

3 International migration

The United Nations estimates that in 2005 globally there were 190 million people living outside of their country of birth – 2.9 per cent of the world’s population.

In 2005, the countries in the Asia-Pacific region were home to almost 50 million migrants – around 1.2 per cent of their total population. Generally these migrants come from other countries in the region. However there is also migration into and out of the region; as a whole, Asia and the Pacific is experiencing net out-migration, primarily to high-income economies.

There is no single standard definition of who is an international migrant. The United Nations Population Division bases its estimates on the number of people living in a country other than that of their birth. This has the advantage that the data on these “foreign-born” people are available in most population censuses. However, censuses using this definition will include as migrants people who may have arrived decades previously and subsequently become citizens of the host country. On the other hand, people who return to their country of birth after a long period abroad would not be counted as migrants since they are not foreign born.

Generally, migrant numbers in censuses are likely to be underestimates. By focussing on permanent or long-term residents, they miss many short-term arrivals. These and other official sources of information are also likely to miss most irregular migrants.

Those who are counted as migrants will also change when there are alterations in international borders. This was evident following the break-up of the Soviet Union. Thus, many of the international migrants in the Russian Federation, for example, are ethnic Russians who were born in other republics within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and would previously have been classified as “internal” migrants. As a result, one-quarter of the region’s migrants are now found in the Russian Federation. Similarly, many of the international migrants in

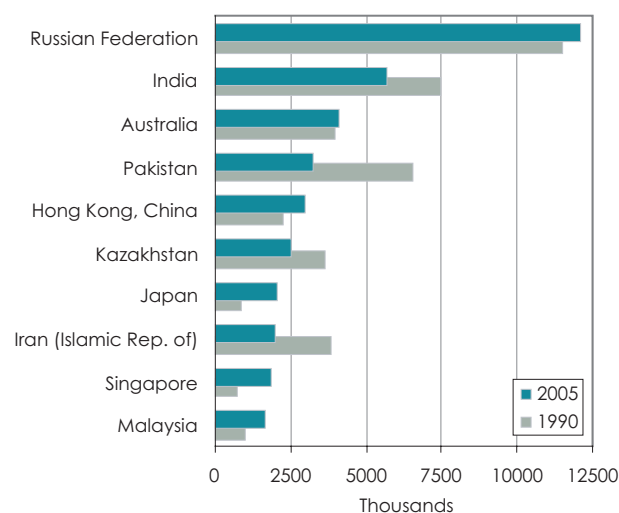
Kazakhstan are ethnic Kazakhs who moved to the country, primarily from Mongolia, when it became independent.

A corresponding situation arose in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The large numbers of international migrants are a consequence partly of the population exchanges when India and Pakistan were partitioned in 1947 and when Bangladesh became independent in 1972. However, as these migrants are now at least 60 years of age and many are now dying, the number of migrants in India and Pakistan has been declining. In Pakistan, the number of international migrants declined by one million persons between 2000 and 2005, though this also reflected the return of former refugees to Afghanistan.

Other countries or areas with more than one million foreign-born people in 2005 were Australia; Hong Kong, China; the Islamic Republic of Iran; Japan; Malaysia; Singapore, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Figure 3.1

Stock of international migrants, selected Asia-Pacific countries or areas, 1990 and 2005



The highest proportions of migrants tend to be in the richer countries. While the proportion of the foreign-born population in low-income

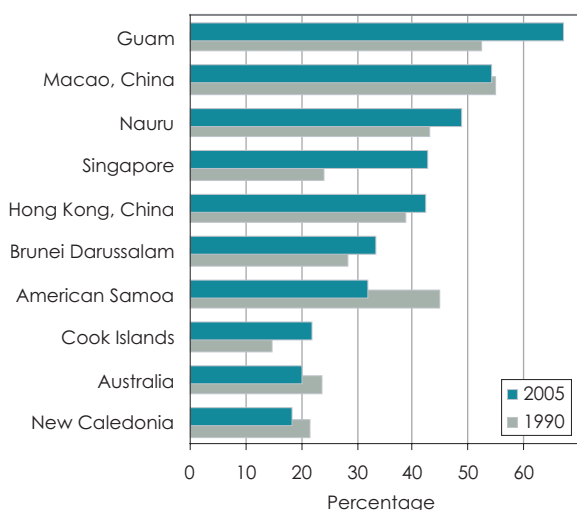
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economies in 2005 was only 0.8 per cent (and these countries include Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), it was 1.1 per cent in middle-income economies, and 6.0 per cent in high-income economies.

International migrants can have a greater proportional impact on areas with small populations. Countries or areas of less than a half million people but which also have high proportions of foreign born include: Guam; Macao, China; Nauru; Brunei Darussalam; American Samoa; New Caledonia and Cook Islands. Larger countries or areas that in 2005 had at least 15 per cent of their populations foreign born included Australia, Kazakhstan, Hong Kong, China; New Zealand and Singapore.

Figure 3.2

Foreign population as a share of the total population, Asia-Pacific countries or areas, 1990 and 2005



Among the subregions the highest proportion of people foreign born was in the Pacific at 15 per cent, while the proportion in Central Asia was only 8 per cent. Of the countries or areas in the region, the highest proportion foreign born – two thirds – was in Guam. The only other area with more than half of its population born elsewhere was Macao,

China, at 56 per cent. Both Singapore and Hong Kong, China, however, also had high proportions, at 43 per cent.

Globally, most migrants travel from less developed to more developed regions. Thus, in each of the three five-year periods since 1990, Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have all experienced net out-migration, while Northern America, Europe and countries in the Middle East have experienced net in-migration. Unlike the stock figures, which are based on place of birth, flows of migrants count all people moving in and out, regardless of place of birth or nationality.

Within the Asia-Pacific region, net migration rates were negative – i.e. more people were leaving than arriving – though for the high-income economies the rates were positive. During the period 2000-2005, net out-migration from Asia and the Pacific, mostly from the low-income and middle-income economies, was 0.3 per 1,000 population per annum, or an average of 1.3 million people a year.

Nevertheless, some parts of the region, in addition to the traditional countries of immigration such as Australia, have experience significant immigration. The highest rate, 21 per 1,000, was recorded for Timor-Leste, because many Timorese who were exiles or refugees prior to independence returned home. Afghanistan also experienced a high rate of net in-migration (9.7 per 1,000) owing to the return of former refugees. High rates of net in-migration were also achieved by Macao, China (10.9 per 1,000), Singapore (9.6) and Hong Kong, China (8.7).

During the period 2000-2005 there was also significant out-migration from the Pacific. Countries with high negative migration rates include Fiji (-10.3 per 1,000), the Federated States of Micronesia (-17.9), Samoa (-16.6) and Tonga (-16.1). For Central Asia as a whole, the net migration rate was -3.8; in both Georgia and Tajikistan the rate was -10.8.

Stock of foreign population (thousand people)

Estimated number of international immigrants, male and female, in the middle of the indicated year. Generally represents the number of persons born in a country other than where they live. Where data on the place of birth were unavailable, the number of non-citizens was used as a proxy for the number of international immigrants. In either case, the migrant stock includes refugees, some of whom may not be foreign born. **Aggregates:** Sum of individual country values. **Source:** World Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision Population Database (online database, accessed in August 2008).

Stock of foreign population as share of total population (percentage)

The number of international immigrants (see definition for *Stock of foreign population*) divided by the total

population. **Aggregates:** Averages are calculated using the total population as weight. **Source:** World migrant stock: The 2005 Revision Population Database (online database, accessed in August 2008).

Net migration rate (per 1,000 population)

The number of international immigrants minus the number of emigrants over a period, divided by the average population of the receiving country over that period. **Aggregates:** Averages are calculated using total population as weight. **Source:** World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision Population Database (online database, accessed in September 2007).

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	Stock of foreign population				Stock of foreign population as share of total population				Net migration rate			
	Thousands				Percentage				Per 1,000 population			
	1990	1995	2000	2005	1990	1995	2000	2005	90-95	95-00	00-05	05-10
East and North-East Asia	4 293	4 986	5 686	6 497	0.32	0.35	0.39	0.43	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2
China	380	441	513	596	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-0.3
DPR Korea	34	35	36	37	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.16				
Hong Kong, China	2 218	2 432	2 701	2 999	38.89	39.19	40.54	42.49	10.1	9.3	8.7	8.3
Japan	877	1 261	1 620	2 048	0.71	1.00	1.28	1.60	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Macao, China	204	224	240	257	54.86	54.53	54.48	54.39	7.8	7.1	10.9	4.2
Mongolia	7	7	8	9	0.30	0.31	0.33	0.35	-5.2	-7.4	-4.0	-2.3
Republic of Korea	572	584	568	551	1.33	1.30	1.21	1.15	-0.5	-0.3	-0.3	-0.1
South-East Asia	3 031	3 500	4 752	5 664	0.69	0.73	0.91	1.02	-0.5	-0.3	-0.6	-0.6
Brunei Darussalam	73	87	104	124	28.48	29.60	31.23	33.22	2.6	2.2	2.0	1.8
Cambodia	38	116	237	304	0.40	1.02	1.85	2.18	2.8	1.3	0.2	-0.1
Indonesia	466	219	330	160	0.25	0.11	0.16	0.07	-0.8	-0.9	-0.9	-0.8
Lao PDR	23	23	24	25	0.56	0.50	0.46	0.44	-1.4	-3.5	-4.2	-2.5
Malaysia	1 014	1 135	1 392	1 639	5.60	5.51	5.98	6.39	3.0	4.5	1.2	0.7
Myanmar	101	112	115	117	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.24	-0.6	0.0	-0.4	0.0
Philippines	164	214	322	374	0.27	0.31	0.42	0.44	-2.8	-2.5	-2.2	-2.0
Singapore	727	992	1 352	1 843	24.11	28.51	33.65	42.59	15.4	19.6	9.6	9.0
Thailand	391	568	844	1 050	0.72	0.99	1.39	1.67	0.6	1.7	0.7	0.5
Timor-Leste	5	6	5	6	0.72	0.68	0.64	0.57		-40.8	21.2	1.7
Viet Nam	28	27	28	21	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.02	-0.7	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5
South and South-West Asia	20 804	16 821	16 247	14 516	1.66	1.21	1.06	0.87	-0.4	-0.4	-0.5	-0.3
Afghanistan	29	35	38	43	0.23	0.19	0.18	0.17	42.9	-4.1	9.7	10.1
Bangladesh	882	1 006	988	1 032	0.78	0.80	0.71	0.67	-0.4	-0.5	-0.7	-0.6
Bhutan	8	9	9	10	1.53	1.70	1.64	1.53	-38.3	0.1	11.7	3.0
India	7 493	6 951	6 271	5 700	0.87	0.73	0.60	0.50	-0.2	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2
Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	3 809	2 478	2 321	1 959	6.72	3.98	3.51	2.82	-5.3	-1.7	-3.7	-1.4
Maldives	3	3	3	3	1.23	1.17	1.15	1.14				
Nepal	413	625	718	819	2.16	2.88	2.94	3.02	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.7
Pakistan	6 556	4 077	4 243	3 254	5.80	3.19	2.94	2.06	-4.3	-0.1	-1.6	-1.7
Sri Lanka	461	428	397	368	2.69	2.37	2.12	1.93	-2.9	-4.3	-4.7	-3.1
Turkey	1 150	1 210	1 259	1 328	2.01	1.93	1.85	1.82	0.4	0.3	-0.1	0.1
North and Central Asia	19 510	18 519	17 767	17 275	9.06	8.47	8.12	7.92	-1.2	-0.6	-0.4	-0.6
Armenia	659	455	314	235	18.58	14.09	10.19	7.80	-29.5	-14.3	-6.6	-5.0
Azerbaijan	361	292	160	182	5.00	3.75	1.97	2.18	-3.1	-3.2	-2.4	-1.2
Georgia	338	250	219	191	6.20	4.97	4.63	4.27	-21.3	-14.4	-10.8	-6.8
Kazakhstan	3 619	3 295	2 871	2 502	21.89	20.70	19.20	16.45	-18.6	-17.1	-2.7	-2.6
Kyrgyzstan	623	482	372	288	14.18	10.49	7.53	5.53	-12.2	-1.1	-3.0	-2.8
Russian Federation	11 525	11 707	11 892	12 080	7.75	7.85	8.07	8.39	3.0	3.0	1.3	0.4
Tajikistan	426	305	330	306	8.03	5.28	5.35	4.68	-11.3	-11.6	-10.8	-5.9
Turkmenistan	307	260	241	224	8.36	6.19	5.35	4.63	2.5	-2.3	-0.4	-0.4
Uzbekistan	1 653	1 474	1 367	1 268	8.06	6.43	5.53	4.77	-3.1	-3.4	-2.3	-1.5
Pacific	4 750	5 052	5 049	5 032	17.78	17.43	16.24	15.07	4.9	3.5	4.9	3.7
Australia	3 984	4 068	4 072	4 097	23.61	22.51	21.28	20.17	5.9	5.0	6.0	4.8
American Samoa	21	21	21	20	44.97	39.74	36.19	31.82				
Cook Islands	3	3	3	3	14.56	15.13	18.08	21.82				
Fiji	14	15	16	17	1.89	1.92	1.99	2.07	-9.3	-10.7	-10.3	-8.3
French Polynesia	26	28	31	34	13.22	13.06	13.03	13.13	-0.5	1.4	1.5	
Guam	70	82	97	113	52.43	56.59	62.30	67.28	-4.6	-6.4	1.0	
Kiribati	2	2	2	3	3.03	2.98	2.90	2.80				
Marshall Islands	2	2	2	2	3.27	3.11	3.12	2.94				
Micronesia (F.S.)	3	3	3	4	3.18	3.16	3.24	3.24	-4.4	-25.4	-17.9	-15.3
Nauru	4	4	5	5	42.93	42.48	45.45	48.67				
New Caledonia	37	39	41	43	21.40	20.03	19.00	18.43	5.8	5.5	4.3	4.5
New Zealand	529	732	708	642	15.52	19.91	18.37	15.67	5.3	2.1	5.1	2.4
Niue	0	0	0	0	10.05	7.93	7.46	6.74				
Northern Mariana Is.	5	5	5	5	11.10	8.63	7.40	6.53				
Palau	2	2	3	3	12.93	13.17	13.54	15.08				
Papua New Guinea	33	32	26	25	0.80	0.67	0.49	0.42				
Samoa	6	7	8	9	3.64	4.05	4.46	5.00	-15.8	-16.2	-16.6	-10.6
Solomon Islands	4	4	4	3	1.29	1.04	0.85	0.69				
Tonga	3	2	2	1	3.19	2.25	1.63	1.17	-18.0	-19.5	-16.1	-14.9
Tuvalu	0	0	0	0	3.23	3.17	3.12	3.12				
Vanuatu	2	2	1	1	1.44	0.98	0.70	0.48	-1.1	-7.9		
Asia and the Pacific	52 388	48 877	49 500	48 985	1.60	1.38	1.31	1.23	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3
LLDC	8 127	7 261	6 453	5 910	8.14	6.49	5.38	4.52	-0.2	-5.5	-0.4	0.5
LDC	1 517	1 950	2 152	2 375	0.75	0.86	0.86	0.86	2.6	-0.8	0.3	0.5
ASEAN	3 026	3 494	4 747	5 658	0.69	0.73	0.91	1.02	-0.5	-0.2	-0.6	-0.6
ECO	18 532	13 906	13 204	11 354	6.23	4.19	3.64	2.89	-2.2	-1.8	-1.3	-0.6
SAARC	15 845	13 133	12 666	11 229	1.39	1.04	0.91	0.74	-0.2	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3
Central Asia	7 985	6 812	5 875	5 196	11.98	9.81	8.25	7.00	-10.5	-8.1	-3.8	-2.5
Pacific island dev. econ.	236	253	269	292	3.67	3.50	3.32	3.25	-6.5	-8.8	-7.3	-7.5
Low-income	10 843	8 353	8 525	7 542	2.51	1.72	1.59	1.29	-0.4	-0.8	-0.7	-0.5
Middle-income	32 215	29 983	29 430	28 676	1.22	1.05	0.97	0.90	-0.4	-0.3	-0.4	-0.3
High-income	9 323	10 534	11 538	12 758	4.74	5.18	5.52	5.99	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2
Other world regions												
Africa									-0.5	-0.4	-0.5	-0.4
Europe									1.3	0.8	2.4	1.6
Latin America & Carib.									-1.7	-1.5	-2.5	-1.5
North America									4.0	4.5	4.7	4.1
Other countries/areas									2.9	2.1	2.0	0.6
World	154 945	165 080	176 736	190 634								