



The Outlook for Non-EU Net Migration 2017 - 2021



Summary

1. Analysis, carried out by the Home Office, of visas issued to non-EU migrants over the seven year period 2004-2010 (the 'Migrant Journey' reports) could indicate the number who, over each of the coming five years, may still have valid Leave To Remain (LTR). This is likely to be of the order of 85,000 a year, which, after adjustments, translates into an LTIM estimate of non-EU net migration of 120,000 a year. However, this assumes that all of those whose visas expire depart the country, an unlikely scenario. On the assumption that 97.5% are visa compliant, overstaying could average 8,000 a year. This means that non-EU net migration could well stand at around 130,000 for the next five years. Net migration of non-EU citizens was estimated to be 175,000 in 2016.

Introduction

2. This paper uses the Home Office Migrant Journey analyses of the number of non-EU migrants who, in past years, still had valid Leave To Remain (LTR) five years after their arrival (including those who had obtained settlement) as the basis for an estimate of the probable scale of future net migration.

Migrant Journey Analysis

3. The Home Office has now conducted seven major analyses of changes in migrants' visa and leave status, known formerly as the Migrant Journey reports. The researchers examined the cohorts of those granted work, study and family visas (including their dependents) each year in the period 2004-2010 and established their visa and leave status five years later. The findings are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Proportion of migrants in non-visit visa categories with valid LTR (including settlement) after five years, by year of arrival.¹ Source: Home Office, Migrant Journey reports.

	Work (Route to settlement)	Temporary Work (No route to settlement)	Study	Family
2004	50%	17%	31%	75%
2005	46%	13%	25%	76%
2006	44%	12%	24%	80%
2007	36%	11%	22%	82%
2008	34%	9%	22%	84%
2009	41%	11%	21%	84%
2010	44%	12%	19%	85%
Average 2004-2010	42%	12%	23%	81%

4. The analysis found that, of those migrants granted a skilled work visa with a route to settlement (including their dependents), an average of 42% across the period continued to have LTR after five years. For those granted a work visa without a route to settlement and their dependants (such as Tier 5), 12% had leave to remain five years later. Those granted family visas were most likely to continue to have LTR after five years, with an average of 81% across the period having the right to remain. Of those granted a study visa and a study dependant visa an average of 23% continued to have LTR five years later.

5. The Migrant Journey methodology only identified those who still had LTR. The analysis did not identify or count those who no longer had LTR but who remained in the country as overstayers. Therefore the proportions presented in the table above are not to be taken as the proportion of migrants who remained five years later, but simply those who continued to have the legal right to do so. The proportion and number of those who have, in fact, remained is likely to be larger as some will have overstayed their visa and remained illegally.

6. To apply the proportions in Table 1 to those visas granted in subsequent years (2011 to 2016) would assume that future patterns of behaviour will mirror those observed during the period studied by the analysis. We think that this is an unlikely scenario since the student route underwent significant reform from 2012 onwards and changes were introduced which would diminish the opportunities for students to remain.² For example, students must now show academic progression if they wish to extend their visa for further study. Students must now also find graduate level employment paying a minimum salary if they

1 Source: Home Office, Changes in Migrants' Visa and Leave Status, 2017, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistics-on-changes-in-migrants-visa-and-leave-status-2015/statistics-on-changes-in-migrants-visa-and-leave-status-2015>

2 We see no reason to make further assumptions. While the family route was reformed this affected the ability to sponsor a family migrant and it would be unlikely that this would make a difference to patterns of behaviour once in the country. Work reforms were largely confined to capping the Tier 2 (General) route, which is also unlikely to make a difference to in-country behavior. The right to settle has been withdrawn for those on a Tier 2 ICT visa, however this has been accounted for in our figures since ICTs are now counted as Temporary Work (not leading to settlement) and the appropriate percentage applied. The threshold for settlement has now been set at £35,000 however we think that a figure of 42% remains a reasonable assumption.

wish to remain for work following the closure of the Post Study Work route which previously allowed students to extend their visas for two years to allow them to search for and take work at any level and pay. It is therefore likely that, in the future, a smaller proportion of students will continue to have LTR after five years than the 23% observed by the Migrant Journey analyses. Therefore we assume that only 10% of students and their dependants will continue to have LTR after five years.

Table 2. Proportion of visas granted in the years 2011-2016 expected to have LTR after five years by visa type.

Proportion of migrants expected to have valid LTR after 5 years by visa Type	
Work (Route to settlement)	42%
Temporary Work (No route to settlement)	12%
Study	10%
Family	81%

7. By applying the proportions outlined in Table 2 above to those granted work, study and family visas (including their dependants) in the years 2011 to 2016, it is possible to estimate the number who may continue to have LTR five years later. The summary findings are in Table 3 below, which shows that an average of 85,000 will continue to have LTR in the years 2016-2021. (The full tables can be found in Annex A)

Table 3. Summary of findings, visa cohorts 2011-2016 and number expected to have LTR five years later in 2016-2021, assuming that 10% of students and their dependants have LTR five years later.

Summary of Findings - Visa Cohorts, 2011-2016 and number expected to have LTR 5 years later, assuming 10% of students and their dependants have LTR after 5 years		
Cohort	Total Visas Granted	Number expected to have LTR after 5 years
2011	454,200	100,900
2012	392,600	83,100
2013	404,500	79,100
2014	420,100	83,200
2015	411,900	84,000
2016	407,300	83,400
Average 2011-2016	415,100	85,600

Overstayers

8. The above estimates are only those who could continue to have the legal right to remain after five years. To assume that this would translate into net migration is to assume 100% visa compliance; an unlikely assumption. Therefore, 85,000 a year could well be the minimum level of non-EU net migration that we can expect in the coming years since there will be some degree of overstaying of visas.

9. Data from the exit checks is showing that overstaying is now not a major problem. ONS analysis of student visas due to expire between April 2015 and April 2016 show that 95% of students either departed when their visa expired, extended their visa or departed and then returned on a short term visa³. For the remaining 5% there was no record of either a departure or an extension. Some of these 5% could have overstayed their visa, meanwhile some may have departed via the Common Travel Area (travel between the UK, the Republic of Ireland the rest of the Common Travel Area is not covered by the exit checks). There may also be data matching issues which mean that the student may have departed however the departure record could not be matched against their visa record. We are therefore assuming that 2.5% of students whose visa expire remain as overstayers.

10. The Home Office analysis of exit checks more widely is showing that 95% of those on a work visa which expired during the period April 2015 to April 2016 departed (excluding those who obtained an extension)⁴. As above, data matching, overstaying and departure via the Common Travel area will explain the remaining 5% so we are therefore assuming that 2.5% of workers failed to depart when their visa expired.

11. We are therefore assuming, on the basis of the first analysis of the exit checks, that the rate of overstaying stands at 2.5%.

12. If an average of 415,100 work, study and family visas (plus dependants) were granted annually between 2011 and 2016 and 85,600 a year are valid five years later then we would expect 329,500 of each annual intake to expire. Assuming that 97.5% of these people depart the country when their visa expires, but 2.5% overstay, this suggests that each annual intake could well produce around 8,000 overstayers which would add directly to net migration.

The IPS Adjustment

13. The International Passenger Survey is a survey that captures passenger movements to and from UK ports. It cannot capture all movements such as migration across the land border with the Republic of Ireland, asylum seekers, removals, and those whose intentions change (known as migrant/visitor switchers). Additional data is therefore used to produce an overall estimate of long-term international migration. The IPS component typically comprises in excess of 90% of the final LTIM figure with additional components and adjustments made to account for flows not covered by the IPS.

3 URL: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/internationalstudentmigrationresearchupdate/august2017>

4 URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/639621/second-report-on-statistics-being-collected-under-exit-checks.pdf

14. It is the overall IPS statistics for inflow and outflow that are subject to the adjustment, and not the more detailed figures for inflow/outflow by citizenship. This means that there is no data available on the non-EU component of the adjustment.

15. However, broadly speaking, the difference between non-EU net migration in the IPS and the LTIM figures can provide an indicator of the size of the adjustment which relates to non-EU migration.

16. In the last two years, this has been around 35,000 a year, meaning that non-EU net migration as measured by the LTIM figures was 35,000 higher than the IPS. These are net migrants not captured by the IPS. Since 2010, the average difference between the IPS and the LTIM figures for non-EU net migration has been 21,000.

17. Assuming that patterns in asylum, removal and visitor/migrant switchers continue as they have for the last two years we can assume that an additional 35,000 could be added in each of the coming five years.

Implications for the Net Migration Target

18. The above analysis provides a broad indicator of the level of net migration that could be expected to from 2016 to 2021:

- The Migrant Journey provides the basis for estimating that around 85,000 migrants granted a visa in the years 2011-2016 will continue to have LTR after five years. This is the starting point for our estimate of future net migration.
- Of those whose visas will expire, we have assumed that 97.5% are visa compliant but that 2.5% will overstay their visa. This would add around 8,000 to net migration.
- Assuming that the difference between the IPS and the LTIM figures (the assumed non-EU component of the adjustment) continues as it has in the last two years then we can add an additional 35,000 to net migration.
- This suggests that non-EU net migration could continue be around 130,000 a year in the years 2016-2021. The actual level of non-EU net migration in 2016 was 175,000.
- The difference between the actual level of net migration in 2016 and the estimated level is likely explained by the fact that the student reforms designed to eradicate abuse were not introduced until 2012. We have assumed that 10% of those who arrived in 2011 would have LTR after five years, an assumption that we have made to account for the tightening of the student system. Yet this did not take place until 2012. The 2011 cohort are therefore more likely to mirror the findings of the Migrant Journey findings which find an average of 23% continued to have LTR after five years.

Conclusion

19. It follows that were no action to be taken, net migration of non-EU migrants could be around 155,000 a year to 2021. This takes account of overstaying, and additional migration components such as asylum, removals and switchers, which make up the IPS adjustment.

Note: This paper has been adjusted to reflect the findings of the ONS and Home Office analysis of the exit checks.

3rd October 2017

Tables A1-A6. Visa cohorts, 2011 – 2016, and number expected to have LTR five years later. Figures based on Migrant Journey findings for workers and their dependants and family migrants and MWUK assumptions about students and their dependants. Source: HO Visa Data and Migrant Journey report 2017.

2011 Visa Cohort - Numbers expected to have LTR after 5 years, assuming 10% of students and student dependants have LTR 5 years later		
	Visa Grants	Expected to have LTR after 5 years
Work (Route to settlement) *	68,800	28,900
Temporary Work (No route to settlement) *	78,600	9,400
Study *	261,900	26,200
Family	44,900	36,400
Total	454,200	100,900

2012 Visa Cohort - Numbers expected to have LTR after 5 years, assuming 10% of students and student dependants have LTR 5 years later		
	Visa Grants	Expected to have LTR after 5 years
Work (Route to settlement) *	41,600	17,500
Temporary Work (No route to settlement) *	101,200	12,100
Study *	209,700	21,000
Family	40,100	32,500
Total	392,600	83,100

2013 Visa Cohort - Numbers expected to have LTR after 5 years, assuming 10% of students and student dependants have LTR 5 years later		
	Visa Grants	Expected to have LTR after 5 years
Work (Route to settlement) *	40,100	16,800
Temporary Work (No route to settlement) *	112,600	13,500
Study *	218,600	21,900
Family	33,200	26,900
Total	404,500	79,100

2014 Visa Cohort - Numbers expected to have LTR after 5 years, assuming 10% of students and student dependants have LTR 5 years later

	Visa Grants	Expected to have LTR after 5 years
Work (Route to settlement) *	43,900	18,400
Temporary Work (No route to settlement) *	121,300	14,600
Study *	220,000	22,000
Family	34,900	28,200
Total	420,100	83,200

2015 Visa Cohort - Numbers expected to have LTR after 5 years, assuming 10% of students and student dependants have LTR 5 years later

	Visa Grants	Expected to have LTR after 5 years
Work (Route to settlement) *	42,700	17,900
Temporary Work (No route to settlement) *	121,200	14,500
Study *	210,300	21,000
Family	37,700	30,600
Total	411,900	84,000

2016 Visa Cohort - Numbers expected to have LTR after 5 years, assuming 10% of students and student dependants have LTR 5 years later

	Visa Grants	Expected to have LTR after 5 years
Work (Route to settlement) *	41,200	17,300
Temporary Work (No route to settlement) *	120,800	14,500
Study *	207,200	20,700
Family	38,100	30,900
Total	407,300	83,400

* Includes dependants