DELIBERATION ISSUE GUIDE

2026

IMMIGRATION POLICIES: INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES

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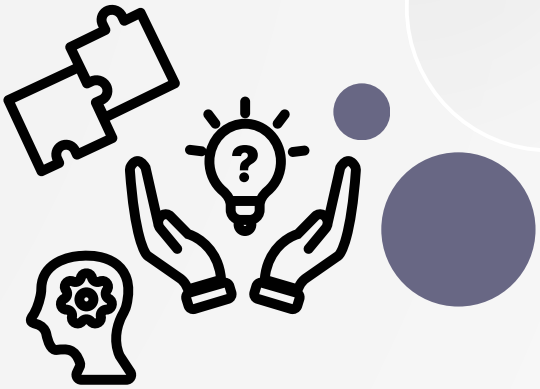
What is Deliberation?

In a deliberation, people gather to discuss possible approaches to complex problems.

Participants bring their unique values and goals, recognizing how each person's experience may inform their analysis of approaches to a problem.

Deliberation is not about finding a "solution," but rather exploring various potential strategies, weighing costs and benefits, and building connections with other participants.



The Deliberation Process

Deliberations are flexible, but they follow a general pattern that helps to keep conversation flowing and ensures that all approaches are considered.

Introduction	Connect to Issue	Consider Each Option	Review and Reflect
Review Ground Rules. Introduce the Issue.	Ask people to describe how the issue affects them, their families, or friends.	Consider each option one at a time. Allow equal time for each. What is attractive? What are the drawbacks?	Review the conversation as a group. What areas of common ground are apparent? What tensions or tradeoffs were most difficult? Who else do we need to hear from?

Fig. 1 Stages of Deliberation. Adapted from: National Issue Forums. *Immigration: Who should we welcome? What should be do?* National Issue Forums. (2020)

Ground Rules

Consider all approaches carefully.

Seek to build a respectful atmophere.

Listen to understand.

It's okay to disagree, but do so with curiosity, not hostility.

Be brief and allow others to participate. No one should dominate.

Consider national and local actions that we can take.

About this Issue Guide

Immigration affects societies across the world, shaping economies, communities, and national identities in different ways. This guide is designed to encourage thoughtful discussion about how countries might approach this complex and often contested issue.

The four approaches summarized here reflect varying international perspectives on immigration, each highlighting distinct priorities, values, and tradeoffs. In practice, most countries draw on more than one approach, combining policies to respond to changing circumstances. Globally, immigration policy often shifts with leadership changes, as governments interpret migration through cultural, historical, economic, and ideological lenses shaped by national identity, security concerns, and public opinion. As government transitions occur, long-standing assumptions about immigration are frequently reconsidered. In times of political change and global uncertainty, it becomes especially important for societies to reflect thoughtfully on how they respond to human mobility. Across contexts, communities and governments face shared questions, even when their answers may differ:

- Should immigration be restricted or encouraged? Or some combination of both?
- Should all immigrants be welcomed in order to grow the economy, or only certain immigrants welcomed that might also preserve cultural traditions?
- Should immigrants be excluded to protect security, or does doing so violate values and principles?
- Can newcomers come from elsewhere, bringing different approaches and perspectives, and yet social cohesion be preserved?
- Should communities welcome the innovations and life newcomers bring, or do these strain community resources?

The development of this guide involved research into worldwide approaches to immigration, focusing particularly on countries that *receive* immigrants. It involved policy analysis, reviews of news sources, social media, and nonpartisan public opinion data, and analysis of scholarly research. Development took place in 2025-2026, inspired by the National Issues Forum's (2020) Guide to Immigration and CERI's 2025 Issue Guide on Immigration in the United States.

Introduction

Migration has been a defining force in human history, shaping civilizations, economies, and identities across centuries. People have always moved to seek safety from conflict, to escape famine or persecution, or to pursue work, education, and freedom. In the modern era, migration has reached a scale and complexity unprecedented in history, shaped by diverse policy approaches, economic inequality, demographic shifts, political and social instability, technological advancements, globalization, and improved travel.[1]

Aris Messinis, AFP | Taken on September 28, 2015, shows refugees and migrants arriving on the shore of the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey.

According to the United Nations Migration Portal, there were nearly 304 million international migrants worldwide by the end of 2024.[2] Immigrants contribute labor, innovation, and culture, yet their movement also challenges societies to confront questions of identity, belonging, and social change. Though different forces may generate shared migration pressures across regions, countries and their governments respond to them in markedly different ways through their immigration policies. While migration refers to the broader movement of people across borders, immigration policies are the mechanisms governments use to manage that movement into their countries in accordance with national priorities, strategic considerations, and cultural values. Whether driven by humanitarian concern, economics, or political self-interest, national approaches to immigration and immigration policies reveal the values of who belongs and under what conditions.

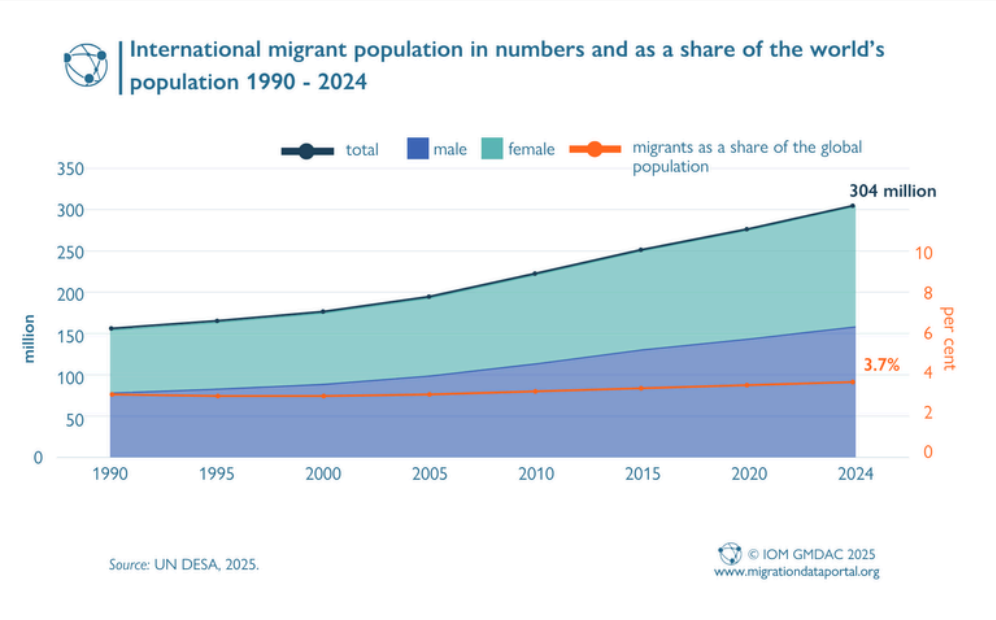


Fig.2

What is an immigrant?

The term “immigrant” has varied uses across national and international contexts. For this guide, we are using the following definitions:

A *migrant* is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a country away from their habitual place of residence. An *immigrant* is a migrant who has changed their country of residence.[3] This definition includes people who have moved temporarily or permanently, for work, family, study, or other reasons.

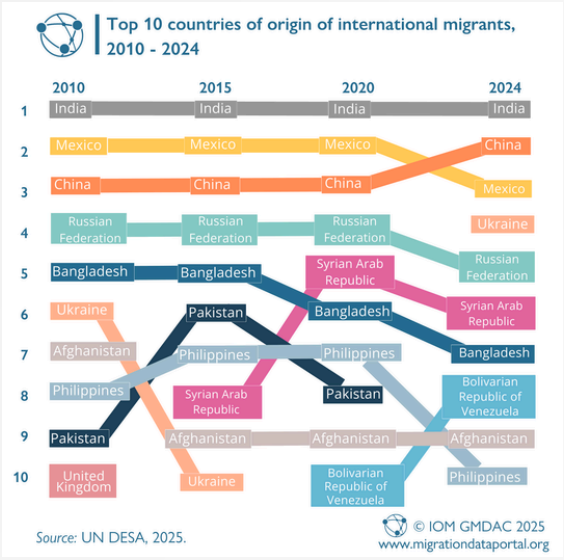


Fig. 3

What are the different types of immigrants?

Temporary vs. Permanent

- Temporary migrants are immigrants who move to another country for a limited period, typically through work or study visas.
- Permanent migrants are immigrants who intend to settle in their destination country for the long term.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- *Refugees* are people who have fled their home country due to persecution, war, or violence and have a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees are recognized under international law (the 1951 Refugee Convention) and are typically processed and vetted while outside their home country before being resettled in a new country.[4]
- *Asylum seekers* are people who have left their home country and are seeking international protection, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. Asylum seekers apply for protection after arriving in or at the border of another country.[5]
- Both refugees and asylum seekers may eventually receive permanent residence or citizenship in their host country if their claims are approved.

The policies discussed in this guide focus on general immigration pathways. Refugees and asylum seekers represent a ***separate category*** with distinct legal protections and processes under international law. Still, these categories are often conflated in public discourse, which can significantly shape opinions on immigration policy more broadly.

Irregular Migrants

- *Irregular migrants* are immigrants who enter without obtaining authorization first, violate visa conditions (such as overstaying), or work without legal permission. These violations are not crimes but are administrative violations, like construction without a permit.[6]

How many immigrants are there globally?

As of 2024, there are approximately 304 million immigrants worldwide, representing about 3.7 percent of the global population.[7] This number has grown significantly over recent decades due to globalization, economic opportunities, conflict, and climate change.

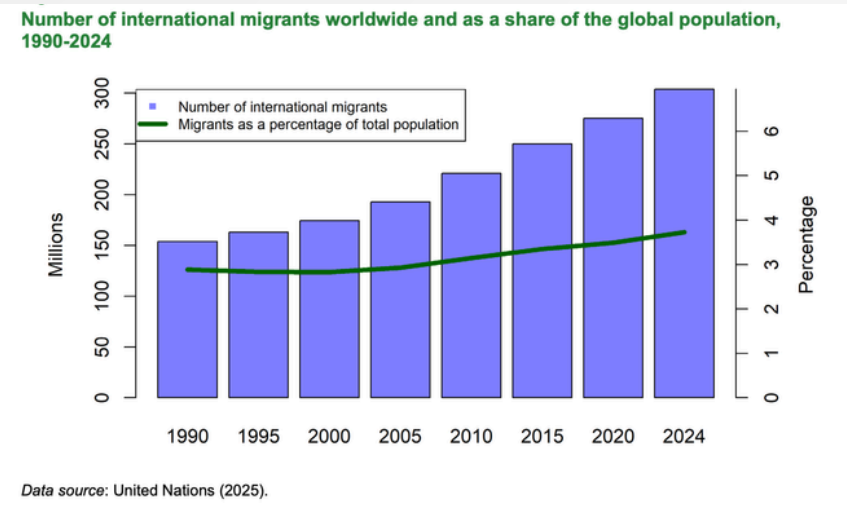


Fig. 4

Which countries have the most immigrants?

By absolute numbers, the United States hosts the most international migrants (over 50 million), followed by Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

By proportion of population, many smaller countries and Gulf states have higher percentages. The United Arab Emirates, for example, has a foreign-born population exceeding 70% of its total population. Other countries with high proportions include Qatar, Kuwait, and Monaco.[8]

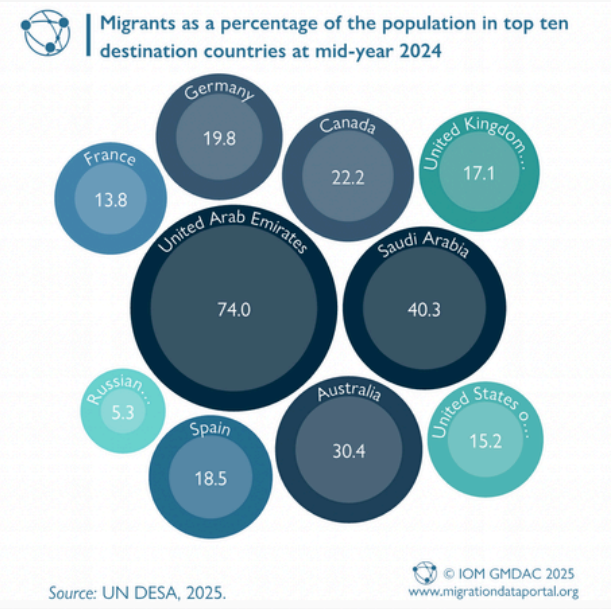


Fig. 5

Immigration policies create legal and institutional frameworks that shape how a country manages global migration within its national context. These policy choices determine who is permitted to enter, under what conditions, and for what purposes. Alternative ideological visions and priorities result in a spectrum of possible policy approaches. These policies are shaped by historical experience, national identity, and cultural norms, and also by ongoing internal debates within societies about belonging, responsibility, and national direction. For some, immigration represents renewal, economic strength, and demographic sustainability. For others, it raises concerns about cultural preservation, national security, and social cohesion. Questions that are debated include:

- Should immigration be governed primarily as an economic strategy, designed to meet labor shortages, address demographic decline, and strengthen national competitiveness?
- Should states prioritize protecting cultural integrity and national identity, even if this means restricting immigration and limiting diversity in favor of social cohesion and continuity?
- Should immigration be treated first and foremost as a security issue, emphasizing border control, deterrence, and risk prevention, even when such measures may constrain humanitarian protections?
- How should governments balance economic growth, social cohesion, national security, and human rights when no single approach fully addresses all dimensions of migration?

This deliberation guide examines a range of immigration policy approaches across key regions and continents, highlighting how different societies respond to human mobility under varying economic, political, and cultural conditions. It presents four approaches, each based on a different understanding of the issues. Every approach includes several actions and drawbacks. No one approach is ‘right’. Each is supported by policymakers and communities somewhere, and each has risks and drawbacks associated with it. Taken together, these frameworks illustrate how states seek to manage movement and change while balancing competing social, political, and ethical demands. Understanding these differences helps clarify policy trade-offs, reveal underlying tensions, and encourage more informed dialogue. At the same time, it highlights the shared dilemmas that increasingly shape immigration debates across countries. As displacement and mobility continue to reshape the world, the central question for the international community is no longer whether migration will persist, but how it will be governed.

Approach 1

Encourage Immigration for Economic Necessity

Immigration is one of the world's most powerful engines of economic development. Across both industrialized and developing economies, immigrants fill essential labor gaps, sustain population growth, and contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship.[9] This approach considers immigration as a strategic economic response to long-term structural needs, including aging populations, sector-specific labor shortages, and global competition for talent.

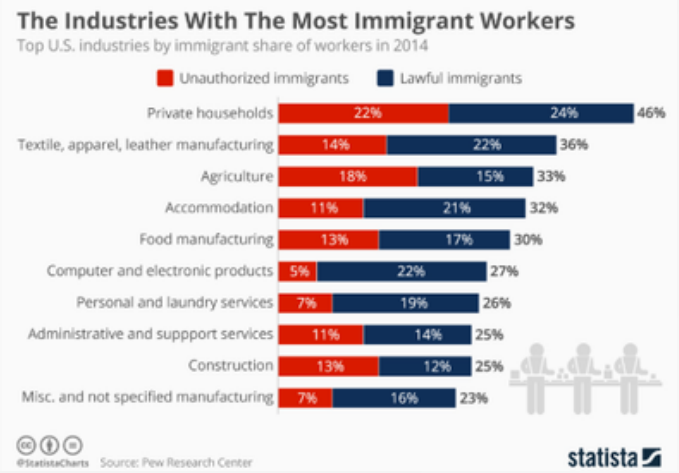


Fig. 6

Certain immigration policies aim to attract highly educated or specialized laborers. Countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand exemplify immigration systems explicitly designed around economic utility. Points-based immigration frameworks allow governments to choose people for sectors and industries facing labor shortages. A points-based immigration policy prioritizes attracting immigrants with education, language proficiency, and professional experience, allowing governments to attract workers for sectors facing labor constraints.[10]

At the same time, countries also use temporary worker programs that supply lower-skilled immigrant labor in sectors like agriculture, construction, hospitality, and caregiving, which are often unattractive to domestic workers. Gulf economies like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar rely overwhelmingly on foreign workers for both skilled and low-skilled labor. Migrants make up as much as 70–90 percent of the workforce in some Gulf States, supporting industries such as construction, logistics, and domestic work.[11] These immigrants contribute to the rapid development and infrastructure projects of Middle Eastern countries, but some policies limit labor rights and long-term integration. For example, the *kafala* sponsorship model, which ties workers' legal status to their employers, has been criticized for enabling exploitation and restricting mobility.[12]

Spain's circular migration programs offer a hybrid model that reflects efforts to balance economic demand with regulated immigrant mobility. Introduced in the early 2000s, these immigration policies were designed to meet seasonal labor needs, particularly in agriculture, while limiting irregular migration movement outside formal legal entry and residency channels, and long-term settlement pressures.[13] By allowing workers from countries such as Morocco, Senegal, and parts of Latin America to return annually under short-term contracts, Spain's approach links labor demand with predictable, legal migration pathways.

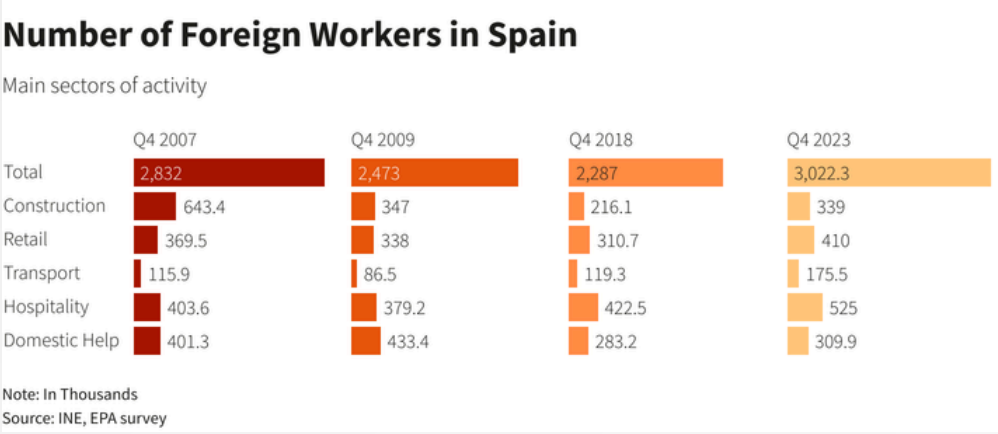


Fig. 7

In East Asia, Japan and South Korea demonstrate a more cautious form of economic immigration policy. Both countries face rapidly aging populations and shrinking workforces, yet they have long resisted large-scale immigration due to strong cultural and national identity norms. In recent years, however, both governments have introduced programs to attract high-skilled professionals and short-term foreign labor in key sectors like manufacturing, eldercare, and technology.[14]

Countries facing labor shortages, aging populations, or sustained demand for workers depend heavily on immigrants to maintain productivity and support long-term development. Immigration policies with an economic focus reflect a growing recognition that, without migrant labor, economic competitiveness and social stability will decline. These policies frame immigration as a strategic tool, one that can be selectively managed to address labor market gaps while balancing political feasibility and public support. Ultimately, this approach recognizes migration as a cornerstone of economic necessity, shaping how states design immigration systems to respond to economic realities and demands.

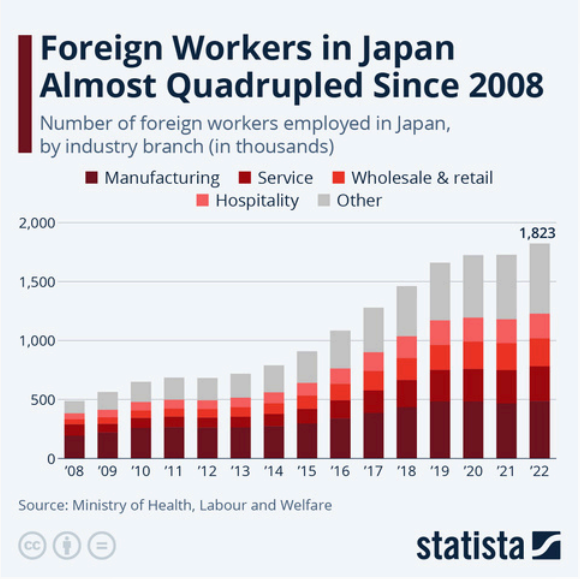


Fig. 8

What Should We Do?

1. **Connect Skilled Immigrants to Market Gaps:** Attract and retain skilled workers through transparent, merit-based systems that link migration pathways directly to labor market gaps. By prioritizing education, work experience, and sectoral demand, governments can compete for global talent in fields such as healthcare, technology, and engineering.

2. **Establish Well-Regulated Programs for Low-Skilled Labor:** Establish well-regulated temporary migration pathways to meet essential low-skill labor needs in agriculture, construction, caregiving, hospitality, and service industries. Strong oversight, clear contracts, and enforcement mechanisms can help meet economic demand while reducing exploitation and irregular migration.

3. **Prioritize High-Skilled Immigrants:** Use points-based or skills-focused immigration systems to prioritize high-skilled immigrants whose education, expertise, and language proficiency align with national economic priorities. These systems allow governments to manage migration strategically and support long-term productivity and innovation.

4. **Consider Circular Migration Models:** Adopt circular migration programs that encourage time-limited labor mobility between sending and receiving countries. By allowing workers to move legally for employment and return home, these models reduce permanent settlement pressures while supporting development through remittances and skill transfer.

5. **Protect and Integrate Immigrant Workers:** Invest in labor protections and integration support to ensure migrants, both temporary and permanent, can work safely and contribute effectively to the host economy. This includes enforcing workplace standards, protecting basic rights, and providing access to language training and orientation services.

Tradeoffs and Drawbacks

1. **Segmented labor markets and unequal mobility:** Economically driven immigration systems often produce dual labor markets, where migrants are concentrated in low-wage, high-risk, or temporary sectors with limited opportunities for advancement.

2. **Flexibility for employers vs. security for workers:** These systems provide employers with flexibility through temporary, sector-specific, or employer-tied visas, allowing labor supply to adjust quickly to market demand. However, this flexibility frequently comes at the expense of worker security.

3. **Rights asymmetry and ethical concerns:** Temporary and contract-based immigration frequently restricts access to residency, family reunification, and labor protections. Systems prioritizing efficiency may tolerate exploitative conditions, particularly in sectors with weak oversight.

4. **Reduces incentives for domestic workforce development:** Reliance on migrant labor can reduce incentives for governments and industries to invest in domestic workforce training, wage growth, or productivity-enhancing technologies. While immigration addresses immediate shortages, overreliance may delay structural reforms needed for long-term labor market resilience.

5. **Labor market efficiency crowds out long-term integration:** Economically driven immigration systems are highly effective at filling immediate labor shortages, but they often deprioritize long-term social and economic integration. Migrants are selected for their productivity rather than their capacity to settle, participate civically, or build durable ties.

Approach 2

Protect Cultural Integrity and National Identity

This approach emphasizes building a nation around one main ethnic group, people who share the same ancestry, language, or religion. It emphasizes protecting the culture of the land from what is seen as outside influence or dilution, with homogeneity providing unity. Together, these ideas promote the belief that a country is strongest and most stable when its people share a common identity, looking, speaking, and thinking alike. Immigration of outsiders can threaten unity and may reduce a country's ability to preserve its culture and language in the face of pressures toward global assimilation. States such as South Korea, Japan, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Cote d'Ivoire, and Russia have shaped their immigration policies around the principles of ethno-nationalism and cultural homogeneity for decades.

Fig. 9 *Geocurrents: The People, Places and Languages Shaping Current Events*

This approach is born out of a historical fear of loss of culture, control, and identity. Nations may have experienced moments of historical legacies that shaped how they think about belonging.

In Japan and South Korea, centuries of colonial suppression, followed by foreign occupation that threatened traditional values, have fed the need for cultural preservation.[15] Again, in South Africa[16] and Cote d'Ivoire,[17] colonialism and apartheid left societies scarred by racial division and the lingering anxiety of who truly belongs. In Saudi Arabia and the UAE, oil wealth brought in millions of foreign workers whose presence created demographic imbalances that challenged cultural and religious dominance.[18] And in Russia, the collapse of the Soviet Union intensified the country's reliance on cultural cohesion as a strategy for nation building, pushing the government to reassert "Russianness" as a unifying force.[19] Across these different states, the result is similar: immigration becomes not just a policy issue, but a question of national survival.

This approach suggests maintaining highly restrictive naturalization pathways, long residency requirements, and ancestry-based citizenship laws that privilege ethnic return migration over foreign settlement. For instance, Japan's citizenship structure and limited naturalization approvals reflect a deliberate effort to preserve ethnic continuity, while the Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, maintain large temporary labor systems without permanent integration or citizenship access for foreign workers.[20] These legal mechanisms transform cultural preference into policy reality, ensuring that migration remains economically functional but socially bounded.

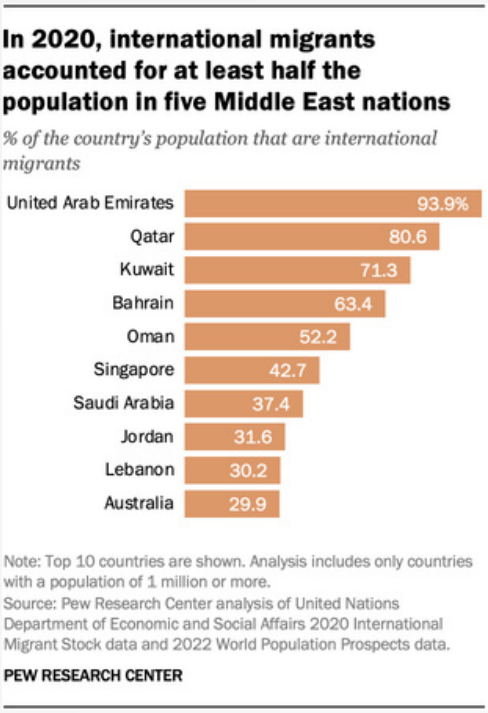


Fig. 10

Ultimately, this approach views ethno-nationalism and cultural homogeneity as shields against perceived loss of culture, power, and control. For post-colonial states, it is about reclaiming ownership of identity after centuries of external domination. For developed nations like Japan and South Korea, it's about protecting cultural integrity in an age of demographic decline. And for Gulf and post-Soviet states, it is about maintaining political stability and religious or ethnic continuity in the face of massive immigration. In all, this approach turns immigration into a mirror, reflecting each society's anxieties about who they are and who they fear becoming. Maintaining boundaries and controlling entry preserves cultural homogeneity and social cohesion.

What Should We Do?

1. **Control Immigration to Protect Social Cohesion:** Governments should regulate immigration through selective admission systems that favor individuals who share or respect the host country's values and cultural markers. This includes language proficiency tests, skill-based quotas, and stricter border enforcement. Governments should also impose temporary visa systems to ensure migration remains short-term and purposeful. Regulated entry helps preserve demographic balance, prevent uncontrolled population changes, and maintain social harmony.[21]

2. **Prioritize Citizens in Employment and Social Programs:** Governments should prioritize citizens in national economic and welfare systems. Governments should set mandatory citizen quotas in the private sector, reserve welfare and housing programs for nationals, and provide training opportunities to increase local employability. This ensures that current citizens remain the primary beneficiaries of economic growth and that foreign labor remains supplementary, not dominant. By prioritizing citizens in employment and public benefits, this approach strengthens social trust and protects the social contract between the people and the state.[22]

3. **Foster National Unity Through Controlled Integration:** Promote integration on the host nation's terms. Foreign residents and workers should be expected to adapt to local traditions, language, and laws as a condition of stay. Governments can establish mandatory cultural orientation programs, national service requirements, or community participation initiatives to strengthen loyalty to the host society. Citizenship should be reserved for individuals who fully embrace the nation's heritage and values. Controlled integration prevents the creation of isolated communities and ensures that newcomers strengthen, rather than alter, the national identity.[23]

4. **Restrict Family Reunification and Dependent Visas:** Limit family-based immigration to prevent the permanent establishment of foreign communities that may not fully integrate. By restricting dependent visas, birthright citizenship, and family sponsorship rights, governments can ensure that migration remains primarily economic and temporary.[24]

5. **Encourage Diaspora Return:** Strengthen national identity by drawing on a country's own people rather than relying on foreign labor or large-scale immigration. Governments can actively invite citizens living abroad and individuals of shared ancestry to return through targeted repatriation programs, preferential residency or citizenship pathways, employment incentives, and cultural reintegration initiatives. By mobilizing citizens who already share the country's language, heritage, and social norms, this approach reinforces cultural continuity and social cohesion.[25]

Tradeoffs and Drawbacks

1. **Loss of Innovation:** Restrictive immigration policies can limit knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship, and innovation, especially in technology, healthcare, and higher education sectors that thrive on global talent.

2. **The Price of Preservation:** By drawing firm boundaries around belonging, governments may limit the fresh perspectives and skills that come from outside.

3. **The Strain of Selectivity:** Industries that rely on foreign labor may struggle to fill gaps, and younger citizens may resist taking low-paying jobs.

4. **The Tension between Order and Openness:** Prioritizing cohesion and homogeneity may create an atmosphere that discourages cultural curiosity and global cooperation. Nations that define belonging too tightly risk isolating themselves from the exchange of talent and ideas that sustain innovation in an interconnected world.

5. **Fractured Global Partnerships:** Restrictive immigration policies can strain diplomatic relations, especially with countries whose citizens face exclusion. This could affect trade negotiations, bilateral economic relations, and foreign direct investments.

6. **International Human Rights Concerns:** Policies around national identity could lead to human rights concerns both domestically and internationally. In an interconnected world, it could come off as racist and a violation of the fundamental human right of freedom of movement, ultimately leading to diplomatic strains with international institutions.

Approach 3

Guard Against Threats to National Security and System Stability

This approach asserts that immigration constitutes a direct threat to national security. It posits that immigrants inherently bring crime and place an unsustainable strain on national resources, and thus, the movement of people is seen as a vector for terrorism, organized crime, and social unrest. This approach argues that open borders and humanitarian corridors are not merely overwhelming systems but are active vectors for terrorism, organized crime, and deliberate societal destabilization. It is rooted in the core conflation of immigration with infiltration, where the compassionate intent of refugee protection is seen as a fatal weakness to be exploited by hostile actors.

This approach argues that immigration and asylum systems can be exploited by terrorist actors to bypass conventional security. Often cited are the 2015 Paris attacks, a series of coordinated assaults by ISIS militants across the French capital that killed 130 people.[26] It is asserted that the perpetrators entered Europe alongside flows of immigrants and refugees, exploiting the crisis for clandestine movement.[27] Subsequent incidents like the 2016 Berlin attack, where a failed Tunisian asylum seeker drove a truck into a Christmas market,[28] and the 2020 Vienna attack, where an ISIS sympathizer who had previously sought asylum opened fire in the city center reinforce this argument that rare but salient incidents are enough reason for strong response.[29]

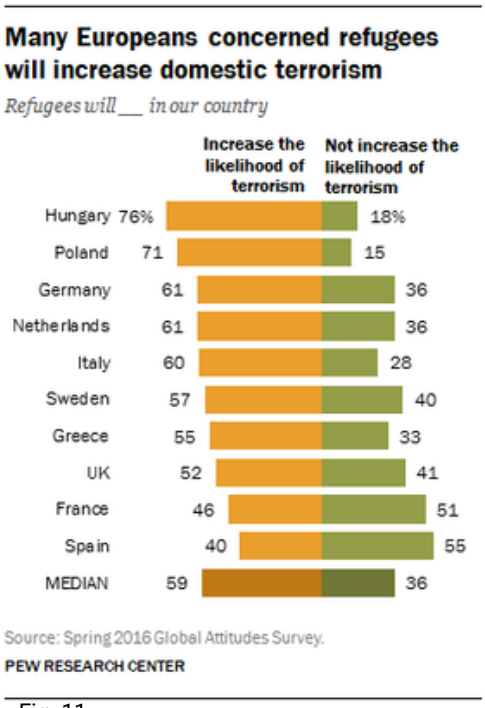


Fig. 11

This approach argues that large-scale immigration inherently destabilizes host nations by overwhelming their institutional systems. For example, the influx of over 3.6 million Syrian refugees into Türkiye after 2011 strained security apparatuses and placed unsustainable pressure on national resources such as healthcare, education, and housing,[30] leading to increased competition with native-born citizens and, ultimately, to significant social tension.[31]

The security narrative also firmly establishes a direct link between immigration and organized crime. Some perceive immigrants are more likely to commit crimes than native-born individuals, while also contending that activities of transnational criminal networks,

such as those involved in human trafficking and drug smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border, are symbiotically linked to flows of irregular migration.[32]

This approach argues that the clandestine process of moving people across borders provides essential cover and operational infrastructure for moving narcotics, weapons, and illicit funds. A perceived "lawless" border is equated with a failure to protect citizens from the violence and corruption of this criminal cartel.

This perspective is a driving force behind policies such as the UK's "Stop the Boats" campaign, Italy's strict maritime interdiction, the "Remain in Mexico" program in the US, and the Trump Administration's travel bans and restrictions.

In response to counterevidence showing immigrants are not more prone to criminality than native-born populations, proponents argue that from a risk-management perspective, even a statistically small number of "bad actors" can cause catastrophic, disproportionate harm. Focusing on overall crime rates is seen as missing the point; the potential consequence of a single security failure is too high a risk.

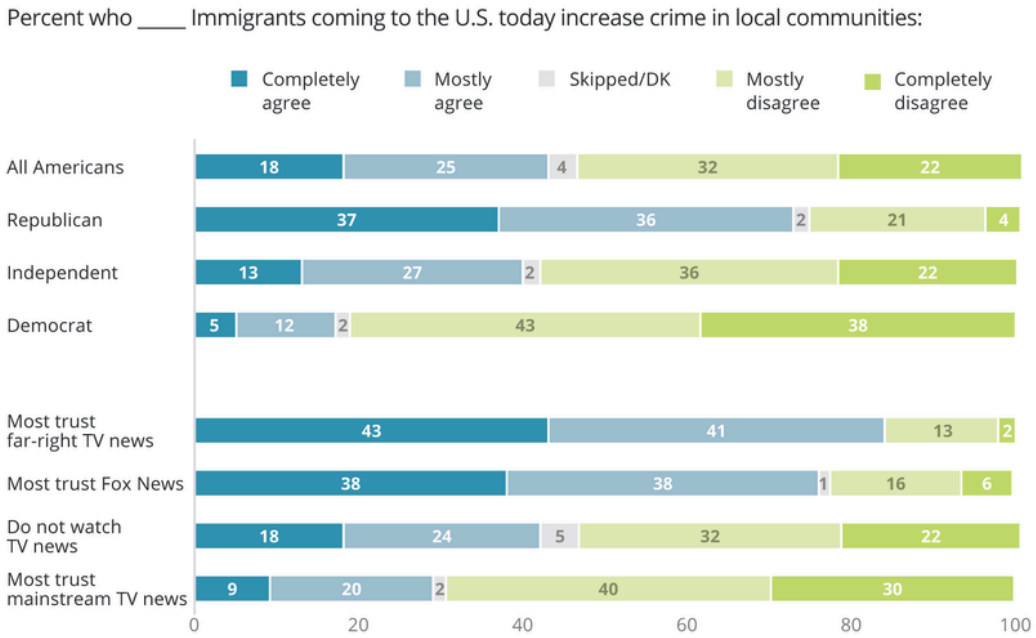


Fig. 12 Perception of Immigrant Crime in the U.S., by Party Affiliation and Media Trust

In sum, this approach argues that uncontrolled immigration creates a critical vulnerability that undermines the government's primary duty to protect its citizens. It calls for a paradigm shift from viewing immigration primarily through a humanitarian or economic lens to treating it first and foremost as a sovereign security challenge, necessitating hardened borders, extreme vetting, and the primacy of national security over international obligations.

What Should We Do?

1. **Secure Borders Through Physical and Technological Deterrence:** Construct permanent physical barriers (walls, fences) at key land borders. Deploy advanced surveillance technology, including drones, motion sensors, and thermal cameras, to create a "smart wall." Increase the permanent presence of border patrol and military forces with a mandate to intercept and turn back all unauthorized entries.

2. **Implement Externalization and Offshore Processing:** Avoid irregular (unauthorized) and unvetted immigrants entering as asylum seekers by negotiating and funding third-country agreements to process asylum claims “outside” the nation's territory. Immigrants and asylum seekers intercepted at sea or at the border would be transferred to designated safe third countries or offshore facilities for processing. Those found to be genuine refugees would be resettled in that third country or a partner nation, not in the host country.

3. **Increase Internal Surveillance:** Monitor immigrants for illegal activity through a centralized database collecting fingerprints, facial recognition data, iris scans, DNA samples, and automated license plate records. Mandate biometric enrollment for all visa applicants, border crossings, and immigration proceedings. Require employers and public service providers to verify immigration status through this system, and deploy real-time tracking and alerts to identify and locate individuals who overstay visas, violate immigration conditions, or commit criminal activity.

4. **Eliminate "Pull Factors":** Legislate to deny access to public welfare benefits, social housing, and non-emergency healthcare to undocumented immigrants and those with pending asylum claims. Make employment for undocumented immigrants illegal, with severe penalties for employers.

5. **Streamline and Accelerate Deportation and Removal:** Drastically simplify the legal process for deportation by limiting appeals and expanding expedited removal. Invest in detention capacity and negotiate rapid readmission agreements with countries of origin to facilitate the swift return of those whose claims are denied or who have no legal status.

Tradeoffs and Drawbacks

1. **Increases financial and human costs:** The construction and maintenance of such barriers entail an extremely high financial cost and also force migrants to take more dangerous routes, which leads to an increase in deaths. When deterrence is done by turning migrants back to face danger, such actions violate fundamental principles of international refugee law.

2. **Creates human rights crises without addressing root causes:** These policies are morally contentious and have been criticized as "outsourcing" humanitarian responsibilities to other nations. Operating offshore processing facilities and funding deals with third countries are extremely costly endeavors. Such arrangements often lead to long-term detention in potentially poor conditions, creating serious human rights crises. Moreover, these measures do not address the root causes of immigration; they merely deflect the issue elsewhere

3. **Creates a vulnerable underclass:** This approach creates a vulnerable underclass of individuals who are denied access to basic services, a situation that can lead to public health crises, widespread destitution, and increased crime. It also pushes migrants further into the informal economy, where they become highly susceptible to exploitation and even modern slavery. Ultimately, such policies contradict the fundamental principles of human dignity and compassion.

4. **Violates principles and erodes trust, and thus reduces safety:** These policies carry a high risk of violating due process, often resulting in the deportation of individuals with legitimate asylum claims due to false negative determinations. They also erode trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement, which makes all communities less safe as crimes go unreported out of fear. Furthermore, such measures can lead to the deportation of individuals to active conflict zones or to countries where they face certain persecution.

5. **Creates racial bias and erodes civil liberties:** These policies disproportionately impact people of color, leading to higher error rates, misidentification, and the wrongful detention of citizens and legal residents. They also raise serious privacy concerns and risk enabling mass surveillance. Such measures can foster racial profiling and discrimination, undermining the civil liberties and equal protection guarantees that democratic societies depend on.

Approach 4

Attract Immigrants for National Vitality

This approach views immigration as foundational to long-term national resilience and prosperity. Beyond economic contributions, immigration strengthens civic institutions, democracy, and society. In a time of rapid technological change, aging populations, and growing political division, immigration plays a crucial role in keeping societies dynamic and democratic.

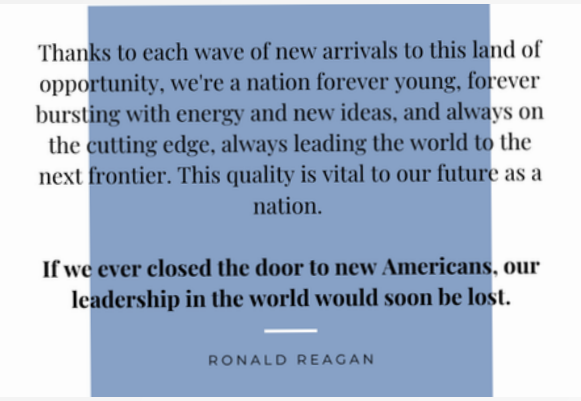


Fig. 13 Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony for the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Societies rely on schools, neighborhoods, and community organizations to function. These are all civic institutions that must be sustained and renewed over time, each generation taking on revolving roles to maintain the health of their communities. Yet across much of the world, nations are experiencing demographic decline.[33] Immigration helps counter this trend. Immigrants are often younger and more likely to arrive with families, helping keep classrooms open, neighborhoods vibrant, and civic organizations running.[34] Countries like Canada and New Zealand recognize this role, embracing immigration systems that emphasize long-term settlement and integration.[35] This reflects an understanding that people who are welcomed into their communities are more likely to invest and participate in civic life.

Immigration also fuels innovation by increasing diversity of ideas and experiences. As people migrate, they carry with them different ways of thinking, different skills, and different perspectives on how to solve problems.[36] In a rapidly changing world, societies must be adaptable and able to tackle new challenges. This approach notes that immigration expands the pool of ideas available within a community, strengthening creativity in science and technology as well as in culture, education, and the political world.

This same diversity of thought that breeds innovation strengthens democracies. A strong democracy requires citizens who can coexist, deliberate, and disagree without exclusion. Exposure to difference of thought and identity strengthens democratic capacity by fostering empathy and critical thinking.[37] Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney recently highlighted Canada's commitment to diversity as a source of national strength, noting how the nation "celebrates what makes us different."[38] According to this approach, immigration makes

difference a normal part of everyday life as people share classrooms, friendships, workplaces, and neighborhoods with peers from diverse backgrounds. These connections foster the openness and curiosity that are essential to healthy democratic societies.

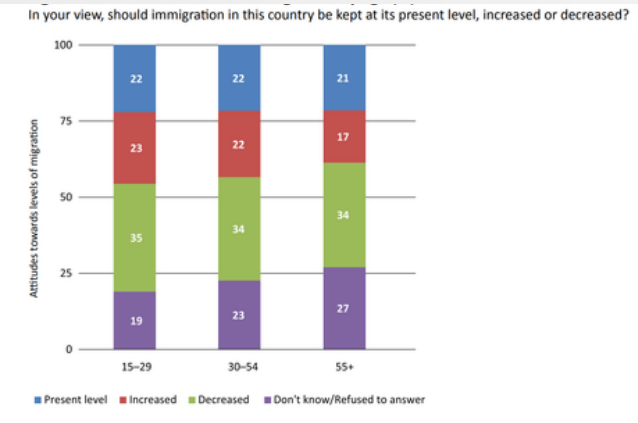


Fig. 14 Attitudes towards immigration by age (%)
Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), How the World Views Migration

Public opinion data measuring global attitudes towards immigration reflects this dynamic. Younger generations, who have grown up in a society valuing globalism and diversity, consistently express more positive views toward immigration. In countries such as Japan and South Korea, this "youth effect" suggests that lived experience with diversity may gradually reshape national attitudes and political priorities even in historically closed and more conservative societies.[39]

Finally, this approach notes that immigration benefits the next generation by setting them up for success within the world they will inherit. Today's students will enter a global society that is more interconnected, diverse, and unpredictable than any previous generation. Exposure to diversity improves cognitive flexibility, communication skills, and cultural awareness – traits that are vital to future success.[40] Children who are raised in communities that embrace immigration are given the gift of experiencing social environments that set them up to learn what it means to belong, participate, and lead.[41]

When immigration is understood as an investment in national vitality, it is necessary for countries to demonstrate welcoming values. Accordingly, this approach emphasizes the importance of protecting immigrants through strong labor rights, access to legal protections, structured support, and pathways to permanent status. These policies safeguard migrants from exploitation while reinforcing standards for everyone. As South Korea's President Lee said, "how a society treats those in weak and precarious positions reflects its level of dignity."[42] Protecting immigrants signals a commitment to dignity and equality, serving as a demonstration of national values and a beacon for attracting newcomers. Furthermore, these protections help foster a culture in which all – immigrants and native-born citizens – are treated more fairly.

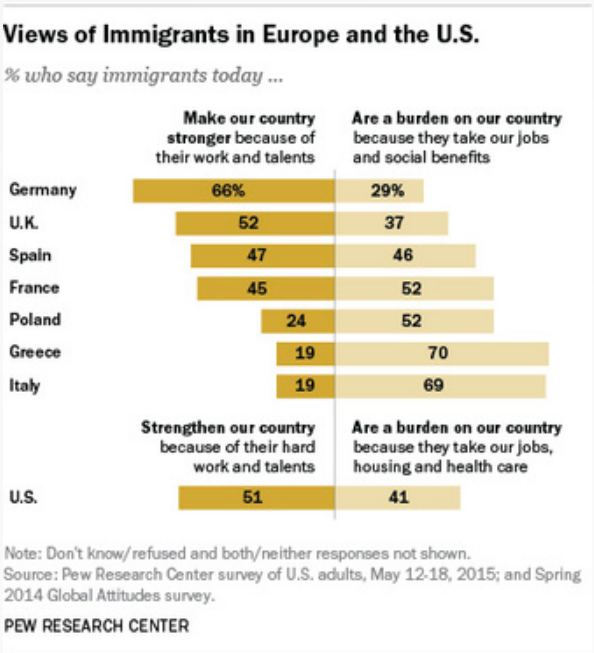


Fig. 15

What Should We Do?

1. **Support the integration and inclusion of immigrants:** Integration policies, such as publicly funded language training, cultural orientation, and credential recognition, are foundational to achieving successful immigration outcomes. This type of support ensures immigrants can actively participate in their new country's workforce and society from the start. Investment in these programs creates mutual benefits: immigrants can contribute their skills to the economy, engage meaningfully in their communities, and develop deep roots in their adopted country.

2. **Ease pathways toward permanent residency and citizenship:** While temporary immigration through work, student, and travel visas may offer temporary boosts to the economy, it is vital for long-term sustainability to encourage immigrants to invest in their communities and participate fully in society. To support a push for long-term migration, states should establish straightforward pathways toward permanent residency and citizenship. This could include structured transitions from temporary work or study programs to permanent status, streamlined procedures for skilled workers, or residency programs that allow immigrants to apply for citizenship after a defined period.

3. **Improve protections for migrant workers:** Many immigration systems create dangerous power imbalances through employer-tied visas, which make immigrants vulnerable to exploitation, accepting unsafe conditions rather than risking deportation.[43] However, immigration policies that guarantee strong labor protections demonstrate that a country values fairness, dignity, and human rights. Protections – including fair wages, safe working conditions, reasonable hours, the right to unionize, and the ability to change employers without risking immigration status – make a nation an attractive destination for talented and motivated immigrants. When immigrants are treated as respected members of society with real autonomy, countries not only safeguard human rights but also strengthen workforce standards, civic trust, and social cohesion for all.

4. **Help immigrants go where they're needed most:** To revitalize struggling regions by keeping schools open, sustaining local businesses, and renewing civic life, countries may direct newcomers to specific areas based on local needs. By offering incentives such as bonus points in migration systems, visa advantages, or faster pathways to permanent residency, governments can reward immigrants who choose to live and work in communities actively seeking new residents. This benefits both communities and immigrants, offering opportunities to integrate into welcoming communities.

Tradeoffs and Drawbacks

1. **Influx of Low-Skilled Workers:** A lack of selectivity in the immigration process and greater fluidity around employer sponsorship risks admitting large numbers of low-skilled workers into already oversaturated job markets, when the country could benefit more from highly educated, economically productive immigrants.

2. **Erosion of Social Cohesion:** If immigration grows without protections or societal support, communities may become more divided rather than more unified. When people mainly interact within their own cultural or social groups, trust and participation in shared civic life can decline. This risks creating separate communities living side by side instead of a strong, shared public identity.

3. **Risks Loss of Primary Culture of Host Country:** Rapid diversification – especially in societies with historically strong shared traditions – risks shifting dominant social norms. This shift may cause longstanding traditions, languages, and social practices to be marginalized or gradually displaced.

4. **Strain on System Capacity:** Immigration flows without structured guidance can place added pressure on resources, jobs, and infrastructure. This risks intensifying competition for limited resources and overburdening systems designed to support local populations, such as housing, healthcare, and social services, particularly in regions already facing capacity constraints.

5. **National Security Vulnerabilities:** Streamlined or accelerated immigration processes with reduced oversight may create gaps in vetting that increase the risk of admitting individuals who pose security threats.

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