

Greece



General Information



Population

10 405 588 (World Bank 2023)

10 413 982 (STAT GR 2023)



Immigration

96 662 (STAT GR 2022)



Emigration

1 088 507 (UN Emigration
Stock 2020)

80 307 (STAT GR 2022)



Working-age population

6 548 256 (World Bank 2023)

6 633 706 (Statistics Greece
2023)



Unemployment rate

11 % (World Bank 2023)

9.8 % (STAT GR 2024)



GDP

243 498 333 237.8 current
prices USD (World Bank 2023)

225 197 000 000 current
prices EUR (STAT GR 2023)



Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

Refugees

214 574 (UNHCR 2024)

59 216 (STAT GR 2021)

Asylum Seekers

20 887 (UNHCR 2024)

28 320 (STAT GR 2021)

IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2024)



Citizenship

By Birth

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT
2022)

By Descent

Yes (GLOBALCIT 2022)

Years of Residency

6-10 (GLOBALCIT 2022)



Territory

131 957 km² (CIA World
Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Line Ministries

Ministry of Interior

Ministry of Citizen Protection

Agencies

General Secretariat for Migration Policy

Directorate of Residence Permits

General Secretariat of Reception of Asylum Seekers

Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors

Special Secretariat for the Coordination of Stakeholders

Greek Asylum Service

Reception and Identification Service

Appeals Authority

General Secretariat for Citizenship (Ministry of Interior)

National Coordination Center for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum (Ministry of Citizen Protection)

Key Policy Documents

[Code of Reception, international protection of third-country nationals and stateless persons and of temporary protection in cases of mass influx of displaced migrants](#) as ratified by L. 4939/2022

[4825/2021](#) on Reform of procedures for deportations and returns of citizens of third countries etc.

[4686/2020](#) on Improvement of immigration legislation etc.

[4636/2019](#) on international protection and other provisions

[4375/2016](#) on Organisation and functioning of the Asylum Service, Appeals Authority, Reception and Identification Service etc.

[Code of Immigration and Social Inclusion](#) as ratified by L. 4251/2014

[3907/2011](#) on the establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service etc.

[3386/2005](#) on Entry, Residence and Social Integration of third country nationals on the Greek territory

[Greek Citizenship Code](#) as ratified by Law 3284/2004

[National strategy for the social integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection](#)

[National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors](#)

[National action plan for children's rights](#)

Greece has traditionally been a **country of emigration** and has started attracting immigrants since the 1990s. By the 2020s, the simultaneous presence of economic migrants, asylum seekers, recognized refugees and EU citizens compose a complex migration scene in the country. According to the latest **census**, the population of Greece has declined by 3.5% since 2011, amounting to 10.432.481 persons in 2021. Against the negative natural increase, immigration in the period 2009-2020 significantly **reduced the population loss** in Greece, albeit without compensating it fully.

The number of Greek citizens of working age, who usually reside in another EU/EFTA country, saw a constant **increase** until the peak in 2019. **According to UN DESA**, over 1 million Greeks lived abroad in 2020. The top 10 hosting countries are Germany (391.502), Australia (119.831), the US (116.619), Turkey (81.457), the UK (75.441), Canada (67.536), Albania (29.643), Cyprus (23.581), the Netherlands (19.776) and Sweden (19.399).

Due to the economic crisis that started in 2009, the subsequent austerity measures, rising unemployment and steep salary and welfare cuts, Greece experienced an **emigration wave** consisting mainly of labour migrants. In the period 2011-2019, the **emigration flow** exceeded 100.000 persons annually with a peak of 124.194 observed in 2012. One-half of this flow comprised Greek nationals and another half were foreigners, equally affected by the economic crisis. Since 2019, the flow started to decline amounting to **77.837** persons in 2020. Yet, given the deteriorating economic situation in 2022, with the **inflation** and the **unemployment** rate in July reaching 12.6% and 12.1% respectively, emigration from the country may again rise. Emigrants are heading to **various destinations**, however, the vast majority go to Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland. In particular, **Germany and the UK** attracted a sizeable share of the post-2010 emigration.

Over the past 40 years, Greece has been facing a **steady increase** in the immigrant population. In 2021, an **estimated 921.000** non-Greek citizens lived in Greece, representing 8.6% of the total population, compared to 180.000 recorded in 1980. Based on the 2011 census, the majority of foreign **nationals** were citizens of Albania (52,7%), Bulgaria (8,3%), Romania (5,1%), Pakistan (3,7%), and Georgia (3%). Meanwhile, based on the UN DESA 2019, the largest immigrant groups in Greece came from Albania, Germany, Georgia, Russia and Romania. **An analysis** of the previous residence reveals that 81.4 % of immigrants in 2020 came to Greece from non-EU countries and only 18.6% came from another EU Member State. Since 2016, the **immigration flow** has been particularly high approaching 130.000 in 2019. However, in 2020 it declined to 84.221 persons, presumably due to COVID-19.

In December 2021, 965.749 persons, including beneficiaries of international protection (59.216), EU citizens (193.136) and foreigners of Greek descent (19.880) had **valid resident permits** in Greece. Of them, third-country nationals had 693.517 permits issued for family reunification (252.146), employment (108.037), education (3.672) and other reasons (329.662). Albanians hold the majority of valid (62.8%) and receive most new permits (10.201 in 2021) in Greece. However, the residence permits granted to Chinese citizens almost quintupled from 5.684 in 2016 to 27.684 in 2021, a fact that is mainly attributed to the intention of the Chinese to invest in Greece. Other **important origin countries** among non-EU residents with valid permits in 2021 included Georgia, Pakistan, Ukraine, Russia, India, Egypt, the Philippines and Bangladesh. Apart from Albanians and Chinese, nationals of Georgia (1.310), Russia (1.095) and Pakistan (1.064) received the majority of 22.905 **first-time residence permits** in 2021. Among EU holders of residence permits in Greece, in **2021 most** came from Bulgaria (35,8%), Romania (28%), Poland (7,1%), Cyprus (5,1%), Germany (5%).

According to the research of the **Hellenic Statistical Authority** conducted in 2014, job research was the prime reason for immigration for 48% of migrants. However, unemployment among migrants in Greece is widespread and remains one of the highest within the EU. In 2020, **28.6% of persons** born outside the EU who were living in Greece were unemployed. In the first quarter of 2022, only **143.000 migrants** were officially employed.

In 2015, Greece became one of the **main entry points** for more than 1 million people who came to Europe seeking safety. The 2016 **EU-Turkey Statement**, along with the closing of the **Balkan Route** and the adoption of **asylum law in 2019**, which expanded **detention** and for this reason has been criticised by NGOs, UNHCR and the **Greek National Commission for Human Rights**, dramatically decreased migration for international protection in Greece. **While 856.723 persons arrived on the Greek shores** in 2015, the number dropped to **9,157** in 2021.

From June 2013 until the end of 2021, Greece registered **350.095** asylum applications, with a maximum of 77.243 recorded in 2019. Most 2021 applicants were nationals of Afghanistan (16%), Pakistan (15%), Syria (14%), Bangladesh (10%), Turkey (7%), Iraq (6%) and Somalia (5%). Overall, from 2016 to 2021, Greece issued **79.065 decisions granting refugee status** and 21.342 decisions granting subsidiary protection. In addition, from the beginning of the war in Ukraine until 28 August 2022, an estimated 75.942 **Ukrainian citizens** have crossed the Greek borders. By 20 September 2022, **close to 20.000** Ukrainians received temporary protection in Greece.

Asylum seekers arriving after 20 March 2016 on the Greek islands are subject to a fast-track border procedure, their international protection applications are examined in the islands and geographical restriction is imposed. The latter resulted in overpopulation and degrading **living conditions** in the five hotspots that have been established in the Greek islands. **According to the Greek Ministry of Migration**, in December 2021 over 32.000 migrants resided in official structures, which is twice as less as in 2020. Furthermore, in 2021, 11.581 **persons** left Greece officially (this number includes, inter alia, forced returns, voluntary returns, returns with IOM support, relocations and departures within the application of the Dublin Regulation).

After the 2020 events at the **Greek-Turkish border**, the **Greek government** strengthened its efforts of controlling the northern border by extending the **border fence** and increasing military and police patrols in the area. Allegations of **pushbacks** at the Greek-Turkish borders as well as on the use of life-threatening methods in the course of operations at sea have been considered credible by **international** and European **institutions** and **human rights bodies**. Since June 2021 Greece started applying the 'safe **country of origin concept**' and considers countries that feature in the common list issued by the Council of the EU and those included in the

national list during the examination procedure of asylum applicants. Turkey is considered a safe country for nationals of Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia.

Irregular migration is a reoccurring problem in Greece, but the overall flows are on decline. In 2017, **over 21.000 third-country nationals had been refused entry** at the external Greek borders, while only 3.075 received refusals in 2021. Almost one million third-country nationals had been **found illegally present in Greece in 2015**, and just 38.015 persons were identified in 2021. Similarly dropped the number of persons ordered to leave, from **104.575 persons** in 2015 to 28.815 in 2021. In 2021, 12.020 **third-country nationals (including 6.447 asylum seekers) were detained in Pre-removal Detention Facilities**. The same year, Greece issued **20.219 detention orders** and executed **3.276** forced returns (including deportations and readmissions based on bilateral agreements with adjacent countries). In 2021, 81% of all forced returns concerned Albanian citizens.

In 2014, the **Immigration and Social Integration Code** introduced reforms concerning residence permits for third-country nationals and organisational arrangements for their social integration. The Greek Immigration Code has been amended several times since its introduction. In 2022, the **Code of Reception and international protection** replaced the previously criticised 2019 asylum law. In 2021, Greece launched a new **National strategy for the social integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection**, a **National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors** and a **National action plan for children's rights**, part of which is dedicated to children in refugee and migration context.

Greece has signed bilateral readmission agreements with more than 15 countries. At the beginning of 2022, Greece and Bangladesh signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** applied mainly to citizens of Bangladesh already residing in Greece permitting them to work seasonally with a specific duration of residence permit and no right of permanent settlement. Greece had similar **discussions with Pakistan**, however, the two countries are yet to reach an agreement. Greece participates in several Migration Dialogues, including the Prague Process, the Budapest Process, the Rabat Process and the Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM). The country adopted the Global Compact for Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration.

latest update: 30 October 2022

Relevant Publications

IOM (2008): Migration in Greece: A Country Profile 2008

UN DESA (2014)