

## Key Migration Trends

### Introduction

West and North Africa comprise in total 10.4 million immigrants and 21.8 million emigrants, representing respectively 1.6 per cent and 3.4 per cent of their 633.2 million inhabitants in 2019, according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates.<sup>1</sup> This overall level of international migration is relatively low (inward) or moderate (outward) compared with a world ratio of migrants to population estimated at 3.5 per cent. Being an average, however, it hides important variations between the two regions and between countries within each region.<sup>2</sup>

In North Africa, the three central Maghreb countries – Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia – are mostly migrant senders, and their emigrants, representing between 4.5 and 8.6 per cent of their populations, are mainly destined for Europe. Foreign migrants on their territory, many of them coming from West Africa as long-term settlers, are in small numbers. Libya displays the opposite pattern. Despite the political chaos and civil war, it remains a destination for hundreds of thousands of migrants employed locally. Its own nationals continue to have a low propensity to migrate abroad, despite intense internal displacement. In all these countries, a relatively small share of migrants aims to transit to Europe, contrary to popular prejudices.

West African countries are at the same time origin and destination countries of mostly intraregional and often temporary migration. Returning nationals represent a high proportion of inward migration every year and most countries have a low migratory balance. Burkina Faso and Mali emerge as key emigration countries, and Côte d'Ivoire as a major destination country. Since its independence six decades ago, Côte d'Ivoire has continuously been a magnet for migrants originating in the entire West African region and beyond, except during the years of political and civil turmoil in the early 2000s.

This section looks at key migration trends within, between and from West and North Africa.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). North Africa includes Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia; and West Africa includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that these are estimates of international migrant stocks, based on national census statistics, which in the case of countries in this region can be several years old. These figures cannot reflect the dynamics of cross-country migration and undocumented and short-term migratory movements.

The main reasons for migrating, as recorded among migrants interviewed in North and West Africa – whether in destination, transit or origin countries – are job-seeking, family and study. Fleeing conflict, political insecurity and persecution, and searching international protection, do not emerge as frequent causes. By contrast, the need for protection is the most common motive declared by African migrants who arrived irregularly in Europe after having crossed the Mediterranean Sea. The discrepancy between reasons given in North and West Africa and in Europe may be a sign that asylum seekers have no choice but to travel clandestinely to countries where they can lodge claims. It also underscores the prevalence of mixed migration along these routes, and how migration reasons and plans may change during the journey due to conditions faced in countries along the route. Although migrants' initial motivations to leave their countries of origin may have been of a different nature, facing violence and abuse in transit or first destination countries may lead them to cross the Mediterranean to seek protection in Europe.

Despite progress in the last decade, there is an acute deficit of statistics and empirical evidence on migration and related issues in West and North Africa. This limits the possibility of reaching a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the migration dynamics at play and to inform effective policymaking. In the 10 chapters of this section, authors draw from the available evidence – produced as part of the programme Safety, Support and Solutions on the Central Mediterranean Route, funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and beyond – to describe migration patterns and trends in North and West Africa and across the Mediterranean.

Population censuses of the 2010s are the main source of solid knowledge on both immigration and emigration in countries that have included specific questions on absent members of households. Censuses provide total numbers, but they capture only the most basic individual characteristics of migrants, at best. Moreover, they provide a minimal description of migrant stocks at the date of the census, but very little on flows and nothing on trends. Administrative routines, which are potentially the richest source of data on migrant flows and migrants' conditions, are not regularly collected or processed (Fargues, Chapter 1 of this volume).

In this context, the continuous flow of first-hand data collected on the ground by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and the Mixed Migration Centre's (MMC's) Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism initiative (4Mi) bring a crucial contribution to the quantitative knowledge of mobility, displacement and migration in North and West Africa, and on the route. They also provide unique insights on topics such as migrants' protection deficits, vulnerable groups, irregular migration and smuggling practices, among others. DTM's and 4Mi's publications and open access databases allow users to follow changes in real time and thereby to potentially monitor the effects of policies on migration and migrants. Next steps should consist of addressing sources of potential bias and increasing efforts to integrate operational and statistical data (Fargues, Chapter 2 of this volume).

Over the past few years, social media and other non-traditional data sources have emerged as potential complementary sources of information on migration-related patterns and trends. Freely available data from the Facebook advertising platform, for instance, allow to distribute Facebook users by countries of origin and residence, and estimate the immigrant stock in African countries at 10.5 million, of whom 5 million originated in other African countries (Rampazzo and Weber, Chapter 3 of this volume).

During 2016–2019, major shifts have been observed in the volume and itineraries of migration flows across the Mediterranean. Sea routes of irregular migration from Africa to Europe change fast, in response to risks, obstacles and opportunities. Risks and obstacles (such as arrest, detention and deportation) are present in Africa before the crossing, at sea (including border guard patrols in Libyan waters and shipwreck) and after the crossing upon disembarkation in Europe. Opportunities include weather conditions and smugglers' anticipation that rescue will take place. Migrants and smugglers constantly adapt to policies adopted by the European Union and African countries to bypass obstacles. While the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) had become the most active from April 2016 (due to the effective closure of the Eastern Mediterranean Route following the European Union–Turkey statement) until the end of 2017, the years 2018–2019 were marked by a shift from the CMR leading to Italy and Malta to the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) to Spain, and ultimately a reactivation of the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR) towards Greece in 2019 (Fedorova and Shupert, Chapter 4 of this volume).

Despite the civil war that has afflicted the country since 2014, Libya still attracts large numbers of migrant workers. Indeed, most of the approximately 650,000 migrants present in the country at mid-2019 according to DTM intended to stay in the country, and only a few intended to reach Europe. They travelled to Libya for job opportunities offered by its labour markets, attracted by the relatively high salaries and the prospects of sending remittances back to their families. This applies in particular to those originating in four of Libya's neighbouring countries – Egypt, the Sudan, the Niger and Chad – representing 62 per cent of Libya's total immigrant stock. Moreover, DTM evidence suggests that the longer migrants stay in Libya, the better their conditions in terms of employment and ability to send remittances to their home countries. Yet, independently of length of stay, migrants generally report poor access to health and other services, and a deficit of protection against risks related to the conflict in Libya, aggravated by their irregular status (Teppert, Cottone and Rossi, Chapter 5 of this volume).

Irregular migrant status and informal employment are typical in countries along the CMR. All States have adopted laws to penalize migrants in irregular situation, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, although not all of them have implemented these laws in the same way. As of 2018, migrants' forced returns from Algeria to the Niger have gained momentum, following Algeria's increased enforcement of Law 08-11 of 2008 regulating the entry, stay and circulation of foreign nationals. While some of these migrants are from the Niger, others come from other parts of Africa and find themselves temporarily in the Niger on their way back to their countries. Meanwhile, numbers of migrants entering the Niger en route to Europe decreased as a result of the Niger's enforcement of Law 2015-36 punishing migrant smuggling and trafficking of migrants. Considerable shifts have since taken place in the direction, size and composition of migrant flows to, through and from the Niger (Yuen, Chapter 6 of this volume).

Aspiring migrants from Africa are still less likely than other migrants to migrate to their preferred international migration destinations. Of those who have a desire to migrate, very few make concrete plans to do so, and very few of those planning to migrate to Europe are likely to do so. Migrants from North Africa are generally more likely to realize their migration plans than migrants from West Africa, and migrants' socioeconomic characteristics, migration policies and changing opportunities have an impact on aspiring migrants' will and possibilities to translate their migration plans into reality (Schöfberger, Acostamiedo, Borgnäs and Rango, Chapter 7 of this volume).

Big data may also offer a solution to the emerging demand by governments to be able to anticipate future migration trends. Migration to seek international protection is the most volatile, and if it were possible to anticipate such flows, receiving States and local communities could better prepare responses to emergencies. The Push Factor Index (PFI) is an innovative tool developed by the European Asylum Support Office for monitoring situations conducive to forced migration in countries with poor or no statistics on the topic. This is built by combining a global database of printed and electronic media reports on conflict and other sources of displacement in origin countries with administrative data on asylum in destination countries. A high correlation was found between push events in Libya and asylum applications in Italy before the closure of the sea route between the two countries in 2018–2019. However, further applications of the PFI are recommended to assess the robustness of this methodology and its applicability to a variety of contexts (Melachrinou, Carammia and Wilkin, Chapter 8 of this volume).

Mobility is and has historically been at the core of the economic, social and cultural practices in the Sahara and the Sahel. Shepherds, livestock farmers and traders are on the move today as in the past. Transhumance is a traditional activity involving the use of larger spaces to offset land aridity and climatic hazards. The large territories it has covered from time immemorial in West Africa now span several sovereign States. Looking at long-standing transhumance movements within Mauritania and across its borders, it appears these have much in common and also overlap with more recent migratory movements within the region, for instance to Mali and Senegal, and beyond it, such as to other States in Africa, the Gulf States and Europe (Lungarotti and Godde, Chapter 9 of this volume). Conflicts that may erupt between transhumant shepherds and sedentary farmers have therefore become a contentious issue in modern West African States. To address these tensions and regulate pastoralism, shepherds' associations of West and Central Africa and IOM have established a Transhumance Tracking Tool (Jusselme, Chapter 10 of this volume).