

# NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN



Northern Ireland  
Statistics and Research Agency

Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann  
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

**Frequency:** Annual

**Coverage:** Northern Ireland

**Date:** 12 September 2018 (9.30am)

**Theme:** Population and Migration

**Time period:** 2017

## Long-term International Migration Statistics for Northern Ireland (2017)

### Key Points:

#### People who came here to live

- In the year ending mid-2017, 22,100 people came here to live (7.3 per cent less than in year ending mid-2016). More than half (11,300; 51.2 per cent) of the people concerned were from outside the UK (i.e. an international immigrant), while the remainder (10,800; 48.8 per cent) were from the rest of the UK.
- The number of people who came here to live from outside the UK fell by 13.0 per cent (1,700 people) between mid-2016 and mid-2017. In the same period, the number of people arriving to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK decreased by less than 50 people (0.4 per cent).
- The vast majority of inflows were aged 16 to 39 (61.2 per cent of inflows from the rest of the UK; 64.3 per cent of international inflows; and 62.8 per cent of total inflows).
- In the calendar year to December 2017, the top three most common countries of previous residence for international inflows to Northern Ireland were Republic of Ireland, Romania and Poland. The most common reasons for international immigrants moving here were work (44.7 per cent), followed by family (27.6 per cent) and education (14.2 per cent).

#### People who left here to live elsewhere

- In the year ending mid-2017, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere (20,900) decreased by 6.5 per cent. Some 51.3 per cent of the people concerned (10,700 people) went to live outside the UK while the remainder (48.7 per cent; 10,200) moved to the rest of the UK.
- Between mid-2016 and mid-2017 the number of people who left to live outside the UK decreased by 7.0 per cent to 10,700 people.
- The number of people who left to live in the rest of the UK fell by 5.9 per cent between mid-2016 and mid-2017 to 10,200 people.

- As was the case with inflows, the vast majority of outflows were aged 16 to 39 years (77.6 per cent of outflows to the rest of the UK; 69.5 per cent of international outflows; and 73.5 per cent of total outflows).

### Net Migration

- As the number of people who moved here to live in the year ending mid-2017 exceeded the number who left (22,100 and 20,900 respectively), this resulted in net inward migration of 1,200 people. This population increase of 1,200 people due to migration can be equally attributed to net inward UK (i.e. 10,800 inflows and 10,200 outflows) and international migration (i.e. 11,300 inflows and 10,700 outflows). This is the fourth successive year that there has been a net inward migration of people to Northern Ireland.
- Six out of the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) experienced net inward international migration in the year ending mid-2017 while the remaining five LGDs experienced a net outflow of international migrants. Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD had the highest level (700 people) of net inward international migration while Belfast LGD had the highest level of net outward international migration (600 people).
- Six of the 11 LGDs experienced net outward migration to the UK with Mid Ulster LGD experiencing the most at 100 people. All the other LGDs experienced net inward migration from the UK with Belfast LGD experiencing the highest (300 people).

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	Background	4
1.2	Purpose of this Bulletin	4
1.3	Comparability between Official Estimates and Administrative Sources	5
<b>2</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL ESTIMATES</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Population Estimates for Northern Ireland	6
2.2	Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland	8
2.3	International Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland	10
2.3.1	<i>International Migration Estimates by Local Government District</i>	11
2.3.2	<i>International Migration Estimates by Age</i>	14
2.4	Comparison of International Migration Estimates across the UK	15
<b>3</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DATA SOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1	Administrative Sources for International Inflows	18
3.1.1	<i>Medical Card Registration Data (calendar year)</i>	18
3.1.2	<i>National Insurance Numbers (NINo) (financial year)</i>	20
3.1.3	<i>Birth registration data (calendar year)</i>	24
3.1.4	<i>2011 Census</i>	25
3.2	Administrative Sources for International Outflows	26
3.2.1	<i>Medical Card De-registration Data (calendar year)</i>	26
3.3	Administrative Sources for International Population (stock)	28
3.3.1	<i>School Census (academic year)</i>	28
3.3.2	<i>2011 Census</i>	29
<b>4</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>DATA QUALITY</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>BACKGROUND NOTES</b>	<b>34</b>

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

## 1.1 Background

As part of its [annual publication of Population Estimates](#), NISRA produces official migration estimates for Northern Ireland which reflect the estimated flows of people to and from Northern Ireland from 1 July to 30 June each year. These migration estimates are primarily based on changes observed in the Medical Card Register<sup>1</sup> and detail the inflows and outflows by age and gender for those travelling to/from the rest of the UK and areas outside the UK. Those travelling to/from areas outside the UK are referred to in this bulletin as international migrants.

## 1.2 Purpose of this Bulletin

The purpose of this bulletin is twofold, namely:

1. To provide a contextual summary of the most recent Population and Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland, with specific focus on the international migration element of those statistics; and
2. To supplement the official migration estimates by collating and reporting on a number of administrative statistics that provide some insight into recent changes/trends in international migration to/from Northern Ireland.

As such, this bulletin details the key findings of the most recent population and migration estimates for Northern Ireland for the year ending mid-2017, which were published on 28 June 2018 as part of the [2017 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#), while also focussing on information relating to international migration indicators from the following administrative sources:

- Health and Social Care Business Services Organisation (BSO) Medical Card Register<sup>2</sup>
- National Insurance Number (NINo) statistics
- General Register Office Birth statistics
- Department of Education School Census statistics

---

<sup>1</sup> The Health and Social Care Business Services Organisation (BSO) Medical Card Register is a list of patients registered with a family doctor (see [Population Estimates Methodology Report](#) for more information).

<sup>2</sup> In previous reports the Medical Card Register (or Medical Card data) was referred to as “health data”.

- 2011 Census<sup>3</sup>

Detailed tables for administrative statistics relating to migration indicators for Northern Ireland and Local Government Districts are available on the [NISRA website](#). Further to the list above, these include statistics from:

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Driver & Vehicle Agency
- Higher Education Statistics Authority
- Health and Social Care Interpreting Services
- Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey

### **1.3 Comparability between Official Estimates and Administrative Sources**

While this bulletin sets out the administrative sources available to indicate levels of international migration for Northern Ireland, it is important to note that these sources may not always be directly comparable with the official migration estimates. There are two main reasons for this:

1. The administrative sources can measure their data using time periods (e.g. financial years or calendar years) which are different to the defined period within the official migration estimates for Northern Ireland (i.e. 1 July to 30 June).
2. They may not provide full coverage of the population of interest. For example, while the Medical Card Register is the source upon which the official migration estimates are based, it is known to be deficient as not everyone who comes here registers with a family doctor (GP) and not everyone who leaves de-registers with their GP. As such, this is adjusted for in the production of official migration estimates.

Therefore, while quantitative statistics are included, it is intended that the information provided within this bulletin to supplement the official migration estimates is purely for the purposes of providing indications of the most recent trends/changes in international migration for Northern Ireland.

---

<sup>3</sup> While the 2011 Census cannot provide information relating to recent international migration to/from Northern Ireland, it is able to provide figures relating to (i) the levels of inflows in the year leading up to the Census and (ii) indicators of the international population in Northern Ireland as of March 2011.

## 2 Summary of Official Estimates

In this section a summary is provided of the most recent Population and Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland, with focus put on the migration component of the estimates. In addition, further detail is provided relating to the international element of the official migration estimates. Data presented in this section relates to the mid-year to mid-year time cycle (i.e. 1 July to 30 June).

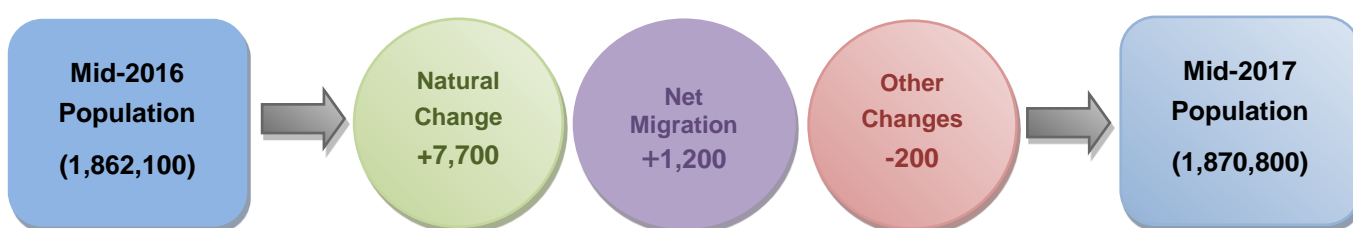
### 2.1 Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

The size of the resident population in Northern Ireland at 30 June 2017 was estimated to be 1.871 million people. Just over half (50.8 per cent) of the population were female, with 950,600 females compared to 920,200 males.

Over the period mid-2016 to mid-2017 the number of people living in Northern Ireland was estimated to have increased by 8,700 people (0.5 per cent). This population increase was a result of the following estimated factors:

1. natural growth of 7,700 people (23,600 births minus 15,900 deaths);
2. an estimated net growth of 1,200 people due to migration. In total 22,100 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 20,900 people left; and
3. a slight reduction of 200 people due to changes in armed forces stationed here.

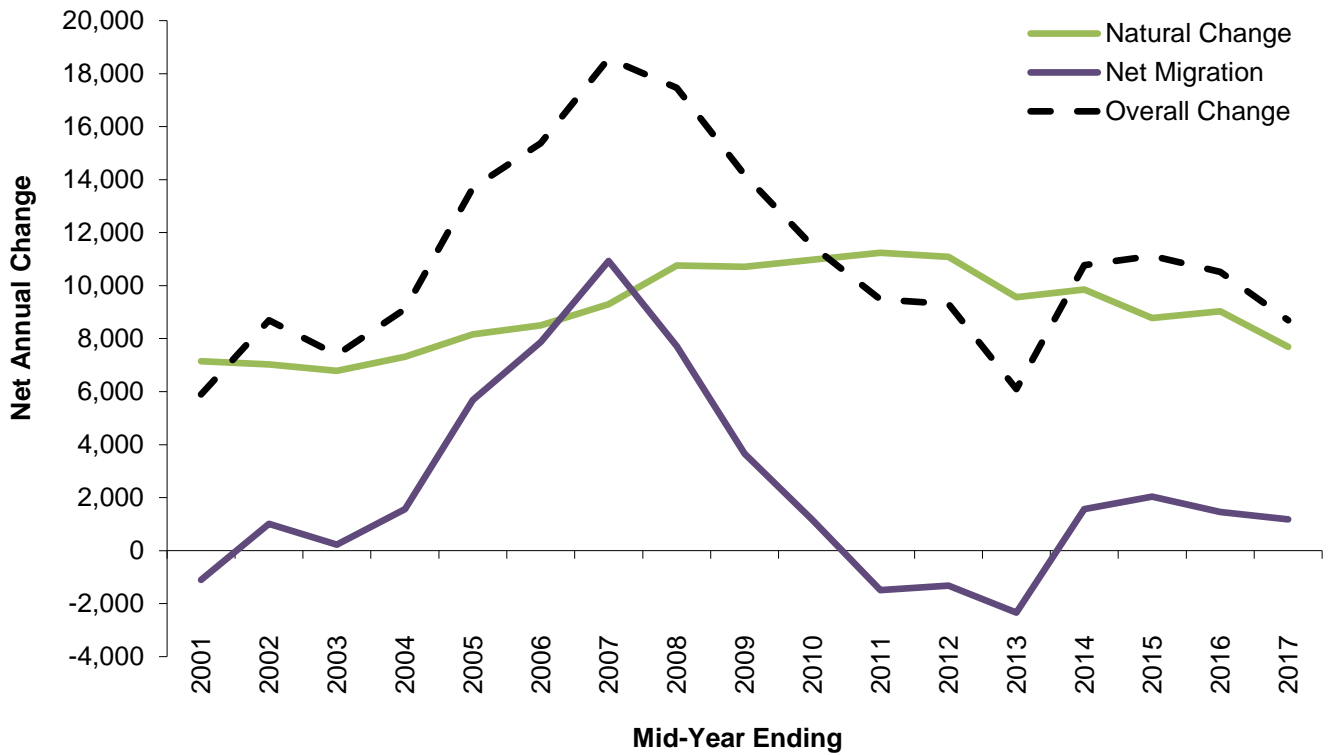
**Figure 1: Contribution of components of change to population increase (year ending mid-2017)**



In the year between mid-2016 and mid-2017 growth due to positive natural change and net migration totalled 8,900 people. As has been the case in recent years, natural change (i.e. births minus deaths) is the main contributor to the increase in population, accounting for 86.8 per cent (7,700 people) of this growth. Net migration (i.e. inflows minus outflows) accounted for 13.2 per cent of the growth, with the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland exceeding those leaving Northern Ireland by 1,200. There was also a small decrease in the number of armed forces personnel stationed in Northern Ireland (200 people), which had a small effect on the change in population during this period (see Figure 1).

Prior to mid-2004, population increase in Northern Ireland was mostly due to natural change. For a brief period between mid-2006 to mid-2007 the contribution from net migration was greater than the contribution from natural change. However, from mid-2008 onwards population growth has again been mainly attributed to natural change (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Components of population change (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2017)**



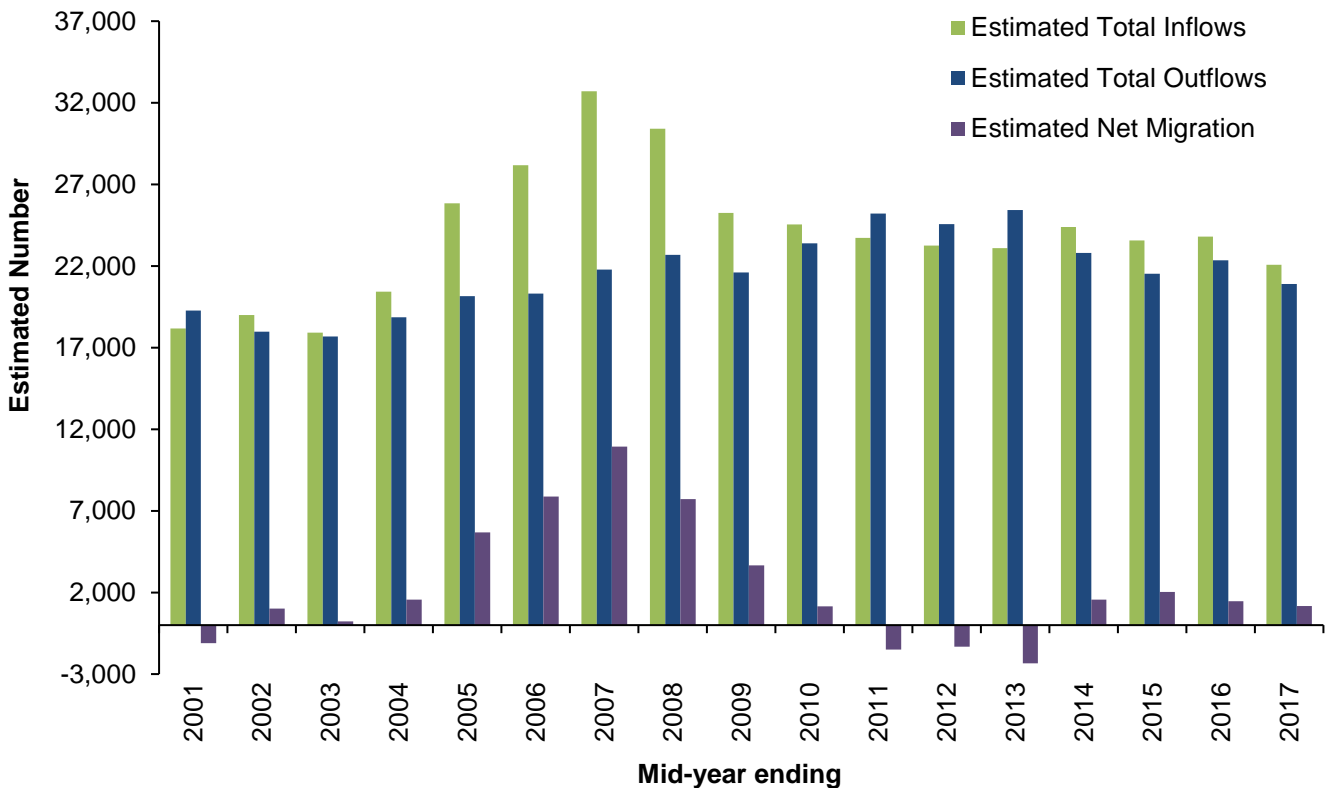
[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 96 Kb)

## 2.2 Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

In the year ending mid-2017, the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live was 22,100 and the number of people leaving to live outside of Northern Ireland was 20,900, resulting in a net increase in the population due to migration of 1,200 people. This was the fourth successive year that the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland exceeded the number who left.

Between the year ending mid-2016 and the year ending mid-2017, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland decreased by 1,500 (6.5 per cent), while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland decreased by 1,700 (7.3 per cent). Since the number of people coming into Northern Ireland decreased more than the number of people leaving Northern Ireland, the net change in population due to migration decreased from +1,500 people to +1,200 people between the year ending mid-2016 and the year ending mid-2017 (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Estimated Total Inflows, Total Outflows and Net Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2017)**



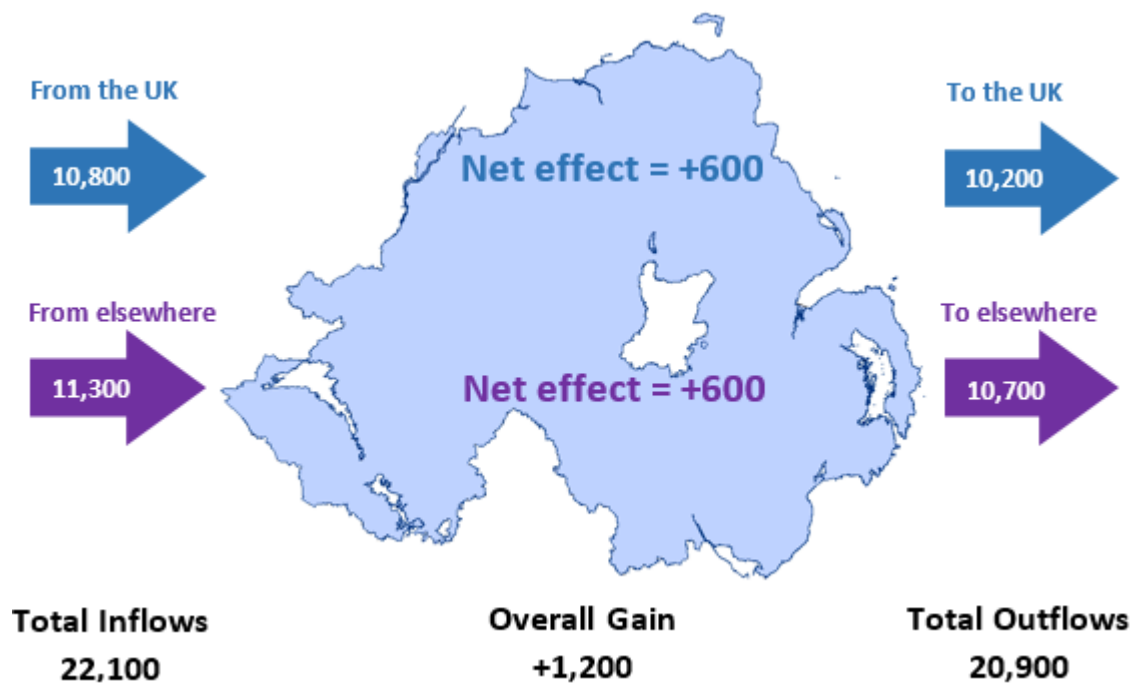
[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 94 Kb)



Between the year ending mid-2016 and the year ending mid-2017, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK decreased by 600 (5.9 per cent), while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK decreased by less than 50 people (0.4 per cent). This led to inflows of 10,800 people and outflows of 10,200 people in the year ending mid-2017 and hence resulted in a net UK migration gain of 600 people.

During the same time, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK decreased by 800 people (7.0 per cent) to 10,700, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK also decreased by 1,700 to 11,300 (13.0 per cent) – resulting in a net gain of 600 people.

**Figure 4: Migration to and from Northern Ireland by Type in the year ending mid-2017**

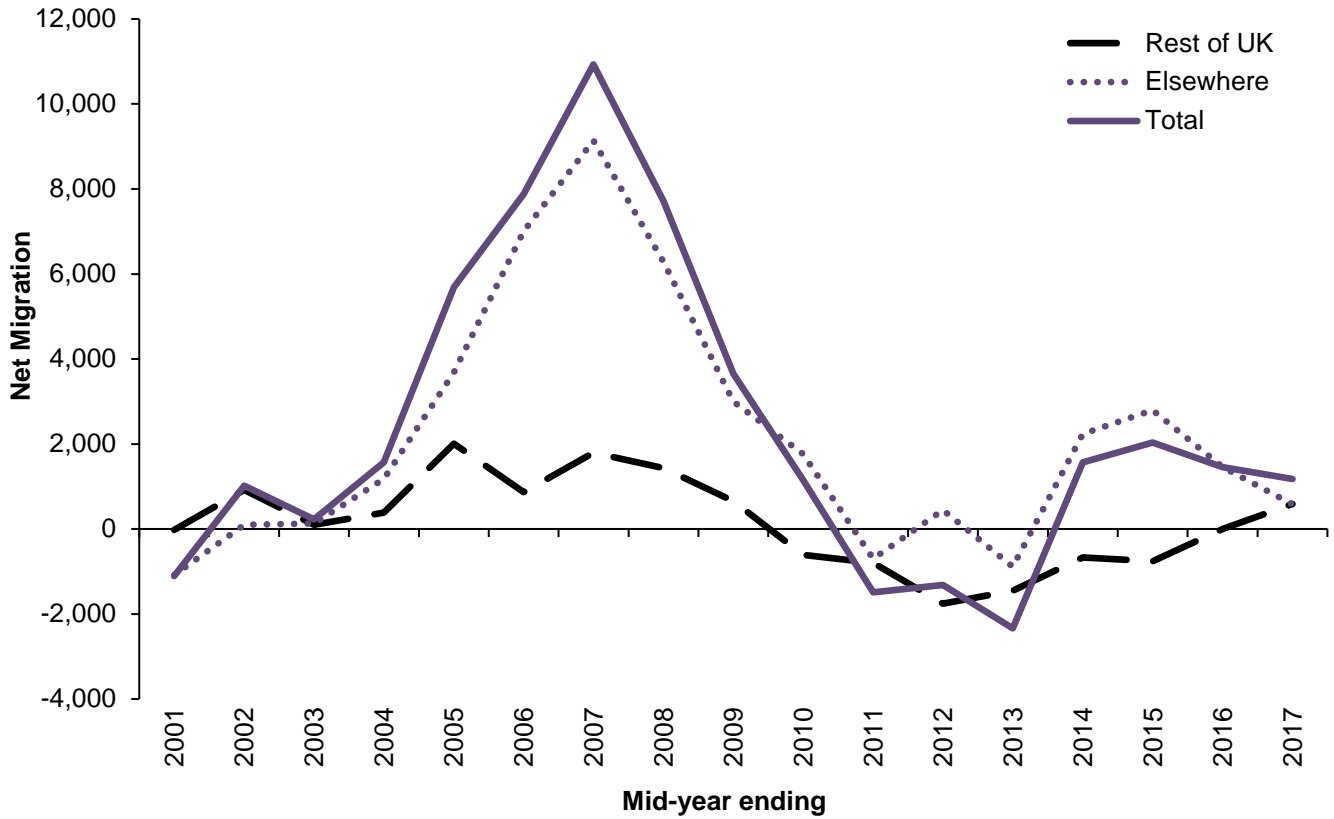


[Download Image](#) (PDF format – 324 Kb)

As a result, the overall increase in population of 1,200 people due to migration in the year ending mid-2017 can be attributed equally to the net gain from UK migration and migration outside the UK (see Figure 4).

Figure 5 shows a time series of net migration by type from year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2017.

**Figure 5: Estimated net rest of UK and International Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2017)**

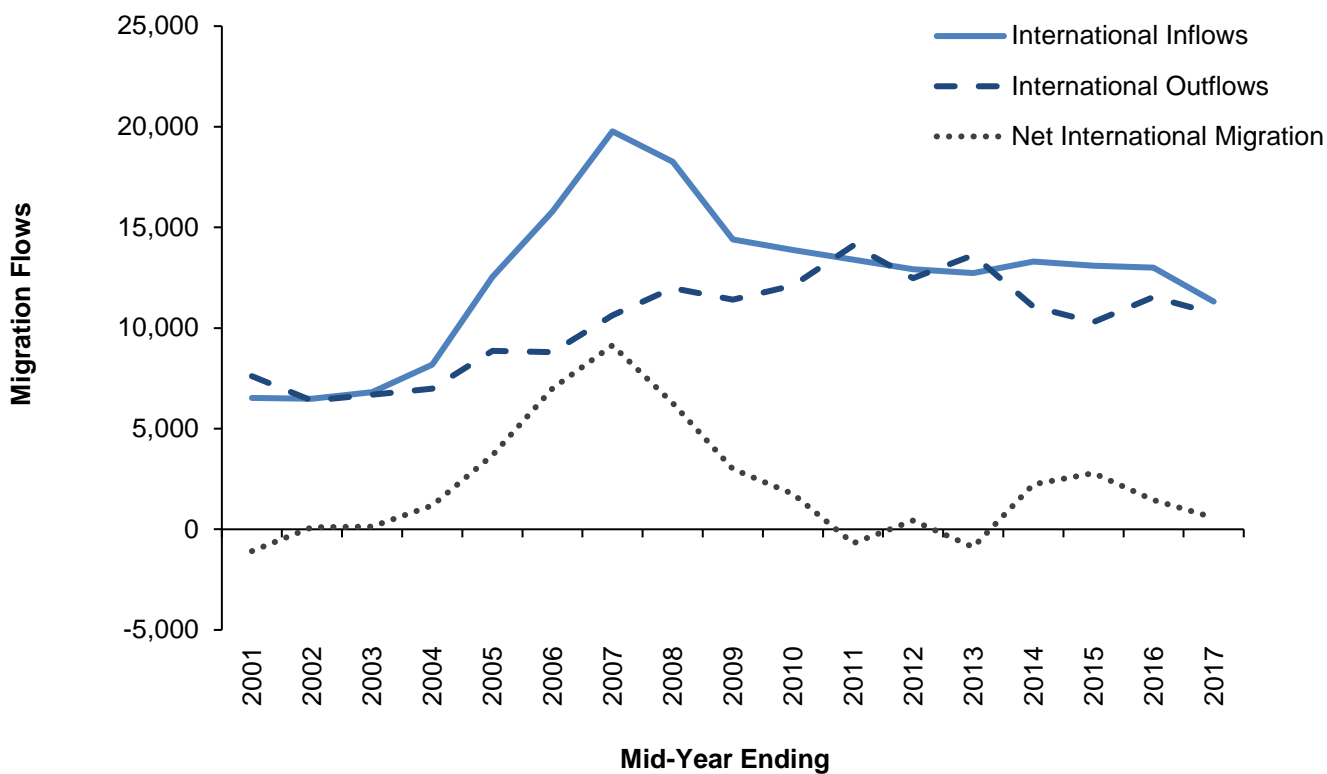


[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 95 Kb)

### 2.3 International Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

Figure 6 shows that while there was a decrease of 13.0 per cent (1,700 people) in the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK (i.e. international inflows) in the year ending mid-2017 (13,000 down to 11,300), the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK (i.e. international outflows) also decreased in the same period (from 11,500 in the year ending mid-2016 to 10,700 in the year ending mid-2017, a decrease of 7.0 per cent).

**Figure 6: Estimated International inflows, outflows, and net migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2017)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 94 Kb)

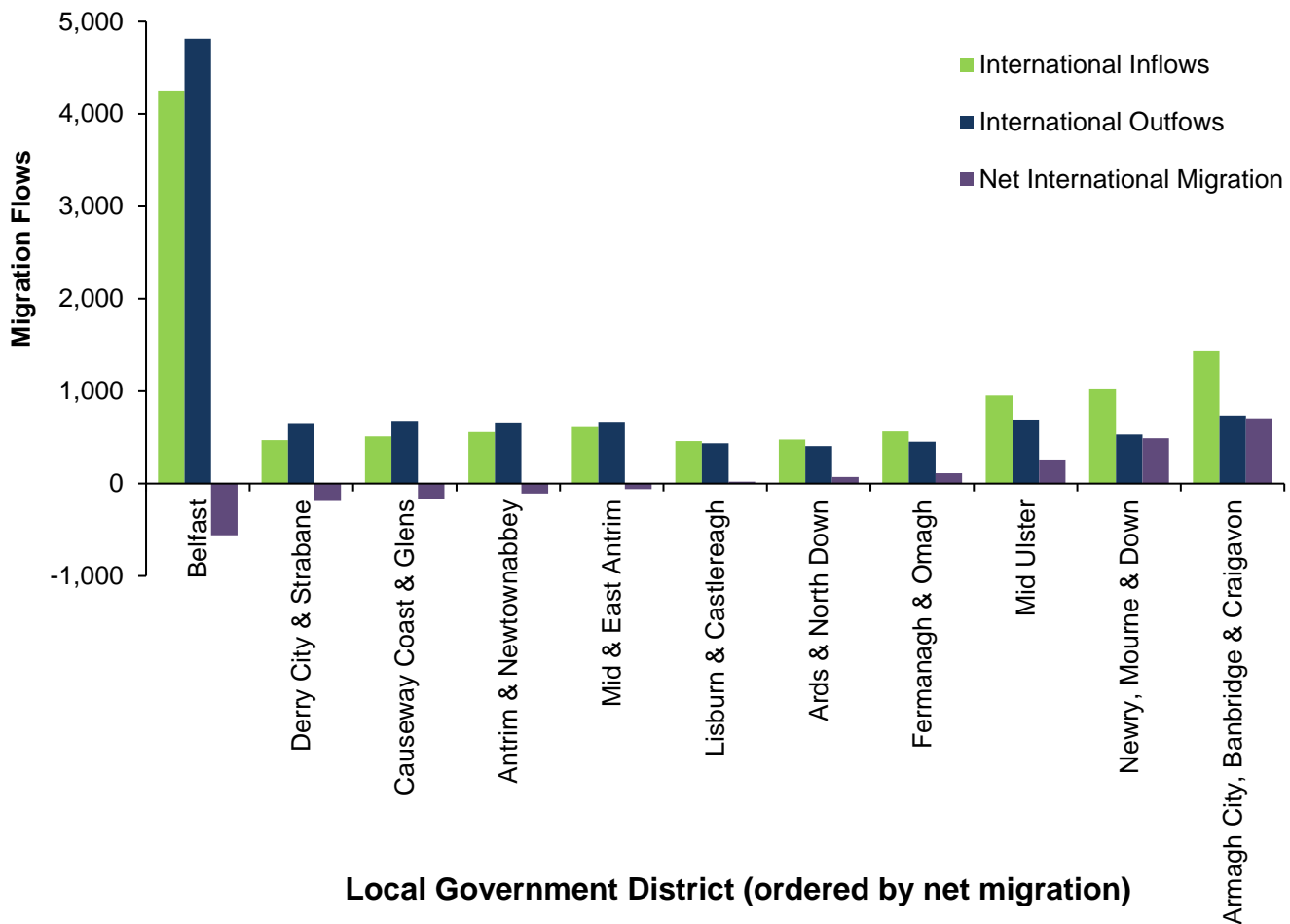
### 2.3.1 International Migration Estimates by Local Government District

Belfast Local Government District had the highest numbers of both international inflows (4,300 people) and international outflows (4,800 people) in the year ending mid-2017. These international flows into and out of Belfast as a proportion of the total Northern Ireland flows were 37.6 and 44.9 per cent respectively. This can be explained by Belfast Local Government District having the largest proportion of the Northern Ireland population living in that district, as well as being a central hub for employment and education.

Despite the large migration inflows, Belfast had the highest level of net outward international migration in the year ending mid-2017 (600 people). Four other Local Government Districts experienced net outflows of international migrants: Derry City and Strabane (200 people), Causeway Coast and Glens (200 people), Antrim and Newtownabbey (100 people) and Mid and East Antrim (100 people).

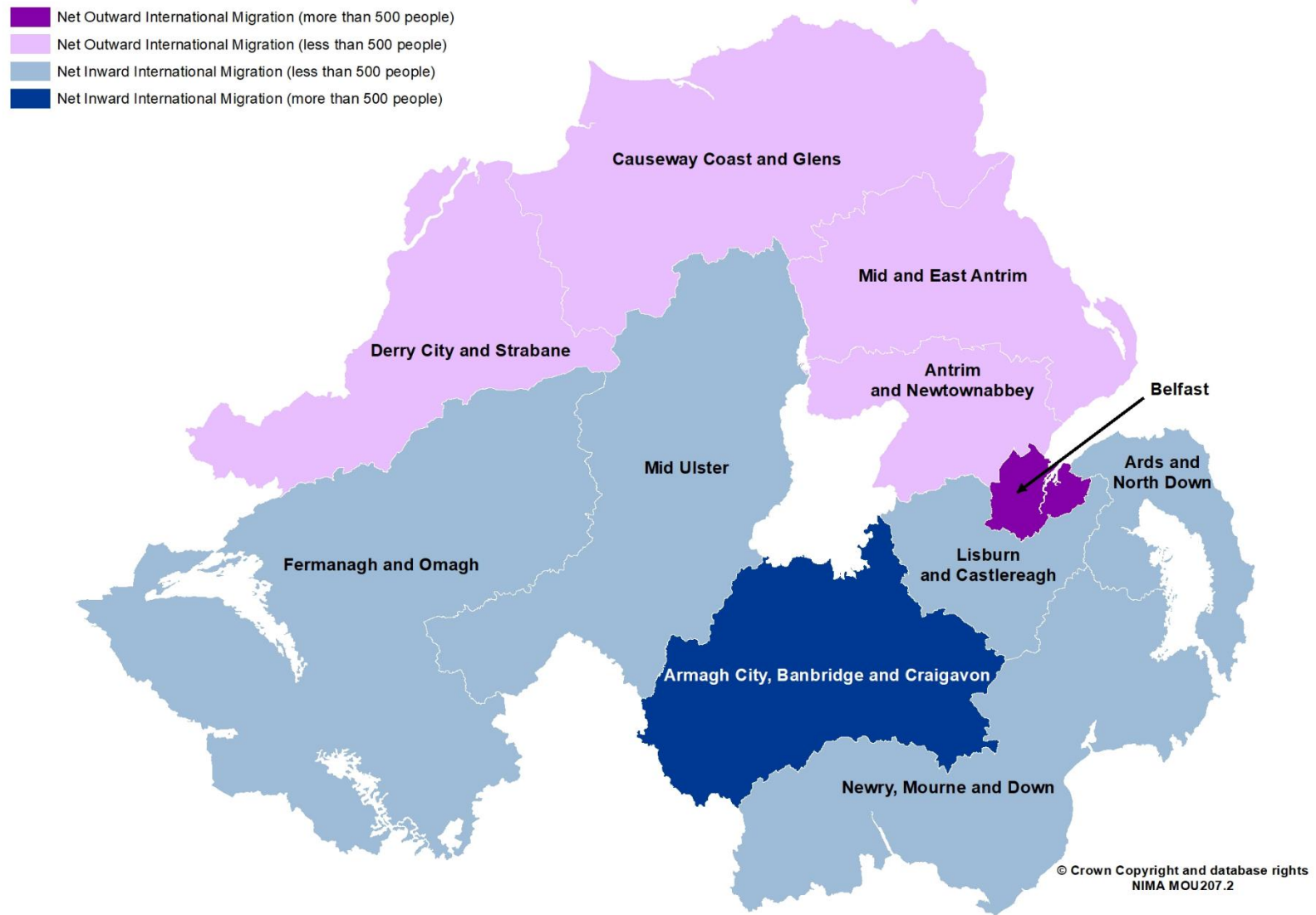
In the same period, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon had the highest level of net inward international migration (700 people) followed Newry, Mourne and Down (500 people) and Mid Ulster (300 people) (see Figure 7 and Map 1).

**Figure 7: Estimated International inflows, outflows and net migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2017) (ordered by net international migration)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 96 Kb)

**Map 1: Net International Migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2017)**



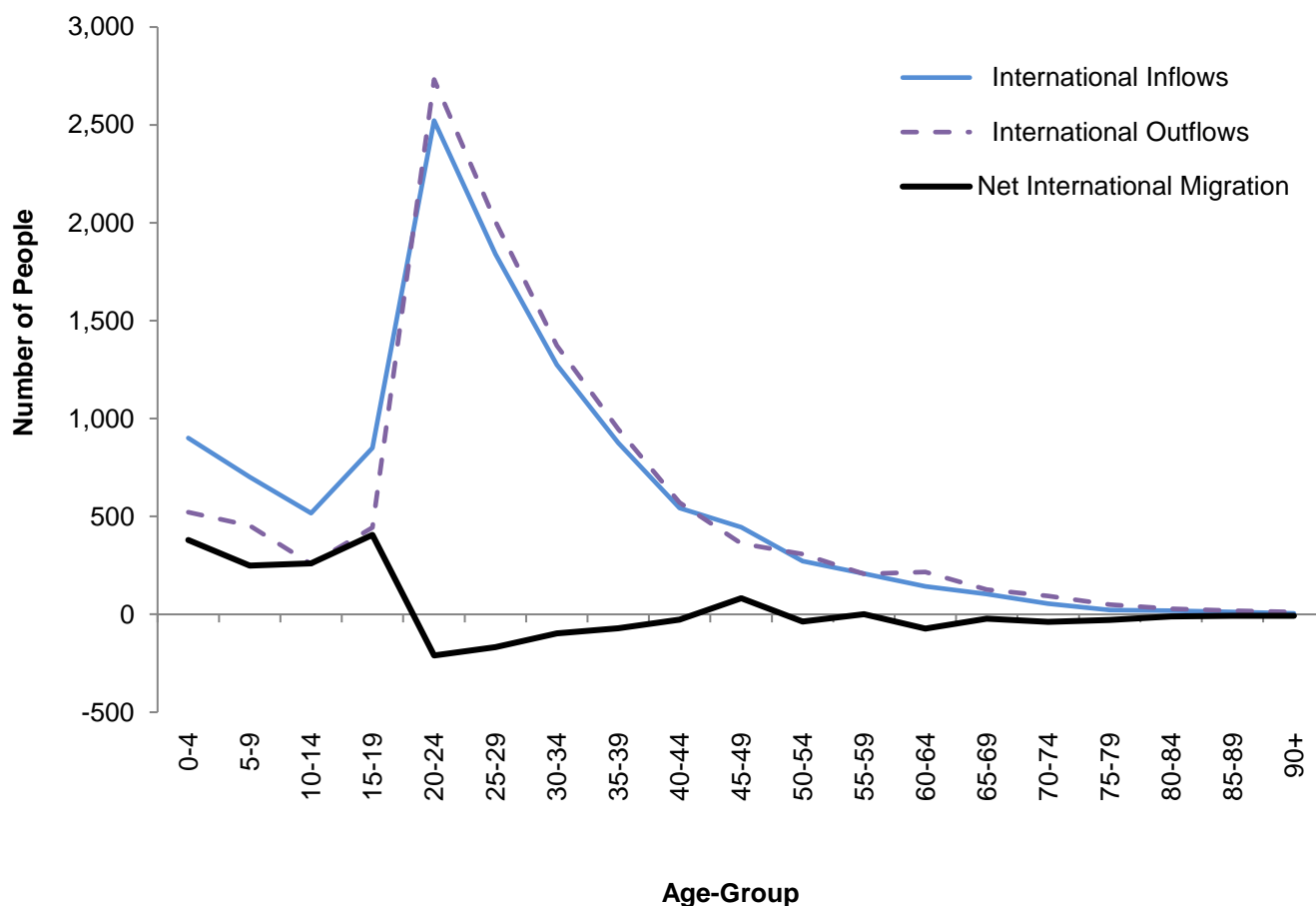
[Download Map](#) (PDF Format – 275 Kb)

### 2.3.2 International Migration Estimates by Age

Figure 8 shows the age distribution of international migrants into and out of Northern Ireland in the year ending mid-2017. 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.

In the year ending mid-2017 international inflows exceeded international outflows for all age groups under 20. The total population increase resulting from net international inward migration almost exclusively occurred in the under 20 age group (1,300 people) with modest net gains in the 45 to 49 and 55 to 59 age groups. Net international outward migration among the other age groups (800 people) had the effect of reducing the total net international inward migration to 600 people.

**Figure 8: Estimated international migration by age (year ending mid-2017)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX Format – 88 Kb)

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.

## 2.4 Comparison of International Migration Estimates across the UK

In the year ending mid-2017, all four UK countries experienced a decrease in international inflows. Scotland experienced the largest percentage decrease (18.6 per cent, 7,500 people) in international inflows, followed by Northern Ireland (13.0 per cent, 1,700 people), England (11.6 per cent, 67,300 people) and Wales (9.5 per cent, 1,600 people).

During the same period, Northern Ireland was the only UK constituent country to experience a decrease in international outflows (7.0 per cent, 800 people). Wales experienced the largest percentage increase in international outflows (41.8 per cent, 3,000 people), followed by Scotland (11.4 per cent, 2,000 people) and England (8.6 per cent, 23,800 people).

Figure 9 below shows that, with the exception of the years ending mid-2011 and mid-2013, both Great Britain and Northern Ireland have experienced an overall net inflow of international migrants each year since the year ending mid-2007.

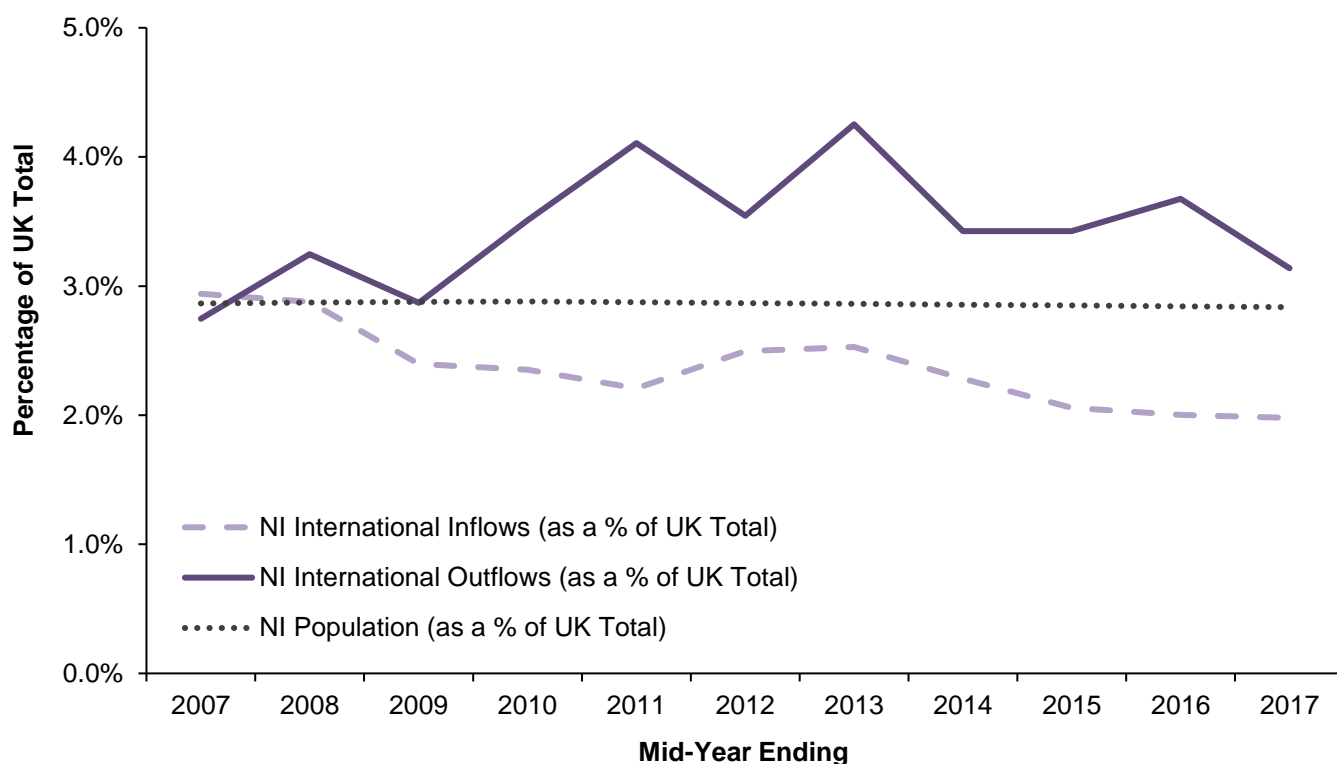
**Figure 9: Net international migration for Great Britain and Northern Ireland per 1,000 of the population (year ending mid-2007 to year ending mid-2017)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 94 Kb)

Figure 10 shows the number of international inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland as a proportion of the UK international inflows and outflows over time. It also shows that the Northern Ireland population as a proportion of the UK population has been stable at just under 3 per cent throughout this period. From this chart it can be seen that, in the year ending mid-2017, Northern Ireland continued to experience a larger share of international outflows relative to its proportion of the UK population and a smaller share of international inflows. The proportion of UK international outflows from Northern Ireland has been changeable in the most recent years, while the proportion of UK international inflows into Northern Ireland has been decreasing at a modest rate since the year ending mid-2013.

**Figure 10: International inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland, as a percentage of UK International Migration (year ending mid-2007 to year ending mid-2017)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 95 Kb)

In the case of Belfast Local Government District, the proportion of international inward migration (37.6 per cent) in the year ending mid-2017 is noticeably higher than the proportion represented by its population at the start of the period (i.e. mid-2016) (18.2 per cent). This is similar to main cities in the UK where the proportion of international inward migration is more than double the proportion represented by their population share. These cities are central hubs for employment and education. The picture is similar with international outward migration (see Table 1).



**Table 1: Population and international migration in main cities as a proportion of respective UK countries (year ending mid-2017)**

Country & City	Mid-2016 Population		Year ending mid-2017 International IN Migration		Year ending mid-2017 International OUT Migration	
	Estimate	As proportion of country*	Estimate	As proportion of country	Estimate	As proportion of country
<b>England</b>	<b>55,268,067</b>		<b>512,075</b>		<b>301,505</b>	
of which London	8,769,659	15.9	190,401	37.2	106,913	35.5
<b>Wales</b>	<b>3,113,150</b>		<b>15,230</b>		<b>10,140</b>	
of which Cardiff	361,168	11.6	4,987	32.7	3,501	34.5
of which Swansea	244,462	7.9	2,454	16.1	1,187	11.7
combined Cardiff & Swansea	605,630	19.5	7,441	48.9	4,688	46.2
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>5,404,700</b>		<b>32,900</b>		<b>19,500</b>	
of which Edinburgh	507,170	9.4	8,538	26.0	4,030	20.7
of which Glasgow	615,070	11.4	9,705	29.5	4,311	22.1
combined Edinburgh & Glasgow	1,122,240	20.8	18,243	55.4	8,341	42.8
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>1,862,137</b>		<b>11,310</b>		<b>10,727</b>	
of which Belfast**	339,579	18.2	4,254	37.6	4,813	44.9

\*Population share is calculated at the start of the period (i.e. in this case mid-2016)

\*\*Belfast Local Government District

[Download Table](#) (XLSX format – 102 Kb)

### **3 Administrative Data sources for International Migration**

This section provides information from a number of administrative data sources relating to international migration for Northern Ireland. As mentioned in Section 1.3, it is important to note that these sources may not always be directly comparable with the official migration estimates due to inconsistencies with their coverage and time periods. That said, these statistics can provide an indication of the recent changes/trends in international migration for Northern Ireland, while in some cases also providing indications as to the reasons for migrating, and the origins / destinations of international migrants.

It is important to note that one of the administrative sources included in this section is the Medical Card Register which, being the most comprehensive data source that can be used to measure flows to and from Northern Ireland, is the primary source of information used in the production of official migration estimates for Northern Ireland. However, there are known deficiencies with the Medical Card Register which have been adjusted for in the production of official estimates (see [Methodology section](#) of this bulletin for more details). These adjustments are made to allow for the production of migration estimates by age and gender. Since this section takes the medical card registration data further than its use for official estimates, the figures have been presented unadjusted and by calendar year.

#### **3.1 Administrative Sources for International Inflows**

NISRA has reviewed a number of administrative data sources that provide information about people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK, which are discussed below. More detailed tables and further administrative sources are available on the [NISRA website](#).

##### *3.1.1 Medical Card Registration Data (calendar year)*

The Medical Card Register is maintained by the Health and Social Care Business Services Organisation (BSO) and is a list of patients registered with a family doctor. At the outset it is acknowledged that while it is advisable for those who come to Northern Ireland to live to register with a GP, not all elect to do so. In addition, In June 2017 a new medical registration form (HSCR1) was introduced in Northern Ireland, requiring applicants taking up residency in, and visiting, Northern Ireland to produce additional supporting documentation as proof of entitlement to medical services. Issues associated with provision of this supporting documentation (including proof of residency, exemption to health service charges and additional signed declarations) have contributed to a drop in migrant applications processed since June 2017.

While this will result in a degree of undercoverage, the information can nevertheless provide valuable insight into the country of previous residence and the reason for moving to Northern

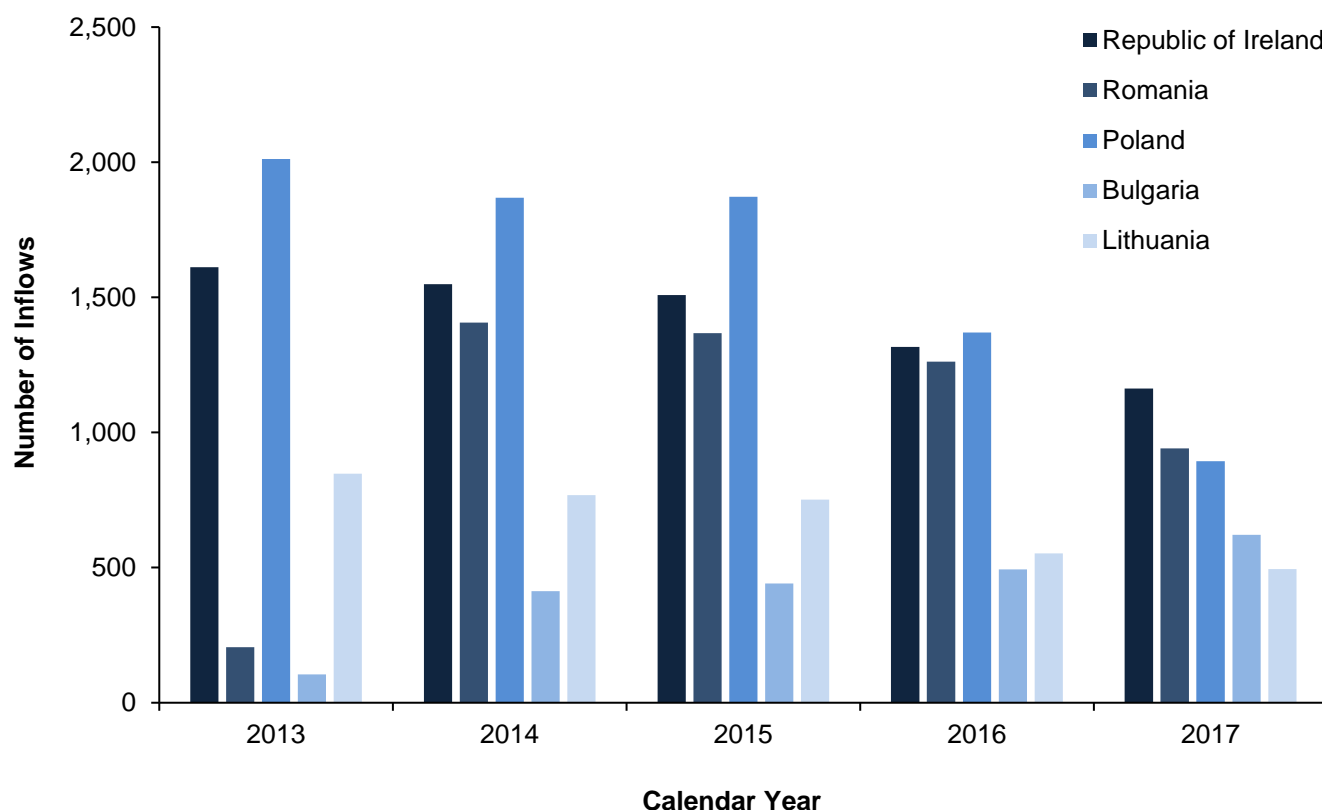
Ireland for those international in-migrants who did register with a GP. This in turn can be helpful in terms of planning service provision in areas such as, for example, language support.

In the calendar year to December 2017 the Medical Card Register shows 9,600 international inflows to Northern Ireland – a 14.5 per cent decrease since 2016.

Analysing medical card data by country of last residence shows that, the Republic of Ireland and Romania were listed the top two most prevalent countries of last residence for people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in the calendar year 2017. However, levels of inflows from these two countries have decreased since the calendar year 2016 (Republic of Ireland: 200 less inflows, down 11.6 per cent; Romania: 300 less inflows, down 25.4 per cent).

This follows a large increase observed from 2013 to 2014 in inflows from Romania (from 200 to 1,400) as a result of Romanian nationals being given the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK<sup>4</sup> on 1 January 2014.

**Figure 11: International Inflows to Northern Ireland by country of last residence (January 2013 - December 2017)**



- The countries included are the top five most prevalent in the latest calendar year (i.e. 2017).

[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 97 Kb)

<sup>4</sup><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/>

As highlighted in Table 2, Republic of Ireland and Romania were the top countries of last residence for international inflows in 7 out of the eleven LGDs. Poland, the third most prevalent country of last residence at the Northern Ireland level, appears in the top three listed countries of previous residence in each of the LGDs, with the exception of Antrim & Newtownabbey, Belfast and Ards & North Down.

The main reason given for coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in 2017 was work (44.7 per cent), followed by family (27.6 per cent) and education (14.2 per cent).

The main reasons vary by country of last residence. For example, the main reasons for coming to live in Northern Ireland among the most prevalent countries of last residence for international inflows shows that for Republic of Ireland the main reason was family (40.9 per cent of inflows from that country), while for Romania, Poland and Bulgaria the main reason was work (69.2, 72.5 and 68.6 per cent of inflows from those countries respectively). In contrast, the main reason for inflows from China was education at 79.3 per cent of inflows.

**Table 2: International Inflows to Northern Ireland by top three countries of last residence for each Local Government District (January 2017 to December 2017)**

Local Government District	Top Countries (Jan 2017 - Dec 2017)		
	First Country (Number)	Second Country (Number)	Third Country (Number)
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Romania (100)	China (100)	Republic of Ireland (<50)
Ards & North Down	Syria (<50)	Romania (<50)	Republic of Ireland (<50)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Bulgaria (300)	Poland (200)	Lithuania (200)
Belfast	China (400)	India (400)	Republic of Ireland (300)
Causeway Coast & Glens	Republic of Ireland (100)	Poland (100)	Germany (<50)
Derry City & Strabane	Republic of Ireland (200)	Poland (<50)	India (<50)
Fermanagh & Omagh	Republic of Ireland (100)	Poland (100)	Hungary (<50)
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Republic of Ireland (<50)	Syria (<50)	Poland (<50)
Mid & East Antrim	Romania (300)	Poland (100)	Bulgaria (<50)
Mid Ulster	Lithuania (100)	East Timor (100)	Poland (100)
Newry, Mourne & Down	Republic of Ireland (200)	Bulgaria (200)	Poland (100)
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Republic of Ireland (1,200)</b>	<b>Romania (900)</b>	<b>Poland (900)</b>

[Download Table](#) (XLSX format – 100 Kb)

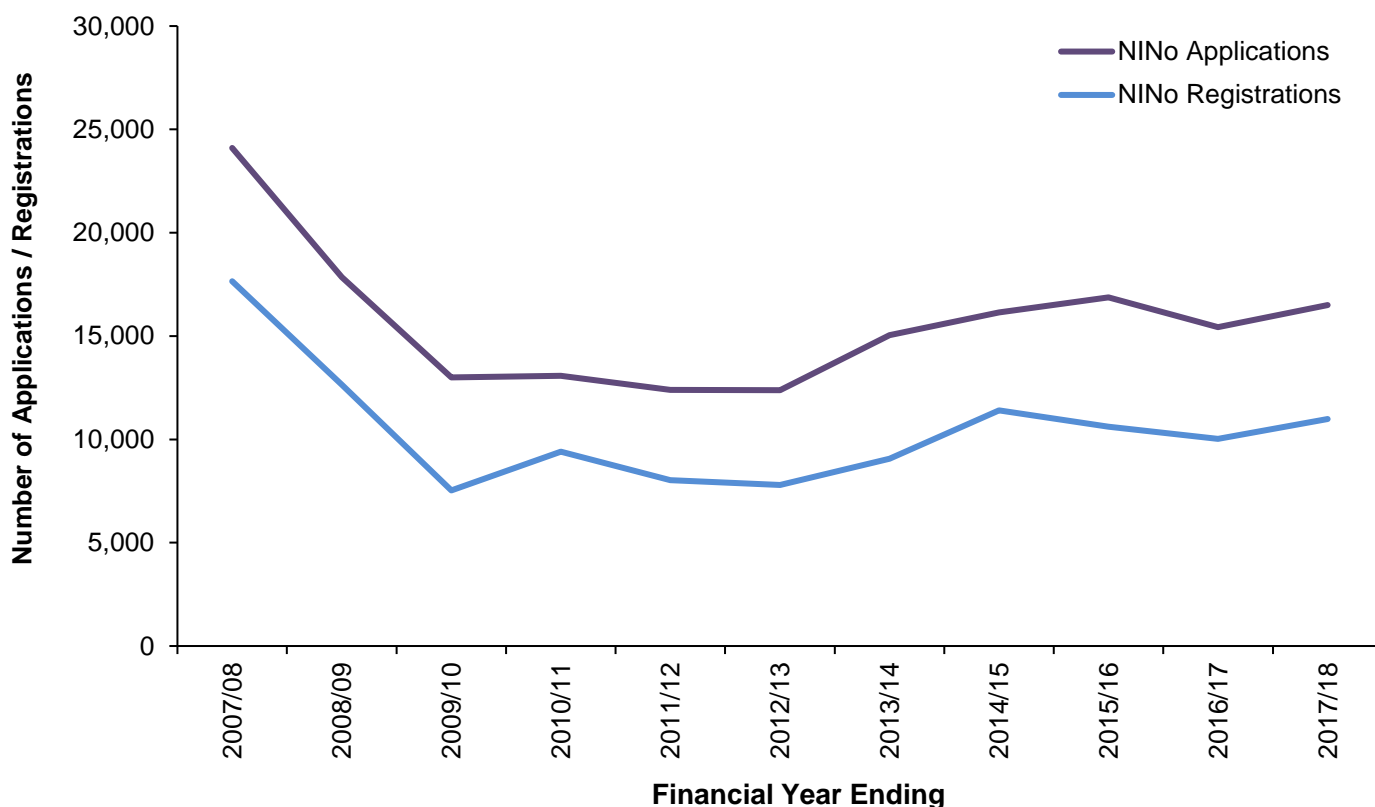
### 3.1.2 National Insurance Numbers (NINo) (financial year)

National Insurance Number (NINo) data is a useful source when looking at international migration into Northern Ireland since information is available for overseas nationals in Northern

Ireland<sup>5</sup> who have either (i) applied for a national insurance number (i.e. NINo applications) or (ii) applied for and received a national insurance number (i.e. NINo registrations). NINo application and registration data is available by financial year (i.e. April to March) from the Northern Ireland [Department for Communities \(DfC\)](#) and the [Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\)](#) respectively.

Figure 12 shows the trend in the number of NINo applications and registrations since the financial year ending March 2008. In the financial year ending March 2018, there was an increase in the number of applications (from 15,400 to 16,500, 7.0 per cent). During the same period there was an increase in the number of registrations associated with non-UK nationals, by 9.5 per cent (from 10,000 to 11,000).

**Figure 12: Northern Ireland NINo Applications and Registrations from non-UK nationals by financial year (2007/08 to 2017/18)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 93 Kb)

<sup>5</sup>It is important to remember that people arriving in Northern Ireland may not necessarily choose to apply for a National Insurance Number at the time of their arrival. As such, some of the NINo data may relate to people already living in Northern Ireland rather than new arrivals.

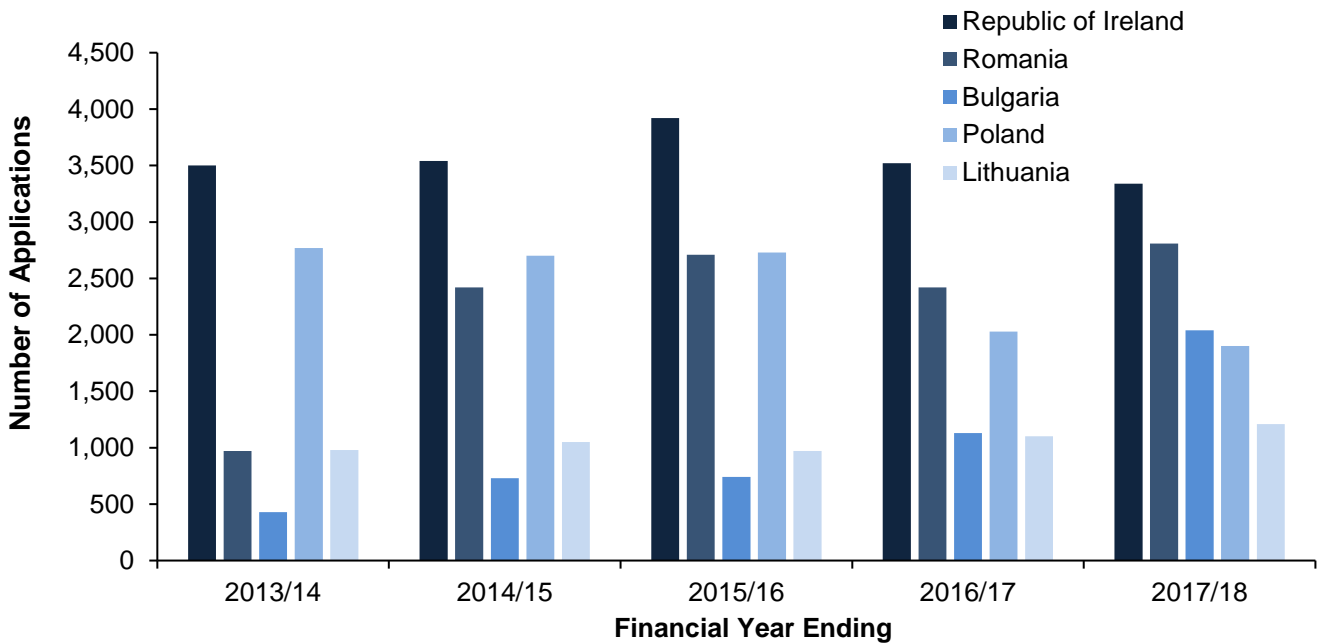
NINo Applications from non-UK Nationals

Figure 13 shows the number of NINo applications from nationalities which were the top five most prevalent in the financial year to March 2018, and provides historical data for these nationalities going back to 2013/14. Applications from nationals from the Republic of Ireland were the most prevalent in the financial year ending March 2018 (3,300 applications), however, the number of applications from nationals from the Republic of Ireland was down by 200 (5.3 per cent) since the financial year ending March 2017.

The number of applications from Romanian nationals (the second most prevalent nationality) increased by 400 (16.2 per cent) in the financial year ending March 2018. This followed a decrease of 300 in the previous financial year. In addition, having been relatively stable for a number of years, the number of applications from Polish nationals also decreased for the second year in a row, down 100 applications (6.6 per cent) in the year ending March 2018.

In the financial year ending March 2018, there was an increase in the number of applications from Bulgarian nationals, rising by 900 (80.5 per cent) to 2,000, overtaking Poland for the first time this decade. The number of applications from Lithuanian nationals also increased by 100 (9.9 per cent) to 1,200, bringing it into the list of top five countries for a second year in a row.

**Figure 13: Northern Ireland NINo Applications from non-UK nationals by nationality and financial year (2013/14 to 2017/18)**



- The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2017/18).

[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 100 Kb)

## NINo Registrations to non-UK Nationals

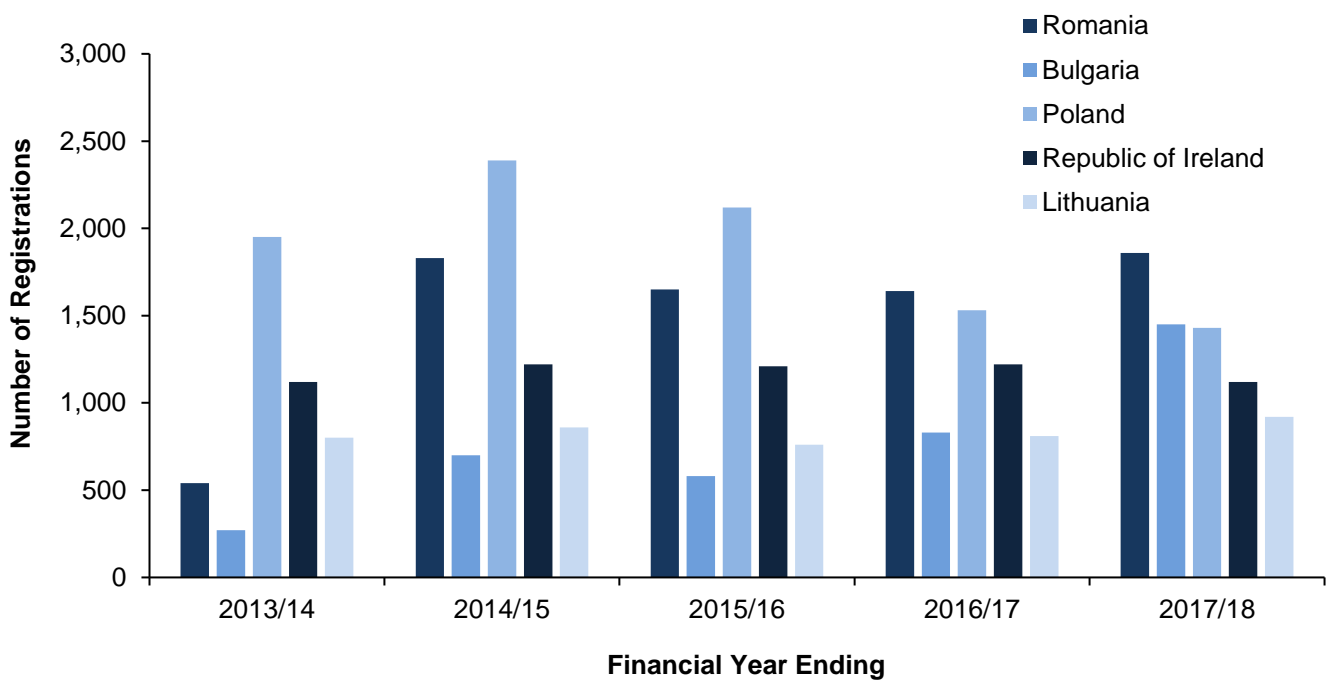
Figure 14 shows the number of NINo registrations from nationalities which were in the top five most prevalent in the financial year to March 2018, and provides historical data back to 2013/14.

Romania was the most prevalent nationality for NINo registrations in the financial year to March 2018 with 1,900 registrations. The overall number of registrations from Romanian nationals increased by 200 (13.4 per cent) from March 2017. Registrations from Romanian nationals had seen large increases over the years since the financial year ending March 2013, most notably between the financial years ending March 2014 and March 2015 where the numbers of registrations increased from 500 to 1,800.

Bulgaria was the second most prevalent nationality for NINo registrations in the financial year to March 2018, having overtaken Polish nationals. Registrations from Bulgarian nationals grew by 75.2 per cent (600 registrations) between March 2017 and March 2018 to 1,500. For the third year in a row, registrations from Polish nationals have fallen (6.7 per cent, 100 registrations), placing Poland third in the list of most prevalent nationalities for the first time in recent years.

Interestingly, when looking at applications and registrations together, there has been a decrease both in the number of NINo **applications** and **registrations** from nationals from Poland in the financial year ending March 2018. Both datasets also show an increase in the number of NINo **applications** and **registrations** from Bulgarian nationals in the same period.

**Figure 14: Northern Ireland NINo Registrations to non-UK nationals by nationality and financial year (2013/14 to 2017/18)**



- The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2017/18).

[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 100 Kb)

### 3.1.3 Birth registration data (calendar year)

The [Vital Statistics](#) Team within NISRA provides statistics on births registered by the General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland – information which includes the parents’ country of birth. Table 3 shows that while the proportion of children born to mothers who were born within the UK has decreased in the twenty years to 2017 (94.6 per cent of births to 87.0 per cent of births), the proportion of children born to mothers born outside the UK has increased. In the calendar year to December 1997, 5.3 per cent of babies were born to non UK-born mothers (1,300 babies out of 24,100), rising to 13.0 per cent (3,000 babies out of 23,100) by December 2017.

**Table 3: Births by mother’s country of birth (Calendar years 1997, 2007 and 2017\*)**

Mother's Country of Birth	Jan 1997 - Dec 1997	Jan 2007 - Dec 2007	Jan 2017 - Dec 2017*
<b>UK</b>	<b>22,800</b>	<b>21,800</b>	<b>20,100</b>
Northern Ireland	21,000	20,300	19,000
Rest of UK	1,800	1,500	1,100
<b>Outside the UK</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>All Births</b>	<b>24,100</b>	<b>24,500</b>	<b>23,100</b>
<i>Percentage of all births to mothers born within the UK</i>	<i>94.6%</i>	<i>89.1%</i>	<i>87.0%</i>
<i>Percentage of all births to mothers born outside the UK</i>	<i>5.3%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>	<i>13.0%</i>

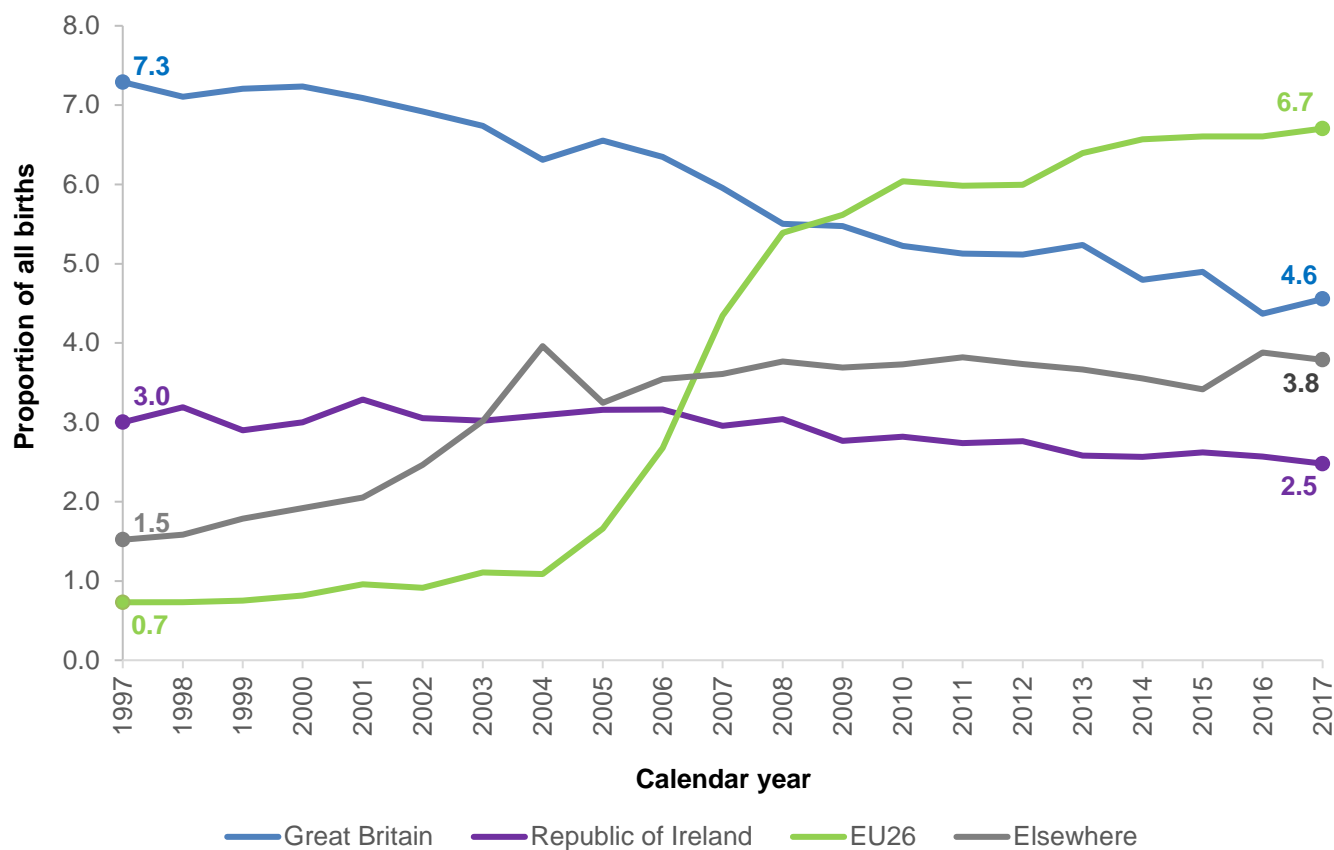
\* Figures for 2017 are provisional and are, therefore, subject to change until the publication of the 2017 Registrar General Annual Report.

[Download Table](#) (XLSX format – 86 Kb)

Figure 15 shows the annual time series relating to the data in Table 3, but also gives some further details as to the countries of birth of mothers who were born outside the UK. It shows that the proportion of births to mothers born in the Republic of Ireland remained broadly stable at around 3.0 per cent in the twenty years to 2017. However, the proportion of births to mothers born in EU26 countries and elsewhere both increased (up 6.0 and 2.3 percentage points respectively). These increases came after the expansion of the EU in 2004 and has resulted in the number of births to mothers from EU26 countries rising from just under 200 in 1997 to over 1,500 in 2017.



Figure 15: Proportion of Births in Northern Ireland by Mother's Country of Birth (1997 to 2017\*)



\* Figures for 2017 are provisional and are, therefore, subject to change until the publication of the 2017 Registrar General Annual Report.

[Download Figure](#) (XLSX format – 94 Kb)

### 3.1.4 2011 Census

A census of population is normally taken every ten years and is carried out by the [NISRA Census Office](#). The latest Census took place on 27 March 2011 and included a question on address 1 year ago. While the Census can't provide figures for those coming to Northern Ireland from outside the UK in recent years, it can be a useful tool to assess the accuracy of both international inflows in 2011 (as derived from the Medical Card Register) and the official migration estimates for mid-2011.

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 countries<sup>6</sup>. It was estimated that in Northern Ireland 13,600 people lived outside the UK one year before Census day. This compared to 12,000 international inflows (as derived from the Medical Card Register)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_385836.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_385836.pdf)

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.

### 3.2 Administrative Sources for International Outflows

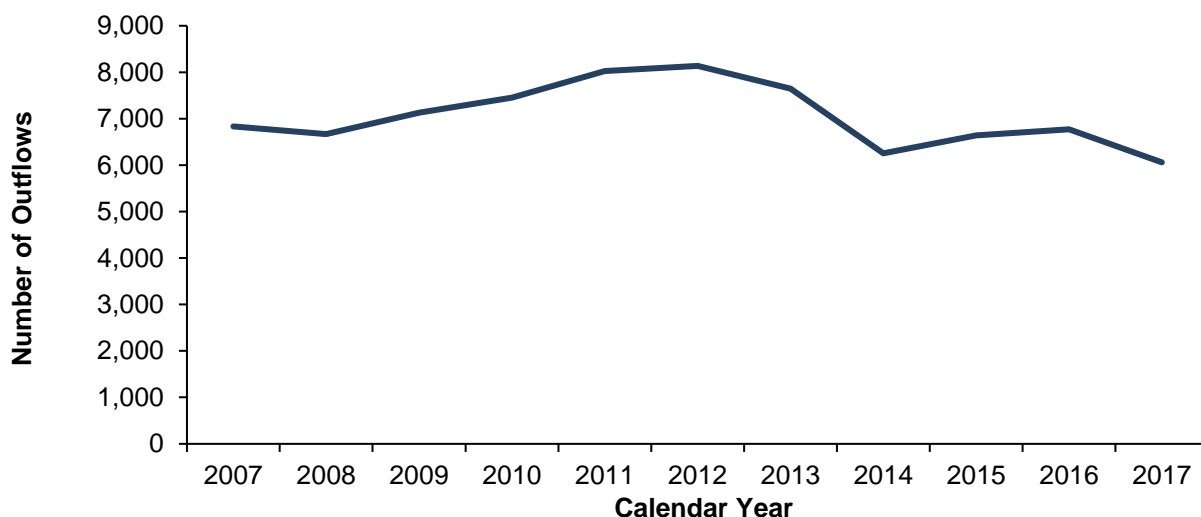
The number of people leaving Northern Ireland is harder to estimate than those arriving, since there are limited data sources available to measure this group. Nonetheless, NISRA has been able to assess information on de-registrations from the Medical Card Register in order to provide some information on those leaving Northern Ireland to a destination outside the UK.

#### 3.2.1 Medical Card De-registration Data (calendar year)

Before getting into the analysis, it is estimated that approximately 3 out of every 5 people who leave Northern Ireland to live outside the UK actually de-register with their GP. In view of this, for the official international migration estimates, NISRA scales up de-registrations by a factor of 1.67 (i.e. 5/3)<sup>7</sup>. While the inferences that can be drawn from the unadjusted Medical Card de-registration data in this section will be limited, the information provides some insight into those that left Northern Ireland to live elsewhere (i.e. outflows).

In the calendar year January to December 2017, there were 6,100 outflows from Northern Ireland to outside the UK, this represents a decrease of 700 (10.5 per cent) from 2016.

**Figure 16: Northern Ireland Outflows to destination outside UK by calendar year (January 2007 – December 2017)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 101 Kb)

<sup>7</sup> This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population (see [Methodology Report](#)).

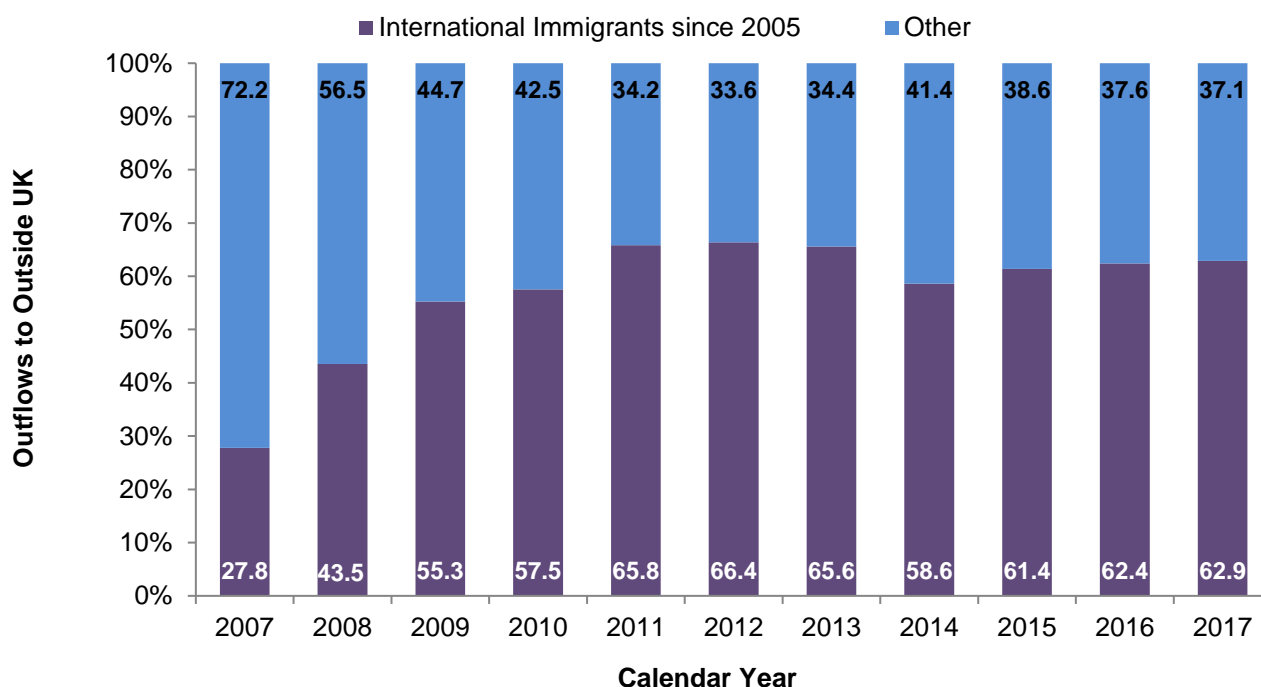
The largest proportion of international outflows from Northern Ireland in 2017 was in Belfast Local Government District (41.7 per cent, or 2,500 out of the total 6,100 outflows). This is the only district whose proportion of outflows exceeded 10 per cent.

Since 2005 information has been collected at the original medical card registration relating to (i) the previous country of residence and (ii) the reason for coming to Northern Ireland to live. Therefore, it is possible to split the analysis of outflows to outside the UK into two groups:

1. those who originally came to Northern Ireland from outside the UK since 2005 (i.e. international immigrants), and
2. those who did not<sup>8</sup> (referred to as 'other' in figure 16 below).

Figure 17 shows that since 2009 approximately 3 out of 5 of all international outflows related to international immigrants.

**Figure 17: Northern Ireland Outflows to destination outside UK by type and calendar year (January 2007-December 2017)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 95 Kb)

<sup>8</sup> This group of outflows is made up from three categories:

- (i) people who were born in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) people who moved to Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK; and
- (iii) people who moved to Northern Ireland from outside the UK prior to 2005.

There is insufficient information available to allocate each outflow 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.

Following this trend, in the calendar year to December 2017, outflows of international immigrants accounted for 62.9 per cent (3,800 people) of all outflows from Northern Ireland to outside the UK, a decrease of 9.8 per cent (400 outflows) since December 2016. In the same period, outflows of those who did not originally come from outside the UK since 2005 fell by 11.5 per cent (300 outflows) to 2,200 people.

Outflows of international immigrants who originally came to Northern Ireland either for work (1,300 people) or family reasons (700 people) remained relatively unchanged from December 2016. There was a decrease in the number of outflows from those who originally came for education (from 1,900 in December 2016 to 1,600 in December 2017).

It is important to note that this information relates to figures for the calendar year and while official mid-year migration estimates use the same medical card de-registration data to estimate international outflows, the data is extracted for the period relating to 1 July to 30 June each year to reflect the mid-year to mid-year period. During the year ending mid-2017 the number of international outflows decreased by 7.0 per cent and it is this trend that is reflected in the official migration estimates.

### **3.3 Administrative Sources for International Population (stock)**

There are a number of administrative data sources that provide information about the number of people living in Northern Ireland who came from outside the UK. Some of these are discussed below, with further information provided on the [NISRA website](#).

#### *3.3.1 School Census (academic year)*

Each year the Department for Education in Northern Ireland (DE) undertakes a [School Census](#), most recently in October 2017 for the 17/18 academic year, which asks pupils about their first language if English is an additional language. This data can be useful when attempting to ascertain the numbers of pupils living in Northern Ireland who have either come from outside the UK themselves, or have been born in Northern Ireland into a family that has members who originally came from outside the UK.

The School Census shows that there were 13,600 pupils in Northern Ireland schools (Primary and Post-primary<sup>9</sup>) who had English as an additional language in October 2017, an increase of 9.9 per cent (1,200 children) since October 2016. The largest numbers of these pupils were found in Belfast LGD (2,900), Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD (2,900) and Mid Ulster LGD (2,300).

---

<sup>9</sup> Figures include pupils in Primary Schools (year 1-7 classes) and Post-Primary Schools (up to and including sixth formers).

The number of school pupils in primary education with English as an additional language rose by 1,000 (10.5 per cent) to 10,700 between October 2016 and October 2017. As has been the case since 2008, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese were the top three languages of primary school children who had English as an additional language in the 2017/18 academic year. Those who speak these languages represented 54.0 per cent of all primary school children who had English as an additional language (5,800 out of 10,700 children).

In post-primary education, the number of school pupils with English as an additional language rose by 200 (7.4 per cent) to 2,800 between October 2016 and October 2017. As in primary education Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese were the top three languages of post-primary school children who had English as an additional language in the 2017/18 academic year. Those who speak these languages represented 48.4 per cent of all post primary school children who had English as an additional language (1,400 out of 2,800 children).

### *3.3.2 2011 Census*

In addition to the question relating to address 1 year ago, the 2011 Census asked questions relating to country of birth and main language<sup>10</sup>. The results of the 2011 census show that the number of people usually resident in Northern Ireland who were born outside the UK was 119,300, with those born in the Republic of Ireland accounting for 37,800 of this group.

In terms of languages spoken, the 2011 Census showed that in March 2011 there were 54,500 people aged three and over whose main language was not English, with Polish and Lithuanian being the most prevalent accounting for 17,700 and 6,300 of the people aged three and over respectively.

---

<sup>10</sup> Further 2011 Census statistics available at <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx?themeNumber=136&themeName=Census+2011>

## 4 Methodology

This section relates to the methodology by which official migration estimates are produced. Since the Medical Card Register is the primary source of information used in the production of official migration estimates for Northern Ireland, this section provides information relating to that source only.

### Migration into Northern Ireland

Migration into Northern Ireland (or inflows) is defined as people 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 re-joined 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; 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 to September each year are used for the official estimates of migration between July and June each year.

### 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 de-registered 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 by the medical card register<sup>11</sup> and therefore de-registrations are scaled up by a factor of 5/3 (i.e. 67 per cent) as only three out of five people who leave Northern Ireland to go outside the UK de-registered from their family GP. This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population (see [Methodology Report](#)). 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 de-registration (3 months). Migration flows to Great Britain are constrained to figures agreed by NISRA, the Office for National Statistics and National Records Scotland.

---

<sup>11</sup> NISRA has previously issued research papers on population migration, for example, see [Northern Ireland Migration Methodology Paper](#), [UK Migration Methodology Paper](#) and [Migration Report \(2009\)](#).

## 5 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 the medical card register, detailing the list of patients registered with a family doctor, described as:

- Inflows (persons who come to live in Northern Ireland for a period of at least one year). These 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). These are estimated by counting the number of people who de-registered with a family doctor.

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 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 the Medical Card Register, School Census data and Births data in the [Population Estimates and Projections Data Quality Document](#). Quality information relating to National Insurance Number statistics is available on the [DWP website](#).

---

## National Statistics Designation

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 the population and migration estimates within this bulletin 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.

Population estimates and projections for Northern Ireland statistics were re-assessed by the Statistics Authority in July 2015 ([UK Statistics Authority Assessment Report](#)). Following work to address recommendations that emerged from the assessment ([Assessment Action Plan](#)), UKSA confirmed the re-designation of these statistics as National Statistics in August 2016 (see [letter of designation](#)).



## 6 Limitations

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 2016 and June 2017). 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).

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. As such, NISRA uses the Medical Card Register as the primary source through which to estimate international migration.

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 estimates have been recently assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as part of a wider assessment of Population Estimates and Projections across the UK, with [National Statistics designation](#) being received for NISRA population statistics in August 2016.

When comparing migration estimates across the UK, it is important to remember the various sizes of the countries and their affiliated populations, ranging from 1.87 million in Northern Ireland to 55.62 million in England ([mid-2017 population estimates](#)). The large differences in population, and therefore in the numbers moving into/out of each administration, as well the effect that population size may have on proportions, should be taken into consideration when reading comparisons across the UK.

## Background Notes

- Migration estimates for Northern Ireland are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Detailed migration statistics can be found on the NISRA website at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/population/long-term-international-migration-statistics>.
- Migration estimates for the year ending mid-2017 were produced and released alongside the Mid-Year Population Estimates on 28 June 2018. Population statistics relate to the usually resident population of Northern Ireland including armed forces stationed here.
- Further information on the methodology for official migration estimates is available in the population and migration estimates [Methodology Report](#).
- Interactive content on migration, along with further statistics, are available on the [NINIS website](#).
- A [migration infographic](#) has been released to highlight the key figures for Northern Ireland migration statistics (2017).
- 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 year ending 30 June, as is used by all UK administrations.
- Migration estimates relating to the period mid-2017 to mid-2018 are expected to be published along with the Population estimates for Northern Ireland in June 2019.
- The revisions policy for Northern Ireland migration statistics is available [here](#).
- We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback directly to [census@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:census@nisra.gov.uk).
- Follow NISRA on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
- All media inquiries should be directed to the DOF Press Office:  
  
Telephone: 028 9081 6724  
Email: [dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk)
- Further statistical information can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services:  
  
Telephone: 028 9025 5156  
E-mail: [census@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:census@nisra.gov.uk)  
Responsible Statistician: Richard Elliott