



Statistical News Release: Immigration Statistics

23 February 2017

Immigration Statistics, October to December 2016

Home Office's *Immigration Statistics October to December 2016* release, published today, provides the latest figures on those subject to immigration control. All data below relate to the year 2016 and all comparisons are with 2015, unless indicated otherwise.

Estimates of the numbers of non-EU nationals migrating long-term to the UK, by reason for migration, are published by the Office for National Statistics, and available on their [International migration](#) website.

Key points from the latest release

Work

There were 56,058 Tier 2 Skilled work sponsored visa applications in 2016 similar to the level in 2015 (56,012). This included a 49% increase (1,748 more visas) in the Human health and social work activities sector, which is largely likely to reflect the addition of nurses to the government's shortage occupation list in November 2015.

There were 849 (16%) fewer Tier 1 Un-sponsored work visas granted in 2016, which continues to reflect the impact of the closure of the Tier 1 General category to new applicants (down 847; 74%). There also continues to be fewer Exceptional talent visas granted (306 in 2016) than the annual number of places available (1,000 each year).

In the year ending September 2016, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates there were 67,000 non-European Union (EU) long-term immigrants for work, similar to the previous 12 months (the difference was not statistically significant). The level and trend for non-EU long-term migrants and long-term work visas are similar over the longer term.

Study

In 2016, there were 207,200 study-related visas granted, 1% fewer than the previous year. This number includes dependants but excludes the un-sponsored short-term student category, formerly known as 'student visitors'. Over the same period, the number of university-sponsored study visa applications (main applicants) rose slightly by 1% to 167,554, with a 6% increase for Russell Group universities (to 80,360) and falls for other sectors.

In the year ending September 2016, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that there were 87,000 non-European Union (EU) long-term immigrants coming to study with an intention to remain a year or more; 31,000 lower than the preceding year, a statistically significant change. However, there are a range of potential reasons why IPS figures for long-term migrants may be different from figures for study visas granted.

Over a quarter (29%) of those granted settlement in 2015 originally arrived to study, or had accompanied a student, and increase from 14% of those granted settlement in 2009, reflecting the growth in student migration over a long period as well as changes in the numbers of other types of migrants seeking to remain in the UK.

Family

The combined total number of family-related visas granted, including European Economic Area (EEA) family permits granted, and visas granted to dependants of other visa holders (excluding visitors) fell by 1,526 to 135,144 (1%) in 2016.

In the year ending September 2016 (the latest provisional data available), estimates from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) showed that 45,000 non-European Union (EU) nationals immigrated long term to the UK to accompany or join others, that is with the intention of staying for a year or more. This was not a statistically significant change on the previous year (43,000). Those arriving to accompany or join are not directly comparable with visa categories, but will include both family-related migration and potentially dependants of other migrants intending to stay for a year or longer, as explained in the Family topic.

Asylum

Asylum applications in the UK from main applicants decreased by 7% to 30,603 in the year 2016, the first annual fall in asylum applications since 2010 (17,916). Numbers of asylum applications in the last two quarters of 2016 (7,146 in July to September and 7,419 in October to December) were considerably lower than in the same two quarters of 2015 (10,231 in July to September and 10,196 in October to December).

In 2016, the largest number of applications for asylum came from nationals of Iran (4,192), followed by Pakistan (2,857), Iraq (2,666), Afghanistan (2,341), Bangladesh (1,939), Albania (1,488), and India (1,488). Most applications for asylum are made by people already in the country (87% of applications in 2016) rather than immediately on arrival in the UK at a port.

There were 1,591 grants of asylum or an alternative form of protection to Syrian main applicants at initial decision in 2016. The grant rate for Syrian applicants was 86%, but some of those not granted will have been transferred to have their case assessed by another EU member state, and other applicants may have been found not to be Syrian following investigation. An additional 4,369 Syrian nationals (including dependants) were granted humanitarian protection under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) 2016. Since this scheme began in 2014, a total of 5,706 people have been resettled.

Including dependants, the UK had the sixth highest number (39,000) of asylum applications within the EU in 2016. Germany (692,000), Italy (117,000) and France (83,000) were the 3 EU countries that received the highest number of asylum applications, together accounting for 75% of asylum applications in the EU in that period.

Passenger arrivals and visitors

The total number of passenger arrivals increased by 6.5 million (5%) to a record 129.9 million in 2016. This increase was accounted for by 5.7 million more arrivals by British, other EEA and Swiss nationals (up 5% to 113.7 million) and 0.8 million more arrivals by non-EEA nationals (up 5% to 16.1 million), compared with the previous 12 months. These numbers represent the number of occasions when a person entered the UK, not the number of distinct individuals.

For non-EEA nationals, more detailed data by category are less up to date than the totals. There were 15.3 million journeys in the year ending June 2016, 3% more than in the previous 12 months, and the highest number since the data series began. There were increases in the Work (up 6%; 9,500); Family (up 2%; 365) and Short-term study (up 3%; 9,800) categories, along with a fall for the Study (down 4%; 6,630) category. The number of visitors remained constant at 9.3m.

Only certain nationalities require a visa to visit the UK. There were 13,969 (1%) fewer Visitor visas granted to citizens of those non-EEA countries required to obtain a Visitor visa in 2016, of a total of around 1.9 million. Excluding Kuwaiti nationals, who were able to visit the UK without a visa from 21 February 2016 as part of the Electronic Visa Waiver (EVW) scheme, the number of Visitor visas granted was 1,876,756 in 2016, up 3% on 2015. There were notable increases in Visitor visas granted to Chinese nationals, up by 80,430 (20%) to 478,164 (excluding Hong Kong), and Indian nationals, up 22,776 (6%) to 389,987.

Returns

Enforced returns from the UK decreased by 11% to 12,193 in 2016 compared with 13,690 in 2015. This includes 10,706 enforced removals and 1,487 other returns from detention.

In 2016, there were 24,202 voluntary returns (excluding returns from detention) compared to 28,189 in the previous year. However, these figures are particularly subject to later upward revision as matching checks are made on travellers after departure.

The number of passengers refused entry at port and who subsequently departed has been mainly increasing since 2012, but fell by 1% in 2016 to 17,395 from 17,636 in 2015.

In 2016, provisional data show there were 5,705 returns of foreign national offenders (FNOs), using enforcement powers or via deportation. This is one of the highest numbers since the series began in 2009 and reflects increasing use of other forms of FNO returns, including those where an offence was committed outside the UK.

Notes to editors

1. *Immigration Statistics, October to December 2016* is available on Gov.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/series/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>.
2. This release is published as part of a coordinated release of migration and population products. These related products are also published today:

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

- *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (Jointly with Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions)*

Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)

- *National Insurance Number (NINo) Allocations to Adult Overseas Nationals to December 2016*

3. The UK Statistics Authority has assessed *Immigration Statistics* against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and confirmed designation as National Statistics. More information can be found at report 177 on the UK Statistics Authority website
<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/archive/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/report-177---statistics-on-immigration.pdf>.

4. For **all press enquiries regarding the Home Office *Immigration Statistics* release**, please contact the Home Office Press Office who will liaise with the Home Office Migration Statistics team.

Newsdesk: **020 7035 3535**

Please note that the press office deals with enquiries from the media only. Members of the public should phone Public Enquiries 020 7035 4848, or email to MigrationStatsEnquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Press enquiries regarding ONS publications should be directed to the ONS Press Office.

5. The Home Office Responsible Statistician is Chris Kershaw.