
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Sir Andrew Green KCMG
Weston House
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Dear Sir Andrew

THE CONTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRATION TO UK POPULATION GROWTH

Thank you for your recent correspondence about official statistics in respect of the contribution of immigration to UK population growth. I am most grateful to you for letting us know that the letter and the ONS release¹ referred to in it seemed inconsistent. A number of figures had been wrongly transposed in the letter, and are corrected below. As is our usual practice, this exchange of correspondence will be placed on the Authority's website.

ONS carries out analysis to look at the impact of migration on future population growth as part of its National Population Projections release. The latest analysis projects that over the period from 2012 to 2037 net migration will account for 4.2 million of the 9.6 million growth, and net natural change resulting from the births and deaths related to those migrants will result in a growth of 1.6 million. Thus, over 60 per cent (5.8 million) of the projected total population growth (9.6 million) in the period from 2012 to 2037 is projected to be the direct or indirect result of migration in that period. These figures are calculated by running the projections forward without migration (assuming at each age net migration is zero) and looking at the difference between that projection and the principal projection. Table 3 in the statistics bulletin for the latest projections provides more details.²

As you point out, the ONS analysis gives the percentage of the projected population increase that is due to future migration, and also the percentage increase that will result from their descendants. If one were to produce a historical analysis, then the Le Bras method might be appropriate. However, carrying out such analysis would require a choice to be made about the start year, and also how many generations one were to count as being the result of the initial migration. This could have a substantial impact on the results. Such work would also need to consider the effect, not just on the size of the population, but also the age distribution.

ONS is developing ways to address the need for more information on the characteristics of migrants and the impact of migration at the local level, as highlighted recently by the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC). ONS will also consider what additional material could be included in their annual population estimates to inform the debate on what proportion of recent changes in population growth are attributable to migration.

¹ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_334975.pdf

² As above

As you will know, I would be pleased to meet with you again to discuss any further statistical matters which you and your colleagues have identified and that you would like us to explore with ONS in this area.

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