

Key Findings

- Geography is one of the most significant factors shaping patterns of migration and displacement over the long term. 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.
- This chapter explores recent events and changes in the context of long-term migration patterns and trends, with reference to the six United Nations regions (Africa; Asia; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; Northern America; and Oceania).
- The implementation of COVID-19-related mobility restrictions looks different across the six regions, with some regions maintaining restrictions to a higher degree (e.g. Asia) compared to other regions (e.g. Europe). The long-term regional migration trends since 1990, however, have not been greatly impacted by the pandemic, although there has been wide variation in the implementation of COVID-19 responses, such as on entry restrictions and migrants' access to vaccination programming.
- Migration in Africa continues to be predominantly intraregional, with around 21 million African international migrants living in another African country in 2020, up from 18 million in 2015, in part due to subregional free movement arrangements. The number of Africans living in other UN regions was lower at around 17 million, with the majority (11 million) in Europe.
- Europe also has a large number of intraregional migrants (44 million), again, in part due to free movement arrangements in the region. Unlike Africa, however, there has been a significant increase in migration to Europe from other regions over the last three decades. In 2020 more than 40 million international migrants from other UN regions were living in Europe.
- In contrast to Africa and Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean has been dominated by emigration to other regions, especially Northern America. In 2020, over 25 million migrants had made the journey north, with the Latin American and Caribbean population living in Northern America increasing from an estimated 10 million in 1990.

- International displacement within and from Asia is a major regional feature, with the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan top origin countries of refugees in the world in 2020. Persecution of Rohingya in recent years has led to Myanmar becoming the third largest refugee origin country in the region.
- The ongoing economic and political situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has created one of the largest displacement and migration crises worldwide. Approximately 5.6 million Venezuelans had left the country as of June 2021, and roughly 85 per cent have moved to another country in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Internal displacement due to disaster is a key feature in several regions, most especially Asia, but is noticeably present in all six world UN regions. While less developed countries often endure the worst climate-related internal displacements, it is clear that no geographic region is immune. In 2020, for example, wildfires resulted in 23,000 new displacements in Greece, Spain and France. Storm and hurricane events also caused hundreds of thousands of internal displacements, causing loss of life and other devastation across the globe.

Takeaway for Policy

Regional differences and complexities provide an important perspective to understanding migration. So often, we read and hear about migration from a national perspective, often portrayed as a negative domestic political issue. But this dominant focus can mask the reality that migration patterns and processes are very closely linked to geography, and that key regional features developed over decades, if not centuries, continue to play a central role in how and where people migrate internationally. Greater recognition of regional and subregional migration patterns, variations and complexities can assist in formulating strategic and sustainable policy responses.



The full chapter is available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022-chapter-3>.



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

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