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International Migrant Stock 2019

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The global number of international migrants reached an estimated 272 million in 2019, an increase of 51 million since 2010. Currently, international migrants comprise 3.5 per cent of the global population, compared to 2.8 per cent in the year 2000. The estimates are based on official national statistics on the foreign-born or the foreign population obtained from population censuses, population registers or nationally representative surveys.

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

Ten key messages

1. In 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide has reached nearly 272 million, up from 221 million in 2010

Europe hosted 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. The global number of international migrants has grown faster than the world's population

Consequently, the share of international migrants in the total population has increased from 2.8 per cent in the year 2000 to 3.5 per cent in 2019. The share of international migrants in the total population varied considerably across regions, with Oceania (21 per cent), including Australia and New Zealand, and Northern America (16 per cent) recording the highest proportions.

3. Forced displacements across international borders have continued to rise

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

4. 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 migrants worldwide (around 13 million each), followed by the Russian Federation (12 million) and the United Kingdom (10 million).

¹ Countries and areas are grouped into seven Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) regions: (1) Sub-Saharan Africa, (2) Northern Africa and Western Asia, (3) Central and Southern Asia, (4) Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, (5) Latin America and the Caribbean, (6) Oceania, and (7) Europe and Northern America. In this note, the last region is further divided into Europe and Northern America.

² The latest available data on refugees and asylum seekers at the time of the preparation of the 2019 revision of the international migrant stock were for 2017.

5. Over two fifths of all international migrants worldwide in 2019 had been born in Europe (61 million) or in Central and Southern Asia (50 million)

Latin America and the Caribbean was the region of origin of an additional 40 million international migrants, and another 37 million originated in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.

6. Most international migrants move between countries located within the same region

The majority of international migrants in sub-Saharan Africa (89 per cent), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (83 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (73 per cent), and Central and Southern Asia (63 per cent) originated from another country in the same region where they resided. By contrast, most of the international migrants that lived in Northern America (98 per cent), Oceania (88 per cent) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (59 per cent) were born in a region other than the one in which they were residing.

7. 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).

8. In 2019, women comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants

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

9. One out of every seven international migrants are below the age of 20 years

In 2019, 38 million international migrants, equivalent to 14 per cent of global migrant population, were under 20 years of age. Sub-Saharan Africa hosted the highest proportion of young persons among all international migrants (27 per cent), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern Africa and Western Asia (about 22 per cent each).

10. Three out of every four international migrants are of working age (20-64 years)

In 2019, 202 million international migrants, equivalent to 74 per cent of the global migrant population, were between the ages of 20 and 64. More than three quarters of international migrants were of working age in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Europe and Northern America.



Prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. These key messages are based on the dataset *International Migrant Stock 2019*, which provides the latest estimates of the number of international migrants by age, sex and origin for all countries and areas of the world. Available at www.unmigration.org.