

The world counted 258 million international migrants in 2017, representing 3.4 per cent of global population

1. Since 2000, the total number of international migrants increased by almost 50 per cent

In 2017, the number of international migrants reached an estimated 258 million persons. During the period from 2000 to 2017, the total number of international migrants increased from 173 to 258 million persons, an increase of 85 million (49 per cent). Half of this increase took place in countries of the developed regions (the “North”), while the other half took place in the developing regions (the “South”).

The role of developing countries in global migration is increasing. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of international migrants residing in the South increased from 40 to 43 per cent of the total worldwide, while the number of international migrants born in the South increased from 67 to 72 per cent.

The number of international migrants is growing faster than the global population. The number of international migrants as a percentage of the global population has grown over time. Currently, international migrants comprise 3.4 per cent of the global population, compared to 2.8 per cent in the year 2000. In the North, almost 12 of every 100 inhabitants are international migrants, compared to only two of every 100 inhabitants in the South. Given the differential growth rates of the total population between the developed and the developing regions, international migrants as a share of the total population are likely to continue to grow faster in the North than in the South.

2. Asia and Europe host the largest numbers of international migrants

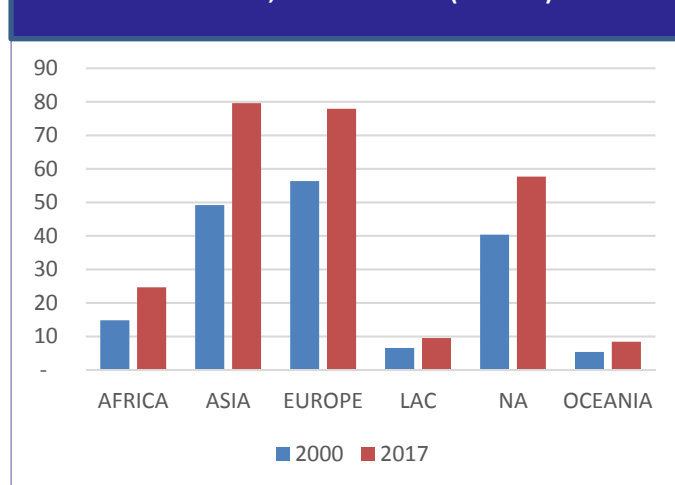
Six of every ten international migrants reside in Asia or Europe. In 2017, Asia hosted the largest number of international migrants (80 million), followed by Europe (78 million) and Northern America (58 million). Africa (25

million), Latin America and the Caribbean (10 million) and Oceania (8 million) combined hosted around 43 million, or 17 per cent, of the global total (figure 1). Between 2000 and 2017, the global share of international migrants residing in Asia increased from 29 to 31 per cent, while Europe’s share declined from 33 to 30 per cent.

3. Africa has experienced the fastest increase in the number of international migrants

Since 2000, the number of international migrants in Africa has increased by 67 per cent. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of international migrants in Africa increased from 15 million to 25 million (figure 1). As a result, the percentage of all international migrants residing in Africa increased from 9 per cent in 2000 to 10 per cent in 2017. Asia was the region recording the second largest relative increase in the migrant population (62 per cent), followed by Oceania (56 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (44 per cent), Northern America (43 per cent) and Europe (38 per cent).

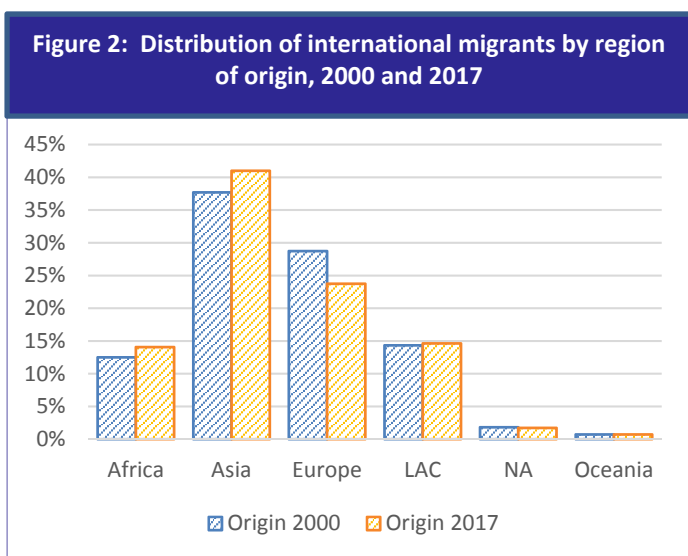
Figure 1: Number of international migrants by region of destination, 2000 and 2017 (millions)



Note: NA = Northern America; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean

4. Asia and Europe are the top regions of origin for international migrants

Two-third of all international migrants were born in Asia or Europe. In 2017, Asia was the region of origin of an estimated 106 million international migrants, representing 41 per cent of the global total. Europe was the source of the second largest number of international migrants (61 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (38 million), Africa (36 million), Northern America (4 million) and Oceania (2 million).¹ Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of international migrants originating in Asia increased from 38 to 41 (figure 2). During the same period, the share of international migrants born in Europe fell from 29 to 24 per cent, while the proportions originating in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean remained stable at 14 and 15 per cent, respectively. Only about 2.5 per cent of international migrants worldwide were born in Northern America or Oceania.



Note: NA = Northern America; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean

5. Most international migration takes place between countries in the same region

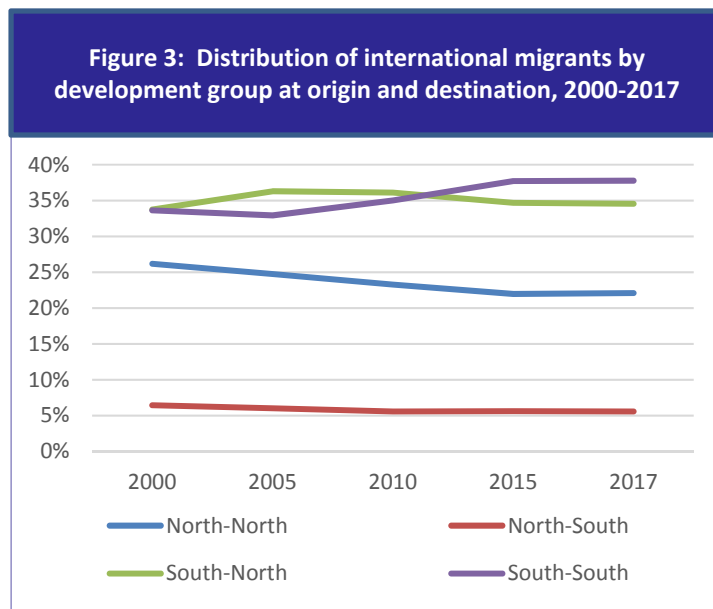
Two thirds of all European-born international migrants reside in Europe. In 2017, of the 61 million international migrants born in Europe, 41 million resided in Europe. By this metric, Asia was the region with the second highest level of intra-regional mobility (60 per cent), followed by Oceania (58 per cent) and Africa (53 per cent). Northern America (27 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (16 per cent) are the only regions for which a majority of out-migrants reside in another region.

¹ The origin of about 11 million international migrants, representing 4 per cent of the total number of international migrants, is not available. Thus, the origin data presented here are based on

In Africa and Asia, 80 per cent of all international migrants were born in their region of residence. In 2017, four of every five international migrants in Africa and Asia were born in the region where they now reside. For Latin America and the Caribbean, more than six in every ten international migrants were born in the same region, while in Europe just over half of all international migrants originated in Europe. In contrast, most international migrants residing in Oceania (87 per cent) and Northern America (98 per cent) were born in another region.

6. More international migrants from the South reside in the South than in the North

More than a third of all international migrants have moved from one developing country to another. In 2017, 38 per cent of all international migrants were born in a country of the less developed regions and were residing in another developing country (“South-South migrants”), while 35 per cent were born in the South but residing in the North (“South-North migrants”). About one in five international migrants were born in the North and residing in the North (“North-North migrants”), while 6 per cent were born in the North but residing in the South (“North-South migrants”) (see figure 3).



7. Although migration is a global phenomenon, most movements take place within a limited set of countries

The top 10 countries of destination host about half of all international migrants. The United States is the leading country of destination, hosting 49.8 million

information for 96 per cent of the target population, who are treated as being representative of all international migrants.

international migrants in 2017, or 19 per cent of the world's total. Saudi Arabia and Germany hosted the second and third largest numbers of migrants (12.2 million each), followed by the Russian Federation (11.7 million), the United Kingdom (8.8 million), the United Arab Emirates (8.3 million), France and Canada (7.9 million each), Australia (7.0 million) and Spain (5.9 million). Between 2000 and 2017, the countries reporting the largest relative increase in the number of international migrants included Spain (260 per cent), the United Arab Emirates (240 per cent) and Saudi Arabia (130 per cent).

The top 10 countries of origin account for one third of all international migrants. In 2017, with 16.6 million persons living abroad, India was the leading country of origin of international migrants. Migrants from Mexico constituted the second largest "diaspora" in the world (13.0 million), followed by those from the Russian Federation (10.6 million), China (10.0 million), Bangladesh (7.5 million), the Syrian Arab Republic (6.9 million), Pakistan (6.0 million), Ukraine (5.9 million), the Philippines (5.7 million) and the United Kingdom (4.9 million). Since 2000, countries experiencing the largest increase in their diaspora populations were the Syrian Arab Republic (872 per cent), India (108 per cent) and the Philippines (85 per cent).

Ten per cent of all international migrants have moved between five pairs of countries. In 2017, 12.7 million international migrants from Mexico resided in the United States, accounting for 5 per cent of all international migrants. Other significant migrant populations, each numbering around 3.3 million, are Indians residing in the United Arab Emirates, Russians residing in the Ukraine, Ukrainians residing in the Russian Federation and Syrians residing in Turkey. Combined, these five "bilateral corridors" account for almost 26 million international migrants, or 10 per cent of the global total. Further, just 23 bilateral corridors account for a quarter of all international migrants in the world today.

8. Despite the recent sharp increase in numbers, refugees represent a small share of all migrants

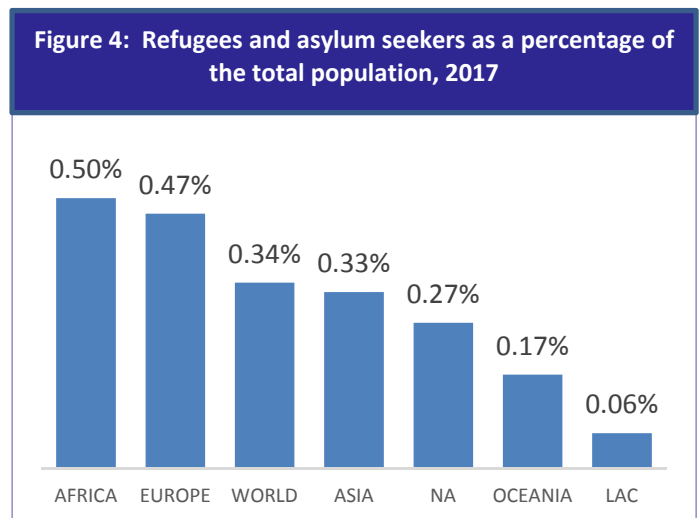
Refugees and asylum seekers constitute roughly 10 per cent of all international migrants. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of refugees and asylum seekers increased from 16 to 26 million, and their share of the total number of international migrants increased from 9 to 10 per cent.²

Four of every five refugees or asylum seekers are hosted by countries in the developing regions. In 2017, countries of the global South hosted 21 million refugees or asylum seekers, representing 83 per cent of the global total. In 2017, Asia hosted the largest refugee population (14.7 million), followed by Africa (6.3 million), Europe (3.5 million), Northern America (970,000), Latin America and the Caribbean (420,000) and Oceania (70,000).

The top 10 countries of asylum host more than half of the world's refugees. In 2017, the 10 leading countries of asylum hosted 62 per cent of the global refugee population, with the largest numbers in Turkey (3.1 million), Jordan (2.9 million) and the State of Palestine (2.2 million).

The share of refugees in the total migrant population varies greatly by development level. In 2017, refugees accounted for just 3 per cent of all international migrants in the North. In the South, however, almost a fifth of international migrants are refugees (19 per cent), and in the least developed countries, refugees constitute more than a third of all international migrants (36 per cent).

One in every 300 persons worldwide is a refugee. In 2017, about 0.3 per cent of the global population was a refugee. As a fraction of the total population, Africa hosts the largest number of refugees (0.5 per cent), while Latin America and the Caribbean host the smallest number (0.06 per cent) (see figure 4). In 2017, the countries with the highest percentage of refugees in the total population included the State of Palestine (44 per cent), Jordan (30 per cent) and Lebanon (26 per cent).



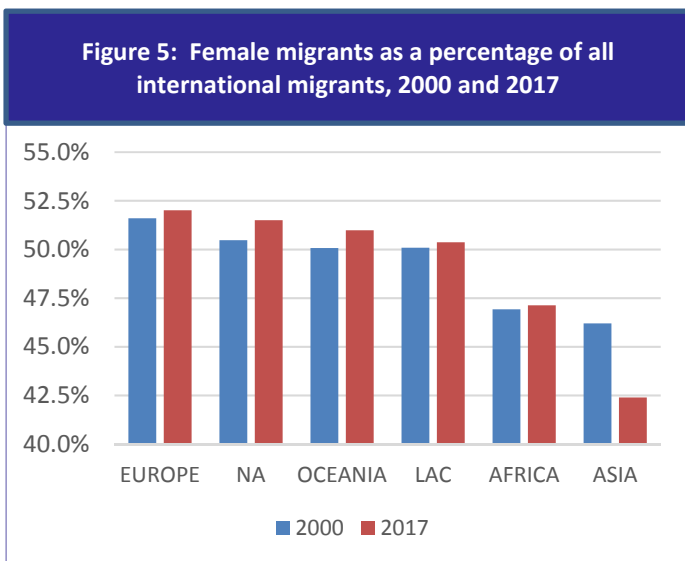
Note: NA = Northern America; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean

² All refugee figures cited here include asylum seekers.

9. While almost half of all international migrants are women, important regional variations exist

Female migrants outnumber male migrants in the North, whereas male migrants outnumber female migrants in the South. In 2017, 48 per cent of all international migrants were women, but the percentage of female migrants varied significantly by region, ranging from 44 per cent in the developing regions to 52 per cent in the developed regions. Although female migrants outnumber male migrants in Europe (52.0 per cent), Northern America (51.5 per cent), Oceania (51 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (50.4 per cent), male migrants are more numerous than their female counterparts in Africa (47.1 per cent) and Asia (42.4 per cent) (figure 5).

Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of female migrants increased in all regions except Asia. The increasing percentage of female migrants in most regions may be due, in part, to population ageing combined with greater female life expectancy. The declining share of female migrants in Asia reflects a sharp rise in the demand for migrant workers in construction and related sectors in Western Asia.

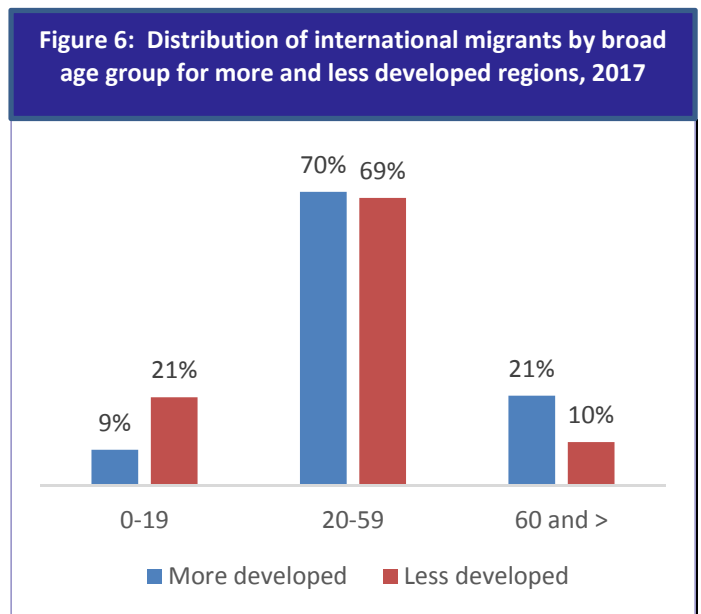


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10. A large majority of migrants are adults of working age

Globally, seven of every ten international migrants are adults of working age. Both in the developed and the developing regions, about 70 per cent of all international migrants are between 20 and 59 years of age (figure 6).

Older migrants outnumber younger migrants in the North, whereas younger migrants outnumber older migrants in the South. In the South, 21 per cent of all international migrants are under the age of 20, which is more than double the share of migrants aged 60 or over (10 per cent). In contrast, the fraction of the migrant population aged 60 or over in the North (21 per cent) is more than double the share of migrants under the age of 20 (9 per cent).



SOURCES

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 revision* (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2017).