

## Frequently Asked Questions on Migration and Remittances Data

### 1) Are data available on bilateral migrant stocks by country?

Yes. Estimates of migrant stocks are compiled in the Bilateral Migration Matrix available on the World Bank Group website at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

### 2) What are the sources for the Bilateral Migration Matrix and how is it compiled?

The database of the UN Population Division (UNPD) is the most comprehensive source of information on international migrant stocks for the period 1960–2013. This dataset “Trend in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision” contains estimates of the total number of international migrants for all 214 countries and territories by country or territory, by destination, and by origin. Factbook 2016 extends this dataset using data from new censuses and country sources, including: (1) data from the 2010 round census that UNPD did not include in the 2013 revision because the census data was released later; (2) new censuses from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean that provided more disaggregated data by country; and (3) revised numbers for Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates based on recent data from the Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM) provided by Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute. The Factbook also includes more recent data on refugees (published by UNHCR).

### 3) Is the Global Bilateral Migration Database (1960-2000) comparable to the Bilateral Migration Matrix (2013)?

The two sets of data are not comparable. The Global Bilateral Migration Database uses estimations to fill the gaps for the cells. A researcher cannot use that data for estimations. The bilateral migration matrix (2010 and 2013) uses UN Population Division (UNPD) data and extends this dataset using data from new censuses and country sources.

### 4) Are time series data available on the Bilateral Migration Matrix?

No. As of now Bilateral Migration Matrix is available only for 2010 and 2013.

### 5) Where can I find data on remittance inflows and outflows?

Data on remittance inflows and outflows can be found on the World Bank Group website at [www.worldbank.org/migration](http://www.worldbank.org/migration), under the tab on data.

**6) What are the sources for officially recorded remittance inflows and outflows data and how are they compiled?**

Where data is available, remittances are measured as the sum of two items in the International Monetary Fund's Balance of Payments Statistics Year Book: i) personal transfers, ii) compensation of employees, and iii) migrants' transfers (i.e., capital transfers between resident and non-resident households). For some countries, data is obtained from the respective country's Central Bank and other relevant official sources.

**7) Are the remittances reported by the World Bank the same as the figures reported by central banks?**

In some cases, the remittance figures reported by national central banks differ from the remittance data we report. This is mainly due to differences in the definition of remittances. Most central banks measure remittances based on data from money transfer companies, which capture only a sub-component of what they report to the IMF for the Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook. Furthermore, the transition of definitions between IMF BPM5 and BPM6 also create differences between some central bank published data and what they report to the IMF (see FAQ 9 below).

**8) Do these remittance figures capture remittance flows through informal channels?**

No. The remittances data reported by the World Bank cover only officially recorded remittances and, therefore, do not include remittances sent through informal channels.

**9) The IMF moved from BPM5 to BPM6. How does this affect the definition of Remittances?**

The IMF has begun publishing the BoP Statistics according to the sixth version of the Balance of Payment Manual (BPM6). According to this methodology, remittances data are captured in two items: compensation of employees and personal transfers. Compensation of employees refers to "the income of border, seasonal, and other short-term workers who are employed in an economy where they are not resident and of residents employed by nonresident entities." Personal transfers consist of "all current transfers in cash or in kind made or received by resident households to or from nonresident households." In the BPM5, remittances are measured as the sum of compensation of employees, workers' remittances, and migrants' transfers. The new definitions are expected to improve data on remittances by bringing them closer to the compilation methodology used by many countries. A comparison of remittances data between the two formats shows that in most cases, the differences are minor. (For further details, see Migration and Development Brief 19 at: <http://goo.gl/vkGt3>; and the International Transactions in Remittances: Guide for Compilers and Users at: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sta/bop/2008/rcg/pdf/guide.pdf> )

**10) Why are the total inflows of remittances higher than the total outflows?**

Numerous factors explain the difference between total inflows and outflows, including better monitoring of inflows, and possible under-reporting of outflows.

**11) Why are remittances data missing for some countries?**

Remittances data are missing for countries that do not report to the IMF the components constituting the definition of remittance (i.e., compensation of employees and personal transfers). Statistical capacity building efforts are ongoing in many countries to improve reporting.

**12) Are there monthly and quarterly data on remittance?**

Monthly and / or quarterly remittances data are available for about 150 countries. These data are available from the websites of the respective country's central banks and other relevant official agencies. These may not match IMF BoP and World Bank reported figures due to definition differences.

**13) Is the definition of remittances the same for annual, monthly and quarterly data?**

Not necessarily. The annual remittances data are captured as described in FAQ 6 above, while the sources for the monthly and quarterly data are less specific.

**14) Are there data on bilateral remittance flows (disaggregated by country pairs)?**

With the exception of a few countries like the Philippines and Pakistan that do report a breakdown of remittances by source countries, there are no official data on remittance flows between countries. The bilateral remittance matrices reported by the World Bank (found at the following webpage:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data> ) aim to fill this gap.

**15) How are the bilateral remittance matrices estimated?**

Two key datasets are used to construct the bilateral remittance matrices. The first is the Bilateral Migration Matrix, which can be found at the following link: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>. The Bilateral Migration Matrix provides estimates on immigrant stocks, disaggregated by migrant source countries, in all the countries for which data is available. It is based on data collected from countries' census bureau and other relevant sources. The second key dataset used in the construction of the Bilateral Remittance Matrix is the remittance inflows data, found at the following link:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>. The remittance inflows data are constructed as the sum, where data is available, of two components in the IMF's Balance of Payments Statistics: i) compensation of employees, ii) personal transfers. Constructing the Bilateral Remittance Matrix involves allocating a country's total remittance inflows in a given year to its emigrant stocks estimated in the Bilateral Migration Matrix, adjusting for the migrant sending and receiving countries' per capita income.

It is important to emphasize that this is not an official figure. The methodology used is described in greater detail in the paper: "South-South Migration and Remittances" by Ratha and Shaw (2007).

**16) Is it possible to estimate remittance outflows based on the Bilateral Remittance Matrix?**

Yes, remittance outflows can be estimated using the Bilateral Remittance Matrix. For a given country, summing across the columns gives the total remittance outflows from that country in the given year.

**17) Remittance outflows based on the Bilateral Remittance Matrix are different from the migrant remittance outflows reported to the IMF. What explains the discrepancies?**

While the migrant remittance outflows data (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>) reported to the IMF are the official figures as monitored by respective central banks and statistical agencies, the estimates based on the Bilateral Remittance Matrix allocate total remittance inflows based on the methodology discussed in Ratha and Shaw (2007) "South-South Migration and Remittances". (see FAQ 15). Given that total reported inflows and outflows also differ, these two outflows figures will not be the same.

**18) Are time series data available on the Bilateral Remittance Matrix?**

Yes. So far, there are Bilateral Remittance Matrices for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. All of them are constructed following the same methodology, discussed under FAQ 15.

**19) In the Bilateral Migration Matrix and the Bilateral Remittance Matrix, there are categories called "Other South" and "Other North." Which countries are included in these two categories?**

As noted in FAQ 15, the Bilateral Remittance Matrix figures are estimates and, therefore, not official figures. A critical input in the estimation exercise is the Bilateral Migration Matrix, itself constructed based on data collected from the respective country census data. These census reports list only the major migrant source countries and lump the rest under a category called "other", with no information of which countries are in this category. Ratha and Shaw (2007)

developed a methodology for allocating this "other" category into Other North and Other South, but no specific information is available on countries of origin in these categories.

**20) How often are the migration and remittances data updated?**

The migration and remittance data are updated as new data become available. The annual remittance inflows are generally updated twice a year coinciding with the release of the Migration and Development Briefs. The next update is scheduled around April 2017.

**21) How can I find out about the latest updates to migration and remittances data?**

The latest update to migration and remittance data can be found by visiting our website, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>. Updates are also announced through the People Move blog: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove>.

**22) I have questions on your remittance and migration data that are not covered in this FAQ. Whom can I contact?**

If you have further queries related to Migration and remittance data, you can send an e-mail to Dilip Ratha, Manager, Migration and Remittance Unit; E-mail: [dratha@worldbank.org](mailto:dratha@worldbank.org).