

Relevant Data on EU-UK Migration Trends, EU students in the UK, and EU academic staff in the UK

Current migration trends between the EU and the UK (Source: The Migration Observatory¹)

Recent years have seen a marked shift in EU-UK migration dynamics. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of the post-Brexit immigration system, **net migration of EU citizens has turned negative**. EU immigration has **declined by nearly 70% from its peak in 2016**, a significant reversal from previous patterns.

Despite this decline, the EU-born population in the UK remains considerable. In 2021, there were **approximately 4 million EU-born residents**, accounting for **6% of the total UK population** and **37% of the foreign-born population**.

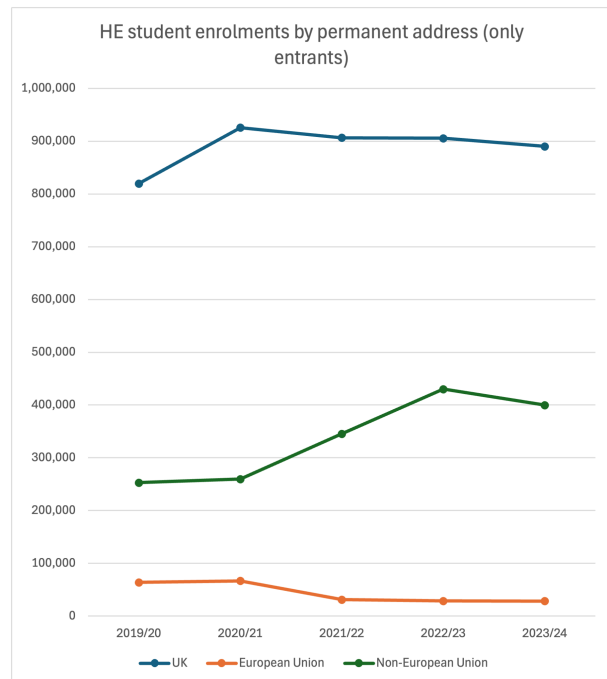
In the labour market, **EU nationals make up around 8% of the UK's total employment**. However, this share has been falling steadily since 2019, reflecting a sustained reduction in EU workforce presence.

EU students in the UK (Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency²)

The introduction of post-Brexit immigration rules has had a substantial impact on EU student participation in UK higher education. **New enrolments of EU students fell by 53%** immediately after the new rules took effect.

As of 2023/24, EU student enrolments continue to reflect this downward trajectory:

- Compared to 2020, **new EU student enrolments are down by 57%**.
- In contrast, **new non-EU international student enrolments have increased by 53%**.
- **New UK national student enrolments** have seen a **modest decline of 4%** over the same period.



These changes have significantly altered the profile of international student cohorts:

¹ Cuibus, M. (2023). BRIEFING EU migration to and from the UK.

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MigObs-Briefing-EU-migration-to-and-from-the-UK.pdf>

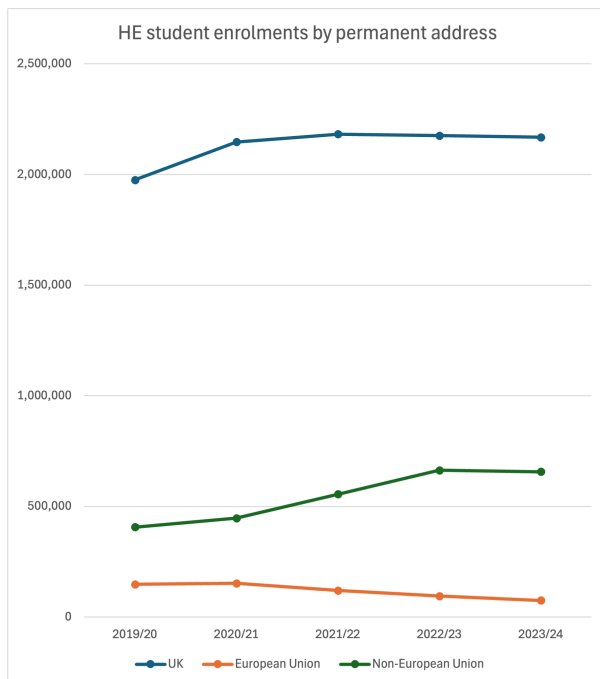
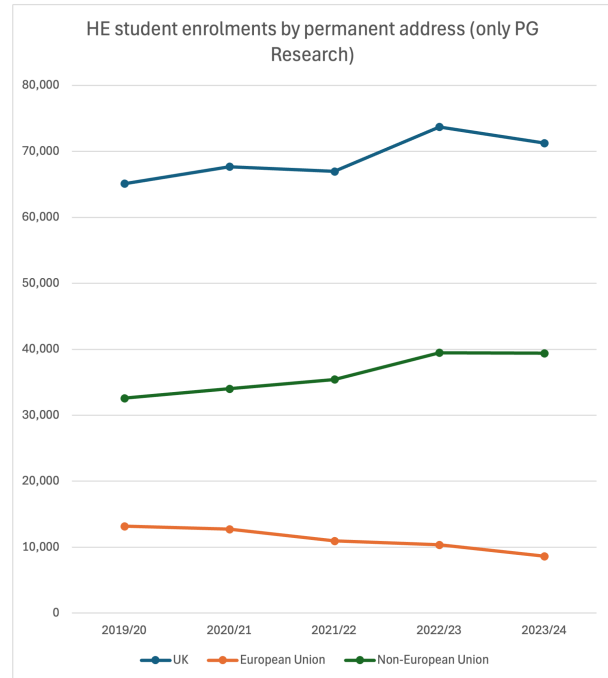
² Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (2025, April 3). Where do HE students come from? | HESA. Hesa.ac.uk.

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from>

- In **2016/17**, **EU students represented nearly 27% of new international students**; by **2023/24**, this share had decreased to **7%**.
- **Non-EU students now make up 93% of new international enrolments**, up from 73% in 2016/17.

A similar trend is evident among **postgraduate research (PGR) students**:

- **EU students accounted for 29% of new international PGR enrolments in 2019/20**; this figure has since dropped to **18%**.
- During the same period, the share of **non-EU PGR students increased from 71% to 82%**.



Looking beyond new enrolments to the overall student population:

- In **2023/24**, **EU students comprise just 2%** of total enrolments in UK universities.
- This represents a significant drop from **6% in 2019/20**.
- Over the same period, the proportion of **non-EU students increased from 16% to 23%**, while **UK nationals decreased slightly from 78% to 75%**.

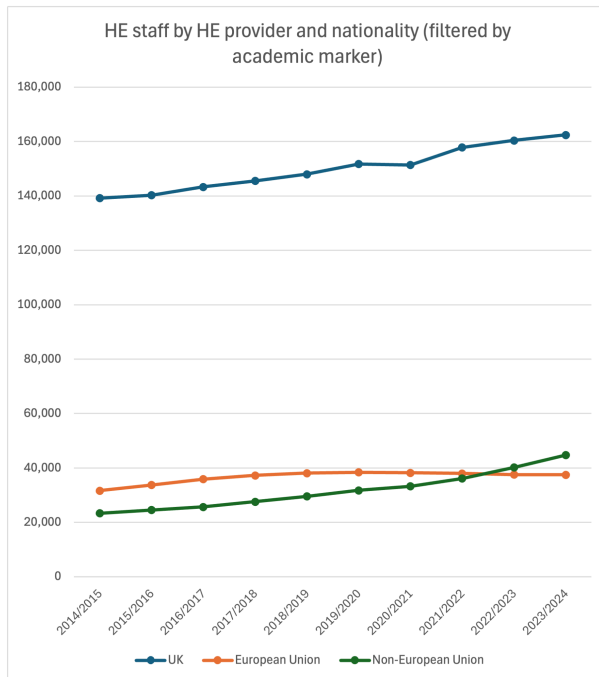
These figures reflect a clear and consistent reduction in the presence of EU students within UK higher education, both in relative and absolute terms.

EU academic staff in the UK (Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency³)

The number of **EU academic staff in UK higher education rose ahead of Brexit** but has since stabilised. While there has been no sharp decline, **growth has plateaued** in recent years.

Between 2014/15 and 2023/24, the number of EU nationals employed as academic staff in UK higher education **increased by 19%**. Over the same period:

- **UK national academic staff increased by 17%**
- **Non-EU academic staff increased by 92%**



This divergence has affected the overall composition of the academic workforce. **EU academics, who expanded their presence in the years leading up to Brexit, are now growing more slowly relative to other groups, particularly non-EU staff.**

While the total number of academic staff in the UK has grown by 25% over the past decade, the share accounted for by EU nationals has not kept pace with overall sector growth. This suggests a **relative decline in the contribution of EU academics** to the UK higher education workforce, even as absolute numbers have remained stable.

³ Where do they work, come from and go to? | HESA. (n.d.). [Www.hesa.ac.uk. https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/location](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/location)