

Statistical bulletin

Short-Term International Migration for England and Wales: year ending June 2018

A summary of the latest official short-term international migration statistics for England and Wales for the year ending June 2018 published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).



Contact:
Mike James
pop.info@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1329 44 4661

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1 . Other migration outputs in this release

Other international migration outputs released today (21 May 2020) can be found on the following pages:

- [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, UK: May 2020](#)
- [Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: 2019](#)

We have reduced the content of our Short-Term International Migration (STIM) publication to focus on our migration transformation work and the development of these statistics. Please see [Measuring the data](#) for more information.

2 . Main points

- Estimates of Short-Term International Migration (STIM) are available based on three definitions: “1 to 12 months” or “3 to 12 months” for all reasons and the UN definition of “3 to 12 months” for work or study only.
- Visits abroad for 1 to 12 months decreased from 3.1 million in the year ending June 2017 to 2.7 million in the year ending June 2018; this is attributable to a decrease in residents of England and Wales visiting friends or relatives.
- There were 1.1 million visits to England and Wales for 1 to 12 months; this was similar to levels seen in previous years, and visiting friends or relatives continued to be the main reason for a visit.
- The number of EU citizens coming to visit England and Wales for 1 to 12 months decreased from 500,000 in the year ending June 2017 to 393,000 in the year ending June 2018; this is attributable to a decrease in EU15 citizens coming to visit.
- The number of visits abroad for 1 to 12 months by non-EU residents decreased from 523,000 in the year ending June 2017 to 402,000 in the year ending June 2018; this is largely attributable to a decrease in non-EU citizens visiting friends or relatives.
- The number of visits abroad and visits to England and Wales for 3 to 12 months was broadly stable; most visits abroad can be attributed to holidays or visiting friends or relatives, whereas most visits to England and Wales can be attributed to study.
- Visits to England and Wales and visits abroad under the UN definition remained broadly stable, and study continued to be the main reason why people visited England and Wales.

Data collection and COVID-19

The data collection period was completed by August 2019 and is unaffected by the recent developments with the coronavirus (COVID-19); for further information, please see the [Office for National Statistics' \(ONS'\) public statement on COVID-19 and the production of statistics](#).

Short-term international migration data from the ONS are based on a survey. It is not possible to survey all people coming to and leaving England and Wales, so these statistics are estimates based on a sample, not precise figures. It is best to review longer time series to assess migration trends.

3 . Definitions used for Short-Term International Migration

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces Short-Term International Migration (STIM) estimates for England and Wales based on three definitions:

- the UN's definition of a short-term migrant as being “a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least three months but less than a year (12 months), except in cases where the movement to that country is for the purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends or relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage”
- 3 to 12 months – all reasons for migration, which includes the UN definition and the categories “Business”, “Holiday”, “Visiting friends or relatives” and “Other”.
- 1 to 12 months – all reasons for migration, which includes the previous definition but for 1 to 12 months; as such, this definition captures more visits made for holidays and to visit friends or relatives

4 . Migration data

[Citizenship by main reason for migration – flows, England and Wales](#)

Dataset STIM.01 | Released 21 May 2020

Estimates of Short-Term International Migration (STIM) to and from England and Wales are based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS). This dataset contains the nationality of short-term migrants by the primary purpose of their visit, by inflow and outflow.

5 . Glossary

EU citizenship groups

EU estimates exclude British citizens. Citizens of countries that 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, which became EU members in 2007.

6 . Measuring the data

Why we have reduced the content of this bulletin

It is our mission to provide the best insights on population and migration using a range of new and existing data sources to meet the needs of our users. This is increasingly important in a rapidly changing policy context where we know our users need better evidence to support decision-making at both national and local levels.

We have long acknowledged that the [International Passenger Survey \(IPS\)](#), which underpins our [existing international migration estimates](#), has been stretched beyond its original purpose and that we need to consider all available sources to fully understand international migration.

So far on our transformation journey, we have focused on developing preliminary adjustments for Long-Term International Migration (LTIM). We are beginning to explore how we can develop measurements of Short-Term International Migration (STIM) estimates as part of our transformation programme.

We have recently undertaken a series of engagement exercises to understand user needs of our STIM estimates. On the whole, users were keen that high-level national estimates were still available and therefore were supportive of proposals to reduce the content of the STIM estimates to allow greater focus on our transformation work and development of these statistics.

As a result, in this release we have updated the estimates for [Table STIM.01](#) only.

We welcome any thoughts you have on the development of STIM estimates in the future. If you would like to get in touch, please contact us by email at pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on our future statistics

Because of the current situation around the coronavirus (COVID-19), the IPS – which underpins our existing range of international migration statistics – has been suspended. This will impact future releases of these statistics.

As a result, we have now revised our approach for transforming migration statistics this year. We will update our users as we make progress in understanding how we can measure short-term international migration in light of these recent changes.

Information on the impact of COVID-19 on our long-term migration statistics is available in our latest update report on [population and migration statistics transformation](#), published on 21 May 2020.

Producing Short-Term International Migration estimates

STIM estimates are produced directly from the IPS at the end of the person's stay in the country, so measure actual migration behaviours. This differs from the estimates of [LTIM](#) published in the [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report \(MSQR\)](#), where people are interviewed at the start of their stay and defined as long-term migrants by their intended length of stay.

To help improve timeliness, we publish [provisional STIM estimates](#), which use 18 months of final IPS data and six months of provisional data. The provisional estimates are then updated the following year.

To be included as a short-term international immigrant to England and Wales under any of these definitions, a person must have been usually resident outside the UK for 12 months or more (these tend to be foreign citizens but can include British citizens). Similarly, a short-term international emigrant from England and Wales must have been usually resident in the UK for 12 months or more prior to leaving (these tend to be British citizens but can include foreign citizens).

Adding together LTIM and STIM estimates does not provide a reliable measure of all immigration to and emigration from the UK within a specific time period. This is because:

- short-term immigration flows are based on journeys to England and Wales, not the movement of people into and out of the UK, and have methodological differences from LTIM flows
- it is possible for someone to be both a long-term and short-term migrant in a given period
- STIM estimates are based on actual migration behaviours, whereas LTIM uses migrants' intentions to infer their length of stay

Although they cannot be added together to provide one single measure of international migration, LTIM and STIM estimates of immigration and emigration should be considered alongside and in the context of each other. These estimates represent different people migrating for different reasons, but they can help to provide an overall picture of international migration.

International Passenger Survey – imbalance and discontinuity work

We completed work to transfer the IPS from paper questionnaires to tablet computer-based data collection in April 2018, following a phased roll-out that began in September 2017.

The use of tablets has enabled us to improve the quality of the IPS data collected. However, we worked with academic experts and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Methodology team to produce a method for detecting any discontinuities (that is, step changes in the time series) that may have arisen as a result of this change. Analysis of the outputs found no statistically significant impact on international migration estimates.

Methodological changes have also been developed for the estimates of international visitors in the IPS. These are weighting adjustments to address concerns about the imbalance (that is, large differences in numbers) in the IPS between the estimates of numbers of visitors arriving and departing, for some nationalities. The new method has been developed in consultation with users and methodological experts and will be implemented in the [IPS overseas travel and tourism](#) statistics due to be published on 22 May 2020. The improved method has been used to produce final estimates of travel and tourism statistics for 2019 and a revised back series for the period 2009 to 2018. These changes have not been implemented for the IPS data used to produce the estimates of STIM. Further work is required to review the impact of these methodological changes on the STIM estimates and will be considered as part of our wider transformation programme for migration statistics.

The changes in data collection methods and methodological changes were set out in [this statement](#), published on 18 March 2020.

7 . Strengths and limitations

Accuracy of short-term migration estimates

Surveys gather information from a sample of people from a population. It is not possible to ask every person travelling in and out of the country to fill out a survey. This means we have to estimate total changes, which can be affected by the group of people we sample. We use [confidence intervals](#) to measure uncertainty around the estimate. Users are advised to be cautious when making inferences from estimates with relatively large confidence intervals.

The [International migration statistics first time user guide](#) summarises the reliability of the international migration estimates. 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](#).

Uncertainty in ONS migration statistics

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) is a sample survey and as such provides estimates. When the estimates are broken down beyond the headline figures, they are subject to greater levels of [uncertainty](#). 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.

Other sources of uncertainty are not represented. A few examples of this include limitations of the survey methodology, potential misunderstandings of the questions and the accuracy of interviewees' answers.

Quality and methodology

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Short-Term International Migration \(STIM\) estimates for England and Wales QMI](#) and the [STIM estimates for local authorities QMI](#).

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

8 . Related links

[Transformation of the population and migration statistics system: overview](#)

Article | Updated 21 May 2020

Latest update on our population and migration statistics transformation journey.

[International migration statistics preliminary adjustments update and feedback: February 2020](#)

Article | Updated 27 February 2020

This background note provides an update of the progress with the preliminary adjustments for long-term international migration statistics so far and summarises our main areas for further research and development.

[Note on the difference between ONS population estimates by nationality and Home Office European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\) statistics](#)

Article | Released 24 February 2020

This note covers the comparison of Office for National Statistics (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 2019 progress report](#)

Article | Released 21 August 2019

Examines the issues with comparing the UK's various migration data sources. This is our follow-up report to explain the differences between these sources.

[International migration – table of contents](#)

Dataset | Released 21 May 2020

Tool to locate the datasets for all ONS international migration outputs.