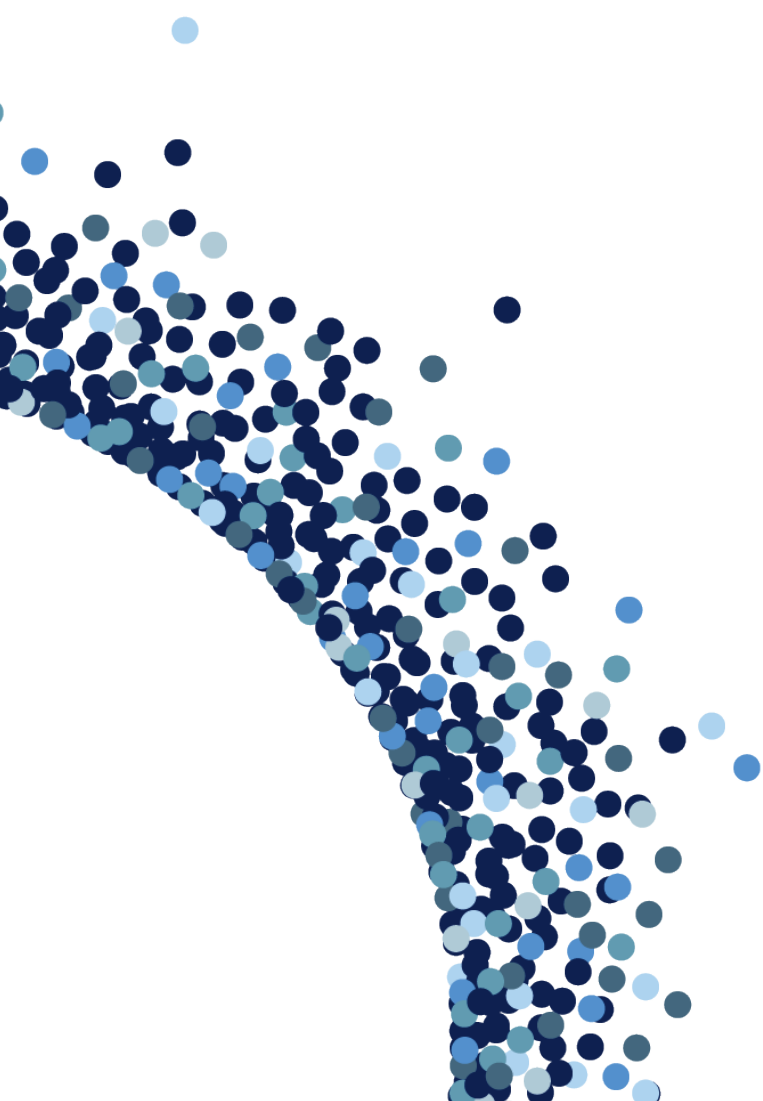


FRAGOMEN



REPORT

Migration and gender in the UK



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COMPAS
Centre on Migration,
Policy & Society



www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk

Foreword

Fragomen valued the opportunity to support the Migration Observatory in producing this report on gender and migration, providing evidence-based insights into how immigration rules affect different groups. The analysis is timely and relevant, offering a clear account of how immigration rules—though formally neutral—can affect men and women differently. By bringing together publicly available evidence on visa routes, labour market outcomes and settlement patterns, the report highlights an often-overlooked aspect of migration policy.

Both men and women contribute important and complementary strengths to the UK economy. Fragomen is committed to supporting research that provides insights into migration and workforce trends, offering evidence that is fair, effective and aligned with the UK's ambition to remain a global leader in talent and growth.

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Men and women face the same rules in the UK immigration system, but these rules can affect them differently. Due to their characteristics, they often migrate through different visa pathways and can face different challenges meeting the eligibility criteria. This report looks at how different immigration routes affect men and women, and how this has changed over time.

Key Points

While the UK immigration system admits roughly equal shares of men and women, the gender balance varies widely by immigration category. Women made up a majority of people receiving partner visas, refugee family reunion, Ukraine visas and Health & Care visas between 2021 and 2024. Men were the majority of main applicants for seasonal workers, dependants of students, asylum applicants, and Skilled Work visas outside of Health and Care.

The share of women receiving work visas has varied over time depending on the main occupations UK employers were recruiting for. The rapid expansion of care worker visas in 2022 and 2023 briefly made women the majority of long-term skilled work visa recipients.

Among Skilled Worker and Health & Care visa holders, the gender pay gap is narrower than in the wider UK workforce—largely because women on Skilled Worker visas tend to earn significantly more than their UK-born counterparts.

Under the post-Brexit immigration system, men became more likely to receive student visas, making up a slight majority (53%) in 2024 for the first time in at least eight years. The ban on most students bringing dependants appears to have had a larger impact on female students.

Women make up the large majority of people receiving visas as partners of British citizens or settled residents. Perhaps surprisingly, this share was not initially affected by the increase in the income requirement for partner visas.

Most asylum seekers are men or boys, and this increased between 2009 and 2024—a change that may be driven partly by small boats arrivals. Asylum grant rates are broadly similar for men and women. Women and girls are more likely to benefit from humanitarian visa routes than from standard asylum routes. They were also much more likely to use the refugee family reunion route, which was suspended in September 2025.

Understanding the policy

This report examines the gender breakdown across different migration routes and explores how migration policies can affect men and women differently. It focuses in particular on the ban on [dependants of students](#) and [care workers](#), as well as the new income threshold for [Partner](#) visas. It also looks at how the gender composition and gender pay gap of Skilled Worker visa holders compares with that of the overall UK workforce, by occupation. More detailed information on the immigration rules is available in the Migration Observatory briefings on [work visas](#), [family migration](#), [asylum and refugees](#), and [student migration](#).

Understanding the evidence

Information on the sex and age breakdown of people issued visas comes from Home Office records or—where not routinely published—Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Home Office data classifies people by the sex included in the application, which will generally be the sex reflected on their official identity documents. The data do not record whether people have changed their legal sex or gender identity, and as a result this report is not able to examine this issue.

This briefing examines the extent to which men or women issued visas under different routes are more likely to migrate with dependants. However, the Home Office does not link data between main applicants and their dependants, making it impossible to calculate the exact number of dependants per main applicant. As an alternative, we use the ratio of main applicants to opposite-sex adult dependants. Given that most partnerships are heterosexual and that adult dependants are the applicant's partner (with only one adult dependant per applicant), this ratio provides a rough estimate of the proportion of men or women who migrate with their partners. This is only an approximation because some applicants are in same-sex partnerships. It is not possible to estimate the share of people migrating with dependant children, as a single applicant may be accompanied by multiple children, making simple ratios misleading.

This briefing compares the gender composition and gender pay gap of skilled worker visa holders with that of the overall UK workforce. Data on the overall UK workforce comes from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). ASHE is based on a 1% sample of employee jobs from HMRC PAYE records and provides detailed breakdowns of pay by occupation and gender.

While ASHE enables comparisons between Skilled Worker visa holders and the broader UK workforce, it has limitations. Some estimates—particularly at the 4-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code level—are classified as statistically unreliable due to small sample sizes. This is especially common in occupations that are predominantly male or predominantly female. In addition, sex-disaggregated occupation data for Skilled Worker visa holders in 2024 is only available for the fourth quarter of 2024, which may limit the comparison. Lastly, while ASHE reflects actual earnings, salary data for Skilled Worker visas is based on figures declared on Certificates of Sponsorship, which may not always correspond to actual pay received.

Data on the gender composition of the foreign-born population come from the England and Wales Census of 2021 and from the Annual Population Survey (APS) 2022 and 2023. The England and Wales 2021 Census data are also used to look in more detail at the characteristics of migrant men and women. It is important to note that these Census data are not representative of the entire UK. However, according to the ONS, 93% of the foreign-born population in the UK lived in England and Wales in 2021. This means that the other nations' Census results are not likely to alter the trends significantly. The Censuses of Scotland and Northern Ireland have been conducted in different years and, therefore, inconsistencies could arise when collating the data from these different sources.

The APS is based on an ONS survey of households across the UK and provides detailed information on the characteristics of people living in the country. It has some important limitations, however. Some people are excluded, such as residents of communal establishments like hostels. Because the APS is a sample survey, the estimates come with margins of error. Since 2020, the APS is also known to have more significant [non-response](#) rates among foreign-born people, particularly those who arrived recently. This means that groups who are less likely to respond to the survey may be undercounted (for more details, see the Migration Observatory's commentary, [Where did all the migrants go? Migration data during the pandemic](#)).

Some definitions used in this briefing are drawn from [Donato and Gabaccia \(2015\)](#), a study examining global trends in the gender composition of migration flows. They define a gender-balanced population as one in which the share of men or women ranges from 47% to 53%. When the proportion of either men or women exceeds 53%, the migration flow is described as male-predominant or female-predominant, respectively.

The share of women varies widely by immigration category

Overall, the migrant population is roughly evenly divided between men and women, with slightly more foreign-born women (53%) living in England and Wales at the time of the 2021 Census than men (47%) (Figure A1).

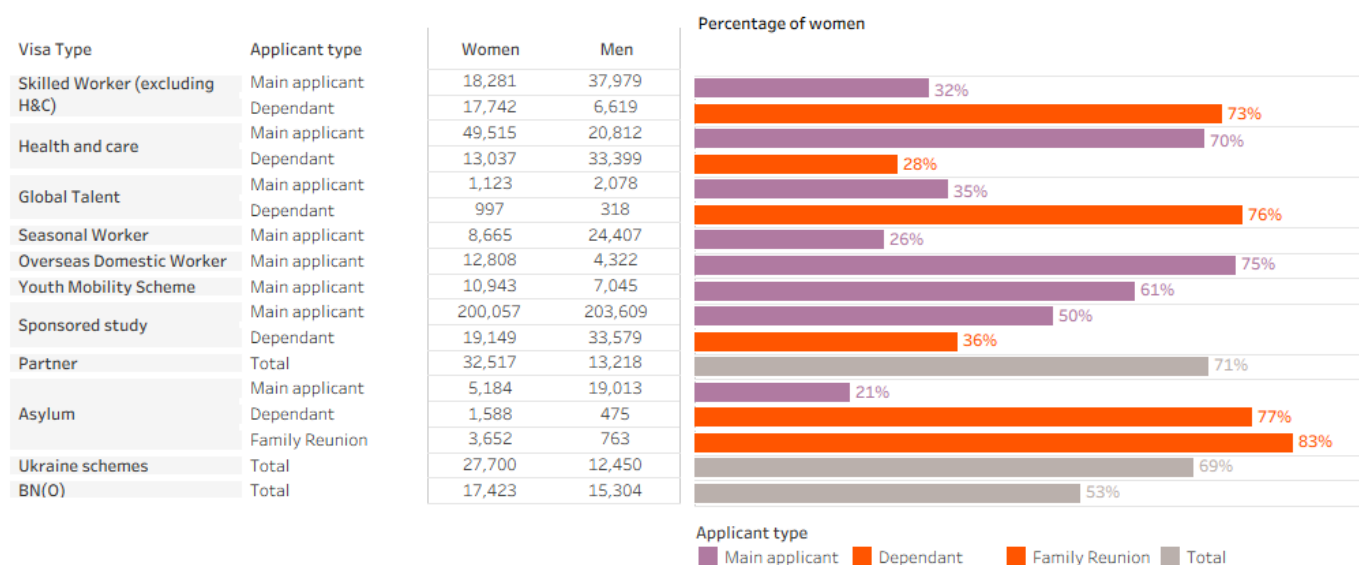
However, men and women migrate to the UK on different visas. Between 2021 and 2024, women made up the majority of people on Ukraine scheme visas (69%), and a majority of visas for partners of British citizens or settled residents (71%). Among work visas, the gender balance depends heavily on which type of work is involved. Seasonal workers are primarily men (74%), as are Skilled Worker main applicant visa holders outside of Health and Care (68% men). By contrast, Health and Care main applicant visa holders are largely women (70%), as are people on the Youth Mobility Scheme (61%) and Overseas Domestic Workers (75%).

The Hong Kong BN(O) route is roughly even, as are student visas for main applicants (Figure 1). Men make up the majority of asylum applicants, and their dependant family members are more likely to be women.

Figure 1

Annual average number of visas issued to men and women, by visa and applicant type, and share of women among visa holders

2021 to 2024. Adults only (18+)



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. For Visas: Freedom of Information request, FOI2025/04035. For Asylum and Family Reunion visas: Asy_D02 and Fam_D01 (YE June 2025). For Home for Ukraine visas: Home Office Immigration Statistics, Summary Tables, UVS_4 (YE December 2024). Note: the data presented exclude dependants joining or accompanying, temporary workers, and short-term students. The data only includes adults (18+). Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown". The demographic data of the Ukraine Schemes is for arrivals, and may not represent the age and gender distribution of visa holders; figures for the Ukraine visa schemes have been rounded.

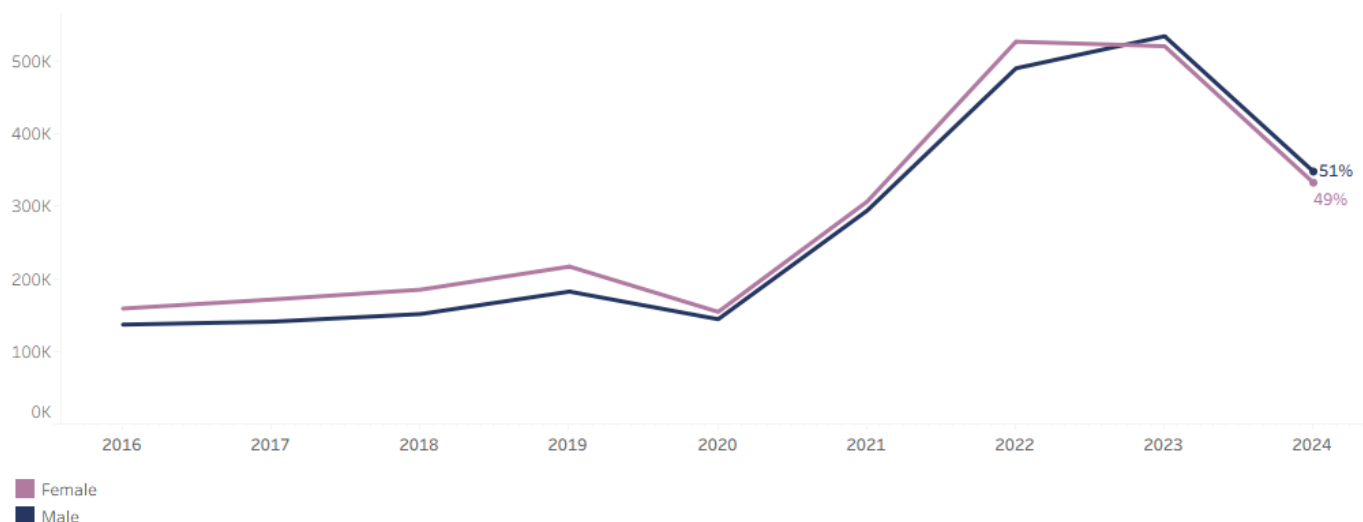


Before Brexit and before the pandemic, more than half of entry visas were granted to women (55% in 2016-2018). However, the gender balance evened out by 2024 (Figure 2). This resulted mainly from an increase in men coming on student visas (Figure A2).

Figure 2

Number of visas issued, by selected visa categories and sex

2016 to 2024. Adults only (18+). Work, Study, Partner, Ukraine, BN(O)s and grants of Asylum-related permission



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. For Visas: Freedom of Information request, FOI2025/04035. For Asylum and Family Reunion visas: Asy_D02 and Fam_D01 (YE June 2025). Note: The data presented exclude dependants joining or accompanying, temporary workers, and short-term students. The data only includes adults (18+). The data for Ukrainian visa holders in FOI2025/04035 contains a substantial number of individuals whose sex is recorded as "unknown." To correct for this, the number of cases with unknown sex was proportionally distributed based on the overall gender distribution observed across the two Ukraine visa schemes. These proportions were derived from UVS_04 (YE December 2024). Asylum grants includes grants of asylum related permissions, family reunion visas, and dependants. For a fully interactive version of this chart, visit our webpage.



The gender composition of different immigration categories results from a range of economic and social factors, which the next sections explore.

The shares of men and women on long-term work visas varies by occupation, with more women in health and care jobs

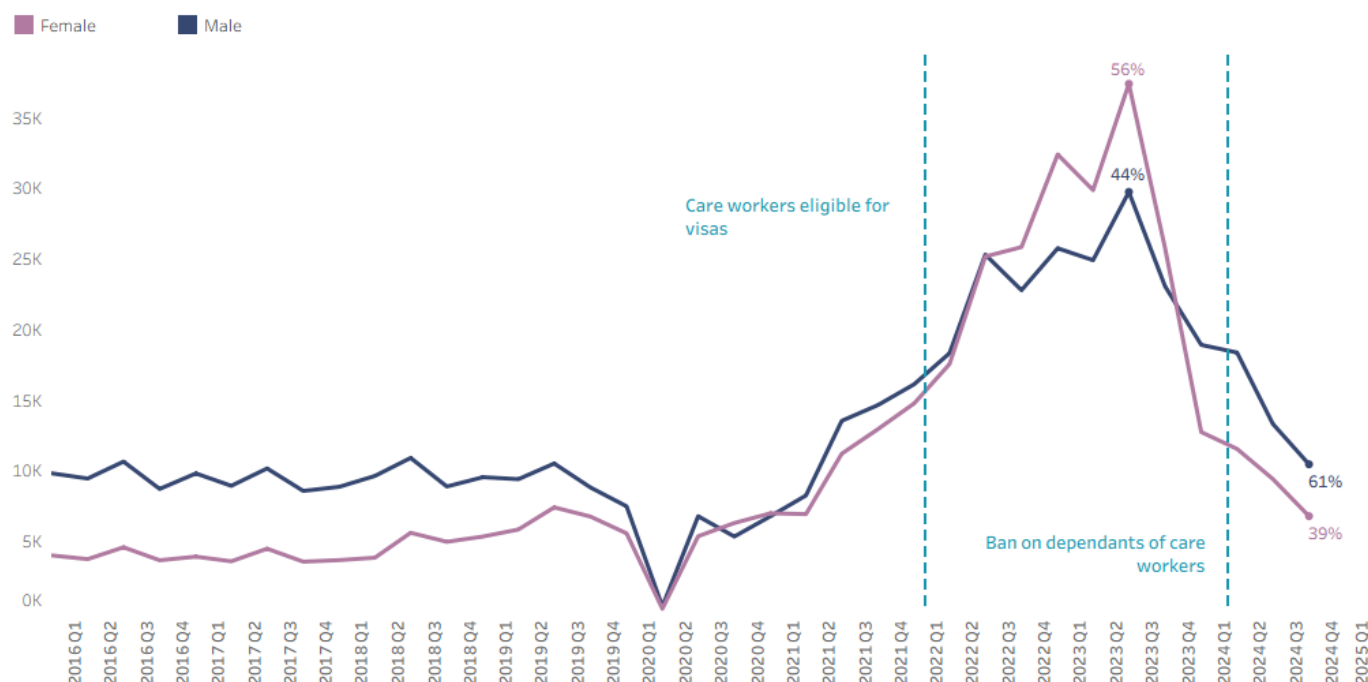
Before 2020, more men than women received long-term work visas, with women accounting for less than one-third of main applicants. This changed with the growth in the Health and Care visa in 2022 and 2023 (Figure 3). Health and Care visas target migrants in female-dominated sectors. Women accounted for more than two-thirds of main applicants in this category from the beginning of 2016 until the end of 2024 (Figure 3). Recruitment on Health and Care visas rose sharply under the post-Brexit immigration system, particularly following a move to make care workers eligible for the route, in February 2022. This drove an increase in the share of long-term work visas going to women.

However, the boom in Health and Care visas was followed by bust. From late 2023 onwards, the government started to scrutinise employer's applications for care workers more carefully due to reports of widespread exploitation. A ban on dependants of care workers took place in early 2024. While the government also introduced restrictions for long-term work visas outside of Health and Care (most notably higher salary thresholds), the decline in applications in the health and care sector was much sharper. As a result, men started to outnumber women again as work visas main applicants in 2024.

Figure 3

Long-term work visa recipients by sex, quarter, and region of birth

2016 to 2024. Main applicants only



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Freedom of Information request FOI2025/04035. Note: the data presented includes Health and Care Workers, International Sportsperson, Intra-company transfer, Minister of Religion, Scale-up Worker, Senior or Specialist Worker, Skilled Worker, Sportsperson and Tier 2. Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown".



The gender balance of long-term work visa holders arriving in different occupations to some extent simply reflects broader trends in the UK labour market: women are much more likely to do some jobs than others.

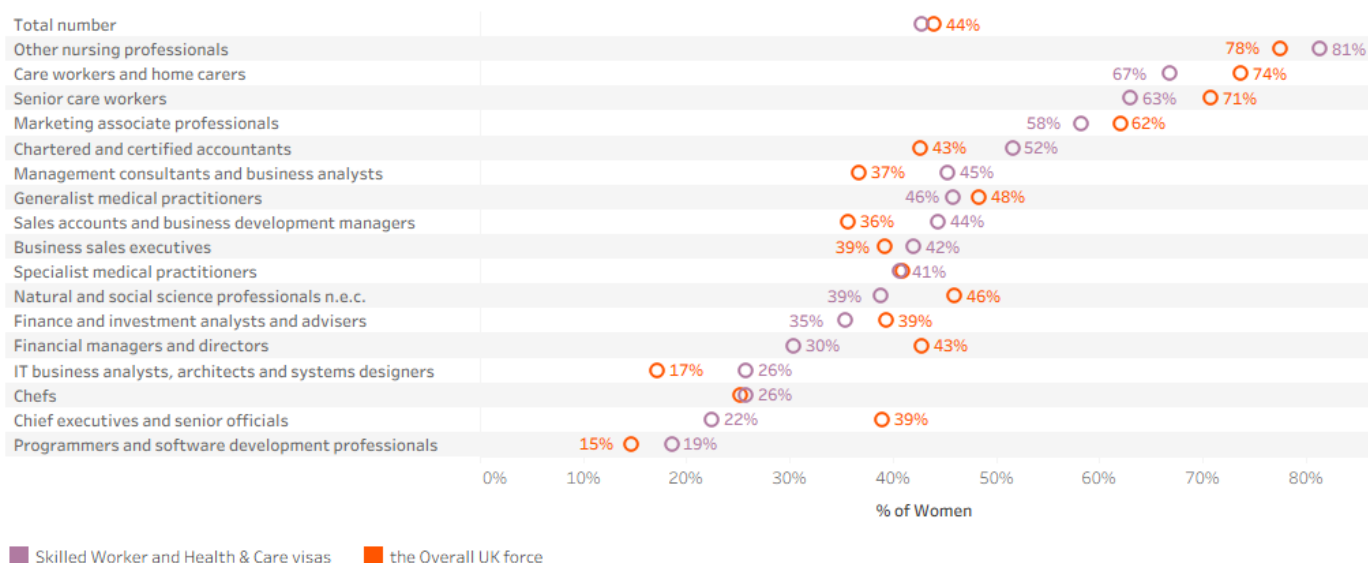
However, there are also some differences. For example, Skilled Worker visa holders who are care workers, home carers and senior care workers are more likely to be men than in the UK labour market (Figure 4). [Research](#) suggests that while most UK-born men are not inclined to work in the care sector, the growing demand for caregivers has made it one of the few available job opportunities for both male and female migrants. A 2009 qualitative study conducted in London [indicated](#) that to maintain their role as providers and support their families in the UK and abroad, migrant men were often willing to take on jobs traditionally associated with women, even if they might have been unwilling to do them in their home countries.

The share of female Skilled Workers is also lower in very well-paid occupations, such among financial managers and directors and chief executives and senior officials than among the UK-born (Figure 4). By contrast, Skilled Worker visas are significantly less male-dominated than the UK workforce in some occupations such as management consultants, chartered and certified accountants. Despite these variations across occupations, the overall share of women among Skilled Worker and Health and Care visa recipients is broadly similar to that of the overall UK workforce. Note that differences such as the age composition of Skilled Workers compared with the overall UK workforce, as well as data limitations, will influence this comparison (see the Understanding the Evidence section).

Figure 4

Percentage of women among Skilled Worker and Health & Care visa recipients (Q4 2024 and Q1 2025) vs overall UK workforce (YE April 2024), by occupation

Top occupations by number of Skilled Worker and Health & Care visas recipients*. Full time employees.



Source: for Skilled Worker Visas: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Freedom of Information request 2025/10340 (Q4 2024 and Q1 2025). For Overall UK workforce: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings Table 14.7a (YE April 2024). Note: ASHE data reflects the number of jobs, not individuals — some people may hold more than one job. ASHE data includes people on Skilled Worker visas. Both ASHE and Home Office data for Q4 2024 are based on 4-digit SOC 2020 occupation codes. The Total figure derived from ASHE data shown here has been filtered to include only occupations eligible for Skilled Worker visas as of September 2024, and those that have reliable estimates.



The gender pay gap among Skilled Worker visa recipients is narrower than among full-time employees in the UK workforce

The gender pay gap refers to the average difference in earnings between men and women in the workforce. Even within the same occupation and among full-time employees, this gap exists due to multiple factors. These [include](#) interruptions in career progression due to childcare, unequal access to leadership positions, discriminatory practices in hiring and promotion, and differences in how men and women negotiate pay. Additionally, caregiving responsibilities often limit women's career progression and long-term earning potential.

Men tend to earn more than women across most occupations, both among Skilled Worker visa holders and in the wider UK workforce. However, the gender pay gap is narrower among Skilled Worker visa recipients in almost all top occupations (see Figure 5).

This narrower pay gap among Skilled Worker visa holders is largely driven by the fact that female visa holders earn significantly more than women in the broader UK workforce. In contrast, the picture is more mixed for men: male Skilled Worker visa holders earn more than their UK workforce counterparts only in some occupations, and when they do, the differences are generally smaller than those observed among women (Figure 5).

The reasons behind higher earnings for female Skilled Worker visa holders are not entirely clear. One possible explanation is selection: for example, that the women who are able to secure UK jobs and migrate internationally have specific characteristics, such as fewer childcare responsibilities or particularly high qualifications, that are associated with higher earnings.

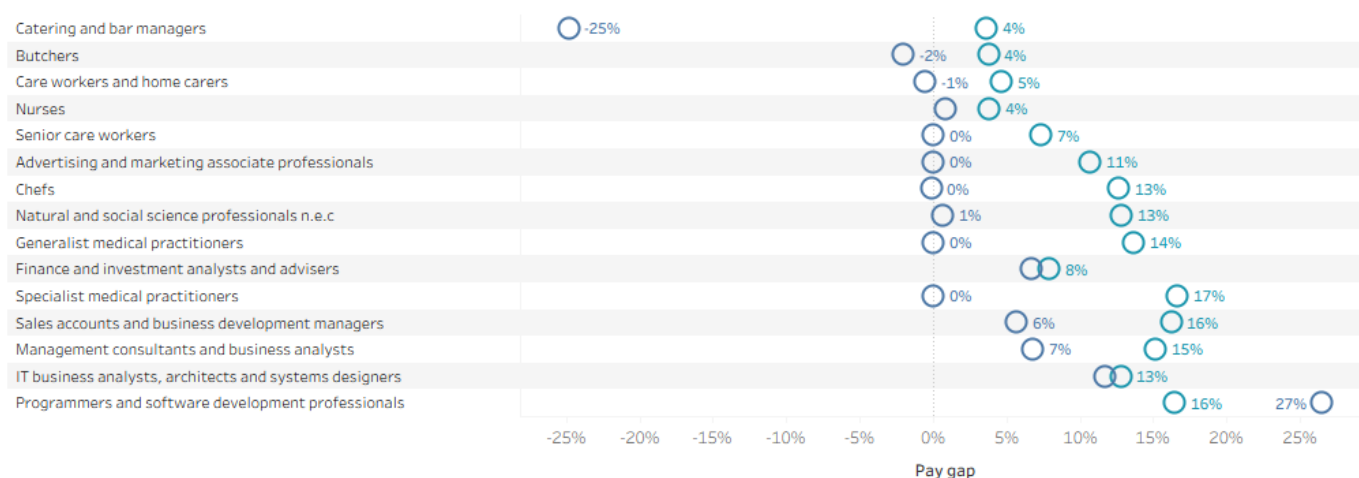
Another contributing factor may be the Skilled Worker visa's minimum salary thresholds. In April 2024, the UK set the general threshold at £38,700 or the occupation's median salary—whichever is higher. In July 2025, the threshold was raised again to £41,700. For women who would otherwise have been paid below the median for the occupation, this policy could help lift women's wages closer to male earnings across.

In the past, some stakeholders [have argued that](#) salary thresholds disadvantage women. In practice, it is more likely there is a dual effect: thresholds may prevent some women from qualifying and being sponsored because they are in lower-paying occupations, while also prompting employers to raise women's pay to meet the threshold.

Figure 5

Gender pay gaps by occupation: Skilled Worker and Health & Care visa recipients (Q2 2024–Q4 2024) vs. overall UK workforce (YE April 2024).

Top occupations by visa issuance during the period.



Source: for Skilled Worker Visas: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Freedom of Information request. For Overall UK workforce: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings Table 14.7a (YE April 2024). Note: Due to changes in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, the time period covered does not align exactly with calendar quarters. The Home Office data covers the period from April 4, 2024, to December 31, 2024. The salary figures for Skilled Worker visas reflect the amounts listed on individuals' Certificates of Sponsorship. Although salary thresholds increased in April 2024, some employers may have submitted Certificate of Sponsorship applications before the new thresholds took effect. As a result, certain occupations may still show salaries below the updated minimum income requirement. The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between the median salary of men and the median salary of women, divided by the median salary of men. A negative value indicates that women's median salaries are higher than those of men. Some occupations in the Home Office database have been assigned multiple SOC codes. In these cases, the salaries associated with the SOC code covering the highest number of visas have been used. The salaries for Medical Practitioners among Skilled Worker visa holders refer to England, and those for nurses refer to "Other nursing professionals, Band 5 and equivalent."



In 2024, men outnumbered women as main applicants on student visas, for the first time in at least eight years

The number of men arriving as main applicants on student visas increased more sharply than that of women in the post-pandemic period, rising by 65% between 2016 and 2023, compared to a 26% increase among women (Figure 6). One possible reason is that the introduction of the [Graduate route](#) in 2021 could have incentivised more men to see this as a medium- to long-term labour migration strategy.

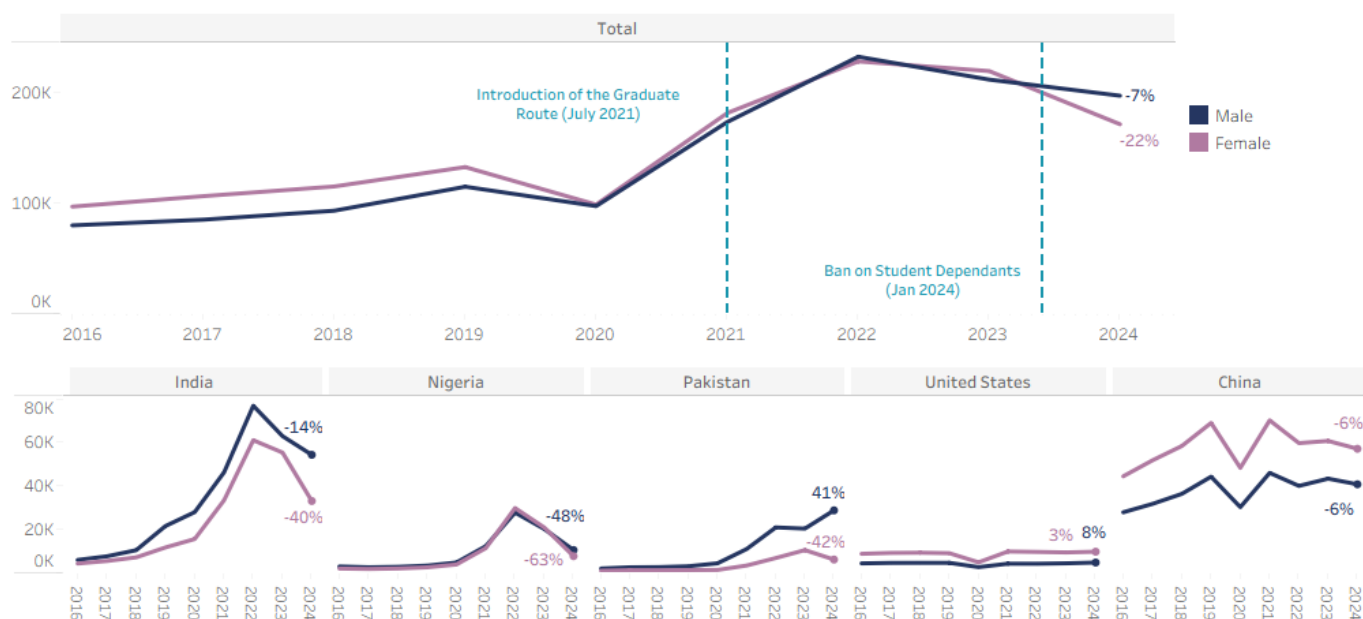
The gap grew even more in 2024, when student visa grants fell more sharply among women than among men. As shown in Figure 6, the number of study visas granted to male main applicants fell by 7% compared to a 22% fall among women. As a result, 2024 marked the first time in the analysed period that men became the majority of student main applicants.

Several factors may have contributed to this shift, including changes in the nationality composition of students, country-specific factors such as the 2023 currency collapse in Nigeria, and the [ban on student dependants](#). After the ban implemented in January 2024, only certain students were allowed to bring family members to the UK (those studying PhDs or two-year research master's qualifications). The decrease in female students was driven in particular by fewer women from India.

Figure 6

Main applicant study visa recipients, by sex, year and selected nationalities

2016 to 2024. Total includes all nationalities. Percentage change in relation to previous year

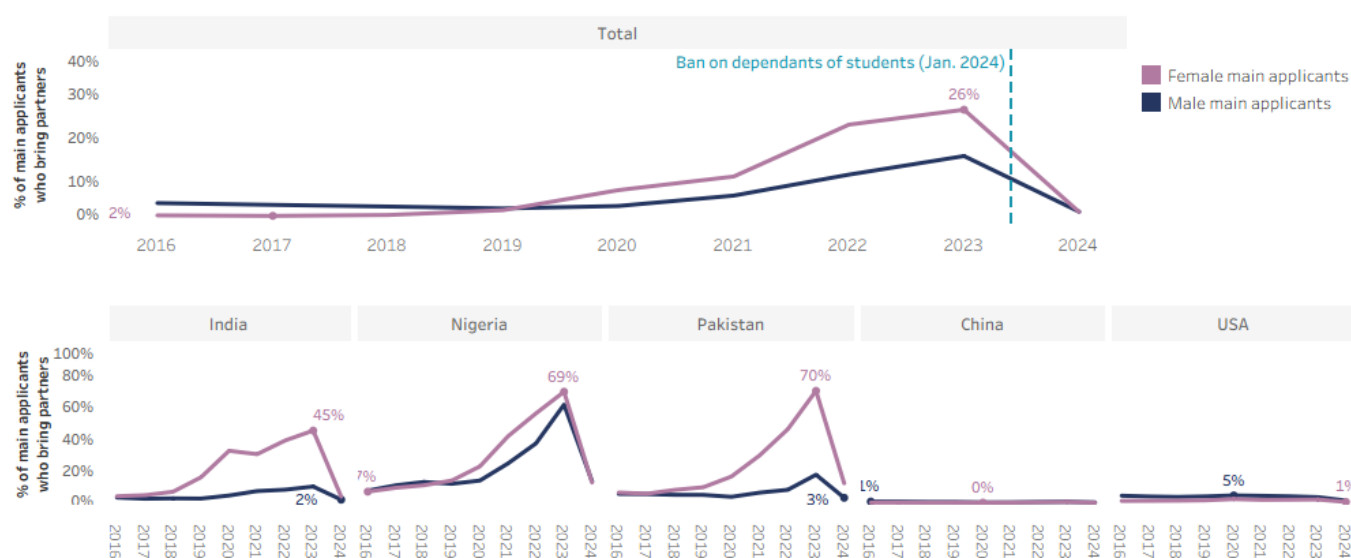


Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Freedom of Information request, FOI2025/04035. The data presented includes only sponsored students. Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown".

While both male and female students had increasingly migrated with their families until the end of 2023, this shift was more pronounced among female students (Figure 7). By 2023, female students were more likely than their male counterparts to migrate with a partner, and it is possible that the dependant ban disproportionately discouraged women from applying as main applicants. This effect is particularly evident among nationalities where women were more likely to bring dependants, such as Indian, Nigerian, and Pakistani (Figures 6 and 7). Among Indian nationals, for example, the number of visas issued to female main applicants fell by 40%, compared to a 14% decline among male students.

Figure 7

Approximate share of student main applicants who come to the UK with a dependant partner, by year, sex of the main applicant and selected nationalities
2016 to 2024. Total includes all nationalities



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Freedom of Information request, FOI2025/04035. The data presented includes only sponsored students. The share is calculated using the ratio of main applicants to opposite-sex adult dependants. Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown".



One possible explanation for the increasing number of men among both student main applicants and dependants from 2021 to 2023 was the greater attractiveness of the UK with post-study work rights. Study visas enabled work migration for both members of the couple. Before the 2024 ban on bringing dependants, partners of students enjoyed more liberal work rights than the student main applicants themselves – similar to dependants of workers. They had no limit to the number of hours they could work, with no salary or language requirements. The post-pandemic increase in student dependants is only notable among certain groups—specifically those from India, Pakistan, and Nigeria. These groups were also particularly likely to use the Graduate visa route.

The gender composition of partner visa recipients remained relatively stable after the introduction of the new income threshold for partner visas in April 2024

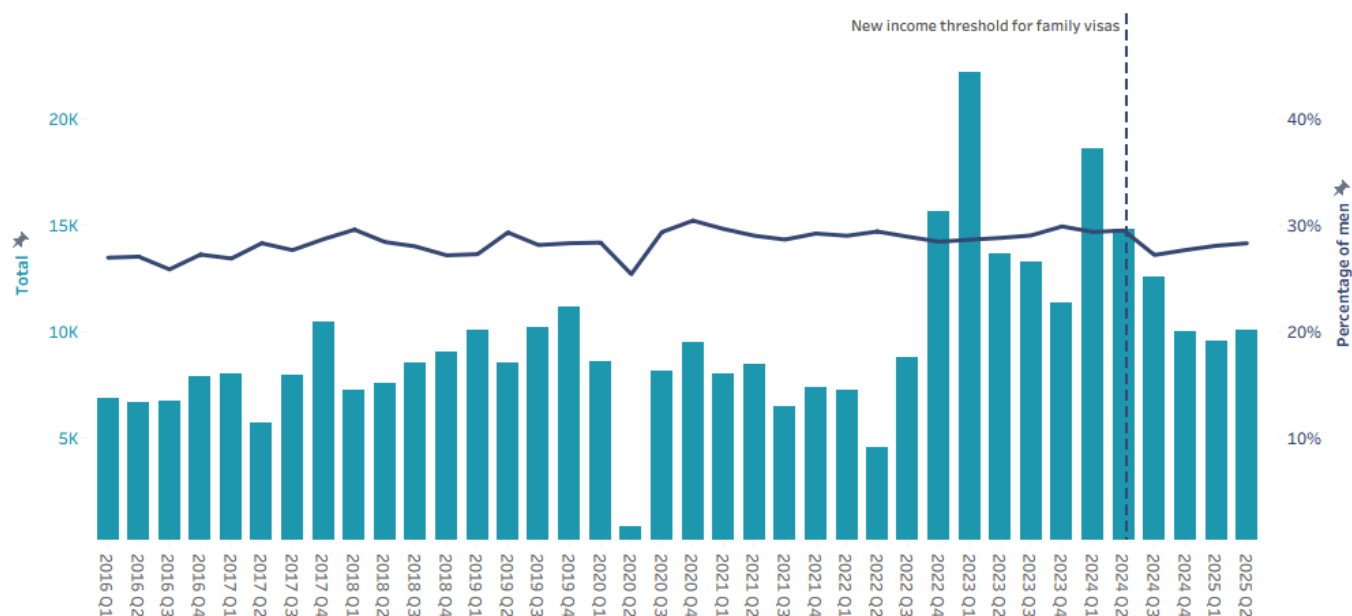
Family visas primarily go to the partners of British citizens or people with Indefinite Leave to Remain and are separate from policies towards the partners and children of migrants on temporary visas. Partner visa recipients are mostly women, a trend also seen in other high-income countries. This is partly due to cultural gender norms, including women's greater willingness to move internationally for marriage.

In April 2024, the government introduced a new income threshold for partner visas, raising the minimum earnings required for British citizens and settled resident sponsors to £29,000. Since women tend to have lower earnings and employment rates than men and are more likely to take career breaks, fewer women in the UK [qualify](#) to sponsor partners under the new policy (see the Migration Observatory [commentary](#) on the 2024 new family income requirement). However, the data show that the gender composition of partner visas remained relatively stable in the four quarters following the policy change.

The proportion of men among visa recipients—who are typically sponsored by female British citizens and permanent residents—decreased only slightly (from 30% in the end of Q2 2024 to 27% in Q3 2024) (Figure 8). It remains possible that patterns might change in the medium or long run, particularly if the minimum income requirement changes again.

Figure 8

Number of partner visas issued and % of men among visa recipients, by quarter
Q1 2016 to Q2 2025



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Freedom of Information requests FOI2025/04035, FOI2025/07833 and FOI2025/11187. Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown". The data excludes the subcategory "family-partner (for immediate settlement)", as this may also include family reunion visa recipients.



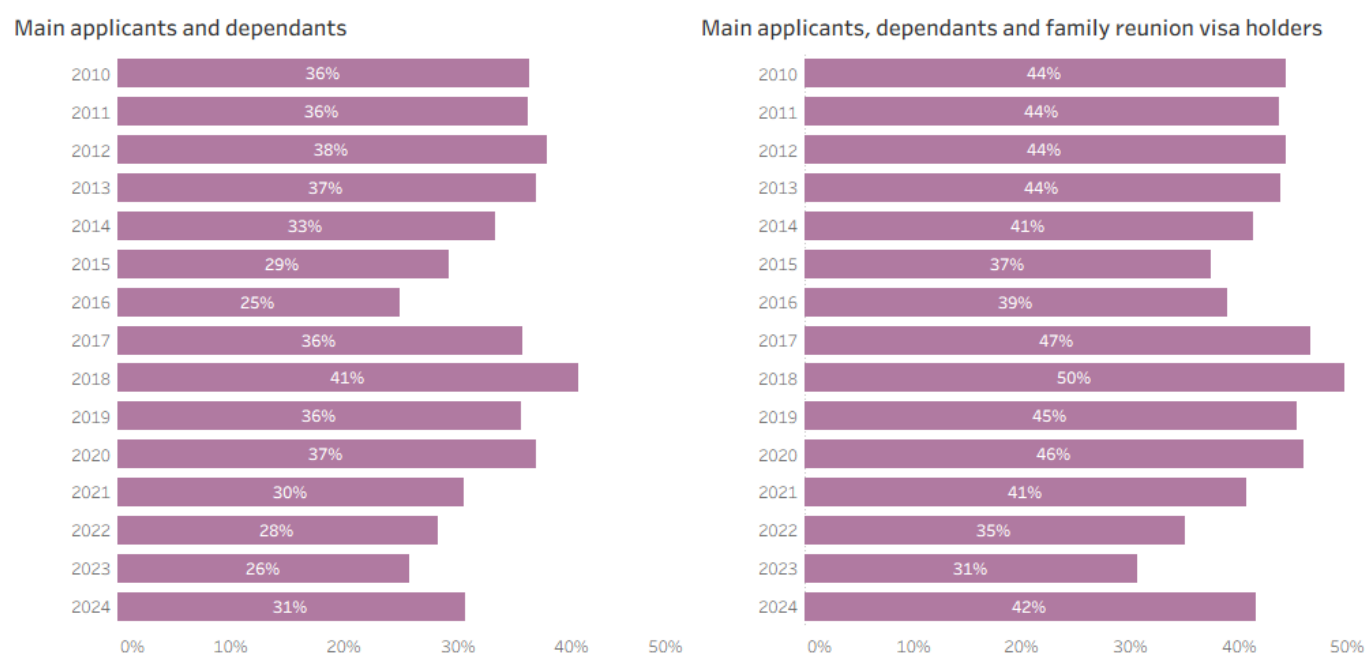
Between 2009 and 2024, the share of men and boys among asylum seekers increased

Most asylum seekers in the UK are men, despite UN [estimates](#) indicating that women and girls account for half of refugees and asylum seekers globally. [Studies](#) suggest that men are more willing to take dangerous journeys in search for protection.

Some men later apply to bring their partners or children after receiving refugee status. As a result, the large majority of people receiving family reunion visas are women and children (92% between 2010 and 2024). The share of women and girls granted protection in the UK, therefore, increases after taking into account refugee family reunion: Between 2022 and 2024, women and girls comprised 36% of people granted either asylum-related status or refugee family reunion, but only 28% of those granted asylum-related status (Figure 9).

Figure 9

% of women and girls among people receiving a grant of asylum-related permission, by year



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Table Asy_D02 (YE June 2025) and Fam_D01 (YE June 2025). Notes: Includes main applicants and dependants. Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown".



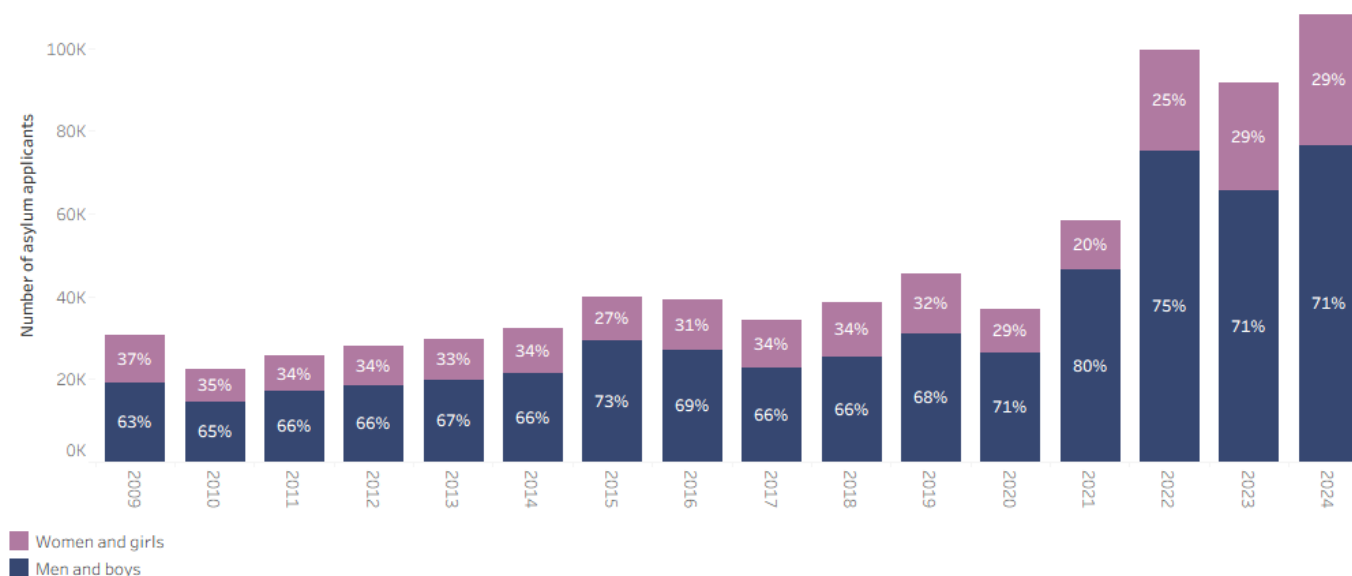
In September 2025, the government temporarily suspended the refugee family reunion route and announced that a more restrictive replacement would be implemented from spring 2026. In the meantime, refugees will need to use the standard family migration rules for British citizens and settled residents, which require the UK-based sponsor to earn at least £29,000 a year and the overseas applicant to have A1 English. Given refugees' typically lower earnings, many will not meet these criteria. While the long-term effects are uncertain, in the short term the suspension is likely to reduce arrivals of women and girls and shift the gender balance further towards men (see the Migration Observatory's [Q&A on the UK's new approach to refugee family reunion](#)).

The proportion of men and boys among asylum main applicants in the UK has fluctuated over the years and increased during the 2020s in particular. It peaked at 80% in 2021, but fell to 71% by 2024 (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Asylum applicants by sex and year

Main applicants and dependants. Children and adults



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Table Asy_D01 (YE June 2025). Notes: excludes people whose age or sex is recorded as "Unknown" in the dataset.

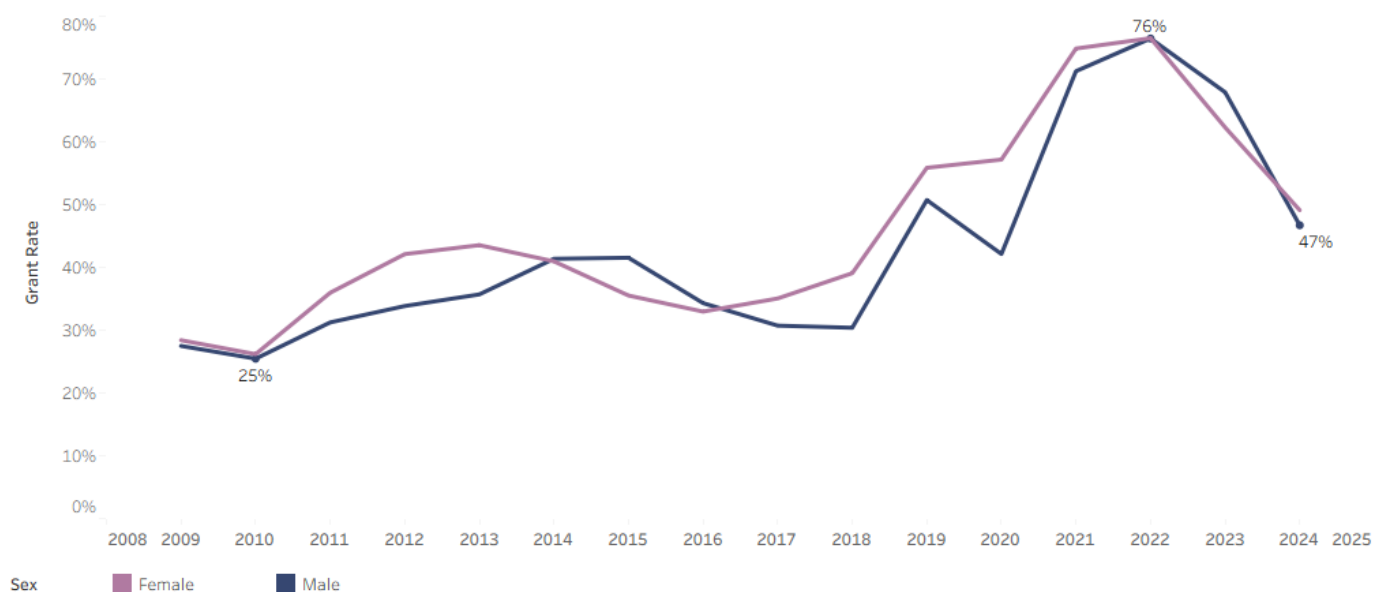


The increase in the male share of asylum applicants took place at the same time as a shift in the mode of entry for asylum seekers. Starting in 2018, asylum seekers started to arrive by small boat, which is a particularly male-dominated route (75% of arrivals from 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2025) (See also Figure A4). For more information see the Migration Observatory briefing on [people crossing the English Channel on small boats](#).

The asylum grant rate for men and women has generally been fairly similar over time (Figure 11). That is, government case workers have generally found men and women roughly equally likely to meet the definition of a refugee.

Figure 11

Share of asylum seekers receiving a grant of asylum-related permission, per year, by sex
2009 to 2024. Main applicants only



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Table Asy_D02 (YE June 2025)



Women make up higher shares of humanitarian visas than asylum applicants

Another approach to granting protection is by offering humanitarian visas that people can apply for from abroad. In the UK, eligible people from [Afghanistan](#), [Hong Kong BN\(O\)s](#), and [Ukrainians](#) have been able to use special humanitarian visas with or without the involvement of the United Nations (UN).

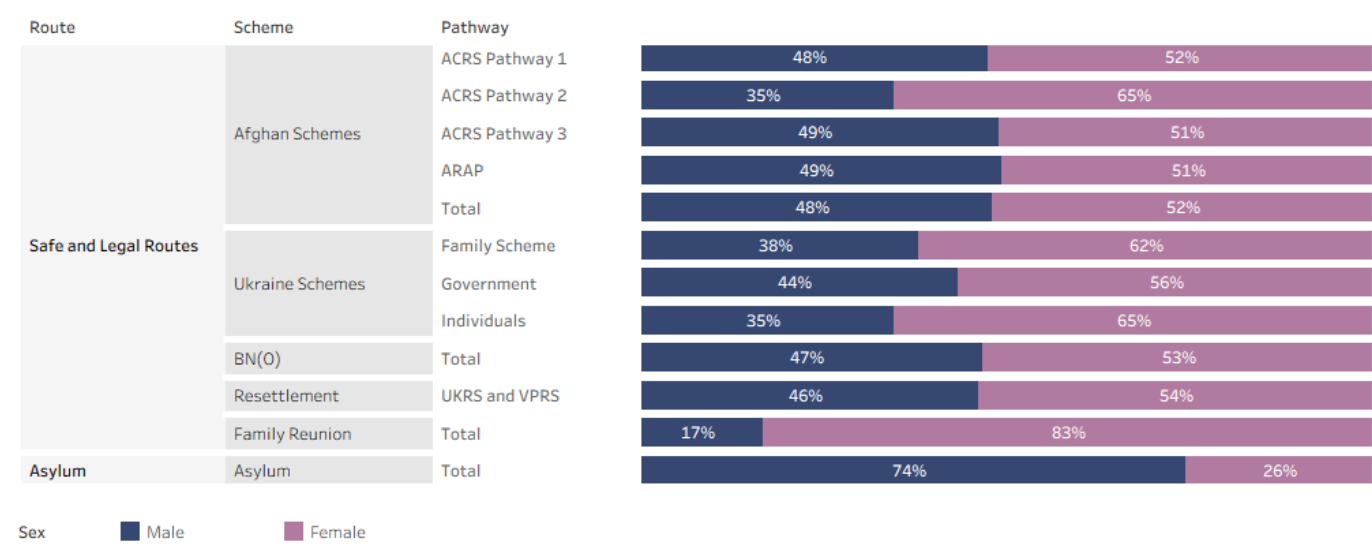
Some [studies](#) have suggested that single men struggle to receive protection via UN refugee resettlement schemes because they are often viewed as less vulnerable than female refugees. In the UK case, women made up a slight majority of people granted protection under the UK Resettlement Schemes and Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Schemes between 2021 and 2024, while the now-closed Afghan schemes were gender-balanced. The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) (Pathway 2) had the highest share of women, because it [prioritised](#) women and girls at risk.

The relatively high share of women among Ukraine scheme visas is to be expected because men between the ages of 18 and 60 were not allowed to leave the country after Russia's February 2022 invasion. It is also possible that men encountered more challenges to find a sponsoring family under the Homes for Ukraine scheme: the data show that men were more likely to be granted a visa when their arrival was sponsored by the government, rather than individuals (Figure 12). This may be due to UK residents' preferring to host female migrants.

In contrast, the British National (Overseas) visa route for people from Hong Kong is gender balanced. It is a special migration pathway open to entire families, in a context with no gender-specific restrictions on movement.

Figure 12

% of adult men and women granted permission to stay in the UK under safe and legal routes vs asylum
2021 to 2024. Asylum includes main applicants and dependants. Adults only (18+)



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. For Asylum: Asy_D02 (YE December 2024). For Afghan schemes and Resettlement Schemes: Res_D01 (YE December 2024). For BN(O)s: Freedom of Information request, FOI2025/04035. For Home for Ukraine visas: Operational data, Home Office and MHCLG, Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme visa data: by age and sex of the applicant (YE December 2024). For Ukraine Family Visas: Home Office Immigration Statistics, Summary Tables, UVS_4 (YE December 2024). Note: The data only includes adults (18+). The demographic data of the Ukraine Family Visa data is for arrivals, and may not represent the age and gender distribution of visa holders. Data for BN(O)s does not include in-country visa applications. Total figures exclude a small number of cases in which the sex and age of the applicant are classified as "unknown".



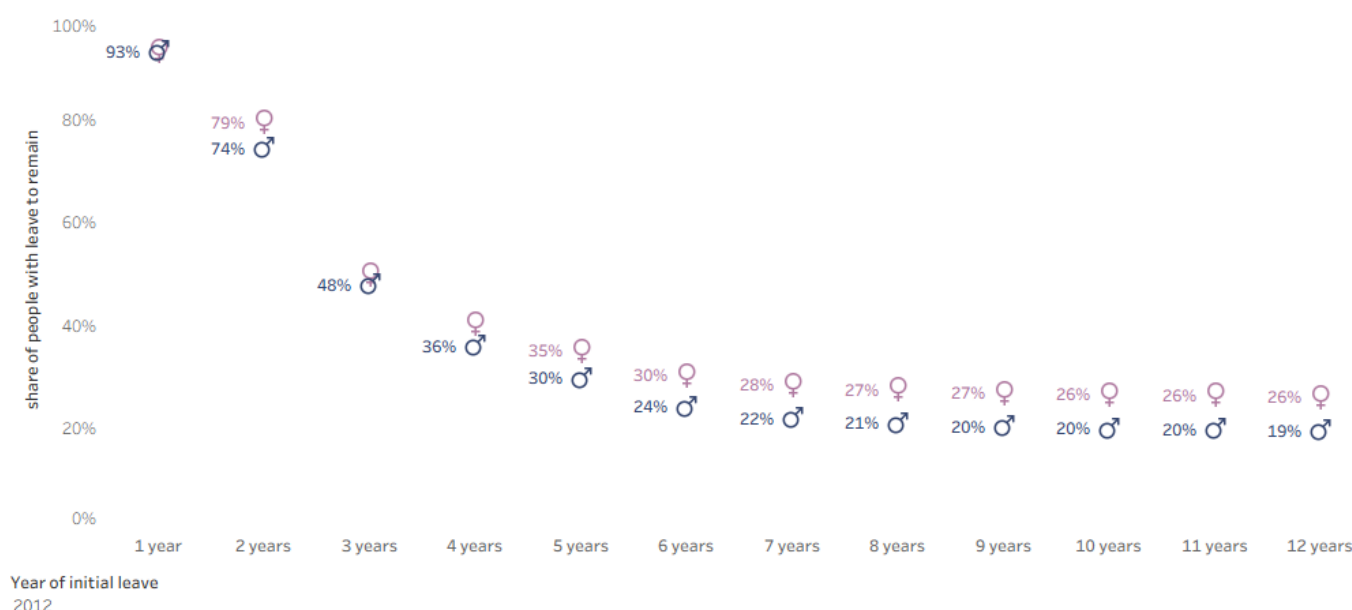
Women are more likely to settle in the UK than men

Although women and men migrate to the UK at roughly similar rates (Figure A3), women are more likely to settle permanently. After 10 years in the UK, 26% of women who entered the country in 2012 still had valid leave to remain, compared to 20% of men (Figure 13). Women are more likely than men to migrate through Partner visas (Figure 1), which have the highest settlement rates among visa categories (see the Migration Observatory analysis on [family migration](#) to the UK).

Figure 13

Share of migrants with a valid immigration status, by sex, year of initial leave, and years into the journey

Only people who have been granted their initial grant at 18 years or older



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Migrant Journey, Freedom of Information Request 2025/04235.



Women on work visas are also more likely to settle than their male counterparts (Figure A5). After ten years, they were twice as likely to have valid permission to stay including a visa or settled status. Male dependants of those on work visas are particularly likely to be in the UK ten years after they arrived, suggesting that settlement rates are highest for women who arrive with a partner (Figure A5).

This finding is consistent with [studies](#) showing that women are less likely to move onward to other countries than men, partly because they are more averse to risk. Research indicates that among women with families, the decision to migrate again may be even [less common](#) because they tend to consider the costs of rebuilding social networks for themselves, their partners and children, while men are less likely to take these factors into account.

Evidence gaps and limitations

Most quantitative data on migration is based on the sex listed in people's official documents and usually includes only the categories "male" and "female." There is no published information on migrants' gender identity.

The Home Office has not historically linked main visa applicants to their dependants, making it impossible to determine how many dependants—particularly children—accompany each migrant. This limits analysis of how bans on dependants in certain visa categories may have affected men and women differently.

Information broken down by sex is often only available through Freedom of Information requests and typically covers only short time periods. This makes it difficult to examine trends over the long term.

Acknowledgments

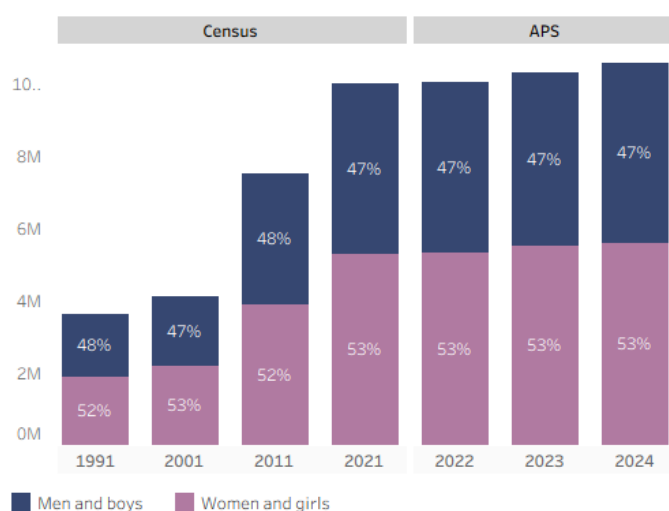
We are grateful to **Fragomen** for supporting this research. Thanks to **Gemma Hyslop, Louise Haycock, and Alan Manning** for comments on earlier versions of the analysis, and to **Asli Salihoglu** for research assistance.

Appendix

Figure A1

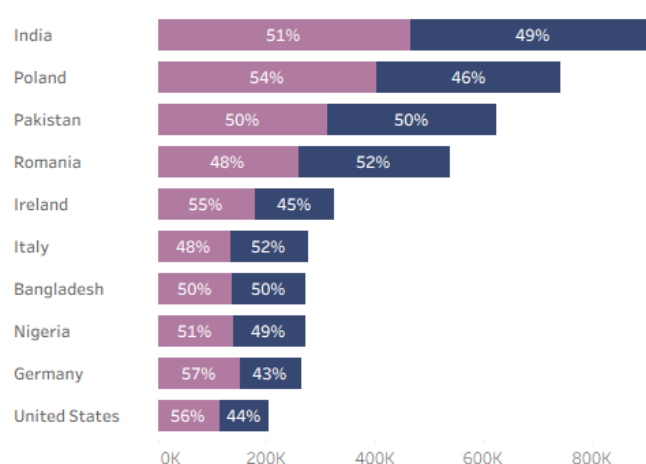
Foreign born population in England and Wales, by sex and year

Censuses 1991-2021 and APS 2022, 2023 and 2024



Foreign born population in England and Wales, by sex and country of birth, 2021

Top 10 countries of birth

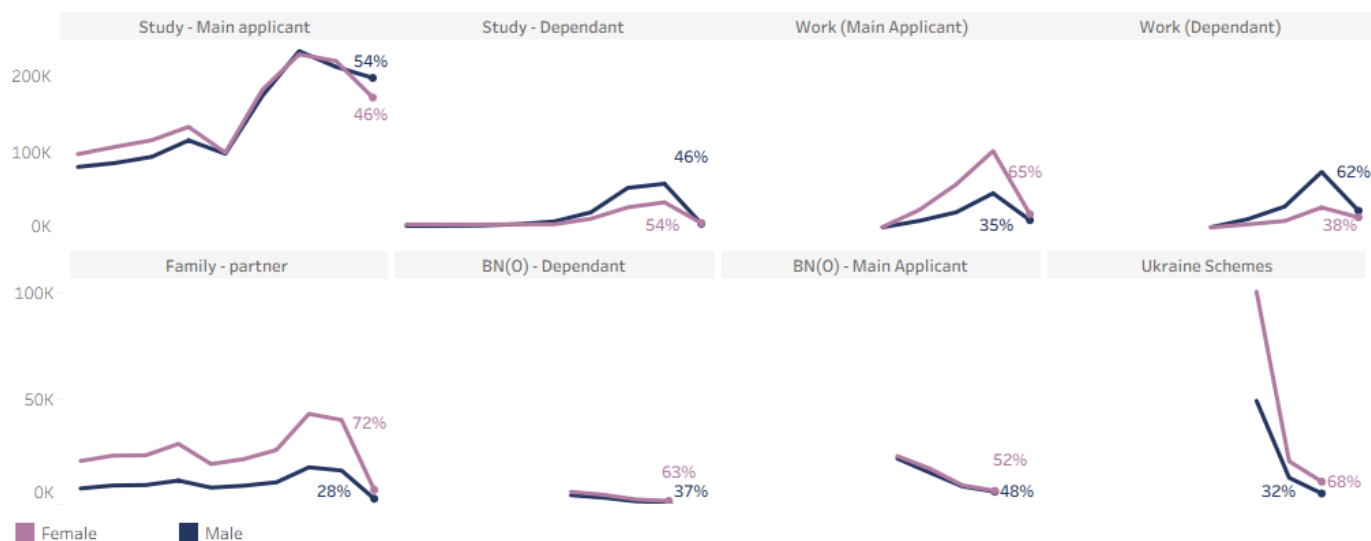


Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Annual Population Survey 2022-2024, England and Wales Census of 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021



Figure A2

Number of visas or grants of asylum-related permission, by type, sex and year.
2016-2024. Adults only (18+). Selected visa categories

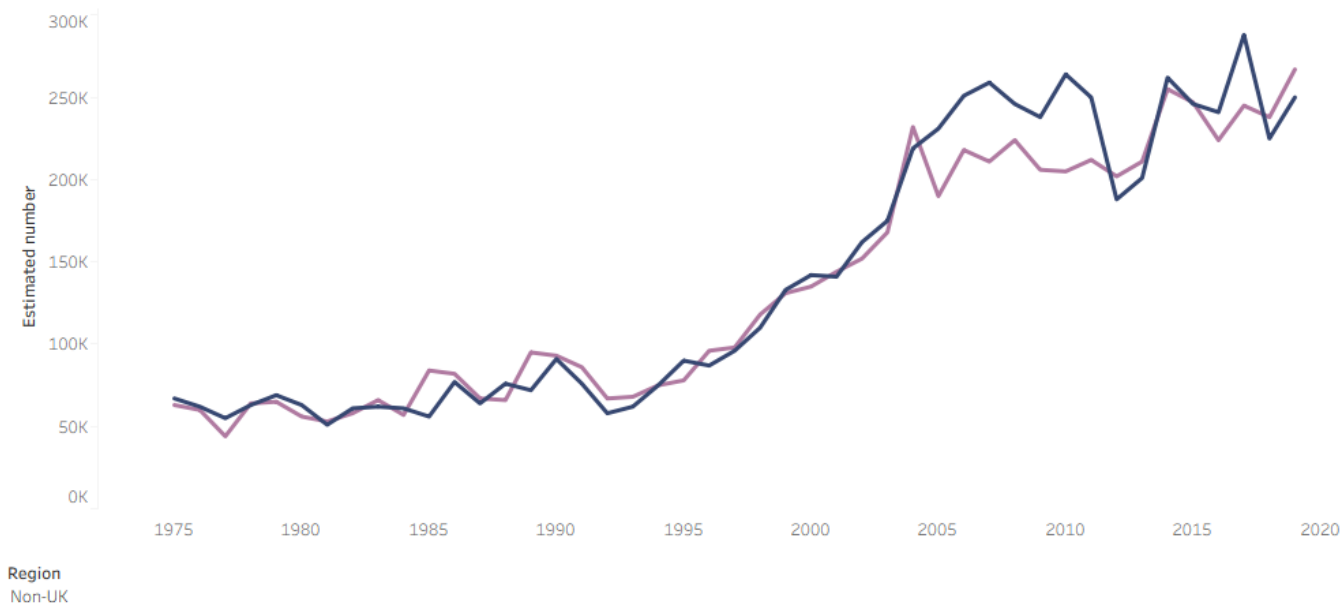


Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. For Visas: Freedom of Information request, FOI2025/04035. For Asylum and Family Reunion visas: Asy_D02 and Fam_D01 (YE June 2025). Note: The data presented exclude dependants joining or accompanying, temporary workers, and short-term students. The data only includes adults (18+). The data for Ukrainian visa holders in FOI2025/04035 contains a substantial number of individuals whose sex is recorded as "unknown." To correct for this, the number of cases with unknown sex was proportionally distributed based on the overall gender distribution observed across the two Ukraine visa schemes. These proportions were derived from UVS_04 (YE December 2024). Asylum grants includes grants of asylum related permissions, family reunion visas, and dependants.



Figure A3

Long term international immigration to the UK, by sex and region of birth
1975 to 2019

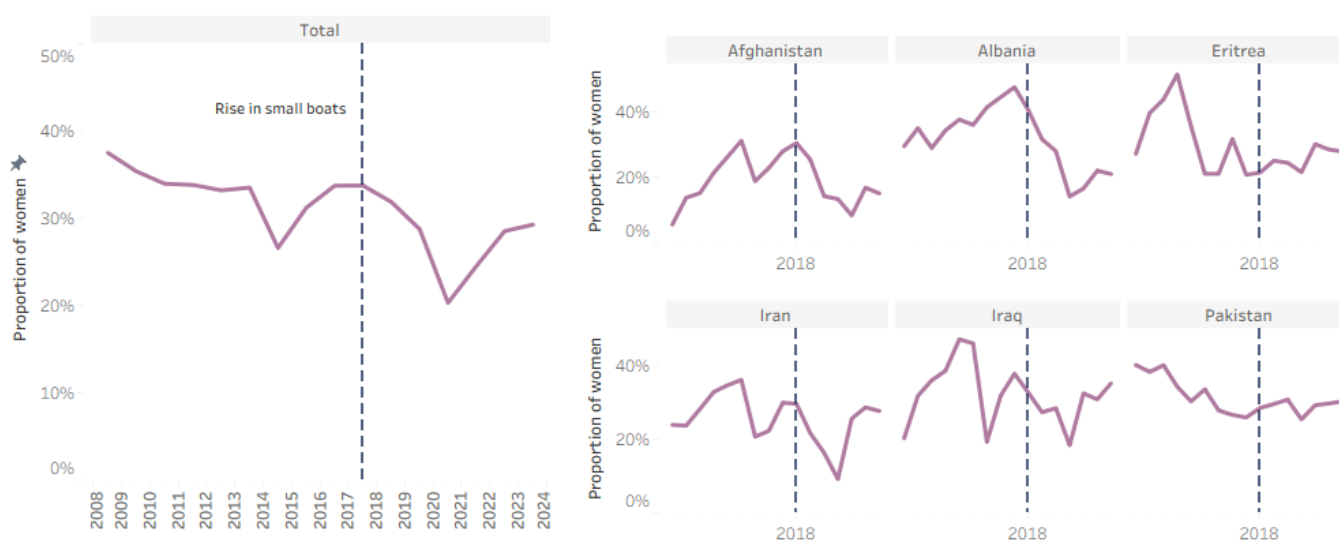


Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the Office for National Statistics Long Term International Migration Estimates (1975-2019) by country of birth and sex (Table 3.04). Note: ONS estimates come with a margin of error which are not reflected in this chart



Figure A4

Proportion of women and girls among UK asylum seekers, by nationality and year
2009 to 2024. Top 6 nationalities over the period. Main applicants and dependants



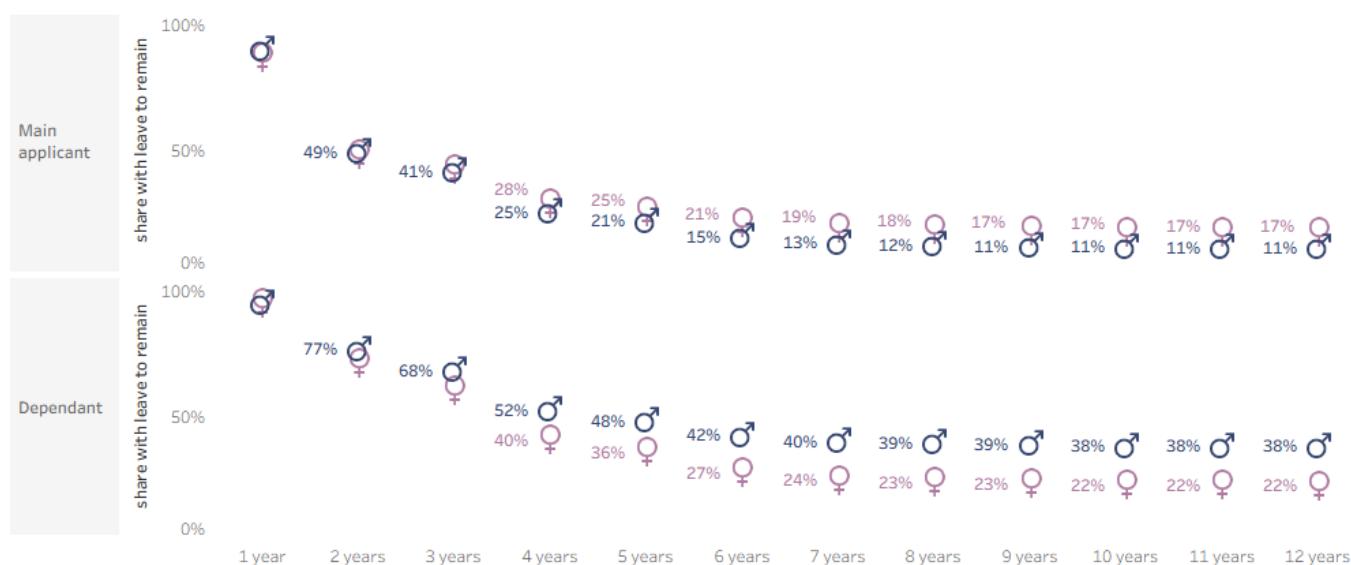
Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Table Asy_D01 (June 2025). Notes: Includes main applicants and dependants. Excludes people whose age or sex is recorded as "Unknown" in the dataset



Figure A5

Share of people who entered the country on a worker visa who have a valid immigration status, by sex, year of initial leave, applicant type and years into the journey

Only people who have been granted their initial grant at 18 years or older



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics, Migrant Journey, Freedom of Information Request 2025/04235.





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 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

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