



World Migration Fact-Checkers' Toolkit

A set of resources for fact-checkers working around the world to combat misinformation about migration and migrants

Migration Research Division

This Fact-Checkers' Toolkit is designed to help fact-checkers around the world to address myths and misinformation about migration by using the latest data, research, information and analysis from the World Migration Report series. It will be regularly updated and expanded.

*To find out more about how disinformation affects migrants and migration, as well as initiatives to counter it, check the chapter '**Disinformation about migration: An age-old issue with new tech dimensions**' of the World Migration Report 2022.*

Has migration been growing out of control over recent years?

FACT: In mid-2020 there were estimated to be 281 million international migrants in the world. This equates to 3.6% of the global population. The vast majority of people (96.5%) live in the countries in which they were born.

FACT: Over the past 50 years the number of international migrants as a proportion of the global population has remained relatively stable, increasing from 2.3% in 1970 to 3.6% in 2020.

FACT: While its full impact remains difficult to assess, it is estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic may have reduced the expected growth in the total population of international migrants by 2 million in 2020.

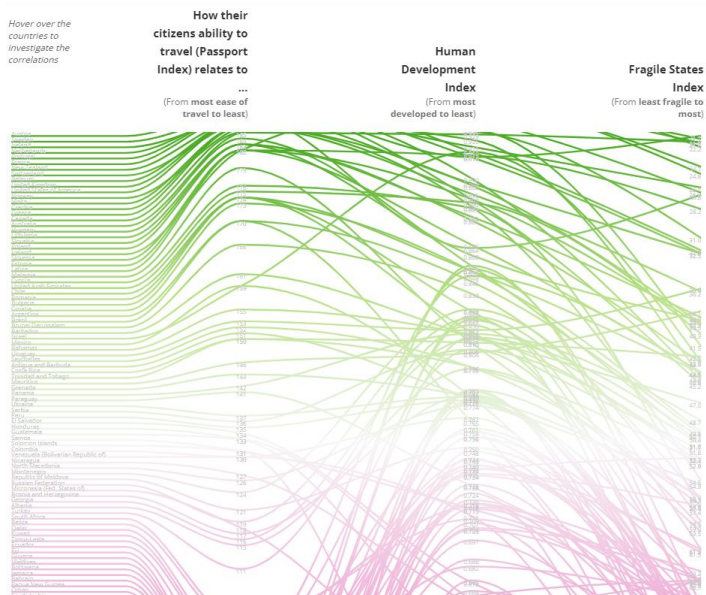
Table 1. International migrants, 1970–2020

Year	Number of international migrants	Migrants as a % 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	152 986 157	2.9
1995	161 289 976	2.8
2000	173 230 585	2.8
2005	191 446 828	2.9
2010	220 983 187	3.2
2015	247 958 644	3.4
2020	280 598 105	3.6

Source: UN DESA, 2008; UN DESA, 2021a.
 Note: The number of entities (such as States, territories and administrative regions) for which data were made available in the UN DESA International Migrant Stock 2020 was 232. In 1970, the number of entities was 135.

For more information on the global population of international migrants, consult chapter 2, **Migration and Migrants: A Global Overview** of the **World Migration Report 2022**. To interact with different global data on migration, consult the **World Migration Report Interactive**

Shouldn't all migrants, including refugees, wait their turn in the queue instead of coming here without a visa?



FACT: Some nationality groups are much less likely to have access to visas. In fact, access to regular migration options is in some ways related to the “lottery of birth”: an individual’s ability to enter a country with relative ease is in many respects determined by the relative power of their national passport, which is often connected to country’s status and relations within the international community.

FACT: Nationals from countries with very high levels of human development can travel visa free to most countries around the world. However, those born in ‘fragile states’ are impacted more by mobility restrictions, and irregular pathways are likely to be the most realistic (if not the only) option open to them.

FACT: On many occasions, migrants do queue. This is reflected in the long waiting times for resettlement, the processing times for decisions on international protection claims, and lengthy processes for family reunification.

To learn more about the ‘lottery of birth’ read chapter **Understanding Migration Journeys from Migrants’ Perspectives** in the [World Migration Report 2018](#). To find out what the data tells us about who migrates and where do they go read chapter **Migration as a Stepladder of Opportunity: What does the Global Data Actually Show** in the **World Migration Report 2022**. To interact with the data, consult the **World Migration Report Interactive**.

Why do all refugees come to Europe and North America?

FACT: Most people affected by displacement, either because of violence and conflict or due to disasters, do not cross the boundaries of their own countries. In 2020, the global stock of internally displaced persons exceeded 55 million.

FACT: Most refugees live in neighboring countries. For example, the largest numbers of Syrian refugees can be found in Turkey and Lebanon, and the largest numbers of Afghan refugees can be found in Pakistan and Iran.

FACT: The top 5 refugee-hosting countries in the world are, in descending order: Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, Germany and Sudan. More than half of the world's refugees reside in just 10 countries and 27% of them reside in least developed countries.

To learn more about internal displacement as well as the global and regional populations of refugees you can consult the chapters **Migration and Migrants: A Global Overview** and **Migrations and Migrants: Regional Dimensions and Developments** in the **World Migration Report 2022**. To find out more about migration corridors, check the **World Migration Report Interactive**.

Are migrants a burden to countries of destination?

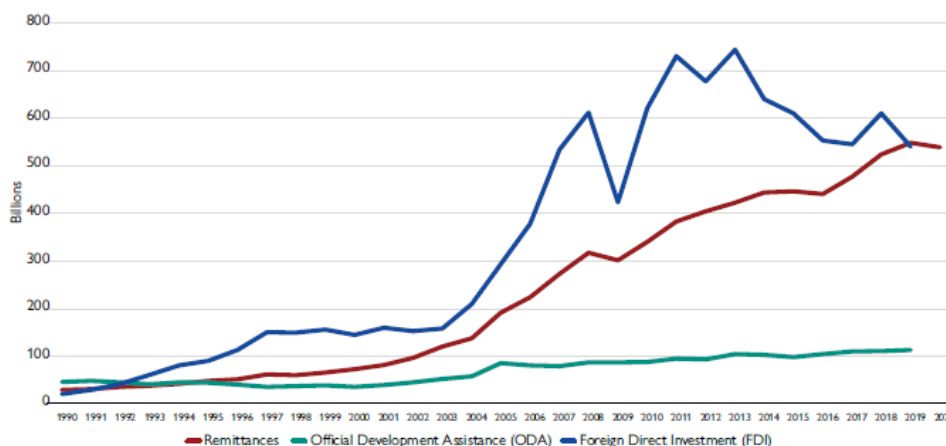
FACT: It is estimated that nearly two-thirds of international migrants are migrant workers, contributing to the economies and societies where they live.

FACT: In 2015 alone, it is estimated that migrants contributed over 9 per cent (or USD 6.7 trillion) to global GDP. For example, it is estimated that between 1990 and 2014, migrants added GBP 175 billion and GBP 155

billion to the GDP of the United Kingdom and Germany, respectively.

FACT: Available data reveal that international remittances reached USD 702 billion in 2020 (up from USD 128 billion in 2000). Remittances to low- and middle-income countries already outstrip both ODA and FDI, significantly contributing to poverty alleviation and development.

Figure 12. International remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (1990–2020)



Source: World Bank, n.d. (accessed June 2021).

Note: All numbers are in current (nominal) USD billion.

For more information of migrants' contributions consult the chapter [Reflections on Migrants' Contributions in an Era of Increasing Disruption and Disinformation](#) in the [World Migration Report 2020](#); for more information on international remittances flows consult the chapter [Migration and Migrants: A Global Overview](#) of the [World Migration Report 2022](#).

Do migrant steal jobs from locals?

FACT: Although migrants are represented across all skill levels, many among them work in the so-called 3D jobs (dirty, dangerous, and demanding) such as in construction, domestic work, or hospitality. These jobs tend to be the least favored by the native-born.

FACT: Many countries of destination rely on international migrants to address labor market shortages. The COVID-19 pandemic has shed a light on the essential roles that migrant workers have long played in the functioning of society, including in critical sectors such as healthcare and the food industry.

FACT: Migrants provide a source of economic dynamism globally, and are overrepresented in innovation and patents, arts and sciences awards, start-ups, and successful companies.

For more information on migrants' contributions, consult the chapter [Reflections on Migrants' Contributions in an Era of Increasing Disruption and Disinformation](#) in the [World Migration Report 2020](#). To learn more about the role migrants played during the COVID-19 pandemic, read the chapter [The Great Disrupter: COVID-19's impact on migration, mobility and migrants globally](#) in the [World Migration Report 2022](#).

Do migrants bring diseases and put pressure on the healthcare systems of destination countries?

FACT: Migrants are not automatically vulnerable to poor health outcomes. It is the conditions associated with different phases of the migration journey (pre-migration, transit, arrival, and return) that may negatively or positively affect their health.

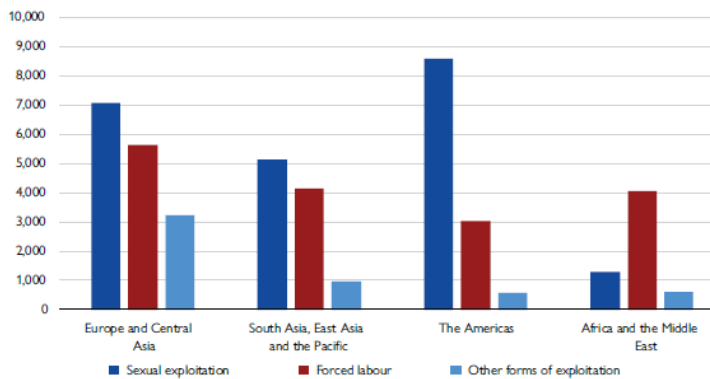
FACT: Migrants are over-represented among workers in the healthcare sector, from care workers to nurses, from doctors to medical researchers. During the COVID-19 pandemic the contributions of migrants to the health systems in their countries of destination was often highlighted and acknowledged.

FACT: People who migrate voluntarily are often healthier than those who stay behind and may display what is known as the "Healthy Migrant Effect".

If you want to learn more about migration and health read the [Migration and health: Current issues, governance and knowledge gaps](#) in the [World Migration Report 2020](#). To learn more about the role migrants played during the COVID-19 pandemic, read the chapter [The Great Disrupter: COVID-19's impact on migration, mobility and migrants globally](#) in the [World Migration Report 2022](#).

Are all female victims of trafficking sex workers?

Figure 3. Number of detected trafficking victims, by form of exploitation and region of detection, 2018



Source: UNODC, 2021.

FACT: While females still make up the largest share of identified victims (around 65% in total, with 46% women and 19% girls), the gender profile of identified victims has been changing over time. Males are also victims of trafficking (20% men and 15% boys), especially for forced labor in which they constitute nearly 60 per cent of identified victims.

FACT: There are differences in the forms of exploitation between regions: while trafficking for sexual exploitation is predominant in many regions, the most prevalent form of exploitation in Africa and the Middle East is forced labor.

FACT: Trafficking victims' gender and age profiles vary from one region to another: more children than adults are detected in Sub-Saharan Africa, while adult females make the greatest share of identified victims in Europe, North America and Asia, and adult male victims are more detected in North Africa and the Middle East.

If you want to learn more about Human Trafficking, read the chapter **Human Trafficking in Migration Pathways: Trends, Challenges and New Forms of Cooperation** in the **World Migration Report 2022**.

Shouldn't we stop migrants to reduce the threat of terrorism?

FACT: Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are more likely to be the victims of violent extremism than the perpetrators of those acts. Violent extremism is a driver for internal displacement and migration.

FACT: The majority of recent terrorist attacks were committed by citizens of the country where they occurred. The overwhelming majority of terrorist attacks worldwide occur in developing and least developed countries, particularly those affected by conflict and violence.

To learn more about this topic, consult the chapter [Migration, violent extremism and social exclusion](#) in the [World Migration Report 2018](#).

This Fact-Checkers' Toolkit has been produced by [IOM Research](#) (research@iom.int).

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