International migration has increased steadily over the years, becoming an established feature of the contemporary social and economic landscape for many youth. Young migrants constitute a relatively large proportion of the overall migrant population and have a significant impact on origin, transit and destination countries and communities.

According to the latest United Nations estimates, there are 232 million international migrants worldwide, representing 3.2 per cent of the world’s total population of 7.2 billion (United Nations, 2013a). There are 35 million international migrants under the age of 20, up from 31 million in 2000, and another 40 million between the ages of 20 and 29. Together, they account for more than 30 per cent of all migrants. Females account for approximately half of the international migrant population.

Migrants constitute a diverse group. Their social, economic and educational backgrounds, the means/forms of migration, and their motivation for leaving all influence the scope, scale and type of migration.

Some young migrants leave their home communities intending to return at some point, while others plan to relocate permanently. There are studies suggesting that youth migrants are more inclined to undertake temporary migration than permanent migration.

Young people may choose to move within their home countries as internal migrants or beyond their national borders as international migrants. The majority of migrants stay in their own countries as internal migrants. Estimates place the number of migrants at approximately 740 million. Youth intending to migrate outside their national boundaries may first undertake rural-urban migration or urban-urban migration within their country of origin in order to find paid employment or intermediary services to support their plans for international migration.

2 The data presented here refer to the international migrant stock, defined as a mid-year estimate of the number of people living in a country or area other than the one in which they were born or, in the absence of such data, the number of people of foreign citizenship.
DEFINITIONS

International migrant
According to the 1998 United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, an international migrant is defined as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence. A person’s country of usual residence is that in which the person lives. It refers to the country in which the person has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest. Temporary travel abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not entail a change in the country of usual residence.

A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence is defined as a long-term migrant. A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least 3 months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage is defined as a short-term migrant. For purposes of international migration statistics, the country of usual residence of short-term migrants is considered to be the country of destination during the period they spend in it.

Internal migrant
A movement of people from one area of a country to another for the purpose or with the effect of establishing a new residence. This migration may be temporary or permanent. Internal migrants move but remain within their country of origin (e.g. rural to urban migration).

Undocumented migrant/migrant in an irregular situation
A foreign citizen who is present on the territory of a State, in violation of the regulations on entry and residence, either after having entered the country illegally or whose residence entitlement (e.g., as a tourist or a visa holder) has expired.

Refugee
A person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.

Circular Migration
The fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or long-term movement linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination.

Sources: United Nations (1998); Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol; International Organization for Migration (n.d.(a)).
Young migrants vary in terms of their legal status in transit and destination countries. Some travel as documented migrants, moving through legal channels or staying in other countries with the required paperwork. However, others are undocumented migrants who may lack the necessary legal authorization (such as a valid passport or specific type of visa) to enter, stay or work in a transit or destination country, or have overstayed the allowed time in their country of destination and are thus in an irregular situation.

Youth migration may be forced or voluntary. Young people subjected to forced migration may be influenced by natural or man-made circumstances. Human trafficking, which is trade in human beings, typically involves various forms of coercion, most often with the aim of forced labor. In other cases people leave their communities in response to threats to their lives and livelihoods; an example would be internal displacement occurring as a result of conflict or natural disasters. Other examples include those fleeing their country of origin to escape persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, sexual orientation or because they are a member of a persecuted ‘social group’ or because they are fleeing a war; in these cases the migrants are entitled to international protection as refugees.

In contrast, voluntary migrants are not influenced by immediate external push factors or coercive pressure. Those who move of their own volition in order to improve their livelihoods include student migrants, young migrants joining their partners abroad and young labour migrants. However, due to the complexity and interlinkages of the different factors leading to migration, it is often quite difficult to differentiate between forced and voluntary migration.

Young people may also engage in circular migration. Traditionally, such migration has been limited to seasonal work activities in the agricultural sector, such as grain and wine harvesting and fruit and vegetable picking. More recently, an increasing number of international students have been crossing borders to intern and gain professional and international exposure during long school recess periods. Similarly, many multinational corporations and transnational partnerships participate in cross-border employee placement and exchange activities that may range from several months to several years.

Recognizing the diversity of youth migrants is important for understanding the motives behind migration, the conditions under which different categories of youth migrants move, and the impact of migration on the human development of young men and women, as well as their country of origin and destination. It is also essential for designing specific interventions that address their unique vulnerabilities.

Voluntary migration for work, study or family reasons is far more prevalent than forced migration. For instance, only 15 out of 232 million international migrants were refugees in 2013. South-South migration is as common as South-North migration, with the number of international migrants in both categories estimated at 82 million in 2013. The majority of young migrants (60 per cent) live in developing countries. However, the number of youth migrants aged 15-24 as a percentage of the total youth population varies considerably by development level. In 2013, youth...
migrants accounted for 9.1 per cent of the total youth population in developed countries, but only 1.4 per cent in developing countries.

Most foreign students (84 per cent) were enrolled in educational institutions in developed countries, with the largest proportion (58 per cent) studying in North America and Western Europe in 2010. However, the foreign student population has been increasing at a much faster rate in developing countries, more than tripling from 130,000 in 1999 to 443,000 in 2008. Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics show that East Asia and the Pacific is the largest source of international students, accounting for 28 per cent of the world total.

The underlying causes of youth migration

The reasons for youth migration vary. Often, a combination of several major factors leads to the decision to migrate. Personal considerations, socio-economic circumstances, and the political situation in the country of origin may be important contributing factors. Often, the main driving force behind youth migration (particularly international migration) is the magnitude of perceived inequalities in labour market opportunities, income, human rights and living standards between the countries of origin and destination. Some young people migrate to escape conflict, persecution, or environmental threats. The decision to migrate is often related to important life transitions, such as pursuing higher education, securing employment or getting married. Marriage migration has become a distinct feature of international migration in Asia as a large and increasing number of young women from developing countries in the region are migrating to developed Asian countries for this purpose. This phenomenon has led to social, cultural and demographic transformation of the communities of origin and destination.
Because these young women are able to send remittances to family members, they often enjoy a higher status in their communities of origin, although they may find themselves in a more restrictive, patriarchal environment in their marriage household. This trend has resulted in an increase in cases of depression and anxiety for many young men living in the sending communities over their diminished status and dwindling marriage prospects.

Youth with at least some secondary education tend to be more likely to have the desire to migrate (internally and internationally) than those with less education. There are young people who migrate because they want to satisfy a desire for adventure or experience a different culture. Aspirations towards increased social prestige as well as family pressure or responsibilities can be influenced by the attitude of returning migrants and ultimately inform the migration decisions of potential youth migrants in places of origin.

GLOBALIZATION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS FACILITATE YOUTH MIGRATION

The availability of faster and cheaper means of transportation has improved human mobility and thus facilitated international migration, but it is arguably the development of information and communications technology (ICT) that has played a key role in facilitating the migration of young people. Youth who have access to information about better opportunities elsewhere are more likely to take advantage of them in today’s world. Web-based social networking platforms such as Facebook, YouTube weblogs (blogs) have been particularly important within this context, in addition to more traditional information technology, such as television and radio, in less connected parts of the world.

Social networks are playing an increasingly visible role throughout the migration process, from initial decision-making to permanent settlement or return. Evolving ICT options have transformed the nature

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**BOX 1.2**

TOP SOURCES AND DESTINATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The number of students enrolled in tertiary education abroad rose from 2 million in 2000 to 3.6 million in 2010, an increase of 78 per cent. China, India and the Republic of Korea were the top sources of international students. The United States of America was the most popular destination for foreign students, accounting for 19 per cent of the world total, followed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (11 per cent), Australia (8 per cent), France (7 per cent), Germany (6 per cent) and Japan (4 per cent).

Migrant labour workers prepare metalwork for a bridge, Lao People’s Democratic Republic
© UNICEF/LAOPDR03068/JIM HOLMES
of transnational communication and, to some extent, the cultural experience of migration by allowing young migrants to stay connected to their home communities as they deal with the challenges of adapting to their new surroundings. Diaspora communities can communicate with one another more easily, stay in touch with friends and family members in their places of origin, and provide information and assistance to potential youth migrants. Social networks can also play an active role in facilitating return migration. Furthermore, the knowledge and skills acquired in destination countries can be transferred back to the community or the country of origin through the new ICT options, thus contributing to the development process in the place of origin.

Migration can be a risky undertaking, as will be discussed further in the following chapter, so most youth migrants prefer to move to areas where members of their network already reside. Maintaining regular contact within migrant networks has a number of potential benefits; the exchange of information, resources and assistance can reduce the risks and costs for new migrants and ease their transition to a new setting (from the journey itself to finding housing and employment).

THE IMPACT OF YOUTH MIGRATION ON INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

Migration affects both the young migrants themselves and those young and old persons left behind. It has a direct and often profound impact on migrants and their immediate families, but the wider community can be directly or indirectly affected as well. The consequences are complex, context-specific and subject to change over time. They may be influenced by factors such as the type of migration, migrant category, national migration policies, and programmatic interventions that are in place in origin, transit and destination societies or countries. Staying connected with family members, peer groups and home communities through the exchange of information, ideas, and remittance flows—and with the stated intention of returning home at some point—is critical to producing positive development outcomes at the individual, family, community and societal levels.

INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL EFFECTS

The literature on youth migration and its development impact at the household level and in countries of origin and destination is sparse. What little information is available indicates that young people and the families they leave behind sometimes see migration as a strategy for improving their livelihood prospects. In certain settings, migration constitutes an important stage in the transition to adulthood and an opportunity for independent income generation. By taking advantage of new opportunities for employment, education and skill development in their destination countries, young migrants can shape their own futures.

When youth migrate, they tend to improve both their own financial situation and the economic circumstances of their families through the income they earn and the remittances they send home. In some settings migration may also strengthen young women’s decision-making authority within families and society, contributing to greater gender equality and reinforcing equitable gender norms.
EFFECTS ON PLACES OF ORIGIN

International migration can improve the social and economic welfare of young migrants and contribute to greater economic efficiency in receiving countries. However, its impact on countries of origin tends to be mixed. One of the most serious adverse effects is human capital flight, or brain drain, which deprives countries of origin of the economic and social contributions of their best educated and most highly skilled citizens. The negative impact of brain drain is particularly evident in the health and education sectors of developing countries, as well as in small developing countries, where the pool of professionals is limited.

There is empirical evidence, however, that the return of migrants to their countries of origin can offset some of the loss of skilled labour through emigration. Migrants often return with enhanced skills, business networks and knowledge, the transfer of which benefits the society of origin over the long-term, effectively resulting in 'brain gain'.

BOX 1.3

MIGRANT REMITTANCES IN NUMBERS

Statistics relating to migrant remittances indicate the following:

- In 2012, remittance flows to developing countries totaled US$ 401 billion and are expected to reach $414 billion in 2013. Recent estimates show that the countries receiving the largest amounts include India ($71 billion), China ($60 billion), the Philippines ($26 billion), Mexico ($22 billion) and Nigeria ($21 billion).

- In 2012, remittances accounted for the largest share of gross domestic product in Tajikistan (48 per cent), Kyrgyz Republic (31 per cent), Lesotho and Nepal (25 per cent each) and the Republic of Moldova (24 per cent).

- A 10 per cent increase in remittances translates into an average reduction of 3.1 per cent in the poverty headcount ratio.

- In the third quarter of 2013, the cost of sending remittances averaged 8.9 per cent of total remittance values at the global level. In sub-Saharan Africa and Pacific Islands, however, the cost of remitting funds exceeded 12 per cent and with the recent development of 'lifting fees' or service charges levied by banks on recipients, the actual costs can amount to more than double the average sending cost.

Sources: World Bank (2013a); World Bank (2013b); World Bank and others (2013); and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2011).
Remittances, in addition to the knowledge, skills and investments made or sent home by young migrants in their country of origin, contribute meaningfully to enhancing economic growth and reducing poverty—both of which are central to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the household level, increased family incomes can insulate recipients against natural and economic shocks and defray health and education expenses. At the societal or collective level, remittances from diaspora youth communities may be channeled into basic infrastructure projects such as bridges and schools, improving local development in countries of origin.

**THE MIXED IMPACT ON YOUTH LEFT BEHIND BY MIGRANT PARENTS**

Migration and remittances have both positive and negative effects on youth left behind. Traditionally, guiding children through their formative years has been a primary function of parents, and the absence of one or both parents can have a serious impact on the psychological, emotional and social development of boys and girls during their childhood and youth—with possible implications for their effective transition to early adulthood. At the same time, young people left behind may develop the capacity for independent decision-making as they assume greater responsibility for the well-being of the household at home. Financial transfers from family members living abroad improve the social and economic welfare of migrants’ children when they are used for education, clothing, health care and other basic needs. However, remittances can also promote dependency among youth and other household members left behind. Taken together, the lack of parental supervision and the availability of what may be seen as discretionary funds may increase the likelihood that youth left behind will engage in risky behaviours.

**EFFECTS ON DESTINATION SOCIETIES**

In destination societies, young migrant workers at various skill levels often fill vacancies for jobs that local workers are unable or unwilling to take, which can enhance labour market efficiency and contribute to economic growth in receiving countries and communities.

It is commonly assumed that immigrants reduce wage rates and compete with native-born workers for jobs, thus increasing the level of domestic unemployment. However, literature shows that in countries in which the characteristics of the immigrant workforce differ substantially from those of the native labour force in terms of education or work experience, migration becomes a net benefit to the economy. This generally occurs when immigrant jobseekers have lower education and skill levels than their native-born counterparts. Unskilled and low-skilled young immigrants are willing to accept lower wages for work in fields of little interest to non-immigrants, so many of the more productive and better-paid jobs remain open to citizens.

**MIGRANTS’ RIGHTS**

The decision as to who may enter and reside in national territories is the sovereign right of States. However, all those living within a country’s borders, including migrants, are entitled to the
Positive effects

- Migration can provide youth with work opportunities not available in their places of origin. The exit of jobseekers may ease domestic pressures linked to excess labour supply.
- Migration may empower young women and reinforce equitable gender norms.
- Migration for reasons related to education or employment can allow girls to avoid marriage at a young age.
- The inflow of remittances may contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction in countries of origin and may also stimulate investment in human capital.
- Diasporas can be a source of technology transfer, investments and venture capital for countries of origin.
- Diasporas frequently assist in emergency relief in their countries of origin.
- The physical or ‘virtual’ return of skilled workers translates into increases in local human capital, skills transfer and foreign network connections.

Negative effects

- Migration often results in the loss of highly skilled workers and a reduction in the quality of essential services.
- Economic growth and productivity decline with reductions in the stock of high-skilled labour.
- In places of origin, returns on public investments in education are lower. The absence of parents may increase the vulnerability of youth left behind, and adolescents commonly experience difficulties in their social relations and will isolate themselves in small peer groups who are in a like situation.
- Youth left behind by their parents commonly experience increased demands as they must assume responsibilities previously assumed by their parents. This can lead to declines in academic performance and exit from school altogether.
- Remittances coupled with limited parental supervision may be linked to a higher probability of risky behavior among youth left behind.
- Migration may expose youth—especially young women—to higher risks of abuse, discrimination and exploitation.

Source: Extrapolated from online consultations and based in part on information obtained from De la Garza, (2010); Temin and others (2013); United Nations (2004).
same respect, protection and fulfillment of their human rights, regardless of their origin, nationality or immigration status.

Respecting the rights and fundamental freedoms of non-native residents or international migrants is essential if migration is to benefit the migrants themselves and the societies in which they live. Those whose legal rights are protected often make significant contributions to social and economic development in destination societies. However, there are many migrants—particularly those in irregular situations—who are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations ranging from unacceptable work and housing conditions and a lack of access to health care or education to abuse, exploitation and trafficking in persons. As a group, migrants often experience exclusion, racial discrimination and even violence. A survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on immigrant and ethnic minorities and discrimination in 27 countries found that violence affected many immigrant groups at a rate much higher than the non-immigrant population. It also found that young people surveyed had experienced higher rates of criminal victimization than their older counterparts. A lack of protection in immigration policies and inaccessibility of redress mechanisms not only leaves young migrants vulnerable to exploitation and abuse but also limits their ability to take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of migration over the short and long term. Countries of origin and destination should endeavor to provide support services throughout all stages of the migration process to ensure for the well-being and development of all young people, and work to develop programmes that provide easily accessible information on safe and regular migration channels.

The rights of migrant workers

Addressing the discriminatory and abusive treatment of migrant workers has long been on the international agenda. Three key instruments adopted to answer this concern include the following:

- The 1949 International Labour Convention (No. 97) concerning Migration for Employment
- The 1975 Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (No. 143) [Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers]
- The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- The 2011 Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers

Although the conventions have been in place for several decades, relatively few States have ratified them. Developed countries and countries of destination make up a very small proportion of the total, accounting for 10 of the 49 parties to the 1949 Convention, only 3 of the 23 parties to the 1975 Convention, and none of the 47 countries that have ratified the 1990 Convention.

In 2011, the General Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which recognizes the economic and social value of domestic work and establishes standards for the protection of domestic workers (see box 4.3 in chapter 4). Eight countries had ratified

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The 2013 General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD)

held on 3 and 4 October 2013, marked the second time in history that the United Nations considered international migration and development in the General Assembly. The overall theme of the 2013 HLD was identifying concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels in order to enhance the benefits of migration and to address its challenges. More than 100 Member States, many at the ministerial and vice-ministerial level, about 350 civil society representatives as well as numerous permanent observers and international organizations participated in the event.

Member States adopted a Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (A/68/L.5), in which they agreed on some key principles and recommendations on international migration and development. In particular, the declaration recognizes the important contributions migrants make to countries of origin, transit and destination. It acknowledges the need to integrate both development and human rights dimensions into the migration debate and calls for safe, orderly and regular migration. The declaration also recognizes migration as a key factor for sustainable development and calls for integrating migration into the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

In their presentations, many Member States covered national practices and recommended measures to address migration challenges and to leverage migration for development. There were calls to develop a framework for the mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas; to regulate the recruitment industry; to reduce the costs of migration, especially recruitment and remittance transfer fees; to engage diaspora groups; to respect migrant labour rights; to develop circular migration programmes; to improve the evidence base; and to promote coherence, partnerships and collaboration at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels.

In preparation of the High-level Dialogue, the General Assembly held informal interactive hearings with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector on 15 July 2013. About 380 non-governmental representatives attended the hearings and were discussing five broad aspects of international migration and development, which included a session on youth perspectives entitled “Youth perspectives: Voices of change”.

One of the invited speakers of the youth session, Mr. Rishi Singh, stated in his presentation “I did not realize what it meant to be undocumented until I was graduating from High School and had to apply to colleges. I soon realized that because I was undocumented, I would not be able to get scholarships, financial aid and loans. (...) It was at this point that I was introduced to DRUM (youth organization). Being undocumented can be very isolating but being in DRUM I soon realized that I was not alone. It became my mission to work towards making sure families and young people do not have to go through what I had to go through. I was a Youth Organizer at DRUM building the leadership of hundreds of other immigrant youth in order to change policies that affected our lives.”

For more on the High-level Dialogue, including preparatory activities, the report of the Secretary-General, the outcome documents and other relevant documentation, recordings of the meeting sessions, as well as an inventory of the statements, see www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/HLD2013/mainhld2013.html?main
the Convention by the time it entered into force on 5 September 2013.4

The rights of refugees

The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol establishes the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits States parties from returning refugees to areas where their lives or freedom “would be threatened on account of ... race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”.5 As of August 2013, the Convention and Protocol had been ratified by 145 and 146 countries respectively. Most of the countries that have not ratified the Convention are in the Middle East and Gulf regions and in South and South-East Asia.

Combating trafficking in persons

There are two important protocols supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (annex II to the Convention) is the first legally binding global instrument with an agreed definition on trafficking in persons:

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

It is aimed at facilitating convergence in national approaches to investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons as well protecting and assisting the victims of trafficking. As of August 2013, 157 States had ratified this Protocol.

The 2004 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (annex III to the Convention) is aimed at preventing and combating the smuggling of migrants by organized criminal groups, protecting the rights of smuggled migrants, and preventing their exploitation. It distinctly defines the smuggling of humans as:

“‘Smuggling of migrants’ shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”

As of August 2013, 137 States had ratified the Protocol.6

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING


  The paper explores the link between migration and inequality, focusing on the positive and negative effects in both directions. The authors contend that inequality is an impetus for migration, but note that migration may contribute to perpetuating or reducing inequality, depending on factors such as remittance flows.


  The paper provides information on the role young people play in international migration, their impact on migration trends, and the motivating factors behind youth migration. Attention is also given to gender considerations, regional migration, and the relationship between population dynamics and future migration trends.


  The 2009 Report examines the link between human development and migration within the larger context of overall development. It notes that migrants typically move towards areas of higher mobility. The Report also asserts that improved migration policies and initiatives can enhance human development outcomes for migrants and the families they leave behind.


  This publication contends that there is a positive correlation between migration and development. It provides examples of countries in which internal rural-urban migration has contributed to development, particularly in areas with low levels of education and high urbanization.


  This collection of meeting papers highlights the positive impact of international migration on the achievement of Millennium Development Goals—showing, for instance, how remittances can contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. It explores the connection between migration and MDG achievement in the areas of gender equality, health and social development. The publication concludes with some policy recommendations for addressing migration within the MDG framework.


  This paper examines human mobility from a gender perspective, exploring how women affect and are affected by migration. Although both positive and negative aspects of the issue are addressed, particular attention is given to women’s greater vulnerability to the risks and dangers associated with migration relative to other groups. The paper concludes with suggestions for research and policy action.