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International Migration 2019

December 2019 • <https://www.unmigration.org> • #UNPopulation • #ForMigration

*Accurate data and information on migration are critical for formulating evidence-based policies and fostering an informed public discourse. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in both countries of origin and countries of destination, while directly benefitting migrants and their families. **International Migration 2019** analyzes global levels and trends in international migration, based on the 2019 revision of estimates of the international migrant stock, and investigates the contribution of migration to demographic change. The report also discusses international migration policies and the status of ratification of legal and normative frameworks on international migration and refugees.*

*The following key findings are based on the report **International Migration 2019** and related materials prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).*

Ten key findings

1. In 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide reached nearly 272 million, up from 153 million in 1990

Europe hosts the largest number of international migrants (82 million), followed by Northern America (59 million) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (49 million). The regional distribution of international migrants is changing, with migrant populations growing faster in Northern Africa and Western Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions.¹

2. Forced displacements across international borders have continued to rise

The global number of refugees and asylum seekers has increased by about 13 million between 2010 and 2017,² accounting for close to a quarter of the increase in the number of all international migrants. Northern Africa and Western Asia host around 46 per cent of the global number of refugees and asylum seekers, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (close to 21%).

3. Most of the world's migrants live in a relatively small number of countries

In 2019, two thirds of all international migrants were living in just 20 countries. The largest number of international migrants (51 million) resided in the United States of America, equal to about 19 per cent of the world's total. Germany and Saudi Arabia hosted the second and third largest numbers of international migrants worldwide (around 13 million each), followed by the Russian Federation (12 million) and the United Kingdom (10 million).

¹ Countries or areas are grouped into geographic regions based on the classification being used to track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (see: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/>). The region Europe and Northern America has been further divided into Europe and Northern America.

² The latest data on refugees and asylum seekers available when preparing the 2019 revision of the estimates of the international migrant stock refer to 2017.

4. One-third of all international migrants originate in only ten countries

In 2019, India was the leading country of origin of international migrants, with 17.5 million persons living abroad. Migrants from Mexico constituted the second largest “diaspora” (11.8 million), followed by China (10.7 million), the Russian Federation (10.5 million) and the Syrian Arab Republic (8.2 million).

5. Women and girls comprise slightly less than half (48 per cent) of all international migrants

Globally, the share of women and girls in the total number of international migrants fell slightly, from 49.3 per cent in 2000 to 47.9 per cent in 2019. The share of female migrants was highest in Northern America (51.8%) and Europe (51.4%), and lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (47.5%), and Northern Africa and Western Asia (35.5%).

6. Although migration in today’s world is having a significant impact on population size in regions of destination, its impact is much less significant in regions of origin

Projection scenarios show that the size of the population of Northern America would be almost 21 per cent smaller by 2070 with zero net migration, whereas Oceania would be 17 per cent smaller, and Europe about 9 per cent smaller. By contrast, the population in regions of origin would be only between 0.1 and just over 3 per cent larger by 2070 under the zero-net-migration scenario.

7. Few Governments are seeking to lower the number of immigrants arriving through regular, or legal, channels

In 2019, most of the 111 countries for which data were available reported either having policies to raise levels of immigration through regular channels (37%) or policies to maintain current levels (26%). Only three per cent of Governments had policies to lower the current level of regular immigration.

8. Promoting orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration is a priority for most Governments

Globally, 84 per cent of Governments reported having provisions for the arrival of unaccompanied or separated minors; 80 per cent reported having information and awareness-raising campaigns for prospective migrants; 76 per cent had pre-arrival authorization controls for those seeking to immigrate; and 75 per cent indicated having a system to monitor international migrants who overstayed their visas.

9. Legal instruments related to international migration have been ratified in varying degrees by Member States of the United Nations

By October 2019, instruments designed to protect refugees or to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking had been ratified by more than three quarters of all Member States, whereas instruments protecting the rights of migrant workers had been ratified by fewer than 30 per cent.

10. In December 2018, two global compacts, one concerning international migration and one on refugees, were endorsed by a large majority of the United Nations Member States

Countries that voted in favour of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration collectively hosted around 181 million international migrants in 2019, representing 67 per cent of the total worldwide. Meanwhile, countries that voted in favour of the Global Compact on Refugees hosted around 25 million refugees, or 89 per cent of the global refugee population.



Prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, these key findings are based on the report *International Migration 2019*, presenting the main findings of the 2019 revision of the international migration stock produced by the United Nations and key results from the United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development, in particular Module III on international migration. More work of the Population Division is available at www.unmigration.org.