

# MIGRATION INFORMATION SOURCE

FRESH THOUGHT, AUTHORITATIVE DATA, GLOBAL REACH



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# About the Source

The Migration Information Source provides fresh thought, authoritative data from numerous global organizations and governments, and global analysis of international migration and refugee trends. A unique, online resource, the Source offers useful tools, vital data, and essential facts on the movement of people worldwide.

The Migration Information Source is a project of the [Migration Policy Institute](#).

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## Issue #1 — The Recession's Impact on Immigrants

The recession that began in the United States two years ago and spread to most other parts of the world has had a deeper and more global effect on migration than any other economic downturn in the post-World War II era.

And while flows of temporary migrants and the unauthorized have dipped, few countries have seen signs of mass return migration (see [Issue #4: What the Recession Wasn't](#)).

For some countries, as unemployment rates have risen significantly, the recession has spurred initiatives to persuade unemployed immigrants to go home and to restrict flows of new immigrants, as well as to raise the bar for the highly skilled (see [Issue #3: Buyer's Remorse on Immigration Continues](#)).



Foreign workers from South Asia stroll through a park in Singapore. (Photo by Benny Lim)

Among the immigrants most affected are those in North America, Asia, and Europe. Across the world's largest economies, immigrants during this recession generally have higher unemployment rates than the native born. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, tens of thousands of Eastern Europeans who lost their jobs have chosen to leave, in part because their status as European Union citizens means they can easily return.

Not surprisingly, remittances to immigrants' families in Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa have decreased as well — although they have risen in Asia.

As a rule, however, and despite higher unemployment rates, immigrants are hunkering down and waiting for the economy to improve.

### North America

In the United States, the housing woes that started in late 2006 and the subsequent collapse of the construction sector disproportionately affected immigrants from Mexico, which is the dominant immigrant group in the United States, and Central America.

As unemployment in the United States has kept climbing (it now stands at 10.2 percent), the rate for immigrants from Mexico and Central America increased sharply, reaching as high as 13.1 percent in January 2009.

By October 2009, the unemployment rate for this group stood at 11.5 percent compared to 9.5 percent for those born in the United States — a reversal of patterns that have stood firm for two decades. Among the estimated 2.3 to 2.4 million unemployed immigrants in October 2009, nearly half were from Mexico and Central America.

This situation has not caused a substantial wave of returns to Mexico, however. Over the last year, the Mexican immigrant population, about 55 percent of which resides in the United States illegally, has decreased only slightly, from an estimated 12.1 million in July 2008 to 11.9 million in August 2009.

### Canada

Although the recession in Canada has been less severe than in other Western countries, immigrants there have also experienced higher unemployment rates than natives, no matter

how long they have lived in Canada. For immigrants in Canada five years or less, Statistics Canada reports that unemployment was 13.9 percent in October 2009, up from 10.7 percent a year earlier.

Among immigrants living in Canada 10 years or more, unemployment stood at 4.8 percent in October 2008, comparable to the native-born unemployment rate of 4.5 percent at the time. Yet, by October 2009, long-term immigrants had an unemployment rate of 8.3 percent compared to 6.2 percent for natives.

## **Asia**

According to several surveys conducted in Japan, approximately 40 percent of Latin American workers, most of them of Japanese origin, were unemployed by the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, compared to just 5 percent in 2005.

In January, Malaysia's government stopped the hiring of foreign workers in certain sectors and made it clear that companies should terminate foreign workers first. The government reported in August that the number of foreign workers had been reduced by 200,000 in two months, bringing the total down to 1.9 million.

In Taiwan, migrant layoffs were concentrated in electronics and garment manufacturing, affecting primarily Filipina and Thai women.

Singapore's prime minister noted in September that foreigners accounted for most of the job losses in the first half of 2009, and that 21,000 foreigners had left the city-state.

## **Europe**

Similar to the United States, Latin American immigrants in Spain were concentrated in the construction sector, and many have lost their jobs as the sector has shed over 560,000 jobs in the last year, more than in industry or services.

In the third quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate for Spaniards was 17.9 percent but 27.5 percent for foreign nationals age 16 and older, according to Spain's National Institute for Statistics; about 1 million foreign nationals were unemployed.

Hundreds of thousands of Eastern Europeans entered Ireland and the United Kingdom after their countries (known as the Accession 8 or A8) joined the European Union in May 2004. They were able to come because the United Kingdom and Ireland, along with Sweden, immediately allowed citizens of the new Member States to work without restrictions.

In Ireland, nationals from the new EU Member States collectively make up the largest immigrant group in the country, with about 5 percent of the population age 15 and older in the second quarter of 2009, according to the Quarterly National Household Survey.

The foreign born from Poland were the second largest foreign-born group (after the Indian foreign born) in the United Kingdom in 2008. Many of these immigrants took lower-skilled jobs in manufacturing, construction, and the services industries — among those shedding the most jobs in the recession.

Unlike labor migrants in most parts of the world, the Eastern Europeans in Ireland and the United Kingdom have been going home in large numbers knowing that returning to Dublin or London when conditions improve is as simple as booking a flight.

In Ireland, where the unemployment rate hit 12.0 percent in the second quarter (Q2) of 2009, there were 25 percent fewer nationals from new EU Member States employed in Q2 2009 compared to Q2 2008. At the same time, the number of Eastern Europeans in Ireland who were unemployed more than doubled, from 12,000 to 29,100. While non-Irish nationals made up 15.8 percent of Ireland's labor force in Q2 2008, a year later they accounted for only 14.2 percent.

Data on employment level by nationality show that the number of A8 nationals working in the United Kingdom dropped from 503,000 to 483,000 (or 4.0 percent) between July-September 2008 and July-September 2009.

Over the same period, the employment level for UK citizens went down 1.6 percent and the level for all non-UK nationals decreased 2.0 percent. The total unemployment rate in the United Kingdom as of July-September 2009 was 7.8 percent.

According to provisional 2008 data from the UK International Passenger Survey, emigration among A8 citizens began rising in early 2008, from 32,000 for the year ended March 2008 to 66,000 for the year ended December 2008.

Immigration of A8 citizens reached an all-time high in the year ended December 2007, at 109,000. But immigration dropped to 79,000 for the year ended December 2008. For A8 nationals, net migration in December 2009 was at its lowest point since the A8 joined the European Union.

UK national insurance number (NINO) data provide additional evidence that fewer Eastern Europeans are arriving (any non-UK citizen looking to work or claim benefits/tax credits in the country must have a NINO). The number of NINOs issued to citizens from the new EU Member States dropped 23 percent from their peak of 332,440 in 2007-2008 to 257,040 in 2008-2009. But the decrease for Polish nationals was 36 percent over the same period, from 210,660 to 134,360.

## **Remittances**

When migrants lose their jobs, they have less money to survive on and to send home. In terms of remittances, the \$338 billion total for 2008 came in above World Bank expectations, for the most part due to very large increases of remittances to India (\$14.4 billion more than in 2007) and China (+\$9.7 billion), as well as Bangladesh (+\$2.4 billion) and the Philippines (+\$2.3 billion).

In the case of India, the increase was mostly due to currency exchange fluctuations and extremely favorable conditions for purchasing real estate.

The World Bank projected in November that remittances will drop 6 percent to \$317 billion for 2009, largely because of the recession.

According to Migration Policy Institute analysis of Central Bank data, the countries that have experienced the steepest declines between 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 are Turkey, Moldova, Poland, Ecuador, Morocco, Mexico, and Kenya. In contrast, remittances to South Asia have risen, not surprising given India's substantial increase in 2008. Also, many South Asian migrants work in the gulf countries, where the recession has not been as severe.

With 31 percent of Moldova's GDP coming from remittances, the decrease there is far more significant than the one in Turkey, where remittances are just 0.2 percent of national income. Ecuador has suffered because its migrants are concentrated in recession-battered Spain and the United States.

The World Bank reported that remittances to Mexico declined 13.4 percent for the first nine months of 2009 compared to a year earlier but noted that the downward trend for all of Latin America appears to be bottoming out.

Since many economists are predicting a jobless global recovery, immigrants will probably not be much better off in 2010 than they were in 2009.

## Features

- **Immigrants in the United States and the Current Economic Crisis**
- **United Kingdom: A Reluctant Country of Immigration**
- **Ireland: From Rapid Immigration to Recession**
- **Pay to Go: Countries Offer Cash to Immigrants Willing to Pack Their Bags**
- **Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region**

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- **Migration and the Global Recession**
- **Migration and the Economic Downturn: What to Expect in the European Union**
- **Immigration in the United Kingdom: The Recession and Beyond**
- **Immigrants and the Current Economic Crisis**

## Issue #2 — Enforcement Tactics Shift in the Obama Era – But What About Immigration Reform?

In the absence of congressional action on any broad immigration reform, the election of President Barack Obama was expected to lead to changes in US immigration policy at the executive level. Obama's first move was to select Janet Napolitano, then governor of Arizona, to run the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which includes the country's immigration agencies.



**President Felipe Calderon of Mexico introduces dinner guests to President Obama during Obama's visit to Mexico in April.  
(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)**

Over the year, Napolitano's direction for DHS became clear: put more pressure on employers to hire only those who are in the country legally, rather than conduct worksite raids; continue to work with state and local enforcement agencies but with a greater emphasis on finding the most dangerous criminal aliens; and move toward a civil immigrant-detention system and rely less on prisons that house convicted criminals.

These changes have meant bolstering the E-Verify system that checks worker eligibility against an online government database, ramping up employer audits, creating new 287(g) agreements that govern state/local immigration enforcement powers, and enlarging the Secure Communities program that checks the immigration status of individuals booked at state and local jails.

The process of transforming the detention system is just beginning and will take years.

Although immigration did not play a prominent role in the 2008 campaign, Obama courted Latino voters, who overwhelmingly supported him, proving critical in his victory in at least four states. Latino voters expected him to pursue immigration reform fairly early in his tenure. The president received plaudits from immigrant advocates when he signed a bill in February reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and expanding it to cover legal immigrant children.

But few were surprised that immigration was not a top-tier priority in the Obama administration's crowded legislative agenda. The economy and then health-care reform were clearly higher concerns. Still, Obama has periodically affirmed his commitment to immigration reform, and immigration became a contentious part of the health-care debate in late summer.

In June, Obama and Vice President Joe Biden discussed immigration reform with a bipartisan group of congressional leaders. Obama focused on three points: tightening border security, cracking down on employers that employ unauthorized immigrant workers, and recognizing the need to legalize unauthorized immigrants.

While meeting with his Mexican and Canadian counterparts in August, Obama promised to have an immigration reform package ready by the end of 2009 but made clear it would likely remain on the back burner until 2010.

Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY), who heads the Senate's immigration subcommittee, said in June that he would introduce a bill this year; most likely political constraints have forced him to wait. In the meantime, Congressman Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) is expected to introduce Congressional Hispanic Caucus-backed legislation before the end of 2009.

In terms of the health-care debate, both the president and Congress agreed that unauthorized immigrants should not be eligible for new benefits. Instead, members have split on a number of other issues, including the extent to which legal immigrants should be eligible to participate in government-subsidized programs.

As the year draws to a close, Congress is working to finalize the health-care bill, and Obama is talking about jobs and the economy. Napolitano, in her mid-November remarks about the needs for immigration reform, was clear about the administration's current position: "When Congress is ready to act, we will be ready to support them."

### **Migration Fundamental**

- **The Basics of E-Verify, the US Employer Verification System**

### **Policy Beat**

- **Immigration Controversy Lands in the Middle of Health-Care Reform Debate**
- **New and Revised ICE Agreements with State and Local Law Enforcement Met with Criticism**
- **DHS Rescinds "No-Match" Rule, Moves Forward with E-Verify as It Shifts Enforcement Focus to Employers**
- **ICE to Expand New Immigration Enforcement Program in Local Jails**
- **Obama's Homeland Security Selection Viewed as Focused on Immigration**

### **MPI**

- **DHS and Immigration: Taking Stock and Correcting Course**
- **Collateral Damage: An Examination of ICE's Fugitive Operations Program**
- **Immigrant Detention: Can ICE Meet its Legal Imperatives and Case Management Responsibilities?**
- **The Next Generation of E-Verify: Getting Employment Verification Right**

## Issue #3 — Buyer's Remorse on Immigration Continues

The global recession has caused countries that once welcomed foreign workers by the tens and hundreds of thousands — particularly Spain — to rethink generous immigration policies as unemployment rates have risen.

Governments in Europe, Asia, and North America (but not Canada — see [Issue #6: Canada Bucks the Trend](#)) have responded in three main ways: tightening criteria for skilled workers, reducing the number of temporary workers, and paying migrants to leave. They have also combated illegal migration. In some places, policymakers have used protectionist rhetoric in explaining the changes — though not in the extremes that some feared. (See [Issue #4: What the Recession Wasn't](#)).



**Spain, the Czech Republic, and Japan are offering financial incentives, as well as a plane ticket, to immigrants who volunteer to leave.**

The United Kingdom was the first to announce changes to high-skilled migration criteria this year. British policymakers have stated that the points-based system, which it began rolling out in 2008, provides them with the flexibility to respond to economic changes and to ensure that companies can recruit abroad though not at the expense of British workers.

Since April, highly skilled immigrants (Tier 1 of the points system) seeking to enter the United Kingdom need to have at least a master's degree and earn at least 20,000 pounds per year (US\$31,000) — rather than a bachelor's degree and 17,000 pounds (US\$26,400) — to qualify for entry.

Also, employers wishing to bring over skilled workers (Tier 2) must advertise jobs to resident workers through a government-run job Web site for two weeks (to be extended to four weeks as of mid-December) and one other permitted method before they can bring in a non-European Union worker. In 2010, the minimum salary for skilled workers rises from 17,000 pounds (US\$26,400) to 20,000 pounds (US\$31,000).

In addition, the list of jobs on the skilled shortage occupation list has shrunk over the last year, from about 700,000 to about 500,000. Potential migrants score points if they are applying to work in one of these occupations.

In mid-November, Prime Minister Gordon Brown made his first major speech on immigration since early 2008. Brown noted the changes to the shortage occupation list and emphasized the need to invest in the skills of British citizens so that the country is less dependent on foreign workers in the future.

While Eastern European migrants have left the United Kingdom in large numbers (see [Issue #1: The Recession's Impact on Immigrants](#)), the government decided in December 2008 not to open its labor market to nationals of Romania and Bulgaria in January 2009. Nationals of those two countries, which joined the European Union in 2007, can only fill low-skilled jobs through two specific programs, the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Scheme and the Sectors Based Scheme (limited to the food manufacturing sector), and only up to 21,250 places for the seasonal program and 3,500 for the other in 2009.

Neighboring Ireland also has seen a decrease in migration from Eastern Europe this year. Nevertheless, it tightened its work permit system for non-EU workers in June 2009 due to the country's recession and high unemployment among Irish citizens.

Among the changes: no new work permits for jobs with a salary of under 30,000 euros (US\$43,500), jobs must be advertised within the European Economic Area for a longer period, and spouses and dependents of work permit holders may not work unless they obtain their own work permits.

Rather than change its points system criteria due to the economy, Australia in mid-March announced a 14 percent reduction in the number of skilled migrants it would accept for permanent residence.

The following month, Australia also announced higher admissions standards for the 457 visa, which allows skilled workers to stay in Australia for up to four years. These workers, as of mid-September, need to be paid at market rates so that employers cannot exploit them. The government also increased the minimum English-language requirements for certain trade and hospitality occupations.

As the Australian government and observers expected, demand for 457 visas has dropped. The number of applications filed in October 2009 was 57 percent lower than in October 2008, and visa grants decreased 60 percent compared to a year earlier. Also, the 74,000 457 visa-holders in October was 9 percent off its February 2009 peak.

Export-dependent Malaysia, which had over 2 million temporary foreign workers at the beginning of the year, mainly from Indonesia and South Asia, in January banned the hiring of foreign workers in a number of industries.

The Malaysian government also announced that existing permits for unskilled workers would not be renewed and that companies hit by the recession could apply to dismiss foreign workers before their contracts expired. By March, approvals for new work permits had been cut 70 percent. The government's message has not wavered: give priority to local workers and become less dependent on foreign workers in the future.

New Zealand, less affected by the recession than most other immigrant-receiving countries, purposely left permanent skilled migration untouched and chose instead to manage temporary worker flows by not renewing work permits in cases where New Zealanders are available to do the job. The government, noting the long-term importance of skilled migration, has called its response moderate compared to countries like Australia and Ireland.

Other changes in New Zealand include removing a small number of occupations from its shortage list and requiring skilled visa-holders to meet a minimum income threshold in order to bring over dependent children.

In the United States, Congress did take one noteworthy action early in 2009 by requiring banks receiving federal bailout money to give priority to US workers over those coming on H-1B temporary visas for highly skilled workers.

Notably, Bank of America rescinded offers to foreign MBA students, citing the H-1B provision. Wells Fargo went even further and told some of its foreign workers in late March that it would not renew their H-1B visas.

The recession has also affected H-1B demand. The annual cap of 65,000 was reached within days of the start of the application period in previous years. As of November 20 — nearly eight months after they became available — approximately 8,000 petitions (12 percent of the cap) remained on hand.

Like the United States, Hong Kong has seen demand drop for its highly skilled migrant program that targets mainland Chinese. Applications were down 15 percent in the first six months of 2009 compared to the same period a year earlier.

Spain sparked a trend when it began its recession-inspired pay-to-go program in November 2008. Pay-to-go programs, also known as voluntary return programs, offer financial incentives in addition to a plane ticket to those who volunteer to leave and to accept certain restrictions on their ability to return to the program-sponsoring country.

In addition to 50 euros (US\$72.50) for travel expenses, Spain pays 40 percent of the migrant's unemployment benefits before departure and the remainder in the home country. On average, each migrant receives 9,148 euros (US\$13,260). As of November 2009, the Spanish government had 8,724 participants for its pay-to-go program, the overwhelming majority from Latin America.

But with participation levels much lower than expected, the government anticipates 87,000 migrants will accept the offer, short of its original goal of 130,000. As of November, the program did not have any closing date.

Spain went further when in late November it passed a new law that requires foreigners with residence permits to live in Spain for five years (instead of the previous one year) before they can bring over immediate relatives. The new law also extends the maximum detention time for unauthorized immigrants from 40 to 60 days, giving the government more time to identify and return them.

Following Spain's pay-to-go lead in 2009 were the Czech Republic and Japan, both targeting legal migrants. The Czech Republic's program, launched in February, paid 500 euros (US\$725) per adult and 250 euros (US\$363) per child during its first phase (through late July); the second phase pays 300 euros (US\$435) per adult and 150 euros (US\$218) per child.

The Czech Republic's program had just over 2,000 participants as of October, well below the government's goal of 4,000; nearly two-thirds were from Mongolia although the majority of eligible individuals eligible come from Ukraine and Vietnam. The Czech Republic is also running a smaller pay-to-go program for unauthorized migrants through December 15.

Japan started its pay-to-go program April 1 by targeting unemployed Nikkeijin — foreigners of Japanese descent — from Latin America. The government pays \$3,000 for airfare and \$2,000 for each dependent, plus a bonus of \$1,000 to \$2,000, depending on how much longer the person was to receive unemployment benefits. As of October 1, over 11,000 applications were approved.

The UK government put a spin on the pay-to-go concept in July when it agreed to pay would-be asylum seekers in Calais, France, 1,700 pounds (US\$2,635) to not enter the United Kingdom. And Denmark, which has had a voluntary repatriation program since 1997, increased its financial incentive tenfold to about US\$20,000 in November to encourage non-EU immigrants to return home forever.

The recession has also prompted countries to step up efforts to combat illegal migration.

Last year, Italy and Libya reached an agreement that, among other things, allows Italy to return to Libya migrants who leave from Libyan coasts and are intercepted before reaching Italian shores, meaning the migrants cannot seek asylum (see [Issue #10: Asylum Seekers Unnerve Governments](#)). As part of the agreement, Italy has provided Libya with patrol boats to stop migrants from leaving for Italy.

In May, Italy put the agreement into practice when it returned over 200 migrants rescued in the Mediterranean. While the Italian government has called the return policy successful, the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, human rights groups, and the Vatican strongly oppose it.

This summer, Israel launched a task force that deported 700 unauthorized immigrants and arranged the voluntary exit of 2,400 others as of October. The government's goal is to expel 20,000 of the country's estimated 280,000 unauthorized immigrants by the end of the year. The hard line extends to about 1,200 Israel-born children of workers; the government has vowed to deport the children next year.

The United Kingdom put employers on notice in 2008, stating that it would "name and shame" those that hire people in the country illegally, in addition to hitting them with a fine of up to 10,000 pounds (US\$15,500) per unauthorized worker. This year, the UK Border Agency has arrested a number of unauthorized immigrants in worksite raids across the country, including at many ethnic restaurants.

### Features

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- [Ireland: From Rapid Immigration to Recession](#)
- [Pay to Go: Countries Offer Cash to Immigrants Willing to Pack Their Bags](#)
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## Issue #4 — What the Recession Wasn't

As the severity of the recession became apparent late last year, some began to speculate that increasing unemployment could prompt thousands of immigrants to head home and citizens of hard-hit countries to assault immigrants for taking "their" jobs and causing other problems.

Yet no country in 2009 has seen a mass exodus of immigrants due to the recession. Instead, most immigrants have stayed put.

And while politicians have said native workers need to have the first shot at jobs and nationalist parties gained more seats in European Parliament elections, immigrants have not been systematically attacked. Italy remains notable, however, for politically capitalizing on anti-immigrant sentiment.



**Fewer Eastern Europeans arrived in the United Kingdom this year, but hundreds of thousands remain.**

As noted in [Issue #1: The Recession's Impact on Immigrants](#), the United Kingdom and Ireland have seen fewer Eastern Europeans arrive in the last year and a noteworthy increase in the number of Eastern Europeans going home. However, large Eastern European populations remain in both countries.

In the United States, the size of the Mexican immigrant population decreased by about 200,000 between mid-2008 and mid-2009, but nearly 12 million Mexicans have not gone home. Unlike Eastern Europeans, many Mexican immigrants came illegally and cannot easily return when economic conditions improve.

In addition, Mexicans know that the recession and swine flu fears from last spring have decimated the Mexican economy and that the country's war against drug gangs has made numerous areas unsafe.

More evidence comes from countries with pay-to-go programs that provide plane tickets and additional financial incentives to immigrants who participate. Spain and the Czech Republic have instituted such programs, but neither has reached its expected goal thus far (see [Issue #3: Buyer's Remorse on Immigration Continues](#)).

Even as tensions between natives and immigrants rose in some places, there were no xenophobic attacks in 2009 that came close to the deadly ones in South Africa in May 2008 that displaced thousands. Tensions in South Africa remain, however. In November, 3,000 foreigners, including refugees and asylum seekers from Zimbabwe, were driven from their shacks in a farming community northeast of Cape Town.

One of the worst incidents this year took place in June in Belfast, Northern Ireland, when over 100 Romanian immigrants fled their homes after a number of men broke in and threatened to kill them. Nearly all the Romanians flew home at the expense of the government of Northern Ireland. Some eventually returned to Belfast.

In Switzerland, where the nationalist Swiss People's Party has gained popularity in recent years, few expected a referendum banning the construction of minarets to pass in late November. But voters turned out in larger-than-usual numbers and overwhelmingly supported

it, disappointing the Swiss government and European leaders and stunning Switzerland's Muslim community, which says the decision will undermine fragile relations.

With Italy's nationalist Northern League part of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's coalition government, Italy has steadily pursued anti-immigrant policies over the last 18 months. In July, the Italian legislature passed a sweeping law that makes illegal immigration a crime, with a fine of between 5,000 euros and 10,000 euros (US\$7,250 to US\$14,500), and housing an unauthorized immigrant punishable with jail time. Under the law, the government can detain unauthorized immigrants for up to six months, up from the previous two months.

A controversial provision that the Northern League championed allows small citizen groups to patrol for public order offenses. Also, parents seeking to register a baby's birth in Italy must show they are legal residents, which some critics have said could lead to an "invisible generation."

### Features

- [United Kingdom: A Reluctant Country of Immigration](#)
- [Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States](#)
- [Pay to Go: Countries Offer Cash to Immigrants Willing to Pack Their Bags](#)
- [Swiss Vote to Ban Minarets, Sparking International Criticism](#)
- [Switzerland's Non-EU Immigrants: Their Integration and Swiss Attitudes](#)

### MPI

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## Issue #5 — Recession Prompts Some Governments to Cut Immigrant Integration Funding

When the global economy was expanding, governments around the world could afford to invest in immigrant integration through language instruction, health care, primary education, and other efforts, even if the returns on such spending would not become evident for many years. But commitments to immigrant integration have proved hard to keep in some countries as governments reexamined their recession-battered budgets in 2009.



**Education was one target of recession-driven budget cuts this year.**

Spain and Ireland are two of the countries in Europe that grew most before the recession and have suffered the most since. Both also experienced rapid growth in their immigrant populations during the boom years.

Spain decided in late 2008 to encourage unemployed immigrants to go home (see [Issue #3: Buyer's Remorse on Immigration Continues](#)). It also needed to trim its 2009 budget, and the government in February chose to cut grants to local governments for immigrant integration. In the face of strong criticism, it restored these cuts in April.

However, in September, the Spanish government announced its 2010 budget would cut integration grants in half, from 200 million to 100 million euros (US\$290 million to US\$145 million). The government also plans to halve its support to nongovernmental organizations that provide humanitarian assistance to newly arrived immigrants (specifically to the Spanish Red Cross), from 6.72 million to 3.72 million euros (US\$9.74 million to US\$5.39 million).

The cutting in Ireland began in December 2008 when the government limited the number of language-support teachers to two per school starting in September 2009. It also reduced the budget for the fairly new Office of the Minister for Integration by 25 percent and withdrew all funding for a decade-old advisory body on racism.

On a case-by-case basis, Irish schools with large numbers of children needing English-language instruction have been able to retain up to four language-support teachers this school year. Still, educators have called the cuts in language-support short-sighted and detrimental to long-term integration.

But Ireland's finances remain in the red, and further cuts to language support could happen if the government follows the recommendations in a government-commissioned report released in July. To save 21 million euros (US\$30.5 million), the McCarthy report recommends laying off another 1,000 language-support teachers and closing the Office of the Minister for Integration (1.5 million euros or US\$2.2 million).

In contrast, some other European countries have made new investments in immigrant integration this year.

France, for example, created a new scholarship fund for immigrant students/children who succeed in school. The scholarship provides 2,400 euros (US\$3,500) per person per year. The number of scholarships is limited to 200 for the first year and will be followed by the creation of 200 new scholarships for the second and third years.

The United Kingdom in March 2009 announced its Migration Impact Fund, which will use 70 million pounds (US\$109 million) over two years to help communities manage short-term immigration pressures. Non-European Union migrants will contribute with a levy. The fund has already made a few small-scale grants.

Although the UK government has not announced cuts to the impact fund or other integration measures, observers expect some cuts are likely after elections in May 2010.

In the United States, immigrant integration largely falls to state and local governments. California and Illinois — two of the main immigrant-destination states — and Massachusetts have made budget cuts that affect immigrants. All three of these states were among the most generous in funding immigrant integration before the recession, and remain so today.

Over the summer, Massachusetts sought to cut about 30,000 legal immigrants from the state's subsidized health insurance system. The savings for fiscal year 2010 would have amounted to about \$130 million. But immigrant advocacy and universal health care groups fought the changes, and the legislature eventually restored \$40 million for their coverage. Enrollment in a lower-cost health plan began for eligible immigrants in Boston on October 1 and has been gradually expanded across the state.

Similarly, California cut funding this summer for Healthy Families, a children's health insurance program for which legal-immigrant children are eligible. Coverage was restored in September for 600,000 low- and middle-income children.

Also, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger used his line-item veto to eliminate all funding for the Seasonal and Agricultural Migratory Workers and Expanded Access to Primary Care programs, directly affecting many uninsured immigrants and migrant workers.

In the United States, some of the state budget cuts — particularly in education — are not targeted toward immigrants but will affect large numbers of them nonetheless.

California cut funding for the University of California (UC) system by hundreds of millions of dollars in its 2008-2009 budget and again in 2009-2010. The regents of the UC system responded with a number of cost-saving measures, including a reduction in class offerings and salaries, but agreed in November to raise tuition 32 percent starting in summer 2010, prompting student protests across UC campuses.

The tuition increase will likely affect immigrants and children of immigrants. Research from UC Berkeley published in 2007 found that more than half the undergraduate students in the UC system have at least one immigrant parent and that just 54 percent spoke only English.

Illinois has the third-largest system of community colleges in the country. As in other states, community colleges in Illinois help integrate immigrants. In 2007, Latinos (both native and foreign born) made up 71 percent of the system's English-as-a-Second-Language students and 25 percent of its adult education enrollment.

Budget shortfalls, however, prompted the state government to cut funding for the Illinois Community College Board to \$24.1 million for 2010 from \$34.8 million in 2009. The federal government may be willing to help. Congress is considering a measure, the American Graduation Initiative, which would expand federal support for community college programs that blend basic skills instruction with occupational or vocational training courses.

## Features

- [Ireland: From Rapid Immigration to Recession](#)
- [Immigrants in the United States and the Current Economic Crisis](#)
- [Feedback and Belonging: Explaining the Dynamics of Diversity](#)

## MPI

- [Migration and the Global Recession](#)
- [Migration and the Economic Downturn: What to Expect in the European Union](#)
- [Immigration in the United Kingdom: The Recession and Beyond](#)
- [Taking Limited English Proficient Adults into Account in the Federal Adult Education Funding Formula](#)

## Issue #6 — Canada Bucks the Trend and Keeps Immigration Targets Steady

While the recession prompted the United Kingdom and Australia to raise the admissions bar for skilled migrants this year (see **Issue #3: Buyer's Remorse on Immigration Continues**), Canada chose to leave untouched its long-standing points system and the number of immigrants admitted for permanent residence despite the highest unemployment rate in nearly a decade.



**Canada decided not to reduce immigration levels in 2009.**

In February, Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney made Canada's position clear. "Our government will not follow the advice of those who believe that Canada should take steps to reduce immigration levels," he said.

Canada admitted 247,202 permanent immigrants in 2008 and was aiming for between 240,000 and 265,000 new permanent residents in 2009 and 2010.

"The focus of the 2010 plan is on economic immigration to support Canada's economy during and beyond the current economic recovery," Kenny stated in late October. As part of the plan, the government increased the admission ranges for immigrants nominated by provinces and territories.

This year was not the first time Canada stayed the immigration course in a recession. In the early 1990s, Canada kept permanent immigration levels at about 230,000 per year. Over 256,000 immigrants settled in Canada in 1993, when unemployment hit 11.4 percent. Studies have shown that immigrants who arrived in this period never fully recovered economically.

As University of Toronto sociologist Jeffrey Reitz told the *Toronto Star* in March, "Their professional careers got derailed. Their skills became stale. They were stuck even when the economy bounced back. These people are worse off for their entire life."

While this recession has been less severe — Canada's unemployment rate in October was 8.6 percent compared to 6.2 percent a year earlier — some question whether immigrants could face similar economic "scarring."

For immigrants in the country five years or less, the unemployment rate reached 13.9 percent in October. A new report from Statistics Canada revealed that in 2008, two-thirds of recently arrived university-educated immigrants worked in occupations that normally required at most a college education or apprenticeship.

The Canadian government, which recognizes that too many of its immigrants are underemployed, is taking some measures to tackle at least once facet of the problem. Earlier this year, the federal budget set aside CAN\$50 million (US\$40 million) over the next two years to make the process of assessing and recognizing educational and professional foreign credentials more efficient.

And in a just-unveiled agreement that will be implemented over the next three years, immigrants in certain occupations, including nurses and engineers, will have their credentials recognized within one year of submitting an application to the relevant authority.

## Features

- **Selecting Economic Stream Immigrants through Points Systems**
- **Canada's Temporary Migration Program: A Model Despite Flaws**

## MPI

- **Migration and the Global Recession**
- **Uneven Progress: The Employment Pathways of Skilled Immigrants in the United States**

## Issue #7 — The World Is Talking about Climate Change and Migration

Floods and hurricanes, droughts and desertification, rising sea levels and salinization of groundwater — all can force people to leave their homes, either temporarily or permanently.

Climate change, which most scientists agree is taking place, likely will exacerbate these environmental processes and events, possibly even causing violence as people fight over scarce resources. It also will lead to migration (some say contested water supplies have contributed to the ongoing violence in Sudan's Darfur region). Estimates of how many people could be displaced vary from as little as 25 million to 1 billion by 2050, according to a recent policy brief on climate change from the International Organization for Migration.



**Many South Pacific island nations are concerned that rising sea levels will eventually force them to leave.**

Talk of climate change and migration ramped up in 2009, in large part due to a number of conferences and reports surrounding the highly anticipated United Nations (UN) Climate Change conference that begins next week in Copenhagen.

In June, a group including the UN University, CARE International, and Columbia University published a report intended to help policymakers and development specialists understand the links between environmental change, displacement, and migration. *In Search of Shelter* noted that climate change already contributes to displacement and migration, that most movement is internal, and that the least developed countries and island states will be affected "first and worst."

When 182 countries gathered in Bonn in June to work on language for Copenhagen, they included text that calls for protecting people whom climate change displaces (the United States objected to the inclusion of "climate refugee," however, because refugees have specific rights under international law and climate migrants are not persecuted).

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, speaking at the Global Forum on Migration and Development in November, said, "Negotiations have recognized that migration is a likely consequence of climate impacts."

What does or does not happen in Copenhagen surely will not mean the end of the discussion. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees pointed out in an updated policy paper in August that it believes "the need for advocacy on climate change issues will remain in various fora into 2010 and beyond."

Some might credit Mohamed Nasheed, president of the Maldives, a nation of small islands in the Indian Ocean, with giving climate-induced migration new visibility. On the eve of his inauguration in November 2008, Nasheed declared that he would try to find a new homeland, as rising sea levels could eventually submerge the country.

In February, Anote Tang, the president of Kiribati, an archipelagic nation in the Pacific, made a similar statement about buying land for future relocation. Already, the Kiribati government is

training its people so they can find jobs in countries like New Zealand, which allows a small number of working-age Pacific Islanders to settle permanently each year.

These leaders, as well as those in Bangladesh, Malawi, and other developing nations confronting climate change, all want the Copenhagen conference to result in major carbon emission cuts. Nasheed went so far as to hold an underwater cabinet meeting in October to draw attention to his country's situation and call for a deal in Copenhagen "that will ensure that everyone will survive."

Not surprisingly, Pacific Island countries would like to cooperate with Australia and New Zealand in making long-term plans. In November, Tong told an Australian newspaper that his larger neighbors had offered little response to his requests. He noted, though, that the president of East Timor said his country might be able to accommodate some of Kiribati's people.

Indeed, one member of Australia's parliament came out this fall in favor of admitting displaced people from the Pacific Islands through an expanded refugee program — but in the context of less migration to Australia overall.

Developing countries are pushing forward with their own plans. In October, the African Union adopted the Kampala Convention, which promises to protect millions of internally displaced persons in African countries. Notably, the convention recognizes natural disasters as a factor in displacement.

The chairperson of the Commission of the African Union said the decision to mention natural disasters was due to the global debate on climate-induced migration.

Bangladesh's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009 states that climate change will most affect the country's coastal region. As outlined in the plan, the government intends to collect data on the displaced and their numbers in cities and then ensure they have employment.

## Features

- [Confronting the Realities of Forced Migration](#)
- [Minimizing Development-Induced Displacement](#)

## Issue #8 — More Countries Entering into Post 9/11-Era Information-Sharing Agreements

Since the 9/11 attacks, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union and its Member States have been working to better secure international travel, which is vital to all their economies. Sharing information, both before departure and upon arrival, has become a higher priority for governments.

But what to share, how to share it, and with whom or what — and doing so in line with existing privacy and data-protection laws and standards — has hardly been easy to pin down. Indeed, such international and bilateral agreements can take years before the parties find common ground.



**Information-sharing agreements signed in 2009 are intended to improve security.**

Over the past year, long-standing discussions and negotiations have resulted in several new information-sharing initiatives that seek to boost security while facilitating travel for legitimate travelers.

In January, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began requiring certain visitors to the United States to share information about themselves and receive travel authorization before they can start their journey. The requirement applies to citizens of the 35 Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries; VWP permits tourists and business visitors to stay in the United States for up to 90 days without a visa.

Under the Electronic System of Travel Authorization (ESTA), VWP travelers submit via a secure online connection the same information that they would have provided on an I-94W form upon arrival in the United States. The ESTA requirement is one of several new features of VWP introduced under the Secure Travel and Counterterrorism Partnership Act of 2007.

The United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada agreed in August to share with each other fingerprint information on foreign criminals and asylum seekers. The United States is expected to sign the agreement, and New Zealand is considering legislation to join in the near future. All are members of the Five Country Conference, a forum for cooperation on measures to improve immigration controls and border security.

During the first year of the agreement, each country can share up to 3,000 sets of fingerprints, a number that will rise over time. Protection measures include ensuring that fingerprints remain anonymous unless a match is detected and destroying fingerprints once a match has been completed, meaning no fingerprint database can be compiled.

Before the agreement was signed, a trial run allowed the United Kingdom to identify an asylum-seeking Somali who had been fingerprinted when he arrived in the United States on an Australian passport. The Somali was indeed an Australian citizen and wanted for rape in Australia. He was deported and is now serving jail time.

In October, DHS finalized an agreement with the European Union that allows for exchanging information on criminals. The Mutual Legal Assistance treaty makes it possible for the United States and the European Union to identify the bank accounts of those involved in terrorism

and other serious crimes and to use data acquired under the agreement for additional serious offenses.

In November 2009, after three years of discussion, the EU-US High-Level Contact Group on information sharing and privacy and personal data protection agreed on a set of common principles for sharing information for law enforcement purposes. Next year, the United States and the European Union will try to turn these common principles into a binding international agreement.

### **Features**

- **Biometrics, Migrants, and Human Rights**
- **Countering Terrorist Mobility**

### **MPI**

- **Weaknesses in the Visa Waiver Program**
- **Testimony of Susan Ginsburg, Director of MPI's Mobility and Security Program, before the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security.**
- **Real Challenges for Virtual Borders: The Implementation of US-VISIT**

## Issue #9 — Some Relief for Immigrants in the Developing World

Many countries in the developing world have large migrant populations, usually from within the region. Often times, these migrants work in low-skilled jobs. While some may have work permits, others may well have entered illegally, overstayed a visa, or been trafficked into the country. They generally do not have the same rights as citizens.

South Africa, Brazil, and Costa Rica — all destinations for migrants from the region — sought to make the lives of immigrants a little better in 2009.



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**Local leaders promoted awareness and tolerance of refugees and migrants in a settlement just outside Pretoria, South Africa, this year.**

South Africa has struggled to cope with refugee and economic-migrant flows from its highly unstable neighbor, Zimbabwe, in recent years. An estimated 2 million Zimbabweans are in South Africa. Last year South Africa received worldwide attention for its citizens' shocking attacks on Zimbabwean and other African migrants.

But this spring, the government announced it was granting 12-month permits to Zimbabweans residing in South Africa illegally. It also lifted its visa requirement for Zimbabwean citizens.

In August, years of ministerial discussions culminated in South Africa and Zimbabwe signing an agreement to promote safe labor migration between the two countries. The agreement starts with farm workers in one province but is expected to be rolled out nationally.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Brazil launched a legalization program aimed at the country's estimated 200,000 Bolivian migrants, many of whom work in sweatshops in Sao Paulo. Those who entered Brazil before February 1, 2009, can apply for a two-year residency permit that upon expiration can be converted into permanent residency.

Costa Rica, which attracts thousands of migrants from Nicaragua, passed a broad migration law that makes human trafficking a criminal offense. Those convicted can face sentences of six to 10 years. One lawmaker noted that the law seeks to improve conditions for Costa Rica's migrants.

### Features

- **South Africa: Policy in the Face of Xenophobia**
- **Why Countries Continue to Consider Regularization**
- **Trafficking, Smuggling, and Human Rights**

## Issue #10 — Asylum Seekers Unnerve Governments

As violence flared from Afghanistan to Iraq to Mexico this year, hundreds of thousands fled over land and by boat in search of safety. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), asylum applications in the first half of 2009 were up 10 percent compared to the same period a year earlier.

Asylum seekers' main destinations — Europe, Australia, and Canada — were not new, but the governments in these countries took a harder line in 2009.



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**Afghan migrants in the "Pashtun jungle" in northern France.**

One of the most dramatic events of the year took place in September in Calais, the French port city that has long been a departure point for asylum seekers trying to enter the United Kingdom illegally.

French police bulldozed a camp in Calais known to locals and migrants as the "jungle" and detained over 270 people, half of them minors. They were sent to detention centers, and in many cases, judges released them.

France's immigration minister, Eric Besson, said the operation was intended to break up human smuggling networks; he later called it a success. But UNHCR and other organizations have said the Calais operation did not address illegal migration or solve the problems of the people concerned.

France went a step further in October, joining the British government in arranging a charter flight to return would-be Afghan asylum seekers to Afghanistan.

In July, Greek police cleared a decade-old camp in the port city of Patras and arrested unauthorized migrants and brought those with valid papers to local hotels; minors were sent to a camp near the Albanian border.

Greece is the entry point for thousands of asylum seekers who are trying to get to northern Europe. Observers have noted that better patrolling of the Western Mediterranean has pushed people to cross the Eastern Mediterranean, putting additional pressure on Greece. Like Italy, which has also struggled to police its coasts, Greece this year passed legislation that increased the amount of time unauthorized migrants can be detained.

For the first time in years, Australia has seen an increase in asylum seekers trying to enter the country by boat. This new wave of asylum seekers, most of them from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, set off a new public outcry.

One case in particular has caused political headaches for Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. In mid-October, an Australian customs ship called the Oceanic Viking rescued 78 Sri Lankan asylum seekers in international waters and attempted to bring them to Indonesia for processing. But in a standoff that lasted over a month, the Sri Lankans refused to come ashore in Indonesia, saying they wanted to be taken to Australia.

Eventually all 78 left the boat and entered an Australian-funded processing center in Indonesia after the Australian government essentially promised them their claims would be fast-tracked.

Australia's opposition leader attacked the government's offer, saying it will only encourage more human smugglers.

On the opposite side of the world, Canada was confronted with thousands of asylum claims from Mexico and the Czech Republic. Citing the cost of processing applications and a reduced ability to quickly process genuine claims, the government announced in July that citizens of both countries need to have visas before they can travel to Canada.

In fact, Mexico became Canada's top source country for applications. Although claims from Mexico have almost tripled since 2005, only 11 percent of claims reviewed in 2008 were accepted. More Mexicans fled home this year as the Mexican government stepped up its fight against violent drug gangs.

Claims from the Czech Republic swiftly ramped up once Canada lifted the visa requirement in late 2007. The government was concerned that many applicants may not be genuine refugees: more than half of the claims were abandoned or withdrawn before the Immigration and Refugee Board made a final decision.