



HUMAN M I G R A T I O N

A special issue explores the intersection of science and migration.

In today's hyperpolarized environment, public discussion about refugees and migrants often swerves away from fact. Numbers swell or shrink, depending on the political context, and evidence can get lost amid distortions. Scientists have an important role to play here: many are seeking to improve how nations track and deal with people forced from their homes, and they are some of the most mobile members of society themselves. This week, *Nature* takes a close look at the intersection of science and migration.

The United Nations has declared that the number of displaced people has surged to unprecedented numbers. But a close examination of data reveals that past flows have been just as high (page 22). Yet human stories reveal what numbers cannot. Refugees often struggle to settle in foreign countries, and three displaced scientists explain the acute challenges of trying to restart research careers while worrying about the safety of distant families (page 24).

When immigrants can successfully settle in new countries, they often bring ideas, skills and gritty determination to their new homes. The United States has benefited greatly

from foreign-born scientists and technologists — until now — writes innovation researcher Vivek Wadhwa (page 29). He warns that the country's sluggish visa system is deterring many of the world's best technology entrepreneurs, who have settled elsewhere instead.

Two other articles highlight the growing role of technology in monitoring human mobility. Policy analyst Gemma Galdon Clavell describes how the rush to amass data for security purposes, through the European Union's Smart Borders initiative, is overstepping citizens' rights (page 34). Huub Dijkstra explains how officials are using data from satellites and biometric tests to track migration and humanitarian crises, sometimes without understanding the results (page 32).

With the election of US President Donald Trump and the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, many foreign-born scientists working in those countries are worried about their visa statuses, funding and job prospects (page 139). The future for them — and for many immigrants around the world — remains uncertain. But people will continue to set off for new shores in search of better lives and careers. ■



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