
Immigration to the United Kingdom since 1922

Immigration to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland since 1922^[1] has been substantial, in particular from Ireland and the former colonies and other territories of the British Empire - such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Caribbean, South Africa, Kenya and Hong Kong - under British nationality law. Others have come as asylum seekers, seeking protection as refugees under the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention, or from European Union (EU) member states, exercising one of the EU's Four Freedoms.

About half the population increase between the 1991 and 2001 censuses was due to foreign-born immigration. 4.9 million people^[2] (8.3 percent of the population at the time) were born abroad, although the census gives no indication of their immigration status or intended length of stay.

Provisional figures show that in 2009, 567,000 people arrived to live in the UK whilst 371,000 left, meaning that net inward migration was 196,000. The number of people immigrating to and emigrating from the UK both fell between 2008 and 2009.^{[3] [4]}

In 2006, there were 149,035 applications for British citizenship, 32 percent fewer than in 2005. The number of people granted citizenship during 2006 was 154,095, 5 percent fewer than in 2005. The largest groups of people granted British citizenship were from India, Pakistan, Somalia and the Philippines.^[5] In 2006, 134,430 people were granted settlement in the UK, a drop of 25 per cent on 2005.^[6]

Meanwhile, migration to and from Central and Eastern Europe has increased since 2004 with the accession to the European Union of eight Central and Eastern European states, since there is free movement of labour within the EU. The UK government is currently phasing in a new points-based immigration system for people from outside of the European Economic Area.

British Empire & the Commonwealth

From the mid-eighteenth century until at least 1947, and longer in many areas, the British Empire covered a large proportion of the globe and at its peak over a third of the world's people lived under British rule. Both during this time, and following the granting of independence to most colonies after Second World War, the vast majority of immigrants to the UK were from either current or former colonies, most notably those in the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean.

Following the end of the Second World War, the British Nationality Act 1948 was passed to allow the 800 million^[7] subjects in the British Empire to live and work in the United Kingdom without needing a visa. These people filled a gap in the UK labour market for unskilled jobs and many people were specifically brought to the UK on ships such as the *Empire Windrush*.

Commonwealth immigration, made up largely of economic migrants, rose from 3,000 per year in 1953 to 46,800 in 1956 and 136,400 in 1961.^[7] The heavy numbers of migrants resulted in the establishment of a Cabinet committee in June 1950 to find "*ways which might be adopted to check the immigration into this country of coloured people from British colonial territories*".^[7]

Although the Committee recommended not to introduce restrictions, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed in 1962 as a response to public sentiment that the new arrivals "should return to their own countries" and that "no more of them come to this country".^[8] Introducing the legislation to the House of Commons, the Conservative Home Secretary Rab Butler stated that:

The justification for the control which is included in this Bill, which I shall describe in more detail in a few moments, is that a sizeable part of the entire population of the earth is at present legally entitled to come and stay in this already densely populated country. It amounts altogether to one-quarter of the population of the globe and at present there are no factors visible which might lead us to expect a reversal or even a modification of the immigration trend.^[9]

– Rab Butler MP, *16 November 1961*

The new Act required migrants to have a job before they arrived, to possess special skills or who would meet the "labour needs" of the national economy. In 1965, to combat the perceived injustice in the case where the wives of British subjects could not obtain British nationality, the British Nationality Act was adopted. Shortly afterwards, refugees from Kenya and Uganda, fearing discrimination from their own national governments, began to arrive in Britain; as they had retained their British nationality granted by the 1948 Act, they were not subject to the later controls. The Conservative MP Enoch Powell campaigned for tighter controls on immigration which resulted in the passing of the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1968.^[10]

For the first time, the Act required migrants to have a "substantial connection with the United Kingdom", namely to be connected by birth or ancestry to a UK national. Those who did not could only obtain United Kingdom nationality at the discretion of the national authorities.^[11] One month after the adoption of the Act, Enoch Powell made his infamous Rivers of Blood speech.

By 1972, with the passing of the Immigration Act, only holders of work permits, or people with parents or grandparents born in the UK could gain entry - effectively stemming primary immigration from Commonwealth countries.^[12] The Act abolished the distinction between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth entrants. The Conservative government nevertheless allowed, amid much controversy, the immigration of 27,000 individuals displaced from Uganda after the coup d'état led by Idi Amin in 1971.^[10]

In the 1970s, an average of 72,000 immigrants were settling in the UK every year from the Commonwealth; this decreased in the 1980s and early 1990s to around 54,000 per year, only to rise again to around 97,000 by 1999. The total number of Commonwealth immigrants since 1962 is estimated at around 2.5 million.^[13]

The Ireland Act 1949 has the unusual status of recognising the Republic of Ireland, but affirming that its citizens are not citizens of a foreign country for the purposes of any law in the United Kingdom.^[14] This act was initiated at a time when Ireland withdrew from the Commonwealth of Nations after declaring itself a republic.^[15]

World War II

In the lead up to World War II, many Germans, particularly those belonging to minorities which were persecuted under Nazi rule, such as Jews, sought to emigrate to the United Kingdom, and it is estimated that as many as 50,000 may have been successful. There were immigration caps on the number who could enter and, subsequently, some applicants were turned away. When the UK declared war on Germany, however, migration between the countries ceased.

Post-war immigration (1945-1983)

Following the end of World War II, substantial groups of people from Soviet-controlled territories settled in Britain, particularly Poles and Ukrainians. The UK recruited displaced people as so-called European Volunteer Workers in order to provide labour to industries that were required in order to aim economic recovery after the war.^[16] In the 1951 census, the Polish-born population of the UK numbered some 162,339, up from 44,642 in 1931.^{[17] [18]}

Indians began arriving in the UK in large numbers shortly after their country gained independence in 1947. More than 60,000 arrived before 1955, many of whom drove buses, or worked in foundries or textile factories. Later arrivals opened corner shops or ran post offices. The flow of Indian immigrants peaked between 1965 and 1972, boosted in particular by Idi Amin's sudden decision to expel all 50,000 Gujarati Indians from Uganda. Around 30,000 Ugandan Asians migrated to the UK.^[19]

There was also an influx of refugees from Hungary, following the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution, numbering 20,990.^[20]

Until the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962, all Commonwealth citizens could enter and stay in the United Kingdom without any restriction. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 made Citizens of the United Kingdom

and Colonies (CUKCs) whose passports were not directly issued by the United Kingdom Government (i.e. passports issued by the Governor of a colony or by the Commander of a British protectorate) subject to immigration control.

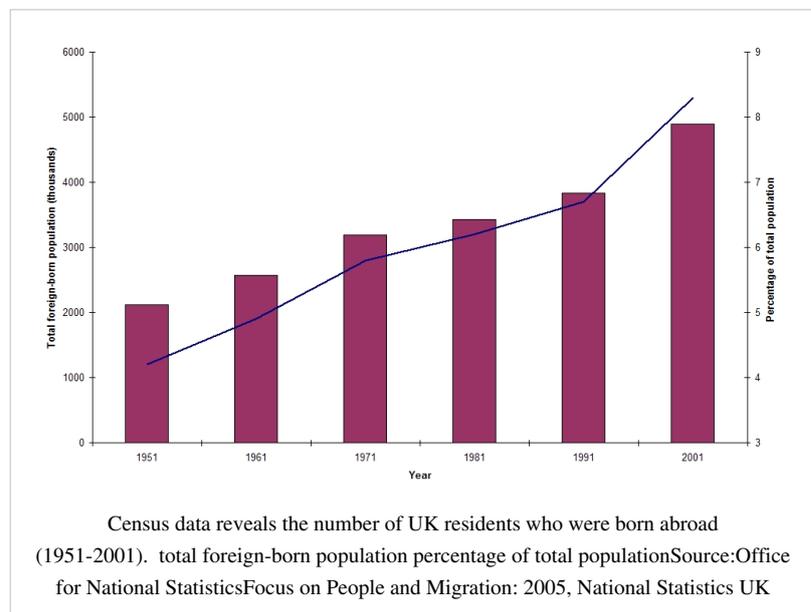
Enoch Powell gave the famous "Rivers of Blood" speech on 20 April 1968 in which he warned his audience of what he believed would be the consequences of continued unchecked immigration from the Commonwealth to Britain. Opposition Leader Edward Heath sacked Powell from his Shadow Cabinet the day after the speech, and he never held another senior political post. Powell received almost 120,000 (predominantly positive) letters and a Gallup poll at the end of April showed that 74% of those asked agreed with his speech. After the 'Rivers of Blood' speech, Powell was transformed into a national public figure and won huge support across Britain. Three days after the speech, on 23 April, as the Race Relations Bill was being debated in the House of Commons, 1,000 dockers marched on Westminster protesting against Powell's "victimisation", and the next day 400 meat porters from Smithfield market handed in a 92-page petition in support of Powell.

By 1972, only holders of work permits, or people with parents or grandparents born in the UK could gain entry - significantly reducing primary immigration from Commonwealth countries.^[12]

Contemporary immigration (1983 onwards)

The British Nationality Act 1981, which was enacted in 1983, distinguishes between British citizen or British Overseas Territories citizen. The former hold nationality *by descent* and the latter hold nationality *other than by descent*. Citizens by descent cannot automatically pass on British nationality to a child born outside the United Kingdom or its Overseas Territories (though in some situations the child can be registered as a citizen).

Immigration officers have to be satisfied about a person's nationality and identity and entry could be refused if they were not satisfied.^[22]



Non-European immigration rose significantly during the period from 1997, not least because of the government's abolition of the primary purpose rule in June 1997.^[23] This change made it easier for UK residents to bring foreign spouses into the country.

Comments from former government advisor Andrew Neather in the *Evening Standard* suggested that immigration was actively encouraged by the Labour government between 2000 and 2008.^{[24] [25]}

European Union

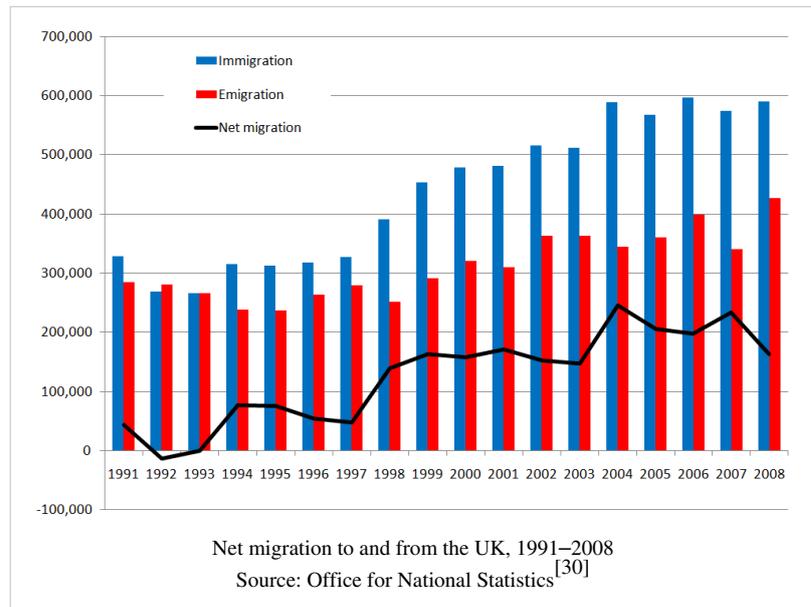
One of the Four Freedoms of the European Union, of which the United Kingdom is a member, is the right to the free movement of people as codified in the Directive 2004/38/EC and the EEA Regulations (UK).

Since the expansion of the EU on 1 May 2004, the UK has accepted immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, Malta and Cyprus, although the substantial Maltese and Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities were established earlier through their Commonwealth connection. There are restrictions on the benefits that members of eight of these accession countries (A8 nationals) can claim, which are covered by the Worker Registration Scheme.^[26] Many other European Union member states exercised their right to temporary immigration control (which must end by 2011)^[27]

over entrants from these accession states,^[28] but some subsequently removed these restrictions ahead of the 2011 deadline.^[29]

Research conducted by the Migration Policy Institute for the Equality and Human Rights Commission suggests that, between May 2004 and September 2009, 1.5 million workers migrated from the new EU member states to the UK, but that many have returned home, with the result that the number of nationals of the new member states in the UK increased by some 700,000 over the same period.^[31]

^[32] Migration from Poland in particular has become temporary and circular in nature.^[33] In 2009, for the first time since the enlargement, more nationals of the eight Central and



Eastern European states that joined the EU in 2004 left the UK than arrived.^[34] Research commissioned by the Regeneration and Economic Development Analysis Expert Panel suggested migrant workers leaving the UK due to the recession are likely to return in the future and cited evidence of "strong links between initial temporary migration and intended permanent migration".^[35]

The Government announced that the same rules would not apply to nationals of Romania and Bulgaria (A2 nationals) when those countries acceded to the EU in 2007. Instead, restrictions were put in place to limit migration to students, the self-employed, highly skilled migrants and food and agricultural workers.^[36]

In February 2011, the Leader of the Labour Party, Ed Miliband, stated that he thought that the Labour government's decision to permit the unlimited immigration of eastern European migrants had been a mistake, arguing that they had underestimated the potential number of migrants and that the scale of migration had had a negative impact on wages.^[37] ^[38]

A report by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) entitled *International Migration and Rural Economies*, suggests that intra-EU migration since enlargement has resulted in migrants settling in rural locations without a prior history of immigration. It also notes that while, at the national level, "evidence so far suggests that it is unlikely that migration has had a significant impact on the wages or employment prospects of local workers...there is some evidence that suggests immigration has had a significant but small impact on wages of previous waves of lower-skilled migrant workers and that when the occupational structure of the UK workforce is taken into account, there is a negative impact on the wages of UK workers at the bottom of the occupational distribution".^[39] Other research indicates that migration from the new EU member states may have helped improve labour market efficiency and hence increase average wages, although with a potentially small negative impact at the bottom of the income scale.^[31]

Research published by University College London in July 2009 showed that EU migrants made a "substantial net contribution to the UK fiscal system", paying 37 per cent more in taxes than they received in welfare payments. However, "EEA national(s) who are economically inactive, including A8 and A2 nationals will not generally be entitled to income-related benefits".^[40] Researchers found that, on average, A8 migrants were younger and better educated than the native population, and that if they had the same demographic characteristics of natives, would be 13 per cent less likely to claim benefits and 28 per cent less likely to live in social housing.^[41] ^[42]

Managed migration

"Managed migration" is the term for all legal labour and student migration from outside of the European Union and this accounts for a substantial percentage of overall immigration figures for the UK. Many of the immigrants who arrive under these schemes bring skills which are in short supply in the UK. This area of immigration is managed by the UK Border Agency, a department within the Home Office. Applications are made at UK embassies or consulates or directly to the UK Border Agency, depending upon the type of visa or permit required.

In April 2006 changes to the managed migration system were proposed that would create one points-based immigration system for the UK in place of all other schemes. Tier 1 in the new system - which replaced the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme - gives points for age, education, earning, previous UK experience but not for work experience. The points-based system was phased in over the course of 2008, replacing previous managed migration schemes such as the work permit system and the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme.^[43] ^[44]

The points-based system is composed of five tiers, described by the UK Border Agency as follows:

- Tier 1 – for highly skilled individuals, who can contribute to growth and productivity;
- Tier 2 – for skilled workers with a job offer, to fill gaps in the United Kingdom workforce;
- Tier 3 – for limited numbers of low-skilled workers needed to fill temporary labour shortages;
- Tier 4 – for students;
- Tier 5 – for temporary workers and young people covered by the Youth Mobility Scheme, who are allowed to work in the United Kingdom for a limited time to satisfy primarily non-economic objectives.^[45]

In June 2010, Britain's new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government brought in a temporary cap on immigration of those entering the UK from outside the EU, with the limit set as 24,100, in order to stop an expected rush of applications before a permanent cap is imposed in April 2011.^[46] The cap has caused tension within the coalition, with business secretary Vince Cable arguing that it is harming British businesses.^[47] Others have argued that the cap will have a negative impact on Britain's status as a centre for scientific research.^[48]

For family relatives of European Economic Area nationals living in the UK, there is the EEA family permit which enables those family members to join their relatives already living and working in the UK.

Though immigration is a matter that is reserved to the UK government under the legislation that established devolution for Scotland in 1999, the Scottish Government was able to get an agreement from the Home Office for their Fresh Talent Initiative which was designed to encourage foreign graduates of Scottish universities to stay in Scotland to look for employment.^[49] Fresh Talent is now closed following the introduction of the points-based system.^[50]

Refugees and asylum seekers

The UK is a signatory to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which means that it has a responsibility under international law not to return (or *refoule*) refugees to the place where they would face persecution.

Nonetheless the issue of immigration has been a controversial political issue since the late 1990s. Both the Labour Party and the Conservatives have suggested policies perceived as being "tough on asylum"^[53] (although the Conservatives have dropped a previous

pledge to limit the number of people who could claim asylum in the UK, which would likely have breached the UN Refugee Convention)^[54] and the tabloid media frequently print headlines about an "immigration crisis".^[55]

This is denounced by those seeking to ensure that the UK upholds its international obligations as disproportionate. Critics suggest that much of the opposition to high levels of immigration by refugees is based on racism. Concern is also raised about the treatment of those held in detention and the practice of dawn raiding families, and holding young children in immigration detention centres for long periods of time.^[56] ^[57] The policy of detaining children asylum-seeking children was to be abandoned as part of the coalition agreement between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, who formed a government in May 2010.^[58] However, in July 2010 the government was accused of back-tracking on this promise after the Immigration Minister Damian Green announced that the plan was to minimise, rather than end, child detention.^[59]

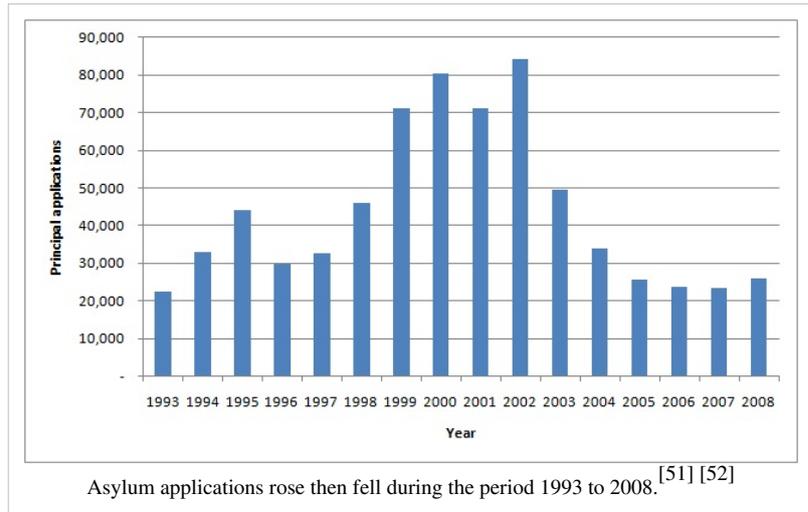
However, critics of the UK's asylum policy often point out the "safe third country rule" - the convention that asylum seekers must apply in the first free nation they reach, not go "asylum shopping" for the nation they prefer. EU courts have upheld this policy.^[60] Research conducted by the Refugee Council suggests that most asylum seekers in the UK had their destination chosen for them by external parties or agents, rather than choosing the UK themselves.^[61]

In February 2003, Prime Minister Tony Blair promised on television to reduce the number of asylum seekers by half within 7 months,^[62] apparently catching unawares the members of his own government with responsibility for immigration policy. David Blunkett, the then Home Secretary, called the promise an *objective* rather than a *target*.^[63]

It was met according to official figures,^[64] despite increase world instability caused by the Iraq War. There is also a Public Performance Target to remove more asylum seekers who have been judged not to be refugees under the international definition than new anticipated unfounded applications. This target was met early in 2006.^[65] Official figures for numbers of people claiming asylum in the UK were at a 13 year low by March 2006.^[66]

Human rights organisations such as Amnesty International have argued that the government's new policies, particularly those concerning detention centres, have detrimental effects on asylum applicants^[67] and their children,^[68] and those facilities have seen a number of hunger strikes and suicides. Others have argued that recent government policies aimed at reducing 'bogus' asylum claims have had detrimental impacts on those genuinely in need of protection.^[69]

In addition to offering asylum, the UK operates a small refugee resettlement scheme in co-operation with the UNHCR known as the Gateway Protection Programme.^[70]



Illegal immigration

Illegal (sometimes termed *irregular*) immigrants in the UK include those who have:

- entered the UK without authority
- entered with false documents
- overstayed their visas

Although it is difficult to know how many people reside in the UK illegally, a Home Office study released in March 2005 estimated a population of between 310,000 and 570,000.^[71] Migration Watch UK has criticised the Home Office figures for not including the UK-born dependent children of unauthorised migrants. They suggest the Home Office has underestimated the numbers of unauthorised migrants by between 15,000 and 85,000.^[72] In 2002 the Home office stated that the figures Migration Watch produces should be treated with 'considerable caution', because of the intrinsic difficulty of quantifying undocumented immigration.^[73] The UK Immigration Advisory Service has referred to these estimates as "idle speculation".^[73]

A recent study into irregular immigration states that "most irregular migrants have committed administrative offences rather than a serious crime".^[74]

Jack Dromey, Deputy General of the Transport and General Workers Union and Labour Party treasurer, suggested in May 2006 that there could be around 500,000 illegal workers. He called for a public debate on whether an amnesty should be considered.^[75] David Blunkett has suggested that this might be done once the identity card scheme is rolled out.^[76]

London Citizens, a coalition of community organisations, is running a regularisation campaign called *Strangers into Citizens*, backed by figures including the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, the Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor.^[77] Analysis by the Institute for Public Policy Research suggested that an amnesty would net the government up to £1.038 billion per year in fiscal revenue.^[78] However, analysis by MigrationWatch UK suggests that if the migrants granted amnesty were given access to healthcare and other benefits, the net cost to the exchequer would be £5.530 billion annually.^[79]

It has since been suggested that to deport all of the irregular migrants from the UK would take 20 years and cost up to £12 billion.^[80] Current Mayor of London Boris Johnson has commissioned a study into a possible amnesty for illegal immigrants, citing larger tax gains within the London area which is considered to be home to the majority of the country's population of such immigrants.^[81]

In February 2008, the government introduced new £10,000 fines for employers found to be employing illegal immigrants where there is negligence on the part of the employer, with unlimited fines or jail sentences for employers acting knowingly.^[82]

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External links

- Born Abroad: An Immigration Map of Britain (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/born_abroad/html/overview.stm) (BBC, 2005)
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- Immigration & Nationality Directorate (<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/content/ind/en/home.html>) at the Home Office
- Moving Here (<http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>), the UK's biggest online database of digitised photographs, maps, objects, documents and audio items from 30 local and national archives, museums and libraries which record migration experiences of the last 200 years
- Summary of UK immigration rules (<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/lawandpolicy/immigrationrules/>) from the Home Office

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