
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Sir Andrew Green KCMG
Weston House
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26 July 2013

Dear Sir Andrew

LONG-TERM INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION ESTIMATES

Thank you for your letter of 8 July and the enclosed statistical note.

I agree that this is a statistical series of particular importance to public and political debate. As you note, the Office for National Statistics has recently published two distinct sets of estimates for net migration over the period between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

The regular *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report*¹, published most recently on 23 May 2013, presents estimates of Long Term International Migration (LTIM) for the UK based primarily on the International Passenger Survey.

The ONS statistical bulletin *Population Estimates for England and Wales, mid-2002 to mid-2010 revised*², published on 13 December 2012, contains estimates of population change due to net migration, for England and Wales, for the years from 2001 to 2011. These were revised in the light of the results of the 2011 Census.

The latter estimates are higher, particularly for the years 2004-05 to 2007-08 where the difference from the LTIM estimates averages about 50,000 annually. I enclose a table which summarises the relevant figures.

All these figures are in the public domain and they are all estimates with quite substantial margins of uncertainty attached to them. The Statistics Authority's recently published Monitoring Review *The Robustness of the International Passenger Survey* discusses some of the limitations of the data derived from this survey³. The estimated components of population change over the inter-censal years are also subject to quite a large degree of uncertainty.

As you recognise, ONS has taken the decision that the estimates from the components of population change are not of a kind that would allow the LTIM series to be reliably amended to reflect the difference at this stage. However, I do accept your broader point that presenting

¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/may-2013/index.html>

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-england-and-wales/mid-2002-to-mid-2010-revised--national-/index.html>

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/monitoring-review-4-2013---the-robustness-of-the-international-passenger-survey.pdf>

the two sets of estimates separately is not sufficient and I have agreed with the Director General of ONS that the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report will in future present both sets of estimates prominently, discuss the probable reasons for the differences between them, and offer advice on appropriate interpretation.

In addition, as announced on 13 December 2012, ONS will be producing a report in the autumn that will further consider these matters and identify a way forward.

I hope you will agree that these steps together will help to ensure that users of statistics have the full picture in terms of the estimates available.

I have asked ONS to reply separately on your point about the possible implications for population projections and on any other points arising from the statistical note you kindly sent us.

I am copying this letter as yours and also to Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair of the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee, and to Glen Watson, Director General of ONS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'D'.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Net International Migration estimates for England and Wales

Thousands

	LTIM net migration estimate ¹	Old MYE net migration (used in rolled forward estimates) ²	New MYE net migration (revised) ²	Difference between old and new MYE migration component
2001-02	148	145	166	21
2002-03	151	144	166	22
2003-04	174	158	174	16
2004-05	253	238	288	50
2005-06	167	158	207	49
2006-07	186	176	242	66
2007-08	180	166	232	66
2008-09	146	152	176	24
2009-10	214	205	218	13
2010-11	224	225	235	10

Sources:

1 LTIM – Table 2.10 Long-Term International Migration time series, 1991-1992 to 2010-2011 Citizenship, 29 November 2012 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-280889>

2 MYE – Mid-year population estimate, from Figure 3 of *Population Estimates for England and Wales, mid-2002 to mid-2010 revised*, 13 December 2012 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-england-and-wales/mid-2002-to-mid-2010-revised--national-/chd---figure-3-pop-change-for-e-w-mid-2001-to-mid-2011.xls>