued for 12 months or more rather than all work visas, to more closely align with the IPS estimates (this adjustment is not possible for NINo data). All three sources show that immigration of non-EU citizens for work has remained broadly stable since 2015.

Figure 6: Non-EU work-related long-term immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

Although non-EU immigration for work has remained fairly stable, there has been an increase in the immigration of Asian, particularly South Asian, citizens over the last year for work-related reasons. In the year ending March 2018, the IPS estimates suggest that 45,000 Asian citizens came to the UK for work-related reasons, up from 30,000 in the year ending March 2017. Over the same period, the number of South Asian citizens coming for work-related reasons increased from 16,000 to 29,000. Increases can also be seen in the Home Office data on the number of long-term work visas granted to Asian and South Asian citizens, with increases of 8,000 and 7,000 respectively between the year ending March 2017 and the year ending March 2018.

Fall in the number of EU nationals in employment in the UK

ONS also produces estimates of the [labour market activity of the resident population in the UK by nationality and country of birth](#). Whilst this can be used to provide a useful comparison of the number of migrants working in the UK, [it is not a measure of how many migrate to work](#). The best measure of total migration flows into and out of the UK is the IPS Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates.

The labour market statistics are from the Labour Force Survey up to the latest period, that is, April to June 2018. The latest estimates show that:

- there were 2.28 million EU nationals working in the UK, 86,000 fewer than a year earlier; this is the largest annual fall since comparable records began in 1997
- there were 0.88 million EU8 nationals working in the UK, 117,000 fewer than a year earlier; this is also the largest annual fall since comparable records began in 1997
- there were 0.39 million EU2 nationals working in the UK, 54,000 more than a year earlier
- there were 1.00 million EU15 nationals working in the UK, 23,000 fewer than a year earlier
- there were 1.27 million non-EU nationals working in the UK, 74,000 more than a year earlier
- the employment rate (the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 years who were in work) was 83.1% for EU nationals, higher than that for UK nationals (75.5%) and non-EU nationals (62.9%)

Further details of work-related data

More detailed estimates over time by main reason for migration can be found for Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) in Table 2 and by citizenship and main reason for IPS in Table 3 in the [accompanying datasets](#).

The [Home Office Immigration Statistics release](#) includes both short-term and long-term visas (including dependants) for non-EU nationals and is available for year ending June 2018. The release includes more detailed statistics by visa category, citizenship and industry sector.

[National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals](#) includes both short-term and long-term visas and are available for year ending June 2018. The summary tables provide more detail by nationality and location of registrations in the UK. Further information including detail on data sources, uses and limitations of the series is provided in the [background information](#).

Differences between the data sources are described in [Comparing sources of international migration statistics](#).

7 . Trends in non-EU immigration for study

As reported in the [July 2018 migration statistics quarterly report](#), Home Office visa and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data show that non-EU long-term student immigration has remained broadly stable since 2013. In contrast, the International Passenger Survey (IPS) non-EU student immigration estimate decreased in the year ending September 2016. In the year ending September 2017, this estimate increased back to levels seen in early 2015 (Figure 7). Our quality work suggests that [the dip seen in the IPS was an anomaly caused by sampling variability](#). Therefore, our best assessment, using all available data sources, is that immigration of non-EU citizens for study has remained relatively stable over the past few years.

Due to the anomaly in the IPS data, we have produced an illustrative revised trend for the IPS non-EU student immigration estimate. For the year ending September 2016 estimates onwards, we have taken the year-on-year percentage change of Home Office visa data and applied this rate of change to the IPS estimates. The illustrative revised trend shows a relatively stable pattern over this time period for IPS non-EU student immigration and brings the IPS estimate back to a similar level as reported from the year ending September 2017 onwards (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Non-EU long-term student immigration trends by data source, UK, year ending June 2008 to year ending March 2018

Published Home Office visa figures for students include both long- and short-term immigrants and are available for [year ending June 2018](#). The latest [research on understanding international student migration](#) was published in August 2017. Differences between ONS and Home Office data are explained further in [Comparing sources of international migration statistics](#).

8 . How many people are granted asylum or protection in the UK?

In the year ending June 2018, the UK issued 14,308 grants of asylum, alternative forms of protection and resettlement, down 12% compared with 16,215 in the previous year. The latest year's figure comprised:

- 6,568 grants of asylum to main applicants and dependants (1,618 lower than the previous year, or down 20%)
- 2,038 grants of alternative forms of protection to main applicants and their dependants (870 higher than the previous year, or up 74%)
- 5,702 people provided with protection under various resettlement schemes (1,159 lower than the previous year, or down 17%)

Additionally, 6,051 Family Reunion Visas were issued to partners and children of those granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK, an 11% increase since last year.

9 . Building our understanding of the migration evidence

As Office for National Statistics (ONS) set out in September 2017, [the context for our work is changing](#). Our role as independent government statisticians is to meet the demand from users of the statistics – in this case, a clear understanding of the latest trends in international migration and improving the evidence base to provide more information on the impact migrants have while they are in the UK. That includes the sectors in which they work, the communities they live in and the impact they have on public services. This programme of work therefore forms one piece of a larger Government Statistical Service (GSS) transformation plan to meet these needs and begin to put administrative data at the core of evidence on migration.

What has come through strongly from [our recent analysis of Home Office administrative data, in collaboration with Home Office experts](#), is that people's lives are complex and no single source of data can fully reflect this complexity. We therefore need to put urgent attention into understanding how the complexity of people's lives can be better reflected within our migration statistics. This concept of people frequently arriving and departing is often referred to as circular migration. We will be working with users of migration statistics to understand more fully what their requirements are and with our GSS colleagues to develop how we can best measure this and communicate it.

This is not easy – there will be many different views as to what should count for people who are in this category based on their contribution to the economy, impact on services and other factors; ONS will ensure we take time to understand all these issues.

The [next stage in our transformation](#) programme is to consult with users later this year about how we can design a system of migration statistics with users at the heart of them. This will also look at circular migration and how best to measure it.

In autumn 2018, ONS also plan to publish our findings from the feasibility research on using linked administrative data to provide international migration flows. This will bring together work on EU and non-EU nationals from a number of different administrative sources to explore the feasibility of different approaches to putting administrative data at the core of migration statistics. This work is part of the wider transformation to move towards an admin-based population statistics system to replace the census from 2021.

The annual [Migration Statistics User Forum](#) will meet on 19 October 2018 and will provide an opportunity to engage further with users on some of these plans and new developments.

As we continue to improve our understanding of administrative data, our future reporting will aim to integrate evidence from further sources, where appropriate.

10 . Links to related statistics

This publication is one of a suite of migration-related statistics and analysis, which together give a more comprehensive view on migration to and from the UK.

Alongside this release are [accompanying datasets](#) relating to Long-Term International Migration and International Passenger Survey only estimates, and a [blog](#) providing an overview of today's (23 August 2018) international migration statistics release.

Today Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also released:

- [UK migration indicators by local area: 2017](#)
- [Migrant labour force within the construction industry](#)
- [Births by parents' country of birth](#)

Across the Government Statistical Service, the following outputs were also released today:

- Home Office [Immigration statistics, year ending June 2018](#) and accompanying statistical tables
- Home Office [Third report on statistics being collected under the exit checks programme](#)
- Department for Work and Pensions [National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals to June 2018](#) and [data on non-UK nationals claiming DWP working age benefits](#); developments have been made to extend the scope of benefit statistics to include all DWP benefits and key benefit combinations.
- [HMRC Income Tax, National Insurance Contributions, Tax Credits and Child Benefit Statistics for EEA Nationals: 2015 to 2016](#)

On 16 July 2018, we released:

- [Report on international migration data sources: July 2018](#)

Other [Home Office publications relating to migration trends](#) and a [summary of changes over recent years](#) can be found on the Home Office analysis page on GOV.UK.

If you are new to migration statistics, you might find it helpful to read the [International migration statistics first time user guide](#).

If you would like to subscribe to our newsletter, please send an email to pop.info@ons.gov.uk with the subject title "Subscribe to ONS Population Statistics Newsletter", or you can also follow our Director of Migration Statistics [@JayLindop_ONS](#) on Twitter for the latest population statistics news and updates and to join in the conversation.

11 . Quality and methodology

The [Long-Term International Migration Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

For more detailed information on our migration statistics methodology please see [International migration methodology](#).

IPS assurance review

On 16 July 2018 we published the International Passenger Survey (IPS) data assurance review in Part 2 of the [Report on international migration data sources: July 2018](#).

Assessing long-term study trends using available administrative data sources

IPS estimates for the year ending September 2016 saw a decrease in the number of non-EU citizens arriving to study. For the year ending September 2017, this estimate increased back to levels seen in early 2015.

For non-EU students, we can compare the IPS trends to Home Office student visa data and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) first year student enrolment data for 12 months or more. None of these data sources will exactly align because of definitional and coverage differences but they provide a broad picture of the patterns. Home Office visa and HESA data show that non-EU long-term student immigration has remained stable since 2013.

In carrying out the IPS assurance review we highlighted that the IPS is more susceptible to sampling variability for students as most students arrive at the start of the academic year creating a cluster effect. Depending on the shifts selected for the IPS sample, it may or may not include clusters of students and so the variability in the subsequent estimates may be increased. This results in the fluctuating trend of long-term IPS non-EU student immigration. As such, we encourage users to look at the broader evidence and longer time series when using these data and our best assessment is that non-EU long-term student immigration has remained relatively stable over the past few years.

A note on the accuracy of long-term migration estimates

Surveys gather information from a sample of people from a population. Using the IPS as an example, the population is passengers travelling through the main entry and exit points from the UK including airports, seaports and the Channel Tunnel. The estimates produced are based on only one of a number of possible samples that could have been drawn at a given point in time. Each of these possible samples would produce an estimated number of migrants. These may be different from the true value that would have been obtained if it were possible to ask everyone passing through about their migration intentions. This is known as sampling variability.

A confidence interval is a measure of the uncertainty around the estimate. Confidence intervals are reported in the [accompanying datasets](#). Users are advised to be cautious when making inferences from estimates with relatively large confidence intervals. For immigration and emigration estimates where the lower confidence interval is below zero, users should assume the estimate is above zero. Estimates from a survey could change from one period to the next simply because of sampling variability. In other words, the change may be because of which individuals were selected to answer the survey and may not represent any real-world change in migration patterns.

For further information on confidence intervals, the accuracy of these statistics, comparing different data sources, and the difference between provisional and final figures, please see [International migration methodology](#).

The [quality of the long-term student migration statistics](#) – former student emigration estimates are now labelled as [Experimental Statistics](#). As part of the ONS work plan on student migration, the latest [research on understanding international student migration](#) was published in August 2017. This report focuses on analysis of Home Office administrative data for non-EU students and the results of a new student survey exploring student intentions on completion of study.

Revisions to net migration estimates in light of the 2011 Census

In April 2014, we published a report [examining the quality of international migration statistics between 2001 and 2011 \(PDF, 1MB\)](#), using the results of the 2011 Census. As a result, we published a revised series of net migration estimates for the UK. Published tables have been updated to include the revised estimates. The report, a [summary](#) and [guidance \(PDF, 56KB\)](#) on how to use these revised figures are available. No revisions were made to separate immigration and emigration estimates at the time the net migration estimates were revised.