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IN MIGRATION



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Cover photo: Front-line worker at the IOM Point of Entry health screening point in Chanika, United Republic of Tanzania. © IOM 2019/Muse Mohammed

Required citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021. Migration research and analysis: Recent United Nations contributions. In: *World Migration Report 2022* (M. McAuliffe and A. Triandafyllidou, eds.). IOM, Geneva.

ISBN 978-92-9268-129-6 (PDF)

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MIGRATION RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS: RECENT UNITED NATIONS CONTRIBUTIONS

Introduction

Previous editions of the *World Migration Report* have pointed to a dramatic increase in research and analysis on migration, referring to an “era of information overload”.¹ Few issues have been as prominent and enduring in political and public discourse as migration. Its political salience remains very high, including amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid expansion of disinformation on migration and migrants witnessed in real time in recent years has influenced the public discourse as never before (see Chapter 8 of this report). Media reports on migration are often unduly negative, and key issues in migration have too often been hijacked by those who peddle misinformation and disinformation on migrants and migration.² As a result, it has become more important than ever to ensure that policymakers have access to, and recognize the value of, rigorous analysis and research. Among the actors carrying out such analysis and research on migration today are many organizations in the United Nations system, producing different types of migration-related data, research and knowledge.

As the nature of publishing itself changes, these organizations have adapted and are increasingly using a diverse range of supports, such as data visualization, portals, blog and journal articles, webinars, videos and podcasts to reach wider audiences. Previous editions of the *World Migration Report* have highlighted the fundamental differences in the publishing processes of academic research (referred to as “white” literature) and non-academic research (referred to as “grey literature”) published by a variety of actors, including intergovernmental organizations, such as those in the United Nations system.³ Both types of research outputs have strengths and weaknesses, as summarized in the table below.

1 IOM, 2017.

2 McAuliffe et al., 2019.

3 IOM, 2017; IOM, 2019a.

Table 1. Strengths and weaknesses of academic and non-academic research

	Academic research (white literature)	Non-academic research (grey literature)
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality research usually ensured through peer review by experts; • Must refer to and build upon existing scientific evidence; • Built on networks of expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible to wide audiences, as usually freely available online and with less technical terminology used; • Rapid publishing processes enabling timely updates for policy deliberations; • Usually of a shorter format; • Ability to draw on expertise in academic and policy spheres.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not freely accessible, as often behind paywalls managed by commercial publishers; • Long publishing timelines due to peer review processes, not meeting policymakers' needs for rapid research and analysis, and at times using out-of-date data; • Not easily accessible to a non-expert audience as highly technical and/or theoretical, with academic terminology used; • Lengthy written outputs, particularly in the case of monographs and handbooks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying quality due to lack of quality assurance mechanisms of certain outputs; • Possible to ignore the existing evidence base, thereby diminishing overall quality and relevance; • Certain outputs may be more focused on advocacy and policy change or driven by a political agenda.

Sources: Banks, 2012; Pappas and Williams, 2011; IOM, 2017; IOM, 2019a.

Most published academic research outputs are behind paywalls (i.e. are not freely accessible) and are often managed by commercial publishers. The dissemination of academic research has, to date, rested on getting works published by commercial publishers, with some forms of publication (such as specific academic journals) having much greater credibility and weight than others. A key strength of academic publications is that they have usually been peer-reviewed by experts in the field, which typically enhances the robustness and credibility of the research, including by ensuring that existing evidence is adequately incorporated and built upon. The downside is that this results in long lead times, impacting on the usefulness for policymakers, who often need material more quickly than academic research methodologies and publishing regimes can accommodate. Academic researchers are increasingly being encouraged to disseminate their work beyond academic spheres; in particular, researchers analysing policy-relevant issues are often keen to engage with policymakers to impart knowledge that can inform policy deliberations and help shape policymaking. This is especially the case in migration. Effective research contributions for policy audiences tend to take the form of short papers, podcasts and blog articles, as well as policy workshops and interactive expert meetings.

Some of the advantages of grey literature, in turn, relate to its accessibility and faster publishing processes, enabling research to respond to issues as they emerge. Contributions from grey literature (such as research reports, working papers and government/official documents) are usually freely available. Other merits of this literature include shorter production times, greater access to unpublished research and data sets, and the ability to draw on expertise in academic and policy spheres.⁴ However, recent developments are increasingly blurring the distinction between

⁴ Pappas and Williams, 2011.

the two types of research. On the one hand, academics are increasingly evaluated on the policy relevance of their research for extension of their contracts and/or tenure. They increasingly disseminate their research beyond academic spheres to impart knowledge that can inform policy deliberations and help shape policymaking, this again being especially the case in migration. Yet, some disincentives persist for academics to engage in policy research, such as insufficient professional reward, difficulties in securing funding, and navigating an often complicated, bureaucratic and politicized field. On the other hand, while grey literature has sometimes been criticized for inconsistent quality and review standards,⁵ efforts have been made in some quarters to increase rigour by improving quality assurance mechanisms.⁶ Some contributions, such as those made by several international organizations, are seen as a key source of evidence in policymaking, at times on par with the quality of academic literature.

In a context of a rapidly changing publishing environment, organizations in the United Nations system are also adapting by increasingly using a diverse range of knowledge tools and platforms to reach wider audiences. This chapter aims to provide an overview of recent research and analysis on migration, focusing on the contributions of organizations in the United Nations system. Two key events have marked the production of research and analysis within the system over the last five years: the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in December 2018, which led to multiple implementation efforts at national and regional levels; and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, officially declared in March 2020,⁷ which brought along widespread border closures and mobility restrictions, impacting on global migration patterns.

This chapter is structured around two main sections: the first looks at the role of the United Nations system as a producer of migration knowledge, while the second features selected recent contributions from relevant United Nations organizations.

The United Nations system and the production of knowledge

Although definitions of intergovernmental organizations may vary, the term refers to “formal, continuous structures founded by an authoritative instrument of agreement between members (including two or more sovereign States) or an existing international organization through which members pursue their common interest”.⁸ Since the first half of the twentieth century, the number, diversity and influence of intergovernmental organizations have grown.⁹ The United Nations system comprises, in addition to the United Nations itself, many funds, programmes, specialized and related agencies, all of which have their own missions and areas of work, as well as their own leadership and budget. The programmes and funds are financed through voluntary, rather than assessed contributions. The specialized agencies are international organizations funded by voluntary, assessed and private donor contributions, and are focused more on the technical work of the United Nations; they report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), but do not report to the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on administrative and budgetary matters. Related organizations have cooperation agreements with the United Nations, with many points in common with those of specialized agencies; but unlike them, they are not brought into relationship by means of Article 57 of the United Nations Charter, and agreements are not established with ECOSOC on the basis of Article 63 of the same charter. They are, nonetheless, members of the Chief Executives

5 Banks, 2012; Pappas and Williams, 2011.

6 This report, for example, is peer reviewed by academic and IOM experts and is subjected to an extensive data-checking process.

7 WHO, 2020a.

8 Davies and Woodward, 2014:13.

9 Davies and Woodward, 2014.

Board for Coordination, a 31-member body that provides strategic guidance and coordination to the United Nations system (see Appendix A).

Organizations in the United Nations system are uniquely placed to gather data, owing among other factors to their presence in the field, as well as their relationship with governmental bodies. While there has been an increased focus in streamlining data collection and the production of research and knowledge to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, capacity issues remain. Scholarly publications note that intergovernmental organizations are now among the main producers of information on migration, a reflection of a broader growing interest in the topic itself.¹⁰ As publishers and institutional authors and research partners with academia, the organizations in the United Nations system make a wide variety of contributions to the knowledge base on migration and migrants. In some circumstances, such organizations may be the only source of information, and multiple references to publications by them are therefore often found in academic and policy literature. Over the years, the United Nations has engaged with the academic world and research institutions in the field of migration, including through three of its research institutes: the United Nations Research Institutes for Social Development, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and the United Nations University (UNU). The last hosts a network on migration, which includes all UNU institutes working on the topic of migration, with the view of sharing knowledge and research practices and informing policy development.

The United Nations system also acts as a bridge between the research community and policymakers. Much has been written about the tensions between the policy and research worlds.¹¹ Through the advocacy work carried out within the United Nations system, its organizations have been able to “plug in” evidence-based research in policymaking spaces,¹² thereby informing policy processes and allowing for cross-fertilization between these two worlds. A key global network designed to support such cross-fertilization is the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS). Founded in 1987, ACUNS is an independent non-profit association of scholars, practitioners, institutions, and individuals active in the work and study of the United Nations. ACUNS stimulates and supports dialogue and research about issues of global concern and international cooperation.¹³

Collaboration in the United Nations system on migration research

Since the turn of the millennium, attempts have been made to streamline inter-agency collaboration on migration issues in the United Nations system. In December 2003, the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) was officially launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and several governments. It constituted the first-ever global panel addressing international migration. In its final report,¹⁴ the GCIM recommended the establishment of a global migration facility “that should ensure greater co-ordination, efficiency and policy consistency among all relevant global bodies, and also allow the sharing and pooling of institutional expertise.”

As a response to this recommendation, the Global Migration Group was established in early 2006 by building on an existing inter-agency group, the Geneva Migration Group. At the time of its cessation, following the creation of the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM), the Global Migration Group brought together 22 agencies in the United Nations system to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better-coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. Part of its work focused on sharing information, research findings

¹⁰ See, for example, Mason, 1999; Pécoud, 2015.

¹¹ Nutley et al., 2003.

¹² UNDG, 2017.

¹³ ACUNS, 2021.

¹⁴ UNGA, 2005; GCIM, 2005.

and statistical data on migration, as well as developing a joint research network on migration and development, with particular emphasis on building research capacity in developing countries.

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly formally endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the culmination of 18 months of wide-reaching informal consultations, followed by intergovernmental negotiations. In parallel with the Global Compact for Migration process, the UNNM was established by the United Nations' Secretary-General to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States in their implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (see Appendix B). In support of the Global Compact for Migration development process, the Migration Research Leaders' Syndicate was established to help build bridges between policy and research (see discussion in the next section).

The UNNM consists of those members of the United Nations system that wish to be a part of it and for whom migration is of relevance to their mandates. The IOM is the coordinator of the UNNM and houses its secretariat. Within the network, an executive committee comprises nine entities with clear mandates, technical expertise and capacity in migration-related fields. According to its terms of reference, the Network sets itself the objective of acting as a source of ideas, tools, reliable data and information, analysis and policy guidance on migration issues.

Table 2: United Nations Network on Migration members, including Executive Committee members

UN Secretariat Bodies	Chief Executives Board Secretariat (CEB) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)* Department of Public Information (DPI) Inter-Agency Standing Committee Secretariat (IASC) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)* Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)*
Special Funds and Programmes, under the United Nations General Assembly	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)* United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)* Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Secretariat World Food Programme (WFP)

Specialized agencies, coordinated by the Economic and Social Council	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) International Labour Organization (ILO)* International Maritime Organization (IMO) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Universal Postal Union (UPU) World Bank World Health Organization (WHO)*
Regional Commissions, under the Secretariat, coordinated by the Economic and Social Council	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)
Related organization to United Nations, under the General Assembly	International Organization for Migration (IOM)*†
Training and research organizations, coordinated by the Economic and Social Council	United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) United Nations University (UNU)
Other entities under the General Assembly, coordinated by the Economic and Social Council	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

* Member of the Executive Committee.

† Coordinator of the Network.

The mandates, missions, or competencies of some of the organizations (such as IOM and UNHCR) are focused on specific forms of migration and displacement, while others have responsibilities relevant to particular aspects or groups of people: UN DESA for data; the ILO for migrant workers; OHCHR for migrants' rights; UNICEF for migrant children; UNODC for transnational criminal aspects, such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling; and UNDP for development aspects. Their various mandates enable these intergovernmental organizations to collect significant quantities of data and/or access data from States. Many of these organizations also convene and report on dialogues and conferences related to migration and mobility, in addition to generating and publishing background, technical, operational, state-of-the-art and agenda-setting research and analysis, including on global statistical data.

The importance of collaborative research on migration had already been highlighted in the report of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), *Strengthening Policy Research Uptake in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, published in 2018. Featuring a case study on migration research, and pre-empting the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration, it made two pertinent recommendations for interdisciplinary and collaborative research on migration, while also noting “the presence of IOM as a specialized partner in most of the collaborations identified”.¹⁵ First, through inter-agency collaboration, it encouraged organizations in the United Nations system to take the necessary measures to establish a global knowledge platform, as stipulated in the Global Compact for Migration. Second, it recommended that United Nations system members of the future Network on Migration should assess the option of inter-agency collaboration with regard to decision-making on migration-related research priorities.

The United Nations system: data collection and capacity-building

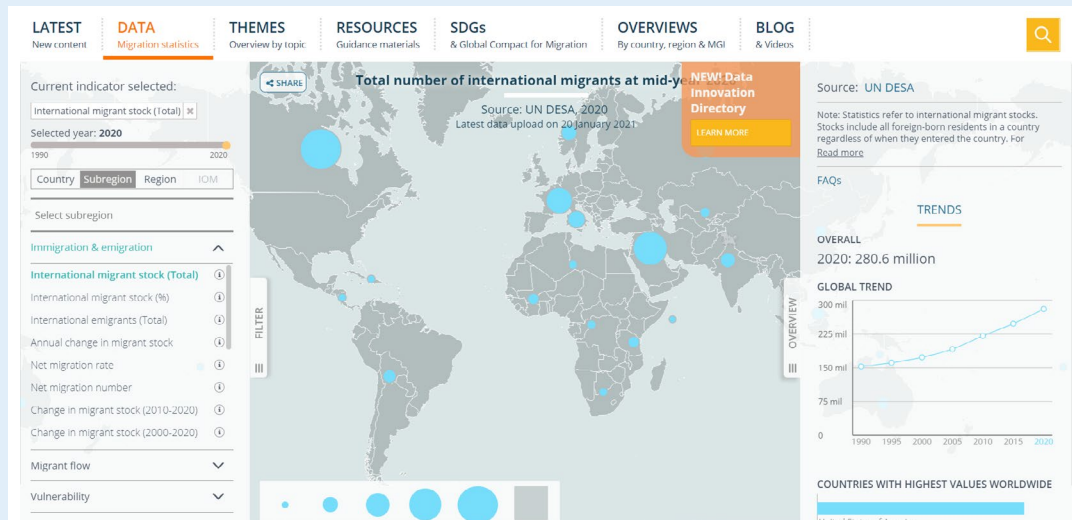
The demands for migration data arising from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have prompted the international statistical community to review the use of traditional sources for migration data, such as population and housing censuses, household surveys and administrative records. Furthermore, through the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration, United Nations Member States recognized the “...need for international efforts to strengthen our knowledge and analysis of migration”¹⁶ and the importance of collecting and disseminating clear, evidence-based information on migration. Central to this commitment is Objective 1: to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies. Beyond building much-needed capacity to collect comparable migration data, this commitment aims to strengthen partnerships, enhance collaboration and create the conditions needed to develop research and studies on the interlinkage between migration and sustainable development.

There is an increased interest in looking for alternative sources to enhance the collection and analysis of migration data. The better use and understanding of existing data sources are essential to improve migration management and policy. Information about migration comes from a variety of data sources that have different strengths and limitations and can be used to produce different migration statistics. In order to facilitate access to and understanding of the different data sets collected by the different organizations in the United Nations system, IOM launched the Migration Data Portal in December 2017. It aims to serve as a unique access point to timely, comprehensive migration statistics and reliable information about migration data globally. The site is designed to help policymakers, national statistics officers, journalists and the general public interested in the field of migration to navigate the increasingly complex landscape of international migration data, currently scattered across different organizations and agencies.

¹⁵ JIU, 2018:40.

¹⁶ UNGA, 2018a.

Migration Data Portal



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 IOM.

The Migration Data Portal was launched in December 2017 and is managed and developed by IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC).^a It aims to facilitate the understanding of migration data by making them more accessible, more visible and easier to understand. The Portal is currently available in English, French, Spanish and German. Based on user feedback, the Portal's new dashboard was launched in June 2021. The interactive dashboard integrates the Portal's map with two comparative sections that enable easier analysis of international data, as well as a national data pilot section. The latter brings together national data from different sources, including government data, visualized in one place. As of June 2021, the national data section had nearly 40 national data indicators from government sources of four pilot countries and WorldPop estimates. The international data section provides access to nearly 80 migration data indicators from over 20 international sources. All indicators are updated as new data sets become available.

True to its objective of making migration data easier to understand, the Portal offers a variety of tools and additional resources, including written reports, blogs, handbooks and interviews with data experts, in view of offering contextual information. It provides access to over 45 thematic pages divided under five pillars, in which concepts and definitions are discussed, the strengths and limitations of available data are explained, and useful infographics and data visualizations can be accessed.

The portal also provides a dedicated section on migration governance, which includes country profiles. This section tracks, through data, progress made by United Nations Member States in achieving migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goals and in their implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

^a Available at <https://migrationdataportal.org/>.

Aligned to the JIU recommendation previously mentioned, the Global Compact for Migration, in paragraph 43, calls for the establishment of a capacity-building mechanism (CBM) in the United Nations, building upon existing initiatives, that supports efforts of Member States in its implementation. The CBM was intended to comprise of a start-up fund (Migration MPTF), the Connection Hub and the Global Knowledge Platform. It emphasizes the need to draw on the technical, financial and human resources, on a voluntary basis, of Member States, the United Nations system, and all stakeholders in order to strengthen capacities and foster multi-partner cooperation. The Migration MPTF contributes to the financing of migration research by providing funding for projects on data collection under its first thematic cluster. The Migration Network Hub,¹⁷ combining both the Global Knowledge Platform and the Connection Hub, was launched in March 2021 and is a vital element of the Global Compact for Migration to ensure that relevant knowledge, experience, and expertise can be drawn upon in developing tailor-made solutions in response to Member State requests.

The Network is committed to developing the components of the Migration Network Hub as building blocks for the other workstreams, ensuring that the “state of knowledge” is constantly refined and provides support for the working groups, by collating migration evidence, migration policies and practices from existing expertise. At the same time, each workstream will inform the Hub on a continuous basis, emphasizing national and regional experiences.

The United Nations Migration Network Hub

The Migration Network Hub was launched on 18 March 2021 and represents the first knowledge platform and connection hub to support United Nations Member States in the implementation, follow-up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It is a virtual meeting space that aims to create a community of practice, where users can share knowledge on migration and identify good practices and initiatives related to the Global Compact for Migration. Information is curated and peer reviewed to ensure high quality; users are able to access resources, participate in webinars, discover Global Compact for Migration-related publications and take part in online discussions on relevant topics. Moving forward, the platform will also feature a practice repository and allow governments to access services and support.

The Hub is part of the capacity-building mechanism envisaged by paragraph 43 of the Global Compact for Migration, which together with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund aims to bring cohesion to the work of all actors involved in the UNNM. Content available can be filtered by choosing any of the 23 Global Compact for Migration objectives, one of 10 cross-cutting themes, or by geographic scope. Users can also consult information made available by the different UNNM working groups, access all documents related to the regional review process of the Global Compact for Migration, including inputs by Member States and other stakeholders, and take part in moderated discussions through the online discussion space.

Another key feature of the Hub is the Experts Database, which provides access to a range of migration experts from around the world, including academics, researchers and practitioners. The database can be consulted by geographic location, area of expertise and type of organization.

¹⁷ Accessible at <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/hub>.

Collaboration between the United Nations system and the scientific community on migration research

Different organizations in the United Nations system support the publication of academic journals. Notable examples are WHO, the ILO and UNESCO, each of which publishes a number of academic journals in their specific fields of expertise. In the area of migration, IOM has been publishing the journal *International Migration* for the past 60 years. It is a refereed scientific journal on migration issues as analysed by social scientists from all parts of the world. It covers the entire field of policy relevance in international migration, giving attention to topics reflective of policy concerns, but also offering coverage of all regions of the world. Geographic diversity and contributions based on multidisciplinary research are priorities of the journal. Both UNHCR and IOM also offer ad hoc contributions, as well as funding, to the journal *Forced Migration Review*, a widely read publication on forced migration published by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

International Migration: 60th Anniversary

In 2021, the journal *International Migration* turned 60. As early as 1961, IOM's leadership recognized the central role of scientific research on migration, arguing the need for technical research on migration to supplement the political dimensions that migration raises. Initially focusing on Europe, the scope of the journal was broadened to a global focus in 1963, over time becoming the editorially independent scientific journal we know today.

Prior to the establishment of the journal, advice was sought from leading academics and practitioners on the need and nature of research functions as part of organizational contributions to the field of migration research. In a 1959 memo, a strong case was made for scientific scholarship on migration:

There are plenty of descriptive accounts of migratory movements, but no serious study explaining the direction and the magnitude of the flows in the post-war period... [I]n scientific inquiries it has been accepted that governments cannot be granted any monopoly of truth...[W]hen research is undertaken on migration problems, as on any other problems of international bearing, the purely political problem has, so to speak, to be de-emphasised...[I]t is necessary and considerably advantageous to tackle the migration problems separately and in technical terms.

The arguments put forward in 1959 are just as relevant today, but perhaps not in the way it was then imagined. We have seen massive changes in migration patterns, from rapid urbanization to increased roles that digital technologies play in our lives. As we witness the rapid expansion of disinformation on migration and its impacts on migrants, it is both important and timely to reflect on the contributions of social scientists worldwide working on international migration in order to better understand its many dimensions and manifestations. As recently articulated by IOM's Director General, António Vitorino:

The need for accurate, rigorous and authoritative accounts of migration is more important than ever before as fake news proliferates, risking the systemic erosion of societal values that are based on truth, science and law, including in relation to migrants' rights...In reaffirming IOM's active support of *International Migration*, now in its sixtieth year, we believe the need for the journal's contribution has never been greater.^a

^a Vitorino, 2021.

It is important to note that organizations in the United Nations system contribute funding to academic journals in order to support peer-refereed, policy-oriented academic publishing. This does not result in interference in editorial discretion over the content of the journals, which, in recognition of scholarly independence, remains the responsibility of the editors.

In 2017, IOM convened the Migration Research Leaders' Syndicate to better support and facilitate knowledge and expertise on migration during the development of the Global Compact for Migration. The Syndicate comprised migration experts from around the world with deep knowledge of a wide variety of aspects of migration. Its 36 members were academic and applied researchers from a range of disciplines, supported by nine advisers with vast experience in policy setting and in bridging policy and research, which enabled leading migration experts to inform the Global Compact for Migration process with the latest thinking in academic and applied research on key migration issues, such as human trafficking, irregular migration, migration narratives, migrants' rights, and return and reintegration.¹⁸

The Global Compact on Refugees, also adopted in December 2018, proposed that "a global academic network on refugee, other forced displacement, and statelessness issues will be established, involving universities, academic alliances, and research institutions, together with UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders."¹⁹ In 2019, during the first Global Refugee Forum, the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN) was launched to advance deliverables in three areas: producing research to support the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees; facilitating teaching, training and knowledge-sharing on refugee, forced displacement and statelessness issues; and promoting solidarity with forcibly displaced scholars within the academic community and providing concrete support for them, such as scholarships.

It has also been noted that the scientific community can play a critical role in the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees through the production of policy-relevant research, by facilitating academic exchange and through the education of students on the importance of both compacts.²⁰ In particular, it has been suggested to build on initiatives that took place during the Global Compact for Migration negotiations, which created collaborative spaces between academia and civil society actors, enhancing the effectiveness and influence of their participation.²¹

United Nations as a global disseminator of facts and knowledge during the COVID-19 pandemic

In recent years, there has been an increase in interest on research in misinformation and disinformation. Academic researchers from a range of disciplines have focused on aspects such as fact checking, the role of online technology in the spread of misinformation and disinformation, and ways to minimize its impact.²² With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread of false information has increased exponentially.²³ An overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – has made it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. This phenomenon has prompted UNESCO and WHO to coin new terms, such as

18 IOM, 2017.

19 UNGA, 2018b.

20 Appleby, 2020.

21 Gottardo and Rego, 2021.

22 Fernandez and Alani, 2018; McAuliffe et al., 2019; Pasquetto et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2020.

23 WHO, 2020b.

“misinfodemic”²⁴ and “infodemic”²⁵ to describe “a parallel misinformation pandemic directly impacting lives and livelihoods around the world”.²⁶

The rise of misinformation has also impacted on how the academic field has been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several scientific publishers made COVID-19 research accessible online free of charge, while others are fast-tracking the publication of COVID-19 articles. While much of the research conducted remains in the medical field, there have been calls made to increase the volume of much-needed social science research and to ensure that these findings are not overlooked when informing effective responses.²⁷ Despite this, researchers have also expressed concern that this rush to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic may compromise research integrity, by pushing researchers to take shortcuts in the research process, impacting on quality and limiting the ability to develop interdisciplinary collaboration.²⁸ Many academics are concerned about the possible consequences of this “covidization”²⁹ of research, including in terms of availability of funding to develop other research areas in the social sciences.

The United Nations system has sought to minimize the spread of misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Department of Global Communications launched a new COVID-19 Communications Response Initiative based on science, solutions and solidarity to fight misinformation. A rapid-response team was formed to help share facts and science to overcome this surge, which included producing and disseminating facts and accurate information, partnering and working together with businesses, media and journalists, mobilizing civil society organizations and being vocal about the rights of those affected by misinformation. As part of its response, the United Nations launched Verified, an initiative to increase the volume and reach of trusted information, and Pledge to Pause, a campaign encouraging people to pause and take care before they share online information.

How migrants are perceived is linked to and shaped by social, economic and political events, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. The spread of disinformation has had a more severe impact on groups considered to be in a vulnerable situation, including migrants. They have at times been accused of bringing the virus to a certain country, or of causing the increase in cases, despite limited evidence to support these assertions.³⁰

In response to increased misinformation and the rise in xenophobic attitudes, IOM, in partnership with the Global Forum on Migration and Development, has launched *It Takes a Community*, a digital communications campaign sharing inclusive stories about social cohesion and the positive impact that migration can have on communities as a means to counteract negative public narratives and disinformation about migration and promote a more balanced conversation. The campaign relies on engagement from IOM, national governments, cities, businesses and civil society.

Combating the spread of hate speech and deliberate distortions of truth on media is increasingly recognized as an international priority.³¹ Media play a critical role in how the public thinks about migration and how policies are shaped, hence IOM has launched the Global Migration and Media Academy to support the media's role in bringing to light the different dimensions of this expansive topic, including coverage of underreported areas such as migrants' contributions to global development.

24 Posetti and Bontcheva, 2020.

25 PAHO and WHO, 2020; WHO, 2020c.

26 UNESCO, 2020.

27 Middlemass, 2020; UN, 2020.

28 Bramstedt, 2020.

29 Pai, 2020.

30 Chugh, 2020.

31 UN, 2019.

Global Migration and Media Academy

On 18 December 2020, the International Organization for Migration and Irish Aid, the Irish Government's programme for overseas development, launched the Global Migration and Media Academy, a worldwide academy for journalists and communications students to tackle the spread of misinformation and xenophobia in the media.

The project will be coordinated by the National University Ireland, Galway and anchored in universities in Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines and Serbia. The Academy will partner with media organizations and journalism faculties to equip students of journalism and media worldwide with the online tools, contextual knowledge and ethical standards they will need to report fully on migration in this fast-evolving information age.

The Academy will provide insight into trends, data, and global and regional developments, covering topics ranging from environmental migration to gender-inclusive reporting. Anyone will be able to access the courses via the website. Taught modules will be introduced in undergraduate media studies and journalism programmes in the four pilot countries.

The Academy supports Objective 17 of the Global Compact for Migration, "Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration" and its objectives are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Recent contributions from the United Nations system: 2019 and 2020 in focus

The contributions of the organizations in the United Nations system reflect how their specific mandates intersect with international migration, including how they respond to key emerging issues, such as COVID-19 or the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. As previously outlined, both topics have dominated the production of research and knowledge on migration during 2019 and 2020. As evidenced in the table below, compared with previous years, less material on migration was published by organizations in the United Nations system over the period covered by this report. This is particularly the case for those organizations whose core mandate is not directly linked to the topic. Due to mobility restrictions and health measures in place, the ability to carry out field research has been greatly impacted. This has been reflected in the type and volume of publications, with shorter pieces and policy positions and briefs being preferred. These obstacles have also resulted in multiple project extensions and delays in the publication of many final reports and other outputs.

Just as in academia, organizations in the United Nations system rushed to address multiple aspects associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and to position their responses in accordance with their mandates. This is also reflected in their publications, which have focused on the topic since the beginning of the pandemic. Table 3 below provides some examples of key migration-related publications produced by organizations in the United Nations system, selected from an expansive volume of material published by the United Nations between 2019 and June 2021.

Table 3: Examples of key global material published from 2019 until June 2021

IOM	Advancing a Common Understanding of Migration Governance Across Regions		2020
	Contributions and Counting: Guidance on Measuring the Economic Impact of your Diaspora beyond Remittances		2020
	World Migration Report 2020		2019
	Migration Governance Indicators: A Global Perspective		2019
	Reintegration Handbook - Practical guidance on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance		2019
UN DESA	International Migration Highlights 2020		2021
	International Migration Highlights 2019		2019
	International Migration Report 2019		2019
	International Migrant Stock		Ongoing
	International Migration Flows		Ongoing
	United Nations Global Migration Database		Ongoing
	Dataset on International Migration Flows		Ongoing
UNHCR	Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019		2020
	Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018		2019
	Population Statistics Database		Ongoing
ILO	ILOSTAT		Ongoing
UNODC	Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020		2021
	Smuggling of Migrants Knowledge Portal		Ongoing
UNDP	Human Mobility, Shared Opportunities: A Review of the 2009 Human Development Report and the Way Ahead		2020
	Migrant Union: Navigating the Great Migration		2019
	Promoting Development Approaches to Migration and Displacement		2019
World Bank	Private Sectors & Refugees: Pathways to Scale ^a		2019
	Migration and Jobs: Issues for the 21st Century		2019
	Migration and Remittances Data		Ongoing
Economic and Social Commissions	ESCAP – Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration		2020
	ESCWA-IOM: Situation Report on International Migration 2019: The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of the Arab Region		2020
	UNECE – Guidance on Data Integration for Measuring Migration		2019
	CEPAL – Demographic Observatory of Latin America 2018: International Migration		2019
Inter-agency Collaboration	UNHCR and World Bank	The Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education	2021
	OECD, ILO, IOM and UNHCR	G20 International Migration and Displacement Trends Report 2020 ^b	2020
		G20 International Migration and Displacement Trends Report 2019 ^b	2019

Note: This table does not include all outputs, such as working papers; only key material is included.

a Produced by The Bridgespan Group and the International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group.

b Led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), jointly published with the ILO, IOM and UNHCR.

IOM publishes, in its own right, over 100 publications on migration every year through its publications platform, including those emanating from research projects undertaken in various locations throughout the world. In recent years, the IOM online publications platform has been upgraded and improved. As of the end of 2020, the platform contained 2,247 electronic publications in 34 different languages, most of which could be accessed free of charge. IOM published a wide range of research and analysis materials in 2019 and 2020, most notably in the form of standalone studies and reports, many of which stemmed directly from specific projects produced both at Headquarters and locally by IOM missions. For example, the report *Migration Governance Indicators: A Global Perspective* constitutes a first global overview of the state of national migration governance across the world. It analyses migration governance indicators (MGI) data to show and discuss policy trends in a number of policy areas that relate to migration (health, education, security and economics, among others). It results from the roll-out of the MGI process in 50 countries.³²

The *World Migration Report* is IOM's flagship publication, and the 10th edition of this biennial publication was published in 2019. It draws on a vast amount of data and research from around the world and is a highly collaborative venture involving IOM experts globally, as well as migration researchers and United Nations colleagues (see text box below). IOM also continues to support migration journals – *International Migration* and *Migration Policy Practice* – providing an important contribution to migration research. The publication of the Migration Research Series has also continued. It showcases policy-relevant research and analysis on diverse and complex migration issues. Calls for abstracts that circulated in 2019 and 2020 addressed topics such as the links between migration and technology; youth and migration; migration, mobility and innovation; and under-represented geographies.

UN DESA coordinates the assembly of data, including in relation to international migration – a process that has highlighted limitations in the capabilities of national statistics offices. Its biennial publication *International Migration Report* was last published in 2019 and highlights levels and trends in international migration for major geographic areas, regions and countries of the world. It also provides the ratification status of migration-related legal instruments. The Population Division maintains the United Nations Global Migration Database, a comprehensive collection of empirical data on the number of international migrants by country of birth and citizenship, sex and age as enumerated by population censuses, population registers, nationally representative surveys and other official statistical sources from 232 countries and territories in the world. It produces two data sets, International Migrants Stock, last updated in January 2021, and International Migrant Flows, a smaller data set covering 45 countries, measuring the number of migrants entering and leaving a country or territory in a given period of time. It was last revised in 2015. See Chapter 2 of this report for discussion of the two datasets.

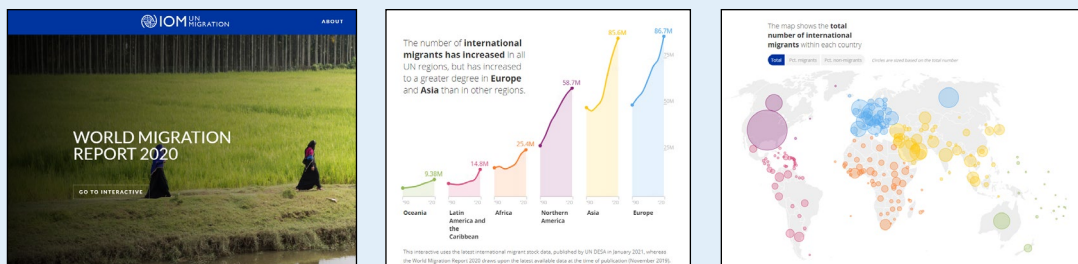
32 IOM, 2019b.

Award-winning *World Migration Report 2020*

The *World Migration Report* is the most rigorous and trusted resource on global migration data, research and analysis. In an era that saw disinformation spread at an alarming rate around the world, objective, balanced research and analysis on human migration and mobility is essential. Increasingly used as a fact-checking tool to counter disinformation, since its last edition the *World Migration Report* has scaled up its dissemination and digital presence. Available in all six United Nations languages and with selected chapters translated into German, Portuguese, Swahili and Turkish, it is the most accessible flagship publication of any United Nations agency.



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 In mid 2021, the *World Migration Report 2020* received two awards in the 2021 International Annual Report Design Awards for its online platform and report design.^b



A digital toolkit for educators was also finalized in late 2021,^c and a digital toolkit for policy officers to inform migration policy deliberations and multilateral discussions is forthcoming in collaboration with the Global Migration Centre at the Graduate Institute for International Development Studies, supported by the Geneva Science Policy Interface.^d

a Available at <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2020-interactive/>.

b IADA, 2021.

c Available at <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/toolkits>.

d Available at <https://gspi.ch/activities/announcing-icp-2021-selected-projects/>.

As a United Nations agency with a mandate to pursue protection, assistance and solutions for refugees, UNHCR produces a wealth of publications and has a dedicated research repository – Refworld. Released annually in June, *Global Trends* is UNHCR's flagship publication. It presents and analyses annual trends worldwide in relation to refugee and other populations of concern to UNHCR. UNHCR is also the key source of global statistics on refugees and other populations of concern, as reported in its online Population Statistics Database.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a standards-setting body responsible for coordinating the development and supervising the implementation of international labour standards. In the context of its efforts to improve the collection and production of labour migration statistics, ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers provides estimates of the proportion of migrant workers among the total number of migrants worldwide. It was last revised in June 2021. The ILO also maintains ILOSTAT, a database that in addition to labour migration data contains diverse statistics related to the labour market, which are also relevant to labour migration.

In December 2018, UNICEF published *A Right to Be Heard: Listening to children and young people on the move*. It highlights the results of a survey conducted via a social messaging tool that reached over 4,000 migrant respondents between the age of 14 and 24. This non-representative survey offers an insight into their experiences, often hidden from public view.

Within its mandate to assist States in addressing international crimes, UNODC undertakes efforts to combat transnational organized crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and produces a variety of publications on these themes. The fifth *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, published in March 2021, provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons and is based primarily on trafficking cases detected between 2017 and 2019. UNODC also maintains a Smuggling of Migrants Knowledge Portal on information to support the implementation of the 2000 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (i.e. case law, annotated bibliography and legislation).

As the United Nations global development agency, UNDP's commitment towards the Sustainable Development Goals translates into a broad range of programmes, including initiatives for building long-term development responses to migration and displacement. UNDP regularly publishes reports on the intersection of migration and development, including 2020's *Human Mobility, Shared Opportunities: A Review of the 2009 Human Development Report and the Way Ahead*, which looks at new patterns of human mobility, reviews progress made on recommendations in the 2009 report, analyses emerging challenges and sets out next steps in the context of the two Global Compacts and the 2030 Agenda.

The Economic and Social Council established five Regional Commissions: in Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Africa and Western Asia. They are the regional outposts of the United Nations in their respective regions. They promote multilateral dialogue, knowledge-sharing and networking at the regional level, and work together to promote intraregional and interregional cooperation, both among themselves and through collaboration with other regional organizations. They also work to promote the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, and in the case of migration, they have specific competence over the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and its review at a regional level, taking place over the 2020–2021 period, which is also reflected in their publications over the past years.

The World Bank Group is a family of five international organizations, most notably the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association, jointly referred as the World Bank. The agencies of the Group are part of the United Nations system, but maintain their own governance structure. They publish a variety of books, reports and working papers on the interlinkage of migration and economic growth, and monitor data on migration and remittances through their own data set covering inflows and outflows. They regularly collaborate with agencies in the United Nations system, as is the case for *The Global Cost*

of *Inclusive Refugee Education*, a joint publication with UNHCR interrogating “what would it take” to ensure access to education for all refugee students in developing countries, where 85 per cent of the world’s refugees live. The World Bank also implements the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), which is a multidisciplinary knowledge partnership that draws upon migration experts to create and synthesize knowledge for use by policymakers in countries of origin and destination. Established in 2013, its second phase runs from 2018 until 2023, and its activities are organized around 11 thematic working groups.³³

Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of how organizations in the United Nations system contribute to migration research and analysis and to our collective understanding of migration. We found that migration continues to be a prominent topic in public discourse and public policy, and that despite a significant increase in the interest in migration as a topic over time, including by some of the major producers of research and analysis, it remains a contested and polarizing subject. This has been aggravated by the increase in misinformation, originating from a variety of sources and spreading rapidly through the Internet and social media platforms. While this phenomenon predates the COVID-19 pandemic, it has grown exponentially through it. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected resource allocations in the field of research, with many research priorities being shifted to address the consequences of the global pandemic. The United Nations system, as a key producer of knowledge and analysis, has been both impacted by and responsive to these trends.

This chapter has shown how the United Nations system contributes to the processes of knowledge production and dissemination on migration. Its organizations are key producers of grey literature, which, as the chapter has shown, offers greater accessibility when compared with academic peer-reviewed research. Its shorter production time and the ability to draw on expertise in academic and policy spheres lends itself to contribute to evidence-based policymaking.

Throughout the chapter, different examples of the migration-related data, research and knowledge produced in the United Nations system have been provided. These include data collection, statistics and statistical analyses; knowledge platforms; country and regional reports; comparative studies; and testimonials, among others. In fact, the increased emphasis placed on research and analysis informing policies and programmatic responses in migration offers the opportunity for a greater role to be played by United Nations organizations in the field of migration research, through the leveraging of its networks in governmental, academic and policy circles.

The stigmatization of migrants and instances of discrimination against them, resulting directly or indirectly from the spread of misinformation and the politicization of migration, also make it timely to reflect on how organizations in the United Nations system can provide critical and evidence-based analysis based on scientific data. It is equally important to reflect on how they can act more effectively to dispel incorrect, and often dangerous, misinformation.

Today, more than ever, we encourage policymakers, practitioners, researchers and others to explore and exploit the wealth of written material on migration with a critical eye. We continue to underscore the importance of activities and initiatives that bridge the gap between the research and policy spheres by bringing together migration scholars, researchers, practitioners and policymakers, including through workshops, conferences, briefing sessions and related consultations. Here, too, there is a critical role for organizations in the United Nations system. The opportunity to listen and share knowledge on migration can support new lines of thinking, dispel myths and untruths, and help craft more effective policy responses that are based on evidence and rigour.

33 See www.knomad.org.

Appendix A. Chart of the United Nations System



Appendix B. Summary of the United Nations Compacts and Network on Migration process timelines

United Nations General Assembly, September 2016 - New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants - IOM becomes a United Nations-related organization				
Global Compact on Refugees		Global Compact for Migration		United Nations Network on Migration
Jan. 2017 – Dec. 2017	Thematic consultations	Apr. 2017	United Nations resolution on the modalities of the Compact process	
Jun. 2017	NGO consultations	Apr. 2017 – Nov. 2017	Informal consultation phase; 6 thematic sessions	
Dec. 2017 – Jan. 2018	Stocktaking consultations	Dec. 2017 – Jan. 2018	Stocktaking phase	Dec. 2017 Secretary-General initiates internal United Nations consultations
Feb. 2018 – Jul. 2018	Formal consultations	Dec. 2017	Secretary-General's report (<i>Making migration work for all</i>) published	May 2018 Executive Office of Secretary-General decision on proposed model
		Feb. 2018 – Jul. 2018	Intergovernmental negotiation phase	Jun. 2018 Deputy Secretary-General briefs Member States on United Nations Network
				Jul. 2018 Final Global Compact for Migration text welcomes Secretary-General decision to establish the Network
				Oct. 2018 United Nations framing meeting on the Network
				Nov. 2018 Network Terms of Reference adopted
Dec. 2018	General Assembly adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees	Dec. 2018	International conference to adopt the Global Compact for Migration and then General Assembly endorsement of the Global Compact for Migration	Dec. 2018 Secretary-General launches Network at international conference
Sep. 2016 – Dec. 2018 Application of CRRF				Jan. 2019 United Nations Network in place; successor to the United Nations Global Migration Group

Source: Newland et al., 2019.

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* All hyperlinks were working at the time of writing this report.

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