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Forced Migration and Undocumented Migration and Development

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In this brief paper, two types of migration are the focus: forced migration and undocumented (sometimes called irregular) migration). Forced migration generally includes refugee and other forcibly displaced populations, which may be primarily due to war and conflict, but also can be due to political, religious, and other persecution; natural or man-made disasters; development-induced displacement; smuggling and human trafficking; and environmental displacement. Undocumented migration includes any migration that is not regulated or documented by the nation-state, and may include anyone residing in a nation without legal status or with tenuous legal status. Increasingly, it is clear that there is a great deal of overlap between these types of migrant populations, and the concept of "mixed migration flows," which is now recognized by UNHCR and other actors, is an important one in terms of protection and rights, but also conceptually for researchers (Koser 2005; McAuliffe 2018).

The first section presents some general trends and facts about forced migrants and undocumented migrants. The second section discusses some linkages between these two types of migration and development. The third section reviews some innovative data sources, research approaches, and collaborations that are contributing or might contribute to our knowledge in these areas. Finally, a concluding section suggests some potential future data, research and policy directions.

I. Forced migration and undocumented migration trends

Forced displacement globally is still increasing. As of 2016, there were almost 26 million refugees and asylum seekers globally, which is 10 percent of all international migrants. This is over two and half times the numbers there were in 2005—fewer than 10 million. Almost 60 percent of refugees come from just three countries: Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Syria. The bulk of refugees (82.5 %) are hosted in the developing regions, which often may be the least prepared to provide protection and services (United Nations 2017). Figure 1 shows which countries are hosting the most refugees and asylum-seekers in 2016: Turkey tops the list.

Further, because of increased border restrictions and barriers to entry and exit in many countries, there are even more internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally than ever before. If all displaced persons are included, nearly 10 percent of the world's population is displaced from their homes. Figure 2 indicates that the number of IDPs is increasing and higher than the number of refugees and asylum seekers. The countries with the largest IDP populations include Colombia, Syria, DR of the Congo, and Iraq. (UNHCR 2018).

We have no perfectly reliable data for undocumented or irregular migrants. As shown in Figure 3, in the United States, there are estimates of 11 million undocumented migrants as of 2016 (Krogstad, Passell, and Cohn 2017). This is a decline since the peak of over 12 million in 2009. Tens of millions are estimated to reside in India. There are also millions in Pakistan and Iran (mainly from Afghanistan) and other flows of undocumented migrants in Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia (IOM 2017).

II. Development and Forced Migration and Undocumented Migration

In contrast to the media images of rural refugee camps, over half the world's refugees are living in urban settings and only 23 percent live in planned or managed camps; majority live in private homes— they are "self-settled". Thus, while we know a great deal about providing health and well-being to camp refugees, we need to know much more about service provision and access among self-settled refugees. Lack of proper documentation can create difficulties in accessing the labor market and also public services, if refugees are eligible.

Many economists argue that migrants are engines for development, because they are instruments for knowledge transfer. There is evidence that both refugees and undocumented migrants contribute to economic development. Economists are in agreement that refugees contribute the economy through entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, and skilled work (Bahar 2018). Research reported by the Center for

American Progress found that passing the DREAM Act (or if taken further, legalizing the status of all undocumented migrants) would bolster the U.S. economy, up to a $1 trillion increase in GDP if investments in education are also taken into account (Ortega, Edwards and Wolgin 2017).

Undocumented migrants encounter innumerable barriers to social, human and economic development. Figures 4 and 5, from an ongoing study of undocumented students at the City University of New York (CUNY) illustrate how undocumented students are advantaged compared to U.S. citizens in terms of their grade point averages (GPAs) and graduation rates. (They are often comparable to legal permanent residents (LPRs or "green card holders"), and sometimes outperform LPRs as well. However, in regression analyses, once we control for differences in pre-enrollment characteristics, we find that undocumented students outperform their peers with legal status at 2-year community colleges but underperform their peers with legal status at 4-year colleges (Hsin and Reed 2018). Barriers and challenges remain which make it difficult for undocumented students, even though they are very highly selected, to complete a more expensive degree.

III. Recent and Innovative Research

A number of innovative research projects and new datasets and approaches are helping to fill the gaps of our knowledge of migration, and particularly about forced migration and undocumented and irregular migration. The following are only a few examples of demographic research that is making a difference.

Ethnosurveys such as the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), Latin American Migration Project (LAMP), and more recently the Migration Between Africa and Europe (MAFE) project help us to understand better what is happening in both places of origin and places of destination and to follow cross border flows by studying migrants in both locations. Researchers have used these data to better understand how legal status and migrant status affect migration patterns, work, family relations, and health.

New public national-level datasets are also being put to use. The Annual Survey of Refugees is now available in the United States with information regarding refugee resettlement. The first year, 2016, was recently released by the Office of Refugee Resettlement for the first time since 1980, when the survey was first collected. The Urban Institute sponsored a webinar recently to publicize the data for researchers and, although there are flaws, they can provide valuable insights about refugees in the U.S. https://www.openicpsr.org/openicpsr/project/104642/version/V2/view

Ellen Kraly and I have been working with the Committee on Population at the National Academies to re-examine what demographers can contribute to our knowledge of forced migration causes, consequences, and patterns. The Robert Wood Johnson and Andrew W. Mellon Foundations are co-sponsoring a workshop that will be organized in 2019 to bring together the best cutting-edge new research in these areas along with experts in demography.

Administrative data sources are also being exploited to give us a better understanding of integration of forced migrants and undocumented migrants in developed countries. For example, colleagues at McMaster University are using the Canadian Longitudinal Immigration Database to better understand the impacts of refugee sponsorship and integration. In my own current research with my colleagues Amy Hsin, also at Queens College, City University of New York, and Sofya Aptekar, from University of Massachusetts, Boston, we are using a mixed methods approach, including the use of university administrative data, to better understand the challenges and resources for undocumented students in terms of their integration and ability to complete their education. https://sites.google.com/view/immigrationcuny

IV. Future Directions

What is next for research and policy on forced migrants and undocumented migrants? We clearly need more research using these unique and innovative data sources that are already available; demography as a whole has been slow to address these issues. In their statement on "Strengthening migration data, research and training in the context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) argued for many data and research improvements, but in particular for disaggregated data—census microdata—so that characteristics of migrants might be compared to non-migrants in terms of integration and human, social, and economic development (IUSSP 2017). Researchers should also think about existing data sources, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) as potential tools for examining development and health among forced migrants and irregular or undocumented migrants. New "big data" sources, such as Facebook or other social media and networking data are already being used to estimate migration flows, but perhaps they can be used to better understand forced migrant and undocumented migrant flows as well.

In terms of policy, it is clear that forced migrants and undocumented migrants, particularly those in precarious legal status or other difficult circumstances, are in need of improved access to services and social and economic integration assistance. Some nations (and states and provinces within nations, which may have different policies and programs) have done quite well at this, and other nations can learn from best practices. Even from a solely economic viewpoint, forced migrants and undocumented migrants benefit many societies, as selection still is at play in all but the direst circumstances. National and global policies should promote durable solutions for migrants, but in many cases, that may mean proposing integration and status regularization for migrants, not creating additional barriers and stumbling blocks.

Fig. 1 Largest Countries of Asylum, 2016
Highest number of refugee and asylum seekers hosted, in millions

Source: UN 2017

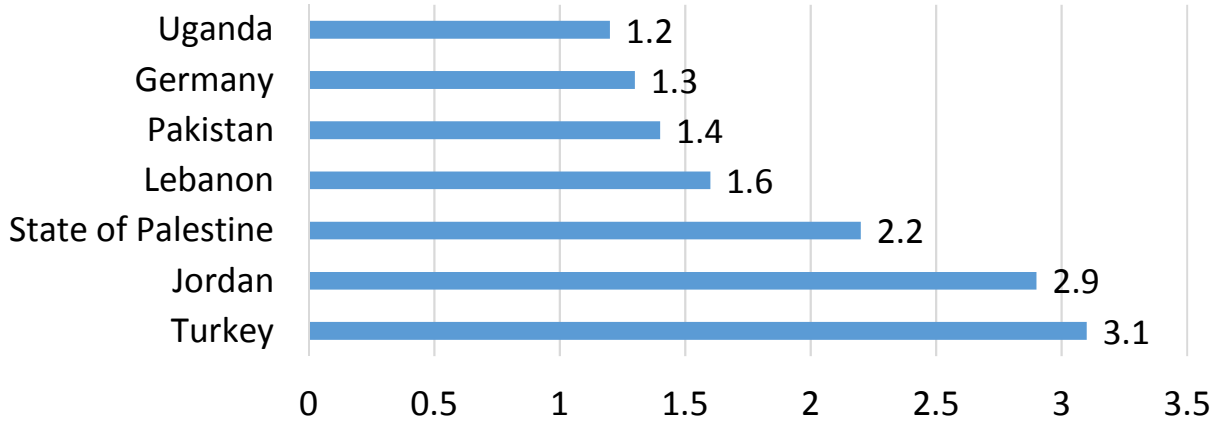


Fig. 2 Source: UNHCR 2018

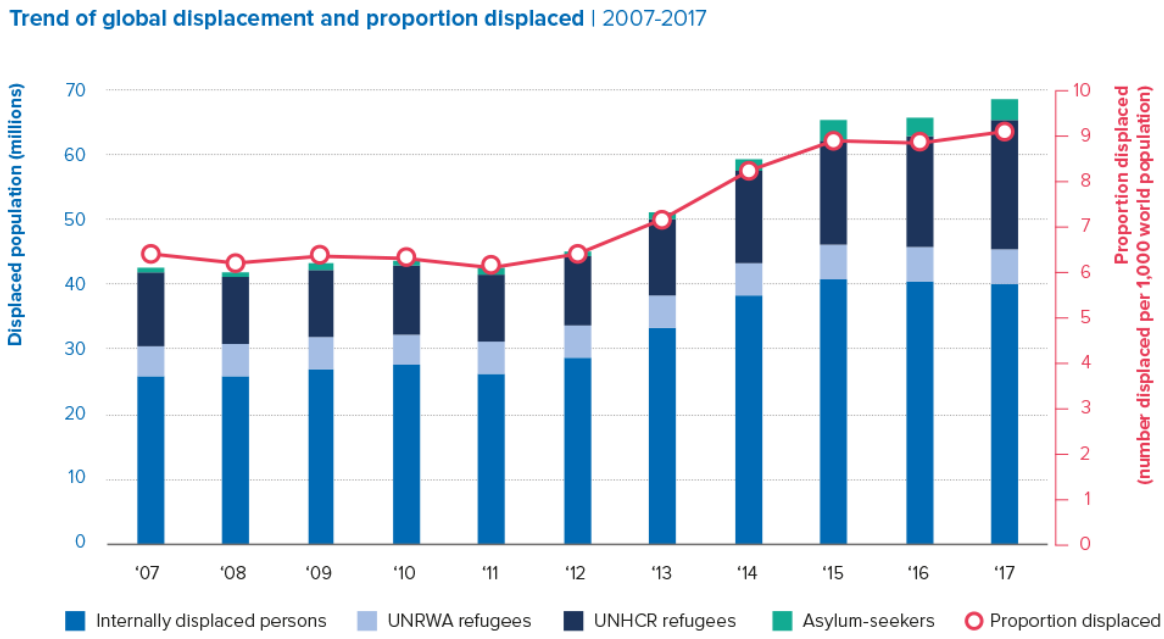
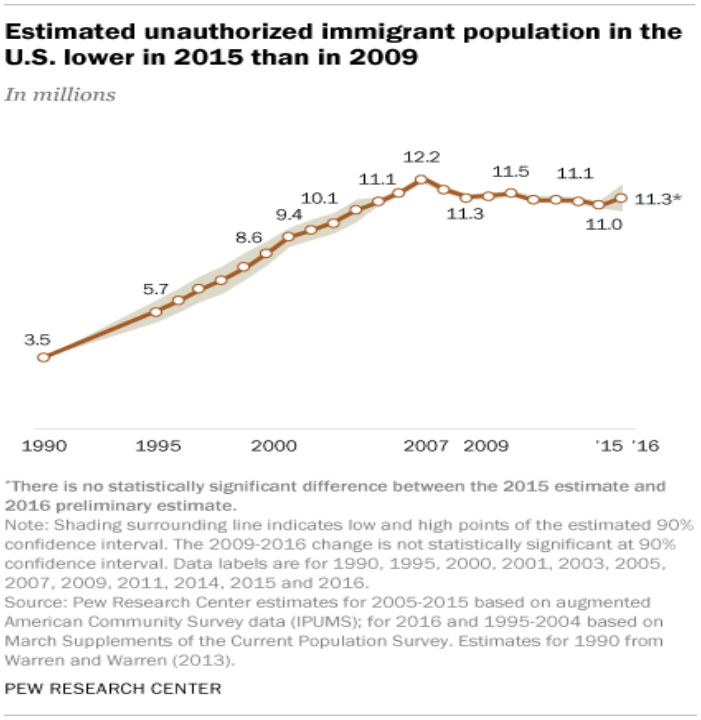
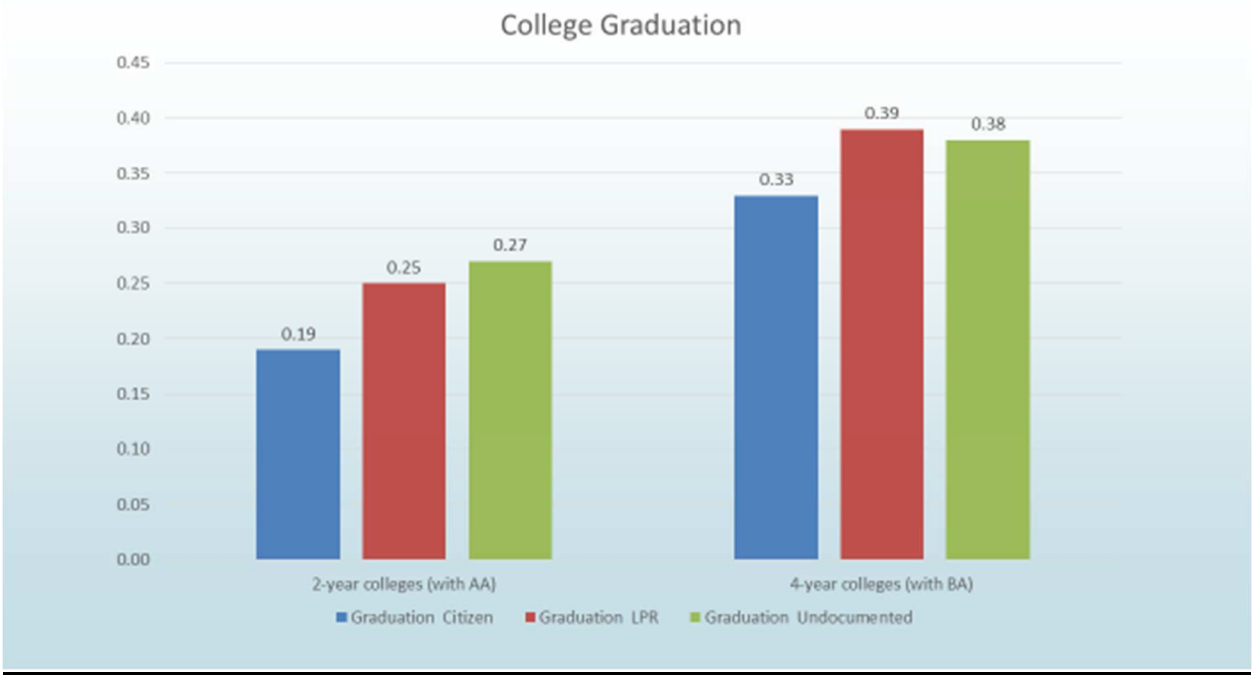


Fig. 3 Source: Pew Research Center 2017.



Figs. 4 and 5 Source: Hsin and Reed 2018.



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