MASS MIGRATION

How RAND Is Addressing One of the Greatest Challenges and Opportunities of the Century
GROWING NUMBER OF MIGRANTS GLOBALLY
[ defined as people living in a country other than that of their birth ]

272 million
2020

220 million
2010

173 million
2000

Every year, millions of people leave their homelands to start their lives somewhere else. Some seek to find a promising new job, strengthen family ties, or engage in new cultural opportunities. Some are seeking relief from crushing poverty or a lack of economic prospects. Others are fleeing war or persecution. Still others are escaping the effects of a long-term drought, a devastating hurricane, or some other kind of climate change–related disaster.

Although individuals' reasons for wanting to resettle vary, steadily rising numbers of migrants over the past two decades suggest that migration management is becoming one of the most pressing issues of this century. And there are no signs that this trend is slowing. Thus, many host and home communities and countries are urgently revisiting or developing new migration policies.

The RAND Corporation has worked closely with national and international agencies, particularly in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Australia, to assess how host- and home-country governments, donor nations, and multilateral agencies can manage policies associated with today's vast migrant flows.

Here, we bring together RAND's interdisciplinary work on migration-related trends, challenges, and solutions. The focus here is our objective research in three areas that represent some of the biggest migration policy issues over the next decade: migration resulting from conflict, migration resulting from climate change or natural hazards, and management of migration across the U.S. southern border. The first two areas are drivers of migration in the United States and globally. The third area considers a pressing policy and political issue in the United States: how these drivers and others—such as economic pressures, gang-related violence, agricultural setbacks, and political instability—affect migration management.

**Three Areas of Migration Challenges and Opportunities**

RAND's mass migration work benefits from the interdisciplinary expertise of RAND researchers and is driven by one goal: to develop effective policy solutions that promote improved economic performance, educational achievement, social and environmental well-being, and public safety in host and home communities and among migrant populations. In the following sections we provide examples of RAND's work in each of the three research areas.
There are more people displaced by conflict and political upheaval today than at any point since World War II, and the global system for managing such flows is in crisis. Furthermore, the pace of returns of displaced people has not kept up with the pace of displacement, leading to a consistently growing population of people who have been displaced long term. Given that many people displaced by conflict will not be able to return to their home countries for years or even decades to come, RAND’s work focuses on developing evidence-based solutions to assist this population with integrating into their new communities, rebuilding their lives and their countries of origin if and when they can return home safely, and enabling host countries to manage public service and security needs. In particular, RAND’s work in this area focuses on such issues as refugee education, economic opportunity, security, and displacement in urban environments.

**REFUGEE EDUCATION**

**Evaluation of the Emergency Education Response for Syrian Refugee Children and Host Communities in Jordan**

Shelly Culbertson, Tom Ling, Marie-Louise Henham, Jennie Corbett, Rita Karam, Paulina Pankowska, Catherine Saunders, Jacopo Bellasio, and Ben Baruch, 2016, www.rand.org/t/RR1203

Evaluates Jordan’s Emergency Education Response Programme for Syrian refugee children and identifies significant successes and longer-term challenges.

**Education of Syrian Refugee Children: Managing the Crisis in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan**

Shelly Culbertson and Louay Constant, 2015, www.rand.org/t/RR859

Reviews education of Syrian refugee children in the three neighboring countries with the largest populations of refugees—Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan—and analyzes four areas: access, management, society, and quality.

Key recommendations are related to developing medium-term planning and targeting gendered needs.
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Opportunities for All: Mutually Beneficial Economic Opportunities for Syrians and Host Countries in Middle Eastern Labor Markets


Explores concrete ways that job opportunities can be created for Syrian refugees and host-community workers in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, including focus groups with refugees and surveys of both firms and refugee households.

“This situation is not without opportunities for the Syrians to both support themselves through work and to contribute to the economies and societies of their host countries.”

Kumar et al., 2018

Jobs Make the Difference: Expanding Economic Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities

United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, and World Food Programme (with Daniel Egel and Shelly Culbertson as participating authors from RAND), 2017, https://www.jobsmakethedifference.org

Provides pragmatic suggestions to help create decent employment and expand economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

SECURITY

This is How Europe Dealt with Migration

Charles Ries and Shelly Culbertson, 2018, The National Interest

Considers migration patterns into the European Union since 2011; the impact on European politics, leadership, institutions, foreign policy, and labor markets; and how the European Union responded to these challenges.

From Negative to Positive Stability: How the Syrian Refugee Crisis Can Improve Jordan’s Outlook

Ben Connable, 2015, www.rand.org/t/RR1069

Examines how Syrian refugees can benefit the Jordanian economy by stimulating growth.

Lessening the Risk of Refugee Radicalization: Lessons for the Middle East from Past Crises

Barbara Sude, David Stebbins, and Sarah Weilant, 2015, www.rand.org/t/PE166

Investigates past crises to draw out comprehensive policies to mitigate the risk of radicalization among refugee populations.

MANAGING DISPLACEMENT IN DIVERSE ENVIRONMENTS

Crossing the Digital Divide: Applying Technology to the Global Refugee Crisis


Analyzes technology uses, needs, and gaps, as well as opportunities for better using technology, to help displaced people and improve the operations of responding agencies.

Making Victory Count After Defeating ISIS: Stabilization Challenges in Mosul and Beyond


Through a case study of Mosul, investigates stabilization needs in Iraq, including the needs of displaced populations, and offers recommendations for immediate actions for stabilization after military operations to liberate Mosul from ISIS.

Evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme

Emma Disley, Daniel Schweppenstedde, Emily Scruggs, Jennifer Rubin, and Ben Baruch, 2017, www.rand.org/t/RR484

Evaluates the Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme, which provided grants to organizations supporting migrants, by examining the impacts achieved in law, policy, and practice in Ireland.

WHAT RAND RESEARCH SAYS

How can nations prepare for newcomers? Displacement can last decades. Engage in longer-term development planning, such as for education, as well as humanitarian response.

How can host nations prepare economically? Refugees can support themselves and contribute to the economies in their host countries. Be prepared to benefit by enhancing job-matching, training, and placement capabilities.

How can host nations prepare their infrastructure? Most refugees are hosted in developing countries. Support public service delivery for both refugees and other host communities with global investment and planning.

How can host nations prepare socially? History indicates that radicalization among some refugee groups arises from inconsistent or punitive treatment of refugees in host countries or from a lack of opportunities. Support dignified lives and opportunities for the future.
Location, location, location. Climate and geography play enormous roles in where people choose to live. Similarly, changes to one or both of these circumstances prompt many to move: Sudden events (such as flooding) or slow-moving phenomena (such as coastal erosion) can significantly reduce a population's access to water, food, and housing or hurt job prospects. As the upward trend of the earth’s average surface temperature has risen since the early 20th century, RAND has worked with organizations, communities, and countries to better understand the impact that migration resulting from climate change or natural hazards has on all populations and on national security, as well as how to increase resilience in environmentally vulnerable locations.

ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBERS OF CLIMATE MIGRANTS BY 2050

EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

CLIMATE MIGRATION IMPACT

After Hurricane Maria: Pre-Disaster Conditions, Hurricane Damage, and Recovery Needs in Puerto Rico
Describes the recovery plan for Puerto Rico that the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center, operated by RAND, developed in response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, including the first assessment of municipality-level differences in outmigration following Hurricane Maria and the analysis of the impact of outmigration from Puerto Rico on the workforce, education, health care, and more.

The Displaced New Orleans Residents Survey (DNORS)
Captures interviews with 1,380 individuals and households that resided in New Orleans, Louisiana, before Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. The survey covers 3,760 residents, and detailed individual interviews were conducted with 1,761 selected respondents to help researchers understand the whereabouts, status, health, and well-being of displaced residents. RAND’s multiple reports from this effort discuss a variety of issues, including employment, emotional consequences, and determinants of return to New Orleans.

Climate Change, Migration, and Adaptation in the MENA Region
Presents empirical evidence on the impact of climate change and extreme weather events in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and Yemen.

CLIMATE MIGRATION AND SECURITY

Climate Change and U.S. Security in the Arctic
Abbie Tingstad, 2019, www.rand.org/t/CT517
Documents the testimony presented before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security on September 19, 2019, describing how the Arctic’s ongoing climate changes present challenges and opportunities for the United States.

WHAT RAND RESEARCH SAYS

Where will people live? Extreme weather, warming trends, and rising water levels will make some areas uninhabitable. Communities that are subjected to chronic climate stress or climate-related disasters are likely to use migration as an adaptive strategy—by choice or necessity. If this is the case, government officials in those communities can give other regions sufficient warning to prepare for new migrants early.

Where will people go? More than 1 million people evacuated New Orleans as a result of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. By 2009, one-third of those residents had still not returned. More than 400,000 people evacuated from Puerto Rico as a result of Hurricane Maria in 2017, and we are still gathering data on how many have returned.

How many will be affected? Between 2008 and 2015, an average of 26.4 million people per year were displaced globally by climate- or weather-related disasters. Climate change is projected to displace between 150 and 300 million people by 2050.6 If this group formed a country, it would be the fourth largest in the world, with a population nearly as large as that of the United States.

Who will help? No global agreements exist to help millions of people who are displaced by natural hazards every year. According to international refugee law, climate migrants are not legally considered refugees. Therefore, they have none of the protections officially accorded to refugees, who are technically defined as people fleeing persecution.

Few issues today are as polarizing as U.S. immigration policy, as evidenced by people’s fervent views on travel bans, a border wall, asylum-seeking, and related topics. And although many people have an opinion on such policies, the United States is in short supply of nonpartisan studies to inform pressing policy decisions. For more than two decades, RAND has sought to fill these analytic gaps in the United States and across the world. Our work seeks to help policymakers measure, understand, and forecast migration populations; understand environmental, political, and security drivers of migration; develop and evaluate approaches to deter and detect unlawful migrant groups; and formulate and manage assistance programs for legal migrants.

**Management of Migration Across the U.S. Southern Border**

Few issues today are as polarizing as U.S. immigration policy, as evidenced by people’s fervent views on travel bans, a border wall, asylum-seeking, and related topics. And although many people have an opinion on such policies, the United States is in short supply of nonpartisan studies to inform pressing policy decisions. For more than two decades, RAND has sought to fill these analytic gaps in the United States and across the world. Our work seeks to help policymakers measure, understand, and forecast migration populations; understand environmental, political, and security drivers of migration; develop and evaluate approaches to deter and detect unlawful migrant groups; and formulate and manage assistance programs for legal migrants.

**SOUTHWEST BORDER APPREHENSIONS**

1.6 million  
2000  

851,500  
2018

60% of apprehensions are families and children

**NATIONAL IMMIGRATION POLICY**

**Modeling the Impact of Border-Enforcement Measures**
Investigates the impact of surveillance technology on levels of U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions of unlawful border-crossers between ports of entry along the southwest border.

**Employer Verification Mandates and Infant Health of Mexican Immigrants**
Kate W. Strully, Robert Bozick, Ying Huang, and Lane F. Burgette, 2019, *Population Research and Policy Review*
Assesses how Mexican immigrants’ health is affected by four sets of state- and county-level laws: E-Verify laws, laws that restrict access to driver’s licenses, laws that permit local law enforcement to perform immigration law enforcement functions, and laws that authorize state police to demand proof of lawful presence.

**Neither Deportation nor Amnesty: An Alternative for the Immigration Debate Building a Bridge Across Deportation-Amnesty Divide**
Proposes minor changes to the “Cancellation of Removal” immigration statute to offer a pragmatic solution for millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

“With respect to the immigration debate, if the rule-of-law and humanitarian sides were able to take a measured step toward each other to compromise, the American polity might be able to serve both core American principles well and possibly restore some faith in government.”
Ligor, 2018

**Immigration in a Changing Economy: California’s Experience**
Assesses the issues and challenges that immigration has posed for California from the 1960s to the 1990s. This is the first study to take a 30-year perspective of the topic, profiling the changing character of immigrants by considering their economic contributions, their effects on other workers and the public sector, and their educational and economic success.

**The Mixed Economic Progress of Immigrants**
Evaluates the employment and education of Mexican, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and other migrant groups in California in the 1990s. The study measures wage and education gaps between groups of different origins to inform equitable policies.

**U.S. BORDERS**

**Human Smuggling and Associated Revenues: What Do or Can We Know About Routes from Central America to the United States?**
Offers a preliminary estimate of transnational criminal organizations’ revenues from smuggling migrants from the Northern Triangle region of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) to the United States and characterizes the organizations’ structures, operations, and financing.

**Measuring the Effectiveness of Border Security Between Ports-of-Entry**
Presents research and recommendations on ways that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security can reliably measure the efforts of the national border-security enterprise between ports of entry.

“…the between-ports-of-entry border-control challenge...remains complex. It involves transit via air, land, and sea, and multiple component agencies.”
Willis et al., 2010

**Newcomers in American Schools: Meeting the Educational Needs of Immigrant Youth**
Considers how schools could assist newly arriving immigrant children in adjusting and fully participating in economic, social, and political life in the United States. The group of immigrants who arrived in the United States during the 1980s was the largest and most diverse since the beginning of the century, thereby having profound effects on urban areas and on the institutions called upon to assist those immigrants.
Taxpayer costs usually diminish greatly over the long term as immigrants integrate fully into society.”

Smith, 2018
The increasing number of migrants around the world is posing some of the most-urgent challenges and opportunities for communities, regions, multilateral organizations, and nations. **The RAND Corporation is continuing to assess and find answers to these and other challenges.** In this section, we raise many of the questions that likely will guide migration-related research over the next decade.

### BIG QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
How can population movements be better measured, explained, and forecast in the United States and globally? Where will global conflict and climate migrants go? How can we improve measures, estimates, and forecasts of cross-border migration flows into the United States in the near and medium terms?

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR MIGRATION
What are the climate, security, and economic factors that prompt mass migration? What environmental changes prompt migration, including sudden shocks (such as hurricanes, flooding, and heatwaves) and slow-moving stressors (such as persistent drought and sea level-rise)? Which populations may be triggered to migrate? How can new methods and tools help analysts and policymakers understand key factors for migration into the United States, such as home-country economics, climate, and violence?

MEETING THE NEEDS OF MIGRANTS, THEIR HOST COMMUNITIES, AND THE COMMUNITIES STAYING BEHIND
How can immediate emergency and humanitarian assistance be improved and coordinated with longer-term needs and planning? How can conditions in both refugee camps and urban host communities be improved? How can access to education, jobs, and health care be improved for both migrants and host communities? How can regions meet the needs of those who stay behind? What happens to local economies as people migrate away?
SECURITY IMPLICATIONS
What are the characteristics of destabilizing migration risks around the world? What are the different security implications of climate stresses and climate shocks? How might these implications affect U.S. foreign military bases and international relations? What are the potential political reactions to migration in regions where migrants leave and where they relocate?

LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
How can the rule of law be maintained during mass migration? How can new migrants have access to justice, security, and legal protections?

LABOR MARKETS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES
What happens to local economies as people migrate away? What are the economic implications of new migrants entering a labor force?

RESILIENCE
Where do people go, what is their health and well-being, and how are they received in host communities?

BORDER AND IMMIGRATION POLICY
What are the impacts of U.S. immigration enforcement policy choices on migration flows and on undocumented migrant populations? How do U.S. efforts to aid economic development, social stability, and the rule of law in migrant-sending countries affect migration from those countries? How are resources allocated across the many links in the immigration enforcement and processing chain, and can the allocation be improved? How do immigration enforcement policies affect the economic, social, and physical well-being of immigrant communities in the United States?