

Executive summary

Ghana is the second ECOWAS country with the largest migration flows to OECD countries

Migration flows from Ghana to OECD countries are the second highest among the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), after Nigeria. Although growth in flows from Ghana to OECD countries has been slower than that from other ECOWAS countries, annual legal migration flows from Ghana more than doubled between 2000 and 2019, from 12 900 in 2000 to 23 000 in 2008 and to 27 400 in 2019.

The United States attracts the largest flows of Ghanaian nationals in the OECD area

Among OECD countries, the United States attracts the largest annual flows of Ghanaians, with more than 8 400 Ghanaian migrating to the country in 2019, followed by the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain. Between 2000 and 2019, these four countries received 85% of Ghanaian annual flows to OECD countries. Flows to Italy and Germany significantly increased over the past decade, reflecting a recent trend of diversification in destination countries.

The majority of residence permits issued to Ghanaian nationals by OECD countries are issued for family reasons

Since 2010, more than half of residence permits issued annually to Ghanaian nationals by European countries have been issued for family reasons, while roughly one-third have been issued for humanitarian reasons. Similarly, more than 70% of permanent residence permits issued by the United States are issued for family reasons, although temporary residence permits issued are mainly issued for educational purposes. In Europe, the United Kingdom is also the only country to grant a substantial number of permits for educational reasons to Ghanaian nationals.

Intentions to emigrate in Ghana are high, especially among young and unemployed Ghanaians

Between 2009 and 2018, 44% of Ghanaians expressed the intention to emigrate, a higher share than the average population living in ECOWAS countries (36%). However, these emigration intentions rarely materialise in the short or medium term, as only 17% of Ghanaians intending to emigrate consider doing so within a year, a lower share than in other West African countries. Emigration intentions in Ghana are substantially higher among young and unemployed individuals and the difficult employment situation is the main driver of emigration intentions in Ghana.

Nearly half a million Ghanaian emigrants live in OECD countries

The Ghanaian diaspora is almost equally distributed between African and OECD countries. In Africa, Ghanaian emigrants are primarily concentrated in the ECOWAS area and Nigeria alone hosts a fourth of the total diaspora. Five countries – the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and Canada – account for almost 90% of Ghanaian emigrants living in the OECD area. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of emigrants from Ghana living in OECD countries registered a threefold increase. Although the United States and the United Kingdom hosted populations of Ghanaian emigrants of similar size in 2000, by 2020 the United States had become the leading destination in the OECD area. Ghana's total population represents 8% of the ECOWAS population, but Ghanaian emigrants account for 16% of all ECOWAS migrants living in OECD countries, reflecting a comparatively long history of extra-continental emigration and high economic growth.

The Ghanaian diaspora in OECD countries is masculine and is highly educated compared to the overall population of Ghana

Although certain studies point to an increasing feminisation of the Ghanaian emigrant population – with women moving independently as skilled workers, entrepreneurs and traders – the gender composition of the Ghanaian diaspora in OECD countries has remained practically stable over the last 15 years. In 2015/16, women accounted for 47% of the Ghanaian emigrant population in the OECD area. Women appear to dominate short-distance corridors. They account for the majority of Ghanaian migrant stocks in the neighbouring countries for which data are available, such as Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Approximately a third of the Ghanaian diaspora has achieved tertiary education. English-speaking destinations – the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada – tend to attract more highly educated emigrants. Given its educational and age distribution, the Ghanaian diaspora evidences a positive self-selection among the highly educated and individuals of working age. Conversely, almost 90% of the Ghanaian emigrant population in Ghana's neighbouring countries has achieved a low level of education.

Ghana has the sixth-highest emigration rate among the ECOWAS countries

Ghanaian emigrants represent approximately 3% of the country's total population. The emigration rate to OECD countries is 2.3% (2.1% for women), almost on par with the ECOWAS average (2.1%). The emigration rate, however, is significantly higher among the tertiary educated (14%).

Ghanaian emigrants fare relatively well in OECD labour markets, but substantial variation exists across destination countries

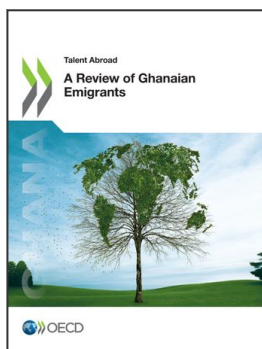
In 2015/16, over three-quarters of the Ghanaian emigrant population of working age participated in OECD labour markets. Overall, the insertion of Ghanaian emigrants into the labour market is comparatively better than among emigrants from other ECOWAS countries. Yet, the situation varies across destination countries with the highest employment rates observed in English-speaking countries. In the United States – the main destination of Ghanaian emigrants in the OECD area – nearly 80% of Ghanaian emigrants were employed in 2017/19. Conversely, in Italy and Germany, employment rates among Ghanaian emigrants were only slightly over 50%. Ghanaian male emigrants fare better in the labour market than women: in 2015/16 their employment rate (75%) was 11 percentage points higher than that of their female counterparts. This gender employment gap, however, remained lower than the gap observed among the native and foreign-born populations of OECD countries.

Employment returns to education are high for Ghanaian emigrants but vary across destination countries

Across OECD countries, the participation of Ghanaian emigrants in the labour market increases with their level of education. The employment rate for the highly educated is 28 percentage points higher than for the low educated, but there is substantial variation across destination countries. Higher employment rates among the tertiary educated hide a significant mismatch between the qualifications of Ghanaian migrants and their occupations in OECD countries: 43% of tertiary-educated migrants from Ghana were overqualified in their occupation. A third of Ghanaian emigrants in the OECD area held an elementary occupation in 2015/16.

In English-speaking countries, Ghanaian emigrants are overrepresented in health-related occupations

A particular feature of the integration of Ghanaian migrants into the labour market is their high participation in health-related occupations, particularly in English-speaking countries. In 2015/16, 5 800 Ghanaian emigrants worked as health professionals in the United Kingdom, which accounts for 9% of the total Ghana-born population of working age living there. Likewise, in the United States, 29% of the Ghana-born labour force was employed in health-related occupations (2017/2019). In Canada, in 2015/16, 11% of Ghanaian emigrants were employed in health-related positions, of which 59% were health professionals. Ghana ranks among the top 20 origin countries of nurses working in the OECD area, a phenomenon that has been amply documented in the literature.



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