

# G20 global displacement and migration trends report 2017



## Outline

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Recent trends in migration flows and integration and evolution of stocks</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Recent trends in the international mobility of foreign students .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Diaspora and highly skilled emigration to the G20 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Recent trends in asylum seekers and refugees in G20 countries .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Recent trends in remittances .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>16</b>

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## Executive Summary

*G20 countries are at the centre of global migration, and many of them have recently experienced a significant rise in migration. The G20 has an important role to play in addressing the challenges associated to migration to make the most out of it for origin, transit and destination countries as well as for the migrants themselves.*

*This report provides a review of recent migration trends to and from G20 countries and the EU28. It shows that about 157 million international migrants, or almost two third of all international migrants, live in the G20 countries. Foreign born people represent about 3.3% of the total G20 population and on average, every second migrant is a woman. Net migration also added about 10 million people to total population in G20 countries between 2010 and 2015.*

*The report also indicates that almost 3.5 million international students were enrolled in tertiary education in the G20 in 2015, representing close to 95% of all registered International students. Almost two-thirds of international students in the G20 are coming from another G20 country. Looking more generally at international mobility of highly skilled workers, the report shows that more than one in four migrants in the G20 has a tertiary level of education, with about one in five tertiary educated migrants coming from India, China or the Philippines. The emigration of highly educated women to the G20 has been increasing particularly rapidly in recent years.*

*G20 members have also received very large inflows of asylum seekers in the last quarter of 2015 and 2016. The inflow of asylum seekers declined significantly in the first half of 2017, but G20 countries currently host 6 million recognised refugees (27% of the world total), up from 2.4 million in 2010. Host countries are now facing the challenges of promoting integration of those who are going to stay. Turkey alone is providing temporary protection to another 3 million Syrians, and Germany has received almost 1.2 million asylum applications in the past two years.*

*Finally, migrant remittances from G20 accounted for 72% of the global remittance outflow in 2015, an estimated 218 US\$ billion (in PPP). Some G20 countries are however also among the top recipients of remittances.*

*There is ample evidence that regular migration can have positive demographic, economic and fiscal impacts for host countries. Migrants accounted for about half of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70% in Europe over the past decade. They add human capital to host societies, but also bring new skills with them when they return or contribute as investors or entrepreneurs to the economy of their origin country. Available evidence also shows that in most countries migrants pay more in tax and social contribution than they receive in individual benefits. The magnitude of migrants' contribution however depends on the recognition and use of their skills in the labour market and more broadly on their labour market integration. Better integration outcomes are also a precondition for capitalising on the migration-development nexus as there cannot be a positive impact of migration on origin countries unless immigrants are safe and making a decent living where they live. It is also conditioned on the capacity of the international community to fulfil its commitments in terms of reducing migration and remittances*

*costs. The G20 Labour and Employment Minister's declaration paves the way for better policies and better integration outcomes for migrants. Going forward it will remain important to evaluate, and report back on, the economic impact of these policy changes.*

*The report concludes by highlighting the importance for the G20 countries to have access to up-to-date, comparable information on most important migration-related trends in order to support national and international policy developments to promote safe, orderly and regular migration.*

## Introduction

People have always moved across communities, states and continents, but over the past decades migration flows have been rising fast and are expected to increase further in the future. In 2015, about 244 million people were living outside their country of birth – more than half of them in G20 countries. **G20 countries are indeed at the centre of global migration and many of them have seen a significant recent rise in migration.**

Over the past few years, the increase in legal flows has been overshadowed by the mass inflows of asylum seekers and refugees. G20 countries received more than 3.5 million formal asylum applications in 2015 and 2016, the highest numbers since World War II, and Turkey alone is providing temporary protection to another 3 million Syrians, while Lebanon and Jordan host more than 1 million and at least 660 thousands Syrians respectively. Germany also registered more than 1.2 million asylum applications in 2015 and 2016. At the same time, legal migration, notably highly skilled migration, and international mobility of students has also gained momentum in the G20.

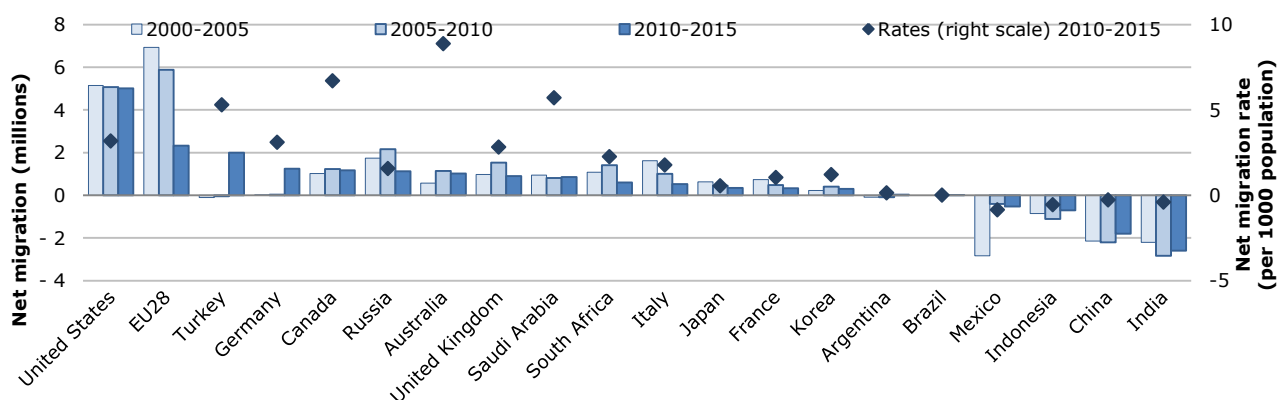
This report proposes a first monitoring of recent migration and remittances trends to and from G20 countries and the EU28.<sup>1</sup> It is organised in 5 sections focusing respectively on migrants' flows and stocks, international mobility of foreign students, emigration by countries of origin, recent changes in refugee and asylum seekers flows and remittances. The last section concludes.

## Recent trends in migration flows and integration and evolution of stocks

**G20 countries population increased by 10 million between 2010 and 2015 due to net migration, which is at its highest level since the early 1950s (Box 1).** The United States is the main net receiver country with 5 million more immigrants than emigrants between 2010 and 2015 (Figure 1). Turkey, which has received a large number of people in need of international protection recently, had the second highest net migration of the G20 in 2010-15 (+2 million). Germany follows (+1.2 million) with a significant increase between 2000-05 and 2010-15.

At the other end of the spectrum, four G20 countries were still net emigration countries on average over the period 2010-15: Mexico, Indonesia, India and China. Net migration to Mexico is however considerably lower than it used to be back in 2005. Relative to the countries' population, Australia has the highest net immigration rate, with around 10 per thousand for the period 2010-15, as well as over the previous 5 year period followed by Canada (+6.7 per thousand), Saudi Arabia (+5.7) and Turkey (+5.3).

**Figure 1. Net migration to G20 countries, 2005-2015**



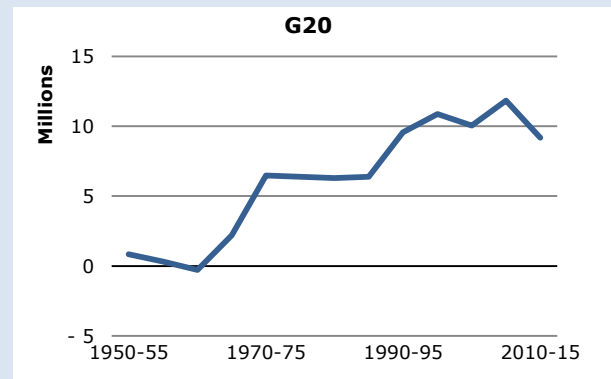
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, DVD Edition.

<sup>1</sup> All averages and totals for the G20 include EU28 and the 19 G20 countries, except indicated otherwise.

### Box 1: an historical perspective on migration in the G20

Net migration to the G20 has always been positive since 1950, except for the period 1960-65, the only period where the US was not the G20 top net migration country (France was). Since the beginning of the '90s, G20 population has increased by around 2 million people per year due to net immigration. The peak observed in 2005-10 is mostly due to a sharp decrease in net emigration from Mexico. The decline in the most recent period is the result of the turnaround in Spain and other European countries hard hit by the economic crisis, which was not fully compensated by the large increases in net immigration driven by the refugee crisis, notably in Turkey and Germany.

Figure 2. Net migration to the G20 1950-2015 (5-year periods)



Available data on migration inflows are not available for all G20 countries and are not always fully comparable. Table 1 compiles many different sources, notably based on OECD regional monitoring systems. The United States appears as the main immigration country in the G20 with 2.5 million new permanent and temporary migrants in 2015. Germany follows with a 2 million people inflow, while 1.5 million Asian migrant workers went to Saudi Arabia in 2015. Three other G20 countries received more than half a million new migrants: Australia (760 000), the United Kingdom (550 000) and Canada (513 000). Relative to the population, the ranking changes and Saudi Arabia comes first with all deployment of workers from Asia representing 5% of the total population (Saudis and non-Saudis). Australia ranks second with around 3% ahead of Germany (2.5%).

Table 1. Recent migration flows to selected G20 countries, 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Permanent	Temporary	Students	Definition	Source
Argentina	178	259	292	279	203		☑	☑	☑		Ministry of Interior
Australia	574	593	689	757	765	759	☑	☑	☑		Department of Immigration and Border Protection
Brazil	96	117	122	128	110		☑	☑	☑		Ministry of Justice
Canada	504	489	526	540	518	513	☑	☑	☑		IRCC
France	197	193	193	205	211	212	☑		☑	Non-EU citizens only	Ministry of Interior
Germany	684	842	966	1 108	1 343	2 016	☑	☑	☑	Registration of foreigners intending to stay at least one week in the country	Destatis
Indonesia	65	77	72	69	69			☑		Registered migrant workers	ILO
Italy	424	354	321	279	248	250	☑	N/A	☑		Istat
Japan	287	267	304	307	337	391	☑	☑	☑	Foreigners who entered the country, excluding temporary visitors and re-entries	Ministry of Justice
Mexico	92	91	79	118	109	103	☑	☑	☑	Permanent resident cards + temp	SEGOB - Unidad de política migratoria
Korea	293	307	300	360	407	373	☑	☑	☑	Long-term inflows (more than 90 days)	Ministry of Justice
Russia	199	215	291	351	443	425	☑				Federal Migration Service
Saudi Arabia	1 128	1 116	1 277	1 245	1 272	1 492		☑		Worker deployments from Asia	Sending countries
South Africa			55				☑	☑	☑		Department of Home Affairs
Spain	330	336	272	248	264	291	☑	N/A	N/A		National Institute of Statistics
United Kingdom	498	488	418	449	551	548	☑		☑	Long-Term International Migration	Office for National Statistics
United States	2 047	2 127	2 141	2 220	2 388	2 537	☑	☑	☑		Department of Homeland Security/ Department of State

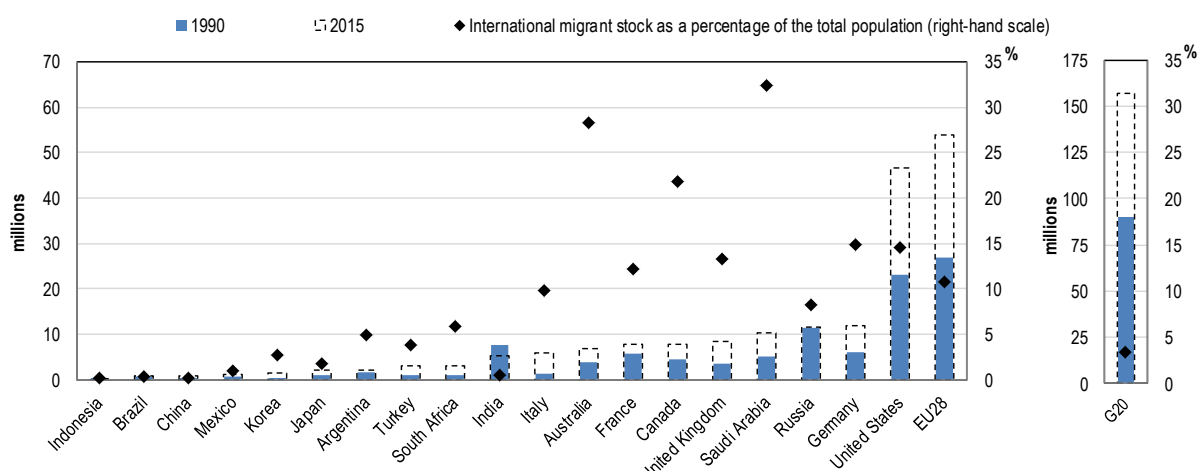
Sources: National sources; OECD International Migration Database, OECD-OAS (2015) International migration in the Americas - SICREMI, OECD-ILO-ADB (2017) Safeguarding the rights of Asian migrant workers from home to the workplace. Note: Sources, definitions and coverage of data used vary significantly across countries. This does not allow for aggregations and direct comparisons, but order of magnitude and trends can be described. Data are generally based on national sources, and most often include temporary workers and students. N/A means that information is not available

In 2015, three G20 countries saw inflows rise sharply compared to 2014: Germany, where 2015 the inflow level is 50% higher than in 2014, but also Saudi Arabia (+17%) and Japan (+16%). In most other G20 countries, the number of new migrants remained relatively stable, even if a 6% increase was registered in the United States, and a 5% drop in Mexico.

**The share of international migrants in the total population of the G20 remains relatively small.** About 157 million international migrants were living in the G20 countries in 2015, about 3.3% of the total G20 population. On average in the G20, every second migrant was a woman in 2015.

This average, however, hides significant differences across countries with very low share of immigrants in the largest G20 countries and much higher percentages notably in OECD G20 countries (Figure 3). Foreign-born population represents respectively 0.1% and 0.4% of the total population in China and India, while the EU28 and the United States respectively host 54 million and 47 million immigrants that represent, respectively, 11% and 14% of their total population.

**Figure 3. International migrant stocks in 2000 and 2015 and share in the total population in 2015**



Note: The figures for the G20 total include EU28 countries.

Source: Trends in International Migration Stock: The 2015 Revision, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015. OECD (2017) International Migration Outlook.

**In 2015, 647% of international migrants worldwide reside in the G20.** Half of the migrant population in the G20 resides in four countries: the United States, Germany, the Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia. The United States alone hosts 30% of the migrant population living in the G20.

**Despite the recent global economic crisis, migrants stocks have continued to increase over the past decades.** Since 1990, the number of international migrants in the G20 increased by around 67 million (75%), more rapidly than in the rest of the world where it grew by 38%. The size of the international migrant stock declined only in India, Indonesia and Brazil. In nine countries and in the EU28, the migrant population more than doubled in the period 1990-2015. In Italy, the number of foreign-born even increased fourfold. The presence of migrants is a new phenomenon in Korea where it rose from less than 50 000 in 1990 to 1.3 million in 2015.

Migration makes a significant contribution to labour force growth in many G20 countries, despite persisting difficulties for integrating migrant workers and valuing their skills in host countries labour markets (Box2). Good practice examples are usually based on a three pillar approach: (i) the effective evaluation, activation and development of migrants' and refugees' skills; (ii) prevention of the exploitation of migrant workers and of discriminatory behaviours; and (iii) strengthening cooperation with social partners, civil society and dialogue between receiving and sending countries.

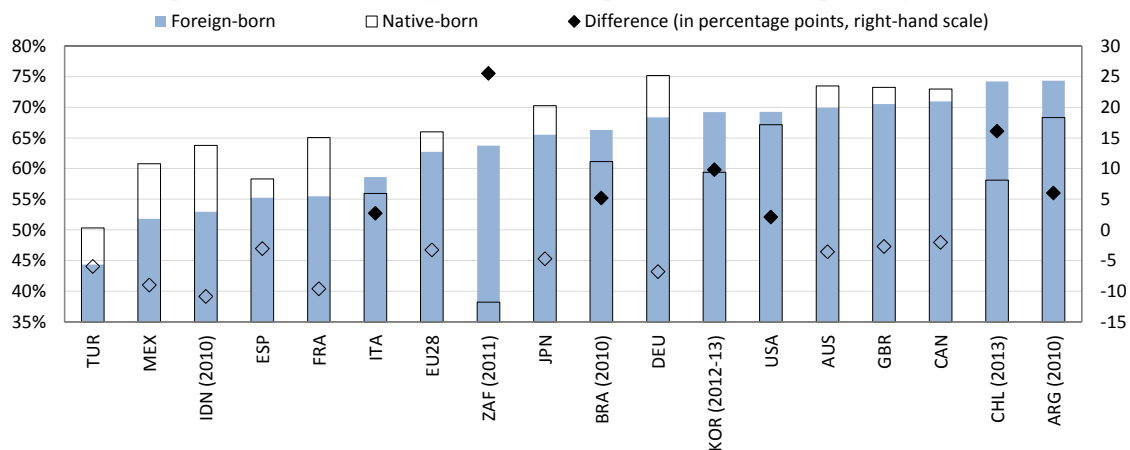
**Box2 Labour market outcomes of migrants in G20 countries: key findings from the joint OECD, ILO, World Bank and IMF paper for the 2017 G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting**

Employment rates of migrants are higher than among the native-born population in a number of G20 countries, notably in Argentina, Brazil, Korea, and South Africa (Figure below). In these countries, many migrants have come from neighbouring countries as labour migrants, and also have lower unemployment rates than the native-born (with the exception of Korea where the unemployment rate among migrants is slightly higher than among the native-born). In contrast, in a number of other G20 countries, gaps in employment rates are particularly large, for instance in India, France, Mexico and Germany. Furthermore, in a number of EU countries, such as France, Italy and Germany, unemployment rates among migrants are much higher than among the native-born.

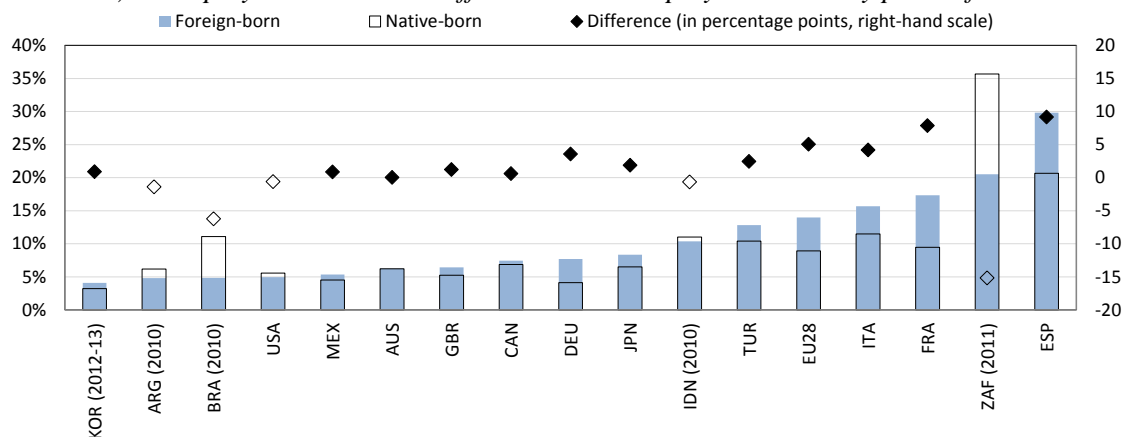
Moreover, employment rates of foreign-born women are much lower overall than among foreign-born men. Data on a number of G20 countries indicate that in many of the G20 countries migrant women face a double disadvantage; i.e. they have lower employment rates than foreign-born men, but also lower employment rates than native-born women (with the exception of Turkey).

*Figure Immigrant vs. native-born employment and unemployment rates in selected G20 countries, 2015 or most recent year available*

*a) Employment rates and differences in employment rates by place of birth*



*b) Unemployment rates and differences in unemployment rates by place of birth*



*Note:* The reference population is the population aged 15-64. Data for Korea refer to foreign nationals.  
*Sources:* OECD 2016a; OECD and European Union 2015; *Database on Immigrants in OECD countries (DIOC) 2010/2011.*

*Source:* OECD-ILO-WB-IMF (2017) *TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR FAIR AND EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS INTO THE LABOUR MARKET*, G20 LEMM, 17-18 June 2017



## Recent trends in the international mobility of foreign students

*In 2014, almost three and half million international students were enrolled in tertiary education in the G20* (Table 2). Almost all foreign students worldwide are enrolled in the G20 (94%). The United States accounts for 25% of all enrolled international students in G20 countries (840 000) and EU member countries 40% (1.5 million). After the United States, other main destinations include the United Kingdom (430 000), Australia (260 000), France (235 000), the Russian Federation (210 000) and Germany (210 000). In addition, over 130 000 international students were enrolled in Japan and Canada, and almost 100 000 in China in 2014.

The number of international students enrolled has increased significantly in the last 15 years in all G20 countries, except in Argentina. It has doubled in Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Turkey and the United Kingdom. It has especially skyrocketed in countries which used to receive few international students at the beginning of the century, such as Mexico and Italy (three times higher), the Russian Federation (five times), Saudi Arabia (six times), and Brazil and Korea (15 times).

**Table 2. International students enrolled in G20 countries, 2014**

	International tertiary students				Share of international students by level of education (%)		
	Total (thousands)	Of which: From G20 countries (%)	Of which: Women (%)	% change 2000-14	Total tertiary education	Master's or equivalent level	Doctoral or equivalent level
Argentina	3	8	..	- 20%	..	..	..
Australia	266	62	47	+ 152%	18	40	34
Brazil	19	31	46	+1 415%	0	1	2
Canada	135	59	45	+ 43%	10	14	27
China	96	..	45	..	0	1	3
France	235	38	52	+ 72%	10	13	40
Germany	211	58	49	+ 13%	7	12	7
Indonesia	7	11	..	+ 139%	..	..	..
Italy	88	45	59	+ 251%	5	4	13
Japan	136	84	48	+ 104%	3	8	19
Korea	52	77	52	+1 455%	2	6	8
Mexico	8	..	..	+ 230%	0	1	3
Russian Federation	213	7	..	+ 418%	3	6	5
Saudi Arabia	47	8	..	+ 522%	..	..	..
South Africa	42	7	43	..	..	..	..
Turkey	48	13	31	+ 173%	1	3	5
United Kingdom	429	67	51	+ 92%	18	37	42
United States	842	77	45	+ 77%	4	9	35
<b>European Union</b>	<b>1459</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>+ 84%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>G20 total</b>	<b>3367</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>+ 103%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>G20 average</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>

*Note:* Date refer to the year 2013/14. Data for Argentina, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia and Turkey refer to foreign students instead of international students. Data for Canada, China, Mexico and South Africa refer to 2013 instead of 2014 and data for Argentina, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia refer to 2012.

*Source:* Education at a glance database, OECD.

*Almost two-thirds of international students in the G20 are coming from another G20 country.* This share is especially high in English-speaking countries, as well as in some Asian G20 countries. In the European Union, three in every five international students is coming from G20 countries, most students coming from

other parts of Europe or from Africa. Overall, in the G20 area, half of all international students come from Asia (mainly China, India and Korea), a third from Europe (mainly from Germany and France), 9% from Africa and 9% from the Americas.

***Whereas slightly more female than male international students are enrolled in the European Union, male students represent the majority in most non-European countries*** where data by gender are available. There are more female than male among international students enrolled in Italy (59%) in France (52%), Korea (52%) and the United Kingdom (51%). Conversely, the share of female among international students is at most 45% in the United States, China, Canada, and South Africa. In Turkey, two thirds of international students are men.

***International students account for an average of 3% of the G20 tertiary-level student population and 8% in the European Union.*** This proportion reaches 18% in Australia and the United Kingdom and 10% in France and Canada. The share of international students in the total student population tends however to be low in most Asian and Latin American G20 countries.

***The proportion of international students increases with the level of education.*** On average in the G20, international students account for 11% of students enrolled in Master's programmes, and 17% in PhD programmes. In several countries (United Kingdom, and France notably), more than a third of PhD students are international students.

## Diaspora and highly skilled emigration to the G20

***The top ten origin countries represented more than a third of migrants in the G20.***<sup>2</sup> Mexico is the top origin country, with more than 11 million in 2010/11 mainly to the United States, an increase of 34% from 2000/01 (Figure 4). The growth of migrants from China and India has been spectacular over the last ten years. These two countries, with 3.7 and 3.5 million emigrants respectively in 2010/11, have become the third and fourth top countries with the largest diasporas living in the G20, representing a 76% and 78% increase respectively since 2000/01. European countries with traditionally large diasporas such as the United Kingdom and Germany have moved down the list of the top countries of origin.

The composition of migrants in terms of their education level has also changed significantly. Overall, 27% of migrants in the G20 had a high level of education (tertiary) in 2010/11, versus 23% in 2000/01. This corresponds to a 60% increase or an additional 12 million tertiary educated immigrants. Three countries, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, host two thirds of highly educated migrants living in G20 countries. The number of highly-educated migrants in these countries increased by 77% between 2000/01 and 2010/11, reaching close to 20 million. The growth has been particularly sharp in the United Kingdom during this period.

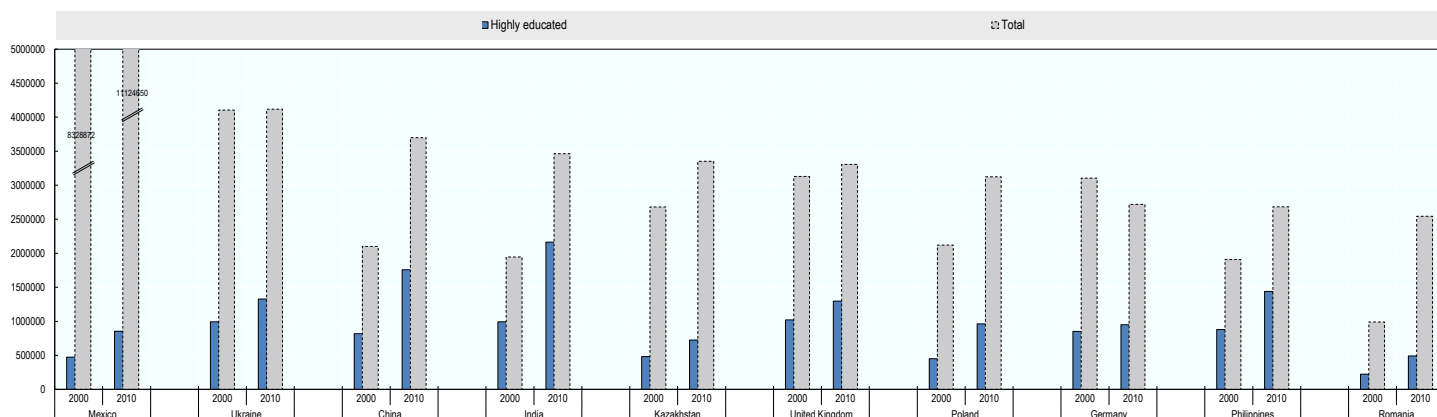
***Close to one in five highly-educated migrants in G20 countries comes from India, China or the Philippines.*** India has by far the biggest community of highly-educated emigrants in G20 countries. The size of the highly educated Indian diaspora more than doubled in ten years, reaching 2.2 million in 2010/11. China and the Philippines, with 1.7 million and 1.4 million respectively, have the second and third largest diasporas of highly educated emigrants. Their highly-educated diasporas grew by 115% and 64% respectively in ten years. Yet, the largest increase among these top origin countries was recorded by Romania (about 492 000 persons in 2010/11).

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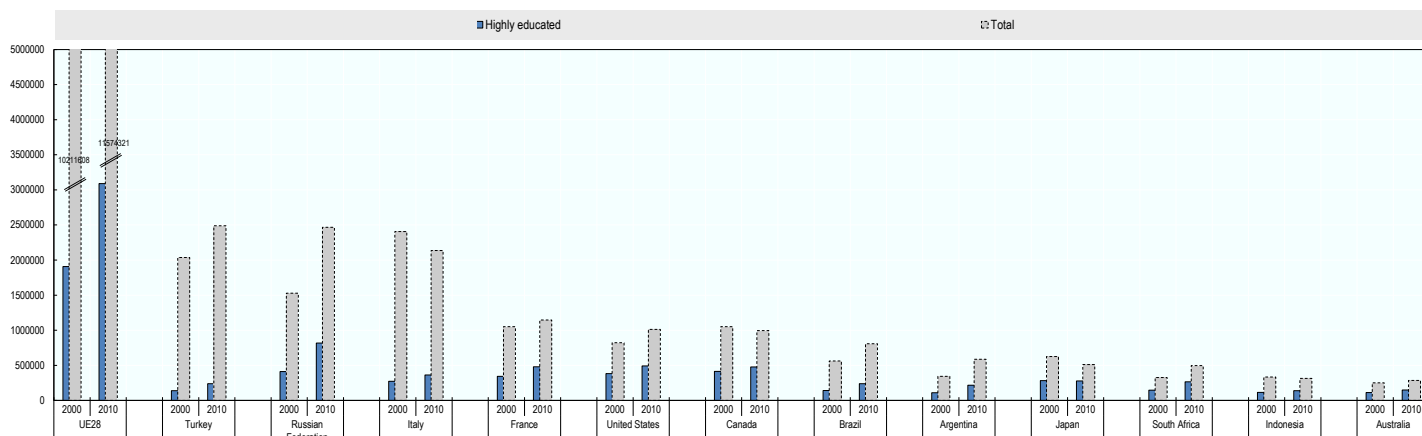
<sup>2</sup> The information in this section refers to all G20 countries as destination countries, except China, India, Saudi Arabia as data by country of origin and education level are not available for these countries in 2000/01 and/or 2010/11.

**Figure 4. Stock of emigrants and highly educated emigrants in G20 countries for ten main origin and G20 members, in 2000/01 and 2010/11**

Panel A. Ten main origin countries



Panel B. other G20 members



Note: The ten countries presented in this figure (on the left) are the top ten origin countries of foreign-born persons living in G20 countries in 2010/11, while those presented on the right are the remaining G20 countries as countries of origin. Numbers do not include migrants in China, India, and Saudi Arabia for which data are not available in 2000/01 and/or 2010/11. Highly educated emigrants are tertiary educated. More than 450 thousand people (about a third are tertiary educated) declare to be born in the former Soviet Union without specifying in which part. There are therefore not included in any country total.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC and DIOC-E), 2000/01 and 2010/11. Among the top origin countries of highly educated migrants in the G20, the emigration rate of the highly educated is particularly large for Kazakhstan (35%) and to a lesser extent for Romania (23%), Poland (20%) and the United Kingdom (11%). For the more populous Asian countries (India and China), the risk of brain drain is much lower (4% or less). Overall, brain drain is a serious concern in a limited number of countries, notably small countries and island states in the Pacific and the Caribbean. For many regions and countries in the world, the rising educational attainment of their populations has mitigated the negative effects of the increasing numbers of their high-skilled emigrants, as these can be captured by the emigration rate of the highly educated.

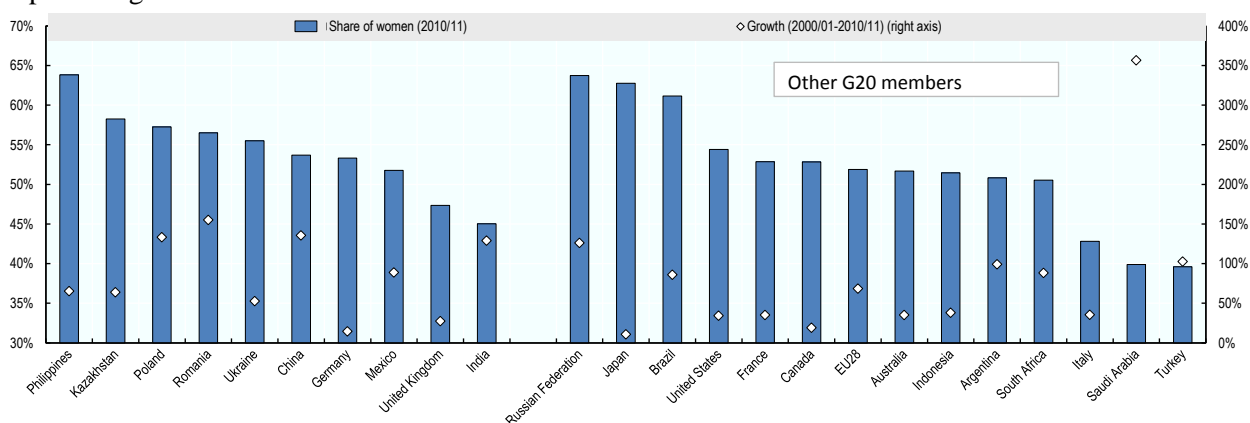
Among the top origin countries of highly educated migrants in the G20, the emigration rate<sup>3</sup> of the highly educated is particularly large for Kazakhstan (35%) and to a lesser extent for Romania (23%), Poland (20%) and the United Kingdom (11%). For the more populous Asian countries (India and China), the risk of brain drain is much lower (4% or less). Overall, brain drain is a serious concern in a limited number of countries, notably small countries and island states in the Pacific and the Caribbean. For many regions and

<sup>3</sup> The emigration rate of highly educated is defined as the number of highly educated migrants from one country as a share of the all highly educated persons living in that specific country, including emigrants from the country.

countries in the world, the rising educational attainment of their populations has mitigated the negative effects of the increasing numbers of their high-skilled emigrants, as these can be captured by the emigration rate of the highly educated.

**The emigration of highly educated women is a growing phenomenon worldwide.** In 2010/11, 52% of all highly educated migrants in the G20 were women up from 49% in 2000/01. Their number increased by 68% versus just 52% for highly educated men. Those percentages translate into rises from 9.8 million to nearly 16.6 million highly educated women and from more than 10.1 million to 15.4 million highly educated men. This trend applies to most countries of origin. The feminisation of migration, especially among the highly educated, is a growing phenomenon in most countries, but is especially prevalent in a number of key origin countries. For instance, emigration from the Philippines has been traditionally more important among women. In 2010/11, 61% of migrants from this country were women and female migrants represented 64% of all highly educated migrants (Figure 5). Women represent 61% or more of highly educated migrants from Russia, Japan and Brazil. For a number of countries of origin (China, India, Poland, Romania), the number of highly educated female migrants at least doubled between 2000/01 and 2010/11 whereas the increase has been lower for men. The number of highly educated female migrants from Saudi Arabia to the G20 was multiplied by 3.5 over the same period, while that of men was multiplied by 2.7.

**Figure 5. Highly educated women in G20 countries for ten main origin and G20 members**  
In percentages



Note: The ten countries presented in this figure (on the left) are the top ten origin countries of foreign-born persons living in G20 countries in 2010/11, while those presented on the right are the remaining G20 countries as countries of origin. Numbers do not include migrants in China, India and Saudi Arabia, for which data are not available in 2000/01 and/or 2010/11. Highly educated emigrants are tertiary educated.

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries (DIOC and DIOC-E), 2000/01 and 2010/11.

## Recent trends in asylum seekers and refugees in G20 countries

There are currently 22.5 million refugees in the world<sup>4</sup>, and G20 Members host 6 million of them (27% of the world total), up from 2.4 million in 2010. Most of this recent increase is driven by the major inflows to Turkey that occurred in the context of the Syrian conflict. Refugees represent 0.3% of the world population, but the overall share among the G20 is significantly lower, at 0.13%. Some G20 countries, such as Turkey and Germany, currently contribute very significantly to this international solidarity effort (Figure 6). Other G20 countries host very few refugees, either because their geographical location makes them unlikely destinations, or because they are not parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The latest available UNHCR data on asylum indicate that there have been about 2 million new asylum applications worldwide in 2016. About 88% of those applications have been lodged in the G20, including 40% in Germany alone. For the G20 as a whole, asylum applications represented in 2016 about 0.04% of the population, but this share was almost seven times higher in EU countries. The number of asylum applications recorded in 2016 in the G20 is nearly four times the average figure for the 2005-2010 period. During this earlier period, South Africa was the G20 country receiving the largest number of asylum applications, in both absolute and relative terms, with an average of more than 120 000 applications per year, representing an annual inflow of 0.2% of its population. About 60% of those applications were made by nationals of neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Among the 2.6 million asylum applications received by EU28 countries in 2015 and 2016, about 780 thousand, or one-third, concerned minors (individuals aged less than 18 years old); 550 thousand were aged less than 14, while 230 thousand were aged 14-17. Among all those young asylum applicants, about 20% were considered unaccompanied minors. Although unaccompanied minors represented a very small share of the youngest category (3% of the 0-13), they represented the majority of the oldest minors (61% of the 14-17). In EU28 countries as a whole, children tend to have higher refugee recognition rates. For decisions taken in 2015 and 2016, the overall acceptance rates was close to 58%, but it was 62% for children aged less than 14 and about 70% for the 14-17 years old. In Turkey, children aged less than 18 represent about 45% of the 3 million Syrian refugees.

The recent increase in the number of applications led G20 countries to make many more asylum decisions than usual. In 2015, they made close to one million decisions (Figure 7, top panel), with Germany accounting for one quarter of this total. Provisional data indicate that the number of decisions increased again in 2016 to reach more than 1.6 million.

For asylum decisions made in 2015, the recognition rate in G20 countries was about 52% (including all forms of international protection), which is more than twice the rate observed during the 2005-2010 period, but somewhat lower than in 2014 where it reached 55% (Figure 7, bottom panel). There is a great deal of heterogeneity across countries and across time in terms of acceptance rate: for the 2005-2015 period, Russia has the highest average acceptance rate, mostly due to temporary asylum given to Ukrainian nationals. Apart from such cases, the average acceptance rate during this period ranged from 10-15% in countries such as Japan, South Africa, Korea, and Argentina, to more than 50% in India and Turkey. For EU countries, the acceptance rate was 33% over this period, but it reached 61% in 2016.

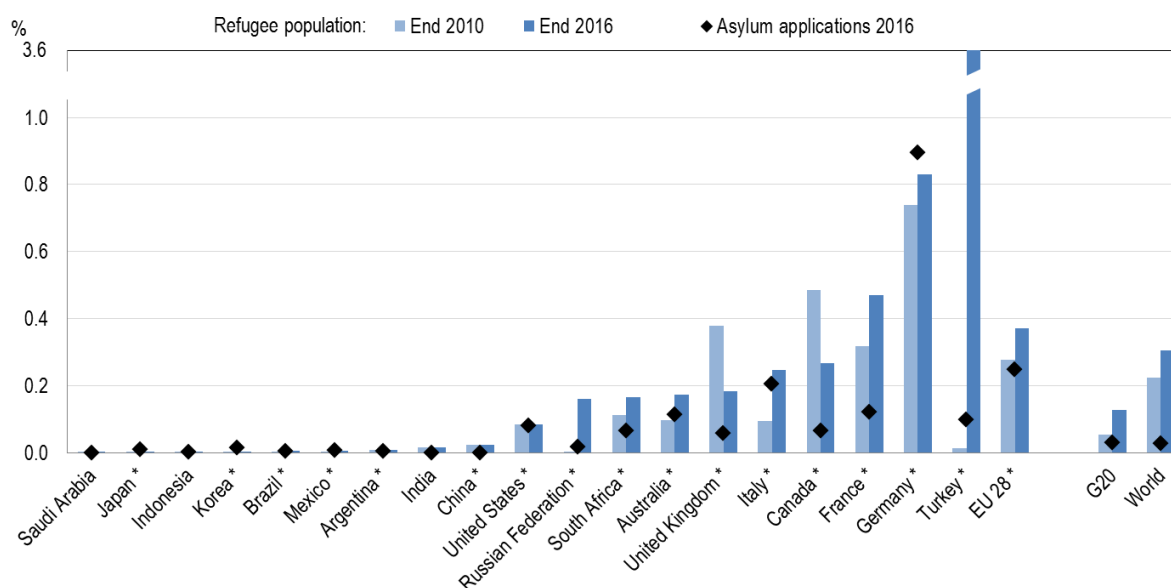
Despite the recent increase in asylum decisions and acceptance rates across a number of G20 countries, the number of pending asylum claims stands at a record high. In EU countries alone, there are currently more than 1 million pending asylum applications.

In response to the refugee crisis, it appears necessary to address the root cause of mass displacement during protracted crisis as well as reinforce burden sharing by scaling up traditional resettlement programmes, and making a better use of existing complementary pathways for people in need of international protection (OECD, International Migration Outlook 2016).

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<sup>4</sup> This includes refugees under UNHCR mandate and refugees registered by UNRWA.

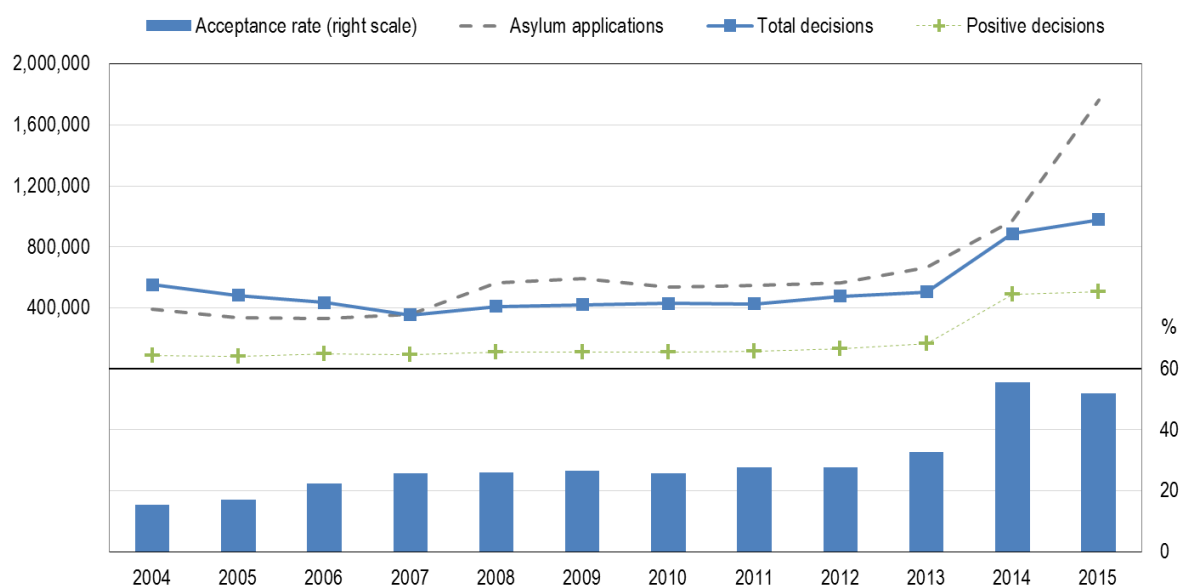
**Figure 6. Refugee population in G20 countries in 2010 and 2016, and asylum applications in 2016, as a share of total population**



*Note:* Refugees include people in refugee-like situations, as defined by the UNCHR. Countries that are Parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention and to the 1967 Protocol are marked with an asterisk (\*). The United States are only Party to the 1967 Protocol. Turkey, while party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, maintains the geographical limitation only to people originating from Europe. As a result, Syrian nationals are not included in asylum applications figures for Turkey. If all Syrians who have been registered as refugees in Turkey in 2016 are counted as asylum applicants for this year, asylum applications in Turkey amount to 0.5% of the 2016 population (instead of 0.1%). Asylum applications do not include applications to refugee resettlement programmes.

*Source:* UNHCR and Eurostat for data on refugees and asylum applications; UN Population Division for data on total population.

**Figure 7. Asylum applications, asylum decisions, and acceptance rate in G20 countries, 2004-2015**



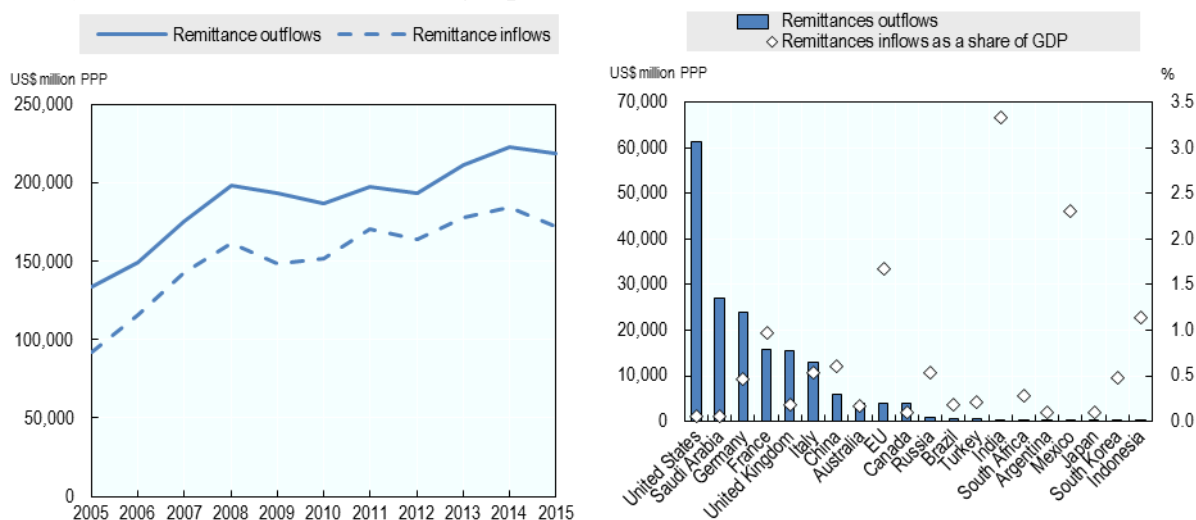
*Note:* Positive decisions include recognition as refugee under the 1951 Convention, as well as other types of protection, such as temporary asylum and subsidiary protection. The acceptance rate is computed as the ratio of positive to total decisions in a given year. *Source:* UNHCR.

## Recent trends in remittances

Remittance flows are a key and steadily growing source of finance for numerous countries around the world. Migrant remittances are beneficial for both recipient countries, augmenting their foreign exchange reserves, and recipient households, increasing their income. They boost output growth, if invested, and generate multiplier effects, if consumed. G20 encompass both some of the main sending and receiving countries of migrant remittances around the world.

**G20 members account for most of the global remittance outflows.** Migrant remittances from G20 accounted for 72% of the global remittance outflow in 2015, an estimated 218 US\$ billion PPP. Such figure has increased by 63% since 2005, when it was around 134 US\$ billion PPP (Figure 8). Moreover, the real magnitude of remittances from the G20 is probably even larger if accounting for unrecorded flows through informal channels. The top G20 source countries of remittances outflows in 2015 were the United States (61 US\$ billion PPP), Saudi Arabia (27 US\$ billion PPP) and Germany (24 US\$ billion PPP). China, while having rather low outflows levels in absolute terms, saw the greatest remittance outflow growth since 2005 – over 8 times its original size. Similarly, Turkey recorded a remittance outflow of 685 US\$ million PPP in 2015 starting from 129 US\$ million PPP in 2005.

**Figure 8. Total remittances outflows and inflows in the G20 between 2005 and 2015 (left panel) and by G20 member state in 2015 (right panel)**



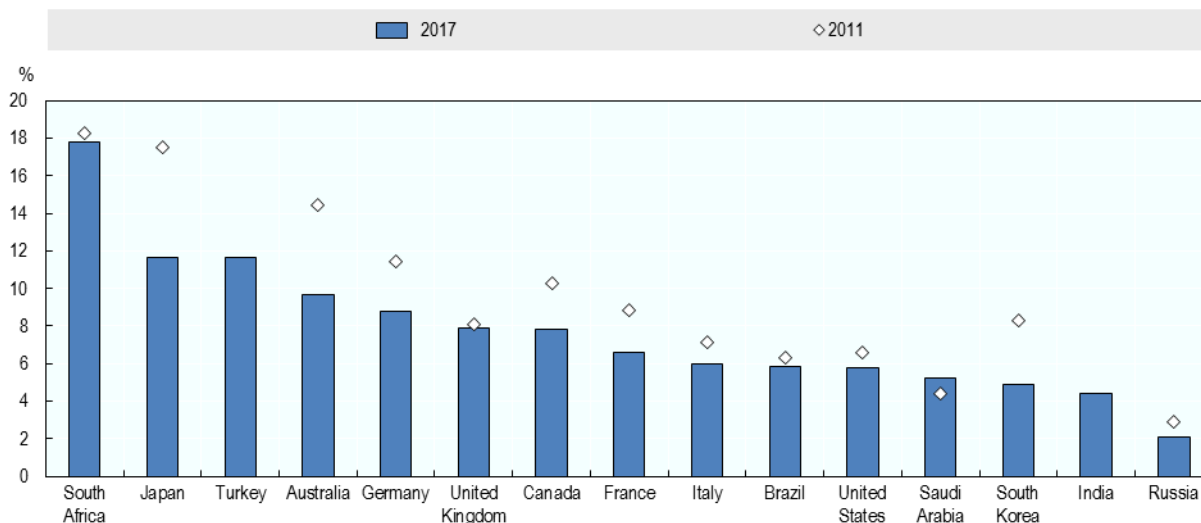
Sources: World Bank Annual Remittances Data and World Development Indicators.

**Remittance inflows are important in some G20 members.** As shown in the left panel of Figure 8, G20 countries are also important receivers of remittances. With an almost doubling size since 2005, remittance inflows across the G20 reached 172 US\$ billion PPP by 2015. India is not only the main remittance recipient country of the G20 and the world in absolute terms, but also as a share of GDP (3.4% right panel of Figure 8). Similarly, over 2.3% and 1.1% of the GDP of respectively Mexico and Indonesia is due to international remittances. Remittances inflows represent also around 1.7% of the overall GDP of EU28. France and Italy, in particular, display remarkable large shares (respectively 1% and 0.5%).

**The cost of remittances is decreasing across G20 countries.** In spite of the forthright welfare benefits of migrant remittances, substantial transaction costs still heavily burden their movements across countries. The average world cost of transferring remittances is around 7.3% of the amount sent, which is just below the average cost of remitting from those G20 countries for which data are available (7.7% in the first quarter of 2017). Albeit improving over the past few years, South Africa still ranks the costliest G20 country to send remittances from (17.8%), followed by Japan (11.7%), Turkey (11.6%), and Australia (9.7%) (Figure 9). It is important to note, however, that the average

cost of remittances in G20 countries has overall dropped by almost a fifth since 2011, suggesting that the collective efforts put forward in the international community to lower remittance transaction costs – such as the “5x5 Objective” campaign and the “National Remittance Plans” developed by the G20 in 2009 and 2015 respectively – are paying off.

**Figure 9. Average cost of remitting by selected G20 countries in 2011 (Q1) and 2017 (Q1)**



Note: Average cost of sending 200 US\$ from selected G20 countries (based on data availability).

Sources: World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide, available at “<http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org>”.

### *Harnessing the benefits of migration for all*

Immigrants play a significant role in the labour market of host countries and contribute to promote inclusive economic growth by providing labour and skills in a variety of occupations and sectors, including construction, personal and home care and domestic services, as well as in high-skilled occupations (OECD 2014a).<sup>5</sup> However, the full potential of migrants’ skills is not always realized and better integration policies are needed for harnessing their full potential (OECD 2014b).<sup>6</sup>

OECD work on the fiscal impact of migration suggests that in most OECD countries, migrants tend to contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits (OECD 2013).<sup>7</sup> The aggregated fiscal impact of the different waves of migration that arrived over the past 50 years in OECD countries is on average close to zero, rarely exceeding 0.5% of GDP in either positive or negative terms. Immigrants are thus neither a burden to the public purse nor are they a panacea for addressing fiscal challenges. Employment is nonetheless the single most important determinant of migrants’ net fiscal contribution, particularly in countries with generous welfare states.

International migration has both direct and indirect effects on economic growth. First, migration has a demographic impact, not only by increasing the size of the population but also by changing the age pyramid of receiving countries as migrants tends to be younger than the general population. Second, migrants arrive with skills and abilities, and so supplement the stock of human capital of the host country. The proportion of highly educated immigrants is indeed rising sharply as discussed in the

<sup>5</sup> OECD (2014a), *Is migration good for the economy?*, Migration Policy debates n°2, OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2014b), “Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills”, *International Migration Outlook 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2014-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en)

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2013), “The Fiscal Impact of Immigration in OECD Countries”, *International Migration Outlook 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2013-6-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2013-6-en).



previous section on “Diaspora and highly skilled emigration to the G20” (see also OECD-UNDESA 2013).<sup>8</sup> Third, evidence suggests that skilled immigrants contribute to boosting research and innovation, as well as technological progress.

Effective integration also increases migrants’ capabilities to contribute to the development of their country of origin through remittances and capacity transfer, which, over time, in turn reduces international wage gaps and migration pressures (OECD-ILO-WB-IMF 2017).<sup>9</sup>

Understanding these impacts is essential to designing policies for managing migration flows as well as for recognising their skills and competences so as to improve migrants’ employment situation. This policy mix will, of course, vary from country to country. But the fundamental question of how to maximise the benefits of migration, both for host and origin countries and the migrants themselves, needs to be addressed.

## Conclusion

Migration is not a zero sum game and if well managed and seen as a long-term investment yields potential benefits for origin, transit and destination countries as well as for the migrants themselves. One should not however underestimate the challenges associated with managing the flows and promoting integration of those who are going to stay in the host country. There are increasing concerns about the distributive effects of international migration both within destination countries and between origin and destination countries, notably when it comes to highly skilled migration and the brain drain.

The G20 has an important role to play in addressing these challenges and make the most out of migration. This requires, however, having access to sound, up-to-date and international comparable data. In this context there is a need to improve the information system on migration, to monitor major trends as well as to identify good practices. The **OECD could help to close this gap by providing a regular update to the G20 on migration issues.** This could take the form of a yearly report to inform on the evolution of migration phenomena and of their economic impact, both within the G20 and globally. It would also contribute to address the SDGs mandate and support UN Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants.

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<sup>8</sup> OECD-UNDESA (2013), *World Migration in Figures*, OECD/United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, [www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> OECD-ILO-WB-IMF (2017) *Towards a Framework for fair and effective integration of migrants into the labour market*, G20 LEMM, 17-18 June 2017