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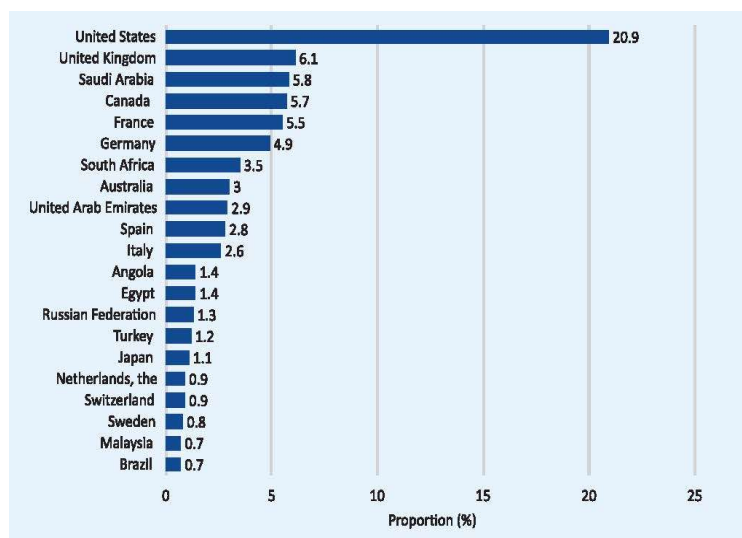
WORLD MIGRATION
REPORT 2018

InfoSheet No 7
Understanding Migration Journeys from Migrants' Perspectives

Chapter 7 discusses the importance of understanding migration from migrants' perspectives, principally by listening to and learning from migrants through rigorous research. While all migrants make decisions before and during their journeys – some decisions being of greater consequence than others, and even involving life and death scenarios – this chapter focuses on people who have fewer means and more restricted choices. The chapter discusses migration journeys and how migrants consider migration before and during such travel, acknowledging that there is a great diversity of experiences, but that nevertheless, some important aspects can be drawn from current migration research and practice.

KEY POINTS

- There is recognition that greater emphasis on migrants' roles, decision-making and behaviour before and during migration is increasingly important in helping to explain how migration occurs. The extent of migrants' self-agency is becoming a more crucial aspect in understanding migration patterns, processes and consequences.

- Examining the overall quality of life by country, and the ability to migrate in terms of visa access, reveals that access to regular migration options is in some ways related to the "lottery of birth". Where possible, migrants will choose to migrate through regular pathways on visas. There are stark differences between travelling on a visa and travelling without a visa. From a migrant's perspective, the experience can be profoundly different in a number of important ways that can impact on the migrant as well as his/her family, including those who may remain in the origin country.

Top 20 desired destination countries among adults planning to migrate (%)

Country	Proportion (%)
United States	20.9
United Kingdom	6.1
Saudi Arabia	5.8
Canada	5.7
France	5.5
Germany	4.9
South Africa	3.5
Australia	3
United Arab Emirates	2.9
Spain	2.8
Italy	2.6
Angola	1.4
Egypt	1.4
Russian Federation	1.3
Turkey	1.2
Japan	1.1
Netherlands, the	0.9
Switzerland	0.9
Sweden	0.8
Malaysia	0.7
Brazil	0.7

- While some policymakers have access to a wider range of information and data than ever before, it is apparent that there still exists a level of presumption and a lack of knowledge about potential and actual migrant decision-making and experiences.

- How potential and actual migrants contemplate migration journeys at various stages is of keen interest to migration researchers as well as policymakers. Information is central to migrants' contemplations and perceptions of migration, whether considering their options, choosing a destination, or determining the safest and most financially feasible routes.

- Despite information campaigns, media reporting, and information from family, friends and other migrants, in some circumstances migrants continue to contemplate and undertake high-risk irregular migration journeys.

- Existing evidence is pointing to increasing pressures on some families and communities to migrate internationally, including people who may prefer to remain at home. Notwithstanding the benefits of international migration, this points to a potentially negative consequence for some communities related to the longer-term development of "cultures of migration". The development of such cultures has been found to impact on how potential migrants think about their futures. And yet, more recent research is highlighting that over time there can be emerging pressures on people who want to remain at home, but are finding it increasingly difficult to do so.

KEY POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

- We need to take more notice of migrants' agency, understanding how people contemplate migration vis-à-vis policy categories and place less emphasis on the policy categories that are central to regulated systems. Rather than citizenship, skills or other attributes to meet visa requirements, for example, the ability to pay for illicit migration services and enact strategies to manage risky journeys appear to be becoming more significant in determining who moves and where, raising broader issues for the regulation and management of migration and support for populations in home and host countries.

- Reconciling aspirations to migrate as well as increasing pressures to migrate in some communities with the need for States to manage regulated entry and stay of migrants continues to be challenging. Further investment in the formulation of innovative and practical ideas on how regular pathways can be enhanced without inadvertently creating overwhelming increases in "demand" for migration is a priority. Understanding how migrants contemplate migration and migration journeys is central to the development of effective approaches.

- As the pressures on people and communities to migrate internationally may be increasing in some circumstances, the longer-term development of much stronger "cultures of migration" may pose problems for an increasing number of communities in the future who would prefer to remain at home, but are less able to do so. It is important to better understand the factors that are involved in preferences to *not* migrate (including in conflict and other perilous environments). This will assist in being able to better support people who would prefer to remain in their communities.

- Harnessing the opportunities as well as managing the risks that new research technologies continue to present will remain a critical aspect in fostering effective and ethical research into migration. Big data analysis, for example, provides a new way of analysing migration dynamics, but this must not be at the expense of compromising migrants' privacy and confidentiality.

To read the report, please go to https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2018