



# Megatrends report on urbanization and migration in the context of family

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# Abstract

This report reviews and analyzes sources published from 2019 to 2024 to investigate the complex dynamics of the intersecting trends of urbanization, migration, and family. To address these complexities, the report synthesizes empirical findings, policy reports, working papers, white papers, government documents, evaluations, and other related literature, highlighting key trends, emerging issues, policy implications, and policy exemplars.

Using the UNDESA 2022 report as a baseline, this report examines how urbanization and migration processes affect families and are shaped by familial structures, roles, and relationships across global contexts. This is achieved through a thorough review of scholarly sources using a rapid review methodology.

Six critical areas in need of policy recommendations have been identified: family-friendly policies, gender-responsive and child-sensitive legislation, affordable housing and inclusive infrastructure, comprehensive urban planning, sustainable urban growth through effective family planning, and comprehensive healthcare services for immigrants.

These recommendations aim to address the complex issues arising from migration and urbanization, promoting inclusive and sustainable development that centers on the needs of individuals and families.

Given the dynamic nature of the processes surrounding urbanization and migration, ongoing research is required to fully address specific aspects of global migration and urbanization as they pertain to families. There is a continued need for targeted research that explores regional nuances in greater depth.

Rapid urbanization and changes to migration policies and patterns necessitate timely and innovative policy responses. Monitoring and adjusting policies that promote family cohesion and well-being is increasingly important as urbanization and migration continue to evolve. Policymakers, researchers, and community stakeholders should engage in ongoing dialogue to identify new opportunities and challenges as they emerge. Since migration is a global issue, nations must prioritize research and policy initiatives and assume collective responsibility to collaborate in addressing these complex and constantly shifting challenges.

# Executive Summary

Population shifts, known as “urbanization,” occur when a greater percentage of people live in urban areas (Trask, 2022). This leads to a concentration of people, economic activity, and the infrastructure required to support them (UNDESA, 2022), often detracting from rural areas and food production. The process of urbanization entails changes to social, economic, and environmental spheres. Urbanization should be viewed as a continuous process that affects not only the topography of a region or the structure of a society but also the nature of work and the role of the family. As such, it has the power to alter people’s perceptions of both individual and group responsibility (Marriage and Family Encyclopedia, 2023). It affects relationships within the family as well as the family structure, particularly in nations with traditional extended families. Catalysts of urbanization include industrialization, technological advancements, rural-to-urban migration, forced displacement, and increasing globalization and migration worldwide (Trask, 2022; UNDESA, 2022).

Urbanization has a significant impact on societal structures that directly affect families, as it involves complex dynamics, including changing demographics, land use, environmental effects, and increased health, educational, and social needs (UNDESA, 2014; UNDESA, 2018; UNDESA, 2022).

Migration refers to the movement of people, families, or groups across national and international borders, often as a result of intricate political, social, and environmental factors (UNDESA, 2022). This includes internal migration, international migration, and forced displacement due to conflict, persecution, or environmental factors (UNDESA, 2022). Migration reveals complex patterns of mobility, integration processes, and connections between communities in both the countries people are leaving and those they are entering. Policy responses aimed at regulating migrant flows are often influenced by these migratory patterns to foster greater social cohesion. Understanding migration in its entirety requires considering its short- and long-term effects on labor markets, cultural dynamics, and the demographic makeup of both the origin and destination regions. Scholarly and policy research emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies to manage migration’s complexity and unlock its potential for sustainable, human-centered development.

The complex interactions between push and pull factors, which shape the relationship between urbanization and migration, affect both processes. Urbanization has historically attracted individuals seeking employment, healthcare, education, and other opportunities, leading to migration from ru-

ral areas and smaller towns to cities. Urban population growth and diversity increase demand for housing, family health services, education, and infrastructure (UNDESA, 2022). Additionally, migration contributes to urbanization by adding skills, labor, and cultural diversity, which bolster social cohesion and economic vitality in urban areas. Further structural factors that influence the relationship between migration and urbanization include globalization, economic inequality, political instability, environmental change, and technological advancements (UNDESA, 2022). These factors affect migrant flows, the location and density of urban populations, and the experiences of individuals and families. Consequently, the degree of urbanization varies globally across different regions and nations (UNDESA, 2022).

Six critical areas for policy recommendations have been identified. These include comprehensive urban planning, sustainable urban growth through effective family planning, affordable housing and inclusive infrastructure, family-friendly policies, gender-responsive and child-sensitive legislation, and comprehensive healthcare services for immigrants. These recommendations aim to address the multifaceted challenges associated with urbanization and migration, ensuring sustainable and inclusive development that prioritizes the well-being of individuals and families.

## 1. Implementing Comprehensive Urban Planning Frameworks for Sustainable Urbanization:

Governments should develop and implement comprehensive urban planning frameworks that support sustainable development, tailored to their specific contexts.

## 2. Promoting Sustainable Urban Growth Through Effective Family Planning:

As the global population increasingly shifts from rural to urban areas, larger, denser cities emerge. This urban growth is associated with air pollution, industrial development, and land use, raising concerns about social adjustment and environmental stress. Urban family planning plays a crucial role in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in terms of gender equality, employment, poverty reduction, and health outcomes. Improved family planning services, especially for low-income urban households, facilitate smaller family sizes and promote a more sustainable and equitable future for urban populations.

## 3. Promoting Affordable Housing and Inclusive Infrastructure to Reduce Socio-Economic Disparities:

Governments should support mixed-income housing projects, which combine market-rate and affordable units, to reduce socioeconomic disparities and foster social cohesion. Housing shortages can be addressed through tax breaks, subsidies, and low-interest loans to private developers who include affordable housing in their projects. Public housing developments and infrastructure upgrades are also necessary, including access to stable energy, clean water, sanitation, and public transportation, to improve living conditions.

#### 4. Promoting Family-Friendly Policies:

Encouraging family-friendly policies that embrace the traditional notion of gender equality is essential for creating a supportive, equitable, and inclusive society. By implementing flexible work schedules, maternity leave, and affordable childcare, we can encourage women to enter the workforce and improve overall family well-being. When employers provide options such as part-time schedules, remote work, and flexible hours, families can enhance their well-being and effectively manage childcare. Governments and organizations can further promote gender equality and enforce family-friendly policies to help families feel more included and supported.

#### 5. Developing Gender-Responsive and Child-Sensitive Legislation and Social Protection Measures:

Sanctuary laws should be implemented and upheld by nations that welcome immigrants to reduce violence against women and children. These laws can help immigrants feel safe and empowered to engage with law enforcement without the fear of deportation. Governments should enact legislation that explicitly supports measures designed to combat violence before implementing sanctuary policies. Education and awareness campaigns are also essential for informing immigrants—particularly women and children at risk of violence—about their legal rights, available resources, and the laws and policies that protect them.

#### 6. Providing Comprehensive Healthcare Services and Mental Health Support for Immigrants:

Children and families who migrate frequently experience depression due to the adjustment to a new location with a different climate and culture. This change may disrupt social networks, educational opportunities, and general stability, leading to increased feelings of worry and loneliness. Immigrants may face worsening mental health problems as a result of financial difficulties and the strain of adapting to a new society. The availability of insurance programs at the state level helps reduce rates of mental illness and depression. To meet the needs of children and families, insurance coverage should include mental health services, counseling, and psychological support. These services should be offered in multiple languages.

Encouraging mental health services within the educational system can provide children and adolescents with a convenient way to seek the help they need. To assist students in understanding and managing their emotions during this transition period, schools can offer counseling and mental health education. Meanwhile, training educators to recognize mental health difficulties will enable students to receive the assistance they need promptly.

#### Conclusion:

Addressing the multifaceted impacts of urbanization and migration on families requires a sustained commitment to global research and collaboration. By focusing on regional disparities and the unique challenges faced by vulnerable families, targeted interventions that promote family well-being and resilience can be developed and implemented effectively.

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# INTRODUCTION

This report explores the intersecting trends of urbanization, migration, and family dynamics by reviewing and analyzing literature published since 2019. Drawing on the UNDESA 2022 report and a comprehensive examination of scholarly sources, using a rapid review methodology, this report analyzes how urbanization and migration processes impact families and are shaped by familial structures, roles, and relationships across global contexts. Through synthesizing empirical findings, policy reports, working papers, white papers, government documents, evaluations, and other related literature, the report highlights key trends, emerging issues, policy implications, and policy exemplars essential to understanding and addressing the complex intersection of urbanization, migration, and family dynamics.

With an emphasis on family structures—including nuclear, extended, and transnational families—this report sheds light on the diverse ways families adapt to urban settings and the role of social policies and community initiatives in both supporting and hindering family resilience amid rapid urbanization and migration trends. By exploring the interplay among economic opportunities, social networks and policies, and familial ties, this analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how urbanization and migration influence the well-being and cohesion of families worldwide. The report aims to inform policymakers and advocates seeking solutions to the complex issues related to urbanization and migration in specific global contexts. It underscores the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in policy development and implementation, considering the implications of cultural norms and practices on familial dynamics. Finally, the report identifies gaps in current research and suggests directions for future studies to address the evolving challenges and opportunities arising from the intersection of urbanization, migration, and family dynamics.

# 1.1

## Understanding Urbanization and Migration

Urbanization refers to a population shift that increases the proportion of people living in urban areas (Trask, 2022), leading to the concentration of people, economic activities, and infrastructure needed to support them (UNDESA, 2022), often drawing attention away from rural areas and food production. Urbanization involves transformations across social, economic, and environmental domains. It should be viewed as an ongoing process that impacts not just the geography or societal organization of a region, but also the role of the family and the nature of work, with the capacity to reshape perceptions of individual and collective responsibility (Marriage and Family Encyclo-

pedia, 2023). It influences family structure and relationships, particularly in societies with traditional extended family systems. Factors such as industrialization, technological advancement, rural-to-urban migration, forced displacement, and increasing global migration and globalization all serve as catalysts for urbanization (Trask, 2022; UNDESA, 2022).

As urbanization unfolds, it contends with complex dynamics involving demographic shifts, changes in land use, environmental impacts, and increased health, educational, and social needs, which all exert profound implications on societal structures and directly impact families (UNDESA, 2014; UNDESA, 2018; UNDESA, 2022).

Urban centers play a significant role in “bolstering the well-being of families” (Aref et al., 2024, p.285). They are central to global development policies, with the New Urban Agenda closely linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming to make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2020). The trend of urbanization continues and accelerates worldwide, with cities expanding at a faster rate than their populations. Migration serves as a significant driver of urbanization, while persistent inequalities remain a challenge in urban areas (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2020). Urban regions possess the capacity to promote social integration and mitigate poverty through inclusive policies, effective resource allocation, and sufficient investment. To create inclusive and sustainable urban growth plans that enhance the lives of urban residents, activists, legislators, and other stakeholders must understand the complex dynamics of urbanization. Technological advancements, particularly in transport and communications, also play a key role in contemporary urbanization. For instance, the widespread adoption of work-from-home policies during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to changes in urban living patterns (e.g., Battisti et al., 2022).

Migration refers to the movement of individuals, families, or groups across geographical and political boundaries, often driven by complex socio-economic, political, and environmental factors (UNDESA, 2022). This phenomenon encompasses internal migration within a country, international migration between nations, and forced displacement due to conflict, persecution, or environmental factors (UNDESA, 2022). Migration reveals intricate patterns of movement, integration processes, and interactions between migrants and the receiving communities. These migratory patterns influence policy responses aimed at managing migratory flows to promote social cohesion.

Understanding migration requires considering its immediate and long-term impacts on labor markets, cultural dynamics, and the demographic composition of both the regions of origin and destination. Scholarly and policy research highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to manage migration’s complexity and realize its potential for sustainable and human-centered development.

Urbanization and migration are shaped by a complex interplay of push and pull factors that characterize the dynamic relationship between the two. Historically, urbanization has attracted people seeking employment, education, healthcare, and other necessities, leading to migration from rural and smaller towns to cities. The growing diversity of urban populations leads to increased demand for housing, healthcare, education, and infrastructure (UNDESA, 2022). Migration, in turn, contributes to urbanization by bringing skills, labor, and cultural diversity, enhancing the social cohesion and economic vibrancy of metropolitan areas. The interaction between urbanization and migration is also influenced by broader structural factors, including globalization, economic disparities, political instability, environmental change, and technological advancements (UNDESA, 2022). These factors contribute to the varying degrees of urbanization experienced by different regions and nations, affecting the dynamics of migrant flows and the location and density of urban populations (UNDESA, 2022).

Following the sections on urbanization and migration, the report will include a discussion on how these two processes intersect and impact family dynamics. In addition, it will provide actionable policy suggestions based on examples of successful implementation. These recommendations advocate for a holistic approach to urban planning and migration policy, enabling societies to harness the potential of cities as engines of economic development, diversity, and innovation, while being well-prepared to support families.

# METHODOLOGY

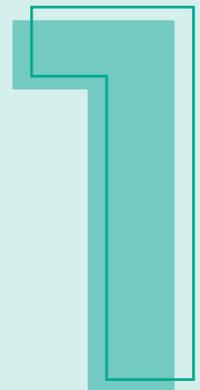


After extensive collaboration with the commissioning body to delineate the report's scope and considering the task of producing a comprehensive report within a constrained time frame, the research team utilized a rapid review approach. Rapid reviews offer a pragmatic solution by diverging from the exhaustive nature of systematic reviews. Instead, rapid reviews use a staged search strategy to swiftly identify high-quality systematic reviews, followed by the inclusion of relevant primary studies and grey literature. By leveraging the rapid review methodology, the research team aimed to balance comprehensiveness with expediency, ensuring that the report would be rigorously evidence-based and delivered on time. This methodological choice underscores the commitment to producing a robust and actionable document despite the inherent constraints of time-sensitive projects (King et al., 2022).

We opted for a concise five-year timeframe to focus on the intersection of urbanization and migration. This period was chosen strategically, given the significant upheavals that have transpired since 2019. Events such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and major geopolitical shifts—including the United States' withdrawal from Syria, the sudden withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Russian war against Ukraine, Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit), the civil war in Sudan, the Israel-Hamas conflict, and substantial changes in U.S. and European immigration policies—have collectively reshaped the dynamics of urbanization and migration.

Additionally, the authors utilized the UN-DESA 2022 report as a foundational source before engaging in the three subsequent phases of the rapid review.

# PHASE



After an initial search to assess the volume of available literature, the following electronic databases were systematically searched on April 7, 2024, specifically targeting international systematic reviews published in English: Academic Search Complete and Web of Science. Title, abstract, and keyword fields were searched using the following terms:

### Urbanization Search Terms:

'Urban settlements,' 'urban discrimination,' 'urban segregation,' 'urban fragmentation,' 'rural to urban migration,' 'urban to rural migration,' 'intra-region mobility,' 'homeless AND family AND policy AND 'systematic review.'

### Migration Search Terms:

'Transnational,' 'internal migration,' 'reunification,' 'remittance,' 'push factors,' 'pull factors,' 'asylum seekers,' 'unaccompanied minors,' 'internally displaced persons,' 'immigration,' 'forced displacement,' 'refugees,' 'mobility,' 'mixed migration,' 'economic migrant,' 'climate migrant,' 'labor migrant' AND family AND policy AND 'systematic review.'

### Inclusion Criteria:

- Peer-reviewed systematic reviews
- Published in English between 2019-2024
- Addressed migration, urbanization, or both in relation to family (core or extended family)

### Exclusion Criteria:

- Not a peer-reviewed systematic review
- Published in a language other than English
- Published before 2019
- Did not address migration or urbanization in the context of family

The lead author reviewed the titles and abstracts of all retrieved systematic reviews and conducted full-text screening. The lead author and co-authors agreed on a data extraction template, which included reference, country/region, focus of review, issues/debates identified, key findings, related policies/initiatives, and recommendations. The data charting was conducted by the lead author.

After identifying duplicates, 217 records were obtained from the databases. After the initial screening, 137 records were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. Following a full-text assessment of the remaining 80, a further 33 reviews were excluded. The final number of reviews included for foundational insights was 47.

# PHASE

# 2

To supplement the limited initial literature, the research team broadened the scope by incorporating primary research and grey literature. This approach captured diverse perspectives and insights beyond systematic reviews.

Searches were conducted on the Academic Search Complete and Web of Science databases. This step ensured a thorough examination of available research, covering a wide range of regions and thematic areas. By integrating primary research findings and grey literature, the team aimed to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the subject matter, enriching the depth and breadth of the analysis.

### Urbanization Search Terms:

'Urban settlements,' 'urban discrimination,' 'urban segregation,' 'urban fragmentation,' 'rural to urban migration,' 'urban to rural migration,' 'intra-region mobility,' homeless AND family AND policy.

### Migration Search Terms:

'Transnational,' 'internal migration,' 'reunification,' 'remittance,' 'push factors,' 'pull factors,' 'asylum seekers,' 'unaccompanied minors,' 'internally displaced persons,' 'immigration,' 'forced displacement,' 'refugees,' 'mobility,' 'mixed migration,' 'economic migrant,' 'climate migrant,' 'labor migrant' AND family AND policy.

### Inclusion Criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles or grey literature
- Published in English between 2019-2024
- Addressed migration, urbanization, or both in relation to family (core or extended family)
- Referred to policy

### Exclusion Criteria:

- Published in a language other than English
- Published before 2019
- Did not address migration or urbanization in the context of family
- Did not refer to policy

The lead author again reviewed the titles and abstracts of all retrieved literature, followed by full-text screening. A data extraction template was agreed upon with the co-authors before data charting was conducted by the lead author.

After identifying duplicates, 3,203 records were found in the databases. After the initial screening, 2,202 records were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. After full-text assessment of the remaining 1,001, an additional 776 papers were excluded. The final number of papers included to provide diverse perspectives and insights was 225.

# PHASE

# 3

In addition to the database searches, the research team also included literature recommended by the commissioning body and the reviewer. Bibliographies of particularly relevant articles were also consulted, which included literature published before 2019.

## Ethical Considerations

### Ethical Approval:

Ethical approval was not required for this rapid review report.

### Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the review, selection, or interpretation of the literature, nor in writing the report.

### Risk of Bias:

As this rapid review provides an overview of the existing literature and does not critically appraise the included articles, the risk of bias was not assessed. However, the authors discussed any limitations within the body of evidence included.

### Voice and Representation:

By limiting the search to English-language publications, some literature may have been excluded. Low- and middle-income countries are notably underrepresented.

# SETTING

## THE SCENE- URBANIZATION



As of 2024, nearly 58 percent of the global population resides in urban areas (UNDESA, 2024). As urban populations continue to grow, rural populations are expected to decline, potentially reaching just 32 percent of the global population by 2050 (UNDESA, 2024). The UNDP (2018) predicts a 1.5 billion increase in urban populations over the next 20 years, with the number of “megacities” (urban areas with more than 10 million residents) set to double. This growth will lead to 358 “million cities” and 27 “megacities.” Much of this urban expansion is expected to occur in developing countries in Africa and Asia (UNDESA, 2024). Rapid urbanization strains resources like water, sewage systems, public health, and education. Despite cities covering only 3% of the Earth’s land-mass, they consume 60-80% of energy and produce 75% of carbon emissions (UNDP, 2018). According to the International Energy Agency (2024), global electricity demand rose moderately in 2023 but is expected to grow faster through 2026. Urbanization presents both challenges and opportunities for resource consolidation and efficiency.

In both high- and low-income countries, geographical location significantly impacts access to resources, particularly affecting disadvantaged groups, including low-income families, children, and the elderly, when they reside far from resource centers (DESA, 2009; IOM, 2020a).

This issue is often overlooked by policymakers due to the complexity of assessing access to services. Migrants from rural areas, who face climate change, lower socioeconomic classifications, altered family roles, and a decline in extended family support, often settle on the outskirts of urban areas, which exacerbates social exclusion. It is essential to recognize that the lives and opportunities of newly arrived migrants differ significantly from those of long-established urban residents. Marginalized settlements must be considered in urban planning to address the diverse experiences and needs of both new arrivals and established urban residents. Furthermore, the intersection of culture, heritage, geography, and place plays a significant role in community development. Each locale requires a robust understanding of its past and present to properly plan for its future (Al-Daffaie & Abdelmonem, 2023).

Urbanization has a globally transformative impact on societies and families, affecting a wide range of experiences and cultures. Key aspects of this trend to be discussed include:

- 1. Urbanization and Families**
- 2. Urbanization, Familial, and Societal Gender Equality**
- 3. Urbanization and Homelessness**
- 4. Urbanization as an Opportunity**

# 3.1

## Urbanization and Families

Urbanization is a global trend characterized by migration from rural to urban areas, with significant implications for societal, economic, and environmental dynamics. Currently, over half of the world's population resides in urban areas, a figure expected to rise to 68% by 2050 (Trend-Bible, 2024), placing substantial demands on infrastructure and housing. This trend is particularly pronounced in regions like Africa and Asia, where rapid urbanization is occurring from lower initial levels, while in Europe and North America, urbanization continues from already high levels but at a slower pace (Query, 2022). In Europe, Canada, and the United States, the gap between urban and rural living is closing due to advancements in telecommunications and transportation, allowing more people to live in rural areas and work virtually. However, much of the developing world still faces major connectivity challenges (e.g., International Telecommunication Union, 2022).

Urbanization profoundly impacts family life, often leading to the fragmentation of family structures and a shrinking extended family. However, in countries like Canada, Singapore, and Qatar, multigenerational housing is on the rise, with incentives encouraging family members to live

close together. These living arrangements, where grandparents play a pivotal role in transmitting values to children, are increasingly recognized for promoting better quality of life and empowerment, contrasting the shrinking trend of extended families attributed to globalization and modernization (UNDESA, 2022). Conversely, urban areas also pose challenges for families, including housing insecurity, disrupted communities due to infrastructure development, and environments that may be unsafe for women and children (UNDESA, 2022). Despite these challenges, understanding the complex interplay between urbanization and family dynamics is crucial for shaping policies and interventions that promote family well-being and social cohesion in urban settings.

In Western urban areas, the rise of childless singles and couples raises questions about the desirability and benefits of childless cities (Kotkin & Modarres, 2013). This trend has led to economic and social consequences, where affluent, childless singles and couples are pricing out families. The phenomenon of childless cities is more prevalent in the West, requiring increased attention from scholars and policymakers (Kotkin & Modarres, 2013).

# 3.2

## Urbanization and Gender Equality

For urban areas to be safe and equitable, particularly for women, it is important for citizens to be involved in the development of these spaces. Without access to transportation and essential services that impact women's health and safety, women remain at risk of domestic and sexual violence (UN Women, 2019). Addressing sexual violence and harassment in public spaces is critical to enabling women's freedom and participation in society. The active engagement of women in urban governance is essential and can lead to the integration of gender equality measures in urban planning, thereby improving safety for women and children (Trask, 2020).

Urbanization has led to changes in family structures, with a shift to smaller family units and altered family roles (TutorChase, 2024). Women in urban areas face more job opportunities, reshaping traditional gender roles into dual-income households and increasing the demand for childcare services (Anthroholic, 2023). This emphasis on women's economic participation has also led to a reevaluation of societal norms and expectations regarding caregiving responsibilities within families. While urban areas offer improved access

to healthcare, education, and recreational facilities, they also present health challenges such as air pollution and limited physical activity due to a lack of open spaces. The high cost of living, job insecurity, and social inequality in cities can strain families, affecting their overall well-being. However, cities provide job opportunities even for those without formal education. In contrast, rural areas often have lower incomes and a higher cost of living, as many goods are transported from cities (e.g., Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024).

Additionally, the fast-paced, individualistic nature of city life can lead to social isolation and weakened community bonds, reducing the support systems available to families (Anthroholic, 2023). Long work hours and commute times in urban settings can also reduce the quality time family members spend together, potentially affecting family stability and relationships. Understanding the complexities of urban living and its impact on family dynamics is crucial for developing effective policies and strategies that support healthy and resilient family units in urban environments.

# 3.3

## Urbanization and Homelessness

Urbanization exacerbates homelessness, a visible manifestation of inequality, which takes various forms such as street homelessness and precarious housing, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (UNDESA, 2022). According to UNDESA's 2022 report, an estimated 150 million people globally experience homelessness, with over 20% of the population living in inadequate housing. Family homelessness, often invisible yet widespread, is influenced by sociocultural, economic, and political factors, including family breakdown and migration from rural to urban areas where housing is limited. Homelessness in children's lives is a major risk factor that affects their development, mental health, and future prospects (Murran & Brady, 2023). Neoliberal policies promoting housing privatization and financialization have further compounded the issue, often overshadowing efforts to address homelessness through alternative approaches. Solutions are harder to find when policymakers fail to

acknowledge the true cost of homelessness (Carnemolla & Skinner, 2021). According to UNDESA's 2022 report, governments should reconsider their urbanization and housing policies, prioritize social protection measures, and address the growing challenges of homelessness, especially for vulnerable groups like women and children. Housing should be recognized as a human right, serving as social, economic, and physical capital (Moreno-Monroy et al., 2020). The 1980s saw a shift from state-provided housing to the private sector, exacerbating homelessness and widening the gap between those who can afford housing and those who cannot (Fée, 2009). Around the world, few countries acknowledge their responsibility to provide housing, with most addressing housing needs only in the aftermath of wars or disasters (Hearne, 2023).

# 3.4

## Urbanization as an Opportunity

Megacities are projected to expand, but the majority of urban dwellers will reside in smaller cities globally. By 2036, India's towns and cities will be home to 600 million people, or 40% of the population, up from 31% in 2011, with urban areas contributing nearly 70% of GDP (Kouamé, 2024). This urban growth poses challenges but also offers opportunities to enhance sustainability and efficiency. Due to their density, urban areas can serve as hubs for integrating economic, energy, environmental, and social aspects, playing a critical role in socio-economic development and social progress when managed effectively. If cities are planned and constructed with care and intention, they can foster greater equity, inclusion, and quality of life (UN Habitat, 2016; 2020).

### Urban Governance

Studies consistently emphasize the exclusion of impoverished groups from decision-making processes, leading to their marginalization and neglect (DESA, 2009). The needs of the most vulnerable individuals are often overlooked, their challenges unrecognized, and their voices excluded from decision-making processes.

# PREDICTORS, MODERATORS/MEDIATORS, AND OUTCOMES OF URBANIZATION



In order to fully understand the complex network of urban family life, it is necessary to examine the predictors, moderators/mediators, and outcomes of this diverse process of urbanization. Urban socioeconomic conditions, environmental stewardship laws, and government planning and policies interact in ways that are explained by moderators and mediators,

while predictors illuminate the economic, infrastructural, demographic, and governmental factors driving urbanization. Research demonstrates the various impacts of urbanization on the environment, family dynamics, health, and development, emphasizing both the advantages and disadvantages of this process (UNDESA, 2022; UN75, 2020).

## Predictors of Urbanization

Through an understanding of the complex dynamics of urbanization, several predictors emerge as significant drivers shaping the landscape of urban areas across the globe. Four key predictors of urbanization include: 1) economic opportunities; 2) development of infrastructure; 3) growth in population; and 4) government policies. These predictors shed light on the economic, infrastructural, demographic, and governmental dimensions of urbanization.

- **Economic Opportunities:** Urban areas often offer better job opportunities, higher wages, and improved living standards compared to rural areas (UNDESA, 2022). Additionally, industrialization and a shift away from agricultural economies towards service-oriented sectors drive families towards cities (UN75, 2020).
- **Development of Infrastructure:** A lack of development in rural areas is a driving force towards urbanization, with universal education provision in rural areas encouraging pupils to seek higher education in urban areas (e.g., Guo et al., 2019). Urban areas attract people due to their robust infrastructure, including housing, healthcare, education, and transportation networks, thereby increasing opportunities for individuals and families (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Growth in Population:** Population growth contributes to urbanization through both rural-to-urban migration and the natural increase of people within cities (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Government Policies:** Urbanization is incentivized by laws that support and encourage urban growth, including financial incentives and increased infrastructure spending in urban centers (UN75, 2020).

## Moderators of Urbanization

With significant ramifications for governance, social structures, and environmental sustainability, the phenomenon of urbanization marks a turning point in the development of modern society. The moderators of urbanization involve complex interactions among urban socioeconomic conditions, environmental stewardship regulations, and government planning and policies. Three key moderators include: 1) planning and policies of the government; 2) socioeconomic status; and 3) environmental regulations.

- **Planning and Policies of the Government:** Intentional and purposeful urban planning and policy can control the pace and effects of urbanization, affecting social services, affordable housing, and transportation (UN75, 2020).
- **Socioeconomic Status:** The advantages individuals and families gain from urbanization rely significantly on their socioeconomic status. Lower-income families often grapple with challenges such as residing in informal settlements, while higher-income families typically enjoy superior housing options and enhanced access to services (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Environmental Regulations:** Urban growth sustainability is impacted by environmental policies and regulations that address issues such as waste management, pollution, and green spaces (UNDESA, 2022).

## Mediators of Urbanization

Examining the complex terrain of urbanization reveals dynamic pathways between several mediators that shape the urban experience. The critical roles that various factors play in mediating the consequences and effects of urbanization include: 1) access to services; 2) social networks; and 3) digital connectivity and technology.

- **Access to Services:** Urbanization's harmful effects on people's quality of life are mitigated by the accessibility and availability of essential services, including healthcare, education, and public transportation (UN75, 2020).
- **Social Networks:** Social networks and community support systems facilitate integration and resource access, assisting individuals and families in navigating the difficulties of urban living (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Digital Connectivity and Technology:** Urbanization is mediated by the integration of digital technology and connectivity, which improves access to economic opportunities, services, and information (UNDESA, 2022).

## Outcomes of Urbanization

The process of urbanization has numerous effects that ripple through various facets of societal life. These effects include: 1) development and economic growth; 2) family and social dynamics; and 3) health and well-being.

- **Development and Economic Growth:** Urbanization typically leads to economic growth due to increased productivity, innovation, and the concentration of businesses and services (UN75, 2020).
- **Family and Social Dynamics:** Urbanization impacts family structures, frequently resulting in smaller households and altered family roles. It may also lead to a decline in the support of extended families, resulting in social fragmentation (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Health and Well-being:** Urban environments can enhance health outcomes by providing improved living conditions and access to healthcare; however, overcrowding, pollution, and changing lifestyles also pose risks (UNDESA, 2022).

Urbanization plays an integral role in shaping societies and families across the world. The regional trends to be discussed include:

1. **Urbanization Trends in the Middle East and North Africa**
2. **Urbanization Trends in Africa**
3. **Urbanization Trends in North America**
4. **Urbanization Trends in Latin America**
5. **Urbanization Trends in Europe**
6. **Urbanization Trends in Asia and the Pacific**

# 4.1

## Urbanization Trends in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

While small and with a rather blurred division between rural and urban areas, the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region represents the most urbanized global region, including Kuwait and Qatar, where nearly the entire population lives in urban areas (Statista, 2022). The MENA region encompasses a vast area extending from the Atlantic coast of Africa to the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan in Central Asia, and from the Mediterranean littoral to the southern boundaries of the Sahara Desert (International Monetary Fund, n.d.).

Countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Syria have demonstrated critical cases of rapid urbanization. It is important to acknowledge that this rapid urbanization has occurred partly as a result of conflict displacement. Refugee camps that were initially temporary settlements in 1948 have now become urban settlements. Similarly, the majority of more recent Syrian refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey have transformed into semi-urban centers that require special attention. These camps are not solely governed by the host governments due to the UN's involvement in their management and support (UNHCR, 2024).

The immense urbanization of the MENA region has resulted in specific familial vulnerabilities for its population (Lansford et al., 2020). A lack of social organization in these sprawling metropolitan areas has weakened family ties and contributed to an increased divorce rate (Alzuhrary, 2010). Financial vulnerabilities have also marked these highly urbanized areas (Sarabdeen et al., 2020). As urbanization and modernization, spurred by globalization, have continued to increase in the MENA region, there has been a steady decline in extended families and an increase in nuclear families (Aref & Khodr, 2022). Although urbanization has led to the segmentation of extended families, this structure persists in some forms across the MENA region, often involving grandparents or other family members living nearby and engaging on a regular basis (Aref & Khodr, 2022). These interactions between nuclear and extended families are generally characterized positively, with grandparents helping and contributing to the nuclear family (DIFI, 2022).

In the Middle East, cultural values and economic forces interact in complex ways that affect urban planning and development. Studying urban living in Iraq, Al-Thahab and Abdelmonem (2019) found that privacy, good neighborliness, brotherhood, family, and the status of women are core principles of the Islamic social system that explicitly shape urban development toward greater community cohesion. These values, regulated by often unwritten building guidelines (passed down from one generation to the next based on Islamic recommendations), foster solidarity and peaceful coexistence, forming dynamic communities where various socio-cultural groups interact harmoniously. Additionally, the urbanization trend in many North African countries is contributing to declining marriage rates and increasing divorce rates, altering the traditional landscape of nuptial patterns and impacting cultural systems of values (Aref et al., 2024). By integrating cultural

values and traditions into urban planning—such as prioritizing privacy and social solidarity while adapting to contemporary needs—communities can achieve sustainable and inclusive urban environments that prioritize human needs.

Over the last 30 years, Middle Eastern cities have shifted from traditional hierarchies to competing for regional influence due to neoliberal policies and increased wealth (Abdelmonem, 2016). New cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha, as well as Neom in Saudi Arabia and the new Administrative Capital in Egypt, are challenging older cities such as Baghdad, Beirut, and Cairo in terms of attractiveness, wealth, and global presence. This competition has disrupted traditional city structures, leading to increased social segregation and unemployment, fueled by urban elites' financial power and middle-class neglect (Abdelmonem, 2016). Middle-class neglect highlights the Arab middle class's persistent struggle with the region's political instability, rising conflict, and difficulty in securing economic opportunities amid scarce social protections and increasing poverty (UNESCWA, 2023). A proposal to address these issues includes a push for new privately owned capital cities that have emerged from neoliberal economic alliances. The aim is to shift economic and political hubs to newly developed areas. Existing cities have been established as fresh urban zones away from more well-established and overcrowded areas, which does little to address many of the central issues within middle-class neglect (Abdelmonem, 2016). Finally, urban infill and rehabilitation projects, such as Musharib in Doha or Al-Abdali in Amman, are worth mentioning. Here, preservation and renewal are the urban strategy, as opposed to building new cities on virgin land (e.g., Al Rabady, 2024).

# 4.2

## Urbanization Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa

Africa has the world's most rapidly growing urban areas, with a young demographic projected to double by 2050 (Aref et al., 2024; Gizelis et al., 2021). The continent is often identified as particularly susceptible to the social and economic repercussions of environmental and demographic shifts, despite urbanized areas encompassing less than one percent of its total landmass. Nonetheless, the population residing in African cities is expected to skyrocket by more than 150% between 2020 and 2050, dwarfing the anticipated 35%

growth in rural populations (Gizelis et al., 2021). The profound societal shifts accompanying this rapid urbanization underscore the importance of understanding the intricacies and ramifications of urban population expansion (Gizelis et al., 2021). Population growth is linked to elevated risks of civil unrest in urban outskirts, whereas there is no such increased risk in urban centers. This highlights the critical need to comprehend the complex nuances of urban environments (Gizelis et al., 2021).

Urbanization trends in Africa reveal complex causes of rural-urban migration, the emergence of increased informal settlements, direct impacts on rural livelihoods, and shifts in gender dynamics. Rural-urban migration in Ethiopia, like in many other African nations, is driven by food shortages due to landlessness and drought, as well as debt, information flow, and cultural norms (Abeje, 2021). This urban expansion leads to the development of informal settlements in areas without legal titles, resulting in rising formal land values (Bikis & Pandey, 2023). In Ghana, proximity to cities shifts rural livelihoods from agriculture to non-agriculture, which has implications for poverty and class mobility (Diao et al., 2019). Female-headed households in the capital city of Uganda face housing challenges influenced by women's social capital and networks, suggesting the need for regulation and tailored policies that consider gender (Mubiru et al., 2022).

In urban settings, families' ability to provide traditional reciprocal and intergenerational care is significantly hindered by factors such as overcrowded housing (Aref et al., 2024). Urbanization in certain regions has led to the construction of small, inadequate houses that do not accommodate the African traditional system of co-residence, further complicating family dynamics. The housing situation in Africa's urban areas has significant implications for health, social care, and intergenerational support, particularly for older individuals. As rural populations migrate to urban centers, extended family care becomes scarce, leading to a breakdown in the conventional support system for the elderly.

Rapid urbanization has contributed to the rise of slums and informal housing arrangements characterized by overcrowding (Aref et al., 2024; Bikas & Pandey, 2023). Sub-Saharan Africa is recognized as the world's fastest urbanizing region, partly due to internally displaced people seeking aid (UNDESA, 2022). However, many end up living in poor urban slums, facing increased health risks, vulnerabilities, and the threat of forced evictions. The act of fleeing persecution and conflict negatively impacts the well-being of family members, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive support and solutions to address the challenges faced by displaced populations in Africa (UNDESA, 2022). Africa is also home to some of the largest and most protracted refugee camps, often constructed on the edges of urban areas. These challenging situations exacerbate issues such as homelessness and restricted access to essential services like clean water, electricity, sanitation, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities (Aref et al., 2024). Informal settlements often lack proper housing and infrastructure, increasing the risk of disease and poor health (Weimann & Oni, 2019). Although the long-term impact of upgrading these settlements on health is not fully understood, efforts to address issues like crowding, water and sanitation, and housing improvements have shown positive effects on health and well-being (Weimann & Oni, 2019). It is crucial to consider not just individual houses but also the broader neighborhood and community dynamics during upgrading efforts.

# 4.3

## Urbanization Trends in North America

In 2021, 83.4 percent of Canadian households were located in urban regions, demonstrating the country's growing urbanization. Between 2016 and 2019, nine out of ten new immigrants chose to settle in metropolitan areas, highlighting the close link between this trend and immigration patterns. Certain cities, like Toronto, have modified their ordinances to allow multigenerational families to live together, which is often a more financially sensible choice. There is substantial evidence linking affordable housing to a higher quality of life, including lower stress levels, better mental and physical health and well-being, a stronger sense of community, and easier access to educational and employment opportunities (UNDESA, 2022). Migration to Canada impacts urbanization, as immigrants and refugees continue to disproportionately settle in urban areas, prompting the government to provide more support for the resettlement and integration of refugees into rural communities through policies such as the Private Sponsorship of Refugees and the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program. Further policy should continue to support rural communities in integrating immigrant families into all aspects of community life (Haugen et al., 2023).

Housing can be considered financial capital, with dwellings either owned or rented. Housing conditions in the United States, as in all global regions, significantly impact children's health, and any de-

cline in housing stability or quality exacerbates this effect (Ramphal et al., 2023). Evictions disrupt every aspect of a family's existence and have multiple detrimental effects on children's health and development (Ramphal et al., 2023). Eviction leads to immediate financial instability, jeopardizing parental well-being and their ability to provide nutritious food, medication, and healthcare, all of which contribute to poor child outcomes (Ramphal et al., 2023). Furthermore, evictions harm communities by increasing rates of violence and disease (Ramphal et al., 2023).

Research indicates that the significant impact of rental evictions on health begins before birth and continues throughout a child's development (Ramphal et al., 2023). Prenatal and early childhood experiences play a crucial role in determining adult health risks, so preventing evictions could not only benefit child health but also contribute to better future adult health outcomes (Ramphal et al., 2023). This preventive measure could potentially reduce the risk of various conditions, including but not limited to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative disorders, cancer, substance abuse, depression, cognitive impairment, and immune system dysfunction (Ramphal et al., 2023).

Addressing the underlying causes of housing insecurity through structural interventions is likely to yield health benefits (Ramphal et al., 2023). A shortage of affordable housing in urban areas exacerbates the problem of evictions, highlighting the need to dismantle barriers to the construction of affordable multifamily housing, such as exclusionary zoning (i.e., the use of zoning ordinances to exclude certain types of land uses from a given community, especially to regulate racial and economic diversity). Additionally, systemic issues—including disparities in education quality, income inequality, limited access to healthcare, insufficient worker protections and wages, unem-

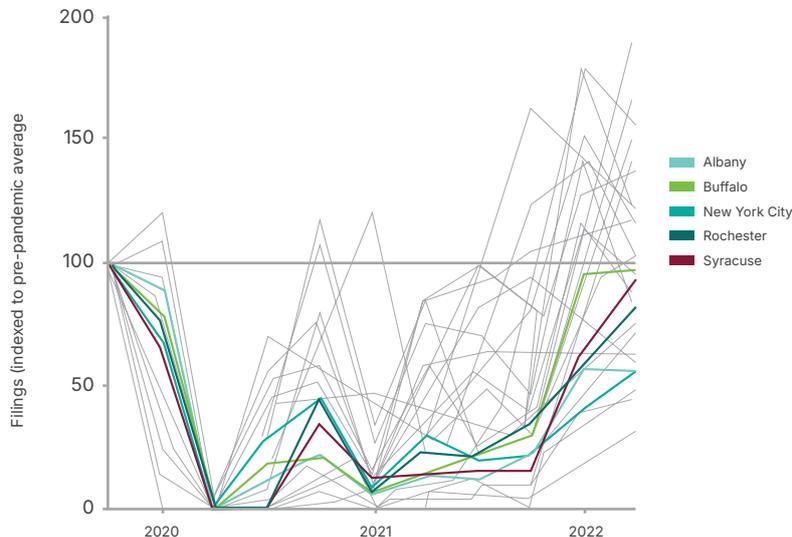
ployment, and inadequate paid sick and parental leave—contribute to housing instability. The intersection of racism, sexism, and classism, along with the historical and systemic nature of discrimination in the United States, compounds these challenges, resulting in a housing market that disproportionately exposes Black women and their children to the highest risk of eviction (Ramphal et al., 2023). Policy changes during the COVID pandemic that prevented evictions (as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below) indicate that when there is political will, policies that contribute to housing security are possible.

Figure 1: Eviction cases in Los Angeles between January 2019 and January 2023 (Source: Scott, A., 2023<sup>1</sup>)

Eviction cases filed in Los Angeles Superior Court



Figure 2: Eviction filing in New York State between 2020 and 2022 (Source: Local Housing Solutions, 2024<sup>2</sup>)



<sup>1</sup> Scott, A. (2023). The predicted 'eviction tsunami' hits LA. Available from <https://www.kcrw.com/news/shows/greater-la/renters-strikes-angels-baseball/evictions> [accessed 19 May 2024].

<sup>2</sup> Local Housing Solutions (2024). New York State Eviction Tracker. Available from <https://local housingsolutions.org/lab/notes/state-eviction-tracker/> [accessed 18 May 2024].

# 4.4

## Urbanization Trends in Latin America

Urban areas in Latin America face significant challenges in achieving the social objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including poverty alleviation, healthcare access, education, and social protections (UNDESA, 2022). Despite a slight increase in public investment in urban infrastructure from 2019 to 2021, urban living conditions remain hindered due to modest government investments (UNDESA,

2022). Latin American nations exhibit low levels of income, capital, labor, and productivity, despite high urbanization rates, presenting formidable economic and environmental obstacles (UNDESA, 2022). Urban migration in Latin America is primarily driven by territorial displacement, negative environmental impacts, conflict, exploitation, and socioeconomic factors (UNDESA, 2022).

Efforts to achieve sustainable urbanization require innovative approaches to preserve urban value and foster inclusive prosperity for families. The region experiences concurrent urban and demographic transitions, characterized by reduced rural-to-urban migration and shifting population dynamics, though economic activities remain concentrated in major metropolitan centers (UNDESA, 2022).

Urban expansion poses challenges, from escalating service costs to disparities in socioeconomic status, exemplified by marginalized Indigenous communities and social unrest (UNDESA, 2022). Although the service sector significantly contributes to GDP, impediments such as deficient planning and informal labor practices hinder its potential. While efforts to address inequalities have reduced housing deficits, socioeconomic residential segregation persists, perpetuating discrimination and spatial fragmentation (UNDESA, 2022).

For example, an evaluation of the impact of informal urban settlements in Colombia indicated that the majority of children under five years of age suffer from malnutrition and are susceptible to morbidities due to low family income, low parental education, overcrowding, inadequate

ventilation in homes, lack of housing, and unmet basic needs (Torres Parra et al., 2024). Further compounding these issues are additional problems stemming from foundational infrastructure challenges. Overcrowding and poor housing conditions can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and domestic violence, putting women and children at greater risk (Torres Parra et al., 2024). The elderly population is also vulnerable and at risk of abandonment and poor health outcomes due to accidents, respiratory diseases, gastroenterological diseases, skin infections, mental illnesses, and substance use (Torres Parra et al., 2024).

In addition to urban housing and settlement complications, Latin America is particularly vulnerable to climate change, underscoring the need for robust adaptation measures and a fortification of urban resilience (UNDESA, 2022). Integrating local governance initiatives, transparent information systems, and forward-thinking climate measures can enhance urban governance and foster equitable and sustainable urban development for families in the region (UNDESA, 2022).

# 4.5

## Urbanization Trends in Europe

Europe has transitioned into a predominantly urban and metropolitan society from its industrial and rural roots (UNDESA, 2022). Key contemporary urban issues in Europe include immigration, longer life expectancy, population aging, and the widespread adoption of new technologies (UNDESA, 2022). Internal migration intensified with the Eastern European countries joining the European Union, though east-west migration eased with democratization and economic growth in the region (UNDESA, 2022). However, nearly all major metropolitan areas in Europe experienced population decline in the years following the pandemic, reversing the multi-decade trend of increasing urban populations. Since 2020, this trend has reversed again, with more people migrating back to urban areas (Wolff & Mykhnenko, 2023).

Additionally, digital connectivity is rising, with a growing number of urban residents utilizing online services for work and daily activities (UNDESA, 2022). Big data and global monitoring have become everyday elements of life, offering cities the potential to improve planning and address local needs through real-time information from sensor networks and data collection systems (UNDESA, 2022). Yet the impact of urbanization in Europe is not solely positive; it also brings complicating factors such as homelessness, which increases risks for children and can often trigger the involvement of child welfare services (Murran & Brady, 2023). Addressing these trends requires a holistic approach that considers family needs, sustainable practices, and community engagement, supported by local and international frameworks.

# 4.6

## Urbanization Trends in Asia and Oceania

Urbanization in Asia is occurring rapidly, particularly in India and China, where both countries now host over a billion urban dwellers (UNDESA, 2022). This surge strains housing, land, and the environment. Further complicating the issues is the variation in their approaches to defining urban areas, which affects census data and government support. In India, strict criteria lead to the underrepresentation of urban areas, whereas China's broad definition expands urban numbers (UNDESA, 2022). Such distinctions impact resource allocation and social benefits. Chinese residents can access better benefits if they change their hukou

status from rural to urban, thus exacerbating inequalities. In both countries, migrants face challenges accessing services and rights, with China's hukou system perpetuating disparities (UNDESA, 2022). Meanwhile, India experiences migration for family reasons and seasonal work, leading to a significant informal sector workforce (UNDESA, 2022). Both nations grapple with integrating migrants into cities, with informal settlements like slums and urban villages emerging as focal points for policy experimentation (UNDESA, 2022).

A surge of rural migrants has left China's urban areas facing numerous issues, such as rising housing costs, environmental pollution, and traffic congestion (Chen & Fu, 2023). In response, cities have implemented population control measures (Chen & Fu, 2023). Small businesses, unregulated markets, and low-skilled industries must all be relocated outside the city as part of these initiatives (Chen & Fu, 2023). Furthermore, efforts have been made to improve the requirements for migrant children to enroll in public education. This highlights the trade-off that migrant parents must make between access to education for their children and employment opportunities in cities, which frequently leads to family separations (Chen & Fu, 2023).

This massive scale of urbanization has unleashed enormous pressures on housing, land use, and the environment. From 2014 to 2020, China sought to lessen the burdens of urbanization on its cities by implementing New-Type Urbanization Planning, which stated that cities with more than five million people in the central urban district should take action to curb their rapid population growth. This initiative involved pushing small shops and low-skilled industries out of the city and incentivizing families to move to urban centers by providing public education initiatives. This created a challenging trade-off for families, as job opportunities persisted in cities, yet affordable housing, education, and family life opportunities lay outside, leading to the fracturing of families as children were often left behind (Chen et al., 2023).

Urbanization resulting from rural-to-urban migration has led to an increase in rural children being left behind in their villages to be cared for by grandparents or other relatives while parents migrate to cities for work. "Left-behind children" are one of the most vulnerable populations in China due to their persistent poverty and psychological and behavioral problems stemming from parental migration to urban regions (Hung et al., 2023). Specifically, left-behind children contend with a lack of supervision and depression. The Chinese government has been piloting boarding schools in rural China to provide a sense of stability, supervision, and support for the rural children left behind when their parents pursue financial prospects in urban areas (Hung et al., 2023). The lessons learned from China and India present significant implications for other Asian countries as well (UN-DESA, 2022).

Due to the geographical location of Oceania, it faces unique coastal urbanization issues. Most nations throughout Oceania and their urban centers are acutely vulnerable to natural disasters, including cyclones, storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic activity (Kiddle, 2021). Micronesia is 69% urban, with some Micronesian countries boasting more than 80% urban areas, while Polynesia is 44% urbanized (Kiddle, 2021). Informal settlements, which are notably prevalent in Melanesian nations, characterize urban

landscapes across Oceania (Kiddle, 2021). These settlements, comprising 20–45% of urban populations in Melanesian capitals, lack legal tenure and are often situated in hazardous environments such as riverbanks and floodplains (Kiddle, 2021). They frequently expand into peri-urban areas on customary land, compromising ecosystem resilience and food production (Kiddle, 2021). The rapid urban population growth exacerbates stress on already fragile local ecosystems in Oceania. Urbanization and climate change are straining these ecosystems, prompting urgent adaptation efforts focused on nature-based solutions. Within Oceania, there is both a history and an opportunity to develop urban design strategies rooted in ecosystem services and traditional knowledge to enhance human well-being and effectively tackle climate challenges (Kiddle, 2021). Urban ecosystem services encompass the benefits humans gain from city and peri-urban ecosystems. Various urban ecosystems, such as street trees and wetlands, are assessed based on their contributions to functions including air filtration and recreational value. City planners and policymakers have an opportunity to understand and prioritize ecologically responsible urbanization, particularly in regions with a history of urbanization that accounts for nature-based solutions used to foster well-being for communities and families (Kiddle, 2021).

# SETTING

## THE SCENE- MIGRATION

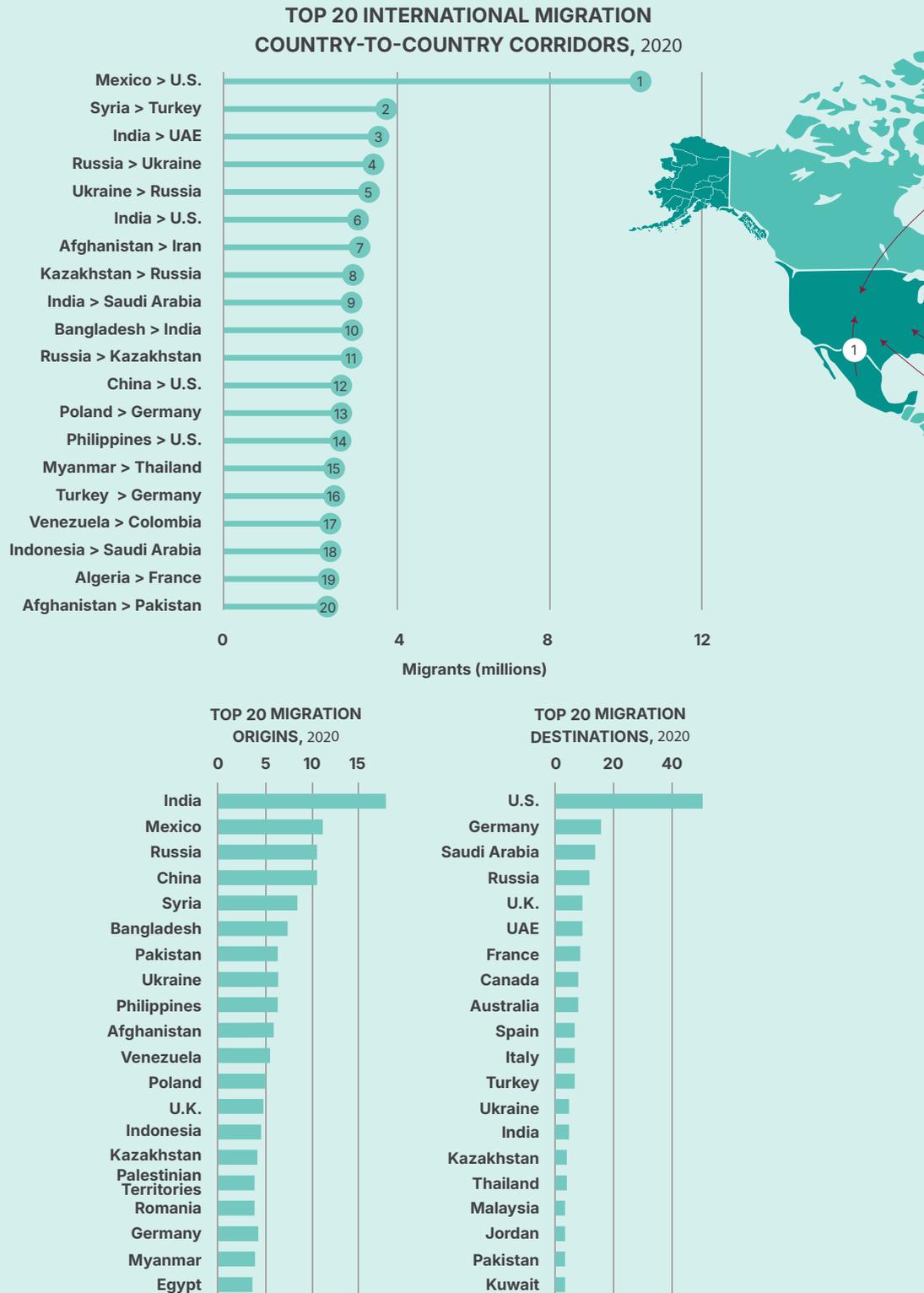


International migration has increased three-fold since the 1970s (IOM, 2024). By 2020, around 281 million people were living outside the countries where they were born (IOM, 2024), with two-thirds of these migrants residing in high-income countries. The United States, which currently has the highest number of immigrants, led the world with the largest immigrant population in 2020. Germany and Saudi Arabia hosted the second and third largest immigrant populations, respectively (Statista, 2020). Other countries with significant migrant populations include Saudi Arabia, France, Canada,

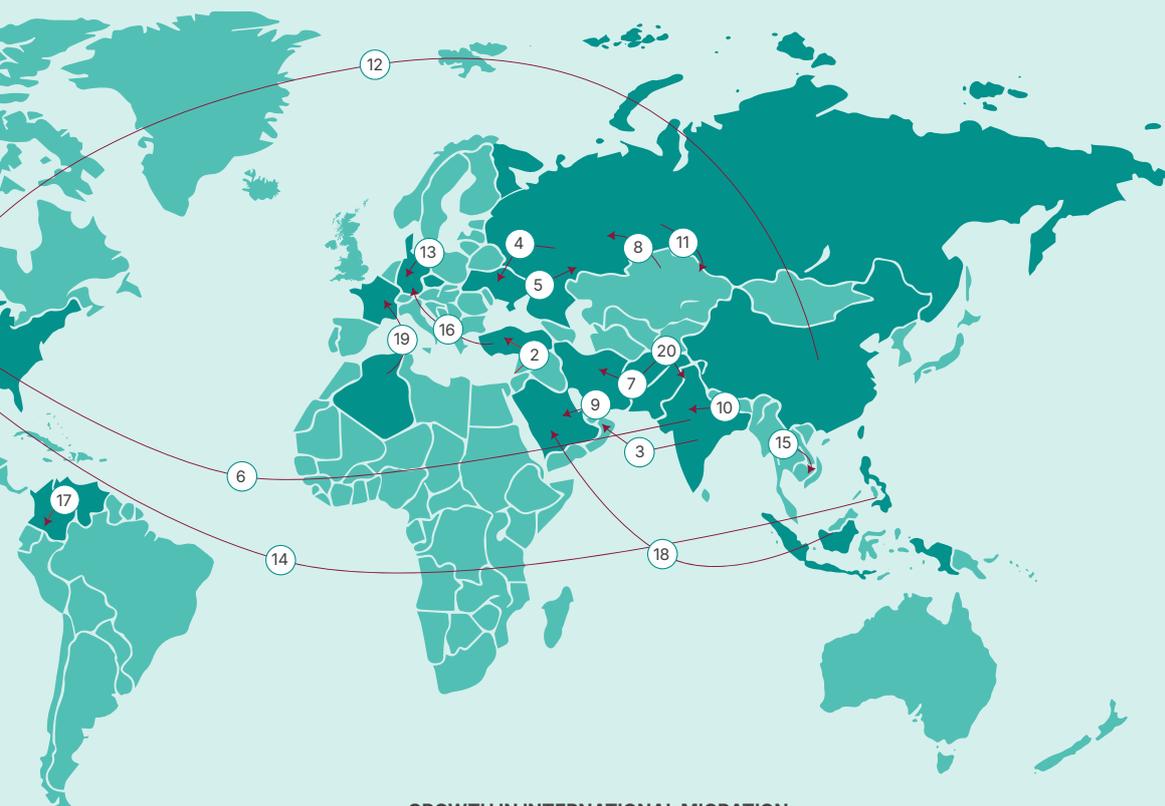
Australia, India, and Pakistan (IOM, 2020a). Proportionally, Middle Eastern countries have the highest foreign-born populations; for example, approximately 90% of the United Arab Emirates' population consists of foreign workers (World Economic Forum, 2017). While countries like Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan export migrant labor, the Gulf oil states are major recipients of migrant laborers. As of 2020, India had the largest diaspora with 17.5 million Indian nationals living abroad, followed by Mexico with 11.8 million, and China with 10.7 million (IOM, 2020a).

International migration flows are projected to continue increasing through 2050, reflecting only one aspect of global migration trends (UNDESA, 2022). According to the UN, most international migrants move for economic or educational reasons, choosing to live in countries other than those of their birth or citizenship (see Figures 3 and 4 below).

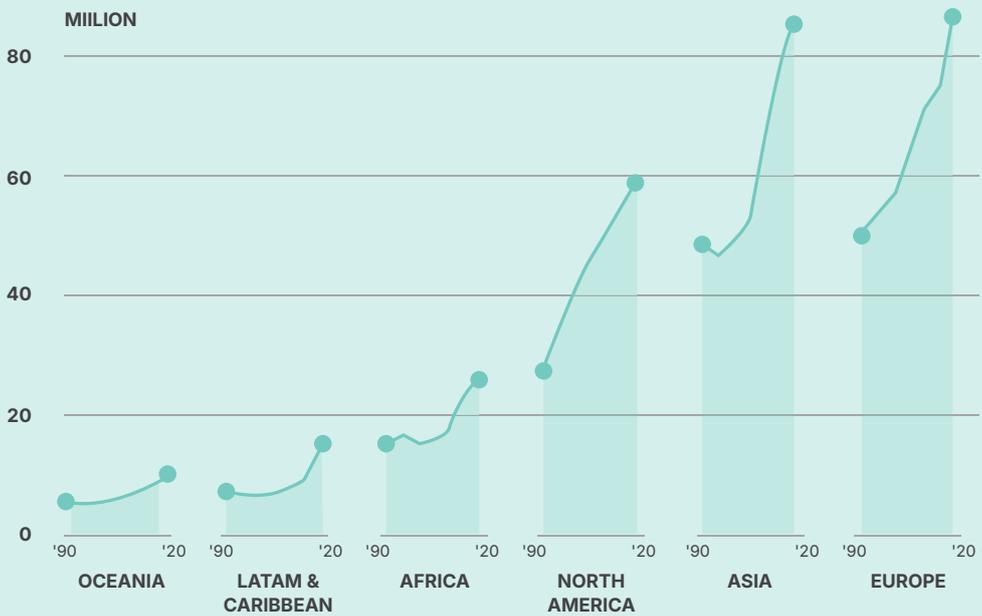
Figure 3: Global Migration Trends in 2020 (Source: Geopolitical Futures, 2022<sup>3</sup>)



← **MIGRATION** **GLOBAL** →

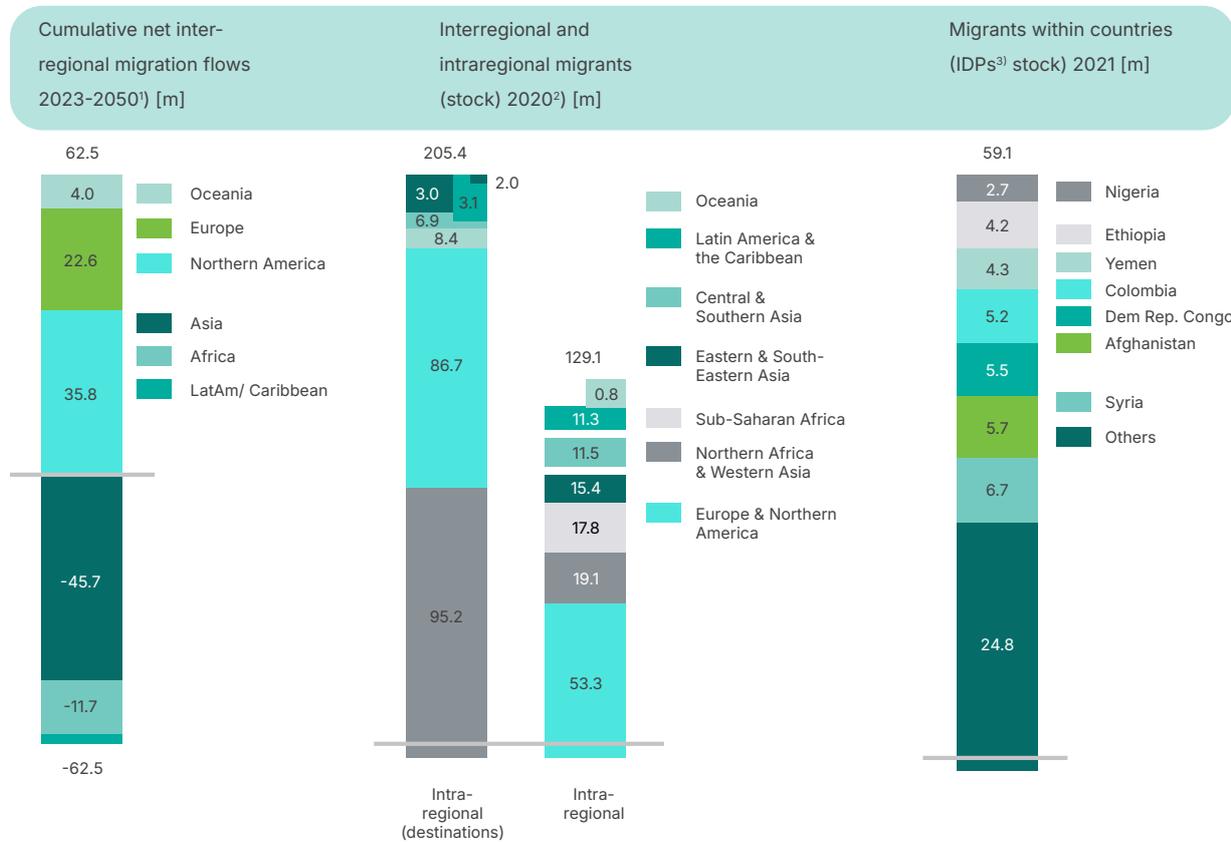


**GROWTH IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**  
1990-2020



<sup>3</sup> Geopolitical Futures (2022). Global Migration Trends. Available from <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/pdfs/global-migration-trends-geopoliticalfutures-com.pdf> [accessed 10 May 2024].

Figure 4: Global inter and intraregional migration patterns since 2020 (Source: The Institute of Internal Auditors Madras Chapter<sup>4</sup>)



In an increasingly transitive world, migration for a wide array of reasons has become a global norm. This mass movement of populations presents both opportunities and challenges. Key aspects of this trend include:

1. Migration and Families
2. Migration and Employment
3. Migration as an Opportunity
4. Forced Migration and Conflict

<sup>4</sup> The Institute of Internal Auditors Madras Chapter (2023) Trend Compendium 2050 Six megatrends that will shape the world. Available from <https://iiamadras.org/trend-compendium-2050-six-megatrends-that-will-shape-the-world/> [accessed 2 April 2024].

# 5.1

## Migration and Families

Migration is unevenly distributed globally, with Europe being the most migratory region relative to its population, followed by Latin America, Africa, Oceania, Asia, and North America (UNDESA, 2017a). Countries like Qatar have migrant workforces that make up 85-90% of their populations. Asia, however, has the highest absolute number of migrants, followed by Europe, Latin America, Africa, North America, and Oceania (ICMPD, 2020). While most migrants move to high-income countries, migration to low- and middle-income countries is expected to rise as socio-economic development continues (ICMPD, 2020). International migration is projected to increase, driven by economic trends, as well as sudden and large-scale flows of refugees and asylum seekers caused by conflicts (UNHCR, 2019). While interstate conflicts have decreased, internal conflicts remain prevalent, leading to significant displacement (Council of Foreign Relations, 2024; PRIO, 2018). Without major improvements in global peace, forced migration will likely remain a significant factor in international migration flows.

Migration affects both sending and receiving societies, with attitudes toward migrants varying by historical context and local conditions. Globalization has altered the relationship between migrants and their home communities, facilitating continued connections through digital technologies (IOM, 2020a). Technology also enables migrants to send remittances home and engage in political mobilization via social media (Alencar, 2023; Gelb & Krishnan, 2022).

Migration has also reshaped gender roles within families, bringing both positive changes, such

as shifts in marital dynamics, and negative outcomes, like higher rates of domestic violence (UN Women, 2019). Over time, migrant fertility, marriage rates, and age at marriage tend to realign with those of the host country (Budiman, 2019; IOM, 2020a). Persistent trends such as low birth rates, aging populations, and global inequalities will continue driving migration from low-income regions to other parts of the world. While immigration can slow aging in host countries by adding working-age migrants, it also raises questions about citizenship, nationality, benefits, and integration as those migrants age (Trask, 2020).

Migration profoundly impacts family structures, unity, and relationships, both for those left behind and those in receiving countries. While migration can foster collective welfare and aspirations for a better future, it can also create societal and familial tensions. Transnational families, divided by migration, face significant social, educational, and psychological costs (SACRU, n.d.). Policies must prioritize family well-being and be grounded in human dignity and protection. Migrant households challenge traditional family dynamics, often introducing new practices and models. Navigating conflicting values and demands, particularly within parent-child relationships, can be difficult for migrant families as they adapt to their new environments (SACRU, n.d.). Migration reshapes both family and societal characteristics, influencing demographics, economies, and public spaces in urban areas. Migrant families frequently confront poverty, educational barriers, and discrimination, underscoring the need for inclusive policies and societal integration efforts (SACRU, n.d.).

# 5.2

## Migration and Employment

Migration is often driven by employment-related factors. In high-income countries like the United States, economic opportunities attract educated migrants from countries like India and China, while the Middle East draws low-wage workers from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines (IOM, 2020a; IOM, 2020b). Many Mexican immigrants to the United States, for example, lack high school diplomas and migrate to fill low-wage positions (Budiman, 2019). Migrants frequently work in informal jobs that pay below legal standards, making their economic position and integration precarious (UNDESA, 2022).

Educational and professional backgrounds vary widely among migrants, even those moving for employment. For instance, 60% of immigrants to the UK are professionals (Migration Observatory, 2019), and 25% of doctors in the United States are foreign-born (AIC, 2018). Approximately one in ten professionals from developing countries now live in Europe, Australia, or the United States, contributing to the phenomenon known as “brain drain,” where skilled workers leave less developed nations for more developed ones (Lowell, Findlay, & Stewart, 2004).

# 5.3

## Migration as an Opportunity

People who migrate have their lives changed by both the society they leave behind and the society they join, providing positive potential outcomes for their new host country (Bossavie et al., 2022; Ismaili, 2024). There are many advantages to migration, particularly in terms of improving productivity and human capital in regions that receive migrants (Bossavie et al., 2022). Immigrants bring a variety of skills and expertise that contribute to local growth and economic development (Smart et al., 2020). By embracing the concept of “productive migration,” efforts can be focused on maximizing the socioeconomic potential of migration for the benefit of all stakeholders involved (Smart et al., 2020).

To optimize these benefits, policy changes should be informed by an understanding of the unique political and economic dynamics of each context. Effective interventions must consider various factors, including policy frameworks, political contexts, economic conditions, stakeholder

participation, and migrant characteristics, to enhance opportunities and socioeconomic outcomes (Smart et al., 2020). Furthermore, successful policy interventions aimed at maximizing the advantages of migration require governments, the corporate sector, and civil society to cultivate trust and cooperation among key stakeholders. It is also crucial to acknowledge and address the vulnerabilities and needs of migrants, including their expertise and access to human, social, and financial capital, to ensure inclusive and sustainable outcomes (Smart et al., 2020). Coordination between the receiving and sending countries of migrants is essential to develop a more coherent approach that yields net positive outcomes from migration.

# 5.4

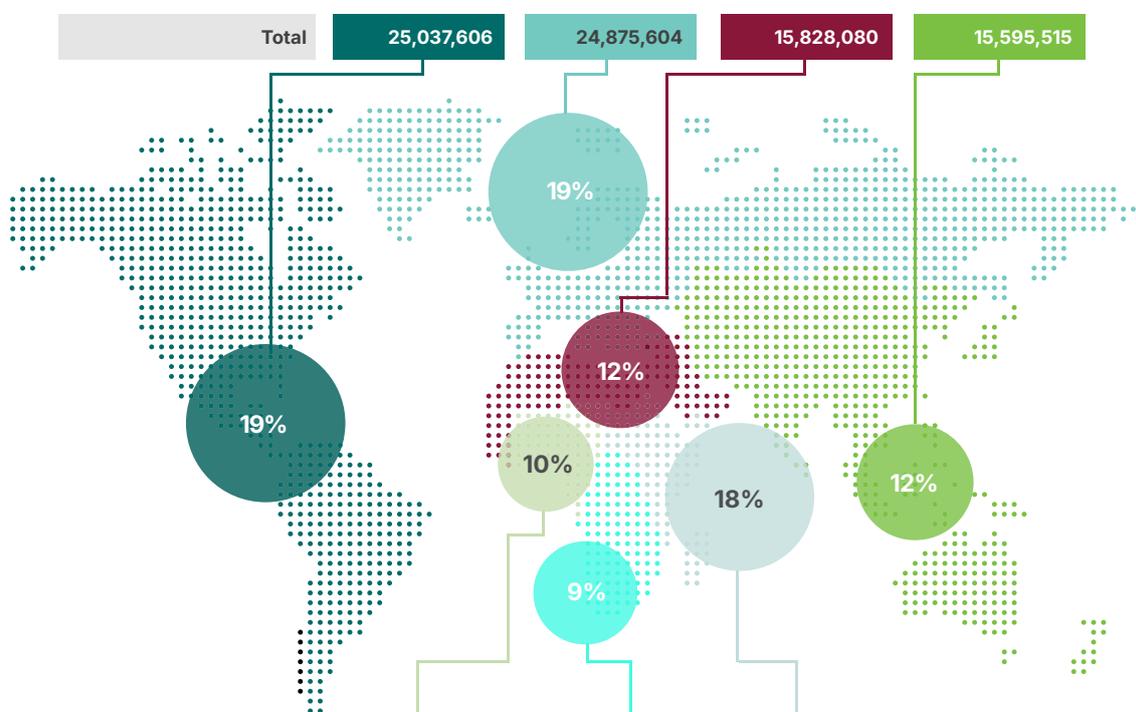
## Forced Migration and Conflict

In 2021, there were 31.7 million international refugees and asylum seekers, with 69% originating from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. The remaining 5.9 million internally displaced people (IDPs) were primarily fleeing conflict, with a smaller number fleeing natural

disasters (The Institute of Internal Auditors Madras Chapter, 2023). The world is witnessing an unprecedented surge in displacement due to conflicts in countries such as Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and Palestine (IOM, 2020a; UNHCR, 2024a; 2024b).

Figure 5: Global refugee data-2024 (Source: UNHCR,2024 c<sup>5</sup>)

	The Americas	Europe	Middle East and North Africa	Asia and the Pacific
Refugees	826,201	13,234,332	2,301,820	8,060,422
Asylum-seekers (pending cases)	4,121,864	1,461,555	451,032	274,202
Internally displaced persons (DPS)	7,620,124	5,934,018	11,740,000	4,399,396
Persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate	92,517	501,817	401,318	1,262,617
Returnees (Refugees and IDPs)	75,004	3,700,210	898,400	1,352,993
Others of concern	5,837,160	43,672	35,510	245,885
Other people in need of international protection	6,464,736	-	-	-



	West and Central Africa	Southern Africa	East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes	Total Africa Regions
Refugees	2,341,318	764,359	5,046,360	8,152,037
Asylum-seekers (pending cases)	89,806	200,273	379,582	669,661
Internally displaced persons (DPS)	8,415,991	8,787,118	16,064,043	33,267,152
Persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate	2,155,988	127,093	157,415	2,440,496
Returnees (Refugees and IDPs)	582,956	2,335,786	1,905,988	4,824,730
Others of concern	42,100	30,784	24,817	97,701
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,628,159</b>	<b>12,245,413</b>	<b>23,578,205</b>	<b>49,451,777</b>

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR (2024 c). Global Appeal 2024. Available from <https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-appeal2024-> [accessed 10 May 2024].

The increase in displacement reflects not only the direct effects of conflict but also broader issues such as the strain on humanitarian resources and the disruption of international supply lines. Displaced individuals and families face precarious situations beyond geographical displacement and physical protection; vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, are more likely to experience exploitation, violence, and limited access to essential services. The Syrian refugee crisis, which began with the violent government crackdown in 2011, has displaced around 14 million Syrians seeking safety (UNHCR, 2024). The situation in Syria remains dire, with 90% of the population living in poverty and 70% in need of humanitarian aid (UNHCR, 2024). Millions of refugees are hosted by nearby nations such as Turkey, which face additional challenges due to recent earthquakes and economic hardship (UNHCR, 2024). Inside Syria, millions continue to suffer from displacement, poverty, and lack of access to basic services (UNHCR, 2024). Economic challenges in host nations push refugees deeper into poverty, increasing their vulnerability to child labor and limiting access to education (UNHCR, 2024).

In Venezuela, over 6.1 million refugees and migrants have fled due to political turmoil, economic instability, and humanitarian crises, with over 80% hosted by 17 Latin American and Caribbean countries (IOM, 2022). Many of these individuals risk dangerous journeys by land, sea, or air—often without proper documentation—making them vulnerable to trafficking or smuggling. Despite these challenges, neighboring countries have made efforts to provide access to jobs, healthcare, and education.

As Ukraine enters its third year of full-scale war with Russia, over 6.4 million refugees have been recorded globally, with nearly 6 million living in European countries (UNHCR Data Tracker, 2024). Approximately 80% of Ukrainians express a desire to return home, thus many have remained in nearby nations (UNHCR, 2023). The war has caused widespread death, destruction, and an energy crisis, severely disrupting basic services such as water, electricity, and healthcare (UNHCR, 2024a). Vulnerable groups, including older people and those with disabilities, face heightened risks, while women and children—who make up 90% of those fleeing—are at increased risk of gender-based violence (UNHCR, 2024a). The war has had global repercussions, disrupting supply chains and driving up the prices of essential goods. The response to Ukrainian refugees has notably been more favorable than for refugees from Syria, Iraq, or Africa (Venturi & Vallianatou, 2022). Financial shortfalls in the UN Refugee Agency during the war's first year have strained support in countries such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Iraq, and Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2024a).

Unresolved conflicts in Africa have displaced millions, including those affected by the 2023 conflict in Sudan, which led to six million cross-border displacements. This adds to the growing numbers of forced migrants from conflicts in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Somalia (Williams, 2024).

Myanmar, which is home to over 130 ethnic groups, faces ethnic tensions and armed conflicts that have resulted in tremendous violence and displacement (UNHCR, 2024b). The Rohingya, the second-largest ethnic group in Rakhine State, have been subjected to violence and persecution, with military and political leaders disputing their ancestral ties to the region (UNHCR, 2024b; USCRI, 2021). The military takeover in 2021 exacerbated existing tensions, leading to widespread displacement and complicating humanitarian efforts. The Myanmar junta has similarly subjected the Karenni ethnic minority to severe violence and persecution, with over a quarter of the Karenni population displaced due to ongoing conflict between the military and resistance groups, many seeking refuge in neighboring communities or forests (USCRI, 2021). Thousands have attempted to cross the Myanmar-Thai border, despite the dangers posed by the Myanmar military and concerns about Thai authorities pushing refugees back. Before the coup in 2021, Thailand was already hosting tens of thousands of ethnic minorities from Myanmar, and that number has continued to rise, with 1.35 million refugees recently fleeing (UNHCR, 2024b).

Palestinian displacement has been at the heart of troubles in the Middle East since 1948, particularly regarding refugee urbanization in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank. Currently, Palestinians are facing forced internal migration as Israel and Hamas wage war in a state where upwards of six million Palestinians have already been living as refugees (UNRWA, n.d.). Since 2023, 1.7 million Palestinians have been displaced in Gaza, over 36,000 people have been killed, and 70,000 housing units have been destroyed (OCHA, 2024). Ground incursions, intensified hostilities, disease, and malnutrition are straining humanitarian resources and applying pressure on nations to act as Palestinians suffer, die, and are perpetually displaced (OCHA, 2023).

There is an urgent need for solutions, developmental responses, long-term international collaboration, and comprehensive plans to address the underlying causes of displacement and advance long-term solutions for affected communities as the global struggle with conflict and forced migration persists.

# PREDICTORS, MODERATORS/MEDIATORS AND OUTCOMES OF MIGRATION

Migration is shaped by a complex interaction of predictors, moderators, mediators, and outcomes, influencing the trajectories of individuals, families, and communities globally. Predictors highlight the interplay of economic, educational, familial, environmental, and sociopolitical factors driving migration. Mediators, such as transnational family structures, economic remittances, and cultural standards, shape the effects of migration on familial relationships, financial stability, and cultural integration, while

moderators like gender dynamics and technological access further influence migration patterns. Migration has far-reaching implications, from changes in social and familial dynamics to economic impacts, health risks, educational outcomes, and cultural assimilation challenges. This broad lens allows us to explore the subtle complexities of migration dynamics and their profound impacts on individuals, families, and societies (UN-DESA, 2022).

## Predictors of Migration

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a range of factors that reflect the intricate relationship between individual goals, social dynamics, and environmental demands. Key predictors include:

- **Economic Opportunities:** One of the primary drivers of migration is the search for better job prospects and financial stability, motivating individuals and families to seek improved living conditions and work opportunities (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Educational Opportunities:** Educational prospects, especially for young people, are a major factor in migration, offering long-term career advancement, cultural enrichment, and personal growth (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Familial Dimensions:** Family reunification, marriage, and divorce play significant roles in migration decisions, impacting people's social networks and geographic mobility, while illustrating the connection between migration and familial ties (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Environmental and Climate Change:** Climate-induced disasters, such as droughts and floods, particularly affect regions vulnerable to climate change, forcing families and communities to seek safer and more sustainable environments (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Sociopolitical Factors:** War, persecution, political instability, and corruption drive migration as individuals and families seek peace, opportunities, and stability in other regions (UNDESA, 2022).

## Moderators of Migration

Several key moderators shape migration dynamics, including:

- **Gender:** Gender significantly influences migration patterns. Women, for example, may migrate independently due to divorce or employment opportunities, often becoming primary breadwinners and sending remittances back home (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Technological Access:** Access to digital technology facilitates migration by enabling communication with family members and providing critical information (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Legality:** Legal frameworks influence migration opportunities and outcomes, determining the extent to which policy can bring coherence to migration processes or exacerbate challenges.

## Mediators of Migration

Mediators such as transnational family structures, economic remittances, and cultural norms play a role in moderating the effects of migration:

- **Transnational Family Structures:** These structures redefine family roles and responsibilities across borders, mitigating migration's impact on family dynamics (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Economic Remittances:** Financial remittances sent by migrants back home provide a crucial safety net for families, supporting their stability and well-being (UNDESA, 2022).

- **Social Remittances and Cultural Standards:** Social remittances, including cultural norms and values, influence the maintenance of cultural identities and the integration of migrants into new societies (UNDESA, 2022).

## Outcomes of Migration

Examining the various implications of migration reveals a complicated environment influenced by many variables. Migration creates a range of effects that significantly impact individuals, families, and communities. These effects include: 1) economic impacts; 2) social and familial dynamics; 3) health and safety hazards; 4) educational outcomes; and 5) cultural integration.

- **Economic Impacts:** Although migration can lead to increased employment opportunities and remittances for immigrant families, it can also result in unstable economic situations due to precarious jobs and low wages (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Social and Familial Dynamics:** Migration impacts family structures and frequently results in new family configurations, such as transnational multigenerational parenting and modifications to traditional family roles. These changes can have both positive and negative effects on family cohesiveness and support (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Health and Safety Hazards:** Migrants often grapple with various health and safety hazards, including inadequate living conditions, exploitation, and the threat of violence. Children and women are particularly vulnerable, facing heightened susceptibility to these risks (UNDESA, 2022).

- **Educational Outcomes:** Children of migrants may find it challenging to access education, which impacts their long-term prospects, academic achievement, and career advancement (UNDESA, 2022).
- **Cultural Integration:** Immigrants may encounter challenges in assimilating into their new communities while also striving to preserve their cultural identity. Despite the potential for social unrest and discrimination, this dynamic also offers opportunities for cultural enrichment and cross-cultural interaction (UNDESA, 2022).

Mirroring urbanization, migration also plays an integral role in shaping societies and families across the world. The regional trends to be discussed include:

1. **Migration Trends in the Middle East and North Africa**
2. **Migration Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on women**
3. **Migration Trends in North America**
4. **Migration Trends in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a particular focus on women**
5. **Migration Trends in Europe**
6. **Migration Trends in Asia and Oceania**

# 6.1

## Migration Trends in the Middle East and North Africa

The migration context in the Middle East and North Africa is largely characterized by forced migration and internal displacement due to multiple crises, complex irregular migration flows driven by economic and other factors, and the movement of labor migrants within and beyond the region (IOM, 2024a). Factors such as armed conflicts, deteriorating economic conditions, and climate change are expected to continue influencing migration processes. While the majority of migrants are expected to move within their countries of origin, international migration is also projected to rise (IOM, 2024a). Illegal migration, particularly to Europe, is anticipated to increase due to factors such as unemployment, violence, and environmental degradation in the region (Plotnikov, 2024). These migration dynamics have significant implications for various aspects of the region's social and economic landscape.

Since the late 2000s, the oil industry has brought 35 million foreign migrants to the region. As of 2023, all member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council had majority foreign populations. Increased wages for the same labor are the main drivers of movement; in Qatar specifically, foreign migrants make up 99.8% of the private sector labor force (Aarthi & Sahu, 2021).

Pre-migration narratives among refugee Arab families depict significant losses, including family members, resources, and support networks (Aref & Khodr, 2022). Beyond these losses, families grapple with structural barriers in host countries that lack cultural, economic, and social recognition of their differences. Aref (2021) highlights the paradox of wealth disparity amidst fragile social systems in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which were exacerbated by COVID-19. This situation fosters a "Transnational Family Network" where migrants support relatives in their home countries through remittances.

Most countries in the region employ labor migration policies based on the Kafala system, which began in 1950. This system regulates and monitors all incoming workers while shifting all liability onto the employer. The Kafala system is widely criticized for minimizing migrant integration through the suppression of foreign workers' rights; these workers are not permitted to switch employers, are restricted from public spaces, and are excluded from protective labor laws, thereby exposing them to a greater risk of exploitation and death (Cholewinski, 2023; Robinson, 2022). Mirroring global trends, recent policy directions in the MENA region are leaning towards restrictions on immigrant socioeconomic rights, selective de-

portation practices, restrictive pathways to citizenship, and the enforcement of 'nationalization' policies to increase the presence of locals in the workforce (Aarthi & Sahu, 2021). The pandemic has initiated discussions about reevaluating the Kafala system, with the region facing pressures to enhance migrant protections (Cholewinski, 2023; Migration Policy Institute, 2024a). In Qatar, recent reforms to the Kafala system have made significant strides, including approving job change requests for approximately 350,000 workers since September 2020 (Cholewinski, 2023). However, challenges remain, such as workers' lack of awareness about their rights to change jobs and employers obstructing this process through threats of retaliation (Cholewinski, 2023).

The Kafala sponsorship system, central to exploitative labor practices, persists alongside issues like exorbitant recruitment fees and limited freedom of association (Cholewinski, 2023). Access to justice mechanisms, critical during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, faces barriers such as language requirements and procedural delays in court cases (Cholewinski, 2023). The Kafala system has resulted in substantial demographic shifts in the Gulf region; over the past fifty years, the population has grown tenfold, and foreigners now exceed locals in all Gulf states except Saudi Arabia (Robinson, 2022).

Rather than drawing refugees, as in many other regions, migration within the Gulf region attracts economic migrants, including a large number of wealthy foreign migrants, who comprise the majority of the region's population (Shayah & Sun, 2019). As of 2019, they accounted for 86% of Qatar's population, 89% of the UAE's population, and 70% of Kuwait's (Shayah & Sun, 2019). Foreign migrants from wealthy countries work in professional capacities, while Western and Arab nationals take on middle-class jobs, and South Asian and Sub-Saharan African migrants occupy low-wage positions (Gardner, 2009). High-skilled, high-income migrants are granted special visas for longer stays—dubbed the 'golden card' (Aarthi & Sahu, 2021). There have been notable positive

social impacts as a result of low-wage, foreign migrant women who perform domestic work for Gulf families; female members of Gulf families experience greater social freedom through the influence of these migrant women in their homes (Ivanova, 2020).

The Syrian conflict, which began in 2011, remains ongoing. The humanitarian crisis has resulted in more than six million refugees resettling in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and other countries, as well as seven million internally displaced people (IDPs), thereby putting significant strain on Middle Eastern and North African countries and systems (Alodat et al., 2021). Data from 2014 revealed that 22% of Syrian refugees residing in Jordan and Lebanon were reported to have disabilities (Rohwerder, 2018). However, alternate figures suggest that this percentage could be substantially higher, particularly considering that 65% of elderly Syrian refugees experience either physical or psychological disabilities (HelpAge International, 2014). Further breakdown of these statistics shows that 13.4% of registered refugees with disabilities have intellectual disabilities, 44.2% have physical disabilities, 42.5% have sensory disabilities, and 20% have multiple disabilities (Rohwerder, 2018). Refugees with disabilities are among the most vulnerable migrants, needing humanitarian services including psychosocial support (Alodat et al., 2021). Reforming the public mental health system requires a significant overhaul of policies, especially in addressing the needs of refugees with disabilities and their families, despite the potential costs involved in providing services. Equally important is collaboration between governments and NGOs to deliver psychosocial support services, which can play a vital role in fostering the social and economic development of both refugees and local communities (Alodat et al., 2021). Intersectoral collaboration and the implementation of Healthy Public Policy, following the WHO Health in All Policies framework, are essential for tackling social and health inequities and thereby reducing mental health challenges among Arabic-speaking immigrants and refugees (Elshahat & Moffat, 2022).

# 6.2

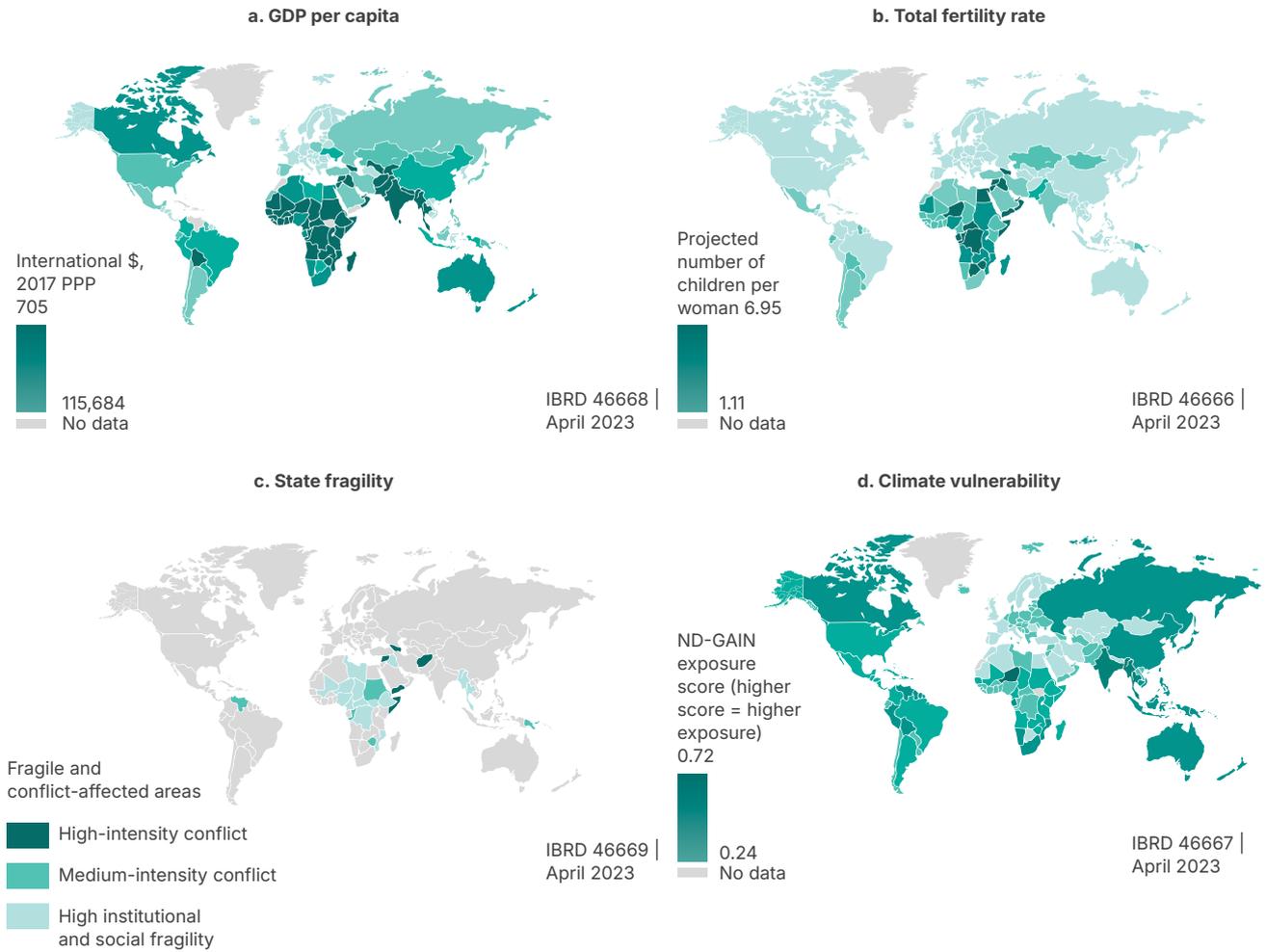
## Migration Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa with a Particular Focus on Women

In Sub-Saharan Africa, many push factors impact migration, with an estimated 35% of people living in poverty, placing immense pressure on household members who earn a living to find work to meet their basic necessities (Williams, 2024). Most migration that is not motivated by conflict follows seasonal economic opportunities (Williams, 2024). Africa has a significant internal migration rate, mostly from rural to urban areas. Urban migration often precedes international migration as migrants seek better income, opportunities,

and safety (Williams, 2024). Through remittances, economic stabilization, improved food security, and support for education, migration benefits both origin and destination nations by bridging labor shortages and boosting education. Remittances to Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to grow by 3.7% in 2024, following a steady increase (Williams, 2024). Additional drivers of migration in African nations include rising joblessness, insufficient healthcare, climate change, conflict, genocide, and corruption (UNDESA, 2022; see Figure 6 below).

Figure 6: African Migration Drivers (Source: World Bank, 2023<sup>6</sup>)

**African Migration is Driven by a Combination of Factors**



Source: WDR 2023

<sup>6</sup> World Bank (2023). World Bank Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies, Washington, D.C.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to over 18 million refugees, accounting for more than 26 percent of the global refugee population (UN, 2016). This increase is largely driven by ongoing crises in countries such as Sudan (now one of the largest displacement situations in Africa and the world), the Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Burundi (UN, 2016). The African nations with the greatest refugee populations include Ethiopia with 659,000 refugees, Kenya with 551,000, Chad with 453,000, Uganda with 386,000, Cameroon with 264,000, and South Sudan with 248,000, where individuals from neighboring nations seek refuge (UN, 2016). A significant number of Sub-Saharan African refugees relocate to the United States. The Sub-Saharan African immigrant population in the United States has grown sixteen-fold since the 1980s, totaling 2.1 million in 2019, or 5% of the foreign-born population (Lorenzi & Batalova, 2022). This diverse group of immigrants hails from 51 countries, is well-educated, highly active in the workforce, and often speaks English at home. However, they face lower incomes and higher poverty rates compared to the overall immigrant population in the United States (Lorenzi & Batalova, 2022).

In an effort to escape conflict, poverty, and climate issues, African immigrants often utilize a variety of migration routes, including travel via the Mediterranean, the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, the Sahara Desert, the Horn towards Gulf States, and the Southern Route. These migration transit routes through and out of Africa are perilous, evidenced by the almost 40,000 documented deaths and disappearances since 2014—a number that is undoubtedly incomplete (Williams, 2024). The number of migrant deaths per year is expected to continue increasing, with an estimated 4,300 deaths in 2023.

Africa faces significant challenges due to high levels of forced displacement and internally displaced persons (IDPs) caused by corrupt governments, political conflicts, civil wars, and extremist groups. In 2021, Africa witnessed a peak in forced displacement, with an estimated 32 million Africans either internally displaced, refugees, or asylum seekers (UNDESA, 2022). Globally, in 2019, there were 41.3 million internally displaced people, with 41% located in various African countries due to violence and conflict. Additionally, environmental disasters such as droughts, floods, and cyclones displaced another 2.6 million individuals. It is important to note that while IDPs arguably receive international protection, because they have not crossed international borders during crises, their protection is provided under a very different legal system (UNDESA, 2022).

The revision of the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) in 2017 and 2018 offered member states the opportunity to prioritize the implementation of robust policy and institutional frameworks to manage migration processes and recognize migration as a key development strategy that could potentially enhance economic conditions for communities. With strong policies, migration governance on the continent can be transformed. However, the lack of reliable official data impedes African migration research. More recent available migration databases have significantly expanded the scope for conducting analyses on migration from and within African countries. Still missing is the macro-data that would allow for comprehensive tracking of migration patterns from, to, and within Africa over the past centuries, as Africa has always been a continent of migration. Although migration research and policies have gained importance in African states, their implementations have historically fallen short (UNDESA, 2022).

Women play a crucial role in migration. They migrate independently for various reasons such as family reunification, marriage, divorce, and work opportunities. African women are particularly vulnerable due to a lack of protections codified in policy, often resorting to migration to seek safety. Migration can enhance women's autonomy and livelihoods, but it also exposes them to increased vulnerabilities, including social exclusion, health risks, and xenophobia. Women left behind due to migration may experience adverse effects on their well-being, especially in cases of reverse remittances and marital instability. In some African host countries, women face intersecting forms of discrimination based on xenophobia, racism, and patriarchy, increasing their risks and vulnerabilities (UNDESA, 2022). For example, women from Zimbabwe who migrate to South Africa use migration as a coping and adaptation strategy for

survival (Ncube & Bahta, 2022). The South African government has made gender relations and equality central to its policies, allowing migrant women from other African countries to benefit from these measures. However, challenges remain, as migrants are often excluded from social welfare benefits and face a xenophobic environment in South Africa (Ncube & Bahta, 2022). African women in the agricultural sector are particularly susceptible to climate change and environmental disasters and often choose migration to cope with these issues. Additionally, less highlighted migration drivers for women include demographic changes, urbanization, land grabbing, religious freedom, and LGBTQI tolerance (UNDESA, 2022). Addressing these multifaceted challenges is essential for creating more inclusive and supportive migration policies and practices for women in Africa.

# 6.3

## Migration Trends in North America

Canada and the United States share similarities in high income and education levels, but they differ in family migration due to unique political, economic, socio-cultural, and historical circumstances (UNDESA, 2022). In Canada, migration is categorized as either interprovincial (within Canada) or transnational (immigration). Immigration policies implemented under the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act prioritize groups such as refugees and economic migrants, influencing family migration patterns (Milaney et al., 2020). For example, multigenerational families may face challenges migrating together due to sponsorship requirements, which can affect care dynamics across generations. These policies can both fragment and unite families, highlighting inequalities among diverse family groups and impacting overall family well-being. Priority may be given to certain family types or those filling employment needs. In 2020, economic immigrants constituted 57.6% of admissions, followed by family-sponsored immigrants at 26.7%, refugees at 13.9%, and others at 1.8% (UNDESA, 2022).

The United States has its own migration dynamics shaped by historical and socio-political factors. While family reunification is a key aspect of U.S.

immigration policy, it also encompasses economic needs and humanitarian considerations. The U.S. immigration system is complex, with various visa categories catering to different types of migrants, including family-based immigrants, skilled workers, refugees, and diversity visa lottery winners. Despite similarities in income and education levels, these differing migration policies result in distinct family migration experiences and urbanization patterns between Canada and the United States (UNDESA, 2022).

Over the past 30 years, as the United States and Canada have experienced economic and political stability, there has been an increase in migratory patterns in North America, primarily caused by immigration from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (IOM, 2024b). The number of migrants has doubled in both the United States and Canada, with the U.S. currently receiving the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers, totaling more than 363,000 in 2022 (IOM, 2024b). Both countries face labor shortages, prompting plans to attract migrant labor to fill essential sectors. Leaders from 21 nations in North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean signed the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection in 2022, demonstrating their commitment to collaborating on migration management (IOM, 2024b).

In the United States, restrictive immigration policies and stricter enforcement, combined with a rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric, have resulted in psychological harm to children from immigrant families (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2021; Lieberman et al., 2023; Rabin et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2020). Events stemming from U.S. immigration policies experienced by Latino families—including family separations, deportations, and uncertainties related to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program—have led to increased depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues (Rabin et al., 2022). Policies aimed at limiting the influx of immigrants, such as metering—which restricts the number of individuals allowed to claim asylum at various entry points—exacerbate danger and subsequent stress for families even before they cross the border, increasing the likelihood of unauthorized crossings for desperate families (Amuedo-Dorantes & Bucheli, 2023). For those who do enter the country, fear of deportation raises stress levels and exposes families to potential separation, emotional distress, and economic instability (Mohammed et al., 2019). Those impacted negatively by Trump administration policies reported higher psychological distress (Rabin et al., 2022). Youth detained in shelters at the border exhibited notably higher rates of PTSD (Rabin et al., 2022). The U.S. political climate has adversely affected the mental health of Latino communities.

Barajas-Gonzalez and colleagues (2021) suggest broadening the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework to encompass the threat and deprivation stemming from racialized immigration policies and enforcement, indicating that this broader framework will yield several benefits. First, it will enable practitioners to better assess health disparities and address health issues arising from these policies and practices with greater precision. Second, it will inspire researchers to explore the unique impacts of ACEs related to the

immigrant experience on children's development. Lastly, it will empower practitioners to advocate for more nurturing immigration policies that foster the well-being and development of children within immigrant families. Acknowledging and addressing these additional dimensions of adversity will likely result in a better understanding of and responses to the challenges faced by immigrant children and families in the context of immigration policies and enforcement (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2021).

Similarly, the mental health of immigrants and refugees is a rising concern in Canada. Arabic-speaking immigrants and refugees in Canada face elevated risks of mental health problems due to stress related to intercultural adjustment, racism, and discrimination (Elshahat & Moffat, 2022). Lack of English literacy significantly contributes to distress and depression (Elshahat & Moffat, 2022). Following migration to Canada or their respective country of relocation, sociocultural factors such as positive ethnic identity, spirituality, family support, and social cohesion serve as protective factors for mental health (Elshahat & Moffat, 2022). Resilience, demonstrated through hope, notably shields Arabic-speaking immigrants and refugees from depression and distress (Elshahat & Moffat, 2022). Mental health stressors include social disparities such as domestic violence, discrimination, stigmatization, and poverty.

# 6.4

## Migration Trends Latin America and the Caribbean with a particular focus on women

The dynamics of migration in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have changed significantly in recent years due to push factors such as violence, economic opportunities, and employment prospects (UNDP, 2023). In contrast to a slowdown in migration to North America and a rebound in migration to Europe, there has been a noticeable increase in intraregional mobility within LAC, even as global migration rises. Increased migration

from Venezuela, tighter U.S. immigration laws, and economic growth in LAC nations have all influenced these trends (UNDP, 2023). Since 2023, there has been a surge in migration, particularly from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, and Ecuador (IOM, 2023). More than 5.6 million Venezuelans have left their country, significantly altering migration patterns and policies throughout South America.

Beyond the current humanitarian crisis, the region has experienced increased migration in recent years, primarily due to labor shortages (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). Factors contributing to this increase include economic crises in Latin America, the pandemic's consequences, policy changes, food insecurity, political unrest, violence in some countries of origin, and vulnerabilities to natural disasters and environmental degradation (IOM, 2023).

A study on the migratory motivations and victimization experiences of migrants from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala found that the experiences and mental health consequences of migrants were not greatly influenced by the source of violence, whether it originated from gangs or government officials. Violence was a common experience among migrants, along with a pervasive fear of returning home due to that violence (Rosenthal et al., 2024).

In recent Central American migrations driven by violence, political instability, and economic insecurity, women have been forced to choose between bringing their children with them for safety or navigating their roles as mothers from a distance. Cook Heffron et al.'s (2022) qualitative study of nineteen Central American women migrating to the United States explores transnational motherhood, revealing five key processes shaped by migration and violence: risking everything, embodying separation, braving reunification, mothering others, and experiencing motherhood due to sexual violence. The findings shed light on how violence influences women's decisions and experiences in migration, particularly regarding family separation. Recognizing the voices and experiences of migrating mothers is crucial for informing research, policy, and advocacy to address oppressive and dehumanizing immigration policies.

# 6.5

## Migration Trends in Europe

Since 1990, there has been a noticeable increase in migration patterns in Europe, with over 82 million foreign residents living there as of 2019 (IOM, 2020a). This migration wave includes around 40 million people migrating from outside Europe and approximately 42 million migrants who were born within the continent (World Migration Report, 2020). The European Union's economic, social, and political differences affect how people migrate and are received, resulting in varying net migration rates across the region (World Migration Report, 2020). The greatest volume of immigration occurs in countries like Germany, Spain, and Italy, while emigration is more prevalent in countries like Romania, Croatia, and Latvia, primarily due to skilled workers relocating within Europe (World Migration Report, 2020).

The primary reasons for granting residence permits in 2019 were employment, family reunification, and international protection (World Migration Report, 2020). Notably, there is a relatively equal distribution of male and female migrants throughout Europe, although Ukraine exhibits a higher percentage of female immigrants and emigrants (IOM, 2024c). This trend is not surprising, as males are unable to leave the country due to expectations to join the military. Significant internal displacement also occurs throughout Europe, with Ukraine experiencing a record number of displacements as a result of the ongoing conflict with Russia (IOM, 2024c). Despite the challenges, migration is essential for keeping Europe's population growing to prevent population decline, which would occur without migration, and to meet labor shortage needs (UNRIC, 2023).

The UK government's response to the situation of those displaced by the Syrian civil conflict is the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) (Haycox, 2023). The program provides recipients with a year-long integration support program in their local communities, along with immediate access to public funds (Haycox, 2023). Eligible families receive comprehensive support services across several institutions for resettlement considerations, including healthcare, employment aid, welfare support, and access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs (Haycox, 2023).

However, other policies create additional barriers for families trying to settle in the UK, fostering a hostile environment for immigrants. Examples include increased visa and application fees, minimum income requirements for bringing a spouse from overseas, lack of access to public funds, and overall exclusion from public services. An important trend is the UK's attempt to introduce a deterrent for illegal immigrants by agreeing with Rwanda to act as a transitional base, whereby migrants are flown to Rwanda while their cases are being examined (International Rescue Committee, 2024). These policies disproportionately impact immigrants from low- and middle-income countries and those from racially marginalized backgrounds (Benchechroun, 2023).

Migrants face unique safety risks in their destination countries, particularly affecting women and children. For women in a country on a spousal visa, leaving a dangerous home environment presents intense logistical barriers. Several OECD countries have specific policy measures to address domestic violence against migrant women. The European Union offers a specific migration

status for individuals in this precarious situation, while in the United States, victims can petition for independent permanent status. However, in many regions, these protections only apply to legal spouses or in cases involving criminal charges (Dumont & Chaloff, 2024).

The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU emphasize the dynamic and two-way nature of the integration process for immigrants into receiving member states. The practice of placing responsibility on both immigrants and residents acknowledges the importance of a reciprocal duty to respect diversity and ensure equal access to education, employment, and participation in democracy for all (Bottero, 2022).

Most recently, the EU adopted the Pact on Migration and Asylum, a comprehensive framework for managing migration and asylum with a focus on European values (European Commission, 2024). This Pact integrates key policies on migration, asylum, border management, and integration, aiming to balance firm rules with fairness (European Commission, 2024). It enhances border security, ensures the protection of rights, and supports EU countries facing migration pressures (European Commission, 2024). Key features include robust screening at borders, a strengthened Eurodac database, streamlined asylum procedures, efficient returns for ineligible applicants, and crisis protocols for emergency situations (European Commission, 2024). The Pact is lauded for establishing a unified European system that introduces this new framework for managing migration during regular periods while also addressing crisis scenarios and preventing misuse (European Commission, 2024).

# 6.6

## Migration Trends in Asia and the Pacific

The Asian and Pacific region, comprising over 4.6 billion people, represents about 60% of the global population (UNESCAP, 2020). It includes countries with diverse demographics, some facing rapidly aging populations, high vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, and significant wealth inequality (UNESCAP, 2020). Moreover, the region hosts both emerging economic and political powers and countries classified among the least developed (UNESCAP, 2020). Asia accounted for more than 40% of the approximately 115 million international migrants worldwide in 2020

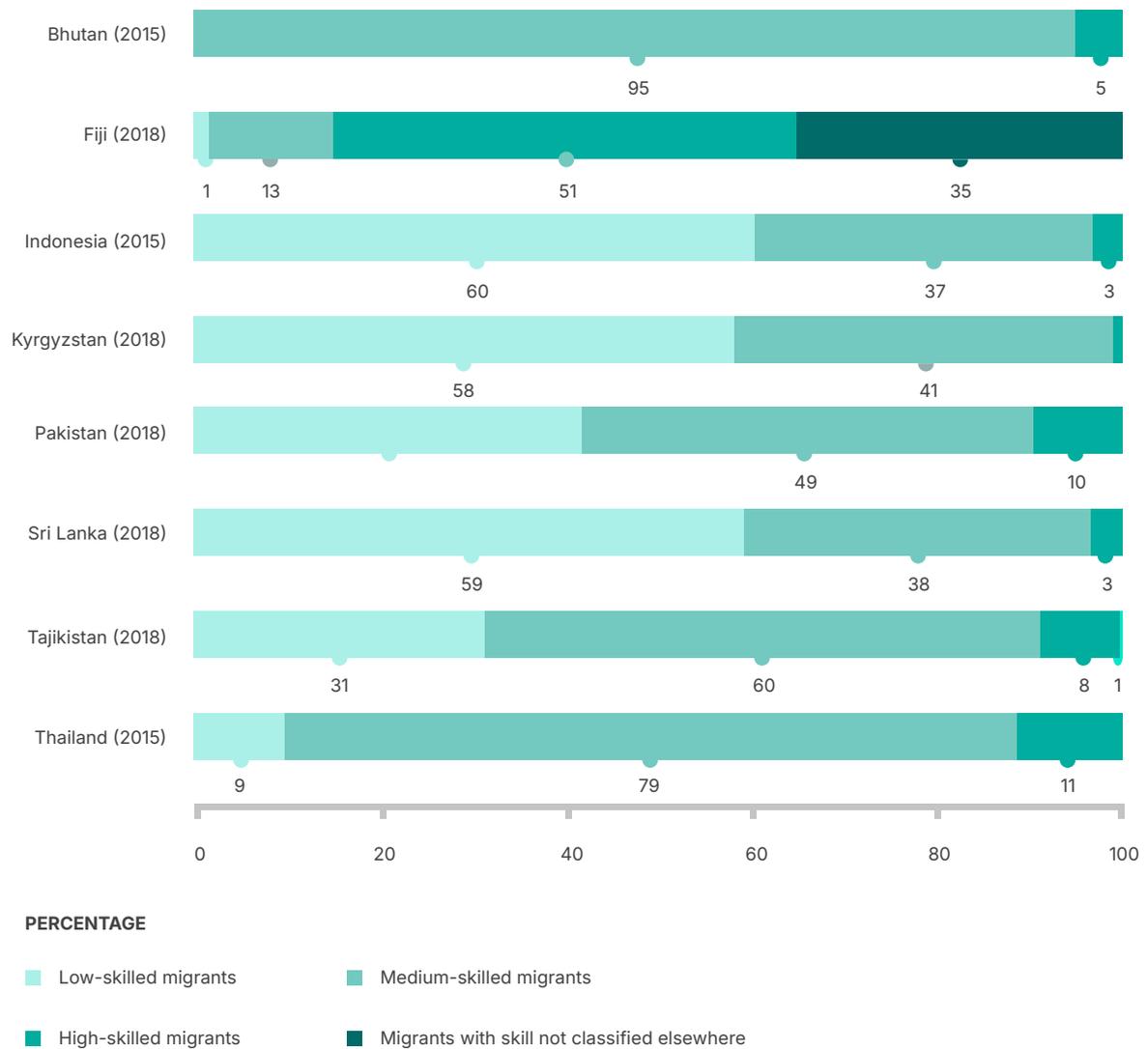
(IOM, n.d.; e.g., Figure 7). Sixty-nine million of these migrants lived in Asia, a substantial increase from the estimate of 61 million in 2015 (IOM, n.d.). Migration to Europe from Asia rose to 23 million in 2020, up from nearly 20 million in 2015, while migration from Asia to North America reached 17.5 million in 2020, slightly up from 17.3 million in 2015 (IOM, n.d.). The number of Asian migrants living outside the region increased dramatically due to this migration pattern, reaching over 46 million (IOM, n.d.).

As of 2020, there were over 8 million international migrants from outside Oceania living in Oceania, including more than 156,000 refugees and asylum seekers (IOM, 2024d). Nearly 91,000 asylum seekers and over 54,000 refugees reside in Australia, the majority of whom come from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Islamic Republic of Iran (IOM, 2024d). Papua New Guinea has the second-highest concentration of refugees and asylum seekers in Oceania (IOM, 2024d). Following a comprehensive evaluation of Australia's immigration system, a government advisory council declared the current system insufficient and recommended significant improvements in early 2023 (IOM, 2024d). The most significant revision to Australia's immigration laws in many years was brought about by this review and implemented soon thereafter (IOM, 2024d). Some criticisms centered on the inadequacies in attracting highly trained migrants and streamlining employers' access to labor (IOM, 2024d). Concerns have also been expressed regarding the prevalence of permanent temporary migration, which has led to the exploitation of migrants and eroded trust in the program (IOM, 2024d).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a lasting impact on migration in Asia and the Pacific, leading to the fastest and most complete halt of mobility in the region. All cross-border mobility was suspended, and it took until 2022 for the first signs of recovery in labor migration across all skill levels. Lower-skilled laborers faced the most significant impact. In Thailand, the number of migrant workers decreased by 14% in just the first three months of 2020. Student migration and tourism plummeted in 2020 and have only begun to rebound in the past year (Migration Policy Institute, 2024b).

The majority of migrants in the region work temporarily in basic-skilled occupations, typically moving from lower to higher-income countries in search of employment (UNESCAP, 2020). While some regions provide regular labor migration channels for individuals of different skill levels, those for workers in vital occupations are often costly and complex (UNESCAP, 2020). Female migrants, particularly in domestic labor, are more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, assault, and discrimination (UNESCAP, 2020). Malpractices in the recruitment process, such as exorbitant fees, undermine the benefits of migration for both migrant workers and their families.

Figure 7: Percentage distribution of migrants departing from selected Asia-Pacific countries by skill level (latest available year; Source: UNESCAP, 2020<sup>7</sup>)



<sup>7</sup> UNESCAP (2020). Asia-Pacific Migration Report: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (ST/ESCAP/2801). Available from [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APMR2020\\_FullReport.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/APMR2020_FullReport.pdf) [accessed 8 June 2024].

In the Asia-Pacific region, human trafficking plays a significant role in migration and poses serious criminal and human rights challenges intertwined with issues such as violence against women and inadequate work opportunities (UNESCAP, 2020). Notably, 56 percent of global human trafficking occurs in this region (USAID, n.d.). Sexual exploitation is the most prevalent form of human trafficking, accounting for 79% of cases, primarily affecting women and girls (UNODC, 2009). Forced labor ranks second at 18%, though it is often underreported compared to sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2009). Children represent nearly 20% of trafficking victims globally; however, in some areas, like the Mekong region, located at the border of East Asia and Southeast Asia, children make up the majority of victims (UNODC, 2009). Nearly half of all child trafficking is initiated by family members who use psychological, sexual, and/or physical abuse to control the victims (IOM, 2017). Traffickers exploit the vulnerability and precarity stemming from weakened protections and immigration status in foreign countries (IOM, 2017).

Effectively combating trafficking requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on human rights, safe migration, and decent work, despite some jurisdictions having passed legislation to protect victims of trafficking and ratified relevant conventions. Strong border control is essential, supported by multi-agency coordination and international partnerships, given the complex cross-border flows in the region (UNESCAP, 2020). Nonetheless, there is an urgent need to enhance capacity-building, particularly in law enforcement initiatives that are child-sensitive, disability-inclusive, and gender-responsive.

Migrants often face exclusion from social protection systems in both their home and host countries. Benefits are frequently not transferable between nations, even if migrants can access such systems. There is little social security transferability between origin and destination countries in the Asia-Pacific area (UNESCAP, 2020). Although there are various creative subregional approaches, some countries within and outside the region have signed bilateral social security agreements. Furthermore, several countries of origin unilaterally grant their nationals residing overseas limited access to social security benefits (UNESCAP, 2020). However, overall, social protection for migrants is generally uneven and lacks a consistent, rights-based approach.

# THE INTERSECTION OF URBANIZATION, MIGRATION, AND FAMILY



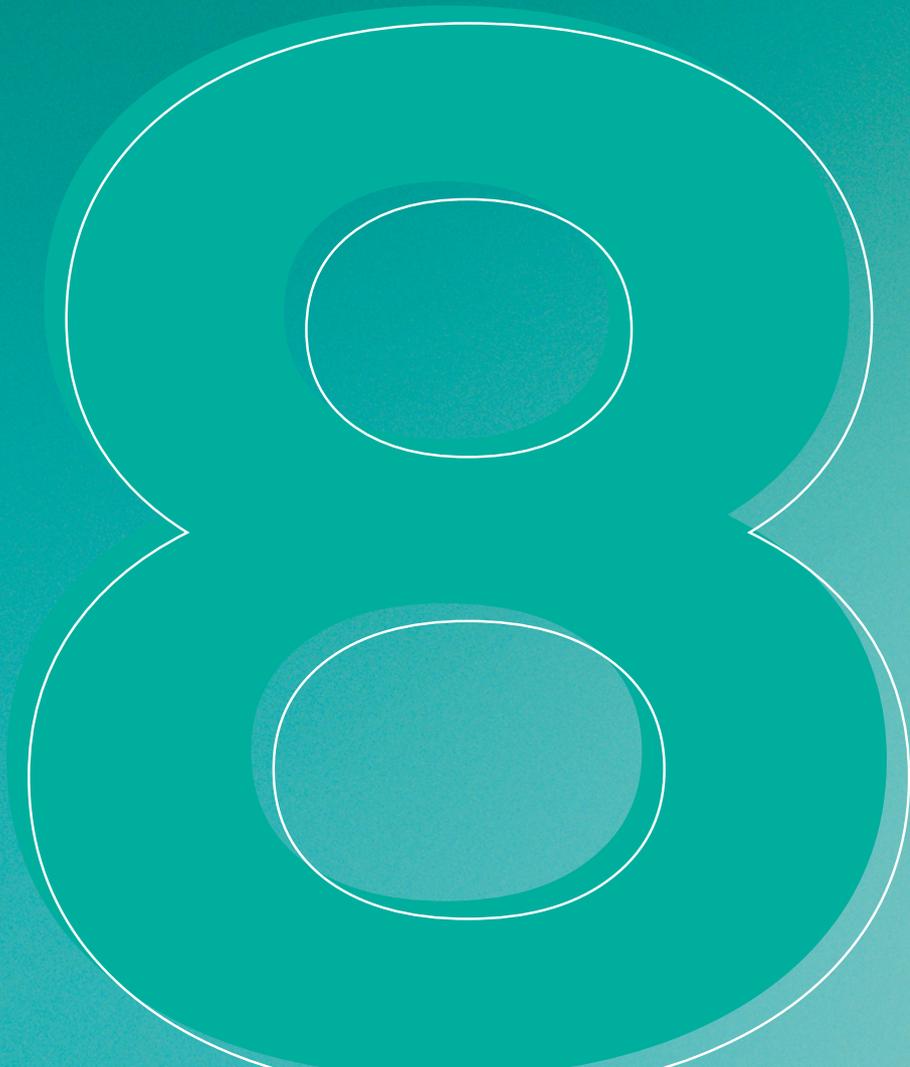
Urban areas attract immigrant and refugee families, drawing a disproportionate share of these populations due to factors such as job opportunities, access to services, and social networks (Dennler, 2022). The relationship between urbanization and migration is dynamic, shaped by various push and pull factors. Urban growth has historically been fueled by migration to cities in search of work, healthcare, and education. Urban areas benefit from the skills, labor, and cultural diversity that migrants bring, which, in turn, shapes the social and economic landscape of these locations. Global migration dynamics and urbanization patterns are further influenced by structural factors, including globalization, economic inequality, and environmental change (UNDESA, 2022). The intertwining of rapid urbanization and migration significantly reshapes family structures worldwide. As individuals migrate from rural areas to urban centers in search of opportunities, cities experience exponential growth. These trends profoundly impact family life, relationships, and practices, bringing about the following changes (IFFD, 2023):

- 1. Changes in Family Structures:** Migration to urban areas or other countries often leads to smaller households and fewer multigenerational families. This shift results in individuals relying more on nuclear families or chosen families for support, leaving behind extended family members.
- 2. Economic Opportunities and Challenges:** Urban areas offer new economic prospects for families, including higher-paying jobs and improved access to education and healthcare. However, urban environments also present economic challenges such as higher living costs, job scarcity, overcrowding, slums, and strain on infrastructure.
- 3. Disruption of Social Support Networks:** Families may face disruptions in their existing social support systems as they are separated from extended family members and friends. While they may establish new networks in their new locations through work or community organizations, this transition can be challenging.

- 4. Adaptation to New Cultural Norms:** Adjusting to new cultural norms and practices, such as learning a new language, adapting to different foods and customs, and navigating unfamiliar social hierarchies, can pose significant challenges for migrating families.
- 5. Impact on Vulnerable Groups:** Vulnerable populations, including children, older individuals, and persons with disabilities, face unique challenges during migration. Forced displacement due to conflict can lead to trauma, disrupted education, limited mobility, and other obstacles that impact well-being and development.
- 6. Effects on Young People:** Young individuals are particularly affected regarding employment opportunities, housing availability, and family formation. Recognizing the importance of integration as an investment is crucial, especially in supporting the well-being and future prospects of young migrants and their families.

Women and children who migrate to urban areas face unique safety risks in their destination countries. If a woman is in a country on a spousal visa, leaving a dangerous home environment poses intense logistical barriers. Several OECD countries have specific policy measures to address domestic violence against migrant women. The European Union offers specific migration status for individuals in similar precarious situations, while in the United States, victims can petition for independent permanent status. However, in many regions, these protections only apply to legal spouses or in cases involving criminal charges (Dumont & Chaloff, 2024). Migrants are inherently more vulnerable when residing in countries where they are unfamiliar with the laws and often afforded fewer legal protections. Compounding their vulnerabilities are issues related to shifting family structures, economic hardship, and the shortage of safe and affordable housing in the urban centers where they often reside. Inclusive policies that specifically seek to protect migrant women and children can provide the most vulnerable families with a sense of community and measures to promote peace and safety, ultimately benefiting everyone.

# **POLICY AND PROGRAMS ADDRESSING FAMILIES AND URBANIZATION - BEST PRACTICE**



This section explores examples of the successful implementation of urbanization policies in shaping the well-being of families across the globe. As urban areas expand rapidly, these policies play a critical role in ensuring access to adequate housing, employment opportunities, and social services for residents.

By addressing the challenges of urbanization, such as housing shortages and infrastructure development, these policies aim to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban environments where families can thrive.

## Middle East and North Africa

Most urban areas in the MENA region have experienced unprecedented growth over the past few decades to absorb population increases and migration from rural and politically unstable regions (Jaad & Abdelghany, 2021). Such expedited urbanization has led to stress on the ecological and financial resources of urban areas, as well as on the overall well-being of their residents (Jaad & Abdelghany, 2021). Policymakers have developed policies to provide adequate housing, employment opportunities, and social services to integrate migrants into urban economies (Awumbila, 2014). However, these policies have also resulted in challenges; rapid development often overlooks ecological impacts, leading to potential environmental degradation, pollution, and loss of green spaces. Additionally, the financial burden on local governments can be substantial, creating budget deficits and reduced public spending on other critical areas (Awumbila, 2014).

Cairo, Egypt, is considered the most significant urban center in Africa due to its long history and large population (Jaad & Abdelghany, 2021). One of the government's policies to accommodate this population has been the development of new cities and satellite towns (Jaad & Abdelghany, 2021; Mikhaeil et al., 2024). These new cities aim to reduce congestion in Cairo by relocating government offices and providing infrastructure and housing (Mikhaeil et al., 2024). Furthermore, several satellite cities have been developed around major urban centers like Cairo and Alexandria (Mikhaeil et al., 2024). The focus has been on improving housing conditions, infrastructure, and access to essential services such as water, sanitation, and electricity (Mikhaeil et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these developments have led to the displacement of some local communities, the disruption of social networks, and the creation of a socio-economic divide between new and old urban areas. The relocation of government offices

and essential services to new cities can also result in reduced accessibility for residents who remain (Mikhaeil et al., 2024). Housing policies have also been a focus for the Egyptian government. To address the housing shortage, the government constructed new residential units and provided financial assistance to low-income families (Mikhaeil et al., 2024). Establishing industrial zones in and around cities and satellite towns has been part of the approach to create job opportunities and attract investments (Mikhaeil et al., 2024). However, the rapid construction of residential units has sometimes led to poor building quality and inadequate urban planning, resulting in potentially unsafe living conditions (Mikhaeil et al., 2024).

Egypt has also developed a Family Development Program to enhance the quality of life for families through various initiatives such as family counseling, health services, and educational support (Ministry of Social Solidarity, Egypt, 2021). Despite these positive intentions, such programs can be underfunded and poorly implemented, leading to unequal access to benefits and limited impact on the most vulnerable populations.

To address housing issues caused by rapid urbanization, Saudi Arabia has developed a National Housing Strategy aimed at increasing homeownership rates among citizens by providing affordable housing options and financial support. This strategy includes subsidized loans and housing allowances to ensure that urbanization benefits are accessible to all families, thereby reducing the development of informal settlements (Ministry of Housing, Saudi Arabia, 2020). However, these strategies face challenges such as bureaucratic delays, rising land prices, and often the exclusion of non-citizen residents from these benefits, limiting their overall effectiveness.

Simultaneously, the UAE has implemented various family policies aimed at enhancing family stability and promoting social welfare. These policies include generous maternity leave, child benefits, and support for working parents (UAE Government, 2021). However, these benefits are often primarily available to Emirati citizens, leaving expatriate families with less support and leading to further disparities in social welfare (UAE Government, 2021). Jordan's Social Welfare and Family Protection Program and Iran's Family Support and Social Protection Policy provide support to families, including cash assistance, health services, and educational subsidies (Ministry of Social Development, Jordan, 2020; Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, Iran, 2020). Similarly, Lebanon's Family and Child Welfare Program includes various initiatives to support vulnerable families, such as financial aid, healthcare, and educational support (Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanon, 2021). However, political instability and economic crises in these countries often undermine the effectiveness of these programs, leading to inconsistent service delivery and limited impact on improving family welfare (e.g., Jordan attempted to keep some of the Syrian refugees in Zaatar Camp while allowing others to integrate, thus affecting the housing market) (Alshoubaki & Zazara, 2020). An attempt to build affordable housing under the slogan "dignified living," financed by Saudi Arabia and named after the late King Abdullah, ended up being occupied by middle-class residents (Nassar, 2020).

## Africa

South Africa has led the region in addressing the challenges of urbanization. Their Urban Development Policy focuses on housing shortages, infrastructure development, and service delivery. The policy aims to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban environments (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, South Africa, 2018). However, the implementation of this policy has faced significant challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, political corruption, and inadequate funding. These challenges have hindered progress and led to uneven development across urban areas in the country (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, South Africa, 2018).

Kenya's government has also adopted a broad approach to urbanization challenges, focusing on housing deficits and improved living conditions. The Affordable Housing Program aims to provide decent and affordable housing to urban residents (Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Housing, Urban Development and Public Works, Kenya, 2020). Despite these efforts, the program has faced obstacles such as land scarcity, high construction costs, and challenges in providing adequate infrastructure to support new developments (Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Housing, Urban Development and Public Works, Kenya, 2020). As urbanization accelerates, ensuring families have access to affordable and adequate housing is crucial for preventing the proliferation of informal settlements and enhancing overall urban livability in the region.

Nigeria's family policy includes measures to support family stability and well-being, such as maternal and child health programs, family planning services, and initiatives to reduce domestic violence and promote gender equity (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Nigeria, 2019). As urban areas in Nigeria grow, these policies help address the unique challenges urban families face, such as limited access to healthcare and increased exposure to social issues. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these policies is often compromised by inadequate funding, insufficient healthcare infrastructure, and cultural barriers that can limit the uptake of family planning and gender equity initiatives. Additionally, urbanization can intensify social issues such as unemployment, housing shortages, and crime, placing further strain on families and the policies designed to support them (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Nigeria, 2019).

## North America

Canada has taken a holistic approach to urban planning. Their National Urban Policy aims to support sustainable urban development by focusing on infrastructure, affordable housing, and enhancing the quality of life in urban areas through better planning and investment. This policy is particularly relevant as Canadian cities are expanding rapidly, necessitating comprehensive strategies to ensure families have access to essential services, safe living conditions, and economic opportunities (Infrastructure Canada, 2020). However, rapid urban growth has also led to challenges such as rising housing costs, making affordable housing targets difficult to achieve. Additionally, the focus on urban expansion can sometimes overlook the needs of marginalized communities, leading to increased social inequality and gentrification (Infrastructure Canada, 2020).

Throughout the report, it is evident that housing undergoes significant transformations in regions experiencing heightened urbanization. In the United States, the Housing First Initiative program aims to end chronic homelessness by providing permanent housing as a first step. This policy is based on the principle that people need necessities like food and a place to live before addressing other needs, including employment and substance use issues (USICH, 2018). Dense urban areas experience a higher rate of homelessness due to the influx of people seeking economic opportunities; by providing stable housing, the initiative helps integrate vulnerable populations into urban settings more effectively. Nevertheless, the program faces challenges such as insufficient funding, a lack of affordable housing stock, and resistance from some communities to housing developments for homeless populations (USICH, 2018).

Families in urban areas also face unique health and stress conditions. The Family and Medical Leave Act in the United States provides employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year for family and medical reasons (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). While its scope and impact may be limited, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) aims to facilitate work-life balance and assist families in caring for newborns or ill relatives without fearing job loss—a crucial blend of support for urban families. With urban areas seeing a rise in dual-income households and higher work pressures, such policies are critical for maintaining family stability and ensuring that urban workers can manage personal responsibilities alongside professional obligations (Garcia, 2019). However, the unpaid nature of the leave can place a financial burden on families, particularly those with lower incomes, who may struggle to afford time off work. Furthermore, not all employees qualify for this benefit, leaving many without legal protection for family-related absences (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020).

Mexico's urban transportation policy focuses on developing sustainable urban transport systems to address congestion and inequities related to lack of transportation access. The government has expanded public transportation networks, promoted non-motorized transport, and reduced city traffic congestion and pollution (Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transportes, Mexico, 2020). These policies are particularly relevant for urban families who rely on public transportation for daily commutes, enhancing access to education, healthcare, and employment. However, these initiatives often face challenges such as inadequate funding, delays in project implementation, and maintenance issues, which can undermine their effectiveness.

## Latin America

This region has also emphasized family support programs for those in urban areas. In Brazil, the Bolsa Família Program provides financial aid to poor families, who must ensure their children attend school and receive vaccinations in return (Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, Brazil, 2019). This program aims to reduce poverty and improve health and education outcomes. Bolsa Família provides urban families with financial stability and encourages educational attainment, which is crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty in rapidly growing cities. However, the program has faced criticism for issues such as insufficient funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and challenges in reaching the most vulnerable populations.

Chile has taken a more robust approach to supporting families in this context with its Family Welfare Policy. This initiative includes a range of programs to help families, such as childcare subsidies, parental leave, and family counseling services (Ministry of Social Development and Family, Chile, 2021).

As urbanization in Chile leads to higher living costs and increased stress on family structures, these programs are vital in ensuring that urban families can thrive and maintain a balanced life. However, these initiatives also face challenges, such as unequal access to benefits, particularly for low-income families and those living in informal settlements, making it difficult for families to achieve true economic stability (Ministry of Social Development and Family, Chile, 2021).

## Europe

Almost all of Europe, except for Eastern Europe, has at least one form of housing allowance (Whitehead, 2019). One particular European region implementing effective urbanization policies is the UK. The United Kingdom's urbanization and housing policies have improved significantly, primarily through housing allowances, rent controls, job creation, and income-related benefits allocated to support low-income households (UK Ministry of Housing, Communities, & Local Government, 2019; Whitehead, 2019). One of these policies is the Housing Benefit System, developed to assist low-income families by subsidizing their housing costs (Whitehead, 2019). Initially, it ensured that all tenants could meet a minimum income requirement, which included paying the total rent and any permitted service fees for those whose incomes were equivalent to the bare necessities allowance (Whitehead, 2019). Over time, this system has improved to include rent rebates and allowances focused on individual household circumstances (Whitehead, 2019). However, rising rents and housing shortages in urban areas have strained the system, making it challenging to provide adequate support for all eligible families (Whitehead, 2019).

Furthermore, the UK has implemented other policies, including rent controls in both public and private sectors, to ensure affordable housing (Whitehead, 2019). The UK's policy on housing allowances, particularly the shift from supply-side subsidies to demand-side benefits, has substantially impacted housing assistance systems (Kemp, 2007). Despite these policies, the effectiveness of rent controls has been debated, with some arguing that they can lead to reduced housing supply and maintenance issues, as landlords may be less incentivized to invest in their properties (Kemp, 2007). Housing policies play a critical role in determining economic and social outcomes by increasing social inclusion and reducing social exclusion (Hills, 2001).

Some European countries have also prioritized family leave policies, surpassing the impact of the U.S. policy described above. France's family allowance programs provide financial support to families with children, helping cover the costs of raising children and reducing child poverty (CAF, 2020). Sweden offers one of the most generous parental leave policies globally, allowing parents to take up to 480 days of leave per child, with part of this time specifically reserved for fathers to promote shared parenting responsibilities (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2021). These programs are particularly relevant in urban settings, where living costs are often higher, placing strain on family budgets. They aim to preserve work-life balance and provide crucial support for families caring for newborns or ill family members, helping them navigate personal responsibilities without the fear of job loss—a vital aspect for urban households. Given the increase in dual-income households and heightened work pressures in urban areas, such policies are crucial for preserving

family stability and ensuring that urban employees can juggle personal obligations with professional duties (Garcia, 2019). However, while these generous family leave policies provide substantial support, they can also be expensive for governments to maintain and may lead to increased tax burdens on citizens. Additionally, challenges can arise in ensuring that both parents, especially fathers, take full advantage of the leave, due to workplace cultures and societal expectations (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2021).

## Asia and Oceania

Some of the best practices in urbanization policies exist in Asia and Oceania. For example, India has focused on facilitating a smoother transition from rural to urban living for families engaged in this move. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is an initiative to improve urban infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms in major Indian cities (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, 2019). The program focuses on creating economically productive, efficient, equitable, and responsive cities. This mission supports the rapid urbanization India is experiencing by enhancing living conditions and providing essential services to urban families.

China's approach to urban policy has centered on providing affordable housing to low- and middle-income families in urban areas. Programs include the construction of public rental housing and subsidies for low-income families (Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China, 2020; World Bank, 2014). Given the massive urbanization in China, which sees millions migrating to cities annually, this policy helps prevent urban poverty (Ma &

Hsu, 2021). Overall, China's urbanization policy, which has evolved over the years, reflects a strategic effort to manage population distribution, enhance economic development, and integrate rural migrants into urban areas. However, challenges remain, including rising housing prices, which can make even subsidized housing unaffordable for some families. Additionally, rapid urbanization has strained urban infrastructure and services, leading to congestion and environmental degradation (Ma & Hsu, 2021).

Australia has implemented exemplary policies addressing urbanization housing issues, high living costs, and sustainability challenges in densely populated cities. The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement funds states and territories to improve access to affordable housing and reduce homelessness (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2020). The policy includes initiatives to increase the supply

of social housing and support services for those experiencing homelessness. Additionally, their Family Tax Benefit aids families in urban areas with higher living costs, helping them manage the costs of raising children based on household income and the number of children. It also supports single-parent families or families with one primary income earner (Australian Government Services, 2021). Regarding sustainability, Australia enacted the Smart Cities Plan to improve the productivity and livability of its major cities. The initiative includes investments in infrastructure, technology, and innovative urban planning practices to address the potential challenges of urbanization (Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, 2016). The plan directly impacts families by creating more efficient, connected, and sustainable urban environments where they can thrive.

# **POLICY AND PROGRAMS**

## **ADDRESSING FAMILIES AND MIGRATION - BEST PRACTICE**





## Middle East and North Africa

Egypt offers an exemplary model of migration policies that serve as a reference for other countries seeking to develop their own migration frameworks. For centuries, Egypt has been a source of migratory movement between and among Asia, Africa, and Europe. It also serves as a long-standing bridge to the Mediterranean world (Habersky et al., 2023). The Egyptian refugee protection system relies on international refugee law as its foundation (Habersky et al., 2023). The four key protection areas are refugee status, family reunification, identification documents, and healthcare (Habersky et al., 2023).

Egypt has ratified several international conventions to safeguard immigrants' rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Additionally, Egypt has adopted the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which means that African regional law plays a significant role in the legal rights afforded to refugees on the continent (Habersky et al., 2023).

In addition to the state, the UNHCR plays a vital role in hosting and protecting refugees in Egypt. The UNHCR recognizes refugees and provides funds to the most vulnerable immigrants (Habersky et al., 2023). Therefore, the international and regional treaties discussed have the potential to provide a robust framework of protection for refugees and other forced migrants in Egypt.

## North America

Certain aspects of Canadian and U.S. migration policy provide examples of humanizing and supportive policies that benefit families. Within the last five years, the Canadian government has shifted toward prioritizing the economic benefits of migration through growth and support programs (Milaney et al., 2020). The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, as discussed previously, aims to encourage the integration and security of migrants transitioning into the Canadian economy (Milaney et al., 2020). Like other regions, especially the Middle East and North Africa, Canada has implemented both a classification and sponsorship system for labor immigration. Based on specific skills deemed beneficial for the current economic state, certain classes of migrants are prioritized or sponsored by a citizen or permanent resident. These sponsorships allow individuals, instead of the government, to take on the legal and financial responsibility of supporting a migrant (Milaney et al., 2020). Further development of this policy should include holistic support for violence, trauma, housing, childcare, and legal assistance to ease transitions for sponsored families.

Furthermore, the United States operates under a complex web of federal, state, and municipal laws and administrative practices that significantly impact immigrants' access to education, employment, and health services. Immigration integration policies in the United States profoundly impact immigrants and their children (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019). These policies aim to enhance access to public and private health insurance and provide healthcare services through federally qualified community health centers or local health departments (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019). In addition to healthcare services, the policies address essential life needs for immigrants, including educational attainment, employment, income, housing, and food (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019).

Moreover, the United States has implemented several policies aimed at reducing poverty among immigrants and assisting newly arrived immigrants in adjusting effectively to their new environment. These policies focus primarily on expanding access to and benefits from existing social safety net programs. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are essential programs. Expanding the EITC has been suggested to enhance its impact on reducing poverty (Garcia et al., 2021).

The EITC offers tax credits to low-income working families, with benefits for those who have children (Garcia et al., 2021). Under the American Rescue Plan Act, the CTC has been temporarily extended to encompass families without income and to offer larger credits. SNAP provides food assistance to low-income families and has also seen proposals for benefit increases to better support children's and families' nutritional needs (Garcia et al., 2021). However, these programs are not available to all immigrants; they are limited to those with recognized forms of documentation and legal status within the country. This highlights legality as a key moderator.

## Europe

Between 2010 and 2019, the EU had a liberal integration policy that resulted in significant changes in labor market mobility, education, political participation, citizenship, and anti-discrimination (Solano et al., 2023). It should be noted that EU member states have converged on policies as the EU has continued to expand (Solano et al., 2023). The policies provide improved access for immigrants to the labor market, access to education—including language and social orientation courses—strengthened measures to prevent discrimination against immigrants, and increased opportunities for immigrants to engage in the political process (Solano et al., 2023).

Migrant families often confront poverty, educational obstacles, and discrimination, highlighting the need for inclusive policies and societal integration efforts. Interventions have been utilized in the European Union to present the idea of integration for immigrants as a shared responsibility between newly arrived immigrants and current residents. The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU compels residents to engage in the reciprocal duty of integration to ensure equal access to employment, education, institutional support, and democracy for migrants (Bottero, 2022). This approach broadens the scope of integration beyond individual immigrant families and emphasizes the importance of whole-society integration.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the need for effective immigration policy, particularly in neighboring European countries. There are benefits for those with existing connections to the UK, who can apply to join a family member based in the UK and receive a visa with three years of leave, the right to work, and access to housing, education, and welfare via the Ukraine Family Scheme Policy (Machin, 2023).

An exemplary illustration of European policy is the UK's initiatives for immigrants, particularly the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), which represents the UK government's primary approach to individuals forcibly displaced by the Syrian Civil War (Haycox, 2023). Beneficiaries of the VPRS are provided immediate access to public funds (Haycox, 2023). Each resettled family receives an integration support plan for their first 12 months in the UK (Haycox, 2023). Through this plan, immigrants receive essential support services, including housing, healthcare, employment, and education (Haycox, 2023). Thus, the UK has recognized the need for a policy response to the numerous families displaced due to the civil war in Syria.

## Asia and Oceania

An example of a successful immigration program exists in South Korea. By encouraging language competence and providing vital information about Korean culture and society, the Korea Immigration and Integration Program (KIIP) significantly contributes to the integration of immigrants into Korean society. KIIP, which is available to all foreign nationals living in Korea, offers educational programs, including “Korean and Korean Culture” and “Understanding Korean Society,” to equip immigrants with the tools they need to integrate (Lim, 2021). Additionally, incentives like shorter wait times and waivers from written exams are granted to KIIP participants when they change their residency status, earn permanent residency, or become Korean citizens. Studies show that immigrants who participate in Korean-language immersion programs are more capable of adjusting to Korean culture (Lim, 2021). Policymakers should prioritize improving language competency among

immigrants, enact anti-discrimination laws, and implement various social integration policies and programs to foster immigrant integration (Lim, 2021). An increased ability to communicate in Korean strengthens an individual’s sense of identity and helps ease the adjustment to Korean society. To ensure the proper settling and integration of immigrants, especially at-risk refugees, into Korean culture, it is imperative that they be actively encouraged to engage in KIIP (Lim, 2021).

In New Zealand, victims of ongoing domestic violence can apply for a Victims of Family Violence visa that allows women to gain visa status independent of an abusive partner. This policy eliminates the control that can be exercised in some abusive situations where a victimized partner is unable to leave if they are being sponsored by their abuser for fear of becoming illegally present in the country. This policy helps empower women to leave abusive situations and gain independent status despite their immigration status (Ayallo, 2021).

# **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS MIGRATION AND URBANIZATION**

# 10

Following a comparative policy analysis of global regions concerning urbanization and migration, six critical areas for policy recommendations have been identified. These areas encompass comprehensive urban planning, sustainable urban growth through effective family planning, affordable housing and inclusive infrastructure, a focus on

family-friendly policies, gender-responsive and child-sensitive legislation, and comprehensive healthcare services for immigrants. These recommendations aim to address the multifaceted challenges associated with urbanization and migration, ensuring sustainable and inclusive development that prioritizes the well-being of individuals and families.

## 1. Implementing Comprehensive Urban Planning Frameworks to Create Sustainable Urbanization

Governments should develop and implement comprehensive urban planning frameworks that promote sustainable development principles. There are considerable differences in the size, types, and geographical distribution of cities within and between societies, and effective urbanization planning allows for the centralization of services, increasing access to employment, education, and leisure activities. Urban planning should include access to affordable housing, quality education, health-care services, and recreational spaces. Families residing in urban areas will benefit even more from implementing resilient and sustainable urban infrastructure, such as green spaces and effective public transportation networks, which promote healthy living conditions. Conversely, promoting sound rural development policies may close the gap and reduce the level of migration to urban areas in the first place.

## 2. Promoting Sustainable Urban Growth Through Effective Family Planning

World populations are increasingly moving from rural to urban centers, resulting in larger cities with higher population densities. Migration from rural to urban areas generates a series of concerns, including environmental stress and social adaptation challenges for migrants, as urban growth is often associated with industrial development, air pollution, and land consumption.

Urban family planning is crucial for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to its significant impact on gender equality, employment, poverty alleviation, and health outcomes. Access to comprehensive reproductive health services, such as contraception and prenatal care, empowers women

by allowing them to control their reproductive choices, leading to fewer unintended pregnancies. This empowerment enables families to plan and space their children effectively, reducing financial burdens and enhancing economic benefits, thereby facilitating investments in education and well-being.

Enhanced family planning services, especially for low-income urban families, contribute to poverty reduction by enabling smaller family sizes. This reduction has the potential to improve maternal and child health outcomes, as access to contraceptives and prenatal care reduces risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth, lowering maternal mortality rates and improving newborn health. Women's employment opportunities increase when they can pursue education and careers without the constraints of unplanned pregnancies, boosting economic independence and productivity.

Urban family planning is not just about the present but also about creating a more equitable and sustainable future for urban communities. As well-planned families manage resources better, food security improves, ensuring access to nutritious food and reducing malnutrition. Urban family planning, therefore, is pivotal for achieving the SDGs, influencing multiple dimensions of sustainable development, including health, education, employment, and food security. Investing in family planning services is an investment in a better future.

## 3. Promoting Affordable Housing and Inclusive Infrastructure to Reduce Socio-Economic Disparities

To mitigate socio-economic inequalities and promote social cohesion, governments should support mixed-income housing developments, including affordable and market-rate apartments.

Housing shortages can be addressed by providing private developers with incentives such as tax credits, subsidies, and low-interest loans to incorporate affordable housing units into their developments. Improving living conditions requires funding public housing projects and modernizing infrastructure to include dependable energy, clean drinking water, sanitary facilities, and public transit.

#### 4. Promoting a Focus on Family-Friendly Policies

Family-friendly policies that incorporate gender equality are vital for enhancing an inclusive, equitable, and supportive society. Implementing flexible working arrangements, parental leave, and access to quality childcare can empower women, increase workforce participation, and enhance family well-being. Families can better manage childcare and improve their overall quality of life when companies offer options such as remote work, flexible hours, and part-time schedules.

Governments and organizations can make families feel more supported and included by enforcing family-friendly policies and advocating for gender equality. When women can engage fully in the workforce, productivity and economic growth increase. Gender equality in the workplace also leads to more inclusive and diverse work cultures that encourage creativity and innovation.

#### 5. Developing Gender-Responsive and Child-Sensitive Legislation and Social Protection Measures to Protect Women and Children

To mitigate violence against women and children, countries that accept immigrants should implement and enforce sanctuary policies. Sanctuary policies can create a safe environment for immigrants and encourage them to engage with law enforcement without the

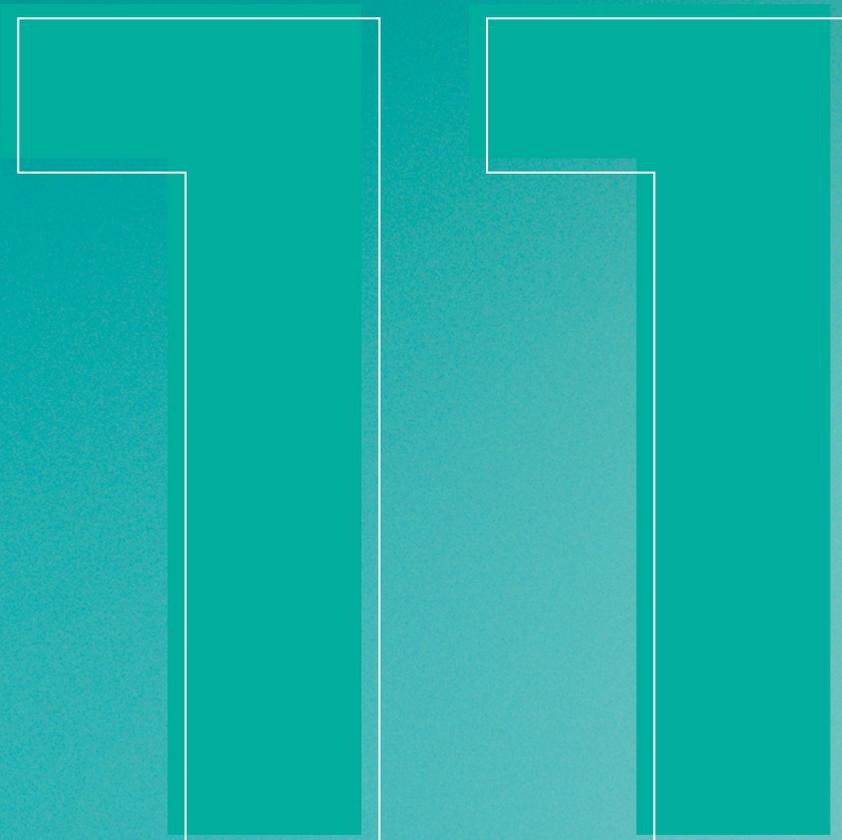
fear of deportation. To implement these policies, governments should pass laws explicitly supporting these guidelines developed to mitigate violence. Additionally, educational and awareness campaigns are critical to inform immigrants—especially women and children who are vulnerable to violence—about their rights and available support services.

#### 6. Providing Complementary Healthcare Services and Mental Health Support for Immigrants

Migration often leads to depression in children and families due to the transition from one environment to a different culture and climate. This transition can disrupt social networks, educational opportunities, and overall stability, contributing to feelings of isolation and anxiety. The pressure of adapting to a new society and economic hardship can exacerbate mental health issues among immigrants. State-level provision of insurance programs contributes to a reduction in depression and mental health issues. Insurance coverage should include mental health care, counseling services, and psychological support to address the needs of children and families. Furthermore, support services such as shelters and counseling for victims of violence should be provided, with services available in multiple languages to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of immigrants.

Schools play a pivotal role in supporting migrant children. Promoting mental health services within the educational system can provide an accessible platform for children to receive necessary support. Schools can offer counseling and mental health education, helping children understand and manage their emotions during the transition. Additionally, training teachers to recognize the signs of mental health issues can help students access available support promptly.

# CONCLUSION



Accounting for the complexity and ever-evolving nature of urbanization and migration dynamics, it is essential that continual research be undertaken to comprehensively address specific aspects of global urbanization and migration as they relate to families. This report has provided valuable insights into overarching trends, challenges, and successes, but there remains a need for focused studies and analyses that explore regional nuances and contexts in greater depth.

Particularly noteworthy is the need for more research addressing specific regions and issues. First, there is a notable gap in research focusing on low- and middle-income countries, where the impact of urbanization and migration on families can be especially pronounced. Second, there is a significant need to explore the role of women and mothers within the context of urbanization and migration, as their experiences and challenges are often unique and under-researched. Additionally, more reports are needed to evaluate the efficacy of policies related to urbanization and migration in low- and middle-income countries. Research that focuses on understanding these regional variations and their implications for families is essential to provide tailored interventions that address local needs and realities.

Addressing the gaps in research and policy evaluation is crucial for developing targeted interventions that respond effectively to the needs of families in diverse urban contexts. Future studies should prioritize gathering empirical data and insights from overlooked regions and marginalized groups to ensure inclusive and equitable policy frameworks.

Moreover, new opportunities and challenges arise due to rapid urbanization and changes in migration policy and patterns, calling for creative and timely policy solutions. As urbanization and migration evolve, there is a growing urgency to monitor and adopt policies that support family cohesion and well-being. This requires ongoing dialogue among policymakers, researchers, and community stakeholders to identify emerging challenges and opportunities in real time.

Finally, given that migration is a global issue, countries must take collective responsibility and prioritize policy and research efforts to support one another in addressing these complex and ever-changing challenges. By facilitating collaboration among countries grappling with similar issues, there is an opportunity for shared learning, resulting in more impactful policy solutions. Collaborative efforts among international organizations, governments, and civil society are essential for fostering sustainable urban development and inclusive migration policies. By sharing best practices and lessons learned, countries can collectively address global migration challenges and promote human rights and social justice for migrant families worldwide.

Lastly, empowering local communities to participate in decision-making processes and implementing bottom-up approaches to urban planning can enhance the resilience of families in rapidly changing urban landscapes. This approach ensures that policies reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of urban residents, fostering inclusive growth and social cohesion. Through such measures, cities can become resilient hubs where all families flourish amid urban complexities.

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