

The purpose with this evidence brief is to present recent evidence from four selected sources on key aspects related to the interlinkage between migration and gender equality. The brief includes aspects such as the gender dimensions in the migration cycle, gender-based violence, and the challenges regarding data collection.

Women, men and non-binary persons migrate for various reasons such as searching for better lives, economic opportunities, family reunification, and to escape conflict, poverty, climate-related threats, human rights abuses, and/or (gender-based) violence. Migration is dynamic and very complex, it may be voluntary or forced. It involves opportunities but also severe risks and vulnerability.

GENDER AND MIGRATION¹

In this comprehensive reader, the authors outline gender and migration patterns during the past 30 years. The researchers point out that “Gender is one of the key forms of differentiation within societies which interacts with other social divisions such as age, class, ethnicity, nationality, race, disability and sexual orientation”. Gendered policies, discourses, and practices can facilitate or restrict movements of women, men and non-binary persons. While the number of women migrants has increased overall, there are still slightly more men migrating than women.

The drivers of migration impact women and men differently. Women and men also migrate differently, whether it be between rural and urban areas, intra-regionally or globally. Gendered segregation of labour affects migration for both low- and high skilled labourers. Among persons that are highly educated, more women than men migrate.

The reader includes reference to research drawing from the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) which suggests that gender inequalities can both motivate and prevent women from migrating. While some women may migrate to escape discrimination and violence, others are not able due to care responsibilities, lack of resources, and/or rights.

A growing literature examines the impact of migrating on transnational families, parenting and children (left behind and/or migrating). Thus, migration can affect gender relations in households and communities in various ways. The authors further observe that integration measures in countries of destination have failed to consider gender, class, race, and religion.

Definitions of migration² and gender equality

- **Migration:** The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.³
- **Displacement:** The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.⁴
- **Gender equality:** Sida defines that gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys and non-binary persons have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the same power to shape their own lives and contribute to society.⁵

GENDER AND MIGRATION: TRENDS, GAPS AND URGENT ACTION⁶

According to the IOM World Development Report 2024, there are an estimated 281 million international migrants, of which 52 percent are men and 48 percent are women.

One of the report’s chapters by Bauloz et al., discusses how gender affects migrants in diverse ways along “the migration cycle”: From departing their country of origin to entering and staying in transit and destination countries and, sometimes, in returning to their country of origin (see Figure 1 on next page).

¹ Christou, A. and Kofman, E. (2022) [Gender and Migration](#) IMISCOE Research Series, Open source.

² There is no globally agreed definition on migrant or migration. Please refer to IOM Glossary for definitions on related terms (i.e refugees, trafficking in persons, smuggling etc). [IOM Glossary on Migration \(2019\)](#)

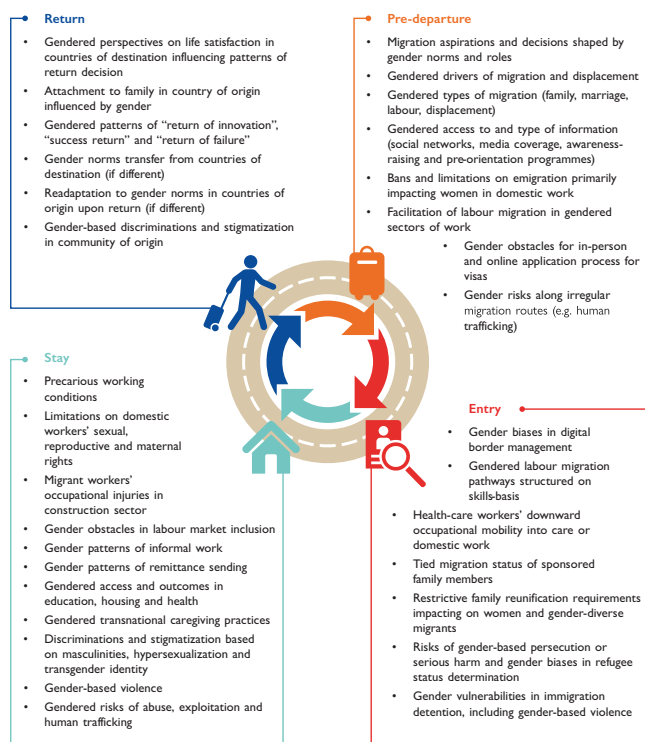
³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Sida Portfolio Overview Gender Equality 2023 [Portfolio Overview 2023: Gender Equality \(sida.se\)](#)

⁶ Bauloz, C., M. Walton-Roberts, R. Jaji and T. Lee (2024). [Gender and migration: Trends, gaps and urgent action](#). In: World Migration Report 2024 (M. McAuliffe and L.A. Ouchou, eds.). IOM, Geneva. Open source.

Figure 1. Gender dimensions throughout the migration cycle⁷



The report exemplifies how socialised gender roles, norms, and relations affects all aspects of migration. For example, countries' policies affect migration by encouraging or limiting it; long-term high-skilled migration policies tend to benefit men; men and women in the agricultural sector and female domestic workers risk precarious working conditions; and women labourers risk deportation if pregnant.

In informal sectors there is also a high prevalence of trafficking in persons. Sexual exploitation is the most common form of trafficking in persons where most victims are women and girls.

On average women earn less than men and pay higher transfer fees. Women seem to remit the same or more, and a larger proportion of their income. There is also a gendered difference as regards to migrants, access to education, training, housing and health, as well as social cohesion, with women and girls facing greater obstacles.

Gendered perspectives on life satisfaction, women's family attachments in origin countries, and gender-based discrimination all affect decisions to return. Men may bring back more patriarchal gender norms upon returning to country of origin.

MIGRANT EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE⁸

This article reviews 84 previous studies of migrants' experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) along their journeys. It concludes that GBV prevalence is higher amongst migrants compared to local populations, and significantly higher for vulnerable groups of migrants such as forced migrants and irregular migrants - regardless of gender.

Migrant women and girls travelling without legal documentation and financial resources face even higher risks of violence and are forced to or may resort to transactional sex as a survival strategy. In some contexts this is even normalized. Sexual violence towards men tends to be more physical and conducted as a form of humiliation or torture. Boys' vulnerability to GBV is often overlooked and boys are in some cases more at risk than girls. Men and boys are less likely to receive protection services.

Migrants without legal documentation or with unstable residence status often lack access to services - leading to long-lasting physical scars and psychological distress. Fear of deportation also make migrants more vulnerable to GBV and refrain them from reporting.

Perpetrators are often persons with power over migrants such as border guards, police, employers, soldiers and smugglers as well as co-migrants.

GENDER AND MIGRATION DATA: CAN WE TRUST IT?⁹

This paper developed by Guy Abel for the UN Network on Migration review data on gender and migration. Data on migration and displacement is overall a concern as data collection is difficult due to a number of factors.¹⁰ It observes unstandardised data collection methods, poor availability, and untimely publishing, due largely to costs and difficulties collecting data. Further issues are "transiency, accountability and ethics". The [UN Department of Social Affairs](#) has the most complete data.

⁷ IOM (2024). World Migration Report 2024

⁸ Tan, Sze Eng, and Katie Kuskminder (2022). "Migrant Experiences of Sexual and Gender Based Violence: A Critical Interpretative Synthesis." Globalization and Health 18: 68.

⁹ Abel, G. (2022). "Gender and Migration Data". Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development. Open source.

¹⁰ Please see further discussion on the difficulties on data related to migration and displacement in Sida's brief Migration and displacement in the multi-dimensional poverty analysis.