

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom continued to attract a high number of immigrants in 2007, although the long-term rise seems to be halted in 2007. The estimated number of people arriving to live in the UK for at least a year in 2007 was 577 000, similar to the figure in the previous four years. However, the number of people leaving the UK was reduced temporarily to 340 000, down from 400 000 the year before, mostly due to the decrease in the number of Britons leaving the country. This was the main reason behind the increase in the net inflow of migrants to 237 000, up from 191 000 the previous year. Provisional estimates for 2008 showed however a significant increase in the number of people leaving the country, with a similar number of people entering the country with respect to the previous year. As a result, there was an considerable decrease in net migration to the UK in 2008, resulting in the lowest level of net migration (118 000) since the accession of EU-8 countries.

There have been dramatic shifts in the total population in the UK in recent years, with the British population stable while the foreign population rose sharply. The 2007 Labour Force Survey recorded a total stock of foreign nationals in the UK of 4.2 million in (around 7% of the total population), almost half of European origin. The EU-8 countries represented 18.2 percent of all foreign citizens. Poland, at around a half million, became the largest foreign nationality in the UK in 2007, surpassing Ireland for the first time and representing 11.9% of all foreign nationals. Asians represent a quarter of all foreign citizens, of which Indians are the largest group with 7% of the total.

25 670 asylum applications were received in 2008, an increase from the previous year (24 430) and a change in the decreasing trend observed in the previous five years. Figures for the first two quarters of 2009 (14 425) confirm the increasing number of asylum applications.

The main policies changes introduced were the roll-out of the new Points Based System (PBS) for labour migration, the introduction of an Identity Card scheme for foreign nationals and the outline of a New Draft Immigration and Citizenship Bill.

The roll-out of Tier 2 of the PBS aims to enable UK employers to recruit skilled workers from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) for those jobs that cannot be filled by a UK or an EEA worker. The government approved in November 2008 a shortage occupation list for the skilled worker Tier 2 following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC). In addition, stricter labour market tests for Tier 2 were approved in September 2009, doubling the time for which jobs must be advertised in Jobcentre Plus (to four weeks) and raising the salary threshold for qualification as a skilled worker (from GBP 17,000 to GBP 20,000). With respect to Tier 4 (foreign students), new rules were implemented in March 2009. Foreign students wanting to come to study in the UK will need to be sponsored by a licensed college or university.

In addition, a compulsory ID scheme has been introduced to all foreign nationals given permission to extend their stay in the United Kingdom as students, as well as for spouses and partners of permanent residents, and dependants of applicants in these two categories. It will be gradually extended and is expected to cover 90% of non-EEA (and Switzerland) nationals by 2015.

A new draft Immigration and Citizenship Bill was published in July 2008 concerning the reform of immigration law, and a full draft Simplification Bill and immigration rules framework is expected in late 2009. In the meantime, the [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009](#) was approved in July 2009. The main provisions are the strengthening of border controls, by bringing together customs and immigration powers to the UK Border Agency for integrated border control, and changes to nationality law to implement a new path to citizenship.

For further information:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>