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WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2026

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- Top: Three hundred and thirty-seven people, including 121 children, arrived in Toronto, Canada, accompanied by three IOM escorts. IOM assisted the resettlement of 20,000 Afghan refugees to Canada since August 2021. © IOM 2022/Stephen UHRANEY
- Middle: The Arbat area – 38 km north-west of Port Sudan – was severely impacted due to the collapse of a dam's spillway on 25th August 2024, after heavy rains. © IOM 2024/Philippa LOWE
- Bottom: People from Thailand and Myanmar regularly cross the border from Thailand's Mae Sot to Myanmar's Myawaddy by boats departing from Tha Huan Yang Pier in Tak province. © IOM 2018/Visarut SANKHAM

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WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2026

This volume is the result of a highly collaborative venture involving a multitude of partners and contributors under the direction of the editors. The *World Migration Report 2026* project commenced in September 2024 and culminated in the launch of the report in May 2026 by the Director General.

The findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM or its Member States.

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All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the data referred to in this report, including through data verification. We regret, however, any data errors that may remain. Unless otherwise stated, this report does not refer to data or events after December 2025. This report has been produced without generative AI tools.

The stories behind the photographs can be found on page v.

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Chapter 1 Bogota's Mayoral Office runs the Orientation and Assistance Point (POA) in Bogota's bus station where humanitarian partners like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) offer services to Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Bogota, Colombia. © IOM 2019/ Muse MOHAMMED

Part I Venezuelans cross the Puente Internacional Simón Bolívar, the busiest border point connecting the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Colombia. Approximately 50,000 Venezuelans cross into Colombia through the three official border crossings in this Department daily. © IOM 2019/ Muse MOHAMMED

Chapter 2 A scene from the Bushagara camp shows families going about their daily activities amidst rows of shelters. Despite the difficult conditions, life continues and families make the best of their temporary homes. Bulengo, Democratic Republic of the Congo. © IOM 2024/ Antoine LEMONNIER

Chapter 3 In Somalia, there are an estimated 2.9 million people internally displaced due to conflict and natural hazards. Most of them are living in informal settlements, often without a land tenure agreement and in precarious conditions. © IOM 2021

Part II View of daily migrants crossing through one of the driest places in the world, trying to irregularly cross the border from the Plurinational State of Bolivia into Chile. Many of those who arrive on foot braving the Atacama Desert are Venezuelans looking for a better life. © IOM 2012/Richard ARANA

Chapter 4 In Serbia, IOM and UNDP work together under the Swiss-funded project "Making Migration Work for Sustainable Development". Young people and Roma returnees in local self-government of Prokuplje engaged in trainings for skills development and future employment with companies with whom a cooperation agreement is in place. Prokuplje, Serbia. © IOM 2022/Beyond Borders Media

Chapter 5 Luay, his wife and four children prepare to be resettled to France where they hope to find better medical care for their son, who suffers from a medical condition and struggles to walk. The Syrian refugee family is looking forward to a new life. Beirut, Lebanon. © IOM 2019/Angela WELLS

Chapter 6 A worker is laying the bricks of a shelter for people displaced by a climatic disaster. A woman brings a cement bucket. Bujumbura Mairie, Burundi. © IOM 2024/Alexander DEE

Chapter 7

The Bentiu Protection of Civilians site in South Sudan was established during the country's civil war to shelter people fleeing violence. Over the years, it has become one of the largest displacement sites in the country, hosting tens of thousands of internally displaced persons. © IOM 2024/Muse MOHAMMED

Chapter 8

Jasim looks at the missing roof where a bomb fell during the large scale operation to liberate the city from ISIS. He was hiding in the corner with 11 other relatives when the explosion caused the roof to collapse. Mosul, Iraq. © IOM 2018/Muse MOHAMMED

Appendices

Kateness migrated from Malawi to South Africa in search for better opportunities when she saw her cousin taking that same path. However once there, she didn't found what she hoped for.

Having reached out to IOM, she was assisted with return and reintegration support. She attended business trainings and together with her mother she now runs a little castor oil production business in Blantyre.

Photos have been taken in the framework of the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, funded by the European Union, and its audio-visual production activity on return and sustainable reintegration. © IOM 2022/Beyond Borders Media

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Aerial view of Monterrey City in Nuevo León, Mexico. © IOM 2022/Alejandro CARTAGENA

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Foreword

Migration is central to the lives of millions of people worldwide. Yet public discourse too often reduces this complex human reality to simplified narratives that obscure its benefits, its challenges and, above all, its humanity. In an era of heightened polarization, balanced and evidence-based analysis is essential to ensure that migration governance is grounded in reality rather than rhetoric.

In this context, the *World Migration Report* remains more essential than ever. As IOM's flagship publication, it provides rigorous analysis of the major shifts shaping migration and mobility globally. Its purpose is to equip policymakers, practitioners and the wider public with reliable knowledge to better understand these dynamics and respond effectively. As the United Nations migration agency, IOM has a responsibility to translate complexity into accessible and credible analysis that supports informed, balanced and rights-based decision-making.

This year's edition carries particular significance. In 2026, IOM marks its seventy-fifth anniversary – a milestone reflecting decades of operational engagement, policy leadership and partnership in support of people on the move. For twenty-five years, the *World Migration Report* has been central to that effort, strengthening global understanding of migration's evolving dynamics and contributing authoritative analysis to international discourse. Together, these anniversaries underscore both IOM's enduring commitment and the continued importance of evidence in shaping effective migration governance.

The *World Migration Report 2026* is released at a time of profound global disruption. Mobility and displacement are shaped by multiple and often interacting drivers that influence how and why people move. Conflicts and violence continue to displace millions, while environmental degradation and climate change are transforming mobility patterns across regions. Rapid technological transformation is altering labour markets and governance systems, creating new opportunities alongside new risks, including for the protection of human rights. These dynamics increasingly converge with economic conditions, demographic change and fragile governance, contributing to a migration landscape that is highly complex, interconnected and politically contested. At the same time, many people around the world face a widening gap between aspirations for mobility and the capabilities or opportunities to move in a safe, orderly and regular way.

The scale of current developments is striking. By the end of 2024, more than 83 million people were internally displaced – the highest number recorded in the modern era. Global displacement exceeded 120 million people, including refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons. In that year alone, there were an estimated 65.8 million forced movements of people within the borders of their country, the majority linked to disasters. These figures illustrate both the magnitude of contemporary displacement and the growing pressures affecting people on the move.

At the same time, long-term trends in international migration remain relatively stable. By mid-2024, there were an estimated 304 million international migrants globally, representing 3.7 per cent of the world's population. While the absolute number continues to grow, the overall proportion has increased only gradually over time, confirming that most people still live in the country in which they were born.

Yet public debate often focuses disproportionately on irregular migration, which represents only a small share of global mobility but can create serious protection concerns for migrants and complex policy dilemmas for States. Addressing irregular migration – while expanding safe and regular pathways – remains essential to reducing risks for migrants and supporting effective migration governance.

Migration also remains a powerful driver of development. Remittances reached an estimated 905 billion US dollars globally in 2024, including 685 billion dollars to low- and middle-income countries, providing vital support to households and communities and often acting as a buffer in times of crisis. Remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries now exceed official development assistance and foreign direct investment combined – a clear illustration of migration's strategic contribution to development.

The report reaffirms IOM's commitment to uphold fundamental rights and to support migrants most in need. This commitment is reflected in the three priority areas of IOM's Strategic Plan 2024–2028: saving lives and protecting people on the move; driving solutions to displacement; and facilitating pathways for regular migration. In a context of enduring displacement, where pathways remain inaccessible for many and irregular migration exposes migrants to severe risks, principled and practical governance is essential.

This edition presents global and regional data alongside balanced analysis of emerging issues. It is intended to support policymakers, practitioners, researchers, teachers, students and the media, and to contribute to informed debate and better decision-making. For a quarter of a century, the World Migration Report has helped shape global migration discourse by providing the evidence needed to understand migration in all its diversity and complexity. We trust that this report will continue to strengthen collective efforts to ensure that migration is safe, orderly and regular – and inform thoughtful and effective approaches to migration management worldwide.

Amy E. Pope
Director General

MARIE MCAULIFFE
PABLO CERIANI CERNADAS

1 REPORT OVERVIEW: MIGRATION DURING A TIME OF INCREASING DISRUPTION AND DISTORTION[1,2]

Introduction

It has been two years since the release of the *World Migration Report 2024*, which underscored how migration continues to be part of the solution in a rapidly changing world while key challenges persist. Since then, the global context for migration and displacement has been marked by deepening disruption and the distortion of facts and evidence on migration. This is occurring within a context of geopolitical tensions, technological acceleration, the curtailment of migrants' rights and environmental degradation, all of which are interacting with demographic change, uneven development, humanitarian crises and tightening fiscal space, ultimately creating a complex landscape in which migration opportunities and challenges are being reshaped simultaneously.

Hardening geopolitics continue to manifest in protracted and new conflicts, strategic rivalry between major powers and regional instability. Over the course of the last two years, large-scale conflicts such as those in the Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza and other parts of the Middle East and Africa have had profound implications for human security, multilateralism and international law, while generating significant human displacement. For example, data show that more than 83 million people were living in internal displacement by the end of 2024, the highest number ever recorded and more than double the figure reported just over a decade ago.[3] At the same time, migration has increasingly been instrumentalized in domestic and regional politics, including through the deliberate use of migration and migrants as a tool in electoral campaigns and geopolitical bargaining.

Environmental disruption is no longer a future risk but a central feature of contemporary mobility. Successive years of record-breaking temperatures, droughts, wildfires and storms have been accompanied by rising disaster-related displacement. The current estimates indicate that there were around 65.8 million internal displacements in 2024 alone, 45.8 million of them associated with disasters and 20.1 million with conflict and violence.[4] Disaster displacements are now occurring across an expanding range of countries and are increasingly shaped by the interaction of climate change, environmental degradation, poverty and inadequate infrastructure. These dynamics reinforce earlier assessments that climate change and environmental stressors are amplifying existing vulnerabilities and contributing to both sudden-onset and slow-onset forms of migration, displacement and immobility.

Technological change has continued apace, often outstripping regulatory frameworks and institutional capacity. The last report highlighted the rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools and the risks that accelerating digitalization could deepen existing "digital divides" in migration governance and access to mobility. Since then, AI-enabled systems have spread further across sectors, including border management, visa processing, identity management and labour market intermediation. While these tools may offer efficiency gains and new possibilities

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2 The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (December 2025).

3 IDMC, 2025.

4 Ibid.

for facilitating regular migration, they also raise important questions about bias and other human rights concerns,[5] accountability, data protection and the impacts of automation on labour demand in migrant-dense sectors. In 2025, for example, we witnessed major multinational companies engage in major staffing level reductions due to AI uptake.[6] Plus, uneven uptake that is largely concentrated in high-income countries with robust digital infrastructure risks widening disparities between States and within societies, potentially compounding the structural disadvantages already experienced by least developed countries and marginalized communities.[7]

Demographic change and development trajectories are also central to understanding the current moment of disruption. Many high-income and some middle-income countries are confronting population ageing, labour shortages and fiscal pressures that place renewed emphasis on migration as a potential source of workers and taxpayers. In contrast, a number of low- and lower-middle-income countries are experiencing rapid population growth, a "youth bulge" and urbanization, often in contexts of limited decent work opportunities and constrained public finances. These divergent demographic trends intersect with persistent inequalities between and within countries, shaping both the aspirations and the constraints that people face when considering migration. Long-term data continue to show that, despite the increase in the absolute number of international migrants over recent decades, cross-border migration remains the exception rather than the rule, with most people living in the country in which they were born.[8]

It is within this wider landscape of overlapping and interacting disruptions – geopolitical, technological, environmental, demographic, developmental and humanitarian – that this *World Migration Report 2026* examines recent developments in migration.

What has happened in migration?

A great deal has happened in migration in the last two years since the release of the *World Migration Report 2024*. As in previous periods, migration and displacement have been profoundly affected by conflict, violence, disasters, inequality and economic uncertainty, even as long-term patterns of migration and remittance flows have remained remarkably stable.

Humanitarian crises, development setbacks and tightening budgets add an additional layer of disruption. Global needs have reached record levels, driven by protracted conflicts, economic shocks, climate-related disasters and public health emergencies. Yet official development assistance and humanitarian funding have come under increasing strain, with many appeals significantly underfunded. In this context, the Humanitarian Reset process seeks to re-examine how humanitarian action is financed and delivered, with greater emphasis on anticipatory approaches, stronger links between humanitarian, development and peace efforts, and increased leadership by affected States and communities. This reset continues to unfold in a fiscal environment where overall resources for both development and humanitarian response are stagnating or declining in real terms, heightening concerns about unmet needs and the sustainability of support for migrants, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).

5 OHCHR and University of Essex, 2023.

6 Dikshit et al., 2025.

7 Beduschi and McAuliffe, 2021; McAuliffe, 2023.

8 UN DESA, 2025.

Major migration and displacement events have continued to cause hardship, trauma and loss of life. Conflicts in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and others have persisted or escalated, compounding the impacts of additional crises such as the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza. By the end of 2024, over 120 million people were living in displacement worldwide, including refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and others in need of international protection.[9] This figure underscores the scale and persistence of displacement, as well as the difficulties many people face in achieving durable solutions.

Climate- and weather-related disasters have become more frequent and severe, contributing to record numbers of internal displacements. In 2024, there were an estimated 65.8 million internal displacements worldwide, of which disasters accounted for around 45.8 million – the highest level on record – and conflict and violence for 20.1 million. While many of these movements were associated with short-term evacuations, they nonetheless highlight the growing role of environmental disruption in shaping mobility, often in combination with other drivers such as poverty, weak infrastructure and governance challenges. These dynamics echo earlier findings that disaster- and climate-related displacements have been rising across multiple regions, including Asia, the Americas and Africa.

Against this backdrop of heightened disruption, long-term data show that international migration has continued to grow, though at a gradual pace. There were around 304 million international migrants worldwide by mid-2024, equivalent to 3.7 per cent of the global population, compared with around 275 million (3.5%) in 2020 and a little over 250 million (3.3%) in 2015.[10] Despite the increase in absolute numbers, the share of international migrants in the world's population has risen only incrementally over the past half-century, confirming that most people continue to reside in their country of birth and that internal migration remains far more common than cross-border movement.

At the same time, international migration and mobility remain important drivers of development, innovation and resilience. International remittances, which were estimated at USD 905 billion globally in 2024 – including USD 685 billion to low- and middle-income countries – continue to provide vital support to households and communities, often acting as a buffer in times of crisis.[11] Migration also contributes to skills circulation, entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer, with impacts that extend well beyond immediate economic indicators. These positive dimensions coexist with serious challenges, including irregular migration, human trafficking and exploitation, constrained access to regular pathways and growing xenophobia in many societies.

As flagged by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the United Nations Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW), in their recently adopted joint general recommendations and comments on guidelines for eradicating xenophobia,[12] evidence indicates an "escalating impact of xenophobia on the rights of migrants and others perceived as such, through narratives that unfairly target migrants as responsible for social, economic and political problems. Such narratives have been used to justify laws, policies and practices that curtail the human rights of migrants, perpetuating a vicious circle of harm".[13]

Politically, migration has remained highly salient and, in some contexts, increasingly contentious. The previous edition of the World Migration Report noted the growing use of migration as a political tool in democratic systems,

9 IDMC, 2025; UNHCR, 2025.

10 UN DESA, 2025.

11 Ratha et al., 2024.

12 CERD and CMW, 2025.

13 Ibid., paragraph 3.

including in election campaigns and inter-State relations, and a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in parts of Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. These trends have persisted, with migration frequently framed in public debates through the lens of security, identity or economic competition, even as many economies continue to depend on migrant workers across a range of sectors.

Misinformation and disinformation are increasingly prevalent in migration debates globally, facilitated in part by social media as well as generative AI, though with the acknowledgement that tools to counter such phenomena are increasingly being developed and deployed via AI technologies.[14] At the same time, some States and regional organizations have sought to expand or drastically refine regular migration pathways, highlighting the ongoing tension between restrictive and facilitative approaches, including at the expense of economic growth as well as migrants' rights. Voluntary and involuntary returns have also become more prominent features of some migration systems, and a growing body of 2025 analysis has questioned whether specific return practices are compatible with applicable legal frameworks and international law in certain contexts.[15]

Important developments have also occurred in the way migration is measured and governed. In 2025, the United Nations Statistical Commission endorsed revised Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and Temporary Mobility, updating the 1998 standards to reflect changes in migration patterns and data systems.[16] The revised recommendations clarify key concepts, distinguish more clearly between long-term migration and various forms of temporary mobility, and encourage the use of new data sources. Their implementation is expected, over time, to improve the comparability and quality of international migration statistics, thereby supporting more informed policymaking.

Taken together, these developments suggest that the period since the *World Migration Report 2024* has been one of intensified and overlapping disruptions rather than of structural break. The scale and complexity of displacement have continued to grow, particularly in contexts of protracted conflict and environmental stress, while long-term trends in international migration and remittances have remained relatively resilient. Understanding how these dynamics interact, and how policy, practice and international cooperation can become more responsive, is at the heart of the analysis that follows in this report.

The *World Migration Report* series

The first World Migration Report was published 26 years ago, initially as a one-off report designed to increase the understanding of migration by policymakers and the general public. It was conceived at a time when the effects of globalization were being felt in many parts of the world and in a multitude of ways. Indeed, the first report states that part of its genesis was due to the effects of globalization on migration patterns, and that the report therefore "looks at the increasingly global economy which has led to an unprecedented influx of newcomers in many countries".[17]

[14] Culloty et al., 2021; McAuliffe and Martin Galan, forthcoming.

[15] UNAMA, 2025; ECRE, 2025; DHS, 2025.

[16] See Chapter 2 of this report for discussion.

[17] IOM, 2000.

Table 1 provides a summary of key statistics reported in the first edition (*World Migration Report 2000*), as compared to this current edition. It shows that while some aspects have stayed fairly constant – the overall proportion of the world's population that are migrants – other aspects have changed dramatically. International remittances, for example, have grown from an estimated USD 128 billion to USD 905 billion, underscoring the salience of international migration as a driver of development. Also of note in Table 1 is the rise in international migrants globally, but more strikingly, the rise in the number of refugees and IDPs, all the while remaining small proportions of the world's population.

Table 1. Key facts and figures from *World Migration Report 2000* and *World Migration Report 2026*

	2000 report	2026 report
Estimated number of international migrants	150 million	304 million
Estimated proportion of world population who are migrants	2.8%	3.7%
Estimated proportion of female international migrants	47.5%	48.0%
Region with the highest proportion of international migrants	Oceania	Oceania
Country with the highest proportion of international migrants	United Arab Emirates	Qatar
Number of migrant workers	–	167.7 million
Global international remittances (USD)	128 billion	905 billion
Number of refugees	14 million	36.9 million
Number of internally displaced persons	21 million	83.4 million

Sources: See IOM, 2000 and the present edition of the report for sources.

Notes: The dates of the data estimates in the table may be different to the report publishing date (refer to the reports for more detail on dates of estimates); refer to Chapter 3 of this report for regional breakdowns.

The contribution of the *World Migration Report 2000* to migration policy as well as migration studies was timely, and its success heralded the World Migration Report series. Since 2000, 13 world migration reports have been produced by IOM, and the report continues to focus on making a relevant, sound and evidence-based contribution that increases the understanding of migration by policymakers, practitioners, researchers and the general public. To support this objective, the series was refined in 2016, moving away from a single theme for each edition to being a global reference report for a wider audience. Each edition now has two parts, comprising:

- Part I. Key data and information on migration and migrants.
- Part II. Balanced, evidence-based analysis of complex and emerging migration issues.

World Migration Report 2026

This edition builds on recent editions by providing updated migration statistics at the global and regional levels. Part I, "key data and information on migration", includes separate chapters on global migration trends and patterns, as well as on regional dimensions and developments. These two chapters have been produced institutionally by IOM, drawing primarily on analyses by IOM experts, practitioners and officials around the world, based on data from a wide range of relevant organizations. The five chapters in Part II are authored by applied and academic researchers working on migration, including IOM researchers. They cover a range of "complex and emerging migration issues", including:

- Foundational issues in migration and development.
- Myths and realities of regular migration pathways.
- Local-level responses to climate migration and displacement.
- Internal displacement dimensions and developments.
- Disability and migration.

While the choice of these topics is necessarily selective and subjective, all the chapters in Part II of this report are directly relevant to some of the most prominent and important debates about migration in the world today. Many of these topics lie at the heart of the conundrums that face policymakers as they seek to formulate effective, proportionate and constructive responses to complex public policy issues related to migration. Accordingly, the chapters aim to inform current and future policy deliberations and discussions by providing a clear identification of the key issues, a critical overview of relevant research and analysis, and a discussion of the implications for future research and policymaking. The chapters are not meant to be prescriptive, in the sense of advocating particular policy "solutions" – especially as the immediate context is an important determinant of policy settings – but to be informative and helpful in what can be highly contested debates.

Part I

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the latest available global data and trends on international migrants (stocks) and international migration (flows). It also provides a discussion of particular migrant groups – namely, migrant workers, international students, refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs – as well as of international remittances. In addition, the chapter refers to the existing body of IOM programmatic data, particularly on missing migrants, assisted voluntary returns and reintegration, resettlement and displacement tracking. While these data are generally not global or representative, they can provide insights into changes that have occurred in relevant IOM programming and operations worldwide. Following the global overview, Chapter 3 provides a discussion of key regional dimensions of migration. The discussion focuses on six world regions as identified by the United Nations: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania. For each of these regions, the analysis includes an overview and discussion of key migration and displacement statistics.

Part II

Chapter 4 – Migration and development: a strategic global asset at risk

- This chapter argues that international migration is a strategic global asset for sustainable development as a global public good that is increasingly at risk. Drawing on long-term evidence, it shows how migrants and diasporas drive development through large and resilient remittance flows, investment, knowledge and skills transfer, and wider forms of civic and political engagement, often outperforming other actors in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. It traces how these contributions are now embedded in global financing for development frameworks and illustrates through regional case studies how migration catalyses development in diverse contexts, from managed climate-related mobility in small island developing States to humanitarian–development–peace approaches in the Horn of Africa.
- The chapter outlines key policy directions to safeguard migration as a strategic asset: lowering remittance costs and leveraging them more effectively; promoting brain circulation through skills partnerships and circular migration; strengthening diaspora institutions; grounding migration policies in human rights and social protection; and investing in better data and evidence-based governance.

Chapter 5 – Rethinking regular migration pathways: myths, realities and opportunities

- This chapter examines how "regular migration pathways" are defined, governed and experienced in practice, challenging dominant myths that they are uniformly open, that they inevitably fuel more migration, or that closing them will "solve" irregular migration. It shows that regular pathways – for work, study, family, protection, return and regularization – have become increasingly selective and unequally distributed across regions, countries and groups, often reflecting broader inequalities in human development, visa regimes and geopolitical relations.
- Drawing on global evidence and regional case studies, the chapter highlights how access to regular status can expand migrants' access to rights, health, labour market opportunities and ability to remit and invest, with positive effects for both origin and destination communities, while restrictive policies tend to displace rather than reduce mobility, pushing people into riskier, more precarious and irregular journeys. It argues that well-designed, accessible and rights-based regular pathways – including regularization measures – are central to good migration governance, to reducing exploitation and irregularity, and to realizing the development potential of migration, provided they are coupled with broader measures for social, economic and legal inclusion.

Chapter 6 – Addressing climate mobility: the role of local and community action

- The chapter examines how climate change is reshaping human mobility worldwide, through both sudden disasters and slow-onset degradation. It argues that responses remain too reactive, crisis driven and disconnected from long-term adaptation planning. It highlights the complexity of the climate–migration nexus, addressing displacement, voluntary and involuntary migration, and "trapped" populations who cannot move. While global data and projections show rising climate-related mobility, they often miss local realities, especially for marginalized groups. The chapter therefore emphasizes the need for disaggregated, locally grounded evidence to design nuanced, context-specific strategies that link climate action, development, disaster risk reduction, social protection and migration governance.
- Against this backdrop, the chapter argues that local governments, communities, Indigenous peoples, diasporas, civil society and the private sector are central to addressing climate-related mobility. It outlines a framework for local action built around three pillars (enabling people to stay, supporting people on the move and enabling people to move safely and regularly), and shows how cities and communities are already innovating in areas such as planned relocation, climate-resilient services, inclusive urban planning and migrant-led initiatives. Key bottlenecks include limited finance, capacity, data and political space, as well as weak inclusion of affected populations. The chapter concludes that empowering local actors with clearer mandates and providing better coordination, more accessible financing, technology and meaningful participation of migrants and other vulnerable groups is essential to shift from a narrow focus on vulnerability toward resilience, adaptation and human dignity in climate mobility responses.

Chapter 7 – Internal displacement: trends, responses and solutions

- This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of contemporary internal displacement at a time when more than 83 million people are uprooted within their own countries. It explains who IDPs are, how key frameworks such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define their rights, and why internal displacement must be understood as both a humanitarian and a structural governance and development challenge. Drawing on recent data, it shows how overlapping drivers – including conflict, disasters, climate impacts and poorly managed development projects – are producing more frequent, protracted and multi-causal crises, while data gaps and political sensitivities continue to obscure the specific vulnerabilities of women, children, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

- The chapter analyses evolving responses and emerging solutions. It traces a shift from short-term "care and maintenance" humanitarian models toward nationally owned, development-oriented approaches embodied in the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement and the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund. Country examples illustrate how participatory, data-driven planning, stronger national institutions and better-aligned financing can advance durable solutions, particularly when they prioritize livelihoods, social cohesion, gender equality and IDP participation in decision-making. Yet persistent funding gaps, geopolitical tensions and uneven political will threaten to stall progress. The chapter concludes that achieving sustainable, rights-based solutions will require embedding internal displacement into national development, climate and peacebuilding agendas, while ensuring that IDPs remain active agents in shaping their own futures.

Chapter 8 – Disability and migration: trends, issues and responses

- This chapter explores the complex intersections between disability and migration, arguing that persons with disabilities are not inherently vulnerable but are often placed in heightened situations of risk throughout the migration and displacement cycle. It traces the evolution from medical to social and human rights models of disability, anchored in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and estimates that at least 62 million migrants, refugees and IDPs worldwide have significant disabilities, likely an underestimate given data gaps and restrictive definitions. The chapter shows how adverse drivers of migration, dangerous journeys, precarious living and working conditions, discrimination and restrictive immigration/asylum regimes all increase both the likelihood of acquiring impairments and the disabling impact of attitudinal and environmental barriers.
- The chapter highlights key barriers and emerging good practices across migration decisions and journeys, migration pathways, asylum and immigration procedures, social protection at destination and return processes. It underscores the central role of disability-inclusive laws, accessible procedures, social protection and portable benefits, as well as the importance of data and research that capture both prevalence and lived experience. A twin-track approach – mainstreaming disability in all migration and displacement policies while also investing in targeted support – combined with meaningful participation of migrants with disabilities and their organizations, is presented as essential to dismantling "dual neglect" and to advancing equal rights, inclusion and empowerment for migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities.

PART I

KEY DATA AND INFORMATION ON MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS

2 MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS: A GLOBAL OVERVIEW[1]

Introduction

Migration continues to offer significant opportunities for growth, innovation and cross-cultural exchange, benefiting both origin and destination countries as well as migrants themselves. Yet it has also become an increasingly complex and sensitive political and policy issue, raising challenges related to integration, displacement, border management and safe and orderly migration.

The number of international migrants has risen steadily over the past few decades. The current global estimate is that there were around 304 million international migrants globally by mid-2024, which equates to 3.7 per cent of the world's population. This is up from around 250 million a decade earlier in 2015 (3.3% of the global population) and 111 million more than in 2005, when this figure stood at around 193 million.[2] Despite the growing number of international migrants, it is important to note that cross-border movement remains the exception rather than the rule; most people continue to live in their countries of birth, and internal migration is far more common.

Technological advancements, lower travel costs and digital connectivity have made global mobility more accessible, while economic inequality, demographic trends, conflict and environmental change continue to also shape migration patterns. Although most people migrate for employment, family, or education, others are compelled to move due to persecution, violence or disasters. While displaced populations such as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) comprise a smaller proportion of total migrants, they often face the greatest vulnerabilities, requiring urgent international attention and protection.

This chapter, with its focus on key global migration data and trends, seeks to assist migration policymakers, practitioners and researchers in making better sense of the bigger picture of migration, by providing an overview of global migration and migrants. The chapter draws upon current statistical sources compiled by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and Meta.[3] The chapter provides an overview of global data and trends on international migrants (stocks) and international migration (flows). It also provides a discussion of particular migrant groups – namely, migrant workers, international students, refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and missing migrants – as well as of international remittances.

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1 The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (August–December 2025).

2 UN DESA, 2025.

3 To keep within the scope of this report, statistics utilized in this chapter were current as 31 December 2025, unless otherwise stated.

The chapter also refers to the body of programmatic IOM data, particularly on assisted voluntary returns and reintegration, resettlement and displacement tracking. While these data are generally not global or representative, they can provide insights into changes that have occurred in relevant programming and operations globally. As IOM is the United Nations migration agency, with activities relevant to all the themes discussed in this chapter, IOM data have the capacity to provide further insights on migration and its various dynamics, including the diverse needs of migrants.

Defining migration, migrant and other key terms

Outside of general definitions of migration and migrant, such as those found in dictionaries, there exist various specific definitions of key migration-related terms, including in legal, administrative, research and statistical spheres.[a] While there is no universally agreed definition of migration or migrant, several definitions are widely accepted and have been developed in different settings, such as those set out in the revised recommendations on statistics of international migration and temporary mobility.[b]

In 2025, the revised recommendations on statistics of international migration and temporary mobility were endorsed at the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the result of a years-long process to update the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration.[c] The revisions reflect not only changes in data collection methods but also in migration patterns and management.[d]

Technical definitions, concepts and categories of migrants and migration are necessarily informed by factors that are geographic, legal, political, methodological, developmental and temporal, among others. For example, there are numerous ways in which migration events can be defined, including in relation to place of birth, citizenship, place of residence and duration of stay.[e] This is important when it comes to quantifying and analysing the effects of migration and migrants, however defined. We encourage readers to refer to primary sources cited in the chapter for information on specific definitions and categorizations underlying the data. Readers may also find the *IOM Glossary on Migration* to be a useful reference.[f]

[a] See, for example, Poulain and Perrin, 2001; World Bank, 2023.
[b] UNSD, 2025.
[c] UN DESA, 1998.
[d] UNSD, 2025; UNSC, 2023.
[e] See, for example, de Beer et al., 2010.
[f] IOM, 2019.

International migrants: numbers and trends

UN DESA produces estimates of the number of international migrants globally. The following discussion draws on those estimates, which are based on data provided by States.[4] The current United Nations recommendations on statistics of international migration and temporary mobility classify all movements that cross international borders within a given year as international mobility, specifying two categories of international mobility: international

[4] Data are also provided to UN DESA by territories and administrative units. For a summary of UN DESA stock data sources, methodology and caveats, see UN DESA, 2025.

migration, and international temporary mobility.[5] International migration is defined as "a change in the country of residence" with a threshold of 12 months, while international temporary mobility "includes all international border crossings (events) other than those related to changes in country of residence".[6] Some countries use different criteria to identify international migrants, for example applying different minimum durations of residence. Differences in concepts and definitions, as well as data collection methodologies between countries, hinder full comparability of national statistics on international migrants.

While the estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past 50 years, it is important to note that the vast majority of people live in the country in which they were born. In the latest international migrant estimates (dated mid-2024), around 304 million people lived in a country other than their country of birth, or about 150 million more than 34 years earlier, in 1990, and over three times the estimated number in 1970 (84 million). The proportion of international migrants as a share of the total global population has also increased, but only incrementally, from 2.9 per cent in 1990 to 3.7 per cent in 2024 (see Table 1).

Table 1. International migrants since 1970

Year	Number of international migrants	International migrants as a percentage of the world's population
1970	84 460 125	2.3
1975	90 368 010	2.2
1980	101 983 149	2.3
1985	113 206 691	2.3
1990	153 916 063	2.9
1995	163 176 002	2.8
2000	174 566 152	2.8
2005	192 788 721	2.9
2010	221 020 392	3.1
2015	250 042 020	3.3
2020	275 284 032	3.5
2024	304 021 813	3.7

Source: UN DESA, 2025.

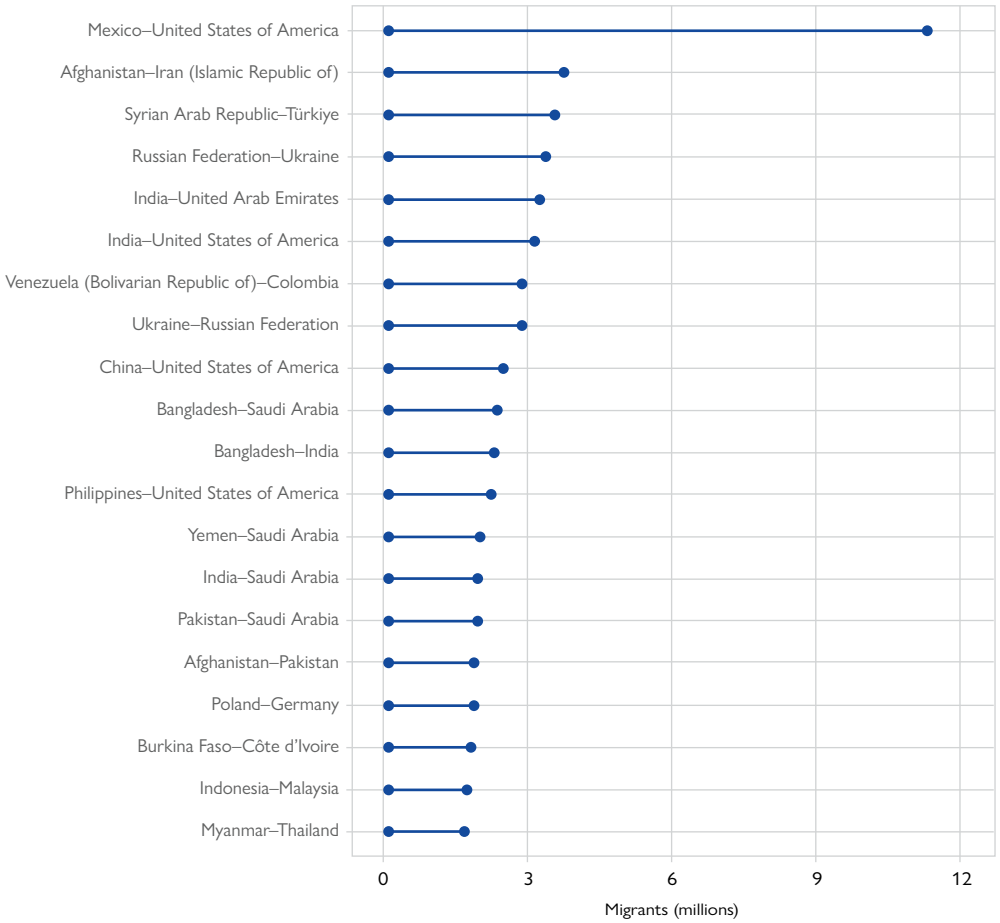
The available international migrant data include estimates of origin and destination links between two countries, allowing for the estimation of bilateral migration corridors globally. The size of a migration corridor from country A to country B is measured as the number of people born in country A who were residing in country B at the time of the estimate. Migration corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

[5] UNSD, 2025.

[6] Ibid.

The Mexico to United States country-to-country corridor remains the largest in the world, with around 11 million people (see Figure 1). The second largest is Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran (more than 3.7 million migrants) followed by the Syrian Arab Republic to Türkiye (over 3.5 million), comprising mainly refugees displaced by the Syrian Arab Republic's civil war. The corridor between the Russian Federation and Ukraine takes up the fourth spot while the fifth-largest corridor, India to the United Arab Emirates, comprises mainly migrant workers. More than 8 million international migrants lived in the United Arab Emirates (comprising 74% of the population), with Indians (more than 3 million) being the top nationality.

Figure 1. Top 20 international country-to-country migration corridors, 2024

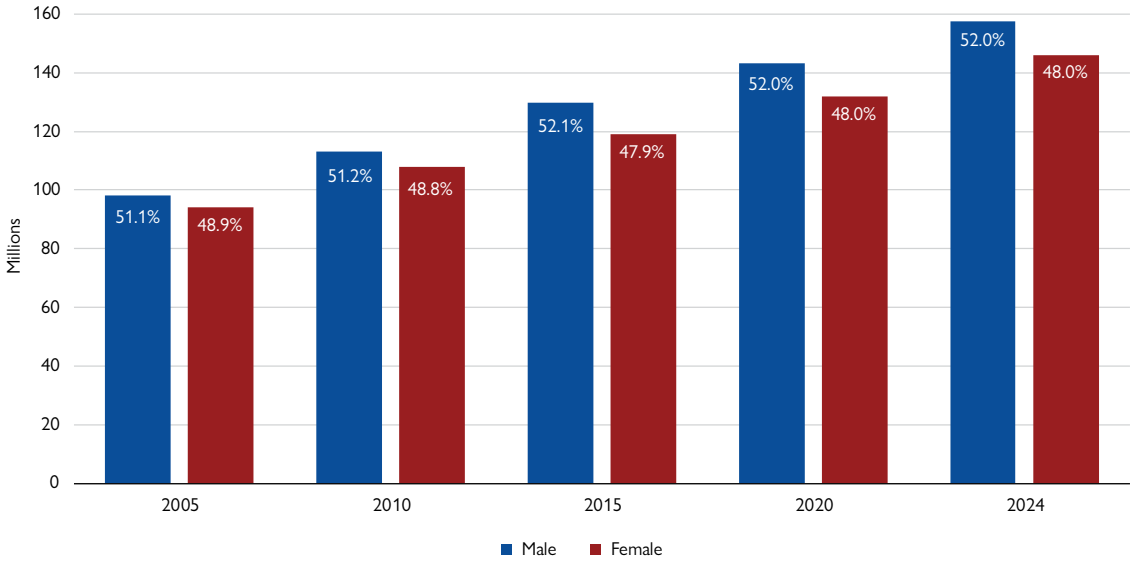


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: The corridors represent the number of international migrants (millions) born in the first-mentioned country and residing in the second. Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

The number of male international migrants continues to be larger than the number of female migrants, and this gender gap has increased over time. Twenty years ago (2005) the male-to-female split was 51.1 to 48.9 per cent (or around 98 million male migrants and about 94 million female migrants). In 2024, the split was 52 to 48 per cent, with 158 million male migrants and 146 million female migrants. See Figure 2 for further breakdowns by sex.

Figure 2. International migrants, by sex

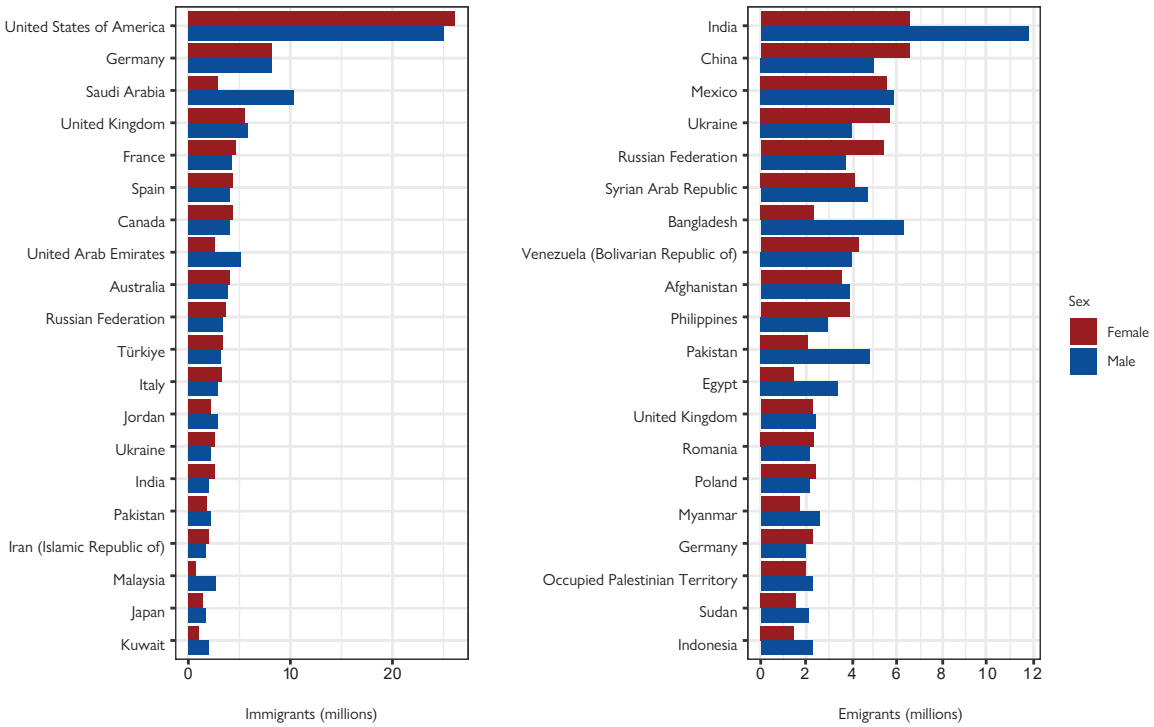


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Figure 3 shows the number of international migrants, disaggregated by sex, in the top 20 destination and origin countries. Some clear patterns emerge from this figure. There are more female than male international migrants across most of the destination countries in Europe and Northern America, such as Canada, France, Italy, Spain and the United States of America, but also in a few countries outside these regions such as India and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In contrast, in most Asian countries in the top 20 – particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council countries Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Malaysia – the number of male international migrants is much larger than the number of female migrants, which is largely related to the structure of their economies (for example, the prevalence of construction and security sector work) as well as social and human security factors.[7] Most countries across the 20 largest countries of origin have more male than female emigrants, with countries such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt having some of widest gaps.

[7] Shah et al., 2018; Ullah et al., 2020.

Figure 3. International migrants, by sex, top 20 destination countries (left) and origin countries (right) (millions)*

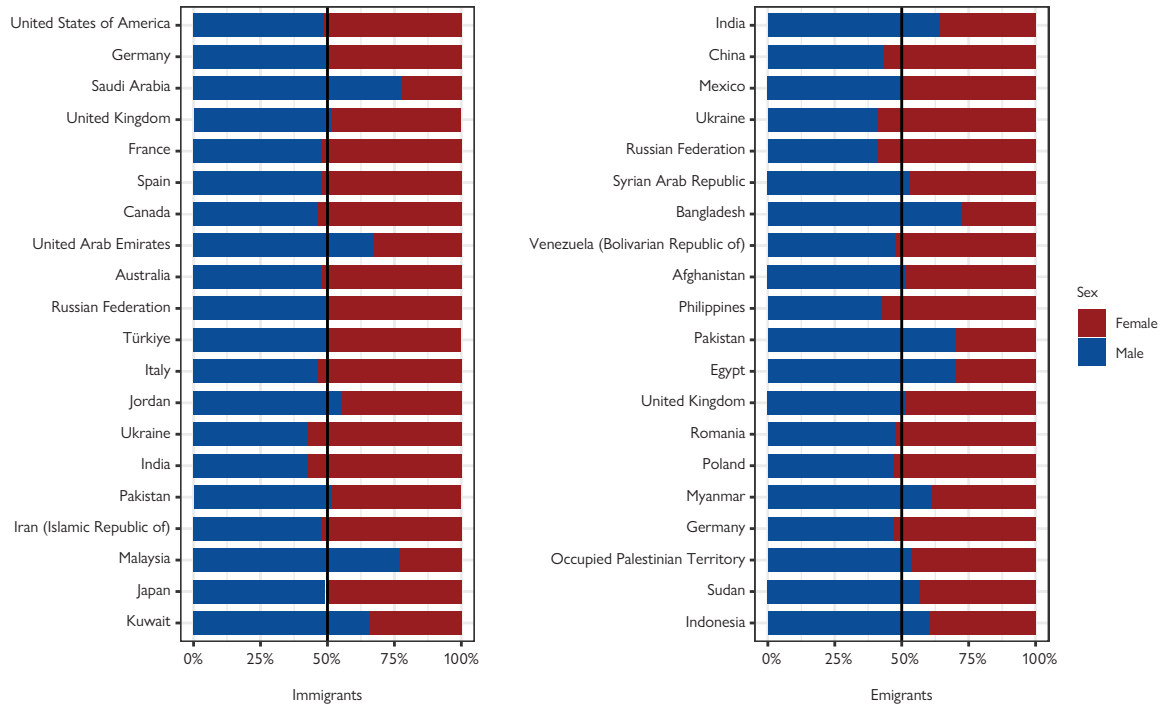


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: * This figure includes territories.

An examination of the proportion of international migrants by sex shows that in the 20 destination countries with the largest number of international migrants, the distribution of female and male migrants is about equal across most countries (Figure 4). The outliers are several Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Malaysia, where the male share is much higher, as well as in Ukraine and India, where the share of female immigrants is significantly higher. The male share of emigrants is higher than the female share in most of the top origin countries (12 out of 20). This is especially the case among the Asian countries, where the male share of emigrants is far higher than the female share (with the exception of China and the Philippines). Among European origin countries, the female share of emigrants is higher than the male share, overall (except for the United Kingdom).

Figure 4. International migrants, by sex, top 20 destination countries (left) and origin countries (right) – proportion*



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

* This figure includes territories.

Migrant workers

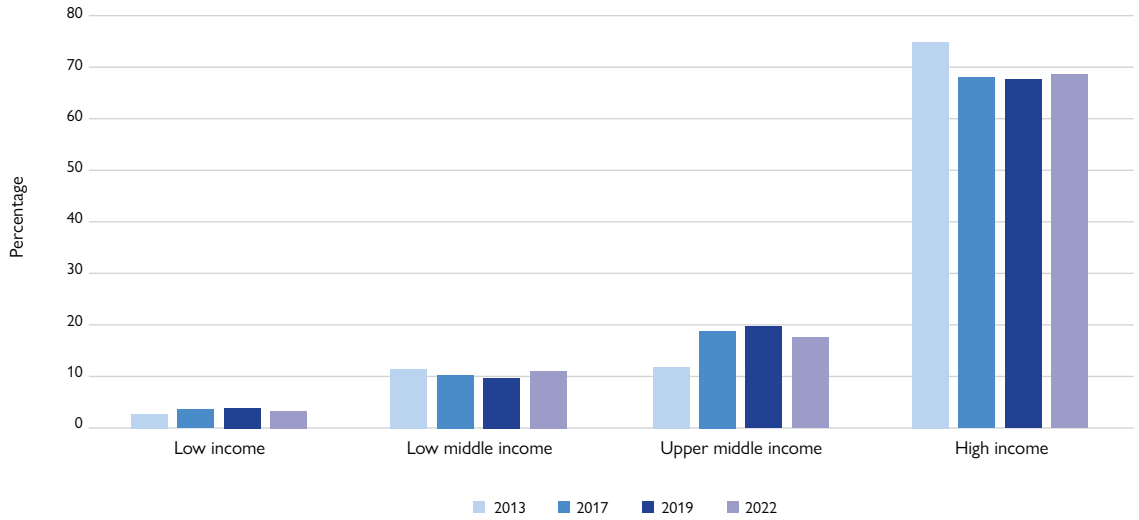
The latest available data show that there were nearly 168 million international migrant workers globally in 2022, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the then global stock of international migrants.[8] The number of international migrant workers has been growing over time, and during the decade from 2013 to 2022 this number increased by more than 30 million.

As shown in Figure 5, most migrant workers have consistently resided in high income countries. Over 114 million (or 68.4%) lived in high income countries in 2022. An additional 29.2 million (17.4%) were living in upper middle income countries, 18.2 million (10.9%) in lower middle income countries and 5.5 million (3.3%) in low income countries. While there was a notable decrease in the number of migrant workers in upper middle income countries between 2019 and 2022, both high income and middle income countries – owing to their greater labour market opportunities and higher standards of living – remain the major destinations.[9]

[8] This section on migrant workers draws on data and contents in the *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers* released by the ILO in 2024 and based on 2022 data (see ILO, 2024).

[9] ILO, 2024.

Figure 5. Migrant workers by destination country income level, 2013, 2017, 2019 and 2022



Source: ILO, 2024.

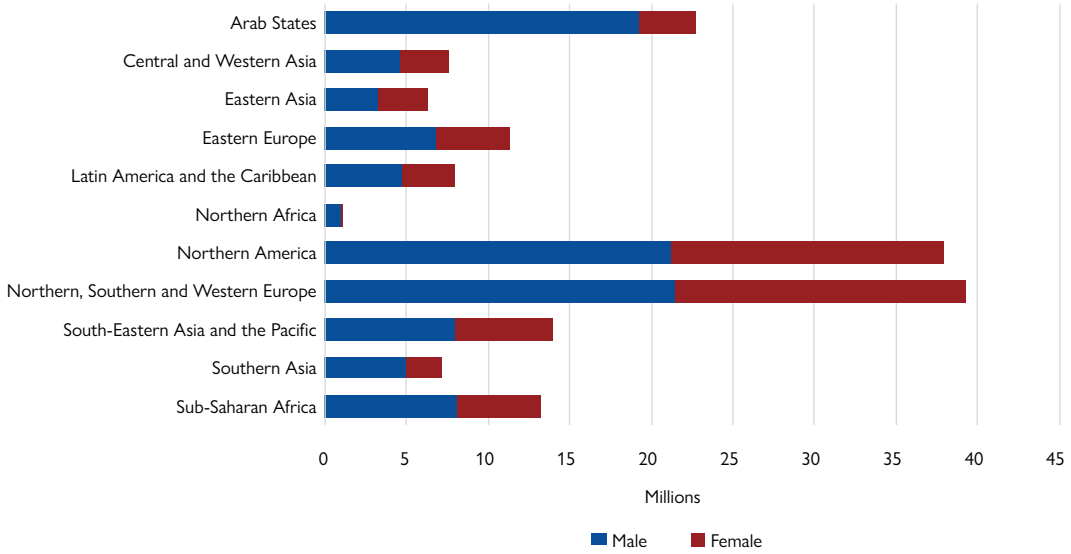
The international migrant worker population remains significantly gendered, with a much larger number of male than female migrant workers worldwide. An estimated 102.7 million migrant workers were male (61.3% of the total) and 64.9 million (38.7%) were female. In addition to this gender concentration, international migrant workers are also geographically concentrated. Over 70 per cent of female migrant workers resided in high income countries. Most male migrant workers (over 67%) were also located in high income countries.

Moreover, and as can be seen in Figure 6, 99.6 million or almost 60 per cent of all international migrant workers resided in three subregions: Northern America; the Arab States; and Northern, Southern and Western Europe.[10] There is also a very noticeable gender imbalance of migrant workers in two regions: Southern Asia (5 million male workers compared with 2.1 million female workers) and the Arab States (19.2 million male workers compared with 3.4 million female workers). The Arab States region is one of the top destinations for international migrant workers, where they comprise 37.2 per cent of the entire working population, often dominating in key sectors.[11]

[10] The ILO category of "Arab States" includes the following countries and territories: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (ILO, 2024).

[11] See ILO, 2024.

Figure 6. Geographic distribution of migrant workers by sex (millions)



Source: ILO, 2024.

Note: The figure reflects ILO geographic regions and subregions, and does not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. Please see Annex A of ILO, 2024 for more information on regional breakdowns. Please note that the rest of this chapter, unless otherwise stated, refers to the UN DESA geographical regions.

International migration flows

While data on migrant stocks are widely available, data on global migration movements (flows) are much more limited. Available UN DESA estimates on global migrant stocks are extensive and global in scope; however, the UN DESA database of migration flows only encompasses 45 countries.[12] Capturing data on migration flows is extremely challenging for several reasons. First, while international migration flows are generally understood to cover inflows into and outflows from countries, there has been a greater focus on recording inflows. For example, while countries such as Australia and the United States record cross-border movements, many other countries only count entries and not departures.[13] Additionally, migration flow data in some countries are derived from administrative events related to immigration status (for example, the issuance or renewal or withdrawal of a residence permit), which are then used as proxies for migration flows. Furthermore, migratory movements are often hard to separate from non-migratory travel, such as tourism or business.[14] Tracking migratory movements also requires considerable resources, infrastructure and ICT or other knowledge systems.[15] This poses particular challenges for developing countries, where the ability to collect, administer, analyse and report data on mobility, migration and other areas is often limited. Finally, many countries' physical geographies pose tremendous challenges for collecting data on migration flows. Entry and border management, for example, are particularly challenging in some regions because of archipelagic and isolated borders, and are further complicated by traditions of informal migration for work.[16]

[12] UN DESA, 2015.

[13] Koser, 2010; McAuliffe and Koser, 2017.

[14] Skeldon, 2018.

[15] McAuliffe and Sawyer, 2021.

[16] Gallagher and McAuliffe, 2016.

Measuring global international migration flows using Facebook data

Meta has introduced an innovative data set that tracks country-to-country migration flows across 181 nations, drawing on anonymized location information from roughly 3 billion Facebook users. Although it excludes very small nations and places where Facebook access is limited – such as Cuba, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran – the data set captures migration patterns for about 79 per cent of the global population, offering unprecedented coverage and temporal detail.[a]

The methodology follows the United Nations' recommended definition of migration, describing it as "an instance in which an individual who has resided in a country for more than a year moves to another country, which they then reside in for more than one year".[b] This approach ensures conceptual consistency across countries and aligns the data set with established international migration standards. To account for unequal representation in Facebook usage, the methodology incorporates a reweighting step that calibrates migration estimates using per capita income and national Facebook user coverage. To protect user privacy, the researchers also added noise to data involving country pairs with very few migrants, preserving anonymity without distorting overall migration patterns.[c]

This innovative approach responds to traditional data collection challenges, including the infrequency with which migrant stock data are collected and published, and the fact that most countries do not report on migration flows.[d] The reliance on digital trace data captured monthly enables researchers to observe how rapidly migration patterns shift, particularly in response to crises or policy changes. For example, the data captured a fivefold increase in migration from Myanmar to Singapore in the wake of a coup in February 2021, a tenfold increase in migration from Ukraine after the Russian invasion in February 2022, and a fifteenfold increase in outflows from Hong Kong SAR, China, after the passage of a security law in June 2020.[e]

An interactive visualization of these global migration patterns can be explored in New York Times, 2025.

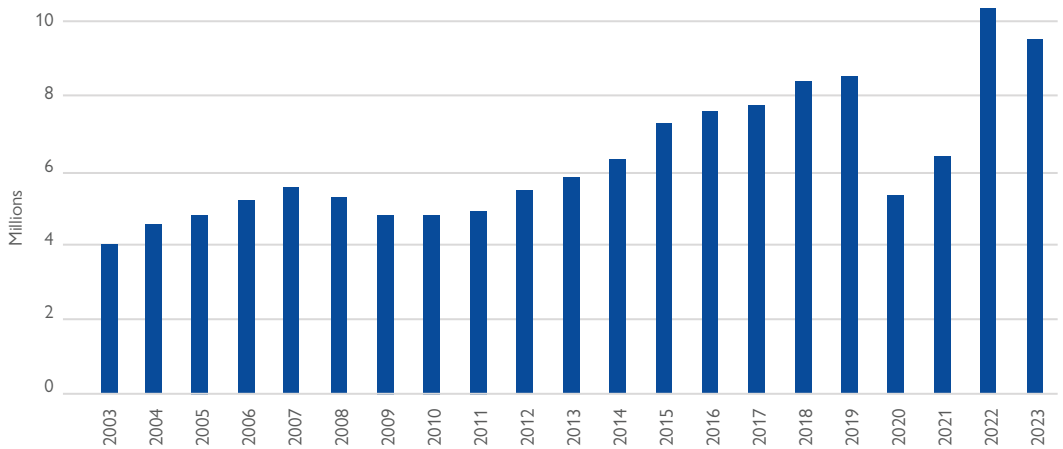
[a] Chi et al., 2025.
[b] Ibid.
[c] Ibid.
[d] McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021.
[e] Chi et al., 2025.

There are currently two main data sets on international migration flows that are derived from national statistics: the UN DESA International Migration Flows data set, and the OECD International Migration Database. Since 2005, UN DESA has compiled data on the movements of international migrants to and from selected countries, based on nationally available statistics. At the time of writing (November 2025), there had been no update to the UN DESA flows data set since the 2015 version. The 2015 migration flows data set comprises data from 45 countries, up from 29 countries in 2008 and 15 countries in 2005.[17]

[17] For UN DESA migration flow data, as well as for the specific countries included, please see UN DESA, 2015.

Since 2000, the OECD has compiled data on international migration flows, making it possible to track trends across a subset of major destination countries (see Figure 7). However, the figures are not fully standardized, as noted under Figure 7. Permanent migration inflows declined in 2023 to 9.4 million, following a sharp post-pandemic increase to nearly 10.3 million in 2022.[18] The surge in 2022 was driven by humanitarian, labour and family migration pathways, and represented a strong rebound from the reduced inflows of 2020 and 2021, which were constrained by COVID-19 border closures and mobility restrictions. Inflows in 2023, while below 2022 levels, were still well above the years preceding and during the COVID-19 pandemic, with record-high immigration levels in countries such as Canada, Japan, Poland, New Zealand and Switzerland, among others.[19] These unprecedented levels highlight, in part, the ongoing global competition for migrant workers. At the same time, the OECD *International Migration Outlook 2024* notes the growing strain on housing and public services that has led to policy shifts, with some governments considering renewed restrictions on regular migration pathways as a means of curbing overall inflows.[20]

Figure 7. Inflows of foreign nationals into OECD countries, permanent migration, 2003–2023 (millions)



Source: OECD, n.d. (accessed 11 November 2025).

Note: Data are not standardized and therefore differ from statistics on permanent migration inflows into selected countries contained in the OECD International Migration Outlook series. The 35 countries typically included in OECD statistics are the following: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. In some years, data for particular countries are not available: data were made available for 31 countries in 2000. Notably, data for Greece have not been reported between 2000 and 2004, data for Türkiye were reported only for 2010 and 2016 onwards, and data for the United Kingdom are only available until 2019. Please refer to the OECD International Migration Outlook series for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, limitations and caveats associated with the numbers and trends presented.

[18] OECD, n.d.

[19] Ibid.

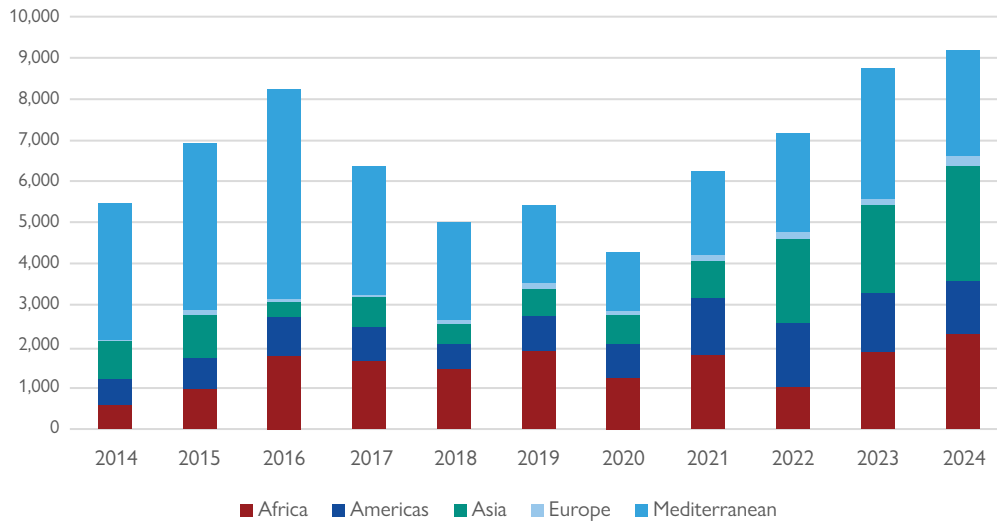
[20] OECD, 2024.

Unsafe migration flows

The IOM Missing Migrants Project tracks cases where migrants, including refugees and asylum-seekers, die during border crossings or in transit. The project was established after the 2013 Lampedusa shipwrecks that claimed at least 368 lives; it is the only open-access global database on deaths during migration.[21] Since the 2018 edition of the *World Migration Report*, the series has featured data and analysis from this initiative, highlighting the dangerous consequences of irregular migration routes and the increasing number of displacement events that make mobility ever more perilous.

In 2024, more than 9,000 migrant deaths were recorded, up from around 8,700 in the previous year, marking the highest annual death toll since data collection began in 2014.[22] Crisis-affected countries facing climate disasters and violent unrest accounted for over half of these deaths.[23] The increase continues a gradual upward trend since the record low in 2020, when COVID-19 mobility restrictions sharply reduced movement. Compared to 2023, recorded deaths increased across all regions, except the Mediterranean (declined from 3,155 to 2,573) and the Americas (declined from 1,413 to 1,272).

Figure 8. Migrant deaths by region, 2014–2024



Source: IOM, n.d.a.

Note: Data include recorded deaths as well as those reported as missing. See IOM, n.d.a for details of methodology and geographic regions.

[21] IOM, n.d.a.

[22] IOM, n.d.b.

[23] IOM, 2025a.

International remittances

Remittances are financial or in-kind transfers made by migrants directly to families or communities in their countries of origin. The World Bank compiles global data on international remittances, notwithstanding the myriad data gaps, definitional differences and methodological challenges in compiling accurate statistics.[24] These data, sourced from the International Monetary Fund balance of payments data, do not fully capture unrecorded flows through formal or informal channels, and the actual magnitudes of global remittances are therefore likely to be larger than available estimates.[25]

In 2024, India, Mexico, the Philippines, France and Pakistan were (in descending order) the top five remittance recipient countries globally.[26] India, however, continued to be well above the rest, receiving more than USD 137 billion, and remained the only country to surpass USD 100 billion. France was the fourth largest remittance recipient in 2024; however, it is important to note that most of its inflows are not household transfers but relate to salaries of cross-border workers who work in Switzerland while residing in France.[27]

High income countries are almost always the main source of international remittances. For decades, the United States of America has consistently been the top remittance-sending country in the world, with a total outflow surpassing USD 100 billion in 2024. It was followed by Saudi Arabia (over USD 46 billion), Switzerland (around USD 40 billion) and Germany (nearly USD 24 billion).

Table 2. Top 10 countries receiving/sending international remittances (2010–2024) (current USD billion)

Top countries receiving remittances							
2010		2015		2020		2024	
India	53.48	India	68.91	India	83.15	India	137.67
Mexico	22.77	China	33.10	Mexico	43.98	Mexico	67.64
Philippines	21.56	Philippines	29.80	Philippines	34.88	Philippines	40.28
France	19.90	Mexico	26.82	France	29.98	France	38.78
Nigeria	19.74	France	25.45	Egypt	29.60	Pakistan	34.91
Germany	14.23	Nigeria	20.63	Pakistan	26.09	China	31.41
China	13.64	Pakistan	19.31	Bangladesh	21.75	Egypt	29.56
Egypt	12.45	Egypt	18.33	China	18.88	Bangladesh	27.60
Belgium	10.99	Bangladesh	15.30	Germany	18.82	Guatemala	21.64
Bangladesh	10.85	Germany	14.89	Nigeria	17.21	Nigeria	21.30

[24] World Bank, n.d.a.

[25] Ibid.

[26] This section on international remittances (top receiving and sending countries) draws on data from World Bank, n.d.a.

[27] Eurostat, 2025.

Top countries sending remittances							
2010		2015		2020		2024	
United States	50.53	United States	60.72	United States	66.13	United States	103.18
Saudi Arabia	27.07	Saudi Arabia	38.79	Saudi Arabia	34.60	Saudi Arabia	46.56
Russian Federation	21.45	Switzerland	25.99	Switzerland	29.56	Switzerland	40.11
Switzerland	18.53	Russian Federation	19.69	Germany	19.38	Germany	23.66
Germany	13.91	Kuwait	15.20	China	18.30	China	20.02
Italy	12.88	France	14.60	Kingdom of the Netherlands	17.88	France	19.69
Kingdom of the Netherlands	12.68	Germany	13.84	Kuwait	17.36	Luxembourg	18.74
France	12.03	Qatar	12.19	Russian Federation	16.87	Kingdom of the Netherlands	18.13
Kuwait	11.86	Luxembourg	11.23	France	14.53	Kuwait	14.17
Luxembourg	10.66	Oman	10.99	Luxembourg	14.27	Canada	13.08

Source: World Bank, n.d.a. (accessed December 2025).

Notes: All numbers are in current USD billion. The source of remittances (inflow and outflow data) in previous editions of the World Migration Report was the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), which was active from 2013 until 2024 and hosted by the World Bank. The latest data (2024) and all historical remittances data in the tables above have been updated using the World Bank DataBank. For China, particularly its inflows remittances data in Table 2, the figures as reflected in the latest World Development Indicators are significantly different from those previously reported or presented by KNOMAD (and reported in previous editions of the World Migration Report).

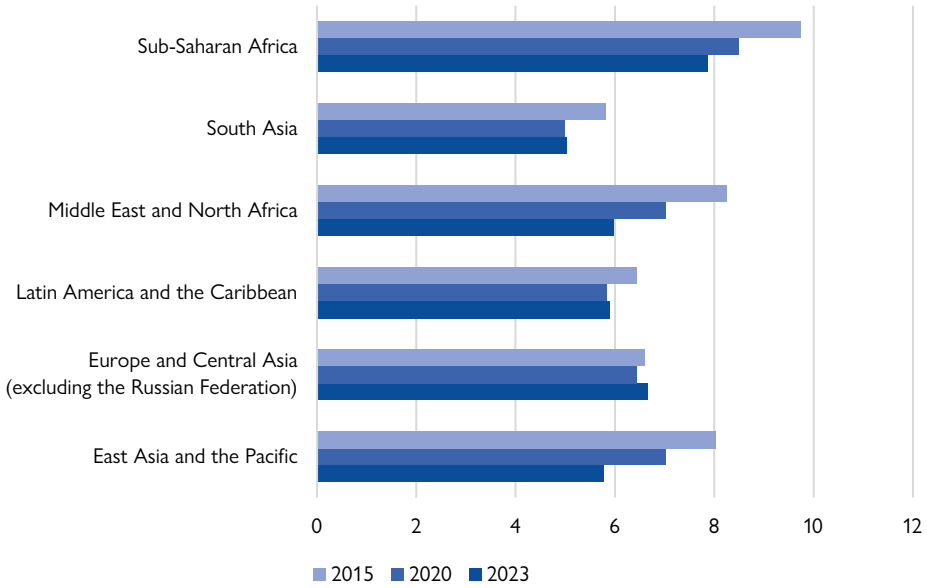
Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.C commits countries to reducing the transaction costs of migrant remittances to less than 3 per cent.[28] The 3 per cent transaction cost is intended as the global average of sending USD 200. While the cost of sending remittances has gradually declined over the last few years across several regions (see Figure 9), it still remains far above the SDG 10 target. The cost of sending remittances has consistently been highest for sub-Saharan Africa, and in 2023 it was at nearly 8 per cent, more than double the SDG target.[29] In the same year, average costs were lowest in South Asia (5%), followed by East Asia and Pacific (5.78%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (both around 5.9%).[30]

[28] United Nations, n.d.

[29] World Bank, n.d.b.

[30] Ibid.

Figure 9. Average cost of sending 200 United States dollars by region of the world, 2015–2023 (percentage)



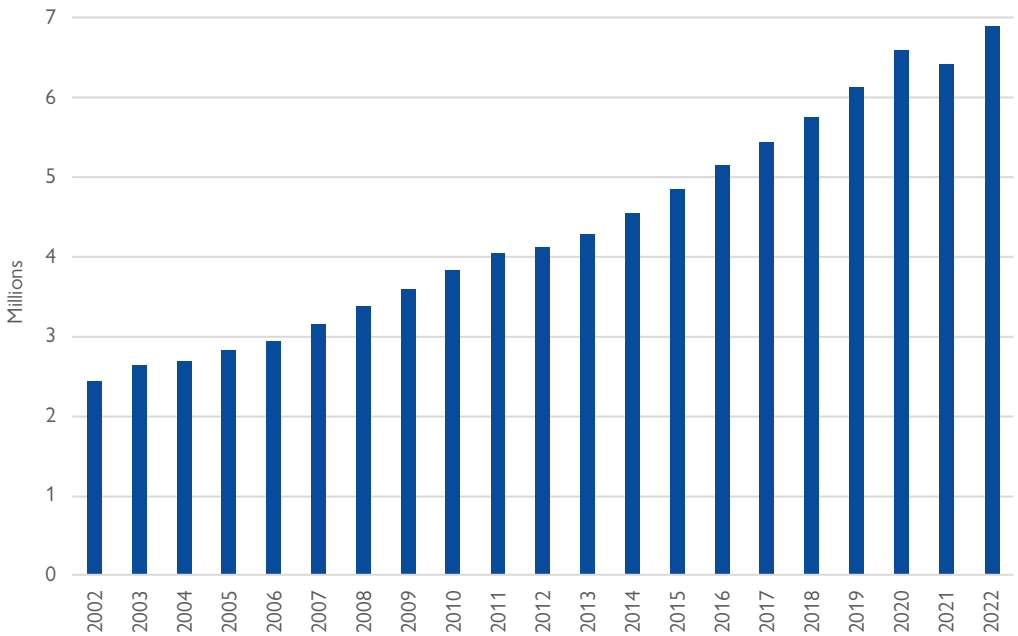
Source: World Bank, n.d.b.

Note: The figure reflects World Bank geographic regions. The analysis excludes the Russian Federation and the former Soviet Republics, since they operate based on the integrated payment systems of the former USSR. Remittance service providers in these countries are not comparable to those in other countries, which incur high costs when having to bridge the national payment systems in two countries.

International students

The total number of internationally mobile students tripled between 2002 and 2022. In 2002, the global total was just over 2 million, and by 2022 it reached close to 7 million. Between 2020 and 2021, international student flows dipped slightly due to COVID-19 restrictions, but mobility remained resilient and rebounded strongly in 2022, reaching record highs with high demand and reopened borders. This steady long-term growth underscores how international student flows have become a primary migration pathway.

Figure 10. Flows of internationally mobile students globally, 2002–2022 (millions)



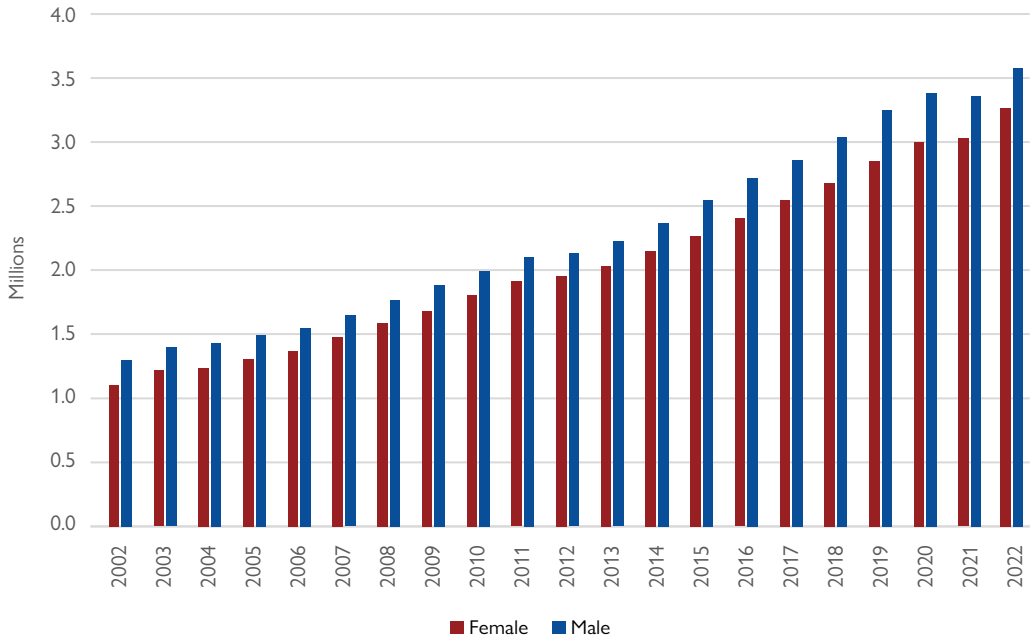
Source: UIS, n.d. (accessed 27 April 2025).

Note: Internationally mobile students are individuals who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective of participating in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin. The country of origin of a tertiary student is the country in which they gained their upper secondary qualifications. This can also be referred to as the country of prior education.

In 2022, there were just over 3.2 million internationally mobile female students (48%), compared to 3.6 million male students (52%).[31] This represents a significant narrowing of the gender gap since the early 2000s, but the balance has barely shifted over the last decade, with women already accounting for 48 per cent of international students in 2012. The long-term trend shows both rising numbers and greater gender parity overall, though progress toward closing the gap has stalled in recent years.

[31] UIS, n.d.

Figure 11. Flows of internationally mobile students globally by gender, 2002–2022 (millions)



Source: UIS, n.d. (accessed 27 April 2025).

Countries in Asia continue to account for the largest share of internationally mobile students. In 2022, more than 1 million international students came from China, the single largest origin country worldwide.[32] India ranked second, with over 620,000 students abroad. Beyond these two leading countries, origin country numbers drop considerably: Uzbekistan (150,000), Viet Nam (134,000) and Germany (126,000) follow, while the United States, France, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Nepal each had between 95,000 and 115,000 students studying abroad.[33] More than half of the world's internationally mobile students reside in countries in Europe and North America.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

IOM's Health Assessment Programme

The migration Health Assessment Programme, established in 1951 by IOM, provides health services for migrants, including refugees. Migration health assessments aim to safeguard public and individual migrant's health and minimize the health impacts of human mobility, in line with the 2005 International Health Regulations. At the request of destination countries, the physical and mental health of migrants is evaluated before their departure, to facilitate health-related immigration requirements as well as integration needs. In 2024, over 857,000 people received IOM migration health assessments.

Migration health assessment centres are specialized health centres established by IOM to conduct migration health assessments. With a network of over 75 centres and close to 300 partner health facilities worldwide, the Health Assessment Programme delivers health services important for the physical, mental and social well-being of migrants and mobile populations, benefiting their communities of origin and destination.

More about IOM migration health functions can be found at IOM, n.d.c.

Source: IOM, 2025b.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

At the end of 2024, there were 36.9 million refugees globally, with 31 million under the UNHCR mandate,[34] and 5.9 million refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).[35] A further 5.9 million other people in need of international protection – largely from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela – were reported at the end of 2024. The number of refugees under the UNHCR mandate has decreased slightly since 2023, when it stood at 31.6 million.

There were also approximately 8.4 million people seeking international protection and awaiting determination of their refugee status, referred to as asylum-seekers. This is a 22 per cent increase from the end of 2023. Despite partial reporting from the United States (only until mid-2024), the country still had – by far – the largest number of pending asylum claims (3.2 million) by end of 2024. Other countries with large asylum applications included Egypt (631,100), Peru (540,000), Germany (348,900) and Canada (292,100).

In 2024 alone, 3.1 million new individual asylum applications were registered globally, with half of these received in only four countries: the United States (729,100), Egypt (433,900), Germany (229,800) and Canada (174,000). Nationals of the Sudan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Syrian Arab Republic, Colombia and Afghanistan comprised most new individual asylum applications in 2024.

[34] The content in this subsection is based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2025a. Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous UNHCR global trends reports, as well as its population statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.) are other key sources of information.

[35] Generally, people under the UNRWA mandate are living in their country of birth, so are not captured as part of international migrant stock estimates (unlike people who were born in one country and have been displaced to another).

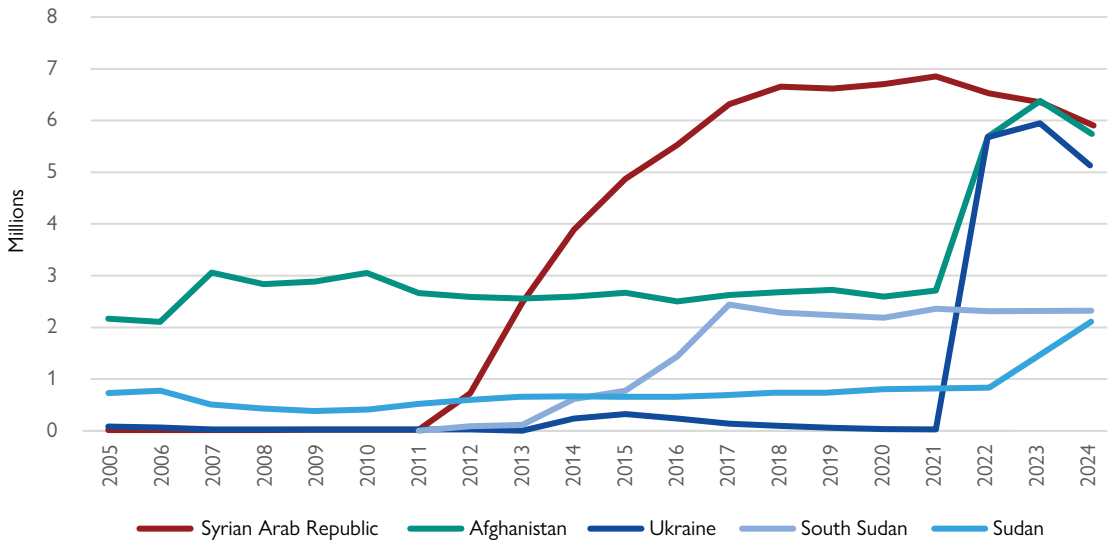
At the end of 2024, children (that is, people under 18 years of age) made up around 41 per cent of refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection. It is important to note, however, that demographic data for age and sex were only available for 79 per cent of refugees and people in a refugee-like situation, with an additional 14 per cent having sex disaggregated data available but no age disaggregated data. In the latest available data, women and girls are estimated to comprise 50 per cent of refugees, people in refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection.

Across multiple countries, relatively new as well as protracted conflicts, in addition to widespread violence, continue to drive large-scale cross-border displacement. Consistent with recent years, the vast majority of refugees and people in need of international protection (85%) came from just 10 countries. While some of these countries have been the origins of some of the largest numbers of refugees for many years, others – such as Ukraine and the Sudan – have only within the last 4 years become major origin countries of refugees.

The conflict in the Sudan, which started in April 2023 and continued to escalate through 2024, has resulted in one of the largest displacement crises globally and a dire humanitarian situation. The number of Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers reached 2.8 million in 2024, growing by around 1 million from the previous year. Most were hosted in neighbouring countries, including Chad (around 1 million), Egypt (over 600,000) and South Sudan (487,700). In 2024, the Sudan was the fifth largest refugee origin country, globally.

Meanwhile, displacement as a result of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine remained significant in 2024, with more than 5 million Ukrainian refugees across Europe at the end of 2024. In 2024 alone, 856,800 Ukrainians were granted international protection, most within the European Union. While there were fewer refugees from Ukraine in 2024 compared to the two years prior, Ukraine was the third-largest origin country of refugees globally. The Syrian Arab Republic, which for most of the last decade has been the largest country of origin of refugees, saw a decline in these numbers, in part due to returns from Lebanon as well as spontaneous returns at end of 2024, after the change in government in December of that year. Despite the fall in the number of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, however, one in six refugees were Syrian and the country remained the origin country of the largest number of refugees in 2024 (over 5.9 million), with most hosted in Türkiye, Lebanon, Germany and Jordan. For Afghanistan, as for the Syrian Arab Republic, the number of refugees from the country declined from just over 6.4 million in 2023 to around 5.8 million in 2024, making it the country of origin of the second largest number of refugees. This 10 per cent drop is largely a reflection of returns to Afghanistan (including forced returns) from some of the key host countries. An estimated nearly quarter of a million Afghan refugees and people in a refugee-like situation returned to Afghanistan in 2024 from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a further almost 127,000 returned from Pakistan.

Figure 12. Number of refugees by top five countries of origin, 2005–2024 (millions)

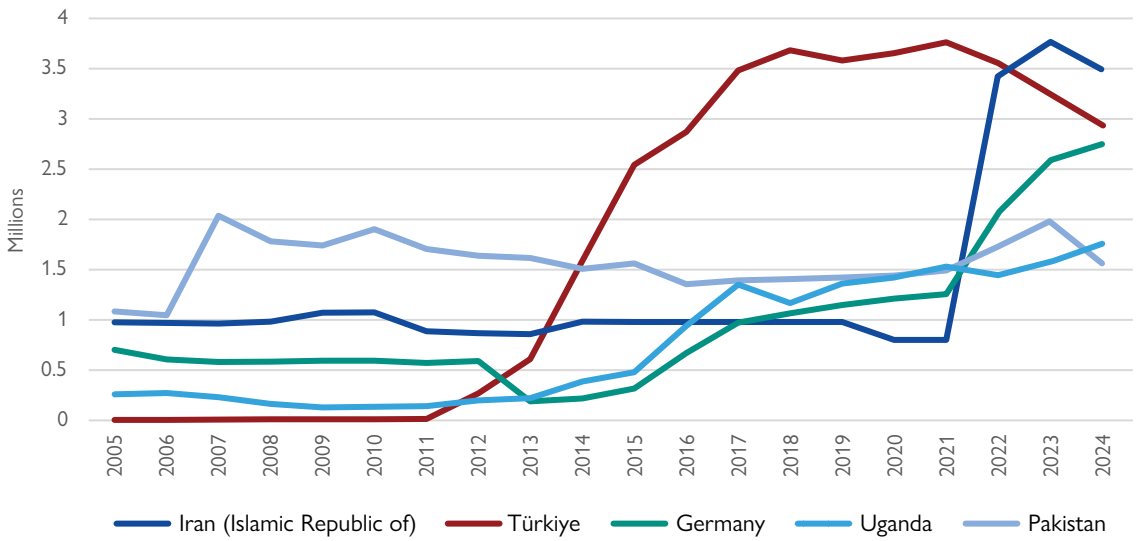


Source: UNHCR, n.d.

Note: South Sudan became a country in 2011.

Since 2023, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the host country to the largest number of refugees in the world, overtaking Türkiye, which had been the host to the largest number of refugees for 10 consecutive years. Nearly 3.5 million refugees were hosted in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2024, most of them Afghans. With around 2.9 million refugees (largely Syrians), Türkiye was the host country to the second largest number of refugees globally, followed by Germany (around 2.7 million). In Germany, most refugees originated from Ukraine (1.2 million), the Syrian Arab Republic (around 725,000) and Afghanistan (nearly 280,000). Uganda and Pakistan were the host countries with the fourth and fifth largest number of refugees globally, with nearly 1.8 million and almost 1.6 million refugees, respectively. Most refugees in Uganda came from South Sudan (975,000), although the number of refugees from the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo increased significantly in 2024. Recent estimates show that low and middle income countries hosted 73 per cent of refugees and other people in need of international protection, and that 67 per cent of refugees and other people in need of international protection lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin.

Figure 13. Number of refugees by top five host countries, 2005–2024 (millions)



Source: UNHCR, n.d.

The number of refugees resettled globally has been rising again since 2021, reaching over 188,000 in 2024 (19% more than in 2023). This was also the largest number of resettled refugees in a single year in over 40 years.[36] Just four countries – the United States, Canada, Australia and Germany – accounted for 94 per cent of all resettlement arrivals in 2024. Despite 2024 being the year with most resettlement in over four decades, the total number of resettlement arrivals only accounted for 8 per cent of the number of individuals identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement the same year (2.4 million). Moreover, as some key destination countries push for significant changes to the current international refugee and asylum system in favour a more restrictive regime,[37] we are likely to see further reduced numbers of resettlement arrivals in the coming years. This will worsen an already dire situation, with current need already far greater than resettlement levels. Indications are that, as of November 2025, the United States is drastically reducing its refugee resettlements to just 7,500 places in the next programme year.[38]

[36] UNHCR, 2025a.

[37] Pamuk and Hesson, 2025.

[38] Roy et al., 2025.

Table 3. Number of refugees needing resettlement and number of refugees resettled globally, from 2005

Year	Total projected resettlement needs (including multi-year planning), persons	Resettlement arrivals	Proportion resettled (%)
2005	–	80 734	–
2006	–	71 660	–
2007	–	75 271	–
2008	–	88 772	–
2009	–	112 455	–
2010	–	98 719	–
2011	805 535	79 727	9.90
2012	781 299	88 918	11.38
2013	859 305	98 359	11.45
2014	690 915	105 148	15.22
2015	958 429	106 997	11.16
2016	1 153 296	172 797	14.98
2017	1 190 519	102 709	8.63
2018	1 195 349	92 348	7.73
2019	1 428 011	107 729	7.54
2020	1 440 408	34 383	2.39
2021	1 445 383	57 436	3.97
2022	1 473 156	114 242	7.75
2023	2 003 982	158 591	7.91
2024	2 420 072	188 759	7.80
2025	2 916 030	–	–
2026	2 527 185	–	–

Source: UNHCR, n.d. and 2025b.

Note: Projected global resettlement needs reports by UNHCR are available from 2011.

The traditional role of IOM in resettlement

Since 1951, IOM has supported tens of millions of refugees and vulnerable migrants in moving out of harm's way and accessing new opportunities through regular pathways. Refugee resettlement programmes and complementary pathways for refugee admissions are key regular pathways through which individuals with international protection needs can travel to and enter another State with the prospect of permanent residence. IOM leverages its expertise in movement management to help beneficiaries move in a safe and dignified manner along regular pathways.[a]

IOM work on resettlement spans four key areas: case management; health assessment and related assistance; movement management and operations; and addressing integration pre-departure and post-arrival.[b]

In 2024, IOM assisted the safe and dignified international movement of over 220,000 people from 148 countries of departure to 28 countries of destination for resettlement and humanitarian admission, relocation within Europe, family reunification and other complementary pathways. During the same year, IOM provided pre-departure or cultural orientation support to almost 117,000 resettling refugees in over 100 training sites.[c]

In partnership with 173 States, significant movement assistance operations were conducted from (in descending order by size of operation) Qatar, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Türkiye and Colombia. The top resettlement countries, in descending order, were the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Germany and France, while the main countries of origin, in descending order, were Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[d]

For more information on IOM resettlement activities, see IOM, n.d.d.

[a] IOM, n.d.d.
[b] IOM, 2022.
[c] IOM, 2025c.
[d] Ibid.

Internally displaced persons

The IDMC compiles data on two types of internal displacement: new displacements during a given period and the total stock of IDPs at a given point in time. This statistical information is categorized by two broad displacement causes: disasters, and conflict and violence. However, IDMC acknowledges the challenges associated with distinguishing between disasters and conflict as the immediate cause of displacement, and highlights the growing need to identify better ways to report on displacement in the context of multiple drivers.[39] It is also important to note that IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. DTM accounted for 52 per cent of 2024 internal displacement figures provided in the IDMC's annual Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).

[39] IDMC highlights the challenges in collecting data on displacements due to development projects, criminal violence or slow-onset disasters, as well as their efforts to overcome these difficulties. See IDMC, 2019.

More than 83 million people were living in internal displacement globally by the end of 2024,[40] 10 million more than the number of IDPs since the last edition of the *World Migration Report (2024)*. This is the highest figure of IDPs ever recorded and more than double the figure recorded in the first global report on internal displacement, over a decade ago. Consistent with previous years, the largest number of IDPs were displaced due to conflict and violence (73.5 million), while 9.8 million were displaced as a result of disasters. Both were record figures and a reflection of increasing and intractable conflicts, climate change impacts and the inadequate support that IDPs "receive to put an end to their displacement by returning home or making a new home elsewhere and addressing their related needs".[41]

Figure 14 shows the world's top 20 countries with the largest number of IDPs displaced due to conflict and violence (stock) at the end of 2024. As in recent years, most countries were either in Africa or Asia (sub-Saharan Africa or the Middle East, more specifically). The Sudan had the largest number of IDPs in 2024 (a record 11.6 million), driven by a conflict that began in April 2023 and has since intensified. The Sudan was followed by the Syrian Arab Republic, where more than 7 million IDPs were recorded. The Syrian Arab Republic has had one of the world's largest numbers of IDPs for more than 10 years. Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – which ranked fourth and fifth – have also consistently been among the top five countries with the largest number of IDPs, and in 2024, over 7 million and more than 6.2 million IDPs were recorded for each country, respectively.

As in previous years, the Syrian Arab Republic continued to have the largest percentage of its population internally displaced due to conflict and violence (31%). The Syrian Arab Republic is followed by the Sudan (23%), and Somalia and Lebanon (both with 17%).

It is worth noting that particularly for protracted displacement cases, such as in Colombia, some people who have returned to their places of origin and to their homes may still be counted as internally displaced. This is because, in some cases, a durable solution has not been achieved.[42] Organizations such as IDMC follow the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons framework, which stipulates eight criteria that constitute a durable solution in determining when people should no longer be considered internally displaced.[43]

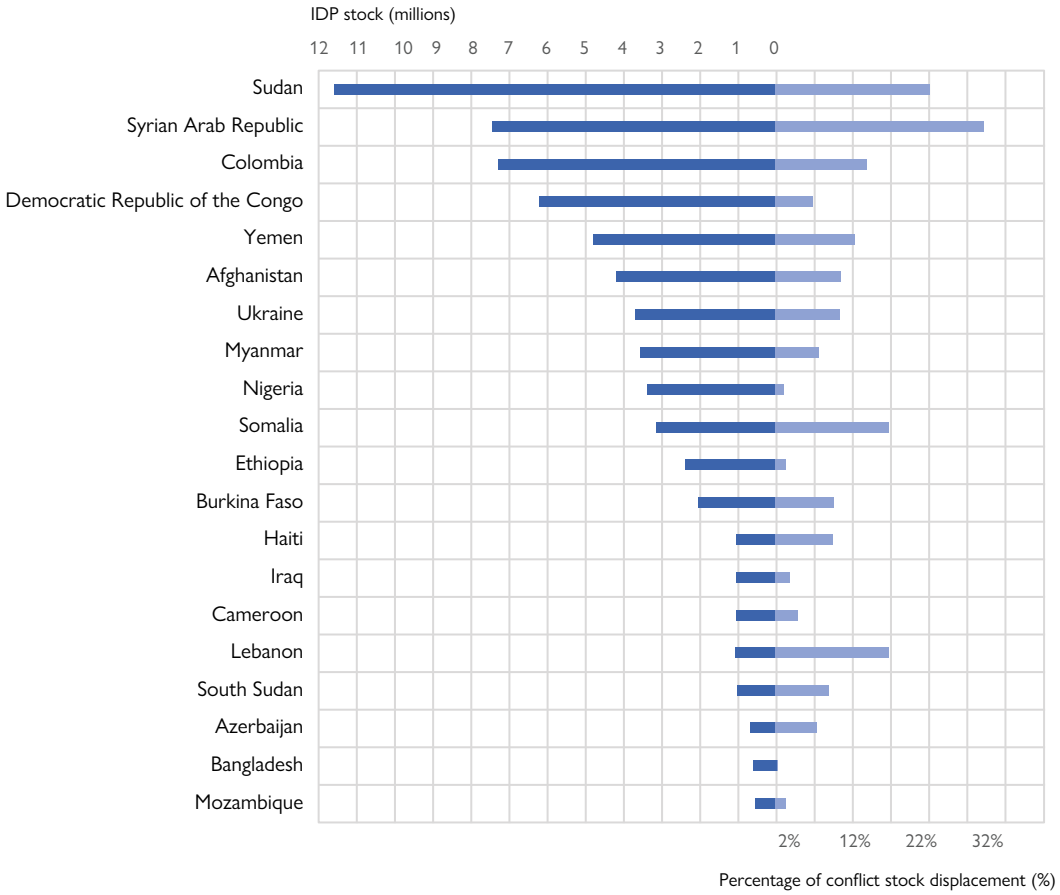
[40] The content in this subsection is based on and drawn from IDMC, 2025 (unless stated otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous IDMC GRID reports, as well as its data set (IDMC, n.d.) are other key sources of information.

[41] IDMC, 2025.

[42] A durable solution is achieved "when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement" (Brookings Institution and University of Bern, 2010).

[43] The criteria include: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective remedies and justice. See, for example, Brookings Institution and University of Bern, 2010; IDMC, 2019.

Figure 14. Top 20 countries with the largest populations of internally displaced persons by conflict and violence at the end of 2024 (millions)



Source: IDMC, n.d (accessed 31 October 2025); UN DESA, 2024.

Notes: IDP populations refer to the accumulated number of people displaced over time. The population size used to calculate the percentage of conflict IDPs is based on the total resident population of the country, as per UN DESA population estimates (2024).

PROGRESS 2024: the second *Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement*

PROGRESS, the Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement, was launched in 2023 to provide evidence on the factors which enable IDPs to move toward – and eventually achieve – durable solutions. PROGRESS is intended to support governments, development and humanitarian actors and host communities to increase and improve solutions' outcomes for IDPs.

PROGRESS complements the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions and the important International Recommendations on IDP Statistics from the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics in emphasizing that efforts to improve solution outcomes for IDPs must follow a tailored, effective process, while keeping the goal – full resolution of the displacement of an IDP – firmly at the front of our minds.

For an overview of our contemporary understanding of internal displacement, including trends, responses and solutions, see Chapter 7 of this *World Migration Report*.

Source: IOM and Georgetown University, 2024.

Displacements in 2024

An estimated 65.8 displacements or movements were recorded during 2024, 45.8 million of these due to disasters and 20.1 million as the result of conflict and violence. Disaster displacements in 2024 (recorded across 163 countries and territories) were the highest on record and accounted for 70 per cent of all internal displacements globally.[44]

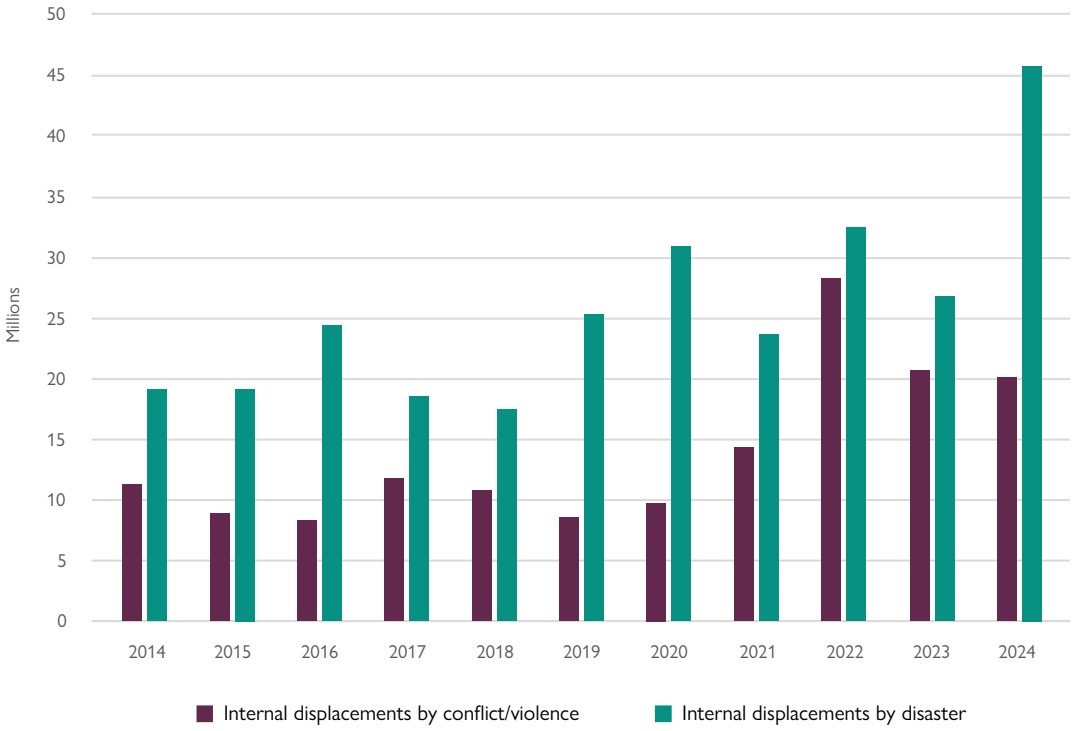
Factors such as climate change – shown to be increasing both the severity and frequency of disasters – as well as others such as poverty and inadequate infrastructure may be playing a role in the significant increase in the number of disaster displacements.[45]

As shown in Figure 15, annual disaster displacements continue to outnumber displacements associated with conflict and violence. Some of the largest disaster displacements, however, including in countries such as the United States and the Philippines, were largely the result of evacuations in response to storms, including cyclones. A significant portion of the global total of displacements by disasters is usually associated with short-term evacuations.

[44] IDMC, 2025.

[45] Ibid.

Figure 15. Internal displacements due to conflict or violence and disaster, 2014–2024 (millions)



Source: IDMC, n.d. (accessed 31 October 2025).

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in a given year, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. Displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during a given year.

The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is the largest primary data collection programme of IOM, providing data on internal displacement and human mobility. The purpose of DTM is to inform assistance and service delivery in complex crises by collecting and sharing data on human mobility dynamics, locations, demographics, living conditions and on the needs of IDPs and other affected populations.

In addition to providing data for humanitarian crisis settings, the core components of DTM have been adapted to deliver services in post-crisis, transition and recovery settings, as well as for those working to support safe and orderly migration in contexts of high mobility. To govern this work, codified technical standards and methodological frameworks, grounded in a wealth of experience collecting data and the collaborative efforts of DTM operations, have been developed in partnership with data users. These include United Nations sister agencies, humanitarian coordination structures, local and international NGOs, government actors and more.

Since 2004, DTM has operated in over 127 countries worldwide. In 2024, 20 years after the inception of the programme, DTM was active in 91 countries. In the same year, the total population captured by DTM assessments was 159.5 million. DTM assessments capture the following population groups: IDPs, IDP returnees, returnees from abroad, migrants, residents, residents departed within country and residents departed abroad. The largest share of those assessed in 2024 were IDPs: 57.1 million people.

For more about DTM and related global survey of operations in 2024, see IOM, 2025d.

Conclusions

It is important to understand migration and displacement, and how they are changing globally, given their relevance to States, local communities and individuals. Human migration and displacement may be age-old phenomena, but their manifestations and impacts have changed over time as the world has become more globalized and we increasingly experience major global transformations in geopolitical, environmental and technological domains.

Previously, as every new day had passed, we would witness more data and information on migration and displacement becoming available. Dramatic changes in the international arena, including concerning international cooperation on migration and displacement operations, programming, data collection and analysis, means that we are at risk of reverting back to fragmented evidence and even more "blind spots" globally, rather than fewer. This abrupt change has been evident in compiling this chapter, with delays to data set releases in various domains, and with reduction in platforms and technical staff in various organizations needed to deliver data and produce analysis designed to support effective responses.

Amidst high degrees of uncertainty, one of the unfortunate realities remains persistent in its truth and in its long-term direction. Globally, displacement caused by conflict, generalized violence and other factors continues to trend upward to new highs. Intractable, unresolved, recurring and newly reignited conflicts and violence have led to an increase in the number of refugees around the world. While a handful of countries continue to provide solutions for refugees, overall, these have been profoundly and persistently insufficient to address global needs, and we have seen the proportion of refugees resettled drop over time. Indications are now that we are entering a new low in refugee resettlement, which could be understatedly referred to as being in "deep crisis". In addition, there are estimated to be more people displaced internally than ever before. The reality is that we continue to read about the "new high" in global displacement (since the commencement of robust data collection) every time annual aggregated global data are released.

3 MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS: REGIONAL DIMENSIONS[1]

The previous chapter provides an overview of migration globally, with specific reference to international migrants and migration dynamics. Particular migrant groups – including international students, migrant workers, refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) – and international remittances were also discussed. Chapter 3 focuses primarily on the regional level, in order to provide a more detailed picture of migration that sets out a different but complementary perspective on migrants and movements in different parts of the world.[2]

Our starting point is geographic, rather than thematic, given that geography is one of the most significant factors shaping patterns of migration and displacement. Many people who migrate across borders do so within their immediate regions, to countries that are close by, countries to which it may be easier to travel, that may be more familiar, and from which it may also be easier to return. For people who are displaced, finding safety quickly is paramount. People, therefore, tend to be displaced to safer locations nearby, whether that is within their own country or across international borders.

This chapter seeks to assist migration policymakers, practitioners, researchers and students to make better sense of international migration globally by using a geographic perspective to present regional migration overviews. The analysis in this chapter focuses on six world regions as defined by the United Nations, and used by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and other organizations:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Northern America
- Oceania

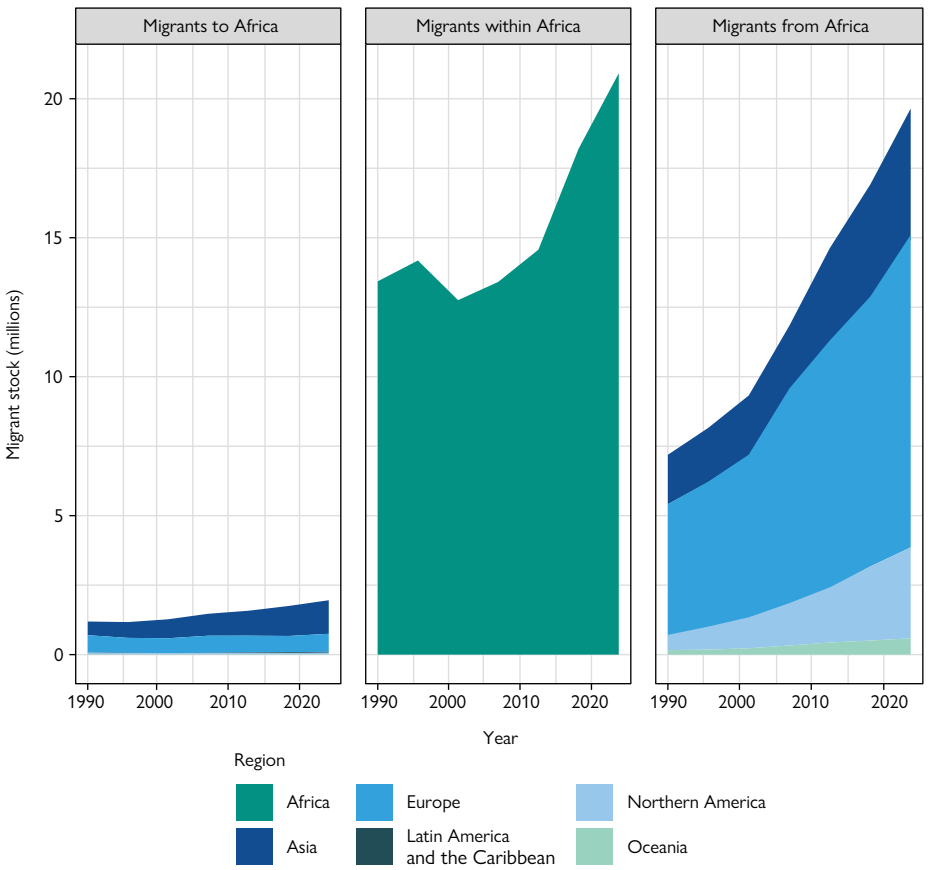
For each of these regions, the analysis includes an overview and brief discussion of key migration statistics based on data compiled and reported by UN DESA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the World Bank.

It is important to note that this chapter builds on the parallel regional chapters of the World Migration Reports of 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024, by providing an update on available statistics.[3] Significant changes over the two years since the last edition of the World Migration Report have been reflected in this chapter, which incorporates key updated data and information on migration. Thematic chapters in this volume may also be of interest, namely migration and development, regular migration pathways, climate migration and displacement, internal displacement, and disability and migration.

Africa

Migration in Africa is characterized by substantial numbers of international migrants moving both within and from the region. By mid-2024, around 45.8 million international migrants were from Africa. While this number has increased over the decades, from just under 20 million in 1990, it remains a small share of the region's population. International migrants from Africa comprised around 3 per cent of the region's overall population. As illustrated in Figure 1, most international migration occurs within the region, and this number has increased sharply since 2000.[4] The latest available international migrant stock data show that around 25 million Africans were living in another African country in 2024, a 17 per cent increase from five years ago (2020) and nearly 39 per cent more than in 2015. This is a reflection – in part – of increased cross-border displacement within the region, as well as of greater intraregional migration facilitated by free movement arrangements.

Figure 1. Migrants to, within and from Africa, 1990–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

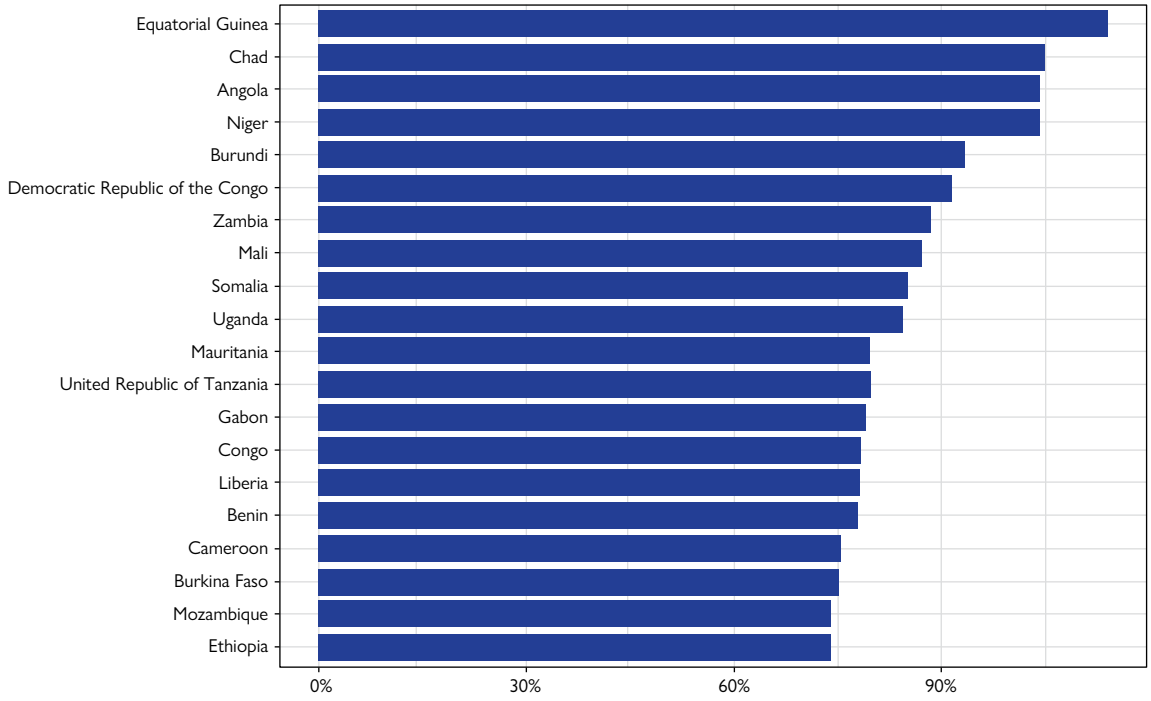
Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Migrants to Africa" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Africa) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. Europe or Asia). "Migrants within Africa" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Africa) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the African region. "Migrants from Africa" refers to people born in Africa who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe or Northern America).

The number of Africans living in different regions has also been growing, although not to the same extent as intraregional migration. Since 1990, this number has more than doubled, with around 21 million Africans currently living outside the region. The latest 2024 data also show that most African-born migrants living outside the region were residing in Europe (around 11 million), Asia (nearly 7 million) and Northern America (around 2.7 million).

One aspect to note about international migrants residing in Africa, as shown in Figure 1, is the small number of migrants who were born outside of the region and have since moved there. Over the last 30 years, this number has increased, from around 1.4 million in 2005 to nearly 2 million in 2024, with most having come from Asia (around 1.3 million) and Europe (around 583,000).

Figure 2 ranks the top 20 African countries with the largest proportional population change over the 20-year period from 2005 to 2024. All these countries experienced significant population growth during this period and, notably, virtually all of them are in sub-Saharan Africa. Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Angola, the Niger, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had the largest proportional population change over the two decades. This population growth in Africa contrasts with population change in Europe, for example, which has experienced slower population increases in some countries and even decline in others over the same period. Recent projections show that in the next three decades, the population in sub-Saharan Africa will grow even further (by nearly 80%) and reach 2.2 billion in 2054.[5]

Figure 2. Top 20 countries with the largest proportional population change in Africa, 2005–2024

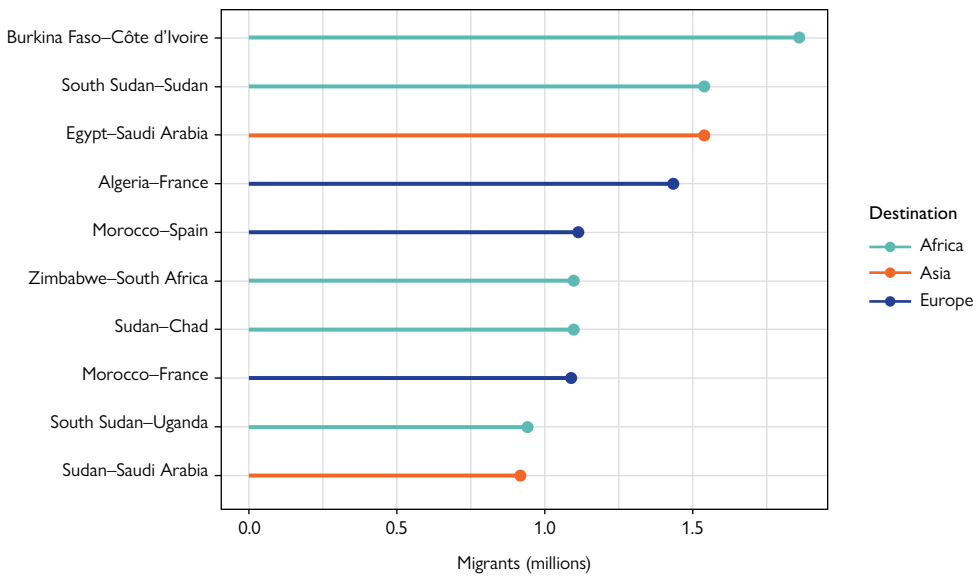


Source: UN DESA, 2024a.

Unlike many countries in regions such as Europe and Asia, where immigration has been and will continue to be the key driver of population growth, in Africa – particularly sub-Saharan Africa – high fertility levels are the main contributors to this growth. There are exceptions, however: for example, in Equatorial Guinea, which underwent the largest proportional population change in Africa over the last 20 years, the population increase has significantly been influenced by immigration in recent decades. The increase in migrants to Equatorial Guinea is largely the result of its economic growth linked to the oil, gas and construction sectors.[6] In 2005, international migrants accounted for less than 1 per cent of Equatorial Guinea's population, but by 2024, this figure had increased to more than 13 per cent.[7]

The largest migration corridors in Africa are shaped by a combination of geographic proximity, historical and socioeconomic linkages and displacement dynamics. The size of a migration corridor from country A to country B is measured as the number of immigrants from country A who were residing in country B in 2024. Migration corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries. The largest migration corridor in Africa, Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire, reflects long-standing labour migration and the countries' geographic proximity. Free movement arrangements in West Africa have also played a key role in further facilitating movement in the subregion. As shown in Figure 3, some of the largest migration corridors in Africa – such as South Sudan to the Sudan, the Sudan to Chad and South Sudan to Uganda – are the result of large-scale displacement due to conflict and violence. The Sudan is now facing the world's fastest-growing displacement crisis, worsened by global cuts to humanitarian aid.[8] Uganda, one of the top refugee-hosting countries, has also struggled in recent years to support its refugee population as international assistance continues to decline.[9] Other significant corridors that involve North African countries, such as from Egypt to Saudi Arabia, Algeria to France and Morocco to Spain, in part reflect labour migration along these corridors and in part reflect postcolonial historical ties and geographic proximity.

Figure 3. Top 10 migration corridors involving African countries, 2024

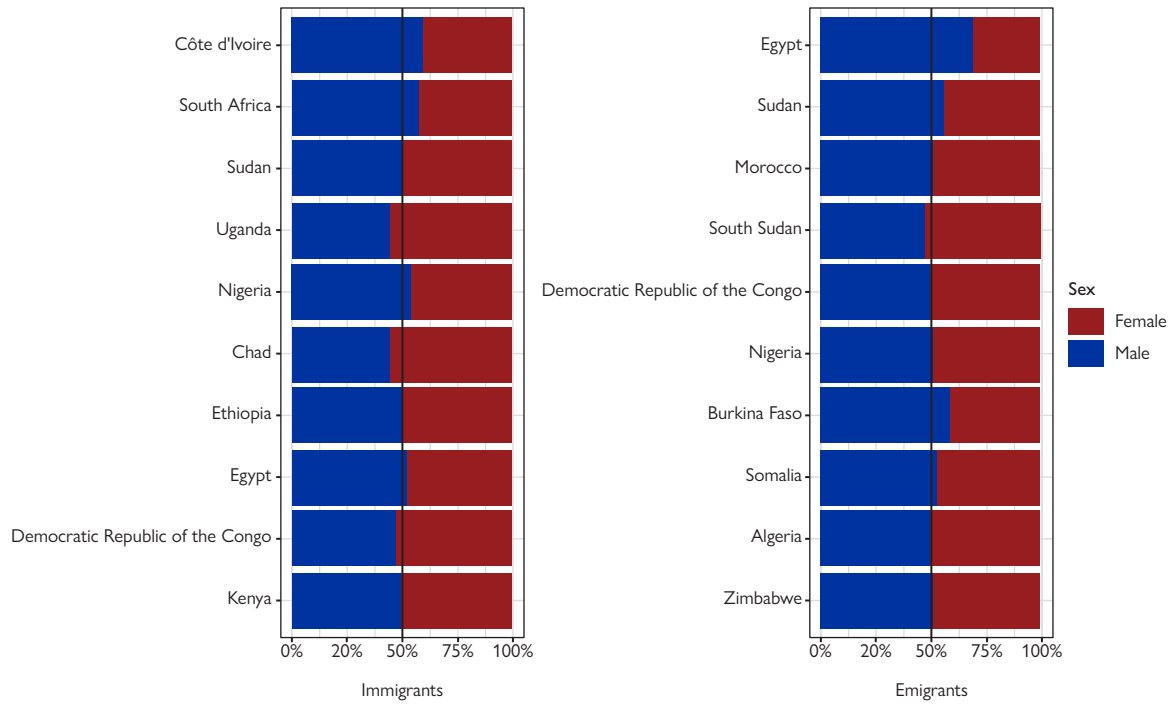


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

In Africa, the proportions of female and male migrants in the top destination countries are largely similar, with only slight differences between countries, with a few exceptions. In Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa, the share of male immigrants is significantly larger. This reflects gendered labour migration pathways in both countries where seasonal work in construction and cocoa agriculture in Côte d'Ivoire,[10] and employment in the mining and construction sectors in South Africa, are prominent.[11] And in Uganda and Chad, the share of female immigrants is substantially larger than males. In the top 10 origin countries in Africa, the share of male and female migrants is also broadly the same. Exceptions include Egypt – the top country of origin in the region – which has a far greater share of male than female emigrants. The Sudan and Burkina Faso both also have a share of male emigrants that, while not as large as Egypt, is also substantial. In North African countries, in particular, the higher number of male migrants is largely due to traditional patterns of migrating independently for work.[12]

Figure 4. Top 10 African destination (left) and origin (right) countries by sex, 2024



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

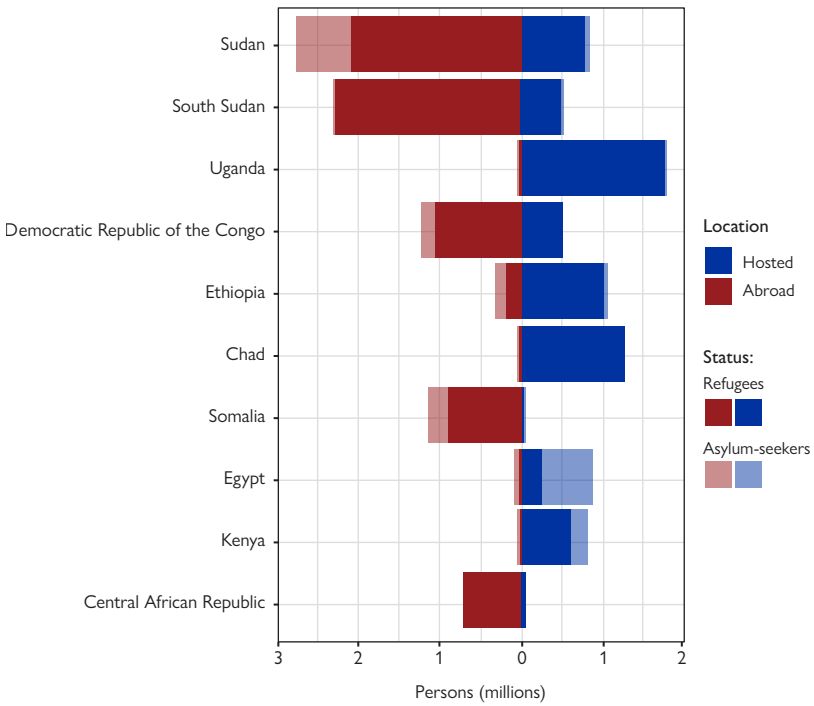
Note: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

As shown in Figure 5, displacement remains a key feature in Africa, with some countries on the continent being both the origin and destination of some of the largest number of refugees and asylum-seekers.[13] Figure 5 shows the top 10 countries in Africa, ranked by the combined total of refugees and asylum-seekers both hosted by and originating from that country. South Sudan remained the country of origin of the largest number of refugees in Africa in 2024 (around 2.3 million). The number of refugees from South Sudan has been the highest among African

countries in recent years, with most hosted by Uganda, the Sudan and Ethiopia. The conflict in the Sudan, which began in 2023, has resulted in one of the world's largest displacement crises, with the country being now the origin of the second largest number of refugees in Africa (around 2.1 million), a 40 per cent increase from the previous year. Similar to South Sudan, most refugees and asylum-seekers from the Sudan were hosted by neighbouring countries at end of 2024, with the vast majority in Chad, Egypt, South Sudan and Libya. The prolonged conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including clashes between State and non-State armed groups, have also resulted in significant cross-border displacement from the country. There were more than 1 million refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2024, the third-largest number in Africa. Somalia and the Central African Republic were the origin countries of the fourth and fifth largest refugee populations in the region.

Uganda, meanwhile, continued to host the largest refugee population in Africa and the fifth highest globally (nearly 1.8 million), most from neighbouring countries such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With around 1.1 million refugees from the Sudan alone, Chad hosted the second largest refugee population in Africa. Countries such as the Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – which are also the origin countries of some of the highest numbers of refugees – are also hosts of large refugee populations. Africa remains the only region where multiple countries both host and produce large numbers of refugees.

Figure 5. Top 10 African countries by total refugees and asylum-seekers, 2024

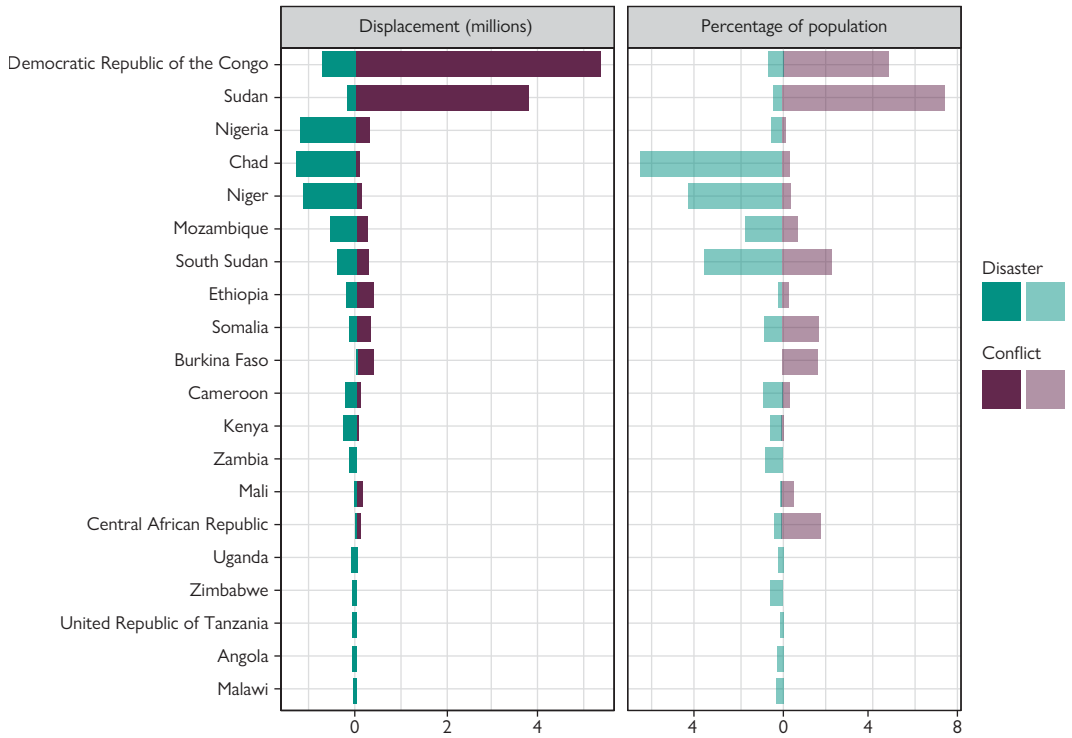


Source: UNHCR, n.d.a.

Note: "Hosted" refers to those refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who are residing in the receiving country (right-hand side of the figure); "abroad" refers to refugees and asylum-seekers originating from that country who are outside of their origin country. The top 10 countries are based on 2024 data and are calculated by combining the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from countries.

As in previous years, the vast majority of internal displacements in Africa in 2024 were the result of conflict and violence, and most occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.[14] With over 5 million and 3.7 million displacements respectively, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan had the largest numbers of conflict-induced internal displacements in the region. Together, these two countries accounted for nearly 80 per cent of displacements triggered by conflict and violence in sub-Saharan Africa. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's crisis has lasted for decades but was further intensified in 2024 by various armed groups, worsening what was an already dire humanitarian situation.[15] In the Sudan, meanwhile, the conflict that started in 2023 has led not just to significant internal and cross-border displacement but also to what has been deemed among the world's worst humanitarian crises.[16]

Figure 6. Top 20 African countries by internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2024



Source: IDMC, n.d; UN DESA, 2024a.

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in 2024, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during the year.

The population size used to calculate the percentage of new disaster and conflict displacements is based on the total resident population of the country per 2024 UN DESA population estimates, and the percentage is for relative illustrative purposes only.

The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. DTM accounted for 52 per cent of 2024 internal displacement figures provided in the IDMC annual global report on internal displacement (GRID) (IOM, 2025).

Disasters also resulted in a significant number of internal displacements in Africa. Some of the same countries with large numbers of internal displacements due to conflict and violence, such as the Sudan, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also recorded substantial disaster displacements, with some of the same people affected. More than 1.2 million disaster displacements (largely due to floods) were recorded in Nigeria and around 750,000 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Chad, considered among the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change, had the largest internal disaster displacements in Africa in 2024 (more than 1.3 million), largely triggered by floods. This was also Chad's largest number of disaster displacements on record. Other countries that experienced large numbers of disaster displacements in 2024 included the Niger (around 1.1 million) and Mozambique (585,000).

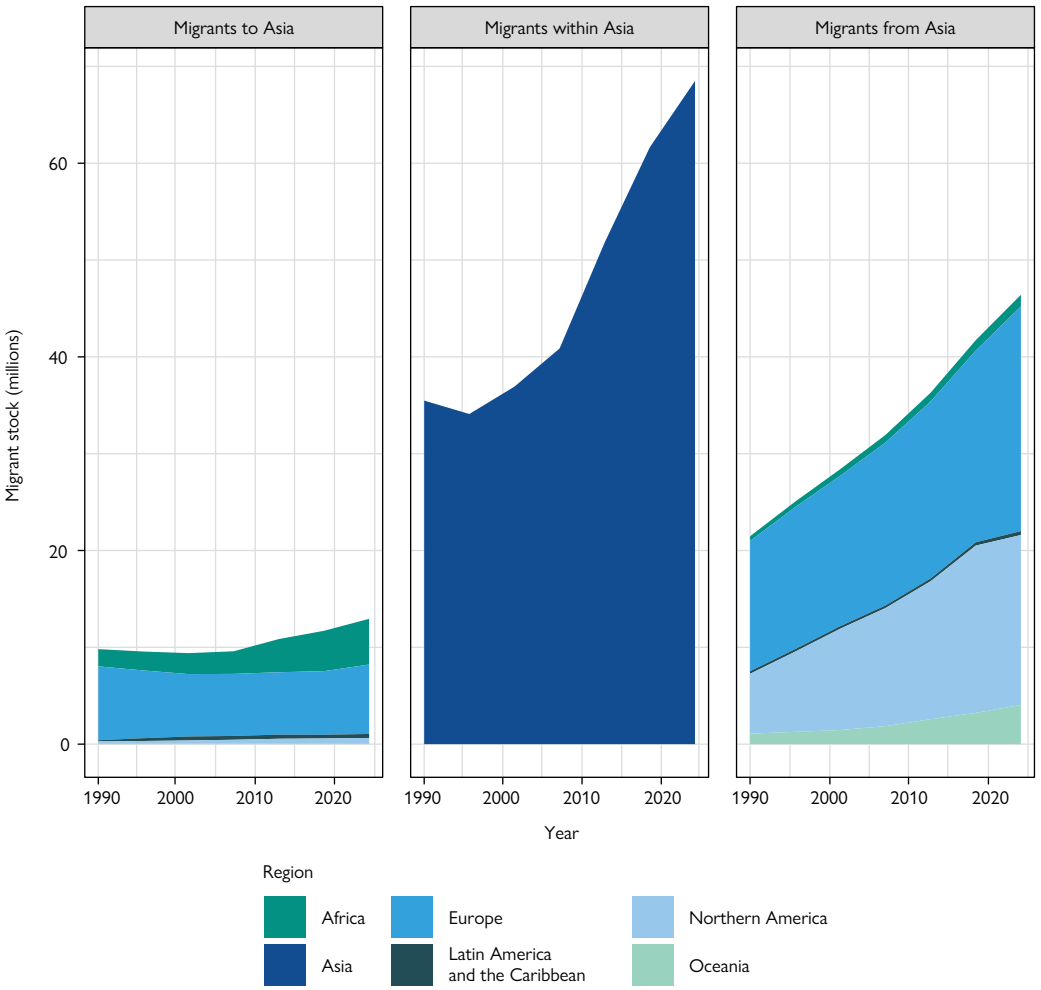
Asia

Asia – home to around 4.8 billion people – was the origin of over 40 per cent of the world's international migrants (nearly 121 million), as shown in the latest available international migrant stock data (2024). The number of international migrants from Asia (as a share of the region's population) has remained relatively stable over the decades, increasing modestly from around 1.7 per cent in 1990 to 2.5 per cent in 2024. More than half of international migrants from Asia (74 million) were residing in other countries in Asia, compared with 62 million in 2015. As shown in the middle panel of Figure 7, intraregional migration in Asia has been a significant trend over the decades, confirmed by the most recent data. International migration within Asia is predominantly comprised of migrant workers, although other factors – such as cross-border displacement and international student migration – have also contributed to the increased amount of intraregional migration.

Growth has also occurred in the number of Asian-born migrant populations in other regions, particularly Northern America and Europe. In 2024, migration from Asia to Northern America reached nearly 20 million, rising from almost 18 million in 2020. These numbers are similar to those for migration from Asia to Europe, which stood at 20 million in 2024, increasing from almost 19 million in 2020. Migration from Asia to Northern America and Europe drove much of the increase in the number of Asian migrants outside the region, which stands at around 46 million in 2024.

The number of non-Asian-born migrants in Asia (around 13 million) has remained at relatively low levels since 1990. Africans comprise the largest group of migrants from outside Asia in the region (nearly 6.7 million), followed by Europeans (close to 5 million). The number of European migrants in Asia include migrants from the European part of the former Soviet Union now living in Central Asia.

Figure 7. Migrants to, within and from Asia, 1990–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

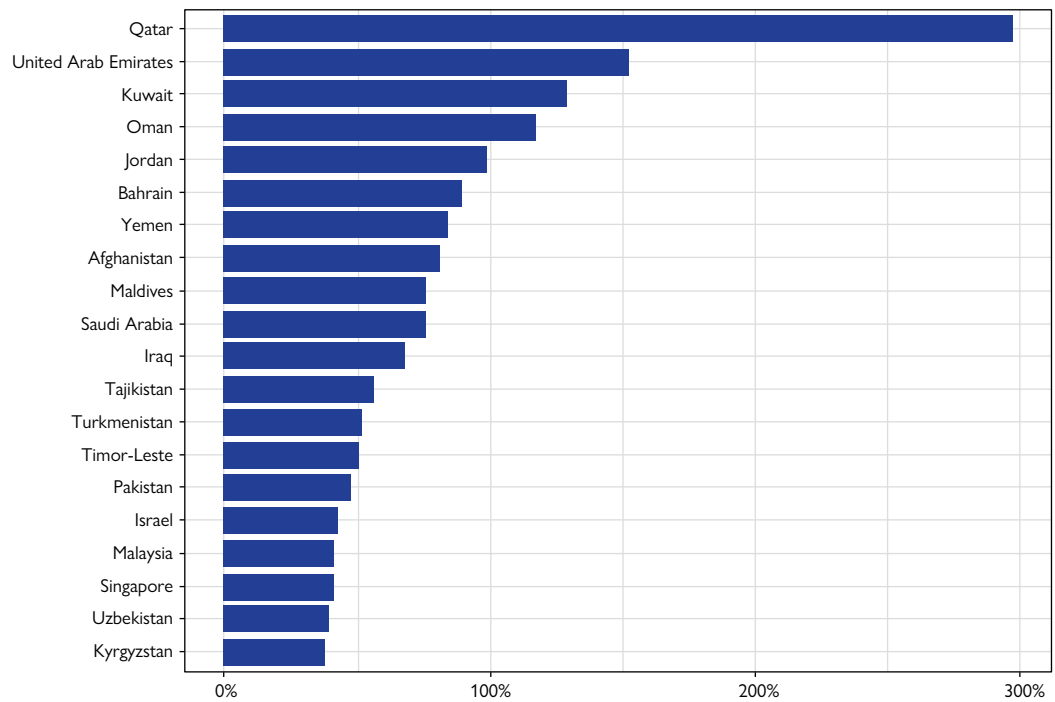
Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Migrants to Asia" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Asia) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. Europe or Africa). "Migrants within Asia" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Asia) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the Asian region. "Migrants from Asia" refers to people born in Asia who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe or Northern America).

Figure 8 shows the top 20 Asian countries with the largest proportional population change from 2005 to 2024. All top 20 countries experienced increases in their populations during this period, with several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries undergoing the most substantial changes in the size of their populations. The GCC States of Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman comprise the top 4 countries with the largest population changes over the 20-year period, as reflected in Figure 8.

Immigration is a driver of population growth in Asia, particularly in GCC countries. These States remain important destinations for migrant workers from Asia and beyond who work across a range of sectors, including construction, hospitality, retail, domestic and care sectors, among others.[17] In 2024, international migrants accounted for nearly 77 per cent, 74 per cent and more than 67 per cent of the populations of Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, respectively.[18]

It is important to highlight, however, that while migration is playing an important role in population changes across the region, Asia's demographic changes are characterized by a complex mix of additional factors, such as ageing populations and declining fertility rates in some countries.[19]

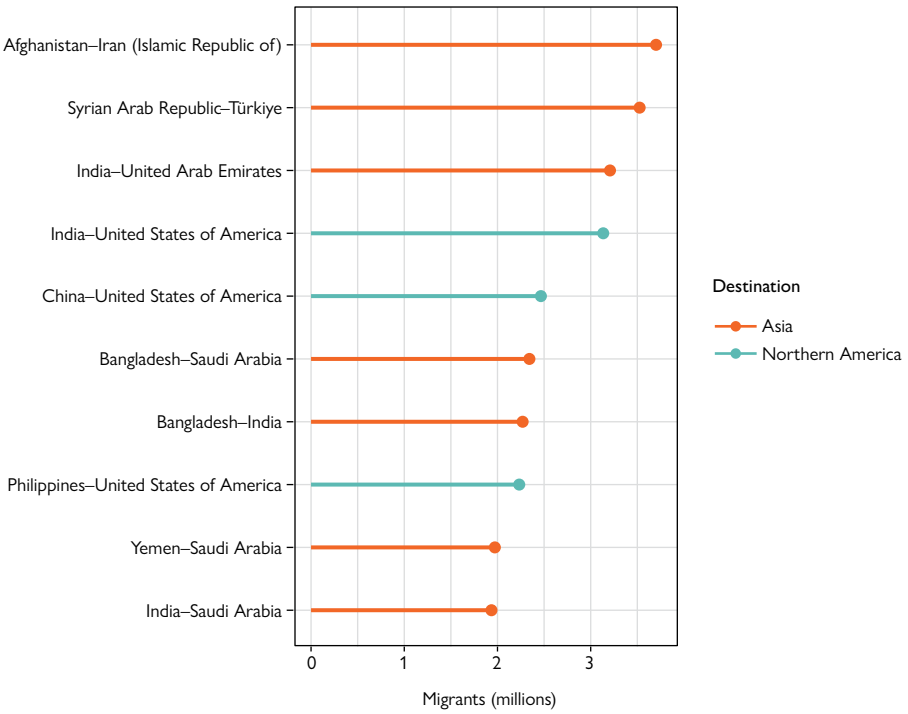
Figure 8. Top 20 countries with the largest proportional population change in Asia, 2005–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2024a.

Figure 9 shows the top 10 country-to-country migration corridors involving Asian countries. The majority (7 of the 10) occur within the region. These migration corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries. The largest corridor is from Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, a change from five years ago when the largest corridor was from the Syrian Arab Republic to Türkiye. Afghan migration and displacement to the Islamic Republic of Iran is long standing and has been ongoing for decades, with around 3.7 million Afghans living in the country by mid-2024. In late 2024, a large-scale return initiative was introduced in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the stated aim of returning up to 2 million Afghan refugees.[20] This led to a significant increase in both involuntary and voluntary returns, as compared to the previous year.[21] While Afghan migration has traditionally been male dominated, particularly due to the extreme risks involved in irregular movement,[22] the takeover by the Taliban in 2021 and the subsequent restrictions on the movements and actions of women and girls by the de facto Taliban authority have led to a rise in the number of female displacements, often in unsafe conditions.[23] The second largest corridor – the Syrian Arab Republic to Türkiye – is also largely the result of displacement due to conflict. Nearly 3.6 million Syrians were living in Türkiye in 2024. Some of the other significant migration corridors from Asia involve large numbers of migrant workers from countries such as India and Bangladesh to Gulf countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Figure 9. Top 10 migration corridors involving Asian countries, 2024

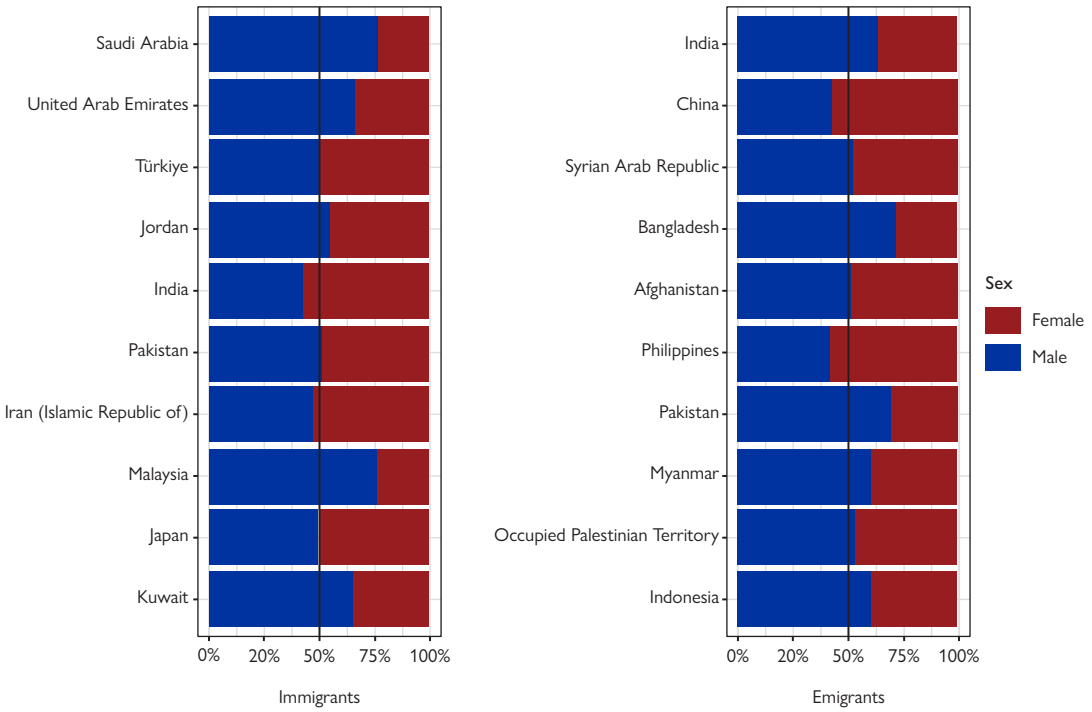


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

In Asia, the distribution of female and male migrants in the top 10 countries of destination and origin is much more varied than it is in other regions. In the top destination countries, Gulf countries – including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – have a far greater share of male than female immigrants. Migrants comprise high proportions of total populations in several Gulf States. In the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, for example, the share of immigrants (both male and female) was 74 per cent and nearly 67 per cent, respectively. This male-dominant migration pattern is largely driven by labour demand in sectors such as construction, and oil and gas, which has historically outpaced demand for female migrant workers (in, for example, domestic roles). Additionally, temporary labour contracts for male migrants often prohibit family accompaniment, further reinforcing the gender imbalance.[24] Malaysia is the only non-Gulf country where the proportion of male immigrants is significantly higher than that of females, with a large number of migrant workers from countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal.[25] India, meanwhile, had a higher share of female than male immigrants. Among the top 10 countries of origin in Asia, nearly all of them – China and the Philippines are the exceptions – had a larger share of male than female emigrants. Countries with a significantly high proportion of male emigrants include India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar and Indonesia. This male-dominant migration pattern is largely shaped by labour migration trends, as already noted, particularly toward Gulf and South-East Asian countries, where demand in sectors like construction, manufacturing and agriculture continues to drive the emigration of working-age men.[26]

Figure 10. Top 10 Asian destination (left) and origin (right) countries by sex, 2024*



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

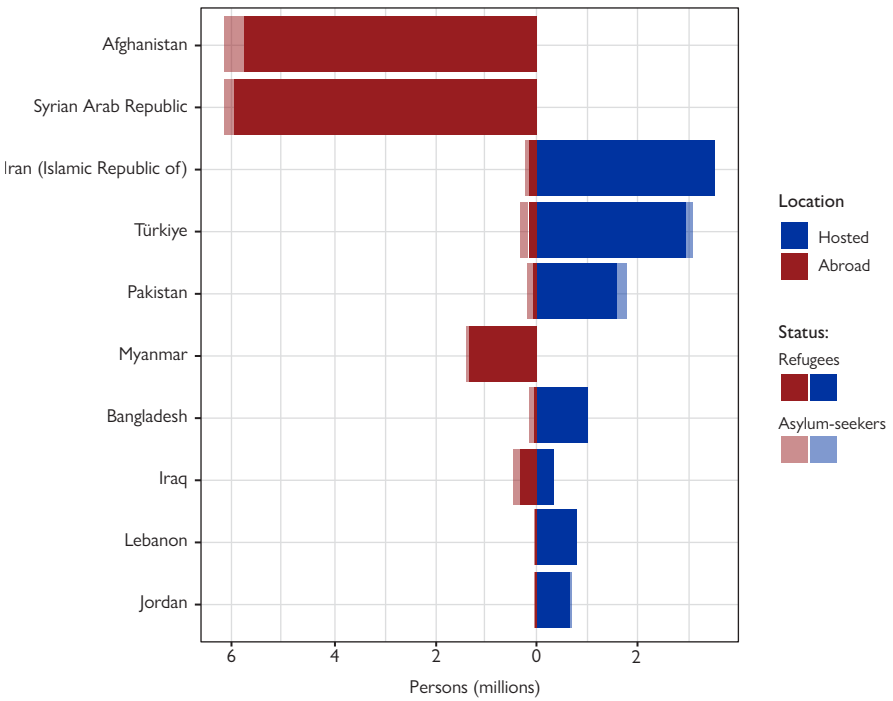
Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

*This includes territories.

Cross-border displacement is a major feature in Asia, as shown in Figure 11. The Syrian Arab Republic continued to be the largest origin country of refugees in the region in 2024 (nearly 6 million), although this figure dropped by 6 per cent from the previous year.[27] One in six refugees globally were Syrian. Closely behind the Syrian Arab Republic is Afghanistan, which was the origin of around 5.8 million refugees, the second largest number in the region. While the number of refugees from Afghanistan remains one of the highest in the world, it decreased by 10 per cent in 2024 from the year prior. The decrease is primarily due to returns to Afghanistan, including deportations from some host countries. The scale of returns to Afghanistan, which has strained already limited resources, has worsened the country's already acute humanitarian crisis.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye and Pakistan, meanwhile, hosted the first, second and third-largest number of refugees in the region, respectively. The Islamic Republic of Iran hosted around 3.5 million refugees, most of them from Afghanistan, while most refugees in Türkiye were from the Syrian Arab Republic. With 1.6 million Afghan refugees, Pakistan hosted the second largest number of refugees from Afghanistan. Bangladesh, meanwhile, with around 1 million refugees who fled violence and conflict in Myanmar, was host to the fourth largest number of migrants in the region in 2024.

Figure 11. Top 10 Asian countries by total refugees and asylum-seekers, 2024



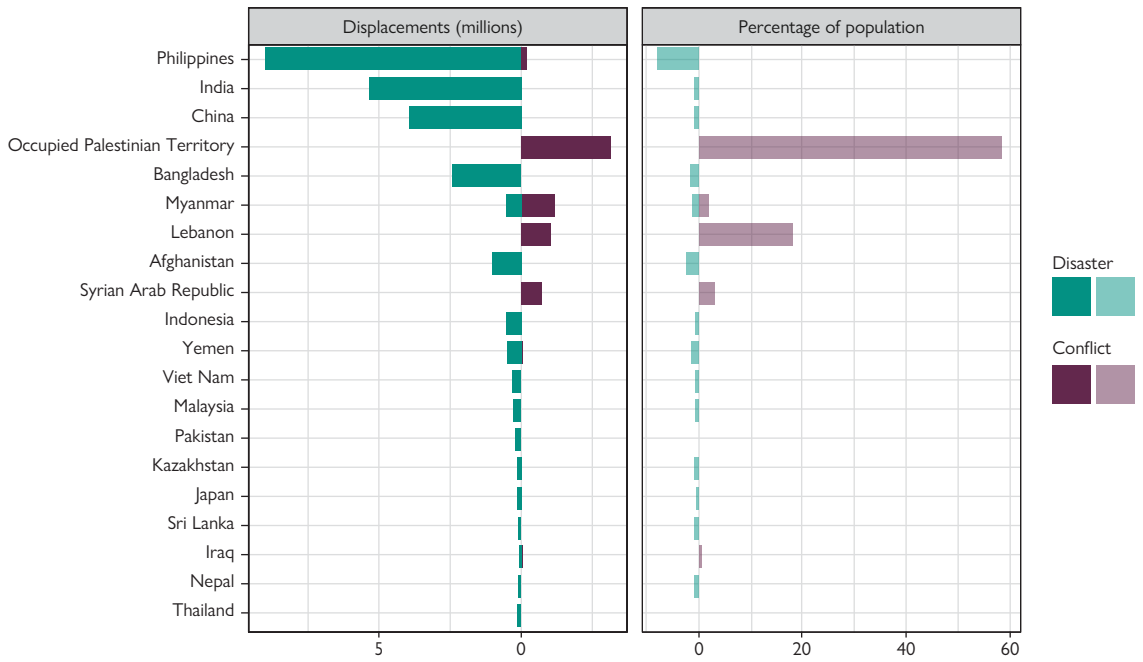
Source: UNHCR, n.d.a.

Note: "Hosted" refers to those refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who are residing in the receiving country (right-hand side of the figure); "abroad" refers to refugees and asylum-seekers originating from that country who are outside of their origin country. The top 10 countries are based on 2024 data and are calculated by combining the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from countries.

Consistent with previous years, the largest internal displacements in Asia in 2024 were triggered by disasters rather than conflict and violence.[28] The Philippines recorded the highest number of internal disaster displacements in the region and the second largest in the world, after the United States. There were nearly 9 million disaster displacements in the Philippines in 2024, most of which (86%) were the result of typhoons. The Philippines is among the world's most disaster-prone countries and one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.[29] Internal disaster displacements in India were the second largest in the region, exceeding 5 million, and triggered by floods and storms, including significant cyclones. China, with more than 3.9 million internal disaster displacements in 2024, recorded the third highest figure in Asia, driven largely by Typhoon Yagi. Most displacements in China were government-driven evacuations, particularly in Guangdong and Hainan provinces.

The largest numbers of internal displacements induced by conflict and violence in Asia (more than 3 million) were recorded in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where hostilities have resulted in significant displacement and an acute humanitarian crisis, leaving half a million people stuck in famine at time of writing.[30] Other countries in Asia where significant numbers of displacement due to conflict and violence were recorded included Myanmar (more than 1.2 million), Lebanon (over 1 million) and the Syrian Arab Republic (768,000).

Figure 12. Top 20 Asian countries by internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2024



Source: IDMC, n.d.; UN DESA, 2024a.

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in 2024, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during the year.

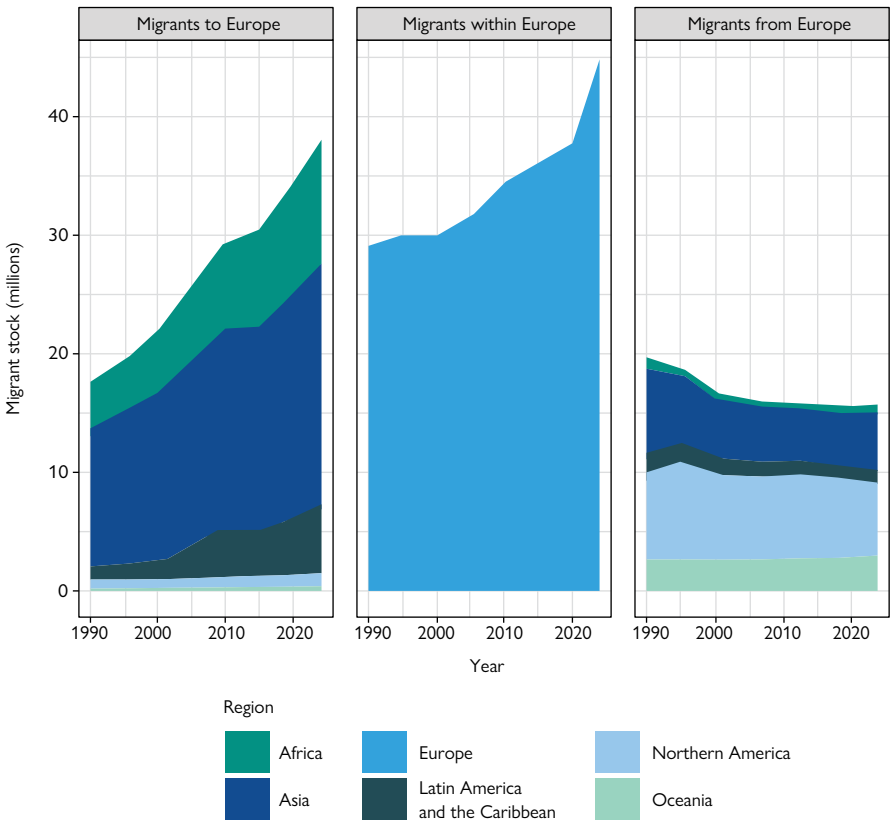
The population size used to calculate the percentage of new disaster and conflict displacements is based on the total resident population of the country per 2024 UN DESA population estimates, and the percentage is for relative illustrative purposes only.

The IOM DTM database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. DTM accounted for 52 per cent of 2024 internal displacement figures provided in the IDMC GRID (IOM, 2025).

Europe

The latest available international migrant stock data (2024) show that just over 94 million international migrants lived in Europe, an increase of more than 13 per cent since 2020, when close to 83 million international migrants resided in the region. Just under half of these (45 million) were born in Europe but were living elsewhere in the region; this number has increased since 2020, rising from almost 38 million and largely driven by refugees from Ukraine fleeing conflict, especially since the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of the country in 2022.[31] In 2024, the population of non-European migrants in Europe was over 38 million, increasing from nearly 35 million in 2020. Most international migrants in Europe in 2024 came from Asia (20 million), Africa (10.6 million) and Latin America and the Caribbean (just over 6 million).

Figure 13. Migrants to, within and from Europe, 1990–2024



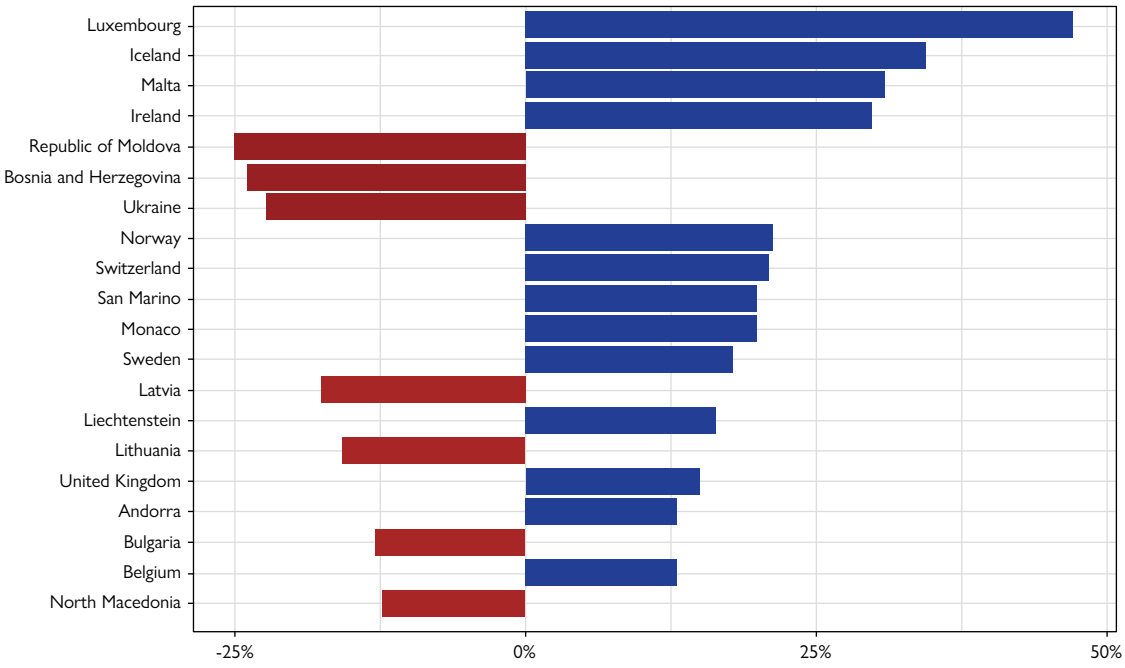
Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Migrants to Europe" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Europe) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. Africa or Asia). "Migrants within Europe" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Europe) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the European region. "Migrants from Europe" refers to people born in Europe who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Latin America and the Caribbean or Northern America).

In 1990, there were roughly equal numbers of Europeans living outside Europe as non-Europeans living in Europe (see Figure 13). However, unlike the growth in migration to Europe, the number of Europeans living outside Europe mostly declined during the last 35 years. This decline reflects – in part – better economic conditions within Europe that made emigration less attractive, as well as a free movement area that has significantly increased intraregional migration over the decades.[32] In 2024, around 16 million Europeans were residing in regions other than Europe (a decline from nearly 20 million in 1990), primarily in Northern America (around 6.6 million) and Asia (nearly 5 million).

Figure 14 ranks the top 20 European countries with the largest proportional population change between 2005 and 2024. While several countries – such as Luxembourg, Iceland, Malta and Ireland – experienced significant population growth during this period (although to a much lesser degree compared with the top ranked countries in Africa and Asia), seven countries in Europe underwent substantial population decline over the 20-year period, as captured in Figure 14. The Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine experienced the steepest declines. For Ukraine, its population decline in recent years has been exacerbated by the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion, which has forced millions of Ukrainians to flee the country.[33]

Figure 14. Top 20 countries with the largest proportional population change in Europe, 2005–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2024a.

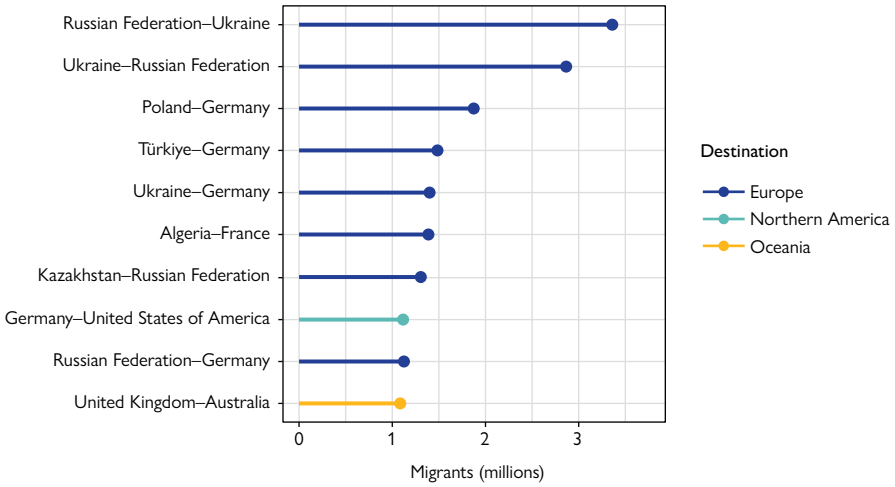
Compared with other regions, Europe has the largest number of countries that underwent significant population decline between 2005 and 2024. Moreover, over the next three decades, several European countries, such as the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Lithuania are expected to see the size of their populations decline by 20 per cent or more.[34] Low fertility rates are the most important driver of negative population change in parts of Europe, although emigration has also contributed to this decline.[35] In countries such as Albania, Lithuania,

the Republic of Moldova, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where fertility rates are already below replacement levels, emigration of people in the reproductive age may contribute to a further decline in the population due to the number of births lost following outward migration.[36]

For many countries in Europe, immigration is expected to continue being a key driver of population growth, lessening the decline in population size resulting from an older age structure and low fertility levels. Without immigration, the population sizes of some countries (such as Germany and Italy) would have peaked even sooner.[37]

Figure 15 shows the top 10 migration corridors involving European countries. The Russian Federation features heavily in the main corridors. Russian-born populations in former member States of the Soviet Union, such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan, participated in some of the largest European migration corridors in 2024. It is important to note, however, that these Russian-born populations only became international migrants after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation will also have impacted several corridors across the region; however, this may not be reflected in full (see notes on Figure 15). Meanwhile, half the corridors are intraregional and nearly half are toward Germany, underscoring its position as a major destination country in Europe and the second leading destination for international migrants globally. Germany was home to nearly 16.8 million international migrants in 2024. While most of the largest corridors involving European countries are the result of long-standing labour or family migration, the fifth largest corridor – Ukraine to Germany – is largely the result of conflict displacement since 2022. The number of Ukrainians in Germany has increased from around 270,000 in 2020 to more than 1.4 million in 2024.[38]

Figure 15. Top 10 migration corridors involving European countries, 2024



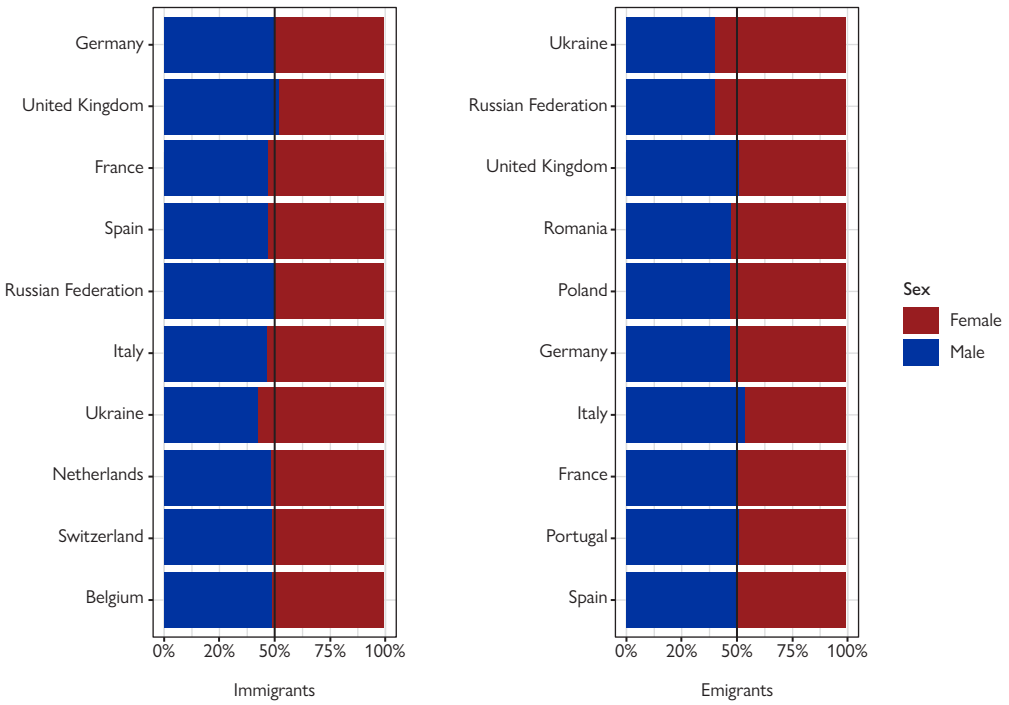
Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

While several corridors involving European countries will have been impacted by the Russian Federation's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, this may not be fully reflected in the 2024 data for a range of reasons, such as the suspension of activities of statistical offices or limitations to the work of administrative sources.

In Europe, the distribution of female and male migrants is about equal across the top 10 countries of both destination and origin, with only small differences between countries. Unlike Africa and Asia – where most countries have higher shares of male than female migrants – in Europe, there are more countries with higher shares of female than male migrants (in both the top destination and origin countries). This trend reflects the growth of female migration in recent years, particularly in Northern America and Europe, where migration policies have favoured permanent settlement and family reunification, resulting in older migrant populations. In addition, strong demand for female care workers to support ageing populations in countries such as Czechia, Germany, Italy and Poland has further contributed to this gendered pattern.[39] In the top 10 destination countries, Ukraine has a notably higher proportion of female immigrants than males when compared with other European countries. The Russian Federation and Ukraine also have the highest share of female emigrants among origin countries. In the case of Ukraine, this is in part due to the mass displacement following the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in 2022, during which millions of refugees, primarily women and children, fled the country, as adult men aged 18 to 60 were restricted from leaving under martial law.[40]

Figure 16. Top 10 European destination (left) and origin (right) countries by sex, 2024

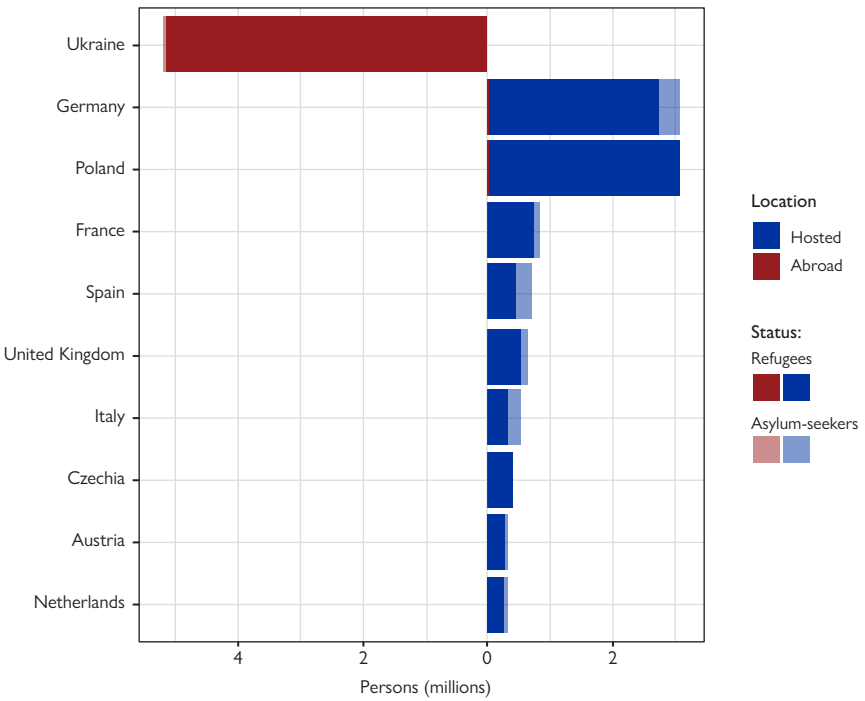


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

As shown in Figure 17, Ukraine remained the origin country of the largest number of refugees in Europe in 2024 (more than 5 million).[41] This large-scale displacement continued to be driven by the international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The prolonged armed conflict – now in its fourth year at the time of writing – was triggered by the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Most refugees from Ukraine were hosted in Germany and Poland. These two countries were also, respectively, host to the first and second largest numbers of refugees in Europe. Germany, with more than 2.7 million refugees, largely from the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Afghanistan, was host to the third-largest number of refugees in the world, after the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye. France also hosted a significant number of refugees in 2024 (more than 700,000)

Figure 17. Top 10 European countries by total refugees and asylum-seekers, 2024



Source: UNHCR, n.d.a.

Note: "Hosted" refers to those refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who are residing in the receiving country (right-hand side of the figure); "abroad" refers to refugees and asylum-seekers originating from that country who are outside of their origin country. The top 10 countries are based on 2024 data and are calculated by combining the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from countries.

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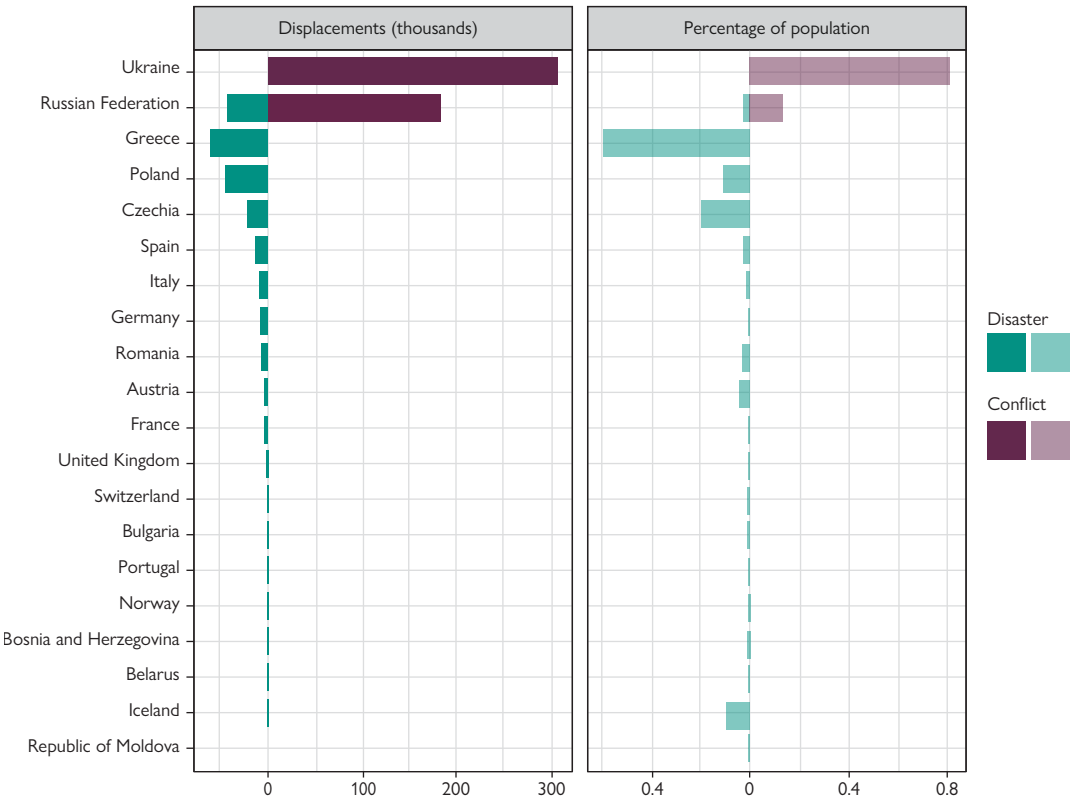
Ukraine continued to have the largest number of internal displacements due to conflict and violence in Europe (over 300,000 in 2024).[42] Since the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Ukraine has recorded the highest number of internal conflict displacements in the region. However, displacements due to conflict and violence in Ukraine in 2024 were lower than those recorded in the two years prior (2022 and 2023), although it is not clear if this is because of reduced availability of data or a drop in displacements.[43] The Russian Federation recorded the second largest number of displacements triggered by conflict and violence in 2024 (182,000), the result of the ongoing conflict with Ukraine.[44] Greece had the highest number of internal disaster displacements in Europe in 2024 (60,000), triggered by large-scale fires. Poland recorded the second-largest number of internal disaster displacements in Europe in 2024 (44,000) due to storms. The burst of a dam and related flooding in the city of Orsk resulted in most of the 43,000 disaster displacements in the Russian Federation, the third-largest number in Europe.

Figure 18. Top 20 European countries by internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2024



Source: IDMC, n.d; UN DESA, 2024a.

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in 2024, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during the year.

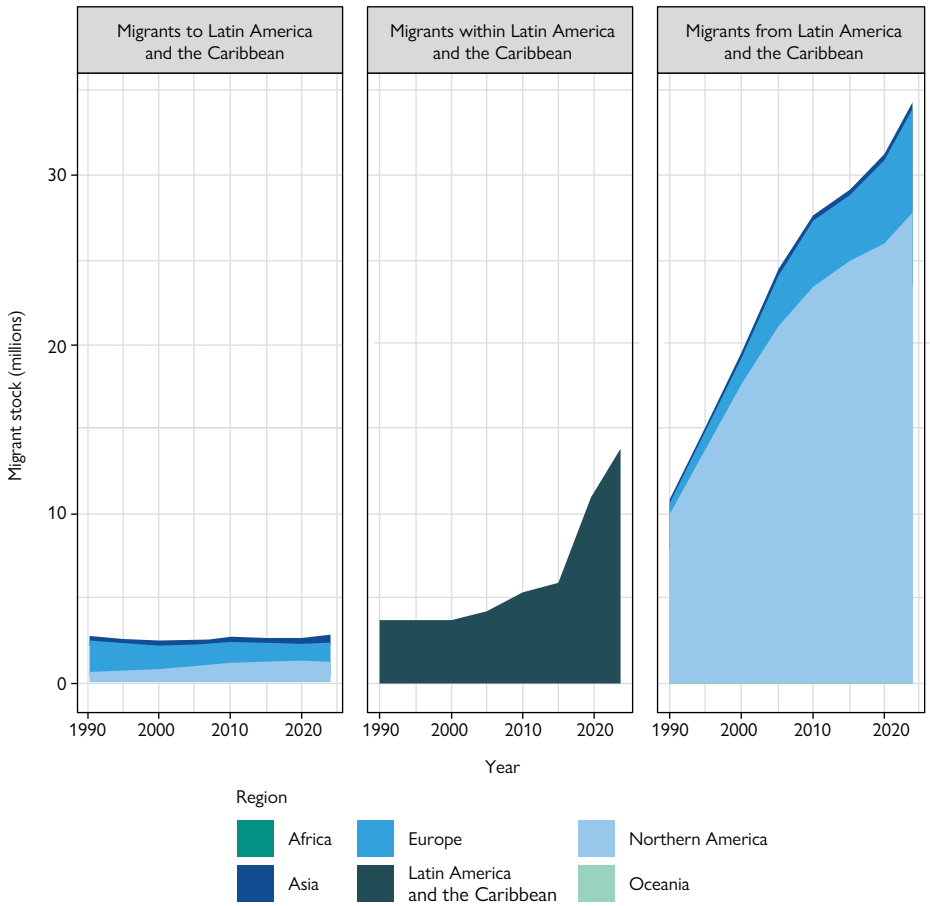
The population size used to calculate the percentage of new disaster and conflict displacements is based on the total resident population of the country per 2024 UN DESA population estimates, and the percentage is for relative illustrative purposes only.

The IOM DTM database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. DTM accounted for 52 per cent of 2024 internal displacement figures provided in the IDMC annual GRID (IOM, 2025).

Latin America and the Caribbean

Migration to Northern America is a key feature in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. The latest available international migrant stock data (2024) show that over 27 million migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean were residing in Northern America. As shown in Figure 19, the Latin American and Caribbean population living in Northern America has increased considerably over time, from just under 10 million in 1990. Another 6 million migrants from the region were in Europe in 2024, up from nearly 5 million in 2020. While this number has not grown significantly since 2020, the number of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean living in Europe has more than quadrupled since 1990. Other regions, such as Asia and Oceania, were home to a very small number of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean in 2024 (around 407,000 and almost 300,000 migrants, respectively).

Figure 19. Migrants to, within and from Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

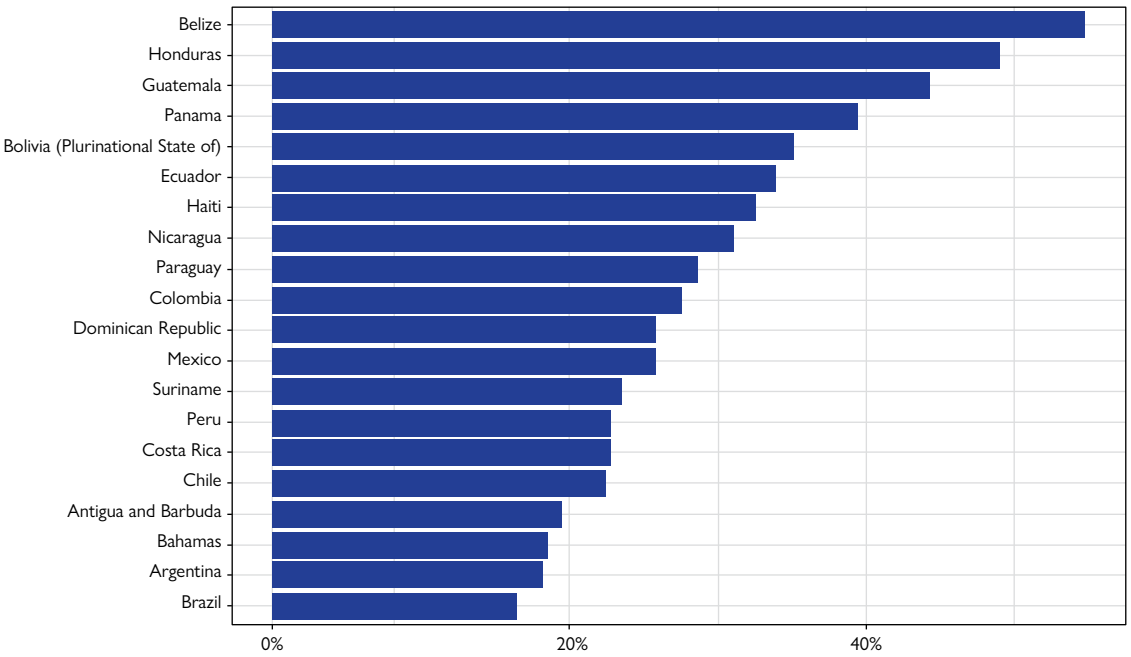
Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Migrants to Latin America and the Caribbean" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Latin America and the Caribbean) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. in Europe or Asia). "Migrants within Latin America and the Caribbean" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Latin America and the Caribbean) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the Latin America and the Caribbean region. "Migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean" refers to people born in Latin America and the Caribbean who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe or Northern America).

The total number of migrants from other regions living in Latin America and the Caribbean has remained relatively stable, at around 3 million over the last 35 years. These are comprised mostly of Europeans and Northern Americans, though the number of Europeans has largely declined over the period, and the number of North Americans has increased. In 2024, the number of Europeans and Northern Americans living in Latin America and the Caribbean stood at around 1.2 million and 1.3 million, respectively. Meanwhile, around 14 million migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean originated from other countries within the region in 2024, increasing from just under 11 million in 2020, in large part due to the large number of people who have been displaced from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela over the last decade.

Several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have undergone considerable population change over the last two decades. Figure 20 shows the 20 countries in the region that have experienced the largest proportional population change from 2005 to 2024. All of these 20 countries experienced increases in the size of their populations during this period, with the largest proportional population changes occurring in Central America. Belize had the greatest percentage change (more than 50%), followed by Honduras and Guatemala. Belize, a country with a relatively small population, has seen its population significantly increase – in part due to immigration – attracting migrants from neighbouring countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, drawn to its better employment opportunities and economic stability.[45]

Over the next three decades (between 2025 and 2054), many countries in the region will have reached their peak population size.[46] While Europe currently has the largest number of countries with population numbers that have already peaked, in the next 30 years, the largest number of countries with "likely to peak" population numbers are in Latin America and the Caribbean.[47]

Figure 20. Top 20 countries with the largest proportional population change in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2005–2024

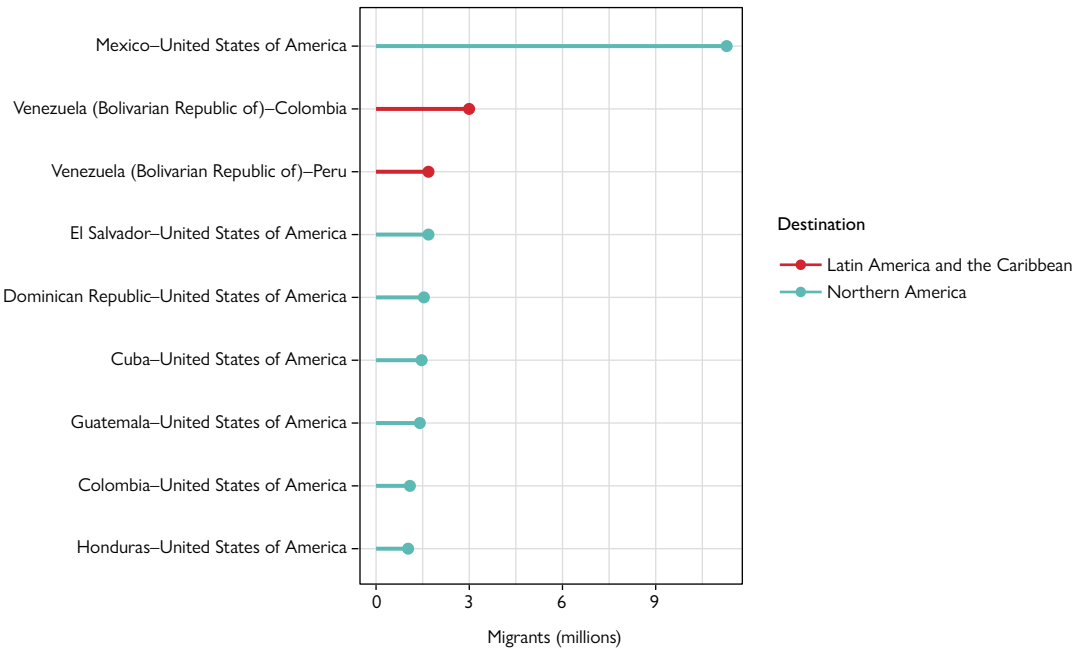


Source: UN DESA, 2024a.

The most striking feature of the 10 largest migration corridors involving Latin America and the Caribbean countries is that nearly all of them – 8 out of 10 – have the United States as the main country of destination. The exceptions are the country-to-country corridors from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Colombia and to Peru. Mexico to the United States, with around 11 million Mexicans living in the United States in 2024, is by far the largest corridor in the world. While Mexicans continue to be the largest number of immigrants in the United States, their number has declined over the last decade from a high of almost 12 million in 2015.

As shown in Figure 21, the only two corridors that are not to the United States are intraregional and involve the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Colombia and to Peru, a reflection of the large-scale displacement of Venezuelans over the last decade. By end of 2024, there were an estimated 370,200 refugees and almost 5.9 million other people in need of international protection from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with most living in Colombia (2.8 million) and Peru (1.1 million).[48] In response, Colombia introduced the Temporary Protection Status programme in 2021, offering 10-year residency to Venezuelans. This initiative has been instrumental in shaping migrant integration efforts across the region.[49] Similarly, Peru launched a Temporary Stay Permit in 2023, granting Venezuelans with irregular status access to services and work.[50]

Figure 21. Top migration corridors involving Latin American and Caribbean countries, 2024

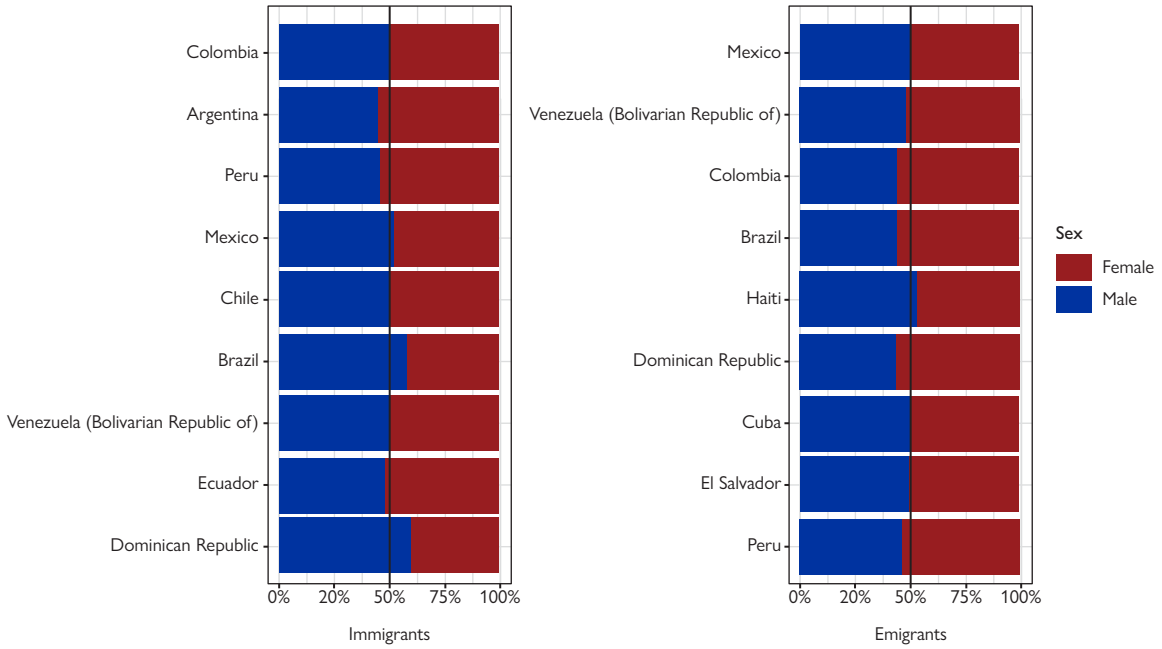


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

As shown in Figure 22, the proportion of female and male migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean is broadly similar in the top countries of destination (left). The exceptions are Brazil and the Dominican Republic, where the share of male immigrants is significantly higher than that of females. In the Dominican Republic, this is largely due to migration from neighbouring countries, like Haiti, where flows are predominantly young and male, driven by labour demand, geographic proximity and displacement.[51] These patterns reflect broader trends in labour migration, where men are more likely to engage in manual or agricultural work near border areas, while women may face greater social and logistical barriers to migration.[52] Among the top countries of origin (right), most have a slightly higher share of female than male emigrants, with countries such as the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Colombia having the largest difference. This reflects a broader trend in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, where female emigration is shaped by global demand for feminized labour, particularly in domestic and care work.[53]

Figure 22. Top Latin American and Caribbean destination (left) and origin (right) countries by sex, 2024



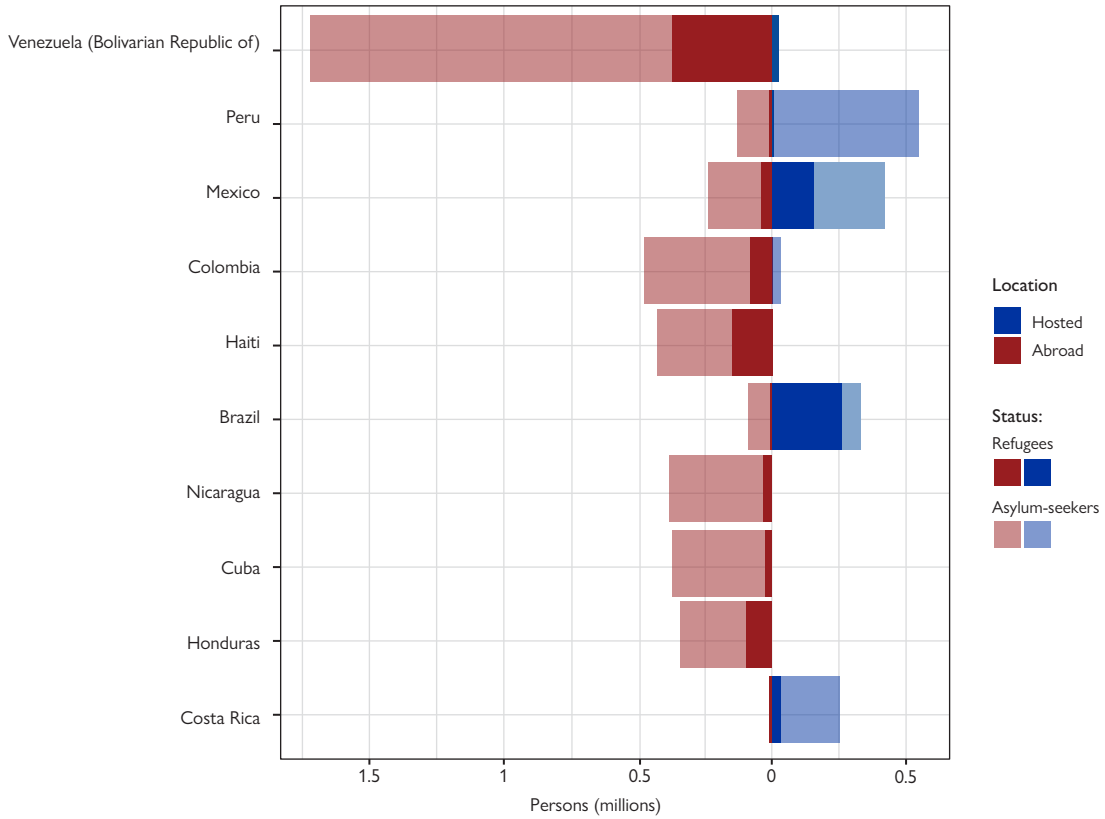
Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

Cross-border displacement continued to be a key characteristic in Latin America and the Caribbean, as shown in Figure 23. As has been the case for the last several years, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela remained the largest origin country of refugees and asylum-seekers from the region.[54] Over 370,000 refugees were from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the country was also the origin of nearly 1.4 million asylum applications, dwarfing the numbers from all other countries in the region. There were also 5.9 million other people in need of international protection from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (not captured in the graph below), with most

issued residence permits and regular stay documentation in countries within the region.[55] "Other people in need of international protection" – virtually all of whom are Venezuelans – refers to people who have been displaced across international borders but not reported under categories such as asylum-seekers, refugees and people in refugee-like situations, but who likely need international protection.[56] There was a 2 per cent increase from the previous year in the number of Venezuelans who were refugees or other people in need of international protection, with the vast majority hosted in Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador.[57] Colombia and Haiti were also the countries of origin of a significant number of asylum-seekers (nearly 400,000 and over 275,000, respectively). In Haiti, gang violence coupled with political instability resulted in large-scale displacement and an acute humanitarian crisis in 2024. Peru, meanwhile, hosted the largest number of asylum-seekers in the region in 2024 (almost 540,000), most of whom were from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The country hosting the second most asylum-seekers was Mexico (around 267,000). The largest number of refugees in the region were hosted in Brazil (more than 257,000), followed by Mexico (around 151,000).

Figure 23. Top 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries by total refugees and asylum-seekers, 2024

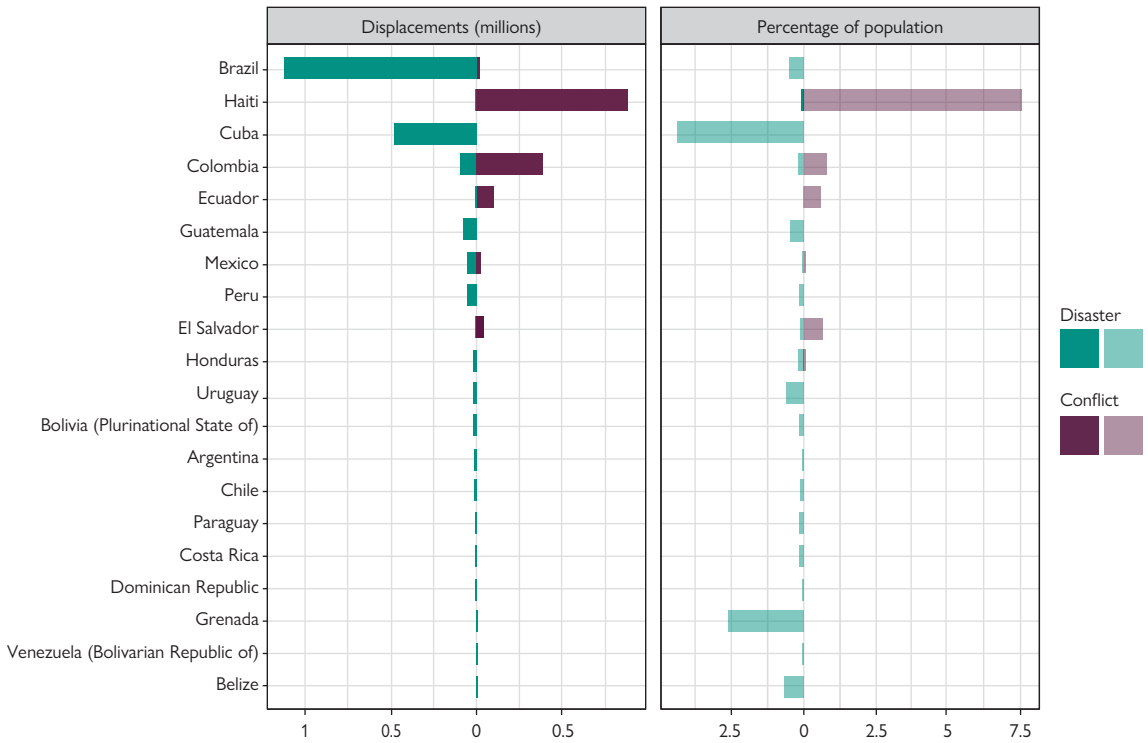


Source: UNHCR, n.d.a.

Note: "Hosted" refers to those refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who are residing in the receiving country (right-hand side of the figure); "abroad" refers to refugees and asylum-seekers originating from that country who are outside of their origin country. The top 10 countries are based on 2024 data and are calculated by combining the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from countries. Please refer to footnote 55 on the issue of categorization of displaced Venezuelans.

As in recent years, disasters resulted in some of the largest internal displacements in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 1 million internal disaster displacements were recorded in Brazil, the largest on record.[58] Most occurred in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul and resulted from flooding. Cuba also experienced significant disaster displacements (480,000) toward the end of 2024, triggered largely by hurricanes Oscar and Rafael. The largest displacements due to conflict and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean were concentrated in Haiti, Colombia and Ecuador. Gang violence and political instability in Haiti continued to force hundreds of thousands of people into displacement sites in Port-au-Prince, while displacing others from the capital to other provinces. By the end of 2024, nearly 900,000 displacements occurred in Haiti and over 1 million people were internally displaced. The second largest number of internal conflict displacements in the region was recorded in Colombia (388,000), followed by Ecuador (more than 100,000). Criminal groups – responsible for the violence that has led to most of the displacements in Ecuador – continued to operate near Quito, the capital, and particularly in the provinces of Guayas, Manabí, El Oro and Esmeraldas.

Figure 24. Top 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries by internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2024



Source: IDMC, n.d.; UN DESA, 2024a.

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in 2024, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during the year.

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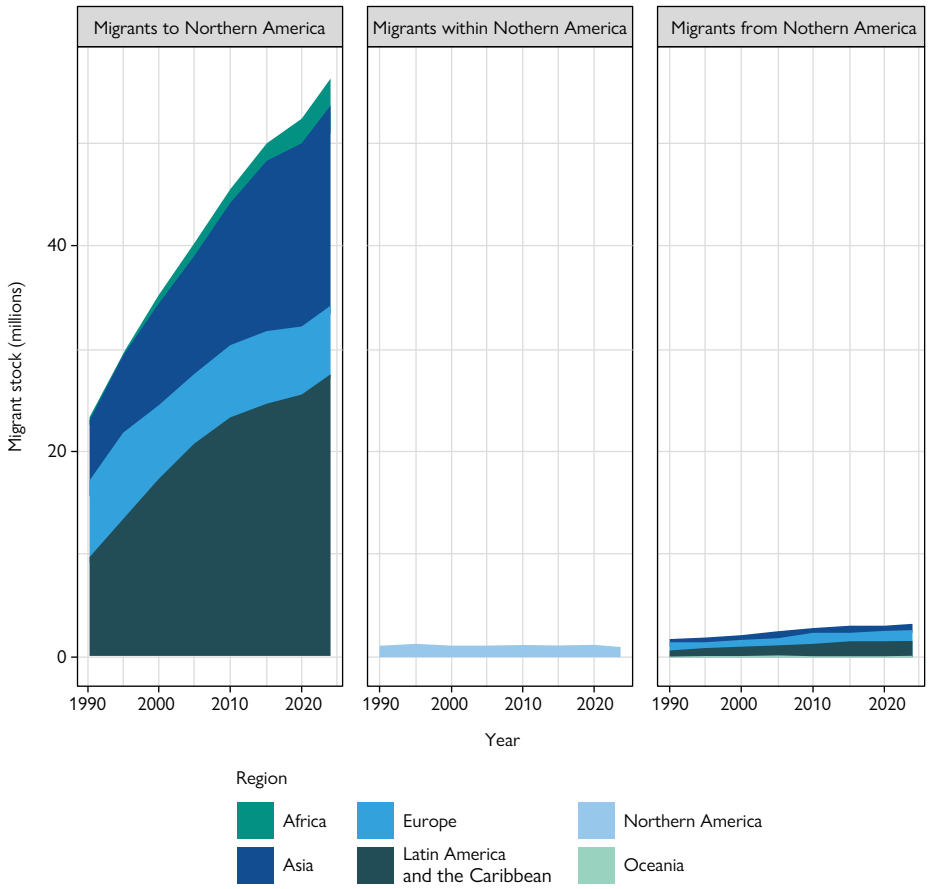
Northern America

Migration in Northern America is dominated by migration into the region, primarily to the United States. The number of international migrants in Northern America has increased sharply over the last three and a half decades, growing from around 27.5 million in 1990 to more than 61 million in 2024. As in previous years, the United States remains the largest destination country in the world for international migrants. Most migrants in Northern America were from Latin America and the Caribbean (more than 27 million), followed by Asia (almost 20 million) and Europe (around 7 million). During the last 30 years, the number of migrants in Northern America has more than doubled, with many arriving in the country as migrant workers, international students, through family reunification programmes and as refugees through refugee resettlement.[59]

Figure 25. Migrants to, within and from Northern America, 1990–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2025.

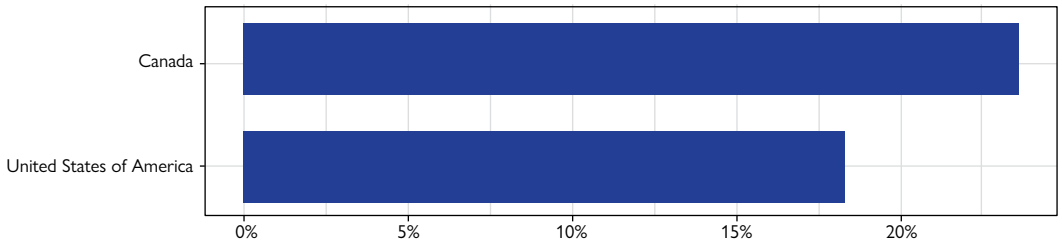
Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Migrants to Northern America" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Northern America) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. Europe or Asia). "Migrants within Northern America" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Northern America) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the Northern American region. "Migrants from Northern America" refers to people born in Northern America who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe or Africa).

As shown in Figure 25, the number of Northern American migrants living within the region or elsewhere was very small compared with the foreign-born population in the region. In contrast to regions such as Asia and Africa, where intraregional migration is significant, more Northern American-born migrants lived outside the region (around 3 million) than had moved elsewhere within the region (a little more than 1 million) in 2024.

Figure 26 shows the countries with the largest proportional population change in Northern America between 2005 to 2024. The population changes in both Canada and the United States were in terms of growth, with Canada experiencing the largest proportional change in the size of its population over the two decades.

In both Canada and the United States, immigration remains the main driver of population growth and is critical for the countries' economies, helping to offset declines in numbers of workers due to lower fertility rates and ageing.[60] In Canada, more than 20 per cent of the population was over the age of 65 in 2024.[61] International migrants accounted for 22 per cent of Canada's population in 2024, up from nearly 19 per cent in 2005, while in the United States, migrants comprised around 15 per cent of the country's population in 2024.[62] Immigration is projected to continue as the main driver of future population growth in Canada and the United States. Without immigration, the population of the United States by 2054, for example, is expected to be 13 per cent smaller.[63]

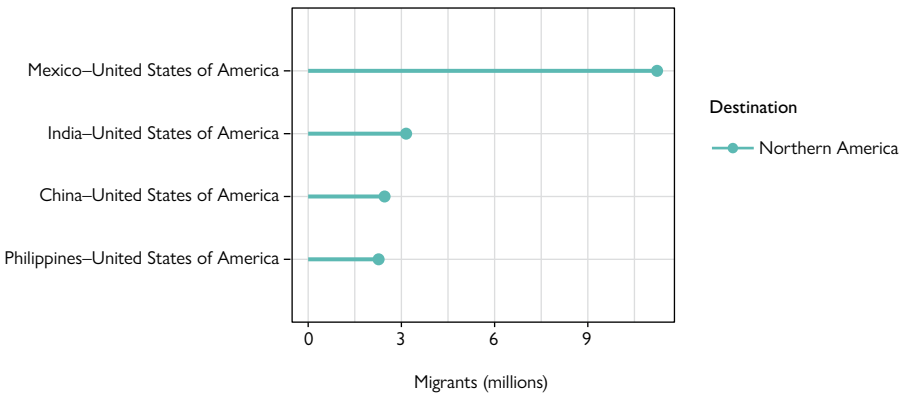
Figure 26. Countries with the largest proportional population change in Northern America, 2005–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2024a.

Figure 27 shows the top country-to-country migration corridors involving Northern American countries, representing an accumulation of migratory movements over time and providing a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries. The largest migrant corridors in Northern America all involve migrants either from Latin America and the Caribbean or Asia to the United States. Mexican-born migrants form the biggest migrant group, with around 11 million living in the United States in 2024. For decades, the Mexico–United States corridor has been the largest migration corridor in the world (see Chapter 2). The next largest migration corridor involving Northern American countries is India to the United States. Around 3.2 million Indian migrants were living in the United States in 2024, the second largest foreign-born group after Mexicans. The number of international migrants from India has increased continuously and significantly over the last several decades, with many arriving in the United States as highly skilled workers or international students.[64] The number of Indians is followed by migrant numbers from two other Asian countries, China and the Philippines, which had nearly 2.5 million and about 2.3 million migrants, respectively, living in the United States in 2024. Migration from the Philippines, in particular, has a long-standing history, especially among female nurses, contributing to one of the largest female migrant populations in the United States.[65]

Figure 27. Top migration corridors involving Northern American countries, 2024

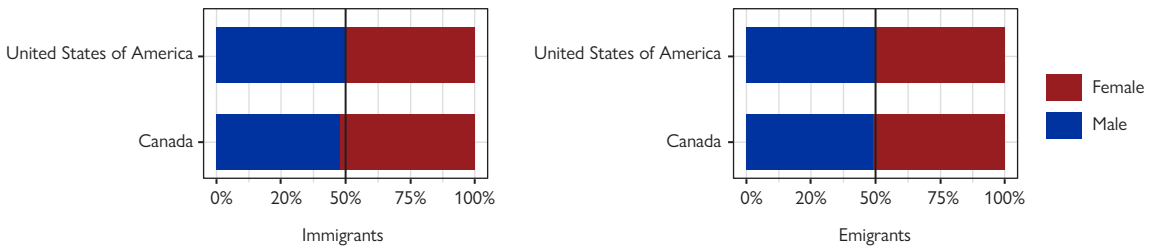


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

The share of female and male immigrants in the United States and Canada is about the same, with female immigrants only slightly larger. The share of female and male emigrants is also about equal in both countries. This gender balance in migration is partly linked to long-standing immigration policies in North America that support permanent settlement and family reunification, contributing to older and more gender-balanced migrant populations.[66]

Figure 28. Main destination (left) and origin (right) countries in Northern America by sex, 2024

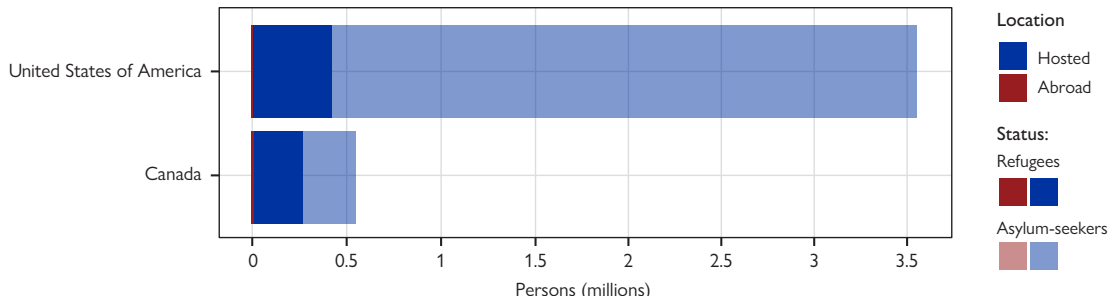


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

The United States continued to host by far the largest number of asylum-seekers and refugees in Northern America.[67] By mid-2024, the United States had more than 3 million asylum claims on hand and was home to over 435,000 refugees at the end of the same year. In the first half of 2024, the United States received over 729,000 new individual asylum applications or a quarter of all new individual applications reported worldwide. These were largely lodged by nationals of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico and Haiti. Canada hosted the second largest number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Northern America, more than 269,000 and over 292,000 respectively, in 2024.

Figure 29. Number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from Northern American countries, 2024

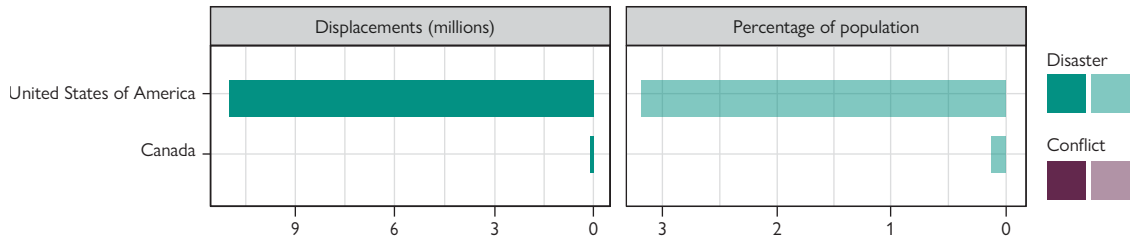


Source: UNHCR, n.d.a.

Note: "Hosted" refers to those refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who are residing in the receiving country (right-hand side of the figure); "abroad" refers to refugees and asylum-seekers originating from that country who are outside of their origin country. The top 10 countries are based on 2024 data and are calculated by combining the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from countries.

Virtually all internal displacements in Northern America in 2024 were the result of disasters.[68] Most of these took place in the United States, where over 11 million displacements were recorded. The United States accounted for almost a quarter of the global internal disaster displacement total, driven largely by multiple major hurricanes that resulted in mass evacuations. In late 2024, for example, Hurricane Helene, the deadliest storm in the continental United States in 20 years, led to 1 million displacements in Florida, 788,000 in South Carolina and 491,000 in North Carolina. Wildfires also contributed to the large number of displacements in the United States in 2024. California was most affected by the wildfires, with the majority of the 266,000 wildfire-related movements taking place in that state.

Figure 30. Northern American countries by internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2024



Source: IDMC, n.d.; UN DESA, 2024a.

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in 2024, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during the year.

The population size used to calculate the percentage of new disaster and conflict displacements is based on the total resident population of the country per 2024 UN DESA population estimates, and the percentage is for relative illustrative purposes only.

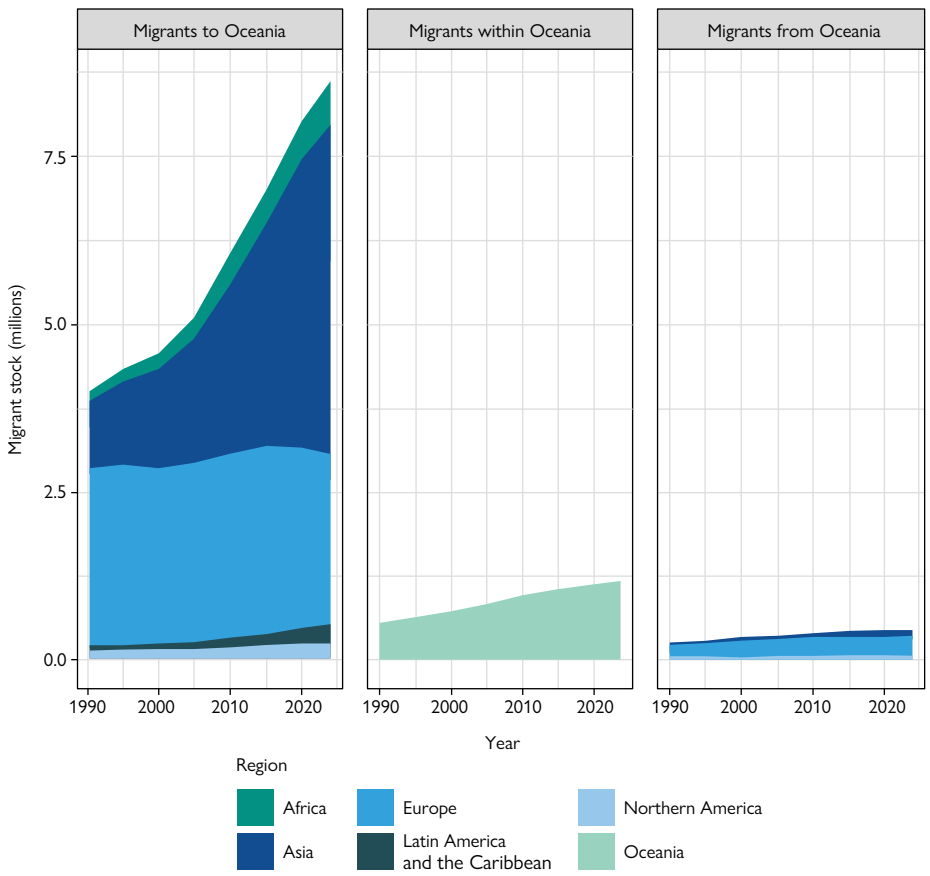
The IOM DTM database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. DTM accounted for 52 per cent of 2024 internal displacement figures provided in the IDMC annual GRID (IOM, 2025).

Oceania

Similar to Northern America, most international migration in Oceania is to the region (rather than from or within Oceania). More than 8.6 million international migrants from outside Oceania were living in the region. As shown in Figure 31, Oceania's foreign-born migrant population is primarily comprised of people from Asia and Europe. During the last 35 years, the number of migrants in Oceania born in Asia has grown substantially, from around 1 million in 1990 to nearly 5 million in 2024. While Europeans comprise the second largest group of international migrants in Oceania (2.5 million), their number has remained steady over the same period, while the number of migrants born in Africa has continuously increased, like the number of migrants from Asia.

Out of all six global regions, Oceania had the lowest number of migrants outside its region in 2024, partly a reflection of its smaller population size compared with other regions. Migrants from Oceania living outside the region mainly resided in Europe, Asia and Northern America.

Figure 31. Migrants to, within and from Oceania, 1990–2024



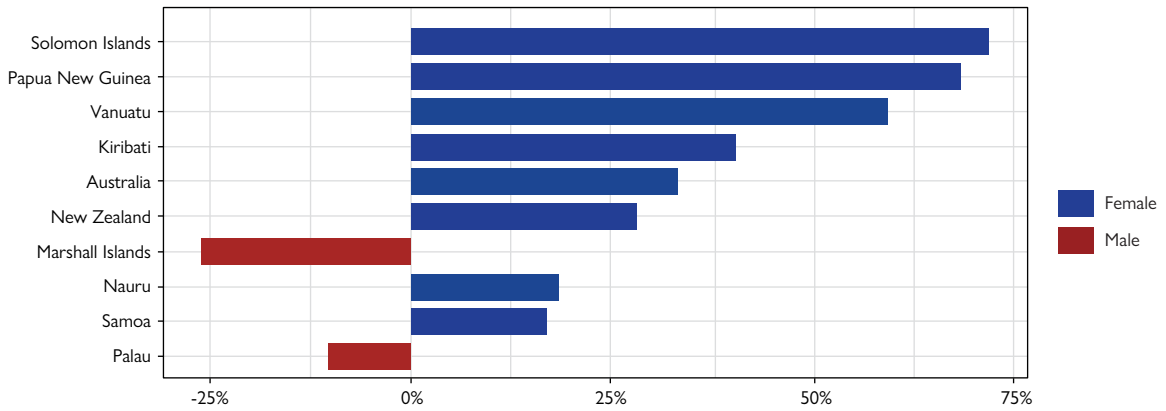
Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Migrants to Oceania" refers to migrants residing in the region (i.e. Oceania) who were born in one of the other regions (e.g. Europe or Asia). "Migrants within Oceania" refers to migrants born in the region (i.e. Oceania) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the Oceania region. "Migrants from Oceania" refers to people born in Oceania who were residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe or Northern America).

Several countries in Oceania have experienced significant changes in the size of their populations over the last 20 years. The population change in most countries was in terms of growth, with the largest changes, as shown in Figure 32, occurring in Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. All three countries experienced population increases of more than 50 per cent. It is important to note, however, that the largest proportional population changes from 2005 to 2024 occurred in countries with relatively smaller populations, as is to be expected.

The only countries in Oceania that underwent declines over the two decades are the Marshall Islands and Palau. The steepest decline was in the Marshall Islands (over 25%), with emigration playing a major role in its population decline.[69] Like the Marshall Islands, Palau's declining population is also partly the result of increased emigration.[70]

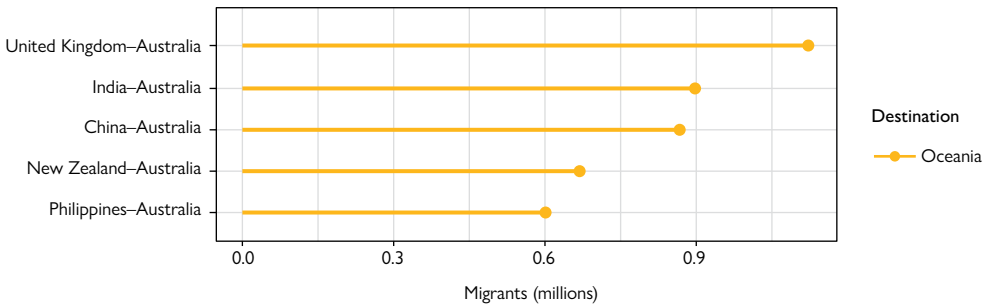
Figure 32. Countries with the largest proportional population change in Oceania, 2005–2024



Source: UN DESA, 2024a.

All of the five largest migration corridors involving countries in Oceania comprise migrants to Australia, with the largest corridor being from the United Kingdom to Australia. Just over 1 million migrants from the United Kingdom were living in Australia in 2024, and this number has remained relatively stable over the last 35 years. The second and third-largest corridors were from India and China to Australia (around 876,000 and 656,000, respectively). The only intraregional corridor among the top five corridors is the one from New Zealand to Australia, with around 588,000 New Zealanders living in Australia in 2024.

Figure 33. Top migration corridors involving Oceania, 2024

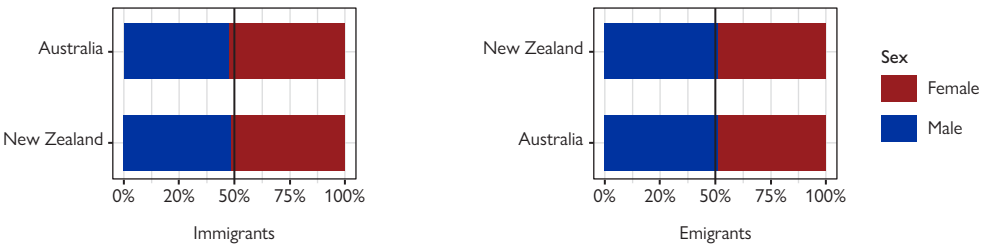


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Note: Corridors represent an accumulation of migratory movements over time and provide a snapshot of how migration patterns have evolved into significant foreign-born populations in specific destination countries.

The proportion of female and male immigrants in both Australia and New Zealand is roughly the same, with the proportion of female immigrants only slightly higher. The share of emigrants is also about equal, with the proportion of male emigrants only slightly higher.

Figure 34. Main destination (left) and origin (right) countries in Oceania by sex, 2024

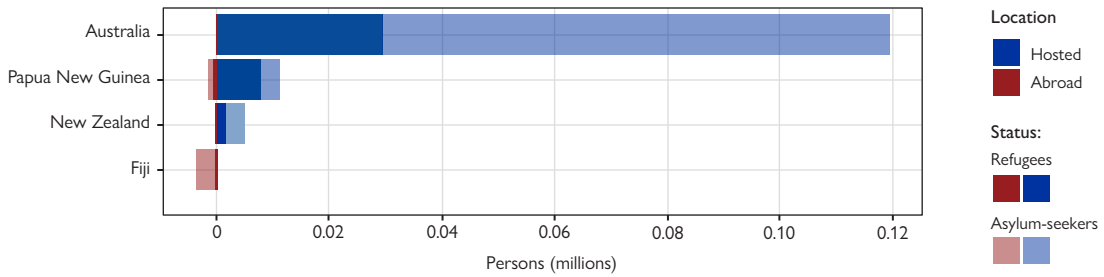


Source: UN DESA, 2025.

Notes: This is the latest available international migrant stock data at the time of writing. "Proportion" refers to the share of female or male migrants in the total number of immigrants in destination countries (left) or in the total number of emigrants from origin countries (right).

Australia was home to the largest number of refugees and asylum-seekers in 2024, with nearly 30,000 refugees and over 91,000 asylum-seekers residing in the country. Most asylum-seekers in Australia come from Asia, but from a wide range of countries, including China and India, which were the origin countries of the first and second largest number of asylum-seekers in Australia in 2024. Other origin countries for large numbers of asylum-seekers included Malaysia and Viet Nam. The country that hosted the second largest number of refugees after Australia was Papua New Guinea (nearly 8,000). Meanwhile, Fiji was the origin of most asylum-seekers from Oceania (more than 3,000).

Figure 35. Number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from Oceania, 2024



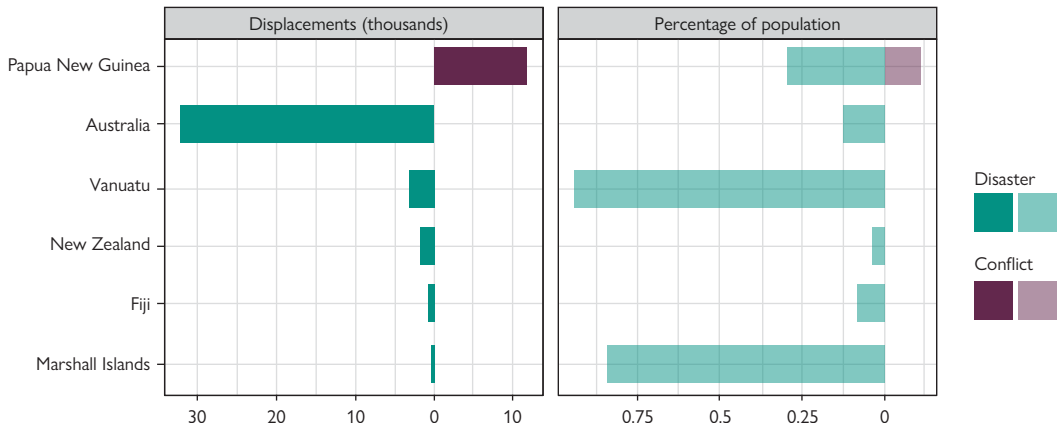
Source: UNHCR, n.d.a.

Note: "Hosted" refers to those refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who are residing in the receiving country (right-hand side of the figure); "abroad" refers to refugees and asylum-seekers originating from that country who are outside of their origin country. The top 10 countries are based on 2024 data and are calculated by combining the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in and from countries.

While Oceania had the lowest number of disaster displacements out of all the regions, several countries in the region are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.[71] Most disaster displacements were in Australia (32,000), and largely the result of wildfires, floods and storms.[72] Tropical Cyclone Kirrily, which landed in Queensland, as well as wildfires in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, led to thousands of displacements.

Papua New Guinea had the second largest number of disaster displacements in the region (31,000) and the highest number of movements due to conflict and violence (12,000). The latter were triggered by communal violence, including in Enga Province.

Figure 36. Top countries in Oceania by internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2024



Source: IDMC, n.d; UN DESA, 2024a.

Notes: The term "displacements" refers to the number of displacement movements that occurred in 2024, not the total accumulated stock of IDPs resulting from displacement over time. New displacement figures include individuals who have been displaced more than once and do not correspond to the number of people displaced during the year.

The population size used to calculate the percentage of new disaster and conflict displacements is based on the total resident population of the country per 2024 UN DESA population estimates, and the percentage is for relative illustrative purposes only.

The IOM DTM database is one of the largest sources for global annual estimates on internal displacement compiled by IDMC. DTM accounted for 52 per cent of 2024 internal displacement figures provided in the IDMC annual GRID (IOM, 2025).

Endnotes

1 The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (December 2025).

2 All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the data referred to in this chapter, including through data verification. We regret, however, any data errors that may remain.

3 Statistics are up to date as of the end of October 2025.

4 The source of data on international migrants is UN DESA, 2025 (unless stated otherwise). Estimates of international migrant stock (foreign-born population) also includes refugees and asylum-seekers as reported by UNHCR. Please refer to the international stock web page (UN DESA, 2025) and related documents for deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers presented. Please see Chapter 2 for definitions of international migration.

5 UN DESA, 2024a.

6 UNFPA, 2023; ILO, 2020.

7 UN DESA, 2025.

8 Eldin, 2025.

9 Onen, 2024.

10 Cross, 2020.

11 Souza and Flippen, 2020.

12 Abel, 2022.

13 The content on refugees and asylum-seekers in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous UNHCR global trends reports, as well as its Population Statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.a), are other key sources of information.

14 The content on internal displacements and internally displaced persons in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from IDMC, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. The IDMC database (IDMC, n.d.) is another key source of information.

15 United Nations, 2024a.

16 OCHA, 2025.

17 ADBI, ILO and OECD, 2024; Bisong, 2021.

18 UN DESA, 2025.

19 UN DESA, 2024a.

20 NRC, 2025.

21 Ibid.

22 McAuliffe, 2017.

23 McAuliffe and Iqbal, 2022.

24 Abel, 2022.

25 IOM, n.d.

26 McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024.

27 The content on refugees and asylum-seekers in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous UNHCR global trends reports, as well as its Population Statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.a) are other key sources of information.

28 The content on internal displacements and internally displaced persons in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from IDMC, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. The IDMC database (IDMC, n.d.) is another key source of information.

29 IFHV, 2025.

30 IPC, 2025; United Nations, 2025.

31 UN DESA, 2025.

32 Oyolola and Batalova, 2024; Koikkalainen, 2021.

33 Dettmer, 2025; United Nations, 2024b.

34 UN DESA, 2024b.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 UN DESA, 2025.

39 Abel, 2022.

40 UNHCR, 2024a.

41 The content on refugees and asylum-seekers in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous UNHCR global trends reports, as well as its Population Statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.a) are other key sources of information.

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43 IDMC, 2025.

44 Ibid.

45 Di Giorgio et al., 2024.

46 UN DESA, 2024b.

47 Ibid.

48 UNHCR, 2025.

49 UNHCR, 2024b.

50 Cortes, 2024.

51 Douyon, 2023.

52 Morales and Rodríguez, 2022.

[53] Esteinou, 2022.

[54] The content on refugees and asylum-seekers in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous UNHCR global trends reports, as well as its Population Statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.a) are other key sources of information.

[55] UNHCR, 2025.

[56] Venezuelans previously designated as "Venezuelans displaced abroad" are included in the new "other people in need of international protection" category, introduced in mid-2022. It refers to "people who are outside their country or territory of origin, typically because they have been forcibly displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories (asylum-seekers, refugees, people in refugee-like situations) but who likely need international protection." See UNHCR, n.d.b.

[57] UNHCR, 2025.

[58] The content on internal displacements and internally displaced persons in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from IDMC, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. The IDMC database (IDMC, n.d.) is another key source of information.

[59] Chishti et al., 2024; American Immigration Council, 2024; Gelat, 2019.

[60] Frey, 2024; Banerjee et al., 2025; Batalova et al., 2024.

[61] UN DESA, 2024b.

[62] UN DESA, 2025.

[63] UN DESA, 2024b.

[64] Greene and Batalova, 2024.

[65] Guevarra, 2010.

[66] Abel, 2022.

[67] The content on refugees and asylum-seekers in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from UNHCR, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. Previous UNHCR global trends reports, as well as its Population Statistics database (UNHCR, n.d.a) are other key sources of information.

[68] The content on internal displacements and internally displaced persons in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from IDMC, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. The IDMC database (IDMC, n.d.) is another key source of information.

[69] Connell, 2022; Johnson, 2022.

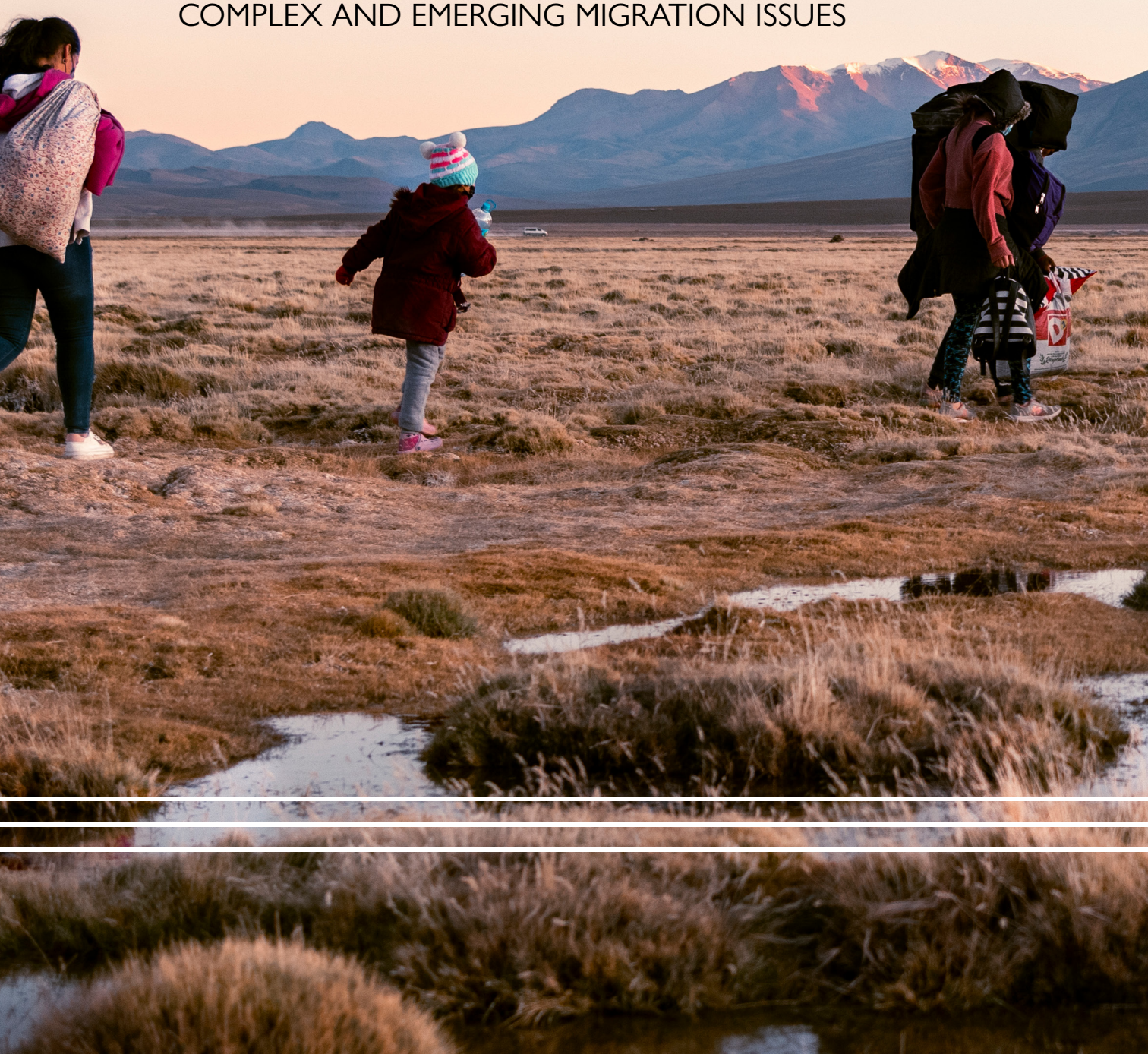
[70] IMF, 2023.

[71] WMO, 2024.

[72] The content on internal displacements and internally displaced persons in this chapter is largely based on and drawn from IDMC, 2025 (unless cited otherwise). Please refer to this document for explanatory notes, deeper analysis, caveats, limitations and methodologies associated with the numbers and trends presented. The IDMC database (IDMC, n.d.) is another key source of information.

PART II

COMPLEX AND EMERGING MIGRATION ISSUES



MARIE MCAULIFFE
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MICAELA LINCANGO

4 MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: A STRATEGIC GLOBAL ASSET AT RISK[1,2]

Introduction

Migration has emerged as a powerful force shaping human development in the twenty-first century. Globally, there are more international migrants than ever before. The total now stands at over 300 million, or approximately 3.7 per cent of the world's population.[3] While this is a small proportion, it has increased incrementally over time as part of the growing interconnectedness of the world's economies, societies and labour markets. At the same time, migration remains a highly contested issue in many countries, with public narratives often ignoring or downplaying its profound and positive contributions to global human and economic development.

This chapter examines how international migration has functioned as a strategic global public good for sustainable development, and highlights the risks to equality and prosperity if anti-migration rhetoric and policy become the norm. At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that despite political backlash in some parts of the world, the long-term evidence is clear: migrants and diaspora communities are not only advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they outperform other State and non-State actors on this issue. Migration contributes significantly through the financial flows of international remittances and investments, the transfer of skills and knowledge and the productive transnational engagement of diaspora communities. These strategic diaspora development contributions have proven remarkably resilient, even during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In the current uncertain global sociopolitical environment, recognition and enhancement of the positive aspects of international migration are not guaranteed. On the contrary, the challenges that migration and human displacement can sometimes present are being elevated in debates and distorted for divisive political gain. Migration's role in development is increasingly threatened by the persisting marginalization of migrants throughout the migration cycle, growing inequality in mobility, narrowing of regular migration pathways, and the weaponization of migration in political discourse. Increasingly abundant misinformation and disinformation about migrants exacerbates public fear and undermines evidence-based, strategic policy development that would be beneficial for inclusive sustainable development.

Against this complex backdrop, this chapter explores the central question: how has international migration become a global strategic asset to achieving human development, and how can it be preserved? The chapter begins by outlining the ways in which migration catalyses development, focusing on three key mechanisms: remittances and diaspora investment; knowledge and skills transfers; and multifaced diaspora engagement. It then presents analysis on emerging risks that jeopardize migration's developmental role. Finally, the chapter highlights a range of policies and initiatives that can help safeguard migration's benefits, including through more inclusive, efficient and leveraged remittance systems, brain gain strategies and enhanced diaspora partnerships.

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[1] Marie McAuliffe, Head of IOM Research (until July 2025) and independent consultant; S. Irudaya Rajan, Co-Founder and Chair, International Institute for Migration and Development; Gibril Faal, Director, GK Partners and Visiting Professor in Practice, The London School of Economics and Political Science; Micaela Lincango, Associate Research Officer, Migration and Displacement Data and Research Analytics Division, International Organization for Migration.

[2] The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (August 2025).

[3] UN DESA, 2025.

In making its argument, the chapter takes stock of the vast amount of data, case studies, research and analysis from around the world covering both the extraordinary contributions migrants make and the policy innovations needed to protect, expand and enhance those contributions in a rapidly changing world.

Migration as a catalyst of development

The evidence is clear. Migration is a major driver of human development globally. With the sudden and severe financial and socioeconomic pressures faced by migrant and diaspora communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were concerns that diaspora finance and engagement would suffer major setbacks.[4] In fact, the flow of remittances as a vivid form of diaspora contribution to development proved to be resilient and continued to grow. The impact of migration extends far beyond remittances; migration facilitates the transfer of resources, knowledge, skills and innovations, as reflected in examples from diverse regions of the world (see the appendix). In Latin America and the Caribbean, migrant domestic workers – mainly women – support households and economies while sending remittances that strengthen local communities. In Europe, cross-border workers' salaries from Switzerland benefit neighbouring countries like France and Germany. In Asia, the Philippines demonstrates how migrants' social remittances influence governance and entrepreneurship. In Oceania, managed migration helps small island developing States (SIDSs) enhance resilience against climate change. In Africa, Ethiopia and Somalia's integrated approaches illustrate the humanitarian–development–peace nexus (HDPN) approach, while in North America, the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada shows how remittances and advocacy contribute to crisis management and recovery.[5]

The strategic and catalytic importance of migration to sustainable development is reflected and integrated in the global financing for development (FfD) frameworks. Diaspora remittances, investments, knowledge, skills and networks can be leveraged and optimized. The enhanced migrant and diaspora resources complement domestic and international cooperation resources, to address priorities, reduce disparities and bolster resilience (see the box on financing for sustainable development).

Financing for sustainable development over the years

Financing for development (FfD) is a series of global efforts coordinated by the United Nations to optimize equitable resource mobilization for sustainable development, structured through multilateral outcome documents agreed at four major international conferences: the Monterrey Consensus (2002), which established the foundation for financing for development and positioned it within the global agenda; the Doha Declaration (2008), which placed additional emphasis on financial system reforms in response to the 2008 global financial crisis; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015), which provided a new global framework for financing sustainable development aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);[a] and the Sevilla Commitment (2025), which focuses on reform of the international financial architecture, reducing debt burdens, and scaling up investments to close the financing gap for sustainable development.[b]

[4] The World Bank estimated that remittances would fall by 20 per cent due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the United Kingdom, Switzerland and others coordinated a "Call for Action" to mitigate this expected set back. See GFMD, 2024; World Bank, 2020.

[5] For the complete case studies, refer to the Appendix A.

FfD3. Migration, diaspora finance and sustainable development

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) recognized "the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, and transit and destination countries".[c] The AAAA commitments included increased international cooperation to: reduce the cost of remittance transfers to less than 3 per cent by 2030; ensure adequate, cheaper, faster and safer remittance and financial services for migrants; address the trend of banks withdrawing services to remittance companies; expand payment systems to non-bank institutions; and promote competition, financial literacy, inclusion and the use of technology to expand and enhance the impacts of remittances. Beyond remittances, the AAAA commitments included action points on access to and portability of pensions and other forms of social and earned benefits; reducing recruitment costs for migrants; and recognition of foreign qualifications.[d]

FfD4. Diaspora remittances, investment, innovation and impact

Amidst current global challenges, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) was held from 30 June to 3 July 2025 in Seville, Spain. The Sevilla Commitment (Compromiso de Sevilla) outcome document reaffirmed the FfD3 commitments on remittances, emphasized the importance of productive use of remittances, and the expansion of diaspora-related digital financial services. Amongst other things, FfD4 introduced new commitments linking diaspora investment to innovative finance, engagement with diaspora communities and reform of the international financial architecture, stating that: "We will strengthen efforts to facilitate diaspora investment including through innovative instruments and call on development partners to support such efforts, including by engaging with diaspora communities and national governments".[e] The RemitAid innovative finance mechanism was launched at the FfD4 summit as one of the 130 high-impact FfD4 Sevilla Platform for Action initiatives.

[a] UN DESA, 2016, n.d.a and n.d.b.
[b] UN DESA, n.d.c.
[c] United Nations, 2015.
[d] Ibid.
[e] United Nations, 2025.

Migration contributes to development through multiple channels, extending beyond financial flows. The following sections explore three key pathways through which migration contributes to sustainable development: international remittances; knowledge and skills transfer; and diaspora engagement.

International remittances

Remittances – financial transfers or in-kind transfers directly to families or communities in countries of origin – are a crucial driver of global economic growth and development.[6] In 2024, global remittances are estimated to be 905 billion United States dollars, a 4.2 per cent increase from USD 865 billion in 2023.[7] Projections indicate that this upward trend will continue, with remittances expected to reach USD 913 billion in 2025.[8]

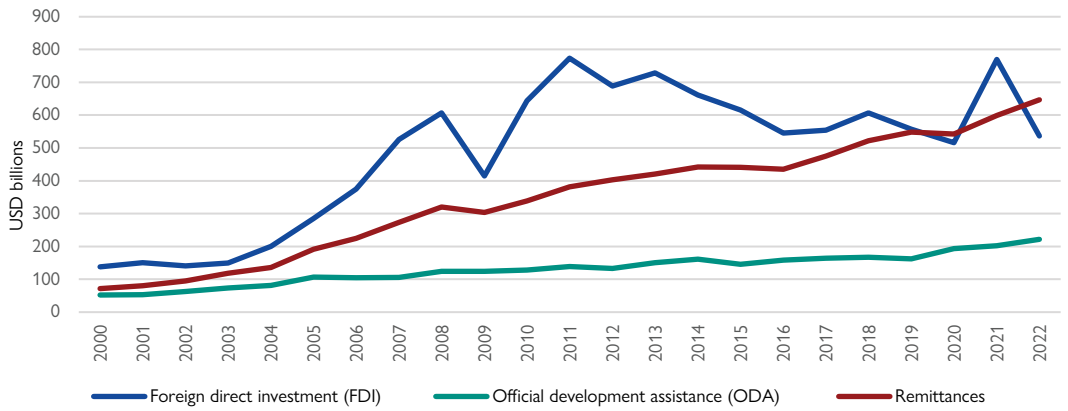
6 IOM, 2024a.
7 Ratha et al., 2024.
8 World Bank, 2024.

India consistently leads as the top recipient of remittances, followed by Mexico.[9] The distribution of remittances varies across regions as well, with South Asia estimated to experience the highest growth in 2024 at 11.8 per cent, driven by continued strong inflows to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.[10] The Middle East and North Africa region is estimated to see a 5.4 per cent increase in 2024, rebounding from a decline in 2023. Remittance growth in Latin America and the Caribbean is expected to slow to 5.5 per cent, down from 7.5 per cent in 2023, while remittances to Europe and Central Asia are set to recover with a 3 per cent increase after an 8.7 per cent decline in 2023. In East Asia and the Pacific, excluding China, remittances are estimated to grow by 3.3 per cent, supported by continued inflows to countries like the Philippines. Meanwhile, sub-Saharan Africa is expected to see a modest growth of 2.4 per cent.

Remittances compared to official development assistance and foreign direct investment

A substantial portion of international remittances, approximately USD 685 billion in 2024, was directed to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).[11] These financial flows often surpass official development assistance (ODA) and, in some cases, foreign direct investment (FDI), which underscores the significance of remittances for many LMICs (see Figure 1). For instance, in 2023, total remittances to LMICs amounted to USD 656 billion, surpassing the combined total of FDI and ODA, which stood at USD 638 billion.[12] This gap is expected to widen in 2024.

Figure 1. International remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (2000–2022)



Source: IOM, 2024a.

Note: Dollar values are given in current (nominal) USD.

[9] Ratha et al., 2024.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] World Bank, 2024.

This trend is significant given the volatility often associated with FDI and the limitations of ODA. While FDI can fluctuate based on global economic conditions and investor confidence, and ODA is subject to donor countries' budgetary constraints and political priorities, remittances have consistently demonstrated resilience. Moreover, remittances often provide a more stable source of external financing compared to FDI, which can be susceptible to rapid withdrawals during economic uncertainties. This stability helps recipient countries maintain a stable balance of payments and supports domestic consumption, thereby stimulating economic growth.

For example, in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, remittance flows remained robust. Notably, remittances to LMICs experienced a modest decline of only 1.6 per cent compared to 2019. In stark contrast, FDI to LMICs plummeted by over 30 per cent during the same period.[13] This stark difference underscores the reliability of remittances as a source of external financing during times of economic turmoil.

For countries with smaller economies, remittances contribute a large share of their gross domestic product (GDP). For instance, in Tajikistan and Tonga, remittances made up 45.4 per cent and 38.2 per cent of their GDP respectively in 2024.[14] In countries like Honduras, Nepal and Samoa, remittances constitute around a quarter of their GDP. These inflows are crucial for household consumption and investment in local businesses, underscoring their importance to national economies.[15]

Looking ahead, remittance flows are projected to continue their growth trajectory. The World Bank forecasts that remittances to LMICs will reach USD 690 billion in 2025, reflecting a 2.8 per cent growth rate, higher than the 2.3 per cent estimated in 2024.[16] This anticipated increase highlights the enduring importance of remittances as a stable and vital source of external financing for developing economies.

Impact on economic growth

Remittances are a vital source of supplementary income for recipient households, boosting purchasing power and stimulating local economies. In low-income countries, even ones with a very small economy like Tonga's, remittances represent on average nearly 6 per cent of their GDP, compared to about 2 per cent for middle-income countries.[17] But the impact of remittances extends beyond merely financial transfer; remittances play a crucial role in the socioeconomic development of recipient countries.

However, the high cost of sending remittances remains a challenge, as transfer fees can significantly reduce the amount received by beneficiaries, highlighting the need for more affordable and efficient remittance channels. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the global average cost of sending USD 200 was 6.4 per cent, more than double the SDG target of 3 per cent by 2030.[18] However, the average cost of remittance through digital channels was closer to the SDG goal at 4.96 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023.[19]

[13] World Bank, 2021.
[14] Ratha et al., 2024.
[15] Ibid.
[16] World Bank, 2024.
[17] Ratha, n.d.
[18] World Bank, 2024.
[19] Ibid.

The impact of remittances on LMICs is likely to be more significant than official figures suggest, as these statistics do not account for unrecorded flows through both informal and formal channels. Informal fund transfer systems, such as the *Hawala* system, are widely utilized by expatriates due to their reliability and convenience. These systems often offer lower costs compared to the high fees charged by formal financial institutions.[20]

Heavy reliance on remittances can also make origin countries vulnerable to economic downturns in destination nations. For example, Nicaragua's economic growth is projected to cool in the medium term due to the likelihood of slowing remittances, which made up 27.2 per cent of their GDP in 2024.[21] Meanwhile, a well-diversified set of destination nations for migration can return sustained remittance inflows, as seen with the Philippines.[22]

International remittances play a pivotal role in the socioeconomic development of recipient countries

Empirical research has demonstrated that households receiving remittances frequently allocate these funds toward educational expenses and medical care, fostering human capital development and enhancing labour market productivity, thereby promoting sustained economic growth. Evidence suggests that remittances are positively correlated with per capita health expenditures and gross secondary school enrolment in developing economies.[23] Remittances also play a crucial role in advancing financial inclusion by increasing recipients' use of formal financial services, thereby facilitating savings accumulation and access to credit, both of which are essential drivers of entrepreneurial activity and broader economic development. In Latin America, for instance, remittance inflows have been linked to financial sector growth, underscoring their significance in strengthening financial systems.[24]

Remittances significantly bolster educational opportunities in developing countries. Families receiving these funds often allocate a portion towards schooling expenses, leading to higher enrolment rates and improved educational attainment. For instance, a cross-country study encompassing 71 developing nations revealed that a 10 per cent increase in per capita official international remittances resulted in a 3.5 per cent decline in the share of people living in poverty, with an additional study highlighting that remittances had a strong, positive impact on education in low income countries by facilitating better educational access.[25]

The influx of remittances also contributes to better health-care access and outcomes, as empirical evidence shows.[26] Households receiving remittances are more likely to afford medical services, leading to improved health indicators. Moreover, remittances serve as a form of social insurance, enabling families to manage health-related risks and emergencies more effectively.[27]

Remittances have a broad economic impact by stimulating local economies. Recipients often invest in constructing new homes or renovating existing ones, enabling families to afford basic needs and thereby improving overall living standards.[28] The increased purchasing power of recipient families leads to higher demand for goods and services, contributes to the local construction industry, generates employment and job creation and fosters local business growth. In countries like Nepal, remittances have been instrumental in reducing poverty levels and promoting

[20] Moin, 2024.
[21] Ratha et al., 2024; Reuters, 2024.
[22] World Bank, 2024.
[23] Khan, 2024.
[24] Islam and Mondal, 2023.
[25] Adams and Page, 2005; Khan, 2024.
[26] Khan, 2024.
[27] Djeunankan and Tekam, 2022.
[28] Khan, 2024.

economic development.[29] Furthermore, remittances can contribute to balance of payments stability and reduce reliance on external borrowing, thereby strengthening economic resilience.[30]

Studies have shown that remittances increase the income of migrant households and reduce poverty. A study demonstrated that one fifth of the poverty reduction in Nepal between 1995 and 2004 was due to labour migration and remittances.[31] Similarly, remittances have been associated with upward income mobility in Sri Lanka, particularly among households from the lowest income deciles.[32]

Remittances play a significant role in enhancing food security by influencing food expenditure, consumption and nutrition. Studies across various countries highlight this impact. One study in Indonesia showed that households receiving remittances spent 8.5 per cent more on food than they otherwise would have, while another study in the Republic of Moldova showed that families with children receiving remittances doubled their monthly food expenditure per person.[33] In Nigeria, remittance-receiving households consumed more calories and had higher iron intake, though dietary diversity remained unchanged.[34] In Honduras, a study found that children in households receiving remittances are taller and heavier, with families spending more on nutritious foods such as fish, fruits and meats.[35] Similarly, in Ecuador, remittances contributed to lower rates of being underweight among children but had no impact on stunting.[36] However, remittances may also contribute to overnutrition, as studies from Mexico indicate that at the community level, increased remittance inflows are linked to rising obesity rates among children and adults.[37]

Leveraging remittances for enhanced sustainable development impacts

The potential to leverage remittances for greater financing for development has long been recognized and advocated for by experts and stakeholders including diaspora organizations, academic entities, the United Nations,[38] and institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank.[39] However, there are hardly any transformative remittance leveraging schemes in operation anywhere in the world.

Amongst other things, the FfD4 Sevilla Commitment identified the need to ensure that additional private resources are mobilized at a larger scale for developing countries, and to leverage innovative financing mechanisms to enhance sustainability and impact. In line with these goals, the RemitAid innovative finance mechanism was selected as one of the 130 high-impact FfD4 projects to be monitored over the next 10 years.[40] RemitAid is a remittance leverage programme, designed to unlock billions of dollars of new development finance, through remittance match funding and remitter micro-contributions.[41] For more information see box on RemitAid.

[29] Wagle and Devkota, 2018.
[30] World Bank, 2022.
[31] Lokshin et al., 2010.
[32] De and Ratha, 2012.
[33] Adams and Cuecuecha, 2010; Vladicescu et al., 2008.
[34] Babatunde and Qaim, 2010.
[35] Howard and Stanley, 2016.
[36] Antón, 2010.
[37] Riosmena et al., 2016; Creighton et al., 2011.
[38] OSAA, n.d.
[39] Ratha, 2006; Okara et al., 2025.
[40] United Nations, n.d.
[41] RemitAid, 2025.

RemitAid innovative finance mechanism

The RemitAid innovative finance mechanism was launched at the FfD4 summit. It uses remittance match funding (RMF) to unlock billions of dollars of new development finance inflows in the form of remitter micro-contributions (RMC). Eighty per cent of the RMF and RMC funds will be invested in an income-generating perpetual RemitAid Endowment Fund (REF). Nineteen per cent of the RMF and RMC funds and 100 per cent of net income from the REF will be granted to the RemitAid Development Trust (RDT) for disbursement to diverse development projects and beneficiary organizations in Africa and within the diaspora. Only 1 per cent of funds is to be spent on operations, management and product development. RemitAid creates new substantial, regenerative, sustainable, long-term development funds to finance the SDGs.

RemitAid offers a balanced mix of remittance leverage, innovative finance, aid optimization, diaspora philanthropy, income generation, funding diversification and financial sustainability. It was selected as one of the 130 high-impact FfD4 Sevilla Platform for Action (SPA) initiatives. In the next 10 years, it aims to: generate USD 16 billion in RMF and RMC; invest USD 13 billion in REF, of which at least USD 6 billion is to be invested in Africa; generate income of USD 2 billion; disburse USD 5 billion in grants and co-finance through RDT; and grow the REF capital and income annually.

Source: RemitAid, 2025.

Knowledge and skills transfer

Migration is a catalyst for the exchange of knowledge, skills and ideas, shaping societies and economies around the world. Whether permanent or temporary, the movement of people facilitates the transfer of human capital: the knowledge, skills and competencies that drive personal, social and economic well-being.[42] This exchange benefits individual migrants as well as origin and destination countries by enhancing productivity, fostering innovation and stimulating economic growth.

Knowledge and skill transfers through migration occur via several mechanisms, including formal education and training, work experience and cultural and professional exchange. However, it is important to recognize the differences between explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is tangible, formalized and can be easily documented, measured and shared.[43] It includes facts, theories and techniques that are commonly transmitted through educational institutions, professional training and written materials.[44] In contrast, implicit knowledge is more nuanced and often acquired through hands-on experience.[45] It encompasses the tacit understanding and skills that are developed over time through informal learning, observation and daily practice.[46] Implicit knowledge is less formalized and not always readily shared. Migrants bring both explicit knowledge, such as technical skills and formal education, and implicit knowledge, like cultural practices and lived experiences, enriching both their destination and origin countries.

[42] OECD, 2001.

[43] Baláž et al., 2021.

[44] Coey, 2018; Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009.

[45] Baláž et al., 2021; Howells, 2002.

[46] Baláž et al., 2021; Collins, 2001; Howells, 2002.

Formal education and training

Access to high-quality education is a major factor driving migration, as it enables individuals to gain valuable knowledge and skills that can be applied across borders.[47] Over the last two decades, the number of internationally mobile students has significantly increased, reflecting increased demand for global educational opportunities.[48] Many migrate to attend prestigious institutions, as international education enhances employability and social participation.[49] These students often acquire advanced technical, managerial and specialized knowledge that benefits both their origin and destination countries, as well as themselves.

Beyond individual advancement, migrant scholars play a key role in knowledge production and skill transfer. Destination countries benefit in many ways: international students contribute to academic research, workforce development and cultural exchange, enriching the curriculum with international perspectives.[50] When students stay in destination countries, they help address skill shortages, strengthen research and promote cross-cultural collaboration. They also build global networks that support ongoing knowledge exchange, and transnational business.[51] Evidence from the United States shows that foreign graduate students significantly contribute to innovation, leading to increased patent applications and higher numbers of university and non-university patent grants.[52] Similarly, international student mobility influences China's knowledge production by encouraging supervising professors to conduct research on students' home countries.[53]

When graduates return home, on the other hand, they can spur innovation, improve industry practices and contribute to economic and social development.[54] For instance, Chinese returnee students have boosted innovation and business in domestic firms, while Georgian alumni educated in Germany have helped modernize legal and political institutions.[55] Similarly, Nigerian doctors returning from abroad bring advanced medical expertise, strengthening health-care systems and supporting reforms.[56]

Work experience

Migrants also transfer knowledge through professional experience. Evidence from different regions suggests that working abroad enhances their ability to adapt expertise across diverse cultural, social and organizational contexts.[57] Skilled migrants working in high tech industries, health care, or academia introduce innovations to both destination and origin countries. A recent study from OECD countries highlights that highly skilled migrants boost domestic innovation and cross-border knowledge transfer.[58]

47 Bauloz et al., 2019; Hagelskamp et al., 2010; Bakewell and Bonfiglio, 2013.
48 IOM, 2024a.
49 Bauloz et al., 2019; UN CESCR, 1999; UNESCO, 2018.
50 de Wit and Altbach, 2020; Sawir, 2013.
51 OECD, 2023.
52 Chellaraj et al., 2008.
53 Yin and Zong, 2022.
54 OECD, 2023.
55 Wang et al., 2024a; Chen and Li, 2019; Krannich, 2024.
56 Alagbe, 2024.
57 Öhlander et al., 2020; Lee and Sukoco, 2010; Lugosi and Ndiuni, 2022.
58 Barabuffi et al., 2025.

Lower-skilled migrants also bring valuable skills.[59] For instance, Pacific islands seasonal workers in Australia improve techniques in irrigation and crop diversification, later applying them at home while sharing traditional methods.[60] Similarly, Bolivian migrants in Argentina have transformed urban agriculture by introducing advanced cultivation techniques.[61]

While skills and knowledge gained abroad are not always directly transferable, work experience in different countries can enhance entrepreneurship and business creation.[62] Exposure to diverse business environments, innovative practices and advanced technologies broaden migrants' expertise, enabling them to introduce new business models and refine processes.[63] Although adapting this knowledge to local contexts may require adjustments, the potential for entrepreneurial growth is substantial.[64]

Informal channels

Knowledge and skill transfer also occur through informal means such as personal networks, mentoring and family or community interactions.[65] For example, Estonian migrants in Finland use transnational family networks to exchange cultural and language skills, demonstrating the broader role of informal mechanisms in knowledge-sharing.

However, the transfer of knowledge and skills is rarely instantaneous. It can be delayed by barriers such as resistance from local institutions, limited opportunities to apply newly acquired skills, entrenched social structures and the necessity of substantial adjustments to align with local practices.[66] Such challenges may hinder the potential benefits of knowledge exchange, making the integration of skills a challenging process.

The discussion of knowledge and skills transfer shows that what is often labelled as "brain drain" can, in fact, be transformed into "brain gain" with substantive and substantial benefits to countries of origin and residence.[67] Rather than representing a one-way draining process, migration enables a continuous and reciprocal flow of human capital between countries. Migrants acquire valuable competencies abroad and, through various channels, reinvest them into their home societies, whether by returning, collaborating remotely, or fostering transnational networks, benefiting both destination and origin countries.

Evidence shows that the exchange of knowledge and skills enhances productivity, supports innovation and contributes to social and economic development.[68] Migrants facilitate this exchange not only through formal channels but also via informal ones that transmit practical know-how and cultural insights. While challenges remain, the broader impact of migration reinforces its role in driving development and strengthening global knowledge systems. The next section examines how diaspora communities extend this impact by maintaining strong social, cultural and economic ties with their countries of origin.

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[59] Dun et al., 2018; Hagan and Wassink, 2016.

[60] Dun et al., 2018.

[61] Pizarro, 2015.

[62] Pauli and Osowska, 2019; Mahé, 2016; Hagan and Wassink, 2016; Shen and Wang, 2024; Vārpiņa et al., 2023.

[63] Pauli and Osowska, 2019; Mahé, 2016; Sinatti, 2018.

[64] Zaenuri and Ichsan, 2023; Sinatti, 2018.

[65] Baláž et al., 2021; Kuschminder, 2011; Lam and Rui, 2023.

[66] Ackers, 2005; Argote and Ingram, 2000; Williams and Baláž, 2008; Grabowska, 2018; Wang et al., 2024b.

[67] Berger, 2022; Eslit, 2023; Mayr and Peri, 2008; Naghavi and Strozzi, 2017.

[68] McAuliffe et al., 2019.

Diaspora engagement: social, cultural and economic ties

Diasporas have long played a critical role in promoting transnational networks that bridge their destination and origin countries to facilitate collaboration and partnerships across multiple domains. Through economic investment, cultural exchanges, knowledge transfer,[69] philanthropy and political advocacy, diaspora communities contribute to the development of both their countries of origin and their countries of destination.[70]

Economic and business networks

Diasporas often act as key economic intermediaries, fostering trade, investment and remittance flows while creating market opportunities for home country goods and services. By acquiring knowledge about advanced technology, capital and professional contacts, they drive direct investment, favour home country entities in outsourcing contracts and promote tourism, collectively strengthening bilateral economic linkages and development.[71]

One of the most prominent examples is the Chinese diaspora, particularly in South-East Asia and Africa. While Chinese business communities have historically facilitated trade by leveraging family and ethnic networks, Chinese entrepreneurs in Africa are playing a vital role in infrastructure development, connecting Chinese firms with African governments and local businesses.[72] Similarly, the Indian diaspora has been instrumental in the expansion of India's technology sector. In the Americas, the Mexican diaspora in the United States plays a crucial role in facilitating remittances and business ventures. Mexico received USD 68.2 billion in remittances in 2024, largely sent by Mexican workers in the United States, directly impacting economic development in various Mexican states.[73]

Cultural and social networks

Beyond economic contributions, diaspora communities help preserve and promote cultural heritage while simultaneously fostering cultural exchange. The African diaspora in Brazil and the Caribbean has maintained strong ties with the continent through music, religion and social activism.[74] Afro-Caribbean communities have played a vital role in reviving and promoting African traditions, including Yoruba religious practices such as Candomblé in Brazil and Santería in Cuba.[75]

In Europe, the Turkish diaspora has helped sustain Turkish cultural and religious traditions while also engaging in social and political activity. Organizations like the Union of European Turkish Democrats promote cultural engagement and transnational dialogue between Türkiye and Turkish communities in France, Germany and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.[76] These networks have also influenced policy debates on integration and multiculturalism in Europe. Diaspora engagement in education and knowledge exchange is another significant cultural contribution. The Armenian diaspora, for example, has been crucial in maintaining Armenian heritage through educational institutions and funding for cultural projects in Armenia. Diaspora-led initiatives such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union support scholarships, academic research and infrastructure projects.[77]

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[69] Irudaya Rajan and Ahsan Ullah, 2023.

[70] Wickramasekara, 2009.

[71] Burns and Mohapatra, 2008.

[72] Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2009; Mazé and Chailan, 2021; De Freitas, 2023; Bo et al., 2024.

[73] Ratha et al., 2024.

[74] Murrell, 2010.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Öktem, 2014.

[77] Nieczuja-Ostrowski and Raczyński, 2020.

Diasporic social networks also serve as a form of social capital, offering essential logistical and informational support to new and prospective immigrants, thereby reducing financial and social risks associated with migration.[78] Moreover, they cultivate a "culture of migration" and expand migration opportunities in the origin country.[79] A study on Chinese older immigrants in the United Kingdom highlights the role of "bridge people," who are often part of the diasporic community, in facilitating access to health-care and social-care services.[80] Research on immigrant Colombian women in the United States of America underscores the role of social networks in helping immigrants navigate psychosocial challenges and adapt to their new environment.[81]

Diaspora in development projects

Diaspora communities contribute significantly to infrastructure projects, including road construction, energy projects and urban development. In Lebanon, remittances from the Lebanese community abroad, particularly from Gulf States, Europe and the Americas, have helped finance road construction, housing developments and small-scale energy projects.[82] Several countries have also leveraged diaspora bonds as a strategic financial instrument to mobilize capital from their expatriate communities, thereby enabling developing economies to access funds at lower interest rates than are available through international capital markets while simultaneously diversifying their sources of external financing. By offering returns that exceed standard deposit rates in destination countries, diaspora bonds present an alternate investment opportunity for migrants, reinforced by sentiments of patriotism. Israel, India, Nigeria and the Philippines have effectively utilized this mechanism, with India raising over USD 10 billion across multiple issuances and Nigeria securing USD 300 million through diaspora bonds registered in the United States and the United Kingdom.[83] The Ethiopian Government issued diaspora bonds to raise funds for its Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD); despite facing regulatory challenges in the United States, there was enthusiastic participation from the Ethiopian diaspora.[84]

Education is a primary focus of diaspora-led development, with many diaspora organizations funding scholarships, building schools and supporting teacher training programmes. The Ghanaian diaspora, for example, has been deeply involved in improving educational opportunities in Ghana. Organizations such as the Ghana Diaspora Education Fund provide scholarships and fund the construction of libraries and computer labs in rural areas.[85] The Filipino diaspora has also played a key role in enhancing education in the Philippines. The Philippine Development Foundation is supported by overseas Filipinos who contribute resources for teacher training, digital learning tools and school infrastructure improvements.[86]

Diaspora groups are instrumental in improving health-care systems by funding medical facilities, supplying medical equipment and organizing health missions. The Nigerian diaspora, for example, has established numerous health initiatives, such as medical missions to underserved communities in Nigeria.[87] In Haiti, the diaspora played a vital

[78] Fussell and Massey, 2004; Garip, 2008.
[79] Kandel and Massey, 2002; Osella and Osella, 2015.
[80] Liu et al., 2017.
[81] Madrigal and Madrigal, 2024.
[82] Atallah, 2023; Abosedra and Fakih, 2017.
[83] Ratha, 2023.
[84] Faal, 2019; Fana Media Corporation, 2025.
[85] Maclean, 2025.
[86] Agunias and Newland, 2012.
[87] Atunlute, 2025; Channels Television, 2024.

role in post-earthquake recovery efforts, particularly in the health-care sector. After the 2010 earthquake, Haitian-American organizations provided financial support for rebuilding hospitals and clinics. The Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad mobilized resources to deliver emergency care and strengthen health-care infrastructure.[88]

Diaspora as agents of political and social change

Diaspora communities have long played a pivotal role in shaping political and social change, advocating for development policies and leveraging their political influence to support national development agendas in both their origin and destination countries. These transnational actors use their economic power, lobbying efforts and activism to drive reforms, promote governance improvements and influence policy decisions.

Diasporas also engage in political activism, advocating for policy changes in both origin and destination countries. The Indian diaspora in the United States, particularly through organizations like the United States–India Political Action Committee (USINPAC), has influenced United States–India relations. Indian-Americans have played a role in strengthening bilateral trade agreements, defence cooperation and visa policies that benefit both countries.[89]

The Filipino diaspora has been active in advocating for migrant workers' rights and political reforms in the Philippines. Millions of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) contribute to the economy of the Philippines through remittances, and their advocacy has led to policy changes, including enhanced protections for migrant workers.[90] The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 was a direct result of diaspora activism and lobbying efforts.[91] By leveraging their transnational position, they develop collaboration that benefits both their origin and destination countries. More recently, diaspora groups have used their economic leverage to advocate for good governance and anti-corruption measures.[92]

In Africa, the Ethiopian diaspora has actively supported economic reforms in Ethiopia, influencing government policies to attract foreign investment and improve infrastructure.[93] The Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund, established in 2018, pools financial contributions from Ethiopians abroad to fund development projects, including education and health-care initiatives.[94] Likewise, the Somali diaspora has been crucial in rebuilding Somalia's governance structures following years of conflict. Many Somali expatriates hold key government positions and contribute to nation-building efforts through financial support and technical expertise.[95]

In addition to advocacy, migrants are increasingly exercising civic and political agency within origin and destination countries (see the box "Harnessing the momentum"). This includes campaigning for voting rights, participating in elections and engaging in policy debates through formal and informal mechanisms. In countries where legal frameworks allow, migrants have exercised their right to vote in both national and local elections. At the same time, many migrants join neighbourhood associations, grassroots movements and civil society organizations alongside nationals to advocate for better public services, denounce discrimination and campaign for educational improvements.

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88 Brinkerhoff, 2016.

89 Kapur, 2010.

90 Agunias and Newland, 2012.

91 Asis, 2006.

92 Ibid.

93 Kuschminder and Siegel, 2011.

94 Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund, n.d.

95 Hammond, 2011.

Harnessing the momentum: exploring the rising civic and political inclusion of migrants in a changing world

While the focus often falls on their sociocultural and economic roles, migrants also make substantial contributions to civic–political life. These contributions can be made through formal and informal channels. Formal avenues of political participation include voting and running for office, voting in referenda, joining political parties, serving on advisory councils and engaging in other arenas of political dialogue.[a]

Alongside the growing acceptance of multiple citizenship – albeit more slowly – non-citizen voting rights have also increased, reflecting a shared recognition of migrants' vital contributions to civic–political life. The right to vote is a fundamental political right that stands alongside a range of other rights within democracies, holding particular significance because it provides access to shaping political power and influencing the laws and policies of a municipality or country of residence.[b] It symbolizes the recognition of migrants as integral members of the civic community, allowing them to actively participate in the decision-making processes that shape the societies they are part of.[c]

Only a limited number of countries grant voting rights to non-citizen residents in national elections: Uruguay (from 1934), New Zealand (from 1975), Chile (from 1980), Malawi (from 1994) and Ecuador (from 2008). Nevertheless, there has been an increasing trend of non-citizen residents having the right to vote in local or regional elections, with this being permitted in 50 countries by 2020.[d] In the European Union, for instance, European Union citizens residing in another European Union country have the right to vote and stand as candidates in local elections under similar conditions to nationals;[e] further, approximately half of all European Union member States also extend these rights to non-European Union citizen residents.[f] In the United Kingdom, Commonwealth citizens with indefinite leave to remain can vote and be voted for in municipal and parliamentary elections.[g]

Non-citizen voting can influence the democratic process and electoral outcomes. It can impact electoral outcomes by potentially increasing voter turnout and influencing the representation of diverse communities in local governance.[h] In response, political parties across various countries within the European Union have included candidates with immigrant backgrounds to appeal to this segment of the population.[i] As a result, there is a noticeable increase in the number of municipal councillors who are either non-nationals or of immigrant origin. In Denmark, councillors with third-country backgrounds rose from 3 in 1981 to 51 in 2001. In Luxembourg, 14 non-nationals were elected in 2005. The Kingdom of the Netherlands' 2006 elections saw over 300 non-Dutch councillors elected, including 157 of Turkish and 66 of Moroccan origin. In Sweden, foreign-born individuals held 7 per cent of municipal council seats in 2002, doubling from a decade earlier.[j]

[a] Gabrielli et al., 2017.
[b] Groenendijk, 2014.
[c] Groenendijk, 2014; Pakdaman, 2019; Munro, 2008.
[d] Finn, 2024; Altman et al., 2024.
[e] European Commission, 2025.
[f] Jolkina, 2021; Yilmaz and Wolffhardt, 2024.
[g] Government of the United Kingdom, n.d.
[h] Kayran and Nadler, 2022; Groenendijk, 2014.
[i] Groenendijk, 2014.
[j] Groenendijk, 2014; Dubajic, 2007.

Source: McAuliffe and Lincango, 2025.

A strategic global public good in danger: the risks to migration

Migration has long been a catalyst for development, but its potential as a global strategic public good is increasingly at risk. A convergence of humanitarian crises, reduced donor funding, distorted narratives and increasingly restrictive policies impacting mobility inequalities is limiting the benefits that migrants bring to both origin and destination countries. This section examines the key challenges that threaten to undermine migration's positive role in human development and with regard to the SDGs.

Migration challenges

Migration is clearly part of the solution to global equality, but it is not without challenges. And while most migration is safe, orderly and regular, we are also seeing the two major exceptions to this expand: one numerical, the increasing number of people experiencing displacement, and one political, the weaponization of misinformation about migrants.

Displacement is the highest on record in the modern era. The current data show that there are around 304 million international migrants. Of this total, around 45 million are refugees or asylum-seekers.[96] The trend over time is also clear: while only a minority of migrants are involved in migration as a result of humanitarian crises due to displacement, the number is on the rise. Cross-border displacement has tripled since 2000 (from 14 to 45 million refugees), and the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has seen an even greater rise (from around 25 million in 2009 to over 80 million IDPs in 2024).[97] In a development context, internal and cross-border displacement have long been found to negatively impact development outcomes for those displaced as well as the communities that receive them.[98] More recently, and with the significant rise in the number of IDPs, there have been widespread calls for a greater focus on development-focused interventions and development finance as a means to support solutions to internal displacement. This topic is examined in detail in Chapter 7 on internal displacement in this report.

On the political front, and notwithstanding its overwhelmingly positive impact, migration has become overtly weaponized. At a time when misinformation and disinformation about migration and migrants are both increasing and increasingly effective, political actors exploit the issue for their own gain, sometimes regardless of the impacts on the societies they serve. False or misleading narratives about migrants have proliferated in recent years, often fuelling xenophobia and political backlashes. These narratives paint migrants as criminals, security threats, or economic burdens, making claims that are usually not supported by evidence but nonetheless gain traction.[99] During election cycles, especially, migration can be weaponized as a polarizing issue, with some politicians exploiting fears for political gain. In 2024, observers noted a surge in the number of dishonest claims about immigration during election campaigns, often involving blaming migrants for a range of negative issues, such as unemployment levels or crime.[100]

In Europe, data showed that the continent faced a manageable increase in asylum applications in 2023 (and a reduction in 2024 over the previous year) compared to the 2015 crisis, but disinformation distorted the debate

[96] UNHCR, 2025.

[97] UNHCR, n.d; IDMC, n.d.a.

[98] Al Zoubi and Wardeh, 2022; Schuettler and Do, 2023; Verme and Schuettler, 2021.

[99] For instance, contrary to some narratives that irregular migrants do not contribute to public finances, they pay billions in taxes each year in some countries. In the United States, for example, irregular immigrants paid USD 96.7 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2022, averaging USD 8,889 per person (Davis et al., 2024).

[100] Schumacher et al., 2024; Varma and Roehse, 2024.

during the European Union parliamentary elections.[101] A very stark example of the tangible impact of false narratives occurred in mid-2024 when a wave of anti-migrant riots swept 27 towns across the United Kingdom, sparked by fake news on social media. In one town, an unfounded rumour led crowds to attack a hotel housing asylum-seekers and clash with police, resulting in over 1,200 arrests and almost 800 people charged.[102]

Against the backdrop of politically driven misinformation and disinformation, many countries face labour gaps related to ageing populations, lagging education systems and quickly emerging skills gaps driven by frontier technologies. While the toxic political discourse hampers effective policies facilitating migration, many governments are also narrowing regular migration pathways by implementing restrictive policies that can have unintended negative consequences, putting migrants and migration's benefits at risk. As can be seen in the box on growing global mobility, long-term analysis of where international migrants come from and migrate to highlights growing migration inequality.

Growing global mobility

Media and political debate often focus on migration from the least developed to the most developed nations. But while most international migrants (79%, 190 million migrants) do reside in countries that rank very highly on the Human Development Index (HDI), their countries of origin present a more complex picture, with comparatively few coming from the poorest nations. Of the top 20 emigration countries in 2020, 16 ranked high or very high on the HDI, and none were low HDI nations (refugee-origin nations excluded). The greatest number of migrants (86 million) emigrated from high HDI countries, followed by very high HDI nations (76 million).

Visa policies have evolved between 1995 and now, resulting in border control and entry policies that have become stricter – and more polarized – meaning that over time more barriers to international mobility have emerged for people from low HDI countries.

Many people from the least developed nations are increasingly denied opportunities for betterment and economic advancement through migration as they are unable to access such options because of high visa costs and demanding visa requirements. This divide risks further exacerbating poverty and inequality between the richest and poorest.

There is therefore an evidence-based case to be made for enhancing regular migration pathways. Contrary to popular perception, most migration takes place between relatively wealthy countries, with migration pathways for people in less developed nations narrowing in recent years. This approach could backfire in the long term, as it risks deepening divides and exacerbating inequality when it comes to mobility, ultimately making it even harder for people from low development countries to migrate out of poverty. Efforts to overcome mobility inequalities, such as through geographic free-movement arrangements and other regular pathways, are critical to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration globally.

Source: McAuliffe et al., 2024.

[101] Varma and Roehse, 2024.

[102] Horwood, 2024.

Critically, when regular pathways are closed, a small proportion of potential migrants are driven into irregular channels. Those who are desperate to seek safety or opportunity may resort to unauthorized routes that carry high risks.[103] The result has been a rise in human smuggling and dangerous journeys across deserts and seas. The Mediterranean, for instance, remains the deadliest migration route in the world. 2024 marked the deadliest year on record for migrants globally, with over 8,900 deaths recorded during migration journeys, including more than 2,700 deaths and disappearances in Asia and over 2,400 in the Mediterranean alone.[104] Those who survive irregular journeys often face exploitation, violence or abuse by smugglers and traffickers, which can permanently harm individuals and diminish their future potential. Moreover, clandestine movement undermines the developmental gains of migration as migrants travelling irregularly often lose their assets, arrive in worse health, or remain stuck in underemployment to avoid detection.

Safeguarding migration: policies for sustainable development

In light of the various challenges and risks that can undermine migration, as noted in the previous sections, thoughtful and impactful evidence-based policies and initiatives are important to safeguard the positive results of migration and promote sustainable development. While there are numerous examples of such policies and initiatives globally, the examples below are included to provide insights into some of the key areas of recent focus, including improvements to remittance channels, skills exchanges and diaspora engagement.

Reducing remittance transfer costs and enhancing impact

Global frameworks recognize the need to make remittances cheaper and more effective for development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG target 10.c) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration have set a goal to reduce remittance fees to 3 per cent and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.[105] Yet as of 2023, the global average cost to send USD 200 was about 6.3 per cent, more than double the SDG target.[106]

While the cost of sending remittances has gradually declined over the last few years across several regions (see Figure 2), it remains high, far above the SDG 10 target. In 2022, average costs were lowest in South Asia (4.6%), followed by East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean (both around 5.8%). Sub-Saharan Africa has consistently had the highest average cost of sending remittances: in 2022, the cost was more than 8 per cent, more than double the SDG target.

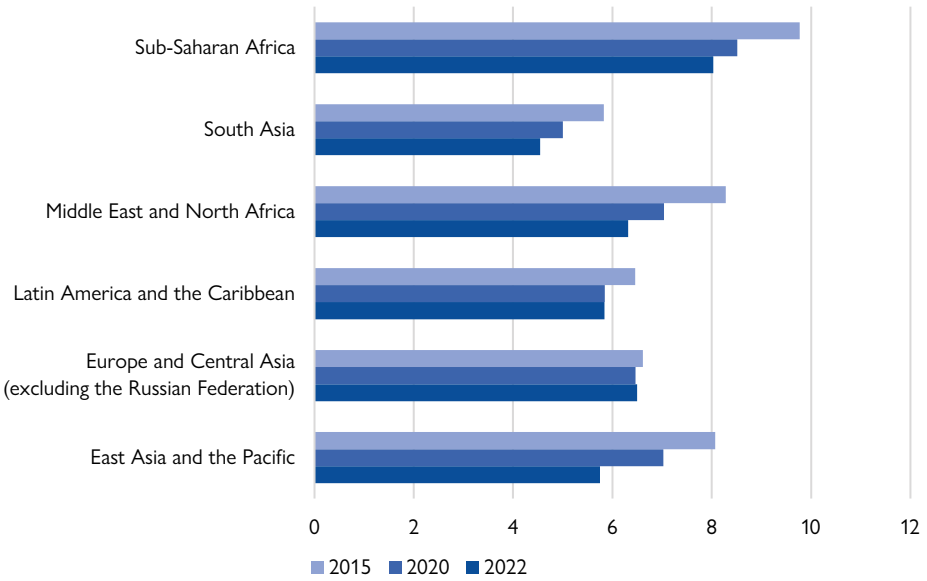
[103] McAuliffe, 2018.

[104] IOM, 2025.

[105] UN DESA, n.d.d.

[106] Ratha, 2023.

Figure 2. Average cost of sending 200 United States dollars by region of the world, 2015–2022 (percentage)



Source: IOM, 2024a.

Note: The figure reflects World Bank geographic regions. The analysis excludes the Russian Federation and the former Soviet Republics, since they operate based on the integrated payment systems of the former USSR. Remittance service providers in these countries are not comparable to those in other countries, which incur high costs when having to bridge the national payment systems in two countries.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most expensive subregion, with average fees around 8 per cent, and the cost to send remittances in some intra-African corridors is exorbitantly high due to multiple currency conversions and limited competition. For example, sending USD 200 from the United Republic of Tanzania to Uganda can cost 35 per cent in fees, under old models.[107] To address this, many countries and institutions are adopting policies to increase competition, transparency and the use of digital technologies in remittances. This policy agenda was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic when immobility disrupted informal remittances, forcing many to turn to digital avenues.[108] The G20 (Group of Twenty) and the European Union have promoted transparency by supporting remittance price databases and comparison websites. European countries like Germany, Italy and France launched consumer-friendly portals listing fees and exchange rates to empower migrants to find cheaper services. Regulatory cooperation has also helped: for instance, under Italy's presidency in 2021, the G20 convened a working group that included its central bank, finance and foreign ministries and remittance providers to jointly devise measures for expanding low-cost formal channels in line with SDG 10.c. These efforts contributed to steady fee declines (for example, remittance costs from the European Union to Africa fell approximately 30% over six years) and helped

[107] Ibid.

[108] Gamlen et al., 2024.

some corridors approach the 3 per cent target.[109] Embracing fintech is another key strategy: digital and mobile remittance services dramatically cut costs and broaden access. Using a digital wallet via a smartphone is now the cheapest way to send money internationally, as seen in East Africa where mobile money integration has enabled cross-border transfers at fees well below traditional bank rates.[110]

Lower costs and greater transparency mean migrants can send more funds home through formal channels, but ensuring these remittances translate into sustainable development is the next step. Many LMICs now actively leverage remittances for broader economic growth. Mexico's "Tres Por Uno" (3x1) programme, for example, channels collective remittances into community projects. Under 3x1, each 1 dollar sent by migrant home town associations for local development (such as building schools or water systems) is matched by 3 dollars from federal, state and municipal governments.[111] This fund-matching grant programme sponsored hundreds of projects across Mexico, multiplying the impact of international remittances. In Latin America and the Caribbean, such partnerships have become a cornerstone of home town development initiatives. They not only improve infrastructure in origin communities but also strengthen trust that remittances are used transparently and effectively. Similarly, community funds and charitable associations in North America and Europe help channel remittances to public goods. By reducing transfer costs, enhancing transparency and co-financing development projects, these policies safeguard remittances as a reliable "bottom-up" investment in sustainable development. Current estimates are that a five percentage-point reduction in fees would save migrant families nearly USD 30 billion annually, money that could instead be directed to education, health care, entrepreneurship and other uses.[112]

Avoiding regressive remittance taxes

In May 2025, the United States Government proposed a new federal law to impose a 5 per cent tax on all outward-bound remittances sent from the United States by non-citizens. This was widely deemed to be regressive.[113] However, with advocacy by various stakeholders and experts, significant amendments were made to the proposed law. On 9 June, one senator proposed that the rate of remittance tax should be set at 15 per cent, but the Senate in fact reduced the tax to 3.5 per cent on 17 June, and to 1 per cent on 28 June 2025.[114] The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" was signed into law by the president of the United States on 4 July 2025, to take effect from 1 January 2026. The new law imposes a 1 per cent tax on outbound remittances from the United States, made through cash, money order, cashier's check or other physical instruments. As opposed to the original proposal, the new law applies to all remittance senders, irrespective of nationality or residency status.[115]

One potentially positive outcome of the new law is that it encourages non-cash digital remittance transfers, which have been evolving over the past two decades and grew significantly during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Digital remittance transfers tend to be cheaper, faster and more transparent, and are promoted in the FfD4 outcome document and other remittance optimization policy frameworks. However, the remittance tax penalizes people without access to bank accounts, while exacerbating financial exclusion.

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[109] ICMPD, 2021.

[110] Kitimbo, 2021; Ratha, 2023.

[111] Malone and Durden, 2018.

[112] Ratha, 2023.

[113] Leon-Himmelstine, 2025.

[114] MSBA, 2025.

[115] Ibid.

Even though the original draft was revised by the United States Congress, the law still has negative effects that undermine the strategic and development benefits of migration. For those who are already marginalized through financial exclusion, the cost of remittance transfers increases by at least 1 per cent. A new administrative burden is placed on money transfer operators to set up and maintain new tax systems and to collect, pass on and reconcile remittances taxes with Internal Revenue Services. The additional costs are likely to be passed on to remitters, further increasing transfer costs, contrary to global commitments to reduce the cost of remittance transactions.

This new United States federal tax may also encourage other authorities and countries to seek to impose regressive remittance taxes, as some Gulf countries have considered before.[116] Several states of the United States have attempted to do so, and currently Oklahoma has a remittance tax law.[117] Given the high volumes of remittance inflows, even some receiving countries had considered remittance taxes as an opportunistic way of raising funds. Some countries had imposed and then rescinded remittance taxes, like Viet Nam (1997), Tajikistan (2003), Gabon (2008) and Palau (2013).[118] One of the first effects of a remittance tax is that it pushes flows to unofficial, informal and potentially unlawful channels. The inherent personal and macroeconomic benefits of formal flows are reduced; senders are exposed to the multiple financial risks associated with some of the informal channels; remittance volumes and tax collections decline, whilst the complexities and costs of administering the remittance tax system remain a burden; and low-income senders and recipients are adversely affected. As such, they are ineffective, regressive and counterproductive.

The United States remittance tax is partly intended to reduce irregular and undocumented migration.[119] However, there is evidence that the tax can increase inward migration pressures as it increases poverty in neighbouring Latin American countries.[120] It generally undermines the positive and strategic development effects of migration that maintain families in good livelihoods abroad. Furthermore, it negatively affects American citizens,[121] hardworking documented migrants, settled diaspora communities, American society and the American economy.[122]

Facilitating migrant skills exchange and "brain gain"

Protecting migration's role in development also means addressing the "brain drain" challenge and turning it into "brain gain". When skilled workers emigrate, origin countries may lose human capital, but tailored policies can circulate knowledge so that both origin and destination countries benefit. One strategy is to create channels for temporary or return migration of professionals. Some estimates indicate that about 40 per cent of emigrants worldwide eventually return to their home country (although estimates vary by region), and return rates are higher for highly educated migrants.[123] Returnees often bring back advanced skills, new ideas and business networks acquired abroad, with many governments enacting policies to entice their overseas professionals to return or contribute from afar. One of the first such policy initiatives is the Philippines's Balik Scientist Program, which is a pioneering brain gain initiative established in 1975 to encourage Filipino scientists and technical experts abroad to

[116] Malit and Naufal, 2016.
[117] Ratha et al., 2017.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Pinedo, 2025.
[120] Dempster et al., 2025.
[121] Minott, 2025.
[122] Kumar, 2025.
[123] Wabha, 2021.

return to the Philippines (even if only for a time) and share their expertise for national development.[124] Through the Balik Scientist Program, overseas Filipino researchers are invited for short-term visitations in universities and labs at home, leading training and collaborative projects. This has helped transfer knowledge in fields from agriculture to biotechnology, and with government support it offers benefits and research funding for returning scholars. Other Asian countries have similar talent-return schemes. For example, India's brain gain efforts include annual diaspora conventions and innovation hubs to entice Indian scientists and entrepreneurs back (or to mentor startups remotely), while China's initiatives like the Thousand Talents Plan have successfully attracted thousands of overseas Chinese academics to return and bolster domestic research and development.[125] Such programmes can have mixed results, however, notwithstanding the longer-term benefits.[126]

Return migrants

Return migration – whether following labour migration, international study, family reunification, displacement or other forms of migration – is an integral part of the migration cycle. When effectively managed, it can generate positive development outcomes. This is especially true when return processes are accompanied by comprehensive reintegration measures that help individuals re-establish themselves socially and economically. For instance, the Guatemalan Government's programme "*Plan Retorno al Hogar*" includes three phases: consular support abroad, dignified reception upon return, and reintegration through employment, education and housing.[a]

Migrants returning home often bring with them valuable assets: newly acquired skills, educational qualifications, financial capital and international exposure. These can contribute across a range of sectors, such as education, health, entrepreneurship and public administration. For example, returnees in Nepal have launched agriculture and carpentry businesses through vocational training.[b] In the Gambia, returnees were given training in the field of small solar home systems and rural mechanics, supporting community development.[c] In Albania, return migrants have leveraged social and human capital gained abroad to start businesses, introduce new work cultures and products, and expand economic opportunities through strong social networks.[d] However, the extent to which returnees are able to contribute depends on the conditions of return, the support available for reintegration and the broader economic and institutional context.[e]

[a] Government of Guatemala, n.d.

[b] Poudel, 2024.

[c] GIZ, n.d.

[d] Xhaho et al., 2024.

[e] Bucheli and Fontenla, 2025; OECD, 2024; Langović et al., 2024.

Destination countries are also adjusting policies to foster brain circulation rather than one-way drain. In Europe, several Eastern European States with immigrant populations (such as Lithuania and Poland) have likewise offered tax breaks, startup capital, or fast-track civil service jobs for young nationals who come back with foreign degrees. Even short of permanent return, circulating skills through temporary migration can be a win-win. Programmes facilitating

[124] Republic of the Philippines, n.d.

[125] Shi et al., 2023.

[126] Li et al., 2018; Pandey et al., 2022.

circular migration allow workers to gain experience abroad and then utilize it back home after they return, including establishing small businesses of their own. New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme and Australia's seasonal work programmes are good examples. They recruit workers from Pacific Island countries for several months of agricultural work, then workers return home with earnings and improved skills. These schemes explicitly tie labour mobility to development with participating Pacific countries reporting that workers come back with new technical knowledge and soft skills that increase their employability or entrepreneurship opportunities locally.[127] Crucially, the remittances are significant with Pacific seasonal workers earning 3 to 10 times their home earnings and remitting on average 60 per cent of their income, lifting many families out of poverty.[128] A recent survey across Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu found these mobility programmes had net positive economic and social impacts on sending communities, with households investing remittance money in homes, education and small businesses.[129] By enabling skill transfer and avoiding permanent loss of talent, circular migration policies mitigate brain drain and instead create a "brain circulation" ecosystem.

Engaging diaspora as development partners

Safeguarding migration's developmental role means institutionalizing diaspora engagement. Migrants and their descendants can be powerful agents of sustainable development, not only through financial remittances and skills, but also via trade links, investments, cultural exchange and advocacy. Recognizing this, governments worldwide have launched dedicated policies to more actively involve their diasporas in national development. African countries and regional organizations have been especially active on this issue. The African Union formally designated the African diaspora as the continent's "sixth region", underlining that those abroad are still part of Africa's socioeconomic fabric.[130] Many African States now have diaspora ministries or high-level offices. For example, Ghana created an Office of Diaspora Affairs under the president in 2017, and in 2019 it spearheaded the "Year of Return" campaign. The campaign commemorated 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in the Americas and invited the global African diaspora to "come home" to Ghana for heritage tourism, investment forums and networking.[131] The results were striking, with Ghana experiencing a 45 per cent jump in international visitors (over 200,000 extra arrivals), boosted tourism revenue and strengthened ties with African American and Caribbean diaspora communities.[132] In 2017, the Migration and Sustainable Development in the Gambia (MSDG) project was initiated as one of the first ever diaspora-led technical cooperation programmes in the world, in partnership with the Government of the Gambia and the Office of the President. MSDG has implemented about 200 diaspora-led cross-sectoral development interventions in line with the commitments of the Global Compact for Migration.[133]

Around the world, diaspora investment incentives are becoming common. Countries in Asia like India and Bangladesh offer diaspora investors preferential access to bonds, real estate or business licenses. In Latin America and the Caribbean, governments engage their diasporas through business forums and tax breaks. Jamaica gives returning citizens duty concessions to start enterprises, and the Dominican Republic has "diaspora investment channels" in sectors like tourism. Further, Barbados and Saint Lucia host regular "homecoming" festivals where diaspora

[127] Government of New Zealand, n.d.

[128] Doan et al., 2023.

[129] Ibid.

[130] African Union, 2025.

[131] Mills, 2019.

[132] EUDiF, n.d.

[133] GK Partners, n.d.

members return to celebrate culture and often to volunteer or donate to local causes. Such events reinforce cultural identity while generating tourism income and philanthropy.

Many migration destination countries view diaspora engagement as a form of "global partnership". Somali and Sudanese diaspora organizations in North America and Europe have been pivotal in raising funds for humanitarian relief and post-conflict reconstruction in their countries of origin, effectively acting as informal development agencies. Some studies have found that refugee diasporas tend to remit at high rates, underscoring that forced migrants maintain strong development ties.[134] Therefore, policies that integrate resettled refugees quickly, including providing access to banking, employment opportunities and membership in community organizations, can facilitate their contributions to sustainable development back home.

A clear trend among governments is the formal acknowledgment of diasporas as development partners. At least 79 countries have one or more institutions fully dedicated to diaspora engagement, while over 100 countries maintain institutions that are at least partially involved in such efforts. These range from high-level diaspora ministries (for example, in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nigeria and Pakistan) to local government outreach programmes in migrant-sending regions. The impact is evident in financial flows: countries with dedicated diaspora policies see significantly higher remittance inflows and diaspora investments than those without.[135] Diaspora policy forums like the Global Diaspora Summit and regional diaspora networks facilitated by international organizations further help countries share best practices, from organizing diaspora bonds to setting up one-stop portals for diaspora members to volunteer or invest back home.[136]

Conclusions

Migration has long played a pivotal role in shaping the economic, social and cultural trajectories of societies. As this chapter has outlined, the long-term evidence supporting migration as a driver of sustainable development is overwhelming. Migrants contribute not only through the vast sums of international remittances they send home – often surpassing ODA and FDI – but also through knowledge and skills transfers, building resilient transnational networks and as innovators and agents of political, economic and social change.

Yet, despite evidence such as the decades of trend data on remittances, migration as a global strategic public good underpinning the SDGs is increasingly at risk. A confluence of trends – growing global mobility inequality, the proliferation of anti-migrant disinformation, restrictive policy environments and a chronically underfunded humanitarian system – threatens to reverse hard-won gains. Some of the key policy implications related to safeguarding international migration and supporting its use as part of the solution to global development, as outlined in this chapter, include:

- Strategic policy must be emphasized. Politicians, parliamentarians, policymakers and the public need to have the information and tools to better recognize migration as a global public good. We must move beyond viewing migration narrowly through a crisis lens. National development plans and international frameworks need to better integrate migration explicitly, not only in terms of managing flows, but in leveraging the full developmental potential of human mobility.

[134] Ibid.

[135] HLCID, 2001; IOM, 2024b; Tittel-Mosser, 2023.

[136] IOM, 2022.

- Remittances are a cornerstone of migration's development impact. Reducing transfer costs and promoting digital financial services would significantly increase the gains already made. Public–private partnerships and regulatory cooperation in this area need to be expanded. Countries can further enhance development outcomes by linking remittances to financial literacy programmes, savings incentives and collective investment schemes.
- Support for circular and return migration can foster human capital development across both origin and destination countries, and get us beyond simplistic brain drain narratives. Such support, in the form of talent mobility programmes, recognition of qualifications, diaspora fellowships and innovation hubs, would be further enhanced by building global skills partnerships and creating legal pathways for skill exchange, particularly in health, science and technology sectors critical to development.
- Diaspora communities are increasingly acting as development actors in their own right, not only through remittances but also via investments, philanthropy, knowledge-sharing and advocacy. Establishing or strengthening diaspora institutions and strategies that facilitate these connections would facilitate a strategic approach to national development planning.
- The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation distorts public perception and undermines strategic policy development. Governments, media platforms and civil society need to boost investment in countering false narratives through public awareness campaigns, fact-checking initiatives and media literacy programmes. Providing accurate information on migration and making it widely accessible is an essential component in combating misinformation and disinformation.
- Migration policies must be rooted in human rights and humanitarian principles. This includes ensuring protection for displaced populations, as well as addressing the vulnerabilities of other migrants, especially those in precarious situations. Social protection schemes, labour standards and portable benefits across borders are essential to safeguard migrants and maximize their developmental contributions.
- Effective migration and development policy depends on accurate, disaggregated and timely data. Continued investments in migration statistics, research and analysis are critical. Global and regional cooperation through initiatives like the Global Compact for Migration and regional consultative processes must continue to be supported to enhance coordination and policy coherence.

Safeguarding migration as a strategic global public good requires creating policy ecosystems that facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, while maximizing the contributions of migrants to sustainable development. Migration is not just movement of people; it is the movement of innovations, ideas, values and opportunities. Protecting and promoting effective migration is essential to achieving a more equitable, resilient and sustainable world.

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5 RETHINKING REGULAR MIGRATION PATHWAYS: MYTHS, REALITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES[1,2]

Introduction

Around the world, governments have repeatedly sought to regulate who moves to their countries and with what implications. Over recent years, such efforts have been closely associated with the term "regular pathways".[3] In general, a path or pathway can be understood as a clearly defined way or track to guide people from one point to another. Regular pathways for migration are the mechanisms that enable people to move to, enter, stay in, exit, or re-enter a country or territory in an authorized manner along their migration journey. Similarly provide a way to enable people to move to, enter, and stay in a given country or territory. Although opportunities alone are insufficient to determine whether people will or will not migrate (peoples' aspirations or intentions and abilities or capabilities to move are also key determinants),[4] they do influence where, when and how people migrate. As a result, the availability or lack of regular pathways can have a significant impact on how migration happens.

Political debates and public policy concerning regular pathways are often dominated by myths and misconceptions.[5] These often describe migration as a problem, or something out of control. They are frequently reflected in public concerns about the scale of migration and its implications for the labour market, public services, crime and other social and cultural issues. These are, in turn, related to and fuelled by broader fears about the perceived negative impact of globalization on State sovereignty and borders, national identities and social cohesion. These fears tend to result in demands for migration pathways to be closed, or at least more strictly regulated and controlled. Examples include imposing increasingly severe visa costs,[6] raising minimum income requirements to qualify for permits to study, work or for family reunification,[7] or reducing the range of circumstances in which people qualify for forms of international protection.[8]

This chapter examines regular migration pathways with the aim of unpacking the myths that dominate the landscapes of political debate and public policy. It highlights trends in regular pathways and their implications for the global scale of international migration. It also examines the effects of regular pathways, such as their role in addressing

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2 The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (August 2025).

3 The term "regular pathways" is used throughout this chapter, rather than the term "legal pathways" that is sometimes used by different governments or organizations. There is no substantive difference between the terms; this chapter uses the one term for consistency, except where quoting sources that use the other.

4 Carling and Schewel, 2017.

5 Crawley et al., 2017; de Haas, 2023.

6 Mau et al., 2015; Torpey, 2000.

7 Such as in Australia (see Government of Australia, n.d.) or the United Kingdom (see Government of the United Kingdom, n.d.)

8 For example, in 2018 the Italian Government removed the status of "humanitarian protection", to be replaced with the more limited status of "special protection" (Repubblica Italiana, 2018). For a legal analysis, see Lodos, 2023.

demographic imbalances and labour shortages in destination countries and benefiting communities and families in places of origin through remittances, skills acquisition and cultural exchange, as well as enabling people in need of protection to reach safety. The following section reviews definitions of regular pathways and how they have changed over time. The subsequent section examines data and research, highlighting a trend of regular pathways becoming increasingly selective and unequally distributed among places and populations. This is followed by a review of available evidence regarding the impacts and outcomes of regular pathways or a lack of them, including case studies from different world regions (see the appendices).

Concepts

Although not a new concept, over recent years "regular pathways" has become an increasingly prevalent term in politics, policy and practice related to international migration.[9] The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration specifically calls for enhancing the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.[10] In the European Union, as is the case in many high income countries, regular pathways have been framed as a way to attract skilled workers in a context of demographic change and a declining working-age population. In the Americas, regular pathways have been a centrepiece of regional cooperation to create the conditions for safe, orderly, regular and humane migration and for international protection, such as in the Los Angeles Declaration among 21 States in the Americas and the Caribbean.[11] The African Union Commission has framed regular pathways as a way to provide young people with opportunities and an alternative to irregular migration in the Migration Policy Framework for Africa.[12] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also lists "promoting migration through regular channels" as a primary recommendation for the Asia-Pacific region as a way of reducing irregular migration, in particular by lowering the costs of entry and stay (visas and work permits) to provide alternatives to travelling with smugglers.

The increasing use of the term has resulted in an expansion of the ideas and approaches that are associated with regular pathways. Some core elements can nonetheless be identified. Regular pathways is a catch-all term describing the broad range of ways that States seek to regulate who can migrate, as well as when, where and how they can migrate. These are set out in national laws and policies, as well as in bilateral or multilateral agreements between States or embedded within regional integration processes, often alongside other policy areas beyond migration and human mobility. They enable people to move to, enter, stay in, or return from a given State territory. There are regular pathways for different groups and for multiple purposes, such as labour migration, family reunification and study, as well as return, readmission and reintegration. There are pathways for people in need of protection, and complementary pathways for those recognized as refugees to move for work purposes. Some are stable; fixed over periods of time; others are ad hoc measures for a particular group or circumstance.[13] Beyond establishing conditions for entry, exit and residence in a country, regular pathways are also embedded in political regimes and constitute a tool of international relations.[14]

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[9] See Appendix A for more details of the examples listed here. See also Ruhs and Anderson, 2010.

[10] See objective 5 of the Global Compact for Migration: "We commit to adapt options and pathways for regular migration in a manner that facilitates labour mobility and decent work reflecting demographic and labour market realities, optimizes education opportunities, upholds the right to family life, and responds to the needs of migrants in a situation of vulnerability, with a view to expanding and diversifying availability of pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration" (United Nations, 2018).

[11] United States White House, 2022.

[12] African Union Commission, 2018a.

[13] Such is the case of the various responses that were implemented to address Venezuelan displacement in Latin America.

[14] Czaika et al., 2018.

Regularization of the status of people residing irregularly is a regular pathway, albeit of people who have already crossed an international border. Regularizations are commonly used tools in migration management. They may be implemented on a case-by-case basis (such as via immigration status resolution or to address the rights of migrant children and their families), through medium to large ad hoc programmes, or they may be more consistent and stable mechanisms set out in law and policy (such as via temporary protection status or labour market-driven regularizations). Recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, several governments implemented a number of regularization measures, with profound implications for migrant populations, local communities and the policymaking process.

Regular pathways are put into practice through a diverse range of bureaucratic and operational activities involving multiple stakeholders within and outside of government, at global, regional, national and local levels. The United Nations Network on Migration includes a Working Group on Regular Pathways for Migrants in Vulnerable Situations.[15] The International Organization for Migration (IOM) presents "facilitating regular pathways" as one of its three overarching strategic priorities.[16] Civil society can have a role in shaping who moves, where, for how long and with what impact on themselves and the communities they move to, such as on sponsorship pathways for refugees. These are defined by UNHCR as "programmes in which private individuals, entities or organizations (nomination sponsors) directly engage in admission efforts by identifying, selecting and supporting the entry and stay of nominated individuals in need of international protection".[17] The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative identified such programmes in 13 countries worldwide in 2022.[18] Several non-governmental organizations have also had an increasing role in advocating for and implementing regular pathways for labour migration, such as Pathways International, which works "with leaders and innovators to design, launch, and expand safe and legal routes for displaced people".[19] Labor Mobility Pathways is another example, working to "dramatically increase the scale and quality of labor mobility, helping workers from low income countries to access quality jobs across borders and businesses in high income countries to address deepening labor shortages".[20] Talent Beyond Boundaries is yet another example, seeking to provide opportunities for refugees to migrate for work by connecting employers with refugees and working with governments to open skilled migration pathways for refugees that benefit individuals, family members, communities and the economy.[21] These and other organizations highlight an expanding ecosystem of governance actors, within and outside of government, with an interest in regular pathways.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the process of obtaining regular migration status is not always linear or predictable. In many cases, migrants' statuses change through different administrative categories and may even shift between periods of being regular and irregular. This may be because the migrants' situations do not fully align with existing frameworks or because social, economic, political and regulatory conditions may change over time.

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15 United Nation Network on Migration, n.d.a.

16 The Strategic Plan states that "IOM works to unleash the potential of migration by assisting States to establish, expand and enhance regular migration pathways, while reducing irregular migration" (IOM, 2024a).

17 UNHCR, 2024a.

18 See GRSI, 2022. For an examination of programmes and their impact in Europe, see Zenzuchi et al., 2023.

19 See Pathway International, n.d.

20 See LaMP, n.d.

21 See Talent Beyond Boundaries, n.d.

Context

It is challenging to measure the success or effects of regular pathways, given the varied and changing nature of the different mechanisms and frameworks that they encompass (see the box on data access). However, some general trends can be identified through global data sets and large-scale research projects on migration policies and legislation. These data show a clear pattern: regular pathways for migration have become increasingly selective, and access to them has become increasingly unevenly distributed around the world. In specific regions and countries, however, there is a more varied trend of opening and closing pathways over time for different populations in different contexts.

The challenges of data access and systematization

The collection and analysis of data on migrants in irregular – and even regular – situations present significant challenges. The lack of accurate data hampers the development of effective policies and the evaluation of regularization programmes. On one hand, data on migrants in irregular situations are inherently difficult to collect, due to the undocumented nature of such migrants. On the other, the absence of detailed information on migration status in administrative records limits the ability to monitor and respond to the needs of this population.

In many countries there are no consistent or publicly available records indicating how many migrants have regular status, how many have been regularized, under which programmes, or how these figures vary over time. Many countries do not conduct longitudinal tracking of permits issued, nor can they identify the unique individuals who receive them. Furthermore, much of the available information refers to administrative events (such as visa issuances) rather than the current legal status of individuals, making accurate estimations difficult.

The situation varies widely by country: in some cases, there is a total absence of data; in others, available data are so limited that studies have resorted to broad estimates based on ranges, explicitly acknowledging the uncertainty of these figures.[a] Additionally, the lack of disaggregated data (by age, sex, previous status, geographic location, and so on) further complicates the assessment of regularization processes and their impact.[b]

[a] Gandini and Selee, 2023.

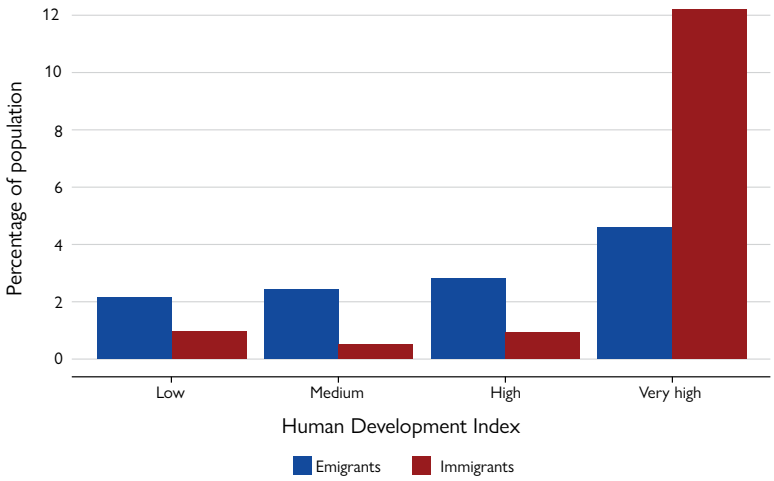
[b] Chaves-González and Delgado, 2023.

The *World Migration Report 2024* has already highlighted a "polarizing effect", whereby migration is increasingly associated with highly developed countries, with implications for the possibilities that international migration offers to sustainable development in less developed countries and communities.[22] Historically, international migration to low income countries has tended to be very limited; very few people tend to migrate to countries that rank low on the Human Development Index (HDI); more migrate to countries with a medium HDI ranking; more again to countries with a high HDI ranking; and the largest number migrate to countries with a very high HDI ranking. This is evidenced by global international migrant stock and HDI data showing that between 1995 and 2020, migration from low and medium ranked HDI countries increased, but only slightly. At the same time, migration from countries

[22] McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024.

with high and very high HDI rankings, to other countries with high and very high HDI rankings, is pronounced and has increased significantly since 1995. This suggests a greater increase in the availability of opportunities for migration for people in countries with high and very high levels of human development than in the availability of such opportunities for people in countries with lower levels of human development.

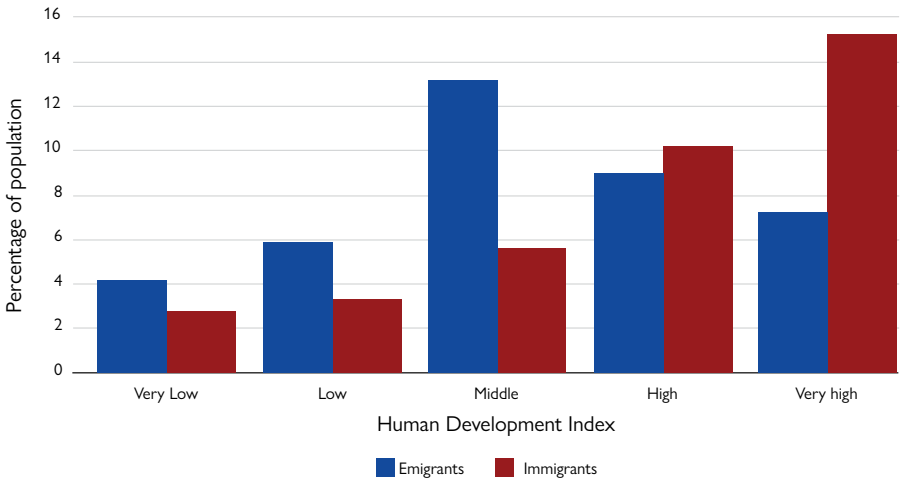
Figure 1. Immigrants and emigrants by Human Development Index country category, 2020



Source: McAuliffe et al., 2024.

Note: Some categories of international migrant are not included.

Figure 2. Association between Human Development Index scores and immigrant/emigrant stocks, 2005



Source: McAuliffe et al., 2024.

Note: Categorization by author (not UNDP HDI 4 categories).

These global inequalities in terms of access to opportunities for regular mobility can also be seen in the patterns of conditions for entry and stay provided by visas and passports.[23] As noted in a previous edition of the *World Migration Report* (2022), visa access can be described as related to a "lottery of birth". This is evidenced by data from the Visa Restrictions Index, a global ranking of countries according to the travel freedom of their citizens, that reveals how an individual's ability to enter a country is in many respects determined by nationality, which in turn is influenced by a country's status and relations within the international community. In general, nationals from countries with very high levels of human development can travel visa free to a significant majority of all countries worldwide. At the same time, citizens of countries with lower levels of human development tend to face much greater restrictions on visa-free travel. There are signals that, on one hand, this trend may continue or even become more pronounced as international relations become more uncertain.[24] On the other hand, the presence of measures to establish visa-free travel at continental and regional levels in different parts of the world (see below for some examples) also suggests that, while some opportunities for mobility may become more restrictive, others may become less so.

Other studies show similar trends. An empirical study based on the Determinants of International Migration (DEMIG) policy database, tracking migration policies in 45 countries, showed that policies generally became less restrictive between 1945 and 2014.[25] However, at the same time, certain pathways became more restrictive. More specifically, visas, entry and integration policies had become less restrictive, while border control and exit policies had become more restrictive (especially pertaining to return and deportation programmes, and in some cases authoritarian regimes' conditions for the exit of citizens).[26] Also, while policies towards irregular migrants and family migrants had been tightened, less restrictive changes were noted in policies targeting highly skilled and lower skilled workers, students and refugees. In a similar fashion, the International Migration Policy and Law Analysis (IMPALA) database on migration policies and laws from 1999 to 2008 both found trends toward more complex, and often more restrictive, regulation since the 1990s, and over the same time period identified differential treatment of groups, such as lower requirements for highly skilled than lower skilled migrant workers.[27] These databases show a trend in migration regimes becoming more selective, rather than simply more or less restrictive across the board.

A range of other studies describe varied patchworks of more or less open or selective pathways in different world regions.[28] Examining regional contexts emphasizes the diverse forms that regular pathways take, and changes in approaches over time. Regional contexts also highlight insights into inequalities in terms of the selectiveness of different pathways and implementation gaps that impact how migration happens in practice.

The European Union provides a particularly varied context, with many different pathways that are differently open or restrictive for different populations and in different member States. Citizens of European Union member States and European Free Trade Association (EFTA)[29] member States enjoy rights of free movement and equal treatment across the Union. In 2023, there were an estimated 10.1 million so-called "free movers" in the European Union and EFTA (equal to 3.8% of the total European Union working-age population). Free movers is defined by the European Commission as "EU or EFTA citizens who reside in an EU or EFTA country other than their country

[23] Mau et al., 2015; Torpey, 2000.

[24] For example, in Executive Order 14161 of 20 January 2025, President Trump of the United States of America directed federal agencies of the United States Government to identify countries for which there should be issued a full or partial suspension on the admission of nationals from those countries (United States White House, 2025).

[25] de Haas et al., 2018.

[26] de Haas et al., 2015 and 2018.

[27] Beine et al., 2015.

[28] Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024; Dempster et al., 2021; Stefanescu, 2020.

[29] The EFTA currently comprises four European countries: Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. For examples, see Appendix A.

of citizenship".[30] So-called third-country nationals (people from a non-European Union country) are subject to varied access criteria in different member States: in some European Union member States, employment is the first reason for entry; in others, it is less significant than people entering for family reunification or for education.[31] At the regional level, the European Union has also created other opportunities for specific categories of migrants, such as the European Union Blue Card for highly skilled migrants.

A mapping of regular pathways in the Americas has described a range of frameworks and initiatives including regional mobility and residence agreements, visa policies, circular labour migration mechanisms and, more recently, flexible humanitarian pathways.[32] Regular pathways within the hemisphere also includes bilateral and multilateral agreements between States and measures determined by individual States that open pathways for particular populations or employment sectors for circular or permanent migration.[33]

In Africa, free movement is a key policy objective of the African Union Commission, regional economic communities and national governments.[34] It is estimated that more than 80 per cent of migrants from African countries stay on the continent.[35] But there are gaps between policy and implementation at regional and national levels. As a result, mobility within the continent is regulated by a complex combination of regional agreements and national policies, laws and practices.[36] For example, several countries are expanding visa-free travel to holders of African passports, and others are establishing electronic travel authorization (ETA) systems to ease cross-border mobility. However, ETAs can actually increase the required documentation and expense for visa-exempt travellers, which compromises free movement in practice.[37]

In Asia, States more frequently engage bilaterally to regulate the movement of migration, such as the border agreements between Nepal and India allowing free movement of Nepalese and Indian people.[38] That said, the existing regional body, ASEAN, has also played an important role in agenda setting on regular pathways and workers' protection in the region.[39] In Asia, 87 per cent of 21 million migrants between 1990 and 2013 came from other Asian countries.[40] In 2024, intraregional migration was notable in Eastern and South-eastern Asia (18 million) and to a lesser extent Central and Southern Asia (around 13 million).[41]

In the Pacific, migration governance is shifting from bilateral pathways to developments at a regional level. For several years, bilateral agreements such as the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme (between Australia and several countries of the South Pacific) and long-standing agreements between countries of the North Pacific and the United States of America have provided key opportunities for labour migration from Pacific States. More recently, however, there has been increasing labour mobility across the Pacific and this, together with close cooperation on shared issues such as climate change, has resulted in increasing attention being paid to establishing regional frameworks to facilitate migration.

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30 European Commission, 2025a.

31 Eurostat, 2025.

32 Acosta Arcarazo and Freier, 2015; Ceriani Cernadas, 2011 and 2024; Mora et al., 2024. See also Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024.

33 See Appendix A.

34 African Union Commission, 2018b.

35 Crawley and Teye, 2024.

36 Williams, 2025.

37 Visa Openness Index, 2024. See Appendix A for examples and Appendix C for a case study of regional migration governance in Africa.

38 Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024; Crawley and Teye, 2024; Sharma and Thapa, 2013.

39 Bakewell et al., 2009.

40 Khan and Hossain, 2017; Crawley and Teye, 2024.

41 UN DESA, 2025.

As can be seen, then, regular migration pathways take varied forms across world regions, shaped by global, regional, bilateral and national policy and legal frameworks and with varying levels of implementation from one context to another. These diverse configurations reflect differing priorities, institutional arrangements and levels of cooperation. They underscore the complexity and adaptability of regular migration systems globally, which enable the migration of some populations to a greater degree than others. They also reflect the shifting nature of borders in regions that are found to be historically less restrictive, especially in Africa.[42] In many postcolonial contexts, migration governance has been synonymous with a consolidation of State sovereignty, increased selectivity of citizenship laws, entry and exit conditions, and visa regimes.[43] Overall, the global and regional examples given here emphasize how opportunities for regular migration are not closing everywhere and for everyone, but rather are dynamically shifting and, in general, becoming increasingly selective.

Effects and issues

Regular migration can have significant benefits for sustainable development in both origin and destination places and communities, as well as positive impacts for the people who move. This is widely recognized, as for example in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Migration. Regular pathways are also frequently described as a measure to reduce irregular migration. With this in mind, this section examines the impact of regular migration pathways in different world regions, for the people who move and for communities of destination and origin. It also unpacks the relationship between regular pathways and irregular migration.

Effects and issues for people who move

Regular pathways for migration can provide people with access to protection and, in turn, life-saving opportunities. The global scale of displacement underlines the need for people facing conflict, persecution and disasters to have more opportunities to find ways to reach safety.[44] The Global Compact on Refugees sets out two key pathways: refugee resettlement and complementary pathways. However, the scale of refugee resettlement globally is far outstripped by the scale of displacement, and this is set to worsen if resettlement countries step back from providing it. Complementary pathways have proven that other pathways (such as for work or study) can provide an alternative model to enable refugees to move to safety and stability, but the scale of initiatives worldwide has tended to be small. Climate change is also set to exacerbate the need for protection pathways.[45] Regional pathways (such as those in the Australia–Tuvalu Falepili Union,[46] planned relocation as seen in areas of Fiji facing coastal erosion,[47] and cross-border transhumance frameworks to enable pastoral mobility[48]) can be innovative responses that utilize human mobility as an adaptation strategy for individuals and communities facing the negative effects of climate change.

Obtaining regular residence status is an enabling condition: it opens the door to the exercise of rights, improves employment opportunities and reduces vulnerability. It is the first step in a broader and potentially lengthy process

[42] Crawley and Teye, 2024.
[43] Adamson and Tsourapas, 2020; Awad and Natarajan, 2018.
[44] UNHCR, 2024b.
[45] Clement et al., 2021.
[46] See Government of Australia, 2024.
[47] Government of Fiji, 2018; McMichael et al., 2019.
[48] IOM and ECOWAS, 2019.

of social, economic and legal inclusion. Evidence also shows that regular status is essential for the protection of children. For migrant children, regularization is a prerequisite for accessing health care, education, child protection systems and basic services, and for reducing exposure to violence, exploitation and discrimination.[49] This requires complementary policies and measures, such as effective access to labour rights, housing, education, health care and other services, antidiscrimination and antixenophobia measures, recognition of skills and qualifications, financial inclusion and institutional adaptation to ensure meaningful inclusion (see the box on regular pathways and health for an example).[50]

In general, regular migration facilitates labour market inclusion as well as access to services and rights that can have significant impacts on the livelihoods and well-being of migrants.[51] For example, migrant workers experience forced labour at more than three times the rate experienced by non-migrants, and this vulnerability is exacerbated when they lack legal protections, cannot exercise their rights, migrate irregularly, or are hired through exploitative practices.[52] People in a regular status have greater access to worker protections, to earning (at least) minimum wages, to signing formal contracts, and to labour protections and social security. In countries with high labour informality, even migrants with a regular status face challenges in securing formal employment; however, their chances of accessing better job conditions are significantly higher than those with an irregular status.[53]

Regular pathways and health

Regular status is key to migrants' health, with broader spillover effects on social determinants of health, too. The right to health is a fundamental part of human rights and an understanding of a dignified life. Migration laws enacted in several Latin American countries guarantee migrants' access to all health services regardless of their migration status, explicitly prohibiting authorities from making any distinction or imposing restrictions on that basis.[a] In Colombia, regularization was associated with better mental health. Venezuelan migrants who obtained legal status reported noticeably better physical and emotional well-being than those who remained in an irregular situation, including a lower likelihood of experiencing severe anxiety or depression.[b]

But migrants often face barriers to health care, and these can be exacerbated by being in an irregular status.[c] It is not common for national legal frameworks to explicitly guarantee migrants full and equal access to health and other rights, regardless of their migration status. Irregular migrants often face major barriers to even emergency care. This is important because people who have undertaken a perilous irregular journey may have experienced trauma before, during and after migrating, affecting their mental and physical health.[d]

49 UNICEF, 2020.

50 Ibañez et al., 2022.

51 Chaves-González and Delgado, 2023.

52 ILO, Walk Free and IOM (2022).

53 Luzes et al., 2024.

Legal and economic constraints block access to essential health care for many. In several European countries (including Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), proof of legal migration status is required to access certain forms of health care.[e] Similarly, studies in African contexts suggest a lack of documentation can constitute a barrier to health-care access. In South Africa, studies have observed that undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers face discrimination when trying to access care.[f] Research comparing Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa indicates that employed migrants with legal documentation have better access to health care than those without documentation.[g] Other issues include the uneven implementation[h] of subregional and regional agreements on the health protection of migrants.[i]

[a] Argentina (2004), Uruguay (2008), the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2013), Brazil and Ecuador (2017), and Guatemala (2016). See Jubilut et al., 2021.

[b] Ibañez et al., 2022.

[c] IOM et al., 2013.

[d] McMahon and Sigona, 2020; Ornelas et al., 2020.

[e] In some cases, medical personnel are even mandated to report people in irregular situations (Stevens et al., 2025).

[f] Walker and Vearey, 2024.

[g] Neetzow et al., 2021.

[h] Studies show limited access of palliative care services for refugees in Rwanda, and that South Sudan's national policies lack comprehensive neonatal interventions for refugees. Also, a review of policy documents in South Africa shows that only 5 of the 12 reviewed policy documents were implemented and enforced (WHO, 2022).

[i] African Union Commission, 2018b.

Obtaining regular migration status is, however, not necessarily a permanent condition; rather, it is often a fragile and reversible situation, subject to renewals, administrative requirements, or regulatory changes that may result in the loss of such status. Regular pathways provide only short-term solutions if they are not associated with social and labour integration measures and efforts to tackle structural factors related to irregular entry and stay, such as the size of the shadow economy. For example, a study of a temporary work scheme bringing 700 Senegalese women to Spain for jobs in the agricultural sector in 2007 found that many of the women stayed and worked irregularly in domestic labour in Spanish cities rather than staying in the jobs provided in the agricultural sector.[54] Elsewhere in Southern Europe, studies during the 1990s and 2000s showed how for many people regularization was only temporary; short-term employment contracts and the prevalence of informal employment would lead to many being unable to renew their regular residence status when the time came.[55] (See Appendix D for a case study of regularization in Thailand.)

A comprehensive and sustained strategy is needed to turn legal status into real integration.[56] That is, inclusion that extends beyond the formal dimension, ensuring not only regular residence but also the possibility to exercise rights effectively and to fully participate in the social, economic and legal life of the receiving country. While regular status does not necessarily guarantee rights, it does make it significantly more likely that migrants will be able to access health care, education, legal assistance and protection mechanisms, among other rights. Conversely, visa restrictions and the resulting irregular status often shift migrants' priorities away from employment, which can delay integration.[57] Irregular status forces migrants to focus their efforts on immediate survival strategies, such as securing

[54] Tandian and Bergh, 2013.

[55] McMahon, 2015; Zincone, 2006.

[56] Chaves-González and Delgado, 2023.

[57] Hammoud-Gallego, 2024.

housing and food, avoiding migration controls, or protecting themselves from detention, rather than on medium-term labour market insertion, which ultimately delays processes of economic and social integration.

Hostile contexts toward migration, in turn, have generated adverse effects by hindering the implementation and effectiveness of mechanisms aimed at facilitating migratory regularization. In various contexts, migration has become increasingly politicized, with segments of the political class attributing responsibility for economic and social problems to migrants. This narrative has contributed to the consolidation of negative perceptions and has fuelled discriminatory and xenophobic discourses across media, social and political spheres, as has been documented in Chile, for example.[58] In response, governments have adopted more restrictive migration policies that, rather than deterring mobility, have led to higher levels of irregular migration. Discrimination, xenophobia and criminalization hinder the development of safe and effective migration pathways. Rather than curbing migration, such policies ultimately exacerbate irregularity and vulnerability.

Gender and status

Many immigration laws are built on patriarchal assumptions that place women in dependent roles (such as "spouse" or "caregiver"), making it difficult for them to obtain their own independent and stable regular status. This limits their migratory autonomy and their direct access to regularization programmes or visas based on employment or qualifications.[a] Regular migration pathways for employment are primarily designed for male-dominated sectors (such as agriculture, construction or manufacturing). Women, by contrast, are largely employed in domestic work, caregiving or informal trade, sectors often excluded from regular migration or labour regularization mechanisms.[b]

Regularization improves access to formal employment and labour rights, but women continue to face wage gaps, informality, and barriers to the recognition of their skills. Migrant women tend to benefit less than men in terms of occupational mobility and wage increases following regularization.[c] The absence of regular pathways forces many women into dangerous irregular migration journeys where they are more likely to experience sexual violence, labour exploitation and trafficking. Their irregular status further limits their ability to access reporting and protection mechanisms.[d]

Patriarchal cultural norms and traditional gender roles also contribute to the heightened vulnerability of migrant women. When regularization programmes are well designed and gender-responsive, they can significantly improve the lives of migrant women, with regularization being associated with increased trust in authorities and willingness to report gender-based violence.[e]

[a] Lin, 2016.
[b] United Nations Network on Migration in Thailand, 2024.
[c] Donato et al., 2014.
[d] Bauloz et al., 2024.
[e] Ibañez et al., 2021.

[58] Thayer Correa, 2021.

Effects and issues for communities of destination and origin

The benefits of regular migration for destination countries are well documented. The OECD finds that, in 25 OECD countries, immigrants contribute more in taxes and contributions than governments spend on their social protection, health and education.[59] Highly skilled immigration can address the demand for specialists in certain occupations facing skill-biased technological change.[60] Immigration is positively associated with entrepreneurship and innovation, with spillover effects in broader economic productivity.[61] Migrants also disproportionately occupy roles in sectors that are central to the functioning of modern societies, as was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.[62] Overall, Boston Consulting Group and IOM estimate that cross-border migration generates an annual global economic output of around 9 trillion United States dollars.[63]

Regular migration pathways are particularly significant for many high income countries with ageing populations and a resultant declining workforce as more people enter retirement age than working age.[64] This is exacerbating new and old labour shortages. Regular pathways for migration are a key piece of the short- to medium-term response, as demographic policy alone will take a long time to have an impact on the labour market.[65] In several countries, however, this results in a gap between the demands of public opinion for greater control of migration and those of economic interest groups that lobby for higher levels of labour migration. Such a gap is not new. Freeman identified the gap hypothesis already in his study of Western democracies in 1995, stating that while public discourse would tend to be driven by public opinion and a negative politicization of migration, the substance of public policy would be shaped by interest groups and employers pushing for more migration.[66]

Much debate has also centred on whether migration constitutes a loss or a gain for the migrants' places of origin.[67] Circular mobility, skills exchange programmes and temporary labour mobility pathways structured around diaspora knowledge networks can bring significant benefits to migrants' countries and communities of origin.[68] Formal initiatives promoting temporary knowledge and network exchanges between origin and destination countries (such as mentoring, technical visits and business collaborations) require structured and predictable mechanisms. This in turn requires migrants to have a regular status that permits them to reliably engage with both their country of origin and their country of destination. These programmes have proven successful when migrants accumulate skills, capital and networks abroad, and when enabling conditions exist in their country of origin (such as policies that support small and medium enterprises).[69]

Access to formal remittance channels is closely linked to the regularity of migration status, which enhances financial inclusion and remittance security.[70] The role of remittances as a critical source of income for migrant households has been widely documented,[71] along with their positive effects in reducing poverty and increasing school enrolment for

[59] OECD, 2021.
[60] Fasani et al., 2020.
[61] Bernstein et al., 2022; Capoani et al., 2024.
[62] Fasani and Mazza, 2020.
[63] Harnoss et al., 2022.
[64] Lutz et al., 2019.
[65] Ueffing et al., 2022.
[66] Freeman, 1995.
[67] Boeri et al., 2012; Lozano and Gandini, 2010.
[68] Gelb et al., 2021.
[69] Ibid.
[70] United Nations Network on Migration, n.d.b.
[71] World Bank, 2023; BBVA Research and CONAPO, 2019.

children in countries in less developed countries.[72] However, the relationship between remittances and development is complex.[73] The potential of remittances is amplified when migrants have regular employment and can access formal financial services, a possibility largely determined by their regular migration status. This underlines a strong link between regular status and the ability to generate, send and maximize remittances. The risks and costs of using informal remittance channels are higher, especially in less developed countries.[74] Regular status is a key determinant for accessing formal financial services. Migrants with regular status tend to remit larger amounts more consistently and frequently than those with irregular status, and are also more likely to invest in long-term projects.[75]

Effects on irregular migration and the scale of mobility

The idea that expanding regular migration pathways will increase the number of migrants tends to persist in different regions, especially in Europe and North America. However, the evidence is quite compelling in showing that restricting opportunities for regular migration (for example, through additional restrictions such as visa requirements) may generate a range of counterproductive effects that carry negative consequences:[76]

- They may divert migration flows toward alternative routes (whether regular or irregular).
- They do not stop migration because they do not address the reasons why people are moving. In some cases, forthcoming restrictions may increase immediate migration rates as a result of a "now or never" effect.
- They prompt migrants to shift to other channels, such as moving from labour migration to seeking asylum or family reunification.
- They alter patterns of circular or temporary migration into long-term or permanent settlement.

Often, these shifts do not stop people from migrating, but make migration journeys riskier, more expensive, more precarious and more prolonged.[77] The case of South America is illustrative. In 1991, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) was established with the aim of achieving economic integration and trade liberalization among eight South American countries. In 2002, MERCOSUR adopted the Agreement on Residence for Nationals of MERCOSUR States Party and the Agreement on Residence for Nationals of Associated States – commonly referred to as the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement, or ARM – that together facilitate migration and regular residence for citizens of member and associated countries. The ARM is currently in force in 9 countries.[78] It is highly significant, given that 80 per cent of migration in South America is intraregional, a historical trend that has largely persisted over time.[79] From its entry into force in 2009 until 2020, the ARM has shown that it has facilitated more than 3.3 million residence permits.[80] In the first years there was an increase in the number of residence permits, which

[72] Adams and Cuecuecha, 2013; Feldmann, 2025.

[73] de Haas, 2005 and 2023.

[74] Isaacs, 2017.

[75] Ghosh, 2000.

[76] These have been defined by Czaika and de Haas (2013) as "substitution effects", as one form of, or channel for, migration is substituted by another. See also de Haas, 2023.

[77] Crawley at al., 2017; McMahon and Sigona, 2018 and 2020.

[78] These countries are Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. In 2011, Ecuador and Peru joined the residence agreement and in 2012, Colombia (IOM, 2018).

[79] IOM, 2022.

[80] Ibid.

corresponded to the regularization of people from MERCOSUR who did not have regular status. Subsequently, the number of annual residencies has stabilized.[81]

The Argentine case is particularly illustrative in showing that the existence of regular migration and residence pathways do not, in themselves, drive increased migration flows. Despite having maintained an active policy of regularization and access to rights for two decades,[82] census data reveal a stable or even declining trend in the relative share of the foreign-born population throughout the twenty-first century.[83] This evidence shows that while regular pathways may partially influence a destination's attractiveness, they are neither sufficient nor decisive on their own.

The Argentine case, and the data on residence permits more generally, show that ARM has operated primarily as a large-scale regularization mechanism rather than driving increased migration flows. Thus, even with the predominance of intraregional migration, the ARM has consolidated itself as a cornerstone for providing safe and regular pathways, without generating a disproportionate increase in movements within the bloc.[84] Rather, migration responds to a broader set of factors that shape both migration decisions and the likelihood of settlement: factors such as employment opportunities, economic stability and the capacity to send remittances.[85] Similar findings have been reported in Colombia, which has implemented various regularization processes and, in 2021, created the Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants, a regularization pathway valid for 10 years. These pathways did not attract new flows of migrants or alter return plans, meaning that potential fears about regularization driving increased migration numbers were not empirically verified.[86]

Evidence has also shown that providing regular channels for migration can reduce pressures for irregular migration, especially when combined with targeted law enforcement.[87] Studies of migrant decision-making have repeatedly found that people who undertake risky, irregular journeys often do so because they consider there to be no safe, regular alternative.[88] These studies note that being able to make a regular journey may have reduced their dependency on informal or criminal networks, and potentially lowered their exposure to risks associated with trafficking, violence, or forced labour. A regular status can also play a crucial role in interrupting the reproduction of irregular migration across generations. Regular channels allow migrants to enter a pathway toward permanent residency and eventually citizenship. Regular status also enables access to family reunification visas and procedures.[89] Having a regular status decreases the likelihood of being detained, deported, or extorted by authorities.[90] It also improves access to justice and protection services.[91] Thus, regular migration creates the possibility of medium- and

[81] IOM, 2018 and 2022.

[82] Debandi et al., 2024.

[83] INDEC, 2023; Debandi et al., 2024.

[84] IOM, 2022.

[85] Cerrutti and Penchaszadeh, 2023. Recent sources indicate a growing trend of re-emigration and outflows from Argentina linked to economic deterioration, including increased departures, returns and secondary migration. These patterns confirm that regularization, while essential, is not sufficient to attract or retain foreign populations (IOM, 2024c).

[86] Ibañez et al., 2022.

[87] Clemens and Gough, 2018; Mora et al., 2024.

[88] De León, 2015; IOM, 2025a; McMahon and Sigona, 2018 and 2020; Mixed Migration Centre, 2023.

[89] Brick, 2011.

[90] Ibáñez et al., 2021.

[91] In South Asia and the Middle East, evidence shows that when women do not have a regular migration status or are bound by systems such as kafala, they experience document confiscation and are unable to leave their employer for fear of being considered "illegal", with the risk of detention or deportation. They are also exposed to economic and sexual extortion in border areas and during exit procedure (ElDidi et al., 2021).

long-term stability for migrants and their families. However, it is important to strengthen legal categories that provide continuity rather than relying on ad hoc or temporary measures that do not offer legal certainty.[92]

The case of migration between Mexico and the United States has been the most studied to illustrate these effects. Increased immigration controls and heightened border surveillance have made crossing into the United States more difficult and, as a result, more expensive. The most important strategy to try to curb this migration was the construction of a border wall in the mid-1990s. Each journey across the border had increased risks, so Mexican migration ceased to be circular (going back and forth between the two countries), and instead became more family oriented and towards more permanent settlement.[93] Routes also shifted towards more risky areas, such as rivers and deserts, where there were no walls and with limited surveillance measures.[94] The outcome was migration that is increasingly irregular, insecure, precarious and expensive.[95] Similar evidence has been found with trends in migration deaths on risky journeys in the Mediterranean.[96]

Countries along irregular migration routes also face particular challenges regarding the relationship between measures to address irregular migration and opportunities to facilitate regular pathways. Indeed, for such countries, balancing domestic concerns with regional prerogatives is challenging because of their geographical position as strategic transit countries to other destinations, meaning that they are often involved in the externalization of migration regulations "downstream" from destination countries.[97] Transit countries often face a tension between implementing migration control externalization policies or facilitating transit. In any case, the tension around providing regular pathways for such mobility persists. These clashing goals and emerging trends underscore the complex balance of opening and closing migration opportunities.

Conclusion

The exploration of regular migration pathways in this chapter has highlighted the complexities, myths and realities surrounding this critical aspect of migration governance. Regular pathways are essential for facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, offering migrants opportunities for better lives while addressing demographic and labour market needs in destination countries. However, political debates and public policies on regular pathways are often dominated by calls for pathways for migration to be restricted.

The evidence presented in this chapter underscores the importance of a nuanced understanding and balanced approach to regular migration pathways. While it is often asserted in the public and political spheres that regular pathways lead to higher levels of migration and should be strictly controlled, the reality is that regular pathways have already become increasingly selective and unequally distributed, influenced by political regimes and international relations. This has significant implications for who can move, where, how and under what conditions. It exacerbates inequalities in terms of access to the benefits of migration.

The impacts of regular pathways are multifaceted. Regular migration facilitates formal labour market inclusion, facilitates access to health care and financial services, enhances migrants' well-being and contributes to development

[92] Jarochinski Silva and Macaísta Malheiros, 2024.

[93] Durand and Massey, 2019.

[94] Casteñeda and Cione, 2024.

[95] Gandini et al., 2020. See also Durand, 2016.

[96] McMahon and Sigona, 2020.

[97] Boyer et al., 2020.

through remittances and skill exchanges. Regular pathways also impact migrants' ability to integrate into the labour market at destination, and in society overall. In contrast, restrictive measures can lead to increased irregular migration, more insecure and precarious journeys, and higher costs for migrants. Enhancing both the quality and accessibility of regular migration pathways is critical. Too often, these channels are limited, expensive, overly complex, or slow, prompting individuals (including migrants, migrant families and employers of migrant workers) to resort to irregular migration. Regular pathways also provide only short-term solutions if they are not associated with social and labour integration measures and with efforts to tackle structural factors related to irregular entry and stay, such as the size of the shadow economy.

In short, regular migration pathways are vital for achieving good migration governance and sustainable development. They require comprehensive policies, effective implementation and international cooperation to ensure that migrants can move safely, legally and with dignity. By addressing the myths and realities of regular pathways, policymakers can create more inclusive and effective migration systems that benefit migrants, origin and destination countries and global development.

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6 ADDRESSING CLIMATE MOBILITY: THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND COMMUNITY ACTION[1,2]

Introduction

For millennia, the environment has influenced where and how people move and settle across the planet. Today, climate change is emerging as an increasingly powerful disruptor of whole ecosystems and multiple dimensions of human life, including mobility. Climate-related migration and displacement are no longer distant concerns; they are present realities that require urgent action. More frequent and intense weather events, rising sea levels and environmental degradation are reshaping patterns of human mobility both directly and indirectly, by impacting other key factors such as livelihoods, public health, food security and water availability.

In 2023, global temperatures rose 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for the first time, marking a critical threshold.[3] Since the IPCC first drew attention to the effects of climate change on migration in 1990,[4] scientific and policy understanding of the climate–migration nexus has significantly matured. The growing importance of this link has been highlighted by successive IPCC assessments,[5] and multiple dedicated studies, as well as forecasting exercises, such as the World Bank "Groundswell" reports on climate-related internal migration.[6] The World Migration Report has also dedicated significant attention to climate-related human mobility, recognizing it as a key migration trend and exploring its different angles in several earlier editions,[7] an approach this chapter continues.

Positive momentum has been achieved on the policy front, too. Climate-related migration features in an array of global and regional agreements and frameworks,[8] including the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.[9] It is also on the agenda of multiple climate, development, humanitarian and migration forums and policy processes. Yet, despite this progress, much of the response remains reactive,

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[2] The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (August 2025).

[3] WMO, 2024.

[4] IPCC, 1992.

[5] IPCC, 2023.

[6] World Bank, 2018 and 2021a.

[7] McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019; McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021; McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024.

[8] Linkages between population movements and climate change are made in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreements, including the 2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework, the 2015 Paris Agreement and the 2021 Glasgow Pact. The main global policy frameworks on migration, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, also recognize this link. Other processes and agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change, and the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda on Internal Displacement have all included references to human mobility and climate change. Multiple regional agreements also address the climate change and migration nexus: for example, migration management agreements, which refer to environmental drivers such as free movement protocols (e.g. in ECOWAS, IGAD, Central America-4 group, the European Union); transhumance agreements (e.g. in ECOWAS and IGAD); and refugee and internally displaced person protection conventions (e.g. Kampala Convention, OAU Convention, Cartagena Convention).

[9] United Nations, 2021.

fragmented and focused on humanitarian crises rather than longer-term proactive solutions. The potential of migration as a positive climate adaptation strategy is still underutilized, despite growing evidence of its benefits. A systemic shift, needed to consistently integrate the climate change–migration nexus into policy and planning on migration, climate and adaptation, development and humanitarian assistance, and other related fields, has not yet been achieved.

Even as the urgency to step up the action grows, the policy space for constructive engagement on climate-related migration has started shrinking. Climate scepticism and negative migration rhetoric have narrowed opportunities for engagement. Geopolitical shifts, conflicts and overlapping crises increasingly command policymakers' attention and public resources, making it ever more challenging to do more to address the climate–migration nexus. There is a need to reevaluate solutions and identify ways to keep up the momentum and continue building on the significant gains made in addressing climate-related mobility.

Local level action offers a particularly promising avenue to do so. Its importance is recognized in key international frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[10] the Global Compact for Migration and the New Urban Agenda.[11] Local governance has gained traction across multiple fields, from disaster risk reduction to development, migration and climate policy, as critical space for responsive, inclusive and innovative action. Despite the many constraints they are facing, and although their authority and capacity vary widely across countries, local stakeholders are increasingly recognized as essential actors in addressing migration and displacement in climate change contexts. Cities, municipalities and community-based organizations (CBOs) are often the first to experience and respond to the effects of climate-related migration. Local actors are typically better positioned to engage affected communities, tailor responses to specific vulnerabilities and innovate in areas where national or international systems may be slow to act.[12]

This chapter builds on analyses presented in previous editions of the World Migration Report by focusing on the critical role played by local action in addressing climate-related migration and displacement. It explores why empowering local stakeholders is not only necessary but also strategic, especially at a time of growing political and economic instability. The chapter first maps the climate–migration nexus and outlines key dynamics that local actors must navigate. It then identifies these actors and the roles they play in addressing human mobility linked to climate change, before turning to local-level interventions in practice and opportunities to scale their impact.

Throughout, the chapter draws on diverse initiatives implemented by cities, municipalities and communities, and includes quotations from migrants and local stakeholders to illustrate the diversity, richness and impacts of local level action. It takes a broad view of climate-related human mobility, covering movements occurring for a variety of reasons both within and across borders. For terminology used, see the glossary of key climate–migration nexus terms provided in Appendix A.

[10] United Nations, 2015.

[11] United Nations, 2017.

[12] See, for example, UNDP, 2016.

Climate change and migration: understanding the context

Main characteristics

The IPCC *Sixth Assessment Report* and the World Meteorological Organization[13] both emphasize that climate change impacts are intensifying globally, affecting where people settle, and contributing to increased pressure to move.

Climate change is reshaping human mobility through both sudden-onset hazards (e.g. floods, storms, wildfires) and slow-onset changes (e.g. drought, rising sea levels), which have different impacts on climate mobility. Sudden-onset events trigger large-scale, rapid and predominantly forced movements that are mostly short term and short distance but can become protracted if recovery is delayed or repeated hazards occur. In contrast, slow-onset changes like coastal erosion or land degradation may lead to more diverse mobility outcomes: short or long term, individual or group based, internal or cross-border. A decision to move, however, is usually a result of an interplay of multiple considerations, where climate change pressures often intersect with economic, social and political factors and other drivers of migration.[14] Made at an individual or household level, or in some cases at a community level, such decisions are influenced by perceptions of risk, social networks, wealth, age structure, health and livelihood choices and, importantly, perceived alternatives to moving.[15] Therefore, the same environmental change can have different human mobility implications for different social groups and individuals, at different times and in different locations.

This causal complexity means that it is difficult to weight the impact of climate change or any other single factor in shaping mobility outcomes. Another implication of the complexity is that there is no single form of human mobility that can be attributed to climate change; instead, the full spectrum of migration patterns can be linked to climate change impacts – from voluntary to forced, within and across borders, temporary, circular or permanent. At the same time, most climate-related mobility occurs within countries, frequently from rural areas into towns and cities; and cross-border flows usually remain regional.[16] This variety and multicausality mean that migration and displacement in climate change contexts can produce different outcomes for migrants and affected societies, both negative and positive. How people move and their agency in the process are among the key factors influencing what impacts mobility has on individuals and societies. In some cases, people move because they have no choice – moving away from a disaster zone can be lifesaving. Such a move can take different forms, from disaster displacement to planned relocation. It may be initiated by governments or communities, and is often associated with complex social and ethical challenges. Forced movement, whether within a country or across a border, often brings hardship and suffering, including exposure to an array of human rights violations. Whether triggered by slow- or sudden-onset hazards, displacement aggravates pre-existing patterns of discrimination and abuse. In the context of international movements, irregular migration is another significant factor increasing the vulnerability of people on the move to human rights violations, violence and exploitation. On the other hand, well-managed migration can be a positive adaptation strategy, helping migrants and their communities become more resilient in the face of climate change.[17]

[13] IPCC, 2023; WMO, 2024.

[14] IPCC, 2023.

[15] Gemenne and Blocher, 2017.

[16] IPCC, 2022a; Almulhim et al., 2024; Hoffmann et al., 2024.

[17] IOM, 2021a.

Another important dimension of the climate change and migration nexus is the issue of involuntary immobility.[18] Migration requires economic and other resources, and therefore it is not an option open to everyone. Climate change impacts not only drive migration but can also make it more difficult or even impossible for some individuals or groups to move. It is such "trapped populations"[19] and individuals who face the gravest risks from climate change impacts.

This complexity points to the need for nuanced, multipronged approaches to climate-related mobility that address underlying socioeconomic issues and vulnerabilities, and are context specific. Local-level action is well suited to designing and implementing such solutions. Before turning to these responses, and to how local actors can implement them more effectively, the next section briefly examines the availability and quality of data and evidence, the essential foundation for planning and for effective responses to diverse patterns of climate-related mobility.

The knowledge base and knowledge gaps

The knowledge base on links between climate change and human mobility is significant, though uneven. It is grounded in a growing body of evidence drawn from diverse disciplines, combining quantitative data with qualitative field research, environmental and socioeconomic indicators, and localized case studies. This section provides a brief overview of what the current data reveal and the main gaps, from global patterns to local insights.

Global level data and analysis

Despite significant progress made in recent years, the global data on the effects of environmental changes on migration and displacement remain limited in several important ways. While there is a solid understanding of the anticipated biophysical effects of climate change, much uncertainty remains regarding how human mobility patterns will be influenced by these changes.[20] This is due in part to the complexity, mentioned above, of the relationship between climate impacts and human mobility. So, though "most statistical models indicate that certain climate-related factors have some effect on migration … there is no consensus on how strong that effect is or, in some cases, even whether the effect is positive or negative."[21]

There are global data available on particular dimensions of climate-related human mobility. There are, for example, more and better data on forced movements triggered by sudden-onset disasters (see the box on internal climate displacement). However, data on other important dimensions of climate mobility – such as slow-onset impacts,[22] local-level dynamics, and marginalized and vulnerable populations – remain limited.

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[18] Carling, 2002.

[19] Chazalnoël and Randall, 2021. The term "trapped populations" emerged from the United Kingdom Foresight 2011 report to denote people unable to move from environmentally risky places; the term has been widely used since then with varied definitions. See, for example, Ayeb-Karlsson et al., 2018.

[20] IOM, 2023a.

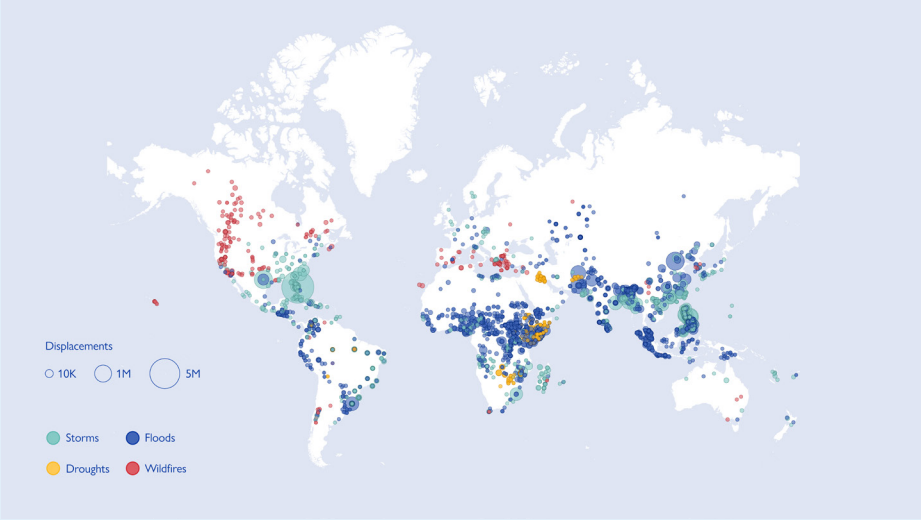
[21] Ibid.

[22] The need for integrated approaches combining quantitative and qualitative research for a more comprehensive understanding of climate mobility together with a synthesis of data from various disciplines, including environmental science, sociology and economics, relevant to the impacts of slow-onset climate events on migration patterns is highlighted in Chazalnoël and Randall, 2021.

Key figures: spotlight on internal climate displacement

Since 2008, storms, floods, droughts and wildfires triggered 401.6 million internal displacements worldwide.[a] These hazards occurred in all parts of the world but were unequally distributed. Figure 1 illustrates displacement in 2024 by geographic location and type of weather hazard.

Figure 1. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre records of weather-related internal displacements in 2024



Source: Authors' elaboration based on IDMC data (IDMC, n.d.).

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

In 2024, there were 45.8 million new internal displacements triggered by disasters, mostly by storms (25.2 million) and floods (19.1 million).[b] These displacements occurred across 163 countries and territories. Moreover, an estimated 9.8 million people were internally displaced due to disasters at the end of the same year. East Asia and the Pacific and the Americas recorded the highest overall number of disaster displacements globally.[c] Countries such as the United States, the Philippines and India had some of the largest number of displacements.[d]

Women and girls constitute a significant share of disaster-related displacements, with many displacements occurring in countries already ranked in the bottom quartile of the Gender Inequality Index.[e] This amplifies risks that displaced women are disproportionally exposed to, such as disrupted reproductive health services and gender-based violence.

[a] IDMC, n.d.
[b] IDMC, 2025.
[c] Ibid.
[d] Ibid.
[e] UNFPA and IDMC, 2024.

Global projections of future climate-related migration and displacement is another actively explored area with multiple studies dedicated to this topic over the years. While most studies anticipate that climate change will increase migration globally, some point to scenarios where international migration will be constrained, especially for low-income groups, due to climate change impacts, resulting in increased "immobility".[23] There is a significant variation in the scale of the expected impact, as challenges of capturing the full range of implications of climate change for human mobility are further compounded by uncertainties, such as those concerning future emissions and demographic shifts. The range of existing projections for 2050 is vast – from 143 million to 1.2 billion people (Figure 2 illustrates the range of estimates for climate migration and their sources).[24]

Figure 2. Global climate migration projections

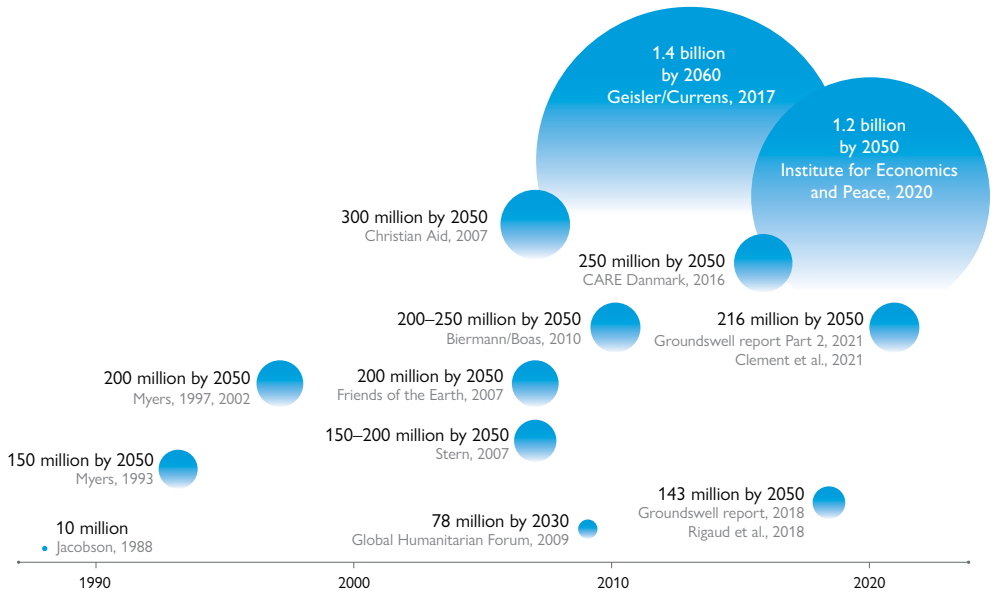


Illustration: SVR/Deniz Keskin

Source: SVR, 2023.

Note: This chart illustrates frequently cited projections of climate change-induced migration; the scope of movement these projections cover and the global warming scenarios vary.

Several models have been developed to forecast how climate change will affect human mobility in the future, but inconsistencies in scope and definitions, as well as regional focuses, make direct comparisons difficult.[25] Some approaches focus on estimating small-scale processes over short-time horizons. Others take a broader view over longer periods of time in order to illustrate the range of possible opportunities, challenges and responses.

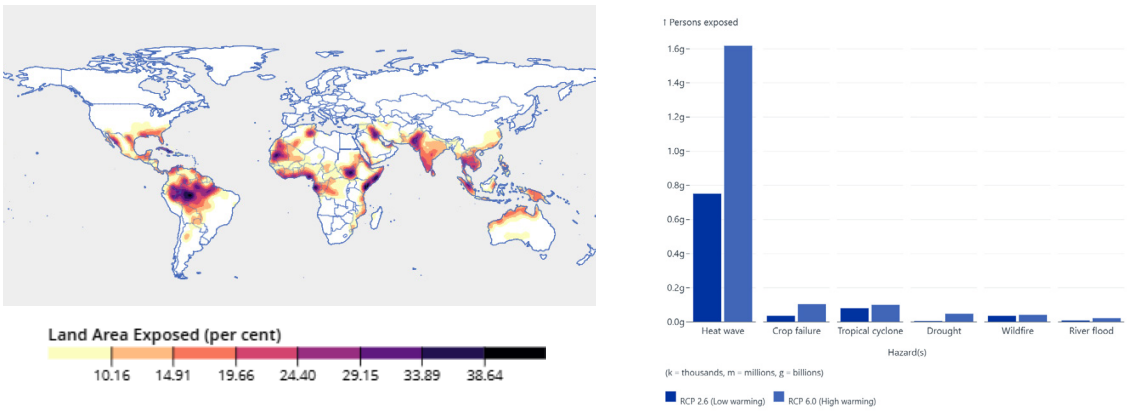
[23] Benveniste et al., 2022.

[24] SVR, 2023.

[25] Ibid.

IOM, for example, uses data modelling to identify areas where environmental stressors intersect with other key drivers of migration to help target resources and inform action. The Migration Data Portal includes an interactive climate mobility impacts dashboard,[26] visualizing projected overlaps between hazard exposure, high population density and economic vulnerability, which are key factors influencing climate-related migration. The dashboard allows users to explore future global hotspots and human exposure to climate impacts across time and under different climatic and socioeconomic scenarios (see Figure 3 for an illustration).

Figure 3. Climate mobility impacts dashboard



Sources: Population: Jones and O'Neill, 2016; hazard: Lange et al., 2020; vulnerability: Wang and Sun, 2022; displacement: IDMC, n.d.

Note: The map shows projected land area exposed to heat waves by 2090 under a high-warming scenario (a representative concentration pathway of 6.0, or RCP6.0); the graph shows projected number of persons exposed to different mobility-related climate hazards under a low-warming (RCP2.6) and high-warming (RCP6.0) scenario. For more data, see Migration Data Portal, n.d.a. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations or the International Organization for Migration.

For a more nuanced picture, IOM carries out regional and country level analyses (e.g. Bangladesh, Haiti and Somalia). This modelling uses real-time data and vulnerability indicators to highlight "mobility hotspots" at the community or regional level.

A recent review of climate-related forecasting models points to locally focused agent-based simulations of household and community behaviour, together with statistical extrapolations of observed mobility patterns, as offering the most decision-relevant insights. It also stresses the need for transdisciplinary collaboration to refine forecasts.[27]

Overall, whether looking at the current situation or anticipating the future, global figures, while informative, do not reflect the complex, context-specific factors influencing climate-related mobility, such as vulnerability, governance structures and social dynamics. These factors are better captured at the local level.[28]

[26] The Climate Mobility Impacts dashboard draws on ensemble projections of six climate hazards (heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, river floods, tropical cyclones and crop failures) from multiple climate impact models under varying emissions scenarios. Projections are overlaid with population and income data to identify when and where vulnerable populations will be exposed. The dashboard also includes past displacement data for context and provides both spatial and aggregate visualizations.

[27] Schewel et al., 2024.

[28] Almulhim et al., 2024; Hoffmann et al., 2021; Schewel et al., 2024; Boas et al, 2019.

Local level data and analysis

Many useful insights are provided by city-level analyses, which are among the best examples of a local-level approach to understanding and anticipating the impacts of climate change, including its effects on human mobility. Cities often have access to more granular data, face distinct climate-related challenges and are on the front lines of responding to both environmental changes and population movements.

Rural to urban migration, intertwined with the effects of climate change, has been a key driver of city growth.[29] Although climate change acts as catalyst for urbanization,[30] there is also evidence that it influences rural–urban migration patterns differently across income levels. Data from 1970–2000 indicate that in middle-income countries, higher temperatures correlate with increased rural–urban migration, while in lower-income countries such temperatures correlate with decreasing rural–urban migration, possibly due to economic constraints.[31]

The exposure of cities to climate hazards – including heatwaves, sea-level rise and riverine flooding – has grown disproportionally faster than the exposure of people living in rural areas. By 2040 over 2,000 cities are expected to lie in low-elevation coastal zones, and 2 billion city dwellers are projected to be exposed to a temperature increase of at least 0.5°C.[32]

The evidence at the city and community level provides valuable insights into mobility intentions, demonstrating the importance of context and the need for local analysis. This includes studies exploring migration preferences within coastal communities, which are some of the most climate-vulnerable communities around the world. One such peer-reviewed study was carried out in Lagos, Nigeria, a coastal megacity exposed to recurrent flooding. It found that residents' perceived flood risk correlates with stronger intentions to move.[33] At the same time, a community survey in Lagos's Ajegunle district reported that flooding and other environmental stressors were not the primary reasons for the residents' desire to move but rather factors exacerbating poor living and health conditions. While many respondents expressed a desire to move, few were able to do so due to limited resources, and those who could move often preferred relocation within the metropolis rather than long-distance migration.[34] A study of four villages in south-west coastal Bangladesh shed light on why some populations decide to stay despite heightened risks. It found that land ownership, social connectedness and economic factors have the most influence on a household's decision to stay even when exposed to high climate-related risks.[35]

Making sure local responses are equitable, sustainable and effective requires access to disaggregated data to enable a differentiated understanding of impacts on specific groups. Mobility dynamics and adaptive capacities can vary significantly across different population groups. Factors such as gender, age, disability and socioeconomic status impact decisions and ability to move in response to climate stressors, as well as needs and levels of vulnerability of those affected. Therefore, data on who is affected are indispensable for policy and operational planning. Yet much of the data available are not systematically disaggregated by relevant sociodemographic markers, including migratory status.[36] As a result, migrants and displaced people are often "invisible" in official statistics. Furthermore, recent assessments indicate that almost three in ten States still fail to report migration statistics disaggregated by

[29] IOM, 2023a.
[30] IPCC, 2023.
[31] Peri and Sasahara, 2019.
[32] UN-Habitat, 2024.
[33] Ekoh et al., 2022.
[34] Mixed Migration Centre, 2023.
[35] Mallick et al., 2022.
[36] IOM, n.d.a.

age.[37] The lack of gender data is another well-acknowledged and persistent issue that is particularly relevant to climate-related migration and displacement.[38]

Addressing these blind spots in the evidence base is essential at all levels, including the local. Direct engagement with communities or specific geographic areas enables local governments and organizations to more accurately capture the characteristics and thus the differentiated needs of their populations. Doing so helps local stakeholders to deliver targeted and equitable responses.

Technology can play a pivotal role in helping local actors address these and other data gaps. This is explored in more detail in the section on bottlenecks to local action as well as in Appendix B, on technology.

The next section takes a closer look at what effective local level responses to climate-related migration and displacement mean in practice.

Climate migration and displacement: taking action

Most relevant global and regional frameworks explicitly recognize the importance of local and community action across different sectors.[39] Multiple studies addressing local governance suggest that, while not universally effective, decentralized governance models tend to be more agile and responsive to local realities, enabling tailored, participatory and community-led approaches.[40] Such approaches offer useful avenues for addressing a phenomenon as heterogenous and context dependent as climate-related mobility.[41]

Furthermore, there are indications that local-level actions in climate adaptation and migration management can be more cost effective than centralized approaches,[42] offering better returns on investment with lower implementation costs.[43] As international aid budgets contract and climate financing becomes more fragmented, achieving maximum impact at a lowest cost is increasingly critical.

Moreover, the nature of climate-related migration puts cities, municipalities and local communities on the front lines of impact. Environmental changes are felt first at the local level, where the earliest decisions, including those to migrate, are made. Climate-related migration is a local phenomenon first before it becomes a national or international concern, because people tend to move short distances first, predominantly within their own countries, often relocating from rural to urban areas.[44]

A wide array of local actors, each with distinct responsibilities, capacities and resources, are central to shaping and delivering local climate mobility responses. Understanding and leveraging their contributions is key.

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37 IDAC, 2023.

38 Data2X, 2023.

39 Including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (notably SDG 11 and Target 11.b), the Paris Agreement (Article 7 on adaptation, National Adaptation Plans, and the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the New Urban Agenda, the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, as well as the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation.

40 For example, Radhakrishnan, 2024; OECD, 2019; Baguios et al., 2021; Boex and Yilmaz, 2010.

41 Yadav et al., 2024; Oxford Policy Management, 2017; Ren, 2022; Maharjan, 2024.

42 Huang and Coz, 2024.

43 The World Resources Institute highlights that the benefits of local adaptation often outweigh the estimated costs, as these measures are tailored to specific community needs and contexts (Illick-Frank, 2020).

44 McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024; SVR, 2023.

Communities and local stakeholders: understanding the actors

From municipal governments managing infrastructure and service delivery, to grassroots organizations facilitating integration and resilience, each local actor plays a distinct and essential role in responding to the complex realities of climate-related human mobility. Recognizing this diversity is critical to designing effective, inclusive and locally anchored responses. The principal local actors relevant to climate-related migration and displacement, as well as the main characteristics and roles they can play in addressing the climate change and migration nexus are briefly outlined below.

Local governmental authorities are often the first to respond to climate-related migration and displacement. Subnational public institutions carry out urban planning and infrastructure development, and deliver services to local communities, migrants and displaced persons. Some develop inclusive policies that foster integration and social cohesion, and lead local adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts. Their effectiveness largely depends on how well they coordinate "upwards" with national authorities. The capacity of local authorities to act on climate-related migration varies significantly, as does their remit in relation to both migration and climate change issues. Revenue bases and staffing levels also differ significantly across regional and national contexts.

Communities and CBOs are locally rooted, non-governmental and usually non-profit entities. Acting as trusted intermediaries between affected populations and formal institutions, CBOs use their deep contextual knowledge to support migrant and displaced populations, contribute to disaster preparedness, early warning and relocation efforts, inform climate adaptation strategies and strengthen social cohesion.

Diaspora groups and migrant networks play several key roles in supporting action on climate migration and displacement.[45] They often act as cross-border connectors, strengthening links between origin and destination communities, supporting cooperation and dialogue on migration, development and climate adaptation. There are many cases of diasporas financing climate-resilient projects and emergency relief through remittances and investment, transferring skills and technologies that boost local adaptation, and easing the integration of newly arrived migrants.

Indigenous peoples and traditional authorities represent communities with deep cultural and spiritual ties to ancestral lands and traditional livelihoods. These are key stakeholders in addressing climate mobility both as they hold valuable local knowledge of ecosystems, which can inform culturally grounded adaptation solutions, and as they are particularly vulnerable in case of displacement due to their strong attachment to land and traditional livelihoods.

Last but not least, the private sector – including local enterprises, large corporations, industry associations and social enterprises – can be pivotal climate migration partners. They channel capital and know-how into community adaptation and in doing so generate employment, including in "green" jobs that can help integrate migrants and displaced persons. The private sector plays a key role in driving innovation and technology transition, including offering adaptation technologies and services such as drought-resistant crops, microinsurance for climate risks and digital finance platforms.

These actors do not operate in isolation; they often work in tandem. They are also increasingly connected through global and regional networks that enable them to scale good practices, access funding and engage in policy advocacy. The local actor networks and their roles in addressing climate-related migration and displacement are presented in Appendix C.

[45] According to the IOM definition, a diaspora is "migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country" (IOM, 2019).

Towards comprehensive local action on climate migration and displacement

Addressing climate-related human mobility requires a comprehensive, forward-looking approach that reflects the complexity of the climate–migration nexus and the diversity of needs on the ground. Putting such an approach into practice requires use of the entire range of available migration policy instruments.[46] This includes measures to minimize displacement, involuntary immobility, as well as irregular migration, which many resort to in the absence of accessible, regular options for migration. Facilitating regular pathways – such as humanitarian admissions, labour mobility schemes, family reunification and regularization of status – is a key avenue to protect rights and reduce vulnerabilities,[47] while enhancing positive impacts of migration for both migrants and communities. Such measures are relevant to addressing migration writ large, beyond climate-related drivers. However, as climate change is a threat and vulnerability multiplier, people moving in climate change contexts are more likely to face cumulative vulnerabilities and therefore deserve particular attention.

To be effective, migration tools need to be part of an integrated cross-sectoral response, linking climate action, development, social protection, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response. This requires not only targeted policies but also mainstreaming climate and mobility considerations into responses across a range of relevant sectors. Moreover, as both climate change and migration are global phenomena with diverse local implications, their intersection needs to be addressed through coordinated action at different levels of governance: global, regional, national and local.

This is highly challenging. Contextualization can help to meet this challenge without resorting to reductionism. As argued above, local actors are uniquely positioned to implement context-specific and people-centred solutions but need to be guided by an inclusive policy framework and empowered through clear operational pathways.[48] A set of international frameworks and agreements provide a shared foundation, some of them already mentioned above: the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC,[49] the Global Compact for Migration,[50] the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,[51] the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[52] the New Urban Agenda,[53] and the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.[54] These are complemented by international human rights instruments,[55] which provide an essential normative foundation for action on climate-related mobility. While each framework has a distinct focus, together they promote multilevel, cross-sectoral action, acknowledge the role of human mobility in climate adaptation and risk reduction, and highlight the importance of engaging local actors in the design and implementation of effective responses.

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46 SVR, 2023.

47 The United Nations Human Rights Committee called on States to open new regular migration pathways and to provide temporary and longer-term forms of protection for individuals who would face life-threatening climate-related risks if returned to their countries of origin (OHCHR, 2020).

48 McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019.

49 UNFCCC, 2015.

50 United Nations, 2021.

51 UNDRR, 2015.

52 United Nations, 2015.

53 United Nations, 2017.

54 United Nations, 2022.

55 Notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1948, 1966a and 1966b).

One well-recognized way to structure the wide range of action needed to address climate-related migration and displacement is put forward by IOM,[56] a global actor working on the full spectrum of climate mobility. This three-pronged approach to human mobility in the context of climate change includes:

1. Enabling people to stay. This set of actions focuses on making migration a choice and not a necessity, by building resilience, reducing the risks of displacement through in situ adaptation, disaster risk reduction and community stabilization.
2. Supporting people on the move. This covers actions to assist and protect migrants and displaced persons in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, including measures to reduce loss and damage linked to disaster displacement by integrating climate risks in humanitarian responses and providing durable solutions to end displacement.
3. Enabling people to move. These actions encompass measures enabling people affected by climate change to move within their countries and internationally in a safe, orderly and regular manner, including by facilitating regular migration pathways and amplifying the positive impacts of this movement for migrants and societies for sustainable development, climate adaptation and resilience-building.

This approach is closely aligned with the "avert, minimize and address" framework of the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement.[57] Within this framework, averting displacement involves investing in resilience and adaptation; minimizing displacement includes expanding migration options and relocation strategies; and addressing displacement focuses on providing protection, relief and long-term sustainable solutions.[58]

While different processes and organizations may use different terminology and emphasis when outlining ways to address climate mobility, they converge on the need for a diverse toolbox and inclusive responses.[59] Local actors, supported by national authorities and regional and global partnerships, must be central to this implementation.

An illustration of specific actions that local stakeholders can take and are already taking in many parts of the world is provided in Table 1. The list of actions included is not exhaustive and aims to demonstrate the wide scope of local level action to address climate-related mobility. The actions are structured using the above-mentioned IOM three-pronged approach. In addition to IOM sources, it incorporates selected actions identified across relevant global policy frameworks and processes.

[56] For example, IOM, 2021a. The strategy outlines the IOM vision on the climate change–migration nexus and how the Organization can support its Member States develop and implement contextualized solutions.

[57] UNFCCC, 2021.

[58] IOM, 2018; Zickgraf, 2019.

[59] Foresight, 2011.

Table 1. Addressing climate-related mobility: a framework for local action

Enabling people to move	Supporting people on the move	Enabling people to stay
Integrate climate-related human mobility in local development plans, including developing city growth plans to prepare for expansion driven by future internal and international mobility.	Integrate human mobility into local early warning mechanisms relating to disasters, extreme weather and food insecurity.	Undertake systematic local risk assessment and horizon scanning to assess trends in vulnerability and needs in climate change affected locations, including by adopting available digital and technological tools.
Undertake surveys to assess which individuals, groups and communities would consider mobility as a form of adaptation to future climate change.	Ensure delivery of principled local humanitarian assistance and protection for displaced persons, as part of an area-based, whole-of-community support approach.[a]	Invest in climate-resilient local infrastructure (e.g. flood control, drought mitigation).
Ensure cross-border municipal cooperation to implement free movement protocols, including to facilitate seasonal pastoral migration across borders.	Establish community-based coordination platforms linking climate data, humanitarian response and protection.	Support sustainable climate-adaptive livelihoods and nature-based solutions for vulnerable populations.
Develop local relocation and resettlement strategies and plans through community consultation, for example for communities at risk of rising sea levels and flooding.	Promote access to local services and durable solutions for migrants and displaced persons unable to return.	Strengthen local land-use planning and zoning to prevent settlement in areas highly exposed to climate risks.
Conduct local foresight planning to assess mobility trends and service delivery implications.	Develop climate resilient infrastructure in the face of natural hazards or in post-crisis reconstruction.	Promote green reintegration packages and circular economy approaches for returnees.
Provide information and support access to documentation to help climate-affected people understand and access regular and safe migration pathways.	Adapt local health, education and social protection systems to climate- and migration-related needs.	Facilitate diaspora engagement in local resilience-building and climate investment efforts.
Ensure participation of migrants, displaced persons, diaspora and local communities in municipal climate planning.	Collaborate across local, national and regional levels for coherent mobility governance and data-sharing.	Introduce or expand locally managed social protection schemes (e.g. cash-for-work, municipal insurance, or emergency relief funds) that explicitly include migrants and displaced persons.

Develop, implement and scale up targeted skills training in affected communities for better future outcomes, including in cooperation with local enterprises.	Establish dedicated municipal shelters and reception facilities for climate-affected migrants.	Leverage Indigenous knowledge and community-based monitoring for early warning and adaptation.

Sources: This table is based on several sources presenting solutions in the context of climate-related migration featured in IOM, 2022 and 2023a. Further input is gathered from the following sources: UNFCCC, 2021; UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement, 2019; C40 Cities and MMC, 2021a; United Nations Network on Migration, 2022.

Notes: [a] Area-based humanitarian and development programmes that benefit all residents, including destination communities and migrants alike, are key to reducing resentment and curbing anti-migrant or xenophobic backlash.

Which specific solutions should be prioritized depends on the local context, needs and capacities. However, one set of actions remains systematically underutilized, largely for political reasons: the strategic use of migration as a form of climate change adaptation.

A growing body of research, including several IPCC reports and multiple global and regional frameworks,[60] recognizes that well-managed migration can be a positive adaptation strategy to climate change for households and individuals. This does not imply promoting migration at all costs. Rather, it involves giving people options, expanding migration pathways and ensuring that mobility contributes to human dignity and sustainable development. Examples include Fiji's planned-relocation guidelines,[61] Anchorage's community-led relocation plan,[62] and Freetown's youth schemes to reduce climate vulnerability that include circular migration and skills transfer initiatives.[63]

However, a negative public discourse on migration and a trend toward restrictive policies have kept migration as adaptation on the fringes of policy and financing. Fully leveraging it requires anticipatory planning, inclusive governance and policy innovation: challenging in times of multiple crises, but more urgent than ever. It is essential that all actors, including cities and municipalities, seek to overcome this climate action blind spot and actively leverage migration as part of their adaptation toolkit.

Accelerating and scaling local action: tackling the bottlenecks

Despite the many advantages of local engagement and the important work done by cities, municipalities and communities to address climate-related mobility, local actors often face significant structural, institutional and political constraints. For example, national political settings affect what can be achieved locally: where central authorities promote enabling, rights-based frameworks, municipalities and city authorities are better placed to develop inclusive solutions. This is more challenging in restrictive environments where migration is framed as a threat.

[60] For example, the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report states that "Increasing adaptive capacity minimises risk associated with involuntary migration and immobility and improves the degree of choice under which migration decisions are made, while policy interventions can remove barriers and expand the alternatives for safe, orderly and regular migration that allows vulnerable people to adapt to climate change (high confidence)" (IPCC, 2023).

[61] Planned relocation is one of the most visible forms of migration as adaptation. However, as emphasized in the 2022 World Migration Report and other reports, planned relocation should be a last resort, carried out in a rights-based and participatory manner, only when in situ adaptation options are no longer viable (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021; Government of Fiji, 2018).

[62] Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, n.d.; AK CASC, 2022.

[63] C40 Cities and MMC, 2021b.

Overall, capacity to act at the local level depends on the degree of decentralization and the legal and fiscal autonomy at local level, which varies significantly across countries.[64] There are examples of positive impacts where local actors are given a clear mandate by the national authorities: Colombia's Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelans delegated migrant registration, ID issuance and basic-service enrolment to municipalities, enabling cities like Bogotá and Medellín to regularize Venezuelans in their territories.[65] Clear channels for funding, legal authority and data flow that link local community initiatives with national systems are needed for effective local responses.

But even without a formal mandate over migration, local authorities can play a vital role in responding to climate-related mobility by factoring it into local responses in other sectors, adapting services they are responsible for and fostering inclusion. In Saint-Louis, Senegal, fishing households are engaging in circular migration to Mauritania to adapt to coastal erosion and declining fisheries, while the city, through its Local Development Plan and partnerships with NGOs and community groups, is supporting in situ adaptation.[66] In Dakar, municipal leaders have likewise brought climate-related migration into adaptation and urban planning through flood-resilient infrastructure and participatory climate plans.[67] This strengthens the city's capacity to support both current residents and migrants.[68] Local authorities are also working across borders to tackle shared climate-mobility challenges: the Peaceful and Resilient Borderlands Programme[69] in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia supports joint early warning, sharing of displacement-tracking data and co-funding livelihood projects to better manage climate-related pastoral mobility. In San Diego in the United States of America and in Baja California, Mexico,[70] a 2023 action plan supports joint climate-risk mapping and cross-border green infrastructure planning.

However, there remains a need for stronger policy integration and coordination, both between the sectors relevant to climate-related migration and between different levels of governance, to ensure coherence and address implementation gaps. This is a big governance challenge that goes well beyond climate change and migration.

Navigating hidden power dynamics of local governance

The landscape of local governance extends beyond formal institutions: de facto authority is often exercised by informal or coercive actors (e.g. criminal networks, corrupt officials, protection rackets).[a] In some contexts, such as informal urban settlements or urban peripheries, local power brokers and extra-legal actors may exert significant influence on local decision-making and distribution of resources.[b] This issue is part of deep-rooted governance challenges linked to corruption, informality and exclusion.[c] While engaging with such actors raises ethical and legal dilemmas, failing to account for their influence risks undermining the effectiveness and legitimacy of local responses. Efforts to empower local actors must contend with such "hidden" dimensions of power, and include interventions that strengthen accountable governance and community trust, while taking into account the underlying political terrain.[d]

[a] Koonings and Kruijt, 2023.
[b] Sampaio, 2023.
[c] Zinnbauer, 2020.
[d] Pieterse, 2018.

64 OECD and UCLG, 2019.
65 Bitar, 2022.
66 Zickgraf, 2018.
67 C40 Cities and MMC, 2021b.
68 Internal migration to Dakar is projected to increase significantly as climate impacts intensify across Senegal (World Bank, 2021b).
69 IGAD, 2024.
70 San Diego Foundation and International Community Foundation, n.d.

Other key challenges local actors are grappling with – especially in low-income or climate-vulnerable areas – include lack of disaggregated and timely data, and limited human resources, technical know-how and financial resources. In many cases, local staff are not trained in mobility-sensitive adaptation planning or lack tools for implementation. This challenge is closely related to limited access to financial resources needed to address climate-related migration.

Yet another challenge concerns limited participation and inclusion of affected populations in the design and implementation of local responses. While being close to the ground and to the affected communities puts local authorities in a good position to engage them, this is not always done. Migrants, displaced persons, Indigenous peoples and marginalized communities are often excluded from decision-making, which can lead to poorly tailored, top-down responses and resistance to implementation.

These barriers, while significant, are far from insurmountable. The following section showcases how local actors are overcoming key bottlenecks through innovation, partnerships and inclusive planning. Two key enablers stand out: technology and migration. Both provide new opportunities to accelerate local action, particularly when combined with community-based planning and cross-sectoral partnerships. Migration, when it is safe, orderly and regular, can benefit migrants and local communities, boosting development and channelling financing, skills and knowledge transfer. Technology – despite some challenges of its own such as digital inequality, privacy concerns and bias – offers local authorities new tools for climate risk management, climate-resilient infrastructure, and early warning systems. What this means in practice is briefly outlined below. Appendix B explores the role of technology in more detail.

Improving access to financing for local action

One of the biggest barriers to scaling up local action on climate-related human mobility is limited and fragmented access to finance. Municipalities often depend on national-level funding, which tends to be short term and tied to humanitarian cycles. Local authorities are also restricted in the types of taxes they can levy or funds they can borrow. This challenge compounds global financing shortfalls for climate action, humanitarian assistance, development and migration governance. Only a small portion of international climate and migration funding reaches the local level. For example, the United Nations estimates adaptation finance needs for developing countries to be 10 to 18 times higher than the international public finance flows,[71] and only a fraction – only about 10 per cent – of the already limited funding reaches local actors.[72]

Migrant and community voices: Mayor of Dakar, Senegal

"Of the climate finance that reaches Africa every year, very little is directed to cities, where climate-change impacts are felt most acutely".[a]

– Soham El Wardini, Mayor of Dakar, Senegal
(C40–MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration launch)

[a] MMC, 2021.

[71] UNFCCC, 2023.

[72] Between 2003 and 2016, less than 10 per cent of climate finance from international climate funds was allocated to locally focused climate change projects. Soanes et al., 2017.

Improving access to such financing for local actors is therefore a priority. There are international mechanisms that can be directly accessed by local authorities and used to fund responses to climate migration.[73] Initiatives such as the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees,[74] led by the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), channel direct financial and technical resources to cities for locally led responses. Through this fund, projects in Beira, Mozambique, and Hargeisa, Somalia (Somaliland region), for example, have enabled voluntary, dignified relocation of flood-affected communities.[75] The Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund also supports local programming, including, for example, a cross-sectoral initiative to strengthen the resilience of health systems in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon,[76] ensuring they are inclusive of migrants and responsive to the health impacts of climate change and disaster risk.

Beyond international finance, better coordination between national and local authorities is needed to channel public resources to address local needs.[77] In many countries, subnational governments rely on national transfers, but lack flexibility in how they can use them. Increasing this flexibility and developing a mechanism to factor in local climate adaptation needs and mobility trends in national allocation systems of subsidies can improve impact.[78]

Alternative financing models are emerging. An innovative model at the intersection of migration and climate adaptation finance is the Nauru Economic and Climate Resilience Citizenship Programme. This initiative allows high-net-worth individuals to contribute to the national climate resilience fund, which supports large-scale relocation efforts, in exchange for residency or citizenship rights.[79]

Parametric insurance is another tool, providing fast, pre-agreed payouts based on climate thresholds, rather than post-disaster damage assessments. A heat insurance programme in India, led by the Self-Employed Women's Association, Swiss Re and UNDP, uses mobile platforms to deliver automatic payouts to low-income women workers when temperatures exceed set thresholds.[80]

Migrant and diaspora communities also contribute significantly through remittances, investment and philanthropy. These transfers serve as a critical financial lifeline across the world, enabling families to recover from climate-related disasters and invest in adaptive measures in their home communities. International remittances are now the largest source of external financing for the low- and middle-income country group as a whole,[81] having greatly surpassed official development assistance (ODA) levels and, more recently, foreign direct investment (FDI).[82] Importantly, remittances and other financial contributions from migrants reach households and communities more directly and rapidly than traditional aid flows.[83] For instance, in Bangladesh, the British Bangladeshi diaspora supported recovery after the 2022 floods.[84] Beyond emergency relief, migrant transfers enable community investments in clean energy

[73] Other examples include: the United Cities and Local Governments, the Lives in Dignity Grant Facility set up by the European Union and the United Nations Office for Project Services, as well as the Financing Durable Solutions Initiative for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities created by UNCDF and UNHCR. For a fuller list, see MMC, 2022.

[74] MMC, n.d.

[75] C40 Cities and MMC, 2024.

[76] Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, 2024.

[77] OECD, 2023a.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Government of Australia, n.d.

[80] UNDP and Generali, 2022; Swiss Re, n.d.

[81] Migration Data Portal, n.d.b.

[82] These figures are aggregated for the low- and middle-income country group; individual countries may differ in the ranking of remittances, ODA and FDI flows (World Bank, 2024).

[83] Bendandi and Pauw, 2016.

[84] IOM, 2023a.

and adaptation projects.[85] For example, the crowdfunding curriculum developed by the African Foundation for Development promotes diaspora investment in local businesses in West Africa in green sectors.[86] Looking ahead, tools such as green diaspora bonds could be used to channel diaspora funds into climate-resilient infrastructure projects.[87]

Technology can further amplify migrant financial contributions. Fintech tools like mobile payment systems and digital wallets facilitate fast, reliable transactions and improve access to climate risk insurance, enabling communities to receive the necessary support.[88] Mobile banking platforms – such as the digital platform M-Pesa in Kenya and blockchain-powered remittance tools like Relámpago in El Salvador – further enable low-cost, rapid transfers to support resilience-building and recovery of rural and climate-vulnerable communities from shocks like droughts or floods.[89]

These innovations not only improve the speed and transparency of financial flows but also empower migrants and members of the diaspora as central agents of resilience.

Building local capacity for climate mobility response

Limited institutional, technical and human capacity continues to be a major challenge for local actors, particularly in low-income and climate-vulnerable settings. Addressing climate-related mobility requires broad expertise spanning data analysis, risk-informed planning, climate adaptation, mobility management, inclusive community engagement and more. Few local actors have access to accurate, disaggregated data or the skills to collect, interpret and use them effectively. Addressing these gaps requires sustained investment in training, peer learning and infrastructure.

In this context, local and traditional knowledge is a key asset to leverage. In East Africa's drylands, for instance, indigenous forecasting methods and seasonal mobility are being integrated into local adaptation planning to enhance resilience and anticipate displacement risks.[90]

Technology can play a key enabling role, offering powerful tools such as remote sensing and geospatial mapping, which can identify environmental risks linked to displacement.[91] For instance, remote sensing monitors environmental changes, including wildfire dynamics in California, while geospatial mapping identifies water-related migration risks in regions like Lake Chad and the Nile Delta.[92] However, these require digital literacy and robust infrastructure. Investments in digital infrastructure, technical capacity development and inclusive technology design are therefore essential for local uptake.

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85 Gordon and Goh, 2025.

86 EUDiF, 2022.

87 Green diaspora bonds are debt instruments issued by governments or development institutions to mobilize funds from diaspora communities specifically for financing environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient projects in their countries of origin. Not yet implemented in practice, such bonds would combine the development focus of diaspora bonds with the environmental goals of green bonds, aiming to channel migrant and diaspora investment into sectors such as renewable energy, reforestation, climate-resilient infrastructure, water management and disaster risk reduction (IOM, 2023b and Ofosu-Hene et al., 2022).

88 Jadaan and Hasan, 2024.

89 Jack and Suri, 2014. Kenya's M-Pesa has dramatically expanded financial inclusion in Kenya and other countries where it operates (e.g. Ghana, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania). With its low-cost, rapid remittance functionality, it facilities migrants' ability to support resilience-building and recovery of rural and climate-vulnerable communities from shocks like droughts or floods. On Relámpago, see Flore, 2018.

90 Radeny et al., 2019.

91 Jia, 2016; Nagabhatla and Brahmbhatt, 2020.

92 Ibid.

Migrants and diasporas help build local capacities in these and other key resilience and adaptation-critical areas. In addition to their financial contributions, diasporas' non-financial contributions to societies of origin and destination – such as knowledge transfer, skills development and cultural exchange – often have profound and lasting impacts.[93] Initiatives such as Diaspora 4 Climate Action and Diaspora Professionals 4 Development engage diaspora expertise in countries like Bangladesh, Ghana and the Philippines to equip local stakeholders with tools and skills in the area of environmental sustainability and climate adaptation.[94] To address lack of local capacity, experts with experience in climate action and related industrial and technological sectors in their countries of residence should be offered opportunities to return and carry out capacity-building of local actors.[95] This can be achieved through return visits, mentorship and virtual training delivered by diaspora experts.[96]

Networks like MMC, Local Governments for Sustainability and the C40–MMC Global Mayors Task Force provide technical assistance and platforms to share experiences on climate mobility governance.[97] Grassroots organizations, such as the Huairou Commission and Slum Dwellers International, enable peer exchange and amplify community voices.

Investing in local capacity – through partnerships with diaspora, civil society, academia and the private sector – is essential to enable inclusive, adaptive and locally grounded responses to climate-related mobility.

Mobilizing marginalized and vulnerable groups for local action on climate mobility

Local responses to climate migration often overlook those who are most affected: indigenous peoples, women, youth and migrants or displaced persons. These groups not only face heightened exposure to climate risks but are also frequently excluded from decision-making and planning. Yet, when meaningfully engaged, they bring essential knowledge, leadership and innovation to local climate and migration action (see the box on engaging migrants and displaced people in local climate action). Their perspectives are indispensable for developing solutions that are equitable, sustainable and effective.

Engaging migrants and displaced people in local climate action

Migrants and displaced persons affected by climate change are often marginalized within the communities where they settle. Beyond the risk of exclusion and vulnerability, this represents a missed opportunity. Migrants and people displaced by climate-related factors have valuable knowledge and coping strategies that can enrich local climate adaptation, support preparedness and contribute to more inclusive and resilient communities.

For example, in the Niger's Maradi region, local authorities and community-based organizations have collaborated with populations displaced by recurring drought and land degradation. These internally displaced groups have been engaged in land restoration initiatives – including reforestation and soil rehabilitation projects – that address environmental decline while promoting reintegration and livelihood recovery for those displaced.[a]

[93] McAuliffe et al., 2019; IOM, 2023c.

[94] IOM, n.d.b; EUDiF, n.d.

[95] Huckstep and Clemens, 2023.

[96] Ibid.

[97] C40 Cities and MMC, 2024.

A city-level example comes from Freetown, Sierra Leone. Rapid growth and exposure to recurrent disasters exacerbated by climate change led to the loss of millions of trees. Climate-related floods and heatwaves disproportionately affect informal settlements where many internal migrants reside. To address this, the Freetown City Council launched the "#FreetownTheTreeTown" initiative, which actively involves residents – including climate-affected migrants and returning migrants – in urban greening and reforestation efforts to reduce flood risk and urban heat.[b] Community members, including migrants – particularly women – are employed to plant and monitor trees, contributing to urban resilience, income generation and social inclusion.

[a] Huang, 2023.

[b] C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group et al., 2022; IOM, n.d.c.

Indigenous and community-based adaptation

Indigenous peoples are among those most acutely affected by climate change, and its mobility consequences.[98] Deep spiritual and cultural ties to ancestral lands, combined with long-standing marginalization and limited access to resources, make Indigenous communities particularly vulnerable to displacement.[99] Climate-induced disruptions – from land degradation and coastal erosion to biodiversity loss and deforestation – threaten their livelihoods, health and territorial sovereignty.

At the same time, Indigenous peoples are powerful agents of resilience,[100] organizing regionally and globally to influence climate and migration governance. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has consistently emphasized that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by climate change.[101] Regional Indigenous coalitions in the Pacific have also become vocal advocates for the rights of communities in low-lying island States. Indigenous peoples' networks help to connect traditional ecological knowledge and governance systems with locally appropriate, sustainable solutions to the challenges of climate-related migration and displacement (see Appendix C for more examples of Indigenous networks). There are many examples of Indigenous peoples contributing to the full spectrum of climate migration responses, including solutions enabling people to move, supporting people on the move and enabling people to stay.

In small island developing States (SIDSs), Indigenous communities face existential threats from sudden-onset disasters such as cyclones and slow-onset hazards including rising sea level and land salination.[102] Planned relocations, though highly disruptive and generally considered a last resort measure, can help entire communities move away from areas that are threatened. In 60 countries, over half of planned relocations, which are between rural areas and occur over short distances, involve Indigenous populations, with their leadership crucial to community-driven approaches.[103] In

[98] IPCC, 2007 and 2018; Abate and Kronk, 2013.

[99] Redvers et al., 2023; Notess, 2018; IDMC, 2021.

[100] Schlingmann et al., 2021.

[101] In its 2024 report to the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues raised concern over the combined impacts of environmental degradation and extractive industry activities, calling on Member States to support Indigenous-led adaptation and displacement prevention efforts.

[102] IOM, 2023a.

[103] IOM, 2022.

the Arctic, Inuit knowledge has informed adaptive housing designs and relocation strategies in response to melting permafrost and coastal erosion.[104]

In the Sahel, Indigenous farmers have revived land restoration techniques, like zai pits and farmer-managed natural regeneration, as part of initiatives addressing desertification and rural displacement, notably the Great Green Wall.[105]

For nomadic communities such as the Fulani or Tuareg, mobility is a core adaptation strategy. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Transhumance Protocol supports cross-border pastoral movement by issuing certificates and coordinating national policies.[106] However, local implementation remains critical for addressing new climate and conflict dynamics.[107]

These examples highlight that Indigenous peoples are not only vulnerable to the effects of climate change but are also central to solutions.

Women driving local climate solutions

Women, particularly those from climate-vulnerable regions, face heightened climate-mobility risks because gender inequalities limit their decision-making power, land ownership,[108] resources and safe migration options. The impacts of climate change exacerbate gender disparities, and displacement further increases gender-related vulnerabilities, exposing women to increased risks of gender-based violence and inadequate access to health care.[109]

Yet when empowered, women, including those who are part of indigenous or diaspora communities, emerge as powerful agents of change, mobilizing their communities and driving local adaptation solutions, migration governance and resilience-building efforts. Women can and do play a critical role in responding to climate change due to their local knowledge and leadership in sustainable resource management and practices at the household and community level.[110]

Migrant and community voices: Indigenous woman, Turkana region, Kenya

"Climate action needs to hear our voices; so let us speak. Listen to us and learn from our knowledge and experience. An empowered woman is a powerful agent for change and a voice for her community".[a]

– Agnes Leina, Indigenous women's rights advocate, Turkana region, Kenya.

[a] World Bank, 2022.

[104] Jamal, 2023.

[105] Bove, 2021.

[106] ECOWAS defines transhumance between States as "the seasonal movement between Member States of herds leaving their usual grazing areas in search of water and pasture" (ECOWAS, 1998).

[107] IOM, 2021b.

[108] According to the FAO, in Africa, the proportion of women's ownership of agricultural land is less than 20 per cent, though they are responsible for 50–80 per cent of agricultural production (FAO, 2011).

[109] Anjum and Aziz, 2025; Zavala et al., 2024; Ullah et al., 2024; Schuster et al., 2024.

[110] DEMAC, 2022.

For example, in Haiti, women-led grassroots groups mobilized after Hurricane Matthew to distribute relief and rebuild livelihoods, filling gaps left by formal disaster response mechanisms.[111] In Nepal's Lalitpur district, the all-female Chhahari Agriculture Firm installed solar micro-irrigation and other climate-smart practices, stabilizing food security and reducing pressure to migrate amid male out-migration.[112] Across Africa, the African Women Agribusiness Network (AWAN-Afrika network) empowers women and youth to do agribusiness, including by engaging with the African diaspora to scale drought-resilient farming and green jobs.[113]

These initiatives show how women's knowledge, social capital and transnational networks can widen adaptation options for entire communities. Global and regional networks – such as the Huairou Commission, the African Women's Development and Communication Network and the Red de Mujeres Migrantes y Refugiadas – now connect hundreds of such projects, encouraging gender-responsive climate and migration solutions (see Appendix C for more information on these networks). Supporting these networks is essential for inclusive, sustainable solutions to climate-related human mobility.

Conclusion

As the impacts of climate change intensify, intersecting with other global crises from conflict to economic downturns, climate-related mobility is a present and growing reality, affecting every part of the world. While projections and models provide glimpses into the future, the rising frequency and severity of climate-related hazards are already shaping patterns of population movement across the world. The future trajectory of climate-related mobility and its implications for societies and communities as well as migrants themselves depend on the policies and actions implemented now.

The current political environment, however, presents a conundrum. On the one hand, there is significant evidence and clear recognition within different multilateral frameworks of the need to step up action to address migration in the context of climate change. On the other hand, the space for engagement on this issue is shrinking due to rising scepticism toward migration, fragmented climate policies and competing global priorities. In this challenging setting, the need for practical, inclusive and forward-looking responses is greater than ever.

It is important to reaffirm the momentum built in recent years and to advocate for systemic integration of climate-related mobility into climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development efforts. This includes moving beyond reactive approaches that treat climate migration solely as a crisis, to designing comprehensive solutions that support people to move safely, assist those already on the move and enable communities to remain and adapt in place when possible. This chapter has argued that, to be effective, such solutions must be tailored to context and informed by a nuanced understanding of how climate risks and vulnerabilities unfold at the local level. The solutions to climate-related mobility must be as diverse and dynamic as the people they are designed to help. Crucially, those most affected should be at the centre of the action, not just as beneficiaries but as partners and leaders in shaping solutions. Migrants, displaced persons, Indigenous and local communities and women bring unique insights and capacities that can inform more effective and sustainable responses.

[111] Tenuta, 2016.

[112] Adhikari et al., 2025.

[113] Gakuba, 2020.

Against this backdrop, local governments and community actors are emerging as key agents of change. They are often on the front lines of climate change impacts, and many have adopted innovative, inclusive approaches to address climate-related mobility, despite limited resources and other institutional and structural constraints. Cities, municipalities and grassroots organizations are developing context-specific responses and innovating in ways that national and international systems can learn from. They are often best placed to foster trust, engage marginalized and vulnerable populations and integrate climate migration considerations into broader development, adaptation and resilience-planning.

Empowering local leadership should be recognized as a key pillar of effective action on migration in climate change contexts. Enabling and supporting local actors to exercise this leadership role is an important responsibility of the international community and national governments. Scaling and accelerating local action to address climate mobility requires stronger multilevel and cross-sectoral coordination, inclusive partnerships and more predictable and accessible financing. Local actors need resources and tools to lead responses that are tailored to their unique contexts. This includes support in closing some persistent data and evidence gaps, such as higher-resolution, community-level data, especially on slow-onset climate impacts and most vulnerable groups such as invisible internally displaced people, mobile pastoralist groups and informal urban settlers.

In an era of complex and compounding risks, local responses offer a path toward pragmatic, inclusive and forward-looking solutions. When adequately supported, local stakeholders can help build momentum for action and play a pivotal role in rebalancing the narrative around climate-related migration, away from a focus on reducing vulnerability, towards greater emphasis on resilience, adaptation and empowerment.

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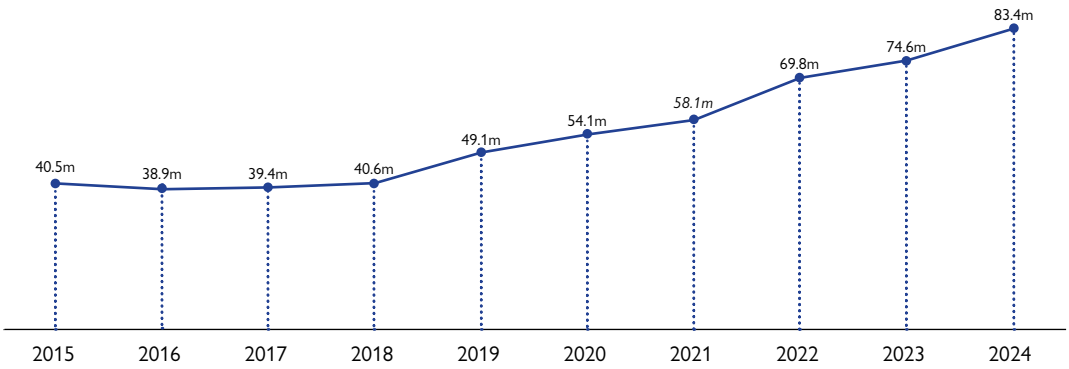
7 INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT: TRENDS, RESPONSES AND SOLUTIONS[1,2]

Introduction

The issue of internal displacement is a critical topic that demands attention due to the unprecedented number of internally displaced people (IDPs). Of the 117.3 million people identified as displaced at the end of June 2025, 58 per cent were IDPs.[3] Furthermore, many IDPs have been internally displaced for a long time, with no durable solutions in sight.[4] With escalating global conflicts and the increasingly visible effects of climate change, widespread awareness of the impacts, trends, responses and preventative actions related to internal displacement is both urgently needed and necessary to inspire effective action. Despite this, internal displacement continues to be overshadowed by cross-border movements in public discourse and government priorities. Although more visible on the international stage, the number of people involved in cross-border displacement is significantly lower than the number of individuals displaced within their own national territories.[5] Large-scale and long-term internal displacement crises have lasting negative impacts on affected populations, the communities that host (and, when able, support) them, governments, economies and the stability of entire regions of the world. While internal displacement describes the movement of people within the borders of an individual territory, it is clear that this is an issue of global concern.

Figure 1. Global numbers of internally displaced people since 2015 (millions)



Source: IDMC, 2025a.

Note: Disaster data were made available in 2019, which may have contributed to the sharp increase that followed. The number for each year reflects the number of IDPs at the end of that year.

[1] Nikki Herwenger, independent consultant; Marie McAuliffe, Head of IOM Research (until July 2025) and independent consultant; Carolina Moreno, Associate Professor, Universidad de los Andes; Naziye Dirikgil, Assistant Professor, Sakarya University.

[2] The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (August 2025).

[3] UNHCR, 2025.

[4] IOM, 2023.

[5] UNHCR, 2024.

Between 2018 and 2024, the number of IDPs worldwide has dramatically surged, more than doubling to reach a record 83.4 million by the end of 2024.[6] This sharp rise was driven by a combination of escalating armed conflicts – particularly in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and Ukraine – and the increasing frequency and severity of natural hazard-induced disasters like floods, storms and droughts.[7] The addition of disaster displacement data to the global estimates in 2019 is partially responsible for the steep increase observed. However, protracted crises in countries such as Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen also contributed significantly to this growth in internal displacement, as millions have remained displaced for extended periods without access to durable solutions. The increase in frequency and magnitude of displacement events over this period, alongside the growing challenge of long-term displacement and the significant economic cost of displacement, underscore the need for urgent action.[8]

This chapter aims to provide an overview of our contemporary understanding of internal displacement. It covers core concepts, key frameworks and data while also addressing the limitations in the current knowledge base and responses. Further, the chapter reviews responses from both governments and the international community, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and outlines preventative actions. The objective is to illustrate the significance of internal displacement, highlighting its far-reaching international implications, developmental impacts and the human costs on a global scale.

Core concepts

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPIDs) are a keystone international framework on internal displacement:

> [T]hese principles identify rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of persons from forced displacement, as well as their protection and assistance during displacement, return, or resettlement and reintegration.[9]

The GPIDs cover four focus areas: protection against displacement; protection during displacement; humanitarian assistance; and protection during return and resettlement. Although they are grounded in international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and, by analogy, in refugee law, they are not strictly legally binding.[10] Protecting IDPs is consequently treated more as a matter of public policy than a legal obligation.[11] In this context, experts argue that the GPIDs should be incorporated into law at relevant levels, including domestic law.[12]

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6 IDMC, 2025a.

7 Ibid.

8 Estimated annual disaster-related economic losses in the Asia-Pacific region reached about USD 780 billion in 2021 (approximately 2.5% of regional GDP), with housing and infrastructure damages representing only part of the impact; displacement costs remain largely unassessed (IDMC, 2022).

9 United Nations, 1998.

10 Cantor, 2018; Ferris, 2008.

11 Cantor, 2018.

12 Kälin, 2018.

And in fact, although the GPIDs are not legally binding under international law, they have served as a foundation for legal regulations at both national and regional levels. At the regional level, African States adopted the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, commonly referred to as the Kampala Convention, which endows these non-binding principles with the force of law across the continent. By August 2024, 34 of the African Union's 55 member States had ratified the Kampala Convention.[13] Most laws and policies regarding internal displacement primarily address issues related to conflict and violence as drivers of such displacement. While only a subset of these instruments tackles displacement caused by disasters, it is noteworthy that there is a growing number of laws and policies that specifically address disaster-induced displacement.[14]

The definition of IDPs in the GPIDs also refers to drivers of displacement, stating that IDPs are:

> [P]ersons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.[15]

The movement of IDPs, then, represents one form of human mobility within the broader migration spectrum. Two key components arise from the GPID definition of IDPs. First, the displacement of these individuals is inherently involuntary. Second, this form of mobility occurs within national borders, distinguishing IDPs from refugees, who, by definition, cross international boundaries. For IDPs, the national and local authorities in the country of residence are primarily tasked with providing protection and assistance. However, in the event that internal displacement crises exceed government capacity to respond, governments invite support from international organizations and NGOs to form a coordinated emergency response. Therefore, the definition also has a more specific purpose, which is to determine the situations that require international action on behalf of IDPs. Conversely, for refugees, the authorities of the admitting or destination country – those that are signatories to the Refugee Convention – are responsible for offering support, because the refugees fall under the international protection regime through Refugee Convention. In both cases, the institutional capacity of the State is an important critical feature of effective responses.

Importantly, when IDPs move within national borders, this does not always occur in their country of citizenship. IDPs can also be foreign nationals who experience displacement within a country. This happens when migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers – who have already crossed international borders – face additional displacement in their transit or destination country. This situation is common in countries facing crises from environmental disasters, armed conflicts, terrorism, failures of political and economic management, epidemics, pandemics and global financial downturns.[16]

Venezuelan nationals in Colombia illustrate this point clearly. Colombia has the largest Venezuelan community worldwide, with nearly 3 million residing in the country by July 2025.[17] At the same time, Colombia faces an ongoing crisis from its unresolved internal armed conflict. As a result of this, Venezuelan migrants and refugees may become victims of this conflict and experience internal displacement, a phenomenon that has been extensively documented in this context. Adding further complexity to the definition of internal displacement, these individuals face displacement in a country where they are not citizens and often lack legal migration status, which can worsen their vulnerability as IDPs. For more information, see the text box on migrants in countries in crisis and internal displacement.

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[13] African Union, 2009 and 2024.

[14] Nicolau and Pagot, 2018.

[15] United Nations, 1998.

[16] McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019.

[17] R4V, 2025.

Migrants in countries in crisis and internal displacement

In countries affected by internal displacement crises, international migrants may be amongst internally displaced populations. These international migrants who have been internally displaced in a country in crisis can include students, migrant workers, refugees, pastoralists and members of indigenous nomadic communities who cross borders routinely, amongst others. During a crisis, these diverse migrant groups may require specific support to address their vulnerabilities and needs.[a] For example, some might need access to services for those without documentation; some might need specific assistance for unaccompanied migrant children; some might need assistance specific to their status as domestic workers within resident households. Crisis response strategies that do not adequately plan for different population groups among those displaced risk creating invisible, underserved populations.[b] It is therefore vital that definitions of internal displacement also reflect the diversity of population groups, members of which may become IDPs during a crisis.

[a] Majidi et al., 2019.
[b] IOM, n.d.

Drivers of internal displacement

As the GDIP definition of IDPs states, the causes of displacement include armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, natural hazard-induced disasters and human-induced disasters. Additionally, although not specified in the GPID definition, the impact of development projects – such as the construction of infrastructure like roads and dams – can be a driver of internal displacement when population relocations are not appropriately managed. The terminology used to describe the causes of displacement varies, with different actors often using the terms "drivers", "triggers" and "causes", sometimes interchangeably. It should be noted that for some actors, "triggers" name the immediate events that cause displacement (such as a flood or a conflict), while "drivers" describe the underlying structural factors or overarching forces that make populations vulnerable to displacement (such as climate change, environmental degradation, poverty and inequality).[18] In this chapter, the term "driver" will be used to refer to causes of displacement.

While there is a significant body of research investigating the specific characteristics of different drivers and their impact on internal displacement dynamics,[19] in practice, drivers are mostly divided into two main categories. On the one hand, displacement caused by conflict; on the other hand, displacement caused by disaster. Although available IDP statistics usually present drivers in this way, the distinction between these drivers is not as straightforward as it may seem. There can be multiple or connected drivers of displacement that underpin movements. For example, armed conflict may arise due to disputes over natural resources related to depletion due to disaster events, such as flooding or drought. An often-cited case is that of Syrian internal displacement due to intercommunal conflict, which is considered to have roots in growing scarcity of resources due to drought conditions.[20] Furthermore, populations displaced by one driver may also be affected or redisplaced by other drivers, as has been the case in contexts like South Sudan, where people displaced by conflict have also been exposed to severe flooding in recent years.[21]

[18] IDMC, 2025b.
[19] Cantor, 2024.
[20] Gleick, 2014; Selby et al., 2017.
[21] IOM, 2025b.

State responsibility

Since IDPs remain within their own national borders, they are predominantly seen as the responsibility of their respective governments. This is also reflected in the lack of international legal frameworks, except for the Kampala Convention,[22] highlighting that "sovereignty remained the cornerstone of the international system, but it began increasingly to be viewed as entailing responsibilities toward one's citizens".[23] This perspective implies that the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters have limited comprehensive international engagement with IDPs. Consequently, the responsibilities of the domestic government encompass protection from displacement, ensuring safety during displacement, and aiding return, resettlement and integration.

Even so, it was not until after the 2005 World Summit that a distilled "Framework for National Responsibility" was developed, consisting of a non-exhaustive list of 12 key steps that governments should consider to exercise their national responsibilities regarding the protection of the rights of IDPs. In practice, every country adjusts these obligations to its context, with measures aiming to:

1. Prevent displacement and minimize its adverse effects;
2. Raise national awareness of the problem;
3. Collect data on the numbers and conditions of IDPs;
4. Support training on the rights of IDPs;
5. Create a legal framework for upholding the rights of IDPs;
6. Develop a national policy on internal displacement;
7. Designate an institutional focal point on IDPs;
8. Support national human rights institutions to integrate internal displacement into their work;
9. Ensure the participation of IDPs in decision-making;
10. Support durable solutions for IDPs;
11. Allocate adequate resources to the problem; and
12. Cooperate with the international community, when national capacity is insufficient.[24]

Even though domestic authorities are responsible for assisting IDPs, cooperation with the international community is essential when State capacity is limited. Therefore, governments request and accept international assistance when faced with an IDP crisis.[25] This may be observed in the presence of non-governmental actors in responses to internal displacement and the humanitarian funding infrastructure that distributes financing from donor States to States with population groups that are experiencing internal displacement.

The end of displacement

There is no agreement on when to stop counting a person as displaced.[26] Academics and practitioners have grappled with questions related to multiple displacement, return, loss of land and property, integration in other communities and more, to understand the end of displacement.[27] In the absence of consensus, calculations are

[22] Ratified by 34 countries in Africa and not extending to countries outside the continent.

[23] Cohen, 2014.

[24] Ferris et al., 2011.

[25] Cohen, 2014.

[26] Mooney, 2005.

[27] McDowell and Morrell, 2010.

made on a case-by-case basis. Despite this, the international community, in collaboration with governments, has developed and implemented approaches for delivering durable solutions to displacement that are discussed in the "Addressing internal displacement" section of this chapter.

Internal displacement data and trends

Contemporary internal displacement is a global phenomenon driven by complex and multifaceted crises that span all regions of the world. Recent surges in conflict – such as those in the Sudan, Ukraine and the Occupied Palestinian Territory – alongside large-scale disasters – like the earthquakes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye in 2023 – have significantly shaped today's displacement landscape. In many regions, displacement is further compounded by overlapping crises with broader regional implications. For example, the Lake Chad Basin (encompassing Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria) and the Liptako-Gourma region (covering Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger) are experiencing multidimensional emergencies marked by extremist violence, political instability and widespread displacement. These areas also feature complex mobility phenomenon, including both regular and irregular migration flows, as well as traditional transhumance routes used by nomadic herders, adding further dimensions to the evolving crises. Within this complex landscape, internal displacement crises intersect with other types of crises and development challenges. Given this complex mobility landscape, collecting accurate data on internal displacement can be a challenge. The text box on definitions summarizes how internal displacement is counted in terms of populations (stocks) and displacements (flows).

Defining internally displaced people: "populations" and "displacements"

Specific terminology is used to refer to data that reflects different aspects of the movement of IDPs. These key terms include "IDP stocks" and "internal displacements", as defined by IDMC.[a]

IDP populations or "stocks".
"A static snapshot of the number of IDPs in a given location at a specific point in time. Population movements such as internal displacements or births among IDP communities may increase this number, while returns, cross-border flight and other outflows may decrease it."

Displacements or "flows".
"The total number of movements that have occurred over a period of time is considered a 'flow' and the most common type of this metric is called 'internal displacements'. This metric can include secondary or multiple displacement movements of the same populations."

[a] IDMC, n.d.a.

Data on IDPs serve a wide range of purposes, including being used for humanitarian response, policy, advocacy and resource allocation efforts. They have also been instrumental in achieving recognition of IDPs as a population of concern for the international community. This recognition came much later than it did for populations fleeing across borders, and was driven by the growing number of IDPs documented in the 1990s.[28]

[28] Stavropoulou, 2009. The former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali submitted the first report on IDPs to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in 1992.

Data are a vital resource for governments and non-government actors at every stage of the response to internal displacement, from the initial life-saving humanitarian response to post-crisis recovery and development. In particular, the scale, scope and coverage of humanitarian data has boomed since the start of a so-called "data revolution" commencing in 2009, marking a radical shift towards more data-driven decision-making.[29] In 2014, the launch of an open data platform (the Humanitarian Data Exchange) made documenting the rapid increase in the production and availability of humanitarian data feasible. Just five years after the launch of this open access archive, the number of data sets hosted on the platform had grown from 800 to over 17,000, reflecting the expanded availability of data for humanitarian response.[30] When examining data on internal displacement specifically, similar increases are evident. IOM currently operates the largest global primary data collection programme for internal displacement, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). The first DTM exercise was launched in Iraq in 2003, and by 2024 the programme was active in 91 countries.[31] This growth in primary data collection has led to enhancements in data consolidation efforts such as the IDMC Internal Displacement Database, which compiles data from diverse sources across 167 countries.[32]

Data limitations and challenges

An independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement found that variations in operating environments, context, data collection infrastructure and capacity across countries lead to fragmented and non-comparable operational data.[33] Political sensitivities and decisions on geographic coverage also affect the completeness and accuracy of data.[34] Furthermore, government statistics rarely reflect internal displacement, and national censuses do not generally distinguish IDPs from other populations. As a result, comparative and longitudinal analysis is challenging, reducing the analytical potential of data. Despite these limitations, progress has been made in addressing data variability and fragmentation, including some progress towards consistency in line with the 2020 International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics (IRIS), which provides a framework for standardization.[35] Operational tools like the DTM Data Kit also help practitioners implement this standardization in the field with practical resources for data collection, including survey question banks, form builders and a data validation application, all aligned with institutional and inter-agency standards.[36]

Nevertheless, challenges persist, including data literacy gaps among users, ethical issues in data use and collection and challenges associated with the use of advanced data science methods. In addition to this, persistent data gaps on key populations continue to challenge the representativeness of data regarding IDPs.

Diversity and inequality: data gaps for key groups of internally displaced people

Internally displaced populations are not a single, uniform group. Their experiences, needs and vulnerabilities vary widely, based on a range of intersecting factors such as:

- Age, particularly as regards the elderly and very young;
- Gender and sexual orientation;

[29] DSEG, 2020.
[30] Centre for Humanitarian Data, 2020.
[31] IOM, 2025a.
[32] IDMC, n.d.b.
[33] Sida et al., 2024.
[34] Lewis and Herwanger, 2022.
[35] EGRIS, 2020.
[36] IOM, 2025g.

- Health status and physical or mental ability;
- Migration status;
- Ethnicity or race.

These overlapping identities influence how individuals access resources, the risks they face and the types of support they require. Furthermore, crises often expose and intensify existing patterns of exclusion and marginalization for many groups. For example, a young migrant woman with a disability may encounter multiple, compounding barriers that differ significantly from those faced by others in the same crisis. In addition to individual overlapping identities, the broader social, economic, political and environmental conditions play a critical role in shaping individual experiences and barriers to access. These factors determine not only the degree of vulnerability but also the capacity of individuals to access long-term solutions to displacement.[a]

Despite widespread acknowledgement of this by responders and experts, critical data gaps persist for key groups such as women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. These data gaps are widely attributed to limited resources, lack of standardization across actors and contexts and operational barriers to inclusion.[b] Representative data collection requires specific methodological approaches that are often time consuming and costly.[c] As a result, data collection often focuses on the most accessible and identifiable populations. Even so, sex- and age-disaggregated data for IDPs are not always available, even for populations that are assessed successfully.[d] This is a critical barrier to understanding important differences in the needs of different sex and age groups as well as how they are affected by crises.

For example, an IOM study covering the 15 pilot countries of the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda found that internally displaced women are less likely than internally displaced men to have stable incomes, or shelters, while female-headed households, when internally displaced, were more likely to experience complete food shortages than male-headed households.[e] A further study of five countries by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security found that gender inequalities were compounded by internal displacement. In Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan, displaced women faced significantly greater disadvantages than women in the host community, displaced men and men in the host community, across a range of outcomes including financial inclusion, cell phone access, education, intimate partner violence, employment, community safety and legal identity.[f] While the need for gender-specific responses to internal displacement is clear, the necessary integration of gender-sensitive data collection approaches is still lacking.

[a] Guadagno and Robles, 2024.
[b] Bate and Herwanger, 2024.
[c] Ibid.
[d] Klugman and Ortiz, 2022; Map Action, 2023.
[e] IOM, 2023.
[f] Klugman and Ortiz, 2022.

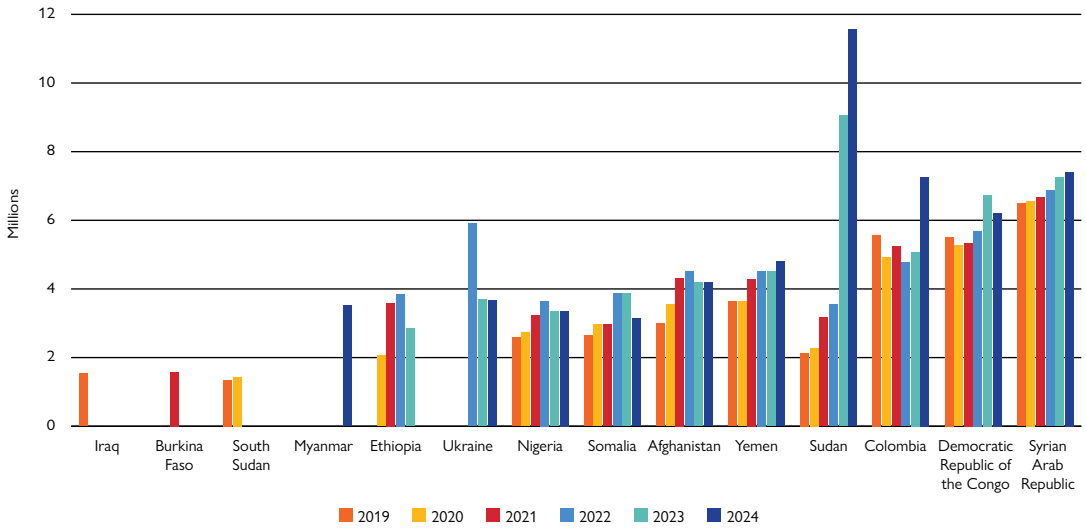
Trends in internal displacement

IDP data from the last six years show an overall increase in internal displacement globally, with conflict as the leading driver of internal displacement worldwide, though there are also growing numbers of displacements year-on-year due to disasters. Since the last *World Migration Report* (2024), IDMC data show that 12.2 million more

people were living in displacement at the end of 2024 compared to 2023.[37] This section examines a selected group of countries to illustrate the complex and varied nature of internal displacement and its underlying drivers. Utilizing data from IDMC and the IOM DTM, this section analyses IDP data from between 2019 and 2024. While not intended as an exhaustive overview of global displacement trends, the analysis unpacks some of the largest internal displacement crises during this period, emphasizing the diverse contexts that shape each situation.

When examining the number of people living in displacement due to conflict at the end of each year (stock) from 2019 to 2024, many of the countries with the highest annual numbers have remained the same. This means populations that have been internally displaced due to conflict are often in protracted displacement. Some of these countries also appear among those with the highest numbers of people internally displaced by disasters. Notably, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan appear consistently in the list of countries reporting the highest IDP stock numbers in terms of people displaced by both conflict and disaster each year from 2019 to 2024.

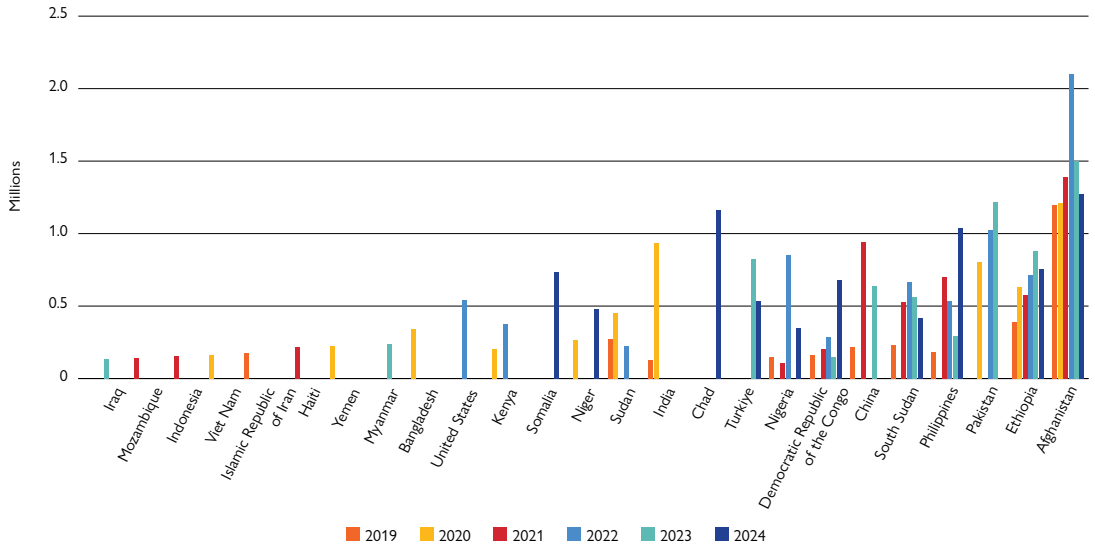
Figure 2. Countries reporting the highest number of internally displaced people displaced by conflict (stock), 2019–2024



Source: IDMC, 2025a.

[37] IDMC, 2025a; McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024.

Figure 3. Countries reporting the highest number of internally displaced people displaced by disaster (stock), 2019–2024



Source: IDMC, 2025a.

The recurrence of countries across both figures highlights a trend of compounding drivers and protracted displacement in key contexts. For countries with consistently high numbers of IDPs (stock), the negative social, economic and development impacts have been well documented. A comparison of data from 2018 and 2024 shows that, on average, internal displacement occurs in more vulnerable areas today than in the past. In 2024, areas affected by internal displacement had younger populations, lower incomes, lower levels of education and lower life expectancy than the areas affected in 2018.[38] High levels of conflict-induced displacement also correspond with increased unemployment rates, food insecurity and maternal and under-five mortality rates.[39] Furthermore, conflict-induced displacement poses barriers to achieving key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as those relating to education, economic growth, health and well-being, access to drinking water and more.[40] In terms of social cohesion, communities that host internally displaced populations are often communities that already have only limited resources, and those resources are further stretched with the presence of IDPs, particularly when displacement becomes protracted.[41] This can happen for displacements induced by both conflict and disaster, resulting in prejudice and discrimination against IDPs as well as, in the worst cases, further conflict and violence.[42] For people who are displaced, whether due to conflict or disaster, there can be significant long-term impacts including loss of assets and resources as well as impacts on health and well-being, which can reduce resilience and the ability to cope with future shocks.[43] This is particularly true for people who are displaced multiple times.

38 IOM, 2024a.

39 Ghafoori et al., 2025.

40 Ibid.

41 Atehortúa Arredondo et al., 2011.

42 Ibid.

43 Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme, 2021.

Data in context: internal displacement in the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan

Figure 2 shows that the Syrian Arab Republic has consistently been among the countries with the highest number of people displaced by conflict, worldwide. After years of protracted conflict, the country experienced a rapid power shift on 8 December 2024. This has radically altered the humanitarian, recovery and mobility landscape. Amongst unprecedented numbers of displaced people returning to the Syrian Arab Republic from abroad, alongside internally displaced people returning to locations of origin, new internal displacement persists, though at declining rates. For example, by the end of May 2025 a total of 13,109 individuals were newly displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic, bringing the cumulative number of IDPs since the onset of the crisis in 2011 to almost 6.4 million, of which 48 per cent were children.[a] At the time of reporting, this represented a continuing trend in decreased new displacement. Simultaneously, from December 2024 to May 2025 over 1.1 million returns took place in the Syrian Arab Republic, including both returning IDPs and arrivals from abroad. These data suggest the possibility of future changes in the total number of people displaced by conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.[b]

Figure 3 shows that Afghanistan has consistently been among the countries with the highest number of people displaced by disaster, worldwide. Drought, flood and other environmental hazards accounted for nearly three quarters (73%) of internal displacements, as well as over 600,000 individuals migrating abroad in 2024.[c] Since the change in conflict dynamics in the country following the Taliban takeover in 2021, climate and disaster have contributed to increasingly larger proportions of displacement.[d] For example, in 2023 alone, the country experienced severe flooding across eight provinces in July, four magnitude 6.3 earthquakes in the western province of Herat in October, and the second year of the worst drought the country had seen in three decades.[e] Disaster-induced displacement is often presumed to be short term; however, data show that this is not always the case. Drought-induced displacement can destroy agricultural livelihoods long term, and extensive damage to housing and infrastructure can be a significant barrier to return for IDPs.[f] The frequent lack of data collection, once the emergency phase of disaster displacement is over, leads to poor understanding of the duration of disaster displacement.[g]

[a] IOM, 2025e.
[b] Ibid.
[c] IOM, 2025f.
[d] Ibid.
[e] Ibid.
[f] Ibid.
[g] IDMC, 2025c.

Appendix A provides further summary analysis of internal displacements (flows) and different country contexts. While the analysis does not represent a comprehensive account of global displacement trends from 2019 to 2024, it nevertheless examines some of the largest internal displacement crises during this period, highlighting the differences in context and drivers across these crises. Overall, the sample of countries analysed in this section demonstrates some of the complexities of IDP stock numbers and country contexts.

Addressing internal displacement

Internal displacement has historically been addressed through humanitarian frameworks that prioritize emergency relief, protection and life-saving assistance. The previous section on data highlighted the centrality of data in informing humanitarian responses and the diverse needs of IDPs. While this framing is critical in responding to acute crises, these approaches have often proven to be insufficient to address both the underlying dynamics of internal displacement as well as the long-term vulnerabilities of displaced populations.[44] Analysts have continued to question the "care and maintenance" model of humanitarianism for entrenching dependency and failing to adequately factor in political and structural drivers of displacement.[45]

Humanitarian interventions tend to be short term, sometimes fragmented and often donor driven, meaning that there is routinely a lack of investment in sustainable livelihoods, integration into national systems, or the effective and sustainable end to displacement for affected populations.[46] This analysis is echoed within United Nations system change processes, particularly over the last five years, that have increasingly recognized that humanitarian responses have "carried the load for too long alone", leaving governments sometimes underengaged and national development actors insufficiently mobilized to support displaced people in rebuilding lives and restoring rights.[47] The result has been a persistent pattern of protracted internal displacement, with many IDPs living in limbo for years or even decades.

Against this backdrop, and in the context of United Nations Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the United Nations Global Compact on Refugees (both 2018, and neither of which encompassed internal displacement), the United Nations Secretary-General launched the 2022 Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Stemming from work done by the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement (see Appendix B for details), the Action Agenda marked a pivotal shift from humanitarian crisis response to nationally led, development-oriented solutions. The Action Agenda committed more than 20 United Nations entities to 33 system-wide actions across prevention, response and solutions.[48] At its heart was a recognition that displacement is a development and governance challenge requiring long-term planning, financing and State leadership. The Action Agenda reaffirmed resident coordinators as the lead at the country level, thereby institutionalizing a collective approach that placed United Nations country teams at the service of governments seeking to integrate displacement into national development strategies.[49] This shift represented a conscious attempt to recalibrate the balance of responsibilities by maintaining humanitarian response for acute crises, while embedding displacement in the everyday work of governance, planning and recovery.[50]

The significance of this shift lies not only in new policy approaches but also in the broader trajectory of United Nations reform. The UN80 review and the so-called Humanitarian Reset (Phase I) reflect systemic pressures on the international aid architecture that is facing escalating crises (escalating in number, severity and scale), shrinking budgets and mounting demands for efficiency and accountability.[51] Internal displacement has become somewhat of a test case for these reforms, although the timing is not favourable. On the one hand, the 2024 Quadrennial

[44] United Nations, 2021.
[45] Ferris and Ferro-Ribeiro, 2012; Bradley, 2020.
[46] Crawford et al., 2021.
[47] United Nations, 2021.
[48] Piper, 2025.
[49] UNSDG and IASC, 2025.
[50] Piper, 2025.
[51] IDSF, 2025.

Comprehensive Policy Review called on the United Nations development system to support IDPs as part of national priorities, an unprecedented acknowledgment of displacement as a measurable development concern.[52] On the other hand, the more recent (July) 2025 Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development failed to mention IDPs, which was a downgrade over the 2024 Ministerial Declaration of this forum that explicitly did.[53] In part, this is a reflection of the shifting terrain at a time of major political and funding withdrawals from the humanitarian and development systems.

The Humanitarian Reset (Phase I) acknowledged that the traditional relief model is unsustainable and that the humanitarian sector must foster approaches that build resilience, reduce aid dependency and empower national institutions and local actors. Some humanitarian actors have referred to the reset as a reactive response to a "profound crisis of legitimacy, morale, and funding".[54] This context is important but also extremely challenging, given the much broader focus on "rethinking" multilateralism in a contested and uncertain geopolitical environment that is also seeking to rebalance the humanitarian–development nexus and expand the role of States as primary duty bearers in displacement governance.

Notwithstanding the challenging global context, operationalizing commitments on IDPs requires institutional innovation. The establishment of the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement ("the Hub") in 2025 is part of this evolution. Acting as a successor to the Office of the Special Adviser, the Hub was established to consolidate institutional memory and provide support to governments and United Nations resident coordinators. It functions as both a technical platform and a political driver of system-wide change. By embedding the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF) within its architecture, the Hub links advisory support, financing and inter-agency coordination.[55] This represents a deliberate attempt to overcome the fragmentation experienced in the past, when humanitarian and development actors often worked in parallel. The Hub's solutions advisers, for example, provide tailored assistance at the country level, while the Solutions Working Group and "solutions champions" facilitate global policy coherence and advocacy. Early evidence from the IDSF pilot programmes demonstrates the catalytic potential of this model: governments in 10 countries developed national or subnational durable solutions strategies, strengthened data systems through more than 28,000 consultations with IDPs, and embedded displacement priorities into broader development planning.[56]

Yet, while these arrangements represent progress, they also highlight persistent tensions in the international response to internal displacement. On the one hand, the emphasis on national ownership reflects both normative commitments to sovereignty and practical recognition that only States can guarantee security, allocate land or design social policies at scale.[57] On the other hand, analytical critiques have long cautioned that an overreliance on government leadership risks sidelining the agency of IDPs themselves, particularly in contexts where States are unwilling to address displacement or are complicit in displacement.[58] Similarly, the so-called "developmentalization" of displacement responses raises questions about equity and inclusion.[59] While embedding solutions into policy frameworks can elevate visibility, it also risks bureaucratizing displacement into policy-driven planning cycles, potentially diluting attention to protection, rights and justice.[60]

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52 UNSDG and IASC, 2025.

53 United Nations, 2025b.

54 ICVA, 2025.

55 IDSF, 2025.

56 Ibid.

57 UNSDG and IASC, 2025.

58 Hammond, 2008; Kälin, 2021.

59 Mitra, 2023; Pichon, 2025.

60 Bakewell, 2008.

Another critical shift lies in the increasing reliance on data to underpin solutions, as highlighted in the previous section. Initiatives such as the Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement illustrate how high-quality operational data can inform national strategies, donor alignment and investment decisions. While this data-driven turn has generated optimism about more targeted and accountable interventions, it also carries risks. As analysts of humanitarian governance note, data regimes can depoliticize displacement, obscuring structural inequalities and framing solutions primarily as technical challenges.[61] The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that data systems are not merely extractive tools but can be participatory mechanisms that amplify displaced persons' voices and enable genuinely people-centred planning (see the text box on participation). Encouragingly, recent IDSF programmes have institutionalized consultations with IDPs and supported women-led associations as active partners in strategy design.[62] Whether such practices become systemic remains to be seen. It is also important to note that participatory data collection requires adequate mapping of structural barriers to participation that are often highly context specific (in Afghanistan, for example, female participation is currently highly restricted). If structural issues are not addressed, data will continue to reflect the social and political hierarchies in the operating context, even if participatory methods are deployed. There are also further risks to the role of data as a critical form of evidence as we witness major reductions in the funding of internal displacement data collection systems, such as the DTM.[63]

Participation of internally displaced people at the local level in Ukraine

In Sievierodonetsk, local authorities have embraced a bold inclusive approach, integrating IDPs into the city's participatory budgeting process. From the outset, IDPs are invited to help design and prioritize community-led projects, helping ensure that decisions reflect their urgent needs and aspirations.

Being part of the coordination council for the participatory budget helped to give IDPs a tangible sense of belonging. With workshop training in project management and budgeting, participants quickly became empowered contributors rather than passive recipients of assistance. As a result, the city's planning cycle now routinely reflects IDP-driven priorities such as access to schooling, infrastructure improvements and communal spaces. This local consultative model has helped support social cohesion between long-term residents and newcomers, and has fostered a stronger, more equitable sense of community ownership in rebuilding efforts.

Source: Council of Europe, 2025.

Taken together, the trajectory of current reforms to how internal displacement is situated, focused and funded point to the potential for a paradigmatic reorientation of the global response to internal displacement. But the massive reform pressure being brought to bear on the United Nations system, as well as on the broader international humanitarian and development systems, is placing this reorientation at significant risk. It remains to be seen whether the move away from the predominance of international humanitarianism towards development-anchored, nationally owned solutions can be achieved while the current global system of international cooperation is in the midst of a major upheaval.

This shift may be widely acknowledged as critical, or even overdue; however, it is contingent on sustained political will, financing and institutional capacity. With over 83 million people displaced within their countries and humanitarian

[61] Scott-Smith, 2016.

[62] IDSF, 2025.

[63] Dupraz-Dobias, 2025.

budgets under severe strain,[64] the stakes are high at the global level. The primary test of success will be whether innovations in how solutions are delivered translate into tangible improvements in the lives of displaced people, restoring dignity, rights and a renewed social contract between citizens and States. A clear example is the move away from providing immediate emergency "shelter" for IDPs towards tangible support for realizing long-term "housing solutions" for people in need.[65] Insights on country strategies are able to shed light on these aspects.

Country-led planning and implementation of solutions

A shift from externally driven interventions to nationally owned, locally led processes has been reinforced in recent years, recognizing that, to achieve sustainable solutions to internal displacement, the priorities and realities of displaced persons and host communities must be at the forefront of planning strategies, incorporated into their design and implementation. While national and subnational strategies have long existed in contexts such as Colombia, Nigeria and Somalia, the establishment of the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement and the IDSF represent a significant step forward. Appendix C provides a consolidated overview of country-level examples of how solutions to internal displacement are being advanced under three thematic areas: knowledge exchange and coordination; evidence-based and data-driven approaches; and strategic development and policy ownership.

Evidence shows that participatory consultations and data-driven planning not only improve policy coherence but also strengthen community buy-in. Local leadership has been central to country-led planning, reflected in institutional structures such as the solutions working groups in Iraq and Nigeria, and the IDP Steering Committee in Libya.[66] These structures have enabled governments to implement solutions through evidence-based strategies that align local realities with national priorities. Inclusive processes – such as community consultations in Mozambique, victims participation boards in Colombia and IDP councils in Ukraine – have ensured that displaced persons can play a central role in identifying and shaping solutions. At the same time, these processes convene stakeholders across all levels of government alongside United Nations agencies, underscoring that durable solutions emerge from holistic, multi-stakeholder collaboration.[67] Supporting these efforts, the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement ensures that gender-sensitive planning is integral to these processes, embedding gender equity as a core principle in both strategy design and implementation.[68]

These participatory approaches have reinforced national strategies that better consider solutions to internal displacement within broader development plans, while also integrating considerations for climate resilience and reintegration, from Colombia's National Development Plan to newer frameworks like Somalia's National Solutions Pathways Action Plan.[69] They have also strengthened national data-capacity initiatives, exemplified by Somalia's Durable Solutions Progress Survey and Iraq's reformation of their referral and compensation systems.[70]

Renewed energy behind nationally owned strategies has translated into concrete financial commitments, with Colombia, Iraq and Libya dedicating substantial budgets, Nigerian states pledging fixed revenue shares, and Somalia

[64] Piper, 2025.
[65] United Nations, 2025a.
[66] UNSDG and IASC, 2025.
[67] Ibid.
[68] IDSF, 2025.
[69] Ibid.
[70] UNSDG and IASC, 2025; IDSF, 2025.

allocating funds for land to support the resettlement of IDPs.[71] Promising advances are tempered by persistent challenges, including high costs and coordination gaps, though stronger government leadership and accountability frameworks show that sustainable solutions are within reach.

2024 Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement

The IOM *Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement* (PROGRESS) was launched in 2023 to provide evidence on the factors that enable IDPs to move toward, and eventually achieve, durable solutions. PROGRESS is intended to support governments, development and humanitarian actors and host communities as they seek to improve outcomes for IDPs.

Key findings of PROGRESS24

1. A majority of IDPs surveyed (60%) wish to remain where they are as their preferred solution.
   Despite variations between contexts and causes of displacement, a majority of IDP households surveyed across nine countries wish to stay in their location of displacement from year one of displacement onwards. This suggests that supporting local integration in the first few years of displacement would correspond to IDP intentions.

2. Duration of displacement affects solutions intentions.
   Local integration preferences approach 100 per cent by year 5 of displacement in disaster settings, with higher percentages (69.5%) of conflict-displaced people expressing an intention to remain in their area of displacement.

3. Fewer than 5 per cent of IDPs wish to relocate or resettle as a solution.
   Although the intention to relocate or resettle to another part of the country increases slightly over time, from 2.7 per cent for those displaced for one year or less, to 3.9 per cent for those displaced for more than 5 years, this remains the least preferred displacement solution for surveyed IDPs.

4. Solutions preferences differ significantly between those displaced by conflicts and those by disasters.
   A higher percentage of those displaced by disasters intend to stay in their current location than those displaced by conflict (in eight of the nine countries analysed).

5. Multiple displacements are experienced by more than one third of surveyed IDPs.
   In this report, 40.8 per cent of respondents reported that they had been displaced on multiple occasions; 59.2 per cent reported that they had been displaced only once. The share of IDPs who intend to stay in their current location reduces as the number of displacements increases.

6. Safety and security is the most frequently cited influence on solutions intentions.
   Data on the perceptions of safety (of mostly conflict-displaced households) show that most (95%) surveyed IDPs feel safe in their locations of displacement and female-headed households are just as likely to feel safe as male-headed households.

[71] Piper, 2025.

7. Livelihoods and employment opportunities are the second most influential factor on solutions preferences.
   Livelihoods become an increasingly important influence on solutions intentions the longer people remain displaced. Approximately 2 out of 10 surveyed IDPs (18.1%) displaced up to a year reported livelihoods and employment as the major factor influencing solutions intentions compared to 25.2 per cent of those displaced for over 5 years.

8. Social ties or community participation could affect durable solutions intentions.
   IDP participation in community activities is relatively low in the location of displacement, with only 32 per cent of IDP households participating. Over 85 per cent of those who participate in community activities intend to remain in their location compared to 67 per cent of those who do not participate.

Source: IOM and Georgetown University, 2024.

Financing and governance for durable solutions

The United Nations's global humanitarian overviews for the last several years paint a grim picture.[72] Armed conflict, climate change and unresolved crises have forced over 120 million people from their homes, with an estimated 305 million requiring humanitarian assistance globally.[73] The increased prevalence and intensity of geopolitical conflicts, such as those in Gaza and Ukraine, combined with the devastating impacts of climate change, continue to uproot communities, disrupt food systems and strain existing humanitarian mechanisms.

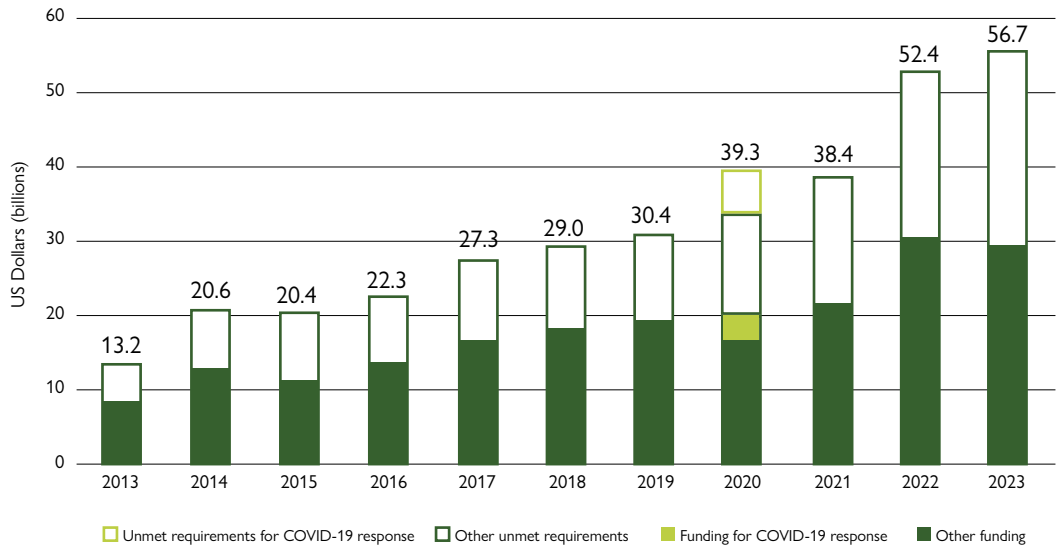
Meanwhile, humanitarian needs are significantly outpacing funding support, as shown in Figure 4. Notwithstanding the major withdrawal of United States Government funding in 2025, as humanitarian needs rise and domestic fiscal pressures grow, many other donor countries are under pressure to reduce their development and humanitarian budgets. As well, the risk of further conflict is the highest it has been in decades, as military spending reached a new record high of USD 2,240 billion in 2022, reflecting an ongoing reduction in peace globally, as well as rising geopolitical tensions.[74]

[72] OCHA, 2024.

[73] Ibid.

[74] SIPRI, 2023.

Figure 4. Humanitarian and unmet requirements, United Nations-coordinated appeals, 2013–2023



Source: Oxfam, 2023.

As highlighted in the previous section, the long-term growing gap between humanitarian needs and actual funding, together with the dramatic reduction in United States Government funding of the humanitarian sector, necessitated the United Nations's Emergency Relief Coordinator to embark on a "Humanitarian Reset" in early 2025. This is part of a larger cascade of funding reductions that is now confronting the more strategic approaches that have been in development on the financing of solutions to internal displacement.

A central aspect of the global effort to move beyond humanitarian crisis response towards lasting solutions has been the creation of the IDSF. This fund has been designed as a financing mechanism to unlock development-oriented approaches to internal displacement. It operates by providing targeted support to governments committed to pursuing nationally led solutions, complementing humanitarian relief with structured development pathways. As of October 2025, the fund had received just over USD 25 million from five donors (the governments of Germany, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), representing a modest but critical investment, especially when compared to humanitarian response funding needs, as shown in Figure 4.[75] Since its launch, the Fund has backed pilot projects in 10 countries, contributing to the development of 5 national and 23 subnational solutions strategies, and supporting participatory planning through IDP consultations embedded in government-led processes.[76] This has been central to a deliberate effort to empower displaced populations as rights holders and decision-making participants, in order to align financing with the principles of inclusion, accountability and sustainability.[77]

[75] UNMPTF, n.d.

[76] IDSF, 2025.

[77] Piper, 2025.

The IDSF has also advanced a model of strategic governance in solutions planning. A consistent lesson emerging across the pilot contexts has been that a national strategy, while important, is insufficient without costed implementation plans that can translate political commitments into sequenced investments and action. For example, in countries such as the Niger and Somalia, the IDSF has underwritten technical support for governments to develop budgeted action plans linked to national development frameworks.[78] This has been reinforced by the establishment of interministerial coordination platforms, which bring together ministries of finance, planning, social affairs and the interior – often for the first time – to work jointly on displacement solutions. Such arrangements not only facilitate whole-of-government approaches but also create political space for reconciling humanitarian imperatives with fiscal planning and broader policy reforms.[79]

At the international level, the IDSF has demonstrated the potential to align donor efforts behind national leadership. Rather than perpetuating fragmented project-based financing, the IDSF has provided a mechanism through which bilateral and multilateral actors can channel contributions to nationally defined solutions strategies. In Colombia and Honduras, for example, IDSF support has been instrumental in harmonizing donor contributions with government-led priorities, thereby reducing duplication and increasing coherence.[80] This shift reflects a broader recognition within the United Nations system that durable solutions require a development financing mindset, where donor engagement is not about substituting for State functions but rather is about strengthening State capacity as the central duty bearer.[81]

Despite these promising developments, the model faces significant challenges. A key constraint lies in the limited availability of development financing expertise within humanitarian-dominated country teams. While humanitarian agencies often have long-standing operational presence, they often lack the technical capacity to design investment pipelines, conduct fiscal analyses, or engage effectively with ministries of finance, particularly because this has previously not been part of an integrated sustainable approach to addressing internal displacement.[82] This can result in solutions strategies that remain aspirational rather than actionable. The experience of the IDSF underscores the need for sustained advisory support, both through the deployment of solutions advisers at the country level and through the role of the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement in facilitating technical exchange and peer learning.[83] Yet reliance on short-term, projectized funding for advisory positions undermines continuity and risks eroding institutional memory.

More broadly, the fund's experience reveals that financing displacement solutions is not merely a technical exercise but a profoundly political process. Developing costed plans and coordinating across ministries requires political will, bureaucratic alignment and the ability to manage trade-offs in resource allocation. Displacement governance is shaped as much by political economies of aid and State building as by formal institutional arrangements.[84] The IDSF has the potential to ameliorate some of these realities by acting as a more neutral mechanism, enabling governments, donors and displaced populations to converge around shared priorities. However, sustaining this role requires greater levels of predictable funding, as well as clear accountability frameworks and a balance between global oversight and country-level autonomy.

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78 IDSF, 2025.

79 United Nations, 2025a.

80 IDSF, 2025.

81 Ferris and Ferro-Ribeiro, 2012.

82 World Bank, 2019.

83 IDSF, 2025.

84 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014.

By supporting governments to design and finance their own strategies, institutionalizing IDP participation and fostering donor alignment, the IDSF has begun to close the gap between humanitarian response and development solutions. Yet its early implementation highlights the structural challenges of expertise, sustainability and political economy that must be addressed if the model is to be scaled. The IDSF experience illustrates both the potential and the fragility of financing mechanisms in realizing durable solutions, underscoring the importance of long-term investment in national systems, advisory capacity and multilateral coherence.[85] Further, it is also important for internal displacement to be part of national development strategies, not just to address existing displacement, but towards preventing future displacement through, for example, climate resilience programming as part of development agendas.

The funding "big picture" remains challenging

Beyond humanitarian response plans and the catalytic but relatively small IDSF envelope, emerging OECD and United Nations data suggest that development assistance for internal displacement remains modest. Using an IDP "tag" for project funding, a 2024 policy brief found that donors disbursed less than USD 600 million in non-humanitarian official development assistance to IDP-tagged projects across 71 countries in 2022, with only 1.7 per cent channelled through country systems; by comparison, annual humanitarian aid for IDPs is estimated at more than USD 5 billion.[86]

At the same time, national development and climate plans in displacement-affected low- and middle-income countries rarely integrate internal displacement: only 28 per cent of national development plans and 36 per cent of national climate action plans explicitly mention refugees and IDPs, leaving tens of millions of displaced people outside the core planning frameworks that guide development and climate-resilience investments.[87] Taken together, these findings suggest that, while instruments such as the IDSF represent an important shift towards development-oriented solutions, they are operating in an environment where official development assistance for internal displacement is still small, heavily mediated by multilateral agencies and weakly connected to national development and climate-resilience agendas.

Conclusions

Internal displacement has reached unprecedented levels, with more than 83 million people uprooted within their own countries at the end of 2024. As this chapter has shown, displacement is increasingly driven by overlapping crises that are becoming more frequent and protracted. While there has been progress toward realizing solutions to internal displacement – through frameworks and initiatives such as the Kampala Convention, the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda and national strategies – the international system remains oriented toward short-term humanitarian responses, and less geared toward longer-term solutions embedded within development contexts. One reflection of this disconnect is the ongoing trend in internal displacement towards a higher number of IDPs globally, year-on-year.

[85] IDSF, 2025.

[86] Hillal et al., 2024.

[87] Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2025; OECD and UNHCR, 2023.

A much-needed transformation is taking place in a challenging and uncertain global context. New mechanisms, such as the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement and the related IDSF, are anchoring and expanding the progress made through the Action Agenda. Meanwhile, the broader UN80 and Humanitarian Reset processes offer important opportunities to embed displacement into development financing, governance and recovery planning. Yet this promise is tempered by persistent funding gaps, increasing competition for aid resources and geopolitical uncertainty that is complicating multilateral cooperation. Without deliberate investment and political will, there is a risk that displacement solutions will remain underfunded and politically marginal, even as the numbers of internally displaced people continue to climb.

Some of the key implications and recommendations that emerge from this chapter's analysis of internal displacement include:

- Governments remain the primary duty bearers for protecting and supporting IDPs, but many lack capacity or resources. International partners should invest in strengthening State institutions, embedding displacement in national development, poverty reduction and climate adaptation strategies. Whole-of-government approaches are needed to ensure solutions are mainstreamed across ministries and sectors.
- Addressing cycles of multiple and protracted displacement is critical to solutions. More than one third of IDPs have been displaced multiple times, creating layers of vulnerability. Solutions planning must account for cyclical displacement, focusing on risk reduction, protection from further displacement and targeted support for those repeatedly uprooted. Approaches should combine humanitarian relief with long-term investments that reduce exposure to future shocks.
- Effective solutions require inclusive, disaggregated and longitudinal data on IDPs, returnees and host communities. Building on initiatives such as Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement and PROGRESS contributions, data must capture the intentions, vulnerabilities and progress of IDPs over time. Host community perspectives should be integrated, since their capacity to absorb IDPs is a critical determinant of durable outcomes.
- Solutions will only be sustainable if IDPs are directly involved in shaping them. Participatory approaches – through consultations, representation in local planning and accountability mechanisms – are essential to ensure that programming reflects the lived realities, aspirations and agency of displaced communities.
- Livelihood opportunities are consistently cited by IDPs as decisive for their futures. Job creation, vocational training, social protection and access to markets should be central pillars of solutions programming. Prioritizing women, youth and marginalized groups will maximize the broader developmental benefits of these investments.
- Achieving solutions requires aligning local and national governments, humanitarian and development actors, civil society and the private sector. Mechanisms such as the Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement and the IDSF should be leveraged to build bridges between these actors, mobilize innovative finance and ensure coherence across humanitarian, development, climate and peace agendas.
- Solutions for IDPs must be explicitly connected to the SDGs, climate action frameworks and peacebuilding processes. Doing so will expand political traction and unlock additional financing streams. In an era of fiscal austerity and geopolitical competition, strategic alignment with these global agendas is crucial to safeguard resources and political commitment for displacement solutions.

Together, these recommendations highlight that internal displacement is not only a humanitarian issue but also a structural governance and development challenge. The combination of strengthened national ownership, targeted international support, innovative financing and the active participation of displaced communities themselves offers a solid way forward. Seizing this opportunity is essential to prevent internal displacement from becoming a permanent and escalating global crisis, and to instead enable dignified, durable solutions that align with development and peacebuilding goals.

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8 DISABILITY AND MIGRATION: TRENDS, ISSUES AND RESPONSES[1,2]

Introduction

> "[T]here is no such thing as an inherently vulnerable person, but only persons with disabilities placed in vulnerable situations". Gerard Quinn, former Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[3]

While this assertion could apply to any individual, it is particularly relevant when talking about disability and migration: persons with disabilities are not inherently vulnerable but can be placed in heightened situations of vulnerability, including in migration and displacement settings. The issue of disability in the context of migration and displacement has, however, often been overlooked in policy, practice and research.

Yet the interactions between disability and migration deserve more attention, because of both their scope and substantive reach. In terms of scope, disability is not exceptional in migration: there would be at least 62 million migrants and displaced persons with "significant" disability in 2024 out of the 304 million international migrant population and 83.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).[4] By way of comparison, this figure would approximately represent the size of the population of South Africa.[5]

In terms of substantive reach, supporting migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities requires going beyond mere non-discrimination to actively working to remove barriers to their full inclusion and empowerment within communities of origin, transit and destination. Grounded in an array of human rights instruments, including the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),[6] this is the pledge made by the Sustainable Development Goals: that of leaving no one behind, including persons with disabilities.[7] This promise is also reflected to a certain extent in both the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

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[1] Céline Bauloz, independent consultant; Nicola Burns, Senior Lecturer in Disability Studies, School of Social and Political Studies, University of Glasgow; Nara Khamkhom, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.

[2] The research and analyses included in this chapter were current at the time of writing (August 2025).

[3] UNGA, 2021.

[4] UN DESA, 2025a and 2025b; IDMC, n.d. and 2025. As detailed below, this figure is extrapolated from the estimates made by the World Health Organization (WHO) that 16 per cent of the world's population experience a "significant disability" (WHO, 2022).

[5] UN DESA, 2024.

[6] United Nations, 2006a.

[7] UNGA, 2015; UN DESA, 2018.

and the Global Compact on Refugees, each of which refers, among others issues, to disability-inclusive and disability-responsive approaches.[8]

Against this background, this chapter contributes to a greater understanding of the interactions between disability and migration, including displacement, to inform future research, as well as policies and programmatic interventions. To do so, the chapter first presents the notion of disability, before contextualizing its prevalence in migration and displacement settings, despite the scarcity of data. The following section then considers some of the barriers to and good practices for increasing the visibility, equality and inclusion of migrants and displaced persons with disabilities, focusing on key issues arising throughout the migration cycle. This provides the grounds for the final section, which offers reflections on key opportunities for more inclusive policy and programmatic responses, before drawing conclusions.

Concepts: understanding disability

The concept of disability is constantly evolving and has changed throughout time. Persons with disabilities were traditionally defined through a medical lens, focusing on specific individual impairments.[9] This perspective often led to the marginalization of persons with disabilities, emphasizing their limitations and need to be "cured".[10] Although still dominating certain medical and scientific domains (such as bioethics),[11] this approach has been challenged by disability activists and scholars in favour of a broader understanding emphasizing the attitudinal and environmental barriers faced by persons with impairments that lead to their exclusion in societies.[12] This social model of disability highlights the interaction between individuals and their socioeconomic, political and cultural environment, rather than impairments as an attribute of individuals.

The social model of disability laid the foundations for the definition adopted in the 2006 UNCRPD, which is often referred to as the human rights model.[13] The Convention "[r]ecogniz[es] that … disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".[14] By extension, persons with disabilities are defined to "include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".[15]

Table 1 summarizes some of the key characteristics and implications of these three main models for understanding disability.

[8] UNGA, 2018; United Nations, 2018.

[9] See WHO, 1980.

[10] Oliver, 1990.

[11] UNGA, 2019a.

[12] Oliver, 1990; Degener, 2016.

[13] Degener, 2016; Lawson and Beckett, 2021.

[14] United Nations, 2006a, preamble, paragraph e.

[15] United Nations, 2006a, article 1.

Table 1. Overview of different definitional models of disability

	Definition of disability	Position	Focus
Medical model	Disability arises from the individual's impairment(s)	Persons with disabilities: • Need to be cured • Are considered passive actors and medical patients • Are considered unable to live independently	Medical treatment and rehabilitation
Social model	Disability arises from social, attitudinal and environmental barriers encountered by persons with impairments	• Disability is not an individual problem, but results from the social, economic and physical barriers encountered • Disability is created by society • Persons with disabilities can and should participate in society	• Elimination of the barriers that constrain the participation of persons with disabilities, ensuring accessibility and inclusion • Full participation of disabled people in economic, social and cultural life of society • Involvement of disabled people in decision-making
Human rights model	Disability arises from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers, hindering their full participation in society on an equal basis with others	• Builds on the social model and centred on persons with disabilities as rights holders • Grounded in human dignity and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights • Focused on equal opportunities, non-discrimination, accessibility and participation and inclusion in society	Respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability

Sources: This table builds on OHCHR, 2014 and n.d., and on United Nations, 2006a.

Applicable to all individuals under the jurisdiction of a State, including migrants, refugees and IDPs, the UNCRPD reaffirms States Parties obligations "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity".[16] While a detailed analysis of the Convention is beyond this chapter, the general principles set out in article 3 highlight the scope of the rights-based approach required by the Convention: one that, most notably, goes beyond mere non-discrimination, extends to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and acknowledges that different layers of identity, such as sex and age, may underscore multiple discriminations.

Despite near universal ratification (191 States Parties at the time of writing), alignment of national legislations, policies and practices with the UNCRPD definition remains limited, as is the case for instance in Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.[17] That said, the Convention complements other core human rights treaties, as well as other legal and policy instruments at the global and regional levels. It is also supported by a specific policy framework governing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction (DRR).[18]

Context: migration and disability today

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, as of 2021, 16 per cent of the world's population had "significant disability".[19] Based on the latest global population estimates,[20] this would represent nearly 1.3 billion people in 2023, of which 80 per cent would have been living in low-income and middle-income countries.[21] While other data sets exist, they do not currently provide a global picture of the prevalence of disability worldwide.[22] Available statistics nevertheless show that disability correlates positively with age and gender and negatively with educational background. Thus, disability is disproportionally more prevalent among older individuals, women and individuals with lower levels of education.[23]

While this chapter does not delve into data challenges for capturing the prevalence of disability, it is noteworthy that these challenges are even more pronounced in the case of migrants and displaced persons with disabilities. National data sets disaggregating disability among these populations are scarce, if not non-existent.[24] Hence, estimates often extrapolate from the general disability prevalence rate of 16 per cent from WHO. On this basis, with over 304 million international migrants, including refugees, asylum-seekers and other people in need of international protection, as well as some 83.4 million IDPs displaced by conflicts, violence and disasters in 2024, there would thus be nearly 62 million migrants and displaced persons with disabilities worldwide.[25]

Any estimates are, however, most likely conservative, with actual figures likely to be much higher. First, and while it may have increased since 2021, the rate of 16 per cent was estimated by WHO based on the medical model, rather than the social one. It focuses on "substantial disability", that is "underlying health conditions and impairments [lasting more than six months and] associated with significant (moderate and severe) levels of disability".[26] While

[16] United Nations, 2006a, article 1. On the scope of States Parties obligations, see further article 4.

[17] IDA and International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), 2025.

[18] See Appendix A for an overview of the legal and policy frameworks relevant to the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

[19] WHO, 2022.

[20] UN DESA, 2024.

[21] UNDRR, 2023.

[22] See for instance World Bank, n.d.; OECD, 2022; Eurostat, 2024; CDC, 2024.

[23] OECD, 2022.

[24] International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS), 2023.

[25] For stock data of international migrants (including refugees, asylum-seekers and other people in need of international protection), see UN DESA, 2025a and 2025b (data as of 1 January 2024, based on UNHCR for internationally displaced persons); for stock data of IDPs, see IDMC, n.d. and 2025 (data as of 31 December 2024).

[26] WHO, 2022.

this methodological approach is justified by the lack of data taking into account the surrounding environment for drawing global and regional estimates, using the social model for estimating the population with disability would have accordingly led to a higher prevalence rate.[27]

Difficulties in capturing the prevalence of disability

The lack of robust statistical and administrative data about persons with disabilities is addressed in article 31 of the UNCRPD, according to which States Party have a duty to collect data to support inclusion. Challenges around such data include:

1. Insufficient use of methodologies available to collect and analyse data disaggregated on the basis of disability or by disability status, including for instance in national census and population/household surveys.

2. Stigma attached to having an impairment, leading people to not self-report their impairment or their experience of disability in population/household surveys.[a]

3. Varying definitions used at national levels, undermining the comparability of national statistics. Some countries still use a definition aligned to the medical model focusing on limitations arising from impairment.[b] Other countries exclude mental health and psychosocial conditions from the definition of disability, leading to lower reported disability prevalence.[c]

To support the collection of comparable and high-quality data on disabilities, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics was created in 2001 and has since developed different sets of questions that are used by the international community and diverse countries. Building on the model taken by the UNCRPD, these questions focus on six basic functions (seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, cognition and communication) to assess individuals' functional limitations in their surrounding environment.[d] A specific module exists for children with disabilities, given the additional challenges in identifying them.[e]

Although the Washington Group questions are an important methodology for collecting data on the prevalence of persons with disabilities, it has limitations in terms of the purposes for which it can be used as well as several criteria that need to be followed so the data collected are reliable and useful. For more information on recommended methodologies for data collection related to persons with disabilities, refer to this decision tree developed by IOM, with input from an advisory group including the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WHO, IOM and Humanity and Inclusion and led by UNICEF.[f]

[a] OECD, 2022.

[b] See for instance the United Nations Statists Division's website on disability statistics which highlights the type of disabilities captured in population census and household surveys in 67 countries.

[c] OECD, 2022.

[d] Washington Group on Disability Statistics, 2020 and n.d.

[e] UNICEF, 2021.

[f] IOM et al., n.d.

[27] Ibid.

Second, the disability prevalence rate is likely higher for migrants, especially displaced persons, than for the general population; not only are migrants more likely to acquire an impairment as either a cause or result of their migration and displacement drivers and journey, they also face additional attitudinal and environmental barriers that are disabling from a social model understanding. Coupled with rising anti-migrant sentiments in some destinations, increasingly restrictive migration and asylum policies have been considered as disabling in and of themselves when restricting access to essential services.[28] The impact of attitudinal and environmental barriers stemming from restrictive migration and asylum policies underpins Table 2, which provides an illustration of some key factors that indicate a higher prevalence of disability for migrant and displaced populations.

Table 2. Factors underpinning a higher prevalence of disability in migrant and displaced populations

Drivers of migration, especially in case of displacement	Adverse drivers of migration, such as conflicts, violence, natural disasters and human rights violations, can directly provoke impairments through injuries and trauma that can further result in disability. A study on self-reported disability among refugees who have recently been resettled in the United States, for instance, highlighted the positive correlation between disability rates among refugees originating from countries plagued by armed conflicts, such as the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, especially when they left their country during the most violent years.[a] Research also evidences a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression in displaced persons, including refugees.[b]
Dangerous migration journeys	With increasingly limited migration pathways, migrants and displaced persons may embark on risky migration journeys, especially through irregular migration routes. They may face violence (including gender-based violence), exploitation, human trafficking and limited access to health care and other support services. These can aggravate pre-existing impairments and lead to the development of new or secondary impairments, which can translate into disability depending on attitudinal and environmental barriers in transit and destination countries.[c]
Social exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization, including xenophobia and racism	In addition to restricting migrants' access to diverse support services, exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization can affect migrants' mental well-being. These can lead to chronic stress, anxiety and depression among migrants, potentially resulting in migrants becoming persons with psychosocial disability.[d]
Precarious living conditions	Precarious living conditions can stem from a variety of factors, including the uncertainty surrounding a person's migration or asylum status, lack of access to healthy food, lack of/inaccessible housing, lack of access to/insufficient social protection, including health care and rehabilitation services, lack of/restricted access to the labour market, precarious employment conditions, etc. These can create anxiety and distress and evolve into longer-term mental health conditions, eventually leading to psychosocial disability. While this is particularly the case in camps and informal settlements, it also often tends to extend to the initial reception phase and beyond, as well as to detention facilities.[e]
Hazardous jobs	Often due to restrictive labour migration policies and limited opportunities to access the labour market, migrants remain disproportionately represented in hazardous jobs, such as construction, mining and manufacturing, with higher risks of workplace injuries, including long-term impairments, compared to the local population.[f] Research confirms the higher prevalence of fatal workplace injuries for migrant workers compared to non-migrant workers in 73 per cent of countries with available data.[g] This pattern is also echoed in case studies of Nepali migrant workers in Malaysia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as well as migrant workers from India, Bangladesh and China in Singapore.[h]

Sources: [a] Kaur et al., 2024. [b] Nickerson et al., 2011; Fazel et al., 2005; de Jong et al., 2001. [c] Mostafa, 2015; Tofani et al., 2025. [d] Phillimore and Cheung, 2021; Isaacs et al., 2020; Goodwin et al., 2024. [e] Whitehouse et al., 2021; Gold Jennings Solicitors, 2025; Yeo, 2024. [f] OHCHR, 2024; Brian, 2021. [g] Gammarano, 2020. [h] Adhikary et al., 2017; Yea, 2022; Feng Lam et al., 2024.

[28] Yeo, 2024.

These factors are not exclusive from one another, and not only do they point to a higher likelihood for migrants and displaced persons to acquire an impairment, but they also unveil attitudinal and environmental barriers that are specific to migration and displacement settings. This highlights the complex relationship between migration and disability, which needs to be better understood to avoid migrants with disabilities facing "dual neglect".[29]

Migrants with disabilities: removing barriers for increased visibility, equality and inclusion

The intersection of migration and displacement with disability presents a complex landscape where individuals often navigate dual layers of marginalization, if not more that two due to other factors including age, gender and ethnicity. This section explores the multifaceted interactions between disability and migration, some of the diverse barriers experienced by migrants with disabilities and good practices adopted in different settings and locations. While unable to present all potential barriers migrants may face, it focuses on some key aspects arising throughout the migration cycle, namely: migration decisions and journeys; migration pathways; immigration and asylum procedures; access to social protection at destination; and return to countries of origin.

Migration decisions and journeys

Migration decisions for persons with disabilities remain complex and multifaceted. While this is true for any individual, barriers experienced by persons with disabilities influence both their decision and their ability to migrate. These barriers may act as a driver of migration, as in the case of precarious living conditions or a lack of adequate support systems in countries of origin.[30] A 2024 study on disability and migration focusing on Venezuelan migrants in Argentina and Chile, for instance, evidenced the importance of disability in migration decisions: 87 per cent of respondents highlighted family and support networks, cultural aspects and social integration opportunities as central factors in their migration decision and choice of destination country.[31] This differs from many standard (non-disability) migrant surveys in which economic and income-generation reasons dominate migration decisions and destination selection.[32]

Discrimination, abuse and violence against persons with disabilities may also be a factor in the decision to migrate and may constitute, at an extreme, a driver of displacement (see below, the section on migration pathways). These are often anchored in cultural stigmas and beliefs about persons with disabilities. In many countries, children with disabilities are subjected to neglect, such as deprivation of freedom and denial of access to education. In some countries, women with disabilities are at times killed because they represent evil spirits, and persons with albinism are sometimes attacked and even killed for rituals with their body parts that would bring fortune and good luck.[33] In other countries, such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, persons with disabilities have been threatened, subjected to violence and extorted by criminal gangs.[34]

At the same time, persons with disabilities may wish to migrate but be unable to do so due to diverse attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers. Beyond institutional barriers linked to the immigration laws of destination countries, this may be due to restrictions to leave their own country, contrary to article 18 of the UNCRPD.[35]

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[29] CRPD and CMW, 2024.

[30] Crock et al., 2019; Dew, 2024.

[31] Marcolongo, 2025.

[32] MMC, 2024.

[33] CRPD, 2024a (Ghana); CRPD, 2024b (Burkina Faso); CRPD, 2024c (Benin); CRPD, 2024d (Zambia); CRPD, 2023a (Malawi); CRPD, 2023b (Togo); CRPD, 2022a (Bangladesh); CRPD, 2019a (Senegal); CRPD, 2018a (Haiti); CRPD, 2016a (Uganda); CRPD, 2015a (Gabon); CRPD, 2015b (Kenya). Concerning attacks on persons with albinism, see UNGA, 2016.

[34] CRPD, 2019b (El Salvador); CRPD, 2017a (Honduras); Kim, 2019.

[35] See also ICCPR, article 12 (United Nations, 1966a) and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 13(2) (UNGA, 1948).

In Viet Nam, for instance, persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities can be prohibited from leaving the country, while in El Salvador, such restrictions have been reported to extend to persons with hearing impairments.[36] Persons with disabilities are also often overrepresented among the poorest segments of the population, limiting their financial capacity to migrate.[37]

In contexts of armed conflict, persons with disabilities may be unable to leave their country due to the inaccessibility of border crossings, as highlighted by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in its concluding observations on Ukraine. The CRPD asked Ukraine to provide information on the accessibility of border crossing points for persons with disabilities and, as far as possible, to establish new ones capable of accommodating persons with disabilities.[38]

Inclusion of persons with disabilities throughout the emergency cycle: from evacuation to building back better

In emergency situations, evacuations provide a form of human mobility through internal displacement to save individuals from dangers stemming from disasters or armed conflicts and violence.[a] However, evacuation information and responses do not always reach persons with disabilities. Incidences of persons with disabilities initially "left behind" were for instance reported in the context of the conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2016 and in Ukraine in 2022, as well as in Bangladesh following the flood in 2024.[b] Among other issues, the lack of proper mapping of households with persons with disabilities can hinder their effective evacuation in case of emergency, while early warnings have often been found to be inaccessible to persons with hearing impairments.[c]

Despite the right to protection and safety of all persons with disabilities enshrined in article 11 of the UNCRPD and the international framework providing for disability inclusion in humanitarian responses and DRR, major gaps remain.[d] The 2023 "global survey on persons with disabilities and disasters" of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) found that disability inclusion is still lagging behind, with important implications in DRR for persons with disabilities, including for preparedness in terms of early warning, information and evacuation.[e]

Good practices highlight the importance of removing institutional barriers and including persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in designing humanitarian action and DRR throughout the different phases of preparedness, response and recovery.[f] Grounded in "build back better" practices, these further ensure that lessons have been learned from past mistakes.[g] For example, following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, a community resilience programme was initiated to reconstruct buildings in a disability-inclusive manner in case of future disasters.[h] In countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania and Vanuatu, (organizations of) persons with disabilities have played a key role in collecting data on persons with disabilities and ensuring disability considerations are duly taken into account with regard to disaster preparedness and response plans, including in action plans for providing assistive devices at community level.[i]

Notes: [a] See McAdam, 2025. [b] Truong et al., 2022; Labaki, 2016; Humanity and Inclusion, 2024; Mardini, 2022. [c] Imerovic Hodzic et al., 2024. [d] IDA and IDDC, 2025. For the international framework concerning disability inclusion in humanitarian action and DRR, see most notably the "guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action" published by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2019), as well as Table 3 in Appendix A of this chapter. [e] UNDRR, 2023. [f] OPDs are organizations representing persons with disabilities and typically led, directed and governed by persons with disabilities. CBM, n.d.a. [g] Grech, 2023. [h] CBM et al., 2019. [i] Ibid.; HPN, 2020; Yasukawa, 2022.

[36] CRPD, 2025a (Viet Nam); Government of El Salvador, 2020, article 51 and CRPD, 2019b (El Salvador).

[37] UN DESA, 2024.

[38] CRPD, 2024e (Ukraine).

Even once departure from one's place of origin has been achieved, it remains only the first step in a migration journey that can be fraught with obstacles and increased risks for persons with disabilities. Increasingly dangerous migration routes, especially irregular ones, can result in new impairments for migrants and displaced persons or exacerbate pre-existing ones.[39] Different impairments may result from the hazardous conditions of the journey. For instance, as reported in Central America and the Balkans, migration journeys have led to physical impairments and injuries, while in countries like Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, explosions from airstrikes, bombs and landmines have resulted in physical, hearing and visual impairments.[40]

Persons with disabilities may also be at increased risk of abuse, violence, exploitation, human trafficking and death, including by smugglers and human traffickers.[41] This abuse and violence may exacerbate pre-existing impairments or create new ones, especially mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[42] The loss of or separation from family members and caregivers along migration and displacement routes, as well as the loss of assistive devices can exacerbate pre-existing impairments and heighten risks for persons with disabilities.[43]

Risks during migration and displacement journeys are particularly acute for migrant women and girls, as well as for migrants of diverse gender identities, due to intersecting factors.[44] Women and girls with disabilities are more at risk of gender-based violence than are those without disabilities,[45] and the circumstances of migration, especially displacement, may place women and girls with disabilities in heightened situations of vulnerability, especially when separated from family members and protective networks.[46]

In the context of violence and armed conflicts, IDPs with physical impairments have at times been associated by authorities with former combatants of non-governmental armed groups, and have been regularly stopped and interrogated at checkpoints.[47] Instances of arrests of IDPs with hearing or speech impairments have also been reported at checkpoints due to functional limitations in answering questions posed by the authorities, which raised the suspicion of the authorities as they did not identify the impairment.

Migration pathways

Article 18(1)(b) of the UNCRPD provides that persons with disabilities shall not be "deprived, on the basis of their disability, of their ability … to utilize relevant processes such as immigration proceedings, that may be needed to facilitate exercise of the right to liberty of movement". In line with the sovereign power of each State to determine who enters its territory, this provision does not entitle persons with disabilities with a right to enter a country other than that of their nationality or residence. Rather, it reaffirms the prohibition of discrimination against people with disabilities in matters such as immigration legislation and policy. It ensures that people with disabilities are able to access immigration procedures and, if eligible, obtain a visa or permit on an equal footing with other individuals.

[39] Marcolongo, 2025.

[40] CRPD, 2014 (Mexico); Doctors without Borders, 2023; Badali, 2021.

[41] Pisani and Grech, 2015; Kim, 2019.

[42] UNICEF, 2023.

[43] Chalklen, 2010.

[44] WHO, 2022.

[45] Dunkle et al., 2018; VAWG, 2019.

[46] UNFPA, 2023.

[47] Bombi, 2010, in the context of Sri Lanka in 2008.

However, an overview of existing immigration laws and policies illustrates that persons with disabilities are not always able to access immigration proceedings on an equal footing with other individuals in some countries. Reminiscent of ableist and eugenic ideologies dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and reflecting the enduring stereotype of the "able-bodied" migrant,[48] some immigration laws still more or less directly consider individuals with disabilities as ineligible for labour and family migration. Often grounded on the risk of becoming a "public charge" in the destination country, these immigration laws can be schematized in different categories as set out in Table 3.

Table 3. Types of ineligibility of people with disabilities for labour and family migration in immigration laws

Direct ineligibility as "prohibited migrants"	Disability as a ground of ineligibility of entry is most often limited to intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. This is for instance the case in Japan, Kenya, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea.[a] While less common, some countries like Guyana, Jamaica, Malawi and Saint Lucia prohibit immigration by all persons likely to become a public charge by reason of any impairments, be it physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial.[b]	
Indirect ineligibility through:	Health requirements	Required in countries like Australia, Canada, the Cook Islands and New Zealand, these health requirements restrict entry and stay either on the basis of a predetermined list of health conditions or in case the condition is deemed to entail a significant service cost in the destination country.[c] These requirements have raised concerns from the CRPD,[d] which even considered them as an indirect discrimination on the basis of disability in a specific case concerning Australia.[e]
	Financial resource requirements	Financial resource requirements can prevent persons with disabilities from being joined by family members through family reunification if they do not have sufficient financial means to support their sponsored relative, including in case they have been benefiting from social benefits.[f] This is for instance the case in Switzerland and in countries of the European Union, as the European Union Family Reunification Directive requires "stable and regular resources…, without recourse to the social assistance system".[g] In a case concerning Denmark, the CRPD found the denial of family reunification to be indirectly discriminatory as it was based on recourse to social benefits linked to that particular disability.[h]

Notes: [a] Government of Japan, 1951; CRPD, 2022b; Government of Malaysia, 2006, section 8; Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2010, section 3; Government of the Republic of Korea, 2014, article 11; CRPD, 2022c. [b] Government of Guyana, 2012; Government of Jamaica, 1945; Government of the Republic of Malawi, n.d.; Government of Saint Lucia, 2023. [c] The Cook Islands provides for a list of health condition (Government of the Cook Islands, 2021 and 2023). For the other countries, see: Government of Australia, 2024; Government of Canada, 2001, section 38(1)(c); Government of New Zealand, n.d. See also Frost, 2022; White, 2020. It is, however, noteworthy that in Australia, for example, a carer visa is available for individuals who need to care for a relative or a family member with a long-term medical condition, provided that no reasonable access to care options is available in Australia (Government of Australia, 2025a). [d] CRPD, 2019c (Australia); CRPD, 2015c (Cook Islands); CRPD, 2022d (New Zealand). [e] CRPD, 2021a. The communication concerned a woman with multiple sclerosis who had secured employment in Australia but was denied a visa due to failing the health requirements. [f] Smith, 2024. [g] For Switzerland, see Government of the Swiss Confederation, 2005, article 43; CRPD, 2022e; Neves et al., 2022. For the European Union, see European Union, 2003. [h] CRPD, 2018b. The case concerned a Danish man who suffered from brain damage after an accident, and who was denied family reunification in Denmark with his Ukrainian wife because he had received social benefits during the three-year period before his application.

[48] Dolmage, 2018; Baynton, 2016; Duda-Mikulin and Glowacka, 2023; Makhlouf, 2020; El-Lahib and Wehbi, 2011.

In the realm of international protection, persons with disabilities can be granted refugee status on the ground of membership of a particular social group or a form of complementary protection based on the principle of non-refoulement when exposed to serious harms if returned. In most cases, these risks of persecution or serious harms concerning persons with disabilities have taken the form of insecurity and threats to life, such as those sometimes experienced by persons with albinism. There have also been instances where forced institutionalization, denial of the right to work and denial of (appropriate) education have been accepted as a basis for international protection.[49]

Building on the jurisprudence of other treaty bodies, the CRPD also reaffirmed the application of the principle of non-refoulement in case of real risk of irreparable harm when removal to countries of origin would expose individuals to "a serious, rapid and irreversible decline in [their] health resulting in intense suffering or to a significant reduction in life expectancy".[50] In the two concerned cases against Sweden involving individuals with mental health conditions and at suicidal risk, the Committee highlighted the obligation for the State to effectively assess whether the individuals would have access to adequate medical care if removed, in these instances, to Iraq and Afghanistan respectively. The severity of the medical conditions of the two individuals was considered established by the Committee despite the Government's argument that, in both cases, the mental health and risk of suicide were "primarily linked to [their] disappointment at [their] asylum process" due to previous denial of their asylum applications.[51]

Resettlement of refugees with disabilities

Refugee resettlement may provide another avenue – albeit limited – for persons with disabilities to be admitted and stay in another country. Refugees to be resettled are referred to resettlement countries by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the basis of priority categories. Consideration of refugees with disabilities among the resettlement submission categories has evolved over time, likely influenced by the adoption of the UNCRPD in 2006.[a] While the 1996 UNHCR "resettlement handbook" provided for the resettlement of refugees with disabilities as a last resort, the 1997, 2004 and 2011 editions followed the medical model of disability by incorporating refugees with disabilities in the medical needs category.[b] In alignment with the social and human rights-based approach to disability, refugees with disabilities are now included by UNHCR in the legal and physical protection needs category, moving away from equating disability with health issues.[c]

The excerpt of Ngor's story below highlights the extent to which resettlement can change the lives of refugees with disabilities, especially when previously living in a refugee camp:

> "Life in the refugee camp was not easy" (Ngor, refugee from South Sudan).
>
> These words, spoken by Ngor, paint a stark picture of his childhood in Ethiopia. Life in a refugee camp was marked by hardship – no electricity, dirt floors, and sweltering heat. Ngor, who [is a person] with … disability, faces additional [barriers].

[49] Motz, 2020; Lord et al., 2022. On the specific case of persons with albinism who often identify as persons with disabilities, see UNGA, 2022.

[50] Z.H. v. Sweden (CRPD, 2021b); and N.L. v. Sweden (CRPD, 2020). See also Motz, 2020; Bauloz, 2016.

[51] Z.H. v. Sweden (CRPD, 2021b, paragraph 10.9); N.L. v. Sweden (CRPD, 2020, paragraph 7.8).

Ngor could not walk so he was limited in his activities in the camp, often relying on his family to get around. "The road, no school – I needed help with everything."

Making friends was also difficult, as some of the other children were not always welcoming….

The news that his family had been approved for resettlement in Spokane, Washington brought a wave of excitement. Suddenly, Ngor has a chance to build towards his dreams.

Getting around Spokane in a wheelchair was much easier. For once he could attend school regularly. Sidewalks, ramps, and elevators opened a whole world of possibilities. Ngor began to soak up everything he could learn – math, English, science, every subject was fascinating!

"It's totally different than in the refugee camp," said Ngor, completely fluent in English. "I learned a lot of new things…. It was good. It was exciting."[d]

Notes: [a] Duell-Piening, 2018; Mirza, 2010.
[b] UNHCR, 1997, 2004 and 2011.
[c] UNHCR, 2025.
[d] Excerpt from World Relief, 2025.

Immigration and asylum processes

Disability-inclusive migration pathways go beyond eligibility for a visa, permit or international protection status. They also address immigration and asylum processes that can create additional barriers for migrants with disabilities, potentially undermining their ability to secure their entry and stay in the destination country on an equal footing with others.

As core elements of equality, non-discrimination and access to justice, accessibility and procedural accommodations are central in immigration and asylum proceedings.[52] These include, for instance, accessibility and procedural accommodations with respect to information, documentation and communications, as well as interviews, appointments and court hearings.[53] Procedural accommodations also require the effective training of immigration and asylum officers and judges on disability inclusion to address potential biases and stigmas towards persons with disabilities and ensure their understanding of how attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers can impact immigration and asylum processes.[54] This is especially relevant for credibility assessments during determination of refugee or other international protection status for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disability. Because of the fear of persecution, deprivations and other traumatic past events they may have experienced both in their country of origin and during their migration journeys, asylum-seekers may have become persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities that can affect the consistency of their testimonies.[55] The identification of the needs of persons with disabilities among migrants and refugees is further essential to ensure that any necessary reasonable accommodation is put in place, including in terms of reception and access to services and support.[56]

[52] CRPD, 2018c; CRPD, 2025a (Viet Nam); CRPD, 2022e (Switzerland); CRPD, 2019d (Türkiye).

[53] EUAA, 2024; Human Rights First, 2023; Government of the United States of America, n.d.

[54] See for instance CRPD, 2023c (Austria).

[55] Human Rights First, 2023; Loyd et al., 2023.

[56] On the importance of identification, see CRPD and CMW, 2017; CRPD, 2023d (Peru); CRPD, 2022f (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela); CRPD, 2022g (Mexico); CRPD, 2019e (Greece).

The rise of e-government services, including online application systems and informational portals, has improved policies and practices in many States, including in terms of accessibility and procedural accommodation. However, only a small number of countries have adopted web-based assistive technologies to ensure that persons with visual or other impairments can access critical information on official websites.[57] Additionally, communication regarding visa or status application outcomes is still delivered in paper form in some countries. In cases where digital communication is used (such as email), few systems are designed to be accessible to screen readers or other digital assistive tools.[58]

The deployment of technology in immigration and asylum systems is not a panacea, particularly if not conceived through a disability-inclusive lens. A striking illustration is the now-discontinued CBP One mobile application in the United States of America. Launched in October 2020 and expanded in 2023, CBP One was intended to manage appointment scheduling at eight south-west border points of entry for individuals seeking asylum or humanitarian parole; part of broader efforts to reduce irregular crossings.[59] Although an exemption existed for persons unable to use the app due to "language barrier, illiteracy, significant technical failure, or other ongoing and serious obstacle", this exemption could only be assessed after presenting at a point of entry, a step effectively inaccessible without first securing an appointment through the app. In March 2024, civil rights organizations filed a complaint with the Department of Homeland Security alleging that the app discriminated against individuals with disabilities.[60] The complaint detailed several barriers, including:

- The app's reliance on visual, reading and writing abilities in specific languages;
- The need for manual dexterity to operate the app and navigate its multistep interface;
- A requirement to take a live photo within the app, which reportedly failed to recognize certain facial features;
- The need to repeatedly reconnect each day to enter a lottery-based registration system, limiting accessibility for individuals with cognitive, mental or physical impairments.

This example underscores the risks of digitally mediated exclusion when tech solutions are rolled out without accessibility safeguards. Disability inclusion needs to be proactively integrated into digital transformation processes to avoid entrenching or amplifying existing barriers in immigration and asylum systems.

Living independently and included in the community at destination: the centrality of social protection

Alongside several international and regional human rights treaties, the UNCRPD provides a comprehensive framework for the respect, protection and fulfilment of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of persons with disabilities, be they migrants, refugees or IDPs. While an overview of all these rights and associated barriers at destination is beyond the scope of this chapter, this section focuses on social protection, as it entails essential services for persons with disabilities, from health care and rehabilitation and assistive devices services to disability pensions.[61] As highlighted by the CRPD, access to social support and services is often a prerequisite for ensuring persons with disabilities live independently within their community, as enshrined in article 19 of the UNCRPD.[62]

[57] EUAA, 2024, referring to the UserWay solution.

[58] EUAA, 2024.

[59] American Immigration Council, 2025.

[60] CREEC and Texas Civil Rights Project, 2024. See also Bohra, 2024.

[61] See UNCRPD articles 19, 25, 26 and 28 (United Nations, 2006a). For a definition of social protection, see ILO, n.d.

[62] CRPD, 2017b.

The central role of social protection for the provision of economic and social inclusion is arguably even greater for migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities, who often experience multiple layers of marginalization, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity and, if applicable, nationality. The CRPD has reasserted the importance of social protection, including rehabilitation and compensation, in cases of migrant workers who experienced workplace injuries in countries like Oman, Senegal, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.[63]

While access to social protection tends to be already limited for any person with disabilities – as qualifying for it often requires meeting strict eligibility criteria that rely on the medical model and a minimum severity of impairment – it can be even more restricted for migrants and refugees, on the basis of nationality and migration status.[64] In some countries, access to social protection is restricted to nationals, excluding migrants, refugees and stateless persons.[65] In Bahrain and Myanmar, children with disabilities can be excluded from social protection as they have no guarantee of citizenship, particularly when they are part of minority groups, are IDPs or refugees in camps, or born to a foreign parent.[66]

For regular migrants, enjoyment of social protection, particularly for more extensive support such as disability pensions, is assessed and accessed in some countries on an incremental basis, depending on the length of residence. The extent to which limitations can be placed on regular migrants to benefit from disability pensions on an equal footing with nationals is not clear. In Australia, a minimum of 10 years of continuous residence is required.[67] In Argentina, the requirement for continuous residence was reduced from 20 to 10 years in 2023.[68] This legislative change occurred following years of pressure by social, human rights and migrant organizations, including a Supreme Court judgement. The Court considered the then requirement of 20-year residency to be inapplicable and unconstitutional in the concerned case of a Bolivian girl with disability.[69] In the United Kingdom, a continuous residence requirement of two years was applied to refugees before they were able to access disability benefits, until the requirement was lifted in 2016, following advocacy work by refugee organizations.[70]

Other restrictions on the basis of migration status tend to focus on irregular status, with variations across countries that can be grouped into three categories:

- Irregular migrants do not benefit from social protection. For example, in Greece and Peru, irregular status is a ground for exclusion from social protection.[71]
- Only some irregular migrants benefit from social protection. In Germany, for example, access to support is limited to irregular migrants under temporary suspension of deportation who need 36 months of residence in Germany to be able to apply for a disability card.[72]

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63 CRPD, 2019a (Senegal); CRPD, 2018d (South Africa); CRPD, 2018e (Oman); CRPD, 2016b (United Arab Emirates).

64 On access to social protection by persons with disabilities, see ILO et al., 2022. For an overview of migrants' access to social protection, see Hagen-Zanker et al., 2017.

65 CRPD, 2016c (Thailand); CRPD, 2022c (Republic of Korea); CRPD, 2022h (Indonesia).

66 CRPD, 2024f (Bahrain); CRPD, 2019f (Myanmar).

67 Government of Australia, 2025b, noting that refugees are exempted from the minimum duration requirement. See also CRPD, 2019c (Australia).

68 Government of Argentina, 2023; CELS, 2023.

69 Supreme Court of Argentina, 2006. See also ESCR-Net, 2009.

70 Refugee Action, 2016.

71 CRPD, 2023d (Peru); Bonneau, 2024.

72 Bonneau, 2024.

- Irregular migrants have access only to essential social protection services. For example, in France and Italy, irregular migrants can benefit from essential health-care services but are excluded from other benefits, such as disability-related ones.[73]

Even for those eligible for social protection, different barriers may hinder migrants from availing themselves of these services and support. This was pointed out by the CRPD with respect to access to rehabilitation in a range of situations: when the prerequisite acquisition of a disability card is too complex and cumbersome;[74] when services are not free of charge and too costly because provided by the private sector;[75] when information on such services is not properly accessible to migrants with disabilities;[76] and when limitations on freedom of movement within the country preclude refugees seeking rehabilitation outside camps.[77] For irregular migrants, the fear of being reported to immigration authorities and subsequently deported can deter them from seeking services they may be eligible for.[78]

Beyond these barriers, the availability and quality of support services for migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities remain closely contingent on available resources. In humanitarian settings, where rehabilitation services may have been disrupted or destroyed,[79] these resources tend to be scarce and channelled towards other priorities. For instance, because they are often not mainstreamed within health provision, rehabilitation and assistive device services remain underfunded and dependent on external actors. In some cases, such as in Malawi and Yemen, humanitarian programmes have relied on local OPDs to produce and distribute assistive devices.[80] For other impairments, rehabilitative services such as physical, occupation and speech therapy, are even more resource intensive, including for the training of specialized health professionals.

Migrant families caring for children with disabilities

For some families, having a child with disability can be a driver of migration or a reason to stay in destination countries where better support services are available.[a] Yet in destination countries, caring for children with disabilities often presents significant challenges for migrants, including refugees. Access to information and communication are commonly cited as the main barriers faced by migrant parents seeking support services, including health care.[b] These typically require proficiency in the destination country's language, but parents may struggle to attend language courses due to limited childcare options.[c] Research underscores the need for culturally sensitive support that goes beyond mere translation and interpretation, enabling migrant families to navigate unfamiliar institutional systems with greater trust and confidence.[d] In addition, many migrant families, especially refugees, experience heightened social isolation when caring for children with disabilities, as they often lack social networks.[e] This isolation can negatively affect their well-being and further hinder their ability to provide care.

73 Ibid.
74 CRPD, 2024e (Ukraine).
75 CRPD, 2025b (Dominican Republic).
76 CRPD, 2017c (Canada).
77 CRPD, 2022a (Bangladesh).
78 Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa, n.d.
79 WHO, 2024.
80 Mirza, 2011.

As in the general population, caregiving responsibilities in migrant households, including for children with disabilities, are shaped by gender roles and dynamics. Migrant mothers most often assume the primary caregiving role, while fathers tend to engage in paid work to support the family financially.[f] This division of labour can be even more pronounced for families in irregular situations as they are frequently excluded from formal support systems, including social protection.[g] In single-parent households, migrant mothers may be compelled to work long hours or multiple jobs while simultaneously providing care for their children.

The implications of these gendered caregiving roles are especially significant for migrant mothers. They may face financial precarity, stress, anxiety and social exclusion, which are compounded in some cultural contexts by feelings of guilt or blame for their child's disability.[h]

Notes: [a] Tanyanyiwa et al., 2024; Sgaramella and Indrio, 2018.
[b] Kocaoğlu and Güner, 2025; Nyikach and Lenert Hansen, 2023; Arfa, 2021; Khanlou et al., 2016.
[c] Bešić and Hochgatterer, 2020.
[d] Ibid.
[e] Tanyanyiwa et al., 2024; Nyikach and Lenert Hansen, 2023; Bešić and Hochgatterer, 2020.
[f] Tanyanyiwa et al., 2024; Nyikach and Lenert Hansen, 2023.
[g] Boyd-Barrett, 2016.
[h] Kim and Hwang, 2018; Nyikach and Lenert Hansen, 2023; Khanlou et al., 2016.

Return to countries of origin

Article 18 of the UNCRPD reaffirms the right of persons with disabilities to return to their own countries, a fundamental right also enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[81] While there is little research on the return of migrants with disabilities, decisions to return are multifaceted and may take diverse forms, as they do for other migrants.

Return to the country of origin may be due to deportation from the country of destination in case of irregular status, including after unsuccessful asylum applications. Migrants with disabilities have been reported to be "significantly overrepresented" in places of detention, including immigration detention that can occur pending deportation.[82] Given the impact of detention on persons with disabilities,[83] both the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the CRPD have called for the non-detention of persons with disabilities, privileging instead community-based and independent living alternatives to detention.[84] Moreover, as seen in the previous subsection on migration pathways, the principle of non-refoulement can act as a ground for non-deportation in case of a real risk of irreparable harm in the country of origin, including in case of lack of access to appropriate health care resulting in intense suffering or a significant reduction in life expectancy.[85]

[81] United Nations, 1966a.

[82] UNGA, 2019b. See also CRPD, 2025c (Canada) concerning asylum-seekers and refugees with disabilities.

[83] Human Rights First, 2023. On the lack of legal representation for a migrant with severe psychological disability, see United States District Court for the Central District of California, 2013.

[84] CRPD, 2025c (Canada); CRPD, 2025d (European Union); CRPD, 2022i (Hungary); CMW, 2021. See also UNHCR, 2012.

[85] Although rarely applied in practice, in the United States of America, disability can lead to deportation if migrants have become a "public charge" by using certain social benefits within five years of their date of entry and if the concerned disability preceded entry. Immigration and Nationality Act, Title 8, para 237(a)(5) (Government of the United States of America, 1958). Sury et al., 2019; Sedaghat, 2024.

Return may otherwise be linked to diverse disability-related barriers and insufficient protection in destination countries, including lack of access to social and health services and the lack of social support networks.[86] A sudden acquisition of an impairment in the country of destination, for instance due to work injuries, may prompt return to the country of origin. As highlighted in research on migrant workers in Singapore, the absence of proper support may compound the worsening of their financial and social situation when back in their country of origin.[87] The inability to fulfil their "breadwinner role" by sending remittances to their relatives back home and then be able to financially support them upon return can also carry important mental health implications for returnees. They may experience feelings of shame, as well as stigmatization from their home communities.

For those who return, the provision of tailored services, including rehabilitation support, by countries of origin thus remains essential.[88] However, disability pensions are not always available due to returnees' lack of contribution to social insurance programmes during their employment abroad. This underscores the importance of including pensions for persons with disabilities as portable rights in bilateral or multilateral social security agreements, as done in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).[89] While such social security agreements are yet to be adopted globally, major origin countries of migrant workers – such as Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka – have established welfare funds for their nationals working abroad, primarily funded through membership fees and covering repatriation and disability benefits.[90]

Disability as a factor in return decisions: the story of César

Establishing a stable daily and economic life is a challenge, more so when one is a person with a disability. For César, 25, daily life and his situation as a migrant changed completely after he acquired a physical disability due to an amputation, the result of a traffic accident he suffered in Colombia in 2019. After being hospitalized for more than a month in a public hospital in Cúcuta and undergoing several surgeries, César had to return to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela because he was unable to support himself economically in Colombia and could not take care of himself.

César was born in the city of Valencia, Carabobo State, and is the youngest of three siblings. From a very young age (12 years old), he worked in heavy mechanics, a trade he also practised in Colombia after leaving his country due to the ongoing crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Before securing work as a mechanic, he had to engage in informal commerce in the city of Cúcuta. Additionally, he worked transporting gasoline in the area until the day of the accident, which occurred one morning while he was on his way to work. Regarding his economic situation, he mentioned that he had managed to earn more than the minimum monthly wage by combining two informal jobs. He had also obtained a temporary residence permit in Colombia, which granted him legal status in the country and access to certain rights such as health care, a benefit he relied on heavily after the accident.

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86 UNHCR and RIADIS, 2021.

87 Feng Lam et al., 2024.

88 CRPD, 2017a (Honduras).

89 CARICOM, 2013. See also recommendations by ASEAN, 2024. See more generally, Holzmann, 2018.

90 Membership to these funds vary from one country to another and can either be mandatory or on a voluntary basis. For Pakistan: Government of Pakistan, n.d. For the Philippines: Government of the Philippines, n.d.; Liao, 2023; van Panhuys et al., 2017. For Sri Lanka: Luz Rodrigues, 2019; del Rosario, 2008.

César underwent surgery in Colombia on a lower limb (for the amputation), on his hands, and on his face; however, a surgery on one of his upper limbs could not be performed due to the extended period of hospitalization and the subsequent need to return to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Today, César is awaiting the final verdict in the legal case assessing the liability of the other party involved in the accident. He plans to use the compensation he may receive to undergo surgery on his upper limb and to start his own business as a way to overcome economic hardship. The situation he faced in Colombia following the accident, along with the absence of family and support networks, led him to return to his home country.

Note: Unofficial translation from Spanish from UNHCR and RIADIS, 2021.

Key opportunities for more inclusive policy and programmatic responses

The previous section underscores the importance of removing the diverse barriers that restrict the full and effective participation of migrants with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others. To be fully effective, the elimination of these barriers needs to be mainstreamed in a "twin-track" approach grounded in human rights to ensure inclusive policy and programmatic responses. Especially advocated for in humanitarian action,[91] this twin-track approach provides a useful model to ensure:

- Disability mainstreaming in legislation, policy and programming related to migration and displacement; and
- The development and implementation of disability-focused interventions.[92]

Against this background, this section delves into selected opportunities for more inclusive policy and programmatic responses. These avenues address key issues relating to the situation of persons with disabilities in migration and displacement settings, that is, addressing their invisibility through increased knowledge and awareness and leveraging their participation and multistakeholder partnerships.

Addressing invisibility: strengthening the knowledge base and raising awareness

The commitment to mainstreaming disability in policy and practice is evident in the increasing guidance available to organizations working with migrants and those forcibly displaced. Both the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration refer to disability, but the absence of data around disability is apparent in migration and displacement contexts.[93]

The collection and analysis of data around disability, disaggregated by sex and age, in contexts of migration and displacement is a key means to address the lack of visibility of persons with disabilities.[94] Data are central to informing policies and programming, including the delivery of services to protect, support and empower migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities.[95] By extension, data also serve to determine and increase awareness of funding needs, as persons with disabilities tend to remain too often invisible to funding agencies.[96]

[91] IDA and IDDC, 2025; UNDRR, 2021; IASC, 2019.

[92] See for instance the acknowledgement by CRPD in 2022 of Mexico's special migration programme for 2014–2018 which explicitly mainstreamed disability (CRPD, 2022g).

[93] United Nations, 2018; UNGA, 2018; UNGA, 2024; UNHCR, 2023.

[94] United Nations, 2006a; CRPD and CMW, 2017; OHCHR, 2017; United Nations, 2019; IFMS, 2023; Allen et al., 2023.

[95] Rojas Paz, 2022; IDA et al., 2020.

[96] Badali, 2021.

Despite the challenges in collecting such data, as seen above, the use of Washington Group questions that focus on functionality has been identified as one way of ensuring consistency in obtaining prevalence rates of persons with disabilities.[97] There nevertheless remain some limitations in the use of the "short set" questions, such as its inability to collect data on the situation of persons with disabilities in different contexts.[98] Other tools and initiatives exist to support data collection and analysis. For instance, although not necessarily focused on migration and displacement, the inter-agency disability data "decision tree" provides guidance on the most appropriate methodology for collecting data on persons with disabilities for different purposes.[99] IOM also partnered with UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Humanity and Inclusion and Oxfam to develop toolkits on data collection, such as the DTM field companion for disability inclusion.[100]

While quantitative data sets are crucial in identifying persons with disabilities within migrant and displaced populations, there is also a need to better understand the lived experiences of persons with disabilities throughout the migration or displacement journey. Qualitative research can provide rich insights into motivations to move, experiences of asylum and reception processes and the barriers faced.[101] Following principles of inclusion of persons with disabilities in policies and programmes about them, research projects have focused on methods of inclusion in research and first-person accounts to highlight the issues facing persons with disabilities on the move.[102]

Beyond qualitative research, efforts to enhance understanding and support inclusion are increasing with the development of films, animations, boardgames and hackathons to illustrate the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities on the move and discuss innovative inclusion solutions.[103] For instance, the global legal advocacy organization, the International Refugee Assistance Project, works with disability organizations to challenge negative portrayals through storytelling by displaced persons with disabilities.[104] Among other examples, the IOM office in the Republic of Moldova launched and implemented a campaign on disability inclusion targeting Moldovan and migrant students to raise awareness and identify youth-led opportunities and solutions for the inclusion of persons with disabilities.[105]

Leveraging participation and partnerships for inclusive policy and programmatic responses

Fundamental to the spirit of the UNCRPD is the inclusion of persons with disabilities in legislative and policy developments and programmes at local, state and international levels.[106] Several international organizations have issued guidance on working with persons with disabilities in various migration and displacement settings.[107] For instance, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee provides guidance on support in humanitarian settings, which has been supplemented with guidance around psychosocial disabilities.[108] In recent years, various instruments have explicitly acknowledged the participation and rights of migrants and displaced persons with disabilities, particular

[97] UNHCR et al., 2019.

[98] Tofani et al., 2022; CBM et al., 2023.

[99] IOM et al., n.d.

[100] IOM DTM, 2020.

[101] Dew, 2024; Hultman et al., 2023; Heino and Lillrank, 2022; Govere et al, 2021; Mosler Vidal, 2022.

[102] Spagnuolo et al., 2020; Mostafa, 2015; Rfat et al., 2023.

[103] See for instance Sarah's Journey, in NDS, n.d.; IOM Türkiye, n.d.

[104] See IRAP, n.d.

[105] United Nations Moldova, 2025.

[106] UNCRPD article 4(3) (United Nations, 2006a); CRPD, 2018f; United Nations, 2019.

[107] UNHCR et al., 2019; IDA et al., 2020; IASC, 2007 and 2019.

[108] IASC, 2019 and 2024.

in relation to humanitarian situations.[109] Examples of effective inclusion of persons with disabilities highlight key challenges and how these can be overcome in specific settings, offering practical guidance and best practice examples.[110]

While States retain the prime responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities, the inclusion of migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities reflects the broader need for partnerships among diverse actors on issues involving migration and displacement together with disability. These multistakeholder partnerships are crucial, as technical knowledge and know-how tends to remain split between those working on migration and displacement and those working on disabilities: actors from the migration and displacement field, including humanitarian action, are not necessarily specialized in disability inclusion, and vice versa.[111] This is reflected by the increased number of joint initiatives and projects run by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on disability, including OPDs.[112]

Yet beyond these partnerships, non-State actors – such as United Nations agencies and NGOs, including OPDs – often remain in practice the prime actors advocating for and supporting the inclusion of migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities, including by providing essential services on the ground.[113] At the global level, the recently launched Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities aims to highlight issues facing refugees with disabilities. Among other examples, the European Disability Forum has developed a toolkit to support the inclusion of refugees and migrants with disabilities.[114] The toolkit provides an overview of the legal and policy framework, involving refugees with disabilities in OPDs, and examples of activities to support and advocate for them.

The central role played by OPDs in humanitarian situations has more recently been highlighted in the context of the conflict in Ukraine.[115] Providing emergency response to persons with disabilities as the conflict began, OPDs have worked with humanitarian organizations as the conflict continued. A report by the European Disability Forum reflects on the difficulties encountered working with humanitarian agencies and how these were overcome. Examples of lessons learned include the recognition of OPDs as experts in their location that can facilitate the work of humanitarian agencies, the need for training and technical support for OPDs and the importance of flexible funding to enable OPDs to quickly reach those in need. Mutual trust and recognition resulted in inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ukrainian humanitarian and response plans and the recognition of persons with disabilities within disaster reduction planning.

Beyond the Ukrainian context, multiple examples exist of the central work of OPDs, especially in DRR.[116] In Nepal, for instance, the earthquake of 2015 resulted in the displacement of 2.6 million people and the loss of 712,000 houses.[117] The disaster response highlighted the lack of planning around the impact on persons with disabilities in policy and practice. This led the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) to embark on training for

[109] See Appendix A for an overview of these instruments.

[110] See for instance CBM, n.d.b.

[111] Dew et al., 2022.

[112] See for instance the collaboration between the International Disability Alliance and UNHCR (IDA and UNHCR, 2022), the 2023 memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and an OPD in Jordan (UNRWA, 2023) or the joint project between the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and a non-governmental organization to support refugees with disabilities in Türkiye (UNFPA, 2021).

[113] Inclusion Europe, n.d.

[114] European Disability Forum, 2020.

[115] European Disability Forum, 2025.

[116] For examples, see DIDRRN, n.d. and CBM, n.d.c.

[117] UNHCR et al., 2020.

OPDs in earthquake effected areas. Applying universal design principles, the OPDs worked with a range of actors to include the needs of persons with disabilities in disaster planning and housing redevelopments.

While impossible to precisely measure due to lack of data, a key challenge for all actors remains the lack of funding for persons with disabilities, including in migration and displacement contexts.[118] While many countries have increased their public expenditures in support of persons with disabilities, funding remains particularly insufficient in low- and middle-income countries that tend to rely on external donors, raising issues of sustainability. The issue of financing also affects the programmes and operations run by international organizations and NGOs, including OPDs. In line with article 32 of the UNCRPD on international cooperation, States arguably have an important role to play through funding and advocacy to ensure that disability is considered as a priority and mainstreamed in the work of the organizations they fund.[119]

Conclusion

The intersection of disability and migration presents a complex and evolving landscape, shaped by both entrenched structural barriers and emerging opportunities for inclusive action. As this chapter has explored, migrants, refugees and IDPs with disabilities often face multiple, interrelated forms of exclusion – legal, institutional, attitudinal and environmental – that intersect at every stage of their journey and with other factors of marginalization. These are not merely technical challenges, but reflections of deeper systemic issues, such as limited visibility in data and decision-making, gaps in legal protections and insufficient accessibility and responsiveness in public services. Further, while the increase in research on persons with disabilities over the last decade is welcome and has shed more light on these barriers, more research in the context of migration and displacement remains needed, including beyond the lens of vulnerabilities.

Encouraging policy advances and programmatic innovations already demonstrate that inclusive approaches are feasible. From the recognition of disability considerations in the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees to increasing guidance from non-State actors on disability inclusion in diverse contexts, there is progress towards a more inclusive approach. Key opportunities lie in scaling these positive examples through a twin-track approach mainstreaming disability across migration and displacement policy frameworks while also developing targeted, rights-based support mechanisms. Enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration between migration actors and disability advocates is also critical to bridging gaps in knowledge, capacity and accountability. OPDs have been essential in bolstering new developments through active advocacy, playing a pivotal role in shaping programmes and responses that reflect the lived experiences of migrants with disabilities.

The inclusion of migrants and displaced persons with disabilities is not only a human rights obligation; it is a cornerstone of effective and resilient migration governance. As policy systems worldwide adapt to demographic shifts, technological changes and complex migration and displacement dynamics, embedding accessibility, participation and equality into the core of migration and asylum frameworks is essential for delivering durable, fair and responsive outcomes. The future of inclusive policy and programmatic responses will depend not only on what is done, but also on how, with whom and for whom it is carried out.

[118] IDA and IDDC, 2025.

[119] Mojtahedi et al., 2022.

5

Appendices

Chapter 3

Appendix A. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: regions and subregions

Please note that this table reflects the UN DESA geographic regions and subregions and does not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Africa				
Eastern Africa	Middle Africa	Northern Africa	Southern Africa	Western Africa
Burundi	Angola	Algeria	Botswana	Benin
Comoros	Cameroon	Egypt	Eswatini	Burkina Faso
Djibouti	Central African Republic	Libya	Lesotho	Cabo Verde
Eritrea	Chad	Morocco	Namibia	Côte d'Ivoire
Ethiopia	Congo	Sudan	South Africa	Gambia
Kenya	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Tunisia		Ghana
Madagascar	Equatorial Guinea			Guinea
Malawi	Gabon			Guinea-Bissau
Mauritius	São Tomé and Príncipe			Liberia
Mayotte				Mali
Mozambique				Mauritania
Réunion				Niger
Rwanda				Nigeria
Seychelles				Saint Helena
Somalia				Senegal
South Sudan				Sierra Leone
Uganda				Togo
United Republic of Tanzania				
Zambia				
Zimbabwe				

Asia				
Central Asia	Eastern Asia	South-Eastern Asia	Southern Asia	Western Asia
Kazakhstan	China	Brunei Darussalam	Afghanistan	Armenia
Kyrgyzstan	China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	Cambodia	Bangladesh	Azerbaijan
Tajikistan	China, Macao Special Administrative Region	Indonesia	Bhutan	Bahrain
Turkmenistan	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Lao People's Democratic Republic	India	Cyprus
Uzbekistan	Japan	Malaysia	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Georgia
	Mongolia	Myanmar	Maldives	Iraq
	Republic of Korea	Philippines	Nepal	Israel
		Singapore	Pakistan	Jordan
		Thailand	Sri Lanka	Kuwait
		Timor-Leste		Lebanon
		Viet Nam		Oman
				Qatar
				Saudi Arabia
				Syrian Arab Republic
				Türkiye
				United Arab Emirates
				Yemen

Europe			
Eastern Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Western Europe
Belarus	Channel Islands	Albania	Austria
Bulgaria	Denmark	Andorra	Belgium
Czechia	Estonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	France
Hungary	Faroe Islands	Croatia	Germany
Poland	Finland	Gibraltar	Liechtenstein
Republic of Moldova	Iceland	Greece	Luxembourg
Romania	Ireland	Holy See	Monaco
Russian Federation	Isle of Man	Italy	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)
Slovakia	Latvia	Malta	Switzerland
Ukraine	Lithuania	Montenegro	
	Norway	North Macedonia	
	Sweden	Portugal	
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	San Marino	
		Serbia	
		Slovenia	
		Spain	

Latin America and the Caribbean		
Caribbean	Central America	South America
Anguilla	Belize	Argentina
Antigua and Barbuda	Costa Rica	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Aruba	El Salvador	Brazil
Bahamas	Guatemala	Chile
Barbados	Honduras	Colombia
Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	Mexico	Ecuador
British Virgin Islands	Nicaragua	Falkland Islands (Malvinas)
Cayman Islands	Panama	French Guiana
Cuba		Guyana
Curaçao		Paraguay
Dominica		Peru
Dominican Republic		Suriname
Grenada		Uruguay
Guadeloupe		Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Haiti		
Jamaica		
Martinique		
Montserrat		
Puerto Rico		
Saint Kitts and Nevis		
Saint Lucia		
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		
Sint Maarten (Dutch part)		
Trinidad and Tobago		
Turks and Caicos Islands		
United States Virgin Islands		

Northern America
Bermuda
Canada
Greenland
Saint Pierre and Miquelon
United States of America

Oceania			
Australia and New Zealand	Melanesia	Micronesia	Polynesia
Australia	Fiji	Guam	American Samoa
New Zealand	New Caledonia	Kiribati	Cook Islands
	Papua New Guinea	Marshall Islands	French Polynesia
	Solomon Islands	Micronesia (Federated States of)	Niue
	Vanuatu	Nauru	Samoa
		Northern Mariana Islands	Tokelau
		Palau	Tonga
			Tuvalu
			Wallis and Futuna Islands

Legend:

Region
Subregion
Country, territory, or area[i,ii]

Note: For methodology as well as explanatory notes, see UN DESA, 2025.

[i] "The names of countries or areas refer to their short form used in day-to-day operations of the United Nations and not necessarily to their official name as used in formal documents. These names are based on the United Nations Terminology Database (UNTERM), which can be found at https://unterm.un.org/UNTERM/portal/welcome. The designations employed and the presentation of material at this site do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations [or the International Organization for Migration (IOM)] concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries" (UN DESA, n.d.).

[ii] The entities included in this table, which the previous chapter draws upon, comprise countries, as well as territories, areas and special administrative regions. Please note that this table is not intended to be fully comprehensive.

Chapter 4

Appendix A. Regional case studies

Latin America: migrant domestic workers

Domestic work is a critical sector supporting millions of households worldwide, with migrant domestic workers from Latin America and the Caribbean – primarily women – playing an essential role in sustaining families and bolstering economies across various regions. Their labour ensures the functioning of homes by providing essential services such as childcare, eldercare and housekeeping, allowing their employers to participate in the workforce and manage other responsibilities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 17.2 per cent of domestic workers are migrants, with women comprising 92 per cent of this workforce, according to the latest available data.[1] Many migrate within the region, moving to countries such as Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, where their work fills labour shortages in domestic service.[2] In Chile, more than 10 per cent of migrants are employed in domestic work, demonstrating its importance in urban economies.[3] Their financial contributions extend beyond their immediate workplaces, as remittances sent home help sustain families, support education and boost local economies.

Latin American migrant domestic workers also make significant contributions in North America and Europe, where they form a substantial part of the household labour force. In the United States, they account for a large share of the domestic workforce, with Latin American women making up 26.6 per cent of all domestic workers and 59.4 per cent of house cleaners.[4] Their role is equally significant in Spain, where around 42 per cent of domestic workers are foreign residents, with Latin Americans historically making up the largest group.[5] Their presence in these labour markets reflects broader economic patterns and the increasing reliance on migrant labour for domestic services. However, these official statistics and policies likely underestimate their contributions, as many migrant domestic workers do not have regular status, working without formal contracts or legal protections.[6] Despite facing job insecurity and vulnerability, they remain essential to the households and societies they serve, ensuring the care and well-being of families while also strengthening economies through their labour and financial support to their home countries.

Europe: cross-border workers' remittances in Switzerland

Remittances are typically associated with financial and in-kind transfers from high-income countries to lower-income countries, where they play a crucial role in family support and economic development. However, Switzerland also sees significant outflows to neighbouring high-income countries like Germany and France, despite them also being high-income countries.[7] It might seem less surprising when we understand that the majority of these financial flows

1 ILO, 2016.
2 ILO, 2021.
3 Rodríguez-Covarrubias, 2024.
4 Banarjee et al., 2022.
5 INE, 2012; León, 2010; RTVE, 2024.
6 ILO, 2015.
7 IOM, 2024a.

are not traditional household transfers but rather the salaries of cross-border workers.[8] Many German and French nationals reside in their home countries while commuting to Switzerland for work, benefiting from higher wages while maintaining a lower cost of living across the border.[9] In 2023, the European Union recorded a significant surplus of 37.2 billion euros (EUR) in personal transfers and employee compensation from Switzerland, with the bulk of these flows directed toward France, Germany and Italy.[10] This highlights the economic significance of Switzerland's labour market for its neighbouring countries, as wages earned in Switzerland directly contribute to household incomes and local economies abroad.

While these financial transfers differ from traditional remittances sent to low-income countries, they still reflect the deep economic interdependence between Switzerland and its European Union neighbours. The steady outflow of salaries supports household consumption, mortgage payments and investments in France and Germany, reinforcing the economic ties between these regions. The phenomenon underscores Switzerland's critical role as a financial hub and labour market for European workers, demonstrating that remittance flows can exist even between high-income countries, driven primarily by employment opportunities and wage differentials.

Asia: beyond financial remittances in the Philippines

In 2024, remittances to the Philippines reached a record high of USD 40 billion, positioning the Philippines as the fourth-largest recipient of remittances globally.[11] However, their contributions go far beyond financial transfers, extending to social remittances: the exchange of ideas, values and practices between migrants and their home communities.[12] These non-material remittances play a crucial role in shaping cultural, social and political landscapes across the Philippines.

Filipino migrants contribute to governance and democratic processes by influencing political accountability at home. A study found that by leveraging remittances as a tool against corruption, migrants empower their families to expect more from local governments and push for higher standards of public service.[13] This was also evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Filipinos' experiences with successful pandemic management and aid distribution in destination countries influenced their expectations and led them to demand similar measures in the Philippines.[14] By witnessing efficient health-care systems and government responsiveness abroad, migrants and their families pushed for improved public services, transparency and accountability back home.[15]

Beyond influencing governance, the transfer of knowledge and skills from Filipino migrants have a positive impact on their country of origin. A study on Filipino migrants in Japan highlights how business expertise, technical know-how and shared best practices can help aspiring entrepreneurs overcome financial constraints.[16] While money alone may not guarantee business success, combining financial remittances with these non-monetary remittances significantly

8 Ibid.
9 Lutz and Lavenex, 2024.
10 Eurostat, 2024.
11 World Bank, 2024.
12 Levitt, 1998.
13 Tusalem, 2018.
14 Deinla et al., 2022.
15 Ibid.
16 Maswana et al., 2024.

increases the likelihood of successful entrepreneurship.[17] Knowledge transfer can also take place through direct engagements, such as visits to the Philippines for lectures and training, participation in medical and surgical missions and the implementation of agricultural technology-driven livelihood initiatives, all supporting the continued progress and development of the Philippines.[18]

Oceania: adaptation through migration in small island developing States

Due to geographic characteristics such as their climate-sensitive location and their small size, small island developing States (SIDS) are among the most vulnerable countries to natural hazards, especially those triggered by climate change.[19] SIDS are facing an increase in the occurrence of extreme weather events, a rising sea level, the degradation of natural resources and health issues, which, in some cases, have led to displacement.[20] Countries like Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are particularly affected.[21] As environmental challenges become more severe, both international and internal migration has intensified in recent years.

In response to these escalating challenges, several adaptation strategies have emerged, with managed migration playing a crucial role in enhancing resilience. For instance, the Australia–Tuvalu Falepili Union Treaty has provided Tuvaluans with structured migration pathways that contribute to climate adaptation in multiple ways. First, it allows those most vulnerable to climate risks to relocate to safer environments, reducing exposure to extreme weather events. Second, it alleviates pressure on Tuvalu's limited resources, particularly in densely populated areas like Funafuti Atoll. Third, migration has strengthened Tuvalu's economy through remittances, which have been invested in education, infrastructure and disaster preparedness, reinforcing long-term resilience. Last, the movement of Tuvaluans to Australia has enhanced their human capital, as migrants gain skills and education that can be shared with their communities, further improving adaptive capacity.[22] Similarly, Kiribati's Migration with Dignity relocation scheme enables its citizens to migrate with skills that ensure employment and economic stability, allowing them to support families back home while avoiding climate displacement.[23] Together, these initiatives demonstrate how managed migration can be a practical tool for adaptation, fostering resilience to climate change and boosting development outcomes.

Africa: integrating the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach in Ethiopia and Somalia

The Horn of Africa has been agitated by protracted conflicts, environmental shocks and fragile governance structures, holding back or reversing development gains and leading to persistent displacement crises. In Somalia, decades of civil war, coupled with recurrent droughts, have left the country with 3.1 million IDPs at the end of 2024.[24] Ethiopia recorded 2.4 million IDPs by the end of the same year.[25] These crises have underscored the need for integrated approaches that bridge humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding efforts, as traditional humanitarian responses have failed to provide sustainable solutions to forced migration. The HDPN

[17] Ibid.
[18] Siar, 2011.
[19] Cassin et al., 2022.
[20] IOM, 2024c.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Barnett et al., 2025.
[23] McClain and Bruch, 2021.
[24] IDMC, n.d.b.
[25] IDMC, n.d.c.

approach aims to address these protracted crises by aligning emergency responses with long-term resilience-building strategies, creating conditions for sustainable migration management.[26]

Ethiopia and Somalia serve as key examples of how the HDPN approach can transform migration into a global asset. Ethiopia's implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework integrates humanitarian assistance with economic and infrastructure development, creating employment opportunities for both displaced populations and the communities receiving them.[27] Similarly, Somalia's Durable Solutions Initiative fosters local integration and sustainable livelihoods for IDPs by linking immediate aid to long-term social services and economic recovery plans.[28] These approaches illustrate how well-managed migration, supported by holistic governance and investment, can drive economic growth, enhance social cohesion and contribute to regional stability.

North America: diaspora contributions to crisis management and recovery

Diaspora remittances, both financial and non-financial, play a crucial role in supporting origin countries during times of crisis.[29] Financial remittances, including cash transfers and investments, provide immediate economic relief by helping households meet essential needs such as food, housing and health care.[30] These funds often act as a safety net when formal economic structures are weakened or disrupted, contributing to household resilience and reducing poverty, but also helping the economies of post-conflict communities to recover.[31] Non-financial remittances, including the transfer of knowledge, skills and social capital, contribute to long-term development by promoting education, entrepreneurship and social cohesion.[32] During crises, diasporas also mobilize aid, participate in political activism and volunteer, leveraging their influence within destination countries to advocate for supportive policies and international aid.[33]

The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada is an example of how diasporas can contribute during crises, particularly since the onset of the conflict with the Russian Federation in 2014. Financial remittances from Canada to Ukraine, which hit a record high of USD 18 billion in 2021, have helped maintain household consumption despite economic instability.[34] Beyond financial support, the Ukrainian Canadian community has demonstrated non-financial engagement through political lobbying, advocacy and volunteering.[35] Established institutions such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress have influenced Canadian foreign policy, promoting trade relations and advocating for military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.[36] Additionally, the diaspora's "intergenerational sweet spot" allows for a blend of short-term support through remittances and long-term engagement via political and social activism.[37] This dual approach helps to mitigate immediate hardships while addressing Ukraine's broader structural and macroeconomic challenges, showcasing how diasporas can be pivotal in both crisis response and long-term recovery efforts.

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[26] Ndeda and Birungi, 2018.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] UNDP, 2022.

[30] Weiss Fagen and Bump, 2006; Cela et al., 2022.

[31] Sritharan and Jothishankar, 2024.

[32] Sayed and Marchand, 2024; Weiss Fagen and Bump, 2006.

[33] Carment et al., 2021.

[34] World Bank, n.d.

[35] Carment et al., 2021.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

Chapter 5

Appendix A. Regional approaches and examples

Africa

The Migration Policy Framework for Africa states that "migrant smuggling can be prevented by expanding legal migration pathways".[38]

In preparation for the 2025–26 African Cup of Nations taking place in Morrocco, the Government has issued a requirement for temporary ETAs to citizens of countries that would normally qualify for visa-free access, due to security and health concerns, until the championship ends.[39] These measures will place new documentation requirements and expenses for visa-exempt travellers.

African Union member States have sought to create an environment of free movement but have yet to ratify the African Union Free Movement protocol. Examples of agreements promoting free movement include the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment (Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS); freedom of movement for citizens protocols (the Southern African Development Community, SADC, and the East African Community, EAC); and the protocols on the free movement of persons and on transhumance (Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD). It should be noted that some of these protocols have been fully ratified but some only partially, and that their level of implementation varies.[40]

Through instruments such as the Global Compact for Migration and the African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2018–2030), the African Union recommends universal health care for all, including migrants. While obstacles linked to ensuring protection for migrants and weak enforcement hinder progress, some countries are committing to the social protection of migrants through bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs).[41]

Americas

The Los Angeles Declaration affirmed in 2022 that "regular pathways, including circular and seasonal labour migration opportunities, family reunification, temporary migration mechanisms, and regularization programs promote safer and more orderly migration".[42] This perspective had already been present throughout the Americas for years, with Latin American States making key declarations on the importance of regular pathways in regional forums and processes.[43]

Regional mobility agreements include agreements for visa-free entry and stay, with varying rights to residence and employment, such as ARM, the Andean migration statute and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy

[38] See African Union Commission, 2018a.

[39] VisaNews, 2025.

[40] See the Freemove hub for more information: Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024.

[41] African Union Commission, 2018b.

[42] See United States White House, 2022.

[43] See also Ceriani Cernadas, 2025.

Agreement. MERCOSUR in Latin America plays a transformational role through the ARM providing all nationals from member States with rights of entry, residence and establishment in another member State for at least two years if their criminal record is clean.[44]

Examples of bilateral and multilateral agreements between States include the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement, the Central America-4 Free Mobility Agreement, Mexico's Border Worker Visa for Guatemalans and Belizeans, the Belize Temporary Employment Permit.[45]

Examples of pathways for particular populations or employment sectors for circular or permanent migration include Costa Rica's Circular Migration Pathways, Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Pro Program, the United States' Seasonal and Temporary Worker Programs, the United States' Family-Based Visas and Reunification Measures, Spain's Seasonal Labour Visas, Skill-Based Immigration Pathways to Canada, Canada's Family-Based Visas and Reunification Humanitarian Program, Brazil's Residence Permits for Non-MERCOSUR Neighbouring Countries, and Residence Pathways to Portugal for Members of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries.[46]

In Latin America, there are countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay where access to health care is guaranteed regardless of a person's migration status. In others, such as Ecuador or Mexico, the laws guarantee such access, but barriers persist in practice.

Asia

"Promoting migration through regular channels" is one of the primary recommendations from ASEAN for the Asia-Pacific region as a way of reducing irregular migration, in particular by lowering the costs of entry and stay (visas and work permits) to make migration through regular pathways an appealing alternative to travelling with smugglers. This is presented as a way to drive development, in particular promoting more orderly responses to labour shortages.[47]

The outcomes document of the 2023 Pacific Immigration Development Community Regular Annual Meeting notes the increasing numbers of Pacific Island workers engaging in labour mobility across the Pacific.[48] The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has established a Pacific Regional Framework On Climate Mobility that "adopt[s] a proactive and planned approach to climate mobility" by "ensuring rights based and people-centred movement in the context of climate change, including staying in place, planned relocation, migration, and displacement".[49]

The PALM initiative between countries in the South Pacific and Australia has grown from a reported 8,000 workers in March 2020 to over 30,000 by 2025; as well, Australia has adopted protection measures in cases of visa cancellations and provides a short-term work visa.[50]

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[44] See Acosta Arcarazo and Freier, 2015; Ceriani Cernadas, 2011 and 2024; Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024.

[45] See Mora et al., 2024; Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024.

[46] Mora et al., 2024; Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024.

[47] ASEAN, 2022.

[48] PIDC, 2023.

[49] For more information see Pacific Islands Forum, 2023.

[50] IOM, 2024b. For more up to date data see PALM, n.d. Information on other bilateral agreements is available at Freemove (Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024).

Europe

A European Union Blue Card gives highly qualified workers from outside the European Union the opportunity to live and work in a European Union member State, provided they hold the necessary higher professional qualifications, or, where appropriate, higher professional skills, and an employment contract or a binding job offer for at least six months with a salary at least equal to, but no higher than 1.6 times, the average gross national annual salary of the country concerned.[51]

The European Union has announced the establishment of regular pathway mechanisms such as talent partnerships that aim to provide a comprehensive policy framework, as well as funding support to boost mutually beneficial international mobility based on better matching of labour market needs and skills between the European Union and partner countries.[52]

This followed a series of pilot projects to "offer legal pathways contributing to address labour and skills shortages in countries of origin and destination alike, and enable both sides to reap the benefits of labour migration" and an interactive tool for labour migration to the European Union.[53]

Appendix B. Case Study 1: Latin America and Venezuelan migration

Since 2014, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been experiencing a multidimensional crisis marked by hyperinflation, negative growth, severe shortages, and a weakening of democracy and the rule of law.[54] Between 2014 and 2020, real GDP saw a cumulative decrease of 76 per cent, unprotected employment increased by nearly 20 percentage points (from 52 to 72%),[55] and life expectancy fell by more than three years.[56] Although there have been recent signs of improvement, the long-term deterioration led to a large-scale exodus.

Approximately 7.9 million Venezuelans had left the country by November 2024,[57] making the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela the top origin country of displacement globally.[58] This transformed the country from a net immigration country into one of mass emigration. Around 85 per cent of these migrants went to another Latin American or Caribbean country.[59] While flows concentrated in neighbouring Andean countries, they also exhibited a multidirectional nature. Colombia received around 2.8 million, followed by Peru (1.6 million), Brazil (over 626,000), Chile (over 532,000) and Ecuador (more than 444,000).[60]

Venezuelan migration unfolded in a context where many Latin American or Caribbean countries had introduced new legal frameworks for mobility, including immigration and asylum laws.[61] Despite limited experience with mass

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51 See European Commission, 2025b.

52 European Commission, 2025c.

53 Stefanescu, 2020; European Commission, 2025d.

54 Freitez, 2019; Smilde et al., 2022.

55 IIES, 2021.

56 Those born during the 2015–2020 period will live 3.7 years less than what had been projected according to official estimates (Proyecto ENCOVI, 2020).

57 R4V, 2024.

58 UNHCR, n.d.

59 IOM, n.d.

60 R4V, 2024.

61 Ceriani Cernadas, 2024.

migration, most countries adopted pragmatic responses aimed at covering basic needs and granting legal status. These generally allowed access to the labour market, education and emergency medical care, though experiences varied.[62] Although uneven and often not fully institutionalized, such policies spread significantly across the region.[63]

Between 50 and 75 per cent of Venezuelan migrants are estimated to have obtained some form of legal status in the 15 main destination countries.[64] Many countries initially facilitated regular migration or regularization mechanisms. However, some later introduced restrictions aimed at curbing flows. While Venezuelans initially enjoyed visa-free access to most Latin American or Caribbean countries, the majority of countries in the region now require visas.[65] Evidence shows these restrictions did not deter migration but increased irregular entry and precarious status.[66]

This is particularly visible in Mexico, where a 2022 visa requirement led to a sharp decrease in regular entries and a subsequent increase in irregular migration, eventually surpassing regular arrivals.[67] Riskier routes, especially the Darien Gap, became more frequently used, contributing to the broader irregularization of transit across the Americas.

Several countries – including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru – relaxed entry requirements by accepting expired passports, identity cards, or no documentation at all. Most Venezuelans received temporary residence through special permits. Colombia implemented the most ambitious programme, granting ten-year residency to around 2 million Venezuelans.[68]

Other approaches included regional mobility agreements, particularly the ARM applied by Argentina and Uruguay, though the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's suspension from MERCOSUR limited its use by other States. Brazil and Mexico also relied on their asylum systems, while some countries attempted to use standard visa processes, which proved insufficient for the scale of displacement.[69]

Taken together, the Venezuelan experience shows that, even amid tensions and imperfect measures, the region managed to build regularization mechanisms on an unprecedented scale, demonstrating that viable responses to large-scale displacement are indeed possible.

Appendix C. Case Study 2: Africa's free movement goals progress

Regional integration serves as a building block for regular free movement in Africa. African countries have adhered to subregional organizations such as regional economic communities (RECs), and to broader free movement and trade aims across the entire continent through the 2018 African Union Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and the African Continental Free Trade Area.[70] RECs such as ECOWAS and the EAC have introduced common

[62] Jubilut et al., 2021.

[63] Gandini and Selee, 2023; Jubilut et al., 2021.

[64] Gandini and Selee, 2023.

[65] Henly and Partners, 2025.

[66] Hammoud-Gallego, 2024.

[67] Gandini, 2024.

[68] Government of Colombia, 2025.

[69] Hammoud-Gallego, 2024; Gandini and Selee, 2023; Zapata et al., 2023.

[70] These include the Arab Maghreb Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, CEN-SAD, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC. See also Hirsch, 2021.

passports to enhance mobility. Building on this and the 1991 Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, the 2018 African Union protocol aims to deepen regional integration by expanding regular pathways through visa-free entry, the right of residence and establishment, and the issuance of common passports.[71] However, the degree of implementation varies significantly among States, and this is reflected in the 2024 Visa Openness Index.[72]

ECOWAS leads the Visa Openness Index in regional mobility, with Benin and the Gambia scoring highest for visa openness. In the SADC, Angola granted visa-free access to 19 countries.[73] The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) dropped in rank due to visa restrictions by Burkina Faso in 2024. The EAC followed in fourth place, with Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania facilitating access to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia recently becoming a full member. Blocs such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), IGAD, and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) ranked lower due to differing visa policies. The Arab Maghreb Union scored lowest, but improved as Libya granted visa-free access to Algeria, and Tunisia did the same with Benin. These developments not only show the uneven progress among RECs in terms of visa openness and reciprocity, but also indicate broader obstacles in advancing Africa's continental free movement agenda. Only 32 countries have signed the African Union protocol,[74] and only four have ratified it, as of 2024. Existing free movement agreements within the RECs either lack sufficient ratifications to be enforced or, when in force, suffer from disparate implementation.[75]

Indeed, national priorities often clash with regional and subregional goals. Implementing visa-free entry frequently conflicts with national visa regimes, security concerns and land border politics. According to the 2024 Visa Openness Index, 47 per cent of intra-African country-pair movements require a visa prior to travel, 28 per cent are visa free, and 25 per cent allow visas on arrival. Although this marks progress from 55 per cent intra-African travel routes requiring a visa in 2016, the gap remains significant, highlighting persistent obstacles to intra-African mobility. Low and middle income countries are more likely to embrace visa-free regimes, whereas high income countries tend to adopt more restrictive policies. Mauritius and Seychelles are notable exceptions, but their openness is linked to their geography as island States without land borders.[76]

Security concerns further influence these trends. Nigeria, for example, closed its land borders in 2019 for security reasons, despite being an ECOWAS member.[77] External actors, such as the European Union, have also shaped restrictive migration policies by promoting deterrence over mobility through bilateral agreements. This externalization dynamic often overshadows African frameworks for free movement.[78]

Regional free movement frameworks in Africa are often disconnected from unpredictable national policies governing visa-free entry and residence. While the 2018 African Union protocol promotes the right of residence

[71] Multiple types of mobility exist in the region, and these include, transhumance, circular/seasonal migration, permanent migration, labour migration, "transit" migration to Europe, displacements due to conflict or environmental factors, among others.

[72] African Union and African Development Bank, 2024.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024, indicators on entry, residence, rights and security of residence.

[75] Only Mali, the Niger, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe have ratified the African Union's free movement protocol. Fifteen (15) ratifications are needed for the protocol to enter into force (Acosta and van der Baaren, 2024).

[76] African Union and African Development Bank, 2024.

[77] Kassa and Zeufack, 2020.

[78] Geddes and Maru, 2020.

and establishment, implementation remains conditional on national policies.[79] Many States hesitate to adopt the protocol, which narrows regular entry and stay pathways while reinforcing exclusion.[80]

Despite these contradictions, mobility continues, often outside formal channels. For instance, despite the ongoing land border closures between Benin and the Niger, informal cross-border trade and movement persist.[81] Smugglers are a key conduit across borders. A study across Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger found that 49 per cent of surveyed migrants who used smugglers considered themselves regular migrants.[82] These realities demonstrate that limiting regular pathways does not stop migration; instead, it pushes people into informal and unsafe alternatives.

The promotion of regular pathways through regional integration in Africa is often misaligned with national practices and frameworks. These discrepancies hinder regular free movement, residence and establishment, and underscore the significance of national dynamics in achieving the full adoption of subregional and regional free movement goals.

Appendix D. Case study 3: Thailand – regularization as a regular pathway

Thailand has long been a major destination for migrant workers from neighbouring countries, particularly Cambodia, the Lao People´s Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Much migration to Thailand has historically been informal, and driven by labour shortages in Thailand's agriculture, fisheries, construction and domestic work sectors. In 2018, over 4.9 million non-Thais lived in the country, with a large share working in low skilled, high risk sectors. By 2023, there were at least 5.3 million non-Thai nationals residing in Thailand. Of these, it was estimated that a significant proportion – over 1.8 million – were in irregular status.[83] Thailand has also seen arrivals of displaced persons, especially from conflict-affected Myanmar.

During the early 2000s, there was limited documentation of migration and few formal pathways. From the mid-2000s, Thailand increased its range of bilateral MoUs on cooperation with origin countries of migration, and began periodic migrant registration campaigns. These offered temporary legal status to existing workers. Thailand made further attempts to foster regular migration during the 2010s, introducing work permits linked to specific sectors and expanding the MoU system. The MoU process is a formal bilateral labour migration mechanism between Thailand and neighbouring countries, including Cambodia, the Lao People´s Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Introduced to provide a regular pathway for lower skilled migrant workers, the process allows migrants to enter, work and reside in Thailand with official documentation. It involves coordination between governments, pre-departure training, health checks and the issuance of work permits and visas.

Over time, the MoU system has become a central component of Thailand's migration governance framework, aiming to support safe, orderly and regular labour migration. However, many migrants have still entered irregularly, often due to the cost of these mechanisms, or their limited awareness of them. Many also moved due to urgency and were unable to access regular permits. This marks a growing gap between the scale of need and the accessibility of regular channels. As a result, Thailand has undertaken key initiatives including expanding migrant registration options, enhancing access to health care and social protection and promoting safe recruitment. In-country regularization

[79] As per article 17 of the protocol, "The right of establishment shall include the right to set up in the territory of the host Member State: (a) a business, trade, profession, vocation; or (b) an economic activity as a self-employed person." See also Adeola, 2019.

[80] Vhumbunu and Rudigi, 2020.

[81] Arhin-Sam et al., 2022.

[82] Mixed Migration Centre, 2025.

[83] United Nations Network on Migration in Thailand, 2024.

is a process through which migrant workers already residing in Thailand without documentation or in irregular situations can obtain legal status without returning to their country of origin. The procedure typically involves registration, verification of nationality, medical screening and the issuance of temporary documentation followed by work permits and visas. Implemented periodically, often through government announcements or special campaigns, in-country regularization serves as a key tool to manage existing migrant populations and integrate them into formal labour systems. It operates alongside other mechanisms such as the MoU process to support Thailand's broader migration governance objectives.

Migration to Thailand has evolved from informal flows to more structured yet selective regularization efforts. Official statistics show that the utilization of the MoU system is uneven, and uptake has declined from over 1 million people in 2019 to approximately 600,000 in 2024. Regularizations, moreover, have increasingly become Thailand's primary pathway for labour migration, with the number of migrant workers included rising from 1.5 million in 2020 to over 2.4 million in 2024. Regularized migrant workers in the country are reported to represent 80 per cent of all registered migrant workers in Thailand.[84]

[84] IOM, 2025b.

Chapter 6

Appendix A. Climate migration and displacement: terminology

Chapter 6 considers the full scope of population movements linked to climate change, across the spectrum from forced to voluntary migration, both internal and across international borders, as well as permanent and temporary. "Climate migration" is used as a broad overarching term to describe such diverse population movements occurring predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that is due to climate change. "Climate displacement" is used as a subset of this term to describe more specifically forced movements, both cross-border and within State borders, linked to climate change impacts. Human mobility is used as a "a generic term covering all the different forms of movements of persons."[85] These and other relevant terms are explained in more detail below.

Adaptation. "Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic *stimuli* or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities".[86]

Climate migration. "Climate migration is a subcategory of environmental migration; it defines a singular type of environmental migration, where the change in the environment is due to climate change. Migration in this context can be associated with greater vulnerability of affected people, particularly if it is forced. Yet, migration can also be a form of adaptation to environmental stressors, helping to build resilience of affected individuals and communities".

Disaster displacement. "The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of a disaster or in order to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard…. Disaster displacement may take the form of spontaneous flight, an evacuation ordered or enforced by authorities or an involuntary planned relocation process. Such displacement can occur within a country (internal displacement), or across international borders (cross-border disaster displacement)".

Environmental migration. "The movement of persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are forced to leave their places of habitual residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move within or outside their country of origin or habitual residence".

Human mobility. "The term human mobility reflects a wider range of movements of persons than the term 'migration'. The term is usually understood as also encompassing tourists that are generally considered as not engaging in migration…. [T]he international organization members of the Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility created in the context of the Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have started to use the term human mobility to cover all the broad range of types of movements that can take place in the context of climate change".

Planned relocation. "In the context of disasters or environmental degradation, including when due to the effects of climate change, a planned process in which persons or groups of persons move or are assisted to move away

[85] IOM, 2019. All definitions given in this appendix come from this source unless noted otherwise, and can be found by following the relevant hyperlinked term.

[86] McCarthy et al., 2001.

from their homes or place of temporary residence, are settled in a new location, and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives".

Slow-onset events. "The impacts of climate change include slow-onset events and extreme weather events, which may both result in loss and damage. Slow-onset events, as initially introduced by the Cancun Agreement (COP16), refer to the risks and impacts associated with increasing temperatures, desertification, loss of biodiversity, land and forest degradation, glacial retreat and related impacts, ocean acidification, sea level rise, and salinization".[87]

Trapped populations. "Populations who do not migrate, yet are situated in areas under threat … at risk of becoming 'trapped' or having to stay behind, where they will be more vulnerable to environmental shocks and impoverishment."

Appendix B. Harnessing digital technology for local action on climate migration and displacement

As the world grapples with the increasing challenges of climate change, climate-related migration and displacement are becoming pressing concerns for communities and policymakers alike. In this context, digital technology offers powerful tools to enhance local responses, from improving early warning systems and supporting climate-resilient infrastructure to strengthening disaster risk management and bringing out the benefits of migration for adaptation. Ensuring adequate financing for these local responses is essential to enable the adoption of sustainable, context-appropriate solutions. Migrants and diaspora communities play a key role in this effort, often serving as bridges for the transfer of digital technology, knowledge and resources that can bolster local adaptation. However, the use of digital technology also brings risks and challenges, particularly in terms of unequal access to such technologies and the potential drawbacks associated with their use, such as privacy concerns and misuse. All of these aspects will be discussed in the following sections of this appendix.

Early warning and anticipatory action

Early warning systems and anticipatory action are crucial at the local level for addressing climate-related migration and displacement, as they enable communities to take proactive steps to reduce the need for people to move.[88] By providing information about climate hazards in advance, these systems empower vulnerable populations to implement preventative measures, protecting livelihoods and infrastructures.[89] Digital technology can enhance the accuracy and speed of predictions, allowing for timely, localized interventions that mitigate the impacts of displacement and strengthen resilience. From remote sensing and geospatial mapping to AI-driven risk assessments, these tools provide real-time data and predictive insights, enabling communities to act before disasters take place.[90]

Early warning systems, such as those implemented by the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS), are instrumental in empowering communities with timely information, ensuring they can prepare for and respond to climate threats.[91] For instance, remote sensing monitors environmental changes, including wildfire dynamics in

[87] United Nations Climate Change, n.d.

[88] Easton-Calabria et al., 2024; Birkmann et al., 2013.

[89] UNDP, 2025.

[90] Roy et al., 2021; Anka et al., 2025; Koskina et al., 2023.

[91] CREWS, 2024.

California, while geospatial mapping identifies water-related migration risks in regions like Lake Chad and the Nile Delta.[92] The IDMC is also using digital technology by leveraging AI-driven machine learning models to analyse climate, socioeconomic and disaster data, enhancing displacement forecasts and informing policies.[93]

Innovations in climate-resilient infrastructure and housing – such as flood-resistant homes, solar-powered microgrids and AI-driven drainage systems – further support adaptation efforts. For example, floating houses in the Philippines use sensors to monitor water levels, while flood control systems help the Jakarta provincial government to prevent floods.[94]

Another example of how digital technology can strengthen early warning systems is the initiative underway in Timor-Leste. The country is developing a state-of-the-art, multi-hazard early warning system. The system will incorporate advanced technologies such as Doppler radars,[95] ocean sensors, automatic weather stations and a new national forecasting centre. To ensure alerts reach communities quickly and effectively, it will also deploy localized tools including megaphones, signboards and mobile messaging. Expected to cover 80 per cent of the population, the system will significantly enhance Timor-Leste's capacity to anticipate and reduce climate-related displacement.[96]

Digital technology is also a key factor in strengthening disaster risk management and response, including at the community level. For instance, geographic information systems, which analyse and visualize spatial data through descriptive maps, played a vital role in the 2011 Tohoku earthquake in Japan by using aerial photos to improve information-sharing, facilitate rescue operations and support rapid reconstruction.[97] By enabling real-time alerts, data-sharing and emergency coordination, mobile phones can improve local disaster preparedness and responses. In Bangladesh, for example, visual and audio warnings are provided to individuals in disaster zones through mobile phones, helping both sighted and visually impaired people reach safe shelters or areas.[98]

Digital tools for disaster management

Digital tools are transforming disaster management by enabling faster, smarter and more inclusive responses to climate-related migration and displacement at the local level. From real-time data collection to transparent aid distribution, these technologies help protect vulnerable populations and build resilience in the face of environmental crises. Blockchain, which ensures secure, transparent and efficient distribution of aid, is allowing communities to track resources and support relief efforts with greater accountability.[99] This is particularly relevant in contexts of climate-related migration, where displaced populations often face challenges in accessing resources and support. For example, Oxfam's UnBlocked Cash Project in Vanuatu, a Pacific Island nation facing increasing displacement and livelihood disruption due to climate-induced disasters, started using blockchain-powered e-voucher cards and mobile apps to deliver rapid and transparent cash assistance to communities after Tropical Cyclone Harold. The

[92] Jia, 2016; Nagabhatla and Brahmbhatt, 2020.

[93] Ronco and Ponserre, 2024.

[94] Tolentino et al., 2022; Simorangkir, 2025.

[95] Doppler radars detect the speed and movement of objects by bouncing radio waves off them and measuring how the waves change.

[96] UNEP, 2023.

[97] Une and Tayakuki, 2019; Mammadzada, 2024.

[98] Rahman et al., 2012.

[99] Inayatulloh et al., 2024.

programme reached over 35,000 beneficiaries, reduced aid delivery time by 96 per cent and costs by 75 per cent and strengthened local economies and digital financial inclusion in remote communities.[100]

Another example of effective technology for disaster management is the use of drones. Drones have been used to map damage and support relief operations during disasters such as the 2023 floods in Libya, the Morocco earthquake, and Cyclone Eloise across Southern Africa.[101] They help responders assess affected areas, locate survivors, track disease outbreaks and deliver essential supplies to otherwise inaccessible regions.[102] As such, drones are becoming an important component in improving the accuracy, timeliness and coordination of disaster management efforts in the context of environmental crises.

Green technology in infrastructure development

Green technology can be a valuable tool for addressing climate-related migration and displacement at the local level, as it supports decarbonization, enhances the development of climate-resilient infrastructure, helps mitigate climate change and strengthens community resilience.[103] As the world urbanizes rapidly, cities are at the forefront of both the challenges and solutions to climate change.[104] They are uniquely positioned to lead in the adoption of green technology through strategic planning, sustainable infrastructure and forward-thinking policies.

For example, in response to rising flash flood risks in Amman caused by unplanned urbanization and climate change, United Nations-Habitat Jordan and the Greater Amman Municipality implemented the Al Zohour Green Triangle Pilot Project, an initiative informed by community assessments and developed through a participatory process.[105] Using green stormwater infrastructure like bioretention areas and detention tanks,[106] this initiative showcases how cities can apply sustainable urban drainage systems to reduce disaster risk and protect vulnerable communities, including Syrian refugees and low-income Jordanians.[107] Additionally, nature-based solutions, such as mangrove restoration and wetland conservation, contribute to urban resilience, ensuring that communities are better equipped to adapt to climate change and reducing vulnerabilities.[108]

Green technology is not only used in cities; it also plays a vital role in rural areas, where it enhances community resilience and provides sustainable livelihoods. For instance, IOM, with the support of Innovation Norway and NORCAP, launched an initiative that uses Energy Mesh Grids to power homes and businesses in resettlement locations across Sofala and Manica provinces in Mozambique, which have been severely affected by natural hazards.[109] These grids not only provide clean energy but also support economic recovery by enabling small businesses to operate more efficiently and safely. Similarly, in Cambodia, the introduction of climate-smart agriculture technologies

[100] Oxfam International, n.d.

[101] Sindi and Zarei, 2023.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Niu et al.,2023; Argyroudis et al., 2022.

[104] Hammad, 2023.

[105] UN-Habitat, 2023.

[106] "Bioretention" is a way to manage rainwater by using soil and plants to soak it up and clean it.

[107] UN-Habitat, 2023.

[108] Hobbs et al., 2024.

[109] "Energy mesh grids" are smart, connected networks that share and manage electricity between multiple energy sources and users for better efficiency and reliability. IOM, 2024a.

has allowed farming families to improve productivity and stability.[110] As a result, many no longer need to migrate in search of work, choosing instead to invest in their land and lead innovation within their own communities.

The use of green technology has proven to be effective; however, its implementation is subject to a "sufficiently sized and adequately skilled workforce". Research across 10 countries shows that workforce gaps exist in these types of jobs, posing significant challenges in achieving the green transition.[111] In Spain, solar photovoltaic companies are not accepting installation requests due to lack of personnel; similarly, in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the shortage of installers is affecting heat pump installations.[112] Migration can contribute to addressing these shortages by supplementing the labour market with individuals who possess relevant skills or can be trained accordingly.[113] For example, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, promoting green jobs and entrepreneurship among rural migrants and vulnerable youth led to the creation of 40 waste collection teams and the closure of informal dumpsites. Similarly, in Monrovia, Liberia, employment, vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes for internally displaced people and migrant women have supported climate adaptation efforts.[114] This shows how migration can help in addressing the effects of climate change.

Financing in local action

Funding is critical for tackling the challenges of climate migration and displacement at the local level; however, it can present several challenges. Technologies have the potential to help local actors overcome these challenges by enabling better access to direct and longer-term financing. Fintech tools like mobile payment systems and digital wallets facilitate fast, reliable transactions, ensuring that people can receive the necessary support.[115] Kenya's M-Pesa mobile banking platform, for instance, helps rural farming households send and receive money, enabling them to manage risks such as extreme weather and climate change.[116] This is particularly helpful at the community level and in the context of climate migration, where vulnerable groups – such as migrants and displaced populations – often face barriers to traditional banking services, including lack of documentation, limited financial history, or living in remote and underserved areas.[117]

Remittances are crucial for financing climate adaptation in vulnerable regions, supporting efforts like anticipatory action, infrastructure rebuilding and agricultural resilience.[118] Blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies can enhance these transfers by reducing costs, increasing speed and improving transparency.[119] One example is Relámpago, a blockchain-based remittance solution designed for migrants in Latin America, particularly in El Salvador. Built on the Bitcoin Lightning Network, it allows recipients to receive funds instantly via a physical card, without needing smartphones or Internet access. Senders in the United States can deposit cash or checks at partner shops, avoiding traditional remittance fees.[120]

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[110] Legault, 2025.

[111] Huckstep and Dempster, 2024.

[112] Ibid.

[113] OECD, 2023b; Huckstep and Dempster, 2024.

[114] C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2024.

[115] Jadaan and Hasan, 2024.

[116] Muasa and Matsuda, 2019.

[117] Zhang, 2023; AFI, 2017; IOM, 2024b.

[118] Huckstep and Beynon, 2024; Tesfaye and Reid, 2023; Musah-Surugu and Anuga, 2023.

[119] Flore, 2018.

[120] Folsom, 2021.

Blockchain technology can also be used to provide anticipatory cash support to communities vulnerable to climate shocks, as demonstrated by Rahat, a blockchain-based financial access platform in Nepal. Rahat's Anticipatory Action module delivers early warning messages and pre-emptive cash assistance to households in flood-prone areas, enhancing their preparedness and resilience.[121] By leveraging mobile phones and blockchain technology with smart contracts, Rahat facilitates instant microinsurance payouts and immediate cash and voucher assistance, ensuring timely humanitarian responses and better preparedness for flood crises.

Additionally, technologies like microloans and parametric insurance offer financial support to individuals and communities, helping them recover faster and adapt to climate challenges by providing targeted financial resources.[122] For example, Bancamía in Colombia provides microloans to small entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas, enabling them to invest in climate-resilient practices and sustain their livelihoods despite environmental uncertainties.[123]

Limitations and challenges

While technological solutions can support local efforts to address climate migration and displacement, their implementation can pose significant challenges and limitations. These include barriers to access and limits on people's ability to effectively utilize particular technologies, as well as inherent limitations and risks associated with the technologies themselves. Notably, concerns around data protection and privacy are critical, as these issues pose substantial risks to vulnerable populations.

High costs and limited funding can hinder the widespread implementation of climate-resilient infrastructure, particularly in developing countries where there is a lack of financial and technical resources.[124] The accessibility and scalability of advanced technologies, such as AI-driven early warning systems and automated flood barriers, can also be constrained by inadequate digital infrastructure and technical expertise. Digital literacy is another key barrier, as individuals with low levels of education and technical expertise may struggle not only in accessing these technologies, but also in effectively using and maintaining them, and correctly interpreting the data outputs.[125] In many cases, women and other vulnerable groups, such as displaced people, have less access to the resources required to adopt digital technologies, further limiting their ability to make effective use of such innovations. For instance, a study in Pakistan found that while 86 per cent of men owned a mobile phone, only 53 per cent of women did.[126] Limited access to mobile phones is already a constraint when it comes to taking advantage of the benefits of using digital technology.

There are also limitations and risks related to the use of new technologies themselves when addressing climate-related migration and displacement at the local level. Data protection, privacy and the security of individuals' information are critical concerns, particularly in regions with vulnerable populations.[127] Moreover, while digital technology can provide valuable insights, it is essential that the tools and solutions used are tailored to the specific cultural and environmental contexts of affected communities. Standardized AI systems and other technologies

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[121] Reach Alliance, n.d.

[122] "Parametric insurance" is a type of insurance that provides a fixed payout based on the occurrence of a specific event or condition (like wind speed or rainfall level), rather than covering actual losses. Muasa and Matsuda, 2019.

[123] Fundación Microfinanzas BBVA, 2020; Bancamía and Fundación Microfinanzas BBVA, 2022.

[124] UNEP-CCC, 2022.

[125] Jadaan and Hasan, 2024; Hasan et al., 2024.

[126] Waqar et al., 2024.

[127] Hayes, 2017.

may not fully capture the complexities of local circumstances, and their use could inadvertently lead to undesired bias, raising the possibility of discrimination and unfair treatment of individuals and groups.[128] A one-size-fits-all approach risks undermining local knowledge, which is vital in understanding the unique challenges faced by displaced populations.[129] Ignoring local expertise can not only exacerbate the vulnerabilities of these communities but also perpetuate biases that fail to address the root causes of displacement. As such, to effectively address climate-related migration, technologies must be adapted and deployed in ways that respect and integrate the specific needs, values and knowledge of the communities involved.

Next steps for local action

Reliance on digital technology alone is insufficient without inclusive governance, community engagement and sustainable policies to ensure that these solutions are equitably distributed and effectively integrated into long-term climate adaptation strategies. To effectively address climate-related migration and displacement, local-level action must be prioritized. Key recommendations include:

1. Expand access to digital technology. Invest in digital infrastructure and training at the local level to ensure vulnerable populations, including women and displaced communities, can access and utilize such technologies.
2. Customize solutions to local contexts. Develop and implement digital technology solutions that are specifically tailored to local needs, incorporating community knowledge to enhance effectiveness and relevance.
3. Ensure data privacy and security. Protect local communities by establishing strong data privacy safeguards, especially when using technologies like AI and blockchain, to prevent misuse and build trust.
4. Strengthen local financial tools. Leverage digital payment systems such as blockchain for remittances and microinsurance, to improve financial access and resilience for communities impacted by climate displacement.
5. Develop local skills and green jobs. Focus on training local populations in green technologies and climate-resilient infrastructure, creating employment opportunities and strengthening adaptation efforts at the community level.
6. Prioritize sustainable, scalable solutions. Invest in local, long-term solutions like solar microgrids, flood-resistant housing and nature-based infrastructure to ensure lasting climate resilience and reduced displacement.

These local-level recommendations will enable communities to harness digital technology effectively in addressing the effects of climate change.

[128] Mcheik, 2024; Kim, 2025.

[129] Bryar and Westbury, 2023.

Appendix C. Key local actors and their networks in climate-related migration and displacement

This appendix presents a concise matrix of the principal local actors relevant to climate-related migration and displacement. For each actor category, the table outlines core mandates, key characteristics and roles in addressing climate migration and displacement, as well as relevant networks that support their efforts.

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
Local governmental authorities Subnational public institutions, including municipalities and city administrations, responsible for managing local development, local policymaking, delivery of public services and emergency response. The level of authority varies across regional and national contexts.	• Often first to respond to climate migration and displacement; • Carry out urban planning and infrastructure development; • Deliver services to local communities, migrants and displaced people; • Develop inclusive policies, facilitate integration and social cohesion; • Lead local adaptation and disaster risk reduction.	A range of global and regional platforms provide strategic support and advocacy for local governments engaged in climate and migration governance. ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) is an international association of local governments, and national and regional local government organizations that have made sustainability a priority, providing technical consulting to help cities prepare for increased climate mobility. The Mayors Migration Council (MMC) empowers city leaders to shape global migration and displacement policy. C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) is a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change. C40 and MMC have joined forces and established the C40–MMC Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration. This task force brings together climate and migration policy city leadership to tackle climate migration challenges. At the regional level, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa works to strengthen local governance and sustainable urban development, and is active on climate adaptation and resilience,

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
		with migration a cross-cutting issue in many of its resilience programmes. Eurocities brings together over 200 major European cities to focus on integration, climate action and green recovery. This network is active on migrant inclusion and increasingly connecting urban climate resilience to population movements (especially through the European Union Green Deal and climate justice lens). Mercociudades brings together over 350 local governments from Southern Common Market member countries to address urban inclusion, sustainability and regional integration. Urban responses to migration are on the table of this group, and it is increasingly engaging in climate adaptation planning.
Communities and community-based organizations (CBOs) Locally rooted, non-governmental, usually non-profit entities composed of residents, local leaders and volunteers. Operate at the grassroots level to deliver services, advocate for community needs and support participatory decision-making. Act as trusted intermediaries between affected populations and formal institutions, with deep contextual knowledge.	• Support migrant and displaced populations; • Strengthen social cohesion in destination communities; • Facilitate community-driven planning in areas of origin, including resilience-building and adaptation; • Contribute to disaster preparedness, early warning and relocation efforts; • Apply local and traditional knowledge to climate adaptation strategies; • Advocate for inclusive, culturally appropriate climate and migration policies; • Lead participatory relocation.	Several global and regional CBO networks play a critical role in shaping grassroots responses to climate risks and human mobility, especially in informal settlements and vulnerable rural areas. These platforms help scale local innovations, elevate community voices and influence global policy on resilience, relocation and inclusive adaptation. At the global level, Huairou Commission, which is a coalition of grassroots women's organizations, works to empower communities in disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and relocation planning, with a focus on gender-equitable development.

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
		Linked to the Commission, the Global Grassroots Women's Congress for Climate Resilience has highlighted links to displacement, migration and women's leadership in the context of climate resilience. Slum Dwellers International is a network of community-based urban poor federations operating in over 30 countries, which supports city-wide mapping, climate risk reduction and inclusive urban development, often in informal settlements vulnerable to climate-induced displacement. At the regional level, groups such as Asian Coalition for Housing Rights work with urban poor communities in Asia on housing, disaster recovery and relocation, and engages with city governments on community-managed adaptation. The African Urban Community of Practice facilitates knowledge-sharing between African community organizations and local authorities, often focused on urban vulnerability and resilience to displacement.

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
Indigenous peoples and traditional authorities Communities and governance structures with deep cultural and spiritual ties to ancestral lands and traditional livelihoods. Holders of valuable local ecosystems knowledge.	• Particularly vulnerable to climate displacement due to attachment to land and traditional livelihoods; • Offer culturally grounded adaptation solutions and traditional knowledge for conservation and resource management; • Should be central to decisions on relocation and climate resilience.	Engaged in global advocacy for Indigenous participation in climate policy, recognition of traditional knowledge and impact of climate change on Indigenous lands and mobility through bodies such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.[a] There are also important regional networks and bodies. The Arctic Council – Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat addresses climate change in the Arctic, and highlights how slow-onset environmental changes (permafrost melt and coastal erosion) are displacing entire communities. The Pacific Indigenous Peoples Network is a strong voice in international forums on climate-induced relocation, rising sea levels, loss of culture and sovereignty and overall risks of becoming "climate-displaced nations."

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
Diaspora groups and migrant networks Transnational communities maintaining strong ties with countries or areas of origin. Active in knowledge exchange, advocacy and financial support for development, emergency response and adaptation initiatives.	• Strengthen links between origin and destination communities, supporting cooperation and dialogue on migration, development and climate adaptation; • Mobilize resources to support climate adaptation and resilience, as well as emergency response in countries of origin through remittances and investments; • Facilitate the exchange of knowledge, skills and technologies that strengthen adaptive capacities and sustainable practices in vulnerable communities; • Provide support and relief to communities affected by climate-related disasters, aiding in recovery and reconstruction efforts; • Support newly arrived migrants and facilitate integration; • Leverage transnational networks to advocate for climate action and influence policy frameworks.	Global and regional platforms and forums exist to connect different diaspora networks and serve as critical enablers of diaspora involvement in, among other issues, climate-related strategies, with growing recognition of their relevance in shaping responses to climate mobility. The Global Diaspora Policy Alliance (GDPA), launched following the 2022 Dublin Declaration, is a multistakeholder platform that brings together diaspora leaders, policymakers and development actors to advance inclusive diaspora engagement in global policy processes. The GDPA explicitly recognizes the intersection between diaspora contributions and the climate agenda, particularly in relation to resilience-building and climate finance. iDiaspora is a digital platform supported by IOM, which provides a global space for diaspora communities to connect, share experiences and collaborate on development initiatives, climate adaptation and disaster response, including funding green transition efforts in countries of origin, and engaging in climate-smart innovation.

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
		At the regional level, African Foundation for Development supports diaspora-led initiatives in sustainable agriculture, local enterprise development and resilience, and has engaged in discussions on climate-smart remittance use and green job creation. *Red de Mujeres Migrantes y Refugiadas en América Latina y el Caribe* is active in addressing vulnerabilities of migrant women, including climate-related displacement, with emphasis on grassroots leadership and community resilience.
Private sector A diverse range of actors, including local enterprises, large corporations, industry associations and social enterprises.	• Support local climate resilience and adaptation by developing climate-resilient products and infrastructure, and advancing the green and just transition; • Mobilize resources through impact investment, climate finance, or corporate social responsibility funds in key sectors such as energy, housing, agriculture and insurance for community-level resilience-building, adaptation and displacement responses; • Provide livelihood opportunities and support integration of migrants and displaced persons by providing employment opportunities, including in green jobs;	Global and regional platforms have encouraged stronger private sector involvement in climate action, with emerging engagement on climate-related human mobility. The United Nations Global Compact mobilizes businesses – including small and medium enterprises – to align with SDGs and promotes climate resilience through business operations, supply chains and partnerships that can mitigate the impacts of environmental stressors on vulnerable populations, including migrants. The We Mean Business Coalition, representing hundreds of companies and investors, encourages climate action and has increasingly emphasized resilience-building, particularly in

Local actor type and main attributes	Key roles in climate migration and displacement	Relevant global and regional networks
		developing countries where supply chains and local labour markets are climate sensitive. At the regional level, the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund and ASEAN corporate sustainability programmes fund climate-smart entrepreneurship, encouraging local businesses to offer products and services that strengthen community-level adaptation and reduce vulnerability to displacement. These include solar irrigation, drought-tolerant seeds and mobile-based financial services used by migrants and their families. There is a growing number of women-led or women-focused enterprises, and business networks are providing leadership in gender-responsive, private-sector-led solutions in climate adaptation and displacement contexts. The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) seeks to provide financing to women-led businesses that are developing innovative solutions for climate resilience and adaptation. We-Fi recognizes displacement and migration in the context of wider climate change challenges.

Notes: a The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has actively addressed the challenges that climate change poses to Indigenous communities, emphasizing the importance of Indigenous-led initiatives in climate adaptation and migration. In its 2024 report, the UNPFII expressed concern over the adverse effects of climate change and irresponsible resource extraction on Indigenous lands and territories, calling upon Member States and international organizations to support Indigenous-led efforts to mitigate these impacts. Furthermore, the UNPFII has highlighted the disproportionate impact of climate change on Indigenous peoples, particularly in regions like the Sahel and Great Lakes, where environmental changes have triggered conflicts and displacement. The Forum has called for regional climate action to address these challenges (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2024).

Chapter 7

Appendix A. Internal displacement trends and dynamics

An analysis of data regarding the number of displacements (or flow) each year from 2019 to 2024 presents an interesting contrast to the analysis of end of year numbers of IDPs (stock). These displacement figures show more fluctuation amongst the 10 countries or territories recording the highest numbers, as the metric captures a dynamic view of displacement events. For example, a country or territory with high IDP population figures each year may have large numbers of people who have been displaced for a long time with comparatively low new displacement. In contrast, countries and territories experiencing dynamic crises with large numbers of people moving, returning to locations of origin and experiencing secondary or tertiary displacement may have comparatively lower end-of-year IDP populations, but may rank among those with the highest numbers of displacements.

The data on internal displacements due to both conflict and disaster from 2019 to 2024 show that some countries or territories recorded numbers of displacements that consistently placed them among the 10 countries or territories with the highest such numbers each year. This is similar to the pattern observed with the end of year IDP population (stock) data. However, when examining changes regarding countries' or territories' relative positions on the list from year to year (that is, changes in their ranking from 1 to 10), the data can be used to provide a timeline for some major displacement events. For example, the escalations of conflict in Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon, Mozambique, Myanmar, the Sudan, Ukraine and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, among others, are visible in Figure 5. Following the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in February 2022, Ukraine went from not being among the top 10 (2019–2021) to the top position, with the highest numbers of displacements that year. A similar pattern is observed with Mozambique in 2020, when it appeared among the top 10 at fourth position following a significant escalation of conflict in the northern province of Cabo Delgado driven by non-State armed groups. For the Sudan, the escalation in conflict is observed in the jump from ninth position to first between 2022 and 2023. This corresponds with armed clashes erupting in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces across Northern, Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan regions.[130]

Figure 5. Rankings of countries or territories by number of internal displacements (flow) due to conflict, 2019–2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Syrian Arab Republic	1	2	7			7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2	1	2	2	2	1
Ethiopia	3	3	1	3	5	9
Burkina Faso	4	5	4	6	7	10
Afghanistan	5	6	3			
El Salvador	6					

[130] IOM, 2025d.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Yemen	7					
Mali	8	9				
South Sudan	9	10	10	8		
Nigeria	10				10	
Mozambique		4				
Central African Republic		7	6	10		
Somalia		8	5	5	8	
Myanmar			8	4	4	4
Sudan			9	9	1	2
Ukraine				1	6	
Colombia				7	9	8
Occupied Palestinian Territory					3	3
Lebanon						5
Haiti						6

Source: IDMC, 2025a.

Notes: Blank spaces indicate that countries or territories fell below the top 10 benchmark that year. The numbers in the visual indicate the rank of the country or territory on the top 10 list for that year: countries or territories ranked 1 recorded the highest numbers of displacements, and so on.

The onset of large-scale disasters is likewise visible when examining the rankings in the numbers of internal displacements (flows) due to disaster. The United States reported 27 disasters with damage exceeding USD 1 billion each in 2024, with total damage costing USD 182.7 billion.[131] This is reflected by the United States's jump to position one that year. In 2022, floods in Pakistan submerged nearly one third of the country during the monsoon season, reflected in a jump to first position among the top 10 that year.[132] These floods caused widespread destruction, including landslides and riverine flooding. Their sudden onset caught communities off guard, leading to relocations and significant disruptions to communication and transportation infrastructure.[133] Türkiye's sudden appearance amongst the top 10 at second position in 2023 was due to a series of earthquakes of magnitudes between 6.4 and 7.8 that occurred near the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, killing over 55,000 people, causing the collapse of over 36,000 buildings and heavy damage to a further 200,000.[134]

[131] NOAA, 2025.

[132] IOM, 2024c.

[133] Ibid.

[134] British Red Cross, 2025.

Figure 6. Ranking of countries or territories by number of internal displacements (flow) due to disaster, 2019–2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
India	1	4	3	4		3
Philippines	2	2	2	2	3	2
Bangladesh	3	3		6	5	5
China	4	1	1	3	1	4
United States of America	5	5	7	10		1
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	6					
Mozambique	7					
Ethiopia	8			8		
Somalia	9	7	10	7	4	
Indonesia	10	10	6			
Viet Nam		6	5			
Honduras		8				
Pakistan		9		1	8	
Democratic Republic of the Congo			4			
South Sudan			8			
Brazil			9	9	7	9
Nigeria				5		7
Türkiye					2	
Myanmar					6	
Syrian Arab Republic					9	
Malawi					10	
Chad						6
Niger						8
Afghanistan						10

Source: IDMC, 2025a.

Notes: Blank spaces indicate that countries or territories fell below the top 10 benchmark that year. The numbers in the visual indicate the rank of the country or territory on the top 10 list for that year: countries or territories ranked 1 recorded the highest numbers of displacements, and so on.

This analysis underscores the complexity of understanding internal displacement and the diverse forces that shape it. Though not a full account of global trends from 2019–2024, the findings from this sample of countries and territories reveal how both conflict and disasters drive mobility patterns over time. To deepen this picture, future work could explore displacements in relation to population size, compare annual flows and end-of-year stocks, and situate these dynamics against economic development indicators. Taken together, such analyses would help uncover not just the scale of displacement, but also its broader implications for societies navigating fragility and change.

Data in context: internal displacement in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Figure 2 shows the Sudan as the country or territory with the largest number of IDPs (stock) due to conflict for 2023 and 2024. In contrast, Figure 5 shows the Democratic Republic of the Congo as consistently ranking top or second for the highest number of internal displacements (flow) from 2019 to 2024. While this might at first glance seem contradictory, to explain this occurrence it is necessary to understand the quite different displacement contexts in both countries.

As the conflict in the Sudan entered its third year in April 2025, nearly one third of its population was displaced internally or across borders. The number of IDPs in the Sudan tripled during the conflict, with over 11.3 million IDPs recorded in April 2025, making it the largest displacement crisis in the world.[a] This is reflected in the top ranking for the highest number of IDPs (stock) displaced by conflict at the end of 2023 and again at the end of 2024 (Figure 2).

Displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is substantively different to displacement in the Sudan, as it is highly dynamic with many displaced but also large numbers of returns due to fluctuating improvements and deteriorations in security in various locations. In 2024, the IOM DTM identified 5.4 million IDP returns and 6.9 million IDPs, with 79 per cent of displacements occurring in four eastern provinces of the country.[b] Conflict was the primary driver of displacement with a resurgence in armed group activity in 2022. While many armed groups are active in the country, the escalation of M23 attacks have had a significant impact on displacement dynamics in recent years. Displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is thus characterized by high IDP flow, though a relatively low IDP stock.

[a] IOM, 2025c.
[b] IOM, 2024b.

Appendix B. The United Nations and internal displacement: recent developments

This appendix briefly summarizes the key events related to internal displacement within the United Nations system. It also provides a table capturing these key developments.

While there have been substantial developments in the global governance of migration and displacement in recent years, and especially since the United Nations Declaration on Refugee and Migrants in 2016, neither the Global Compact on Refugees nor the Global Compact for Migration dealt with IDPs.[135]

Some participating Member States in the Second Thematic Consultation, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in May 2017, had argued for IDPs to be included in the Global Compact for Migration, but others were opposed to it.[136] Though acknowledging the international and internal migration linkage, the moderators, co-facilitators and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General clarified that IDPs were not within the mandate of the Global Compact for Migration.[137]

By 2019, and following the adoption of the two global compacts in 2018, internal displacement figures were rising sharply, with protracted crises in contexts like Colombia, Nigeria and the Syrian Arab Republic. Member States expressed concern that humanitarian responses were overstretched and inadequate for enabling durable solutions. They requested that the Secretary-General look into how the United Nations system could better address internal displacement.

In response, the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement was established in 2020, co-chaired by Federica Mogherini (former European Union Vice-President) and Donald Kaberuka (former President of the African Development Bank). It included leaders and experts from across government, humanitarian and development spheres.

The panel's report, published in 2021 under the title "Shining a light on internal displacement: a vision for the future",[138] argued for a paradigm shift that involved moving beyond humanitarian containment to government-led, development-anchored solutions. It emphasized the role of national governments, whole-of-society approaches and the integration of displacement into national development plans.

Building on these recommendations, the Secretary-General issued the Action Agenda in June 2022.[139] This contained 31 United Nations system commitments across prevention, response and solutions, effectively institutionalizing the panel's core message that displacement is a solvable development challenge requiring nationally owned strategies with United Nations support.[140]

[135] Martin and Weerasinghe, 2017.

[136] Newland et al., 2019.

[137] Khadria, 2017.

[138] United Nations, 2021.

[139] United Nations, 2022.

[140] United Nations, n.d.

Table 1. Key United Nations events concerning internal displacement since 2018

Year	Key event
2018	United Nations Global Compact on Refugees and Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted by Member States; internal displacement was out-of-scope of both.
2019	Internal displacement increases globally; 57 Member States raise alarm and advocate for a response to internal displacement; request that the Secretary-General acts.
2020	High-level Panel on Internal Displacement established by the Secretary-General.
2021	High-level Panel on Internal Displacement publishes report "Shining a light on internal displacement".
2022	Secretary-General launches Action Agenda (33 United Nations commitments).
2023–2024	Office of Special Adviser and IDSF established to operationalize Action Agenda.
2025	United Nations system-wide response to internal displacement report released by the United Nations Chief Executive Board.
2025	Hub for Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement launched under United Nations Development Coordination Office, embedding IDSF and solutions advisers.
2025	Humanitarian Reset review starts; UN80 reform process commences; major cuts to foreign aid, including humanitarian and development programming.

Appendix C. Country-led strategies for durable solutions to internal displacement

Table 2 provides a consolidated overview of country-level examples of how solutions to internal displacement are being advanced under three thematic areas: knowledge exchange and coordination; evidence-based and data-driven approaches; and strategic development and policy ownership.

Under "knowledge exchange and coordination" are listed inclusive and participatory mechanisms that aim to strengthen collaboration across local, national and international actors. Many of these initiatives also embed gender-sensitive approaches, ensuring equity when amplifying the voices of displaced persons in planning processes. Under "evidence-based and data-driven approaches" can be found mechanisms that reflect governments' growing reliance on data to inform planning, prioritize interventions and align displacement responses with broader governance and financing frameworks. These efforts underscore that credible evidence is now a cornerstone of durable solutions. Under "strategic development and policy ownership" are listed projects in which national and subnational governments are embedding displacement solutions into overarching policy and development strategies. This shift signals not only institutional ownership but also the recognition that durable solutions must be aligned within broader poverty reduction, climate resilience and development agendas.

Together, they illustrate how a whole-of-government approach, in collaboration with local stakeholders, United Nations partners and civil society, is institutionalizing participatory, evidence-based and nationally owned strategies to ensure durable solutions for internally displaced populations.

Table 2. Illustrative examples of country-led solutions by thematic area

Country	Thematic areas		
	Knowledge exchange and coordination	**Evidence-based and data-driven approaches**	**Strategic development and policy ownership**
Colombia	Participatory bodies, like the Victims Participation Boards in Colombia, have sought to amplify local voices in planning (UNSDG and IASC, 2025). Colombia has also institutionalized territorial forums and mapping sessions to ensure Afro-Colombian, Indigenous and rural IDPs influence policy, improving data and civil society partnerships. These territorial strategies have sought to address the intersectional vulnerabilities of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women (IDSF, 2025). To further coordination, Colombia disseminated knowledge products to governments, civil society and donors, and organized South–South exchanges with El Salvador and Honduras (ibid.).	To support more precise targeting and advocacy for resources, a geospatial focalization method combining census, displacement and poverty data was used to examine microterritories. Local governments also employed municipal profiling and cost–benefit analyses to effectively allocate resources (IDSF, 2025).	Colombia integrated displacement into its National Development Plan and created multiple instruments, including the 2421 Law (new Victims Law) and Ombudsman's Strategic Plan (IDSF, 2025). Moreover, the Durable Solutions Strategy was elevated to a National Council for Economic and Social Policy document, the highest level policy instrument, aligning targets with budget lines and empowering territorial planning (ibid.).

Country	Thematic areas		
	Knowledge exchange and coordination	Evidence-based and data-driven approaches	Strategic development and policy ownership
Iraq	In Iraq, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement convened dialogues in Diyala, Anbar and Salah Al-Din on displacement challenges and returnee priorities, leading to follow-up actions on infrastructure and services (United Nations, 2024). Biweekly coordination meetings among IOM, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement also worked to improve compensation systems and share real-time lessons (IDSF, 2025). Other capacity-building efforts included legal clinics and training on data integration for the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (ibid.).	The modernization of the referral and compensation system, using secure digital architecture and survey data, improved verification and claim processing (IDSF, 2025). Survey and legal analysis were also used to close regulatory gaps (ibid.).	Cabinet Resolution No. 24007/2024 reflects efforts to promote a national vision for displacement solutions, with the aim of securing local-level buy-in and building an investment case through dedicated financing mechanisms to sustain collaboration and long-term solutions. Such efforts have led to substantial direct budget commitments to solutions pathways (IDSF, 2025).
Libya	In Libya, the Murzuq Road Map for Peace and Reconciliation created an IDP Steering Committee with government budget backing, enabling collaboration with international actors and conflict-affected groups in the district to support inclusive local development and return planning, demonstrating State-led multistakeholder planning (UNSDG and IASC, 2025; United Nations, 2024).	The IDP Steering Committee collaborates with municipal bodies across housing, economic and planning sectors to conduct community-based needs assessments in efforts to design inclusive development plans that support IDP returns to Murzuq (United Nations, 2024).	The Murzuq IDP Steering Committee has gained official recognition from eastern and western part of Libya, leading to an operational budget from national authorities. This enables the Committee to function as a legitimate interlocutor, effectively engaging local, national and international actors in advancing solutions for displaced people (United Nations, 2024).

Country	Thematic areas		
	Knowledge exchange and coordination	Evidence-based and data-driven approaches	Strategic development and policy ownership
Mozambique	In Mozambique, the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF) supported a new consultation methodology that blended qualitative and quantitative approaches, helping capture displaced communities' intentions and integration challenges while addressing communication needs (UNSDG and IASC, 2025). The incorporation of gender-sensitive tools and participatory mapping also allowed women, youth and marginalized groups to shape durable solutions action plans (IDSF, 2025).	A national dashboard aligned with international standards (such as those provided by the IOM International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) and the Data Solutions for Internal Displacement initiatives (DSID)) was developed to track progress, while enhanced assessments also captured aspirations around housing, livelihoods and services (IDSF, 2025). Mozambique also created a "data for solutions" workstream that convened government, humanitarian and academic actors to refine indicator frameworks to guide solutions pathways (ibid.).	Mozambique operationalized its disaster displacement policy with IDSF support, developing an implementation plan and planning tool to strengthen coordination. This leveraged municipal investment in climate-resilient housing (IDSF, 2025).
Nigeria	Nigeria's BAY states (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) established State Advisory Committees with ministries, traditional leaders and IDP representatives to co-lead solutions planning (UNSDG and IASC, 2025). Knowledge exchange mechanisms were developed, including an inter-State platform to facilitate peer learning on integration and housing policy (IDSF, 2025). Nigeria's state action plans also included gender-sensitive budgeting and involved women's associations in decision-making (ibid.).	Complaints and feedback mechanisms were integrated into BAY state action plans, enabling real-time monitoring of relocation projects and strengthening accountability between authorities and displaced households (IDSF, 2025). Nigeria's BAY states conducted capacity assessments, appointed data custodians and used displacement tracking surveys to anticipate movements, design gender-responsive budgets and coordinate across sectors (ibid.).	Nigeria launched three state action plans and began developing a national framework to harmonize state-level plans, with Yobe State committing funding from its annual budget (IDSF, 2025; Yobe State Government, 2024). These state-level frameworks are being leveraged to resource WASH, housing and livelihoods in displacement settings (IDSF, 2025).

Country	Thematic areas		
	Knowledge exchange and coordination	Evidence-based and data-driven approaches	Strategic development and policy ownership
Somalia	In Somalia, grassroots consultations over six months informed the national Solutions Pathways Action Plan, prioritizing land, housing and services for IDPs (IDSF, 2025). Somalia built learning agendas into its planning process, ensuring adaptation over time. Gender indicators and women's civil-society input elevated land, health and livelihood priorities for displaced women (ibid.).	Somalia's Ministry of Planning led the Durable Solutions Progress Survey in coordination with IOM and local consortiums to support capacity assessments and provide baselines for monitoring implementation (UNSDG and IASC, 2025). Somalia also embedded a full data pathway in its Solutions Plan, using needs assessments and thematic studies to design indicators, align with the National Statistics Office and mobilize funding (IDSF, 2025).	Somalia's 2020–2024 National Durable Solutions Strategy was recognized for explicitly linking displacement resolution with poverty reduction (UNSDG and IASC, 2025). The Solutions Pathways Action Plan (2024–2029) is a fully costed, government-owned strategy embedded in the National Transformation Plan (2025–2029). Backed by broad grassroots consultations and interministerial participation, it is further supported by the newly established National Centre for Rural Development and Durable Solutions (IDSF, 2025).
Ukraine	In Ukraine, IDP councils bring together displaced persons, civil society and host community representatives as advisory bodies to local authorities, advocating for IDP rights and integration. Established at the local level, they ensure local needs inform policies and strategies within municipal governance (UNSDG and IASC, 2025; United Nations, 2024).	The Operational Plan of the State Strategy on Internal Displacement requires subnational authorities (oblasts and hromadas) to integrate the needs and priorities of IDPs into local planning, budgeting and programming (UNSDG and IASC, 2025)	The State Strategy on Internal Displacement represents a nationally endorsed framework that establishes durable solutions as a government responsibility. By assigning clear roles across ministries and local administrations, it embeds displacement into national development planning, demonstrating strong policy ownership (UNSDG and IASC, 2025).

Chapter 8

Appendix A. Overview of the legal and policy frameworks relevant to the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities

The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is anchored in a solid human rights framework, grounded on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[141] Table 1 of this appendix summarizes what is referred to as the "core international human rights instruments" adopted under the auspices of the United Nations. Beyond the UNCRPD, which is focused on persons with disabilities, all these treaties apply to any individuals under the jurisdiction of a State without distinction of any kind, such as "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status", including disability.[142]

Most of these instruments are complemented by additional protocols establishing the competence of committees for communication procedures,[143] as is the case for the 2006 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the CRPD.

Table 1. Core international human rights instruments

Instruments	Date of adoption and entry into force
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	21 December 1965 (entry into force: 4 January 1969)
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	16 December 1966 (entry into force: 23 March 1976)
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	16 December 1966 (entry into force: 3 January 1976)
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	18 December 1979 (entry into force: 3 September 1981)
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	10 December 1984 (entry into force: 26 June 1987)
Convention on the Rights of the Child	20 November 1989 (entry into force: 2 September 1990)
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	18 December 1990 (entry into force: 1 July 2003)

[141] UNGA, 1948.

[142] See for instance ICCPR, article 2(1) (United Nations, 1966a).

[143] The two optional protocols of 2000 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are more substantive as they govern the involvement of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, respectively.

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	20 December 2006 (entry into force: 23 December 2010)
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	13 December 2006 (entry into force: 3 May 2008)

These core international human rights instruments are further complemented by diverse legally binding instruments and policy instruments, at global and regional levels, focusing on the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities. While not exhaustive, Table 2 provides some examples.[144] Table 3 then lists frameworks and instruments specifically addressing the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Table 2. Examples of legal and policy instruments on persons with disabilities

Geographical scope	Instrument	Organization	Date
Global	World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons	United Nations	3 December 1982
Global	Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	United Nations	21 October 2015
Global	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy	United Nations	2019
Africa	African Decade of Disabled Persons (1999–2009)	African Union (then Organization of African Unity)	1999
Africa	Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (1999–2009)	African Union	2002
Africa	Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities 2010–2019	African Union	2013
Africa	The African Union Disability Inclusion Guidelines for Youth Exchange	African Union	2020

[144] Except for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Table 2 includes instruments that specifically focus on persons with disabilities. However, other instruments of broader scope apply to persons with disabilities and may be relevant including, for instance, the 2003 Charter of Fundamental Social Rights in SADC or the 1961 European Social Charter and its 1996 revised version of the Council of Europe.

Geographical scope	Instrument	Organization	Date
Africa	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa	African Union	29 January 2018 (entry into force: 3 May 2024)
Americas	Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities	Organization of American States (OAS)	8 June 1999 (entry into force: 14 September 2001)
Americas	Declaration on the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (2006–2016)	OAS	6 June 2006
Americas	Programme of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (2016–2026)	OAS	2015
Asia	ASEAN Declaration on Disability-inclusive Development and Partnership for a Resilient ASEAN Community	ASEAN	2023
Asia	ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	ASEAN	February 2019
Asia and the Pacific	Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003–2012: Biwako Millenium Framework for Action: towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	2002
Asia and the Pacific	Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific	ESCAP	2012
Asia and the Pacific	Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy	ESCAP	10 December 2018

Geographical scope	Instrument	Organization	Date
Asia and the Pacific	Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities	ESCAP	2 September 2022
Pacific	Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016–2025	Pacific Disability Forum	2009
Europe	European Disability Strategy 2010–2020	European Union	2010
Europe	European Union Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882)	European Union	7 June 2019
Europe	Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030	European Union	March 2021
Europe	Directive 2024/2841 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities	European Union	14 November 2024
Europe	Directive 2024/2842 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 extending Directive 2024/2841 to third-country nationals legally residing in a Member State	European Union	14 November 2024

Table 3. Policy framework for the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

Framework/instrument	Year
Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030	2018
World Humanitarian Summit 2016, with the Report of the Secretary-General	2016
Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action	2016
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action	2019

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