



IRELAND 2021

Main developments in migration and international protection, including latest statistics



EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

August 2022



OVERARCHING CHANGES

In line with the [2020 Programme for Government](#), a scheme to regularise long-term undocumented migrants and their eligible dependents where specific criteria are met was announced on 3 December 2021. On the date the scheme opened for applications,¹ eligible applicants must have a period of four years' (three years for those with children) residence in the State without an immigration permission. A parallel strand within the scheme was also announced to allow for applications from those with an outstanding application for international protection and have been in the asylum process for a minimum of two years. This reflected the recommendation in the [report of the Advisory Group on the provision of support, including accommodation, to persons in the international protection process](#) regarding people in the protection process for two years or more.

Residence permissions were temporarily extended during 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister for Justice announced the ninth temporary extension of immigration and international protection permissions on 17 December 2021. This applied to permissions due to expire between 15 January 2022 and 31 May 2022 and included permissions already extended by the previous temporary extensions since March 2020. This meant that those who were legally in Ireland in March 2020 had permission to remain until 31 May 2022.

A new plain-English, customer-focused [website](#) was launched for the immigration service in July 2021.

KEY POINTS



The Regularisation of Long-Term Undocumented Migrants Scheme was announced in December 2021.



A White Paper setting out reforms towards a new international protection support service was published in February 2021.



The Interim Report of the Independent Anti-Racism Committee was published in April 2021, accompanied by a public consultation on a new National Action Plan Against Racism.



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

Following evidence-based review, changes were made to the Critical Skills Occupations List (CSOL) and Ineligible Occupations List (IOL) during 2021 to address labour market needs.

The occupations of dietician and social worker were added to the CSOL via the [Employment Permits \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) and the [Employment Permits \(Amendment\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2021](#). Social workers had already been removed from the IOL from 14 June

¹ The Scheme opened for applications on 31 January 2022

2021 via the Employment Permits (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

A broad list of occupations in the construction sector were removed from the IOL via the Employment Permits (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2021, with most occupations in the construction sector becoming eligible for an employment permit. The Employment Permits (Amendment) Regulations 2021 also removed occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and healthcare assistants working in hospitals and residential settings from the IOL.

These Regulations also set a minimum remuneration threshold of €27 000 for healthcare assistants. When applying for a renewal permit, a healthcare assistant will be required to have achieved a relevant qualification at Level 5 on the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework after two years' employment in the State.

The Regulations also introduced quotas for a number of occupations including in the agriculture, agri-food and hospitality sectors.

Revised rules were introduced during 2021, allowing general employment permit applications for third-country national non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) to be made on a two-year multi-site basis, regardless of the length of the contract, reflecting doctors' frequent movement between public hospitals (generally every six months).

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment continued to process employment permits during the Covid-19 pandemic in line with temporary visa arrangements, issuing permits fully online.

STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

As temporary measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, arrangements were put in place for third-country national English language students and also to facilitate students in relation to the Third-Level Graduate Programme. Linked to the temporary extensions of residence permissions, English language students who had completed three language courses were entitled to remain and to continue to work up to 15 January 2022 (and subsequently until 31 May 2022) without enrolling in a further English language course.

In March 2021, special arrangements were announced to allow students studying remotely outside Ireland to apply for the Third-Level Graduate Programme. These arrangements were strictly on a once-off basis, and all other existing criteria for the programme still applied. In September 2021, it was announced that individuals already on the Third-Level Graduate Programme, who could not find work due to the pandemic, could apply to have their permission extended for a further year.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

On 26 February 2021, the Government published its [White Paper to end direct provision and to establish a](#)

[new international protection support service](#). The White Paper sets out a new model to provide accommodation and other supports to persons in the international protection system. The model will be centred on a human rights approach; with key supports geared towards ensuring integration with independence.

The accommodation model proposed by the White Paper is a two-stage approach. All new applicants will be accommodated in State-run Reception and Integration Centres for four months in Phase One, followed by transition to accommodation options fostering an independent life within the community in Phase Two.

The [Reception Conditions \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) reduced the qualifying period for labour market access for protection applicants from nine months to six months. The length of a labour market access permission was also extended to 12 months.

An [end-to-end review of the international protection process](#) was conducted by the Department of Justice during 2021. The purpose of the review was to identify areas for improvement, and efficiencies to the international protection process in line with the White Paper and in accordance with the recommendation of the Advisory Group on the provision of support, including accommodation, to persons in the international protection process. One key recommendation was a six-month limit on the processing time for both first instance decisions and appeals respectively.

RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT²

The Government approved the Afghan Admission Programme on 28 September 2021, and it opened for applications on 16 December 2021. Administered by the Department of Justice, it offers temporary Irish residence to Afghan people whose freedom or safety is at risk, whether resident in Afghanistan or certain neighbouring countries having fled from Afghanistan since 1 August 2021, and who have close family members in Ireland. Up to 500 places were made available for beneficiaries under the programme.



MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

MINORS

The [White Paper to end direct provision and to establish a new international protection support service](#) proposed a model that includes specific provisions on children and families. Families will be accommodated in own-door accommodation units within a reception centre in Phase One, and in own-door accommodation in self-contained houses or apartments within the community in Phase Two.

Two changes were announced to the Student Support Scheme, which supports eligible international protection applicants to access third-level education. In March 2021, the Ministers for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS) and Children, Equality,

Disability, Integration and Youth (CEDI+Y) announced that international protection applicants with permission to work would no longer be required to pay the international student fee of €3 600 to access post-leaving certificate (PLC) courses. The Support Scheme was also amended to include postgraduate courses for the first time.

Some 28 unaccompanied minors were relocated from Greece during 2021, completing the 2018 commitment to relocate 36 unaccompanied minors from Greece.

OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

A pilot vulnerability assessment procedure for protection applicants which had commenced in December 2020 was extended to all protection applicants in February 2021. The purpose of the vulnerability assessment is to determine if an applicant is deemed to have special reception needs, what those needs are and what actions are required to address those needs.



INTEGRATION

NATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020 was extended to end-2021.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ADULTS/ LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS

The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy was launched by the Minister for FHERIS in September 2021. The Strategy provides an overview of a cross-government, cross-economy and cross-society approach, seeking to ensure a society in which every adult has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to engage in society and to fully realise their potential. One of the primary aims of the Strategy is to increase investment in literacy provision and to include more English language supports for migrants.

On 10 December 2021, the Minister for FHERIS published new guidelines and toolkits to assist migrant learners to improve their English language skills and progress through further education.

FIGHTING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

On 21 April 2021, the Minister for CEDI+Y published the [Interim Report of the Independent Anti-Racism Committee](#) as part of the development of a new National Action Plan against Racism in Ireland. A public consultation was launched on the same date.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

On 18 January 2021, the Department of Justice opened a temporary system enabling citizenship applicants to complete their naturalisation process by signing a

statutory declaration of loyalty. That declaration replaced the requirement to attend citizenship ceremonies, which were temporarily suspended during COVID-19. On 31 December 2021, the Department of Justice announced a new scorecard approach for determining residency and identity requirements for citizenship applications.



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

BORDER MANAGEMENT

Ireland implemented the Schengen Information System (SIS) in March 2021. While Ireland is not part of the Schengen area, Ireland acceded to certain aspects of the Schengen acquis via Council Decision 2002/192.

Mandatory hotel quarantine for nationals of certain designated States was introduced on 26 March 2021 and was in place until 25 September 2021 as a COVID-19 public health measure. International protection applicants and unaccompanied minors were not subject to mandatory hotel quarantine. Staff of the Border Management Unit at Dublin Airport supported the implementation of COVID-19 public health measures.

VISA POLICY

Regulations to amend the lists of countries whose nationals are subject to visa requirements or transit visa requirements were introduced and repealed during 2021 in accordance with the public health situation. The Short-Stay Visa Waiver Programme was reinstated from 31 October 2021 and extended to 31 October 2026. Colombia, Indonesia, Kosovo, Peru, Philippines, North Macedonia and Vietnam were added to the list of states or territorial entities whose nationals may be covered by the programme.



IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

PREVENTING FACILITATION OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION ('SMUGGLING') AND PREVENTING IRREGULAR STAY

The [Criminal Justice \(Smuggling of Persons\) Act 2021](#) came into operation on 31 December 2021. The Act provides for the transposition of three international legal instruments in the area of people smuggling: Council Directive 2002/90/EC defining the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence; Framework Decision 2002/946/JHA on the strengthening of the penal framework to prevent the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence; and UN Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted in November 2000.



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

NATIONAL STRATEGIC POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In April 2021, the Minister for Justice announced an initiative to expunge previous convictions for 'sale of sex' or prostitution offences. The Department of Justice considered this 'a significant step in recognising and responding to the needs of victims of sex trafficking, and those forced to provide sexual services.' Part 4 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 makes it an offence to pay for sexual activity with a prostitute or a trafficked person. It also removed those offering their services as a prostitute from the existing offences of soliciting. It has not been an offence to sell sex in Ireland since 2017, however it was considered that previous convictions can be a significant obstacle for people exiting prostitution. The changes will require legislation.

IDENTIFICATION AND INFORMATION TO VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

On 11 May 2021, the Irish Government approved plans for a revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for the identification of victims of human trafficking. Approval was given to draft legislation to place the new NRM on a statutory footing. The new approach will recognise the role of other State bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in addition to An Garda Síochána (national police), in identifying and referring victims of trafficking. Work began to operationalise the revised NRM.

For the second year, the Department of Justice and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the support of other State agencies and non-State organisations, cooperated on a public information campaign

#AnyoneTrafficked2021 to raise awareness of human trafficking.



RETURN AND READMISSION

MAIN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The General Scheme of the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 proposed an amendment to section 48(3) of the International Protection Act 2015 to extend the timeline for unsuccessful protection applicants to accept voluntary return from five days to 30 days, as recommended by the Advisory Group on the provision of supports, including accommodation, to persons in the international protection process.



MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

No significant developments in 2021.



STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex was prepared by ICF, the European Migration Network Service Provider, with statistics provided by Eurostat. It provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Ireland on aspects of migration and international protection (2018-2021), including legal residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, integration, irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics were not available at the time of publication, this is indicated in the Annex as "N/A".

STATISTICAL ANNEX

! GENERAL NOTES

This statistical annex complements the Country Factsheet with relevant migration-related data organised in up to nine thematic sections – depending on data availability. The dashboard-like layout of the annex allows comparability across countries as well as simultaneous visualisation of different indicators. Whenever data are not available, the relative chart is indicated with 'N/A'. Data are provided for the latest available year or the latest available four-year period. For some indicators, data are rounded in the source. The sum of percentages or of individual values might not add up to 100 or to the total value. This is due to rounding and confidence intervals in the original data. For this edition, figures for Third Country Nationals refer to 'non-EU27 nor reporting country' across all indicators and years. The How to Read Guide is available [here](#).



COLOUR LEGEND

Whenever not specified, the following colour legend is adopted. Colours for multiple nationalities are randomly chosen.

Data relative to Ireland

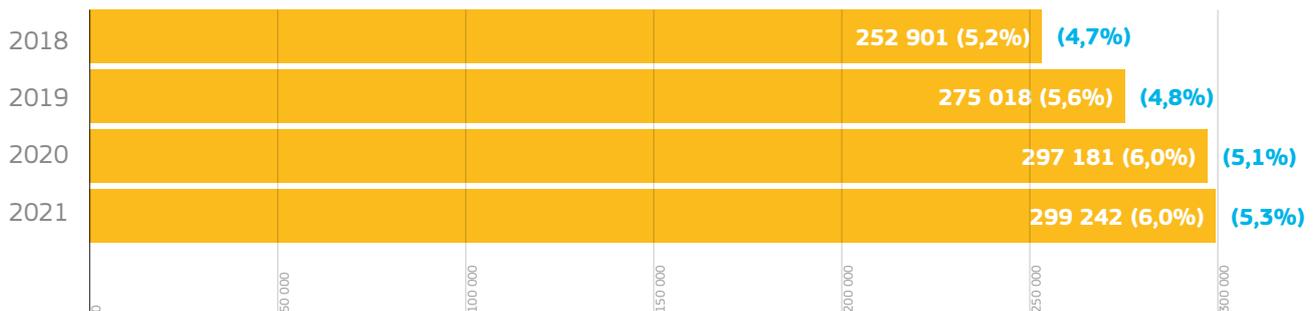
Data relative to EU

LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) as % of total population in the country (and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

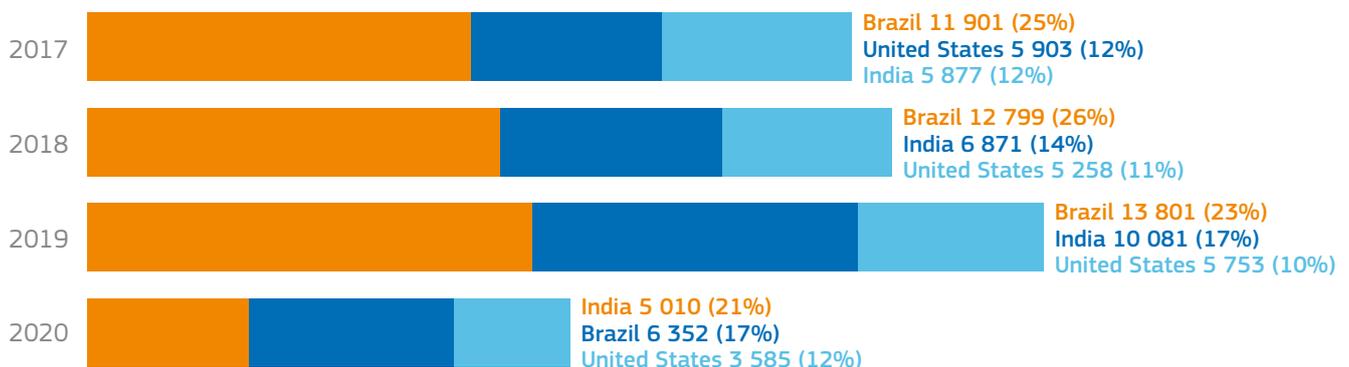
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)

These figures refer to 'non-EU27 nor reporting country'.



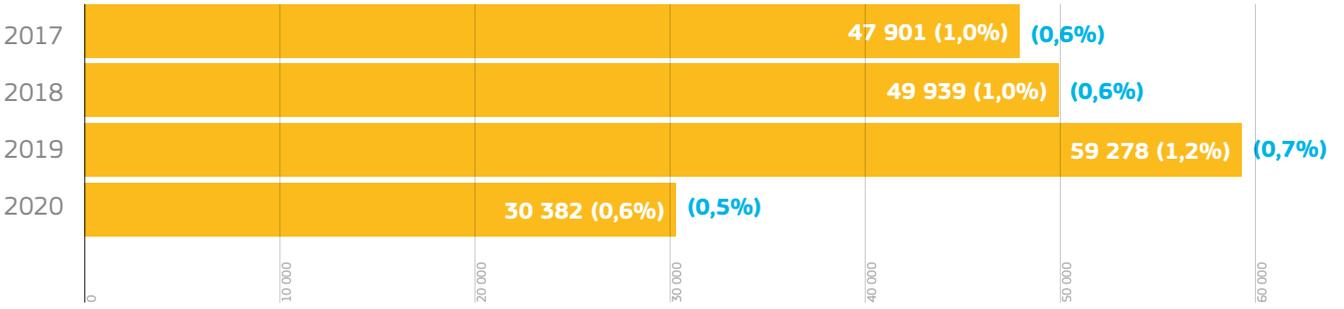
Top 3 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits and % of total annual permits

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



First residence permits annually issued: total number and % of total population in the country (and in the EU)

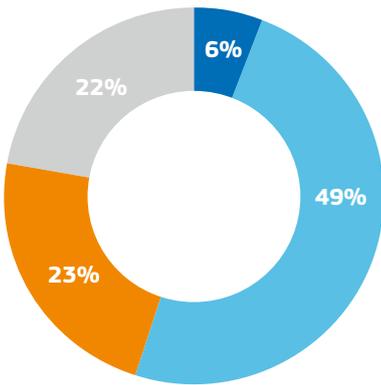
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst, migr_pop1ctz)



First residence permits annually issued by reason in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)

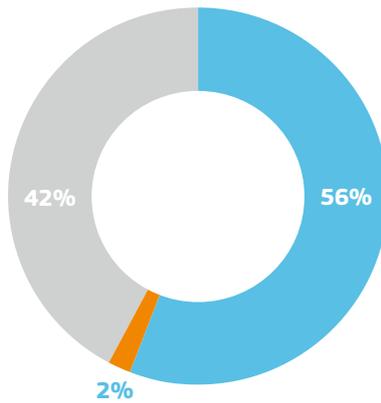
- Family
- Education
- Work
- Other



First residence permits annually issued for work reasons in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resocc)

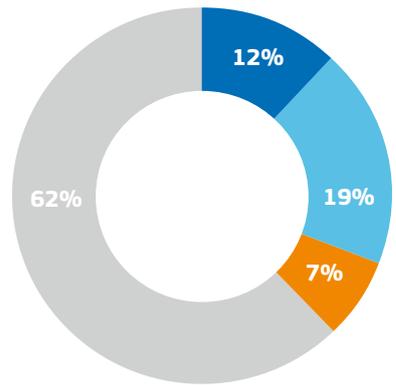
- Highly skilled
- Researchers
- Other



First residence permits annually issued for 'other reasons' in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)

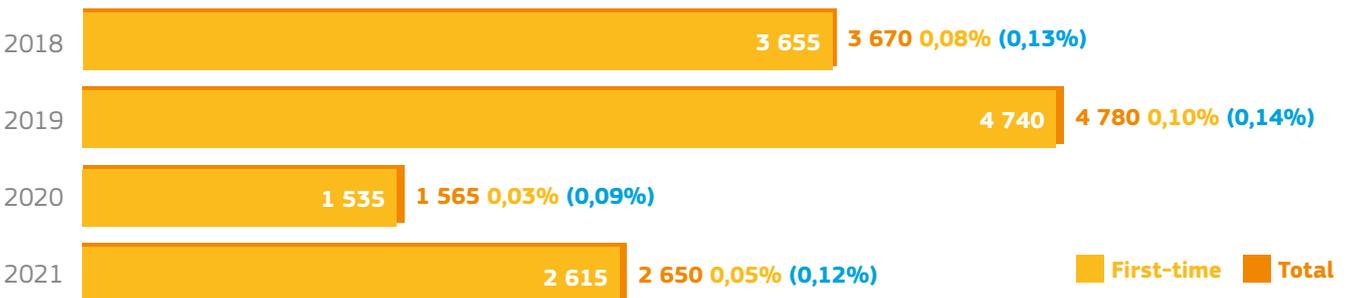
- Refugee/sub prot.
- Residence only
- Humanitarian
- Not specified



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

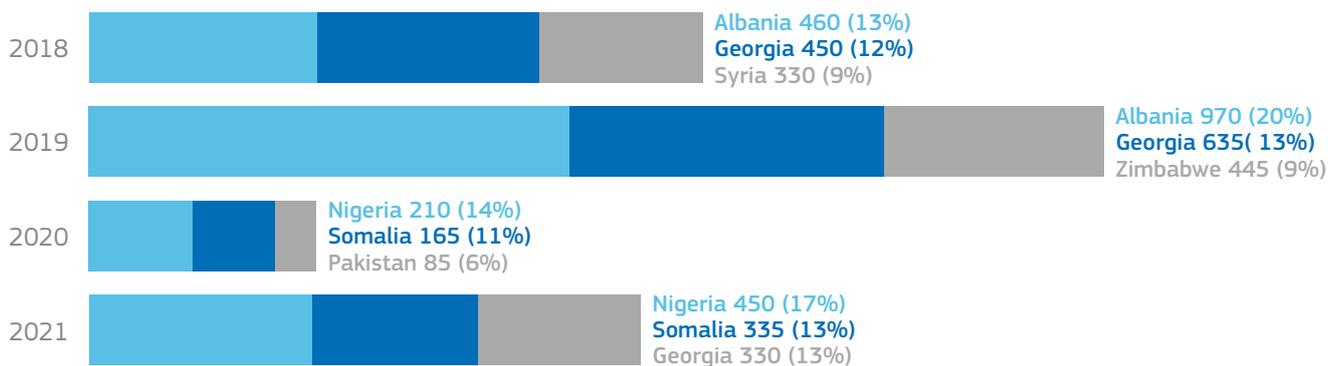
Total/first-time asylum applications; first-time asylum applications as % of population in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza, migr_pop1ctz)



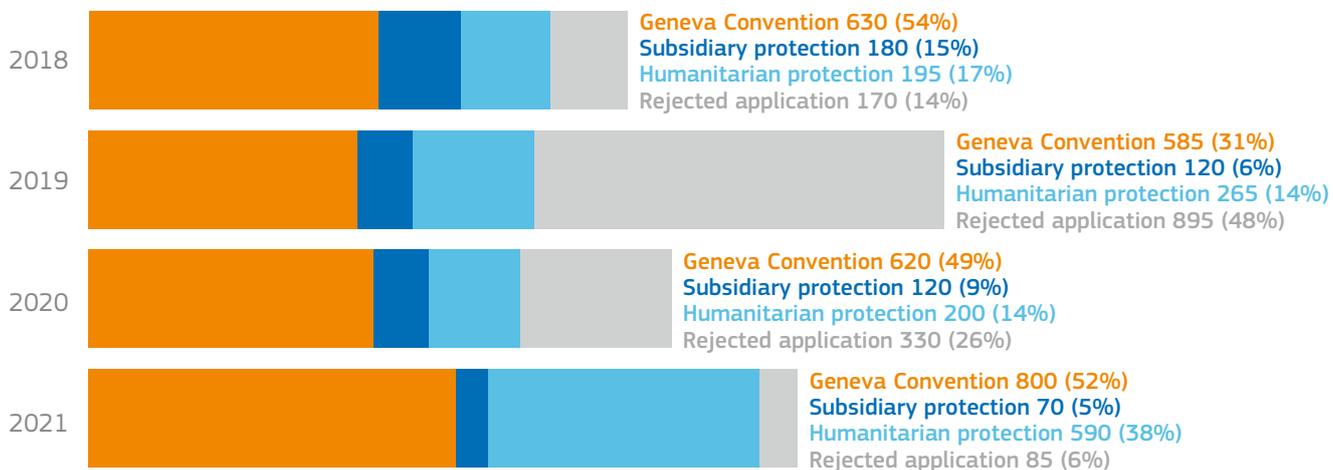
Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)



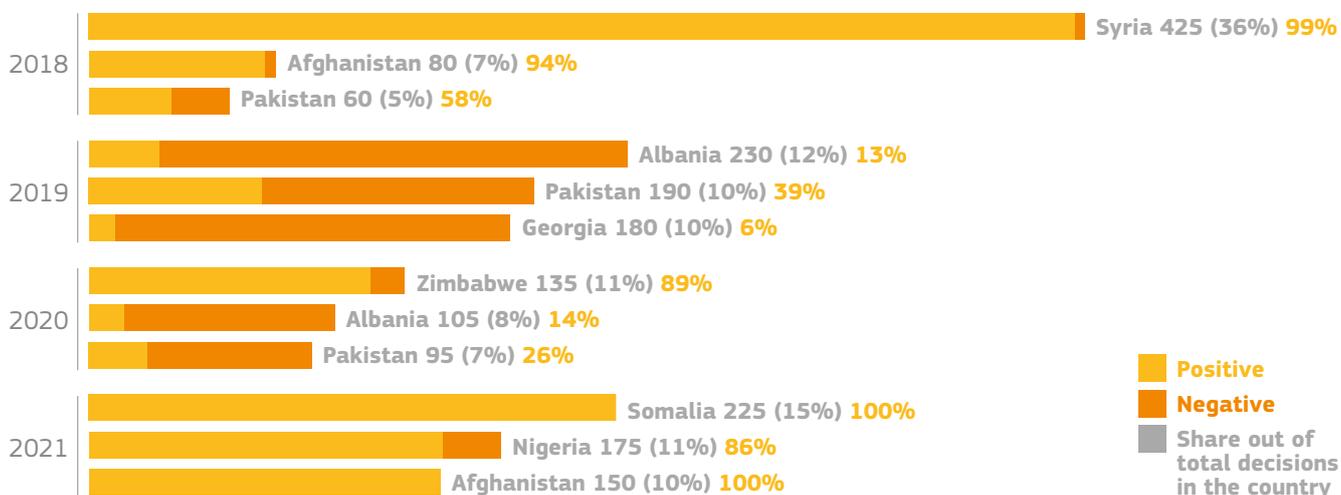
Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-instance decisions: number of decisions (% of total decisions in the country) and % of positive outcomes

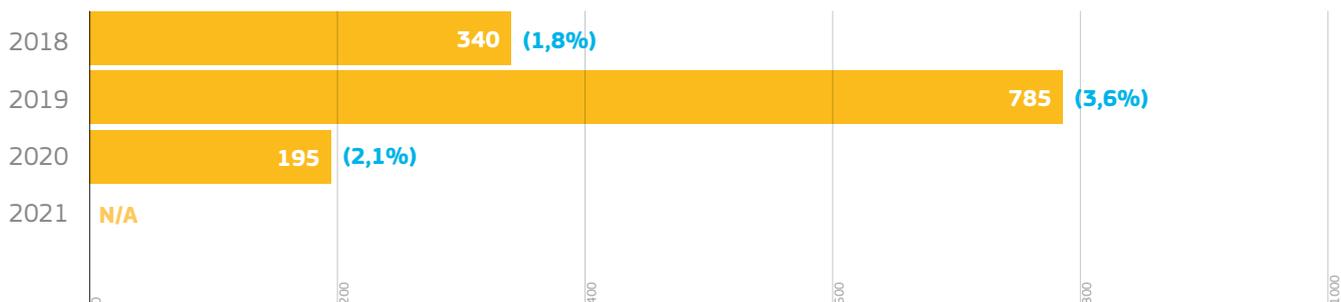
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



■ Positive
■ Negative
■ Share out of total decisions in the country

Third-Country Nationals resettled: absolute number and as % of total resettled in the EU

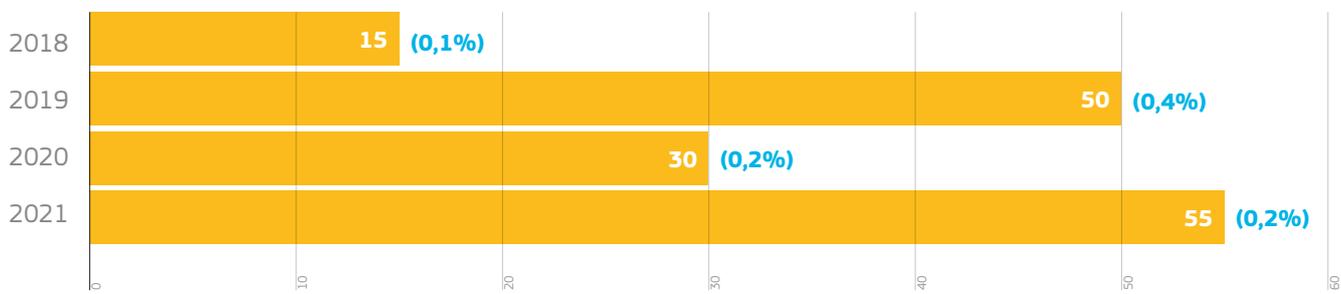
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyresa)



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

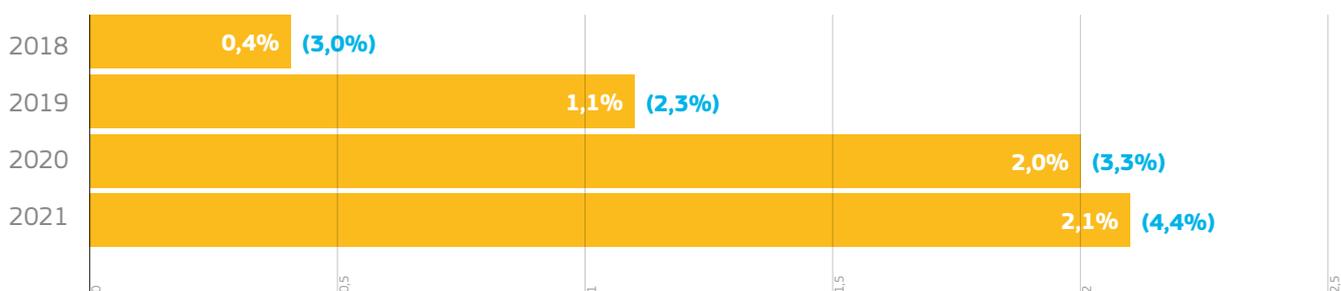
Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the country (and % of total applications from unaccompanied minors in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



Unaccompanied minors as % of first asylum applications in the country (and in the EU)

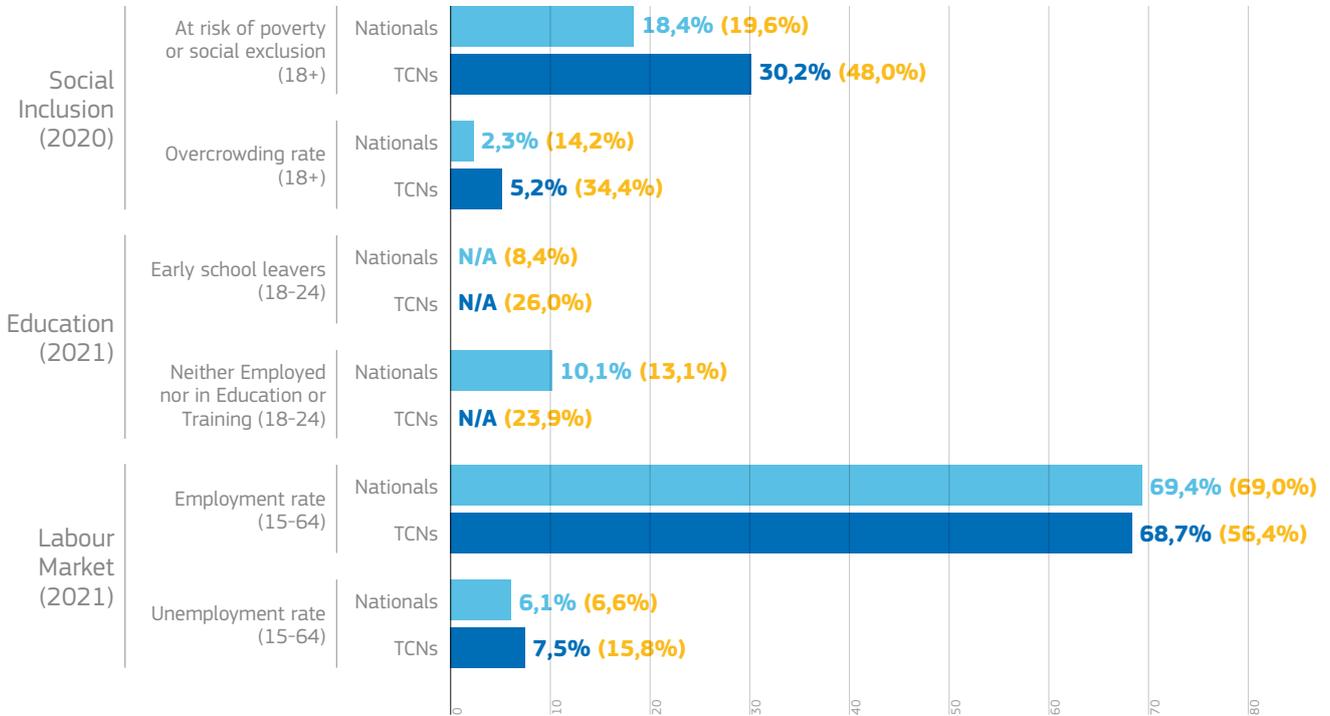
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



INTEGRATION

Integration indicators for nationals (light blue) and Third-Country Nationals (dark blue) in the country (when available). The same indicator is provided in yellow for the EU.

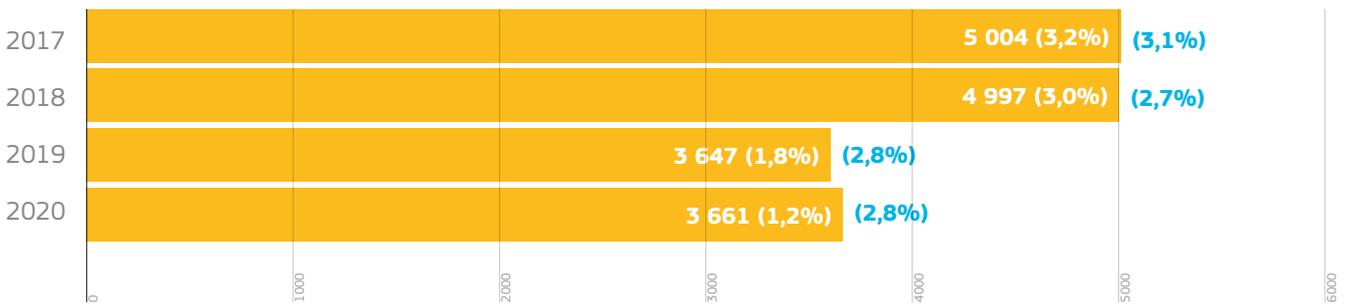
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc_peps05, ilc_lwho15, edat_lfse_01, edat_lfse_23, lfsa_ergan, lfsa_organ)



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

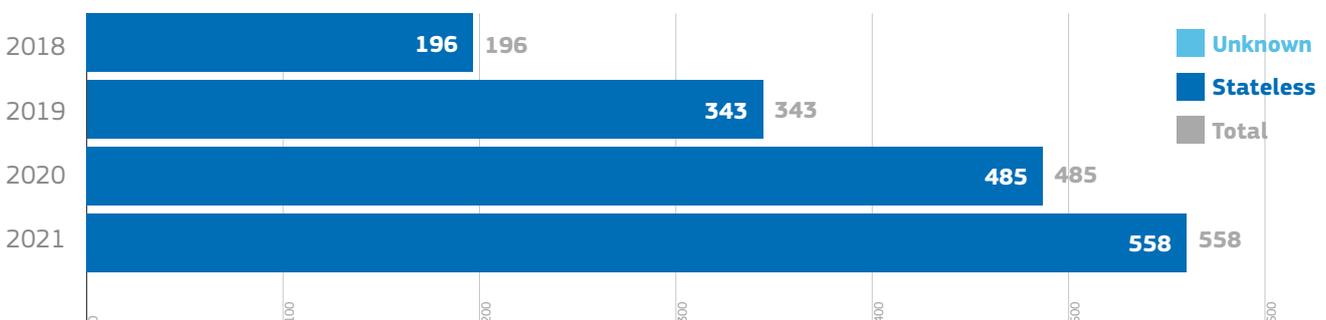
Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acqs, migr_acq)



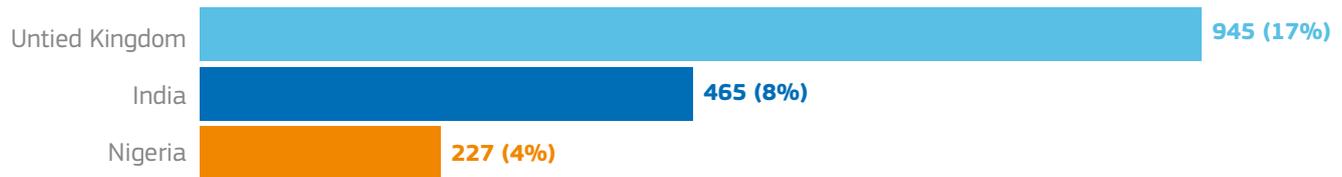
Stateless, unknown citizens and recognised non-citizens (RNC) - where present

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)



Top 3 nationalities by number of citizenship acquisition in 2020: absolute number and % of total acquisitions in the country by Third-Country Nationals

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acq)



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

Ireland is not part of the Schengen area and does not issue Schengen visas, in accordance with Council Decision 2002/192/EC

Short-term visa issued

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs

N/A

Short-term visa issued in top 3 consulate countries (and % of total issued)

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs

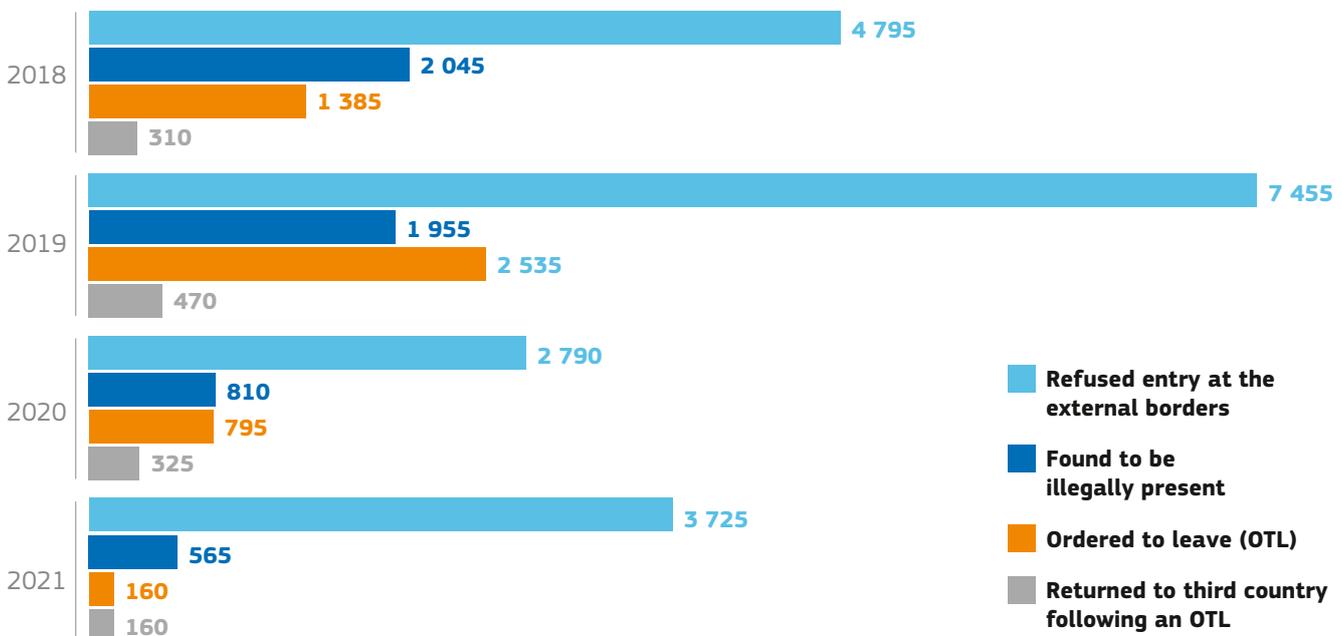
N/A



IRREGULAR MIGRATION

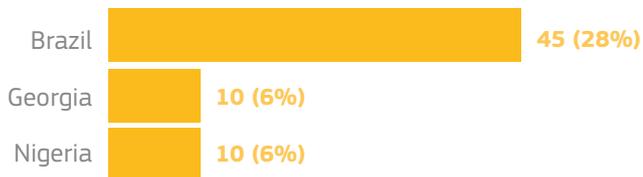
General statistics on irregular migration

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirfs, migr_eipre, migr_eiord, migr_eirtn)



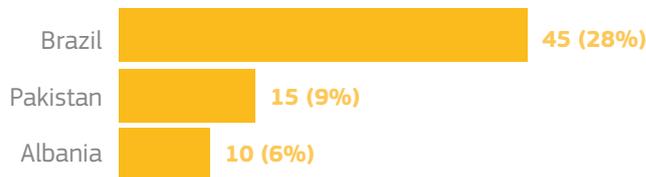
Top 3 nationalities ordered to leave the country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave the country

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eiord)



Top 3 nationalities returned to third country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave the country

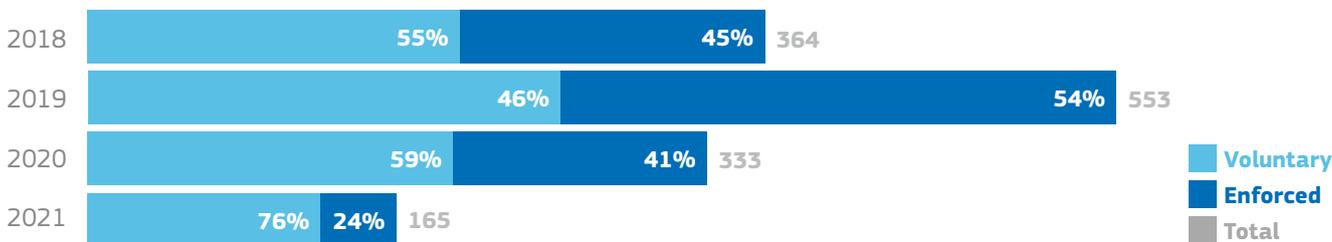
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirtn)



RETURN AND READMISSION

Number of Third-Country Nationals who left the territory by type of return (in %) and total returns

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirt_vol)



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Number of first residence permits issued to victims of trafficking in human beings

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)

