



Federal Ministry  
of the Interior, Building  
and Community



Federal Office  
for Migration  
and Refugees

# 2019 Migration Report

## Key Results



# 2019 Migration Report:

## The most important trends in immigration to and emigration from Germany

### Net migration decreases further

Immigration to Germany reached its highest level in 2015 – especially because of a large number of asylum seekers – with 2.1 million persons and a net migration of 1.1 million persons. Over the four years since then, immigration declined. In 2019, some 1.6 million immigrants and 1.2 million emigrants were recorded. Thus immigration to Germany decreased 1.7% from the year before; emigration increased 3.9%. The result was a net immigration of +327,060 persons, somewhat less than in 2018 (+399,680 persons).

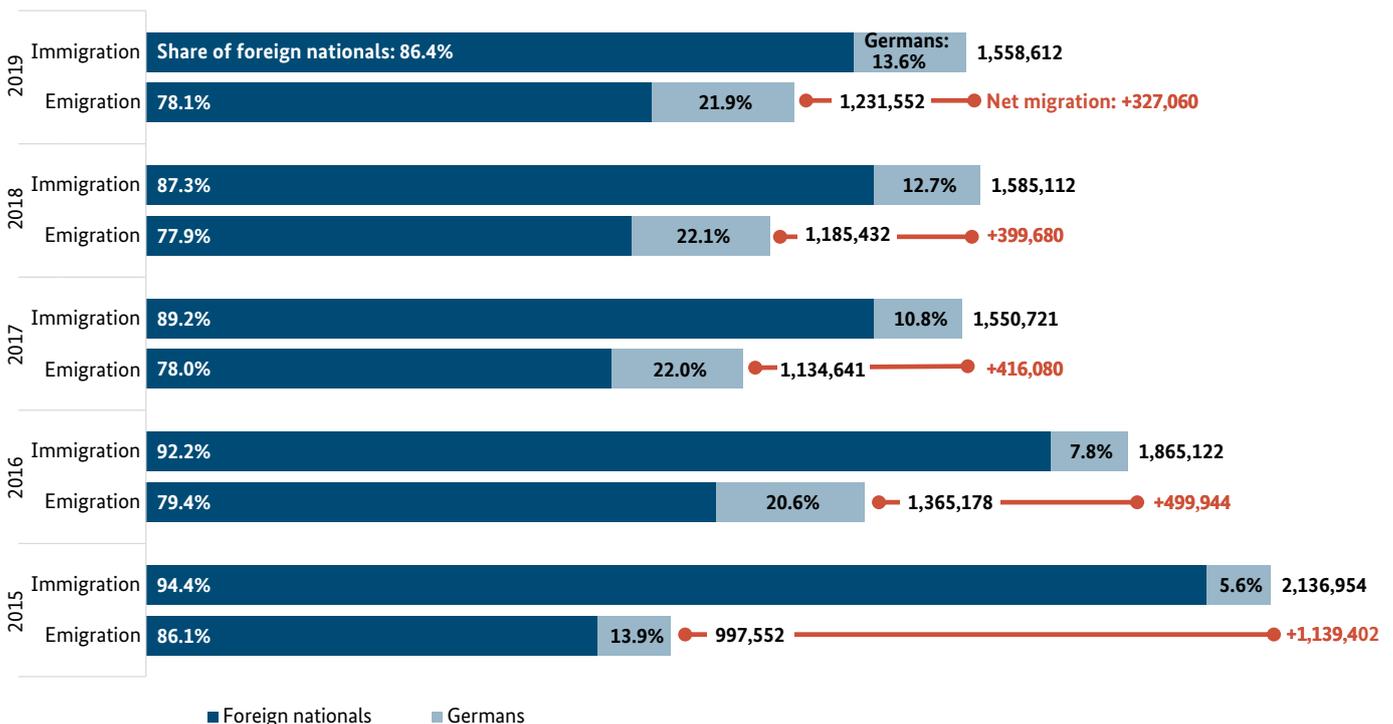
### Two-thirds of all immigrants come from European countries

For years now, migration movements in Germany have been dominated primarily by immigration from and

emigration to other European states. That trend continued in 2019. All in all, 66.4% of all immigrants came from European countries<sup>1</sup>: 51.1% from EU states and 15.3% from the other European states. Another 13.7% of immigrants came from an Asian country. Only 4.2% of immigrants came to Germany from African countries, and 5.5% came from the Americas, Australia and Oceania.<sup>2</sup>

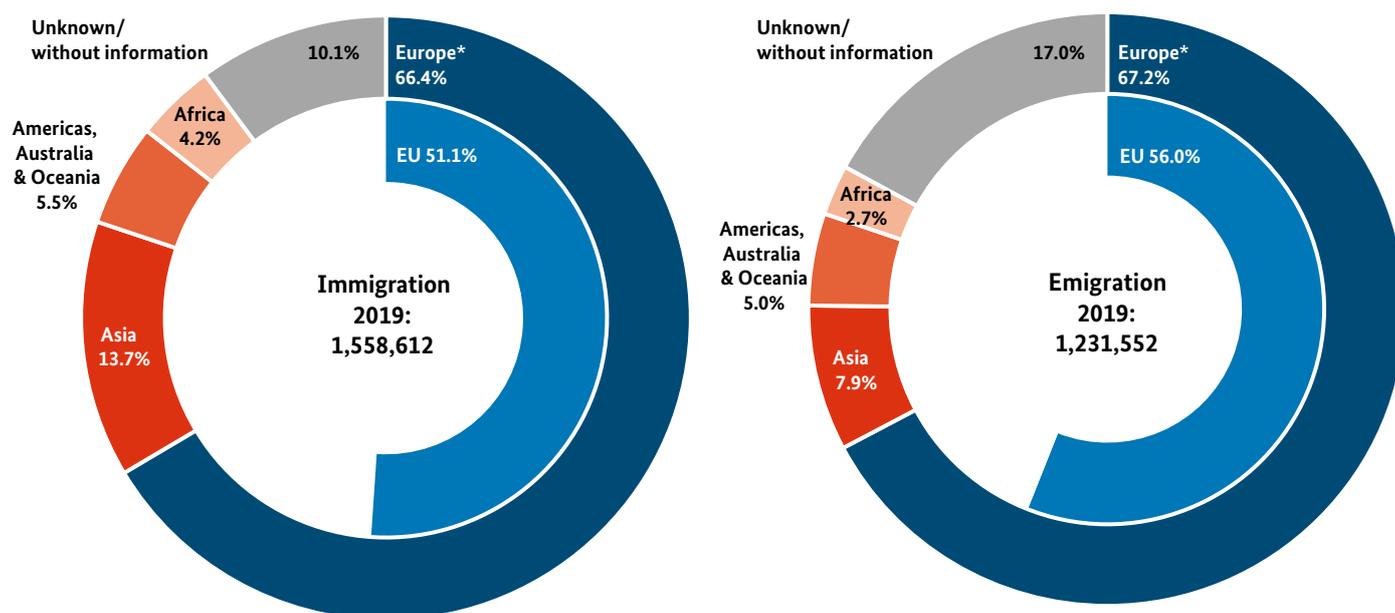
- 1 European Union and third countries in Europe, including Turkey and the Russian Federation (the official statistics count both as Europe).
- 2 This section focuses on the migrants' countries of origin and destination, not on their nationality. As a result, for example, immigration from EU countries might also include third-country nationals who moved from EU countries to Germany. See the section on "Internal EU migration" for more about the migration of EU nationals.

### Total migration in the past five years



Source: Federal Statistical Office, Migration Statistics

### Migration by regions of origin and destination in 2019



\*Including Turkey and Russian Federation.

Source: Federal Statistical Office, Migration Statistics

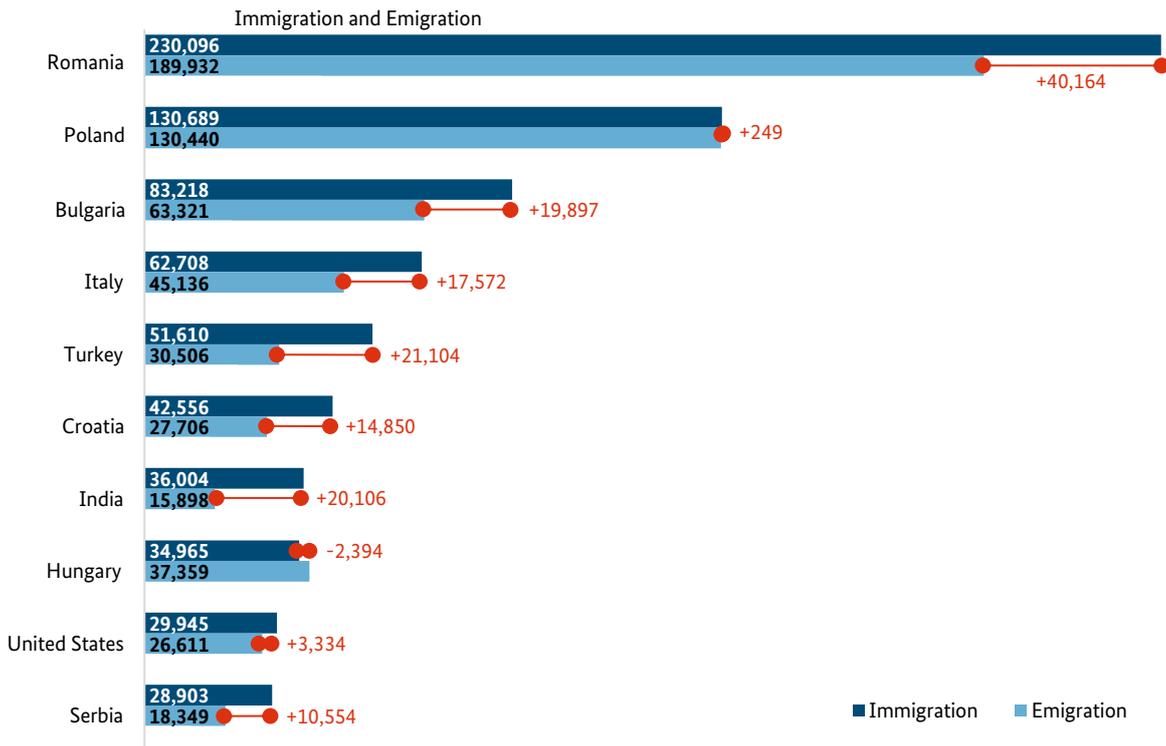
The significance of internal European migration is also evident in the emigration figures. As with immigration, Europe was again the primary destination region. About two-thirds of emigrants (67.2%) moved from Germany to another European country in 2019; 56.0% migrated to other EU member states. Emigration to Asia accounted for 7.9%; emigration to the Americas, Australia and Oceania came to 5.0%. Only 2.7% of the registered emigrants moved to Africa.

As in previous years, Romania was again the main country of origin for immigrants in 2019 (14.8% of all immigrants), followed by Poland (8.4%) and Bulgaria (5.3%). The other quantitatively significant countries of origin in 2019 were Italy, Turkey, Croatia, India, Hungary, the United States, and Serbia. Thus six out of the ten main countries of origin for migrants in 2019 were EU countries.

Immigration figures declined substantially for the most common countries of origin for refugees. In 2017, viewed in terms of overall migration movements, Syria still ranked sixth among the countries with the largest immigration. But since 2018 it has no longer been among the top ten countries of origin. In 2019, immigration figures from Syria declined once again, down 17.1% from the prior year; the figures for Iraq (-26.4%) and Iran (-18.2%) were lower as well.

For emigrants as well, Romania, Poland and Bulgaria were the most important destinations in 2019. These countries thus evidence large migration volumes; i.e., many people migrate from these countries to Germany, and many others emigrate there again. The largest net volume of migration in 2019 was from Romania (+40,164). Syria (not shown in the chart) came next with a considerably lower figure, +23,967. The net immigration from Syria has declined steadily over the past few years (2018: +28,814, 2017: +49,123, 2016: +153,239).

## Migration by most common countries of origin and destination in 2019



Source: Federal Statistical Office, Migration Statistics

## Overview of immigrant groups

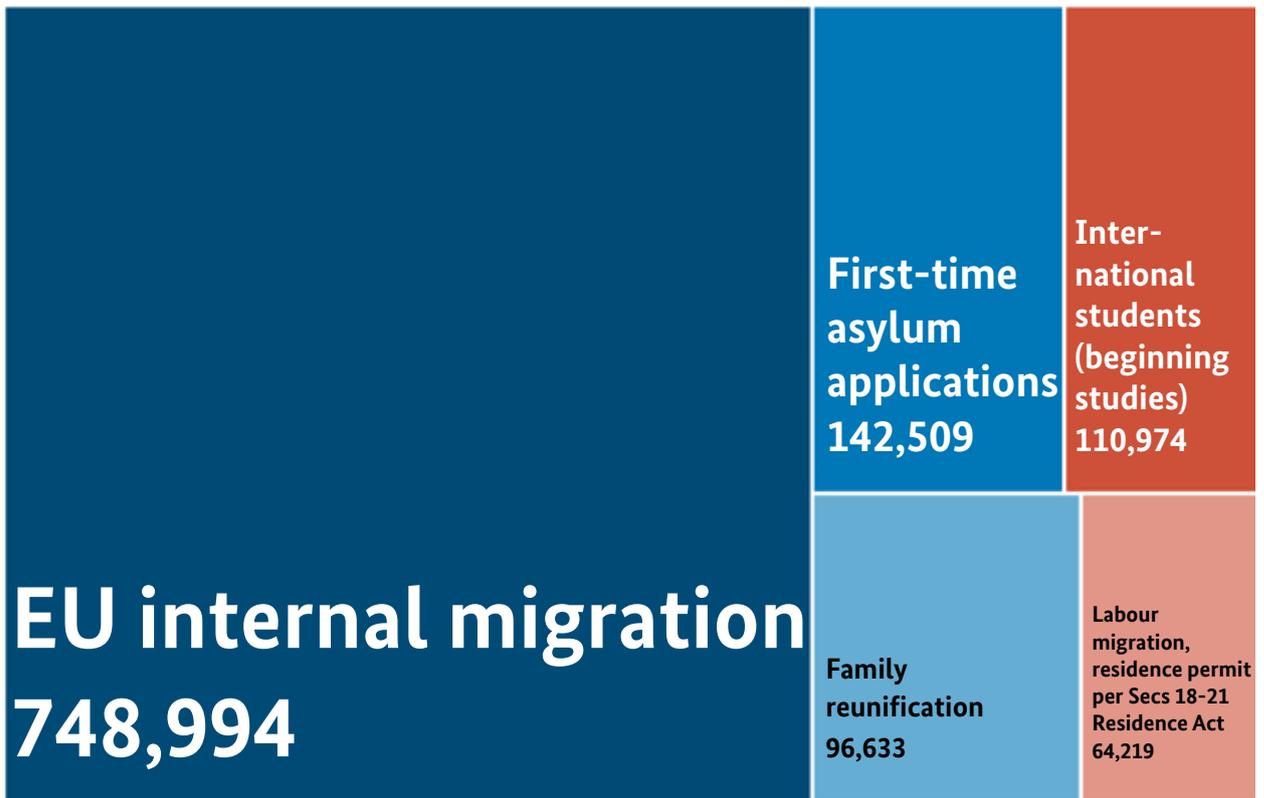
Immigration to Germany has changed considerably since 2015 in terms of both scope and composition. As has already been mentioned, migration has been dominated primarily by movements from and to other European states. In 2019, EU nationals represented 51.1% of immigrants to Germany. Migration for humanitarian reasons decreased once again from 2018 to 2019. While 161,931 first applications for asylum were received in 2018, the figure decreased to 142,509 in 2019 (-12.0%). Immigration for family reunification remained relatively constant: 96,633 residence permits were granted for family reasons in 2019 (2018: 97,129). 110,974 international students (who obtained their qualification for higher education in another country) started their studies in Germany, somewhat more than the year before (109,995). In 2019, 64,219 third-country nationals received residence permits for employment; the increase from the prior year (2018: 60,857) was somewhat more substantial here than it was for students.

## Internal EU migration: Positive net migration decreases

A more detailed look at immigration and emigration by EU nationals (excluding Germans) in 2019 shows that the number of immigrants decreased 5.5% from a year earlier, to 748,994 (2018: 792,796). Particularly large decreases in immigrants in 2019 were evident for Hungarian (-16.4%) and Croatian (-16.2%) nationals. Non-German EU nationals thus accounted for 48.1% of total immigration (2018: 50.0%).

The total number of EU citizens who emigrated from Germany increased in 2019, to 636,479 (+7.8%, 2018: 590,443 emigrants). The share of non-German EU nationals among total emigrants grew from 49.8% in 2018 to 51.7% in 2019. Thus the total net migration of EU citizens came to +112,515 immigrants, a considerable decrease from the year before (2018: +202,353).

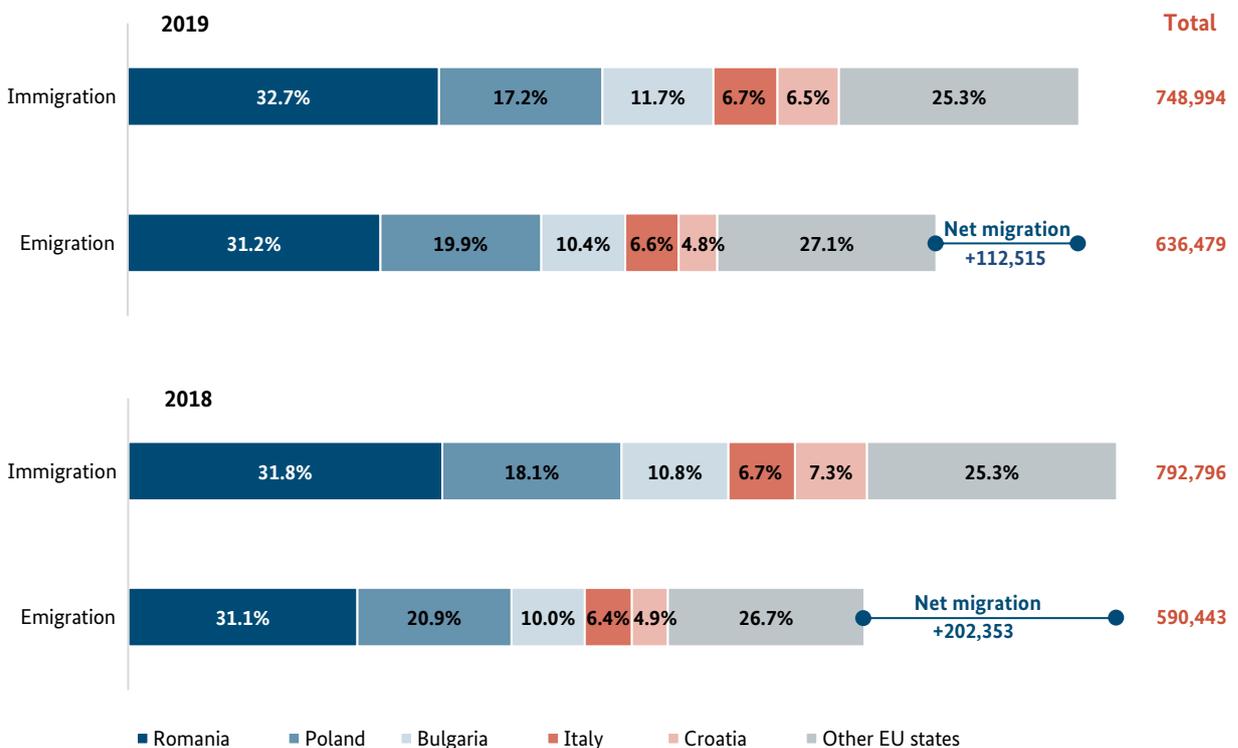
**Most important migration groups in 2019**



Because of different recording criteria (e.g., per-case vs. per-person statistics) and duplicate counts (e.g., EU internal migration and seasonal workers from EU states), the immigrant groups cannot be added up to a meaningful total.

Source: Federal Statistical Office, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Central Register of Foreign Nationals

**Immigration and emigration by EU nationals to and from Germany in 2018 and 2019**



Source: Federal Statistical Office, Migration Statistics

### Migration of third-country nationals: Migration for employment and education gains in importance

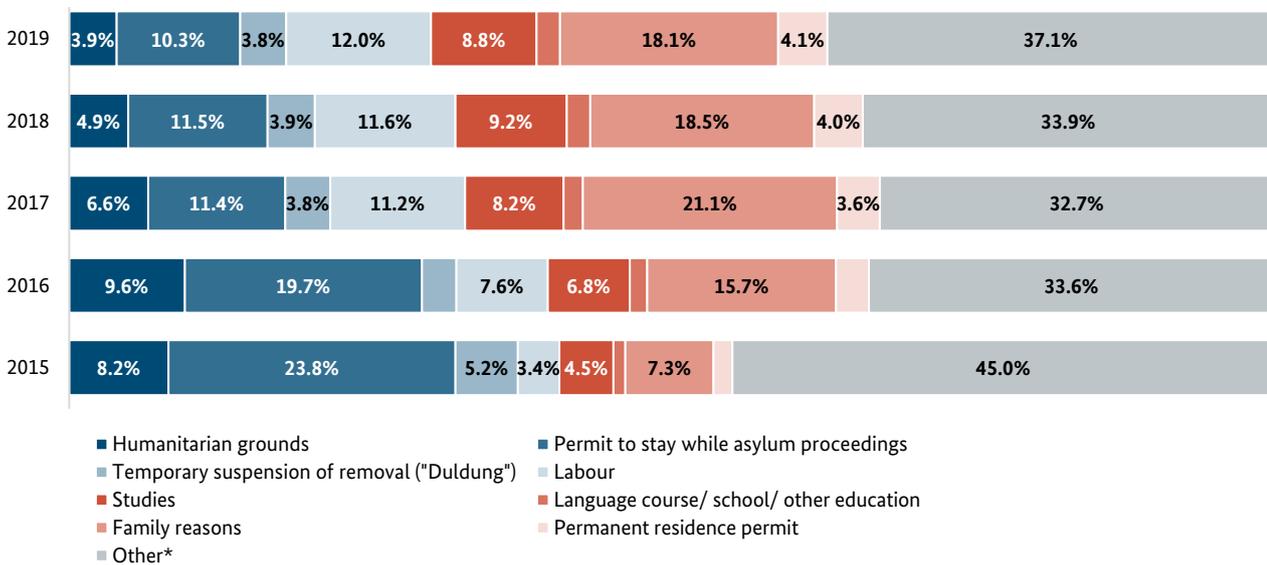
Migration from third countries continues to evolve. This is especially evident in the composition of immigration broken down by types of residence permit, as can be seen in data from the Central Register of Foreign Nationals (AZR). While about 30% of immigrants in 2015 and 2016 received residence permits on humanitarian grounds or permission to stay while asylum proceedings were pending, by 2019 the figure had decreased by more than half (14,2%). Migration for employment showed the opposite development. Where only 3.4% of immigrating third-country nationals received a residence permit for work in 2015, the figure for 2019 was more than three times that amount (12.0%). The number of third-country nationals immigrating for university-level study also increased, almost doubling from the 4.5% figure for 2015 to 8.8% in 2019.

### More skilled workers immigrate from non-EU countries

For years now, Germany has seen a steady increase in immigration by skilled workers from Third Countries. In 2019, a total of 64,219 third-country nationals came to Germany and received a residence permit for employment purposes under Secs. 18 through 21 of the former version of the Residence Act. Most of these persons were qualified or highly qualified skilled workers (61.3%; includes qualified employment, EU Blue Card, researchers, highly qualified individuals, self-employed individuals, and holders of an Intra-company transfer (ICT) card).

Where immigration of skilled workers is concerned, the EU Blue Card has made particularly strong gains in significance as a residence permit for highly qualified individuals. But there has also been a substantial increase since 2015 in the immigration of third-country nationals who have taken up an occupation that does not require vocational training. The western Balkan states have played a particularly important role in this regard.

Immigration of third-country nationals by type of residence permit

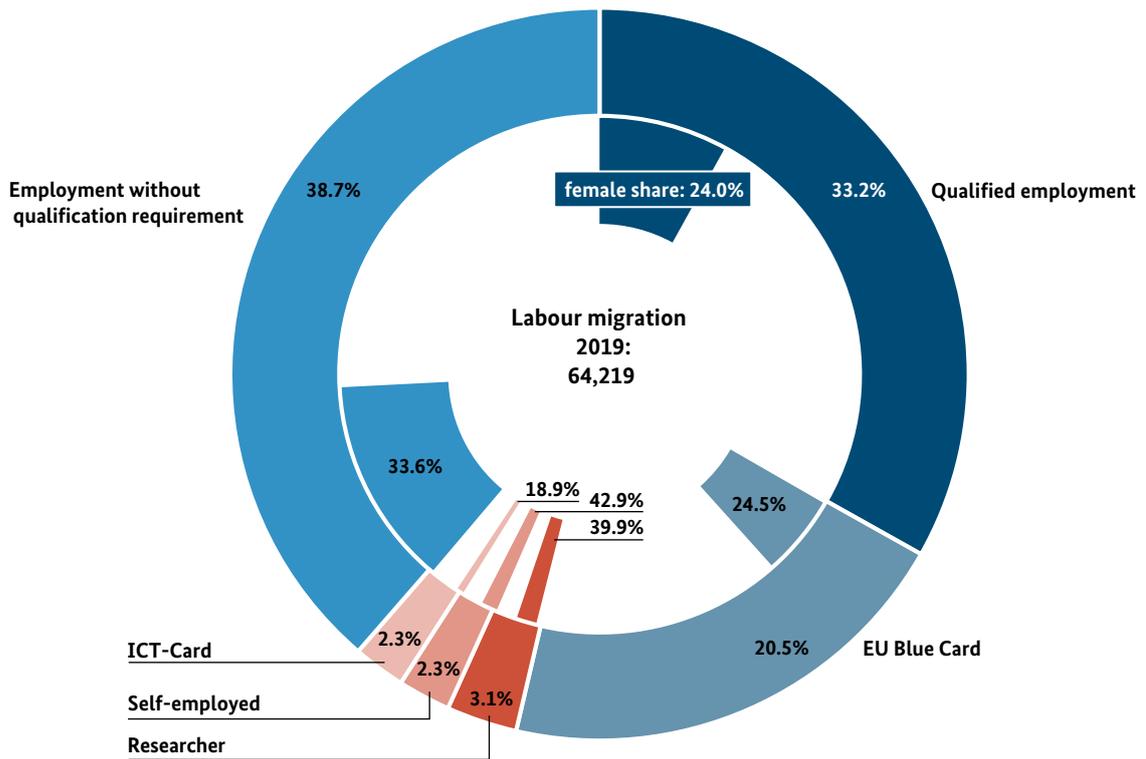


\* Includes, among others, persons who hold another form of residence permission, who have applied for a residence permit, or who are exempt from a residence permit requirement.

Note: Figures below 3% are not shown.

Source: Central Register of Foreign Nationals

**Immigration from non-EU countries for employment purposes (residence permits granted for entry in 2019)**



Source: Central Register of Foreign Nationals

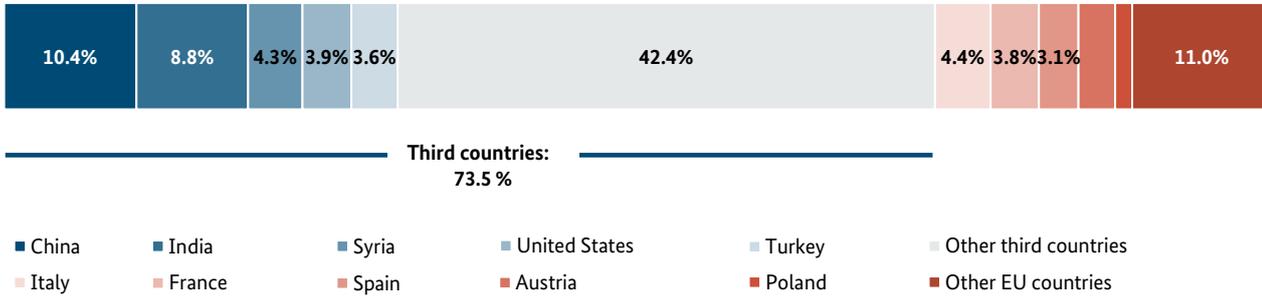
**Germany still an attractive destination for international students**

Germany is one of the world’s most attractive destination countries for international students. The number of international students who obtained their qualification for higher education in another country and began a university-level course of studies in Germany rose once again in 2019 (summer semester 2019 and winter semester 2019/2020). All in all, 110,974 international students who qualified for higher education elsewhere began studies at a university-level German institution (2018: 109,995). Thus 2019 saw the largest number to date of such students matriculating for their first semester here.

As has been the case since as far back as 2006, Chinese nationals were the largest group of international students that began their studies at a German university in 2019 (11,587 students, 10.4% of the total). The second-largest group was students from India (9,785 students, 8.8%), followed by Italy (4,874 students, 4.4%). Where students from Syria had still been the third-largest group the previous year (2018: 5,783), in 2019 they became the fourth-largest group, with 4,744 (4.3%) students beginning their first semester at a German university.

**Students from abroad who obtained their qualification for higher education in another country and began their first semester at a university-level institution, by most common nationalities (summer semester 2019 and winter semester 2019/2020)**

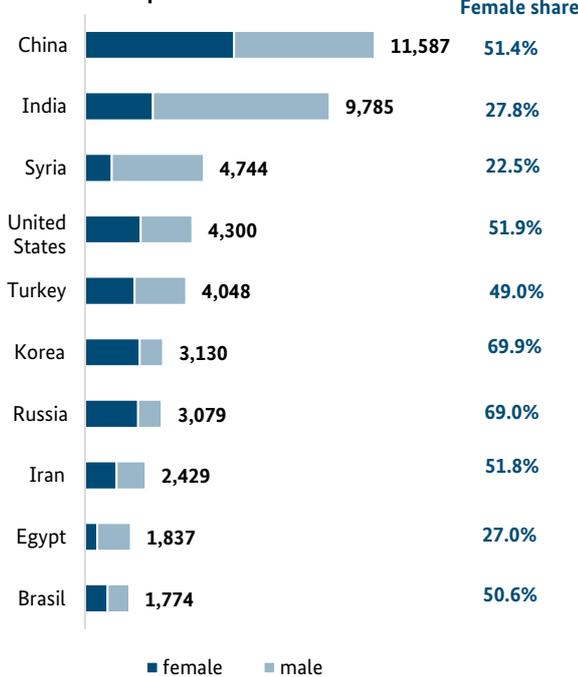
**Total: 110,974**



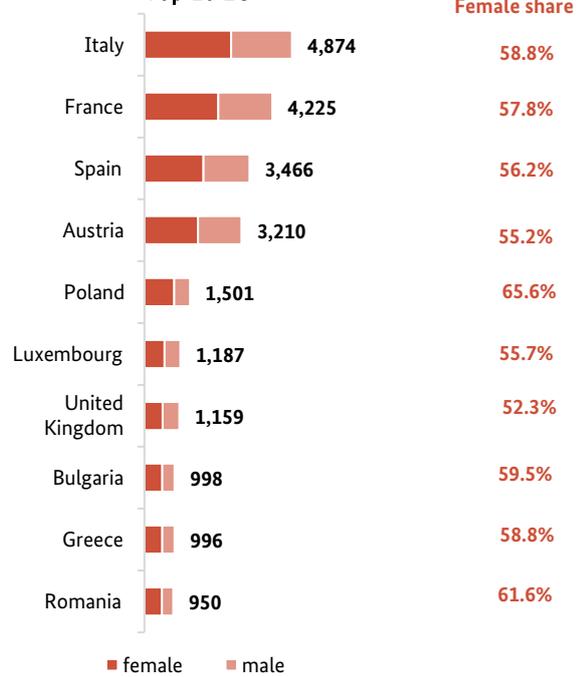
Third countries:  
73.5 %

- China
- India
- Syria
- United States
- Turkey
- Other third countries
- Italy
- France
- Spain
- Austria
- Poland
- Other EU countries

**Top 10 third countries**



**Top 10 EU**



Note: Figures below 3% are not shown.

Source: Federal Statistical Office

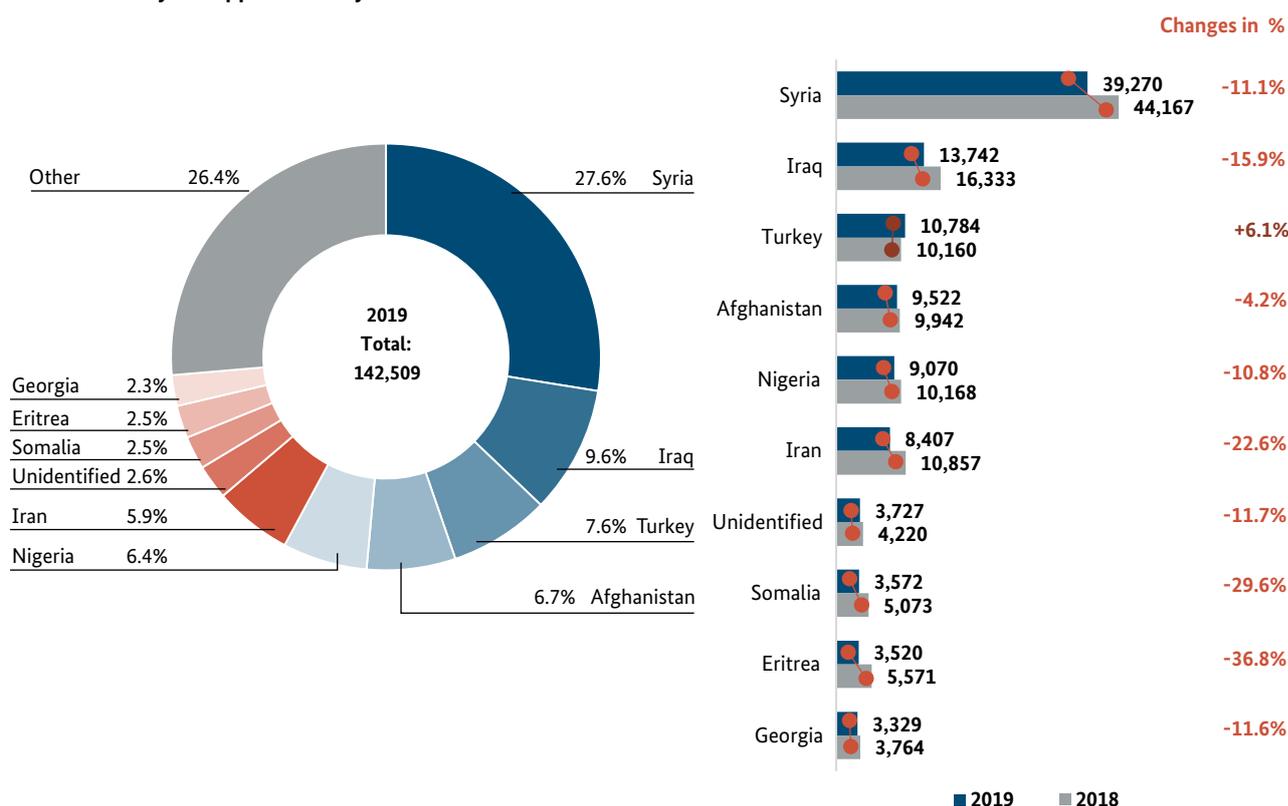
**Applications for asylum decrease further**

Following a peak number of asylum applications in 2016 (722,370), there were already sharp decreases in 2017 (198,317) and 2018 (161,931). That trend continued in 2019, when a total of 142,509 individuals applied for asylum for the first time (-12.0% from 2018). Of these applications, 31,415 (22.0%) were for children less than one year of age born in Germany. Thus the number of first-time applicants was again below the 2014 level (173,072).

The evolution of refugee migration to Germany has always reflected worldwide crises and conflicts across the years. Since 2014, Syria has been in first place

among the nationalities with the largest incoming numbers. In 2019, 39,270 first-time asylum applications were filed by Syrian nationals, equivalent to 27.6% of the total. First-time applications by Syrian nationals were down 11.1% from the prior year (2018: 44,167 first-time applications). Iraq, with 13,742 first-time asylum applications and a 9.6% share of the total, was the country of origin with the second largest volume in 2019. Applications by Iraqi nationals were also down from the prior year, by 15.9% (2018: 16,333). Only Turkey, the country of origin with the third most numerous applications, showed a slight increase: in 2019, 10,784 Turkish nationals lodged a first application for asylum (equivalent to 7.6% of the total), where the 2018 figure was 10,160 (+6.1%).

### First-time asylum applications by the ten most common nationalities in 2019



Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

The list of the ten most common nationalities immigrating to Germany did not change significantly from 2018 to 2019. In 2019, the Russian Federation was no longer among this group; Georgia joined the list instead. With Turkey, one European state is included in the list of the ten most common nationalities. The largest percentage decrease from the prior year in 2019 was for Eritrea, with 36.8% fewer first-time asylum applications.

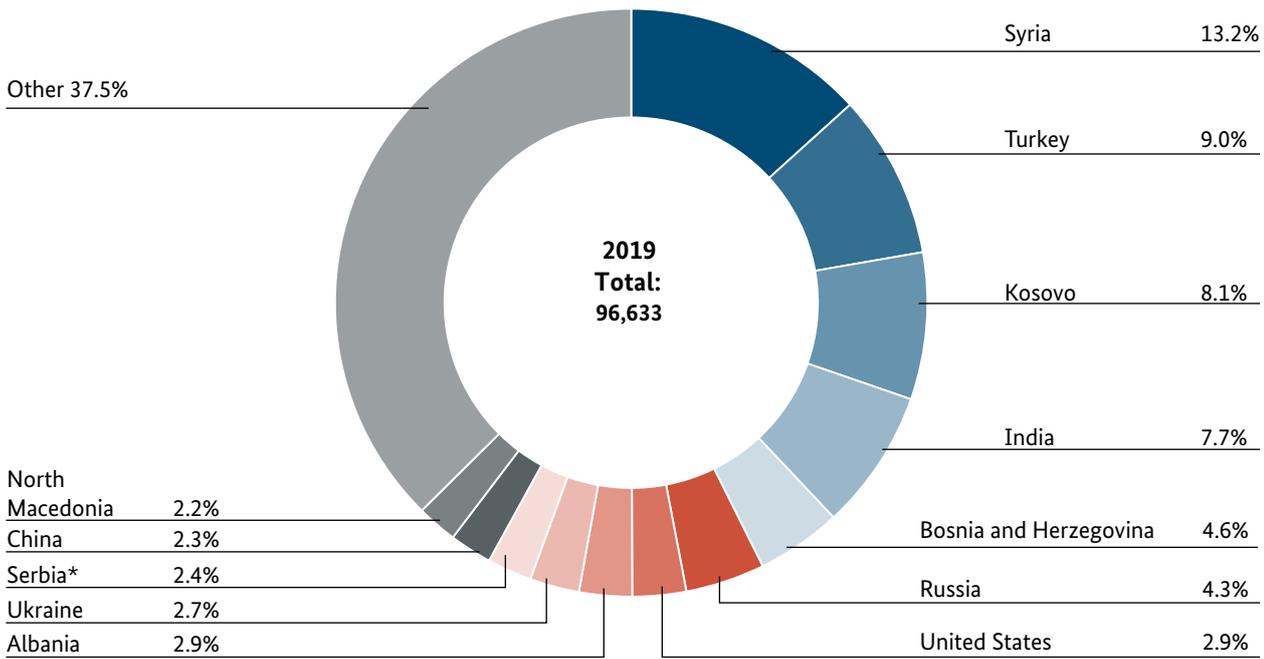
### Slight decrease in family reunification for third-country nationals

Family reunification saw only a slight change from the prior year. In 2019, a total of 96,633 third-country nationals were granted residence permits in Germany on family grounds. The number of these permits was down 0.5% from the prior year (2018: 97,129).

Ever since 2015, Syrian nationals have been the largest group for family reunification – a development associated with rising numbers of individuals immigrating to join family members from that country who had been granted protection. In 2019, 12,790 Syrian family members entered the country, equivalent to a 10.9% decrease. Other important countries of origin for fam-

ily reunification were Turkey, Kosovo and India. Somewhat more than half of the granted residence permits (55.9%) were for the reunification of spouses; more than one-third (36.9%) were for minor children.

**Migration for family reasons (residence permits granted), ten most frequent nationalities in 2019**



- Wife joining a German national
- Wife joining a foreign national
- Minor children
- Other family members
- Husband joining a German national
- Husband joining a foreign national
- Parents joining minor children

\* including former Serbia and Montenegro  
 Note: Figures below 3% are not shown.  
 Source: Central Register of Foreign Nationals

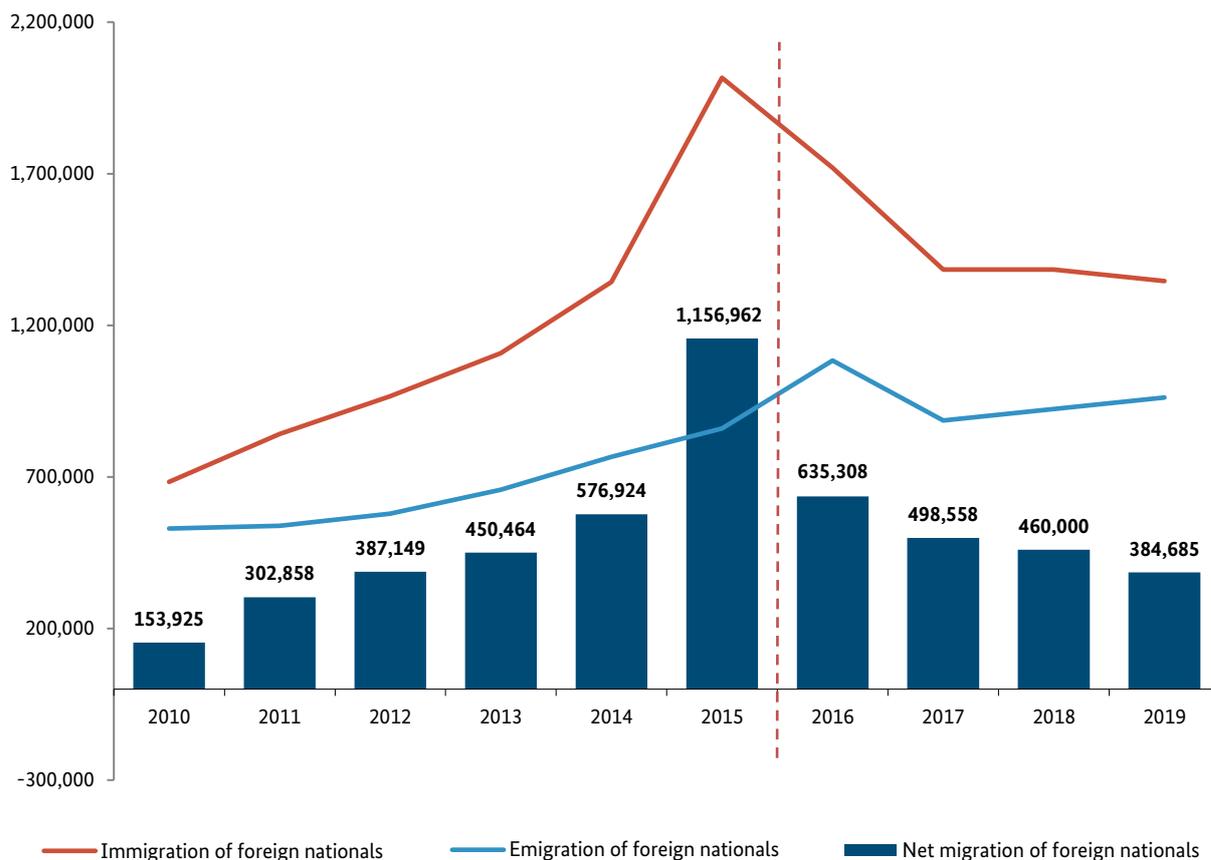
**Resettlement of ethnic Germans to Germany remains constant**

Following a steady decrease from 2001 (around 98,500 persons) to 2012 (around 1,800 persons), subsequent years saw a slight increase in the immigration of resettled ethnic Germans and their family members – a consequence of changes in the law that most notably made family reunification easier. In 2019, 7,155 persons were registered as resettled ethnic Germans, including their family members. This is approximately the same level as in the prior year (2018: 7,126 persons).

**Emigration from Germany**

While immigration increased, after a certain delay an increased number of foreign nationals have also been leaving Germany, as the figures since 2010 show. Emigration remained relatively constant until 2012; then the figure rose until it peaked, for the time being, in 2016. From 2010 to 2019, 12.8 million people moved to Germany from other countries. But 7.8 million left the country over the same period.

### Immigration and emigration of foreign nationals to and from Germany since 2010\*



\* From the 2016 reporting year onwards, comparability of results with prior-year figures is limited because of methodological changes and refinements of measuring techniques. Precision of results is limited by inconsistencies associated with the requirements of law for the treatment of persons seeking protection. Detailed information is available on the Federal Statistical Office's website on migration.

Source: Federal Statistical Office, Migration Statistics

In 2019, 961,258 departures of foreign nationals (2018: 923,581) were registered. There were 1,345,943 arrivals during the same period. The net migration among persons from other countries thus amounted to +384,685 persons, a 16.4% decrease from 2018 (+460,000).

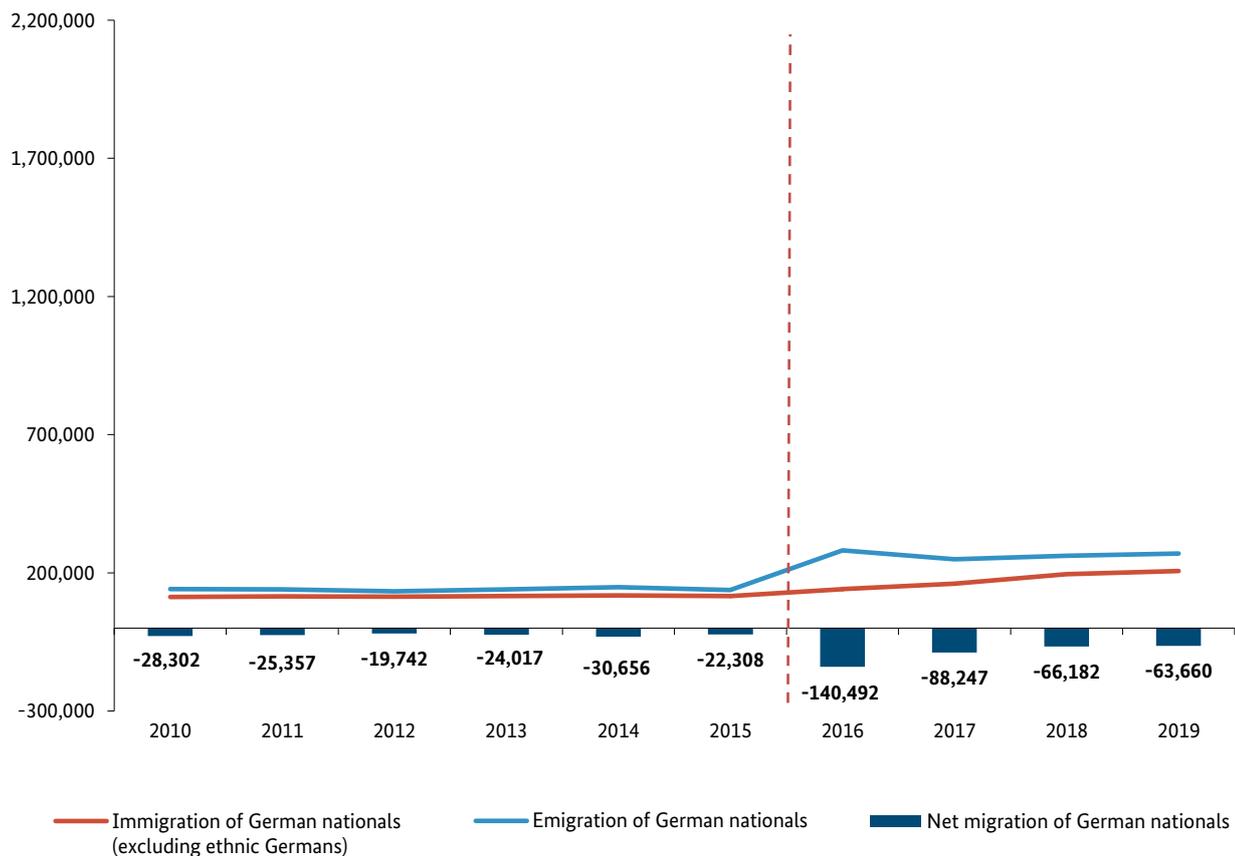
The net migration of German nationals<sup>3</sup>, on the other hand, has been consistently negative since 2010. German nationals were the second-largest group of immigrants (206,634 arrivals) in 2019, following Romanian nationals;<sup>4</sup> but at the same time, the number of emigrants increased slightly from the prior year, to 270,294 (+3.2%, 2018: 261,851 emigrants). Thus the net migration of German nationals came to -63,660

emigrants in 2019. The most popular destination countries among emigrating German nationals in 2019 were Switzerland, Austria and the United States.

3 Excluding ethnic Germans included in the procedure under the laws on expellees, who were recorded as immigrating Germans in the immigration statistics.

4 Excluding ethnic Germans resettling in Germany.

### Immigration and emigration of German citizens to and from Germany since 2010\*



\* From the 2016 reporting year onwards, comparability of results with prior-year figures is limited because of methodological changes and refinements of measuring techniques. Precision of results is limited by inconsistencies associated with the requirements of law for the treatment of persons seeking protection. Detailed information is available on the Federal Statistical Office's website on migration.

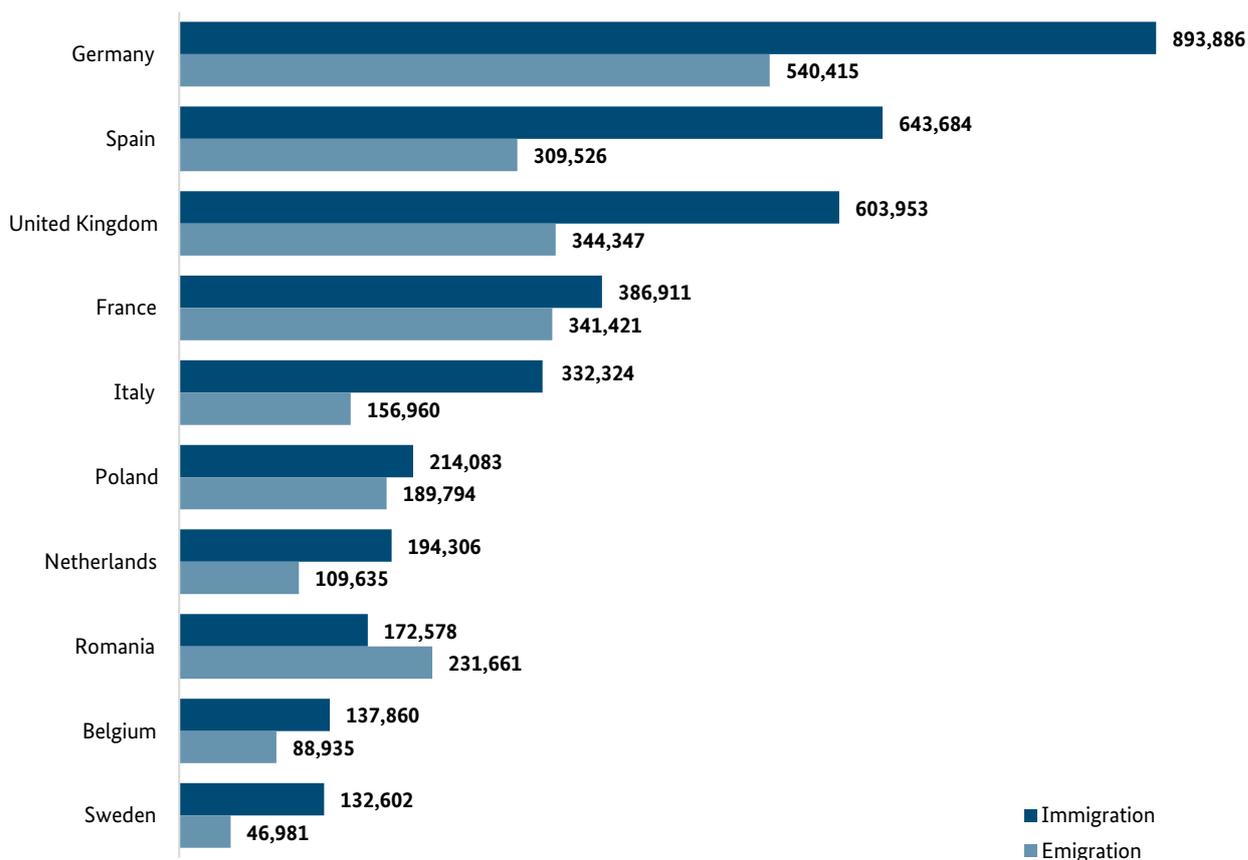
Source: Federal Statistical Office, Migration Statistics

### Germany ranks first among European countries as a destination for longer-term immigration

Compared to the rest of Europe, Germany continues to be a primary destination for migration. Among EU states, Germany had the highest level of longer-term immigration in 2018 (893,886 immigrants).<sup>5</sup> With 540,415 persons emigrating in 2018, Germany had net migration of +353,471 persons (2017: +356,409). Other countries with large immigration figures were the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Italy.

<sup>5</sup> "Longer-term" means that the (intended) duration of the immigrant's stay was at least one year. Comparable figures for the EU only become available after a delay of about two years, therefore only the figures from 2018 can be considered here.

### Immigration and emigration (as defined by the UN) in 2018 by most frequent destination countries in the EU



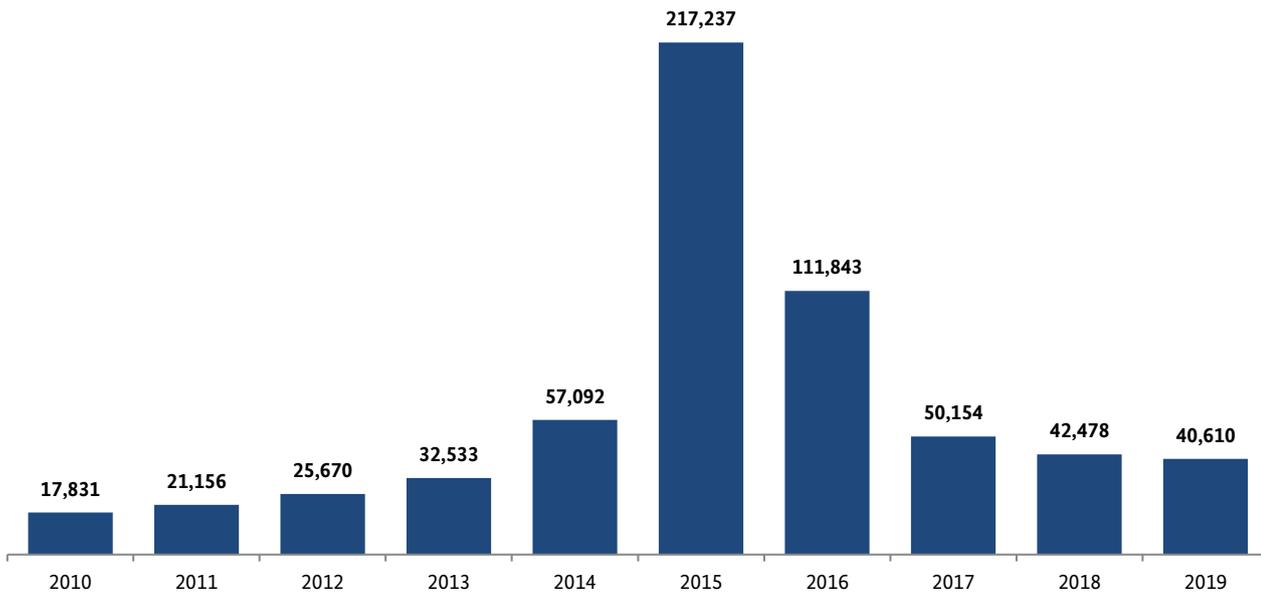
Source: Eurostat (migr\_imm1ctz/migr\_emi1ctz, last consulted: 1 Sept. 2020)

When comparing the individual EU states' immigration figures as a function of the size of their populations, in relative terms Malta had a high immigration rate in 2018, at 55.6 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants; so did Luxembourg (40.9) and Cyprus (27.1). Germany's immigration rate in comparison with other EU states was in the middle, with 10.8 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants.

### Irregular migration declines again slightly

Statistics of the Federal Police cover foreign nationals whom the Federal Police or other authorities policing cross-border traffic have identified as entering the country without permission. There were a total of 40,610 such identifications in 2019, equivalent to a decrease of 4.4% from the prior year (2018: 42,478).

### Identification at German borders of foreign persons entering the country without permission, 2010 to 2019



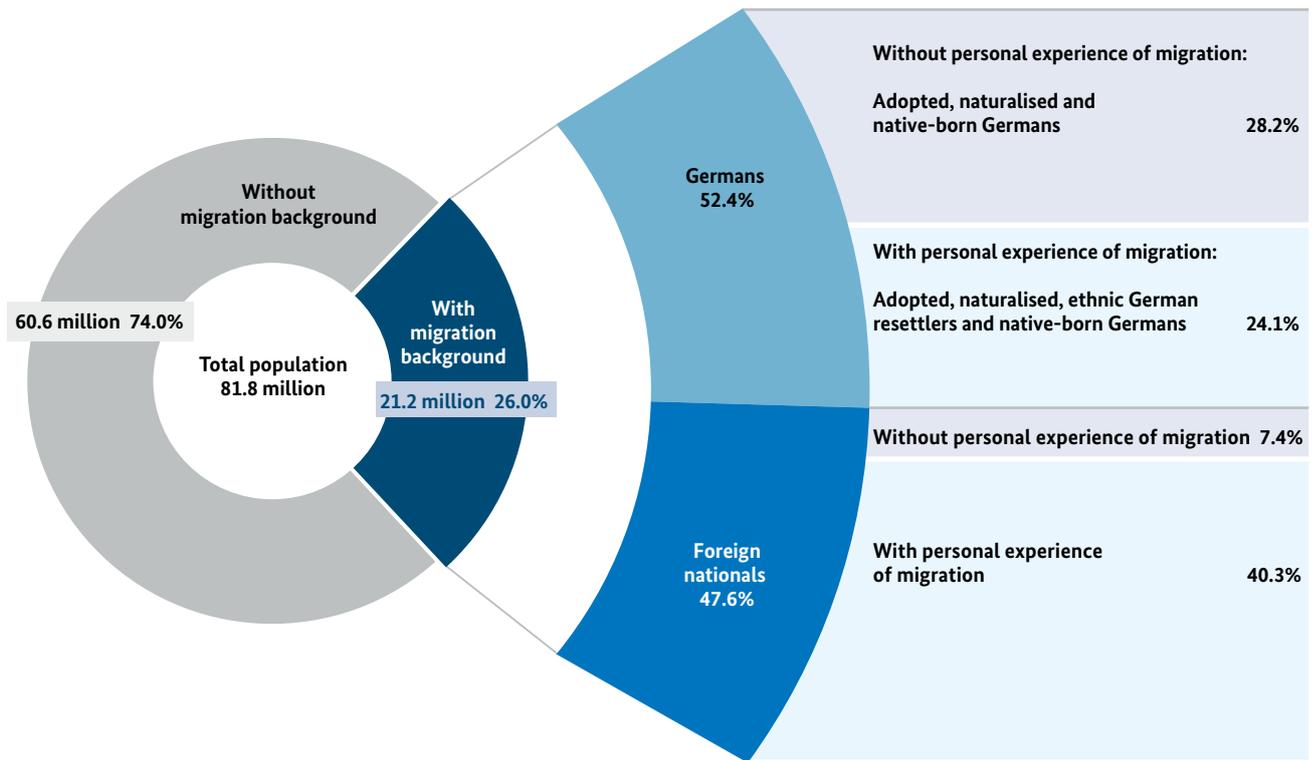
Source: Federal Police

If foreign nationals do not voluntarily comply with an established, enforceable requirement to leave the country, the procedure for removal intervenes. In 2019, 22,097 removals were carried out (2018: 23,617). The figure has decreased slightly since its maximum in 2016 (25,375), after rising sharply in 2015 from 2014 (+91.9%). Removals in 2019 also included 8,423 transfers to other EU Member States or Schengen countries under the Dublin procedure. That figure is equivalent to 38.1% of the total number of removals. Out of all the removals in 2019, 1,604 involved Albanian nationals, 1,432 were Nigerians, 1,242 were Georgians, 1,152 were Russians, and 1,038 were Serbians.

### One-fourth of the population in Germany has a migration background

According to the 2019 Microcensus data, 21.2 million people in Germany had a migration background, equivalent to 26.0% of the population living in households. The Federal Statistical Office defines a person as having a migration background “if the person himself or herself, or at least one parent, did not acquire German citizenship by birth”. More than half of the people in Germany with a migration background are German nationals (52.4%); almost two-thirds (64.4%) immigrated themselves, while over one-third (35.6%) were born in Germany.

**Population with a migration background in Germany in 2019**

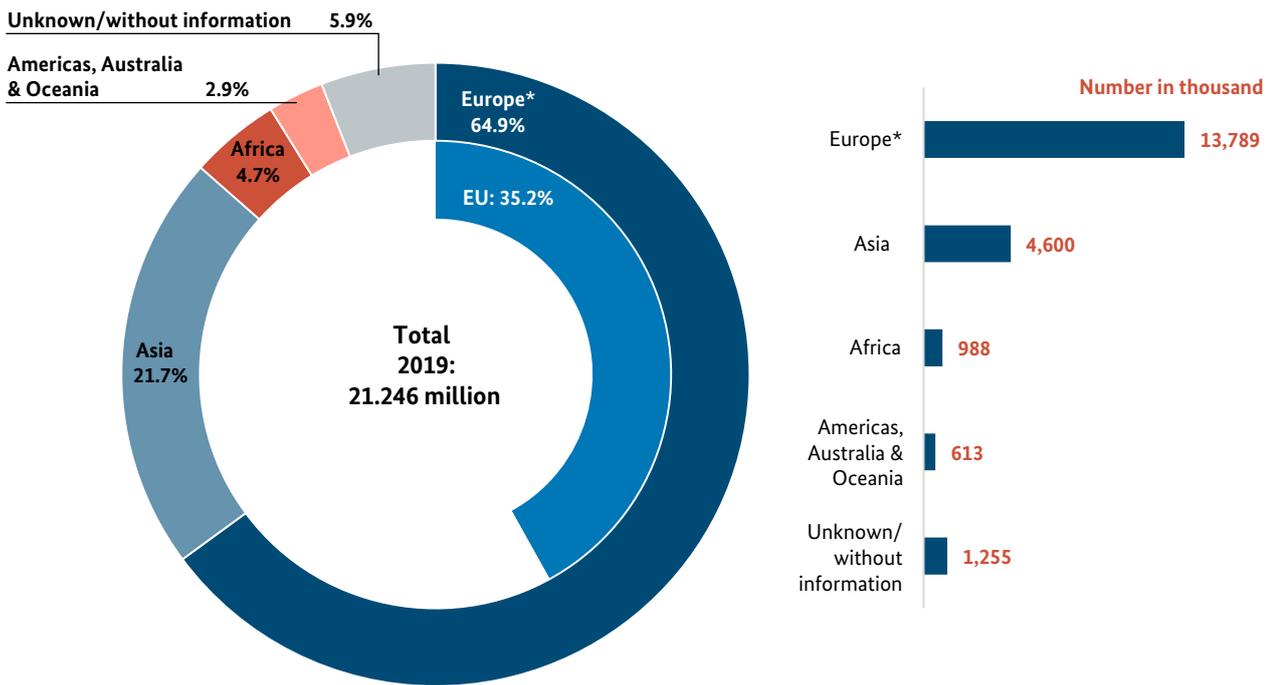


Source: Federal Statistical Office, Microcensus

The population with a migration background was grouped by origin in the Microcensus on the basis of the respondents' country of birth, or the origin of their parents if the respondents themselves had been born in Germany. According to the results from the 2019 Microcensus, more than one-third of persons with a migration background came from other EU countries, and nearly another third came from another European country. The remaining third is composed of persons from various countries outside Europe. In terms of the most important "countries of birth", the roughly 2.8 million people with a Turkish migration background constituted the largest group.

Persons who immigrated to Germany themselves have lived in this country an average of about 21 years, but over one-third (35.5%) have lived here less than ten years. This figure especially reflects the large refugee immigration of 2015/2016.

**Population with a migration background by region of birth<sup>1</sup> in Germany, 2019**



\*Including Turkey and the Russian Federation

1) Refers to respondent's own region of birth or, if born in Germany, the parents' region of birth.

Source: Federal Statistical Office, Microcensus

## Imprint

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