



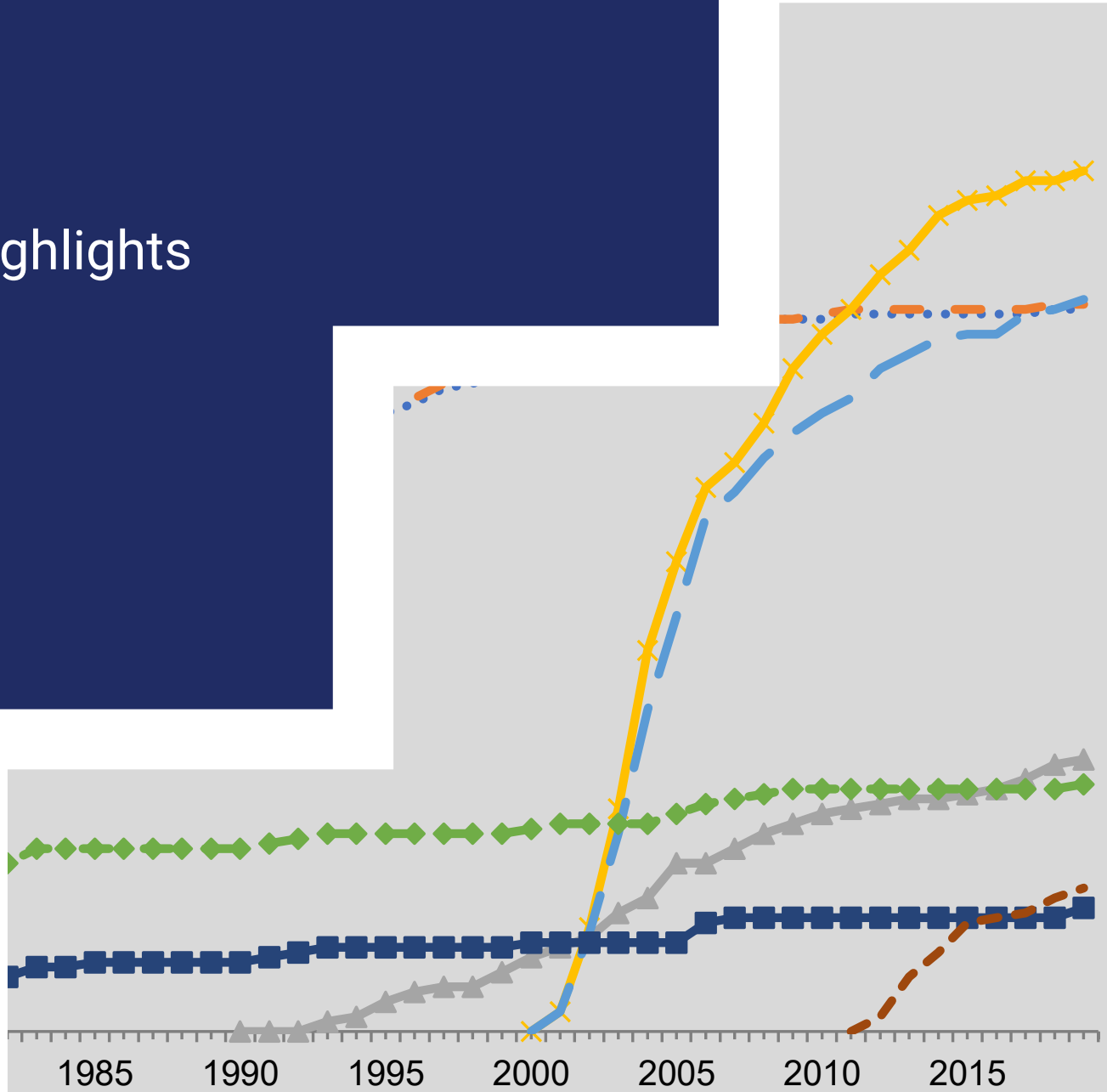
United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

International Migration

2019

Highlights



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Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Population Division

International Migration 2019

Highlights



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The term “country” as used in this report also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas.

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What is *International Migration 2019: Highlights?*

Migration has major impacts on both the people and the places involved. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in both origin and destination countries, while also benefitting migrants and their families. These Highlights summarize the key findings of the *International Migration 2019 report* that analyzes global and regional levels and trends in international migration, based on the latest estimates of international migrant stock, and investigates the contribution of migration to demographic change.

This *Highlights* also discusses international migration policies and programmes and provide an overview of normative and legal frameworks on international migration and refugees.

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International Migration 2019: Key messages

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 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 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 originated 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.

Introduction

Migration has major impacts on both the people and the places involved. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in both origin and destination countries, while also benefitting migrants and their families. The crucial linkages between migration and development, including the opportunities and challenges that migration brings, are well established and acknowledged in a series of landmark agreements adopted by the United Nations Member States, including the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development held in 1994, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants from 2016, and most recently, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018.

Reliable data on migrants and migration are crucial for assessing current and future trends, identifying policy priorities, and making informed decisions. Reliable data on migration can help ensure that discussions on migration, at both national and international levels, are based on facts, not myths or misperceptions. Accurate, consistent and timely data on international migration are also essential for Member States to monitor progress in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Global Compact is the first negotiated global agreement covering all dimensions of migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner, in which Governments have placed a strong emphasis on data by including “Collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated [migration] data as a basis for evidence-based policies” as the first of its 23 objectives.

For many years, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has provided the international community with regular

and timely data on numbers of international migrants, estimates of net migration and Government policies on international migration for all countries of the world. This Highlights presents an overview of key findings of the International Migration 2019: Report. Like the longer report, the Highlights is organized in four main areas, covering the following topics:

The first chapter examines the levels and trends in numbers of international migrants classified by age, sex, and countries of origin and destination, using information from the 2019 revision of the International Migrant Stock (United Nations, 2019a). The second chapter presents global and regional estimates and projections of net migration and total population based on the latest information available from the 2019 revision of World Population Prospects (United Nations, 2019b). The third chapter discusses international migration policies, using data collected through the module on international migration (module III) of the United Nations Twelfth Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development (the “Twelfth Inquiry”) (United Nations, 2018).³ The final, fourth chapter provides an overview of the international legal and normative framework on international migration, with a particular focus on legal instruments to safeguard the human rights of migrants. This chapter also provides an overview of the adoption and endorsement by the General Assembly in 2018 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

³ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) assisted in gathering responses to module III of the Twelfth Inquiry from Governments.



Special event with authors and students on Migration in Geneva, 2018. UN Photo/Violaine Martin

Levels and trends in international migrant stock

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

In the period between 1990 and 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide grew by around 119 million. During this period, countries in more developed regions gained 69 million international migrants, whereas countries in less developed regions added 50 million (figure 1). In 2019, nearly 56 per cent of international migrants lived in more developed regions, while less developed regions hosted 44 per cent.

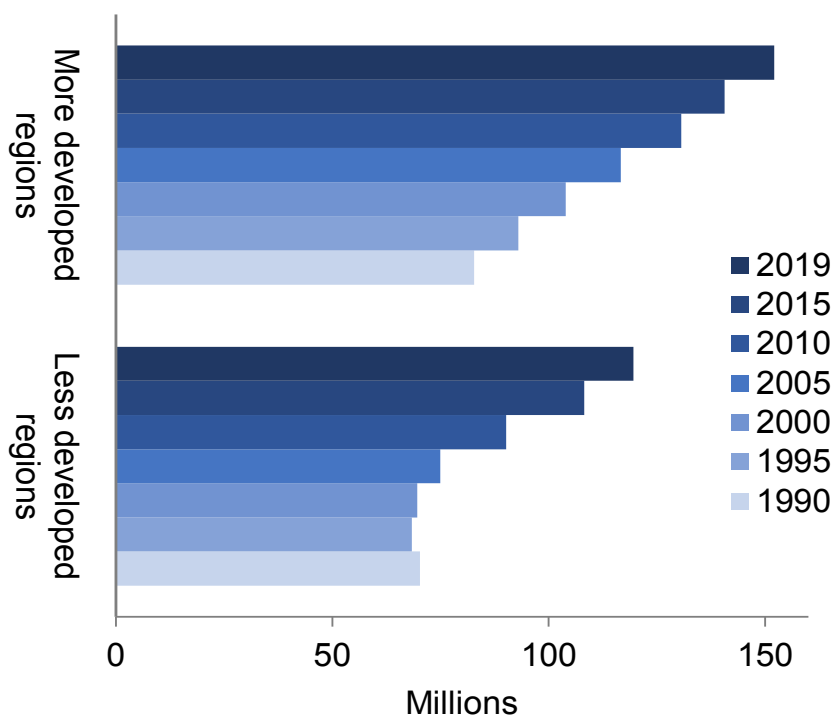
International migrants accounted for a relatively small share of the world’s total population, 3.5 per cent in 2019. This share has increased from 2.9 per cent in 1990. International migrants constituted 12.0 per cent of the total population in the more

Box 1. Who is an international migrant?

For the purpose of estimating the international migrant stock, international migrants are defined as persons who are either living in a country other than their country of birth or in a country other than their country of citizenship. When data on place of birth are available, they are generally given precedence.

Of the 232 countries or areas in the International Migrant Stock 2019, data on the foreign-born were available for 184, or 79 per cent. Data on foreign citizens were used for 45 countries or areas, or 19 per cent. For six countries or areas, estimates were imputed based on regional levels and trends.

Figure 1:
Number of international migrants by development group, 1990-2019 (millions)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

developed regions in 2019, compared to 1.9 per cent of the total population in less developed regions (see table 1.A.).

In 2019, more than half of all international migrants worldwide lived in Europe and Northern America

Roughly 82 million international migrants resided in Europe and nearly 59 million in Northern America. Northern Africa and Western Asia hosted the third largest number of international migrants (49 million), followed by sub-Saharan Africa (24 million), Central and Southern Asia (20 million), and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (18 million). Latin America and the Caribbean (12 million), and Oceania (9 million) recorded the lowest numbers of international migrants.

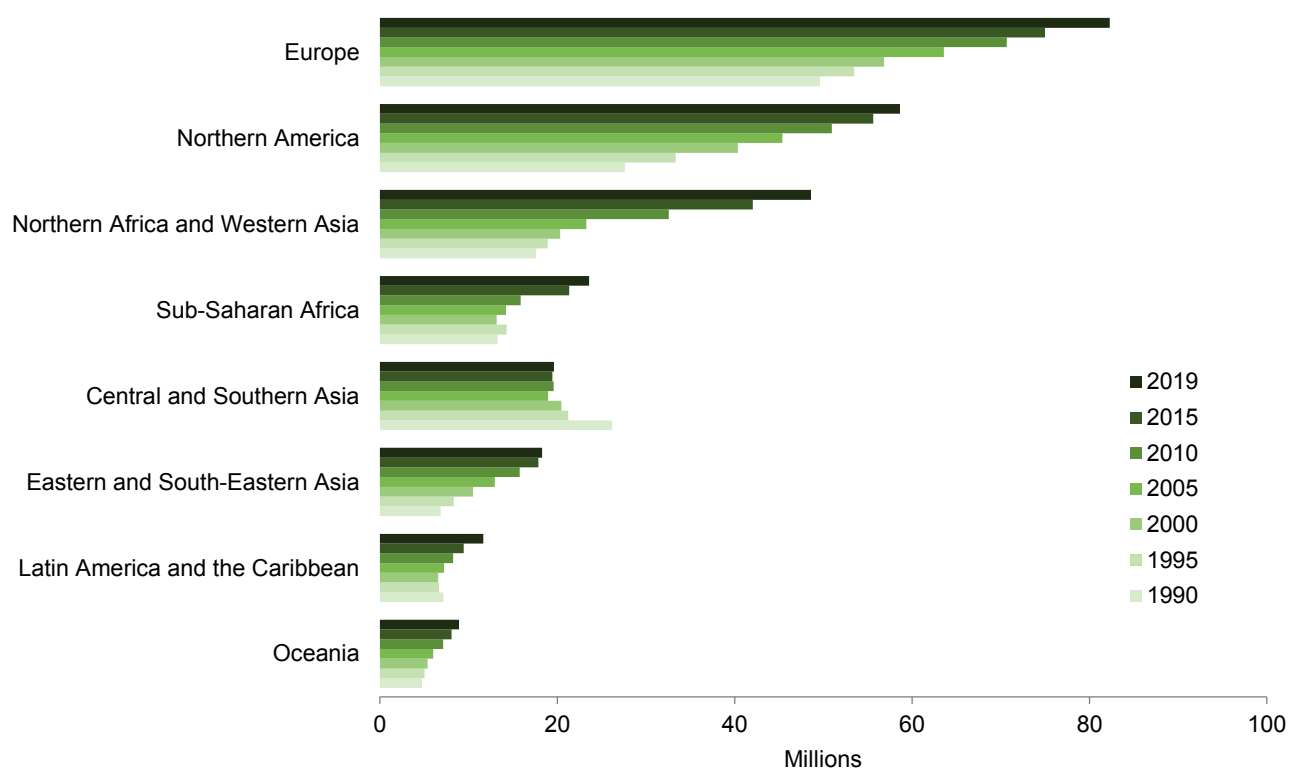
Between 1990 and 2019, the international migrant stock increased by approximately 30 million each in Europe, Northern America, and Northern Africa and Western Asia (figure 2). Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa each added approximately 10 million international migrants, while Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania added more than 4 million each. By contrast, the number of international migrants decreased by around 7 million in Central and Southern Asia during this period.

In 2019, the five largest regional migration corridors accounted for almost half of the global international migrant stock

Europe-to-Europe constituted the largest regional migration corridor in the world, with 41.9 million international migrants born in Europe and residing

Figure 2:

Number of international migrants by region of destination, 1990-2019 (millions)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

in another country in the same region, of which a considerable proportion were between countries of the European Union (see table 2.A.). The corridor from Latin America and the Caribbean to Northern America was the second largest migration corridor in 2019, with a stock of 26.6 million international migrants. The third, fourth, and fifth largest regional migration corridors were almost equal in size, with around 18 to 19 million international migrants for the corridor within Northern Africa and Western Asia, for the corridor from Central and Southern Asia to Northern Africa and Western Asia, and for the corridor within sub-Saharan Africa.

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

In 2019, just 20 countries hosted two thirds of all international migrants and about half were living in just ten countries. The largest number of migrants resided in the United States of America, which hosted

51 million migrants in 2019, or around 19 per cent of the world's total (figure 3). The second and third largest countries of destination were Germany and Saudi Arabia, hosting around 13 million migrants each, followed by the Russian Federation (12 million), and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (10 million).

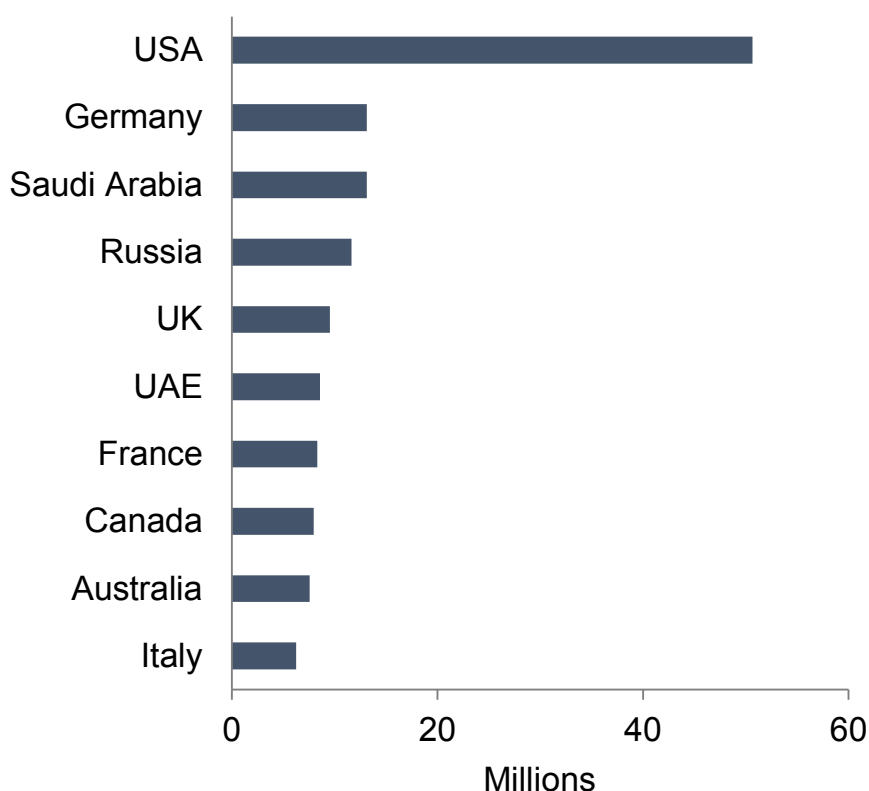
Of the 20 main destination countries of international migrants worldwide, seven were in Europe, four in Northern Africa and Western Asia, three in Central and Southern Asia, two each in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and in Northern America, and one each in Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa.

One-third of all international migrants originated in only ten countries

With 17.5 million persons living abroad in 2019, India was the leading country of origin of international migrants. The second largest country of origin was Mexico (11.8 million), followed by

Figure 3.

Countries hosting the largest number of international migrants, 2019 (millions)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

Note: USA refers to the United States of America, Russia refers to the Russian Federation, UK refers to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and UAE refers to the United Arab Emirates.

China (10.7 million), the Russian Federation (10.5 million) and the Syrian Arab Republic (8.2 million).

Women and girls comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants

In 2019, women made up 47.9 per cent of all international migrants worldwide. Women constituted 51.5 per cent of all migrants in more developed regions, a number that had barely changed since 1990. In less developed regions, however, the percentage of women among all migrants declined from 47.0 in 1990 to 43.4 in 2019.

Regions with a longstanding tradition of immigration recorded the highest shares of female migrants. In 2019, the percentage of females among all international migrants was highest in Northern America (51.8 per cent) and Europe (51.4 per cent). Whereas, women and men provided an almost equal share of all international migrants in Oceania (50.4 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (49.9 per cent), Central and Southern Asia (49.4 per cent), and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (49.3 per cent). By

contrast, the share of female migrants was lower in sub-Saharan Africa (47.5 per cent), and much lower in Northern Africa and Western Asia (35.5 per cent), where male migrants significantly outnumbered female migrants.

The majority of international migrants are of working age

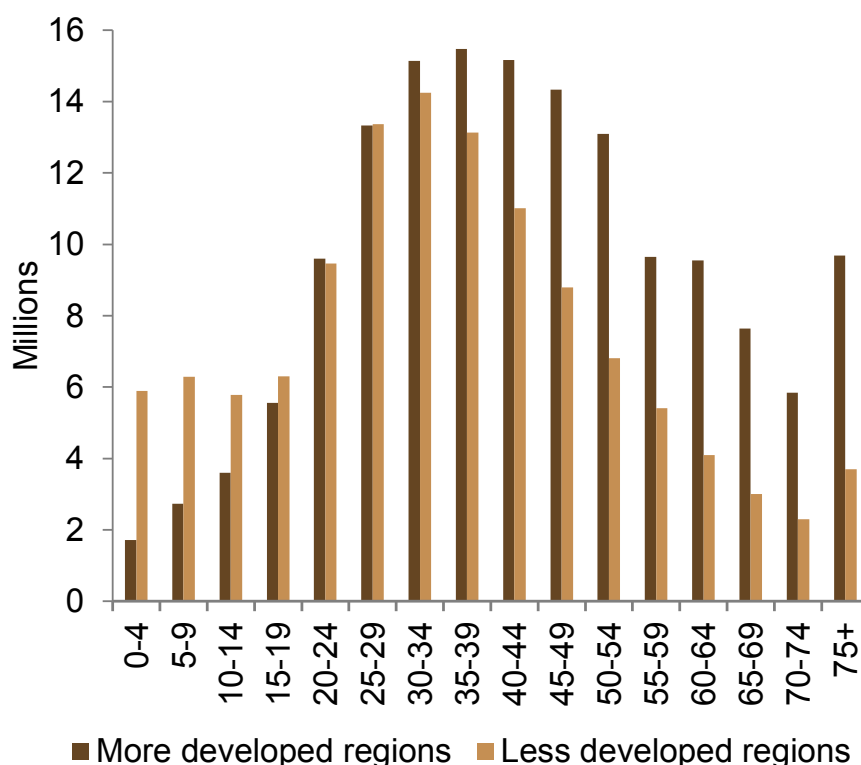
In 2019, three out of four international migrants were between the ages of 20 and 64 years, which is the age range commonly defined as the working age. Of the 202 million international migrants of working age, 57 per cent were settled in more developed regions and 43 per cent in less developed regions (figure 4).

In 2019, 38 million international migrants were below the age of 20 years, or one seventh of the global international migrant stock. The proportion of young persons among all migrants was much larger in less developed regions (20 per cent) than in more developed regions (9 per cent).

Globally, there were approximately 32 million international migrants aged 65 years or over in

Figure 4.

Number of international migrants by age, development group, 2019 (millions)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

2019, accounting for 12 per cent of all international migrants. Older persons aged 65 years or over accounted for 15 per cent of all international migrants in more developed regions, compared with 8 per cent in less developed regions.

Forced displacements across international borders have continued to rise

Globally, the number of refugees and asylum seekers reached 29 million in 2017. The number of refugees and asylum seekers more than doubled between 2005 and 2017, corresponding to an average annual growth of over 1 million.

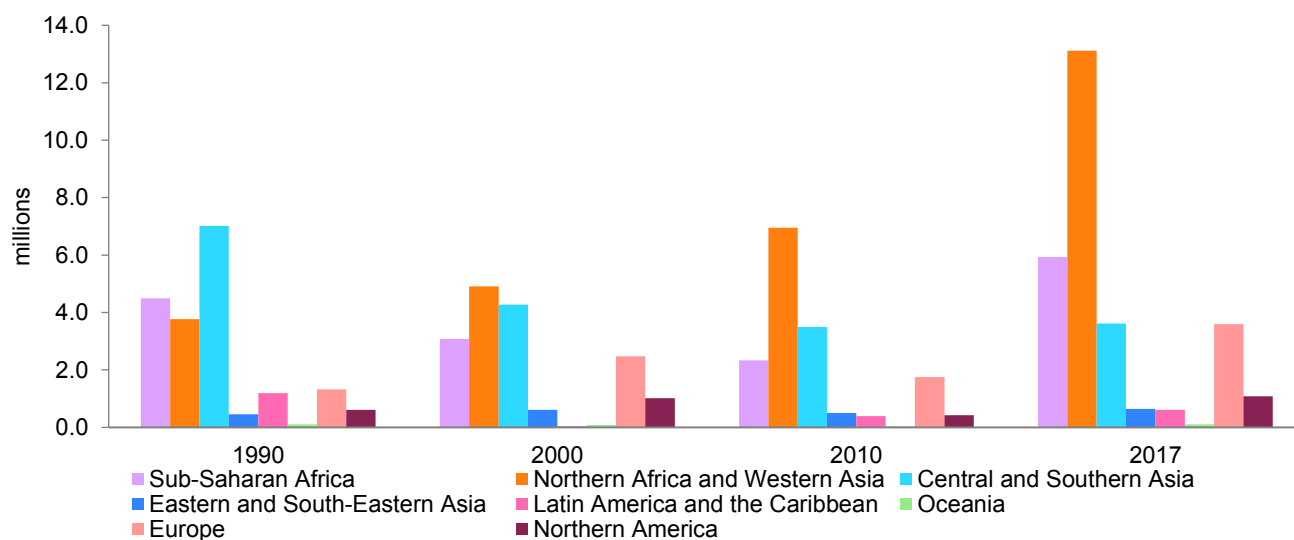
The number of refugees and asylum seekers varies across regions of destination

In 2017, 46 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers lived in Northern Africa and Western Asia (13.1 million) (figure 5). Sub-Saharan Africa hosted the

second largest number of refugees and asylum seekers (5.9 million), followed by Central and Southern Asia, and Europe (3.6 million each). The remaining five regions hosted a combined total of 2.5 million refugees and asylum seekers.

The refugee stock of 2017 accounted for 10.6 per cent of the global international migrant stock of 2019. However, this share varied significantly across development groups, and regions. While refugees and asylum seekers accounted for only 3.2 per cent of the international migrant stock in more developed regions, they comprised 20.0 per cent of all migrants in less developed regions. In Northern Africa and Western Asia, and in sub-Saharan Africa, refugees and asylum seekers accounted for more than a quarter of all international migrants. By contrast, less than 5 per cent of international migrants were refugees and asylum seekers in Oceania, Northern America, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Europe.

Figure 5.
Number of refugees and asylum seekers by region of destination



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

Note: The estimate of the number of refugees and asylum seekers were provided by UNHCR (2019) and UNRWA (2019). While the latest available estimate of the migrant stock reported in this chapter refers to the year 2019, the latest available estimate of the refugee stock refers to the year 2017.



Return of internally displaced persons, East Timor 1999. UN Photo/UNHCR/M Kobayashi

Net international migration

Net migration from less developed regions to more developed regions has declined in recent years

Net migration from 1950 to 2020 saw a net positive flow of people from countries in less developed regions to countries in more developed regions, and it is expected to continue this way in the foreseeable future. Net migration from less developed regions to more developed regions increased from around 26 thousand per year in the early 1950s to a high of 3.4 million per year during 2005-2010, and it has since declined to 2.8 million per year during 2015-2020 (see table 3.A).

Box 2. Net migration: Definition and related terminology

Net migration, for a given country and time period, refers to the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants, irrespective of citizenship. If more people immigrate than emigrate, the country gains population due to positive net migration, or net immigration; when more people emigrate than immigrate, the country loses population through negative net migration, or net emigration.

The data on net migration presented here do not include information on the country or region of origin or destination. For regions or groups of countries, the level of net migration reflects only movements from or to countries located outside the region or group. For the world as a whole, the level of net migration is zero.

Some regions have consistently been net recipients of migrants while others have been net senders

Northern America and Oceania have had positive net migration for all periods between 1950 and 2020, while Europe has experienced positive net migration for all periods since 1970. Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa have experienced negative net migration for all periods between 1950

and 2020, while Central and Southern Asia has experienced negative net migration for all periods since 1970. Northern Africa and Western Asia's net migration has been mostly negative until 2000 and positive since then, while Eastern and South-Eastern Asia has generally experienced negative net migration, with sporadic periods of positive net migration (figure 6).

Net migration across regions is only part of the picture since a significant amount of migration also takes place across countries within regions. Between 2000 and 2010, amongst the 201 countries or areas with net migration estimates, 75 had positive net migration while 125 had negative net migration. Overall, the sum of countries with positive net migration for the period 2015-2020 was 24.4 million compared to 13.8 million at the regional level. This implies that around 10.6 million or 43 per cent of net international migration took place within regions.

Central and Southern Asia has the largest net number of emigrants

Most countries in Central and Southern Asia were net senders (negative net migration) for the period 2000-2010 and 2010-2020 (12 and 10, respectively, out of 14). Combined, a net annual average of 1.5 million people emigrated from this region between 2000 and 2020, making it the largest sending region in the world.

Eastern and South-Eastern Asia was the second largest region in terms of the net number of emigrants (an annual average of 0.8 million during 2000-2020), but this region also included several countries with positive net migration.

Latin America and the Caribbean was the third largest region with an annual average net number of emigrants of 0.7 million between 2000 and 2020 (0.9 million during 2000-2010 and 0.5 million during 2010-2020). The countries in this region had very diverse migration patterns: 10 out of 37 had positive net migration during the first 10 years, while 14 had

experienced positive net migration during 2010-2020 (see table 4.A).

Around three quarters of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa were net sending countries during 2010-2020. Altogether, the sub-Saharan Africa had an annual negative net migration of around 0.3 million (0.2 million during 2000-2010 and 0.4 million during 2010-2020).

Europe and Northern America are the regions with largest positive net migration

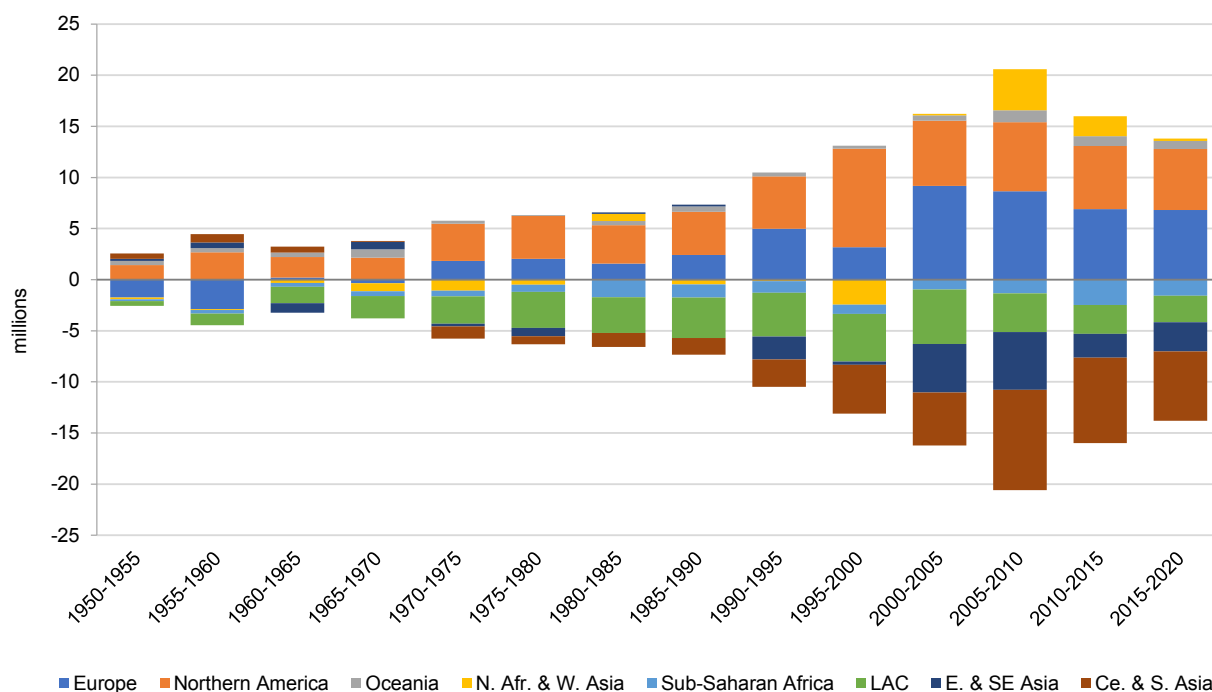
Between 2000 and 2020, Europe experienced an average annual net inflow of around 1.6 million migrants. Much of the migration taking place in the region was within its borders; of the 40 countries in Europe with estimates on net migration 25 had positive net migration, while the other 15 had negative net migration.

Northern America is the second largest region in terms of the net number of immigrants. The region had an average annual net immigration of around 1.25 million during 2000-2020 (about 1 million into the United States of America and about a quarter of a million into Canada).

During 2000-2020, Northern Africa and Western Asia had an average annual net migration of 317 thousand. Around half of the countries in the region were net senders and the others net receivers. During this period, positive net migration into Oceania averaged around 176 thousand per year, mostly into Australia (179 thousand), New Zealand (18 thousand) and New Caledonia (1 thousand). The rest of the countries in Oceania experienced negative net migration.

Figure 6.

Average annual net number of immigrants by region, from 1950-1955 to 2015-2020 (millions)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b)

Notes: N. Afr. & W. Asia: Northern Africa and Western Asia; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; E. & SE Asia: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia; Ce. & S. Asia: Central and Southern Asia.

International migration has a significant impact on population size of many countries in regions of destination, but its impact is much less significant in regions of origin

This section examines projected change in total population by 2070 under two scenarios: the “medium-variant” migration scenario, assuming a continuation of recent levels of net migration, and the “zero-net-migration” scenario, assuming that the number of immigrants equals the number of emigrants for all time periods starting in 2015-2020.

As people relocate from sending to receiving countries, the overall world population is not likely to be greatly affected by migration. At the regional level, receiving regions are projected to be significantly more populous under the medium-variant scenario than under the zero-net-migration scenario, while sending regions are projected to be much less affected in relative terms.

Under the zero-net-migration scenario, Northern America’s population would be close to 21 per cent smaller by 2070 than under the medium-variant scenario, while Oceania’s would be 17 per cent

smaller and Europe’s about 9 per cent smaller. The sending regions’ populations would be between 0.1 and just over 3 per cent larger by 2070 under the zero-net-migration scenario (table 1).

Box 3. Net migration and population change

Populations vary in size and either grow or decline over time due to natural change, the number of births minus the number of deaths, and/or net migration, the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants.

Migration affects population size by the addition of immigrants and the subtraction of emigrants. As migrants generally have a different age distribution to that of the total population, it can also affect its age distribution, and its levels of mortality and fertility.

Migration tends to involve mostly people of working-age and therefore increases the working-age population at the destination, while reducing the working-age population at the origin.

Table 1.

Projected population in 2070 according to the medium-variant and the zero-net-migration scenarios, by region

Region	Population in 2070 (millions)		Difference between medium-variant and zero-net-migration scenarios (percentage)
	Medium-variant scenario	Zero-net-migration scenario	
World	10,459	10,454	<0.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	2,867	2,895	-1
Northern Africa and Western Asia	856	858	-0.1
Central and Southern Asia	2,545	2,627	-3.2
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	2,245	2,278	-1.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	759	772	-1.8
Oceania	65	55	16.6
Europe	667	610	8.5
Northern America	454	360	20.7

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Since 1950 natural change has been the driving force (with few exceptions) behind population change for all regions. In terms of contribution to the total population change, natural growth has reached its peak in all regions except in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is expected to peak during the 2050-2060 decade.

Positive net migration can contribute to slowing the long-term trend toward population ageing

The world is ageing rapidly. The world's population aged 60 years and over is projected to increase from 1.0 billion in 2020 to 2.5 billion in 2070, while the median age of the world population is projected to increase from 30.9 years to 38.7 years. Because international migrants tend to comprise larger proportions of working-age persons compared to the overall population, positive net migration can contribute to slowing the long-term trend toward population ageing.

In more developed regions, the median age is projected to increase from 42 years in 2020 to 46.8 years in 2070, and with zero net migration it would be two years higher at 48.8 years. During this time, the median age in less developed regions is projected to increase from 29.0 years to 37.7 years, but the effect of net migration is projected to be insignificant.

Under the medium-variant migration scenario, the median age of the population of Northern America is projected to increase from 38.6 years in 2020 to 44.3 years in 2070, but it would increase to 47.1 years with zero net migration.

Oceania and Europe are also expected to benefit significantly from migration in dampening the increase in the median age. In the case of Oceania, the

median age is projected to increase from 33.4 years in 2020 to 39.5 years in 2070, instead of an expected increase to 41.0 years with zero net migration. For Europe, currently with a median age of 42.5 years, the projected median age of 47.7 years by 2070 would be even higher at 48.7 years under the zero-net-migration scenario.

A similar trend is observed for the role of net migration in affecting the share of the working-age population, another measure of population ageing. Based on the medium-variant migration scenario, the share of the working-age population, defined as aged 20 to 64 years, is projected to decrease from 57.4 per cent in 2020 to 55.2 per cent in 2070. While at the world level this change is a consequence of the demographic transition, at the regional and country levels the change in the share of the working-age population is also affected by international migration.

Four of the eight regions are projected to be positively affected by migration and consequently to have an increase in the share of the working-age population. In Northern America, the projected share of the working-age population would be 2.4 percentage points higher in 2070 under the medium-variant migration scenario than under the zero-net-migration scenario. The projected share of the working-age population in 2070 under the medium-variant migration scenario would be higher by 1.2 percentage points in Oceania, 0.8 percentage points in Europe and 0.5 percentage points in Northern Africa and Western Asia than under the zero-net-migration scenario. The effect of net migration on the share of the working-age population is projected to be small for the other four regions, less than 1 percentage point in each case.

International migration policies

When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. The importance of the nexus between migration policies and migration outcomes is explicitly acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

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

In 2019, among the 111 countries with available data, the majority of Governments reported either having policies to raise levels of immigration through regular channels (37 per cent) or policies to maintain current levels (26 per cent). Only 3 per cent

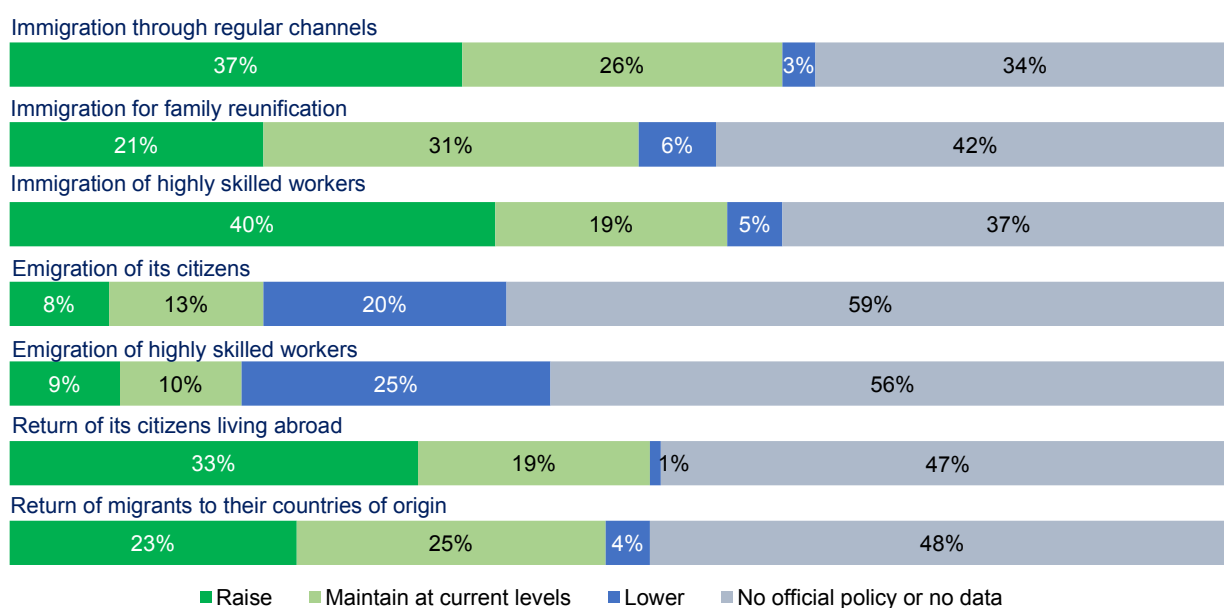
of Governments had policies to lower their current immigration levels (figure 7 and table A.4).

In 2019, an overwhelming majority of Governments also reported either having policies aimed at maintaining their current levels of immigration for family reunification (31 per cent) or not having a policy to influence them (42 per cent). Only 6 per cent of Governments had policies to lower immigration for family reunification, while 21 per cent had policies to raise it.

Globally, many countries report having some type of policy measure to attract highly skilled migrants. In 2019, 40 per cent of Governments reported having policies to raise immigration of high-skilled workers, 5 per cent had policies to lower such inflows, and the remaining countries either had policies aimed at maintaining the current levels (19 per cent) or had no policies in place (37 per cent).

Figure 7.

Percentage of Governments with policy measures concerning the annual level of immigration, emigration and return, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019c).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019).

While emigration generates both opportunities and challenges for countries of origin, few Governments worldwide report having explicit policies to change levels of emigration

In 2019, the majority of Governments had no explicit policy on the emigration of their citizens (59 per cent) or on the emigration of highly skilled workers (56 per cent). Less than one in ten Governments reported that they sought to raise the level of emigration of either their citizens or highly skilled workers. By contrast, 20 per cent of Governments sought to lower the emigration of citizens and 25 per cent sought to lower the emigration of highly skilled workers.

Many Governments report having policies or programmes to encourage the return of their citizens living abroad

In 2019, 33 per cent of Governments reported having policies to raise levels of return of citizens living abroad, compared to 1 per cent with policies to lower such flows. Policies to influence levels of return of international migrants to their country of origin are somewhat less prevalent. Twenty-three per cent

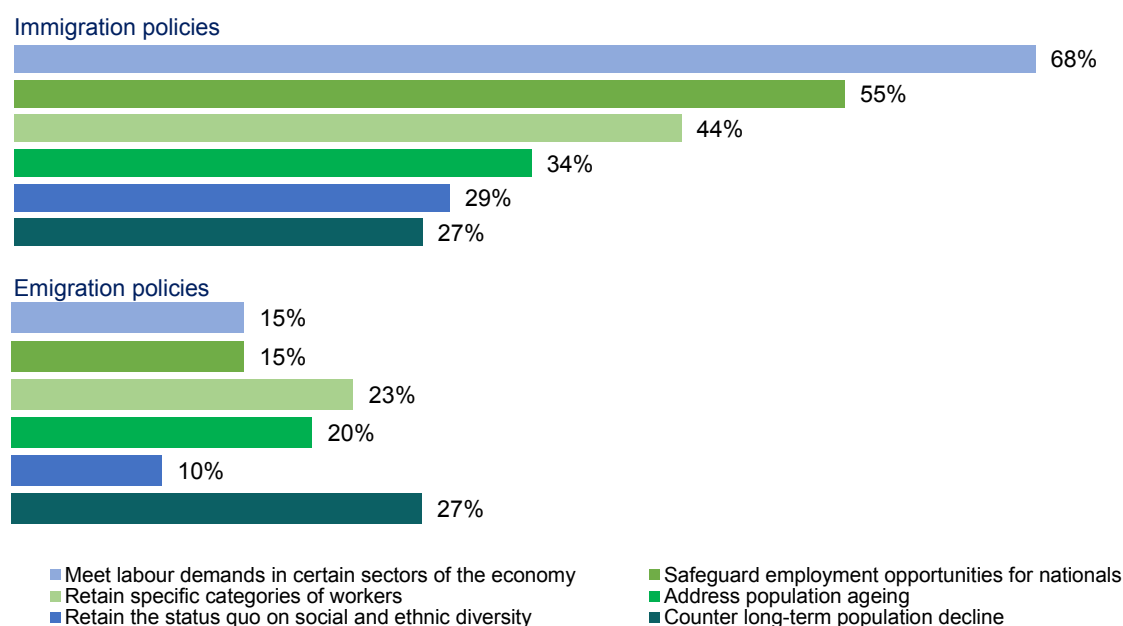
of Governments reported having policies to raise the level of migrant returns, while 25 per cent sought to maintain current levels.

Countries cite a variety of underlying reasons for their current immigration and emigration policies

Among the 111 countries with data in 2019, 68 per cent identified meeting labour market demands as an underlying reason for their current immigration policy (figure 8 and table A.4). A large share of Governments also viewed immigration policy as a tool to safeguard employment opportunities for their nationals (55 per cent) or retain specific categories of workers (44 per cent). Demographic drivers were cited as a rationale by around one-third of responding countries, with 34 per cent of Governments pursuing their current immigration policy to address population ageing and 27 per cent to counter long-term population decline. In terms of the rationale for current emigration policies, countering long-term population decline was the most widely cited reason (27 per cent), followed by retaining specific categories of workers (23 per cent), and addressing population ageing (20 per cent).

Figure 8.

Percentage of Governments by major underlying reasons for setting current migration policies, 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019c).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019).

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

Irregular migration poses multiple challenges to countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as to migrants themselves. Among the countries that provided information in 2019, irregular migration was considered as a matter of concern by Governments of all but five countries. Globally, 68 per cent of Governments viewed irregular migration in their countries as a major concern, and another 25 per cent viewed it as a minor concern.

Policy measures to protect migrants' rights and ensure their access to basic and essential services varies widely

Globally, 95 per cent of Governments in 2019 reported having policies to provide non-nationals equal access to essential or emergency health care. Ninety-three per cent of Governments indicated that they ensured equal access to justice, while 91 per cent reported having measures to provide equal access to public education, including public primary schools and secondary schools. Among policy measures to address various dimensions of irregular immigration and promote regular migration, 91 per cent of Governments reported having formal strategies to address human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Eighty-four per cent of Governments in 2019 reported having provisions for unaccompanied or separated minors, including specialized procedures for their identification, referral, care and family reunification; legal assistance; and specific visa and asylum procedures. Eighty per cent of Governments reported having information and awareness-raising campaigns. Eighty per cent of Governments also reported having penalties for employers of migrants

in an irregular situation; while 76 per cent had pre-arrival authorization controls. Seventy-five per cent of Governments indicated that they had a system to monitor visa overstays or used fines or detention of migrants in an irregular situation. Sixty-five per cent of Governments reported facilitating the regularization of their legal status through formal mechanisms.

In 2019, 77 per cent of Governments reported having policies aimed at promoting the inclusion and integration of migrants. However, one-quarter of the countries where international migrants comprised 10 per cent or more of the total population in 2019, did not have an explicit national policy or strategy to promote the inclusion or integration of migrants.

Measures to promote the socioeconomic well-being of migrants are essential for maximizing the positive development impact of migration

Globally, 81 per cent of Governments in 2019 reported having policies to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad. Seventy-eight per cent of Governments indicated that they had measures to promote fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers. Sixty-seven per cent of Governments indicated that they had policy measures to facilitate or promote the flow of remittances. Measures to align labour migration policies with actual and projected labour market needs were reported by 66 per cent of Governments providing data. Sixty per cent of Governments had policy measures to facilitate the portability of social security benefits, signifying that they had an agreement with at least one other country on the portability of at least one type of social security benefit.



Team teamwork togetherness collaboration concept, by Rawpixel.com

Legal and normative framework for international migration

The normative framework for international migration includes legal instruments pertaining to the human rights of all migrants, the rights of migrant workers and members of their families and the protection of refugees, as well as instruments designed to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the recently adopted global compacts relating to migration and refugees also contribute to the normative framework on international migration.

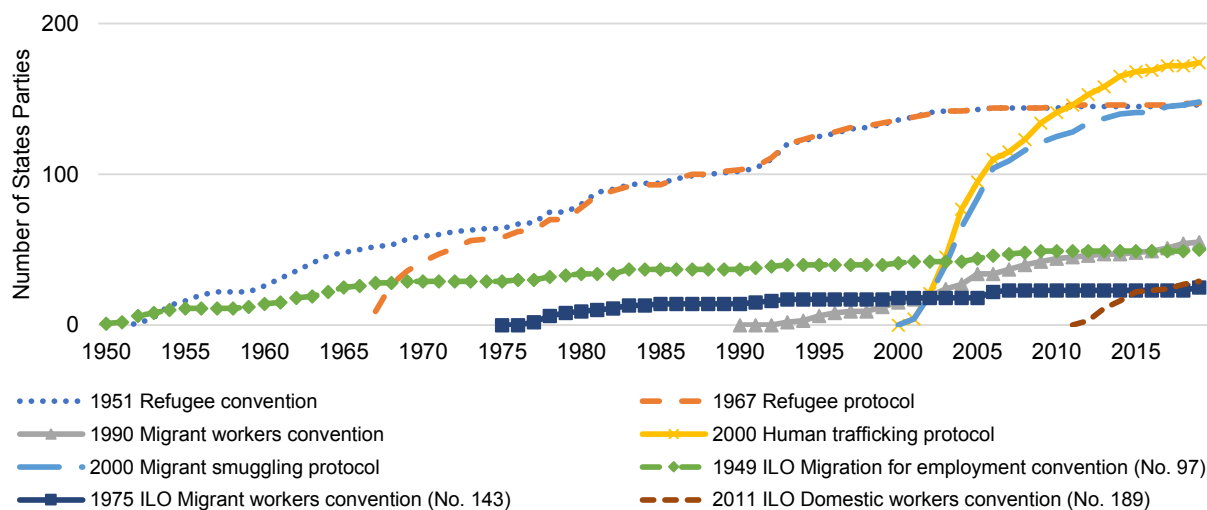
Legal instruments related to international migration have been ratified in varying degrees by Member States of the United Nations

As of October 2019, instruments designed to protect refugees or to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking had been ratified by more than three quarters of the Member States, whereas instruments protecting the rights of migrant workers had been ratified by less than 30 per cent of the Member States (figure 9 and table 7.A).

Ratification rates of all legal instruments related to international migration were higher for countries in the more developed regions than in the less developed regions, except for the 1990 convention on migrant workers and members of their families. By region, ratification rates of legal instruments were generally higher in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions (table 8.A).

As of October 2019, the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees had been ratified by 146 and 147 United Nations Member States, respectively, with 144 States Parties having ratified both instruments. All refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Europe resided in countries that had ratified both instruments relating to the status of refugees. On the other hand, the majority of refugees in Northern Africa and Western Asia, Central and Southern Asia, and Northern America resided in countries that had not ratified both of these instruments.

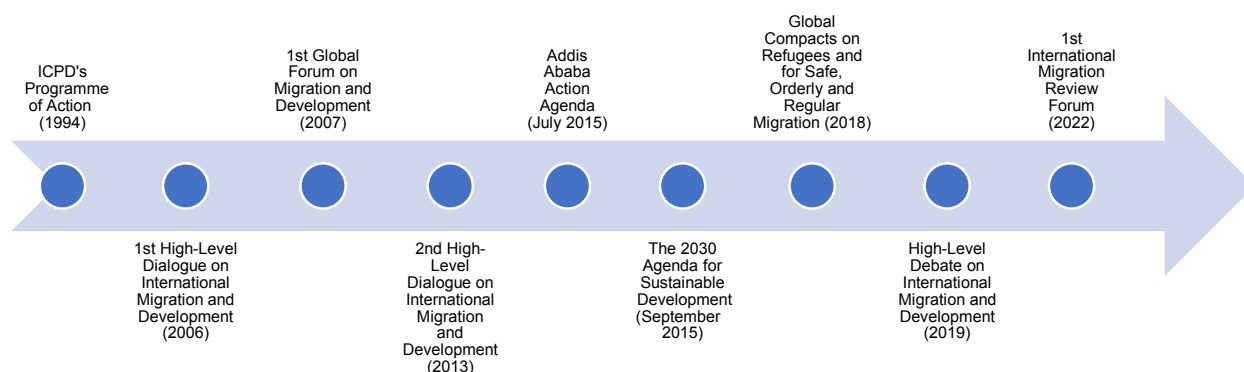
Figure 9. Status of ratification of legal instruments related to international migration, 1950-2019



Source: United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>, accessed 21 October 2019); NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards (<http://www.ilo.org/normlex>, accessed 21 October 2019).

Note: Does not include ratifications by the European Union.

Figure 10.

Timeline of key events related to international migration at the United Nations

As of October 2019, 55 Member States had ratified the 1990 Migrant Workers Convention, collectively hosting about 10 per cent of the global migrant population. The 1975 ILO Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers had been ratified by only 25 Member States, hosting only about 7 per cent of the global migrant population. The latest ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers had been ratified by 29 Member States, hosting about 20 per cent of the global migrant population. Only 4 of 187 ILO Member States had ratified all three ILO legal instruments concerning migrant workers.

There has been a rapid increase in the ratification of the protocols relating to human trafficking and migrant smuggling

As of October 2019, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children had been ratified by 174 Member States; and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air had been ratified by 148 Member States, reflecting a growing concern about links between transnational organized crime and irregular migration.

The inclusion of international migration in the United Nations development agenda has evolved over a long period

Early discussions on international migration, mostly

within the context of overall population dynamics, occurred in the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest and the 1984 International Population Conference in Mexico City. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo was the first intergovernmental conference to adopt a comprehensive, negotiated text on international migration (figure 10). Subsequent United Nations conferences and summits have affirmed the need to uphold the human rights of international migrants, respect labour standards for migrant workers, enhance the contributions of international migration to development, address the challenges associated with migration and strengthen international cooperation on migration.

The introduction of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly confirms the relevance of international migration for global development by calling on Member States to strengthen international cooperation to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration with full respect for human rights and for the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, and of refugees and internally displaced persons. The 2030 Agenda has 17 overarching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, of which eight targets include references to issues directly pertaining to international migration.

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

Of 193 Member States, 152 voted in favour of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, while 181 voted in favour of the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees. The two global compacts provide the blueprints for governments and all stakeholders to ensure more effective cooperative and collective efforts concerning international migration.

Following the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration, the Member States agreed that the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and

Development shall be repurposed and renamed as the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). It shall serve as the primary intergovernmental global platform for Member States to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact for Migration at the local, national, regional and global levels, including as it relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders with a view to building upon accomplishments and identifying opportunities for further cooperation. It is expected that each edition of the IMRF will result in an intergovernmentally agreed Progress Declaration to be considered by the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. Starting in 2022, the IMRF will take place once every four years.

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Annex tables

Table A.1.

Number and share of total population of the international migrant stock by development group, income group, and region, 1990-2019

	International migrant stock (millions)				International migrants as a share of total population (percentage)	
	1990	2000	2010	2019	1990	2019
World	153.0	173.6	220.8	271.6	2.9	3.5
More developed regions	82.8	104.0	130.6	152.1	7.2	12.0
Less developed regions	70.2	69.6	90.2	119.6	1.7	1.9
High-income countries	77.8	103.0	144.3	175.8	7.5	14.0
Middle-income countries	65.0	61.0	65.9	82.1	1.7	1.4
Low-income countries	9.8	9.0	10.0	13.1	2.8	1.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	13.3	13.2	15.9	23.6	2.7	2.2
Northern Africa and Western Asia	17.6	20.3	32.6	48.6	6.1	9.4
Central and Southern Asia	26.2	20.5	19.6	19.6	2.1	1.0
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	6.8	10.5	15.7	18.3	0.4	0.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	7.2	6.6	8.3	11.7	1.6	1.8
Oceania	4.7	5.4	7.1	8.9	17.3	21.2
Europe	49.6	56.9	70.7	82.3	6.9	11.0
Northern America	27.6	40.4	51.0	58.6	9.9	16.0

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

Table A.2.

Number of international migrants by region of destination and origin, 2019 (millions)

Destination	Origin									
	Sub-Saharan Africa	N. Afr. & W. Asia	Ce. & S. Asia	E. & SE Asia	LAC	Oceania	Europe	Northern America	Unknown	World
World	28.35	36.87	49.78	37.08	40.46	2.11	61.10	4.53	11.36	271.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	18.31	1.21	0.14	0.09	0.04	0.02	0.76	0.04	2.97	23.57
N. Afr. & W. Asia	2.07	18.93	18.52	4.27	0.07	0.01	2.58	0.17	1.98	48.59
Ce. & S. Asia	0.00	0.33	11.69	1.97	0.02	0.00	4.49	0.05	1.08	19.63
E. & SE Asia	0.01	0.03	1.90	14.32	0.34	0.08	0.21	0.31	1.08	18.30
LAC	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.29	8.24	0.01	1.42	1.24	0.31	11.67
Oceania	0.48	0.43	1.16	2.30	0.20	1.06	2.89	0.23	0.16	8.93
Europe	4.94	13.05	11.20	3.60	4.98	0.40	41.86	1.10	1.18	82.30
Northern America	2.50	2.79	5.16	10.24	26.58	0.52	6.89	1.37	2.60	58.65

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019a).

Notes: N. Afr. & W. Asia: Northern Africa and Western Asia; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; E. & SE Asia: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia; Ce. & S. Asia: Central and Southern Asia.

Table A.3.

Net number of immigrants per period by development group and region, 1950-2020 (thousands)

Development group/region	1950-60	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-00	2000-05	2005-10	2010-15	2015-20
More developed	271	5,965	13,109	12,812	23,767	16,452	16,945	14,527	14,010
Less developed	-271	-5,965	-13,109	-12,812	-23,767	-16,452	-16,945	-14,527	-14,010
Sub-Saharan Africa	-531	-825	-1,270	-2,978	-2,002	-955	-1,344	-2,485	-1,566
N. Afr. & W. Asia	-240	-1,114	-1,573	201	-2,617	151	4,010	1,950	225
Ce. & S. Asia	1,336	659	-1,939	-3,005	-7,459	-5,176	-9,819	-8,370	-6,770
E. & SE Asia	742	-177	-1,101	313	-2,546	-4,762	-5,634	-2,311	-2,850
LAC	-1,612	-3,818	-6,188	-7,460	-8,972	-5,331	-3,793	-2,830	-2,607
Oceania	832	1,225	379	964	674	508	1,186	957	781
Europe	-4,637	-131	3,856	3,984	8,130	9,179	8,643	6,890	6,805
Northern America	4,111	4,182	7,836	7,981	14,791	6,385	6,751	6,199	5,982

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Notes: N. Afr. & W. Asia: Northern Africa and Western Asia; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; E. & SE Asia: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia; Ce. & S. Asia: Central and Southern Asia.

Table A.4.

Number of countries or areas with positive or negative net migration during 2000-2010 and 2010-2020, and those with a change in the direction of net migration between 2000-2010 and 2010-2020, by region

Region	Positive net migration		Negative net migration		Change in the direction of net migration between 2000-2010 and 2010-2020	
	2000-2010	2010-2020	2000-2010	2010-2020	From positive to negative	From negative to positive
World	75	81	125	118	11	18
Sub-Saharan Africa	14	11	36	38	8	6
Northern Africa and Western Asia	12	14	13	11	0	2
Central and Southern Asia	2	4	12	10	0	2
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	7	8	12	11	0	1
Latin America and the Caribbean	10	13	27	24	0	3
Oceania	3	4	10	9	0	1
Europe	25	25	15	15	3	3
Northern America	2	2	0	0	0	0

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019b).

Note: Countries or areas estimated to have zero net migration either during 2000-2010 or 2010-2020 were excluded for the respective period.

Table A.5.

Percentage of Governments with policy measures concerning the annual level of immigration, emigration and return by region, 2019

	Immigration			Emigration		Return	
	Regular channels	Highly skilled workers	Family reunification	Citizens	Highly skilled workers	Citizens living abroad	Migrants to their countries of origin
World							
No policy or no data	34	37	42	59	56	47	48
Lower	3	5	6	20	25	1	4
Maintain	26	19	31	13	10	19	25
Raise	37	40	21	8	9	33	23
Sub-Saharan Africa							
No policy or no data	48	58	64	55	55	48	55
Lower	0	9	3	21	33	0	3
Maintain	15	6	18	18	12	9	18
Raise	36	27	15	6	0	42	24
Northern Africa and Western Asia							
No policy or no data	58	50	50	83	67	67	58
Lower	0	0	0	17	25	0	0
Maintain	25	17	33	0	0	8	25
Raise	17	33	17	0	8	25	17
Central and Southern Asia							
No policy or no data	20	20	60	40	20	20	40
Lower	0	0	0	20	40	0	0
Maintain	20	20	0	20	20	40	40
Raise	60	60	40	20	20	40	20
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia							
No policy or no data	14	0	57	43	43	29	29
Lower	0	0	0	14	14	0	14
Maintain	29	29	14	0	0	57	14
Raise	57	71	29	43	43	14	43
Latin America and the Caribbean							
No policy or no data	21	71	29	64	64	43	64
Lower	0	0	0	21	14	0	0
Maintain	29	7	36	14	21	36	29
Raise	50	21	36	0	0	21	7
Oceania							
No policy or no data	22	11	22	67	44	56	44
Lower	0	22	22	0	22	0	0
Maintain	44	33	33	11	11	22	44
Raise	33	33	22	22	22	22	11
Europe and Northern America							
No policy or no data	26	13	23	58	61	45	35
Lower	10	0	13	26	23	3	6
Maintain	32	32	48	13	6	13	26
Raise	32	55	16	3	10	39	32

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019c). Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019).

Table A.6.

Percentage of Governments by major underlying reasons for setting current migration policies by region, 2019

	Counter long-term population decline	Address population ageing	Meet labour demands in certain sectors of the economy	Safeguard employment opportunities for nationals	Retain specific categories of workers	Retain the status quo on social and ethnic diversity
World						
Immigration policy	27	34	68	55	44	29
Emigration policy	27	20	15	15	23	10
Sub-Saharan Africa						
Immigration policy	24	39	55	55	48	42
Emigration policy	30	18	15	18	33	21
Northern Africa and Western Asia						
Immigration policy	8	0	33	33	33	8
Emigration policy	25	17	17	8	17	0
Central and Southern Asia						
Immigration policy	20	20	60	80	60	60
Emigration policy	0	0	20	40	40	20
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia						
Immigration policy	0	0	86	71	29	43
Emigration policy	29	14	29	29	29	14
Latin America and the Caribbean						
Immigration policy	36	43	50	43	36	21
Emigration policy	14	14	14	7	29	7
Oceania						
Immigration policy	11	33	100	78	89	67
Emigration policy	56	44	11	22	11	11
Europe and Northern America						
Immigration policy	45	48	90	55	35	6
Emigration policy	26	23	13	10	10	0

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019c).

Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019).

Table A.7.

Status of ratification of legal instruments related to international migration

Instrument	Year of entry into force	Parties to legal instruments	
		Number	Percentage ¹
Refugees			
1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	1954	146	75
1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	1967	147	75
Migrant Workers			
1949 ILO Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised 1949) (No. 97)	1952	50	27
1975 ILO Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) (No. 143)	1978	25	13
1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	2003	55	28
2011 ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (No. 189)	2013	29	16
Smuggling and Trafficking			
2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ²	2003	174	89
2000 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air ²	2004	148	76

Sources: United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>, accessed 21 October 2019); NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards (<http://www.ilo.org/normlex>, accessed 21 October 2019).

¹ Of 193 Member States of the United Nations plus 2 non-member observer States, or of 187 member States of the International Labour Organization.

² Does not include ratifications by the European Union.

Table A.8.

Rates of ratification of legal instruments related to international migration, by development group and region (percentage)

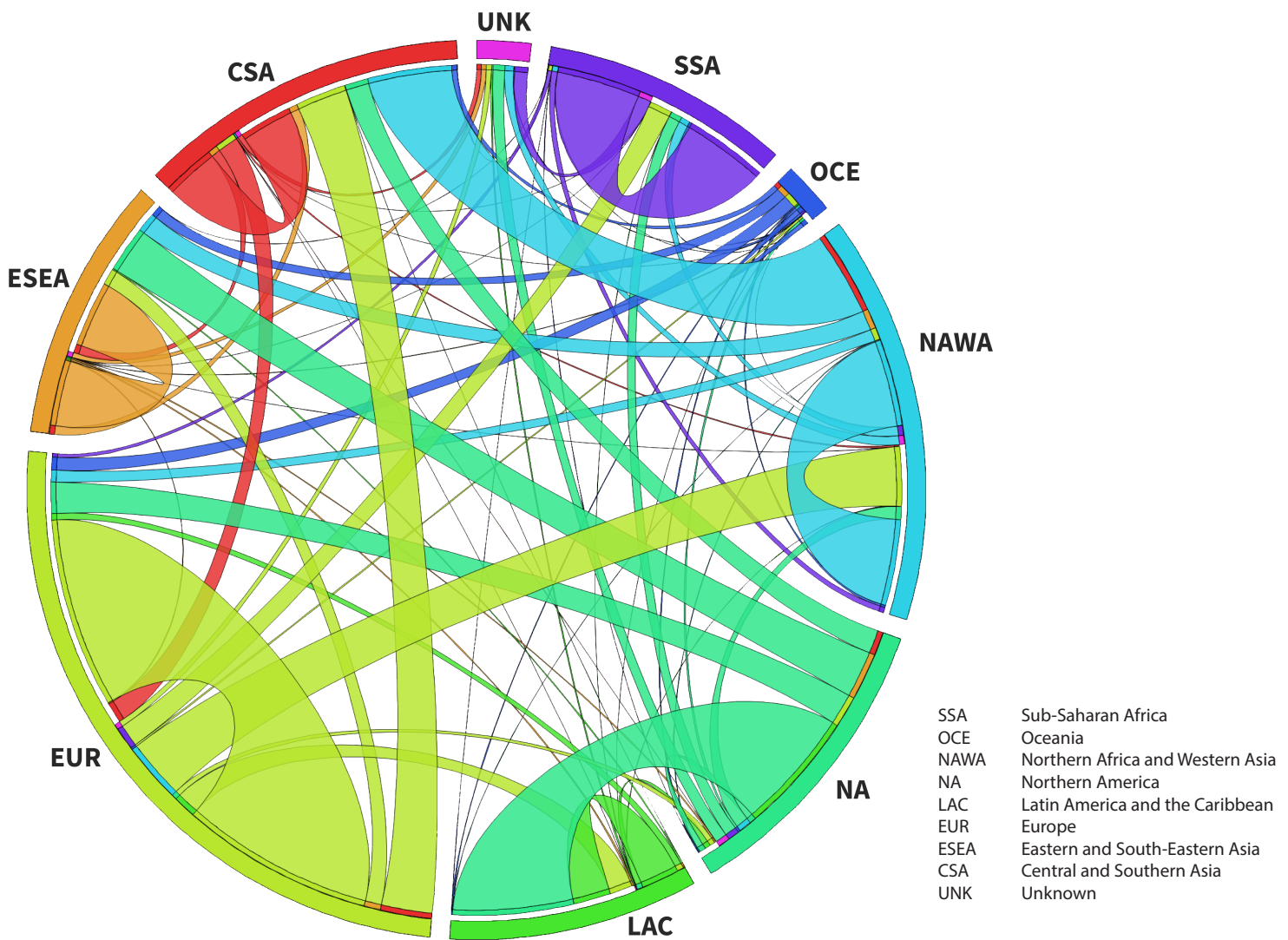
Development group/region	Parties to United Nations instruments ¹					Parties to ILO instruments ²		
	1951 Refugee Convention	1967 Refugee Protocol	1990 Migrant Workers Convention	2000 Human Trafficking Protocol ³	2000 Migrant Smuggling Protocol ³	1949 Migration for Employment Convention (No. 97)	1975 Migrant Workers Convention (No. 143)	2011 Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189)
More developed regions	94	96	4	96	92	38	24	18
Less developed regions	68	68	36	87	71	23	10	15
Sub-Saharan Africa	92	92	42	90	79	19	19	8
Northern Africa and Western Asia	50	50	29	96	71	22	9	0
Central and Southern Asia	43	43	29	71	43	15	8	0
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	38	38	19	88	56	13	7	7
Latin America and The Caribbean	82	82	55	100	91	45	3	48
Oceania	57	57	7	50	43	8	0	0
Europe	95	95	5	95	91	40	28	20
Northern America	50	100	0	100	100	0	0	0

Sources: United Nations Treaty Collection (<http://treaties.un.org>, accessed 21 October 2019); NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards (<http://www.ilo.org/normlex>, accessed 21 October 2019).

¹ Of 193 Member States of the United Nations plus 2 non-member observer States.

² Of 187 Member States of the International Labour Organization.

³ Does not include ratifications by the European Union.



Migration has major impacts on both the people and the places involved. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable development in both origin and destination countries, while also benefitting migrants and their families. These Highlights summarize the key findings of the *International Migration 2019* report that analyzes global and regional levels and trends in international migration, based on the latest estimates of international migrant stock, and investigates the contribution of migration to demographic change. The Highlights also discuss international migration policies and programmes and provide an overview of normative and legal frameworks on international migration and refugees.

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