

FACTFILE: GCSE ECONOMICS

UNIT 3.2

IMMIGRATION & EMIGRATION



Immigration & Emigration

Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Analyse how population changes, including those resulting from immigration and emigration, affect product and labour markets.

Immigration & emigration – some definitions

Immigration – movement of people INTO a country or region

Emigration – movement of people OUT OF a country or region

Net immigration = Immigration – emigration

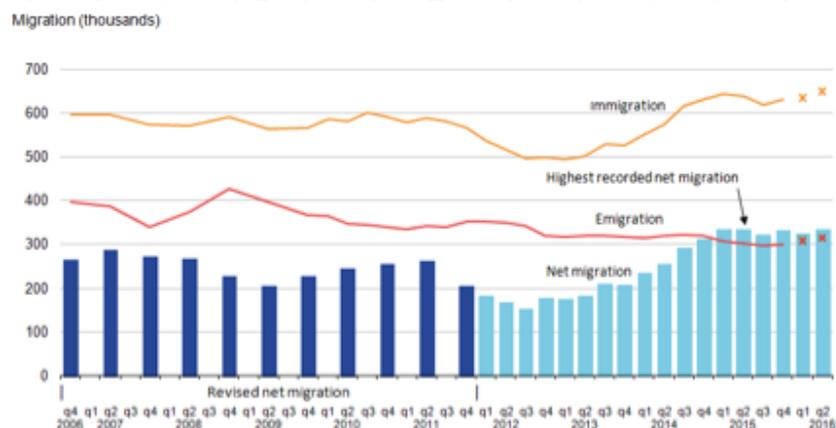
The definitions of emigration and immigration are rather vague and cause difficulties for statisticians. They do not include people coming into or leaving the country for holidays or short business trips, but there is no agreed time after which someone becomes an immigrant or emigrant.

UK Immigration and Emigration 2006–16

Immigration into the UK has remained mostly around 600 000 people per year in the 21st century. Emigration has fallen by 100 000. As a result net immigration has risen to approximately 300 000 people per year. This is still, however, less than 0.5% (or less than 1 in 200) of the UK population.

It should also be noted that some ‘immigrants’ are actually British citizens coming back to the UK. There were 80 000 of these returners in 2015.

Figure 1 – UK migration 2006–16

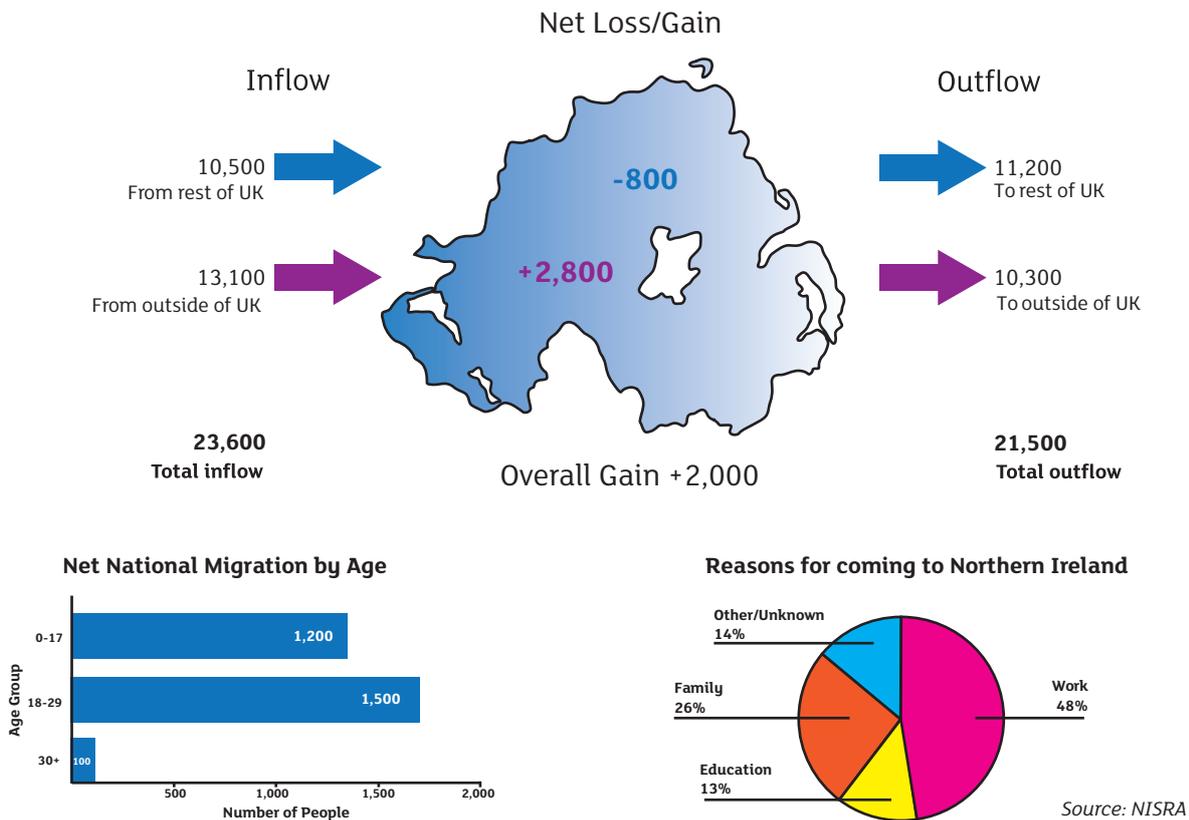


Source: ONS

Northern Ireland immigration and emigration

In Northern Ireland the scale of net international immigration is much lower in proportion to the population of 1.85 million, amounting to about 0.15% (1 in 660 people).

Figure 2 – Northern Ireland migration



Economic impact of immigration and emigration

There are several arguments about the costs and benefits of immigration and emigration. Concerns include:

1. Immigrant labour may take away jobs from British workers and drive down wage levels. There have been some studies of this, most of which have concluded that there may be a very small effect for the very lowest-paid jobs, but that any fall in wages might also have been caused by other factors such as the decline of trade unions or recession. The number of UK-born workers employed has also actually increased in recent years.
2. There have also been suggestions that immigrants may be a burden on the taxpayer by claiming benefits. However, a survey by Oxford's Migration Observatory found that foreign-born adults were 16.2% of the working-age population but only 7.7% of working-age individuals receiving key out-of-work benefits. In simple terms, foreign-born adults were less than half as likely as UK-born adults to be claiming unemployment benefits.
3. A rising immigrant population may put pressure on Government services such as education and housing, especially in areas such as London and South-East England, which have the largest immigrant population.

4. Emigration may create a 'brain drain' with UK-born people taking their education and skills abroad. For the example, according to the OECD, 17 000 doctors (costing £250 000 to train) and 50 000 nurses trained in the UK work abroad.

Benefits claimed for immigration and emigration include:

1. Immigrants bring new education and skills into the economy, often being younger, better-educated and more highly-skilled than the UK-born population. Over 30% of recent arrivals have a university degree, compared to just over 20% of UK-born adults.
2. Immigrant labour fills gaps in the labour market at all levels of skill. For example 35% of doctors and 22% of nurses in the UK are foreign-born.
3. Being more highly educated and skilled and also more likely to be working, foreign-born workers make a significant contribution to the economy. They make a significant positive contribution to the Government and the economy, paying far more in taxes than they receive in benefits.
4. Immigrants bring new products, markets and businesses to the UK.
5. Even people who emigrate from the UK often return, as we can see in Figure 2. They may bring back significant skills and capital to benefit the UK economy.

