

Changing Landscape of International Migration Policies

The Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recognized migration as an intrinsic part of global development and encouraged “cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination in order to maximize the benefits of migration for the development of both sending and receiving countries”.¹ The first High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2006 reaffirmed that “international migration could be a positive force for development in both countries of origin and countries of destination, provided that it was supported by the right set of policies”.² As the world community dwells upon a new global framework for development, the second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013 provides an opportunity to assess policy challenges associated with the growing migration phenomenon, both in scope and complexity, and to identify priorities for the post-2015 development agenda.

According to the recent United Nations estimates, the number of international migrants worldwide has increased from 154 million in 1990 to 232 million in 2013. In 2013, almost 60 per cent of all international migrants in the world were living in developed countries, where international migrants represented 10.8 per cent of the population, compared with 1.6 per cent in developing countries.³

Migration policies in both origin and destination countries play an important role in determining the flows, conditions and consequences of international migration. The contribution of international migrants to development in both their countries of origin and destination depends on policies to ensure that migration occurs in safe and legal conditions, with full respect and safeguards for their human rights.

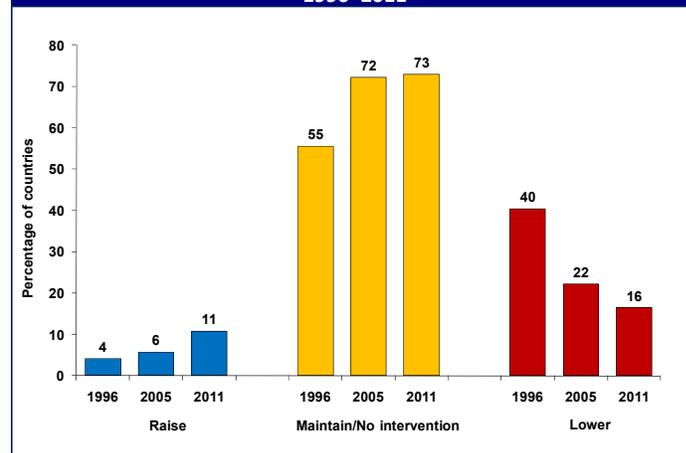
This brief summarizes recent changes in Government policies related to international migration for all Member and non-Member States of the United Nations.

1. A growing number of Governments have shown openness to regular immigration

In 2011, among the 195 countries with available data, a large majority of Governments (73 per cent) either had policies to maintain the current level of immigration or they were not intervening to change it, while 16 per cent had policies to lower and 11 per cent had policies to raise the level of immigration.⁴

At the global level, the percentage of Governments with policies to lower immigration has declined from 40 per cent in 1996 to 16 per cent in 2011, while the percentage to raise immigration has increased from just 4 per cent in 1996 to 11 per cent in 2011.

Figure 1. Government policies to influence the level of immigration, 1996–2011



The trend towards openness to immigration was especially pronounced in developed countries. The percentage of developed-country Governments that had implemented policies to lower immigration fell dramatically from 60 per cent in 1996 to just 10 per cent in 2011.

During 1996 to 2011, the percentage of Governments seeking to raise immigration has risen sharply in developed countries, but not in developing countries. In developed countries, the percentage of Governments that had policies to raise the level of immigration increased from just 2 per cent in 1996 to 22 per cent in 2011. While in developing countries, the percentage of Governments with

policies to lower the level of immigration declined from 34 per cent 1996 to 18 per cent in 2011.

All 11 countries with policies to raise immigration in 2011 were in Europe, including six in Eastern Europe (Belarus, Bulgaria, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine), three in Northern and Western Europe (Austria, Finland and Sweden) and two in Southern Europe (San Marino and Slovenia).

Among the 25 countries with largest migrant stocks, Governments of five countries had policies to raise the level of immigration, 10 had policies to lower, and the remaining 10 desired to maintain the level of immigration at current levels or did not intervene to change it. The Russian Federation, with the second largest stock of migrants, desired to raise the level of immigration.

2. Irregular migration is a major concern of Governments in both developed and developing countries

In 2011, out of 146 countries with data, three out of four Governments viewed irregular migration in their countries as a major concern.

Among the 25 countries with the largest stocks of international migrants, Governments of 22 countries considered irregular migration as a major concern in 2011.

Governments in both developed and developing countries were about equally likely (77 per cent in developed countries and 73 per cent in developing countries) to consider irregular migration as a major concern in 2011.

Among countries with available data, irregular migration was considered as a major concern by 84 per cent of Governments in Africa and 79 per cent in Asia, compared with 77 per cent in Europe and 60 per cent in Latin American and the Caribbean.

3. The receiving countries have shown greater selectivity towards highly-skilled workers

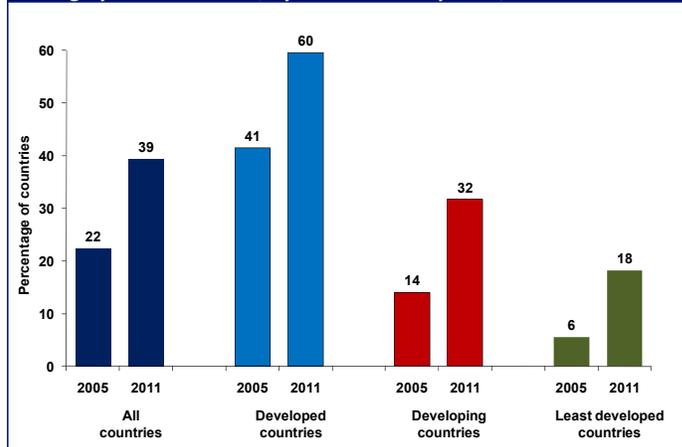
A growing number of Governments have adopted policies to raise the immigration of highly-skilled workers. The percentage of Governments with policies to raise the immigration of highly-skilled workers has increased from 22 per cent in 2005 to 39 per cent in 2011.

In 2011, policies to raise the immigration of highly-skilled workers were about twice as common in developed countries (60 per cent) as in developing countries (32 per cent).

In 2011, relative to the highly-skilled category, few Governments had adopted policies to raise immigration for permanent settlement (6 per cent) or for family reunification (9 per cent). On the contrary, more than three-quarters of all Governments had policies to maintain their current levels of immigration for permanent

settlement and family reunification or they were not intervening to influence them.

Figure 2. Governments with policies to encourage the immigration of highly-skilled workers, by level of development, 2005 and 2011

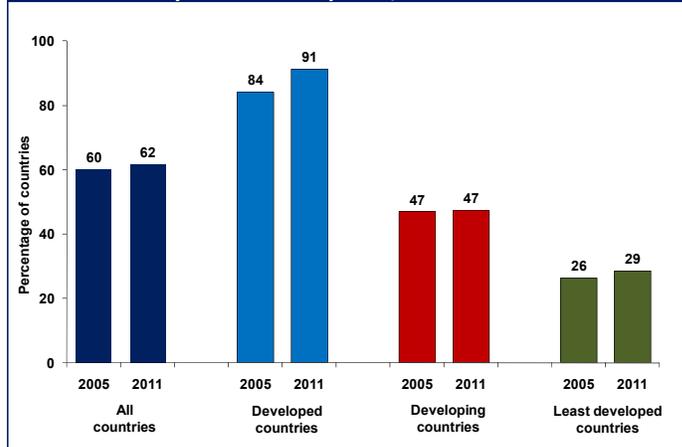


4. The majority of Governments recognize that successful integration of migrants into the host society is essential to maximize the opportunities afforded by migration

Globally, three out of five Governments had policies in place in 2011 to promote the integration of non-nationals.⁵

In developed countries, where the majority of international migrants reside, 9 out of 10 Governments had such integration policies, compared with less than half (47 per cent) of developing countries and less than a third (29 per cent) of least developed countries.

Figure 3. Governments with policies to integrate non-nationals, by level of development, 2005 and 2011



Between 2005 and 2011, the proportion of Governments with policies to integrate non-nationals increased in developed countries (from 84 per cent to 91 per cent), but remained unchanged at 47 per cent in developing countries.

5. Most countries have “non-restricted”⁶ naturalization policies

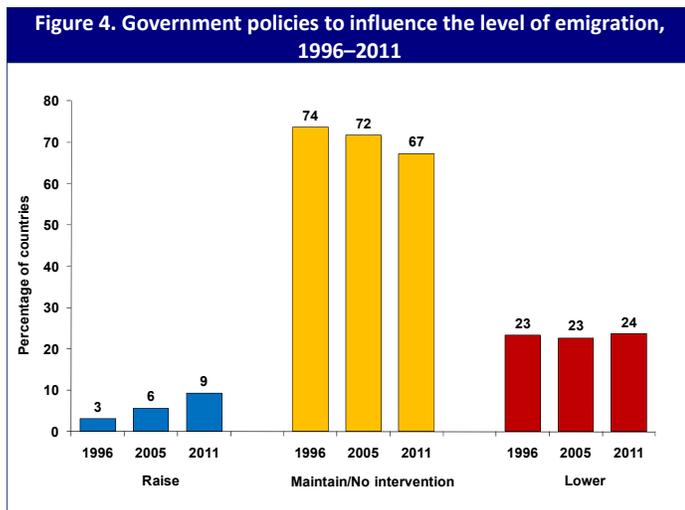
In 2011, 65 per cent of Governments had “non-restricted” naturalization policies, and another 32 per cent allowed naturalization under “restricted” conditions. Five countries — Kuwait, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nauru and United Arab Emirates — did not allow naturalization under any conditions.

Naturalization policies were more restrictive in developing countries than in developed countries. Seventy-eight per cent of developed countries allowed “non-restricted” acquisition of naturalized citizenship in 2011, compared with 61 per cent of developing countries and 47 per cent of least developed countries.

6. One out of four Governments worldwide has policies to discourage emigration

In 2011, 24 per cent of Governments had policies to lower the level of emigration, 67 per cent desired to maintain the current level of emigration or did not intervene to influence emigration, and remaining 9 per cent had policies to encourage emigration.

Since the mid-1990s, the proportion of Governments with policies to lower emigration has remained virtually unchanged, while the proportion with policies to raise emigration has increased steadily.



In 2011, a higher proportion of developed-country Governments (84 per cent) had policies to maintain their level of emigration or did not intervene to influence it than that of developing-country Governments (62 per cent).

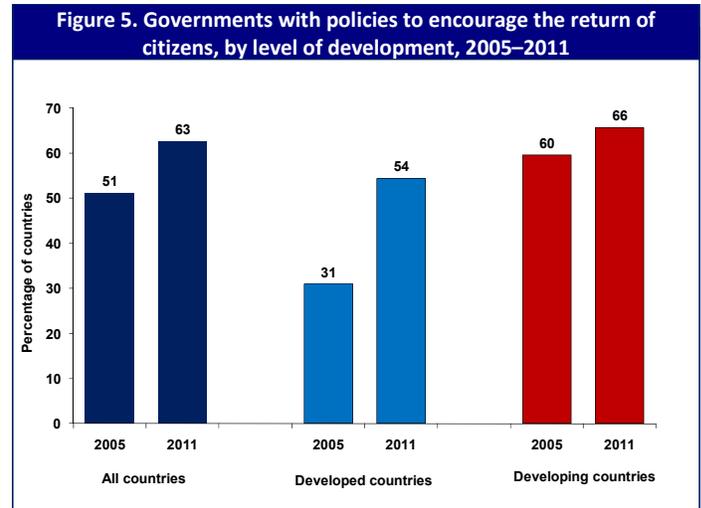
All 18 countries where Governments had policies to raise emigration in 2011 were developing countries.

Among the 25 countries with largest emigrant stocks, Governments of 18 countries had policies to maintain the current levels of emigration or did not intervene to influence emigration.

Among the top five emigration countries — India, Mexico, Russian Federation, China and Bangladesh — Mexico had a policy to lower the level of emigration and Bangladesh had a policy to raise it, while the remaining three had a policy to maintain or not to intervene.

7. A growing number of Governments have instituted policies to encourage the return of their citizens

The proportion of countries that had policies to encourage the return of their citizens has increased consistently since the mid-1990s, from 43 per cent in 1996 to 51 per cent in 2005, and 63 per cent in 2011.



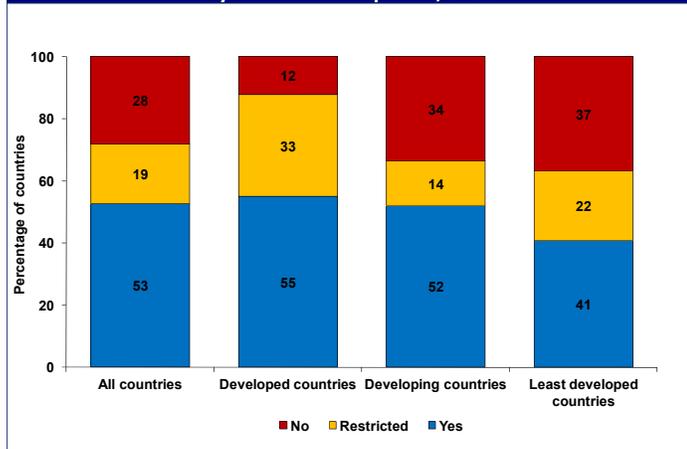
In 2011, Governments of developing countries were more likely to have policies to encourage the return of their citizens (66 per cent) than those in developed countries (54 per cent). This gap has narrowed in recent years.

8. Dual citizenship policies are less common among developing countries than among developed countries

In 2011, over one half of all Governments worldwide had policies to allow their citizens abroad to retain their citizenship of origin without restrictions⁷ when acquiring another country’s citizenship.

A much smaller proportion of Governments of developed countries had a total prohibition of dual citizenship (12 per cent) than Governments of developing countries (34 per cent) or least developed countries (37 per cent).

Figure 6. Governments with policies to allow dual citizenship, by level of development, 2011



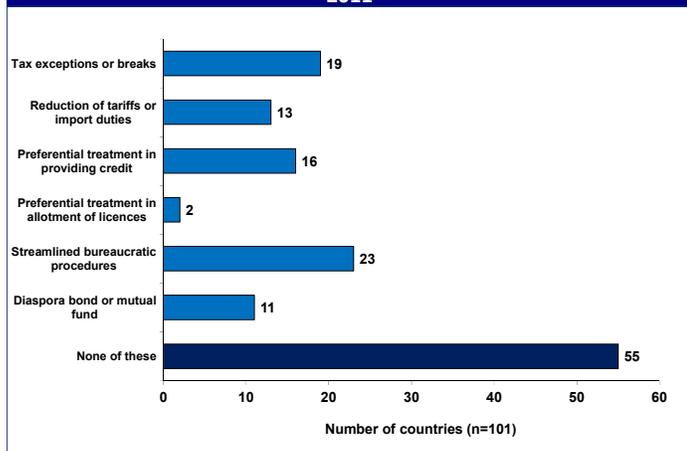
9. Many Governments have set up diaspora units and implemented policy measures to encourage investment by diaspora

In 2011, out of the 144 countries with available data, 114 countries had established special governmental units to deal with the matters of interest to emigrants and their families living abroad.

In 2011, 84 per cent of developed countries had diaspora units, compared with 77 per cent of developing countries, and 90 per cent of least developed countries.

Among the 101 countries with available data in 2011 on six key measures to attract investment by diaspora,⁸ only 46 countries had instituted at least one of the six measures.

Figure 7. Government measures to attract investment by diaspora, 2011



Governments in developing countries were more likely to have adopted at least one of the six diaspora investment measures than those in developed countries.

In 2011, among countries with available data, two thirds of developed-country Governments had not adopted any of the six measures to attract investment by their diaspora, compared with one half of developing-country Governments.

NOTES

- United Nations publication, sales No. E.95.XIII.18.
- United Nations, General Assembly Note, A/61/515.
- United Nations Database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013.
- United Nations publication, sales No. E.13.XIII.2.
- Policies to integrate non-nationals may include provisions for social services, involvement in civil and community activities, language training, and legal provisions to ensure non-discrimination.
- Naturalization policies were considered “restricted” where the entitlement to naturalization was limited to a certain category of immigrants or where the residency requirement was 10 years or longer.
- Restrictions related to either (i) the countries involved (acceptance of dual citizenship when some specific countries are involved but not others); or (ii) the rights involved (acceptance of dual citizenship with some restrictions to full citizenship rights).

⁸ Measures to promote investment by diaspora included: (1) tax exceptions or breaks; (2) reduction of tariffs on goods or import duties for diaspora companies; (3) preferential treatment in providing credit; (4) preferential treatment in allotment of licences; (5) streamlined bureaucratic procedures for investment; and (6) diaspora bond or mutual fund.

This brief presents groupings of countries according to classification of regions in 2011 into two major groups: the developed regions comprise all regions of Europe plus Northern America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Countries in the developed regions are referred to as “developed countries”. The developing regions comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Countries in the developing regions are referred to as “developing countries”. The terms “developed” and “developing” are used for statistical convenience and do not express a judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. The least developed countries include 49 countries (34 in Africa, 9 in Asia, 5 in Oceania and 1 in Latin America and the Caribbean), as defined by the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 59/209, 59/210, 60/33, 62/97, 64/295 and 67/136.

Results presented in this brief are based on the 2011 revision of the World Population Policies Database. Further information about the Database and related publications can be obtained from the United Nations Population Division website: www.unpopulation.org.