



Africa's Migration Futures

Africa's Migration Future to 2050

Alize le Roux

Last updated 26 October 2026 using IFs v8.72

Table of contents

Africa's Migration Future to 2050	3
Briefly	3
Modelling migration	3
Applying four global scenarios to migration	3
International migration to 2050	4
The scale of future African international migration	5
Intra-African and off-continental international migration	5
Off-continental migration destinations	6
Regional migration systems to 2050	7
Donors and Sponsors	13
Reuse our work	13
Cite this research	13

Africa's Migration Future to 2050

- Briefly
- Modelling migration
- Applying four global scenarios to migration
- International migration to 2050
- The scale of future African international migration
- Intra-African and off-continental international migration
- Off-continental migration destinations
- Regional migration systems to 2050

Briefly

Modelling migration

The migration forecasts presented below do not distinguish legal status, motivation for movement or whether movement is forced or voluntary, regular or irregular. The [International Futures \(IFs\)](#) migration model forecasts international migrant flows and stocks. It does not forecast internal migration or displacement within African countries, or explicitly account for circular migration or involuntary immobility.

IFs models international migration through two connected components. A country-level, or monadic, model estimates total outward migration from each country, while a bilateral, or dyadic, gravity model distributes migrants among potential destination countries.

At the country level, migration responds to changes in population, economic growth, income, poverty and insecurity. At the bilateral level, destination patterns are influenced by geographic distance and existing migrant stocks. Established migrant communities reduce the costs and risks of moving, reinforcing migration corridors over time. Migration flows subsequently alter bilateral migrant stocks, which in turn influence future flows.

The results refer to annual international migration flows and accumulated international migrant stocks. A detailed explanation of the migration module, its underlying data, parameters and limitations is available under the scenario section of the Technical page.

Applying four global scenarios to migration

The migration scenarios presented here use four global scenarios set out in the [Global Power Shifts](#) and [Africa in the World](#) themes as an underlying framework: a Sustainable World, a Growth World, a Divided World and a World at War. These four scenarios are structured around two broad uncertainties: the extent of global integration or fragmentation and the degree to which sustainability, equity and long-term resilience are prioritised. They are not predictions, but alternative futures used to explore how different global pathways could shape Africa's development. Chart 6 depicts the dimensions of the four global scenarios.

Chart 6: Dimensions of the four global scenarios

Source: Source goes here

The four global scenarios create very different environments for migration. The Sustainable World combines stronger international cooperation, African regional integration, improved governance and lower conflict. The Growth World produces rapid economic growth and high trade and capital mobility, but also greater inequality and weaker environmental protection. The Divided World is characterised by global fragmentation, nationalism, weaker multilateral cooperation and stronger anti-migrant sentiment. At the same time, the World at War combines geopolitical conflict, economic disruption, greater authoritarianism and weaker international integration.

To translate these broader global scenarios into migration outcomes, this theme considers two related questions: how strong are the pressures or incentives for people to move, and how able are they to act on those pressures or incentives?

- Pressure or need to move captures the forces that encourage or compel migration, including conflict, insecurity, livelihood deterioration, inequality and environmental stress, as well as aspirations for employment, education and improved living standards.
- Ability and opportunity to move captures whether people can translate those pressures or aspirations into actual migration. Household resources, legal pathways, labour demand, regional integration, migrant networks, transport systems and destination-country policies shape it.

The scenarios explore how different combinations of migration pressure and the ability to move shape migration outcomes, as summarised in Chart 7.

Chart 7: Migration logic for the four global scenarios

Source: [Source goes here](#)

International migration to 2050

There were approximately 313 million international migrants globally in 2025. By 2050, the global international migrant stock increases under all four scenarios, but at very different rates: to approximately 454 million in the Growth World, 421 million in the Sustainable World, 363 million in the Divided World and 330 million in the World at War. Chart 8 presents the global international migrant stock by scenario from 2025 to 2050.

The divergence reflects the interaction between pressure to move and the ability and opportunity to do so. The Growth World produces the largest increase, around 45% above the 2025 level, as strong economic growth, rising household resources, high connectivity and international labour demand expand people's capacity to migrate. The Sustainable World also produces substantial growth, to around 35% above 2025, supported by stronger development outcomes, international cooperation and more accessible, regular migration pathways.

The increase in international migrant numbers is much slower in the Divided World and very limited in the World at War. Political fragmentation, harder borders and weaker economic performance constrain international mobility in the Divided World. In the World at War, conflict and insecurity generate acute pressure to move but simultaneously erode household resources, disrupt transport systems and close migration pathways.

Chart 8: Global international migrant stock by scenario, 2025-2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

These global patterns provide the context for Africa's migration trajectory. The following sections examine how the same interaction between migration pressure and mobility capability shapes African-origin migration, including its division into intra-African international migration and off-continent international migration.

The scale of future African international migration

The African-origin international migrant stock comprises African-born people living outside their country of birth, whether in another African country or off-continent. It therefore comprises both intra-African international migration and off-continent international migration.

In 2025, there were just less than 52.5 million African-origin international migrants, almost evenly divided between intra-African and off-continent destinations. By 2050, the stock is forecasted to increase to approximately 95 million in the Growth World, 83 million in the Sustainable World, 63 million in the Divided World and 55 million in the World at War. Chart 9 shows the African-origin international migrant stock by scenario from 2025 to 2050.

Chart 9: African-origin international migrant stock by scenario, 2025–2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

The scenarios diverge most clearly after 2030. The Growth World produces the largest African-origin international migrant stock, while the World at War produces the smallest. This does not mean that migration pressures are lowest in the World at War. Rather, conflict and economic disruption increase the need to move while simultaneously reducing household resources, disrupting migration routes and hardening borders.

The World at War should therefore not be interpreted as a low-mobility future. Its conditions are more consistent with high levels of internal displacement, short-distance cross-border movement and involuntary immobility, while long-distance international migration becomes more difficult.

The Growth World combines strong migration capability with persistent migration pressure. Rapid economic growth increases household resources and connectivity, while labour shortages in wealthier ageing economies strengthen demand for African workers. Inequality and environmental pressures nevertheless remain comparatively high, producing both opportunity-led migration and more unequal forms of labour mobility.

The Sustainable World produces the second-largest African-origin international migrant stock. Rising incomes, education, infrastructure and connectivity increase people's capacity to move, even as improved governance, lower conflict and stronger climate adaptation reduce distress-related pressures. Stronger African integration also shifts a larger share of international migration towards destinations within the continent.

Intra-African and off-continental international migration

Chart 10: Intra-Africa and off-continent African-origin migrant stocks per scenario, 2025-2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

In 2025, approximately 27 million African-born international migrants lived in another African country, while around 26 million lived outside the continent. African international migration was therefore almost evenly divided between intra-

African and off-continent destinations. By 2050, however, the balance differs significantly across the four scenarios. Chart 10 depicts intra-African and off-continent African-origin migrant stocks by scenario from 2025 to 2050.

The Sustainable World produces the strongest shift towards intra-African international migration. By 2050, approximately 50.7 million African-origin migrants will live in another African country, compared with 32.3 million outside the continent, up from roughly half in 2025.

This reflects a more integrated African economy in which the AfCFTA is more fully implemented, the Free Movement Protocol is operational, cross-border infrastructure improves and regional labour markets deepen. Better recognition of qualifications and more regular labour pathways make it easier for Africans to move towards opportunities elsewhere on the continent. Migration becomes more closely embedded in Africa's own structural transformation.

The Growth World also produces substantial intra-African migration, which reaches approximately 45.6 million by 2050. Off-continent migration, however, increases even faster to around 49.3 million. It is the only scenario in which African migrants living outside the continent outnumber those living elsewhere in Africa, accounting for about 52% of the total. Strong international labour demand, rising household resources and established migration corridors reinforce movement towards higher-income destinations.

The Divided World remains predominantly intra-African, with approximately 35.4 million African-origin migrants living elsewhere in Africa and 27.1 million living outside the continent by 2050. Around 57% of the international migrant stock is therefore intra-African. This should not be interpreted as stronger African integration. Rather, longer-distance movement is more constrained by harder borders, weaker cooperation and increasingly selective migration pathways. Established African corridors persist due to proximity, historical ties and migrant networks. These conditions are also more conducive to irregular and higher-cost movement, although the model does not quantify migrants by legal status.

The World at War produces the highest intra-African share, at around 65%. By 2050, approximately 35.5 million African-origin migrants will live in another African country, compared with only 19.4 million outside the continent. Again, this does not indicate stronger regional integration or more effective migration governance. It reflects the greater difficulty of long-distance migration as household resources decline, routes are disrupted and borders become more restrictive. Internal displacement and involuntary immobility are also likely to be substantially higher than the international migrant stock alone suggests.

Off-continental migration destinations

Chart 11: Off-continent migration of African migrants in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios, 2025-2050

Source: Source goes here

The historical analysis shows that African migration outside the continent is concentrated principally in Europe and the Arabian Peninsula. Looking to mid-century, the Growth and Sustainable Worlds produce the largest off-continent migrant stocks but differ substantially in the scale and distribution of that movement. Chart 11 shows the off-continent migration of African migrants in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios from 2025 to 2050.

Europe remains the largest off-continent destination in both scenarios. The stock of African-born migrants living in Europe rises from around 12 million in 2025 to 29 million in the Growth World by 2050, compared with 19 million in the Sustainable World. Relative to Europe's total population, however, these stocks remain modest. African-born migrants account for approximately 1.6% of Europe's population in 2025 and would represent around 3.9% in the Growth World

and 2.6% in the Sustainable World by 2050. Europe's total population remains broadly stable in the Growth World, at around 747 million, and declines to approximately 719 million in the Sustainable World, compared with about 744 million in 2025. Established diaspora networks, historical and linguistic ties, family connections and long-standing migration corridors continue to support movement to Europe. The stronger increase in the Growth World reflects rising household resources and mobility capability in Africa alongside greater labour demand in ageing European economies.

Asia remains the second-largest destination region. African-origin migrant stocks in Asia rise from around 8 million in 2025 to 13.2 million in the Growth World and 9.3 million in the Sustainable World by 2050. Much of this movement is concentrated in the Arabian Peninsula. In the Growth World, the African-born migrant stock in the Arabian Peninsula reaches approximately 10.6 million by 2050, compared with around 7.6 million in the Sustainable World.

North America also attracts a larger share of African off-continent migration in the Growth World. By 2050, the African-born migrant stock in North America will reach approximately 6 million in the Growth World, compared with around 3 million in the Sustainable World. This further illustrates the stronger outward orientation of the Growth World, where higher household resources and strong labour demand in wealthier economies expand opportunities for long-distance migration.

Europe and the Arabian Peninsula represent different migration systems. African migration to Europe occurs through a wide range of pathways, including employment, education and family reunification, with greater opportunities for longer-term residence and settlement. However, access and rights vary considerably between countries and migration categories. Migration to the Arabian Peninsula is more strongly linked to labour demand. It is generally more temporary, with recruitment and employer-linked sponsorship systems shaping entry, employment and length of stay.

In the Growth World, rising household resources and external labour demand expand established migration corridors to Europe, Asia and North America. In the Sustainable World, migration outside Africa grows more slowly as stronger African integration and expanding opportunities direct a larger share towards destinations within the continent.

Regional migration systems to 2050

Africa does not have a single migration system. Geographic proximity, regional labour markets, economic integration, conflict and established migrant networks have created distinct migration systems across the continent. The scenarios explore how different development pathways change the scale and geographical orientation of these established systems.

The following sections focus primarily on the Growth and Sustainable Worlds, which produce the largest African-origin international migrant stocks and provide the clearest contrast between stronger off-continent migration and deeper intra-African integration.

Northern Africa – a transit and externally orientated migration system

More than any other African region, Northern Africa functions simultaneously as a destination, transit zone and staging area for off-continent migration, reflecting its position at the intersection of Africa, Europe and the Middle East. The region has relatively low migrant density, limited intra-regional migration and strong connections with external destination systems, making it particularly sensitive to changes in migration policy, border enforcement, labour demand and geopolitics.

Unlike other African regions, fewer than half of Northern Africa's approximately 2.7 million migrants in 2024 were African-born, while only around 11% originated within the subregion. At the same time, the stock of African-born migrants in Northern Africa increased from approximately 419 000 in 1990 to more than 1.3 million in 2024, illustrating the region's continuing role as both destination and transit space.

Egypt and Libya exemplify these dynamics. Egypt increasingly hosts people displaced by conflict in neighbouring countries, particularly Sudan. At the same time, Libya has shifted from being primarily a labour destination before 2011 to a major transit hub linking African migration systems with Mediterranean routes to Europe. Northern Africa, therefore, forms part of a wider transcontinental migration system in which movements within Africa, migration towards Europe and labour migration towards the Middle East intersect.

Northern Africa remains strongly oriented towards off-continent destinations under both the Growth and Sustainable Worlds. The North African-origin migrant stock in Europe rises from around 6.3 million in 2025 to 13.2 million in the Growth World and 10.3 million in the Sustainable World by 2050. Migration to Asia increases from around 5.1 million to 8 million in the Growth World and to 6.6 million in the Sustainable World, with the Chart 12 presents the off-continent migration of Northern African migrants in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios in 2025 vs 2050.

The results show that even under stronger African integration, Northern Africa remains structurally tied to Europe and the Middle East. Its migration future is therefore shaped not only by developments within Africa but also by external labour demand, migration policy, border management and geopolitical relationships. These established corridors expand more strongly in the Growth World than in the Sustainable World.

Chart 12: Off-continent migration of Northern African migrants in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios, 2025 vs 2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

Eastern Africa - A multi-nodal migration system with regional integration prospects

Eastern Africa has one of Africa's largest and most complex migration systems, combining intra-African labour mobility, large-scale forced displacement and established migration corridors beyond the continent. Unlike regions dominated by a single destination hub, Eastern Africa is multi-nodal: several countries simultaneously function as countries of origin, destination and transit.

In 2024, Eastern Africa hosted approximately 8.8 million international migrants, around 95% of whom were African-born and approximately 74% of whom originated within the subregion. Major destination countries included Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan, although each also participates in wider outward and transit migration systems. Kenya functions as an important economic, educational and transport hub, while Uganda and Ethiopia host large displaced populations alongside substantial labour and livelihood mobility.

Forced displacement is a defining feature of the regional migration system. Protracted conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and neighbouring countries have generated repeated internal displacement and cross-border refugee movements, usually towards nearby African countries. Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia remain important refugee-hosting countries. These movements should, however, be distinguished from the international migrant stocks modelled in IFs, which do not identify whether migration is forced or voluntary.

Eastern Africa is also connected to destinations beyond Africa through several established migration systems. The most prominent is the Eastern Corridor, which links the Horn of Africa with Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. Migrants from Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and neighbouring countries use these routes for employment and other livelihood opportunities, while Sudan connects Eastern Africa with Northern Africa and onward routes towards Europe. A further southward system links parts of Eastern Africa with Southern Africa, particularly South Africa.

The Growth and Sustainable Worlds produce markedly different migration geographies for Eastern Africa. In both scenarios, international migration continues to increase, but the relative importance of African and off-continent destinations changes substantially. Chart 13 illustrates the East African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios in 2025 vs 2050.

The stock of East African-origin migrants living elsewhere in Africa rises from approximately 9.9 million in 2025 to around 16.3 million in the Growth World and 20 million in the Sustainable World by 2050. The Sustainable World therefore produces the stronger shift towards intra-African international migration, consistent with deeper regional integration, freer movement, stronger African labour markets and improved connectivity.

The difference is equally visible in established off-continent migration systems. In 2025, approximately 1.9 million East African-origin migrants lived in Europe, and around 2.5 million in Asia, with the Arabian Peninsula hosting roughly 2 million.

In the Growth World, these established long-distance corridors expand substantially. By 2050, the East African-origin migrant stock in Europe reaches approximately 4.7 million, while the stock in Asia rises to 4.18 million (the Arabian Peninsula rises to around 3.6 million). Rising household resources, stronger connectivity and labour demand outside Africa therefore increase East Africans' ability and opportunity to migrate over longer distances.

The Sustainable World produces a different pattern. The East African-origin migrant stock in Europe increases more moderately, reaching approximately 2.4 million by 2050, while migration to the Arabian Peninsula remains broadly at its 2025 level at approximately 2 million. These results do not imply lower overall mobility in the Sustainable World. Rather, a larger share of East African international migration is redirected towards opportunities within Africa.

Eastern Africa consequently illustrates particularly clearly how development pathways can change not only the scale of international migration but also its geography. The Growth World connects the region more strongly to both African and global labour markets. At the same time, the Sustainable World strengthens an already substantial regional migration system and shifts a greater share of movement towards destinations within Africa.

Chart 13: East African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios, 2025 vs 2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

Western Africa - an established regional system that will remain resilient

Western Africa has one of the world's strongest intra-regional migration systems, combining labour mobility, displacement and return migration. In 2024, the region hosted approximately eight million international migrants, around 89% of whom originated within the subregion. The intra-regional migrant stock increased from approximately 3.8 million in 1990 to 7.1 million in 2024.

The 1979 ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement formalised longstanding mobility patterns through a phased framework providing for visa-free entry, followed by rights of residence and establishment. While entry provisions for ECOWAS citizens have been widely implemented, residence and establishment rights remain constrained by administrative barriers, documentation requirements and uneven border enforcement. International migration within Western Africa, therefore, continues through a combination of formal regional arrangements and historically embedded labour, trade and family networks.

More recently, conflict, insecurity and political instability in the Central Sahel, particularly Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, and the Lake Chad Basin have intensified forced displacement. Forced displacement in Western Africa more than doubled over the past decade to approximately 7–7.5 million people by 2025, with Nigeria and Burkina Faso accounting for some of the largest displaced populations.

Western Africa is also connected to Northern Africa and off-continent destinations through established Mediterranean and Atlantic migration routes. Although these movements remain considerably smaller than intra-African international migration, the stock of West African-origin migrants living outside Africa has grown substantially since 1990.

In both the Growth and Sustainable Worlds, Western Africa retains a strongly African-oriented international migration system. The stock of West African-origin migrants living elsewhere in Africa increases from approximately 8.5 million in 2025 to around 12.3 million by 2050 in both the Growth and Sustainable Worlds. Despite very different global development pathways, the two scenarios therefore produce remarkably similar aggregate stocks of West African migrants elsewhere on the continent, reflecting the resilience of long-established regional labour, trade and migration networks supported by geographic proximity and ECOWAS free movement. Chart 14 shows the West African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios in 2025 vs 2050.

The main divergence occurs in off-continent international migration. Europe remains the most important destination outside Africa. The West African-origin migrant stock in Europe increases from approximately 2.4 million in 2025 to around 5.7 million in the Growth World, compared with approximately 3.6 million in the Sustainable World by 2050. The difference becomes particularly pronounced after 2030, as rising household resources, greater connectivity and external labour demand expand opportunities for longer-distance migration in the Growth World.

North America remains a much smaller destination. From approximately 1.3 million West African-origin migrants in 2025, the stock increases slightly to around 1.4 million in the Growth World by 2050.

These results underline the resilience of Western Africa's established intra-African migration system. The scenarios have a much stronger effect on the scale of long-distance off-continent migration than on the region's underlying African migration system.

Chart 14: West African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios, 2025 vs 2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

Southern Africa - A regional labour migration system centred on South Africa

Southern Africa's migration system is primarily intra-regional and concentrated around South Africa as its dominant economic hub. In 2024, the region hosted approximately 4.8 million migrants, of whom 61% originated within the subregion, and 77% were African-born. Longstanding regional labour corridors are complemented by smaller flows from other African regions and outside the continent.

Its largest corridor, from Zimbabwe, comprised approximately 1.1 million migrants in 2024, up from around 116 000 in 2000 as Zimbabwe experienced a prolonged economic and political crisis. Many Zimbabwean migrants work in **informal** trade, domestic work and agriculture and support households through remittances. Other major corridors into South Africa originate in Mozambique (approximately 400 000), and Lesotho and Malawi (around 200 000 each). Together, migrants from the other nine Southern African countries accounted for approximately two-thirds of the subregion's intra-regional migrant stock in 2024.

Although South Africa is the primary hub, migration patterns form a dense web of cross-border movements shaped by geographic proximity, historical labour migration, conflict legacies and regional labour-market opportunities. Around 16% of migrants living in Southern Africa originated elsewhere on the continent, with most residing in South Africa.

Southern Africa also hosts the continent's largest stock of non-African migrants: approximately 1.1 million in 2024, concentrated mainly in Angola and South Africa. Angola's oil and construction sectors have attracted workers from Portugal, Brazil and China, while South Africa draws migrants through its comparatively diversified economy and infrastructure.

Southern Africa's migration system was profoundly shaped by colonial land dispossession and labour recruitment for South Africa's mines and farms. These systems drew workers from neighbouring countries through regulated contracts that generally required them to return home upon completion of their employment. At its peak in the late 1980s, mining employed almost 500 000 foreign workers. This had fallen to 35 000 by 2023 as the mining industry weakened, became more mechanised and immigration restrictions increased. Since 1994, migration to South Africa has also become more diverse, encompassing low- and high-skilled workers, refugees and asylum seekers, while declining formal recruitment has contributed to more mixed and irregular movement. Migrants often face insecure work and limited protections, alongside recurrent xenophobic violence targeting foreign nationals and migrant-owned businesses.

Southern Africa retains a strong regional migration system under both scenarios. The stock of Southern African-origin migrants living elsewhere in Africa increases from approximately 3.6 million in 2025 to around 7.0 million in the Growth World and 7.8 million in the Sustainable World by 2050. The persistence of strong intra-African international migration reflects the region's long-established labour corridors, particularly those linking neighbouring countries with South Africa. Chart 15 depicts the Southern African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios in 2025 vs 2050.

The stronger divergence occurs in off-continent international migration. The Southern African-origin migrant stock in Europe increases from approximately 1.1 million in 2025 to around 2.8 million in the Growth World, compared with about 1.7 million in the Sustainable World by 2050.

North America remains a much smaller destination. The Southern African-origin migrant stock there increases from approximately 0.3 million in 2025 to around 0.6 million in the Growth World, while remaining close to 0.3 million in the Sustainable World by 2050.

The Sustainable World produces a more regionally concentrated migration pattern, as regional integration and freer movement make African labour markets more accessible.

Chart 15: Southern African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios, 2025 vs 2050

Source: [Source goes here](#)

Central Africa - proximity shapes migration flows and stocks

Central Africa's migration system is characterised mainly by bilateral cross-border corridors linking adjacent countries. A limited number of origin countries—particularly DR Congo and the Central African Republic—generate large-scale movements into neighbouring states.

DR Congo lies at the centre of this system, functioning as both a major destination and the region's largest country of origin. In 2024, DR Congo hosted more than 1 million African migrants, including 442 585 from Central Africa and

substantial flows from Rwanda, South Sudan, Angola and Sudan. The global stock of Congolese migrants reached approximately 2.1 million in 2024, of whom around 1.8 million lived outside Central Africa. Most were concentrated in neighbouring countries, particularly Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Republic of the Congo, demonstrating the proximity-driven nature of movement.

Most countries in Central Africa play dual roles as migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries, with much movement occurring between neighbouring states and often shaped by local crises. Equatorial Guinea presents a distinct profile, attracting a relatively large non-African workforce associated with its oil, gas and construction sectors.

In 2025, DR Congo faced Africa's largest internal displacement crisis. The country recorded a record high of 9.7 million internal displacement movements driven by conflict and violence, almost double the number recorded in 2024. By comparison, approximately 1.25 million Congolese refugees and asylum seekers were living in other countries. More than three decades of conflict have escalated through fighting involving the Congolese armed forces, M23 and numerous other armed groups, despite the country's extensive mineral wealth. Repeated displacement has left many families without secure access to food, water, healthcare or education and has exposed children to recruitment and forced labour.

Central African international migration remains strongly oriented towards destinations elsewhere in Africa under both scenarios. The stock of Central African-origin migrants living elsewhere on the continent increases from approximately 4.4 million in 2025 to around 8.6 million by 2050 in both the Growth and Sustainable Worlds. Despite the very different development pathways, the aggregate African destination stock is therefore almost identical by mid-century, reflecting the persistence of Central Africa's proximity-based migration system. Chart 16 presents the Central African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios in 2025 vs 2050.

Migration to Europe remains much smaller but shows a substantially greater difference between the two scenarios. The Central African-origin migrant stock in Europe increases from approximately 0.8 million in 2025 to around 2.2 million in the Growth World, compared with approximately 1 million in the Sustainable World by 2050. The Growth World, therefore, produces much stronger expansion of the region's principal off-continent migration corridor, while the Sustainable World remains more strongly concentrated within Africa.

DR Congo particularly clearly illustrates the persistence of this proximity-based system. Across nine neighbouring destinations included in IFs, the Congolese migrant stock increases from around 1.7 million in 2025 to almost 4 million by 2050 in both scenarios. Uganda remains the largest individual destination, while Rwanda, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, Angola, Tanzania, South Sudan and Zambia continue to form important corridors.

Different development pathways, therefore, alter individual routes and the scale of off-continent migration without fundamentally changing the combined importance of neighbouring African destinations. In Central Africa, migration governance will remain closely linked to cross-border cooperation between adjacent states, particularly where conflict and displacement overlap with established regional mobility systems.

Chart 16: Central African-origin international stock by destination in the Growth and Sustainable World scenarios, 2025 vs 2050

Source: Source goes here

Donors and sponsors



Reuse our work

- All visualizations, data, and text produced by African Futures are completely open access under the [Creative Commons BY license](#). You have the permission to use, distribute, and reproduce these in any medium, provided the source and authors are credited.
- The data produced by third parties and made available by African Futures is subject to the license terms from the original third-party authors. We will always indicate the original source of the data in our documentation, so you should always check the license of any such third-party data before use and redistribution.
- All of our charts [can be embedded](#) in any site.

Cite this research

Alize le Roux (2026) State Futures in the Global South. Published online at futures.issafrica.org. Retrieved from <https://futures.issafrica.org/thematic/22-migration/> [Online Resource] Updated 26 October 2026.

About the authors

Ms Alize le Roux joined the AFI in May 2021 as a senior researcher. Before joining the ISS, she worked as a principal geo-informatics researcher at the CSIR, supporting various local and national policy- and decision-makers with long-term planning support. Alize has 14 years of experience in spatial data analysis, disaster risk reduction and urban and regional modelling. She has a master's degree in geographical sciences from the University of Utrecht, specialising in multi-hazard risk assessments and spatial decision support systems.

About African Futures & Innovation

Scenarios and forecasting can help Africa identify and respond to opportunities and threats. The work of the African Futures & Innovation (AFI) program at the Institute for Security Studies aims to understand and address a widening gap between indices of wellbeing in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The AFI helps stakeholders understand likely future developments. Research findings and their policy implications are widely disseminated, often in collaboration with in-country partners. Forecasting tools inspire debate and provide insights into possible trajectories that inform planning, prioritisation and effective resource allocation. Africa's future depends on today's choices and actions by governments and their non-governmental and international partners. The AFI provides empirical data that informs short- and medium-term decisions with long-term implications. The AFI enhances Africa's capacity to prepare for and respond to future challenges. The program is headed by Dr Jakkie Cilliers.