



BRIEFING PAPER

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Polish population of the United Kingdom

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1. Population
2. Economic contribution



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Summary

The number of Polish nationals living in the UK increased from around 69,000 in 2004 (when Poland joined the European Union) to around 853,000 in 2014.

In Q1 2016:

- There were around 908,000 people born in Poland, and 984,000 nationals of Poland living in the UK.
- Around 69% of people born in Poland were aged 25-49 compared with around 34% of the UK population as a whole.
- A larger percentage of the Polish nationals were aged under 20 than people who were born in Poland. Around 23% of Polish nationals were aged under 20, compared with 14% of people born in Poland.
- The regions with the largest numbers of Polish born migrants were London (177,000), the South East (123,000) and the North West (97,000).
- The countries and regions with the smallest numbers of Polish born migrants were the North East (19,000), Northern Ireland (24,000) and Wales (27,000).

1. Population

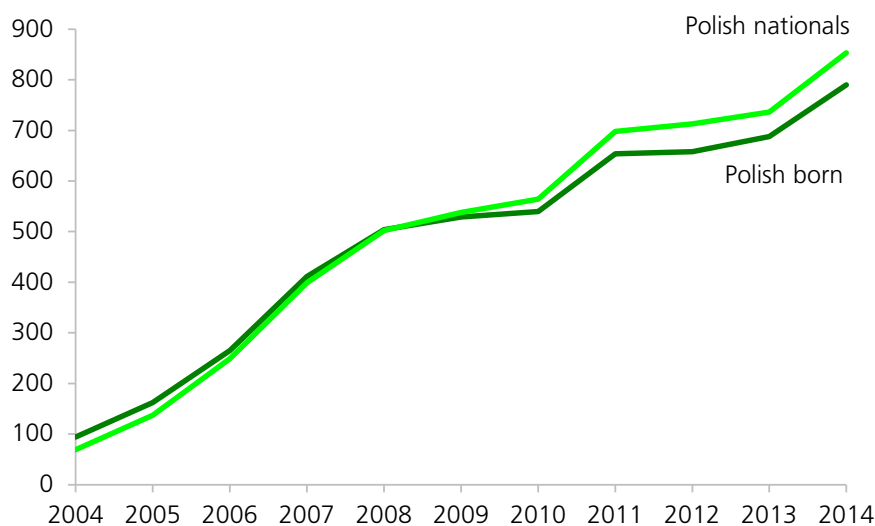
There is no measure of the Polish population of the UK that captures all people with a Polish heritage. Poles are not separately identified in the ethnic classification that is used for official statistics in the UK. Data is available on the number of people living in the UK who were born in Poland, and the number who are nationals of Poland. Neither of these fully captures what might be considered the Polish population of the UK: Polish nationals do not include Polish migrants who have acquired British citizenship, while people born in Poland do not include the children of Polish migrants born in the UK. However, by looking at both of these measures it is possible to describe the characteristics of the UK's Polish migrants.

1.1 Number of Polish people living in the UK

According to the most recent quarterly estimates, there were around 908,000 people born in Poland, and 984,000 nationals of Poland who are usually resident in the UK in Q1 2016.¹

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes annual estimates of the population by country of birth and nationality. The chart below shows estimates of the Polish population by country of birth and nationality from 2004 to 2014.

Polish migrants living in the UK, 000s, 2004-2014



Source: ONS, [Population by country of birth and nationality, 2014](#)

The number of Polish nationals living in the UK increased from around 69,000 in 2004 (when Poland joined the European Union) to around 853,000 in 2014. The number of Polish nationals has grown faster than the number of people born in Poland. This is because children born to Polish nationals who are living in the UK take the nationality of their parents in the first instance. Growth in the number of Polish nationals therefore reflects births to Polish migrants as well as migration.

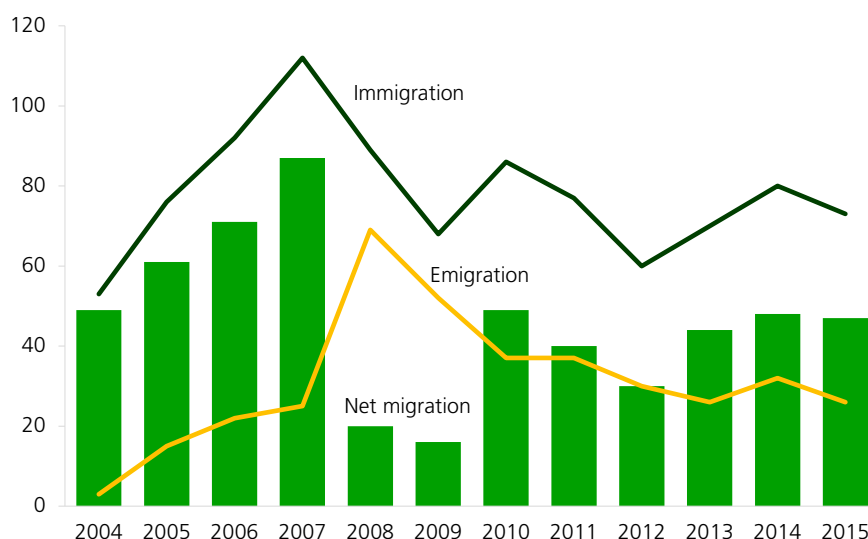
¹ ONS, Labour Force Survey Q1 2016

1.2 Migration of Polish nationals

Official estimates of long-term international migration do not provide estimates of migration by Polish nationals. These figures are typically not broken down to individual countries of nationality because they are estimated from survey data, and in most cases the survey sample is not large enough to provide estimates for nationals of a single country. Estimates are available for migration by nationals of EU8 countries in total.²

The chart below shows annual estimates of immigration, emigration, and net migration by EU8 nationals from 2004 to 2015. These estimates provide some indication of trends in immigration and net migration from Eastern European countries. **However, figures from 2004 to 2011 are now known to have underestimated the true level of immigration and net migration from Eastern European countries during this period.**³ This should be remembered when considering changes in the level of immigration by EU8 nationals over time.

Migration of EU8 nationals to and from the UK, 000s, 2004-15



Source: ONS, [Long-Term International Migration, 2014](#); ONS, [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2016](#)

Immigration and net inward migration of EU8 nationals was highest during the period 2004 to 2008. Net migration of EU8 nationals fell in 2008 and 2009 following the onset of the global financial crisis, but has increased since 2009 and has averaged around 43,000 a year in each year since 2010.

² EU8 countries are the Eastern European countries that became Member States of the EU in May 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

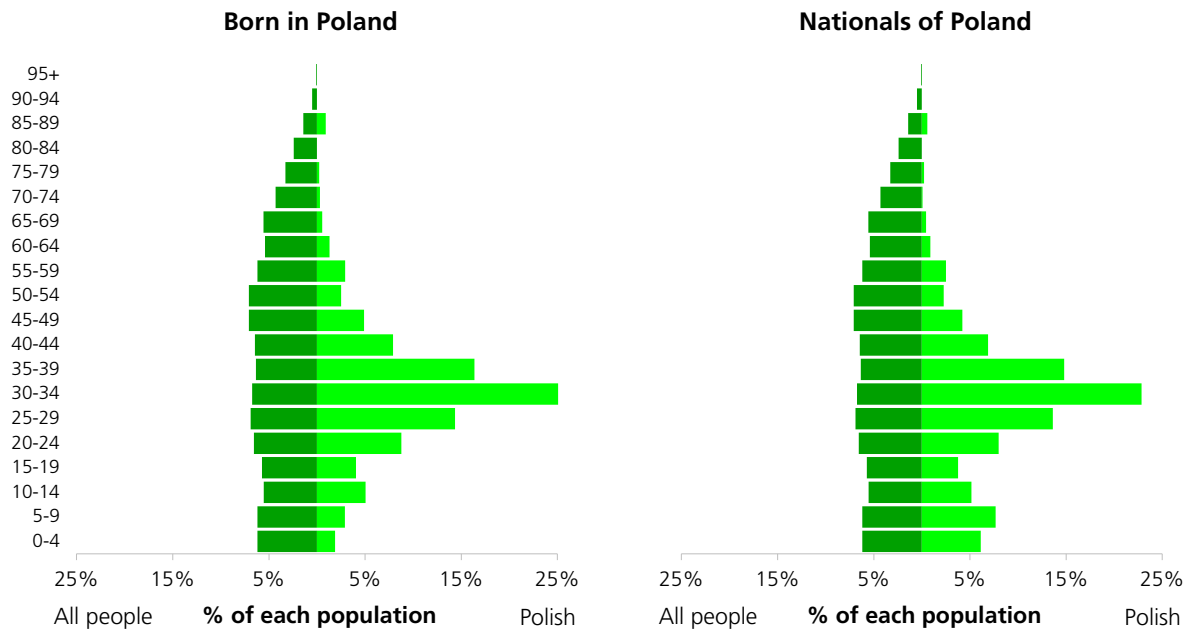
³ See Section 2.1 of the House of Commons Library briefing paper on [Migration Statistics](#) for further information.

1.3 Age-structure of the Polish population

Polish migrants to the UK are younger than the population as a whole and are concentrated in working age-groups.

The charts below compare the age structure of the UK population as a whole with the age structure of people born in Poland, and people who are nationals of Poland.

Age-structure of the Polish population of the UK, Q1 2016



Source: Labour Force Survey, Q1 2016

In Q1 2016, around 69% of people born in Poland were aged 25-49 compared with around 34% of the UK population as a whole. Around 25% of people born in Poland were aged 30-34, compared with 7% of the UK population.

A larger percentage of the Polish nationals were aged under 20 than people who were born in Poland. Around 23% of Polish nationals were aged under 20, compared with 14% of people born in Poland. This is because Polish nationals include children born to Polish migrants living in the UK. In Q1 2016 there were around 98,000 children with Polish nationality who were born in the UK.

1.4 Geographical distribution of the Polish population

Polish migrants live in all parts of the UK. In Q1 2016, the regions with the largest numbers of Polish born migrants were London (177,000), the South East (123,000) and the North West (97,000). The countries and regions with the smallest numbers of Polish born migrants were the North East (19,000), Northern Ireland (24,000) and Wales (27,000).

Polish born population of the UK by country or region, Q1 2016

Country/Region	Thousands		As % of population		As % of region	
	Polish born	All people	Polish born	All people	Polish born	All people
North East	19	2,602	2.0%	4.0%	0.7%	100.0%
North West	97	7,099	10.7%	11.0%	1.4%	100.0%
Yorkshire and Humberside	76	5,337	8.4%	8.3%	1.4%	100.0%
East Midlands	89	4,637	9.8%	7.2%	1.9%	100.0%
West Midlands	67	5,712	7.4%	8.8%	1.2%	100.0%
East of England	66	6,044	7.3%	9.4%	1.1%	100.0%
London	177	8,671	19.5%	13.4%	2.0%	100.0%
South East	123	8,865	13.6%	13.7%	1.4%	100.0%
South West	57	5,407	6.3%	8.4%	1.1%	100.0%
Wales	27	3,072	3.0%	4.8%	0.9%	100.0%
Scotland	87	5,291	9.5%	8.2%	1.6%	100.0%
Northern Ireland	24	1,838	2.7%	2.8%	1.3%	100.0%
United Kingdom	908	64,576	100.0%	100.0%	1.4%	100.0%

Source: Labour Force Survey, Q1 2016

Overall, around 1.4% of the UK population was born in Poland. The proportion of the population that was born in Poland varied from 0.7% in the North East to 2.0% in London.

1.5 Polish families

The table below compares the distribution of Polish families with all families living in the UK by family type.

Polish families and all families living in the UK by type, Q1 2016

Family Type	Thousands		As % of families	
	Polish families	All families	Polish families	All families
All families (with or without children)				
One person	135	11,141	31.2%	37.2%
Married couple	167	12,525	38.6%	41.8%
Cohabiting couple	84	3,158	19.3%	10.5%
Lone parent	45	2,940	10.4%	9.8%
Same sex cohabiting couple	<10	99	0.2%	0.3%
Civil Partnership or same-sex married couple	<10	75	0.3%	0.3%
Families with dependent children				
Married couple	114	4,777	26.4%	16.0%
Cohabiting couple	35	1,276	8.1%	4.3%
Lone parent	37	1,904	8.6%	6.4%
Same sex cohabiting couple	<10	<10	0.0%	0.0%
Civil Partnership or same-sex married couple	<10	14	0.1%	0.0%
All families total	433	29,937	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Household Labour Force Survey, Q1 2016

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In this analysis, Polish families are all those families whose head of family was born in Poland. This is a somewhat crude way of identifying Polish families, as it excludes families where other members of the family are Polish, but it allows for broad comparisons of family structure between the Polish born population and the population as a whole.

There were around 433,000 Polish families living in the UK in Q1 2016, out of 29.9 million families in total. A smaller proportion of Polish families were one person families (31%) than among all families (37%). A similar proportion of Polish families were married (39%) as all families (42%). And a larger proportion of Polish families were cohabiting couple families (19%) than all families (11%).

Married and cohabiting couple Polish families were more likely to have dependent children than all families. 26% of Polish families were married couples with dependent children, compared with 16% of all families. And 8% of Polish families were cohabiting couple families with dependent children, compared with 4% of all families. This largely reflects the younger age-structure of the Polish population.

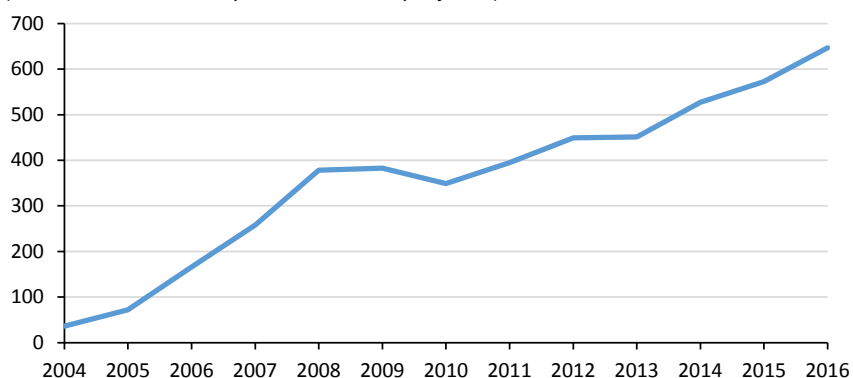
2. Economic contribution

Since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, the number of Polish workers in the UK has increased significantly. In Q1 2016, 646,000 people born in Poland were employed in the UK. This is shown in the chart below.

The increase of Polish-born workers slowed during the Great Recession, post-2008. Since 2013, the rate of increase has risen however it has not returned to pre-recession levels.

Number of Polish people* working in the UK

(000s, data at Q1 of each year. Not seasonally adjusted)



*People born in Poland

Source: Labour Force Survey 2004-2016

The top three occupation groups of Polish workers in the UK in January – March 2016 were elementary occupations (28% of total Polish workers), machine operatives (20%), and skilled trades (17%). Details of all occupation groups are detailed below.

Polish employment in the UK, Q1 2016

Type of employment	People	% of total Polish employment
Managers, Directors And Senior Officials	17,000	3%
Professional Occupations	41,000	6%
Associate Professional And Technical Occupations	29,000	4%
Administrative And Secretarial Occupations	43,000	7%
Skilled Trades Occupations	111,000	17%
Caring, Leisure And Other Service Occupations	64,000	10%
Sales And Customer Service Occupations	27,000	4%
Process, Plant And Machine Operatives	130,000	20%
Elementary Occupations	183,000	28%
Total	646,000	100%

Source: Labour Force Survey

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