

**Mariana Bălan**

Institute for Economic Forecasting,

Romanian Academy,

Bucharest, Romania

dr.mariana.balan@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4326-4826

**Svitlana Bilan**

National University of Water

and Environmental Engineering,

Rivne, Ukraine

vdovtsova@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9814-5459

# Recent Dimensions of Regional Migration

**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** The purpose of this article is to make an analysis of the size and structure of migratory flows at regional and sub-regional level.

**Methodology:** Descriptive statistical analysis was mainly used to visualize and synthesize information about the evolution of the structure and size of migratory flows in major regions of the world.

**Findings:** The importance of contemporary migration is related not only to the number of migrants, but also to the fact that the migratory phenomenon has become global and takes on more and more diverse forms. People travel for various periods of time, but shorter. They adopt

a pattern of circulatory migration, continue to maintain strong connections with where they left from or practice unregulated migration. Migration has become a defining feature of the modern global economy, and the main factors underlying its expansion are the processes of globalization, technical progress, the new economic order, etc. In 2019, the number of I migrants at world level reached 271.6 million, well above the values forecast by international bodies in recent years. In the last three decades, more developed regions have received 69 million international migrants, while less developed regions have received only 50 million. The highest migratory flows were recorded in high-income countries (98 million persons), and middle and low-income countries added only about 20 million persons to migrants' stock (17 million and 3 million, respectively).

**Value Added:** The paper presents an analysis of the size and structure of migratory flows at the regional level, providing a more detailed picture of migration, and presenting a different but complementary perspective of migrants and movements from different parts of the world. A comparative analysis of migrant flows at regional level and on large migration corridors is performed, but also of the structure by age groups and gender of regional migrants.

**Recommendations:** The analysis of data on regional migration shows significant differences in migration patterns between regions. Greater recognition of regional migration patterns, variations and complexities can help shape strategic and sustainable responses of the migration policies. It is also necessary to pay attention to the regional dimensions and variations of international migration that may have critical implications for debates and regulations, especially (but not only) globally.

**Key words:** migration, regions, destinations, vulnerabilities

**JEL codes:** F22, O15, R23

## Introduction

The contemporary era can certainly be called an era of migration. In recent years, the international migration has accounted for 3.5% of the world's population. The migratory phenomenon is characteristic, practically, of any state. The migration has become a defining feature of the modern global economy, and the main factors underlying its expansion are the processes of globalization, the technical progress, the new economic order, etc.

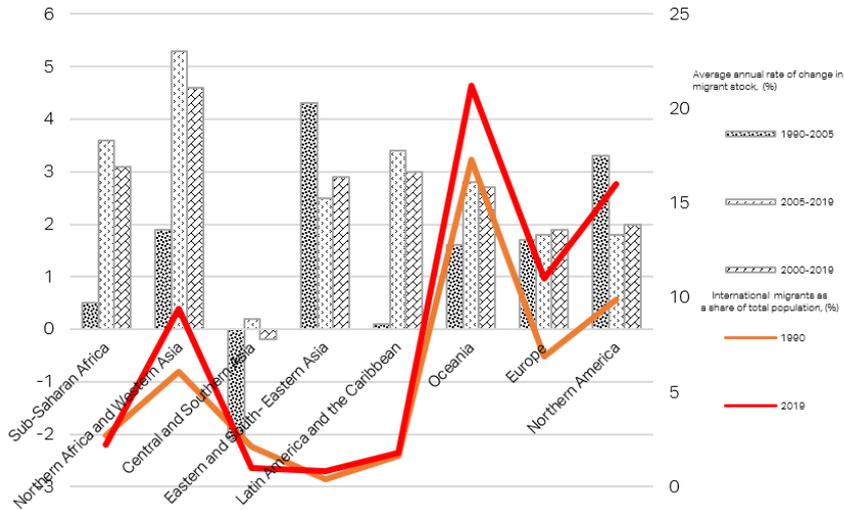
Worldwide, in 2019, the number of migrants was 271.6 million, of which almost 56% of them lived in component countries of more developed regions.

65% of them migrated to high-income countries, 30% lived in middle-income countries, and 5% were in low-income countries. If in the period 1990–2005 the average annual rate of change in the stock of migrants worldwide was 1.5%, in the period 2005–2019 it increased to 2.5%, which shows that in this last period, the size of migratory flows was larger, the number of international migrants increasing by 79.6 million people. In this context, in the last three decades, more developed regions have received 69 million migrants, while less developed regions have received only 50 million. The highest migratory flows were recorded in high-income countries (98 million people), while middle-income and low-income countries added only about 20 million people to their stock of migrants (17 million and, respectively 3 million).

## The levels and trends of regional migration

Globally, the share of migrants in the total population of the planet was relatively small, namely 3.5% in 2019, increasing compared to 1990, when they accounted for 2.9% (Figure 1) (UN DESA, 2017; UNHCR, 2019; UN, 2019).

Figure 1. Annual rate of change of migrants' stock and their share in the total population, by regions, in the period 1990–2019

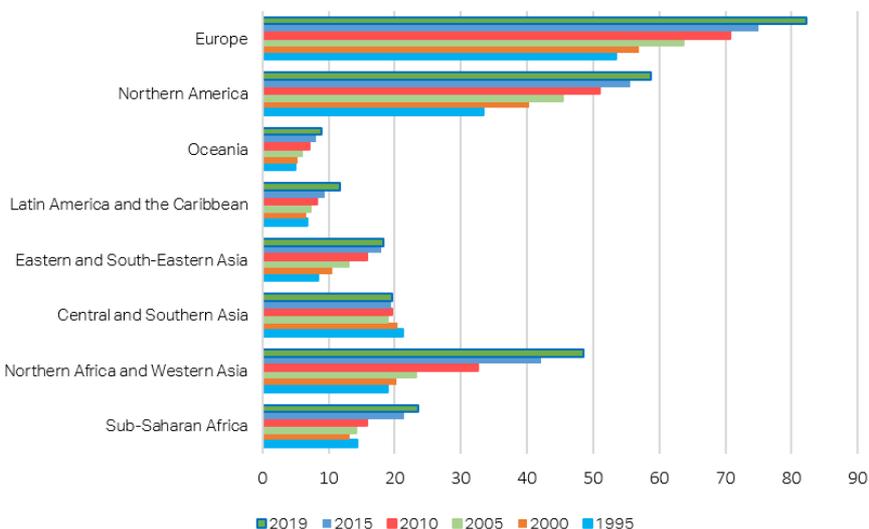


Data source: developed by the author based on UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

In the more developed regions, in 2019, international migrants accounted for 12.0% of their total population, while less developed regions accounted for 1.9% of the total population (statistics UNHCR).

In 2019, 51.9% of the world's international migrants lived in Europe and North America (30.3% in Europe and 21.6% in North America). North Africa and West Asia hosted 49 million international migrants (17.9% of global migrants) (Figure 2), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (8.7%), Central and South Asia (7.23%) and East and South-East Asia (6.74%). Latin America and the Caribbean (11.67 million) and Oceania (8.93 million) recorded the lowest number of international migrants (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The evolution of international migrant stock at mid-year by region



Data source: Statistics UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

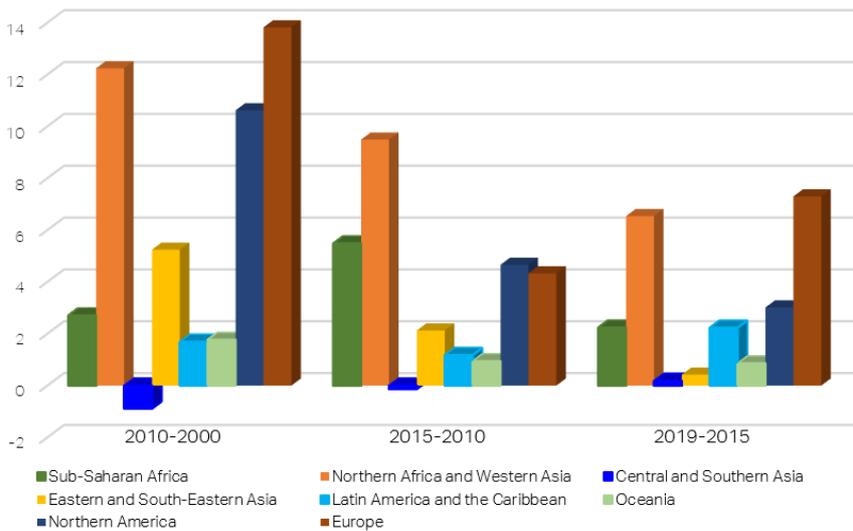
The analysis of the diagrams in Figure 2, shows that between 1995 and 2019, the international stock of migrants increased by 32.7 million in Europe, by 31.04 million in North America and by 30.98 million in North Africa and West Asia. East and South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are regions that each added about 10 million international migrants, while Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania added about 4 million each. In contrast, the number of international migrants decreased during the period considered by 6.54 million in Central and South Asia.

Over time, the average annual change in the number of migrants has varied from one region to another. If in the first decade of the 21st century, in Europe, North Africa and West Asia and North America, the population of migrants increased by over 1 million per year, in the period 2015–2010 and as a result of the economic and financial crisis it decreased below 0.7 million / year. The exception was Sub-Saharan Africa, which in 2015–2010 has doubled its migrant population from 2000–2010 (Figure 3). By contrast, the international

stock of migrants reduced in Central and South Asia by 0.89 million between 2000 and 2010 and by 1.13 million people between 2015–2010.

The period 2015–2019 is characterized by an increase in the size of migratory flows in all regions of the world, the highest values being recorded in Europe (7.3 million people) (Bite, Szombathelyi, & Vasa, 2020), North Africa and West Asia (6.54 million people) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Evolution of the migrant stock by destination regions, in various time periods (millions persons)



Data source: Statistics UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

In 2019, more than 124 million international migrants were registered in the five largest regional migration corridors, which represents 45.65% of the global migrant stock (IDMC, 2018, 2019). The largest regional migration corridor in the world was Europe to Europe, with 41.9 million migrants born in Europe and residing in another country in the same region (a significant share of them migrating between the countries of the eurostat Union (European Commission, 2018; Statistics Eurostat, 2019; MacGregor, 2019)). In both the first and second decades of the 21st century, the regional migration corridor

between Europe and Europe has increased by more than 5 million international migrants, an average annual increase of over half a million (Table 1).

The second largest migration corridor in 2019 was the Latin American and Caribbean corridor to North America, with a stockpile of 26.6 million migrants (Zong et al., 2019). This regional migration corridor increased by 0.9 million migrants per year in the period 1990 - 2000, but decreased in the decades of the 21st century: the number of international migrants on this corridor increasing with an average of 0.5 and respectively, 0.3 million people per year.

**Table 1. Number of international migrants by regions of destination and origin in 2019 (millions)**

| Destination regions              | Regions of origin  |                                  |                           |                                 |                                 |         |        |                  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|--------|------------------|
|                                  | Sub-Saharan Africa | Northern Africa And Western Asia | Central And Southern Asia | Eastern and South -Eastern Asia | Latin America and the Caribbean | Oceania | Europe | Northern America |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 18.31              | 1.21                             | 0.14                      | 0.09                            | 0.04                            | 0.02    | 0.76   | 0.04             |
| Northern Africa And Western Asia | 2.07               | 18.93                            | 18.52                     | 4.27                            | 0.07                            | 0.01    | 2.58   | 0.17             |
| Central And Southern Asia        | 0.00               | 0.33                             | 11.69                     | 1.97                            | 0.02                            | 0.00    | 4.49   | 0.05             |
| Eastern and South -Eastern Asia  | 0.01               | 0.03                             | 1.90                      | 14.32                           | 0.34                            | 0.08    | 0.21   | 0.31             |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 0.03               | 0.10                             | 0.03                      | 0.29                            | 8.24                            | 0.01    | 1.42   | 1.24             |
| Oceania                          | 0.48               | 0.43                             | 1.16                      | 2.30                            | 0.20                            | 1.06    | 2.89   | 0.23             |
| Europe                           | 4.94               | 13.05                            | 11.20                     | 3.60                            | 4.98                            | 0.40    | 41.86  | 1.10             |
| Northern America                 | 2.50               | 2.79                             | 5.16                      | 10.24                           | 26.58                           | 0.52    | 6.89   | 1.37             |

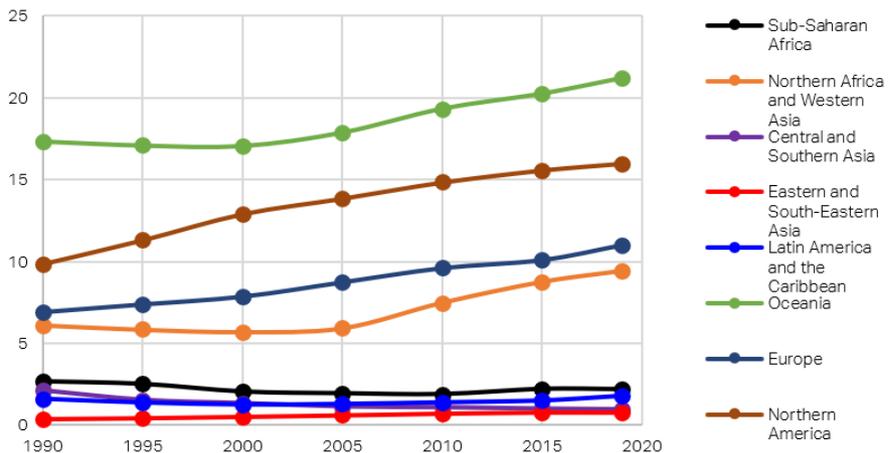
Data source: Statistics UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

In 2019, the size of migratory flows was almost equal in the regional migration corridors three, four and five: 18.93 million international migrants for North Africa and West Asia to North Africa and West Asia, with 18.52 million migrants for Central and South Asia to the same region and with 18.31 million migrants for the sub-Saharan Africa corridor to Sub-Saharan Africa (Table

1) (IOM, 2019; Srivastava & Pandey, 2018). The number of migrants from the North Africa and West Asia regional corridor increased by 7.3 million between 2010 and 2019, while the Central and South Asia corridor to North Africa and West Asia increased by 5.4 million. The number of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa to the same region then increased by 5.4 million between 2010 and 2019.

The highest values of the weights of international migrants in the total population of the destination regions were registered in: Oceania (21.2%), North America (16%) and Europe (11%) and North Africa and West Asia (9.4%) (Figure 4). In the other regions, the migrants represented between 0.8% and 2.2% of the total population (Figure 4) (Eurasian Economic Union).

Figure 4. Share of migrants in the total population of the destination regions, (%)



Data source: Statistics UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

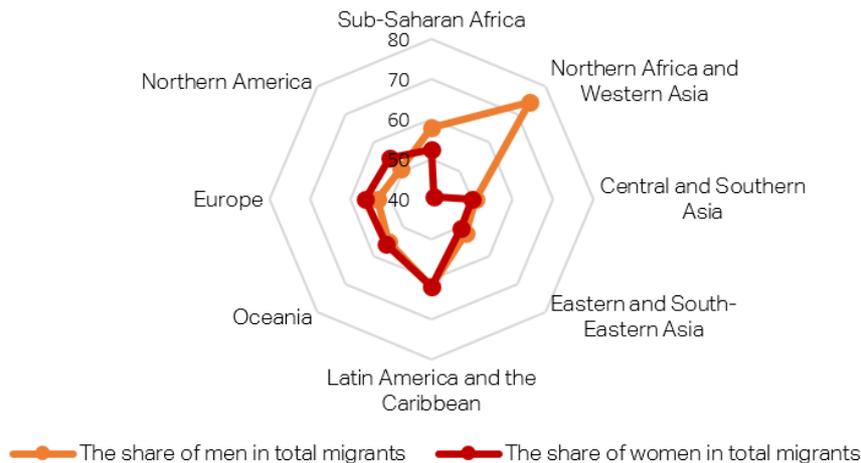
At the beginning of the 21st century, the share of the international migrants in the total population of the destination regions increased by 4.1 percentage points in Oceania, by 3.7 percentage points in North Africa and West Asia and by about 3 percentage points in Europe and North America. In the other regions, with the exception of Central and South Asia, the share of migrants in their total population increased by 0.2 to 0.5 percentage points. In Central

and South Asia, there was a 0.4 percentage point reduction in the share of international migrants in the total population, which means that the general population grew faster than the population of migrants in this region (Máté, Sarihasan, Popp, & Oláh, 2018).

## Levels and trends of regional migration by age and gender groups

If in 2019, the women accounted for 47.91% of the total migrants in major regions of the world, they exceeded the number of male migrants in more developed regions. In less developed regions, the share of migrant women represents less than half of all migrants (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Share of migrant women in total international migrants, by destination region, 2019



Data source: Statistics UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

In the period 1990–2019, the share of women in the total number of migrants, from more developed regions varied insignificantly: from 51.16% in 1990 to 51.49% in 2019. Larger variations in the share of migrant women in

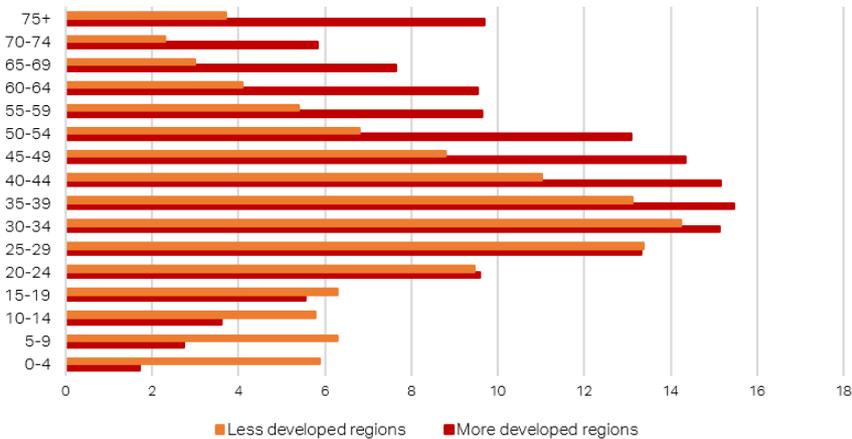
total migrants were registered in less developed regions, where this percentage decreased from 46.99 in 1990 to 43.36 in 2019. This phenomenon was due to the rapid increase in the number of male migrants in North Africa and West Asia between 2000 and 2010 as due to the high demand for migrant workers in several countries in these regions.

The regions where the share of women in total migrants was higher than men, in 2019 were Europe with 51.4% and North America with 51.8%. In the same year, women and men accounted for an almost equal share of total migrants in: Oceania (50.4%), Latin America and the Caribbean (49.9%), Central and South Asia (49.4%), and from East and Southeast Asia (49.3%). In Sub-Saharan Africa the share of migrant women was 47.5%, and North Africa and West Asia only 35.5%.

Regarding the average age of migrants worldwide, in 2019, it was 39.0 years, with significant variations between the development regions of the world. Thus, in more developed regions, the average age of migrants was 42.9 years, and in less developed regions it was 34.5 years.

By age groups, from the 202 million international migrants aged 20-64, 57% were in more developed regions and 43% in less developed regions (Figure 6). If in the period 1990-2010 the share of worldwide migrants of working age among all migrants increased from 69% to 74%, in the period 2010-2019 it did not suffer significant variations.

Figure 6. Distribution of migrants by age groups, by development regions, 2019, (millions persons)

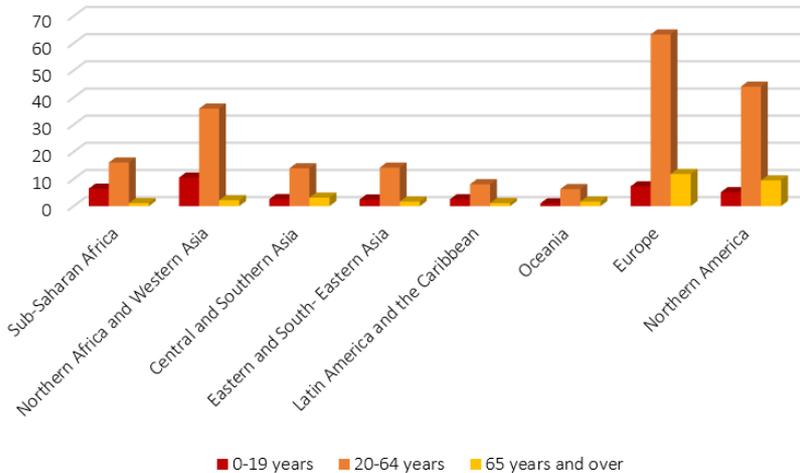


Data source: Statistics UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

Migrants under the age of 20 accounted in 2019 for 1/6 of the global migrant stock and the largest share of them lived in developed regions. The variation of this segment of migrants in the period 1990-2019 was only 5 pp (from 19% in 1990 to 14% in 2019). In all regions of the world, in 2019, there were 32 million migrants aged 65 or over. In the more developed regions they represented 15% of the migrant population in these areas, and in the less developed regions the share of this category of migrants was only 8%.

The analysis of the distribution of migrants by age groups and by large regions of the Earth, highlights the fact that in 2019, Europe and North America had the highest share of migrants in the age categories 20–64 and 65 and over (Figure 7), in while in the region of North Africa and West Asia were concentrated the most international migrants under the age of 20.

Figure 7. Migrant stock by age groups in the major regions of the world, in 2019, (millions persons)



Data source: UN DESA's Population Division, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

Following the increasing number of international migrants in recent years, the estimates of international organizations in the field indicates that in more developed regions, the median age will increase from 42 years in 2020 to 46.8 years in 2070, and in less developed regions the median age will increase from 29.0 years to 37.7.

At the regional level, as well as worldwide, changes in the working age population are also due to international migration (Cristea & Grabara, 2019). It is expected that in 2070, four of the eight regions will be positively affected by migration by increasing the share of the working age population (by 2.4 pp. in North America, 1.2 pp. in Oceania, 0.8 pp. in Europe and 0.5 pp. in North Africa and West Asia). For the other four regions, the impact of migration on the working age population will be insignificant (below 1 percentage point).

But with the measures introduced by governments to “flatten the curve” of infections, the COVID-19 pandemic already has a major impact on mobility and migration. In this context, the forecasts regarding the impact of regional migration on socio-economic processes and phenomena need to be reformulated.

## Conclusions

And in the coming decades, the international migration remains a real process and can vary taking into account the political and economic changes, innovative technological and social changes, growing demographic imbalances, the effects of climate change and globalization trends.

The statistics provided by various international bodies in the field indicate that, at the regional level there are clear geographical aspects of migration. The analysis of data on regional migration shows significant differences in migration patterns between regions: the migration in Africa was predominantly intraregional (migration taking place and in other regions of the world), while in Latin America and the Caribbean migration is dominated by emigration to other regions of the world, especially North America, with intraregional migration playing a more limited role.

The regional differences and complexities, as well as recent developments, provide an important perspective for understanding migration, and the migration patterns and processes are closely linked to geography and key regional characteristics developed over decades, perhaps even centuries, and it continues to play a central role in the way and place in which people migrate at international level.

A greater recognition of the regional and sub-regional migration patterns, variations and complexities can contribute to the formulation of strategic and sustainable responses to the emigration policies. It is also necessary to pay attention to the regional dimensions and variations of international migration that may have critical implications for debates and regulations, especially (but not only) at the global level.

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SPOLECZNA AKADEMIA NAUK

