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Youth and migration: an overview

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Abstract

In 2019, there were an estimated 1.8 billion people aged 15-29 in the world population. As these people grow up, entering social and economic independence along the way, they will potentially reshape economies, politics and social relations around the world. International initiatives have also put the importance of young people centre-stage for sustainable development in the future, but the knowledge-base on migration patterns of young people around the world is lacking. With this in mind, this report examines youth and migration globally, in Africa and in the European Union. Specifically, we a) define the concepts of youth and youth migration; b) map demographic trends globally and in Europe to highlight where youth populations are growing or declining; and c) describe migration trends to show which young people are moving, where and why.

Executive summary

Over recent years, a number of initiatives in European, African and international politics have highlighted the potentially transformative role young people can play in politics, the economy and society. Youth is important to a range of current EU initiatives, including the Strategy with Africa and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Against this background, this report examines the available evidence on the relationship between youth and migration globally, in Africa and in the European Union (EU).

Youth migration merits specific attention due in part to the scale of the world's youth population. In absolute terms, there were an estimated 1.8 billion people aged between 15 and 29 in 2019, the majority of which (87%) resided in low- and middle-income countries. The global total of young people who have migrated internationally has also risen from 37.7 million in 1990 to 57.6 million in 2019.

But this does not mean that we should be alarmist about a future youth exodus. The youth population is declining as a share of the total global population, and this decline is likely to continue in the future as more countries transition to having ageing populations, longer life expectancy and lower birth rates. The youth population is also declining as a share of the total population of international migrants; whereas 25% of the world's international migrant stock was aged 15 to 29 in 1990, in 2019 it was 21%. And despite many young people saying that they wish to migrate, only a small minority (1.7%) actually prepare to make a move.

So who does move, where and why?

Young people are more likely to express a wish to migrate to another country than those who are older: whereas 22.2% of the global population expresses an intention to migrate internationally, this rises to 31.7% of those aged between 15 and 29 years old. The young people who say that they want to migrate are more likely to be single, have completed higher levels of education, to live in towns or cities and to consider that their lives are getting worse, when compared to those who say that they do not want to migrate.

Regarding the young people who have migrated, more of them reside in high-income countries than in low- and middle-income ones. Only 40% of the world's young migrants reside in low and middle-income countries, vis-à-vis 87% of the world's youth population. They are unevenly distributed around the world's geographic regions. 34% of the international migrant stock aged between 15 and 29 years lives in Asia, followed by Europe (27%) and Northern America (18%), while smaller shares live in Africa (12%), Latin America and the Caribbean (5%) and Oceania (4%).

Africa in particular has the youngest population and the fastest growing youth population of all continents, registering an increase of 112% from 1990 to 2019. But although the African continent is home to 20% of the world's young people, only 12% of the global stock of young migrants resides there. Migration for Africa's youth is more of an exception than a norm. Whereas the proportion of people aged between 15 and 29 in Africa expressing a desire to migrate in the future is higher than the global average (37%), the proportion who actually prepares to make a move is not (1.8%). Only one in four (25%) of the young Africans who are planning to migrate actually prepares for the move, which is considerably lower than the 43% of those in the EU-27 who are planning to migrate and then prepare to do so.

In the EU, in contrast, the youth population has recently shrunk in absolute terms, from 81 million in 2010 to 77 million in 2018. Demographic projections show it will continue to decline in absolute size and as a share of the population in years to come. But intra-EU mobile citizens and people who migrate to the EU tend to be on average younger than the EU's non-migrant citizens. Whereas 17% of the citizens of the EU-27 are aged 15-29, this

rises to 24% in the case of non-EU citizens who reside in the EU-27. This means that a larger proportion of the migrant population in the EU is entering economically-active life than is the case for the native population. And the majority of the young people who migrate to the EU come with permits enabling them to study or to work. 30% of the young people who migrate to the EU do so with a permit for remunerated reasons, 29% for education and 23% for family reasons. Other reasons (including humanitarian protection) are the least represented one in this age group (18% of permits).

Finally, the report highlights a need for further research on the reasons why young people migrate. Studies often underline the importance of economic drivers of youth migration, in particular the search for opportunities in education and employment. They also stress the way that migration is an essential part of the transition to adulthood and relates to the personal changes young people go through at that stage in their life. But the evidence is limited due to a lack of data on global migration flows which is disaggregated by age cohorts, inconsistent age definitions and limited geographic coverage in studies on the topic.

The report is based on a review and synthesis of scientific literature from peer-review publications and data from international sources including Eurostat, OECD, UNDESA and the Gallup World Poll to show the scale of global youth populations, youth migration and the intentions of young people to migrate. It also contains projections about future population change and reflects on its social and economic implications. It considers young people to be those aged between 15 and 29 years, which covers the main milestones in the transition from childhood to adulthood and aligns with age cohort boundaries in most international statistics. Youth migration is a form of mobility which takes place during these transitions to adulthood and interacts with the formative personal, familial and social transformations involved therein.

1 Introduction

Youth has become an increasingly important consideration for European Union (EU) policymaking on a range of issues. President von der Leyen has stated that 'the best investment in our future is in our young people', for example (von der Leyen 2019). The recent joint proposal for a Strategy with Africa states that 'Africa's young people have the potential to transform their continent's political, economic and social prospects' and should be a key player in international dialogues (JOIN(2020) 4 final). Employment opportunities for young people have also been highlighted in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum as a mechanism for shaping migration trends (COM(2020) 609 final). Prior to these, the fifth African Union-European Union Summit in 2017 was held under the title 'Investing in Youth'. A focus on youth is also increasing significantly in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected the employment and education opportunities of young people, especially in low-income countries (ILO 2020).

The association between youth and migration needs further attention, however. In 2014, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon stated that 'the intersection of migration and youth remains a large, inadequately addressed challenge for governance in countries worldwide' (UN 2014). Recently, commentary and research have sought to fill the gap, but in doing so have tended to adopt an alarmist tone, imagining a future of inevitable and massive migration flows of young people from the global South to the North, and in particular from Africa to the European Union (EU). In 2018 the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development Gilbert Houngbo stated that economic migration from Africa would double without sufficient jobs being created for young people in agriculture (The Guardian 2018). In the same year, Festus Akinnifesi of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations called for investment in agriculture to 'mitigate massive youth migration in Africa' (Akinnifesi 2018). And in 2019 researcher Stephen Smith suggested similar in his book titled 'The Scramble for Europe', in which he argued that young people from Africa would seek to migrate northwards in ever-increasing numbers (2019).

Against this backdrop, in this report we examine the available evidence on the relationship between youth and migration globally, in Africa and in the EU. Specifically, we; a) define the concepts of youth and youth migration; b) map demographic trends globally and in Europe to highlight where youth populations are growing or declining; and c) describe youth migration trends to show which young people are moving, where and why.

For many, migration is a source of opportunity and social mobility for people who move and their families. The Global Migration Group notes that 'migration offers potentially tremendous opportunities for youth in transitioning to adult life, in facilitating their productive participation in society, and in attaining personal career and family aspirations' (Global Migration Group 2014: Chapter 6, p. 5). Studies in West Africa and Mexico have highlighted how spatial mobility through migrating to a new place is connected with social mobility for young people, through increased income and raised social status in the places they move to or in their place of origin if they return there (Hertrich and Lesclingand 2013; Juarez et al. 2013). Studies have also shown how young people can be particularly adaptive to local contexts, developing new identities which build on local and transnational bonds with their place of origin and their place of residence (Wills 2016). People who migrate in early life have been shown to have higher chances of integrating effectively in the labour market (Aslund et al. 2009). Despite the challenges of entering a new education system, young people have also been shown to benefit from bilingualism as a result of their migration background (Skrobanek 2017).

Migration can also be disruptive, however, in particular in terms of young peoples' identities, educational outcomes and earnings. For example, research highlights an attainment gap between migrant and non-migrant youth in education (Détang-Dessendre et al. 2013) and challenges of acculturation faced by young people who move to a new

place without social and familial networks around them. Unemployment is generally higher for young people than those of older ages, and globally labour market access for young migrants lags behind that of similar-aged nationals, especially in competition for higher-level jobs (although in the EU mobile EU nationals tend to have higher employment rates than native, non-mobile EU citizens) (Kallas et al. 2010; Global Migration Group 2014: Chapter 6). Migration can also bring about challenges for the places that young people emigrate from. Studies of rural to urban migration, for example, often associate youth emigration with the decline of rural communities (Balaz et al 2004; Laoire 2000).

Finally, migration during youth is important as it can shape young people's subsequent adult lives and migration tendencies. Migration patterns of young people may be more flexible and dynamic than that of older people, involving multiple moves to different locations (Zenteno et al. 2013), as has been found in empirical research in Mexico (Ibid.), Mali (Hertrich and Lesclingand 2013) and Malawi (Beegle and Poulin 2013). Bailey's study of youth migration within the United States of America also highlights how past migration is associated with higher rates of re-migration, concluding that people who migrate when young are more likely to migrate again when older, although this varies for different groups (Bailey, 1993: 324). Studies which have been able to measure return migration of young migrants also find that 'a high proportion of migrants do return ... [and] that most youth who ever return do so while fairly young' (McKenzie 2007: 15-6; see also El Haj 2019). This can benefit individuals, as shown in the case of young return migrants' increased earnings compared to non-migrant youth in Estonia (McKenzie 2016), and potentially maximises the development impact of migration as it involves importing skills learnt abroad, which young people can use during the long working lives they have ahead of them.

This report provides an introduction and overview to youth migration trends globally, and in Africa and the EU. It is structured in four thematic chapters. The approach adopted is based on a comprehensive review and synthesis of available research and data on youth and migration. We draw on scientific literature from peer-review publications¹ and data from international sources including Eurostat, OECD, UNDESA and Gallup to show the scale of global youth populations, youth migration and the intentions of young people to migrate. We also examine projections about future population change and reflect on its social and economic implications. In the following chapter we underline the importance of a focus on youth and migration and provide a theoretical basis for the subsequent chapters. The second chapter describes trends and future projections in youth populations around the world and in the EU specifically using international data sources and demographic projections. The third chapter examines the specific nature of youth migration, mapping trends around the world, describing the existing knowledge on the drivers of youth migration and taking a look at young people's intentions to migrate in the future. The final chapter looks at the situation in the EU in particular, highlighting the scale of the youth population within migration flows to and between EU Member States.

¹ The search entered the terms 'youth' and 'migration' in the Scopus database, the world's largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature. It was limited to peer-reviewed articles and book chapters in the social sciences and arts and humanities. The results were cleaned and filtered to include only those entries which explicitly address "youth" and "migration". Studies on second generation youth who were born in a country their parents had migrated to, but had not migrated themselves, were excluded. Internal and international youth migration were both included. This produced a dataset of 388 publications from between 1969 to the end of 2019

2 Defining youth and migration

'Youth' is a concept which lacks a precise definition. In research and policymaking there is no consistent operationalisation of what 'youth' is, in contrast to the clearer definition in international law of a child as 'every human being below the age of eighteen years'.² There is a lack of global data sources on international migration flows which are disaggregated by age cohorts, and the available case studies are piecemeal in their thematic and geographic coverage (Belmonte and McMahon 2019). In this chapter, we put forward a conceptual definition of 'youth' and operationalise it as an age cohort which can be examined in international datasets. In doing so we provide a basic framework for the chapters that follow.

2.1 Youth as a formative transition

Youth is a specific and particular life-stage which shapes people's adulthood. Historically, the term youth is said to have emerged in conjunction with changes in social and economic relations brought about through the Industrial Revolution (Smith 2019: 53). In order to prepare for entry to an increasingly specialised labour market, young people had to undergo greater education and training, often outside the family home. This meant that their life experiences were distinct from those of children and of adults. In this way, youth was understood as a period of transition from education to employment, and from reliance on family to personal and economic independence.

But from the end of the Twentieth Century to today 'youth' has undergone significant changes. As Berlin et al have noted, 'young people are taking longer to leave home, attain economic independence, and form families of their own than did their peers half a century ago' (2010: 3). People tend to marry and have children later in life, whilst remaining in education for longer to undertake higher studies. These shifts have altered the personal development of adolescents and young adults in many places (Arnett 2000; Furstenberg 2010). Youth in industrialised societies has become increasingly marked by change and exploration of possible life directions, rather than a clear shift into settled, long-term adult roles and relationships.

Against this background, youth emerges as both a *transition*, in which people move out of childhood, and a *formative process*, in the sense that it shapes people's opportunities and identities as they enter adulthood. It is also *varied*, because youth transitions do not take place in the same way for all social groups or in every place. In the EU, many young people have increasingly studied for longer to gain qualifications which open specialised employment opportunities, whilst choosing to marry later in life (although wide differences have been noted in youth experiences across different Member States. See Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). Diverging expectations of gendered family and social roles also mean that men and women may be considered to become independent adults at different times to one another (Zenteno et al. 2013). Young people who are unable to move into employment and economic and personal independence can also be described as living in a situation of 'waithood' in which they have not been able to attain the social markers of adulthood (Honwana 2013, see also Dhillon and Yousef 2009; Kovacheva et al 2018). Such variations complicate the definition who is 'young' and who is not.

2.2 Setting the boundaries: 15-29 years of age

Despite the variations noted above, boundaries are important for research and policy, defining which people with more or less similar characteristics are to be examined together or for whom an intervention is designed. Regarding 'youth', defining the boundaries of a specific age cohort has the advantage of introducing consistency in large cross-country comparative analysis, but the disadvantage of neglecting regional specificities. In this study

² Convention on the Rights of the Child, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 (available online at https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/09/19900902%2003-14%20AM/Ch_IV_11p.pdf)

we seek to give a broad overview of youth population and migration trends in different countries and regions, and so must define the boundaries of a youth age cohort which enable us to do so.

The UN and Global Migration Group define a youth as any individual aged from 15 to 24 (Global Migration Group 2014). But in initiatives by the European Union young people may range from 13 to 30 years of age (European Commission 2011). Other international organisations make reference to young people being aged between 10 and 24 years (UNFPA 2014; WHO 2019). The African Union's Youth Charter defines youth or young people as every person between 15 and 35 years of age (African Union 2006). These inconsistent age boundaries make it difficult to pin down what and who 'youth' and 'young people' are in different policy initiatives and social contexts, and therefore limit our capacity to make global comparisons and to establish and compare across places.

In order to set out the boundaries of an age cohort for this study, we can understand youth transitions to adulthood as being composed of the following processes (See also Arnett 2000; Furstenberg 2010; Zenteno et al 2013):

- The completion of full-time education
- Entry into the labour market and the resultant financial independence associated with it
- Increasing familial independence, through leaving the family home
- Forming stable personal relationships, which often result in partnerships, marriage and children

With this in mind, in this report we adopt the ages of 15 to 29 years for the following reasons:

1. Coverage of the transition to adulthood:

15 to 29 years is an age range which is broad enough to include most of the economic, political and social transitions to adulthood described in the previous section, whilst being narrow enough to distinguish it from the different character of later life and older age cohorts.

In terms of leaving education and entering employment, generally speaking, working age is considered in international statistics to begin at 15 years of age (OECD 2020). This aligns with UNESCO data on the proportion of the population that is out of school: whereas a majority of the population aged between 15 and 17 years of age is out of education (53%), only a minority of those under 15 are (23% of children and 24% of adolescents) (UNESCO 2019).³ Moreover, the age range for the transition from education to employment varies widely from place to place. In OECD countries, the median age of first graduation has been reported as ranging from 22 in Belgium and the United Kingdom to over 27 in Iceland and Israel (OECD 2014). Similarly, great regional differences are found in school life expectancy, that ranges from 6 years in Western Africa and Middle Africa, to 15 in Europe and Northern America (UNESCO, n.d).⁴ Leaving school generally entails entering or trying to enter into the labour market and taking up self-sustenance responsibilities. The later this happens in life, the longer the youth period can be considered. For this reason, we envisage a young person's transition from education to employment as generally occurring between the mid-teens and late twenties but the precise duration varies from place to place.

³ For UNESCO, 'youth' aligns with the age of upper secondary education, whereas those in lower age secondary school are 'adolescents' and children are primary school age. According to data from UNESCO, the global mean age of official entrance age to upper secondary education is 15.2 years. For more information see UNESCO, Official entrance age to each ISCED level of education, Data extracted on 27 Jan 2020 15:47 UTC (GMT) from [UIS.Stat](#)

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Number of years a person of school entrance age can expect to spend within the specified level of education. Aggregation by sub-regions was carried out by the authors, based on data from the last available year and on the countries for which data is available.

Two other useful proxy indicators are the mean age at first marriage, which demographers use as a proxy indicator for when people transition into a new family. Here, regional and gender differences emerge. The mean age at first marriage ranges from 21 for women in Southern Asia, Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, and Western Africa, and 25 for men in Central and Southern Asia; to 30 for women in Northern America and 31 for men in Southern Africa, Europe and Northern America. For this reason, the early twenties to early thirties can be considered the general range for marriage, and the relatively stable personal and family relationships that are associated with it.

2. Alignment with cohorts in international statistics:

In practical terms, in order to give a global overview, the definition of youth should also correspond to the boundaries of the age cohorts in available statistics. International population statistics with the broadest global coverage, and therefore enabling the most comprehensive comparisons, tend to be grouped in cohorts of five years. With this in mind, we have selected a lower boundary of 15 years to align with the beginning of the working age and the end of education for a majority of students, and an upper boundary of 29 years as the closest end-point to the oldest mean graduation age and mean age of first marriage.

However, it should also be noted that these ages are a guide rather than a hard boundary between categories; region-specific behaviours linked to different age groups may lead to a need to refine the age group selection. The age boundaries that we have selected also cannot illustrate the duration of the transition to adulthood, but rather provide a general age range in which the transition should be expected. In order to better highlight and understand these, more detailed case study research would be necessary.

2.3 Conclusion

Drawing on the definitions set out above, youth migration can be defined as a form of mobility which takes place during young people's transitions to adulthood (understood broadly as occurring between 15 and 29 years of age) and interacts with the formative personal, familial and social transformations involved therein. Migration during the transition to adulthood can provide specific opportunities and challenges which influence their subsequent adult lives. This overview will be used as a guide for the analysis which follows in the next chapters.

3 Youth population trends

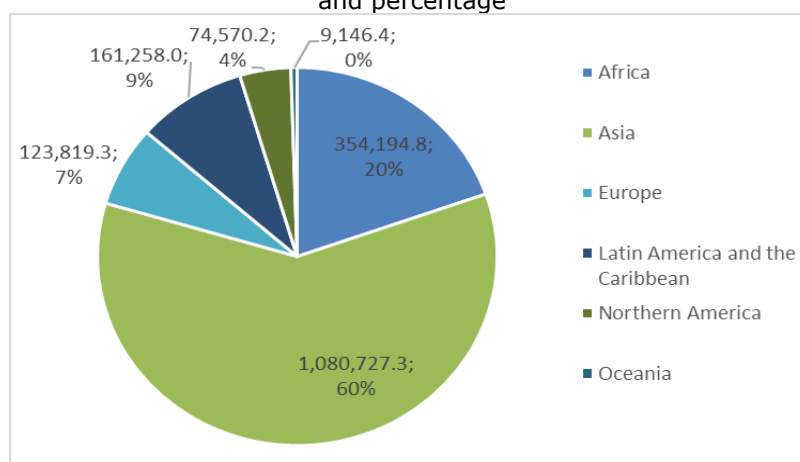
In absolute terms, the world's youth population is larger today than at any other time on record. However, as a share of the total global population, the youth population is declining as more countries go through demographic transitions from being societies of high birth rates and high death rates to having longer life expectancy and lower birth rates. There are also important divergences in the demographic composition and trajectory of different regions. In particular, as this chapter will show, in the EU the youth population is declining in absolute size, whereas in Africa it is rapidly growing. These different demographic trajectories potentially have distinct social and economic implications for each continent.

This chapter traces relevant global and regional demographic trends to give a general overview of the current scale and distribution of the world's youth population. It then builds on this by setting out forecasts for future population change based on the current youth population and different development scenarios.

3.1 Global youth population: growing in size, but declining as share

Today in the world there are 1.8 billion people aged 15-29. Their distribution by geographic region⁵ varies, with Asia hosting the lion's share of the youth population, i.e. 1.08 billion or 60%. Africa follows with 354 million or 20% of the world youth population; then Latin America and the Caribbean, with 161 million or 9%; Europe with 124 million or 7%; and finally North America and Oceania, with respectively 75 million and 9 million, equal to 4% and less than 1% of the world youth population (Figure 1). The distribution of young people by continent generally reflects the distribution of the total population, with differences amounting to few percentage points.

Figure 1 – Distribution of the 15-29 population by continent in 2019, in thousands, absolute value and percentage



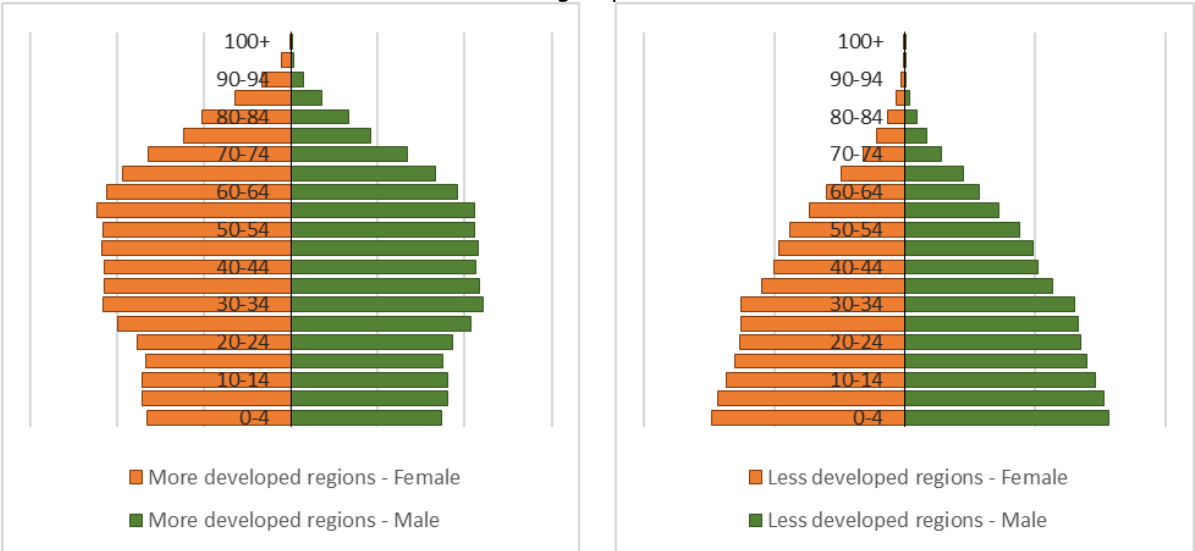
Source: UNDESA, 2019, Migrant Stock By Age And Sex workbook

The number of people in the world population aged 15 to 29 increased by 25% between 1990 and 2019, from 1.4 to 1.8 billion. But over the same period the total population registered a 45% growth from 5.3 to 7.7 billion. The increase of the youth population in absolute terms is relatively small when compared to the increase seen for older age groups. In fact, the share of youth over total population decreased from 27% in 1990 to 23% in 2019. Overall, while youth is becoming larger in absolute terms, the age group 15-29, along with the age group 0-14, is also becoming smaller relative to older age groups. This is due to raising life expectancy, lowering birth rates and large birth cohorts from earlier decades entering 30+ age groups.

⁵ The geographic regions here are defined by the UN Statistics Division, see: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

Moreover, as shown in Figure 2, there are important differences between more and less developed regions.⁶ For the population of more developed regions, the widest part of the population pyramid is that above 30 years of age. For less developed regions, in contrast, the widest part of the population pyramid is below 20 years of age. This shows how developed regions tend to have already undergone a transition from having high fertility and high mortality rates to stable, below replacement fertility and low mortality rates, as part of the process known as the demographic transition. The global population which resides in more developed regions tends to be ageing, whereas the population in less developed regions tends to be younger, with a significant proportion entering adulthood in the short to medium term future. Many argue that this could result in a demographic dividend, if the working population grows more rapidly than the dependent population (children and those in older age) and if economic conditions are favourable (for more information see Box 1).

Figure 2 – Population pyramids for more and less developed regions, according to UN development groups



Source: UNDESA, 2019, Population prospects for 2019

Box 1. The Demographic Dividend

Demographic transitions can potentially be associated with a demographic dividend as more people enter a productive phase of their lives than there are dependents (children and older citizens). For example, Bloom and Williamson (1998) argued that the economic growth registered in the so-called East Asian miracle resulted from a transitional effect of population growth on economic growth due the faster increase of working-age population than the dependent population.

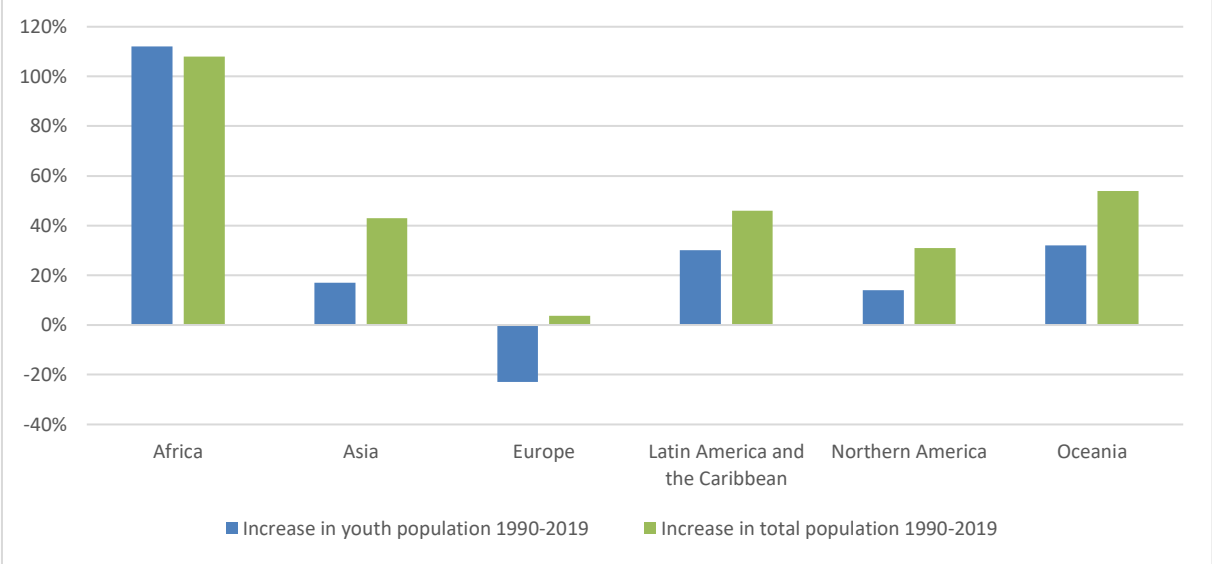
To maximise the impact of the demographic dividend, however, certain conditions should be met. In particular, the job market needs to be ripe for accounting for the needs of a large number of young people. Lee and Mason (2006) have argued, for example, that the increase in the share of working-age population on the total population is not a systematic guarantee of improvement in income and economic conditions, but a window of opportunity. During the first phase of a demographic transition, the decline of fertility rates produces a first demographic dividend. Yet, at later phases of demographic transition, when longevity increases, the higher propensity of older population for capital accumulation generates additional resources of income. In this case, a second demographic dividend is possible.

⁶ The development groups used here are defined by the UN Statistics Division, see: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

3.2 The world’s youngest continent: Africa

Within the global figures, there are significant regional differences in trends (Figure 3).⁷ Africa, in particular, is the only region where the youth population grew at a faster pace than other age groups in the last three decades. Demographic changes in Africa have seen the youth population register an increase of 112% from 1990 to 2019, against an overall increase in the population of 108%.

Figure 3 - Increase (in percentage) in the total world population and in the youth population by continent in the period 1990-2019



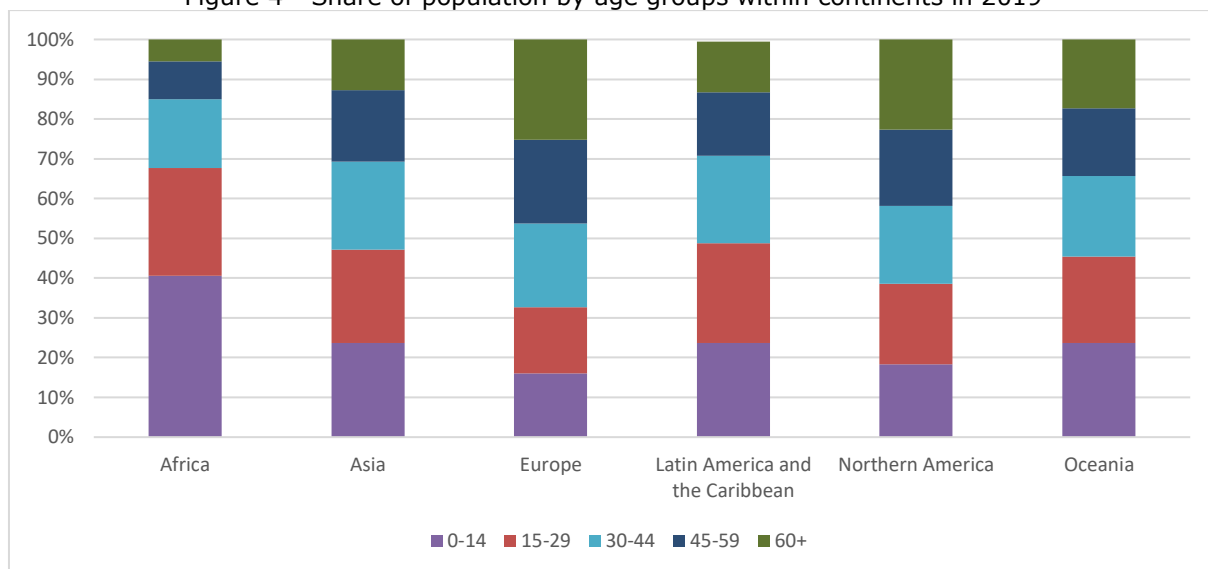
Source: UNDESA, 2019, Migrant Stock By Age And Sex workbook

Looking at the age distribution within each continent in 2019 (Figure 4), shows how Africa has the youngest population of the world’s continents, with 27% of its population aged between 15 and 29 years and 41% aged under 15. The median age in Africa has recently risen, but only slightly and it remains far younger than any other geographic region. In 2000, the median age in Africa was estimated to be 18.3, in 2015 it was estimated at 19.3 and in 2020 19.7.⁸ In Asia and Latin America, the population under 45 is equally distributed among the 0-14, 15-29, and 30-44 age groups, and young people in particular are respectively 23% and 20%. By contrast, Europe is currently the world’s oldest geographic region. It stands out as the continent with the smallest share of youth population and, at the same time, the largest share over 60 (Figure 4). The population aged 15 to 29 accounts for just 17% of the total. In Northern America and Oceania young people are approximately one in five of the total population.

⁷ The geographic regions here are defined by the UN Statistics Division. For more information see: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

⁸ Data from UNDESA, World Population Prospects 2019 (POP/5: Median age by region, subregion and country, 1950-2100)

Figure 4 - Share of population by age groups within continents in 2019



Source: UNDESA, 2019, Migrant Stock By Age And Sex workbook

Africa is also the continent with the slowest demographic transition to low mortality and low fertility. In Sub-Saharan Africa in particular (with the exception of Southern Africa), the 15-29 group accounts for more than a quarter of the population. When combined with younger cohorts, children and youth account for approximately 70% of the population. Depending on future development scenarios, in the short to medium-term the youth population is likely to increase and occupy a larger share of the population.

Of course, there are differences between African countries. In North African countries young people tend to represent a smaller proportion of the total population than in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia people aged between 15 and 29 years of age constitute less than 25% of the total population, whereas in Ethiopia they equal 30% of the total and in Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia they equal 29% of the total population (see Annex 1 for more information). Nevertheless, in general it should be noted that in all countries in Africa, young people represent a greater proportion of the total population than in any EU Member State.

3.3 The EU: an ageing population

Across the EU, the youth population is getting smaller. Eurostat estimates that there were 77 million people aged 15-29 in the EU-27 in 2018, representing 16.8% of the total population.⁹ This has declined from 81 million in 2010 in the EU-27. At the same time, the EU has an ageing population structure. The median age of the EU-27 population was 43.1 years in 2018, having risen at a rapid and steady pace from 41 years in 2010 and 38 years in 2000.¹⁰ It is estimated that by 2060, the median European will be 47.4 years old. This demographic trend may exacerbate some economic challenges, since the large number of the old-age dependent population compared to those in the working age group can have negative impacts on economic and social stability, resulting in a slowdown in economic growth, rising health care costs for the elderly, and the insolvency of pension systems (EC, 2018) (see Box 2).

⁹ For the original data see Eurostat:

https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_pjangroup&lang=en

¹⁰ For the original data see Eurostat:

https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_pjanind&lang=en

Box 2: The Old-Age Dependency Ratio and the Effective Economic Dependency Ratio

The **old-age dependency ratio** is the ratio between the number of elderly people (65+ years) and the number of people of working age (15-64 years). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64 years). It illustrates the ageing of the population.

In the EU, the old-age dependency ratio was 30.5 in 2018. This means that there were 30.5 people aged 65+ per 100 people of working age. The old-age dependency ratio in the EU has been rising in the last decades. In 2008, there were about 20 people aged 65+ per 100 people of working age.

In the last decade, the old-age dependency ratio has increased in all Member States. Only in Luxembourg has it remained stable at 20.6% between 2008 and 2018. The biggest increases between 2008 and 2018 were recorded in Finland (from 24.8% to 34.2%), Malta (from 19.9% to 28%), Slovenia (from 23.3% to 29.6%), Lithuania (from 25.2% to 30.1%) and Portugal (from 26.6% to 33.3%). The most moderate increases can be observed in Ireland (from 15.5% to 21.2%) and Belgium (from 25.8% to 29.1%).

The decline in the youth population translates into fewer workers who have to support an increasing number of older people. The future working age population will therefore have greater financial responsibility for supporting older sections of the population (e.g. by raising taxes to finance health and pension expenditure).

An **effective economic dependency ratio** depends not only on the age profile but also on age-specific economic behaviour, such as labour market activity and inactivity. Many people between the ages of 15 and 65 are actually economically inactive, such as students, people with sickness and disability benefits, long-term unemployed and not actively looking for a job, people taking early retirement, mothers and fathers caring for their children at home. Similarly, a growing number of people over 65 are working and are economically independent.

Effective economic dependency ratios show the link between economic inactivity and activity among the population. These ratios provide a measure of the average number of individuals that each employed person economically "supports". These measures show the potential to increase employment levels among the population and are particularly relevant when considering the growth prospects of the per capita GDP or the fiscal effects on the state coffers.

High employment-based dependency ratios of the population over the age of 65 (or 75) means that the economically active population has to bear higher costs for the provision of social services to economically dependent older people. The future effective workforce will therefore have larger financial responsibility for supporting older and inactive population groups.

As dependency ratios increase, the most discussed solutions include increasing the retirement age in line with longer life expectancy, increasing women's participation in the labour market, and bringing more people from different backgrounds into work.

The challenges of a shrinking youth population and rapidly ageing general population will affect all Member States. That said, the spatial distribution of young people across the EU is rather uneven at national and sub-national levels (see Annex 2 for national figures for the Member States). At the national level, Cyprus and Malta had the highest percentages of the young population, as people aged 15-29 accounted for 20% of the total population in Malta and 22% in Cyprus. At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest shares of the young population were recorded in Spain, Slovenia, Italy, Bulgaria and Greece. In these countries, the population between the ages of 15 and 29 represented about 15% of the national population in 2018. In 2018 the lowest median age was in Ireland (37.3 years), Cyprus (37.5 years) and Luxembourg (39.4 years), while Italy was the Member State with the highest median age, equal to 46.3.

Differences in the distribution of the young population are even more marked between regions and local contexts. The regions with the highest share of young population are in

the Netherlands – Groningen (22%), Cyprus (21%), and Belgium - Brussels (20%). On the other hand, Principado de Asturias (11%) and Galicia (12%) in Spain, Chemnitz (11%) and Brandenburg (12%) in Germany, and Liguria (13%) in Italy are among the regions with the smallest youth populations. In rural areas in particular, the young and working-age population is rapidly shrinking and is expected to decline further in the future. Persistent emigration of younger people and relatively low fertility rates in some areas of South-Eastern Europe are leading to massive depopulation, which has become a common pattern for many rural and remote areas of the EU. In Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Latvia and Hungary, over 80% of rural areas have declined in recent decades. In addition, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal and Germany have the highest percentage of shrinking rural regions (ESPON, 2017).

3.4 Population change in the future

Population projection is a tool to describe future population trends and demographic changes. Given certain assumptions on fertility, mortality, and migration trends, population projections show the future size and structures of populations. Keyfits (1972) gives the definition of projection as numbers representing future populations that are determined by arithmetically or mathematically transforming numbers representing existing or historical populations.

Current trends show that many regions of the world have progressed towards later stages of demographic transition, with both low rates of mortality and fertility. Even in Africa, where the population is likely to increase more than in other continents, the share of younger people in the total population should be expected to decrease in the medium to long term.

To inquire about future trends, we draw on Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs). These are global development scenarios for the rest of the century that are used by researchers to prepare projections of future demographic change. Three main pathways can be highlighted:

- **SSP1 (rapid social development):** A path with an accelerated demographic transition and relatively low world population. This scenario assumes high levels of education, low mortality, low fertility. It also assumes the long-term average of migration will continue.
- **SSP2 (middle-of-the-road):** Assumes that current trends continue and that the development of low-income countries is uneven. In this case there is medium fertility, mortality, education, and the long-term average of migration continues.
- **SSP3 (stalled social development):** This path considers a world separated into regions broadly characterised by rapidly growing populations. The scenario assumes low levels of education, high mortality, high fertility, and continuation of the long-term average of migration.

Based on these scenarios, we see that projections of future demographic change vary across world regions (see Box 2 and Figures 5 and 6).

- According to **Scenario SSP1**, the world population could reach around 8.9 billion by 2060 and in Africa 2 billion. This would be a 70% increase from 2015. However, it would then begin to decline towards the end of the century. The youth population (15-29 age groups) would increase by 35% in Africa, reporting the highest age-group growth rate in the world: in Europe, the 15-29 age group would decrease by 35%; similar trends are expected in Asia (-30%), Latin America (-32%) North America (-20%) and Oceania (-13%).
- Under the **middle-of the-road scenario assumptions (SSP2)**, the youth population at global level would increase by 35%, while in Europe it would decline both in size and in share. According to this scenario, the natural decline resulting

from lower fertility in Europe would bring the European population to 466 million by 2060. This would be a 3% decline from 2015. Africa will remain the youngest continent, and its youth population is projected to increase by 93% by 2060. The share of the youth population (15-29) is projected to increase by 1% in Asian and Latin American countries (from 25% to 26% in Asia and 17% to 18% in Latin America), while in Europe, 15-29 age groups are expected to decrease by 20%.

- Under the **Scenario SSP3**, the global population could rise to 11 billion and the African population increase to 3.1 billion (an increase of 163% since 2015). Under this scenario the African youth population is projected to increase by 159% by 2060, while in Europe, it would decline by 6%.

In Africa, rapid population growth is projected mainly due to the persistence of high fertility rates in many African regions (Box 3). However, educational improvement assumptions could moderate the increase in size of the youth population in school age (15-19).

Box 3. Youth projections in the Middle East and North Africa

The size of MENA populations is projected to rise faster than the world overall pattern. This will be driven largely by increasing numbers of people surviving at reproductive age (SSP2).

Young people constitute around one fifth of the total population of MENA countries. This share represents a so-called 'youth bulge' in the population. From the period 2030-35 onwards, the youth bulge in the region is projected to decline, becoming stable at around 100 million people by 2065.

This trend requires investments to be made in educational systems and the development of employment opportunities targeted for young people. At the same time, health and care systems would be adjusted to face with a rapid ageing population in the coming decades (in the past, the care of elderly has most been under family's responsibility).

Figure 5 Projected population growth rates by continent (2015-2060), 15-29 age groups

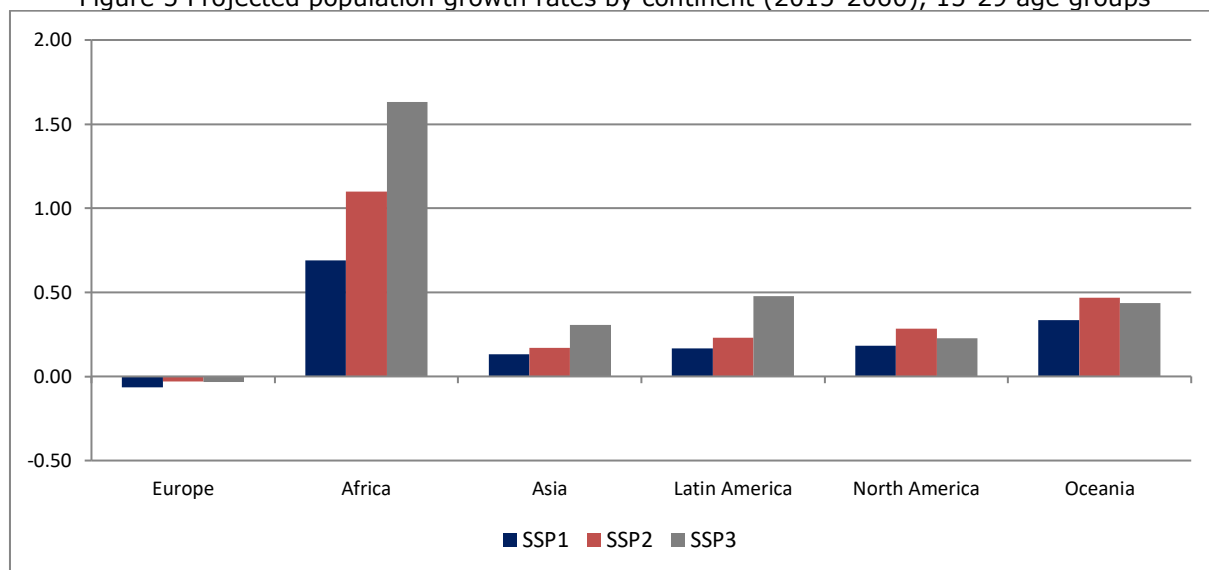
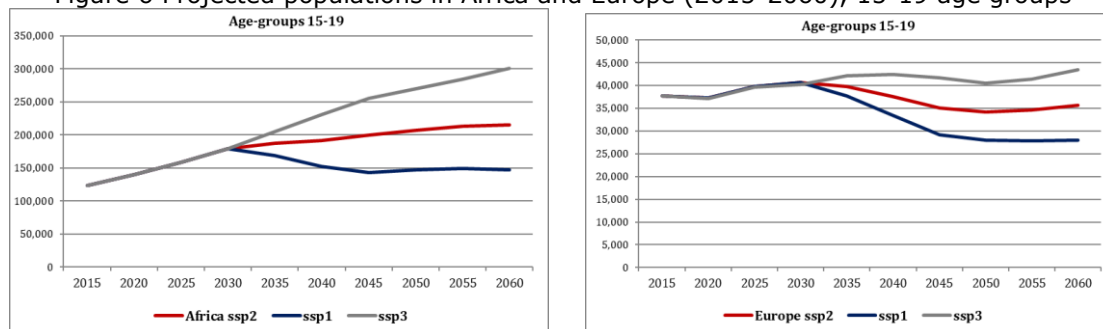


Figure 6 Projected populations in Africa and Europe (2015-2060), 15-19 age groups



Focusing in particular on the EU, the proportion of young people in the EU is expected to decline in the future. Eurostat projects 67 million people aged 15-29, corresponding to 15% of the EU-27 future total population in 2060. France and Sweden are projected to be the youngest Member States with this rate equal to 17%, while Lithuania, Portugal, Cyprus, Croatia, Italy and Malta could have the lowest rates - approximately 13% - in 2060. The decrease in the young population will be potentially very large and fast in Lithuania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, where the rates are expected to drop by -46.58%, -38.94%, -30.79%, -29.52%, -29.07%, -28.35%, and -28.11% respectively. This will be driven by low net birth rates and high outward migration. In absolute terms, Italy and Poland could lose the highest number of young people, amounting to almost 2 million in 2060.

A decrease in the youth population will lead to a decrease in the working age population (if the working age is kept constant at 15-64 years). This is true for all Member States, but the decline will be faster in several Member States in the East - Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - and in the South of the EU - Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal - with some dependency ratios already above the European average (Box 3 and Annex 3). The Eastern and Southern EU Member States will reach old-age dependency ratios above the European average of 51.04 years in 2060.

In the future, younger age cohorts will be progressively more educated than older ones. The results of demographic projections by educational level (European Commission 2018) show significant progress in education in all Member States. Europe's population is already highly educated compared to other continents, with 30% of people aged 25 years and over having completed post-secondary education in 2015. In the same year, the countries with the highest share of the population aged 25+ with at least post-secondary education were Lithuania (55.6%), Ireland (47%) and Estonia (45%), while the least educated were Italy (15.6%) and Portugal (18.7%). Over the coming decades, we will potentially observe significant progress in educational attainment in all Member States. Under the medium scenario, in 2060 about half of the population aged 25+ will have at least a post-secondary education and only 3.5% of the population would have a low level of education with primary or lower achievement. In 2060, the differences between the age groups will be low compared to 2015, with the population aged 25-44 being the most educated.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the growth of the global youth population, showing how the number of people in the world aged 15 to 29 increased by 25% between 1990 and 2019, from 1.4 to 1.8 billion. Moreover, it also shows how trends in the growth and the distribution of the youth population greatly vary by regions, producing distinct demographic structures and trajectories in different places. The fastest growing youth population is in Africa, which is in striking contrast to Europe, where the youth population has got smaller. Whereas the youth population in Africa is expected to grow further over coming years, in the EU a further decline is predicted. And in the future, young people are expected to represent a declining proportion of the world population as more countries undergo demographic

transitions and the general population ages. To understand the impact of these demographic trajectories on international migration, in the following chapter we focus on youth migration trends and reasons for migrating.

4 Trends in youth migration

International migration has been a key issue in European and international politics over recent years. Globally, the number of people who move across international borders has increased, from 176 million at the turn of the century to 272 million in 2019 and changes in the direction of migration flows have also led to the emergence of new destinations and patterns of forced displacement. And yet, there has been relatively little attention paid to migration trends and drivers of young people in particular.

This chapter examines trends in international migration during young people's transitions to adulthood (understood broadly as occurring between 15 and 29 years of age). It synthesises available evidence on which young people migrate, where and for what reasons. It does so over four sections, examining the availability of data sources on youth migration, the general global patterns of youth migration, the drivers of youth migration as highlighted in available research, and intentions to migrate, through the available international statistics.

4.1 The data gap

Global data on migration by age groups are limited. While global coverage is available on the stock of migrants in destination countries, consolidated data at the global level on origin countries as well as on annual flows are missing. Very few statistics disaggregated by age have a wide enough coverage to give insight into global patterns of migration flows, composition of migrant populations or outcomes of youth migration in particular for economies, societies and individuals.

Two organisations provide a global overview of migrant stock between the ages of 15 and 29 years: UNDESA and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹¹ UNDESA statistics have the largest coverage in terms of countries of destination and time. However, when data are disaggregated by age, they do not provide any information on migrants' countries of origin. The OECD Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC) fills this gap, as it includes bilateral stocks from 200+ countries of origin; yet, the number of countries of destination is narrowed down to OECD countries only.¹² The extended version of DIOC (DIOC-E) compiled by the OECD and the World Bank broadens the coverage to approximately 100 destination countries, but the age is known for migrants in only 37% of the country pairs.¹³

Data on stock tells us the age profile of migrant population in destination countries at one point in time. However, providing a snapshot, it is not possible to distinguish new arrivals from changes affecting the migrant population already present in a country (i.e. births, deaths or ageing, or acquisition of citizenship). Moreover, they do not offer information on when the person has migrated (e.g. they could have moved just after birth or just before the reporting year). Global data on migration flows are available based on estimates of migration stocks (UNDESA, 2015; Abel, 2017; Abel and Cohen, 2019). This, however, does not distinguish by age groups so cannot be used to focus in on young people specifically. Therefore, while this section provides preliminary analysis on where young migrants reside globally questions on the actual movement of people, on potentially different mobility patterns across age groups, and on the evolution of these patterns over time remain unanswered at this stage.

¹¹ UN DESA Workbook: UN_Migrant StockByAgeAndSex_2019.xlsx and OECD Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC) and extended DIOC.

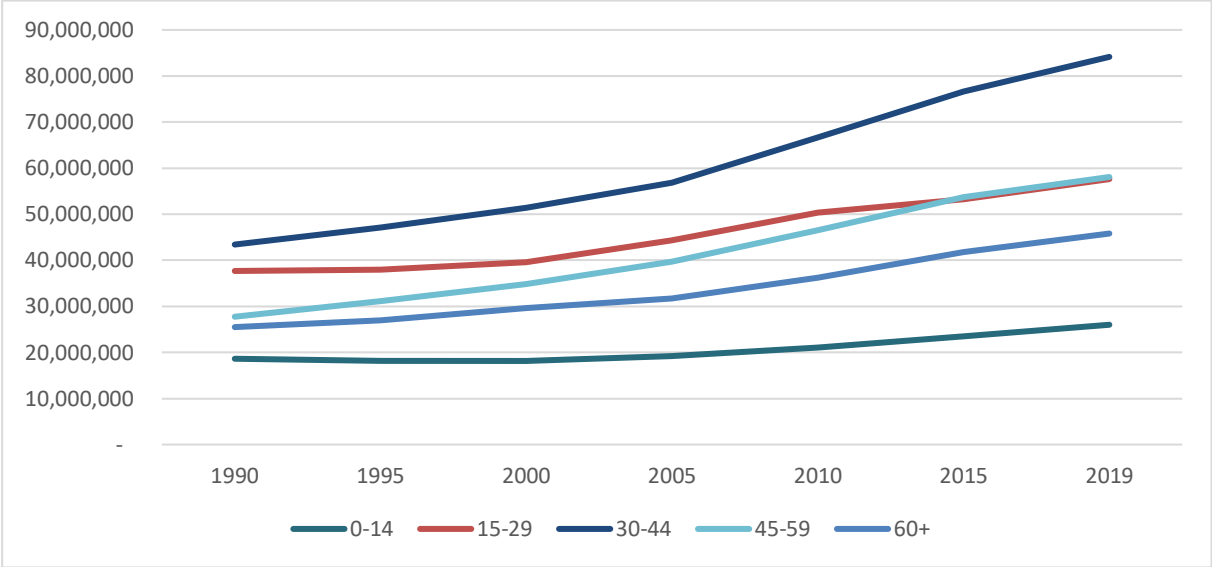
¹² Moreover, while for the years 2000/01, 2005/06, 2010/11 data provide information both on the country of origin and the OECD country of destination, for the years 2015/16 data cover either region (continent) of origin and individual OECD countries of destination or individual countries of origin and OECD area as a whole as destination.

¹³ In particular, 37 per cent of country pairs have age disaggregation for at least 70 per cent of migrant population. Country pairs with fewer than 10 migrants were excluded.

4.2 Global trends in the distribution of young migrants

The number of young people who reside in another country has increased in absolute terms over the last three decades. UNDESA data show that, in absolute terms, the number of people aged between 15 and 29 years who have migrated, and as a result live in a country different from their own¹⁴ (stock), has increased during the past 30 years, from 37.7 million in 1990 to 57.6 million in 2019 (a 53% increase) (Figure 7). This is alongside an increase in the global population (and in the global youth population specifically) and in the total global stock of international migrants.

Figure 7 - Evolution of world migrant population by age in absolute numbers



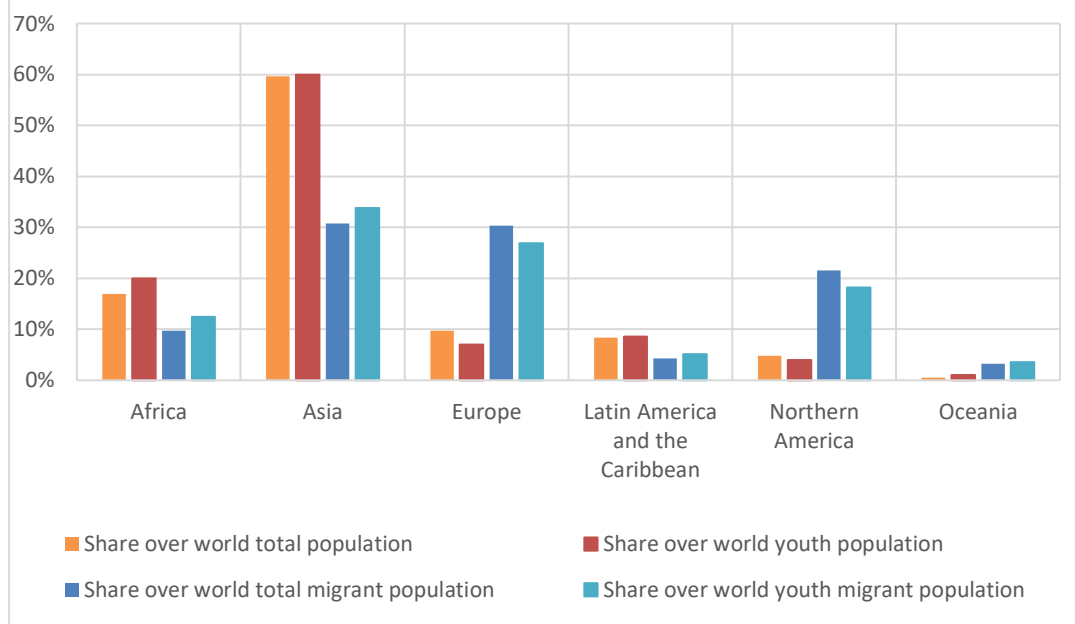
Source: UNDESA, 2019, Migrant Stock By Age And Sex workbook.

Over the 1990-2019 period, the international migration stock increased by 78% from 153 to 272 million. However, while the absolute number of migrants has increased for all age groups, the age composition of the global stock of migrants over time has been approximately constant over the last 30 years. If the total number of international migrants is divided into 15-year age cohorts, the largest cohort is consistently those aged between 30 and 44 years, which represented approximately 30% of all migrants during the entire period of 1990 to 2019. People in the age range of 15 to 29 years have represented the second largest cohort of international migrants since 1990, although this has fallen from 25% of the total of all migrants in 1990 to 21% in 2019.

Within these figures there are important regional differences. The relative majority of the global young migrants (34% of those between 15 and 29 years of age) lives in Asia, followed by Europe (27%) and Northern America (18%), while smaller shares live in Africa (12%), Latin America and the Caribbean (5%) and Oceania (4%) (Figure 8). This distribution of young migrants is overall similar to the distribution of migrants in general, except for young migrants being slightly overrepresented in Africa and Asia and slightly underrepresented in Europe and North America (Figure 8).

¹⁴ For most countries (approximately 80%), immigrants are defined by their country of birth, but in some cases, by the country of citizenship. This depends on different national methodologies to produce statistics.

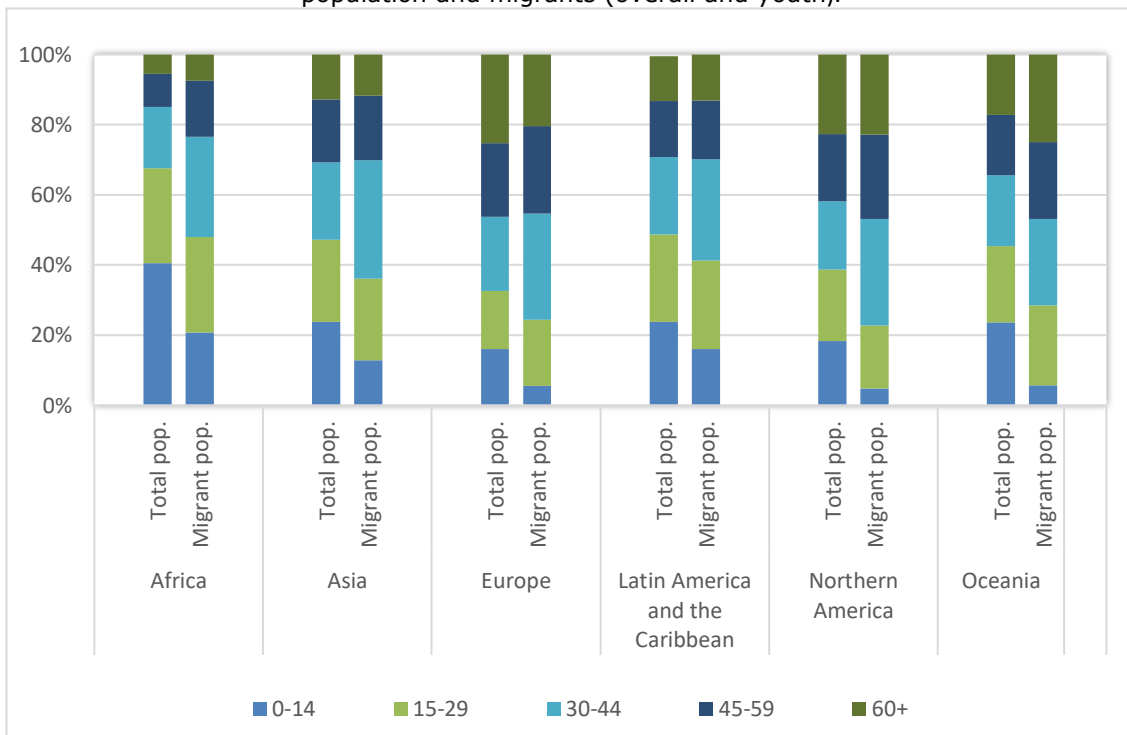
Figure 8. Age distribution of overall population and migrant population, by continent in 2019



Source: UNDESA, 2019, Migrant Stock By Age And Sex workbook

Figure 9 shows the share of different migrant age groups in each continent. This varies, ranging from 27 % in Africa to 18 % in Northern America, and it is very similar to the share of people aged 15-29 over the general population. Like the overall population, migrants are the oldest in Europe and Northern America, and the youngest in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 9 – Share of the general population and migrants living in each region over total general population and migrants (overall and youth).

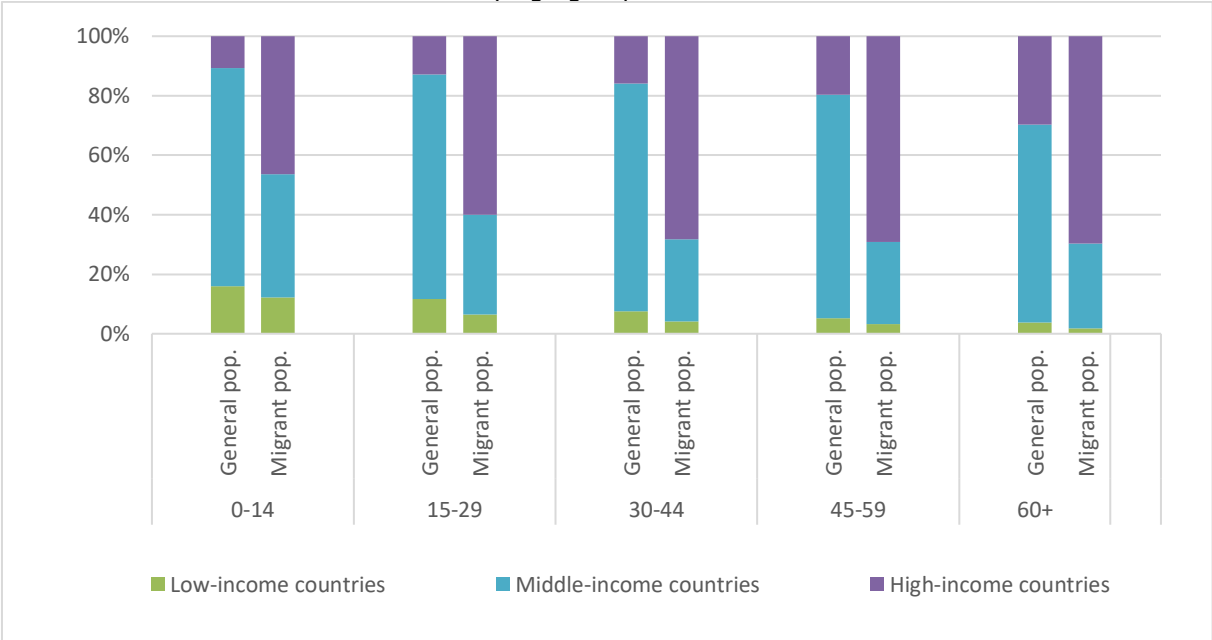


Source: UNDESA, 2019, Migrant Stock By Age And Sex workbook.

Unlike the distribution by continents, the distribution of migrants by income groups of destination countries shows some differences compared to the distribution of the total

population. Only 40% of the world's young migrants reside in low and middle-income countries, vis-à-vis 87% of the world's youth population (Figure 10). This reflects the fact that the largest migration flows have been registered from middle to high-income countries and within high-income countries (Migali et al., 2018). It also highlights how a large proportion of the youth population in low- and middle-income countries does not migrate, despite expressing a wish to do so (see following Section). The specific distribution of young migrants vis-à-vis other age groups sees the 15-29 group more represented in low- and medium- income countries, compared to older age cohorts (Figure 10). The composition of the migrant population in low- and middle-income countries is younger than in high-income countries.¹⁵ This could result from different migration patterns: for instance, destinations may depend on migrants' age with young people tending to migrate to low- and middle-income countries; the duration of stay may differ depending on the destination country, with the average duration of stay being longer in high income countries; life expectancy in destination countries may differ, being higher in high income countries. While these are reasonable expectations, they need to be validated with further research.

Figure 10. Distribution of general population and migrant population in countries by income level, by age group in 2019



Source: UNDESA, 2019

Migration stock data also show that migration is regional to a very great extent. The majority of all migrants from Africa, Asia, Europe (respectively 53%, 60% and 69%) live in countries on the same continent as their place of origin. This is less the case for North America and Oceania, where although the relative majority of migrants stay on the continent, the share is lower (30% and 50% respectively). Latin America and the Caribbean is an exception as the majority of migrants (66%) from this region moved north, to North America.

Since flow data disaggregated by age are unavailable, it is not possible to know whether these regional mobility patterns differ by age group, and whether young migrants are more likely to migrate in the same region first. However, it can be assumed that these trends reflect established migration networks and routes, which are likely to shape the decisions of young people on where to move. The analysis of stock data for countries for which data are disaggregated by age and covers both origin and destination (OECD-E) also provide some insights that this may be the case (see Box 4), but further research is required.

¹⁵ In 2019, 28 % and 23 % of migrants in respectively low and medium income countries is aged 15-29, vis-à-vis 20 % in high income countries (UNDESA, 2019).

Box 4: Regional migration patterns by age

Indonesia, Paraguay and Cote d'Ivoire are three migrants' origin countries with a relative high data coverage in the OECD DIOC-E 2010-11 on age disaggregation and destination countries. Age disaggregation (15-24, 25-64, 65+) is available for all the approximately 1.3 million migrants from Indonesia; for all the approximately 621 thousand migrants from Paraguay; and for most (95%) of the 531 thousand migrants from Cote d'Ivoire.

The top regional and non-regional destination countries accounting for more than 90% of the international stock of migrants from these countries are:

- Indonesia: Malaysia, Hong Kong; Netherlands, USA;
- Paraguay: Argentina, Brazil; Spain, USA;
- Cote d'Ivoire: Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo; France, Italy, UK (excluding USA, which is the second top non-regional destination but for which data by age is not available).

If we look at only the migration stock in the top regional and non-regional destination countries, we see a particular distribution of migrants according to their age. Approximately 80% of the migrant stock in the top destinations listed above have moved there from a place of origin in the same region (Indonesia: 81%, Paraguay: 87%, Cote d'Ivoire: 79%). However, we can see differences in region of destination for different age groups. Specifically, 90% of migrants from Indonesia aged 15-24 reside in the top regional destinations, vis-à-vis 85% of those aged 25-64 and 13% of those aged 65+. 87% of migrants from Paraguay aged 15-24 reside in the top regional destinations, vis-à-vis 85% of those aged 25-64 and 97% of those aged 65+. 92% of migrants from Cote d'Ivoire aged 15-24 reside in the top regional destinations, vis-à-vis 67% of those aged 25-64 and 49% of those aged 65+.

This preliminary analysis may suggest that young people tend to move closer to home than older groups. However, this finding would need to be confirmed with more in-depth analysis of migration patterns for these countries and for other countries. In particular Indonesia, Paraguay and Cote d'Ivoire, these countries have been selected only on the basis of data availability, as bilateral data on stock by age are very limited, but further research should include other selection criteria. Moreover, stock data do not provide information on when migrants have moved, therefore conclusions on migration movements are tentative.

4.3 Why young people migrate: economic opportunity but not only

Drivers of migration are generally 'the factors which get migration going and keep it going once begun' (Van Hear et al. 2012). Over recent decades it has become widely accepted that there is a range of factors which drive migration, and that different configurations of these factors impact on the scale, form, direction and timing of migration flows. Some of the drivers of youth migration are common for migrants of all ages. However, the available research also highlights how there are drivers and experiences of migration of young people which are distinct to those of older age groups (Global Migration Group 2014: 5; McKenzie 2007; Zenteno et al. 2013). This section describes some of the key drivers of youth migration drawn from a synthesis of published research papers, gathered through the Scopus database.¹⁶

In the literature, economic drivers of youth migration are frequently highlighted, particularly emphasising the search for new employment opportunities and higher wages which shapes migration of young people from rural to urban contexts. However, it is also evident that economic factors are not the only ones driving young people to migrate.

¹⁶ The search entered the terms 'youth' and 'migration' in the Scopus database, the world's largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature. It was limited to peer-reviewed articles and book chapters in the social sciences and arts and humanities. The results were cleaned and filtered to include only those entries which explicitly address "youth" and "migration". Studies on second generation youth who were born in a country their parents had migrated to, but had not migrated themselves, were excluded. Internal and international youth migration were both included. This produced a dataset of 388 publications from between 1969 to the end of 2019

Indeed, youth migration is bound up with the other shifts and transformations in young people's transitions to adulthood. Young people also represent an important part of displaced populations which move in search of safety. This means the drivers of youth migration go beyond only economic factors.

Economic drivers

The available research has frequently highlighted the economic drivers of youth migration, emphasising a link between spatial mobility and social mobility. This is especially the case in countries with a large youth population which is growing faster than the availability of jobs. Furthermore, many countries around the world have expanded access to education to their young populations, and as those people become increasingly skilled they may seek higher returns for their work by migrating to new places offering jobs they cannot find at home (Global Migration Group 2014; OECD 2017). In these places, young people are more likely to need to emigrate in order to find career opportunities or realise their aspirations.

For youth facing economic uncertainty at home, accessing opportunities through emigration can also provide a pathway to greater personal independence. This is especially highlighted in studies of Southern and Eastern Europe and North Africa, where young people are described as living through periods of prolonged 'waithood'. For example, for youth in MENA countries youth emigration has been associated with a lack of professional opportunities (situations of unemployment or underemployment) which creates an inability to reach economic independence and impedes their transition to adulthood (Dibeh et al. 2018: 6).

Youth migration can also serve economic purposes for families. Young people who migrate internationally can broaden a family's access to income in other countries, as an insurance mechanism against instability in their home country (De Haas 2010). They may also have to move at a young age to access economic opportunities to support their family if their parents are not able to provide for them.

Education

As young people around the world require increasingly specialised skills to enter into contemporary labour markets, accessing higher education has become more and more important. Migration can provide a way to access education opportunities which might not otherwise be available. This is particularly the case in the EU where an increasing number of young people stay in formal education for longer to complete more specialised studies. Indeed, there were 1.7 million mobile tertiary students in the EU who had come from another EU Member State or outside the EU in 2017 (Eurostat, n.d). In that year, an average of 8.1% of those studying in tertiary education across the EU were doing so outside of their country of origin (Ibid). However, there are significant differences across the Member States. Dabasi-Halász et al. (2018) suggest that there is a 'centre-periphery pattern' in Erasmus+ mobility patterns between Western and Eastern EU Member States, with post-socialist countries being primarily sending countries. Kmiotek-Meier et al. (2018) also draw attention to a range of obstacles hindering young people from going abroad to study, specifically a lack of financial resources, cultural capital and language skills, reluctance to move away from social relationships and a lack of information on regulations, transferability of qualifications and so on.

Marriage and personal relationships

Marriage and family formation have been associated with youth mobility, particularly of women in the global South. In Malawi, for example, it has been noted that 'the transition to adulthood centers on marriage, work, and school, all of which are linked to local mobility' (Beegle 2013: 42). This study found that marriage was a key driver of relocation, especially for women. Of the men surveyed between 15 and 24 years of age who had never been married, 80% had resided in the same community for five or more years whereas only 66% of those who were married had. For women, the rates were 82% and 57%

respectively. Moreover, marriage-related movements were generally shorter in distance; those migrating for labour opportunities more often travelled further to do so.

Culture and coming of age

Research has often highlighted how migration, whether from rural to urban environments or internationally, has been a way for young people to seek greater independence in their transition to adulthood. This may be associated with a move towards modern urban lifestyles from potentially more conservative, rural environments. Research in Estonia found, for example, that although rural youth workers were concerned about young people emigrating, they described this as moving "forward" rather than "away", in a form of self-empowerment and self-expression (Jentsch 2014). Similarly, in Mali migration from rural to urban settings is described as representing a move towards modernity and 'a way of life free of the constraints operating in the countryside' (Hertrich and Lesclingland 2013). Kandel and Massey argue that migration from Mexico is a rite of passage for adolescent boys who share a 'culture of migration': those who move away enjoy raised social status on their return, whereas those who do not emigrate are viewed negatively by peers (Kandel and Massey 2002).

In contrast, Laoire has also highlighted how feelings of attachment and rootedness in local settings where there are social expectations of young people staying can discourage young people from emigrating (2000: 239). This means that youth migration can in many cases be considered a predominantly urban phenomenon, as young people move internally or internationally to cities.

Conflict

As Maguire notes, 'in violent conflict, it is mostly adolescents and youths – female and male – who are conscripted into armed groups or targeted for sexual violence' (2012:4). For young people from Eritrea, for example, emigration has been perceived as the only way to escape from indefinite conscription and protracted crisis (Belloni, 2019). Research has also highlighted how emigration from Syria was a necessity for those young people whose education was interrupted and who faced being forced into military action (Crawley et al., 2017).

Box 5: Youth migration in MENA countries - The SAHWA project (Dibeh et al. 2018)

The SAHWA Project brought together 15 partners from Europe and Arab countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon.

Results from the SAHWA Youth Survey of 10,000 young people found that:

- 19% of all youth intend to migrate and many would do so irregularly
- 80% of them have a school education, 17% also have a university education or vocational training
- 20% belong to the upper social class
- 33% have no confidence in the legal system
- 70% currently reside in urban areas

This led them to conclude that:

- Being unemployed increases significantly the expression of wishing to emigrate
- Youth are more likely to emigrate when they have no confidence in the legal system in their country
- Higher wealth inequality is a migration-promoting factor for those at the bottom of the wealth distribution

4.4 Migration intentions and the gap between wanting and preparing to move

Understanding why people migrate and how they may migrate in the future is not a trivial task. International organisations such as UN DESA, Eurostat, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission as well as most of the national statistical institutes include migration forecasts in their population projections. These forecasts rely on assumptions about future migration which take into account only a limited range of factors that can affect migration flows. IOM (2016) states that migration forecasting is notoriously difficult and unreliable due to the many and unpredictable drivers of migration. One alternative way to consider how migration flows may evolve in the future is to look at the intentions that people have to migrate. While these intentions do not necessarily turn into actual moves, they can represent an important part of the decision to migrate (Carling and Schewel 2017). In most cases, those willing to migrate are more likely to do so than the rest of the population. Information on migration intentions can also provide insights not only regarding how many might migrate in the future (flows) but also who those future migrants may be in terms of origin, gender, skills, and other characteristics.

This section looks at differences in migration intentions of young individuals compared to the rest of the population and across geographic areas and countries. Doing so highlights how significant a wish to migrate is among youth populations around the world, whilst also drawing attention to a large gap between the number of young people intending to migrate and those who practically prepare to undertake an international move (Migali et al 2018).¹⁷ The section also examines differences according to development level, geographic region and individual characteristics.

While the number of surveys collecting information on migration intentions is growing, the Gallup World Poll is one providing the largest geographic coverage.¹⁸ The following three questions are asked to capture migration intentions in terms of desire to migrate, plan to and preparation for the move.

1. Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move permanently to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country?
2. Are you planning to move permanently to another country in the next 12 months, or not? (asked only of those who would like to move to another country).
3. Have you done any preparation for this move? (asked only of those who are planning to move to another country in the next 12 months)

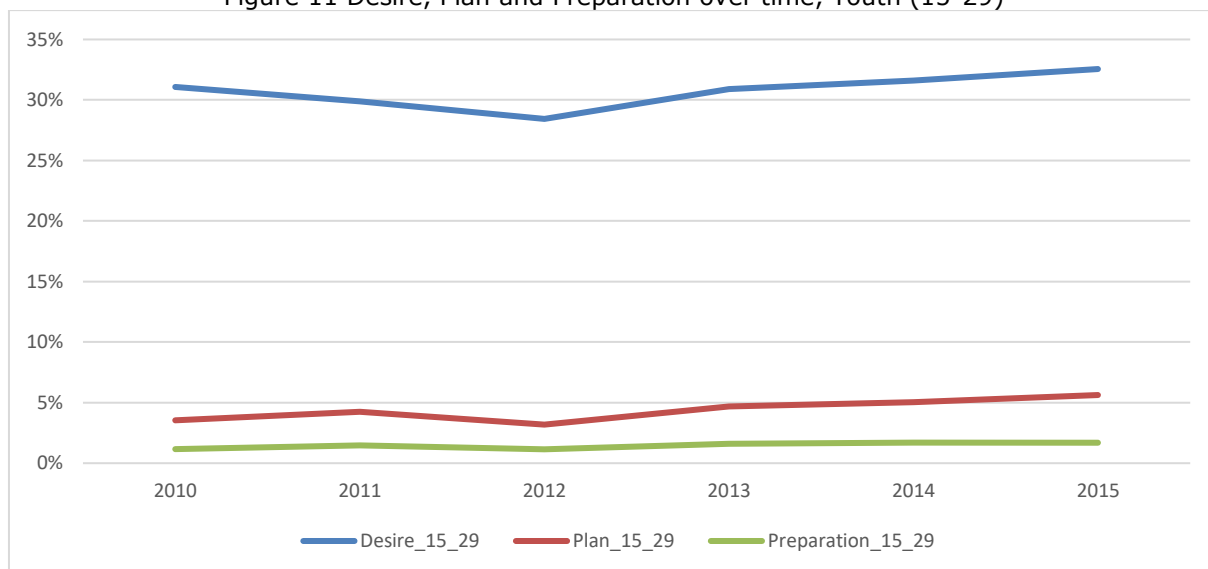
According to the Gallup World Poll about 22.2% of the world population expresses a desire to migrate, but only 3.2% are planning to move and only 1.1% are actually preparing for the move.¹⁹ While these figures are relatively stable over time (see Figure 11), they vary significantly across geographic areas, country groups defined by income level, single countries and also across age groups, sex, education level, employment status and other individual sociodemographic characteristics.

¹⁷ Only small share of those expressing willingness to migrate actually do so. At the global level annual emigration flow corresponds only 0.1 per cent of world population. It is slightly higher for Africa (0.12%) and Europe (0.14%). The annual emigration flow in low income countries is equivalent to approximately 0.14% of the population, compared to 0.09% for middle and high income countries (Migali et al. 2018)

¹⁸ The recent waves of Afrobarometer, Arab Barometer, Latinobarometro, and Caucasus Barometer extensively cover the topic of migration going beyond dire, plan and preparation and focusing on reason, destinations.

¹⁹ All the reported figures are based on Gallup World Poll survey covering the period from 2013 to 2015.

Figure 11 Desire, Plan and Preparation over time, Youth (15-29)



Source: Gallup World Poll, author's elaborations. Note: The figures refer to period from 2013 to 2015.

Migration intentions are significantly higher for younger individuals compared to the rest of the population. This is true at global, continent and single country level.²⁰ At the global level, among individuals in the age group 15-29, about 31.7% express a desire to migrate, 5.1% plan to move and 1.7% are preparing for the move (see Figure 12).

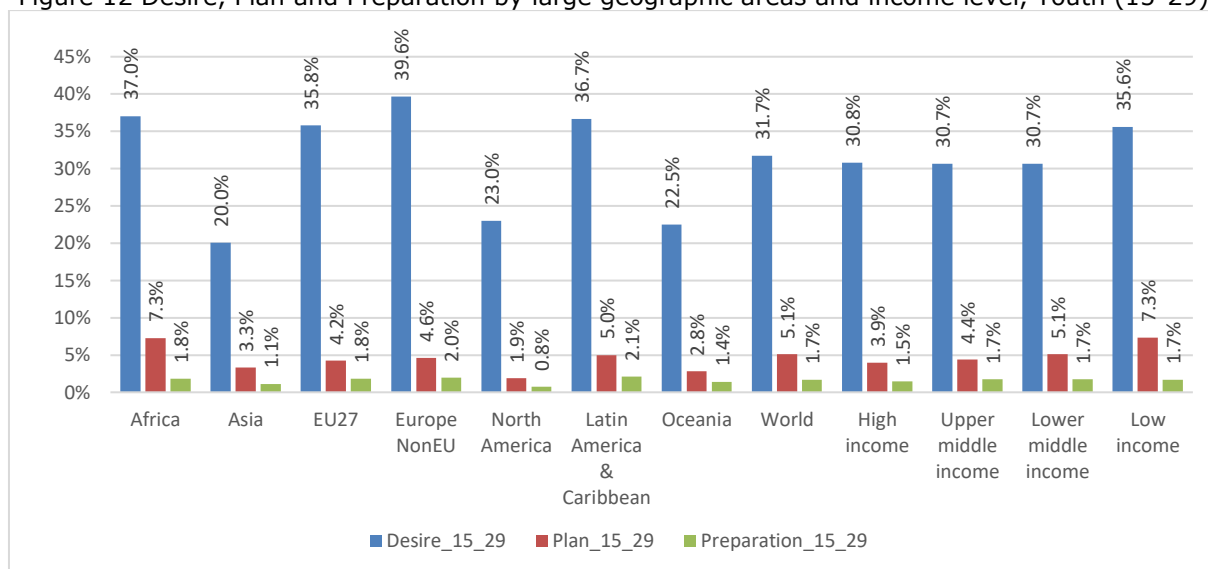
The intention to migrate among youth is the highest in non-EU European countries (39.6%), followed by Africa (37.0%) and Latin America (36.8%) (see Figure 12). The share of youth in the EU expressing a desire to migrate is not very different from what is observed in its neighbouring region - every third person expresses a desire to migrate (35.8%). In nine EU Member States, roughly half of young individuals would like to move to another country. The EU Member States with the highest figures are Italy (50.8%) and Lithuania (57.7%).

Moving from desire to plans, we can see that the share of youth planning to migrate within the next 12 months from when they were interviewed is the highest in Africa (7.3%) followed by Latin America and Caribbean (5.0%). In contrast, only 4.6 % of young people in non-EU European countries prepare to move. The share of those who undertake steps to prepare for the move is even lower.²¹ Only 1.8% of African (but also EU) youth is preparing for the move. In other words, only one in four (25%) of the young Africans who are planning to migrate actually prepares for the move. By comparison, 43% of those in the EU-27 who are planning to migrate also then prepare to make the move. The large difference between intentions, plan and preparation observed for Africa potentially reflect the unavailability of resources or other constraints limiting the mobility of African youth (De Haas 2010).

²⁰ With exception of Syria, in all 154 countries we have information for, younger people declare to have migration intention more often than their elder compatriots do.

²¹ The respondents were asked if he/she applied for residency or a visa, purchased the ticket, etc.

Figure 12 Desire, Plan and Preparation by large geographic areas and income level, Youth (15-29)



Source: Gallup World Poll, author's elaborations. Note: The figures refer to period from 2013 to 2015

Focusing more closely on single countries, in 18 of the 154 countries covered by the Gallup World Poll an absolute majority of the youth population (over 50%) wishes to emigrate. These are spread across different parts of the world as follows:

- High-income countries:** Italy, Lithuania
- Middle-income countries:** Albania, Armenia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Honduras, Moldova, Republic of Congo, Syria, Sudan
- Low-income countries:** Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone

This range of countries shows how youth migration is not limited to a particular region or income group. Rather, a high proportion of the youth population in different regional and national contexts expresses a wish to migrate. This indicates that income level at country level is not the only factor predicting the share of young population willing to move permanently to another country. Looking from the development (income level at country level - GDP per capita) perspective (see Figure 12), one can see that the share of youth willing (desire) to migrate in high, upper-middle, and lower-middle income group countries is very similar – just above 30%.²² The figures are higher for low-income group countries (35.6%). The higher percentage of young population planning to migrate is in low-income countries (7.3%). This is almost twice as high as in high-income countries. As noted above, globally, about 1.7% of youth are preparing to migrate. However, in high-income group countries the figure is slightly lower (1.5%).

Table 1 reports the socio-demographic characteristics of young people and their different wish to migrate. The sociodemographic characteristics of those wishing to migrate are different from those who prefer to stay in the country. The presented information indicates that those willing to migrate are generally slightly younger, better educated, more often male, foreign born, single, unemployed, live in large cities, have a friend or relative abroad, and consider that living standards are changing towards worse compared to those who are not willing to migrate.

²² The division is based on the World Bank classification. Available at: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>. Last accessed 24 January 2020.

Table 1. The sociodemographic characteristics of youth by migration intentions

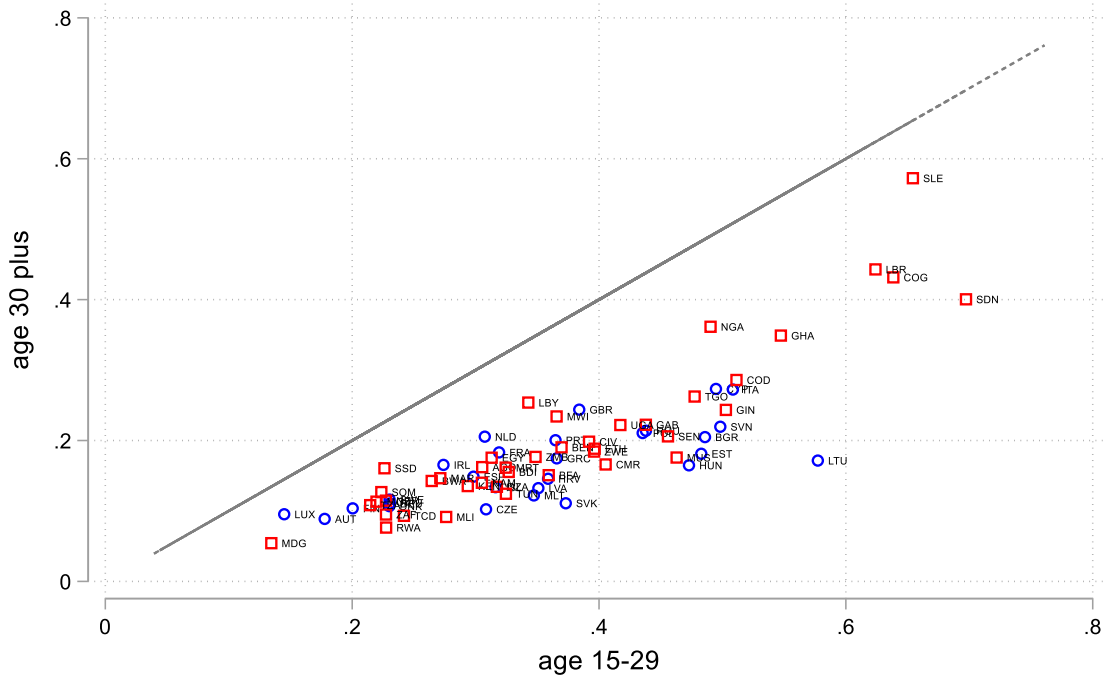
	Willing to migrate	
	No	Yes
Age	21.94	21.42
Male	48.62%	53.70%
Marital status		
<i>Single</i>	64.66%	75.00%
<i>Married</i>	27.19%	16.63%
<i>Other</i>	8.15%	8.37%
Family status		
<i>Having children</i>	61.53%	59.94%
Education level		
<i>Primary</i>	36.88%	32.46%
<i>Secondary</i>	53.60%	57.18%
<i>Tertiary</i>	9.52%	10.36%
Labour market status		
<i>Employed</i>	49.12%	46.32%
<i>Unemployed</i>	9.45%	13.09%
<i>Out of workforce</i>	41.43%	40.58%
Place of living		
<i>Rural area or farm</i>	32.36%	24.85%
<i>Small town or village</i>	32.43%	33.83%
<i>Large city</i>	27.40%	32.36%
<i>Suburb of a large city</i>	7.81%	8.96%
<i>Major city</i>	21.20%	25.99%
Change in living standard		
<i>Better</i>	60.18%	51.42%
<i>Same</i>	22.15%	23.14%
<i>Worse</i>	17.67%	25.44%
Other		
Having network abroad	37.43%	52.22%
Foreign-born	3.08%	4.09%

Source: Gallup World Poll, author's elaborations. Note: The reported statistics refer to period from 2013 to 2015

To detect similarities and disparities across and between EU and African countries, we compare information on desire and plan to migrate for two age groups (15-29 and over-30) through two scatterplots (Figures 13 and Figure 14). The horizontal and vertical axes represent the share of those expressing a desire to migrate (Figure 13) or planning to migrate (Figure 14) in age groups 15-29 and over-30. The 45-degree line splits the plot into two sections: when cases are plotted below the line, the share of those willing to migrate is higher for the younger group, and when they are plotted above the line it is lower.

Figure 13 presents the relationship between the share of those willing to migrate (desire) among youth and the rest of the population in the EU and Africa. The countries are scattered (with few outliers on the right side) and do not demonstrate any pattern specific to EU or Africa. With no exception, the share of those willing to migrate among youth is significantly higher than among the rest – all the countries remain below the 45-degree line. The deference is relatively small (closer to the line) in Luxembourg, Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Africa. The largest discrepancy between the two age groups is observed in Lithuania, Estonia, Sudan and Mauritius.

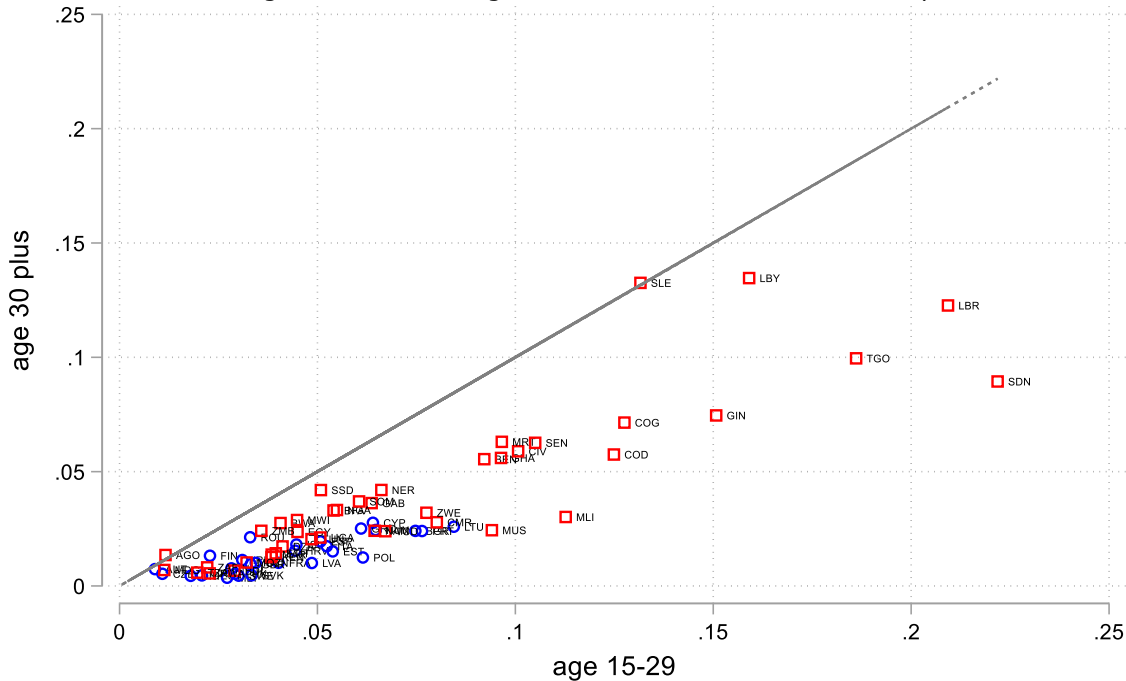
Figure 13 Desire to migrate in EU and Africa. Youth vs 30 plus



Source: Gallup World Poll, author's elaborations. Note: The figures refer to period from 2013 to 2015. Blue circles stand for EU MS. Red quadrats stand for African countries.

Figure 14 presents the relationship between the share of those planning to migrate among young people and the rest of the population in the EU and in Africa. Similar to Figure 13 all the countries remain below the 45-degree line, indicating that the share of those planning to migrate is higher among youth compared to the rest of population. Angola and Sierra Leone are sitting on the 45-degree line, indicating that in these countries the share of those planning to migrate is similar across the two age groups. This is despite very large difference in the share of those willing to migrate: 1.3 vs 13. In Angola, no one plans to migrate, in Sierra Leone many want to migrate both among young and older population. One can also notice that the EU member states are clustered below the 0.1 mark (10%) of the horizontal and 0.05 (5%) vertical axes. Instead, the African countries are more scattered. This indicates that there is less variation among EU countries in terms share of population planning to migrate compared to what is observed for African countries.

Figure 14 Plan to migrate in EU and Africa. Youth vs 30 plus



Source: Gallup World Poll, author's elaborations. Note: The figures refer to period from 2013 to 2015. Blue circles stand for EU MS. Red quadrats stand for African countries.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the main trends in youth migration globally and in different world regions. It has highlighted how the number of people aged between 15 and 29 years who have migrated internationally has increased by 53% over the past 30 years, from 37.7 million in 1990 to 57.6 million in 2019, but that this is in line with the growth of the global population. The distribution of the world's young migrants is uneven, however, with 34% of those between 15 and 29 years of age living in Asia, followed by Europe with 27%. This, too, is generally in line with the overall distribution of the global migrant population across continents. Only 12% of the world's young migrants reside in Africa.

The data also points towards distinctions in the opportunities or resources available for young people from different world regions to migrate. A majority of the world's young migrants reside in high-income countries, with only 40% of the world's young migrants residing in low and middle-income countries. The youth who wish to migrate tend to be better educated, male, single, live in cities, have a network of people they know living abroad already, and consider that their standard of living is changing for the worse. And of those who wish to migrate a larger proportion of those in the EU prepare to actually compared with those in Africa.

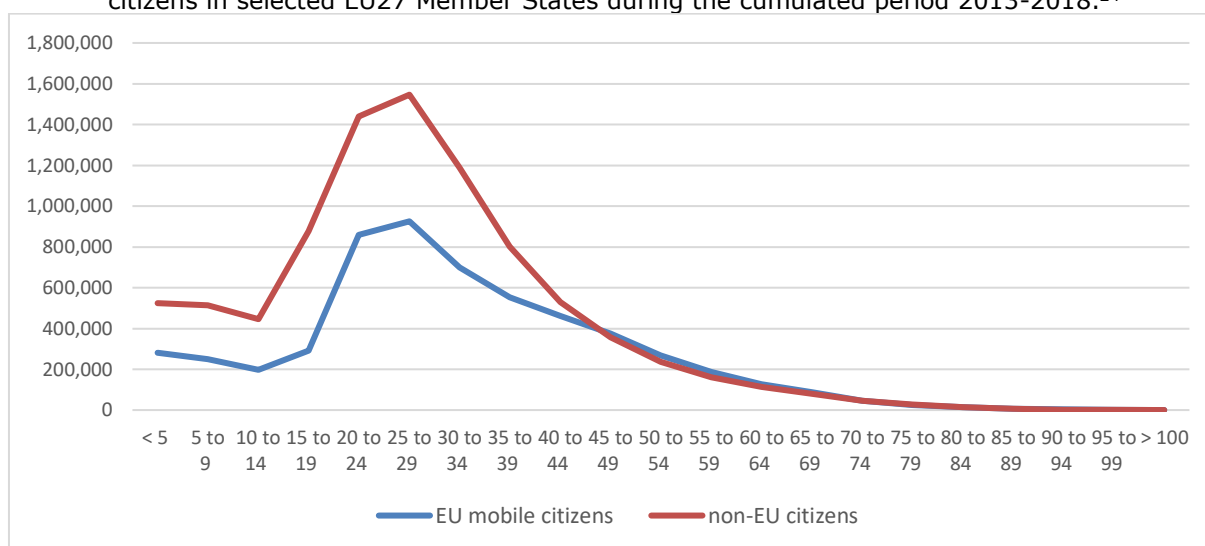
Nevertheless, further research is required to better understand the impact of economic conditions and especially the Covid-19 pandemic on the decisions of young people to migrate. For some, economic conditions will be a motivation for moving somewhere new, but for others already scarce opportunities may become even more limited. Research should also seek to understand the extent to which economic drivers of youth migration interact with other factors, including education, marriage and culture, which impact on where, when and for how long young people migrate.

5 Youth migration to and in the EU

This chapter takes the distinctive character of the EU as an area of free movement with an ageing population as a starting point for looking at the flow of migrants and EU mobile citizens into and within the EU. It goes a step further than the descriptions based on stock earlier in this report, thanks to the more extensive data availability at EU level than at the global level.²³ This chapter will analyse intra-EU mobility and non-EU immigration patterns by age.

People who migrate to the EU from non-EU countries, as well as those who move between EU countries, tend to be younger than the non-migrant population. The age distribution of the cumulated inflows during the period 2013-2018 show that the number of migrants and EU mobile citizens in the 15-29 age group is the largest (Figure 15). In particular, the number of immigrants steadily increases across 5-year age groups up to 25-29 years, where it peaks, and more slowly decreases afterwards. This is true for both EU mobile citizens as well as for non-EU citizens.

Figure 15 – Distribution by age groups of absolute number of EU mobile citizens and non-EU citizens in selected EU27 Member States during the cumulated period 2013-2018.²⁴



Source: Eurostat, migr_imm1ctz. Note: Austria, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Romania, Slovenia are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation. EU mobile citizens include British citizens.

5.1 EU mobility and emigration

Intra-EU mobility is an important political, economic and demographic phenomenon for the EU, especially when it comes to young people. Several EU initiatives, most notably the Erasmus plus programme, facilitate the temporary mobility of students and young workers within the EU and to the EU from third countries. These aim to open new educational opportunities for young people, foster the circulation of knowledge, improve knowledge of the EU and its languages and educational systems, and to strengthen the EU's identity.

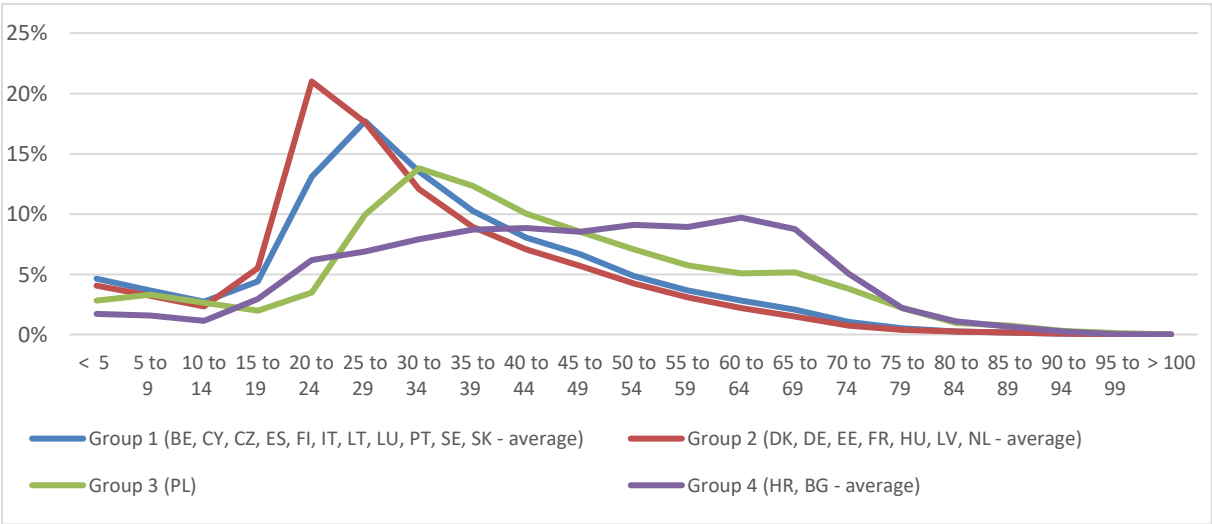
²³ The datasets used in this chapter are mainly Eurostat's migr_imm1ctz and migr_emi1ctz: on immigration and emigration flows by groups of citizenship; migr_pop1_ctz: on the residing population by groups of citizenship; and migr_resfas on first time residence permits issued by reason. These datasets have been selected due to the availability of age disaggregation and consistency. There are however limitations: irregularly staying migrants are not included and the coverage of asylum seekers varies across countries; intra-EU mobility is captured only to a limited extent due to the lack of reliable data on intra-EU mobility (e.g. due to failure to register or deregister from municipal population registers). Being based on the criterion of citizenship, these exclude naturalised non-EU born as well as people born in other EU countries that subsequently changed their citizenship. The citizenship criterion has been favoured over the country of birth criterion as immigration and mobility regimes depend on the citizenship of the person moving, rather than on their country of birth.

²⁴ Data disaggregated by citizenship groups available only as of 2013.

Due to reduced mobility costs, free movement is often associated with less permanent settlement in destination countries. In the medium and long run, however, EU mobility, especially when it is not temporary and when it is unidirectional, also has an impact on the demographic structure of the population. Especially in the case of Central-Eastern European Member States, free movement can contribute to population decline and the shrinking in the labour force (Lutz et al. 2019).

Individual Member States present different patterns of intra-EU mobility. Overall, *for intra-EU mobility*, four groups of Member States can be identified depending on when the curve describing the inflow of migrants by age groups peaks in the cumulated period 2013-2018 (Figure 16). In the first group (Group 1), the shape of the distribution curve by age of EU mobile citizens resident in the territory of the Member State is similar to the EU one reported in the introduction of this chapter, peaking with the 25-29 age group and downgrading afterwards. These countries are BE, CY, CZ, ES, FI, IT, LT, LU, PT, SE, SK. Although not visible from the chart, in CY, PT and ES the share of mobile citizens starts to increase again with the pension age (a small hump is visible from 55). In a second group (Group 2), intra-EU mobility peaks slightly earlier, in the 20-24 age group, where students and early career workers tend to be more represented. These countries are DK, EE, FR, HU, LV, as well as NL and DE where the curve depicts a plateau between the age 20-29. In a third group of countries (Group 3) – represented only by PL – EU-mobility peaks later, in the 30-34 age group, signalling that the country is more attractive to older than younger EU citizens, or more mature workers. Finally, in a fourth group of Member States (Group 4), represented by HR and BG, the peak comes considerably later, in the 60-64 age group for which mobility tends to be less-work related.

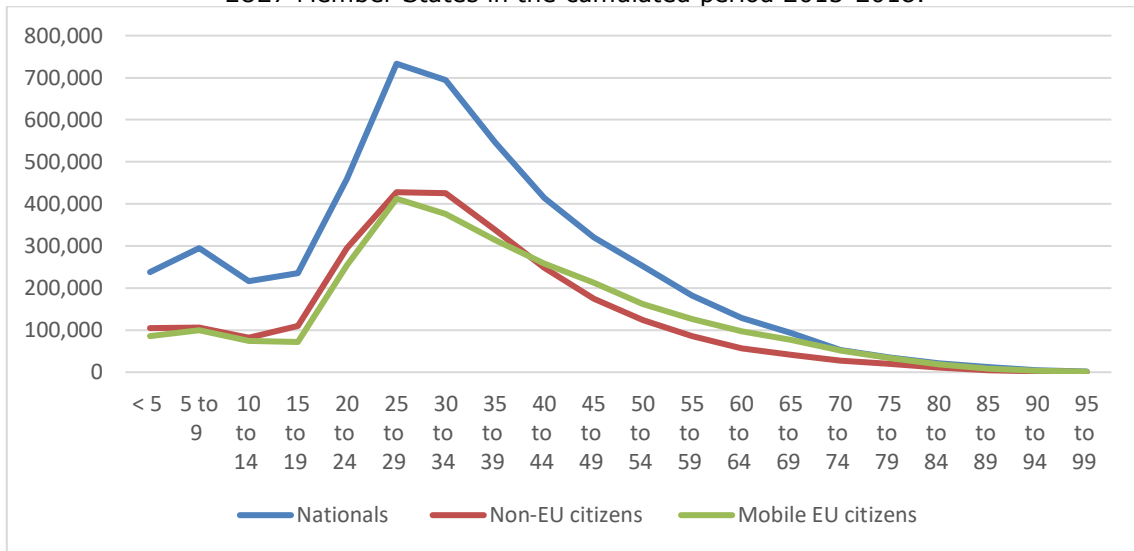
Figure 16 – Distribution by age group of EU mobile citizens in the cumulated period 2013-2018 in groups of selected EU27 Member States (share of each age group over the total, on average)



Source: Eurostat, migr_imm1ctz. Note: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, France, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation.

Emigration from the EU Member States is also a phenomenon that predominately concerns young people. When looking the age of emigrants from EU Member States in case of nationals, EU mobile and non-EU citizens during the cumulated period 2013-2018, outward mobility peaks in the age group is 25-29 for EU nationals (mobile or not) and, while slightly later (30-34) for non-EU citizens (Figure 17).

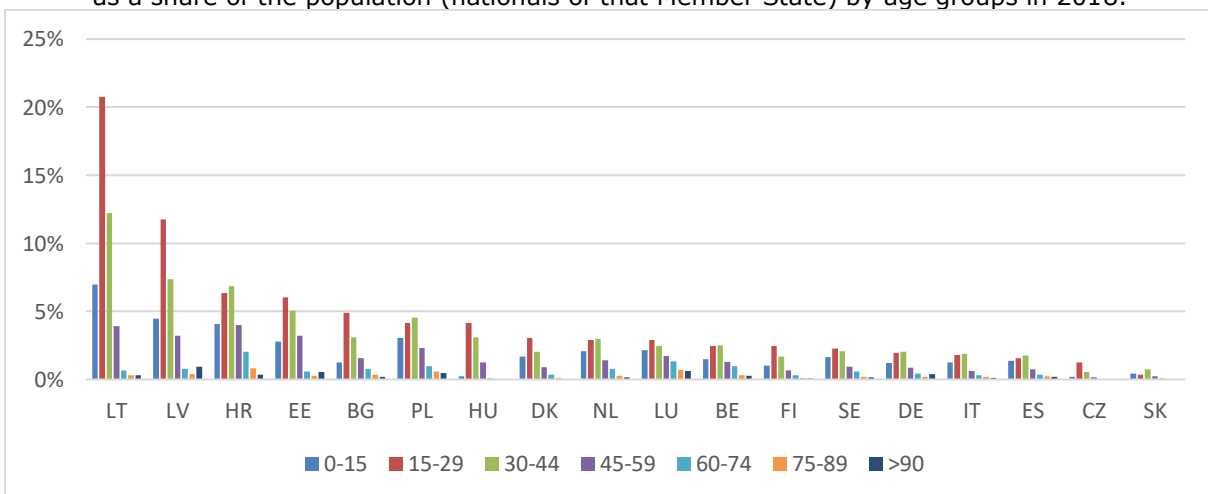
Figure 17 – Distribution by age groups of absolute number of emigrants by nationality in selected EU27 Member States in the cumulated period 2013-2018.



Source: Eurostat, migr_emi1ctz. Note: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, France, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation.

Focusing on emigration of their own nationals, the peak is reached in the 25-29 age group in all Member States, except for ES, PL and SK, where the peak of emigration is later, at 30-35. The top three Member States for absolute number of young nationals who emigrated in the 2013-2017 period are DE, PL, and IT, which are also among the top five Member States for population aged 15-29. However, when looking at the number of young emigrants as a share of the young native population, specific patterns emerged (Figure 18), with Central-Eastern European Member States having higher share of young citizens leaving. This is particularly the case in the Baltic countries – where the share of young people leaving the country during the period 2013-2018 reached 21%, 12% and 6% respectively in LT, LV and EE of the population in 2018. Moreover, the propensity to migrate in the 15-29 age group is higher than in the older cohort (30-44) in LT, LV, EE, HU, DK, LU, BG; while in other Member States the share of those aged 30-44 leaving the country is as high or higher.

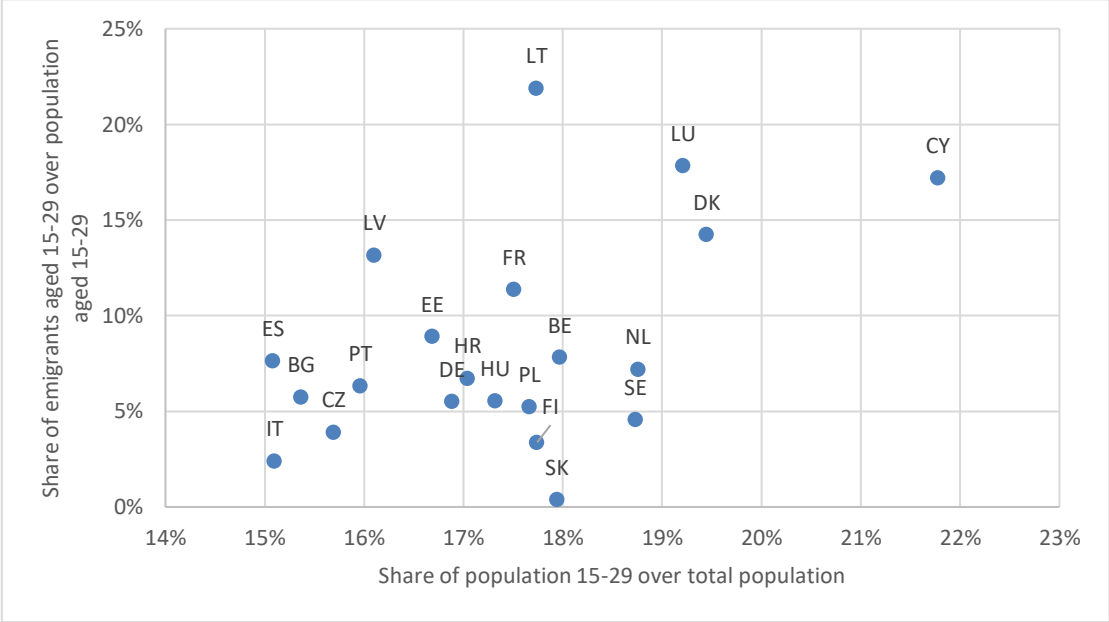
Figure 18 – Citizens of the EU27 Member State leaving the Member States in the period 2013-2018 as a share of the population (nationals of that Member State) by age groups in 2018.



Source: Eurostat, migr_emi1ctz and migra_pop1_ctz. Note: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, France, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and the UK are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation of emigrant population.

In general, regardless of the nationality of emigrants, the size of youth emigration from one country seems to go hand in hand with the size of the young people in a country, as the larger the share of people aged 15-29 over the total population, the larger the share of emigrants among the 15-29 age group (Figure 19). However, some differences across countries appear. While IT and ES share the same percentage of young people (15%), in ES the share of young migrants is higher than in IT (8% vis-à-vis 2%). Similarly, in LT and LV the share of young people in the population is similar (respectively 16% and 18%), but emigration is higher from LT, where 22% of young people emigrate (vis-à-vis 13% in LV).

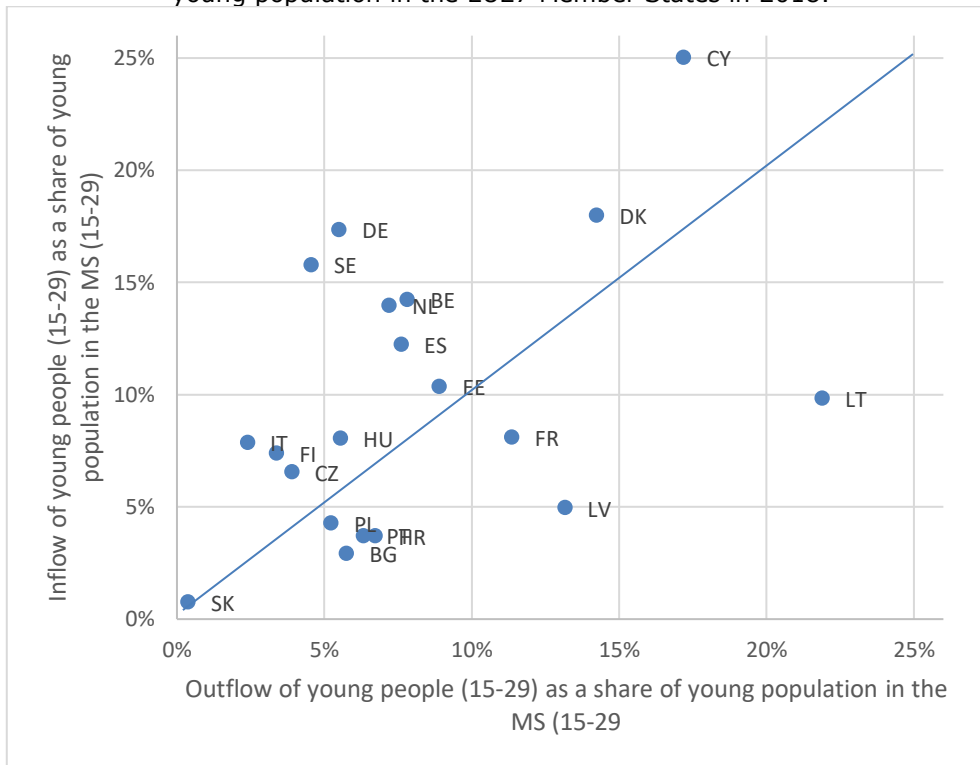
Figure 19 – Share of population aged 15-29 in 2018 vis-à-vis share of emigrants among the population aged 15-29 in the cumulated period 2013-2018.



Source: Eurostat, migr_emi1ctz and migra_pop1_ctz. Note: Austria, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Romania, and Slovenia are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation of emigrant population.

Considering the outflow/inflow dynamic of young people in Member States, regardless of their nationality (natives, mobile or non-EU nationals), three groups of Member States can be identified: those where the outflows of young people outnumber the inflows (below the diagonal in Figure 20), those where the opposite happens (above the diagonal), and those where there is a balance between outflow and inflow (along the diagonal).

Figure 20 – Outflow and Inflow of young people registered in the period 2013-2018 as a share of young population in the EU27 Member States in 2018.

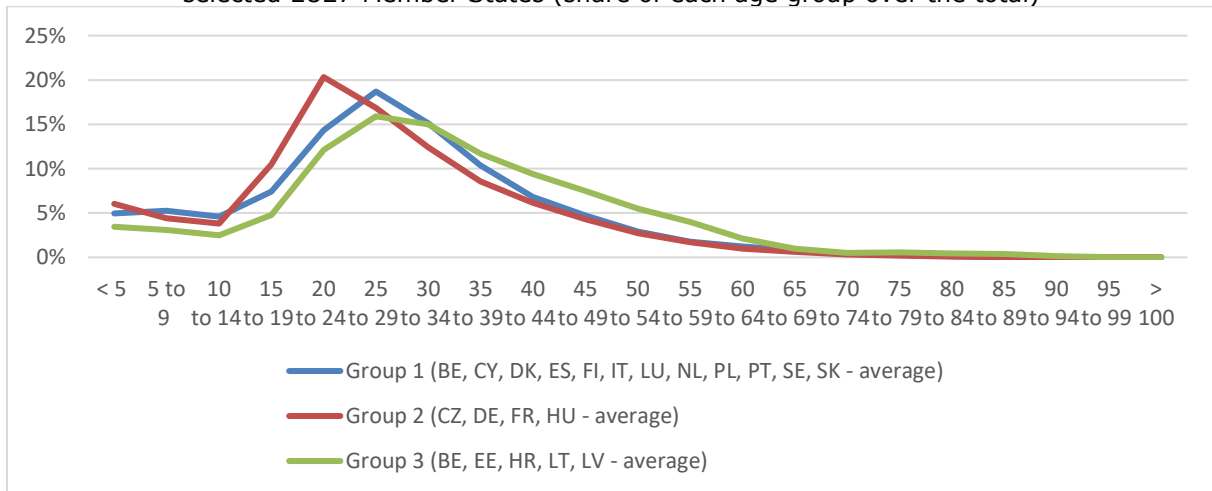


Note: Austria, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Romania, Slovenia are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation of emigrant population. Luxembourg is an outlier and not reported in the chart (outflow: 25% of youth population, inflow: 28). Source: Eurostat, migr_emi1ctz, migr_imm1ctz and migra_pop1_ctz.

5.2 Non-EU migration

The age profile of *non-EU citizens* migrating to the EU is more homogeneous than the one of EU mobile citizens. Member States can be clustered into three groups on the basis of the curve described by the age profile of non-EU migration (Figure 21). The first and most populated group of Member States, represented by BE, CY, DK, ES, FI, IT, LI, LU, NL, PT, SE, SK, shares a similar pattern with the EU (as described in the chart in the introduction) and immigration peaks at 25-29. In a second group, the peak age is slightly earlier in time, at 20-24. These are HU, FR, CZ and DE. Finally, in a third group of Member States, the peak is less pronounced as older groups are also largely represented. These are BG, EE, HR, LT, LV.

Figure 21 - Distribution by age groups of non-EU immigrants in the period 2013-2018 in groups of selected EU27 Member States (share of each age group over the total)

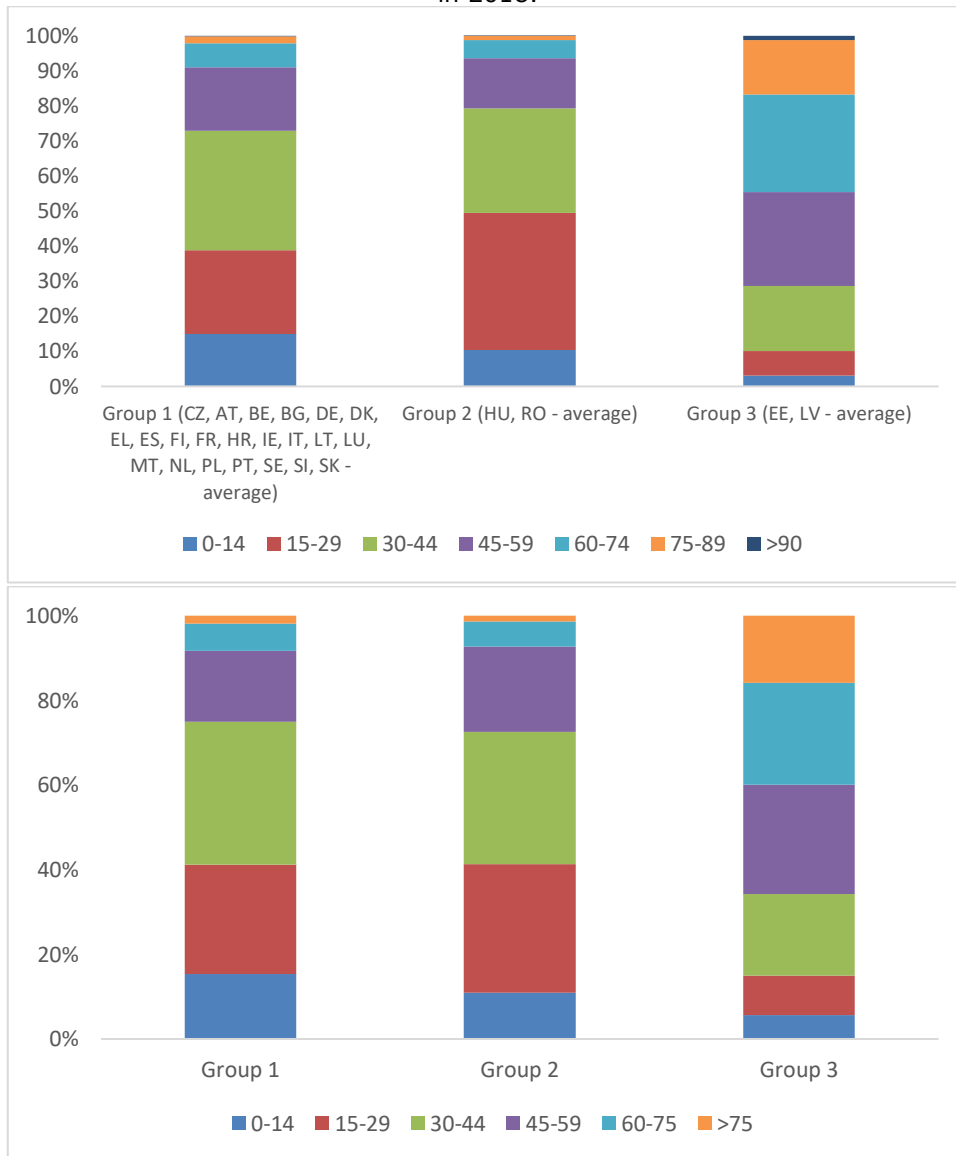


Source: Eurostat, migr_imm1ctz. Note: Austria, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Romania, Slovenia are excluded as they do not provide age disaggregation.

When differentiating by groups of nationalities, data on immigration flows show that there are no major differences across world sub-regions of origin and the shape of the distribution of migrants is similar across sub-regions. Everywhere the period of life in which the relative majority of people move to the EU is youth, and particularly the 25-29 or slightly earlier (specifically 24-25 for Western Africa, Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Northern America, and with an important share of people between 15-19 for Eastern Africa), progressively decreasing afterwards.

Migrants already residing in MS (stock) are older than newly arrived migrants (flows). This is intuitive as in general people move when they are young and, when they do not move back and hence migration is not temporary, they get older in the destination country. The age group for which the number of migrants residing in the country is the largest is older than the one for which the number of migrants arriving in the country is the largest. Three groups of MS can be identified (Figure 22): in the largest one (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, DI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK) the stock of non-EU citizens follows a bell-shaped curve, peaking at the group 30-44, which represents from 26% (BG) to 44% (IE) of all residing migrants. In another group (CY, HU, RO), the largest age group of residing non-EU citizens is younger, i.e. 15-29. Finally, in another group (EE, LT, LV), the largest groups are older, i.e. those aged 45-59 (EE) or 60-75 (LV), representing approximately 30% of all non-EU citizens. These, in particular, represent movement of people or changes in national classification occurred after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (recognised-non citizens).

Figure 22 – Age composition of non-EU citizens residing in groups of selected EU27 Member States in 2018.



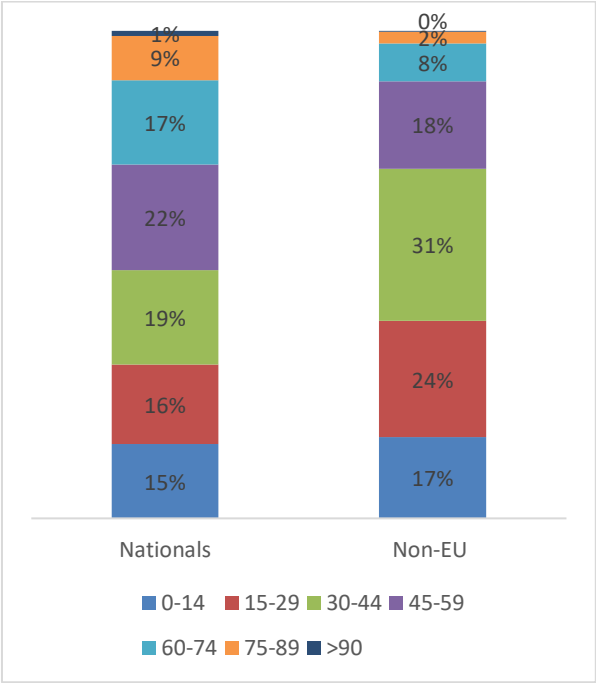
Source: Eurostat, migr_pop1_ctz. Non-recognised citizens included.

Compared to the native population, on average, non-EU citizens have a younger demographic profile. Specifically, the share of the youth population among non-EU citizens is 24% vis-à-vis 16% of EU nationals (Figure 23). This is also true for all Member States individually analysed, with the exception of the Baltic countries and SK, where the youth share is smaller in non-EU citizens than in nationals.

Migrants move for a variety of reasons and using different entry pathways. The reasons why residence permits are issued define entry legal pathways for migrants. These do not necessarily overlap with motives or reasons to migrate, but, in absence of other data, the reasons for issuing permits can be taken as a proxy of reasons to migrate. Looking at the residence permits and the reasons why they are issued, young migrants seem to be the group with the most heterogeneous reasons to migrate among all age groups. Within the age group 15-29, the relative majority of young people (30%) migrate for remunerated reasons. Work is also the top reason to migrate for older age groups, namely from the 30 to 59 group, where approximately half of the permits are issued for this purpose. The second top reason for young people to migrate, immediately below work, is education (29% of permits). Unsurprisingly, this reason occupies a much larger share than it is the

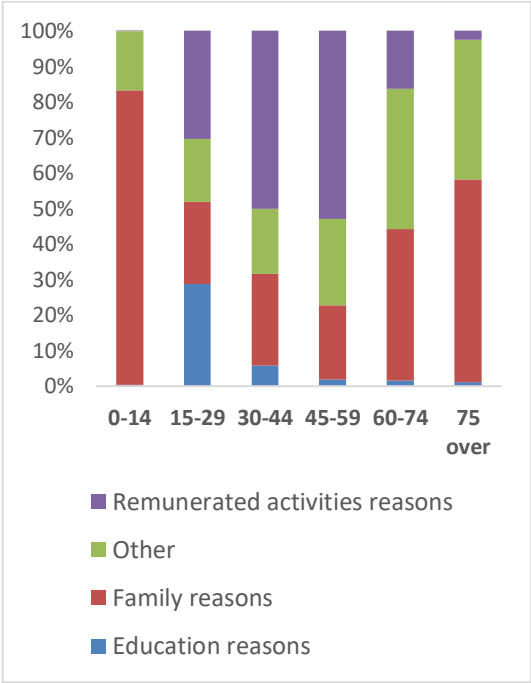
case in other age groups. Family reasons are also important, occupying 23% of permits issued to people aged 15-29. This share is however smaller than in younger cohorts as well as in older cohorts, with the exception of the 45-59 group. Finally, other reasons (including humanitarian reasons) are the least represented one in this age group (18% of permits), while being much more relevant to older age cohorts.

Figure 23 – Share of each age group for non-EU citizens and citizens of the MS, average of EU Member States, in 2018.



Source: Eurostat, migr_pop1_ctz.

Figure 24 – Share of residence permits by reason issued to different age groups in the EU in 2018



Source: Eurostat, migr_resfas

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on EU Member States, taking as the starting point the population structure of the EU and setting it against the composition of the migrant population. This chapter has shown that the age composition of the migrant and mobile citizen populations is distinct to that of the native population. People who migrate into the EU from non-EU countries or who are mobile EU citizens moving between Member States, tend to be younger than the native population and the stock of already-resident migrants in the country they are moving to. This means that a larger proportion of the migrant population in the EU is entering economically-active life than is the case for the native population. The majority come with permits enabling them to study or to work.

Moreover, the chapter has also highlighted how different patterns of mobility are present across the Member States. In Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, more young people between 15 and 29 years of age immigrate than emigrate, leading to a net gain in the size of the youth population in those Member States. In contrast, Central-Eastern Member States tend to have a higher share of their young populations emigrating. These differences can potentially exacerbate demographic inequalities across the EU, with the associated challenges that this entails in terms of sustainability of the welfare state.

6 Conclusions

This report has examined the particular dynamics of youth migration globally and in the EU and Africa. In doing so, it underlines the importance of adopting a specific research and policy focus on youth migration, understood as a form of mobility which takes place during young people's transitions to adulthood (understood broadly as occurring between 15 and 29 years of age) and interacts with the formative personal transitions and broader familial and social transformations involved therein.

Specifically, we have argued that youth migration merits attention because:

- The global youth population in some world regions is particularly large and rapidly growing. Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world and the fastest growth in number of people aged between 15 and 29.
- Young people are more likely to express a wish to migrate than older generations, although there is a large gap between the proportion of young people who wish to move and those who actually prepare to make the move.

The report also provides insights into which young people migrate, and where:

- Globally, the young people who say that they want to migrate are more likely to be single, have completed higher levels of education, to live in towns or cities and to consider that their lives are getting worse, when compared to those who say that they do not want to migrate. A larger proportion of young people in Africa express a wish to migrate than in the EU, but less of those who are planning to migrate actually move on to making preparations to do it.
- More young migrants reside in high-income countries than in low- and middle-income ones. Only 40% of the world's young migrants reside in low and middle-income countries, vis-à-vis 87% of the world's youth population. 34% of the international migrant stock aged between 15 and 29 years lives in Asia, followed by Europe (27%) and Northern America (18%), while smaller shares live in Africa (12%), Latin America and the Caribbean (5%) and Oceania (4%).

These findings have implications for our understanding of future trends in international migration and potential policy challenges and responses. Specifically:

- There may be more young people around the world who migrate in the short to medium term future, because of current demographic trends in low and middle-income regions and the tendency of more young people in those regions to express a wish to migrate than people of older generations or young people in other regions.
- But this should not necessarily be equated to an inevitable youth exodus. The youth share of the global migrant stock has not increased over recent years, and only a minority of those who express a wish to migrate go on to prepare an actual move.
- Youth migration could impact on the age structure in the EU in the short to medium-term future. In some EU Member States immigration brings a net gain in younger people as more young people immigrate than emigrate or already reside in the native population. But in other Member States youth migration exacerbates the challenges faced by places with ageing of populations, as emigration of youth brings about a net loss in the number of young people.

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Annex 1

Youth population in African countries (2019)

Country	Total Population	Youth Population (15-29 years)	Youth % on Total Population
Algeria	43 053	9 606	22
Angola	31 825	8 530	27
Benin	11 801	3 258	28
Botswana	2 304	618	27
Burkina Faso	20 321	5 629	28
Burundi	11 531	3 179	28
Cabo Verde	550	149	27
Cameroon	25 876	7 219	28
Central African Republic	4 745	1 390	29
Chad	15 947	4 475	28
Comoros	851	236	28
Congo	5 381	1 402	26
Côte d'Ivoire	25 717	7 367	29
Democratic Republic of the Congo	86 791	22 801	26
Djibouti	974	268	28
Egypt	100 388	25 099	25
Equatorial Guinea	1 356	395	29
Eritrea	3 497	929	27
Eswatini	1 148	340	30
Ethiopia	112 079	33 469	30
Gabon	2 173	559	26
Gambia	2 348	668	28
Ghana	30 418	8 387	28
Guinea	12 771	3 754	29
Guinea-Bissau	1 921	537	28
Kenya	52 574	15 199	29
Lesotho	2 125	612	29
Liberia	4 937	1 350	27
Libya	6 777	1 657	24
Madagascar	26 969	7 692	29
Malawi	18 629	5 383	29
Mali	19 658	5 246	27
Mauritania	4 526	1 229	27
Mauritius	1 270	292	23
Mayotte	266	70	26
Morocco	36 472	8 877	24
Mozambique	30 366	8 528	28
Namibia	2 495	712	29
Niger	23 311	6 069	26
Nigeria	200 964	53 459	27
Réunion	889	187	21
Rwanda	12 627	3 487	28
Sao Tome and Principe	215	57	26
Senegal	16 296	4 463	27
Seychelles	98	20	21
Sierra Leone	7 813	2 226	28
Somalia	15 443	4 350	28
South Africa	58 558	15 091	26
South Sudan	11 062	3 122	28
Sudan	42 813	12 074	28
Togo	8 082	2 202	27
Tunisia	11 695	2 540	22
Uganda	44 270	12 629	29
United Republic of Tanzania	58 005	15 770	27
Zambia	17 861	5 123	29

Zimbabwe	14 645	4 057	28
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Source: UNDESA, 2019, Population prospects

Annex 2

Youth population in EU Member States (2018)

Member State	Total Population	Youth Population (15-29 years)	Youth % on Total Population
European Union - 27 countries	508,273,732	86,534,201	17
Belgium	11,398,589	2,048,554	18
Bulgaria	7,050,034	1,083,467	15
Czechia	10,610,055	1,664,962	16
Denmark	5,781,190	1,124,329	19
Germany	82,792,351	13,981,161	17
Estonia	1,319,133	220,149	17
Ireland	4,830,392	888,314	18
Greece	10,741,165	1,672,774	16
Spain	46,658,447	7,037,670	15
France	66,926,166	11,740,306	18
Croatia	4,105,493	699,788	17
Italy	60,483,973	9,133,523	15
Cyprus	864,236	188,202	22
Latvia	1,934,379	311,537	16
Lithuania	2,808,901	498,241	18
Luxembourg	602,005	115,673	19
Hungary	9,778,371	1,693,559	17
Malta	475,701	93,909	20
Netherlands	17,181,084	3,222,970	19
Austria	8,822,267	1,593,658	18
Poland	37,976,687	6,709,637	18
Portugal	10,291,027	1,642,668	16
Romania	19,530,631	3,288,155	17
Slovenia	2,066,880	312,030	15
Slovakia	5,443,120	976,640	18
Finland	5,513,130	978,132	18
Sweden	10,120,242	1,895,760	19

Source: Eurostat

Annex 3

Old-age dependency ratio 1st variant (population 65 and over to population 15 to 64)

GEO/TIME	2018	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
European Union - 28 countries	30.5	31.6	38.7	45.8	49.9	51.4
Belgium	29.1	30.1	36.4	41.0	42.7	44.2
Bulgaria	32.5	33.8	39.4	46.5	57.3	64.3
Czechia	29.6	31.2	35.5	41.0	50.4	54.3
Denmark	30.1	31.1	36.3	40.7	40.7	44.3
Germany	32.8	33.8	42.7	48.4	49.0	50.8
Estonia	30.6	31.7	37.5	42.9	50.2	57.9
Ireland	21.2	22.1	27.8	35.1	43.9	45.2
Greece	34.1	35.1	42.2	53.5	63.4	61.0
Spain	29.2	30.0	37.9	50.2	59.3	55.9
France	31.6	33.0	39.9	46.1	47.0	45.2
Croatia	30.7	32.6	41.6	48.4	56.1	61.2
Italy	35.2	36.3	44.9	58.9	64.7	62.9
Cyprus	23.4	23.9	27.8	30.3	35.4	47.7
Latvia	31.4	32.5	41.4	46.4	51.6	56.7
Lithuania	30.1	31.1	44.2	52.0	55.4	61.7
Luxembourg	20.6	21.1	25.7	31.1	36.0	42.2
Hungary	28.5	30.5	34.3	40.4	48.8	53.5
Malta	28.0	28.8	32.2	32.5	38.8	54.0
Netherlands	29.0	30.2	39.0	45.8	45.1	46.8
Austria	27.9	28.6	36.5	43.6	46.2	49.7
Poland	25.3	27.5	36.3	40.8	52.7	62.0
Portugal	33.3	34.5	43.7	55.6	65.8	66.3
Romania	27.5	29.0	34.3	44.0	53.6	58.0
Slovenia	29.6	31.6	40.8	48.7	57.5	57.6
Slovakia	22.5	24.5	32.8	39.4	52.2	61.5
Finland	34.2	36.0	42.5	44.3	46.9	51.5
Sweden	31.7	32.0	33.1	34.6	35.5	40.8

Source: Eurostat

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