

Global Migrations: Economic, Political, and Climatic Changes



Migration is usually driven by multiple factors.

Our three case studies

1. Chinese migration to the US over the Mexico border is driven by a combination of economic factors and an increasingly repressive government.
2. Wars in Syria and Ukraine have caused a spike in migration to Europe and prompted anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe.
3. Climate refugees often also suffer from poverty. Migrants from Africa are fleeing climate emergencies as well as armed conflict and poverty.

Essential questions

How have global migrations in recent decades represented economic, political, and climatic upheaval and change?

How do people in the transit and receiving communities and countries respond to immigrants?

What role do borders and immigration policy play in migration?

Some terms

Migration: “The movement of people within and across borders”
(Haass)

Migrant: “A person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, for a variety of reasons.” (UN)

Emigration: leaving a country.

Immigration: entering a country.

Step Migration: migration occurring in stages, or “steps”

Chain Migration: migration occurs on the basis of ethnic/national groups staying unified.

Migration is movement - not always across borders and not always voluntary

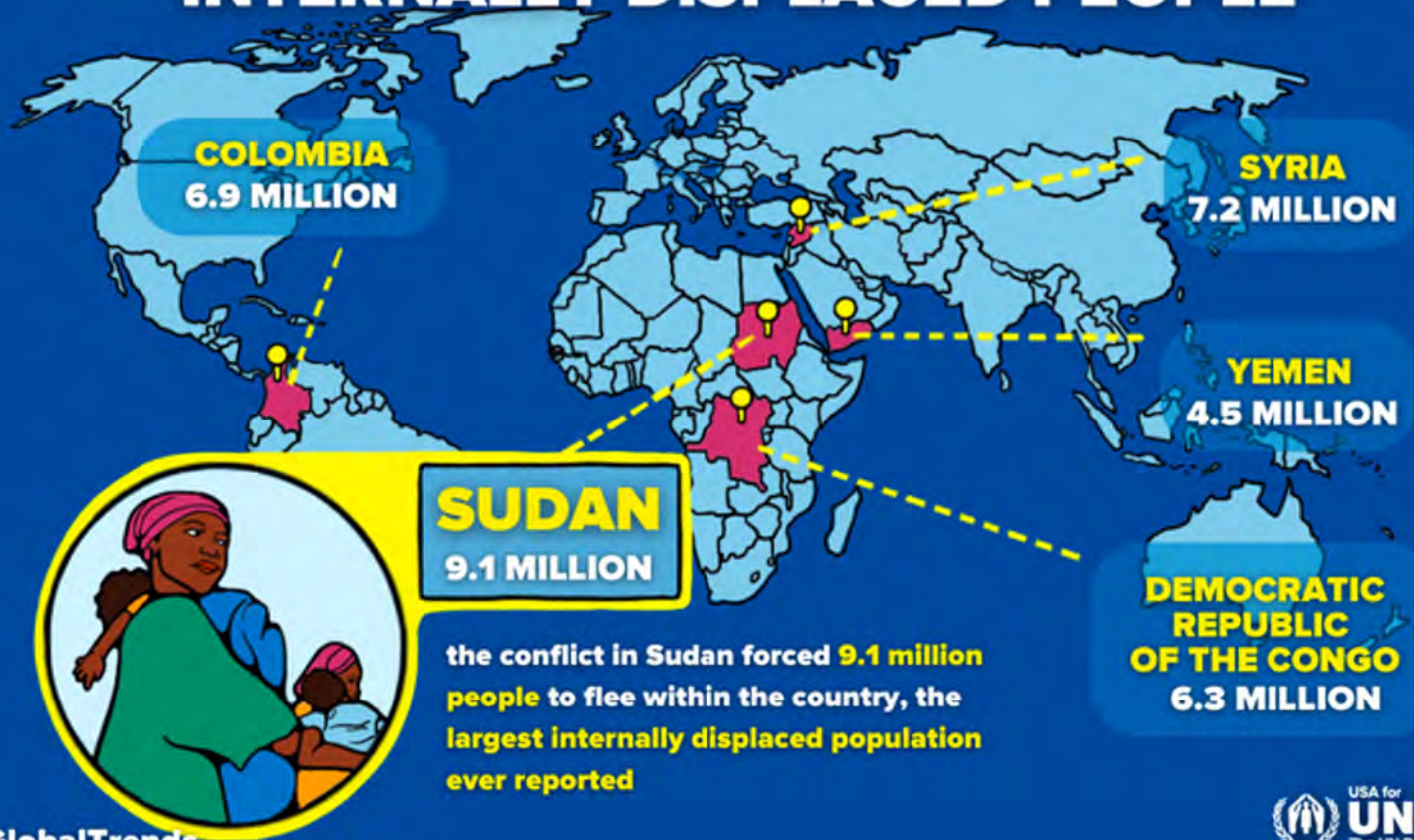
Forced Migration-migrants have no choice-must leave.

Internally displaced people, referred to as IDPs, have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, they remain within the borders of their own country. Globally, there are 68.3 million internally displaced people.

Periodic movement-short term (weeks or months) seasonal migration to college, winter in the south, etc. **Cyclic movement**-daily movement to work, shopping. **Nomadism**-cyclical, yet irregular migration that follows the growth of vegetation.

Expat - An expatriate or expat is an individual living and/or working in a country other than their country of citizenship. The arrangement is often temporary and for work reasons. An expatriate can also be an individual who has relinquished citizenship in their home country to become a citizen of another.

63.3 MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE



SUDAN
9.1 MILLION

the conflict in Sudan forced **9.1 million** people to flee within the country, the largest internally displaced population ever reported

Asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants

“Distinguishing migrants from asylum seekers and refugees is not always a clear-cut process, yet it is a crucial designation because these groups are entitled to different levels of assistance and protection under international law.”

“An **asylum seeker** is defined as a person fleeing persecution or conflict, and therefore seeking international protection under the **1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees**; a **refugee** is an asylum seeker whose claim has been approved. However, the UN considers migrants fleeing war or persecution to be refugees, even before they officially receive asylum. (Syrian and Eritrean nationals, for example, enjoy *prima facie* refugee status.) An **economic migrant**, by contrast, is a person whose primary motivation for leaving his or her home country is economic gain.

The term "migrant" is seen as an umbrella term for all three groups. (Said another way: all refugees are migrants, but not all migrants are refugees.)”

Push and Pull factors: Often these overlap

Economic conditions-poverty and a desire for opportunity.

Political conditions-persecution, expulsion, or war.

Environmental conditions-crop failures, floods, drought, environmentally induced famine.

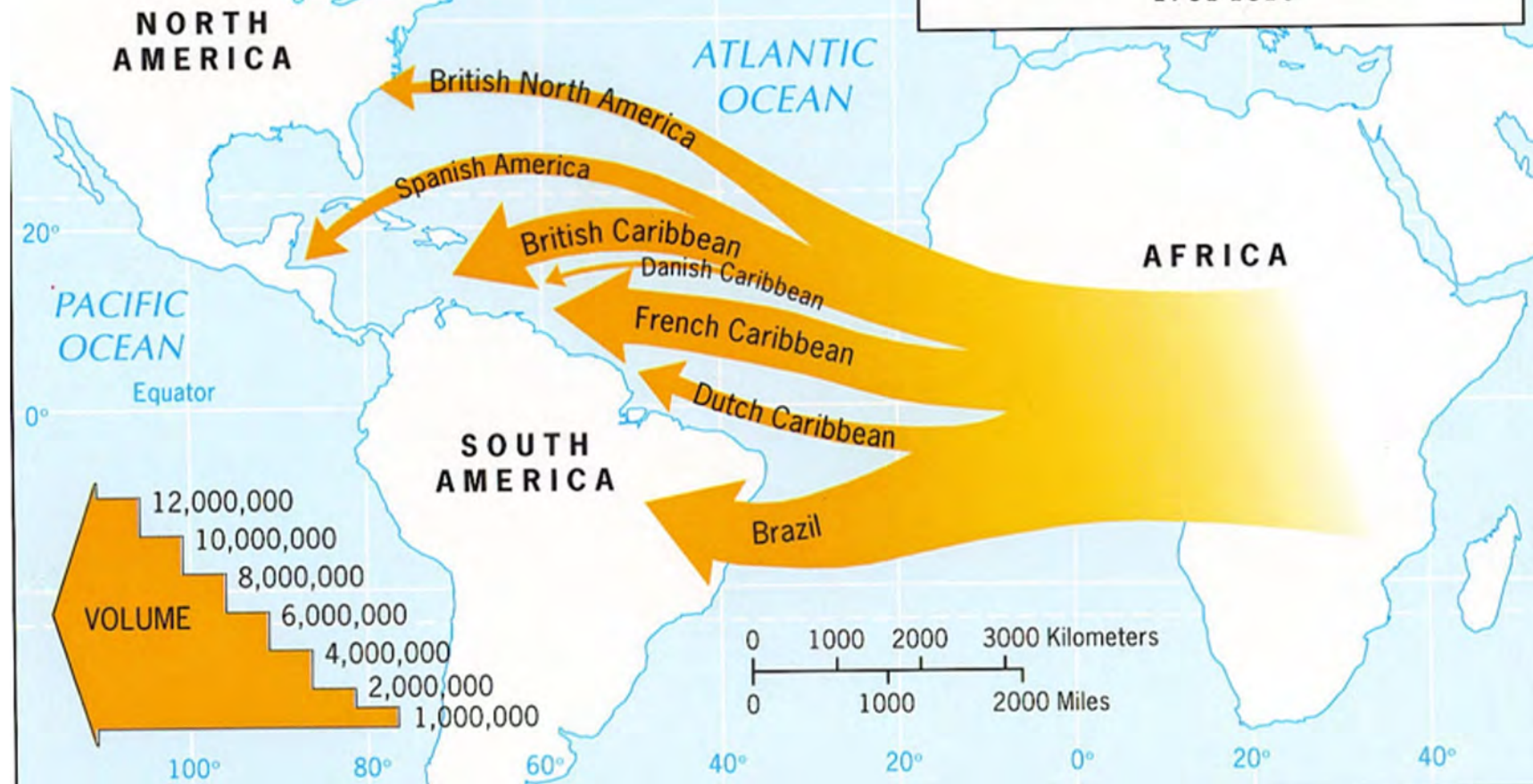
Culture and tradition-threatened by change.

Technology-easier and cheaper transport or change in livability.

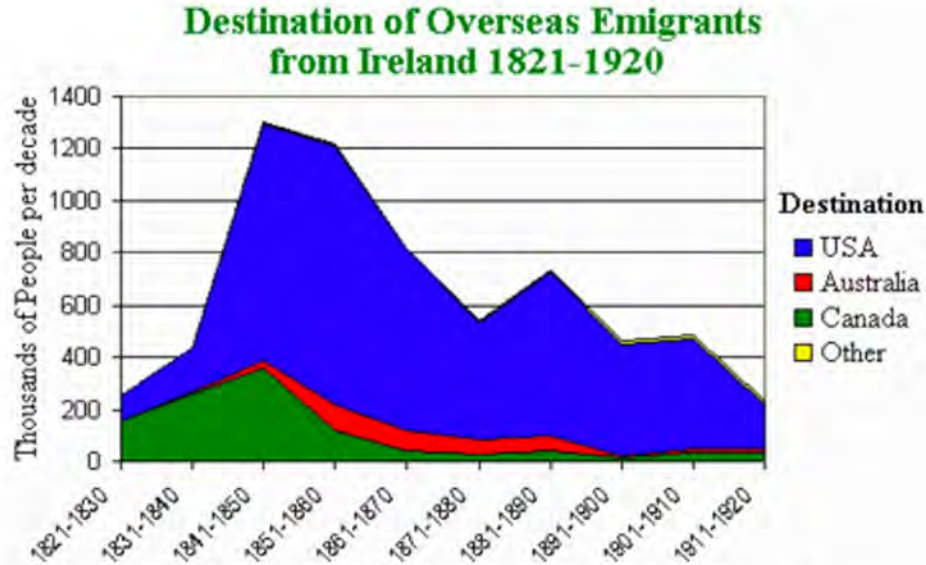
THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

VOLUME AND DESTINATIONS

1701-1810

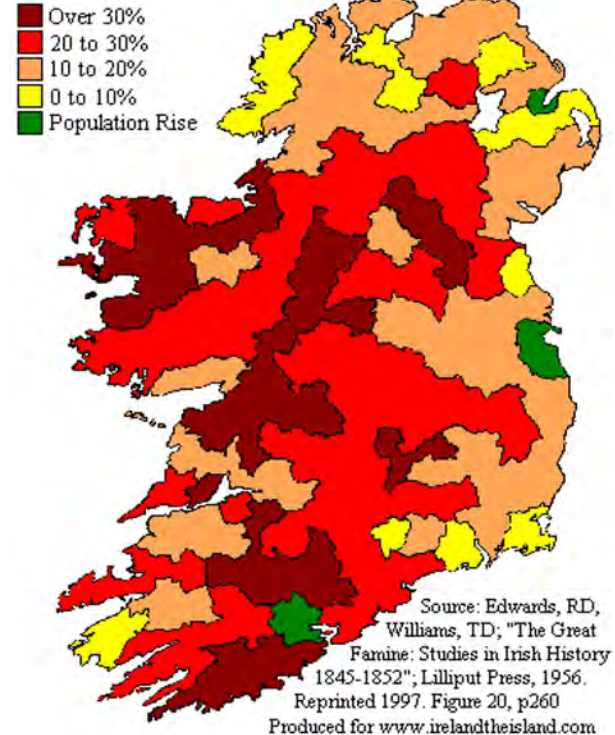


Irish potato famine 1840



Unlike the rest of this site, this chart is declared to be in the public domain.

Population Fall in Ireland 1841-1851

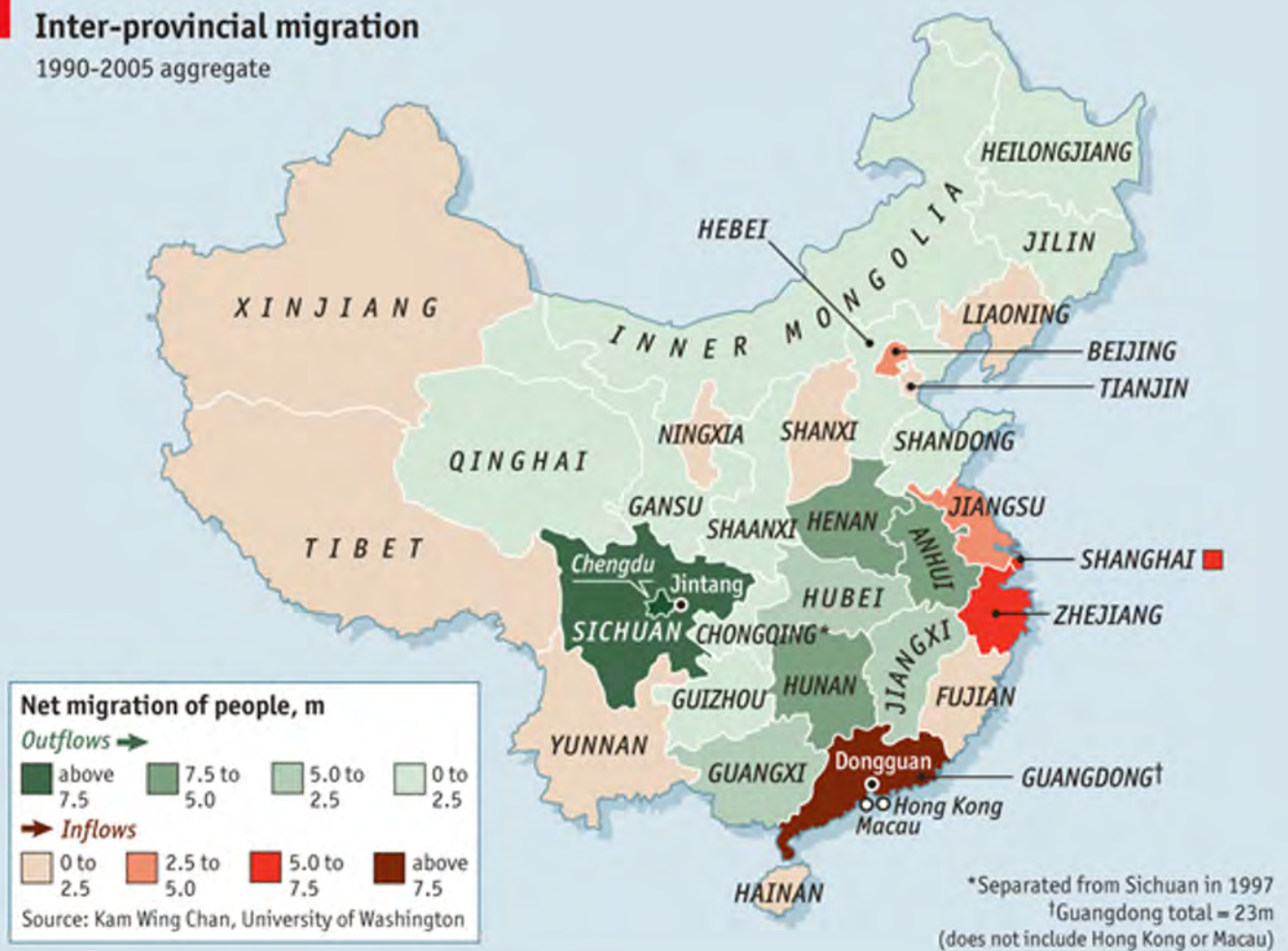


The Great Migration 1916 - 1970



Inter-provincial migration

1990-2005 aggregate



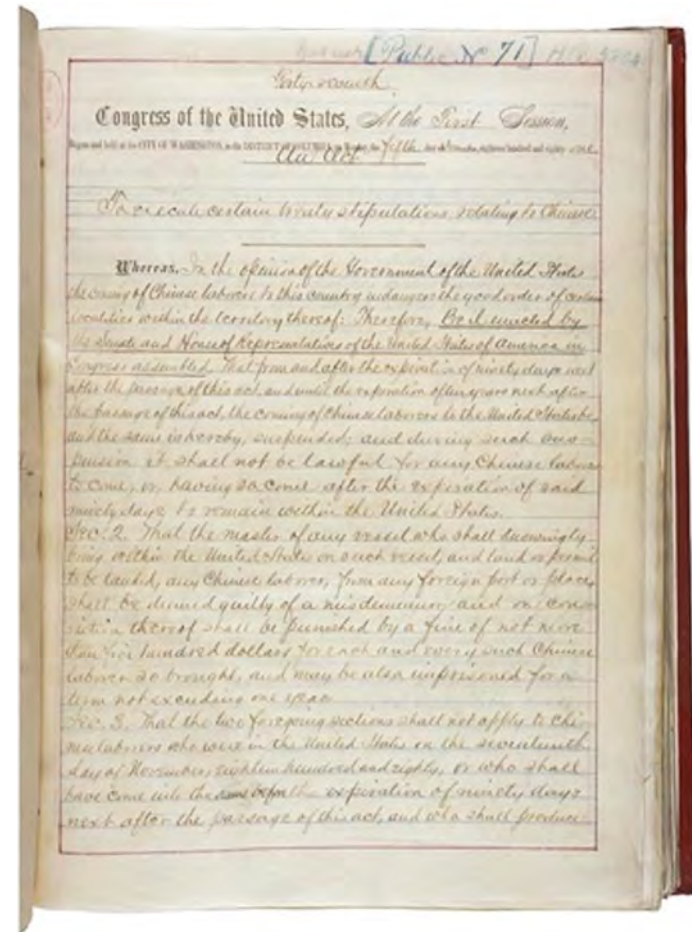
Chinese workers: gold rush and railroads



Chinese Exclusion Act 1882

“It was the first significant law restricting immigration into the United States. In the spring of 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This act provided an absolute 10-year ban on Chinese laborers immigrating to the United States.”

National Archives

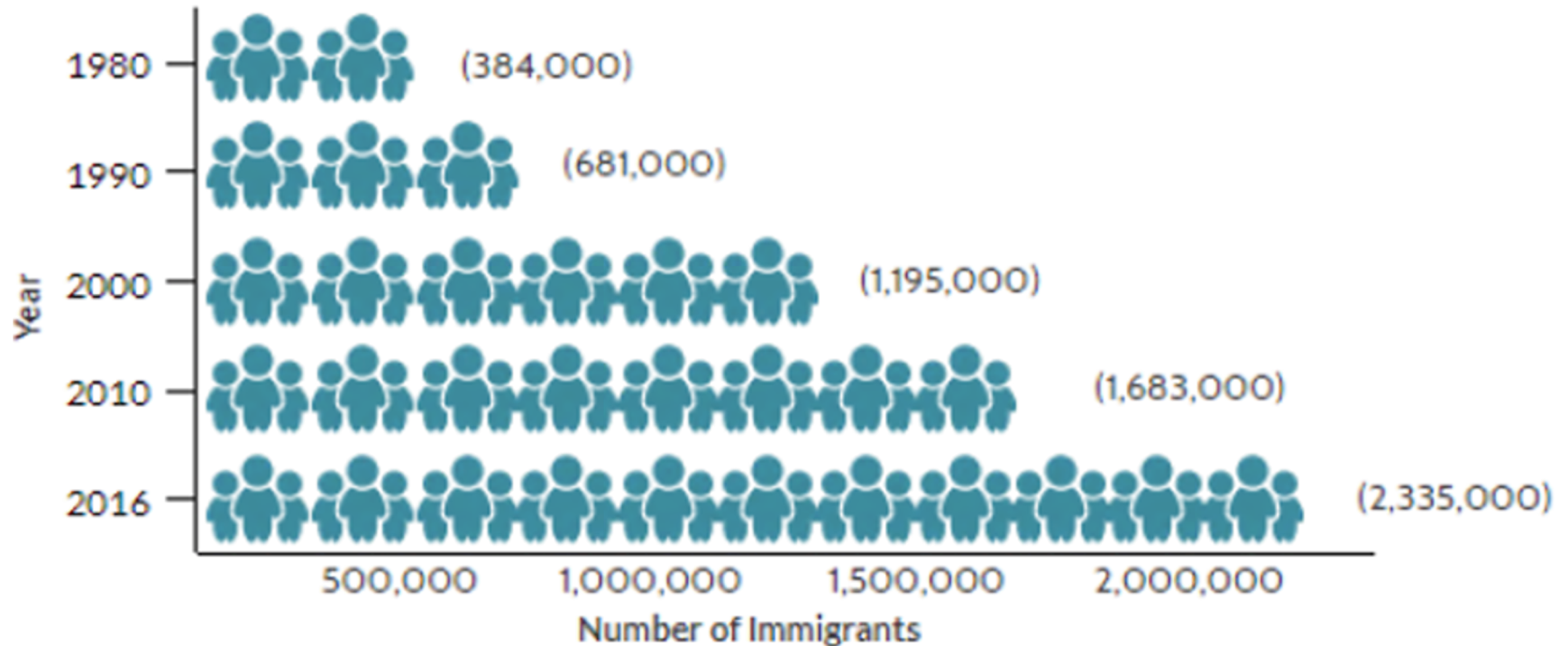


The changing picture of Chinese immigration

“Increases in Chinese immigration to the United States have historically followed major changes in Chinese and U.S. policy, including the upheaval of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown and China’s 2001 admission to the World Trade Organization.”

“The most recent influx is characterized by small business people and factory workers, said New York-based immigration lawyer Wei Zhu. “There are a lot of people wondering now what their future will be, so they say ‘Let’s go zouxian.’”

Chinese migration to the US 1980-2016



China's economy as a major factor in the current wave

“And in other ways, the Chinese economy seems to be stumbling. Even the official statistics say that China is experiencing [Japan-style deflation](#) and high youth unemployment. It's not a full-blown crisis, at least not yet, but there's reason to believe that China is entering an era of stagnation and disappointment.

Now, these problems have been fairly obvious for at least a decade. Why are they only becoming acute now? Well, international economists are fond of citing [Dornbusch's Law](#): “The crisis takes a much longer time coming than you think, and then it happens much faster than you would have thought.”

Paul Krugman *NYTimes*: “China's economy is in serious trouble”, Jan. 18, 2024

The impact of the pandemic on China's economy

“The Chinese economy is stuck. Following Beijing’s decision, in late 2022, to abruptly end its draconian “zero COVID” policy, many observers assumed that China’s growth engine would rapidly reignite. After years of pandemic lockdowns that brought some economic sectors to a virtual halt, reopening the country was supposed to spark a major comeback. Instead, the recovery has faltered, with sluggish GDP performance, sagging consumer confidence, growing clashes with the West, and a collapse in property prices that has caused some of China’s largest companies to default. In July 2024, Chinese official data revealed that GDP growth was falling behind the government’s target of about five percent. The government has finally let the Chinese people leave their homes, but it cannot command the economy to return to its former strength.”

Zongyuan Zoe Liu. *Foreign Affairs*. “China’s Real Economic Crisis” Sept/Oct 2024



'Lucky to be alive': Risking everything to flee China

3:56

Lei Xiaoyue and his family fled economic turmoil in April and came to the United States as part of a historic wave of migration from China. (Erin Patrick O'Connor/The Washington Post)

Table 1. Top Destinations of Settlement for Chinese Migrants, 2020

Destination	Number of Chinese Immigrants
TOTAL	10,461,000
China, Hong Kong SAR	2,408,000
United States	2,184,000
Republic of Korea	803,000
Japan	776,000
Canada	699,000
Australia	653,000
Singapore	426,000
China, Macao SAR	301,000
Italy	233,000
United Kingdom	208,000
Spain	179,000
Bangladesh	160,000
New Zealand	144,000
Germany	143,000
France	126,000
India	108,000
Thailand	77,000
Indonesia	76,000
Netherlands	73,000
Russian Federation	56,000

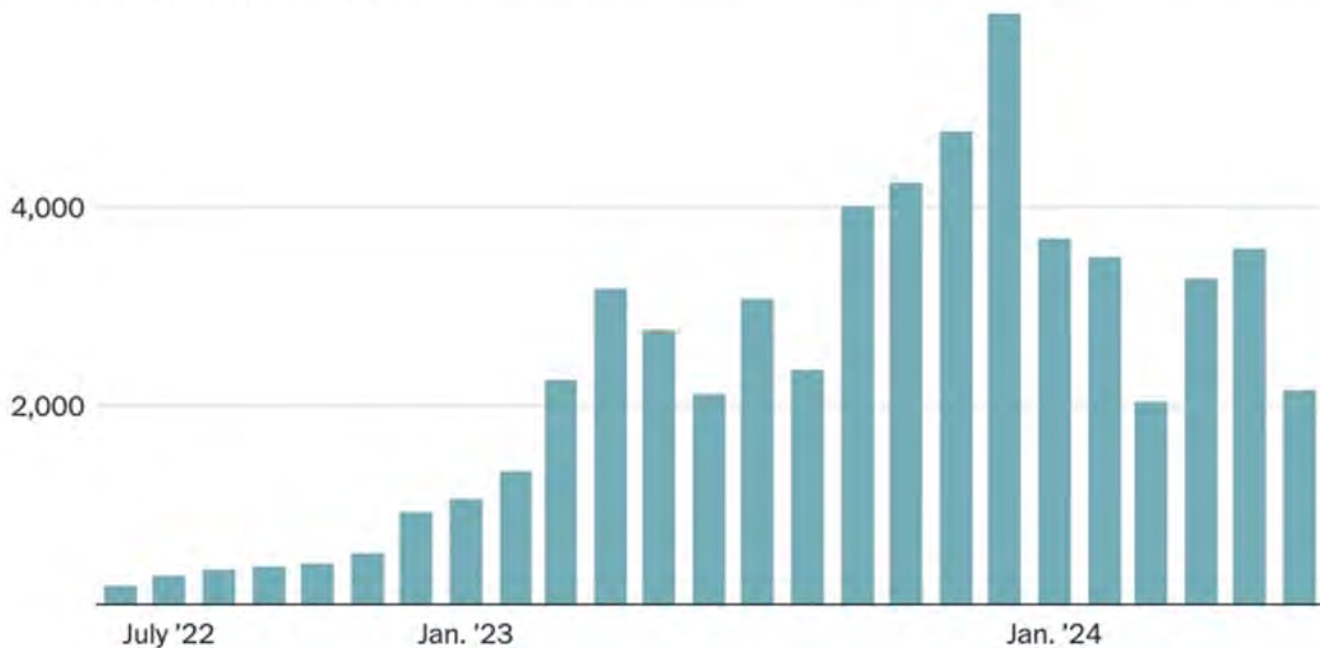
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Population Division, "International Migrant Stock 2020: Destination and Origin, Table 1: International Migrant Stock at Mid-Year by Sex and by Region, Country or Area of Destination and Origin," accessed January 22, 2022, available online.

— Routes over land by bus, taxi or walking — By boat



Chinese migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border

U.S. agents have recorded more than 55,000 illegal entries by Chinese migrants at the Mexico border since 2023



Source: [U.S. Customs and Border Protection data](#). Updated monthly.

“I think there’s this fascination with Chinese immigration, especially when it’s undocumented, that is disproportionate to its actual occurrence,” Ngai said. “And that has a very long history that’s associated with Chinese being seen as a special threat to the United States.”



Chinese migrants are dropped off by U.S. authorities at a transit center in San Diego in April. After calling relatives and friends, they depart for different states, with many headed first to Los Angeles.

China's statistics

Number of immigrants:

About **1 million**



(ranking China **54th** globally
in number of immigrants)

Number of emigrants:


About **10.5 million**



(ranking China **4th** in number of
nationals living in another country)

 = 1 million people

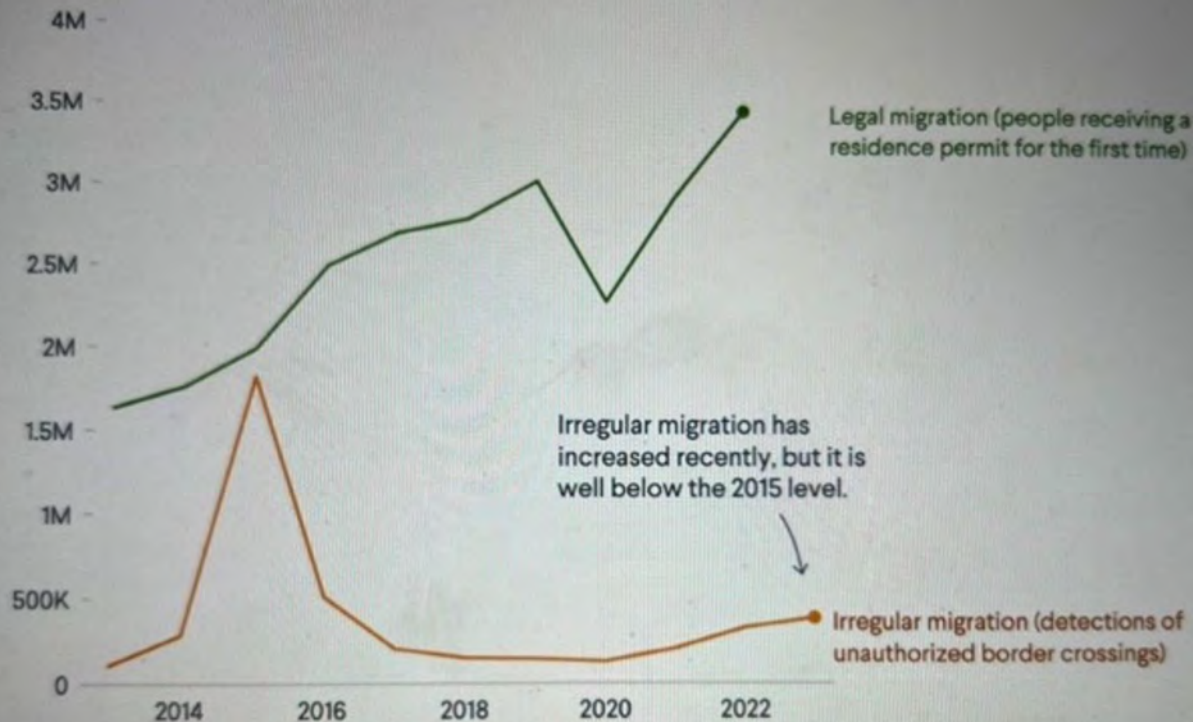


 Too few children means China needs to look outside the country for new blood. | Image: Zhang Peng/LightRocket via Getty Images



Most Immigration to Europe Is Legal

Legal and irregular migration to the EU



Note: Detections of unauthorized border crossings may double count people crossing borders multiple times.

Sources: Eurostat; Frontex.



120 MILLION PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE

the global displaced population is
equivalent to the size of Japan's,
the 12th largest country
in the world



1 in 69

people in the world are
displaced, with 75% hosted
in low- and middle-income
countries

#GlobalTrends



USA for
UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

43.3M REFUGEES

3 in 4

almost three in four refugees, 73 percent of all refugees, originated from just five countries



UKRAINE
6 MILLION

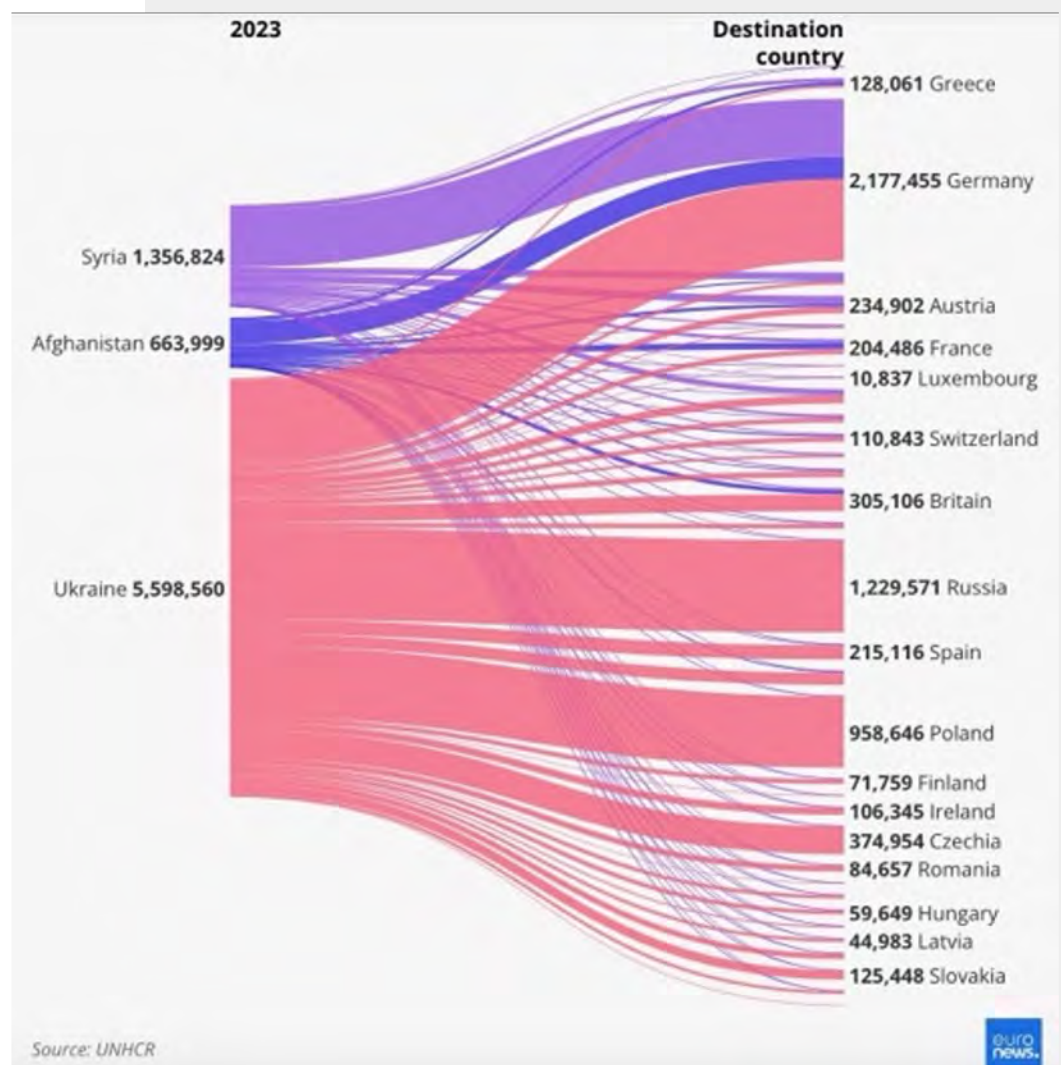
AFGHANISTAN
6.4 MILLION

VENEZUELA
6.1 MILLION

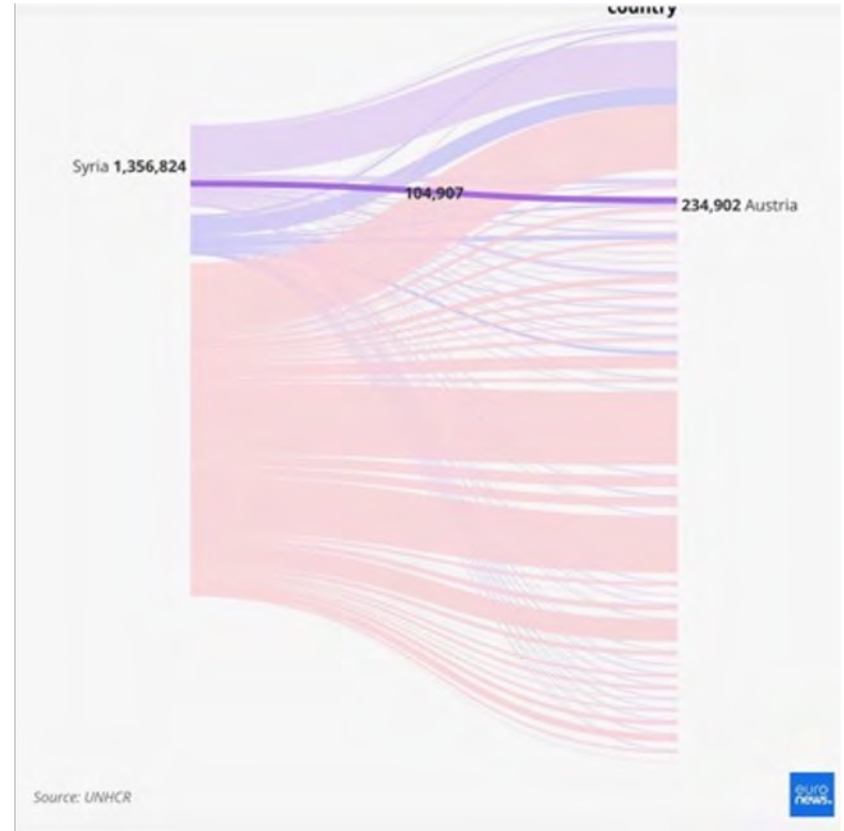
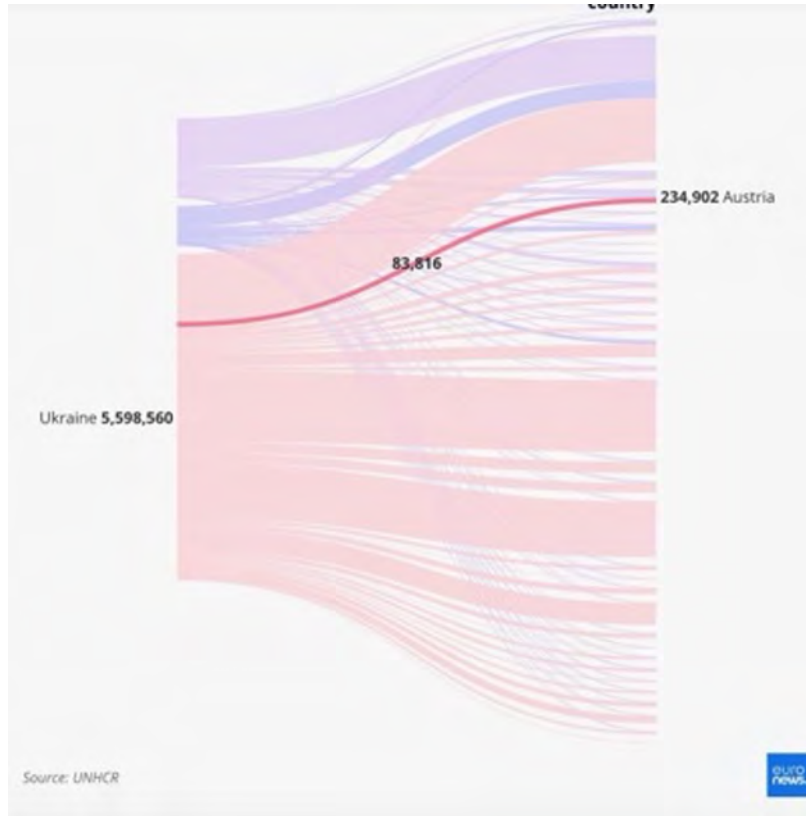
SYRIA
6.4 MILLION

SUDAN
1.5 MILLION

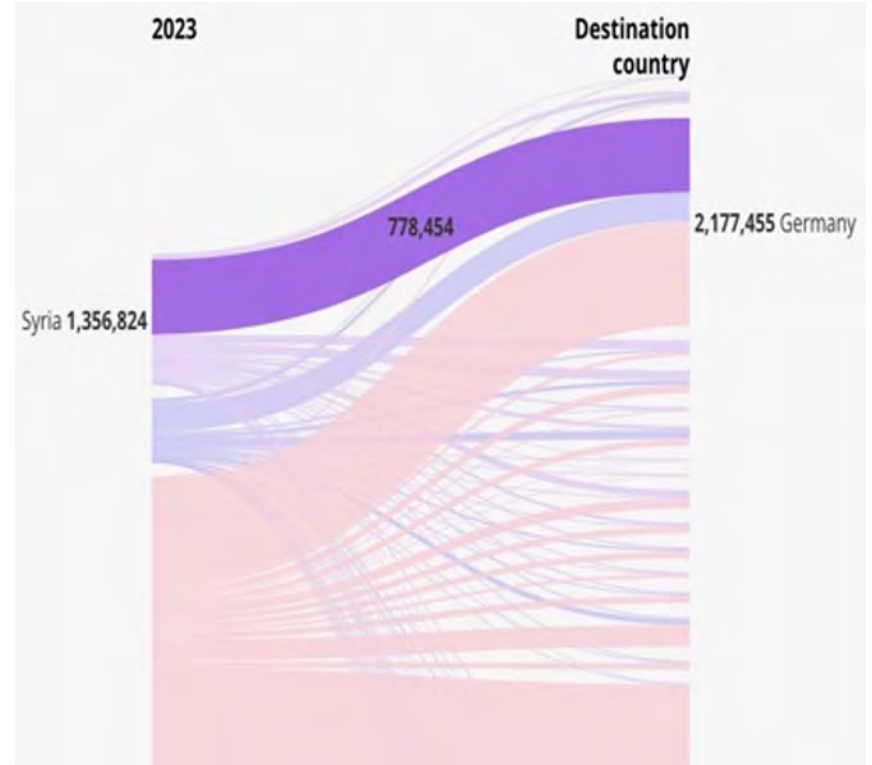
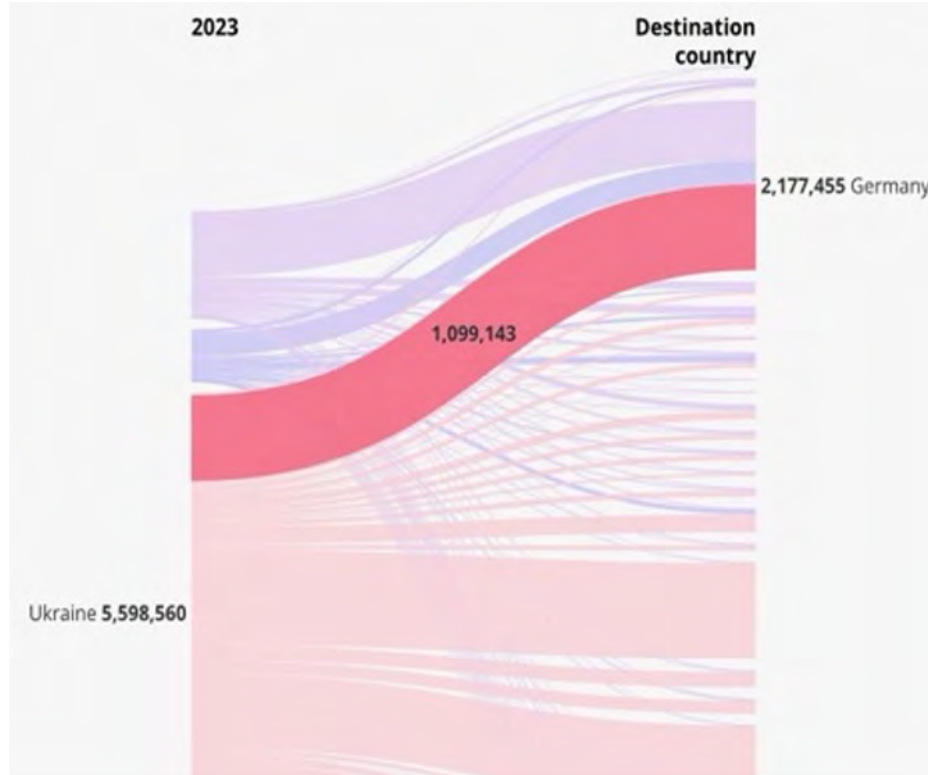
Most refugees
came to Europe
from Syria,
Ukraine, and
Afghanistan

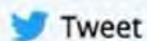


Austria's share of refugees from Ukraine and Syria



Germany's share of refugees from Ukraine and Syria

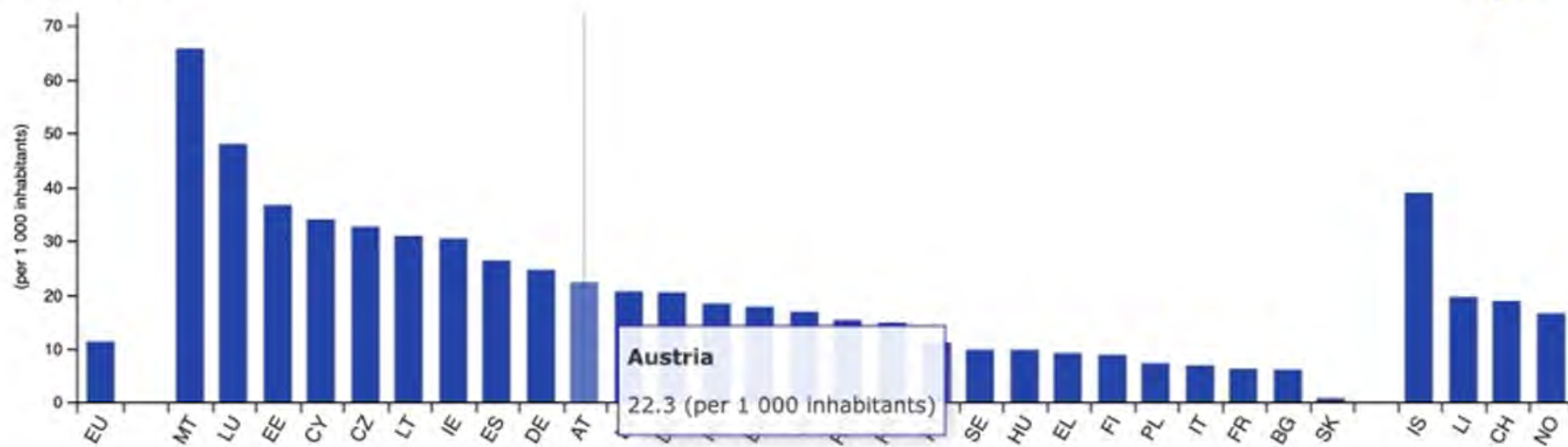




Tweet

27.3 million people (6.1%) of the 448.8 million people living in the EU on 1 January 2023 were non-EU citizens.

Immigrants, 2022



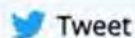
Note: Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and Liechtenstein did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

Break in series: EU, Croatia, Portugal, Hungary, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria

Provisional: EU, Malta, Portugal, Poland, France

Estimate: EU, Poland

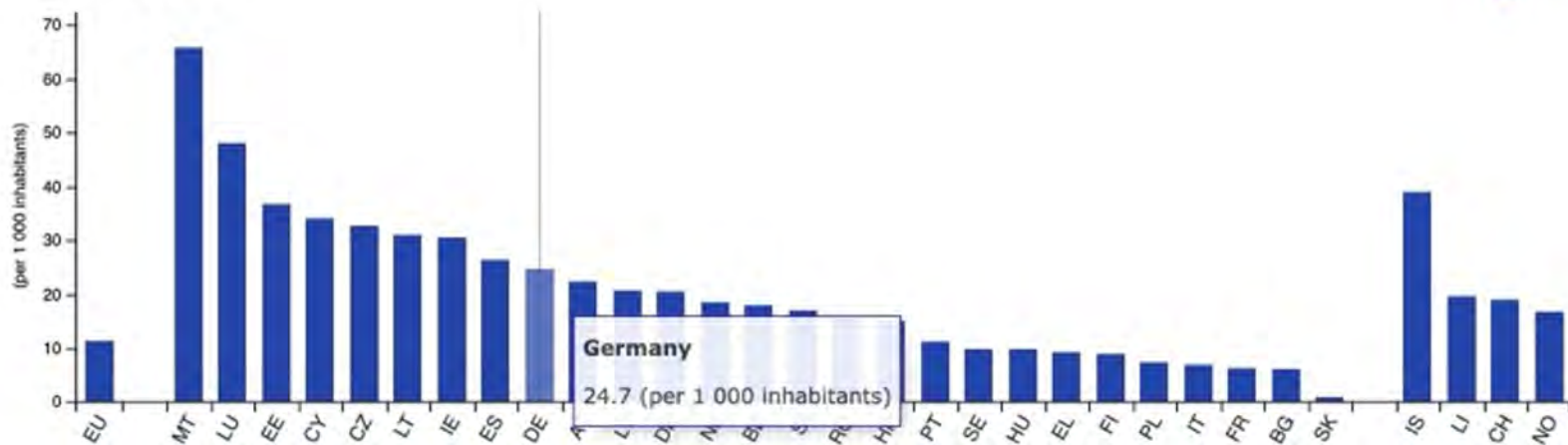
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_imm1ctz and migr_pop1ctz)



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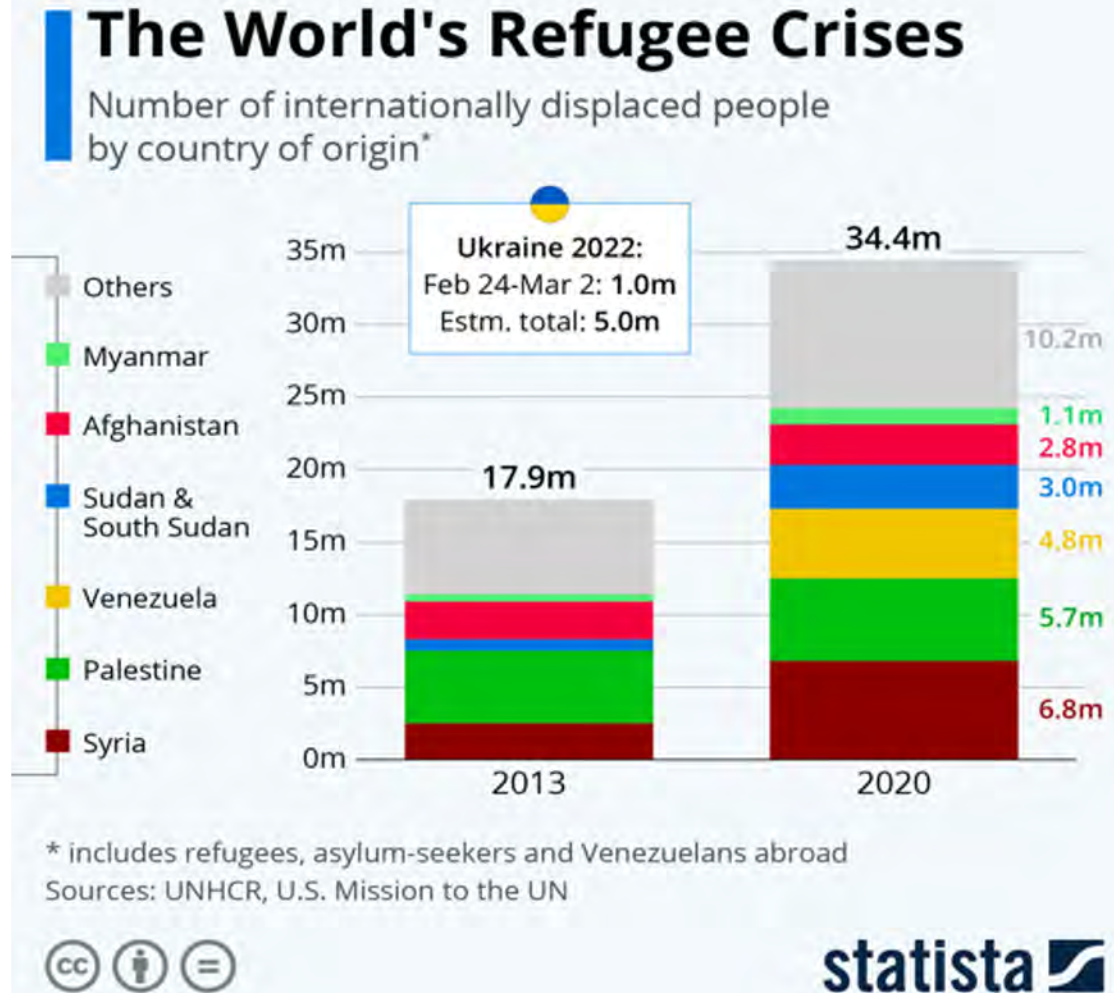
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_imm1ctz and migr_pop1ctz)

eurostat

This article presents European Union (EU) statistics on international migration (flows) and numbers of national and non-national citizens in the

How the Ukraine
refugee crisis
compares worldwide

This does not take into
account “climate
refugees” because
there is no agreement
about how the status of
refugees applies to
these cases.



The challenge of accepting refugees

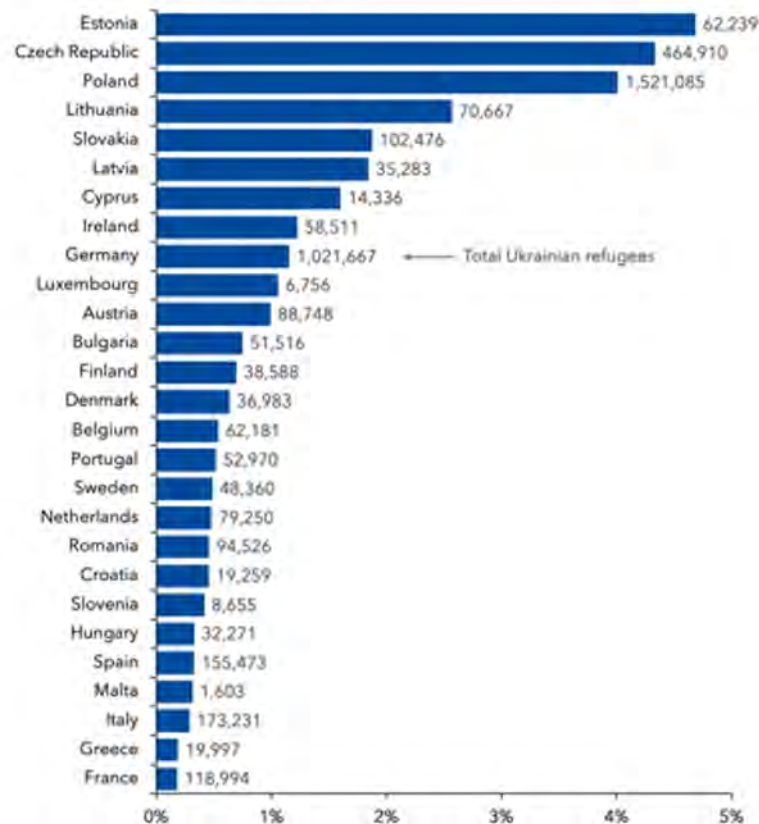
“Supporting refugees comes with some short-term fiscal costs. Across the EU, these could reach 30 billion euros to 37 billion euros in the first year, or about 0.2 percent of gross domestic product, as we noted in our latest [Regional Economic Outlook](#), published in October. Countries with the largest shares of refugees, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Moldova, and Poland, could incur fiscal costs this year equal to about 1 percent of GDP. The larger share of women and children will result in more spending on childcare, education, and health care services.”

International Monetary Fund, Dec 15, 2022

Share of refugees

Almost 8 million people have fled Ukraine since Russia's invasion, with the majority now in the European Union.

(Ukrainian refugees as a share of population)



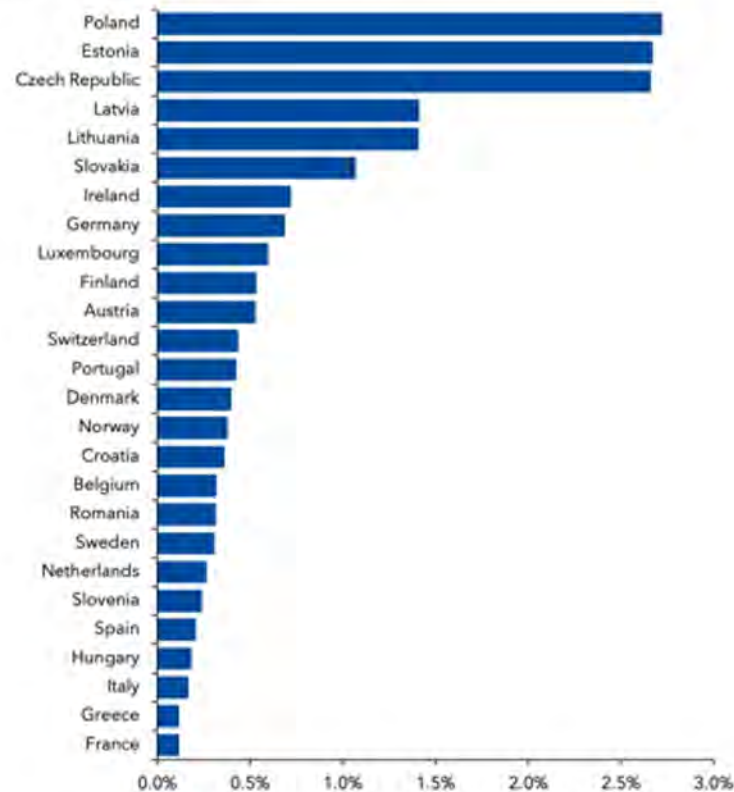
Source: UNHCR; Eurostat; WEO Database; and IMF Staff Calculations.
Note: Refugee numbers as of December 1st.

IMF

Refugee dividend

Ukrainian refugees could raise the size of the labor force by 2.7 percent in the countries with the largest numbers of arrivals.

(change in labor force size, 2022)



Source: OECD; Eurostat; UNHCR; IMF staff calculations.

Notes: Baseline estimates assume the participation rate of working-age refugees is two thirds that of non-EU native working-age women with a tertiary degree in the respective country.

IMF

The “refugee dividend”

“Over the medium term, however, refugees could boost economic growth and tax revenue while helping ease current labor market tightness in some parts of Europe. We estimate that Ukrainian refugees could raise the size of Europe’s labor force by some 0.6 percent by the end of 2022, and by 2.7 percent in the countries with the largest numbers of arrivals, where Ukrainian refugees will ease labor shortages.

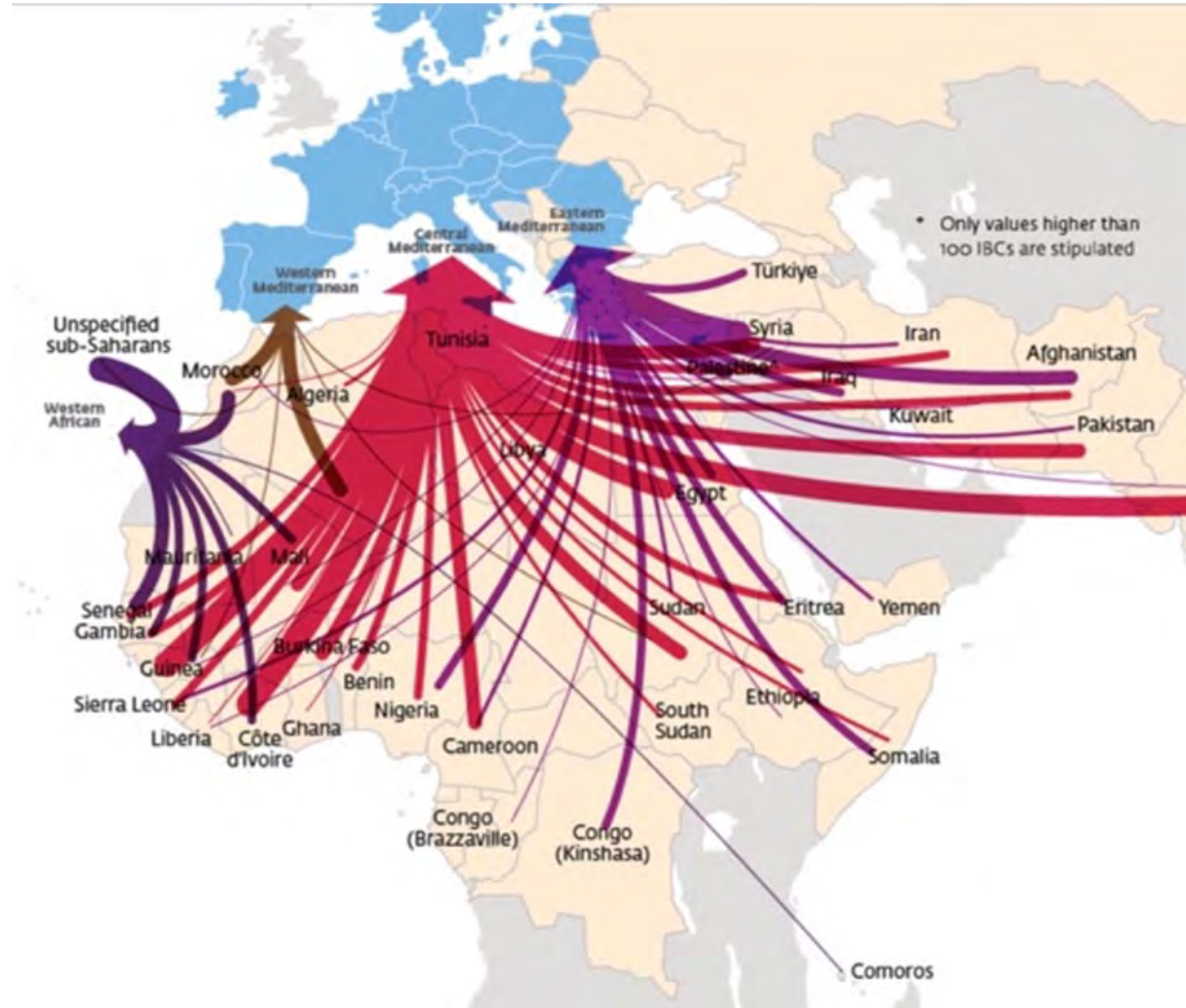
Any increase in unemployment because of this surge in labor is likely to be temporary and early signs of refugees’ integration into European labor markets are promising. There is evidence that refugees in Poland and the United Kingdom have found jobs relatively quickly, for example.”

International Monetary Fund, Dec 15, 2022



Migration routes to the primary country of arrival, and subsequent refugee movements inside Europe Source: Katehon think tank. Geopolitics & Tradition (2017)

European Border and Coast Guard Agency: Frontex



AUSTRIA'S FAR-RIGHT CLINCH HISTORIC VICTORY



Where Europe's Far-Right Has Gained Ground

Share of seats held by the main far-right party in the national parliament of selected EU countries*

59%	Fidesz
35%	PiS
30%	Fdi
23%	PVV
23%	PS
21%	SD
16%	FPÖ
15%	RN
12%	VB
11%	AfD
9%	Vox
5%	Chega
4%	DF



As of Nov. 23, 2023. Figure for the Netherlands is preliminary.

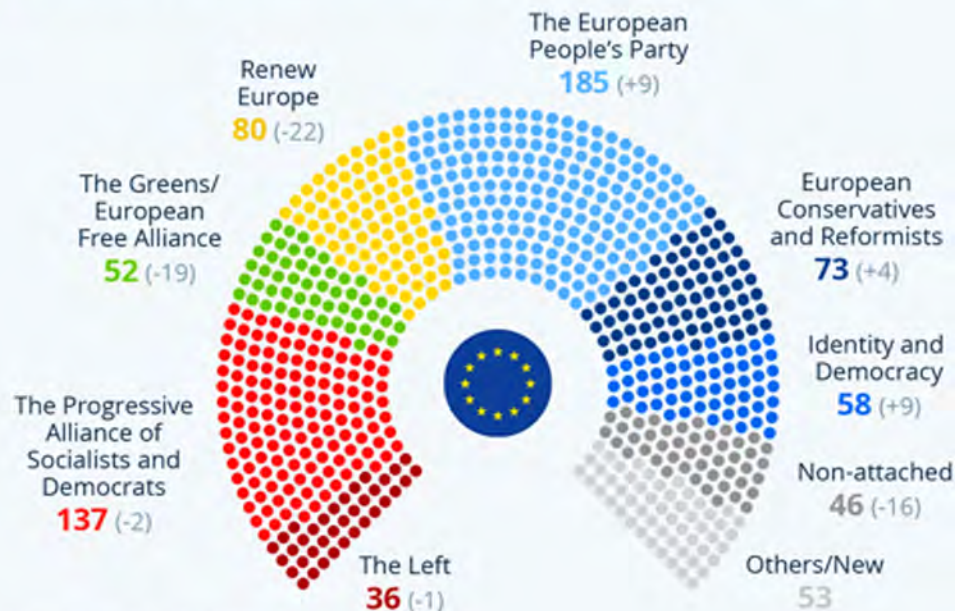
* Ideologically, these parties share a stance on nationalism, social conservatism and anti-immigration. Some parties may be part of a broader coalition.

Sources: Respective parliaments, YouTrend, Statista research



The New European Parliament

Composition of the European Parliament based on provisional results of the European Elections 2024*



* As of June 10, 10:30 GMT+2

Source: European Parliament



EUROPE'S HARD-RIGHT EARTHQUAKE

NETHERLANDS

Anti-Islam firebrand Geert Wilders dubbed the 'Dutch Trump' won big in Dutch general election

GERMANY

Alternative for Germany celebrated 'historic victory' this month with first win for the far-right in a state parliament election since World War Two

SWEDEN

Sweden Democrats struck deal with centre-Right government for stricter migration controls after 2022 elections

FINLAND

The National Coalition triumphed in elections last year. Right-wing populist Finns finished close second.

AUSTRIA

The Freedom Party won the popular vote in national elections for the first time in September

HUNGARY

EU-critical Viktor Orban won his fourth consecutive term as PM in 2022

GREECE

Centre-Right New Democracy party returned for second term last year and two far-Right parties entered parliament for the first time.

FRANCE

Marine Le Pen could replace Macron as president in 2027 after National Rally trounced rivals in parliamentary elections in July

SWITZERLAND

Swiss People's party promised 'less political correctness' after it won the 2023 election.

ITALY

Brothers of Italy with self-confessed Nazi historical links won the 2022 election. PM Giorgia Meloni vowed to stop inflow of migrants.

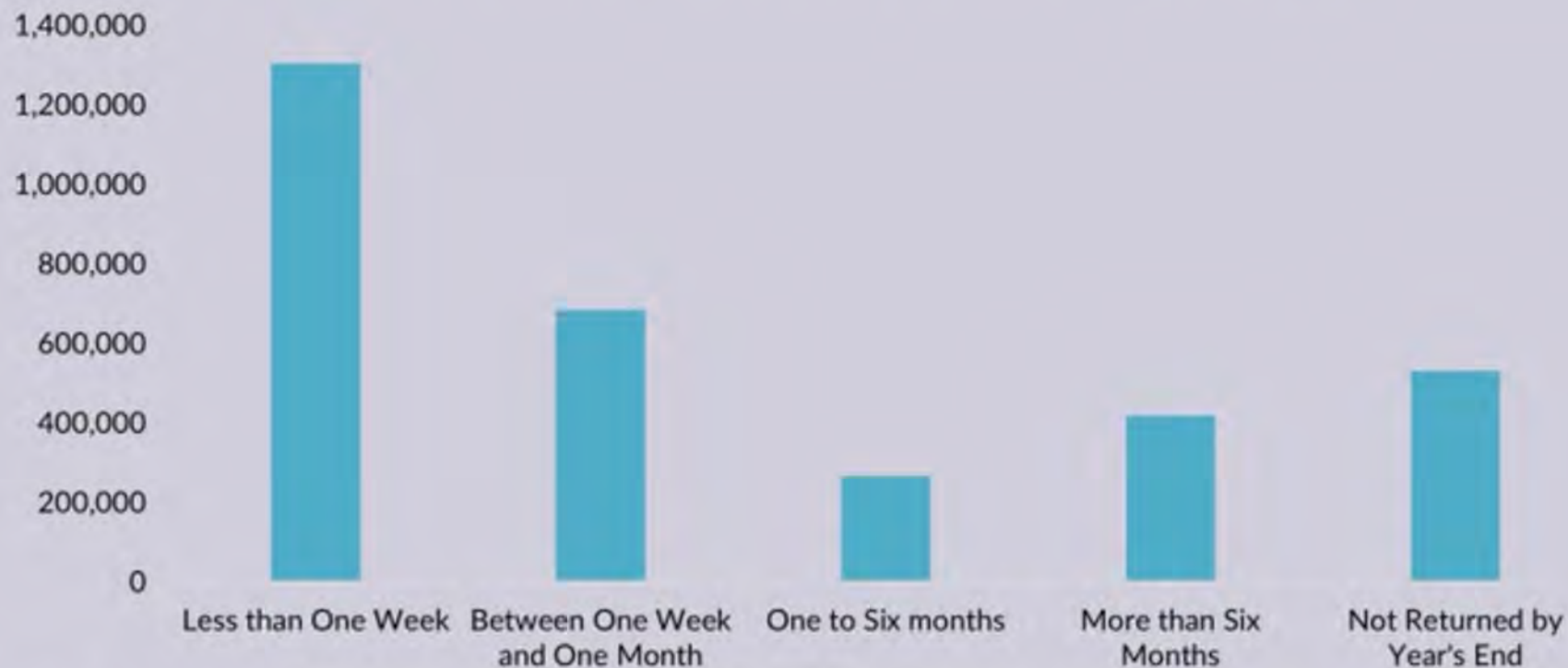




Climate migration: Developed countries are not immune



Figure 2. Adults Displaced by Natural Disasters in the United States, by Duration of Displacement, 2022



Notes: Figure shows outcomes for adults who reported being displaced by a natural disaster within the past year; survey was conducted from January 4 to January 16, 2023.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Week 53 Household Pulse Survey: January 4 - January 16," January 25, 2023, [available online](#).

Climate Change, the Great Displacer

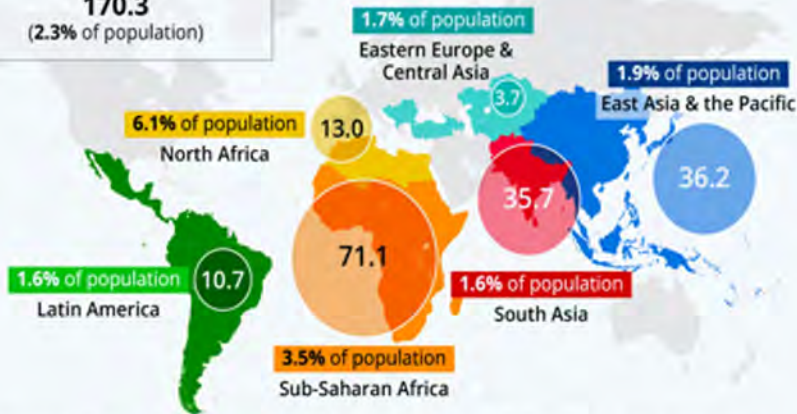
Average number of internal climate migrants by 2050 per region (in millions)*



Total in surveyed regions

170.3

(2.3% of population)



* Modeled on pessimistic reference = High emission & unequal development scenarios concerning water availability, crop productivity and sea-level rise

Source: World Bank



statista

“Climate refugees” is a phrase often used in the media to describe people who are forced to move from their homes due to climate-related events, but it is not a term officially recognized in international law.”

“Most climate-related displacement is within countries, whereas the 1951 Refugee Convention offers protection only to those fleeing war, violence, conflict or persecution who have crossed an international border to find safety.”

UNHCR

The status of
Climate Refugee is not yet recognized under international law,
despite every **3 out of 4** people displaced
in 2023 were fleeing due to climate change.

An additional **1.2 billion people**
could be displaced by climate
related events by **2050**.

Image Source : Public Health Post



Climate refugees are increasing. The
International Displacement Monitoring Centre
(IDMC) found that **98% of the 32.6 million**
internally displaced in 2022 were displaced
by **climate related disasters**, such as floods,
storms, wildfires and droughts.



55.5 MILLION

forcibly displaced people live in countries with **high-to-extreme**
exposure to climate-related hazards



**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF THE CONGO**



SOMALIA



SUDAN



SYRIA



YEMEN

Examples of disasters that displace populations

Flood - Bangladesh

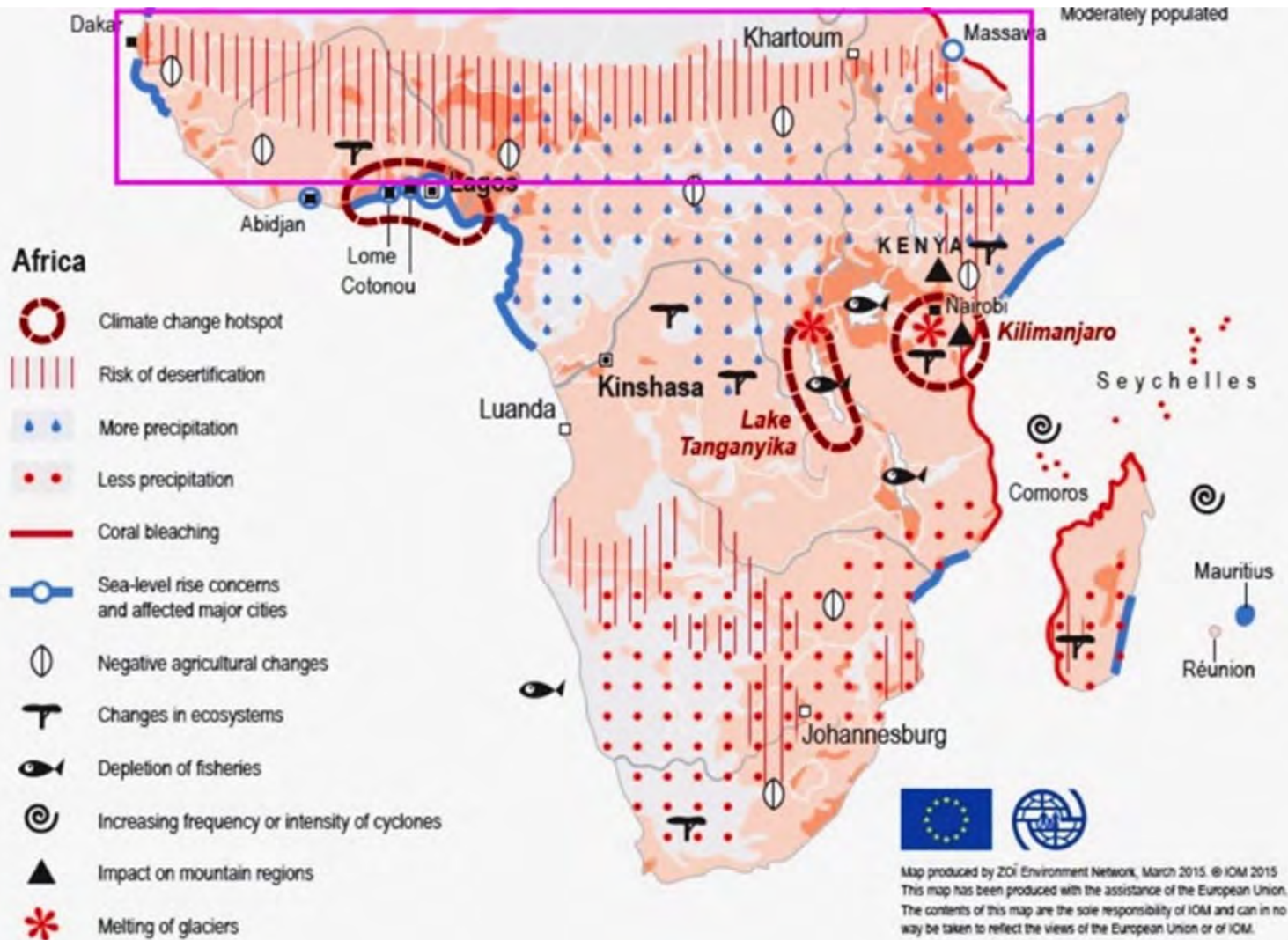
Drought - Sudan

Hurricane with flooding - Florida

Fires: Amazon and Australia

“Yet **even in high-income countries**, climate change is already reshaping migration. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, 3.2 million U.S. adults were displaced or evacuated due to natural disasters in 2022, of whom more than 500,000 had not returned by the beginning of 2023 (see Figure 2).”





Sub-Saharan Africa will have the largest number of internal climate refugees by 2050

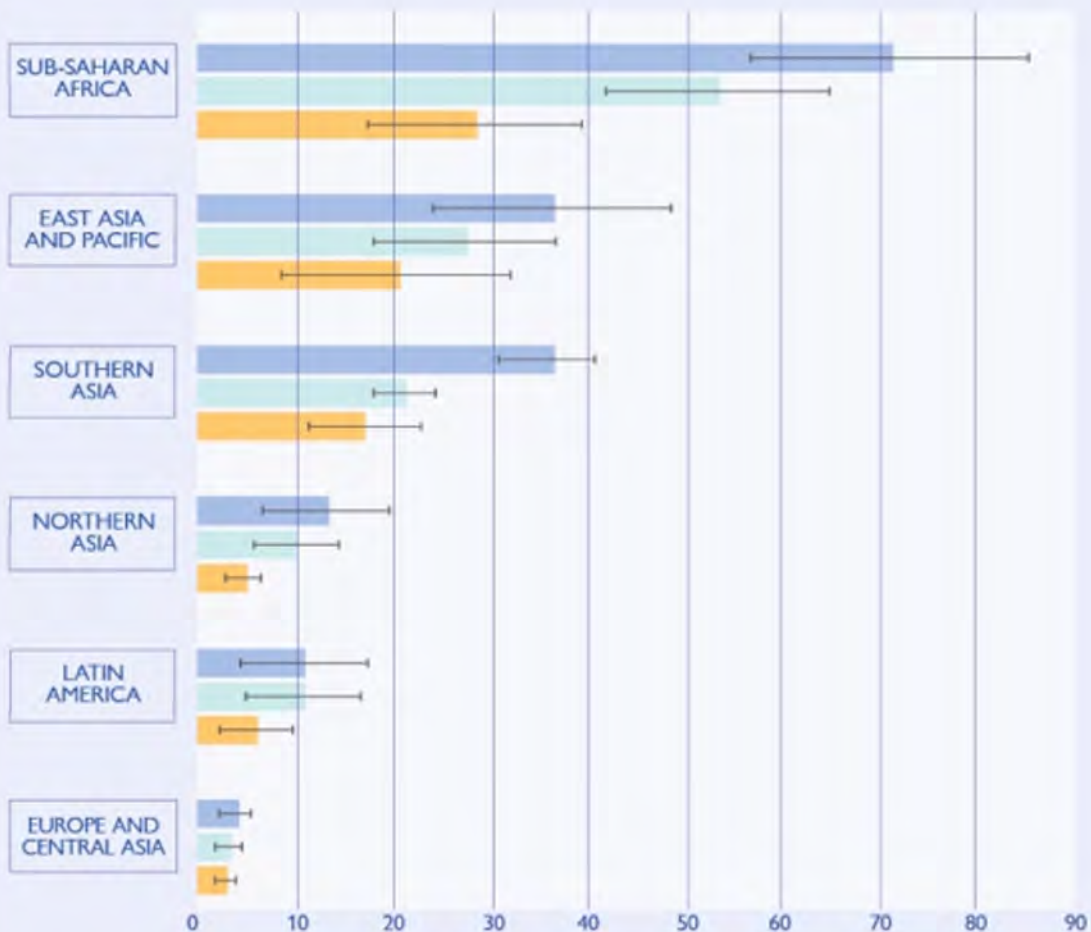




© IOM/Muse Mohammed | A family displaced by prolonged drought in Ethiopia now live in a makeshift tent in Mogadishu, Somalia.



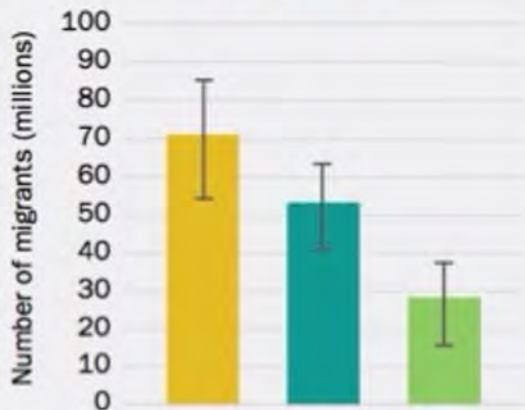
PROJECTED INTERNAL CLIMATE MIGRANTS BY 2050



Source: Clement et al. (2021).

© IOM Global Data Institute, 2022

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



SOUTH ASIA



LATIN AMERICA



"Plausible" internal climate migration scenarios by 2050 across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America under three scenarios: the "pessimistic (Reference)" scenario (yellow), the "more inclusive development" scenario (blue) and the "more climate-friendly" scenario (green). Vertical lines represent the 95th percentile confidence interval. Source: [World Bank 2018](#).

World Bank report on migration caused by climate

In a foreword to the [WorldBank] report, Kristalina Georgieva, chief executive of the World Bank, says:

“There is growing recognition among researchers that more people will move **within national borders** to escape the effects of slow-onset climate change, such as droughts, crop failure, and rising seas...Internal climate migration is a development issue. Unless we act it will become the human face of climate change.”



Some 400 people were stranded on a boat in the central Mediterranean, pictured on April 9, 2023, as migrant arrivals to Europe have surged. Giacomo Zorzi/Sea-Watch/AP

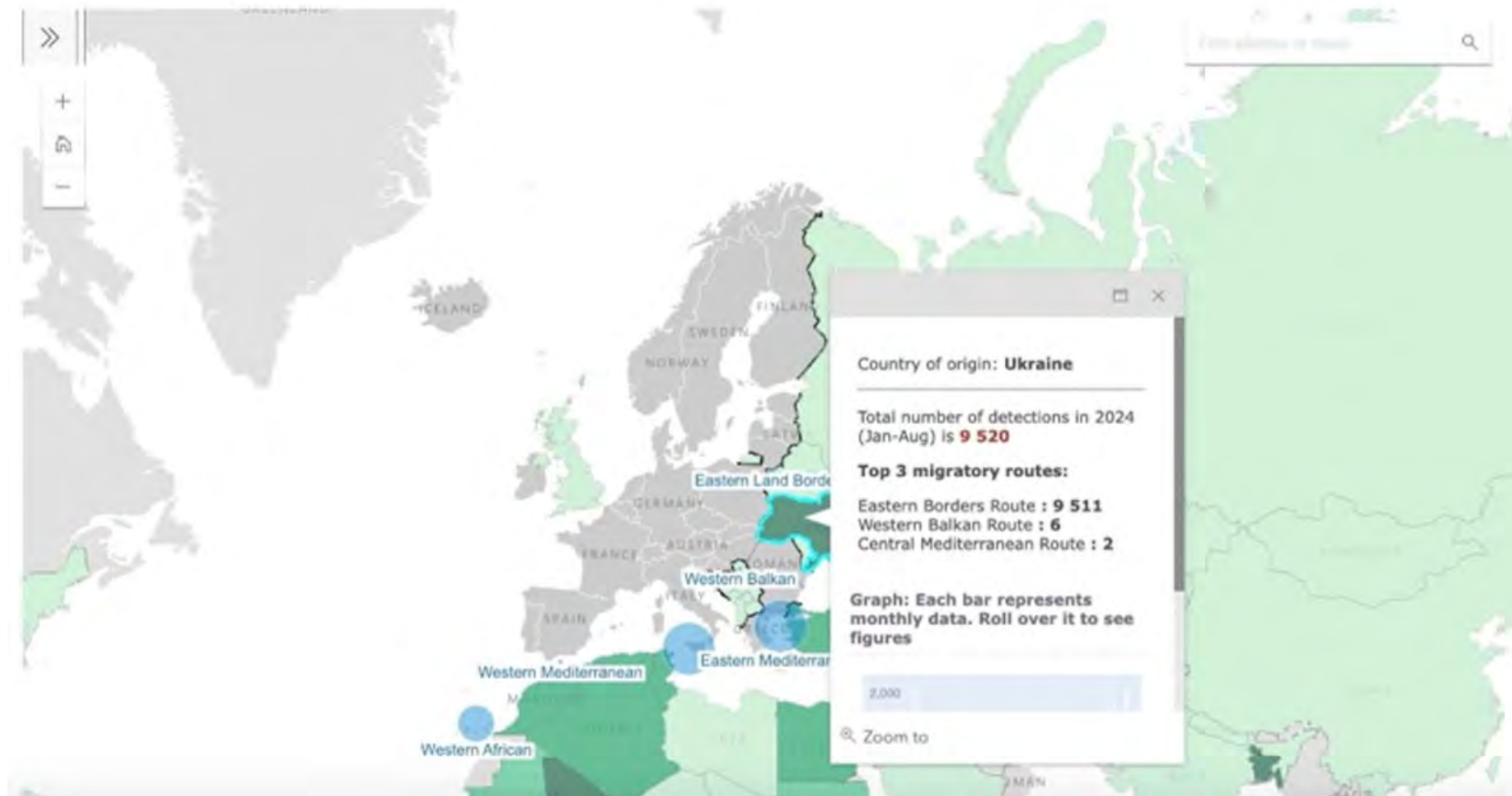
An aerial photograph showing a large group of people, mostly of African descent, scattered across a vast, dry, and dusty landscape. The people are seen from above, some standing, some sitting, and some lying down. The ground is a mix of light brown and tan colors, with some darker patches. The overall scene conveys a sense of displacement and hardship.

A FILM BY AI WEIWEI

HUMAN FLOW

WHEN THERE IS NOWHERE TO GO,
NOWHERE IS HOME.

This map presents the current migratory situation in Europe. Each circle represents one of the main migratory routes into the EU. Click on a circle or one of the countries of origin to see more details.



Migratory map: Frontex

<https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-map/>

Resources

Climate migration projections by 2050: World Bank

<https://www.statista.com/chart/26117/average-number-of-internal-climate-migrants-by-2050-per-region/>

Amnesty International

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>

United Nations

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1138147>

Down to Earth

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/climate-change/climate-change-can-force-216-million-people-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050-79002>

Council on Foreign Relations: Europe's Migration Crisis

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/europes-migration-crisis#chapter-title-0-3>

Resources

Foreign Affairs

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-real-economic-crisis-zongyuan-liu>

International Monetary Fund

<https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/12/15/europe-could-do-even-more-to-support-ukrainian-refugees>

Research Gate

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Migration-routes-to-the-primary-country-of-arrival-and-subsequent-refugee-movements_fig6_324228628

Carbon Brief

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/expect-tens-of-millions-of-internal-climate-migrants-by-2050-says-world-bank/>

Euronews: Interactive chart: refugees to Europe

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/09/04/number-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-europe-keeps-rising-data-shows>

Climate migration: NYTimes focused on Central America

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>

Interactive Washington Post article: Chinese at the Mexican border

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/interactive/2024/china-migrants-us-border-san-diego-new-york/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/interactive/2024/china-migrants-us-border-san-diego-new-york/>

Unicef site on Ukraine

https://www.unicef.org/eca/ukraine-emergency-response-neighbouring-countries?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwmOm3BhC8ARIsAOSbapWUZYU5KOuPQsgce-MLIEwww5jmEVv1utfZAL411erjquhDHjdf46AaAhmVEALw_wcB

Migrants, refugees, IDPs, and asylum seekers

The terms “refugee”, “asylum seeker” and “migrant” are used to describe people who are on the move, who have left their countries and have crossed borders.

The terms “migrant” and “refugee” are often used interchangeably but it is important to distinguish between them as there is a legal difference. Refugee: a person who has crossed an international border fleeing conflict.

Internally displaced people, referred to as IDPs, have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, they remain within the borders of their own country. Globally, there are 68.3 million internally displaced people.

Asylum seeker: An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.