

WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2013



MIGRANT
WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Overview



Since the first-ever United Nations General Assembly High-level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development in 2006, there has been increasing international debate about how best to harness the benefits of migration for development. Yet migration remains inadequately integrated into development frameworks at national and local levels, and there is limited public understanding and appreciation of the contribution that migrants make to the development of their countries of origin and destination.

In 2013, a second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will be held, presenting the international community with another opportunity to focus its attention on making migration a positive factor in sustainable development and poverty reduction. The HLD comes at an important time, as the international community moves beyond the Millennium Development Goals and towards the formulation of a post-2015 development agenda.

WMR 2013 draws upon the findings of the Gallup World Poll, using data collected in 2009–2011 from 25,000 first-generation migrants and over 440,000 native-born individuals in over 150 countries, to assess, for the first time, the well-being of migrants worldwide. Most studies on migration tend to focus on the situation of migrants in the North. Gallup's data yield unprecedented global insights into the experience of migrants, providing new evidence of the often understudied situation of migrants in the South.

The key features and messages of *WMR 2013* are presented as a contribution to this ongoing global debate on migration and development, and can be summarized by five key headings:

1. PLACING MIGRANTS AT THE CENTRE OF THE DEBATE

Throughout the history of mankind, human beings have migrated in search of greater opportunities and a better life. While migration is driven by many complex factors, most migrants want to earn a better living, to live in a more agreeable environment or to join family or friends abroad. Many, however, do not move of their own free will but are forced to do so – refugees escaping persecution, for instance; people devastated by conflict or natural disasters; or victims of trafficking. But those who willingly choose to migrate are largely driven by the desire for greater happiness, prosperity and well-being.

Not surprisingly, much research and policy debate has focused on migration as a process and on its socioeconomic impacts in aggregate terms. Many reports on migration and development focus on the broad socioeconomic consequences of migratory processes – studying the impact of, for example, remittances, migrant knowledge networks or diaspora resources. Consequently, the impact of migration on the lives of individual migrants can easily be overlooked. This *World Migration Report 2013* focuses instead on outcome for migrants themselves and on how their lives have been affected in positive or negative ways, as a result of migrating. This approach is consistent with one of the major recommendations of the *WMR 2013* – namely that, instead of being the passive subjects of enquiry, migrants should be given the opportunity to tell their stories. It is hoped that this emphasis on the experiential dimension, as opposed to the usual focus on disembodied socioeconomic dynamics, will open the door to policymaking that is more attuned to human needs.

2. DEVELOPMENT IS ABOUT HUMAN WELL-BEING

The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development defines development as a “constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals”.¹ Similarly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration focuses on the well-being of the individual as the key purpose of development. More recently, the United Nations argued that the notion of well-being and sustainability should be at the core of the global development framework beyond 2015 (UN DESA, 2012a). In this vein, the *WMR 2013* has uniquely framed its approach to assessing development-related outcomes of migration in terms of human well-being. This approach is consistent with recent new orientations in thinking about development that are not limited to economically based notions such as productivity, wealth or income.

Despite the research community’s growing interest in developing and testing instruments to measure societal progress from the perspective of human well-being, it is clear that few studies have focused on the well-being of migrants. Those that exist have focused on only one dimension – measures of happiness – and in just a handful of developed countries.

The Gallup World Poll assesses the overall well-being of migrants by asking them questions about objective elements in their lives, such as income level, housing and working conditions, as well as subjective perceptions, feelings and impressions of satisfaction with their lives.

¹ www.un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a41r128.htm

3. MIGRATION IS NOT JUST A SOUTH–NORTH PHENOMENON

Traditionally, migration reports and policy discussions about the contribution of migration to development focus on movements from low-/middle-income countries to more affluent ones (such as from the Philippines to the United States). Taking a more inclusive approach, this report sets out to explore whether variations in the origin and destination of migrants can produce different outcomes for those concerned. In addition to South–North migration, therefore, the report covers three other migration pathways: from one high-income country to another (such as from the United Kingdom to Canada: North–North); from a high-income to a low-/middle-income country (such as from Portugal to Brazil: North–South); and from one low-/middle-income country to another (such as from Indonesia to Malaysia: South–South). Based on the research findings, it argues that each of the four migration pathways has specific human development outcomes that have not yet been fully understood or taken into account.

It is clear from the data that a more inclusive approach to migration and development is needed. According to Gallup sources, only 40 per cent of migrants move from South to North. At least one third of migrants move from South to South (although the figure could be higher if more accurate data were available), and just over a fifth of migrants (22%) migrate from North to North. A small but growing percentage of migrants (5%) migrate from North to South. These figures can vary somewhat, depending on which definition of ‘North’ and ‘South’ is used.

4. MIGRATION IMPROVES HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, BUT MANY MIGRANTS STILL STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE SATISFACTORY LEVELS OF WELL-BEING

Comparing the well-being of migrants with that of similar people in the country of origin

This report provides a unique picture of the gains and losses associated with migration. Drawing on the findings of the Gallup World Poll, it examines what migrants have gained and lost through migration, comparing the well-being of migrants who have lived in a destination country for at least five years with estimates of what their lives might have been like had they stayed at home.

The greatest gains are associated with migration to the North, be it North–North or South–North. Migrants in the North generally rate their lives better than do their counterparts in the countries of origin. Long-timer South–North migrants (persons living in a country for five years or more), for example, consider themselves to be better off than they would be back home.

By contrast, migrants in the South tend to rate their lives as similar to, or worse than, those of ‘matched stayers’ in the home country (persons of a similar profile who did not migrate). Consequently, South–South long-timers consider themselves to be worse off than if they stayed in their home country – reporting, for example, difficulties in obtaining adequate housing, with 27 per cent of them having struggled to afford shelter in the previous year, compared to 19 per cent of their counterparts back home. Migrants from the South generally report that they have more difficulty in achieving a satisfactory standard of living and do not consider themselves to be better off than if they had stayed at home.

It is important to bear in mind that certain vulnerable groups of migrants, such as victims of trafficking, stranded migrants and undocumented migrants, are not identified in the Gallup World Poll.

Comparing the well-being of migrants with that of the native-born

This report also compares the well-being of migrants with that of the native-born in the destination country, highlighting some key differences between the experiences of migrants in the North and South. For example, migrants in the South are less likely than the native-born to report that they are satisfied with their lives. South–South migrants also report that they are less well off, financially, than the native-born. Migrants in the North also face many challenges, but North–North migrants are much less likely than South–North migrants to be struggling to meet their basic needs. Overall, migrants who have moved from one country in the North to another consider themselves to be better off, financially, compared to natives, than do migrants who have moved from South to North. The financial situation of migrants in the North is generally not as good as that of the native-born (although it improves with time) – with 12 per cent of South–North migrants, for instance, finding it very difficult to get by on their incomes, compared to only 6 per cent of the native-born.

The financial challenges faced by migrants are likely due to the difficulties in obtaining work or, if employed, obtaining a full-time job. Migrants in the North are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed: 26 per cent were found to be underemployed and 13 per cent unemployed (compared with 18% and 8%, respectively, of the native-born). In the South, migrants are less likely than the native-born to be part of the official workforce, and just as likely as the native-born to be underemployed or unemployed.

Migrants in the South are less likely than the native-born to feel safe where they live (whereas migrants in the North generally feel as safe as native-born residents). For a minority of migrants in the South, fear and high crime rates prevent them from fully participating socially and economically. However, the situation does seem to improve the longer migrants stay in their new country.

Migrants who have moved to or between countries in the South are less satisfied than the native-born with their personal health and are more likely to have health problems that prevent them from taking part in activities that people their age would normally engage in.

Overall, migrants moving between two high-income countries – or North to North – report the most satisfactory experiences. They have the most positive outcomes in multiple dimensions of well-being, such as life satisfaction, emotional positivity, financial gain, personal safety, community attachment and health. Those migrating between the North and the South, in either direction, have mixed experiences. Generally, economic factors play a key role, with North–South migrants enjoying greater economic prowess and the ability to make their money go further in a relatively cheaper environment. These migrants tend to have fewer social contacts, however, and are less likely to have someone they can count on for help. Conversely, those moving from the South to the North suffer from this economic differential, struggling to make the transition, but they are nevertheless better off for having migrated than those who stayed at home. South/South migrants report relatively little improvement – if any – to their levels of well-being as a result of their having moved. They find it difficult to achieve a satisfactory standard of life, and their outlook for the future is tinged with pessimism. Whereas the migration and policy debate tends to be overwhelmingly focused on the situation of migrants in the North, it is migrants in the South who would appear to be most vulnerable and in need of particular attention.

5. WAY FORWARD AND POST-2015: DEVELOPING A GLOBAL BAROMETER OF MIGRANT WELL-BEING

The shape of the global development agenda beyond 2015 is unknown, but there is growing debate about whether and how migration should be factored into a new global framework. How migration is integrated into the development agenda will depend partly on whether the focus remains on poverty eradication in the poorest countries of the world, rather than on a broader vision of inclusive and sustainable development for all countries.

Whatever approach is taken, there is clearly a need for a much stronger evidence base to understand better on the linkages between migration and development. Additional research and better indicators of migrant well-being are also needed to generate a clearer understanding of the implications of migration for human development in the future.

The poll findings presented in the *WMR 2013* are only a sample of what can be gathered through the Gallup World Poll. By adding new questions to the existing survey, or by increasing migrant sample sizes in certain countries, much more could be learned about the well-being of migrants worldwide. In addition, an ongoing ‘Global Migration Barometer’ survey could be developed to regularly monitor the well-being of migrants across the globe.

WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2013



MIGRANT
WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

17 Route des Morillons, 1211 Geneva 19,
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 717 93 56
Fax: +41 22 798 61 50

www.iom.int

Since the first-ever UN General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) in 2006, the international debate about how best to harness the benefits of migration for development has intensified significantly. Yet migration remains inadequately integrated into development frameworks at national and local levels, and public perceptions of migrants and migration are often very negative.

In 2013, a second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will be held, presenting the international community with a critical opportunity to focus its attention on how to make migration work for development and poverty reduction. The HLD takes place at an important time, as the international community is seeking to formulate a new agenda for global development as we approach the target year of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

The *World Migration Report 2013* contributes to the global debate on migration and development in three ways: First, the focus of the report is on the migrant, and on how migration affects a person's well-being. Many reports on migration and development focus on the impact of remittances: the money that migrants send back home. This report takes a different approach, exploring how migration affects a person's quality of life and their human development across a broad range of dimensions. Second, the report draws upon the findings of a unique source of data – the Gallup World Poll surveys, conducted in more than 150 countries, to assess the well-being of migrants worldwide for the first time. Third, the report sheds new light on how migrants rate their lives, whether they live in a high-income country in the North, or a low or middle income country in the South. Traditionally the focus has been on those migrating from lower income countries to more affluent ones; this report considers movements in all four migration pathways and their implications for development i.e. migration from the South to North, between countries of the South or between countries of the North, as well as movements from the North to the South.

The first three chapters of the *World Migration Report 2013* provide an introduction to the chosen theme 'Migrant Well-being and Development', present the current global migration situation across four migration pathways and review existing research on the emerging field of happiness and subjective well-being.

Chapter four presents original findings on migrant well-being from the Gallup World Poll, looking at outcomes on six core dimensions of well-being across the four migration pathways.

The final part draws conclusions and makes recommendations for future initiatives to monitor migrant well-being and the impact of migration on development, with reference to the inclusion of migration in the post-2015 global development framework.



ISSN 1561-5502
ISBN 978-92-9068-668-2

USD 40.00