

OVERVIEW OF ESTONIAN MIGRATION STATISTICS

2014-2018



This overview of Estonian migration statistics provides answers to the following questions:

- What characterises the emigration and return migration of Estonian citizens?
- How many visas and temporary residence permits were issued and to whom?
- Who came to live in Estonia and for what reasons?
- Where did the foreigners move to live in Estonia?
- How many persons were granted international protection and which nationalities they had?
- Who were granted long-term residence permits and permanent rights of residence?
- Who became Estonian citizens?
- Who became e-residents?
- How many foreigners participated in the welcoming programme?

The overview was **prepared** by the Ministry of the Interior and the European Migration Network Estonian Contact Point.
Design by PauPau Design.

Introduction

In the last four years, more people are coming to live, work, or study in Estonia, and more and more Estonians are returning to Estonia. Until 2014, the net migration was still negative (−2,642 and −733, respectively), but since 2015, it has been consistently in a positive trend. For example, in 2018, according to the data of Statistics Estonia, the population decreased by 1,400 people due to rate of natural increase (the number of deaths exceeded births) and increased by 6,090 thanks to a positive emigration balance (more people came to Estonia to live than left Estonia). The total population of Estonia increased by almost 0.4% in 2018.

*The data for 2018 are preliminary numbers, as Statistics Estonia will publish the specified population with population events (migration, births, and deaths) in May 2019.

The purpose of this publication is to give a brief overview of Estonian migration statistics in 2014–2018.

It is important to note that in 2016, Statistics Estonia introduced a new population calculation methodology. Previously, only the population register data was used, but now, migration is measured by the residency index, which evaluates people's activity in registers and assesses on this basis the likelihood of a person's residence being in Estonia in that year.¹

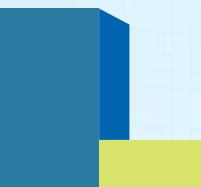
¹ Quarterly Estonian Statistics. (2017). Statistics Estonia

Migration balance

immigration
emigration

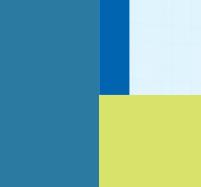
2014

3,904 4,637 1,733



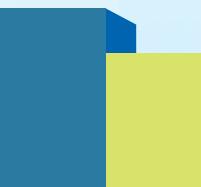
2015

15,413 13,003 2,410



2016

14,822 13,792 1,030



2017

17,616 12,358 5,258



2018

13,030 6,940 6,090



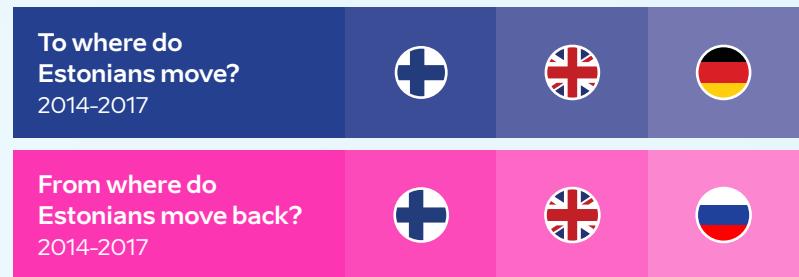
1.

Emigration and return migration of Estonian citizens

During the period of 2014–2017, the number of Estonian emigrants (30,426) exceeded the number of Estonians who returned (26,278), but in 2017, more people returned to Estonia than left the country. More men than women took part in emigration and return migration. Estonians have mainly moved to Finland, The United Kingdom, and Germany. The number of people moving to Finland was more than nine times higher than the number of people moving to The United Kingdom. The majority of return migrants were also from Finland, The United Kingdom, but also Russia.

*Statistics Estonia will publish its data for the year 2018 by June 2019, so it is not yet reflected in this overview..

Emigration of Estonian citizens



Return migration of Estonian citizens

total women men



2

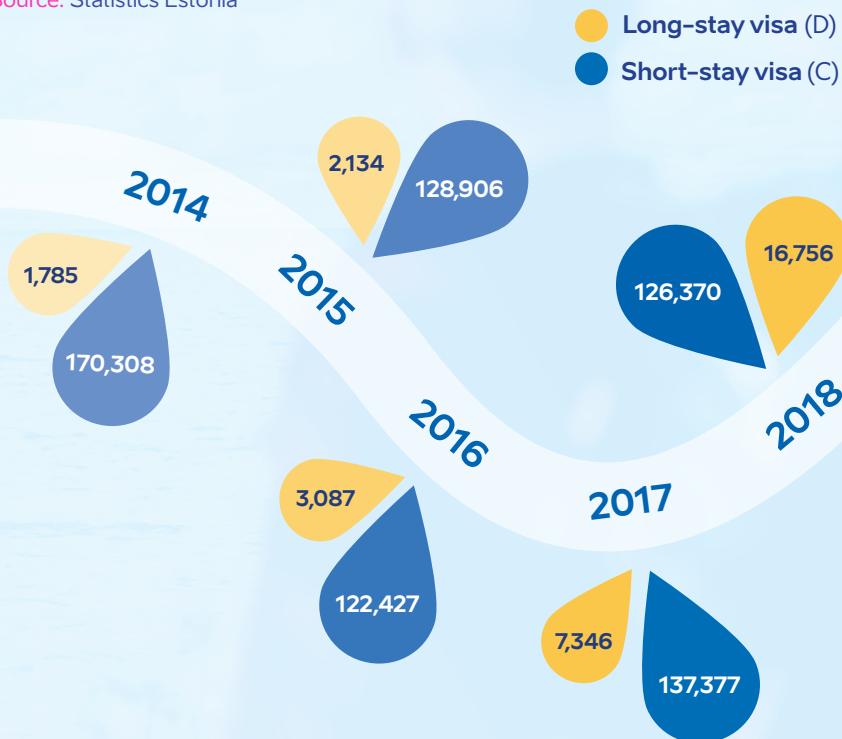
Visas

A uniform Schengen visa (visa type C) allows one to move throughout the Schengen area for up to 90 days in 180 days.

A long-stay visa (visa type D) is issued for staying in Estonia for up to twelve consecutive months for up to 365 days. A long-stay visa is a national visa entitling one to move throughout the Schengen area for up to 90 days within 180 days.

Visas issued by Estonia in 2014-2018

Source: Statistics Estonia



TOP 5 purposes for issuing visas:

Tourism

Visiting relatives

Business trip / work

Sports

Culture

Visas issued by Estonia in 2018

Short-stay (Schengen) visas (C visas)		Long-stay visas (D visas)	
Total	TOP 5 citizenships	Total	TOP 5 citizenships
126,370	Russia Belarus Ukraine China India	16,756	Ukraine Russia Belarus India Turkey

Source: Ministry of the Interior

Short-term work

Foreigners temporarily staying in Estonia (e.g. on the basis of a visa or visa waiver) can work in Estonia if the right to work arises directly from the law or an international agreement or if the short-term employment has previously been registered by the employer at the Police and Border Guard Board.

Generally, short-term employment can be registered for up to 365 days over a 455-day period. Since 2014, the number of short-term registrations has steadily increased: in 2017, the number increased four times and in 2018, it reached 19,858 registrations.

Registration of short-term employment in 2014-2018

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
963	1,086	1,782	7,584	19,858

TOP 5 citizenships in 2018

Ukraine	Belarus	Russia	Moldova	India
15,524	1,112	864	857	194

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

3.

Who came to live in Estonia?

Temporary residence permit:

A temporary residence permit is a permit granted to a foreigner to settle in Estonia. A temporary residence permit may be issued to a foreigner to settle with a spouse or close relative, for studying, working, entrepreneurship, participating in criminal proceedings, in the case of substantial national interest, on the basis of a treaty, or for settling permanently in Estonia. A temporary residence permit is valid for up to 5 years and can be extended for up to 10 years.

TOP 5 citizenships in 2018

First-time temporary residence permits and rights of residence for the family members of EU citizens	Ukraine 1,628	Russia 1,034	Belarus 224	India 216	Nigeria 180
EU citizens who have registered their residence	Finland 712	Latvia 706	Germany 524	Italy 329	France 284

Sources: Police and Border Guard Board and the population register



Temporary right of residence:

Citizens of the European Union acquire a temporary right of residence for up to 5 years upon registration of their place of residence in the population register. The temporary right of residence is automatically extended for 5 years if the place of residence of the EU citizen is still registered in Estonia. Third-country family members of a citizen of the European Union who wish to reside in Estonia must apply for a temporary right of residence and its extension.

4

Why did foreigners come to Estonia?

The statistics of first-time temporary residence permits show that most foreigners come to Estonia to work, study, or due to family migration. Family migration means a person joining a spouse or a close relative who is already living in Estonia.

In recent years, the highest number of residence permits has been issued for employment. In 2018, the number was 1,850.

First-time temporary residence permits and rights of residence of the family members of EU citizens in 2014–2018

Reason	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Family migration	1,105	1,195	1,233	1,184	1,662
Employment	804	1,216	1,325	1,501	1,850
Entrepreneurship	25	23	16	53	87
Studying	793	1,009	1,160	1,211	1,267
Family members of EU citizens	29	36	35	42	57
Other	86	70	46	46	46
Total	2,842	3,549	3,815	4,037	4,969

Sources: Police and Border Guard Board

*Other – participation in criminal proceedings, international agreement, permanently settling in Estonia

Types of migration in 2018



Work migration

First-time temporary residence permits for employment on the basis of type of employment in 2018

Basis of decision	Number of residence permits
Pursuant to general procedure	1,224
Top specialist	228
Working in a start-up	186
Expert/adviser/consultant	58
Research activity / lecturer	40
Member of a governing body of a legal person in private law	37
Sportsman/coach/referee	21
EU Blue Card	19
Minister of religion / nun / monk	18
Creative worker	11
Teacher	7
Long-term residence permit of an EU Member State	1
TOTAL	1,850

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

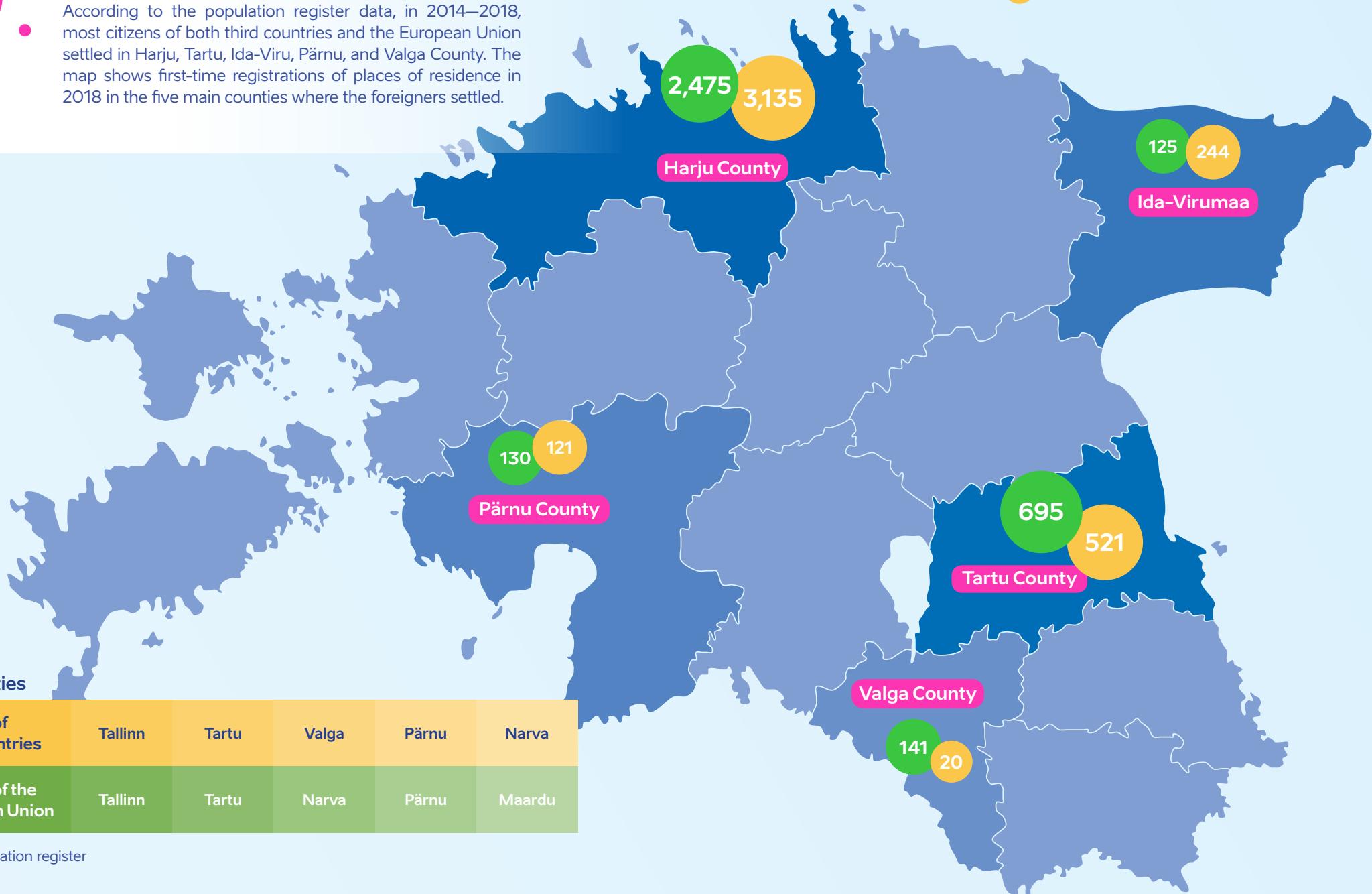
The number of applications for a residence permit for entrepreneurship is increasing, as well as the share of foreigners working in Estonian start-ups. One of the reasons is that in 2017, several changes in the law were made to facilitate start-up migration. The changes enable prospective start-ups to come to Estonia for the sake of economic development in Estonia and to recruit foreign workforce under more favorable conditions.

5.

Where did the foreigners move to live in Estonia?

According to the population register data, in 2014–2018, most citizens of both third countries and the European Union settled in Harju, Tartu, Ida-Viru, Pärnu, and Valga County. The map shows first-time registrations of places of residence in 2018 in the five main counties where the foreigners settled.

- citizens of the European Union
- citizens of third countries



Source: Population register

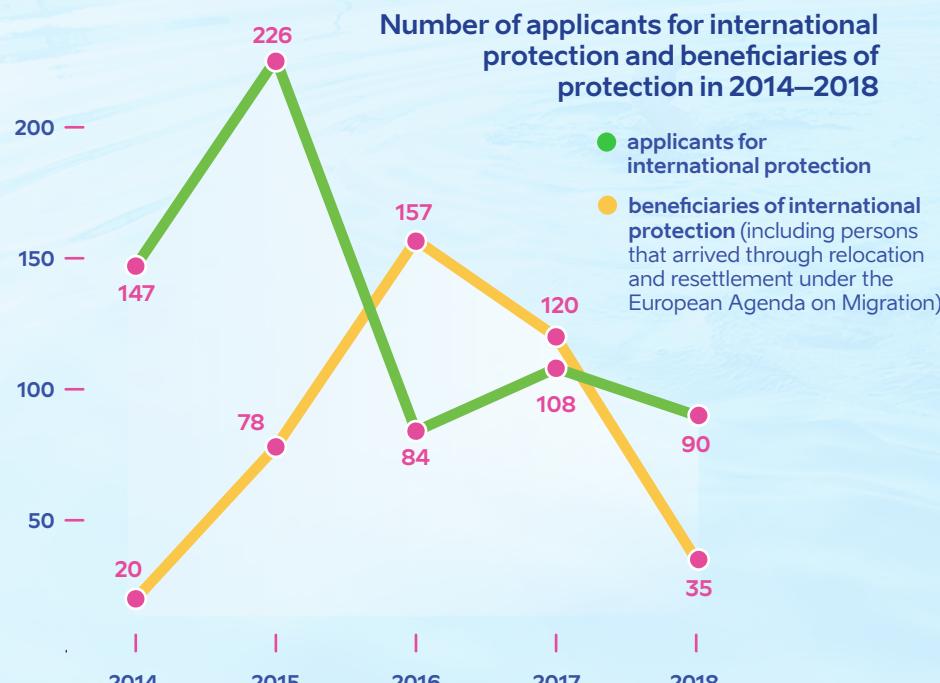
6

International protection

A beneficiary of international protection is a foreigner who has been recognised as a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection and who has been granted an Estonian residence permit.

In recent years, the number of applicants for international protection has remained stable and relatively low, rising only in 2015, when the Ukrainian war broke out. The number of beneficiaries of protection has also remained low (refugee status + subsidiary protection status), to which people with international protection needs under the European Agenda on Migration have been added since 2016.

Since 1997, 1,101 foreigners have applied for international protection from Estonia and 481 foreigners have been granted international protection, among whom are 206 people who arrived to Estonia through relocation and resettlement under the European Agenda on Migration (as at 31 December 2018).



Source: Police and Border Guard Board

The **refugee status** is given to a person for whom it has been identified that they are well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion and they have been granted protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees.

Subsidiary protection is given to people who do not qualify as refugees but whose return or repatriation may pose a serious risk to them (e.g., death penalty, torture, other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, international or national armed conflict).

MOST APPLICANTS HAVE BEEN FROM



SYRIA



UKRAINE



GEORGIA



RUSSIA



AFGHANISTAN

Applying for international protection



AT A BORDER CROSSING POINT

One can apply for international protection at any border crossing point on the border of the Republic of Estonia before entering the country. This is usually done when the person needs protection, but does not have a valid visa, travel documents, or an Estonian residence permit.



AT A SERVICE POINT OF THE POLICE AND BORDER GUARD BOARD

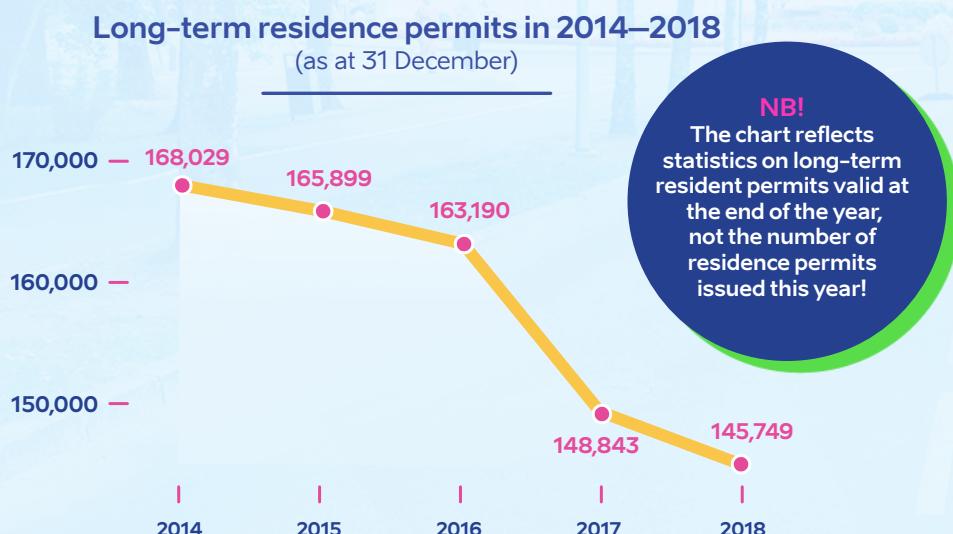
If the person is already in Estonia, the application is submitted at a service point of the Police and Border Guard Board.

7.

Long-term residence permits

A long-term residence permit may be granted if a third-country citizen has resided in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit for at least five years, has a valid temporary residence permit and a permanent legal income, is insured, has registered their place of residence, and speaks Estonian at least at the B1 level.

The statistics also include people with undetermined citizenship (so-called 'grey' passport holders). However, the number of people with undetermined citizenship has decreased in Estonia: the main reason is the acquisition of citizenship of Estonia or another country.



TOP 5 citizenships of long-term residence permit recipients as at 31 December 2018

Russia	Undetermined citizenship	Ukraine	Belarus	United States of America
76,830	63,228	3,717	1,013	180

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

Permanent right of residence of a citizen of the European Union

A citizen of the European Union and his/her family member who is third-country national who has lived in Estonia for 5 consecutive years on the basis of a temporary right of residence has the right to apply for permanent right of residence.

NB!
The chart reflects statistics on permanent rights of residence of EU citizens valid at the end of the year, not the number of rights of residence issued this year!

Permanent rights of residence of EU citizens and family members of EU citizens in 2014–2018 (as at 31 December)



Permanent rights of residence of EU citizens and family members of EU citizens in 2014–2018 (as at 31 December)

Latvia	Finland	Lithuania	Sweden	The United Kingdom
2,014	1,923	1,363	347	347

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

8.

Who became Estonian citizens?

In 2014–2018, Estonian citizenship was granted to 5,933 people through naturalisation, of whom 3,178 were women and 2,755 were men. During the period of observation, the most citizenships were granted by naturalisation to people with undetermined citizenship, but also to citizens of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and Latvia.

Applying for citizenship

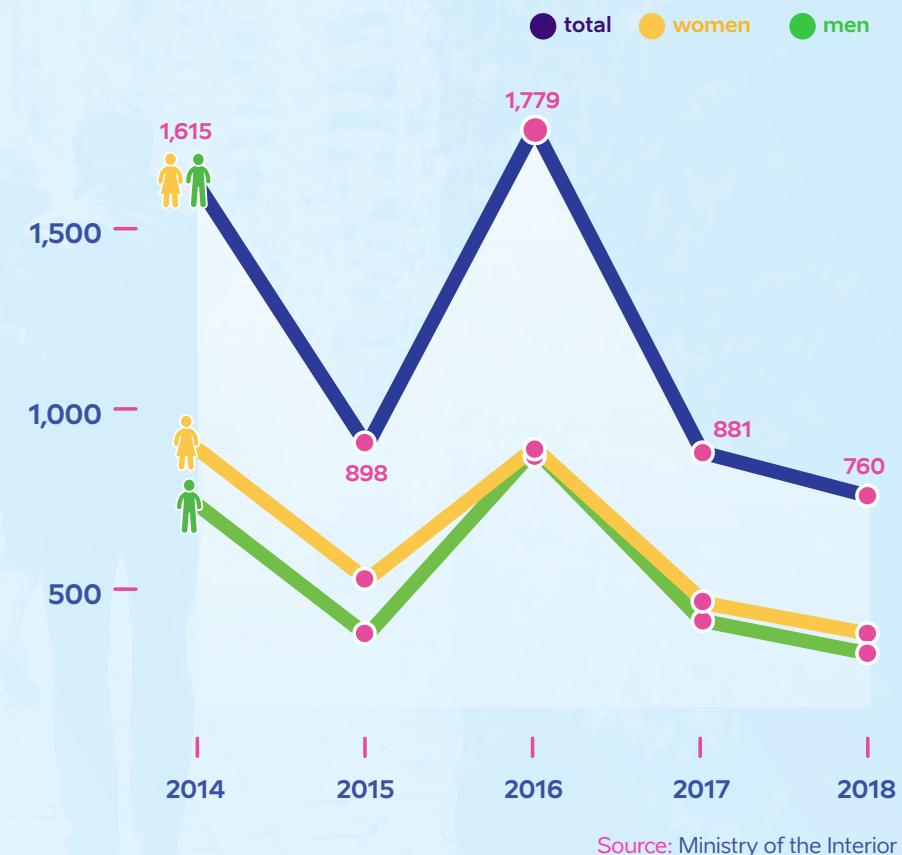


How to become an Estonian citizen?

Acquisition and resumption of Estonian citizenship:

- Estonian citizenship is acquired by a child by birth if at least one of their parent is an Estonian citizen at the time of the birth.
- Estonian citizenship is acquired by naturalisation and restored to a person who has lost Estonian citizenship as a minor.
- From 2016, Estonian citizenship is also granted to a child born in Estonia from the moment of their birth if their parents are not citizens of any country and have legally lived in Estonia for at least five years by the moment of the child's birth.

Acquiring citizenship by naturalisation



9.

E-residency

Estonia is the first and currently the only country in the world to offer e-residency. From December 2014, Estonia grants e-residency and with it, the possibility for nationally guaranteed and secure identification, and issues an identity document — a digital ID for an e-resident, which gives foreigners the opportunity to arrange matters digitally and wherever they are.

In addition to establishing a company, Estonian e-residents can make e-banking transactions, have access to international payment service providers, file a tax return electronically, remotely control a company, and digitally sign documents and contracts. They will have needs-based access to the Estonian e-government services.

Source: Enterprise Estonia

In 2014–2018 there were

50 634

e-residents, including

12% 

88% 

Citizenships



Positive decisions on issuing digital IDs for e-residents in 2014–2018

Year	Total number of digital IDs issued	TOP 5 citizenships
2014	114	Finland Russia USA Latvia Lithuania
2015	7,129	Finland Russia USA Italy Ukraine
2016	7,515	Finland UK Russia USA Ukraine
2017	13,461	Ukraine Finland Germany UK Russia
2018	22,415	Japan Russia China Ukraine Germany

Source: Police and Border Guard Board

10.

Kohanemisprogramm

The welcoming programme is a training programme offered by the Estonian state that helps foreigners who have arrived in Estonia to settle in more easily and understand local life. In the programme, it is possible to learn Estonian and get acquainted with topics related to work, studying, and family. The trainings take place in English and Russian and mainly in Tallinn, Tartu, and Narva.

Foreigners can participate in the welcoming programme if they have lived in Estonia for less than 5 years, are third-country citizens or family members of EU citizens, and have a temporary residence permit or temporary right of residence. EU citizens can participate in the programme if they have registered their place of residence in Estonia and therefore acquired a temporary right of residence.

The welcoming programme launched in August 2015 and by the end of 2018, 4,202 participants had attended the training courses.

The welcoming programme consists of **primary-level Estonian language learning** and seven thematic training modules that last for a one day: **the basic module, work and entrepreneurship, studying, research, family, children and young people, and international protection.**



Participants

So far, women have been slightly more active in participating: by the end of 2018, the proportion of women participating in the programme was 52% and that of men 48%. Additionally, women were more active in participating in several different training modules. The most popular course is basic-level Estonian language learning.



Participants in the training programme

Year	Total attendance	TOP 5 citizenships
2015 (from 1 August)	298	Ukraine Russia Nigeria Belarus Iran
2016	1,210	Russia Ukraine Syria Finland Latvia
2017	1,215	Russia Ukraine Belarus Syria Latvia
2018	1,479	Russia Ukraine India Nigeria Belarus

