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Changing Patterns of Global Migration and Remittances

*More Migrants in U.S. and Other
Wealthy Countries; More Money to
Middle-Income Countries*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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About this Report

This report examines trends in international migrant population from 1990 to 2013 and in international remittance flows from 2000 to 2013. The migration estimates in this report refer to the total number (or cumulative “stocks”) of migrants living around the world rather than to the annual rate of migration (or current “flows”). Migration and remittance patterns are analyzed for groups of low-, middle- and high-income nations, using World Bank categories; migration patterns also are analyzed for regions and individual nations. Analysis is based on migration stock data from the [United Nations](#) and migrant remittance data from the [World Bank](#).

Research associate Phillip Connor wrote the overview and migration sections of this report; senior writer D’Vera Cohn wrote the section on remittances, based on the analysis of research associate Ana Gonzalez-Barrera. Editorial guidance was provided by Paul Taylor, executive vice president of the Pew Research Center; Michael Dimock, director of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press; Jeffrey S. Passel, senior demographer; and James Bell, director of international survey research. Anne Shi, research associate, number-checked the report. Eileen Patten, research analyst, formatted the report. Marcia Kramer of Kramer Editing Services copy-edited the report.

A Note on Terminology

“International migrants,” as defined by the United Nations, are those living for one year or longer in a country other than the one in which they were born. Thus, many foreign workers and international students are counted as migrants, as are refugees and, in some cases, their descendants. Total migrant stock includes unauthorized or illegal immigrants living in various countries.

The economic classification of countries used in this report follows the World Bank’s categories of low-, middle- and high-income countries based on per capita, global national income (GNI) in U.S. dollars. GNI cut points separating low-, middle-, and high-income countries are based on World Bank lending rules. The country classifications in this report use 2013 country groups; however, further comparisons using the World Bank’s country groups in 1990 produce similar patterns. For a listing of countries by their economic classification, see Appendix B.

“Remittances” are funds or other assets sent to their home countries by migrants, either themselves or in the form of compensation (wages) for border, short-term and seasonal employees. The World Bank reports only remittances sent via formal channels, such as banks and other businesses that transfer money.

This report uses international migrant data published by the U.N., which classifies migrants born in territories such as Puerto Rico (a U.S. territory) or Guadeloupe (a French territory) living in the U.S. (born in Puerto Rico) or France (born in Guadeloupe) as international migrants. Similarly, U.N. international migrant data consider people born in one of the 50 U.S. states and living in a U.S. territory as international migrants. U.S. territories (including Puerto Rico) are part of the United States, and those born in U.S. territories are U.S. citizens by birth. Migrants from U.S. territories living in the U.S. are not classified as international migrants in foreign-born population estimates published by the U.S. Census Bureau or the Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project.

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Chapter 1: Overview

Patterns of global migration and remittances have shifted in recent decades, even as both the number of immigrants and the amount of money they send home have grown, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of data from the United Nations and the World Bank.

A rising share of international migrants now lives in today's high-income countries such as the United States and Germany, while a growing share was born in today's middle-income nations such as India and Mexico, the analysis finds.

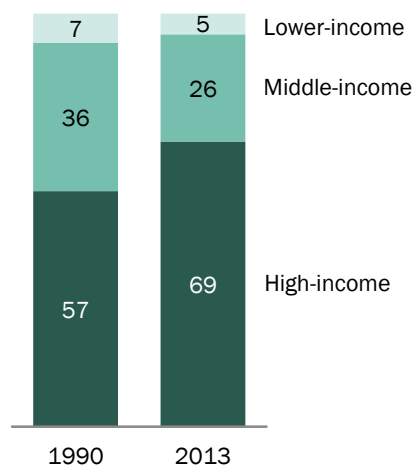
These shifts occurred as the total number of international migrants rose from 154 million in 1990 to 232 million in 2013 – but remained steady as a 3% share of the globe's growing population.

During this period, the U.S. remained the largest destination country by far and increased its share of the world's migrants. One-in-five (46 million) migrants now live in the U.S., compared with slightly less than one-in-six (23 million) in 1990.

The U.S. is not the only wealthy destination country whose share of the world's migrants has increased. All told, an estimated 160 million, or 69%, of international migrants now live in high-income countries (nations with an average per capita income of \$12,616 or higher), up from 87 million, or 57%, in 1990, the Pew Research analysis finds. These high-income countries, many of them in North America and Europe, may appear increasingly attractive to modern migrants, whose principal reason for moving is to pursue economic opportunity.

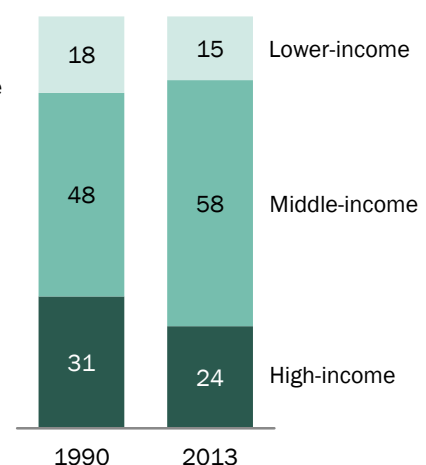
International Migrants Increasingly Are Living in High-income Nations ...

% of international migrants by current country of residence



... and Increasingly Were Born in Middle-income Nations

% of international migrants by birth country



Note: Income categories based on 2013 World Bank country classification. Unclassified countries not included.

Source: United Nations

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Where do today's migrants come from? Increasingly, they were born in what the World Bank designates as middle-income countries, those with per capita annual income between \$1,036 and \$12,615. About six-in-ten (135 million) of today's international migrants were born in such countries, compared with fewer than half (74 million) of all migrants in 1990. Over the same period, the share of immigrants born in high- as well as low-income nations has declined.¹

Remittances

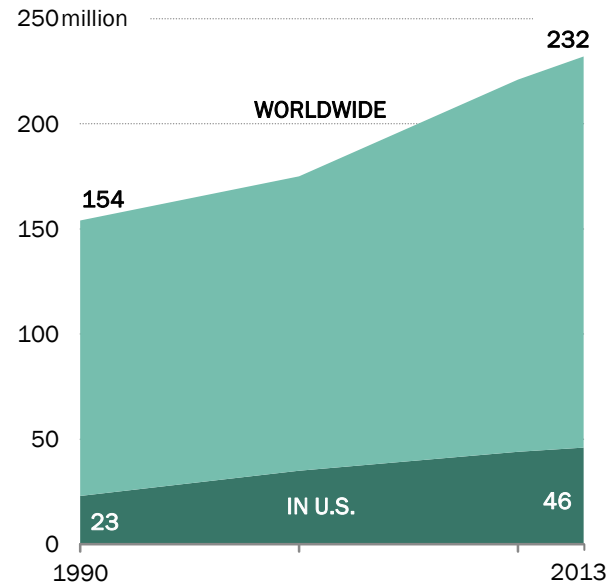
Once they move across borders, many migrants send money, known as remittances, back to families in their countries of origin. Despite a marked dip during the 2009 global recession, the overall annual flow of such remittances has nearly tripled since 2000 and now tops \$500 billion.²

And according to the Pew Research analysis of World Bank data, the rise in the stock of emigrants *from* middle-income countries has been accompanied by a concomitant increase in the flows of remittances *back to* middle-income countries.

The share of all remittances received by today's middle-income countries has risen to an estimated 71% in 2013 from 57% in 2000. The share to low-income nations has doubled, while remaining a small proportion of the total—6% in 2013 compared with 3% in 2000. The share to high-income nations has declined, to 23% in 2013 from 40% in 2000.

Number of International Migrants Grows in the U.S. and Around the World

Number of people living in a country in which they were not born



Source: United Nations

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¹ Readers should note that the number of middle-income nations and the populations living in them have increased since 1990—for example, the populous nations of China and India have joined the list of middle-income nations—so some growth in emigration from those nations and remittances to them would be expected. But the findings in this report are valid even when adjusting for that growth. The emigrant population born in middle-income nations grew 73% between 1990 and 2010, more than the 31% population growth in those countries.

² Because of a change in the World Bank's definition of remittances, there is discontinuity in data for 2004 and 2005. The change resulted in a somewhat lower level of overall remittances in 2005 than would otherwise have been the case. See the methodology for more details. Nonetheless, overall patterns are similar regardless of whether the new definition is used.

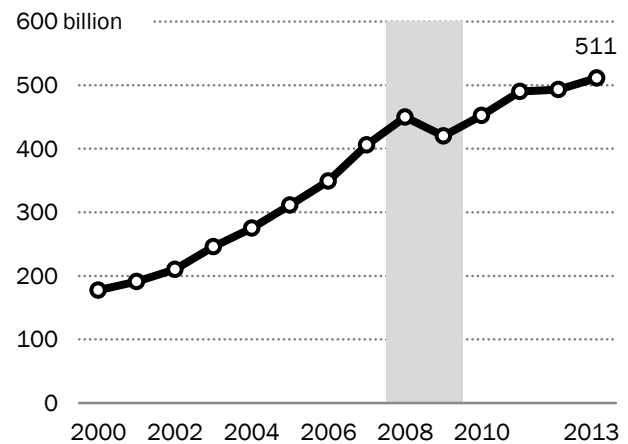
The economic importance of remittances is larger in poorer countries than in richer ones. Remittances account for 8% of the gross domestic product in low-income nations, 2% in middle-income nations and less than 1% in high-income nations, according to analysis of World Bank data. Total remittances to low- and middle-income nations are nearly three times the amount of foreign aid to those countries, the World Bank says. Since 2009, the World Bank has recognized the importance of remittances by including them in its measure of creditworthiness, allowing nations with high remittance levels to borrow more money than they otherwise could.

The shifting patterns in the flows of both migrants and remittances have a regional as well as economic dimension. The Middle East and North America have grown as destination regions of international migrants from 1990 to 2013, as have several Western European countries. A smaller share of international migrants lives in Asia in 2013 than three decades ago. Meanwhile, the shares of international migrants living in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have not changed markedly.

Although policy and geography are important factors in changing patterns of migration, migration researchers often cite economics to explain migration trends. The pattern of migrants increasingly living in today's high-income countries but coming from middle-income nations reflects broader changes in the global economy. As free trade agreements for goods and services increased between middle-

Remittances Have Been Rising

Total remittance dollars, 2000 to 2013. In billions of 2013 U.S. dollars



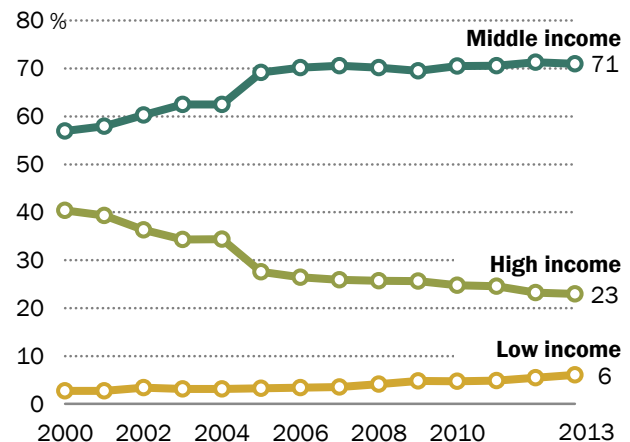
Note: Based on 137 countries with data for all years, which account for 93% of remittances in 2013. Shading indicates the U.S. recession.

Source: World Bank

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Remittances Increasingly Sent to Middle-Income Nations

% of total world remittances by receiving countries



Note: Based on 137 countries with data for all years, which account for 93% of remittances in 2013.

Source: World Bank

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and high-income countries, so has the movement of people. Moreover, as the human capital and economic aspirations of people in middle-income countries have grown during the past quarter century, more of them have been able to take advantage of opportunities in high-income countries. By contrast, people living in lower-income countries may want to move but most do not have the resources to undertake the journey.

As a Destination, the U.S. Looms Large

Despite global shifts in international migration, one constant remains: The U.S. has the world's largest number of international migrants.

The number of immigrants in the U.S. doubled from 23 million people in 1990 to 46 million in 2013. During this time, no other country has come close to the number of foreign-born people living within its borders. For example, second-ranked Russia had about 11 million immigrants in both 1990 and 2013 (many of whom had moved within the former USSR prior to 1990). Consequently, the U.S. has bolstered its lead in the number of international migrants, doubling second-place Russia in 1990 and quadrupling it by 2013.

The U.S. has also become a major recipient of migrants from key countries with large numbers of emigrants. Although the U.S. was not a leading destination of migrants born in top origin countries in 1990, things have changed considerably in a quarter century. By 2013, nearly 1-in-6 (2.1 million) migrants born in India—the top country of birth for international migrants in 2013—lived in the U.S. Almost the entirety of the 13 million migrants born in Mexico—the second highest country of birth for international migrants in 2013—also lived in the U.S.

And the U.S. is the top recipient of migrants from about a quarter of the world's countries. In 1990, the U.S. was the top destination of migrants born in 53 countries. In 2013, that number was about the same at 52 countries.

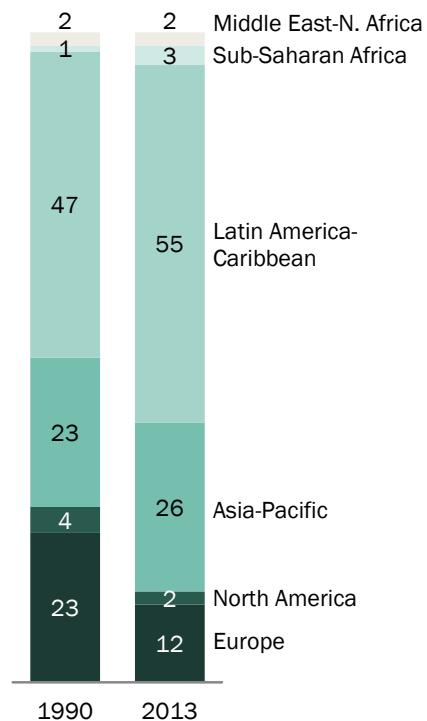
In Other Ways, U.S. Is in the Middle of the Pack

Even with this growth, the foreign born as a share of the total population is still considerably lower in the U.S. than in a number of other major destination nations. About 14% of the U.S. population in 2013 was foreign born, a smaller share than in Australia (28%) and Canada (21%), and significantly less than in some countries in the Persian Gulf, where the vast majorities of their populations are foreign-born workers.

In fact, the regional origins of U.S. immigrants have become more concentrated over time with a greater share born in Latin America and the Caribbean. About 47% of all migrants living in the U.S. in 1990 were from Latin American and Caribbean countries. By 2013, 55% of all foreign-born people living in the U.S. were born in the same region.

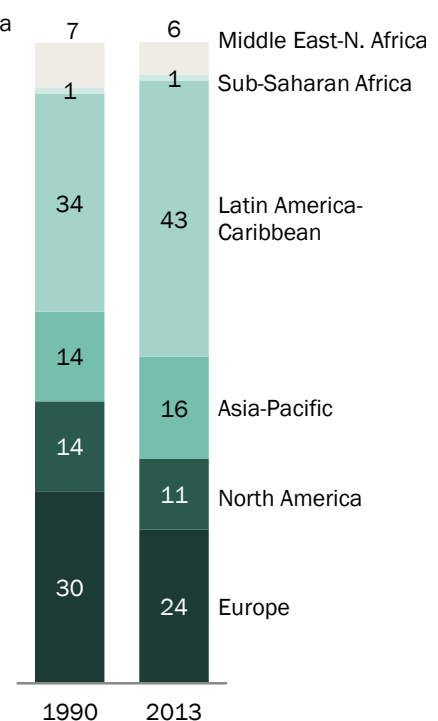
U.S. Immigrants Increasingly Are Born in Latin America and the Caribbean ...

% of U.S. immigrants by region of birth



... and U.S. Emigrants Increasingly Are Living in Latin America and the Caribbean

% of U.S. emigrants by country of residence



Note: Unknown origins not included in estimates.

Source: United Nations

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U.S. Emigrants—A Rising Number, but Still Relatively Few

The U.S. receives many more migrants than it sends. Nonetheless, nearly 3 million Americans lived outside of the U.S. in 2013, up from 1.8 million in 1990.

Compared with other origin countries, the U.S. is a relatively small source of international migrants. The U.S. ranks 20th in the list of top origin countries of international migrants, far behind world leaders such as India, Mexico and China, which together comprised about 16 million migrants in 1990 and nearly 37 million migrants in 2013.

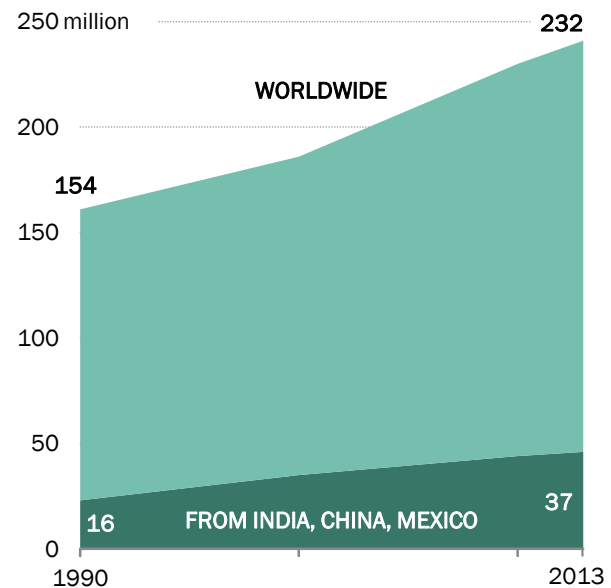
The U.S. also has a significantly lower rate of emigration than most countries. For example, about 1% of Americans currently live outside of their country of birth, compared with about 20% of people born in several Eastern Europe countries and more than 4% of people born in countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada.

Road Map to the Report

Chapter 2 of the report looks at the share and number of international migrants in national and regional destinations, as well as trends from 1990 to 2013. Chapter 3 looks at the origin countries of international migrants and trends from 1990 to 2013. Chapter 4 looks at global trends in remittances and compares patterns in receiving nations by income category. Additional information is provided in Appendix A: Methodology and Appendix B, which lists countries included in the World Bank's high-, middle- and low-income nation categories. Appendix C lists countries by their regional classification.

Number of International Migrants Born in India, China and Mexico Grow

Number of people living in a country in which they were not born



Source: United Nations

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Chapter 2: Migrant Destinations

Global Patterns and Shifts

The shifts in migration by country income categories are to some extent associated with geographic changes in migrant destinations. Sometimes called the Global North, countries such as Canada and the United States in North America (among others including Australia and several countries in Europe) contain a greater share of international migrants today than a quarter century ago.³ At the same time, a larger share of international migrants now live in the Middle East-North Africa region. (For more information about which countries are part of which regions, see Appendix A: Methodology.)

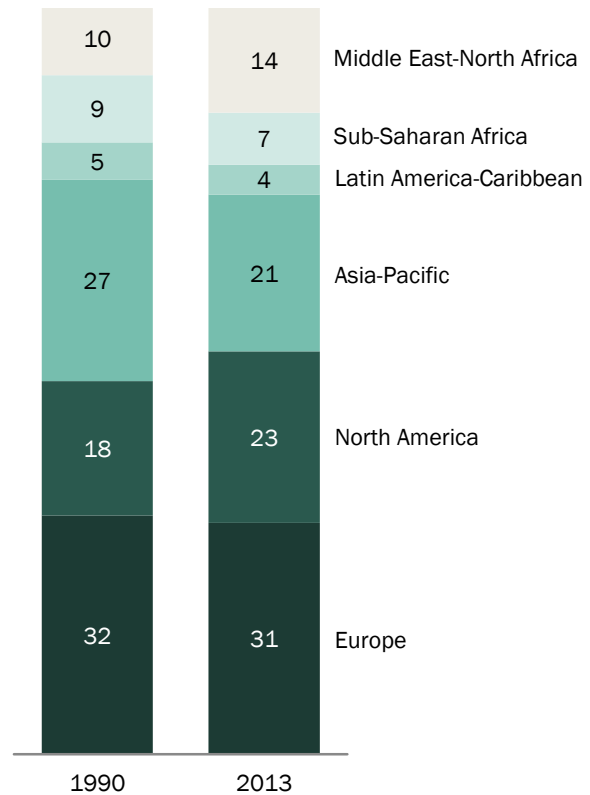
In 1990, the largest share of international migrants (32%) lived in Europe. This group of international migrants consisted mainly of migrants born in developing countries beyond Europe (such as Turkey, Algeria and Pakistan), but also migrants who had moved between European countries (such as Eastern Europeans living in Western Europe).

Meanwhile, about a quarter (27%) of international migrants in 1990 lived in the Asia-Pacific region. This group of migrants mainly consisted of cross-border migrants, who for a variety of reasons (economic opportunities, military conflicts, family reunification) lived in nearby countries within the Asia-Pacific region.

Nearly a fifth (18%) of international migrants in 1990 lived in North America, mostly in the United States. Smaller shares of migrants lived in the Middle East-North Africa (10%), sub-Saharan Africa (9%) and Latin America-Caribbean (5%) regions.

Destination Regions of International Migrants

% of international migrants, by region



Source: United Nations

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³ The United Nations defines the Global North as developed countries; they also are generally located in the Northern Hemisphere.

But a global shift in the destinations of migrants began in the 1990s. A greater number of people born in countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in the Asia-Pacific region started moving to the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf in the Middle East-North Africa region, shrinking the share of Asian migrants who may have otherwise moved to other countries in the Asia-Pacific or other regions.

Joining these Asian migrants in the Middle East were migrants from Europe and North America. Together, this migration to the Middle East-North Africa region increased the share of international migrants there from 10% in 1990 to 14% in 2013.

At the same time, huge numbers of migrants, many of whom were born in Latin American and Caribbean countries, crossed into the United States during the past quarter century. Combined with increased migration to Canada, this large-scale movement led to a growing share of international migrants living in North America, climbing from 18% of international migrants in 1990 to 23% in 2013.

Although the share of international migrants in Europe stayed about the same between 1990 and 2013, the composition of migrants living in Europe changed considerably. One reason was that migrants of previous waves, mostly among European countries, started to die off or returned to their countries of birth. Among their replacements were considerable numbers of people from developing countries in North Africa (such as Morocco and Algeria), Asia (such as Turkey and India) and refugee-sending countries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa (such as Iraq and Somalia).

Changes in Top Destination Countries

In light of these regional and economic shifts, several countries received a much higher number of migrants than other destinations. And the list of top destination countries has changed between 1990 and 2013.

With a large number of migrants moving northward from Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.S. became an even larger destination of the world's migrants, numbering 23 million in 1990 but ballooning to 46 million in 2013.

In addition, millions of people who had moved within their own countries suddenly were redefined as international migrants when their national borders changed. For example, in 1990, millions of people living in former USSR countries—including more than 10 million in Russia and more than 6 million in Ukraine—became “migrants” almost overnight. Their migrant status changed to “foreign born” when new borders separating the former USSR states were established.

These “migrants” found themselves on the opposite

side of a border they had crossed years earlier, but at the time their migration was not considered an international move. Many of these “migrants” moved back to their homelands, but many continued to remain in their current countries of residence. Also, Russia’s economic growth attracted more migrants from neighboring countries, sustaining its total number of immigrants around 11 million in 2013.

Migration among countries within the Indian subcontinent is common. In 1990, about 7 million migrants lived in India as well as in Pakistan. Some of these migrants didn’t actually move as international migrants, but like the Russian situation, became “migrants” because of changing borders in previous decades. But the long-term effects of this earlier “migration” dropped off by 2013, leading India and Pakistan to no longer rank in the world’s top-10 destinations.

Many countries in Europe as well as Canada and Australia and other traditional destinations continued to receive migrants during the past quarter century. For example, Germany’s growing ranks of foreign-born persons from nearly 6 million immigrants in 1990 to nearly 10 million immigrants in 2013 included many migrants from countries formerly aligned with the Soviet bloc as well as increased migration from Turkey and the Balkans. With growing tourism and agricultural business in Spain, many Moroccans and Romanians moved to Spain, helping to bolster its immigrant population to over 6 million.

Top-10 Destination Countries of International Migrants, 1990 and 2013

Number of people living in a country in which they were not born, in millions

	1990		2013
United States	23.3	United States	45.8
Russia	11.5	Russia	11.0
India	7.5	Germany	9.8
Ukraine	6.9	Saudi Arabia	9.1
Pakistan	6.6	United Arab Emirates	7.8
Germany	5.9	United Kingdom	7.8
France	5.9	France	7.4
Saudi Arabia	5.0	Canada	7.3
Canada	4.5	Australia	6.5
Iran	4.3	Spain	6.5

Note: Numbers for Russia include people who moved within the Soviet Union before some parts of the USSR became separate states. See Chapter 3.

Source: United Nations

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Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia (9 million foreigners) and the United Arab Emirates (7.8 million foreigners) became even more prominent destination countries by 2013. With millions of temporary migrants to support the growing oil industry and related infrastructure in these countries, Gulf Cooperation Council countries have become important hubs for migrants in recent years.

Top Destinations by Percent Foreign born

Destinations can be ranked by the number of international migrants within their borders. But differences between immigrants and non-immigrants living within their borders can also be compared.

For example, several countries in the Persian Gulf region (such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain) are majority foreign born, while other countries in the region (such as Saudi Arabia and Oman) are nearly a third foreign born.

And some countries with the highest percentage of immigrants are some of the geographically smallest countries. For example, about 4 in 10 people living in Hong Kong and Singapore were not born there.

Some destination countries have received a large number of refugees from neighboring countries, vastly increasing the share of their population that is foreign born. For example, about 4 in 10 people in Jordan are estimated to be foreign born, many of whom have come from neighboring Palestinian Territories, Iraq and Syria, often as refugees.

Several Western countries have become important migrant destinations because of their economic growth and high employment opportunities. Although these countries do not have the highest percentages of foreign-born residents, some Western countries have a greater share of immigrants than others. For example, Australia, New Zealand and Canada all have foreign-born percentages exceeding 20%. Several European countries such as Ireland, Sweden and Austria are also about 15% foreign-born. Finally, around 14% of people living in the United States in 2013 were born outside of the U.S., compared with 9% in 1990.

Top-10 Destination Countries by Percent Foreign born, 2013

Percentage of country's population that is foreign born

United Arab Emirates	84
Qatar	74
Kuwait	60
Bahrain	55
Singapore	43
Jordan	40
Hong Kong	39
Saudi Arabia	31
Oman	31
Switzerland	29

Note: Countries with total populations less than 1 million excluded.

Source: United Nations

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Chapter 3: Migrant Origins

Global Patterns and Shifts

The greater movement from middle-income countries is to some extent linked to underlying regional changes in migration. In sum, the origins of the international migrant population have changed in recent decades, becoming more Asian and Latin American or born in what is sometimes referred to as the Global South.⁴ At the same time, the origins of migrants have become less European.

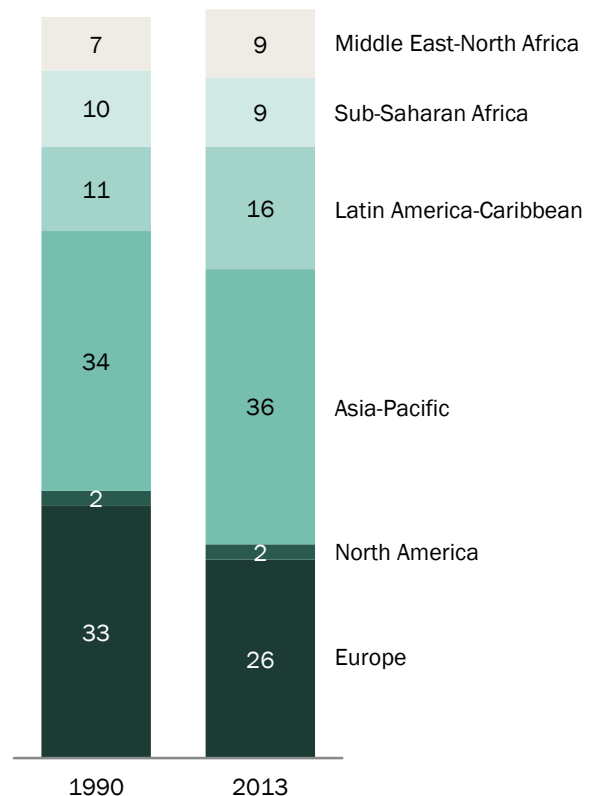
In 1990, about one-third (33%) of international migrants were born in Europe. Many of these “migrants” had moved within the Soviet Union before the collapse of the USSR and were not considered migrants when they moved. When country boundaries were changed, their status changed to migrant or foreign born. About a third (34%) of international migrants in 1990 were born in countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including many in the Indian subcontinent and high-emigration countries such as China and the Philippines.

The remaining third of migrants in 1990 were born in the Latin America-Caribbean (11%), sub-Saharan Africa (10%) and Middle East-North Africa (7%) regions. Much of the movement of migrants in these regions occurred across nearby borders such as Mexicans migrating to the U.S.

But a global shift in the origins of migrants began in the 1990s. A greater number of migrants born in the Asia-Pacific region left for employment opportunities in the Middle

Regional Origins of International Migrants

% of international migrants born in each region



Note: Unknown origins included in estimates; consequently percentages may not round to 100.

Source: United Nations

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⁴ According to the United Nations, the Global South is defined as developing countries, or all countries except Australia, New Zealand, Japan and nations in North America and Europe. Countries in the Global South are located in Southern and Northern Hemispheres.

East, Europe and North America. This movement slightly increased the share of international migrants born in the Asia-Pacific.

Movement from Latin-America and the Caribbean to the U.S. also increased between 1990 and 2013. Consequently, a greater share (16%) of international migrants in 2013 had been born in Latin American and Caribbean countries than in 1990.

At the same time, a lower share of the world's migrants by 2013 had been born in Europe (26%), a consequence of less migration within Europe, but also an aging migrant population in Russia and nearby countries that began to die off.

Changes in Top Origin Countries

In light of these regional and economic shifts, a greater number of migrants have left some countries than others. Consequently, top origin countries of international migrants have changed considerably during the past quarter century.

The high number of migrants in 1990 from Russia (12.7 million) and Ukraine (5.6 million) is largely the result of changing borders during the fall of the USSR. However, migrants have continued to leave these countries, albeit less so than other top origin countries. Consequently, Russia's ranking fell from top origin country in 1990 to third place in 2013, with 10.8 million migrants. Ukraine also dropped its ranking by 2013, though its total of 5.6 million migrants was the same in 2013 as it had been in 1990.

Changing borders in the Indian subcontinent decades ago also led to the sudden increase in the number of international migrants from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, millions of people left these countries during the past quarter

Top-10 Origin Countries of International Migrants, 1990 and 2013

Number of people living in a country in which they were not born, in millions

	1990		2013
Russia	12.7	India	14.2
Afghanistan	7.3	Mexico	13.2
India	6.8	Russia	10.8
Bangladesh	5.6	China	9.3
Ukraine	5.6	Bangladesh	7.8
Mexico	5.0	Pakistan	5.7
China	4.1	Ukraine	5.6
United Kingdom	4.1	Philippines	5.5
Pakistan	3.6	Afghanistan	5.1
Italy	3.5	United Kingdom	5.0

Note: Numbers for Russia include people who moved within the Soviet Union before some parts of the USSR became separate nations. See Chapter 3.

Source: United Nations

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century, moving to other countries in the Indian subcontinent and also to the Middle East, Europe and North America. Consequently, the number of international migrants born in these countries has increased. In fact, India became the top origin country in 2013 with 14.2 million international migrants, while Bangladesh claimed the number five spot with 7.8 million international migrants. Pakistan is sixth with 5.7 million.

Political strife and military conflict continued to plague Afghanistan and nearby countries during recent decades. For these reasons, more than 7 million Afghans lived outside of Afghanistan in 1990, many in Iran, Pakistan and other nearby countries. In 2013, that number decreased to slightly more than 5 million people.

Each historical era has prominent countries of origin for international migrants. Among the examples: Around the beginning of the 20th century, many Italians left for the United States and countries in South America. After the Second World War, some people from the United Kingdom moved to Canada, Australia and the U.S. to join military spouses. The impact of these movements is reflected in migrant populations in 1990. Consequently, these earlier waves of migrants from Italy and the UK led to high origin rankings, with more than 4 million people born in the UK living outside of the UK and 3.5 million Italian-born migrants living elsewhere. With the passage of time, these migrant populations began to decline as the earlier migrants died and were not replaced by new migrants.

As the origins of migrants shifted from Europe to Asia, new countries of origin began to rank higher among migrant populations. By 2013, 9.3 million people born in China lived outside of China. Some 5.5 million people born in the Philippines lived in foreign countries.

Finally, the huge growth of Mexican immigrants moving to the U.S. made Mexico the second-highest origin country of international migrants in 2013. In the past quarter century, the number of international migrants born in Mexico had more than doubled—from 5 million in 1990 to more than 13 million in 2013—with almost all of them living in the U.S.

Top Origins by Percent Emigrant

Migrant origins can be ranked by the number of international migrants who have left their birth countries. But the share of country populations that has migrated out provides another interesting point of view.

Although some may not consider movement from Puerto Rico to the U.S. as an international move, definitions employed by the U.N. (and as used in this report) consider Puerto Rico a

separate territory from the U.S. Based on this definition, about a third of people born in Puerto Rico live outside of Puerto Rico.

Almost all migrants from Puerto Rico live in the U.S., as do migrants from other top origin countries by percent emigrant such as Jamaica (28%) and Trinidad and Tobago (22%).

Poor economic conditions explain most emigration from several countries in Eastern Europe. For example, nearly a third (29%) of people born in Albania no longer live in Albania, while about a fifth (20%) of Moldovans live outside of Moldova.

Conflict has led a large number of people to leave their countries of birth. For example, several countries once part of the former Yugoslavia such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Macedonia have had high rates of emigration. Similarly, large percentages of Kuwaitis left during the first Gulf War.

A number of factors may explain the high percentage of migrants born in Kazakhstan (23%) and Armenia (23%). Historical connections to nearby countries have led many people in these countries to move, as have high unemployment and social hostility toward some minority groups.

Top-10 Origin Countries by Percent Emigrant, 2010

Percentage of people living outside of their country of birth

Puerto Rico	33
Albania	29
Jamaica	28
Bosnia-Herzegovina	28
Kazakhstan	23
Armenia	23
Trinidad and Tobago	22
Kuwait	21
Moldova	20
Republic of Macedonia	20

Note: Palestinian territories, unknown origins of migrants and countries with total populations less than 1 million are excluded.

Source: United Nations

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Chapter 4: Remittances

Remittances worldwide have nearly tripled since 2000 and experienced only a one-year dip during the recent recession. Remittances to middle-income countries—the birthplace of a rising share of immigrants worldwide—have more than tripled since 2000, and middle-income nations account for a markedly increased share of all remittances over that period.

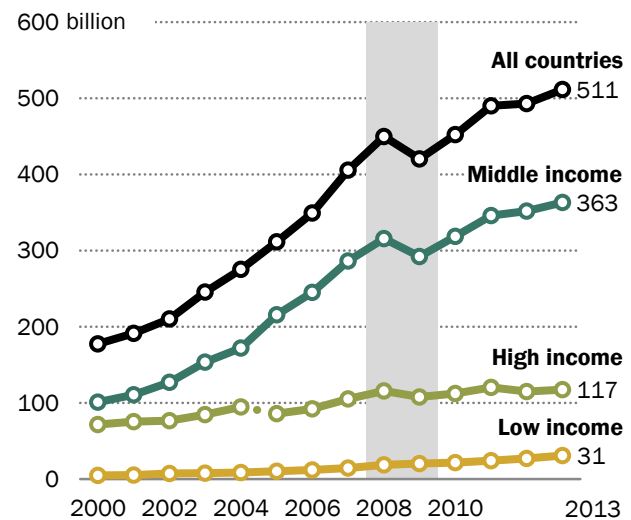
After a one-year decline in 2009 during the Great Recession, remittances worldwide recovered the following year and have continued to rise. Remittances to all nations declined 7% (\$30 billion) in 2009, to \$420 billion, but by 2010 were slightly higher (\$452 billion) than they had been in 2008 (\$450 billion).

For those countries with available data, remittances rose 22% from 2009 to 2013, according to World Bank data. (The analysis in this chapter is based on remittances to 137 nations that receive 93% of estimated 2013 remittances in World Bank data. See Appendix A: Methodology for details.)

In 2013, the world's middle-income nations as a group received an estimated \$363 billion in remittances, according to World Bank data. That represented growth of 360% since 2000. As with remittances overall, remittances to middle-income countries declined in 2009 but picked up the following year to exceed the 2008 total. From 2009 to 2013, remittances to middle-income nations grew by 24%.

Total Remittances Received by Country Income Group, 2000 to 2013

In billions, 2013 U.S. dollars



Note: Includes 137 countries with data for all years. Income categories based on 2013 World Bank country classification. Unclassified countries not included. Shading indicates the U.S. recession. Dotted line indicates a change in methodology that affected the trend.

Source: World Bank

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From 2000 to 2013, remittances to high-income nations as a group grew 64% and to low-income nations increased more than sixfold.⁵ Remittances to high-income nations declined during the recession, but remittances to low-income nations did not.

Remittances to high-income nations declined in 2009, rose in 2010 and by 2011 exceeded the total for 2008. Remittances to low-income nations have risen each year since 2000.

By any measure, India and China are the top global recipients of remittances, according to World Bank data. They also are the top receiving nations among middle-income countries. In 2013, India received an estimated \$71 billion in remittances, and China an estimated \$60 billion. Among the other top middle-income receiving nations for remittances are the Philippines (\$26 billion), Mexico (\$22 billion) and Nigeria (\$21 billion).

Among high-income nations, the top five remittance receivers are France (with an estimated \$22 billion in 2013), Germany (\$15 billion), Belgium (\$11 billion), Spain (\$10 billion) and South Korea (\$9 billion). The United States, which received an estimated \$6 billion in remittances in 2013, ranks ninth among high-income nations.

Top-10 Remittance Receiving Countries by Country Income Group , 2013

In billions, U.S. dollars

High-income countries		Middle-income countries		Low-income countries	
France	21.6	India	71.0	Bangladesh	15.2
Germany	14.7	China	60.2	Nepal	5.4
Belgium	10.8	Philippines	26.1	Tajikistan	4.1
Spain	10.0	Mexico	22.0	Burma (Myanmar)	2.5
South Korea	9.0	Nigeria	21.0	Kyrgyzstan	2.3
Italy	7.7	Egypt	20.0	Haiti	1.7
Poland	7.3	Pakistan	14.9	Kenya	1.3
Russia	6.4	Vietnam	10.7	Uganda	1.0
United States	6.3	Ukraine	9.3	Ethiopia	0.6
Portugal	4.0	Indonesia	7.9	Afghanistan	0.5

Note: Includes all countries.

Source: World Bank

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⁵ Because of a change in the World Bank's definition of remittances, there is discontinuity in data for 2004 and 2005. The change resulted in a lower level of remittances to high-income nations than would otherwise have been the case. See Appendix A: Methodology. Nonetheless, overall patterns are similar regardless of whether the new definition is used.

Among the world's poorest countries, Bangladesh ranks first as a remittance receiving nation, taking in \$15 billion in 2013, according to World Bank estimates. Among the other top low-income receiving nations are Nepal (\$5 billion), Tajikistan (\$4 billion), Burma (Myanmar) (\$3 billion) and Kyrgyzstan (\$2 billion).

Share of Remittances by Income Category

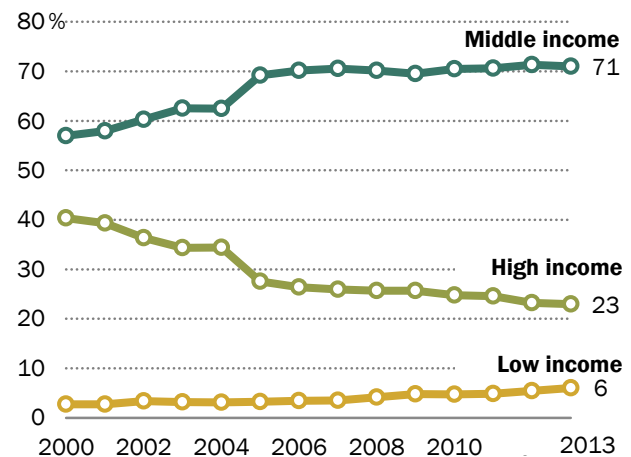
Middle-income nations receive the majority of remittances worldwide, 71% in 2013, according to World Bank estimates. Their share of the total has grown markedly since 2000, when it was 57%. That growth has slowed since the mid-2000s; middle-income nations have claimed 70% to 71% of the total since 2006.

Low-income nations receive a small share of remittances worldwide, an estimated 6% in 2013, but that share has doubled since 2000. The growth in share of remittances to these nations has taken place since 2006.

High-income nations receive 23% of worldwide remittances, according to World Bank 2013 estimates. That share has declined from 40% in 2000. Most of the decline came before the mid-2000s.

Share of Remittances Received by Country Income Group

% of total world remittances



Note: Includes 137 countries with data for all years.

Source: World Bank Country Remittances Inflow, 2013

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Remittances as Share of GDP

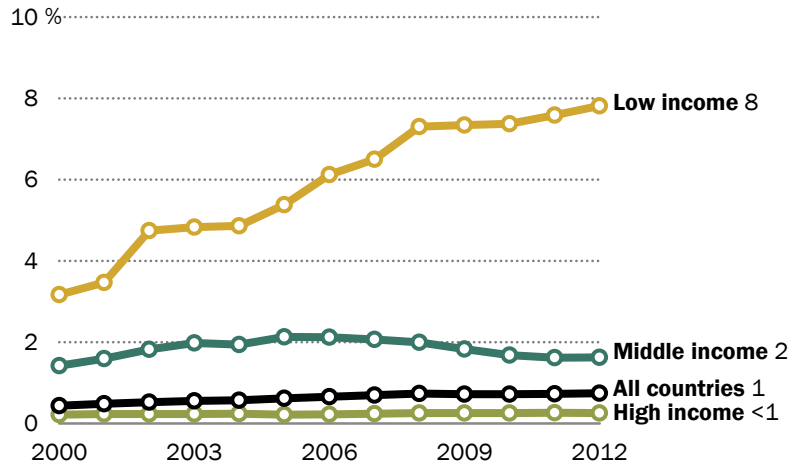
Remittances represent a higher share of GDP in poorer nations than in richer ones and also have grown more sharply as a share of GDP. Among all low-income nations, remittances accounted for an estimated 8% of GDP in 2012. The contribution of remittances to the GDP of low-income nations overall has more than doubled since 2000, when money sent home by migrants represented about 3% of those countries' GDP. These nations, however, receive a small share of all world remittances.

Among middle-income nations, remittances represented less than 2% of GDP in 2012, according to an analysis of World Bank estimates.

Meanwhile, among high-income nations, remittances are a much smaller share of 2012 GDP, less than 1%, according to an analysis of World Bank estimates.

Remittances as Share of GDP

% of receiving countries' GDP



Note: Includes 137 countries with data for all years.

Source: World Bank

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Appendix A: Methodology

Data

Migration data were released by the [United Nations](#) in September 2013. The data contain population counts for all possible destinations of international migrants for every origin country in the world (and vice versa, a population estimate for all origins of every destination country) in 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2013. Consequently, the data provide an estimate for the number of international migrants born in and currently living in every country of the world.

Estimates for the origins of migrants in this report include unknown origins, which together amount to more than 3 million people in 2013, or about 1% of all the world's international migrants.

Also, the U.N.'s migration data released in September 2013 included updates to previous years. As a result, migrant estimates in this report differ from estimates in other reports on international migration published by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Pew Research Center.

Remittance inflow data from 2000 to 2013 were drawn from the [World Bank](#). Estimates for 2013 are forecast by the World Bank based on previous trends and projected economic conditions in destination countries. When reporting trends over time in remittance flows, amounts for years before 2013 are adjusted to 2013 dollars, using the average U.S. inflation rate for every preceding year. For this reason, some numbers in this report differ from unadjusted data published by the World Bank. Also, trends contain complete information for countries across all years, amounting to 93% of total inflow in 2013. A total of 137 countries were used for trends.

The World Bank reports only remittances sent via formal channels, such as banks and other businesses that transfer money. If unofficial remittances were counted, the total could be 50% higher or more, according to household surveys and other evidence cited by the World Bank.

In 2013, the World Bank revised its definition of remittances to delete a category of capital transfers between households. The World Bank also revised previously published numbers back to 2005 to reflect the change. Therefore, there is some discontinuity in the remittance data in this report for 2000 to 2004 and data for 2005 onward. Nevertheless, overall patterns are similar regardless of whether the new definition is used.

Economic Classifications and Regions

Economic classifications follow the taxonomy provided by the World Bank in their categorization of countries in October 2013. Lower-income countries have a per capita gross national income (GNI) of \$1,035 U.S. dollars or less. Examples of lower-income nations are Afghanistan and Zimbabwe. Middle-income countries have a per capita GNI between \$1,036 and \$12,615 U.S. dollars and include lower-middle nations such as Bolivia and Pakistan, and upper-middle countries such as Brazil and China. Finally, high-income nations have a per capita GNI of \$12,616 U.S. dollars or more and include such countries as the United States and Russia. See [Appendix B](#) for a complete list of countries by their economic classification.

The great majority of countries remained in the same high-, middle-, or lower-income positions since 1990. Major exceptions include China (changed from low income to middle income in 1999), India (changed from low income to middle income in 2007) and Russia (changed from middle income to high income in 2012). However, even if these countries are excluded from the analysis, the patterns are similar. Additional analysis indicates that economic shifts in migration patterns are not due entirely to changing classification of countries. When the World Bank's 1990 classification of countries is substituted for the 2013 classification, the patterns also are similar, even though the numbers of countries in the high- and middle-income groups have increased since 1990.

Geographic regions used in this report for the most part match regions categorized by the U.N. One exception is the added Middle East-North Africa region, which consists of countries in North Africa along the Mediterranean, Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Israel and nearby countries as far east as Iraq. Sudan is also part of the Middle East-North Africa region, while Turkey and Iran are considered part of the Asia-Pacific region. See Appendix C for a complete list of countries by their regional classification.

Calculations

The *percent immigrant calculation* for 1990, 2000 and 2010 uses the number of immigrants estimated by the U.N. in these years divided by the total population in these countries also estimated by the U.N. The percent immigrant calculation for 2013 is from the [U.N.'s Migration Wallchart](#).

The *percent emigrant calculation* was computed for 1990, 2000 and 2010. The numerator is the number of people living outside of their country of birth. The denominator is the total population estimated by the U.N. for the birth country plus the number of people born in the birth country but living in a foreign country minus the number of foreign-born people living in the birth country.

Because smaller nations can have unique explanations associated with these calculations, countries with a total population less than 1 million are excluded from the rankings included in this report. Moreover, the Palestinian territories are not included for the percent emigrant since the U.N. includes descendants into the third and fourth generations. Consequently, these migrant counts are not consistent with the foreign-born definition used in this report.

The *percent of GDP* calculation is the total remittances received by a country divided by the country's GDP for that particular year.

Appendix B: Countries by Economic Classification

High Income (2013 per capita GNI of \$12,616 U.S. dollars or more)

Andorra	Germany	Poland
Antigua and Barbuda	Greece	Portugal
Aruba	Greenland	Puerto Rico
Australia	Guam	Qatar
Austria	Hong Kong	Russia
Bahamas	Iceland	San Marino
Bahrain	Ireland	Saudi Arabia
Barbados	Isle of Man	Singapore
Belgium	Israel	Sint Maarten
Bermuda	Italy	Slovakia
Brunei	Japan	Slovenia
Canada	Kuwait	South Korea
Cayman Islands	Latvia	Spain
Channel Islands	Liechtenstein	St. Kitts and Nevis
Chile	Lithuania	Sweden
Croatia	Luxembourg	Switzerland
Cyprus	Macau	Trinidad and Tobago
Czech Republic	Malta	Turks and Caicos Islands
Denmark	Monaco	U.S. Virgin Islands
Equatorial Guinea	Netherlands	United Arab Emirates
Estonia	New Caledonia	United Kingdom
Faeroe Islands	New Zealand	United States
Finland	Northern Mariana Islands	Uruguay
France	Norway	
French Polynesia	Oman	

Middle Income (2013 per capita GNI between \$1,036 and \$12,615 U.S. dollars)

Albania	Costa Rica	Iran
Algeria	Cuba	Iraq
American Samoa	Djibouti	Ivory Coast
Angola	Dominica	Jamaica
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Jordan
Armenia	Ecuador	Kazakhstan
Azerbaijan	Egypt	Kiribati
Belarus	El Salvador	Laos
Belize	Fed. States of Micronesia	Lebanon
Bhutan	Fiji	Lesotho
Bolivia	Gabon	Libya
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Georgia	Malaysia
Botswana	Ghana	Maldives
Brazil	Grenada	Marshall Islands
Bulgaria	Guatemala	Mauritania
Cameroon	Guyana	Mauritius
Cape Verde	Honduras	Mexico
China	Hungary	Moldova
Colombia	India	Mongolia
Congo	Indonesia	Montenegro

Morocco	Samoa	Thailand
Namibia	Sao Tome and Principe	Timor-Leste
Nicaragua	Senegal	Tonga
Nigeria	Serbia	Tunisia
Pakistan	Seychelles	Turkey
Palau	Solomon Islands	Turkmenistan
Palestinian territories	South Africa	Tuvalu
Panama	Sri Lanka	Ukraine
Papua New Guinea	St. Lucia	Uzbekistan
Paraguay	St. Vincent and Grenadines	Vanuatu
Peru	Sudan	Venezuela
Philippines	Suriname	Vietnam
Republic of Macedonia	Swaziland	Yemen
Romania	Syria	Zambia

Low Income (2013 per capita GNI of \$1,035 U.S. dollars or less)

Afghanistan	Ethiopia	Nepal
Bangladesh	Gambia	Niger
Benin	Guinea	North Korea
Burkina Faso	Guinea Bissau	Rwanda
Burma (Myanmar)	Haiti	Sierra Leone
Burundi	Kenya	Somalia
Cambodia	Kyrgyzstan	South Sudan
Central African Republic	Liberia	Tajikistan
Chad	Madagascar	Tanzania
Comoros	Malawi	Togo
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mali	Uganda
Eritrea	Mozambique	Zimbabwe

Appendix C: Countries by Regional Classification

Asia-Pacific

Afghanistan	Iran	Papua New Guinea
American Samoa	Japan	Philippines
Armenia	Kazakhstan	Samoa
Australia	Kiribati	Singapore
Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Solomon Islands
Bangladesh	Laos	South Korea
Bhutan	Macau	Sri Lanka
Brunei	Malaysia	Tajikistan
Burma (Myanmar)	Maldives	Thailand
Cambodia	Marshall Islands	Timor-Leste
China	Mongolia	Tokelau
Cook Islands	Nauru	Tonga
Cyprus	Nepal	Turkey
Fed. States of Micronesia	New Caledonia	Turkmenistan
Fiji	New Zealand	Tuvalu
French Polynesia	Niue	Uzbekistan
Guam	North Korea	Vanuatu
Hong Kong	Northern Mariana Islands	Vietnam
India	Pakistan	Wallis and Futuna
Indonesia	Palau	

Europe

Albania	Gibraltar	Poland
Andorra	Greece	Portugal
Austria	Hungary	Republic of Macedonia
Belarus	Iceland	Romania
Belgium	Ireland	Russia
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Isle of Man	San Marino
Bulgaria	Italy	Serbia
Channel Islands	Latvia	Slovakia
Croatia	Liechtenstein	Slovenia
Czech Republic	Lithuania	Spain
Denmark	Luxembourg	Sweden
Estonia	Malta	Switzerland
Faeroe Islands	Moldova	Ukraine
Finland	Monaco	United Kingdom
France	Montenegro	Vatican City
Georgia	Netherlands	
Germany	Norway	

Latin America-Caribbean

Anguilla	Curaco	Montserrat
Antigua and Barbuda	Dominica	Nicaragua
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Panama
Aruba	Ecuador	Paraguay
Bahamas	El Salvador	Peru
Barbados	Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	Puerto Rico
Belize	French Guiana	Sint Maarten
Bolivia	Grenada	St. Kitts and Nevis
Brazil	Guadeloupe	St. Lucia
British Virgin Islands	Guatemala	St. Vincent and Grenadines
Caribbean Netherlands	Guyana	Suriname
Cayman Islands	Haiti	Trinidad and Tobago
Chile	Honduras	Turks and Caicos Islands
Colombia	Jamaica	U.S. Virgin Islands
Costa Rica	Martinique	Uruguay
Cuba	Mexico	Venezuela

Middle East-North Africa

Algeria	Lebanon	Sudan
Bahrain	Libya	Syria
Egypt	Morocco	Tunisia
Iraq	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Israel	Palestinian territories	Western Sahara
Jordan	Qatar	Yemen
Kuwait	Saudi Arabia	

North America

Bermuda	Greenland	United States
Canada	St. Pierre and Miquelon	

Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola	Congo	Guinea Bissau
Benin	Democratic Republic of Congo	Ivory Coast
Botswana	Djibouti	Kenya
Burkina Faso	Equatorial Guinea	Lesotho
Burundi	Eritrea	Liberia
Cameroon	Ethiopia	Madagascar
Cape Verde	Gabon	Malawi
Central African Republic	Gambia	Mali
Chad	Ghana	Mauritania
Comoros	Guinea	Mauritius

Mayotte
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Reunion
Rwanda

Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
South Sudan

St. Helena
Swaziland
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe