

Foreword

The worldwide stock of international migrants has risen significantly in recent decades, from 77 million persons in 1960 to an estimated 214 million in 2010 – an increase of 177% – equivalent to just over 3% of the global population in 2010. In addition, the composition of migrant communities has also gone through major changes with more high-skilled migrants, more migrant women and a diversification of both countries of origin and destination. In the meantime, contacts with the origin countries have been greatly facilitated as a result of both recent advances in information and communication technology and decreasing transportation costs. In this context, the potential impact of diasporas on the development of origin countries has become a crucial issue for governments and development agencies.

The contribution of a diaspora to the economic and social development of its country of origin, however, depends on many factors, such as its size, average skill level, wealth, seniority and degree of organisation. It also depends on the prevailing conditions in the country of origin and on the institutional support the diaspora receives. Governments of both origin and destination countries can facilitate the involvement of diasporas, by supporting networks, by facilitating communications channels with the country of origin, by creating an enabling environment or – more directly – by easing skill mobility and use. In support of this objective, detailed knowledge about diasporas is crucial.

The lack of precise information on diasporas – whom they comprise, where they are, what they are doing and their aspirations for the future – has indeed been a significant impediment to understanding and promoting their role in the development of origin countries. This publication aims at filling that gap by gathering a broad range of statistical information on migrant populations and their children worldwide by origin country, which can help policy makers to tailor policies to the specific needs and circumstances of the population groups in question.

The concept of “diaspora” is relatively fuzzy and diasporas members cannot easily be counted in practice. In theory, it covers all people who maintain some form of attachment to a specific country of origin in relation to their migration background. These people can be migrants themselves or the children or grand-children of migrants. Some of them have the citizenship of the country in question, others have multiple nationalities or only the citizenship of their current country of residence. Ideally, members of the diaspora should be identified through population surveys by self-declaration. In practice, however, because of data limitations, quantitative analyses on diasporas are limited and usually restricted to the first generation of migrants. This publication takes one step further by also considering the children of immigrants and by paying a special attention to those who are not yet members of the diaspora but express the desire to emigrate.

Information presented in this publication gathers all available data sources on migrants by country of origin, building largely on the results of a longstanding co-operation between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in compiling data on migrants from population censuses in OECD countries and beyond.

This publication contains 140 country notes summarising diaspora sizes, including the number of children of migrants born in the destination countries; the characteristics of emigrant populations (gender, age, education, labour market outcomes); the numbers and main destinations of international students; recent migrant flows to OECD countries; and information on the desire to emigrate among different population groups.

We hope that this publication will help to portray more accurately the migrant communities worldwide in order to facilitate the design of sound policies to better mobilise migrant skills for development in origin countries.

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