



BRIEFING

Geographical Distribution and Characteristics of International Migration Flows to Scotland

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www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk

This briefing focuses on migrants coming to Scotland from overseas destinations. It examines where they go in Scotland as well as their characteristics.

Key points

From mid-year 2011 to mid-year 2012, 62% of all overseas immigrants to Scotland came to Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Aberdeen.

The other 29 Scottish council areas each attracted less than 5% of overseas immigrants in 2011–12.

The majority (61%) of international immigrants to Scotland in 2011–12 were aged between 16 and 34.

In 2011, an estimated 19,000 immigrants to Scotland from overseas destinations were female and 19,000 were male.

Understanding the evidence

This briefing focuses on the characteristics of immigrants arriving in Scotland during a given time period—not on the characteristics of the existing stock of migrants already in the country. The data used in this briefing are based on Office for National Statistics (ONS) Long Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates. These estimates are largely based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS), as well as incorporating information from other sources including the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Home Office data on asylum seekers. Furthermore, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) uses information from the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) and the Community Health Index (CHI) to estimate how these figures are distributed across geographic and age groups in Scotland.

To accurately interpret and understand LTIM data, it is important to be clear about their underlying assumptions and limitations. ONS uses the current United Nations standard definition of a long-term international migrant—a person moving to another country for at least one year—to generate LTIM estimates. For further discussion, see 'Evidence gaps and limitations' at the end of this briefing.

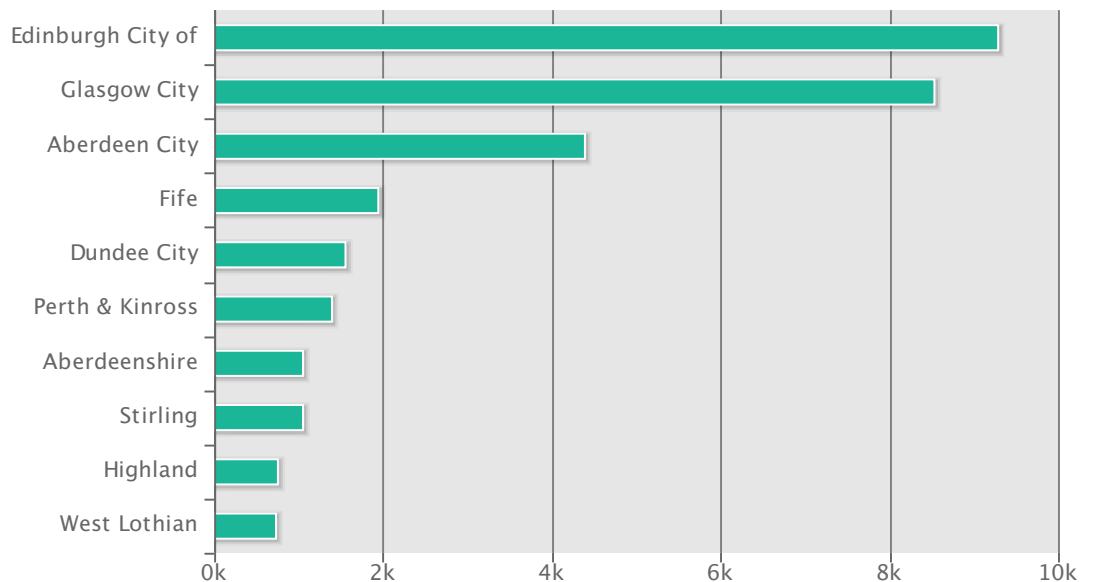
Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen were the most common destinations for overseas migrants entering Scotland in 2011-2012

Figure 1 reports the ten Scottish council areas which experienced the largest number of incoming overseas migrants in 2011-12, as estimated by the NRS. 9,298 (26%) went to Edinburgh, while 9,549 (24%) went to Glasgow. Meanwhile, about 4,414 (12%) arrived in Aberdeen. Together these three cities accounted for 62% of the incoming migrants.

Figure 1

10 council areas with the largest number of int'l migrants, 2011-12

Chart provided by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk

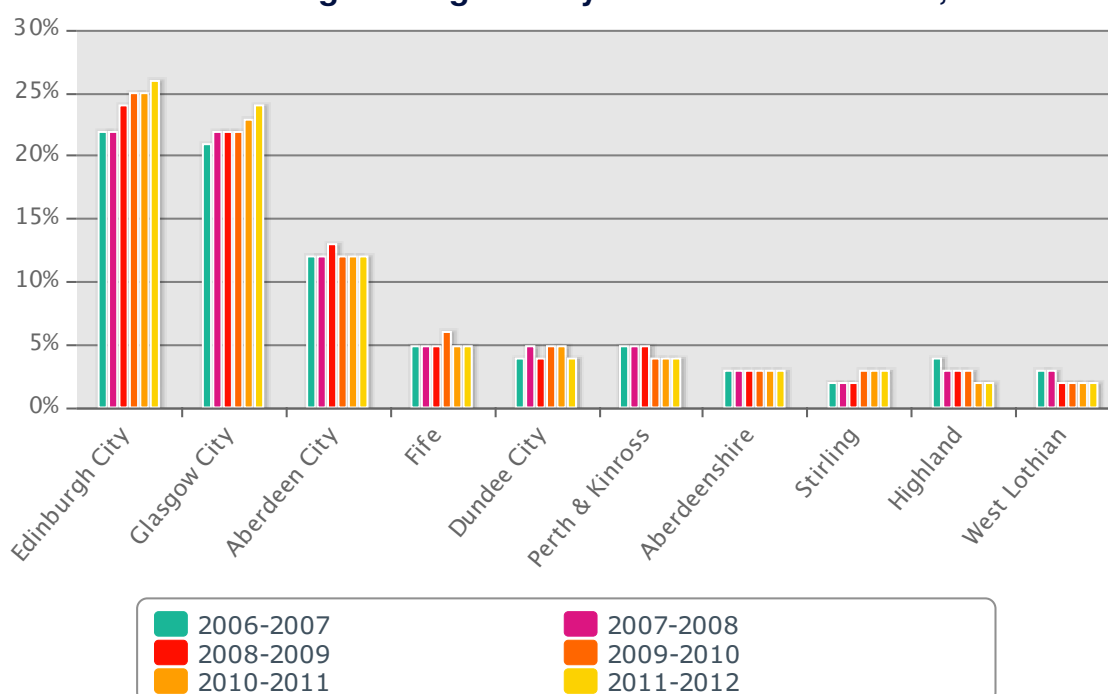


Source : NRS, Table 5c: Components of migration by administrative area, mid-2011 to mid-2012

Figure 2 puts these numbers into historical perspective by charting the share of incoming international migrants to each destination since mid-2006. Edinburgh and Glasgow have remained the most popular destination for overseas migrants since 2006-2007, with both councils experiencing increases in their shares from 2006 to 2011. Meanwhile, Aberdeen City saw its share of incoming migrants stay roughly the same at 12%.

Figure 2

Share of incoming int'l migrants by Scottish council area, 2006-12



Source : NRS, 'In, Out & Net Migration between Administrative Areas & Overseas'

When put in terms of the overall share of immigrants, each of the other 29 councils individually attract about 5% or less of the number of annual immigrants to Scotland. For data from all 32 Scottish councils, see Table 1 below for immigration estimates from 2006-2007 to 2011-2012, the period available from NRS data.

Table 1 - Immigration for all Scottish local councils, 2006-07 to 2011-12

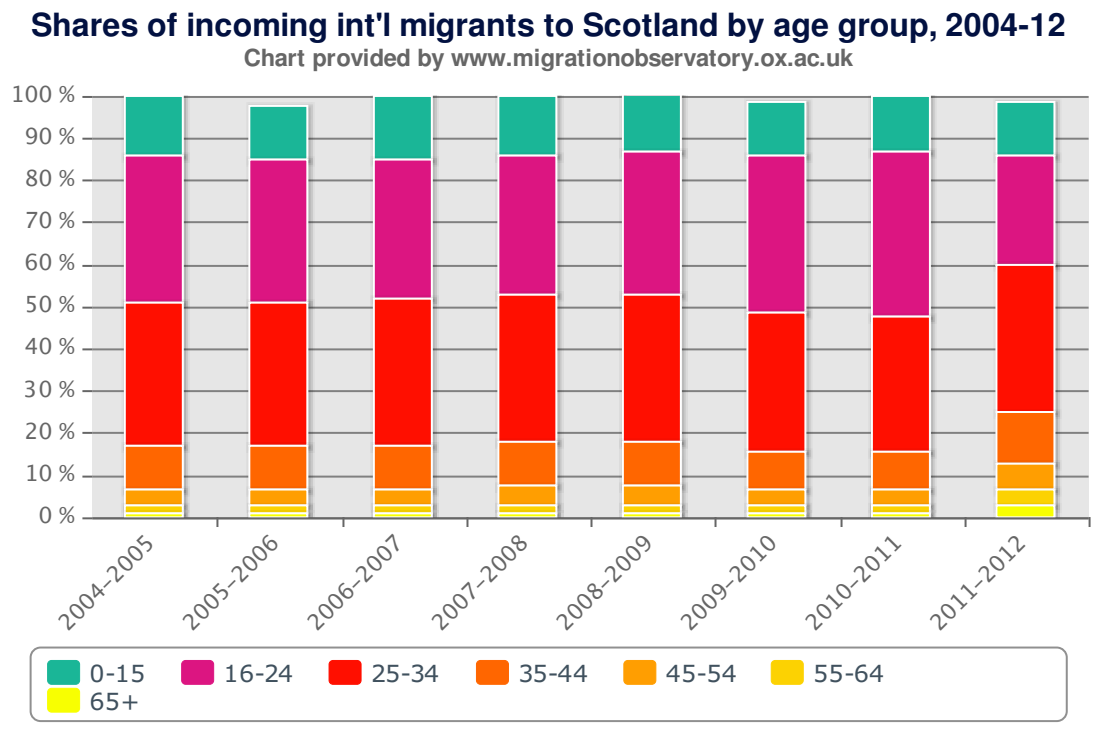
Council name	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Aberdeen City	4413	4573	5535	5645	5052	4414
Aberdeenshire	1298	1287	1410	1549	1380	1061
Angus	361	437	437	546	498	366
Argyll & Bute	445	367	419	467	358	309
Clackmannanshire	210	170	162	147	105	116
Dumfries & Galloway	410	444	366	364	343	244
Dundee City	1518	1751	1830	2129	2151	1567
East Ayrshire	140	176	108	146	111	112
East Dunbartonshire	186	108	187	145	162	107
East Lothian	312	468	420	426	416	413
East Renfrewshire	110	110	142	186	136	79
Edinburgh, City of	8469	8430	10064	11476	10716	9298
Eilean Siar	83	66	72	68	57	44
Falkirk	536	464	475	437	478	312
Fife	1905	1871	2269	2603	2197	1962
Glasgow City	7893	8518	9541	9949	9855	8549
Highland	1475	1320	1220	1272	978	761
Inverclyde	186	163	154	186	101	76
Midlothian	185	170	177	198	163	176
Moray	425	426	389	444	381	316
North Ayrshire	222	229	210	229	207	149
North Lanarkshire	966	900	848	750	600	524
Orkney Islands	45	41	45	61	62	38
Perth & Kinross	1708	1989	2025	2069	1547	1403
Renfrewshire	760	569	617	816	674	424
Scottish Borders	533	580	491	383	357	383
Shetland Islands	63	80	140	99	97	91
South Ayrshire	267	284	267	317	298	242
South Lanarkshire	606	604	680	661	540	458
Stirling	849	788	913	1218	1299	1054
West Dunbartonshire	183	124	187	192	142	109
West Lothian	1038	993	900	922	839	743
TOTAL	21000	30800	25200	24600	16900	26200

Source: NRS, 'In, Out, and Net Migration between Administrative Areas and Overseas'

Immigrants to Scotland since 1991 have been most likely to be young and male

Figure 3 shows the age distribution of overseas migrants entering Scotland since mid-2004. NRS changed the way it estimated the age distribution of migrants from 2004-05 onwards, making data prior to mid-2004 inconsistent with current measures. It illustrates how migrants aged between 16-24 and 25-34 have consistently made up the largest shares since mid-2004. Meanwhile, the estimated share of incoming migrants aged 16-24 declined from 39% in 2010-11 to 26% in 2011-12, while the share of those aged 35-44 increased from 9% in 2010-11 to 12% in 2011-12. The NRS changed the way it estimated the age and sex of immigrants and emigrants from 2011-12, which means direct comparisons using 2011-12 data should be avoided (NRS, 2013).

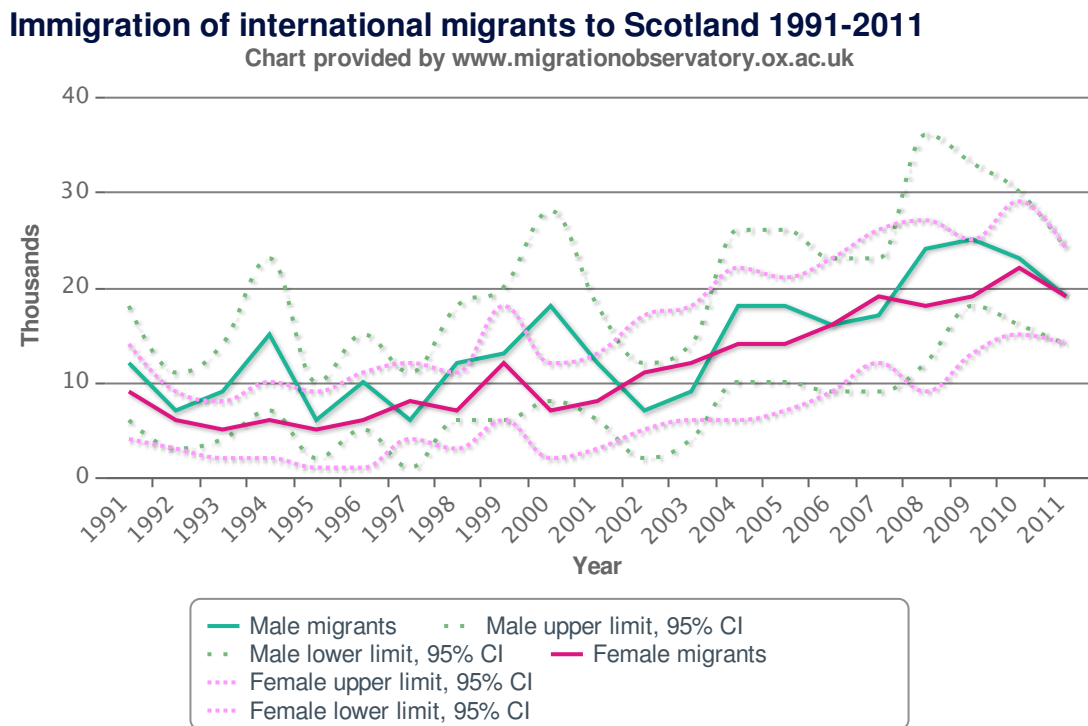
Figure 3



Source: NRS, 'In, Out & Net Migration By Age Group Between Admin Areas & Overseas'

Figure 4 uses IPS data to estimate the number of female immigrants to Scotland for each year since 1991. Data for individual years are subject to fluctuation due to the small sample size of the survey, and are published with margins of error which give a range of likely values for the proportions. These margins are shown as dashed lines. In 2011, an estimated 19,000 immigrants from overseas destinations were female, which was the same estimate for male emigrants. From 1991 to 2000, the number of female overseas immigrants averaged 7,000 annually, while an average of 11,000 per year were male. Meanwhile, from 2001 to 2011, the average estimate of female emigrants increased to 16,000 per year, with an average of 17,000 per year being male. This may suggest that overseas migration flows to Scotland are becoming more equal in terms of sex. However, it is important to note that the margins of error, as shown on the chart, demonstrate considerable uncertainty around these figures (see 'Evidence gaps and limitations' below).

Figure 4



Source : ONS, International Passenger Survey, Table 3.07

Evidence gaps and limitations

Using IPS data to identify the destinations of overseas migrants has several limitations. Because the survey asks respondents to name their intended destination, it captures the first place where migrants are planning to establish themselves and may miss longer-term moves. Other factors, including employment prospects and cost of living, will impact whether an immigrant actually stays at this location in the long-term. Some migrants’ first destination may be intended as a temporary stop while looking for work elsewhere. This method is likely to overestimate the number of people staying in London: a large proportion of the sample is taken at London-based airports, and some survey respondents may answer London when asked their destination even if they are not intending to remain in London. Thus, actual figures of people intending to travel onwards to Scotland may be different. To help address these limitations, the ONS uses other sources of data such as the LFS to ascertain the final geographic distribution of migrants and adjust the IPS results. These are reported as LTIM estimates.

However, these results are not broken down further for sub-national regions within Scotland. To estimate where overseas immigrants go to in Scotland, NRS distributes the total national LTIM estimate for Scotland across the 32 Scottish council areas and age groups using doctor registration data held in the NHSCR and CHI.

Finally, as results from a survey, IPS data are actually estimates of the ‘real’ number of incoming and outgoing international migrants. The margin of error surrounding a figure, or ‘confidence interval’, gives a sense of the range in which one can be confident that the true value lies. This is important to recognise when interpreting survey results, especially when observing large reported increases or decreases in consecutive years: the actual values may differ. In the case of data about the sex of incoming international migrants, we report the confidence intervals around each ONS figure.

References

- NRS. “Mid-Year Population Estimates for Scotland: Methodology Guide.” National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, August 2013.



The Migration Observatory

Based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, the Migration Observatory provides independent, authoritative, evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK, to inform media, public and policy debates, and to generate high quality research on international migration and public policy issues. The Observatory's analysis involves experts from a wide range of disciplines and departments at the University of Oxford.



COMPAS

The Migration Observatory is based at the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. The mission of COMPAS is to conduct high quality research in order to develop theory and knowledge, inform policy-making and public debate, and engage users of research within the field of migration.

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