



Internal Migration in Gloucestershire

An Overview

(2023 Data)

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Data Source:

Office for National Statistics, Internal migration in England and Wales

[Internal migration in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

Introduction

Internal migration describes moves made between local authorities, regions or countries within the UK.¹ As Gloucestershire comprises six individual districts, any moves to and from each district are classed as internal migration, whether they are to another district in Gloucestershire or to another local authority outside the county.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) state that their internal migration estimates are primarily based on data that flag up when people change their address with their doctor. Most people change their address with their doctor soon after moving, so these data are considered a good proxy indicator of migration.²

Regarding data availability for this report, ONS were unable to obtain all the usual data necessary to run the mid-2023 internal migration estimates in full. In particular, issues with late availability, changes in variables, and incomplete coverage of data for those in higher education have meant ONS could not link health data and higher education data for 2023. Internal migration data based purely on health data would, in particular, underestimate the movements of young adults to and from higher education.

For this reason, there is no data available around moves between locations (origin and flow), and only total net migration is available for Gloucestershire.

Internal Migration in Gloucestershire in 2023

In the 12-month period leading up to Mid-2023, ONS estimates that Gloucestershire had a net-positive internal migration flow, adding 4,674 people to the total population due to internal migration. There was also a net-positive internal migration flow for the South West, adding an additional 26,025 people to the total population. In contrast, nationally there was a negative migration in the 12 months preceding mid-2023, contributing to a loss of 31,393 people in England, and a loss of 13,834 people in England and Wales.

The net internal migration rate, shown in Table 1, indicates that for every 1,000 people in Gloucestershire at the beginning of the year in 2023, 7.1 people were added to the total population by the end of 2023 due to internal migration. Likewise, 4.5 people per 1,000 population were added to the South West's population in 2023 due to internal migration. In England and Wales, internal migration moves contributed to a loss of 0.2 people per 1,000 population in 2023.

¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS) definition: Internal migration is defined as residential moves between different local authorities (LAs) in the UK, including those that cross the boundaries between the four UK nations: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. However, only moves affecting LAs in England and Wales are included; moves that occur solely within Scotland and/or Northern Ireland are excluded. The statistics also exclude any moves within a single LA and any international moves either into or out of the UK. The local authority and age/sex tables use this definition.

² [Population estimates for England and Wales, mid-2023: methods guide - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

Table 1 – Internal migration within Gloucestershire, districts, region, and nationally

	Net internal migration	Inflow	Outflow	Net internal migration rate (per 1,000 people)
Gloucestershire	4,674			7.1
Cheltenham	141	9,000	8,859	1.2
Cotswold	244	6,556	6,312	2.7
Forest of Dean	1,302	5,655	4,353	14.6
Gloucester	-162	8,014	8,176	-1.2
Stroud	1,553	7,557	6,004	12.5
Tewkesbury	1,596	7,451	5,855	16.1
South West	26,053			4.5
England	-31,393			-0.5
England & Wales	-13,834			-0.2

District Focus

In 2023, Tewkesbury had the highest number of net internal migration moves of all the county's districts, at 1,596 people - equivalent to a rate of 16.1 moves per 1,000 population. Forest of Dean and Stroud also had a high internal migration rate, equivalent to 14.6 net moves per 1,000 population in Forest of Dean and 12.5 in Stroud.

Gloucester was the only district with more people moving out of the district than into it, resulting in a loss of 162 people due to internal migration, equivalent to -1.2 net moves per 1,000 population.

Internal Migration from 2012 to 2023

Between 2012 and 2023, the number of net moves into the county ranged between 1,554 (2012) to 6,294 (2021), as shown in Figure 1. In 2020, there was a noticeable dip in numbers moving into and out of the county, followed by a significant increase in 2021. The period of mid 2019-2020, when there was a reduction in migration in and out of the county, overlaps with the start of the coronavirus pandemic; lockdowns prevented movement over the span of many months. The uplift in internal migration from mid-2020 to mid-21 corresponds with the period of the pandemic when there was a trend in people moving out of large cities to more rural areas.³ In 2022, net internal migration decreased, but it has risen again in 2023 to the second highest level since 2012, at 4,674 net moves – a figure of around three times higher than in 2012.

³ UCL, [Understanding internal migration in the UK before and during the COVID-19 pandemic using twitter data - UCL Discovery](#)

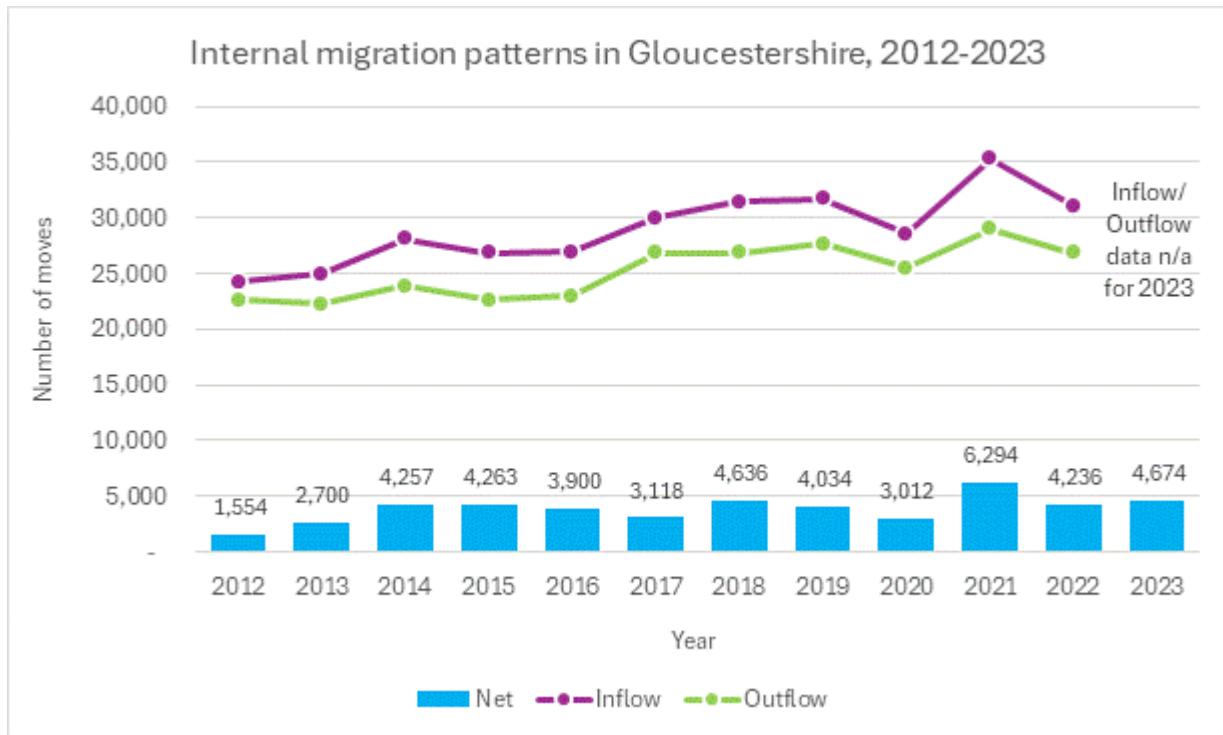


Figure 1 – Internal migration patterns in Gloucestershire, 2012-2023

District Focus

Figure 2 shows the number of net internal migration moves for each district in Gloucestershire between 2012 and 2023. Of all six districts, Cheltenham and Gloucester have experienced the lowest net migration; in addition, they are the only two districts to have experienced net negative internal migration at points during this time period, with more people moving out of each district than moving in. Gloucester has experienced a net loss of people each year since 2018. Although Cheltenham had experienced a net loss since 2019, in 2023 the borough returned to net positive internal migration.

Since 2012, Tewkesbury and Stroud have generally seen the highest levels of net internal migration of all districts, and continued to have the highest levels in 2023 – Tewkesbury with 1,596 moves into the borough, and Stroud with 1,553.

As with the county trend, most districts saw a decrease in net internal migration in 2020, followed by a sharp increase in 2021; this could be attributed to changes in movement due to the coronavirus pandemic. Gloucester was the exception during this period, where net migration continued to rise in 2020, but a decrease then followed in 2021.

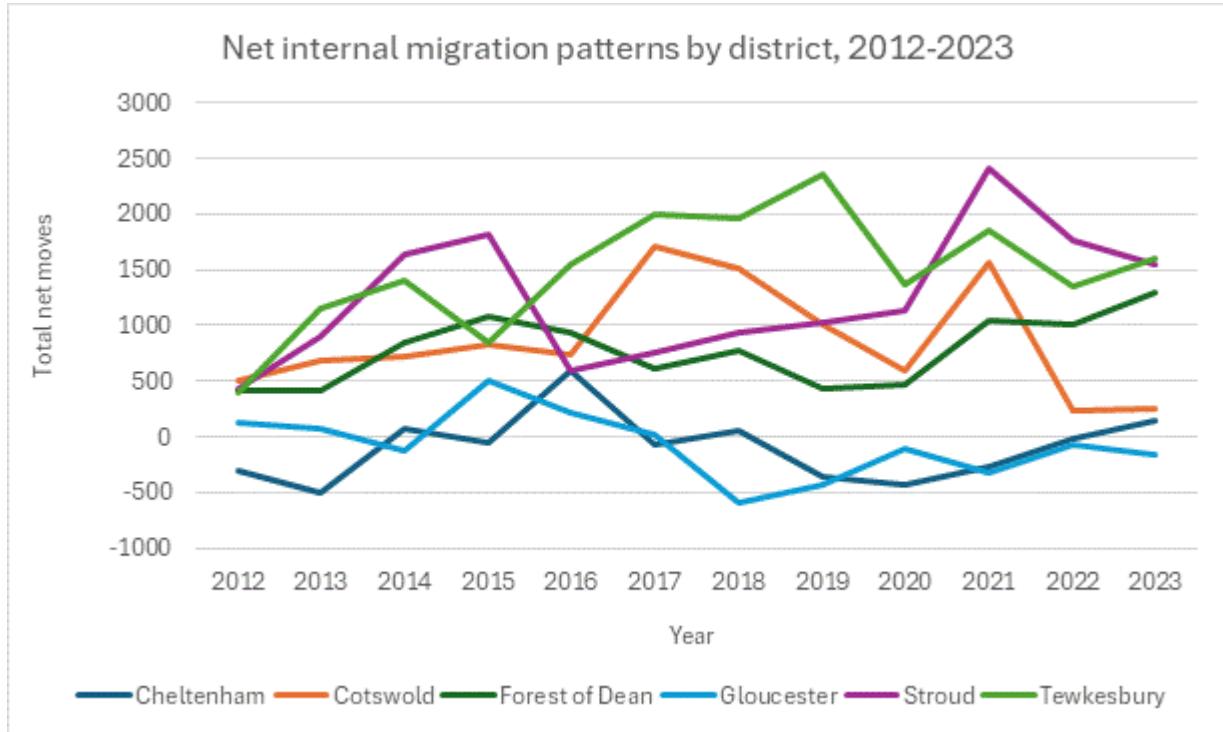


Figure 2 – Net internal migration patterns by district, 2012-2023

Total Inflows and Outflows for each district between 2012 and 2023 are shown in Figure 3. Since 2012, Cheltenham has seen the greatest overall movement in the county. Gloucester has seen the second largest number of overall moves, whilst Tewkesbury has seen the smallest amount. This pattern remained the same for 2023.

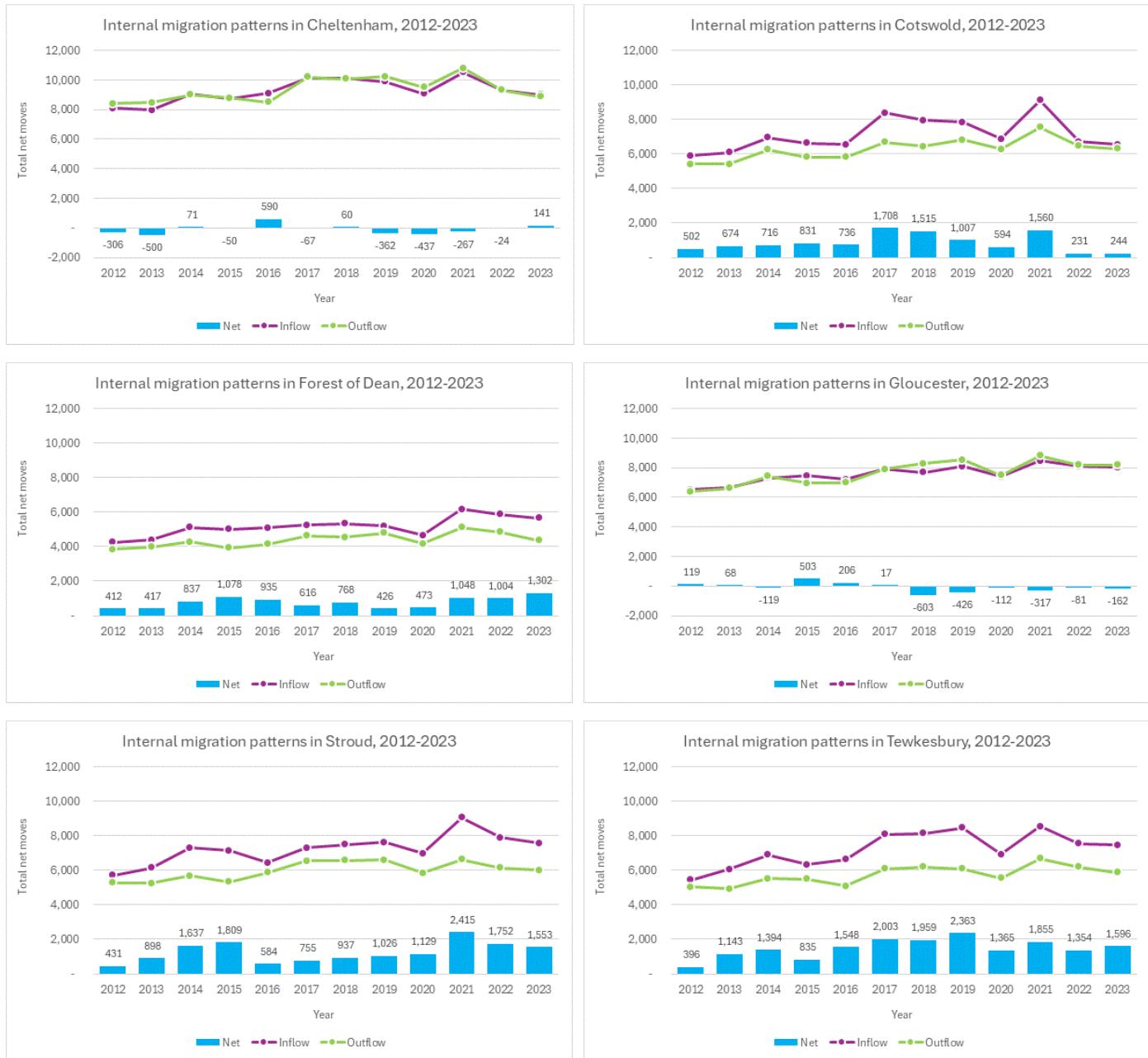


Figure 3 – Internal migration patterns for each district, 2012-2023

Net Internal Migration by Age

Internal migration estimates by age breakdown at county level are not currently available, as ONS were unable to obtain all the usual data necessary to run the mid-2023 internal migration estimates in full.⁴

District Focus

Figure 4 shows net migration in 2023 for each district, by five year age groups. Overall, the greatest net outflows from each district were among young adults. Net losses peaked in the 15-19 year old age group within Stroud, Tewkesbury and Gloucester. This age group covers students moving to study. In Forest of Dean, the greatest net migration losses were among the slightly older age group of 20-24 years, whilst in Cheltenham, net losses were greatest among ages 25-34. Cotswold's greatest losses covered a wider age span of 15-29 years.

Net outflows were much smaller within older age groups, although some net losses among people over the age of 80 were seen in four districts (Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud and Tewkesbury).

In most districts, the largest gains in net migration were seen in the working age groups. However, in Cheltenham, the largest net inflows were among those aged 10-14. It is also worth noting that Gloucester, Cheltenham and Cotswold have all seen net outflows of several groups of working age.

⁴ Issues with late availability, changes in variables, and incomplete coverage of data on those in higher education have meant we could not link health data and higher education data for 2023. Internal migration data based purely on health data would, in particular, underestimate the movements of young adults to and from higher education. For this reason there is no data available around moves between location (origin and flow) and a breakdown by age is not available at county level.

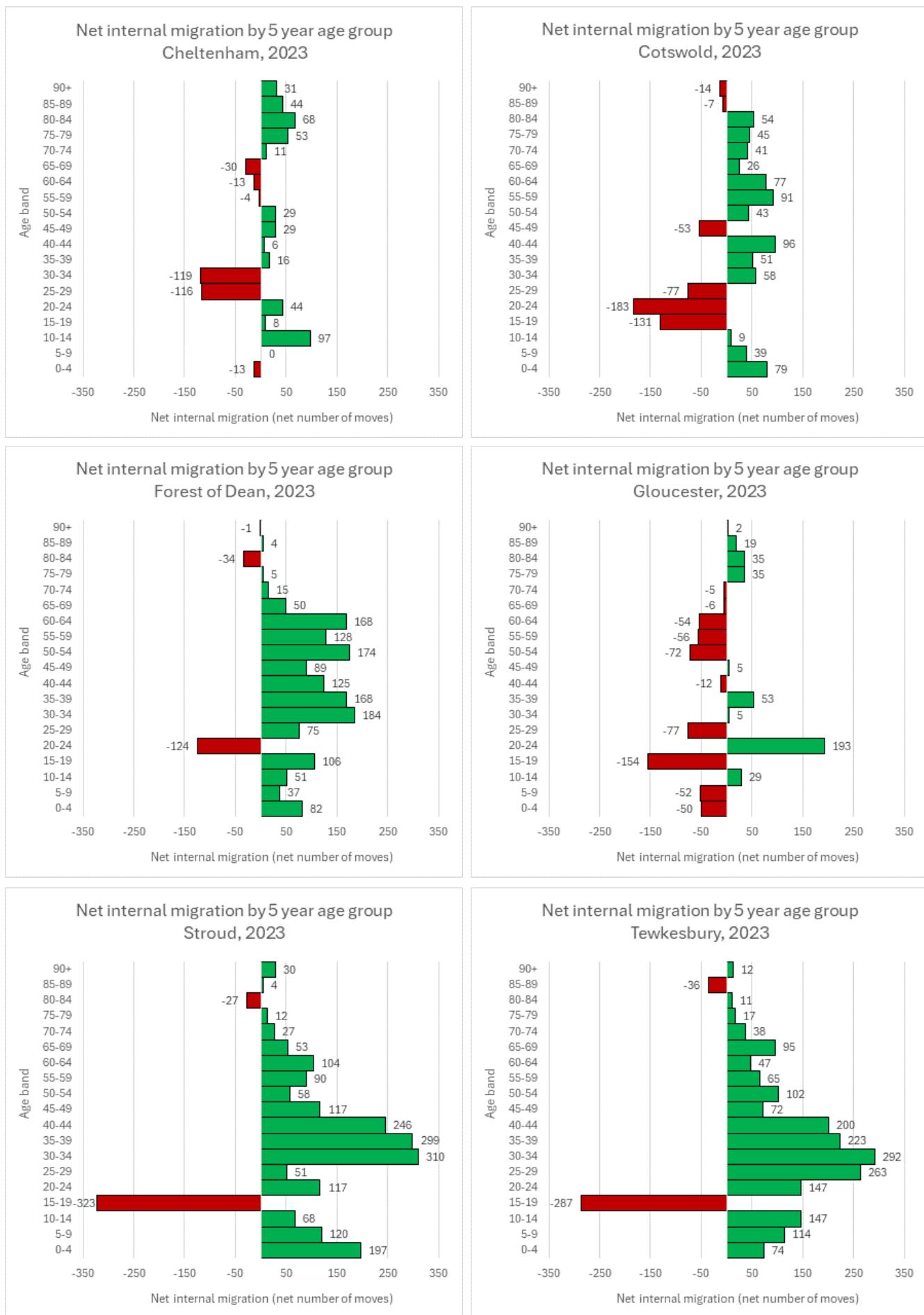


Figure 4 – Net internal migration by 5 year age group for each district, 2023