

# WORLD MIGRATION REPORT

*Update*

## Migration and Migrants: Asia

[www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018](http://www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018)

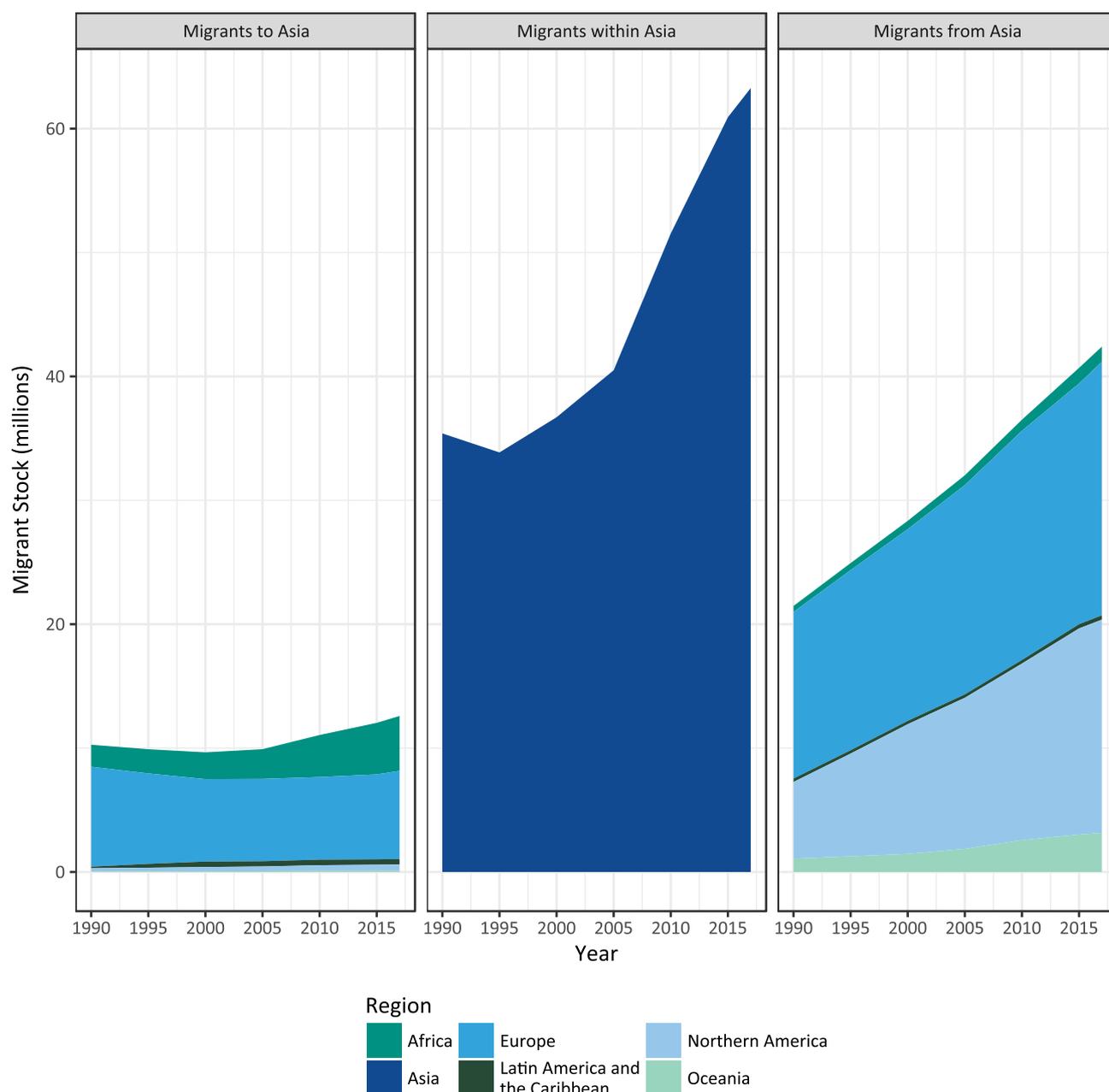
This *World Migration Report* update provides an overview of the latest data on international migrants in Asia. It is based on the most recent estimates from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). Released in December 2017, the international migrant stock datasets estimate the number of international migrants by age, sex and origin.<sup>1</sup> In addition to presenting current data on international migrants in Asia, the update briefly discusses trends in Asian migration.<sup>2</sup>

Asia – home to around 106 million international migrants – was the origin of over 40 per cent of the world’s international migrants in 2017. More than half (63 million) were residing in other countries in Asia, an increase from 2015 when 59 million were estimated to be living within the continent. As shown in the middle panel of figure 1, intraregional migration within Asia has increased significantly over time, rising from 35 million in 1990. Considerable growth has also occurred in Asian-born migrant populations in Northern America and Europe over the last two decades. In 2017, migration from Asia to Northern America reached 17.2 million, rising from 15.5 million in 2015. Whereas in Europe, migration from Asia stood at 20.5 million in 2017. Migration from Asia to Northern America and Europe drove much of the increase in the number of Asian migrants outside the region, reaching 42 million in 2017, a moderate increase from 40 million in 2015.

<sup>1</sup> UN DESA, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> For details on the composition of Asia, see World Migration Report 2018, Appendix A (page 311). [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2018\\_en.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf).

**Figure 1. Migrants to Asia, within Asia and from Asia between 1990 and 2017**



Source: UN DESA, 2017.

Note: "Migrants to Asia" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Asia) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. Europe or Africa). "Migrants within Asia" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Asia) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the Asian region. "Migrants from Asia" refers to people born in Asia who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe or Northern America).

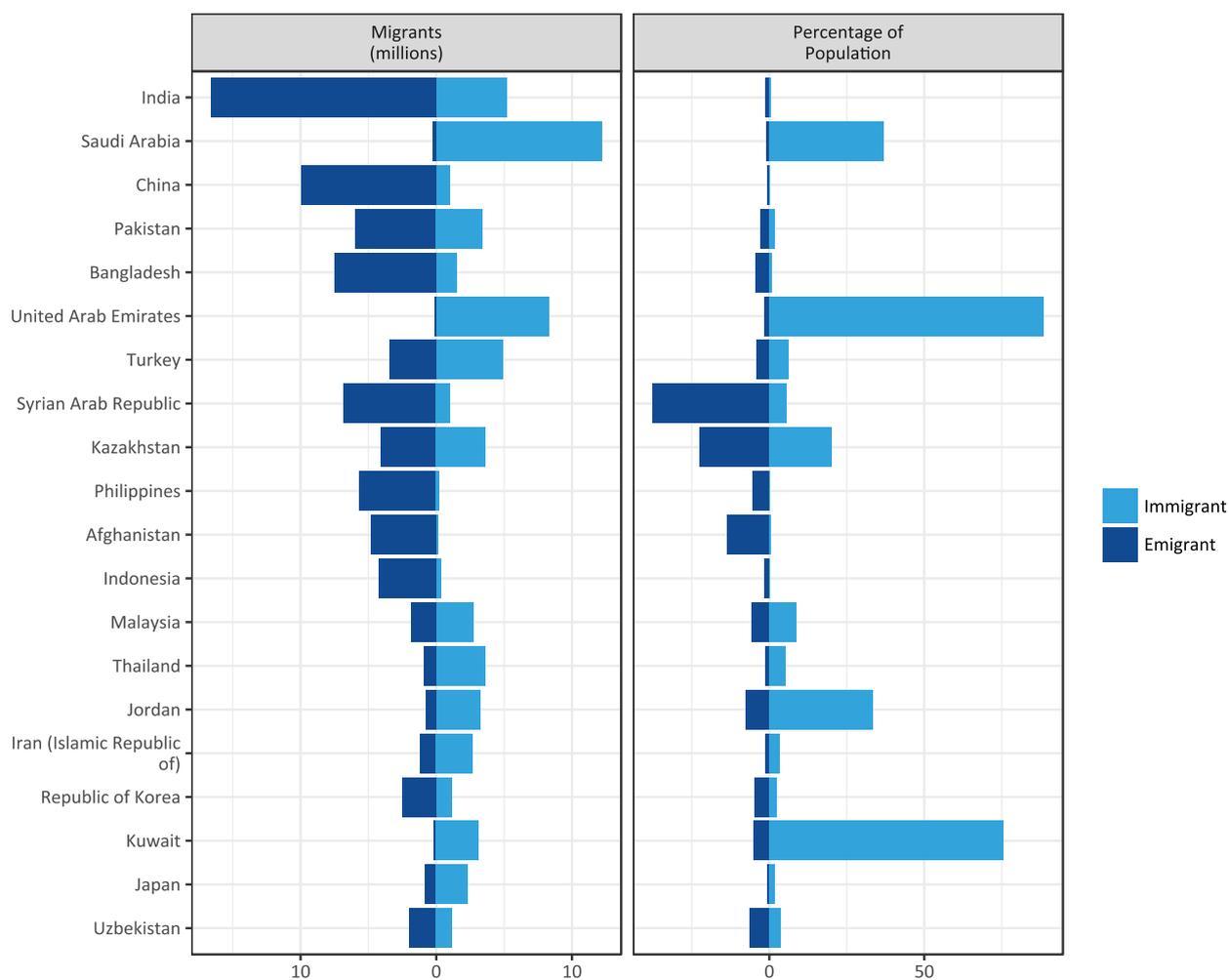
The number of non-Asian-born migrants in Asia has remained at relatively low levels since 1990. Europeans comprise the largest group of migrants from outside Asia in the region. These numbers include migrants from the European part of the former Soviet Union now living in Central Asia. During the same period, the number of Africans – the other sizable group of migrants in Asia – has grown.

The two Asian "population giants", India and China, have the largest absolute numbers of migrants living abroad (figure 2). It is important to add that these large absolute numbers of emigrants constitute small shares of the total populations of India and China. Migrants from China made up the fourth largest population of foreign-born migrants in the world after India, Mexico and the Russian Federation. Over two million Chinese-born emigrants resided in the United States, which was also home to other large Asian migrant groups from India, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Other countries with large numbers of migrants residing abroad include Bangladesh and Pakistan, many of whom are in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

In GCC countries, migrants make up high proportions of the total national populations (figure 2). For example, in 2017, migrants accounted for 88 per cent of the population in United Arab Emirates; around 76 per cent in Kuwait; 65 per cent in Qatar; and 48 per cent in Bahrain.<sup>3</sup> Many migrants came from Africa, South Asia (e.g. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal), and South-East Asia (e.g. Indonesia and the Philippines).

It is also important to note that current data on foreign-born migrants also partly reflect significant historical events, such as the 1947 Partition resulting in the mass displacement of people from and to India and Pakistan. This is evident in 2017 data, which show that over 5.1 and 3.4 million foreign-born migrants (respectively) resided in the two countries.

**Figure 2. Top 20 Asian migrant countries in 2017**



Source: UN DESA, 2017.

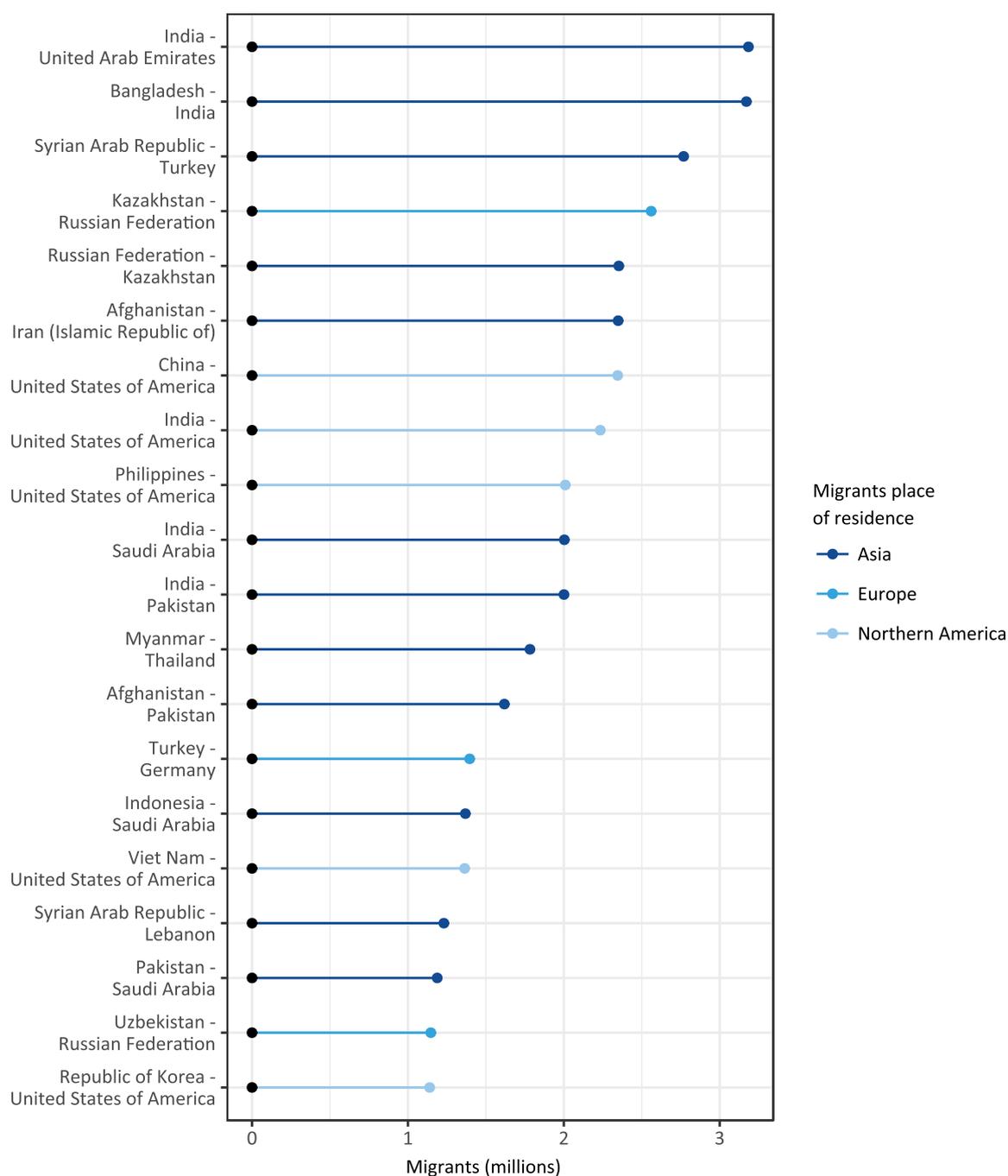
Note 1: The population size used to calculate the percentage of immigrants and emigrants is based on the UN DESA total resident population of the country, which includes foreign-born populations.

Note 2: "Immigrant" refers to foreign-born migrants residing in the country. "Emigrant" refers to people born in the country who were residing outside their country of birth in 2017.

Figure 3 shows the top 20 migration corridors from Asian countries, with a little over half of them occurring within the region – 11 of the 20. This is a slight decrease from 2015, when 13 out of the top 20 migration corridors were within Asia. These migration corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries. The largest corridor is from India to the United Arab Emirates, where over 3.3 million Indians were residing in 2017.

3 UN DESA, 2017.

**Figure 3. Top 20 migration corridors from Asian countries**



Source: UN DESA, 2017.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

For more information, please refer to *World Migration Report 2018* or UN DESA websites below:

- *World Migration Report 2018*  
[www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018](http://www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)  
[www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/index.shtml)