

# Migration

Human migration between and within countries is increasing as a result of global economic ties, improving global communications, increasing mobility and government policy (particularly in the case of the EU).

Long-term trends in labour migration show there is growing pressure for more labour mobility around the world, mainly due to changing demographic patterns. Many developed countries with declining birth-rates need migrant workers to support their ageing populations and fill other key shortages in the workforce; low labour mobility can therefore stunt these countries' economic growth, create fiscal imbalance and degrade the welfare of the elderly. However, accelerated mobility can also lead to brain drain and related labour shortages in migrant origin countries.

In future, political and environmental drivers may contribute to a further growth in migration. More people could become climate change refugees, for example, due to sudden or long-term changes in their local environment.

## Implications

- Migrants will continue to fill existing and emerging gaps in the labour force of developed countries, while in many instances benefitting from economic and educational opportunities they might not otherwise have the opportunity to access. Migration can also encourage cultural exchange, bringing energy and innovation to host countries.
- High levels of mobility of relatively skilled or advantaged people may lead to clusters of skill and advantage in some cities, while diluting skill and downscaling talent in others, as well as rural areas. First people are pulled from the countryside, then cities pull from other cities. This kind of ordering and sorting of skill and talent could lead to a much greater urban/rural divide in future, as well as inequalities between cities. [1]
- An influx of migrant labour without any corresponding increase in the capacity of the services in the receiving communities can strain resources and potentially lead to political and social tension. [2] At the same time, unnecessary government bureaucracy can impede the movement of workers, and economic opportunities may be lost as a result. [3]

Footnotes:

1. [International Business Leaders Forum \(2010, March\).](#)
2. [International Business Leaders Forum \(2010, March\).](#)
3. [International Business Leaders Forum \(2010, March\).](#)

## Current trajectory

The number of international migrants is rising – their number increased by over 77 million (50%) between 1990 and 2013. A total of 69% migrants moved to a developed country, and 31% to a

developing one. Around 25 million migrated to North America. [1]

- In 2013, 'South-North migration' – i.e. the number of international migrants born in the South who live in the North – almost equalled the number of migrants born in the South who live in the South, or 'South-South migration'. [2]

- Globally there are 232 million international migrants in the world, representing 3.1% of the world population. [3]

- 48% of all international migrants are women, who are increasingly migrating for work purposes. [4]

- Most international migration today is for employment purposes; more than 90% of all international migrants are workers and their families. [5]

- The world's largest corridor of international migration is between the United States and Mexico. [6] According to figures released in 2013, the US hosts the largest number of international migrants (45.8 million), while Mexico has the largest number of emigrants (over 11% of its native population lives abroad). [7]

- 1 in 8 migrants are estimated to be between 15 and 24 years old. [8]

- In 2013, Asians represented the largest diaspora residing outside their major area of birth. [9]

- Officially recorded remittances to developing countries reached US\$435 billion in 2014, an increase of 5% on 2013. The growth rate in 2014 was substantially faster than the 3.4% growth recorded in 2013, driven largely by remittances to Asia and Latin America. [9]

- The International Organization for Migration estimates that 20 million persons were displaced by extreme weather events in 2008. Future forecasts range widely between 25 million and 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050, moving either within their countries or across borders on a permanent or temporary basis. The most widely cited estimate is 200 million persons, which is equal to the current estimate of international migrants worldwide. [10]

Footnotes:

1. [UN, International Migration Report \(2013\).](#)
2. [OECD World Migration Figures \(2013\).](#)
3. [International Labour Organization \(2014, March\) - Labour Migration, Facts and Figures.](#)
4. [International Labour Organization \(2014, March\) - Labour Migration, Facts and Figures.](#)
5. [International Labour Organization \(2014, March\) - Labour Migration, Facts and Figures.](#)
6. [OECD \(2013\) World Migration in Figures.](#)
7. [International Labour Organization \(2014, March\) - Labour Migration, Facts and Figures.](#)
8. [World Bank \(2014, October\) - Migration and Development Brief 23.](#)
9. [United Nations - Population Facts \(2013, September\).](#)
10. [International Organization for Migration \(date unspecified\).](#)