

Introduction

2007 Edition of International Migration Outlook shows an increase in migration flows to the OECD...

International migration of both permanent and temporary immigrants continued to increase in 2005. Overall, for the seventeen countries for which there exist comparable data on “permanent-type” legal immigration, inflows increased by about 11% in 2005 relative to 2004. Among the other OECD countries, there was an increase of about 10% between 2004 and 2005, largely due to greater inflows in Spain. At the same time, high temporary movements were observed in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, countries in which permanent migration is also high.

... notably in family migration and migration for employment...

Family migration continues to dominate among the inflows of permanent-type immigrants. Although it represents only one third of all permanent-type migration in Japan and the United Kingdom, it reaches a high of 70% in the United States, whose migration regime is heavily family-based. Many European countries, among them Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom, appear as important labour migration countries, with some 30 to 40% of permanent-type immigrants arriving for work-related reasons.

... while, the number of asylum seekers continues to decline

The number of asylum seekers continued to decline in OECD countries in 2005, falling by 15% overall. The 2005 level has almost halved compared to the number observed in 2000 and currently stands below 300 000. Absolute levels of asylum requests were at about 50 000 in France, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom at about 30 000 each, and Austria, Canada and the United States in the 20 000 to 25 000 range. However, relative to the population, it was Austria that received the most requests at more than 2 700 per million persons in the population.

There are increasing inflows of international students

The number of foreign students in OECD countries has increased by more than 40% since 2000, with especially large increases in New Zealand, the Czech Republic and Korea. Other countries which have seen large increases (exceeding 50%) include the countries of

southern Europe, Ireland, Australia, France, the Netherlands and Japan. The increase in the number of international students is most likely a response to signals which many OECD countries have been sending in recent years, concerning possibilities for work and residence following the completion of their education.

There are more immigrants from central and eastern Europe, China and India...

In 2005, the major origin countries of migration remained relatively stable, with geographical proximity still being a major determinant in the choice of destination country. A change in origin countries is nevertheless evident in Europe, where movements have been largely influenced by the increase in flows from central and eastern European countries as a consequence of the enlargement of the European Union (May 2004) and the recent adhesion of Bulgaria and Romania (January 2007). Outside of Europe, in North America, Oceania, Japan and Korea, migrants from Asia are still dominant, with a significant growth in numbers of those from India and China.

... and destination countries for sub-Saharan African migration have begun to diversify

Migration from Africa to OECD countries concerns mostly European countries due to historical links and geographic proximity. In Europe, North African migration is more frequent than migration from sub-Saharan Africa. Destination countries for African migration have begun to diversify, however, and Southern European countries have become an attractive destination as a result of new employment opportunities combined with geographical proximity. For instance, flows from Senegal and Nigeria to Spain increased on average by about 25 and 15% per year, respectively, over the past five years. Africans also emigrate to North America, especially those from English-speaking countries like Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya. In the United States, the number of persons from Africa obtaining legal permanent resident status increased by 30% in 2005 to reach 85 000.

The integration of immigrants into the labour market is improving...

During the last 5 to 10 years, differences in participation rates between the native-born population and immigrants declined in most countries. This, however, conceals large differences regarding groups of origin and gender. Between 1995 and 2005, there was strong growth in employment in most OECD countries to which immigrants greatly contributed. In 15 out of the 18 countries for which data are available, the percentage of immigrants in net job creation between 1995 and 2005 was higher than the proportion of immigrants in the working population in 2005.

... but immigrants continue to be over-represented among the unemployed

In 2004-2005, in all OECD countries, with the exception of Poland, Hungary and the United States, the unemployment rate of immigrants was higher than that of the native

population. In the Nordic countries, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland, immigrants are over-represented among the unemployed by a factor of at least two compared to their share in the labour force.

The report this year focuses on the labour market integration of the children of immigrants...

Altogether, persons with a migration background account for more than 30% of the 20-29 year old in Australia, Canada and Switzerland (in descending order); between 30 and 20% in Sweden, the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, France and the United Kingdom; and around 15% in Denmark and Norway.

... which tends to be less favourable than for the children of the native-born

A first glance at the employment rates of the children of immigrants reveals significant gaps for most countries. Although the second generation generally has a higher employment probability than young immigrants, the gaps vis-à-vis the children of the native-born are still large in European OECD countries. There is, however, a relatively strong improvement for second generation women. The large gaps in the employment rates of the second generation are partly due to the lower educational attainment of the former. In Denmark, for example, the gap would diminish by about half if the second generation had the same educational attainment as other natives. Nevertheless, even at given education levels, gaps remain large in all European countries with the exception of Switzerland.

This year's report provides a new approach to migration policies

The report provides a new approach to presenting migration policies. A distinction is made between domestic policy issues such as the recruitment, reception and integration of immigrants on the one hand, and the international dimension of migration policies on the other hand. The domestic issues concern changes in migration policies which aim at responding to labour market needs (including in the context of EU enlargement), the introduction of more restrictive measures for family reunification, policies to enhance the human capital of immigrants, and recent changes in integration policies including a redefinition of responsibility sharing. This part also highlights recent regularisation programmes in OECD countries. The second more international set of issues deal with measures to combat irregular migration, the international co-operation for reinforcing border control and policies aiming at enhancing the links between international migration and development of origin countries.

Two special chapters deal with topical issues

The increase in the migration of highly skilled workers is one of the salient features of recent international migration trends in OECD countries. In this context, questions arise

concerning the transferability and use of foreign skills in receiving countries' labour markets, and the impact of the international mobility of the highly skilled on origin countries.

The first chapter addresses the question of the mismatch between qualifications and jobs of immigrants in OECD countries...

Regardless of the definition used and the country concerned, immigrants are more likely than the native-born to hold jobs for which they are over-qualified. Foreign-born women seem to be at an even greater disadvantage. The analysis underlines the crucial importance of the place of education. This variable may translate differences in terms of the content and quality of schooling (at a given level of education), but it may also serve to distort employers' interpretation of education levels, given the lack of information available to them. In any case, the fact that in all of the countries considered, at least 25% (on average almost 50%) of skilled immigrants are inactive, unemployed or confined to jobs for which they are over-qualified, poses the question of finding ways to use more effectively on the human resources of skilled immigrants.

... and the second chapter presents an up-to-date and comprehensive picture of immigrants in the health sector in OECD countries

On average, around the year 2000, 11% of nurses and 18% of doctors employed in the OECD area were foreign-born. There are large variations in the size of the foreign-born health workforce across OECD countries, partly reflecting general migration patterns, notably of the highly skilled. In general, however, health professionals are not over-represented among highly skilled migrants. While there is a legitimate concern about the consequences of migration on origin countries, stopping the outflows of doctors and nurses especially from low income countries – if this were indeed possible – would by itself not solve the global health workforce crisis these countries face. The Chapter also emphasises the necessity to recognise that, in the long run, active international recruitment can hardly compensate for domestic solutions, especially when there is large pool of human resources that could be mobilised.