



## Menace of Illegal Migration

**For Prelims:** [International Organization for Migration](#), Missing Migrants Project, Internal Migration, Donkey flight, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.

**For Mains:** Status of Migration Across the Globe, Major Challenges Faced by Migrants

**Source:** TH

### Why in News?

Recently, the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) has stated that a total of 8,565 [migrants](#) died on land and sea routes worldwide in 2023.

- IOM reported that the number of migrant deaths in 2023 increased by almost **20%** compared to 2022.
- The "**Missing Migrants**" project by IOM, established in 2014, tracks these figures and was initiated after a surge in deaths in the Mediterranean and an influx of migrants on the Italian island of Lampedusa.

### What is the International Organization for Migration?

- **About:**
  - The **International Organization for Migration** originated in 1951 as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME) after **World War II's** upheavals.
  - It underwent name changes from PICMME to the **Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM)** in 1952, to the **Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM)** in 1980, and finally to the **International Organisation for Migration** in 1989, reflecting its evolution into a migration agency.
  - In 2016, IOM entered into an agreement with the [United Nations](#), becoming a related organization.
- **Members:** It currently has 175 Member States and 8 states with Observer status.
  - **India** became an IOM Member State on 18th June 2008.
- **Crisis Management:** Throughout its history, IOM has responded to various crises such as Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Chile in 1973, Vietnamese Boat People in 1975, Kuwait in 1990, Kosovo and Timor in 1999, and the **Asian tsunami and Pakistan earthquake** of 2004/2005.

### What is the Status of Migration Across the Globe?

- **About:** Migration refers to the movement of people from one place to another, typically involving a change in residence.
  - This movement can be within a country ([internal migration](#)) or between countries (**international migration**).

- It can be temporary or permanent, depending on the individual's intentions and circumstances.
- According to the International Organization for Migration, migrants currently **constitute 3.6% of the global population.**
- **Major Causes:**
  - **Economic Reasons:** People often migrate in search of **better job opportunities, higher wages, improved living standards,** and access to essential services such as education and healthcare.
  - **Conflict and War:** Armed conflicts, civil wars, and political instability can force people to flee their homes and seek refuge in safer areas or countries.
  - **Environmental Factors:** Natural disasters such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, earthquakes, and climate change-related impacts can displace populations, leading to migration.
  - **Social and Political Factors:** Discrimination, persecution, human rights violations, lack of freedom, and political oppression can compel individuals or communities to seek asylum or move to countries with more favourable conditions.
  - **Urbanization and Rural-Urban Migration:** Rural residents may move to urban areas in search of employment, education, healthcare, and improved living standards, **contributing to urbanization trends.**
- **Major Challenges Faced by Illegal Migrants:**
  - **Physical Risks and Dangers:** Illegal migrants (like those who opt for **donkey flight**) face numerous physical dangers throughout the journey, including treacherous terrains like the **Darién Gap, lack of clean water, wild animals,** and the **threat of violence from criminal gangs.**
    - This can lead to injuries, illnesses, or even death during the journey.
  - **Legal Status and Rights:** Undocumented migrants or those with irregular status often encounter legal hurdles, lack access to fundamental rights and services, and live under the constant threat of **deportation, detention, or exploitation.**
  - **Discrimination and Xenophobia:** Migrants may face discrimination, prejudice, and hostility based on their nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, or cultural background, leading to **social exclusion, marginalisation, and unequal treatment.**
  - **Trafficking and Exploitation:** Migrants, especially vulnerable groups such as **women, and children** are at risk of human trafficking, exploitation, abuse, and forced labour, particularly in informal or precarious work settings.

## Note

### Donkey flight:

- Donkey flight is a term used to describe an illegal immigration technique employed by people seeking unauthorised entry into countries like the **United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia.**
  - According to the **US Customs and Border Protection (USCBP)**, Indians are the 5th largest source of illegal migrants entering the US from the southwest border.
  - 96,917 Indians were caught illegally crossing borders into the US between **October 2022 and September 2023.**

### Darién Gap:

- A **geographic region** in the **Isthmus of Darién or Isthmus of Panama** connecting the **American continents within Central America**, consisting of a large watershed, forest, and mountains in Panama's Darién Province and the northern portion of Colombia's Chocó Department.



## Way Forward

- **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM):** Implementing the objectives and commitments outlined in the [GCM](#), a UN-led framework for addressing migration challenges through a cooperative, people-centred approach involving governments, civil society, and other stakeholders.
- **Widening Legal and Safe Pathways:** Enhancing legal and safe pathways for migration, including resettlement programs for [refugees](#), family reunification mechanisms, labour migration schemes, and humanitarian visas.
  - This can reduce the reliance on dangerous and illegal routes like the Donkey Flights.
- **Combating Human Trafficking:** Strengthening law enforcement and international cooperation to combat [human trafficking and smuggling networks](#) that exploit migrants.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Fostering regional cooperation among countries of origin, transit, and destination to develop joint strategies for **migration management, information sharing, and capacity building.**
- **Provide Assistance to Returnees:** Support programs that assist returning migrants with reintegration into their communities, including **access to education, vocational training, healthcare, and psychosocial support.**

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Mains:

**Q.** “Refugees should not be turned back to the country where they would face persecution or human right violation”. Examine the statement with reference to the ethical dimension being violated by the nation claiming to be democratic with open society. **(2021)**

**Q.** Rehabilitation of human settlements is one of the important environmental impacts which always attracts controversy while planning major projects. Discuss the measures suggested for mitigation of this impact while proposing major developmental projects. **(2016)**

**Q.** Discuss the changes in the trends of labour migration within and outside India in the last four decades. **(2015)**

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