

Turkmenistan



General Information



Population

6 430 770 ([World Bank 2022](#))

6 200 000 ([SMS TM](#))



Immigration

194 920 ([UN DESA Immigration Stock 2020](#))



Emigration

242 554 ([UN DESA Emigration Stock 2020](#))



Working-age population

4 098 501 ([World Bank 2022](#))



Unemployment rate

4 % ([World Bank 2010](#))



GDP

56 542 857 142.9 current prices USD ([World Bank 2022](#))

45 231 428 570 current prices USD ([IMF 2020](#))



Refugees and IDPs

Refugees

14 ([UN Refugee Stock 2023](#))



Citizenship

By Birth: No

By Descent: Yes

Dual Citizenship: No

Years of Residency: 5



Territory

488 100 km² ([CIA World Factbook](#))

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

State Migration Service

Line Ministries

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Culture

Ministry of Interior

Agencies

State Customs Service

State Statistical Service

State Frontier Service

General Prosecutors' Office

Key Policy Documents

2017 (2021) Law on Refugees

2013 Law on Citizenship

2012 (2021) Migration Law

2011 Law on the Status of Foreigners

2009 (2021) Law on Migration Service

2016 (2018) Law on the employment of the population

2016 (2018) Law on Combatting Human Trafficking

Relevant Publications

Migration Profile Light 2014

Analytical Report '**Combating irregular migration and human trafficking in the CIS countries**'

Background Note '**Asylum seekers from the Eastern Partnership and Central Asian Countries in the EU**'

Background Note '**Migration and Mobility in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: What to expect in times of COVID-19?**'

Policy Brief '**The EU Central Asia Strategy and Its Impact on Migration**'

Analytical Report '**China's "Belt and Road" Initiative and Its Impact on Migration Flows and Policies in Central Asia**'

Turkmenistan features a growing and young population that surpassed 6 million in 2020. Over 60 % of the population is of working age with the median age projected to reach **35.2 years by 2040**. **Unofficial reports** allude to a total population of only 2.7-2.9 million, resulting from substantial emigration and a declining fertility rate.

Turkmenistan is predominantly a country of emigration. In 2019, **media announced** that 1.9 million Turkmen had left the country in 2008-2018, mainly because of the deteriorating economic situation and for political reasons. The same year, more than **100,000 people** left the country, with the vast majority migrating to Turkey for employment. In 2019, over **133,000 Turkmen** resided in Turkey, with some **80,000** of them having first-time residence or work permits. By mid-2021, their overall number decreased to **125,000**. However, given the visa-free regime between the two countries, the real number of Turkmen in Turkey is **assumed to be much larger**. The overall volume of labour migration from Turkmenistan was estimated at **200,000-300,000 people in 2016**.

Apart from Turkey, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Gulf countries represent further popular destinations for Turkmen nationals. In 2019, more than **14,000 people** moved to Russia – a record number not seen since 1997. In addition, **over 34,000** Turkmen students enrolled to higher education institutions in Russia in the 2019/2020 academic year, marking a tenfold increase over a decade. While media reports suggest that Turkmenistan is restricting the cross-border mobility of its nationals by imposing **travel restrictions on certain categories of the population**, the **Law on Migration** stipulates that Turkmen can freely leave the country to study and work abroad. This makes student migration a viable option to emigrate in a regular manner. While most migratory movements remain temporary (some **12,000** Turkmen came to Russia and left again in 2020), a tendency towards permanent emigration can also be observed. For instance, the number of Turkmen acquiring Russian citizenship increased from **729 persons** in 2017 to **2,451 in 2020**.

In the past, most Turkmen settled in Russia, Ukraine, Germany and Belarus. A **Turkmen diaspora** is present in nearly all post-Soviet countries, as well as in Iraq (about 3 million people), Syria (about 3 million), Afghanistan (about 2 million), and Iran (from 1.5 to 3 million). **Experts estimate** that some 10 million ethnic Turkmen live in countries beyond the post-Soviet space. Within the EU, Germany is by far the main destination for Turkmen citizens who held **over 1,000 valid residence permits at the year-end in the** last decade. Meanwhile, the number of irregular Turkmen migrants in the EU is **insignificant**: for the past five years, around 100 illegal migrants were registered annually, about 60 ordered to leave and even fewer refused to enter the EU.

The quest for international protection primarily targets the US that hosts some 200 Turkmen refugees since 2017, followed by Germany hosting around 100 refugees. Turkey registered over 1,300 Turkmen asylum applications in 2017-2018, but has not recognized them as refugees.

According to the UN Population Division, Turkmenistan hosts almost 195,000 foreign nationals, most of whom originate from Russia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, with the immigrant stock steadily decreasing. The country also hosts almost **4,000 stateless persons and some 20 refugees** from Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. Importantly, Turkmenistan undertakes steps to end statelessness on its territory. In 2020, it granted citizenship to

2,580 people. Over the past 15 years, 26,000 refugees and stateless persons received Turkmen citizenship.

Turkmenistan is a participating state of the Prague, Budapest and Almaty Processes. It has endorsed the Global Compact for Migration, committing to establish regular, orderly and safe migration pathways as part of its 2017 Migration Concept, national plans and strategies, the Law on Migration and other legal acts. In recent years, the country amended some key national legislation including the Law on Refugees, the Law on Migration and the Law on Combatting Human Trafficking. In January 2019, the Government adopted the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Statelessness 2018-2024. In December 2019, Turkmenistan adopted a new National Action Plan for 2020-2022 on Combatting Human Trafficking and launched the National Referral Mechanism 2019-2021 focusing on identification of and assistance to trafficked persons.