1. **TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

This chapter provides a brief overview of global and regional patterns and trends in international migration since 1990. It also describes selected characteristics of international migrants and the contribution of migration to overall population change.

1.1. **OVERALL TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

The total estimated number of international migrants in the world (global migrant stock) has increased from 154 million in 1990 to 232 million in 2013, and is expected to continue to rise in the foreseeable future (United Nations, 2013). Although this represents a considerable increase in the global migrant stock, the percentage of international migrants compared to the global population has changed only slightly in the 23-year period, from 2.9 per cent in 1990 to 3.2 per cent in 2013. Between 1990 and 2013, the migrant stock has increased more than twice as fast in countries in more developed regions (by 53 million) as that in countries in less developed regions (by 24 million).

Between 1990 to 2013, the migrant stock born in the global South and residing in the global North has doubled—from 40 million to 82 million. Over the same period, the migrant population from the South and residing in the South grew from 59 million to 82 million.

Despite a more rapid rise in the number of international migrants living in the North in the past two decades, South-South migration was as common as South-North migration (figure 1.1). In 2013, more than one third (36 per cent or 82.3 million) of the global migrant stock originated in the South and was living in the South, and a similar proportion (35 per cent or 81.9 million) of the global migrant stock was born in the South but resided in the North. Further, about one quarter (23 per cent or 53.7 million) of all international migrants in the world were born in the North and resided in the North. The percentage of international migrants who were born in the North but resided in the South was relatively small (only 6 per cent of all international migrants or 13.7 million).

South-North migration is usually driven by income disparities, geographic proximity and historical links such as common language and colonial ties. However, in the case of South-South migration, income differentials are relatively modest, and the role of income seems more complex as proximity and networks are more likely to have a greater impact (Ratha and Shaw, 2007). Among the middle-income countries, for example, Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chile attract migrants from Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru; Malaysia draws migrants

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4 The number of international migrants is defined as the midyear (1 July) estimate of the number of people living in a country other than that in which they were born. If the number of foreign-born was not available, the estimate refers to the number of people living in a country other than that of their citizenship.

5 The World Bank classification of countries into low-income, middle-income and high-income groups is based on gross national income (GNI) per capita (World Bank, n.d.). More information is available from http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications.
from Indonesia; and South Africa attracts people from Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe (Ratha and Shaw, 2007).

Substantial migration also occurs among the low-income countries. For example, Burkina Faso has been a source of labour migration to the neighbouring countries of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana. Moreover, seasonal migration may occur regardless of income disparities. For example, Nepalese farmers cross into north-east India during planting and harvesting seasons (Khadria, 2005). Seasonal migration also occurs in South-North migration, as exemplified by Mexican farm workers moving to the United States of America during the harvest season (Ratha and Shaw, 2007).

1.2. REGIONAL DIFFERENTIALS IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Major regions of the world account for different shares of the global stock of immigrants and emigrants (figure 1.2). For example, in 2013, Europe hosted 31 per cent of the global migrant stock, whereas it was the origin of 25 per cent of all emigrants (of whom 65 per cent were living within Europe). In comparison, Asia and Northern America hosted 31 and 23 per cent of the total migration stock, respectively, while they were the origin of 40 and 2 per cent of all emigrants. Further, the majority of foreign-born from Asia and Oceania (58 per cent each) remained within Asia and Oceania, whereas 71 per cent of foreign-born from Latin America and the Caribbean resided in Northern America.
The origin of international migrants has become increasingly diversified over the past two decades. In 2013, India (14 million), Mexico (13 million), the Russian Federation (11 million), China (9 million) and Bangladesh (8 million) were the top five emigration countries. The number of migrants from China living in Africa, Europe, Northern America and Oceania more than tripled between 1990 and 2013, while the number of migrants from Mexico and the Philippines living outside their country of birth has doubled during the same period. Despite the increased diversification of migratory flows, international migration remains highly concentrated. In 2013, of the 232 million international migrants worldwide, more than half were living in just 10 countries, namely, the United States of America (46 million), the Russian Federation (11 million), Germany (10 million), Saudi Arabia (9 million), the United Arab Emirates (8 million), the United Kingdom (8 million), France (7 million), Canada (7 million), Australia (6 million) and Spain (6 million).

### 1.3. Contribution of Net Migration to Overall Population Change

Over time, a population grows and declines due to natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (immigrants minus emigrants). Migration affects population change directly by adding to or subtracting from the population in countries of destination and origin. It also affects population indirectly by impacting, for example, mortality and fertility in the respective countries. Given the age selectivity of migration, it also affects the age structure of the population in countries of origin and destination. Although natural increase remains the main component of population change in the majority of countries worldwide, net migration has become increasingly important for countries in more developed regions.
In Europe, where the number of deaths has exceeded the number of births since the late 1990s, positive net migration has so far offset population decline (figure 1.3). In both Northern America and Oceania net migration played a positive and important role in population growth over the last 60 years, a trend that is generally expected to continue. Over the same period, the populations of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean continued to grow due to natural increase, however, at a declining rate. Negative net migration was more than offset by natural increase, which will remain the major factor behind population growth in these major regions in the future.

**Figure 1.3. Contribution of natural increase and net migration to population change by major area, 1950–1960 to 2000–2010**


*Note: The graphs included in figure 1.3 have different scales.*
1.4. Characteristics of International Migrants

Migration tends to be selective by age, sex, level of education and other characteristics. Migrants tend to be younger and healthier than their non-migrating counterparts. For instance, in a sample of seven European countries, immigrants between 20 and 29 years of age constituted between one third and one half of all immigrants arriving in 2008 and 2009 (Roig et al., 2008).

At the global level, in 2013, the median age of all international migrants is 38.4 years, compared with 29.2 years in the total population. The median age of migrants is higher than that of the general population due to a smaller proportion of children among migrants. Moreover, in some destination countries newborns are not considered immigrants (principle of *jus soli*). The median age of migrants is higher in countries in more developed regions (42.2 years) than in less developed regions (33.2 years). Examining by region, international migrants living in Africa and Asia tend to be younger (median age of 29.9 and 33.6 years, respectively) than in Europe, Northern America and Oceania (median age is 42.3, 42.2 and 43.4 years, respectively) (figure 1.4).

![Figure 1.4. Median age of international migrants and total population by major area, 2013](http://esa.un.org/unmigration/).

Globally, seven out of ten international migrants are of working age (20 to 64 years) (figure 1.5). Because international migrants tend to comprise higher proportions of working-age persons compared to the overall population, migration contributes to reducing old-age dependency ratios (the number of persons aged 65 years or over divided by the number of persons aged 20 to 64 years) in destination countries. Despite this effect, the old-age dependency ratios of countries in more developed regions are projected to continue to increase.
Among international migrants worldwide, in 2013, approximately half are women—52 per cent in countries in more developed regions and 43 per cent in less developed regions. Since women often live longer than men, they tend to be overrepresented among older migrants. The large labour movements in Europe and the United States of America in the 1960s and 1970s were male dominated and women and children migrated as dependants. Changes in the migratory behaviour of women first appeared in the 1980s and 1990s with the development of service sector employment and, in particular, the growing need for nurses and teachers. Women are now also likely to seek employment opportunities abroad in domains previously dominated by men.

Increasingly, women are migrating on their own or as heads of households and principal wage earners for themselves and their families. For instance, data from labour emigration permits in South and South-East Asia show that some countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, allocate 70 per cent or more of such permits to prospective female migrants.