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# MIGRATION POLICY PRACTICE

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COVID-19 information desk at a point of entry. © IOM 2020/Carlos Oliver CRUZ

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## Introduction

*Solon Ardittis and Frank Laczko*<sup>1</sup>

Unlike what several commentators had claimed or predicted, 2020 did not mark the dawn of an “age of immobility”. While the pandemic may have disrupted some of the more traditional dynamics and norms of global migration, and reduced the overall levels of pre-COVID-19 cross-border mobility, it has not brought international migration to a halt.

In Europe, to take but one example, while Frontex has registered a significant decrease in detections of irregular crossings in the first five months of 2020, it has also witnessed a threefold increase in illegal crossings on the Central Mediterranean route compared with the same period in 2019.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, COVID-19 restrictions appear to have led to an increase in the use of more risky and costly smuggling services in other parts of the world too, not least in the Northern Triangle of Central America with people fleeing the crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (UNODC, 2020).

On the other hand, as has been duly documented throughout the past year, COVID-19 has not affected all communities, native and foreign-born, in the same way.<sup>2</sup> Not only have border closures and other restrictions, in particular, increased the risks of migratory journeys by pushing people into more perilous routes and processes, and oftentimes stranding a number of them into unsafe environments, but they have also impacted a range of critical areas such as access to health care, social support, jobs and income. They have led to a reduction in remittances and increased migrants’ vulnerability to exploitation, including trafficking in persons. The difficulty of social distancing for migrants in transit and destination countries has also meant that people trying to migrate irregularly during this period have been at a higher risk of contracting the virus. According to the Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), COVID-19–related mortality rates for immigrants could be significant, exceeding those of the native-born population.

On a more positive note, the pandemic has also shed light on the critical role migrants can play as essential workers in a number of key sectors such as health care, supply chains and agricultural systems. According to IOM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, migrants constitute a significant share among critical sectors as well as sectors that are most affected by the crisis. For example, more than 13 per cent of all services and sales workers in 7 of the 20 countries with the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases are foreign-born (IOM, n.d.). As Ylva Johansson, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, recently remarked, “COVID really opens our eyes to how much our societies depend on migration” (Islam, 2020).

Looking to 2021, with the pandemic far from receding, and with lingering unknowns about the efficiency and equity of the unfolding vaccination efforts, it appeared fitting for *Migration Policy Practice (MPP)* to reflect on some of the key COVID-19-related and non-COVID-19-related features of international migration in the past year and to anticipate key global mobility trends in 2021.

In particular, some of the key questions that have guided this exercise include:

- (a) The most important migration policy challenges for 2021, in the field of both regular and irregular migration, based on key trends witnessed in 2020;
- (b) The anticipated levels and structure of migration flows in the course of 2021 – for example, in terms of types of migration, source countries, and number and profiles of migrants, based on current and anticipated developments, particularly on the pandemic front;
- (c) The most salient migration data collection and processing challenges currently experienced worldwide, and the way in which these are likely to evolve and improve in the course of 2021, including through regional and international cooperation.

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<sup>2</sup> See also: IOM, 2020.

This special edition of *MPP*, after reflecting on some of the key developments in global migration in 2020, examines the anticipated migration trends in Africa, Asia, Central America, China, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United States in 2021.

In his opening article, Frank Laczko discusses the five key trends that have defined global migration in 2020. These include: a dramatic fall in global flows after years of growth, with estimates showing that due to COVID-19, the number of international migrants may have fallen in mid-2020 by around 2 million globally; a persistence in the risks taken by migrants to cross borders irregularly, with more than 3,000 being reported dead or missing in 2020; higher COVID-19–related infections and death rates for migrants in some countries; changing public attitudes to migration and growing anti-migrant sentiment; and a fall by 14 per cent of global remittances.

Following on from Laczko’s diagnostic, are there any clear trends emerging for 2021? While there may be notable variations among regions based on a range of objective factors, COVID-19 inevitably appears set to remain a key driver of migration dynamics in the months to come.

In **Africa**, Aderanti Adepoju suggests that the unexpected speed of the spread of the global pandemic may have exposed many weaknesses in African countries’ migration policies and processes. COVID-19 pandemic responses have been largely ad hoc, and task forces have had to be quickly established to address the incidence and spread of the virus as many infected persons (including nationals returning for various reasons) have contributed to the increased morbidity in COVID-19 cases. As a consequence, given the current disruptions in human mobility and closure of borders as a result of COVID-19, intraregional migration may continue to be a dominant form of mobility in 2021. In addition, prolonged extensions of travel restrictions by governments of certain destination countries may push more Africans towards irregular channels of migration. If this happens, irregular migration, especially among the youth, may likely increase unless more legal channels are enabled.

In **Asia**, Binod Khadria and Ratnam Mishra question whether Asia’s position as a continent largely of migrant origin – particularly India, Bangladesh, China, the Philippines and Indonesia – will be maintained in 2021 or undergo significant change due to the pandemic severely affecting mobility globally. In the authors’ view, the Gulf in West Asia may transform from being destination countries to transit countries

for highly skilled migrants aspiring to move to the West. For Asian emigrants, there may also be a diversification of destinations outside the United States of America because of the instability of mobility policies that have been lingering there since 9/11 and have reached their pinnacle during the last four years of the Trump Administration. Mobility could be eased if the Biden Administration’s anticipated lifting of barriers for various categories of migrants is emulated in other countries, particularly those that had withdrawn from the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

In **Central America**, Gabriella Sanchez stresses that the consequences of the measures aimed to contain migration across the region have derived to a large degree from recent United States migration policy. The continued, and in some instances increasing, precarity in Mexico and Central America, combined with the continued grip of the pandemic, will continue to pose significant challenges to the implementation of efforts to govern migration effectively across this corridor. Repression is unlikely to deter the mobility efforts of those seeking safety (although they can further their vulnerabilities), and the continued reduction in legal, safe and orderly paths to migrate in Mexico and Central America is unlikely to contain future flows. While Central American migrants had until recently been able to travel freely across the region, the containment they now face in Guatemala (instead of at the usual ports of entry into Mexico) suggests that a new era of enforcement may accompany the arrival of Joe Biden to the White House.

In **China**, Huiyao Wang, Xiaoxiao Chen, Zhongao Li and Huiyi Chen suggest that it is unlikely that COVID-19 will significantly impact the long-term trend of international talent coming to China and Chinese students moving abroad to study. China is opening its doors to cooperation with more countries, as witnessed by the development of the Hainan Free Trade Zone and cooperation networks between China and ASEAN countries, and it needs a variety of international talent to support this deepening international cooperation, promote structural transformation and develop an innovative economy. China also needs more international talent to raise its position in global supply chains. Notwithstanding these long-term trends and aspirations, China, as the world’s third-largest migrant origin country (with over 60 million in the diaspora around the world) and also an emerging destination country for international migrants, has clearly suffered from COVID-19–related travel restrictions and closed borders, as well as from the resurgence of anti-migration sentiment.



In **Europe**, according to Andrew Geddes, there is and will remain significant uncertainty about migration to, from and within the continent, given that it now seems likely that restrictions on travel will continue throughout 2021 – with vaccine inequalities and roll-out also potentially affecting travel and migration beyond 2021. Furthermore, labour migration in particular is an issue where European countries, not the European Union, retain the prerogative to determine the numbers of migrants to be admitted. While the pandemic drew public attention to the vital role played by migrant workers in key sectors, there have also been clear trends towards closure of pathways for regular migration, particularly to lower-skilled employment. In addition, when thinking about trends, Geddes points to the fact that no debate about migration is likely to be resolved by appeals to “the facts” alone because data, evidence and facts will continue to be filtered by values and beliefs.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, William Mejia foresees that in view of the volume and the number of countries involved, the first migration policy challenge in 2021 will be the integration of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. This will run parallel to the challenge of managing the transit of migrants and asylum seekers, amid deplorable conditions and great risks, to the United States, due to the impact of COVID-19 on the near suspension of regular migration in the region, with some exceptions regarding seasonal workers – for example, Mexicans to the United States and Panamanians and Nicaraguans to Costa Rica. In terms of extracontinental migration from the region, particularly to traditional destinations in Europe (Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, among others), which had already declined prior to the pandemic, a significant change is not expected this year, given the uncertainties surrounding the recovery of most European economies.

In the **United States**, Joanne van Selm anticipates that the challenges facing the country and its new leadership in 2021 will be vast, ranging from reshaping and informing public opinion domestically, to mending relationships with neighbours on migration (and other) issues; from determining the best strategy to reform and “reset” immigration, to working out how to reunite 545 separated families. A return to immigration as a normal, accepted, understood and civilly discussed feature of American society and politics will clearly be the overarching challenge. On the other hand, according to van Selm, there is a widely understood need to not just wind back to the policy that prevailed in 2016, but actively reform and update United States immigration policy. In particular, the broadest task at hand will be to balance the

divergent demands of the two Americas over which Biden says he presides – those in the majority who maintain the welcoming approach and the vocal minority who demand an end to new immigration.

*MPP's* editors would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this special issue under very short notice and, for most of them, during the 2020 winter holiday season. All the articles were completed by 25 January 2021 and therefore only reflect the state of knowledge available as of the end of 2020. ■

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# COVID-19 and migration in 2020: Five key trends

Frank Laczko<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Before considering how migration patterns may change in 2021 in this issue of *Migration Policy Practice*, it is worth pausing to reflect on what were some of the key trends in global migration in 2020. It was a very exceptional year in the history of migration, as most countries introduced mobility restrictions in response to COVID-19. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the world was experiencing a global pandemic, and soon after many countries introduced border closures and travel restrictions to try to limit the spread of COVID-19. In April 2020, it was reported by the Pew Research Centre that 91 per cent of the world's population was living in a country which had imposed restrictions on people arriving from other countries who are neither citizens nor residents (Connor, 2020). These restrictions have remained in place in many countries since April 2020: "As of 4th January 2021, a total of 226 countries, territories or areas have issued 111,879 travel-related measures ... Of these, 29,057 were reported as entry restrictions and 81,822 were reported as conditions for authorized entry" (IOM, 2021a).

It is difficult to know what the full impact of COVID-19 will be on migration patterns around the world, given the time lag in reporting such data. Much of the data available at present, for example, only covers the first half of 2020. Another limitation is that the work of national statistical offices (NSOs) has been impacted by COVID-19. Global surveys of NSOs conducted by the World Bank and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in 2020 show that COVID-19 had a significant negative impact on the ability of statistical offices to collect data in 2020. The coronavirus has caused serious disruptions to data collection, especially in low- and middle-income countries, with many having to cancel or postpone censuses and surveys. In May 2020, for example, 96 per cent of NSOs reported

that they had stopped face-to-face data collection (UN DESA, 2020a). Bearing in mind these limitations, the emerging evidence suggests at least five key trends which can be identified. These are outlined in this short article.

## 1. Global migration falls dramatically after years of growth

In December 2020, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) released new figures indicating that the global stock of migrants in the world had increased to 281 million, up from 221 million in 2010. But more recently, there are signs that the global flow of migrants has fallen substantially. For example, UN DESA (2020b) estimates that due to COVID-19, the number of international migrants may have fallen in mid-2020 by around 2 million globally. This figure corresponds to a decrease of approximately 27 per cent in the growth expected between July 2019 and June 2020.

Similarly, in a study for G20 countries, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that migration flows fell dramatically during the first half of 2020. The four agencies concluded that "overall, 2020 is projected to be a historical low for international migration in the OECD and G20 area". Before the global pandemic, permanent migration flows to OECD countries reached 5.3 million in 2019. In the first half of 2020, recorded migration flows fell by 46 per cent compared with the same period in 2019. And figures for the second quarter of 2020 suggest that the fall was even sharper at 72 per cent. (OECD et al., 2020)

Refugee flows were also affected. During the first half of 2020, there were an estimated 586,100 new claims for asylum lodged globally with States or UNHCR in "first instance" procedures, 32 per cent less than the same period in 2019. During the same period, only 17,300 refugees were resettled, 46 per cent fewer than during the first half of 2019, when the number was 32,000. (OECD et al., 2020)

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It should also be recalled that as a result of border closures and travel restrictions, tens of thousands of migrants found themselves stranded in 2020, unable to return to their countries of origin. Calculating the size of this problem is not easy given that definitions of “stranded migrant” may vary considerably across countries. But IOM (2020a) calculated in July 2020 that nearly 3 million people (2,751,454) could be identified as known cases of migrants stranded abroad – from public and official sources and direct requests for assistance to the Organization.

Despite these dramatic reductions, some forms of migration have continued in 2020. Many countries introduced exemptions to travel restrictions to ensure that some types of migration could continue. For example, some countries took steps to ensure that “essential workers” in health care, agriculture and transportation could continue to enter their territories. The tightening of border controls also did not bring an end to irregular forms of migration.

## 2. Migrants continue to make perilous journeys – with more than 3,000 reported dead or missing in 2020

Across the world, many countries reported a significant decline in irregular migration in 2020. For example, in Europe, Frontex (2021) reported a sharp fall in the numbers of illegal border-crossings on Europe’s main migratory routes, reaching its lowest since the Agency began collecting such data in 2009. Along the United States southwest border with Mexico, border apprehensions fell by 50 per cent between March and April 2020, but have since increased, rising each month between May and September 2020 (Papademetriou, 2020).

Despite the reduction in cross-border migration in 2020, migrants continued to embark on perilous journeys, and more than 3,000 migrants were reported missing or dead in 2020 according to IOM’s Missing Migrants Project. In some cases, migrants resorted to using new migration routes to avoid tougher border controls. Routes that had not seen significant numbers in recent years, such as the sea route between West Africa and the Spanish Canary Islands, again became important. Numbers along this route, which is particularly hazardous due to the length of the sea journey, increased from under 2,700

in 2019 to more than 21,400 in 2020.<sup>2</sup> The number of arrivals in the Canary Islands remained low after the mid-2000s but has begun to rise again since mid-September 2020, with more than 2,000 arrivals recorded that month and more than 5,000 recorded each month since. This increase, while far below the numbers seen on this route in the mid-2000s, is of particular concern as it has also led to a dramatic rise in the number of deaths at sea, with more than 500 recorded in 2020,<sup>3</sup> compared to 210 recorded in 2019 and less than 50 deaths recorded each year between 2014 and 2018.

## 3. COVID-19–related infection and death rates are higher for migrants in some countries

Migrants especially face a number of health risks during a global pandemic – it is well documented that they often lack access to health care, are more likely to live in overcrowded and substandard housing, and tend to do low-paid jobs which cannot be done remotely from home. Furthermore, migrants are usually more exposed to health risks as they are over-represented in jobs in the health-care sector. Data on migration and health tends to be limited because relatively few countries disaggregate health indicator data by migratory status. Even in the more developed European region, WHO (2020a) recently reported that only 25 of its 53 member States’ health and information systems collect refugee and migrant health data. Furthermore, some evidence is emerging for a few countries and regions which suggests that the incidence of COVID-19 is higher among migrants. For example, in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, migrants seem to be more likely to have been infected by COVID-19 (OECD, 2020). In the case of Norway, among the confirmed cases of COVID-19, it was found that 31 per cent are foreign-born, which is almost twice as high as their share of the population. OECD data for the Lisbon region and Ontario also point in the same direction. However, in the case of Italy, only 5 per cent of cases concern foreigners, or only about half of their share of the population (OECD, 2020). Given the different demographic profiles of countries and differences in COVID-19–related data collection, it is not easy to make comparisons between them. It is also the case that few countries collect data

<sup>2</sup> More information is available at <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>.

<sup>3</sup> This is as of 23 November 2020.

on the number of people who die from COVID-19 disaggregated by migratory status. However, in some countries, it is possible to analyse mortality data by migratory status even without obtaining data on the cause of death. Such data for France, Sweden, and the Netherlands indicate higher death rates among immigrants during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020. Drawing together this information, OECD (2020) concludes that “immigrants have paid a higher toll with respect to the incidence of COVID-19, with higher infection risk and higher mortality, despite having a younger age on average”. Further evidence from a review of studies in 82 high-income countries also supports these findings, suggesting that migrants are at high risk of exposure to, and infection with, COVID-19. It was also found based on analysis of data sets available in these countries that there was a disproportionate representation of migrants in reported COVID-19 deaths (Hayward et al., 2020).

#### 4. Reports of increasing anti-migrant sentiment

COVID-19 may be changing public attitudes to migration. On the one hand, there may be a growing appreciation of the fact that so many health-care workers are migrants and that so many migrants are “key workers” providing essential services.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, there are fears that foreigners are being blamed for the current global pandemic in many countries.

In May 2020, IOM’s Director General António Vitorino warned that “we are seeing an alarming increase in anti-migrant rhetoric, in particular the scapegoating of migrants and others in the public domain and online” (IOM, 2020b). In the same month, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres expressed fears that COVID-19 is contributing to “a tsunami of hate and xenophobia” (IOM, 2020c).

At the end of 2020, WHO (2020b) released the results of an online global survey of nearly 30,000 migrants and refugees. In the survey, respondents were asked about their experiences of perceived discrimination. Migrants and refugees were asked whether they were treated worse, the same or better than before the pandemic. Most respondents reported no change, but a significant minority reported that they felt that

discrimination against refugees and migrants had worsened. For example, at least 30 per cent of those aged 20–29 felt that discrimination had increased since the pandemic. WHO (2020b) also reported that people living on the street, in insecure accommodation and in asylum centres particularly felt that they were treated worse than before.

Another source of evidence is Wikipedia, which monitors incidents of xenophobia and racism specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. Such incidents can be found in more than 40 countries. For example, in the case of Ethiopia, it is reported that “violence towards foreigners has been reported amidst the pandemic, with some locals attacking foreigners on social media by publishing photos of them linking them to the coronavirus” (Wikipedia, n.d.). Another example comes from Fiji, where the “state-owned broadcaster FBC reported that a local Chinese had been berated publicly at a bus station by a man claiming the victim had COVID-19” (Wikipedia, n.d.). These are just two of numerous incidents which have been reported since the onset of the pandemic. While it is difficult to assess the full scale of anti-migrant sentiment, these are worrying signs of a potentially growing problem (IOM, 2020b).

#### 5. Remittances forecast to fall by 14 per cent

Approximately 1 in 9 people around the world depends on remittances sent by a migrant relative (IOM, 2021b). Remittances are a vital lifeline for many people in developing countries, helping them to pay for medicines, health care and education as well as basic necessities. Migrant workers in many of the countries with the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases – the United States of America, the Russian Federation, India, France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Germany – sent home nearly a quarter of all remittances in 2018. In April 2020, the World Bank (2020a) estimated that remittances to low- and middle-income countries would fall by 20 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019. After it became clear that remittances did not fall sharply along certain migration corridors, the World Bank adjusted its estimates. For example, in countries such as Mexico, Egypt and Nepal, monthly remittances in the second and/or third quarters of 2020 increased to figures higher than in 2019. The World Bank (2020a) originally estimated that remittances to low- and middle-income countries would decline to USD 445 billion in 2020, then adjusted its forecast. The revised estimate suggested that the figure would be USD 508 billion (World Bank, 2020b). Furthermore,

<sup>4</sup> See the Global Migration Data Portal’s COVID-19 section for data on the percentage of doctors and nurses who are migrants in OECD countries (IOM, 2021b).



it was projected that remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries would fall by 14 per cent in 2021 compared to pre–COVID-19 levels.

The somewhat less-than-expected fall in remittances could be explained by several factors. It is possible that migrant workers in richer countries decided to send home more amounts of money to their relatives in poorer countries who may have been badly affected by the pandemic. It is also possible that currency fluctuations may have had an impact on remittance data. As explained on the Global Migration Data Portal, emerging economies faced a sharp currency depreciation in February–March 2020 (IOM, 2021b). This may have led to the usual amount of remittances sent being converted to higher amounts in the receiving countries.

### Concluding remarks: Better data is needed to understand the full impact of COVID-19 on global migration

This brief article has sketched out some of the ways in which COVID-19 is reshaping international migration based on very limited existing data sources. It should be stressed that data on migration is often scarce and patchy. To give but one example, in its latest report on migration statistics to the United Nations Secretary-General, UNSD (2021) notes that since 2010, statistics on migrant inflows are available for only 54 countries. Without good migration data, it is likely to be much more difficult to develop appropriate migration responses to COVID-19.

Without more data disaggregated by migratory status, it will be hard to assess the full impact of COVID-19 on migrants and migration. Closing the data gap will also require investing in more data innovations. Recent global surveys of NSOs suggest that many countries could learn more about the impact of COVID-19 by making better use of nontraditional data sources (UN DESA, 2020a). For example, the use of geospatial information and technologies has not been mainstreamed yet in COVID-19–related data collection in most NSOs. Looking ahead, working more closely with the private sector to leverage many forms of mobility data may become more common. There are already signs that many NSOs are engaging in new public–private partnerships to bridge the data gaps created by the pandemic (UN DESA, 2020a). Such partnerships will need to be managed carefully to not only protect the privacy and security of migrants but also offer the potential of providing new data insights. ■

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## Mobility and migration data in 2021: Perspectives from Africa

*Aderanti Adepoju<sup>1</sup>*

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel disruptions, restrictions and lockdowns in 2020 directly impacted mobility globally. At the early stages of the pandemic and resulting travel restrictions and border closures, it was reported that regional migration within West and Central Africa almost halved compared with 2019 flows (IOM, 2020). It can be said that in the African context, the restrictions significantly affected remittances and the tourism, travel and hospitality sectors, among others, further exacerbating unemployment in nearly all sectors. As in the rest of the world, many businesses in Africa have shut down or are surviving under very strenuous conditions. The informal sector, which accounts for an estimated 65 per cent of the total economy, consisting of activities ranging from agricultural production to small-scale businesses of varying types, received little to no government support to stay afloat. The effects of the lockdown of the economy have been devastating for many of these businesses.

### The most important migration policy challenges for 2021, in the field of both regular and irregular migration

The unexpected speed of the spread of the global pandemic exposed many weaknesses in African countries' migration policies and processes – including their protection systems, migration objectives, and receiving and return processes. COVID-19 pandemic responses were largely ad hoc, and task forces had to be quickly established to address the incidence and spread of the virus as many infected persons (including nationals returning for various reasons) contributed to the increased morbidity in COVID-19 cases.

Connected to the weak migration systems is the high volume of irregular migration flows, trafficking in persons, smuggling and child labour within the continent. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have been working to create labour opportunities for a growing young population by advocating more openness to trade and human mobility. Yet countries are at different stages of the process, making it difficult to encourage nations to create an environment where labour opportunities can be taken up by the youth within the continent.

Legislative instruments and policy and institutional coherence tend to be weak across Africa. The limitation is mainly due to the general lack of coordination among the various ministries and agencies dealing with migration-related issues. Where data is available on movements and on specific indicators such as reasons for entry or exit of immigrants entering or departing from various African countries, it is not always in a form that is accessible for inter-organizational sharing and policy decision-making that properly target migrant groups with relevant initiatives. Thus, proper coherence is required to address migration policies and processes at the national level, including the cooperation of all stakeholders in the migration management process – such as those in the diaspora returning temporarily for events, migrants leaving the continent without proper documentation through the Mediterranean and other routes, as well as return migrants.

Additionally, in order for African countries to better harness the benefits of migration for socioeconomic development, more attention needs to be paid to developing comprehensive strategies, openness and modifications to migration agreements between sending and receiving countries. For example, African migration policy is inclined towards continental integration visible in the African Economic Community and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreements. The eight African RECs have various agreements fostering free movement of people, yet more specific regional and global agreements are required (bilateral, multilateral, etc.) to promote migration for development at the source and destination economies.

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### How are the levels and structure of migration flows in Africa likely to evolve in the course of 2021?

Given the current disruptions of human mobility and closure of borders as a result of COVID-19, intraregional migration may continue to be a dominant form of mobility in 2021. While it is expected that many Africans will still be interested in migrating internally and internationally in search of better economic opportunities once travel restrictions are eased, prolonged extensions of travel restrictions by governments of certain destination countries may push more Africans towards irregular channels of migration. If this happens, irregular migration, especially among the youth, may likely increase unless more legal channels are enabled.

Once borders are reopened, intraregional migration is expected to resume, but whether pre-COVID-19 flows will be restored is a difficult question to answer.

Migration flows are typically from semi-arid regions and poorer countries to relatively wealthier countries along the coast. Poorer countries in the semi-arid regions of Africa are expected to experience massive climate-induced migrations as most of the people in such regions (the Sahel, in particular) depend on rain-fed agriculture, and extreme poverty limits their adaptive capacity to effectively withstand climate-related stress. Economic impact is expected to differ by sector, with small-scale farmers feeling the impacts of climate change, including through farmer–herdsmen conflicts. The impact on food deficit may further drive migration pressures. Given the expected fall in consumer demand associated with the economic downturn, enterprises and artisans could experience business closures, and measures will have to be taken to avoid job losses and the consequent decline in economic output.

Migration will continue to flow from those areas where development processes are slower in comparison to other more developed countries in the region. The mobile population will continue to be young people with a mix of women and men seeking income-generating opportunities; regional cross-border migration and possibly intracontinental migration may increase given the increased security protocols in terms of travel restrictions to the rest of the world. However, measures such as those taken by the new United States Administration to lift travel and visa bans hitherto imposed on several African countries – including Nigeria, Eritrea, the Sudan, the United

Republic of Tanzania, Libya and Somalia – may ameliorate these consequences.

The AfCFTA agreement which came into force on 1 January 2021 fosters trade openness and eases travel documentation requirements, further facilitating the free movement of people, goods and services. The African Visa Openness Index (2020) – the extent to which an African country is open to travellers from other African countries with regard to entry visa – shows that the Gambia, Seychelles and Benin allow visa-free access to all African countries, thus having the highest visa openness rank. A record 54 per cent of the continent is accessible for African visitors without visa, or one can be obtained on arrival. About 21 out of the 54 African countries have an index of 0.8 or more. Another 24 African countries or 44 per cent offer e-visa programmes, easing the travel documentation processes.

However, a number of challenges to transregional mobility still remain – for example, the pilot programme introducing an immigration bond of between USD 5,000 and USD 15,000 for travellers to the United States from 23 countries, 15 of which are from Africa (*African Times*, 2020).<sup>2</sup> As noted above, unfavourable visa or entry regimes continue to be a driver of irregular migration.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the way work is being carried out, with increasing numbers of organizations closing physical locations and moving work to online platforms. This has presented an opportunity for highly skilled workers who are able to work remotely to potentially achieve their goal of earning better income without needing to leave their home country. When borders reopen, the digital shift could also mean more frequent travels of shorter durations in the future for skilled workers. However, poor infrastructure and access to technology remain a challenge in many African countries to date, and the consequences of being left behind in the global transformation as a result of technological challenges are dire to already declining economic growth.

Mobility can be expected to rise for those skilled African workers moving to the health-care and education sectors (Williams, 2020). The same rise in demand can be expected for some non-skilled services such as domestic care and farm work across

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<sup>2</sup> Also see: Federal Register, 2020.

and outside the continent. These are sectors where irregular migration has been dominant, for which African countries should consider stronger bilateral or multi-country agreements that foster migrant protection and allow better control over migrant agencies and labour agreements. The migration systems that foster migration for development can extend beyond the continent through proper labour market data and source–destination labour market agreements. New initiatives to be explored include labour market needs of destination countries that can be listed and advertised through labour attachés present across sending countries in Africa.

Given the expected decline in mobility and increased travel and transaction costs such as travel health certifications, it is important for Africa to create channels for regular migration and ease bureaucratic bottlenecks in obtaining documentation, in order to reduce pressures associated with irregular migration. There are some indications that the clampdown on irregular migration across Africa has had mixed effects. In some cases, migrants have found alternative routes, taking greater risks, while in other cases, the impact has been to reduce the number of irregular migrants. Moreover, trafficking continued and became more difficult to monitor as migration restrictions across Africa increased. Channels such as labour contract verification services that help those seeking unskilled employment across Africa, in Asia or across the rest of the globe would facilitate the use of proper documentation and reduce labour migration abuses for migrants.

**How are migration data collection and processing challenges currently experienced in Africa likely to evolve and improve in the course of 2021, including through regional and international cooperation?**

Migration regulation has become increasingly important, with control of irregular migration becoming a priority for many African countries. Migration regulation would benefit from data and identification integration across the continent. National identification documentation remains problematic in many African countries. In addition to this, scaling up those initiatives to harmonize certification across the continent would facilitate skill matching, but this has been constrained by

weak technical capacity and resource deficit. The resource problem may not improve in 2021 since many governments and international organizations are preoccupied with how to raise funds to deal with patent issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Integration of migration data has been challenging across Africa as its countries collect migration data differently, with the most common being through censuses, which may also make comparability difficult. Adequate population and administrative data are required to improve migration information. However, the recent training led by the African Union and its stakeholders to support national statistical bodies in developing a common approach to collecting migration data could improve the design, collection and processing of data of different countries. Yet some African countries have not been collecting migration-related data, a situation occasioned by capacity and resource deficit and a seeming lack of political will to inform the population and migration profile of a country. Efforts by international organizations such as IOM to conduct needs assessments could identify and bridge capacity deficits and improve the existing data and knowledge gaps. In the same vein, the European Union Trust Fund for migration in Africa should be used to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of migration data in Africa. It would be very interesting to find out, for instance, the contribution of African migrants in the medical profession to the fight against COVID-19 in industrialized countries, especially in Europe.

A few policy instruments such as the Nigerian National Migration Policy articulate modalities for enhancing inter-agency collaboration. Different countries are developing national migration policies and profiles in an effort to respond to their migration needs. However, migration policy documentations advanced at different paces across the continent and weak technical capacity on the part of national statistical departments in various countries have hindered progress. Effective implementation of the policy approaches to migration will require further institutional strengthening interventions, human capacity development, and broad-based sensitization to the benefits of inter-organizational and interregional cooperation, which can no longer be ignored. ■



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# Migration in Asia and its subregions: Data challenges and coping strategies for 2021

*Binod Khadria and Ratnam Mishra<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

Over the past decade, Asia, with a migrant stock of 77.2 million in 2015 and 83.5 million in 2019, has overtaken Europe. Five major destination countries in Asia hosting the majority of these migrants are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, India, China (including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China; and the Macao Special Administrative Region, China), Malaysia and Thailand (UN DESA, n.d.). However, Asia's share as a continent of migrant origin is much larger than as a destination. Five major countries of origin in Asia are India, Bangladesh, China, the Philippines and Indonesia. The question remains whether these positions would remain the same in 2021 or undergo significant change due to the COVID-19 pandemic severely affecting mobility globally. In this context, the challenge of achieving the first objective of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) assumes greater proportion – i.e. “[to] collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies” (United Nations, 2018).

This article notes the migrant stocks at midyear by major countries of migrant origin in Asia and their major destinations. Since the latest United Nations data available until mid-January 2021 is only up to 2019, it projects the trend of migrant stocks for the next two years (i.e. 2020 and 2021 in the continent and its five subregions: East Asia, West Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and South-East Asia) without taking into account the actual data for 2020 released on 15 January 2021 (UN DESA, 2020). The projections in this article have been made for three categories of data. The first is the projection of the overall and female migrant stocks in 2020 and 2021 in Asia as a whole and its subregions based on the five-year annual stock data from 2005 to 2015 and

then in 2019. The second category of data projects international migrant stocks in the age group 25–44 years for these two years (i.e. 2020 and 2021) in the same regions, from data for the same time period (i.e. 2005 to 2019). The third category gives the scenario of net migration rate (per 1,000 population) in Asia and its subregions as estimated by the United Nations from 2000 to 2025.

Accordingly, given the limited space, the three prime “policy challenges” flagged in this article are the relationship between overall stocks and flows of migrants through the changing net migration rate, the gendered status of female migrants and the status of youth migrants in the age group 25–44 years. Among the other aspects that we could have also highlighted are the educational, occupational and income profiles and languages of the migrants, but our rationale to prioritize women and youth migrant stocks is that these have been the hardest hit groups by COVID-19, with effects that would linger in 2021 and beyond. The article then points out the “data challenges” currently being experienced in collection and processing, and proposes strategies to cope with them.

The three data sets that the article addresses are all for regular documented migrants. There are not enough available data on irregular migration flows to and from Asia globally or regionally (IOM, 2017:306), nor has it been advised to try estimating the global population of irregular migrants (IOM, 2019:28). Bangladesh and Pakistan are two Asian countries that are the world's largest recipients of refugees. The numbers of applications for asylum and regularization of status are viable indicators, but relatively few countries globally have the capacity to fully isolate, monitor and collect data on irregular migration flows into or out of their territory. One reason is that not all irregular migrants are irregular at entry, but many undergo a change of status to irregular in situ due to reasons like visa overstay.

## Current data on migrant stocks from major origin countries of Asia in their destinations

Table 1 shows that the total number of Asian migrants in the world was 220.7 million in 2010; it was 248.8 million in 2015 and 271.6 million in 2019.

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**Table 1. Migrant stocks at midyear by leading countries of origin in Asia and their destinations by major country or region and the world: 2010, 2015 and 2019 (in millions)**

Year	Major destination	Major country of origin in Asia			
		Bangladesh	China	Philippines	India
2010	Australia / New Zealand	0.03	0.46	0.21	0.39
	Canada	0.05	0.61	0.45	0.52
	Europe	0.35	0.96	0.46	1.10
	Japan	0.01	0.69	0.21	0.02
	Malaysia	0.35	0.01	0.04	0.12
	Singapore	0.07	0.37	0.01	0.12
	United Kingdom	0.21	0.16	0.12	0.68
	United States of America	0.16	1.92	1.84	1.78
	West Asia (Gulf)	2.38	0.03	1.18	6.48
	WORLD	6.75	8.73	4.72	13.23
2015	Australia / New Zealand	0.04	0.60	0.28	0.52
	Canada	0.06	0.65	0.58	0.66
	Europe	0.38	1.06	0.51	1.27
	Japan	0.01	0.71	0.23	0.03
	Malaysia	0.39	0.01	0.11	0.14
	Singapore	0.08	0.45	0.02	0.15
	United Kingdom	0.22	0.20	0.13	0.81
	United States of America	0.22	2.68	1.98	2.39
	West Asia (Gulf)	2.88	0.03	1.46	8.30
	WORLD	7.31	10.16	5.52	15.93
2019	Australia / New Zealand	0.05	0.74	0.32	0.64
	Canada	0.06	0.69	0.63	0.71
	Europe	0.44	1.21	0.56	1.49
	Japan	0.01	0.78	0.26	0.03
	Malaysia	0.41	0.01	0.12	0.15
	Singapore	0.07	0.38	0.01	0.13
	United Kingdom	0.25	0.23	0.15	0.92
	United States of America	0.24	2.90	2.05	2.66
	West Asia (Gulf)	3.36	0.03	1.65	9.36
	WORLD	7.84	10.73	6.00	17.51

Source: Extracted and tabulated by authors using data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Population Division.

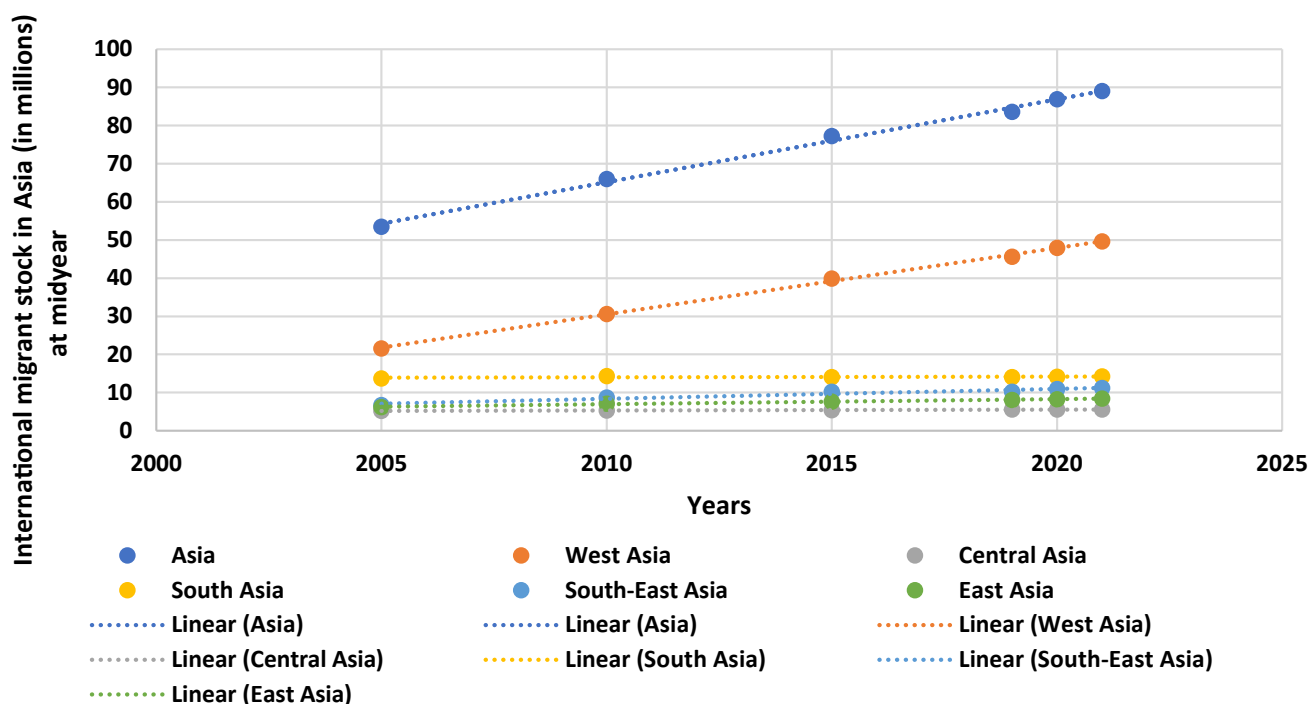
Among major countries of origin in Asia, India has continued to be the largest contributor of emigrants in the world. In 2010, India had sent 13.23 million emigrants to the rest of the world, which increased to 15.93 million in 2015 and 17.51 million in 2019. Its share in 2019 was far more than the shares of other major countries of origin like China, Bangladesh and the Philippines, which sent emigrant stocks of 10.73 million, 7.84 million and 6 million, respectively. The Gulf countries and the United States turned out to be the major destinations for migrants from India, the Philippines and Bangladesh; while for those from China, it has been the United States and Europe. It

is important to note that the United Nations source does not provide overall numbers of migrants originating from Asia as a whole, leaving the onerous task of adding the data for individual countries to the researchers and policymakers.

#### Immigrant stocks in Asia and its subregions: Overall, female and youth profiles

As per Figure 1, the immigrant stocks in Asia show an upward trend with estimated values of 86.88 million in 2020 and 89.05 million in 2021.

**Figure 1. Immigrant stocks (in million) in Asia and its five subregions at midyear (2005–2021)**



Source: Estimated by authors using data from UN DESA, Population Division.

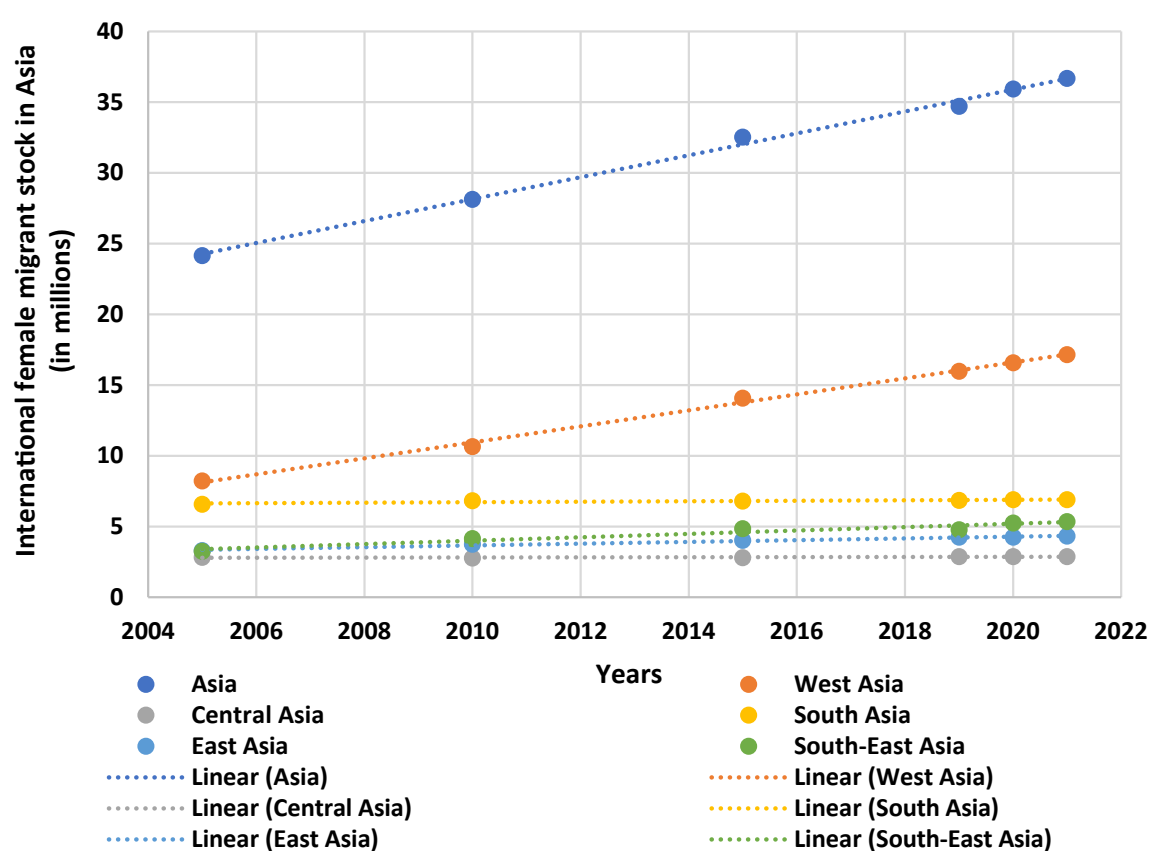


Among the subregions of Asia, West Asia (Gulf) shows the highest growth in immigrant stock as compared to the other subregions. However, in reality in the wake of COVID-19, not only has the flow of migration to West Asia (Gulf) started to slow down, but return migration from the region to India and other South Asian countries like Bangladesh has also ensued, thereby bringing the growth in the stocks lower than the projected estimates. In South-East Asia, Singapore and Malaysia are the major receiving countries,

which may be the reason for the marginally rising immigration trend in that region as compared to other subregions. Not much change has been observed in the migration trends of other subregions of Asia, particularly in South Asia.

As Figure 2 shows, in the case of female immigrants in Asia and its subregions, similar trends are projected, but in reality, such growth is unlikely to be realized.

**Figure 2. Immigrant stocks (in millions) in Asia and its five subregions at midyear (2005–2021): Females**



Source: Estimated by authors using data from UN DESA, Population Division.

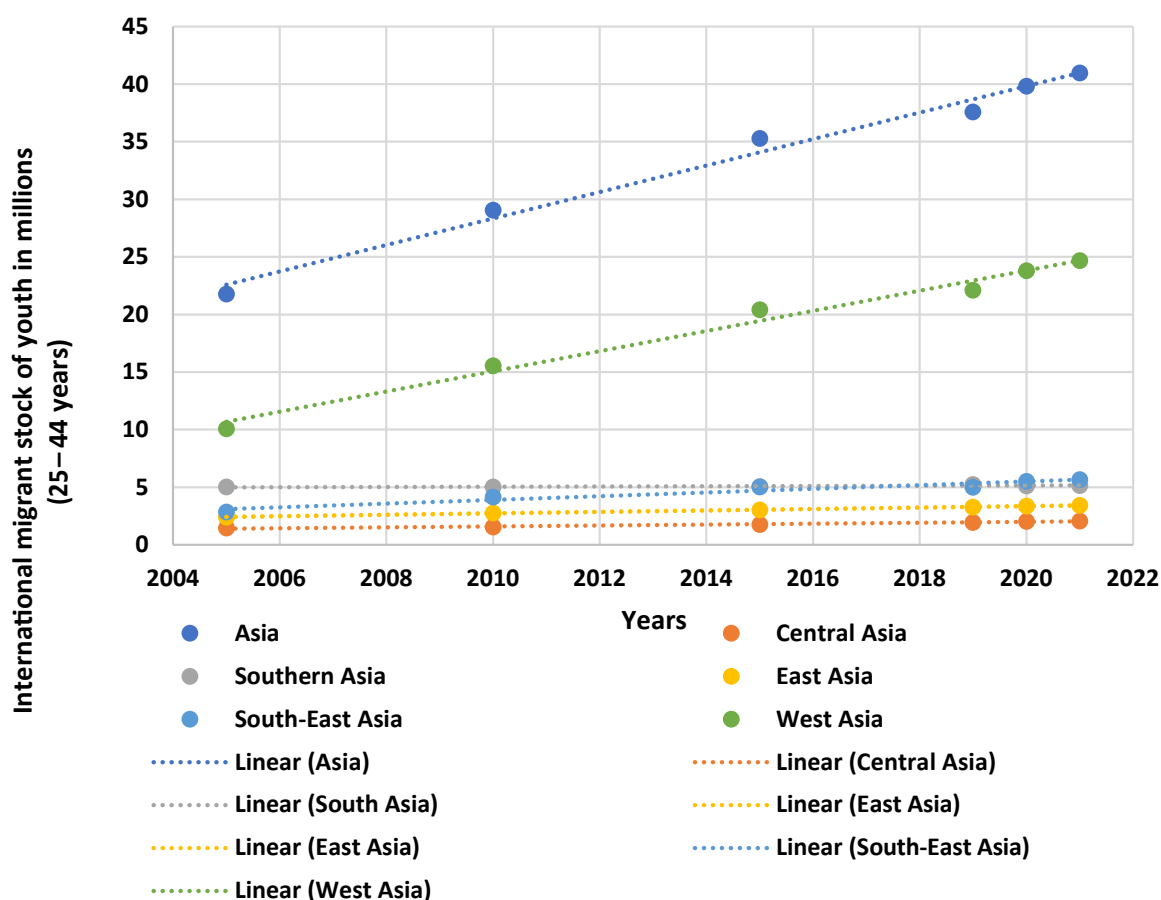
In fact, because the adverse effect of COVID-19 on female mobility is higher than on overall mobility, the growth in female migrant stocks may even be negative in some subregions of Asia in 2021.

### Immigrant youth in Asia

Youth population is a function of population structure, but youth migration is a function of their purpose, whether they are migrating for education

or employment. The age group that we have taken caters to employment-driven migration rather than education-driven migration, which is the preceding age group. One of the reasons for selecting the age group 25–44 years is that this is not only the most productive age group, thereby creating a “demographic dividend” in countries like India for having majority of its population in this range, but also the most mobile globally (IOM, 2020:3–5).

Figure 3. Stocks of immigrant youth (25–44 years) at midyear in Asia and its subregions, 2005–2021 (in millions)



Source: Estimated by authors using data from UN DESA, Population Division.

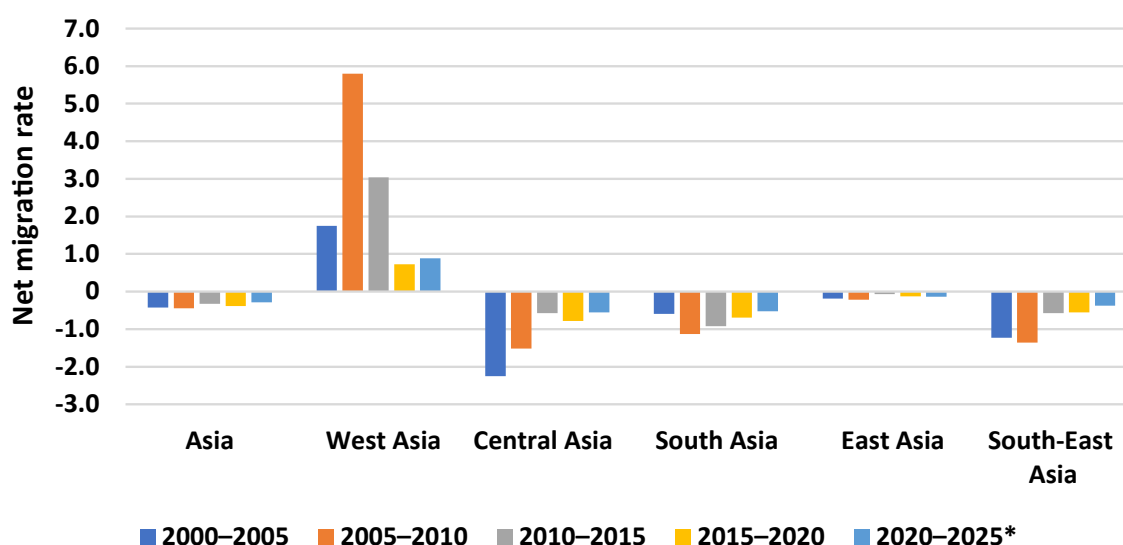
Ironically, it is this group of youth that is adversely affected by COVID-19 through loss of livelihood and employment. Hence, contrary to the data projection results in Figure 3, which are similar to that for overall immigration as well as female immigration in Asia, our hunch is that the actual trend of the employment-driven youth migration in 2021 would be either static or even declining due to return migration.

### Migration rate as a surrogate of migration flows

Figure 4 gives the estimates of net migration rate<sup>2</sup> in Asia and its subregions by UN DESA from 2000 to 2025 at five-year intervals. The data shows that the net migration rate is negative in Asia for all years because of emigration being larger than immigration. The decline in this mobility rate from -0.4 in 2005–2010 to -0.3 in 2010–2015 reflects a decrease in emigration due to the 2008 global recession, whereas the same decline from -0.4 in 2015–2020 to -0.3 in 2020–2025 could be expected to fall further drastically in 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>2</sup> The formula for net migration rate is  $N = 1000 \times (I - E) / P$ , where  $N$  = net migration rate,  $E$  = number of people emigrating out of the country,  $I$  = number of people immigrating into the country and  $P$  = the estimated midyear population. More information is available at <https://study.com/academy/lesson/net-migration-rate-definition-formula-statistics.html>.

**Figure 4. Net migration rate (per 1,000 population) in Asia and its subregions (United Nations estimates from 2000 to 2025)**



Source: UN DESA, Population Division.

Notes: Negative values indicate emigration > immigration. Positive values indicate immigration > emigration.

In the case of West Asia (Gulf countries), which is a destination region, the positive net migration rate fell from 5.8 in 2005–2010 to 3 in 2010–2015 due to the 2008 global recession, then continued to fall to 0.7 in 2015–2020. After 2020, the United Nations estimated rate of 0.9 could have signified a trend of recovery but may be expected to rather fall further because of mobility being affected adversely by the COVID-19 pandemic. The other four subregions of Asia experiencing drastic to moderate decline in emigration are expected to experience a sharp decline in mobility in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, even if the rate of vaccination of the population would neutralize it to some extent.

### Challenges in data collection and coping strategies for 2021

Migration in and from Asia has been undergoing change in recent times. China has already been emerging as a new destination in Asia. The Gulf in West Asia may transform from being destination to transit countries for highly skilled migrants aspiring to migrate to the West. For Asian emigrants, there may be a diversification of destination to include more countries other than the United States because of the instability of mobility policies that have been lingering there since 9/11 and have reached their pinnacle during the last four years of the pre-Biden

regime. Mobility could be eased if the Biden regime's relaxation in terms of lifting of barriers for various categories of migrants is emulated by other countries, particularly those who had withdrawn from the GCM. In fact, a possible retraction of the United States' own withdrawal from the GCM – the first one and which had precipitated the withdrawals of other countries like Australia, Austria, Chile, Czechia, Hungary, Israel, Italy and Poland – might set the pace for a generic paradigm shift in favour of better mobility if the others follow or are led to rejoining the GCM.

It may be anticipated that in the near future, there will be questions as to who would take leadership in terms of cooperation and partnership in data collection for Asia. Some countries like China and Singapore are not forthcoming in sharing their latest data in the public domain, while important South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal do not properly classify data even if they are collected. Further, cooperation in some regions like South-East Asia (e.g. ASEAN) and West Asia (e.g. Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf) is possible but relatively difficult in South Asia (e.g. the failure of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation). Bilateral agreements between individual countries of destination and countries of origin in Asia may need to be tapped – e.g. between India and Bangladesh (Khadria, 2020). Constructive possibilities are evident

from the first ever participation of the latter's military squadron and band in India's Seventy-second Republic Day Parade on 26 January 2021.

Further, an unanticipated saving grace could be to use the COVID-19 vaccination as a realistic opportunity for data collection, provided a relevant question about the migration status of the vaccine beneficiaries could be operationalized. This would be an opportunity lost if nothing is done about it. As the second-best option, such data on the vaccine beneficiaries' migration status could be collected while administering the second dose of vaccine – if it is already too late to collect them at the time of administration of the first dose in some countries. This would particularly help in capturing data on irregular migration too, because the entire population is supposed to be covered under this process, irrespective of their migration status. By mid-2020, migration had started slowing down due to the onset of COVID-19. In 2021, it may pick up based on expectations of recovery. However, we anticipate that in 2021, migration in Asia will still remain low, until the vaccine coverage becomes near-full and effective and travel restrictions are eased. ■

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## Time for a wake-up call? Mexico and Central America and their present and future migration policy challenges

Gabriella Sanchez<sup>1</sup>

I started to write this contribution as the devastating news concerning the violent deaths of 19 migrants in Mexico – presumed to be Central Americans – began to circulate in civil society’s WhatsApp groups and social media feeds. The news, coming less than a week after the inauguration of Joseph Biden Jr. as the incoming United States President, is overwhelming for many reasons. If confirmed, these violent murders will be the latest in a series of high-profile cases that to this day have remained unsolved, concerning the deaths and disappearances of migrants in transit and internally displaced people in Mexico – most notably, the San Fernando massacre in August of 2010, where 72 migrants from Central America, South America and Asia died in a calculated military-style attack (Casillas, 2010); and the case of Cadereyta in 2012, when the remains of 49 migrants were reportedly found by the Mexican army (Varela Huerta, 2017).

These cases – and the many, many others that migration researchers and activists have collected in the course of their work over the years – stand as a dark reminder of the lack of a single mechanism in the entire Central America–Mexico–North America corridor to improve migrants’ safety in the context of their journeys, and of the absence of conduits allowing migrants to safely and securely report the violent acts committed against them. Most ominously, they are evidence of the lack of efforts from governments throughout the region to hold accountable those who perpetrate the heinous acts that migrant people endure in the course of their journeys.

After four difficult years, the arrival of the new United States Administration has been described in migration policy and academic circles in the United States, Mexico and Central America with hope and excitement. The United States President’s own statements concerning the need to implement reforms in the field of migration, and the signing of an executive order articulating the need for a legal path

to regularization for the estimated 11 million people who reside in the United States without documents, have in part fuelled these sentiments. Talks about the re-establishment of the United States asylum system through the cancellation of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP, the United States programme that required those seeking asylum to wait for a court hearing on the Mexican side of the border) (Eiland, 2021) and of a moratorium on deportations (which during the pandemic facilitated the transportation of unknown numbers of migrants, some of them presenting COVID-19 symptoms, to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) (Menchu, 2020) have further led many to label the United States presidential transition as a turning point in United States–Mexico–Central America migration policy.

And yet, to many of those responding to the continued humanitarian emergency along the United States–Mexico border, and across small towns and cities in Mexico and Central America on the migration pathway, the early celebrations and self-congratulatory speeches in Washington and other capital cities in the region feel extremely out of place. Violence, conflict, environmental disasters, and continued economic and political precarity across the region have not deterred people from migrating, even despite the pandemic. Most troublingly, the arrival of a new administration has not translated into the suspension of the enforcement of immigration controls that – coupled with public health responses in connection with COVID-19 – have limited or altogether prevented the movement of thousands of people in need of protection across Mexico and Central America (O’Toole, 2021; Cartwright, 2021).

Of significant concern is the future of the thousands of people impacted by MPP and its Mexican counterpart, the *Quédete en México* (Stay in Mexico) programme, implemented by the Mexican Government. MPP, which went into effect in early 2019, required those seeking to apply for asylum to wait – often under extremely precarious circumstances – on the Mexican side of the border to file their claims (DHS, 2019). According to data from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) Immigration Project (2020) at Syracuse University, there is a total of

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70,467 people registered under MPP. While there is no official data, researchers and non-governmental organizations believe that the long waiting times, compounded by the closing of United States immigration courts on 20 March 2020 in response to the pandemic (Kneedler, 2020), ultimately led many people to reconsider their options. An unknown number has remained in cities on the Mexican side of the border, waiting for the reopening of ports of entry and courts. Others have moved to other cities, filed for asylum in Mexico (despite the country's significant backlog on asylum applications) or decided to return to their countries of origin (Leutert and Arvey, 2020; Navarrete and Sanchez, 2020). As this article goes into print, it is still unknown when immigration courts in the United States will reopen, primarily given the spread of COVID-19 across the country.

Also on the United States–Mexico border, expulsions have continued under Title 42, a statute from the United States Public Health Service Act. Title 42 allows United States immigration authorities to deny any person admission into the country if he or she is coming from a territory where a public health emergency quarantine exists, on the grounds of protecting public health. According to numbers from the United States Customs and Border Protection (2021), a total of 206,978 expulsions and removals took place under Title 42 during the months of October to December 2020 alone.

The United States–Mexico border has not been the only area in the region facing returns, removals or the accumulation of stranded migrants. In its last report from July 2020, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Panama documented that in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus, 2,474 migrants had remained at IOM's three Migratory Receiving Stations since the closure of the Costa Rica–Panama border in April (IOM, 2020a). Efforts to deport Central American migrants and to return them to their countries of origin from Mexico have encountered challenges as well. In addition, in April 2020, representatives of Mexico's National Institute of Migration (INM) recognized that their efforts to return 480 Central American migrants at the Guatemala border had failed, given the closure of the port of entry and the absence of personnel to process the returns. Also of significant concern was the response from local residents, who violently reacted to the migrants' arrival and ultimately prevented them from entering Guatemala's territory under the claim they could spread the virus (INM, 2020).

Combined, the lack of paths to justice, the high number of expulsions, and the number of migrants stranded and deported while en route suggest that while the pandemic might have reduced the incidence of migration and/or led people to reconsider plans to migrate (IOM, 2020b), migration across the region and the responses to counter it have continued. For many of those seeking to move, the possibility of becoming infected with the virus seems a chance they are willing to take considering the overall conditions they face. The northern section of Central America (comprised of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras) was hit by back-to-back hurricanes Eta and Iota in November of 2020, which left widespread devastation in a region already facing extreme levels of precarity. By mid-January 2021, calls for Hondurans to depart the country as a caravan and head north began to appear in Honduran social media. By late January, two groups of several thousand people had left Honduras only to be met by resistance as they attempted to enter Guatemala (Cuffe, 2021), with the intensity of the militarized response having been documented extensively by local and international media. The response – which involved the deployment of border enforcement personnel all the way down along the Guatemala–Honduras border – can be interpreted as a sign of the externalization of United States migration policy and its future expansion in the region. In other words, while Central American migrants had until now been able to travel freely across the region, the containment they faced in Guatemala (instead of at the usual ports of entry into Mexico) suggests that a new era of enforcement may in fact accompany the arrival of Biden to the White House.

Together, these dynamics point to a series of complicated challenges ahead. The continued reduction of legal, safe and orderly paths to migrate in Mexico and Central America will not contain migration. Organized migratory efforts will continue to take place, and if the response to the Honduran caravans serves as an example, they will be met with increasing levels of force. Around the world, evidence shows that migration enforcement coupled with pandemic-related restrictions has invariably maintained migrants' reliance on the services of brokers or smugglers who can facilitate their transits (UNODC, 2020). Mexico and Central America are no exception. These journeys, as showcased at the beginning of this contribution, are not devoid of risks. The lack of an organism that responds to the cases involving missing and dead migrants in the

region and investigates those involving foul play will simply perpetuate the culture of impunity that has historically allowed migrants' victimization along this corridor.

Simultaneously, we cannot forget that those who facilitate the services that migrants rely upon across Central America and Mexico are often members of communities that have experienced decades of State violence, civil war, foreign intervention and displacement. A forthcoming report from IOM's Mesoamerica Program raises concerns over the perceived growth by law enforcement across Central America of the involvement of rural, indigenous and displaced people in the facilitation of smuggling services (IOM, 2021), which further showcases the highly precarious economic conditions present in communities along the Central American migration pathway (IOM, 2020a). Not only does access to specific routes or channels impact smugglers' ability to operate – or generate tension among competing smuggling groups – it can also translate into acts of extreme violence that impact the safety and the lives of the people who rely on those routes for their transits. Moving forward, an analysis of the operational capabilities of migrant smuggling in the entire region, which takes into account the high levels of precarity that both migrants and those behind their journeys face, will be imperative.

In sum, the consequences of the measures aimed to contain migration across the region have derived to a large degree from United States migration policy, and their new articulations under Biden; the continued, and in some instances increasing, precarity in Mexico and Central America and the lack of mechanisms to reduce impunity and allow migrants and their families to have access to justice, combined with the continued grip of the pandemic, pose significant challenges to the implementation of efforts to govern migration effectively across this corridor. Repression and violence are unlikely to deter the mobility efforts of those seeking safety – instead, they can further migrants' vulnerabilities. Thus, this landscape underscores the need to effectively collect and use data as part of the evidence-based response to the forms of violence that migrants face, as well as the urgent need to translate this data into effective legislative mechanisms to address migrant violence, in a way that provides effective and expedited access to justice, not only to migrants and their families, but also to those involved in their victimization. ■

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# Mobility and migration data in China in 2021

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## Introduction

In 2020, international mobility was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as countries enacted travel restrictions and closed borders to halt the transmission of the virus. Previous efforts and progress in migration integration have been overshadowed by economic recession and the resurgence of anti-migration rhetoric. China – as the world’s third-largest migrant origin country, with over 60 million in the diaspora around the world, and also an emerging destination country for international migrants – has suffered from these setbacks as well. In this context, coherent and constructive migration policies are essential to address the current COVID-19 crisis and to improve China’s migration governance system. This article forecasts possible changes in migration flows in and out of China based on the current situation and anticipated developments. The article also outlines shortcomings in China’s management of migration data and provides recommendations to improve immigration administration.

## Prospects for immigration to China in 2021

*COVID-19 is unlikely to significantly impact the long-term trend of international talent coming to China and Chinese students going abroad to study*

With COVID-19 cases outside China surging since February 2020, the Chinese Government enacted strict border controls to reduce the risk of cross-border contagion. These measures included a reduction in international flights, temporary suspension of foreigners’ entry in March, as well as strengthened border controls due to increased imported cases in October. Because of these mobility restrictions, in 2020 the number of international travellers to China plunged compared to 2019.

Physical constraints on international mobility have changed people’s perceptions of migration. Chinese emigrants overseas have tended to become more willing to return to China rather than emigrate to other countries or regions. For Chinese students who plan to study abroad, favoured destination countries have become more diversified. Although strict border-control measures have impeded immigration to China, the general trend of high-end talent coming to China and Chinese students going abroad to study won’t change in the long term, which would benefit the innovative, social and economic development of China.

## *China’s increasing pull for international talent from around the world*

As it moves into a stage of quality-oriented development, China is opening its doors to cooperation with more countries (Wang and Miao, 2019a), as seen in the development of the Hainan Free Trade Zone and cooperation networks between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. China needs a variety of international talent to support this deepening international cooperation, promote structural transformation and develop an innovative economy (Wang and Miao, 2019b). China also needs more international talent to raise its position in global supply chains.

International talents can be broadly categorized into three types:

## High-end foreign talent

In early 2020, the Ministry of Justice released the People’s Republic of China Regulations on the Administration of Permanent Residence for Foreigners (Draft for Solicitation of Comments). Noticeably, the new draft makes the requirements clearer – including education, income, years of work experience, etc. – and introduced new channels for foreign talent to permanently stay and develop their careers in China. The combination of these facilitation policies and economic development is expected to make China a more attractive destination for foreign talents.

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### Talent from special administrative regions

In early 2019, the State Council of China released the Outline Development Plan for Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area. The establishment of the Bay Area marks the integration of different economic entities, as well as the facilitation of administrative regulations in terms of exit/entry, work permit and residence in the area, which will make it more convenient for talents from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China, and the Macao Special Administrative Region, China, to develop their careers in Mainland China and vice versa. For example, the People's Government of Guangdong Province has set certain quotas of civil servant positions for citizens from Hong Kong SAR, China, and Macao SAR, China.

### International students and youth talent

International students are emerging as potential intellectual capital for China's economic and technological development. In recent years, China has become an increasingly popular destination for international students. The country has also broadened the scope of Sino–foreign cooperative education with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, based on established academic exchange programs with the European Union and ASEAN countries, in the coming years China will promote the expansion of an international talent mobility network of foreign students and scholars to facilitate study and research in China. The enhanced cooperative network, along with more welcoming immigration policies, should work to encourage more young talent to come to China and stay.

### Immigration data collection and processing issues in China

#### *Imperfections in the immigration administration data system*

Popular destination countries for international migrants tend to have relatively well-developed systems for immigration administration data (Wang and Miao, 2018). For example, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services publishes immigration and citizenship data every fiscal year, which contains the applications and approvals of various non-immigrant and immigrant visa types

categorized by countries of origin.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the United States Department of Homeland Security releases data on the stock of immigrants by different types, including lawful permanent residents (e.g. skilled workers, investors), naturalizations, non-immigrants (e.g. temporary workers, students and exchange visitors), refugees and asylum seekers, etc.<sup>3</sup>

A sophisticated immigration data and administration system is utilized in multiple aspects of immigration governance. However, current immigration data released by China's National Immigration Administration or embassies and consulates only incorporates data on departure and entry by season. In addition, there is no complete immigration data release mechanism, which leads to the public's lack of access to authoritative data and accurate understanding of immigration stocks and flows.

#### *Shortage of data on immigrants' contributions due to inadequate research*

In comparison to international academia, immigration research in China still lacks a functioning theoretical framework that fits the country's context and realities, particularly quantitative and multidisciplinary research on the contributions of immigrants to the country (CCG, 2020). Experts in other countries have conducted a significant amount of research to show the economic and social contributions of immigrants to host countries. For instance, in the United States, scholars have indicated that hiring more highly skilled immigrants is positively associated with product innovation among local American enterprises (Bernstein et al., 2018). In addition, the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs calculates the economic contributions of international students in the United States, including direct fiscal contributions and job opportunities created.

In contrast, in China there is a lack of data on migration and a lack of research on the contributions of immigrants. There is scope to quantify immigrant contributions in more areas such as productivity and creation of job opportunities and patents.

<sup>2</sup> Non-immigrant visas include F (academic student), J (exchange scholars) and H-1B (skilled workers); while immigrant visas include E1 (outstanding talents), E2 (advanced professionals) and E5 (investors).

<sup>3</sup> More information is available at [www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics](https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics).

Publicizing immigrant contributions will not only help improve the public's understanding and acceptance of immigrants but also enhance public confidence in China's immigration administration system.

#### *Insufficient data related to immigrant well-being*

The *World Migration Report 2020*, published by IOM, pointed out that data on various indicators of immigrants' well-being is generally neglected in many countries around the world, including China. Among those indicators, health-related data is one of the most important, especially amid the current global public health crisis that is COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> In this situation, the cross-border mobility of migrants is closely related to public health risks in destination countries, as well as their pandemic prevention and response measures. However, the lack of information exchange and unified public health indicators in the international community, as well as the lack of effective international agreements on the rights of migrants to access health services, makes the collection of reliable and time-sensitive data and the health administration of different migrant groups extremely challenging.<sup>5</sup>

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has also brought lessons for China's immigration health administration. In the early stages, China's release of health indicators related to pandemic prevention and control was questioned by the international community. This has not only delayed the integration of China's public health system with the international community but also discouraged the inflow of immigrants into China because of doubts about its public health system. Therefore, China needs to establish a comprehensive immigrant public health system that is in line with international standards, and to publish public health statistics regularly. These steps would help to provide better health services for immigrants, control contagion risks in China, promote the integration of China's public health system with the international community and encourage international cooperation to fight the pandemic.

#### **Policy recommendations**

##### *Establish a transparent system for immigration data, including data related to immigrant administration and well-being*

Immigrant administration data should include data on visa application and issuance categorized by visa type, country of origin and the stock of immigrants by year to reflect the changes in migration flows, as well as immigrant health data, which is the most representative data for immigrant well-being. These steps could be realized by the increased digitalization of immigration administration, such as promoting the use of cell phone applications among immigrants and establishing a big data system for immigration. Ideally, this immigrant data system would be consistent with relevant international standards, help build an effective mechanism for international cooperation in data collection and publication, enhance mutual trust, and contribute to the global governance of migration.

##### *Support research and publication related to immigrant contributions*

Immigration data could be added to the existing database in the National Bureau of Statistics. This could include the number of companies founded by immigrants, the number of jobs created by immigrants and the number of patents produced by immigrants. These indicators help quantify immigrant contributions. Comparison with the corresponding metrics for domestic citizens – e.g. the number of companies/jobs/patents created by every thousand immigrants or domestic citizens – would help increase public understanding of the contributions of immigrants to China's development.

##### *Nurture an atmosphere that is inclusive of immigrants to promote social integration*

In addition to timely and transparent data on immigrant contributions, the Government should also increase efforts to bridge the gap between immigration policies and public perceptions of immigrants. This would help the public to better understand immigrants, address common concerns about them and initiate discourse on xenophobia.

<sup>4</sup> Immigrant well-being indicators include migrants' physical and mental health conditions, the coverage of social security and public services, safety risks faced by migrants, the family and growth environment of migrant children, etc.

<sup>5</sup> These include regular and irregular migrants, such as refugees and asylum seekers.

### *Upgrade the immigration service mechanism*

Establish local immigration service centers equipped with professionally trained staff and provide services such as Chinese language and culture classes, community integration activities during Chinese holidays, and policy consultation to help with immigrant visa and residence applications. Initiated by the Chinese Government, this immigration service system could also involve local communities, volunteers and social organizations, to help ease the integration process into Chinese society.

### *Adopt more welcoming visa and immigration policies for young talents*

To attract more international students, besides a robust economy and abundant employment opportunities, a set of welcoming policies regarding their eligibility to live, work or start businesses in China after graduation play a critical role. These welcoming policies could provide a strong incentive for international students to stay in China after graduation, and they create opportunities for these young talents to contribute to China's economic growth and technological innovation. ■

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## Objective and subjective migration trends in Europe

Andrew Geddes<sup>1</sup>

When thinking about the three most important challenges for 2021 in the fields of both regular and irregular migration in Europe, the easy and obvious answer is that they are COVID-19, COVID-19 and COVID-19. Travel restrictions and border controls will persist in 2021, and their effects will be compounded by potential vaccine inequalities caused by the speed of vaccination programmes and how countries will prioritize who gets the vaccine.

It is also the case that the relationship between objective and subjective trends will continue to be central to contemporary European migration and responding to the many challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Objective trends rely on various methods that seek to project data and evidence, albeit in the shadow of considerable uncertainty (IOM, 2020). Subjective trends centre on how people respond to this data and evidence. This can be migrants subject to information campaigns or people in destination countries watching the news on TV or reading a newspaper. Subjective trends are a matter of not only misperceptions and inaccuracies that can be corrected, but also the ways in which facts, data and evidence are necessarily shaped and filtered by peoples' values and beliefs – by subjectivity. There is significant evidence, for example, that people utilize evidence and data in ways that confirm prior beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

Efforts to systematize data collection for application to policy have been led by the European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography as well as by Europe-focused elements of IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre. A developing trend in data collection and processing in Europe is to give greater attention to the factors that influence migration and responses to migration and on how to build effective communication strategies that account

for the subjective contexts in which facts and evidence are processed.<sup>3</sup>

The need to understand more about how people respond to facts, data and evidence does not negate the value and importance of collecting data and using it to inform policy and practice. Facts, data and evidence are, however, all filtered and shaped at the individual level by values and beliefs that are formed early in peoples' lives, strongly influenced by early life experiences, particularly education, and that can be resistant to change. It is unlikely that appeals to "the facts" alone will be effective when it is clearly the case that facts about migration will be affected by peoples' values and beliefs.

The most immediate issue is whether COVID-19 will mean a decisive rupture in underlying trends both in migration to Europe as well as in governance responses to migration. Experience following the financial crisis of 2008 and the so-called migration crisis of 2015 showed that crises tend to confirm existing patterns rather than disrupt them, notably the closure of regular migration pathways, particularly to lower-skilled employment, and the irregularization of migration. A decisive rupture would mean disrupting these trends.

The effects of the pandemic on travel and mobility mean that it is potentially far more disruptive than previous crises. For example, if vaccine roll-out is swifter in higher-income countries, as seems likely to be the case, then this could make it even more difficult for migrants from lower-income countries to move to Europe. Subjectively, migrants from lower-income countries may be represented as a threat to

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see: Haidt, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute has created an Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration (<https://migrationpolicycentre.eu/opam/>). Then there is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Network of Communication Officers on Migration ([www.oecd.org/migration/netcom/](http://www.oecd.org/migration/netcom/)) which is focused on communication. Another, with a specific focus on the Mediterranean region, is the International Centre for Migration Policy Development's EUROMED Migration V project which contains work on migration narratives ([www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/euromed-migration-v/](http://www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/euromed-migration-v/)).

public health if they live in places that lag behind in terms of vaccination.

There has been a tendency in Europe to link migration to crises of various types (poverty, conflict, climate). This was evident in the European Commission's white paper on the future of Europe (WPFE) published in 2017 which, while obviously not foreseeing the COVID-19 pandemic, identified migration as a central component of all the five visions of the European Union's future development (European Commission, 2017). Strikingly, the WPFE contains a guiding assumption that "the pressures driving migration [to Europe] will ... multiply and flows will come from different parts of the world as the effects of population growth, widespread tensions and climate change also take hold". This reflects tendencies to see continued high levels of migratory pressure, particularly from African countries, as a stable component of Europe's future and to associate migration with tension.

The WPFE also highlights the powerful linkages between the migration crisis of 2015 and wider issues of both border management and free movement. One effect of the events of 2015 was the temporary reimposition of border controls and travel restrictions that were then reinstated much more systematically across the European Union during the COVID-19 pandemic and will persist into 2021 and, likely, beyond.

Debates about post-COVID-19 economic and social reconstruction are obviously about much more than international migration, but migration will be a part of them. During the pandemic, public attention has been directed to "essential work" and the presence of migrants ensuring food supplies and providing health care, but migrants remained in vulnerable positions, exposed to the risk of catching the virus either through their employment or as a result of poor living conditions, such as in migrant/refugee camps. Worsening economic conditions in Europe may also lead to return migration. Reports in early 2021 from Italy suggested increased levels of return by Chinese migrants (de Biase, 2021).

Looking to 2021, it is important to break down the debate and consider migration types. First, labour migration is an issue where European countries, not the European Union, retain the prerogative to determine the numbers of migrants to be admitted. While the pandemic drew public attention to the vital roles played by migrant workers in key sectors,

there have also been clear trends towards closure of pathways for regular migration – particularly to lower-skilled employment. Prior to the pandemic, tighter restrictions on regular migration were seen as a factor influencing irregular migration and informal employment, with tendencies to exploit migrant workers. Economic reconstruction post-COVID-19 is highly likely to continue to require migrant workers. Without legal pathways, there are tensions between restrictive policies, demand for migrant workers, and the abuses and exploitation associated with irregularity and informality. These play out in different ways in different European countries but have become a common European Union concern. Strikingly, 2021 will also see uniformed border guards, which visibly display the European Union's State-like presence, but this has not been matched by collective efforts to better organize migration flows into the European Union via regular pathways.

Counter-intuitively, the pandemic is also likely to shift a recent trend in European politics, which has seen high levels of public attention – or salience – for the immigration issue. After 2015, migration became a very high-salience issue across the European Union. An effect of the pandemic is that migration is likely to become less directly salient as a political issue because other concerns such as the economy become much more pressing concerns in the minds of citizens. There is evidence that the salience of the immigration issue has declined in Europe (Dennison and Geddes, 2020). This does not mean that the issue itself is not important – far from it. International migration will remain closely linked with debates about economies and the provision of key services such as health and education across Europe.

The pandemic has also worsened the plight of migrants and refugees in camps or those living and working in precarious positions where they have been exposed to significant COVID-19-related health risks. Migration has been a key topic of policy debate across Europe since 2015 with a clear tendency towards closure, which seems likely to continue. The European Commission's proposals for policy development outlined in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum published in September 2020 continued a direction of travel established over the last 20 years, which has seen greater efforts to cooperate with neighbouring non-European Union member States to prevent flows towards the European Union. Most notably this has included agreements with the Turkish and Libyan authorities.

The Pact also calls for greater efforts to use data and evidence to provide foresight for policymakers. Attempts to project into the future and think about trends will necessarily be affected by uncertainty, a key element of which is that international migration will be shaped by changes in underlying economic, political, social, demographic and environmental factors all compounded by the effects of the global pandemic. There is uncertainty about changes in these underlying factors now as well as the effects of interactions between these factors.

This relationship between objective and subjective trends will persist, and it seems likely that social media echo chambers will continue to amplify it. Digitalization can affect migration dynamics by changing the ways in which information flows, but it also changes the ways in which the causes and effects of migration are debated and discussed and could underlie and even reinforce the tendency towards social and political polarization on immigration. Those with more conservative value orientations are likely to understand international migration in ways that are very different to the perceptions of those with more progressive value orientations – with people inhabiting very different digital universes.

Evidence suggests that this does not mean that debate about migration will be a clash between wholly unreconcilable viewpoints. Many people in what has been referred to as the “anxious middle” are persuadable, but they are unlikely to be won over if told that their values and beliefs are wrong or based on ignorance. This would be more likely to fuel polarizing tendencies rather than diminish them (Katwala and Somerville, 2016).

To conclude, there is and will remain significant uncertainty about migration to, from and within Europe, compounded by the effects of the pandemic. It seems highly likely that restrictions on travel will continue throughout 2021, with vaccine inequalities and roll-out also potentially affecting travel and migration beyond 2021. If the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are to be truly disruptive, then this would mean shifting away from trends such as closure in European countries and the irregularization of migration, particularly lower-skilled employment. It is too early to say if this is the case, although the European Union’s New Pact on Migration and Asylum seems to point in a direction that is consistent with established policy rather than plotting a new course. Finally, when thinking about trends, it is useful to

highlight the relationship between objective and subjective trends. No debate about migration is likely to be resolved by appeals to the facts alone because data, evidence and facts will be filtered by values and beliefs. ■

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## Key migration trends in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021

*William Mejia<sup>1</sup>*

### Key migration policy challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean in the field of regular and irregular migration in 2021

**D**ue to the volume of the population and the number of countries involved, the first challenge in terms of migration policy for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is the integration of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. According to data collected by the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in November 2020 the total figure of that population exceeded 4.5 million, the majority in a vulnerable condition. By country or territory, the following data stood out, according to the same source: 1.72 million in Colombia; 1.04 million in Peru; 1.36 million in the rest of South America; 253,000 in Panama, Mexico and Costa Rica; and 173,000 in the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, and Curaçao. If we add the number of Latin Americans and Caribbean people who returned from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to their countries of origin, the population to be considered would be over five million.<sup>2</sup>

Such integration requires the regularization and definition of refugee-status requests. As of 5 November 2020, there were more than 800,000 of such requests in the region and only 2.5 million residence and regular stay permits were granted. Regarding refugees, one should notice that even though many of the countries have accepted the definition of the Cartagena Convention, which means it can be applied to Venezuelans in the current exodus, only Brazil has used it more or less generously, granting it to more than 46,000 applicants.<sup>3</sup>

Another challenge, which is equally important, is managing the transit of migrants and asylum seekers with scarce resources and amid deplorable conditions

and great risks to the United States. Although, the situation compromises many countries, including South America, through which some of their nationals and other migrants of extracontinental origin travel. The greatest challenge in this regard is for Central America, and especially for the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador), the origin of most of those who move. The situation is more complicated in Mexico, the last stopover on the route, where those who wait to irregularly cross the border and those who aspire to a hearing for the consideration of asylum (which is generally denied) accumulate. This is a large and rapidly growing problem. In 2018, the number of family units detained on the southern border of the United States was almost 77,800; in 2019, it exceeded 432,000 (UNHCR, 2020). During the pandemic, between January and November of 2020, 50,470 foreigners were deported from Mexico, 95.7 per cent of them from the Northern Triangle (Government of Mexico, 2020).

The third important challenge arises with the management of the previous two. The fulfilment of these purposes should be done while thinking more about human rights than security issues, which in recent years have determined, in some cases, the attention of Venezuelan and Central American flows. It is necessary to recover and save the advances in free mobility within the region and, in general, in the rights of migrants. Because of more than 20 years of dialogue and consensus between countries, the South American Conference on Migration (SACM or Lima Process) has built a paradigmatic discourse, which has guided the emergence of migration laws in the subregion with human rights as the core of their policy. In such a way, they have replaced old norms, several of them a product of dictatorial regimes, with national security as a fundamental reference. Something similar has happened in Central America with some new laws.

Policymakers must pay special attention to ensure that in facing the challenges of providing care to Venezuelans, and the flow seeking migration or asylum in the United States from and through Central America, they do not lose the human rights achievements of recent years. Indeed, this should

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<sup>2</sup> More information is available at <https://r4v.info/es/situations/platform>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



be an opportunity to reorient the course. The Quito Process, through which it is intended to coordinate actions regarding the response to Venezuelan migration,<sup>4</sup> cannot affect the progress and continuity of the SACM. On the contrary, the process must be based on and contribute to strengthening the SACM.

In the case of Mexico, there is also the challenge of reconsidering the immigration policy imposed by Trump. His policy led to Mexico renouncing its traditional position of relative respect and generosity with Central Americans and others in transit to the North, and the abandonment of good intentions in immigration matters declared by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador during his electoral campaign. Mexico and Central America must fight for a more dignified position in their immigration negotiations with the United States, understanding that they must reach agreements of common benefit, but far from the role of immigration police imposed by the northern neighbour. The United States, as has become evident during the pandemic, has a vital need for Mexican and Central American labour, especially for its agricultural sector, and President Joe Biden has already expressed the intention to make some adjustments and build a dialogue around the matter (Telemundo, 2020).

### Anticipated levels and structure of migration flows in Latin America and the Caribbean in the course of 2021, also taking account of COVID-induced mobility factors

Until January 2021, the main effect of COVID-19 on immigration matters has been the near suspension of regular migrations, with some exceptions for those demanded seasonally – for example, Mexicans to the United States and Panamanians and Nicaraguans to Costa Rica. On the other hand, the irregular flows of Central Americans and Caribbean people to the north and of Venezuelans and Andeans to the south slowed down and generated some increase in returns.

The loss of work, or the inability to access it, generated by the pandemic, especially in periods of more rigid restrictions on mobility, has had a greater impact on the population that has only that job to survive. Under these conditions, COVID-19 appears as a new potential cause of migration. For migrants, the

irregularity and weakness of support networks, which limits access to any type of aid, makes the situation more difficult. Some Venezuelans who, when the situation had been extreme,<sup>5</sup> chose to return to their country, where they did not find the situation any better, have had to emigrate again.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the circumstances that drove emigration from Central America before the pandemic, a survey conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund, of people detained on the southern border of the United States, found a worrisome panorama. First, 20 per cent of all the surveyed were fleeing violence. Second, more than 30 per cent of unaccompanied children had suffered violence and death threats associated with gang recruitment, as well as the inability to access education and other essential services. In addition, cases of women and girls who were victims of sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of gang members, and of young men exploited for criminal purposes, were identified (UN News, 2020).

There is no news that such situations have changed favourably. On the contrary, one could assume that the restrictions on mobility brought about by the pandemic made them worse. Moreover, as an additional complication, there are the effects of the estimated drop of 8.5 per cent in the GDP of Mexico and Central America in 2020 (ECLAC, 2020) and the impact suffered in the subregion because of the last hurricane season, which affected millions of people and left tens of thousands of families homeless, mainly in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala (IFRC, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). On the other hand, for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the drop in GDP was estimated at 30 per cent in 2020, the largest drop in the region. Indeed, experts indicate that this year, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will be the only country in the region whose GDP will not grow, instead falling around 7 per cent (ECLAC, 2020:117). Finally, Haiti, another important source of migrants, will have one of the lowest rates of economic recovery in the region (World Bank, 2021; ECLAC, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> More information is available at <https://r4v.info/es/documents/details/68101>.

<sup>5</sup> More information is available at <https://r4v.info/es/working-group/248?sv=39&geo=0>.

<sup>6</sup> See for example: [www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/asi-seria-la-nueva-llegada-de-venezolanos-a-colombia-538482](http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/asi-seria-la-nueva-llegada-de-venezolanos-a-colombia-538482).



In such conditions, one expects that in 2021, with the opening of borders and the reduction of uncertainty in the economic panorama (and the migration regulations) in the destination countries, which will probably occur during the second semester, the mentioned flows will tend to regain their dynamism. With their intensity (number of migrants per unit of time) measured from the source, it is possible that towards the end of the year, some will have returned to pre-pandemic levels or perhaps even exceeded them. The possible continuation of some sanitary and migratory restrictions could lead to the use of unofficial routes, with the implications of increased risks and costs for migrants.

The expectations about the immigration policy changes announced by Biden, and those that would apply in Mexico and the Northern Triangle, will encourage Central American flows to the United States – which, as already mentioned, were already seeing a dramatic increase before the pandemic. Mexican migration to the United States, characterized by a declining trend throughout the decade (although with a slight recovery attempt in 2018 and 2019), could also be spurred by political changes. A similar situation could occur with migrations from Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, Ecuador and Brazil, which in 2019 did not have large absolute growths, but rather significant percentage growths. Special mention should be made of the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who has promised a temporary protection status (TPS) to its nationals (Telemundo, 2020).

Venezuelan emigration, as has already been said, will continue and, possibly, recover its intensity prior to the pandemic – which, it should be clarified, was slowing down compared to the rates shown in 2017 and 2018. Other intraregional flows will also surely recover, like the Andeans towards Chile, and the traditional border movements: those already mentioned towards Costa Rica; the Haitians to the Dominican Republic; and the Uruguayans to Argentina, among others.

Regarding extracontinental migration from the region – particularly to traditional destinations in Europe (Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and France, among others), which had already lost dynamism before the pandemic – a significant recovery is not expected this year. Various circumstances allow us to make the previous forecast and suppose that many migratory projects with these destinations, which imply planning, will be postponed: restrictions on mobility, which can last during the year; the impact

suffered by the economies and employment in those destinations; the uncertainty about the recovery and new migration control measures; in addition to the high costs, with respect to intraregional migration, that the movements cause.

The intensity of each specific flow by destination – particularly that of Venezuelan emigration, which significantly influences the regional migratory structure due to its high relative weight – will depend on how the different destination countries and the region emerge from the pandemic, and the intensity and characteristics of the recovery in each of them. However, some forecasts can be attempted.

The announcements that tourism is one of the first sectors to recover and that some Caribbean countries, including the Dominican Republic, are among those with the highest GDP growth forecasts for 2021 (ECLAC, 2020) could make some of those territories gain power of attraction in the region. They would be joined by Panama and Peru, to which a greater proportion of Venezuelans could be reoriented, perhaps at the expense of Ecuador, which is expected to perform poorly in 2021, the worst in South America, after the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, according to projections of the World Bank (2021). Colombia, Chile and Argentina, some of the main destinations for Venezuelans, can remain attractive in 2021 due to their expected growths.

Based on previous forecasts, the migration structure of the region will not undergo, at least this year, significant changes, although one can expect some reordering of the importance of destinations.

### Migration data collection and processing challenges

In LAC, the migration information required to define policies and action roads is deficient.

National population censuses usually have a frequency of 10 years. This limits their use in dynamic situations as the one described earlier. Thus, most experts use administrative records. These records refer mainly to regular entry and stay processes: entry and exit controls as well as issuance of visas and residence and work permits.

With a view to including irregular migrants and linking new variables, the countries with the highest immigration rates have started to ask for the place of birth or nationality in different official procedures, such as admission to education and health care.

In this regard, in addition to national efforts, subregional coverage projects are under way or have been announced on behalf of international organizations. For example, IOM has been carrying out, for some time, the Regional Project to Strengthen the Production and Analysis of Information on Migrations in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, which should result in a common platform. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) convened in 2020 to carry out a consultancy aimed at integrating official migration information in South America. The International Labour Organization is advancing another consultancy, also in South America, that seeks proposals for the integration of public employment services, taking migration as a reference.

However, given the prevalence of irregularity in the main intraregional migrations, the above efforts are insufficient. As an alternative, United Nations agencies, international cooperation entities, academic groups, and non-governmental organizations perform other types of surveys and studies, which focus on sections of the flows or on specific stocks. These provide important timely information, including data on people in irregular situations, but without continuity.

IOM has widely implemented its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodology, with flow monitoring surveys. Although it achieves some temporal continuity, it suffers the typical limitations of subject-specific studies. Furthermore, the biases that are introduced in the selection of the populations may not be well identified by the users of the information. Like other new methodologies, experts have experimented with big data from Facebook to follow the advancement and establishment of Venezuelans throughout South America. This allows them to manage some variables of users' characterization. In such a way, they can identify the emergence and expansion of informal settlements of migrants in border areas. For similar purposes, several studies use satellite imagery.

Periodic or continuous surveys deserve special recognition. In most cases, they inquire about the country of birth or nationality, and there is good

information to take advantage of. The use of these surveys, which involves the publication of anonymized microdata, could be the axis for the construction of a regional information system on migration, where the results of the different efforts mentioned above are integrated. The challenge for 2021 could be the beginning of this construction, for which the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) already has part of the advanced work with its Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and with the recent evaluation it made on the quality of indicators built for international migration issues (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). This challenge implies, besides the authorization of the statistical offices, the disposition and cooperation of the other producers of information. In particular, the involvement of IOM is essential for its progress on the subject and for its mission. Perhaps the consultancy envisaged by the IDB could be redirected towards supporting this possibility. ■

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## The United States of America's immigration policy for 2021

Joanne van Selm<sup>1</sup>

**T**he new Administration of President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Vice President Kamala D. Harris assumes governance of a country consumed by great uncertainties. The deadly and costly impact of the public health emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the violence and insurrection during the final weeks of the previous Administration are set to dominate public discourse and attention for some time to come. But the new President has clearly indicated that he means to do business in every area of public administration, to get started immediately, and to return to the levels of professional conduct and expertise previously expected in and of the United States.

One area on which Biden and his team have promised early action is immigration. Immigration law and policy are, of course, rarely straightforward. The United States immigration system as it stands in early January 2021 has been reshaped by the conspiracy theories, racism and white supremacy that have impacted the United States political approach to the pandemic and divided the population and Government alike. Immigration is also an underlying issue in the call of the right wing in the United States as elsewhere. The major political and societal challenge in United States immigration policy in 2021 will therefore be the big picture: to return civility, normality and humanity to the overall approach. Additional challenges will be political, juridical and strategic, balancing the need to focus on specific policy details while seeking a holistic approach. Although various specific issues (pathways to legal status and citizenship, managing asylum flows, restarting resettlement) will all present their own challenges, the perspective at this point in time has to be broader.

Biden's team has indicated that it will be immediately issuing executive orders dealing with many issues, including reversing the Muslim ban instituted by its predecessor, a deportation moratorium, extending the protections for Dreamers, ordering a plan for reuniting the over 500 immigrant children who were

separated from their (now deported) parents in 2017, making it easier to seek asylum at the Mexico border, and halting funding and construction of the border wall. In addition, the President will be sending a major immigration reform bill to Congress which, if passed, could ease the pathway to legality and citizenship for some 11 million currently undocumented migrants over an eight-year period (Mascaro and Barrow, 2021). The last reform of United States immigration law took place in 1986, offering legalization to irregular immigrants, while also significantly expanding enforcement, deterrent and border security.

As such, we can expect the United States Government for all but the first 19 days of 2021 to be pushing hard to make the country's immigration policy better. The starting point means that the chances of success in terms of a manageable and balanced policy approach are quite high. Over the last four years, United States immigration policy has been the most legally restricted it has ever been (Nowrasteh and Bier, 2020): in the face of the pandemic, legal immigration to the United States has all but shut down. Given that anti-immigrant sentiment is central to ideological support for the MAGA agenda, there is work to be done to spread deeper awareness and understanding of the place of immigration and immigrants in United States society and economics. Immigration reform could be more politically volatile than ever against this backdrop, or it could prove to be precisely the moment for bold action and to grasp the opportunity to move forward after the desperation of the downward spiral during the last four years. Indeed, in many ways, the time seems ripe: the number of Americans saying that immigration to the United States is a "good thing" is currently at some 76 per cent (National Immigration Forum, 2020). With a Democrat as President, a slim Democratic majority in the House and a tie to be broken by Democrat Vice President Harris in the Senate, it is potentially an apt moment to cement some changes that have been in the planning stage for over a decade. Elected with the largest popular vote ever, President Biden has a mandate to put forward and carry out his plans. Yet few seem to have expected him to push so hard so soon: "Top Latino and immigrant advocacy groups who've seen details of the coming package said they were stunned by

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the boldness of Biden’s plan” (Barrón-López and Rodriguez, 2021). It remains to be seen whether the Administration can get the votes for actual reform. Their big plans will show intent and drive debate, but whether these plans or anything like them become actual law remains uncertain (Nowrasteh, 2021). So politically, the Biden Administration will likely be strategic, use all tools at its disposal and potentially have to take smaller wins while seeking bigger gains.

There is a widely understood need to, not just wind back to the policy that prevailed in 2016, but actively reform and update the current immigration policy. It was already in need of reform for years even before 2016 and then took a severe knock. As a Senator, Joe Biden was active in favour of immigration reform and establishing legal pathways to citizenship for both legal and long-term irregular immigrants. As Vice President, he supported the Dreamers, the people who arrived in the United States as young children with their undocumented immigrant parents. Their statuses have not been regularized, but under Obama, they benefited from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Therefore, immigration policy analysts and activists have high hopes that President Biden will act as swiftly as possible to strengthen United States immigration policy in a humane and reasonable way. In setting out his wide-ranging vision for reforming immigration policy and the immigration system, Biden’s campaign described all Americans – except those descended from native or slave families – as people whose history in the country is based on choice (Biden for President, n.d.). The broadest task at hand is to balance the divergent demands of the two Americas over which Biden says he presides – those in the majority who maintain the welcoming approach, and the vocal minority who demand an end to new immigration. As such, a major challenge in 2021 is how to pick up the pieces and create a better, more fitting whole, with widespread political and citizen support and understanding.

The question is – which results in another set of challenges – what is the best logistical approach to achieve change in immigration policy in 2021: sweeping reform, a more piecemeal approach to undo each of the barriers and obstacles erected in recent years, or (as seems to be the initial attempt) a blended approach? A swift rolling back of the restrictions imposed on all types of immigration over the last four years is viewed as essential to turning the page, not just on immigration policy but for the image of the United States at home and abroad.

An anti-immigrant president, assisted by an able anti-immigrant adviser, used executive orders to enact a plethora of restrictions. Those hundreds of orders have been based on a kind of securitization and hard-line approach previously unknown in the modern United States, if not totally alien to American history. Reversing those rules, orders and other aspects of immigration control is, according to many analysts, not just about changing the intent or the letter of the law and policy. They see a complex web of recent restrictions and expect the process to be more difficult than simply writing a new plethora of executive orders (Meissner and Mittelstadt, 2020). However, others suggest enacting sweeping change (either back to a starting point in need of deeper reform or at least a slightly more developed form) can be put into effect in the same way that the restrictions of the last four years were imposed, with more executive orders and a focus on changes at the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). Decisions by the BIA impact law and policy through precedence: Attorney General Jeff Sessions reshaped the BIA in a restrictive way. Attorney General Merrick Garland (if confirmed) could, the argument suggests, swing it the other way, undo the damage and build constructively (De La Hoz, 2020). Immigration courts wield power over the lives and deaths of immigrants, but the system has become (over many years) dysfunctional, with a backlog of 1.3 million cases – and children as young as two years old expected to defend themselves, for example. Fixing the court system has to be done through Congress and would be a major part of immigration reform (Pandya, 2021). An early logistical challenge for 2021 is therefore working out exactly how to (and most appropriately) undo the web of restrictions in order to effect a workable immigration approach attuned to realities. Biden’s team has clearly issued its first response to that challenge by announcing both immediate executive orders and a reform package, thus tackling the issue on two fronts. Yet it is unlikely that everything will change overnight, in terms of either law or implementation. The personnel of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), for example, have wielded such power in the last few years that some are unlikely to change tack on the ground immediately simply because the big picture has changed, even if it means the law no longer supports their preferred security view and methods.

Besides the legal, legislative and political perspectives on migration policy in the United States in 2021, there are the challenges of righting the human wrongs done



towards many immigrant and American families in the name of restrictionism. Major headline issues such as reuniting the families of over 500 children separated from their deported parents since 2017 will be challenges whose impacts go well beyond the people concerned, making clear that the United States has regained its commitment to upholding human rights and some moral authority. Biden's team has indicated this will be embarked upon instantly. Similarly, addressing DACA both for existing recipients and those who qualify will be a big legislative move, with significant impacts for the individuals and families involved. For permanent legal residents, addressing the issue of "public charge" will – particularly in the context of the global pandemic – be a priority, as access to health care and immunization against COVID-19 will be vital for broader public health.

A more complex human, and humanitarian, problem is that of the southern border. Between 10,000 and 20,000 asylum seekers are trapped close to the United States border in Mexico under the so-called Migrant Protection Protocols. These people have been fingerprinted, are known to authorities and are often in precarious situations, prey to unscrupulous actors in all manner of ways. Candidate Biden had promised to bring a swift end to their peril, but he has walked back those promises as his inauguration drew nearer. Some argue that there are obvious ways to allow the asylum seekers to enter the United States and be treated humanely, with their cases heard expeditiously and appropriate outcomes put into action (Reichlin-Melnick, 2021). However, some fear the pull factor of this approach, particularly as the annual "caravan" of migrants makes its way through Central America, in spite of the deterrent effect of enforcement actors in each country (Beaubien, 2021). As President-elect, Biden has acknowledged the complexities – a large arrival of new immigrants and asylum seekers can potentially create a situation that complicates his overall approach to immigration reform (Miroff and Sacchetti, 2020). He has indicated that this piece of the puzzle will take longer, as guard rails need to be established so as not to derail the entire immigration reform approach. Nonetheless, fixing this problem will be important for, not only its immigration policy aspect, but also the foreign policy and international relations context. Likewise, deeper coordination on the United States' other border, with Canada, is essential both to reopen post-COVID-19 and to manage the "safe third country" pact challenged by a Canadian court in 2020 – that the United States was no longer safe for asylum seekers (Murray, 2020). And

while considering re-engagement with the United Nations in various fields, the United States signing the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration would send a strong signal.

A more distant (but nonetheless important), humane and national-image-related angle to United States immigration policy is its refugee programme. With resettlement arrivals down from 88,994 in 2016 to 11,814 in 2020 (Refugee Processing Center, n.d.) and a ceiling of 15,000 proposed for 2021, President-elect Biden said he wanted to restore the programme to a ceiling of 125,000. That can legally be done, with immediate effect. However, experts warn that achieving that number of admissions and settling the refugee families appropriately would take a massive commitment of resources and will, as organizations that manage the settlement and integration processes have been depleted by the low numbers of recent years. The precedent of the post-9/11 resettlement restrengthening can be drawn on for lessons on how to proceed, but the money and political will required to do this in 2021 will be significant.

The challenges facing the United States and its new leadership in 2021 are vast – ranging from reshaping and informing public opinion domestically, to mending relationships with neighbours on migration (and other) issues; from determining the best strategy for reform and an immigration "reset", to working out how to reunite 545 separated families. A return to immigration as a normal, accepted, understood and civilly discussed feature of American society and politics is the overarching challenge, and as in many policy areas, as of 20 January 2021, the United States has new hope. ■

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## Publications



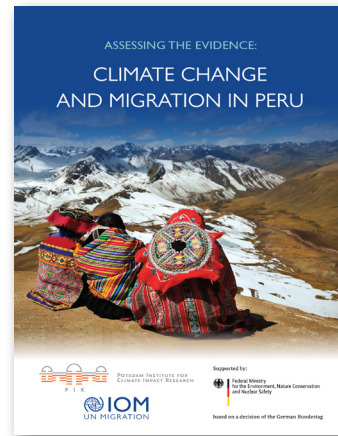
**Migration Governance Indicators Profile 2020**  
The Republic of Sierra Leone  
2021 | 32 pages | [English](#)

This Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) profile presents a summary of well-developed areas of migration governance in Sierra Leone as well as areas with potential for further development, as assessed through the MGI. The MGI is a standard set of approximately 90 indicators to assist countries in assessing their migration policies and advance the conversation on what well-governed migration might look like in practice.

The incorporation of Sustainable Development Goal Target 10.7 into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development created the need to define “planned and well-managed migration policies”. In 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF). The Framework offers a concise view of an ideal approach that allows a State to determine what it might need to govern migration well and in a way that suits its circumstances.

In an effort to operationalize the MiGOF, IOM worked with The Economist Intelligence Unit to develop the MGI.

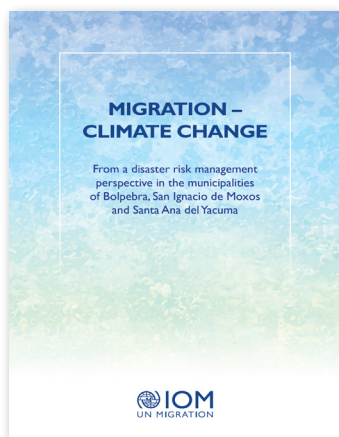
The MGI helps countries identify good practices as well as areas with potential for further development and can offer insights into the policy levers that countries can use to develop their migration governance structures. The MGI takes stock of migration-related policies in place and operates as a benchmarking framework that offers insights into policy measures that countries might want to consider as they progress towards good migration governance.



**Assessing the Evidence: Climate Change and Migration in Peru**  
2021 | 260 pages | [English](#), [Spanish](#)

People across Peru are vulnerable and exposed to a wide range of hazards, and studies demonstrate that these hazards are key drivers of migration in the country. Hydrometeorological hazards resulting in excessive amounts of water (in such forms as torrential rainfalls and floods) – or the lack thereof (in the form of, for example, drought or glacier retreat) – are particularly salient to migration. Climate change has intensified these hazards and will continue to do so, possibly resulting in new and unparalleled impacts on migration.

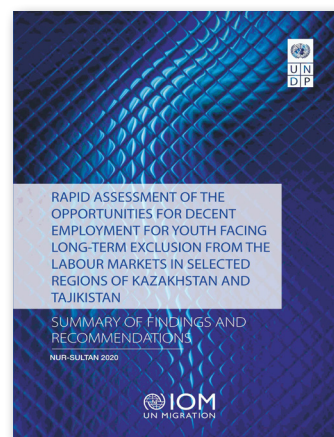
IOM and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research have partnered to produce this report, which seeks to shed light on the available evidence on the environment, climate change and migration nexus in Peru. The study puts into perspective various climate risks and hazards that affect communities in the country’s main topographical zones: the coast, the highlands, and the rainforest or jungle. The report provides a systematic review of the complex interaction between climate and other factors driving migration in the country. It discusses the necessity to understand climate migration patterns and improve planning and policies in the short to medium term, in view of several “no-analog threats” – that is, those with unprecedented large impacts – that could occur towards the end of the century.



**Migration–Climate Change: From a disaster risk management perspective in the municipalities of Bolpebra, San Ignacio de Moxos and Santa Ana del Yacuma**

2021 | 88 pages | E-ISBN: 978-92-9068-832-7  
[English](#)

This study on the relationship between migration and climate change was carried out within the framework of the project “Migration–climate change in indigenous communities in a situation of vulnerability”. The study seeks to contribute to the development of public policies on the basis of a thematic understanding of the migration–climate change relationship, by identifying and characterizing the structural and contingent factors that arise from migratory processes and unplanned human displacements related to the effects of climate change, disasters and/or emergencies. It also aims to identify the strategic lines that form the basis for the development of resilient capacities of local actors (indigenous, rural and municipal communities) that allow for the prevention, preparation, prosecution and confrontation of migratory processes concerning population groups in a state of vulnerability and considering the economic and sociocultural patterns through risk management.

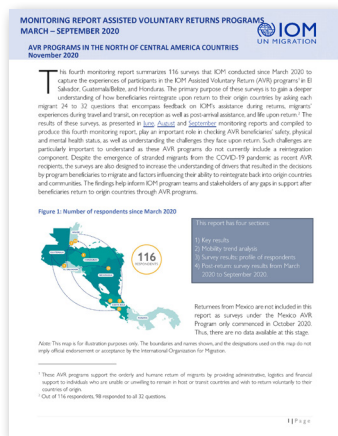


**Rapid Assessment of the Opportunities for Decent Employment for Youth Facing Long-term Exclusion from the Labour Markets in Selected Regions of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan**

2021 | 49 pages [English](#) | 50 pages [Russian](#)

This publication covers implementation of IOM’s project on rapid assessment of the opportunities for decent employment for youth facing long-term exclusion from the labour market in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan from May to December 2020

Данная публикация посвящена итогам реализации проекта МОМ по быстрой оценке возможностей достойной занятости для молодежи, сталкивающейся с длительной изоляцией от рынка труда в Казахстане и Таджикистане в период с мая по декабрь 2020 года.



## Monitoring Report Assisted Voluntary Returns Programs March – September 2020

2021 | 17 pages | [English](#)

This monitoring report summarizes 116 surveys that IOM conducted from March 2020 to September 2020 to capture the experiences of participants in the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes in El Salvador, Guatemala/Belize, and Honduras. The primary purpose of these surveys is to gain a deeper understanding of how beneficiaries reintegrate upon return to their origin countries by asking each migrant 24 to 32 questions that encompass feedback on IOM's assistance during returns, migrants' experiences during travel and transit, on reception as well as post-arrival assistance, and life upon return.

## IOM Migration Data Strategy: Informing Policy and Action on Migration, Mobility and Displacement 2020 | 2025

2021 | 39 pages | [English](#)

IOM has developed a comprehensive strategy – the Migration Data Strategy – to frame, focus and further amplify its existing robust engagement on the issue of data. A key IOM goal is to improve the evidence base for good migration governance in support of sustainable development, effective humanitarian action and peaceful societies, as well as the implementation, monitoring and reporting of relevant stakeholders on their actions in support of relevant international frameworks. The Migration Data Strategy maps out a path for IOM to reach this goal. It seeks to mobilize the international community in helping unlock the potential of migration data for sound policy and decision-making.

Migration Data Strategy is part of the broader organizational strategic planning; it is designed within the framework of the IOM Strategic Vision and a crucial element to support its realization. It is also aligned with the data strategy of the Secretary-General, which aims to foster the individual and collective strengths of United Nations system entities.

A brief overview of the strategy can be found [here](#).





## Call for authors/Submission guidelines

Since its launch in October 2011, Migration Policy Practice has published over 254 articles by senior policymakers and distinguished migration policy experts from all over the world.

### Past authors have included, inter alia:

Eric Adja, Director General of the International Migrants Remittances Observatory (IMRO) and Special Adviser to the President of Benin; John K. Bingham, Global Coordinator of civil society activities in the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on Migration and Development; Ambassador Eva Åkerman Börje, Chair of the GFMD 2013–2014; Mark Cully, Chief Economist at the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection; António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations; Khalid Koser, Chair of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Migration; Khalid Malik, Director of the Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Cecilia Mamlström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs (2010–2014); Ali Mansoor, Chair of the GFMD 2012; Andrew Middleton, Director of Culture, Recreation and Migrant Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics; Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2008–2014); Robert A. Mocny, Director of the Office of Biometric Identity Management (OBIM), formerly US-VISIT, US Department of Homeland Security; Imelda M. Nicolas, Secretary of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), Office of the President of the Philippines; Ignacio Packer, Secretary-General of the Terre des Hommes International Federation; Kelly Ryan, Coordinator of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees – IGC, Geneva; Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament (2012–2014); David Smith, Director of Economic Analysis Unit, Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection; Sir Peter D. Sutherland, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Migration (2006–2017); Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM); Myria Vassiliadou, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, European Commission; Catherine Wiesner, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, US Department of State.

Migration Policy Practice welcomes submissions from policymakers worldwide. As a general rule, articles should:

- Not exceed five pages and be written in a non-academic and reader-friendly style;
- Cover any area of migration policy but discuss, as far as possible, particular solutions, policy options or best practice relating to the themes covered;
- Provide, as often as applicable, lessons that can be replicated or adapted by relevant public administrations, or civil society, in other countries.

Articles giving account of evaluations of specific migration policies and interventions, including both findings and innovative methodologies, are particularly welcome.

To discuss any aspect of the journal, or to submit an article, please contact:

**Solon Ardittis** ([sardittis@eurasylum.org](mailto:sardittis@eurasylum.org))  
**Frank Laczko** ([flaczko@iom.int](mailto:flaczko@iom.int))

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