

---

**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE**

Sir Andrew Green K.C.M.G  
Weston House  
Deddington  
OX15 0TG

6 August 2014

Dear Sir Andrew,

**LONG-TERM INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Thank you for your letter of 3 July about revisions to the Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates series.

ONS published revised net migration estimates on 10 April 2014 for the period from 2001 to 2011, which were consistent with the results of the 2011 Census. I have asked ONS to respond to your request for a further breakdown of the revised net migration estimates by citizenship.

ONS's response is enclosed. In summary, ONS could potentially devise a methodology to produce estimates of net migration by citizenship for 2001 to 2011, but this would only provide indicative results. There would be no method of assessing the quality of the estimates produced, and it is unlikely that the estimates would be of sufficient quality to show reliable levels and changes in net migration by citizenship over time.

I think ONS's response is reasonable, but I would of course be happy to discuss this with you further.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE**

## Annex – ONS response

ONS revised its net migration estimates on 10 April 2014 following a review into the 'Quality of Long-Term International Migration Estimates from 2001 to 2011'<sup>1</sup>. These estimates are consistent with population estimates following the 2011 Census.

Improvements made to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) were shown in the review to have improved the quality of migration estimates from 2009 onwards. The adjustments made to net migration estimates for 2010 and 2011 were small, and within reported statistical error ranges. As a result, published estimates of migration by citizenship from 2010 onwards are of sufficient detail and quality for monitoring progress towards the government's net migration target.

ONS identified that the IPS missed EU8<sup>2</sup> migrants during the middle part of the decade from 2001 to 2011. This conclusion was reached as a result of studying flight data from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and was the most plausible explanation based on the higher number of EU8 citizens recorded in the 2011 Census.

As part of the review, ONS considered the feasibility of producing migration estimates by citizenship which were consistent with the revised net migration series. ONS concluded that this would be extremely difficult due to the lack of available data sources that provide robust information on migration for each year between the 2001 and 2011 censuses. ONS published a guidance note<sup>3</sup> for users setting out the methodological reasons for this decision, and further information on how to interpret our published tables alongside the revised net migration estimates.

Within the review, ONS conducted analysis of a number of data sources which can provide information on trends in migration by citizenship, but for a variety of reasons will not be consistent with LTIM estimates:

- **2011 Census:** These data can provide estimates of citizenship by year of last arrival for those born outside the UK, and who were usually resident in the UK on 27 March 2011. They do not allow us to estimate 'year of first arrival' in the UK, nor the number of people who immigrated and subsequently emigrated before Census day. This would be required to provide annual estimates of net migration by citizenship.
- **Annual Population Survey (APS):** Although these data include information on year of first and last arrival in the UK, they include short-term migrants (those staying less than 12 months) and would not include the majority of migrants living in communal establishments (for example student halls of residence). The estimates are sample-based and therefore subject to their own uncertainty.
- **CAA flight data:** These provide information on the number of routes and passenger journeys between the UK and airports overseas. However the data do not distinguish between visitors and migrants, and exclude all travellers using sea ports and the Channel Tunnel which may be particularly important in the context of EU migration.
- **Allocations of National Insurance Numbers (NINo) to non-UK nationals:** These measure only those migrating for work. They will include short term migrants and may not

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/long-term-international-migration/quality-of-long-term-international-migration-estimates-from-2001-to-2011/sty-quality-of-ltim.html>

<sup>2</sup> The EU8 are the eight central and eastern European countries that joined the EU on 1 May 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/population-and-migration/international-migration-methodology/guidance-note-for-net-international-migration-revisions.pdf>

reflect when a person arrived in the UK as there may be a time lag between arrival and registering for a NINo.

- **GP registrations:** Data on GP registrations for people whose address one year ago was overseas will include short term migrants and may not always reflect when someone arrived in the UK. This may be due to a time lag between arrival and registering for health services.

While ONS could potentially devise a methodology to produce estimates of net migration by citizenship for 2001 to 2011, this would provide indicative results at best. There would be no method of assessing the quality or the robustness of the estimates produced, and it is unlikely that the estimates would be of sufficient quality to reliably show levels and changes in net migration by citizenship over time. However, as mentioned above, robust comparisons by citizenship can be made using already published estimates back to 2010.