



Migration Profile

THE UNITED KINGDOM

A. Executive Summary

The United Kingdom (UK) is a constitutional monarchy including four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. England has the largest territory, and in 2018 14% of its resident population was born abroad. On January 31, 2020 the UK left the European Union coalition, whose membership started on January 1, 1973. Working and studying are the main reasons why people move to the UK, and migration has been significant from Ireland as well as those countries once under the British empire. Specifically, most migrants come from India and its bordering countries (Bangladesh and Pakistan), from the Caribbean, Hong Kong and from several African countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. Among the European countries, the largest immigrant group living in the UK comes from Poland (as a matter of fact, Polish is the second-most common language in the UK).

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA), human trafficking in the UK is a rapidly growing issue. Many victims of human trafficking are from overseas, but there are also UK-born nationals, often trapped in domestic abuse and homelessness. According to UN estimates, in 2018 approximately 136,000 people were trafficked in the UK.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

The United Kingdom is among the first ten most powerful economies in the world. It is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and also part of NATO, G7, G20 and many other multilateral organisations and institutions. UK's population is unequally distributed over the four parts of country: England itself makes up about 84% of the total populationⁱ (with London being by far the most populous metropolitan area in the country), Wales around 5%, Scotland roughly 8.5%, and Northern Ireland less than 3%.

According to the Special Eurobarometer 493, in 2019 half of the population living in the UK was Christian, precisely 14% Protestants, 13% Catholics, 7% Orthodox and 16% belonging to other denominationsⁱⁱ. A smaller percentage (37%) claimed to be unaffiliated or non-religious. A minority of the population is Muslim (5%), Sikh (1%), Hindu (1%), Buddhist (fewer than 1%), and Jewish (less than 1%). 4% claimed to be from other religions, 1% refused to answer and another

1% did not know.ⁱⁱⁱ

As of November 2021 migrants, crossing the English Channel from Calais (France) to Kent (England) and often drowning, are considered a major issue. In June 2021 the UK signed a deal with France pledging to give them 54 million pounds in order to prevent boats from arriving in England. Since then some attempts have been discouraged, however passages are still happening, thus intensifying the political tension between the two countries.

II. International and Internal Migrants

Work and study are the main reasons for long-term immigration to the UK (71% of all the 2018 arrivals), while asylum and resettlement are the least common motivations (about 6%). Around ten million people residing in the UK were born outside the country, and many international and internal migrants come here to pursue a better-quality education. Chinese students have exceeded all of the other nationalities, being the largest group of international students in the UK (in 2019-2020, 139,130 Chinese were enrolled in higher education studies).^{iv} 52,545 students, instead, come from India and 19,940 from the USA. (Oxford and Cambridge rank the 5th and 6th education places in the world, but also Imperial College and University College London are top ranked).^v In 2017, Ireland, Romania, and Poland were the top three most relevant countries of origin for foreign residents in Northern Ireland, while about half of the migrants living in Scotland come from England (54%)^{vi}.

The majority of the British migrants live in London, Birmingham and Cardiff (Wales), while migrants moving to Scotland usually reside in Edinburgh (30,120 migrants in 2019-2020), Glasgow (32,000), and Lothian (34,000). Most of them, though, move to Greater Glasgow and Clyde (36,000 in 2019-2020). The Scots migrate to Great Britain, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Because of the EU inclusion of Eastern countries and due to the Middle East instability, the British population has increased by 4 million people in the last 10 years. This has been a major point of contention for Brexit, considering the increasing number of migrants one of the main reasons for leaving the EU.

International and internal migrants face several problems. Intraregional migration within Europe is dynamic thanks to the free movement of people within the Schengen Area. However after Brexit, the Dublin III Regulation will no longer apply to the UK and therefore new bilateral agreements^{vii} were made between an EU member state and the UK.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

About 407,000 people left the UK in 2019, and almost half of them (48%) held professional or managerial roles.^{viii} An increasing number of British citizens emigrating from the UK come from professional or managerial occupations, leaving the UK for work-related reasons (72% in 2011).^{ix} Among the adults, far more women than men emigrate to accompany or join someone else abroad.

Outside the EU, Australia has been the major destination country, followed by the US and Canada. Regarding other EU destinations, Spain is the most common one for the British, even before Ireland (ranking 2nd).

IV. Forced Migration (internally displaced, asylum seekers, refugees, and climate-displaced people)

According to the UK government, “in 2020, there were 2,331 requests from EU member states to transfer individuals into the UK. There were 882 transfers into the UK. The majority (551) of these transfers came from Greece.”^x

According to UNHCR, at the end of 2020 there were 132,349 refugees living in the UK, and in 2021 the main country asking for asylum in the UK was Iran, followed by Albania (2,840), Eritrea (2,373), Iraq (2,125) and Sudan (1,913). Most asylum-seekers do not have the right to work in the UK and have to solely rely on government support. Scotland welcomed over 2,000 Syrian refugees in November 2015, and within two years - as of 31 December 2017 - there were already 3,650 asylum seekers living in Scotland, especially in Glasgow.^{xi}

Female migration is similar to men’s; however, its challenges are different, like poverty, gender inequalities, and discrimination. In addition to professional reasons (52%), women also migrate for family reunification; in fact, just in 2013 75% of them came to the UK to finally join their own spouse.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Victims of trafficking are both men and women, children and adults. In 2019, 10,627 potential victims of modern slavery were identified in the UK, and this number is almost double if compared to the 6,986 individuals detected in the previous year. Most of the reported cases were located in England.^{xii}

According to government data, in 2019 many victims of modern slavery referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) were Albanian (1,705 victims), Vietnamese (887), Chinese (798), Indian (467), and Eritrean (466). They were mainly located in the suburbs of central England. In 2020 10,613 potential victims were reported through the NRM^{xiii}; 74% of them were male and 26% female. Their main nationalities were the UK, Albania, and Vietnam, and especially Vietnamese were located in Scotland. The two most common forms of exploitation for both adults and children were labour trafficking and forced criminality. Many were forced to work “in agriculture, cannabis farms, and nail bars.”^{xiv} Sex trafficking was present in Northern Ireland and affected mostly young women coming from Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania).

The 2006 UNODC report noted that “the UK is one of the main destinations of adults and children who are trafficked from: Central and South Eastern Europe; the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Africa; Asia; Latin America; and the Caribbean”.^{xv} For instance, hundreds of people came from Poland to the West Midlands with the promise of better lives. Both adults and children

often cross many transit countries on their way to the UK. Some of the routes are arduous and dangerous, leaving for example from Vietnam and going to China, Russia, Northern or Western Europe, and finally arriving in the UK.

Sexual exploitation, forced labour, and domestic servitude are considered the main causes of human trafficking, often living in very poor and desperate conditions. Dozens of people are crammed up in small rooms with no beds, heating and hot water, or no cooking facilities. They are usually robbed of their goods and their bank cards get stolen.

VI. National Legal Framework

The main legal document referred to for migration issues in the UK is the Immigration Act (1971). In addition to that, the Immigration Rules have also been implemented. These are “some of the most important pieces of legislation that make up the UK’s immigration law”^{xvi} and are regularly updated. The UK adopted, and because of that it is obligated to carefully evaluate every asylum application in the UK requested by a person claiming to be fleeing persecution.^{xvii}

Concerning the issue of human trafficking, some legal agreements have been enacted. In 2003, the UK implemented the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. In 2007 an international convention was signed by the UK, the Council of Europe convention on action against trafficking in human beings, in order to prevent human trafficking and protect victims. It also promotes international cooperation by joining efforts to counteract human trafficking. The 2010 Coalition Agreement is another document where the government expresses the intention to tackle human trafficking as a priority and to create a dedicated Border Police Force, thus preventing human trafficking.

Moreover, human trafficking is prosecuted under the 2015 Modern Slavery Act in England and Wales. Some provisions apply also to Scotland and Northern Ireland. This act also includes some victims’ protection measures, such as children’s trafficking advocates, and appears to be an innovative tool to tackle the issue under many perspectives.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The government department responsible for immigration and security in the UK is the Home Office (HO), handling “passports, drugs policy, crime, fire, counter-terrorism and police.”^{xviii} The Home Office is supported by several agencies and public bodies. The Border Force^{xix} and the UK Visas and Immigration Office are two very relevant institutions. “Border Force is a law enforcement command within the Home Office”^{xx} and keeps the UK border safe by conducting immigration and custom checks on individuals and commodities entering the country. The UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) department, in turn, allows people to visit or stay in the country. The Border Force body and the UKVI are both part of the Home Office.^{xxi}

On March 4, 2021 the UK Government published the New Plan for Immigration, aiming at improving the fairness of the system and better protecting individuals in real need of asylum.^{xxii} It also tries to prevent unlawful entrance into the UK, as well as to speed up the process of removal of persons who have no legal right to be in the UK.

A new association, the Santa Maria Group bringing together international police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with civil society members, tries to combine the resources available in the Law Enforcement Agencies and in the Church to prevent trafficking and modern slavery. This group provides, along with police personnel, pastoral care to victims, accompanying them in the process of re-integration in the community^{xxiii}.

The Catholic Church

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) is the official agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for domestic social action. It is a member of Caritas Internationalis and offers support for migrants in their administrative and legal procedures, distributes food and provides them with pastoral and health care, protection and shelter, formal and informal education, legal assistance, life and job skills training and entrepreneurship opportunities.^{xxiv} CSAN includes over 40 Catholic charities and a growing number of diocesan Caritas offices, working across England and Wales, by providing support to families and children living in poverty, to prisoners, victims of crime and refugees.^{xxv}

The Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN) helps migrants, refugees, internally displaced people and seafarers in various countries, including the UK, where it focuses on one specific project concerning chaplaincies.^{xxvi}

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation and works in the UK advocating for the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced persons.^{xxvii} JRS UK has “a special ministry for those who find themselves destitute as a consequence of government policies and those detained for the administration of immigration procedures”.^{xxviii}

The Claretian community is specifically active in Buckden Towers (England). They offer services to Spanish speaking immigrants in the London area. Today the parish ministry continues to serve different immigrant communities.^{xxix}

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has a specific office taking care of migrants and refugees, the Office for Migration Policy.^{xxx} This office collects data and provides briefings on migration concerns so that bishops can formulate policies and react to debates. The Office for Migration Policy has many objectives, and, among other activities, it deals with pastoral challenges and promotes key events for migrant communities. It has established a Migrants' Mass to honour migrant workers and their families' contributions to UK society.

The Community Sponsorship Scheme is a government-backed program allowing community organisations, such as the Catholic Church, its agencies and charities to help resettle refugees in

the UK. This plan, based on a Canadian model, has successfully relocated more than 300,000 migrants since 1978. A dedicated network of volunteers provides on-going support for this programme. The first Catholic parish to welcome a Syrian family with this new program was St. Monica's, Flixton, in the Diocese of Salford (November 2016). Caritas Salford has been a part of the project since its start.^{xxxi}

In 2008 the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference established the Irish Episcopal Council for Immigrants (IECI). IECI offers English classes to immigrant communities and encourages them to become active participants in parish life.^{xxxii} Geographically, the diocese of Westminster is one of the smallest dioceses in England and Wales, but it is the largest in terms of Catholic population and priests. It instituted a mission to enact more globally a "Safeguarding Service"^{xxxiii} concerning children and adults at risk, or survivors of abuse. Also the archdiocese of Cardiff has welcomed refugees^{xxxiv}.

The Salesian Section for Mission and Volunteering UK – the Salesian Youth Ministry –^{xxxv} plays a role "in the international scene across Europe as part of Don Bosco Youth-Net and in the worldwide Salesian Youth Movement".^{xxxvi} Young adult volunteers can spend a gap year helping young people at "Savio House", and especially young migrants and asylum seekers have been the focus of their most recent program.

In Northern Ireland, the Down and Connor is the second largest diocese in Ireland. In 2015 its Bishop set up a team to provide a humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis. In the diocese of Derry, instead, a special coordinator takes care of the migration department, called Pastoral Care for Migrants and Asylum Seekers.^{xxxvii}

In September 2015, the Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR)^{xxxviii}, a multi-faith partnership project hosted by the Church of Scotland, established this refugee coordination project as a response to the desire expressed by many congregations across the country to help and support the integration of "asylum seekers and refugees."^{xxxix} The Catholic Church, in particular, is involved in the Justice and Peace Commission. "The group aims to advise members of faith communities in Scotland on practical, societal and ethical issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers; support and encourage faith-based humanitarian and advocacy efforts to promote the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers, and propose and co-ordinate joint initiatives."^{xl} SFAR follows the principles of integration set out in the Scottish Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022,^{xli} by promoting refugee integration in Scotland through language, city tours and other activities.

In Scotland, another active charity outside the Justice and Peace Commission is the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF). It is the international aid charity of the Bishops' Conference in Scotland.^{xlii} It is located in Glasgow and mostly works with the Emergency Response Fund.^{xliii}

The Order of Malta also operates in Scotland and England, serving the poor and the sick. There

are nearly one hundred Companions in Scotland doing “regular charitable activities in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Coatbridge, St. Andrews and Wick”. The Order of Malta in the region not only provides volunteers with the disabled, terminally ill and vulnerable people, but also launches emergency appeals, such as the one for the Afghan refugees. It holds several reunions during the year, both for volunteers and guests to spend time together.

International and other organisations

The main agencies involved with migration issues are the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Home Office. They specifically deal with victims of human trafficking. The Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) is an independent source of advice for trafficked children. ICTGs are currently available in England and Wales with the mission to provide specialistic independent support for every kid. The British charity Barnardo's is also another organisation providing direct and professional care to trafficked children. The most active group seems to be the Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium (RMCC), a group of NGOs working collaboratively to ensure that the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children are promoted, respected and met in accordance with the relevant domestic, regional and international standards.

These associations offer positive solutions to tackle the migration issue. However, the ICTGs only operate in a few geographic locations and lack the professional competence and reputation needed to deliver an effective safeguarding response. In 2018, an additional £2 million grant was given to ICTGs, which reveals a funding shortfall and the need to work closely with first responders, especially police.

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy ensures that refugees and asylum seekers are supported and integrated from the first day of their arrival.^{xliv} “Since 2014, the strategy has been led in partnership by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council, to coordinate activities which support refugees, asylum seekers and communities in Scotland.”^{xlv}

The Red Cross Refugee Support is also an organisation helping with asylum support enquiries. “The Red Cross currently has more than 2,600 Community Reserve Volunteers in Scotland but wants to boost that response to serve even more communities.”^{xlvi}

Another organisation is the Freedom from Torture, “a British registered charity which provides therapeutic care for survivors of torture who seek protection in the UK.”^{xlvii}

Finally, the Scottish Refugee Council - like the Irish Refugee Council in Ireland - is a service available to people for “all aspects of building a new life in Scotland.”^{xlviii} It helps with “housing, education, health, learning English and building social connections.”^{xlix} It seems to be a deeply effective service.

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- xlvii Freedom From Torture <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/>
- xlviii Scottish Refugee Council <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>
- xliv *ibidem*