

## International Migration 2013: Age and Sex Distribution<sup>1</sup>

### 1. International migrants are older than the general population

At the global level, estimates indicate the median age of all international migrants is 38.4 years, compared with 29.2 years in the total population. The higher median age is partly due to a smaller percentage of children among migrants, as newborns in the country of destination are not considered international migrants in many countries. The median age of migrants is higher in the developed regions (42 years) than in the developing regions (33 years).

International migrants living in Africa are the youngest, with a median age of 30. In contrast, migrants are older in Europe, Northern America and Oceania, where the median age is 42.3, 42.2 and 43.4 years, respectively (figure 1).

The median age of international migrants remained constant over the last few years. Aging of the migrant population in destination countries is offset by the inflow of young migrants and the return of migrants to their

countries of origin. In the developed regions, the median age has remained constant for the past few years, while in the developing regions it increased only slightly, from 32.8 in 2010 to 33.2 in 2013.

### 2. The population of working-age among international migrants is significantly higher than among the total population

Some 74 per cent of all international migrants are aged 20 to 64, compared to only 58 per cent of the global population. Globally, the proportion of migrants aged 20 to 64 increased from 67 per cent in 1990 to 74 per cent in 2013. During the same period, the share of the working age population in the total population increased from 51 to 58 per cent.

Currently, more than six out of every ten international migrants of working age reside in the developed regions (figure 2). This distribution has varied little since 2000, when 62 per cent of working-age migrants resided in the North<sup>3</sup>. Female migrants of working age are

Figure 1. Median age of international migrants and total population, 2013<sup>2</sup>

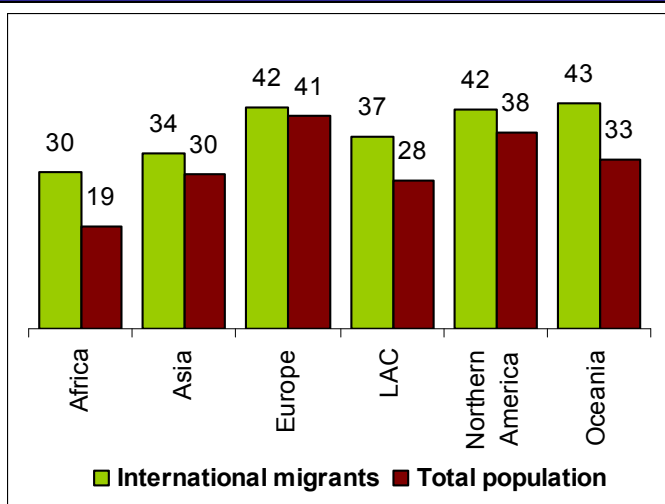
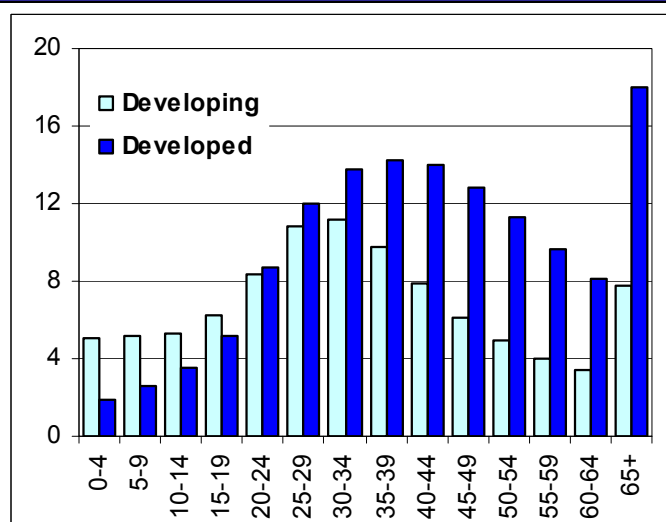


Figure 2. Age distribution of migrants in developing and developed regions, 2013 (millions)



slightly more concentrated in the developed regions than their male counterparts — 51 versus 49 per cent of the global total, respectively, in 2013.

**Between 2000 and 2013, the number of working-age migrants has grown faster in the South than in the North.** In the global South, the number of migrants of working age increased from 46 million in 2000 to 67 million in 2013 (a 44 per cent increase), compared to the global North, where it rose from 76 million in 2000 to 104 million in 2013 (a 37 per cent increase). Women accounted for around half of the increase in the North (52 per cent) and a third of the increase in the South (33 per cent).

### 3. Young migrants are underrepresented among all international migrants

**Globally, 15 per cent of all international migrants are under the age of 20 compared to 35 per cent of the total population.** This difference is due to the fact that most migrants move when they are between the ages of 20 and 34. Moreover, in many countries, children born in destination countries are not considered in international migrants.

**The proportion of young migrants among all migrants continues to decline.** This proportion has declined from 21 per cent in 1990 to 18 per cent in 2000 and further to 15 per cent in 2010. The proportion of young migrants is significantly higher in the developing regions (23 per cent) than in the developed regions (less than 10 per cent) (figure 2).

### 4. There is a larger proportion of older persons among international migrants than in the total population

**Globally, there are close to 26 million migrants aged 65 and over.** Older migrants represent 11 per cent of the total migrant population, as compared to 8 per cent for the world's population. Fifty-six per cent of elderly migrants are women, which is similar to the percentage of persons aged 65 and over globally.

**The proportion of older migrants has declined since 1990.** The share of older migrants in the total migrant population declined from 12 per cent in 1990 to 11 per cent in 2013. The proportion of older migrants was higher for women (13 per cent) than for men (9 per cent).

**Between 1990 and 2013 the number of older migrants grew significantly in the North, but changed only slightly in the South.** The North experienced an increase of almost 7 million older international migrants from 1990

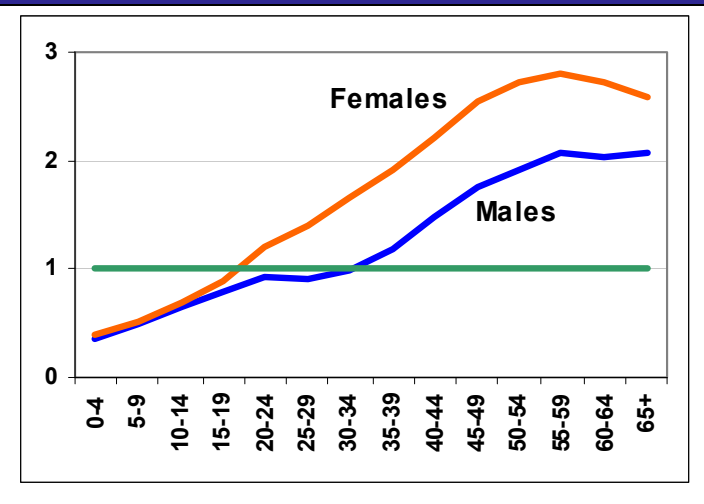
to 2013. During the same period, the number of older migrants in the global South increased only by 0.3 million persons.

### 5. The ratio of migrants living in the North to those living in the South varies significantly by sex and age

**There are about three times as many migrants under 5 years of age living in the South as in the North.** By contrast, there are about 2.5 times as many migrants at ages 55 and above living in the North as in the South (figure 2).

**Starting at age 20, the ratio of migrants living in the North to those living in the South increases much faster with age for women than for men.** The largest difference is for the age group 55-59 (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Ratio of migrants in developed to developing regions by sex and age, 2013



## 6. The proportion of women among international migrants varies considerably across regions and by age

Overall, the ratio of women to men among international migrants declines from 0.9 in the age group 0-4 years, to 0.8 in the age group 30-34. From ages 35-39, the ratio increases (see figure 4).

**In the South, migrant men outnumber migrant women in all age groups except for ages 65 years and older.** In the developing regions, the ratio of women to men declines from 0.9 at ages 0-4 to a low of 0.6 for ages 30-34. It then gradually increases and reaches its highest level — around 1.1 — for ages 65 and over.

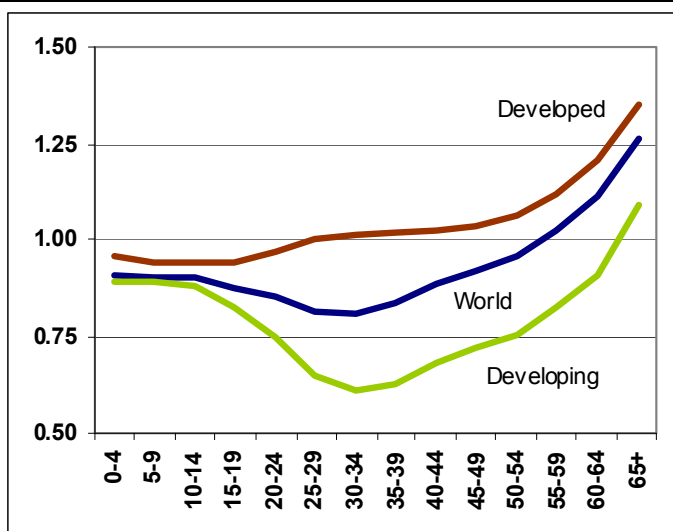
**In the North, women outnumber men in all age groups above 29 years.** In the developed regions, the ratio of women to men in all age groups under age 30 varies between 0.9 and 1.0. It then increases, gradually, to reach 1.3 for ages 65 and over.

## 7. Migrants aged 20 to 34 years comprise a large share of international migrants

Migrants aged 20 to 34 represent 28 per cent of all international migrants, equivalent to 65 million people.

**The share of women among migrants at ages 20 to 34 is relatively small.** In the developed regions, half of all international migrants aged 20 to 34 are women. In contrast, women represent only 40 per cent of all international migrants aged 20 to 34, a reflection of the large number of male labour migrants in Western Asia.

Figure 4. Ratio of women to men by age group for the world and for developed and developing regions, 2013



## 8. The origin and destination of migrants at ages 20 to 34 are markedly different from those of the overall migrant population

**Migrants aged 20 to 34 are more numerous in the South than in the North.** Countries of the South are the origin of 72.3 per cent of migrants in this age group (the “recent migrants”), compared to 70.9 per cent for migrants of all ages. From the destination perspective, the difference is even more notable: migrants aged 20 to 34 who have migrated to the South constitute 47 per cent of the world total, versus 41 per cent for migrants of all ages (figure 5).

**South-South migration is more significant for ages 20 to 34 than for other age groups.** Forty per cent of migrants in this age group have migrated between countries of the South, compared to 36 per cent for migrants across the full age range. Furthermore, South-South migration in this age group represents 56 per cent of migrants who originate in the South, compared to 50 per cent for all migrants, regardless of age.

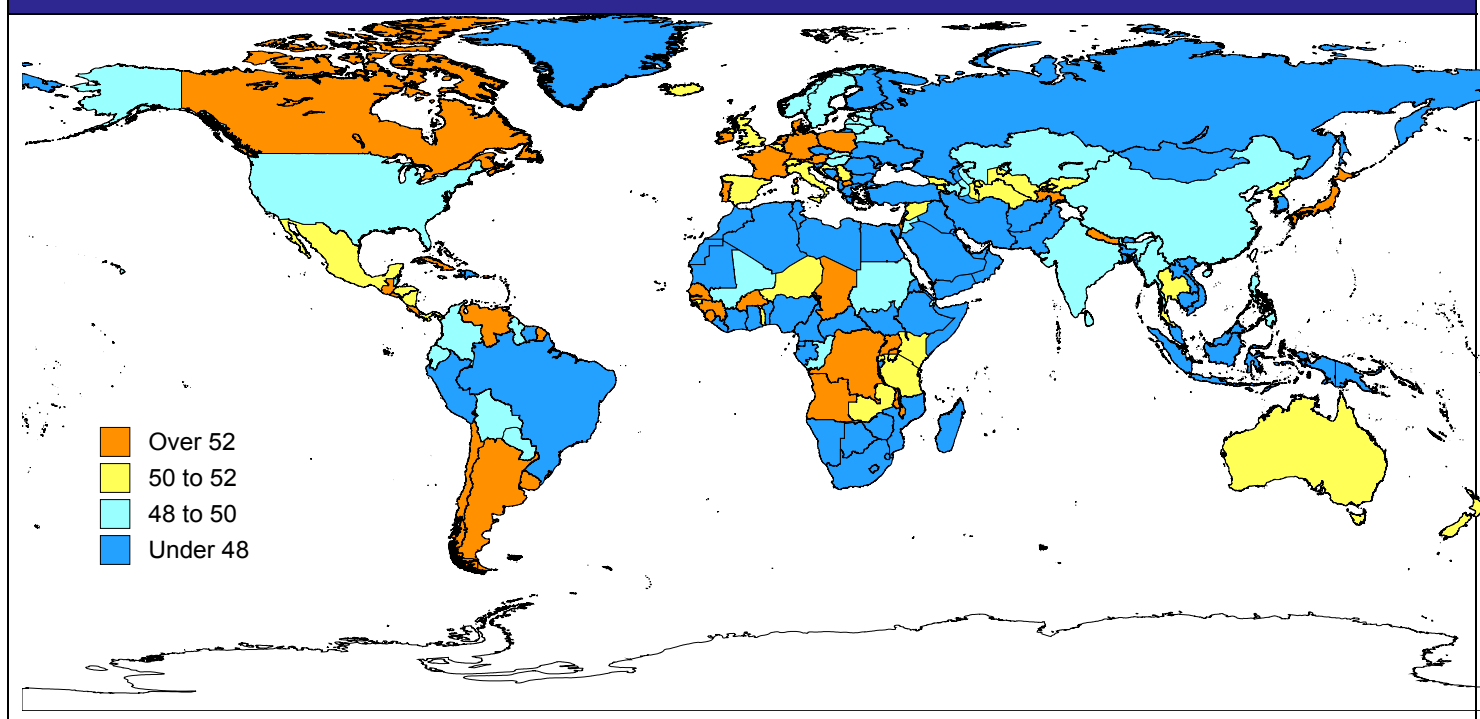
## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The estimates of the migrant stock were prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The data presented here refer to the international migrant stock defined as a mid-year estimate of the number of people living in a country or area other than the one in which they were born or, in the absence of such data, the number of people of foreign citizenship. Most statistics used to estimate the international migrant stock were obtained from population censuses, population registers and nationally representative household surveys. The refugee data used to estimate the migrant stock were based on figures reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The following source should be cited when referring to the data in this fact sheet: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision* (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013). See [www.unmigration.org](http://www.unmigration.org).

<sup>2</sup> “LAC” refers to “Latin America and the Caribbean”.

<sup>3</sup> The term “North” refers to countries or regions traditionally classified for statistical purposes as “developed,” while the term “South” refers to those classified as “developing.” The developed regions include Europe and Northern America plus Australia, New Zealand and Japan. These terms are used for statistical convenience and do not express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

Figure 5. Estimated percentage of female migrants at ages 20 to 34, 2013



Note: The boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. The data refer to the proportion of foreign-born living in a particular country that were born in the major area of birth in which they are currently residing