“Non-citizens of Latvia” are 220 thousands Latvian residents, 11% of the population, as at 2019. These are people made stateless by the restrictive citizenship law of Latvia in 1991 and their children, unless they obtained a citizenship later. Voteless “non-citizens” form 13% in the voting-age population. Latvia claims this legal status to be distinct from statelessness.
The shares of those affected by “non-citizenship” in various ethnic groups, 2019:

- Ethnic Belarusians - 46.5%
- Ethnic Ukrainians - 43.7%
- Ethnic Russians - 27.3%
- Ethnic Jews - 22.8%
- Ethnic Germans - 18.3%
- Ethnic Poles - 18.1%
- Ethnic Romani - 4.6%
- Ethnic Latvians - 0.04%


Demographic portrait:

The share of “non-citizens” born in Latvia, 2016

43%

Data: ACFC/SR/III(2016)001, p. 63

The share of “non-citizens” aged 65+, 2019.
The authorities are waiting for “non-citizens” to die.

38%

Naturalization: stalling

While applying for naturalization is allowed for most “non-citizens”, executive refusals may be final. The process includes paying a fee, taking an oath, passing history, Constitution and Latvian language exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Persons naturalised by Latvia</th>
<th>Reduction of the number of “non-citizens”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>8,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>9,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>9,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>10,605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Current discussions

As at mid-2019, the Parliament of Latvia considers a bill (No. 274/Lp13) on granting citizenship to newborn children of “non-citizens”. However, it is a «feel-good measure» for two reasons:
1. It does not concern thousands of children “non-citizens” already born. Their right to nationality, granted by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, remains denied.

Crucial rights denied to “non-citizens”:

- Suffrage and eligibility, even in local elections.
- Access to public service (civil and military) and free legal professions (lawyers, notaries, court bailiffs)
- Limited rights - those related to having worked in the former USSR (calculation of retirement pensions and unemployment benefits). See Andrejeva v. Latvia (ECHR)

Latvian Human Rights Committee recommendations for Latvia:

- to ratify the European Convention on Nationality and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level;
- to withdraw reservations to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons;
- to allow naturalising activists of legal federalist organisations of 1991 and people who committed crimes of negligence and (while under 18) non-violent crimes;
- to ensure neutrality of naturalisation exams regarding interpretations of history;
- to limit the level of language exams for people lacking any citizenship – it shouldn’t be higher than A2.
## REPEATED INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Granting voting rights in local elections to “non-citizens”</th>
<th>Automatic granting of citizenship to newborn children of “non-citizens”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UN, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Concluding observations CERD/C/LVA/CO/6-12, 23.08.2018, § 21.</strong></td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>