



International Migrants by Age

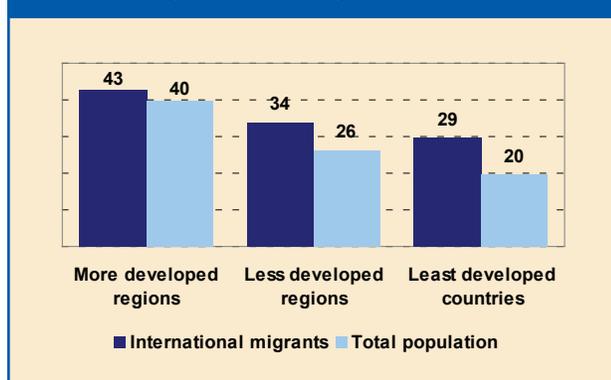
1. The age distribution of international migrants differs markedly from that of the overall population.

- **Estimates of the number of international migrants by age group and sex, available for the first time for every country in the world,¹ indicate that, globally, international migrants are older than the general population.** Whereas half of all international migrants are 39 years or older, half of the total population is composed of persons 28 years or older.
- **International migrants in developed countries tend to be older than those in developing countries.²** International migrants in developed countries have a median age³ of 43 years, whereas that of international migrants in developing countries⁴ is just 34 years. International migrants in the group of least developed countries tend to be younger still, with a median age of 29 years (figure 1).

2. The majority of international migrants are aged 20 to 64 years and they are highly concentrated in developed countries.

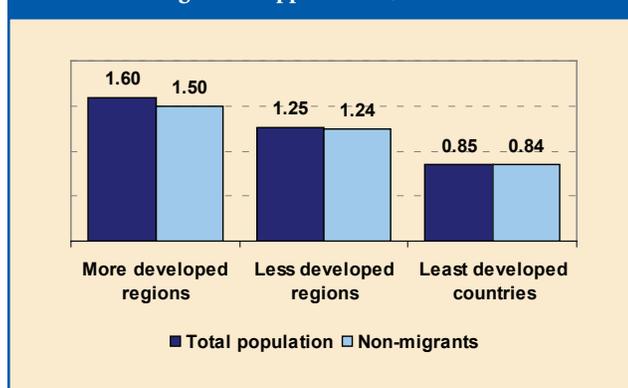
- **In 2010, 72 per cent of all international migrants are aged 20 to 64.** Globally, 154 million international migrants out of a total of 214 million are aged 20 to 64.

Figure 1. Median age, 2010 (years)



- **The majority of international migrants of working age (20 to 64) live in developed countries.** In 2010, developed countries have 96 million international migrants aged 20 to 64, representing 62 per cent of all international migrants of working age. The rest, representing 38 per cent, live in developing countries, including the 7.7 million (5 per cent) living in the least developed countries.
- **In developed countries, international migrants of working age account for a high proportion of the working age population.** International migrants aged 20 to 64 represent 12.6 per cent of the population aged 20 to 64 in developed countries, whereas in developing countries, they account for just 1.9 per cent of the working age population. In the least developed countries, 2 per cent of the population of working age consists of international migrants.
- **In developed countries, international migrants contribute to increase the support ratio.** In developed countries, the ratio of persons of working age (20 to 64) to dependants (persons under age 20 plus those aged 65 or over) is lower when the population excludes international migrants than in the whole population. Excluding international migrants, the support ratio is 1.5 persons of working age per dependant whereas among the total population the support ratio is 1.6 (figure 2).
- **In developing countries, the effect of international migrants on the support ratio is negligible.** Excluding international migrants, the support ratio in developing countries is 1.24 persons of working age per dependant, while in the whole population the support ratio is 1.25 (figure 2).

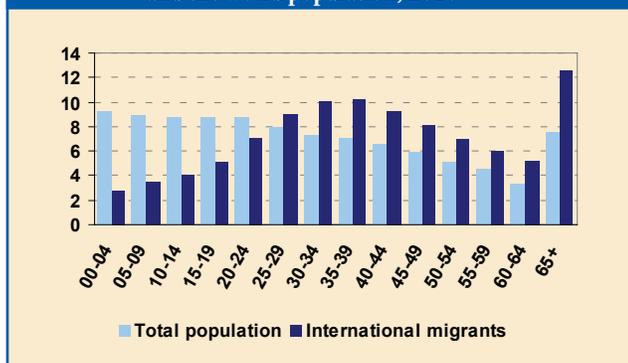
Figure 2. Support ratios, 2010



3. Compared to the overall population, the young are underrepresented among international migrants.

- Globally, there are **33 million international migrants under the age of 20** and they account for 15 per cent of all international migrants. In comparison, persons under 20 account for 36 per cent of the world population (figure 3). This striking difference results, at least in part, from the fact that the children of international migrants born in the country of destination are not international migrants.

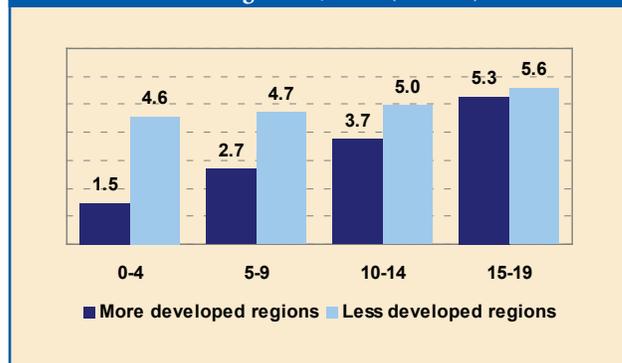
Figure 3. Age distribution of international migrants and the world population, 2010



- The majority of international migrants under age 20 reside in developing countries. Among the 33 million international migrants under the age 20, nearly 20 million or 60 per cent reside in developing countries (figure 4).
- There are **13.5 million children under age 10 among international migrants** and they account for six per cent of all international migrants (figure 4). The vast majority (70 per cent) live in developing countries.

- Whereas the number of young international migrants by five-year age group increases markedly with age in developed countries, it changes relatively little in developing countries. In developed countries, international migrants aged 15 to 19 are more than three times more numerous than those aged 0 to 4, but in developing countries the number of international migrants aged 15 to 19 is only 22 per cent higher than that of international migrants age 0 to 4 (figure 4).

Figure 4. International migrants under the age of 20, 2010 (millions)



- As a result, as age decreases, a higher percentage of young international migrants reside in developing countries. Among international migrants aged 15 to 19, 51 per cent live in developing countries but among those aged 0 to 4, 75 per cent do.

4. In each age group above age 20, there are more international migrants in developed countries than in developing countries.

- Starting at ages 20 to 24, international migrants in developed countries begin to outnumber their counterparts in developing countries. The percentage of international migrants hosted by developed countries increases with age, from 53 per cent among those aged 20 to 24 to 70 per cent among those aged 65 or over (figure 5). Overall, 63 per cent of international migrants aged 20 or over reside in developed countries.
- Older international migrants are highly concentrated in developed countries. Among the 27 million international migrants aged 65 or over,

Figure 5. International migrants by five-year age group, 2010 (millions)

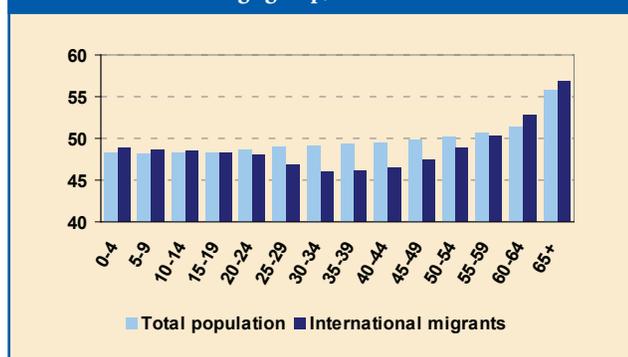


19 million or 70 per cent live in developed countries and 8 million or 30 per cent live in developing countries. Among older international migrants in developing countries, just half a million live in the least developed countries.

5. The proportion female among international migrants varies considerably with age.

- **There is a slight excess of men among international migrants of working age.** Women account for 48 per cent of international migrants aged 20 to 64, whereas among all international migrants, 49 per cent are female. Within the working ages, the percentage female is lowest among international migrants aged 30 to 39 (46 per cent) and highest among migrants aged 60 to 64 (53 per cent), as is shown in figure 6.
- **Among migrants under age 20, the percentage female is close to that of the total population.** Among children under age 10, the percentage female

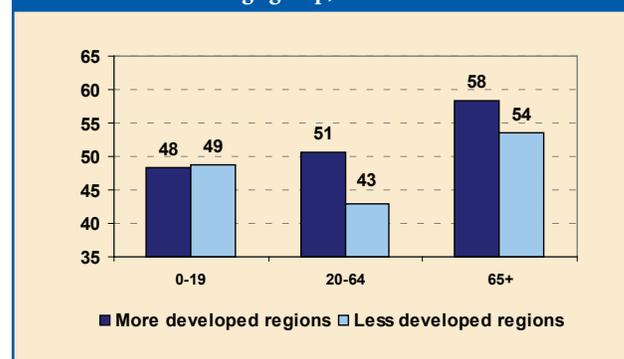
Figure 6. Percentage female by five-year age group, 2010



among international migrants is slightly higher than among the overall population. At ages 10 to 19, the percentage female among international migrants is very similar to that of the whole population in the same age groups (figure 6).

- **Women predominate among older international migrants.** Among the 27 million international migrants aged 65 or over, 57 per cent are women, a higher proportion than that among all persons aged 65 or over (56 per cent).
- **Among international migrants in the working ages, women outnumber men slightly in developed countries but men outnumber women markedly in developing countries.** In developed countries, women account for 51 per cent of the international migrants aged 20 to 64, whereas in developing countries they account for just 43 per cent of the international migrants in that age group (figure 7).

Figure 7. Percentage female by major age group, 2010



- **Among international migrants under age 20, male children and adolescents outnumber their female counterparts in both developed and developing countries.** The percentage female among young international migrants is 48 per cent in developed countries and 49 per cent in developing countries.
- **Women outnumber men by wide margins among older international migrants in both developed and developing countries.** The excess of older migrant women over older migrant men is more marked in developed countries, where older women

represent 58 per cent of international migrants aged 65 or over. In developing countries, the equivalent proportion is 54 per cent.

6. The international migrants of working age are unevenly distributed among the world regions.

- **In 2010, Europe hosts the highest number of international migrants aged 20 to 64:** 50.5 million or nearly a third of all international migrants of working age (figure 8)⁵. They account for 11 per cent of the population of working age in the continent.

Figure 8. International migrants aged 20-64 by region, 2010 (millions)



- **Asia, the most populous world region, hosts the second largest number of international migrants of working age:** 42 million, which represent 27 per cent of all international migrants aged 20 to 64 and just 1.7 per cent of the population of working age in Asia.

- **In Northern America, the 39.3 million international migrants of working age present in 2010 account for nearly 19 per cent of the working age population in the region.** As long established countries of immigration, Canada and the United States of America are major magnets for international migrants. Thus, whereas in 2010 their combined populations of working age account for just 5.4 per cent of the world total, they have 26 per cent of all international migrants of working age.

7. Asia has the largest number of young migrants and Europe has the largest number of older migrants.

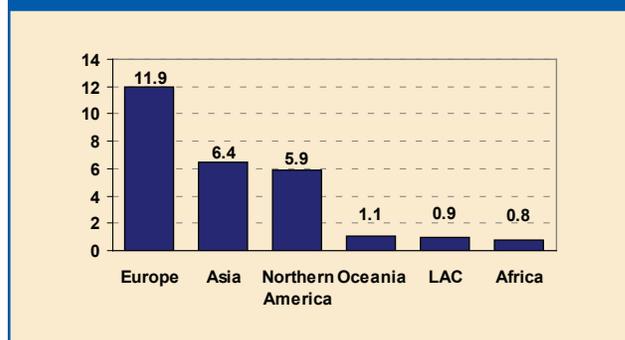
- **Asia hosts 12.9 million international migrants under age 20, representing 39 per cent of the total**

(figure 9). Europe hosts 11.9 million international migrants aged 65 or over, representing 44 per cent of all older migrants (figure 10).

Figure 9. International migrants aged 0-19 by region, 2010 (millions)



Figure 10. International migrants aged 65 or over by region, 2010 (millions)



NOTES

¹ The estimates presented in this issue of Population Facts have been prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat with financial support from the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

² The designations “developed countries” and “developing countries” are used for statistical purposes and do not reflect a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. Developed countries are those in Europe and Northern America plus Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Developing countries are all the rest.

³ The median age divides the population in two equal halves.

⁴ The group of least developed countries currently comprises 49 countries so designated by the General Assembly, namely: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia.

⁵ In figures 8, 9 and 10, LAC stands for “Latin America and the Caribbean”.