



Latvia

General Information



Population

1 879 383 (World Bank 2022)

1 875 757 (STAT LV 2022)



Immigration

11 223 (Eurostat 2019)

12 689 (STAT LV 2021)



Emigration

380 010 (UN Emigration Stock 2020)

12 975 (STAT LV 2021)



Working-age population

1 176 188 (World Bank 2022)

1 158 585 (STAT LV 2022)



Unemployment rate

6.8 % (World Bank 2022)

7.9 % (STAT LV 2021)



GDP

40 932 030 049.6 current prices USD (World Bank 2022)

28 763 000 000 current prices EUR (STAT LV 2021)



Refugees and IDPs

Refugees

45 237 (UNHCR 2023)

80 (EMN 2021)

Asylum Seekers

360 (UNHCR 2023)

582 (EMN 2021)

IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2023)



Citizenship

By Birth

No (GLOBALCIT 2022)

By Descent

Yes (GLOBALCIT 2022)

Years of Residency

5 (GLOBALCIT 2022)



Territory

64 589 km² (CIA World Factbook)

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

Ministry of Interior

Line Ministries

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Welfare

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Education and Science

Ministry of Culture

Agencies

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

State Border Guard

Latvian State Security Service

Key Policy Documents

Immigration Law

Asylum Law

Citizenship Law

Law On Stateless Persons

Law on the Status of a long-term Resident of the European Union in the Republic of Latvia

On the Termination of the Granting of the Status of a Non-citizen to Children

Law on the Register of Natural Persons

Relevant Publications

Report on Migration and Asylum in Latvia 2021

Report on Migration and Asylum in Latvia 2020

Report on Migration and Asylum in Latvia 2019

Guidelines on the Implementation of the Mechanism for the Supervision of Persons subject to Enforced Return 2021

Information Report of the Ministry of the Interior "On the Establishment of a Coordinating Body in the Field of Socio-economic Inclusion of Persons in Need of International Protection"

Useful information in 12 languages for asylum seekers in Latvia

A comparative report on the reaction of the governments of

Latvia is a country of origin, transit and destination of migrants. Over the past decade, the population of Latvia has declined by nearly 200.000 persons, partly due to natural decline and partly due to emigration, reaching **1.875.757** in 2022. While observed and potential net migration remains negative, emigration from Latvia is on the decline and its impact on demography is equally decreasing.

Latvia faced **several waves of emigration**, the last of which was related to the economic crisis of 2008/2009. According to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, **over 213.000 Latvian citizens** lived abroad in early 2022. Over 40% of them lived in the UK, followed by Germany and Ireland, each hosting some 10% Latvians, and the US hosting another 7%. Meanwhile, UN DESA estimated the size of the Latvian diaspora at over 380.000 in 2020, with the most populous communities living in the UK, Germany and the US. Compared to 2011, the outflow from Latvia in 2021 saw a three-fold decline reaching **13.000**, 67% of whom were Latvian nationals. The main reason for emigration in recent years is work and study opportunities abroad. Notably, representatives of ethnic minorities emigrate more often.

Over the past decade, immigration flows to Latvia amounted on average to 10.000 persons annually, with peaks of 13.000 recorded in 2012 and 2021. The share of Latvian nationals in the immigration flow has slightly declined over the same period, settling at around **50%** in recent years. Among foreigners, in **2021**, the most populous groups came to Latvia from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, India and Uzbekistan. Overall, nationals of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus make up the lion's share of 240.000 immigrant stock in Latvia, according to UN DESA. Based on the number of all valid residence permits issued to non-EU nationals in Latvia, which has declined from over **350.000 in 2012 to some 277.000** in 2021, Russian nationals continue to hold 17% of all valid permits in Latvia.

Out of the **8.138** first-time residence permits issued to non-EU nationals in 2021, around half were granted for employment purposes and 26% for family reasons, signifying an ongoing increase of labour migration and a decline in family migration observed since 2014. **The total number of employment rights granted to third-country nationals in 2021, both based on a visa and a temporary residence permit, has increased by 34% from 12.199 in 2020 to 16.400 in 2021.** The majority of non-EU nationals work in the field of land and pipeline transport (6.358), in the construction sector (978), computer programming and consulting (1119), and civil engineering (533).

At the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year, 9.000 foreign students studied in the Latvian higher education institutions, including those studying in exchange programs. Overall, the number of foreign students has been increasing since 2005. The majority of foreign students come to Latvia from India, Uzbekistan and Germany. 32% of foreign students are EU citizens.

Since joining the EU, Latvia has **become a transit country for migrants** going to the Nordic or Western countries. At the same time, the State Border Guard reports that in recent years Latvia is increasingly a destination country for migrants who come and work illegally. Judging by the Eurostat data, irregular migration in Latvia is declining. The number of migrants refused entry at external borders has declined from **1.800 in 2019 to 855 in 2021.** The number of non-EU nationals found to be illegally present in Latvia saw particular peaks in

2015 and 2016, but then declined reaching 175 persons in 2021. Consequently, the number of third-country nationals **ordered to leave** has been decreasing but the return rate remains consistently above 85%.

Migration flows in search of international protection in Latvia remained relatively inconsiderable up until 2022. From 1998 until 2020, Latvia recorded 3,014 asylum seekers, only 26% of whom received refugee status or another form of protection. The flows were particularly small before 2011, and remained below 200 persons annually in 2018-2022. In 2021, Latvia saw an **increase** in the number of asylum seekers associated with the instrumentalisation of migrants by Belarus. The majority of 582 asylum seekers who arrived in 2021 were nationals of Iraq, Afghanistan and Belarus. Over 50% of asylum applications processed in 2021 were rejected, and 225 persons received protection, including **49 Belarussian nationals, 22 Afghan nationals and 6 Russian nationals**.

Following the Russia's invasion of Ukraine and until end of August 2022, **over 38,000** Ukrainians have received temporary protection in Latvia. On 28 February 2022, **the Cabinet of Ministers approved a Plan in the event of a mass influx of people from Ukraine to Latvia**. On 7 April 2022, amendments to the **Immigration Law** allowed suspending the issuance of initial temporary residence permits to nationals of Russia and Belarus until 30 June 2023. At the same time, amendments determined some exceptions, for example, the possibility to issue temporary residence permits for family reunification, international protection, and employment under the legal acts.

Latvia further continues to host a number of stateless persons on its territory, but undertakes steps to end statelessness. The country has joined the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In 2019, Latvia adopted a new law On Terminating the Granting of Non-Citizen Status to Children, which was welcomed by the **Commissioner for Human Rights** as a decisive step toward eliminating child statelessness. The country also introduced amendments to the Citizenship Law in 2013, and adopted initiatives to provide information and support to 'non-citizens' to naturalise. **The Citizenship Law** stipulates that a child born in Latvia after 21 August 1991 can be recognized as a citizen of Latvia simultaneously with the registration of the fact of the child's birth, based on the expressed will of one parent, if both parents of the child are stateless and permanently reside in Latvia. In 2021, **136 stateless persons** resided in Latvia, compared to 164 in 2019. The number of 'non-citizens', who are not stateless persons under the domestic law but lack a nationality and some rights, amounted to over **200,000** in 2021.

On 17 June 2021, the *Saeima* adopted amendments to the **Personal Identification Documents Law**, which foresees a new type of personal identity card - a foreigner's identity card or foreigner's eID card. This eID card will provide a possibility to use the range of digital services provided by the State, for example, to electronically sign documents and use the public administration e-services. **On 12 November 2021, Latvia adopted the Law on Construction of the External Land Border** establishing a special legal framework to construct the infrastructure necessary for the protection of the external land border. On 1 February 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the amendment to the Immigration Law that would permit third-country nationals to request a permanent visa for one year, if the person wishes to stay in Latvia and maintain employment relations with an employer registered abroad or continue to work remotely as a self-employed person.

In 2021, **work on the conclusion of a new inter-institutional cooperation protocol** "Agreement between the Latvian SBG and the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service on co-operation in

border protection issues” continued. Based on bilateral cooperation plans, the Latvian State Border Guard shall implement cooperation with the State Border Guard Service of the Republic of Moldova, the Border Police of the Georgian Ministry of Interior, as well as the Ukrainian Border Guard Service.

Latvia is a party to the Prague Process, Budapest Process and Khartoum Process.