

Article

Reason for international migration, international students update: November 2024

International student migration to the UK. Provisional estimates, 2019 to 2024. These are official statistics in development.

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Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Overview](#)
3. [Overall long-term migration for those on a study-related visa](#)
4. [Study-related visas and length of stay in the UK](#)
5. [Nationalities of those who arrive in the UK on a study visa](#)
6. [Nationalities of those who arrive in the UK on study-dependant visas](#)
7. [Subjects studied and geographical location of international students in higher education](#)
8. [UK international students' data](#)
9. [Glossary](#)
10. [Data sources and quality](#)
11. [Future developments](#)
12. [Related links](#)
13. [Cite this article](#)

1 . Main points

- Long-term net migration of non-EU+ international migrants who initially arrived in the UK on a study-related visa decreased to 262,000 for year ending (YE) June 2024 compared with our updated YE June 2023 estimates of 326,000, but this remains higher than five years ago (YE June 2019).
- Emigration of non-EU+ migrants who initially arrived on a study-related visa increased from 51,000 in YE June 2022 to 113,000 in YE June 2024; this includes those who emigrated but had transitioned onto a different visa type during their time in the UK.
- More non-EU+ students and their dependants have been staying longer, and nearly 1 in 2 transitioned to a different visa type after three years from YE June 2021; an increase from 1 in 10 after three years from YE June 2019.
- There was an increase in the number of those arriving on a study-dependant visa, particularly those of Nigerian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationality, since YE June 2019 until YE June 2023; however, the number of dependants immigrating decreased in YE June 2024 following government policy changes.
- The proportion of study to study-dependant visas varies substantially between nationalities, particularly for YE June 2023 arrivals; overall 55% of Nigerian study-related visas were dependants compared with 1% of Chinese nationality.
- Estimates for YE June 2021, YE June 2022 and YE June 2023 have been updated in line with revisions to long-term international migration; YE June 2024 estimates are provisional and are subject to revision in future publications, as assumptions about length of stay or departure are replaced by actual data.

These are official statistics in development and we advise caution when using the data. The methods are currently under development, which means estimates may be revised and updated as improvements are introduced and as further and more recent data become available. More information can be found in [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#).

2 . Overview

This article provides further insights into our [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2024 bulletin](#), focusing on estimates of long-term international students and their dependants, as well as analysis of their characteristics and migration patterns.

This publication builds on our [Reason for international migration, international students update: May 2024 article](#). Since then, we have developed our methods and provided more detailed social characteristics on those arriving on study-related visas, such as analysis on what they do while they are in the UK.

At this stage in our research, we can only apply our methods to non-EU+ nationals as this research uses Home Office Borders and Immigration data (HOBI) to understand what students do after initially coming to the UK. Long-term non-EU+ study immigration accounts for 94% of all study immigration to the UK in year ending (YE) June 2024. Methods to estimate migration of EU+ nationals using HOBI are still in development. More information can be found in our [International migration research, progress update: November 2024 article](#).

In [Section 7: Subjects studied and geographical location of international students in higher education](#) of this release, we have included analysis of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data on students from countries which were European Union (EU) members, and how this migration has changed.

If a person immigrates to study in the UK for 12 months or more, they are counted as a long-term immigrant. More information on long-term immigration can be found in the [Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration publication document \(published by Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division\)](#).

Not all students leave, but those who do leave for 12 months or more are counted out as an emigrant. Additionally, those who come to study for periods of less than 12 months are not counted as a long-term international migrant. Our [Population and migration estimates - exploring alternative definitions: May 2023 article](#) highlights the challenges of separating out international students in our estimates.

Those on a study-related visa make up 40% of non-EU+ nationals who immigrated in YE June 2024. This proportion has remained relatively stable since YE June 2019 when those who initially arrived on a study-related visa accounted for 36% of non-EU+ immigration estimates. However, the number of non-EU+ international migrants increased substantially over this period.

These provisional estimates are released with the expectation that they may be revised and updated as further, more recent, data become available. More information on revisions is available alongside our [provisional long-term international migration estimates bulletin](#).

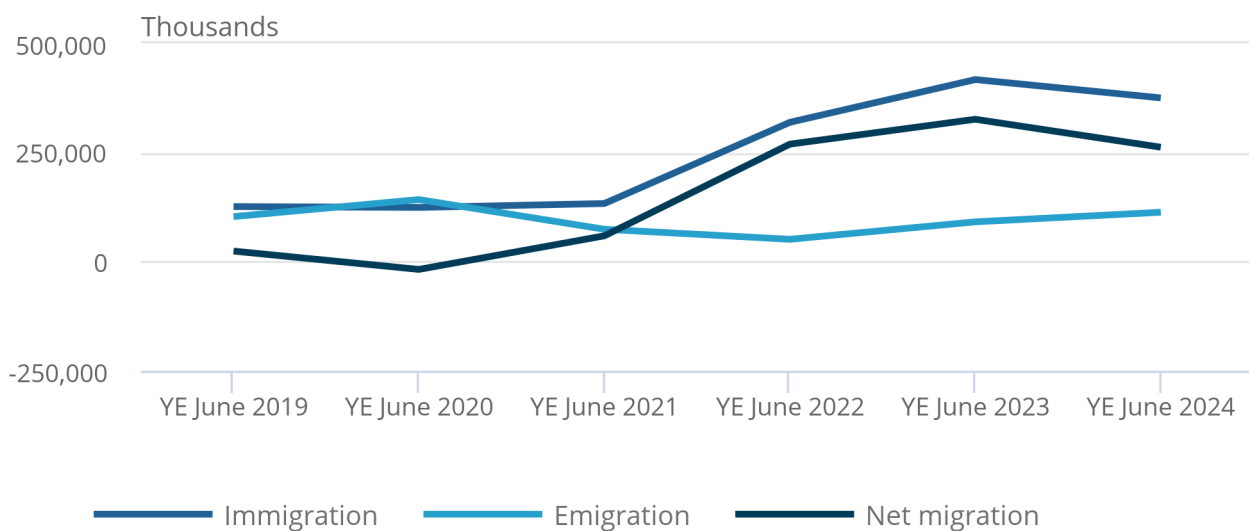
3 . Overall long-term migration for those on a study-related visa

Figure 1: Emigration levels for non-EU+ nationals whose initial reason for immigration was study continues to increase in the most recent year, leading to a decrease in net migration

Total number of non-EU+ nationals who initially immigrated long-term into the UK on a study-related visa by flow type, for year ending (YE) June 2019 to YE June 2024

Figure 1: Emigration levels for non-EU+ nationals whose initial reason for immigration was study continues to increase in the most recent year, leading to a decrease in net migration

Total number of non-EU+ nationals who initially immigrated long-term into the UK on a study-related visa by flow type, for year ending (YE) June 2019 to YE June 2024



Source: Home Office Borders and Immigration Data from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest thousand. The sum of individual numbers may not equal totals seen elsewhere.
2. Emigration includes those who initially immigrated on a study-related visa but may have subsequently transitioned to a different visa type.
3. YE: Year ending.
4. Includes study-dependant visas.
5. Non-EU+ nationals only.

Net migration for those initially arriving on a study-related visa for year ending (YE) June 2024 is estimated at 262,000. This is lower than YE June 2023 and YE June 2022 for which our revised estimates are 326,000 and 269,000. However, this is still over nine times higher than YE June 2019 when net migration was estimated at 24,000.

Emigration of international students and their dependants has been increasing from YE June 2022 to YE June 2024. It increased by 62,000 from 51,000 to 113,000. Furthermore, since YE June 2023, there is a decrease in the immigration of those who initially arrived on a study-related visa. Following higher numbers of international migrants who immigrated on a study-related visa after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and given that in the past the majority of international students arrive, study, then leave, the recent increase in emigration would be expected.

However, immigration for those arriving in the UK on a study-related visa increased from 126,000 in YE June 2020 to 417,000 in YE June 2023. This previous increase in immigration was partly because of the increase in the number of student dependants arriving since 2019. There was an increase of 108,000 student dependants arriving between YE June 2019 and YE June 2023.

The increase in the number of international students and their dependants arriving on a study visa in recent years can be attributed to post-pandemic recovery, the UK exit from the EU and changes in how universities attract international students. On 16 March 2019, the Department for Education and Department for International Trade launched the International Education Strategy. The ambitions of this strategy were to increase the total number of international students choosing to study in the UK higher education system each year to 600,000 by 2030; this figure was passed in 2020 to 2021.

Despite this increase, the number of dependants immigrating in YE June 2024 decreased by 36,000 from 115,000 in YE June 2023, to 80,000 in YE June 2024. For further information on the split between study and study-dependant visas, see our [Provisional long-term international migration dataset](#).

In May 2023 government policy changes were announced which mean that international students can no longer bring dependants on all but postgraduate research courses, and courses with government-funded scholarships. These policy changes came into effect on 1 January 2024. However, as most courses start in the autumn, student arrivals in the first six months of year tend to be relatively low. The impacts of this policy change are more likely to be reflected in data from July 2024 onwards.

Home Office [monthly monitoring of entry clearance visa applications](#) show that applications in January to October 2024 for a study visa were 16% lower than in January to October 2023. There were 85% fewer applications from dependants of students in January to October 2024 than in the same time period in 2023. This can be attributed to the dependant policy change, but until we have data from January 2025 we will not have a full year of data post-policy change. This is needed to see its complete impact.

4 . Study-related visas and length of stay in the UK

Figure 2: More non-EU+ nationals who arrived on study-related visas in recent years are remaining in the UK for longer and transitioning to other visa types, rather than emigrating at the end of their studies

The migration status to the UK of years ending (YE) June 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 cohorts, between YE June 2020 and YE June 2024

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage. The sum of individual numbers may not equal totals seen elsewhere.
2. YE: Year ending.
3. Study-related visa arrivals include those who arrive on study and study-dependant visas.
4. Estimates are for non-EU+ nationals only.
5. These estimates are for long-term international migrants only and do not include short-term migrants.
6. Emigrated in previous years refers to those who have emigrated in a different year.
7. A small number of records for YE June 2019 and YE June 2020 arrivals could not be categorised because of the use of updated Home Office Borders and Immigration data for the latest two time periods to maintain consistency with published long-term international migration estimates.

Figure 2 shows 78% of non-EU+ nationals who arrived in the UK on study-related visas during year ending (YE) June 2019 had emigrated by YE June 2024. Since then we have seen behaviours change, with greater proportions of non-EU+ nationals remaining in the UK for longer. Of those who arrived in YE June 2019, 54% remained in the UK one year after arrival compared with 87% of those who arrived in YE June 2023.

This change is because of more students and their dependants transitioning from study-related visas to other visa types, instead of emigrating following the completion of their studies.

Since 2019, more students and their dependants have been remaining in the country for longer and have been transitioning from study-related visas to other visa types, instead of emigrating following the completion of their studies. This will, in part, be related to the introduction of the Graduate visa in 2021, which grants permission to stay in the UK for at least two years after successfully completing a course (three years for PHD or other doctoral qualifications). The proportion of those who initially arrived on a study-related visa and had transitioned onto a different visa type three years after arrival has increased substantially by 39 percentage points since 2019, from 9% of those who arrived in YE June 2019 to 48% of YE June 2021 arrivals.

There has also been an increase in the proportion of those on a study-related visa who transitioned to non-study visas more quickly following their arrival in the UK. For those who arrived in YE June 2023, 47% had transitioned to a non-study visa type after one year of arrival – the highest percentage of all the immigration cohorts. This is substantially higher than the earlier cohorts (YE June 2019 and YE June 2020) when only 3% had transitioned to a different visa type after one year.

Study-related visas and transitions to other types of visas

Those who initially arrive on a study-related visa are more likely to transition onto a work visa (including the Graduate visa) once they have completed their studies compared with a family, humanitarian (including asylum and resettlement scheme visas) or “other” visa.

Figure 3: A higher proportion of non-EU+ nationals who initially arrived in the UK on study-related visas transitioned onto work-related visas in more recent years

All visa transitions for those who arrived in the UK on a study-related visa in years ending (YE) June 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 cohorts, between YE June 2020 and YE June 2024

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage. The sum of individual numbers may not equal totals seen elsewhere.
2. YE: Year ending.
3. Study-related visa arrivals include those who arrive on study and study dependant visas.
4. Work-dependant visas and graduate visas are included in work visas.
5. Humanitarian visas include asylum, protection and resettlement scheme visas.
6. Other visas include visit, administrative and settlement visas.
7. Estimates are for non-EU+ nationals only.
8. These estimates are for long-term international migrants only and do not include short-term migrants.

A much higher proportion of those arriving on a study-related visa in YE June 2021 transitioned to a work-related visa after three years in the country (38%) compared with just 11% who transitioned to other visa types. This is a large increase compared with YE June 2019 arrivals, where 7% transitioned to work-related visas and only 3% transitioned to other visa types. Instead of transitioning, a higher proportion of those who arrived in YE June 2019 had emigrated after three years (68%) compared with YE June 2021 arrivals (35%).

Those who arrive on a study-related visa in the later cohorts also transition to work visas at higher rates than earlier cohorts. For YE June 2019 arrivals, 2% transitioned to a work visa after one year of arrival in the UK, compared with 31% of those who arrived in the UK in YE June 2023.

This coincides with the introduction of the [Graduate visa](#) in 2021, which our research has identified as the most common work visa that those on a study visa transition to in recent years. While the graduate route offers an opportunity for those who transition onto the visa to work, they do not have to work as part of the visa conditions. Furthermore, if they do work, they are not subject to the same restrictions as those of the [Skilled worker](#) or [Health and Care Worker](#) visa.

The Home Office [Migrant journey: 2023 report](#) explores migrants' journeys through the UK immigration system. This report showed a substantial increase in the number of people who arrived on student visas and transitioned onto "Worker" visas, which includes the "Skilled worker" and "Health and Care" routes. However, it is too early to say whether these students and their dependants will remain in the UK permanently, or whether they are just staying longer.

Furthermore, analysis from [The Migration Observatory](#) suggests the reason a higher number of students transitioned onto different work visas at the end of their studies is because of the decision to make care workers eligible for the Skilled worker (including Health and Care) Route in early 2022. More than half of all people who transitioned directly from study visas to skilled worker visas in YE June 2023 went into care work. It is possible that [restrictions on work visas](#) may have some effect on these patterns, though this is hard to predict. The proposed policy changes do not significantly affect eligibility for main applicants on the care visa, but would prevent people with children or partners from using the care route to stay in the UK after their studies.

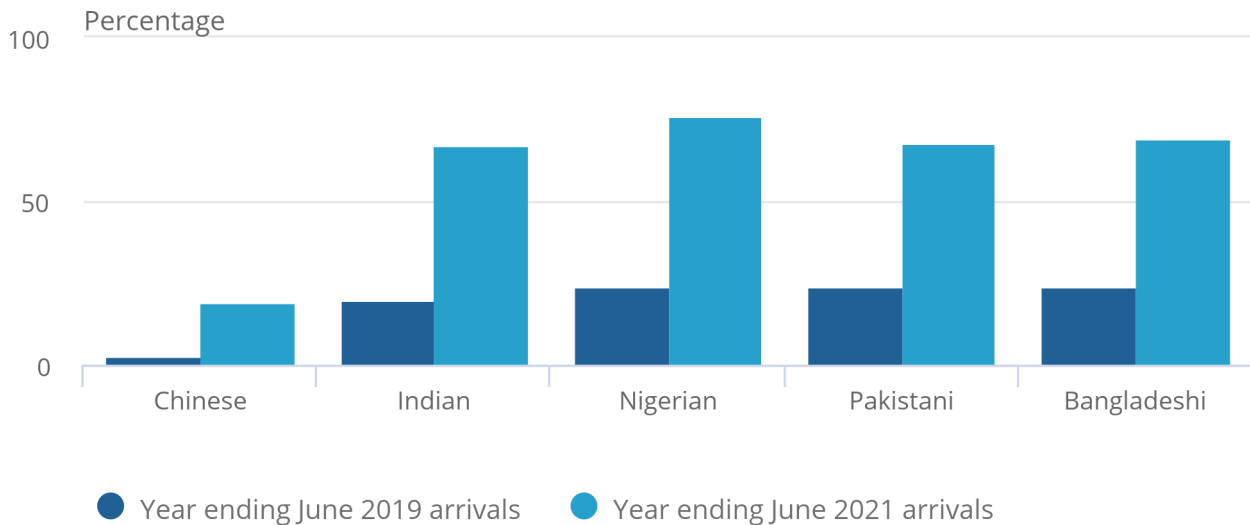
Nationalities transitioning onto different visa types

Figure 4: Nigerian nationals were most likely of all non-EU+ nationals to have transitioned from a study-related visa to a different visa type after three years

Percentage of nationalities from year ending (YE) June 2019 and YE June 2021 cohort who had transitioned to a different visa after three years of arrival

Figure 4: Nigerian nationals were most likely of all non-EU+ nationals to have transitioned from a study-related visa to a different visa type after three years

Percentage of nationalities from year ending (YE) June 2019 and YE June 2021 cohort who had transitioned to a different visa after three years of arrival



Source: Home Office Borders and Immigration Data from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percentage. The sum of individual numbers may not equal totals seen elsewhere.
2. Different visa types include work, family, humanitarian and “other” visas.
3. YE: Year ending.
4. These estimates are for long-term international migrants only and do not include short-term migrants.

Out of the top five nationalities, Nigerian nationals had the highest proportion of those who had transitioned to a different visa type after three years. For YE June 2019 cohort, 24% of those with a Nigerian nationality had transitioned to a different visa type after three years. However, for YE June 2021 cohort, this increased by 52 percentage points to 76% of Nigerian nationals having transitioned to a non-study visa after three years.

Chinese nationals had the smallest percentage of those who had transitioned to a non-study visa for both YE June 2019 and June 2021 arrivals. However, this does increase by 16 percentage points between the two cohorts. This demonstrates that although some nationalities are more likely than others to transition to other visa types in recent years, there has also been an overall increase in the proportion transitioning to non-study visas.

5 . Nationalities of those who arrive in the UK on a study visa

Nationalities of students arriving in the UK on a study visa

Figure 5: Indian nationals remain the top nationality of non-EU+ students arriving in the UK on a study visa

Top five nationalities of non-EU+ long-term international students arriving in the UK on a study visa for years ending (YE) June 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred. The sum of individual numbers may not equal totals seen elsewhere.
2. YE: Year ending.
3. These estimates are for long-term international migrants only and do not include short-term migrants.

Indian, Chinese and Nigerian were the top three nationalities of students arriving from year ending (YE) June 2020 onwards. Prior to this Indian, Chinese and USA were the top three.

Overall, those of Indian and Nigerian nationalities have seen the biggest increase in the number of students arriving from YE June 2019 to YE June 2023; this increased from 14,200 to 102,600 for Indians and from 3,600 to 45,400 for Nigerians. India and Nigeria were considered headline markets for [Study UK](#), which is funded by the British Council. Study UK offers [GREAT Scholarships](#) which focus on promoting UK education in important international student recruitment markets.

6 . Nationalities of those who arrive in the UK on study-dependant visas

As mentioned in [Section 3: Overall long-term migration for those on a study-related visa](#), there has been an increase in the number of non-EU+ migrants arriving as dependants of someone on a study visa up until year ending (YE) June 2023. In YE June 2023, 115,000 student dependants arrived in the UK. This was the largest number since YE June 2019. However, this data relates to the period before government policy changes regarding dependants were brought into effect and more recent [Home Office visa applications data](#) shows the number of applications from dependants is now declining.

Figure 6: The number of Indian and Nigerian student dependants has increased year-on-year since 2019

Student versus student dependant percentage split by nationality for years ending (YE) June 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred. The sum of individual numbers may not equal totals seen elsewhere.
2. YE: Year ending.
3. These estimates are for long-term international migrants only and do not include short-term migrants.

The split of study-related visas between students and dependants varies by nationality. Figure 6 shows that the ratio of Nigerian student dependants to students increased from 2019 to 2023. In YE June 2023, of those with a Nigerian nationality, 55% were dependants, compared with 45% students. This is the first time the number of migrants with Nigerian nationality on a study-dependant visa has exceeded the number of those on a study visa. For YE June 2019, the split was 79% students and 21% dependants.

In comparison, for those with a Chinese nationality, the split between students and student dependants was 99% students and only 1% dependants in YE June 2023. This has remained relatively stable over the past five years, with Chinese student dependants accounting for a maximum of 1% between YE June 2019 to YE June 2023.

7. Subjects studied and geographical location of international students in higher education

Home Office [Immigration system statistics](#) found that 90% of sponsored study visa applications in 2023 were for higher education institutions. Statistics on higher education students are collected and disseminated by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). These data provide us with an insight into where in the UK international students are based and the subjects that they study. We cannot obtain these insights from the Home Office Borders and Immigration data used for our main analyses.

Using the latest published data available from [HESA](#), we have identified recently migrated international students as those with a permanent address outside of the UK prior to study, who were a full-time entrant or first year student.

In the academic year 2022 to 2023, 38% of all new higher education students had resided in a non-EU country prior to starting their studies. This compares with 23% in the academic year 2018 to 2019.

The rise in the proportion of entrant students previously residing in non-EU countries has been seen throughout the regions of England and the countries of the UK. In the academic year 2018 to 2019, London, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the North East had 25% or more of new higher education students who were previously resident in a non-EU country. By 2022 to 2023, this proportion had increased above 25% in all areas of the UK and was above 40% in the East of England, London, Scotland and the North East.

Business and management continued to be the most popular course for all new international students at higher education providers. The proportion of each student population choosing to study this subject varied considerably. In 2022 to 2023, 42% of entrants from non-EU countries chose to study business and management, compared with 18% for those who were resident in the UK prior to studying. The second and third most popular courses were also different. Non-EU students chose computing or engineering and technology courses, whereas UK students preferred subjects allied to medicine and the social sciences.

Further insights on non-EU students are available in the [Migration Advisory Committee annual report, 2023](#).

Higher education students who had previously resided in the European Union

For our analysis using HESA data, European Union (EU) students are those who were resident in the EU before starting their studies, regardless of their nationality. This does not include those who were resident in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland (which together with the EU make up the country grouping of the EU).

On average, EU students accounted for 7% of all higher education students starting university each academic year from 2016 to 2017 to 2020 to 2021. Entrants from these countries dropped by more than half in the following academic year (2021 to 2022) from 61,000 to 27,000 students. In 2022 to 2023 there were 25,000 entrants from EU countries, making up 2% of entrants at universities within the UK.

The reduction of EU students studying at UK universities is likely because of changes in rules resulting from Brexit. The academic year 2020 to 2021 was the last year that students could move freely within the EU, with the exception of Irish nationals or those who had had registered with the EU Settlement Scheme.

All areas, except Northern Ireland experienced a drop in the number of EU entrant students from 2020 to 2021 to 2022 to 2023, but the impact varied by region. In the academic year 2022 to 2023, London had 51% fewer entrant students from the EU than in 2020 to 2021, whereas a reduction of at least 70% was seen in the East of England, East Midlands and West Midlands.

The proportion of EU entrant students studying science courses has remained at 39% each academic year from 2019 to 2020 to 2022 to 2023. The subjects with the largest EU cohorts in 2022 to 2023 were business and management (21%) and social sciences (12%). Other popular subjects were design, creative and performing arts (9%), engineering and technology (8%), law (7%) and subjects allied to medicine (7%).

8 . UK international students' data

[Long-term international student migration, provisional estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 28 November 2024

Long-term international student migration to the UK, 2019 to 2024, including status of migration and visa, age, sex and nationality. These are official statistics in development.

9 . Glossary

Cohort

A group of student and student dependants' long-term migrants that arrived in the UK in the same year ending period.

Dependant visas

International migrants that have entered the UK on a visa may be eligible to bring their dependant partner or child with them through a dependant visa, depending on the type of visa the main applicant holds. A dependant partner or child is any of the following of an international migrant:

- a husband, wife, civil partner or unmarried partner
- a child under 18 years, including if they were born in the UK during the international migrant's stay
- a child over 18 years if they are currently in the UK as the international migrant's dependant

EU and EU+

EU is the European Union. It is the sum of EU14, EU8, and EU2, plus Malta, Cyprus and Croatia (from 1 July 2013). British nationals are not included in these numbers at any time point. The European Union groups are:

- Romania and Bulgaria (EU2)
- Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (EU8)
- Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (EU14)
- Other EU is Malta, Cyprus and Croatia (joined from 2013)

EU+ is all current EU countries plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Higher education

Higher education is education that comes after secondary and further education, leading to a qualification or credit awarded by a degree-awarding body. Typically, it involves working towards a degree at a university, but some programmes may lead to a diploma, certificate or other award or qualification on the national qualifications frameworks.

Higher Education Statistics Agency

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collect, assure and disseminate data about higher education in the UK. They provide a rich, open source of information on higher education for data users.

Home Office Borders and Immigration data

Combines data from different administrative sources to link an individual's travel in or out of the UK with their immigration history. This system has data for all non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) visa holders.

“Humanitarian” reason for migration

For non-EU+ migrants, the reason for migration is based on their visa type. “Humanitarian” reason includes people who immigrated into the UK under visas classified as:

- protection
- British national (overseas) (BN(O))
- Ukrainian support schemes
- asylum applicants

International student

An international student is currently defined as someone who arrives in the UK to study and remains for a period of 12 months or more. In line with the current UN definition of a long-term migrant, international students are included in our estimates of long-term immigration.

For our analysis of HESA open data we have used the closest match available to this definition. We have identified new or recently migrated international students as those who are entrants on full-time courses at higher education providers within the UK, and whose previous address prior to starting to study was outside of the UK.

Long-term international migration

Long-term international migration (LTIM) statistics estimate the flow (or movement) of migrants to and from the UK. This article uses the UN-recommended definition of a long-term international migrant, as explained in the [Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration paper \(PDF, 5MB\)](#). It is defined as:

“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.”

Nationality

Nationality of a country is a legal status that usually gives a person a particular set of rights relating to that country.

Net migration

Net migration is the difference between the number of people coming to live in the UK (immigration) and the number of people leaving to live elsewhere (emigration). When more people are arriving in the UK than leaving, net migration is above zero and so adds to the non-UK population.

Non-EU+

Non-EU+ is the sum of the rest of the world, including the rest of Europe, not included in the EU+ category. British nationals are excluded from these numbers.

“Other” reason for migration

For non-EU+ migrants, the reason for migration is based on their visa type. “Other” reason includes people who immigrated into the UK under visas classified as:

- admin
- visit
- other
- settlement
- those that did not fit into any of our designated classifications

Study-related visa

A study-related visa refers to those who initially arrive as a student or student dependant.

10 . Data sources and quality

Official statistics in development

These statistics are labelled as “official statistics in development”. Until September 2023, these were called “experimental statistics”. Read more about the change in the Office for Statistics Regulation's [Guide to official statistics in development](#).

Estimates for the most recent time period in our data series (year ending (YE) June 2024) are provisional and provide users with an early indication of migration during this period. Our [Population and International Migration Statistics Revisions Policy methodology](#) shows they are released with the expectation that they may be revised and updated as further and more recent data become available. We are also continuing to develop and refine our methods for measuring long-term international migration, including international students.

More information on revisions is available in our [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2024 bulletin](#).

Higher Education Statistics Agency open data

For the first time we have extended our analysis of international students, by using open data from the [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#). This open data provides easy access to accredited official statistics on many characteristics of students studying at higher education providers within the UK.

This additional analysis provides valuable insights into international university students, not least on students from the EU. Although the data cannot confirm if the student is a long-term migrant, it does exclude most students who are studying overseas, who apply but do not arrive, or attend for less than two weeks at the start of their course.

However, the latest data currently available are for the academic year 2022 to 2023 and the data are not coherent with the main analysis in this article. As nationality is not one of the characteristics included in the open data tables, we have used non-UK residency as the main indicator of someone being an international student. This may include those of many nationalities, including British, whose permanent address was abroad prior to study. It may exclude those with non-UK nationality who were already living in the UK.

11 . Future developments

We will continue to regularly update our estimates of international student migration as we receive more data, while working to further improve our methods and provide additional detail, insights and analysis using a range of data sources.

In this release we have introduced additional breakdowns of our analysis of migration patterns and behaviour over time by nationality of both students and student dependants. We have also included insights on what and where international students study while in the UK using Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data to complement the information available from Home Office Borders and Immigration (HOBI) data.

Our next steps include:

- research into extending our methods to cover all nationalities, including the use of HOBI data for EU+ nationals to provide headline estimates and more detailed breakdowns for this group
- analysis of the length of stay by different visa types (for example, the graduate route) and their impact on net migration
- investigating the use of record level HESA data to provide further insights on the geographic location, nationality and other characteristics of international students
- identifying the feasibility of using linked data sources to provide insights into the relationship between student migration, skills and labour market participation

International students meet the UN definition of a long-term international migrant, so we include them in our provisional long-term international migration net migration estimates. It is not currently possible to fully exclude students from net migration statistics for methodological and definitional reasons as many go on to stay in the country for work or other purposes after the end of their study and do not emigrate immediately. We are aware of stakeholder interest in estimates of net migration excluding students and will be seeking user feedback in early 2025 as part of investigating potential options for how to estimate this.

We want your feedback

Your feedback is important. We want to hear what our users need from the development of these statistics to ensure we are providing the best insights on population and migration.

Please get in touch with any feedback by emailing pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

12 . Related links

[Long-term international migration, provisional: year-ending June 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 28 November 2024

UK international migration for the year ending (YE) June 2012 to YE June 2024. These are official statistics in development.

[International migration research, progress update: November 2024](#)

Article | Released 28 November 2024

An update on international migration methods and research.

[Migrant journey: 2023 report](#)

Article | Released 23 May 2024

A series of publications that explore migrants' journeys through the UK's immigration system.

[Monthly entry clearance visa applications](#)

Article | Released 14 November 2024

Statistics on visa applications for people coming to the UK for work and study.

13 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 28 November 2024, ONS website, article, [Reason for international migration, international students update: November 2024](#)