



Patterns and perceptions of migration, is Scotland distinct from the rest of the UK?

The forthcoming referendum on the constitutional future of Scotland has inevitably been the focus of considerable public debate. The issue of migration has not featured strongly in these discussions. However there are grounds for believing that Scotland is 'different' from the rest of the UK in terms of migration patterns and in relation to public attitudes towards immigration. This briefing introduces some of the issues that are being addressed by an ESRC Centre for Population Change study investigating how migration in Scotland is different from the rest of the UK and how Scottish independence from the UK might affect migration. The results show that migration is a stronger determinant of future population change in Scotland than the rest of the UK and the general public in Scotland has a more tolerant view of migration than elsewhere in the UK.

Key Points

- In a reversal of historic trends, Scotland has in every year over the past decade gained more people than it has lost through internal migration
- Scotland has a low immigrant population compared to many other parts of the UK
- Migration is much more of an important driver of population change in Scotland than it is in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- The general public in Scotland is less opposed to immigration than is the case in many other parts of the UK

Introduction

This briefing investigates how migration to and from Scotland is different from the rest of the UK, and how Scottish independence from the UK might affect migration. This is of interest given the potentially differing policies towards migration that could emerge between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Particular questions considered include: Does Scotland gain

or lose population through internal mobility within the UK? How does the scale of international migration to Scotland compare with the rest of the UK? How important is migration as a driver of demographic change in Scotland relative to other parts of the UK? Does the general public in Scotland hold distinct views towards immigration?

Unlike the UK as a whole, Scotland has traditionally lost more people than it has gained from migration. Figure 1 demonstrates that over the past decade this trend has ceased with the country experiencing annual net gains from migration.

Scotland and internal mobility within the UK

Part of this reversal can be attributed to changes in population movements within the UK. As Figure 2 shows, since 2000-1 Scotland has consistently experienced net gains through internal migration.

Scotland and international migration

Most of the gains in population that Scotland has experienced have been through international migration. Of the 28,300 net migrants that Scotland gained between June 2010 and June 2011, 2,900 of them were a net gain from rest of the UK and 25,400 were a net gain from overseas. As can be seen in Figure 3 Scotland has made significant gains from international migration for the past decade.

Despite the significant gains in population from international migration, Scotland has a relatively small immigrant population relative to England, especially London (Figure 4).

Migration and demographic change in Scotland

An important way in which Scotland differs significantly from the other nations in the UK is in how international migration influences population change. As is evident in Figure 5, population growth in Scotland in the short and medium term is projected to be driven by migration to a much greater extent than will be the case in the rest of the UK. This clearly marks Scotland out as distinct from the three other UK nations as it is comparatively heavily reliant on the in-movement of people for population growth. This has significant

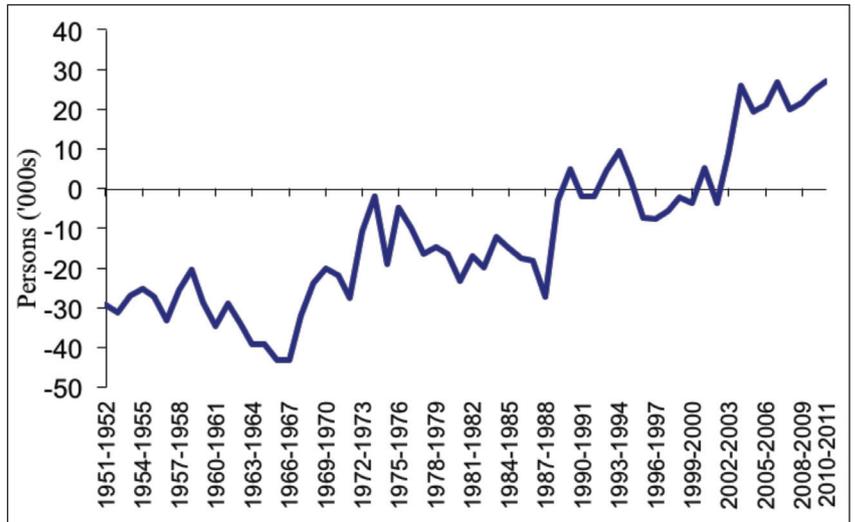


Figure 1: Estimated total (internal and international) net migration, Scotland 1951-2011
Source: Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends 157th Edition, 2012

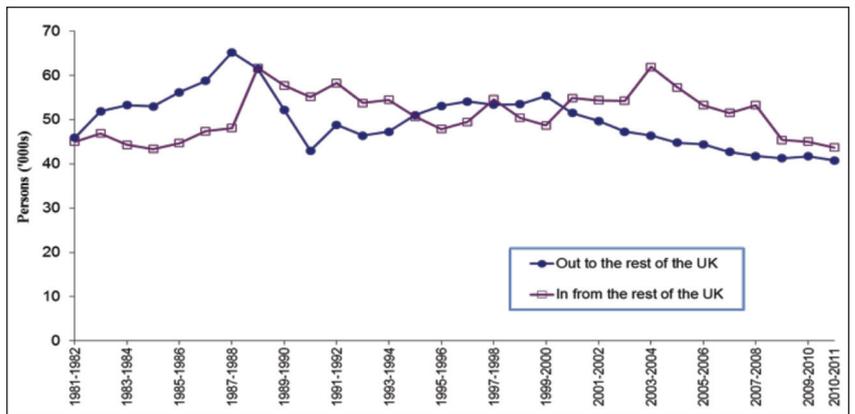


Figure 2: Estimated internal migration, Scotland 1981-2011
Source: Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends 157th Edition, 2012

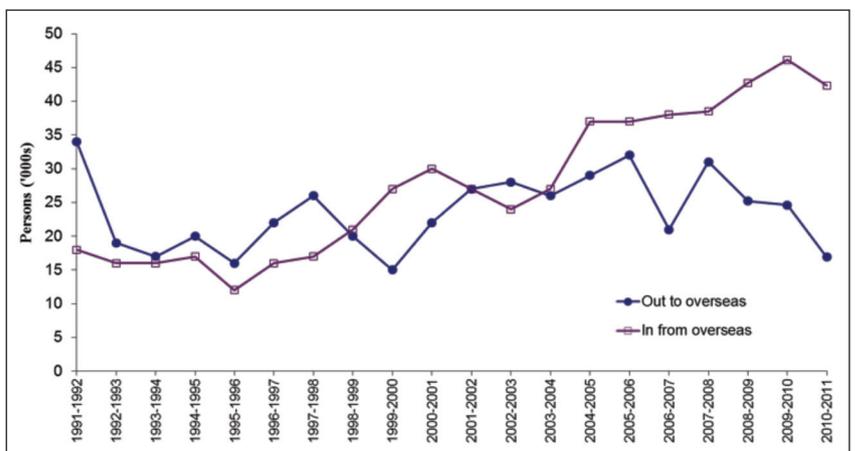


Figure 3: Estimated international migration, Scotland 1991-2011
Source: Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends 157th Edition, 2012

implications for Scotland's policy goal of population growth (as is discussed later in this document).

Public attitudes towards immigration in Scotland

Not only is Scotland distinct in terms of having a relatively small immigrant population and being reliant on migration for population growth but the Scottish public may be less hostile to immigration than is the case in many other parts of the UK. As is shown in Figure 6, residents of Scotland are less likely to identify immigration as a key concern than residents of most other parts of Britain. Further analysis of the British Social Attitudes Survey (not shown here) finds that residents of Scotland are less likely to describe themselves as 'very or a little prejudiced against people from other races' than is the case in Great Britain generally (24% and 30% respectively) and are slightly less inclined to agree with the statement that 'ethnic minorities take jobs away from other people in Britain' (36% and 39% respectively). This finding is significant for policymakers in promoting Scotland as being more 'open' towards immigrants than elsewhere.

Discussion and policy implications

This analysis reveals that Scotland is distinct from the UK as a whole in that migration is a more important determinant of future population change and the general public are less hostile to immigration. Consequently policy rhetoric towards immigration differs greatly between Westminster and Holyrood. The current UK coalition government has introduced a raft of restrictive immigration policies since it came to power in 2010 and has a much published pledge to reduce net migration to less than 100,000 by the time of the next election in 2015. On the other hand the Scottish Government, reflecting the country's demographic challenges, has identified immigration as a key driver of population and economic growth. This has led to the creation of an official Population

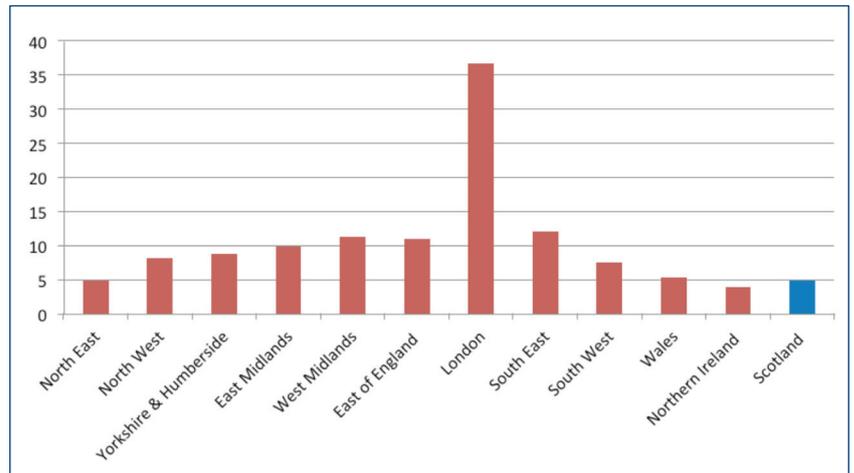


Figure 4: Proportion of usual residents that are foreign born, 2011
 Source: 2011 Census for England and Wales, 2011 Census for Scotland and 2011 Census for Northern Ireland *Foreign born population not yet available from the Scottish and Northern Irish censuses, calculations based on estimates from All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, 2013

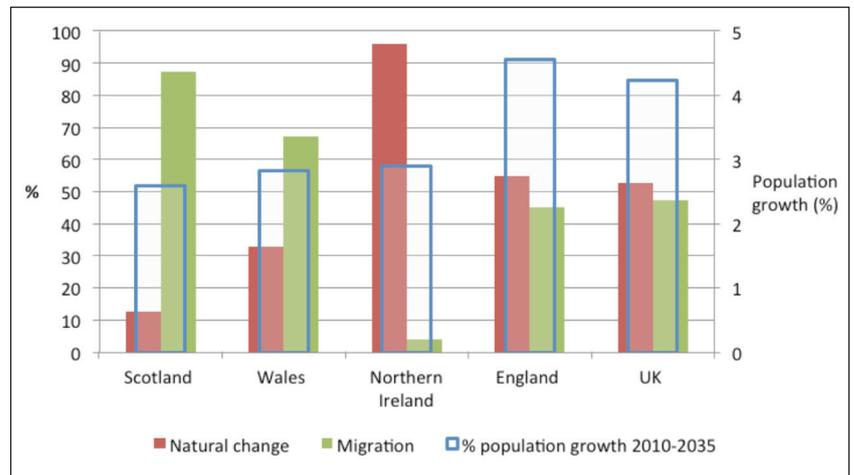


Figure 5: Role of migration relative to natural change in projected population growth, 2010-2035
 Source: ONS national population projections 2010-2035

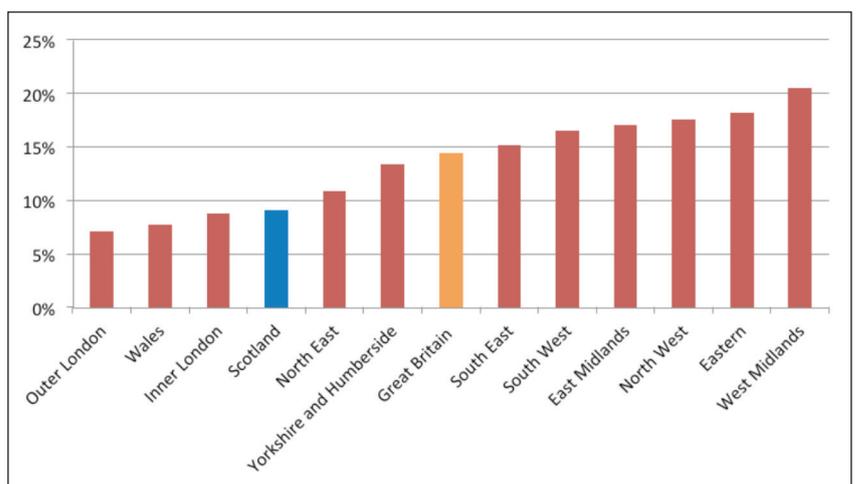


Figure 6: Proportion of respondents naming immigration as the most important issue facing Britain today.
 Source: 2010 British Social Attitudes Survey

Target, which hopes to see population growth in Scotland match average European (EU-15) population growth over the period 2007-2017. However under the 1998 Scotland Act which reinstated the Scottish Parliament, the immigration system and border controls are issues which remain 'reserved' to the UK government. This inevitably limits the extent to which the Scottish Government can directly influence international migration.

The prospect of constitutional change in Scotland raises a number of interesting migration issues. Independence

would give Scotland greater direct policy influence over inflows, with the expectation being that the Scottish Government would enact a less restrictive approach to immigration than Westminster. There is some uncertainty relating to migration from the European Union. It is possible that Scotland could leave the UK but remain in the EU. Equally the UK could leave the EU. It is these complex relations between potential Scottish constitutional change and migration which this on-going research project seeks to investigate.

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