

NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN



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Long-Term International Migration Statistics for Northern Ireland (2015)

Key Points:

People who came here to live

- In the year ending mid-2015, 23,600 people (3.3 per cent fewer than in year ending mid-2014) came here to live. More than half (13,100; 55.6 per cent) of the people concerned were from outside the UK (i.e. an international immigrant), while the remainder (10,500; 44.4 per cent) were from the rest of the UK.
- The number of people who came here to live from outside the UK (i.e. international inflows) fell by 1.6 per cent (200 people) between mid-2014 and mid-2015.
- In the calendar year to December 2015, the top three most common countries of previous residence for international inflows to Northern Ireland were Poland, the Republic of Ireland and Romania. The most common reasons for international immigrants moving here were work (47.6 per cent), followed by family (25.8 per cent) and education (13.0 per cent).

People who left here to live elsewhere

- In the year ending mid-2015, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere (21,500) was at its lowest level in nine years and represented a decrease of 5.6 per cent from the year ending mid-2014 figure. Some 52.2 per cent of the people concerned (11,200 people) went to live in the rest of the UK while the remainder (47.8 per cent; 10,300) moved to outside the UK.
- The number of people who left to live outside the UK (i.e. international outflows) fell by 6.9 per cent between mid-2014 and mid-2015 to reach the lowest level since the year ending mid-2006.

Net Migration

- As the number of people who moved here to live in year ending mid-2015 exceeded the number who left (23,600 and 21,500 respectively), this resulted in net inward migration of 2,000 people. This is the second successive year in the past five years that there has been a net inward migration of people to Northern Ireland.

- In terms of international movements, the number of international inflows exceeded the number of international outflows by 2,800 people, giving rise to net inward international migration in year ending mid-2015.
- Conversely, the number who left Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK (11,200) during the same period exceeded the number who came here to live from within the UK (10,500), giving rise to net outward migration among this group.
- Eight out of the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) experienced net inward international migration in the year ending mid-2015, with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon having the highest level (1,100 people). Derry City & Strabane, Ards & North Down and Causeway Coast & Glens each experienced a relatively small net outflow of international migrants during the same period (200, 100 and 100 people respectively).

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Note: Throughout the report figures have been presented in a rounded form to ease readability. For example, numbers have been presented to the nearest 100 and percentage changes have been presented to 1 decimal place. However, all calculations have been undertaken on the basis of unrounded numbers which will, in some instances, give rise to apparent discrepancies.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The United Nations definition¹ of a Long-term Migrant is “a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence”.

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 under the United Nations definition. These migration estimates are primarily based on changes observed in the Medical Card Register² 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-2015, which were published on 23 June 2016 as part of the [2015 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#), while also focussing on information relating to international migration indicators from the following administrative sources:

¹ See page 10 of [Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration \(Revision1\)](#)

² 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)

- Health and Social Care Business Services Organisation (BSO) Medical Card Register³
- National Insurance Number (NINo) statistics
- General Register Office Birth statistics
- Department of Education School Census statistics
- 2011 Census⁴

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,

³ In previous reports the Medical Card Register (or Medical Card data) was referred to as “health data”.

⁴ 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.

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.

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 Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

The size of the resident population in Northern Ireland at 30 June 2015 was estimated to be 1.852 million people. Slightly more than half (50.9 per cent) of the population were female, with 942,500 females compared to 909,100 males.

In the year ending mid-2015 the number of people living in Northern Ireland was estimated to have increased by 11,100 people (0.6 per cent). This population increase was a result of the following estimated components:

1. Natural growth of 8,800 people (24,200 births minus 15,400 deaths);
2. An estimated net growth of 2,000 people due to migration. In total 23,600 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 21,500 people left; and
3. A net gain of 300 people due to other changes⁵.

⁵“Other Changes” refers to changes in the number of armed forces personnel stationed in Northern Ireland and/or differences resulting from the methodology used to develop the local area estimates. For estimates at the Northern Ireland level, “Other Changes” refers solely to changes in armed forces personnel (see [Methodology Report](#)).

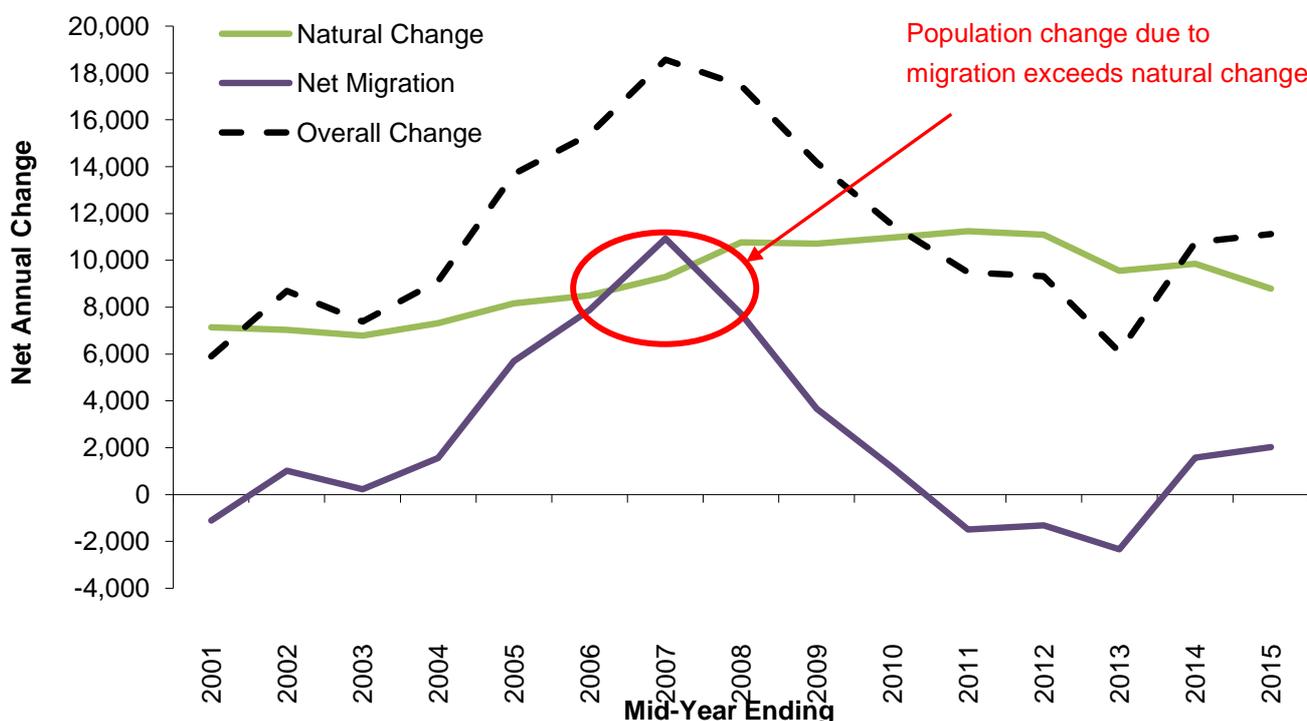
Figure 1: Contribution of components of change to population increase (year ending mid-2015)



In the year ending mid-2015, natural change (i.e. births minus deaths) remained the main contributor to the increase in population, accounting for 79.0 per cent (8,800 people) of the overall population increase. Net migration (i.e. inflows minus outflows) accounted for 18.3 per cent of the population increase, with the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland exceeding those leaving Northern Ireland by 2,000. There was also a modest increase in the number of armed forces personnel stationed in Northern Ireland (300 people). This had the smallest proportional contribution to the change in population during this period at 2.8 per cent.

Prior to the year ending mid-2004, population increase in Northern Ireland was mostly due to natural change. For a brief period between the years ending mid-2006 and mid-2007 the contribution from migration was greater than the contribution from natural change. However, from the year ending mid-2008 onwards population growth has again been attributed mainly to natural change (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Components of population change (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2015)



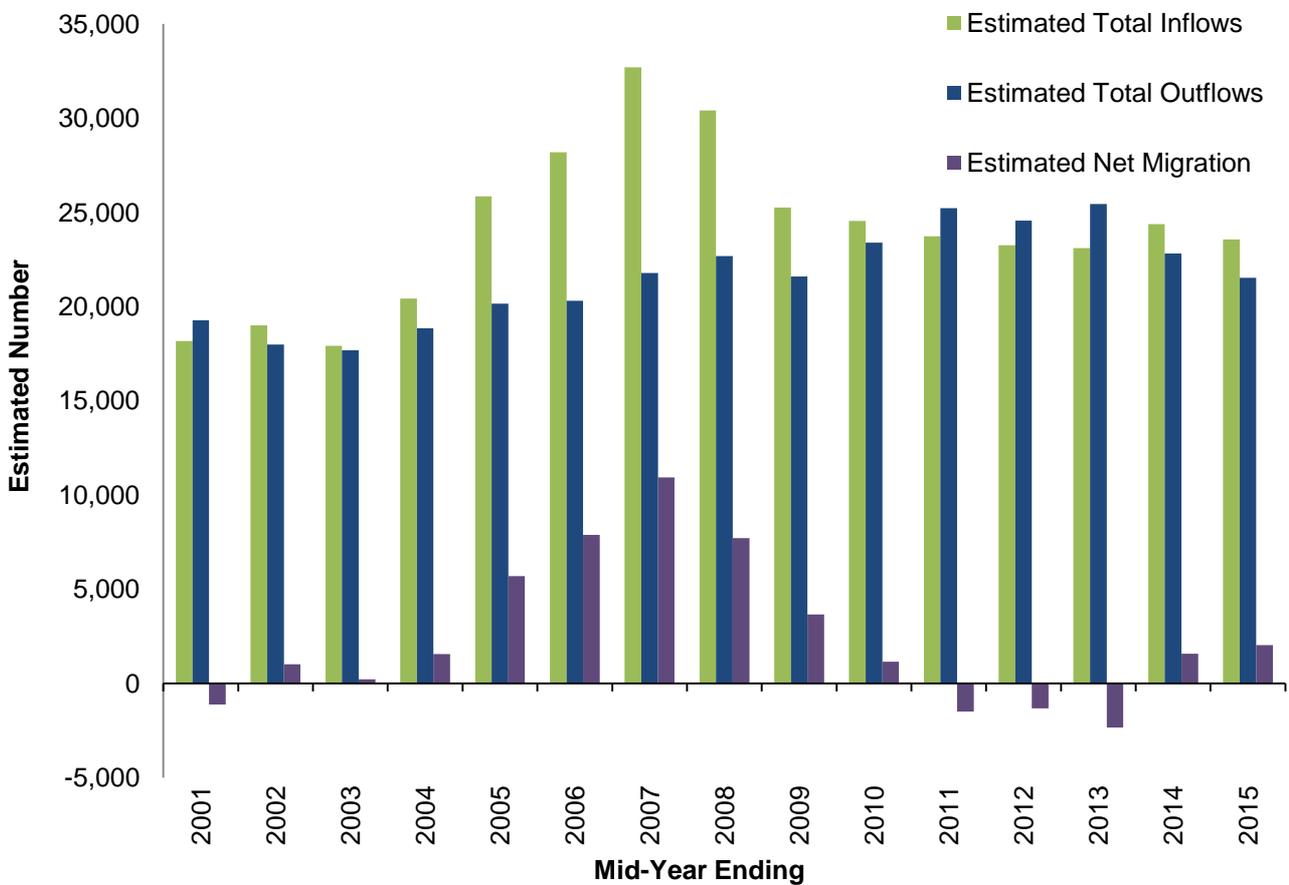
[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 3,508 Kb)

2.2 Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

In the year ending mid-2015, there was a net increase in the population due to migration (2,000 people). This was the second successive year that the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland exceeded the number who left.

Overall, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland (21,500 in the year ending mid-2015) was at its lowest level since the year ending mid-2006, falling by 5.6 percent between the years ending mid-2014 and mid-2015. Having reached a four year high in the year ending mid-2014, there was a 3.3 per cent fall in the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (24,400 down to 23,600) in the year ending mid-2015 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Estimated Total Inflows, Total Outflows and Net Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2015)

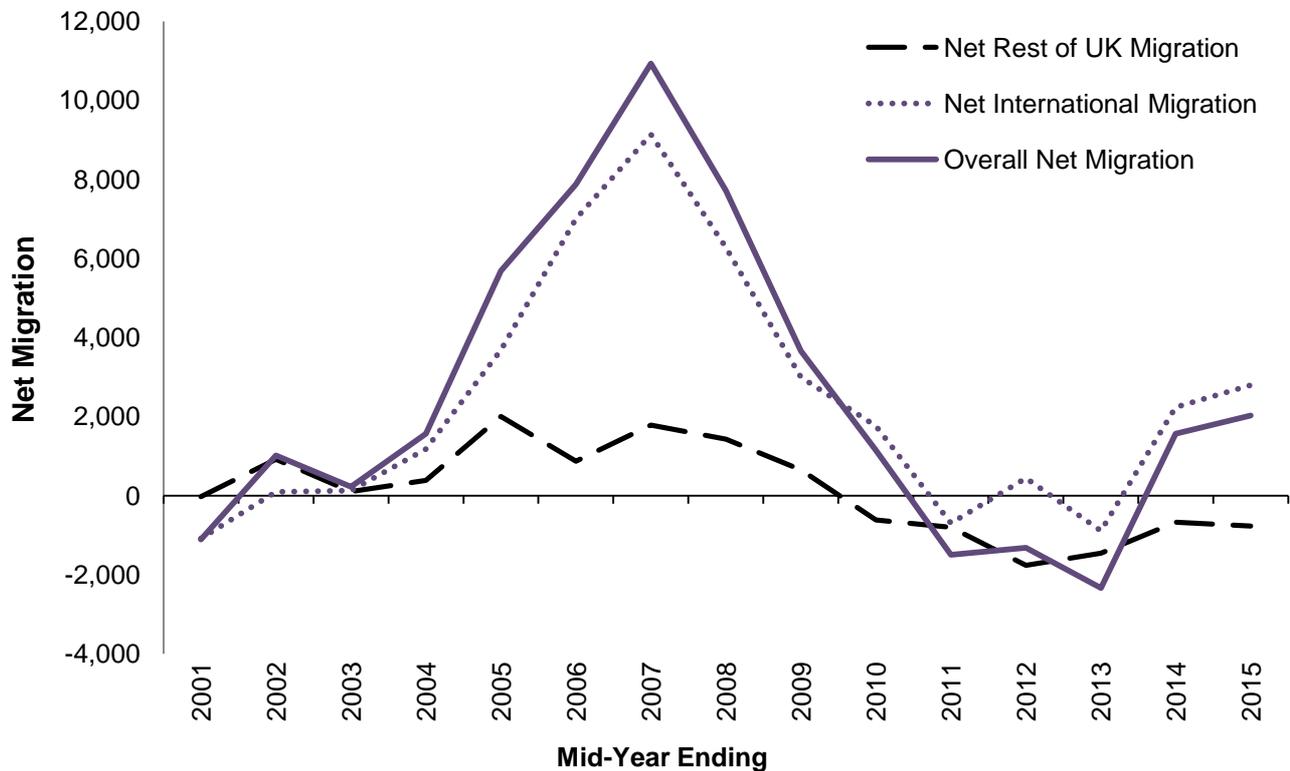


[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 872 Kb)

Figure 4 shows the continuing trend of a net migration loss to the rest of the UK (i.e. more people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK than coming to live in Northern

Ireland from the rest of the UK) since the year ending mid-2009. The overall number of people that Northern Ireland lost to the rest of the UK rose slightly from 700 in the year ending mid-2014 to 800 people in the year ending mid-2015.

Figure 4: Estimated net rest of UK and International Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 871 Kb)

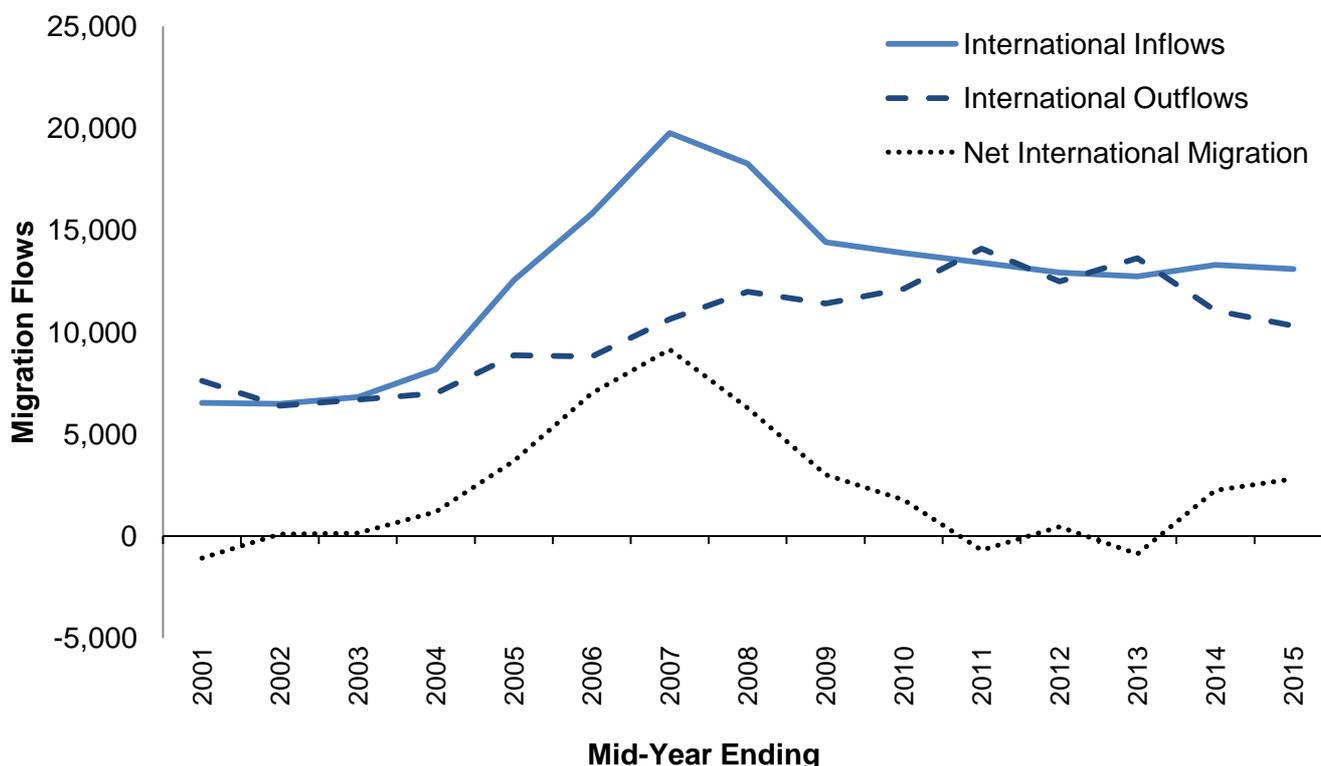
In the year ending mid-2015, 2,800 more people came to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK than left to live outside the UK, an increase of 600 people (24.9 per cent) in the previous year ending mid-2014. This is mainly due to a decrease in the number of people from Northern Ireland moving to outside the UK (from 11,100 in year ending mid-2014 to 10,300 in the year ending mid-2015). The number of people from outside the UK coming to live in Northern Ireland remained relatively unchanged (13,300 in the year ending mid-2014 and 13,100 in the year ending mid-2015).

As the **net international migration gain** in the year ending mid-2015 (2,800 people) exceeded the **net migration loss to the rest of the UK** (800 people), there was an overall increase of 2,000 people in the population due to migration.

2.3 International Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

Figure 5 shows that while there was a moderate decrease of 1.6 per cent (200 people) in the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK (i.e. international inflows) in the year ending mid-2015 (down to 13,100), the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK (i.e. international outflows) has continued to decline in the same period (down from 11,100 in the year ending mid-2014 to 10,300 in the year ending mid-2015, a decrease of 6.9 per cent). This follows on from an 18.8 per cent fall (2,600 people) in the number of international outflows in the previous year. These decreases mean that in the year ending mid-2015 international outflows were at the lowest level since the year ending mid-2006.

Figure 5: Estimated International inflows, outflows, and net migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 870Kb)

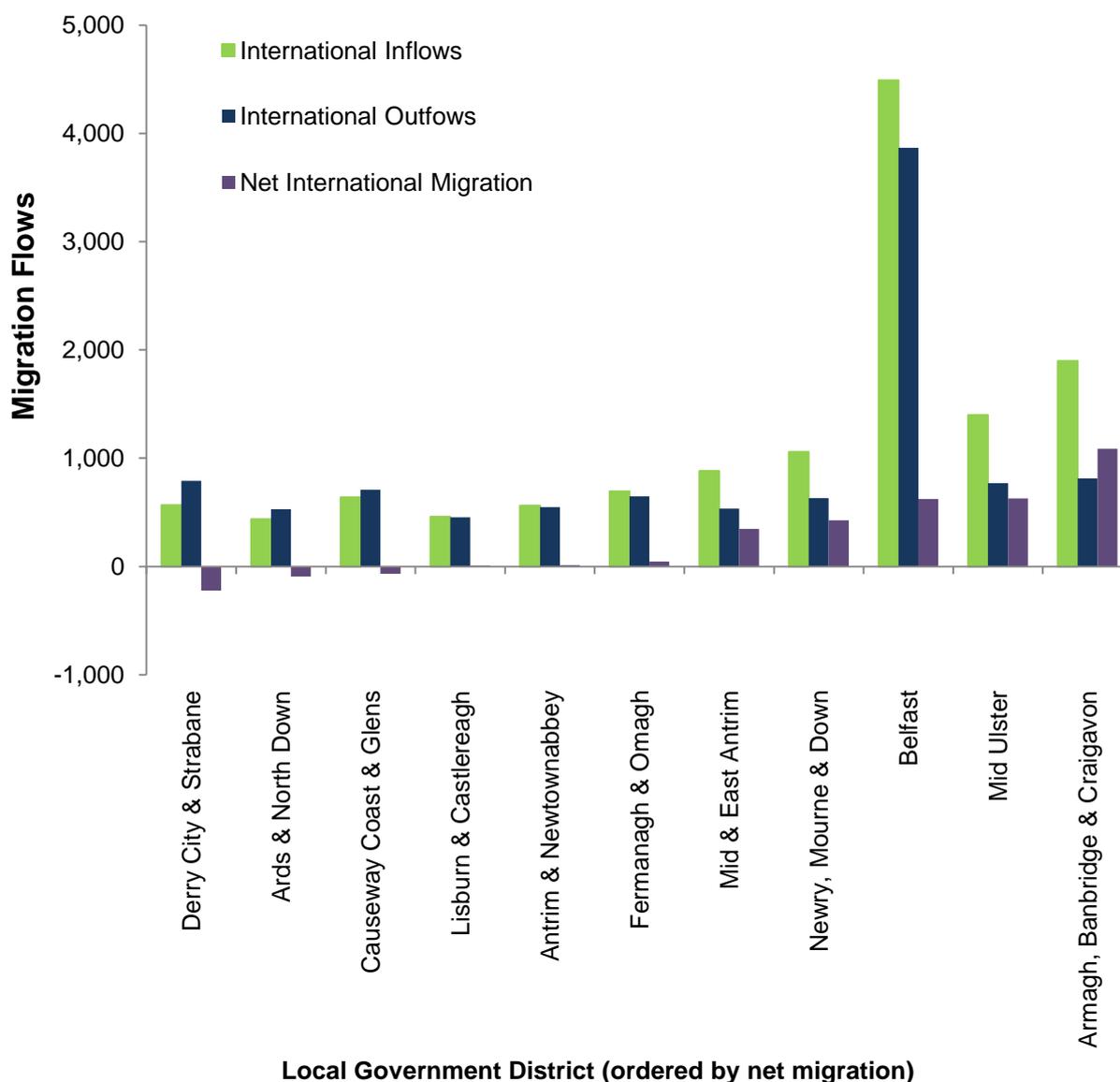
2.3.1 International Migration Estimates by Local Government District

Belfast Local Government District had the highest numbers of both international inflows (4,500 people) and international outflows (3,900 people) in the year ending mid-2015. These international flows into and out of Belfast as a proportion of the total Northern Ireland flows are 34.3 and 37.6 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.

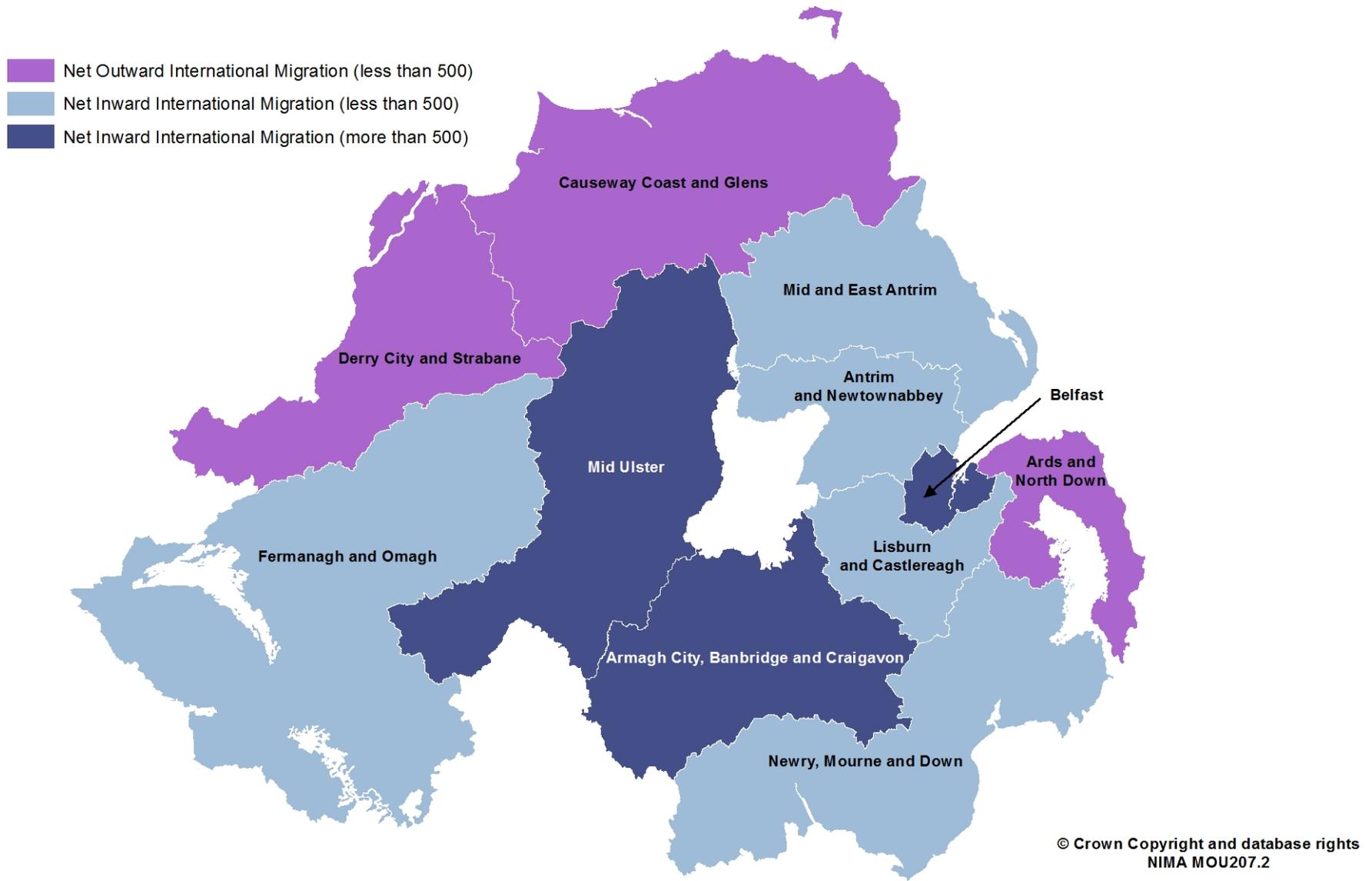
Despite the large migration flows, Belfast had only the third highest level of net inward international migration in the year ending mid-2015 (600 people), after Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (1,100 people) and Mid Ulster (600 people) Local Government Districts. Three Local Government Districts experienced net outflows of international migrants: Derry City and Strabane (200 people), Ards and North Down (100 people) and Causeway Coast and Glens (100 people) (see Figure 6 and Map 1).

Figure 6: Estimated International inflows, outflows and net migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 876Kb)

Map 1: Net International Migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2015)



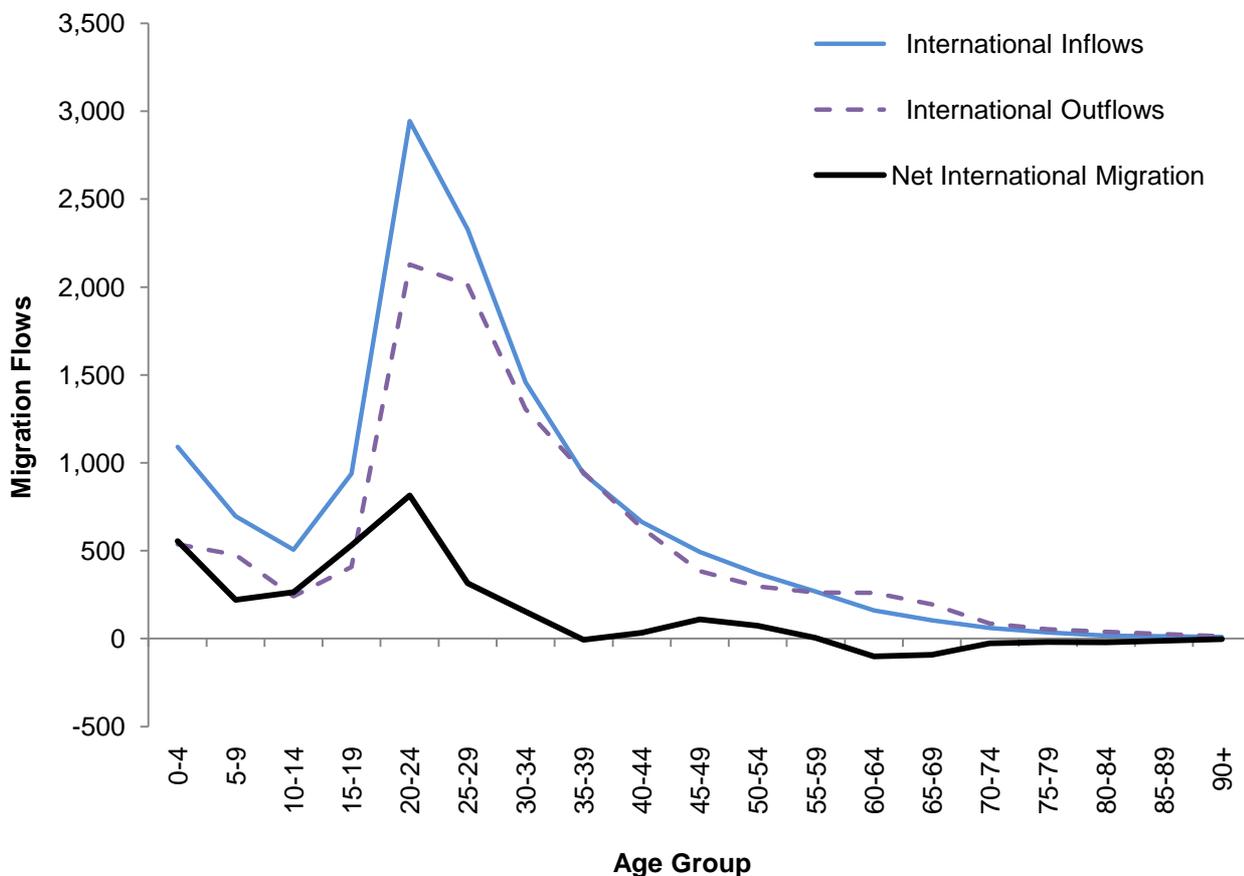
[Download Map](#) (PDF Format - 505Kb)

2.3.2 International Migration Estimates by Age

Figure 7 shows the age distribution of international migrants into and out of Northern Ireland in the year ending mid-2015. 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-2015 international inflows exceeded international outflows for all age groups under 35. The total population increase resulting from net international inward migration was almost evenly split between those aged 18 and under (1,300 people) and those aged 19 to 34 years (1,600 people). The net contribution to international migration for other age groups was relatively negligible (net outflow of approximately 100 people).

Figure 7: Estimated international migration by age (year ending mid-2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 867Kb)

It should be noted that there are limited data on the actual reasons why people move: the medical card register records the reasons people give for moving to Northern Ireland, however reasons for moving out of Northern Ireland are not recorded.

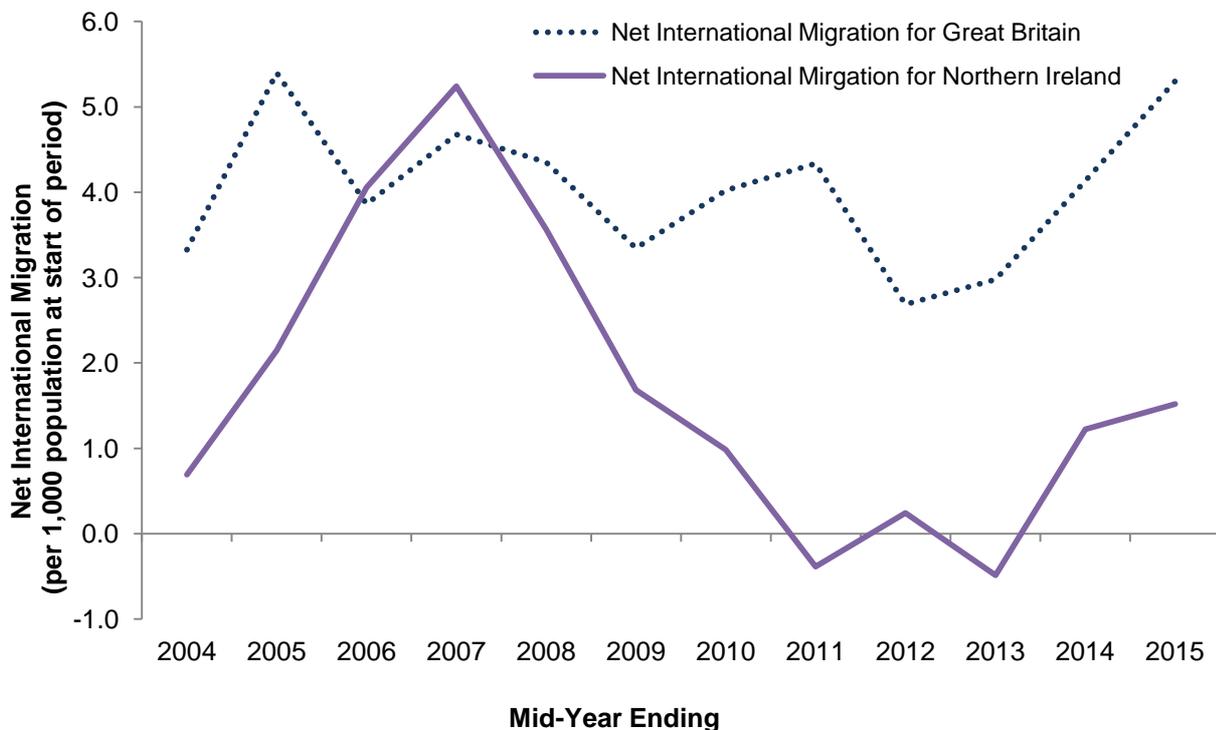
2.4 Comparison of International Migration Estimates across the UK

In the year ending mid-2015, Northern Ireland was the only one of the four UK countries to experience a decrease in international inflows (1.6 per cent, 200 people). Scotland had the largest percentage increase (13.9 per cent, 4,600 people) with Wales (10.0 per cent, 1,500 people) and England (9.2 per cent, 47,700 people) also experiencing increases.

During the same period, all of the UK countries (with the exception of Wales) had decreases in international outflows. Scotland experienced the largest percentage decrease (27.8 per cent) with the number of people leaving Northern Ireland and England falling by 6.9 per cent and 5.8 per cent respectively. In contrast, the number of people leaving Wales to live outside the UK increased by 16.1 per cent.

Figure 8 below shows that, with the exception of the years ending mid-2011 and mid-2013, both Great Britain and Northern Ireland have experienced an overall net inflow of international migrants each year since the year ending mid-2004.

Figure 8: Net international migration for Great Britain and Northern Ireland per 1,000 of the population (year ending mid-2004 to year ending mid-2015)

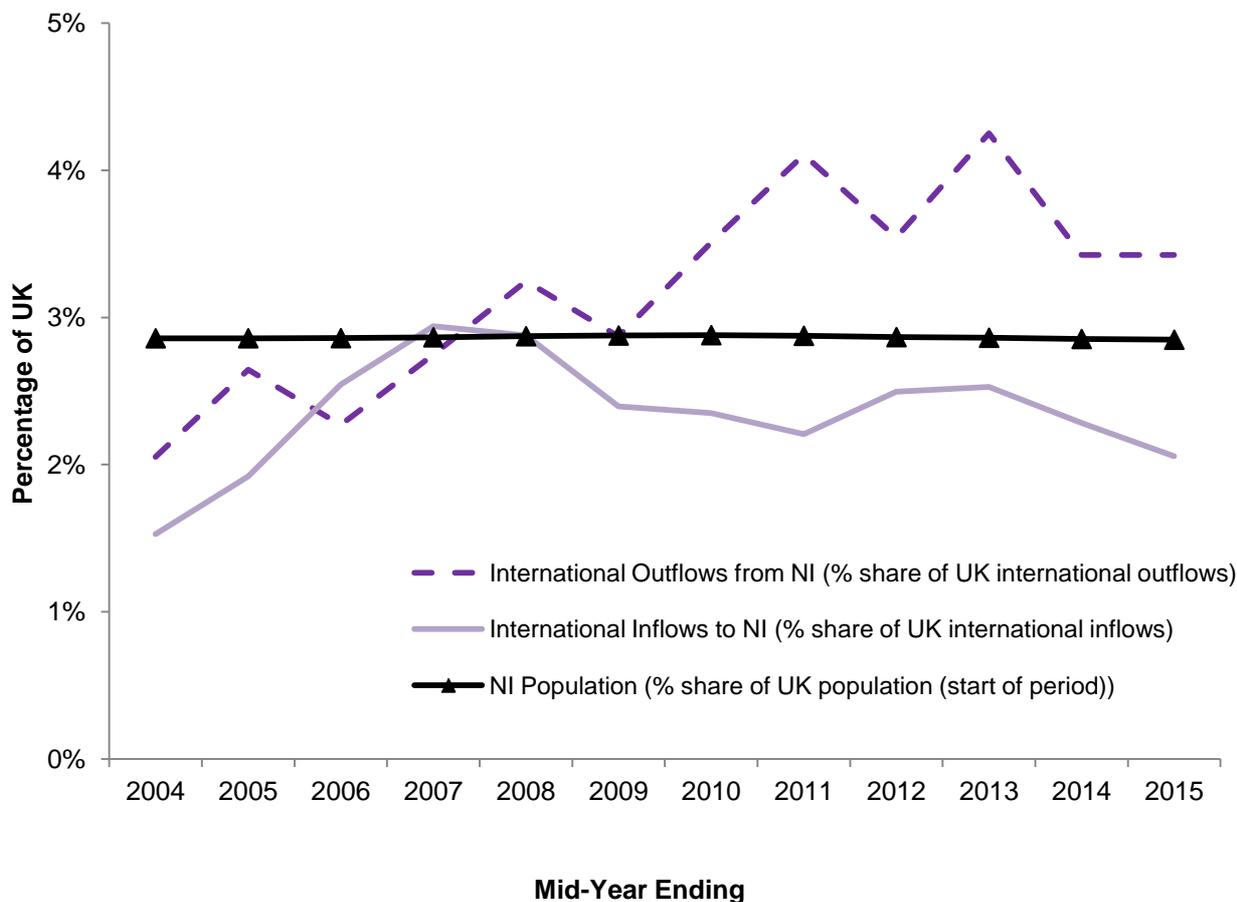


[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 864Kb)

Figure 9 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 the proportion of UK international outflows from Northern Ireland have been more changeable in the most recent years, as well as being higher than the relatively stable proportion of UK international inflows into Northern Ireland. Since mid-year ending mid-2008 Northern Ireland has experienced a larger share of international outflows relative to its proportion of the UK population, and a smaller share of international inflows.

Figure 9: International inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland, as a percentage of UK International Migration (year ending mid-2004 to year ending mid-2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 867Kb)

In the case of Belfast Local Government District, the proportion of international inward migration in the year ending mid-2015 is almost double the proportion represented by its population at the start of the period (i.e. mid-2014). 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 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Population and international migration in main cities as a proportion of respective UK countries (year ending mid-2015)

Main City (UK Country)	Area population (as a proportion of country population)*	International inflows to area (as a proportion of total international inflows to that country) year ending mid-2015	International outflows from area (as a proportion of total international outflows from that country) year ending mid-2015
Belfast** (Northern Ireland)	18.3%	34.3%	37.6%
London (England)	15.7%	38.9%	33.4%
Cardiff & Swansea (Wales)	19.3%	47.6%	45.3%
Glasgow & Edinburgh (Scotland)	20.4%	53.1%	38.1%

*Population share is calculated at the start of the period (i.e. in this case mid-2014)

**Belfast Local Government District

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 900Kb)

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 are 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 in their raw form (i.e. 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. 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.

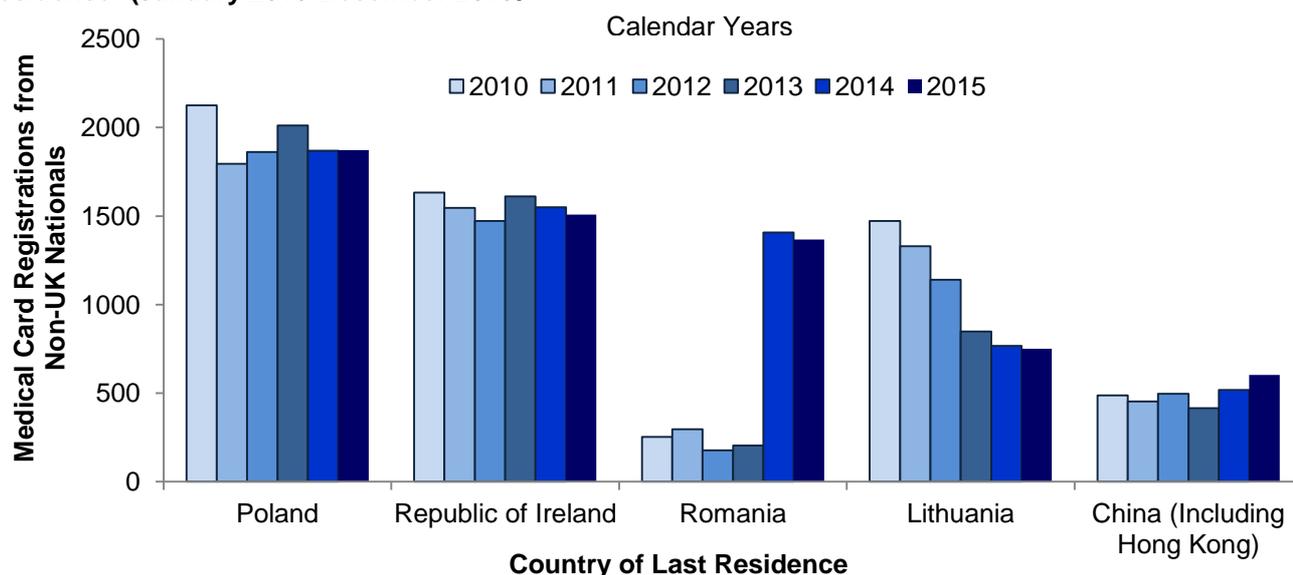
In the calendar year to December 2015 the Medical Card Register shows 12,700 new international medical registrations in Northern Ireland – a modest 0.45 per cent increase since 2014.

Analysing medical card data by country of last residence shows that in the calendar year 2015, Poland and the Republic of Ireland were listed the top two most prevalent countries of last residence for people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK. Levels of new registrations from these two countries have remained broadly consistent in recent years with numbers from Poland and the Republic of Ireland averaging at around 1,900 and 1,600 per year respectively over the six calendar years from 2010 to 2015.

In the calendar year 2015 Romania was the third most prevalent country listed as the previous place of residence for the second year in a row (see Figure 10), albeit figures have remained relatively unchanged since 2014. However, from 2013 to 2014 new registrations from Romania increased sharply (from 200 to 1,400) due to Romanian nationals being given the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK⁶ on 1 January 2014.

⁶<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coming-from-abroad-and-claiming-benefits-the-habitual-residence-test/eea-nationals-and-the-habitual-residence-test/bulgarian-and-romanian-nationals-claiming-benefits/>

Figure 10: Northern Ireland Medical card registrations from non-UK nationals by country of last residence* (January 2010-December 2015)



*The countries included are the top five most prevalent in the latest calendar year (i.e. 2015).

[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 114Kb)

As highlighted in Table 2, Romania was a top three country of last residence for new medical registrations in a number of LGDs for the second year in a row. It was the top country listed for Belfast and Mid & East Antrim LGDs. With the exception of Belfast, Poland appears in the top three listed countries of previous residence in each of the 11 LGDs.

Table 2: Northern Ireland Medical Card Registrations from non-UK nationals by top three countries of last residence for each Local Government District (January to December 2015)

Area	Top Countries (January to December 2015)		
	First Country (Number)	Second Country (Number)	Third Country (Number)
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Poland (100)	Romania (100)	Lithuania (100)
Ards & North Down	Lithuania (<50)	Romania (<50)	Poland (<50)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Poland (400)	Lithuania (300)	Portugal (300)
Belfast	Romania (400)	China (400)	Rol (400)
Causeway Coast & Glens	Poland (100)	Rol (100)	Germany (<50)
Derry City & Strabane	Rol (200)	Poland (<50)	USA (<50)
Fermanagh & Omagh	Rol (200)	Poland (100)	Hungary (100)
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Poland (100)	Rol (100)	Romania (<50)
Mid & East Antrim	Romania (400)	Poland (200)	Czech Republic (100)
Mid Ulster	East Timor (300)	Poland (200)	Lithuania (200)
Newry, Mourne & Down	Rol (300)	Poland (200)	Bulgaria (100)
Northern Ireland	Poland (1,900)	Rol (1,500)	Romania (1,400)

Rol = Republic of Ireland

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 899Kb)

The main reason given for coming to live in Northern Ireland on new medical card registrations from outside the UK in 2015 was work (47.6 per cent), followed by family (25.8 per cent) and education (13.0 per cent). More than three quarters (76.2 per cent) of the migrants who completed new registrations and indicated education as the main reason, came to live in Belfast Local Government District.

The main reasons also vary by country of last residence with 88.5 per cent of inflows from Malaysia (100 people) and 78.7 per cent from China (400 people) indicating they had come to Northern Ireland for education purposes in the calendar year to December 2015. Over 80 per cent of inflows from East Timor (400 people) and Slovakia (200 people) arrived for work, with 63.2 per cent of arrivals from Australia (100 people) coming here for family reasons.

3.1.2 National Insurance Numbers (NINo) (financial year)

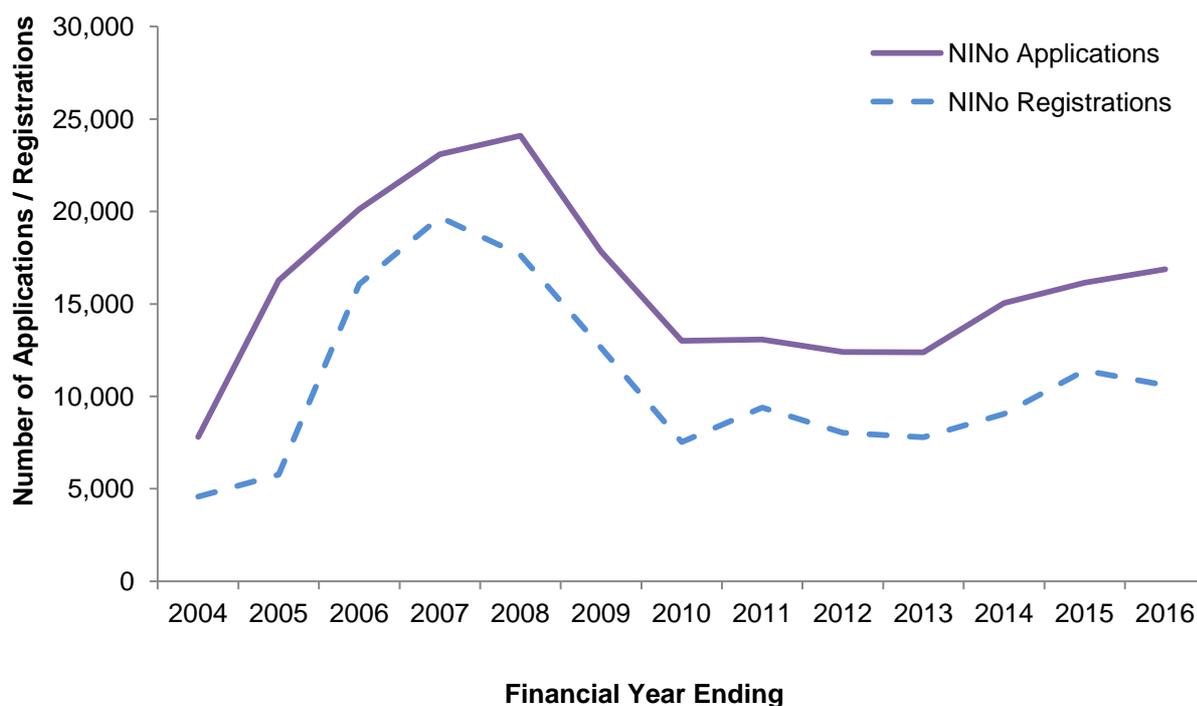
National Insurance Number (NINo) data is a useful source when looking at international migration into Northern Ireland since information is available for overseas nationals in Northern Ireland⁷ who have either (i) applied for a national insurance number (i.e. NINo applications) or (ii) applied for and 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.

Figure 11 shows the trend in the number of NINo applications and registrations since the financial year ending March 2004. There was a large increase in the number of applications and registrations between 2006 and 2007 with applications continuing to rise until the financial year ending 2008. As suggested for medical card registrations, these increases can be attributed to the arrival of people resulting from the accession of countries into the EU since 2004.

In the financial year ending 2016, while there was a modest increase of 4.5 per cent in the number of applications (from 16,140 to 16,870), there was a decrease in the number of registrations associated with non-UK nationals, falling by 7.0 per cent (from 11,400 to 10,600).

⁷It 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.

Figure 11: Northern Ireland NI No Applications and Registrations from non-UK nationals by financial year (2003/04 to 2015/16)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 867Kb)

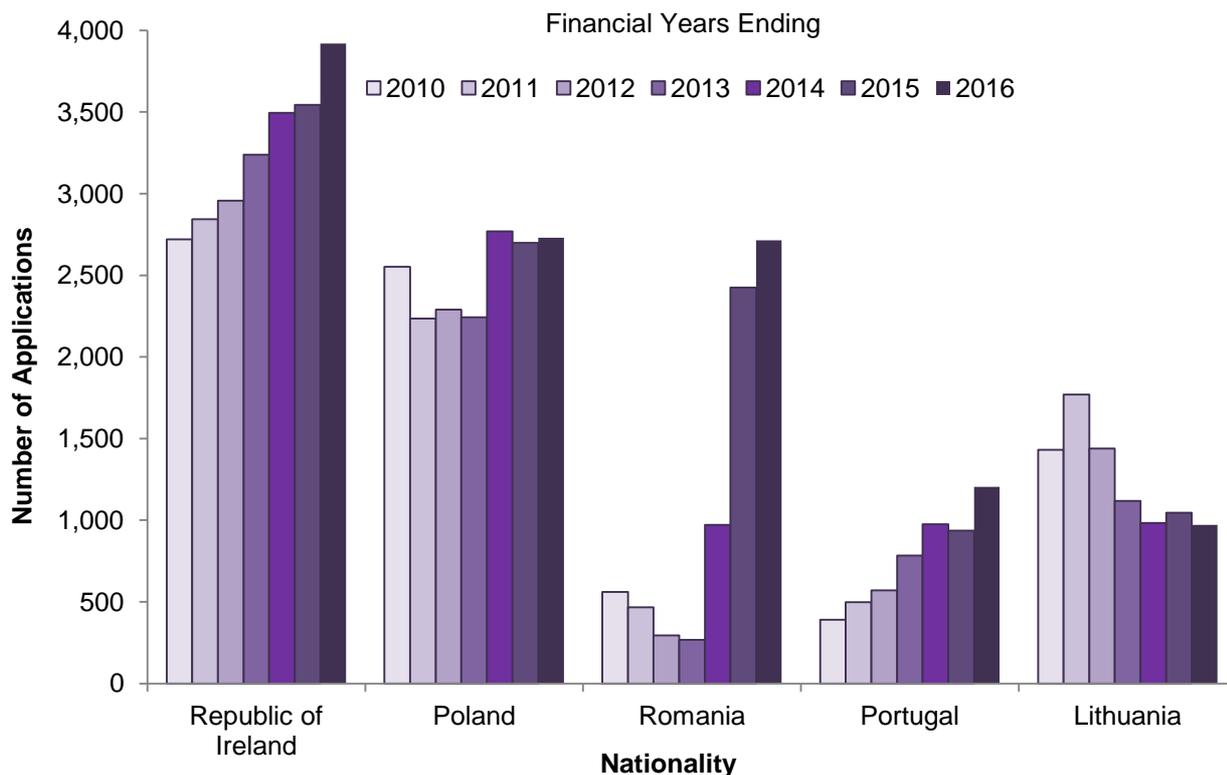
NI No Applications from non-UK Nationals

Figure 12 shows the number of NI No applications from nationalities which were the top five most prevalent in the financial year to March 2016, and provides historical data for these nationalities going back to 2010. Applications from nationals from the Republic of Ireland were the most prevalent in the financial year ending March 2016 (3,900 applications), having increased from 2,700 applications in the financial year ending March 2010. Applications from Polish nationals (the second most popular nationality) have been more or less consistent in the past three years (at around 2,700 applications) after experiencing a notable rise from 2,200 in the financial year ending March 2013.

The number of applications from Romanian nationals increased by 300 (12.0 per cent) in the financial year ending March 2016. This followed increases of 700 and 1,500 in the two previous financial years which, as suggested for medical card registrations, may be due to Romanian nationals being given the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK⁸ on 1 January 2014. In the financial year ending March 2016, there was a notable increase in the number of applications from Portuguese nationals, rising by 300 to 1,200 (28.7 per cent), with Lithuania experiencing a modest fall of 7.2 per cent to 1,000 (see Figure 12).

⁸<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coming-from-abroad-and-claiming-benefits-the-habitual-residence-test/eea-nationals-and-the-habitual-residence-test/bulgarian-and-romanian-nationals-claiming-benefits/>

Figure 12: Northern Ireland NINo Applications from non-UK nationals by nationality* and financial year (2009/10 to 2015/16)



*The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2016).

*The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2016).

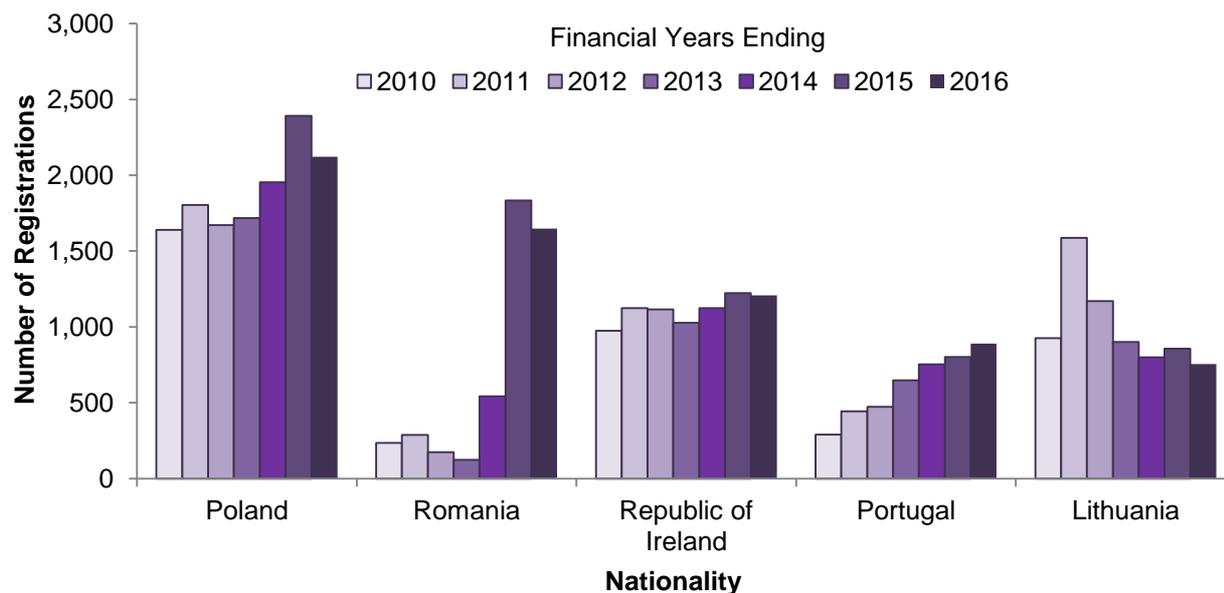
[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 867Kb)

NINo Registrations to non-UK Nationals

Figure 13 shows the number of NINo registrations from nationalities which were the top five most prevalent in the financial year to March 2016, and provides historical data for these nationalities going back to 2010. Registrations from Polish nationals were the most prevalent in the financial year ending March 2016 (2,100 registrations), despite having fallen 300 (11.3 per cent) since March 2015. Registrations from Romanian nationals (the second most prevalent nationality in 2016) have seen the largest increases over the years since the financial year ending March 2013, most notably between the financial years ending March 2014 and March 2015 where the numbers of registrations increased from 500 to 1,800.

Interestingly, when looking at applications and registrations together, whilst there has been a steady increase in the number of NINo **applications** from nationals from the Republic of Ireland since the 2010 financial year, the number of annual **registrations** over this period has remained broadly stable, averaging at around 1,100.

Figure 13: Northern Ireland NINo Registrations to non-UK nationals by nationality* and financial year (2009/10 to 2015/16)



*The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2016).

[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 874Kb)

3.1.3 Birth registration data (calendar year)

The [Vital Statistics](#) Team within NISRA provide statistics on births registered by the General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland – information which includes the parents’ country of birth. Table 3 shows that the proportion of children born in Northern Ireland whose mother was born outside the UK has notably increased over the last ten calendar years to December 2015. In the calendar year to December 2005, 8.1 per cent of babies were born to non UK-born mothers (1,800 babies out of 22,300), rising to 12.6 per cent (3,200 babies out of 25,300) by December 2010. The change in the proportion of births to non-UK born mothers was much greater in the first half of the decade 2005-15 than in the second half, where the proportion remained at 12.6 per cent.

Table 3: Births by mother's country of birth (January to December 2005, 2010 and 2015)

Mother's Country of Birth	Registration Year (January to December)		
	2005	2010	2015
	<u>Number of Births</u>		
Northern Ireland	19,000	20,800	20,000
Rest of UK	1,500	1,300	1,200
UK	20,500	22,100	21,200
Republic of Ireland (RoI)	700	700	600
A8 Countries	100	1200	1,200
All Other Countries	1000	1200	1,200
Unknown	<100	-	-
Outside the UK	1,800	3,200	3,100
All Births	22,300	25,300	24,200
	<u>Proportion of Births</u>		
UK	91.8%	87.4%	87.4%
Outside the UK	8.1%	12.6%	12.6%

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 849Kb)

3.1.4 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 the medical card registrations in 2011 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 countries⁹. It was estimated that in Northern Ireland 13,600 people lived outside the UK one year before Census day. This compared to 14,200 new registrations on the medical card system from outside the UK 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.

⁹ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_385836.pdf

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.

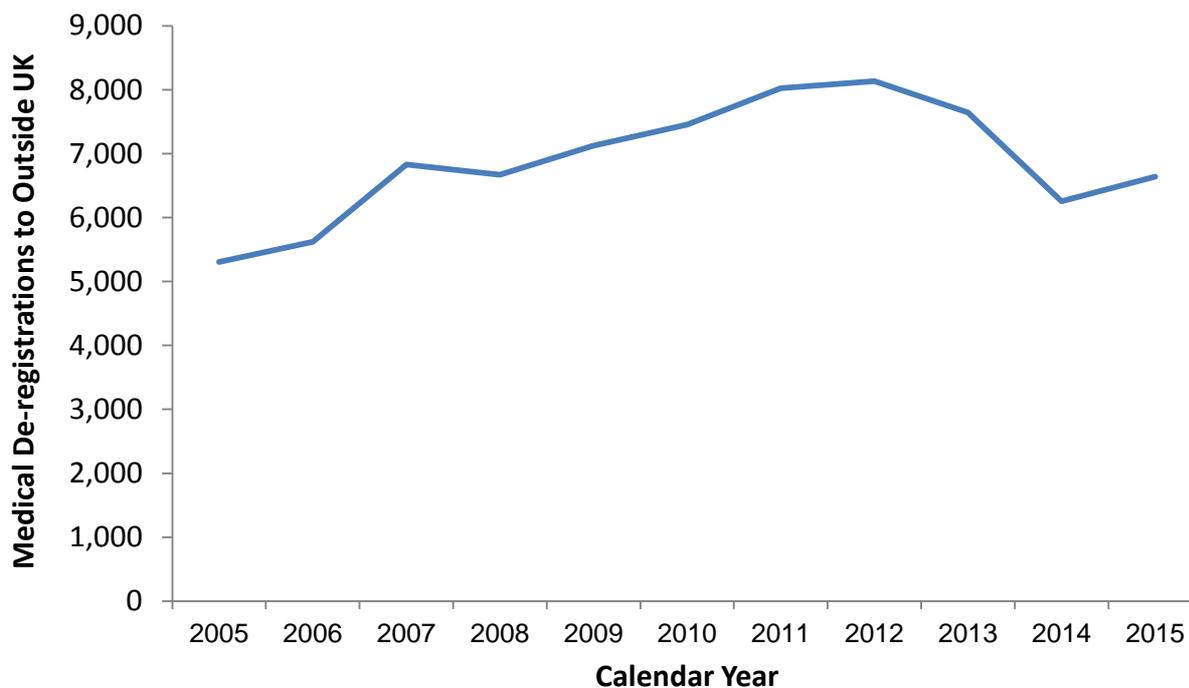
3.2.1 Medical Card De-registration Data (calendar year)

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-registrations by a factor of 1.67 (i.e. $5/3$)¹⁰. While the inferences that can be drawn from the unadjusted de-registration data in this section will be limited, the information provides some insight into those that did actually de-register with their GP.

In the calendar year January to December 2015, 6,600 medical de-registrations from Northern Ireland to outside the UK were recorded. This is an increase of 400 (6.2 per cent) from 2014. As Figure 14 shows, this increase follows two years where the number of de-registrations had decreased.

¹⁰ This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population (see [Methodology Report](#)).

Figure 14: Medical card de-registrations to destination outside UK by calendar year (2005- 2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 86Kb)

The largest proportion of de-registrations in 2015 was in Belfast Local Government District (38.3 per cent, or 2,500 out of the total 6,600 de-registrations). This is the only district whose proportion of de-registrations exceeded 10 per cent.

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 medical card de-registrations 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 not¹¹.

¹¹ This group of de-registrations is made up from three categories:

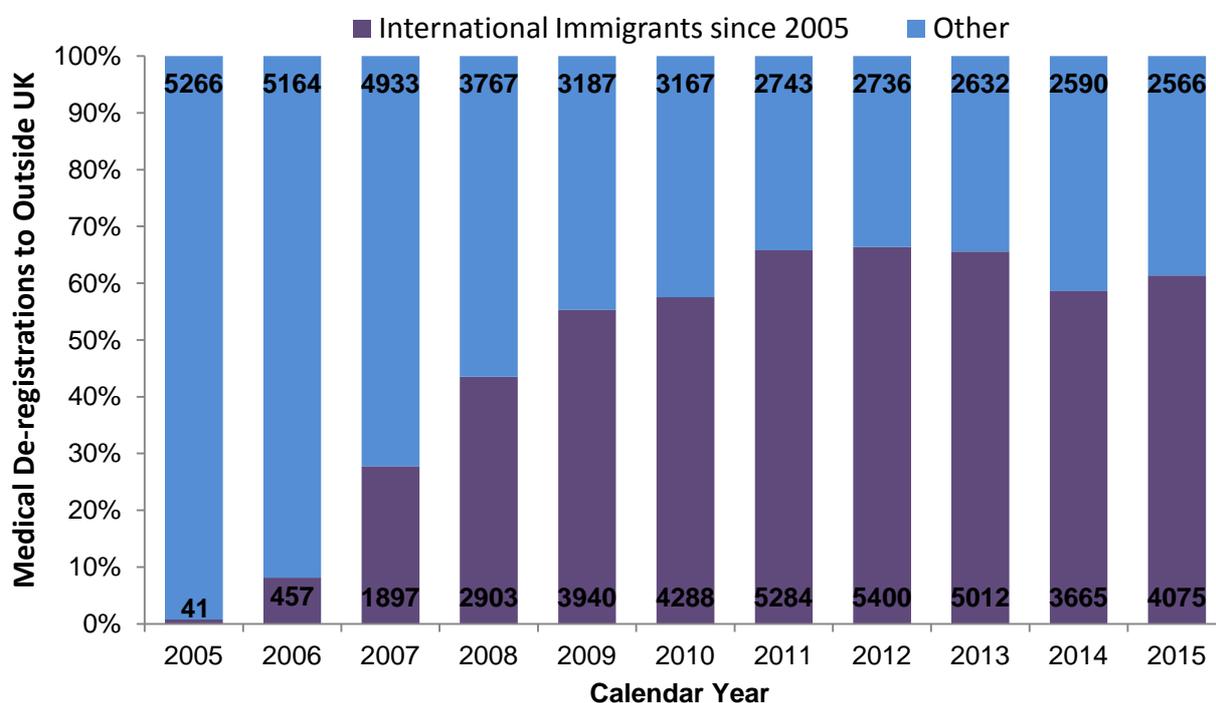
- (i) people who were born in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) people who moved to Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK; and
- (iii) people who moved to Northern Ireland from outside the UK prior to 2005.

There is insufficient information available to allocate each de-registration 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.

In recent years changes in international out-migration from Northern Ireland have been influenced more by these international immigrants, with no less than 64 per cent of any total annual change in international out-migration since 2009 being attributed to them.

Figure 15 shows that since 2009 approximately 3 out of 5 of all international de-registrations related to international immigrants.

Figure 15: Medical card de-registrations to destination outside UK by type and calendar year (2005-2015)



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

Following this trend, in the calendar year to December 2015, de-registrations of international immigrants accounted for 61.4 per cent (4,100 people) of all de-registrations from Northern Ireland to outside the UK, an increase of 11.2 per cent (400) since December 2014. In the same period, de-registrations of those who did not originally come from outside the UK since 2005 remained relatively unchanged.

De-registrations of international immigrants who originally came to Northern Ireland for work increased by 17.1 per cent (from 1,200 to 1,400 people) from December 2014 to December 2015, while for those who originally came for family reasons the number of de-registrations remained relatively unchanged at 700.

While the number of de-registrations to outside the UK increased in the year ending December 2015, it is important to note that this relates to figures for the calendar year. 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-2015 the number of de-registrations actually fell by 6.9 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 2015, 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.

The School Census shows that there were 11,400 pupils in Northern Ireland schools (Primary and Post-primary¹²) who had English as an additional language in October 2015, an increase of 8.3 per cent (900 children) since October 2014. The largest numbers of these pupils were found in Belfast LGD (2,400), Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon LGD (2,400) and Mid Ulster LGD (2,100).

As has been the case since 2008, in the 2015 academic year Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese were the top three languages of primary school children who had English as an additional language. Those who speak these languages represented 57.6 per cent of all primary school children who had English as an additional language (5,100 out of 8,900 children).

In post-primary education, the number of school pupils with English as an additional language rose by 100 (4.0 per cent) to 2,600 between 2014 and 2015. Polish and Lithuanian made up almost half (45.7 per cent) of all post-primary school pupils with English as an additional language in 2015.

¹² Figures include pupils in Primary Schools (year 1-7 classes) and Post-Primary Schools (up to and including sixth formers).

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 language¹³. 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.

¹³ 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 rejoined 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 register¹⁴ 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.

¹⁴ 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 & 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 resultant estimates are quality assured by checking the estimates against new National Insurance Numbers registered and figures from the School Census. 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 & 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](#).

National Statistics Designation

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance review to ensure they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated the population and migration estimates within this bulletin as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Population estimates and projections for Northern Ireland statistics were re-assessed by the Statistics Authority in July 2015 ([UK Statistics Authority Assessment Report](#)). Following work to address recommendations that emerged from the assessment ([Assessment Action Plan](#)), UKSA confirmed the re-designation of these statistics as National Statistics in August 2016 (see [letter of designation](#)).

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 2014 and June 2015). 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 recently 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 1.85 million in Northern Ireland to 54.79 million in England ([mid-2015 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.

NISRA
December 2016

Background Notes

- Migration estimates for Northern Ireland are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Following international guidelines, migration statistics relate only to long-term migrants (i.e. someone who changes their place of residence for one year or more (Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, United Nations, 1998)).
- Detailed migration statistics can be found on NISRA website at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp18.htm>.
- Migration estimates for the year ending mid-2015 were produced and released alongside the Mid-Year Population Estimates on 23 June and 31 August 2016. Population statistics relate to the usually resident population of Northern Ireland including armed forces stationed here.
- Further information on the methodology for official migration estimates is available in the population and migration estimates [Methodology Report](#).
- Interactive content on migration, along with further statistics, are available on the [NINIS website](#).
- A [migration infographic](#) has been released to highlight the key figures for Northern Ireland migration statistics (2015).
- Migration statistics are available for Scotland, published by [National Records Scotland](#) (NRS); for England and Wales, published by the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS); and for the Republic of Ireland, published by the [Central Statistics Office](#) (CSO). The estimates for the Republic of Ireland relate to the year ending mid-April, rather than year ending 30 June, as is used by all UK administrations.
- Migration estimates relating to the period mid-2015 to mid-2016 are expected to be published along with the Population estimates for Northern Ireland in June 2017.
- The revisions policy for Northern Ireland migration 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@finance-ni.gov.uk.
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