

Children, Adolescents and Migration: Filling the Evidence Gap

Prepared by UNICEF Division of Policy and Practice

with the support of the United Nations Population Division/DESA and UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation

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Improving the Evidence Base on International Migrants Under 20 Years of Age

Since the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, organized by the United Nations General Assembly, and the creation of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the issue of international migration has risen on the agenda of policy-makers around the world. The increased demand for policy relevant migration information has exposed serious deficiencies in the availability of basic data on global migration levels, trends and characteristics. Many countries collect data on persons under 20 years of age who were born outside the country of enumeration and who may or may not have the citizenship of that country, usually as part of their population census or through administrative means, and at different intervals. While more information on child and adolescent migrants has become available in the recent past, harmonized estimates for all countries and areas in the world at regular intervals are currently not available. Answers to basic questions, such as “how many children and adolescents are participating in international migration?”, “what are the age profiles of those moving across borders?”, “do girls and boys have the same propensity to migrate?”, and “how does migration affects children and adolescents moving across borders and those who stay behind?” remain elusive. The absence of information on basic migration trends and its impacts on children and adolescents severely hampers one of UNICEF’s main concerns to ensure children’s, adolescents’ and women’s rights in receiving societies regardless of citizenship and migratory status as well as the endeavors of policy makers at national and regional levels to design and implement evidence-based policies in order to maximize the positive effects of migration and to minimize its negative effects on migrant families and migrant communities of origin and destination.

To fill this void, UNICEF has partnered with the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) to develop estimates of the global stock of international migrant children and adolescents. These estimates will allow policy-makers to understand the patterns of child and adolescent migration across the world and to support partners in developing countries and developed countries to formulate coherent policies to assure the rights of migrant children and adolescents in accordance with the 1990 Convention of the Rights of the Child and other relevant international instruments. As a first step, a database was created to collect all available tabulations of the international migrant stock by age and sex. The *United Nations Global Migration Database* contains more than 4,000 tabulations from 230 countries or areas since the 1970s. Launched in December 2008, the database has more than 1,000 registered users (see: <http://esa.un.org/unmigration>).

The 2010 round of population censuses, currently underway, is a unique opportunity to improve the quality and availability of gender and age disaggregated migration data. Through its country offices, UNICEF actively promotes the collection of policy relevant migration information through censuses and specialized household surveys focusing on the impact of migration on children. These activities are fully consistent with the report *Migrants Count: Five Steps Toward Better Migration Data*, published by the Center for Global Development in 2009, which is fully endorsed by UNICEF. This poster visualizes empirical data on the stock of international migrants by country of birth and citizenship contained in the *United Nations Global Migration Database* and highlights opportunities for further research and analysis on child and adolescent migration. The database was developed by the Population Division of UN/DESA with the support of UNICEF and UNDP’s Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank, the University of Sussex and IPUMS International, University of Minnesota.

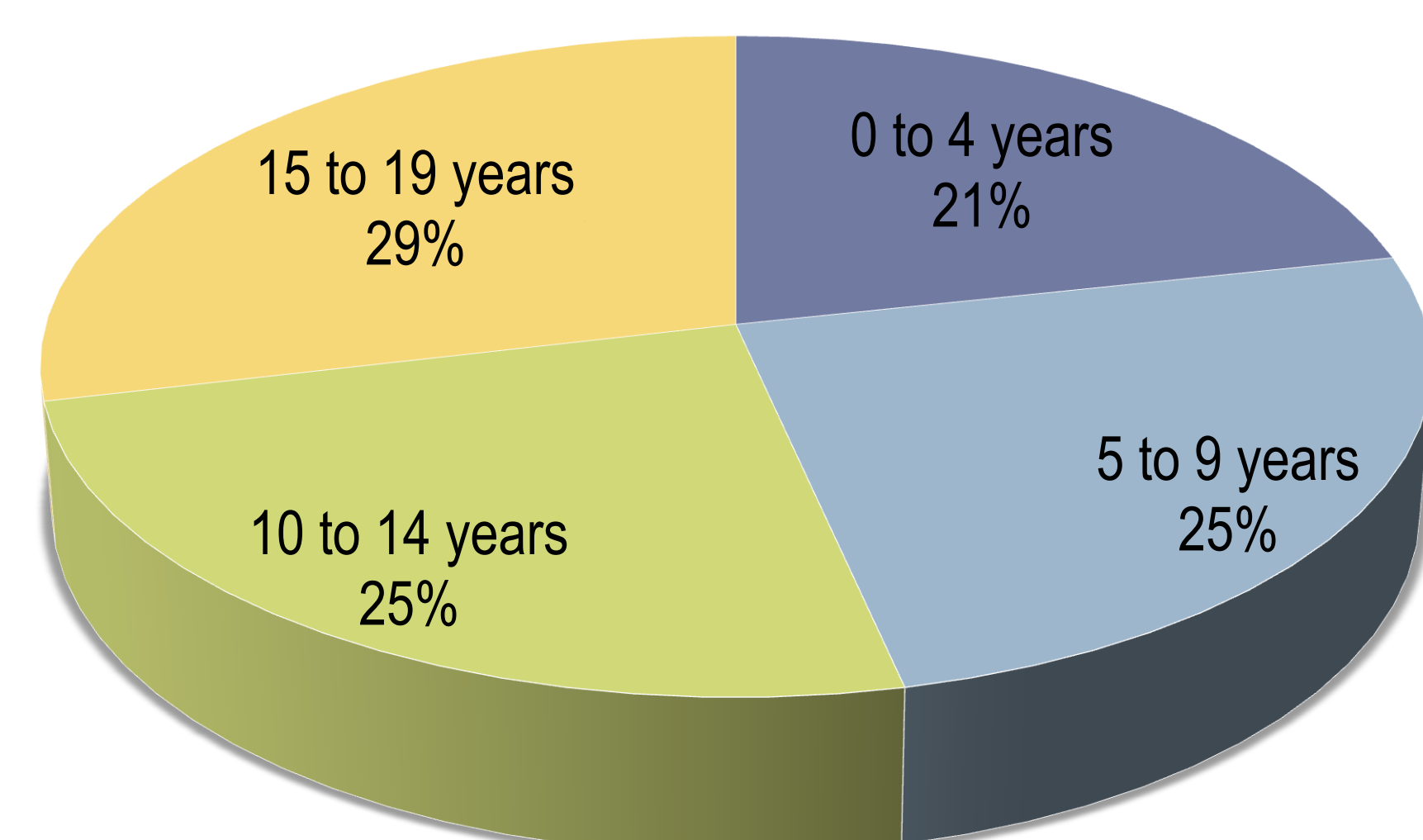
International Migrants under 20 Years of Age: In Developing and Developed Countries

(Latest data available)*

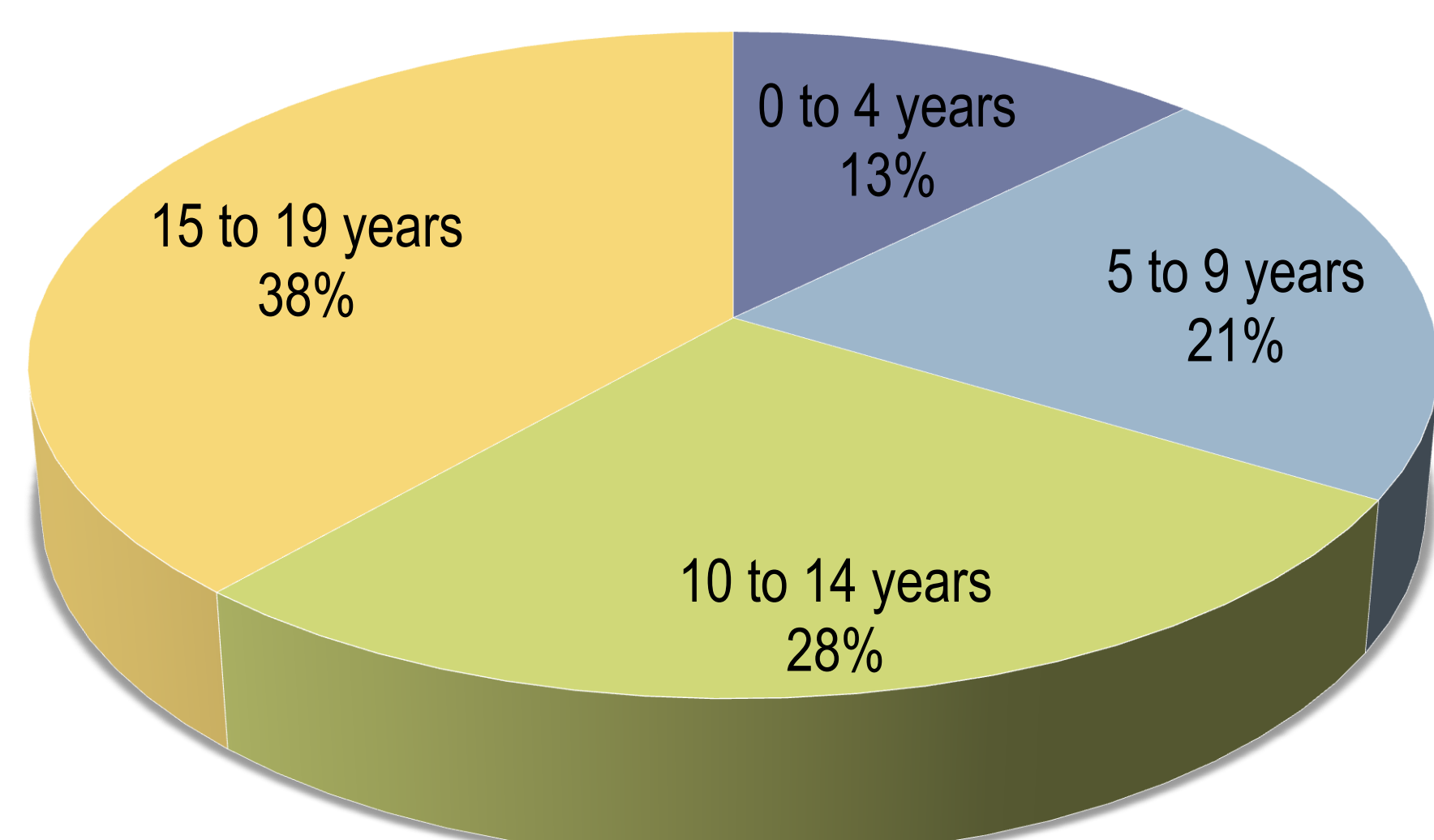
Developing countries**, host a higher proportion of migrants under 20 years of age. The percentage of migrants under the age of 20 in developing countries is 19 per cent, while the percentage in more developed countries*** is 12 per cent.

In developing countries migrants between 15 and 19 years of age represent 29 per cent of all migrants under 20 years of age, whereas in developed countries, migrants aged between 15 and 19 years account for almost 40 per cent of all migrants under 20 years of age.

Developing Countries



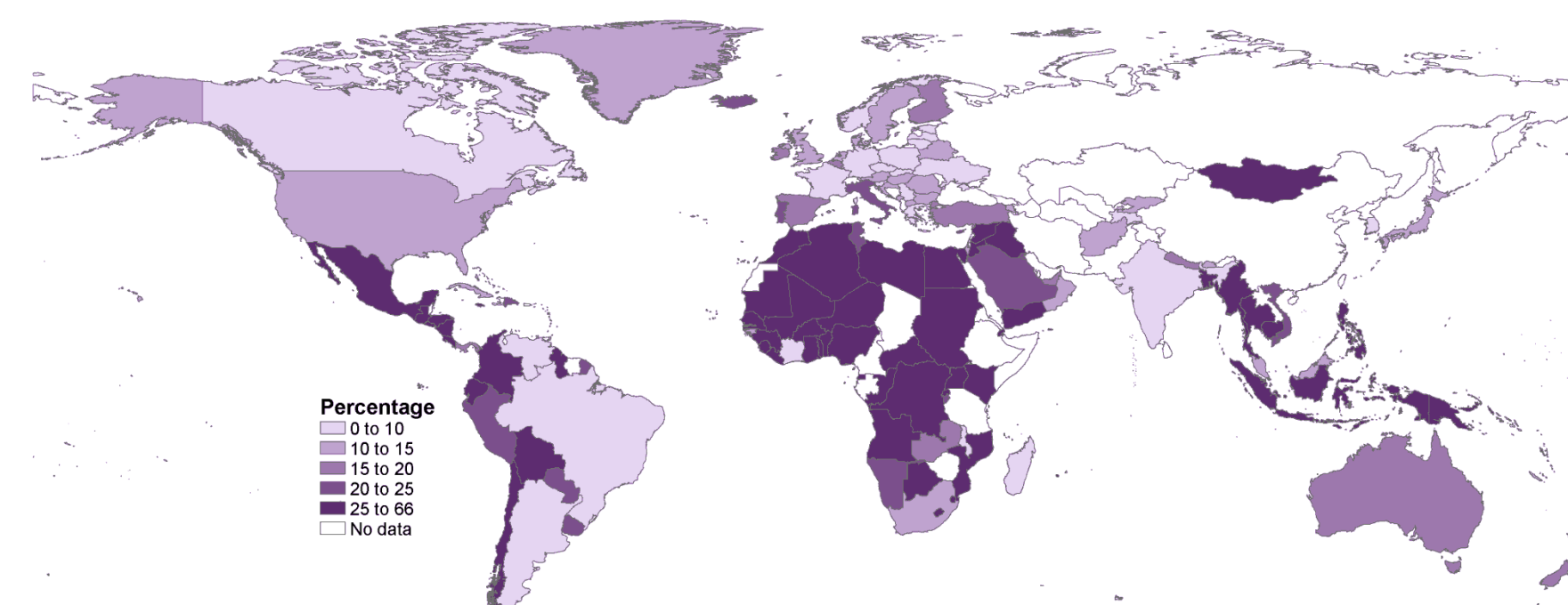
Developed Countries



International Migrants Under 20 Years of Age: A Global Picture

(Latest data available)*

Percentage of International Migrants under the Age of 20

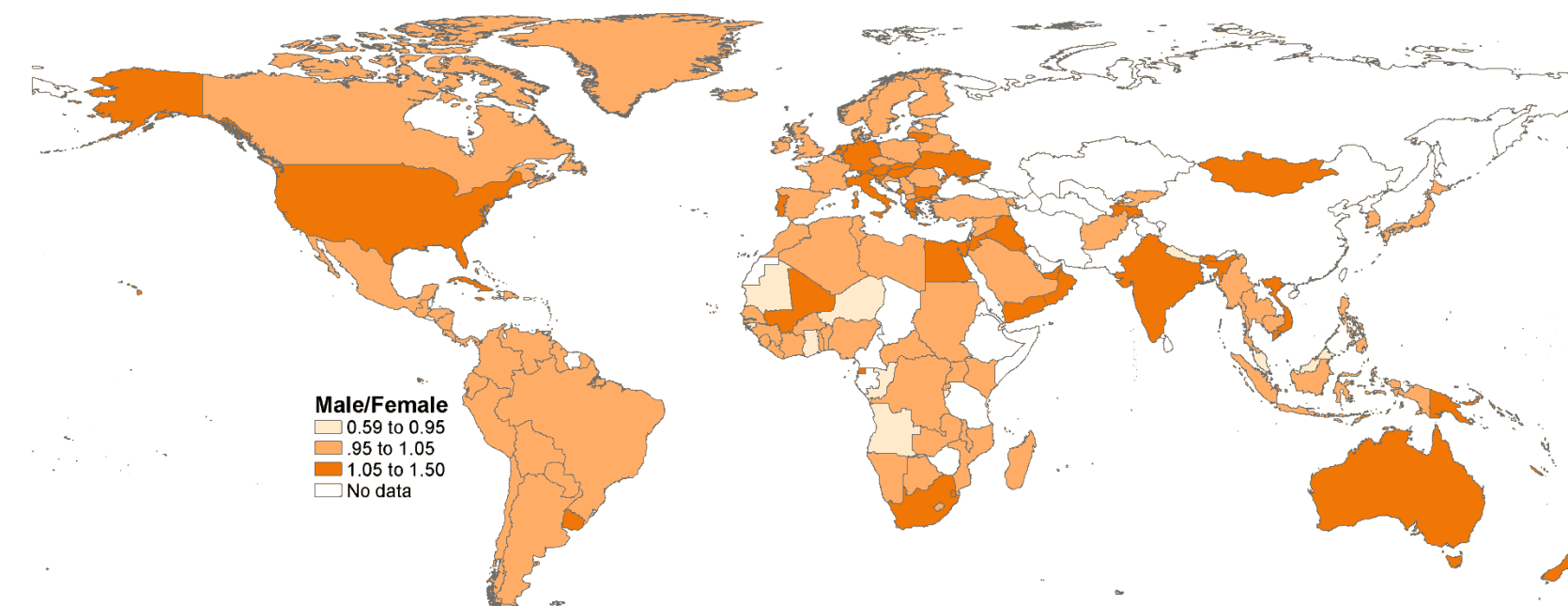


There are relatively few young international migrants. On average, some 36 per cent of the global population is younger than 20 years. However, only 14 per cent of all international migrants are under the age of 20.

International Migrants Under 20 Years of Age: Sex Ratio

(Latest data available)*

Sex Ratio (Male / Female)



Male migrants under 20 years of age outnumber female migrants. Globally, there are 95 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under the age of 20.

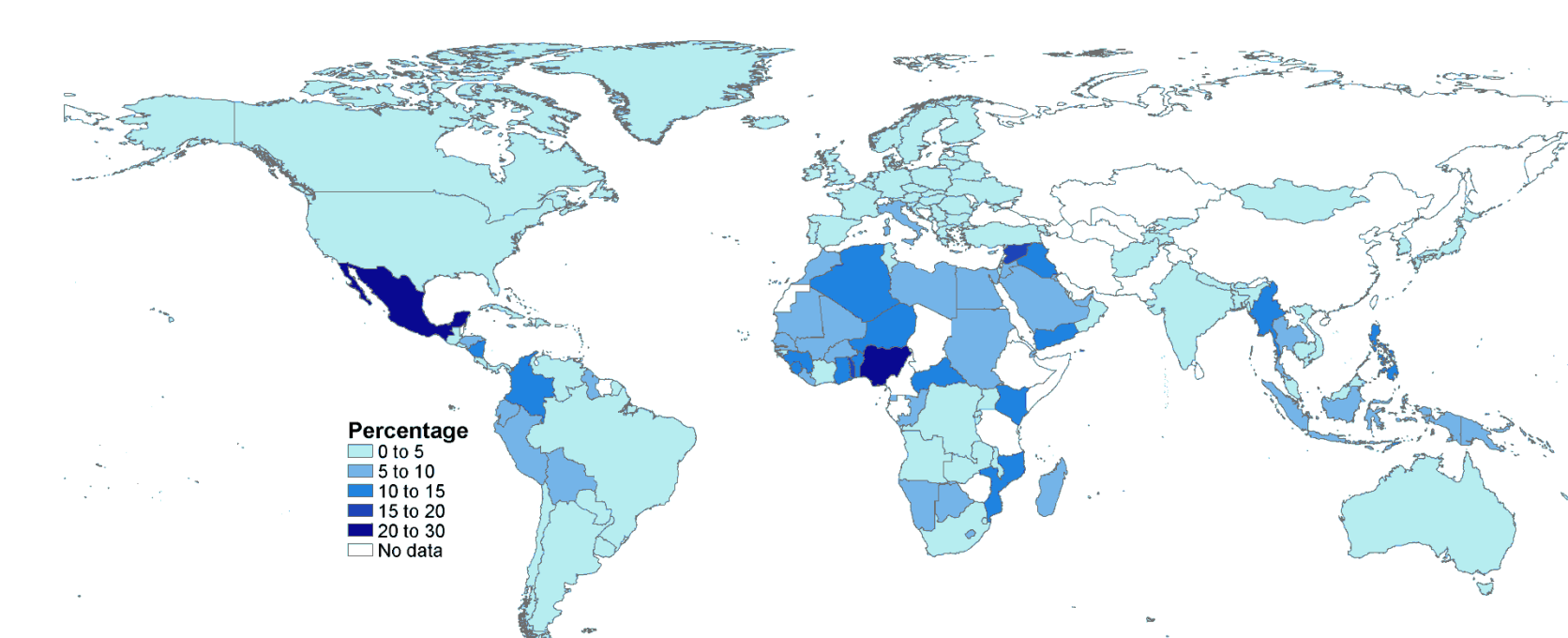
Migrant females are the least numerous in the age group 15 to 19. For every 100 male migrants aged between 15 and 19, there are only 91 female migrants. The number of female migrants per 100 male migrants fluctuates between 93 and 97 for the other three young age groups.

The differences between countries can be explained by the unique nature of each migration corridor. For instance, migration from Latin America & the Caribbean to the United States has been characterized by an over-representation of young male migrants seeking employment opportunities.

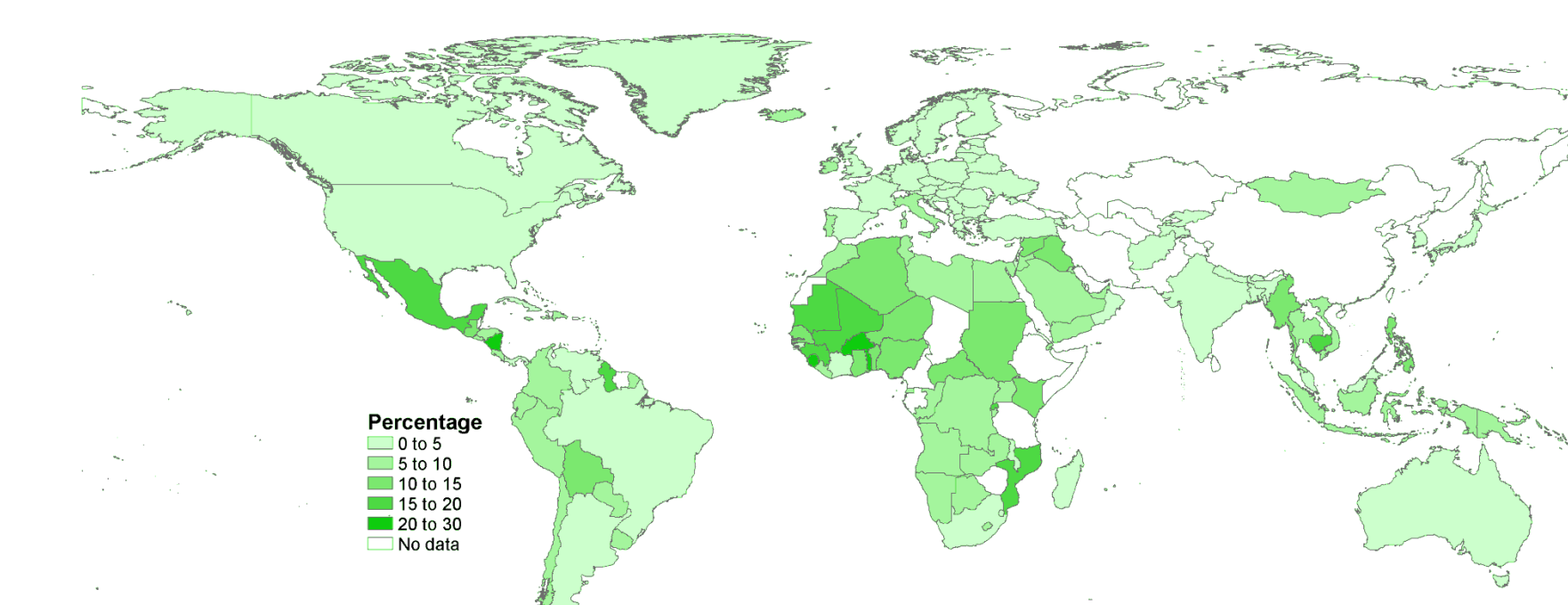
International Migrants Under 20 Years of Age: Age Distribution

(Latest data available)*

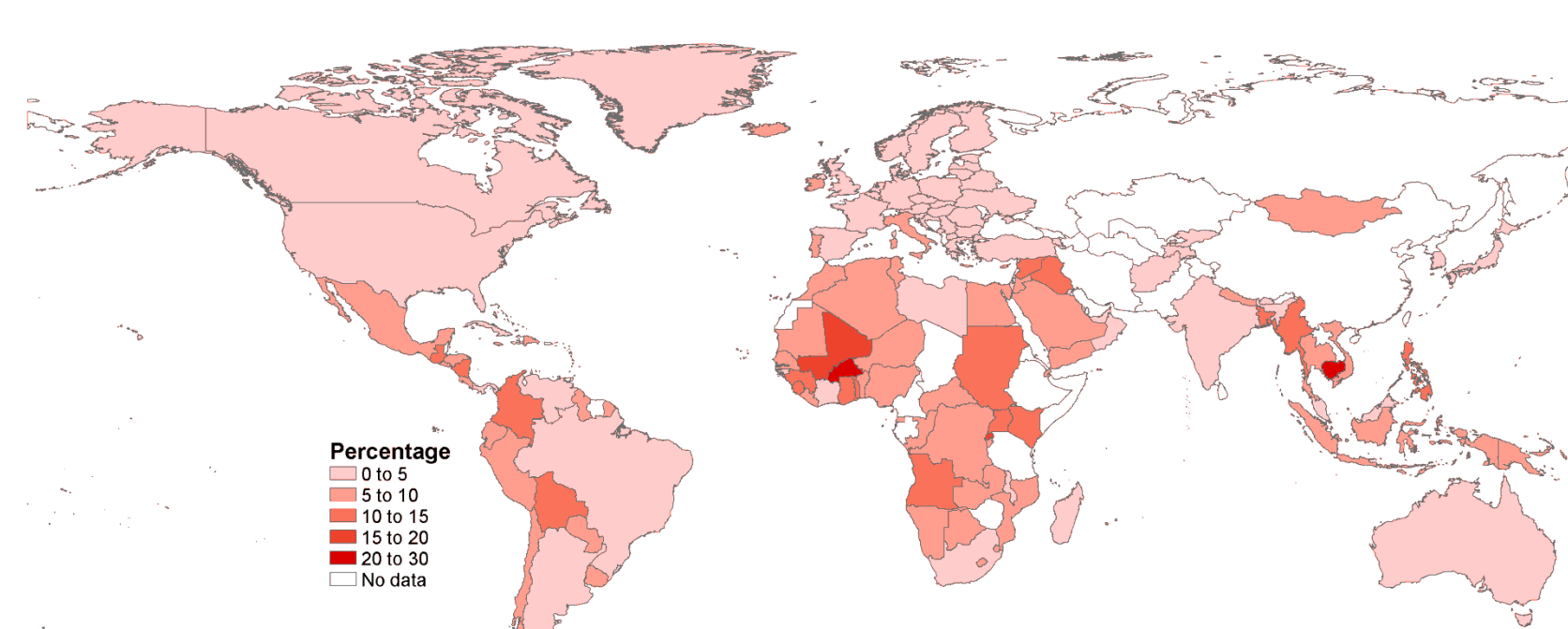
Percentage of international migrants between 0 and 4 years of age



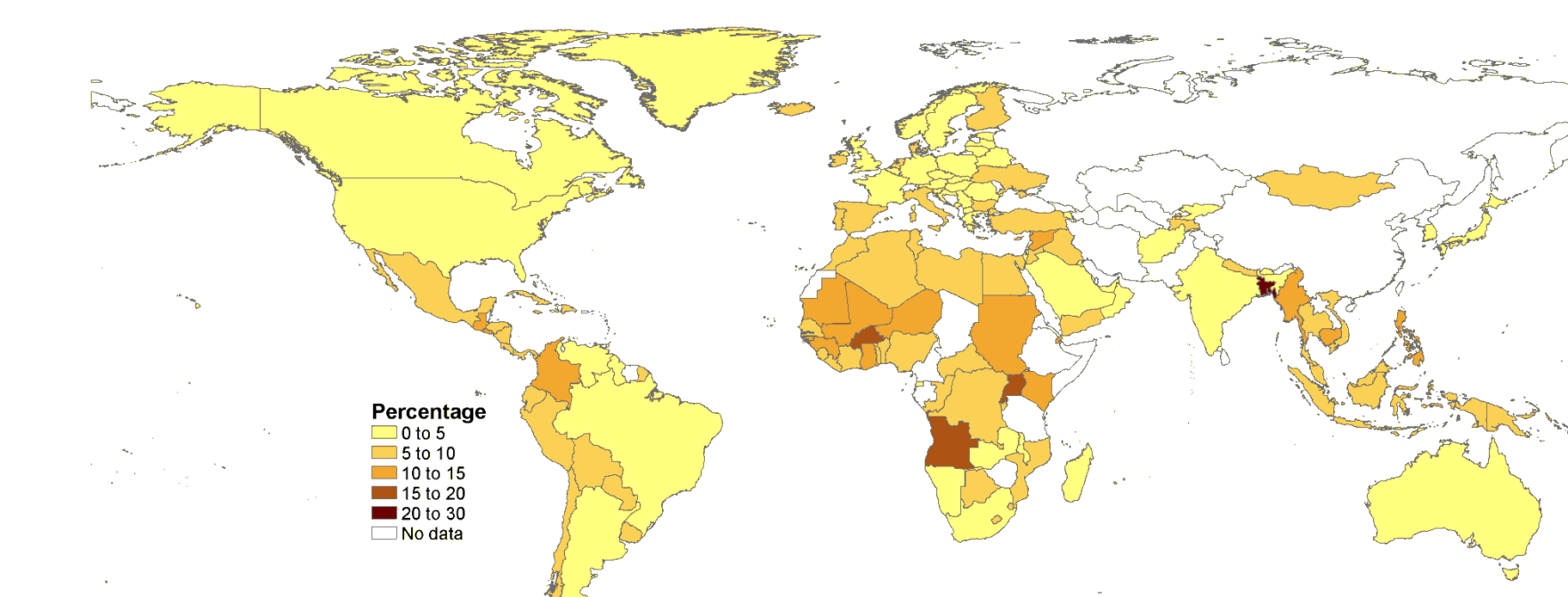
Percentage of international migrants between 5 and 9 years of age



Percentage of international migrants between 10 and 14 years of age



Percentage of international migrants between 15 and 19 years of age



Among the migrants under 20 years of age, the group of 15 to 19 years is the largest group, accounting for some 34 per cent of all migrants under the age of 20, followed by the age group 10 to 14, which represent around 26 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, while the age groups 5 to 9 and 0 to 4, represent 23 per cent and 17 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age.

Migrants under the age of 20 constitute the largest group of the total migrant population in Africa (27%), followed by the Caribbean, Central and South America (19%), Asia (17%), Oceania (15%), and Europe and Northern America (11%).

There are regional variations among migrants under 20 years of age. In Europe & Northern America, Africa and Oceania the group of 15 to 19 years represents 39, 34 and 32 per cent of total migrant population under the age of 20, respectively. In Asia, the group of 10 to 14 years represents 26 per cent of all migrants under 20, while in Latin America & the Caribbean the group of 5 to 9 years accounts for 27 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age.

Notes:

* Includes foreign born and foreign citizens. Foreign born refers to persons born outside the country of enumeration. Foreign citizen refers to persons who do not have the citizenship of the country of enumeration.

** Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia

*** Europe, Northern America, Australia/New Zealand, and Japan

The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on all of these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.