Global Migration

Data Sheet

2005–10

Unique estimates of migration flows between the top 50 sending and receiving countries

The bilateral flows between 196 countries are estimated from sequential stock tables (see overleaf for details). They are comparable across countries and capture the number of people who changed their country of residence between mid-2005 and mid-2010.

Migration flows within and between ten world regions, in 100,000s

This circular plot shows all global bilateral migration flows for the five-year period mid-2005 to mid-2010, classified into a manageable set of ten world regions.

Key features of the global migration system include the high concentration of African migration within the continent (with the exception of Northern Africa), the closed migration system of the former Soviet Union, and the high spatial focus of Asian emigration to North America and the Gulf states.

The circular plot shows the estimates of directional flows between the 50 countries that send and/or receive at least 0.5% of the world’s migrants in 2005–10. Tick marks indicate gross migration (in + out) in 100,000s.

How to read the plot

Origin and destination countries are represented by segments around the circle. Each country is assigned a colour (minor yellow), which have the same colour as the origin flows/fire Mexico to USA on your right, huge gap at destination the width indicates its size.

Origin migration from Mexico, coloured by destination country (here USA). Tick marks indicate a country’s gross migration in 100,000s (here 4 from 1 in 2011).

Note: The estimates reflect migration transactions over a five-year interval and should be compared to national migration flow data published by United Nations and Eurostat.

The large circular plot only shows the top 15% of all flows.
The 20 largest country-to-country flows in 2005–10

The circular plot depicts the 30 largest country-to-country flows (in absolute terms) in 2005-10. The origins and destinations of these flows are arranged by level of education, with college-educated flows at the outer ring of the pie chart and the United States at the center. The outer circles mark the 10 largest flows at different magnification levels, then the United States. The pie chart indicates that most of the flows originated in Asia and went to the rich Gulf countries and the United States. Exceptions to this trend are the flow from Mexico to the US and flows within Africa. (Cites in boxes to Baskis and Zaidi to South Africa). Malaysia and India were the only countries to be both senders and receivers of very large flows, highlighting the strong effect that migration and differences in education levels have on the redistribution of population.

Immigration (in), emigration (out) and net migration flows for 196 countries in 2005–10 (in 1,000s)

Why estimates and UN flow data are incomparable

Official international migration data collected by national statistics offices, and collected by the United Nations, are not directly comparable due to differences in definitions, measurements and data collection procedures. In contrast, our estimates of migration flows between two unimodal stock tables capture much of what people personally change their country of residence over five years.

It is tempting to evaluate our estimates against official data by dividing our five-year flows by a factor of five to derive an annual number similar to that of official data. However, this would be a not a valid comparison as the two measures capture different types of moves. Annual data flows derive from administrative records or national surveys, capture every move during a reference period, typically a day or ten days (the time interval, where only one transition over the length of the period is allowed). For data flows between one year and five year migration numbers (flow rates, annual migration flows) show very much circular and return movements occur, there is no simple algebraic solution to converting annual region migration data and net five-year flows. Returns (m) do not distinguish return revenues (r) (those who have stayed in their country) they can also be counted multiple times during the interval, wherewith only one transition over the length of the period is allowed. Returns (r) for data flows between one year and five year migration numbers (flow rates, annual migration flows) do not return movements occur, there is no simple algebraic solution to converting annual region migration data and net five-year flows. Returns (m) do not distinguish return revenues (r) (those who have stayed in their country) they can also be counted multiple times during the interval, wherewith only one transition over the length of the period is allowed. Returns (r) for data flows between one year and five year migration numbers (flow rates, annual migration flows) do not.