

IMMIGRANT POPULATION

National views on the appropriate definition of the immigrant population vary from country to country. Despite this, it is now possible to provide an internationally comparable picture of the size of the immigrant population, based either on nationality or on country-of-birth criteria. Strictly speaking, the immigrant population consists of persons residing in a country but born in another country. The definition based on nationality is commonly used in a certain number of countries and reflects a legal view of immigration.

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 solis*, the right of soil) while in other countries, they retain the nationality of their parents (*jus sanguinis*, the right of blood). In 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.

Long-term trends

Not surprisingly, the foreign-born population has increased in the past decade in all countries for which data are available. It is especially high in Australia, Canada, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Switzerland. This increase is likely to continue into the future, with further immigration needs. 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. It thus gives a partial view of the evolution of immigration trends.

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 data shown for the year 2000 come from a special census data collection covering almost all OECD countries. Note that the foreign-born 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).

For a number of countries, reliable data on the foreign-born population are available only at time of census. To make up for this deficiency, the OECD has developed data series for a certain number of countries, applying two estimation methods, the choice of which depends on the auxiliary information available for estimation. These methods are described and evaluated at www.oecd.org/els/migration/foreignborn.

For the foreign-born population the data year shown under the 2000 column is 1999 for France; 2001 for Greece, Italy, the Slovak Republic, Spain; 2002 for Poland; under the 2005 column is 2003 for Germany and 2004 for the Slovak Republic. For the foreign population the data year shown as 2000 is 1999 for France; 2001 for Australia, Canada, Greece; 2002 for Poland.

Source

- OECD (2007), *International Migration Outlook: SOPEMI – 2007 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2007), *International Migration Outlook: SOPEMI – 2007 Edition*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2008), *A Profile of Immigrant Populations in the 21st Century: Data from OECD Countries*, OECD, Paris.

Methodological publications

- Lemaître, G. and C. Thoreau (2006), *Estimating the foreign-born population on a current basis*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2005), “Counting immigrants and expatriates in OECD countries – a new perspective”, *Trends in International Migration: SOPEMI – 2004 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

Online database

- Database on immigrants in OECD countries, www.oecd.org/els/migration/censusdatabase.



Foreign-born and foreign populations

As a percentage of the total population

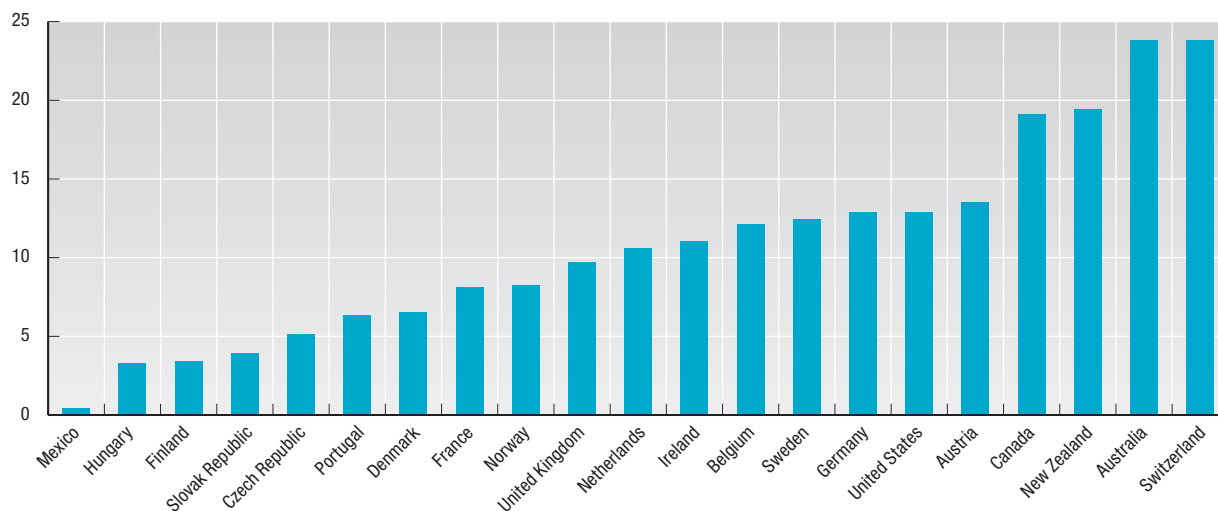
As a percentage
of all foreign-born

	Foreign-born population			Foreign population			Foreign-born nationals
	1995	2000	2005	1995	2000	2005	2000
Australia	23.0	23.0	23.8	..	7.4	..	68.4
Austria	..	10.5	13.5	8.5	8.8	9.7	40.9
Belgium	9.7	10.3	12.1	9.0	8.4	8.6	40.8
Canada	17.2	18.1	19.1	..	5.3	..	72.6
Czech Republic	..	4.2	5.1	1.5	1.9	2.7	79.8
Denmark	4.8	5.8	6.5	4.2	4.8	5.0	40.3
Finland	2.0	2.6	3.4	1.3	1.8	2.2	41.6
France	..	7.3	8.1	..	5.6	5.8	53.1
Germany	11.5	12.5	12.9	8.8	8.9	8.8	..
Greece	..	10.3	..	..	7.0	..	41.5
Hungary	2.8	2.9	3.3	1.4	1.1	1.5	71.1
Ireland	..	8.7	11.0	2.7	3.3	6.3	45.2
Italy	..	2.5	..	1.7	2.4	4.6	47.5
Japan	..	..	..	1.1	1.3	1.6	..
Korea	..	..	..	0.2	0.4	1.0	..
Luxembourg	..	..	..	33.4	37.3	39.6	13.0
Mexico	0.4	0.5	0.4	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	9.1	10.1	10.6	4.7	4.2	4.2	65.0
New Zealand	..	17.2	19.4	..	..	..	..
Norway	5.5	6.8	8.2	3.8	4.0	4.8	47.6
Poland	..	1.6	..	..	0.1	..	96.1
Portugal	5.4	5.1	6.3	1.7	2.1	4.1	66.3
Slovak Republic	..	2.5	3.9	0.4	0.5	0.5	84.2
Spain	..	5.3	..	1.3	2.2	6.2	30.9
Sweden	10.5	11.3	12.4	6.0	5.4	5.3	62.5
Switzerland	21.4	21.9	23.8	18.9	19.3	20.3	29.3
Turkey	..	1.9	..	..	..	..	79.2
United Kingdom	6.9	7.9	9.7	3.4	4.0	5.2	..
United States	9.3	11.0	12.9	..	6.6	..	46.4

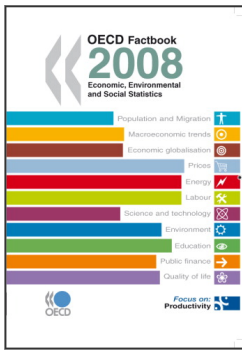
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/272383730066>

Foreign-born population

As a percentage of total population, 2005



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/266484230878>



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