Alternative Definitions of Migration

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Why we need alternative definitions

- Today, populations are more mobile than in past decades. We know there are people staying in the UK who are not covered by our official population estimates, and that movers with shorter or repeat patterns of mobility are not represented in our migration numbers.

- Patterns of migration have changed since the pandemic – need to reflect the reality of international mobility

- New opportunities to measure mobility using administrative data

- Policy makers want to assess migration policies at greater levels of granularity

What we already have

- Conceptual frameworks and related statistical concepts and definitions on international migration, UNSC, 2021
  - International mobility – all movements over a border in a given year
  - International migration & international migrant – all movements/movers where a change of residence occurs
  - Resident population – most of the last 12 months/intention for 6 months, at least 12 months/intention for 12 months
  - Additional concepts i.e. present population, cross border workers, seasonal workers
- International migrant workers, ILO, 2018
  - International migrant workers are defined as migrants of working age, who during a specified reference period, were in the labour force of the country of their usual residence, either in employment or in unemployment.
- Circular migration definition – UNECE, 2016
  - A circular migrant is a person who has crossed the national borders of the reporting country at least 3 times over a 10-year period, each time with duration of stay (abroad or in the country) of at least 90 days.
- 1998 - an international migrant is "any person who changes his or her country of usual residence"(United Nations, 1998).
  - He or she must have a previous country of usual residence, He or she must establish usual residence in the country of destination

Key components of population change

Long-term international migration (LTIM) estimates are a key component of change in the usual resident population.

Excludes other types of international mobility that do not meet the 12-month length of stay condition of LTIM.
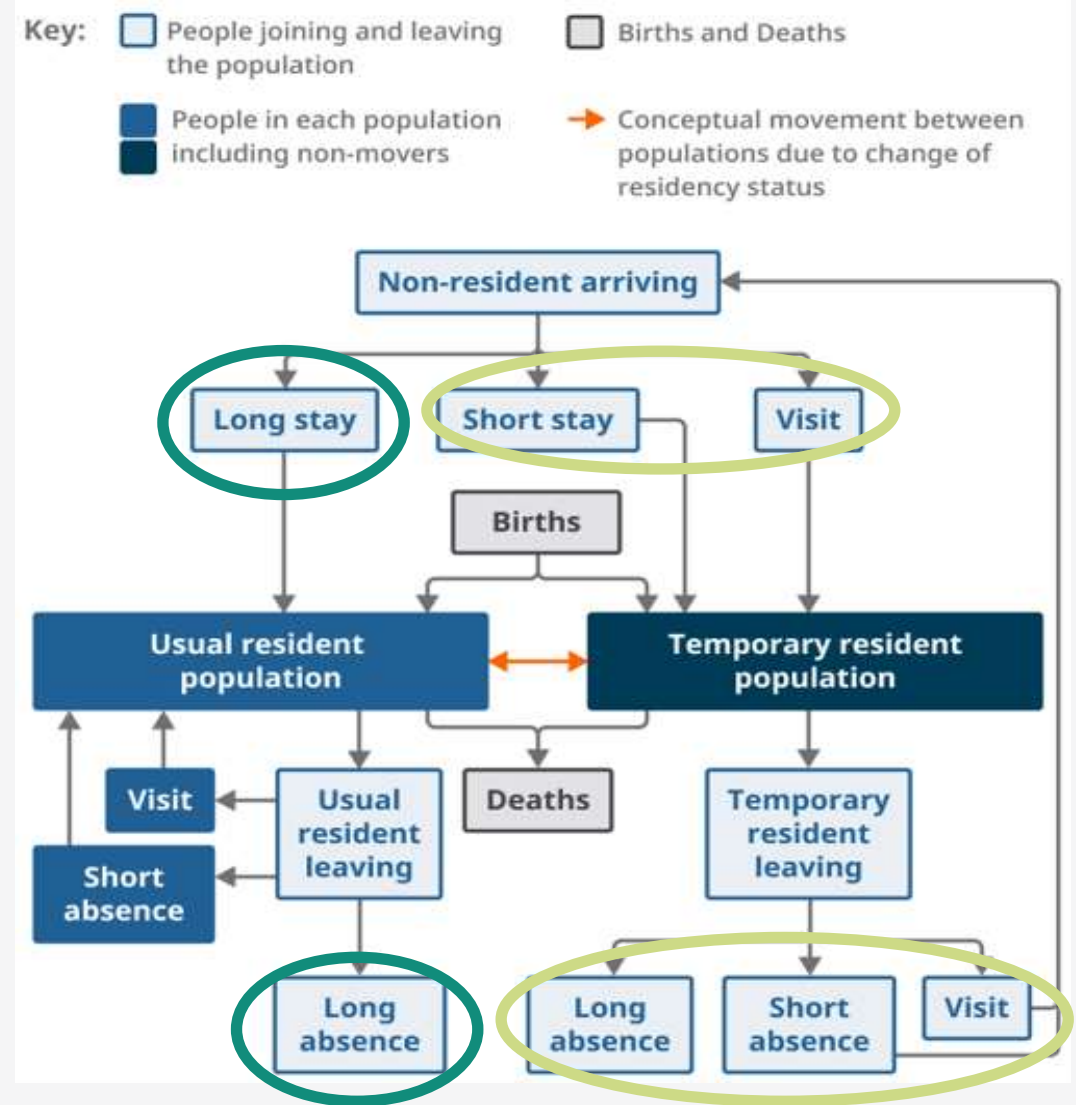
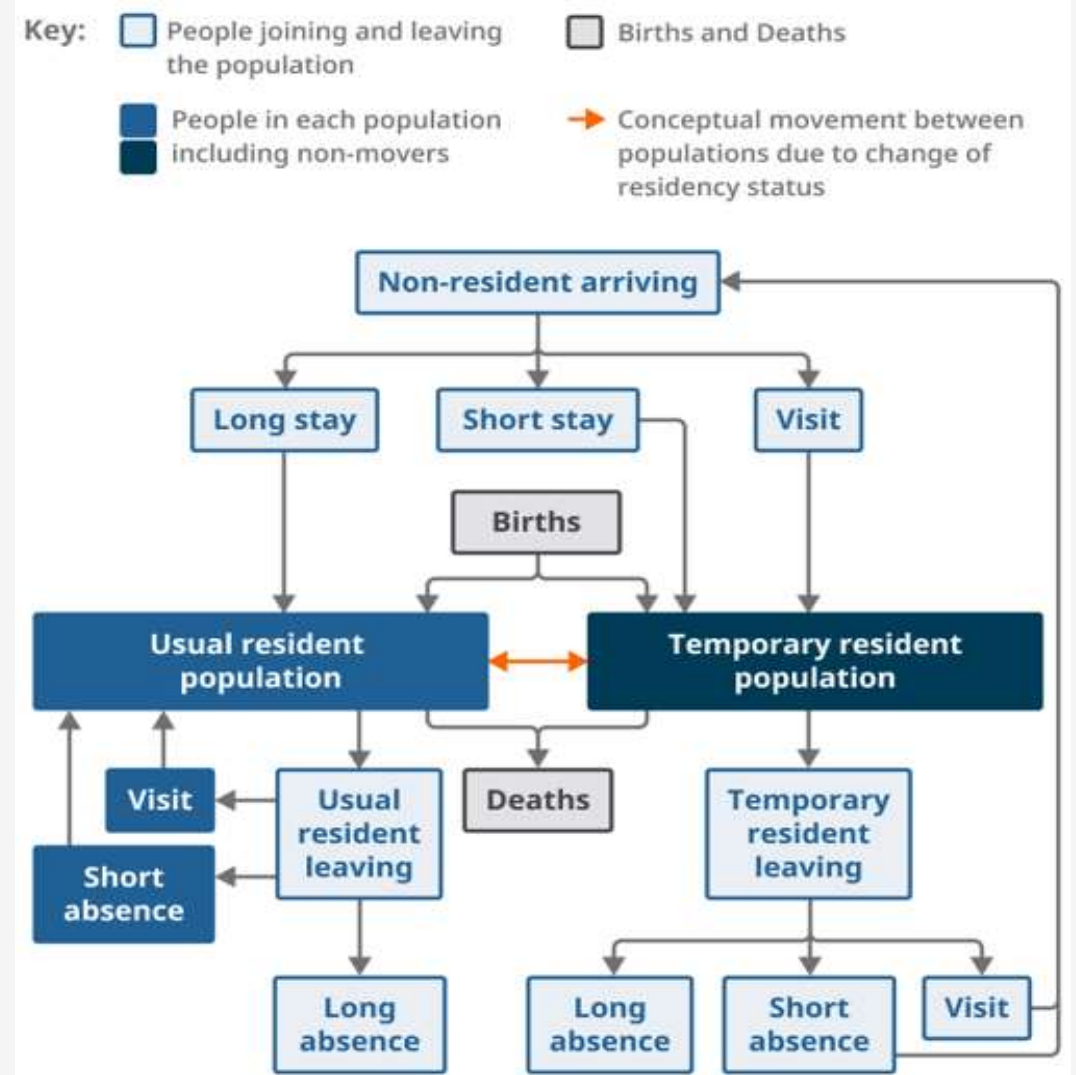A conceptual framework of how people move in and out of populations

Conceptual framework

Can apply at different geographies
- usual and temporary residents of a city, local authority administrative area, region, country

And for different time periods
- year, month, day, night

A conceptual framework of how people move in and out of populations
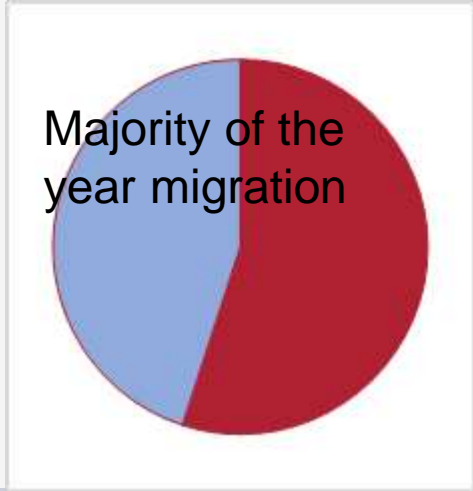
Alternative definitions of international mobility (i) Condition-based definitions

Less than 12 months

Majority of the year migration

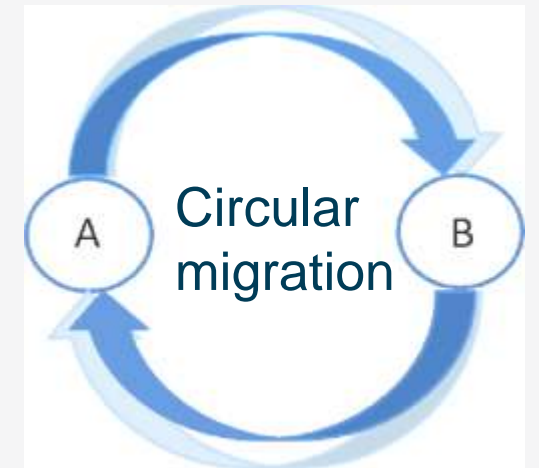Temporary residence in another country
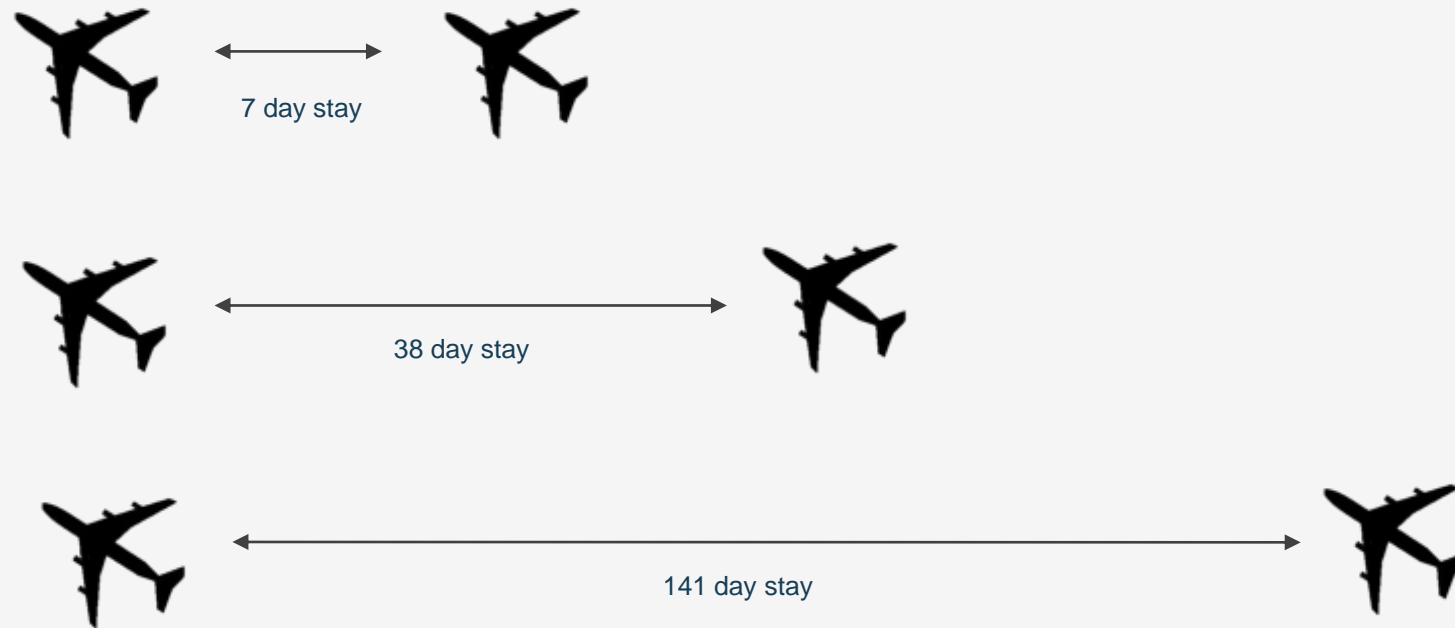

Seasonal migration

Short-term migration

Travel and Tourism

Circular migration

Different ways to categorise international mobility.

Travel record for one person in a period of 12 months:

7 day stay

38 day stay

141 day stay

- 3 journeys or moves

- Longest trip is for 4+ months

- Cumulative stay of 186 days (6 months & 3 days)

- Stayed majority of the 12-month period

- Altogether stayed more than 6 months but less than 9 months

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Possibilities

Six-month or nine-month plus length of stay; includes those living in an area and using the local services for at least six or nine months, but who did not stay for a whole year, such as **seasonal workers**

Majority of the time basis, cumulatively present in an area for more than 50% of a 12-month period; would include those whose time in an area was split over several substantial visits, such as **circular** and **repeat migrants**

12-month stay within a 16-month period; extends the period of time within which a **temporary resident** might be considered to be a **usual resident**, avoiding exclusion because of a short absence

Specific **short-term periods of stay** such as ≥ 1 month < 3 months, or ≥ 3 month < 6 months. Length of stay could be a **single occurrence** or **cumulative**
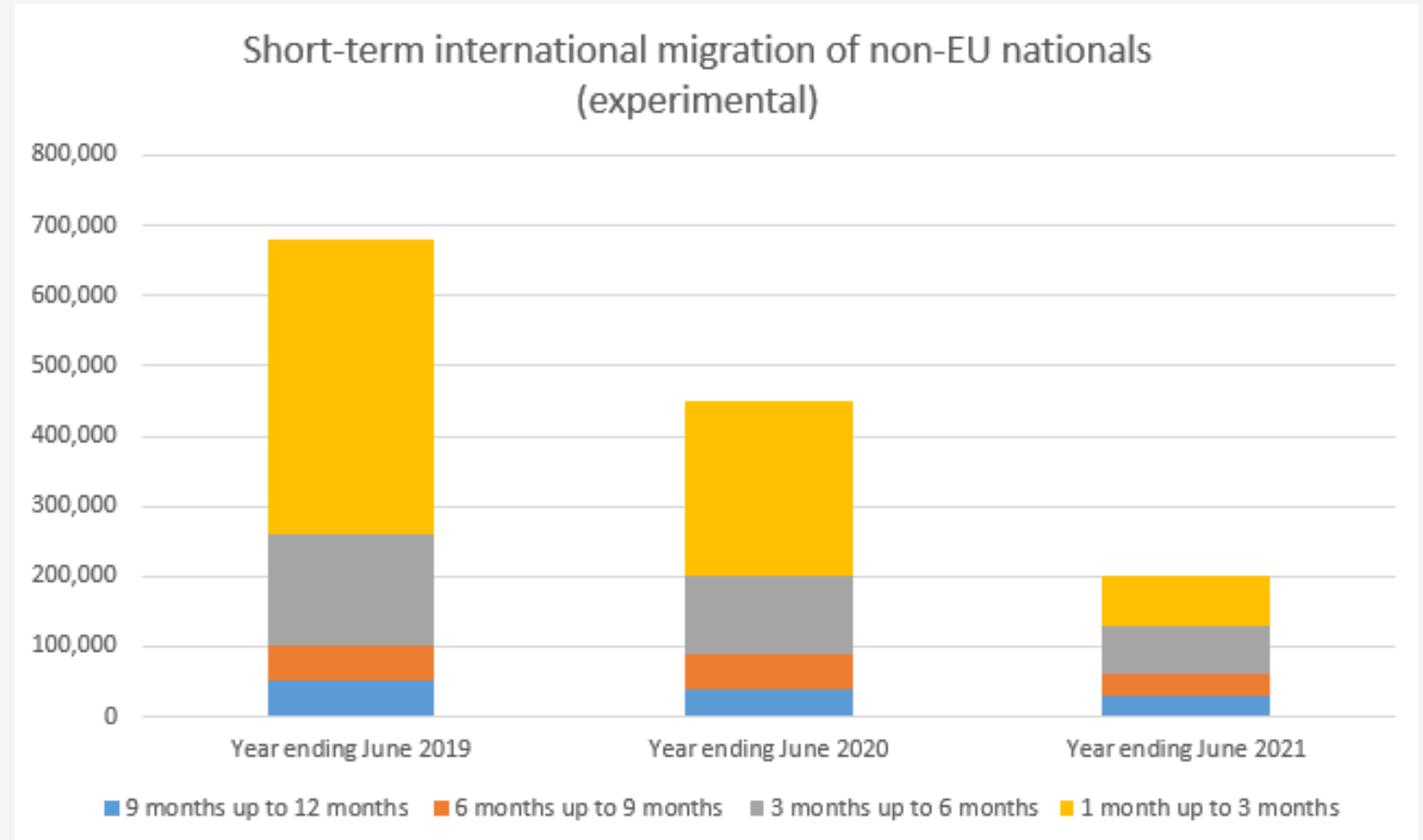
Population and migration estimates: exploring alternative definitions May 2023,ONS

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Short-term periods of stay

Excludes journeys with missing arrival/departure dates

Potential for greater detail i.e. work/visit using visa information

Potential to explore other presentations i.e. how many short-term migrants present on each day of the year

Short-term international migration of non-EU nationals (experimental)

Legend:
- 9 months up to 12 months
- 6 months up to 9 months
- 3 months up to 6 months
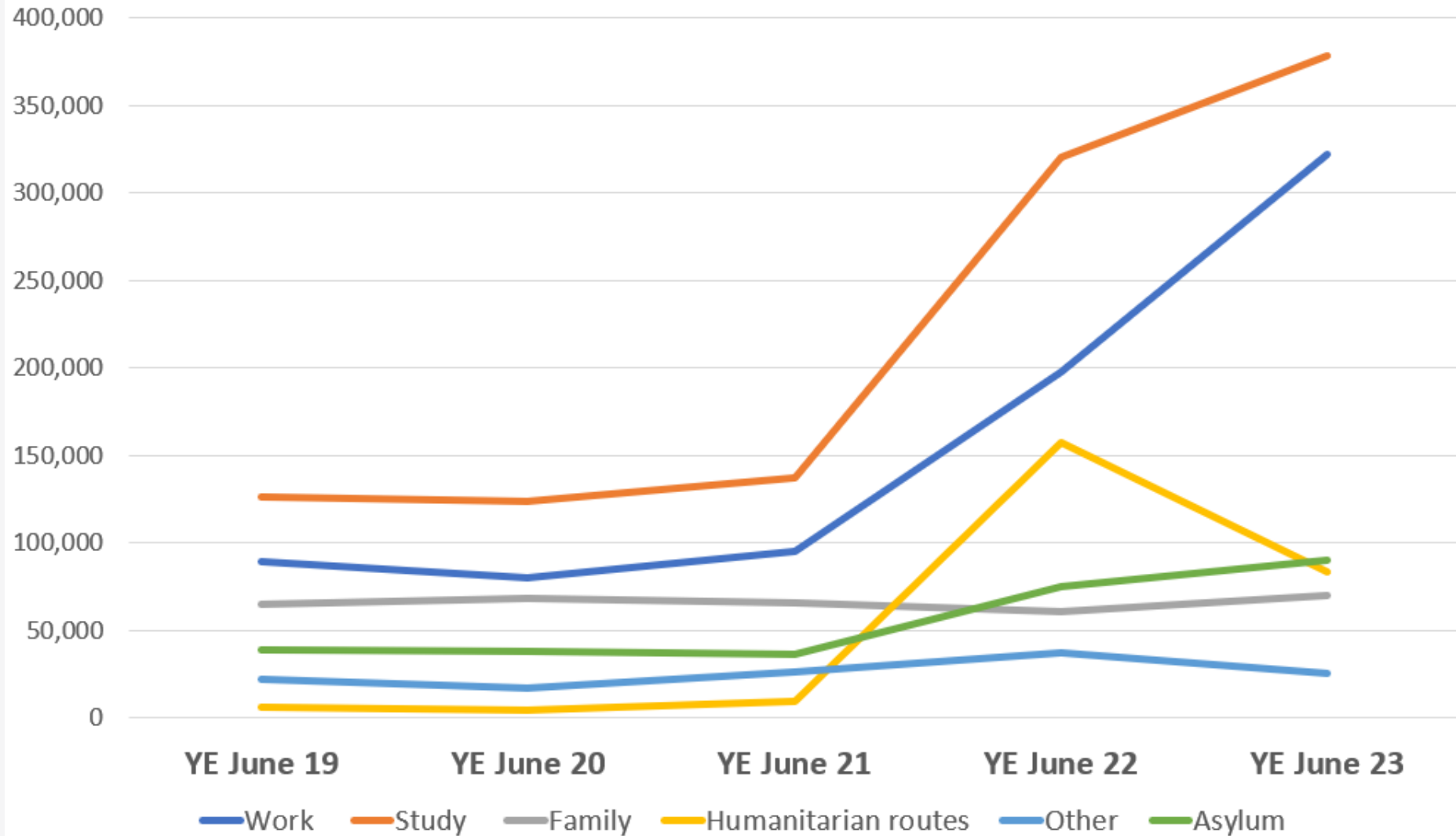- 1 month up to 3 months

Alternative definitions of international mobility (ii) Qualifying status-based definitions

Reason for migration to the UK (non-EU)

Long-term international migration, ONS, November 2023

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Estimating international student migration

- Should students be included as part of our long-term international migration (LTIM) estimates as they are often considered part of the temporary population?

- The interaction between students and other reasons for migration means we cannot treat students in isolation.

- If we did, we would be at risk of inaccurately estimating UK net migration.
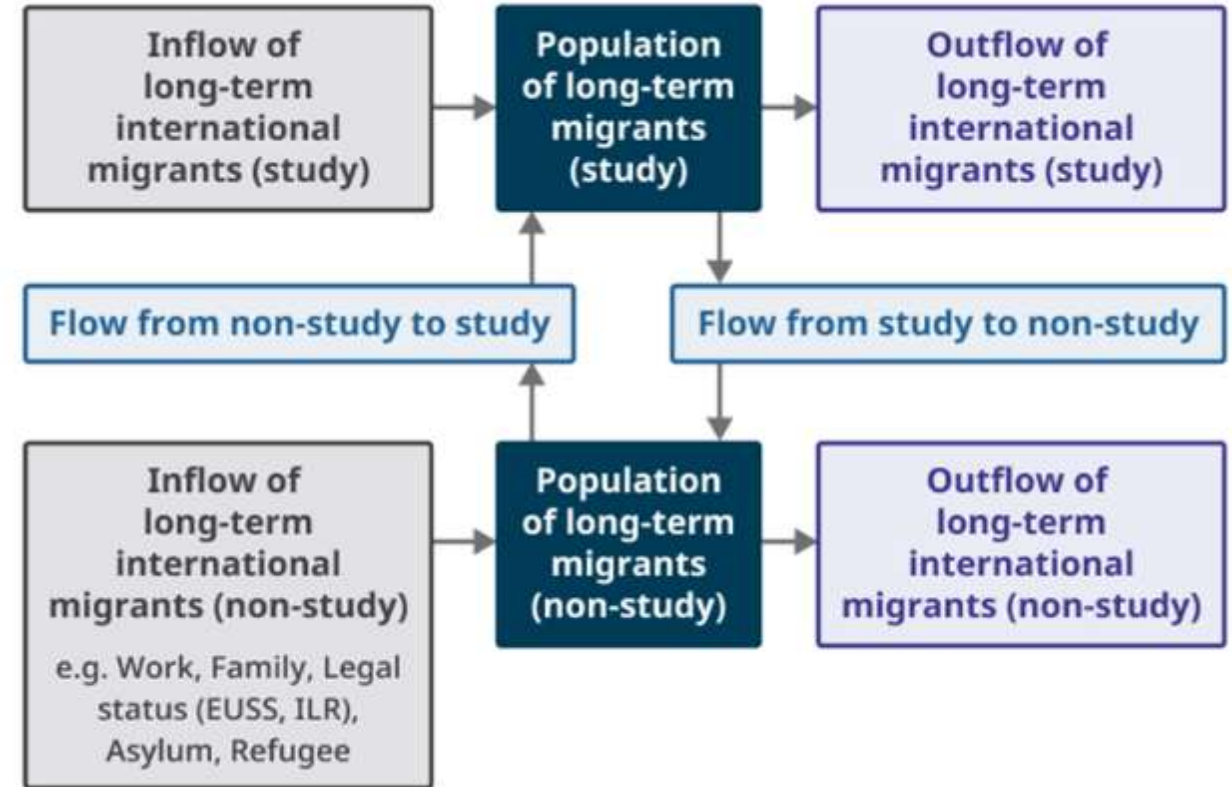
Source: Office for National Statistics

Cohort approach

- Determine for each year of arrival, continuous visa histories for each cohort member

- Calculate whether an individual has emigrated, transitioned, or has not emigrated and the visa type they held at the end of the reference period

- Repeat for each subsequent year so that the individual cohorts can be followed year on year, and their time spent in the UK and on different visas becomes clear
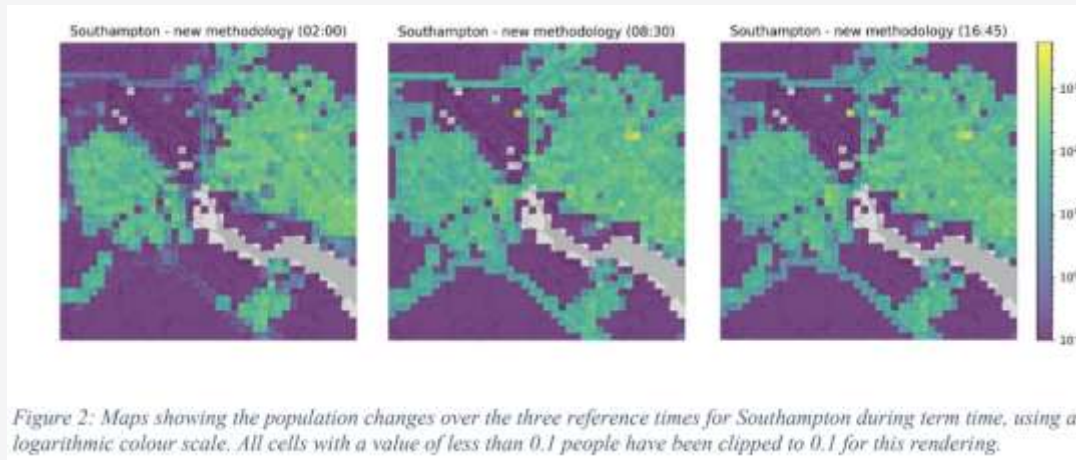

The migration status of the years ending (YE) June 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 cohorts, between YE June 2019 and YE June 2023
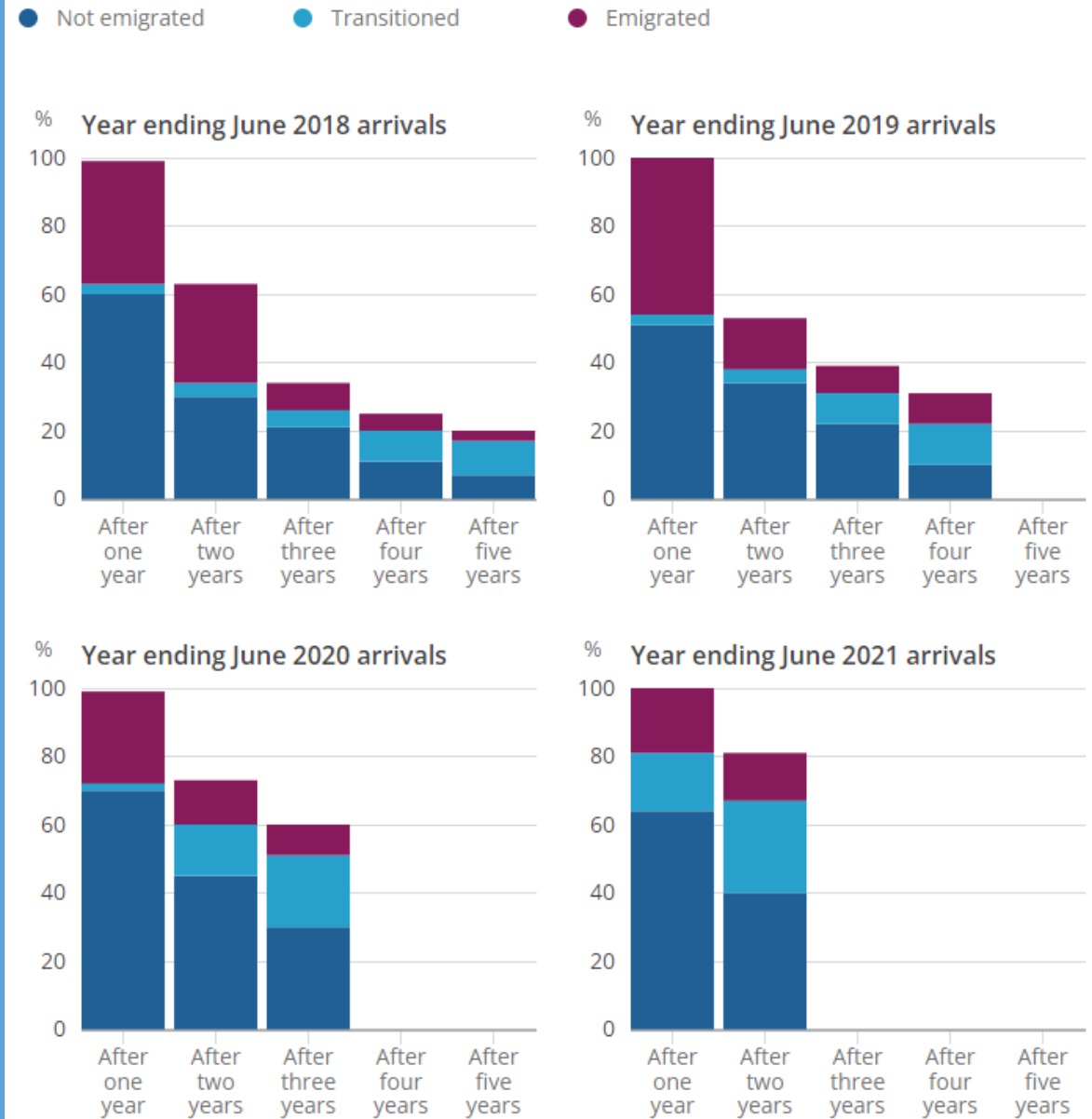
Source: Office for National Statistics, Home Office

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Population present

- workplace and workday populations; who is present in an area during the standard working week

- evening and weekend populations; who is present in an area outside the standard working week

- monthly, quarterly, or seasonal populations

Figure 2: Maps showing the population changes over the three reference times for Southampton during term time, using a logarithmic colour scale. All cells with a value of less than 0.1 people have been clipped to 0.1 for this rendering.

Population 24/7 – A method to account for daily population mobility in spatiotemporal population estimates
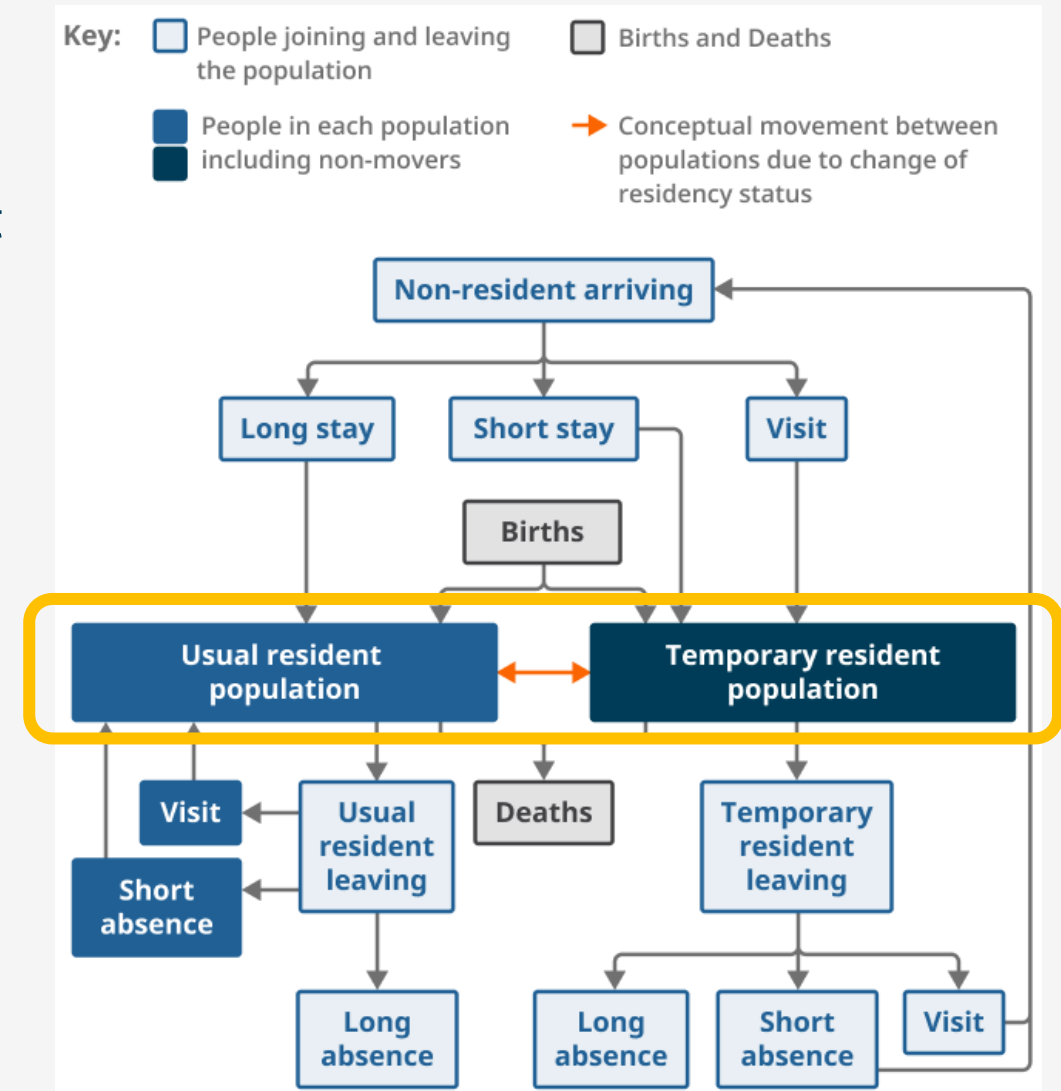
Conclusions

- Existing standards and definitions for measuring migration are a vital part of understanding population change but they are limited when compared to increasing mobility of people.

- Alternative measurements of migration will need to take account of time and place conditions, which can offer insight into short and repeat movers and enable decision makers to plan for temporary population changes. Definitions based on status will highlight the needs of important groups of people.

- The UK work to date on this demonstrates that administrative data sources can enable more granular measurement. Longitudinal administrative data might also show changes in status within a stay in country, to help us understand the drivers of migration better than ever before.