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FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

2025 UPDATE

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About IDAC

The International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) is a cross-sectoral global coalition that aims to improve data and statistics and support evidence-based policymaking for migrant and displaced children. With the European Union as its main donor and jointly led by Eurostat, IOM, OECD, UNHCR and UNICEF (Secretariat Chair), IDAC brings together governments (including experts from national statistical offices and migration- and displacement-related ministries), international and regional organizations, NGOs, think tanks, academics, civil society and youth. At the end of 2025, IDAC's membership had surpassed 50, including 25 Member States.

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WHO ARE CHILDREN ON THE MOVE?

Children who have been directly or indirectly affected by migration and displacement, either internationally across borders or within the same country, are considered children on the move. IDAC's definition includes migrant children and children of migrants; children in need of international protection, such as children of refugees and asylum-seekers or unaccompanied and separated children; internally displaced children; children indirectly affected by migration and displacement, such as children who stay behind while parents or caregivers migrate; stateless children¹ and child victims of cross-border trafficking.

ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

This document presents data on some of the better-defined groups of children on the move; not all of these groups are mutually exclusive and, in many cases, their exact numbers are unknown. For instance, for statistical purposes, the international migrant population in a country usually refers to foreign-born individuals regardless of their primary reason for leaving their country of birth or their legal status. Many individuals in need of international protection, such as refugees and asylum-seekers, are included in the international migrant population since many (although not all) fulfil the statistical definition of international migrants.

For more information on the different groups that comprise children on the move, see IDAC's reference document, [Children on the Move: Key terms, definitions and concepts](#).

1. IDAC's definition of children on the move only includes children who are stateless in the context of migration and displacement.



DATA GAPS ON MIGRANT AND DISPLACED CHILDREN

FACT 1: Around the globe, millions of children are on the move – many in response to crisis. They are one of the world’s most marginalized groups, but remain concerningly underrepresented in data and statistics.

In many countries, data on migrant and displaced children are not routinely collected, analysed or used. Children on the move are often missed or are invisible in censuses, household surveys and administrative data. Their invisibility can stem from a range of factors, including immigration status, living conditions – such as homelessness or living in collective settings – and recent arrival in a country. For many subgroups of children on the move – such as unaccompanied and separated children or missing migrant children – data are largely unavailable.²

These gaps leave many questions about children on the move unanswered: Why have they left home? How far are they going? How many are in school? How many are affected by food insecurity? How many are receiving the health care they need? How many have been abused, trafficked or exploited? How many are children of refugees and asylum-seekers? How many stay behind while parents are on the move?

Without quality, age-disaggregated data, these answers will remain unknown. And the rights of children on the move will remain at risk.

FIGURE 1: DATA GAPS ON DIFFERENT GROUPS OF CHILDREN ON THE MOVE



Source: Calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migrant Stock 2020*, 2020, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2024*, 2025.

2. [Children the Move: Key terms, definitions and concepts](#).

3. Including other people in need of international protection. The threshold for data reliability was defined as having age data available for at least 50% of the population in the country.



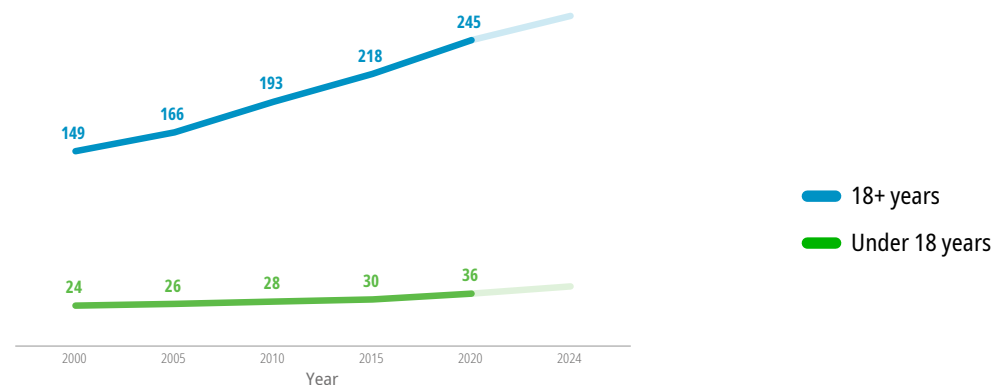
INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT CHILDREN

FACT 2: Of the world's 304 million international migrants in 2024, between 12 per cent and 14 per cent are children. In other words, there are at least 37 million child migrants globally.

The global total estimate of 304 million international migrants reported by the United Nations⁴ captures any individual living outside their country of birth at a specific point in time (in this case, mid-2024).⁵ It includes persons from a range of backgrounds and circumstances, with different needs, challenges and aspirations: migrants in regular and irregular situations, refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as those who have recently immigrated or who arrived decades earlier.

The latest estimates of the global number of international migrants are not disaggregated by age. Assuming that the age distribution from 2000 to 2024 holds, children comprised between 12 per cent and 14 per cent of all international migrants in 2024 – or between 37 million and 42 million migrant children.

FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS BY AGE, 2000–2024 (IN MILLIONS)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, [International Migrant Stock 2024](#).

Note: Indicative range of child migrants based on the minimum and maximum proportion of children in the total international migrant stock estimates between 2000 and 2020 from the International Migrant Stock 2020 published by UN DESA, and applied to the total international migrant stock estimate in the International Migrant Stock 2024 (for which age-disaggregation is still unavailable) – not an official estimate.

4. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, [International Migrant Stock 2024](#).

5. 'Migrant stock' refers to the number of international migrants at a special time, as opposed to 'migrant flow', which refers to the number of persons immigrating (or emigrating) every year into (or out of) a country. Although 'country of birth' is the preferred criteria to determine migratory status in the context of migrant stock, 'citizenship' is used instead if information on country of birth is missing.

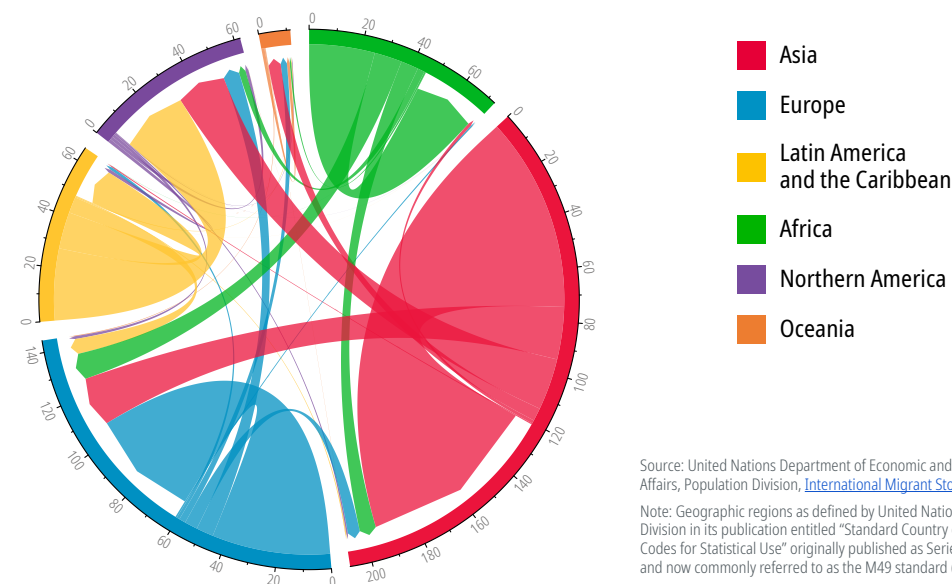
FACT 3: Most international migrants move to countries within their region – this is likely the case for child migrants as well.

Looking at the international migrant stock in 2024, 121 million migrants had left countries in Asia – and a majority – 62 per cent – were residing in another Asian country. This regional movement was similar in Europe, where 74 per cent of European migrants stayed in the region, Africa (55 per cent) and Oceania (72 per cent).

Regional movement was less common in the Americas: Only 29 per cent of migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean stayed within the same region, and 27 per cent of all migrants in Northern America (only the United States and Canada) remained within it.

Although data on child migration along these corridors may have been collected, country-level analysis by age group is not available. Nonetheless, child migration patterns are likely to follow these regional trends.

FIGURE 3: DIRECTION AND SIZE OF REGIONAL CORRIDORS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, 2024 (IN MILLIONS)



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, [International Migrant Stock 2024](#).

Note: Geographic regions as defined by United Nations Statistics Division in its publication entitled "Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use" originally published as Series M, No. 49 and now commonly referred to as the M49 standard ([link](#)).

FACT 4: The number of children forcibly displaced, internally and internationally, has nearly tripled since 2010.

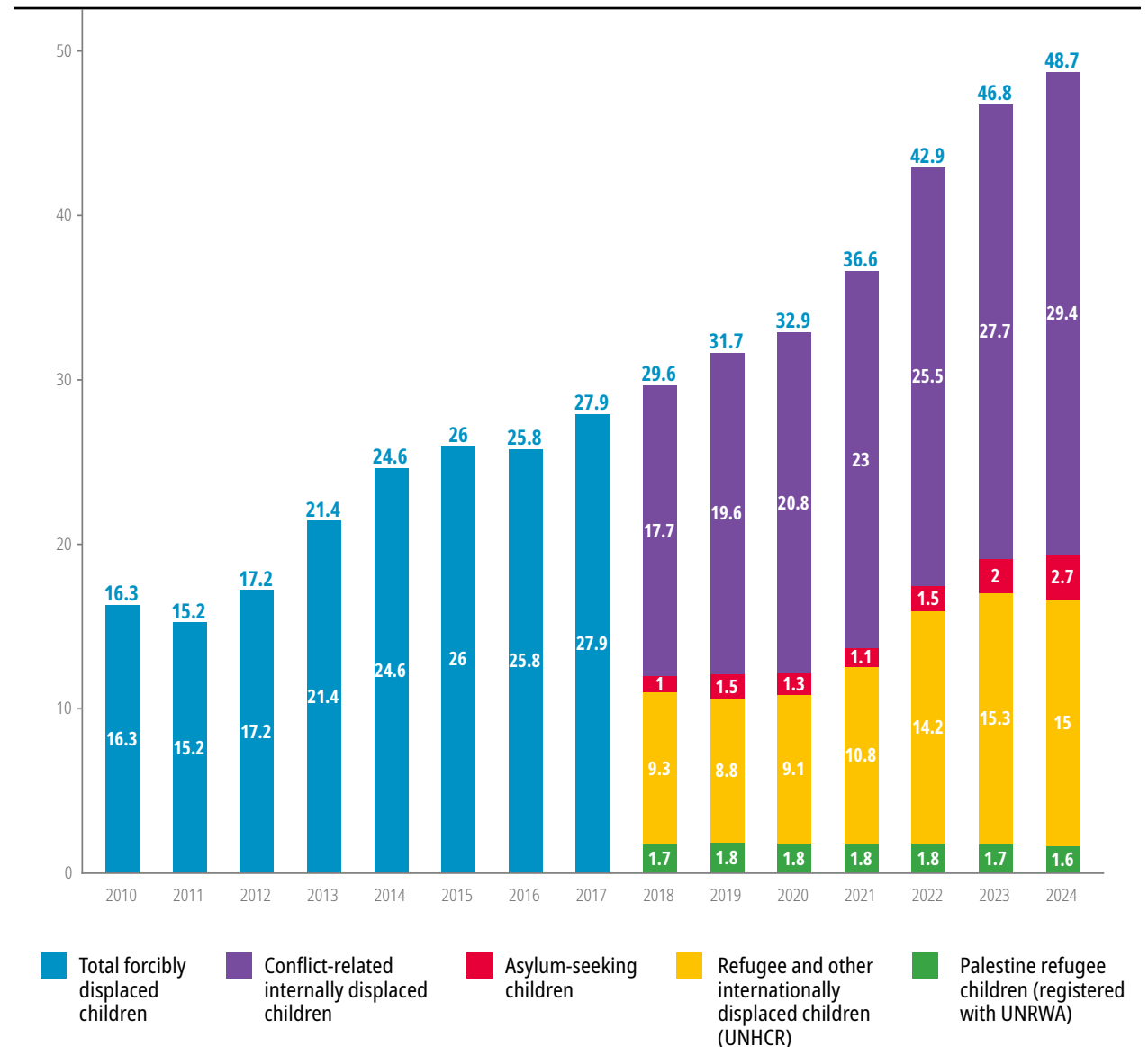
Children account for 40 per cent of the world's forcibly displaced people, according to the most recent estimates.

UNHCR⁶ reported that by the end of 2024, 123.2 million people were living in situations of forced displacement within their own country or across borders, driven from home by persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.

An estimated 29.4 million were internally displaced children, another 15.0 million were refugee children (including children in refugee-like situations and other children in need of international protection under UNHCR mandate),⁷ and 2.7 million were children in the process of applying for asylum. In addition, 1.7 million Palestine refugee children were registered with UNRWA.⁸

The number of children displaced due to conflict, violence and other human rights violations internally or across borders surged from 16.3 million in 2010 to 48.7 million in 2024.

FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED CHILDREN, 2010–2024 (IN MILLIONS)



6. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

7. Unless otherwise stated, all references to refugee children in this document refer to refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection.

8. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Source: Estimation based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2024, 2025; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Internal Displacement Database, 2024.

FACT 5: In 2024, almost 90 per cent of refugee children fled situations in 10 countries. Three in four of these children were from Africa or Asia.

In 2024, two thirds of refugee children came from five countries: Afghanistan (2.8 million, 19 per cent of the global total); the Syrian Arab Republic (2.7 million, 18 per cent of the global total); Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (1.9 million, 13 per cent of the global total); Ukraine (1.4 million, 9 per cent of the global total); and South Sudan (1.3 million, 9 per cent of the global total).

In most regions, refugee children primarily come from a single country. Children from the Syrian Arab Republic represent 66 per cent of refugee children in Northern Africa and Western Asia, children from Afghanistan account for 96 per cent in Central and Southern Asia, and children from Ukraine make up 96 per cent in Europe and Northern America.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, numerous conflicts have forced 3.8 million children to cross borders seeking safety. The largest proportion comes from South Sudan, comprising 34 per cent of the region's refugees, followed by 14 per cent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 11 per cent from Somalia and 10 per cent from the Central African Republic.

FIGURE 5A: NUMBER OF REFUGEE CHILDREN BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND PER CENT OF GLOBAL TOTAL, 2024

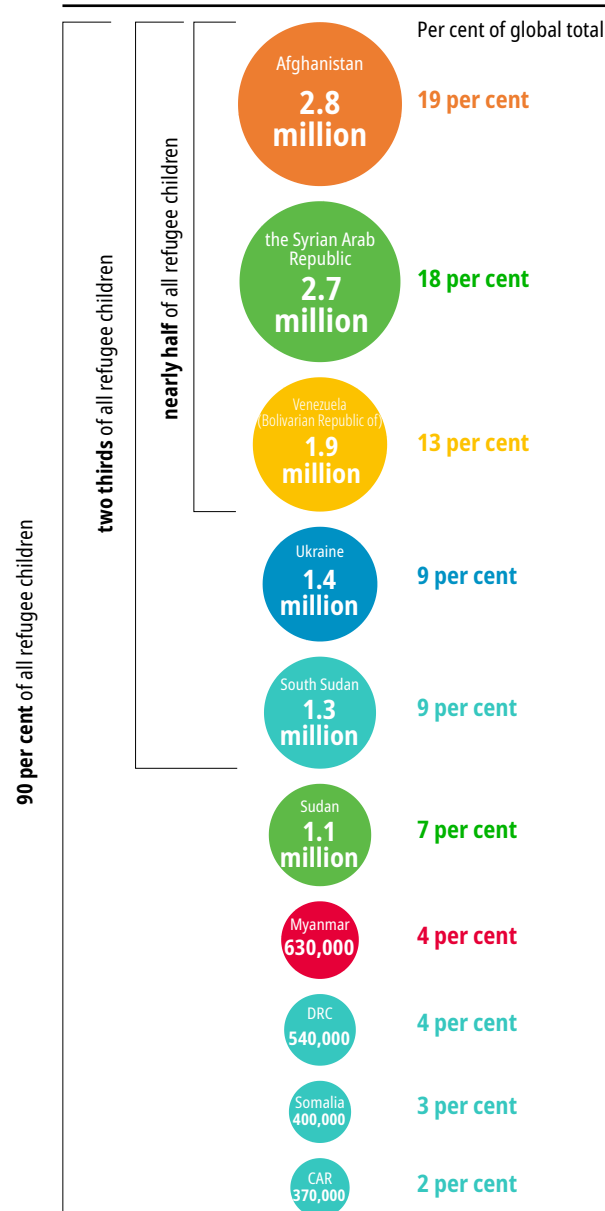
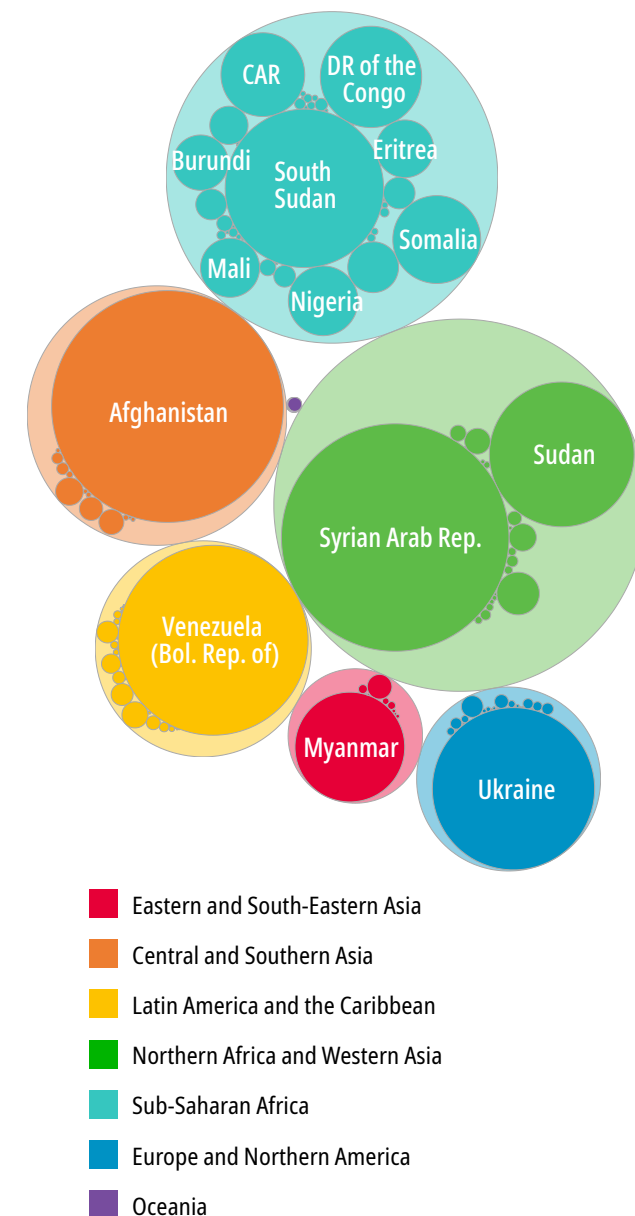


FIGURE 5B: PROPORTION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN BY COUNTRY AND SDG REGION OF ORIGIN, 2024



Source: Estimation based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2024](#), 2025.

Note: Sorted by SDG region. An additional 1.7 million Palestinian refugee children registered with UNRWA are not included here. Due to limited availability of age-disaggregated data, the estimated number for refugee children from Ukraine has a relatively large uncertainty range (1.2–1.5 million).

FACT 6: Almost 60 per cent of refugee children are hosted in 10 countries. Two in three of them live in Africa or Asia.

Sub-Saharan Africa hosts the largest population of refugee children globally – 4.1 million, or 28 per cent of all refugee children. Central and Southern Asia follows with 3.2 million refugee children (21 per cent of the global total), driven primarily by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which alone hosts 1.8 million refugee children. This represents 12 per cent of the world’s refugee children, the largest number hosted by any single country. Most of these children are from Afghanistan. With 1.4 million refugee children, Türkiye is home to the second-largest population globally – accounting for 1 in 10 of the world’s refugee children – most of them from the Syrian Arab Republic.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia hosts the largest population of refugee children, with nearly one million, primarily other people in need of international protection from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Europe and Northern America together host 18 per cent (2.6 million) of the world’s refugee children. Globally, most refugees remain close to their countries of origin: 67 per cent reside in countries that directly border their home country.

Relative to its total population, Lebanon hosts more refugees per capita than any other country (131 refugees per 1,000 people), followed by Chad (63 refugees per 1,000 people) and Jordan (56 refugees per 1,000 people).

FIGURE 6A: NUMBER OF REFUGEE CHILDREN BY COUNTRY OF ASYLUM AND PER CENT OF GLOBAL TOTAL, 2024

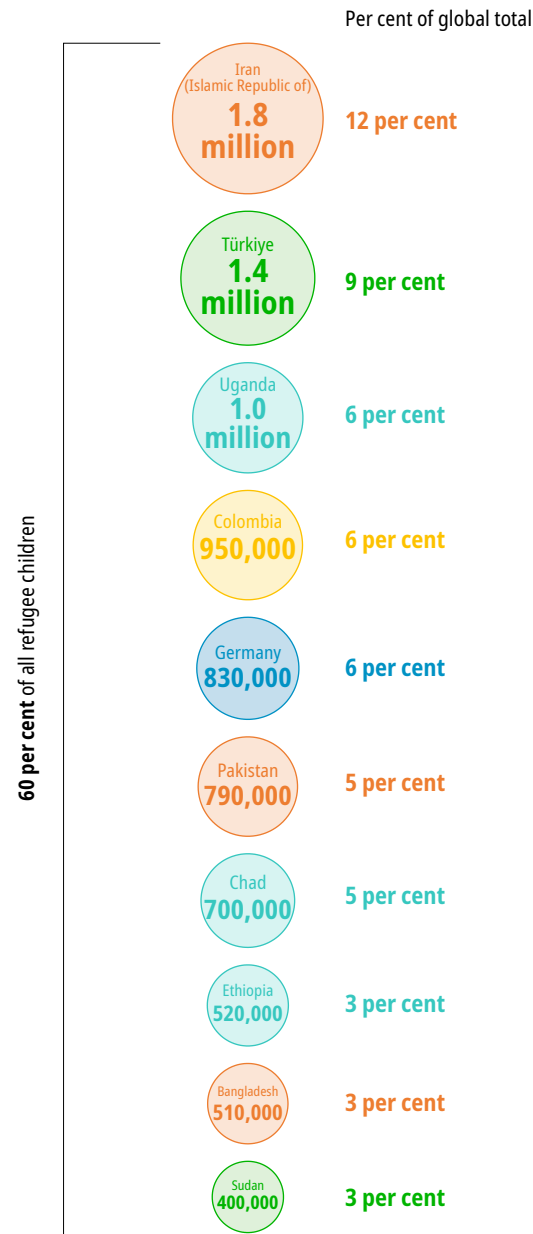
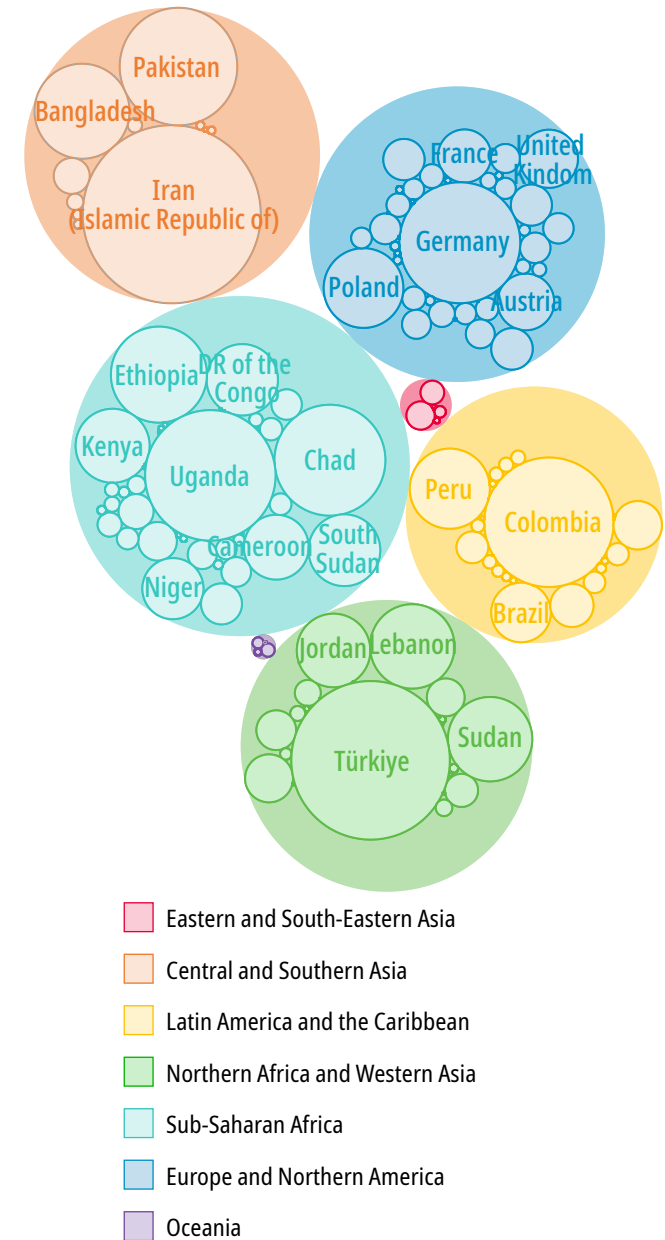


FIGURE 6B: PROPORTION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN BY COUNTRY AND SDG REGION OF ASYLUM, 2024

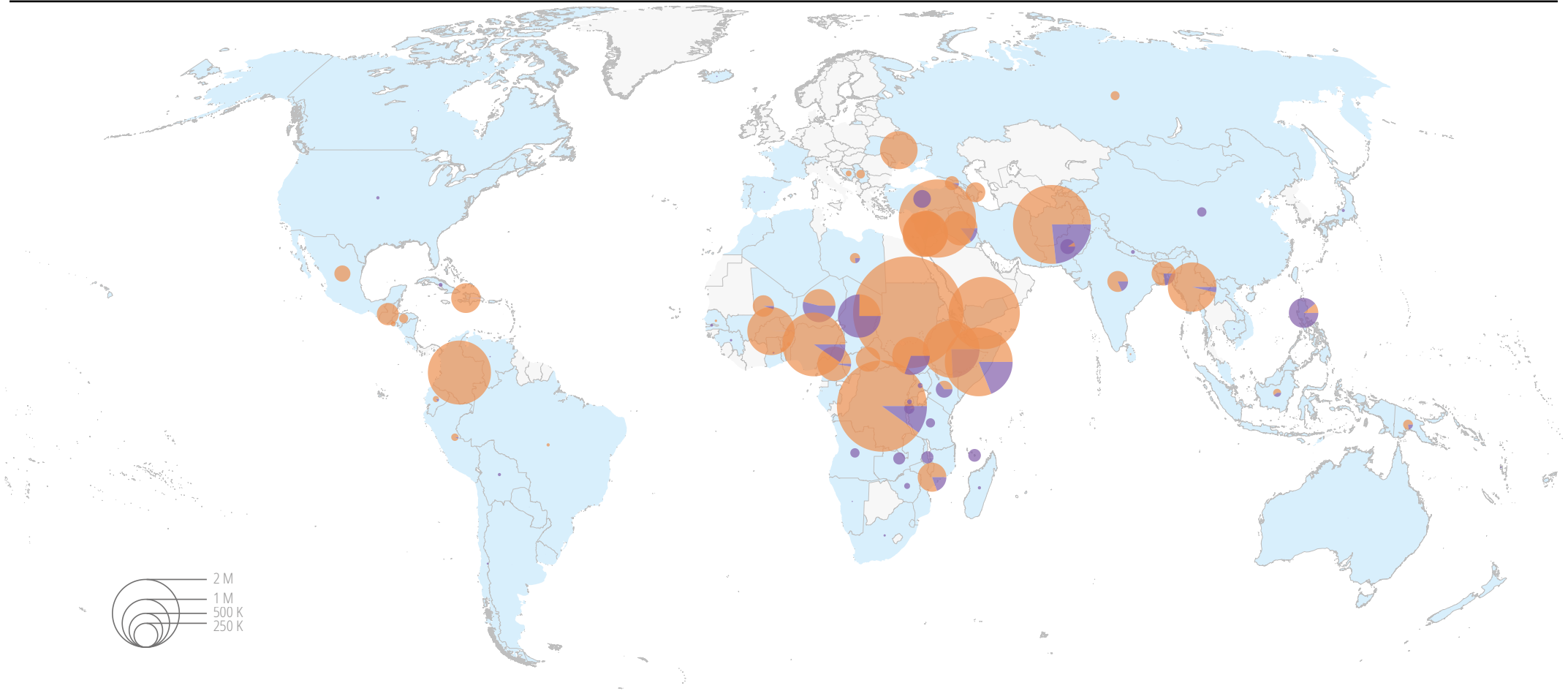


Source: Estimation based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2024](#), 2025.

FACT 7: Conflict and violence are the main reasons children remain displaced within their own countries.

Displacements due to conflict and violence typically last far longer than those caused by disasters due to the often protracted nature of conflict. This results in more children living in internal displacement at any given time than being newly displaced during a year. At the end of 2024, there were an estimated 31.2 million children who were internally displaced – the vast majority of them (28.1 million) because of conflict and violence – which is more than twice the number of refugee children. Most of these conflict-related internally displaced children lived in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED CHILDREN (DISPLACEMENT STOCK) BY CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT, 2024



■ Conflict-related ■ Disaster-related

This map does not reflect a position by IDAC, its members or contributors to this publication 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.

Source: Estimation based on Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Global Internal Displacement Database](https://www.internal-displacement.org/), 2025.

FACT 8: In 2024, an estimated 23.3 million new internal displacements of children occurred globally. Disasters were linked to more than half of them.

Disasters (weather-related and geophysical hazards) led to 14.5 million new internal displacements of children in 2024, while conflict and violence were linked to 8.9 million displacements. Some children may have been displaced more than once over the course of the year.

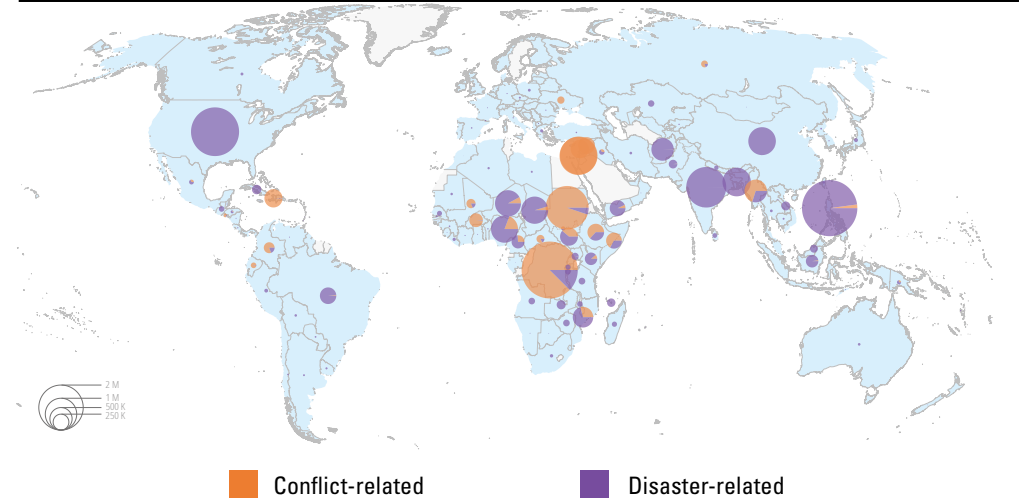
The majority of new internal displacements related to disasters (mostly due to storms and floods) took place in Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, while the bulk of those tied to conflict and violence occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. These numbers are based on reported movements of people forced to flee their homes.

FACT 9: Since 2016, weather-related events have triggered at least as many new child displacements as conflict and violence in most years.

Between 2016 and 2024, the number of new internal child displacements due to weather-related disasters reached 77 million, along with another 57 million tied to conflict and violence. Over this nine-year period, new internal displacements of children due to weather events outpaced those due to conflict and violence at a rate of nearly four to three.

Explore [IDAC's report](#) on children and climate mobility.

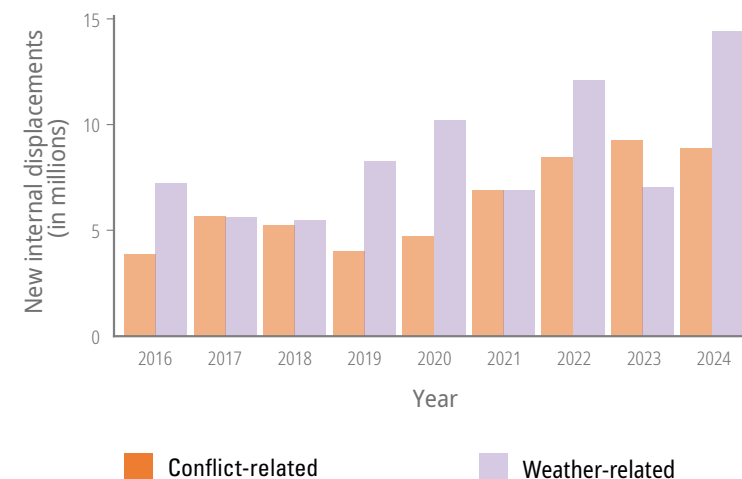
FIGURE 8: NUMBER OF NEW INTERNAL DISPLACEMENTS OF CHILDREN, BY CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT, 2024



This map does not reflect a position by IDAC, its members or contributors to this publication 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.

Source: Estimation based on Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Global Internal Displacement Database](#), 2025.

FIGURE 9: CONFLICT-RELATED DISPLACEMENTS VS. WEATHER-RELATED DISPLACEMENTS, 2016–2024



Source: Estimation based on Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Global Internal Displacement Database](#), 2025

UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN

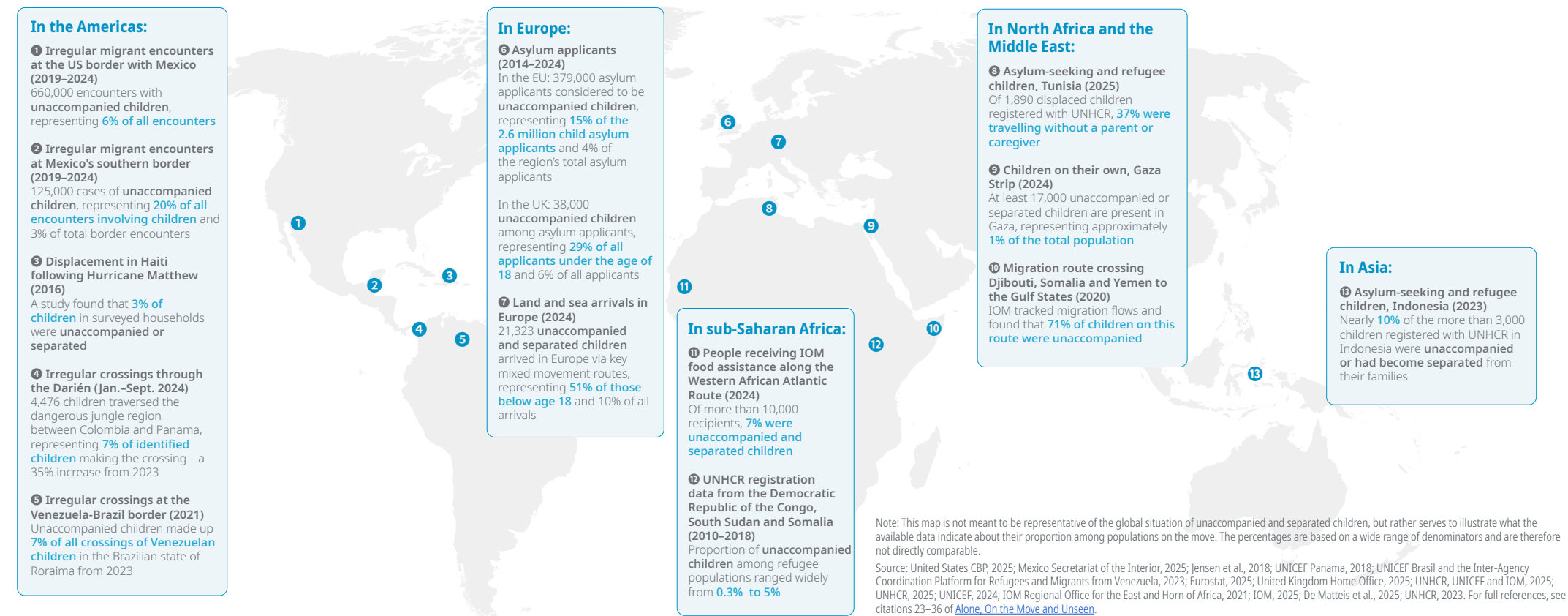
FACT 10: Children travelling unaccompanied or becoming separated during their journeys are regularly documented among populations on the move.

Data from key mixed movement flows and regional data and statistics on displaced populations – such as asylum applicants – indicate that a troubling number of children are on the move without a parent or caregiver.

Available data, however, represent only a small part of the global population of unaccompanied and separated children. For instance, route-based analysis is unavailable for many of the world's busiest corridors, such as movements from Venezuela or Syria. It is likely that many children are making these journeys alone and are missing from the current evidence base. Closing these data gaps is essential for realizing their rights and requires urgent, coordinated action.

Read [IDAC's report](#) on unaccompanied and separated children.

FIGURE 10: CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON THE PRESENCE OF UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN. FROM MIXED-MOVEMENT FLOWS AND REGIONAL DISPLACEMENT DATA





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