

EU migration to Britain falls sharply: study

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The number of people moving to Britain from Eastern Europe has fallen by around a third since the Brexit vote, according to a study released Wednesday that suggested the plunge in the pound could be to blame.

The study focused on eight countries that became part of the EU in 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The analysis by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford pointed to official data showing a fall in allocations of National Insurance numbers to the lowest level since the countries joined the EU.

National Insurance numbers are required by people looking to work or claim social welfare in Britain.

The number of people registering for National Insurance numbers from the eight countries was 26,000 in the first three months of this year, around a third lower than the first quarter of 2016, the study found.

Britain voted to leave the European Union in June 2016 after a bitter campaign in which mass immigration from the rest of the EU was a key issue.

Since then, the pound has fallen about 13 percent against the euro.

Major sectors of the British economy are highly reliant on migrant labour, including farming, catering and the state-run National Health Service.

There were around 3.6 million EU citizens living in Britain in 2016, a third of them in London.

With one million citizens, Poland is by far the EU member state with the highest [number](#) of its citizens living in Britain.

"We are seeing indications that the UK has become less of an attractive destination for migrants from Poland and the other A8 countries since the referendum on leaving the EU," Carlos Vargas-Silva, acting director of the Migration Observatory, said.

The study suggested the drop could be due to a sharp fall in the value of

the pound after the Brexit vote.

"The referendum result led to a wave of concern in global financial markets about the UK economy, which immediately resulted in a decline in the value of the pound against other major currencies—reducing the relative value of wages for foreign workers," it said.

Vargas-Silva added: "Other things like the lack of clarity about their long-term legal status, and highly-publicised xenophobic attacks, may also have affected EU citizens' choice to come to the UK, or to remain here."

Prime Minister Theresa May is expected to set out her plans on the status of EU nationals at a summit in Brussels on Thursday and Friday.

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