

EU migration and borders

Key facts and figures

SUMMARY

Is the EU facing a migration crisis? Are the EU's borders on the brink of collapse because of increased irregular migration? Would border fences help to stop or reduce irregular migration? How many of the world's refugees and asylum seekers are headed towards the EU? Are the protection claims of asylum seekers genuine, or is subterfuge used to gain access to the EU? And what happened with the Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war into the EU? These are among the most common and important questions shaping the current discussion around migration and borders in the EU.

This briefing provides an overview of key trends and figures on migration, borders and asylum in the EU. The analysis critically situates these topics in the broader global and historical context, providing a synthetic, data-rich and accessible presentation of major issues.

The analysis leads to several interesting findings that may challenge common perceptions about migration and borders in the EU, including the following.

- The majority of migrants enter the EU through legitimate legal channels.
- Most irregular migrants do not cross the EU's external borders irregularly.
- There are significantly more legal migrants than irregular migrants in the EU.
- Building fences at the EU's external borders does not seem to reduce irregular entries.
- The view of a dramatic increase in the number of migrants and refugees is contested.
- The EU's share of the world's refugees and asylum seekers remains limited.
- Reducing or stopping immigration would worsen the EU's demographic challenges.
- The EU's temporary protection scheme showed the Union's capacity to provide protection swiftly to a significant number of people in need.



IN THIS BRIEFING

- Irregular migration
- Legal migration
- Asylum and refugees



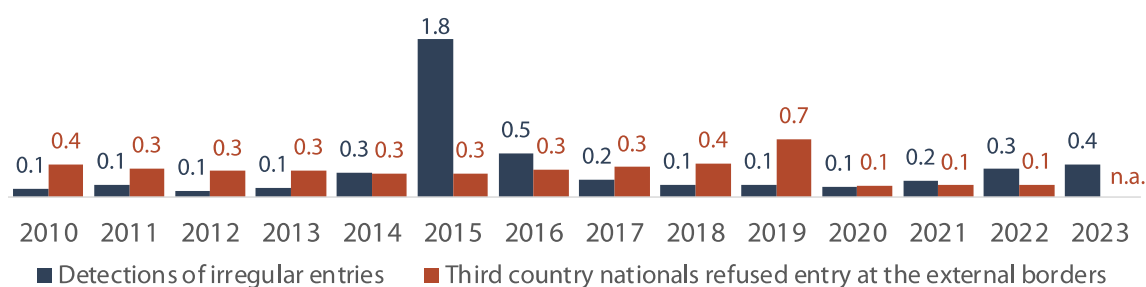
Irregular migration

Irregular migration has attracted significant media and political attention in the EU in the last decade, but the phenomenon is notoriously difficult to define or measure. Generally speaking, an irregular migrant is a person who is present on the territory of a state without an authorisation to be there. Although media reports often associate irregular migrants with people crossing borders irregularly, there are, in fact, different paths towards irregularity. These include, for example, people who stay on the territory after their visa has expired, or migrants who lose their regular status because of unemployment or non-compliance with certain requirements.¹ Despite worrying reports about ongoing or impending migration 'crises', research shows that this focus on irregular migration is 'disproportionate to its volume'² and also misses the bigger picture of contemporary global migration trends.³

Unauthorised entry

One of the most publicised EU indicators of irregular migration is the [number of detections of irregular border crossings](#), reported by Frontex, the EU's border and coast guard agency. According to Frontex, **irregular entries have been on the rise since 2020**. In 2023, there were [380 000 detections](#) of irregular entries – 'the highest since 2016' (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Detections of irregular entries and refused entries at EU borders (in millions)



Data sources: [Frontex](#) and Eurostat ([migr_eirfs](#)).

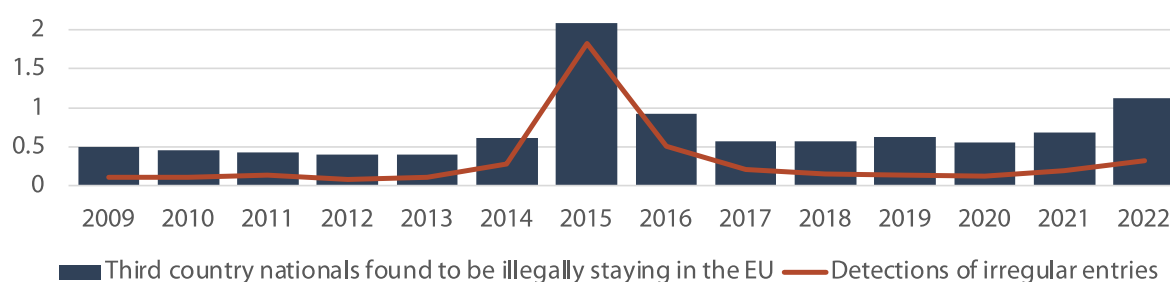
Frontex's data on irregular entries comes with the caveat that it 'refers to detections of illegal border-crossing rather than the number of persons, as the same person may cross the external border several times'. This means that the statistic may count irregular migrants [multiple times](#). There are also **different ways to interpret these statistics**. The rising number of detections may be caused by increasing migration pressure, but they may also be a result of increased reinforcement of borders, or improved reporting. It must also be noted that people crossing the border irregularly maintain the right to seek international protection upon apprehension by authorities. By exercising this right, many become asylum seekers and, if successful in their applications, beneficiaries of international protection in the EU (see below) – and thus cease to be irregular migrants.

Eurostat provides data on the number of third country nationals [refused entry at the external borders](#) (i.e. people who tried to enter legally but did not fulfil one or more entry requirements). This number had generally been higher than the number of detections of irregular entries (except in 2015-2016), but this trend has reversed in the last few years.

Unauthorised stay

Eurostat provides statistics on the number of third country nationals [found to be illegally present](#) in the EU. This number is typically also higher than the number of detections of irregular entries (see Figure 2). There were about 10 million people found to be illegally present in the EU between 2009 and 2022, whereas only 4.3 million irregular entries were detected during the same period. About 1.1 million people were found to be illegally present in the EU in 2022 (latest available data).

Figure 2 – Third country nationals found to be illegally present in the EU (in millions)



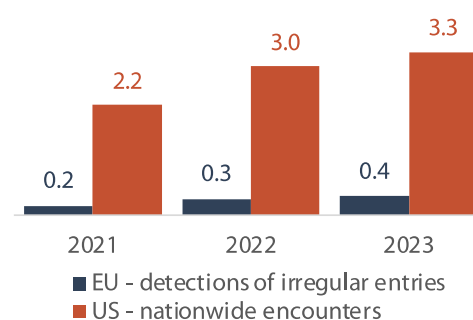
Data source: Eurostat ([migr_eipre](#)) and [Frontex](#).

EU statistics on irregular entries and stays seem to confirm the hypothesis that **most irregular migrants in the EU are not people who have crossed the external borders irregularly**. Eurostat provides a breakdown of data on irregular stay by reason of illegal presence in the EU from 2021 onwards. This shows that irregular entry was the reason for illegal presence in 48 % of apprehensions in 2022. Overstaying visas counted for 15 % in both years, although data is missing for some countries (e.g. France) or may be underreported. As already stated by [Frontex](#) in 2010, 'overstaying is probably the most common technique for illegal migration to the EU, mostly through the air borders'.

Irregular entries in the EU and the US

The EU's challenges related to irregular migration seem less daunting when compared to the situation in the US – whose 6 000 miles of land borders are of similar length to the EU's 10 000 km of external land borders. According to the [US Customs and Border Protection](#) authority, the number of nationwide encounters⁴ has increased significantly in recent years, reaching 3.3 million in 2023 (see Figure 3). This is **almost nine times higher** than the number of detections of irregular entries at the EU's external borders in the same year. The [Pew Research Center](#) estimated that 10.5 million unauthorised immigrants lived in the US in 2021.

Figure 3 – Irregular entries in the EU and the US (in millions)



Data sources: [Frontex](#) and [US Government](#).

Border fences at land borders

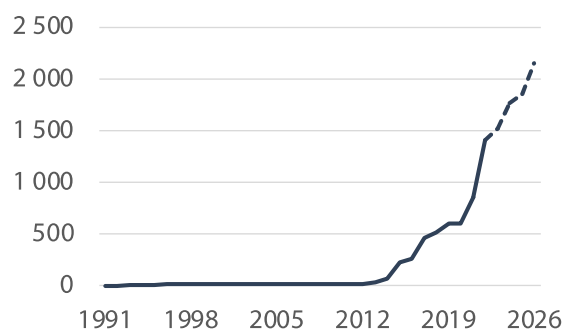
Concerns about irregular migration have triggered renewed efforts to strengthen the EU's external borders (including measures to reintroduce controls at certain [internal borders](#)). In a bid to reduce irregular entries, many Member States have decided to erect border fences (physical obstacles of various compositions and dimensions) along their land borders with non-EU countries.

Thirteen EU and associated countries oversee the EU's external land borders, which cover 9 636 km.⁵ Of these, **10 countries** (all except Romania, Croatia and Slovakia) have started building fences at the EU's external borders. As of December 2023, these **fences covered 1 522 km**⁶ (16 % of the EU's external land borders), with most having been built after 2015 (see Figure 4).

The distribution of border fences (built and planned) is as follows: Bulgaria (235 km), Estonia (69 km, + 90 km planned), Finland (3 km, + 197 km planned), Greece (49.5 km,⁷ + 135 km planned), Hungary (158 km), Latvia (457 km, + 210 km planned), Lithuania (595 km), Norway (0.2 km),⁸ Poland (186 km) and Spain (21 km).⁹ The fences cover the borders with the following third countries: Belarus

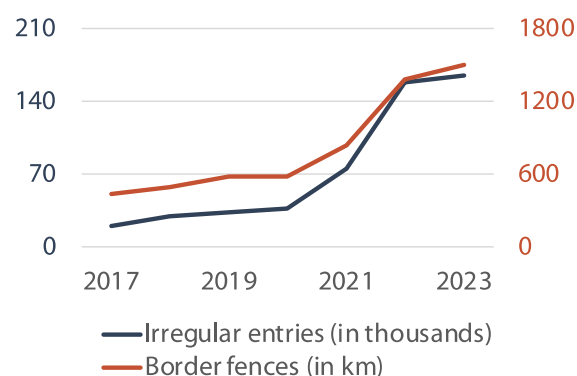
(848 km, + 30 km planned), Türkiye (247.5 km, + 135 km planned), Russia (210.2 km, + 467 km planned), Serbia (158 km), North Macedonia (37 km) and Morocco (21 km).

Figure 4 – Fences at the EU's external borders (in km)



Data source: compiled by the author.

Figure 5 – Border fences and irregular entries at the EU's external land borders



Data sources: [Frontex](#) and compiled by the author.

The purpose of these border fences has been, at least partially,¹⁰ to combat irregular migration, including attempts by hostile countries to ['instrumentalise' migrants](#) in order to destabilise the EU and its Member States. So have border fences reduced irregular entries?

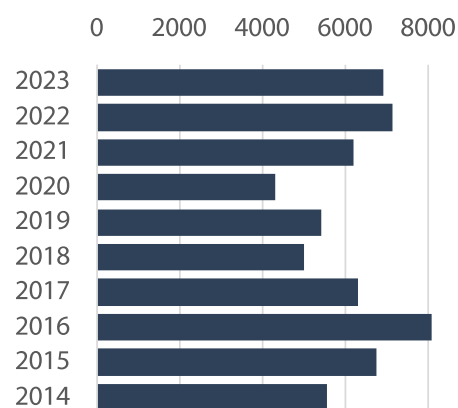
First, it must be noted that the detections of irregular entries at land borders only constitute about one third of detections (two thirds being detections at sea borders), which already significantly reduces the pool of irregular entries detected. A look at the evolution of detections of irregular entries along the three major [migratory routes](#) across the EU's external land borders (the Eastern Mediterranean route [on land], the Western Balkan route and the Eastern borders route) does not reveal any decrease in the number of detections after the construction of border fences. On the contrary, the fortification of a considerable part of these land borders **has gone hand in hand with an increase in the number of detected irregular entries** (see Figure 5). This could be interpreted as evidence that fences may facilitate the detection of irregular entries. However, this upward trend in detections has also been recorded at the (non-fenced) sea borders, which brings into question any alleged effect of border fences on irregular entries.

Dead and missing at sea borders

The majority of detections of irregular entries take place at the EU's external sea borders. Unfortunately, attempts to cross the sea to enter the EU irregularly may end in tragedy. According to data from the [International Organization for Migration](#), between 2014 and 2023 about 35 000 people lost their lives and more than 26 000 people went missing in the Mediterranean Sea (see Figure 6). By comparison, in the last decade Frontex recorded 2.7 million irregular entries at the EU's sea borders (although the number of persons detected may be lower). This means that, in the past decade, at least 23 people disappeared at the sea for every 1 000 detections.

By a different calculation, the [Council](#) reports that 615 087 lives have been saved and 26 623 fatalities have been registered in the Mediterranean and Western African routes since 2015.

Figure 6 – Dead and missing at the EU's sea borders



Data source: [IOM](#).

Legal migration

International migration

Migration has been a constant phenomenon in human history. Despite concerns about an ongoing or impending mass migration unsettling Europe and the Western world, **international migration has remained stable throughout the past decades.**

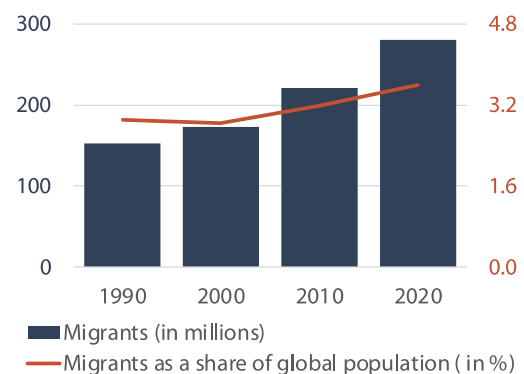
According to [data](#) from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), between 1990 and 2020, the number of international migrants rose from 153 million to 281 million. Given that the global population grew significantly in the same period (from 5.3 billion to 7.8 billion), the share of migrants in the global population increased only slightly – from 2.9 % to 3.6 % (see Figure 7).

The distribution of migrants varies between the world's geographical regions. Asia has been the most important source of migrants (see Figure 8) and the second most important destination. **Europe has become the most important destination for migrants**,¹¹ hosting 87 million migrants as of 2020. Europeans also represented 22.5 % of all international migrants (63 million) in 2020.

The number of international migrants in Europe increased from 50 million to 87 million between 1990 and 2020 (see Figure 9). However, this increase (by 75 %) is below the global increase of international migration (83 %) in the same period, and below the growth rate of immigrant stocks in Northern America (113 %), Latin America and the Caribbean (107 %) and Asia (78 %). Moreover, the **share of migrants residing in Europe of the total number of international migrants has also slightly decreased** in the past three decades – from 32.4 % to 30.9 %.

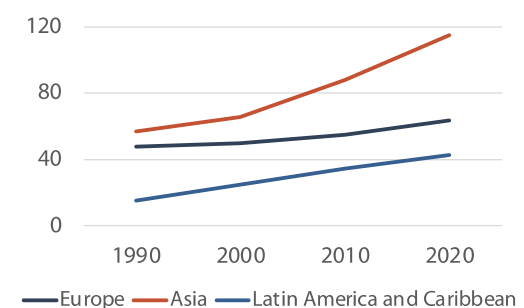
The **share of immigrants in the population of Europe increased from 6.9 % to 11.6 %** between 1990 and 2020. This increase is more rapid than in other world regions (except Northern America), but this is primarily caused by sluggish population growth in Europe (4 % compared to the global population growth of 48 % – a demographic dynamic also reflected in the slowing down of European emigration). In 2020, Europe ranked third among the world's regions with regard to the share of immigrants in the total population – it was outranked by Oceania (21.5 %) and Northern America (15.7 %).

Figure 7 – International migrants



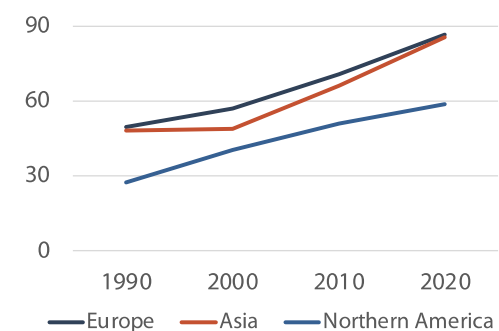
Data source: [UN DESA](#).

Figure 8 – Stock of international migrants by main region of origin (in millions)



Data source: [UN DESA](#).

Figure 9 – Stock of international migrants by main region of destination (in millions)



Data source: [UN DESA](#).

EU migration

Despite great public attention to irregular migration in the EU, the majority of third country nationals enter and stay in the EU lawfully.

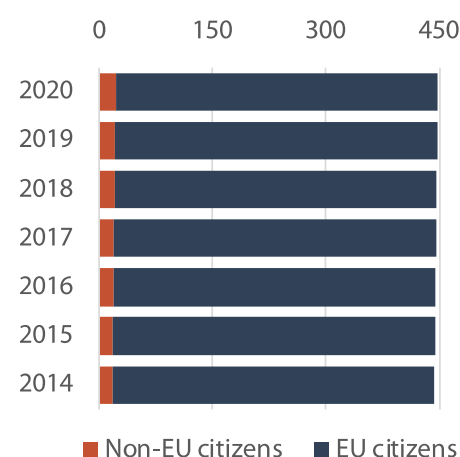
According to [Eurostat](#), the number of non-EU citizens residing in the EU **rose from 17 million to 24 million between 2014 and 2022** (see Figure 10). The share of non-EU citizens in the EU population grew from 3.9% to 5.3%. In fact, the number of EU citizens declined during this period, so the slight EU population growth recorded is due to immigration. The EU hosted 7.9% of all international migrants in 2020, as counted in the UN migration stock database.

As regards [migration flows](#), the **EU receives on average between 2 and 3 million new immigrants** (non-EU citizens)¹² every year. There were 2.6 million new immigrants to the EU in 2021, higher than in 2020, but below the peak of 2.7 million reached in 2019. At the same time, about 1.2 million EU citizens emigrated from the EU in 2021. According to [Eurostat](#), in 2022 the **Member States issued almost 3.5 million first residence permits to non-EU citizens**. The number of permits has increased steadily in the last decade (up from 1.6 million in 2013). Notably, the share of residence permits issued for employment purposes has surpassed that of the residence permits issued for family reasons. In addition, the number of permits for skilled workers¹³ increased significantly, from under 200 000 in 2019 to more than a half a million in 2022.

The number of immigrants arriving in the EU lawfully **significantly exceeds the number of those attempting to enter the EU irregularly**. For example, in 2020, for each irregular entry detected, 12 immigrants entered the EU lawfully (see Figure 11).

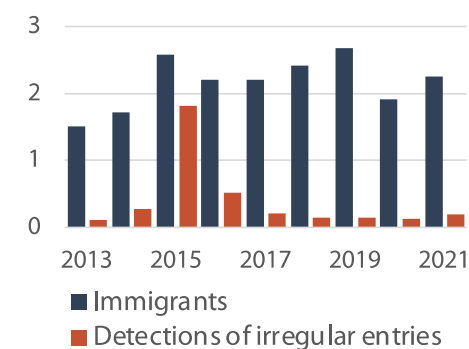
Lastly, according to Eurostat's population [projections](#), the EU population is expected to fall by 6% by 2100 (baseline scenario). **Reducing or stopping immigration would lead to an even more drastic population decline** by 2100 (17% or 33%, respectively) (see Figure 12). The [old-age dependency ratio](#) is also expected to further deteriorate in the EU, rising from 33% in 2022 to almost 60% by 2100 (that is, to fewer than two working-age adults for each elderly person). Reducing or stopping immigration would lead to a higher old-age dependency ratio by 2100 (70% and 62% respectively). It is believed that legal immigration can [help alleviate](#) some of the EU's demographic challenges, though this contribution should not be overstated.¹⁴

Figure 10 – EU citizens and non-EU citizens living in the EU (in millions)



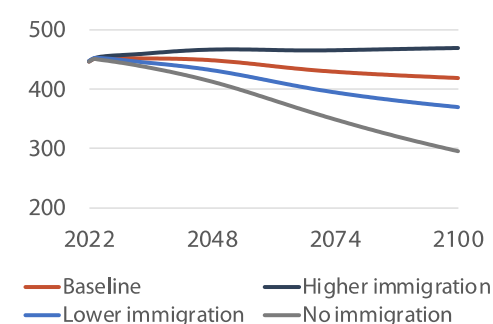
Data source: Eurostat ([migr_pop1ctz](#)).

Figure 11 – Lawful immigrants and detections of irregular entries (in millions)



Data source: Eurostat ([migr_imm12prv](#)) and [Frontex](#).

Figure 12 – EU population projections (in millions)



Data source: Eurostat ([proj_23np](#)).

EU short-term visas

The EU has established a common visa policy, which includes [procedures and conditions](#) for issuing visas for short stay¹⁵ in the EU (maximum 90 days in a 180-day period). It also established common [lists of third country nationals](#) who must be in possession of a visa when crossing the EU's external borders and of those who are exempt from that requirement.

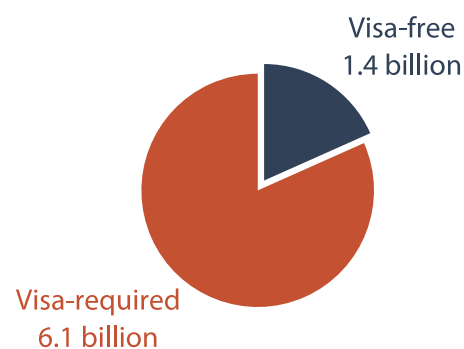
Currently, citizens of 61 non-EU countries, 2 special administrative regions of China and 2 territorial authorities that are not recognised as a state by at least one Member State can enter the EU without a visa. This means that **1.4 billion third country nationals** (about 18 % of the global population)¹⁶ can travel to the EU without a visa (see Figure 13). Citizens of the US, Brazil, Mexico and Japan make up 60 % of all visa-free third country nationals. As for the remaining 6.1 billion third country nationals in the world, they are required to obtain a visa before traveling to the EU. This includes citizens of China, India and the Russian Federation.

According to data from the [European Commission](#), the EU issued 145 million visas between 2010 and 2019 (see Figure 14).¹⁷ The number of visas issued dropped significantly in 2020 and 2021 due to the travel restrictions triggered by the pandemic.

Data on EU visas issued can only give us an imperfect indication of the **volume of authorised entries**. For example, this data does not capture the entry of visa-free third country nationals.¹⁸ It is also possible that an EU visa holder might enter the EU several times (with a multiple-entry visa) during a year, or that they might decide not to travel to the EU at all that year.

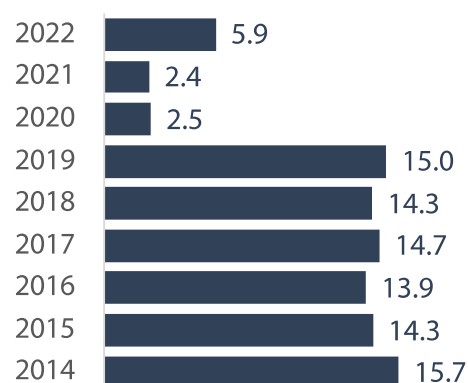
A more accurate measure of the number of entries by visa-required third country nationals is provided by [statistics](#) on the use of the Visa Information System (VIS) provided by the EU Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice ([eu-LISA](#)). On average, there were **30-40 million visa verifications in the VIS** at the external borders in each year before the pandemic. Given the limited number of refusals of entry at the external borders, we can assume that most visa holders arriving at EU's borders are allowed to enter. The number of authorised entries by EU visa holders **exceeds by far the number of detections of irregular entries** (see Figure 15).

Figure 13 – Visa access to the EU



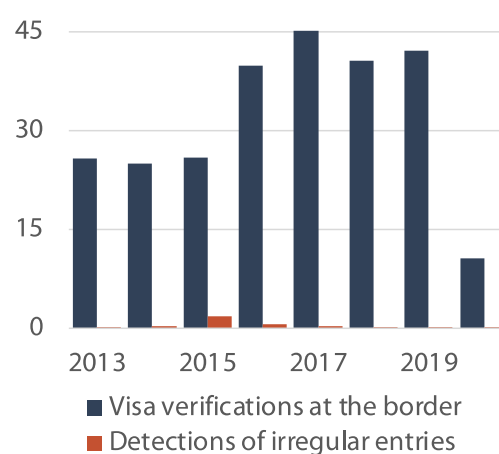
Data source: [European Commission](#).

Figure 14 – EU visas issued at Member States' consulates (in millions)



Data source: [European Commission](#).

Figure 15 – Visa verifications in the VIS and detections of irregular entries (in millions)



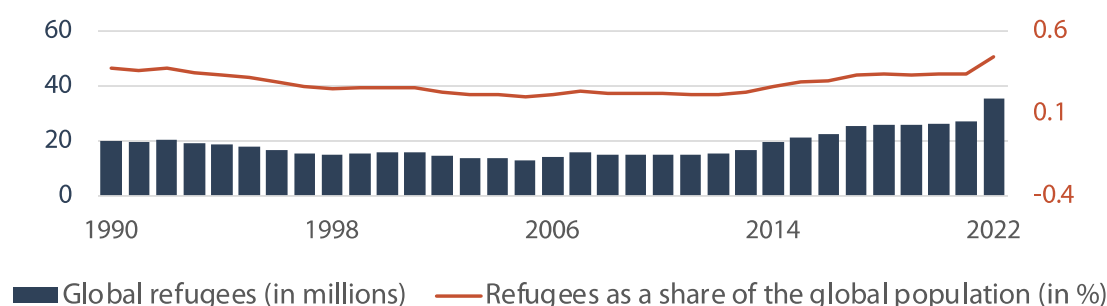
Data sources: [eu-LISA](#) and [Frontex](#).

Asylum and refugees

World's refugees

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the global refugee population reached [35.8 million](#) in 2023 – up from 20 million in 1990. Despite growing numbers, **the share of refugees in the global population has been relatively stable since 1990**. Refugees made up 0.38 % of the global population in 1990 and 0.34 % in 2021 – before rising to 0.44 % in 2022 (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 – Global refugee population



Data sources: [UNHCR](#) and [UN DESA](#).

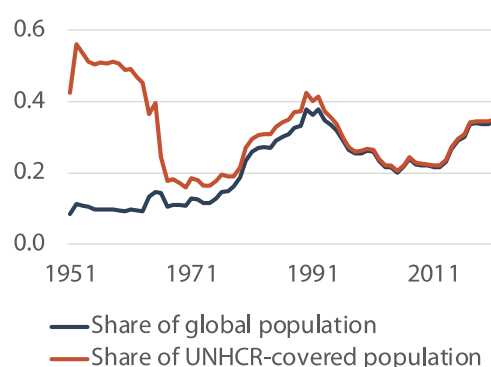
It must be noted that UNHCR counts as refugees people who have refugee-like status (e.g. Ukrainians fleeing the war into Europe who enjoy temporary protection status). This means that the number of refugees reported is typically larger than the number of people who are officially granted refugees status in line with the [Geneva Convention](#) on the protection of refugees. Moreover, UNHCR's data, which go back to 1951, do not count all refugees throughout this period because the agency has only gradually [expanded](#) its data collection to include all countries of asylum. There were only 21 countries of asylum included in 1951; this increased to 69 countries by 1970, 124 countries by 1990 and 180 countries by 2010. Therefore, we can assume that the number of refugees in the past was greater than reported.

Figure 17 reconstructs the share of refugees in the global population and in the population of the countries of asylum covered by UNHCR. It shows that the share of refugees in the population is higher if we consider the population of the asylum countries covered by UNHCR as opposed to the global population.

Research has challenged the view that the past decade has seen an unprecedented refugee crisis and an all-time high refugee population. It is argued that instead of an upward trend of ever more refugees, the pattern is rather 'one of fluctuation, with refugee numbers going up and down according to levels of conflict in origin countries'.¹⁹

The distribution of refugees across the world's regions remains highly uneven. **About 80 % of refugees are hosted by low-income and middle-income countries**. Moreover, most refugees seek protection in countries close to their country of origin. For example, Türkiye received about 3.5 million refugees from conflict-ridden Syria, which makes it the world's [largest refugee-hosting country](#). Another neighbour, Lebanon, hosts 1.5 million Syrian refugees, which makes Lebanon the country with the [largest number of refugees per capita](#) in the world (about 30 % of the population).

Figure 17 – Refugees as a share of population (in %)

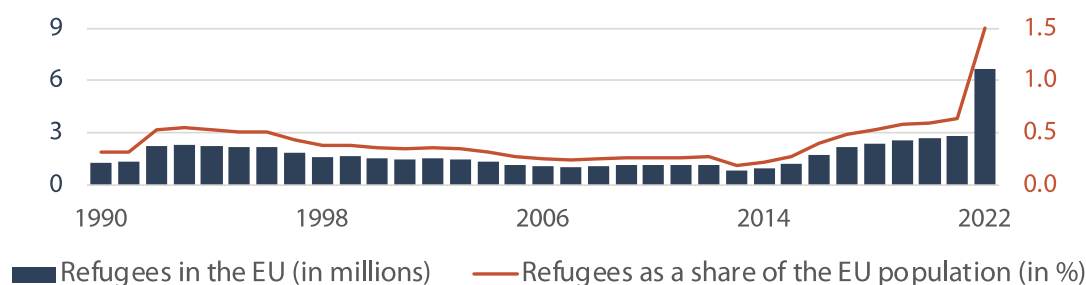


Data sources: [UNHCR](#) and [UN DESA](#).

Refugees in the EU

The number of refugees in the EU doubled between 1990 and 2021,²⁰ although the share of refugees in the EU population has fluctuated over the last few decades (see Figure 18). This share had, in fact, **declined for two decades after the mid-1990s**. It only re-attained the 1995 level (0.6 %) in 2019, and grew to an unprecedented level of 1.5 % in 2022.

Figure 18 – The EU's refugee population



Data sources: [UNHCR](#) and Eurostat ([demo_gind](#)).

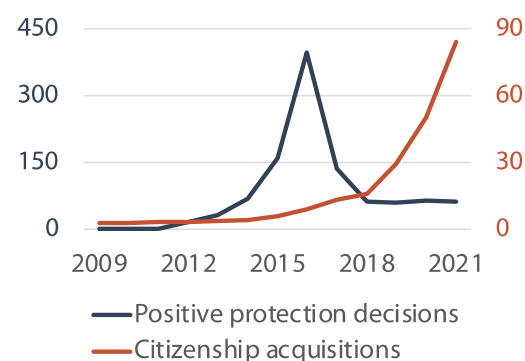
Contrary to a common perception, the **EU hosts a small proportion of the world's refugees**. In 2022, it hosted 6.7 million refugees, which was about 19 % of world's refugees. However, the EU's share of the world's refugees had dropped after the mid-1990s, reaching as low as 5.7 % during the so-called European 'migration crisis' (see Figure 19). The share then remained close to the average of 10 % until the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022.

Figure 19 – The EU's share of world's refugees (in %)



Data source: [UNHCR](#).

Figure 20 – Protection status and EU citizenship acquisitions by Syrian nationals (in thousands)



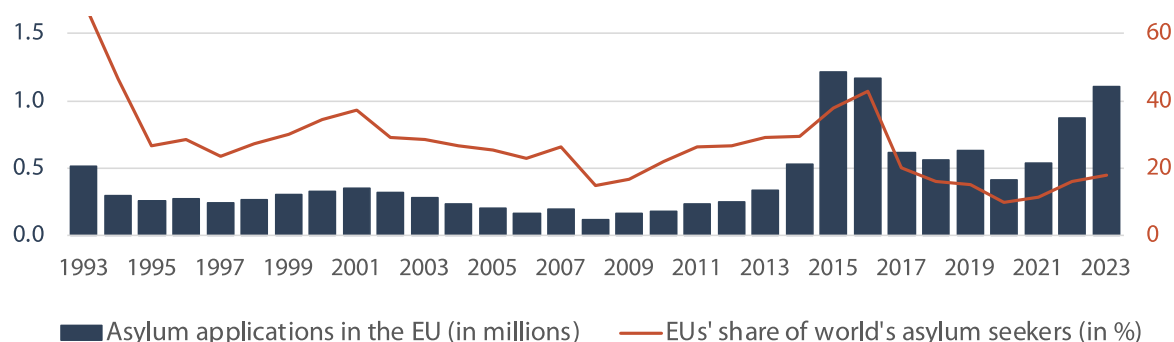
Data source: Eurostat ([migr_acq](#) and [migr_asydcfsta](#)).

It must be stated that refugees in the EU have, in general, more opportunities to change their legal status over time (e.g. to become legal migrants or citizens) than do refugees in some other parts of the world – which reduces the number of refugees in the EU. To illustrate this point, one can look at the number of acquisitions of citizenship in the Member States by nationals of countries with a high number of recognised refugees. For example, about five years after more than half a million Syrian nationals received [positive decisions](#) on their applications for international protection in the EU (in 2015 and 2016), we notice a significant increase in the number of Syrian nationals [acquiring citizenship](#) in EU Member States (see Figure 20).²¹ We can assume a link between the two trends, although we cannot know for certain how many recognised refugees acquire citizenship in a Member State.

Asylum seekers

According to [Eurostat](#), the EU has received, on average, about half a million asylum applications per year in the last three decades. This average rose to three quarters of a million over the past decade due to a peak in 2015-2016 (see Figure 21). According to [preliminary data](#) from the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the number of asylum applications in the EU reached 1.1 million in 2023,²² an increase of 18 % compared to 2022 and nearing the 2015-2016 peak.

Figure 21 – Applications for international protection submitted in the EU

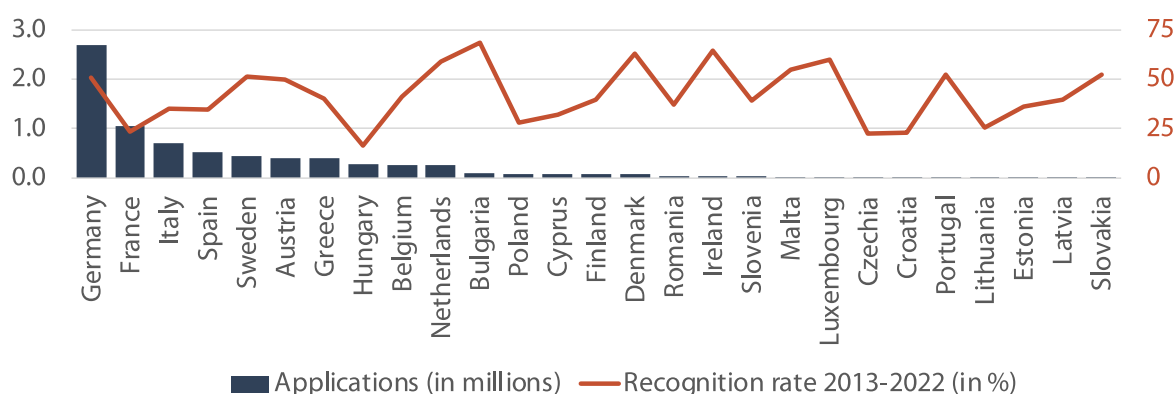


Data source: Eurostat ([migr_asyctz](#) and [migr_asyappctza](#)), [EUAA](#) and [UNHCR](#).

Despite an increase in the number of asylum applications, the **EU continues to receive only a small share of the world's asylum seekers**. In fact, the EU's share of the world's asylum seekers has decreased significantly and constantly, from 70 % in 1993 to under 20 % as of 2018.

A common public concern is about the 'mixed' nature of migration and refugee flows. It is frequently reported that many people requesting international protection are not genuine refugees. However, the overall recognition rate for applications for international protection (the share of positive decisions in the total number of decisions) does not support this view. Between 2014 and 2022, the Member States' authorities delivered [5.7 million](#) decisions in the first instance and [2 million](#) final decisions in appeal or review. The number of positive decisions was 2.8 million in the first instance (49 %) and 0.6 million (28 %) in review or appeal. This means that **about 60 % of all applicants received protection in the EU** (either recognition as refugees, beneficiary protection or humanitarian status).

Figure 22 – Asylum applications and recognition rates in the Member States – 2013-2022



Data source: Eurostat ([migr_asyappctza](#) and [migr_asydcfsta](#)).

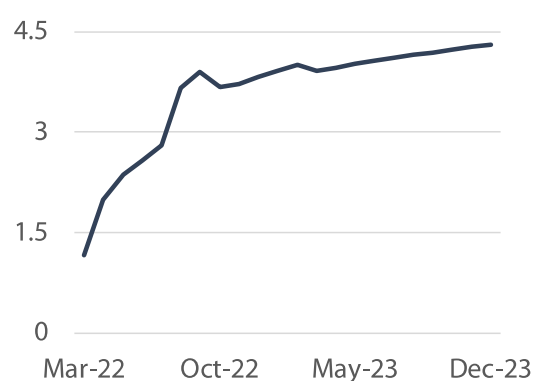
Whereas the **share of asylum applicants in the EU population remains small** (on average 0.15 % per year), **some Member States are more affected than others**. For example, in the decade 2013-2022, three Member States received more than 60 % of all new asylum applications submitted in the EU: Germany (35 %), France (14 %) and Italy (9 %) (see Figure 22). Other Member States face challenges due to high numbers of asylum applicants relative to their population. For example, Cyprus received 77 500 applications between 2013 and 2022, which amounted to 8.9% of its (average) population. In the same period, Austria, Sweden and Malta also had to handle volumes of applicants that surpassed 4% of their populations.

Recognition rates also vary across Member States. On average, in the decade 2013-2022, the highest recognition rates (all applications considered) were recorded in Bulgaria (68.5 %), Ireland (65 %) and Denmark (63 %). It must be noted that these Member States dealt with a small number of applications (a combined 2.7 % of all applications submitted in the EU). The lowest recognition rates for the same period were recorded in Hungary (16 %), Czechia (23 %) and Croatia (23 %).

Temporary protection

In March 2022, the EU [activated](#) the [Temporary Protection Directive](#), granting immediate temporary protection status in the EU to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The number of [beneficiaries of temporary protection](#) grew rapidly in the first year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, reaching 4 million by February 2023. In December 2023, there were 4.3 million beneficiaries of temporary protection in the EU (see Figure 23). Having access to temporary protection does not preclude beneficiaries from applying for international protection in the EU. Between March 2022 and December 2023, [34 000](#) Ukrainian nationals lodged asylum applications in the EU.

Figure 23 – Beneficiaries of temporary protection in the EU (in millions)



Data source: Eurostat ([migr_asytpsm](#)).

It is important to highlight that in less than two years, the EU granted a secure status of temporary protection to **almost two times more people** than it had granted international protection in a whole decade (2.8 million positive decisions between 2013-2022). This is a tremendous achievement, which proves that the EU and its Member States **can act swiftly to provide protection to a significant number of people** in need of protection and thus live up to their legal commitments and common values.

MAIN REFERENCES

Dumbrava C., [The EU's external borders: Key trends and developments](#), EPRS, March 2023.

De Haas H., *How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics*, Penguin Books, 2023.

ENDNOTES

¹ For an overview of relevant issues, see A. Triandafyllidou and L. Bartolini, '[Understanding Irregularity](#)', in S. Spencer and A. Triandafyllidou (eds.), *Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe*, IMISCOE Research, 2020.

² S. Spencer and A. Triandafyllidou, '[Irregular Migration](#)', in P. Scholten (ed.), *Introduction to Migration Studies*, IMISCOE Research Series, 2022, pp. 191-204.

³ For a clear picture and debunking of key contemporary myths and misconceptions about migration, see H. de Haas, *How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics*, Penguin Books, 2023.

⁴ The US data on nationwide encounters includes apprehensions at the border, people refused entry (inadmissible) and expulsions for public safety health reasons.

- ⁵ It is surprisingly difficult to find authoritative information on the exact length of a country's borders. This figure is calculated based on the most credible sources available online. It sums up the length of land external borders of Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. It excludes the external borders with Andorra (120 km), Monaco (5 km) and Gibraltar (1.2 km). It also excludes the Ireland-Northern Ireland border (500 km) as well as the Green Line separating from the government-controlled and the non-government-controlled territories in Cyprus (180 km).
- ⁶ This figure does not include border fences built along the internal borders. It also excludes border barriers built at the France-UK border in Calais (up to [65 km](#)) and the fortifications built along the Green Line in Cyprus.
- ⁷ This figure includes 37 km of fences built at Greece's external borders with North Macedonia.
- ⁸ This figure does not include the old 150 km-long [fence](#) between Norway and Russia built mainly to prevent the movement of reindeer.
- ⁹ This includes the first EU anti-immigration fences built by Spain around Ceuta (8 km) and Melilla (13 km) in Africa.
- ¹⁰ Some of these border fences also play a more conventional security role, which is becoming more apparent in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and of Belarus' hostile activities against the EU.
- ¹¹ According to the UN, the [geographical region](#) of Europe consists of 51 countries, including all EU countries, and other European countries such as Belarus and the Russian Federation.
- ¹² As defined by [Eurostat](#), an immigrant is a person who establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of an EU country for at least 12 months, and has previously resided in another EU country or a non-EU country.
- ¹³ This data includes blue cards for skilled workers, authorisations to study or do research and intra-corporate transferees.
- ¹⁴ Addressing demographic imbalances may require a host of other measures (e.g. labour participation, family support). Moreover, immigration tends to create new challenges (e.g. integration). On the limitations of immigration as a solution to demographic challenges, see M. Potančoková, G. Marois and J. Bijak, [Migration events and future labour force in Europe](#), Population Europe policy brief, June 2023.
- ¹⁵ For stays in the EU for periods longer than 90 days, third country nationals need to apply for a national visa, in accordance with national legislation. A national visa allows access only to the territory of the issuing Member State.
- ¹⁶ This figure is based on [UN population data \(2022\)](#), considering the global population without the EU's population.
- ¹⁷ Schengen states may issue EU visas at their consulates. They may also issue EU visas at the border, though the number of these visas are limited. For example, in 2022, there were [80 378 EU visas](#) issued at the border.
- ¹⁸ This will change when the European Travel Information and Authorisation System ([ETIAS](#)) becomes operational. ETIAS will give information on the people who entered the EU with an EU visa and did not exit after its expiry date.
- ¹⁹ H. de Haas, *How Migration Really Works*, p. 48. See also S. Fransen and H. de Haas, [Trends and Patterns of Global Refugee Migration](#), in *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 48(1), 2022, pp. 97-128.
- ²⁰ This figure includes refugees in the current EU27 countries throughout this period, including data from years when some of these countries were not yet part of the EU.
- ²¹ It takes about 5 years to obtain citizenship in an EU Member State. Several countries have facilitated modes for the acquisition of citizenship by recognized refugees; see the [database](#) of the Global Citizenship Observatory (GLOBALCIT).
- ²² The EUAA published asylum data for EU+ countries: 27 EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. In 2023, the EU27 countries received 1 106 889 applications, whereas Norway and Switzerland received 35 729 applications altogether.

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