

European Union migrants living in Wales

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This Data Insight examines the differences between the number of European Union (EU) migrants living in Wales, and other countries of the UK, using different data sources. It particularly focuses on applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), which has been a requirement for EU nationals living in the UK following the UK's decision to leave the EU. In addition to considering the number of EU migrants from the different data sources, we also compare information on the origin countries of EU migrants to the UK.

What we did

In order to provide a context for the anonymised analysis of merged EUSS and data held in SAIL Databank, we have examined EUSS data for Wales that has been released by the Home Office, and compared it to the Annual Population Survey (APS) data collected by the ONS. In addition, we have also compared this data with information on National Insurance Numbers Issued to Overseas Nationals (NINo) published by the Department of Work and Pensions. We have also undertaken comparisons of statistics from these data sources for other countries in the UK.

What we found

There are fairly large discrepancies between those applying to the EUSS and the estimated number of migrants born in EU countries or those indicating a EU nationality living in Wales.

In particular, Table 1 reports that around 96,000 EUSS applications were made in Wales (by EU nationals) between June 2018 and June 2021. This compares with an estimated population of around 81,000 people born in EU countries in Wales and 77,000 indicating a EU nationality.

Background

EU migration to the UK was a key issue in the 2016 referendum on membership of the EU, and has continued to be an important topic of debate since, with the UK media regularly reporting on the skill shortages experienced in certain sectors of the economy. These shortages have caused problems in the supply chain, most notably the lack of fuel in many petrol stations which was argued to have been the result of EU-born tanker drivers departing the UK following the referendum (Hesketh et al., 2021).

The EUSS Data Linkage project aims to focus on various aspects of EU migration in the context of EU citizens registering on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). This has been a requirement for EU-born citizens living in the UK following Brexit (starting from June 2018). The EUSS Data Linkage project will match information on EUSS registrations from the Home Office with data on range of other indicators such as on education, employment and health from datasets held in the SAIL Databank.

The higher number of EUSS applicants relative to EU born people, or those with an EU nationality, is also observed in the other countries of the UK. However, the extent of discrepancy is higher in England but lower in Scotland and Northern Ireland according to the ratio of EUSS registrations to the estimated EU-born population. This ratio is 1.61 in England, 1.18 in Wales, 1.09 in Scotland and 1.08 in Northern Ireland. The reason for these discrepancies is because some of those applying to the EUSS will have moved from the UK (Sumption, 2020). A further indication that quite large numbers of EU migrants have left the UK can be seen from the total number of NINo registrations made between 2002 and 2020, which are considerably higher in each of the countries of the UK than the number of EUSS applications.

The table also contains percentages relating to the origin of EU migrants to the countries of the UK. In terms of EUSS applications, there are some differences between the countries of the UK, with the percentage of applicants from EU8 countries (the 8 Central and Eastern European Countries that joined the EU in 2004) ranging from 33% in England to 57% in Northern Ireland. This percentage is 47% in Wales, with 32% of total EUSS applications made by Polish nationals.

The nationality with the next highest percentage of applications in Wales is Romanian, at 16%. Whereas in England, the number of applications was slightly higher for Romanians than it is for Poles. This is somewhat at odds with the population estimates from the APS since the most recent data for England indicates that around a third of EU migrants were from the EU8 compared with just over 10% from the EU2 (Bulgaria and Romania). The APS indicates a similar percentage of EU migrants to Wales are from the EU but that a higher percentage are from EU8 countries. These statistics appear to be consistent with NINo registrations, with around 36% of registrations between 2002 and 2020 made by Poles and 12% by Romanians.

Table 1: Migration Statistics from the EUSS, APS and NINo for Wales and Other Parts of the UK

		England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
EUSS Applications: June 2018-June 2021	Number in 000s	4,969	96	280	95
	% EU8 [Polish]	32.6 [18.7]	47.2 [31.8]	50.7 [35.9]	57.2 [29.8]
	% EU2 [Rom.]	25.9 [20.3]	22.0 [15.5]	14.0 [9.7]	21.5 [12.5]
	% Other EU [Ital.]	41.5 [10.2]	30.8 [6.0]	35.3 [7.8]	21.4 [12.1]
APS Estimates of EU Nationality (EU Born): July 2020-June 21	Est. No. in 000s	3,069 (3,099)	77 (81)	235 (258)	469 (88)
	% EU8	32.8 (31.3)	42.2 (35.5)	43.5 (39.1)	5.7 (28.1)
	% EU2	13.0 (12.6)	12.0 (10.9)	5.0 (5.5)	0.7 (2.8)
	% Other EU	54.3 (56.1)	45.8 (53.7)	51.5 (55.4)	93.7 (69.1)
NINo Registrations by EU Nationals: 2002-2020	Number in 000s	6,242	136	458	150
	% Polish	22.9	35.5	34.2	30.7
	% Romanian	16.8	11.6	8.1	7.9

Notes: EU Nationality includes Irish, which is the reason for the high number of those with an EU nationality in Northern Ireland. Nationals from the Republic of Ireland are not required to register on the EUSS. However, some Irish nationals have submitted applications to the EUSS as have nationals from non-EU countries. These individuals have been excluded from the above table. The number of applications recorded above includes those applying for both settled and pre-settled status, some of whom will have had their applications rejected.

Why it matters

Obtaining an accurate knowledge of the EU-born population resident in different parts of Wales influences the services that the Welsh Government is able to deliver. This is of particular importance in relation to key public services such as education and health.

What next

We plan to carry out a more detailed analysis, once the data on EUSS applicants living in Wales has been de-identified and matched to data held in the SAIL Databank. Once linked we will look in detail at a number of questions that are of importance to the Welsh Government. These include:

- Where exactly are different groups of EU nationals located in Wales?
- How do children of EU nationals perform in education compared to other groups of children?
- To what extent are there differences in the way in which EU nationals and their children access health services in relation to other groups of individuals living in Wales?

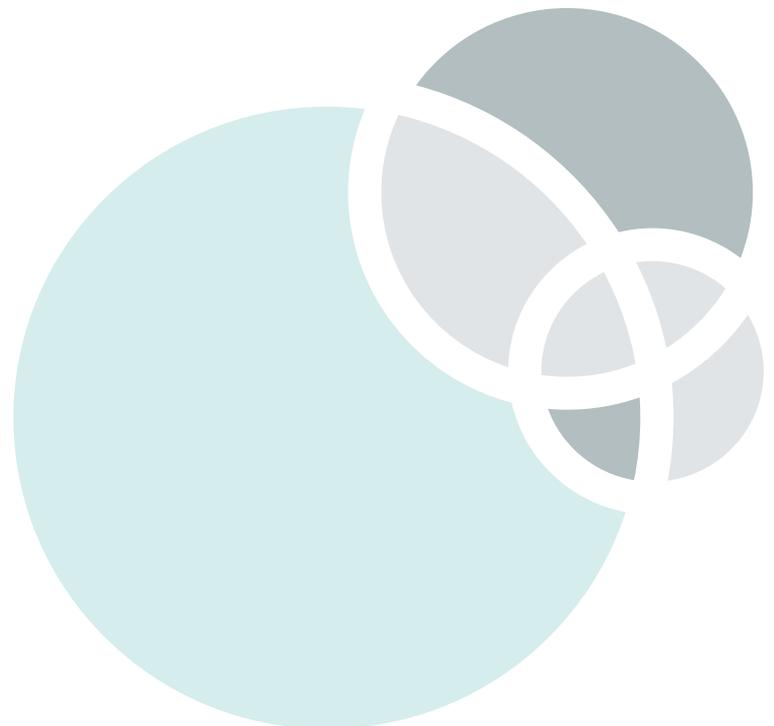
Acknowledgements

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References

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ADR Wales brings together specialist teams, data science experts, and statisticians as part of the Economic and Social Research Council (part of UK Research and Innovation) funded ADR UK. Our team is made up of specialists in their field from Swansea University Medical School, the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) at Cardiff University and the SAIL Databank at Swansea University with statisticians, economists and social researchers from Welsh Government. Together ADR Wales develops new evidence which supports the Welsh Government's national strategy, Prosperity for All to improve the lives of people in Wales.

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