



BRIEFING

Global International Migrant Stock: Scotland in International Comparison

AUTHOR: WILLIAM ALLEN

PUBLISHED: 04/04/2014



This briefing compares the stocks of international migrants in Scotland to the UK and other countries, as well as considering how these comparisons would change in an independent Scotland.

Key points

In 2010, the most recent year that allows direct comparison of Scotland to other world regions, migrants made up a lower share of Scotland's population (6.3%) than they did in the European Union (9.8%).

The latest data (2012) show that people born in Poland, Germany, and the USA make up a greater share of the foreign-born in Scotland compared to the UK as a whole.

In terms of the absolute number of international migrants living in a country, Scotland currently would rank 77th out of the 232 countries that reported data to the UN.

In terms of the share of international migrants living in a country, Scotland would rank 68th among the 154 countries that have at least 50,000 international migrants.

If Scotland became independent, the share of international migrants in its population would increase to 17.6% after including people born in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. This would increase Scotland's global share ranking from 68th to 31st among the 154 countries with at least 50,000 migrants.

Understanding the evidence

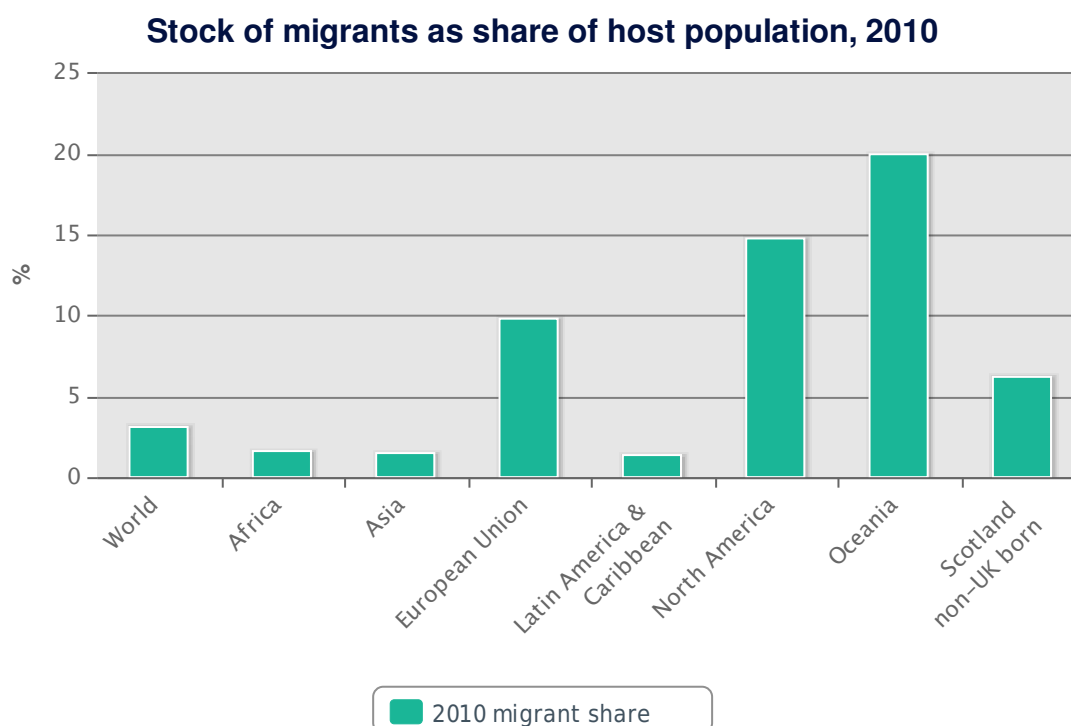
In this briefing, the term 'international migrant' is used primarily in reference to someone who was born outside the UK. Those born in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland are not considered to be foreign-born. The data in this briefing come from the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the United Nations Population Division (UNPD). Figures referring to Scottish international migrant stocks are estimated by the APS, and come with associated margins of error. For example, in the case of 2012 data about migrant stocks in Scotland, the margins range from 354,000 to 396,000. More information about these data is provided in the Observatory briefing *Migrants in Scotland: An Overview*.

Meanwhile, UNPD data provide the stock of international migrants in each country across time using intervals of five years. Usually, these data are based on each country's population censuses, but also come from population registers and nationally representative surveys. Usually, the definition of the stock of international migrants is the stock of foreign-born residents, but the stock of foreign-nationals is used for some countries. At the time of publication, 2013 figures were based on extrapolations and projections from previous years. The figures provided are mid-year estimates, measured from 1 July of the years indicated.

In 2010, the most recent year that allows direct comparison of Scotland to other world regions, migrants made up a lower share of Scotland's population (6.3%) than they did in Europe as a whole (9.8%)

2010 is the most recent year in which reliable (non-extrapolated) stock data for both Scotland and the rest of the world are available. Figure 1 displays the share of Scotland's population which was non UK-born in that year compared to other world regions. It shows that the Scottish share of international migrants, at 6.3% in 2010, was lower than 2010 levels in the EU (9.8%), North America (14.8%), and Oceania (20%). Even when using the extrapolated UN figures for 2013, the estimated proportion of migrants in the EU (remaining at 9.8%) was larger than the 2012 proportion in Scotland (7.2%). See the briefing Migrants in Scotland: An Overview for more information about the shares of migrants in Scotland.

Figure 1



Source : APS 2012 and UN Trends in International Migration Stock 2013

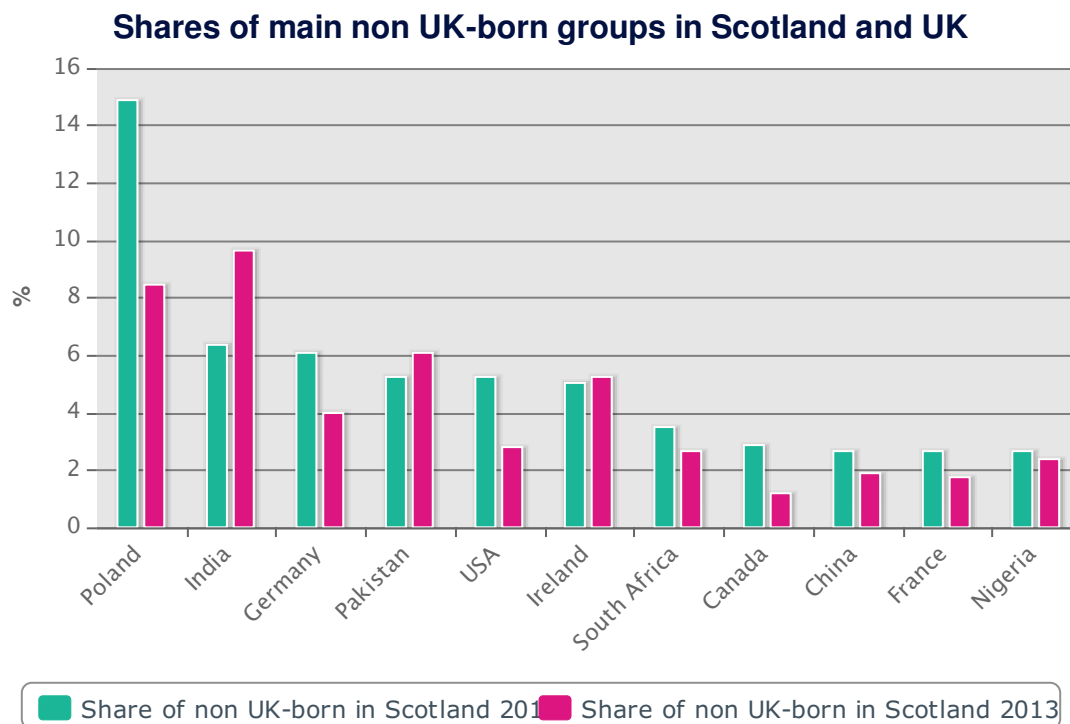
People born in Poland, Germany, and the USA make up a greater share of the foreign-born in Scotland compared to the UK as a whole

Figure 2 displays the main non UK groups present in Scotland in 2012, compared to the UK foreign-born population as a whole in 2013. These two years are used because they are drawn from the most recent data available. In 2012, 14.9% of foreign-born people in Scotland were born in Poland, compared to 8.5% in the UK as a whole in 2013. Meanwhile, other groups that made up a larger share of foreign-born in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK include people born in Germany (+2.1%), USA (+2.5%), South Africa (+0.7%), Canada (+1.7%), France (+0.7%), and Nigeria (+0.3%). However, 9.7% of foreign-born people in the UK as a whole were from India, compared to 6.4% of the foreign-born in Scotland. People born in Pakistan and Ireland also made up a larger share of the UK foreign-born in 2013 compared to Scotland in 2012.

Note that for these purposes, only people born outside the UK are considered international migrants to either Scotland or the rest of Britain. Of course, if Scotland were to become independent, both the size and composition of its population of international migrants would change considerably – at least under the frequently used

definition of international migrants as all people living in a country other than the one in which they were born. In an independence scenario, people born in England, Wales or Northern Ireland but living in Scotland would become 'foreign-born'. The reverse would hold for the rest of Britain, as Scottish-born residents of the rest of Britain would also become foreign-born and therefore migrants by this definition.

Figure 2



In terms of the absolute number of international migrants living in a country, Scotland would currently stand at 77th position out of the 232 countries that reported data to the UN

Data from the Annual Population Survey (APS) shows that in 2012 an estimated 375,000 people in Scotland were non-UK born, while 285,000 were non-UK nationals (for more information, see our briefing Migrants in Scotland: An Overview. To put these figures in context, the entire stock of international migrants throughout the world was about 231 million in 2013. The Migration Observatory briefing Global International Migrant Stock: The UK in International Comparison contains more detail about the characteristics of these stocks. Therefore, Scotland currently ranks 77th out of 232 countries included in the UN data in terms of the absolute number of international migrants. This is measured by comparing its 2012 non UK-born population with the most recent available 2013 data from the UN. Table 1 displays a selection of countries ranked by their stocks of international migrants in 2013. Note that to avoid double-counting migrants living in Scotland, the UK figure has been adjusted by removing the estimated non UK-born population of Scotland. Without this adjustment the UK would still rank 6th although it would be virtually even with the United Arab Emirates, ranked 5th.

Table 1 – Selected rankings of countries by total migrant stock

Rank	Country	2013 Total stock
1	United States of America	45,785,090
2	Russian Federation	11,048,064
3	Germany	9,845,244
4	Saudi Arabia	9,060,433
5	United Arab Emirates	7,826,981
6	UK (without Scotland)	7,449,131
7	France	7,439,086
8	Canada	7,284,069
9	Australia	6,468,640
10	Spain	6,466,605
...
70	Congo	431,470
71	Costa Rica	419,572
72	Dominican Republic	402,506
73	Chile	398,251
74	Gabon	394,953
75	Republic of Moldova	391,508
76	Guinea	378,464
77	Scotland (2012 Data)	375,000
78	Zimbabwe	360,992
79	Ecuador	359,315
80	Ghana	358,829

Source: APS 2012 and UN Trends in International Migration Stock 2013

It is important to emphasise that these rankings are generated using the most recent data available about stocks in both Scotland and the world, which is why two different years' data are cited. However, this result does not differ greatly when using the data from 2010 – the most recent year that appears in both UNPD and APS datasets. In that year, when the non UK-born population in Scotland was estimated at 326,000 people, Scotland ranked 80th in the world in terms of international migrant stocks. For more information on the datasets, see evidence gaps and limitations section below.

In terms of the share of international migrants living in a country, Scotland ranks 68th among the 154 countries that have at least 50,000 international migrants

Moving from absolute numbers to the proportion of international migrants in a country reveals that Scotland is ranked near the middle of countries having at least 50,000 migrants. The cut-off of 50,000 effectively excludes countries with very small populations that would skew the shares data by giving the impression of high levels of migration. Table 2 shows a selection of countries ranked by the percentage of their total population that is made up of international migrants. The UK figure, ranked at 44th, has been adjusted to avoid double-counting Scottish

migrant stocks and population in the rankings. This was done by subtracting both the estimated migrant stock and total population of Scotland from the UK figures published by the UN. Total population of Scotland at mid-year 2012, estimated to be 5,313,600, was retrieved from the National Records of Scotland.

Table 2 – Selected rankings of countries by migrant stock as share of population

Rank	Country	Migrant share of population (%)
1	United Arab Emirates	83.7
2	Qatar	73.8
3	Kuwait	60.2
4	United States Virgin Islands	59.3
5	China, Macao	58.8
6	Bahrain	54.7
7	Channel Islands	51.0
8	Brunei Darussalam	49.3
9	Guam	48.9
10	Luxembourg	43.3
...
42	Spain	13.8
43	Norway	13.8
44	UK (without Scotland)	12.9
45	Libya	12.2
46	Côte d'Ivoire	12.0
...
66	Russian Federation	7.7
67	Botswana	7.2
68	Scotland (2012 data)	7.2
69	Bhutan	6.7
70	Macedonia	6.6

Source: APS 2012 and UN Trends in International Migration Stock 2013

Again, however, Tables 1 and 2 treat only non-UK born people as international migrants in Scotland. The independence scenario, in which those born in the rest of the UK would become 'foreign-born' residents of Scotland, is considered below.

The share of international migrants in Scotland would increase to 17.6% after including people born in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. This would increase Scotland's global ranking from 68th to 31st among the 154 countries with at least 50,000 migrants

In a hypothetically independent Scotland, this picture would change: residents of Scotland born within the UK but outside of Scotland would now be classified as international migrants. According to 2012 APS data, 10.4% of the Scottish population was made up of people born in England (9.3%), Wales (0.7%), and Northern Ireland (0.4%).

When added to the 2012 share of non-British born stock in Scotland (7.2%), this results in a total percentage of 17.6%. As seen in Table 3, this would put Scotland at 31st in terms of total migrant stock as a share of its population, among the 153 countries with at least 50,000 migrants. This would represent a rise in its global shares ranking from 68th.

Table 3 - Selected rankings of countries by migrant stock as share of population (Scotland with England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Rank	Country	2013 stock as share of population (%)
30	Lebanon	17.6
31	Scotland (2012 data plus Eng/W/NI)	17.6
32	Estonia	16.3
33	Bahamas	16.3
34	Ireland	15.9
35	Sweden	15.9
36	Austria	15.7
37	Réunion	15.6
38	Belize	15.3
39	Martinique	15.0
40	United States of America	14.3

Source: APS 2012 and UN Trends in International Migration Stock 2013

Evidence gaps and limitations

Since being launched in 2004, the APS combines results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) with additional survey interview 'boosts' in England, Scotland, and Wales to increase the sample size. The LFS brings some limitations for estimating the dynamics of migrants in the UK. First, it does not measure the scale of irregular migration. Second, it does not provide information on asylum seekers. Third, the LFS excludes those who do not live in households, such as those in hotels, caravan parks and other communal establishments. Therefore, the LFS likely underestimates the number of recent migrants in the UK. However, unlike other data sources such as the Census the LFS provides annual data on the number and characteristics of migrants in Scotland.

Meanwhile, although the UNPD dataset allows for international comparisons, the extent to which this can be done across countries is less than perfect. Several factors make comparisons problematic: differences in data collection practices, changing borders and political unions, irregular migration, and differences in rates of foreign-born naturalisation. Furthermore, estimates of stocks also capture the cumulative effects of migration that may have occurred a considerable time ago, rather than the current patterns of migration. While recognising these limitations, this dataset remains the most useful and most widely used in international comparisons of migrant stocks.

For the purposes of this briefing, it is also important to recognise that the APS data is updated on an annual basis whereas the UNPD dataset is updated every five years, with revisions based on extrapolation and estimation occurring between these updates. Therefore, for this briefing, the most recent available data from both sources were used for comparison. However, where possible, the 2010 data which was common to both datasets was also used.

For Figure 1, the European Union excludes Cyprus, because migrant stock data were not available from the UN.

Subtracting Cyprus, the EU in Figure 1 data include the following: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

References

- United Nations. Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2013.

Related material

- Migration Observatory briefing - Migrants in Scotland: An Overview
www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-scotland-overview
- Migration Observatory briefing - Global International Migrant Stock: The UK in International Comparison
www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/global-international-migrant-stock-uk-international-comparison



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.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk

About the author

William Allen
Research Officer
william.allen@compas.ox.ac.uk

Press contact

Rob McNeil
Head of Media and Communications
robert.mcneil@compas.ox.ac.uk
+ 44 (0)1865 274568
+ 44 (0)7500 970081

Recommended citation

Allen, William. "Global International Migrant Stock: Scotland in International Comparison." Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford, UK, April 2014.

