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DEBUNKING MIGRATION MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

MELISSA SIEGEL

EMN Educational Seminar on Migration

25 August 2021



Outline

Myths and misconceptions around

- Who is a migrant?
- Migration trends
- The migration development nexus



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Who is a migrant?

Who is perceived as a migrant?



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Word Cloud here

- Question: What comes to mind when you hear the term migrant?



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Who is a migrant?

Who is perceived as a migrant?

- People who are from developing countries
- People who are poor
- People who are unskilled
- People from Africa
- Refugees
- People coming across the Mediterranean in boats



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Who is a migrant?



- Normalize migration **Who is a migrant? Mygration Stories**



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'Mygration Story' Series

Our 'Mygration Story' series tracks the family histories of staff and fellows at UNU. The aim is to show that many of us owe our lives and careers to the courage of migrant ancestors. People who left their homes to build safer or better lives — for themselves and for their children. With this monthly series we want to show that migration is not an historical aberration, but a surprisingly common element in family histories worldwide.



Mygration Story: A Migrant's View on Migrants

27 March 2017

When people ask me where I'm from, I pause. I take a deep breath and try to decide if I should give the long story or the short story. I was born in Abergavenny, a small town in Wales. When I was one year old, we moved to Hong Kong, and spent an amazing 10 years living there....

[Continue Reading →](#)



Mygration Story: Who Is a Migrant Anyway?

30 November 2016

I identify strongly as a migration researcher. So I sometimes feel inadequate next to all my colleagues who can brandish intriguing migration histories from their own lives. My story seems parochial by comparison: I was born and raised in Oslo, Norway, and so were both my parents. I s...

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Mygration Story: Building Up & Giving Back Through Transnational Living

26 October 2016

Like most Americans, I have a pretty mixed up immigrant background: in my case from Sweden, Poland, Romania, Ukraine and Russia. My mother's family emigrated from Sweden during the 'great wave' of migration between the 1880s and the 1920s....

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Mygration Story: From Destruction to Empowerment

30 September 2016

I was born in Aachen, a child of a German mother and a Palestinian father. As a German, I am the owner of the most 'powerful passport' in the world -- a passport that grants me the freedom to travel and visit the most beautiful places around the globe. Yet, my Palestinian roots were s...

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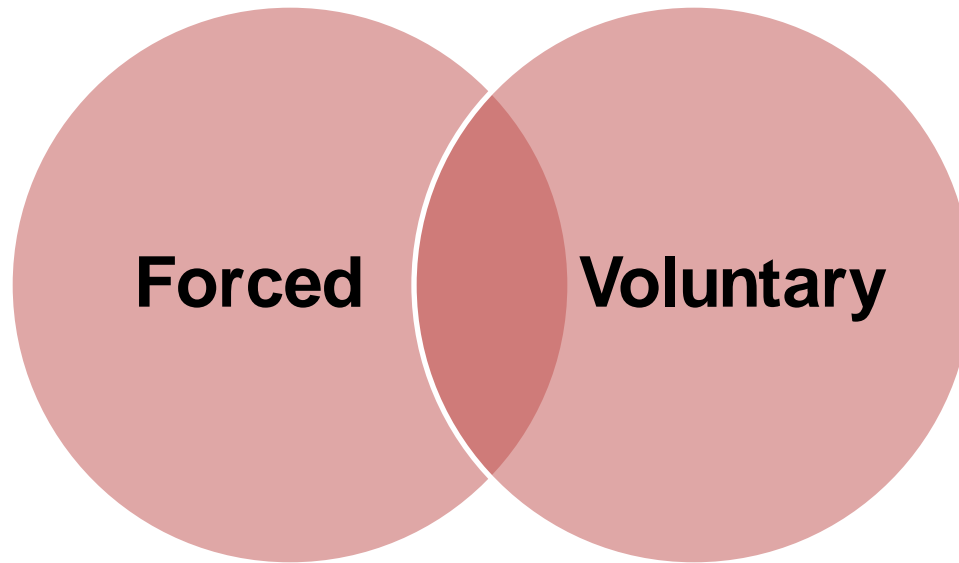
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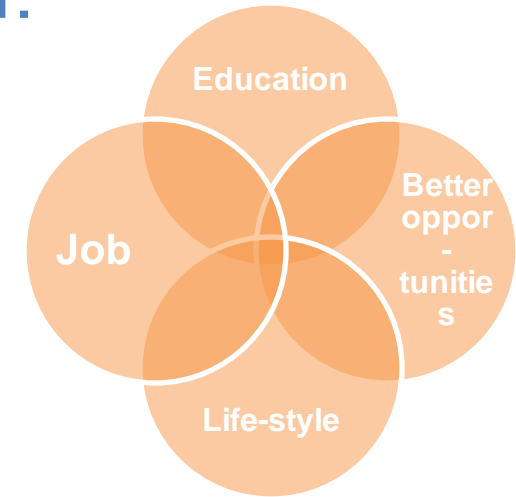
Reasons/motivations for migration



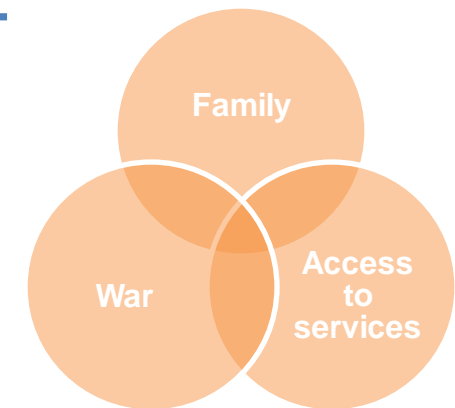
- Conflict
- Violence
- War
- Persecution
- Environment
- Access to services

- Family
- Education
- Retirement
- Job
- Life-style
- Better opportunities

Person 1:



Person 2:



Myths and Misconceptions around Migration Trends

- Migration is at an all time high and accelerating fast
- Most migration is from developing countries to developed countries
- Refugees are mainly hosted in Developed (European) countries
- Refugees are a large portion of migrants
- Poverty is the main cause of migration, especially from developing countries to developed countries



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**Myth: Migration is at an all time high
and accelerating fast**



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What is the reality? Globally?

- The number of international migrants globally in 2020: 280 million (3.5% of the world's population) (IOM, 2021)

Table 1. International migrants, 1970–2019

Year	Number of migrants	Migrants as a % of the world's population
1970	84,460,125	2.3%
1975	90,368,010	2.2%
1980	101,983,149	2.3%
1985	113,206,691	2.3%
1990	153,011,473	2.9%
1995	161,316,895	2.8%
2000	173,588,441	2.8%
2005	191,615,574	2.9%
2010	220,781,909	3.2%
2015	248,861,296	3.4%
2019	271,642,105	3.5%

Source: UN DESA, 2008, 2019a, 2019b.

Note: The number of entities (such as States, territories and administrative regions) for which data were made available in the 2019 UN DESA *Revision of International Migrant Stock* was 232. In 1970, the number of entities was 135.

Myth: Most migration is from developing countries to developed countries



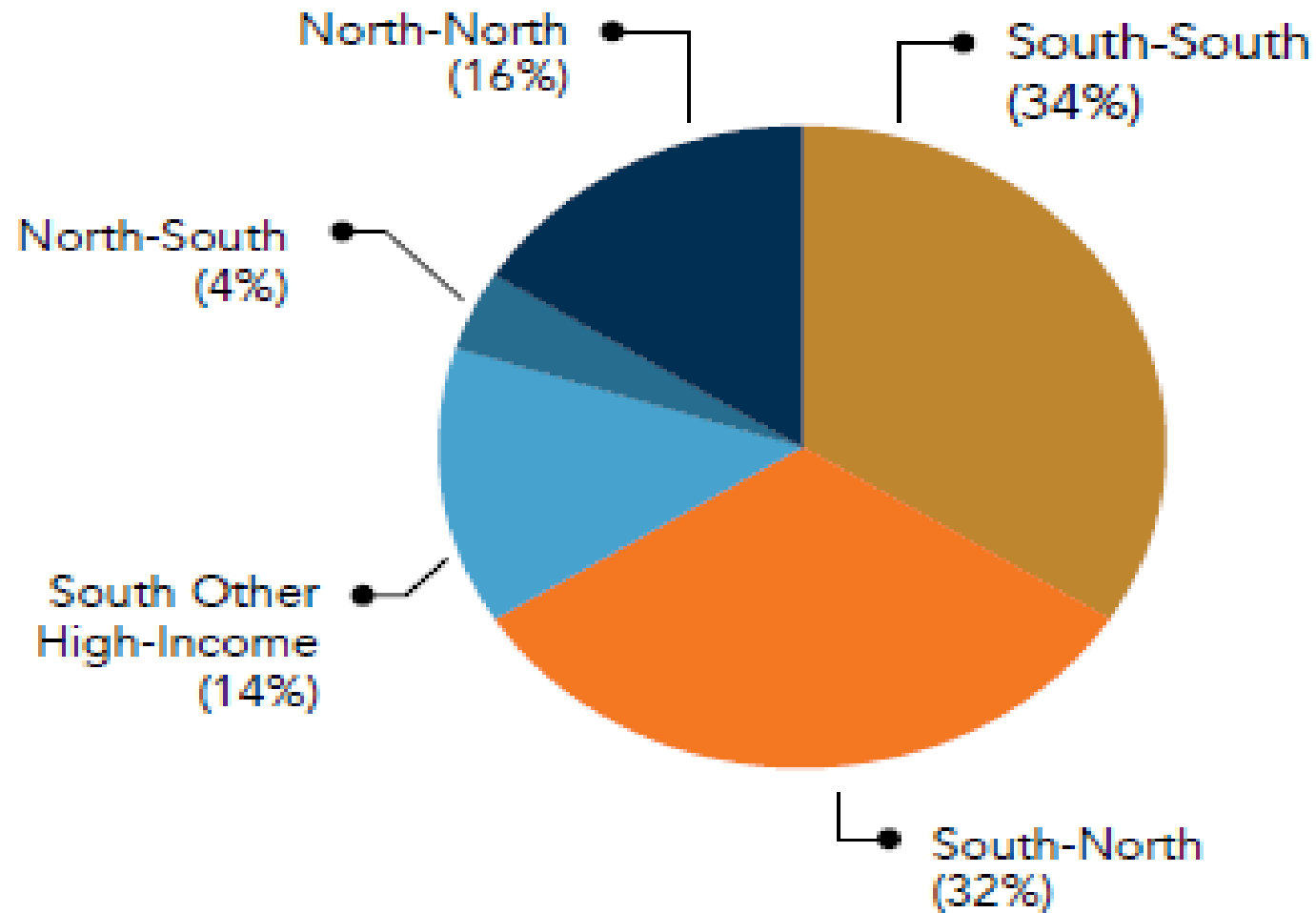
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Composition of international migrants (2018)



Source: World Bank (2019) Leveraging Economic Migration for development: A Briefing for the World Bank Board, Washington. DC. World Bank



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Misconception: numbers of migrants in host countries

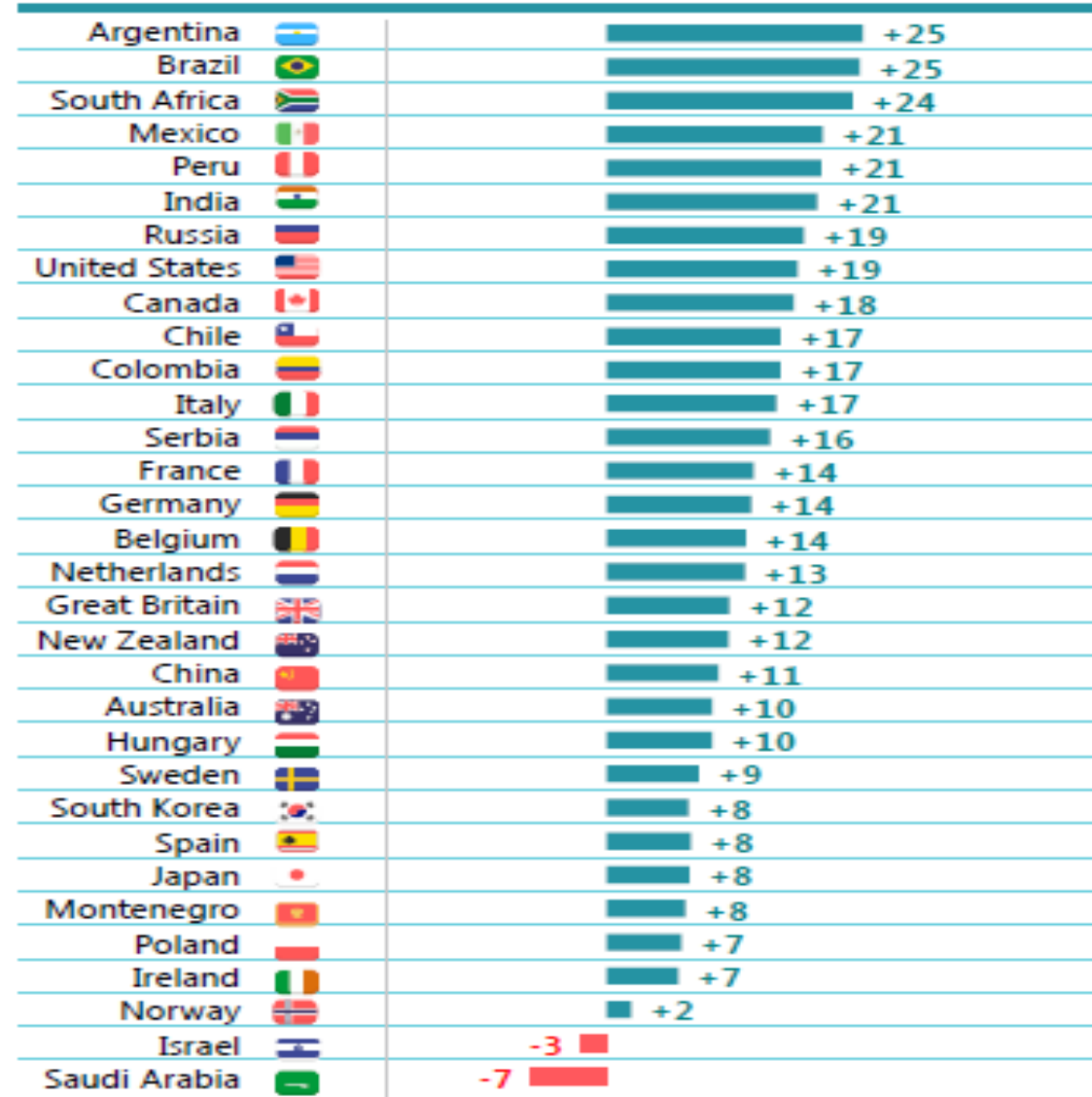


Q. What percentage of the population do you think are immigrants (i.e. not born in this country)?

People generally overestimate the level of immigration in their country. This is particularly true in Latin America.

% point difference

too low | too high



Avg. guess Actual

30	5
25	0.3
29	5
22	1
21	0.3
21	0.4
27	8
33	14
39	21
19	2
17	0.3
26	9
22	6
26	12
26	12
24	10
25	12
25	13
37	25
11	0.1
38	28
15	5
25	16
11	3
22	14
10	2
16	8
9	2
23	16
16	14
24	27
24	31

- Part of this over estimation may be because the general population is not only thinking of first generation immigrants (so those people who were born abroad) but also their children, who are often called second generation migrants although they never moved and were born in that country.



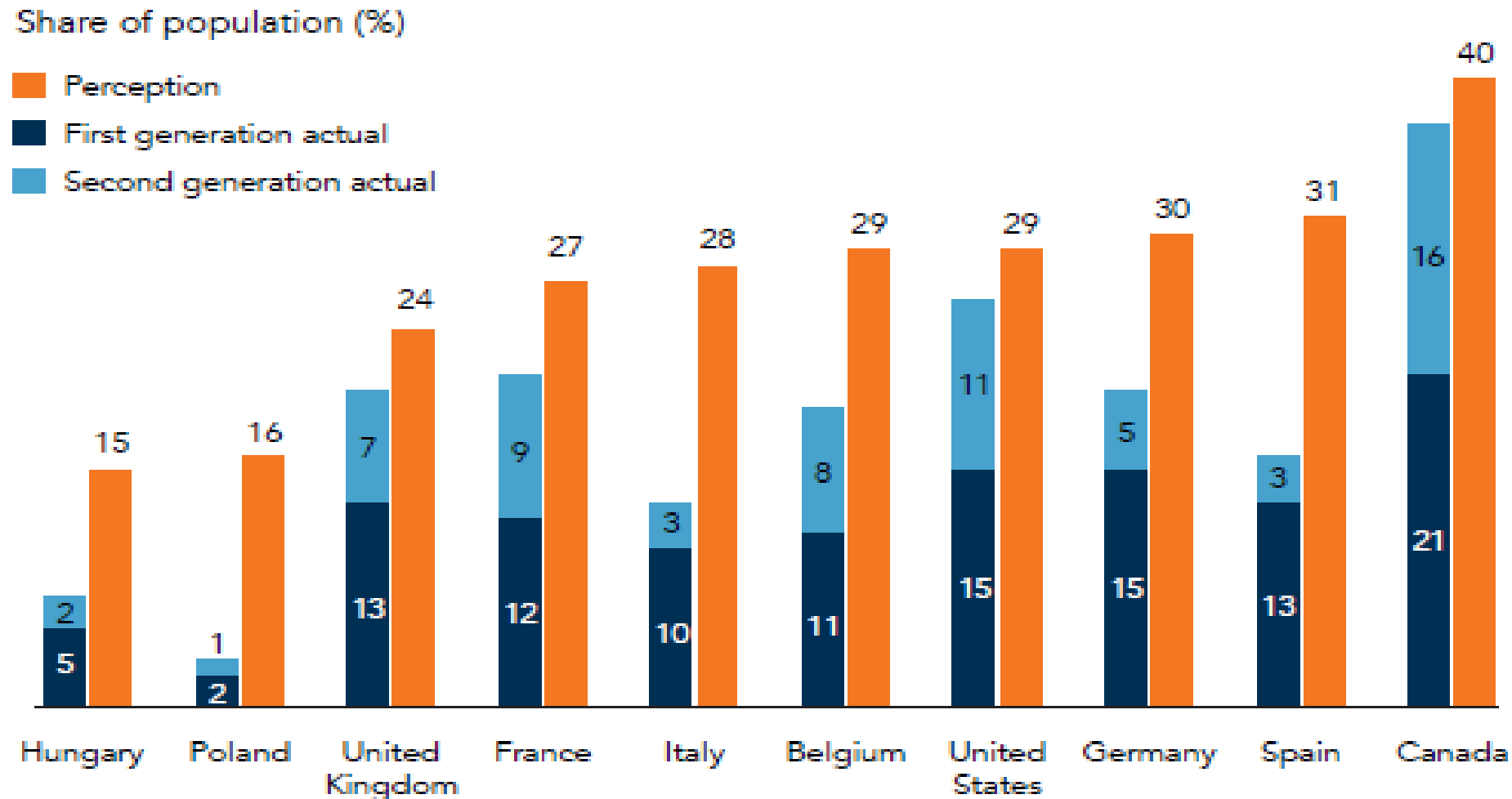
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FIGURE 2.10. Perceptions vs reality: survey respondents' estimates of immigrants' share in population vs. the actual population share



Sources: Calculations by World Bank staff using data from UNDESA, Ipsos (2018), Eurostat, U.S. Census Bureau, Migration Policy Institute, Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, and Germany's Federal Statistical Office (Destatis 2011).

**Myth: Refugees are mainly hosted in
Developed (European) countries**



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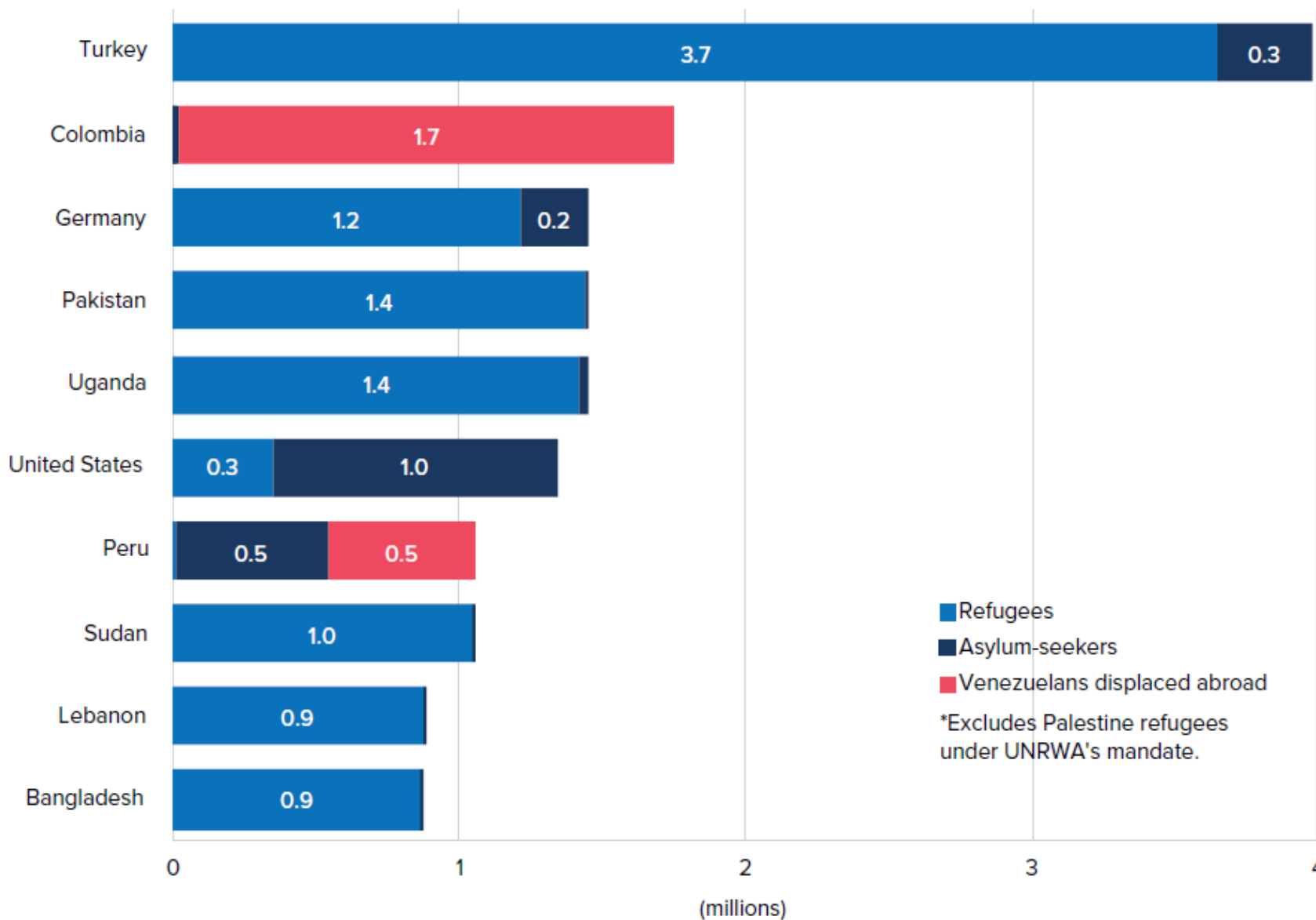
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Refugee hosting in absolute terms

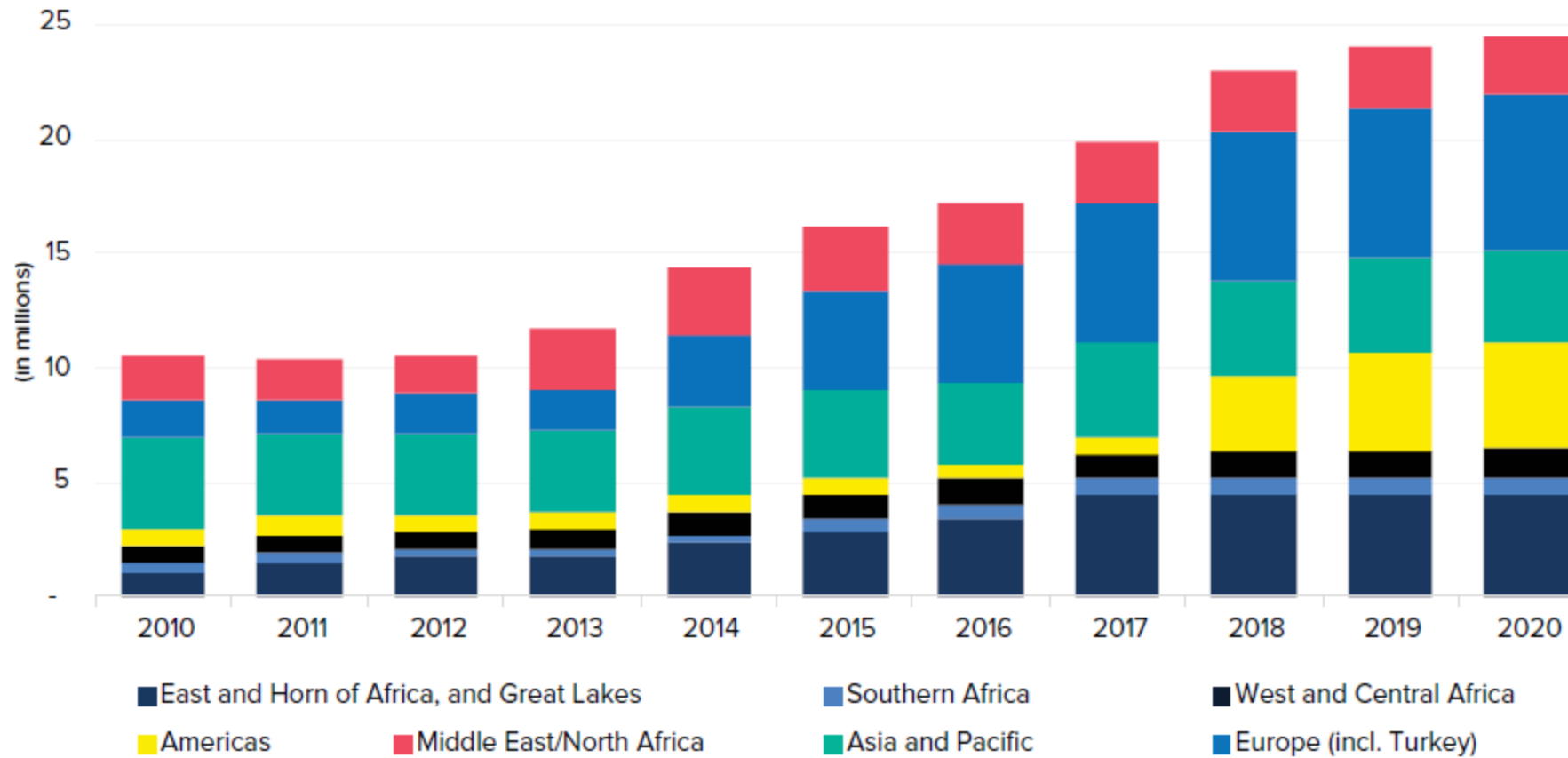
Figure 4 | International displacement situations by host country | end-2020*



Source: UNHCR (2021)
Global Trends in Forced
Displacement in 2020

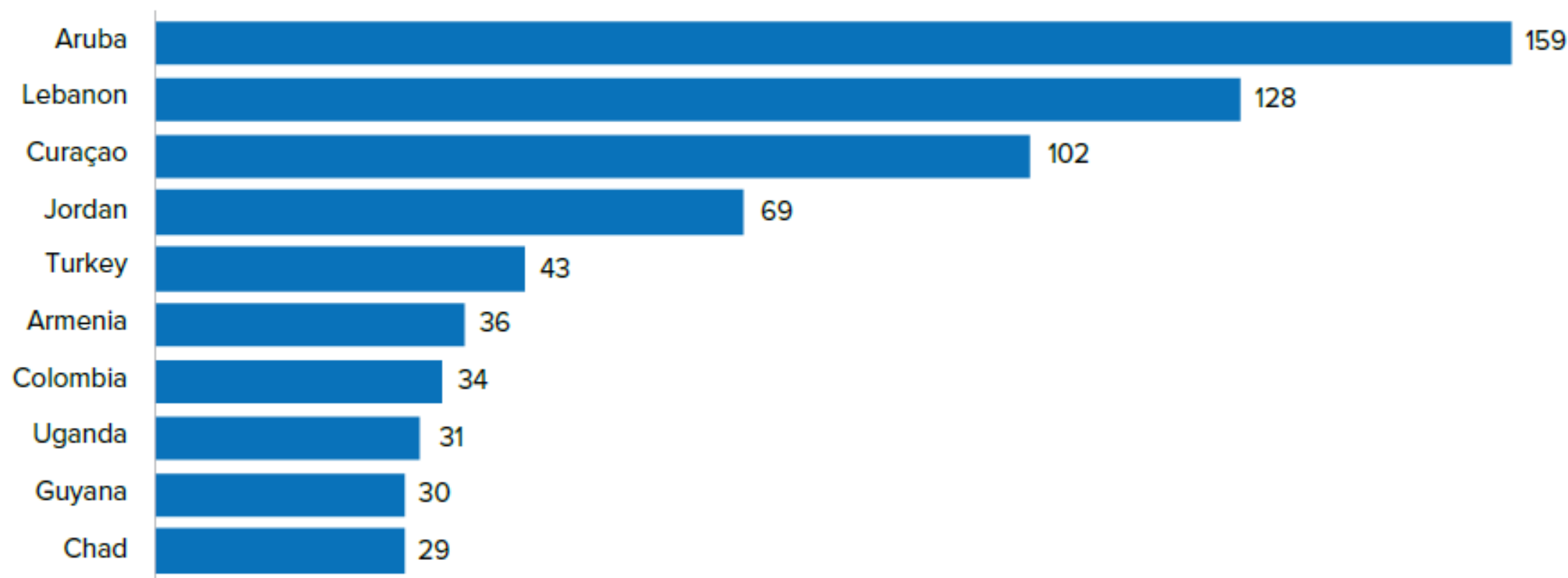
By region of asylum

Figure 5 | People displaced across borders by region | end-year



Refugee hosting in relative terms

Figure 11 | People displaced across borders per 1,000 host country inhabitants | end-2020*



*Limited to countries hosting at least 10,000 people. Excludes Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

Debunking Myths and Misconceptions

- 14% of refugees are hosted in the developed world (UNHCR 2021)
- 86% of refugees are hosted in the developing world (UNHCR 2021)
- 1/3 of the global refugee population hosted in least developed countries (UNHCR 2019)



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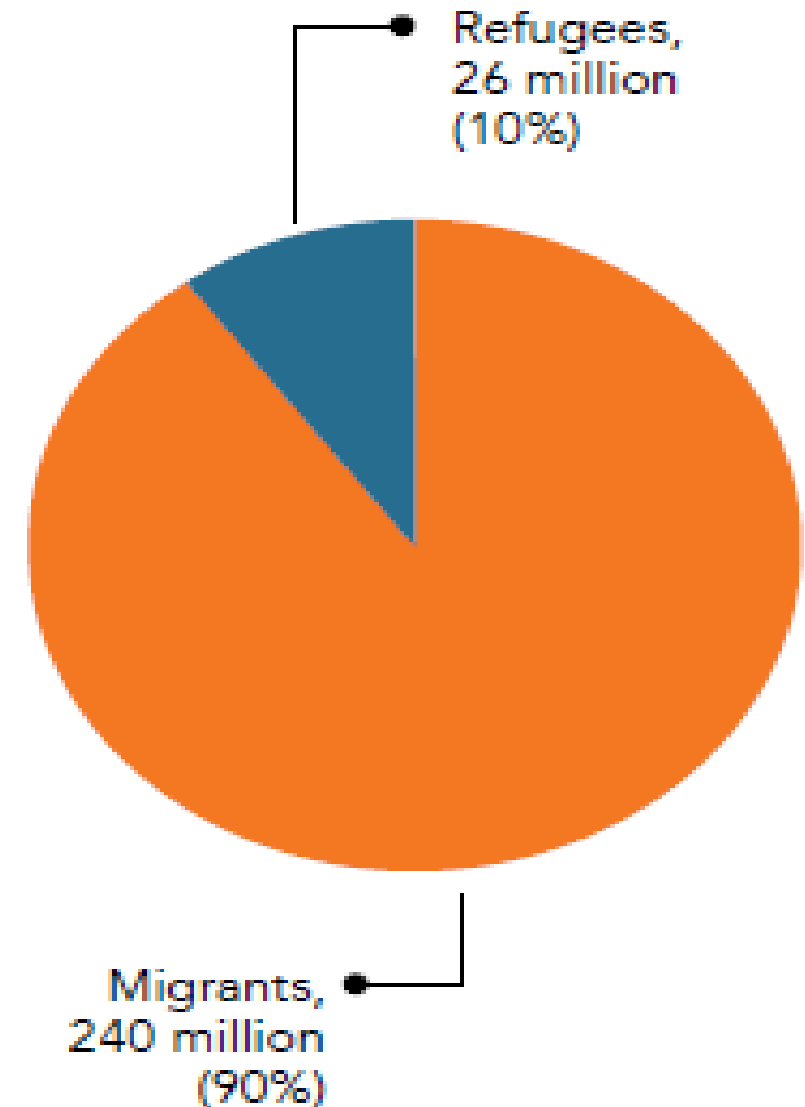
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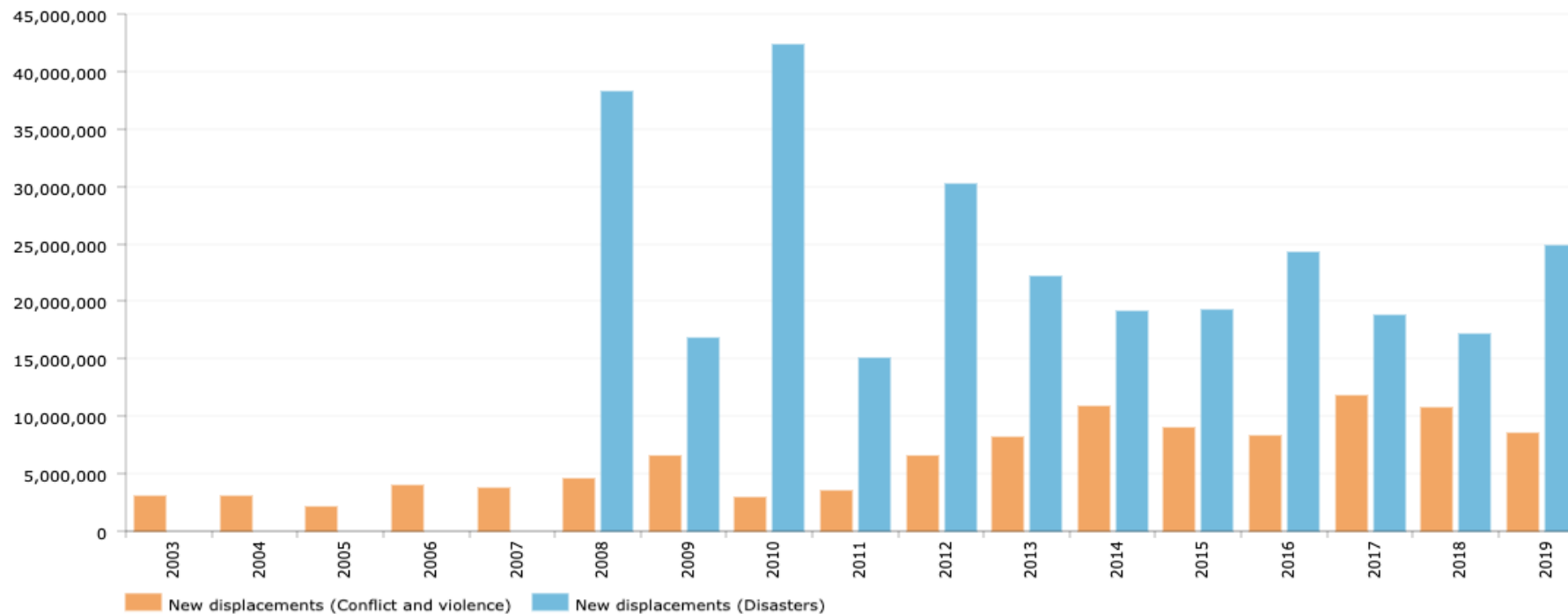
Refugee numbers compared to migrant in general

- The majority of international migrants today are what are considered labour migrants, those who have a job in another country (high, medium and low skilled)
- A close second are family migrants (family members of labour migrants, those who reunify with refugees or marriage migrants)



Misconception: Most forced migration is because of war/persecution/violence

- New displacement: more people are displaced because of environmental disasters
 - Title: Total annual new displacements since 2003 (Conflict and violence) and 2008 (Disasters)



Nature and length of this displacement is different

Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2019). Global Internal Displacement Database. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>

Myth: Poverty is the main cause of migration

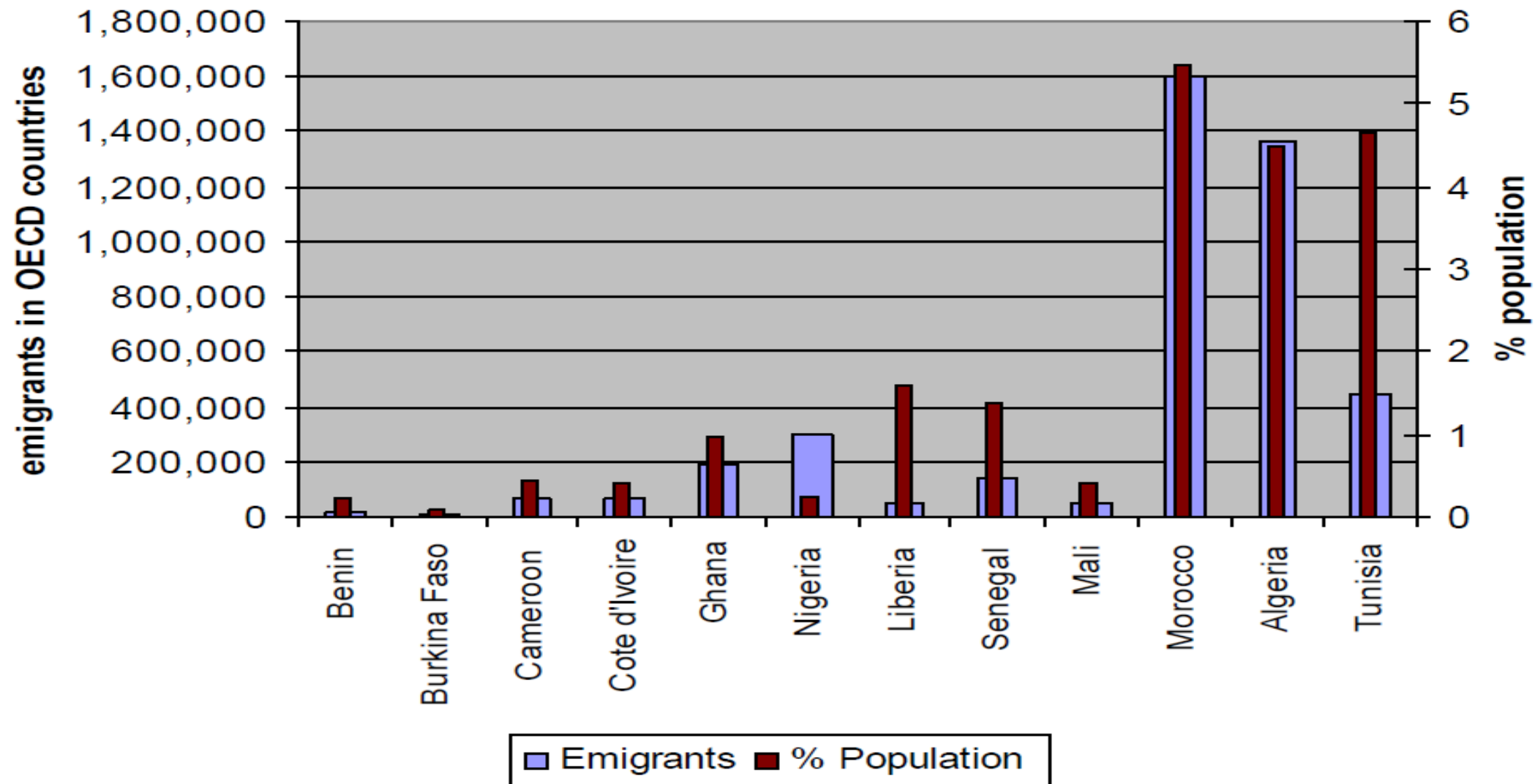


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Source: de Haas (2015)



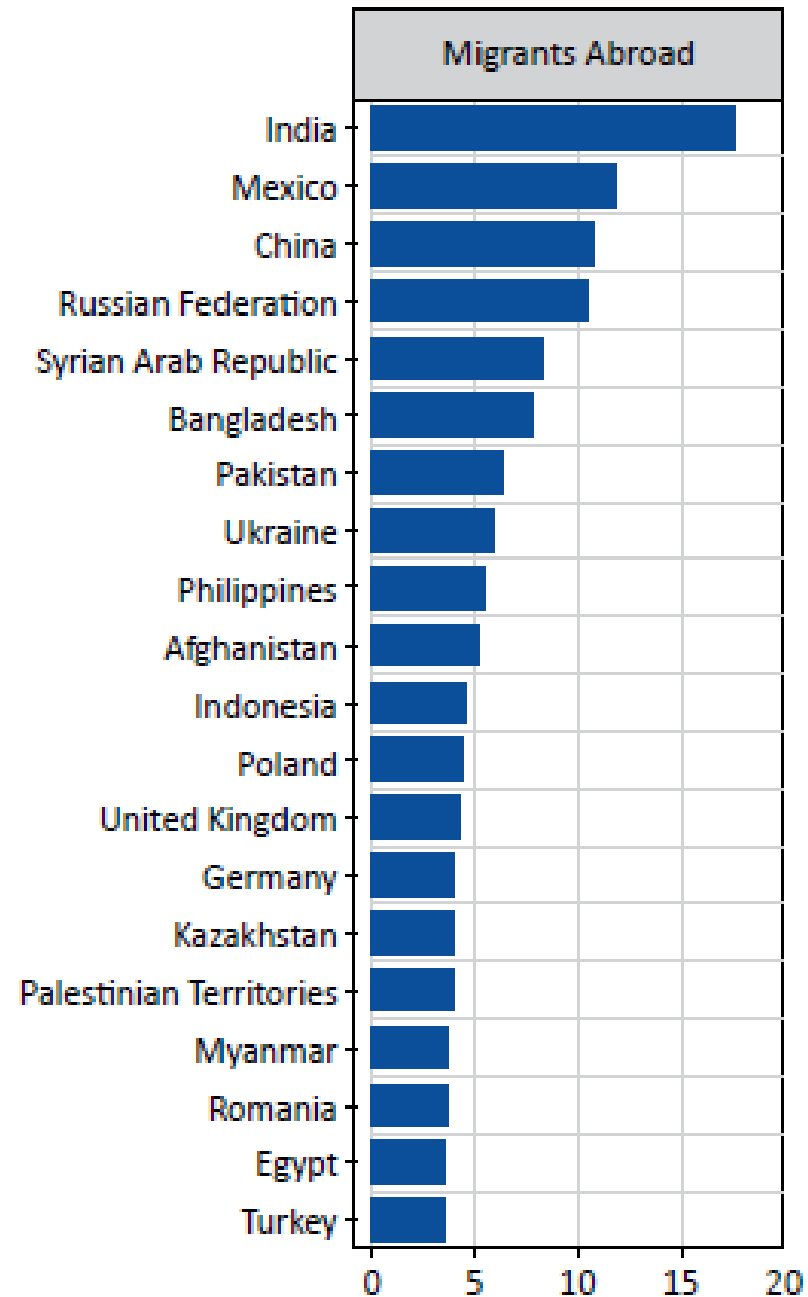
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Absolute #s 2019 in millions



MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS: MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

- Development will reduce migration
- Development aid will reduce migration



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Myth: Development will reduce migration



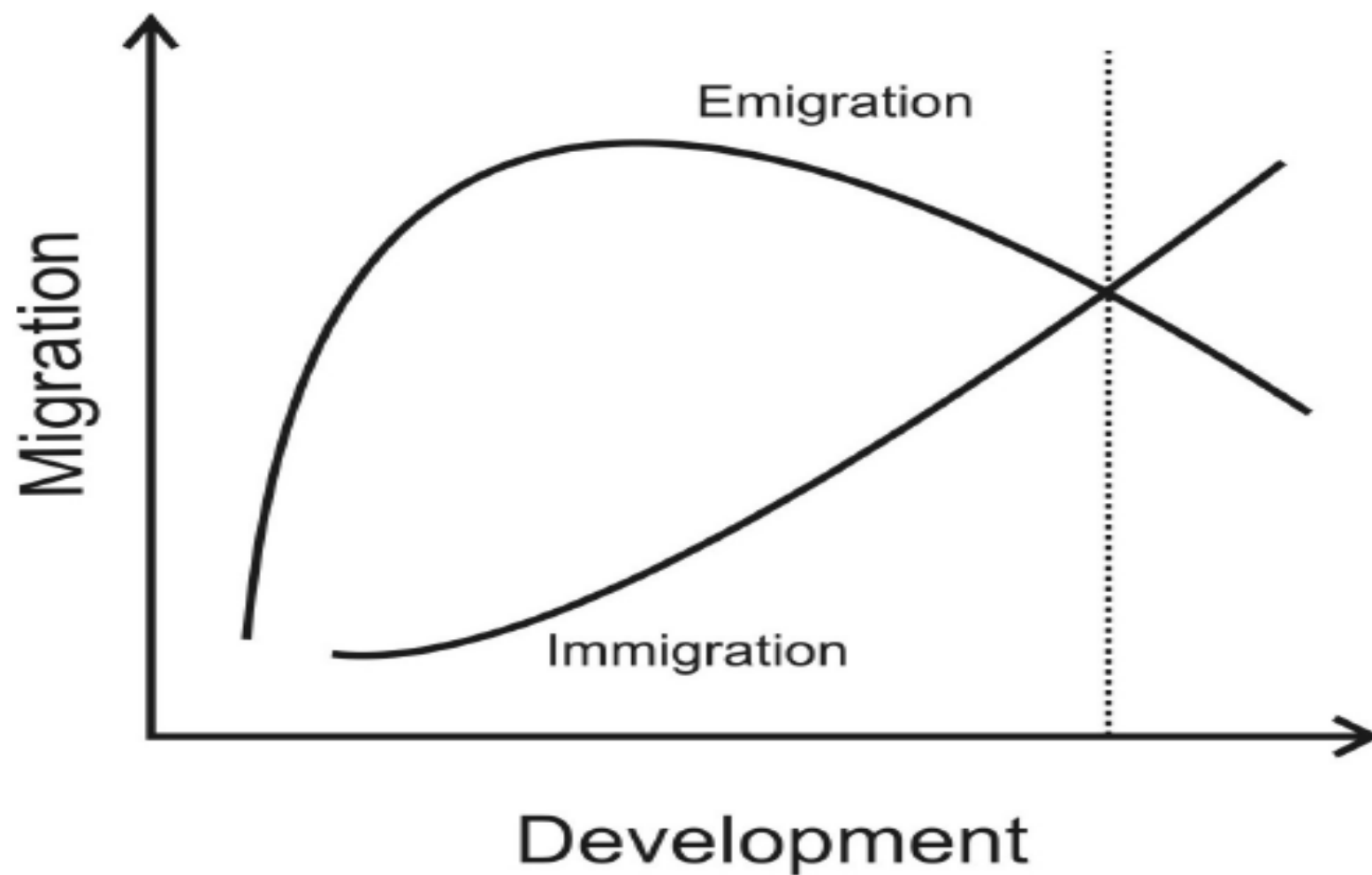
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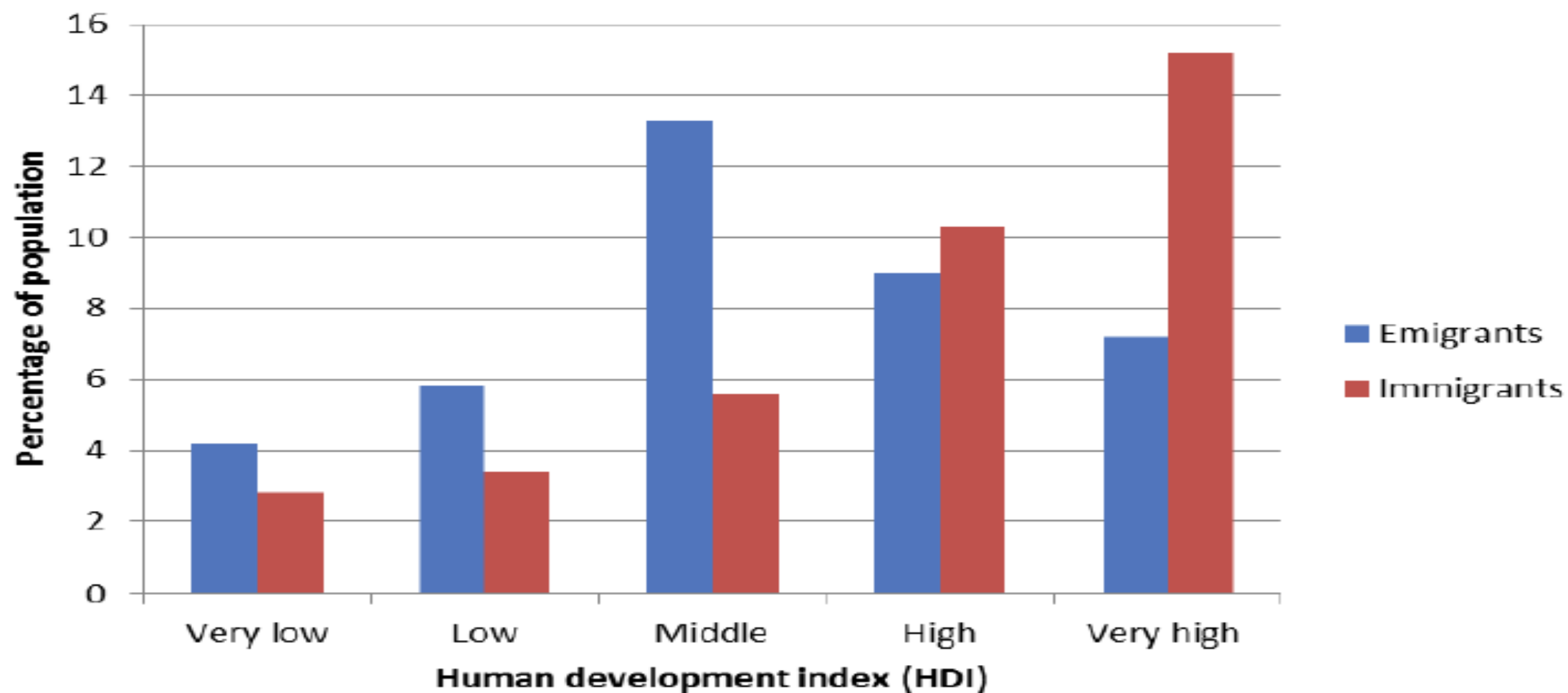
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Migration transition theory



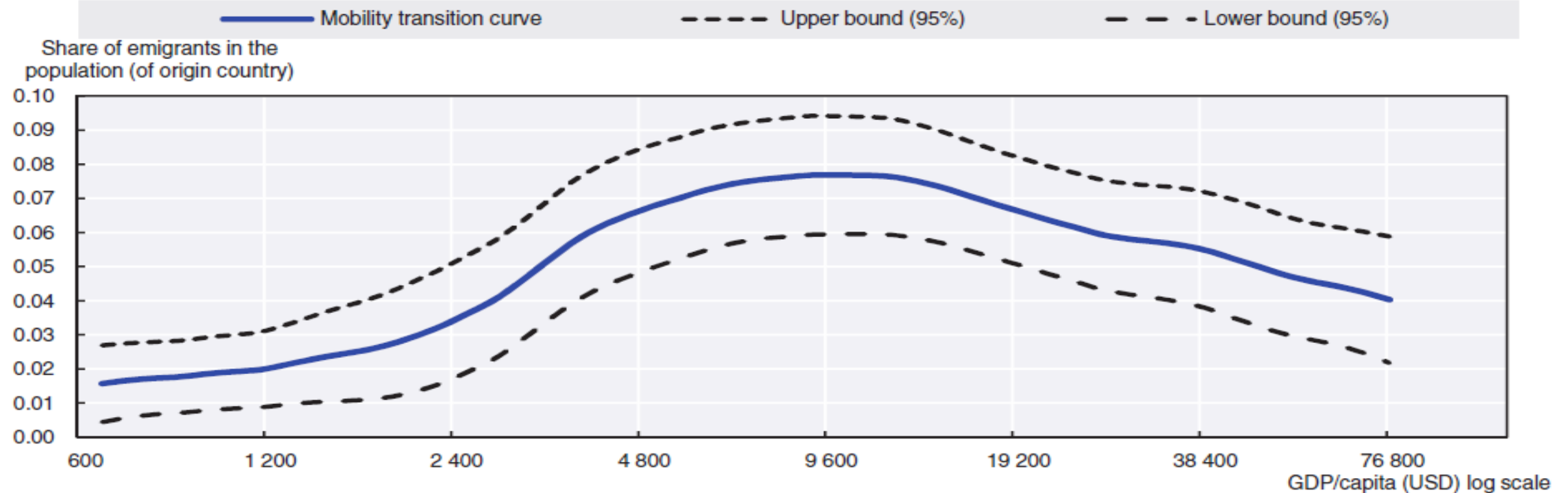
Source: de Haas, H. (2010). *Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration*. Oxford, Working Paper No 24, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

Association between development and migration



Source: de Haas, H. 2010. *Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration*, IMI Working Paper, University of Oxford.

Figure 4.6. The proportion of emigrants from a country relative to the population of the country is related to GDP per capita, 2010



Source: OECD 2016



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MYTH: DEVELOPMENT AID WILL REDUCE MIGRATION



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Important questions

- What are development interventions?
- Do they work?
- Do they deter migration?



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What are development interventions?

- “addressing the root causes of migration” popular in policy circles
 - Types of interventions:
 - Social protection, social transfers in cash or in kind, employment creation, insurance
 - Skills training
 - SME support
 - Agricultural development
 - Institutional capacity building
 - European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
 - Employment creation
 - Basic local level service provision
 - Migration management
 - Migration governance



Does aid affect development?

- For this rational to work, aid must be targeted and effective (Gregl & Logoza, 2017)



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Does aid affect development?

- Skepticism about the ability of development aid to seriously contribute to sustained growth
- Skepticism about the ability of development aid to effect large changes in youth employment
- Little evidence that aid helps to mitigate conflict (Clemens, 2018)



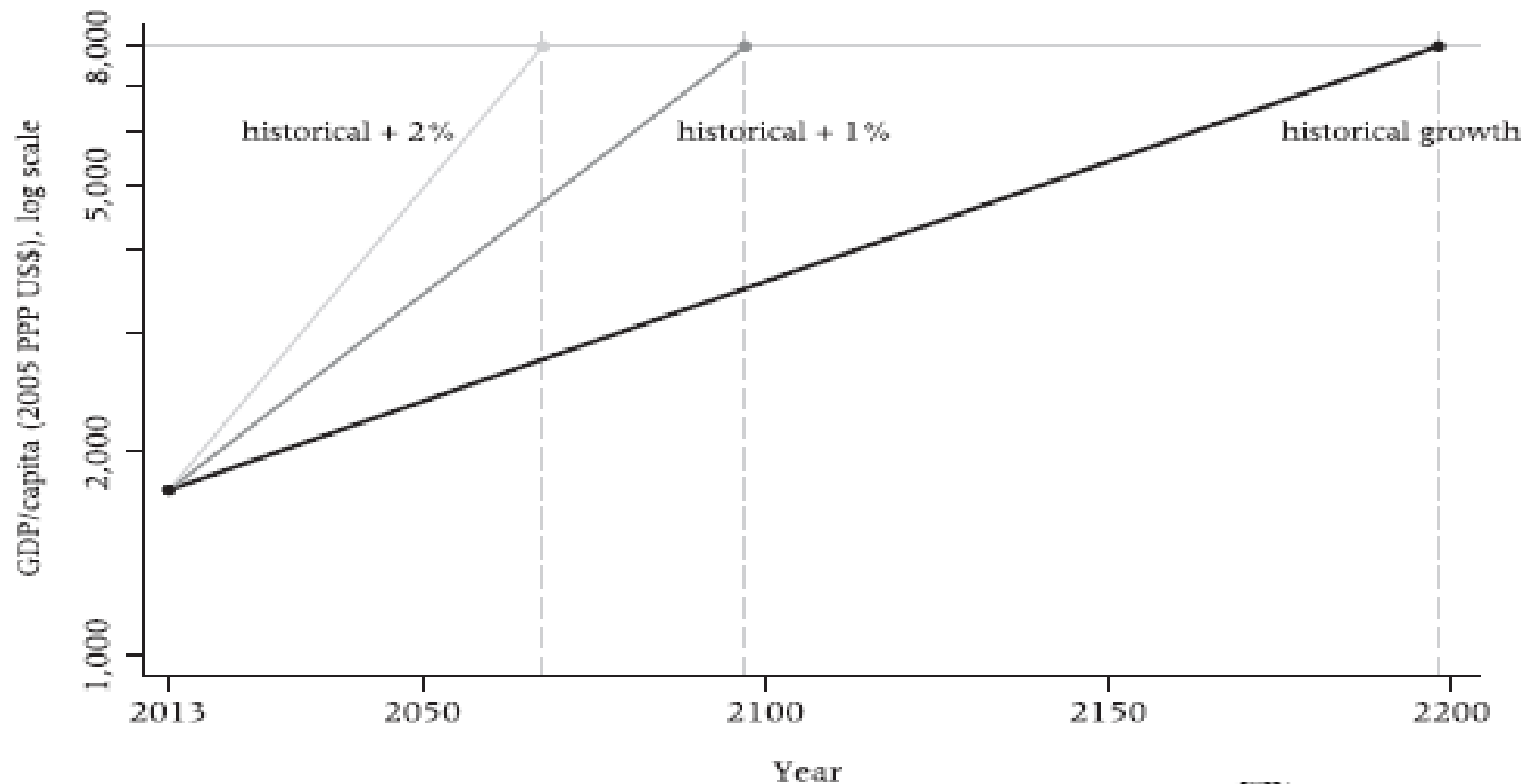
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FIGURE 2 Years for the poorest quintile of countries to reach PPP\$8,000/capita



Source: Clemens & Postel (2018)



3. Do development interventions impact emigration? Does aid effect emigration?



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Evidence-general

- Berthélemy, Beuran, and Maurel (2009) Using World Bank bilateral data
 - Effect of total aid on migration-push affect/allowing migrants to afford the cost of migration-10% increase in aid in general increases migration by 1.5%-promotes unskilled migration
 - Bilateral aid-contact facilitation/attraction effect-scholarships- 10% increase in bilateral aid increases migration by 3%-promoted skilled migration
- No systematic deterrent effect until \$8000-\$10000 PPP GDP per capita: Clemens (2014), Dao et al. (2018), OECD (2017)



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- Aid does not seem to be effective enough in its current form to make real underlying changes that effect migration decisions (magnitude)
- For poor countries, aid is expected to increase migration
- A deterrent effect of aid only seems to be the case when higher levels of income are achieved or with very specific types of aid in specific contexts
- What changes with development is how “we” perceive migration
- Need more systematic evidence, especially at the micro level, some is under way
- Do aid/development interventions deter irregular migration specifically? (disaggregation of types of migrants)
- We see a direct effect of migration on development spending in some cases:
 - Europe (Knoll, 2017), Spain Vazquaz & Sobrao (2016, Some countries have a stronger “migration sensitive aid allocation” (Czaika & Mayer 2011) US, Austria, Norway

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JUSPAXAR
GOZAIMASHITA
EFCHARISTO

TASHAKKUR ATU
YAQHANYELAY
SUKSAMA
EKHMET
MEHRBANI
GRAZIE
MAAKE
KOMAPSUMNIDA
LAH
MINMONCHAR

BIYAN
SHUKRIA
TINGKI
BOLZIN
MERCI

DANKSCHEEN
SPASSIBO
NUHUN
SNACHALHUYA
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Extra



Evidence by type of aid

Evidence- by type of aid

- Aid supporting rural development had **very** small positive effects on the reduction of rural migration(Gamso & Yuldashev, 2018)
- Lanati & Theile (2018) find a negative relationship for both poor and more well off countries-aid related improvements in public service but the bilateral aid link is still there
- Effects can differ by type of aid Lanati and Thiele (2018) and Gamso and Yuldashev (2018) – aid to social sector or governance aid
- Differences in transferred and non-transferred aid (Lanati and Thiele, 2019)
- Specific channel of health aid showed a negative relationship (Moullan, 2013)



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Macro vs Micro studies

MACRO

- Sustained economic development tends to encourage emigration in poorer countries (Clemens, 2018)
- Highest rates of emigration in middle income countries
- Poorest countries could be most stimulated by aid interventions
- Type of aid matters
- Evidence is mixed (positive, negative, no affect)

MICRO

- Review of social protection interventions (Hagen-Zanker & Himmelstein, 2013): finds no consensus in the literature with interventions being associated with both positive and negative effects-context matters



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MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS: EFFECTS OF MIGRATION

- Immigrants take jobs from natives
- Immigrants reduce the wages of natives
- Immigrants cause more crime



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Myth: Immigrants take jobs from natives



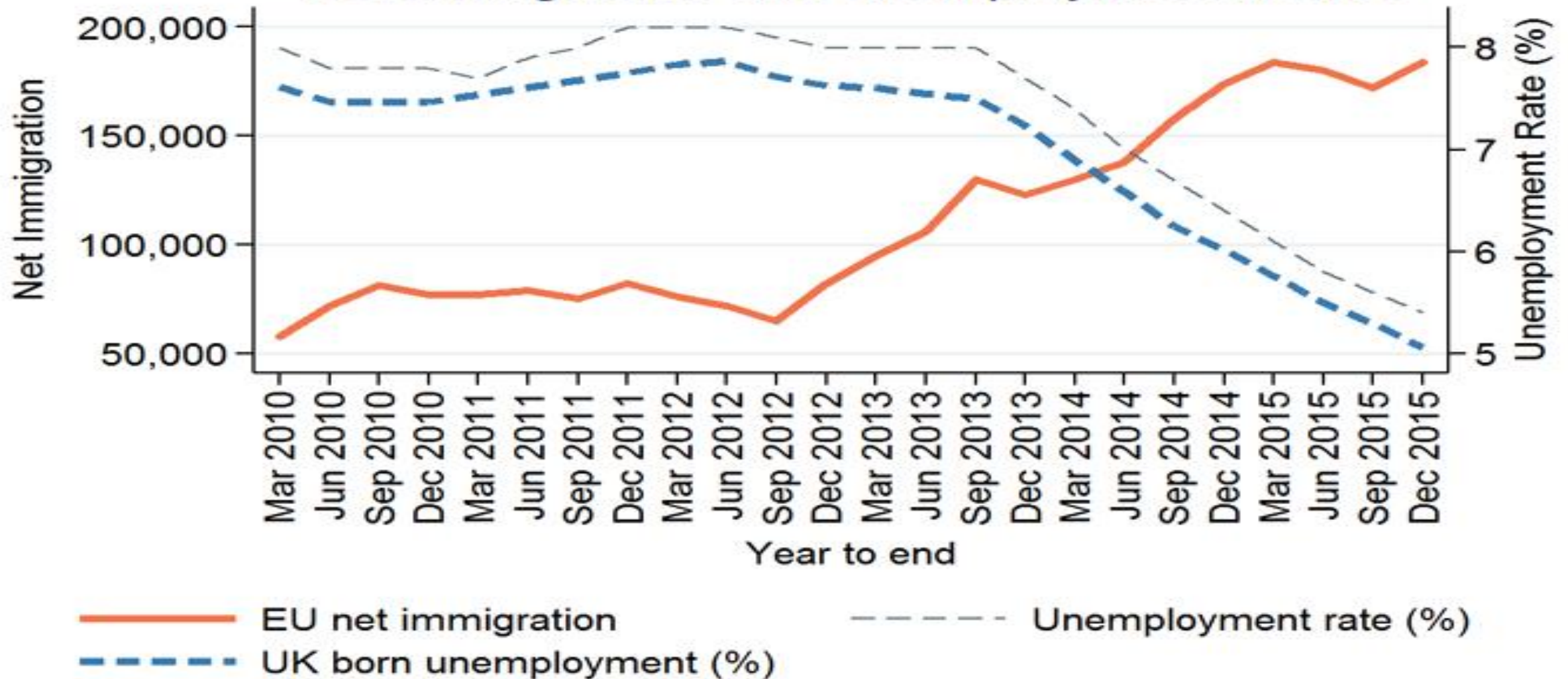
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Net immigration and unemployment trends



Note: UK-born unemployment data missing for year end March 2011 - September 2011

Source: Net immigration data - Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Source: Unemployment data - Annual Population Survey (APS)

Source: Institute for Employment Studies
2016

Myth: Immigrants reduce native wages



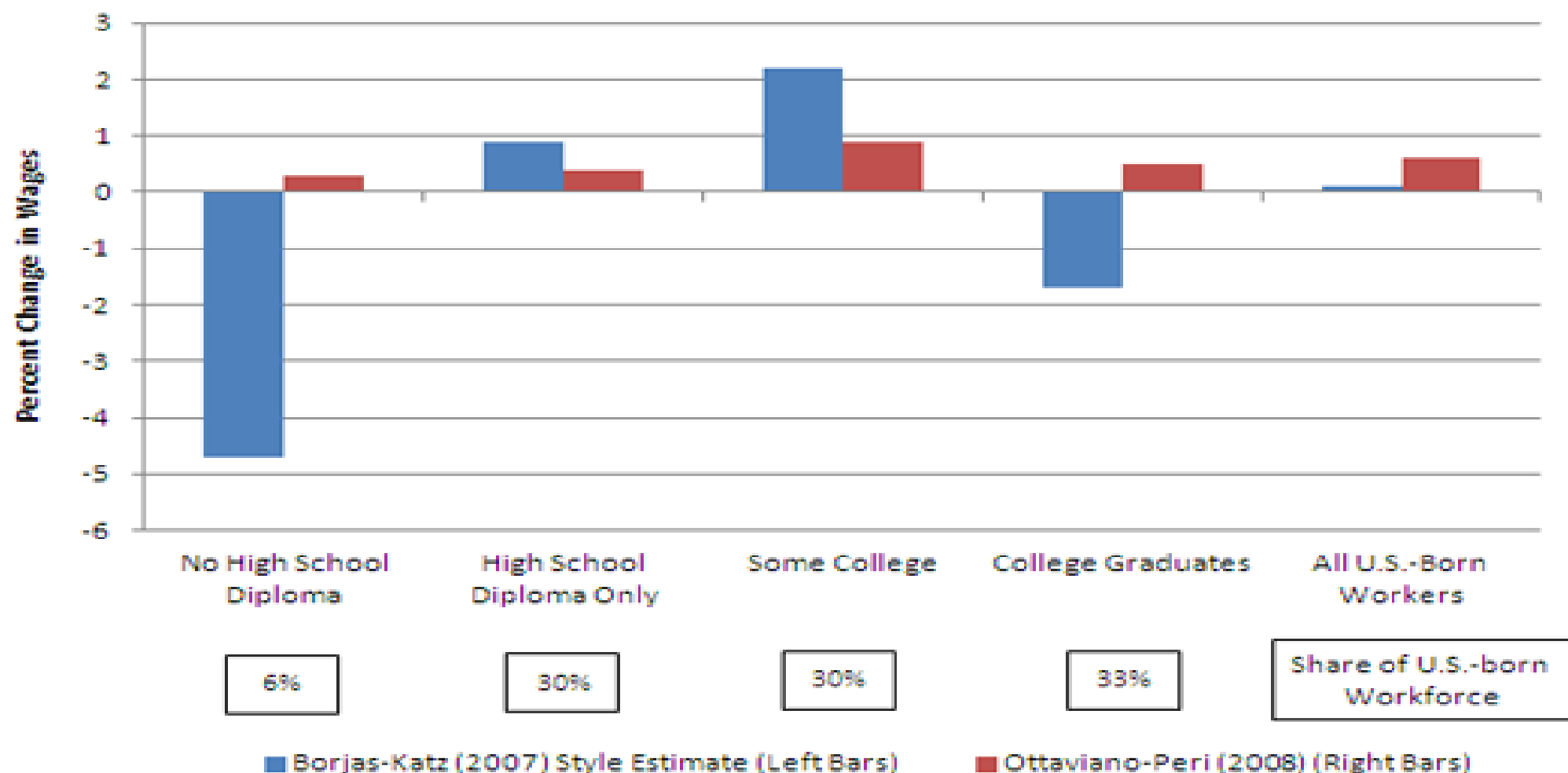
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Effect of Immigration on Wages of U.S.-Born Workers



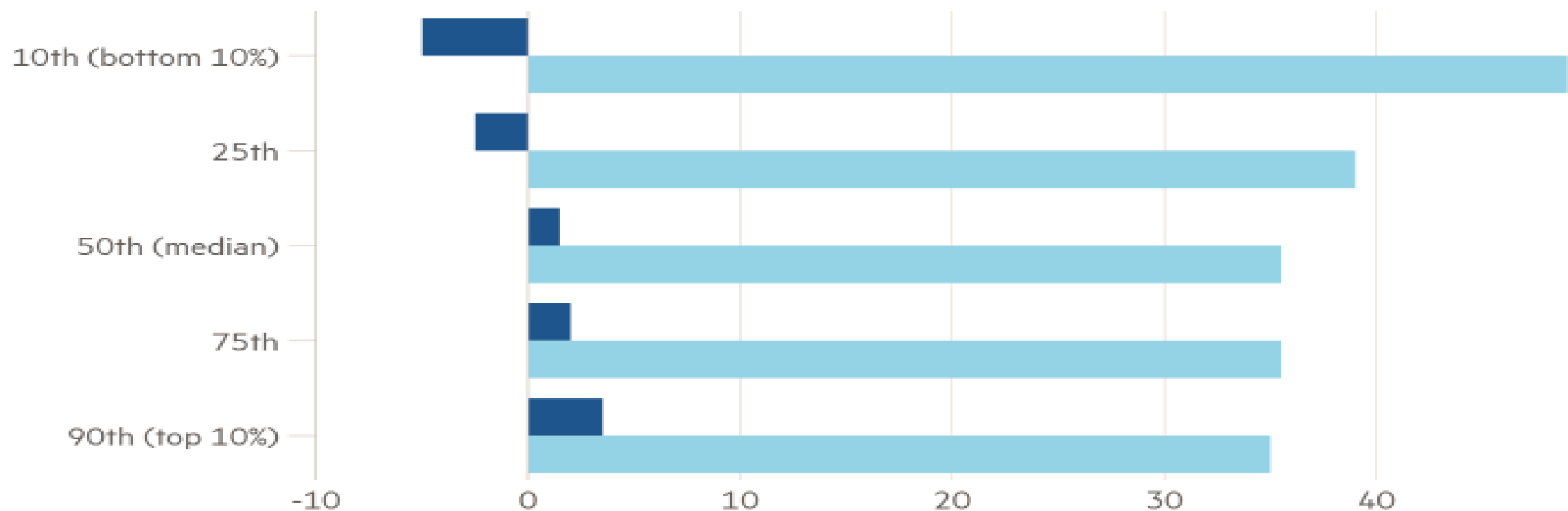
Source: Ottaviano and Peri (2008), Table 7; 2011 CPS.

Note: Share of U.S.-born population ages 25-64, numbers may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Migration may have hit wages for the poorest paid - but the change is small compared with overall wage growth

Change in real pay of UK-born workers, 1992-2017 (%)

■ Estimated effect of EU immigration
■ Actual increase over period



Source: Migration Advisory Committee
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Myth: Immigrants cause more crime



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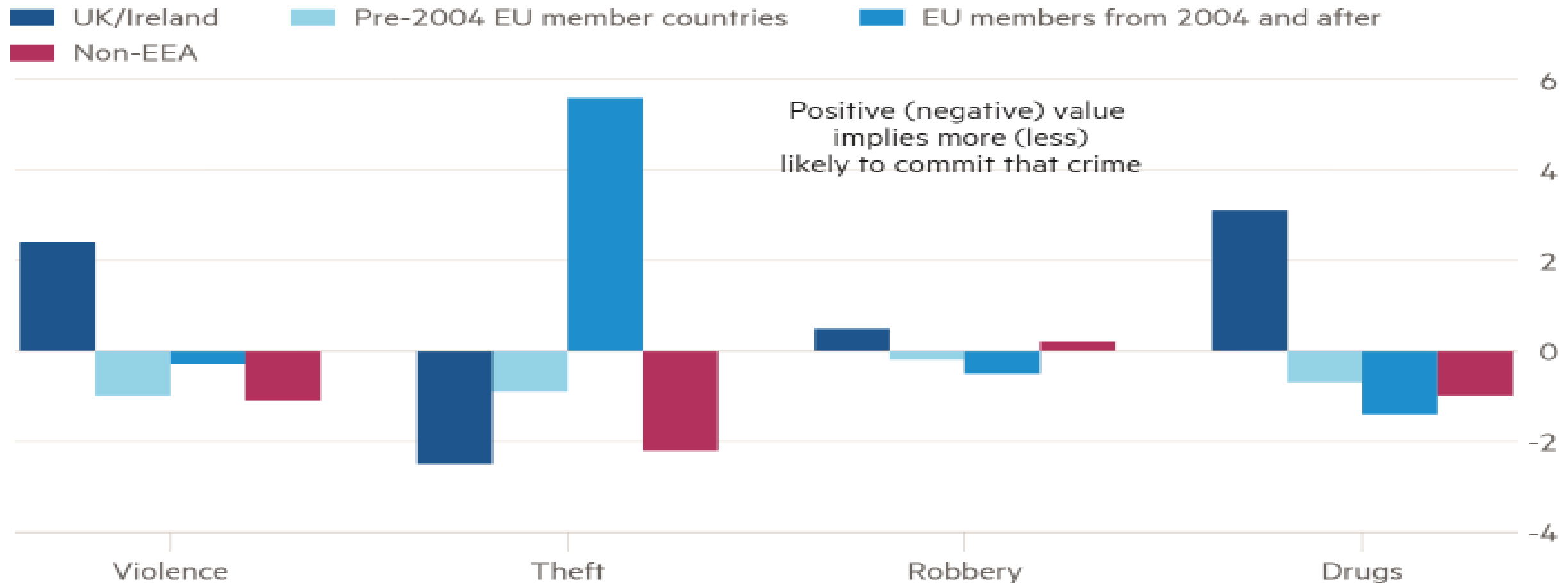
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Evidence on crime is mixed

Share of cautions/convictions for each crime category (2012-16) less share of male population aged 16-29, by nationality (% points)



Source: MAC, from PNC database
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Evidence: Bernat (2017)

- Quantitative research has consistently shown that being foreign born is negatively associated with crime overall and is not significantly associated with committing either violent or property crime.
- If an undocumented immigrant is arrested for a criminal offense, it tends to be for a misdemeanor. Researchers suggest that undocumented immigrants may be less likely to engage in serious criminal offending behavior because they seek to earn money and not to draw attention to themselves.
- Additionally, immigrants who have access to social services are less likely to engage in crime than those who live in communities where such access is not available.
- In regard to victimization, immigrants are more likely to be victims of crime. Foreign-born victims of crime may not report their victimization because of fears that they will experience negative consequences if they contact the police.
- Recently, concern about immigration and victimization has turned to refugees who are at risk of harm from traffickers, who warehouse them, threaten them, and physically abuse them with impunity.



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MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS: MIGRATION POLICIES

- Migration Policies have become more restrictive
- Migration restrictions reduce migration



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Myth: Migration Policies have become more restrictive



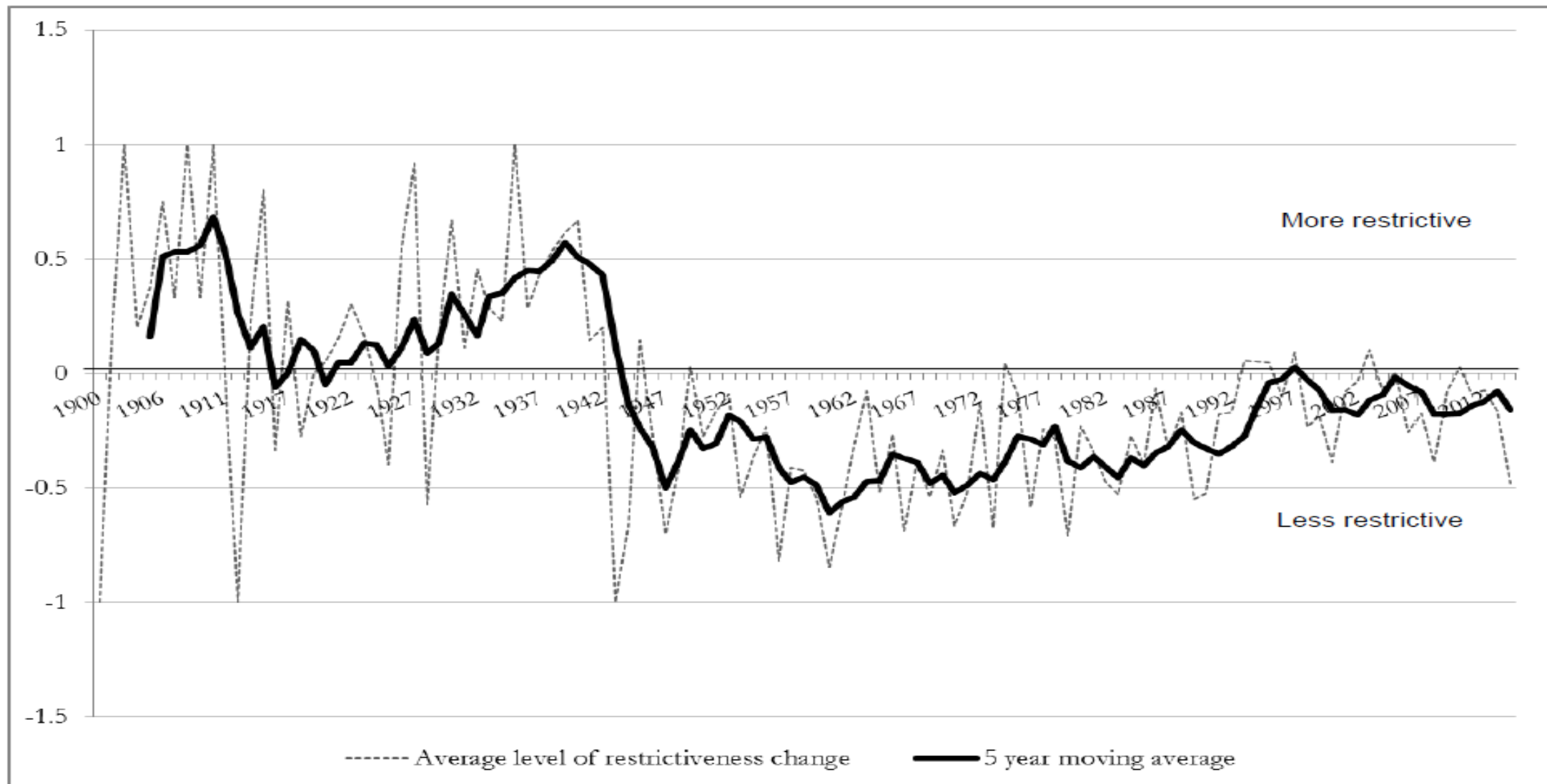
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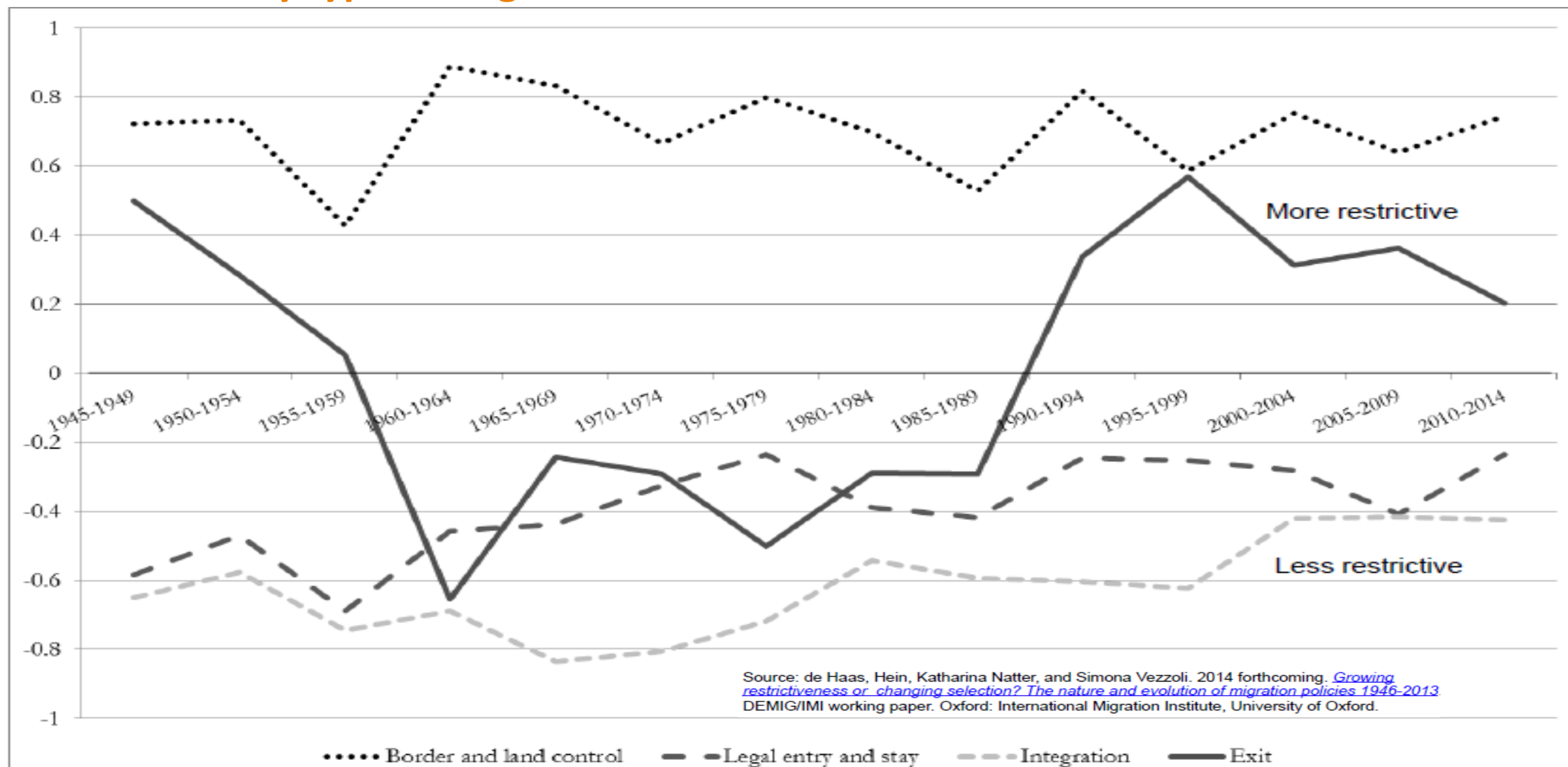
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Average yearly change in migration policy restrictiveness, 1900-2014



Source: de Haas, Hein, Katharina Natter, and Simona Vezzoli. 2014 forthcoming. [Growing restrictiveness or changing selection? The nature and evolution of migration policies 1946-2013](#). DEMIG/IMI working paper. Oxford: International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.

Differences by type of Migration Policies



Myth: Migration restrictions reduce migration



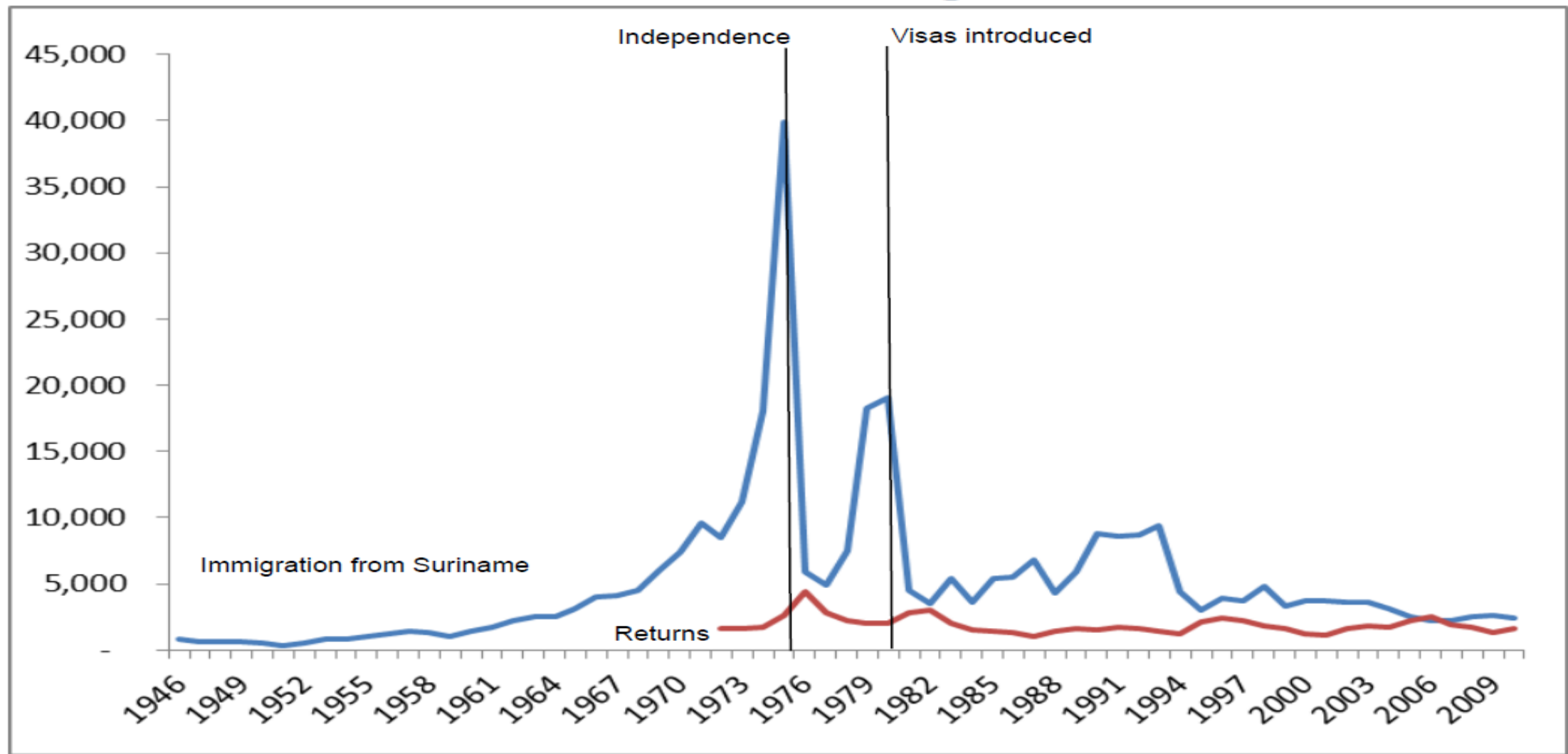
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How the Dutch government stimulated unwanted migration from Suriname



Source: DEMIG C2C database - www.imi.ox.ac.uk
van Amersfoort, Hans. 2011. *How the Dutch Government stimulated the unwanted immigration from Suriname*. IMI/DEMIG Working Paper 47. Oxford: International Migration Institute.

Migration restrictions do not necessarily reduce migration

- They change the nature of the movement
- They mainly change the way in which people move
- They affect who migrates (selection)
- They do not change the process driving migration, like development, social transformation, labor markets



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Changing the narrative

- Get correct information out in an accessible way
- Trust in information is a big problem and often very polarized
- One way to build trust is to acknowledge that there may be some legitimate issues with migration and have a more nuanced discussion



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MINMONCHAR

BIYAN
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