

Over the past two decades, sharp increases in international migration have been accompanied by significant changes in the composition of migrant groups, origin countries, and destinations. Against this backdrop, the collection and utilisation of accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies remain a key objective, as outlined in the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” prepared under the auspices of the United Nations. For origin countries, obtaining access to accurate information on the size and characteristics of their emigrants is a challenge. It is, nevertheless, a prerequisite for preparing and implementing policies aimed at leveraging the competencies and resources offered by their diaspora, as well as for mitigating the adverse impact of brain drain on origin countries, to ensure sustainable economic and social development.

In order to address this need, the OECD, with the support of the French Development Agency (AFD), has in recent years developed a database on immigrants in OECD countries (DIOC), which compiles statistics on migrant stocks based on country of birth. These data, despite some limitation, represent a unique source for researchers and policy makers.

This **Migration Data Brief** presents preliminary estimates from the 2020/21 update of the OECD DIOC, which reveal some unprecedented developments and cast a new light on structural trends revealed in previous datasets. Data by countries of origin for about a third of OECD countries covered have been estimated based on observed migrant stocks. Data by detailed countries of origin, including in terms of emigration rates, will be released later in 2024 based on a consolidated version of the DIOC data base for 2020/21.

Global Trends in Immigration to OECD Countries from 2000/01 to 2020/21

Key Findings

- In 2020/21, the migrant population aged 15 and above in OECD countries amounted to 136 million, marking a notable surge of 69% from the 81 million recorded in 2000/01. They represent 56% of 15+ worldwide migrants (up from 52% in 2000/01)
- Migrants represent 12.2% of the overall OECD population aged 15 and above in 2020/21 (3.3 percentage points more than in 2000/01).
- Mexico remains the top origin country, with slightly less than 12 million emigrants. India and China are the second and third primary origin countries of migrants, with almost 6 million emigrants to the OECD each.
- Migration from Eastern Europe and South America to OECD countries has significantly increased compared to 2000/01. The number of Romanian migrants more than tripled, while Venezuelan migrants increased by 738%.
- In 2020/21, the United States remains the primary destination country, receiving 34% of all migrants in OECD countries. Germany follows with 9% of the total, while the United Kingdom, Canada, and France each received between 5.5% and 7% of all migrants in OECD countries.
- Between 2000/01 and 2020/21, the share of migrants with a tertiary education rose from 28% to 38% among those born outside of the OECD area, and from 22% to 34% for those born in another OECD country.
- In 2020/21, there were more tertiary-educated migrants in OECD countries than low-educated migrants for both non-OECD born, and OECD born individuals. Moreover, the emigration rate increases with the level of education for most origin countries.
- Tertiary-educated migrant women have a higher propensity to emigration (to the OECD) than their male counterparts.

Data for understanding the dynamics of migration to OECD countries

The Database on Immigrants in OECD countries (DIOC) serves as a distinctive resource, presenting an overview of both the quantitative figures and socio-economic characteristics of foreign-born populations residing within OECD countries. Updated on a five-year basis since 2000/01, it draws from a variety of sources including censuses, population registers, and representative surveys. Despite some shortcomings, linked, inter alia, to the frequency of the data (every 5 years), to some data limitation in a few countries, to imperfect coverage of migrants in irregular situations (notably in countries where data are based on population registers) and to the limited number of detailed tables available, this dataset is a unique source of information for countries of origin, effectively supporting the work of both researchers and policy makers and contributing to illustrate the scope and potential impact of brain drain.

The DIOC facilitates an understanding of migration dynamics, spanning from the origin country to the destination, and sheds light on shifts in emigration rates and the global phenomenon known as 'brain drain' directed towards OECD countries. These datasets cover a spectrum of migrant demographics, including age, gender, and educational background, as well as pertinent factors concerning international migration and assimilation, such as nationality, duration of stay, employment status, occupation, industry and family dynamics.

First results by country of destination, country of origin, sex, age, and educational attainment for 2020/21 are based on available data and estimations for a few countries (Table 1). Different approaches were applied for each country with missing data based on the specificity of available datasets (Annex Figure 1)¹.

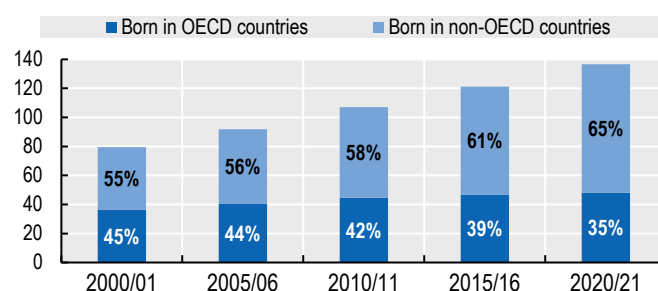
Persistent increase in migrant populations in OECD countries primarily propelled by immigration from non-OECD countries

In 2020/21, the migrant population aged 15 and older in OECD countries reached 136 million (out of a total 1.12 billion), compared to 81 million (out of a total 911 million) in 2000/01, reflecting a 69% increase over two decades. This growth rate exceeds the UN DESA international migrant stock, which rose by 63% from 155 million in 2000 to 252 million in 2020 (UN DESA, Population Division, 2020). As a result, the share of worldwide migrants residing in the OECD has slightly increased and now reaches 56%.

However, Figure 1 shows, migration from non-OECD countries to the OECD experienced a substantially higher increase (+104%) compared to migration originating from OECD countries (+33%).

The share of migrants in the OECD population has increased over the past two decades, rising from 8.9% to 12.2%. However, the growth rate of the migrant stock was higher in the first decade of the century (2.9%) than in the second (2.5%)

Figure 1. Share of migrants (15+) in the OECD, by OECD versus non-OECD country of birth, 2000/01 to 2020/21 (in millions)



Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

Table 1. Detailed sources by country

Reference population: 15+			
Australia	Census of Population and Housing 2021	Japan	Population Census 2020
Austria*	EU LFS 2022 and UNIDEMO 2022	Korea	Population Census 2020
Belgium*	EU LFS 2022 and UNIDEMO 2022	Latvia	Population Census 2021
Canada	Census of Population 2021	Lithuania	Population and Housing Census 2021
Chile	National Employment Survey 2022	Luxembourg	Census 2021
Colombia	National Population and Housing Census 2018	Mexico	Census of Population and Housing 2020
Costa Rica	Employment Continuous Survey 2020	Netherlands*	EU LFS 2022, DIOC 2015/16 and UNIDEMO 2022
Czechia	Census 2021	New Zealand	Census of Population and Dwellings 2018
Denmark	Register based statistics 2019	Norway	Population Register 2021
Estonia	Population Census 2021	Poland*	EU LFS 2022 and UNIDEMO 2022
Finland*	EU LFS 2022, DIOC 2015/16 and UNIDEMO 2022	Portugal	Census 2021
France	Annual Census Survey 2020	Slovak Republic	Census 2021
Germany*	EU LFS 2022 and DIOC 2015/16	Slovenia	Census 2021
Greece*	EU LFS 2022 and UNIDEMO 2022	Spain	Census 2021
Hungary	Census 2022	Sweden	Census 2020
Iceland*	EU LFS 2022 and UNIDEMO 2022	Switzerland	Structural Survey 2021
Ireland*	EU LFS 2022 and DIOC 2015/16	Türkiye	Address Based Population Registration System
Israel*	DIOC 2015/16 and UN DESA 2020	United Kingdom**	Census 2021 (England and Wales)
Italy	Labour Force Survey 2020	United States	5-Year American Community Survey 2021

Note: (*) Figures for these countries are estimated. (**) Estimates are based on data from England and Wales. In many cases, 2020 Census schedule has been affected by the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

1. For countries with missing data, EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) was used to identify updated distributions by aggregated regions of birth for sex, age, and education. Eurostat's Unified Demographic Data Collection (UNIDEMO) provided updated totals by detailed country of birth, sex, and age.

Finally, DIOC 2015/16 data were first iteratively raked to the control distributions from the EU LFS. The resulting intermediate totals were then iteratively raked to the UNIDEMO totals. In cases where data from UNIDEMO were not available, the DIOC 2015/16 totals were directly raked to the grouped EU LFS totals.

Significant migration growth from Asia to OECD countries

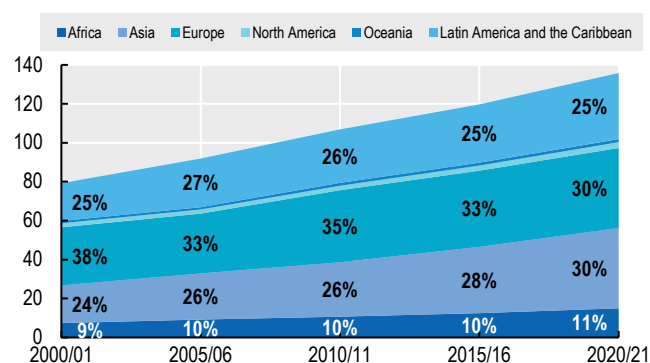
Figure 2 illustrates the growth of international migrants from each region between 2000/01 and 2020/21. Europe currently remains the main region of origin, with 41.2 million migrants, accounting for 30.4% of the migrant population in the OECD. Over the past 20 years, the number of international migrants originating from Asia has more than doubled, from around 19.3 million to more than 41 million, closing the gap with European migration. China and India are driving this trend.

By contrast, the shares of migrant originating from Africa (11%), North America (2%), Oceania (1%), and Latin America and the Caribbean (25%) have remained relatively stable overtime.

Table 2 enables to analyse further the evolution of migration to the OECD by subcontinental region of origin. It shows that in 2020/21, Eastern Europe was the top region of origin, with 16.1 million international migrants (11.9 % of the total migrant population in the OECD), followed by Central America with 15.6 million migrants (11.5%) and Southern Asia (12.4 million migrants, 9.2% of the total).

In the past two decades, the number of international migrants from Southern Asia and South America grew by 192% and 184%, respectively. The number of migrants from Eastern Europe increased by 59%. However, the Western African migrant community grew more than any other community in the past twenty years, with a staggering 247% increase.

Figure 2. Number of migrants aged 15 and over in OECD countries, by continental region of origin, 2000/01-2020/21 (millions)



Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

Continued immigration from India and China, along with a surge from Venezuela

Taking now an even closer look at top 20 origin countries (Table 3), it appears that the rate of growth of migrant stocks varied considerably across countries.

Mexico remains the top country of origin in the OECD, with 11.2 million migrants (most of whom live in the United States) despite a slight decrease in numbers since 2010. By contrast, despite continuous increases in absolute terms, top three European origin countries in 2000/01, namely the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy, significantly dropped down the ranking. The United Kingdom fell from second to seventh place and Germany from third to eighth place. Italy, which was the fifth-placed origin country in 2000/01 fell to 13th place in 2020/21. Türkiye also fell from seventh to eleventh place.

Table 2. International migrants by 22 geographical subregions, 2000/01-2020/21 (in millions)

	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11	2015/16	2020/21	Growth 2000/01-2020/21 (%)
Africa	7.5	9.2	10.6	12.5	15.0	101%
Western Africa	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.4	3.5	247%
Eastern Africa	1.2	1.6	1.9	2.3	2.7	124%
Middle Africa	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.1	130%
Northern Africa	4.3	4.9	5.4	6.1	6.8	57%
Southern Africa	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	92%
Asia	19.3	23.7	28.1	34.0	41.3	114%
Western Asia	4.2	4.7	5.3	6.4	7.8	86%
Central Asia	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.8	151%
Eastern Asia	5.1	6.2	7.1	8.4	10.0	97%
South-eastern Asia	5.1	6.1	7.0	8.1	9.3	83%
Southern Asia	4.3	5.9	7.5	9.8	12.4	192%
Europe	29.9	30.7	36.9	39.2	41.0	37%
Eastern Europe	10.2	10.5	13.9	15.4	16.1	59%
Northern Europe	5.5	5.6	6.1	6.1	6.2	13%
Southern Europe	7.6	7.9	9.5	10.0	10.7	40%
Western Europe	6.6	6.7	7.4	7.7	8.1	22%
Northern America	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.9	42%
Oceania	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.6	46%
Australia and New Zealand	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	44%
Polynesia	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	22%
Melanesia	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	68%
Micronesia	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	120%
Latin America and the Caribbean	19.5	24.9	27.4	29.9	34.0	74%
South America	3.7	5.7	6.6	7.2	10.6	184%
Caribbean	4.9	5.5	6.0	7.1	7.7	57%
Central America	10.8	13.7	14.8	15.5	15.6	44%

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC). United Nations classification by subregions.

Over the same period, migration from Poland and Romania increased significantly both in absolute terms and in terms of ranking, by 75% (+2) and 203% (+12) respectively. This is also true for some several Asian countries. In 2020/21, China and India are now second and third main countries of origin (from eighth and ninth place respectively in 2000/01). The growth rates of migrant stocks from India (203%) and China (192%) far exceeded those of most other countries. Numbers of migrants born in the Philippines also more than doubled and that country of origin now ranks sixth in 2020/21.

Emigration from Venezuela to OECD countries, notably South American OECD countries as well as the United States and Spain, increased dramatically over the past years. Chile and Colombia are two primary destinations and host respectively 6.1 million and 5.8 million Venezuelans. Many Venezuelans also reside in the United States (4.2 million) and in Spain (3.7 million) (OECD, 2020).

Stable ranking of preferred destinations

The distribution of migrants across OECD countries remained largely unchanged in the past two decades. Top ten receiving countries still host over 80% of all migrants to the OECD (Table 4).

In 2020/21, the United States hosts 35% of all migrants residing in the OECD. This share has slightly decreased from 39% in 2000/01 but the United States remains by far the first destination country. Germany ranks second, accounting for 9.6% of the total migrant population, while the United Kingdom, Canada, and France received between 5.5% and 7% of migrants each.

Most significant changes are recorded for Chile (+724%), Colombia (+778%), and Mexico (+386%), partly due to a recent influx of migrants from Venezuela. Selected European destinations also experienced sizeable growth in the past two decades, notably Spain (+258%), Italy (+192%) and Norway (+166%).

Table 3. Numbers of migrants (15+) born in the top 15 origin countries and living in OECD countries, 2000/01 to 2020/21 (in millions)

2000/01		2005/06		2010/11		2015/16		2020/21		Growth 2000/01- 2020/21 (%)	Growth 2015/16- 2020/21 (%)
MEX	8.3	MEX	10.8	MEX	11.3	MEX	11.7	MEX	11.2	34.3	-4.4
GBR	3.3	GBR	3.4	GBR	3.7	IND	4.8	CHN	6.1	192.3	31.4
DEU	3.2	DEU	2.9	CHN	3.6	CHN	4.6	IND	6.0	203.2	25.0
RUS	2.5	POL	2.9	IND	3.6	POL	3.9	POL	4.0	74.7	0.5
ITA	2.4	IND	2.8	DEU	3.5	GBR	3.7	PHL	3.9	102.7	11.1
POL	2.3	CHN	2.7	POL	3.3	DEU	3.6	ROU	3.8	203.0	7.1
TUR	2.1	TUR	2.6	PHL	3.0	PHL	3.6	GBR	3.8	14.6	2.3
CHN	2.1	PHL	2.5	RUS	2.9	ROU	3.5	DEU	3.7	15.1	3.1
IND	2.0	RUS	2.4	ROU	2.7	MAR	3.0	MAR	3.4	85.0	14.8
PHL	1.9	ITA	2.3	TUR	2.6	RUS	2.6	VNM	2.7	79.9	24.3
MAR	1.8	MAR	2.2	MAR	2.6	TUR	2.5	TUR	2.7	25.1	6.2
VNM	1.5	VNM	1.8	ITA	2.3	ITA	2.4	RUS	2.6	2.4	44.2
KOR	1.4	KOR	1.7	VNM	1.9	VNM	2.2	ITA	2.5	3.5	4.1
UKR	1.4	ROU	1.6	KOR	1.8	UKR	1.8	VEN	2.2	742.5	269.9
DZA	1.3	DZA	1.5	UKR	1.8	KOR	1.8	COL	1.9	163.8	39.4
Top 15	37.6	Top 15	44.1	Top 15	50.6	Top 15	55.7	Top 15	60.3	60.4	8.4
Total	80.7	Total	91.9	Total	107.0	Total	121.1	Total	136.7	69.4	12.9

Note: Growth between 2000/01-2020/21 calculated for the fifteen leading origin countries in 2020/21.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

Table 4. Numbers of migrants (15+) in the ten main OECD destination countries, 2000/01 to 2020/21 (in millions)

2000/01		2005/06		2010/11		2015/16		2020/21		Growth 2000/01- 2020/21 (%)	Growth 2015/16- 2020/21 (%)
USA	31.4	USA	38.6	USA	40.9	USA	46.2	USA	47.8	52.2	3.5
DEU	7.8	DEU	10.1	DEU	10.4	DEU	12.0	DEU	13.1	66.8	8.8
FRA	5.6	FRA	6.4	GBR	7.4	GBR	8.1	GBR	9.9	119.5	21.8
CAN	5.4	CAN	6.1	FRA	6.8	CAN	7.7	CAN	9.0	68.8	16.8
GBR	4.5	GBR	5.9	CAN	6.7	FRA	7.4	FRA	7.9	41.8	7.2
AUS	3.9	AUS	4.1	ESP	5.1	AUS	5.8	ESP	6.9	257.8	30.2
ISR	3.5	ESP	3.8	AUS	5.0	ITA	5.5	AUS	6.7	72.8	15.2
ITA	2.0	ITA	2.8	ITA	4.5	ESP	5.3	ITA	5.7	181.3	2.7
ESP	1.9	ISR	1.8	CHE	1.9	CHE	2.2	TUR	2.6	133.5	94.4
CHE	1.5	CHE	1.5	ISR	1.7	ISR	1.7	CHE	2.4	67.9	9.2
Top 10	67.5	Top 10	81.2	Top 10	90.3	Top 10	102.0	Top 10	112.2	66.3	10.0
Total	80.7	Total	91.9	Total	107.0	Total	121.1	Total	136.7	69.4	12.9

Note: Growth between 2000/01-2020/21 calculated for the ten main destination countries in 2020/21.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

A continued increase in the educational attainment of migrants

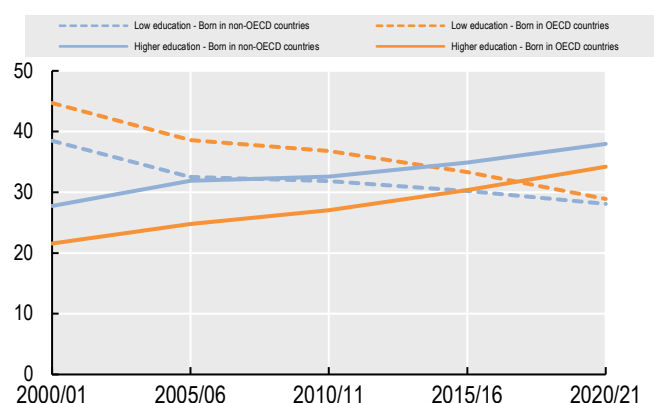
One noticeable outcome of all five rounds of data collection has been the continuous increase in the level of education of migrants residing in the OECD countries - and the simultaneous decline in the proportion of poorly-educated migrants (see Figure 3).

Between 2000/01 and 2020/21, the share of migrants with tertiary education rose from 28% to 38% for those born outside of the OECD, and from 22% to 34% for those born in another OECD country. In total, between 2000/01 and 2020/21, the number of tertiary-educated migrants increased by around 28 million.

In the meantime, the share of non-OECD low-educated (at most lower secondary education) migrants decreased from 38% to 28%, and from 45% to 29% for those born in an OECD country.

In 2020/21, there were 10 million more tertiary-educated foreign-born migrants in OECD countries than low-educated migrants, which is a complete reversal of the situation in 2000/01 when there were 13 million fewer tertiary-educated migrants.

Figure 3. Share of low- and high- educated migrants, by group of countries of birth, 2000/01 to 2020/21 (%)



Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

Higher emigration rates for high-educated migrants, notably women

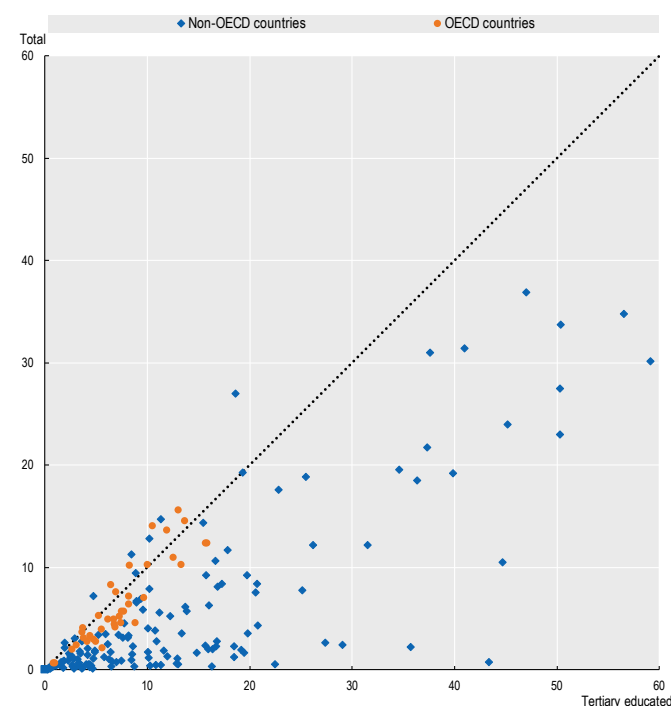
DIOC provides unique information on individuals categorized by gender, age, educational attainment and country of birth for more than 200 countries of origin. This data allows for the calculation of emigration rates of a given origin country in a given year by sociodemographic characteristics such as gender, age, education attainment defined as the share of the native population of country residing abroad at this time.

Overall, as Figure 4 reveals, with the exception of a few countries, the emigration rate for tertiary educated is higher than the one for low educated. This denotes a positive selection of migration that can be explained, inter alia, by the selectivity of migration policies, demand for skills and capacity to bear the cost of migration (d'Aiglepiere et al., 2020).

There is also a clear difference by gender, particularly for graduates from non-OECD countries. As Figure 5 shows, after taking into account educational attainment, there is little difference in the overall rate of emigration between men and women born in OECD countries. This is also true for the

low-educated and for people with intermediary levels of education (at most upper secondary and post-secondary non tertiary). However, there is a marked difference among highly-educated individuals, with an emigration rate of 5.7% for women and 4.6% for men, suggesting a stronger brain drain for migrant female non-OECD born migrants.

Figure 4. Total emigration rate and emigration rate of tertiary graduates by country of birth, 2020/21 (%)

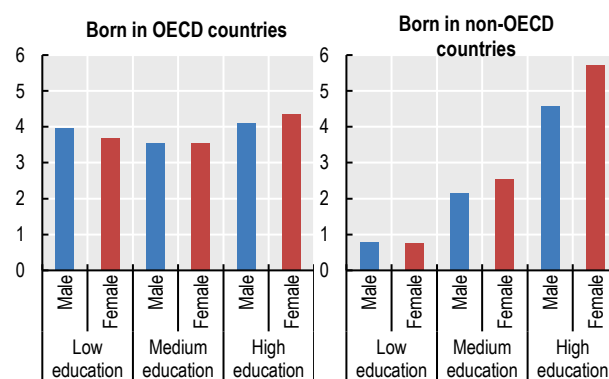


Note: Excluding countries where the 15+ population is below 500 000 inhabitants. The rate of emigration is calculated as being the ratio between the number of emigrants living in OECD countries and the total sum of the resident population and emigrants living in OECD countries.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

Previous studies (Widmaier and Dumont, 2011; Arslan et al., 2015; d'Aiglepiere et al., 2020) (Dumont, Martin and Spielvogel, 2007) using previous rounds of the DIOC have already identified this finding which suggests higher potential returns from migration for women than for men.

Figure 5. Rate of emigration by level of education, by group of countries of birth and gender, 2020/21 (%)



Note: The rate of emigration of is calculated as being the ratio between the number of emigrants living in OECD countries and the total sum of the resident population and emigrants living in OECD countries.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

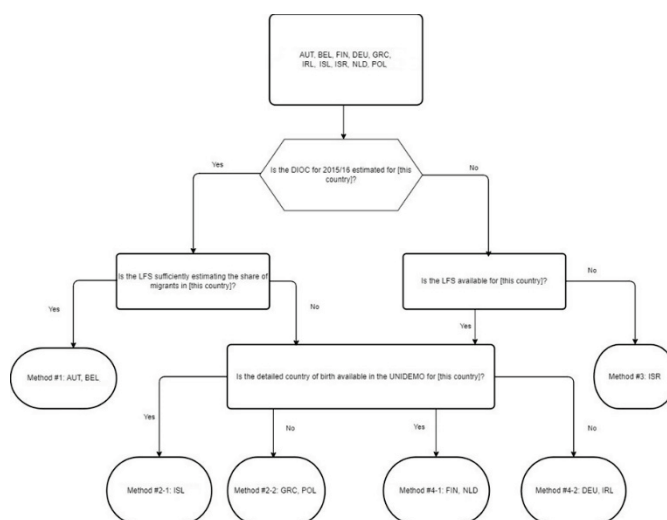
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Useful links

- www.oecd.org/migration
- <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/database-on-immigrants-in-oecd-and-non-oecd-countries.html>
- <https://www.afd.fr/en>
- <https://www.afd.fr/en/page-programme-de-recherche/research-inequalities>

Annex Figure 1. Different estimation methodologies adopted by available data sources



Annex Table 1. Numbers of migrants (15+) born in the top ten origin non-OECD and OECD countries and living in OECD countries, 2000/01 to 2020/21 (in millions)

	2000/01	2020/21	Growth 2000/01-2020/21 (%)
OECD countries			
MEX	8.3	11.2	34.3
POL	2.3	4.0	74.7
GBR	3.3	3.8	14.6
DEU	3.2	3.7	15.1
TUR	2.1	2.7	25.1
ITA	2.4	2.5	3.5
COL	0.7	1.9	163.8
KOR	1.4	1.8	27.4
FRA	1.2	1.7	43.8
USA	0.9	1.6	74.3
Top 10	25.8	34.7	34.4
Total	36.2	48.2	33.3
Non-OECD countries			
CHN	2.1	6.1	192.3
IND	2.0	6.0	203.2
PHL	1.9	3.9	102.7
ROU	1.2	3.8	203.0
MAR	1.8	3.4	85.0
VNM	1.5	2.7	79.9
RUS	2.5	2.6	2.4
VEN	0.3	2.2	742.5
BRA	0.6	1.8	226.2
PAK	0.7	1.8	170.7
Top 10	14.7	34.4	135.0
Total	43.4	88.5	104.0

Note: Growth between 2000/01-2020/21 calculated for the ten main origin countries in 2020/21.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC).

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