

**International Migration &
GENERATION 2025**

On October 31, 2011 the global population was estimated to have reached 7 billion. The demographic changes between developed and less developed regions will be readily felt in the next decade – by 2025 – when the world’s population hits 8 billion. More developed countries are simultaneously facing fertility rates at their lowest levels and aging populations, while less developed countries, in contrast, are and will be experiencing higher birth rates and a significant “youth bulge”. The majority of the next billion will be born in low- and middle-income countries where those with the lowest per capita incomes will be more likely to experience higher fertility rates if current trends continue.¹



While the social, economic, fiscal and political implications of these demographic changes are obvious for both developed and less developed countries, the policy interventions to minimize its negative impacts, however, are less clear.²

International migration especially of young people constitutes one of the potential effects that could mitigate these challenges. Migrants moving from countries with high fertility and unemployment rates to countries with an increasingly aging population and low fertility rates could not only delay these demographic imbalances but also improve the

developmental prospects of migrants in both, more developed and less developed countries.³

A Global Picture⁴

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT
CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

Today, there are some 33 million international migrants under the age of 20, who represent around 16 per cent of the total migrant population. Among the 33 million international migrants under 20 years of age, adolescents (15-19 years)

¹ See You, Danzhen, and David Anthony. 2012. *Generation 2025 and Beyond*. New York: UNICEF for a discussion.

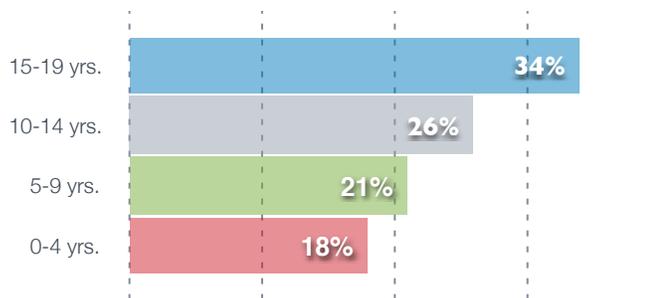
² Cortina, Jeronimo. 2012. "Children, Education and Migration: Win-Win Policy Responses for Co-Development." Presented at the Symposium on Family, Migration and Dignity, Doha, Qatar.

³ Cortina, Jeronimo. 2012. "Children, Education and Migration: Win-Win Policy Responses for Co-Development." Presented at the Symposium on Family, Migration and Dignity, Doha, Qatar.

⁴ The following analysis is based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011). *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Sex and Age* (UN Database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2010)

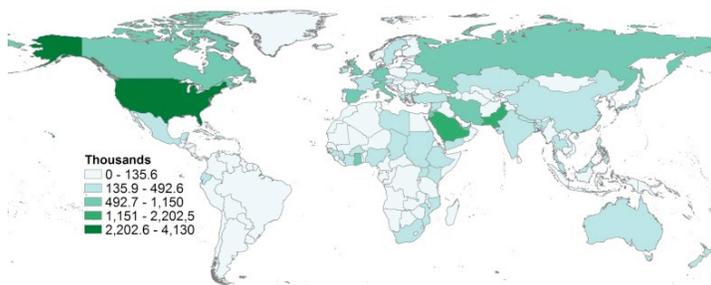
account for 11 million. They are followed by adolescents between 10 and 14 years who comprise around 9 million. Young children ages 5-9 and 0-4 represent 7 and 6 million of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, respectively (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Age Distribution International Migrant Children and Adolescents



In line with current demographic trends **developing countries host a higher proportion of child and adolescent migrants**. Around 20 million international migrants under 20 years live in least developed and developing countries, accounting for 60 per cent of the total international migrant population under the age of 20 (See Figure 2 for global distribution).

Figure 2. International Migrants Under 20 years of age; A Global Picture



Regional Differences

There are significant regional differences in the proportion of child and adolescent migrants. The highest proportion of child and adolescent migrants over the total migrant population (0-65+ yrs.) is found in **Africa**, followed by **Asia**, **Oceania**, **Europe** and the **Americas** (see Figure 3).

Fig. 3 Proportion of International Migrant Children and Adolescents over the Total Migrant Population by Region



In **Africa**, the group 15-19 years of age represents around 31 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, while the group 0-4 represent 21 per cent. In **Northern America**, migrants between 15 and 19 years of age represent 43 per cent of the total migrant population under the age of 20, while in **Latin America and the Caribbean** they represent 29 per cent. The group 0-4 years of age represents 9 and 33 per cent in **Northern America** and **Latin America and the Caribbean**, respectively.

In **Asia** and **Oceania**, the group 15 to 19 represents 27 and 40 per cent, respectively, while the group 0-4 years of age represents 24 and 10 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, in each region respectively.

In **Europe**, international migrants between 15 and 19 years of age represent 41 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, while migrants between 0 and 4 years represent 11 per cent of all migrants under the age of 20.

Gender Differences

Globally, there are 95 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under the age of 20. In **Northern America** there are 89 female migrants for every 100 male migrants, while in **Latin America and the Caribbean** there are 95 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under 20 years of age. In **Asia** and **Oceania** there are 91 and 97 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under the age of 20, respectively. In **Europe** there is almost parity, that is 99 female migrants for every 100 male migrants. In contrast, in **Africa** for every 100 male migrants there are 108 female migrants under 20 years of age.

Facts and Figures

SOUTH-SOUTH MIGRATION⁵

Today, South-South migration is almost as frequent as South-North⁶ migration representing 34 and 35 per cent of the global migrant population, respectively.⁷

In 1990 around 19 per cent (2.3 million) of the total migrant population born and living in the South was under the age of 20. In 2000 this figure increased by 26 percentage points accounting for 21 per cent (2.9 million) of the total migrant population, a rise of 26 per cent in absolute terms.

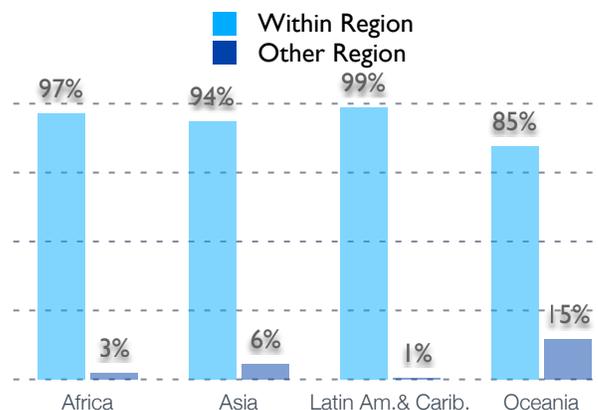
In 1990 and 2000 the proportion of boys and adolescents (0-19 years) was on average around 9 per cent of the total migrant population, while the proportion of girls (0-19 years) was approximately 10 per cent of the total migrant population for both census rounds.

Among the total migrant population (0-65+) children and adolescents born and living in the South, the proportion of males under 20 years of age increased from 17 per cent in 1990 to 21 per cent in 2000, while the proportion of female migrants under 20 years of age remained unchanged at 21 per cent. In 1990 there were 99 male migrants per 100 female migrants aged 0-19 years. In 2000, however, this pattern was reversed: there were 101 male migrants per 100 female children and adolescent migrants.

Regional Differences

Most South-South migration takes place within the same geographical region. In **Africa** 97 per cent of South-South migration occurs within the same region, while in **Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean** and **Oceania** 94, 99, and 85 per cent of South-South migration takes place within the same region, respectively (see Figure 4). Children and adolescent migrants born and living in the global South are even more likely to migrate within the same region.

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of South-South migrants (0-19 yrs.) within geographical regions



Gender Differences

In **Africa**, in 1990 there were 98 male migrants for every 100 female migrants between 0 and 19 years of age. In 2000, male migrants under 20 years of age outnumbered female migrants. There were 101 male migrants between 0 and 19 years of age for every 100 female migrants.

In **Oceania**, in 1990 there were 103 male migrants for every 100 female migrants under 20 years of age, while in 2000 there was virtual parity in the number of male and female migrants under 20 years of age.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean** the proportion of male migrants has decreased. In 1990 there were 98 male migrants under 20 years of age for every 100 female migrants, while in 2000 there were 96 male migrants for every 100 female migrants between 0 and 19 years of age.

In **Asia**, the proportion of male and female migrants under 20 years of age has not changed. Male migrants under 20 years of age outnumber female migrants. Both, in 1990 and 2000 there were 103 male migrants for every 100 female migrants under the age of 20.

⁵ The analysis presented in this brief is based on empirical data on the age and sex of South-South international migrants based on the 1990 and 2000 census rounds.

⁶ For statistical purposes the UN classifies the global North as more developed regions, which include Europe and Northern America, while the global South encompasses less developed regions including Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia (except Japan) and Oceania (except Australia and New Zealand).

⁷ The designations “developed countries” and “less developed countries” are used for statistical purposes and do not reflect any judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

DISCUSSION

Why is migration important for the current discussion on population dynamics and the post-2015 development agenda? Current population dynamics put both developed and less developed countries on an equal footing within the development paradox: countries will either suffer from relatively high fertility rates or from high old-age dependency ratios and low fertility rates.

- In the next decade population growth will occur in low- and middle-income countries (countries with the lowest per capita incomes will experience the highest levels of fertility).
- Old-age dependency ratios will increase markedly – especially in more developed countries – as a byproduct of improvements in longevity and low fertility rates.

These population imbalances create major resource-allocation problems especially in sectors where government expenditures are the highest, namely, health, social security (i.e. pensions) and education, all of which are intimately tied to the post-2015 development agenda and universally relevant to developed and less developed countries.

Population trends, if they continue to hold, suggest that no silver bullet exists for balancing future population and developmental challenges. However, there are several different policy alternatives that may ease their negative implications.

Increases in productivity may contribute to reducing old-age dependency ratios in developed countries but the question is by how much. Governments can also increase the age of eligibility for pensions and benefits, but it is questionable whether these increases would be politically feasible. Lastly, governments could make use of new tax revenues, reduce unemployment and/or raise the participation of women in the labour force to fund pensions.

International migration not only has the potential to delay current population trends especially in countries with an increasingly aging population and low fertility rates but also improve the developmental prospects of both more developed and less developed countries and deliver many positive benefits to foster equitable development.

International migration, especially that of future generations—that is, today's children and adolescents—needs to be inserted into the global conversation grounded on a system of rights and equity in terms of access and opportunities and of shared responsibilities between countries of origin and destination. Targeted investments in children's health and education constitute, today, the first steps to equalize the world's population imbalances. Failure to invest efficiently and effectively would be tantamount to forgoing countries' equitable development..

For more on data...

MigrantInfo.org is an online database containing data on indicators related to global migration. Developed by **UNICEF** in partnership with the **United Nations Population Division** and the **University of Houston's Project on Development, Migration and Evaluation**. MigrantInfo allows users to generate tables, graphs and maps using the latest available estimates of the international migrant stock, disaggregated by age and gender.

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