



International Migration From and Within Africa

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Summary

41 million African-born people live outside their country of origin. They account for 14% of the world's global migrant population (UN DESA, 2020). Over the past 60 years, their absolute number has grown fivefold from 8 million in 1960.

- The majority of internationally-mobile Africans migrate within their continent – usually between countries belonging to the same region.
- Temporary and long-term labour migration play a significant role in movements between countries of Western Africa and between countries of Southern Africa (with Ivory Coast, Nigeria and the Republic of South Africa as prime destinations).
- In Central and in Eastern Africa previous refugee flows play a key role explaining the distribution of international migrants who found protection (mostly) in neighbouring countries (in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Chad in particular).

Other major destinations for Africans include:

- Europe as a destination for marriage and student migration, a smaller volume of labour migration, as well as some irregular and refugee migration;
- The Gulf States as a destination for temporary labour migrants including irregular migrants;
- North America and Australia as destinations for student migration, refugee resettlement and some family reunions.

Due to geographic proximity, historical ties and established diasporas (translating not only into networks, but also into marriage migration between regions of origin and diaspora-hosting countries), the largest numbers of African-born residents of Europe are from the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia), followed by Nigeria.

Over the past 15 years, reduced labour recruitment led, between 2008 and 2015, to a drop in the number of new regular arrivals from Africa to Europe, while between 2016-2019, marriage and student migration increased. At the same time, there was a shift in the flow of asylum seekers away from refugee-producing countries (namely Eritrea and Somalia) to West African countries of origin (with little or no state-led violence against political opponents and minorities) and lately also a rise in arrivals of Algerian, Egyptian, Moroccan and Tunisian asylum seekers. Citizens of this latter groups of countries were rather seeking economic opportunity than political protection in Europe and the majority of them are not recognised as refugees. Many of them, however, manage to be granted humanitarian protection or to be tolerated temporarily. Deportation and repatriation to countries in Northern and Sub-Saharan countries are rather an exception.

In 2020, travel restrictions and border closures related to the COVID-19 epidemic led to reduced flows of irregular migrants and asylum seekers from Africa to Europe. The main reduction was due to fewer citizens of Western Africa crossing the Mediterranean and a drop in marriage migration and family reunion. Forced, assisted and voluntary repatriation almost came to standstill.

Available surveys indicate that almost 30% of adult Africans consider moving to another country while almost 10% have started concrete steps in preparation of such a move. Shares of those considering plus those preparing for emigration are above average in many countries in Western Africa and some countries in Southern Africa.

While surveys show that economic considerations are the most important in decisions to stay or move, they also give a clear hint that young African adults (aged 18-35) with comparatively better education, a job and access to cash income are more likely to actively prepare their emigration to other countries. African men are a bit more inclined to move than women.

Although economic reasons are frequently the main driver for migration for Africans, they can go hand in hand with personal or family reasons, and factors such as “violence, insecurity and conflict” (not state-led). Environmental and climate issues are rarely cited as the sole or a main factor for migration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has primarily impacted economic conditions, public health and travel connections. Its socio-economic and practical consequences led to increasing aspirations to leave and decreasing capabilities to do so.

Additional factors that contribute to migration aspirations and decision-making include the influence and attraction of family members and close friends already established in another country, and, to a lesser extent, social media and smugglers.

Main messages

- The number of Africans living outside their country of birth (international migrant stock) has grown fivefold (from 8 to 41 million) since 1960.
- That growth is more or less in line with Africa's overall population growth.
- This means that at an individual level Africans have not become more mobile over the past 60 years as the probability that they live outside their country of birth has remained more or less the same over time.
- Only a minority of Africans living outside their country of birth are refugees – 7.2 million in 2020 (UNHCR 2021); the majority of these refugees are located in Eastern and Central Africa, where they found some protection in neighbouring countries but do not become integrated (exception: Uganda). Uganda (1.4 million), Sudan (1.0 million) and Ethiopia (0.8 million) were estimated to be the three countries hosting the highest numbers of international migrants (predominantly refugees) in Eastern Africa in 2020 (UNHCR 2021).
- Some 0.5 million recognised (mostly East) African refugees are residing in the European Union. Most West African asylum seekers in the EU do not obtain recognition as refugees, but their countries of origin do not usually cooperate when EU countries want to repatriate them.
- Almost all emigration from Northern Africa is to overseas destinations: Maghreb to Europe (around 180,000 yearly inflows, Eurostat 2021); and Egypt to the Gulf States (mostly temporary labour migrants).
- Regional intra-African destinations dominate migration patterns in Sub-Saharan African, but the relevance of overseas destinations is increasing. The Republic of South Africa (2.8 million), Ivory Coast (2.5 million), and Nigeria (1.3 million) are the most important destination countries.
- The number of internally displaced Africans is growing and stands at more than 20 million in 2020 (compared to 13 million in 2013).
- The composition of flows from Africa to Europe has shifted since 2008, but there is no dramatic increase of total inflows: family reunion/marriage migration are dominant and increasing, student migration is increasing, labour migration is lower than before 2010.
- The irregular migration/arrival of asylum seekers peaked in 2015-2018 but has since remained significantly below the level of 2015 crisis. However, arrivals across the Central and Western Mediterranean (+adjacent Atlantic) have started picking up, with the number of illegal border crossings at all EU external borders in the period Jan-Nov 2021 reaching around 100,000, compared to 95,000 in 2020 (all year) and almost 124,000 in 2019 (according to UNHCR, EASO). A fairly recent phenomenon is the rising numbers of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian citizens crossing the Mediterranean and asking for asylum in Italy, Spain and (to a small extent) France or avoiding registration and directly entering irregular labour markets.
- Specific COVID-19 effects in 2020: fewer Sub-Saharan Africans were arriving in Europe. Asylum applications of Africans also dropped in 2020.
- African adults considering or planning to move abroad are – on average – better educated, younger and better off economically than the comparable adult population of their home country.
- Economic drivers dominate African migration (and migration aspirations), but they are intertwined with perceived political instability and pull factors related to diasporas.

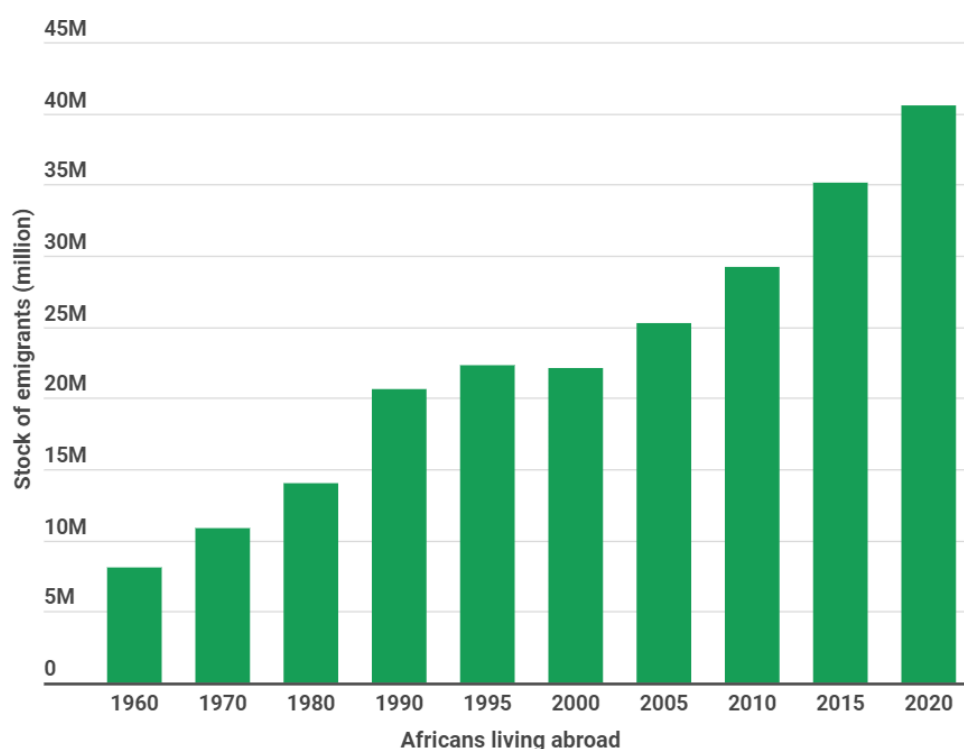
- African (especially North African) diasporas play a significant role in shaping migration from Africa to Europe as they facilitate marriage migration, which has become the main legal gate of entry for Africans coming to EU Member States.
- When interviewed, African migrants rarely mention ecological factors and climate change as the main reason for their mobility.
- Available data do not suggest an imminent mass exodus of Africans. However, economic growth and socio-economic development (increasing the number of people with skills, aspirations and access to cash income increasing the ability to pay for transportation) as well as rapid population growth (increasing the absolute number of more mobile young adults) and possibly the negative impact of climate change on livelihoods are likely to increase the number of African migrants.
- Even at an accelerated speed of socio-economic development, African countries will experience more emigration than immigration over the next 30-40 years, as more Africans will gain access to the economic and social capital required to offer them the choice between moving and staying. Better education (of girls and young women in particular) as well as socio-economic development will reduce fertility and ultimately moderate total population growth. In the short- to medium-term the reduced pace of population growth will not offset the increasing ability of young people to migrate to another country.

I. Migration from and within Africa – overview of key trends

Since the early 1960s, **the absolute number of Africans living outside their country of birth has increased fivefold** – from an estimated 8.1 million¹ to an estimated **40.5 million** in 2020 (Fig. 1).²

This increase is, however, more or less in line with overall population growth on the continent. As a result, over the past 60 years, the share of Africans living abroad compared to Africa’s total population has remained pretty stable, fluctuating between 2.6% and 3.2%, and stood at 3.0% in 2020 (Fig. 2). In other words: at an individual level, Africans have not become more mobile over the past 60 years as the probability that they live outside their country of birth has remained more or less the same over time.

FIGURE 1: AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD – AFRICAN-BORN POPULATION (STOCK DATA) LIVING OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 1960 – 2020, ABSOLUTE NUMBER, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

¹ It might, however, well be that this was an undercount as some Asian-born people with European ancestry repatriated from former colonies between the 1940s and 1960s might not be included in these figures.

² This DG INTPA factsheet is partly based on the KCMD report: S. Migali, F. Natale, R. Münz. 2018. Many more to come? European Commission, DG JRC

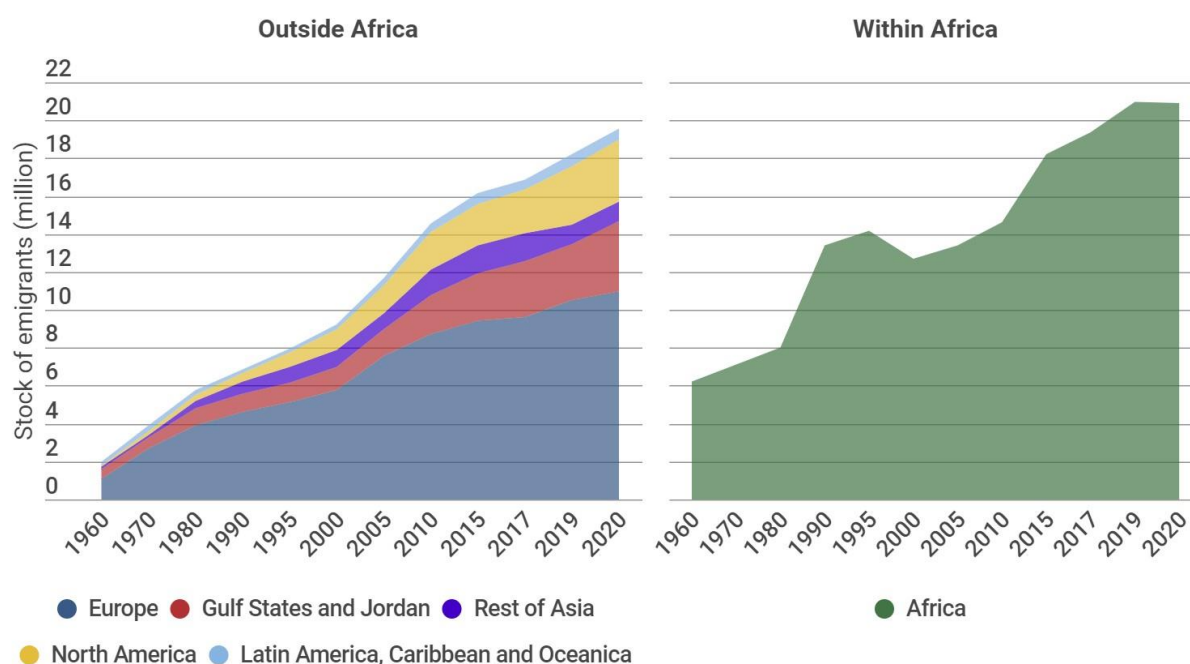
More than half of all African migrants live in other African countries

Over time, the destinations of African migrants have become more diversified.

In the early 1960s less than one in four of the estimated 8 million African migrants (23%) lived outside of their native continent. Only a few of them (1.3 million or 16%) were residents of today's EU 27, EFTA, the UK or the Soviet Union.

By 2020, an estimated 19.6 million of the 40.5 million Africans residing outside their country (almost one in two) had a place of residence outside Africa: 48% of all African-born people living abroad. Only a small minority of African migrants residing overseas are refugees. This also means that, **in 2020, 20.9 million Africans (or 52% of all Africans living outside their country) resided on the African continent** (Fig. 2 + 4).

FIGURE 2: AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD – AFRICAN-BORN POPULATION (STOCK DATA) BY CONTINENT OF DESTINATION, 1960-2020, ABSOLUTE NUMBER, IN MILLIONS

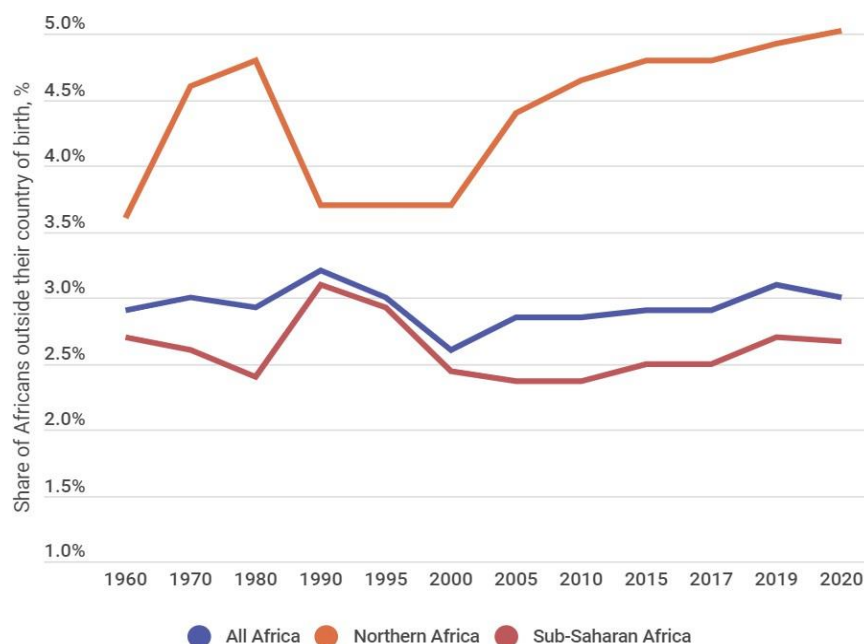


Source: UN DESA

When it comes to destinations, there is a clear difference between Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa. The share of North Africans living abroad did increase between 1960 and 1980, before dropping in the 1990s, and rising again between 2000 and 2020. **5% of Northern Africa's population lived outside of their country of birth in 2020** (mostly in Europe and the Gulf States; Fig. 3).

In contrast, the share of **Sub-Saharan Africans** living abroad has fluctuated between 2.4% and 3.0%, with 2.6% of them living abroad in 2020 (Fig. 3). The relative share was slightly higher in Eastern Africa (2.9%), average in Western Africa (2.6%), and slightly lower in Central (2.4%) and Southern Africa (2.3%).

FIGURE 3: AFRICANS LIVING OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF BIRTH RELATIVE TO AFRICA’S TOTAL POPULATION – SHARE OF EMIGRANTS (STOCK DATA), 1960-2020, IN % OF TOTAL POPULATION OF REGION OF ORIGIN



Source: UN DESA

African-born people in Europe

The majority of African-born people who have left their native continent on a more or less permanent basis now live in Europe. In 2020, some 10.6 million Africans were living in Europe, most of them in the EU 27, the UK and Switzerland (Fig. 4). In 2020, the EU 27 hosted 8.6 million African-born immigrants, of which 5.4 million were from Northern Africa and 3.3 million from Sub-Saharan Africa.

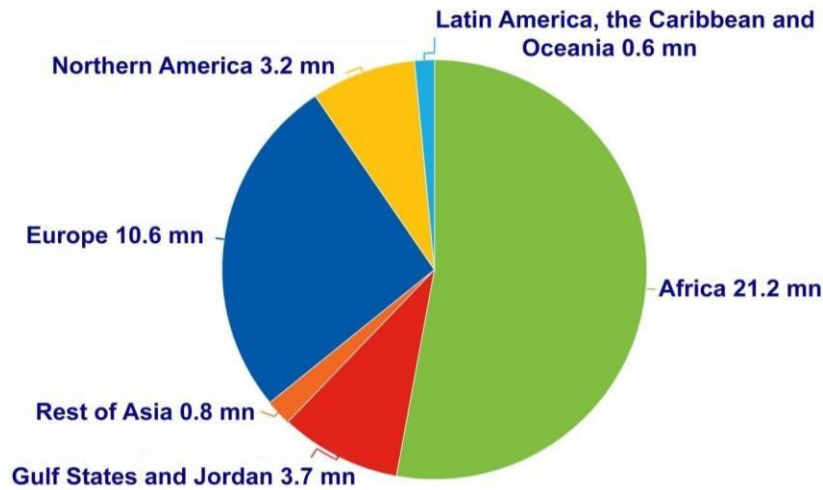
On the one hand, there are people who were once recruited as labour migrants or who followed as dependent family members. The majority of those Africans who remained in the country of destination are now retired.

On the other hand, there are people who came more recently through marriage (mostly from the Maghreb countries Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) or as asylum seekers (recognised refugees mainly from Eritrea and Somalia) and as non-deportable aliens whose asylum claims have been rejected (mostly from Western Africa).

In 2019, only some **0.5 million Africans living in an EU Member State were people recognised as refugees, people granted humanitarian protection or asylum seekers with pending claims or.** Italy (120,854) and France (110,189) were the two leading EU countries hosting African asylum seekers and refugees.

Other major host countries of African refugees were Yemen (260,969), and the United States (58,267) (UNHCR 2020).

FIGURE 4: AFRICANS ABROAD: WHERE DO THEY LIVE? AFRICAN-BORN PEOPLE LIVING OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF BIRTH (STOCK DATA) BY CONTINENT, ABSOLUTE NUMBER, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

Europe’s western Mediterranean countries are the prime overseas destination of Africans living abroad. France, Spain and Italy are hosting the largest African-born diasporas.

The Gulf States and Jordan are the second ranking overseas destinations, hosting 3.7 million African-born migrants (Fig. 4). The vast majority of these are temporary labour from Egypt, Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa working in the Gulf States and in Jordan with very limited rights and no access to permanent residence. Some are de facto refugees, mainly from Somalia and Eritrea with no access to refugee status.

Despite its considerable Afro-American population, **North America** is not a prime destination for African migrants. In 2020, there were only 3.2 million African-born people living in the USA and Canada (Fig. 4). The large majority of African Americans are descendants of victims of forced migration and the slave trade who came to the Americas between the 17th and the early 19th centuries. Today, the US and Canada are home and host to just 2.9 million African-born people.

North African migrants are much more likely to head overseas – African migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa are gradually catching up

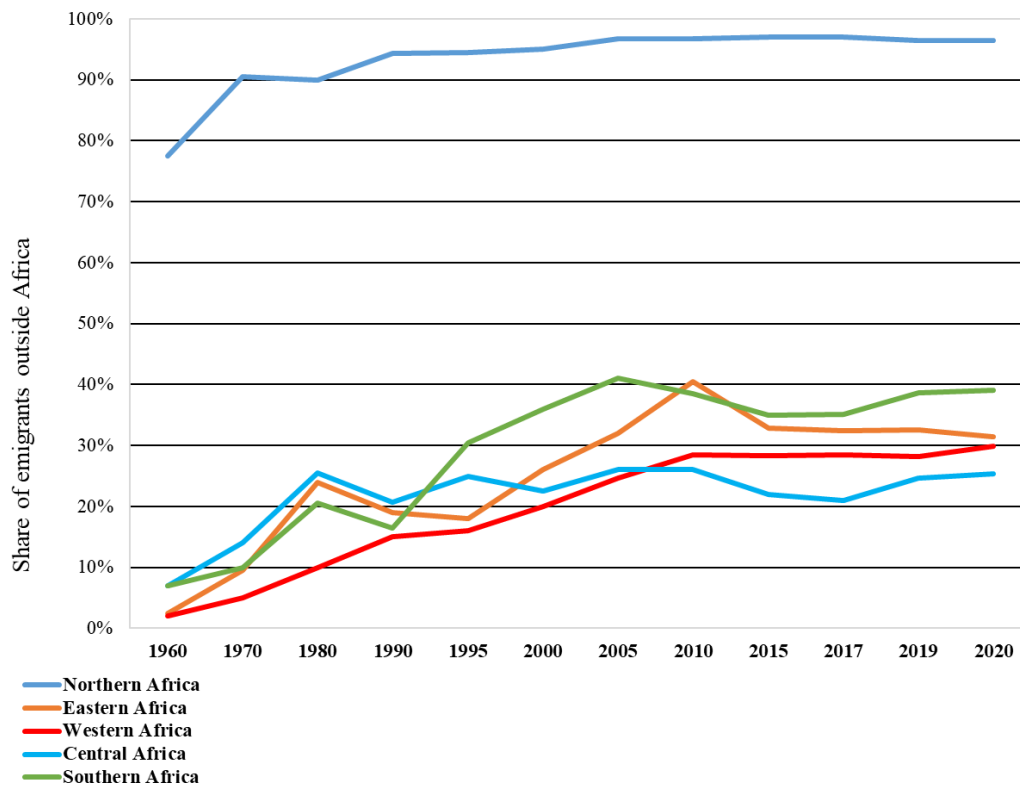
The share of North African migrants living overseas (in relation to all North African emigrants) has remained above 90 % ever since the 1970s (Fig. 5).

While the share of overseas migrants born in **Sub-Saharan Africa** is much lower, **a gradual diversification of destinations, including European countries, the Gulf States and North America is clearly taking place**. Between 1960 and 2010, the share of Sub-Saharan-born migrants residing outside Africa rose from 3% to

34% (of all sub-Saharanans living abroad). Between 2010 and 2020, their share stabilised at around 30 % (Fig. 5).

Among people born in Southern Africa the share rose from 7% in 1960 to 41% in 2005, but then dropped to 39 % in 2020. Since the late 1990s, moving within the region to the Republic of South Africa has become a regional alternative to overseas destinations.

FIGURE 5: AFRICAN MIGRANTS LIVING OUTSIDE AFRICA COMPARED TO TOTAL MIGRANT POPULATION BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 1960-2020, IN %



Source: UN DESA

II. Key migration corridors: inter-continental migration from and intra-regional migration within Africa

Northern Africa

In 2020, just over **one in four Africans living abroad was from Northern Africa** (10.0 million migrants) – almost all of them were residing overseas (Fig. 6).

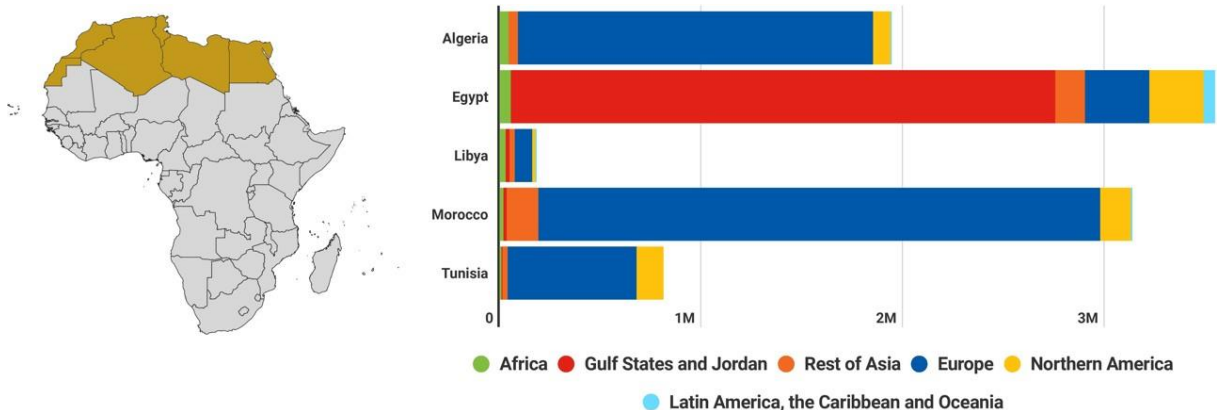
Two different regional migration patterns can be identified:

- **Maghreb-to-Europe flows**, with Algeria and Morocco as the main countries of origin, and migrants usually residing in Europe as permanent residents. This pattern can be explained by geographic proximity, previous labour recruitment agreements, as well as enduring post-colonial and diaspora ties. Migration flows continue well beyond periods of labour recruitment because of ongoing family reunion and subsequent marriage migration. New families are formed as EU citizens or permanent residents with a diaspora background are marrying brides or grooms from the region of origin and ethno-religious background of their parents or grandparents.

Top African-born diasporas in Europe by corridor (2020 – stock data, UNDESA):

- Algeria – France (1.6 million)
- Morocco – France (1.0 million)
- Morocco – Spain (0.8 million)
- Morocco – Italy (0.5 million)
- Tunisia – France (0.4 million)

FIGURE 6: AFRICA'S MIGRANTS AND DIASPORAS – NORTHERN AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD BY CONTINENT OF DESTINATION (STOCK DATA), MID-2019, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

- In absolute numbers, **migrants from Egypt** are the largest group of Africans living outside their country of birth. They usually head **to the Gulf States and Jordan** — most of them as temporary workers. As a result, unlike the people of Maghrebian origin, Egyptians abroad do not form a permanent but a revolving Diaspora.

Top African-born diasporas in Asia by corridor (2020 – stock data, UNDESA):

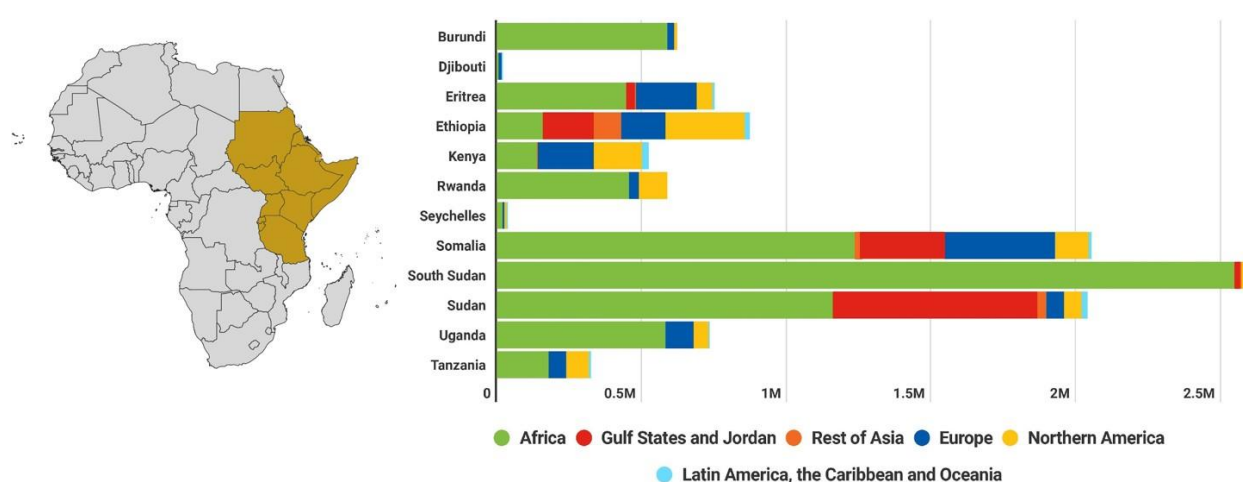
- Egypt – Saudi Arabia (0.9 million)
- Egypt – United Arab Emirates (0.9 million)
- Egypt – Kuwait (0.4 million)

Mobility between North African countries is rare today. Borders between Morocco and Algeria are closed, while Libya, until 2011 a major country of destination, no longer hosts large numbers of Arab migrants from Egypt and Tunisia.

Eastern Africa and the Horn

Around 27% of all African living abroad are from Eastern Africa (11 million). Most of these live in another African country (Fig. 7). Among them are considerable refugee populations that found protection abroad: the majority of them in neighbouring countries within the region, namely in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda and a minority in Western Europe and North America. Most refugees in the region originated from South Sudan (2.2 million refugees, 2020), Somalia (0.9 million refugees and asylum seekers), Sudan (0.9 million refugees and asylum seekers), and Eritrea (0.6 million refugees and asylum seekers, 2020). In addition, hundreds of thousands of East Africans are non-recognised de facto refugees living as irregular migrants in Egypt and the Gulf States.

FIGURE 7: AFRICA’S MIGRANTS AND DIASPORAS – EASTERN AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD BY CONTINENT OF DESTINATION (STOCK DATA), MID-2019, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

The top diaspora corridors within the region are all determined by past refugee flows.

Top diaspora corridors (2020 – stock data, UNDESA):

- South Sudan – Uganda (1.0 million)
- South Sudan – Sudan (0.8 million)
- South Sudan – Ethiopia (0.4 million)
- Somalia – Kenya (0.4 million)
- Somalia – Ethiopia (0.4 million)
- Eritrea – Sudan (0.2 million)
- Eritrea – Ethiopia (0.2 million)

Both as a result of refugee flows and of previous regular migration, some East African countries, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania have a sizeable diaspora living in Europe and/or North America:

- Somalia – Europe (0.4 million, including 0.1 million in the United Kingdom)
- Ethiopia – USA (0.2 million)
- Eritrea – Europe (0.2 million)

East African **labour migrants** have moved in larger numbers to the Republic of South Africa and to Botswana, while geographic and partly cultural proximity also make the Gulf States a major destination for temporary labour migrants from Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

- Sudan – Saudi Arabia (0.5 million)
- Sudan – UAE (0.1 million)

Western Africa

Around a quarter of Africans residing abroad were born in Western Africa (10 million in 2020).

All countries in this region are members of the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) and, as such, their citizens have the right to enter, reside and establish economic activities in the territory of another member country. Strong cross-border networks among the many ethnic groups established in more than one country of the region also play a significant role in facilitating and channelling migration flows.

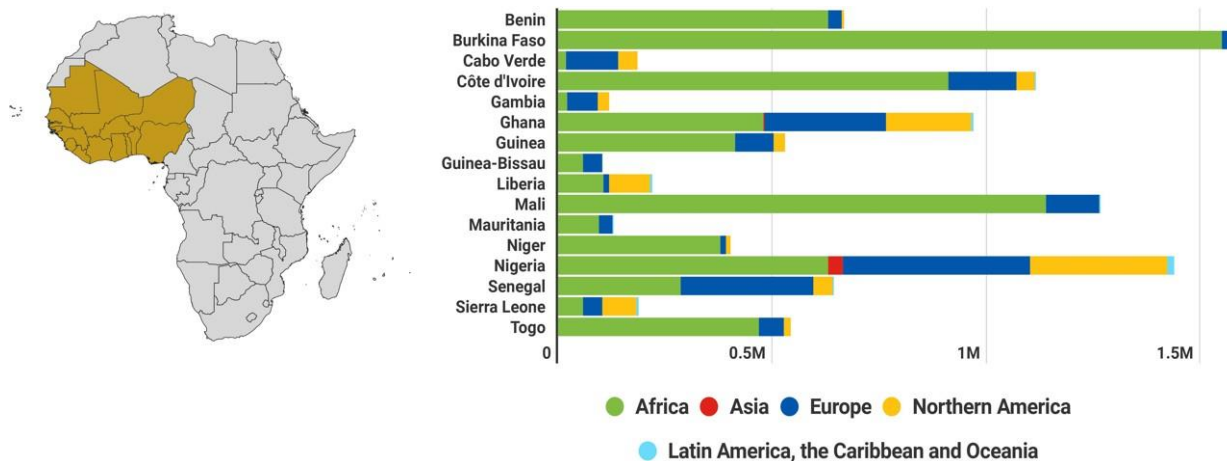
Two different patterns can be identified in this region (Fig. 8).

(1) In more than half of West African countries a majority of migrants have moved within Africa, usually to another country in the region. This intra-regional migration between the ECOWAS countries is mostly due to **seasonal, temporary and partly even permanent migration of workers** primarily moving from countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali to coastal and commodity-rich countries such as Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

The main corridors are:

- Burkina Faso – Ivory Coast (1.3 million)
- Mali – Ivory Coast (0.5 million)
- Benin – Nigeria (0.3 million)

FIGURE 8: AFRICA’S MIGRANTS AND DIASPORAS – WESTERN AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD BY CONTINENT OF DESTINATION (STOCK DATA), MID-2019, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

(2) Other migration patterns prevail in Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. For these countries, the number of **diaspora members living in Europe and North America** is equal to or even larger than the number of emigrants living in Africa.

The main corridors are:

- Nigeria – Europe (0.5 million, including 0.2 million in UK and 0.1 million in Italy)
- Nigeria – United States (0.4 million)
- Ghana – United States (0.2 million)
- Senegal – Europe (0.3 million, including 0.1 million in France)
- Ghana – Europe (0.2 million)

Nigeria and Ivory Coast are not only among Africa’s foremost migrant sending countries, but are also among the main receiving countries.

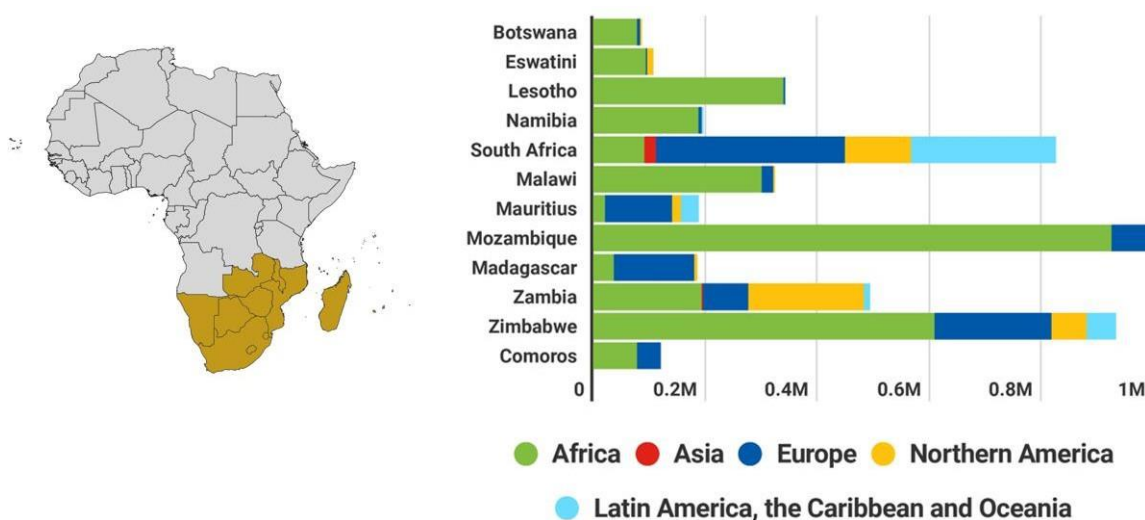
Southern Africa

The number of people of Southern African origin living abroad was around 4.8 million in 2020.

Most of them moved as temporary or permanent labour, but some also as refugees to the Republic of South Africa and also, in smaller numbers, to Botswana.

Traditional sending countries are Lesotho, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

FIGURE 9: AFRICA'S MIGRANTS AND DIASPORAS – SOUTHERN AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD BY CONTINENT OF DESTINATION (STOCK DATA), MID-2019, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

The following countries of Southern Africa show different patterns (Fig. 9):

- Madagascar and Mauritius have a diaspora residing mainly in Europe (mostly in France);
- Zambia and Zimbabwe have sizeable diasporas both in Europe and North America;
- South Africa (RSA) is the foremost destination country in the region, but also has Africa's geographically most diverse emigration pattern, with its citizens (or former citizens) residing in Europe (in particular in the EU and the UK) as well as in North America and Australia. This can be partly explained by the fact that the country has a native English- and Afrikaans-speaking minority population of European origin.

Top diaspora corridors (2020 – stock data, UNDESA):

- South Africa – United Kingdom (0.2 million)
- South Africa – Australia (0.2 million)
- Zimbabwe – United Kingdom (0.1 million)
- Madagascar – France (0.1 million)
- Mauritius – France (51,000)
- Zimbabwe – South Africa (0.7 million)
- Lesotho – South Africa (0.2 million)
- Mozambique – South Africa (0.3 million)

Central Africa

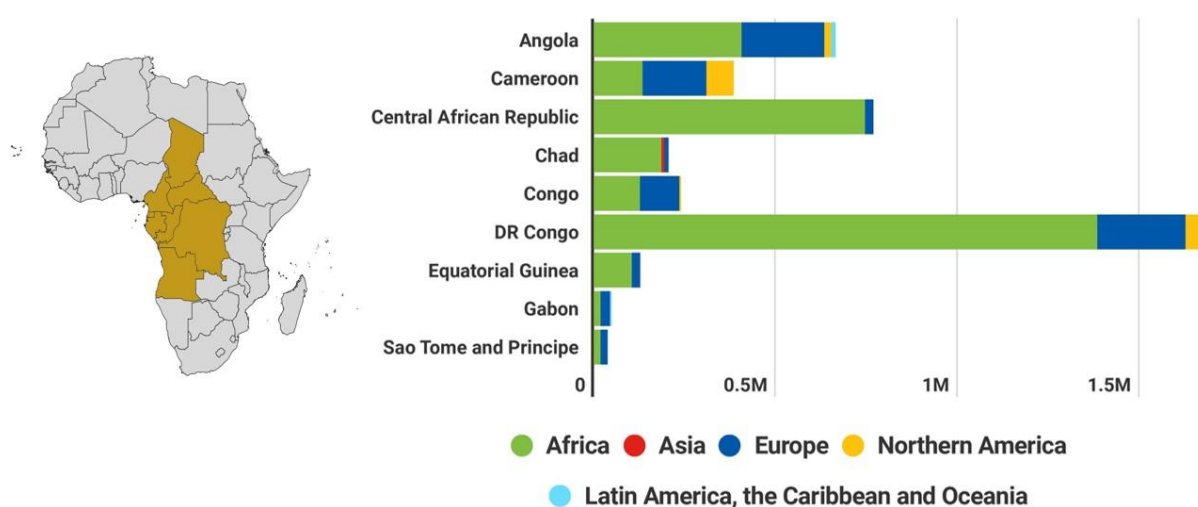
In 2020, **some 4.4 million people born in Central Africa were living abroad**, most of them in a neighbouring African country (Fig. 10).

Angola, Cameroon, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo have sizeable diasporas mostly living in Europe. They are mainly located in countries that were dominant colonial powers in the region until the early 1960s. Cameroon is the only country in the region where more than 50% of the diaspora resides in Europe and North America.

Top corridors between Central Africa and Europe:

- Angola – Portugal (0.2 million)
- Cameroon – France (0.1 million)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo – Europe (0.2 million, including 87,000 in Belgium and 88,000 in France)

FIGURE 10: AFRICA’S MIGRANTS AND DIASPORAS – CENTRAL AFRICANS LIVING ABROAD BY CONTINENT OF DESTINATION (STOCK DATA), MID-2019, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, IN MILLIONS



Source: UN DESA

Conflict and political instability have played a significant role in migration both from and to neighbouring countries in Central Africa.

Top diaspora corridors related to former refugee flows (2020 – stock data, UNDESA):

- Democratic Republic of the Congo – Uganda (0.4 million)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo – Burundi (0.2 million)

Only Gabon hosts a larger number of migrant workers from the region.

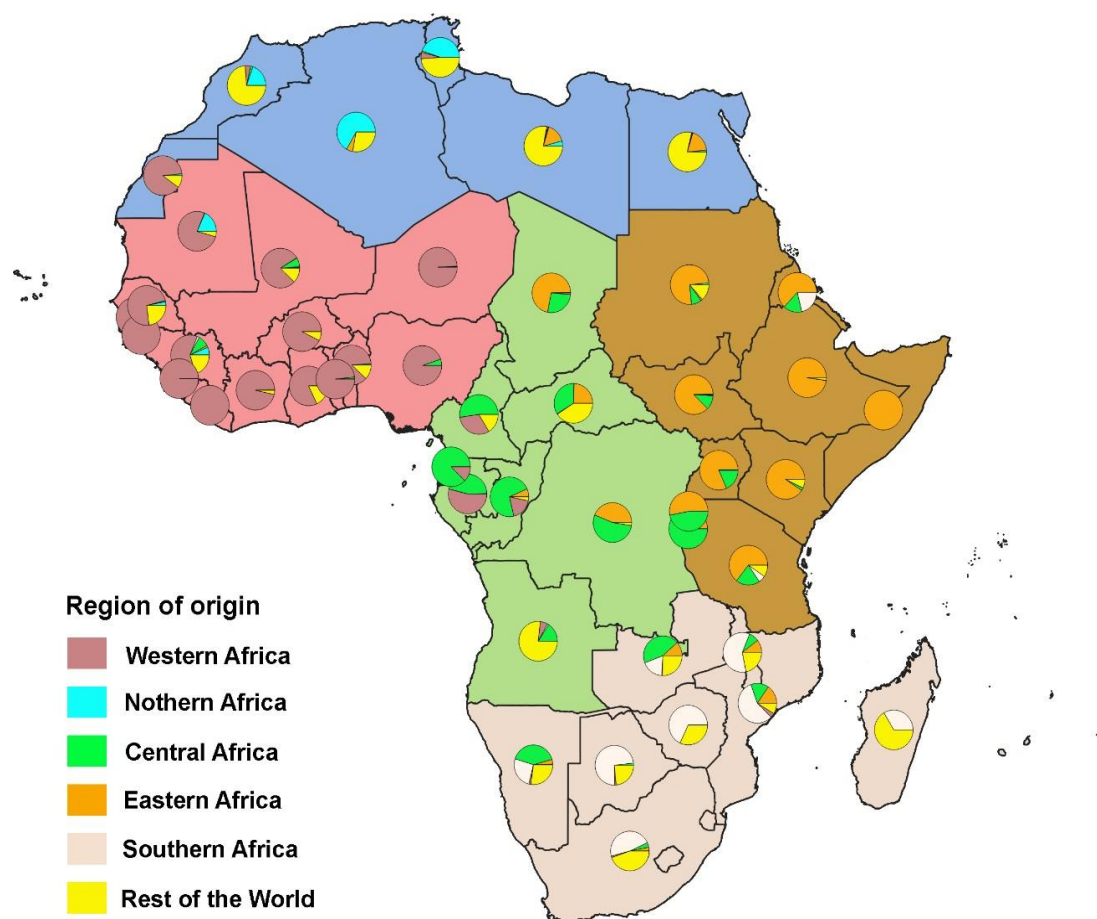
- Equatorial Guinea – Gabon (87,000)

III. Africa as a destination for migrants

Africa, in 2020, hosted 22.7 million international migrants and refugees. In 2020, in addition to 20.9 million African-born migrants and refugees living in Africa, the continent also hosted some 1.8 million temporary or permanent immigrants from outside Africa, mostly from Asia (1.2 million) and Europe (0.6 million).

Just as the majority of African migrants currently reside in Africa rather than overseas, many of these also remain, for the most part, within their regions of origin. Among them, a large number are forced migrants. In 2020, there were some **6.6 million registered international refugees in Africa**, mostly from neighbouring African countries.

FIGURE 11: MIGRATION TOWARDS AND WITHIN AFRICA – FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN AFRICA (STOCK DATA), 2020



Source: UN DESA

Northern Africa was home to 1.8 million foreign-born residents in 2020.

- **Libya** was both the foremost receiving and transit country. In 2020, it hosted an estimated 0.6 to 0.8 million foreign-born residents and transit migrants (down from about 2 million in 2010). The majority of Libya's more permanent immigrants are from the Middle East (Palestine, Iraq, Syria,

Egypt) while migrants with shorter stays are from Niger, from Sudan and Chad. About 550,000 irregular African and Asian migrants transited through Libya to reach Italy during the years 2015-2020.

- The second ranking receiving country is **Egypt** with almost 0.5 million foreign-born legal residents. The majority are Palestinians (2020: 135,932),³ Syrians (125,673) and citizens of other Middle Eastern countries. In addition, Egypt hosts large numbers of irregular migrants, including irregular labour migrants from Sudan, as well as de facto refugees from Eritrea, Somalia and Syria.

The total number of immigrants in Eastern Africa was 9 million in 2020.

- **Kenya** (1 million), **Ethiopia** (1 million) and **Uganda** (1.7 million) host the largest numbers. The majority are refugees from South Sudan (1.5 million), Somalia (1.0 million) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.1 million). In recent years the number of Chinese migrant workers, entrepreneurs, government officials and military personnel moving to countries in the region has increased sharply.

In 2020, Western Africa hosted an estimated 7.5 million foreign-born residents – mostly labour migrants.

- **Ivory Coast** (2.5 million) and **Nigeria** (1.3 million) were the main destination countries. The largest immigrant community originated in Burkina Faso (1.3 million Burkinabes in Ivory Coast alone).

In 2020, Central Africa was home to an estimated 3.8 million foreign-born people

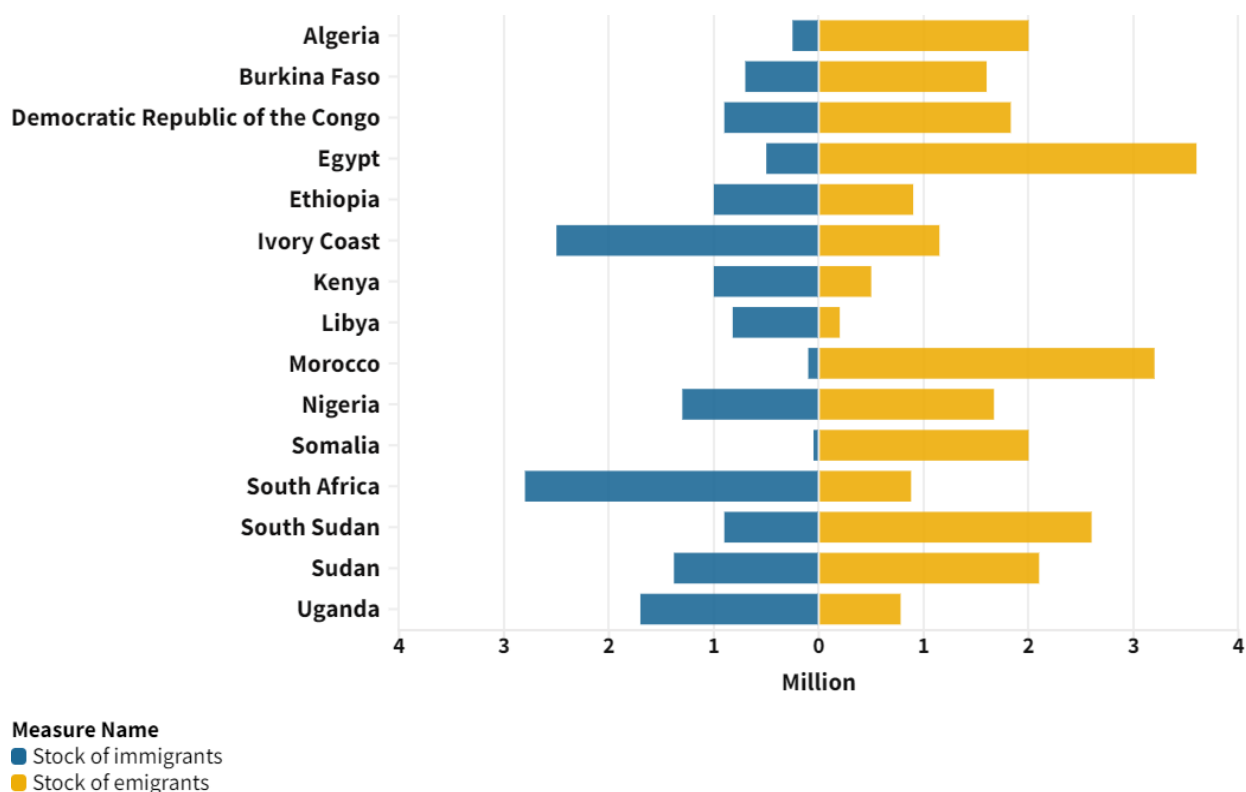
- **The Democratic Republic of the Congo** (950,000), **Cameroon** (580,000) and **Angola** (660,000) were the foremost destination countries, hosting for the most part refugees from the Central African Republic, Sudan, Rwanda, Nigeria and South Sudan, but, in the case of Angola, also immigrants from Europe.
- The main destination for labour migrants was Gabon (420,000).

Southern Africa hosted 4.3 million foreign-born residents in 2020.

- **The Republic of South Africa** has seen a considerable rise in immigration, becoming an attractive alternative to Europe and other overseas destinations. In 2010, the country was home and host to only 1.9 million migrants, a considerable decline compared to the 1990s as many European-born and also some Indian-born South Africans had left the country following the end of the Apartheid regime. In 2020, the number of foreign-born residents had risen again to 2.8 million, making the country Africa's main magnet society.
- Immigrants have origins ranging from Central, Eastern and Southern Africa to Europe, South Asia and China. People born in Zimbabwe and Mozambique are the largest groups of foreign-born people living in the RSA. Many African immigrants have found work in key sectors such as mining while others work in the hospitality sector. The RSA hosts a considerable number of irregular migrants from neighbouring countries.

³ This figure includes stateless Palestinians born in Egypt or another Middle Eastern country whose ancestors fled or had been expelled from Israel or the Palestinian Territories (West Bank, Gaza).

FIGURE 12: MIGRATION ON BALANCE – AFRICA’S TOP 17 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND DESTINATION, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS OF IMMIGRANTS AND EMIGRANTS COMBINED, 2020



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), International Organization for Migration (IOM)

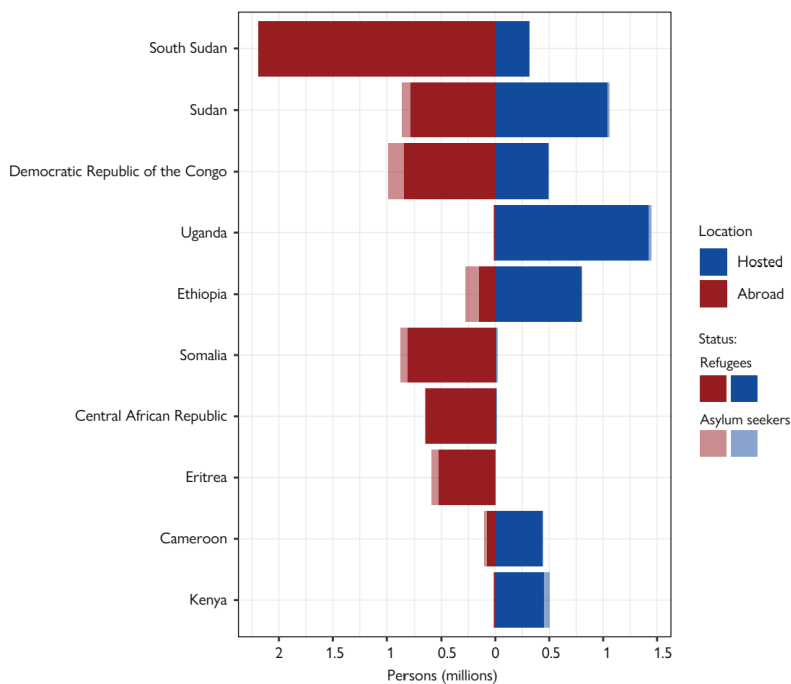
Africa’s main destination countries are South Africa (RSA) Ivory Coast and Nigeria on the one hand, Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia on the other hand. While the former mainly host labour migrants, the immigrant populations of the latter are dominated by refugees.

When looking at regular migrants, Africa’s main sending countries are on the one hand Egypt, a major labour exporting country, and on the other hand Morocco and Algeria with emigration largely generated by marriage.

IV. Stock of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa

Africa hosted about 6.6 million registered international refugees at the end of 2020 (UNHCR, 2020). The greatest numbers found protection in Eastern and the Horn of Africa, as well as the Great Lakes region. This part of Africa now hosts nearly 30% of all registered or recognised refugees worldwide. Most of Africa’s refugees found protection in Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In 2020, Uganda hosted the largest African refugee population (1.4 million).

FIG 13: INTERNATIONAL REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN AND FROM AFRICA, 2020



Source: UNHCR, IOM

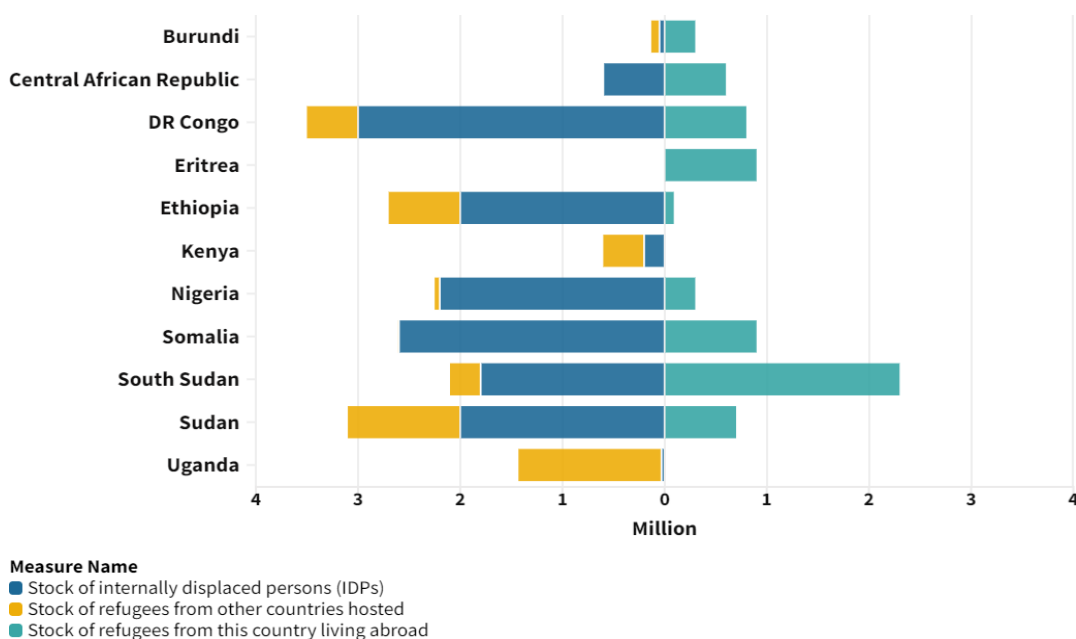
The largest populations of refugees (and asylum seekers in EU countries) originated from South Sudan (2.2 million), the DRC (1.0 million), Somalia (0.9 million), Sudan (0.9 million), the Central African Republic (0.6 million) and Eritrea (0.6 million). The main non-African host countries were Yemen (260,969), Italy (120,854), France (110,189), and the United States (58,267) (UNHCR, 2020).

In 2020, some 0.5 million Africans lived as refugees or asylum seekers in the European Union (UNHCR, 2021). Mainly since 2013 (with a peak in 2015-2016), larger numbers of asylum seekers have arrived from West African countries, which are usually not refugee-producing, resulting in a considerable number of Africans living in Europe with temporary humanitarian protection status or whose asylum requests have been denied, but who cannot be repatriated (non-deportable aliens).

Next to this, **20.8 million Africans were internally displaced** within their own countries by the end of 2020 as a result of political violence and civil wars (up from 16.3 million in 2016). 15 countries were hosting more than 100,000 internally displaced persons. The country with the largest violence-related internally displaced population, according to the International Displacement Monitoring Centre, was the DRC (5.3

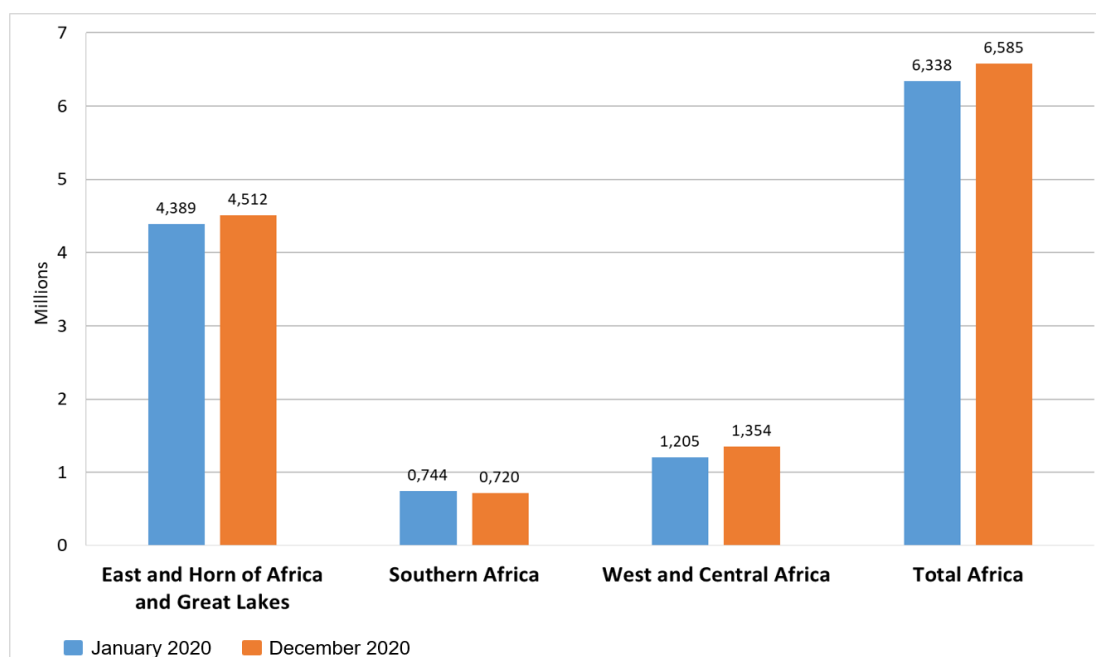
million), followed by Somalia (3.0 million), Nigeria (2.7 million), Sudan (2.3 million), Ethiopia (2.1 million), and South Sudan (1.4 million) (IDMC, 2021, Annual Report for 2020).

FIG. 14: AFRICA'S MAIN IDP AND REFUGEE-PRODUCING AND REFUGEE-RECEIVING COUNTRIES, STOCK OF REFUGEES, STOCK OF IDPs, 2018, ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, IN MILLIONS



Source: UNHCR, IDMC

FIGURE 15: REFUGEES AND PEOPLE IN REFUGEE-LIKE SITUATIONS, BY UNHCR REGIONS, AT THE START AND THE END OF 2020



Source: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2020/pdf/Chapter_PoC.pdf

<https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/60b638e37/global-trends-forced-displacement-2020.html>

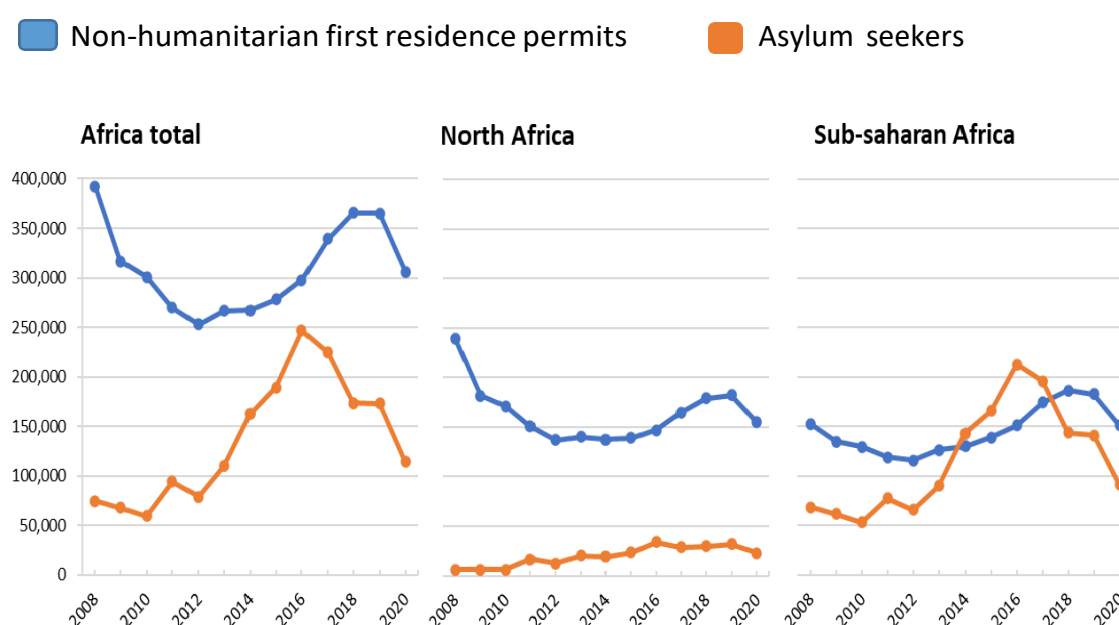
V. Flows of African migrants to Europe

Less legal and temporarily more irregular migration from Africa to Europe

Between 2008 and 2020, on average, some 1.3-1.5 million Africans migrated to another country each year. Among these, **some 400,000 to 550,000 have been coming to Europe annually.**

Until 2013, the vast majority of these mobile Africans travelled as regular immigrants with visa and residence permits granted before arrival. However, the number of **African immigrants settling legally in EU Member States dropped significantly**, from about 375,000 in 2008 to 260,000 in 2012 and numbers remained more or less stable until 2015. Legal migration to the EU then picked up again, reaching 360,000 in 2019, but dropped to 306,000 in 2020 (Fig. 16, Fig. 17).

FIGURE 16: AFRICA-EU: LEGAL MIGRATION DROPPED AFTER 2008 AND IN 2020, IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCREASED BETWEEN 2011 AND 2016



Source: Eurostat

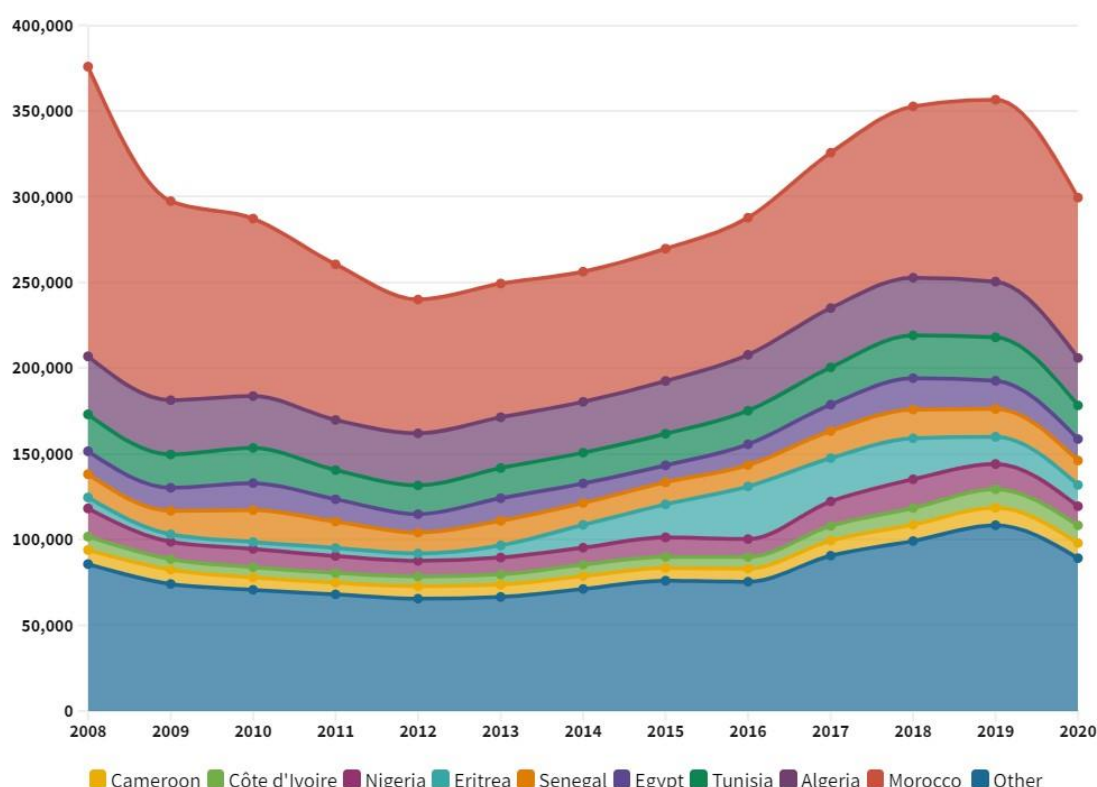
Among these recent regular immigrants to Europe (2008-2020), almost 57% were citizens of Northern Africa – although the flow of regular North African migrants fell by 40%, from 240,000 in 2008 to 140,000 in 2012. Over this period, the already small number of residence permits issued to Libyans dropped by 72%, while those issued to Moroccans and Egyptians dropped by 52% and 15% respectively. During the whole period, Morocco was and remained the leading source country, followed by Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (Fig. 17).

Between 2014 and 2018, however, Eritreans were the 2nd or 3rd largest group of Africans coming to Europe.

In 2020, 93,500 Moroccan citizens received first resident permits, with marriage as well as family reunion being the prevailing reasons for permits granted (63%). Algerian and Tunisian nationals were the second and third largest groups granted first residence permits, accounting for 27,600 and 20,000 respectively with marriage and family reunion also being the major reasons.

The remaining 43% of legal African immigrants to Europe over the period 2008 to 2020 came from Sub-Saharan countries (in 2020: 49%). Legal immigration from this region fell slightly (by -12% from 145,000 in 2008 to 125,000 in 2012) but picked up again after 2013 reaching 165,000 in 2019 and 151,000 in 2020. From 2015, Eritreans and Senegalese became the largest group followed by Nigerians and Ivorians (Fig. 17).

FIGURE 17: REGULAR IMMIGRATION OF AFRICANS TO EUROPE: ONE IN TWO FROM NORTHERN AFRICA - FIRST RESIDENCE PERMITS ISSUED BY EU 27 MEMBER STATES, 2008-2020



Source: Eurostat

Legal immigration to the EU: First residence permits

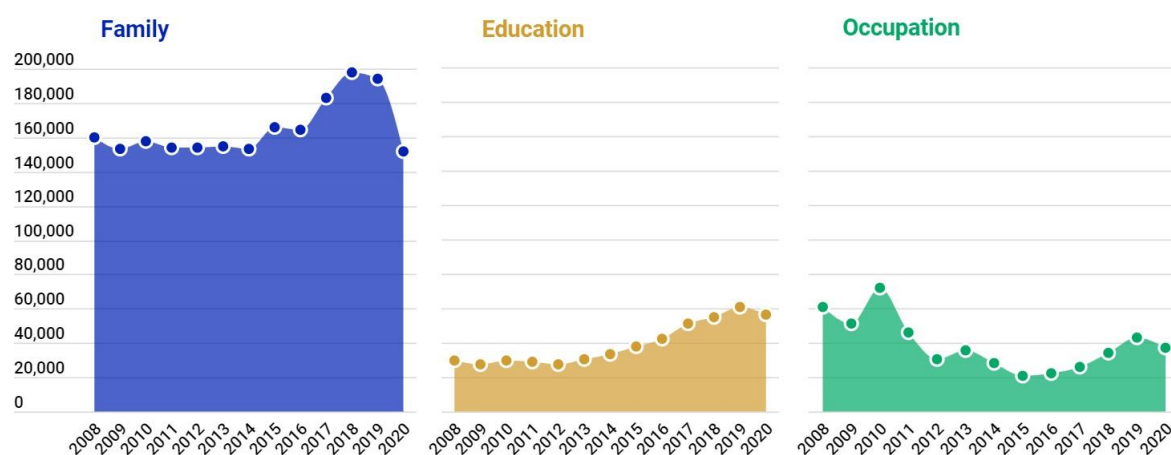
Family formation and family reunion remain the main legal gates of entry for Africans migrating to and staying in Europe, even if its composition is changing.

During the period 2008-2014, some 160,000 first residence permits were issued each year to newly married or dependent family members coming from Africa. From 2015, this flow increased to almost 200,000 per year (2018, 2019; Fig. 18) and fell again to 152,000 in 2020. Unlike in the 1970s and 1980s,

when family reunion consisted of labour migrants being joined by their spouses and minor children, today this type of legal migration is mainly linked to well-established Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian diasporas in Europe, namely in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. It is the EU-born children and grandchildren of immigrants who are marrying distant relatives and members of local communities living in the ancestral land of their parents or grand-parents. In many cases these marriages are arranged by relatives, and the subsequent family reunion almost always takes place in Europe.

Contrary to permits awarded for marriage migration and family reunion, which increased over the period 2008-2019, **first residence permits awarded for work reasons fell by almost 70%**, from 60,000 African migrant workers coming to the EU in 2008 to 20,000 in 2015-2016, before rising to 42,000 in 2019 though numbers dropped to 37,400 in 2020 (Fig.18).

FIGURE 18: REGULAR IMMIGRATION FROM AFRICA: FAMILY REUNION DOMINANT, LABOUR MIGRATION LOWER THAN BEFORE - FIRST RESIDENCE PERMITS (12+ MONTHS) BY "GATE OF ENTRY", 2008-2020, EU 27



Source: Eurostat

Irregular arrivals and first asylum applications

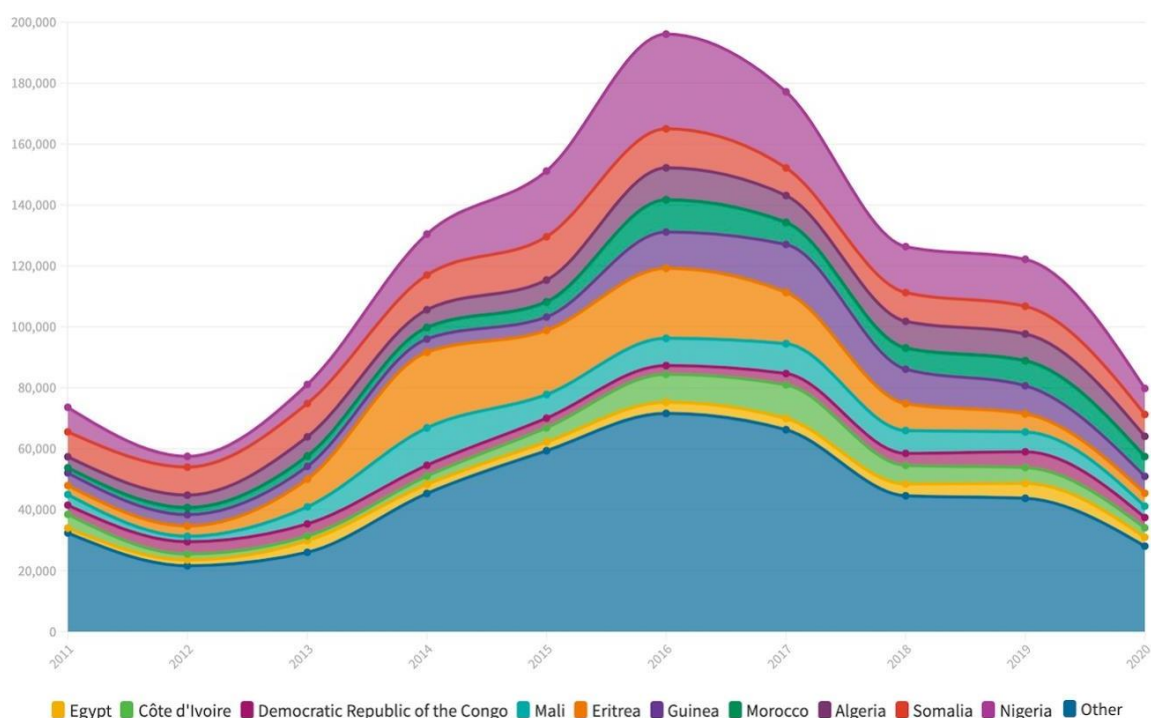
Irregular arrivals of Africans across the Mediterranean (and the Atlantic towards the Canary Islands) **have increased considerably between 2013 and 2016-17**, with journeys mainly terminating in Italy and Spain, but also to a small extent in Greece (via Turkey) and in France.

The political disintegration of Libya after the Western military intervention in 2011, combined with the rise in human smuggling activities and the increase in search and rescue operations carried out by European coast guards, naval forces and NGOs, played a significant role in generating and facilitating this flow. Morocco's varying, but mostly restrictive border policing efforts at its land (Ceuta, Melilla) and sea borders with Spain also had an impact.

As a result, **asylum and humanitarian protection channels became major gates of entry**. Between 2008 and 2012, first-time asylum claims by Africans in the EU-28 averaged at around 75,000 each year. After 2013, with more irregular migrants crossing the Central and Western Mediterranean as well as the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, the number of asylum claims rose drastically – peaking at 212,600 in 2016. In recent years, asylum requests of Africans fell to 140,000 in 2017 and to 97,500 in 2020 (Fig. 20). In 2021 numbers were a bit higher.

The initial increase of asylum claims of African citizens that began in 2013 was linked both to higher numbers of irregular arrivals per se, as well as to an intensification of controls at points of disembarkation in Sicily and Calabria as well as in Spain, which gave more visibility to irregular entries. Since 2015-2016, most irregular migrants were registered upon arrival and a higher share of them now ask for asylum in Italy or Spain, as moving on to north-western Europe has become more difficult for them.

FIGURE 19: FIRST ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OF AFRICAN CITIZENS, 2008-2020 BY COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP



Source: Eurostat

Reinforced control efforts in Libya as well as Libyan search and rescue operations led to a decline in irregular arrivals at Italy’s southern shores from 2017, but passages from Algeria and Morocco to Spain as well as from Algeria and Tunisia to Italy went up. In the case of Spain, irregular entry to the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (located on the African continent adjacent to Moroccan territory) and across the Atlantic to the Canary Islands also play a role. Irregular arrivals in Malta dropped significantly between 2018-19 and 2021. Overall though, EU asylum claims by Africans became slightly less frequent in 2017 compared to 2015 and 2016, and the decrease continued during the years 2018 to 2020. The drop in 2020 can partly be linked to travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 epidemic. In 2021, irregular

arrivals of African citizens across the Western Mediterranean and towards the Canary Islands were about the same as in 2020 while the number of Africans crossing (Tunisians and Egyptians in particular) crossing the Central Mediterranean increased visibly.

It should, however, not be overlooked that a considerable number of asylum requests comes from Africans who are arriving in a regular manner (with Schengen visa) or who are already residing in an EU member State.

FIGURE 20: ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN EU 27, 2020

Citizenship of asylum seekers	European Union - 27
Somalia	10,145
Nigeria	9,610
Guinea	7,465
Eritrea	7,095
Morocco	6,775
Algeria	6,450
DR Congo	6,200
Côte d'Ivoire	5,980
Mali	3,795
Cameroon	3,280
Senegal	2,770
Tunisia	2,690
Sudan	2,705
Gambia	2,110
Libya	1,755
Ghana	1,400
Other	12,290
Total Africans	97,515

Source: Eurostat

Over the last decade, initially a large majority of irregular arrivals in Italy, Malta and Spain were citizens of Sub-Saharan countries. This has changed in recent years. Among those who arrive in an irregular manner, the following groups can be identified:

- Eritreans and Somalis, who come from so-called refugee-producing countries and have a considerable chance of being granted refugee status;
- Citizens of other African (namely West African) countries, who only have a relatively small chance of being recognised as refugees as their countries of origin usually are not characterised by state-led violence against minorities or political opponents (but, in several cases – for example Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria – violence initiated by radicalised non-state actors is happening on a regular basis);
- In this second group, the majority of asylum seekers are from Sub-Saharan Africa with Nigeria, the DR Congo, Guinea and Ivory Coast being the main countries of origin.
- In recent years increasing numbers of North African citizens arrive as irregular migrants and asylum seekers; at first mainly from Morocco and Algeria, but more recently also from Tunisia and Egypt (Fig. 21). Many of them do not ask for

Claiming asylum (even if chances of being granted refugee status are very small) gives citizens of Maghreb and West African countries access to temporary status, along with some social transfers, housing, healthcare and education.

The majority of irregular African migrants denied refugee status remains in the EU as most African countries of origin are only reluctantly cooperating with EU Member State authorities in the return and readmission of their citizens.

In 2020, new African asylum applicants in EU 27 were mainly citizens of Somalia (10,145), Nigeria (9,610), Guinea (7,465), Eritrea (7,095), Morocco (6,775), Algeria (6,450), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (6,200), and Ivory Coast (5,980). The total number of asylum applications made by African citizens in the EU 27 was 97,515 (Eurostat data, 2020; Fig. 20).

VI. Irregular migration across the Mediterranean

Irregular arrivals

According to the UNHCR and EASO, with many COVID-19 related restrictions remaining in place throughout 2020 and a considerable temporary drop in labour demand in Europe (and partly also in the Gulf States), overall arrivals in the EU via the Mediterranean and Atlantic routes decreased to 95,100 irregular border crossings in 2020 (-28,000 or -23% compared to 2019). In 2021, the total number of arrivals via the Mediterranean and Atlantic routes increased to 126,500 irregular border crossings (+31,499 or + 33% compared to 2020). Irregular arrivals increased only slightly in Spain (+1%), but considerably in Italy (+97%) while Malta reported a substantial drop (-63%).

Available data from Frontex, UNHCR and the Italian Ministry of Interior shows that Tunisia had surpassed Libya as the main embarkation point to Italy in 2020 while Libyan departures were higher in 2021 than departures from Tunisia – with the highest numbers of Tunisian citizens' arrivals ever recorded in recent years, but also with an increasing number of nationals of Ivory Coast, many of whom had lost their jobs in Tunisia.

- 2021 witnessed a marginal increase in crossings of the **Western Mediterranean** (and the Atlantic route from Western Africa to the Canary Islands). The total number of arrivals in **Spain** in 2021 was 41,945. 41,547 That was 1% higher than during the year 2020. Arrivals in the Canary Islands in 2020 and 2021 had increased 5-fold compared to 2019. The main country of departure of migrants arriving in mainland Spain through the Western Mediterranean route in 2021 was Algeria, followed by Morocco. The main departure countries on the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands were Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal.
- Broken down by citizenship, Moroccans (39%) Algerians (20%) and Malians (13%) were the largest groups of irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving by sea; followed by Guineans (8%), Ivorians (7%) and Senegalese (6%). Both economic and political concerns were likely drivers for the increase in Mediterranean crossings by North African nationals.
- The **Central Mediterranean** experienced the highest increase (+82%) among all the routes in the course of 2021. Yet, the total number of arrivals in **Malta** in 2021 was 838, a 63% decrease from the same period in 2020. At the same time there was a 97% increase in **Italy** with 67,480 total arrivals. Almost half of these happened via **Libya** (while Libyan citizens were not involved in this irregular flow). Irregular arrivals from **Tunisia** also remained high in comparison to the years before 2019, accounting for about one third of irregular arrivals in Italy in 2021. One other significant trend is the increased numbers of irregular migrants arriving directly in Italy, as opposed to landing following search and rescue operations. This reflects the larger numbers of departures from Tunisia arriving directly in Italy without being rescued. At the same time search and rescue operations leading to arrivals in Italy are reduced to NGO-sponsored ships as European naval forces no longer operate there, while people rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard (26 705 between Jan and Oct. 2021) are taken back to Libya. This also has forced smugglers to provide irregular migrants with more solid ships.

- Almost two-thirds of irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy were African citizens with Tunisians (28%) being the largest group followed by Bangladeshis (13%) Egyptians (10%) and Ivorians (6%). Other African groups include Guineans (4%), Eritreans (4%), Moroccans (3%) and Sudanese (3%; Fig. 21).

There has been a decrease in crossings using the **Eastern Mediterranean** route, which is traditionally much less relevant for irregular arrivals of African nationals in the EU. The overall figure in 2021 is lower than last year, with a significant decline of 58% of arrivals in Greece so far this year. In contrast, 2021 has seen a rise in arrivals in Cyprus of some 47%, and a notable 208% increase in arrivals of migrants coming directly from Turkey to Italy: 6,175 in 2021, compared to 2,007 in 2020 (European Commission, 2021).

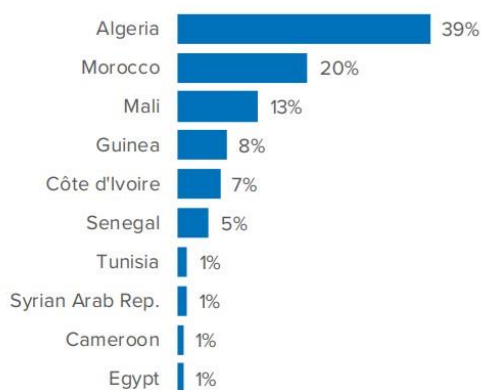
A key overall trend is the rise of Mediterranean crossings by North African citizens and a decline in crossings by sub-Saharan African citizens. According to Eurostat, in 2020, African nationals were responsible for some 40% of a total of 95,100 registered irregular border crossings across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic (2021: 140,400). Moroccans made 14% of all irregular crossings registered at external EU/Schengen borders, followed by Algerians (11%), Tunisians (10%), Ivorians (2%) and Sudanese citizens (1.5%). In 2021, citizens of Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Egypt were the top 4 on the list of African asylum seekers.

FIGURE 21: ARRIVALS THROUGH THE MEDITERRANEAN ROUTES AND THE CANARY ISLANDS ROUTE, 2020-2021, ITALY, MALTA, SPAIN

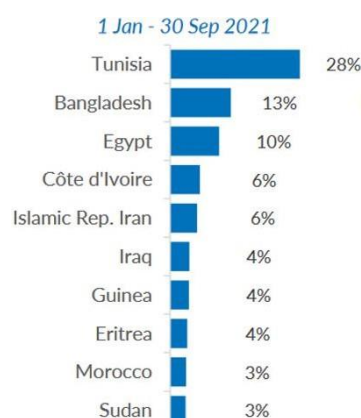
Country	2021	Change compared to 2020
Italy by sea	67,480	+97%
Malta by sea	838	-63%
Spain Canary Islands	22,316	-2%
Spain Mainland by sea	18,409	+6%
Spain by land (Ceuta, Melilla)	1,218	-18%
Spain total	41,945	+1%

Figures for Ceuta and Melilla do not include an estimated 7 000-9 500 arrivals in Ceuta on May 17-18, 2021, of which almost all had been returned to Morocco immediately.

Most common nationalities, Jan - Sep 2020²



Spain



Italy

Source: UNHCR <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

Potential migrants who were in an economically vulnerable position – particularly citizens of poorer countries in Sub-Saharan Africa – might have become too constrained to move, while those with some access to financial resources – mostly from Northern Africa, but also from Ivory Coast – had a higher likelihood of seeking economic opportunities in the EU, but asked for asylum (Mixed Migration Centre, 2021).

Situation in Libya in 2020⁴

In 2020, COVID-19-related border closures in 43 of Africa's 54 countries as well as suspended travel connections and border closures in Europe and the Middle East have disrupted the flow of migrants both at regional (intra-Africa, Africa-Gulf States) as well as intercontinental (mostly Africa-EU/UK) migration. In Northern Africa, the closure of most border crossings between April and June 2020 considerably hampered mobility in the region. In Libya, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported a decrease in the estimated number of international migrants residing in the country, from 625,638 identified between March and April 2020, to 574,146 in September and October. Further, the IOM estimated that about 80,000 migrants had left Libya in 2020 for neighbouring African countries, likely due to continued restrictions, increasing difficulties reaching Europe from Libyan shores and disrupted opportunities linked to the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

A migration survey with 383 refugees and irregular migrants residing in Libya showed that in late 2020, some 60% of respondents (219) had at some point since the beginning of their journey considered crossing the Mediterranean with the purpose of reaching Europe. When asked if they planned to take the journey within the following six months, fewer than 30% (112) answered that they planned to cross the sea while another 30% were undecided or did not know.

Hence, while over a half of interviewed refugees and migrants aspired to cross the Mediterranean, just one-third appeared to have short-term plans to do so. 40% of respondents (150) indicated that they had not considered crossing the sea. Prior MMC research highlights that many irregular migrants and (potential) asylum seekers come to Libya to work, as the country still provides better job opportunities than their home countries. One male migrant from Nigeria noted: "As for me I have no intention of crossing the Mediterranean Sea. I set my mind coming to work in Libya and go back to Nigeria." This was also elaborated on by a migrant from Niger, who declared being engaged in circular labour migration between Niger and Libya: "I have never thought of going to Europe because my work is fetching me good money in Libya here, so there is no reason for me to go and risk my life on the Mediterranean Sea, my plan is to make my money here and go back to my country".

⁴ See: MMC, Mixed Migration Quarterly Update North Africa, Q 2, 2021.

Shifting routes and departure points

The majority of the African migrants and refugees surveyed in Libya expressing the intention to cross the Mediterranean planned to depart from Tajoura, Zwara, Azzawya, and Sabratha, and to a lesser extent from Al-Khums and Sirte.

Routes and methods of transportation to departure points are shifting given increasing movement restrictions and patrolling by the Libyan Coastguard. A Nigerian woman in Tripoli emphasised that smugglers were still operating along the routes, even if they had changed their ways of working: “Yes some can take the car from one town to another, but the smugglers will put you inside the boot [of the car] to take you to the sea.”

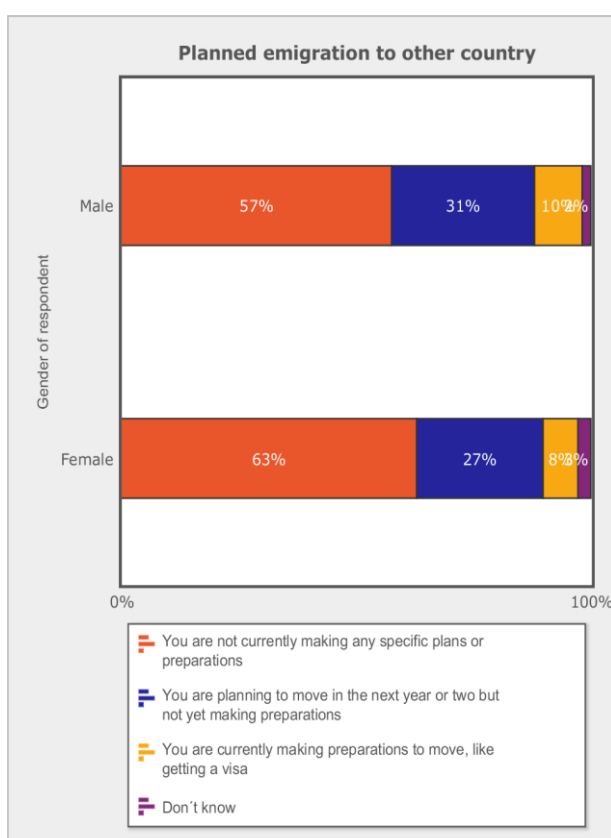
A Nigerian woman explained that fear of arrest prevents some refugees and migrants from attempting the journey: “Most of the migrants that wish to cross to Europe could not do so because of fear that police may probably arrest them on the sea. The fear of police arrest is the greatest fear of most of us, coupled with other migration problems that normally occur on the sea route.”

VII. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of potential migrants

According to recurring Afrobarometer surveys, during the period 2016-2018, almost four in ten (38%) of the adult respondents interviewed from 34 African countries (age 18+) could be identified as potential migrants (Fig. 22):

- Three in ten had a general intention (29%) but had not yet made any preparations. Men (31%) were generally slightly more likely to consider emigration than women (27%).
- Interestingly, more than half of those who considered migrating were either in full-time or part-time employment.
- Related to this, higher qualifications and previous work experience contributed to the desire to migrate as the chances of finding work and earning money abroad increase with experience and qualification, while employment at home gives access to cash income that facilitates travel arrangements.
- One in ten (9%) had a concrete plan for moving to another country within the next one to two years. Again, men (10%) were slightly more determined than women (8%).

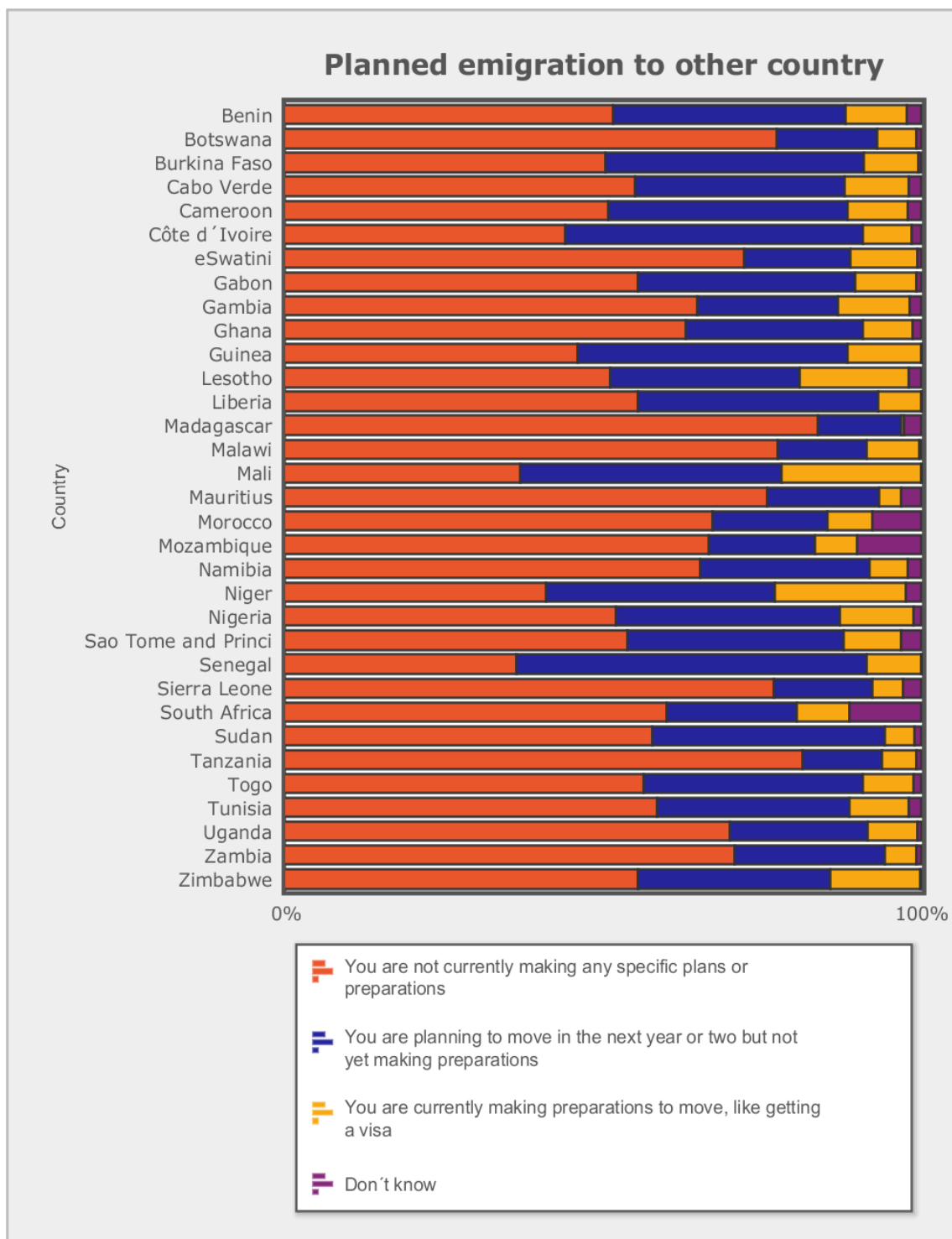
FIGURE 22: ARRIVALS THROUGH THE MEDITERRANEAN ROUTES AND THE CANARY ISLANDS ROUTE, 2020-2021



Source: Afrobarometer 2016-2018

Afrobarometer, 2016-2018 – The online data analysis tool <https://afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online>

FIGURE 23: INTENDED OR PLANNED EMIGRATION TO OTHER COUNTRY, AFRICAN POPULATION AGE 18+, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH/RESIDENCE, 2016-2018, IN %



Source: Afrobarometer 2016-2018

The Afrobarometer survey shows that these **people who prepare to leave** their country of birth within the next one or two years:

- **Are mostly in the age bracket 18 to 35 years;**
- **Are generally better educated and are more likely to have completed secondary or tertiary education** than the average population of their country of origin.

General migration considerations (African average: 29%) were highest in Senegal, followed by Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Guinea, Benin and Sudan. At the same time, the share of those who took preparatory steps (African average: 9%) was highest in Mali followed by Niger, Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

When combining both indicators, the survey shows that more than 50% of the adult populations of Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal as well as slightly less than 50%, but more than 40% of the adult populations of Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Lesotho, Liberia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe appear to be potential migrants – either with unspecific intentions or already actively preparing to move (Fig. 23).

Demographic data show, however, that not more than 0.2% of African adults are migrating across international borders annually. There is obviously a big gap between mobility intentions, active preparation, and the ability to actually move to another country.

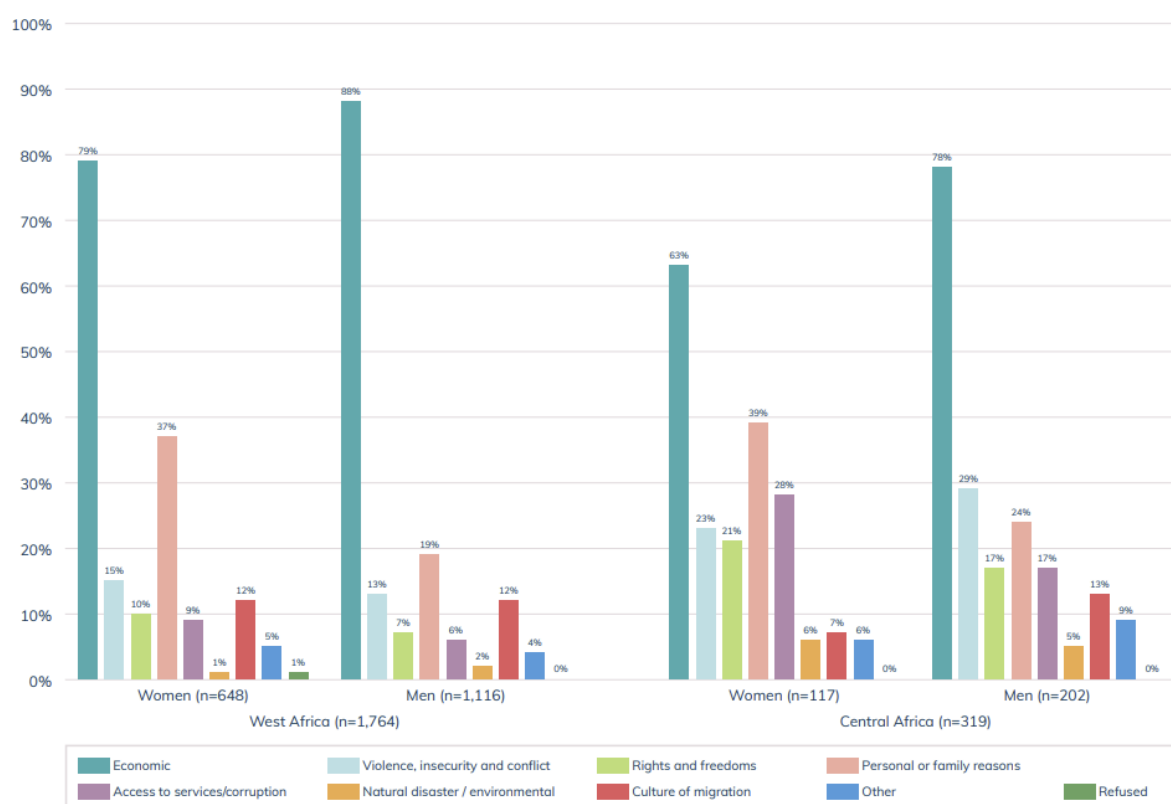
VIII. Individual reasons to migrate

Socio-economic and political circumstances as well as family constellations and personal aspirations are important when people decide to remain in their birthplace or to move – within their country of origin or to another destination.

The quantitative analysis conducted by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC, 2021) on migration drivers and motivations of **West and Central Africans** on the move in Western and Northern Africa shows the multiplicity of factors that can influence a migration decision. 6,108 interviews carried out with migrants (2,737 people in Western Africa on the move through Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger; 3,371 people in Northern Africa residing as migrants in or moving through Libya, Sudan and Tunisia) between February – April 2021 show:

- **Economic reasons or considerations are the main reported cause of migration.** They were mentioned more often by men (West African men: 88%; Central African men: 79%) than by women of the same origin (West African women: 79%; Central African women: 63%; Fig. 24).
- **Next in line were personal and family reasons.** They were mentioned more often by women (West African women: 37%; Central African women: 39%) than by men of the same origin (West African men: 19%; Central African men: 24%; Fig. 24).

FIGURE 24: FOR WHAT REASONS DID YOU LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE?



Source: MMC Briefing Paper, June 2021

- **Violence, political conflict and insecurity** were reported by one in four migrants surveyed from Central Africa (women: 23%; men: 29%), while this driver played a somewhat smaller role among migrants from/within Western Africa (women: 15%; men: 13%).
- **Central African migrants also mentioned lacking access to services** and suffering from corruption (women: 28%; men: 17%), while this was rarely the case among migrants from/within Western Africa (women: 9%; men: 6%).
- Compared to these main drivers mentioned by the African migrant population surveyed, the effects of natural disasters and **environmental factors** are reported as a main reason for migration to a much lesser extent (1-2% of West African and 5-6% of Central African migrants; Fig. 24).

Economic reasons

Economic reasons were cited as the main reason for migrating by 83% of West and Central African migrants. The men interviewed (86%) cited economic reasons slightly more often than the women (76%).

According to the study, the impact of economic considerations on migration and mobility decisions is complex and varies between the economic situation at micro (individual) and macro (e.g. country) levels. 60% of respondents who said that economic considerations were a driving factor in their departure indicated that they had not been earning enough in the job they had prior to leaving their home country. This clearly indicates that they were indeed economically active and not among the poorest people without jobs or income. Economic activity at home allows international migrants and internally mobile adults to earn enough to pay for their trip to a larger urban centre, a neighbouring country, or their attempt to reach European soil.

People who are slightly or distinctly better off in their countries of birth/origin are usually those who “develop the aspirations (through higher education, social networks, etc.) and accumulate the resources (capability) to be able to afford migration journeys. Thus, creating jobs or trying to combat poverty – while beneficial in their own right – will not necessarily be sufficient to provide a sustainable alternative to migration, and may have the opposite effect, which points to one of the fundamental flaws in the root causes approach to irregular migration” (MMC Briefing Paper, June 2021; p. 18).

Political and social drivers

“Violence, insecurity and conflict” were selected by 27% of respondents from Central Africa as compared to 13% of respondents from Western Africa. This aligns with more macro-level data available on conflict and displacement situations across these regions: conflict-affected countries make up a smaller proportion of the overall sample in Western Africa as compared to Central Africa.

In addition to a higher proportion alluding to “violence, insecurity and conflict,” respondents from Central Africa more frequently indicated “rights and freedoms” (18%) and “access to services/corruption” (21%) as reasons for their departure than did respondents from Western Africa (8% and 7% respectively).

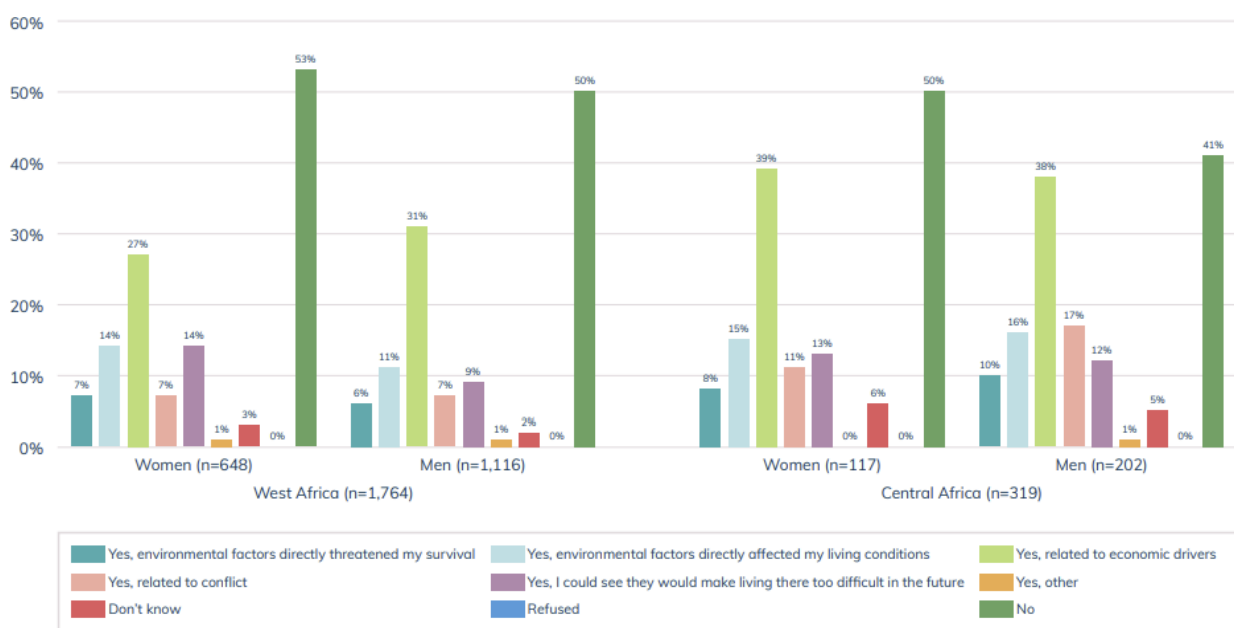
Environmental reasons

Analysis of the survey data shows that respondents hardly ever spontaneously mentioned climate change and environmental factors when asked why they migrated.

2% of West African and 6% of Central African migrants mentioned “natural disaster or environmental factors” as decisive, when asked specifically for what reasons they left their country of departure, and none of these respondents cited this as their sole reason for leaving (Fig. 24).

When, however, asked in a “separate and direct question whether environmental issues were a factor in their decision to leave their country of departure, a substantially greater percentage of respondents – 49% overall (Western Africa: 47%, Central Africa: 53%) – indicated that these had played a certain role among a variety of reasons. This shows that the environmental reasons are usually further to the back of people’s mind when they give reasons for migration, unless in the case of immediate, sudden-onset environmental disasters and changes forcing people to move. Yet they may act as a stress multiplier, affecting other migration drivers”.

FIGURE 25: WERE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES A FACTOR IN YOUR DECISION TO LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE?



Source: MMC Briefing Paper, June 2021

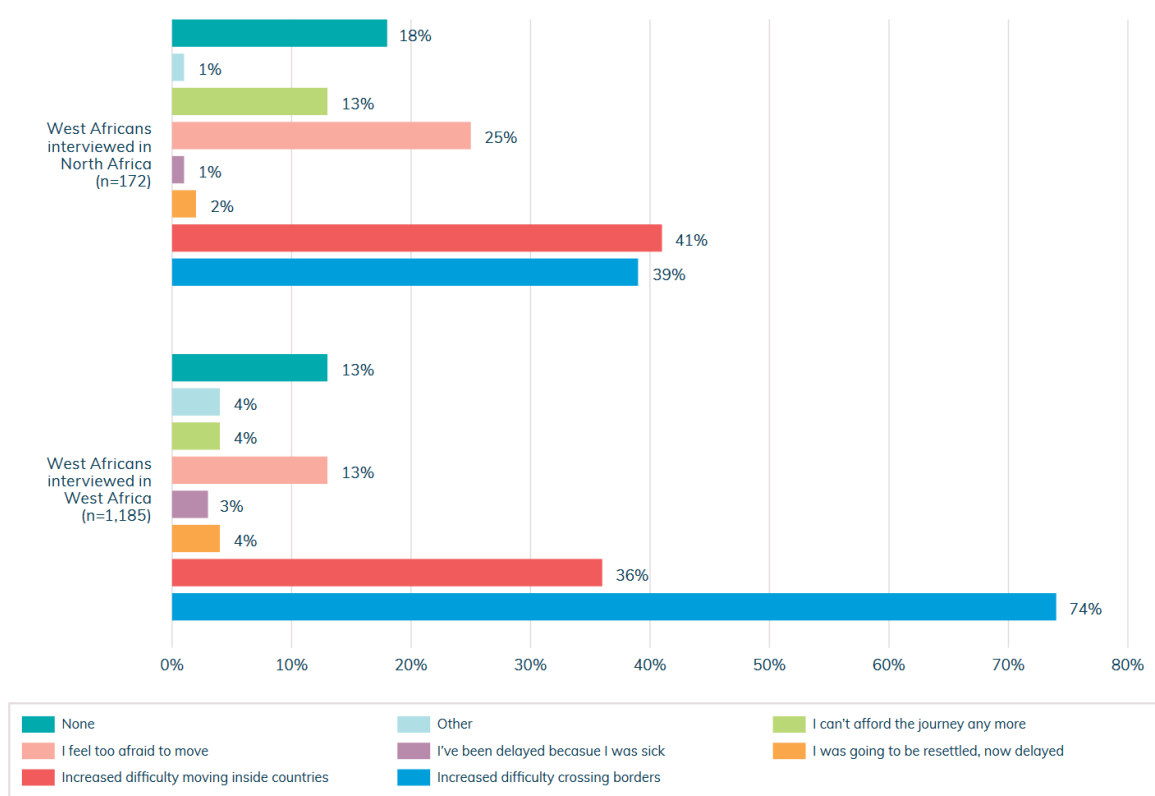
Data collected by the “Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre” (IDMC, 2021) show, however, that dislocation caused by sudden-onset environmental disasters rarely lead to permanent displacement. Most victims of floods, storms, mudslides and other extreme weather conditions usually return to their original place of residence and rebuild their livelihoods.

MMC survey data indicate that the main indirect influence of environmental change on migration decisions occurs when this change impacts the economic situation of (potential) migrants (27% of women and 31% of men interviewed in Western Africa; 39% of women and 38% of men interviewed in Central Africa; Fig. 25). Only a minority saw environmental change as a direct threat to survival (6-10%) or as directly negatively impacting current living conditions (11-16%). Other migrants indicated that they had anticipated environmental degradation at their place of origin and decided to move pre-emptively (on average: 12%).

COVID-19 epidemic

The COVID-19 pandemic played a clear role in migration decisions and the ability of potential migrants to implement them, as measures fighting the spread of the virus including lockdowns or mobility restrictions led to a decline in mobility options with international borders being closed or monitored more strictly and travel connections reduced or temporarily shut down completely.

FIGURE 26: DID THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC HAVE AN IMPACT ON MIGRATION JOURNEY?



Source: MMC Briefing Paper, February 2021

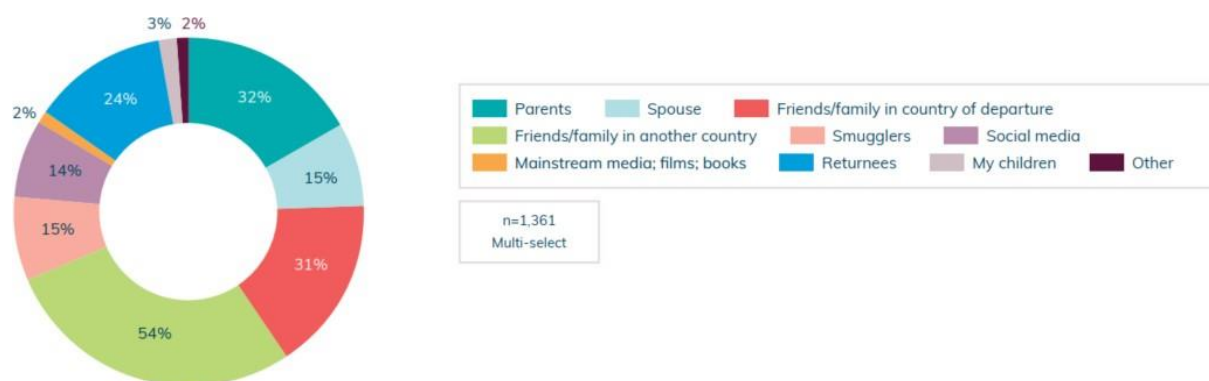
An MMC report on the impact of COVID-19 on migration drivers and cross-border movements indicated that the pandemic and its socio-economic consequences led to increasing aspirations to leave and decreasing capabilities to do so (MMC Briefing Paper, February 2021; Fig. 25).

- Some 39% of West African migrants interviewed in Northern Africa and 74% of West African migrants interviewed in Western Africa reported difficulties crossing international borders.
- 41% of West African Migrants interviewed in Northern Africa and 36% of West African migrants interviewed in Western Africa reported difficulties moving within countries.
- Only a small minority no longer had the means to move on or return (13% in Northern Africa, 4% in Western Africa).

Influencers

Apart from economic, political and environmental drivers, other less tangible factors contribute to migration aspirations and decision-making. 65% of respondents stated that they had been influenced by somebody or something in making their migration decision. These influences were overwhelmingly close personal contacts such as “friends/family in another country” (54% of respondents), “other friends/family in the country of departure” (31%) and “parents” (32%). In addition, social media was another source of influence for 14% of the respondents, while 15% of respondents stated that people smugglers had been influencing their decisions.

FIGURE 27: SOURCES OF INFLUENCE -WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST INFLUENCES ON YOUR DECISION TO MIGRATE?



Source: MMC Briefing Paper, June 2021

IX. The future of African migration

Available data do not suggest an imminent mass exodus of Africans – neither to neighbouring countries nor to Europe or the Gulf States. The annual migration rate is 0.2% of the adult population. This does, however, not mean that the number of migrants will stay the same. Rapid population growth in combination with economic growth, socio-economic and infrastructure development, as well as the negative impact of climate change on livelihoods are likely to increase the number of African migrants.

Even at an accelerated speed of socio-economic development, African countries will experience more emigration than immigration during the next 30-40 years. Growth will give more Africans access to economic and social capital offering them the choice between moving and staying. Better education (of girls and young women in particular) as well as socio-economic development will reduce fertility and ultimately lead to a reduction in total population growth. In the short- to medium-term the reduced pace of population growth will not offset the increasing ability of young people to migrate to another country.

A number of key determinants will most likely affect African migration over the coming decades. Among these are:

- population growth;
- socio-economic development;
- climate change;
- political instability, violence and geopolitical factors

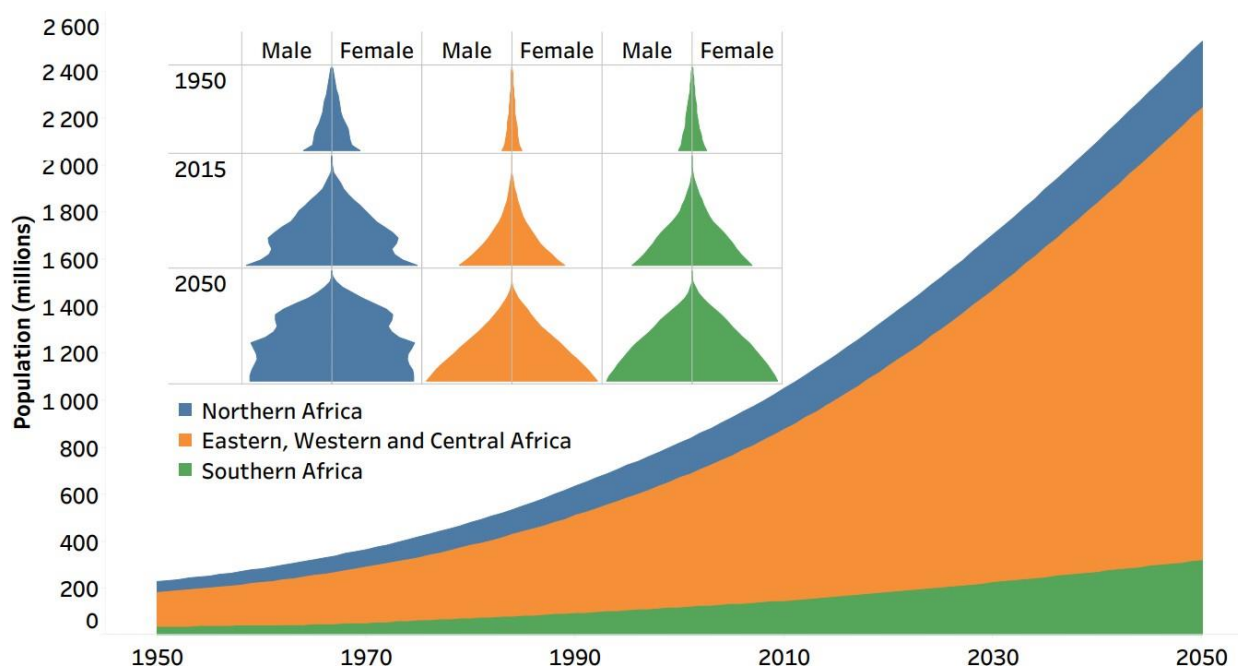
Possible interactions between some of these key determinants can describe the likely directions of future migration flows.

Demography. Many parts of Africa will continue to experience high population growth for several decades to come. The UN World Population Prospects projection estimates that Africa's total population will double from 1.3 billion inhabitants in 2021 to 2.5 billion by 2050 – with most of the increase concentrated in Western, Central and Eastern Africa. In line with the overall increase in total population, Sub-Saharan African countries are expecting growing numbers of young adults (age groups 18-35) – the prime age at which Africans are most mobile. Also for this reason, the number of migrants can be expected to increase over the next 20 to 30 years under any plausible scenario.

As for **socio-economic development scenarios**, an optimistic approach would assume that Africa will experience a higher pace of economic growth triggered by domestic and foreign investment, coupled with better and more widespread education and a greater reduction in the average number of children (lower fertility). Based on such optimistic assumptions, the size of Africa's total population might only reach 1.8 billion in 2050 and could stabilise by 2080. Such a development path would be in line with projections for the EU's External Investment Plan that aims to channel more private investments into African infrastructure, create jobs and address the so-called 'root causes' of migration.

By combining different assumptions about both the speed of socio-economic development (in line with current GDP trends versus more rapid GDP growth) and the rate of population growth (higher versus lower population growth), two main scenarios have been developed to project future migration rates from and within Africa.

FIGURE 28: POPULATION INCREASE IN AFRICA: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECTION UNTIL 2050 - POPULATION SIZE AND AGE DISTRIBUTION FOR NORTHERN AFRICA, SOUTHERN AFRICA AND EASTERN, CENTRAL AND WESTERN AFRICA COMBINED



Source: UN DESA, Population Division, visualisation: JRC KCMD

Scenario 1 is based on the continuation of current trends, be it in terms of socio-economic development, population growth, or migration intensity. The annual rate of migratory flows would remain above the world average in Northern Africa and below the global average in Sub-Saharan Africa. The increase in the number of younger African citizens (aged 15-35) – mainly in Western, Central and Eastern Africa – will lead to an increase in the absolute number of migrants within and from Africa. It could be estimated that **the annual number of mobile Africans leaving their country of origin would increase from 1.4 million (actual annual numbers 2015-2020) to 2.8 million in 2050 (projected annual numbers).**

Scenario 2 assumes that **economic growth** triggered by more direct investment will lead to the creation of wage-bearing jobs in the formal economy and to subsequent socio-economic transformations, including access to better education and a faster decline in fertility rates that will eventually lead to a reduction of the number of people in the most mobile 15-35 age group. At the same time, higher levels of socio-economic development will enable more Africans to access education, jobs and cash incomes, thereby also increasing the pool of people who have both the financial means to migrate and a level of human capital potentially providing access to better-paid jobs abroad. Under this scenario, we can **estimate that the increase in the annual number of Africans leaving their country of origin will shift from 1.4 million (actual annual numbers 2015-2020) to 3.5 million in 2050 (projected annual numbers).**

The following conclusions can be drawn from these scenarios:

- It is almost certain that emigration from African countries will increase in the coming decades, with many more Africans living outside their country of birth than there are today.
- Much of the increase will be derived from an interplay between population growth (leading to more potentially mobile people in the age bracket 18-35) and socio-economic development (giving more people access to education and income, thus empowering them to leave their region of origin).
- If the pace of social development and economic growth is lower, the decline in fertility rates will remain slower and Africa's population will grow more rapidly creating a larger demographic pool of migrants.
- If, however, development efforts bear fruit more rapidly and access to education and jobs improve, the number of children per family will decline more quickly. This will lead to a smaller increase in the migration-prone age group of 15-35-year-olds, but many more Africans will be economically and socially empowered to become mobile and able to leave their countries of origin.
- Global warming leading to droughts reducing agricultural productivity and prolonged heat waves are also likely to play a key role in producing some forms of international migration, as internal rural-to-urban mobility will produce a pool of potential international migrants. At the same time, some Africans with sufficient financial means may move to more distant countries in reaction to or in anticipation of negative environmental developments.

The number of Africans that will migrate to other African countries and the number that will move to Europe, Asia and North America will not only depend on the preferences and needs of Africa's potential migrants. It will also depend on migration, admission and return policies adopted by the countries of origin, transit and destination. In any case, boosting education, investing in infrastructure, promoting family planning, accelerating job creation and mitigating climate change in Africa will be crucial to ensuring that people have a better future on their own continent. For several decades, however, such measures will not reduce international migration, as increases in GDP per capita will also increase the ability of people to make a choice between staying and migrating.

Authors

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Rainer Münz is an expert in Demography and international migration. He currently teaches as visiting professor at the Central European University (Department of Public Policy) and at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna.

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Until 2004, Rainer Münz had an academic career as researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1980-1992, and at the Department of Mathematics of Finance/ TU Vienna, 2002-2004, as well as a tenured university professor at Humboldt University, Berlin, 1993-2003. He also was visiting professor at the Universities of Bamberg, UC Berkeley, AU Cairo, Frankfurt/M., HU Jerusalem, Klagenfurt, St. Gallen (HSG), Vienna and Zurich.

In 2000-01, Rainer Münz was member of the German commission on immigration reform (Suessmuth commission). Between 2008 and 2010, he was Member of the high level ‘Reflection Group Horizon 2020-2030’ of the European Council (Gonzales commission). Between 2015 and 2019, he was chair of Migration Advisory Board of the UN Organisation on International Migration (IOM). Currently he is one of the working group chairs of the World Bank’s Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development trust fund (KNOMAD). He also is member of the Experts Council on Integration advising the Austrian government.

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