



Frequency of Publication Annual

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Date: 27 August 2015 (9.30am)

Theme: Population

Long-Term International Migration Statistics for Northern Ireland (2014)

Key Points:

- The Northern Ireland population at 30 June 2014 is estimated to be 1.840 million, an increase of 10,800 (0.6 per cent) since mid 2013.
- The year mid-2013 to mid-2014 was the first year since the year ending mid 2010 that the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (24,400) was greater than the number of people leaving (22,800).
- However, when looking at flows between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK only, more people left (11,700) than arrived (11,100) to live in Northern Ireland in the year ending mid-2014.
- There was a modest increase (4.4 per cent) in the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live from outside the UK between the year ending mid 2013 (12,700) and the year ending mid 2014 (13,300).
- There has been a marked increase in the number of people from Romania and Bulgaria coming to Northern Ireland to live since some of their residency requirements were lifted in January 2014.
- The number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK was at its lowest level in seven years, falling by 18.8 per cent between the year ending mid 2013 (13,600) and the year ending mid 2014 (11,100). This fall was driven by a drop in the number of people leaving Northern Ireland who previously came to live here from outside the UK over the last decade.

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Note: Throughout the report figures have been presented in a rounded form to ease readability. For example, numbers have been presented to the nearest 100 and percentage changes have been presented to 1 decimal place. However, all calculations have been undertaken on the basis of unrounded numbers which will, in some instances, give rise to apparent discrepancies.

1. Introduction

This bulletin details the key findings of the long-term international migration estimates for Northern Ireland from mid-2013 to mid-2014. These estimates were published on 4 June 2015 as part of the [Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland \(2014\)](#), along with migration estimates within Northern Ireland, and between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. This bulletin summarises all migration estimates for Northern Ireland, mid-2013 to mid-2014, before focusing on international migration estimates. The official estimates are then compared with the latest findings of migration indicators from a variety of administrative sources: medical card register; birth statistics; the School Census; National Insurance Number (NINo) statistics; and the Continuous Household Survey. Detailed tables for administrative sources of in migration, out migration, and stock figures for Northern Ireland and Local Government Districts are available on the [NISRA website](#).

International migration statistics are widely used. They are a primary component used in producing national statistics, as a component of population change in population estimates and population projections at the Northern Ireland level but also for areas within Northern Ireland¹. These statistics are also of interest to those involved in research and academia, for example, when describing the changes in the demographic profile of Northern Ireland. The supporting information from administrative sources on languages and country of birth can be used in the provision of services, for example the need for translators in the health and court system.

International migration refers to the number of people leaving or arriving to live in Northern Ireland to and from areas outside the UK. Migration estimates are calculated from mid-year to mid-year (e.g. the most recent migration estimates occurred between July 2013 and June 2014). However, some administrative data sources measure their data using either financial years (April through to March) or by calendar year (January through to December). Furthermore, on 1st April 2015, the 11 new Local Government Districts came into effect. All mention of Local Government Districts within this bulletin is referring to the 11 new Local Government Districts.

2. Background

Migration estimates for Northern Ireland are published annually and approximately one year in arrears. Migration estimates are primarily based on changes in the medical card register, which is a list of patients registered with a family doctor (see [Methodology Report](#) for more information).

¹ For the latest population projections for the UK see [link](#)

Measuring migration is challenging. [The United Nations definition](#) of a long-term migrant based on a 12 month residency rule is used in Northern Ireland. This report sets out the sources available to estimate the number of persons coming to live in Northern Ireland, or leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere. The report notes that these sources use different definitions for recording migration.

3. Population of Northern Ireland

The size of the resident population in Northern Ireland at 30 June 2014 is estimated to be 1.840 million people. Slightly more than half (51.0 per cent) of the population were female, with 937,800 females compared to 902,700 males.

Over the period 2013-14 the number of people living in Northern Ireland is estimated to have increased by 10,800 people (0.6 per cent). This population increase was a result of the following estimated factors:

- a. natural growth of 9,800 people (24,200 births minus 14,300 deaths);
- b. an estimated net growth of 1,600 people due to migration. In total 24,400 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 22,800 people left; and
- c. a net loss of 600 due to a reduction in Her Majesty's Forces stationed in Northern Ireland.

Between mid-2001 and mid-2004 the population of Northern Ireland grew on average by 8,400 people or 0.4 per cent each year. This increase was due to natural change (more births than deaths) with little change in the size of the population due to migration. The European Union expansion in 2004 resulted in increased migration to Northern Ireland, reaching a peak in mid-2007 with a net migration of 10,900 into Northern Ireland.

4. Migration for Northern Ireland

Following the economic downturn, the total number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live fell by 24.0 per cent from 30,400 in mid 2007-08 to 23,100 in mid 2012-13. In the same period, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland increased by 12.1 per cent from 22,700 to 25,400. This led to the biggest population loss due to migration (2,300 people) in 2012-13 since 1998-99. However, to put this figure in its historical context, at least 3,000 more people left Northern Ireland than came to stay in each year from 1967 to 1990, and averaged at 8,200 more people leaving than coming to stay per annum.

In mid 2013-14 there was an overall increase in the population due to migration (1,600 people). This was the first year since mid 2009-10 that the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland exceeded the number who left.

Figure 1 shows that the overall net inflow of people into Northern Ireland is mainly related to the estimated international migration. Overall, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland (22,800 in mid 2013-14) was at its lowest level in five years, falling by 10.3 per cent between the mid-years 2012-13 and 2013-14. Also, the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (24,400 in mid 2013-14) was at its highest in four years, increasing by 5.5 per cent between mid-years 2012-13 and 2013-14. As the **net international migration gain** exceeded the **net migration loss to the rest of the UK**, there was an overall increase in the number of people coming to Northern Ireland.

Figure 1: Estimated Net Migration for the Rest of the UK and International, 2013-14

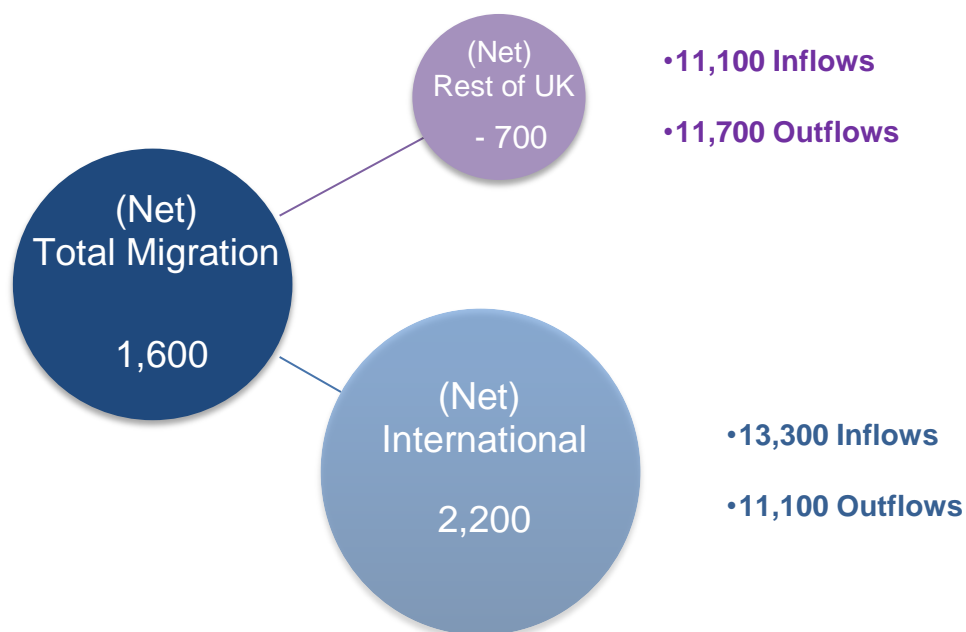
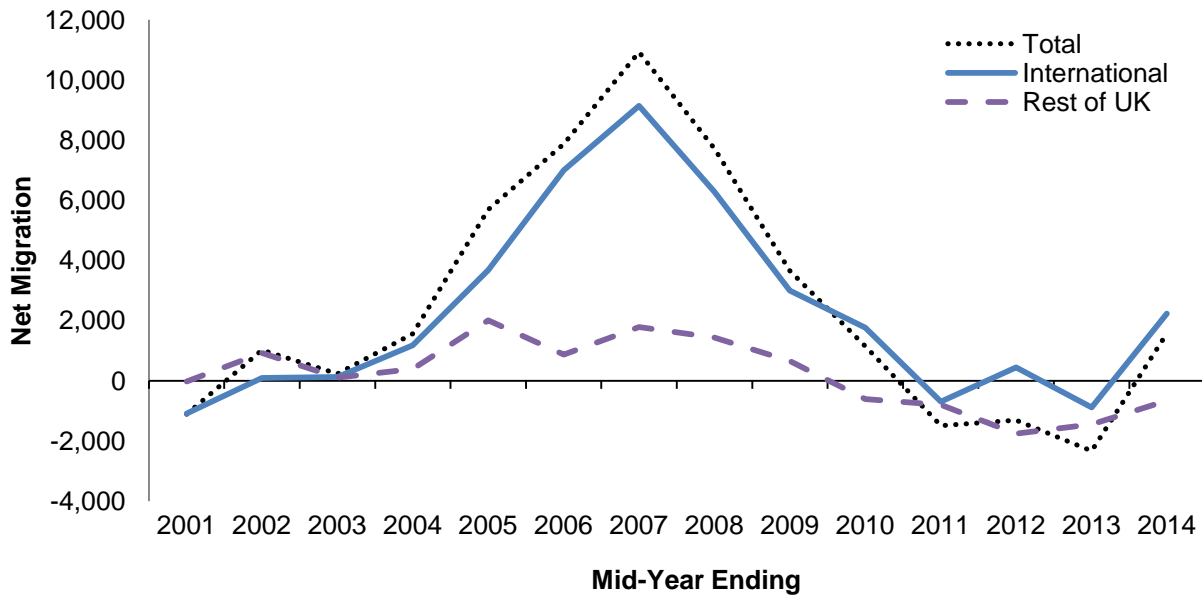


Figure 2 shows the net migration loss to the rest of the UK is a continuing trend. However, the overall number of people Northern Ireland lost to the rest of the UK has more than halved, from 1,500 more people leaving for the rest of the UK in 2012-13, to 700 leaving in 2013-14. The main reason for this is the increase in the number of people coming from the rest of the UK to live in Northern Ireland, from 10,400 in 2012-13 to 11,100 in 2013-14 (6.9 per cent). The number of people leaving for the rest of the UK fell by 100 people from 11,800 in 2012-13 to 11,700 in 2013-14 (0.6 per cent).

Figure 2: Estimated net rest of UK and international migration, July 2000 – June 2014



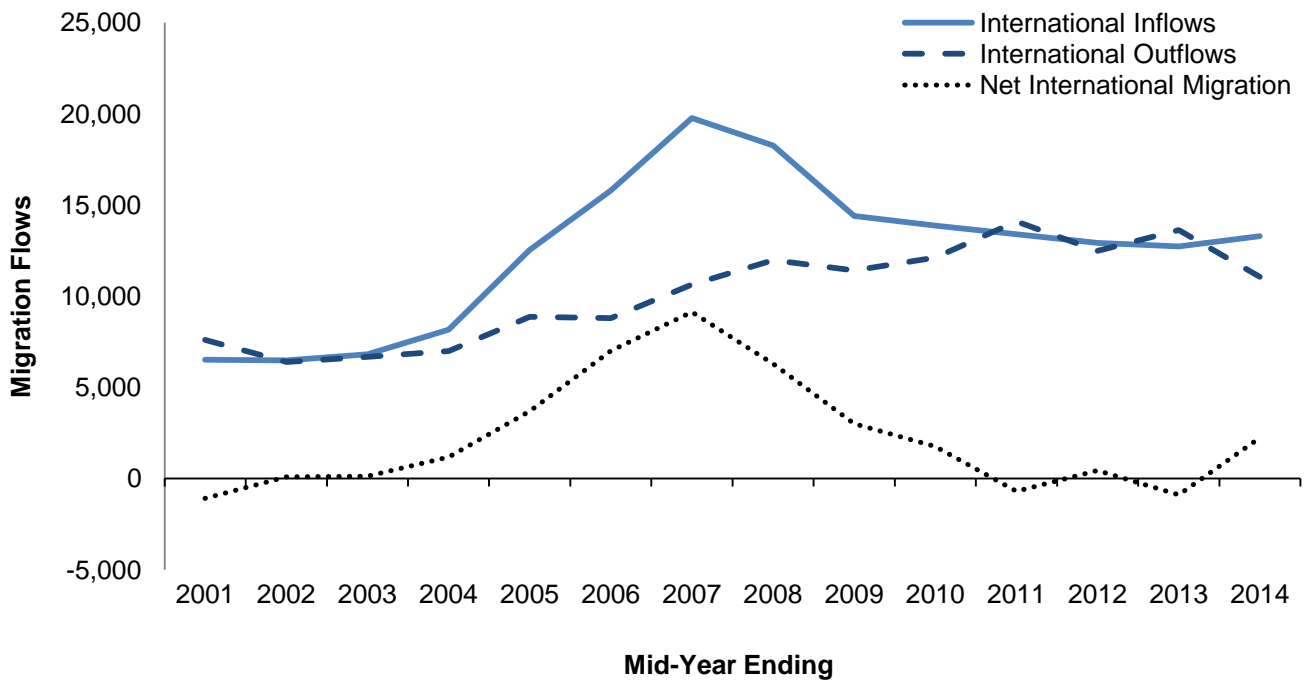
[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 861Kb)

5. International Migration

In 2013-14, 13,300 people came to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK, while 11,100 left to live abroad, leaving a net inflow of 2,200 people into Northern Ireland from outside the UK. This net inward migration represents a substantial change in net international migration from 2012-13 when 900 more people left Northern Ireland to go abroad than entered Northern Ireland from outside the UK.

Figure 3 shows that this change in net international migration is mainly due to a fall in the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live abroad, which dropped from 13,600 in 2012-13 to 11,100, a decrease of 18.8 per cent. This drop meant international outflows were at the lowest level in seven years. In addition, there was a comparatively moderate increase of 4.4 per cent in international inflows (from 12,700 in 2012-13 to 13,300 in 2013-14) which produced an overall increase in the number of people coming to Northern Ireland from abroad.

Figure 3: Estimated International inflows, outflows, and net migration, July 2000 to June 2014



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 875Kb)

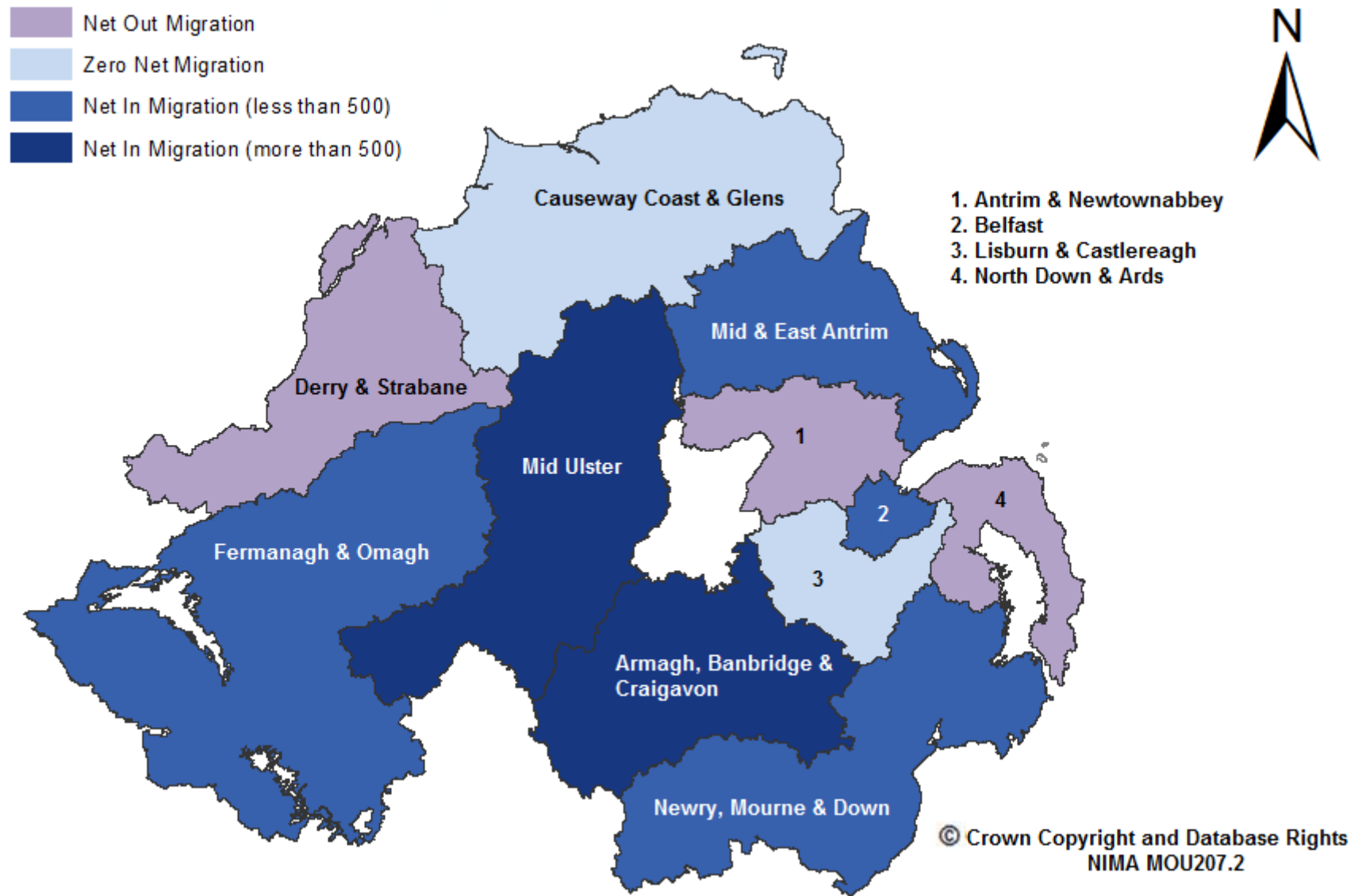
International Migration by Local Government Districts

Belfast Local Government District had the highest numbers of both people arriving from outside the UK (4,700 people) and people leaving for areas outside the UK (4,300 people) between mid-2013 and mid-2014. These international flows into and out of Belfast as a proportion of the Northern Ireland flows are 35.4 and 39.1 per cent respectively. This can be explained by Belfast having the largest number of people living in this District, and being a central hub for employment and education.

Despite the large migration flows, Belfast had only the third highest net international migration in 2013-14 (400 people), after Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon (900 people) and Mid Ulster (600 people) Local Government Districts.

Four Local Government Districts experienced a net outflow of people to outside the UK: Derry & Strabane (200); Antrim & Newtownabbey and North Down & Ards (both 100); and Causeway Coast & Glens Local Government District (50). Map 1 shows the 2013-14 net international migration by Local Government District.

Map 1: Net International Migration by 11 New Local Government Districts, July 2013 to July 2014



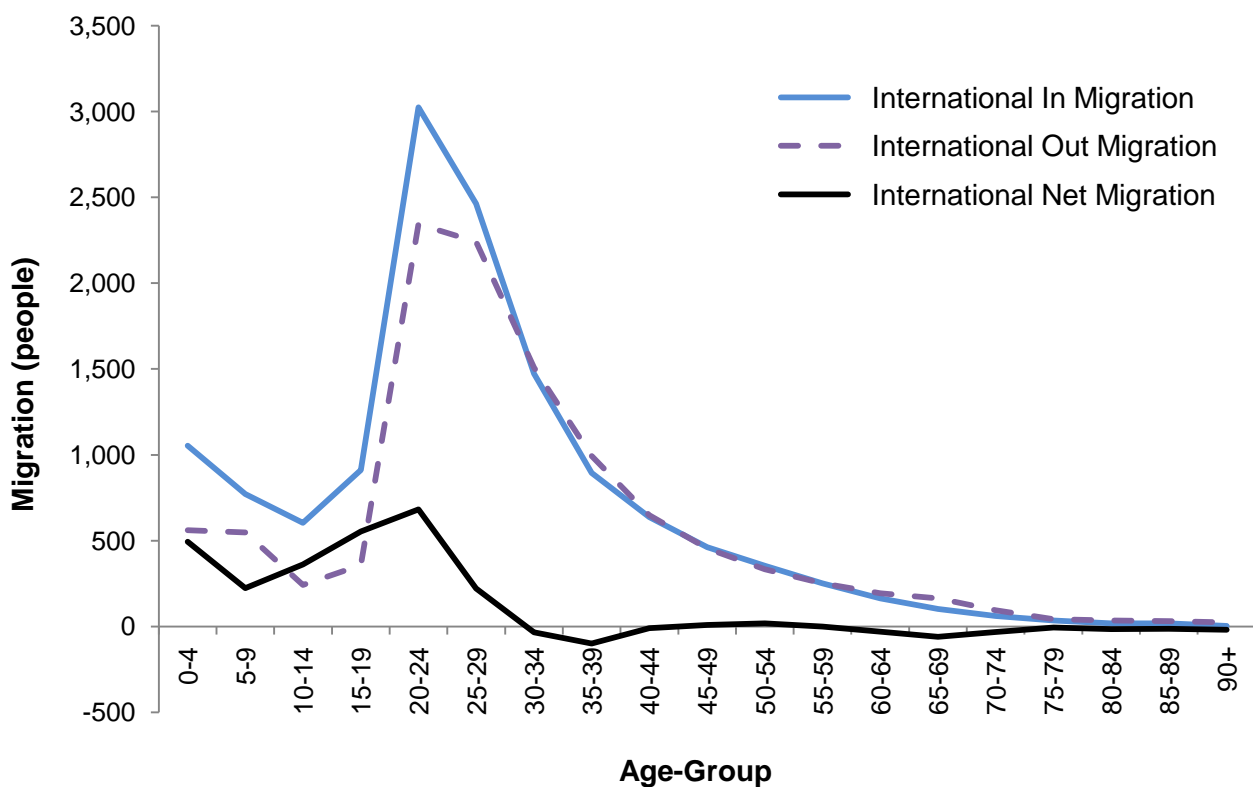
[Download Map](#) (PDF Format - 45Kb)

International Migration by Age

Figure 4 shows the age distribution of international migration into and out of Northern Ireland in 2013-14. Both curves comply with the standard age profile of migration, with a clear childhood curve (falling levels of migration as children get older) and a labour force curve (peaking at young working age). The latter may also include a student peak of those in their late teens and early twenties.

International in migration exceeds international out migration for all ages under 30. The population increase from international migration is equally split between those aged under 18 (1,300 people) and the young working age (1,300 people aged 18 to 29 years). For those aged 30 and over, international inflows and outflows follow a similar path, resulting in a small net out migration effect in this age group (300 people).

Figure 4: Estimated international migration by age, July 2013 to June 2014



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It should be noted that there are limited data on the actual reasons why people move: the medical card register records the reasons people give for moving to Northern Ireland, however reasons for moving out of Northern Ireland are not recorded.

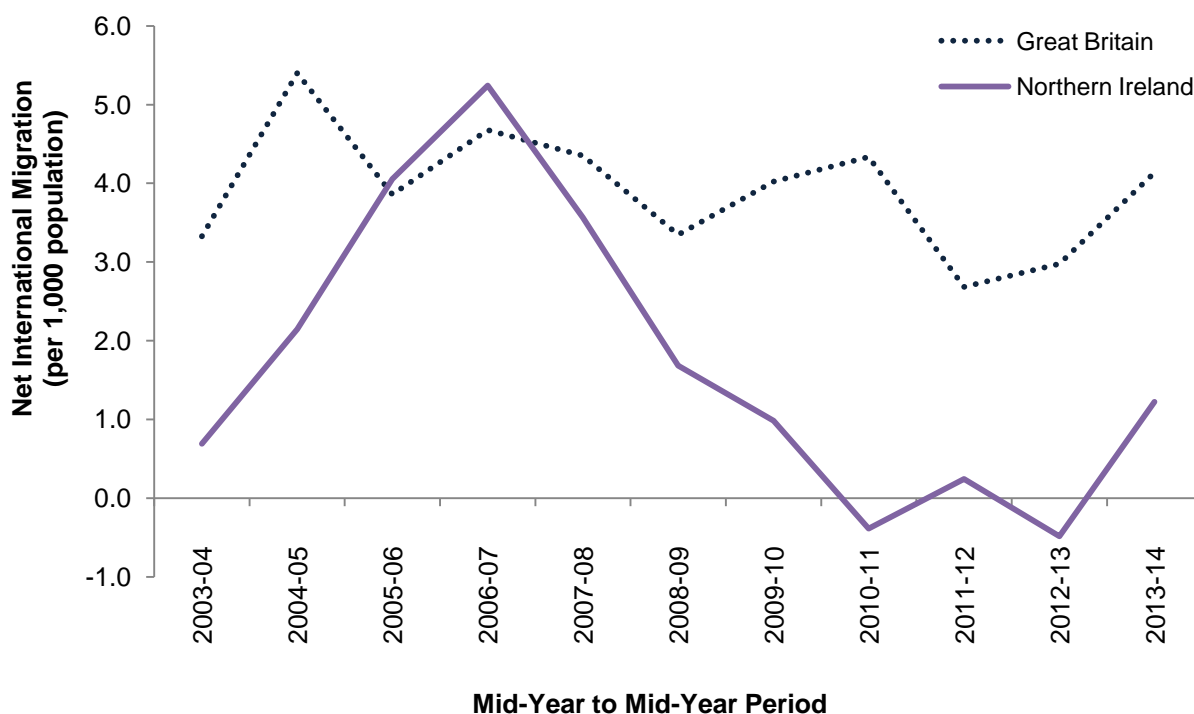
6. Comparison of International Migration across the UK

Between mid-2013 and mid-2014, all four of the UK administrations experienced an increase in the number of people coming to live from abroad, with the largest percentage increase of 17.7 per cent occurring in Scotland. In comparison, Northern Ireland had the smallest percentage increase at 4.4 per cent.

During the same period, Northern Ireland experienced the largest percentage decrease in the number of people leaving to live abroad, falling by 18.8 per cent. International outflows from Scotland also decreased slightly by 3.4 per cent, while the numbers of people leaving England, and Wales to live abroad both increased, by 1.2 per cent and 45.0 per cent respectively.

These changes in international inflows and outflows over the last few years have led to an overall inflow of people from abroad into all four UK administrations (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Net international migration for Great Britain and Northern Ireland per 1,000 of the population, 2003-04 to 2013-14

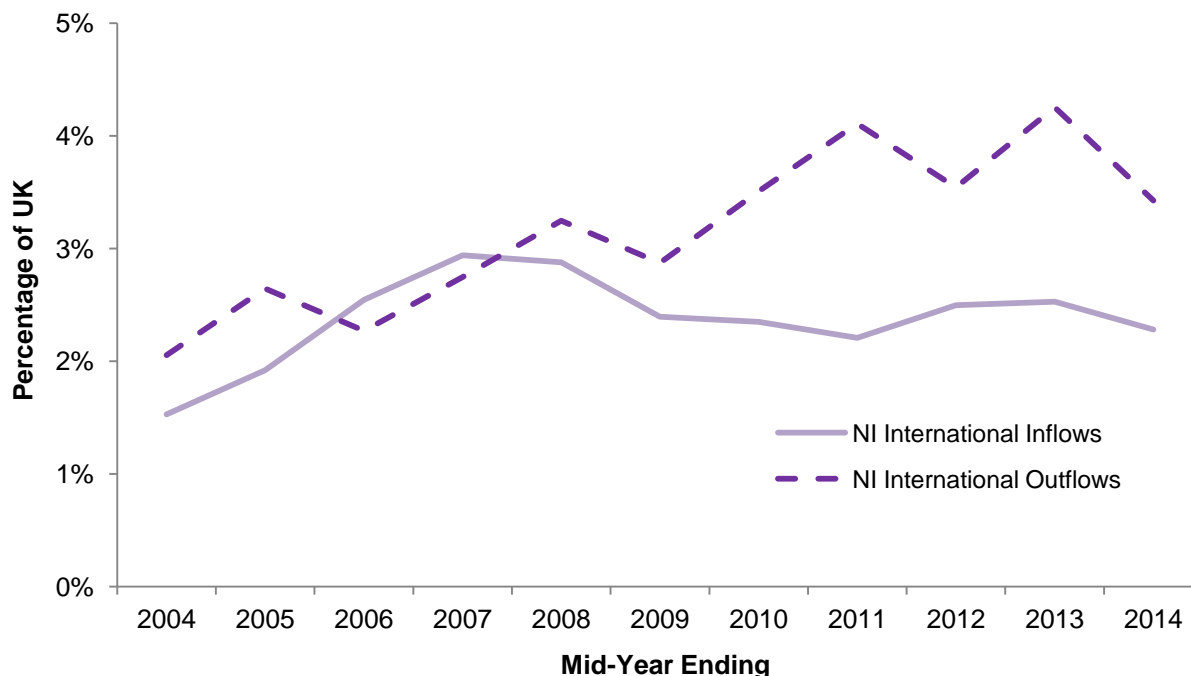


[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 873Kb)

Figure 6 shows the number of international inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland as a proportion of the UK international inflows and outflows over time. The Northern Ireland population as a proportion of the UK population was stable around 2.9 per cent throughout this period. From this chart it can be seen that the proportion of UK international outflows from Northern Ireland have been more changeable in the most recent years, as well as being higher than the relatively stable proportion of UK international inflows into Northern Ireland. This shows that the Northern Ireland population growth from international migration is small relative

to those of the rest of the UK countries. This shows that the factors affecting the number of people leaving the UK to live abroad, such as the expansion of the EU and the economic downturn of recent years, have had a differential impact on different parts of the UK.

Figure 6: International inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland, as a percentage of UK International Migration, July 2003 to June 2014



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 875Kb)

The position of Belfast within Northern Ireland regarding international migration is comparable to the position of the main cities in the other UK countries, where the proportion of international migration is (more than) double the proportion represented by its population. These cities are central hubs for employment and education.

Table 1: Population (mid-2014) and international migration (2013-14) in the main cities as a proportion of UK countries

Main City (UK Country)	Proportion of population (2014)	Proportion of international inflows (2013-14)	Proportion of international outflows (2013-14)
Belfast (Northern Ireland)	18.3	35.4	39.1
London (England)	15.7	41.5	37.1
Cardiff & Swansea (Wales)	19.3	49.2	48.2
Glasgow & Edinburgh (Scotland)	20.4	52.3	40.1

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 905Kb)

7. Administrative Sources for International Inflows

NISRA reviewed a number of administrative data sources that can be used as international migration indicators. Administrative data sources have been used to create and validate migration estimates, but can also provide further detail on the reasons, origin and destination of migrants.

This report highlights details of several administrative data sources that are particularly relevant to recent changes in migration flows. More detailed tables and further administrative sources are available on the [NISRA website](#).

Medical Card Registration Data

This is the most comprehensive in migration data source, maintained by the Health and Social Care [Business Services Organisation](#) (BSO). It shows 12,700 new international medical registrations into Northern Ireland in the calendar year 2014. This is an increase of 1,500 new registrations (13.9 per cent) since 2013, when there were 11,100 such new registrations.

Analysing medical card data by country of last residence shows that in the calendar year 2014, Poland was listed the highest number of times as being the country of last residence. This is consistent with previous years' data since the accession of 12 countries to the EU since 2004. However, this is the first year that Romania has been one of the top three countries listed as the country of last residence in new registrations for Northern Ireland.

As Table 2 shows, Romania was the top country of last residence for new medical registrations in Belfast Local Government District, as well as being in the top three of several other Districts. This marks the first year since records began (2006) that Romania has been a top country in any of the Local Government Districts. Poland appears in the top three of each of the 11 Local Government Districts.

This may in part be related to the change in legislation that came into effect on 1 January 2014, giving Bulgarian and Romanian nationals the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK². Figure 7 shows a sharp rise in the number of registrations with Romania (and a modest increase for Bulgaria) stated as country of last residence since January 2014.

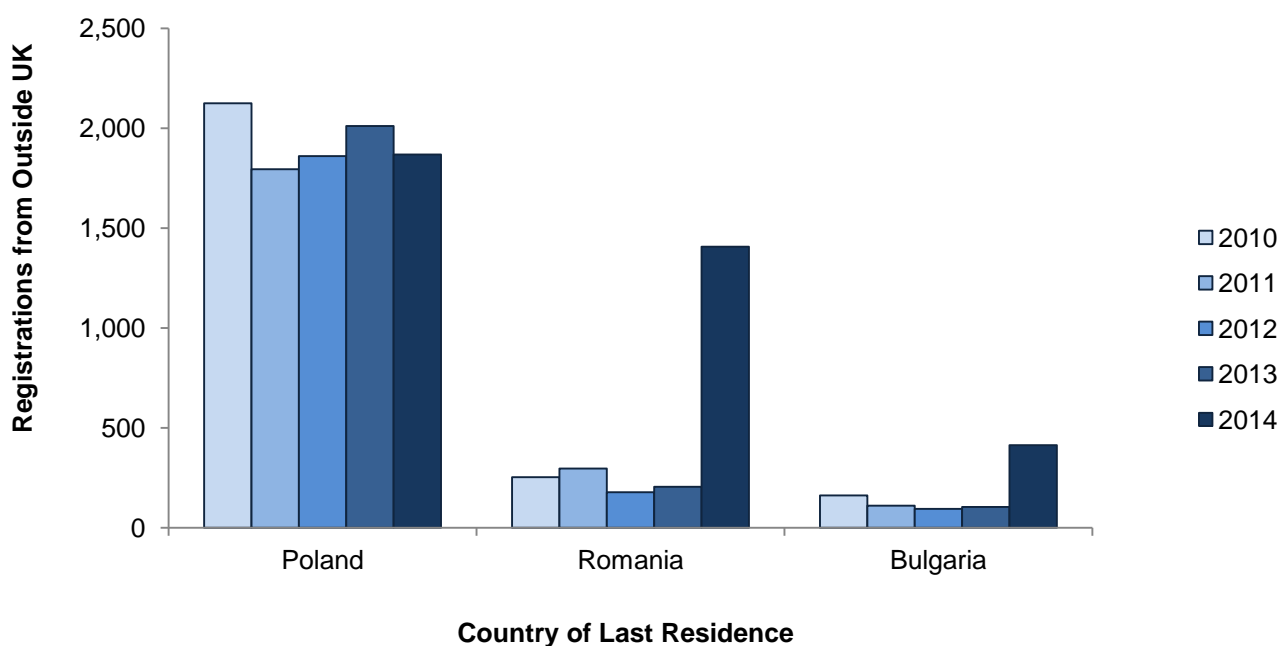
² <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coming-from-abroad-and-claiming-benefits-the-habitual-residence-test/eea-nationals-and-the-habitual-residence-test/bulgarian-and-romanian-nationals-claiming-benefits/>

Table 2: NI Medical Card Registrations from non-UK nationals by top three countries of origin for 11 new Local Government Districts, 2014

Area	<u>Top Countries (2014)</u>		
	First	Second	Third
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Poland	China	Romania
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Poland	Portugal	Lithuania
Belfast	Romania	Poland	Republic of Ireland
Causeway Coast & Glens	Poland	Republic of Ireland	France
Derry & Strabane	Republic of Ireland	Poland	USA
Fermanagh & Omagh	Republic of Ireland	Poland	Hungary
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Poland	Republic of Ireland	Romania
Mid & East Antrim	Poland	Romania	Slovakia
Mid Ulster	Lithuania	Poland	East Timor
Newry, Mourne & Down	Republic of Ireland	Poland	Bulgaria
North Down & Ards	Republic of Ireland	Lithuania	Poland
Northern Ireland	Poland	Republic of Ireland	Romania

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 896Kb)

Figure 7: Count of medical card registrations from non-UK nationals by country of last residence (Poland, Romania, & Bulgaria), January 2010- December 2014



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 104Kb)

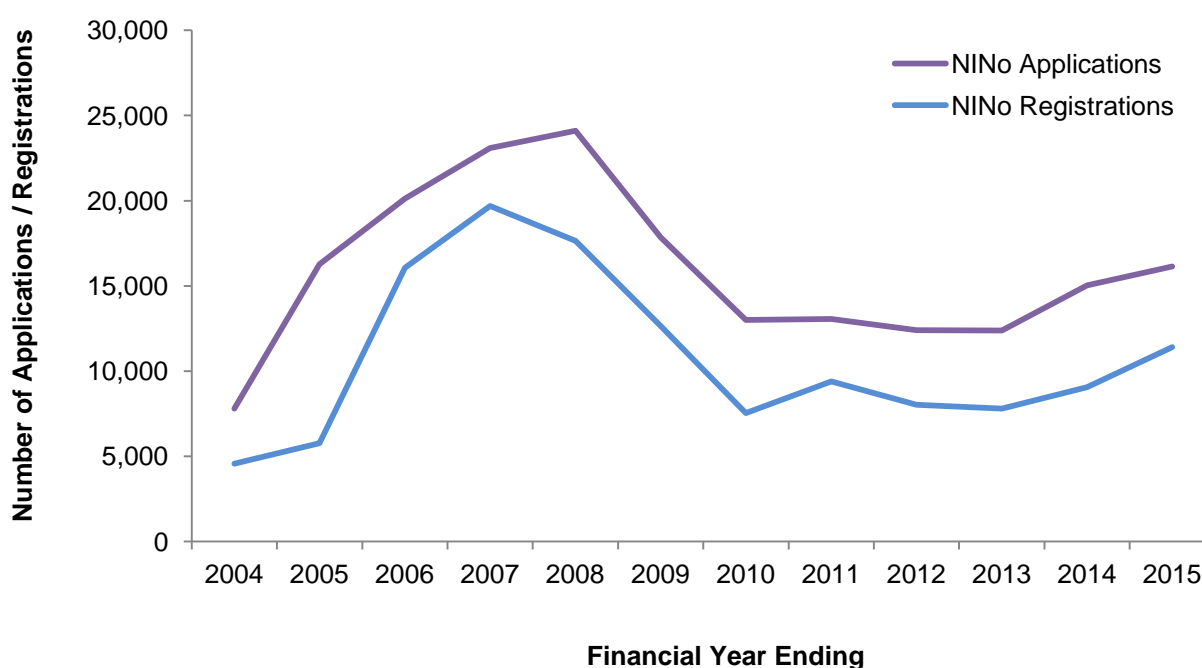
The main reason given on new medical card registrations from outside the UK in 2014 is work (46.9 per cent), followed by family (27.9 per cent) and education (13.3 per cent). Two-thirds of new registrations which state education as the main reason came to live in Belfast Local Government District. The main reasons also vary by country of last residence: 90 per cent of inflows from Malaysia (100 people) came here for education, whilst over 80 per cent of inflows from East Timor (200 people) and Slovakia (300 people) arrive for work. Finally, 61 per cent of arrivals from Australia (100 people) came here for family reasons.

National Insurance Numbers (NINo)

The [Department for Work and Pensions](#) issues and reports on National Insurance numbers allocated to overseas nationals entering Northern Ireland. Figure 8 shows the trend in the number of NINo applications and registrations since the financial year 2003-04. There was a large increase in the number of applications between 2005-06 to 2007-08 (2005-06 to 2006-07 for registrations). This increase is again in line with the influx of people due to the accession of countries into the EU since 2004. After this, the number of applications and registrations first decreased, and then began to stabilise. However, for the past two years, the numbers of both NINo applications and registrations have increased.

The number of applications increased by 21.5 per cent in the financial years from 2012-13 to 2013-14 (12,400 to 15,000), and then by 7.3 per cent to 16,100 applications in 2014-15. While the largest percentage increase in applications occurred in the previous year, a lag can be found in the registrations: the number of registrations increased by 16.2 per cent from 2012-13 to 2013-14 (7,800 to 9,100) and then by 25.8 per cent to 11,400 registrations in 2014-15.

Figure 8: Number of NINo Applications and Registrations, April 2003 to March 2015



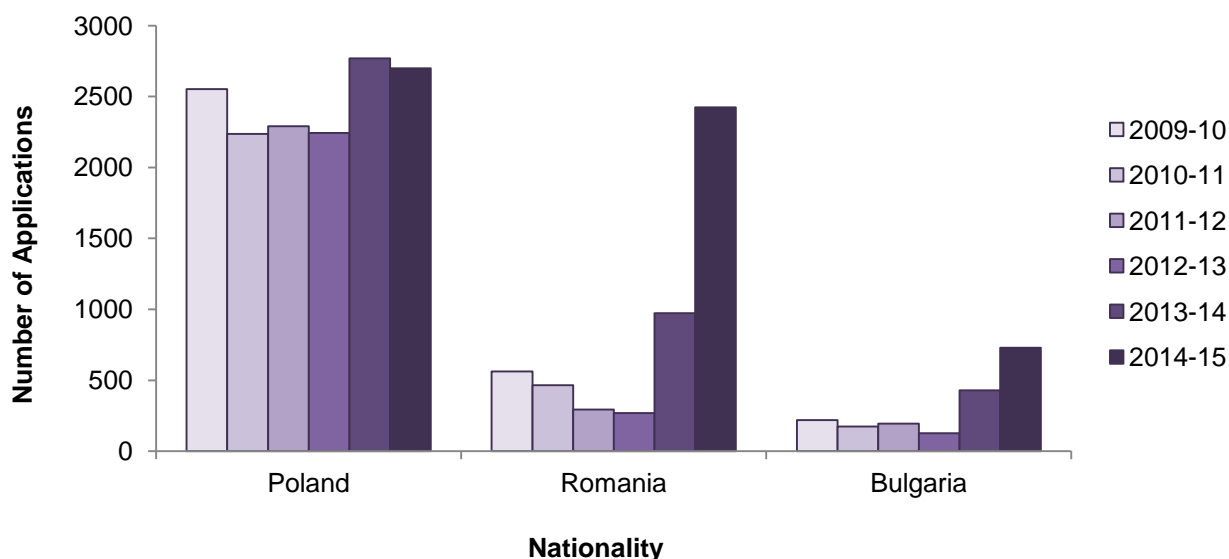
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These trends in recent NINo data may in part be related to the change in legislation that came into effect on 1 January 2014, giving Bulgarian and Romanian nationals the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK³. Figure 9 shows the number of NINo applications from Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian nationals from the financial year 2009-10 to 2014-15. Applications from Polish nationals, the second highest nationality (after the Republic of Ireland) have been more or less consistent in the past six years.

The most visible change is clearly the number of applications from Romanian nationals, which have increased by 700 from 2012-13 to 2013-14, and by 1,500 from 2013-14 to 2014-15 financial years. Applications from Bulgarian nationals have also experienced a slight increase, rising by 300 each year during the same period.

The same trends also appear in the number of NINo registrations, where the number of registrations from Romanian nationals increased by 400 from 2012-13 to 2013-14, and by 1,300 from 2013-14 to 2014-15 financial years, while registrations from Bulgarian nationals increased by 200 and 400 respectively during the same period.

Figure 9: NINo Applications for Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, April 2009 to March 2015



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 865Kb)

³ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coming-from-abroad-and-claiming-benefits-the-habitual-residence-test/eea-nationals-and-the-habitual-residence-test/bulgarian-and-romanian-nationals-claiming-benefits/>

It is important to remember NINo applications could have been made by people already living in Northern Ireland, rather than new arrivals. However, the NINo dataset is the second source to show change in Bulgarian and Romanian indicators. Medical card register data also indicated an increase in new registrations where the country of origin was stated as Bulgaria or Romania. It would therefore seem plausible that there has been an increase in people coming to Northern Ireland from Bulgaria and Romania, however the increase may not be as high as suggested by NINo data.

Birth registration data

The [Vital Statistics](#) Team within NISRA provide statistics on births registered by the General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland, including the parents' country of birth. The proportion of children born in Northern Ireland whose mother was born outside the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland has almost doubled over the last ten years. In 2004, 5.2 per cent of babies had foreign-born mothers (1,200 babies out of 22,300) while this has risen to 10.1 per cent in 2014 (2,500 babies out of 24,400). This is in part due to the accession of countries into the EU since 2004. Table 3 shows that the rate of increase in the proportion of births with foreign born mothers was much greater in the first half of the decade 2004-14, before the net flow of international migration becomes much more stable in the second half of this decade (see Figure 4 previously).

Table 3: Births by mother's country of birth, January 2004 to December 2014

Mother's Country of Birth	Registration Year (Jan-Dec)			
	2004	2009	2013	2014
<u>Number of Births</u>				
Northern Ireland	19,100	20,500	19,900	20,100
Rest of UK	1,400	1,400	1,300	1,200
Republic of Ireland (RoI)	700	700	600	600
UK & RoI	21,200	22,600	21,800	21,900
A8 Countries ¹	<100	1,100	1,300	1,300
All Other Countries	1,100	1,200	1,200	1,200
Unknown	<100	-	-	-
Outside the UK & RoI	1,200	2,300	2,400	2,500
All Births	22,300	24,900	24,300	24,400
<u>Proportion of Births</u>				
UK & RoI	94.8%	90.7%	89.9%	89.9%
Outside the UK & RoI	5.2%	9.3%	10.1%	10.1%

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 854Kb)

School Census

Each year the Department for Education in Northern Ireland (DENI) undertakes a [School Census](#), most recently in October 2014. The School Census shows an increase of 1,200 in the number of primary school children with English as an additional language between 2013 and 2014, an increase of 17.9 per cent. The largest numbers of these pupils were found in Belfast (1,800), Mid Ulster (1,500), and Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon (1,500) Local Government Districts. This is the second year running that Polish and Lithuanian make up over half of all primary school children with English as an additional language. The number of pupils with Romanian as their first language doubled from 100 in 2013 to 200 in 2014. Again, this is linked to the lifted restrictions to Romanian and Bulgarian nationals in January 2014.

In post-primary education, the number of school children with English as an additional language has been relatively stable at around 2,500 pupils in the last five years. Polish and Lithuanian make up just under half (47.0 per cent) of all post-primary school children with English as an additional language in 2014. These pupils would have been born prior to the accession of countries in 2004, and hence it is likely that the vast majority of them will have moved to Northern Ireland in the past 10 years.

Census

A census of population is normally taken every ten years and is carried out by the [Census Office](#), part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The latest Census took place on 27 March 2011 and included several questions relating to migration, language and national identity⁴. The number of persons born outside the UK and Ireland rose from 27,200 (1.6 per cent) in 2001 to 81,500 (4.5 per cent) in 2011. Again, a large proportion of this rise can be attributed to the expansion of the EU since 2004.

In November 2014, the Office for National Statistics reported on responses to the question “*One year ago, what was your usual address?*” from the 2011 Census for all UK countries⁵. It was estimated that in Northern Ireland 13,600 people lived outside the UK one year before Census day. This compared to 14,200 new registrations on the medical card system from outside the UK in the period April 2010 to March 2011, and to the official estimates for international in migration for the year ending June 2011 of 13,400 people.

⁴ Further 2011 Census statistics available at <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx?themeNumber=136&themeName=Census+2011>

⁵ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_385836.pdf

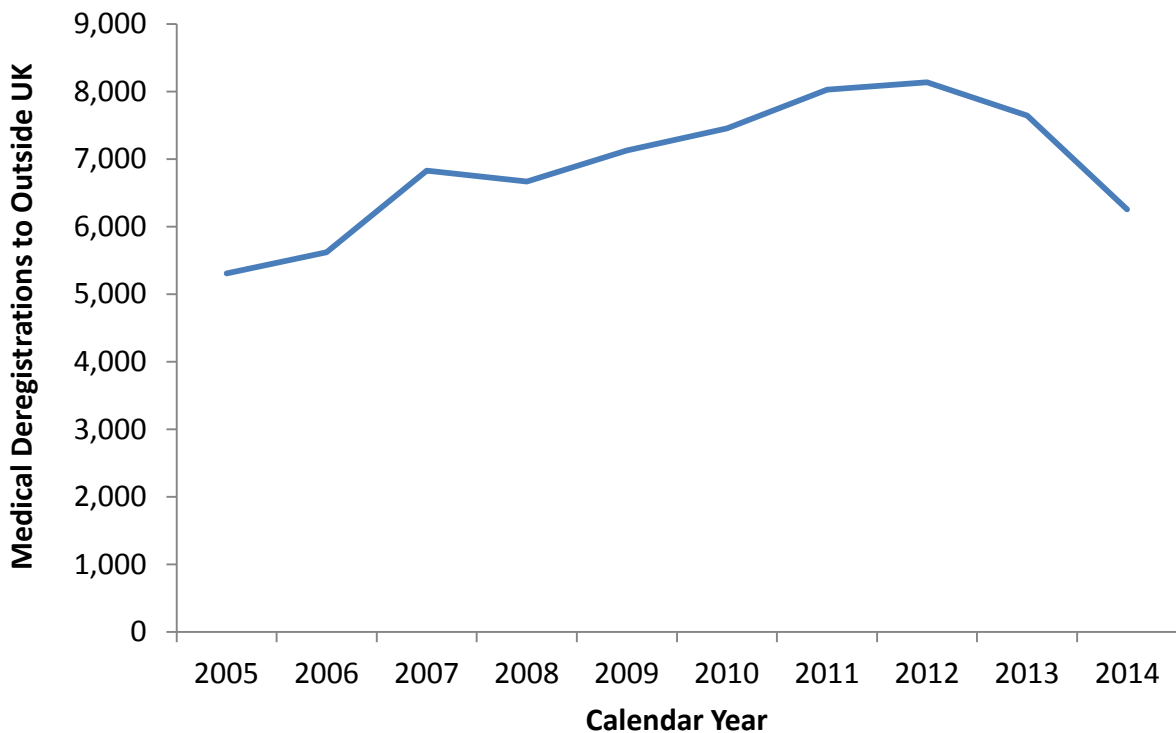
8. Administrative Sources for International Outflows

The number of people leaving Northern Ireland is harder to estimate as there are limited data sources. NISRA have assessed information on medical card deregistrations, household surveys and School Census.

Medical Card Deregistration Data

In 2014, 6,300 medical deregistrations to outside the UK were recorded. This is a decrease of 18.2 per cent from 2013, three times as large as the decrease in 2013 (6.0 per cent). As Figure 10 shows, the decrease in deregistrations is the largest fall in all the years of data available.

Figure 10: Medical card deregistrations to destination outside UK, 2005-2014



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 87Kb)

The largest proportion of deregistrations was in Belfast Local Government District (36.1 per cent, or 2,300 out of 6,300 deregistrations). This is the only district whose proportion of deregistrations exceeds 10 per cent.

The number of deregistrations fell by 1,500 (18.8 per cent) from 8,200 for year ending September 2013 to 6,600 for year ending September 2014. These periods correspond to the data used for the official migration estimates. For those who deregistered and originally came from outside the UK since 2005, information was collected at the original registration on the previous country of residence and the reason for coming to Northern Ireland to live. These deregistrations fell from 5,500 in the year ending September 2013 to 4,000 in the year ending September 2014, a decrease of 27.9 per cent or 1,500 people. Therefore, the recent fall in international out migration was dominated by a drop in the number of people leaving the UK who have come to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in the last decade.

The countries of previous residence with the largest drop in deregistrations were Poland (300 people, 39.1 per cent), India (200 people, 33.8 per cent) and China (200 people, 29.5 per cent), with a further five countries where deregistrations in the year ending September 2014 were 100 fewer than in the year ending September 2013 (Philippines, USA, Slovakia, Ireland and Lithuania).

Deregistrations of people who originally came to Northern Ireland for work or family reasons both fell by 34.1 per cent (700 and 400 people respectively). Deregistrations of people who came to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in the last decade were concentrated at those aged 24 to 44 years – falling by a third (33.2 per cent) from 3,100 in the year ending September 2013 to 2,000 in the year ending September 2014 – and accounted for two-thirds of the drop of 1,500 deregistrations.

Deregistrations of those who did not originally come from outside the UK since 2005 have been stable in the last three years (2,700 deregistrations), with also a similar age distribution. This group of deregistrations is made up from three categories:

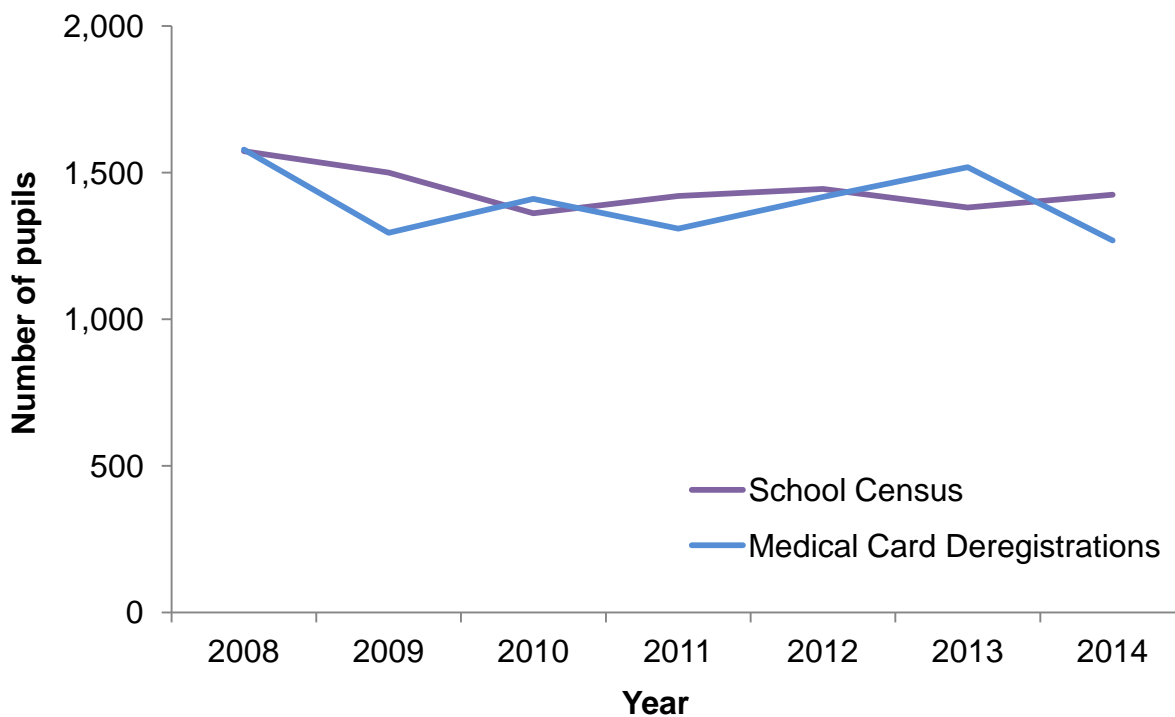
- (1) people who were born in Northern Ireland;
- (2) people who moved to Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK; and
- (3) people who moved to Northern Ireland from outside the UK prior to 2005.

There is insufficient information available to allocate each deregistration to one of these three categories. However, given the low historic levels of migration into Northern Ireland from both the rest of the UK and outside the UK, it is assumed that people born in Northern Ireland form the majority.

School Census

In addition to the information collected on pupils with English as an additional language, Schools are also asked how many of its pupils left in the previous academic year⁶. This question does not apply to those in the first school year, nor to the approximately 1,000 children who are home-educated. This figure can be compared to medical card deregistrations of those aged 5 to 10 years (primary schools), and 12 to 16 years (post-primary schools). Figure 12 shows the results for both primary and post-primary schools compared to medical card deregistration from 2008 to 2014.

Figure 11: Number of Primary and Post-Primary School pupils who left Northern Ireland during the last academic year (2008-2014 School Census), and Medical Card Deregistrations aged 5-10 and 12-16 years



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 867Kb)

It is clear that both data sources suggest broadly similar figures of around 1,400 pupils leaving Northern Ireland each year. The small differences could originate from under recording, home-educated children, or pupils over the compulsory school age (4-15 years).

⁶ See also http://www.deni.gov.uk/census_description_for_web_14_15_r3.docx

Household Surveys

The [Central Survey Unit](#) within NISRA carries out several household surveys each year. Data from the Continuous Household Survey, Travel Survey and Family Resources Survey for the financial year 2014-15 show that, of the 4,300 households surveyed, 200 people were reported as having left that household in the past year. Of these, roughly two-thirds (67.7 per cent) moved to elsewhere within Northern Ireland. A further 18.5 per cent travelled to somewhere within the rest of the UK, while 13.8 per cent went to somewhere outside the UK (see Figure 11).

It is important to note that the survey results are using a relatively small number of households. It also excludes people who previously lived in a communal establishment, and wholly moving households⁷. The variation in the findings of the household surveys over time on the number and destination of people leaving can be attributed to sampling error rather than trends.

Figure 12: Proportion of people reported leaving households by destination, April 2012 to March 2015



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 872Kb)

9. Methodology

Migration into Northern Ireland

Migration into Northern Ireland or inflows is defined as persons who come to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom or any other country for a period of at least one year. Inflows are estimated from the medical card register, which is a list of patients registered with a family doctor. It records the sex, age and date when people joined or rejoined the register (i.e. this will include people who previously resided here, but left and then returned). It is recognised that the medical card source is deficient in recording young adult males;

⁷ If all household members left in the past year, there is no one left to respond to the survey. The household space will be either empty or occupied by a new household.

therefore the age distribution of young adult males is adjusted to be similar to the young adult female age distribution. Also, it is assumed that there is a lag between the date of arrival in Northern Ireland and the medical card registration. Therefore, new registrations in the period October 2013 to September 2014 are used for the official estimates of migration between July 2013 and June 2014.

Migration out of Northern Ireland

Migration out of Northern Ireland or outflows is defined as persons who leave Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK or any other country for a period of at least one year. Outflows are estimated from transferred and deregistered medical cards for flows to Great Britain and countries outside the UK respectively. These estimates are available by sex and age at mid-year. Previous research has shown that not all outflows are measured fully by the medical card register⁸ and therefore deregistrations are scaled up by an additional 67 per cent (i.e. three out of five people who leave Northern Ireland to go abroad deregistered from their family GP). This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population. As with inflows it is recognised that the administrative data is deficient in recording young adult males, therefore the age distribution of young adult males is adjusted to be similar to the young adult female age distribution. It also assumes the same lag between leaving Northern Ireland and deregistration (3 months). Migration flows to Great Britain are constrained to figures agreed by NISRA, the Office for National Statistics and National Records Scotland.

10. Data Quality

Migration is the most difficult component of population change to measure, as unlike births and deaths, there is no complete system for registering migration. Migration is estimated using transfers observed in medical cards⁹, detailing the list of patients registered with a family doctor: inflows (persons who come to live in Northern Ireland for a period of at least one year) are estimated by counting the number of people who registered or re-registered with a family doctor; outflows (persons who leave Northern Ireland for a period of at least one year) are estimated by counting the number of people who de-registered with a family doctor¹⁰.

⁸ NISRA has previously issued research papers on population migration, for example, see Northern Ireland Migration Methodology Paper, UK Migration Methodology Paper and Migration Report (2009)

⁹ In previous reports, medical card data was referred to as “health card” data.

¹⁰ Migration definitions used by NISRA originate from the [United Nations definition](#) of a long-term migrant based on a 12 month residency rule.

Medical card data are collated by the Business Service Organisation (BSO) and validation checks are undertaken by NISRA statisticians within BSO. When the data are then sent to NISRA, the population & migration section carries out further checks, for example, on missing or invalid values and on consistency over time. Medical card data are then processed to calculate migration estimates; figures for migration to / from the rest of the UK are agreed between the different UK administrations to provide consistency, accuracy and comparison between UK administrations as possible for users.

The resultant estimates are quality assured by checking the estimates against new National Insurance Numbers registered and the School Census. The administrative sources quoted in the report have been quality assured by their organisation's statisticians, with further checks carried out by statisticians in NISRA's population & migration section. Further detail on collection methods and quality assessments are available for [School Census](#), [birth statistics](#) and [NINo allocations](#).

National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance review to ensure they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has [designated](#) these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. UKSA are currently reassessing population estimates and a report is due later this year. Further information on the monitoring and assessment of statistics can be found on the [NISRA website](#).

11. Limitations

Migration is the most difficult component of population change to measure. The United Nations definition of a long-term migrant based on a 12 month residency rule is used in Northern Ireland. However the administrative sources used in the creation and quality assurance of migration statistics may use different definitions for recording migration.

It is recognised that the medical card source used in the production of population and migration estimates is deficient in recording young adult males; therefore the age distribution of young adult males is adjusted to be similar to the young adult female age distribution. Furthermore, not all outflows are measured fully by the medical card system and therefore de-registrations are scaled up by an additional 67 per cent (i.e. 3 out of 5 persons who leave Northern Ireland to go abroad de-registered from their family doctor). This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population (see [Methodology Report](#)).

While the International Passenger Survey (IPS) is used by England, Wales and Scotland to estimate international migration, NISRA is unable to use this source due to issues relating to the use of the IPS in Northern Ireland. The main issues are that the IPS does not cover the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the uncertainty introduced when “Ireland” is given in response to survey questions – some people stating “Ireland” as their origin or destination may be referring to Northern Ireland.

While this means there is a methodological inconsistency for the international migration estimates of Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, NISRA is content that the data sources used in Northern Ireland to estimate migration yield robust results. Furthermore, Northern Ireland migration statistics have been previously assessed by UKSA, who found them to be fit for purpose¹¹.

Administrative data sources are often collected and formatted by their source departments in a variety of different ways and they may be related to a variety of different demographic areas. These various sources may indicate the movement of a number of different categories of people, rather than the full population as a whole. Furthermore, migration estimates are calculated from mid-year to mid-year (e.g. the most recent migration estimates occurred between July 2013 and June 2014). However, some administrative data sources measure their data using either financial years (April through to March) or by calendar year (January through to December). Due to these variations, administrative data sources collected by NISRA cannot be used as a direct comparison of migration estimates. However they are useful for analysing the broad direction of migration flows (i.e. if migration flows are increasing or decreasing).

¹¹[UKSA Assessment Report - Statistics on Demography and Vital Events in Northern Ireland \(2011\)](#)

When comparing migration estimates across the UK, it is important to remember the various sizes of the countries and their affiliated populations, ranging from 1.8 million in Northern Ireland to 54.3 million in England ([mid-2014 population estimates](#)). The large differences in population and therefore in the numbers moving into /out of each administration, as well the effects population size may have on proportions, etc., should be taken into consideration when reading comparisons across the UK.

NISRA

August 2015

Background Notes

1. Migration estimates for Northern Ireland are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Following international guidelines migration statistics relate only to long-term migrants (i.e. someone who changes their place of residence for one year or more (Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, United Nations, 1998)).
2. Detailed migration statistics can be found on [NISRA website](#).
3. Migration estimates for the year ending mid-2014 were produced and released alongside the [Mid-Year Population Estimates](#) on 4 June 2015. Population statistics relate to the usually resident population of Northern Ireland including Her Majesty's Forces stationed here.
4. Further information on the methodology for official migration estimates is available in the population and migration estimates [Methodology Report](#).
5. Interactive content on migration, along with further statistics, are available on the [NINIS website](#).
6. This report coincides with the release of [UK quarterly migration](#) and the [UK migration indicator suite](#) by the Office for National Statistics, [UK Immigration Statistics](#) by the Home Office, and [National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals](#) by the Department for Work and Pensions.
7. An [infographic](#) has been released to highlight the key figures for Northern Ireland migration statistics (2014).
8. Migration statistics are available for [Scotland](#), published by National Records Scotland (NRS); for [England and Wales](#), published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS); and for the [Republic of Ireland](#), published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The estimates for the Republic of Ireland relate to the year ending mid-April, rather than 30 June, as is used by all UK administrations.
9. Migration estimates for mid-2014 to mid-2015 are expected to be published along with the Population estimates for Northern Ireland in May/June 2016.
10. The revisions policy for Northern Ireland migration statistics is available [here](#).

11. We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release.
Please complete a short [survey](#) or send feedback directly to census.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk.
12. Follow NISRA on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
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