

MIGRATION • FLOWS OF IMMIGRANTS

INFLOWS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

An important component of international migration flows are asylum seekers, i.e. persons seeking protection under the Geneva Convention on Refugees. It has become a highly controversial channel of entry during the 1990s, because of the perception that it was being used by economic migrants as a way of entering OECD countries.

**INTRODUCTION**  
to the indicator

Long-term trends

Asylum seeking increased substantially with the fall of the Iron Curtain and reached a peak in 1992, as a result of the crisis in the former Soviet Union. In host countries reacted by introducing restrictive measures such as extending the number of countries subject to visa requirements or by limiting the legal appeal channels. Two general rules also began to be applied to requests for asylum: the safe-country-of-origin rule by which requests for asylum from identified "safe" countries were automatically refused; and the safe-country-of-transit rule, which stipulated that an asylum seeker had to make his/her application in the first "safe" country through which he/she passed. In 2000 and 2001, the increase in regional conflicts increased the number of asylum seekers throughout the OECD area. Since then, the number of asylum seekers arriving in OECD countries has again shown a marked downward trend, with a fall of about 50% since 2001.

**GLOBAL CONTEXT,**  
history, and forecasts

Since 2003, France has replaced the United States as the most important destination country for asylum seeking. In absolute numbers, flows also remain high in the United Kingdom and Germany – despite a strong decline in these two countries since 2001/2002. In relative terms, requests remain high in Austria, Sweden, Luxembourg, Belgium and Switzerland – although there were declines in these countries (with the exception of Belgium) to 2005.

In all OECD countries, recognition rates are low. Generally significantly less than one in five asylum requests is accepted by the host country. Some asylum seekers are allowed to stay on humanitarian grounds, although they are not formally recognised as refugees. Currently, refugees, other persons admitted for humanitarian reasons and accompanying family account for less than 10% of long-term migration to OECD countries. With the continuing fall in asylum seeking, this proportion is likely to fall as well.

Where to find  
the full databases

**DEFINITION**  
of what is being described  
and measured

Definition

Asylum-seekers are persons who have applied for asylum or refugee status, but who have not yet received a final decision on their application. In principle, each country subsequently decides to whom to grant refugee status among asylum applicants. This status can be granted, among others, under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the so-called Geneva Convention) – of which all OECD countries are signatories. In other cases a special "protection" may be granted to asylum claimants who are unable to return to their origin countries because of conflict situations. Those refused refugee or protection status are in principle supposed to return to their country of origin.

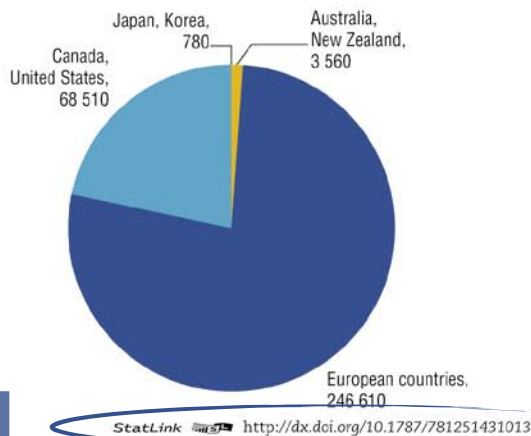
How well do  
national figures  
COMPARE?

Comparability

The data are taken from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) database. In most OECD countries, there are separate administrative registers for asylum seekers, and the numbers are reported to the UNHCR. Due to the registering and the administrative procedures involved in treating asylum requests, they are generally accurate and thus of good comparability.

Inflows of asylum seekers

Number of persons, 2005



Source

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) database

**FURTHER ANALYSIS**  
on the subject

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2006), International Migration Outlook: SOPEMI – 2006 Edition, OECD, Paris.

economies covering a wide range of areas. Indicators are data table and a graph to present the results at a glance.

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INFLOWS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Inflows of asylum seekers into OECD countries

Year 2000=100

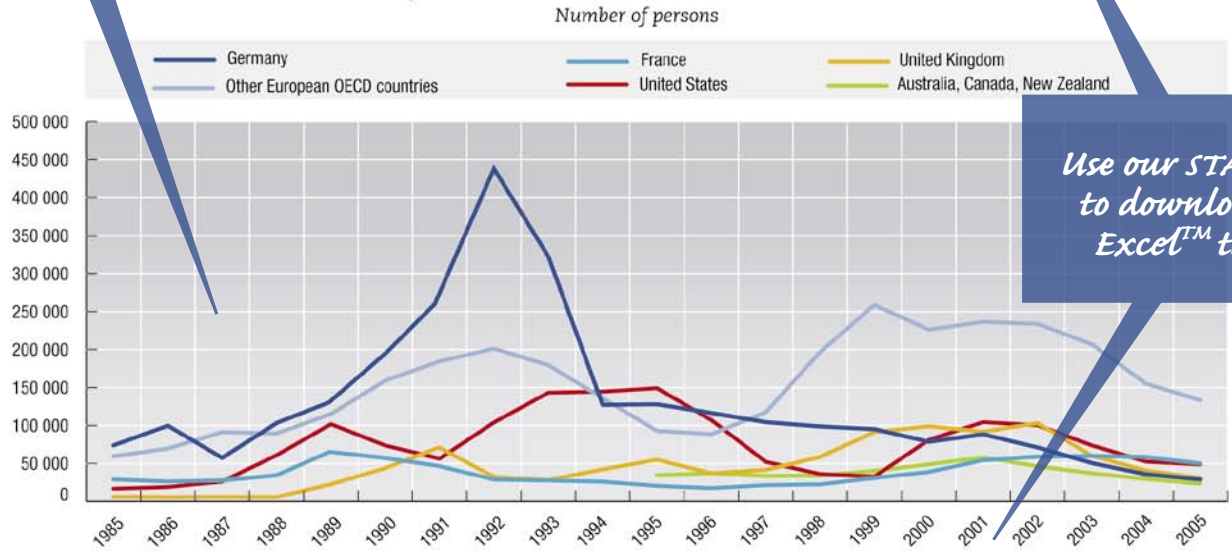
	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2005
Australia	..	93	58	75	71	62	72	100	95	45	33	24	25	3 210
Austria	37	125	32	38	37	76	110	100	165	215	177	135	123	22 470
Belgium	12	30	27	29	26	51	64	100	58	44	40	36	37	15 960
Canada	38	107	76	76	66	70	86	100	129	115	93	75	58	19 740
Czech Republic	..	18	16	25	24	46	82	100	206	97	130	62	46	4 020
Denmark	71	43	42	48	42	77	101	100	103	50	38	27	19	2 260
Finland	1	87	27	22	31	40	98	100	52	109	102	122	112	3 560
France	75	141	53	45	55	58	80	100	140	152	154	151	129	50 050
Germany	94	246	163	148	133	126	121	100	112	91	64	45	37	28 910
Greece	45	200	43	53	142	96	50	100	178	184	265	145	294	13 610
Hungary	..	45	2	2	3	91	147	100	122	82	31	21	21	1 610
Iceland	4	29	21	17	25	79	71	100	217	488	333	313	39	1 220
Ireland	..	..	4	11	36	42	71	100	94	106	72	44	39	1 220
Italy	26	31	11	4	12	71	214	100	62	103	86	62	61	9 910
Japan	13	15	24	68	112	62	103	100	163	116	156	197	171	370
Korea	..	..	..	2	102	40	9	100	91	86	200	349	95	410
Luxembourg	..	18	63	42	69	275	470	100	111	168	249	254	129	800
Netherlands	13	48	67	51	78	103	97	100	74	43	31	22	28	12 350
New Zealand	..	43	44	85	96	127	99	100	103	64	54	37	23	350
Norway	8	37	13	16	21	77	94	100	136	161	147	73	50	5 400
Poland	..	..	18	70	77	74	64	100	99	113	151	176	119	5 440
Portugal	31	33	204	121	133	163	137	100	104	109	39	48	49	110
Slovak Republic	..	..	23	27	41	33	85	100	524	623	666	732	224	3 490
Spain	30	109	72	60	63	84	106	100	120	80	75	70	66	5 260
Sweden	89	180	55	35	59	79	69	100	144	203	192	142	108	17 530
Switzerland	55	203	97	102	136	235	262	100	117	148	118	81	57	10 060
Turkey	..	44	68	74	89	120	116	100	89	67	70	69	69	3 910
United Kingdom	6	39	56	37	42	59	92	100	93	104	61	41	31	30 460
United States	21	91	184	132	65	44	40	100	129	124	91	65	60	48 770
OECD Total	34	99	84	71	65	78	96	100	110	107	85	65	55	319 050

FULL TABLE with the most recent data

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/347368352135>

Graph shows KEY MESSAGE

Inflows of asylum seekers into the main destination countries



Use our STATLINKS to download the Excel™ tables!

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/385812465226>