Statistical bulletin

Short-Term International Migration for England and Wales: year ending June 2017

A summary of the latest official short-term international migration statistics for England and Wales for the year ending June 2017 published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Data from the Home Office (which cover the UK) are also included.

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1. Other migration outputs in this release

As part of our ongoing work to improve bulletins, commentary on other international migration outputs released today (24 May 2019) can be found on the following pages:

- Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, UK: May 2019
- Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: January to December 2018

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 United Nations (UN) definition of "3 to 12 months" for work or study only.

- Visits abroad for 1 to 12 months continued to increase, reaching the highest levels recorded at 3.1 million in the year to June 2017, largely attributable to an increase in British citizens going on holiday and visiting friends or relatives; visiting friends or relatives continued to be the most common reason for people to come to and leave from England and Wales.

- For 3 to 12 months, most visits abroad can be attributed to holidays or visiting friends or relatives; conversely, the numbers of visits to England and Wales are more evenly spread between work, study, and visiting friends or relatives.

- For 3 to 12 months, most visits abroad were made by those aged 16 to 24 years; while for 1 to 12 months most visits abroad were made by those aged 65 years and over, following a period of increase for this age group since 2004, now at 612,000 and the highest level recorded.

- Most visits to England and Wales under the UN definition were to London or the South East; the most common short-term work destination was London (Newham, Brent and Tower Hamlets), while the most common study destinations were outside London in Nottingham, Oxford and Birmingham.

- Of the 1.8 million short-term (1 day to 12 months) entry clearance visas issued in 2018, most were issued to visitors (83%); the remaining visas were study-related (10%), work (3%) or other (4%).

Short-term international migration data from the Office for National Statistics 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:
• United Nations (UN) definition of a short-term migrant – “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, this includes the UN definition and the categories business, holiday, visiting friends or relatives, and other

• 1 to 12 months – all reasons for migration, this includes the categories in the 3 to 12 months definition, but for 1 to 12 months; as such, this definition captures more visits made for holidays and to visit friends or relatives

For the first time we are presenting more detailed reasons for visits, which now includes: work, study, business, holiday, visiting friends or relatives, and other. This comes after feedback from users to help make the bulletin more informative. Previously, the categories had been work, study, work (other), and other.

Measuring short-term international migration with these definitions

Figures 1 and 2 show how many visits are made to and from England and Wales respectively, according to each of the three definitions used for STIM. Estimates are shown by length of stay and using the more detailed reasons for visit for year ending June 2017.
Figure 1: Most short-term visits to England and Wales last one to two months and are for visiting friends or relatives

Short-term international immigration by reason for visit and by definition, England and Wales, year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.
Figure 2: Most short-term visits abroad last one to two months and are for visiting friends or relatives or holidays

Short-term international emigration by reason for visit and by definition, England and Wales, year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.

4. More short-term visits abroad than to England and Wales

The number of short-term visits made abroad for 1 to 12 months was 3.1 million in the year to June 2017 and has gradually increased since 2012 (Figure 3). The number of 1- to 12-month visits made to England and Wales (1.2 million) has remained broadly stable.

Each year more short-term visits for 1 to 12 months are made abroad than to England and Wales, a pattern seen since records began in 2004. Although, the latest data suggest a wider gap than seen in recent years.
The rise in short-term visits abroad can largely be attributable to an increase in British citizens going on holiday and visiting friends or relatives.

**Figure 3: Short-term visits abroad have gradually increased over the last five years**

**Short-Term International Migration for 1 to 12 months, England and Wales, year ending June 2004 to year ending June 2017**

A similar pattern can be seen for visits of 3 to 12 months. In the year to June 2017, the number of visits to England and Wales was 285,000 compared with 465,000 visits abroad. In contrast, when using the United Nations (UN) definition, more short-term visits were made to England and Wales (159,000) than abroad (49,000) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Under the UN definition, more visits are made to England and Wales than abroad.**

**Short-Term International Migration for 3 to 12 months (UN definition), England and Wales, year ending June 2004 to year ending June 2017**

Using the UN definition, the number of visits to England and Wales has gradually increased over the last six years and despite a recent fall is back to the level seen in 2015. This gradual increase has been driven largely by those coming to work (Figure 5).
Figure 5: Visits to England and Wales for work and study have gradually increased since 2011

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:
1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.

For all three definitions, most visits made to England and Wales were by non-UK citizens, while most visits made abroad were by British citizens. For every 10 people visiting England and Wales for 3 to 12 months, five were EU citizens, four were non-EU citizens and one was a British citizen. For every 10 people visiting abroad, seven were British citizens, two were non-EU citizens and one was an EU citizen.

In the year to June 2017, for all three definitions most visits made to England and Wales were by those aged 16 to 24 years. Most visits abroad for 3 to 12 months and the UN definition were made by those aged 16 to 24 years. For 1 to 12 months, most visits abroad were made by those aged 65 years and over, following a period of increase for this age group since 2004, now at 612,000 and the highest level recorded.

More detailed Short-Term International Migration (STIM) estimates are available in the accompanying datasets.

In 2018, the number of short-term entry clearance visas¹ issued increased by 89,000 (5%) from the previous year, to 1.8 million. More than four out of five (83%) of these were issued to visitors² (1.5 million). The remaining 17% includes study-related (175,000 or 10%), work (50,100 or 3%) and other³ (77,700 or 4%) visas. The largest proportion of short-term entry clearance visas were granted to individuals with South Asian nationalities (31%).
Impact of short-term migrant stocks on the population

Short-term migrants do not stay for more than 12 months, so do not become “usually resident” in a country; therefore, there are no estimates of “net” Short-Term International Migration (STIM). Instead, the most appropriate estimates to measure the impact of short-term international migration on the population are stocks.

STIM stocks give the average number of “long-term international migrant equivalents” in the country on an average day. For example, two short-term migrants staying six months each, would produce a stock estimate of one. Short-Term International Migration methodology – national estimates explains how these stock estimates are calculated in more detail.

Similar to the short-term migration flows they are derived from, the out-stock estimates are higher than the in-stock estimates when using the 1 to 12 months and 3 to 12 months definitions. That is; people usually resident abroad, who came to England and Wales for 3 to 12 months added the equivalent of 130,000 people to the population. However, people usually resident in England and Wales who visited abroad added 192,000 people to the populations of their destination countries – such as Spain (29,000), France (13,000) and the US (13,000).

Notes for: More short-term visits abroad than to England and Wales

1. Short-term entry visas include all visas that are less than 12 months in duration and issued to those who have arrived in the UK for one of the following purposes: visit, study, work, family-related and other reasons.

2. Most entry clearance visas granted to non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals are visit visas (both short-term, one day to six months, or long-term, allowing multiple visits of one day to six months in duration). However, this excludes a large number of visitors who do not require a visa (non-visa nationals and those with electronic visa waivers). Visit visas are regularly used for periods of less than one month and evidence from International Passenger Survey (IPS) visitor statistics indicates that many visits are less than one month.

3. Most “other” visas are family-related (such as EEA family permits) and transit visas.

5. Why do people make short-term visits?

For short-term visits of 1 to 12 months, visiting friends or relatives continued to be the most common reason for people to come to and leave from England and Wales. Visits to friends or relatives in England and Wales have been broadly stable since 2004. However, the estimate of those going abroad to visit friends or relatives for 1 to 12 months has continued to increase and reached the highest level recorded (1.7 million) in the year ending June 2017 (Figure 6).
Figure 6: Visits abroad to visit friends or relatives continued to increase

Short-Term emigration for 1 to 12 months by main reason for visit, England and Wales, year ending June 2004 to year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.

For 3 to 12 months, most visits abroad can be attributed to holidays or visiting friends or relatives. Conversely, the number of visits to England and Wales are more evenly spread between work, study, and visiting friends or relatives (Figure 7).
Figure 7: Work, study, and visiting friends or relatives remain the top reasons for visiting for 3 to 12 months

Short-Term immigration for 3 to 12 months by main reason for visit, England and Wales, year ending June 2004 to year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.

For those visits to England and Wales according to the United Nations (UN) definition in the year ending June 2017, there were clear differences in the reasons for coming between citizenship groups. Most non-EU citizens (88%) came for study, whereas EU citizens tended to come for employment (66%); the percentage coming for employment was even higher for EU8 (89%) and EU2 (81%) citizens (Figure 8). This follows a similar pattern to the long-term international migration estimates.
Figure 8: Most non-EU citizens came to study and EU citizens came for work

Proportion of short-term immigration for 3 to 12 months (UN definition) by main reason for migration and citizenship, England and Wales, year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.

Home Office data on work and study visitors

A total of 175,000 short-term sponsored study visas¹ and short-term study visas were issued to non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) nationals in 2018. Of these, 134,000 visas were issued for less than six months (76%) and 41,000 were issued for more than six months but less than a year (24%).

Of the total, 61,000 visas were issued for Tier 4 (sponsored study), an increase of 2% compared with 2017. Of those, 89% (54,200) were issued for 3 to 12 months.
The number of visas issued for the unsponsored short-term study category was 114,000 (up 7% compared with 2017). Most non-EEA nationals entering the UK on the unsponsored short-term study category do not require a visa (an estimated 229,000 were admitted in this category in 2017).

Home Office data on the number of entry clearance visas issued show that of the 176,000 work-related visas issued in 2018, 50,000 (29%) were short-term. Short-term visas issued for work fell 3% compared with 2017 and, of those, 85% (42,700) were issued for 3 to 12 months. The reduction in the number of short-term visas issued for work largely reflected changes to sponsored skilled work (Tier 2) visas.

For further information on Home Office data about visitors, see the quarterly Immigration Statistics.

Not all data sources are directly comparable. Users should be aware of these differences before drawing conclusions.

**Notes for: Why do people make short-term visits?**

1. Includes Tier 4 (sponsored) study and unsponsored “short-term study” visas. For Tier 4 sponsored study, a non-EEA national required a “confirmation of acceptance to study” (CAS) issued by a recognised education institution registered on the Home Office register of sponsors.

2. The short-term intra-company transfer category was closed to new applications from April 2017, and there were increases in the long-term intra-company transfer visas issued (and the introduction of a minimum salary threshold of £41,500 for the vast majority of such visas).

**6 . Where attracts the most short-term students and workers?**

Visits to England and Wales using the United Nations (UN) definition of Short-Term International Migration (STIM) can be distributed to local authority level using a range of administrative data sources. For further details of how these estimates are produced, please refer to the Short-Term International Migration methodology – local authority estimates.

Of those visits made to England and Wales in the year to June 2017, just 3% spent most of their time in Wales. The majority (97%) of visits were to England. London and the South East were the most common regions, with the least common remaining the North East with 5,500 visits. This largely reflects the distribution for the population as a whole.

In 2011, 53% of visits made for 3 to 12 months to work or study were made to London and the South East. Since 2011, the proportion of short-term migrants going to Yorkshire and The Humber, the East Midlands and the West Midlands to work or study has increased. Therefore, in 2017, only 42% of visits were made to London and the South East.

Of those visits made for work, 24,900 (35%) visited London. In comparison, only 17,500 (21%) of visits made for study chose London as their destination.

For most regions in England and Wales, in the year to June 2017, more visits were made to study than to work. Of all visits to the North East, just 15% were to work, as the majority of visits were to study (85%); however, in London, 59% of visits were to work and 41% were for study (Figure 9).
Figure 9: Most short-term migrants in London go there to work and most in the North East are there for study

Figure 9: Most short-term migrants in London go there to work and most in the North East are there for study

Proportion of short-term immigration for 3 to 12 months (UN definition) by main reason for migration and by region, England and Wales, year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Notes:

1. Figures for 2017 are provisional.

These differences are reflected in the 10 most common local authorities that students and workers reside in (Table 1). Eight of the 10 most common destinations for workers are in London, in comparison with just two London local authorities for students.
Table 1: Most common local authority districts for students and workers visiting England and Wales for 3 to 12 months, year ending June 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>3,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>3,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>3,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>3,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>3,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>2,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry</td>
<td>2,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
<td>2,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>2,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>2,136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Short-Term International Migration (STIM.07) - Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Estimates for 2017 are provisional. [Back to table]

2. Local authority level estimates are provided unrounded to the nearest unit - this is to enable and encourage further calculations and analysis; the estimates must not be assumed to be as exact as the level of detail implied by unit level data. [Back to table]

Use our interactive map to see how many short-term visits have been made to your local authority by people coming to work or study.

Figure 10: Short-term workers mostly visited London, whereas the most common study destinations were outside of London

Local authority district visits of 3 to 12 months for workers and students as a proportion of the total visits for work and study, England and Wales, year ending June 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Short-Term International Migration

Download the data

7. Migration data

Estimates of Short-Term International Migration (STIM) to and from England and Wales are based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS).
The data tables largely associated with this release can be found in Table STIM.01, STIM.04, STIM.07 and STIM.08. Estimates detailing average length of stay are available in Table STIM.03 and STIM.06, while estimates for stocks are available in Table STIM.02 and STIM.05.

**Citizenship by main reason for migration – flows, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.01 | Released 24 May 2019
Nationality of short-term migrants by the primary purpose of their visit, by inflow and outflow.

**Citizenship by main reason for migration – stocks, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.02 | Released 24 May 2019
Nationality of short-term migrants by the primary purpose of their visit, by residency.

**Citizenship by main reason for migration – stays, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.03 | Released 24 May 2019
Nationality of short-term migrants by the primary purpose of their visit, by length of stay.

**Age by sex – flows, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.04 | Released 24 May 2019
Age and sex of short-term migrants coming to and from England and Wales, by inflow and outflow.

**Age by sex – stocks, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.05 | Released 24 May 2019
Age and sex of short-term migrants coming to and from England and Wales, by residency.

**Age by sex – stays, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.06 | Released 24 May 2019
Age and sex of short-term migrants coming to and from England and Wales, by length of stay.

**Inflows by local authority by main reason for migration, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.07 | Released 24 May 2019
Short-term immigration to regional and unitary government areas in England and Wales, by main reason for migration.

**Top 10 countries – flows and stocks, England and Wales**
Dataset STIM.08 | Released 24 May 2019
Top 10 countries of last or next residence for short-term migrants, by inflow, outflow and residency.

### 8. 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; while 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.
9. Measuring these data

Short-Term International Migration (STIM) estimates are produced directly from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) at the end of the person’s stay in the country, so measure actual migration behaviours. This differs from the estimates of Long-Term International Migration (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, provisional STIM estimates are published, 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 and emigration to 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.

Visa data provide only partial coverage of short-term migrants, since they normally relate to those non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) nationals, who are subject to immigration control, and who require a visa. A small number of EEA nationals do apply and are issued with visas; in previous years these were included, however, in 2018 EU and British citizens have been excluded from this analysis. Additionally, for those non-EEA nationals classified as “non-visa nationals” (for example, citizens of the US, Brazil and Japan), a visa is not normally required for visits of less than six months.

It is important to recognise that visa duration does not necessarily represent length of stay. Many individuals will depart prior to the expiry date, while a proportion of these may also be granted extensions of stay. Furthermore, visa statistics presented here are for the UK, not England and Wales and include individuals visiting for under one month. Some individuals may visit more than once during the period that their visa is valid for.

International Passenger Survey – imbalance and discontinuity work

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) has recently transferred outputs from data collected on paper forms to an improved method using tablet computers. Tablet data collection was phased in gradually from September 2017 to April 2018. More background information about the rollout is available.
With the new tablets enabling us to improve the quality of the IPS data collected, discontinuities (that is, step changes in the time series) arising from the introduction of tablet data collection in the IPS are possible. We have worked with academic experts and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Methodology team to produce a method for detecting any such discontinuities.

We have continued to monitor the results as more data have become available. Further analysis using a longer series of data is required to determine whether there are any discontinuities, so some caution is still advised in the interpretation of data in this release.

Further methodological changes are planned to the estimates on 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. We plan to implement the new method in October 2019, when the results for the second quarter of 2019 are published. A revised back series will also be published at this time. More information about the planned changes will be published as soon as possible.

The changes in data collection methods and planned methodological changes were described in the Travel trends 2017: recent data collection changes and planned methodological changes article, in July 2018.

Please note that while the imbalance work is unlikely to affect long-term migrants in the IPS, we have committed to exploring whether the survey processes that cause the imbalance in international visitor estimates also impact on long-term migration further, as part of our workplan to understand different migration data sources.

10. 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 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

Where possible in this release we present the Short-Term International Migration (STIM) data with shading around the line on the chart to represent the uncertainty of the estimates due to the number of people surveyed; based on 30%, 60% and 95% confidence intervals. The line of the chart is the most likely value and the values towards the upper and lower band of the shading are possible but less likely.

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

Quality and methodology

The Short-Term International Migration (STIM) Quality and Methodology Information reports for England and Wales and Local Authorities contain 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.

11 . More about migration

International migration and the education sector – what does the current evidence show?
Article | Released 8 May 2019
An exploration of what the current evidence can tell us about the impact and contribution of international migration on the education sector.

Update on our population and migration statistics transformation journey: a research engagement report
Article | Released 30 January 2019
An update on our population and migration statistics transformation using administrative data.

Building our understanding of the migration evidence
Bulletin Section 9 | Released 23 August 2018

Report on international migration data sources: July 2018
Article | Released 16 July 2018
An update on our migration statistics transformation plans, our recent analysis of Home Office administrative data, in collaboration with Home Office experts, and our International Passenger Survey (IPS) data assurance review.

Migration statistics transformation update: May 2018
Article | Released 24 May 2018

What’s happening with international student migration?
Article | Released 24 August 2017
An update on our progress towards developing a better understanding on student migration to and from the UK since the April 2017 update.

12 . You may also be interested in

Office for National Statistics international migration articles
All ONS articles relating to international migration.

International migration – table of contents
Dataset | Released 28 February 2019
A tool used to locate the datasets of final Long-Term International Migration and International Passenger Survey estimates.
Home Office migration research and analysis
Research and statistics on migration to support Home Office policy development and operational activity.

Home Office developments in migration statistics
Article | Released 28 February 2019
Recent changes introduced by Home Office statisticians to a wide range of UK migration statistics.

Migration Advisory Committee (MAC)
The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) is an independent, non-statutory, non-time limited, non-departmental public body that advises the government on migration issues.