

# Migration: old phenomenon, new policies

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**Migration is nothing new. People have moved across communities, states and continents for millennia. In 2017, about 258 million people worldwide were living outside their country of birth, nearly half in OECD countries. The International Migration Outlook 2018 looks at who these migrants are and maps what is driving their flow into OECD countries, where an estimated 5 million new migrants settled permanently in 2017, representing a 5% drop from 2016 levels.**

Migrants come for many reasons: to take up studies, request asylum, join family, seek or take up new work, or at the request of their employer. Work-related migration is an area that often makes the headlines, reflecting worries about the impact of migrants and refugees on the job market. What does the data show?

Temporary labour migration—the recruiting of immigrant workers on a short-term basis, normally used for either low or very high-skilled workers—increased by 11% between 2015 and 2017 across the OECD. International recruitment of seasonal workers rose by 30% in 2016. Within the European Union (EU), the number of posted workers (EU workers sent by their employers to other EU countries) neared 2.2 million.

Refugees also seek work, and their impact on the labour market varies across and within countries. In the EU overall, the inflow of refugees is expected to have expanded the working-age population by less than half a percent by December 2020. However, in some places, recently arrived refugees may increase the number of people looking for a job, at least in the short-to-medium term.

Migration isn't new—and it isn't going away. In order to ensure the best outcomes for everyone, countries need to anticipate changing trends in migration flows and labour market needs. Many are developing or refining programmes to attract highly qualified foreigners and some are creating specialised visas that cater to start-ups. Support may also be needed for those native-born people most affected by the impact of new arrivals on the job market, in particular men with little education or skills. Policies like these will help countries prepare for the future and generate more opportunities for everyone, within an increasingly diverse and mobile global society.

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## References

OECD (2018), International Migration Outlook 2018, OECD Publishing, Paris, [https://doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2018-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2018-en) [http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2018-en](http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2018-en)