

# United States of America

## Displacement associated with Disasters

Figures Analysis – 2020

|   | Figure    | Highlight   | Methodology and Sources   | Caveats and Challenges   |
|---|-----------|---|---|--|
| <b>New Displacement</b>   | 1,714,000 | This figure refers mostly to displacement triggered by storms and wildfires. Major displacement events not only included hurricanes that affected the south and southeastern parts of the country during a record-setting season, but also a devastating wildfire season in the west. Wildfires alone contributed to almost 1.1 million new displacements.  | This figure was obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), local or state emergency management offices, the American Red Cross, and local media reporting. It is based on daily situation reports by FEMA, which include information on mandatory evacuations, housing destruction, as well as shelter data from the American Red Cross. While FEMA provides data on medium-to-large scale events, local media and local/state authorities are useful for small-scale events and include information related to evacuations and housing damage assessments. Media sources include national broadcasting networks, such as ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, and PBS, and their affiliates. | We have medium confidence in this figure. Firstly, the decentralized information flow – including the existence of numerous media outlets, as well as various local, state and federal government authorities – hinder a more reliable estimate. Secondly, we use reports of evacuation orders or people in shelters as the primary indication of displacement. We are aware that these orders cover more people than are accounted for in temporary shelters, and that people may not heed these orders. On the other hand, while evacuation orders may overestimate displacement, data on people in official shelters typically underestimate it. Furthermore, there is a gap in knowing who is displaced elsewhere, whether, for example, they are staying with family or friends, in hotels or in other unofficial locations, as this happens frequently. In the absence of this information, or to improve our estimates, we also use housing destruction as a proxy for displacement. Finally, another challenge comes from not fully understanding how long it takes people to return home. |
| <b>Total number of IDPs as of 31 December 2020</b><br><br><i>Pending further information and evidence, those who are in a situation of displacement, but progressing towards a durable solution have not been included.</i> | 126,000   | Our year-end estimate is based on time series data and housing destruction data for specific disaster events, as well as aggregated figures on the number of people displaced by disasters recorded by governments and other stakeholders. In addition to the people displaced by disasters in 2020, this figure includes cases from previous years where there was information on the number of people still displaced.<br><br>We used an algorithm that reduces tens of thousands of data points entered into IDMC's database into a final IDP stock estimate per country. The script also filters the data into a variety of pre-defined scenarios and to ensure that no overestimation can occur. The code was written by the Department of Statistics, University of Oxford, and funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Impact Acceleration Account grant. Our methodology remains a work in progress. |   | Providers of disaster displacement data tend not to include information about when, how and for how long people were displaced. One of the main gaps and challenges in accurately estimating the number of IDPs is the lack of measurement of return flows. Data tends not to be collected on people who have achieved durable solutions either by local integration or resettlement elsewhere in the country.<br><br>Our headcount does not include people displaced from hundreds of events for which we recorded only one data point (i.e. one figure provided at only one moment in time). These figures often reflect the maximum number of people displaced, commonly during an evacuation, and including these figures would have led to an overestimate.   |