

## Displaced People in Mountains – Analytical Map (2024 data)

Disasters, conflict, and violence displace millions from their homes across the world every year. The United Nations defines those who remain in their country as internally displaced people, and since 1998, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has been tracking them. In its 2025 global report, IDMC finds that 65.8 million people were internally displaced worldwide in 2024. This figure represents the flow of displaced people – the numbers measured over a specific period of time, in this case a single year.

The IDMC report also provides a snapshot of all of the people living in internal displacement at the end of 2024 – a total of 83.4 million people. This snapshot captures the stock of displaced people – a measurement taken at a particular time. This 2024 stock figure is slightly more than double the 40.5 million internally displaced people at the end of 2015. The stock figures do not include the current year displacements who returned home, but do include the previous years' displacements who remain displaced.

This Zoï map represents an initial attempt to add mountain information to the IDMC work. It builds on the analysis of the IDMC stock figures for 2024 to present a preliminary picture of internal displacement in the mountains of the world. The Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) enables comparative mountain research across scales, and provides the basis for coordinating the IDMC data with information on the mountains. The method used here entails overlaying the geo-referenced IDMC data points with the GMBA inventory of the world's mountains. This approach results in the calculation of how many displaced people were living in the mountains at the end of 2024, but it does not allow for an assessment of flows – where these people moved from or how many people who were living in the mountains were displaced.

A number of countries have more than 50 per cent of their internally displaced people housed in the mountains, and the map highlights these countries by outlining them in blue. This set of countries is intriguing in that it includes some that do not necessarily spring to mind as particularly mountainous – Mexico, Haiti, Spain, Morocco, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Yemen, Laos, Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the countries of the Middle East, and others. The natural 3D style of showing the world's main mountain ranges is an application of a Bertin-Rivière projection.

Bubbles depict the location, by country, of people displaced to mountain regions. The size of a bubble corresponds to the numbers of people: 1-100 in Switzerland, for example, and 1 million or more in Afghanistan. Dark blue bubbles indicate that more than 50 per cent of the displacements are attributable to conflict, and light blue bubbles signify that more than 50 per cent are caused by disasters. Red rings identify places where disasters caused displacements, and solid red circles indicate where people were displaced by violence. These points come from an IDMC dataset, and include conflicts and disasters in both mountain and non-mountain regions.

The Voronoi-style diagram in the top right corner of the map compares the stock numbers of displacements by mountainous and non-mountainous regions and by cause of displacement. Of the total displaced people (83.4 million), about 75 per cent (62.8 million) went to non-mountain areas, and about 25 per cent (20.6 million) went to mountain areas. (Approximately 15 per cent of the world's population makes their home in the mountain.)

The IDMC flow numbers of people displaced in 2024 offer interesting comparisons with the stock numbers. The total displaced in 2024 was 65.8 million, or 17.6 million fewer than the end-of-year stock total (83.4 million). Of the 20.6 million people displaced to the mountains, 92 per cent (18.9 million) fled conflicts, and 8 per cent (1.6 million) fled disasters. In contrast, the total flow numbers show that 30 per cent (20.1 million) fled conflicts, and 70 per cent (45.8 million) fled disasters.

Some of the explanation for these figures may lie in the differences between returning home from a disaster displacement as opposed to a conflict displacement. Many of the people displaced by storms, floods, and other disasters are able to return home when the danger has passed, and could be home within weeks or even days. Displacements caused by conflicts may last years.

The mountains may lose population through displacements from the mountains or gain population through displacements to the mountains. In the absence of an understanding of the mountain-lowlands displacement dynamics, policy solutions will remain elusive. A thorough assessment of displacement flows between the mountains and the lowlands is likely to advance the analysis.

This map and brief analysis are intended to stimulate interest and further work on the connections between internal displacements and mountain populations. Pairing one set of global data with another is a challenge that provides ample opportunity to amplify the weaknesses inherent in both. More focused investigations may build the foundation for policy development.