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achieving gender equality, development and peace

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## Women joining migrant streams in unprecedented numbers and proportion

(UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 3 March 2005) Ninety million women currently reside outside their countries of origin, representing almost half of the world's international migrants, according to a United Nations report launched today. Their representation among all international migrants has risen from 46 per cent in 1960 to 49 per cent in 2000, and that proportion has now reached 51 per cent in more developed regions. More recent statistics show that the trend appears to be continuing, with 54 per cent of legal immigrants to the United States reported to be women in 2002.

The *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women and International Migration* says that women have naturally constituted a significant portion of the world's migrants, but what is different today is the scale of the migration and the entry of women into migration streams that had previously been predominantly male (see table and accompanying chart).

The proportion of legal women immigrants is particularly high in the traditional large-scale receiving countries of Australia, Canada and the United States. Europe had the highest proportion of female migrants in 2000, while Western Asia and Southern Africa had the lowest.

The Philippines has a very high proportion of female migrants living abroad (approximately 60 per cent, according to data collected during the 1990s). Mexico has many more male emigrants - 69 per cent according to a 1995 census.

The *World Survey* highlights the difficulties in assessing the full implications of migration and mobility for women due to the limited amount of quality and comparable data. It recommends that research and data collection on international migration be disaggregated by sex and age in order to improve understanding of the causes of female migration and its impacts on women as well as on their origin and receiving countries.

### Overall migration trends

According to the *World Survey*, the past four decades have seen steady growth in the numbers of international migrants, to an estimated 175 million in 2000, up from an estimated 75 million in 1960. As of 2000, about 159 million persons were classified as voluntary migrants, with the remaining 16 million being refugees.

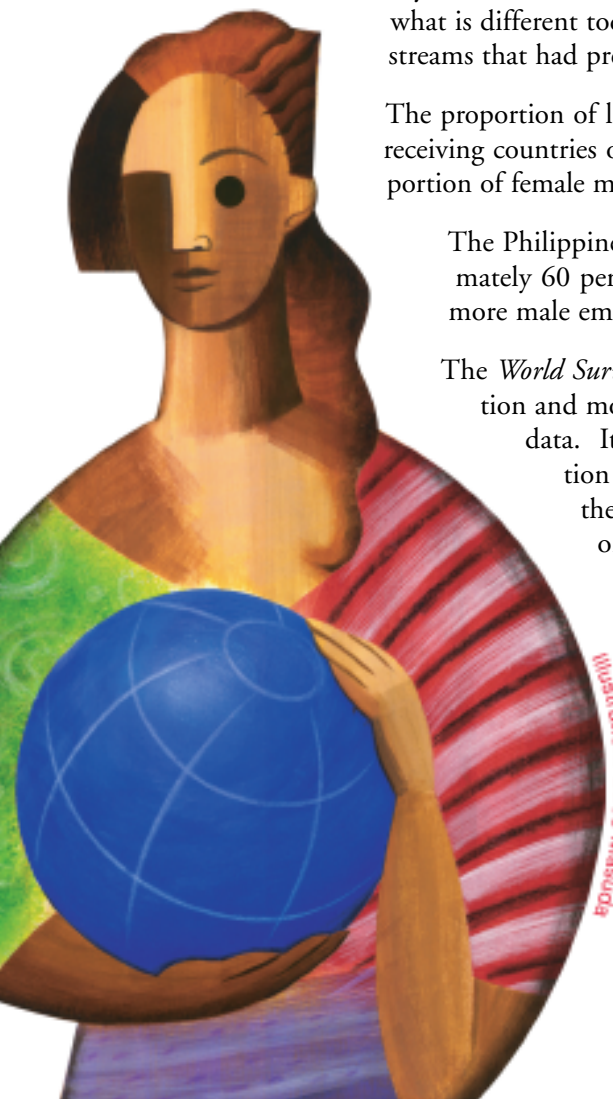


Illustration: Coco Masuda

Sixty per cent of the world's migrants reside in the more developed regions and 40 per cent in the less developed regions. Almost one in every 10 persons in the more developed regions is a migrant, whereas only one in every 70 persons in the developing countries is a migrant.

The United States is the largest recipient of international migrants, with 35 million migrants in 2000, followed by the Russian Federation (13 million), Germany (7 million), Ukraine, France and India. The countries with the highest percentage of international migrants relative to total population are the United Arab Emirates (74 per cent), Kuwait (58 per cent), Jordan (40 per cent), Israel (37 per cent) and Singapore (34 per cent).

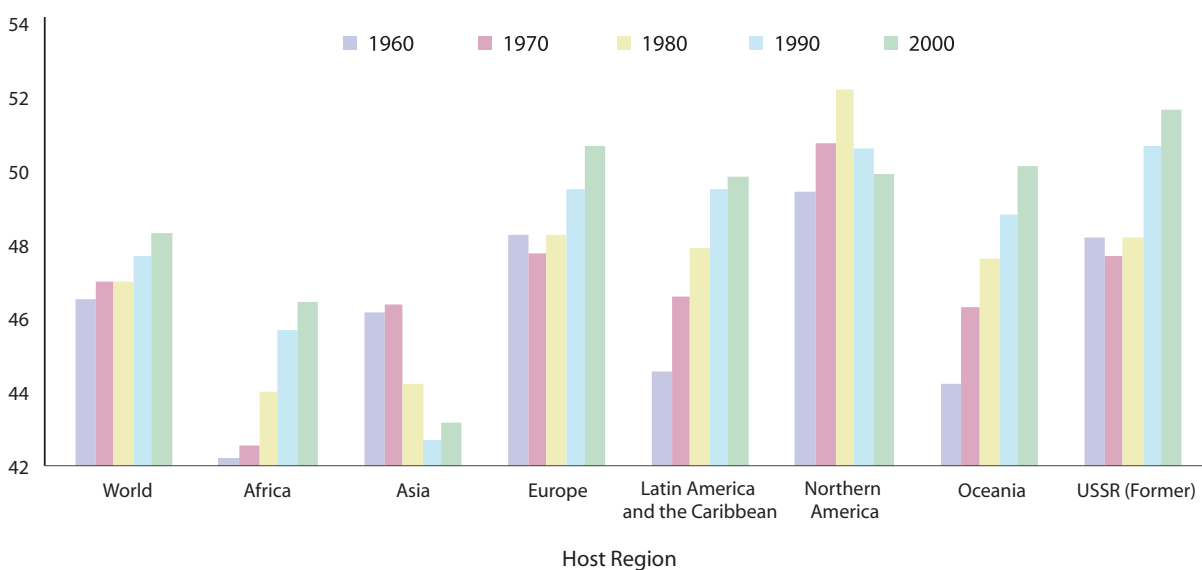
While some migration is global in scope, significant levels of immigration occur within the same region, generally from low-income to mid-income countries.

In Latin America, for example, regional destinations include Costa Rica for Nicaraguan migrants, the Dominican Republic for Haitian migrants and Argentina for Bolivian migrants. Similarly, Southern Africa (including South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho) is a key destination region for migrants from elsewhere in Africa.

In South-East Asia, considerable migration takes place from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan Province of China. In Southern Asia there is continuing migration from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal to India. India has also received refugees from Sri Lanka and Tibet.

### **Trends in the Number of Female Migrants by Continent/ Region 1960-2000**

**Chart: Proportion of Females Among International Migrants**



The full text of the *World Survey on Women's Role in Development: Women and International Migration* is available at [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/review/english/press-releases.asp](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/review/english/press-releases.asp).

To order copies of the report, please e-mail United Nations Publications at [publications@un.org](mailto:publications@un.org). The copies are also available at UN bookstores in New York and Geneva.

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**Table: Female Migration: 2000**

| Major area, region, country             | Estimated number of female migrants at mid-year |            |            |            |            |
|---|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|   | 1960  | 1970       | 1980       | 1990       | 2000       |
| World                                   | 35,469,362                                      | 38,507,161 | 47,156,135 | 73,817,887 | 85,080,716 |
| More developed regions                  | 15,629,174                                      | 18,742,613 | 23,882,284 | 45,347,826 | 56,228,897 |
| More developed regions without the USSR | 14,203,958                                      | 17,259,476 | 22,306,792 | 29,860,914 | 40,896,880 |
| Less developed regions                  | 19,840,187                                      | 19,764,548 | 23,273,851 | 28,470,062 | 28,851,819 |
| Least developed countries               | 2,896,736                                       | 3,323,332  | 4,129,540  | 5,102,639  | 4,929,009  |
| Africa                                  | 3,794,583                                       | 4,208,331  | 6,216,156  | 7,441,517  | 7,595,140  |
| Eastern Africa                          | 1,293,119                                       | 1,475,861  | 2,301,832  | 2,875,736  | 2,172,969  |
| Middle Africa                           | 590,194   | 826,174    | 885,992    | 678,235    | 688,812    |
| Northern Africa                         | 736,578   | 463,260    | 705,274    | 1,047,756  | 832,620    |
| Southern Africa                         | 295,111   | 315,178    | 391,477    | 559,760    | 652,419    |
| Western Africa                          | 879,580   | 1,127,858  | 1,931,582  | 2,280,030  | 3,248,320  |
| Asia                                    | 13,572,729                                      | 13,096,395 | 14,340,682 | 17,862,959 | 18,936,075 |
| Eastern Asia                            | 1,278,511                                       | 1,420,383  | 1,785,838  | 2,102,777  | 2,960,174  |
| South-central Asia                      | 8,522,472                                       | 7,910,730  | 7,626,765  | 8,679,779  | 6,607,013  |
| South-eastern Asia                      | 1,996,622                                       | 1,650,835  | 1,386,772  | 1,444,668  | 1,994,868  |
| Western Asia                            | 1,775,123                                       | 2,114,447  | 3,541,309  | 5,635,735  | 7,374,020  |
| Europe                                  | 6,799,126                                       | 8,981,401  | 10,752,040 | 13,120,718 | 16,736,713 |
| Eastern Europe                          | 1,839,170                                       | 1,564,127  | 1,396,956  | 1,289,489  | 1,547,640  |
| Northern Europe                         | 1,146,007                                       | 1,971,053  | 2,397,504  | 2,741,423  | 3,223,267  |
| Southern Europe                         | 746,303   | 966,136    | 1,211,280  | 1,853,954  | 2,736,125  |
| Western Europe                          | 3,067,646                                       | 4,480,085  | 5,746,300  | 7,235,852  | 9,229,682  |
| Latin America and the Caribbean         | 2,702,258                                       | 2,690,034  | 2,957,603  | 3,497,251  | 2,983,844  |
| Caribbean                               | 204,522   | 288,102    | 362,570    | 433,491    | 523,755    |
| Central America                         | 226,661   | 200,950    | 276,194    | 940,403    | 531,621    |
| South America                           | 2,271,075                                       | 2,200,983  | 2,318,839  | 2,123,357  | 1,928,467  |
| Northern America                        | 6,227,246                                       | 6,638,354  | 9,516,257  | 14,074,660 | 20,543,473 |
| Oceania                                 | 947,643   | 1,408,956  | 1,797,350  | 2,333,426  | 2,945,035  |
| Australia/New Zealand                   | 910,724   | 1,354,625  | 1,713,969  | 2,228,821  | 2,818,208  |
| Melanesia                               | 20,306  | 36,923     | 39,807     | 39,724     | 37,536     |
| Micronesia                              | 11,493  | 8,275      | 25,776     | 38,030     | 53,275     |
| Polynesia                               | 5,120   | 9,133      | 17,798     | 26,851     | 36,016     |
| USSR (Former)                           | 1,425,777                                       | 1,483,690  | 1,576,046  | 15,487,356 | 15,340,437 |

Source: United Nations Population Division, Trends in Total Migrant Stock: 2003 Revision (POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2003). New York: United Nations, 2003.

