



Immigration: Post-Brexit changes in NI continuing, says UU economist

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A post-Brexit change in immigration patterns to Northern Ireland is continuing, an Ulster University economist's analysis suggests.

UK law now makes it harder for non-Irish EU nationals to move to NI for low-paid work.

However, liberalisation of the visa system for high-skilled and medical workers is attracting more workers from India and other Asian countries.

The data also shows migration from sub-Saharan Africa has risen since 2020.

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Economist Mark Magill analysed national insurance registrations, which is one way to estimate migration inflows.

Changing patterns

In 2023 there were just 918 national insurance registrations from non-Irish EU nationals.

By comparison there were more around 6,600 registrations from Asia.

Mr Magill said: "The driver of higher Asian migration is India – and is a function of both work and study.

"There has also been a significant increase in new workers from the Philippines."

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Until 2020 there was very little migration from sub-Saharan Africa to NI, with only around 200 registrations per year.

In 2023 there were more than 2,000 registrations, primarily from Nigeria.

Mr Magill said that in 2023 there were 13,583 new national insurance registrations to overseas nationals entering Northern Ireland.

That was a slight decrease from 2022 (13,774), but still represents the second highest number recorded since 2007.

National insurance registrations give an indication of inflows but do not tell us about outflows, for example students leaving after they graduate,

The most recent net migration figures, which cover estimated inflows and outflows, suggest there was a net addition of around 2,300 people from migration in 2022.

In 2020 and 2021, there was net emigration of 3,348 and 403 people respectively.

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