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Cover photo: Many of the more than 300,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants who cross the border of Ecuador and Colombia pass through this border point in Ipiales, Colombia. Others embark on trochas, or informal and more dangerous routes, in rural areas through mountains and across rivers to enter Ecuador.
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MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS: A GLOBAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

Describing and analysing how migration around the world is changing from a range of different perspectives, including those entailing economic, social and security dimensions (and associated legal–policy frameworks), must start with an understanding of fundamental metrics. Human migration may well be an age-old activity touching almost every society around the world; however, it is changing in important ways. Examining the shifts in scale, direction, demography and frequency can illuminate how migration is evolving while also pointing to long-term trends that have been shaped by historical as well as recent events.

The current global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which equates to 3.6 per cent of the global population.¹ A first important point to note is that this is a very small minority of the world's population, meaning that staying within one's country of birth overwhelmingly remains the norm. The great majority of people do not migrate across borders; much larger numbers migrate within countries.² That said, these estimates relate to migrant populations, rather than movement events. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the interconnections between migration and mobility, with COVID-19 travel restrictions resulting in unprecedented immobility around the world. At the time of writing (July 2021), travel restrictions in many countries were being (re)imposed or strengthened as virus strains circulate the globe, testing the world's collective resilience in the face of a global health crisis unseen in the preceding century.

When mobility regimes are not impeded by global pandemics, the overwhelming majority of people migrate internationally for reasons related to work, family and study – involving migration processes that largely occur without fundamentally challenging either migrants or the countries they enter. In contrast, other people leave their homes and countries for a range of compelling and sometimes tragic reasons, such as conflict, persecution and disaster. While those who have been displaced, such as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), comprise a relatively small percentage of all migrants, they are often the most in need of assistance and support.

This chapter, with its focus on key global migration data and trends, as well as new COVID-19 mobility and travel-related data, seeks to assist migration policymakers, practitioners and researchers in making better sense of the bigger picture of migration, by providing an up-to-date overview of global migration and migrants. The chapter draws upon current statistical sources compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the University

1 UN DESA, 2021a.

2 The most recent estimate was 740 million internal migrants globally in 2009 (UNDP, 2009).

of Oxford.³ The chapter provides an overview of global data and trends on international migrants (stocks) and international migration (flows). It also provides a discussion of particular migrant groups – namely, migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and missing migrants – as well as of international remittances and COVID-19-related mobility restrictions.

The chapter also refers to the body of programmatic IOM data, particularly on assisted voluntary returns and reintegration, resettlement and displacement tracking.⁴ While these data are generally not global or representative, they can provide insights into changes that have occurred in relevant programming and operations globally. As the United Nations migration agency, with activities relevant to all the themes discussed in this chapter, IOM data have the capacity to provide further insights on migration and its various dynamics, including the diverse needs of migrants.

Defining migration, migrant and other key terms

Outside of general definitions of migration and migrant, such as those found in dictionaries, there exist various specific definitions of key migration-related terms, including in legal, administrative, research and statistical spheres.^a While there is no universally agreed definition of migration or migrant, several definitions are widely accepted and have been developed in different settings, such as those set out in UN DESA's *1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*.^b Work has recently been completed by the United Nations Statistical Division and a task force of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics on a revised conceptual framework on statistics on international migration and mobility to guide the process under way in updating the 1998 Recommendations.^c The conceptual framework was endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 52nd session in March 2021, paving the way for revised recommendations on international migrant and mobility that are better able to account for different aspects of mobility, including migration.^d The conceptual framework is summarized in Appendix A.

Technical definitions, concepts and categories of migrants and migration are necessarily informed by geographic, legal, political, methodological, temporal and other factors. For example, there are numerous ways in which migration events can be defined, including in relation to place of birth, citizenship, place of residence and duration of stay.^e This is important when it comes to quantifying and analysing the effects of migration and migrants, however defined. We encourage readers to refer to primary sources cited in the chapter for information on specific definitions and categorizations underlying the data. Readers may also find the IOM *Glossary on Migration* (2019 edition) to be a useful reference. The *Glossary* is available at the IOM Publications Platform: <https://publications.iom.int/books/international-migration-law-ndeg34-glossary-migration>.

a See, for example, Poulain and Perrin, 2001.

b UN DESA, 1998.

c United Nations Statistics Division, 2021.

d United Nations Statistical Commission, 2021.

e See, for example, de Beer et al., 2010.

3 To keep within the scope of this report, statistics utilized in this chapter were current as at 30 June 2021, unless otherwise stated.

4 IOM data on victims of human trafficking are presented in Chapter 10 of this report.

International migrants: numbers and trends

UN DESA produces estimates of the number of international migrants globally. The following discussion draws on its estimates, which are based on data provided by States.⁵ The current United Nations *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* defines an “international migrant” as any person who has changed his or her country of usual residence, distinguishing between “short-term migrants” (those who have changed their countries of usual residence for at least three months, but less than one year) and “long-term migrants” (those who have done so for at least one year). However, not all countries use this definition in practice.⁶ Some countries use different criteria to identify international migrants, for example by applying different minimum durations of residence. Differences in concepts and definitions, as well as data collection methodologies between countries, hinder full comparability of national statistics on international migrants. A review of the United Nations recommendations is currently under way, as discussed in the text box above.

The estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past 50 years. In 2020, almost 281 million people lived in a country other than their country of birth, or about 128 million more than 30 years earlier, in 1990 (153 million), and over three times the estimated number in 1970 (84 million). The proportion of international migrants as a share of the total global population has also increased, but only incrementally. The vast majority of people live in the country in which they were born. The impact of COVID-19 on the global population of international migrants is somewhat difficult to assess, one reason for this being that the latest available data are as at mid-2020,⁷ fairly early in the pandemic. That said, it is estimated that COVID-19 may have reduced the growth in the stock of international migrants by around two million. In other words, had there not been COVID-19, the number of international migrants in 2020 would have likely been around 283 million.⁸

Table 1. International migrants, 1970–2020

| Year | Number of international migrants | Migrants as a % of the world's population |
|------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1970 | 84 460 125 | 2.3 |
| 1975 | 90 368 010 | 2.2 |
| 1980 | 101 983 149 | 2.3 |
| 1985 | 113 206 691 | 2.3 |
| 1990 | 152 986 157 | 2.9 |
| 1995 | 161 289 976 | 2.8 |
| 2000 | 173 230 585 | 2.8 |
| 2005 | 191 446 828 | 2.9 |
| 2010 | 220 983 187 | 3.2 |
| 2015 | 247 958 644 | 3.4 |
| 2020 | 280 598 105 | 3.6 |

Source: UN DESA, 2008; UN DESA, 2021a.

Note: The number of entities (such as States, territories and administrative regions) for which data were made available in the UN DESA International Migrant Stock 2020 was 232. In 1970, the number of entities was 135.

5 Data are also provided to UN DESA by territories and administrative units. For a summary on UN DESA stock data sources, methodology and caveats, please see UN DESA, 2021b.

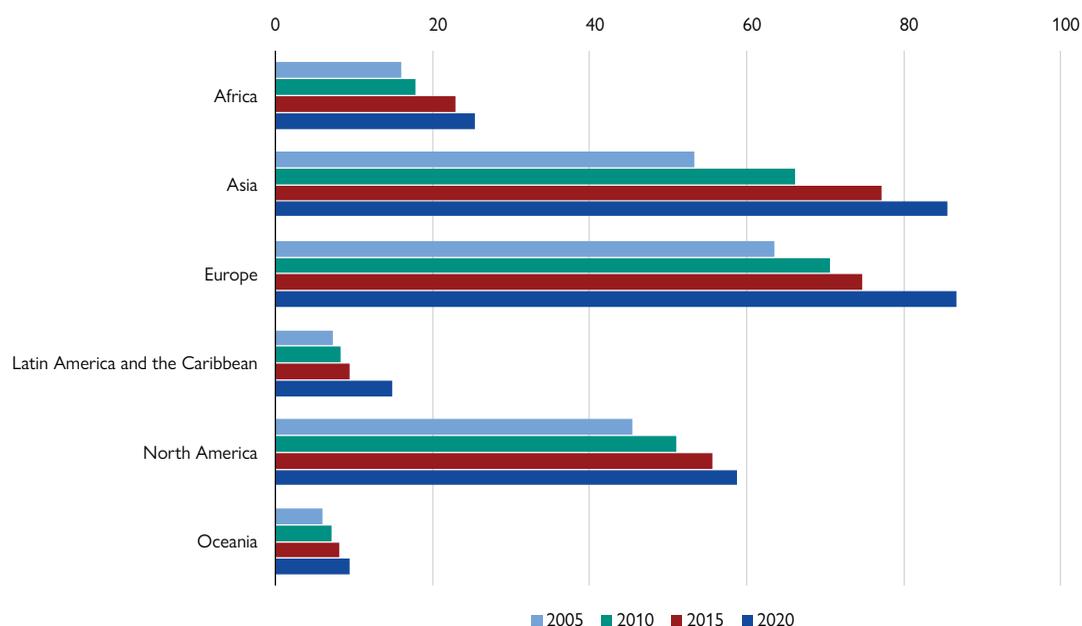
6 UN DESA, 1998.

7 UN DESA, 2021b.

8 UN DESA, 2021c.

When international migrant populations are examined by United Nations region, Europe is currently the largest destination for international migrants, with 87 million migrants (30.9% of the international migrant population), followed closely by the 86 million international migrants living in Asia (30.5%).⁹ Northern America is the destination for 59 million international migrants (20.9%), followed by Africa with 25 million migrants (9%). Over the past 15 years, the number of international migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean has more than doubled from around 7 million to 15 million, making it the region with the highest growth rate of international migrants and the destination for 5.3 per cent of all international migrants. Around 9 million international migrants live in Oceania, or about 3.3 per cent of all migrants. The growth of international migrants living in each region between 2005 and 2020 is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. International migrants, by major region of residence, 2005–2020 (millions)



Source: UN DESA, 2021a.

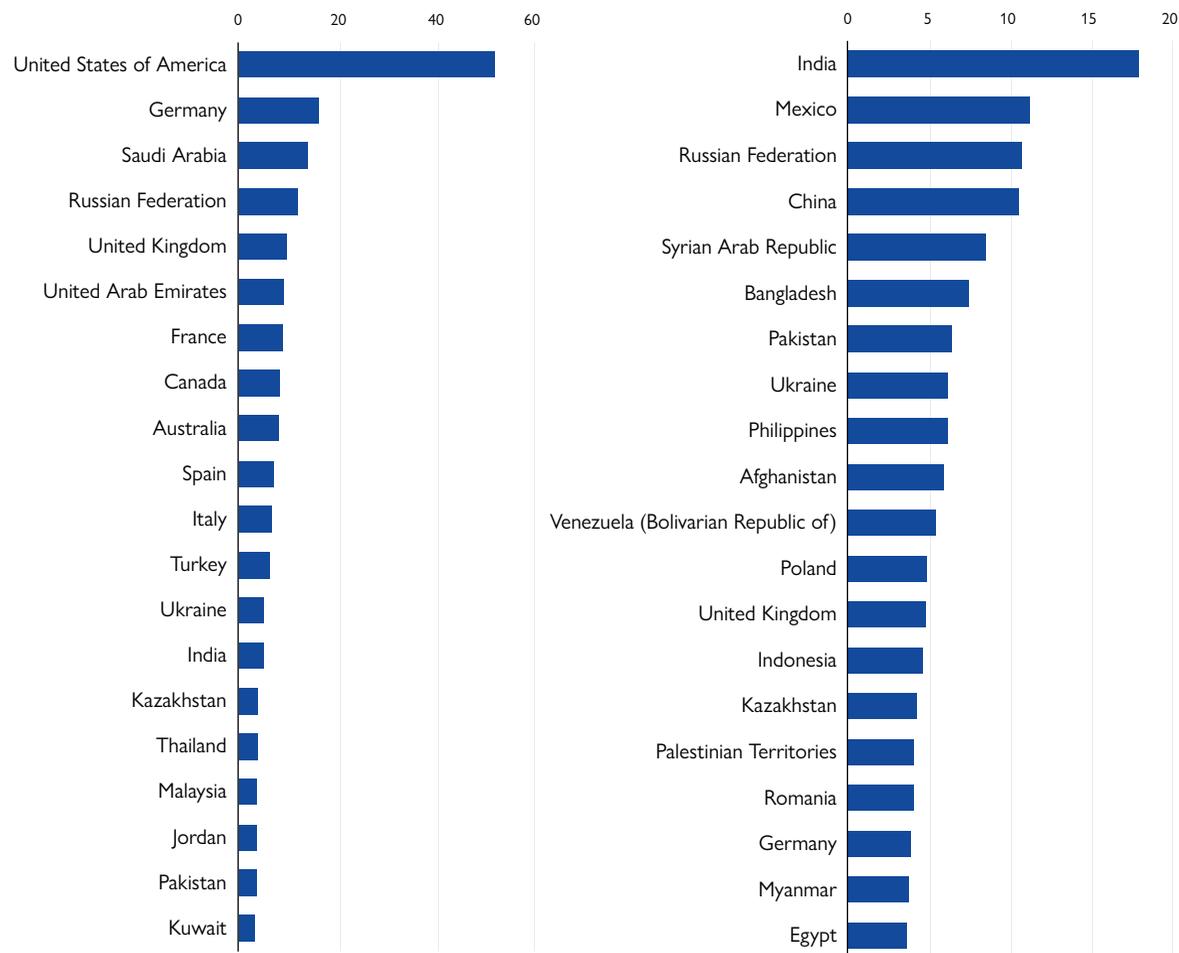
Oceania has the largest share of international migrants as a proportion of the total population, with 22 per cent of the population having been born in another country. Northern America has the second largest share of international migrants at 15.9 per cent, followed by Europe at 11.6 per cent. Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia have international migrant shares of 2.3, 1.9, and 1.8 per cent respectively.

As has been the case for the past 50 years, the United States of America remains the primary destination for migrants, at over 51 million international migrants. Germany has become the second most prominent destination, with nearly 16 million international migrants, while Saudi Arabia is the third largest destination country for international migrants, at 13 million. The Russian Federation and the United Kingdom round out the top five destination countries, with about 12 million and 9 million international migrants respectively. A list of the top 20 destination countries for migrants can be found in the left panel of Figure 2.

⁹ UN DESA, 2021a.

With nearly 18 million people living abroad, India has the largest emigrant population in the world, making it the top origin country globally. Mexico is the second most significant origin country at around 11 million. The Russian Federation is the third largest origin country, followed closely by China (around 10.8 million and 10 million respectively). The fifth most significant origin country is the Syrian Arab Republic, with over 8 million people living abroad, mainly as refugees due to large-scale displacement over the last decade (see discussion in the refugee section below). The panel on the right in Figure 2 features the top 20 origins of migrants in 2020.

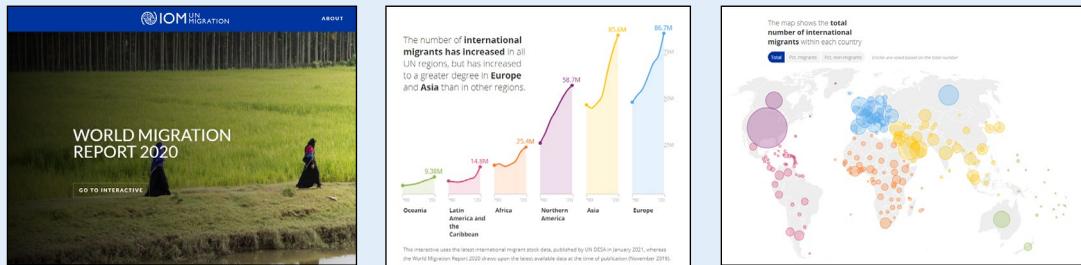
Figure 2. Top 20 destinations (left) and origins (right) of international migrants in 2020 (millions)



Source: UN DESA, 2021a.

World Migration Report Data Visualization Platform

In May 2021, IOM launched a new World Migration Report web portal that integrates fact-based migration narratives with interactive data visualizations on the most up-to-date global migration data and trends.^a



This digital format offers an intuitive representation of the data by displaying interactive visualizations of global migration trends. Building on the analysis developed in the report, the site provides country-level migration statistics and maps, interactive visualizations of migration corridors, and the leading remittance recipient and source nations since 1995, in addition to global and regional data. New interactive components on COVID-19 restrictions were added from this current report.

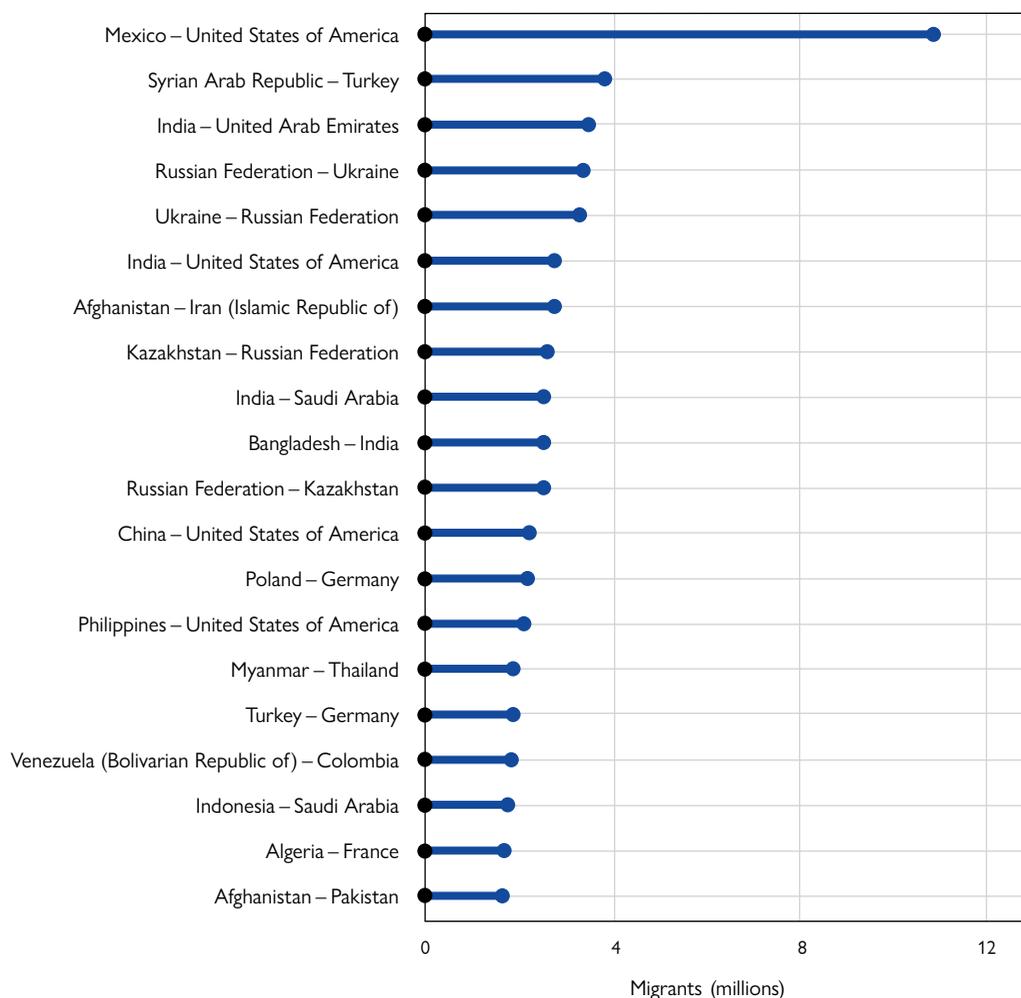
By creating a visual context for the information, data visualization favors a more accessible comprehension of the magnitudes of the numbers and the trends at play, supplementing the extensive analysis presented in the report. The interactive platform is available in English, French and Spanish.

a IOM, 2020a.

The available international migrant data include estimates of origin and destination links between two countries, allowing for the estimation of bilateral migration “corridors” globally. The size of a migration corridor from country A to country B is measured as the number of people born in country A who were residing in country B in 2020. 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.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the Mexico to United States corridor is the largest in the world at nearly 11 million people. The second is from the Syrian Arab Republic to Turkey, comprising mainly refugees displaced by the Syrian Arab Republic’s decade-long civil war. On the other hand, the third largest corridor in the world, India to the United Arab Emirates (over 3 million), comprises mainly labour migrants. The bilateral corridor between the Russian Federation and Ukraine take up spots four and five among the largest corridors in the world. About 3 million people born in the Russian Federation now live in Ukraine, while nearly the same number of people have moved from Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

Figure 3. Top 20 international migration country-to-country corridors, 2020



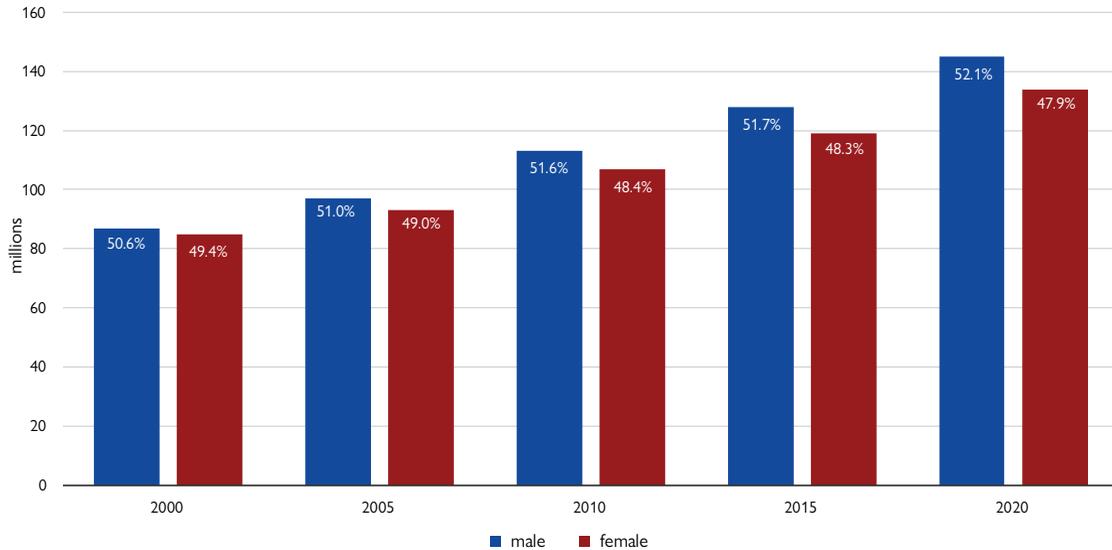
Source: UN DESA, 2021a.

Note: The corridors present the number of international migrants (millions) born in the first-mentioned country and residing in the second. 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.

Most international migrants (around 78%) were of working age (between 15 and 64 years of age). Since 1990, the share of international migrants age 19 and younger has dropped from 18.9 per cent to 14.6 per cent, while international migrants older than 64 have remained steady at around 12.2 per cent.

There is currently a larger number of male than female international migrants worldwide, and the gap has increased over the past 20 years. In 2000, the male to female split was 50.6 to 49.4 per cent (or 88 million male migrants and 86 million female migrants). In 2020 the split is 51.9 to 48.0 per cent, with 146 million male migrants and 135 million female migrants. The share of female migrants has been decreasing since 2000, while the share of male migrants has increased by 1.4 percentage points. See Figure 4 for further breakdowns by sex.

Figure 4. International migrants, by sex, 2000–2020



Conflating “migration” and “migrant”

In a general sense, **migration** is the process of moving from one place to another. To migrate is to move, whether from a rural area to a city, from one district or province in a given country to another in that same country, or from one country to a new country. It involves action.

In contrast, a **migrant** is a person described as such for one or more reasons, depending on the context (see the text box on “Defining migration, migrant and other key terms” above). While in many cases “migrants” do undertake some form of migration, this is not always the case.

In some situations, people who have never undertaken migration may be referred to as migrants –children of people born overseas, for example, are commonly called second- or third-generation migrants.^a This may even extend to situations involving statelessness, whereby whole groups of people are not able to access citizenship despite being born and raised in a country. Such people may even be referred to as irregular migrants by authorities.^b

a See, for example, Neto, 1995; Fertig and Schmidt, 2001.

b Kyaw, 2017.

International migration flows

While data on migrant stocks are widely available, data on global migration movements (flows) are much more limited. Available UN DESA estimates on global migrant stocks are extensive and global in scope; however, the database of migration flows only encompasses 45 countries.¹⁰ Capturing data on migration flows is extremely challenging for several reasons. First, while international migration flows are generally accepted as covering inflows and outflows into and from countries, there has been a greater focus on recording inflows. For example, while countries such as Australia and the United States record cross-border movements, many others only count entries and not departures.¹¹ Additionally, migration flow data in some countries are derived from administrative events related to immigration status (for example, issuance/renewal/withdrawal of a residence permit), which are then used as a proxy for migration flows. Furthermore, migratory movements are often hard to separate from non-migratory travel, such as tourism or business.¹² Tracking migratory movements also requires considerable resources, infrastructure and ICT/knowledge systems. This poses particular challenges for developing countries, where the ability to collect, administer, analyse and report data on mobility, migration and other areas is often limited. Finally, many countries' physical geographies pose tremendous challenges for collecting data on migration flows. Entry and border management, for example, is particularly challenging in some regions because of archipelagic and isolated borders, and is further complicated by traditions of informal migration for work.¹³

There are currently two main data sets on international migration flows, both of which are derived from national statistics: UN DESA's International Migration Flows data set and OECD's International Migration Database. Since 2005, UN DESA has compiled data on the flows of international migrants to and from selected countries, based on nationally available statistics. At the time of writing (July 2021), there had been no update to the UN DESA flows data set, with the most current being the 2015 version. The 2015 migration flows data set comprises data from 45 countries, up from 29 countries in 2008 and 15 countries in 2005.¹⁴

The OECD has been collecting international migration flow data since 2000, allowing for trend analysis to be conducted over a subset of major destination countries, depicted in Figure 5 (though data are not standardized, as explained in the note under the figure). The latest available data indicate that in 2018, a 10 per cent increase in permanent migration inflows was recorded from the previous year of 2017. The United States, one of the main destination countries, recorded around 1.1 million new entries in 2018, a 2.7 per cent decrease compared with the previous year. Another country that recorded a notable change was Chile, with 64 per cent growth. With regard to the European countries in OECD, total migration increased by around 136,000 in 2018 (3.2% more than 2017). Within Europe, the United Kingdom and Italy recorded 6.5 and 5.2 per cent declines in permanent flows, respectively. The growth in Europe was instead led by Spain (+23%, or an increase of around 106,000) and Portugal (+52%, or an increase of around 32,000).

10 UN DESA, 2015.

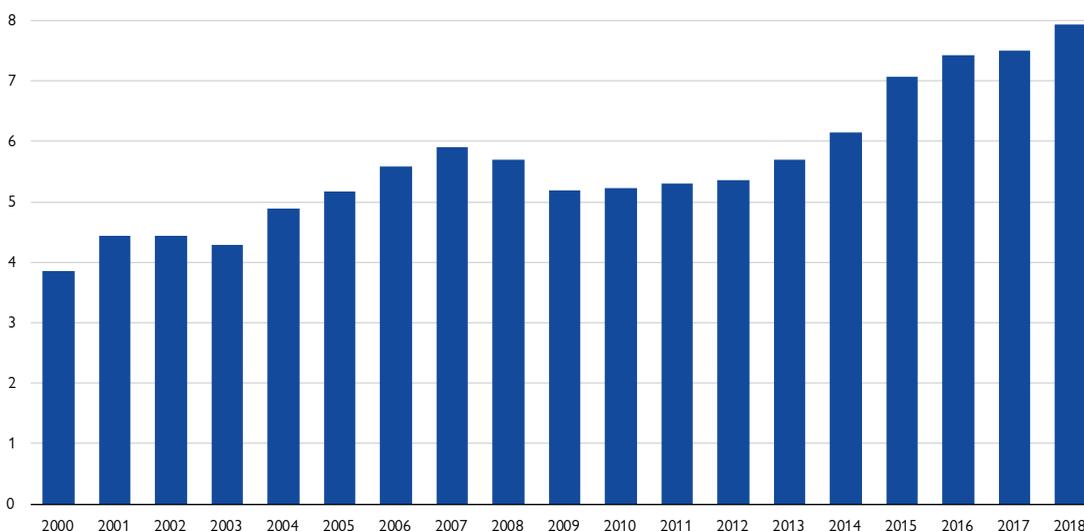
11 Koser, 2010; McAuliffe and Koser, 2017.

12 Skeldon, 2018.

13 Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.

14 For UN DESA migration flow data, as well as for the specific countries included, please see UN DESA, 2015.

Figure 5. Inflows of foreign nationals into OECD countries, permanent migration, 2000–2018 (millions)



Source: OECD, n.d.a.

Note: Data are not standardized and therefore differ from statistics on permanent migration inflows into selected countries contained in OECD's International Migration Outlook series. The 35 countries typically included in OECD statistics are the following: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. In some years, data for particular countries are not available: data were made available for 31 countries in 2000. Notably, data for Greece have not been reported between 2000 and 2004, and data for Turkey were reported only for 2010, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The impacts of COVID-19 on mobility globally are discussed below in this chapter and also in Chapter 5 of this report.

Unsafe migration flows

Some migration corridors pose many more challenges than others, for migrants as well as for authorities. Migrants' journeys can sometimes be characterized by unsafe and even deadly outcomes, often related to a range of social, political, economic, environmental and policy factors that can profoundly impact the way in which people undertake migration.¹⁵ In the wake of the tragic events of October 2013, in which more than 360 people died in the sinking of two boats near the Italian island of Lampedusa, IOM began collecting and compiling information on migrants who perish or go missing on migratory routes worldwide as part of its Missing Migrants Project.¹⁶ Data sources include official records of coastguards and medical examiners, media stories, reports from non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, and interviews with migrants.¹⁷

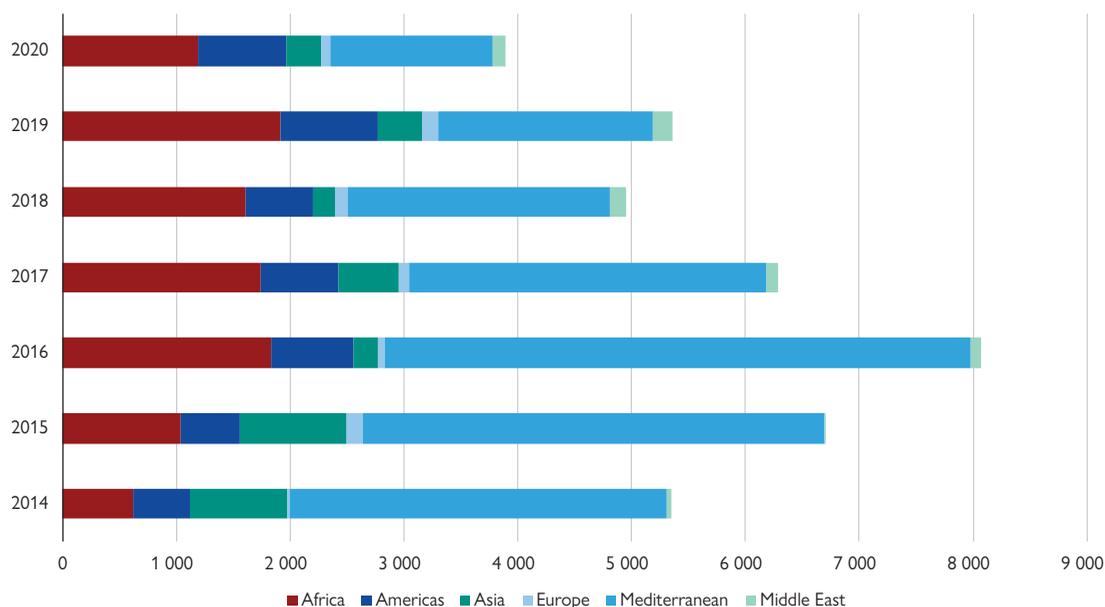
15 McAuliffe et al., 2017.

16 See <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>.

17 IOM, n.d.

Across six years of data collection, 2020 recorded the lowest total (around 3,900), compared with the previous almost 5,400 recorded in 2019 (see Figure 6). The decrease in deaths between 2019 and 2020 reflects, in part, the mobility restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that 2021 will also record a reduced number of deaths overall, with travel restrictions continuing globally. In total, between 2014 and 2020, the Mediterranean Sea has seen the highest number of deaths, claiming the lives of over 21,200 people. In 2020, the Mediterranean continued to be the place with the highest known number of deaths during migration, recording over 1,460 fatalities. Following the trend observed over the previous six years, there was a higher proportion of deaths on the “Central Mediterranean route”.¹⁸

Figure 6. Migrant deaths by region, 2014–2020



Source: IOM, n.d. (accessed 20 September 2021).

Note: Data include recorded deaths as well as those reported as missing. See the Missing Migrants Project webpage for details of methodology and geographic regions (<https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>).

The Missing Migrants Project faces notable challenges in its data collection. For instance, most recorded deaths are of people travelling via clandestine routes, which are often at sea or in remote areas (to evade detection), meaning remains are often not found. Few official sources collect and make data on migrant deaths publicly available. Relying on testimonies of fellow migrants and media sources can be problematic due to inaccuracies and incomplete coverage. Nevertheless, the project sheds light on a previously under-researched and neglected topic, highlighting the need to address this ongoing tragic issue, including in the context of the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

¹⁸ Ibid.

COVID-19 impacts on mobility

COVID-19 has been the most severe pandemic in a century, with its combination of high transmission, virus strains and the severity of the disease forcing policymakers into previously uncharted territory. While the main focus has necessarily been on responding to the global health crisis (e.g. virus testing, disease treatment, and vaccination development and programming), part of the response has involved drastic changes to freedom of movement of people all around the world, which in turn has massively impacted human mobility globally. COVID-19-related immobility has become the “great disrupter” of migration.¹⁹

Governments around the world implemented various measures to limit the spread of the virus, and a range of restrictions was introduced from early 2020, evolving over time. New data sets emerged to track policy responses globally, such as the University of Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker,²⁰ which has recorded a wide range of government responses globally, such as “stay-at-home” measures, workplace closures, school closures, restrictions on gatherings, restrictions on internal movements within a country, and international travel control measures. In addition, IOM began tracking travel restrictions globally early in the pandemic, drawing upon a range of data and reporting results via its COVID-19 Mobility Impacts dashboard.²¹ See additional data, research and analysis in the thematic Chapter 5 on COVID-19 impacts in this report.

Some countries, such as El Salvador, Israel, New Zealand, Nigeria, Qatar and Singapore, quickly imposed significant international travel restrictions (by early March 2020), while others took action weeks or months later.²² Some countries stopped all entry of foreign citizens, some banned citizens of specific countries, while even further, some countries completely closed borders to stop departure and entry of all people, including their own citizens.²³ Quarantine measures were also introduced by some countries, requiring passengers entering a country to be quarantined in isolation for a minimum period (typically 10 to 14 days) immediately upon arrival.

Overall, COVID-19 travel restriction measures – both internal and international – were quickly put in place by the vast majority of countries around the world, with the peak occurring in late March to early April 2020 (see Figure 7). While international travel restrictions were more likely to have been enacted early in the pandemic, there was a greater variety of control measures during the initial weeks (including screening early on), probably due to governments needing to assess the severity of the crisis during a period of extraordinary uncertainty. As the severity of COVID-19 became clear, the number of both international and internal travel restrictions rose drastically.

19 McAuliffe, 2020.

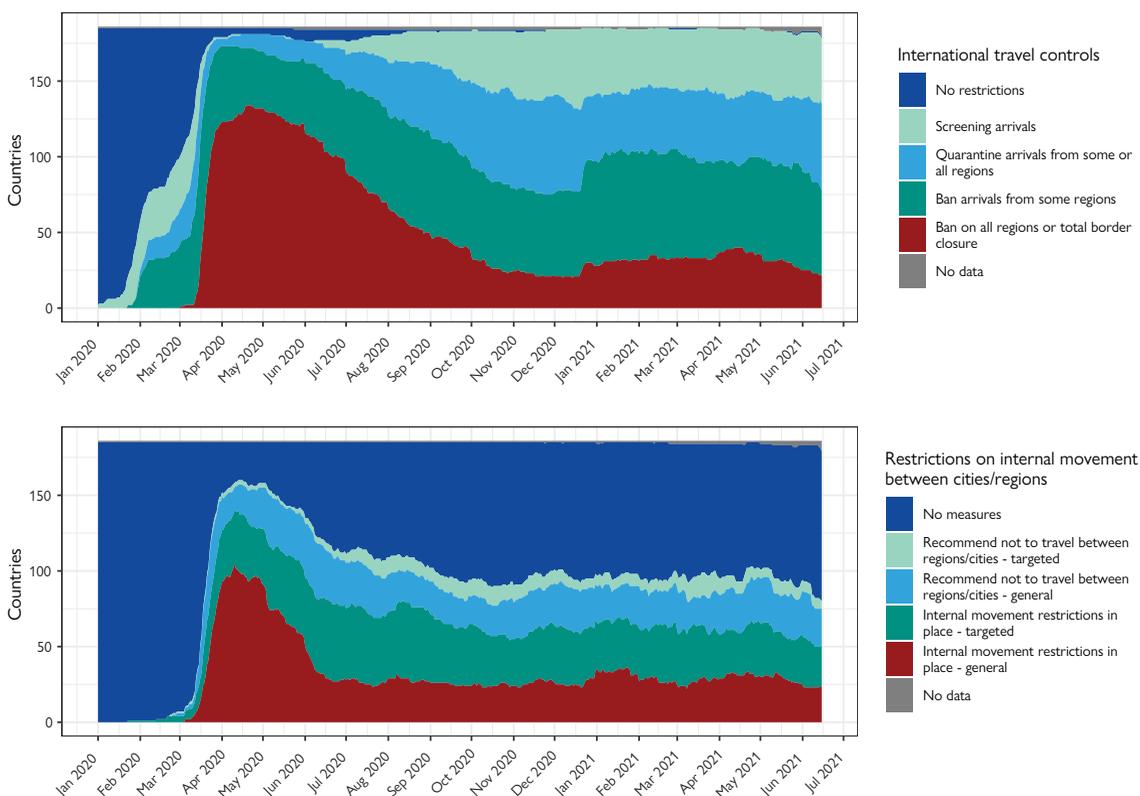
20 Hale et al., 2021.

21 See <https://migration.iom.int/>.

22 Hale et al., 2021.

23 IOM, 2020b; Al Jazeera, 2020.

Figure 7. COVID-19-related travel controls: international and internal, January 2020–June 2021, all countries



Source: Hale et al., 2021.

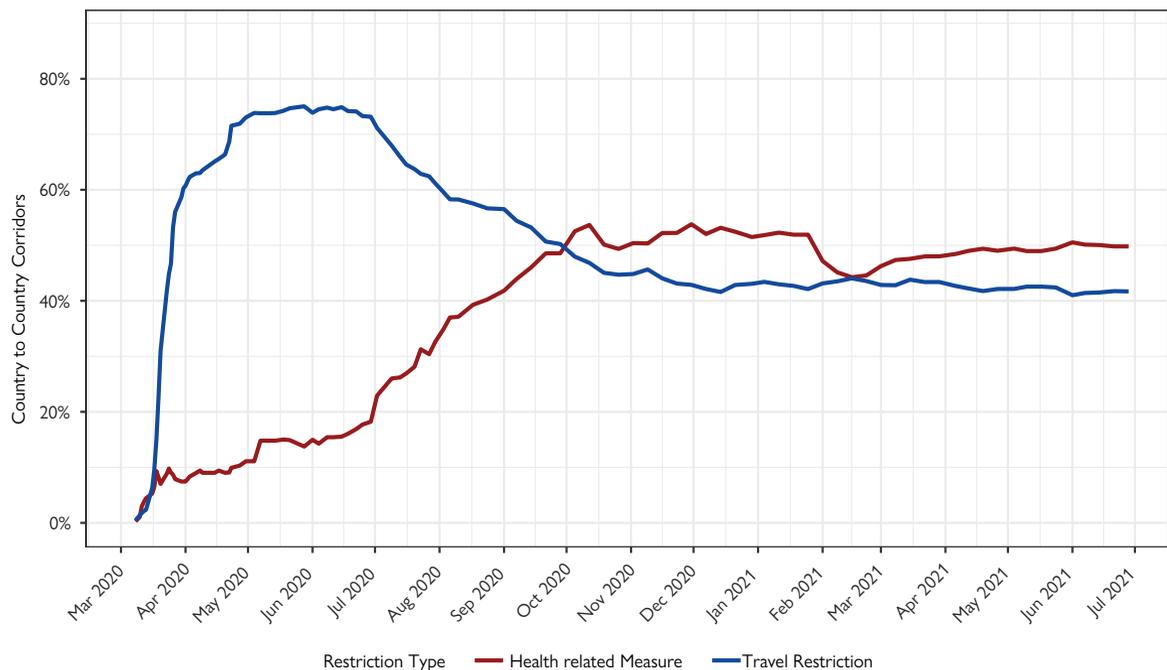
Notes: Categories used are those of the Oxford Government Response Tracker; categories included in the data set are for COVID-19-related restrictions only and do not reflect other travel restrictions that may also be in place, such as those related to visa restrictions, entry bans based on citizenship, departure/exit restrictions and internal movement restrictions.

The differences in the evolution of the restrictions can be seen in Figure 7, which shows that COVID-19-related international travel restrictions of some sort remained in place in all countries globally one year after the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of the pandemic on 10 March 2020.²⁴ In contrast, internal restrictions declined over time. That said, there are three key points to highlight from these data:

- While there are international travel restrictions of some sort in all countries, there is a mix of screening, quarantine and bans (total/specific);
- More than half of all countries had travel bans in place (total or specific) one year after the pandemic commenced; and
- More than a third of all countries had internal travel restrictions in place one year after the pandemic commenced.

When international COVID-19-related travel restrictions are examined over time, we can see that travel/border restrictions and health-related measures have changed as the technology and logistical capacity supporting health-related measures has been developed and rolled out. Pre-travel testing, quarantine and vaccination-certificated entry being rolled out by different countries saw the travel restrictions being overtaken by health-related measures in October 2020.

Figure 8. COVID-19-related international travel measures: March 2020–July 2021, all countries

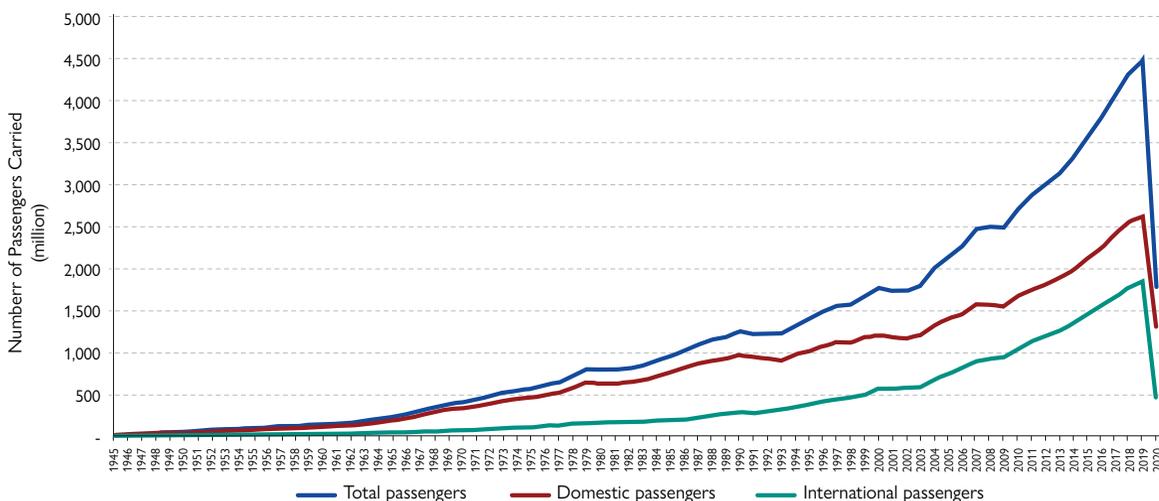


Source: IOM, 2021a.

Notes: Only countries (not territories) are included in this analysis. Health-related measures include health screening and monitoring, testing/medical certificates, and quarantine measures. Travel restrictions include passenger restrictions based on nationality or arrival from a geographic location. See the DTM mobility restrictions page for more information on the methodology.

The impact of the COVID-19-related travel restrictions becomes very clear when air passenger data are examined. We can see from long-term air passenger figures that COVID-19 travel restrictions had a major impact on both international and domestic air travel in 2020. Total air passengers carried dropped by 60 per cent from around 4.5 billion in 2019 to 1.8 billion in 2020 (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Air passengers carried globally, 1945–2020



Source: ICAO, 2021.

Overall, we can see that COVID-19 has had a major impact on travel, and therefore on migration, with the restrictions remaining in place longer than many had anticipated, caused in part by the challenges posed by emerging virus strains and rolling “waves” of infections. The long-term impacts are yet to be fully understood, but the analysis outlined in Chapter 5 points to the transformation of migration and mobility in several key areas.

COVID-19 and stranded migrants

The mobility restrictions put in place during COVID-19 resulted in major problems for some migrants and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. The border closures stranded thousands of migrants, including seasonal workers, temporary residence holders, international students, migrants travelling for medical treatment, beneficiaries of assisted voluntary return and reintegration, seafarers and others.

By mid-2020, the pandemic-related restrictions had stranded nearly 3 million people outside of their home countries, most of whom were frequent travellers such as migrant workers, students and tourists. Many of these travellers were left without consular services, including help with their legal status in the country, and some were without enough money to provide food and shelter. The majority were in the Middle East and North Africa (around 1.3 million), followed by Asia and the Pacific (around 977,000).

The specific issues faced by these migrants differed substantially, as did their situations, but in general, challenges fell into two categories. First were movement-related issues. These related to immobility that resulted from the emergency restrictions on transportation and movements. Other significant challenges were the costs and logistics involved in returning home. Moreover, the lack of collaboration between countries of origin, destination and transit further exacerbated movement issues.

Second were the vulnerabilities connected with the migratory status of migrants. Status can preclude the possibility of government support, which exposed people to, or placed them at risk of, extreme poverty. Other vulnerabilities included xenophobia and stigmatization, the stranding of people at sea, and increased health risks for those living in overcrowded shelters and/or those unable to access COVID-19 vaccination programmes.

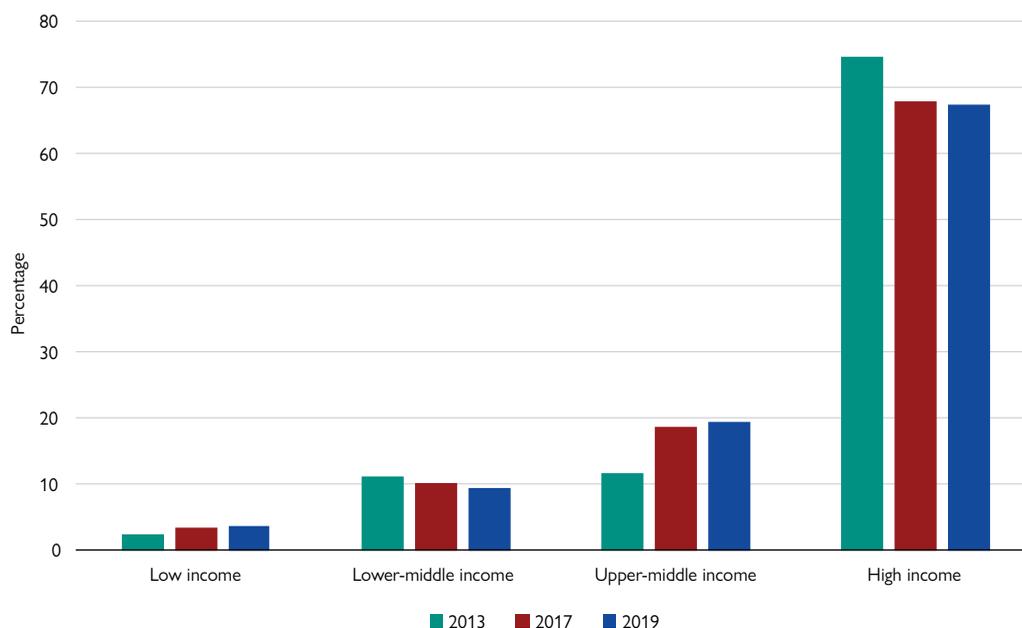
Sources: IOM, 2020c; Benton et al., 2021.

Migrant workers

The latest available estimates indicate that there were roughly 169 million migrant workers around the world in 2019, accounting for nearly two thirds (62%) of the (then) 272 million global stock of international migrants.²⁵ It is worth noting that these estimates predate COVID-19, which has affected international labour migration in many ways, although it provides a benchmark against which COVID-19 impacts can be assessed in the future.²⁶ When compared with the global population of international migrants of working age – regarded as 15 years of age or older (245.6 million) – migrant workers account for 68.8 per cent.

In 2019, 67 per cent of migrant workers were residing in high-income countries – an estimated 113.9 million people. An additional 49 million migrant workers (29%) were living in middle-income countries, and 6.1 million (3.6%) were in low-income countries. While we are unable to compare the numbers of migrant workers over time, it is useful to examine changes in proportional distribution. The concentration of international migrant workers in upper-middle- and high-income countries has remained stable at 86.4 per cent in 2013, 86.5 per cent in 2017 and 86.9 per cent in 2019. However, there was a noticeable change within these two categories over time; that is, from 2013 to 2019, high-income countries experienced a 7.3 percentage point drop in migrant workers (from 74.7% to 67.4%), while upper-middle-income countries observed a 7.8 percentage point increase (from 11.7% to 19.5%) (see Figure 10). This apparent shift may be influenced by economic growth in middle-income countries and/or changes to labour immigration regulations in high-income countries. The share of migrant workers in the total workforce across country income groups was quite small in low- (2.3%) and in lower- and upper-middle-income countries (1.4% and 2.2%, respectively), but much greater for high-income countries (18.2%).

Figure 10. Migrant workers by destination country income level, 2013, 2017 and 2019



Source: ILO, 2018; ILO, 2021.

²⁵ The content in this subsection is based on and drawn from ILO, 2021. Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, limitations and caveats associated with the numbers and trends presented. More generally, information on foreign-born employment in OECD countries is available from OECD, n.d.b.

²⁶ See, for example, ILO, 2021.

Male migrant workers outnumbered female migrant workers by 28.8 million in 2019, with 98.9 million males (58.5%) and 70.1 million females (41.5%), in a context where males comprised a higher number of international migrants of working age (128 million or 52.1%, compared with 117.6 million or 47.9% females). This represents a slight shift since 2013, towards an even more gendered migrant worker population, when the share of male migrant workers constituted 55.7 per cent and females 44.3 per cent. See Table 2 for further breakdowns by income level and sex.

Table 2. International migrant workers, by sex and income level of destination country, 2019

| | Migrant workers (millions) | | | Proportion of all migrant workers (%) | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | M | F | Total | M | F | Total |
| Low-income | 3.7 | 2.4 | 6.1 | 2.2 | 1.4 | 3.6 |
| Lower-middle-income | 10.5 | 5.6 | 16.0 | 6.2 | 3.3 | 9.5 |
| Upper-middle-income | 19.5 | 13.5 | 33.0 | 11.5 | 8.0 | 19.5 |
| High-income | 65.3 | 48.5 | 113.9 | 38.6 | 28.7 | 67.4 |
| Global Total | 98.9 | 70.1 | 169.0 | 58.5 | 41.5 | 100.0 |

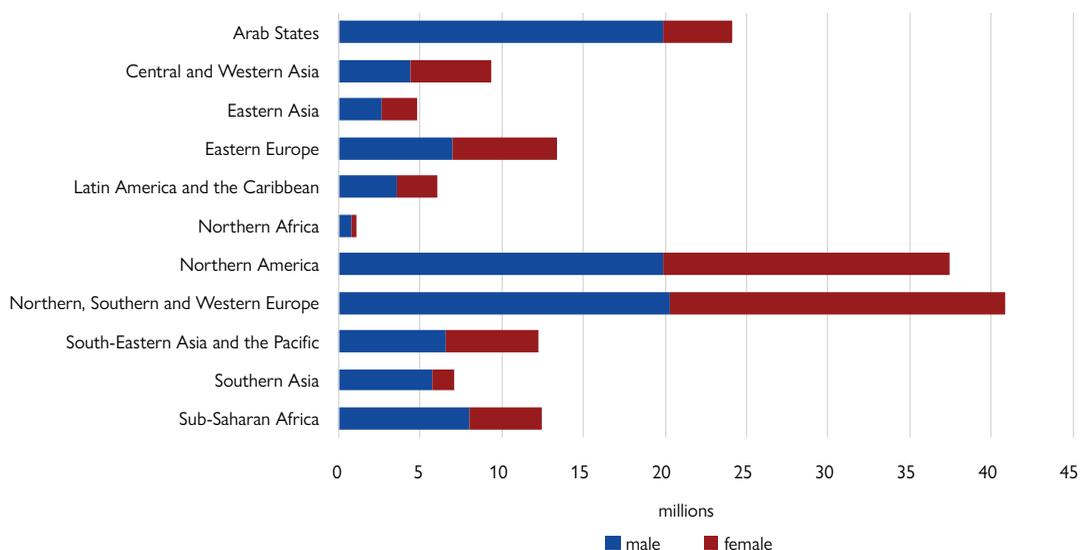
Source: ILO, 2021.

As evident from the data, the international migrant worker population is currently gendered as well as geographically concentrated. There is a much larger number of male than female migrant workers worldwide (see Table 2), with a gender composition that sees much higher numbers of men in low- and lower-middle-income countries compared with women, and in contrast to the gender splits for high-income countries.

In terms of geography, and as seen in Figure 11 below, 102.4 million or almost 61 per cent of all migrant workers resided in three subregions: Northern America; the Arab States; and Northern, Southern and Western Europe.²⁷ Notably, there is a striking gender imbalance of migrant workers in two regions: Southern Asia (5.7 million males compared with 1.4 million females) and the Arab States (19.9 million males compared with 4.2 million females). The Arab States region is one of the top destinations for migrant workers, where they comprise 41.4 per cent of the entire working population, often dominating in key sectors.

27 The ILO category of "Arab States" includes the following countries and territories: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and the Palestinian Territories.

Figure 11. Geographic distribution of migrant workers by sex (millions), 2019



Source: ILO, 2021.

Note: The figure reflects ILO geographic regions and subregions, and does not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. Please see annex A of ILO, 2021 for more information on regional breakdowns. Please note that the rest of this chapter refers to the UN DESA geographical regions.

IOM's assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes

IOM has implemented assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes since 1979. IOM's AVRR support to migrants comprises a range of activities and typically includes: the provision of pre-departure counselling, the purchase of flight tickets, administrative and travel assistance and, where possible, the provision of reintegration assistance.

On average, from 2005 to 2014, IOM assisted 34,000 migrants per year with AVRR. In line with the rise in the volume of migration in recent years, the number of returns has also increased (up until COVID-19). In 2019, AVRR support was provided to 64,958 migrants returning from 136 host or transit countries to 164 countries or territories of origin. However, this declined dramatically in 2020 due to COVID-19. Throughout 2020, AVRR support was provided to 42,181 (15,149 in Q1, 2,588 in Q2, 10,521 in Q3 and 13,923 in Q4) migrants returning from 139 (88 in Q1, 41 in Q2, 84 in Q3 and 122 in Q4) host or transit countries or territories to 150 (136 in Q1, 70 in Q2, 110 in Q3 and 132 in Q4) countries or territories of origin.

Sources: IOM, 2020d; IOM, 2020e; IOM, 2020f.

International remittances

Remittances are financial or in-kind transfers made by migrants directly to families or communities in their countries of origin. The World Bank compiles global data on international remittances, notwithstanding the myriad data gaps, definitional differences and methodological challenges in compiling accurate statistics.²⁸ Its data, however, do not capture unrecorded flows through formal or informal channels, and the actual magnitudes of global remittances are therefore likely to be larger than available estimates.²⁹ This issue has come to the fore during the pandemic, following a much more positive outcome in 2020 for international remittance flows, contrary to initial dire projections; this was due in part to a shift from informal channels to formal channels in response to COVID-19 immobility restrictions, among other reasons (see text box below).³⁰ Despite these issues, available data reflect a long-term increasing trend in international remittances in recent years, rising from USD 128 billion in 2000 to USD 702 billion in 2020.

Despite the initially projected 20 per cent decline in international remittances globally for 2020 (made in April of that year),³¹ the annual data show that there was only a slight dip in remittances globally (2.4% decrease) in 2020, amounting to USD 702 billion, down from USD 719 billion in 2019. However, the three consecutive years prior to 2020 all witnessed an increase: from 2016 to 2019, global (inward) flows of remittances increased by an estimated 7.2 per cent, from USD 597 billion in 2016 to USD 640 billion in 2017, and by 8.4 per cent and 3.6 per cent from 2017 to 2018 (from USD 640 billion to USD 694 billion) and from 2018 to 2019 (from USD 694 billion to USD 719 billion), respectively. Consistent with this trend, remittances to low- and middle-income countries (which account for the majority of the global total) decreased in 2020 (from USD 548 billion in 2019 to USD 540 billion) after the positive trend from 2016 to 2018 (from USD 441 billion in 2016 to USD 478 billion in 2017 and USD 524 billion in 2018). Since the mid-1990s, international remittances have greatly surpassed official development assistance levels defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries (see Figure 12 below).³²

28 The content of much of this subsection, unless otherwise noted, is based on and drawn from the World Bank's data in relation to migration and remittances (World Bank, n.d.). In particular, the World Bank's annual remittances data sets (*ibid.*), *Migration and Development Brief 34* (Ratha et al., 2021), and its 12 May press release (World Bank, 2021a) are key sources of information. Please refer to these sources as well as the World Bank's *Factbooks on Migration and Development*, including its latest, published in 2016, for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented.

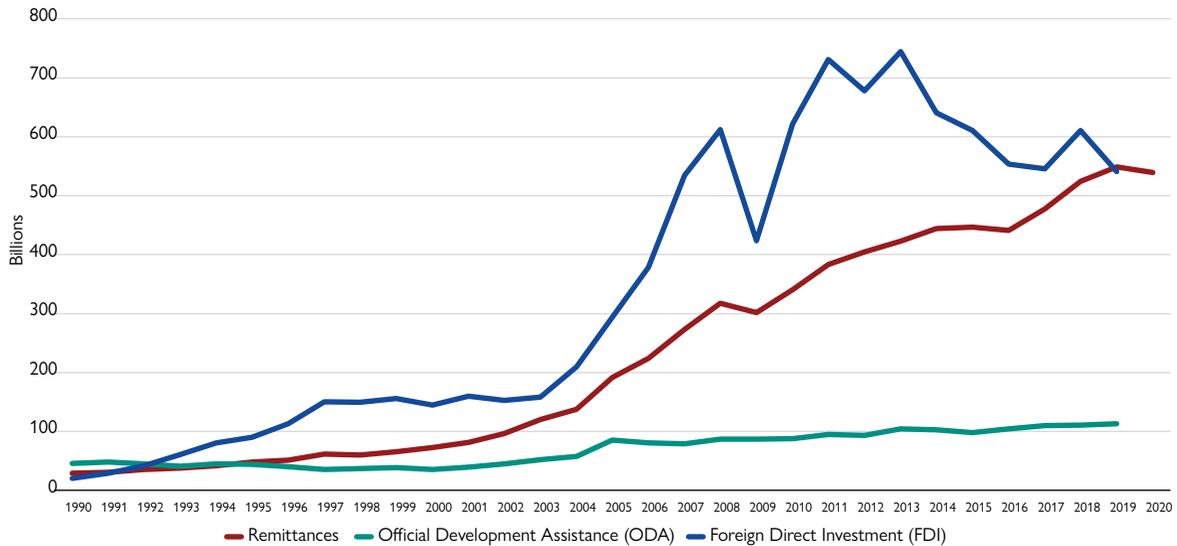
29 World Bank, 2016.

30 IMF, 2020; IOM, 2020g; IOM, 2020h; IOM, 2020i; IOM, 2021b.

31 Ratha et al., 2020a.

32 See, for example, OECD, n.d.c, which also contains data on official development assistance. There is a growing body of work exploring the developmental, economic and social impacts of this trend.

Figure 12. International remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (1990–2020)



Source: World Bank, n.d. (accessed June 2021).

Note: All numbers are in current (nominal) USD billion.

In 2020, India, China, Mexico, the Philippines and Egypt were (in descending order) the top five remittance recipient countries, although India and China were well above the rest, with total inward remittances exceeding USD 59 billion for each country (see Table 3). G7 countries France and Germany remained in the top 10 of receiving countries globally in 2020, just as they have done since 2005 (see Table 3). It should be noted, however, that the majority of inflows are not household transfers, but relate to salaries of cross-border workers who work in Switzerland while residing in France or Germany.³³

Table 3. Top 10 countries receiving/sending international remittances (2005–2020)
(current USD billion)

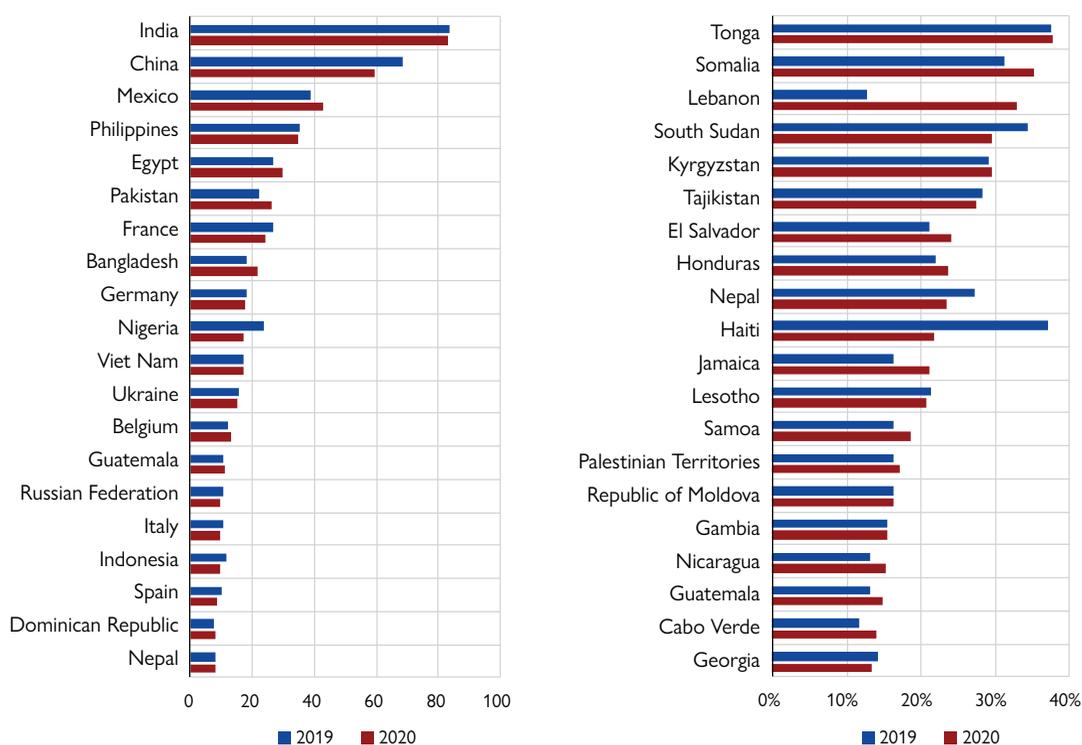
| Top countries receiving remittances | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| 2005 | | 2010 | | 2015 | | 2020 | |
| China | 23.63 | India | 53.48 | India | 68.91 | India | 83.15 |
| Mexico | 22.74 | China | 52.46 | China | 63.94 | China | 59.51 |
| India | 22.13 | Mexico | 22.08 | Philippines | 29.80 | Mexico | 42.88 |
| Nigeria | 14.64 | Philippines | 21.56 | Mexico | 26.23 | Philippines | 34.91 |
| France | 14.21 | France | 19.90 | France | 24.07 | Egypt | 29.60 |
| Philippines | 13.73 | Nigeria | 19.74 | Nigeria | 20.63 | Pakistan | 26.11 |
| Belgium | 6.88 | Germany | 12.79 | Pakistan | 19.31 | France | 24.48 |
| Germany | 6.86 | Egypt | 12.45 | Egypt | 18.33 | Bangladesh | 21.75 |
| Spain | 6.66 | Belgium | 10.99 | Germany | 15.58 | Germany | 17.90 |
| Poland | 6.47 | Bangladesh | 10.85 | Bangladesh | 15.30 | Nigeria | 17.21 |
| Top countries sending remittances | | | | | | | |
| 2005 | | 2010 | | 2015 | | 2020 | |
| United States | 47.75 | United States | 50.53 | United States | 60.72 | United States | 68.00 |
| Saudi Arabia | 14.30 | Saudi Arabia | 27.07 | United Arab Emirates | 40.70 | United Arab Emirates | 43.24 |
| Germany | 12.71 | Russian Federation | 21.45 | Saudi Arabia | 38.79 | Saudi Arabia | 34.60 |
| Switzerland | 10.86 | Switzerland | 18.51 | Switzerland | 26.03 | Switzerland | 27.96 |
| United Kingdom | 9.64 | Germany | 14.68 | Russian Federation | 19.69 | Germany | 22.02 |
| France | 9.47 | Italy | 12.88 | Germany | 18.25 | China | 18.12 |
| Republic of Korea | 6.90 | France | 12.03 | Kuwait | 15.20 | Russian Federation | 16.89 |
| Russian Federation | 6.83 | Kuwait | 11.86 | France | 12.79 | France | 15.04 |
| Luxembourg | 6.74 | Luxembourg | 10.66 | Qatar | 12.19 | Luxembourg | 14.20 |
| Malaysia | 5.68 | United Arab Emirates | 10.57 | Luxembourg | 11.19 | Netherlands | 13.92 |

Source: World Bank, n.d. (accessed June 2021).

Note: All numbers are in current (nominal) USD billion.

There is no consensus on how “overreliance” on international remittances can be defined, but dependency on remittances is mostly measured as the ratio of remittances to gross domestic product (GDP). There are currently 29 countries (out of 177 countries reported) that have a remittance-to-GDP ratio above 10 per cent. The top five remittance-receiving countries by share of GDP in 2020 were Tonga (37.7%), followed by Somalia (35.3%), Lebanon (32.9%), South Sudan (29.5%) and Kyrgyzstan (29.4%). While many countries maintained similar levels in 2020 as in 2019, the share of GDP in Lebanon tripled as its GDP plummeted in 2020. By contrast, the Haitian remittance economy as a share of GDP halved in value due to limited access to local currencies and the possible rise in transfer costs. Heavy reliance on remittances can cultivate a culture of dependency in the receiving country, potentially lowering labour force participation and slowing economic growth.³⁴ Too much dependence on remittances also makes the economy more vulnerable to sudden changes in remittance receipts.³⁵

Figure 13. Top 20 recipient countries/territories of international remittances by total in USD billion (left) and share of GDP (right), 2019–2020



Source: World Bank, n.d. (accessed June 2021).

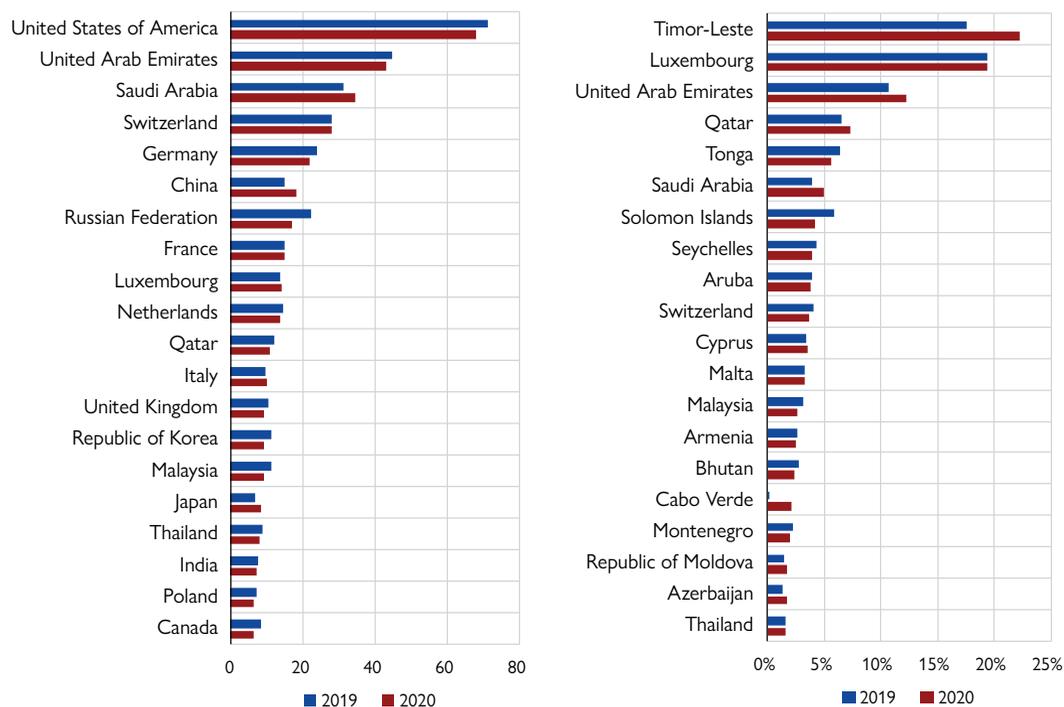
Note: All numbers are in current (nominal) USD billion. Yemen is not included as the remittances data have not been updated.

34 Amuedo-Dorantes, 2014.

35 Ghosh, 2006.

High-income countries are almost always the main source of international remittances. For decades, the United States has consistently been the top remittance-sending country in the world, with a total outflow of USD 68 billion in 2020, followed by the United Arab Emirates (USD 43.24 billion), Saudi Arabia (USD 34.60 billion) and Switzerland (USD 27.96 billion). The fifth highest remittance-sending country in both 2019 and 2020 was Germany (with total outflows of USD 23.94 billion and 22.02 billion, respectively). In addition to its role as a top recipient, China (classified as an upper-middle-income country by the World Bank) has also been a significant source of international remittances, with USD 15.14 billion in 2019 and USD 18.12 billion reported in 2020.

Figure 14. Top 20 sending countries/territories of international remittances by total in USD billion (left) and share of GDP (right), 2019–2020



Source: World Bank, n.d. (accessed June 2021)
 Note: All numbers are in current (nominal) USD billion.

COVID-19, international remittances and digitalization

During 2020, many analysts around the world were closely following the latest information and analysis to understand the migration and mobility implications of COVID-19 on international remittances.^a Throughout 2020, remittances data from several countries defied World Bank projections of major declines globally in remittances, with some countries posting record monthly inflows after mid-2020.

According to World Bank's May 2021 report,^b remittance flows have proved to be resilient during the COVID-19 crisis. In 2020, officially recorded remittance flows reached USD 702 billion, only 2.4 per cent below the USD 719 billion seen in 2019, which is in complete contrast to the previous estimates (USD 572 billion in April 2020^c and USD 666 billion in October 2020^d).

Along with policy responses to support remittances and better economic conditions, a move from informal channels (e.g. carrying cash across borders) towards more formal channels through an increased digitalization of financial transfers appears to be one of the most important factors in explaining the slower-than-expected decline in remittance flows. Therefore, official data are likely to capture more remittances even if the true size of total international remittances (formal and informal) may have fallen. For example, in Mexico, remittance flows shifted from informal to formal as border crossings were constrained during 2020 and electronic wire transfers became the only option to remit.^e

Several countries have taken measures to encourage the use of digital services during the pandemic, and mobile money platforms have made the transfer of remittances cheaper and faster than the traditional cash and bank transfers. Through mobile money, remittances have become more traceable, making this method safer than informal channels.^f

However, the costs of sending remittances home, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, still remain high despite global efforts to reduce the cost of international remittances since the late 2000s. As of March 2021, sending remittances globally costs an average of 6.38 per cent of the amount sent (UN SDG target to reduce to less than 3%) and 26 per cent of country-to-country corridors are above a total cost of 5 per cent (UN SDG target to reach zero such corridors).^g

COVID-19 may provide the extra push to harness technology to further expand remittance channels and drive down costs.

a IOM, 2020g; IOM, 2020h; IOM, 2020i; IOM, 2021b.

b Ratha et al., 2021.

c Ratha et al., 2020a.

d Ratha et al., 2020b.

e Dinarte et al., 2021.

f Aron and Muellbauer, 2019.

g World Bank, 2021b.

Refugees and asylum seekers

By the end of 2020, there was a total of 26.4 million refugees globally, with 20.7 million under UNHCR's mandate and 5.7 million refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Near East.³⁶ The total number of refugees is the highest on record, although the annual rate of growth has slowed since 2012.

There were also approximately 4.1 million people seeking international protection and awaiting determination of their refugee status, referred to as asylum seekers. In 2020, the global number of first-instance asylum claims lodged was 1.1 million. This 45 per cent drop from the previous year's 2 million represents the largest single-year decrease since 2000, when asylum requests began being aggregated globally by UNHCR, and was a direct result of COVID-19 mobility restrictions. The top recipient remained the United States with around 250,800 claims, a 14 per cent decrease from the previous year (301,000). Second placed was Germany, with 102,600 new claims, a notable decrease from 2019 (142,500), and the lowest recorded in almost 10 years.

At the end of 2020, those under 18 years of age constituted around 38 per cent of the refugee population (8 million of the 20.7 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate). Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) lodged an estimated 21,000 individual asylum applications in 2020, a decrease from the previous year's 25,000.

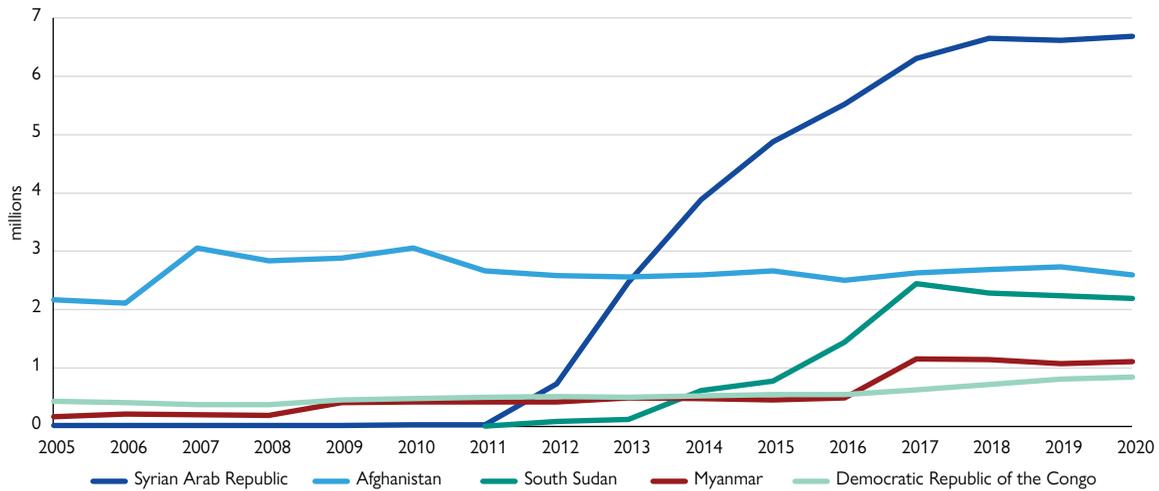
As outlined in previous reports, unresolved or renewed conflict dynamics in key countries contributed significantly to current figures and trends. Of the refugees under UNHCR's mandate at the end of 2020, the top 10 countries of origin – the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan, the Central African Republic, Eritrea and Burundi – accounted for more than 80 per cent of the total refugee population. Many of these countries have been among the top origins of refugees for at least seven years.

The ongoing, decade-long conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic saw the number of refugees from that country reach approximately 6.7 million. This was an approximately 100,000 increase from the previous year and reaching the seventh year in a row as the main origin country of refugees. The instability and violence that has made Afghanistan a major source of refugees for over 30 years has continued, with the country being the second largest origin country in the world, with 2.6 million refugees in 2020; this is a decrease from 2019 figures (2.7 million). South Sudan remained the third largest origin country of refugees since large-scale violence erupted in the middle of 2016, with 2.2 million at the end of 2020. Refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo comprised over half of the world's refugee population. Figure 15 shows the trends in refugee numbers for the top five countries of origin from 2005 to 2020. The impact of the Syrian conflict is clearly illustrated; in 2010, the Syrian Arab Republic was an origin country for fewer than 30,000 refugees and asylum seekers, whereas it was the third largest host country in the world, with more than 1 million refugees mainly originating from Iraq.³⁷

36 The content in this subsection is based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2021a. Please refer to this documents for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. UNHCR's previous Global Trends reports, as well as its Population Statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.a) are other key sources of information.

37 UNHCR, 2011.

Figure 15. Number of refugees by top five countries of origin, 2005–2020 (millions)

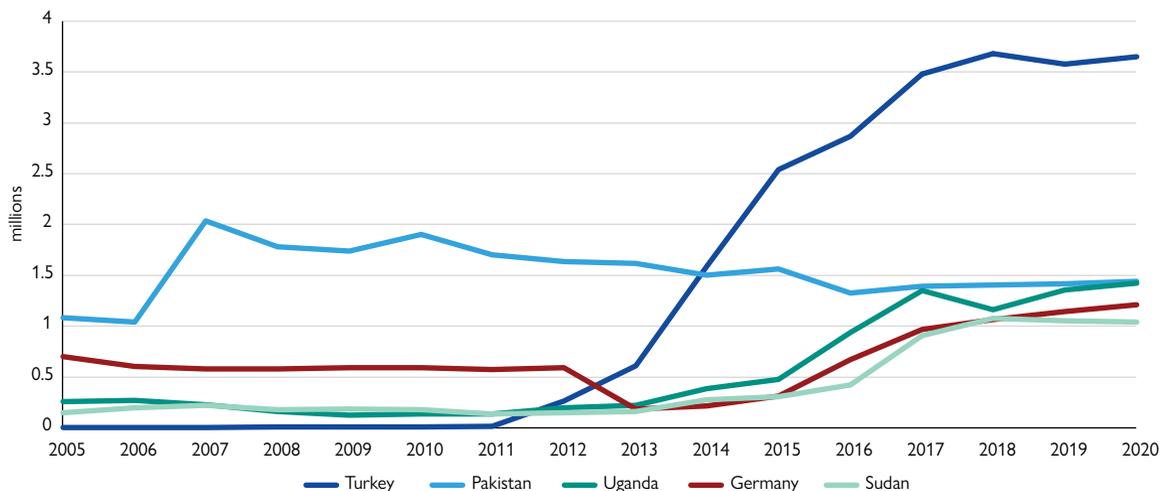


Source: UNHCR, n.d.a (accessed 23 June 2021).

Note: South Sudan became a country in 2011.

Consistent with the previous years, more than half of all refugees resided in 10 countries. In 2020, for the fifth consecutive year, Turkey was the largest host country in the world, with over 3.6 million refugees, mainly Syrians. Reflecting the significant share of Syrians in the global refugee population, the bordering country of Lebanon also featured among the top 10. Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran were also among the top 10 refugee-hosting countries, as the two principal hosts of refugees from Afghanistan, the second largest origin country. Uganda, Germany, the Sudan, Bangladesh and Ethiopia comprised the rest. The vast majority (73%) of refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries. According to UNHCR, the least developed countries – such as Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen – hosted 27 per cent of the global total (6.7 million refugees).

Figure 16. Number of refugees by top five host countries as of 2020 (millions)



Source: UNHCR, n.d.a (accessed 23 June 2021).

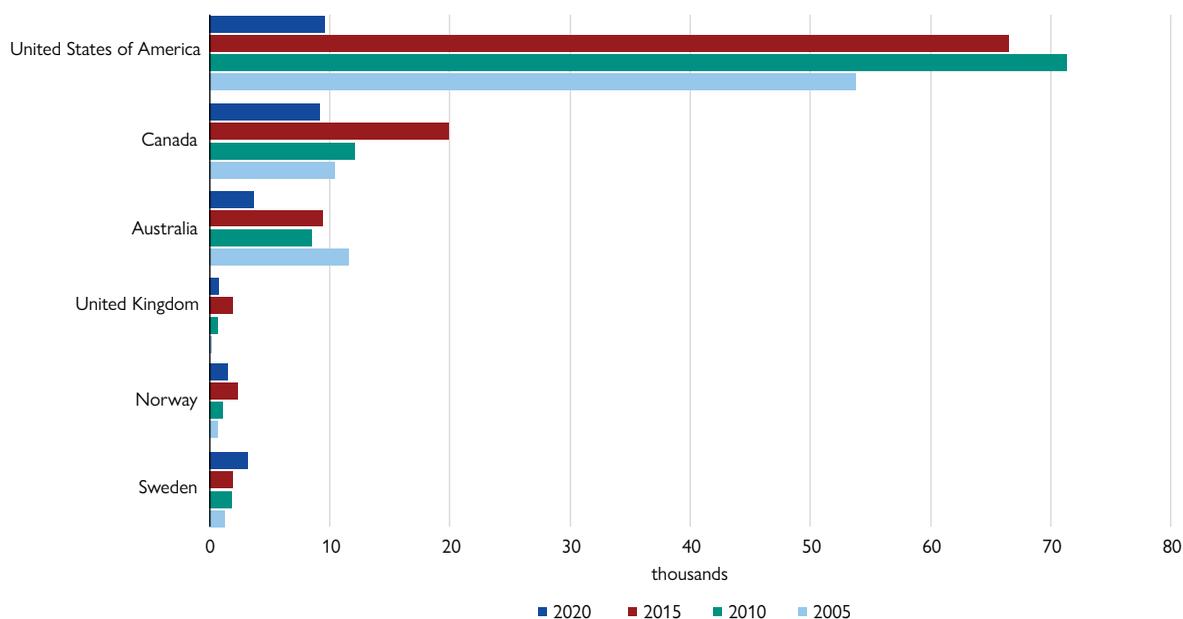
In 2020, over 250,000 refugees returned to their countries of origin, 21 per cent less than in the previous year (317,000). Almost half (122,000) of the returns were to South Sudan, the majority of these being from Uganda (74,000). In 2020, South Sudan surpassed the Syrian Arab Republic for the most refugee returns.

While there are many challenges to measuring those benefiting from local integration, UNHCR estimates that in 2020, 28 countries reported at least one naturalized refugee (compared with 25 countries in 2019), with a total of almost 34,000 naturalized refugees for the year – a notable decrease from the nearly 55,000 newly naturalized refugees in 2019, but still an increase when compared with the 23,000 reported in 2016. In 2020, 85 per cent of naturalizations occurred in Europe, the majority of which (approximately 25,700 refugees) were in the Netherlands. Second and third placed were Canada (approximately 5,000) and France (approximately 2,500).

In 2020, approximately 34,400 refugees were admitted for resettlement globally, representing a huge decrease from 2019, when over 107,700 were resettled. The key resettlement countries were the United States and Canada, with around 9,600 and 9,200 refugees respectively, and an extremely sharp decrease from the previous year of 27,500 (United States) and 30,100 (Canada). The European Union resettled a total of 11,600 refugees. Syrians were the key beneficiaries, accounting for one third of resettled refugees, followed by Congolese (12%).

The sharp fall in refugee resettlement can be partially explained by the effect of the pandemic, which severely limited international movements worldwide. An additional cause of the decline in the number of refugees resettled in the United States was due to a substantial lowering of the refugee admission ceiling (the number of refugees admitted for resettlement each fiscal year) and enhanced security screening for refugees from “high-risk” countries, which has had the effect of decreasing the number of refugee admissions from these countries. Figure 17 provides an overview of resettlement statistics for key countries from 2005 to 2020.

Figure 17. Number of refugees resettled by major resettlement countries in 2005–2020



Source: UNHCR, n.d.b (accessed 23 June 2021).

Over the last 10 years, the number of refugees in need of resettlement has dramatically increased, almost doubling in size. UNHCR estimated that in 2011 there were approximately 805,000 refugees in need of resettlement, which has increased to 1.4 million for 2021.³⁸

The number of resettled refugees has fluctuated over the years. In 2005, almost 81,000 refugees were resettled, compared with around 34,000 in 2020. However, in 2019 the number resettled was almost 108,000. Overall, resettlement has not kept up with the significant increase in need (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of refugees needing resettlement and number of refugees resettled globally, from 2005

| | Total projected resettlement needs (including multi-year planning), persons | Resettlement arrivals |
|------|--|--------------------------|
| 2005 | – | 80 734 |
| 2006 | – | 71 660 |
| 2007 | – | 75 271 |
| 2008 | – | 88 772 |
| 2009 | – | 112 455 |
| 2010 | – | 98 719 |
| 2011 | 805 535 | 79 727 |
| 2012 | 781 299 | 88 918 |
| 2013 | 859 305 | 98 359 |
| 2014 | 690 915 | 105 148 |
| 2015 | 958 429 | 106 997 |
| 2016 | 1 153 296 | 172 797 |
| 2017 | 1 190 519 | 102 709 |
| 2018 | 1 195 349 | 92 348 |
| 2019 | 1 428 011 | 107 729 |
| 2020 | 1 440 408 | 34 383 |
| 2021 | 1 445 383 | – |

Source: UNHCR, n.d.b (accessed 23 June 2021).

Note: *Projected Global Resettlement Needs Report* by UNHCR is available from 2011.

38 UNHCR, 2021b.

IOM's role in resettlement

IOM plays a key role in global resettlement. Providing essential support to States in resettling refugees and other humanitarian entrants is a fundamental purpose and is among its largest ongoing activities. Beyond traditional refugee resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, more States are interested in or are currently carrying out other forms of admission, such as private sponsorships, academic scholarships and labour mobility schemes. IOM's movement data for resettlement assistance refer to the overall number of refugees and other persons of concern travelling under IOM auspices from various countries of departure to destinations around the world during a given period.

In 2019, around 107,000 persons travelled under IOM's auspices through resettlement programmes, with significant operations out of Afghanistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine and the United Republic of Tanzania.^a Of the above-mentioned figure, around 30,000 persons in need of international protection were resettled to 18 different European countries, representing 30 per cent of the global resettlement and humanitarian admission caseload assisted by IOM.

In 2020, IOM supported over 27 States in conducting resettlement, humanitarian admissions and relocation for a total of 40,536 refugees and other persons in situations of vulnerability, with significant operations out of Afghanistan, Greece, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The top three resettlement countries were the United States, Canada and Sweden. Of the above-mentioned total, 3,063 beneficiaries in need of international protection were relocated from Greece, Italy and Malta to 14 destination countries in the European Economic Area, the majority of whom were moved via charter flights.

IOM supports its Member States in implementing a variety of resettlement, relocation and other humanitarian admission schemes, many of which are well-established programmes, while others are ad hoc responses to specific forced migration crises.

Given the high needs and lack of available places for resettlement, IOM continues to engage with actors on increasing accessibility to safe and legal pathways. Under cooperative agreements, IOM provides stakeholders with necessary information and shares data with key partners, such as UNHCR, resettlement countries and settlement agencies. IOM works in close collaboration with UNHCR on a regular basis to verify and better align aggregate data related to resettlement, specifically around figures for departures. For more information on IOM's resettlement activities, see www.iom.int/resettlement-assistance.

a IOM, 2020j.

Internally displaced persons

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) compiles data on two types of internal displacement: new displacements during a given period, and the total stock of internally displaced persons (IDPs) at a given point in time. This statistical information is categorized by two broad displacement causes: (a) disasters, and (b) conflict and violence. However, IDMC acknowledges the challenges associated with distinguishing between disasters and conflict as the immediate cause of displacement, and highlights the growing need to identify better ways to report on displacement in the context of multiple drivers.³⁹ Measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 have impeded the collection of displacement data.⁴⁰

At an estimated 48 million, the total global stock of people internally displaced by conflict and violence in 59 countries and territories as of 31 December 2020 was the highest on record since IDMC began monitoring in 1998, and represents an increase from the 45.9 million reported in 2019. As with trends for refugees (discussed in the previous section), intractable and new conflicts have meant that the total number of persons internally displaced by conflict and violence has almost doubled since 2000 and has risen sharply since 2010.

Figure 18 shows the world's top 20 countries with the largest number of IDPs displaced due to conflict and violence (stock) at the end of 2020. Most countries were either in the Middle East or sub-Saharan Africa. The Syrian Arab Republic had the highest number of people displaced due to conflict (6.6 million) by the end of 2020, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5.3 million). Colombia had the third largest number with 4.9 million, followed by Yemen (3.6 million) and Afghanistan (3.5 million). Over 35 million (nearly 74%) of the global total of 48 million people displaced lived in just 10 countries.⁴¹

In terms of proportion of national population, the Syrian Arab Republic, whose conflict has dragged on for over a decade, had over 35 per cent of its population displaced due to conflict and violence. Somalia had the second highest proportion (19%), followed by the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Yemen (with over 12%). It is important to note, however, that especially for protracted displacement cases, such as in Colombia, some people who have returned to their places of origin and to their homes may still be counted as internally displaced. This is because, in some cases, a durable solution has not been achieved.⁴² Organizations such as IDMC follow the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons framework, which stipulates eight criteria that constitute a durable solution in determining when people should no longer be considered internally displaced.⁴³

39 IDMC highlights the challenges in collecting data on displacements due to development projects, criminal violence or slow-onset disasters, as well as their efforts to overcome these difficulties. See IDMC, 2019:72–73.

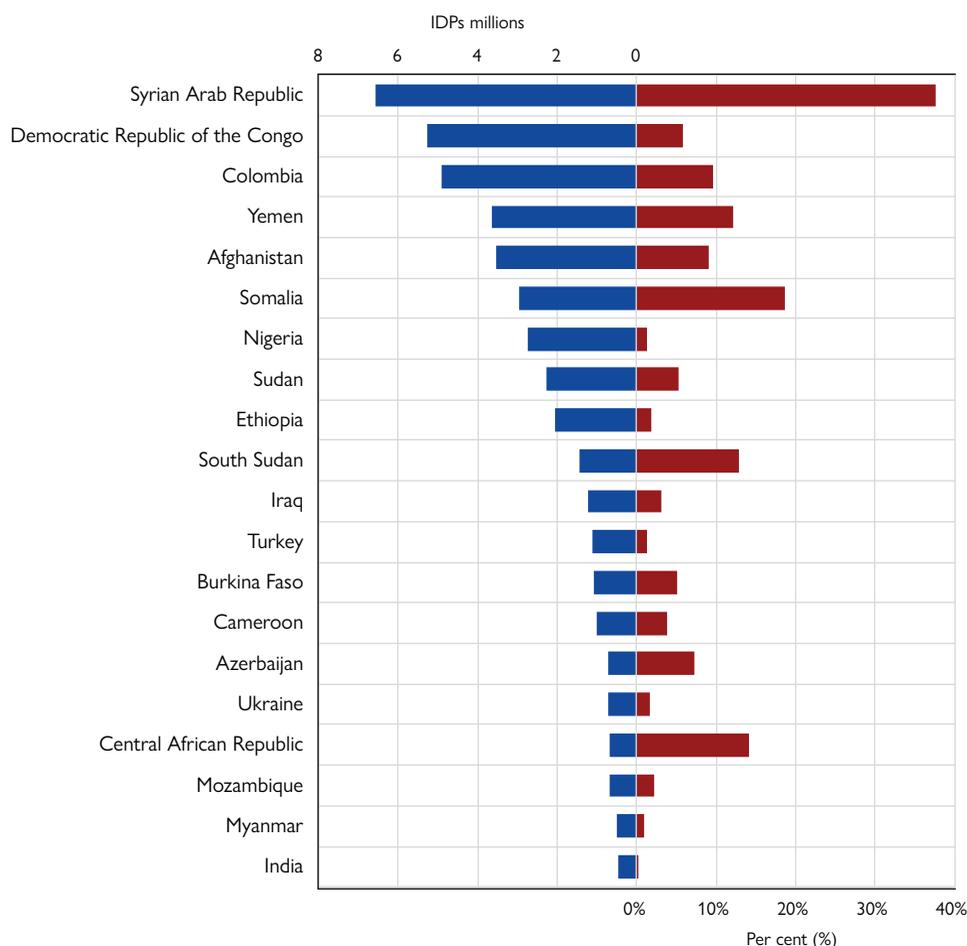
40 IDMC, 2020:4.

41 The 10 countries comprise the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, the Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

42 A durable solution is achieved “when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement.” See, for example, Brookings Institution and University of Bern, 2010.

43 The criteria include: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective remedies and justice. See, for example, Brookings Institution and University of Bern, 2010; IDMC, 2019.

Figure 18. Top 20 countries with the largest populations of internally displaced persons by conflict and violence at the end of 2020 (millions)



Source: IDMC, 2021.

Notes: IDP populations refer to the accumulated number of people displaced over time. The population size used to calculate the percentage of conflict IDPs is based on the total resident population of the country per UN DESA population estimates (2021a).

In 2020, the global total number of persons displaced by disasters was around 7 million persons across 104 countries and territories. These people were reported to be still living in displacement at the end of 2020 due to disasters that occurred in 2020. As noted by IDMC, this figure is a “highly conservative estimate”, as it does not capture those living in displacement because of disasters that took place before 2020.

IDP statistics: recommendations

New recommendations^a were published in January 2021 by the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS), which was established in 2016 to facilitate the compilation of official statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. The recommendations have updated the 2018 technical report,^b the first globally recognized standards for official statistics on forced displacement, providing recommendations on the production and dissemination of statistics on internal displacement. The Expert Group's report comprises six chapters (excluding introduction and endnotes):

- **Legal and policy frameworks and definitions:** international and regional standards for protecting IDPs, and commonly used non-statistical definitions for IDPs;
- **Statistical framework for internal displacement:** specification of population groups in the scope of the recommendations, and statistical definitions of IDP inflows, stocks and outflows;
- **Durable solutions and key displacement-related vulnerabilities:** analysis of IDP vulnerabilities and assessment of progress towards durable solutions;
- **Outline of key variables and indicators:** recommended variables including age and sex, and tabulations for the different categories of persons that fall within the internal displacement statistical framework;
- **Data sources for collecting statistics on IDPs:** data sources, including censuses and surveys, available to produce IDP statistics, and their respective challenges and advantages; and
- **Principles and mechanisms for the coordination of IDP statistics:** quality standards and the role of coordination over operational data and strengthening statistical systems on forced displacement.

The recommendations will be continually promoted by a group of countries with technical support from EGRIS members to build data systems and statistical capacity.

a EGRIS, 2020.

b EGRIS, 2018.

New displacements in 2020

By the end of 2020, there had been a total of 40.5 million new internal displacements across 42 countries and territories due to conflict and violence, and 144 countries and territories due to disasters. Seventy-six per cent (30.7 million) of these new displacements were triggered by disasters and 24 per cent (9.8 million) were caused by conflict and violence.⁴⁴

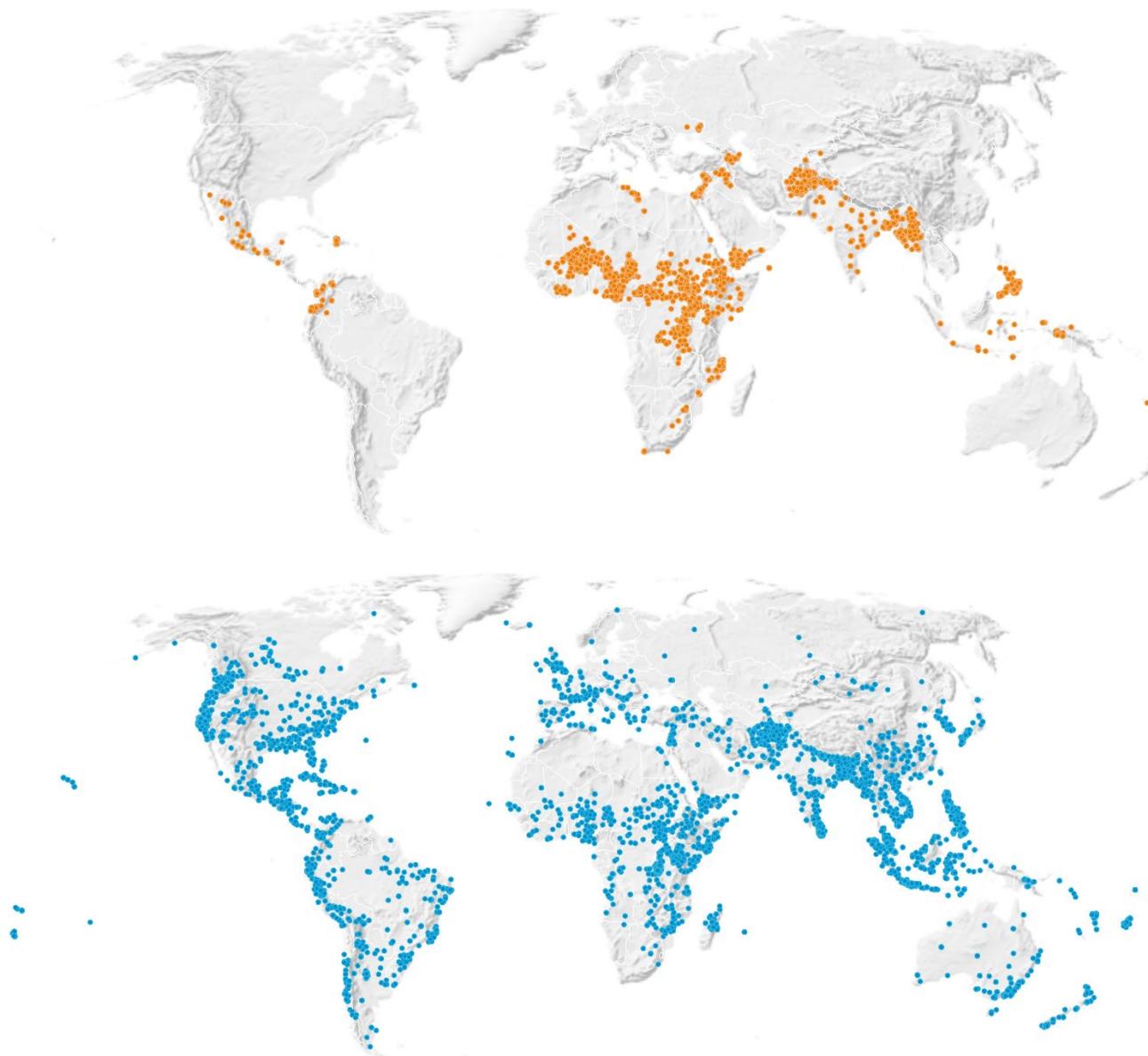
In 2020, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2.2 million) and Syrian Arab Republic (1.8 million) topped the list with the highest numbers of new displacements caused by conflict and violence, considerably influencing global numbers as a result. They are followed by Ethiopia (1.7 million), Mozambique (0.6 million) and Burkina Faso (0.5 million). The Philippines experienced the highest absolute numbers of new disaster displacements in 2020 (approximately 5.1 million).⁴⁵

44 The content in this subsection is based on and drawn from IDMC, 2020 and IDMC, 2021. Please refer to these documents for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. IDMC's previous *Global Estimates* reports (available at www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/), as well as its Global Internal Displacement Database (IDMC, n.d.), are other key sources of information.

45 IDMC highlights possible reasons for these changes, including stabilization of front lines of conflicts, ceasefires, restrictions on freedom of movement and changes in methodology for data collection.

In any given year, many more people are newly displaced by disasters than those newly displaced by conflict and violence, and many more countries are affected by disaster displacement. This is apparent when examining the number of countries and territories in which new displacements occurred in 2020: 144 for disasters, compared with 42 for conflict and violence (see Figure 19). As in previous years, weather-related disasters triggered the vast majority (30 million) of all new displacements, with storms accounting for 14.6 million displacements and floods for 14.1 million.

Figure 19. Conflict displacements (top) and disaster displacements (bottom) in 2020 by location

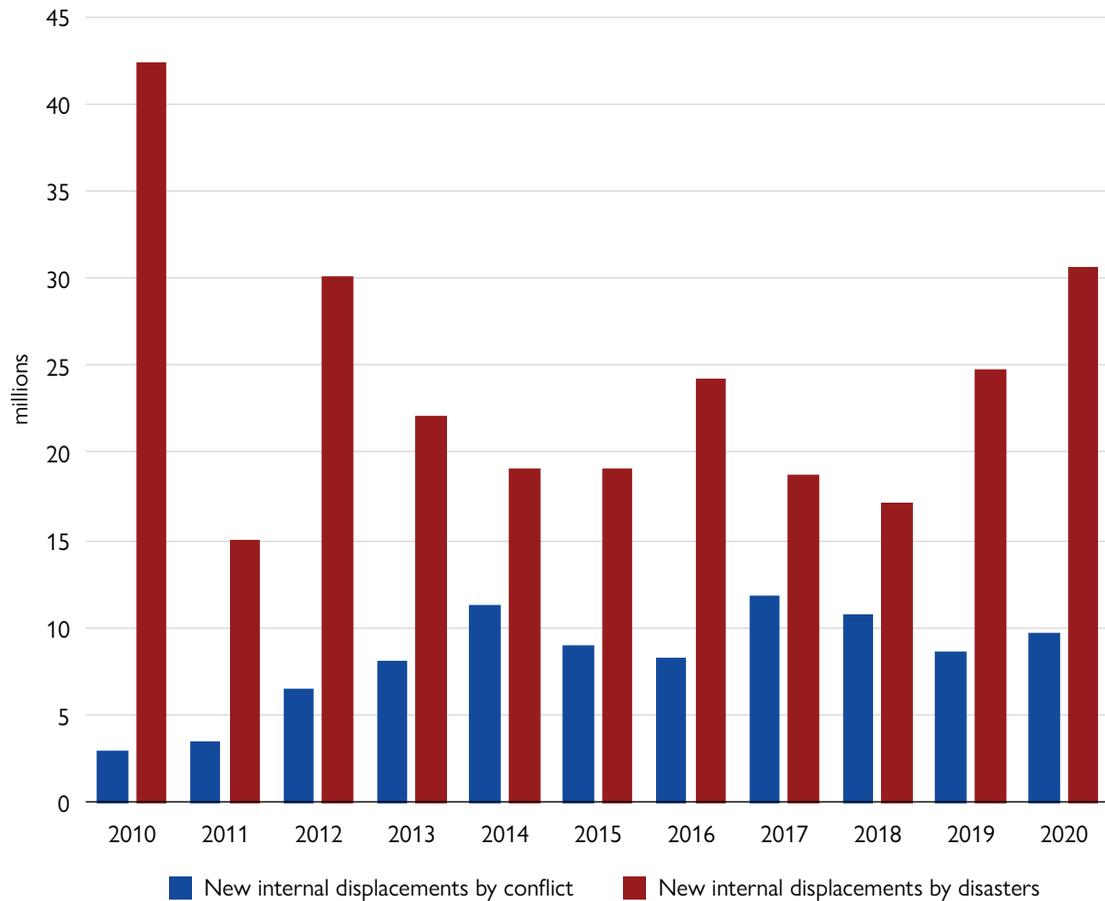


Source: IDMC, 2021.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

As shown in Figure 20, in previous years, annual new disaster displacements outnumbered new displacements associated with conflict and violence. IDMC notes, however, that a significant portion of the global total of new displacements by disasters is usually associated with short-term evacuations in a relatively safe and orderly manner.

Figure 20. New internal displacements due to conflict and disasters, 2010–2020 (millions)



Source: IDMC, n.d. (accessed May 2021).

Notes: The term “new displacements” refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in a given year, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once, and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during a given year.

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) programme gathers and analyses data to disseminate critical multilayered information on displacement and population mobility. DTM's data collection and analysis enables decision makers and responders to provide these populations with better context-specific and evidence-based assistance. Data are shared in the form of maps, infographics, reports, interactive web-based visualizations, and raw or customized data exports. Based on a given context, the DTM gathers information on populations, locations, conditions, needs and vulnerabilities, using one or more of the following methodological tools:

- Tracking mobility and multisectoral needs at area and location level to monitor needs and target assistance;
- Monitoring movement ("flow") trends and the overall situation at origin, transit and destination points;
- Registering displaced individuals and households for beneficiary selection and vulnerability targeting and programming;
- Conducting surveys, to gather specific in-depth information from populations of interest.

In 2020, operating in more than 80 countries, the DTM tracked over 30 million IDPs, 26 million returnees and 5 million migrants. IOM's DTM database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. For more information on IOM's DTM, see <http://dtm.iom.int>.

Conclusions

It is important to understand migration and displacement, and how they are changing globally, given their relevance to States, local communities and individuals. Human migration and mobility may be age-old phenomena that stretch back to the earliest periods of history, but their manifestations and impacts have changed over time as the world has become more globalized.⁴⁶ This has been highlighted in stark terms as COVID-19 continues to significantly disrupt international migration and mobility (and many other facets of modern society), more than 18 months since it was first declared a pandemic by the WHO.⁴⁷ Ongoing mobility restrictions remain a key feature in many societies around the world as virus strains see confirmed cases rise again and while vaccine roll-outs continue, albeit in a highly uneven way globally. Restrictions to mobility – international and internal – emerged as one of the key pillars of COVID-19 response and, while evolving and fluctuating, have persisted ever since. The thematic chapter on COVID-19 impacts (Chapter 5 of this report) explores these issues in much greater detail, with a focus on the first 12 months of the pandemic and its longer-term implications.

46 McAuliffe and Goossens, 2018; Triandafyllidou, 2018.

47 WHO, 2020.

Now, more than at any other time in history, we have more data and information on migration and displacement globally at our disposal; yet the very nature of migration in an interconnected world means that its dynamics can be difficult to capture in statistical terms. That said, we have seen entirely new data sets emerge very quickly during the pandemic, including from IOM (Figure 8) and other United Nations agencies, as well as from academic institutions.⁴⁸ Further, some of the large technology companies, including Facebook and Google, began releasing anonymized mobility data early in the pandemic that was based on users' mobility records, providing an indication of the vast amounts of unit record data collected, while also underscoring existing concerns regarding the human rights implications (including privacy) of such data reserves and their usage.⁴⁹ We are also seeing how the increasing digitalization of migration and mobility – the lifeblood of which is data – is being increasingly utilized as part of ongoing efforts to develop and implement artificial intelligence technology in migration systems (see Chapter 11 of this report). Reducing global inequality is also supported by data collection and analysis. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration emphasizes a commitment to improving international cooperation on migration, as well as collecting migration data and undertaking research and analysis so that we may better understand trends and evolving patterns and processes, to support the development of evidence-based responses. Recent developments in this area are described in Chapter 4, with particular reference to work being undertaken by the United Nations Network on Migration.

In the context of ongoing globalization, as well as expanding data collection and related digitalization processes, it is increasingly relevant to stay abreast of long-term trends and evolving patterns in migration and displacement. In this chapter, we have provided a global overview of migration and migrants, based on the current data available. Notwithstanding data gaps and lags, several high-level conclusions can be drawn. At the global level, for example, we can see that, over time, migrants have taken up residence in some regions (such as Asia and Europe) at a much greater rate than others (such as Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean); and that this trend is likely to continue over the longer term, notwithstanding the acute impacts of the pandemic in recent months. Likewise, statistics show that migrant workers continue to gravitate toward regions with greater opportunities, as economies grow and labour markets evolve, and that some migrant worker populations are heavily gendered (see Figure 11). That said, additional analysis in this report (Chapter 7) indicates that there have been changes in the composition of migration corridors, along with indications that higher mobility has been occurring from highly developed countries in recent years.

The global data also show that displacement caused by conflict, generalized violence and other factors remains at a record high, notwithstanding the additional difficulties in collecting data during the pandemic. Intractable, unresolved and recurring conflicts and violence have led to an increase in the number of refugees around the world. While a handful of countries continue to provide solutions for refugees, overall, these have been profoundly and persistently insufficient in addressing global needs. In addition, there were estimated to be more people displaced internally at the end of 2020 than ever before. Recent tragic events in Afghanistan indicate that we are likely to see global displacement numbers rise even higher in the immediate future as people are displaced within and from that country during the remainder of 2021 and into 2022.

48 See, for example, the University of Oxford's Government Response Tracker (used in this chapter) and the Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 data set (referred to in Chapter 5 of this report).

49 Toh, 2020; Zuboff, 2021.

Appendix A. Abridged extract: *Final Report on Conceptual Frameworks and Concepts and Definitions on International Migration* (27 April 2021)

Full report available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/migration-expert-group/task-forces/TF2-ConceptualFramework-Final.pdf>.

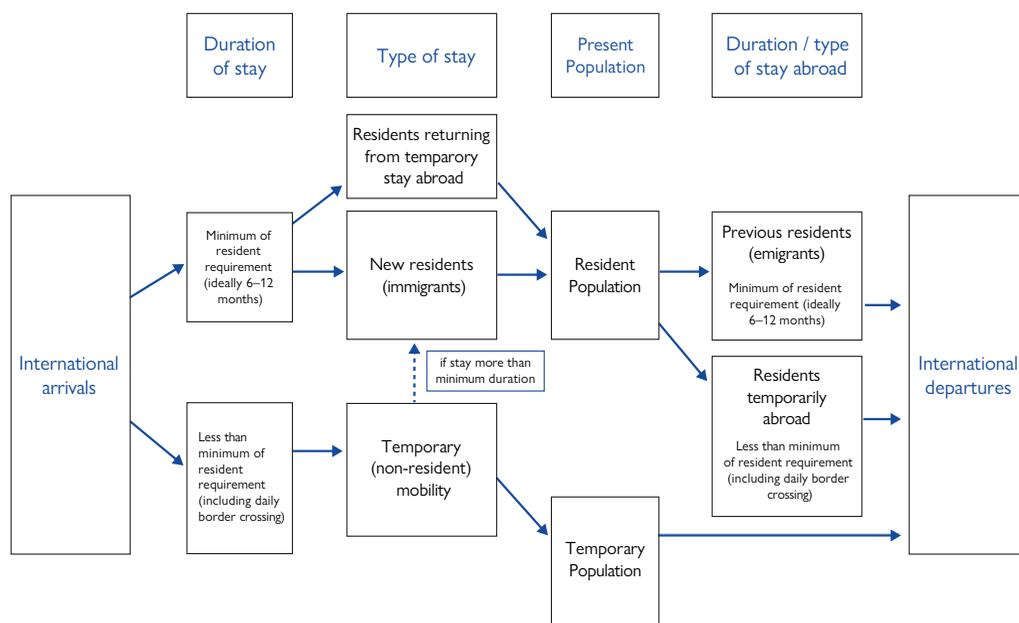
Introduction and Background

1. The United Nations Statistics Division, under the guidance of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics, has initiated revisions of the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (referred to as the 1998 Recommendations hereafter). Up until now, the definition of international migrant as stipulated in the 1998 Recommendations has supported to a certain degree comparability across countries. However, more than 20 years have passed since the 1998 Recommendations were published. Up until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the obstacles of international migration were reduced. In particular, modern communication technologies and the increased convenience of travel lessened the psychological burden of living in other countries as migrants were able to remain in frequent contact with their families and friends in their origin countries. This includes both temporary and permanent moves associated with education or job opportunities and those due to political or environmental circumstances. Regional agreements have also been made that allow free movements amongst certain countries, raising new measurement challenges even for countries with relatively developed statistical systems.
2. Increases in the levels and changing patterns of international migration, including asylum seekers and refugees, have raised the demand for accurate and timely data. Calls for better data from a number of initiatives have stressed the need to collect and use migration statistics to develop evidence-based migration policies and guide the integration of migrants into national development planning. These data are also needed for estimating populations and understanding demographic change. With increasing life expectancy and declining fertility across most countries in the world, migration has become an increasingly important component of both demographic and social change.
3. Quality and timely data on international migration are needed for many reasons. They are increasingly related to population growth or decline, economic development and environmental concerns. For example, local actors need timely counts of persons who use local services (e.g. housing, health and social services, schools), while national stakeholders may be more interested in the size, characteristics and dispersion of migrants across the national territory to assess the effects on population change and domestic labour markets, for instance. As international mobility involves movements of persons from one country to another, there is a need for sharing data on these movements and ensuring they are comparable over time. Without such data, it is not possible to estimate the size of countries' diasporas abroad or to benchmark the size and characteristics of international migration stocks and flows. Nor is it possible to meet the data requirements of the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and Sustainable Development Goals. As many countries struggle to collect statistics on population movements, having a mechanism for building capacity in the development and improvement of migration statistics could prove very valuable.

Reconceptualising International Migration and Mobility

17. In this section, we outline the key conceptual framework for international mobility and migration. International mobility includes all movements that cross international borders within a given year. International migration is defined more narrowly as a change in the country of residence and is considered a subset of international mobility. These flows are integral for understanding resident population change, which is the main population used for international comparison. In our conceptual framework, we split populations and their corresponding international mobility into two distinct groups: (i) resident population and international migration and (ii) temporary (non-resident) population and international temporary mobility. International temporary mobility includes all international border crossings (events) except those related to changes in the resident population.
18. We define residence in line with the UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (Revision 3, par. 2.50). That is, it is recommended that countries apply a threshold of 12 months when considering place of residence according to one of the following two criteria:
 - a. The place at which the person has lived continuously for most of the last 12 months (that is, for at least 6 months and one day), not including temporary absences for holidays or work assignments, or intends to live for at least 6 months and one day;
 - b. The place at which the person has lived continuously for at least the last 12 months, not including temporary absences for holidays or work assignments, or intends to live for at least 12 months.
- ...
27. In Figure 2, we present a conceptual framework that links international arrivals to the present population, which includes all persons present in the country at a particular time, excluding residents temporarily abroad. The key distinguishing factor between international migration and other international population movements is duration of stay in the country or abroad. The criterion for defining a migrant, therefore, should be the duration required in order to be considered part of the resident population. In practice, this would imply a duration either 6 months or 12 months (see paragraph 18) so that flows of migration coincide with annual resident population change. The same situation occurs for departures: persons need to be away and stay in another country long enough based on minimum residence requirement to be considered part of another country's resident population. Persons who stayed temporarily in more than one country for less than minimum duration criteria cannot establish a new residence, therefore are still part of the resident population of their country of origin. In the framework, we include individuals who never become part of the resident population. We also include changing status from temporary population to resident population for persons who stay more than the minimum duration criteria while they are still present in the country. Persons who stayed longer than minimum duration criteria and do not possess a valid visa or other immigration documentation should be considered part of the resident population.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework on intersection between duration of stay and international mobility



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