



YOUTH AND MIGRATION

In Brief

- In 2013, young migrants (aged 15 to 24) represented 12 per cent of the total migrant population (28.2 million people).
- Of international migrants 10.2 per cent in developed countries, 14.9 per cent in developing countries, and 20.9 per cent of those in least-developed countries were youth.
- In developed countries young women made up 48.9 per cent of young migrants; and 43 per cent of young migrants in developing countries.
- 27 million young people leave their countries of birth to seek employment abroad as international migrants (ILO).
- Key drivers of youth migration include employment, education, marriage, and escape from poverty, violence, conflict and environmental change.

Statistics and data from the Report of the UN inter-agency network 'Global Migration Group': Migration and Youth 2014

In 2013, there were 28.2 million international migrants aged 15 to 24 in the world, accounting for one-eighth of the 232 million international migrants worldwide.¹

The proportion of young migrants is higher in developing countries than in developed countries, while the proportion of girls and young women who migrate is higher in developed countries than developing countries.²

¹ Global Migration Group: Migration and Youth Report, 2014

² See above 'In Brief' for statistics.

In developed countries, women and girls constitute 48.9 per cent of adolescent and youth migrants and 51.6 per cent of the total migrant population in developed countries. In developing and least developed countries, women and girls represent a somewhat smaller proportion of the total migrant population (43.0 and 45.3 per cent, respectively) due to the rising proportion of males.³

Drivers of Youth Migration

Young people migrate for a plethora of reasons. The decision to migrate is often related to important life transitions, such as obtaining higher education, finding and starting work, or getting married. With some 71 million youth unemployed globally in 2016⁴ the search for work continues to be significant driver of youth migration in both developed and developing countries.

Many youth also choose or are forced to migrate to escape poverty, violence, conflict, or are displaced due to the effects of war or climate change. As such, youth are heavily represented in migration for humanitarian reasons, including as refugees, asylum-seekers and as unaccompanied minors.

Impacts of Youth Migration

Internal or international migration can have a positive impact on young people by opening up new opportunities, a path to participate in higher education, a better and decent job, a chance to gain professional experience or to pursue personal development, by building self-confidence, and allowing them to acquire skills and competencies beneficial to themselves and their countries and communities of origin as well as destination.

However, for some young people, especially young women and those in irregular situations⁵, the migration process confronts them with particular challenges and confers to them certain vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities include discrimination based on gender, migration status,

³ Global Migration Group: Migration and Youth 2014 http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/sites/default/files/0_Cover_and_Acknowledgements_%281%29.pdf

⁴ World Employment and Social Outlook Trends for Youth 2016, International Labour Organization <http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/youth/2016/lang--en/index.htm>

⁵ The International Organization on Migration describes irregular migration as 'Movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries'.

ethnicity or religion; poor working conditions (often exacerbated by the relatively low levels of bargaining power and trade union membership among young migrant workers compared to their adult counterparts); lack of access to basic social services such as health; risks associated with sexual and reproductive health; and lack of social protection or loss of social protection entirely once the migration status of the young migrant changes (from student to graduate, for example). Therefore, the migration experience can end up representing either an opportunity or a risk for young people and can either lead to their development or the very opposite, depending on policies and measures supporting them.

Effective Policy Development

Strong, evidence based migration and youth policies are the cornerstone of ensuring that the benefits and opportunities of youth migration are fully harnessed. Legislation, policies and administrative regulations that affect young migrants should comply with international obligations under international human rights, labour, and refugee law.

Promoting cooperation at all levels - local, national, regional and international – as well as strengthening meaningful youth participation in the migration policy debate and programmes will be critical to managing migration to harness the development potential of youth migration while mitigating associated risks.

Agenda 2030 and Youth Migration

Addressing migration opportunities and challenges is central to achieving sustainable economic and social development.

Population growth trends across the world – below replacement level fertility rates in most destination or developed countries, ageing migrant populations and the youth bulge in most developing countries - reflects the relevance of youth migration and young migrants in sustaining and promoting inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in the years to come.

The positive contribution of migrants for sustainable

development is recognized in the UN's newly adopted development framework, [Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals](#). Through this mechanism Member States have agreed to “ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons”.

In September 2016 the United Nations held for the first time a [High Level Summit on addressing large flows of refugees and migrants](#) providing member states with a historic opportunity to come up with a blueprint for a better international response and to bolster efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs.

The 2013 UN DESA [World Youth Report](#) on youth migration was prepared to offer a multidimensional account of the life experiences of young migrants and young people affected by migration.

Further Reading

United Nations General Assembly 71st Session
High Level Summit on Migration and Refugees
<http://www.refugeesmigrants.un.org>

Migration and Youth Challenges and Opportunities, Global Migration Group 2014
<http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/migrationandyouth>

World Youth Report: Youth and Migration, UNDESA www.unworldyouthreport.org

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

UN DESA Population Division – International Migration
<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/international-migration/>

ILO International Migration Branch
<http://www.ilo.org/migrant/lang-en/index.htm>



<http://undesadspd.org/Youth.aspx>



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