



Migrants and refugees rescued in the Aegean Sea by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS).

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Migration drivers

The population in Britain increased by half a million in 2015, and two thirds of this was due to net immigration. The general opinion among the UK population is that rising population numbers is not in their interests. The idea that immigration and fertility rates are too high has gained traction in the political world. However, migration is not only a cause of population growth. On the contrary, it is important to understand that population growth is a primary causal factor of migration.

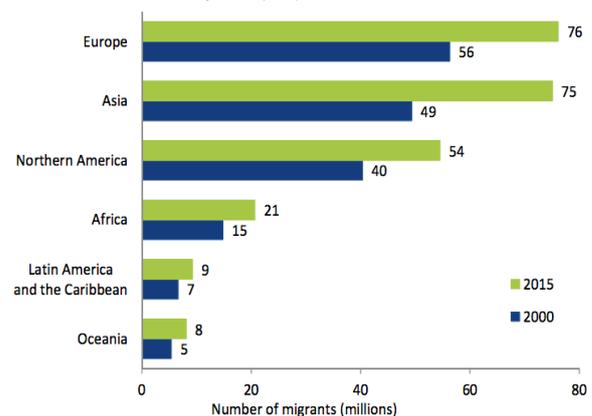
Trends of global migration

Globally, about one in seven people today are identified as migrants, comprising both international migrants (232 million) and internal migrants (740 million).¹ Today’s era is associated with a “migration crisis” because of exceedingly high rates of migration. The

number of migrants worldwide in 2015 was at a record level.

With increasing rates of migration, there is also a shift in the patterns of migration. The South-South migration — movement of people between two developing countries — has increased, while the South-North migration — movement between a developed and a developing country — has comparatively declined. Nevertheless, Germany is the second most popular destination for international migration, after the United States.

Number of international migrants by major area of destination, 2000 and 2015



In addition to this, the highest rate of forced displacement since World War II was recorded in 2015. This was due to conflict in Syria and the growing number of other refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people globally. In total, 15.1 million refugees were welcomed globally.²

Reasons for people to leave

Migrants leave their home country for a diverse set of reasons, which can be economic, political, cultural or environmental.

On the one hand, there are conditions that drive people out of their home country, i.e. *push factors*. For example, unemployment and fewer opportunities prompt people to decide to leave their land for economic opportunities elsewhere.



In other cases, some people may face persecution from organisations like ISIS in Syria, or fear the consequences of political unrest. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods also trigger migration of people towards safer areas.

On the other hand, people can be attracted to a country because of certain *pull factors*. People may feel they will be better taken care of medically, or be more protected, elsewhere than in their home country. They may also be attracted by the wealth, success or abundance of opportunities available in the other country.

How population growth contributes to migration

Because migration can be defined as the movement of people involving change of residence from one place to another, it also impacts the structure, composition and growth of a country's population.

Ultimately, migration is caused by population growth. As countries increase their population, people leave a country with a growing population density to find a better life elsewhere. They seek better opportunities, resources and wealth, as they may feel marginalised or frustrated in their aspirations in their home countries. In doing so, they try to avoid such factors as war, violence, terrorism, natural disasters, inequalities and poor lifestyle. Due to high fertility rates, the fastest-growing populations are located mostly in the developing countries. The growing population density can frustrate efforts to improve dismal healthcare services and limited water and energy supply networks.

For example, cities act as a pull factor for rural migrants. However, many of these poor rural migrants have to live in slums with poor levels of public hygiene, resulting in increased risk of developing infectious diseases and ultimately loss of employment. These factors, acting in tandem or independently, precipitate residents into unemployment, poverty, or illness, resulting in vulnerability and extremely low living standards. As a consequence, people emigrate. Many people tend to migrate to developed countries, where there is a slower rate of population growth and better access to resources.

To alleviate this extreme poverty and to boost people's living standards, Population Matters promotes the moderation of population growth.

Levels of population growth in the developed and developing countries

Today, Europe accounts for almost 739 million people.³ Germany, the most popular destination in Europe, is home to around 80 million.⁴ While many of the people moving towards Europe

migrate to Germany, they still represent a small proportion of the total population.

India and China, with relatively high population density, constitute around 60 per cent of the total Asian population.⁵ They experience high rates of internal as well as international migration through rapid urbanisation and globalisation. For example, rural men in India and China tend to leave the countryside in order to access more opportunities, have a better job and feed their families back at home.

Similarly, the North American population has increased rapidly to more than 360 million,⁶ while the total population in Africa has reached 1.2 billion.⁷ Such unprecedented levels of population growth and density will challenge the political and natural establishments of the world through the impact of migration.

Solutions

Population Matters believes that enabling a rise in living standards throughout the world will improve everyone's individual opportunities.

Tackling underlying causes in the country of origin, like poverty, family planning, lack of resources, climate change and conflict, are equitable and long-term solutions to migration pressure.

Our aim is to encourage smaller families. In order to achieve this, the fertility rate needs to decrease, through improving access to family planning and promoting smaller families. We support improvements to women's rights to

access education and employment, and their entitlement to choose to limit their family size if they so wish.



We also support appropriate maternal medical care, in order to limit the mortality rate at birth, so that families can plan their future more effectively. This enables parents to devote more attention and resources to a limited number of children, rather than having to struggle to offer scarce and often insufficient resources to many children.

Conclusion

The main drivers of migration are the demographic variables of population growth, fertility rates and urbanisation. Countries need to tackle migration by addressing its root causes, rather than simply addressing its consequences. In summary, to limit migration, the governments of developed as well as developing countries should focus as much on population growth in countries of origin as on migration itself.

¹ International Organization for Migration. (2015). Global Migration Trends: An overview. Retrieved August 8, 2016, from http://iomgmdac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Global_Migration_Trends_2014_PDF.pdf



² Global Migration Trends 2015 Factsheet - IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre. (2016). Retrieved August 08, 2016, from <http://iomgmdac.org/global-trends-2015-factsheet/>

³ Europe Population (LIVE). (n.d.). Retrieved August 08, 2016, from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/europe-population/>

⁴ Germany Population (LIVE). (n.d.). Retrieved August 08, 2016, from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/germany-population/>

⁵ Asia Population (LIVE). (n.d.). Retrieved August 08, 2016, from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/asia-population/>

⁶ Northern America Population (LIVE). (n.d.). Retrieved August 08, 2016, from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/northern-america-population/>

⁷ Africa Population (LIVE). (n.d.). Retrieved August 08, 2016, from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/>