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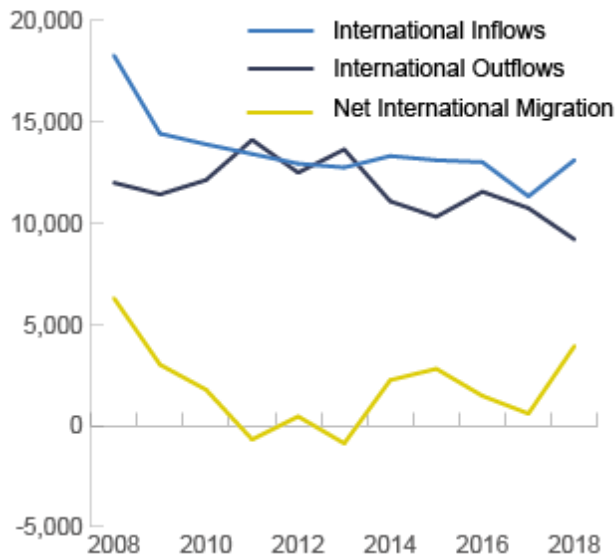


Long-term International Migration Statistics for Northern Ireland (2018)



This statistical report provides official population and migration estimates for Northern Ireland alongside supplementary administrative statistics from a range of sources that provide some insight into recent changes/trends in international migration to/from Northern Ireland.

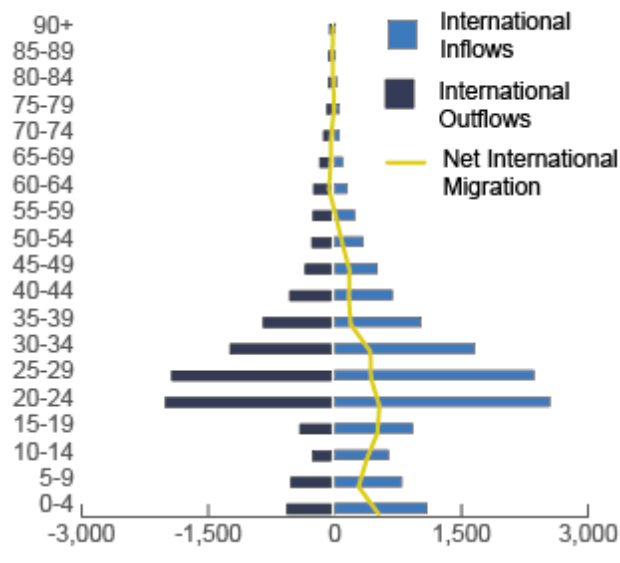
Long Term International Migration Statistics 2018 - summary



Net international migration grows to + 3,900 people in mid-2018

The number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK increased by 1,800 (15.8 per cent) to 13,100 between mid-2017 and mid-2018. The number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK decreased by 1,500 people (14.4 per cent) to 9,200.

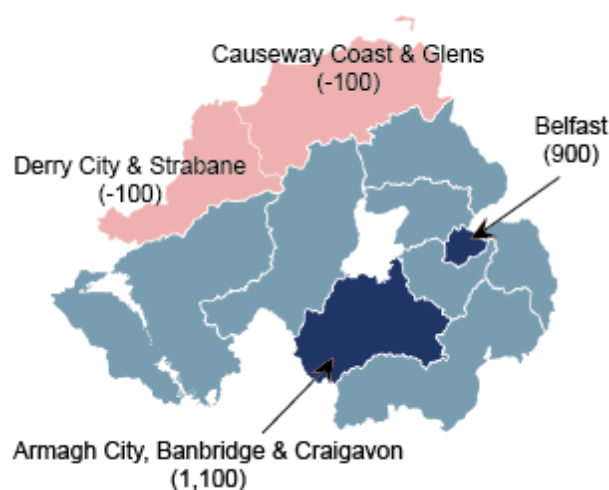
The rise in international inflows and decrease in international outflows has led to net international migration of +3,900 people.



International migration was most prominent in the under 35 age groups

In mid-2018, international inflows exceeded outflows for all age groups under 60. There were significant net gains in the under 35 age groups which accounted for 3,400 people, almost all of the total net international migration (3,900 people).

Net international migration among the 60 and over age groups accounted for a modest loss of 200 people over the year.



Two LGDs experienced net outflows of international migrants in mid-2018

Derry City & Strabane and Causeway Coast & Glens Local Government District (LGD) both experienced net outflows of 100 international migrants in mid-2018.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (1,100 people) and Belfast LGD (900 people) had the highest levels of net international inward migration in mid-2018.

Long Term International Migration Statistics 2018 - summary

In 2018 there were 13,000 international inflows to Northern Ireland

In the calendar year to December 2018 the Medical Card Register shows 13,000 international inflows to Northern Ireland - a 35.4 per cent increase from 2017.

The Republic of Ireland (1,500 inflows) remained the top country of previous residence for international inflows in 2018. This was closely followed by Romania in second (1,500 inflows) and Poland in third (1,100 inflows).



1. Work
45.4 per cent



2. Family
30.5 per cent



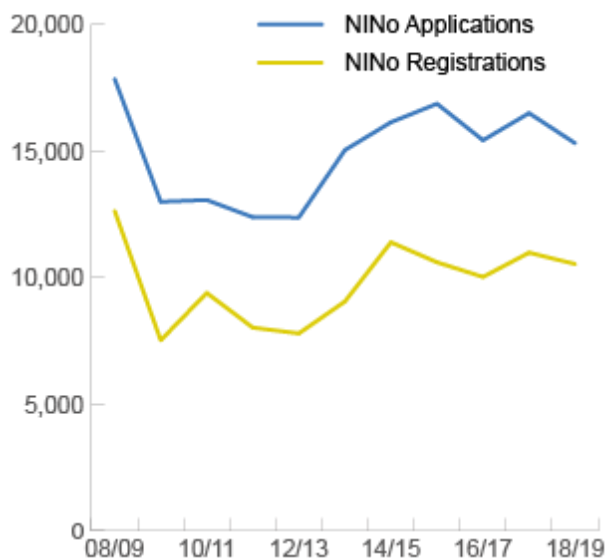
3. Education
12.4 per cent

Work, Family & Education were the top 3 reasons given for coming to NI

The main reason given for coming to NI from outside the UK in 2018 was Work (45.4 per cent), followed by Family (30.5 per cent), and Education (12.4 per cent).

Reasons for coming to NI varied by country of last residence. The main reason for coming to live in NI for inflows from the Republic of Ireland was family (40.2 per cent). For Romania, Poland and Bulgaria the main reason was work (63.3, 72.5 and 65.3 per cent, respectively).

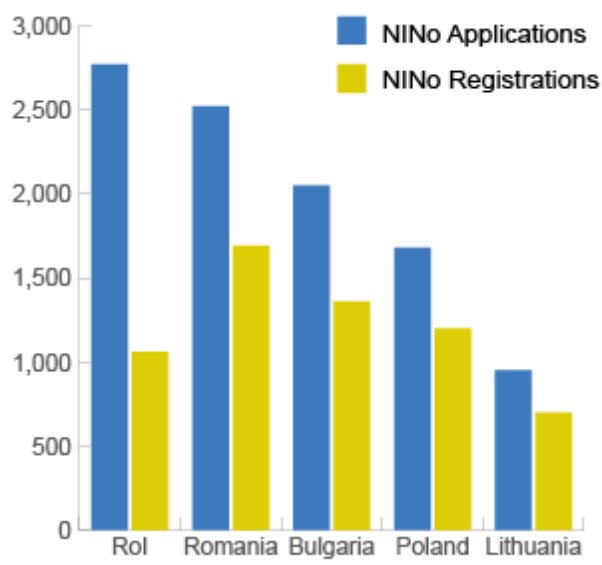
Long Term International Migration Statistics 2018 - summary



The number of NINo* Applications and Registrations decreased over the 2018/19 financial year

In the year to March 2019 the number of NINo **applications** to non UK nationals decreased from 16,500 to 15,300 (7.2 per cent). In the same period the number of NINo **registrations** to non UK nationals also decreased from 11,000 to 10,500 (4.1 per cent).

*National insurance number



NINo Applications and Registrations were most prevalent from Republic of Ireland and Romanian nationals, respectively

Applications from Republic of Ireland (ROI) nationals were most prevalent in 2018/19 (2,800), however this was a 17.1 per cent (600) decrease from 2017/18. Romania was the most prevalent country of previous residence for **registrations** in 2018/19 (1,700), however this was also a decrease of 9.3 per cent (200) from 2017/18



1998
1,300 births
5.5 per cent



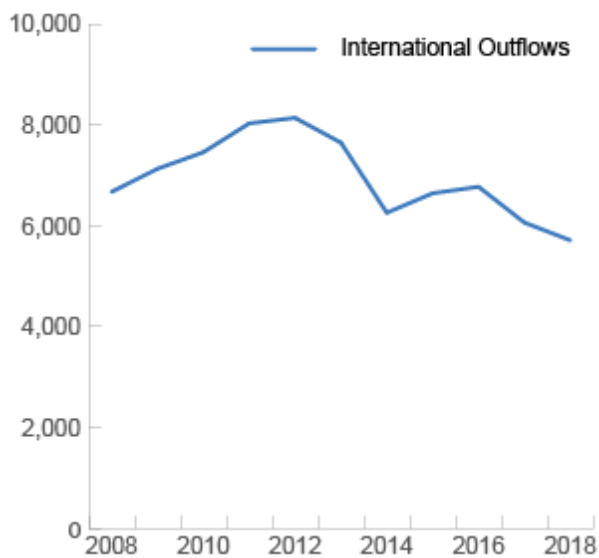
2018*
3,000 births
13.3 per cent

*birth figures for 2018 are provisional

Births to non UK mothers have increased over the past two decades

Over the past two decades the number of births in Northern Ireland to mothers born outside the UK has increased. In 1998 the number of births was 1,300 which was 5.5 per cent of all births for the year. By 2018 the number of births had grown to 3,000 which was 13.3 per cent of all births for the year.

Long Term International Migration Statistics 2018 - summary



International outflows decrease for the second year in a row

In the calendar year to December 2018 the Medical Card Register showed the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK decreased by 400 (5.8 per cent) to 5,700 in 2018.

The largest proportion of international outflows were from Belfast LGD in 2018

Outflows from Belfast LGD totalled 2,500 which was 42.9 per cent of total outflows for the year (5,700). Across the remaining LGDs the number of outflows ranged from 200 in Ards & North Down LGD to 500 in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD.



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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 Register¹ 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-2018, which were published on 26 June 2019 as part of the [2018 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 Register²
- National Insurance Number (NINo) statistics
- General Register Office Birth statistics
- Department of Education School Census statistics

¹ 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).

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

- 2011 Census³

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.

³ 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).

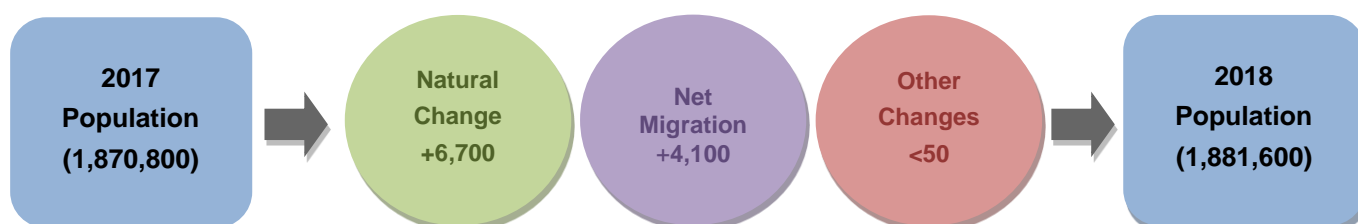
2.1 Northern Ireland's population continues to grow

The size of the resident population in Northern Ireland at 30 June 2018 was estimated to be 1.882 million people. Just over half (50.8 per cent) of the population were female, with 955,400 females compared to 926,200 males (49.2 per cent).

Over the period mid-2017 to mid-2018 the number of people living in Northern Ireland was estimated to have increased by 10,800 people (0.6 per cent). This population increase was a result of the following estimated factors:

1. Positive natural change of 6,700 people (23,100 births minus 16,400 deaths);
2. An estimated growth of 4,100 people due to net migration (23,600 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 19,400 people left).
3. A slight reduction of less than 50 people due to other changes.

Figure 1: Contribution of components of change to population increase (year ending mid-2018)



In the year between mid-2017 and mid-2018 growth due to positive natural change and net migration totalled 10,800 people. As has been the case in recent years, natural change (i.e. births minus deaths) was the main contributor to the increase in population, accounting for 61.8 per cent (6,700 people) of this growth. Net migration (i.e. inflows⁴ minus outflows⁵) accounted

⁴ Inflows: the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live.

⁵ Outflows: the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere.

for 38.2 per cent of the growth, with the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland exceeding those leaving by 4,100 (see Figure 1).

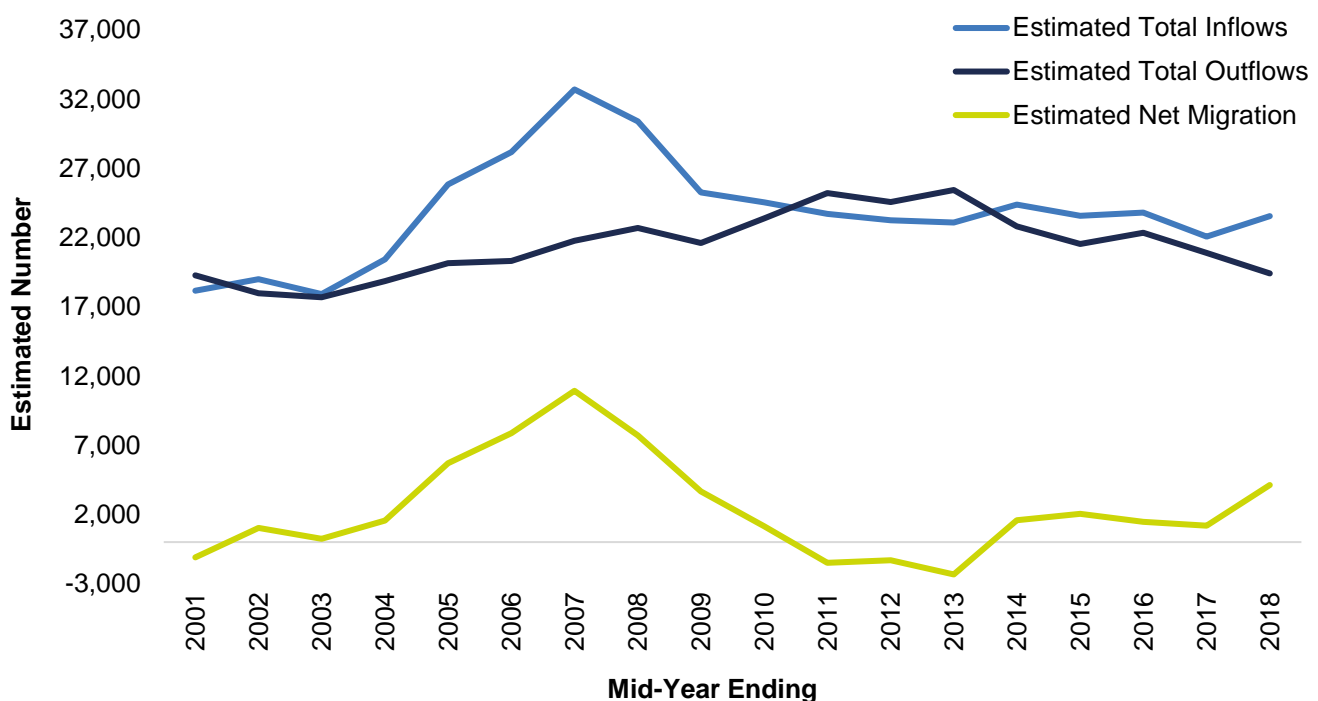
2.2 Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

In 2018, Net migration was at its **highest** level (+ 4,100 people) since mid-2008

In the year ending mid-2018, the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live was 23,600 and the number of people leaving to live outside of Northern Ireland was 19,400, resulting in a net increase in the population due to migration of 4,100 people. This was the fifth successive year that the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland exceeded the number who left.

Between the year ending mid-2017 and the year ending mid-2018, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland decreased by 1,500 (7.1 per cent), while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland increased by 1,500 (6.7 per cent). Since the number of people coming into Northern Ireland increased and the number of people leaving Northern Ireland decreased, the net change in population due to migration grew from +1,200 people to +4,100 people between the year ending mid-2017 and the year ending mid-2018 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Estimated Total Inflows, Total Outflows and Net Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2018)



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

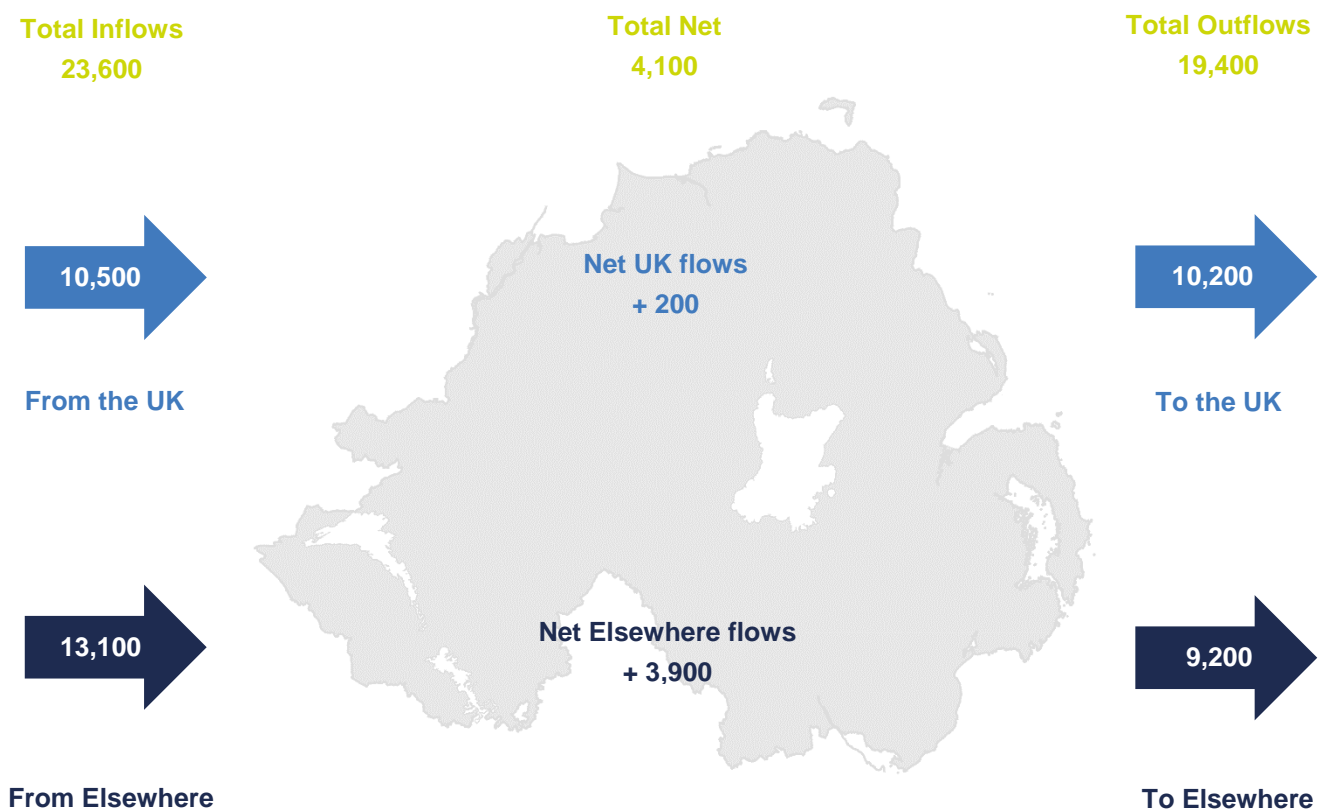
2.3 Where do migrants come from and go to?

Migration into and out of Northern Ireland can be analysed in two groups, namely:

- UK migration – Flows of people between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK
- Migration to Elsewhere – Flows of people between Northern Ireland and outside the UK (sometimes referred to as International Migration)

Figure 3 below shows the number of people migrating into and out of Northern Ireland by type (i.e. whether to/from the UK or Elsewhere) for the year ending mid-2018.

Figure 3: Migration to and from Northern Ireland by Type in the year ending mid-2018



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[Download Map](#) (PDF format – 451 KB)

Between the year ending mid-2017 and the year ending mid-2018, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK increased by less than 100 people (0.7 per cent), and the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK decreased by 300 people (2.9 per cent). This led to inflows of 10,500 people and outflows of 10,200 people in the year ending mid-2018 and resulted in a net UK migration gain of 200 people.

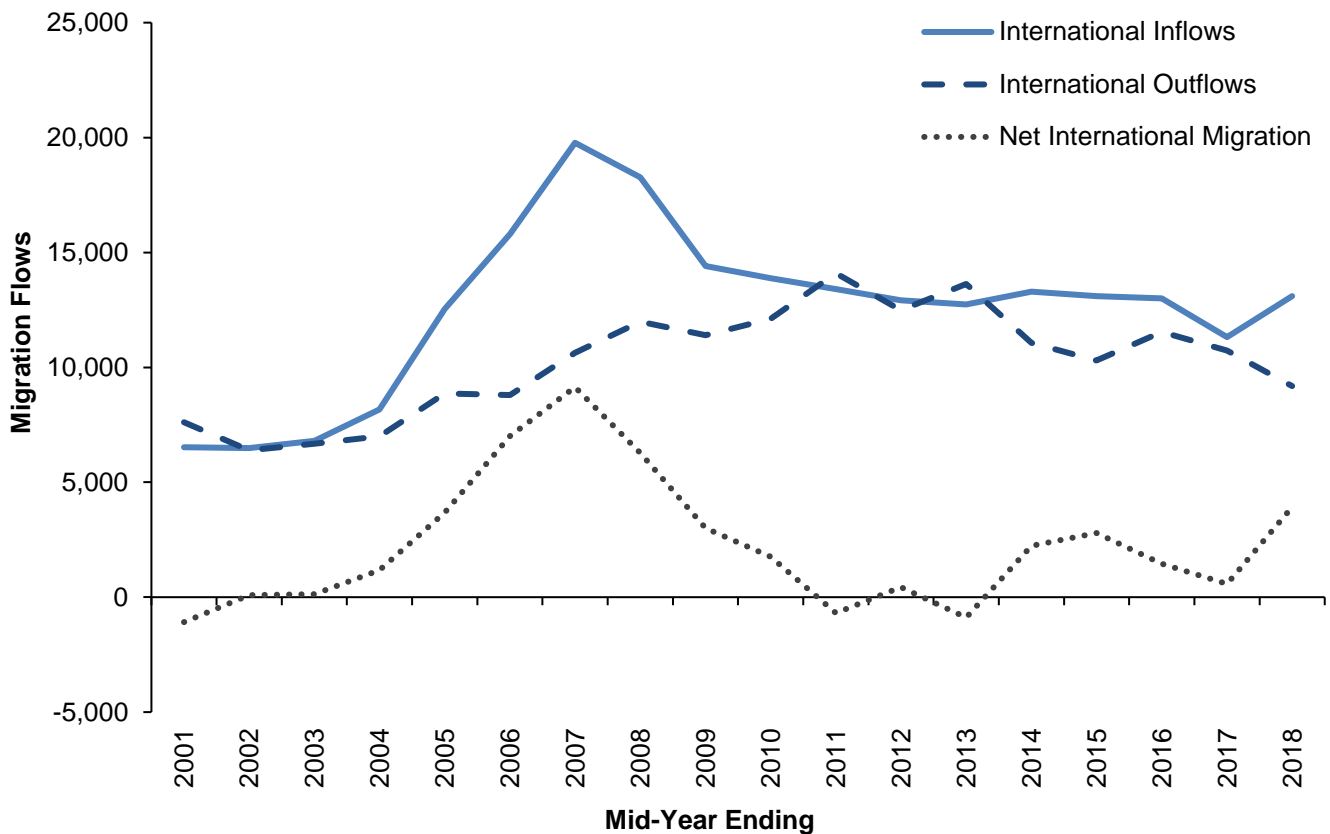
During the same time, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK decreased by 1,500 people (14.4 per cent) to 9,200, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK increased by 1,800 (15.8 per cent) to 13,100. The increase in migration from outside the UK and decrease in migration to outside the UK has resulted in a net gain of 3,900 people due to international migration (see Figure 3).

2.4 International Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

In 2018, Net international migration was at its **highest** level (+ 3,900 people) since mid-2008

Figure 4 shows international migration flows into and out of Northern Ireland from mid-2001. Net international migration was at its highest level between mid-2004 and mid-2008 which can be attributed to the expansion of the EU. In mid-2018, net international migration was at its highest level since mid-2008. This is a result of the simultaneous increase in international inflows (1,800 people) and decrease in international outflows (1,500 people) from mid-2017.

Figure 4: Estimated International inflows, outflows, and net migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2018)



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

2.4.1 International Migration Estimates by Local Government District

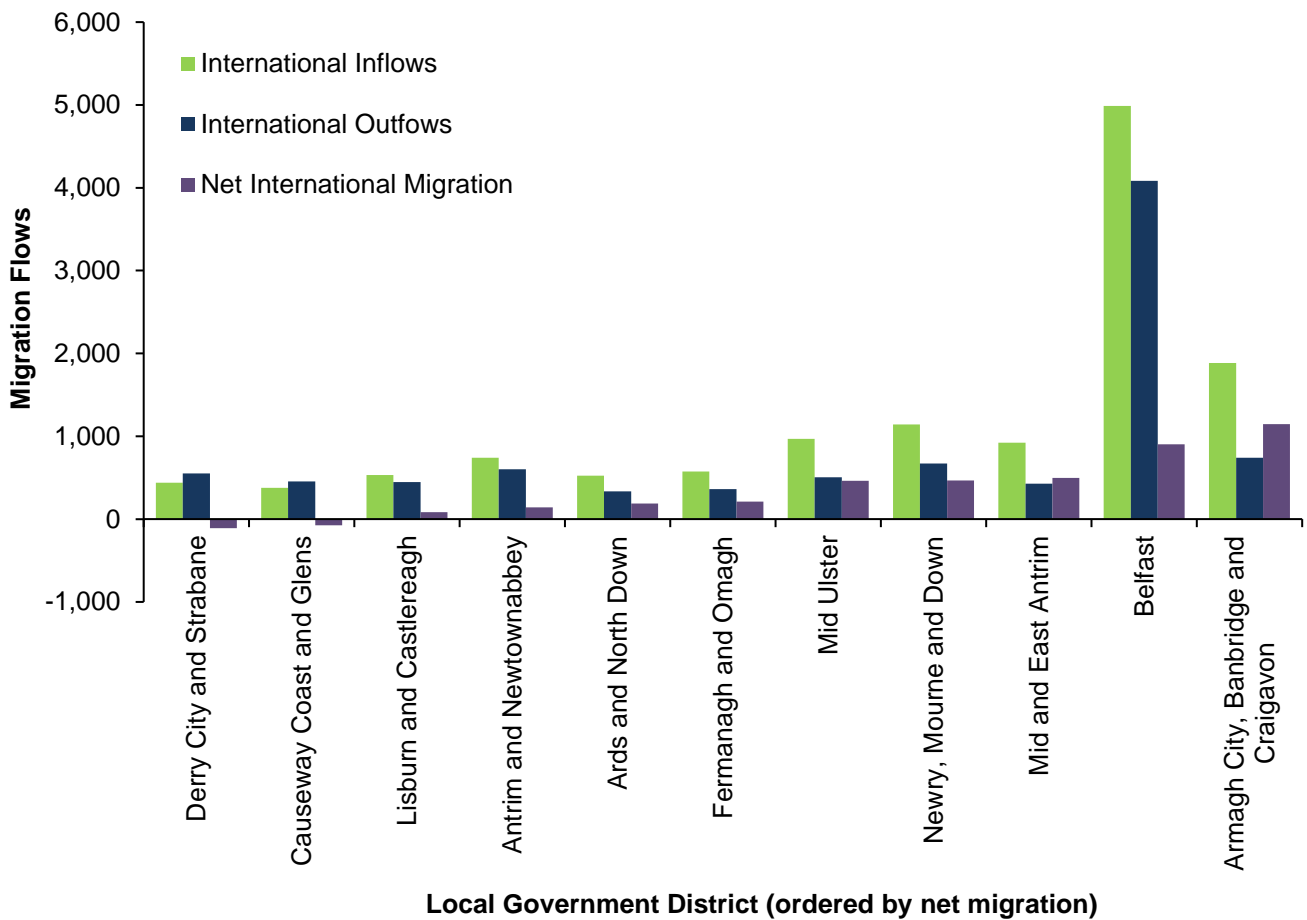
Belfast Local Government District had the highest numbers of both international inflows (5,000 people) and international outflows (4,100 people) in the year ending mid-2018. These international flows into and out of Belfast as a proportion of the total Northern Ireland flows were 38.1 and 44.5 per cent 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.

Two Local Government Districts experienced net outflows of international migrants in mid-2018

Derry City and Strabane (100 people) and Causeway Coast and Glens (100 people) both experienced net outflows of international migrants between mid-2017 and mid-2018. In the same period, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon had the highest level of net

inward international migration (1,100 people) followed Belfast (900 people) (see Figure 5 and Map 1).

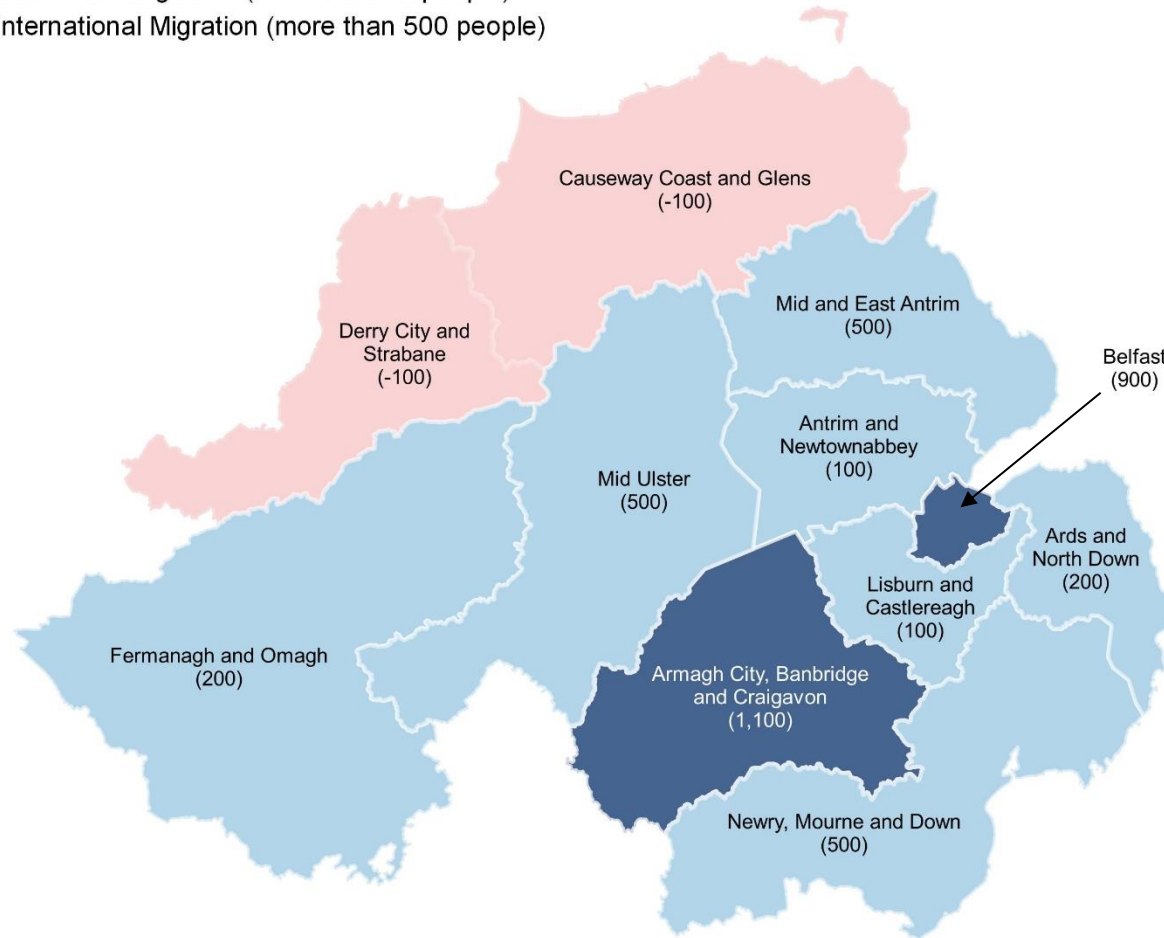
Figure 5: Estimated International inflows, outflows and net migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2018) (ordered by net international migration)



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

Map 1: Net International Migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2018)

- Net Outward International Migration (less than 200)
- Net Inward International Migration (less than 500 people)
- Net Outward International Migration (more than 500 people)



[Download Map](#) (PDF Format – 292 Kb)

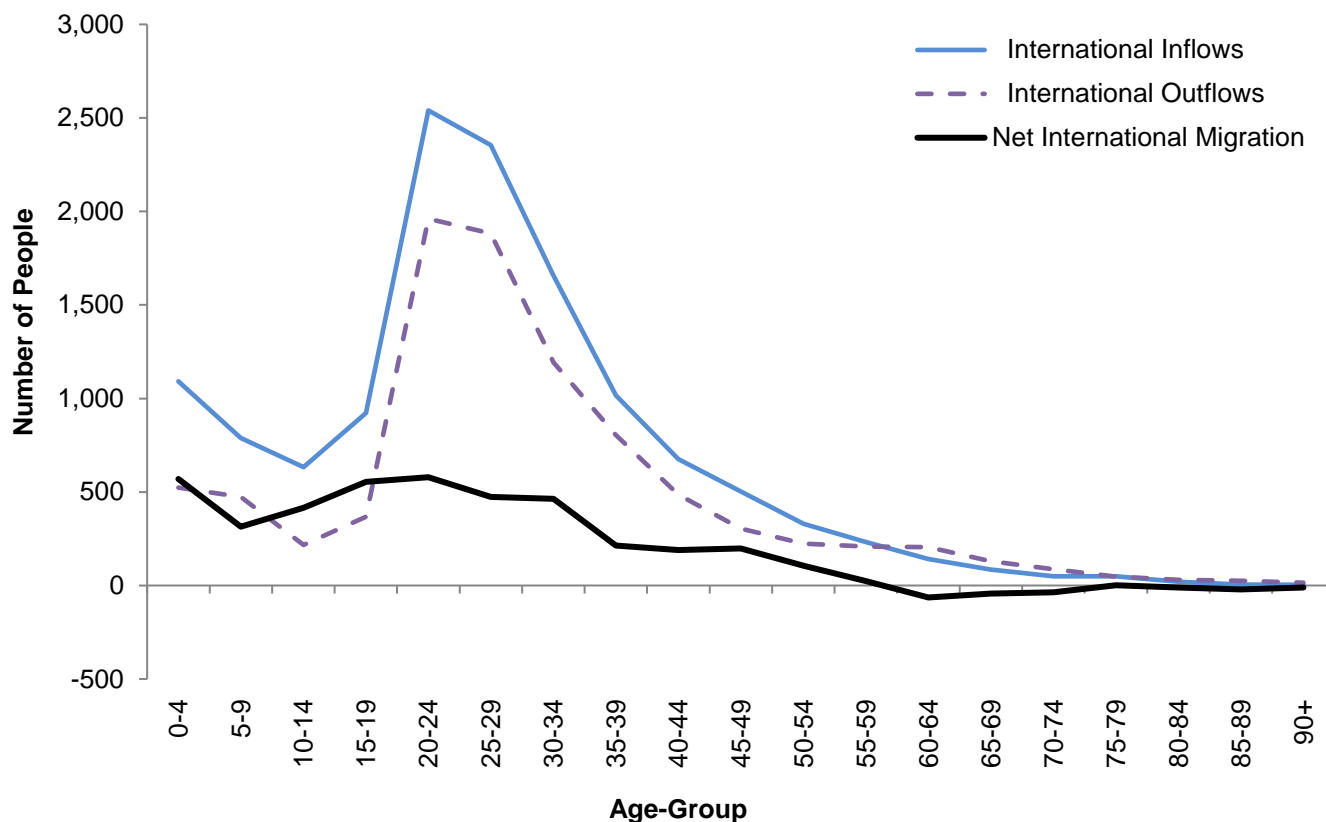
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2.4.2 International Migration Estimates by Age

Figure 6 shows the age distribution of international migrants into and out of Northern Ireland in the year ending mid-2018. 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-2018 international inflows exceeded international outflows for all age groups under 60. There were significant net gains in the under 35 age groups which accounted for 3,400 people, almost all of the total net international migration (3,900 people). Net international outward migration among the 60 and over age groups accounted for a modest loss of 200 people over the year.

Figure 6: Estimated international migration by age (year ending mid-2018)



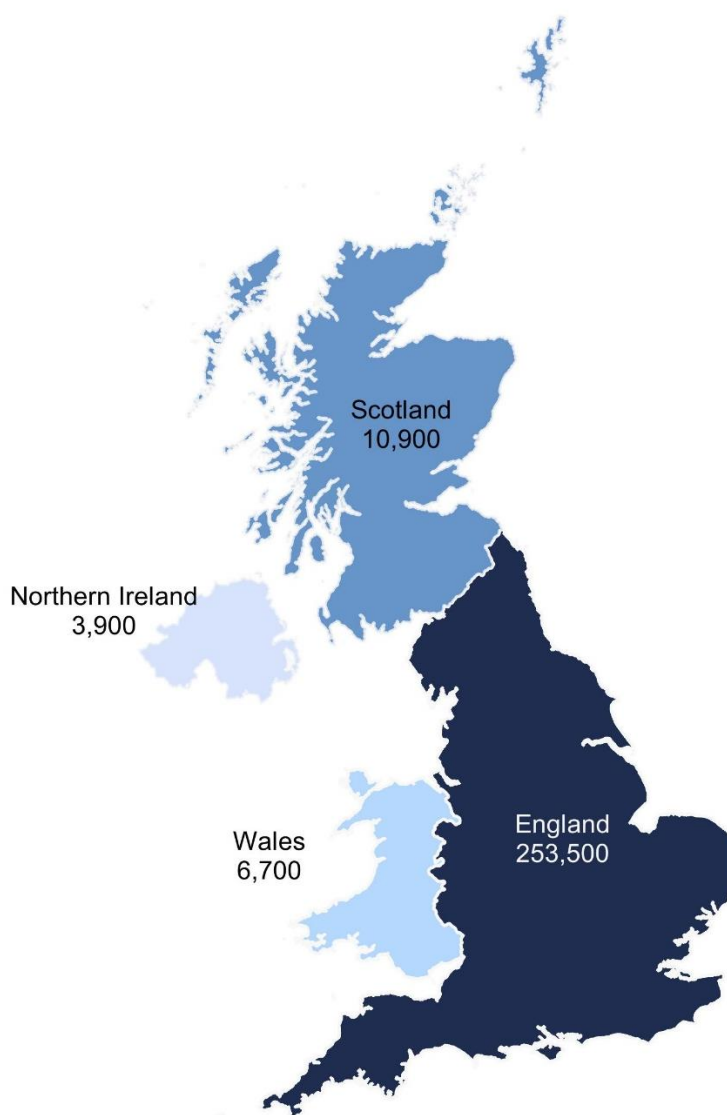
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2.5 Comparison of International Migration Estimates across the UK

In the year ending mid-2018, three UK countries experienced an increase in international inflows. Northern Ireland experienced the largest increase in international inflows (15.8 per cent, 1,800 people), followed by Wales (14.7 per cent, 2,200 people) and England (9.8 per cent, 50,400 people). There was negligible change in international inflows to Scotland between mid-2017 and mid-2018.

During the same period, Northern Ireland was the only UK constituent country to experience a decrease in international outflows (14.4 per cent, 1,500 people). Scotland experienced the largest percentage increase in international outflows (12.8 per cent, 2,500 people), followed by Wales (6.4 per cent, 700 people) and England (2.5 per cent, 7,500 people).

Map 2: UK Net international migration, mid-2017 to mid-2018

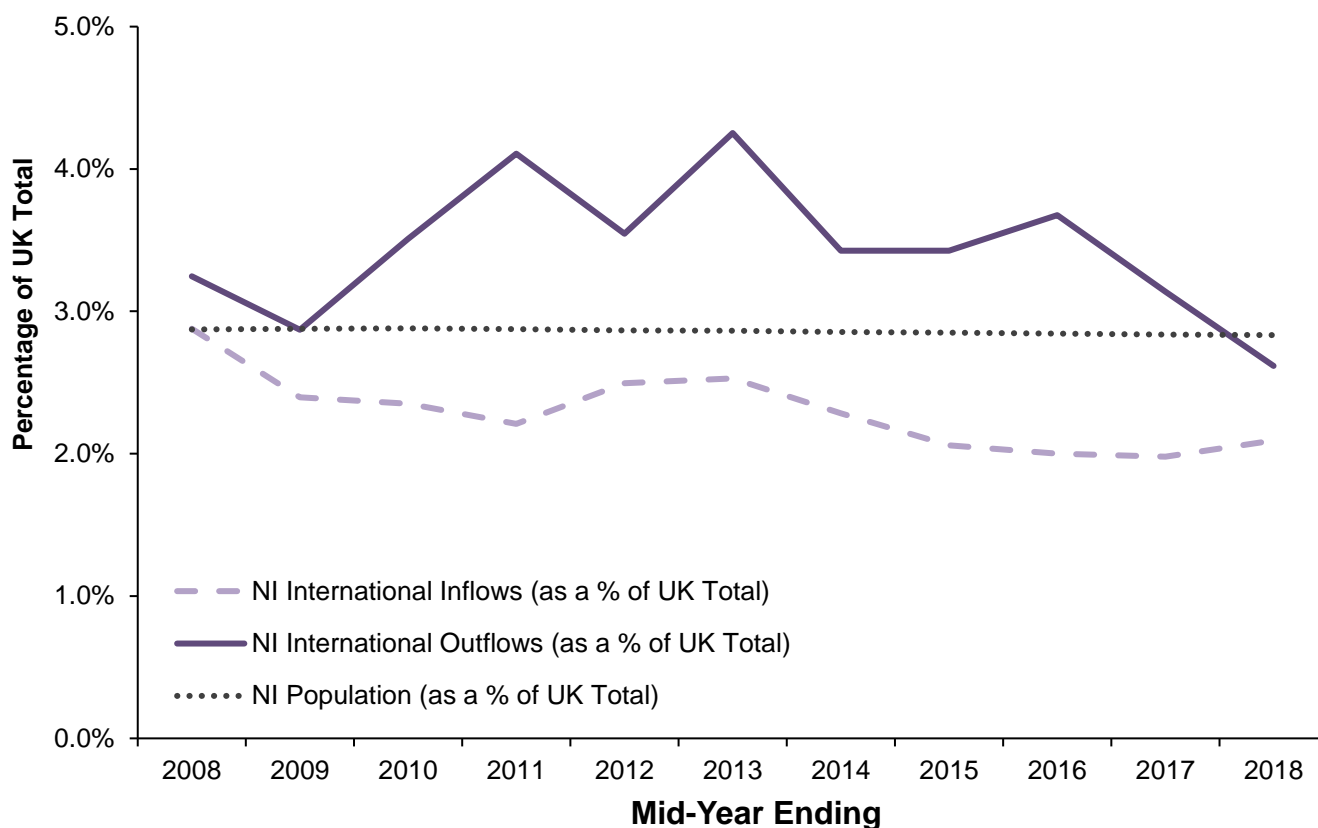


[Download Map](#) (PDF Format – 240 Kb)

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Figure 7 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-2018, Northern Ireland has experienced a smaller share of both international outflows and international inflows relative to its proportion of the UK population. The proportion of UK international outflows from Northern Ireland has decreased for the second year in a row, while the proportion of UK international inflows into Northern Ireland has remained around 2.0 per cent since mid-2015.

Figure 7: International inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland, as a percentage of UK International Migration (year ending mid-2008 to year ending mid-2018)



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

2.5.1 Comparison of UK International Migration Estimates in main UK cities

In the case of Belfast Local Government District, the proportion of international inward migration (38.1 per cent) in the year ending mid-2018 is noticeably higher than the proportion represented by its population at the start of the period (i.e. mid-2017) (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-2018)

Country & City	Mid-2017 Population		Year ending mid-2018 International IN Migration		Year ending mid-2018 International OUT Migration	
	Estimate	As proportion of country	Estimate	As proportion of country	Estimate	As proportion of country
England	55,619,430		562,457		308,960	
of which London	8,825,001	15.9%	201,872	35.9%	89,079	28.8%
Wales	3,125,165		17,470		10,792	
of which Cardiff	362,756	11.6%	5,903	33.8%	3,994	37.0%
of which Swansea	245,480	7.9%	2,682	15.4%	1,254	11.6%
combined Cardiff & Swansea	608,236	19.5%	8,585	49.1%	5,248	48.6%
Scotland	5,424,800		32,900		22,000	
of which Edinburgh	513,210	9.5%	9,000	27.4%	4,690	21.3%
of which Glasgow	621,020	11.4%	9,970	30.3%	4,670	21.2%
combined Edinburgh & Glasgow	1,134,230	20.9%	18,970	57.7%	9,360	42.5%
Northern Ireland	1,870,834		13,100		9,182	
of which Belfast*	340,220	18.2%	4,989	38.1%	4,085	44.5%

Population share is calculated at the start of the period (i.e. in this case mid-2017)

*Belfast Local Government District

[Download Table](#) (XLSX format – 103 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](#).

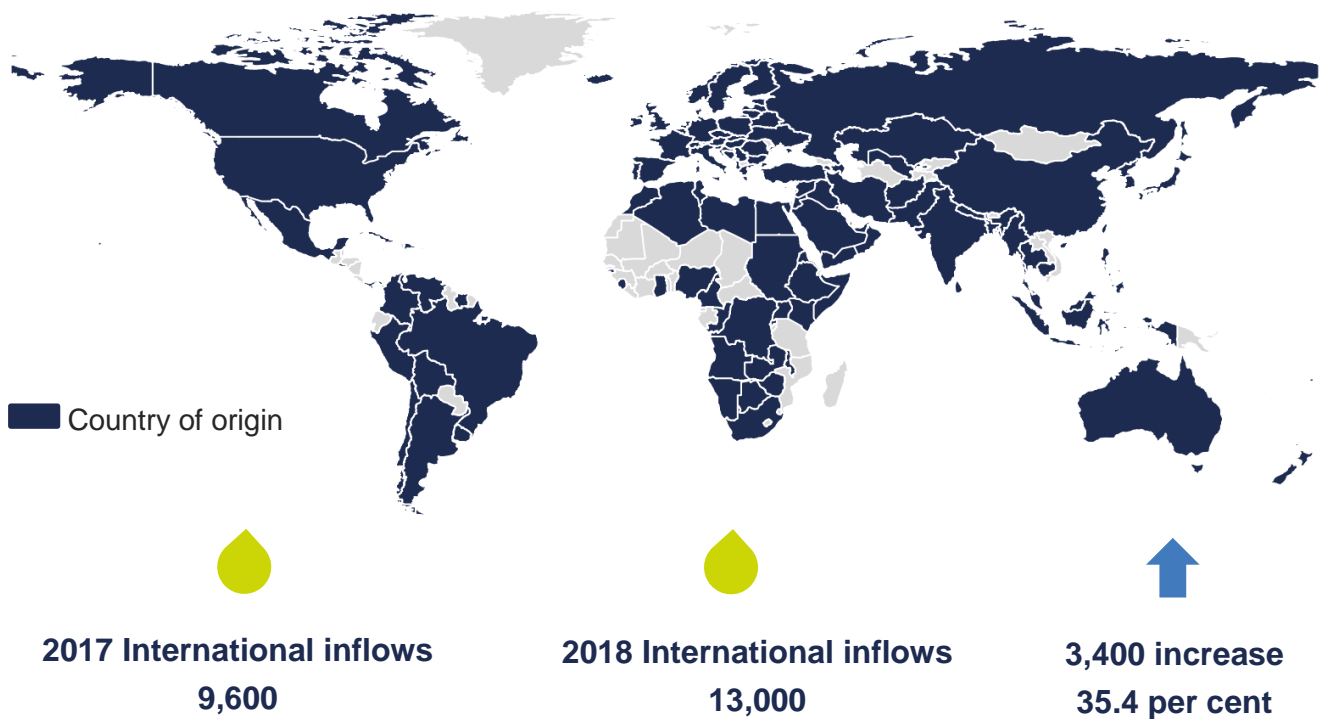
3.1.1 Medical Card Registration Data (calendar year)

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 in 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 2018 the Medical Card Register shows **13,000 international inflows** to Northern Ireland – a 35.4 per cent increase since 2017.

Map 3: Countries of origin for international inflows to Northern Ireland (2018)



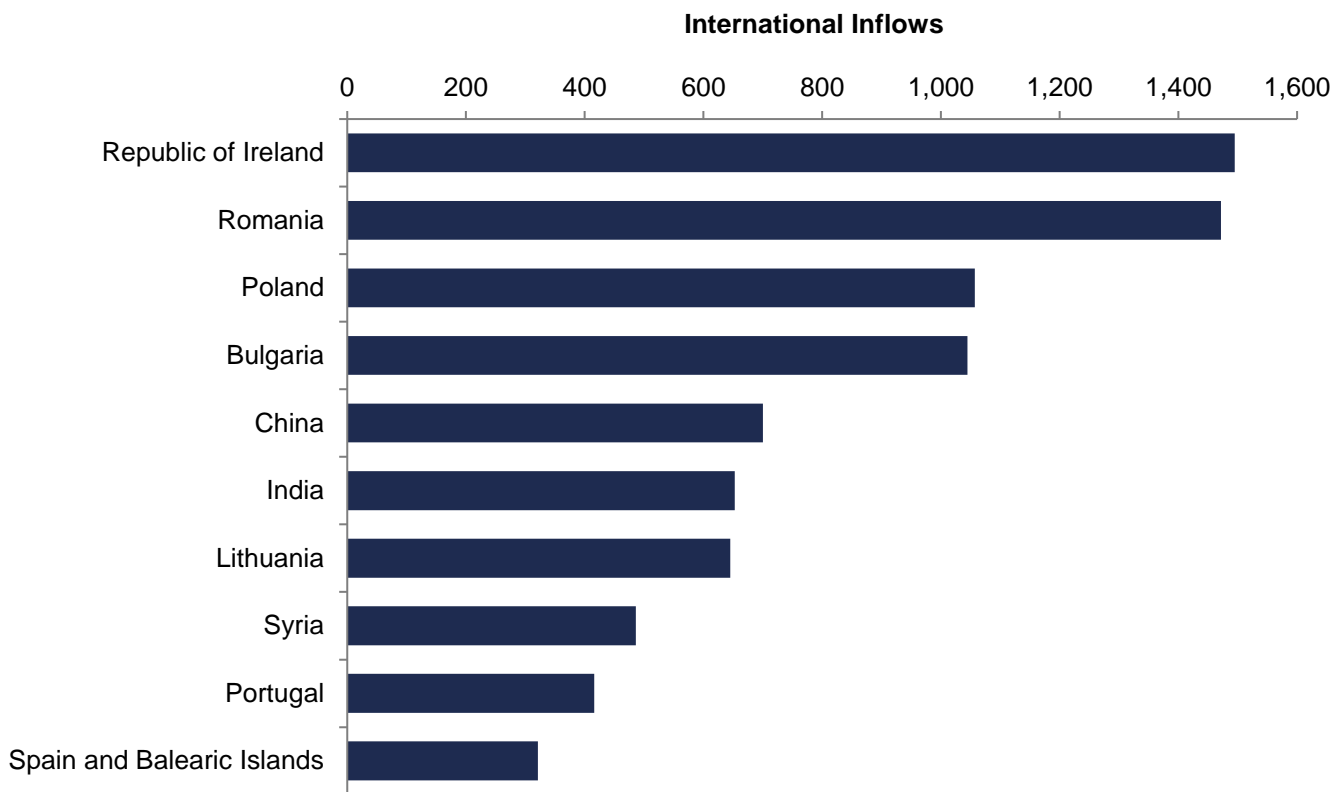
[Download Map](#) (PDF Format – 286 Kb)

Republic of Ireland remains the **top** country of previous residence for international inflows in 2018.

Analysing medical card data by country of last residence shows that, the Republic of Ireland was the top country of last residence for people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in the calendar year 2018. This was closely followed by Romania in

second. Levels of inflows from these two countries have increased since the calendar year 2017 (Republic of Ireland: 300 more inflows, up 28.5 per cent; Romania: 500 more inflows, up 56.4 per cent) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: International Inflows to Northern Ireland by Top 10 countries of last residence (2018)



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

The main reason for coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in 2018 was work (45.4 per cent), followed by family (30.5 per cent) and education (12.4 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 (40.2 per cent of inflows from that country), while for Romania, Poland and Bulgaria the main reason was work (63.3,

72.5 and 65.3 per cent of inflows from those countries respectively). In contrast, the main reason for inflows from China was education at 79.6 per cent of inflows.

3.1.2 Medical Card Registration Data by Local Government District (calendar year)

As highlighted in Map 4, Republic of Ireland and Romania were the top countries of last residence for international inflows in 5 out of the eleven LGDs and in the top 3 countries of last residence in 9 out of the eleven LGDs. Poland, the third most prevalent country of last residence at the Northern Ireland level, appears in the top 3 listed countries of previous residence in eight of the LGDs, with the exception of Antrim & Newtownabbey, Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh.

Map 4: International Inflows to Northern Ireland by top three countries of last residence for each Local Government District (2018)



[Download Map](#) (PDF Format – 305 Kb)

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3.1.3 National Insurance Numbers (NINo) (financial year)

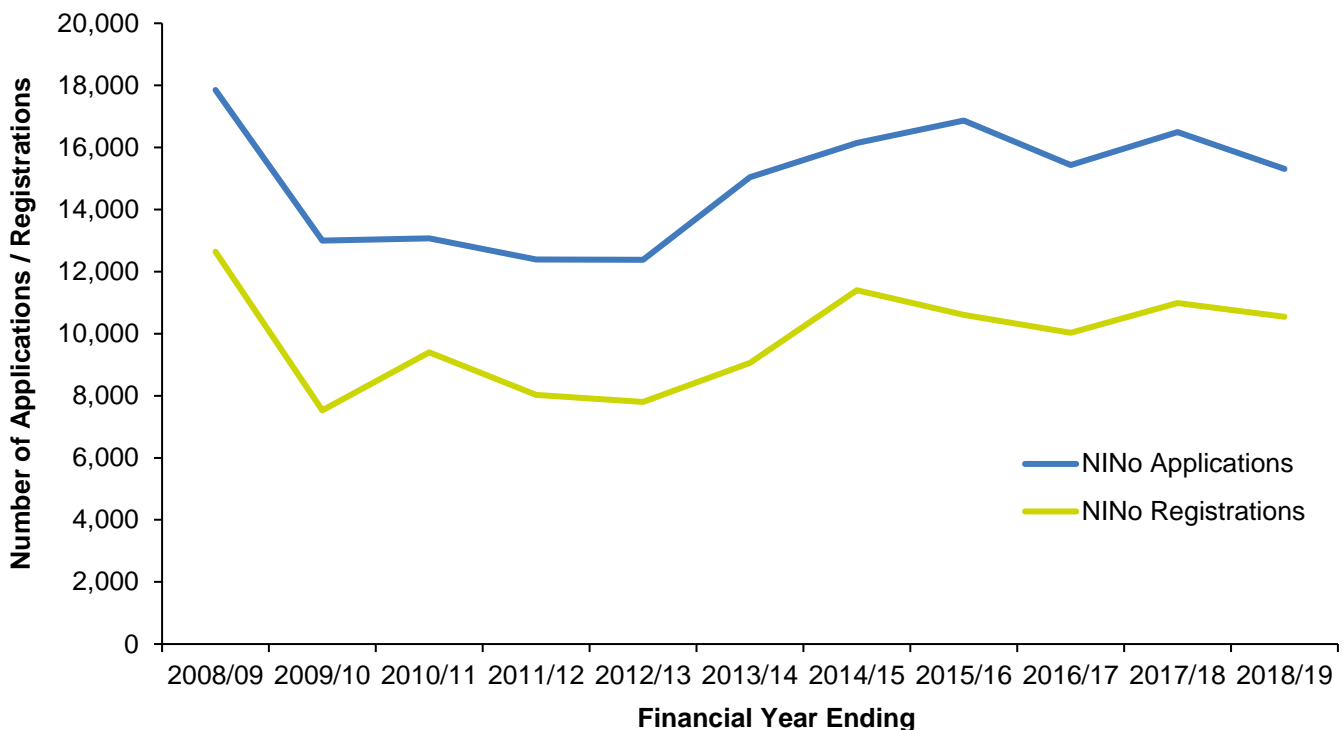
National Insurance Number (NINo) data is a useful source when looking at international migration into Northern Ireland since information is available for overseas nationals in Northern Ireland⁶ who have either (i) applied for a national insurance number (i.e. NINo applications) or (ii) applied for and 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.

The number of NINO Applications and Registrations **decreased** over the 2018/19 financial year

Figure 9 shows the trend in the number of NINo applications and registrations since the financial year ending March 2009. In the financial year ending March 2019, there was a decrease in the number of applications (from 16,500 to 15,300, 7.2 per cent).

During the same period there was also a decrease in the number of registrations associated with non-UK nationals, by 4.1 per cent (from 11,000 to 10,500).

Figure 9: Northern Ireland NINo Applications and Registrations from non-UK nationals by financial year (2008/09 to 2018/19)



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

⁶It 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

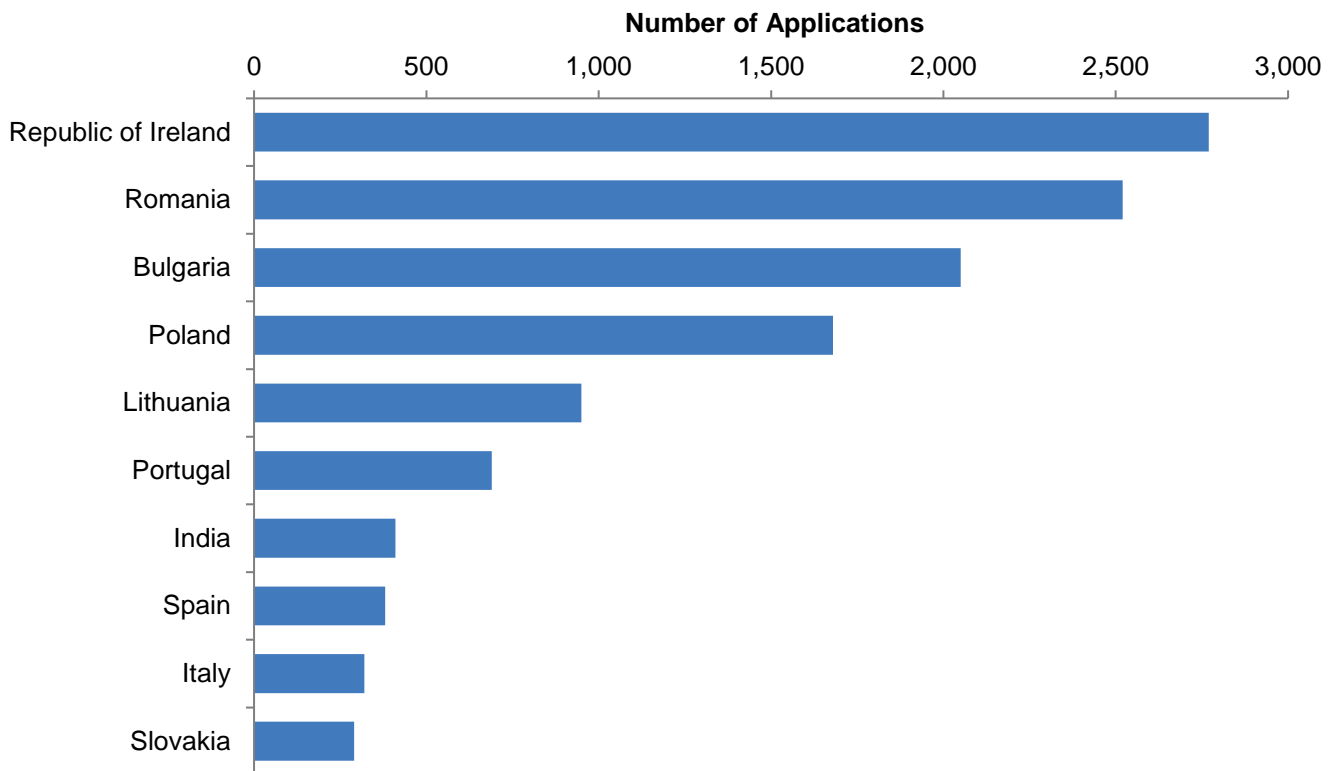
NINo applications from nationals from the **Republic of Ireland** were the most prevalent in 2018/19 (2,800 applications)

Figure 10 shows the number of NINo applications from nationalities which were the top 10 most prevalent in the financial year 2018/19. Applications from nationals from the Republic of Ireland were the most prevalent in the financial year (2,800 applications), however, the number of applications from nationals from the Republic of Ireland was down by 600 (17.1 per cent) since the financial year 2017/18.

The number of applications from Romanian nationals (the second most prevalent nationality) also decreased by 300 (10.5 per cent) in the financial year ending March 2019. This followed an increase of 400 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 third year in a row, down 200 applications (11.5 per cent) in the year ending March 2019.

There was negligible change in the number of applications from Bulgarian nationals (less than 50). The number of applications from Lithuanian nationals decreased by 300 (21.7 per cent) to 900, remaining in the list of top five countries for a third year.

Figure 10: Northern Ireland NINo Applications from non-UK nationals by Top 10 most prevalent countries (2018/19)



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

NINo Registrations to non-UK Nationals

NINo registrations from nationals from **Romania** were the most prevalent in 2018/19 (1,700 applications)

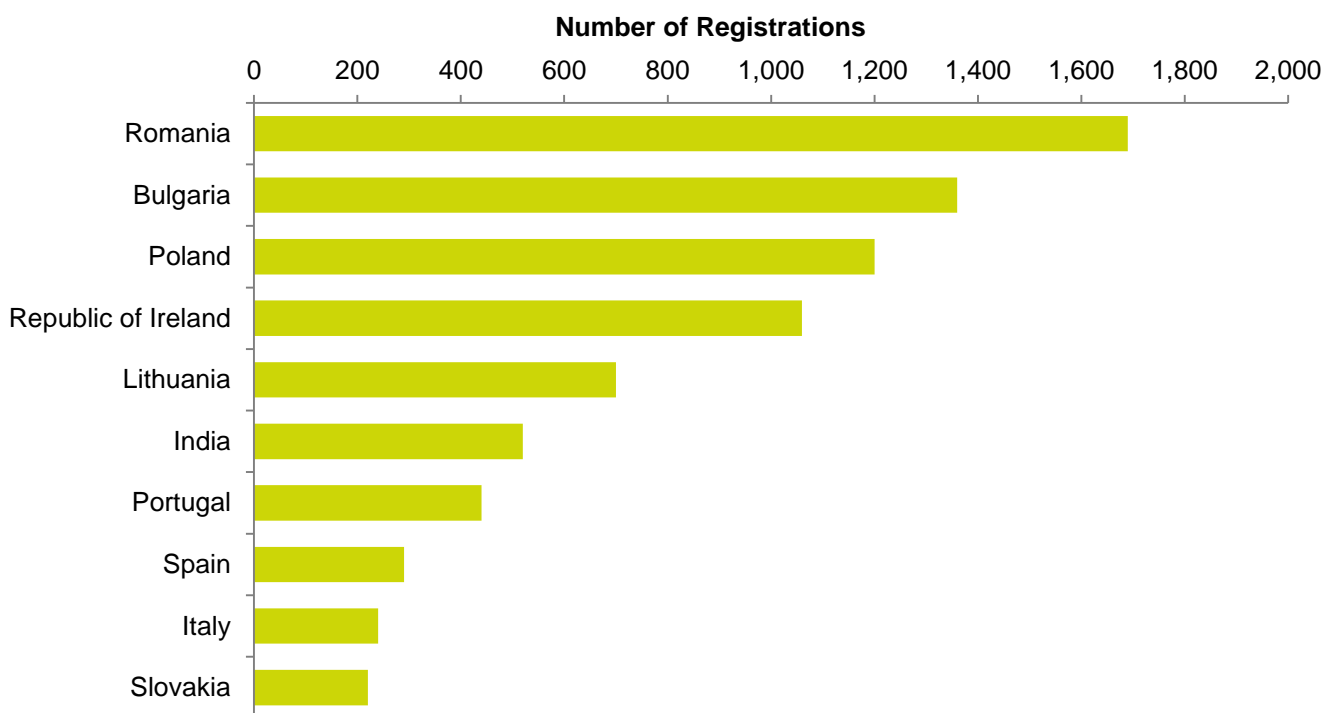
Romania was the most prevalent nationality for NINo registrations in 2018/19 with 1,700 registrations (see Figure 11). The overall number of registrations from Romanian nationals decreased by 200 (9.3 per cent) from 2017/18. Registrations from Romanian

nationals had seen large increases over the years since 2012/13, 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 2019, having overtaken Polish nationals. Registrations from Bulgarian nationals fell by 6.2 per cent (100 registrations) between April 2018 and March 2019 to 1,400. For the fourth year in a row, registrations from Polish nationals have fallen (16.1 per cent, 200 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 2019.

Figure 11: Northern Ireland NINo Registrations from non-UK nationals by Top 10 most prevalent countries (2018/19)



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

3.1.4 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 2: Births by mother’s country of birth (Calendar years 1998, 2008 and 2018*)

Mother's Country of Birth	Jan 1998 - Dec 1998	Jan 2008 - Dec 2008	Jan 2018 - Dec 2018
UK	22,300	22,500	19,800
Northern Ireland	20,600	21,100	18,800
Rest of UK	1,700	1,400	1,000
Outside the UK	1,300	3,100	3,000
All Births	23,700	25,600	22,900
<i>Percentage of all births to mothers born within the UK</i>	94.3%	87.8%	86.7%
<i>Percentage of all births to mothers born outside the UK</i>	5.5%	12.2%	13.3%

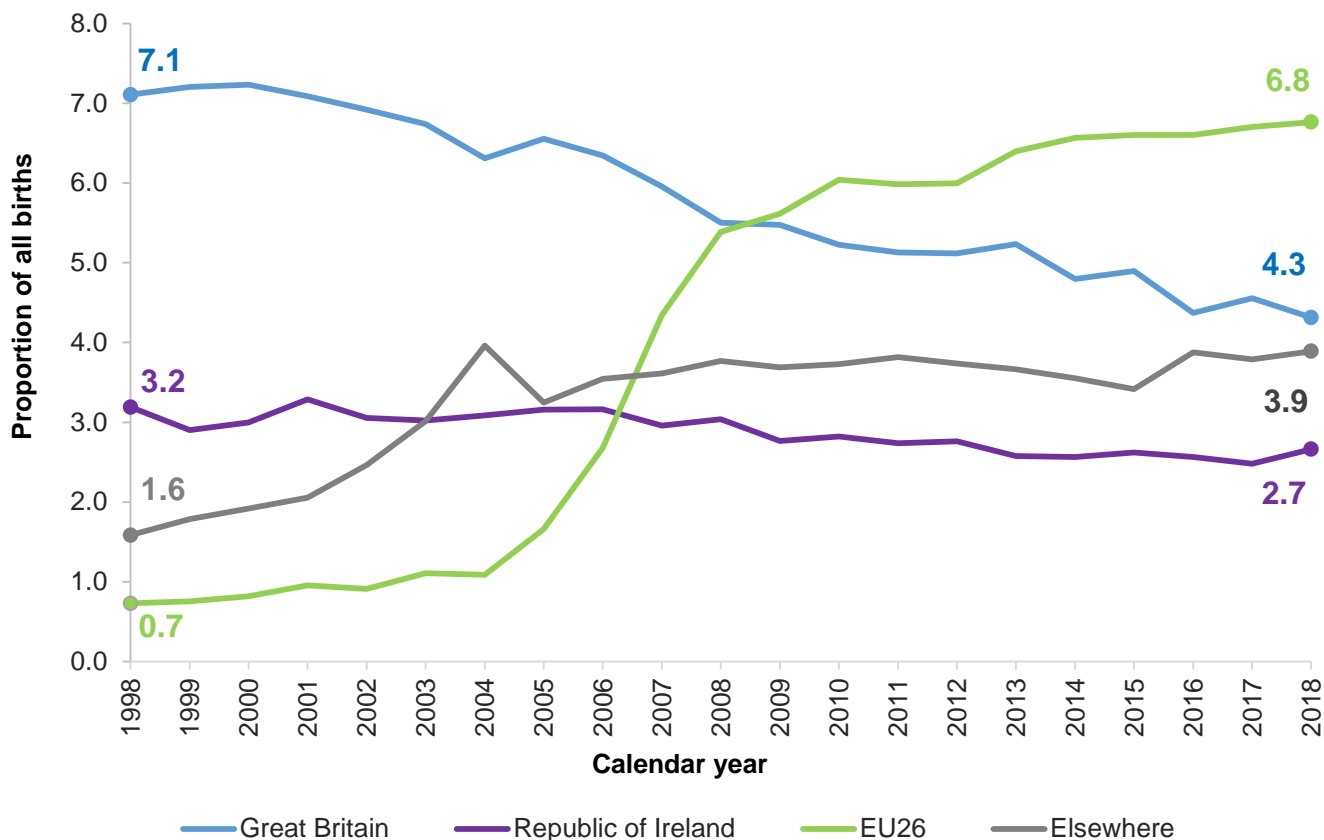
* Figures for 2018 are provisional and are, therefore, subject to change until the publication of the 2018 Registrar General Annual Report.

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

Table 2 shows that while the proportion of children born to mothers who were born within the UK has decreased in the twenty years to 2018 (94.3 per cent of births to 86.7 per cent of births), the proportion of children born to mothers born outside the UK has increased. In the calendar year to December 1998, 5.5 per cent of babies were born to non UK-born mothers (1,300 babies out of 23,700), rising to 13.3 per cent (3,000 babies out of 22,900) by December 2018.

Figure 12 shows the annual time series relating to the data in Table 2, 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 2018. 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 12: Proportion of Births in Northern Ireland by Mother's Country of Birth (1998 to 2018*)



* Figures for 2018 are provisional and are, therefore, subject to change until the publication of the 2018 Registrar General Annual Report.

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

3.1.5 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 countries⁷. 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)

⁷ 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

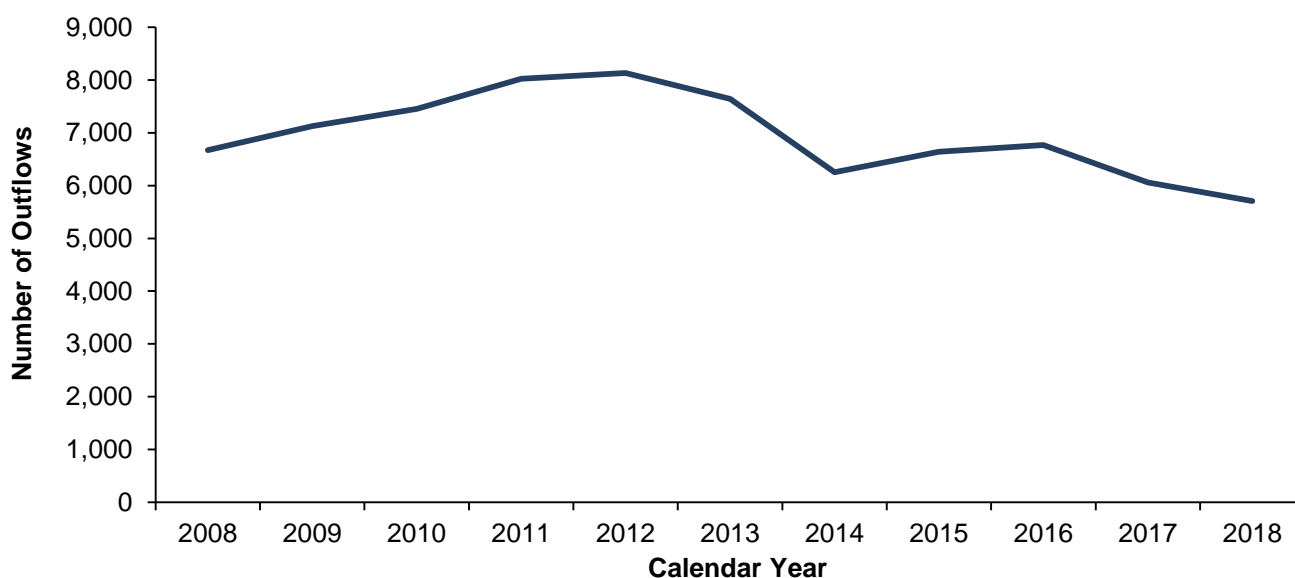
The number of people leaving Northern Ireland is harder to estimate than those arriving, since there are limited data sources available to measure this group. Nonetheless, NISRA has been able to assess information on de-registrations from the Medical Card Register in order to provide some information 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-registrations⁸ by a factor of 1.67 (i.e. 5/3). 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 2018, there were **5,700 outflows** from Northern Ireland to outside the UK (Figure 13), this represents a decrease of 400 (5.8 per cent) from 2017.

Figure 13: Northern Ireland Outflows to a destination outside UK by calendar year (January 2008 – December 2018)

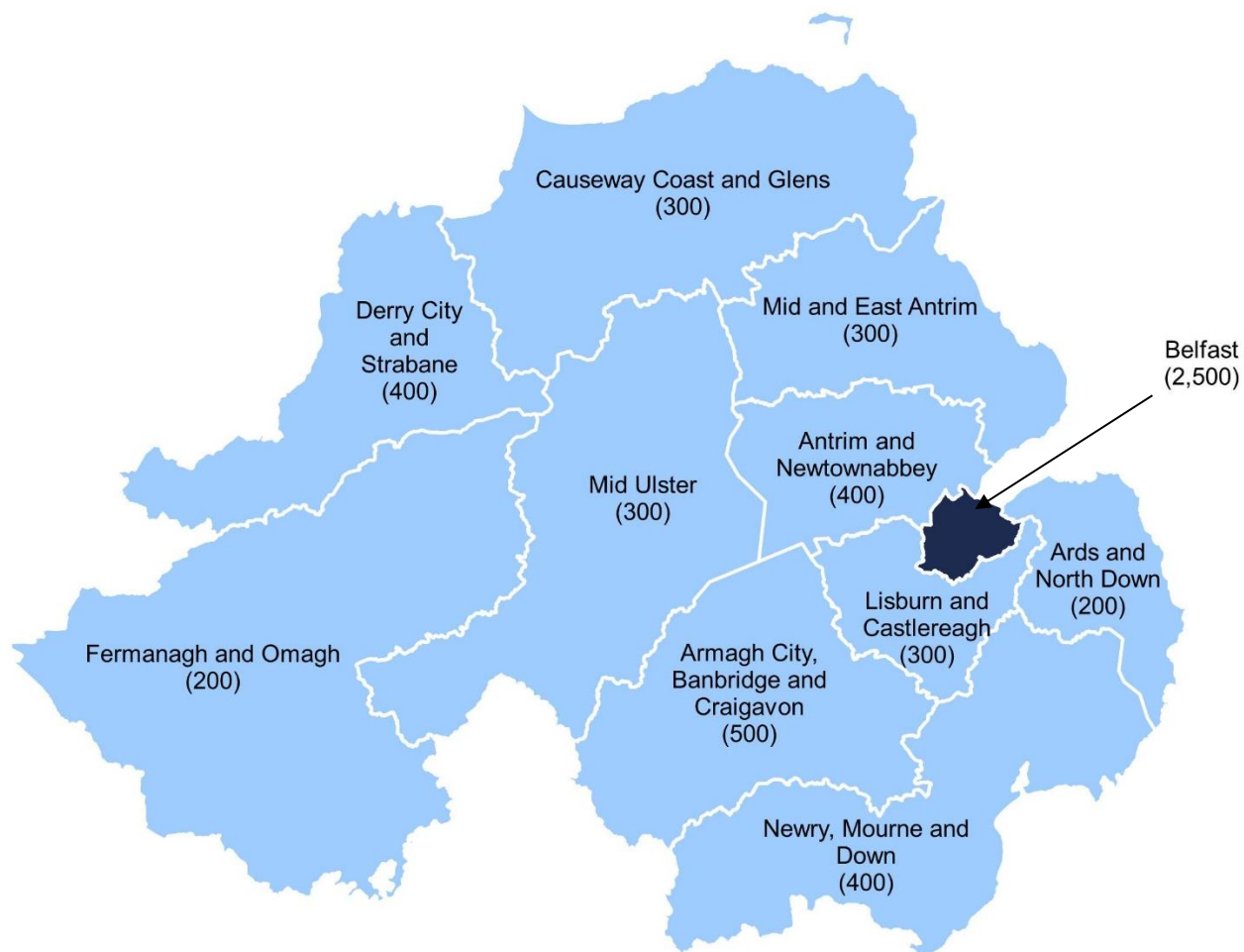


[Download Chart](#) (XLSX format – 101 Kb)

⁸ This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population (see [Methodology Report](#)).

Map 5 shows the largest proportion of international outflows from Northern Ireland in 2018 was in Belfast Local Government District (42.9 per cent, or 2,500 out of the total 5,700 outflows). This is the only district whose proportion of outflows exceeded 10.0 per cent.

Map 5: International Outflows from Northern Ireland by Local Government District (2018)



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

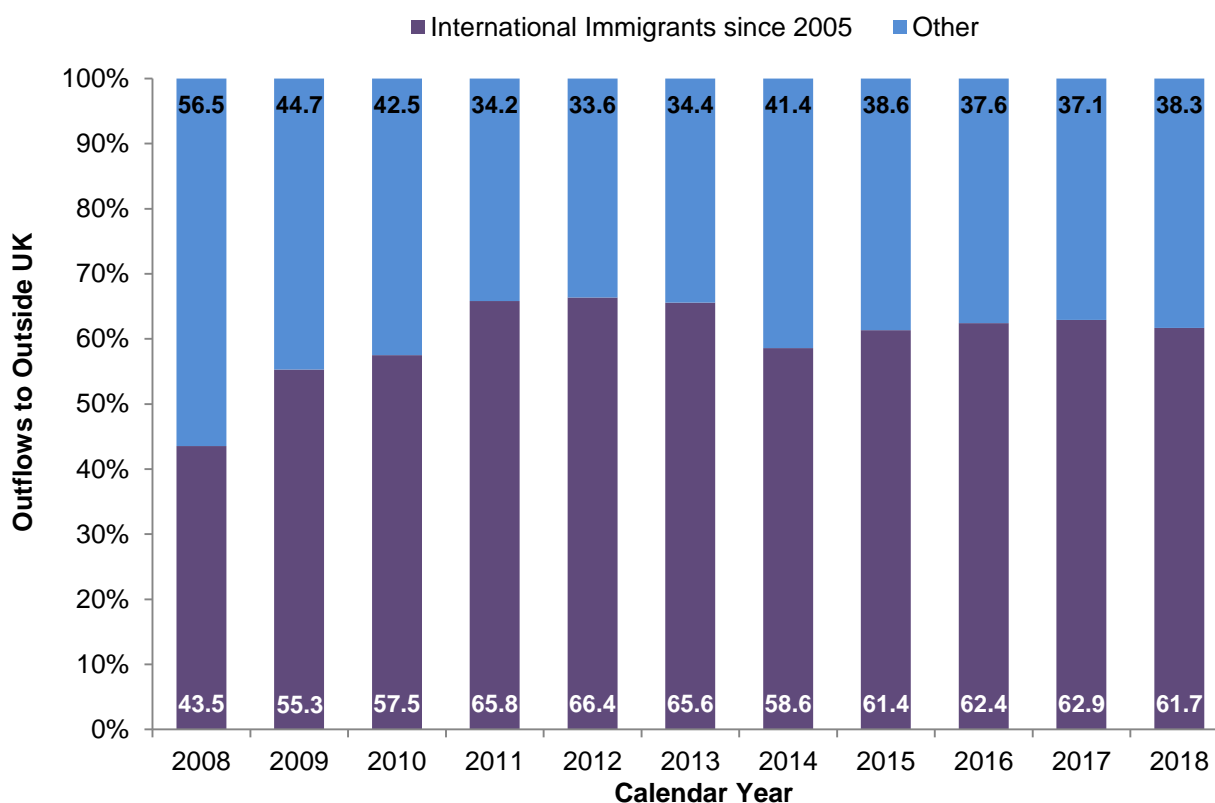
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Since 2005, information has been collected at the original medical card registration relating to (i) the previous country of residence, and (ii) the reason for coming to Northern Ireland to live. Therefore, it is possible to split the analysis of outflows 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 not⁹ (referred to as 'other' in figure 16 below).

Figure 14 shows that since 2009 approximately 3 out of 5 of all international outflows related to international immigrants.

Figure 14: Northern Ireland Outflows to destination outside UK by type and calendar year (January 2008-December 2018)



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

⁹ 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 2018, outflows of international immigrants accounted for 61.7 per cent (3,500 people) of all outflows from Northern Ireland to outside the UK, a decrease of 7.6 per cent (300 outflows) since December 2017. In the same period, outflows of those who did not originally come from outside the UK since 2005 fell by 2.8 per cent (100 outflows) to 2,200 people.

Outflows of international immigrants who originally came to Northern Ireland either for work (1,200 people), education (1,500 people) or family reasons (700 people) remained relatively unchanged from December 2018.

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-2018 the number of international outflows decreased by 14.4 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 2018 for the 18/19 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.

There were **14,600** pupils in NI schools who had English as an additional language.

The School Census shows that there were 14,600 pupils in Northern Ireland schools (Primary and Post-primary¹⁰) who had English as an additional language in October 2018, an increase of 7.3 per cent (1,000 children) since October 2017. The largest numbers of these pupils were found in Belfast LGD (3,100), Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD (3,100) and Mid Ulster LGD (2,500).

¹⁰ 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 700 (6.6 per cent) to 11,400 between October 2017 and October 2018. 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 2018/19 academic year. Those who speak these languages represented 51.6 per cent of all primary school children who had English as an additional language (5,900 out of 11,400 children).

In **post-primary education**, the number of school pupils with English as an additional language rose by 300 (9.9 per cent) to 3,100 between October 2017 and October 2018. 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 2018/19 academic year. Those who speak these languages represented 46.2 per cent of all post primary school children who had English as an additional language (1,400 out of 3,100 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 language¹¹. 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.

¹¹ 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 register¹² 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.

¹² 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 and 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 and 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](#).

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 2017 and June 2018). 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 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 1.88 million in Northern Ireland to 55.98 million in England ([mid-2018 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.

7 Links to related statistics

[Population and migration estimates for the UK](#) and its constituent countries are available from the Office for National Statistics website.

More detailed population estimates for Local Government Districts and Parliamentary Constituencies are available on the [NISRA website](#). Population estimates can also be found for Health and Social Care Trusts, former 26 Local Government Districts, former Education and Library Boards, former Health and Social Services Boards, former NUTS Level III areas, Super Output Areas and former Electoral Wards.

[Estimates of the population aged 85 and over](#) are available on the NISRA website and released in September following the mid-year population estimates in June. Mid-2018 based population estimates will be released in September 2019.

[Population projections for Northern Ireland](#) and [sub-national areas](#) (2016-based) are available from the NISRA website. The 2018-based population projections for Northern Ireland and sub-national areas will be published in October 2019 and April 2020 respectively.

[Population estimates for small areas in Northern Ireland](#) are available on the NISRA website and are released in November following the mid-year population estimates in June. Mid-2018 based population estimates will be released in November 2019.

How to find data

What are you looking for?

The tables and figures used throughout this publication in Excel format.

Population and migration estimates in Open Data format (3* CSV).

Interactive data to engage with population and migration estimates and compare geographies within Northern Ireland

Where is it?

[Tables and figures](#)

[Open Data NI](#)

[Interactive data visualisations](#)

1. [Components of Change](#)
2. [Population Totals](#)
3. [Population by age bands](#)
4. [Population Pyramid](#)
5. [Infographic](#)

8 National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

Population Estimates for Northern Ireland last underwent a full assessment by the Statistics Authority against the [Code of Practice](#) in July 2015. The assessment report can be found [here](#). Following the Statistics Authority assessment the continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in [August 2016](#).

National Statistics status was confirmed subject to NISRA implementing six specific requirements. An action plan outlining how and when NISRA addressed each of these requirements can be found [here](#).

An action plan checklist with supporting documentation can also be found on the [NISRA website](#).

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved clarity and insight by redesigning the statistical bulletin to include a key point's summary for users. In addition, key point headlines have been included throughout the commentary so users are alerted to key messages.
- We have improved the dissemination of our geographical analysis by including maps, where appropriate, to compare migration estimates across LGDs and the UK. We have also improved the output tables for the Long-Term International Migration report by adding a detailed contents section to make it easier for users to explore the range of data on offer by source.
- We have included a new 'Links to related statistics' section within the bulletin so that users can explore the whole population statistics package, including mid-year population estimates, older person estimates, population projections, small area population estimates and a range of other material.

Enquiries and suggestions

- The revisions policy for Northern Ireland population 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.
- 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

- Further statistical information can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services:

Telephone: 028 9025 5156

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Responsible Statistician: Jonathan Harvey

NISRA

August 2019