

IMMIGRANT AND FOREIGN POPULATION

As a result of migration flows of varying destinations and size, countries differ in their share of immigrants and foreign population. The exact definition of these shares is key for international comparisons.

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 some 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 other 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.

Most of the data for this indicator are taken from the contributions of national correspondents who are part of the OECD Expert Group on International Migration.

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 who received large inflows of repatriates from former colonies.

Overview

The share of the foreign-born population in the total population is especially high in Luxembourg, Australia, Switzerland, Israel, New Zealand and Canada where it ranges from 21% to 42%. In a number of other European countries as well (namely, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Germany, Estonia, Austria and Sweden), the share is higher than in the United States (13.1%). 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 roughly 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

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Further information

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- OECD (2012), *Connecting with Emigrants, A Global Profile of Diasporas*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Settling In: OECD Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2012*, OECD Publishing.

Methodological publications

- Lemaître, G. and C. Thoreau, (2006), *Estimating the foreign-born population on a current basis*, OECD, Paris.

Online databases

- OECD International Migration Statistics.

Websites

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



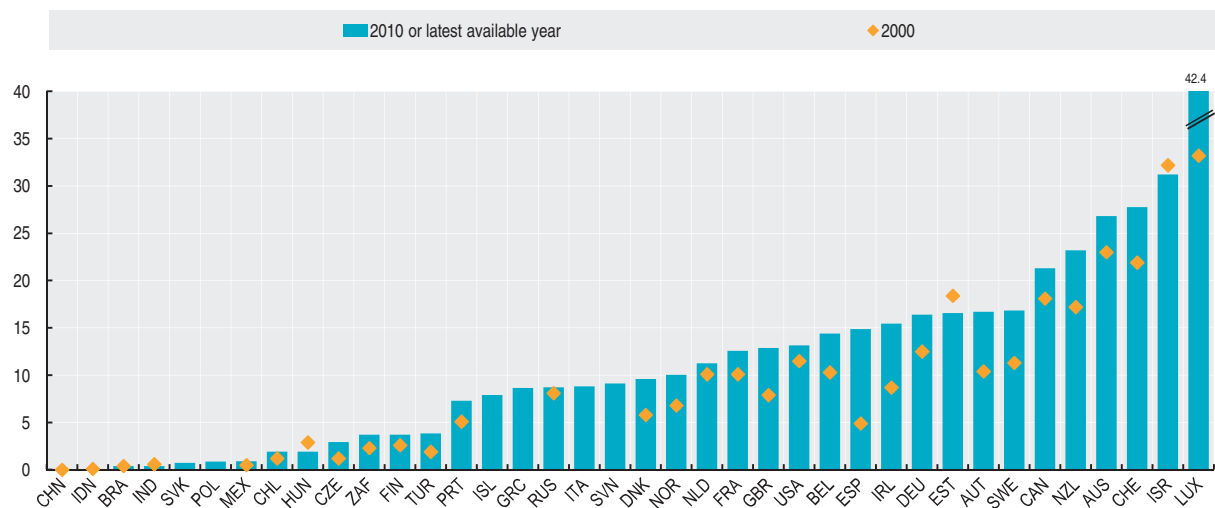
Foreign-born and foreign populations

	As a percentage of total population								As a percentage of all foreign-born
	Foreign-born population				Foreign population				Foreign-born nationals
	1995	2000	2005	2010	1995	2000	2005	2010	
Australia	23.0	23.0	24.2	26.8	..	..	..	..	..
Austria	..	10.4	14.5	16.7	8.5	8.8	9.7	10.4	41.9
Belgium	9.7	10.3	12.1	14.4	9.0	8.4	8.6	9.2	44.6
Canada	17.2	18.1	19.5	21.3	..	..	..	..	..
Chile	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.9	..	..	..	..	..
Czech Republic	..	1.2	1.5	2.9	..	..	..	1.1	63.1
Denmark	4.8	5.8	6.5	9.6	4.2	4.8	5.0	5.4	46.7
Estonia	..	18.4	17.5	16.6	..	..	..	17.6	35.7
Finland	2.1	2.6	3.4	3.7	1.3	1.8	2.2	2.1	47.2
France	..	10.1	11.0	12.6	..	..	..	5.9	53.4
Germany	11.5	12.5	12.6	16.4	8.8	8.9	8.8	9.0	55.1
Greece	..	..	..	8.7	..	2.9	5.2	7.0	22.1
Hungary	2.7	2.9	3.3	1.9	1.4	1.1	1.5	0.6	69.6
Iceland	..	..	..	7.9	..	..	..	3.7	54.7
Ireland	..	8.7	12.6	15.5	2.7	3.3	6.3	11.2	29.9
Israel	..	32.2	29.1	31.2	..	..	..	..	..
Italy	..	..	..	8.8	1.7	2.4	4.6	6.5	26.9
Japan	..	..	..	..	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.7	..
Korea	..	..	..	..	0.2	0.4	1.1	2.0	..
Luxembourg	30.9	33.2	35.0	42.4	33.4	37.3	39.6	41.8	13.2
Mexico	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.9	..	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	9.1	10.1	10.6	11.2	4.7	4.2	4.2	3.6	70.5
New Zealand	..	17.2	20.3	23.2	..	..	..	..	..
Norway	5.5	6.8	8.2	10.0	3.8	4.0	4.8	5.6	49.0
Poland	..	..	..	0.9	..	..	..	0.1	87.1
Portugal	5.2	5.1	6.3	7.3	1.7	2.1	4.1	3.5	53.9
Slovak Republic	..	..	4.6	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.2	74.4
Slovenia	..	..	..	9.1	..	..	..	1.3	85.5
Spain	..	4.9	11.1	14.9	..	..	..	12.3	18.3
Sweden	10.6	11.3	12.5	16.8	6.0	5.4	5.3	5.6	67.7
Switzerland	21.4	21.9	23.8	27.8	18.9	19.3	20.3	21.6	32.1
Turkey	..	1.9	..	3.8	..	..	..	..	..
United Kingdom	6.9	7.9	9.4	12.9	3.4	4.0	5.2	7.4	41.9
United States	10.1	11.5	13.3	13.1	6.1	6.5	7.5	7.1	54.0
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OECD
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	57.1

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Foreign-born population

As a percentage of total population


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