



International  
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# ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers

Results and Methodology



- Labour Migration Branch  
Conditions of Work and  
Equality Department
- Department of Statistics



# ► ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers

Results and Methodology  
Third edition

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE GENEVA

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## ► Preface

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International migrant workers constitute nearly 5 per cent of the global labour force and are an integral part of the world economy. Labour migration not only benefits the migrant worker, but also the communities they become part of, as well as their origin countries. Yet, the gains of labour migration can be diminished when migration policies are not informed by an evidence-base and insufficiently linked to employment policies. Harnessing the potential of labour migration toward development gains requires well-informed and effective policymaking, based on up to date and sound data.

The UN *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda* (UN 2015) recognizes migration as an important aspect of development policy, urging governments to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (target 10.7) and to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment” (target 8.8). The *2020 Sustainable Development Goals Report* (UN 2020) provides a timely set of data as this year both SDGs 8 and 10, among others, will be reviewed at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2021.

Recognizing the importance of timely, reliable and comparable data and the need for international standards on labour migration data, the ILO has developed *Guidelines Concerning Statistics of International Labour Migration* that were adopted by the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) (ILO 2018a). With the adoption of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)* in 2018 by the UN General Assembly (UN 2019), countries have committed to improved migration governance and cooperation to facilitate orderly migration. The ILO supports the capacity-building efforts of countries in data collection and contributes to the regional and global knowledge building and dissemination on international labour migration statistics. To support this work, ILO has established and maintains the world’s largest and most robust global labour migration database.

This third edition of the *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology* presents the most recent estimates on the stock of international migrant workers, disaggregated by age, sex, country-income group and region, and the estimation methodology. The periodic publication of this report provides information on recent trends on labour migration and therefore, contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as supporting policymaking at the country, regional and global levels.

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