

# Rural Migration News

## Blog 209

MARCH 2021

### International Migration in 2020

The UN defines international migrants as persons who cross national borders and stay outside their country of birth a year or more. The 281 million international migrants in 2020 were 3.6 percent of the world's 7.7 billion people.

Europe had 87 million or 31 percent of the world's international migrants in 2020, Asia had 86 million or 31 percent, Northern America had 59 million or 21 percent, and Africa had 25 million or nine percent.

Europe is the continent of migration, with a tenth of the world's people, a third of the world's migrants and, according to many Europeans, over half of the world's social welfare spending. Northern America has a higher share of migrants relative to its population, since Canada and the US have five percent of the world's people and 21 percent of the world's migrants.

In 2020, two thirds of all international migrants were in 20 countries,

led by 51 million in the US (the UN considers Puerto Ricans who move to the mainland to be international migrants), followed by Germany, 16 million, Saudi Arabia, 13 million, and Russia, 12 million. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of migrants rose in the US and Germany and fell in India and Ukraine.

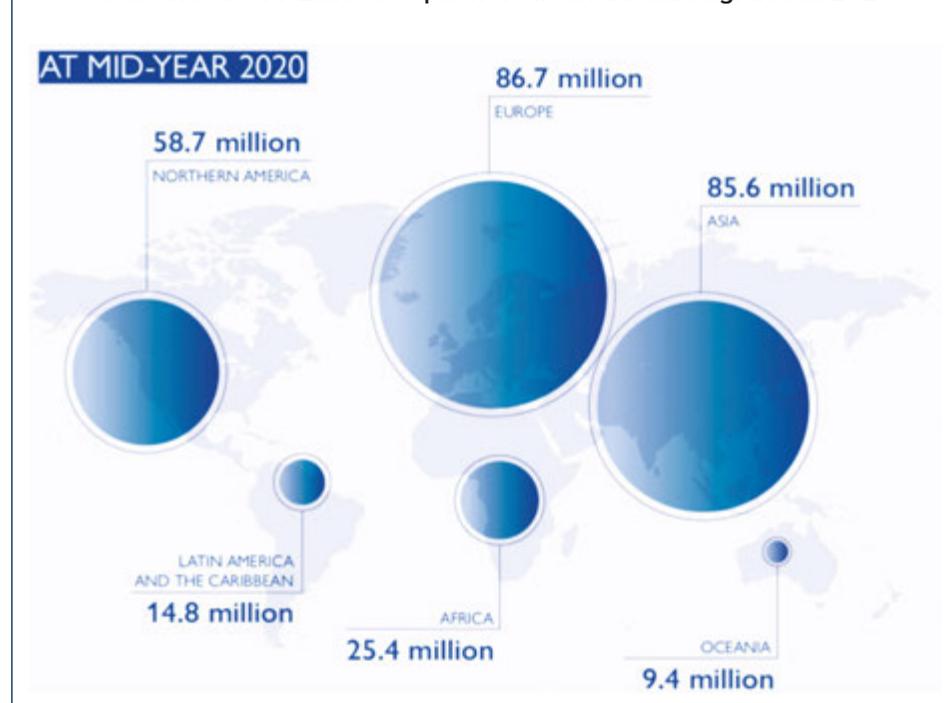
The leading countries of emigration also changed between 2000 and 2020. The number of migrants from India rose most, making the 18 million Indians who were abroad a year or more the largest single group of international migrants and India the leading source of emigrants. Mexico and Russia each had 11 million citizens abroad, followed by China, Syria, and Bangladesh.

Most international migrants cross national borders but stay close to home. In the circular flow chart below, the thickest arrows represent intra-regional migration, as in Europe, where 70 percent of international migrants were born in another European country. One exception is Northern America, where most migrants are from Latin America and Asia.

Most migrants move from poorer to richer countries. There are several ways to classify countries by their level of income. The UN distinguishes between developed and less developed countries, and reported 157 million migrants in developed countries in 2020, 56 percent, and 123 million migrants in the less developed countries. The World Bank defines high-income countries as those with per capita incomes of \$12,500 or more in 2020, and they had 182 million or 65 percent of international migrants.

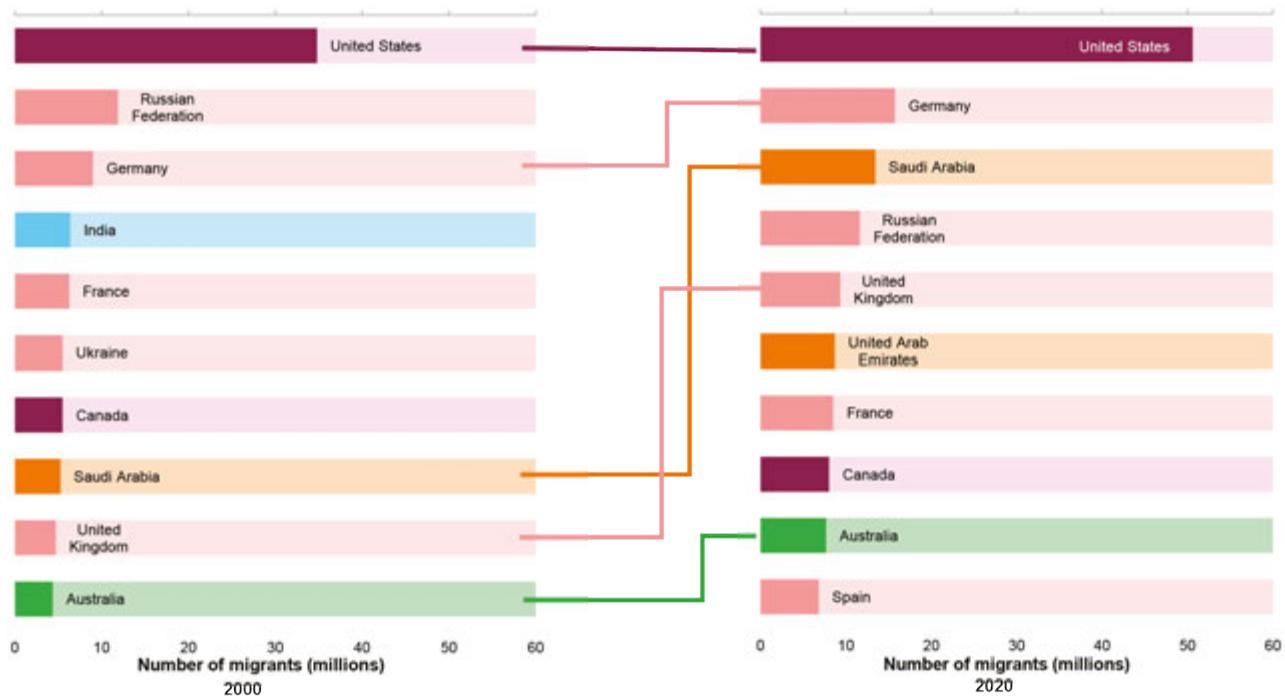
The World Bank's high income countries attracted migrants from lower-income countries and from other high-income countries. Most of the migrants in high-income countries

#### 3.6% of the World's 7.7 Billion People were International Migrants in 2020



Between 2000 and 2020, the Number of Migrants Rose in the U.S. and Germany and Fell in India and Ukraine.

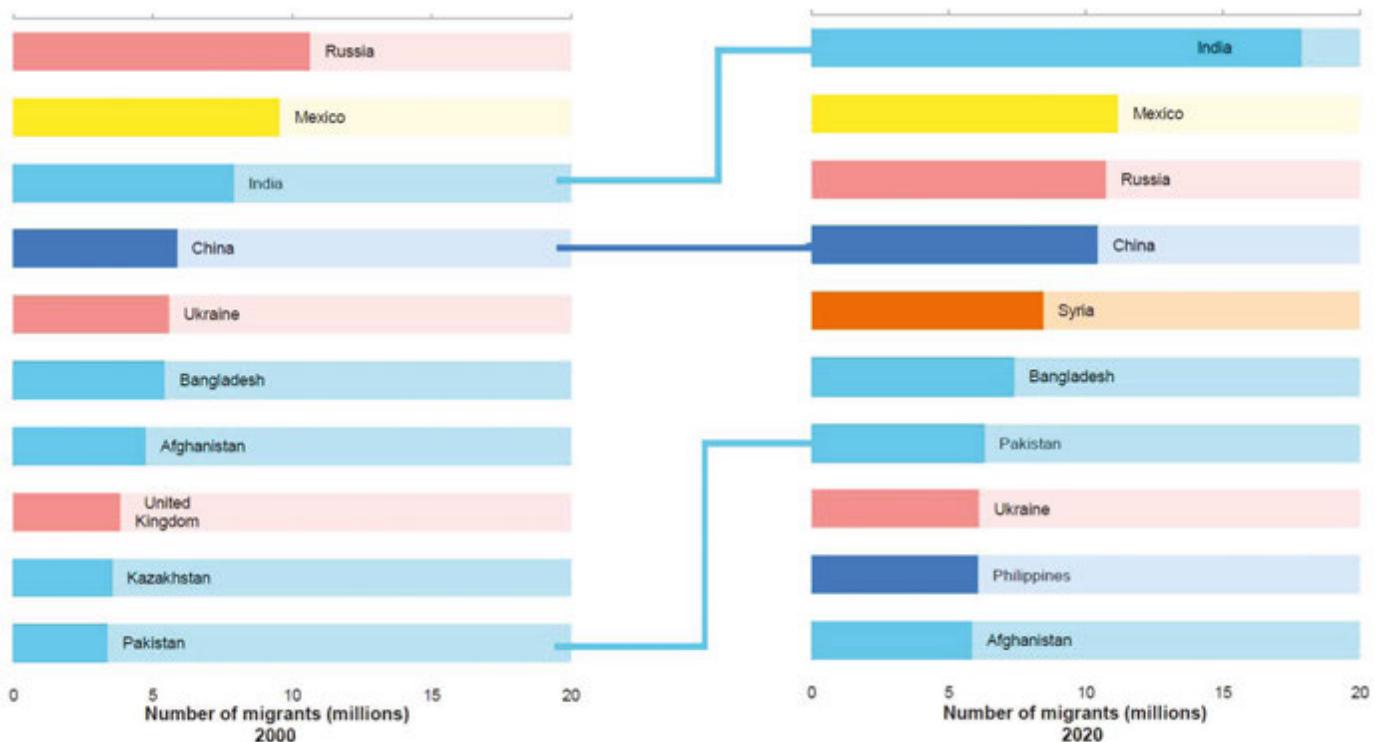
Ten Countries of Destination with the Largest Number of International Migrants, By Region, 2000 and 2020



Source: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/International%20Migration%202020%20Highlights.pdf>

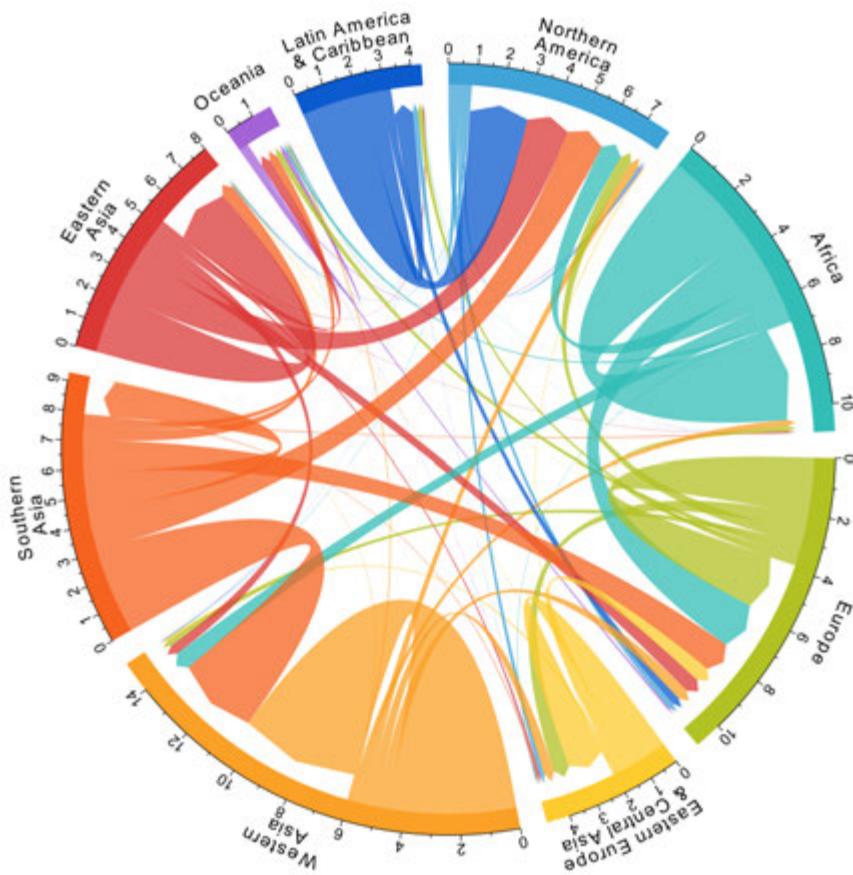
The Number of Indians Abroad Almost Tripled to 18 Million Between 2000 and 2020

Top Ten Countries of Origin for International Migrants, By Region, 2000 and 2020



Source: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/International%20Migration%202020%20Highlights.pdf>

### Most International Migrants Stay Within a Region (2010-15 Flows)



Source: <https://gjabel.wordpress.com/2016/05/18/updated-circular-plots-for-directional-bilateral-migration-data/>

were from upper-middle-income countries, as when Mexicans move to the US. The second-largest group were from other high-income countries, as with Canadians in the US. The third largest group of migrants were from low-middle-income countries, as with Hondurans in the US. The 53 high-income countries include micro states such as Monaco and areas including Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Hong Kong.

### Labor Migration

The ILO estimated 164 million migrant workers in 2017, meaning that two-thirds of all international migrants were in the labor force of their host country. The distribution of migrant workers closely tracks the distribution of migrants, with a third in Europe, almost a third in Asia, and a quarter in Northern America. The 96 million male migrant workers are 58 percent of all migrant workers, and 87 percent of migrant workers are 25 to 64.

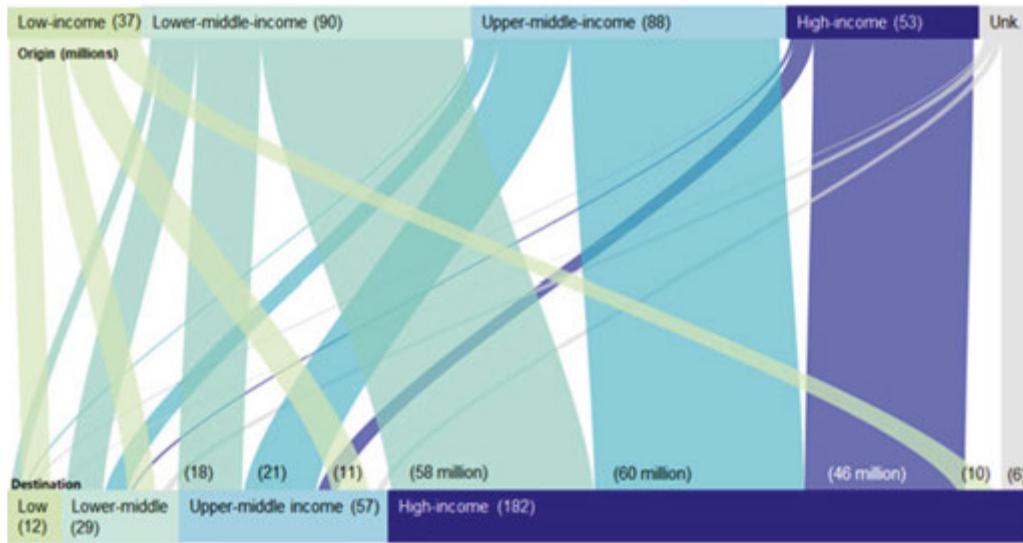
The 111 million migrant workers in high-income countries in 2017 were 18 percent of the 600 million strong workforce in those countries. Almost half of all migrant workers in 2017 were in Northern America and Europe. There was rapid growth in the number of migrant workers in upper middle income developing countries between 2013 and 2017.

### The World Bank Groups Countries by Their Level of Gross National Income per Capita

Group	July 1, 2020 (new)	July 1, 2-19 (old)
Low income	< 1,036	< 1,026
Lower-middle income	1,036 - 4,045	1,026 - 3,995
Upper-middle income	4,046 - 12,535	3,996 - 12,375
High income	> 12,535	> 12,375

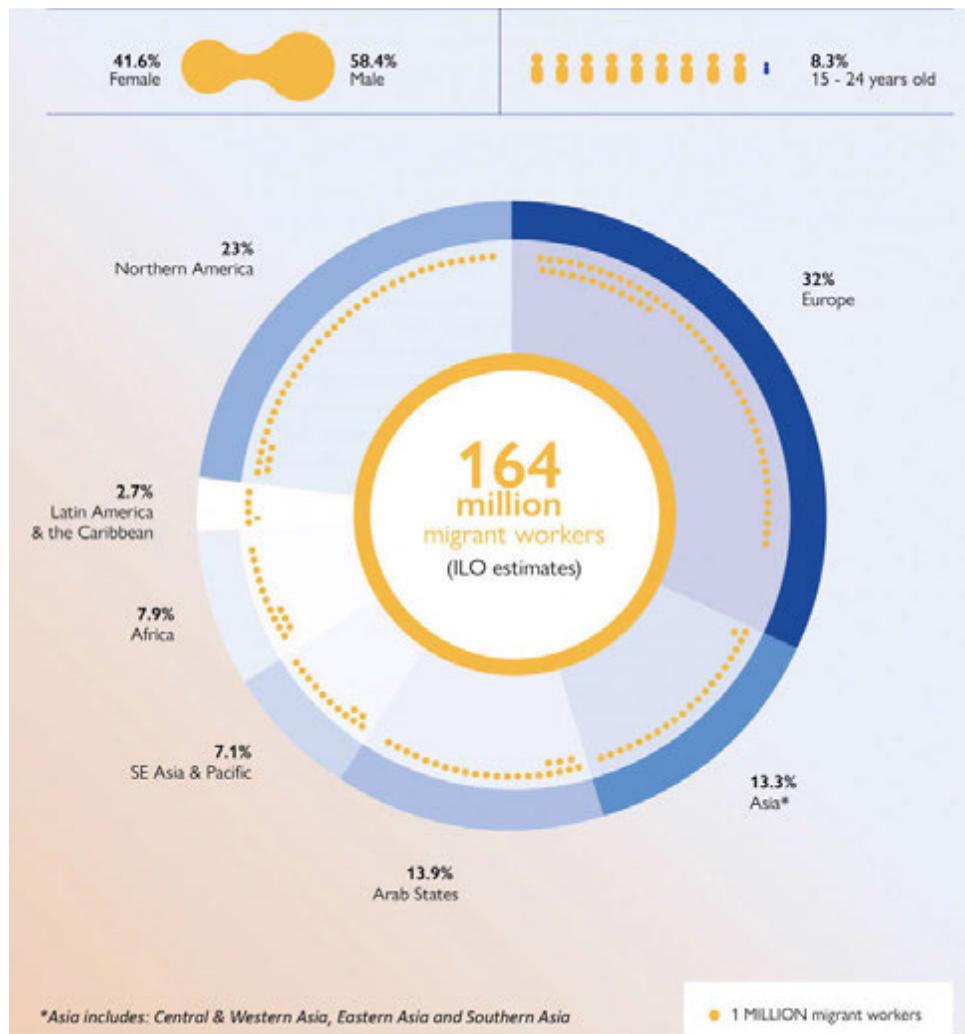
**Most Migrants in High-income Countries are From Upper-middle Income Countries, as with Mexicans in the U.S.**

Number of International Migrants, by World Bank Income Groups at Origin and Destination, 2020



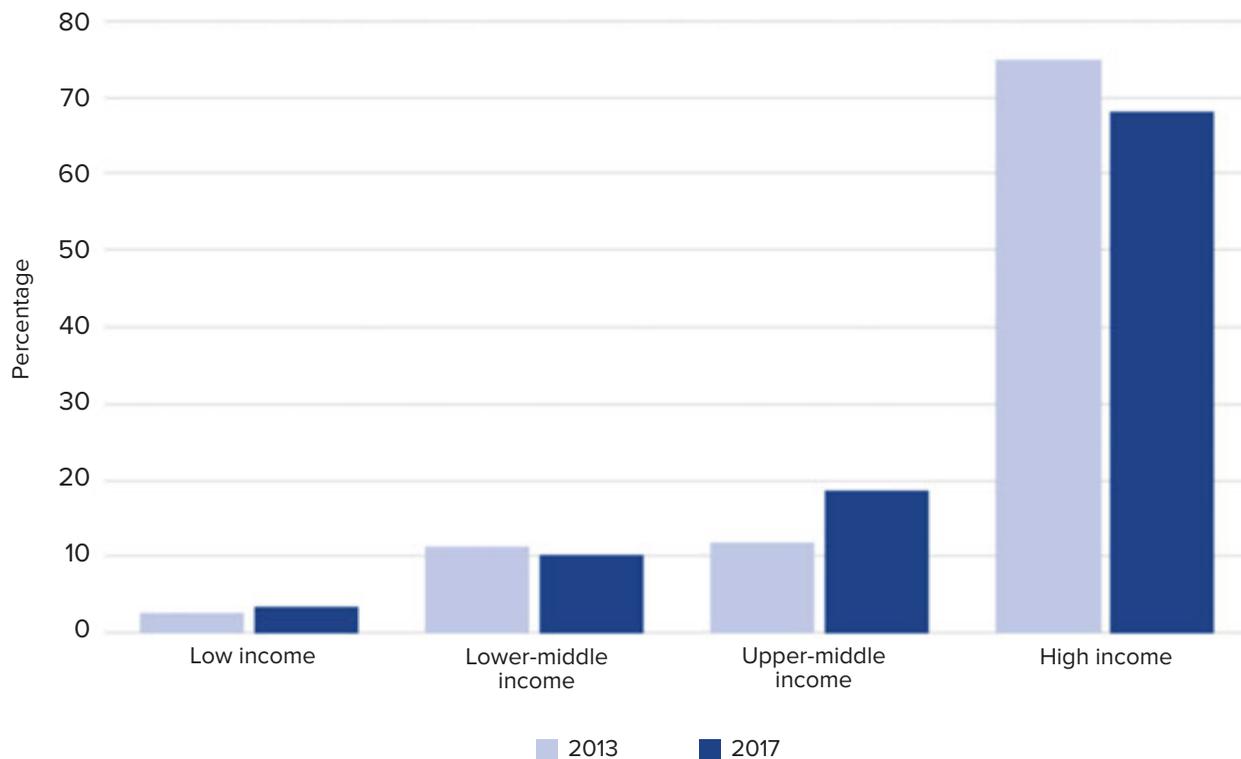
Source: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>

**The 164 Million Migrant Workers in 2017 were 58 Percent Men**



Source: <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/labour-migration>

**Two-thirds of Migrant Workers were in High-income Countries in 2017. Migrants were a Sixth of Workers in High-income Countries.**



### References

ILO. 2018. ILO global estimates on migrant workers: Results and methodology.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_652001.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_652001.pdf)

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## Appendix

The UN emphasizes country of birth when defining international migrants, while the ILO emphasizes citizenship when defining migrant workers. This means that naturalized citizens working in the country in which they acquired citizenship are international migrants, because they were born in another country, but not a migrant workers because they are citizens of the countries where they work. Border commuters who live in their country of citizenship but work in another country are foreign workers by the ILO definition but not international migrants by the UN definition.

### The UN Defines International Migrants by Place of Birth; the ILO Defines Foreign Workers by Their Citizenship

Type of migrant	Is a foreign migrant worker?	Is an international migrant?
Citizen of the country of residence who is working and was born in another country	<b>No</b> , as did not move in search of work	<b>Yes</b> , as the country of birth is different from the country of residence (see definition in international migrant stocks)
Person born in, and working in the country in question, but who does not have citizenship	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Citizen returning to work in the country in question after working abroad	<b>No</b> , as holding the citizenship of the country of origin	<b>Yes</b> , due to change in country of residence
Border workers (who reside in one country but work in another)*	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Consular official*	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Military personnel*	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

Source: <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/labour-migration>