Key Findings

- International migration remains relatively uncommon, with a mere 3.6 per cent (or 281 million) of the world being international migrants, based on the latest United Nations estimates (from 2021). The vast majority of people do not move across borders to live, and most international migration is safe, orderly and regular.

- Migration is a driver of human development, and can generate significant benefits for migrants, their families and countries of origin. In addition to enhancing national income and average living standards, immigration can have a positive effect on labour markets by increasing labour supply in sectors and occupations suffering from shortages of workers, as well as helping address mismatches in the job market.

- Humanitarian crises due to displacement remain exceptional within the broader global picture but they are also on the rise. Forced displacement is the highest on record in the modern era. The situation is further exacerbated by environmental impacts and climate change.

- The impacts of environmental, geopolitical and technological systemic global shifts have intensified further in the last two-year period since the previous World Migration Report (2022 edition) highlighted their growing importance for migration and mobility.

- The impacts of ecologically negative human activity have intensified: overconsumption and overproduction linked to unsustainable economic growth, resource depletion and biodiversity collapse, as well as ongoing climate change (including heating) are continuing to grip the world.

- New developments in AI technologies – such as generative AI – have further underscored rapidly changing tech developments globally. The highly uneven, sustained use of AI, however, in only some migration systems point to the heightened risk that AI technologies in migration and mobility are on track to exacerbate digital divides both between states and within states. The "asymmetry of power" in AI for migration globally is an ongoing problem, likely to be exacerbated with every new advance. Supporting access to safe, orderly and regular migration requires that digital equality is actively supported.

- Hardening geopolitics has also seen previously-unthinkable conflict in terms of both scale and nature. The last two years saw major migration and displacement events that have caused great hardship and trauma, as well as loss of life. In addition to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, millions of people have been displaced by conflict elsewhere, such as within and/or from the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Ethiopia and Myanmar.

- There have also been large-scale internal displacements triggered by disasters in many parts of the world in 2022 and 2023, including in Pakistan, the Philippines, China, India, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Takeaway for Policy

International migration has long served many millions of people and societies around the world well – whether in origin, in transit or in destination countries – providing opportunities and enriching their lives. Notwithstanding recent events, long-term trend analysis on international migration has taught us that migration is not uniform across the world, but is shaped by economic, geographic, demographic and other factors, resulting in distinct migration patterns. It is also important to place migration and mobility within broader systemic changes that act to determine, shape and impede responses by governments and non-State actors. Ongoing technological, geopolitical and environmental global transformations are particularly relevant to help better understand strategic issues shaping the context in which people migrate, and the growing increase in displacement globally.

The full chapter is available at
https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-1.

The WMR interactive platform can be accessed at https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/.