MIGRATION POLICY PRACTICE

Short articles to better connect migration research, policy and practice worldwide

CONTENTS

IOM UN MIGRATION

New insights on the short- and long-term impacts of migration

Marie McAuliffe, Charles Kwenin, Richa Arora and Jenna Blower-Nassiri[1]

Human mobility continues to be a defining phenomenon of the century, with migration impacting many facets of societies. Human movement is driven by demographic change, international labour demand and ecological transformations, including climate change. Within communities, migration is directly and indirectly shaping how we work, learn, socialize, consume and communicate as the mega forces of globalization and urbanization transform our world.

This *Migration Policy Practice (MPP)* issue examines migration dynamics at local and regional levels, with articles examining how migration information campaigns in local areas across Africa and Asia influence migration aspirations (Carling and Caso) and the role of integrated border management systems to facilitate human mobility in the East and Horn of Africa (Abebe and Wachira).

New articles in this issue consider the effects of migration over time, including the long-term ecological and sociopolitical impacts of migrants travelling through the Darién Gap in Panama (Ordaz, Baird, Ortega Bacorizo and Gabster), and experiences of discrimination among skilled migrant women from India and its impact on the European Union labour market (Raghuram and Sondhi).

This issue also examines future migration scenarios while considering how unanticipated global events can incite new patterns of human mobility (Bijak, Czaika, Potančoková, Vono de Vilhena and the QuantMig team). Regarding the element of uncertainty, other articles explore migration policy responses to geopolitical events (Xhardez and Dagher) and migrant livelihood strategies amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Ramogwebo, Bhanye and Matamanda).

The MPP Editorial Team would like to extend our gratitude to our 2022–2023 peer reviewers (see details in text box), as well as the MPP Editorial Advisory Committee (see details on the last page of this issue) for their critical contributions to supporting research and analysis on migration policy and practice.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Marie, Charles, Richa and **Jenna**

[1] Marie McAuliffe, IOM; Charles Kwenin, University of Ghana; Richa Arora, GiZ; and Jenna Blower, IOM and York University.

The reach and impact of migration information campaigns in 25 communities across Africa and Asia

Jørgen Carling and Nicolás Caso[1]

Abstract

Migration information campaigns seek to influence migration decision-making, averting the use of migrant smugglers and reducing irregular migration. Recent research has examined both the ethics and the efficacy of such campaigns, often with specific campaigns as the object study. In this article, the authors provide a complementary bird's-eye perspective by placing migration information campaigns and their effects within broader dynamics of migration and development in diverse settings. The analyses are based on survey data covering almost 13,000 young adults in 25 local areas across 10 countries in Africa and Asia. The article examines how exposure to migration information varies, how messages are perceived, and how warnings against migrating affect migration aspirations. Between 4 per cent and 86 per cent of young adults in each area have seen or heard some form of migration information during the past year, most commonly in the form of warnings against migrating. It is found that such warnings rarely have an impact on migration aspirations, and that when they do, they are most often associated with a higher desire to leave.

Introduction

Migration information campaigns have become a key component of migration policy in different parts of the world. These seek to influence migration decision-making, avert the use of migrant smugglers and reduce irregular migration. Since 2015, the European Commission alone has allocated more than EUR 40 million to information campaigns for preventing irregular migration.[2]

Yet despite the growing investment and assigned relevance to these information campaigns, little is known about their impact and effectiveness. In particular, large quantitative studies assessing the reach and effect of these campaigns on migration aspirations are almost non-existent.[3]

Based on uniquely extensive survey data, this article provides a complementary bird's-eye perspective on the scope of these campaigns and their influence on migration aspirations. This is done by placing migration information campaigns and their effects within broader dynamics of migration and development in 25 local areas across 10 countries in Africa and Asia.

[1] Jørgen Carling is a research professor in Migration Studies at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Nicolás Caso is a research assistant at the PRIO and PhD fellow at Ghent University.

[2] European Migration Network, Network events (n.d.); European Commission, Awareness raising and information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration in selected third countries and within Europe (AMIF-2019-AG-CALL-04), Funding and Tenders portal (2019).

[3] Jasper Tjaden, Sandra Morgenstern and Frank Laczko, *Evaluating the Impact of Information Campaigns in the Field of Migration: A Systematic Review of the Evidence and Practical Guidance*, Central Mediterranean Route Thematic Report Series (Geneva, IOM, 2018); Raffaella Pagogna and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "Disciplining migration aspirations through migration-information campaigns: A systematic review of the literature", *Geography Compass*, 15(7):e12585 (2021).

A growing number of studies and media reports have examined the ethics and politics of information campaigns that seek to deter migration, and sometimes raised serious concerns.[4] While this article does not engage directly with these dimensions, these are recognized as an essential context for policy evaluation.

The MIGNEX project and the MIGNEX survey

The analysis is based on the collaborative project Aligning Migration Management and the Migration–Development Nexus (MIGNEX), a six-year research project (2018–2024) with the core ambition of creating new knowledge on migration, development and policy.[5] MIGNEX involves researchers at nine institutions in Europe, Africa and Asia, coordinated by the PRIO.

The project is designed to understand migration dynamics at the level of local communities. Most of the data collection is concentrated in 25 research areas across Africa and Asia (see Figure 1). Each research area can be a town, part of a city or a rural district. They have been selected with an emphasis on complementarity between and within countries, so that the 25 areas overall reflect the diversity of contexts in which migration originates. The research areas were referred to by their name and an ID that includes the country abbreviation such as Enfidha (TUN1).

Figure 1. MIGNEX research areas

Source: MIGNEX, 2023.
Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

---

[4] Verena K. Brändle, "Claiming authority over 'truths' and 'facts': Information risk campaigns to prevent irregular migration" in *Europe in the Age of Post-Truth Politics* (Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), p. 151; Nassim Majidi, "Deterring migration in times of crises: The ethics of behavioral change in migration information campaigns", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 0(0) (2023).

[5] See mignex.org. MIGNEX has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 770453.

While the project gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, this article is based on the quantitative survey component. The survey was carried out face to face by trained interviewers using quality-approved translations to relevant local languages. In each research area, the survey covered a random sample of approximately 500 residents aged 18 to 39 years, yielding a grand total sample of nearly 13,000.[6] (The research area Kombolcha (ETH1) is excluded because survey data collection was aborted for security reasons.)

Sources of information about migration were a minor theme among many others in the survey. To assess exposure to migration information campaigns, the respondents were first asked the following broad question:

Sometimes there are TV shows, events or other information about migration – about people moving from one country to another. Over the last year, have you seen or heard of any of the following in [Research area]?

  (a) A TV advert or programme about migration?

  (b) A workshop or event about migration?

  (c) A radio programme or advert about migration?

  (d) Social media or a website about migration?

  (e) A poster or newspaper advert about migration?

Respondents who had seen or heard information about migration via any of these channels were subsequently asked if they remembered the message. Based on the respondents' spontaneous answer, enumerators selected from a pre-defined list of messages. Answers that did not fit any of the options were recorded as text and later recoded.

Which messages are conveyed in information about migration?

The most recalled message was "telling people not to migrate" followed by "warning people about the dangers of smuggling". These messages are typical of campaigns that are implemented as policy interventions. In the analyses, these are combined under the label "warning against migrating".

Many respondents also recalled other messages, including "explaining what migration is", "warning people about immigrants" and "telling people how to migrate". This is unsurprising, since respondents were asked broadly about seeing or hearing information about migration, which could also include media coverage and commercial advertisements, for instance.

As shown in Figure 2, the proportion of respondents who had seen or heard campaigns warning them against migrating ranges from close to zero in the research areas in Pakistan to well over half in some of the research areas in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Guinea. In other words, migration information campaigns are truly a large-scale phenomenon, not only in terms of funding allocated but also in reaching a very large number of people.

Overall, about half of the respondents who had seen or heard information about migration recalled the message to be warning them against migrating. It is striking that this is the dominant message that people in these low- and middle-income communities hear about migration.

---

[6] For detailed methodology and documentation, see Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Gemma Hennessey, Jørgen Carling and Rashid Memon, "Chapter 7: Survey data collection" in *MIGNEX Handbook* version 2 (Oslo, PRIO, 2023); and Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Jørgen Carling, Nicolás Caso, Gemma Hennessey and Marcela Rubio, "Chapter 10: Documentation of survey data" in *MIGNEX Handbook* version 2 (Oslo, PRIO, 2023). For more detailed information on MIGNEX survey data collection strategy, please read chapter 7 of the MIGNEX Handbook.

Figure 2. Exposure to information about migration
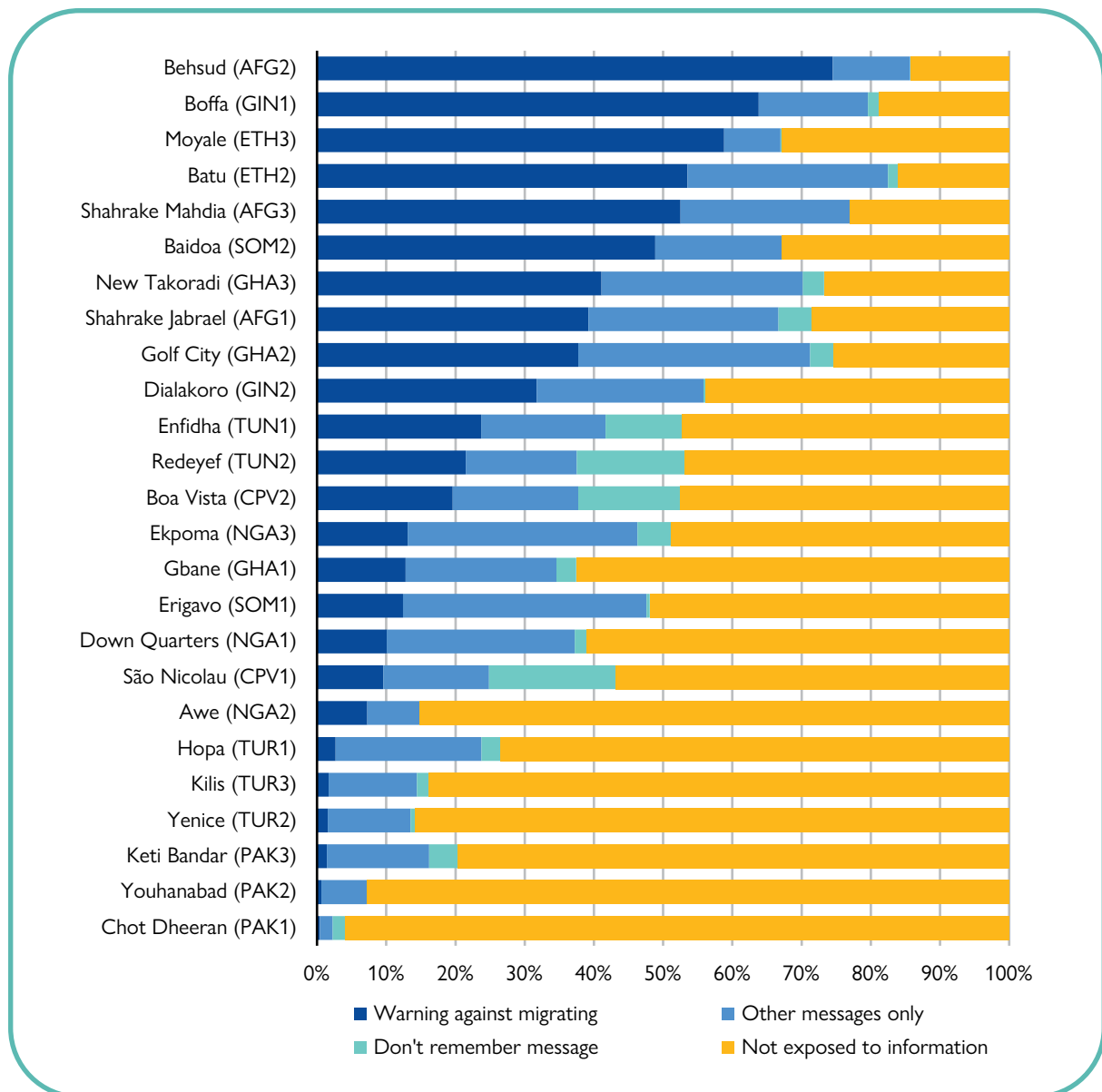
Source: MIGNEX survey data set (restricted variant, v1), 2023.
Note: N = 12,966. Data are weighted to reflect the survey design. "Warning against migrating" include such messages alone or in combination
with other messages. Research areas are ordered by the proportion who have been exposed to warnings against migrating.

Channels for information about migration

As previously explained, respondents were asked about seeing or hearing information about migration in five specific channels: (a) television; (b) workshops or events; (c) radio; (d) social media or websites; and (e) posters or newspapers. On average, the respondents who had seen or heard information about migration reported doing so via two channels.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of respondents in each research area who reported hearing or seeing information about migration via each of the five channels.

Television was the most common channel in fourteen of the research areas, while social media or websites were most common in eight research areas. In the remaining three research areas, information about migration was most often received via radio. In general, the distribution of channels is similar regardless of the type of message that was recalled by respondents.

Figure 3. Exposure to information about migration, by channel

Assessing the impact of migration information campaigns

There are several ways of measuring the effectiveness of information campaigns, all of which have limitations. Where other studies seek to precisely measure the impact of a single campaign in a single location, the approach is less precise but broader in scope. In short, this paper analyses whether people who have been exposed to warnings against migrating have different migration aspirations than otherwise similar individuals who have not been exposed.

Exposure to warnings against migrating are measured in three ways. First, the same basic measure as previously presented is used: having seen or heard information about migration in one or more channels, and recalling the message as being telling people not to migrate and/or warning people about dangers of smuggling. Second, differentiation within this group is done by counting the number of channels through which individuals have been exposed to such messages. Third, those individuals who have been exposed via all five channels are singled out.

Migration aspirations

This paper is interested in the effects of migration information campaigns on migration aspirations, which is an umbrella term for the conviction that migrating would be preferable to staying.[7] Migration aspirations could, in other words, mean an active desire to migrate, as well as the view that migration is the lesser of two evils, for instance in situations of insecurity. There are diverse aspects of migration aspirations that can be measured through carefully formulated survey questions.

Two such measures from the MIGNEX survey are used:

• *Preference to migrate*, measured with the question "Would you like to go and live in another country some time during the next five years, or would you prefer to stay in [Survey country]?"

• *Readiness to migrate*, measured with the question "If someone were to give you the necessary papers to live and work in a richer country,[8] would you go, or would you stay in [Survey country]?"

The preference to migrate ranges from 4 per cent in Keti Bandar (PAK3) to 86 per cent in Ekpoma (NGA3). The readiness to migrate is generally higher, reflecting people's inclination to seize an opportunity that appears, even if it is not the most desirable one. The values range from 23 per cent in Keti Bandar (PAK3) to 92 o in Ekpoma (NGA3). In other words, the research areas cover a great range of outmigration contexts.

Do warnings against migrating make a difference?

If migration aspirations among individuals who have and have not been exposed to warnings against migrating are simply compared, it will yield misleading results. For instance, if people who are unemployed spend more time watching TV, they are also more likely to see televised migration campaigns, and the results would confound the effects of unemployment with the effect of exposure to campaigns.

---

[7] Jørgen Carling and Kerilyn Schewel, "Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6):945–963 (2018).

---

[8] The reference to "a richer country" differentiates this hypothetical migration opportunity from regional migration. Migration to higher-income countries is an established phenomenon in nearly all research areas, although it varies whether the most relevant and desired destinations are in Europe, North America or elsewhere.

Similar arguments can be made for many other individual characteristics that might affect the likelihood of seeing or hearing warnings against migrating and have a bearing on migration aspirations.

To address this challenge, a series of multivariate logistic regressions were implemented.[9] These statistical analyses allow for measuring the effect of being exposed to warnings against migrating given a number of other individual characteristics. The results are striking: there is no discernible effect of being exposed to warnings against migrating, nor of the number of channels through which respondents have been exposed to warnings. Even when respondents were exposed through five channels, there is no effect on their migration aspirations. Both the preference to migrate and the readiness to migrate are unaffected.

Other influences on migration aspirations

As previously explained, the regression models take account of many other individual characteristics that could affect migration aspirations. The results show that they do, and this puts the negligible effect of information campaigns in perspective. The following factors are associated with significantly lower migration aspirations:

• Being female;

• Being married or cohabiting;

• Being the parent of at least one child aged 0–15;

• Being employment or running a business.

The following characteristics are associated with significantly higher migration aspirations:

• Having a higher level of educational attainment;

• Being aware of current, recent or former international migrants;

• Knowing of someone's failed migration experience;

• Having family, relatives of friends in a high-income country and having had contact;

• Having lived in a high-income country for at least one year;

• Having received remittances to the household during the past year.

The latter two factors only affect the preference to migrate and not the readiness to migrate. Household wealth also affects migration aspirations, although in a more complex way. Among poorer households, increases in wealth are associated with higher migration aspirations, but above a certain level of wealth, this is no longer the case. There was no consistent effect of age (within the 18–39 age range of the respondents) nor of being an internal migrant.

It is striking that knowing of someone's failed migration experience – defined here as being stuck en route, detained, deported, injured or killed – is associated with higher migration aspirations. It resonates with the finding that warnings against migrating can also have such an effect, perhaps because of people's willingness to take risks, or their belief in their own ability to avoid danger.

---

[9] For detailed methods and results, see Nicolás Caso and Jørgen Carling, "The reach and impact of migration information campaigns in 25 communities across Africa and Asia: Technical note", *Migration Policy Practice*, XII(3) (2023).

Context-specific effects

Even though no clear effect of migration information campaigns in the overall sample is found, the picture might be different in individual research areas. Therefore, the analyses were also run separately for each of the 25 research areas, with the same measures of exposure to warnings against migrating, and considering the effects of both the preference and the readiness to migrate.

Only in one research area, Baidoa (SOM2), was exposure to warnings against migrating consistently associated with lower migration aspirations. Those who had seen or heard warnings against migrating were 19 per cent less likely to express a readiness to leave if the opportunity arose. For respondents who had been exposed through five different communication channels, the effect was twice as large. The preference for migration was similarly affected.

In 12 of the remaining 24 research areas, respondents who had been exposed to warnings against migrating had significantly different migration aspirations from those who had not. However, these patterns were not consistent: the effect was only evident with certain ways of measuring exposure, or only on one type of migration aspirations. And in more than two thirds of the cases, exposure to warnings against migrating was associated with higher migration aspirations.

There are two possible explanations for this pattern. First, the campaigns could have an effect, which is the opposite of what the funders and implementers intended. Repeatedly seeing information about migration could make individuals more aware of migration as a possibility. And even if campaigns emphasize the risks, the individuals who see them probably also know of

migrants who have succeeded, and they might reason that they personally will be able to avoid the dangers.[10] A second possible explanation is that individuals who have migration aspirations at the outset are more alert to information about migration, and therefore more likely to notice and recall campaigns. However, their attention to these messages does not mean that their attitudes towards migration will necessarily change.

Conclusion

Drawing on a survey with nearly 13,000 young adults in 25 local communities in Africa and Asia, new insights on the reach and apparent effects of migration information campaigns have been produced. The following five points stand out:

- Across local communities in Africa and Asia, there is great variation in exposure to information about migration.

- In most of the locations surveyed, warnings against migrating is the dominant message that people recall.

- Migration information campaigns are part of a broader migration information landscape with diverse messages.

- Overall, young adults' migration aspirations appear unaffected by being exposed to warnings against migrating.

- In cases where warnings against migrating have an effect, they are more likely to raise migration aspirations than to lower them.

These are broad observations that gloss over the specific characteristics and effects of individual campaigns. Moreover, statistical patterns of who has been exposed to warnings and who aspires to migrate do not prove a causal effect. It cannot

---

[10] María Hernández-Carretero and Jørgen Carling, "Beyond 'kamikaze migrants': Risk taking in West African boat migration to Europe", *Human Organization*, 71(4):407–416 (2012).

be ruled out that people who have migration aspirations in the first place are more attentive to information about migration, including messages intended to deter departures.

The readiness to migrate irregularly was not asked specifically, which is what many campaigns seek to prevent. However, the most commonly recalled message was telling people not to migrate in general. The distinction between regular and irregular migration might also not be as clear in practice as in policy discussions.

The findings add to other research that questions the wisdom of investing so heavily in migration information campaigns. This paper complements other studies by showing the reach that such campaigns already have. When the international community appears concerned with promoting nuanced and unprejudiced information about migration, it is striking that in many low- and middle-income societies, the message that dominates is essentially "don't go".

The role of regional integration in advancing human mobility in East and Horn of Africa

Tsion Tadesse Abebe and George Mukundi Wachira[1]

Abstract

This article[2] examines the role of regional integration in advancing human mobility that is safe, orderly and regular in the East and Horn of Africa region (EHoA). Findings of the article show that trade and labour mobility are some of the key benefits of regional integration and human mobility. Integrated border management, especially through one-stop border posts (OSBPs), and the digitalization of operations are enablers of cross-border movement of people, goods and services. Access to health care and sustainable reintegration are essential to ensure cross-border movements are safe, while climate change impacts the mobility of persons. Gender considerations and equity are critical for regional integration and safe, orderly and regular human mobility. The analysis of the article is informed by the East African Community's (EAC) Common Market Protocol (CMP), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Free Movement of Persons Protocol, as well as existing bilateral arrangements between member States. The article puts forward policy suggestions for consideration by member States, EAC, IGAD and other partners to advance human mobility that is safe, orderly and regular.

Regional integration and human mobility in East and Horn of Africa

Regional integration is a process by which countries agree to cooperate at a regional level through common agendas, norms and institutional frameworks. It encompasses several kinds of interaction, from the free movement of persons, trade and financial exchanges to monetary policy, political agreements, social and cultural exchange, and environmental impacts. While each of these forms of interaction are important elements of regional integration, the article focused on the free movement of persons and human mobility. This scope is inspired by the significant momentum that the EAC and IGAD, have made towards advancing human mobility between and among their member States.[3] Part of Africa's eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs), regional integration is a core objective and raison d'être of the EAC and IGAD.

Statistics already show that African migration is mainly intra-continental and intraregional. The 68 per cent of the 13 million emigrants from EHoA region moved to another country in Africa in 2020.[4] Regular and irregular labour migration is a key feature of the region's migration landscape, although forced migration plays a central role in pushing mobility decisions. The region was home to 22.3 million displaced persons, including 16.9 million internally displaced persons. COVID-19 has impacted upon the region's

---

[3] The article covers 12 countries that are members of the EAC and/or IGAD: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Apart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, the rest of the countries are also covered by the administrative confines of IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa.

[4] Abebe and Mukundi-Wachira, *The State of Migration in East and Horn of Africa Report 2022*, 2023.

mobility patterns. Lack of data continues to impede the ability of member States and RECs to provide comprehensive figure on the mobility of persons within the region, including short-term movements for the purposes of service provision and seasonal as well as pastoral movements. The EAC and IGAD are taking important steps to address this challenge by establishing regional technical working groups and providing technical support to member States.

The region's adoption of various instruments on the free movement of persons has renewed impetus for advancing human mobility. While the EAC has relied on its CMP to facilitate the mobility of persons, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons of the IGAD provides incentives to IGAD member States to do the same. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, which established the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), is yet another groundbreaking opportunity for RECs and their member States to promote trade, complemented by the movement of persons. The EAC has made significant progress in facilitating intraregional trade, guided by its EAC-CMP. IGAD has recently adopted its trade policy. Several countries in the region domesticated AfCFTA. Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania are among the eight African countries that joined the guided trade initiative under the AfCFTA in October 2022, which marked the official start of regional trade under AfCFTA rules.[5]

The mandates of the EAC and IGAD are closely related and their memberships overlap, with Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda belonging to both. The EAC scores highest as one of the most integrated RECs in Africa. Citizens of the EAC can move within the region without a visa, except in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is still in the process of conforming. Citizens of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda can move freely between the three States using their national identity cards or the EAC passport. IGAD member States – apart from a few that have bilateral free movement agreements – still retain visa requirements for citizens of other member States. While this reality persists, the adoption of the Protocols on the Free Movement of Persons and Transhumance by the IGAD in 2021 are major developments.

---

[5] Pavithra Rao, "AfCFTA's Guided Trade Initiative takes off, set to ease and boost intra-African trade" (Africa Renewal, 12 October 2022).

Figure 1. Assessment of East African Community regional integration by dimension, on a scale of 0–1
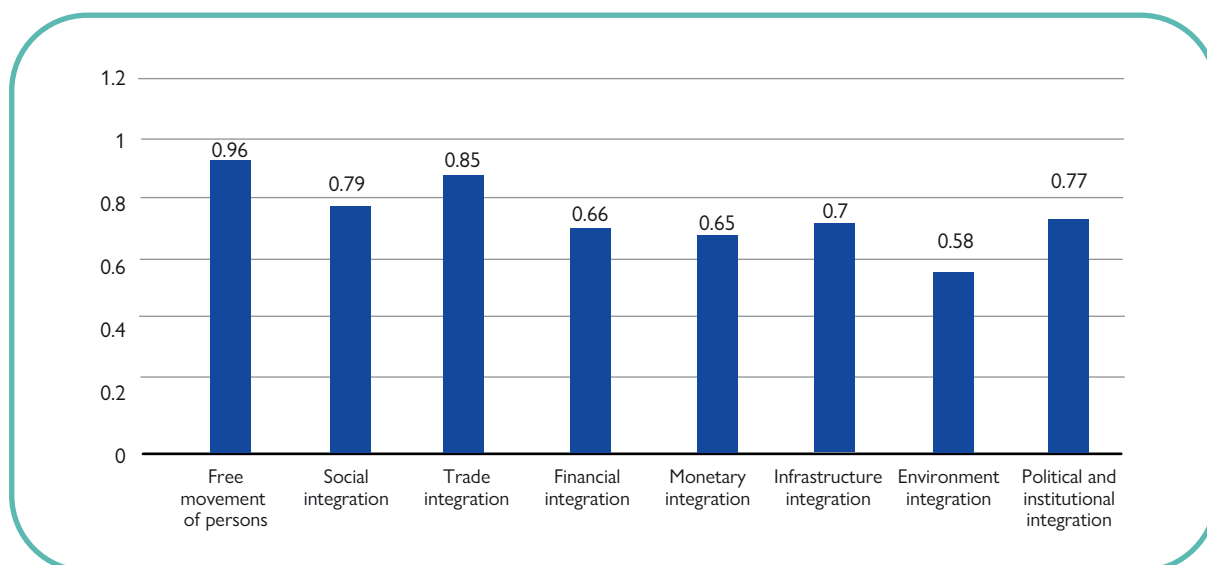
Source: Abebe and Mukundi-Wachira, *The State of Migration in East and Horn of Africa Report 2022*, 2023.

Figure 2. Assessment of Intergovernmental Authority on Development **regional** integrationby dimension, on a scale of 0–1
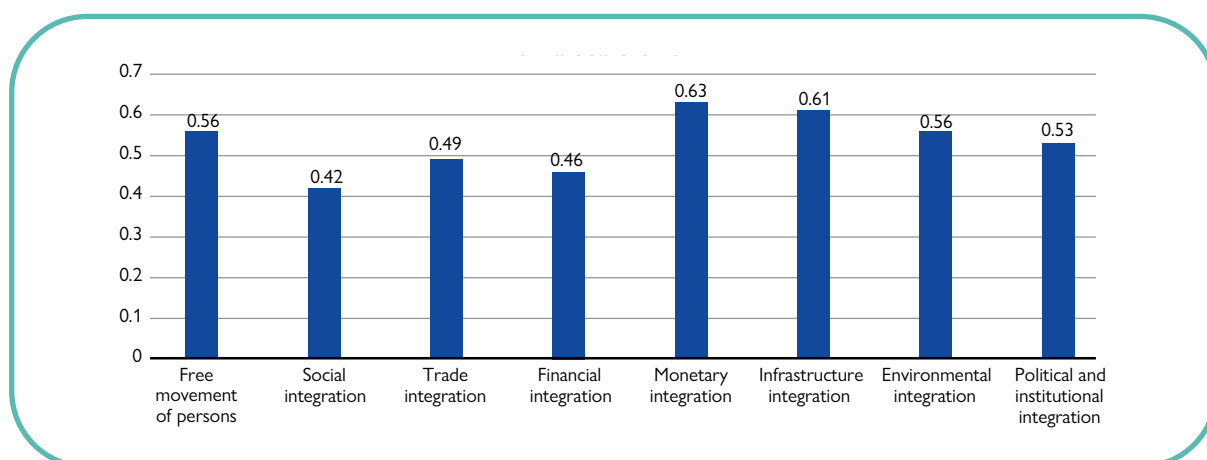
Source: Abebe and Mukundi-Wachira, *The State of Migration in East and Horn of Africa Report 2022*, 2023.

The EHoA integration experience offers important lessons and comparable practices that other regions may draw upon to advance human mobility. However, several challenges and gaps remain. Socioeconomic disparities in and between member States, as well as insecurity in some, raise concerns and misperceptions around the concept of open borders. In addition, the term *free movement* is at times misconstrued to suggest the absence of regulations, and policies to facilitate, monitor and track movements. Some member States and policymakers might equally assume that integration will only benefit countries that are more advanced economically, to the detriment of others facing acute socioeconomic challenges and inequities.

Some of these constraints include the following: (a) infrastructural and capacity gaps; (b) lack/limited access to data and statistics on regular migration; and (c) challenges linked to peace and security.

Benefits of regional integration and human mobility

Trade and labour mobility are among the key benefits of regional integration and human mobility. Regional integration fosters trade. Intra-EAC trade, for instance, increased to USD 4.36 billion in 2021 from USD 3.36 billion in 2020. Human mobility is critical to enabling trade, given that trade in goods or services is facilitated by people. In this regard, the AfCFTA has the potential to enhance trade and mobility in the region through the implementation of the agreed trade in goods, trade in services and investment commitments. This in turn will promote regional integration. Three factors inhibit the growth of trade and mobility in the region: (a) overlapping memberships; (b) non-tariff barriers to trade facilitation; and (c) limited value addition, despite the potential of regional frameworks to encourage greater harmonization.

Regional integration advances labour mobility by eliminating structural and legal barriers through the required policymaking processes. Access to work, mutual recognition of skills and portability of social security benefits are important factors in advancing labour migration. The EAC encourages its member States to remove barriers to access employment such as work permit fees. The IGAD is in the process of creating an enabling environment for the free movement of workers. While implementation experiences vary between States, experiences of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda illustrate the critical role of regional integration in advancing labour migration as a key feature of cross-border human mobility. Gaps in member States' practices surrounding labour migration, including lack of reliable labour market information systems, provide room for greater harmonization and regional collaboration.

Factors making human mobility safe

Four factors contribute to human mobility that is safe, orderly and regular: health, climate change, gender and sustainable reintegration. Access to health care enables people to move safely and is thus an essential component of human mobility. COVID-19 is a salient reminder of the inherent cross-border nature of disease spread and the catastrophic impact of public health threats on the movement of persons, goods and services. As such, safe, orderly and regular human mobility requires people-responsive and mobility-sensitive primary health-care systems, with cross-border universal health coverage.

As climate change continues to shape human mobility patterns, EHoA countries' shared experiences and mutual interests can incentivize decisive policy action. The 2022 Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change illustrates the promising role that regional integration can play in advancing responses to climate-related migration and mobility. Originally signed by 15 EHoA countries,[6] and subsequently embraced by 48 African countries,[7] the Declaration aims to facilitate access to safety, assistance and livelihood opportunities for communities affected by climate change and address the adverse impacts of climate change on people, as well as livestock. It calls for action to prevent and minimize displacement and strengthen support to countries and communities most vulnerable

---

[6] Signatories from the region include Burundi, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda; signatories from outside the region include Algeria, Egypt and Senegal.

[7] During a conference that was co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Uganda with support from the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 25 August 2023.

to climate change – including through increased climate finance, capacity-building and technology transfer, and advancing the Global Goal on Adaptation.

High levels of irregular movement throughout the EHoA stand in contrast with, and are indeed a function of, limited regular migration pathways, especially for semi-skilled and lower-skilled youth. The assisted return of migrants to their places of origin is therefore a prominent aspect of human mobility in the region, begging the need for comprehensive approaches to reintegration. The fact that most States in EHoA do not have specific policies on return and reintegration is a major gap.

Various REC policies recognize the importance of gender in all stages of the migration process. However, gender-specific barriers persist that impact women's equal participation, largely informed by gender norms and cultural attitudes that impede women's resource ownership. Women's limited representation in the formal economy as well as in the policymaking process pose key constraints on their mobility throughout the EHoA. Still, overall trends indicate that regional integration has led to the development of policy frameworks that enhance women's mobility in the region.

Enablers of regional integration and mobility

Integrated border management and digitalization are enablers of regional integration and human mobility. Opening borders not only eases human mobility, but also creates an enabling environment for other benefits of regional integration, including the movement of goods, services and capital. In this respect, integrated border management and OSBPs are particularly instrumental. The adoption of the EAC Passport is the most advanced manifestation of mobility facilitation

in the region. Challenges to the progressive implementation of border management include varying levels of implementation of the mechanism within member States and the unforeseen impact of OSBPs on border communities.

A digital approach to migration and human mobility has the potential to facilitate the free movement of people across the region. Recognizing the growing relevance of this policy area, the EAC, IGAD and member States are progressively employing digital technologies to enable such mobility, including via digital identity documents, e-immigration strategies and transhumance, albeit with varying approaches and speed. High costs of cross-border communication present a key bottleneck to facilitating human mobility in the region. For example, data and voice call roaming charges remain costly throughout the EHoA, despite notable efforts to reduce them. This impedes migrants and other people on the move from communicating and transacting with counterparts from their countries of origin and destination.

Regional integration as advanced by RECs also supports the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.[8] Several Global Compact for Migration commitments reflect the priorities of RECs, such as regular migration pathways and strengthened regional cooperation on migration, affirming their complementarity. While the Global Compact for Migration offers opportunities for advancing freedom of movement, it does not explicitly mention regional integration and lacks a regional implementation framework. Leveraging their convening power, the EAC and IGAD could encourage their member States to partner with the private sector to implement the Global

---

[8] United Nations, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted on 19 December 2018 (A/RES/73/195).

Compact for Migration commitments in line with their existing national plans.

Conclusion and recommendations

The article illustrates the relevance of regional integration to migration policymaking, and in turn, the achievement of human mobility that is safe, orderly and regular, with the potential to catalyse economic growth and development in the EHoA. RECs play a major role in promoting and supporting member States in implementing existing free movement frameworks and facilitating knowledge transfer and best practices. It recommends the following policy actions to be considered by RECs and member States:

- Member States could enhance and standardize administrative data sources and related data collection mechanisms across ministries, departments and agencies to strengthen evidence on migration and mobility.

- RECs could consider establishing a trade and mobility coordination mechanism to address the challenge of multiple memberships and accelerate the implementation of a continental customs union with free intra-Africa trade.

- EAC and IGAD member States could establish and maintain reliable labour market information systems to track labour force stock, composition and trends.

- Member States could follow through on their commitment under the Abuja Declaration to increase their health spending to at least 15 per cent of their annual national budgets.

- IGAD and EAC could establish an Interministerial Working Group on Climate Change, Environment and Migration, with the goal of facilitating regular monitoring and evaluation of member States'

implementation of relevant regional climate pledges under the Kampala Ministerial Declaration.

- RECs could support member States to put in place national return and sustainable reintegration policies. Further, the EAC and IGAD could strengthen interregional dialogues and collaboration to manage irregular migration.

- EHoA countries and RECs could establish gender-sensitive financial and economic inclusion policies to enhance women's access to markets and encourage women-friendly financing, accompanied by robust monitoring and evaluation plans to track member States' progress.

- Countries of the region should adopt compatible integrated border management systems to facilitate cross-border interoperability, training of border officials, civil registration and issuance of identity documents.

- RECs could support member States to adopt policies that enable as many people as possible to connect digitally. This includes lowering the cost of cross-border communication by reducing or eliminating roaming charges across the region. Increased partnership with the private sector could help such an effort.

- EAC and IGAD could explore options for the development of a regional implementation framework for the Global Compact for Migration to enhance implementation, complementing the Global Compact's implementation plan being developed by the African Union Commission.

Historic transit migration through Darién, Panama: Qualitative results of impact for local communities

Michelle Ordaz, Madeline Baird, Rou Ortega Bacorizo and Amanda Gabster[1]

Abstract

In Panama, the volume of migrants in transit travelling through the Darién Gap has increased by 27 times since 2018. Over this period, this route has transformed into a principal passage for migrants transiting from South America en route to resettle principally in North America. In 2022, Panama reported a historic year of transit migration, with 248,284 migrants that travelled the multiple-day trek crossing the Darién. While the violence migrants encounter during their journey has been well documented by State and humanitarian organizations, limited research has examined the broader sociopolitical and ecological impact of this historic transit migration for local residents in Darién. The study centres on ethnographic methods collected through participant observation, community focus groups (n = 3) and in-depth interviews (n = 32) with community leaders, State officials and actors of humanitarian organizations. This research describes the broader impact on local economies, State social service infrastructure, political representation for Indigenous communities, and ecological implications of river water and other types of contamination. The research highlights the challenges of coordinated State and humanitarian policies and response efforts in addressing community priorities and needs in the context of historic transit migration across the Darién Gap.

Introduction

Transit migration through Darién, Panama, has rapidly increased in the last decade. Global political instability, economic inequality and a need for protection outside the country of origin motivate migrants to resettle mainly in North America.[2] Limited legal pathways for a "mixed flow" of asylum-seekers, refugees and people on the move have driven shifting migration patterns globally and resulted in increasing transit migration across new border zones.[3] In the Americas, the Darién Gap has become a key passage for migrants en route to North America. Migrants from more than 40 distinct nationalities navigate the multiple-day foot crossing over rivers and mountains from Colombia into Panama.

Since 2018, the volume of migrants in transit through Panama has increased 27 times, exceeding the capacity of State response and humanitarian assistance (Figure 1). Migrants spend an average of three to ten days on foot crossing Darién and completing their trek, arriving at local communities in the Emberá Comarca. The two communities, Bajo Chiquito and Canaán Membrillo, have both served as principal sites of arrival for the 248,284 migrants that irregularly migrated through Darién in 2022, a number more than four times the size of the population in the province.[4] Community members sell food, shelter and basic services to migrants prior to the transport of migrants by Panamanian Border

[1] Michelle Ordaz is a master's student at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences. Madeline Baird is a PhD student at the University of Connecticut. Rou Ortega Bacorizo is a research assistant at the Ministry of Health of Panama. Amanda Gabster is a researcher for the Center of Population Sciences for Health Equity at the Florida State University in Tallahassee.

[2] Diana Carolina Peláez Rodríguez, "Movilidades fantasmagóricas: (des) apariciones como espectáculo en el Tapón del Darién", *Nexos: observatorio migrante* (March 2022) (in Spanish).
[3] David Fitzgerald, *Refuge Beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019).
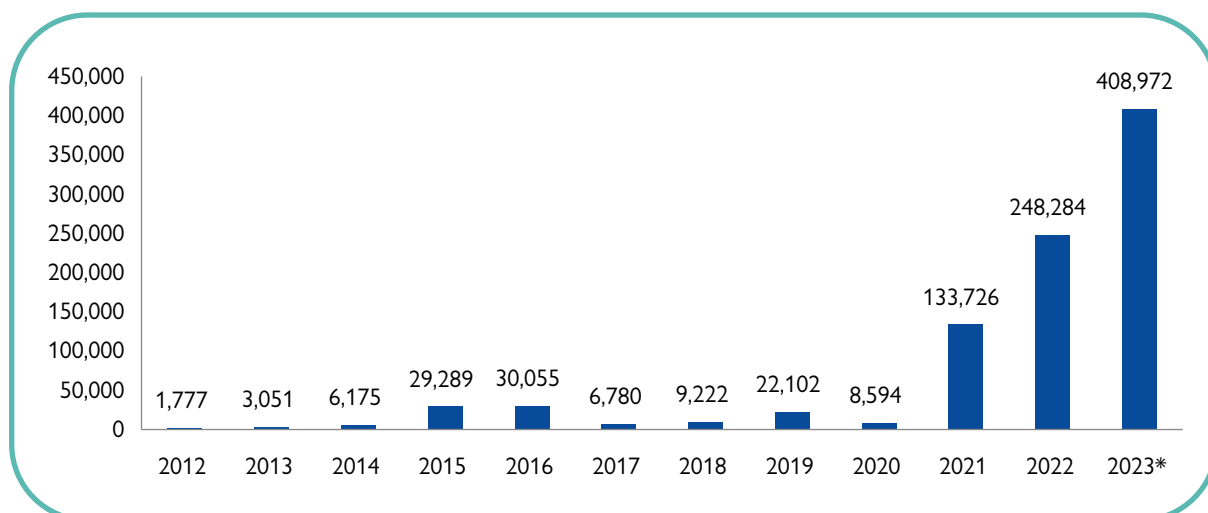[4] National Migration Service (Servicio Nacional de Migración, SNM), Transito irregular por Darién (December 2022).

Police (SENAFRONT) to migratory reception centres in Darién. Panama's "controlled" migration policy seeks to contain the migratory flow into the country through reception centres coordinated via agreements with United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and agreements with Colombia and Costa Rica.[5]

In Latin America, Panama has been recognized for its efforts to acknowledge Indigenous peoples' claims to autonomy in the twentieth century. The Panamanian State has demarcated territories within Indigenous *comarcas* that enable semi-autonomous governance by Indigenous leaders in accordance with national laws. Through the establishment of five semi-autonomous *comarca* regions, the Panamanian State has sought to promote the political and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples.[6] In the Province of Darién, the Cémaco sector within the Emberá–Wounaan Comarca has experienced the most significant migration influx over the last five years.

Figure 1. Transit migration through Darién, National Migration Service, 2012–2023

Source: Authors' elaboration based on National Migration Service data (National Migration Service (Servicio Nacional de Migración, SNM), Panama: Transito irregular por Darién (2023).
Note: Data for 2023 are based on reported migration statistics up to September 2023.

---

5 Caitlin Yates and Jessica Bolter, African migration through the Americas: Drivers, routes, and policy responses (Washington, D.C., Migration Policy Institute, 2021).

6 Francisco Herrera, "La evolución de las demandas indígenas sobre la tierra y las respuesstas del estado en Panamá", *Quaderns-e de l'Institut Català d'Antropologia*, 17(1):44–59 (2012) (in Spanish).

Figure 2. Principal sites of transit migration in Darién, Panama

Source: Melissa Wiles, 2022.
Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Historically, State infrastructure and social services in Darién have remained underfunded. In recent decades, the State has provided limited opportunity for local political representation to dictate participation in sectoral planning and resource allocation.[7] Government resources allocated to comarca regions are up to ten times less than other regions in the country.[8] In Darién, the province of 57,818 residents remains without access to a general hospital and social service infrastructure continues to be insufficient to meet population needs.[9] In response, international bodies have expressed concern related to equitable resource distribution and rates of poverty, illiteracy and health inequity for Indigenous peoples living in the *comarcas*.[10]

Methods

In 2022, a study on the health and social service impact of increasing transit migration for migrants and residents in Darién with the Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies in Panama was carried out.[11] Semi-structured interviews (n = 32), focus groups (n = 3) and participant observation were carried out in Emberá communities, and State social service providers and institutionalized

---

[7] World Bank, *The Connections between Poverty and Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Panama: A Diagnostic* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

[8] United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Perfil de los sistemas de salud: Panamá* (Washington, D.C., USAID, 2007) (in Spanish).

[9] República de Panamá, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, Resumen de la estimación y proyección de la población total de la Provincia de Darién, 2010–2020 (Panamá, 2010) (in Spanish).

[10] Organization of American States, Kuna Indigenous people of Madungandi and Embera Indigenous people of Bayano and their members Panama, Report No. 125/12 (2012).

[11] Amanda Gabster, Monica Jhangimal, Jennifer Toller Erausquin, José Antonio Suárez, Justo Pinzón-Espinosa, Madeline Baird, Jennifer Katz, Davis Beltran-Henríquez, Gonzalo Cabezas-Talavero, Andrés F. Henao-Martínez, Carlos Franco-Paredes, Nelson I. Agudelo-Higuita, Mónica Pachar, José Anel González, Fátima Rodriguez and Juan Miguel Pascale, "Rapid health evaluation in migrant peoples in transit through Darién, Panama: protocol for a multimethod qualitative and quantitative study", *Therapeutic Advances in Infectious Disease*, 8 (2021).

spaces were set up for humanitarian assistance. Interviews included State and humanitarian officials supporting response programming with transit migrants in Darién. Focus groups included community leaders in three communities serving as host sites for migrants. Interview and focus group data collected centred on understanding the experiences of local communities, State officials and humanitarian workers in the context of a rapid increase in transit migration.

Interviews in English, Spanish and Emberá were carried out depending on actor preference. Interview and focus group data were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcript data were analysed using NVivo 12 (QSR International Pty Ltd. 2019) and applied codes based on the interview guide structure and themes that emerged from the analysis. The research received institutional approval from the Research Bioethics Committee of the Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies in Panama (ref: N221/CBI/ICGES/22). The research findings emphasize three core themes related to the community impact of historic transit migration through Darién: (a) transformed local social dynamics, economies and culture; (b) risks to community health and ecological impacts; and (c) limited local political representation and institutional capacity.

Transformed community social fabric, local economies and culture in Darién

Community members described shifting transit migration through Darién in the last decade and an intensification of migration beginning in 2015. They reflected on migration policy shifts in Panama and their resulting impact on interaction with migrants as migrants who previously stayed up to three weeks in local communities, and now only spent one or two days in receptor communities in 2022. Community members described disruptions to the social fabric of local community life as up to 2,000 passed through communities of less than 300 residents daily in 2022. They described the tragedies – including robbery, sexual violence and exploitation – that migrants shared as part of their experience crossing Darién. One community member summarized this as: "They all tell us exactly what has happened because everything that happens in this tragedy, this path, this jungle, the sacrifice they make to arrive here; it is huge."[12]

Communities described a normalization of violence as they witnessed daily the significant health and social service needs migrants experienced following their trek through the Darién. Exposure to migrant stories and needs as part of their everyday lives led one community member to share that, "Us here we live with migrants; we live here unlike anyone." Community members empathized with migrant needs, sharing that they "deserve that attention as human beings" and that they "have the right to life, to health, to food". One community member recognized that their experience as a Panamanian citizen largely varied from migrants: "For us it is sad, because obviously, we have not gone through this experience that they have, thanks to God; we live happy with life with zero war … so of course their experience greatly worries me."

Increasing migration in host communities also transformed dynamics related to local economies based on demands to provide services to migrants during their transit. This included new opportunities to sell food, shelter, fluvial transport and other essential services to migrants. As a result, some humanitarian and State actors expressed concern over the long-term economic impact on communities that had previously relied on subsistence agriculture that now principally provided services to migrants.

---

[12] All quoted matters shared by the interviewees are of their own and does not reflect the opinions of the authors and IOM.

Community members from areas down river from principal reception communities described receiving few of the benefits of this increase in migration as they had not received the same opportunities for revenue generation.

Risks to community health and ecological impacts

Community members expressed concern about emerging health risks in their communities due to transit migration. They described the potential entry of new infections linked to the diverse flow of migrants arriving from different regions of the world. One community member described this risk: "We do not know what diseases migrants may bring from other countries to our community, and that is very dangerous." Community actors identified that increasing transit migration also augmented community risk and health needs, including waterborne infections causing diarrhoea, vomiting and skin rashes that community members associated with water contamination. One State medical provider shared her experience with patients in the area:

> In the area of Canaán, I have seen many children, including adults from this community, that now, with the arrival of migrants, are presenting a lot of diarrhoea, gastrointestinal infection and vomiting, and they describe migration as the culprit of their illness.

Communities also expressed concern over the ecological impact of increasing transit migration. They shared that the abundance of clean drinking water accessed from local rivers was central to community life for washing, bathing and preparing food and drink. One community described this simply: "For us, water is life." Another community member commented, "As human beings who bless our water, without water, we are nothing." Community members described an unsustainable volume of trash and open defecation by migrants that contaminated local landscapes and rivers and a resulting impact where "all the contamination eventually ends up here in the community". Community members expressed their awareness of the danger and loss of life in crossing Darién and concern about the decomposition of cadavers near water sources. They noted increasing river pollution in a context of "more than 100 motorboats" passing each day to provide transport to migrants and response officials. One community member described the situation in his community:

> It is a problem because it is something that is not being controlled, seeing all the problems that migrants bring from their countries, all the deaths in the river that have happened when they have had to cross rivers. So of course, the deaths worry us so much, because 100 per cent of us drink water from the river, and people in our community do not drink boiled or chlorinated water because for us, culturally it is not part of our practice, so it is a huge problem for us.

Limited local representation within State-humanitarian response and institutional capacity

Despite an increase in perceived health risks, residents described a lack of representation within their communities' planning and response activities. They noted the presence of humanitarian actors and the increasing resources associated with the needs of migrants arriving in these areas. Yet community members described that they, too, encountered the same infrastructural and systemic barriers to social services impacting response programming with migrant populations. One community member described this as preferential treatment to migrants: "They are given priority because they give them all the water and food, and for us here

we do not receive anything." Another community member shared that the "people come last" in terms of resources provided to communities. All communities described feeling "abandoned" by the State. One community member emphasized this lack of representation:

> We are here surviving, and maybe there is no exit from this, but where is the Panamanian State? Quiet, nothing, no government is going to say what is happening year after year, even after this has become international news. We continue to send notification after notification to the Government and nothing. There is nothing done to resolve our situation here.

Humanitarian and State actors also shared their concern over the increasing health risks and strained public infrastructure in response to increasing transit migration in Darién. Actors emphasized a historic insufficiency of social service and public health infrastructure in responding to the needs of the local population in the province. They emphasized challenges to health-care delivery based on limited access, funding and personnel for migrant and resident populations. They described that a lack of essential diagnostics, medical commodities and specialized clinical staff in mental health, paediatrics and gynaecology in Darién challenged adequate response to migrant and local population health needs. One humanitarian official emphasized the lived experience of navigating these challenges in Darién:

> One has to understand that Darién is one of the least developed provinces in the country that has limited capacity and few institutional funds. The Government's capacity to respond to the increasing migratory flow is one of the greatest challenges. State institutions nor humanitarian agencies have the capacity we were not prepared or ready for such a large flow.

Community members and State and humanitarian actors alike highlighted a need for improved planning to better respond to migrant needs, as well as the long-term impact on residents. One humanitarian actor emphasized a need for a focus on "how to protect our communities, because the migratory flow is not going to stop". In describing a need for long-term response planning, one humanitarian actor emphasized that the generalized State-humanitarian response efforts lacked responsiveness to community priorities:

> This question to the community "How can we help?" is something that no organization is addressing. UNICEF says very strongly: sensitization, water, sanitation, shelters for migrants, security; we all know this and do this. But it serves us to attend the local population; we are going to leave and what will be left for the community? Trash.

Conclusion

While the violence migrants encounter during their journey has been well documented by State and humanitarian organizations, limited research has examined the broader sociopolitical and ecological impact of historic transit migration for local residents in Darién. The research provides novel insight into the impact on residents in Darién experiencing the daily realities of historic transit migration. Community members described significant disruptions to the local social fabric, economy and culture, given a broad normalization of violence linked to increasing transit migration. Community members, State officials and humanitarian actors alike highlighted increasing risks to community health at a time that State capacity to respond to health and social service needs has been overwhelmed by service demand linked to transit migration. Increasing transit migration through Darién, projected to reach up to 400,000 by the close of 2023, only

furthers the urgent need for improved long-term response planning and resources to respond to these broad impacts of transit migration in Emberá communities in Darién.[13] The research findings highlight a significant need for structural improvements to the coordinated State-humanitarian response in Panama to account for the broader social, economic, political and ecological impacts of transit migration for local communities and residents in Darién.

---

[13] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Panamá: cifra récord de 100.000 personas refugiadas y migrantes cruzan el Darién en los primeros meses de 2023, Comunicado de Presa (14 April 2023) (in Spanish).

Indian migrant women in the European Union labour market: beyond stereotypes and current tropes[1]

Parvati Raghuram and Gunjan Sondhi[2]

Abstract

This article examines the barriers skilled migrant women face in accessing and continuing paid employment in the European Union member States by drawing on the experiences of skilled migrant Indian women in the European Union. The article makes three novel moves. First, it uses an expansive definition of *skilled* to refer to all migrant women with skills, not only those who enter under skilled worker visa categories. Second, it explores the newer mobility patterns of skilled migrant Indian women in the European Union. Third, it outlines how gender discrimination operates at policy and employer levels. It closes by advising European Union policymakers on a gender-sensitive approach to migration and integration policymaking.

Introduction

Recent reports have highlighted the extant skills shortages in the European Union. They also recognize that migrants are an important resource that can help to address skills shortages. Addressing labour shortages can be achieved both through encouraging new skilled migration and ensuring the economic integration of skilled migrants.

Integrating skilled migrants is especially significant for migrant women who remain relatively untapped in skilled labour markets. Migrant women within European Union member States' labour markets are faced with double discrimination: as migrants and as women.[3] As a result, they are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive than any other group.[4] Feminist researchers have long drawn attention to the deskilling of migrant women, including the detrimental consequence of such marginalization and exclusion.[5] Deskilling of migrant women has led to their withdrawal from the labour market, poor economic outcomes and poor mental health and well-being, all leading to poor social integration into the European Union labour market and, consequently, the member States.

In response to these European Union-wide concerns of skills shortage and the call to improve the labour market participation of women of migrant backgrounds,[6] this article explores the newer patterns of mobility of one group – skilled migrant Indian women in the European Union – to examine the barriers skilled migrant women face in accessing and continuing paid employment in European Union member States. In doing so, it goes beyond current discussions, which primarily focus on supporting migrant women, to outline how gender discrimination operates at policy and employer levels.

[3] European Union, Migrant women and the EU labour market – Overcoming double discrimination, Briefing (European Parliament Research Service, 2023).

[4] European Institute for Gender Equality, *Sectoral Brief: Gender and Migration* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020).

[5] Parvati Raghuram and Eleonore Kofman, "Out of Asia: Skilling, re-skilling and deskilling of female migrants", *Women's Studies International Forum* 27(2):95–100 (2004).

[6] European Union, Migrant women and the EU labour market – Overcoming double discrimination, 2023.

The inability of European Union policies to embed gender dimensions in their policymaking has been flagged by both the European Union parliament and civil society.[7] This is because policy discourses often see migrant women as trailing spouses or migrating for family reunification. The discrimination of migrant women, as argued, leads to the marginalization of skilled women migrants from the European Union labour market, leading to brain waste (poor career progression, economic outcome and social integration). The article therefore directly contributes to requests from the European Parliament for targeted advice to enable a more gender-sensitive approach to migration and integration policymaking.

In this article, skilled women refer to all women with skills, not only those who enter under skilled worker visa categories. Some women may have been unable to use their skills, qualifications and knowledge to access the labour market.

The article is organized into three further sections. The next section, section two, justifies the case of Indian migrants and highlights some diversity in Indian migration to the European Union. Section three examines the case of Indian migrant women, especially workers in the information technology (IT) sector and the barriers they face. The fourth and final section offers recommendations to better support migrants by improving policies and employer practices.

Skilled migrant Indian women in the European Union labour market sectors

Stock and flows of Indian migrants in EU-27

Between 2013 and 2019, the total Indian population in the EU-27 rose from 249,465 to 410,317, accounting for about 1 per cent of the total foreign-born population (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Total India-born population in EU-27, 2013–2022
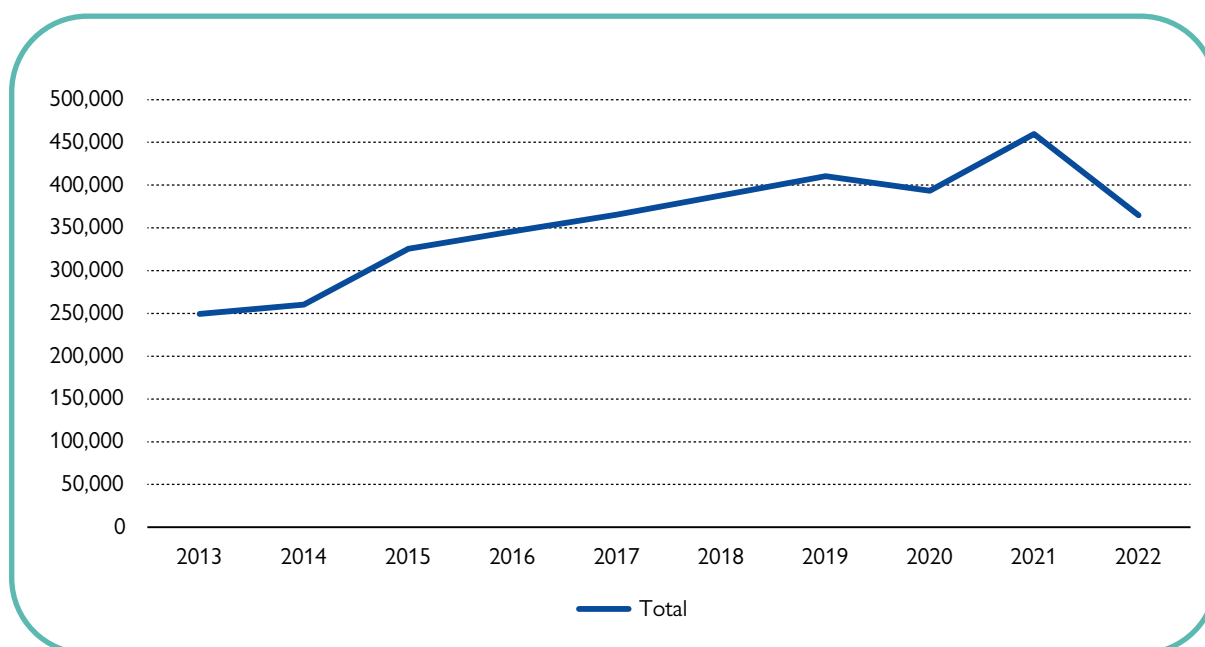
Source: Eurostat, Population on 1 January by age group, sex and country of birth (online data code: MIGR_POP3CTB) (accessed 20 August 2023).

---

[7] European Union, Migrant women and the EU labour market - Overcoming double discrimination, 2023.

However, since 2020, the stock of Indian born has fluctuated mainly due to changes in flows to Italy. Italy accounts for 47 per cent of the total India-born population across EU-27 member States.

Unlike the trend in Italy, the stock of Indian-born migrants within other EU-27 member States has steadily increased (see Figure 2).

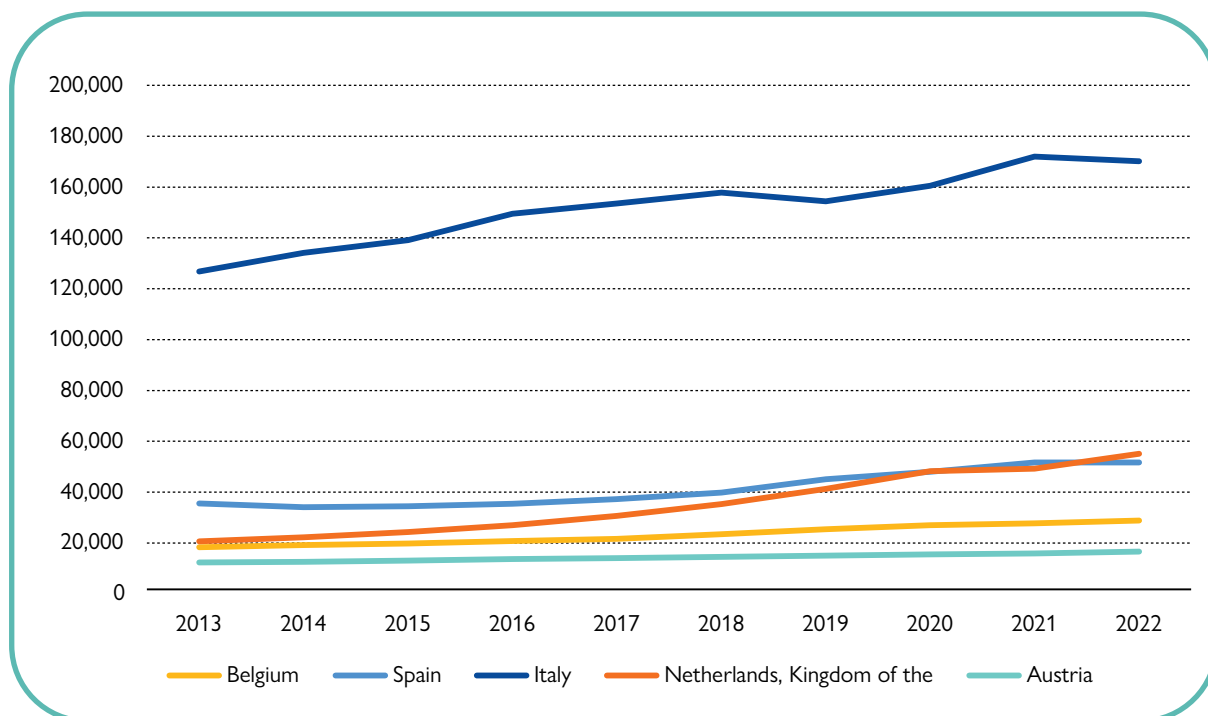**Figure 2.** Indian-born population, top five European Union member States, 2013–2022

Source: Eurostat, Population on 1 January by age group, sex and country of birth (online data code: MIGR_POP3CTB) (accessed 20 August 2023).

Note: Countries such as Germany have not been included due to missing data.

In 2022, across the European Union member States, the sex composition of the flow of Indian migrants was 62 per cent male and 38 per cent female.[8] The highest proportion of men is in new countries of migration, such as Romania (95%) and Slovenia (80%). Countries such as Italy, which already have significant numbers of female migrants, have comparatively more gender-balanced profiles regarding Indian migrant flows. The member States with near gender parity in

their Indian-born population are Ireland (48%), Sweden (46%) and Belgium (46%) (see Figure 3).

Flows of Indian migrant women in EU-27

Among the tropes that have guided migration research on women migrants has been the idea of the trailing spouse or family migrant. Although family continues to be the largest single category for Indian women entering the European Union, there are other trends that need attention (see Figure 4).

---

[8] The author's calculations are based on data available in the Eurostat table: MIGR_RESFAS (accessed 19 August 2023).

Figure 3. First permits issued to Indian nationals by sex, 2022
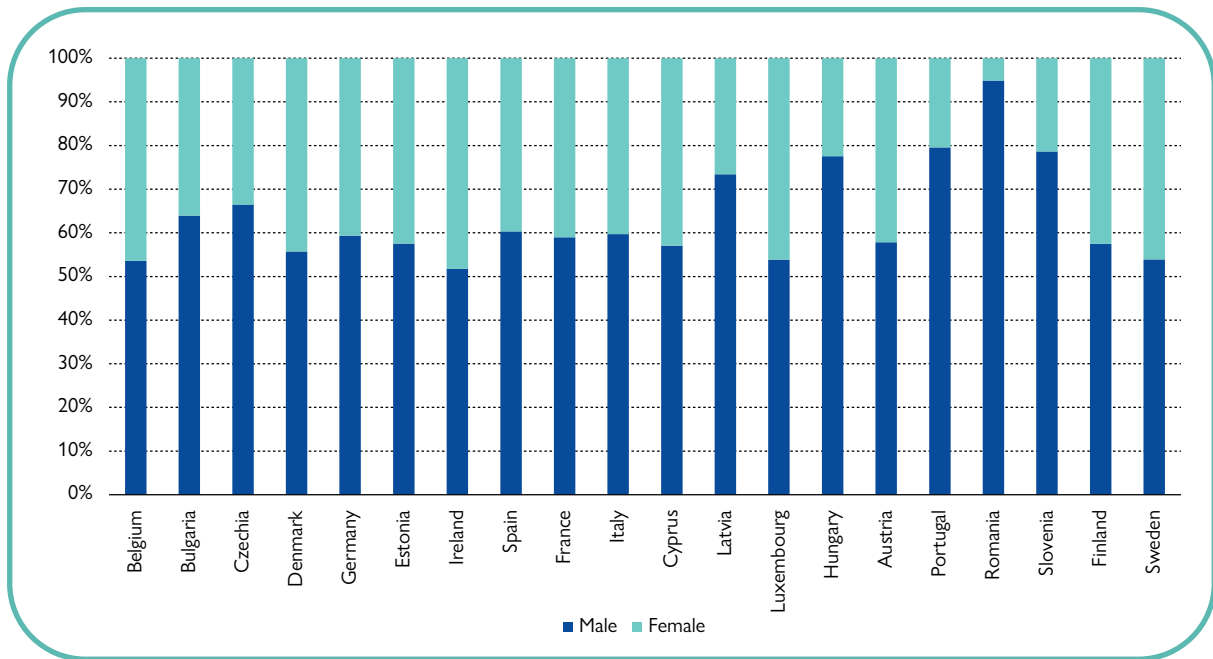
Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (online data code: MIGR_RESFAS) (accessed 19 August 2023).
Note: The table does not include the Kingdom of the Netherlands as sex-disaggregated data is unavailable; it also does not include data of the "unknown" sex category.

Figure 4. First permits issued to Indian nationals by reason and sex, 2022

Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (online data code: MIGR_RESFAS) (accessed 19 August 2023).
Note: The figure does not include the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as sex-disaggregated data is unavailable; it also does not include data of the "unknown" sex category.

Between 2013 and 2022, the proportion of Indian women travelling under the family category dropped from 65 to 47 per cent, while employment increased from 16 to 25 per cent and education from 9 to 20 per cent (see Figure 5).

The employment and education categories comprise 45 per cent of the total flow of women

from India. Many people in this group are visibly skilled, as opposed to women who enter under the family category – whose skills and qualifications are invisible within the migration categories and data available. However, it would be incorrect to assume that women in the family category possess no skills relevant to the labour market.
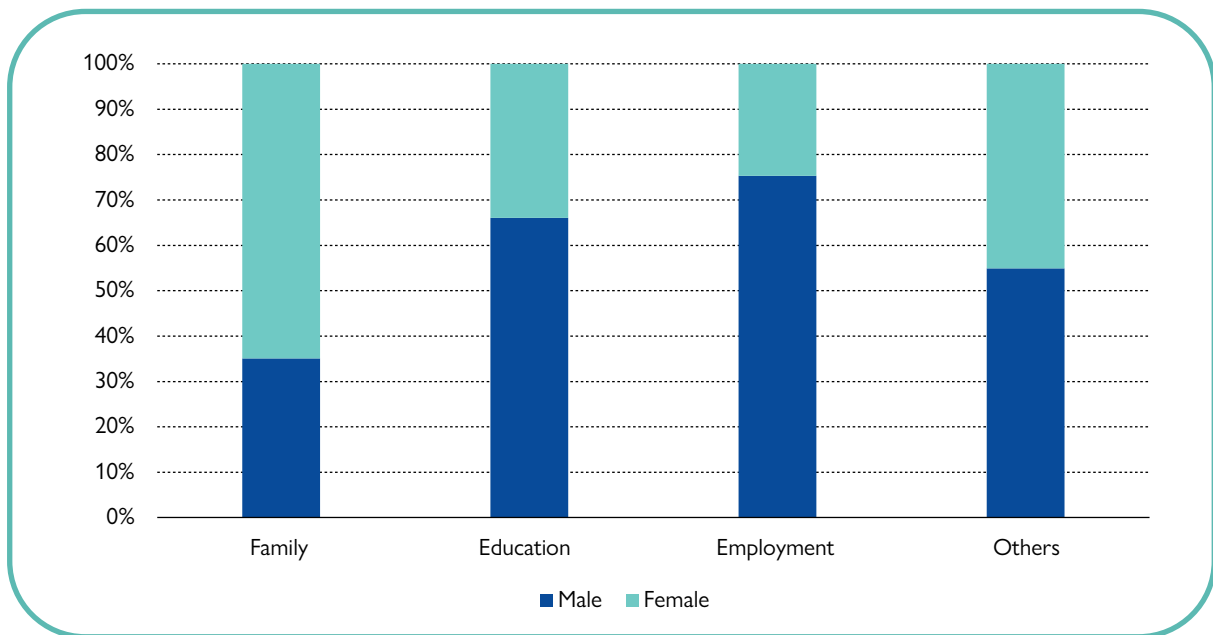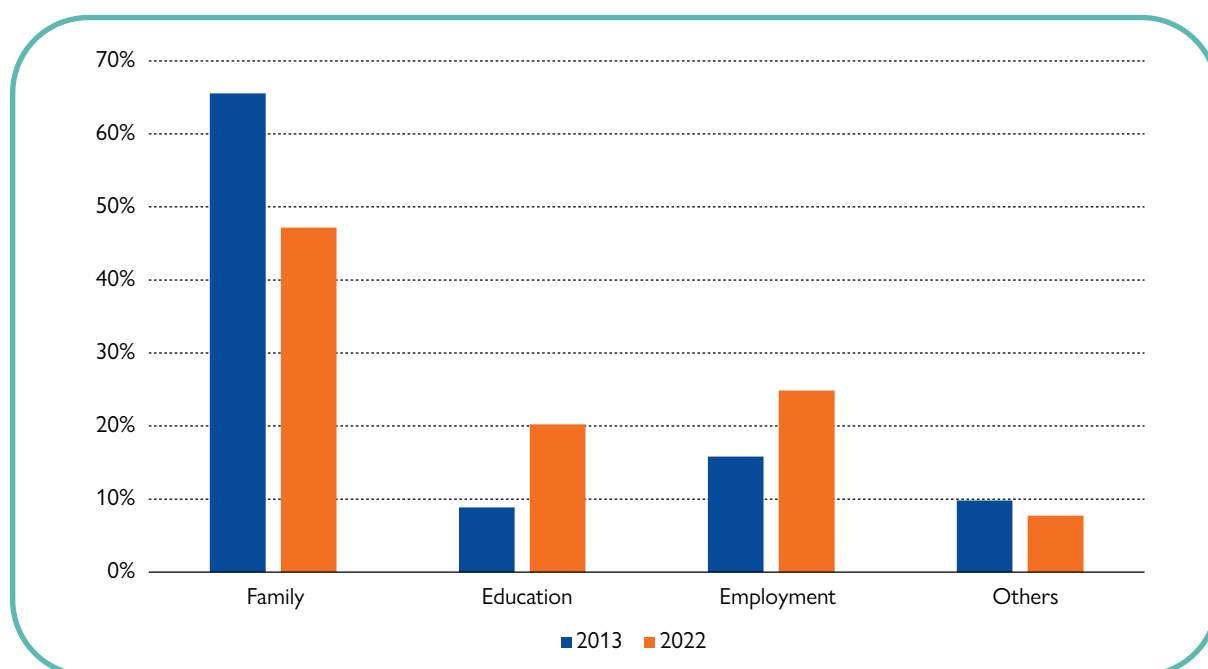
Figure 5. Percentage of first permits issued to Indian women, by reason, 2013 and 2022

Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (online data code: MIGR_RESFAS) (accessed 19 August 2023).
Note: This figure does not include the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as sex-disaggregated data is unavailable.

Over time, there has been an increase in the flow of Indian women to European Union member States across all categories of first-permit issues. Although 2020 saw a drop in flows across all

categories due to COVID-19, more recently, there has been a recovery and a continual increase in flows, especially under the employment and education categories (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. First permits for Indian women by reason, 2013–2022

Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (online data code: MIGR_RESFAS) (accessed 19 August 2023).

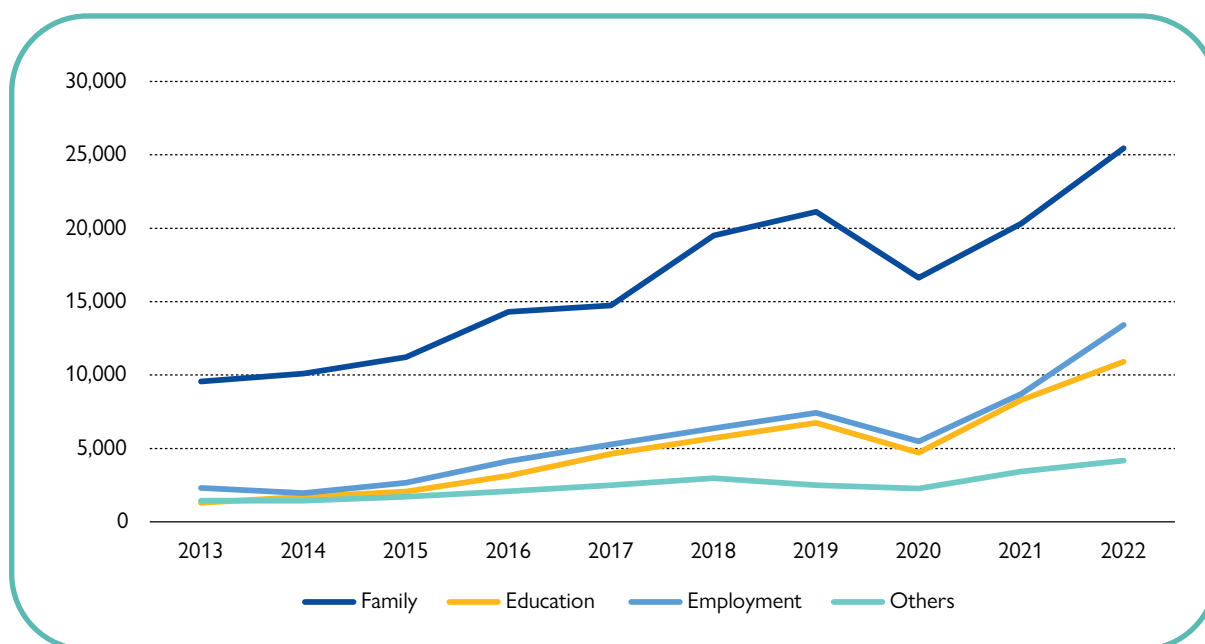Due to data limitations, it is impossible to provide data by gender and occupation. However, through the interviews,[9] one of the most notable findings is the variety of sectors and roles in which Indian women are employed. Women migrants work in the public and private sectors as small entrepreneurs and as waged employees in small, medium and large firms. These sectors have been divided into two: Group 1 – those where entry to the European Union is employment; and Group 2 – sectors where women find employment although their reasons for entry are sometimes education or family (Table 1) (see report for details).

Table 1. Remunerated activities

Group 1: Sectors where migrants are entering for reasons of employment	Group 2: Sectors in which migrants arriving for education and family reasons are engaged
• IT • Medicine • Nursing • Researchers • Caregiving • Domestic work	• Manufacturing • Trade in goods and services • Language assistants and cultural mediators • Hospitality

Source: Table generated by authors based on research undertaken during October 2020–February 2021.
Note: Those entering as a family or for study may also be employed in some group 1 sectors.

---

[9] For details on research methodology, see Raghuram, *Indian Women's Migration to the EU*, 2022.

Barriers to labour market participation: Information technology sector case study

In this section, the focus is on group 1, specifically women working in the IT sector, to show the barriers they face. The barriers are sometimes sector specific but, for the most part, cross-cutting across sectors and European Union member States. Deskilling is a common shared experience among Indian migrant women in Europe. Deskilling due to gender discrimination may be related to their visa category, migration status, labour market characteristics or the nature of their qualifications, many of which they share with Indian migrant men. Some of the reasons for deskilling are explored as follows.

Visa category

Research and interviews supported the finding that skilled worker schemes, such as the Danish Skilled Worker scheme and the EU Blue Card Scheme, fail to account for gender differences.[10] Visa entry criteria such as income thresholds and years of work are gender discriminatory, as women's pay is often lower than that of men and women. Women also have career breaks for childbearing, making it harder for women to meet the thresholds. Besides, even when women entered through this scheme, the labour market was not always willing to take in Indian women.

Migration status

Interviews revealed that the variations in the right to work for dependants of intra-company transfer (ICT) workers lead to variations in migrant women's labour market participation. Not all women have access to permits for spouses, which enable them to work. Table 2 shows some variations in the right to work for dependants of ICT workers.

Table 2. Intra-company transfer permit, dependant's right to work

European Union countries permitting spouses to work (further conditions may apply)	European Union countries that do not currently permit spouses to work (require additional permits)
Austria Cyprus Czechia Estonia Finland France Germany Greece Italy Latvia Lithuania Malta Netherlands, Kingdom of the Poland Portugal Slovakia Spain	Belgium Bulgaria Croatia Hungary Luxembourg Romania Slovenia Sweden (if the ICT permit is for greater than six months, then one can apply for a work permit) **Ireland and Denmark have not adopted the ICT directive.

Source: Table compiled by authors from multiple sources: Deloitte Belgium (2018), *ICT Permit Study: Facilitating EU Mobility for Third-Country Nationals*; European Union, Directive 2014/66/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer (L 157/1), Official Journal of the European Union (15 May 2014).

[10] Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram, "Skilled female labour migration", Focus Migration Policy brief no. 13 (Hamburg, Hamburg Institute of International Economics, 2009).

[11] See Raghuram, *Indian Women's Migration to the EU, 2022,* for details on the table.

These differences affect Indian migrant women who come through some national work permits too. They lead to poor labour market outcomes for family migrants, impacting women ICT workers whose partners travel with them but cannot participate in the labour market.

Labour market characteristics: internationalization

In some sectors and some countries, there is little tradition of internationalization, making it challenging to enter skilled sectors, even in sectors with labour shortages (such as IT in Denmark). For instance, the Italian labour market is relatively impermeable. Where jobs are available, as in the public sector, there is little experience hiring foreign talent. As a result, Indian women migrants do not quickly get jobs in such sectors, leading to a period out of work followed by incorporation, often at lower levels than their qualifications justify. Deskilling is the inevitable outcome in these conditions.

Labour market characteristics: gendered culture

Labour markets are also influenced by their gendered nature, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields such as IT. The gendered work cultures became particularly significant when IT workers entered through the EU Blue Card Scheme and moved into small firms where most other employees were nationals. Indian women struggle to be accepted at work because of their ethnicity and gender, as even when there are women employees, they are likely to be in secretarial or human resources roles.[12] Such gender and ethnic

discrimination has led to women dropping out of work.

Equivalence of qualifications

In sectors like medicine and nursing, the country of qualification can stratify job opportunities and lead to deskilling among Indian migrant women. However, the interviews reveal that for the new groups of skilled women, often moving through career pathways, many issues arise from their employment contracts, which relate to short-term labour market needs in very specific sectors, have income thresholds and only offer longer-term visas for service level, rather than career-advancing posts. Women report being paid lower salaries, but the route for addressing these is often through human resources offices, which are not gender sensitive.

Policy recommendations

Overall recommendations

- Improving the portability of skills and qualifications by ensuring that a refreshed Blue Card Scheme is reviewed through a gender lens and standardizing professional qualification recognition to minimize skills mismatch.

- Improving access to and ensuring the portability of rights by encouraging women to find out about and join workers' organizations for more information about their rights, bargaining power and protection.

- Gender mainstreaming by enabling greater ease in switching visa categories, permitting spouses the right to work across visa categories and improving messaging about Indian women migrants.

---

[12] Although there are no detailed studies of the different pathways of Indian migrant IT workers and European Union nationals working in their own countries, United Kingdom data suggests that Indian women tend to occupy technical roles while British women in IT often move into human resources or management. See Parvati Raghuram, Clem Herman, Esther Ruiz-Ben and Gunjan Sondhi, *Women and IT Scorecard – India: A Survey of 55 Firms* (The Open University, 2018).

However, these require different considerations across the different stakeholders. These are outlined as follows.

For the European Union

- Develop practices, tools and toolkits to encourage a gendered approach in migration policy development.

- Combat gender and racial stereotypes within the labour market and, more broadly, in society.

For member States

- Provide low-cost or free, accessible pre-departure language training for migrants. As women often move as family migrants, they may not have acquired the language skills even where they have other skills.

For companies/labour market sectors

- Have internationalization and gender-awareness training within the human resources departments to sensitize them to the presence and contributions of skilled migrant women.

- Support migrants in sectors where mobility is highly prized (such as in science, technology, engineering and mathematics) to easily switch jobs and accrue the years they have stayed in a European Union country towards citizenship. Labour market support in this setting is particularly important for women as these sectors tend to be male dominated.

- Standardize professional qualification recognition to minimize skills mismatch. Women who move as family migrants have more difficulty recognizing their skills than the primary (often male) labour migrants.

For Indian information technology firms (in cases of intra-company transfers)[13]

- Provide training and mentoring for those considering or taking up international assignments.

- Offer strong family policies that support migrant women.

---

[13] For more details, see Raghuram et al., *Women and IT Scorecard – India: A Survey of 55 Firms*, 2018.

New perspectives for migration foresight and preparedness: Insights from the QuantMig Project[1]

Jakub Bijak, Mathias Czaika, Michaela Potančoková, Daniela Vono de Vilhena and the QuantMig team[2]

Abstract

This paper summarizes new perspectives for studying migration futures, drawing on the results of the European Union-funded project QuantMig: Quantifying Migration Scenarios for Better Policy. The paper presents advances in conceptualizing, explaining, estimating and forecasting international migration, considering various forms of uncertainty, and acknowledging the complexity of migration processes and the agency of various actors involved. The authors propose and evaluate a range of tools aimed at improving the estimates of current and predictions of future migration levels, and enhancing operational preparedness across various time horizons. A brief overview of these tools is provided, followed by a discussion of key implications and recommendations for migration and migration-related policies. The goal is to underscore the opportunities for making these policies more robust, future-proof and better aligned with the needs of both host societies and migrants themselves.

The need for forward-looking migration studies

Recent political events leading to large-scale population displacement, especially those driven by war and persecution, as seen in in the case of the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011 and Ukraine since 2022, have brought foresight and preparedness to the forefront of the agendas of migration policymakers in the European Union and beyond. Novel policy perspectives, such as those proposed in the European Union Blueprint on preparedness,[3] explicitly acknowledge the uncertainty and complexity of migration processes, as well as the need to manage unforeseen migration. However, the evidence related to the explanations of past and present migration, not to mention foresight into future migration, remains limited and highly fragmented. The uncertainty surrounding migration governance only adds to the overall unpredictability of migration.

In this paper, the state of the art in studying possible migration futures and present new perspectives are summarized, drawing from the experience of the European Union-funded project QuantMig: Quantifying Migration Scenarios for Better Policy.[4] It begins by presenting key elements necessary for a better understanding of migration processes and their potential future trajectories, including the complex driver environments in origin, destination and transit countries (section 2). Recent advances in conceptualizing, explaining,

estimating and forecasting migration (section 3) are then highlighted, followed by a review of tools that may prove useful for studying future migration across various time horizons (section 4). This concludes by emphasizing the opportunities that the current focus on migration preparedness offers for creating more robust migration policies that are better equipped to handle future surprises (section 5).

Understanding current processes driving possible migration futures

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon involving multiple actors. To grasp the intricacies of the various factors that drive migration in origin regions, one can turn to the aspirations-capabilities framework.[5] This framework considers individual aspirations, which can be indirectly measured through satisfaction with current living conditions. Aspirations are necessary but not sufficient conditions of migration; actual mobility also depends on having the means to move. This framework helps explain why many people, even when facing personal danger or the loss of livelihoods, choose not to migrate, highlighting the importance of immobility. This aspect deserves increased attention from both research and policy perspectives.

Moreover, there is substantial uncertainty in migration drivers. For example, situations in conflict zones change rapidly. In the case of climate change, despite its slower onset, there is uncertainty about its impacts on migration, compounded by the limited predictive capacity of existing models of climate-induced migration. Changing socioeconomic and political conditions

in both origin and destination countries also lead to shifts in dominant migration channels, such as labour, family, study or asylum, influenced by evolving political and legal circumstances.

Migration policies and other relevant policies in destination countries are part of the complex driver environment affecting the size and composition of migration flows. Uncertainty can also arise from policy development itself, which can influence migration patterns. For instance, the uncertainty surrounding the United Kingdom's migration policy since the Brexit referendum in 2016 resulted in reduced immigration from the European Union and increased immigration from the rest of the world, with no noticeable spillover of non-European immigration into the rest of the European Union.

Over the past two decades in Europe, migration policy developments have followed various directions, often driven by short-term considerations and resulting in numerous changes in migration routes and legal channels. This creates a complex web of dependencies across space, time and among different groups of migrants. Access to information, particularly first-hand information from migrant networks, can reduce uncertainty for prospective migrants, serving as a significant pull factor, especially for asylum-seekers. Conversely, negative attitudes among native populations can deter migration.

Within the European Union, migration of European Union nationals is largely circular, with an increasing trend toward more long-term and permanent moves. Younger migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe often settle in their destination countries in Northern and Western Europe. At the same time, Southern and Eastern European countries also act as stepping stones for non-European Union-born migrants from other parts of the world on their

---

[5] Jørgen Carling and Kerilyn Schewel, "Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6):945–963 (2018). On drivers, see Mathias Czaika and Constantin Reinprecht, "Migration drivers: Why do people migrate?" in *Introduction to Migration Studies* (P. Scholten, ed.) (Cham, Springer, 2022), pp. 49–82.

journeys to Western Europe. The latter migrants are particularly likely to move between major Western European countries, including France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. To better analyse onward mobility, adopting a subnational perspective is crucial to consider substantial heterogeneity of moves, not only between but also within individual European countries.

Recent advances in migration concepts, theory and estimation

Focus on the high levels of uncertainty and complexity inherent in migration processes necessitates expanding the conceptual boundaries of contemporary migration studies. When dealing with uncertainty, it is useful to distinguish between its *epistemic* aspects — those that are unknown but potentially knowable with further research and insight — and *aleatory* aspects, which are inherently random and will always remain unknowable.

The epistemic uncertainty encompasses knowledge about migration flows and drivers, while the aleatory one includes the free decisions of individual people and the irreducible uncertainty of the inherently uncertain future. An important challenge for contemporary migration studies and policy practice is to delineate the limits of knowledge, thus differentiating between these two types of uncertainty: epistemic uncertainty can be reduced through research, while aleatory uncertainty cannot, and requires planning and preparedness.

Regarding explanations for migration processes, recent advances have occurred in two areas. At the individual level, migration decisions can be understood across four dimensions, including aspirations (as previously discussed), time and decision horizons, the availability of reliable information, and the degree of agency and control exercised by potential migrants. Exploring the interactions between these dimensions provides a more nuanced understanding of migration decisions and offers new avenues for empirical research.

At the macro level, there has been progress in empirically examining the impact of migration and other relevant policies to a greater extent than before. A study of policy changes in Europe in 1990–2020, analysed with the assistance of the updated and expanded DEMIG policy database (QuantMig-DEMIG), revealed an increasing frequency and decreasing magnitude of policy changes, reflecting their predominantly reactive nature and often responding to high-profile events.[6]

In terms of measuring migration in Europe, a new set of harmonized estimates of migration flows by origin, destination, age and gender is now available through the QuantMig Migration Estimates Explorer.[7] The estimates build upon previous efforts to standardize migration statistics across Europe and provide measures and their associated errors for nearly two decades, spanning from 2002 to 2019.

---

[6] DEMIG policy data database and DEMIG–QuantMig Policy database.

[7] Migration estimates for 32 European countries by origin, destination, age and sex are available from the QuantMig Migration Estimates Explorer. See also James Raymer, Arkadiusz Wiśniowski, Jonathan J. Forster, Peter W.F. Smith and Jakub Bijak, "Integrated modeling of European migration", *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 108(503):801–819 (2013).

The QuantMig estimates are based on data compiled by Eurostat, auxiliary variables, extensive data quality assessment and expert opinion (an example for the whole EU-27 is illustrated in Figure 1). The estimation process has identified significant trade-offs between data availability and the degree of harmonization, especially following the introduction of a European Union regulation on migration and asylum statistics.[8] Harmonization of migration statistics is attainable through formal modelling, albeit with explicitly acknowledged estimation errors.

Figure 1. Estimated immigration to EU-27 countries in 2002–2019
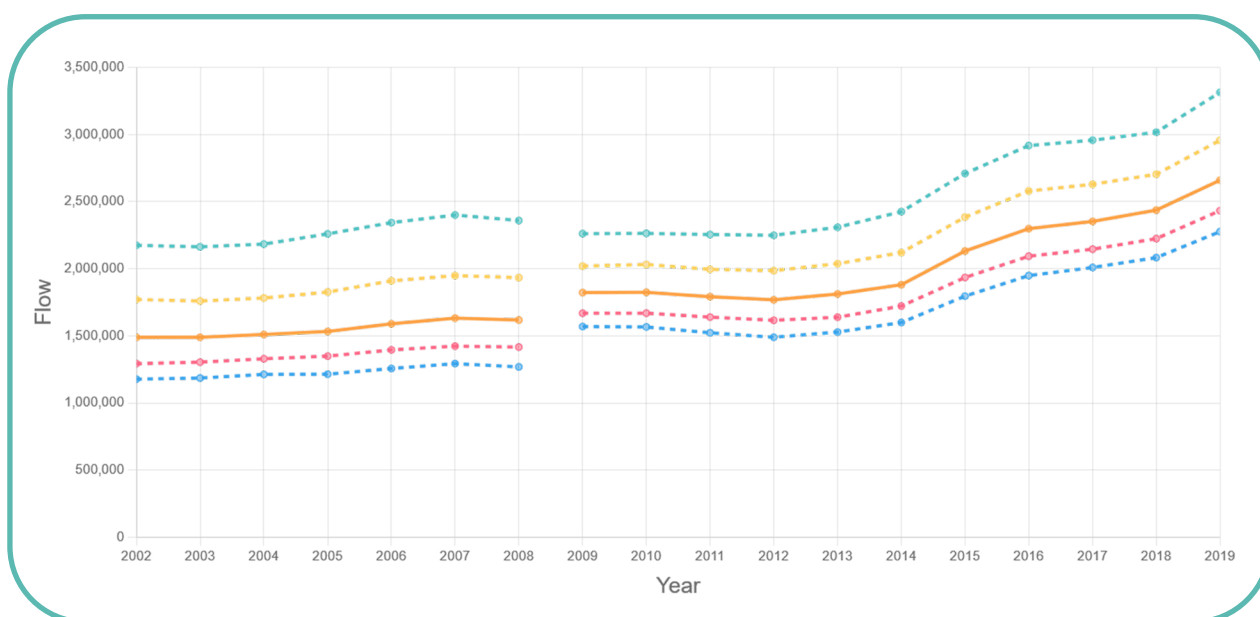
Source: Michaela Potancokova, Jason Sadler and Miguel Gonzalez-Leonardo, QuantMig Migration Scenarios Explorer v1.0, Online web tool (2023).
Note: There are changes in legislation, methodology and data availability in 2009.

New migration foresight and preparedness tools across time horizons

When attempting to anticipate future migration flows, time becomes a crucial factor – both at the individual level and at the macro level – that is important for modelling. The farther decisions extend into the future, the greater the uncertainty, with aleatory factors increasingly dominating longer horizons. This phenomenon is closely tied to individual-level decisions and personal timelines, shaped by people's lived experiences and decisions as they progress through various stages of life. This progression is evident in distinct age patterns of migration.

---

8 European Union, Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 311/76 on the compilation of statistics on foreign workers (L 199/23), Official Journal of the European Union (2007), pp. 23–29.

At the macro level, the innovative QuantMig toolkit provides a methodological framework for examining various migration futures, across different time horizons. These range from early warnings for the very short term to forecasts for intermediate horizons and long-term scenarios, using a broad suite of available data and state-of-the-art methodology. The methodological tools help depict uncertainty and complexity, employing probability-based methods for shorter perspectives and formally analysing process responses for longer ones. However, it is important to remain realistic about the lack of universal and problem-free solutions for any perspectives.

In the very short-term, early warnings and nowcasts are the preferred options for decision support. Initial work involved employing statistical signal detection techniques and was later expanded to explore different sources of non-traditional data, such as databases of global events or Internet searches, alongside traditional sources like macroeconomic data, past migration trends, administrative data or even surveys. In certain circumstances, some predictive signals can be detected a few months in advance, but models often contain significant statistical noise. Their success hinges on identifying countries, processes and situations that analysts need to consider. The best results come from combining traditional and non-traditional data with contextual knowledge.[9]

For short-term to midterm horizons relevant for planning purposes, formal forecasts remain a valuable decision support tool, provided they include a formal uncertainty assessment. Forecasting models can be based on migration trends or augmented with proxy variables for drivers, such as income or unemployment levels. However, the utility of such forecasts diminishes beyond a few years' horizon, and the inclusion of additional variables exacerbates the already high uncertainty surrounding migration. Forecasting also benefits from breaking down migration flows into categories driven by similar driver environments, such as asylum, family, labour or study. Forecasts can facilitate extended decision analysis by incorporating costs and benefits of different decisions, or formal risk management by juxtaposing the uncertainty of migration processes against their policy-relevant impact.[10]

Decision support across long-term horizons falls within the domain of scenarios. Scenarios can be based on extrapolations, narrative interpretations of socioeconomic developments or derived from formal theory-based models. These models, in addition to producing plausible and coherent future migration trajectories, allow for stress-testing responses to changing conditions and processes. Alternatively, scenarios can revolve around analysing the impacts of rare migration events, expressed in terms of their relative frequency (such as once in a century), similar to civil contingency planning.

[9] Joanna Napierała, Jason Hilton, Jonathan J. Forster, Marcello Carammia and Jakub Bijak, "Toward an early warning system for monitoring asylum-related migration flows in Europe", *International Migration Review*, 56(1):33–62 (2022); Marcello Carammia, Stefano Maria Iacus and Teddy Wilkin, "Forecasting asylum-related migration flows with machine learning and data at scale", *Scientific Reports*, 12:1457 (2022).

[10] Jakub Bijak and Mathias Czaika, "Black swans and grey rhinos: Migration policy under uncertainty", *Migration Policy Practice*, X(4):14–18 (2020); Jakub Bijak, Goerge Disney, Allan M. Findlay, Jonathan J. Forster, Peter W.F. Smith and Arkadiusz Wiśniowski, "Assessing time series models for forecasting international migration: Lessons from the United Kingdom", *Journal of Forecasting*, 38(5):470–487 (2019).

The results of such scenarios produced with another dedicated tool, the QuantMig Migration Scenario Explorer[11] (with an example of Germany shown in Figure 2) confirm that even migration events of rare magnitude have some impact on population and labour force size across Europe, although their influence on overall dynamic trajectories is limited, as these are primarily driven by underlying population change processes. Consequently, effective labour market policies must extend beyond migration and encompass a broader spectrum of socioeconomic aspects.

Figure 2. Immigration and total labour force under the baseline and alternative migration scenarios

Immigration from outside EU-27

Total labour force of EU-27 countries

Legend:
- Baseline
- Persistent-high migration event from North Africa
- Persistent-high migration event from Other Europe
- Persistent-high migration event from sub-Saharan Africa
- Persistent-high migration event from West Asia
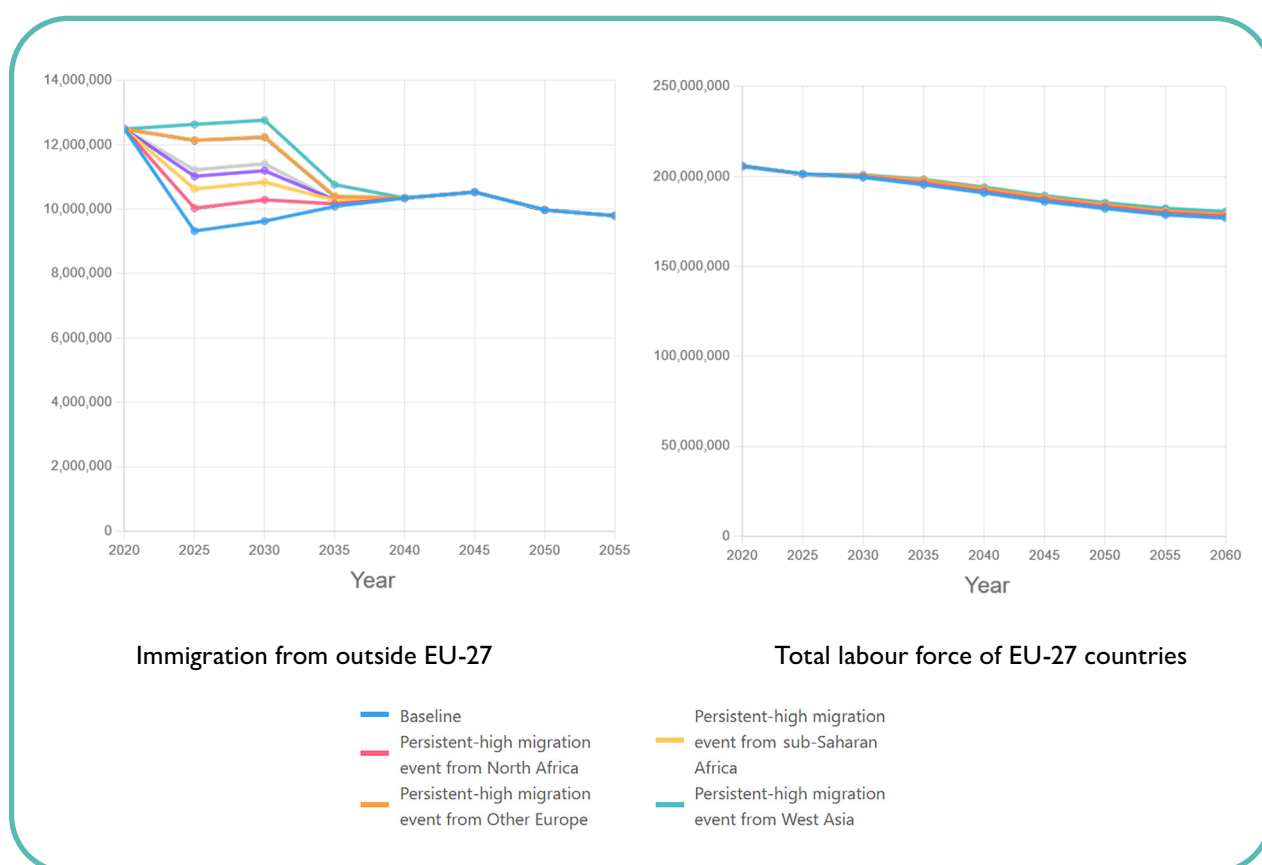
Source: Potancokova et al., QuantMig Migration Scenarios Explorer v1.0, 2023.

Key policy opportunities

Recent advances in futures studies and the development of anticipatory tools and methods offer several valuable lessons for migration policy and practice. Firstly, it is important to recognize that different policy aims and purposes, which apply across various time horizons, require adopting different perspectives and tools to guide decision-making. For the short-term and midterm operational and planning objectives, numerical predictions are crucial, necessitating the use of formal forecasting, nowcasting and early warning models. Conversely, long-term strategic objectives require a thorough examination of migration processes and policy

---

[11] Migration scenarios by age, sex, labour force participation and education are available from the QuantMig Migration Scenarios Explorer.

responses through coherent scenarios, stress-testing and the development of contingency plans.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that setting numerical targets for migration without considering the broader socioeconomic context and interactions between different policy types can result in a self-defeating exercise. This is due to the inherently uncertain nature of migration and its responsiveness to changes in driver environments. Some recent policy responses, such as the European Union Blueprint on preparedness, already demonstrate an ambition to shift the perspective from a reactive stance to a more proactive and future-focused one.

Uncertainty has also become a key element in mainstream migration discourse, with a growing recognition that effective migration management must account for the need to adapt to unexpected developments. Additional policy opportunities here involve designing mechanisms that continuously review policies to ensure they remain fit for purpose, essentially future-proofing the solutions that are adopted. Integrating regular updates of tools and processes into the policy routine can help guard against complacency and ultimately make the solutions more robust and better suited to meet the demands and challenges of the twenty-first century. This benefits both host societies and migrants alike.

Uncovering disparities: Temporary protection schemes in response to the Ukraine crisis

Catherine Xhardez and Miryana Dagher[1]

Abstract

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has led to a significant displacement crisis. In response, countries worldwide have implemented temporary protection schemes, providing legal status, humanitarian assistance and certain rights to displaced persons. Beyond Europe, this article compares the temporary protection schemes in five countries – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada and the United States of America – underlying disparities in policy settings and revealing that while temporary protection schemes may appear similar on the surface, they vary on many dimensions. The widespread adoption of temporary protection schemes presents a unique opportunity to undertake a comprehensive assessment of these instruments, evaluating both policy outputs and policy outcomes.

Introduction

The war in Ukraine has triggered a massive displacement crisis. While those fleeing Ukraine have primarily been absorbed by European countries, there has been an unprecedented and swift response further afield, with various temporary protection schemes being implemented around the world. Temporary protection schemes are time-limited policies providing legal status, humanitarian assistance and certain rights to displaced persons, allowing them to stay temporarily in a host country. The use of temporary protection policies is not unprecedented.[2] For example, since 2014, Türkiye has provided temporary protection status to Syrians.[3] What is novel is the extensive and swift use of temporary protection for Ukrainians in several countries across the globe. However, existing research has predominantly focused on the European Union's policy response[4] and the first-ever activation of the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive to manage the mass influx of displaced persons.[5] To gain insight into the actions taken beyond the European Union, this article compares temporary protection schemes implemented in five countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada and the United States

---

[1] Catherine Xhardez is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the Université de Montréal. Miryana Dagher is a master's student in the Department of Political Science at the Université de Montréal.

[2] John Fitzpatrick, "Temporary protection of refugees: Elements of a formalized regime", *American Journal of International Law*, 94(2):279–306 (2000).

[3] Refugee Rights Turkey, Registration and Status for Syrian Refugees and Other Persons under Temporary Protection (Istanbul, 2017); Esra Yılmaz Eren, "Is temporary protection eternal? The future of temporary protection status of Syrians in Turkey", *Border Crossing*, 9(2):125–134 (2019).

[4] See, among others: Giselle Bosse, "Values, rights, and changing interests: The EU's response to the war against Ukraine and the responsibility to protect Europeans", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(3):531–546 (2022); Sergio Carrera and Meltem Ineli-Ciger (eds.), *EU Responses to the Large-scale Refugee Displacement from Ukraine: An Analysis on the Temporary Protection Directive and its Implications for the Future EU Asylum Policy* (Florence, European University Institute, 2023); Tamara Kortukova, Yevgen Kolosovskyi, Olena Korolchuk, Rostyslav Shchokin and Andrii S. Volkov, "Peculiarities of the legal regulation of temporary protection in the European Union in the context of the aggressive war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine", *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, 36(2):667–678 (2023).

[5] European Union, Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing consequences thereof (L 212), Official Journal of the European Union (2001).

of America.[6] To analyse the five temporary protection policies, this article builds on Hall's typology by differentiating between "the overarching goals that guide policy in a particular field, the techniques or policy instruments used to attain those goals, and the precise settings of these instruments".[7] Although temporary protection schemes may appear similar on the surface, this article uncovers underlying disparities in policy settings. As the conflict persists, these instruments face new challenges stemming from their implementation and the potential transition towards more permanent solutions. Nevertheless, the experience and data emerging from the current temporary protection schemes constitute a unique learning opportunity for researchers and policymakers.

Unique features of the countries' schemes

Table 1 compares the five temporary protection instruments implemented in terms of 10 settings: (a) starting date; (b) duration of protection offered; (c) who can apply; (d) visa policy; (e) fees and costs; (f) right to work; (g) time window; (h) number of people protected; (i) cap; and (j) access to long-term residence.[8] Before delving into this policy comparison, and for contextual purposes, it is pertinent to highlight the size of the Ukrainian diaspora in the five receiving countries. Canada hosts the second largest diaspora in the world with 1.4 million Ukrainians living in the country; in the United States, there are approximately 1.1 million Ukrainians; Brazil has a diaspora of around 600,000 Ukrainians; Argentina's Ukrainian community comprises approximately 350,000 members; in Australia, the Ukrainian population is smaller, estimated around 38,000 people.[9]

---

[6] This paper focuses on five federal States in this paper, but other States (including Israel, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) have also implemented temporary protection schemes. See: Martin Wagner, Justyna Segeš Frelak, Caitlin Katsiaficas, Nazanine Nozarian and Malin Frankenhaeuser, "Responding to displacement from Ukraine: Past, present and future policies", Discussion paper (Vienna, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2023).

[7] Peter A. Hall, "Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: The case of economic policymaking in Britain", *Comparative Politics*, 25(3):275–296 (1993):278.

[8] To compare with the European Union policy response, using the same grid and settings for analysis, see: Catherine Xhardez and Dagmar Soennecken, "Temporary protection in times of crisis: The European Union, Canada, and the invasion of Ukraine", *Politics and Governance*, 11(3):264–275 (2023).

[9] Sécurité publique Canada (Public Safety Canada), "Notes des comités parlementaires : Menaces contre la diaspora ukrainienne au Canada" ["Parliamentary Committee Notes: Threats to the Ukranian Diaspora in Canada"] (Government of Canada, 2023) (in French); Joshua Rodriguez and Jeanne Batalova, "Ukrainian immigrants in the United States", Migration Policy Institute (22 June 2022); Ukrainian World Congress, "Brazil's Ukrainian community leader on UOL calls on authorities to arm Ukraine" (28 February 2023); Elena Leticia Mikusinski, "Descubriendo mis raices" ["Discovering my roots"] (Embassy in Ukraine, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Culture, Government of Argentina (17 August 2023) (in Spanish).

Table 1. Comparison of temporary protection schemes for Ukrainians in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada and the United States

Country	Argentina	Australia	Brazil	Canada	United States
Instrument[a]	Provision 417/2022	Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) Subclass 786 Visa	Interministerial Ordinance no. 28	Canada–Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET)	Uniting for Ukraine (U4U programme)
(a) Starting date	8 March 2022	21 March 2022	3 March 2022	17 March 2022	21 April 2022
(b) Duration of protection offered	3-year stay (art. 2)	3-year stay	2-year stay	3-year stay (renewal possible before 31 March 2024)	2-year stay
(c) Who can apply?	Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members, regardless of nationality, who are outside Argentina (art. 1).	Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members.	Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons, who have been affected or displaced by the events in Ukraine (art. 1).	Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members, regardless of nationality, from overseas.	Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members who are outside the United States, resided in Ukraine immediately before the Russian invasion (through 11 February 2022) and displaced as a result of the invasion.
(d) Visa policy	*1-step process* Humanitarian visa: Application for entry at the offices of the Argentine consular network (art. 2).	*2-step process* Six-month Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) Subclass 449 visa (a.k.a. Temporary Safe Haven visa), followed by a Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) Subclass 786 visa.	*2-step process* Art. 2–3: Humanitarian visa, application for entry at consular authority (180 days to enter Brazil). Art. 4: 90 days to register with the federal police and obtain the residence permit for humanitarian reception purposes. Art. 5: This residence permit can also be granted to Ukrainians, regardless of migratory status when entering Brazil.	*1-step process* Acts as a visitor visa, expedited with minimal visa requirements. Application from abroad, submitted online (processing time within 14 days of receipt of a complete application). CUAET holders should enter Canada before 31 March 2024.	*2-step process* Temporary parole process. Ukrainians approved via this process will be authorized to travel to the United States to be considered for parole, on a case-by-case basis. Applications are submitted online. 90-day travel authorization; individual inspection by the United States Customs and Border Protection at port of entry, plus additional screening and vetting; medical exam within 90 days.
(e) Fees and costs	No fees (art. 3)	No visa application charges. Cost of the health examinations, if required.	No fees.	Fee waiver. Exempt from immigration medical exam overseas. May be required within 90 days of arrival (paid; certain provinces provide additional support).	No fees. Within 90 days of arrival, each beneficiary over two years old must have a tuberculosis and blood test.

Country	Argentina	Australia	Brazil	Canada	United States
(f) Right to work	Work and study	Work and study	Work and study	Option to apply for an open work or study permit	Option to request authorization to work
(g) Time window	*Still open* 8 March 2022–…	*Expired* 21 March 2022–31 July 2022	*Still open* 3 March 2022–31 December 2024	*Expired* 17 March 2022–15 July 2023	*Still open* 21 April 2022–…
(h) Number of people protected[b]	Between 150 and 250.	Approximately 11,500 visas to Ukrainian nationals in Ukraine and thousands more to Ukrainian nationals elsewhere. Nearly 11,400 of these visa holders have since arrived in Australia.	Approximately 800.	A total of 1,189,320 applications received, of which 922,590 approved, of which 198,642 arrived in Canada.	Over 117,000 have been admitted under the U4U programme (271,000 have entered the United States).
(i) Cap	None.	Being a temporary visa, this is not part of the Humanitarian Programme (which is annually capped).	None.	No cap (unlike traditional refugee resettlement applications and permanent residence streams). Willingness to accept an "unlimited number".	No cap (unlike similar programme for migrants fleeing the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which was initially capped at 24,000). President Biden initially mentioned welcoming up to 100,000.
(j) Access to long-term residence[c]	After three years residing in Argentina, may apply for permanent residence.	In February 2023, the Minister for Immigration indicated that they may allow Ukrainians holding SC 786 visas to apply for other visas in "exceptional circumstances", lifting the bar preventing further visa applications while in Australia.	Pathway to permanent residence (art. 8).	From October 2023: Ukrainians with family members in Canada may access the "fast-track" pathway to permanent residence. CUAET holders can access all the regular immigration programmes as well.	Parole per se does not provide a path to permanent residency. A bill (Ukrainian Adjustment Act of 2023) was introduced in Congress on 6 July 2023 to provide a streamlined process for certain Ukrainian nationals living in the United States to receive lawful permanent resident status.

[a]*Sources*: Argentina, Government of, Direccion nacional de migraciones, Disposición 417/2022 [National direction of migration, Provision 417/2022], Legislación y Avisos Oficiales [Legislation and Official Notices], (Buenos Aires, 3 July 2022) (in Spanish); Australia, Government of, "Information for Ukrainian nationals who accepted the offer of temporary humanitarian stay before 31 July 2022", Department of Home Affairs (n.d.); Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, Gabinete do Ministro [Ministry of Justice and Public Safety, Minister's Office], Portaria Interministerial MJSP/MRE N° 28, de 3 de Março de 2022 (Portal de Imigração, 2022); Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), "Canada–Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel", Government of Canada (2022); U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Uniting for Ukraine" (n.d.).

[b] Data were gathered from several official sources, including the Ukrainian World Congress, which keeps track of Ukrainian refugees around the world; newspaper *Ambito*; Australia Home Affairs; Canada's IRCC and US Congress. Note that it was not always possible to isolate temporary protection beneficiaries from other categories, such as refugees or Ukrainians arriving through alternative migration channels.

[c]*Sources*: Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Current visa options for Ukrainians in Australia (24 February 2023); IRCC, Canada, Government of, "Canada launches pathway to reunite families and support Ukrainians", news release (15 July 2023); United States Congress, Ukrainian Adjustment Act of 2023 (H.R. 3911), 118th Congress (2023–2024); Congressman Mike Quigley (United States congressman), "Quigley, Keating, Fitzpatrick, and Kaptur introduce Ukrainian Adjustment Act", Press release (8 June 2023).

On 3 March 2022, Brazil enacted Interministerial Ordinance no. 28, offering protection to Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons affected or displaced by the events in Ukraine. The ordinance allows them to be granted a 180-day humanitarian visa to enter Brazil and then, regardless of their immigration status, a two-year residence permit for humanitarian reception purposes. Argentina followed suit on 8 March 2022 with Provision 417/2022, which permits Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members, regardless of nationality, to enter and stay in Argentina for a period of three years. Similarly, on 17 March 2022, Canada launched CUAET, granting Ukrainians and their immediate family members entry into Canada and temporary residence for up to three years (renewable). Australia adopted a two-step process on 21 March 2022, initially offering Ukrainians a six-month Humanitarian Stay Visa (subclass 449) and subsequently, pending health checks, allowing them to transition to a three-year Temporary Humanitarian Concern Visa (subclass 786). In April 2022, the United States introduced the U4U programme, offering Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members outside the United States to enter and stay temporarily for a two-year period. The U4U is a temporary parole programme based on a private sponsorship model: Ukrainians must have a United States-based supporter who agrees to provide them with financial support for the duration of their stay.

Looking at these schemes together, some common features immediately emerge: (a) the rapidity of their introduction (within a couple of days or weeks of the invasion date); (b) their duration (two or three years); and (c) their lack of fees (except where medical examinations are required). But while technical details are beyond the scope of this overview, practical requirements regarding who can apply and the

relevant visa policy (see Table 1, rows 3–4) greatly influence the reach and effectiveness of these programmes. For example, unlike the Schengen area or Ireland,[10] visa requirements are central to all the cases studied here, necessitating the acquisition of a travel document before embarking on the journey. The degree of difficulty in obtaining these visas can therefore either facilitate or hinder mobility and access to temporary protection. The cross-country comparison demonstrates that the five cases do indeed differ in terms of the number of steps involved, where the visa is processed, processing times, administrative burden and conditions of issue.

As seen in Table 1 (rows 7 and 8), these five countries all had different response timelines and uptake numbers. Australia's temporary protection scheme, which started on 21 March 2022, was the first of the five countries to end it, with the offer of a temporary humanitarian stay (Subclass 786) requiring acceptance by 11:59 p.m. on 31 July 2022. Australian Home Affairs report that approximately 11,500 visas were granted to Ukrainian nationals in Ukraine, and thousands more were issued to Ukrainian nationals residing elsewhere. Nearly 11,400 Ukrainians have since arrived in Australia, but because of how the data is collected, it is unclear how many of those benefited from this specific protection scheme, rather than another immigration stream. Canada stopped accepting applications in July 2023, having been extended from the original end date of March 2023. IRCC received 1,189,320 applications, and 77 per cent of them

---

[10] Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports do not need a visa to enter the Schengen area and, even before the war, could travel freely for 90 days in any 180-day period. Ireland, which is not part of the Schengen area, lifted its visa requirements in response to the war. See: Robert Falconer, *Canadian immigration policy and the Russo-Ukraine War*, Research paper vol. 15:23 (*The School of Public Policy*, Alberta, 2022); Carrera and Meltem Ineli-Ciger, *EU Responses to the Large-scale Refugee Displacement from Ukraine: An Analysis on the Temporary Protection Directive and its Implications for the Future EU Asylum Policy*, 2023..

(922,590) were approved. As of October 2023, 198,642 CUAET holders have arrived in Canada, but the final travel deadline is 31 March 2024. The scheme in Argentina is still open and has attracted between 150 and 250 people. The U4U programme is also ongoing, having seen the arrival of 117,000 sponsored Ukrainians in the United States, exceeding President Biden's goal of 100,000. Brazil's protection scheme was initially set to end on 31 August 2022, but was extended twice at the time of writing (first until 3 March 2023, and then until 31 December 2024) with around 800 people benefiting from this scheme.

While it is the first time that several similar temporary protection schemes have been implemented simultaneously across continents, temporary protection policies themselves are nothing new. Brazil, for instance, initiated humanitarian visa provisions for Haitians in 2012, and extended it to encompass people affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2013.[11] The United States has a long history of humanitarian paroling as a mechanism for granting temporary stays for individuals in exceptional circumstances, often for urgent humanitarian reasons. It has also been applied to the 2023 New Parole Program for nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela who are seeking safe haven within the United States.[12] Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this represents Canada's first foray into temporary protection schemes, as prior discretionary admission of groups in need of protection had always been done with the goal of permanent residence.

What is more unusual is that none of the countries studied here implemented a cap – a predetermined numerical limit on the number of visas or permits granted within a specific time frame (see Table 1, row 8). Australia, Canada and the United States all set immigration targets, and even implement caps, for other immigration streams – in particular for permanent residence purposes, and also for temporary residence in some cases. For example, the United States parole programme for Venezuelans was set to be capped at 24,000, although its more recent iteration sets a combined limit for nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of 30,000 individuals per month.

Pathways to long-term solutions

While temporary protection offers prompt decision-making and adaptability, critics raise concerns about the prolonged uncertainty and precarious legal statuses faced by displaced individuals. Given the characteristics of the programmes studied, the effects of the temporary protection schemes may expire as early as March 2024 in some cases. As the conflict drags on, and displaced individuals establish themselves in host countries, the question of obtaining long-term residence becomes increasingly urgent (see Table 1, row 9).

Argentina and Brazil have already incorporated pathways to permanent residence within their temporary protection frameworks. On the other hand, while Australia, Canada and the United States had initially signalled that existing economic and family migration routes would be accessible to Ukrainians,[13] the specific avenues to permanent residence following temporary protection are not yet fully developed. In Australia, Ukrainians

[11] Liliana Lyra Jubilut, Camila Sombra Muiños de Andrade and André de Lima Madureira, "Humanitarian visas: building on Brazil's experience", *Forced Migration Review*, 53:76–78 (2016).

[12] U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans" (2023).

[13] See Wagner et al, "Responding to displacement from Ukraine: Past, present and future policies", 2023, p. 21.

holding a SC 786 visa may be eligible to apply for other visas in exceptional circumstances, which include economic and societal contributions, and maintaining family unity with Australian citizens. This runs counter to existing restrictions on visa holders submitting further visa applications. In Canada, since 24 October 2023, a Permanent Residence Pathway for Family Members has been launched: it provides a fast-track pathway to permanent residence for Ukrainian nationals in Canada who have temporary resident status and who have at least one family member in the country. In the United States, on the other hand, a bipartisan bill (Ukrainian Adjustment Act of 2023) has been introduced in Congress with the goal of permitting Ukrainian nationals, paroled into the United States after 20 February 2014, to apply for lawful permanent resident status. However, the legislative process might be lengthy.

Policy implications

While forced migration poses pressing global challenges, revealing shortcomings in the current international refugee regime, temporary protection has emerged as a parallel approach, providing a pragmatic response to mass displacements. However, as illustrated by this comparative overview, the instruments of temporary protection vary on many dimensions, raising questions about their effectiveness and outcomes. On the one hand, advocates of temporary protection commend its complementary nature, its responsiveness to urgent situations, the group-based approach (eschewing individual asylum claims), its ability to alleviate current pressures on the international protection system and its return-oriented character. Conversely, critics caution against the potential erosion of permanent refugee protection, the preferential treatment of certain protection seekers, the uncertainty inherent in temporary legal statuses, and the ad hoc responses lacking a coherent and transparent protection approach.

Beyond theoretical debates, the practical implementation of temporary protection serves as a genuine litmus test for the future. In practice, challenges and opportunities emerge for policymakers, practitioners and migration researchers in at least two respects:

(a) The widespread adoption of temporary protection schemes presents a unique opportunity to undertake a comprehensive assessment of these instruments, evaluating both policy outputs and policy outcomes. While this analysis has primarily focused on policy outputs, describing policy instruments and their diverse settings across geographical contexts, the next phase should look more closely at how these instruments interact with their environments to produce positive or negative consequences, considering factors like housing, health care, education and labour market integration. This would facilitate the evaluation of surge capacity, thereby determining the most effective settings and efficiency thresholds for accommodating substantial population influxes.

(b) Amidst prolonged conflict and impending deadlines for specific protection schemes, the pivotal challenge lies in transitioning from return-oriented mechanisms to more enduring solutions regarding status. From a legal and political perspective, it prompts an exploration of how these schemes will coexist with the broader international protection system and asylum as a transition pathway. While many Ukrainians might choose to remain abroad, leveraging economic streams or family reunification pathways, some will not have these options. Finding a balance between integrating people in need of protection into host countries in the long term, and safeguarding

their right to international protection, if necessary, remains an ongoing concern.[14]

The experience and data emerging from the current temporary protection schemes constitute a unique learning opportunity. However, drawing absolute conclusions may be premature. These schemes were created under the specific assumption that Ukrainians would be able to return home within the medium term, but as timelines protract, there are mounting uncertainties about the meaning and appropriateness of temporary protection. Going forward, policymakers need to confront complex questions about pathways to permanence, immigrant integration and secondary migration, and how these interact with the legal frameworks and infrastructure of the international protection system. As the prospect of transitioning to more permanent options draws nearer, policymakers will need to confront the administrative repercussions of a large-scale influx of individuals, as well as a potential deterioration in public support for such impacts. Tracking outcomes over the coming years will reveal whether this large-scale experiment constitutes a transformative juncture in emergency migration management.

---

[14] Meghan Benton and Andrew Selee, "The Ukrainian conflict could be a tipping point for refugee protection", Migration Policy Institute (May 2022).

Surviving the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: Experiences of migrants in the informal economy in downtown Bloemfontein, South Africa

Theodorah Ramogwebo, Johannes Bhanye and Abraham Matamanda[1]

Abstract

This policy paper presents the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants in the informal economy of Bloemfontein downtown area, South Africa. Data was collected using qualitative rapid ethnographic methods in the Bloemfontein downtown area. In the context of this study, the term *migrants* pertains to individuals of international origin who have relocated and established residence within the borders of South Africa. The paper reveals that COVID-19 lockdowns were strict and mandatory for the whole population, but they disproportionately affected informal workers who work in public spaces, lack legal and social protections, and depend on daily earnings; harassment from police and soldiers was also disproportionate in informal settlements. Due to their overrepresentation in informal employment and informal settlements, migrant workers were particularly affected by the pandemic and associated restrictions. The migrant status also made them vulnerable to xenophobic attacks (long documented in South Africa) and hindered their access to government support. Without social safety nets, many resorted to coping mechanisms such as relegation from the city (return migration), depletion of savings and venturing into new businesses. Despite the adversities, the paper also highlights the resilience and adaptive agile strategies employed by migrants in the face of such a crisis. Understanding the experiences of migrants during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial for shaping effective urban policy responses.

Introduction

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought about unprecedented challenges that rippled across all sectors of society, reshaping the way people lived and worked.[2] The pandemic's socioeconomic impacts were particularly profound for vulnerable populations, including migrants, who often find themselves marginalized within host countries.[3] This marginalization arises from a combination of factors, such as exclusion from formal market opportunities, hindered access to public services due to insufficient documentation, systemic discrimination, and the prevalence of substandard housing conditions.[4] These challenges exacerbate the vulnerability of migrant communities, amplifying the adverse effects of the pandemic on their socioeconomic well-being.

1 Theodorah Ramogwebo is a master's student in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of the Free State in South Africa (ramogwebotheo@gmail.com). Johannes Bhanye is a post-doctoral research fellow in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of the Free State in South Africa (ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9658-7755; email address: joebhanye@gmail.com). Abraham Matamanda is a senior lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University of the Free State in South Africa (ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5260-5560; email address: matamandaa@gmail.com).

2 International Labour Organization (ILO), "Part I: Latest labour market developments: continuing workplace closures, working-hour losses and decreases in labour income", ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work (2020).

3 Johannes Bhanye, "Lydiate is now our home of a sort": perceptions of place amongst ageing first-generation Malawian migrants in Zimbabwe", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 45(3):180–194 (2022).

4 Johannes Bhanye, "Nimble sociality and belonging": an ethnography of migrants' responses to bans on associational life during the COVID-19 pandemic", *Urban Forum* (Dordrecht, Springer Nature, 2023).

This policy paper presents the unique experiences of migrants operating in the informal economy of downtown Bloemfontein, South Africa, shedding light on their struggles, coping strategies and the broader implications for policy considerations. The South African informal economy – averaging about a third of total employment in South Africa over the post-Apartheid period (see Rogan and Skinner, 2021)[5] – plays a crucial role in the national economy, offering livelihood opportunities to millions of individuals, including migrants seeking economic betterment.[6] Due to low barriers to entry, the informal economy is an important source of employment for migrants. As of 2020, people employed in the informal economy in Bloemfontein/Mangaung metropolitan province accounted for 46,051 or 16.4 per cent of the total employment.[7] Downtown Bloemfontein, a bustling urban hub, is home to a diverse range of informal businesses, with migrants forming a significant portion of this dynamic workforce. These migrants often navigate precarious circumstances due to their unresolved citizenship status, which affects their access to social services and legal protections.[8] The fact that they work informally also means they are excluded from social protection through employment. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced a new layer of complexity to their already challenging lives.

The pandemic prompted swift and stringent government responses, including lockdowns and restrictions on movement, to curb the spread of the virus. However, these measures inadvertently exacerbated the vulnerabilities faced by migrants in the informal economy. Limited access to social safety nets, discrimination, and the absence of appropriate legal recognition further compounded their difficulties. As the pandemic unfolded, migrants were forced to adapt rapidly to the changing landscape while grappling with systemic barriers that impeded their ability to weather the storm effectively.

The policy paper holds significance for policymakers and other key stakeholders, including government authorities, local business associations, non-governmental organizations, migrant advocacy groups, employer associations, community representatives, international organizations, academic and research institutions, labour unions, and health-care providers by offering an understanding of the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by migrants in the informal economy during global crises, thereby guiding the development of targeted and effective interventions to address their unique needs.

Methodology: Qualitative rapid urban ethnography

This policy paper is based on a one-month (August 2022) qualitative rapid ethnographic approach carried out in downtown Bloemfontein, South Africa (Figure 1).

---

[5] Michael Rogan and Caroline Skinner, "The South African informal economy" in *The Oxford Handbook of the South African Economy* (A. Oqubay, F. Tregenna and I. Valodia, eds.) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 757–C35.P114.

[6] Abraham A. Matamanda, Mischka Dunn and Verna Nel, "Broken bridges over troubled waters: COVID-19 and the urban poor residing in Dinaweng informal settlement, Bloemfontein, South Africa", *South African Geographical Journal*, 104(3):309–327 (2022).

[7] Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mangaung Metropolitan Free State: Profile and analysis district development model (M/52) (2020).

[8] Johannes Bhanye and Vupenyu Dzingirai, "Structures and networks of accessing and securing land among peri-urban squatters: The case of Malawian migrants at Lydiate informal settlement in Zimbabwe", *African Identities*, 20(3):237–256 (2022).

Figure 1. Study map for Bloemfontein's downtown area
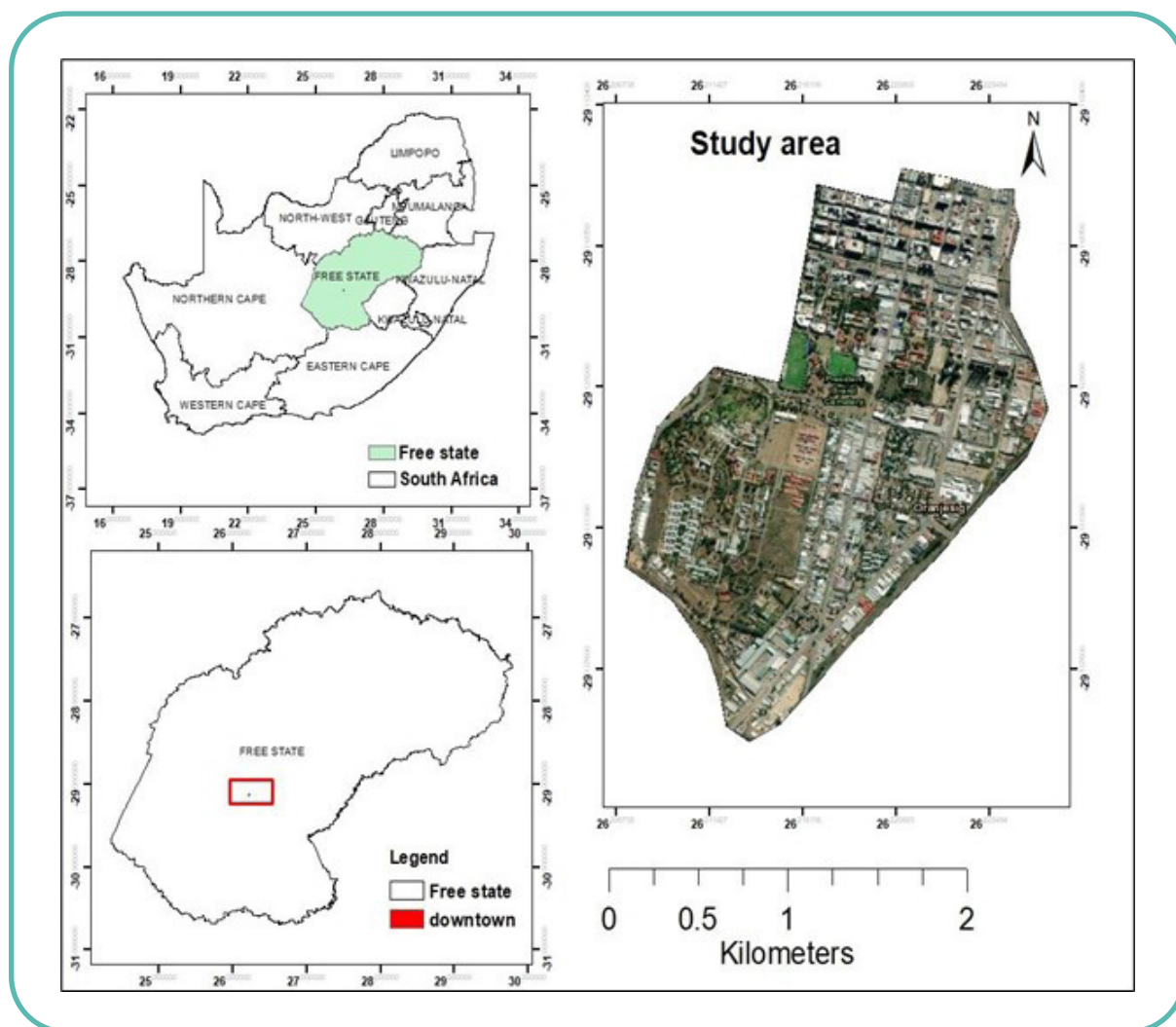
Source: Authors.
Note: These maps are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

The methodology involved participant observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis to gather in-depth insights into the experiences of this vulnerable population during the pandemic. A purposive sampling approach was employed to select participants with diverse backgrounds. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of participants (gender, age, nationality, occupation and years of residence in Bloemfontein). Semi-structured interviews explored participants' pandemic experiences, challenges, coping strategies and interactions with local communities and authorities. Participant observation within informal business settings allowed a deeper understanding of migrants' daily operations and challenges. Additionally, document analysis contextualized findings within broader socioeconomic and policy contexts, including government policies and relevant reports.

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of participants

Variable	Options	Number of participants (N = 28)
Gender	Female	15
	Male	13
Age (years)	21–30	8
	31–40	15
	41–50	5
	>50	0
Nationality	Basotho	10
	Congolese	4
	Ethiopian	1
	Ghanaian	3
	Kenyan	1
	Malawian	2
	Rwandan	1
	Nigerian	1
	Tanzanian	1
	Zimbabwean	4
Occupation	Salon owner	1
	Street vendor	6
	Hairdressing and cosmetics	7
	Flea market operator	1
	Tailor	1
	Clothing and accessories shop operator	5
	Vegetable market operator	5
	Butcher operator	1
	Taxi driver	1
Residence in Bloemfontein (years)	1–10	21
	11–20	5
	>20	2

Note: The authors generated the figures based on the field data.

Socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants

Migrants in the informal economy of downtown Bloemfontein faced diverse socioeconomic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 2 summarizes the profound effects they experienced.

Figure 2. Socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented migrants
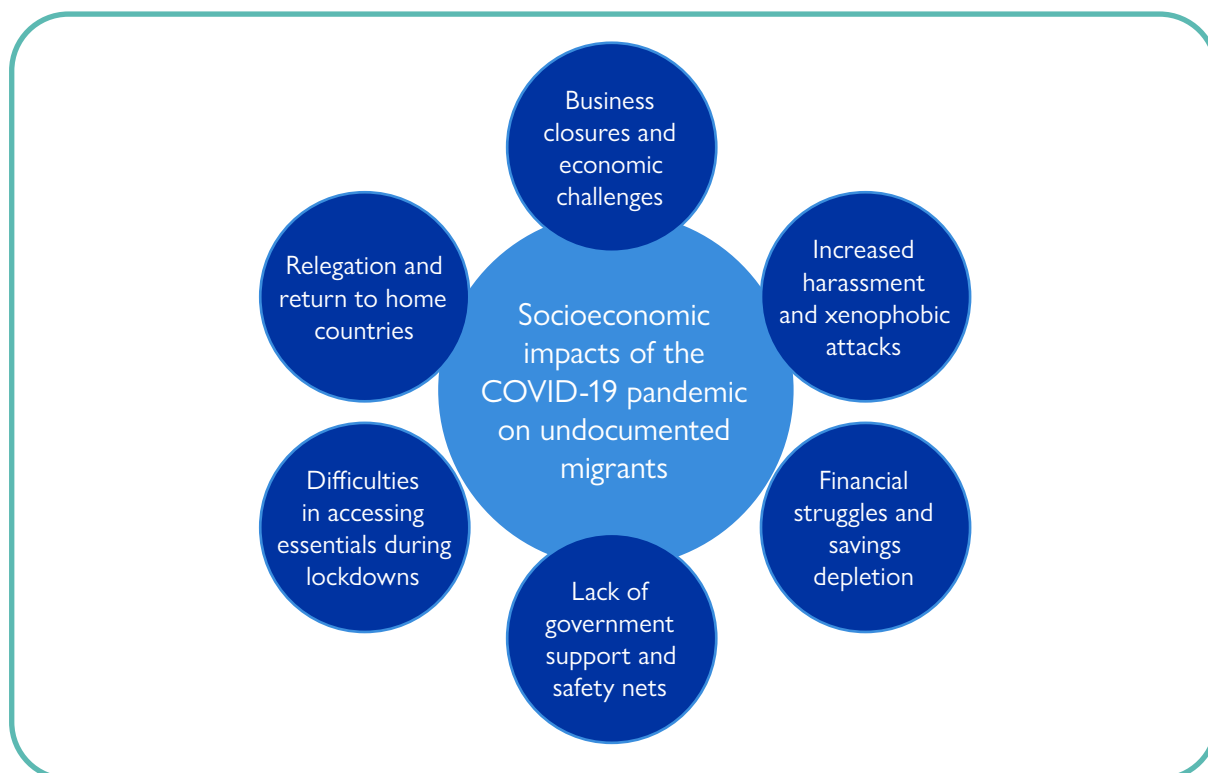
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Business closures and economic challenges

South Africa implemented a nationwide response to COVID-19 through a system of lockdown levels, ranging from Alert Level 5 (strictest) to Alert Level 1 (least restrictive). Generally, lockdown measures were enforced at the national level, but there were variations in their application at the local level based on the severity of COVID-19 outbreaks. While essential services, including food vendors, were allowed to operate during lockdowns, municipal authorization and permits were often required to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. In Bloemfontein, the pandemic triggered a wave of business closures among migrants who could not obtain municipal authorization and permits to operate. Hair salons, street vending stalls, taxi services and other informal businesses were abruptly halted. Participants reported significant losses in income, pushing many families into financial instability. Rita, a street vendor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recalled how the closure of her business during the COVID-19 pandemic completely stalled her business: "The Government's mandatory lockdowns completely grounded me. I could not even operate my business, and I could not buy nor sell my goods. I even ended up consuming all the stocks that I had; otherwise, I was going to die with my family." Figure 3 shows some informal business operations closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as vegetable stalls, flea markets, hair salons and others.

Figure 3. Some informal business operations closed during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Photos taken by the authors during the fieldwork in 2022 at downtown Bloemfontein.

Increased harassment and xenophobic attacks

As the pandemic continued to spread, tensions escalated, and migrants became targets of harassment and xenophobic attacks. Harassment and xenophobic attacks are not new. South Africa's major cities are periodically wracked by large-scale xenophobic violence directed at migrants and refugees from other countries.[9] Informal economy businesses and their migrant owners and employees are particularly vulnerable targets during these attacks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants working in the informal economy were accused of spreading the virus and competing for limited economic opportunities. In Bloemfontein, instances of verbal abuse, physical assaults and property damage were reported, exacerbating the vulnerability of these migrants. The threat of police brutality created a sort of "double pandemic" for the poor, as the authorities used counterfeit goods raids as a cover to target migrant-owned shops and businesses. The unjust deployment of troops, also observed in many other African countries like Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Kenya, among others, prompted outcries from civil society and the United Nations, who warned that excessive policing and the potentially deadly risks associated with the enforcement of

---

[9] Godfrey Tawodzera and Jonathan Crush, "A foreigner is not a person in this country": xenophobia and the informal sector in South Africa's secondary cities", *Urban Transformations*, 5:2 (2023).

harsh lockdowns and curfews could "spark a human rights disaster."[10]

Financial struggles and savings depletion

With businesses shuttered and incomes slashed, migrants faced dire financial challenges. Many were forced to dip into their savings to cover basic necessities like rent, food and health care. The depletion of savings raised concerns about their ability to sustain themselves in the long run and highlighted the absence of safety nets for this marginalized group. Migrant status further intensified these conditions for informal workers like Anitha from Rwanda, who operated a flea market. She shared: "I work from hand to mouth, and I was unable to store up on food during the COVID-19 pandemic mandatory lockdowns." Similarly, a migrant from Ghana expressed: "My family depends on me to sustain them; therefore, in order to do so during the lockdowns, I had to use my savings." The dual challenges of economic vulnerability and migration status rendered this group particularly susceptible to the compounding effects of the pandemic.

Lack of government support and safety nets

Undocumented migrants were excluded from government assistance programmes, including support with health care, food, cash, rent relief and housing aimed at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A working paper series by Margaret Visser revealed that the foreign-born were initially excluded from accessing the Social Relief of Distress Grant and food parcels. It was only after the court reversed this exclusion on 19 June 2020 that they could access it. In October 2021, the Minister of Health indicated that only South African citizens with identity documents would be vaccinated. Shortly thereafter, the president declared that

the vaccine would be available to all adults living in South Africa. Still, regardless of citizenship or residence status, foreigners have had only common access to vaccines since December 2021.[11] This discrimination and lack of support left them extremely vulnerable despite their significant contributions to the local economy through employment generation and ensuring food security.[12] In an interview, Teboho, a street seller from Lesotho, explained the lack of government support during the pandemic, saying: "Due to my foreign origin, I was unable to receive government support to sustain myself and my family throughout the pandemic." Because of his citizenship status, he added, he felt neglected by the authorities. The absence of safety nets, including health care, food, cash, rent relief and housing support, further heightened migrants' vulnerability as they grappled with uncertainties about their future and well-being.

Difficulties in accessing essentials during lockdowns

Lockdown measures aimed at containing the virus made it challenging for undocumented migrants to access essentials. Restricted movement hindered their ability to procure food, water and sanitation facilities. Their living conditions, often characterized by overcrowded informal settlements, exacerbated the risk of infection and limited their ability to adhere to health protocols (Figure 4).

---

[10] Katie Trippe, "Pandemic policing: South Africa's most vulnerable face a sharp increase in police-related brutality" Atlantic Council (24 June 2020).

[11] Margareet Visser, The impact of COVID-19 on South African migrant wage workers and the self-employed, ILO Working Paper no. 88 (Geneva, ILO, 2023).

[12] Jane Battersby and Vanessa Watson, "Addressing food security in African cities", *Nature Sustainability*, 1:153–155 (2018).

Figure 4. Left photo: Dry tap in one of the yards denies the residents' right to potable water and compromises their hygiene. Right photo: Children fetching water at a communal tap.

Source: Photos taken by the authors during the field work in 2022 at downtown Bloemfontein.

Relegation and return to home countries (Return migration)

The pandemic prompted some undocumented migrants to consider returning to their home countries (return migration), seeking refuge with family and friends. What is interesting in the South African case is that the Government recognized the need to allow citizens to move to another household before lockdown orders take effect. According to the survey, Social Impact of COVID-19 (Wave 3): Mobility, Migration, and Education in South Africa, nearly 6 per cent of respondents changed their provincial residence during the national lockdown. The results show that, generally, migrant respondents were more vulnerable than non-migrant respondents. A much higher percentage of migrant respondents (22.5%) were unemployed than non-migrants (9%).[13] The findings from the report emphasize the important role of mobility and migration in the South African economy during the national lockdown.

In Bloemfontein, the dire economic conditions and lack of prospects compelled some migrants to choose to leave behind their businesses. In an interview, Farai, a hairdresser from Zimbabwe, stated: "I have friends with whom I used to work with in the downtown area, but they were forced to travel back to their own countries because of COVID-19 lockdown limitations." He continued by saying that while some of them could return, most of them never did. Tami, a Malawian clothing vendor, also narrated: "Because I did not want to handle everything by myself, I had to leave and come back once the prolonged lockdown was finished. For me to be able to help in an emergency, I wanted to stay near to my home." This unfortunate return and reverse migration come at the expense of the personal aspirations and stability of migrants.

---

[13] Statistics South Africa, Mobility and migration in SA during the COVID-19 lockdown (27 July 2020).

These findings demonstrate the profound impact of catastrophes like the COVID-19 pandemic in shaping migration patterns of migrants in South Africa. The reverse migration, prompted by the constraints of the prolonged lockdown, highlights the sacrifices made by migrants, compromising their aspirations and stability in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Coping strategies and adaptation by migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic

Migrants in the informal economy of downtown Bloemfontein demonstrated remarkable resilience by employing various "nimble" coping strategies to navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 5 illustrates some innovative approaches they adopted to adapt and survive during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5. Coping strategies and adaptation by migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic
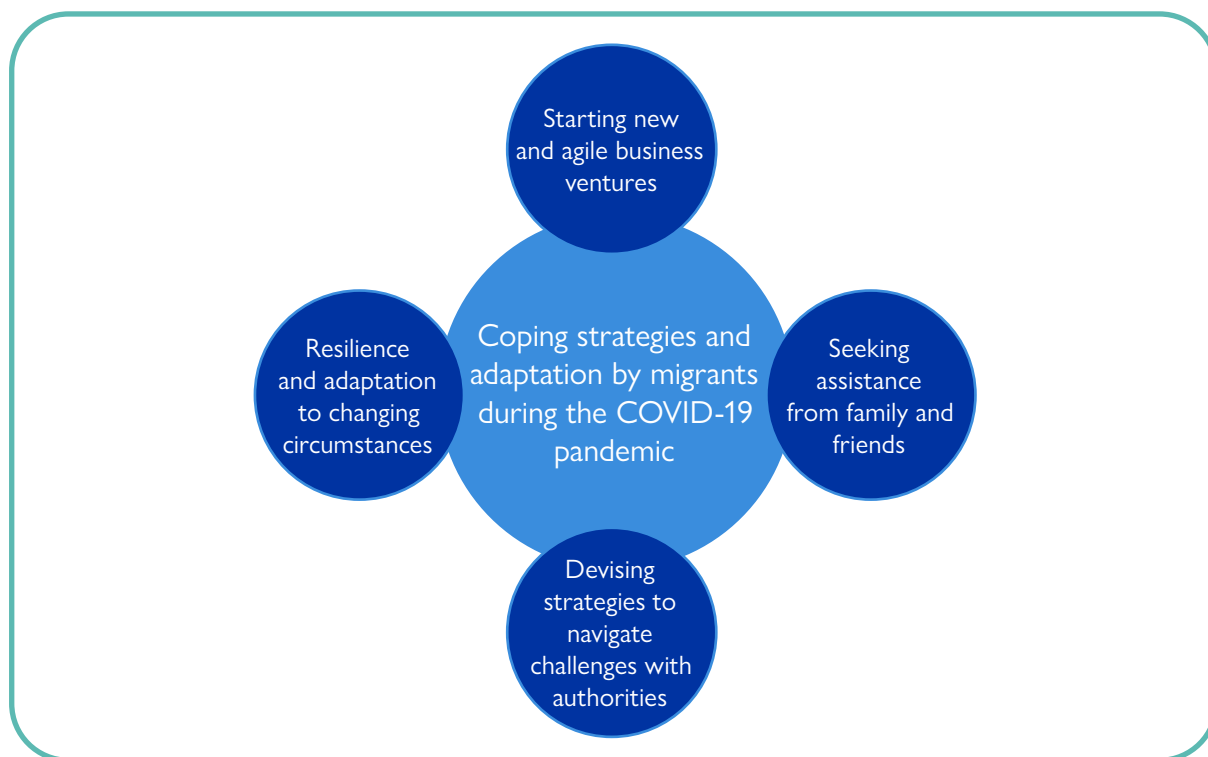
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Starting new and agile business ventures

Confronted with the sudden closure of their businesses, many migrants displayed resourcefulness by venturing into new business avenues. Street sellers turned to selling masks, sanitizers and other pandemic-related essentials. Hairdressers diversified their services, providing home-based haircuts to clients. Rita narrated: "I ended up selling masks and sanitizers in the residential neighbourhood, and I was able to earn a little money to sustain myself and my family, which was better than sitting without doing anything to bring food in the table." Betty, a street seller from the Democratic Republic of

the Congo, said: "I started knocking on doors in my neighbourhood to see if they have any jobs that they could provide me only for that day." She continued by saying she was employed regularly and paid to clean yards and wash laundry. She was able to sustain her family and herself with the money. These adaptive measures provided alternative income sources and showcased migrants' ability to seize emerging opportunities in the face of a crisis.

Amidst the limitations imposed by the curtailment of conventional face-to-face interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants in the informal economy also resourcefully turned to digital platforms and social media. These modern technological tools became instrumental in maintaining connections with clients and adapting and sustaining their businesses in the evolving landscape of remote communication and commerce.

Seeking assistance from family and friends

Social networks are often limited for migrants at their destination. However, there is evidence that informal traders draw on and develop their social capital to mitigate negative trends and shocks and take advantage of opportunities.[14] During the COVID-19 pandemic, many turned to family and friends for financial assistance, leveraging these relationships to secure loans and financial aid. Thomas from Malawi narrated: "My friend Mark helped me with money to pay my rent and buy food. He was indeed an angel from heaven; I was going to die if it was not of him!" This mutual support network became a lifeline, helping them cover essential expenses like rent, food and health care when formal safety nets were absent.

Devising strategies to navigate challenges with authorities

There is evidence that anti-migrant sentiment is a key driver of punitive approaches toward the informal economy.[15] Exclusionary approaches are underpinned by legislative frameworks that criminalize informal street trading. Vendors also face forceful evictions, frequent confiscations of their goods and illegal soliciting of bribes by police officials to permit them to operate in certain areas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some migrants in Bloemfontein also resorted to offering bribes to law enforcement to continue operating their businesses. Others employed discretion by minimizing movements and adhering to health protocols to avoid drawing attention. Mbizi, a shop owner from Malawi, said: "I had to offer authorities a few rands as in like a bribe to continue operating my business throughout the pandemic." These handy strategies aimed to strike a delicate balance between survival and avoiding potential legal repercussions. It is important to note that these dynamics are not new and demonstrate the strong hand of authorities themselves in soliciting bribes from migrants because of their undocumented status.

Resilience and adaptation to changing circumstances

The migrants' ability to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed their remarkable resilience. As business environments shifted, they adjusted their operations, reduced expenditures and explored novel ways to cater to evolving customer demands. This demonstrated their capacity to withstand adversity and swiftly adapt to dynamic conditions.

---

[14] Nomkhosi Mbatha and Leah Koskimaki, "Making life liveable in an informal market: Infrastructures of friendship amongst migrant street traders in Durban, South Africa", *Migration and Society*, 6(1):43–56 (2023).

[15] Laura Alfers, Jane Barrett, Vanessa Pillay, Mike Rogan and Marlese von Broembsen, "Informal economy/sector", Stream 3, Policy Brief 1, Job Summit Policy Brief Series (Johannesburg, Institute for Economic Justice, 2018).

The plural and lithe coping strategies migrants employ demonstrate their determination to navigate the complex challenges posed by the pandemic. Their adaptability and innovation are a testament to their agency and unyielding pursuit of sustenance in the face of adversity. Rather than passively succumbing to adversity, they took charge of their circumstances by innovating and adapting their businesses. Their resilience was evident in their ability to swiftly shift business models, diversify offerings and tap into emerging market demands. In response to external shocks, this agility illustrates migrants' capacity to influence their economic trajectories despite the constraints. While conventional face-to-face interactions were curtailed, migrants embraced digital platforms and social media to maintain client connections. They created online marketplaces, utilized messaging apps for customer engagement and conducted virtual consultations. This adaptability exemplified their determination to preserve their economic activities despite unprecedented constraints. As policymakers contemplate interventions, understanding and harnessing these strategies can inform the development of targeted support measures that align with the needs and strengths of this marginalized community.

Conclusion and recommendations

This policy paper presented the experiences of migrants in the informal economy during the COVID-19 pandemic in downtown Bloemfontein, South Africa. The findings revealed a complex interplay of challenges faced by migrants, ranging from business closures and economic struggles to xenophobia and difficulties accessing essentials. Crucially, the paper revealed the distinction between vulnerabilities inherent in informal employment and those arising from migrant status, shedding light on how the convergence of these conditions exacerbates the challenges faced by migrants. While the vulnerabilities associated with informal employment include economic instability, limited access to formal support structures, exploitation and low wages, and health and safety risks, being a migrant introduces an additional layer of complexity. The intersectionality of these conditions manifests in heightened hurdles, particularly in terms of xenophobia, discrimination and the struggle to secure basic necessities during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study concludes that migration status intensifies the vulnerabilities inherently associated with informal employment, creating a unique set of challenges for this marginalized group.

Despite the adversities, the paper also highlights the resilience and adaptive strategies migrants employ in the face of such a crisis. Understanding the experiences of migrants during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial for shaping effective urban policy responses. Recognizing the agency of these migrants and acknowledging their contributions to the local economy is fundamental to building equitable and inclusive societies. Policymakers should also consider measures that protect migrants from harassment, xenophobia and discriminatory practices. Additionally, providing access to essential services, including health care and education, regardless of citizenship status, can mitigate the socioeconomic disparities exacerbated by crises. The study also highlights the importance of inclusive policies prioritizing all residents' needs, irrespective of their legal status. During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring access to government support, social safety nets and relief programmes is crucial. These measures not only alleviate the immediate struggles of migrants but also contribute to social cohesion and economic stability.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

IOM Publications Platform

 IOMPublications @IOMPublications

⊙ Sign up for **IOM Research** and **IOM Publications**

The *Migration Policy Practice* editors welcome submissions from practitioners, policy officials and applied researchers worldwide. Articles should:

» Not exceed 2,500 words and be written in a non-academic and reader-friendly style (with a maximum of 10 footnote references).
» Wherever possible, include statistical information analysis in graphs, tables and/or infographics.
» Provide analysis, findings and responses that can be applied/adapted by relevant public administrations or civil society in other countries.
» Articles on evaluations of specific migration policies and responses, including both findings and innovative methodologies, are particularly welcome.

IOM UN MIGRATION