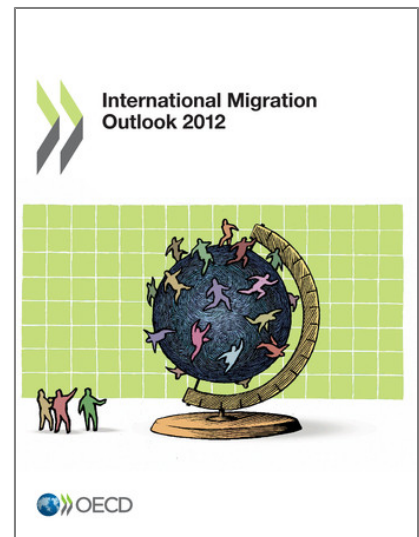


OECD *Multilingual Summaries*

International Migration Outlook 2012

Summary in English



Read the full book on:
10.1787/migr_outlook-2012-en

- The slowdown in migration into OECD countries caused by the global economic crisis seems to have come to an end. Migration into OECD countries fell in 2010 for the third year in a row, but started to rise again in most countries in 2011. Temporary labour migration continued to fall, albeit more slowly, while the number of people coming to the OECD to study continued to grow.
- With the recovery still fragile, and public opinion sensitive to migration issues against a backdrop of continuing high unemployment, many governments have introduced more restrictive migration policies. Jobless young migrants are also a particular cause for concern, requiring targeted policy action from governments.
- For the future, population ageing in the OECD area is likely to have a significant effect on migration trends, but perhaps in unexpected ways.
- At the same time, it is not clear how much longer high-skilled migration from Asia will continue to rise as demand for high-skilled labour increases in fast-growing economies in the region.
- This edition of the International Migration Outlook looks at trends in migration and migration policy, as well as employment trends among migrants. Special chapters focus on how changes in educational attainment and occupations affect migration, and on the changing role of Asia in international migration.

Migration flows to the OECD

Overall permanent migration inflows into 23 OECD countries plus the Russian Federation declined in 2010, for the third year in a row. However, the decline was modest overall (-3% compared with 2009) and the number of migrants – over 4.1 million – was higher than in any year prior to 2005 for which standardised statistics are available. Preliminary figures show that immigration started to increase again in 2011 in most European OECD countries except Italy, as well as in Australia and New Zealand; Canada recorded a significant decline, following record-high numbers in 2010.

Still limited evidence of increasing emigration from Southern Europe, Ireland

In the OECD, 2011 was marked by a worsening of economic conditions in some Eurozone countries, in particular Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, generating some speculation about an increase in emigration. The evidence available to date suggests that emigration from these countries has indeed increased, but only modestly. Outflows of nationals have also been rather small, with the exception of Ireland, where language barriers to emigration may be less of a problem.

Free movement and labour migration falling...

In 2010, free movement migration, strongly on the decline since 2007, accounted for 20% of all permanent migration flows. Because of the drop in employer demand, labour migration also decreased and represented only 21% of the total. Overall, family migration was the main category of entry in 2010, accounting for 36% of the flows (45% if accompanying family of workers are included). Humanitarian migration accounted for only 6% of migration in the EU and 13% in the United States.

... but temporary labour migration remains significant

Temporary worker migration tends to react quickly and strongly to changes in economic conditions. In fact, it experienced a sharp drop in 2008 and 2009 but only a modest 4% decline was observed in 2010. The size of temporary worker migration flows now stands at about 1.9 million, significantly more than the 1.4 million estimated for permanent migration for employment.

International student numbers continue to grow ...

In contrast to both permanent migration and temporary labour migration, the number of international students continued to grow in 2009, increasing by 6% to reach more than 2.6 million in the OECD countries and the Russian Federation. Australia replaced France as the third main destination after the United States and the United Kingdom. International students account on average for more than 6% of all students in OECD countries. China and India between them account for a full 25% of international students, who are an important source of future labour migration.

...while asylum seeker figures remain stable

Arrivals of asylum seekers in OECD countries were at a slightly lower level in 2010 than in 2009, and well below the high numbers observed at the turn of the millennium. The economic crisis thus did not lead to large increases in asylum-seeking. France remained the country which received the most asylum seekers in 2010, followed by the United States and Germany. The main country of origin in 2010 was Serbia, followed by Afghanistan and China. In 2011, this trend was reversed as asylum applications increased by more than 20%, notably because of the “Arab Spring” and increasing requests from Afghanistan.

China accounts for almost 10% of migrant flows

In 2010, China was again the main country of origin of migration flows to the OECD, nearly one in ten migrants being a Chinese citizen. Romania, India and Poland follow – each contributing about 5% of the total.

Migrants hit hardest by crisis job losses

The economic downturn hit immigrants hard, and almost immediately, in most OECD countries. The evidence suggests that overall the impact of the economic crisis on unemployment has been more pronounced for migrants than for the native-born. Overall, in the OECD, the foreign-born unemployment rate increased by four percentage points between 2008 and 2011, compared with 2.5 points for the native-born. Even more worrisome is the increase in long-term unemployment among immigrants. In most countries, migrants are responsible for between 14% and 30% of the increase in total long-term unemployment, a figure which is, in most cases, well above their share in total employment.

The crisis affected different migrant groups in different ways. In most countries, migrant women have been less affected than foreign-born men – in several countries an increasing number of migrant women have taken jobs to compensate for income losses suffered by migrant men. In terms of skill levels, low-skilled foreign-born workers have been hit harder than the medium- and high-skilled. This is not only related to differences in employment distribution by sector, but also to the type of jobs they occupy (often temporary) and their lower seniority, which imply a lower firing cost to employers.

Young migrants particularly vulnerable ...

The increase between 2008 and 2011 in the share of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), an indicator which captures the “joblessness” of young people, has been especially marked among migrants. This is true most notably in Greece, Spain, Sweden, Ireland and Italy. In addition, in the majority of countries, the incidence of temporary employment has increased more for young foreign-born workers than for their native-born counterparts or foreign-born adults (aged 25-54). Similarly, in a number of countries, the share of part-time employment in total employment has increased more for migrant youth than for native-born young people.

... requiring adequate and immediate policy response

Both during the crisis and in the recovery, adopting specific policies to help young people to find and keep a job is even more important for low-skilled foreign-born youth who suffer a combination of disadvantages (low skill levels, weak language skills, limited access to networks), who are at a higher risk of future unemployment and who are more likely to experience reduced total lifetime earnings (the so-called “scarring” effect).

Governments review migration policies...

Several countries shifted towards more restrictive immigration policies in 2010-2011 in response to changing in economic conditions and to increasing public sensitivity on migration issues. New governments tightened controls over the immigration process and restricted the possibilities of long-term immigration for migrants with poor employment prospects. More generally, many governments reviewed their skills shortage lists and temporary work programmes and subjected employers to more scrutiny. Points systems for admission have become more demand-driven, with supply-driven channels restrictive.

... including integration policies

Integration continues to be a top priority for immigration policy of OECD countries. Countries have adopted a wide range of integration-related initiatives, - ranging from establishing comprehensive national strategies to fine-tuning and refining existing action plans and integration programs. The focus also oscillates between established and newly-arrived migrants. A common trend among these policies is to prioritize labour market integration and reinforce the educational aspects of integration, including language training.

Impact of population ageing on migration

Population ageing and the role of migration in meeting this challenge is not just a question of how many new workers there are to replace those who retire. By looking at the contribution of migration to labour force changes – instead changes in working age population- in terms of education level and occupation, it becomes clear that the labour market is changing too rapidly for demographic imbalances alone to be a reliable indicator of future occupational needs.

The educational attainment of new entrants into the labour force was much higher than that of retiring workers over the period 2000-10. New immigrants had educational levels that were between those of new entrants and retirees, with proportionally more highly educated workers among new immigrants than among retirees. New entrants are, however, playing a more significant role in maintaining the size of the labour force than in its upskilling in most countries.

There is also the question of the type of occupation that will be available in the future, and the skills that will be needed, compared with the jobs and skill sets of the past. New immigrants represented 15% of entries into strongly growing occupations in Europe over the decade and 22% in the United States. They are thus playing a significant role in the most dynamic portions of the economy, even under conditions when most migration has not been demand-driven. But a higher number of immigrants were entering the most strongly declining occupations – 28% in Europe and 24% in the United States. In some countries, the figure is significantly higher for low-skilled jobs, which risks creating a segmented labour market.

Growing importance of Asian migration to the OECD...

Migrants from Asia accounted for 17% of all migrants over age 15 in OECD countries in the mid-2000s, and 30% of migration inflows in 2010 were from the region. Furthermore, Asia, notably India and China, provides a large part of skilled migration to OECD countries. In the short term it is most likely that Asia will remain a key source region for highly skilled workers. In the longer-term, however, as Asia develops, it will produce more skilled workers, but also foster the conditions for them to remain, and to attract skilled workers from other parts of the world.

... and future challenges for labour migration systems in Asia

Management of less-skilled migration in Asia is difficult because of a large surplus of labour and limited opportunities, leading to frequent rent-taking and raising migration costs for the less educated to a significant portion of expected overseas earnings. Some schemes, such as Korea's Employment Permit Scheme (EPS), have been successful in dealing with these challenges. In the meantime, countries of origin look to the Philippines as a model of how to integrate surplus labour into the global labour market – in different sectors, towards different destinations, and at different skill levels – while protecting their rights. As the growth in demand for low skilled migration remains limited in Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and OECD destination countries as well as within Asia, there might be little scope to significantly increase the supply of this type of migrant.

In the future Asian countries will also face a number of challenges, notably to manage increasing family and marriage migration but also to develop more comprehensive integration strategies as settlement – or at least longer duration of stay – is becoming more frequent for both high- and less skilled migrants.

© OECD

Reproduction of this summary is allowed provided the OECD copyright and the title of the original publication are mentioned.

Multilingual summaries are translated excerpts of OECD publications originally published in English and in French.

They are available free of charge on the OECD Online Bookshop www.oecd.org/bookshop

For more information, contact the OECD Rights and Translation unit,

Public Affairs and Communications Directorate at: rights@oecd.org or by fax: +33 (0)1 45 24 99 30.

OECD Rights and Translation unit (PAC)

2 rue André-Pascal, 75116

Paris, France

Visit our website www.oecd.org/rights



Read the complete English version on OECD iLibrary !

OECD (2012), *International Migration Outlook 2012*, OECD Publishing.

doi: 10.1787/migr_outlook-2012-en