

Data shows migration more strongly linked to aspiration than desperation

April 17 2018



Credit: European Commission Joint Research Centre

A new global analysis of intentions to migrate suggests that individuals

preparing to move abroad are more likely to do so out of aspiration for a better life, economic opportunities and development of skills, rather than sheer desperation.

While the [analysis](#) does not include individuals who are forced to migrate, such as refugees and [asylum seekers](#), it provides valuable insights on voluntary migrants.

Between 2010 and 2015, around 30% of the population of 157 countries around the world expressed a wish to move abroad, while less than 1% have actually migrated.

The analysis finds that while being dissatisfied with one's own standard of living is associated with a higher probability to desire and to plan a move abroad, the link with making concrete preparations is less clear.

In fact, for areas such as Africa and Latin America, those individuals satisfied with their income have a higher probability of preparing to migrate than those who are dissatisfied.

The analysis shows a gap between the wish and the actual preparation to migrate. As such, the share of the population expressing a desire to migrate is an imperfect measure of what is often portrayed as potential migration.

A range of factors including being young, male, foreign-born, highly educated, unemployed, or having networks abroad are all strongly associated with a higher likelihood of preparing for international migration.

The analysis also confirms that the relationship between an individual's income and the probability to migrate differs across geographical areas and the income levels of countries.

Data suggests that in high income countries those with higher individual income are less likely to migrate, while the opposite is true for [middle income countries](#).

Here, data suggests that those with a higher individual [income](#) are more likely to make concrete preparations to move abroad than poorer parts of the population.

Background

The analysis is based on data from a set of questions relating to the intention and preparation for migration contained within the Gallup World Poll Survey.

Each year, Gallup interviews around 1000 residents per country, of almost every country in the world.

It is the only survey of its kind with global coverage, with questions covering a wide range of aspects including wellbeing, ideology and individual opinions.

Using this data, JRC scientists analysed intentions to migrate in different forms: the desire to move abroad, actual plans, and preparations.

Provided by European Commission Joint Research Centre

Citation: Data shows migration more strongly linked to aspiration than desperation (2018, April 17) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-migration-strongly-linked-aspiration-desperation.html>

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