

The need for continued inflows of EU workers to the UK

European Union: MW 401

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Summary

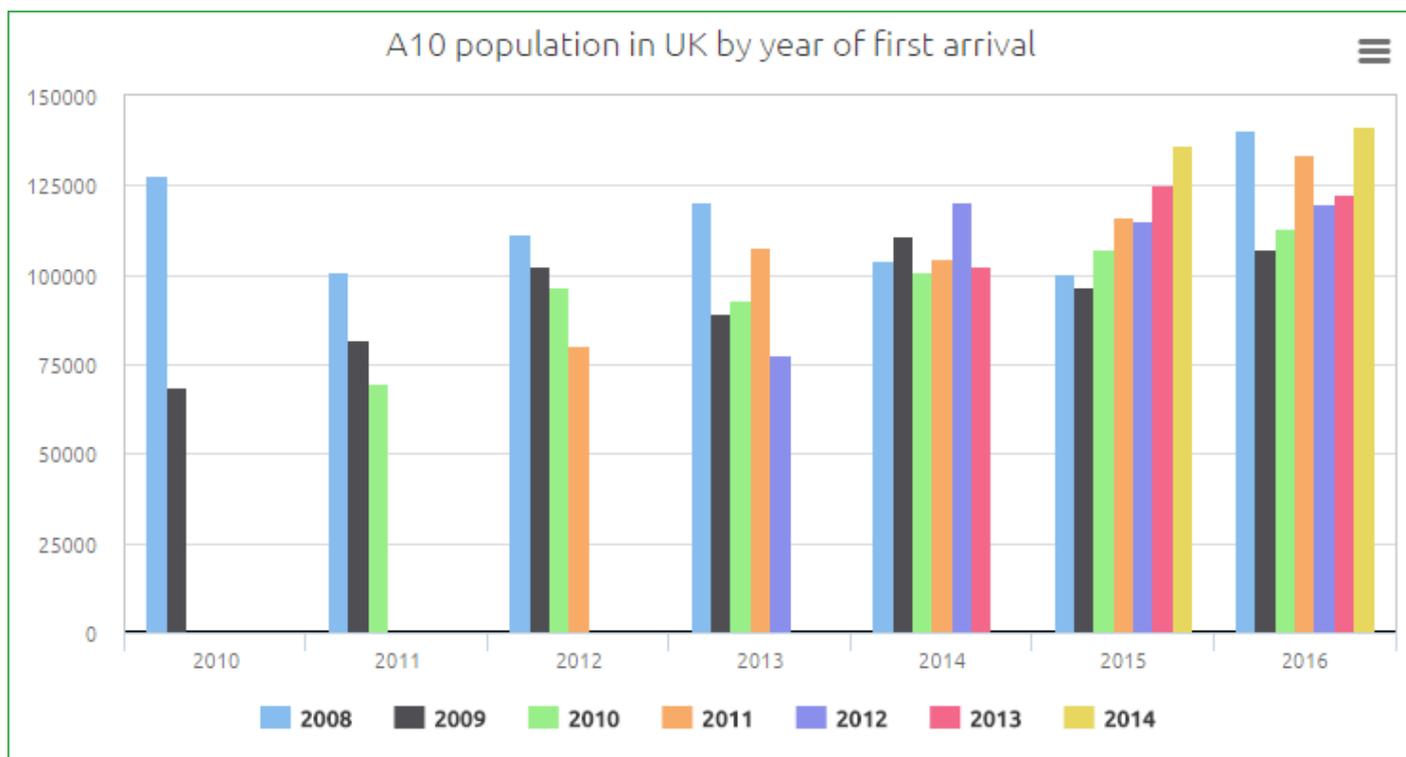
1. Some business leaders are concerned that once Britain leaves the European Union, controls on immigration will prevent them from maintaining the existing workforce of East Europeans, a large proportion of whom work in lower skilled and lower paid occupations. However, analysis of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) suggests that this has been a largely settled population, at least since the end of the recession. This suggests that there is no need for a continued inflow to maintain the existing stock of Eastern European workers in particular.

Detail

2. Concerns have been expressed that post-Brexit controls on the entry of EU workers will lead to serious shortages of labour.

3. However data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) suggests that they are a stable population. The graph below shows the annual stock from 2010 onwards of those EU10 migrants who have arrived in each year since 2008. If the numbers of each arrival cohort diminished year on year, that might suggest that continued inflows were needed to maintain the population at any given level. However, that does not appear to have been the case, and instead of a downward trend, there has been a steady increase in their number. This increase could be explained by workers who did not think that they would stay long-term in the UK (and hence were excluded from the LFS in the year they arrived) but actually ending up doing so.

Figure 1. The stock of EU10 migrants in the UK, 2010-2016, by year of first arrival, 2008-2014.

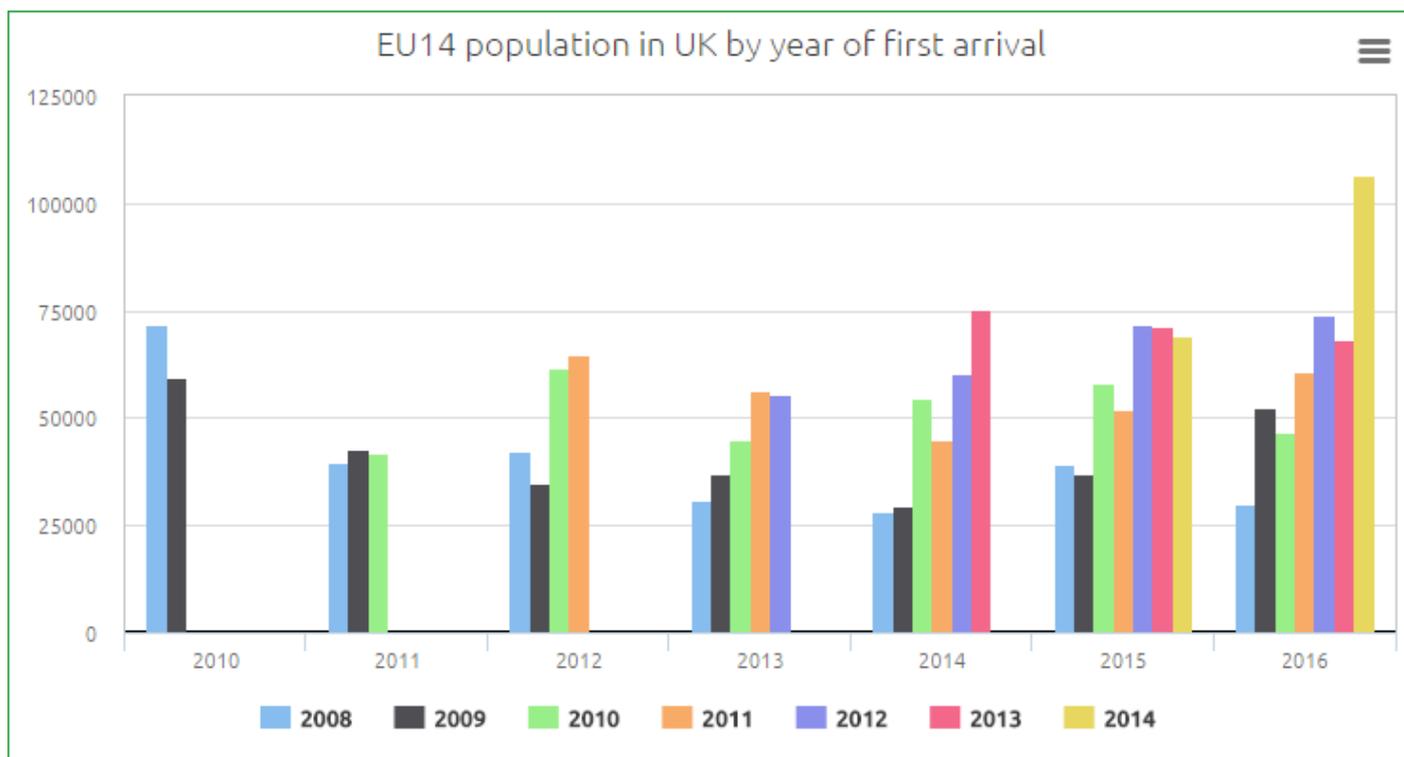


4. On the assumption that EU citizens who are here before the UK leaves the European Union will have their rights preserved, this analysis suggests that there will not be a need for any significant continuing inflow to sustain the *existing* East European work force as it appears that previous arrivals have not in fact tended to leave the UK such as to need continual replenishment.

Comparison with the EU14 and Non-EU populations in the UK

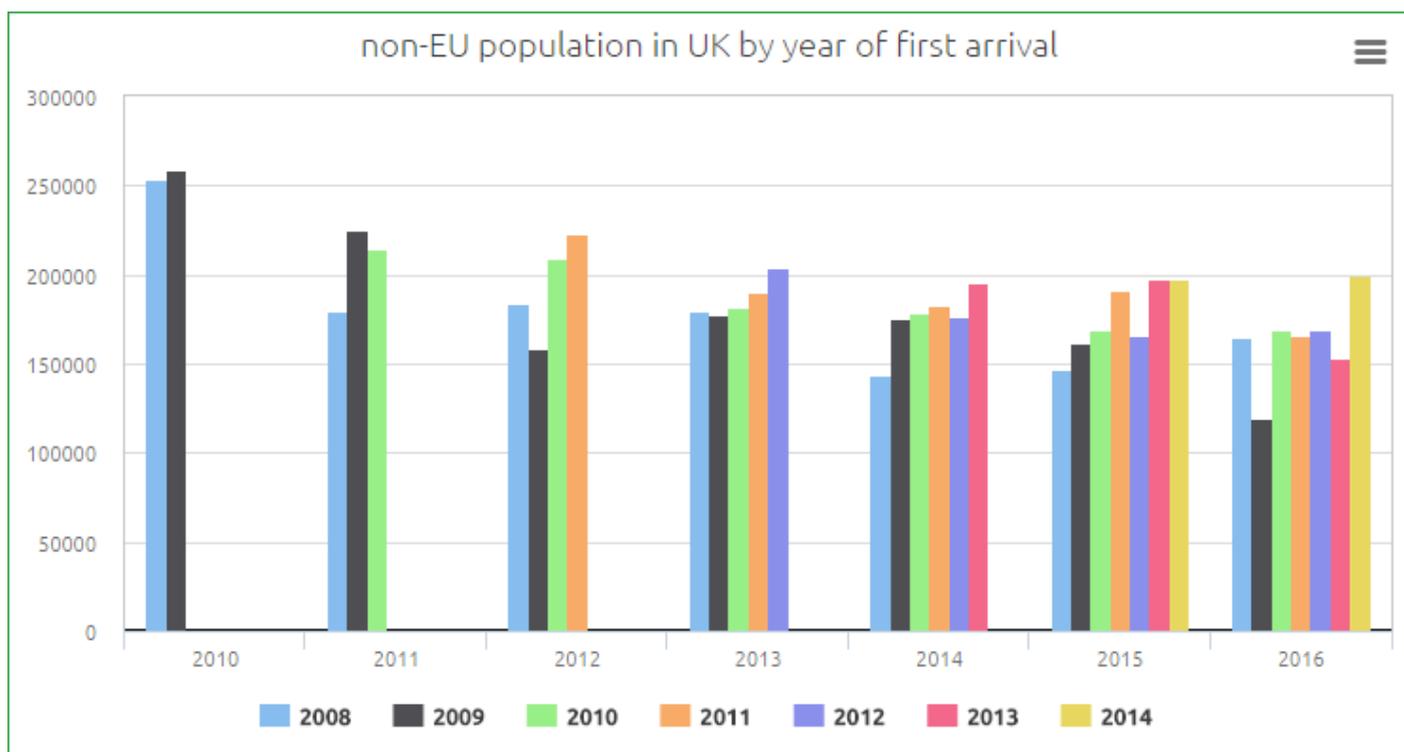
5. A slightly different pattern can be observed in the LFS in respect of the EU14 who have arrived since 2008, but again the overall picture is not one of a diminishing stock of previous cohorts, particularly amongst those who arrived since 2010. See figure 2 below.

Figure 2. The stock of EU14 workers in the UK, 2010-2016, by year of first arrival, 2008-2014.



6. A different pattern is observed in respect of the non-EU population living in the UK. With the exception of those who arrived in 2014, the annual stock of those who arrived in each year of arrival has declined. This is consistent with the visa requirements imposed on non-EU migrants to the UK that impose time-limits on the stays of many of those admitted to the UK. See figure 3 below.

Figure 3. The stock of non-EU migrants in the UK, 2010-2016, by year of first arrival, 2008-2014.



Conclusion

7. The data on long-term migrants suggests that migrants from the EU tend to settle down and stay in the UK, including some of those who originally arrive only intending to stay for a short time. This is in contrast to non-EU migrants who exhibit a much higher rate of churn.

14th February 2017