



Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam remain important origins for international migrants, both moving within Asia and overseas. China is both a major source of migrants and a destination for students and persons with skills. On a smaller scale Thailand is important both as host country and as of the origin of migrant workers.

Women migrants, remittances and refugees

Nearly half of the world's migrants now are women, the UN reports, and they outnumber male migrants in the developed countries.

The most recent estimate of the total amount of remittances that migrant workers send home to developing countries is US\$167 billion, in 2005. This estimate is double the amount actually reported but may not reflect entirely the remittance flows going through informal channels. Moreover, the multiplier effect of these transfers in the countries that receive them has been estimated at 2 or 2.5 resulting from the fact that remittances, even when used for consumption, stimulate demand and support local enterprises. Hence, overall, remittances could have an impact equivalent to about half a trillion US dollars.

The apparent stagnation in the number of migrants within regions often stems from the settlement of civil conflicts and the subsequent repatriation of refugees, rather than from a slowing of cross-border movement for other purposes, according to UN demographers. Slow growth in the number of international migrants living in Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, is accounted for by a drop in the number of refugees from 5.4 million in 1990 to 2.75 million in 2005, offsetting other gains. The overall recent decline of the migrant stock in Latin America is due to repatriation of 1.2 million Central American refugees in the 1990s.

Figures from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development show that Eastern European countries have replaced those in North Africa as major sources of migrants to Western Europe. They also indicate that sometime around the end of the twentieth century, China replaced Mexico as the major source of migrants to the 30 economically advanced OECD countries—primarily to those outside of Europe.

Despite tensions in many receiving countries, more than 50 per cent of governments surveyed by the UN in 2005 expressed an intention to maintain incoming migrant flows at roughly the same level. Just about 20 per cent had as objective the reduction of incoming flows, but that share was down from 40 per cent in 1996. Six per cent of governments favoured higher levels of immigration in 2005.

[To request a preview interview with a senior UN official or obtain regional fact sheets on migration and development, contact Oisika Chakrabarti, 1-212-963-8264, \[chakrabarti@un.org\]\(mailto:chakrabarti@un.org\), or Tim Wall, 1-212-963-5851, \[wallt@un.org\]\(mailto:wallt@un.org\), of the UN Department of Public Information, Development Section.](#)

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