

Israel*

In 2009, there were 14 600 new permanent immigrants to Israel, a slight increase (6%) over 2008, but far below the level of the 1990s, when immigration averaged almost 100 000 annually. The main countries from which immigrants arrived were the Russian Federation (22%), the United States (17%), Ukraine (11%) and France (11%). One notable absence in inflows in 2009 was Ethiopia, which had provided about 11% of the inflow over the previous decade.

While permanent immigration is generally limited to entries under the Law of Return (Jews and their family members) and family reunification with an Israeli citizen (only 120 persons in 2009), Israel has a large temporary labour migration programme, under which workers may stay up to five years for employment in specific low-skill sectors or in specialist jobs. In 2009, there were 26 600 new entries for employment under this programme, a decline of about 13% from the 2008 numbers. The main sending countries were Thailand (19%), the Philippines (17%), the former Soviet Union countries (17%), Nepal (9%) and India (7%). The stock of legally employed foreign workers was about 90 000, mostly in care work (about 50 000), agriculture (26 000) and construction (9 000). The number increased slightly in 2010, due to a rise in the number of care workers.

There were also about 30 000 workers who had lost their right to stay, and up to 100 000 individuals who had entered with a tourist visa, illegally overstayed, and assumed to have entered the labour force. About 40% of the latter group are citizens of the former Soviet Union. Altogether, these workers were estimated to account for about 7% of total employment in Israel.

Israel also admits Palestinian workers for employment, on a temporary renewable basis. In 2009, there were about 22 600 Palestinian workers legally employed in Israel, although the government estimated that an additional 25 000 were employed illegally. In early 2011, the stock of permits for Palestinian workers was raised to 28 000.

2009 saw a significant number of Africans – 4 000 – crossing the border from Egypt into Israel, a phenomenon which began in 2007. An additional 13 000 arrived in 2010, bringing the stock to about 32 000. Most are Eritreans (61%) or Sudanese (26%), who are not generally granted access to the asylum process in Israel, but who receive a tolerated temporary status. Others may apply for asylum, although acceptance rates are low. In 2009, there were

810 applications, 30% from Georgians, 25% from Nigerians, and 14% from Ghanaians. To address the inflow of asylum seekers, the government plans to build a reception centre. In the meanwhile, in the absence of reception services, it is not enforcing the prohibition on employment of asylum seekers and those with tolerated status. The hotel industry is the single largest employer of these workers.

The main policy developments in 2009-10 concerned changes to the temporary labour migration management system, under which quotas are applied for the agricultural, construction and restaurant sectors, and employees may only change occupations within the sector for which they are admitted. While the government agreed on reductions in the quotas for construction (to be eliminated entirely) and for agriculture (to be gradually reduced), the full implementation of these reductions was delayed. The government objective is to train Israeli workers for jobs in construction, and subsidise employment and mechanisation in agriculture, to reduce dependence on foreign workers in these sectors. The home care sector remains uncapped.

In order to reduce illegal fee-taking and to ensure rotation, the government started a pilot seasonal agricultural worker programme with Sri Lanka in October 2010, under which 300 workers arrived in the first group.

Responsibility for immigration matters – enforcement, licensing of agencies, permit issuance and renewal, and refugee status determination – was shifted in 2009 from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour (MoITAL) to the Population, Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA) at the Ministry of Interior. However, an ombudsman remains at the former ministry, and MoITAL continues to oversee labour inspectors.

Finally, a government resolution in February 2010 contained a commitment to develop a new framework law for immigration. Separately, an opposition proposal for a framework immigration law, specifying criteria for family reunification, refugee status, labour migration, and naturalisation, is scheduled to be discussed in 2011.

For further information:

www.cbs.gov.il

www.moit.gov.il/NR/exeres/8CD0F279-80FA-43A6-934B-35B28B0CDE1F.htm

www.piba.gov.il

* The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Recent trends in migrants' flows and stocks

ISRAEL

Migration flows (foreigners) National definition	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level ('000)			
					2000-04	2005-09	2009			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
Inflows	9.6	3.1	1.9	1.9	5.6	2.4	14.6			
Outflows	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Migration inflows (foreigners) by type	Thousands		% distribution		Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners					
Permit based statistics (standardised)	2008	2009	2008	2009						
Work	..	..	..	..		
Family (incl. accompanying family)	1.4	0.1	10.5	0.8						
Humanitarian	..	..	..	..		
Free movements	..	..	..	..		
Others	12.3	14.5	89.5	99.2						
Total	13.7	14.6	100.0	100.0						
Temporary migration	2005	2008	2009	Average 2005-09						
<i>Thousands</i>										
International students	..	..	..	..		
Trainees	..	..	..	..		
Working holiday makers	..	..	..	..		
Seasonal workers	..	..	..	..		
Intra-company transfers	..	..	..	..		
Other temporary workers	..	..	..	..		
Inflows of asylum seekers	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
	1.0	0.1	1.1	0.1	..	0.4	809			
Components of population growth	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level ('000)			
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>										
Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Natural increase	27.7	26.4	26.9	..	27.2	..	..	
Net migration	9.8	2.4	1.7	..	4.6	..	..	
Stocks of immigrants	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level ('000)			
<i>Percentage of the total population</i>										
Foreign-born population	32.2	29.1	26.9	26.2	31.2	27.6	1 878			
Foreign population	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Naturalisations	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level			
<i>Percentage of the foreign population</i>										
			
Labour market outcomes	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level			
<i>Employment/population ratio</i>										
Native-born men	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign-born men	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Native-born women	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign-born women	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Unemployment rate</i>										
Native-born men	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign-born men	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Native-born women	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign-born women	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Macroeconomic indicators	2000	2005	2008	2009	Average		Level			
<i>Annual growth in %</i>										
Real GDP	9.1	4.9	4.2	0.8	3.0	4.2	..			
GDP/capita (level in USD)	6.3	3.0	2.4	-1.0	0.9	2.4	25 832			
Employment (level in thousands)	3.9	3.8	3.4	0.3	2.4	3.0	2 782			
<i>Percentage of the labour force</i>										
Unemployment	8.7	9.0	6.1	7.6	9.9	7.7	..			

Notes and sources are at the end of the chapter.

Source: Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932441382>