



# United Kingdom (cooperation suspended)

## General Information



### Population

68 350 000 (World Bank 2023)  
68 265 200 (STAT UK 2023)



### Immigration

9 359 587 (Eurostat 2019)  
1 316 000 (STAT UK 2023)



### Emigration

4 732 510 (UN Emigration  
Stock 2020)  
450 000 (STAT UK 2023)



### Working-age population

43 301 590 (World Bank 2023)  
43 030 000 (STAT UK 2024)



### Unemployment rate

4 % (World Bank 2023)  
4.3 % (STAT UK 2024)



### GDP

3 380 854 520 809.5 current  
prices USD (World Bank 2023)  
2 535 017 000 000 current  
prices GBP (STAT UK 2023)



### Refugees and IDPs

#### Refugees

482 780 (UNHCR 2024)

#### Asylum Seekers

128 285 (UNHCR 2024)  
67 337 (STAT UK 2023)

#### IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2024)



### Citizenship

#### By Birth

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT  
2022)

#### By Descent

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT  
2022)

#### Years of Residency

5 (GLOBALCIT 2022)



### Territory

243 610 km<sup>2</sup> (CIA World  
Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

# Migration Authorities

## Responsible Body

UK Home Office

- Border Force;
- HM Passport Office;
- Immigration Enforcement;
- UK Visas and Immigration.

## Line Ministries

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

## Department for Work and Pensions

Department for Health and Social Care

## Agencies

Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner

Migration Advisory Committee

Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority

National Crime Agency

Serious Fraud Office

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

UK Statistics Authority

Evaluation Task Force

## Key Policy Documents

Nationality and Borders Act 2022

Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020

Immigration Act 2016

Immigration Act 2014

Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009

Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008

Tribunals, Courts and enforcement Act 2007

UK Borders Act 2007

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006

Asylum and Immigration (etc) Act 2004

Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Special Immigration Appeals Commission Act 1997

Asylum and Immigration Act 1993

Immigration Act 1988

British Nationality Act 1981

Immigration Act 1971

Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968

British Nationality Act 1948

British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914

Aliens Act 1905

The UK is a country of immigration, with an estimated positive net migration of 239,000 people in the year ending June 2021. The 67 million population of the country continues to grow, and the growth is largely attributed to immigration. In mid-2021, the non-UK-born population stood at 9.6 million and the non-British population – at 6 million. The five most common countries of birth of immigrants were India, Poland, Pakistan, the Republic of Ireland and Germany. Moreover, Indians and Poles represent the two most populous groups of residents of both non-UK-born and non-British origin.

Between June 2020 and June 2021, 573,000 people immigrated to and 334,000 emigrated from the UK. The immigration flow consisted of 58% non-EU nationals, 32% EU nationals and 10% British nationals. Meanwhile, emigrants were mostly EU and British nationals (58% and 18% respectively), followed by 24% non-EU citizens. Yet, based on the new estimates based on tax and benefits records released in April 2021, the immigration of EU citizens compared to non-EU citizens might have been underestimated in the period 2012-2020. According to this new dataset, annually the UK received on average 407,500 EU nationals and 262,000 non-EU nationals. Meanwhile, traditional data on long-term international migration gave an average annual estimation of 224,900 EU and 297,100 non-EU nationals respectively. One thing that emerges consistently across data sources is that EU citizens made up a declining share and non-EU citizens an increasing share of immigration and net migration after the Brexit referendum.

The number of visas and permits granted to foreigners between March 2021 and March 2022 was 1,618,367, representing a two-fold increase compared to the same period in 2020-2021. Excluding persons who come to visit the country, most immigrants arrive in the UK to study and work, with 3% coming for family reasons and 13% for other purposes. Since January 2021, the country has been granting separate visas to the British (Overseas) Nationals, the number of whom reached 123,400 persons by the end of March 2022. In response to Ukraine's displacement crisis, the UK also operates three visa schemes for Ukrainians - the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, and the Ukraine Extension Scheme – under which as of 2 August 2022 it issued 48,200, 123,000 and 13,400 visas respectively.

In the year ending March 2022, the UK received 55,146 asylum applications (main applicants only) constituting the highest number since 2003. The country granted protection to 15,451 people, of whom 82% received asylum, 6% – humanitarian protection, 2% – alternative forms of leave and 11% got refugee status through resettlement schemes, excluding those relocated under the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy launched in January 2022 and in April 2021. 6,000 partners and children of refugees living in the UK acquired family reunion visas. The top ten nationalities claiming asylum in the UK in 2020-2022 were Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Albania, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Vietnam, Pakistan and India. According to UNHCR, the UK hosted 135,912 refugees, 83,489 asylum seekers and 3,968 stateless persons in mid-2021.

When looking at the attempts to enter the UK irregularly, 2021 saw 28,526 arrivals with small boats across the Channel, representing a three-fold increase compared to 2020. Most such arrivals constituted migrants from Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Syria and Vietnam. In addition, the UK recorded 2,563 inadequately documented air arrivals, 5,038 detections inside the country and 665 detections at UK ports. In 2017, the stock of irregular migrants was estimated at 800,000 to 1.2 million people, around half of whom originated from the Asia-Pacific region and a fifth from sub-Saharan Africa. Presumably, most of them either overstayed their visa or remained in the country after receiving a negative asylum decision. In 2021, the UK enforced 2,761 returns, 18% fewer than in 2020 and 62% fewer than in 2019.

When it comes to trafficking in human beings, a series of counter-trafficking operations and awareness-raising activities were launched as part of the AIDANT COVID-19 project in June 2020, resulting in 27 new investigations, made 16 arrests, and referred 13 potential victims. Through the National Referral Mechanism, authorities referred 10,613 potential trafficking victims for care in 2020. The AIDANT project resulted in more than 770 trafficking-related arrests in the period 2017-2019.

In While younger age groups favour Australia, Spain is playing an important role in retirement migration. Most British emigrants leave the country for work reasons and to enhance quality of life. Typically, more British people leave the UK than return every year. However, in the year ending June 2021 net migration of British nationals was close to zero. This reduction in the migration of UK nationals is likely to be explained by the combined effects of Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic.

The UK migration policy has changed significantly with Brexit putting an end to the free movement of persons between the EU and the UK as of January 2021. Yet, the EU, EEA and Swiss citizens can enter the UK without a visa and stay for up to 6 months. Moreover, those EU+ nationals who were living in the UK before 31 December 2020 could apply to the free EU Settlement Scheme. Up to 31 March 2022, some 5.83 million people – 5.4 million EEA and Swiss nationals and ca. 422,400 non-EEA nationals – had applied to this scheme.

For new immigrants to the UK, a points-based system has been introduced, including a route for skilled workers with a job offer from an approved sponsor. A global talent scheme has been opened up to the EU, EEA and Swiss nationals, providing a route for highly-skilled scientists and researchers without a job offer. Students from the same countries can apply for a student visa. In addition, a new graduate visa is available to international students who received a degree in the UK. For Irish citizens, the Common Travel Area arrangements apply, under which they may enter the UK freely (with limited exceptions).

In 2022, the UK passed a broader package of asylum reforms. The 2022 Nationality and Borders Act increased penalties both for people smugglers and for those entering the UK illegally or overstaying their visa, introduced a two-tier asylum system granting lower levels of protection to those arriving by irregular means, removed stages of appeal for certain cases, and introduced new regulations about age assessments, among others. Updates to the immigration rules were introduced, coming into effect in June 2022.

In April 2022, the government announced plans to reform the asylum dispersal policy with the aim to spread asylum seekers more evenly between local authorities. The same month, the UK concluded a Migration and Economic Development Agreement with

**Rwanda**, including a five-year 'asylum partnership arrangement'. **Rwanda agreed** to admit persons who are considered 'inadmissible' to the UK's asylum system. The UK in turn is providing £120 million in funding to Rwanda, which foresees payments covering the integration costs of each relocated person.

**Furthermore**, the navy in partnership with the border force assumed operational command in the English Channel. £50 million new funding will support their work. Intercepted boats will be brought to Dover for screening. From there, intercepted persons will be allocated to accommodations.

The reform package has been firmly criticised. The **UK Law Society**, for example, raised concerns about the incompatibility of some provisions of the 2022 **Nationality and Borders Act** with international law. More than 150 other organisations, including **UNHCR**, expressed their **opposition to the asylum partnership agreement with Rwanda**.

The UK endorsed the Global Compact for Migration in 2018. It is actively cooperating with international organizations, such as **UNHCR**, **IOM** or **ICMPD**, and is involved in a range of migration dialogues, such as the **Prague Process** or the **Budapest Process**.

*latest update: 30 August 2022*

# Relevant Publications

UK Government: Entering and staying in the UK

UK Government: Why do people come to the UK? To work, May 2022

UK Government: How many people are detained or returned? May 2022

UK Government: How many people continue their stay in the UK or apply to stay permanently? May 2022

UK Government: How many people do we grant asylum or protection to? May 2022

UK Government: Global Talent Visa Evaluation, May 2022

House of Commons Library Research Briefing: Migration Statistics, May 2022

Citizenship and naturalisation for migrants in the UK, May 2022

The Fiscal Impact of Immigration in the UK, March 2022

How Secure is Pre-Settled Status for EU Citizens After Brexit? March 2022

Public attitudes to labour migrants in the pandemic: dynamics during 2021, April 2022

Policy Primer: The UK's 2021 points-based immigration system, May 2021

Public attitudes to labour migrants during the pandemic: localised findings, April 2022

Where do migrants live in the UK? March 2022

EU Migration to and from the UK, February 2022

Migrants in the UK Labour Market: An Overview, January 2022

Work visas and migrant workers in the UK, September 2021

Student Migration to the UK, January 2024

Family Migration to the UK, July 2022

Integration in the UK: Understanding the Data, March 2021

Asylum and refugee resettlement in the UK, May 2021

Recent estimates of the UK's irregular migrant population, September 2020

Migration research and analysis of the UK government

The Migration Observatory of the Oxford University

Sussex Centre for Migration Research

Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS)