

International Migration Report

United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

International Migration Report 2017

Highlights



United Nations

New York, 2017

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

The Population Division of the Department of

International Migration Report 2017: Highlights Key Facts

x The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly in recent years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000.

x Over 60 per cent of all international migrants live in Asia (80 million) or Europe (78 million). Northern America hosted the third largest number of international migrants (58 million), followed by Africa (25 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (10 million) and Oceania (8 million).¹

x In 2017, two thirds (67 per cent) of all

Introduction

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that touches nearly all corners of the globe. Modern transportation has made it easier, cheaper

Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations prepares, at regular intervals, estimates of the number of international migrants disaggregated by age, sex, country of destination and country of origin for all countries and areas of the world

International migrant stock by age, sex and origin:

Definitions and data availability

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Levels and trends in international migration

The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow over the past seventeen years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 248 million in 2015, 220 million in 2010, 191 million in 2005 and 173 million in 2000. Between 2000 and 2005, the international migrant stock grew by an average of 2 per cent per year. During the period 2005-2010, the annual growth rate accelerated, reaching 2.9 per cent. Since then, however, it has slowed, falling to around 2.4 per cent per year during the period 2010-2015 and to 2.0 per cent per year during the period 2015-2017.

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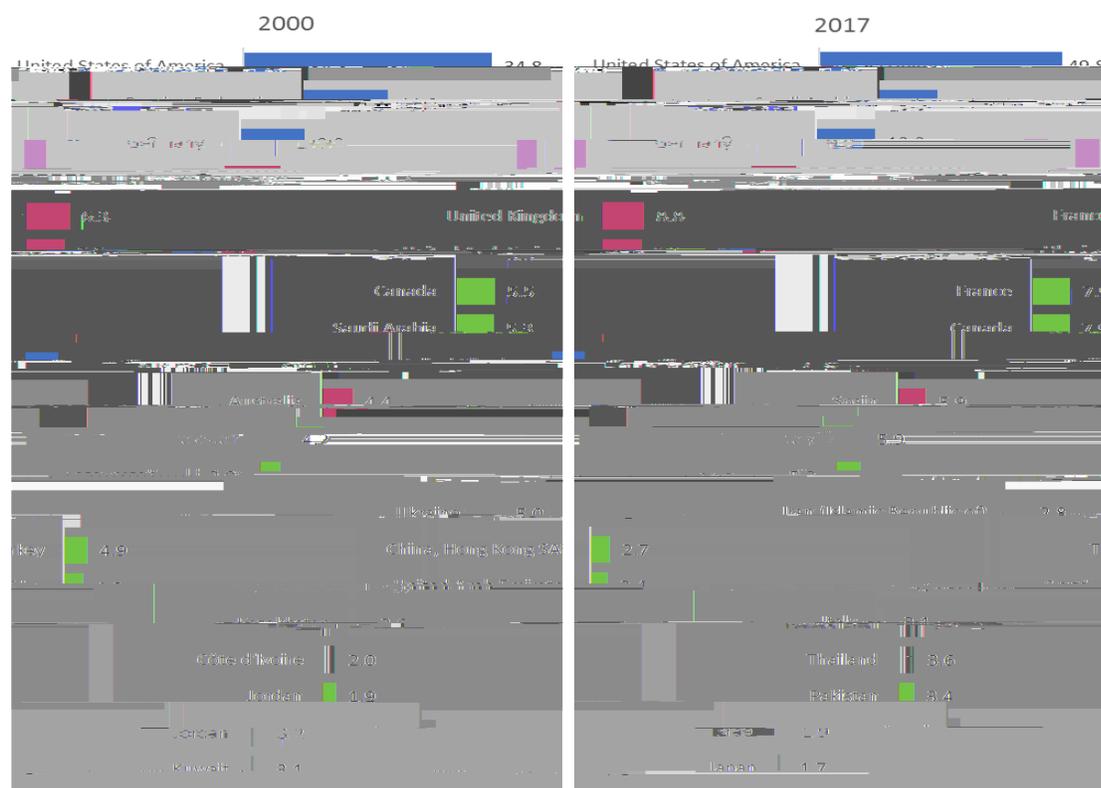
year. After declining in the period from 2000 to 2010, the rate of growth of the migrant population in low-income countries accelerated to 6.6 per cent per year in 2010 to 2015, and slowed again, to 2.0 per cent per year, most recently (2015-2017). In middle-income countries, the growth rate was the lowest during this period (1.4 per cent per year).

Analysing data by geographic region provides additional insights into current trends. More than 60 per cent of all international migrants worldwide live in Asia or Europe. In 2017, 80 million international migrants lived in Asia or Europe. In 2017, 80 million international migrants lived in Asia or Europe.

annum, respectively. Oceania recorded the third fastest average annual growth rate in the international migrant stock during this period (2.7 per cent) followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (2.2 per cent). Europe and Northern America, where the size of the migrant stock was already large, experienced a slightly slower pace of change, with an average annual growth rate of 2.1 per cent in North America and 1.9 per cent in Europe.

OR VW RI WKH ZRUOG, respectively, and the number of countries. In 2017, more than 50 per cent of all international migrants in the world were living in just ten countries or areas, while only twenty countries or areas hosted 67 per cent of the global number of international migrants. The largest number of international migrants resided in WKH 8QLWHG 6WDWHV RI \$PHULFD PLOOLRQ HTXDWRU SHU 3). Saudi Arabia, Germany and the Russian Federation hosted the second, third and fourth largest numbers of migrants worldwide (around 12 million each), followed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (nearly 9 million), and the United Arab Emirates (8 million). Of the twenty largest countries of destination of international migrants worldwide, nine are located in Asia, seven in Europe, two in Northern America, and one each in Africa and Oceania.

Figure 3
Twenty countries or areas hosting the largest numbers of international migrants, 2000 and 2017, number of migrants (millions)



Source: United Nations (2017a)
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Changes in the number of international migrants differ widely by country. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of international migrants increased in 172 countries or areas worldwide. In 70 of these countries, the migrant population grew by less than 2 per cent per annum (map 1). In 102 countries or areas, however, the pace of growth dur4.004 (r)7-50 (by)15 (en)107.998s

asylum seekers in 2016. Given that a large majority of refugees is hosted by developing countries, and that many refugees reside in countries of first asylum for over a decade, there is an urgent need for sharing the burden and responsibility of hosting and caring for refugees more equitably.

Where do international migrants come from?

In 2017, of the 258 million international migrants worldwide, 106 million were born in Asia. Europe was the region of birth of the second largest number of international migrants (61 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (38 million), and Africa (36 million). Relatively few migrants worldwide were born in Northern America (4 million) or Oceania (2 million). Considering each region's relative share in the world population, international migrants from Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania were overrepresented, while international migrants from Asia, Northern America and Africa were underrepresented.

Table 1:

Share of regions in world population and international migrants by origin (in thousands), 2017

	Total population	Percentage of global population	International migrants by origin	Percentage of international migrants
World	7,550,262	100.0	257,715	100.0
Africa	1,256,268	16.6	36,266	14.1
Asia	4,504,428	59.7	105,684	41.0
Europe	742,074	9.8	61,191	23.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	645,593	8.6	37,720	14.6
Northern America	361,208	4.8	4,413	1.7
Oceania	40,691	0.5	1,880	0.7
Unknown	n/a	n/a	10,560	4.1

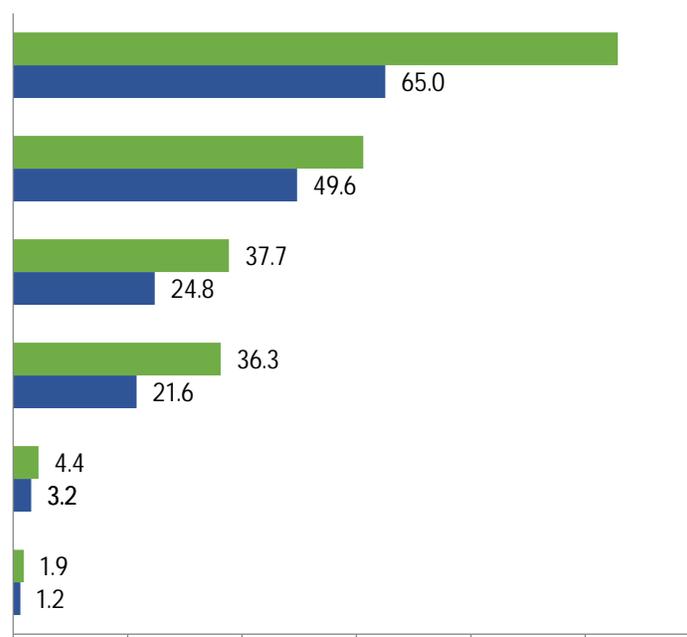
Source: United Nations (2017a).

Between 2000 and 2017, the number of international migrants originating in Asia recorded the largest increase (40.7 million), followed by the migrant population born in Africa (14.7 million), in Latin America and the Caribbean (12.9 million), in Europe (11.6 million), in Northern America (1.2 million) and in Oceania (700,000) (see figure 4). In

relative terms, however, the number of international migrants originating in Africa experienced the largest increase since 2000 (+68 per cent), followed by the population of migrants born in Asia (+62 per cent), in Latin America and the Caribbean (+52 per cent) and in Oceania (+51 per cent).

Figure 4

Number of international migrants by region of origin, 2000 and 2017



Source: United Nations (2017a).

Migration occurs primarily between countries that are located within the same world region. In 2017, t

Caribbean and Oceania (figure 6). Conversely, for migrants born in Africa and Northern America, the proportion of those living in a country outside of their region of birth increased.

Figure 6

Percentage distribution of international migrants by region of destination, for regions of origin, 2000 and 2017

Source: United Nations (2017a)

Notes: NA stands for Northern America, LAC stands for Latin America and the Caribbean

Asia is the origin of the largest number of persons who are living outside their region of birth. In 2017, there were 42 million international migrants born in Asia but living elsewhere. Of these, most international migrants were living in Europe (20 million), followed by Northern America (17 million) and Oceania (3 million). Migrants born in Latin America and the Caribbean represented the second largest group, with 32 million persons living outside their region of birth. The majority of these migrants were living in Northern America (26 million) and Europe (5 million). Europe recorded the third largest number of persons living outside their region of birth (20 million). Migrants of European origin were primarily residing in Northern America (8 million), Asia (7 million) and Oceania (3 million).

Globally, the twenty largest countries or areas of origin account for almost half (49 per cent) of all international migrants, while one-third (34 per cent) of all international migrants originates in only ten countries. India

Bangladesh (7.5 million), Syrian Arab Republic (6.9 million), Pakistan (6.0 million) and Ukraine (5.9 million). Of the twenty largest countries or areas of origin of international migrants, eleven were located in Asia, six in Europe, and one each in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern America.⁹⁸

Albeit small in absolute numbers, the fastest growing destination for international migrants born in Oceania and in Latin America and the Caribbean was Africa with a 7 per cent increase per year (15,000 and 22,000 migrants, respectively).

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Worldwide, the median age of migrants has been increasing. The median age of all international migrants in 2017 was 39.2 years, compared with 38.0 years in 2000. Given the earlier finding that most migrants move within their region of birth, it is not surprising

Figure 11

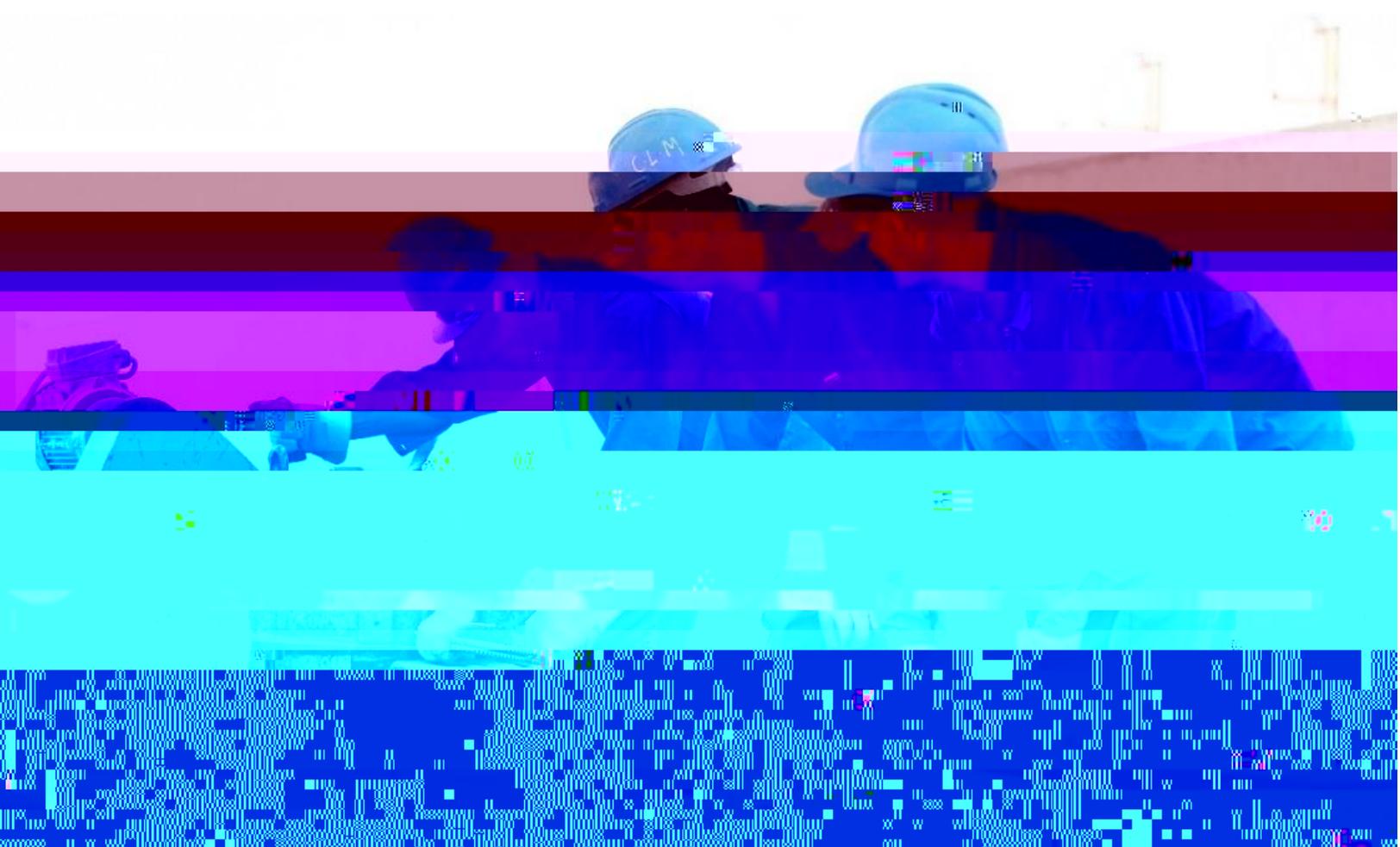
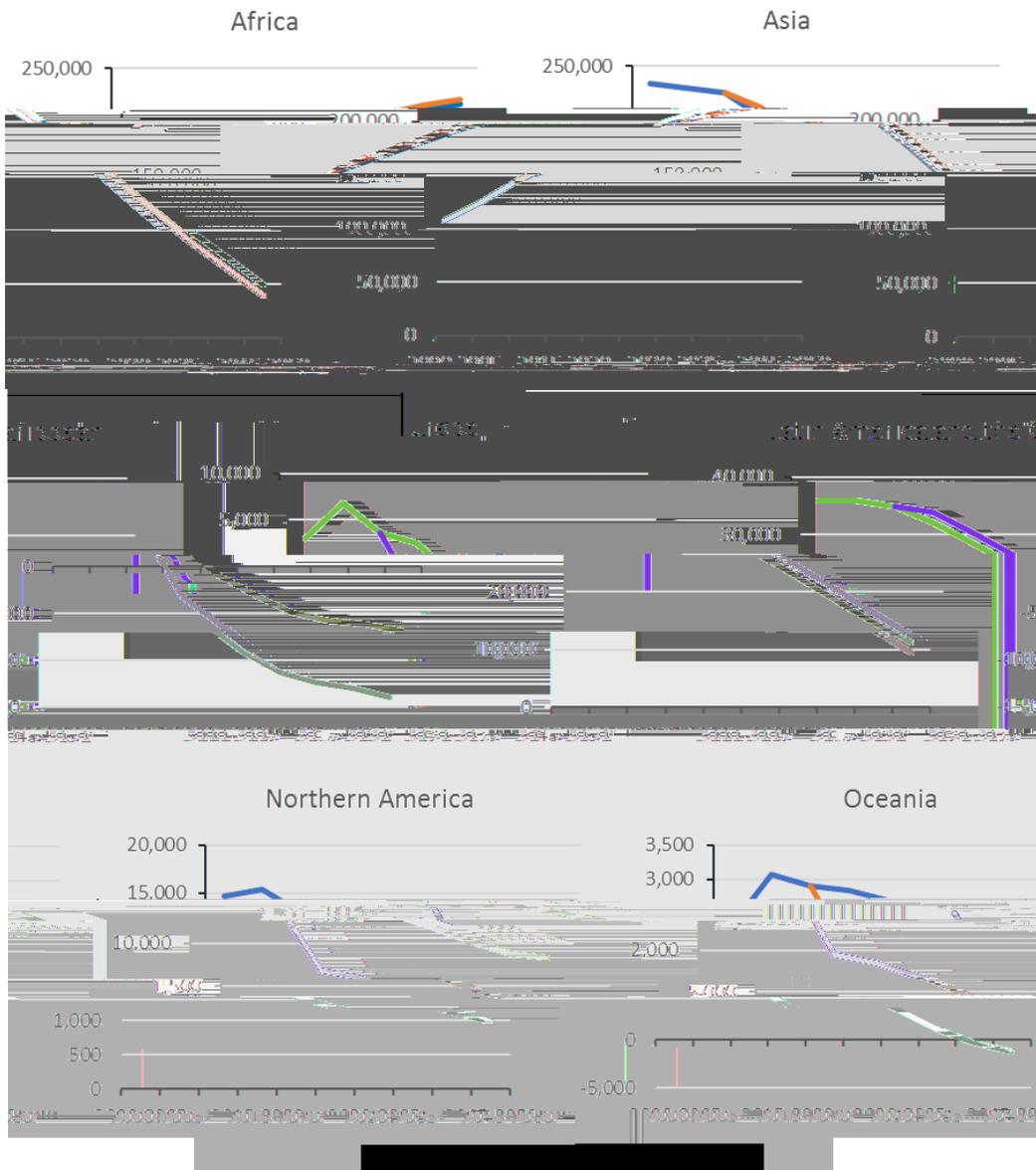


Figure 12

Estimated and projected change in total population over five-year time periods by region, from 2000 to 2050, with and without international migration starting in 2015 (in thousands)



Source: United Nations (2017b).

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 emigrants for all time periods starting in 2015-2020.

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 aged 60 years or over is projected to double from 962 million today to 2.1 billion in 2050. Similarly, the global median age, the age at which half the population is older and half is younger, is projected to increase from 30 to 36 years between 2015 and 2050. However,
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 regions. In the more developed regions, the median age is projected to increase from 41 years in 2015 to 45 years in 2050, while in the less developed regions, it is projected to rise from 28 years in 2015 to 35 years in 2050. It is anticipated that population aging will be

particularly rapid in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Asia, with the median age projected to increase by 12 and 9 years, respectively, during the same period. The median age in Africa, currently the lowest at 19 years, is projected to rise to 25 years in 2050.

Without migration, the median age in the more developed regions in 2050 would be 1.7 years higher than with migration remaining at current levels. Northern America would add 2.0 years, Oceania 1.6 years and Europe 1.1 years to their median age in 2050 if net migration were to equal zero between 2015 and 2050. In contrast, net outmigration is expected to have a negligible effect on population age structure in the less developed regions: the median age would be only 0.1 years lower in 2050 if net migration equalled zero between 2015 and 2050.

Because international migrants comprise a larger proportion of working-age persons compared to the overall population, positive net migration can help to reduce the old-age dependency ratio.⁶ In some parts of the world, the old-age dependency ratio would be higher in the absence of migration. Assuming zero net migration, in 2050 the number of persons aged 65 or over per 100 persons of working age would rise to 57, compared to 53 per 100 assuming a continuation of current migration patterns. For Northern America and Oceania, the old-age dependency ratio would rise to 47 and 37 per 100, respectively, with zero net migration compared to 41 and 33 per 100 if current levels of migration would continue.

While international migration can play a role in reducing dependency ratios in countries of destination, it cannot halt, let alone reverse, the trend of population ageing. Even assuming a continuation of current migration patterns, most regions of the world are projected to have significantly higher old-age dependency ratios in 2050. In Europe, for every 100 persons of working age, there will be 53 persons aged 65 or older in 2050, compared to a ratio of 29 older persons per 100 working-age adults in 2015. Likewise, during the period 2015-2050, old-age dependency ratios are projected to increase from 13 to 34 per 100 in Latin America and the Caribbean, from 13 to 31 per 100 in Asia, from 25 to 41 per 100 in Northern America, and from 21 to 33 per 100 in Oceania. Only Africa is projected to experience a modest increase in the old-age dependency ratio, rising from 8 older persons per 100 persons of working age in 2015 to 11 in 2050.

International migration at the United Nations

Migration has steadily risen on the agenda of the international community. Since the adoption of the Programme of Action at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which contains one of the most comprehensive negotiated texts on international migration to date, the issue of international migration and its relation to development has steadily increased in importance. While subsequent United Nations conferences and summits in the social and economic field affirmed the contribution of international migration to development, this was not reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

After years of deliberating the question of convening an intergovernmental conference on international migration, the General Assembly decided to hold a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in September 2006. This marked the first high-level event of the General Assembly dedicated exclusively to this topic. Although the formal outcome of the event was limited, the Secretary-General to create a voluntary and state-led global forum on migration and development received widespread support. Since 2007, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) has fostered informal dialogue.

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Ratification of legal instruments related to international migration

The United Nations has several legal

Annex

Major area, region, country or area of destination	Number of international migrants (thousands)		International migrants as percentage of total population		Females among international migrants (percentage)		Median age of international migrants (years)	
	2000	2017	2000	2017	2000	2017	2000	2017
WORLD	172,604	257,715	2.8	3.4	49.3	48.4	38.0	39.2
More developed regions	103,418	145,984	8.7	11.6	51.1	51.8	40.0	43.4
Less developed regions	69,186	111,732	1.4	1.8	46.6	43.9	34.8	34.3
Least developed countries	10,073	14,442	1.5	1.4	50.0	50.4	26.9	29.7
Less developed regions, excl. least developed countries	59,155	97,331	1.4	1.8	46.0	42.9	36.2	34.9
	100,405	164,847	9.6	14.1	49.0	47.7	38.5	40.6

Chad	105	490	1.3	3.3	46.1	53.9	22.5	25.9
Congo	305	399	9.5	7.6	49.9	45.2	28.5	31.9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	744	879	1.6	1.1	51.0	51.3	23.9	

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Turkmenistan	218	195	4.8	3.4	56.9	53.4	49.2	53.0
Uzbekistan	1,405	1,159	5.7	3.6	56.9	53.4	49.2	51.6
Eastern Asia	5,393	7,777	0.4	0.5	52.7	53.2	39.9	39.2
China ⁶	508	1,000	0.0	0.1	50.0	38.6	34.8	36.8
China, Hong Kong SAR ⁷	2,669	2,883	40.1	39.1				

Sint Maarten (Dutch part)	..	28	..	70.4	..	52.1	..	37.0
Trinidad and Tobago	42	50	3.3	3.7	53.8	51.2	53.4	40.0
Turks and Caicos Islands	9	25	47.8	69.2	48.3	48.3	29.6	34.0
United States Virgin Islands	57	57	52.1	54.1	52.8	52.9	40.9	48.8
Central America	1,108	2,093	0.8	1.2	49.9	49.9	24.6	24.8
Belize	36	60	14.8	16.0	48.9	49.7	30.6	37.8
Costa Rica	311	414	7.9	8.4	49.6	52.0	28.5	39.9
El Salvador	32	42	0.5	0.7	53.0	52.4	27.1	34.3
Guatemala	48	82	0.4	0.5	55.9	52.6	31.2	35.1
Honduras	28							

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Vanuatu	3	3	1.4	1.2	49.7	50.3	33.8	35.2
Micronesia	130	118	26.2	22.3	50.1	49.3	34.4	36.9
Guam	74	78						

