

# NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN



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## Long-term International Migration Statistics for Northern Ireland (2016)

### Key Points:

#### People who came here to live

- In the year ending mid-2016, 23,800 people came here to live (1.0 per cent more than in year ending mid-2015). More than half (13,000; 54.6 per cent) of the people concerned were from outside the UK (i.e. an international immigrant), while the remainder (10,800; 45.4 per cent) were from the rest of the UK.
- The number of people who came here to live from outside the UK fell by 0.7 per cent (100 people) between mid-2015 and mid-2016. In the same period, the number of people arriving to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK increased by 300 people (3.2 per cent).
- The vast majority of inflows were aged 16 to 39 (61.4 per cent of inflows from the rest of the UK; 64.3 per cent of international inflows; and 63.0 per cent of total inflows).
- In the calendar year to December 2016, 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 (40.5 per cent), followed by family (25.6 per cent) and education (14.5 per cent).

#### People who left here to live elsewhere

- In the year ending mid-2016, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere (22,300) increased by 3.8 per cent from the year ending mid-2015. Some 51.6 per cent of the people concerned (11,500 people) went to live outside the UK while the remainder (48.4 per cent; 10,800) moved to the rest of the UK.
- Between mid-2015 and mid-2016 the number of people who left to live outside the UK increased by 12.1 per cent to 11,500 people.
- The number of people who left to live in the rest of the UK fell by 3.8 per cent between mid-2015 and mid-2016 to reach 10,800 people - the lowest level since the year ending mid-2009.

- As was the case with inflows, the vast majority of outflows were aged 16 to 39 years (75.0 per cent of outflows to the rest of the UK; 68.9 per cent of international outflows; and 71.8 per cent of total outflows).

### Net Migration

- As the number of people who moved here to live in the year ending mid-2016 exceeded the number who left (23,800 and 22,300 respectively), this resulted in net inward migration of 1,500 people. Given the position of net zero UK migration (10,800 inflows and 10,800 outflows), this population increase of 1,500 people due to migration can be entirely attributed to net inward international migration (i.e. 13,000 inflows and 11,500 outflows). This is the third successive year that there has been a net inward migration of people to Northern Ireland.
- Six out of the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) experienced net inward international migration in the year ending mid-2016 while the remaining five LGDs experienced a net outflow of international migrants. Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGD had the highest level (900 people) of net inward international migration while Belfast LGD had the highest level of net outward international migration (600 people).
- Four of the 11 LGDs experienced net outward migration to the UK with Derry & Strabane and Lisburn & Castlereagh LGDs experiencing the most at 100 people each. All the other LGDs experienced net inward migration from the UK with Mid Ulster LGD experiencing the highest (100 people).

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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 definition<sup>1</sup> 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 Register<sup>2</sup> 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-2016, which were published on 22 June 2017 as part of the [2016 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#), while also focussing on information relating to international migration indicators from the following administrative sources:

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<sup>1</sup> See page 10 of [Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration \(Revision1\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> 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 Register<sup>3</sup>
- National Insurance Number (NINo) statistics
- General Register Office Birth statistics
- Department of Education School Census statistics
- 2011 Census<sup>4</sup>

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,

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 2016 was estimated to be 1.862 million people. Just over half (50.9 per cent) of the population were female, with 946,900 females compared with 915,200 males.

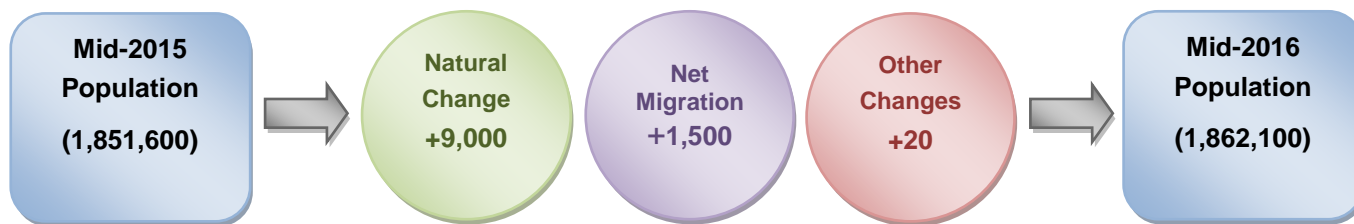
In the year ending mid-2016 the number of people living in Northern Ireland was estimated to have increased by 10,500 people (0.6 per cent). This population increase was a result of the following estimated components:

1. Natural growth of 9,000 people (24,400 births minus 15,300 deaths);
2. An estimated net growth of 1,500 people due to migration. In total 23,800 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 22,300 people left; and
3. A net gain of 20 people due to other changes<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>“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](#)).

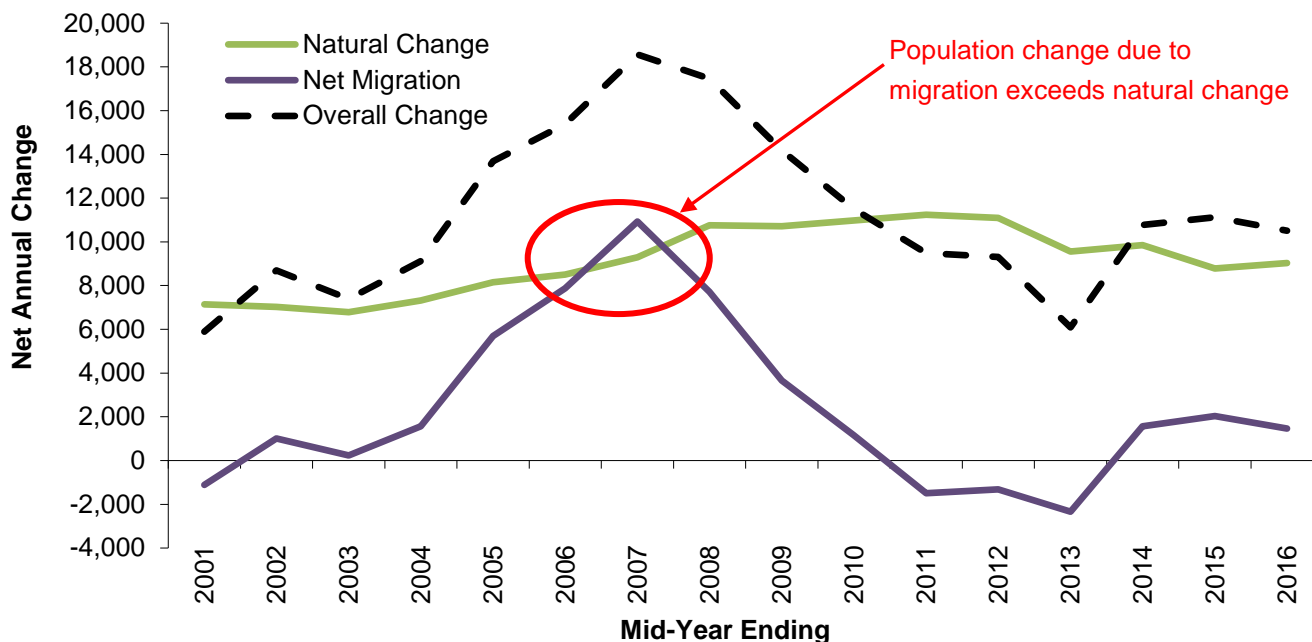
**Figure 1: Contribution of components of change to population increase (year ending mid-2016)**



In the year ending mid-2016, natural change (i.e. births minus deaths) remained the main contributor to the increase in population, accounting for 85.9 per cent (9,000 people) of the overall population increase. Net migration (i.e. inflows minus outflows) accounted for 13.9 per cent of the population increase, with the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland exceeding those leaving Northern Ireland by 1,500. There was also a modest increase in the number of armed forces personnel stationed in Northern Ireland (20 people).

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-2016)**



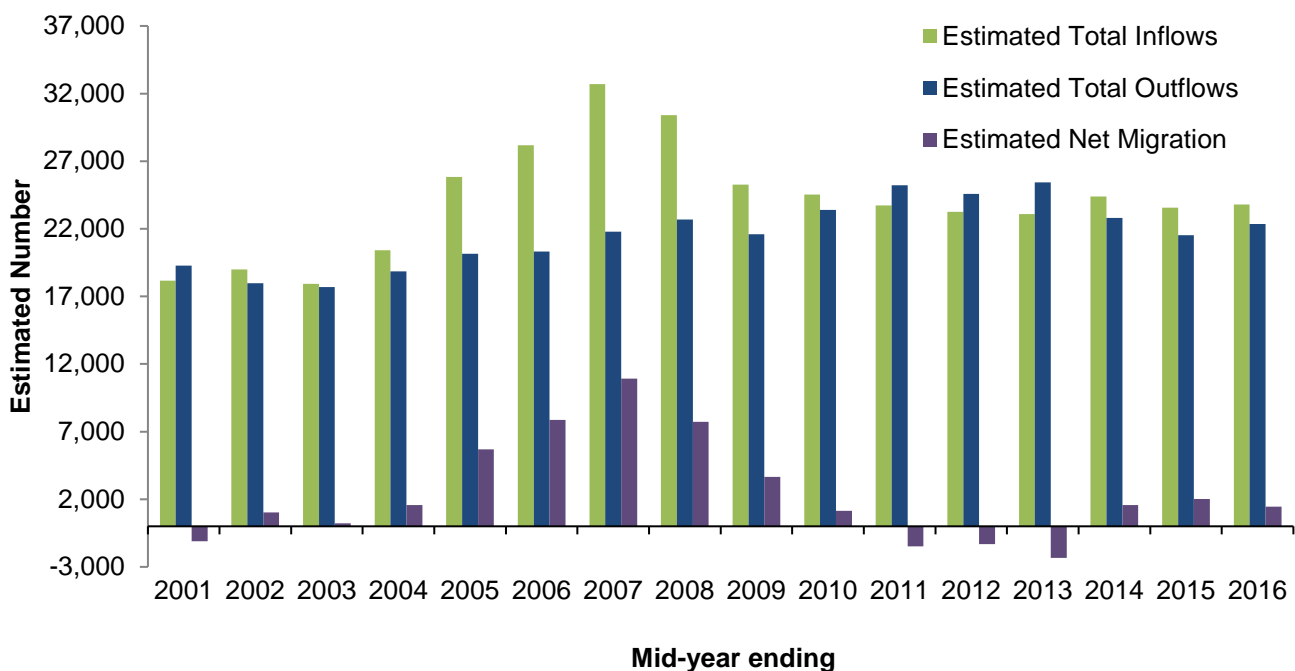
[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 3,678 Kb)

## 2.2 Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

In the year ending mid-2016, there was a net increase in the population due to migration (1,500 people). This was the third successive year that the number of people who came to live in Northern Ireland exceeded the number who left.

Between the year ending mid-2015 and the year ending mid-2016, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland increased by 800 (3.8 per cent), while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland increased by 200 (1.0 per cent). Since the number of people leaving Northern Ireland increased more than the number of people coming to Northern Ireland, the net change in population due to migration decreased from +2,000 people to +1,500 people between the year ending mid-2015 and the year ending mid-2016 (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Estimated Total Inflows, Total Outflows and Net Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 1,040 Kb)

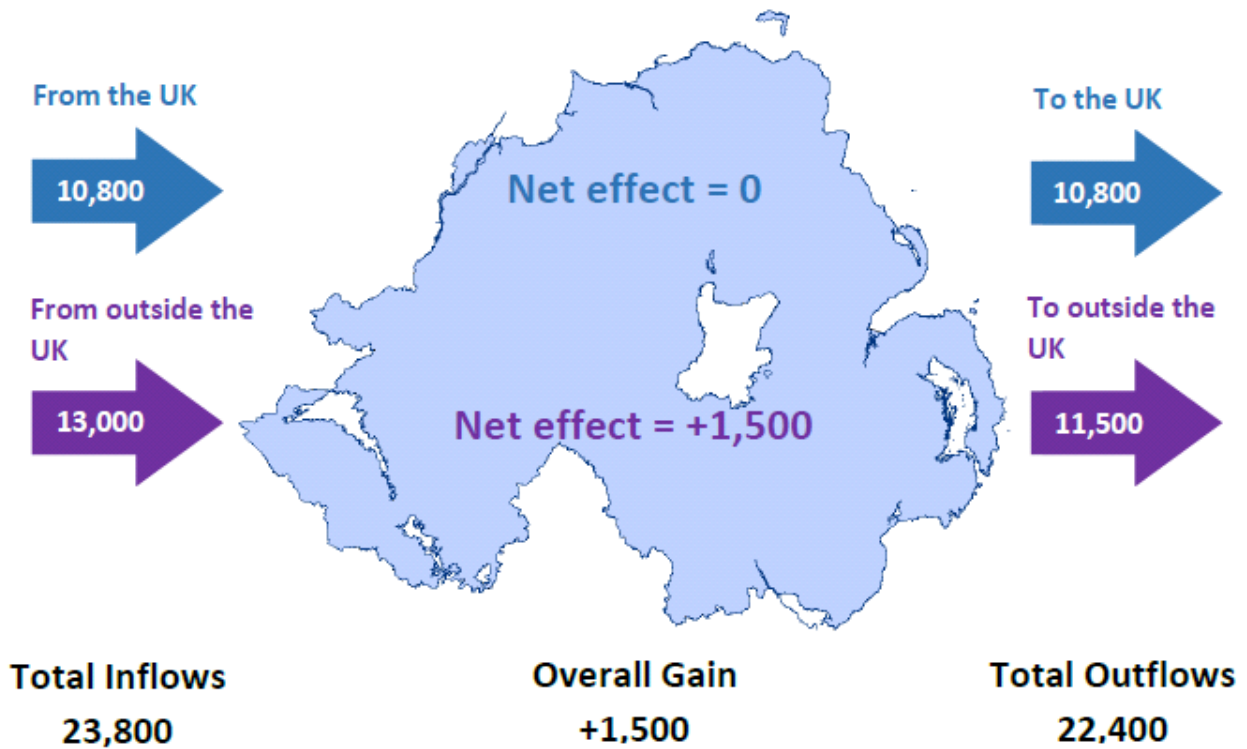
Between the year ending mid-2015 and the year ending mid-2016, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK decreased by 400 (3.8 per cent), while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK increased by 300 (3.2 per cent). This led to flows of 10,800 people each way in the year ending mid-2016 and hence resulted in a net zero UK migration.

During the same time, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK increased by 1,200 to 11,500 (an increase of 12.1 per cent), while the number of people



coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK decreased by 100 to 13,000 (decrease of 0.7 per cent). This resulted in a net gain of 1,500 people due to International migration.

**Figure 4: Migration to and from Northern Ireland by Type in the year ending mid-2016**



As a result, the overall increase in population of 1,500 people due to migration in the year ending mid-2016 can be solely attributed to the net gain from International migration. Figure 5 below shows the trend in UK and International migration over the years since mid-2001.

**Figure 5: Estimated net rest of UK and International Migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2016)**

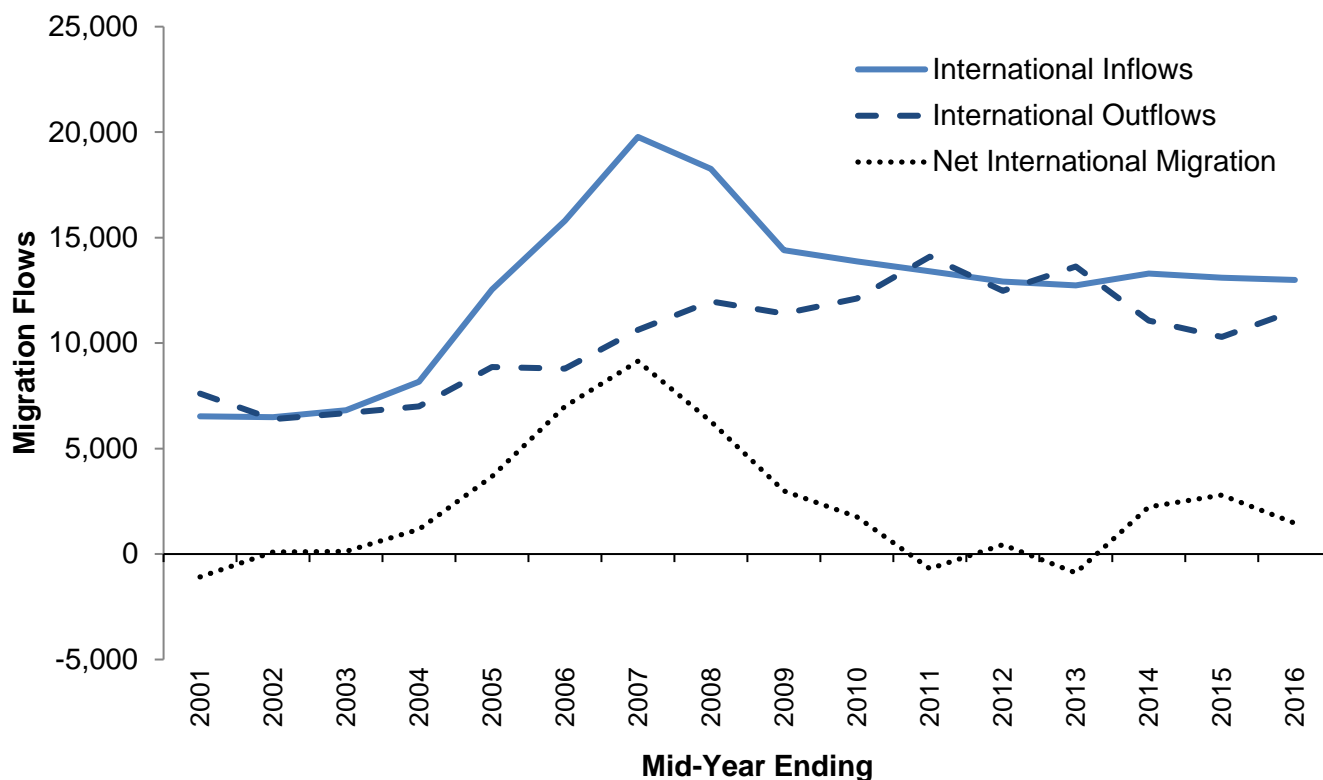


[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 849 Kb)

### 2.3 International Migration Estimates for Northern Ireland

Figure 6 shows that while there was a moderate decrease of 0.7 per cent (100 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-2016 (13,100 down to 13,000), the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK (i.e. international outflows) has increased in the same period (up from 10,300 in the year ending mid-2015 to 11,500 in the year ending mid-2016, an increase of 12.1 per cent). This follows on from a 6.9 per cent fall (800 people) in the number of international outflows in the previous year and means that, in the year ending mid-2016, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK was at its highest since the year ending mid-2013.

**Figure 6: Estimated International inflows, outflows, and net migration (year ending mid-2001 to year ending mid-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 1,037 Kb)

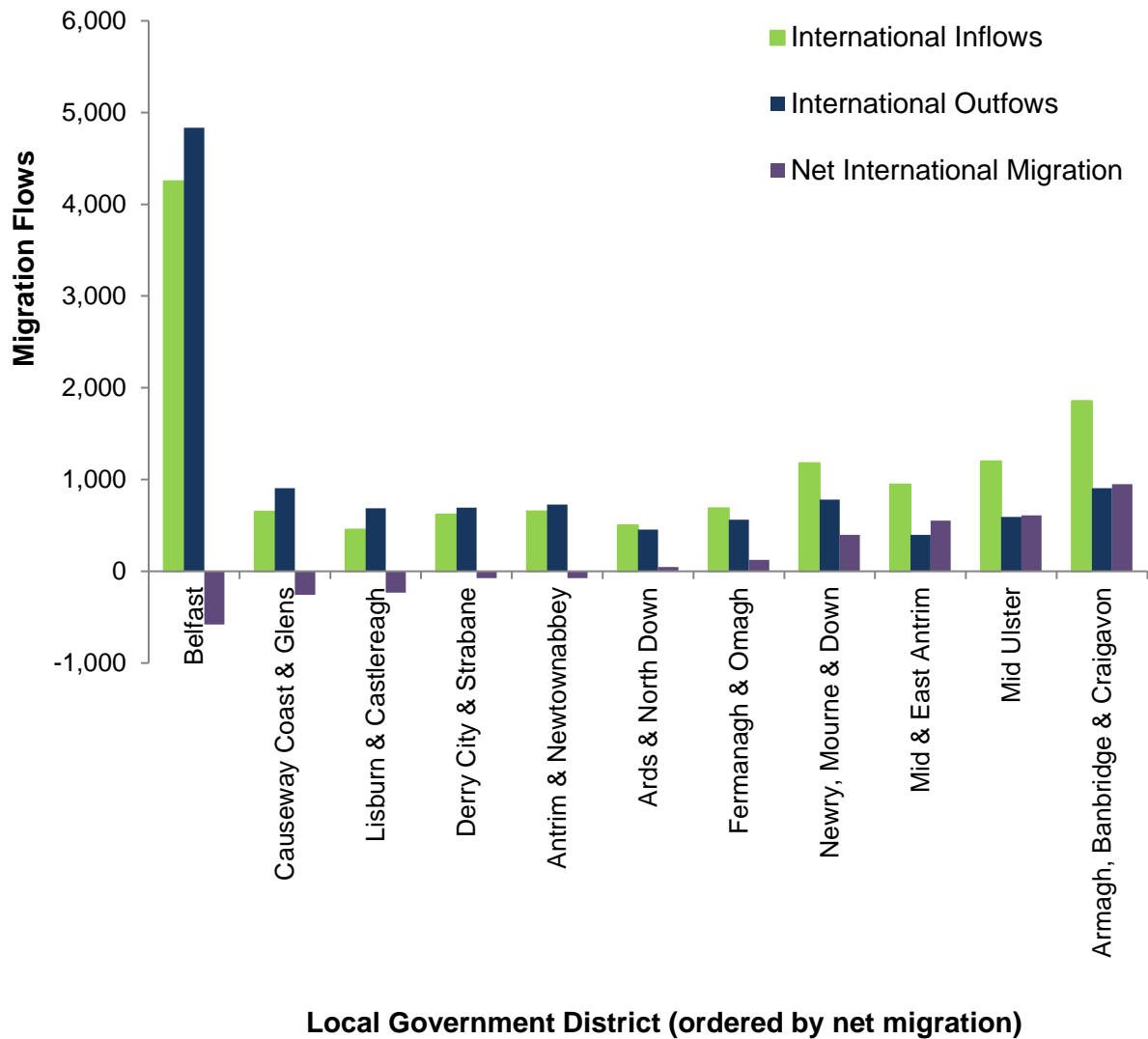
### 2.3.1 International Migration Estimates by Local Government District

Belfast Local Government District had the highest numbers of both international inflows (4,300 people) and international outflows (4,800 people) in the year ending mid-2016. These international flows into and out of Belfast as a proportion of the total Northern Ireland flows are 32.7 and 41.9 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 inflows, Belfast had the highest level of net outward international migration in the year ending mid-2016 (600 people). Four other Local Government Districts experienced net outflows of international migrants: Causeway Coast & Glens (300 people), Lisburn & Castlereagh (200 people), Derry City & Strabane (100 people) and Antrim & Newtownabbey (100 people).

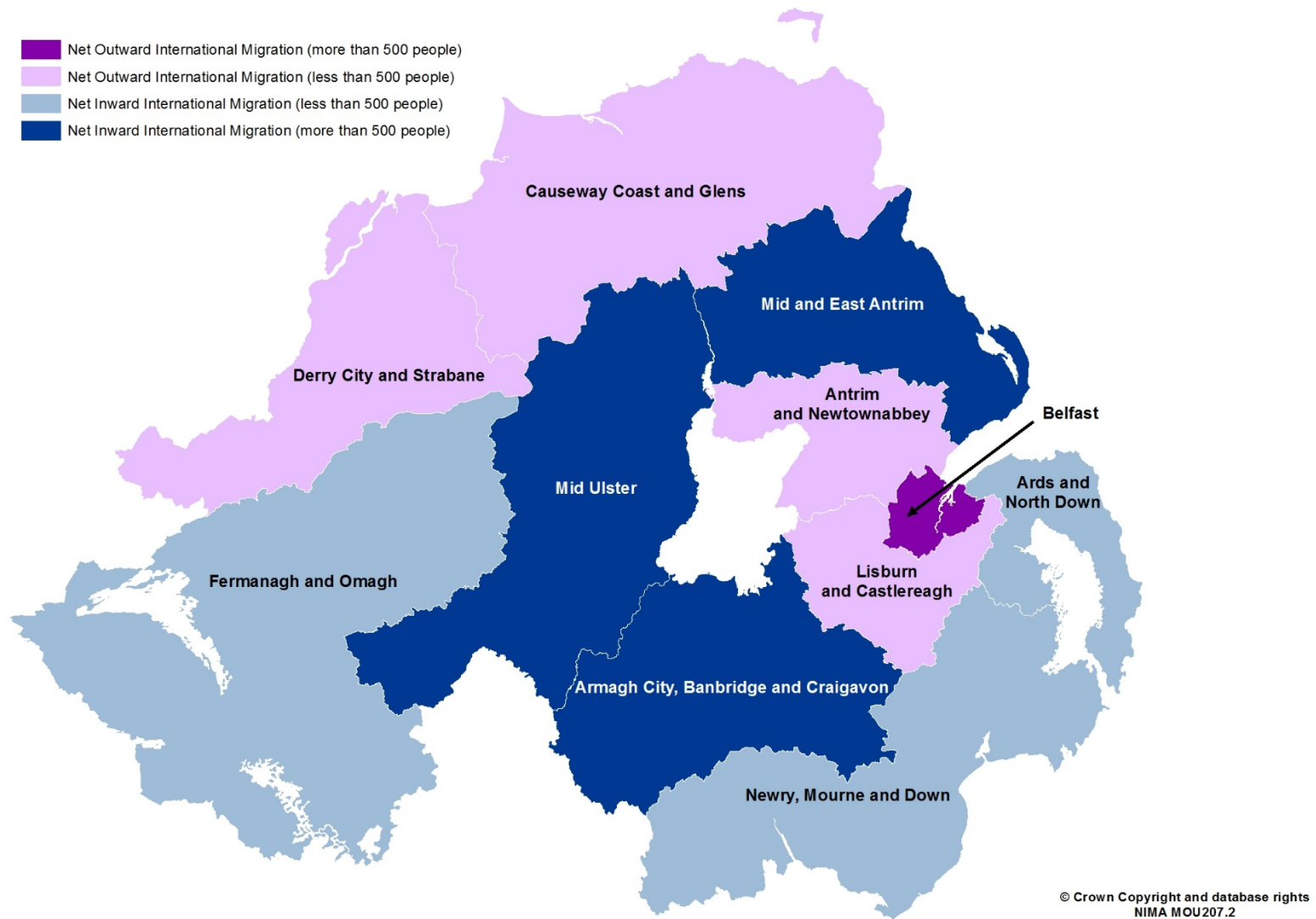
In the same period, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon had the highest level of net inward international migration (900 people) followed by Mid Ulster and Mid & East Antrim Local Government Districts (both 600 people) (see Figure 7 and Map 1).

**Figure 7: Estimated International inflows, outflows and net migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 1,043 Kb)

**Map 1: Net International Migration by Local Government District (year ending mid-2016)**



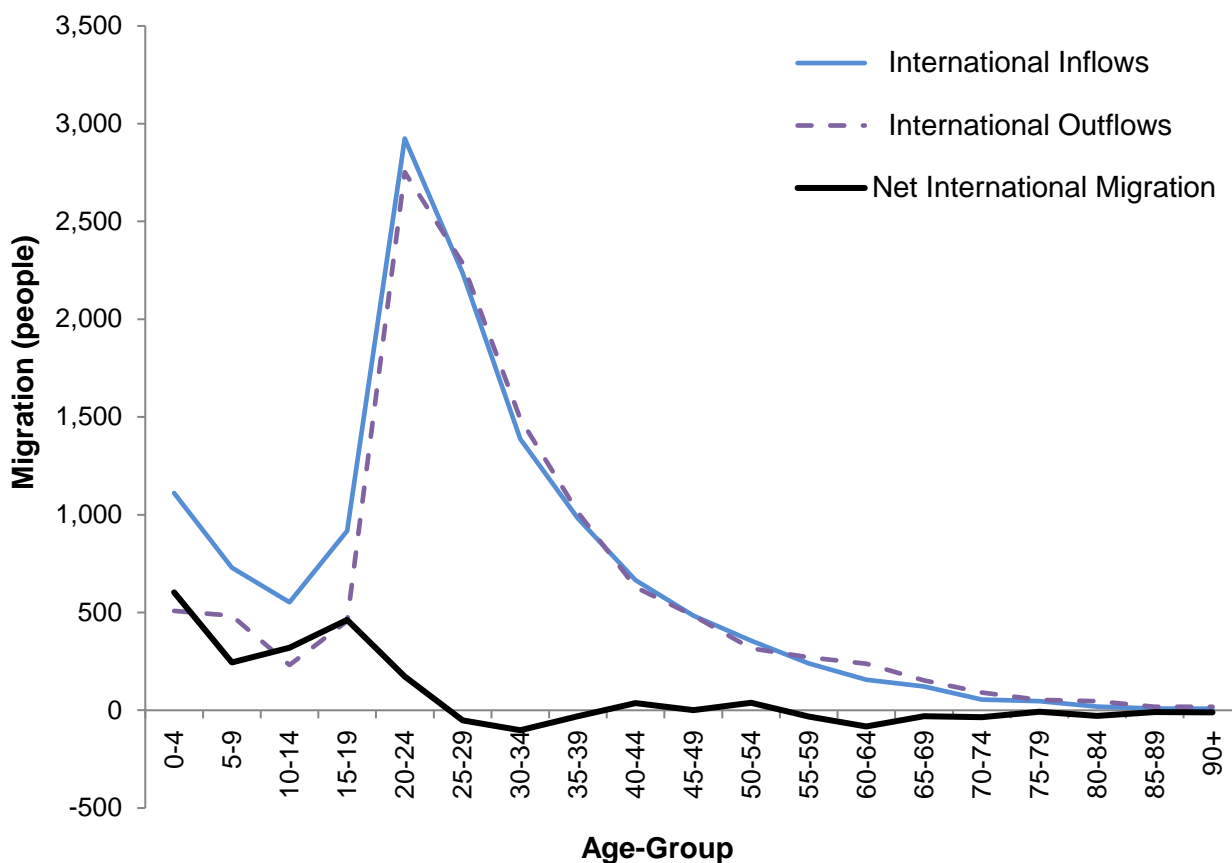
[Download Map](#) (PDF Format - 670Kb)

### 2.3.2 International Migration Estimates by Age

Figure 8 shows the age distribution of international migrants into and out of Northern Ireland in the year ending mid-2016. 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-2016 international inflows exceeded international outflows for all age groups under 25. The total population increase resulting from net international inward migration almost exclusively occurred in the 24 and under age group (1,800 people) with only two other age groups, those aged 40 to 49 and 50 54 years, experiencing net inward international migration (less than 50 people in both). Net international outward migration among all of the other age groups (400 people) had the effect of reducing the total net international inward migration to 1,500 people.

**Figure 8: Estimated international migration by age (year ending mid-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 1,039 Kb)

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.

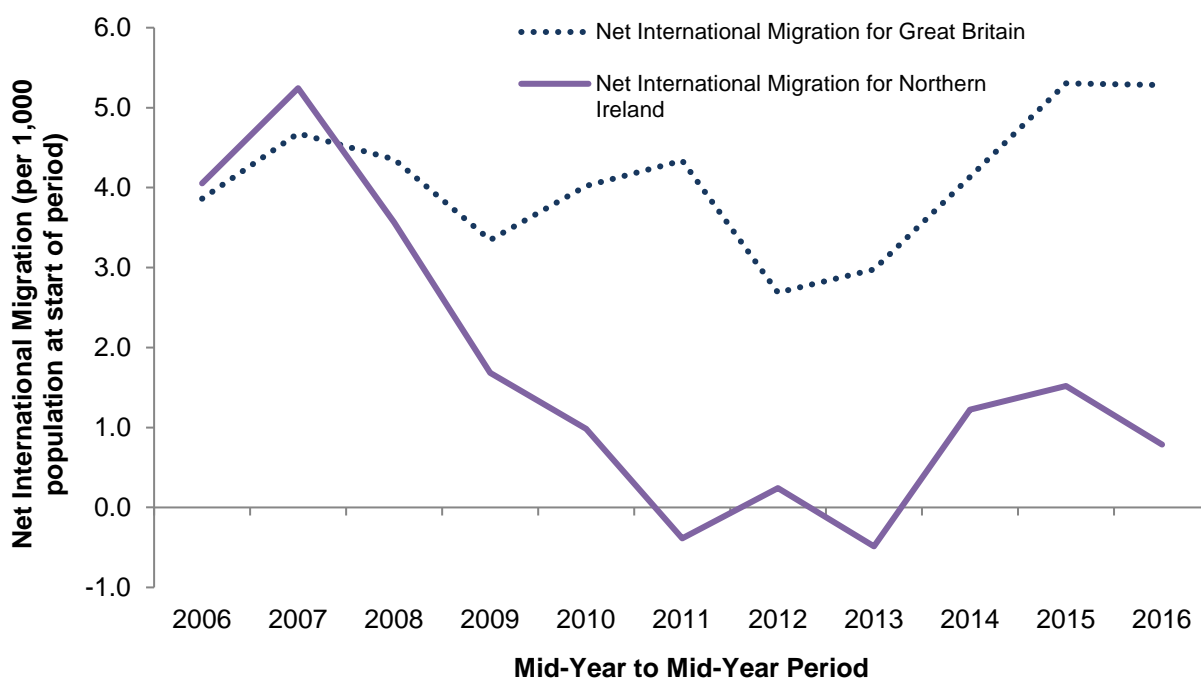
## 2.4 Comparison of International Migration Estimates across the UK

In the year ending mid-2016, Northern Ireland was the only one of the four UK countries to experience a decrease in international inflows, albeit a modest one of 100 people (0.7 per cent). Scotland had the largest percentage increase (6.9 per cent, 2,600 people) with England (1.9 per cent, 10,600 people) and Wales (0.8 per cent, 100 people) also experiencing increases.

During the same period, the changes in international outflows varied across the UK countries. Both Wales (33.7 per cent, 3,600 people) and Scotland (3.8 per cent, 700 people) experienced decreases in the number of people leaving to live abroad. In contrast, England (6.3 per cent, 16,300 people) and Northern Ireland (12.1 per cent, 1,200 people) had increases in the number of international outflows.

Figure 9 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-2006.

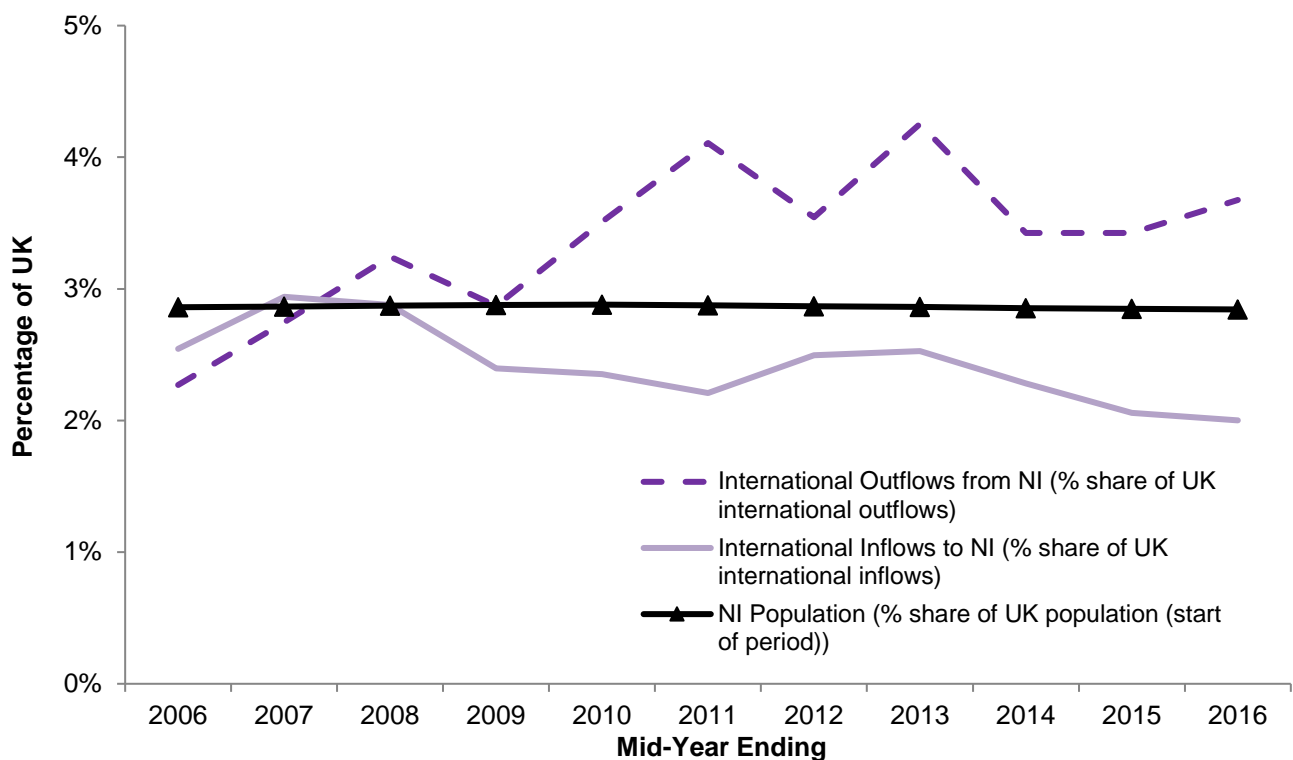
**Figure 9: Net international migration for Great Britain and Northern Ireland per 1,000 of the population (year ending mid-2006 to year ending mid-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 841 Kb)

Figure 10 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, in the year ending mid-2016, Northern Ireland continued to experience a larger share of international outflows relative to its proportion of the UK population and a smaller share of international inflows. The proportion of UK international outflows from Northern Ireland has been changeable in the most recent years, while the proportion of UK international inflows into Northern Ireland has been decreasing at a modest rate since the year ending mid-2013.

**Figure 10: International inflows and outflows for Northern Ireland, as a percentage of UK International Migration (year ending mid-2006 to year ending mid-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 844 Kb)

In the case of Belfast Local Government District, the proportion of international inward migration (32.7 per cent) in the year ending mid-2016 is noticeably higher than the proportion represented by its population at the start of the period (i.e. mid-2015) (18.3 per cent). 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-2016)**

<b>Main City (UK Country)</b>	<b>Area population (as a proportion of country population)*</b>	<b>International inflows to area (as a proportion of total international inflows to that country) year ending mid-2016</b>	<b>International outflows from area (as a proportion of total international outflows from that country) year ending mid-2016</b>
Belfast** (Northern Ireland)	18.3%	32.7%	41.9%
London (England)	15.8%	38.1%	34.1%
Cardiff & Swansea (Wales)	19.3%	49.2%	42.5%
Glasgow & Edinburgh (Scotland)	20.6%	54.3%	41.2%

\*Population share is calculated at the start of the period (i.e. in this case mid-2015)

\*\*Belfast Local Government District

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 1,073 Kb)

### 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 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 2016 the Medical Card Register shows 12,600 international inflows<sup>6</sup> to Northern Ireland – a 1.3 per cent decrease since 2015.

Analysing medical card data by country of last residence shows that, consistent with recent years, 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 in the calendar year 2016. Levels of inflows from these two countries decreased since the calendar year 2015 (Poland: 400 inflows, 22.4 per cent; Republic of Ireland: 100 inflows, 8.6 per cent).

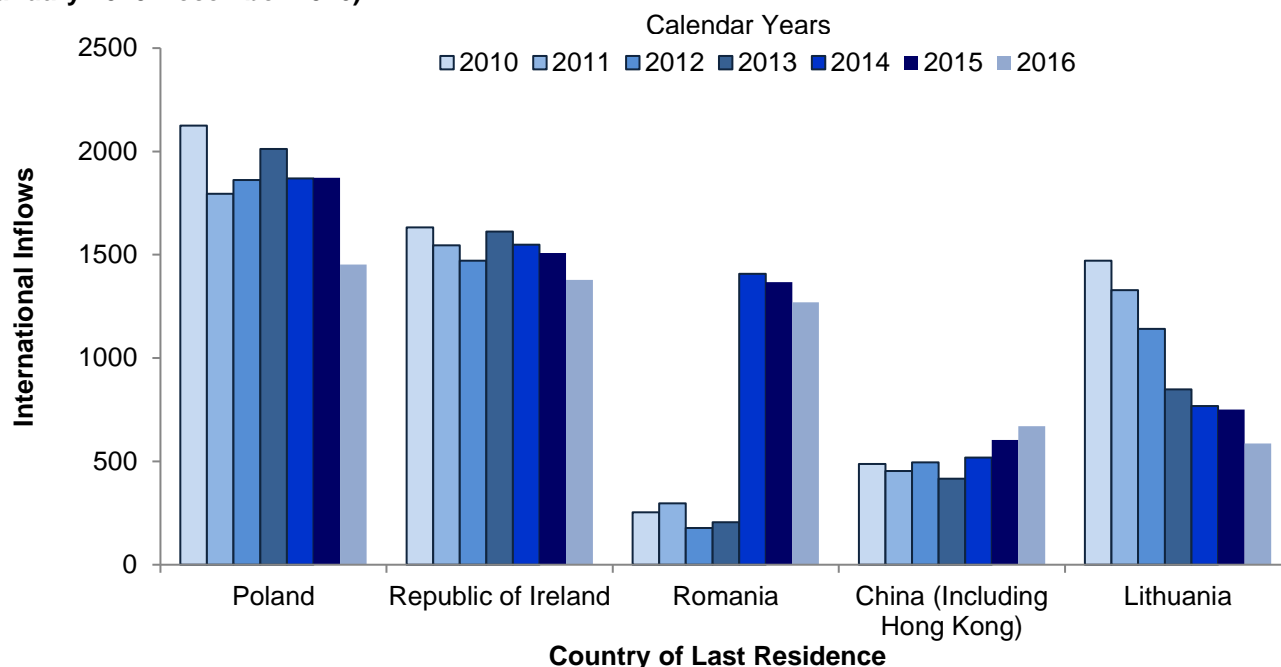
In the calendar year 2016 Romania was the third most prevalent country listed as the previous place of residence for the third year in a row (see Figure 11), albeit figures have decreased by 7.1 per cent (100 inflows) since 2015. This follows a large increase observed from 2013 to 2014 in inflows from Romania (from 200 to 1,400) as a result of Romanian nationals being given the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK<sup>7</sup> on 1 January 2014.

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<sup>6</sup> Inflows relate to the number of new registrations to the Northern Ireland Medical Card Register as well as those who appear to have returned to the Register but had previously left (i.e. re-registrations).

<sup>7</sup> <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 11: International Inflows to Northern Ireland by country of last residence\* (Medical Card Register: January 2010-December 2016)**



\*The countries included are the top five most prevalent in the latest calendar year (i.e. 2016).

[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 286 Kb)

As highlighted in Table 2, Republic of Ireland and Romania were one of the top three countries of last residence for international inflows in a number of LGDs. With the exception of Belfast, Poland appears in the top three listed countries of previous residence in each of the LGDs.

**Table 2: International Inflows to Northern Ireland by top three countries of last residence for each Local Government District (Medical Card Register: January 2016 to December 2016)**

Area	Top Countries (January to December 2016)		
	First Country (Number)*	Second Country (Number)*	Third Country (Number)*
Antrim & Newtownabbey	Romania (100)	Poland (100)	China (<50)
Ards & North Down	RoI (<50)	Romania (<50)	Poland (<50)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Poland (200)	Romania (200)	Portugal (200)
Belfast	China (500)	Romania (300)	RoI (300)
Causeway Coast & Glens	Poland (100)	RoI (100)	France (100)
Derry City & Strabane	RoI (200)	Syria (<50)	Poland (<50)
Fermanagh & Omagh	RoI (200)	Poland (100)	Hungary (<50)
Lisburn & Castlereagh	Romania (100)	Poland (<50)	Syria (<50)
Mid & East Antrim	Romania (400)	Poland (100)	Bulgaria (<50)
Mid Ulster	Lithuania (200)	East Timor (200)	Poland (200)
Newry, Mourne & Down	RoI (200)	Poland (200)	Bulgaria (200)
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Poland (1,400)</b>	<b>RoI (1,400)</b>	<b>Romania (1,300)</b>

RoI = Republic of Ireland

\* Indicative rounded figures provided in brackets.

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 892 Kb)

The main reason given for coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK in 2016 was work (40.5 per cent), followed by family (25.6 per cent) and education (14.5 per cent). Almost three quarters (73.2 per cent) of the migrants who 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 90.5 per cent of inflows from Malaysia (100 people) and 80.8 per cent from China (500 people) indicating they had come to Northern Ireland for education purposes in the calendar year to December 2016. By the way of contrast, the vast majority of inflows from East Timor (84.0 per cent, 200 people) and Slovakia (79.2 per cent, 200 people), for example, arrived for work.

### 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 Ireland<sup>8</sup> 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.

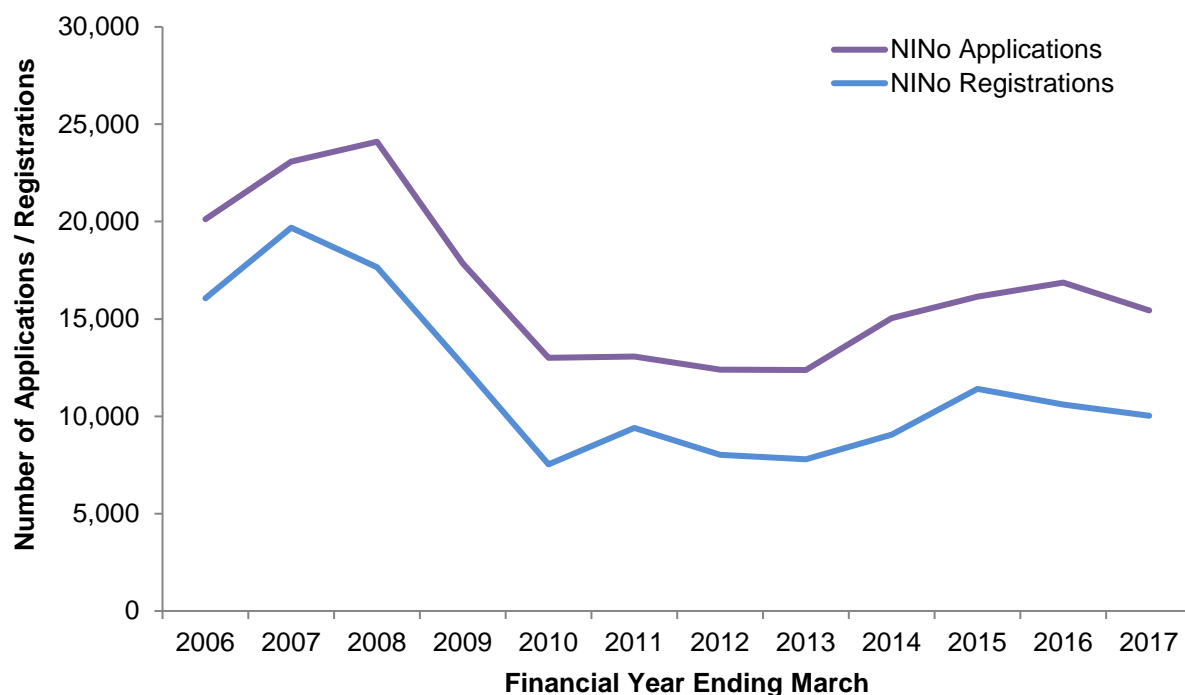
Figure 12 shows the trend in the number of NINo applications and registrations since the financial year ending March 2006. There was a large increase in the number of applications and registrations between 2006 and 2007 with applications continuing to rise until the financial year ending 2008. As suggested in relation to medical card registration data, 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 March 2017, there was a decrease in the number of applications (from 16,900 to 15,400, 8.5 per cent) for the first time since the financial year ending 2013. For the second year in a row, there was a decrease in the number of registrations associated with non-UK nationals, falling by 5.4 per cent (from 10,600 to 10,000).

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<sup>8</sup>It 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 12: Northern Ireland NI No Applications and Registrations from non-UK nationals by financial year (2005/06 to 2016/17)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 1,029 Kb)

#### NI No Applications from non-UK Nationals

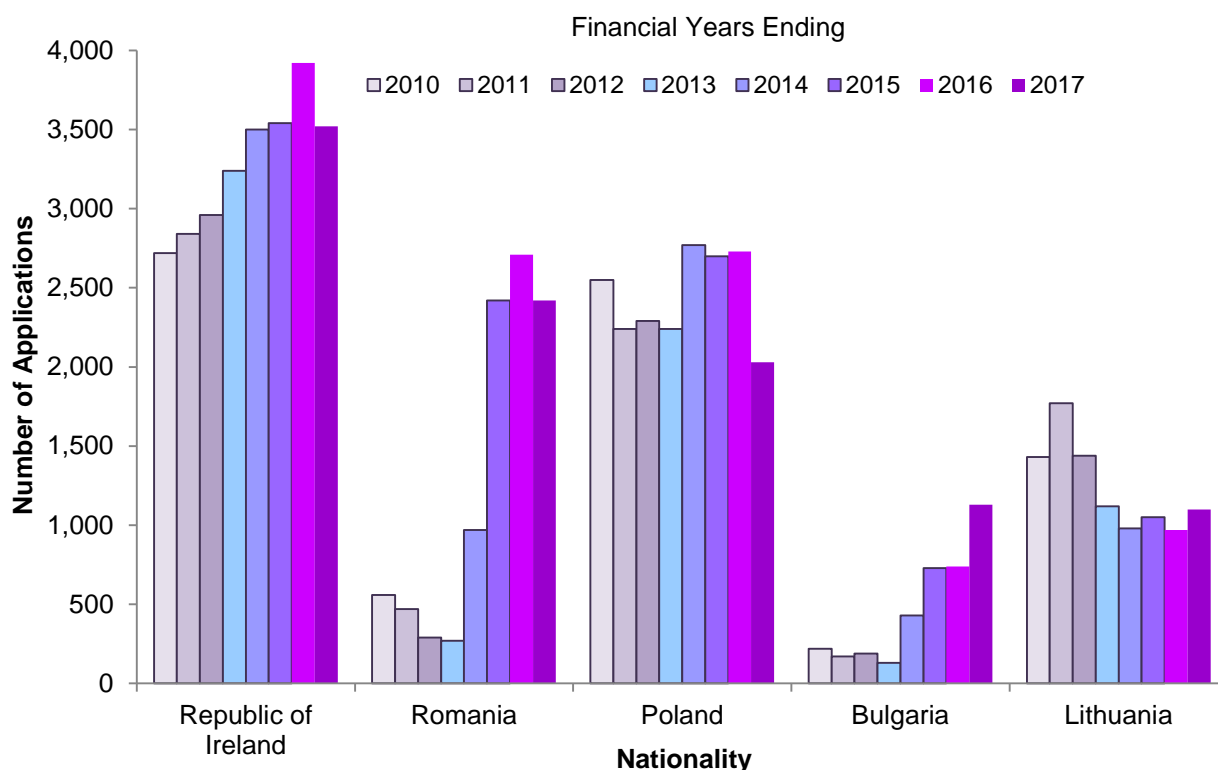
Figure 13 shows the number of NI No applications from nationalities which were the top five most prevalent in the financial year to March 2017, and provides historical data for these nationalities going back to 2010. Applications from nationals from the Republic of Ireland were the most prevalent in the financial year ending March 2017 (3,500 applications), however, the number of applications from Irish nationals was down by 400 (10.2 per cent) since the financial year ending March 2016.

The number of applications from Romanian nationals (the second most prevalent nationality) decreased by 300 (10.7 per cent) in the financial year ending March 2017. This followed increases of 300, 1,500 and 700 in the three previous financial years which, as suggested in relation to medical card registration data, may be due to Romanian nationals being given the same rights as other EEA nationals to live and work in the UK<sup>9</sup> on 1 January 2014. Having been relatively stable for a number of year, the number of applications from Polish nationals also decreased in the financial year ending March 2017 (700 applications, 25.6 per cent).

<sup>9</sup><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/>

In the financial year ending March 2017, there was an increase in the number of applications from Bulgarian nationals, rising by 400 to 1,100 (52.7 per cent) bringing it into the list of top five countries. The number of applications from Lithuania also increased from 1,000 to 1,100 (13.4 per cent) (see Figure 12). In contrast, Portugal has moved out of the list of top five countries having experienced a fall of 20.7 per cent to 1,000 applications.

**Figure 13: Northern Ireland NINo Applications from non-UK nationals by nationality\* and financial year (2009/10 to 2016/17)**



*\*The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2017).*

[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 1,033 Kb)

### NINo Registrations to non-UK Nationals

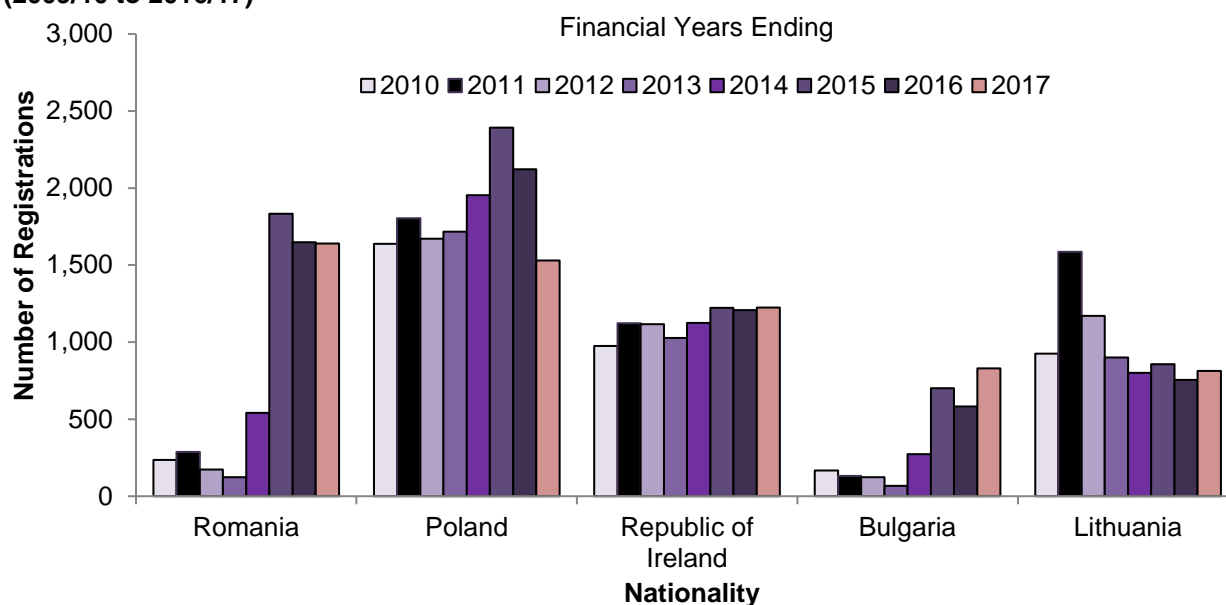
Figure 14 shows the number of NINo registrations from nationalities which were the top five most prevalent in the financial year to March 2017, and provides historical data for these nationalities going back to 2010.

Having been the second most prevalent nationality in the financial year to March 2016, registrations from Romanian nationals are now the most prevalent nationality in 2017. The overall number of registrations from Romanian nationals has remained consistent at 1,600. Registrations from Romanian nationals had seen large 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.

Registrations from Polish nationals (the second most prevalent nationality in 2017, having been the most prevalent in each year since the financial year ending 2006) have fallen by 600 (27.9 per cent) since March 2016. Registrations from Portuguese nationals decreased by 23.1 per cent to 700 causing Portugal to fall out of the list of top five countries in the financial year ending March 2017.

Interestingly, when looking at applications and registrations together, there has been a decrease both in the number of NINo **applications** and **registrations** from nationals from Poland and Portugal in the financial year ending March 2017. Both datasets also show an increase in the number of NINo **applications** and **registrations** from Bulgarian nationals in the same period.

**Figure 14: Northern Ireland NINo Registrations to non-UK nationals by nationality\* and financial year (2009/10 to 2016/17)**



\*The nationalities included are the top five most prevalent in the latest financial year (i.e. 2017).

[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 1,034 Kb)

### 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 2016. In the calendar year to December 2006, 9.4 per cent of babies were born to non

UK-born mothers (2,200 babies out of 23,300), rising to 13.1 per cent (3,100 babies out of 24,100) by December 2016.

**Table 3: Births by mother's country of birth (January to December 2006, 2011 and 2016\*)**

Mother's Country of Birth	Registration Year (January to December)		
	2006	2011	2016*
	<u>Number of Births</u>		
Northern Ireland	19,600	20,800	19,900
Rest of UK	1,500	1,300	1,100
<b>UK</b>	<b>21,100</b>	<b>22,100</b>	<b>20,900</b>
Republic of Ireland (RoI)	700	700	600
A8 Countries	400	1,200	1,200
All Other Countries	1,100	1,300	1,300
<b>Outside the UK</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>3,200</b>	<b>3,100</b>
<b>All Births</b>	<b>23,300</b>	<b>25,300</b>	<b>24,100</b>
	<u>Proportion of Births</u>		
<b>UK</b>	90.6%	87.5%	86.9%
<b>Outside the UK</b>	9.4%	12.5%	13.1%

\* Please note that figures for 2016 are provisional and are, therefore, subject to change until the publication of the 2016 Registrar General Annual Report.

[Download Table](#) (XLS format – 1,022 Kb)

### 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 international inflows in 2011 (as derived from the Medical Card Register) 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 countries<sup>10</sup>. It was estimated that in Northern Ireland 13,600 people lived outside the UK one year before Census day. This compared to 12,000 international inflows (as derived from the Medical Card

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_385836.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_385836.pdf)



Register) 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.

## **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)*

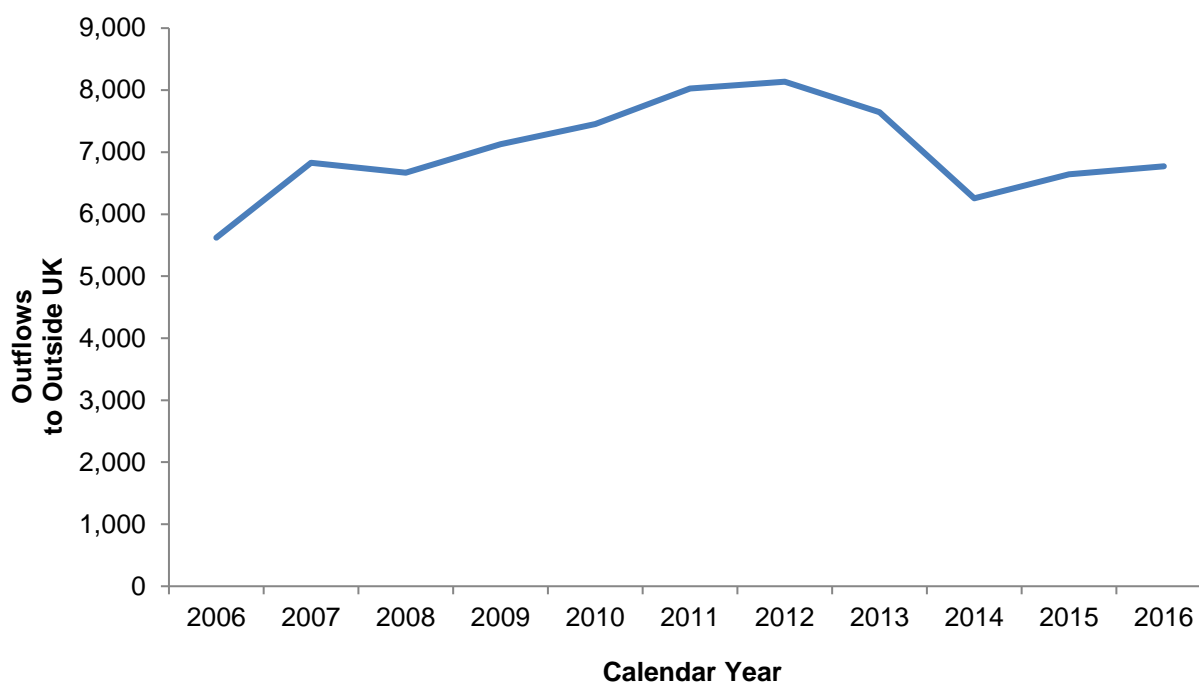
Before getting into the analysis, it is estimated that approximately 3 out of every 5 people who leave Northern Ireland to live outside the UK actually de-register with their GP. In view of this, for the official international migration estimates, NISRA scales up de-registrations by a factor of 1.67 (i.e.  $5/3$ )<sup>11</sup>. While the inferences that can be drawn from the unadjusted Medical Card de-registration data in this section will be limited, the information provides some insight into those that left Northern Ireland to live elsewhere (i.e. outflows).

In the calendar year January to December 2016, there were 6,800 outflows from Northern Ireland to outside the UK. This is an increase of 100 (1.9 per cent) from 2015. As Figure 15 shows, this was the second successive year where the number of international outflows had increased.

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<sup>11</sup> This scaling factor was determined through analysis of historic population change using results from Censuses of population (see [Methodology Report](#)).

**Figure 15: Northern Ireland Outflows to destination outside UK by calendar year (Medical Card Register: 2006-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 258 Kb)

The largest proportion of international outflows from Northern Ireland in 2016 was in Belfast Local Government District (41.1 per cent, or 2,800 out of the total 6,800 outflows). This is the only district whose proportion of outflows 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 outflows 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 not<sup>12</sup> (referred to as 'other' in figure 16 below).

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<sup>12</sup> This group of outflows is made up from three categories:

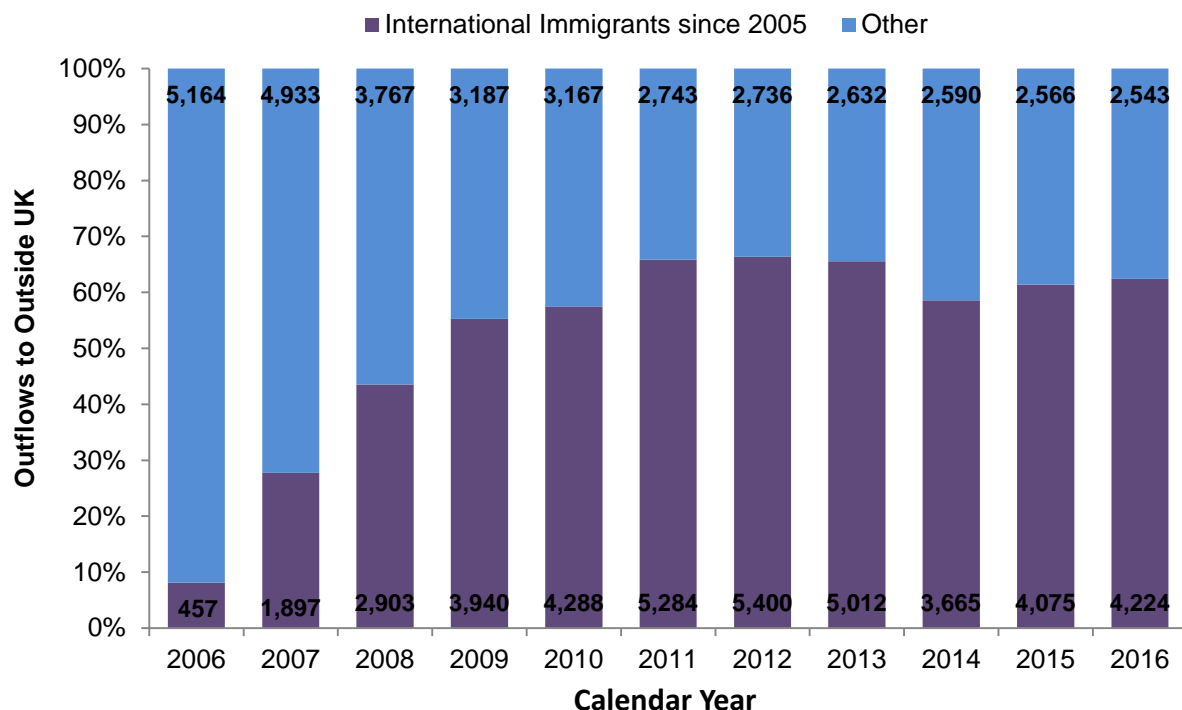
- (i) people who were born in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) people who moved to Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK; and
- (iii) people who moved to Northern Ireland from outside the UK prior to 2005.

There is insufficient information available to allocate each outflow 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 16 shows that since 2009 approximately 3 out of 5 of all international outflows related to international immigrants.

**Figure 16: Northern Ireland Outflows to destination outside UK by type and calendar year (Medical Card Register: 2006-2016)**



[Download Chart](#) (XLS format – 266 Kb)

Following this trend, in the calendar year to December 2016, outflows of international immigrants accounted for 62.4 per cent (4,200 people) of all outflows from Northern Ireland to outside the UK, a small increase of 3.7 per cent (100 outflows) since December 2015. In the same period, outflows of those who did not originally come from outside the UK since 2005 remained relatively unchanged.

Outflows of international immigrants who originally came to Northern Ireland either for work (1,400 people) or family reasons (700 people) remained relatively unchanged from December 2015. There was an increase in the number of outflows from those who originally came for education (up from 1,700 in December 2015 to 1,900 in December 2016).

It is important to note that this information relates to figures for the calendar year and 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-2016 the number of outflows also increased by 12.1 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 2016, 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 12,300 pupils in Northern Ireland schools (Primary and Post-primary<sup>13</sup>) who had English as an additional language in October 2016, an increase of 8.3 per cent (900 children) since October 2015. The largest numbers of these pupils were found in Belfast LGD (2,600), Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon LGD (2,500) and Mid Ulster LGD (2,200).

The number of school pupils in primary education with English as an additional language rose by 900 (9.6 per cent) to 9,700 between 2015 and 2016. As has been the case since 2008, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese were the top three languages of primary school children who had English as an additional language in the 2016 academic year. Those who speak these languages represented 55.9 per cent of all primary school children who had English as an additional language (5,400 out of 9,700 children).

In post-primary education, the number of school pupils with English as an additional language rose by 100 (3.6 per cent) to 2,600 between 2015 and 2016. As in primary education Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese were the top three languages of post-primary school children who had English as an additional language in the 2016 academic year.

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<sup>13</sup> 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 language<sup>14</sup>. 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.

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<sup>14</sup> 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 register<sup>15</sup> 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.

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<sup>15</sup> 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 2015 and June 2016). 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 1.86 million in Northern Ireland to 55.27 million in England ([mid-2016 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**  
**August 2017**

## 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 <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/population/long-term-international-migration-statistics>.
- Migration estimates for the year ending mid-2016 were produced and released alongside the Mid-Year Population Estimates on 22 June 2017. 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 (2016).
- 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-2016 to mid-2017 are expected to be published along with the Population estimates for Northern Ireland in June 2018.
- 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.gov.uk](mailto:census@nisra.gov.uk).
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