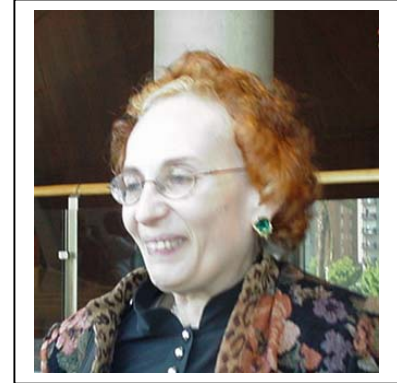


SOUTH TO NORTH MIGRATION

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It is a common view that international migration increased markedly over the last decades of the twentieth century. Using the estimates of the number of international migrants in each country of the world prepared by the United Nations Population Division (United Nations, 2004a and 2004b), let us assess the changes taking place in international migration since 1980.

Between 1980 and 2000, the number of international migrants in the world increased by 75 per cent, from nearly 100 million to 175 million. Slightly more than a third of that increase, however, was due to the break up of the former Soviet Union. In 1991, when the USSR was replaced by 15 independent States, persons who had been internal migrants within the USSR because they were living in a republic other than that in which they were born became, literally overnight, international migrants. An estimated 27 million persons were in that category.

At face value, the number of international migrants increased by 54 million during the 1980s. If the number of migrants in the USSR is subtracted, the increase during 1980-1990 drops by half, to 27 million, higher than the 21 million increase estimated for 1990-2000. That is, even without the effects of disintegration, there was a slow down in the increase of the number of international migrants worldwide during 1990-2000. If the rates of increase prevalent during the 1990s were to continue, the number of international migrants in 2005 would be close to 190 million.

The slowdown in the rise of the number of international migrants worldwide in the 1990s is mostly associated with the virtual stagnation of the number of international migrants in developing countries as a whole. Thus, whereas the number of international migrants in developing countries rose by 12 million in the 1980s, from 52 million to 64 million, it remained virtually unchanged at 64 million during the 1990s.

The stabilization of the number of migrants in the developing world owes much to the sharp decline in the number of refugees worldwide. Excluding refugees, the number of migrants in developing countries rose from 44 million in 1980 to over 47 million in 1990 and then to 51 million in 2000, implying a rise of approximately 3 million per decade.

The number of refugees in the developing world rose sharply between 1980 and 1990 (from 8 million to 17 million, a rise of 9 million) but then dropped markedly (by 3.5 million) during the 1990s, to reach 13.5 million in 2000.

¹ The views and opinions are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.



These developments have resulted in a notable shift of international migrants toward the developed world. Thus, whereas in 1980, 48 per cent of all international migrants lived in developed countries other than the USSR and 52 per cent lived in developing countries, by 2000, 63 per cent of all international migrants lived in the developed world and just 37 per cent lived in developing countries.

In terms of net migration, the developed world has been gaining migrants from developing countries since the 1960s. Over the last five or ten years, developed countries have gained an annual average of 2.6 million persons from developing countries.

The distribution of migrants among countries has changed significantly over time. In 1980, only one country, the United States, had more than 10 million migrants. Countries such as France and India had between 4 and 10 million. But all the rest had less migrants. By 1990, the US and the Russian Federation had more than 10 million and France, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Germany, the Ukraine and Canada had between 4 and 10 million. In 2000, the countries with large numbers of migrants were similar. But notice that also some countries in the developing world, like Brazil in the 1980s and those in Eastern Africa in the 1990s, experienced a reduction of their number of international migrants.

Although all countries host international migrants, the majority of the migrants in the world are concentrated in relatively few countries. In 2000, 28 countries hosted three-quarters of all international migrants in the world. They included 13 developing countries, 10 developed countries and 4 successor States of the former USSR. The slide shows the ten largest migrant receiving countries in 2000. The list is headed by the USA with 35 million migrants (it hosts one in every 5 migrants in the world) and followed by the USSR. Germany, France, India, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom follow.

The steady and rapid increase in the number of international migrants in the developed world has led to a greater concentration of international migrants in developed countries and they account for growing proportions of the populations of developed countries. In developed countries without the USSR, migrants account today for over 8 per cent of the population. The map shows the percentage of migrants in each country in 2000. Countries with very high percentages (above 45 per cent) are very small and cannot be seen in the map. But in Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, international migrants represent between 18 per cent and 45 per cent of the population. And there are many countries, especially in the developed world where migrants account for over 7 per cent of the population.

Women have long been active participants in international migration. Estimates for the 1960s show that women and girls already constituted by then nearly 47 per cent of all international migrants. By 2000, they constituted nearly 49 per cent. Female migrants are more numerous than male migrants in developed countries. In the developing world, females are particularly underrepresented among the international migrants living in Northern Africa and South-central Asia, where their share of the migrant population decreased to 43 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively. That is, increases in female migration have not been either universal or uniform among regions. The map shows the countries where migrant women are more numerous than migrant men (orange and yellow) and those where women are especially underrepresented among migrants (dark brown). The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council are among the latter and most developed countries are in the group with high proportions of female migrants.

Now let's look at the origins of migrants in selected developed countries. In most countries with data on annual admissions (and departures) of international migrants, the net number of migrants remaining in the country is usually higher for migrants originating in developing countries than for those coming from other developed countries. In the USA, in particular, migration from developing countries has been dominant since the late 1960s; in Canada since the mid-1970s and in Australia since the mid-1980s. In the United



Kingdom, a country of net emigration until the late 1970s, there were for a long time net gains of migrants from developing countries while at the same time there was a loss of UK citizens to the rest of the world.

Germany is an exception to this pattern because of the return of ethnic Germans to that country, mostly originating in the former USSR. However, recently, migrants from developing countries have surpassed those from the developed world.

In the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium, developing countries have been the main sources of migrants since the 1980s. Spain is different because only very recently have migrants from the developing world surpassed those from developed countries.

In conclusion, migration, especially that directed to developed countries is rising, and a major component of that migration at the country level is accounted for by net gains from the developing world. This crucial fact underlies and shapes the debates taking place in many countries regarding the importance of international migration for the process of development, both for the countries of origin and those of destination.

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