

A recent timeline of the ONS's Migration Statistics Transformation

House of Commons Library, June 2020

- 2004 Home Office starts to collect Advance Passenger Information (API) for both inbound and outbound air passengers.
- 2010 Coalition Government commits to introducing Exit Checks, in other words matching arrival and departure records using API.
- December 2012 The 2011 Census shows that the population of England and Wales is [464,000 higher than expected](#). This is based on the recorded number of births and deaths and the estimated level of net migration during the decade since the previous Census in 2001. The ONS concludes that the “largest single cause is most likely to be underestimation of long-term immigration from central and eastern Europe in the middle part of the decade.”
- July 2013 House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) publishes report on [Migration Statistics](#), which concludes they are, “blunt instruments for measuring, managing, and understanding migration to and from the UK”. It finds that, “A full and accurate account of migration to and from UK requires new sources of statistics” with the PASC chair Bernard Jenkin describing migration statistics as “not fit for purpose”.
- April 2014 The Government, in [its response to the report](#), “do[es] not agree with the conclusion that the IPS is too uncertain for accurate measurement of progress in reducing net migration” but confirms that it is continuing to improve its e-borders (API) data with a view to using this to enhance migration statistics in the future.
- October 2014 ONS launches new business plan for 2015-20, ‘Better Statistics, Better Decisions’, signalling an overall ambition to improve the quality of its statistics where necessary.
- April 2015 Home Office [formally introduces Exit checks](#):
“Exit checks works by combining data on persons entering the UK, and the permission that they have to stay in the UK, with data on persons leaving the UK. Exit check data is collected from both API and TDI covering all in scope routes. A detailed database, developed for monitoring movements of non-EEA nationals, termed the Initial Status Analysis (ISA) database, combines not just the API and TDI information required for exit checks, but also other sources of information including the main data on visas and other forms of permission granted for leave to remain in the UK such as extensions of leave or asylum claims.”
- June 2015 Outbound exit checks reach 100% (but still exclude travel to Ireland)
- June 2016 Inbound checks reach 87%
- August 2016 [First exist checks report](#)
- March 2017 Inbound checks reach 89%
- August 2017 [Second exit checks report](#): initial results
- August 2017 ONS publishes [research into student migration](#). This uses Home Office visa data, Migrant Journey, Exit Checks, and ONS’s [Survey of Graduating International Students 2017](#):

“In previous research updates, we have explained how the IPS shows a “gap” between the numbers of immigrants arriving to study and the numbers of emigrants who had previously immigrated to study. Since 2012, when this new measure of former student emigration was introduced, the “gap” has averaged around 100,000 (and was 73,000 in provisional estimates for the year ending December 2016). In the year ending March 2017, the “gap” was approximately 56,000 for non-EU students.”

- Nov 2017 Forum held for migration statisticians in which Iain Bell, Dept. National Statistician, heralds [a “new era for migration statistics”](#) and outlines the proposed work.
- May 2018 [Migration statistics transformation update](#). It describes the progress so far: student migration analysis and two rounds of Exit Checks analysis. Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR) postponed due to sampling problem (unrelated).
- July 2018 Delayed [May MSQR](#) released, along with [Report on international migration data sources: July 2018](#). The way have they used admin data so far is:
- MSQR contains adjustment of non-EU student flows based on Home Office student visa data and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) first year student enrolment data for 12 months or more.
 - Analysing Exit Checks and visa data in an exploratory way.
- August 2018 [Third Exit Checks report](#)
- August 2018 MSQR. No new analysis. ONS announces consultation to take place in the Autumn.
- Nov 2018 [MSQR](#). No further changes. It announces that, “In December 2018, Office for National Statistics (ONS) will publish their findings from the feasibility research on using linked administrative data to provide international migration flows and be seeking feedback on user needs across the international migration evidence base.”
- January 2019 ONS [Research engagement report](#) published:
- “we are progressing a programme of work to put administrative data¹ at the core of our evidence on international migration (UK) and on population (England and Wales) by 2020”
- “We are still developing our future system and are in the process of acquiring the further administrative data sources needed to deliver this”
- Still just analysis of HO data so far, concluding:
- There is evidence of circular migration & ‘complex’ travel patterns
 - Substantial lag between migrant arrival and NHS registration (Migrant Worker Scan & NHS records)
 - Other observations about students from linked HESA, Exit Checks, HMRC, and PAYE data.
- February 2019 [MSQR](#). Adjusted 2016/17 non-EU student estimates are absorbed into main series. Also includes a [workplan](#) for the year.
- May 2019 [MSQR](#). No new analysis.
- August 2019 [Fourth Exit Checks report](#)

21 Aug 2019 [Understanding different migration data sources: August 2019 progress report:](#)

ONS migration flows stats downgraded to experimental: “Reclassifying our international migration statistics to Experimental Statistics supports this period of development and innovation to meet the public good.”

22 Aug 2019 [MSQR](#). Two preliminary adjustments made to the series since 2008:

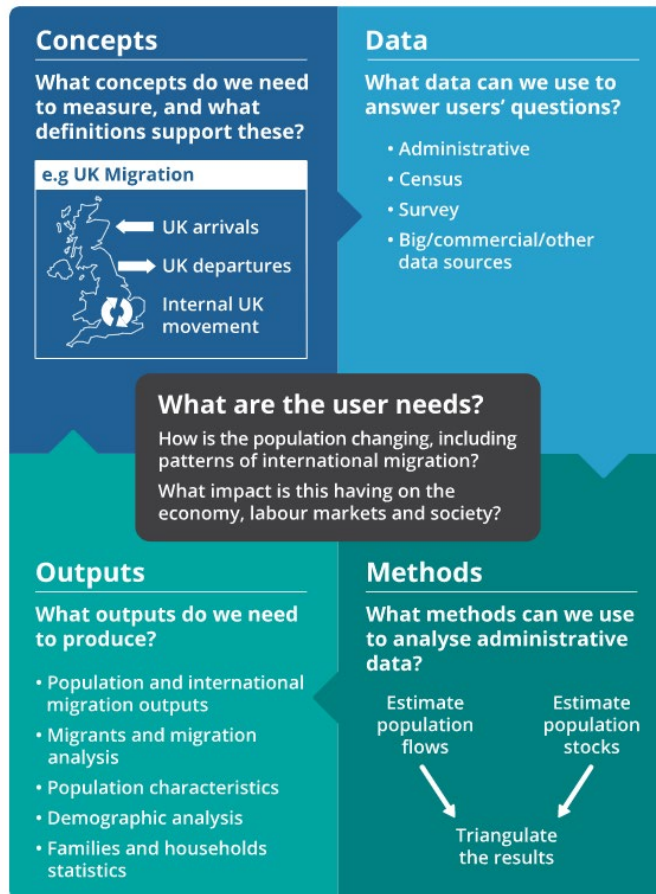
1. Increasing the estimate of non-EU emigration during this period by around 25,000 per year. This is done after analysis of the Home Office’s exit checks data showed a higher proportion of non-EU students leaving after completing their studies than was estimated using the International Passenger Survey, even with its previous adjustments.
2. Increasing EU immigration by around 35,000 in each year between 2011 and 2016. This is done following analysis of National Insurance Number (NiNo) registration and activity which suggested that just over half (53%) of non-UK arrivals during this period became long-term migrants. This proportion was then applied to the number of EU8 nationals registering for NiNos during that period and the resulting estimate of long-term migration was 48% higher than the number that had been estimated previously using the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Based on this, the ONS adjusts the EU8 non-student inflow upwards by 48% between 2011 and 2016.

The report also states:

“When we look over an extended time period (2005 to 2018), there is a divergence in what the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and Annual Population Survey (APS) tell us about long-term international migration in the UK. Our progress report showed that, while for overall international migration the long-term trends are similar, the yearly change in the EU-born population (as measured by the APS) tends to be larger than EU net migration (as measured by the IPS) – whilst the opposite is true for non-EU migration.”

Nov 2019 [MSQR](#). Same historical adjustments as in August. Non-EU adjusted for the latest year.

January 2020 [Update on our population and migration statistics transformation journey: a research engagement report](#). Describes the journey and sets out a framework:



It states that, “**The IPS will continue to be essential as a leading indicator of international migration.** The survey collects information on the future intentions of individuals moving to the UK and helps provide a timely picture of migration patterns. We can then potentially enhance it using the latest administrative sources, so that we reach our best assessment of migration – reflecting the strengths of what different sources can tell us.”

Also reports on stock estimates from the Statistical Population Dataset (SPD) – a parallel piece of work to improve population estimates.

14 Feb 2020 The ONS releases several articles from its research:

- [Defining and measuring international migration](#): a summary of ONS’s research into how migration defined.
- [Exploring international migration concepts and definitions with Home Office administrative data](#)
- [What can administrative data sources tell us about the patterns of presence of non-EU students?](#)

27 Feb 2020 [MSQR](#): “In this release we have made small refinements to the preliminary adjustment methods. These refinements have had minimal impact on the estimates:

- for the EU and non-EU preliminary adjustments, aligning the adjustment to use data for each year ending period rather than rolling the same adjustment through four time periods
- for the non-EU preliminary adjustment, to use the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) dataset rather than England and Wales, include other Europe, adjust the HESA method to remove those on a course less than a year and use world region breakdowns”

27 Feb 2020

[International migration statistics preliminary adjustments update and feedback](#)

Describes the latest work that has been done to aggregate administrative data for migration statistics transformation:

“To produce the current preliminary adjustment for EU migrants, we commissioned the DWP to provide some aggregate analysis of their Lifetime Labour Market Database (**L2**) dataset. The L2 dataset is a 1% sample of HM Revenue and Customs’ (HMRC) National Insurance and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) System and is supplemented with benefit data from DWP. The L2 dataset allowed the DWP to analyse data on non-UK national adults who registered for a National Insurance number (NINO) in the UK, and had interactions with National Insurance, PAYE, DWP benefit and local authority benefit systems.

This analysis meant patterns of interaction with the tax and benefits system could be identified, and allowed the DWP to classify records which could, based on prolonged interaction with these systems, be classed as long-term migrants. Aggregate counts of these data have been shared with us and used to develop preliminary adjustments.

As part of the development of the preliminary adjustments, we are looking to replace the use of L2 with aggregate data from the DWP-created **Registration And Population Interaction Database (RAPID)**. One of the main benefits of RAPID, compared with L2, is that RAPID uses 100% extracts of data, meaning it contains records for everyone with a NINO. An additional benefit of RAPID is that it contains data extracts from a wider range of DWP and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) systems than L2, including all benefit, employments, self-employment, pensions and in-work benefit interactions, for example tax credits and Housing Benefit.

RAPID provides a single coherent view of citizens’ interactions with the DWP, HMRC’s PAYE and Self Assessment systems and local Authorities’ Housing Benefit systems within a tax year for the UK (between tax year ending 2011 and tax year ending 2019). To do this, RAPID collates 100% extracts of data and summarises the duration of individual interactions with the above systems for each tax year.

As well as all people who hold a NINO, RAPID also includes information on migrants registering for a NINO along with their date of registration and self-reported date of arrival in the UK. Information on migrant arrivals and registrations, combined with the data on interactions, allows an assessment of whether the duration of the stay in the UK may classify them as long-term residents. As with the previous work using L2, DWP analysis of RAPID is undertaken on de-identified data, and **only aggregate data will be supplied to us** to be integrated into our preliminary adjustment methodology.

In addition to using the Registration And Population Interaction Database (RAPID) in the EU preliminary adjustment, we will also compare RAPID data with findings from

the August 2019 coherence work, when looking at the divergence of LTIM EU net migration and the change in stocks as measured by the **Annual Population Survey (APS)**. Once these patterns are better understood, we plan to extend the preliminary adjustments to the latest time period.”

February 2020 [Transformation of the population and migration statistics system: overview](#)

In addition to describing progress so far it adds that:

- ONS is now beginning to explore how it can develop measurements of Short-Term International Migration (STIM) estimates as part of the transformation programme.
- It is undertaking ongoing research into circular travel patterns (USING Exit Checks).

This is a live article which is being continually updated.

March 2019 IPS is suspended due to coronavirus.

21 May 2020 [MSQR](#). No new adjustments. It says the following about the impact of coronavirus:

“[W]e have now revised our approach for transforming migration statistics this year because of the current situation around the coronavirus (COVID-19). The IPS – which underpins our existing international migration statistics – has been suspended. The latest available IPS data cover the vast majority of the year ending March 2020, which we are due to publish in the August MSQR. However, there will be no new IPS data available for inclusion in the November 2020 MSQR. We are now planning to move away from the IPS and use administrative data to deliver new measures of migration from November 2020 onwards. **The August MSQR will be the last set of migration statistics based on IPS data.**”

An ONS blog also outlines the effect of coronavirus on the IPS: [Understanding international migration in a rapidly changing world](#)

28 May 2020 Home Office releases [Statistics relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system](#). It includes data on the impact of coronavirus on passenger arrivals.

August 2020 Last MSQR to use the IPS (for the time being). It will include:

- IPS data up to year ending March 2020
- HO visa applications and DWP NINo registrations up to year ending June 2020

Nov 2020 First MSQR to rely entirely on sources other than the IPS.