

IMMIGRANT POPULATION

National views on the appropriate definition of the immigrant population vary from country to country. Despite this, it is possible to provide an internationally comparable picture of the size of the immigrant population, based either on nationality or country-of-birth criteria.

Definition

Nationality and place of birth are the two criteria most commonly used to define the “immigrant” population. The foreign-born population covers all persons who have ever migrated from their country of birth to their current country of residence. The foreign population consists of persons who still have the nationality of their home country. It may include persons born in the host country.

Comparability

The difference across countries between the size of the foreign-born population and that of the foreign population depends on the rules governing the acquisition of citizenship in each country. In some countries, children born in the country automatically acquire the citizenship of their country of birth (*jus soli*, the right of soil) while in other countries, they retain the nationality of their parents (*jus sanguinis*, the right of blood). In still others, they retain the nationality of their parents at birth but receive that of the host country at their majority. Differences in the ease with which immigrants may acquire the citizenship of the host country explain part of the gap between the two series. For example, residency requirements vary from as little as three

years in Canada to as much as ten years in some countries. The naturalisation rate is high in settlement countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and in some European countries including Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands. In general, the foreign-born criterion gives substantially higher percentages for the immigrant population than the definition based on nationality. This is because many foreign-born persons acquire the nationality of the host country and no longer appear as foreign nationals. The place of birth, however, does not change, except when there are changes in country borders.

The definitions and coverage used to estimate the size of the foreign-born and foreign populations differ slightly from one country to another but it results in relatively minor differences.

Most of the data published in this database are taken from the contributions of national correspondents who are part of the Continuous Reporting System on Migration (SOPEMI). Consequently, these data have not necessarily been harmonised at international level.

The foreign-born population data shown here include persons born abroad as nationals of their current country of residence. The prevalence of such persons among the foreign-born can be significant in some countries, in particular France and Portugal (repatriations from former colonies).

Overview

The foreign-born population is especially high in Luxembourg, Australia, Switzerland, Israel, New Zealand, and Canada. It has increased in the past decade in all countries for which data are available with the exception of the two most recent members of the OECD, namely Estonia and Israel. The proportion of foreign-born in the population as a whole at least doubled over the decade in Spain, Ireland and Norway. Other countries, such as Finland, South Africa and Chile report a low share of foreign-born in the total population but have seen a spectacular increase in recent years. By contrast, the foreign population tends to increase more slowly, because inflows of foreign nationals tend to be counterbalanced by persons acquiring the nationality of the host country.

Sources

- OECD (2011), *International Migration Outlook*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2008), *A Profile of Immigrant Populations in the 21st Century: Data from OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing.

Methodological publications

- Lemaître, G. and C. Thoreau, (2006), *Estimating the foreign-born population on a current basis*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2005), “Counting Immigrants and Expatriates in OECD Countries – a New Perspective”, *Trends in International Migration 2004*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- *OECD International Migration Statistics*.

Websites

- Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC), www.oecd.org/els/migration/dioc.



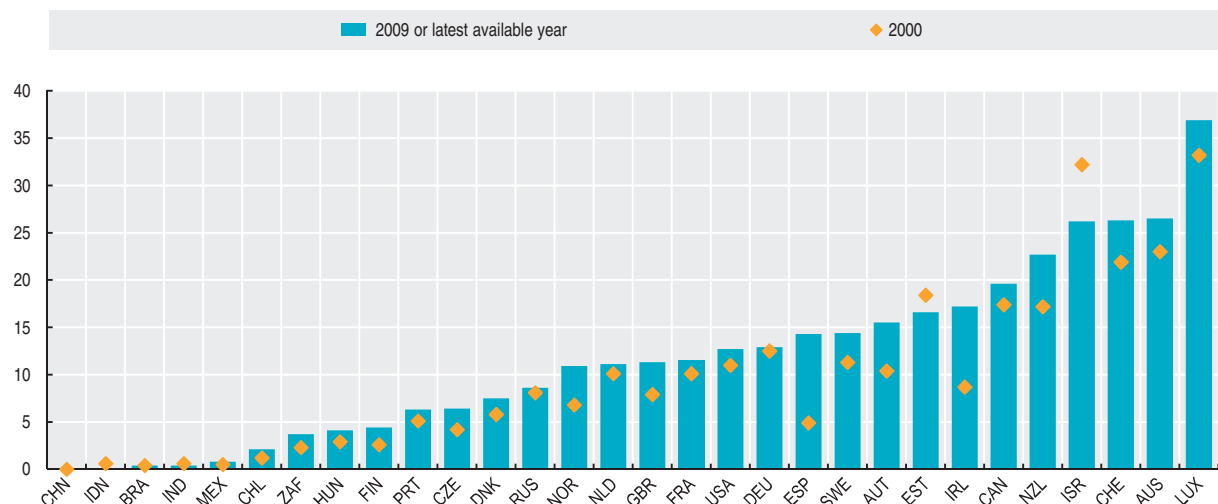
Foreign-born and foreign populations

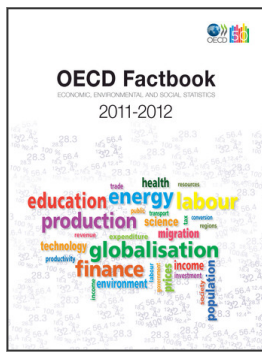
	As a percentage of total population												As a percentage of all foreign-born
	Foreign-born population						Foreign population						Foreign-born nationals
	1995	2000	2005	2007	2008	2009	1995	2000	2005	2007	2008	2009	2009 or latest available year
Australia	23.0	23.0	24.2	25.1	25.8	26.5	..	..	..	..	..	..	67.8
Austria	..	10.4	14.5	15.0	15.3	15.5	8.5	8.8	9.7	10.1	10.4	10.7	42.9
Belgium	9.7	10.3	12.1	13.0	..	..	9.0	8.4	8.6	9.1	9.5	9.8	44.0
Canada	16.7	17.4	18.7	19.2	19.4	19.6	..	..	..	..	..	..	75.0
Chile	..	1.2	1.5	1.8	1.9	2.1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Czech Republic	..	4.2	5.1	6.2	6.5	6.4	1.5	1.9	2.7	3.8	4.2	4.1	57.5
Denmark	4.8	5.8	6.5	6.9	7.3	7.5	4.2	4.8	5.0	5.5	5.8	6.0	42.0
Estonia	..	18.4	17.5	16.9	16.7	16.6	..	..	..	17.3	16.7	16.4	..
Finland	2.1	2.6	3.4	3.8	4.1	4.4	1.3	1.8	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.9	41.8
France	..	10.1	11.0	11.3	11.4	11.6	..	..	..	6.0	..	..	55.7
Germany	11.5	12.5	12.6	12.8	12.9	12.9	8.8	8.9	8.8	8.2	8.2	8.2	..
Greece	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.9	5.2	5.7	6.5	7.4	27.6
Hungary	2.7	2.9	3.3	3.8	3.9	4.1	1.4	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.0	..
Ireland	..	8.7	12.6	15.7	16.7	17.2	2.7	3.3	6.3	..	..	..	31.8
Israel	..	32.2	29.1	27.6	26.9	26.2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Italy	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.7	2.4	4.6	5.8	6.6	7.1	39.1
Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	..
Korea	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.2	0.4	1.0	1.7	1.8	1.9	..
Luxembourg	30.9	33.2	35.0	36.2	37.3	36.9	33.4	37.3	39.6	43.2	44.5	43.8	10.3
Mexico	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	..	..	..	..	..	0.2	..
Netherlands	9.1	10.1	10.6	10.7	10.9	11.1	4.7	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.4	70.2
New Zealand	..	17.2	20.3	21.6	22.3	22.7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Norway	5.5	6.8	8.2	9.5	10.3	10.9	3.8	4.0	4.8	5.7	6.4	6.9	47.4
Poland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.2	0.2	0.1	90.5
Portugal	5.2	5.1	6.3	6.1	6.1	6.3	1.7	2.1	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	57.1
Slovak Republic	..	..	4.6	6.8	8.2	..	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.2	..
Slovenia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.4	3.5	4.0	..
Spain	..	4.9	11.1	13.5	14.2	14.3	..	..	..	11.7	12.4	12.4	18.4
Sweden	10.6	11.3	12.5	13.4	13.9	14.4	6.0	5.4	5.3	5.7	6.0	6.4	64.5
Switzerland	21.4	21.9	23.8	24.9	25.8	26.3	18.9	19.3	20.3	20.8	21.4	21.7	29.6
Turkey	..	1.9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
United Kingdom	6.9	7.9	9.4	10.3	11.0	11.3	3.4	4.0	5.2	6.4	6.8	7.1	42.6
United States	9.9	11.0	13.0	13.6	13.7	12.7	..	..	..	7.5	7.3	6.9	48.9
Brazil	0.4	0.4	0.4	..	..	0.4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
China	0.0	0.0	0.0	..	..	0.1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
India	0.7	0.6	0.5	..	..	0.4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Indonesia	0.1	0.1	0.1	..	..	0.1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Russian Federation	7.9	8.1	8.4	..	..	8.7	..	8.2	..	..	..	..	..
South Africa	2.7	2.3	2.6	..	..	3.7	..	1.0	..	..	..	..	1.3

 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932502904>

Foreign-born population

As a percentage of total population


 StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932502923>



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