

London's Internal (UK) Migration Flows: 2001-08

Background

Between mid-2001 and mid-2008 the 297 thousand population growth in London has been due to positive natural increase of 430 thousand outweighing the net migration loss. London's net migration loss of 138 thousand persons is the difference between a total inflow of 2.34 million and a total outflow of 2.48 million. The overall loss is composed of a net gain of 508 thousand persons from overseas and a net loss of 646 thousand persons to the rest of the UK. While only 48 per cent of London's gross inflow is from the rest of the UK, 71 per cent of those leaving London settle in other parts of the UK, many in the adjacent regions.

Data on inter-regional flows are made available each quarter by the Office for National Statistics. The data are drawn from NHS Central Register records of the changes of patient registrations with GPs in England & Wales and from the equivalent systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Therefore there is a rich source of material on the origins and destinations of the annualised flows and the ages of those moving. This *Update* concentrates on the flows between London and its two neighbouring regions, the East and South East. Flows to and from the South West are also considered separately from the remaining English regions and UK countries. Most of the analysis considers mid-year to mid-year flows between 2001-02 and 2007-08 but also includes the latest available data for calendar year 2008.

Total Flows

Chart 1: Migration Flows between the London and the Remainder of the UK, 2001 to 2008.

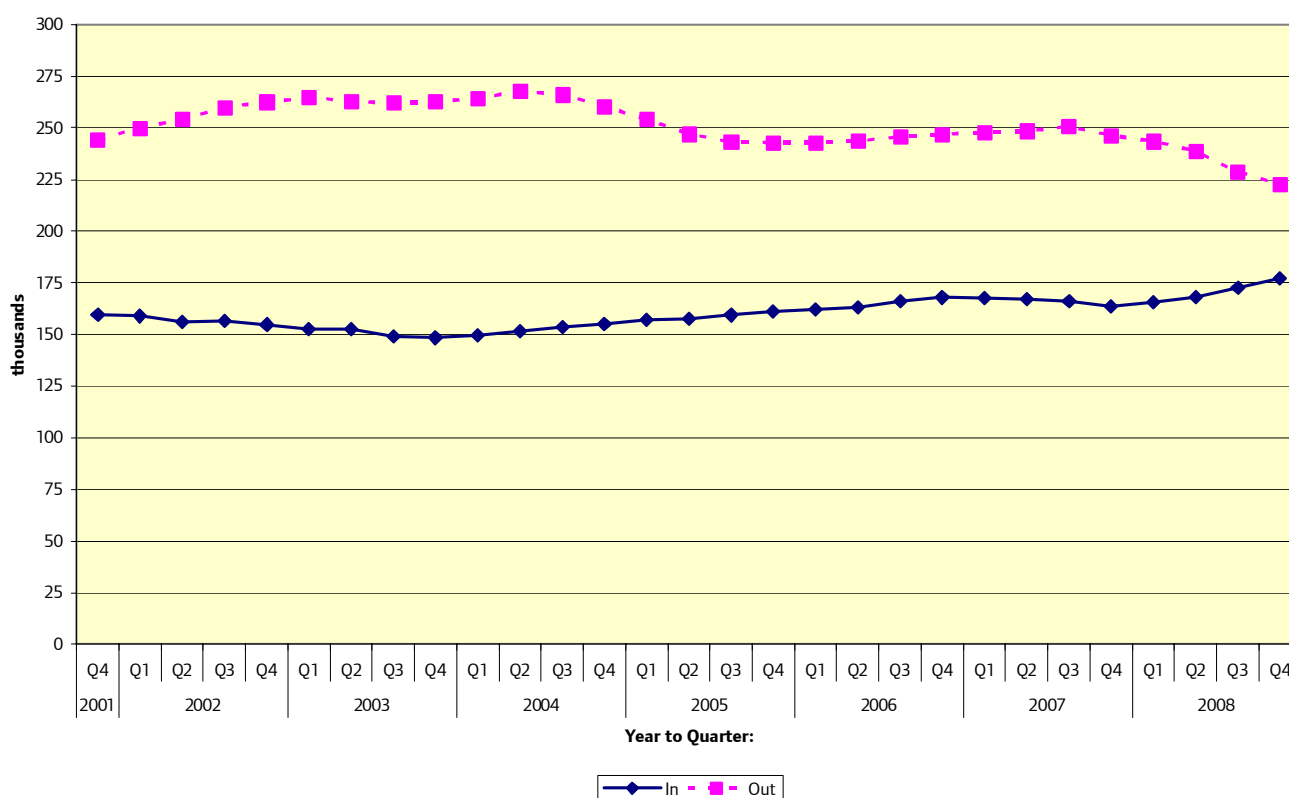


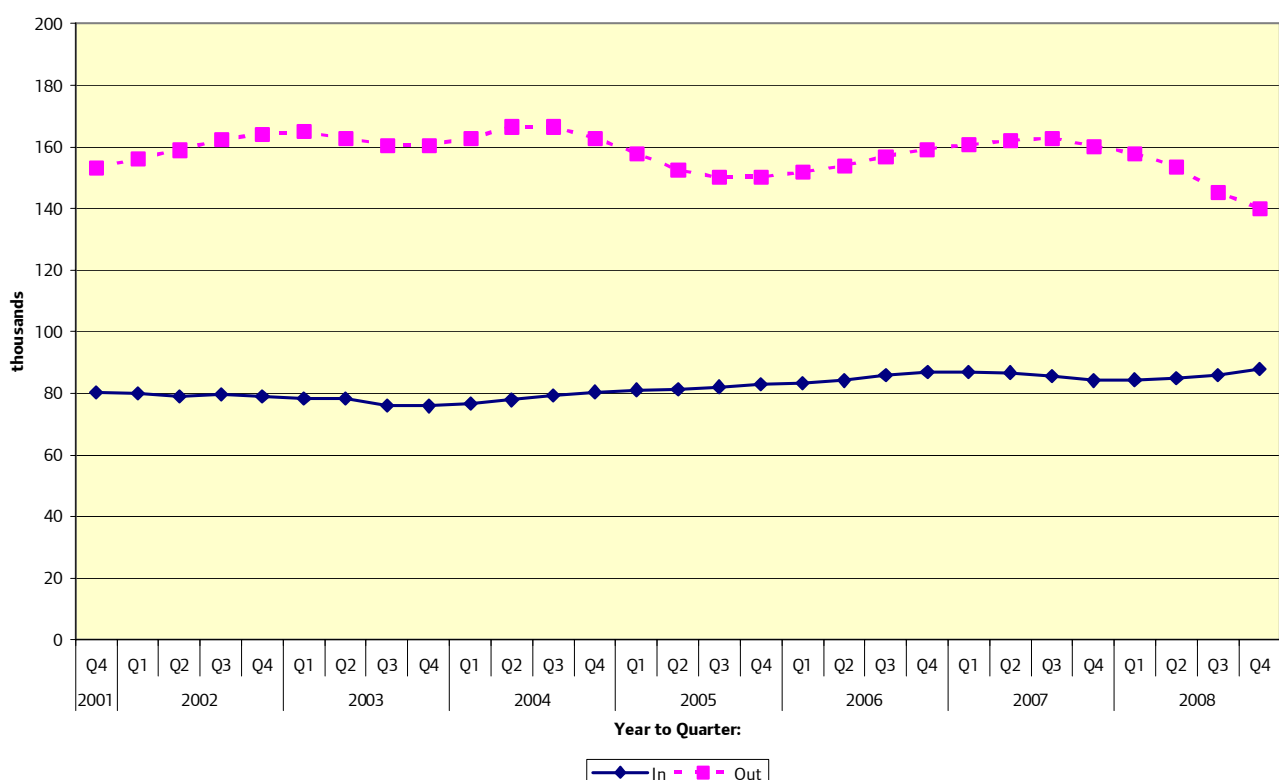
Chart 1 shows annualised quarterly data for the total flows between London and the remainder of the UK. Both inflows and outflows demonstrate a series of short-term peaks and troughs. The level of outflow is currently at its lowest since 2001 and has been declining for five successive quarters, which is both the longest and steepest decline since 2001. However, the inflow is at its highest, not just since 2001 but also since internal migration flow statistics started to be collected in this way in 1984.

Table 1: Internal Migration Flows for London with Other Countries/Regions of the UK, 2008.

	In (000s)	Out (000s)	Net (000s)	In (%)	Out (%)
United Kingdom	176.9	222.6	-45.7	100.0	100.0
England	163.1	209.7	-46.6	92.2	94.2
North East	5.5	3.6	1.9	3.1	1.6
North West	13.4	11.6	1.8	7.6	5.2
Yorkshire and The Humber	12.4	9.6	2.8	7.0	4.3
East Midlands	12.4	12.2	0.2	7.0	5.5
West Midlands	13.8	12.2	1.6	7.8	5.5
East	31.5	55.9	-24.4	17.8	25.1
South East	56.4	84.2	-27.8	31.9	37.8
South West	17.7	20.3	-2.6	10.0	9.1
Wales	5.5	4.8	0.7	3.1	2.2
Scotland	7.1	6.6	0.5	4.0	3.0
Northern Ireland	1.2	1.5	-0.3	0.7	0.7

London's internal migration flows are dominated by its two neighbours; the East and the South East, which currently account for around half of inflows to London and two-thirds of outflows (see Table 1). In 2008 the net flow from London to these two regions was rather more than London's overall net loss, ie London gained from the other parts of the UK in sum.

Chart 2: Migration Flows between London and the East and South East regions, 2001 to 2008.



The pattern of flows between London and its two neighbours is similar to that relating to the whole of the UK in terms of the peaks and troughs. The low period for inflows to London was reached in 2003 and the high point for outflows from London was 2003-04, with 2004 being the year in which London had its largest net losses.

Chart 3: London's Net Flows with other parts of the UK, 2001 to 2008

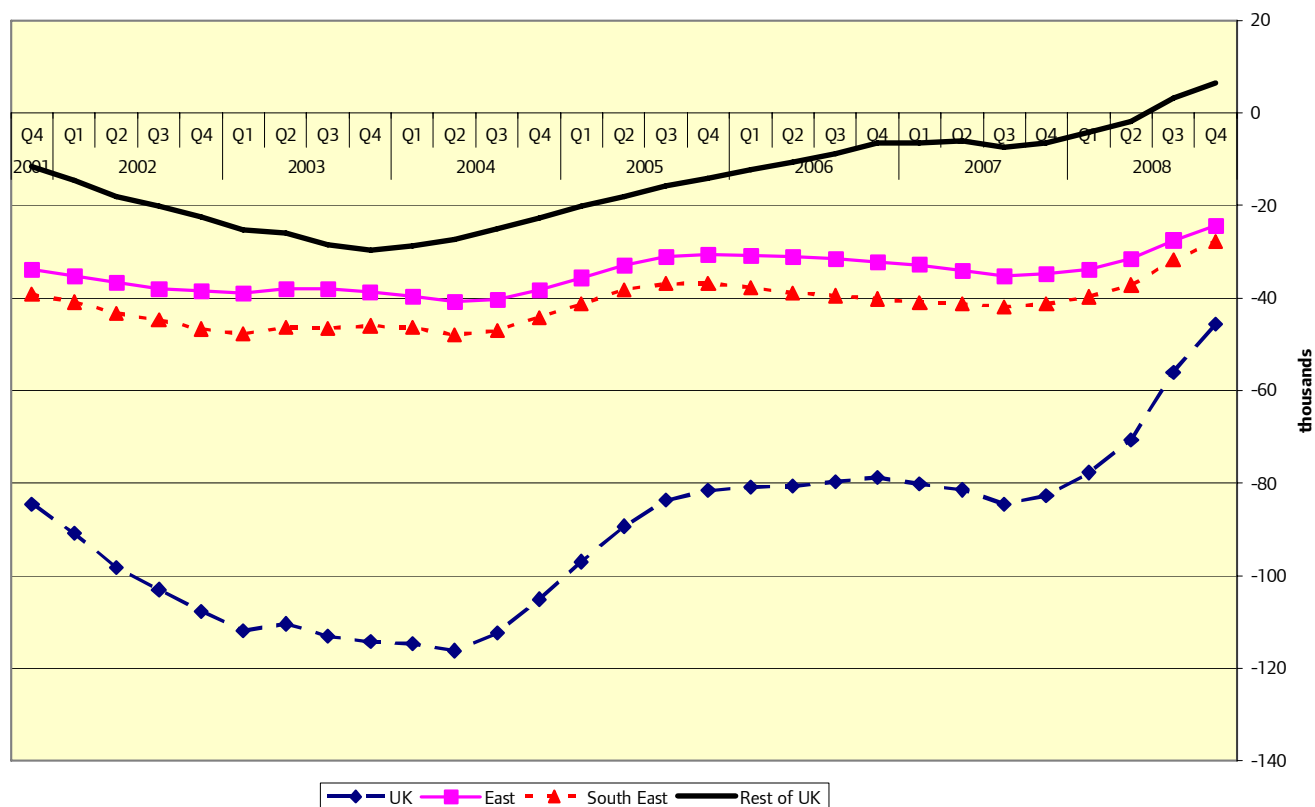


Chart 3 shows the distribution of London's net migration between the East and South East regions and the remainder of the UK (ie including the South West). This clearly shows the very sharp rate at which the total net loss has declined since mid-2006. The changes in the net losses to the East and South East are quite consistent but the change in the net flow with remainder of the UK has been more rapid and has changed from a London net loss to a net gain during 2008.

Table 2: London Internal Migration Flows, 2001-02 to 2008, thousands.

		2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008
In to London from:	East	28.4	27.7	27.6	28.7	30.2	30.8	30.3	31.5
	South East	50.6	50.7	50.2	52.6	53.9	55.9	54.6	56.4
	South West	15.0	14.4	14.7	15.2	15.7	16.3	16.7	17.7
	Rest of UK	62.0	59.7	59.1	61.1	63.3	64.0	66.6	71.3
		2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008
Out from London to:	East	65.1	65.8	68.4	61.7	61.2	64.9	61.9	55.9
	South East	93.9	97.0	98.2	90.8	92.8	97.1	91.8	84.2
	South West	24.1	24.9	25.4	22.8	22.6	22.4	21.4	20.3
	Rest of UK	71.1	75.2	75.8	71.6	67.1	64.0	63.7	62.2
		2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008
Net to London with:	East	-36.7	-38.1	-40.8	-33.0	-31.0	-34.1	-31.6	-24.4
	South East	-43.3	-46.3	-48.0	-38.2	-38.9	-41.2	-37.2	-27.8
	South West	-9.1	-10.5	-10.7	-7.6	-6.9	-6.1	-4.7	-2.6
	Rest of UK	-9.1	-15.5	-16.7	-10.5	-3.8	0.0	2.9	9.1

Table 2 shows the recent trend of the flows with the three individual regions and the rest of the UK. The flows to and from all regions have broadly changed in step.

In many respects 2006-07 was a watershed and it is clear that the recession, and particularly the difficulty of obtaining mortgages, has had a major impact on subsequent inter-regional migration volumes. The total number of inter-regional moves in the UK fell by 5.4 per cent between 2006-07 (1.23 million) and 2008 (1.16 million).

Table 3: Percentage Change in Flows between 2006-07 and 2008.

	To London	From London
East	2.3	-13.9
South East	0.9	-13.3
South West	8.6	-9.4
Rest of UK	11.4	-2.8
Total	5.9	-10.4

As Table 3 shows the outflows from London to the three main destinations have all declined by much more than 5.4 per cent between 2006-07 and 2008, with the flows to the East and South East dropping by considerably more. However, against the trend of a 5.4 per cent national decline in mobility there were increased flows to London from all four areas, with the flows from the South West and the rest of the UK growing fastest. The only part of the UK that did not show an increase in the flow to London was Northern Ireland, which provides the fewest migrants.

Flows by Age

Table 4 shows London's inflows and outflows by broad ages and compares flows in 2008 with those in 2006-07. The main feature of the comparison is that flows fell much faster for those aged over 65, particularly the outflow from London. Inflows to London at the lowest ages rose the fastest.

Table 4: London Migrant Flows by Broad Age groups, 2001-02 to 2008.

		2001-02	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008	Change 2006-07 to 2008	Change % 2006-07 to 2008
In	0-15	13.8	15.4	15.7	15.3	15.4	16.8	1.5	9.8
	16-24	60.1	55.7	57.0	58.1	59.0	63.5	5.4	9.2
	25-44	68.2	71.4	74.3	76.6	77.7	80.4	3.8	5.0
	45-64	9.8	11.2	11.7	12.5	12.1	12.4	-0.2	-1.4
	65+	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.1	-0.5	-10.6
	All ages	156.2	157.8	163.2	167.1	168.4	177.1	10.0	6.0
Out	0-15	44.4	41.0	41.0	41.9	40.6	37.2	-4.7	-11.1
	16-24	48.1	48.6	47.3	46.5	46.8	46.8	0.3	0.6
	25-44	113.0	112.5	109.6	110.1	105.6	99.1	-11.0	-10.0
	45-64	32.6	30.9	31.3	34.7	32.2	27.9	-6.8	-19.5
	65+	16.2	14.0	14.5	15.4	13.7	11.8	-3.7	-23.8
	All ages	254.3	247.0	243.7	248.6	238.9	222.8	-25.8	-10.4
Net	0-15	-30.6	-25.6	-25.4	-26.6	-25.2	-20.4	6.2	
	16-24	12.0	7.1	9.7	11.6	12.2	16.7	5.1	
	25-44	-44.9	-41.1	-35.3	-33.5	-27.8	-18.7	14.8	
	45-64	-22.8	-19.8	-19.6	-22.2	-20.1	-15.6	6.6	
	65+	-11.9	-9.8	-10.0	-10.8	-9.5	-7.7	3.2	
	All ages	-98.2	-89.2	-80.5	-81.5	-70.5	-45.7	35.8	

Highlighted gross flows are increases.

London has tended to gain persons only at ages 16-24. This pattern has persisted since the start of the recession but with an acceleration of the already increasing net inflows of 16-24s and reduced net losses at other ages. As Charts 4 and 5 show in more detail the net gain actually covers ages 20-29. The charts also show that there is a significant, but currently reducing, pre-retirement net outflow at ages 50-64 with very few persons aged over 60 moving to London.

Chart 4: Gross and Net flows by Five-year Age-groups, London, 2006-07.

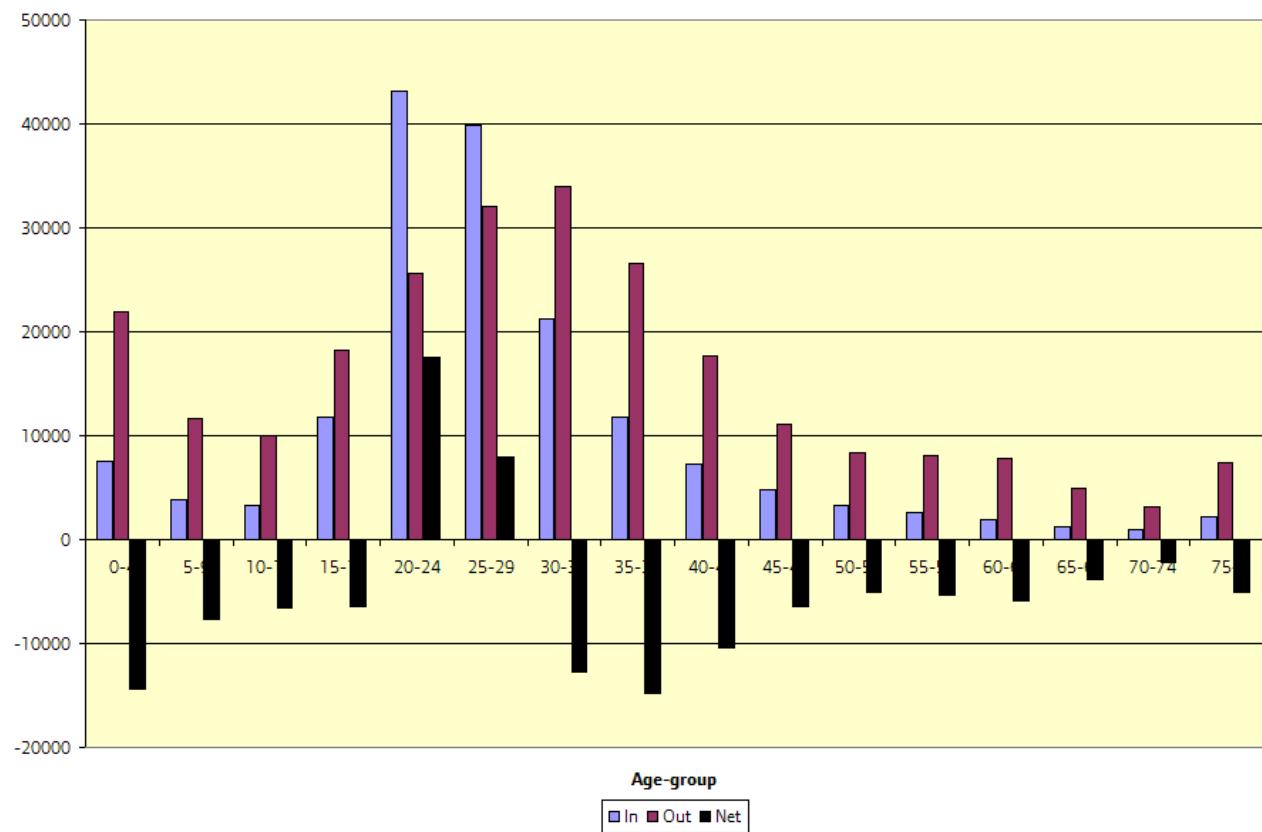
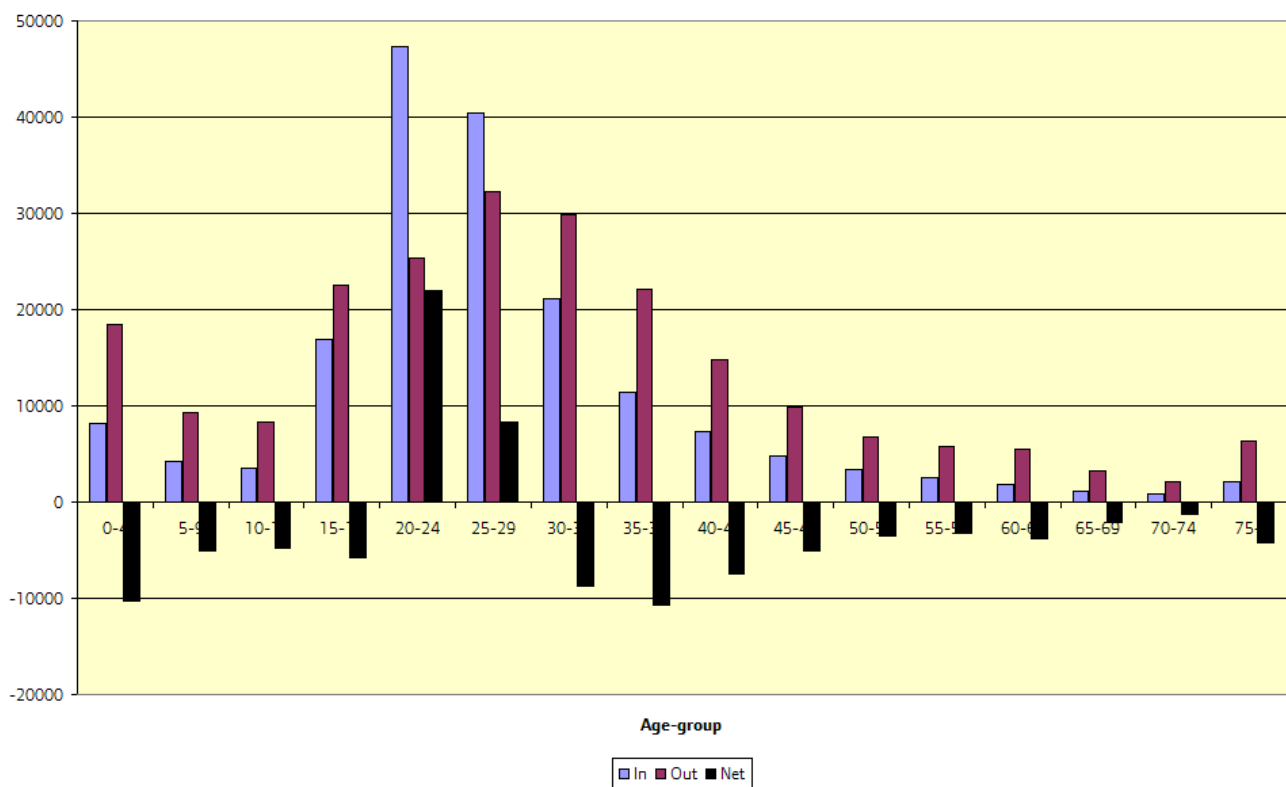


Chart 5: Gross and Net flows by Five-year Age-groups, London, 2008.



Charts 4 and 5 use data specially commissioned from ONS by the GLA. The age-patterns of the gross flows shown in these charts are quite typical of moves within the UK: a relatively high mobility of pre-school ages, a more settled pattern at school-ages and huge transitions in the late teens, twenties and thirties. London exhibits a plateau of outflow around the pre-retirement ages, where the inflows are declining with increasing age. Peak inflows to London occur at ages 20-24 which is five to ten years earlier than the peak outflows. London's net losses are greatest at age groups 0-4 and 35-39.

A comparison of Charts 4 and 5 shows how patterns have changed since 2006-07. The outflow has generally declined at all ages, with the exception of 15-29, by rates varying from 12 to 34 per cent. The outflow of pre-school and school-age children fell by between 16 and 20 per cent while the flow of persons aged 55 to 74 declined by between 29 and 34 per cent. The only age group significantly offsetting the decline in outflow was 15-19, where the flow grew by 24 per cent. The peak age group for outflow has shifted from 30-34 to 25-29, presumably as the exodus of families with children has been temporarily stemmed.

There was less variability by age in the inflows, however the flow of 15-19 year olds to London grew by 43 per cent. The inflow of children grew by 9 per cent and of 20-24 year olds by 10 per cent. The main reductions occurred at ages over 60.

The ages at which London had net outflows in 2006-07 all showed reduced losses in 2008 and at 20-29 the net inflows became more pronounced.

Table 5: Inter-regional Flows to/from London by Broad Ages, 2006-07 and 2008, thousands.

		2006-07				2008			
		East	S East	S West	Rest UK	East	S East	S West	Rest UK
In	0-15	3.3	5.2	1.0	5.7	3.4	5.0	1.0	7.3
	16-24	9.0	18.4	6.5	24.2	9.6	19.5	7.3	27.1
	25-44	14.5	25.8	7.2	29.1	14.7	25.8	7.7	32.1
	45-64	2.9	4.7	1.2	3.8	2.7	4.5	1.2	3.9
	65+	1.1	1.8	0.5	1.2	1.0	1.5	0.4	1.1
	All ages	30.8	55.9	16.3	64.1	31.5	56.4	17.7	71.6
Out	0-15	12.0	17.1	3.3	9.5	10.0	14.6	3.0	9.7
	16-24	9.3	15.5	4.5	17.2	9.2	15.0	4.7	17.9
	25-44	28.7	44.0	9.3	28.1	25.3	38.6	8.5	26.6
	45-64	9.9	14.0	3.8	6.9	7.7	11.0	2.9	6.3
	65+	5.0	6.4	1.6	2.4	3.7	4.9	1.2	1.9
	All ages	64.9	97.1	22.4	64.2	55.9	84.2	20.3	62.4
Net	0-15	-8.7	-11.9	-2.2	-3.8	-6.5	-9.6	-1.9	-2.4
	16-24	-0.3	2.9	2.0	7.1	0.4	4.5	2.6	9.1
	25-44	-14.2	-18.2	-2.1	1.0	-10.6	-12.8	-0.8	5.5
	45-64	-7.1	-9.3	-2.6	-3.1	-5.1	-6.5	-1.6	-2.3
	65+	-3.9	-4.7	-1.1	-1.2	-2.7	-3.4	-0.8	-0.8
	All ages	-34.2	-41.2	-6.1	0.0	-24.4	-27.9	-2.6	9.2

Highlighted net flows are gains to London,

Table 5 shows the age composition of London's migration connections with the regions and Table 6 outlines how these have recently changed.

Almost all outflows from London have reduced, the major exception being the flow of 16-24s to the rest of the UK. Inflows to London have increased at ages 16-24 from all areas, notably the rest of the UK, which has also seen significant rises in flows at ages 0-15 and 25-44. The impact of overall reduced mobility is a squeezing of the net flows. All of the net losses from London have been reduced but where London was already receiving net inflows (mostly at ages 16-24) these net inflows have increased. Only the net outflow at ages 16-24 to the East in 2006-07 has changed to a small net gain.

The greatest proportional reductions in flows have been the outflows from London at ages 45-64 and 65+, particularly those to the popular retirement regions of the East, South East and the South West. However not all of these reductions are associated with retirement as the flows from London to the East and South East of pre-school and school age children have also declined sharply. The main reductions in flows to London were also of the over-65s.

Table 6: Changes in Inter-regional Flows to/from London by Broad Ages, 2006-07 and 2008, thousands.

		Change 2006-07 to 2008				Change (%) 2006-07 to 2008			
		East	S East	S West	Rest UK	East	S East	S West	Rest UK
In	0-15	0.1	-0.2	0.0	1.6	4.4	-4.3	0.0	27.4
	16-24	0.6	1.1	0.8	2.9	6.6	5.9	12.6	11.8
	25-44	0.2	0.0	0.6	3.0	1.4	0.0	8.1	10.3
	45-64	-0.2	-0.2	0.1	0.1	-5.9	-3.7	5.4	2.7
	65+	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-9.3	-13.6	-15.7	-5.3
	All ages	0.7	0.5	1.4	7.5	2.2	0.8	8.5	11.7
Out	0-15	-2.0	-2.5	-0.3	0.1	-16.8	-14.5	-9.3	1.5
	16-24	-0.2	-0.5	0.2	0.8	-1.7	-3.1	3.4	4.5
	25-44	-3.4	-5.4	-0.7	-1.5	-11.7	-12.2	-8.0	-5.5
	45-64	-2.2	-3.0	-0.9	-0.7	-22.0	-21.3	-24.2	-9.6
	65+	-1.3	-1.5	-0.4	-0.5	-26.8	-23.4	-22.3	-19.2
	All ages	-9.1	-12.8	-2.2	-1.8	-14.0	-13.2	-9.6	-2.7
Net	0-15	2.2	2.3	0.3	1.4				
	16-24	0.8	1.6	0.7	2.1				
	25-44	3.6	5.4	1.3	4.5				
	45-64	2.0	2.8	1.0	0.8				
	65+	1.2	1.3	0.3	0.4				
	All ages	9.7	13.3	3.5	9.2				

Highlighted gross flows are increases. Highlighted net flows are gains to London.

Commentary

London has very strong migration connections with the East and South East regions which act as major destinations for many of London's young families and the retired. At the same time London is a most popular destination for young adults from all parts of the UK, either for higher education or employment.

The strong connections between London and its two neighbours is not surprising given that over two-thirds of moves in Great Britain are of less than 10 kilometres and London has a population of 1.9 million in the eight boroughs which border the South East and 1.8 million in the seven boroughs that border the East. Hillingdon borders both regions but most of its population lives nearer to the South East region.

Migration in the wider south east of England may be characterised as a series of spokes with London at the hub. Central London attracts young, mainly single, people from all over the UK and overseas. As these young people form partnerships and have children there is a tendency to move away from central London into inner boroughs and eventually to outer London. More mature families then tend to move on radial routes out of London into the adjacent parts of the South East and East. The retired are even more likely to move to the neighbouring regions, but necessarily to the same parts of the region as family movers.

The recession has had a major impact on mobility within the UK but while the outflow from London has declined faster than all inter-regional moves London has attracted increasing numbers of young migrants from all parts of the UK and currently has a record high level of inflow. The recession has particularly affected the numbers of pre-retirement and retirement moves in the UK and especially those moving from London.

The recent heavy demand for school places, particularly in reception classes, in most London boroughs has been partly influenced by the reduction in the net migration loss of school-age children from London.