Migration and Demography

Section 2.2

Topics:

*Demographic Trends and Realities*
*Progressively Ageing Populations*
*Four Case Studies*
*Demography and Migration Policy Challenges*

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**Essentials of Migration Management**

Volume Two: Developing Migration Policy
Migration and Demography

Section 2.2

This Section reviews the relationship between migration and demography. Demographic factors have important implications for the development of migration policy. Topic One discusses the current realities and trends that will influence migration policy. Topic Two discusses the implications of age and ageing for migration policy. Topic Three provides four case studies that explore the impact of demographic trends on four different countries. Topic Four concludes the Section with a review of policy challenges based on demographic realities.

Learning Objectives

- identify the major demographic factors that have a bearing on migration policy
- understand the connections between demography and migration policy
- develop your ability to identify the demographic factors that will affect migration policy in your setting

Background

The world is experiencing ever-increasing movements of people. With globalization—especially in relation to trade liberalization, global economic integration, and electronic communication—has come a heightened awareness of opportunities to live and work in other parts of the world. Coupled with developments in international transport, this has led to greater population mobility.
Today, the number of people living outside their countries of origin is over 175 million, more than double the number from 35 years ago. This significant movement of people occurs not only from developing countries to developed countries but also from one developed country to another, as well as between developing countries. Indeed most international migration takes place between the developing countries that hold more than 80 per cent of the world’s population.

The relationship between migration and demography is complex. Vastly differing population growth rates, together with extended life expectancy in most regions, is resulting in significant demographic differences between regions and corresponding variations in labour supply.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, the rate of global population growth began to decline, due primarily to continuing declines in population replacement.

Policy makers in developed countries are already paying a great deal of attention to declining fertility rates, although no measures or programmes have successfully increased fertility rates over an extended period.

Another important demographic fact that will affect many relatively affluent societies in the next few decades is population ageing. Again, owing to continuing reproduction falling below the replacement level and ongoing trends towards longevity, a number of countries will see their population age faster in the next fifty years than during the past half century.

Guiding Questions

1. Which of the case studies in this Section most closely approximates the situation in your setting?

2. To what extent is migration policy factored into demographic analysis and projections in your setting?

3. To what extent are the demographic trends and projections in your setting taken into consideration in the formulation of migration policy?

4. What are the implications of developing a closer connection between demographic trends and migration policy in your setting?
Key Message

Migration will not solve all of the challenges created by current and projected demographic trends, and policy makers are therefore considering migration as one part of a policy response package. Countries are looking at ways to manage migration in order to meet their demographic, economic development, and labour market needs.

Terms and Concepts

Brain drain
A term used to describe the movement of educated and skilled persons from one country to another, usually to the detriment of the former

Demography
The study of the characteristics of human populations including growth, density, distribution, and vital statistics

Development
A dynamic process implying growth, advancement, empowerment, and progress in all dimensions of human life and activity

Fertility/Fertility rate
In the context of this Section, the terms “fertility” and “fertility rate” are interchangeable and can be defined as the ratio of live births per 1000 people in an area per year. Example: a fertility of three per cent means that thirty people are born each year for every 1000 people.
Topic One

Demographic Trends and Realities

Migration is generally viewed as a response to differences between countries of origin and destination—differences in resources and employment opportunities, in security and human rights, and in demographic growth. While in real terms the world population is still growing, in many developed countries this is no longer the case, and globally the overall growth rate is in decline.

Today, population decline in developed countries is having important consequences. Due to low fertility, increased longevity, and limited immigration, the populations of most European countries, and many other developed countries, are becoming smaller and older, and, as a result, many are experiencing labour force shortages.

Section 2.3, Migration and Development, discusses perspectives on migration in developed and developing countries.

Important Points

1. Nations where the economies are still developing continue to experience population growth. According to UN projections, between 2004 and 2015, 52 countries in the world will still have a population growth rate of more than two per cent. Among them, 31 countries are in the least developed regions.

2. The rate of population growth in 2000 was roughly 16 times higher in less developed regions and 25 times higher in the least developed regions than that in more developed regions. This growth is still maintained despite the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS and the fact that a larger number of migrants leave their countries than arrive.

3. Two-thirds of least developed countries have policies to lower their population growth rates, as do over half of the countries in the less developed regions. Even with such policies and large outflows of their citizens, developing countries have a surplus population that exceeds the capacities of their labour markets. Indeed, encouraging and facilitating labour migration is seen as one policy response to a surplus labour force by several developing countries.
A number of governments actively promote overseas employment as a strategy to increase economic growth and bring about full employment.

**Example**

Some countries have deliberately trained more health care providers than can be absorbed into the domestic health care system. These countries are taking advantage of the global labour market by capitalizing on their high quality training programs and the shortages of health care providers in other countries.

The Philippines has about 418 nurses per 100,000 population (compared to about 497 in the United Kingdom) and has for many years been a major source of migrant nurses for several countries experiencing shortages. Over 10,000 trained nurses left the Philippines in 2002 to work abroad, most going to Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. Remittance levels back to the Philippines reached nine per cent of GDP in 2001.

**What You Need To Know About...**

*International Migration and Population Change*

During the second half of the twentieth century, a “population explosion” was a major global threat, primarily due to sustained high fertility rates and rapidly declining mortality rates in the developing world. Indeed, the world population doubled from 3 to 6 billion within only 33 years since 1960. This raised serious concerns about the sustainability of economies, resource depletion, and environmental degradation.

While the real world population is still growing, fertility has now fallen markedly in all regions of the world, except for some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, in many countries, fertility has already hit a record low level. During 1995-2000, 64 countries reported a fertility rate of well below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. The majority are located in the developed regions where virtually all countries experience fertility rates at below replacement level.

This trend is expected to remain in developed countries, with average fertility rates of 1.56 children per woman in 2005-2010 through 1.85 children per woman in 2045-2050. Policy makers in developed countries are already paying a great deal of attention to declining fertility rates, although so far no measures or programmes have successfully increased fertility rates for an extended period.
**Figure 1**

*World Population Growth Rate*


**Table 1**

*Countries and Areas Whose Population is Expected to Decline Between 2000 and 2050*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Western Europe</th>
<th>Countries with economies in transition</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>Oceania</th>
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<td>Japan (Hong Kong SAR)</td>
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<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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United Nations Population Division
What You Need To Know About...

*Population Decrease and Migration*

Table 1 lists countries that would experience decreases in the size of their population sometime during the first half of the twenty-first century.

From a demographic point of view, this is the first time in human history that so many countries will be experiencing depopulation at the same time. According to United Nations estimates, if the present demographic trends continue, 32 countries are projected to have smaller populations in 2050 than in 2000. Of those, 15 are located in Western Europe and 14 are countries with economies in transition. In Asia, Japan is the only country that would experience depopulation. In Japan, the population is expected to start declining in just a few years, after it reaches a peak at 128 million. The population of Italy, currently 57 million, is projected to shrink by as much as 30 per cent by mid-century. Total EU population (including the ten accession countries) is projected to decrease to 431 million by 2050 from 452 million in 2000.

The countries with economies in transition are losing their populations, not only due to low fertility but also because of emigration to Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, to North America.

It is important to note that none of the traditional countries of immigration, Australia, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, are expected to experience a population decline over the next fifty years. The continuing regular inflow of migrants has traditionally been well above the number of migrants needed to prevent a decline in the total population in these countries. Even though the fertility level in these countries is predicted to remain below the replacement level for the next few decades, assumed future immigration intakes will be able to offset declining population growth.

**Example**

In the United States, assuming a continuing annual net intake of 760,000 migrants per year as was experienced during 1995-2000, the total population of the country is projected to increase continuously from 278 million to 349 million between 2000 and 2050. But, without any migration, the total population would increase only to 290 million in 2050.

Many developed countries rely on international migration to balance their shrinking and ageing populations, despite the fact that in 2000, only 40 per cent of international migrants moved to developed countries.
What You Need To Know About...

*Population and Net Migration*

Even at its current levels, international migration is expected to contribute to the population growth of developed countries three times more than natural growth during 2000-2010. This implies that without international migration, these populations would shrink even more.

### Table 2

Population and Net Migration in Three Regions in 2000

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>More developed</th>
<th>Less developed</th>
<th>Least developed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population number (thousands)</td>
<td>1,191,429</td>
<td>4,865,286</td>
<td>667,613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate of natural increase per 1,000 people</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net migration number (thousands)</td>
<td>2,321</td>
<td>-2,321</td>
<td>-306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International Migration Report 2002, United Nations Economic and Social Affairs

Section 2.3, *Migration and Development*, discusses the “continuum of development” and perspectives on migration along this continuum.

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**Apply What You Have Learned**

1. What is the population growth forecast for your country?

2. How is net migration going to affect population in your region over the next ten years?

3. Which demographic trends are most important for migration policy to take into account in your country?
4 How is labour supply and demand going to be affected in your country and region by the demographic trends and realities described in this Topic?

5 To what extent is migration policy factored into demographic analysis and projections in your setting?
Topic Two

Progressively Ageing Populations

Many relatively affluent societies will be affected in the next few decades by population ageing. Continuing trends of reproduction below the replacement level and ongoing trends towards longevity will cause a number of countries to have their population age faster in the next fifty years than during the past half century.

Figure 2 depicts the growth of elderly population (65 years or older) for selected developed countries. The graph shows that in these countries, the proportion of aged in the population will grow significantly.
In Russia, the aged population will grow from 12.5 per cent of the total to 27.0 per cent between 2000 and 2050. Similarly, in Canada, the proportion of aged is projected to nearly double from 12.6 per cent to 25.7 per cent during the next 50 years. The trends are similar for most other developed countries. In the 25 EU countries, on average, more than 28 per cent of the total population is expected to be 65 years or older by 2050, as compared to 20 per cent in 2000.

Figure 3 shows the declines in workforces for the same countries listed in Figure 2. It is clear that labour force shrinkage will be critical in Europe and Japan. For example, if the present demographic trend continues, Germany’s population aged 15-64 years would decrease from 68.1 per cent to 56.9 per cent between 2000 and 2050. In the example of Germany, this percentage change is based on a projected decrease of the population aged 15-64 from 56 million to 45 million between 2000 and 2050.
Important Points

1. The future change in the size of working-age population in the course of population ageing will affect the economic sustainability of a country because the potential support ratio—the number of persons of working age (15 – 64) per older person—will often be halved, from 4 or 5 to 2.

2. Traditional countries of immigration are predicted to slow the decline of the working-age population with immigration programmes, which select relatively young migrants for permanent settlement. Only one-sixth of the population of more developed regions were under 15 years old in 2000, while in less developed regions a third of the population were under 15 years old. These figures are important pointers to the future directions of these populations, particularly in terms of the future population projected to be available to support the older age group.

3. These demographic changes will have implications for all sectors of society by impacting retirement pensions, social security schemes, and other policies that affect workers’ decisions to retire such as whether or not to extend the age of retirement.

4. These demographic trends will have implications on health-care systems and benefits, on education programmes, as well as on the economic vitality of a country. Many established economic, political, and social policies, programmes, and structures will need to be reassessed. Furthermore, with the age structure becoming older, the pace of modernization may slow.
What Do You Think?

What are the policy choices in such a situation? There is no single solution to the complex issue of population ageing. Measures to respond need to be comprehensive, and may include raising the age of retirement, reassessment of pension and health-care benefits, encouragement of labour force participation of women, facilitation of technological innovation, and, potentially, “immigration.”

Figure 5

Typical Age-Sex Distribution of Immigrants

United Nations Population Division

What You Need To Know About...

Immigration Policy and Ageing Populations

Immigration is not, by itself, a solution to population ageing, but it may be considered as one part of a larger package of solutions. As demonstrated in a recent UN study, the “rejuvenation” effect of migration on the host population is fairly modest. It is almost impossible to counter population ageing by migration alone because it requires not only unrealistically large number of migrants, but also strict administrative controls of both inflow and outflow of migrants of certain age and sex.

Ageing populations may turn to foreign labour to offset the shortage of workers in certain occupations. Demand is likely to increase for caregivers for the elderly, as well as for domestic workers who can support working mothers, and workers for other jobs that locals have shunned.
Demand for highly skilled workers in order to maintain the economic competitiveness of a country is on the rise in many developed countries. This increase is often in response to demand from specific sectors, including IT, health care, and research.

Cooperative arrangements can be created to help migration meet the demographic needs of surplus populations in most developing countries and, at the same time, the needs of ageing, declining populations in developed countries.

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Apply What You Have Learned

1. What cooperative arrangements would help migration address the demographic needs of your country?

2. How will the working-age population change in your country over the next ten to fifty years?

3. How will the labour market in your country be affected by the demographic changes that are predicted in this topic?

4. What can help developing and developed countries work together in response to the demographic changes associated with ageing populations in developed countries?
Topic Three

Four Case Studies

The United States -
A Traditional Country of Immigration

Most developed countries will experience population decline in the future whether or not they receive migrants. However, traditional countries of immigration that maintain a continuous high inflow of migrants will have demographic features that differ from countries in developed regions that do not receive high migrant inflows. As a result of migration, none of the traditional immigration countries, for example, Australia, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, will see their populations decrease over the next 50 years. The important points that follow describe what the future population structure will be like in the United States.

Important Points

1. The United States will have approximately 409 million people by 2050, up from about 285 million in 2000. In the mid-twentieth century, the fertility level of the United States was at 3.45 children per woman. This decreased to 2.11 children per woman at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This decline in fertility will continue. By 2050, the level of fertility in the United States is projected to be at 1.85 children per woman, which is well below the replacement level.

2. With no immigration and with the decreasing rate of fertility, its population growth would decrease to slightly above 300 million. Migration therefore contributes to 80 per cent of the population growth of the United States. Like other developed countries, the United States is experiencing population ageing. By 2050, people at the age of 65 or older will make up 20.0 per cent of its total population, an 11.7 per cent increase from 1950.

3. By 2050, due primarily to immigration, the percentage of people of working age 15 to 64 years old will only slightly decrease to about 62 per cent from 65 per cent. As a consequence, the potential support ratio (that is, the ratio of the 15-64 working age group to persons above 65) in 2050 will be 3.1, down from 7.8 in 1950.
**Japan - A Traditional Non-Immigration Country**

The recent trends of low levels of fertility and mortality are also emerging in Japan, where a significant population decline is expected. Japan’s population is approximately 127 million people, including 26 million in the 65 or older age group. The total population will start to decline in a few years after it reaches a peak of 128 million people. If Japan maintains the current level of fertility at 1.3 children per woman, with no immigration, the population will decline to 100 million by 2050.

**Important Points**

1. Along with the steep decline in fertility level is the increase in population ageing by one million a year. In 1950, Japan had a support ratio of 12:1, i.e., 12 people of working age for every person above 65. Today, the support ratio is down to 4:1.

2. By 2050, Japan is projected to have only 1.4 people at the working age per person above 65. Italy, Spain, and a number of other countries will be in a similar situation.

3. Japan, with its relatively restrictive immigration policy, still has small but positive net migration between 1995 and 2050 (0.4-0.5). Yet, it continues to experience labour shortages.

**India – A Developing Country**

In developing countries, high fertility plus a decline in infant mortality produces a very young age structure. This subsequently generates a large population growth in the working age bracket. Unless job opportunities grow at the same rate as the fertility level, the labour market will not have space for young adults.

International migration has had some impact (albeit limited) in lowering the overall population growth rate of less developed countries. India, despite being the source of a considerable number of labour migrants, still experiences a significant population increase.
Important Points

1. The fertility rate in India was very high in the middle of the twentieth century—almost 6 children per woman. The rate is still relatively high, although it is decreasing. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, India has a fertility rate of 3 children per woman.

2. In view of this decline in fertility, the population growth rate has also been decreasing since the late 1980s. Yet, in real terms India’s population is still on the rise. For the second half of the twentieth century, India had a population increase of 660 million. The population in 2000 is almost three times larger than that in 1950 and the country is predicted to have an increase of 515 million people during the next 50 years. In seven days India’s national population increased by 294,000, whereas the increase of the 15 member countries (prior to May, 2004) of the EU was 300,000 for the whole of 2003.

3. India, despite the large outflow of its citizens, has a surplus workforce that exceeds the needs of the national labour market.

South Africa – An Economically Emerging Country with a “Brain Drain”

South Africa, with a population of 44 million in 2000, is the principal country of destination for migrants in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite immigration, South Africa nonetheless experiences significant brain drain.

Important Points

1. Although at least three million foreigners migrated to South Africa between 1994 and 2000, the country is facing an increasing shortage of skilled workers due to the combination of a high rate of adult infections with HIV and a high emigration rate of South African skilled workers, managers, and other professionals.

2. With the decline in fertility rate from 2.61 in 2000 to 1.85 in 2050, it is projected that South Africa will not experience population growth from 2005 onwards, despite positive net migration.
Apply What You Have Learned

1. Which of the case studies in this Topic most closely approximates the situation in your setting?

2. What demographic factors do all of the case studies share?

3. Do any of the case studies point the way to effective migration policy for your setting?

4. Do any of the case studies reveal a need for changes to migration policy?
In the past century, it was often an economic or a political force that shaped the volume and direction of international population movements. Because many developed countries will experience the progression of population ageing and population declines in the foreseeable future, the demographic dynamics of a country will become another underlying factor that must be considered when formulating migration policy.

The way population changes and international migration interact is complex, and often not visible in the short run. Yet, policy makers should be fully aware of the mid- and long-term impacts of immigration on the host population. Indeed, more countries are looking at ways to manage migration in order to meet their demographic, economic development, and labour market needs. Governments that used to restrict the entry of immigrants are developing programmes to attract migrant workers. Developing countries are becoming aware of the benefits migrants can bring, with contributions through remittances, investment, and expenditures, as well as through skills, entrepreneurial activities, and support for democratization and human rights.

Remittances and connections with migration and development are discussed in Section 2.3, Migration and Development.

Important Points

1. Brain drain is still a significant concern for countries experiencing large-scale emigration of skilled workers. Loss of skilled citizens can be a particular challenge for emerging economies.

2. How do governments experiencing wide-scale emigration continue to meet the needs of their labour market and their growing economies? This is particularly challenging because of the migration “hump” theory, which contends that migration continues to rise with an increase in economic development; it is only after reaching a certain level of economic development that the desire or need to migrate diminishes. Italy has been cited as a concrete example. Migration from Italy was consider-
able until the late 1960s when its economy blossomed, and fewer Italians left to find jobs.

3 It is likely that the ageing of populations in developed countries will generate new demands for migrants in order to lessen the social burden arising from the unevenness of population structure, or from maintaining the economic vitality of the country.

4 Public reaction to further immigration has often been negative. This is particularly so among countries in Europe and Japan, where the society has little or no history of systematically admitting foreign settlers. These societies are among the first to be confronted by unprecedented declines of total population, as well as of their working-age population.

5 Despite the potential demographic implications, governments may encounter difficulties promoting liberal migration policy because of unwarranted concern that the result would be mass immigration and changes in the nature of society from an inflow of many cultures.

6 Governments will need to take a comprehensive approach to assess policy implications, and include an evaluation of policies in all sectors potentially affected by increased migration. This will include not only economic and labour market policies, but also social policies and in particular those related to integration and social cohesion.

What Do You Think?

It is not an easy task for policy makers to formulate an immigration policy in the demographic climate described in this Section. However, efforts to build understanding and a recognition of the positive economic and social benefits that migration can bring into host societies would assist policy makers in their task.

Apply What You Have Learned

1 What are the implications of developing a closer connection between demographic trends and migration policy in your setting?
2 How significant is the problem of “brain drain” in your setting?

3 What can help overcome the barriers to migration in countries that will experience a labour shortage but have no history of systematic admission of migrants?

4 Based on demographic trends and realities, what are the most important migration policy challenges in your setting?
Concluding Remarks

This Section of the Manual discussed the relationship between demographic trends and realities, and the formulation of migration policies. It has identified, through the case studies, four scenarios where demographic factors are significant influences, and where migration policy will, to varying degrees, be able to address the implications of demographic trends.

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