

# Introduction

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*The annual report is now entitled “International Migration Outlook”.*

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For the past thirty years, the OECD’s Continuous Reporting System on Migration (known under by its French acronym SOPEMI) has been producing an annual report. In 1992, the report first appeared as a flagship publication of the OECD, under the title *Trends in International Migration*. This report, the thirtieth, broadens its analytical scope and its new title, *International Migration Outlook*, better reflects the growing importance of international migration in a context of accelerating economic globalisation and population ageing.

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*To improve the international comparability of migration statistics...*

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Until now, it has been difficult to provide an accurate overview of immigration flows in OECD countries, because inflow data vary from country to country. Indeed, commonly used national data sources do not all define international migration in the same way. For example, some countries include short-term entries in the flow statistics, while others only cover permanent entries.

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*... the report this year focuses on long-term entries.*

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The current report attempts to make up for some of these gaps by presenting, for the first time and for the majority of OECD countries, harmonised statistics on long-term immigration flows in receiving countries. The emphasis on the flow statistics this year complements the contribution of last year’s report, which described a new OECD database on the immigrant population by country of residence, country of birth and educational attainment.

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*The harmonised entries are lower than those usually published.*

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The harmonisation process essentially amounts to excluding from national statistics on immigration flows, categories of migrants (in particular students) with residence permits that are not renewable or are renewable only on a limited basis. The harmonisation of the data results in only a moderate increase in the overall annual change in the inflows for the countries covered, but reduces the level of entries compared to those usually published by about one million.

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*Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia and Canada have relatively high immigration levels.*

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Among countries for which harmonised data have been produced, the level of legal long-term entries as a percentage of the total population is highest in Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, whereas low levels are observed in Finland and Japan. In Portugal and Italy, the large number of irregular migrants can explain the relatively low levels observed in those countries. In the United States, which also has high levels of unauthorised immigration, the number of legal entries as a percentage of the total population is relatively modest compared to many other OECD countries.

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*Temporary worker movements are increasing in response to labour shortages.*

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Almost all OECD countries also have temporary worker migration programmes, which have been growing over the past decade (temporary workers, seasonal workers, working holidaymakers, contract workers). There are also other temporary-type movements, such as intra-company transfers of managers within multinational enterprises, traineeships and cross-border service provision. Temporary worker entries increased by about 7% between 2003 and 2004, reaching 1.5 million entries, and this includes only OECD countries for which there are detailed data and excludes movements of students who can work (on a limited basis) during their studies.

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*There are more immigrants from Russia, the Ukraine, China and Latin America.*

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As each year, the report analyses the trends in migration movements and policies. Migration to neighbouring countries and to countries with which there are historical links tends to predominate. The report underlines the growing importance of certain nationality groups and in particular, of recent flows from Russia, the Ukraine, China and Latin America (especially to Spain) to European OECD countries. Outside of Europe, the movements are more diverse, with persons from countries in Asia, Latin America, but also from the United Kingdom, figuring among the top source countries in North America, Oceania, Japan and Korea. The significant presence in the migration flows of women from the Dominican Republic, the Philippines and the Ukraine suggests an increasing feminisation of the flows, but the trend is not a general one.

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*Family migration continues to dominate.*

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Family migration (accompanying family of workers and family reunification) is predominant in most OECD countries, even in countries where worker entries are relatively more common than in the past, as in Portugal, Denmark, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

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*Asylum requests continued to decline, while international student flows increased.*

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The trend decline in the number of asylum seekers observed since 2000 continued with a decrease of 20% between 2003 and 2004. In relative terms, requests for asylum remain high in Austria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. France is the country which had the highest number of requests in 2004, while the strongest declines between 2000 and 2004 were observed in Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The increase in the number of foreign students was significant, in particular in New Zealand, Japan, Australia, France and Germany.

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*Immigrants represent a growing share of the labour force...*

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Immigrants represent a growing share of the labour force in OECD countries, although there are important differences from one country to another. For example, they represent less than 1.5% of the working population in Japan, around 12% in Germany, but 25% in Switzerland and in Australia. A detailed analysis of the situation of immigrants on the labour market shows the spread of immigrant employment to the service sectors in most OECD countries while self-employment among immigrants is growing, in particular in Belgium and the United Kingdom.

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*... but some have difficulties integrating into the labour market.*

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Notwithstanding progress in employment of the foreign-born during the last decade, the latter encounter difficulties in most of the receiving countries in integrating into the labour market, as illustrated by a lower rate of employment compared to the native-born and a higher unemployment rate. In the countries of southern Europe and Ireland, as well as non-European OECD countries, this pattern is less apparent, indeed, one observes the opposite.

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*Younger and older workers are particularly vulnerable...*

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In certain OECD countries, the young, older workers and women encounter specific difficulties. Immigrants in these groups are even more at risk because they combine the disadvantages associated with their demographic group and with their origin. For example, in Belgium, France and Sweden, while unemployment among young people 15-24 born in the country exceeds 15%, the figure for young immigrants is twice as high. In a number of member countries, older immigrant workers have to contend with a similar situation in accessing the labour market. In Belgium, fewer than a quarter of 55-64 year olds born abroad are working, while in Germany and Denmark, the figure is a little over 35%.

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*... as are women, in particular those from non-OECD countries.*

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The 2006 edition of *International Migration Outlook* looks in particular at the labour market integration of immigrant women in OECD countries. In most of them, foreign-born women have a lower employment rate compared to the native-born, generally below 60%. Moreover, the gap tends to widen with the level of education. This is partly attributable to problems with the recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications. Women originating from non-OECD member countries are likely to find themselves in an even worse situation in the majority of countries.

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*Measures are needed to facilitate access to employment of immigrant women.*

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A Seminar organised by the OECD and the European Commission (Brussels, September 2005) focused on the identification of obstacles encountered by immigrant women and on specific measures for facilitating their access to the labour market. These measures concern vocational training programmes and language training, the recognition of qualifications, and labour demand in domestic services sector and care for children and the aged. They also concern the promotion of women's entrepreneurship and efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

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*Migration policies are focusing on labour recruitment and the fight against irregular migration...*

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This report also presents an inventory of the principal migration policies adopted by OECD member countries. Several countries have taken new measures aimed at facilitating the recruitment of highly qualified immigrants, by means of the implementation or improvement of selective policies, and by attracting a larger number of international foreign students, considered as potential qualified workers with strong links to their receiving countries. The report also considers the impact of EU enlargement on labour migration flows within Europe. The increased need for temporary immigration of low skilled workers is a matter for concern in several OECD countries. Security and the fight against irregular migration are at the heart of policies aimed at a better management of migration flows.

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*... as well as on the integration of immigrants.*

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In parallel, new measures have been adopted to develop or improve integration programmes for new arrivals. Particular attention is paid to compulsory language courses, accompanied by initiatives, which are also addressed to already settled migrants, for promoting employment, increasing diversity in enterprises and the fight against discrimination and for equal opportunities.

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*Two special chapters deal with topical issues. The first addresses the question of the management of migration inflows through quotas and numerical limits...*

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This year two special chapters deal with topical issues. The first concerns the fixing of quotas and numerical limits in the context of the management of migration and evaluates the efficacy of such measures. The chapter highlights their limits and the risks associated with levels that are fixed too high or too low, if non-discretionary migration entries (family or humanitarian migration, for example) are not taken into account, and if irregular migration persists and remains at a high level. Fixing numerical limits or target levels is one of a number of methods for managing migration.

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*... and the second takes another look at the links between migration, remittances and development.*

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The second chapter analyses the links between migration, remittances and development. This was the background document for the Marrakech Conference co-organised by the OECD (February 2005) which sought to identify the necessary conditions for remittances to play a greater role in the economic development of the country of origin. Remittances have indisputably contributed to improving the living conditions of migrants and their families although it seems less evident that these transfers have had a positive impact on the economic development of the country of origin.

The report also includes country notes describing recent developments in migration movements and policies and introducing new standardised tables. The statistical annex at the end of the publication contains statistics on flows of the number of immigrants and foreigners, and on naturalisations.