

# Uprooted

THE GROWING CRISIS FOR  
REFUGEE AND MIGRANT  
CHILDREN

STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT

unicef    
70 YEARS FOR EVERY CHILD

## The global perspective

The story of child refugees and migrants is a global story, not one confined to a single region

Nearly

# 1 in 200

children in the world  
is a child refugee



Nearly

# 1 in 3

children living outside  
their country of birth  
is a refugee



# 2x

 as many child  
refugees\* in 2015  
than in 2005

### Child refugees

- > 31 million children live outside their country of birth, including 11 million child refugees and asylum-seekers.
- > Nearly one in three children living outside their country of birth is a refugee; for adults, the proportion under UNHCR's mandate is less than 1 in 20.
- > In 2015, just two countries – the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan – accounted for nearly half of all child refugees under UNHCR's mandate; about three-quarters of all child refugees under UNHCR's mandate came from only 10 countries.
- > Today, nearly 1 in every 200 children in the world is a child refugee. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of child refugees under the UNHCR's mandate more than doubled. During the same period, the total number of all child migrants rose by 21 per cent.
- > Approximately 10 million child refugees are hosted across the world, primarily within the regions where they were born.
- > Girls and boys are equally represented among registered refugees, although children's risk of specific protection violations – such as recruitment by armed forces and armed groups, or sexual and gender-based violence – may differ between girls and boys.
- > Overall, the refugee population is much younger than the migrant population. While a clear majority of the world's migrants are adults, children now comprise half of all refugees.
- > The 10 countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees are all in Asia and Africa, with Turkey hosting by-far the largest total number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate. Although complete age-disaggregated data are not available for refugees in Turkey, its substantial share of total refugees makes Turkey likely the host of the largest number of child refugees in the world.

#### Data about children are crucial to decision-making but are incomplete

Children are too often relegated to the fringes of the world's debates about migration and displacement. One reason is the lack of hard numbers to support the case for children. Without reliable data, evidence-based debates and policymaking are hampered.

Global estimates are incomplete and therefore do not tell us the whole story. We do not know where all the world's child refugees and migrants were born, how old they are, or whether their migration was forced or voluntary. There are even fewer comprehensive and comparable indications about how child migrants fare in their countries of origin, transit, and destination.

This report is an effort to bring together the best data that are available, but effectively addressing the rights and needs of children requires concerted action to fill the gaps that remain.

\*Under UNHCR's mandate

## Internally displaced children

- > By the end of 2015, some 41 million people were displaced by violence and conflict within their own countries; an estimated 17 million of them were children.
- > By the end of 2015, 19.2 million people were internally displaced by violence and conflict across Asia, a staggering 47 per cent of the global total for similar internal displacements.
- > Together, the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Yemen accounted for nearly one-third of the world's total of conflict-induced internal displacements by the end of 2015.
- > There were 12.4 million internally displaced persons by conflict and violence across Africa in 2015.
- > Four countries in Africa – Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan – were among the top 10 countries globally for new, violence-induced internal displacements in 2015.

## Child migrants

- > Globally, three out of every five international child migrants live in Asia or Africa.
- > Since 1990, the proportion of international child migrants within the global child population has remained stable at just over 1 per cent, but a rising global population means that the absolute number of child migrants has increased significantly in the past 25 years.
- > Today, 1 in every 70 children worldwide lives outside their country of birth. Like adults, most children who move migrate primarily within their own geographical region.
- > When girls and boys move across international borders, they do so in almost equal numbers. This pattern is contrary to adult migration, where there are pronounced differences in the proportion of men and women by region.
- > Half of all the world's child migrants live in just 15 countries, led by the United States of America, which is home to 3.7 million child migrants.

Around the world

# 1 in 8



migrants  
is a child

Around the world

# 28 million

children have been forcibly displaced



And there are

# 20 million

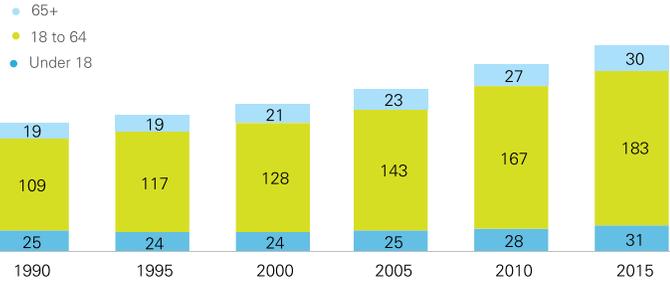
other international child migrants



# Trends in childhood migration and displacement

## In 2015, the number of international migrants reached 244 million; 31 million of them were children

Number of international migrants by age, 1990–2015 (in millions)

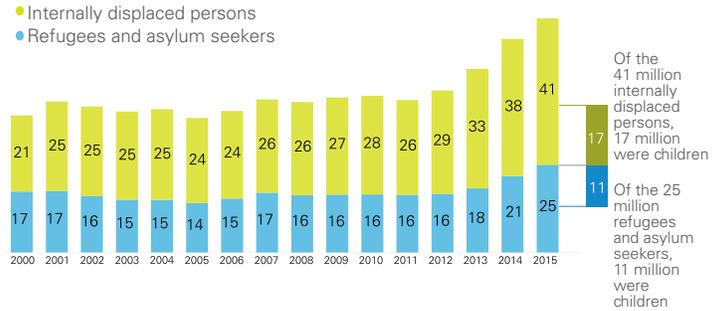


**Note:** 'International migrants' refers to people living in a country or area other than where they were born. In cases where information on the country of birth was not available, it refers to people living in a country other than that of their citizenship.

**Source:** United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by age and sex*, United Nations, New York, 2015.

## Both internal and international forced displacements have been rising rapidly over the past five years

Number of displaced persons, 2000–2015 (in millions)



**Note:** These numbers include refugees under UNHCR's mandate, Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA and asylum applications that had not been adjudicated by the end of a given reporting year. Internally displaced persons are as reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Since 2007 the refugee population category also includes people in a refugee-like situation, most of whom were previously included in the 'others of concern' group.

**Source:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2016; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2016; and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 2016. The number of displaced children in 2015 comes from UNICEF analysis based on aforementioned sources.

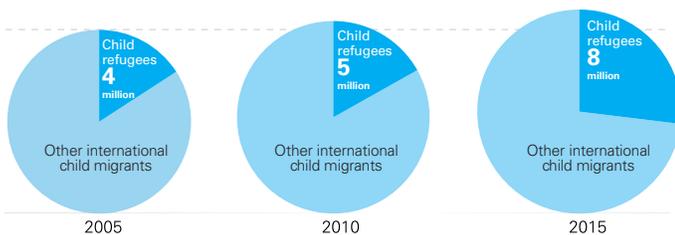
Children make up less than one-third of the global population, but they comprised half of all refugees under the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees' (UNHCR) mandate in 2015.

Today, nearly one-third of children living outside their countries of birth are child refugees; for adults, the proportion is less than 1 in 20.

Worldwide, nearly 1 in every 200 children is a child refugee. In 2005, the ratio was roughly 1 in every 350 children.

## Nearly one-third of children living outside their country of birth are refugees

Distribution of international migrants under 18 years of age by status, 2005, 2010 and 2015 (in millions)

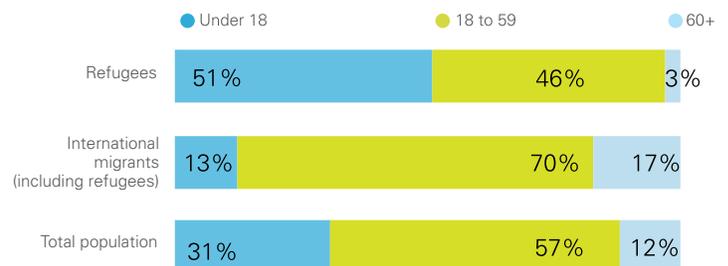


**Note:** This figure refers to child refugees under UNHCR's mandate. If children registered with UNRWA are included, there were approximately 10 million child refugees in 2015.

**Source:** UNICEF analysis based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2016; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by age and sex*, United Nations, New York, 2015; and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2016.

## The refugee population is much younger than the overall migrant population

Age distribution of refugees, international migrants and total population, 2015 (percentage)



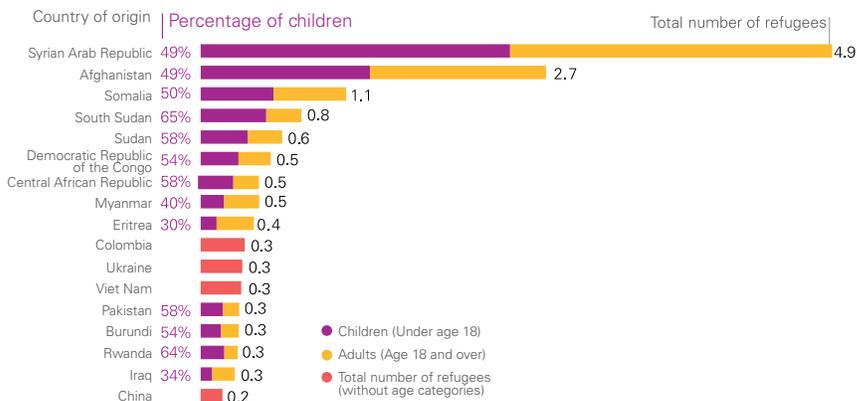
**Note:** Refugees under UNHCR's mandate. An additional 5.2 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA are not included.

**Source:** UNICEF analysis based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2016; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by age and sex*, United Nations, New York, 2015; and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 revision*, United Nations, New York, 2015.

# Children among the world's refugees

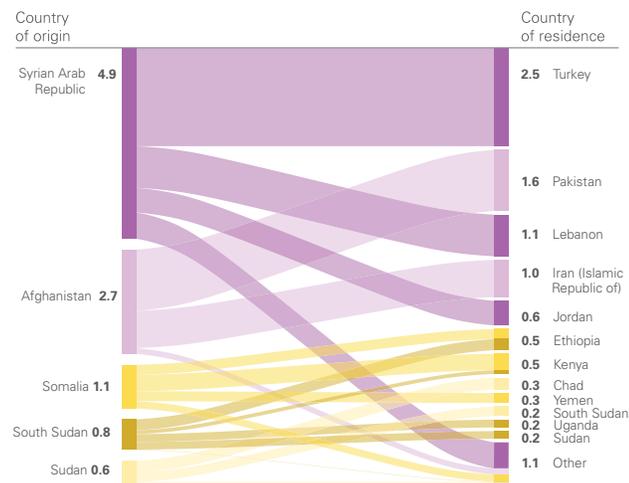
## Just two countries account for nearly half of all child refugees in the world

Largest refugee populations by country of origin and age, 2015 (in millions)



## In 2015, one in six of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate lived in Turkey

Top five countries of origin for refugees by country of residence, 2015 (in millions)



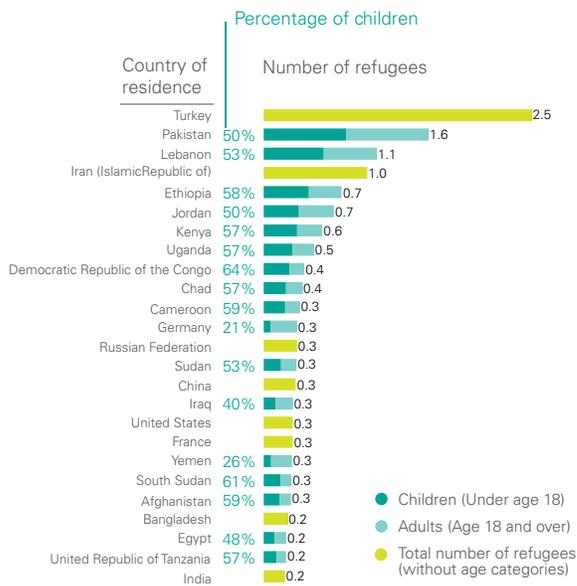
**Note:** Refugees under UNHCR's mandate. An additional 5.2 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA are not included or plotted. Age categories shown for countries with information on age for at least 50 per cent of the population, with the exception of the Syrian Arab Republic, with information on age for 45 per cent of the population.

**Source:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, 2016, and unpublished data table, cited with permission.

## The story of child migrants and refugees is a global story, not one confined to a single region

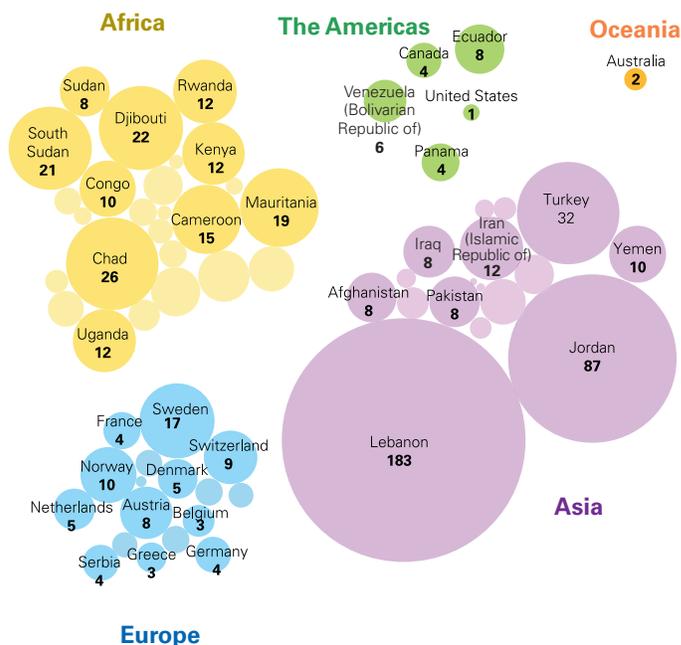
### Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate

Largest refugee populations by age and country of destination, 2015 (in millions)



### Lebanon and Jordan host the largest numbers of refugees relative to their population

Refugees per 1,000 population in countries hosting over 10,000 refugees, 2015



**Note:** Refugees under UNHCR's mandate. An additional 5.2 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic are not included. Age categories shown for countries with information on age, for at least 50 per cent of the population. The number of refugees does not include applicants for asylum whose refugee status has yet to be determined. At the end of 2015, there were 3.2 million asylum applications pending worldwide.

**Source:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2016; and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 revision*, United Nations, New York, 2015.

# The regional perspective

## Migration within regions accounts for more than half of all international migration

Number of international migrants by region of origin and destination, 2015 (in millions)

### The Americas

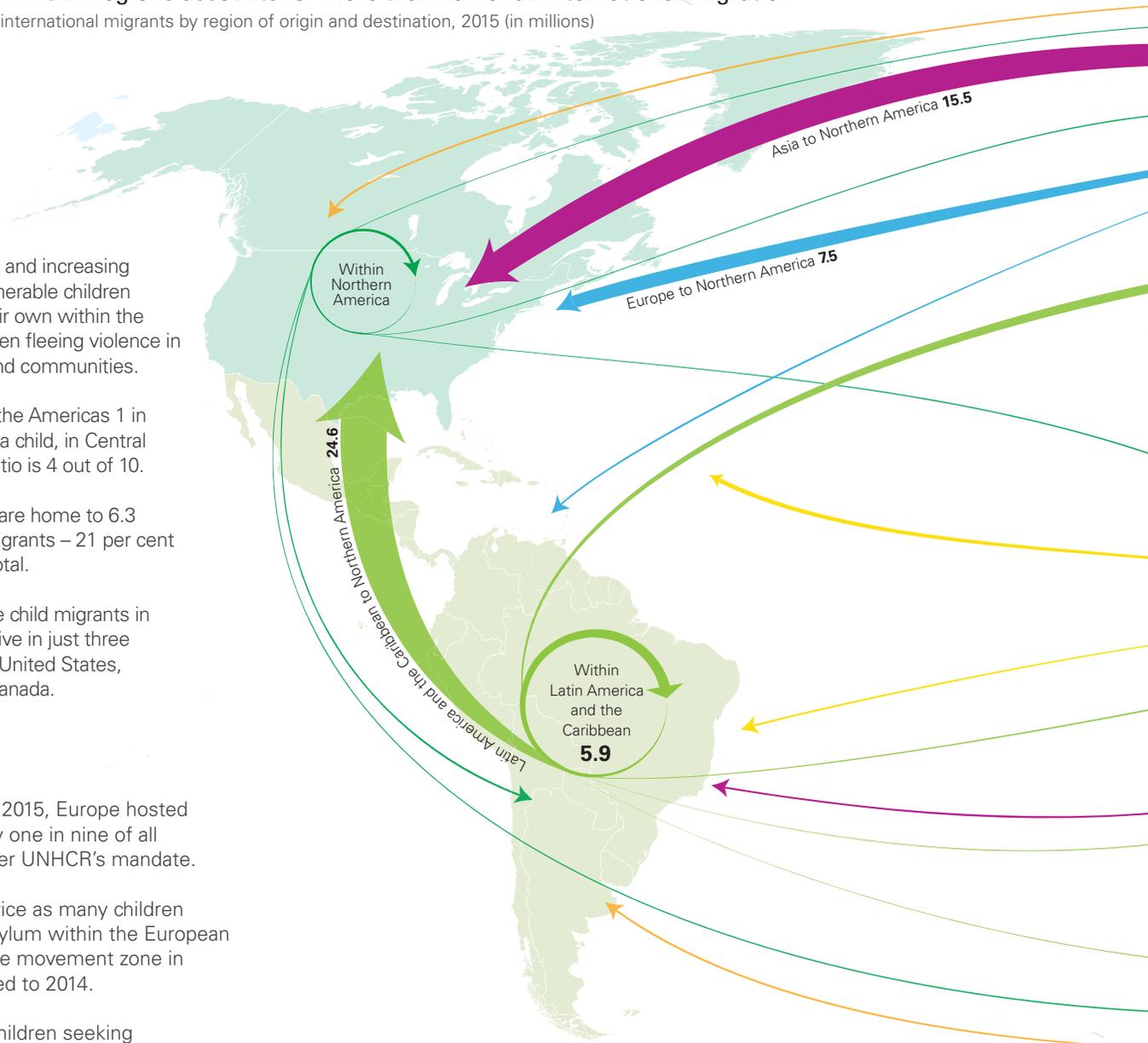
- > There is a high and increasing number of vulnerable children moving on their own within the Americas – often fleeing violence in their homes and communities.
- > While in all of the Americas 1 in 10 migrants is a child, in Central America the ratio is 4 out of 10.
- > The Americas are home to 6.3 million child migrants – 21 per cent of the global total.
- > Four out of five child migrants in the Americas live in just three countries: the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

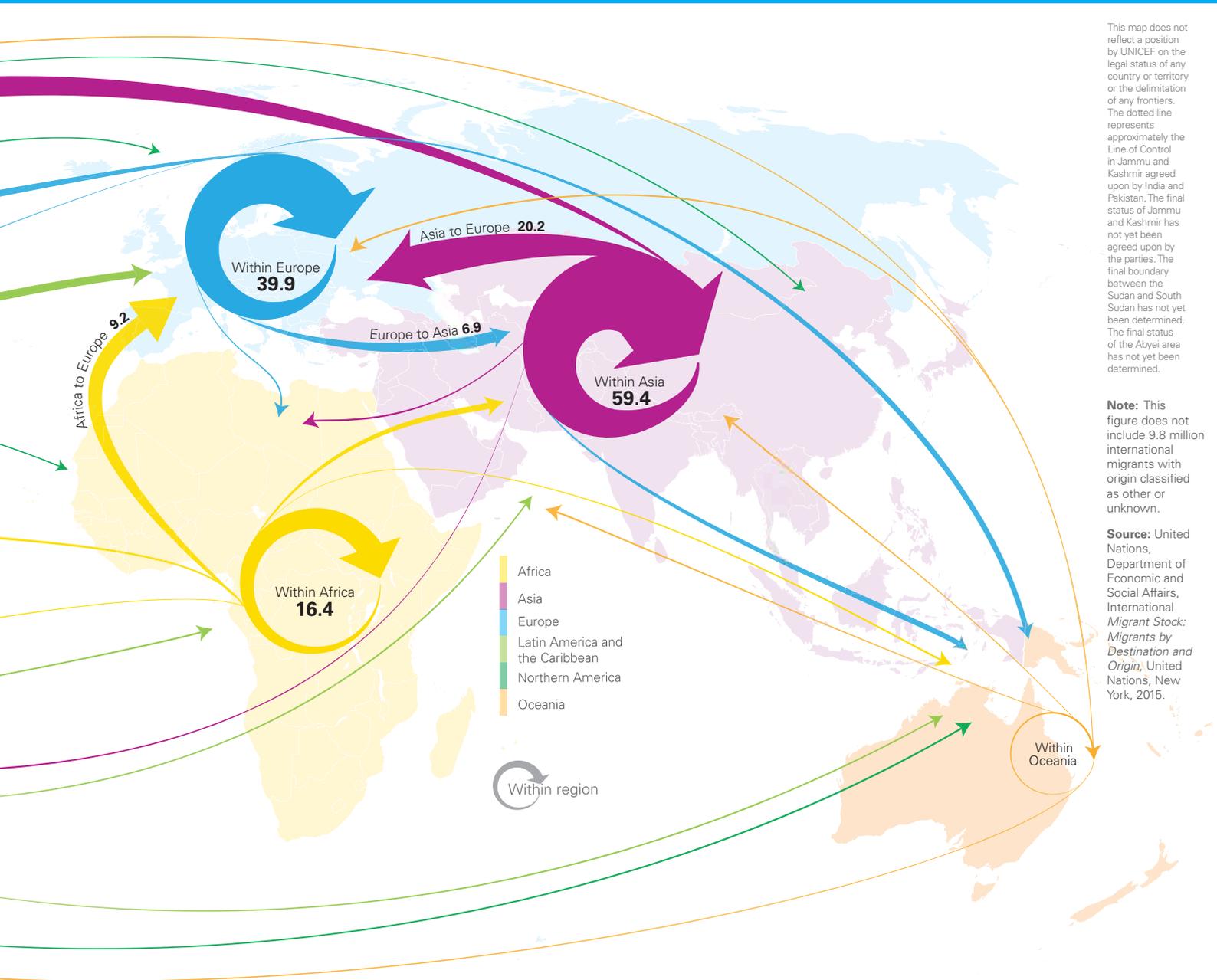
### Europe

- > At the end of 2015, Europe hosted approximately one in nine of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate.
- > More than twice as many children applied for asylum within the European Union and free movement zone in 2015 compared to 2014.
- > Seven in 10 children seeking asylum in the European Union and free movement zone were fleeing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan and Iraq.
- > The 5.4 million child migrants in Europe are just 7 per cent of all the region's migrants. This is the lowest share of children in a total migrant population for any region. Approximately one in six of the world's child migrants lives in Europe.

### Africa

- > Around 5.4 million refugees originate from African countries – roughly one-third of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate.
- > Some 86 per cent of African refugees find asylum in other African countries.
- > Approximately one-half of African refugees are children – nearly 3 million children who have been forced from their own countries and are confronting the world's harshest realities.
- > Africa has one of the world's lowest rates of child migration, with just 1 in 90 African children living outside their country of birth. But among the migrants in Africa, nearly one in three is a child, more than twice the global average.





This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

**Note:** This figure does not include 9.8 million international migrants with origin classified as other or unknown.

**Source:** United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International *Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin*, United Nations, New York, 2015.

## Asia

- > The five countries and territories hosting the largest numbers of refugees in the world are all in Asia.
- > In 2015, around 45 per cent of all child refugees under UNHCR's mandate had origins in the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan.
- > Asia is home to two in five of the world's international child migrants.
- > Some of the Asian countries hosting large numbers of child migrants – which include Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey – all host large numbers of child refugees. This reflects the continuing toll of conflict rather than a trend of voluntary child movement.

## Oceania

- > The combined impact of climate change and migration dynamics is already affecting children and young people in many Pacific Island nations.
- > Between 1990 and 2015, the total number of child migrants increased in Oceania from 430,000 to 670,000.
- > Child migrants constitute a high proportion of all children in Oceania. Six in every 100 children in the region are migrants.
- > Just over 48,000 refugees live in Oceania. While disaggregated data on the number of children in that total are not available, recent reports indicate that children seeking refuge in the region face serious danger as they attempt to reach safer shores.

Around the world, 31 million children are living outside their country of birth, including 11 million child refugees and asylum-seekers; another 17 million children have been displaced within their own countries by violence and conflict.

They make their way to new homes by land, by air and by sea.

Some are in search of safety and security; some are rejoining family members; others are pursuing new opportunities. Nearly all have multiple reasons for moving.

Some move with their families and others are alone; some have planned their journeys for years while others must flee without warning.

All are seeking a different future from the one they have left behind.

No matter why they move or how they arrive, children are at the centre of the world's population movements. Whether they are migrants, refugees or internally displaced, they are always children: entitled to protection, support and all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

This snapshot contains selected statistics from the report "Uprooted – The Growing Crisis for Refugee and Migrant Children", published by UNICEF, September 2016. An electronic copy of the full report is available at <http://www.unicef.org/uprooted/>



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Cover Photo: Addis, holding his 30-month-old son, Lato, sits in a cell at the Alghaiha detention centre in the coastal town of Garabulli on the north-western coast of Libya. The detention facility houses migrants apprehended while attempting the dangerous voyage across the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. Addis, from Eritrea, is now a single parent. He and his wife decided to leave their homeland right after Lato was born. The family spent two years in Sudan, where Addis worked as a driver. "After that, we decided to go to Tripoli, where my brother is working in a supermarket," he said. His wife died during the journey by truck between Sudan and Libya. With the help of another man making the journey, he buried her under the sand. "Now I am here in this detention centre because, as we were only 200 kilometres from Tripoli, the police caught us at a check point. My dream is still to join my brother in Tripoli and offer a better life to my son," he said.

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