

# Latvia

## General Information



### Population

1 866 124 (World Bank 2024)

1 860 575 (STAT LV 2025)



### Immigration

220 471 (UN Immigration Stock 2024)

14 701 (STAT LV 2024)



### Emigration

161 014 (UN Emigration Stock 2024)

18 937 (STAT LV 2024)



### Working-age population

1 172 875 (World Bank 2024)

1 172 860 (STAT LV 2025)



### Unemployment rate

6.9 % (World Bank 2024)

6.9 % (STAT LV 2024)



### GDP

43 684 254 432.4 current prices USD (World Bank 2024)

35 167 637 000 current prices EUR (STAT LV 2024)



### Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

#### Refugees

33 086 (UNHCR 2025)

104 (OCMA 2024)

#### Asylum Seekers

527 (UNHCR 2025)

801 (OCMA 2024)

#### IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2025)



### Citizenship

#### By Birth

No (GLOBALCIT 2024)

#### By Descent

Yes (GLOBALCIT 2024)

#### Years of Residency

5 years of residence required (GLOBALCIT 2024)



### Territory

64 589 km<sup>2</sup> (CIA World Factbook)

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

# Migration Authorities

## Responsible Body

Ministry of Interior

## Line Ministries

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Welfare

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Education and Science

Ministry of Culture

## Agencies

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

State Border Guard

Latvian State Security Service

Official Statistics of Latvia

## Key Policy Documents

Immigration Law

Asylum Law

Citizenship Law

Law On Stateless Persons

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

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

Law on the Register of Natural Persons

## Relevant Publications

Exploring the Potential of Digitalisation in Migration Management in the Prague Process Region

Digitalisation and labour migration: the use of modern technology, challenges and opportunities

How will migration to Europe look in the Future?

Intra-corporate Transferees (ICTs): The benefits for the EU and the opportunity cost

Re-thinking approaches to labour migration. Potential and gaps in EU Member States. Case study: Latvia

ICMPD Policy Brief, Creative approaches to boosting the employment of displaced Ukrainians in Central and Eastern Europe

Latvia is a country of origin, transit and destination of migrants. Over the past decade, its population has declined by nearly 140,000 persons due to both natural decline and emigration, reaching **1,860,575** at the beginning of 2025. Between 2014 and 2024, Latvia generally recorded negative **net migration**. In 2022, net migration turned positive for the first time in years, reaching 22,028, mainly due to reduced emigration and increased immigration, driven in large part by the arrival of refugees from **Ukraine**.

Latvia has experienced **several waves of large-scale emigration**, including a major outflow after the 2008-2009 economic crisis, when around 190,000 people left between 2008 and 2011. In 2024, **emigration** remained notable: 18,937 people left the country, half of whom were Latvian citizens, followed by Ukrainian nationals (25.2 %) and Russian nationals (11.1%). Out of all **emigrants**, 8,700 moved to EU countries and 4,900 (26 %) moved to EU candidate countries. **Germany** remained the top destination, receiving 2,200 emigrants from Latvia in 2024.

Recent emigration from Latvia is primarily driven by economic **motives**, including low wages, limited career opportunities, and the pursuit of higher living standards abroad. Social factors such as family reunification, education, and marriage to foreign nationals also play a role. While earlier emigration was shaped more by political circumstances, current outflows largely reflect the search for better employment opportunities and quality of life within the EU.

According to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, over **255,620 Latvian citizens** lived abroad in mid-2025. Over 39.5% of them lived in the UK, followed by Germany (10.9%), Ireland (9.5%), and the US (7.1%). Meanwhile, **UNDESA** estimated that over 161,014 **Latvians were leaving abroad** in 2024, the majority of whom resided in Europe (146,581 or 91%).

From 2011 to 2021, annual immigration to Latvia generally moved within a relatively narrow band of roughly **8,000-13,000 arrivals**, with small year-on-year increases and decreases but no major structural shifts. This stable pattern was interrupted in 2022, when immigration flow surged to 38,708, driven by the arrivals of displaced persons from Ukraine, who accounted for about 60% of all arrivals that year. After this exceptional peak, immigration dropped sharply to 15,629 in 2023 and further to 14,701 in 2024. Although still somewhat above many pre-2022 levels, these figures indicate a return to the earlier, moderate trend. Since 2022, the share of Latvian nationals among immigrants has steadily increased flow, reaching around **61%** in 2024. Among foreigners arriving in 2024, the largest groups came from Ukraine, Russia and India, albeit arrivals from the latter two have not exceeded a 1,000 persons each. In terms of the overall immigration stock – 220,471 persons according to **2024 UN DESA dataset** – Russians (48.8%) formed the largest share, followed by Belarusians (17.7%) and Ukrainians (13.5%). Residence permits data reflects a similar picture: the number of all **valid residence permits** issued to non-EU nationals in Latvia has declined from over 336,000 in 2014 to some 249,000 in 2024, with Russian nationals holding around 15% of all valid permits.

The issuance of first-time **residence permits** also decreased in 2024. A total of 9,027 were issued, 11.5% fewer than in 2023 (10,193). Indian (24.3%) and Uzbek (18.4%) nationals received the largest shares. Of all first-time residence permits granted to non-EU nationals, 39.4% were issued for employment, 32.3% for education and 18.6% for family reunification.

In 2024, the number of **employment rights** granted to third-country nationals increased by 4.4% (19,825 compared to 18,983 in 2023). Most foreign workers were employed in land and pipeline transport (7,682), labour search and staff provision (2,120), building construction (1,695), computer programming and consultancy (938), specialised construction (773), manufacture of fabricated metal products, excluding machinery and equipment (691). In 2024, the highest number of rights to employment were issued to nationals of Uzbekistan (6,048), Belarus (3,176) and Ukraine (2,356).

At the beginning of the 2024/2025 academic year, 11,542 **foreign students** were enrolled in Latvian higher education institutions. Although the previous academic year saw the highest number of foreign students to date, their share of the total student population remained stable at 15%. As in earlier years, India remained the leading country of origin with 3,158 students (27%), followed by Uzbekistan (1,118; 10%), Sweden (976; 8%), Ukraine (895; 8%), and Germany (748; 6%). The number and share of students from India continued to rise, increasing from 25% to 27% year-on-year.

The number of non-EU nationals **refused entry** at external borders declined from 3,625 in 2023 to 3,070 in 2024, most of whom were nationals of Moldova (34%). After record highs in 2022 (13,575) and 2023 (14,205), the number of non-EU nationals found to be **illegally present** in Latvia dropped sharply to 2,325 persons in 2024, reflecting the impact of **enhanced border management measures** introduced in 2023. The number of non-EU nationals **ordered to leave** has been increasing since 2021, as has the number of those actually **returned**, exceeding 2,000 each in 2024.

After a significant rise in 2023, when Latvia received 1,624 **asylum applications**, the number of asylum seekers halved in 2024, falling to 801. The main **countries of origin** of asylum seekers in 2024 were Tajikistan, Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, Russia, and Syria. Of the 660 decisions taken in 2024, 28% were positive. 192 persons received international protection. Refugee status was granted to 104 persons and alternative status to 88 persons.

Latvia continues to offer temporary protection to Ukrainians, **valid until** March 2027. In 2024, 6,738 **temporary residence permits** were issued to the nationals of Ukraine. **Amendments** adopted on November 2024 extended the validity of such permits from two to three years and prolonged related assistance measures. By early **2025**, 18,000 Ukrainian residents had not renewed their temporary protection status and consequently lost legal residence. In September 2025, Latvia hosted **31,150** beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Latvia remains both a source and destination country for **human trafficking**, with Latvian and foreign adults and children exploited in forced labour and sex trafficking domestically and abroad, particularly in Western Europe. Vulnerable groups include women with limited education, children from disadvantaged families or state institutions, unemployed adults, and migrant workers, especially from

South and Central Asia. In 2024, authorities identified 38 trafficking victims, up from 22 in 2023, including four children and 26 foreign nationals. Recent reforms have [strengthened](#) the legal and institutional framework to combat trafficking, including enhanced protections for child victims, limits on repetitive interviews, mandatory psychologist involvement, increased funding for NGOs, expanded awareness, specialised training for relevant professional, increased regional cooperation.

In 2025, Latvia continued reinforcing [border management and migration governance](#) with a strong national security focus. The [Integrated Border Management Plan 2024-2028](#), adopted in December 2024, prioritises preventing irregular crossings, improving return procedures, modernising border infrastructure and technology, and improving national-EU cooperation. Enhanced [surveillance measures along the Belarusian border](#) remains in place due to ongoing irregular crossing attempts. To mitigate security risks, Latvia extended [entry and visa restrictions](#) for Russian and Belarusian citizens until the end of 2026 and plans to introduce new pre-arrival requirements for third-country nationals without Latvian-issued visas or residence permits, who will need to submit detailed travel information 48 hours before entry.

In 2024 and 2025, Latvia introduced several [changes](#) to its migration policy and regulatory framework. Amendments to the [Immigration Law](#) adopted in June 2024 granted authorities broader powers to restrict the ability of individuals or organisations to invite foreign workers in cases of legal violations and allowed the Cabinet of Ministers to impose visa restrictions in specific geopolitical contexts. New rules also established that third-country workers must demonstrate financial means equivalent to the average wage within their respective sector. Further [amendments](#), approved in December 2024, introduced stricter obligations for employers recruiting foreign nationals. From January 2025, employers must justify vacancies to the State Employment Agency, assess local candidates proposed by the agency, and provide documented reasons for any rejections.

Several [EU directives](#) were transposed into national law in 2024, including provisions related to the Emergency Travel Document and regulations clarifying the rights of EU Blue Card holders and their family members to access social services and disability related benefits. To ensure the implementation of the [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), a high-level [working group](#) was established on 11 December 2024 to coordinate national efforts and oversee the development of Latvia's implementation plan.

Latvia continues to actively engage in regional and international migration dialogues, being a member of the Prague Process, the Budapest Process, and the Khartoum Process.

*latest update: 25 November 2025*