

Marked increase in recent years in the number of illegal immigrants

For the first time, a scientific analysis has been carried out of the number of illegal immigrants living in Denmark.

The findings reveal that the number of illegal immigrants is greater than hitherto assumed, indicative of a considerable rise in such immigration in recent years. While it is estimated that there were around 15,000 illegal immigrants in Denmark in 2008, the number had increased to more than double that in 2013, standing at approximately 33,000.

The new analysis has been conducted by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, and is based on police records of illegal immigrants. The calculations are made on the basis of registrations of immigrants that the police have encountered and charged with residing or working illegally in Denmark. Statistical methods have been used to extrapolate from these figures to estimate the size of the population of illegal immigrants in the country.

As Figure 1 shows, it is not possible to give a very precise estimate on the basis of the available information, but only to indicate a range of figures within a specified *confidence interval*. This shows the estimated maximum and minimum probable sizes of the population. In 2008 the number is estimated to have been between 9,000 and 21,000. In 2010 the population of illegal immigrants was smaller, between 7,000 and 16,000. Since then the figure has increased dramatically, and in 2013 stood at between 20,000 and 49,000.

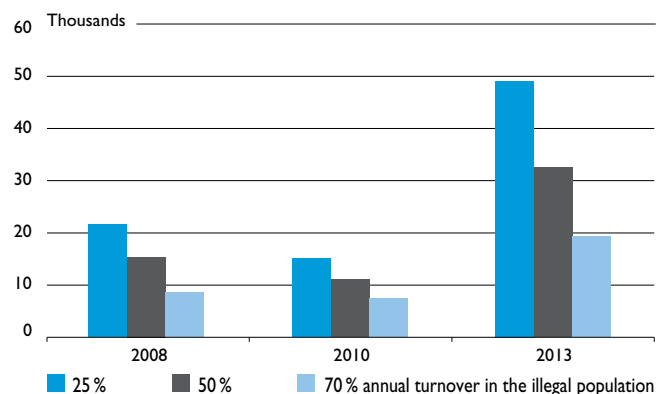
A clear trend

According to Torben Tranæs, Research Director at the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, this analysis represents a first attempt at a statistical calculation of the number of people living or working illegally in Denmark.

‘Until now, the only figures available have been police estimates. We have gone a step further and made a calculation on the basis of the police records. This does not remove the uncertainty inherent in the estimates, but it does provide a more soundly based figure. We have applied a tried and tested statistical method that is used in many contexts where the size of a hidden population – or one that is hard to register – is to be calculated,’ Torben Tranæs explains.

The most uncertain factors related to the calcu-

FIGURE 1
Estimated numbers of active illegal immigrants in Denmark



SOURCE: DEN ILLEGALE INDVANDRING TIL EUROPA – OG TIL DANMARK, ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT AND GYLDENDAL, 2014.

Note: ‘Active illegal immigrants’ are those who either work illegally, or who reside illegally in the country and break other laws and regulations as well.

Estimates of how many illegal immigrants there are in Denmark are subject to a degree of uncertainty. The best presumption is that there is an annual turnover in the illegal population of approximately 50%. This would mean that in 2008 there were around 15,000 illegal immigrants in the country, falling to 11,000 in 2010. Thereafter there was a heavy increase, and a likely figure for 2013 is 33,000.

lations are the size of the annual turnover in the total illegal population, and the proportion of those charged by the police who return after deportation.

Danish and Norwegian studies suggest that different groups among the illegal immigrants have very different levels of mobility. For example, it is likely that people who are in the country illegally in order to work are highly mobile, while rejected asylum-seekers are not.

‘Different assumptions can be made concerning remigration and population turnover rates, and for this reason we can only present figures with a very wide margin of uncertainty. Nevertheless, it is very clear that the numbers have increased in recent years,’ adds Torben Tranæs.

A variety of aspects of illegal immigration are dealt with in this newsletter, including illegal immigration to Denmark for work purposes, and the main nationalities of those charged by the police with illegal residence and working illegally.

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Who needs a permit to work legally in Denmark?

Nationals of countries outside the Nordic region, the EU, the EEC or Switzerland normally need a permit to work in Denmark. Work permits may be granted with certain restrictions. For example, students are allowed to work only 15 hours per week, though they may work full-time during June, July and August. A work permit may also be restricted to allowing work only for a specific employer. It is a precondition for obtaining a work permit that the applicant should have a residence permit for Denmark.

A person who has been granted a residence permit as a refugee, for family reunification, or for humanitarian reasons, does not need a separate permit to work in Denmark.

Au pairs are not allowed to work for anyone other than their host families. EU nationals must register with the Immigration Service if they work in Denmark.

Who may reside in Denmark?

EU and EEC nationals may remain in Denmark for up to three months without a permit. If they expect to remain in the country for more than three months, they must apply for a residence permit from The State Administration. This may be granted if they are looking for work during their stay, in the first instance for up to six months, and thereafter for as long as they can document that they are still looking for work and that there is a real prospect of their finding employment.

Nationals of countries in the Nordic region can travel freely to Denmark and may reside and work in the country. They do not need either residence or work permits.

Nationals of many developing countries are normally required to obtain a visa before entering Denmark. Such a visa will be subject to a maximum time limit of 90 days, and will normally be valid throughout the Schengen area.

Nationals of some countries are exempted from visa requirements. A list of countries whose nationals must obtain a visa and those whose nationals need not do so can be found at <http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/>.

Many more illegal immigrants in Denmark since 2010

The number of illegal immigrants in Denmark decreased in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, but 2010 marked a turning point in the trend, with numbers rising again steeply thereafter.

The precise number is unknown, but while it is likely that there were fewer than 15,000 people in Denmark illegally in 2010, the best estimate places the figure for 2013 at 33,000, suggesting that the illegal population more than doubled in the space of three years.

These are some of the findings presented in the book *Den illegale indvandring til Europa – og til Danmark (Illegal immigration to Europe – and to Denmark)*, published in 2014 by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.

Since illegal immigrants do not register with or make themselves known to the authorities, for obvious reasons, it is clearly difficult to state their exact number – there is nowhere that this information can simply be looked up.

Consequently, it is necessary to resort to other methods to estimate the numbers with any degree of accuracy, and also to calculate the level of uncertainty associated with the estimate.

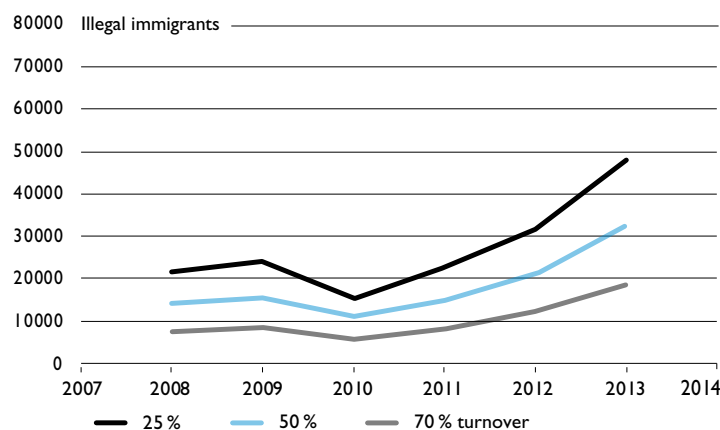
The estimates in the analysis are based on the records that the police maintain of the people they have apprehended at their checkpoints. These definite but limited figures are then processed using a statistical method to produce provisional but nevertheless soundly-based estimates of the full population.

Methodology

The method used for these calculations of illegal immigrant numbers is called a *capture-recapture estimate*. It was initially developed for use in an entirely different context, and it is applied, for example, to calculating the size of the trout population in a lake through repeat registrations of identified individual fish.

By and large, the method can be transferred to the counting of all kinds of concealed populations. In other words, it is possible to work out how many illegal immigrants there are in Denmark from the number of repeat offenders registered by the police. The more often the same people are apprehended, the fewer illegal immigrants there probably are – just as we can almost be sure that we are in a small town if we keep meeting the same people again and again.

FIGURE 2
Numbers of active illegal immigrants with turnovers of 25, 50 and 70 percent



SOURCE: DEN ILLEGALE INDVANDRING TIL EUROPA – OG TIL DANMARK, ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT AND GYLDENDAL, 2014.

One unknown factor in the statistical method used to calculate the numbers of illegal immigrants is the level of turnover. Consequently, there is a relatively large spread between the maximum and minimum estimates for each given year. The figure shows the estimates assuming turnover levels of 25, 50 and 70 percent of the illegal population.

Nevertheless, there are two reasons why it is still difficult to estimate the number of illegal immigrants.

The first is that it is not possible to make contact with a randomly selected sample group of illegal immigrants.

The police come into contact only with an element of the illegal population that is made up of people we can term *active illegal immigrants*. These are people who work illegally, or who behave in a way that makes it likely that they will be investigated by the police in the course of their regular duties.

This is clearly not the case for all illegal immigrants.

The second reason that measuring the number of illegal immigrants is difficult has to do with the length of time they are in the country. How many of those apprehended actually leave Denmark, or more accurately, how many of them come back again after deportation? How long do illegal immigrants spend in Denmark on average, and is that length of time affected by being apprehended and charged?

It is thus necessary to make assumptions about the length of stay, and consequently

about the rate of turnover in the illegal population. If turnover is high, and many of the illegal immigrants found do not return to Denmark, then the frequency of repeat encounters with the same individuals recorded by the police will be lower – not because the population is large, but because the probability of a repeat encounter is less.

However, the process is not completely a shot in the dark. If something is known about the composition of the group, this provides an indication of what the rate of turnover might be. Observation suggests that all else being equal, rejected asylum-seekers tend to remain in the country for a longer period than other illegal immigrants. In contrast, young men from Africa who come to Denmark in order to work are quick to move across borders.

The cautious estimates given in this newsletter are based on the assumption that there is a remigration rate/turnover of between 25 and 70 percent annually. In other words, there are at least one in four, and at most seven out of ten illegal immigrants who leave Denmark in the course of a year, or who do not return after being deported.

As Figure 2 shows, this range of possible turnover rates is precisely what leads to the uncertainty in the estimate. For 2013, for example, the best estimate of the size of the illegal immigrant population is 33,000, which is based on a turnover rate of 50 percent. However, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that the population might be only 20,000 (if the turnover rate is 70 percent), and similarly a population of 49,000 (with a turnover of 25 percent) cannot be ruled out.

Active illegal residents – a very select group

The analysis covers two categories of illegal immigrants – those who are working without a work permit, and those who are simply residing in Denmark illegally.

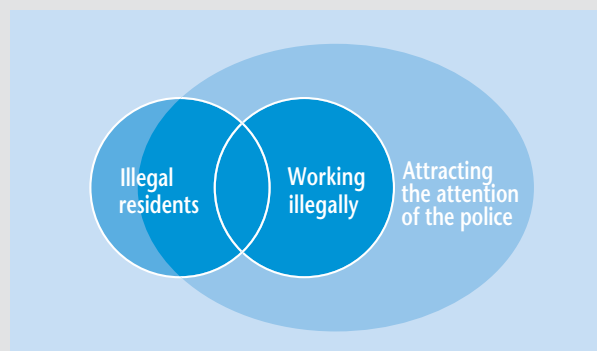
In order to be included in the sample used for the analysis, a person must appear in the police records. In other words, it is only those illegal immigrants who have had some contact with the police in the course of their normal duties and who have been charged with illegal residence, illegal working, or both, who are registered and who are therefore included in the analysis.

The analysis and the resulting estimates of the size of the population are thus based on this very limited known group. There may be immigrants who never

come into contact with the police – perhaps an elderly lady, for example, who is supported by her children, and who never emerges from their apartment. She is not an active illegal immigrant, and she is very unlikely to come to the attention of the police force.

The estimate of the size of the illegal population presented in this analysis corresponds to the dark blue area in the figure below.

The estimates in this analysis must therefore be viewed as conservative. Over and above the known, active illegal immigrants there is an additional, completely hidden population – but we have no idea of its size.



The police direct their efforts to countering many types of illegal activity, including illegal work. However, only active illegal immigrants attract their attention. Those illegal residents who do not work and who live their lives without breaking the law – other than by being in the country illegally – are unlikely to come into contact with the police, and are therefore not included in the estimates in this analysis.

One in five of the illegal immigrants charged with offences in Denmark comes from Russia, Pakistan or Kosovo

The countries of origin of the illegal immigrants who appear in the Danish police records will be surprising to some. It is not people from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East who top the list.

Most numerous among the illegal immigrants who come to the attention of the police are people from Russia, Pakistan and Kosovo.

This is documented in an analysis by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit. The analysis is based on police records of people who have no Danish civil registration numbers and who are apprehended because they are found working illegally, or who come to the attention of the police for some other reason.

The largest of these groups in 2013 comprised people from Russia and the Russian Federation, who made up 7.7 percent of recorded illegal immigrants. Almost as many – 7.5 percent of the total – came from Pakistan; and a further 6.3 percent of those apprehended by the police were from tiny Kosovo.

In total, people from these three places made up over 20 percent of the illegal immigrants apprehended by the police in Denmark; in other words, one illegal immigrant in five was of Russian, Pakistani or Kosovan origin.

Half are from refugee-sending countries

The analysis indicates that many of the illegal residents in Denmark come from refugee-sending countries but are in Denmark without a residence permit. They may be rejected asylum-seekers, or they may never have had any form of contact with the authorities.

On the basis of samples, it is estimated that nearly 50 percent of illegal immigrants are from typical refugee-sending countries/areas such as Syria, Lebanon, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Russian Federation (Chechnya), Pakistan and Kosovo. In

TABLE I
Most frequent countries of origin of illegal immigrants charged with offences in Denmark

Percent	2013
Russia (Russian Federation)	7.7
Pakistan	7.5
Kosovo	6.3
The Philippines	5.2
Vietnam	4.0
Thailand	3.5
India	3.3
Iran	3.3
Albania	3.2
Iraq	3.1
Algeria	3.0

SOURCE: DEN ILLEGALE INDVANDRING TIL EUROPA – OG TIL DANMARK, ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT AND GYLDENDAL, 2014.

The top 11 countries of origin of illegal immigrants to Denmark. Together, people from these countries make up half the illegal immigrant population.

total, there are around 30 nationalities on this list, plus refugees who are stateless or whose nationality is not recorded.

The last three nationalities on the list above – Russians, Pakistanis and Kosovans, who fill the top three places on the overall list of illegal immigrants apprehended – thus also feature on the list of people from typical refugee-sending countries.

Note that the full list of countries of origin of illegal immigrants runs to 147 entries, which means that a very large proportion of the nations of the world are represented among the illegal immigrant population of Denmark. Exactly the same situation is found in other Western European countries, and it reflects the significance of globalisation for international migration.

Many people charged with working illegally come from Nigeria and China

Some of the immigrants residing illegally in Denmark come to the country in order to work and earn money.

Among the people caught working illegally in Denmark, two nationalities are especially prominent: nearly 30 percent of these people come from either Nigeria or from China.

For many years, the police in Denmark have regularly checked up on illegal working, and Nigerians are the people most frequently caught working illegally. In 2013, nearly 17 percent of those apprehended were of Nigerian origin. In second place on the list were people from China, the world's the most populous nation. Nearly 12 percent of the people that the police found working illegally in Denmark in 2013 were Chinese.

It is surprising that Nigeria and China should account for such a large proportion of the illegal workers in Denmark. In contrast to, for example, Russia, Pakistan and Kosovo, neither of the two countries is particularly strongly represented on the list of nationalities simply living illegal-

ly in Denmark; less than three percent of all those charged with residing illegally in Denmark were of Nigerian origin, and less than two percent were from China. Thus, even though people from the two countries made up less than five percent of illegal immigrants in general, 30 percent of those charged with working illegally in Denmark were from Nigeria and China.

In other words, there is evidence to suggest that a very large proportion of the people who come to Denmark illegally from Nigeria and China, come in order to work. An alternative explanation for the figures might be that the police units which check up on illegal working take a particular interest in business sectors that tend to attract people of these two specific nationalities, but this possibility has not been investigated further.

Pakistanis are the third most frequently recorded nationality in this category, with around nine percent of the people found working illegally being from Pakistan. They are followed numerically by immigrants from Turkey, Ghana and India, with each nationality accounting for nearly four percent of those apprehended.

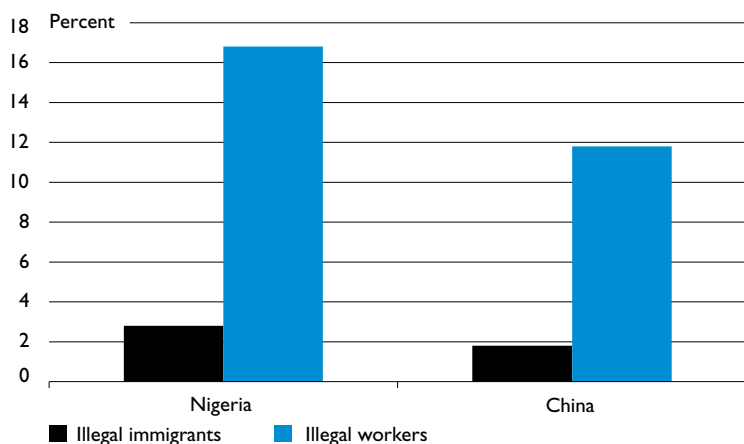
More work illegally

It is difficult to state the exact number of illegal workers in Denmark. None of the parties to the illegal labour market have any interest in obtaining the figures.

However, using a statistical calculation procedure as explained in the box on page 4, the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit estimates that there were around 10,000 people working illegally in Denmark in 2013, a considerably higher figure than the estimates for earlier years.

The best estimate for the year 2008 is that there were then around 2,800 illegal workers in Denmark, meaning that by 2013 the figure had increased more than threefold within the space of just six years. It is particularly interesting that this increase occurred during a period when the Danish labour market was in crisis, with falling rates of employment among Danes, and when there was a significant influx of legal labour from new EU member states.

FIGURE 3
Shares of illegal immigrants apprehended overall and of those charged with working illegally



SOURCE: DEN ILLEGALE INDVANDRING TIL EUROPA – OG TIL DANMARK, ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT AND GYLDENDAL, 2014.

The proportions of people charged with residing illegally in Denmark who come from Nigeria or China are not especially large. However, these two nationalities make up a very large share of those charged with working illegally, accounting in total for around 30% of the illegal workers apprehended in Denmark in 2013.

Men represent an increasing share of the illegal immigrants apprehended

The gender balance among illegal immigrants to Denmark appears to have shifted in recent years. Today, men represent a much larger proportion than previously of the illegal immigrants arrested.

This is revealed by an analysis of the charges filed by police against people residing or working illegally in Denmark.

It is hardly news that more men than women cross international borders to try their luck in other countries. However, police accounts indicate that there has been a marked change in the gender balance among illegal immigrants.

In 2007, women made up 33 percent of the illegal immigrants apprehended in Denmark, and men 67 percent. Since then, the gap between these proportions has increasingly widened, so that in 2013 the shares were 20 percent women and 80 percent men.

Or, to put it another way, in 2007 there were two men arrested for every woman apprehended, while in 2013 there proportion was four men to every one woman. In that year, 1,402 men and 353 women were arrested either for being in the country illegally or for working without a permit.

The average age of those apprehended was around 32 years, and that figure remained unchanged throughout the period covered by the analysis, namely 2007-13.

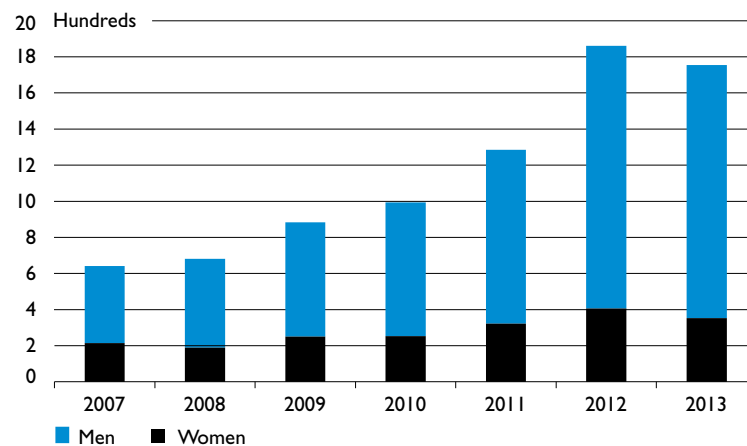
Men also dominate among illegal workers

In 2007 the police arrested equal numbers of men and women working illegally in Denmark.

Just as the balance of the sexes changed among those found residing illegal-

FIGURE 4

Number of people arrested for residing or working illegally in Denmark, by gender



SOURCE: DEN ILLEGALE INDVANDRING TIL EUROPA – OG TIL DANMARK, ROCKWOOL FOUNDATION RESEARCH UNIT AND GYLDENDAL, 2014.

In 2007 there was one woman to every two men recorded by the Danish police as being illegal immigrants. The proportion altered dramatically in subsequent years, and by 2013 there was one woman to every four men arrested for being in the country illegally.

ly in Denmark, so it changed towards a greater proportion of men among those charged with working illegally. In 2013, 72 percent of those arrested for working without a permit were men, and 28 percent women. Thus, there were almost three times as many men recorded working illegally as women.

The disproportionate number of men who are in Denmark illegally, whether working or just residing in the country, is in close accordance with findings from elsewhere in Europe.

A shadow population

The picture is the same all over the Western world. Illegal immigrants are often doing jobs that can only exist because the workers are in the country illegally. Jobs that are so unattractive to other people, for one reason or another, that they would disappear if there were no illegal immigrants to take them.

This is revealed by examining a number of studies of the working lives of people who are unable to take legal work in the countries where they live. Such people may be found, for example, scouring the streets of Copenhagen for bottles with a deposit on them, or picking grapes in southern Italy, or baby-sitting in Key West. What is common to all of them is that nearly the whole of the labour market is permanently closed to them.

Everything in the world is against these people. Generally they are unskilled, so they lack job-related qualifications. They may well have difficulty with the language of the country they are in. Without work permits, they are barred from work in the whole of the public sector and large sections of the private sector. Well-established private enterprises have entire departments whose work it is to ensure that every regulation and every agreement are fulfilled to the letter when a new person is employed. In addition, the trade unions do all they can to keep these people away.

Consequently, the labour market for illegal immigrants lies on the margins of society. These workers compete only to a very limited extent with the labour force in the country where they are living. In other words, there is nothing to suggest that the jobs of Danish workers are threatened by these illegal immigrants.

3-D jobs

The illegal immigrants find themselves at the very bottom of the work hierarchy, doing the things that no-one else wants to do. They have '3-D jobs' – Dirty, Dangerous and Degrading. Typically, wages are

low, and spells of employment are random and often short.

The expansion of the EU to the east has put some pressure on the illegal immigrants' labour market, because there are now more people competing for the same work. What is left is the most marginal of work, for example collecting bottles in Copenhagen to claim back the deposit on them. No work permit is needed to do that.

Various studies have indicated that illegal immigrants in Europe tend to work in one of four areas, with considerable variation from country to country. These areas include agriculture (especially in southern Europe), building and construction, and unskilled work in the services sector (e.g. cleaning). In certain countries, there are even sometimes jobs in industry – particularly in industries that are highly labour-intensive and very vulnerable to competition.

There is also a tendency for illegal immigrants to find work in large towns and cities in firms where the owner is from an ethnic minority, or even for them to start up small businesses of their own (J. van der Leun, *Looking for Loopholes*. Amsterdam, 2003). There are also many opportunities for work in private households, where immigrants may be employed to cook, to clean, and to take care of children. The advantage of a job in a private household is obvious: the authorities are generally reluctant to disturb people's private lives, so there is little likelihood of the working immigrant being discovered.

Publication details for the study

Tranæs, Torben and Bent Jensen. 2014. *Den illegale indvandring til Europa – og til Danmark. Årsager, omfang og betydning (Illegal immigration to Europe – and to Denmark. Causes, extent and significance)*. The Rockwool Foundation Research Unit and Gyldendal.



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