
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP
Prime Minister
10, Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

31 March 2010

Dear Prime Minister

MIGRATION STATISTICS

I have received representations from several sources about your recent podcast on migration.

I attach a note, prepared by the ONS, on these statistics. You will see that the note points out that the podcast did not use comparable data series for 2007 to 2009, and that it did not take account of the revised estimate of long-term net immigration for 2007.

I note that in your speech today you correctly referred to the statistics in respect of migration for the period 2007 to 2009.

The Statistics Authority hopes that in the political debate over the coming weeks all parties will be careful in their use of statistics, to protect the integrity of official statistics.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Issue

On Friday 26 March the Prime Minister discussed migration on a podcast on his official website. This note seeks to clarify the source of the figures the Prime Minister used.

Net inward migration

Prime Minister's podcast: "Some people talk as if net inward migration is rising. In fact, it is falling - down from 237,000 in 2007, to 163,000 in 2008, to provisional figures of 147,000 last year."

In 2007 the estimate of long-term net immigration was 233,000. The figure of 237,000 was published before ONS revised previous figures in November 2009.

In 2008 the estimate of long-term net immigration was 163,000 as stated.

Long-term net immigration according to the provisional estimate from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) was 147,000 in the year to June 2009. As this figure does not include additional adjustments used to create the final estimate, it is not comparable to the figures quoted for 2007 and 2008. Comparable figures for 2009 will not be available until November 2010.

The difference between final long-term international migration (LTIM) figures and provisional figures based solely on the IPS is shown in table 1.5 of the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report for February 2010.

thousands

Period	Inflow		Outflow		Net flow	
	IPS	LTIM	IPS	LTIM	IPS	LTIM
YE Jun 07	545	595	376	387	170	208
YE Dec 07	546	574	326	341	219	233
YE Jun 08	531	571	363	375	168	196
YE Dec 08	538	590	409	427	129	163
YE Jun 09	518		371		147	

(YE - Year Ending)

The provisional IPS net flow figures for YE Jun 09 (147,000) can be compared with equivalent figures for YE Jun 08 (168,000) and YE Jun 07 (170,000).

A number of adjustments are made to the IPS to produce the final LTIM figure. These are for:

- migration to and from Northern Ireland
- asylum seekers and their dependants not counted by the IPS, and
- switchers (people who change their intentions with regard to their length of stay and, therefore, their migratory status).

The size of these adjustments varies each year.

References

1. Transcript of the Prime Minister's podcast: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page22959>
2. Migration Statistics Quarterly Report - February 2010: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/mig0210.pdf>