

## UK Tightens Immigration Rules as Net Migration Falls, EU Mobility Raises Concerns

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— Categories: Breaking News



The UK has seen a significant fall in net migration alongside growing political debate over potential schemes that could increase EU citizens' access to the country, sparking fresh concern over immigration policy under the Labour government.

Latest figures show that net migration dropped to 431,000 in 2024, down from a record 860,000 the previous year. The fall has been driven by a decline in international student arrivals, particularly their dependents, and an increase in departures, including former visa holders leaving at the end of study or work periods. This marks the largest year-on-year drop ever recorded.

Despite Brexit ending free movement, discussions around new bilateral mobility agreements with EU countries, such as a proposed youth mobility scheme, have alarmed critics. They argue that such deals could be used to reintroduce mass EU migration through the back door, especially if they are not subject to strict quotas or safeguards.

Meanwhile, the government is pushing ahead with immigration reforms aimed at curbing low-skilled migration and reducing overall numbers. From July 2025, new rules will raise salary and skill thresholds for work visa applicants, tighten restrictions on dependents for international students and care workers, and introduce mandatory English language testing for adults applying to settle. The required residency period for citizenship is also set to double, from five to ten years, while overseas recruitment for certain care roles will be phased out.

Figures released for 2024 show that around 86% of long-term arrivals were from outside the EU, while EU citizens made up only 10%, a reversal of patterns seen before Brexit. Countries such as India, Nigeria, and Pakistan now dominate skilled worker arrivals, reshaping the migrant profile.

While economic contributions from migrants remain positive, EU citizens in the UK had an employment rate of 82% and median earnings of

£31,100, there is increasing scrutiny on welfare access. Over 1.2 million migrants are currently claiming Universal Credit, fuelling public concern about pressures on the welfare state and housing.

From a centre-right perspective, the shift reflects a more controlled, skills-based system that protects national interests while addressing workforce gaps. However, there is growing pressure on ministers to ensure any future mobility schemes with EU states are limited, reciprocal, and do not undermine the post-Brexit immigration settlement voters were promised.