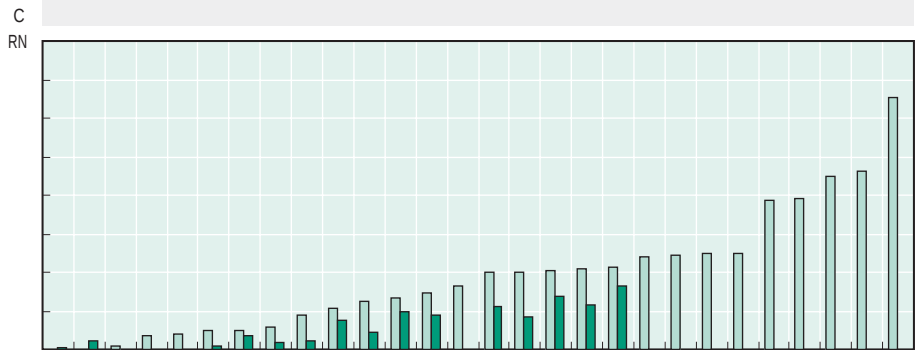


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On the other hand, there has been a significant improvement in the availability of comparable migration stock data. For the 2000 census round, virtually all OECD countries have identified both the foreign and foreign-born resident populations in their censuses. As a result it is now possible to compare on a common basis the size of the immigrant populations in OECD countries, as well as the extent of expatriation within the OECD area (see Dumont and Lemaitre (2004) and Chart 1). Why is it so difficult to get the international picture right with respect to the extent of migration flows? This Brief, which deals only with legal migration, as measured in the statistics of the receiving countries, explains the reasons and proposes some practical steps that could be taken to improve the situation.

## **he regulation of international migration movements**

All OECD countries regulate the movements of non-nationals to a greater or lesser extent. Nationals enjoy the right of free movement, both with respect to entry into or departure from their home country. This right, however, does not preclude the registration of their movements, such as is commonly done in countries where there exist population registers (see below). In almost all countries, certain non-nationals are accorded the right of free entry and of stay for short periods, as part of reciprocal agreements between countries. Most other non-nationals require an entry visa before they can enter the territory of a receiving state. The visa generally only accords the right to stay in the country for a short period of time, often three months. The right of free entry and stay may be extended, both in time and in scope, to include the right of residence and the exercise of an economic activity, either as part of regional agreements (Australia/New Zealand, the Nordic countries) or broader supra-national political or economic unions (the European Union).

The right of a non-national to stay or reside in a country for a more extended period manifests itself through the granting of a residence permit. The criteria considered in assessing whether or not to grant a permit generally include the candidate's reasons for wishing to stay in the country, which can vary from extended visit, study, family

training, or to find refuge from persecution, among other reasons. The international recommendations include a detailed classification of entries and departures by reason for migration. In what follows, the focus will be initially on the characterisation of migration by duration, which is how most statistics are currently generated, before returning in the final section to the possibilities for describing (and indeed, harmonising) migration movements in terms of the reasons for movement.

## National statistics on international migration



In almost all countries there exists a duration threshold that identifies who is to be considered a migrant in statistical estimates of migration inflows and outflows. The fundamental problems with respect to harmonisation of the statistics of international migration are that the threshold varies from country to country, that permit durations for the same type of migration may differ across countries and that in many cases it appears extremely difficult to adapt or change national data sources to allow for the production of international statistics using a common threshold.



In what follows, attention will be focused largely on the immigration of persons of foreign nationality. Migration involves both inflows and outflows, but because outflows are generally unregulated, the problems in their measurement tend to be even greater than for inflows. Likewise, migration involves not just movements of non-citizens (foreigners) but also of citizens (nationals) and a complete picture needs to take these latter flows into account as well. For the most part, however, it is the immigration of foreigners that tends to be most closely monitored in OECD countries and which is the object of most policy concerns. Indeed, it is statistics on the movements of foreigners which are published regularly in the OECD's *Education at a Glance* (OECD 2004). If a focus on the immigration of foreigners seems a

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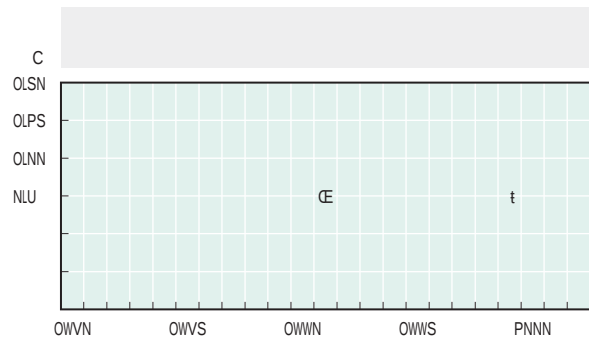
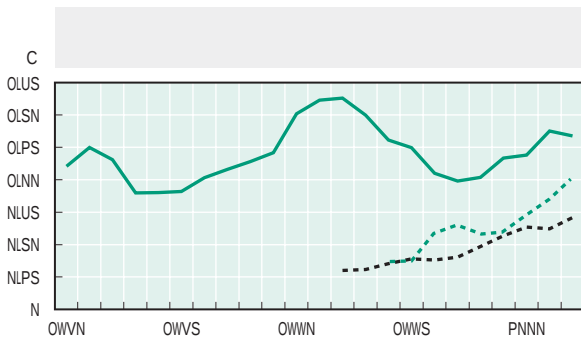
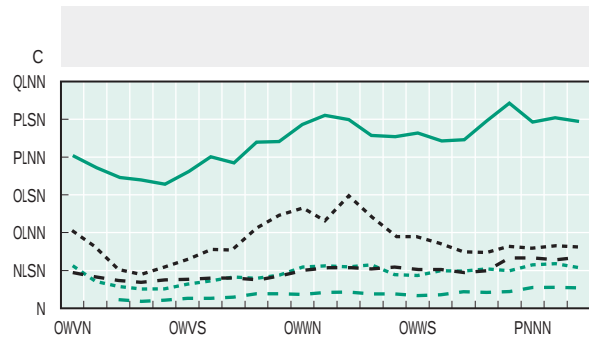
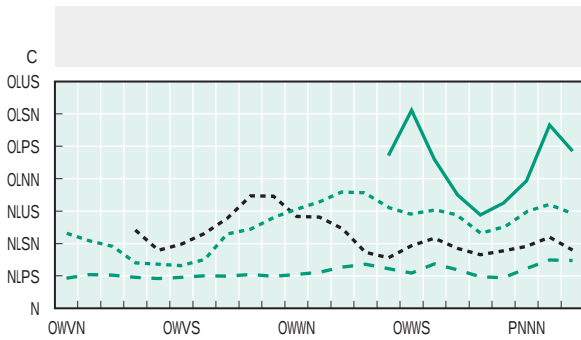
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minimum duration during the year. This minimum duration can vary from one year in France and Switzerland to unlimited duration in some of the so-called settlement countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States). In some cases, persons receiving permits of unlimited duration may have entered in a previous year under a temporary permit and changed status to a permanent one during the current year. In recent years, over half of the persons receiving "green cards" in the United States, for example, were already present in

the country, having entered previously under another (temporary) status.

The granting of a permanent residence permit to an immigrant upon entry is unusual in most OECD countries, except perhaps for refugees resettled under the Geneva Convention (and those that are transferred from UNHCR refugee camps for settlement into receiving countries). Indeed, outside of the settlement countries, most residence permits granted by OECD countries upon



entry are of limited duration. Certain types of temporary permits may be more or less automatically renewed, for example if the holder is working or looking for work, and a longer term permit obtained after several years in the country, but the legal right of permanent residence may be granted only after a long stay in the country or indeed upon the acquisition of the nationality of the country in question.

Although initial residence permits in a particular country may all be of limited duration, this does not imply that all migration is viewed as temporary in the first instance. Certain types of temporary permits place the recipient on a "track" that could eventually lead to permanent residence and are recognized as such. In France and Switzerland, for example, persons receiving one-year permits upon entry are often referred to as "permanent immigrants" or "permanent residents". The residence status of persons on such a "permanent track" is different from that of, say, international students or seasonal workers, who also receive temporary permits, but whose stay is intended to be temporary and whose permits are renewable a limited number of times, if at all.

Chart 2 shows immigration inflow rates for persons of foreign nationality, where countries have been grouped together according to the expected duration of stay or the

duration of the residence permit. The first group relates to countries in which inflows refer to permits of unlimited duration; the second to countries for which the inflows concern all movements longer than a specified (short) duration; and the third and fourth, to those for whom the duration is one year or more.

In countries which only count persons granted permanent residence permits as immigrants, international students, for example, would not be considered immigrants. By contrast, in countries where immigrants are persons intending to stay for more than a short period, international students typically fit this bill and would be counted as immigrants. The numbers here are not small. For example, for the United States close to 234 000 new visas were issued in 2002 to students from abroad, whereas in Germany the

to be regulated, there are generally good sources available to measure their inflows. However, this is not necessarily the case for inflows of citizens and for outflows in general. Nonetheless, estimates for both of these are produced in various ways (see OECD 2004) and a figure for net migration is generated on a regular basis in practically all countries. From these statistics, one can see, for example, that migration in most OECD countries accounts for a high proportion of current population increase (Chart 3).

Note that there are rarely any questions raised about the comparability of the statistics of net migration. The reason is that because net migration is obtained by subtracting





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