

DATA AT A GLANCE

Decreasing Number of Internally Displaced Persons in the World, But Growth Trajectories Across Countries Are Mixed

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The prevailing public perception is that the number of internally displaced persons (IDP)—those who are forced to flee their homes or habitual residence due to conflict, violence, development projects, disasters, and climate change (www.internal-displacement.org)—has been on the rise throughout the world and across countries. What does the evidence say? The World Bank (2019) has a data set on IDP, including on new cases of displacements, at both the global and country levels. We analyzed the numbers for the world and for 67 countries (these are the only ones with both 2008 and 2018 data); the results are given in Table 1.

Data indicate that the number of IDP in the world had decreased by more than one half (55.1%) from 2008 to 2018. A closer look at the annual numbers (not in the table) suggests that the global number of IDP had been on a steady decline during the 10-year period, except in 2010 where the number had burgeoned to more than 40 million due to the unprecedented natural disasters that occurred around that year.

At the country level, as Table 1 further shows, the number of IDP had ranged from as few as 20 or 31 persons in some countries to as many as 14.9 million to 18.7 million persons in other countries across the 10-year period. The 67 countries included in the analysis were about equally divided into those with increments (n=36) and with decrements (n=31). The country-level increases in IDP were found to have ranged from 6.35% to 49,900%, whereas the decreases from -18.2% to -99.9%. Afghanistan, Indonesia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda had the most notable increases, whereas

Algeria, Benin, Chile, China, Cuba, and Pakistan had the most significant decreases. IDP data are indicative of social inequality and require urgent action from the government and the private sector.

Table 1

Numbers of Internally Displaced Persons in the World and 67 Countries, and Percent Change, 2008–2018

	2008	2018	Percent Change
Absolute number of IDP in the world	38,241,123	17,183,614	-55.1
Absolute numbers of IDP in 67 countries (range)	20 to 18.7 million	31 to 14.9 million	
% increase in 36 countries	–	–	6.35 to 49,900
% decrease in 31 countries	–	–	-18.2 to -99.9

Reference

World Bank. (2019). *Internally displaced persons, new displacement associated with disasters (number of cases)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IDP.NWDS>