

Measuring Migration

Migration has always existed in human history, yet in the last decades, mainly after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and with the globalisation of economic activity, international movement has increased significantly. Demographic imbalances, large differences in real wages, wars, hunger, environmental disasters, political conflict and the simple search for new opportunities, push people to move. Migrants represent three per cent of the world's population and are a relevant part of each society, both economically and culturally. Nevertheless, the amount of internationally comparable information is very small.

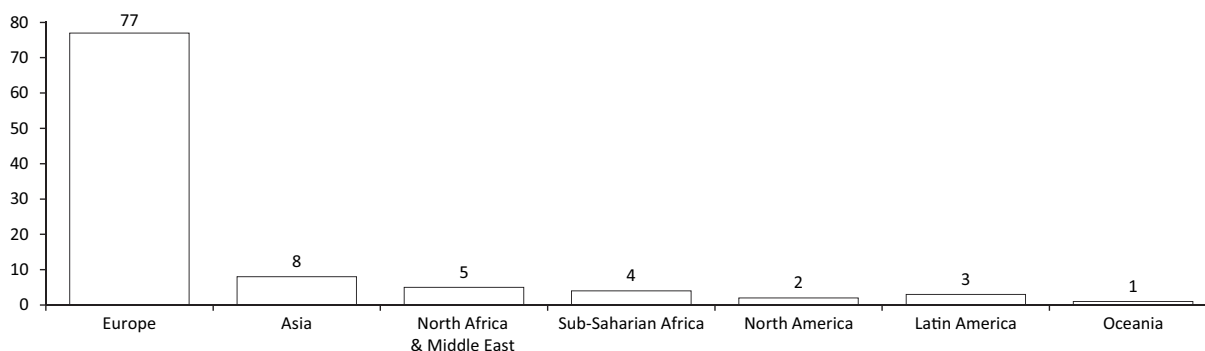
Presented here is a selection of information available from various international sources. The information is grouped into six sections¹:

- I. Immigration and emigration stocks (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4)
- II. Student migration and brain drain (Tables 5, 6 and 7)
- III. Employment and qualification (Table 8, 9 and 10)
- IV. Remittances (Table 11)
- V. Students from immigrant backgrounds (Tables 12 and 13)
- VI. Immigration and emigration policies (Table 14)

What these tables tell us

The great majority of migrants in European countries come from Europe. This is particularly true in Eastern Europe where an important percentage of the population is composed by foreigners and more than 80 per cent of them – and in many countries more than 90 per cent – were born in Europe (tables 1 and 2). These figures are much lower in Western Europe where European migrants often fall below 50 per cent (e.g., in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) and where there is more immigration from other regions (e.g., Africa and the Middle East for southern countries and Asia for northern countries).

Figure 6: Where do the migrants come from? Estimated average per cent of migrants in European countries by region of birth



Source: Elaboration on World Bank data

Tables 4 and 7 show that countries that are usually considered recipient countries also have a considerable outflow of nationals every year. Countries like Austria, Italy and the United Kingdom have outflow quotas that exceed five per cent of their population.

Students are an important component of international mobility, even if they are not always counted as migrants. Most of them are bound for a limited number of countries, with a strong concentration in the United Kingdom, Germany and France. Linked to the migration of students is the so-called 'brain drain', the emigration of qualified people. In Albania, Czech Republic, Ireland, Macedonia and San Marino more than 20 per cent of people with a tertiary education emigrate. In Bosnia Herzegovina, despite a very low number of physicians per capita, 12 per cent of doctors emigrate. In Ireland, although the number of physicians is below the average, 22 per cent work abroad.

In relation to employment issues, there is a serious lack of data, preventing a complete comparison among countries. The migrant labour force is high in Baltic countries (nearly 20% in Estonia and Latvia – but very low in Lithuania) and significant in various EU countries, where they make up more than 5 per cent of the labour force (e.g., in Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Greece and Slovenia). However, it is important to note that ILO data only measure registered workers. Hence, the number of migrants working in, for example, agriculture in Southern Europe is relatively underestimated.

The migrant labour force, as opposed to the overall number of migrants, is prevalently masculine and more qualified than native populations. In fact, in most countries, the percentage of highly qualified migrants aged 25 to 34 staying in the country since they were 10 years old or less is higher than the percentage of 25 to 34 year-old native workers.

It is quite normal for migrant workers to send money home. Yet remittances are not very relevant for most European countries, counting for less than one per cent of GDP. But in a dozen of cases they overtake this threshold and there are a few cases in which remittance inflows represent more than 10 per cent of GDP: Albania, Armenia and Bosnia Herzegovina. In Moldova they constitute up to 34 per cent of gross national product.

¹ Prepared by Lunaria.

One of the few international surveys that enable us to evaluate the standard of living of migrants in various countries is the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) conducted every three years by the OECD. As well as assessing the quality of schools and of the education system, the OECD analyses the background of students and, on that basis, builds a synthetic index called the economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) index, which takes into account a number of issues related to family wealth, occupational status, the educational attainment of parents, and educational resources at home. Students with an immigrant background (that is first and second generation immigrants) score lower on the ESCS index than native students, except in Montenegro. Yet in some countries, the differences are less pronounced than in others. In Spain and the United Kingdom the difference is less than 0.30 points, on the while in Denmark and Luxembourg it is more than 0.90. These differences, together with the ones relative to the different performance of native and migrant students, may represent one of the few internationally comparable indicators of migrant integration.

Table 14 synthesises the major characteristics of migration policies in European countries, as well as the adoption by the states of migration related UN treaties.

BOX 10: Methodological problems

Measuring migration entails a number of difficulties that make the availability of information quite scarce, even when simply measuring the number of migrants. The major limitations are due to the fact that only registered migrations across borders are counted.

Internal migration is not considered. According to UNDP internal migrants are almost four times the number of international migrants, thus representing an important phenomenon for a number of countries, especially for larger countries with internal economic and social differences. not considering them may greatly bias the real overall figures of the migration phenomena.

In addition, figures reflect only legal migration, as measured by the receiving country. Illegal migrants are obviously not counted and no country generally counts the number of people leaving, which means that there is no double checking mechanism. Also, short-term migrants are often not registered under national regulatory frameworks and, therefore, are not included in available statistics. To be registered, a person entering from outside the country must intend to stay in the country for a specified minimum period, which may vary from one week (Germany) to three months (Belgium), or even one year (Sweden). This means that short-term migrants are counted in Germany, but not in Sweden. With the exception of asylum seekers, the reasons why people migrate are not always explicit or recorded. Hence, international students and seasonal workers are both considered migrants for statistical purposes.

Furthermore, second generation migrants are not counted as migrants. They are not technically migrants, but, from a sociological point of view, they may face similar difficulties.

These are the main problems faced when trying to measure the stock of people moving into other countries (i.e., the quantity of migration). In relation to the qualitative aspects of migration (i.e., reasons for migrating, level of education, sector of employment), many countries lack data, and a qualitative analysis of the standards of living of migrants across countries (i.e., income, production, consumption, hours worked, access to credit, access to health care, family reunion, life satisfaction, etc.) simply does not exist. These are issues studied locally through surveys. The only international survey on qualitative aspects of migration is the one conducted by the OECD on the quality of education (PISA), which fortunately takes into consideration first and second generation migrant students.