

Migrant integration statistics - education

Statistics Explained

Data extracted on 9 July 2025.

Planned article update: July 2026.

Highlights Between 2014 and 2024, the share of nationals of the reporting country aged 25-34 with tertiary education showed steady growth, peaking at 45.1% in 2024. For non-EU citizens this share grew steadily as well, reaching 36.7% but remaining the lowest, while for other EU citizens it has fluctuated upward, peaking at 41.1% in 2024.

Educational attainment is becoming an increasingly important factor, both in the labour market and for individuals as well as society in general.

This article presents European statistics for three key aspects of education: educational attainment, early leavers from education and training and adult participation in learning. These indicators are analyzed by individuals' citizenship, while educational attainment is also examined by migration status.

Individuals are classified by citizenship as either nationals (citizens of the reporting country) or non-nationals of the country in which they reside. Non-nationals are further divided into 2 groups: those who hold the citizenship of another EU country and those who hold the citizenship of a non-EU country.

Migration status is defined according to individuals' country of birth and, where relevant, their parents' country of birth. Individuals are grouped as either native-born (born in the reporting country) or foreign-born (born abroad). Native-born individuals are further classified based on the birthplace of their parents, in order to reflect on the possible migrant background. As a result, the migration status categories used are: native-born with 2 native-born parents, native-born with 1 foreign-born parent, native-born with 2 foreign-born parents, and foreign-born persons.

This article forms part of the online publication on [migrant integration statistics](#).

Educational attainment

An analysis of educational attainment is based on the highest level of education that a person has successfully completed. Educational levels are defined and classified in the [international standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#). The levels of educational attainment used in this article are based on ISCED 2011.

- A low level of education refers to ISCED levels 0-2 (less than primary, primary and lower secondary education).
- A medium level refers to ISCED levels 3 and 4 (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education).
- A high level refers to ISCED levels 5-8 (tertiary education, composed of short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor's degree or equivalent, master's degree or equivalent, and doctorate or equivalent).

Over the years, the share of people with tertiary education has steadily increased across all citizenship groups (Figure 1). The citizens of the reporting country have generally remained close to the level of those of other EU countries, although they recorded slightly higher values in the last 2 years. For citizens of non-EU countries, there was also a continuous increase in the share with tertiary education, but this remained below the other 2 groups throughout the period.

Figure 1 In 2024, non-EU citizens had the largest share of individuals with a low level of education (Figure 2). For this group, the share with low educational attainment was more than twice as high compared to nationals, among whom 4 out of 5 had at least a medium level of education. Among citizens of other EU countries, the distribution across the 3 educational attainment levels was more balanced, with a higher share of individuals holding upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Figure 2 For individuals aged 25-34, the share of people with tertiary education increases across all citizenship groups (Figure 3). Conversely, when considering older age groups, the percentage with tertiary education tends to decrease.

Figure 3 At EU level, nationals had the highest share of tertiary education and non-EU citizens the lowest. However, this did not hold true for Ireland and Luxembourg, where non-EU citizens had a higher share than the other two groups (Figure 4). Furthermore, citizens of other EU countries recorded the highest share of tertiary education in Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Malta, Austria, Portugal and Sweden. At EU level, women had a higher share of tertiary education compared to men.

Figure 4 Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of people based on migration status, educational attainment level, and sex. In 2024, foreign-born people predominantly had higher percentages in the lower education category. In contrast, native-born individuals, particularly those with 1 foreign-born parent, had the highest shares in tertiary education. Additionally, women generally had slightly higher levels of tertiary education compared to men across most migration status categories.

Figure 5 In 2024, native-born people with one parent born abroad had the highest levels of tertiary education across the EU, in particular in Cyprus and Spain (Figure 6). Foreign-born people also had notable levels of tertiary education, with highest shares observed in Ireland and Luxembourg. Medium educational attainment showed a broad distribution, with native-born populations almost always having higher percentages, particularly in Czechia and Poland. Low education levels were more common among foreign-born individuals in several EU countries, notably in Italy and Spain.

Figure 6 Figure 7 shows the shares of people by migration status and education level across different age groups at EU level. In 2024, within the 25-54 age group, educational attainment varied significantly by migration status. Native-born people with one foreign-born parent had the highest levels of tertiary education, surpassing other groups. The largest share of people with medium educational attainment was among native-born individuals with two foreign-born parents. Conversely, the educational distribution for foreign-born people was more balanced.

Figure 7

Early leavers from education and training

This section focuses on the share of early leavers from education and training; this indicator is calculated for people aged 18-24 years. A person in this age group is an early leaver if their highest level of educational attainment is at most lower secondary education and they have not received any formal nor non-formal education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.

It is important to follow the developments of this group, as early leavers from education and training can face challenges when trying to get established in the labour market.

Over the past 20 years, the share of early leavers from education and training was consistently higher among non-EU citizens, although it showed a gradual downward trend (Figure 8). Nationals recorded the lowest and steadily decreasing share. The share among citizens of other EU countries followed a more fluctuating pattern and, in recent years, has moved closer to the level observed for non-EU citizens.

Figure 8 Early leaving from education and training is more prevalent among non-EU and other EU citizens compared with nationals (Figure 9). Nationals consistently recorded the lowest shares across all EU countries. The differences between groups were particularly visible in Germany, Spain, Italy and Cyprus.

Figure 9

Participation in adult learning in the previous 12 months

The share of people having participated in learning is calculated for people aged 25-64 years. It is the share of people who participated in formal or non-formal education and training during the 12 months preceding the survey.

Adult learning is an important aspect when it comes to digitalization and automation in the labour market. Employees need to adapt and, for example, learn new digital skills and, in some cases, reskill. Adult learning should improve employability, boost innovation, ensure social fairness and close the digital skills gap.

Between 2022 and 2024, the share of adult participation in learning increased across all citizenship groups (Figure 10). Nationals consistently recorded the highest participation rate, followed by non-EU and other EU citizens, whose levels were relatively close to each other.

Figure 10 Nationals generally recorded the highest share of adult participation in learning (Figure 11). Exceptions include Czechia, Estonia, and Malta, where the highest shares were observed among other EU citizens, and Ireland, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Finland, where non-EU citizens registered the highest participation. The shares for men and women were close, with slightly higher values for women.

Figure 11

Source data for graphs

The data by citizenship displayed in the visualisations come directly from the [Eurostat online database](#) for the reference year(s) mentioned in the visualisations. For figures by migration status, shares were calculated using data from the Eurostat dataset [Population by sex, age, migration status, citizenship and educational attainment level \[lfsa_pganedm\]](#) . The accompanying text is from 9 July 2025 and reflects the data situation at that moment in time.

Information on data reliability, series breaks, and differing definitions, flags can be consulted in the online datasets.

Data sources

The data presented in this article are from the EU [labour force survey \(EU-LFS\)](#) , the largest household sample survey in the EU. The survey covers the resident population in private households. As such, people living in collective households are excluded from the target population. The concept of usual residence is used, which means the place where a person normally spends the daily period of rest, regardless of temporary absences for purposes of recreation, holidays, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage. The data for the EU are aggregated results for the 27 EU countries. For more information on the data sources used, please consult the online publication [EU labour force survey](#) .

Due to the sampling nature of the survey, some data have low reliability or are not published due to very low reliability or confidentiality.

Main concepts

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education successfully completed. Educational levels are defined and classified in the [international standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#) . The levels of education used in this article are based on ISCED 2011. A low level of educational attainment refers to ISCED levels 0-2 (less than primary, primary and lower secondary education), a medium level refers to ISCED levels 3 and 4 (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education) and a high level refers to ISCED levels 5-8 (tertiary education).

For instance, to calculate the tertiary education attainment rate for people aged 25-34, the numerator includes those in this age group with tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not respond to the question about the 'highest level of education or training successfully completed'.

For the calculation of the share of **early leavers from education and training**, the numerator refers to persons aged 18-24 years who met both of the following 2 conditions: (a) the highest level of education or training they had completed was ISCED 2011 levels 0, 1 or 2 (in other words, at most, lower secondary education) and (b) they had not received any education or training (neither formal nor non-formal) in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding respondents who did not answer the questions 'highest level of education or training successfully completed' and 'participation in education and training'.

Since 2022, data on participation in education and training in the last 12 months are collected biennially in the EU-LFS. To calculate the share of people aged 25-64 years **participating in learning in the previous 12 months** the data for participation in (formal and non-formal) education and training during the 12 months preceding the survey are used. The denominator used for the ratio is the total population (of the same age group), excluding people who did not answer the question concerning participation in (formal and non-formal) education and training. The indicator covers formal and non-formal education and training, i.e. formal and non-formal learning activities. The fundamental criterion to distinguish learning activities from non-learning activities is that the activity must be intentional (not by chance – 'random learning'), in other words, a deliberate search for knowledge, skills, competences or attitudes.

- Formal education and training is defined as education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organisations and recognised private bodies and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country.
- Non-formal education and training is defined as any organised and sustained learning activities outside the formal education system. This can be further distinguished as:
 - non-formal programmes;
 - courses (which are further distinguished into classroom instruction, private lessons and combined theoretical-practical courses including workshops);
 - guided-on-the-job training (it should be noted that labour force survey data on non-formal education and training do not cover guided-on-the-job training).

Non-formal education therefore takes place both within and outside educational institutions and may cater for people of all ages. It covers educational programmes and training to impart literacy, life skills, work skills, and general culture.

Data by migration status - calculation of shares

The calculation of shares/distributions is based on a total excluding the number of people classified in the not stated or unknown. The distributions for the education levels therefore each sum to 100.0 %.

Context

In November 2020, an [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027](#) (COM(2016) 377 final) was adopted with the purpose of fostering social cohesion and building inclusive societies for all. Inclusion for all is about ensuring that all policies are accessible to and work for everyone, including migrants and EU citizens with migrant background. This plan includes actions in 4 sectoral areas (education and training, employment and skills, health and housing) as well as actions supporting effective integration and inclusion in all sectoral areas at EU, EU country and regional level, with a specific attention paid to young people.

More information on the policies and legislation in force in this area can be found in an [introductory article on migrant integration statistics](#).

The [Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European](#)

[Education Area and beyond](#) (known as EEA 2030) was agreed by the [Council](#) in February 2021. It outlines 5 strategic priorities for the period 2021-2030: improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training; making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all; enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession; reinforcing European higher education; and supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training. For monitoring progress, [7 EU-level targets](#) were defined, including that

- the share of persons aged 25-34 years with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45%, by 2030;
- the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%, by 2030;
- at least 47% of adults aged 25-64 years should have participated in learning during the previous 12 months, by 2025.

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External links

- [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027](#)
- [European Commission – Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs \(DG HOME\)](#) , see:
 - [Legal migration and integration](#)
 - [Statistics on migration to Europe](#)
- [European Commission – Education and training policies](#)
- [European Migration Network \(EMN\)](#)
- [European Website on Integration](#)
- [OECD – Migration](#) , see:
 - [International Migration Outlook 2024](#)
 - [Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023 - Settling In](#)
- [UNESCO – Education transforms lives](#)
- [UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning](#)

Legislation

- [All legislation on migrant integration](#)
- [EU labour force survey – main features and legal basis](#)