Migrant integration statistics - over-qualification

Statistics Explained

Highlights

Between 2014 and 2024, non-EU citizens resident in the EU consistently had the highest over-qualification rates, though these fell from 45.9% to 39.6%. Rates for other EU citizens dropped from 34.0% to 30.3%, while nationals remained lowest and stable around 20–21%.

This article presents European Union (EU) statistics on over-qualified employed persons, providing insights into how foreign citizens compare with nationals in terms of skills and successful participation in the labour market.

Over-qualified employed people are persons with a tertiary level of educational attainment (hereafter referred to as tertiary-educated persons) working in low- or medium-skilled occupations. This may also be referred to as a 'vertical' skills mismatch.

The article presents information by citizenship and by country of birth, and provides additional analyses by age and by sex. 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. According to the concept of country of birth, the population is classified as either native-born (individuals born in the reporting country) or foreign-born. Foreign-born are further divided into 2 groups: those born in another EU country and those born in a non-EU country.

This article forms part of the online publication on migrant integration statistics .

Overview of the over-qualification rate

Effective participation in the labour market requires both skills and qualifications. The highest level of educational attainment offers valuable insight into the skills that workforce participants bring to the market.

Box 1: over-qualification rate

The over-qualification rate is calculated for employed persons with a tertiary level of educational attainment (international standard classification of education (ISCED) levels 5–8). The rate shows the proportion of these people who are employed in a low- or medium-skilled occupation (international standard classification of occupations (ISCO) major groups 4–9). More information on tertiary education and low- or medium-skilled occupation is provided in the Data sources section of this article.

Figure 1 illustrates the overqualification rates in the EU from 2004 to 2024, categorized by citizenship. Throughout this 20-year period, non-EU citizens consistently had the highest overqualification rates. Meanwhile, citizens of other EU countries also experienced high rates, whereas nationals of the reporting country consistently had the

lowest rates. Overqualification rates for non-EU citizens have tended to decline over time, gradually narrowing the gap with nationals and other EU citizens. Women constantly had higher overqualification rates than men across all citizenship groups, especially among non-EU citizens.

Figure 1When analyzed by country of birth, a broadly similar pattern emerges, although the differences between the three subpopulations were smaller (Figure 2). From 2004 to 2024, people born outside the EU consistently had the highest over-qualification rates, with women in this group being most affected. Native-born people consistently experienced the lowest rates.

Figure 2

Over-qualification rate by EU countries and citizenship

In 2024, over-qualification rates differed across EU countries and citizenship groups.

Typically, nationals had the lowest rates, while non-EU citizens had the highest (Figure 3). The exceptions were Germany, Ireland, and Cyprus, where citizens of other EU countries recorded the highest over-qualification rates. Among EU countries, Greece reported the highest over-qualification rates for non-EU men and women. Gender disparities were notably wide in Italy, Cyprus and Malta. In contrast, Germany had relatively balanced rates between men and women.

Figure 3Figure 4 illustrates the over-qualification rates broken down by age groups. In some EU countries, over-qualification rates differed significantly between citizenship groups. For example, in Czechia and Malta, over-qualification rates for non-EU citizens aged 20-34 years exceeded 50%, compared to under 15% for nationals. This disparity was also evident among older adults aged 35–64 years, especially in Greece, Italy, and Estonia where non-EU citizens reported high rates.

Figure 4

Over-qualification rate by EU countries and country of birth

Figure 5 and 6 focus on the over-qualification rates broken down by country of birth groups.

In nearly all EU countries, native-born people had lower over-qualification rates compared to those born in other EU countries and those born outside the EU (Figure 5). Exceptions include Greece, where people born in other EU countries had the lowest rate, and Germany and Ireland, where they had the highest rates. Women had higher over-qualification rates than men across most categories and countries. For example, women born in non-EU27 countries experienced notably high over-qualification rates in Spain and Italy.

Figure 5When analyzed by age groups, non-EU-born individuals aged 20-34 years faced notably high over-qualification rates in Greece, Latvia, and Czechia in 2024 (Figure 6). Among older people (aged 35-64 years), non-EU-born citizens also experienced significantly higher over-qualification rates, exceeding 50% in Italy, Spain, and Greece. Regardless of age group, native-born individuals showed lower over-qualification rates.

Figure 6

Source data for graphs

The data displayed in these visualisations are taken directly from the Eurostat online database for the reference year(s) mentioned in the visualisations. The accompanying text is from 17 July 2025 and reflects the data situation at that 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

An employed person is someone aged 15–89 years who, during the reference week of the labour force survey, performed work – even if just for one hour a week – for pay, profit or family gain. Also included are people who were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent. Employment can be measured in terms of the number of persons or jobs, in full-time equivalents or in hours worked. All the estimates presented in this article use the number of persons.

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 high level of educational attainment refers to ISCED levels 5–8 (tertiary education).

- ISCED level 5: short-cycle tertiary education

- ISCED level 6: bachelor's or equivalent level

- ISCED level 7: master's or equivalent level

- ISCED level 8: doctoral or equivalent level

For the calculation of the **tertiary educational attainment share** , the numerator refers to persons aged 20–64 years with a tertiary educational attainment (ISCED level 5-8). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding respondents who did not answer the question 'highest level of education or training successfully completed'.

Occupations of employed persons are defined and classified in the international standard classification of occupations (ISCO) . The occupations used in this article are based on ISCO-08. At the highest level, ISCO-08 is composed of 10 major groups. Low or medium-skilled occupations include the following major groups.

- Major group 4: clerical support workers

- Major group 5: services and sales workers

- Major group 6: skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers

- Major group 7: craft and related trades workers

- Major group 8: plant and machine operators and assemblers

- Major group 9: elementary occupations

As such, the occupations that are not considered to be low or medium-skilled are managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, and armed forces occupations.

Context

Well-functioning labour markets depend largely on matching the skills and qualifications of the labour force to those sought by employers. Although some mismatches are inevitable (especially in rapidly developing sectors of the economy), high and persistent mismatches may be costly for employers, workers and society at large.

Education and skills mismatches are considered especially relevant for vulnerable groups, such as older workers, young people moving from education into work or migrants. One particular issue that impacts on non-EU citizens is (lower) recognition for their professional qualifications: EU citizens may benefit from initiatives such as the recognition of professional qualifications . Easier and more accessible recognition procedures, as well as opportunities for adult migrants to upgrade or equalise their qualifications, including access to lifelong learning, may help enhance the employability of migrants.

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 EU policies are accessible to and work for everyone, including migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background. This plan includes actions in four 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 the EU, Member State and regional levels, with a specific attention paid to young people.

In April 2024, the European Parliament adopted the Pact on Migration and Asylum , followed by the Council in May 2024. The Pact includes important provisions on integration and provides a comprehensive approach that delivers a common European response to migration. It allows the EU to manage migration in a fair and sustainable way, ensuring solidarity between countries while also providing certainty and clarity for people arriving in the EU and protecting their fundamental rights. The Pact on Migration and Asylum will ensure that countries share the effort responsibly, showing solidarity with the ones that protect our external borders and with those facing particular migratory pressure, while preventing irregular migration to the EU. The Pact also gives the EU and its countries the tools to react rapidly in situations of crisis, when countries are faced with large numbers of arrivals or when a third-country or non-State entity tries to instrumentalise migrants in order to destabilise our Union.

More information on the policies and legislation in force in the area of migrant integration can be found here .

Explore further

Other articles

Related articles

- Employment – annual statistics

Methodology

- Labour force survey

Database

- Employment and unemployment (Labour force survey) (employ) , see:

LFS series - detailed annual survey results (lfsa)

Population – LFS series (lfsa_pop)

Employment rates - LFS series (lfsa_emprt)

Total unemployment - LFS series (lfsa_unemp)

- Migrant integration (mii) , see:

Employment (mii_emp)

Unemployment (mii_une)

Thematic section

- Skills
- Labour force survey
- Migrant integration

Publications

- All publications on employment and unemployment statistics
- All publications on migrant integration statistics

Methodology

- LFS series – Detailed annual survey results (ESMS metadata file – lfsa_esms)
- EU labour force survey

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 Migration Network (EMN)
- European Website on Integration
- OECD – Migration , see:
  - OECD – International Migration Outlook
  - OECD – Indicators of immigrant integration 2023 - Settling In

Legislation

- All legislation on employment and unemployment statistics
- All legislation on migrant integration statistics