A systematic bibliography on return migration

As the starting point for a large-scale project on return migration, our team conducted a literature review with the aim of developing the conceptual framework, theoretical background and hypotheses for our research. In preparation for the review, publications were classified according to thematic and regional keywords. This bibliography, which contains over 1100 publications, is the result of our collection and classification. The project, Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration (PREMIG), explores return migration from Norway and the United Kingdom, with case studies on return to Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq, Pakistan and Poland, and statistical analyses covering a greater range of nationalities. It is funded by the Research Council of Norway and carried out jointly by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Statistics Norway, the University of Bristol and the University of Sussex.
A systematic bibliography on return migration

Jørgen Carling
Elin Berstad Mortensen
Jennifer Wu
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# Contents

**Introduction 1**
- Scope of the review 1
- The process of collecting and classifying publications 2
- Patterns in the literature 3
- Limitations of the bibliography 4

**Bibliography by thematic keyword 5**

*Key publication 5*

**Methods 6**
- Quantitative methods 6
- Ethnographic methods 15
- Multi-sited data collection 26
- Theoretical or conceptual 28

**Initial migration context 32**
- Asylum and forced migration 32
- Labour migration 38
- Family migration 46
- Student migration 46

**Return migration 47**
- Possibilities of return 47
- Experiences of return 72
- Voluntary return 91
- Semi-voluntary return 100
- Forced return 103
- Second-generation return 105
- Ancestral return 108
- Temporary return 111
- Post-conflict (or conflict) return 115
- Complex return itineraries 118

**Transnationalism 119**
- Remittances 119
- Transnationalism 123

**Country of residence 128**
- Integration 128

**Country of return 132**
- Post-return reintegration 132
- Development 143

**Context-independent keywords 148**
- Information and communication 148
- Programmes, policy, regulations, law 150
- Politics 161
- Culture and identity 164
- Religion 174
- Climate 175
- Health and healthcare 176
- Social networks and community 181
- Violence, crime, insecurity 187
- Entrepreneurship and investment 189
- Education and human capital 193
- Livelihoods and finances 200
- Class 208
- Gender 211
- Age, generation and life cycle 214
- Family and kinship 221

**Bibliography by region of origin 227**
- North America 227
- Mexico and Central America 230
- Caribbean 234
- South America 239
- Europe 241
- Middle East and North Africa 253
- Sub-Saharan Africa 258
- Caucasus and Central Asia 265
- East Asia 266
- South Asia 271
- South-East Asia 274
- Oceania 277
Introduction

As the starting point for a large-scale project on return migration, our team conducted a literature review with the aim of developing the conceptual framework, theoretical background and hypotheses for our research. In preparation for the review, publications were classified according to thematic and regional keywords. This bibliography is the result of our collection and classification.

The project, *Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration (PREMIG)*, explores return migration from Norway and the United Kingdom, with case studies on return to Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq, Pakistan and Poland, and statistical analyses covering a greater range of nationalities. It is funded by the Research Council of Norway and is carried out jointly by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Statistics Norway, the University of Bristol and the University of Sussex. See www.prio.no/premig for additional information.

Scope of the review

Before collecting publications, it was necessary to define the scope of the literature review: for example, which migrants to include (children of migrants? further descendants?), which types of return to cover (forced? voluntary? temporary?), and which time periods to examine. The following points provided guidance in this process:

*Which migrants?* All migrants regardless of why they originally moved (labour, family, protection, etc). We also cover return by the children of migrants (second-generation return) and return to ancestral homelands (diasporic/ethnic return).

*Which forms of return?* All forms of return, be it forced or voluntary, temporary or permanent. It is important to explore the conceptual limits of ‘return migration’. This means that we need to consider visits/holidays and circular migration as part of the picture.

*Which parts of the world?* All parts of the world. Given the purpose of the review, it will not be limited to the empirical contexts we study in the PREMIG project.

*Which time periods?* Contemporary return migration, meaning roughly after 1960. We thus include research on the return of guest workers in Europe, but exclude many historical studies. We should make exceptions if there are particularly important works that, for instance, summarize findings about return migration from North America to Europe in the early 1900s, but not aim to cover the historical literature.

*Which publication types?* Since our thematic scope is so broad, it was necessary to limit ourselves to academic literature of a certain quality. In other words, we generally excluded government reports (not research based) and conference papers (not peer-reviewed) and instead concentrated on books and journal articles.

Please cite. This bibliography has been prepared in the spirit of collaboration between researchers, in the hope that the work we have invested in our own project can also benefit others. If you use this bibliography in your research, please cite it. Suggested format:

Collecting and classifying publications

Once the scope was defined, we combined in-house expertise—libraries or bibliographies referred to us from members of our team—with online searches using the citation database ISI Web of Knowledge. The search terms we used in ISI included the following:

- [return SAME migra*]: to retrieve publications with “return” and “migration” in the same sentence
- [(emigra* OR immigra*) AND return]: intended to cover return of emigrants or immigrants
- [forc* AND repatriat*]: intended to cover the topic of forced repatriation

Our final collection of literature amounted to over 1100 publications. To classify the collection, we created a system of keywords to indicate, for example, the research methodology used, the type of return migration discussed, and other themes. The section entitled Bibliography by thematic keyword is a listing of all the publications organized by the following keywords (further explained in the bibliography itself):

- Key publication
- Quantitative methods
- Ethnographic method
- Multi-sited data collection
- Theoretical or conceptual
- Asylum and forced migration
- Labour migration
- Family migration
- Student migration
- Irregular migration
- Possibilities of return
- Experiences of return
- Voluntary return
- Semi-voluntary return
- Forced return
- Second-generation return
- Ancestral return
- Temporary return
- Post-conflict (or conflict) return
- Complex return itineraries
- Remittances
- Transnationalism
- Integration
- Post-return reintegration
- Development
- Information and communication
- Programmes, policy, regulations, law
- Politics
- Culture and identity
- Religion
- Climate
- Health and healthcare
- Social networks and community
- Violence, crime, insecurity
- Entrepreneurship and investment
- Education and human capital
- Livelihoods and finances
- Class
- Gender
- Age, generation and life cycle
- Family and kinship

Publications were also classified according to their geographical focus: that is, according to the countries and/or regions from which the migrants originated (and to which they may have returned). The section entitled Bibliography by region of origin lists the bibliography according to region and country. Note that here we only classify by country of origin: a publication on Turkish migrants in Germany and their plans for return, for instance, will be placed under Turkey, not Germany.

The regional classification is first by world region, then alphabetically by country. Publications that cover migrants from several countries are listed several times. Publications that relate to a world region (e.g. Sub-Saharan Africa) rather than to individual countries are listed under the regional heading, before the first country-level heading. The following world regions are used in the classification:
• North America (NAM)
• Mexico and Central America (MCA)
• Caribbean (CAR)
• South America (SAM)
• Europe (EUR)
• Middle East and North Africa (MDE)
• Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)
• Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA)
• East Asia (EAA)
• South Asia (SOA)
• South-East Asia (SEA)
• Oceania (OCE)

Patterns in the literature

After classifying all the publications, we used EndNote and Excel to analyze keyword frequencies and correlations. From this analysis we identified several topics that were broadly covered by the literature: these include the decision-making process of migrants considering return, the reintegration experiences of those who do return, and national laws and programmes related to return migration. Examples of these thematic patterns with their corresponding keywords are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The return decision</td>
<td>Possibilities of return</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Voluntary return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reintegration post-return</td>
<td>Experiences of return</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Post-return reintegration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverse culture shock</td>
<td>Experiences of return</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Post-return reintegration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Culture and identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation programmes</td>
<td>Programmes, policy, regulations, law</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Forced return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Assisted Return Programmes</td>
<td>Programmes, policy, regulations, law</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Semi-voluntary return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees returning to conflict/post-conflict areas</td>
<td>Asylum and forced migration</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Post-conflict (or conflict) return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of geography, we identified a large number of publications on Mexican return migration from the United States. There were also several studies on the return of Puerto Ricans from the United States, as well as on the ancestral return of Japanese-Brazilians. A substantial number of articles dealt with migration within the same country: for the United States, these often related to the regional migration of Black Americans or the return of residents to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina; for China, publications generally dealt with issues of rural-urban labour migration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Return From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations of the bibliography

A bibliography such as this can hardly be complete. Despite our efforts, it is obvious that there will be gaps. First, the pace of publication is such that a handful of new publications would need to be added every week. Second, our systematic search for journal articles is limited to ISI-indexed journals; many articles from other journals have also been included, but not in an exhaustive way. Third, even with the range of search terms used, we may have missed ISI-indexed articles that address return migration but use an unusual terminology. Finally, there are probably relevant books and book chapters that we simply did not discover. On the other hand, the bibliography also contains entries that may seem at odds with the scope of the bibliography as described above. These are likely to be publications sourced from the pre-existing bibliographies of our team members, which would not have otherwise come up in our searches. Despite these inconsistencies, we are confident that the more than 1100 items in the bibliography constitute a reasonable representation of ‘the literature on return migration’. The ambiguities of inclusion and exclusion nevertheless caution against bibliometric analysis.
Bibliography by thematic keyword

Key publication
Systematic reviews, or comprehensive empirical studies, or important theoretical contributions, or widely cited by others.


Methods

Quantitative methods

Based on statistical analysis of data. (Simply presenting migration statistics, for instance, is not sufficient.)


**Ethnographic methods**

Based on first-hand qualitative interviews/fieldwork. Presumably rich, in-depth data.


Ethnographic methods

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Multi-sited data collection

Data collection in the country of residence as well as in the country of return (or in multiple countries or residence/return).


**Theoretical or conceptual**

Explicitly theoretical/conceptual, or with sections that have this focus, or relevant to challenging the concept of return.


**Initial migration context**

**Asylum and forced migration**

Migration that is motivated by a need for protection and/or make use of the asylum regime.


**Labour migration**

Including guest workers, professionals.


Labour migration


Labour migration


Family migration
Migration for formation (marriage) and family reunification.


Student migration
Migration for the purpose of education and/or making use of student visas.


Alberts, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


Possible Possibilities of return

Return migration

Possibilities of return

Everything that covers all migrants who may return, or which compares those who do with those who don’t. Includes determinants of return, myth of return, return intentions, return decisions, patterns of return.


Possibilities of return


Possibilities of return


POSsibilities of return


Experiences of return

Everything that concentrates on those who do return and/or the communities to which they return. Includes reintegration, development impacts, contribution to peace building, etc.


Experiences of return


Experiences of return


Experiences of return


Potts, D. and Mutambirwa, C. (1998) ‘“Basics are now a luxury”: perceptions of structural adjustment’s impact on rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe.’ Environment and Urbanization, 10(1):55-76.


Voluntary return

Return that is not linked to restrictions on residence, work or settlement; e.g. return of citizens/permanent residents for retirement.


Semi-voluntary return
Return in situations in which remaining in the country of residence is not an option, e.g. VARPs.


Forced return
Forcible return against the will of the returnee; deportation


Second-generation return

‘Return’ by children of migrants to their parents’ country of birth.


Ancestral return

‘Return’ by descendants of migrants to their ancestors’ origin.


Temporary return

Return for shorter periods and/or without the intention to stay; explorative visits; ancestral tourism.


Post-conflict (or conflict) return

Return to an ongoing armed conflict or to a post-conflict society.


Complex return itineraries

Return ‘to third countries or places other than the migrant’s origin; geographical challenges to the concept of return.


Remittances, transfers of savings (generally from country of residence to country of return).


Transnationalism

Remittances

Remittances, transfers of savings (generally from country of residence to country of return).


Potts, D. and Mutambirwa, C. (1998) ‘“Basics are now a luxury”: perceptions of structural adjustment’s impact on rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe.’ Environment and Urbanization, 10(1):55-76.


Transnationalism

Publications that address transnationalism or transnational practices.


Transnationalism

Publications that address transnationalism or transnational practices.


Country of residence

Integration

Processes of integration, inclusion/exclusion within the country of residence; including racism and discrimination.


---

**Country of return**

**Post-return reintegration**

The process of social, economic, cultural etc., (re-)integration after return. Always overlaps with ‘exp-ret’.


Post-return reintegration


Finlay, J.L., Cru...


Context-independent keywords

Information and communication

Communication between people, access to information, information campaigns, etc.


Politics

*Formal and informal politics, including relations between interest groups, politically laden discourses, etc.*


Carling, J. (2002) 'Return and reluctance in transnational ties under pressure.' paper presented at The dream and reality of coming home: The imaginations, policies, practices and experiences of return migration, Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 8-10 March.


Culture and identity

Culture (in the traditional/popular sense); cultural, ethnic, national, linguistic, professional or other identity


Albets, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


Ulrich, J. (2008) 'Religious groups, beliefs, institutions, etc.


**Health and healthcare**

*Individual health status, health risks/benefits, healthcare services.*


Series B  
Elder Migration, Drains and Policy Responses. 1154.  
37(6):741  
Impact of Forced Migration on Long (2005)  
53(3):S153  
Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, Children. 320.  


Social networks and community
development and community
cohesion (or lack thereof).


**Violence, crime, insecurity**

Violence, crime, insecurity and related issues.


**Entrepreneurship and investment**

Entrepreneurship, business, innovation, productive investment (overlaps with livelihood).


**Education and human capital**

About education/skills or about certain professional/educational groups (e.g. highly-skilled migrants).


Alberts, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


Livelihoods and finances

Earning a living, work and employment, savings, financial investment, borrowing (may overlap with entrepreneurship).


Alberts, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


Livelihoods and finances


Class

About certain socio-economic groups, or relations across the class spectrum; inequality.


Age, generation and life cycle

Relations between generations/age groups; the life cycle, children, old age, retirement (the age/time aspects of kinship).


**Family and kinship**

*Conjugal relations, proximity/distance to family and relatives (the network aspect of kinship).*


Bibliography by region of origin

North America

North America Region


Canada


**United States**


Mexico and Central America

**Mexico and Central America Region**


**Costa Rica**


**El Salvador**


**Guatemala**


**Honduras**


**Mexico**


Nicaragua


Panama


Caribbean

Caribbean Region


Barbados


Cuba


Dominica


Dominican Republic


Grenada

Guadeloupe

Haiti

Jamaica

Martinique

Puerto Rico

You can’t be two places at once’: Rethinking transnationalism through Jamaican return migration.’ Identities, 14(1-2):63-83.


Saint Kitts and Nevis


Trinidad and Tobago


South America

South America Region


Argentina


Bolivia


Brazil


Chile


Colombia

Ecuador

Guyana

Paraguay

Peru
Suriname


Uruguay


Europe

European Region


Albania


**Austria**


**Bosnia and Herzegovina**


**Croatia**


**Cyprus**


**Czech Republic**


**Denmark**


**Estonia**


**Finland**


**France**


**Germany**


Hungary


Ireland


**Kosovo**


**Latvia**


**Macedonia**


**Moldova**


**Netherlands**

Alberts, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


**Norway**


**Poland**


**Portugal**


**Romania**


**Russia**


Serbia and Montenegro


Slovakia


Slovenia


**Sweden**


**Ukraine**


**United Kingdom**


Yugoslavia


Middle East and North Africa

Middle East and North Africa Region


Algeria


Egypt


Iran


Iraq


Israel


Jordan


Lebanon


Libya

Morocco


Palestinian Territories


Tunisia


Turkey


Yemen


Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa Region


Angola


Burkina Faso


Burundi


Cape Verde


Côte d’Ivoire


Eritrea


Ethiopia


Ghana


Guinea


Kenya


Liberia

Malawi

Mali

Mozambique

Nigeria


Rwanda

Senegal


Sierra Leone


Somalia


South Africa


Sudan


Swaziland


Tanzania

Alberts, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


Togo


**Uganda**


**Zambia**


**Zimbabwe**


**Armenia**


**Georgia**


**Kazakhstan**


**Kyrgyzstan**


**Tajikistan**


**Caucasus and Central Asia**

**Caucasus and Central Asia Region**


**East Asia**

**East Asia Region**


**China**


Hong Kong


### Japan


North Korea

South Korea

Taiwan


South Asia

South Asia Region


Afghanistan


Bangladesh


Chagos Islands


India

Alberts, H.C. and Hazen, H.D. (2005) ‘“There are always two voices...”: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries.’ International Migration, 43(3):131-154.


Nepal


Pakistan


South-East Asia

South-East Asia Region


Cambodia


East Timor


Indonesia


Laos

Myanmar

Philippines

**Thailand**


**Vietnam**


**Oceania**

**Oceania Region**


**Australia**


**Cook Islands**


**Fiji**


**French Polynesia**


**New Zealand**


**Niue**


**Papua New Guinea**


**Samoa**


Tonga


Vanuatu


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