
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Will Moy
Full Fact
9 Warwick Court
London
WC1R 5DJ

10 December 2015

Dear Will,

EU MIGRATION AND UK TOTAL NET MIGRATION STATISTICS

Thank you for your letter of 4 November 2015 about how members of the Government have communicated the effect of migration from the EU on meeting its ambition of delivering net migration in the tens of thousands¹. We have reviewed migration statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)², statements made by Ministers to which you refer in your letter and articles produced by Full Fact³. This is a complex and changeable subject area and the effect of migration from the EU on the Government's ambition has varied over time.

The most recent statistics published by ONS⁴ show that annual UK total long-term net migration was estimated to have been above 100,000 each year since 1998 (Annex A figure 1). As noted in your letter, both EU and non-EU net migration have contributed to annual UK total net migration being above this level. Non-EU net migration is estimated to have been consistently above 100,000 since 1998 (Annex A figure 2) while EU net migration (excluding British citizens) was estimated to be below 100,000 until 2006, above 100,000 in 2006 and 2007 and then dropped back below it in 2008. Since 2009 EU net migration has been increasing; in 2013 the estimate was above 100,000. The figure continued to rise and has stayed above this level since then.

The total net migration statistic for the UK is made up of net migration for EU citizens (excluding British), non-EU citizens, and British citizens. Looking at the level of UK total net migration if EU net migration had been zero, over the past ten years (Annex B), the estimate for the UK was above 100,000 in most years between 2005 and 2011; in 2012 and 2013 the estimate dropped to slightly below 100,000. It then rose above 100,000 in 2014 and has remained above 100,000 since. If EU net migration had been zero, based on these estimates net migration would still have been above 100,000 since the first quarter of 2014.

As shown in Annex A figure 2, British citizenship net migration estimates are typically negative as more people in this group emigrate (leave the UK) than immigrate (move to the

¹ <https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto>

² [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, November 2015](#)

³ https://fullfact.org/immigration/eu_reason_missing_net_migration_target-44364

⁴ [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, November 2015](#)

UK). Therefore, even though non-EU net migration is estimated to have been above 100,000 in 2012 and 2013, the combination of non-EU and British net migration brings the UK total net migration estimate to slightly below 100,000 in both these years.

Given the forthcoming EU referendum and current high levels of public interest in immigration, it is particularly important that net migration statistics are used accurately and described precisely in public debate. I am speaking with Cabinet Office officials to ensure that communications on this subject consistently provide a complete picture, informed by the most up-to-date statistics.

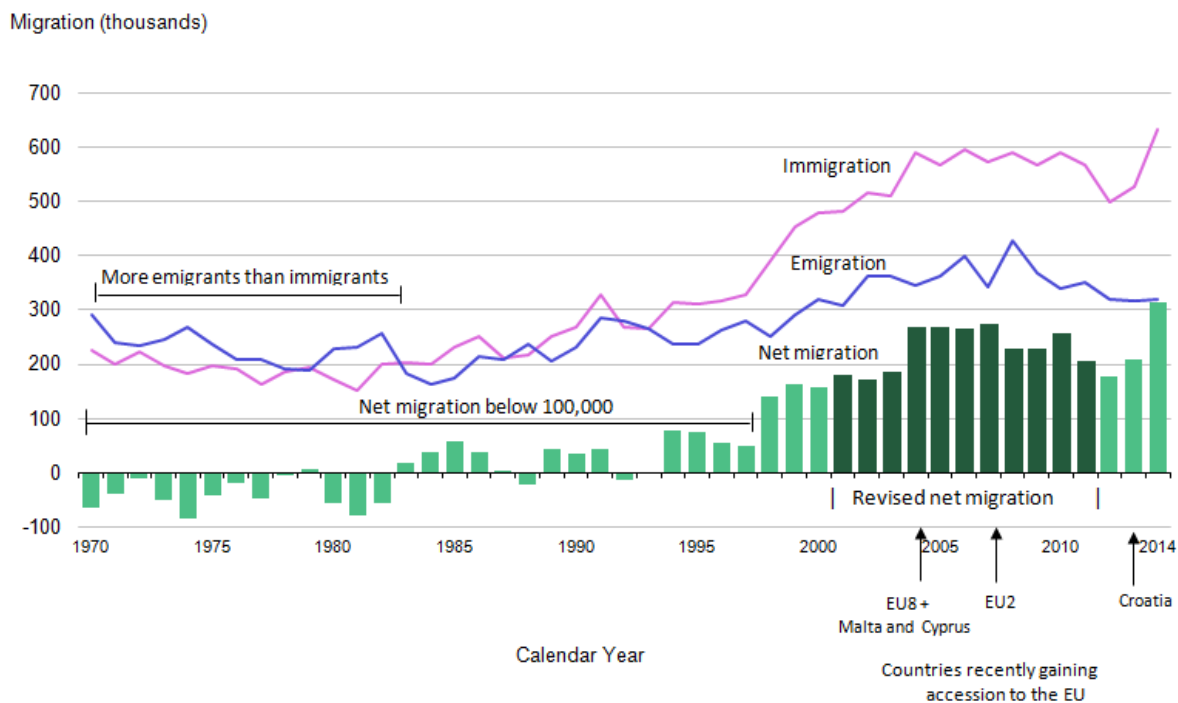
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Annex A: Trends in net migration over time

Figure 1: Long-Term International Migration, UK, 1970 to 2014 (annual totals)

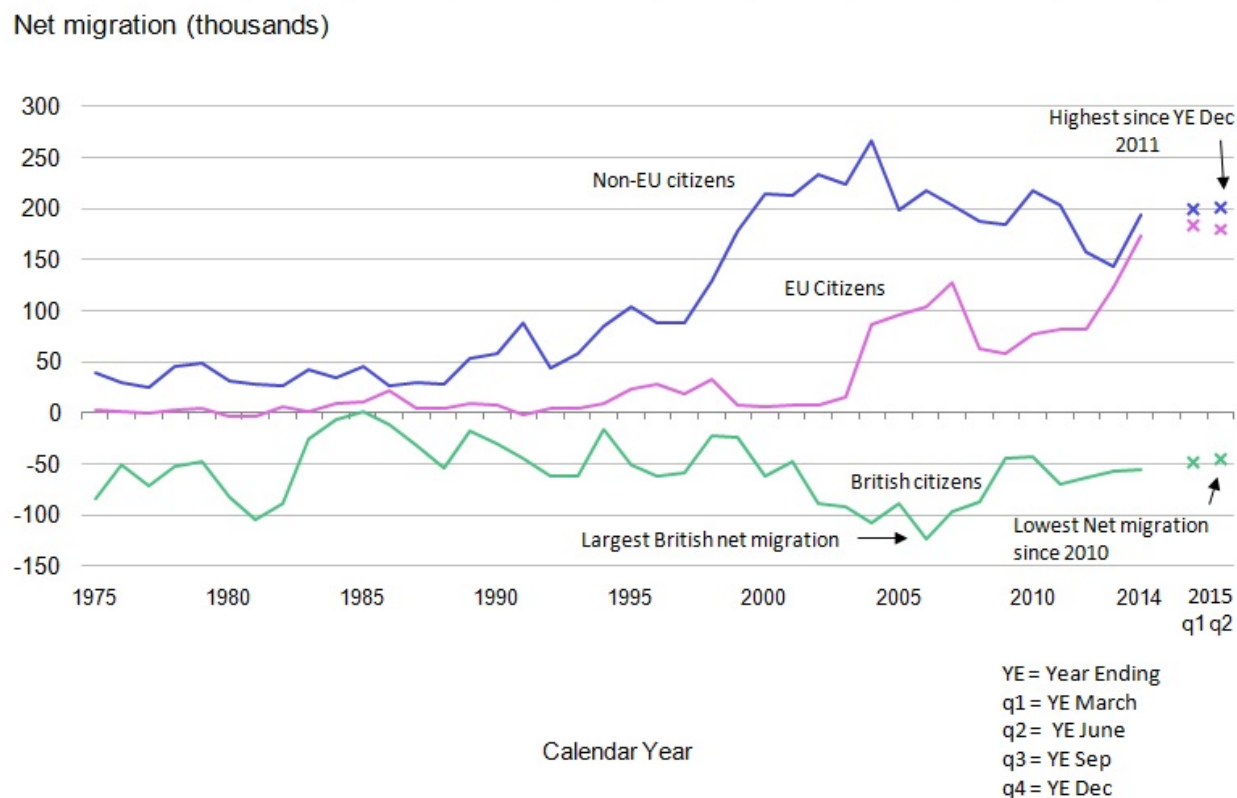


Source: [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report November 2015](#), Figure 2

Notes:

1. Based on Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates which are produced by combining migration data from the IPS, Home Office data on asylum seekers (including non-asylum enforced removals adjustment), migration to and from Northern Ireland (from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) and adjustments for visitor switchers and migrant switchers.
2. Net migration is the difference between immigration and emigration.
3. Net migration estimates for the period 2001 to 2011 have been revised in light of the 2011 Census. Immigration and emigration estimates have not been revised and are therefore not consistent with the revised net migration estimates.
4. Data pre-1991 are IPS data only. LTIM data are shown from 1991 onwards.
5. Although Malta and Cyprus also acceded in 2004, they are not included in the EU8.

Figure 2: Long-Term International net migration by citizenship, UK, 1975 to 2015 (year ending June 2015)



Source: [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report November 2015](#), Figure 3

Notes:

1. Based on Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates which are produced by combining migration data from the IPS, Home Office data on asylum seekers (including non-asylum enforced removals adjustment), migration to and from Northern Ireland (from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) and adjustments for visitor switchers and migrant switchers.
2. Citizenship is the term used in the International Passenger Survey (IPS) to define the country for which a migrant is a passport holder. This refers specifically to the passport being used to enter or leave the UK at the time of interview. It does not refer to any other passport(s) which migrants of multiple nationality may hold. More generally a British citizen as described in IPS statistics includes those with UK nationality usually through a connection with the UK: birth, adoption, descent, registration, or naturalisation. British nationals have the right of abode in the UK.
3. Net migration estimates for the period 2001 to 2011 have been revised in light of the 2011 Census. Citizenship breakdowns have not. Therefore this chart is not consistent with the total revised net migration estimates shown in Figure 1. This also means that estimates for the period 2001 to 2011 are not fully comparable with those for later periods.
4. Data pre-1991 are IPS data only. LTIM data are shown from 1991 onwards.
5. Figures for 2015 are provisional and quarterly. All other figures are final calendar year estimates of LTIM. Provisional rolling quarterly estimates are represented in this chart by a cross.
6. Note that the data for 2015 reflect quarterly year ending data whereas before 2014 the data are calendar year data.

Annex B: Net migration statistics, UK (2005 – June 2015)

The total net migration statistic for the UK is made up of net migration for EU citizens (excluding British), non-EU citizens, and British citizens. Therefore two possible approaches to calculating total net migration if EU net migration were zero include: adding up the non-EU and British citizenship figures; or subtracting the EU net migration figure from the total net migration figure. The last two columns in Table 1 show the outcome of these calculations. These two approaches give similar numbers in recent years but show larger differences for earlier years. The differences seen in years 2005 through to 2011 are because the total net migration statistics have been adjusted to take account of the 2011 Census but the citizenship breakdowns have not⁵.

Table 1: Net migration statistics, UK (2005-June 2015)

Year	Total net migration		Net migration by citizenship						Calculated values	
			EU Citizens		Non-EU Citizens		British Citizens		Non-EU + British citizens net migration	Total net migration - EU citizens net
	Estimate	CI (+/-)	Estimate	CI (+/-)	Estimate	CI (+/-)	Estimate	CI (+/-)		
2005	267	:	96	27	198	29	-88	29	110	171
2006	265	:	104	30	218	29	-124	31	94	161
2007	273	:	127	33	204	25	-97	24	107	146
2008	229	:	63	43	187	25	-87	28	100	166
2009	229	:	58	25	184	20	-44	18	140	171
2010	256	:	77	25	217	19	-43	18	174	179
2011	205	:	82	23	204	20	-70	18	134	123
2012	177	34	82	21	157	19	-63	19	94	95
2013	209	35	123	24	143	19	-57	16	86	86
YE2014Q1	236	37	130	26	157	20	-51	16	106	106
YE2014Q2	254	38	138	27	165	20	-49	17	116	116
YE2014Q3	292	42	158	28	188	24	-54	20	134	134
YE2014Q4	313	43	174	29	194	25	-55	19	139	139
YE2015Q1 ^(p)	336	40	184	28	200	23	-48	18	152	152
YE2015Q2 ^(p)	336	39	180	27	201	22	-45	18	156	156

Source: [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report November 2015](#), Table 1.

Notes:

1. Based on Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates which are produced by combining migration data from the IPS, Home Office data on asylum seekers (including non-asylum enforced removals adjustment), migration to and from Northern Ireland (from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) and adjustments for visitor switchers and migrant switchers.
2. (p) highlights that the figures for 2015 are provisional. They are subject to revisions each quarter as more timely data becomes available.
3. Figures for 2005 to 2013 are final calendar year estimates of LTIM. Figures for 2014 and 2015 are rolling year ending (YE) estimates. Q1 = YE March, Q2 = YE June, Q3 = YE September, Q4 = YE December

⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/international-migration-methodology/guidance-note-for-net-international-migration-revisions.pdf>

4. *Total net migration estimates for the period 2001 to 2011 (so those for 2005 to 2011 in this table) have been revised in light of the 2011 Census but underlying breakdowns, such as citizenship have not. Totals may not add exactly due to this.*
5. *All estimates are individually rounded to the nearest thousand. Totals may not add exactly due to this rounding.*
6. *CI = Confidence Interval. There is uncertainty around these figures as they are primarily based on a sample survey (IPS). This table uses 95% confidence intervals (CI) to indicate the accuracy of each estimate. The confidence intervals relate only to the IPS component of each estimate. Please see the source publication for more information. For any given estimate, there is a 95% probability that the true figure lies in the range: estimate +/- confidence interval. Users are advised to be cautious when making inferences from estimates with large confidence intervals.*
7. *Confidence intervals are not available for the revised total net migration estimates, revised to take account of Census 2011 data (denoted by ":"), or for the calculated values.*