



DTM



CLOSELY KNIT

An assessment of migrants' social networks in Libya

LIBYA • JANUARY 2021

Photo: Migrants in Benghazi awaiting to register with the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme to return home.

Over 4,800 stranded migrants in Libya are registered with IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme to return to their countries of origin amid the COVID-19 restrictions.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| CMR | Central Mediterranean Route |
| ECHO | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations |
| GMG | Global Migration Group |
| HNO | Humanitarian Needs Overview |
| KNOMAD | Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development |
| MSNA | Multi-Sector Needs Assessment |
| NFIs | Non-Food Items |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| OHCHR | United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSMIL | United Nations Support Mission in Libya |
| WHO | United Nations World Health Organisation |



PART 1 HIGHLIGHTS

Photo: In October, 154 Bangladeshi and seven Indian migrants returned home through the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme on a charter flight from Benghazi Benina airport.

Over 4,800 stranded migrants in Libya are registered with IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme to return to their countries of origin amid the COVID-19 restrictions.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants can become stranded for a range of reasons, including, but not limited to, mobility and travel restrictions, the reduced number of international flights as well as the loss of livelihoods and resources. As a result of this, being stranded can exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, lack of access to services and insecurity which in turn increases the risks of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

HIGHLIGHTS

54%

of migrants reported having friends in Libya prior to migrating

The findings of this survey highlight that migrants are influenced by interlinkages and kinship networks throughout the process of migrating to Libya. Overall, a quarter of migrants reported having family (24%) in Libya while more than half reported having friends in the country (54%) and a third reported having acquaintances (33%) prior to migrating. Data shows that migrants rely on social networks for an array of services, including insider knowledge on the experience of migrating to Libya, assistance with finding housing and employment as well as risk sharing, through financial support, amongst other things. Furthermore, support from social networks is also a vital coping strategy for unemployed migrants.

59%

of migrants who had family members in Libya reported having based their decision to migrate to Libya fully on their family members

Family and friends in their country of origin, appear to weigh in more heavily in migrants' decision-making compared to family or friends abroad. Overall, family appears to most often be the main factor on which migrants based their decision to migrate to Libya over friends and acquaintances. Business promoters, community leaders, facilitators and religious leaders appeared to play a much less important role in the choice of destination.



The context of departure and arrival as well as migrants' motives for migration appear to influence the types of social networks they rely in Libya, which in turn impact their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Fewer individuals who reported fleeing violence or conflict reported having friends in Libya than those motivated primarily by economic reasons. Migrants who intend to remain in Libya reported having developed and used to a greater extent their connections with Libyans to find employment than migrants who intend to stay only for a limited period.

31%

of migrants reported that some of the information on migration to Libya provided to them was inaccurate

The findings of this study confirm that truthful information about border crossing and the risks involved in the experience of migration is a challenge for migrants. Limited access to reliable information can lead to challenges and exacerbate protection risks. Migrants from neighbouring countries tended to be better informed on migration to Libya and the risks associated and reported having been inadequately informed to a lesser extent than migrants from other countries. Amongst migrants who reported that some of the information on migration to Libya provided to them was inaccurate, a minority reported that it came from migration facilitators (8%) and the majority reported that it came from friends (45%).

Migrants reported relying on a variety of sources of information in their preparation to migrate to Libya, including family, relatives, friends, migration facilitators and community leaders. Despite the availability and their exposure to various sources of information with more readily access to internet and social media, most migrants reported gathering information on migration primarily from friends, family and acquaintances who had previously been to Libya through social media and messaging apps.

74%

of migrants reported that friends had been a source of information prior to leaving for Libya

Migrants with lower levels of education tended more often to arrive in groups, fewer reported having friends in Libya prior to migrating and more were likely to base their decision to migrate *fully* on information provided by friends in Libya. In addition, a greater percentage of migrants with lower levels of education reported that some of the information they had received before leaving for Libya turned out to be inaccurate and they relied more often on family and friends and less on web-based search engines, such as Google, than those with a higher level of education. Migrants with a higher level of education relied on a more varied range of channels to gain information and reported obtaining information through social media to a lesser extent than those with a primary or secondary level of education or those with no formal education.



A greater percentage of migrants with lower levels of education reported that some of the information they had received before leaving for Libya was inaccurate

A minority of female migrants reported traveling independently and women in general were more likely to base their decision to migrate on family and close friends. Women migrants also relied on different types of social networks compared to men. For example, more women relied on co-nationals and extended family for assistance compared to men, who also relied more on migrants from other countries.

62%

of female migrants traveled to Libya with their spouse compared to six per cent of men

Social networks appear to play an essential role in sharing information about labour opportunities through social ties. Meeting new friends in Libya is strongly correlated with the ability to secure employment in the country. Overall, a greater proportion of migrants who reported not having a social network (family, friends and acquaintances) in Libya prior to migrating systematically reported facing difficulties whilst looking for employment than migrants who did. Across almost all sectors, migrants reported relying on social networks that comprised migrants from their country the most to find employment, with the exception of those working in the mining and hospitality sectors.

64%

of migrants reported having found their current employment through their social networks

A photograph of a man in profile, looking down. He is wearing a dark grey knit beanie, glasses, and a brown quilted jacket with a fur-lined hood. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a utility pole and buildings under a clear sky.

PART 2 BACKGROUND

Photo: Issa came to Libya from Niger in 2018 to look for a better life and provide for his wife and son. He worked at a landfill site in Tripoli. "I had many Libyan friends so the living conditions in Libya and the work were excellent as I was working and able to transfer money to my family in Niger", he explained. However, with the deteriorating security conditions he decided to avail of the Voluntary Humanitarian Return programme in February 2020 and went back to Niger to reunite with his family.

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CONTEXT

Human connections and relationships are central to [human development](#)¹, [health](#)² and [survival](#)³. Beyond what one knows and what one possesses, who one knows has a significant impact on an individual's life. From family members to government officials and from friends to work colleagues, migrants, like everyone else, are connected through social networks.

According to [social network theory](#)⁴, a prospective migrant's belonging to a social network increases their likelihood of migration because through these connections more resources become available thereby reducing the costs and risks of migration. For example, members of a social networks or peers, such as migrants, [can provide and be provided](#)⁵ with useful information and assistance. Diaspora bonds and connections can facilitate migration itself by helping to overcome language barriers and unfamiliarity with the job market, local customs, laws and restrictions, for instance.

Libya is a prime example of the influence of diasporic ties in shaping migration dynamics. With its [appeal](#)⁶ starting in the 1960s following the discovery of oil, Libya became a destination for migrants seeking livelihood opportunities on a temporary, regular or long-term basis. For that reason, the country has been hosting large migrant populations from neighbouring Niger, Egypt, Sudan and Chad. As a result of circular migration, over time, populations from these bordering countries have [been present](#)⁷ in Libya with their communities and in some cases share familial or social ties with local communities. These ties and social networks play an active role in



What are social networks?

Social networks can be [defined](#) as patterns of social ties or interpersonal ties such as kinship, friendship and shared community of origin or destination. Migrants are connected through this network of ties at home, while in transit as well as in their destination countries. For example, potential migrants at home can be [linked](#) to current or former migrants abroad through kinship, friendship or shared community of origin.

influencing migration intentions and plans. This report investigates the nature of their influences.

Overall, social networks can be understood as one of many factors that guide one's decision to migrate.

At the same time, there are multiple actors involved in the migration process and [studies](#)⁸ have shown that migration flows, beyond migrants' networks (kinship, friendship or community ties), can be influenced by employers, government officials and migration facilitators as well as broader institutions or structural factors, such as immigration policies and labour market structure.

However, there are several caveats to studying migrants' social networks owing to their dynamic nature. Social networks are made up of links that vary in terms of strength and affinity. At the same time, the links that form social networks can in turn strengthen or weaken over time.

1 Osher, D. et al. (2018), "Drivers of Human Development: How Relationships and Context Shape Learning and Development". Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650> (accessed November 2020).

2 House, J.S. et al. (1988), "Social Relationships and Health". Available at <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/241/4865/540> (accessed November 2020).

3 Umberson, D. & Montez, J. K. (2011), "Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy". Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3150158/> (accessed November 2020).

4 ODI (2015), "Why People Move: Understanding the Drivers and Trends of Migration to Europe". Available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10485.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

5 Meeteren, M. & Pereira, S. (2016), "New Roles for Social Networks in Migration? Assistance in Brazilian Migration to Portugal and the Netherlands". Available at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137539212_3 (accessed November 2020).

6 Migration Policy Centre (2013), "MPC Migration Profile: Libya". Available at https://migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/migration_profiles/Libya.pdf (accessed November 2020).

7 IOM (2016), "Libya 2016: Migration Profiles and Trends". Available at <https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/DTM - Libya 2016 Migration Profiles Trends %5Bweb%5D.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=354> (accessed November 2020).

8 Meeteren, M. & Pereira, S. (2016), "New Roles for Social Networks in Migration? Assistance in Brazilian Migration to Portugal and the Netherlands". Available at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137539212_3 (accessed November 2020).

Moreover, the [assumption](#)⁹ that migrants are bonded through a common obligation and understanding of kinship and friendship and are therefore consistently sources of assistance and information is often made. Research has shown that there are likely to be variations in the level and nature of social network linkages depending on the context.

Qualitative research should be conducted to further understand the dynamics at play and the nature of the relationships that tie migrants to family, friends and acquaintances at home, abroad and in transit and how they may weaken or strengthen over time. Given that these dynamics cannot be fully understood through quantitative data this aspect is therefore considered beyond the scope of this report.

 **574,146**

migrants were identified by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) during [Round 33](#) of data collection for the period September - October 2020 (IOM, 2020c).

Family and relatives

For the purpose of this report the word 'relatives' is used to designate members of the extended family while the words 'family' or 'family members' refer to the immediate family, or family members only.

Weak & strong ties

Weak ties are connections outside the immediate circle of family and close friends (e.g. acquaintances). While strong ties are characterized with a deep affinity, which generally includes stronger feelings of trust and norms of reciprocity as well as generally durable and solid bonds. Strong ties include, for example, family members and close friends.

⁹ Curran, S. R. & Saguy, A.C.(2001), "Migration and Cultural Change: A Role for Gender and Social Networks?". Available at <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1619&context=jjws> (accessed December 2020).

PURPOSE

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) conducted an assessment to better understand migrants' social networks and how they evolve and are shaped throughout the migration experience and journey to and through Libya.

More specifically, it aims to identify the roles of family, relatives and friends at home and in Libya in shaping migration experiences to and through Libya. The report also aims to identify the main channels of communications migrants use to share information and communicate with each other in Libya and with their friends and kinship at home.

This report provides an overview of the roles social networks play in migrants' ability to adjust while in Libya including aspects related to security, employment, housing and access to services.

As such, it provides a basis to explore how a better understanding of the influence of social networks can be leveraged to provide a more integrated approach to the planning and provision of migration programmes and policies in Libya.

METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings of IOM Libya's DTM migrant social network assessment conducted by IOM field staff between 07 October – 10 December 2020 in 43 municipalities (baladiya) across 21 (out of 22) regions (mantikas¹⁰). Data was collected through individual interviews (1022 interviews) which took place at work recruitment points (where migrants gather to seek short-term casual labour) (44%), collective site of accommodation (33%), other urban locations (such as markets and public buildings) (20%) and transit points (2%).

A desk review of the main aspects of migrants' social networks in Libya provided the basis of this report and helped inform the design of the questionnaire. This desk review was based on a total of 22,227 interviews conducted across 19 regions by DTM over the period January 2019 – March 2020.

The individual-level interview questionnaire designed for this study included questions on socio-demographics, migratory intentions, employment situation, travel history as well as questions aimed to understand more specifically the roles that relatives, friends and acquaintances at home and in Libya play in the journey of migrants and in finding employment and housing, ensuring their safety as well as acquiring and sharing information.

¹⁰ The term 'mantika' describes a major administrative and geographic area of Libya. There are twenty-two mantikas in Libya.

Limitations

- *Comparisons and COVID-19*

The survey took place nearly six months into the global COVID-19 pandemic, which may have impacted the way migrants interact at home, in transit as well as in Libya. [Mobility restrictions](#)¹¹, physical distancing and [social stigma](#)¹² around the virus and discriminatory behaviours may have impacted and could continue to impact the way migrants make contacts and build relationships or may, in some cases, have prevented them from doing so. This survey on migrants' social networks in Libya is DTM's first and most comprehensive on the subject which makes it difficult to extrapolate on the impact of COVID-19. However, this report provides a broad picture of the current situation and importance of migrants' social networks in Libya.

- *Social Networks as a deterring driver of migration*

It is difficult to assess whether the lack or presence of social networks can be a deterring force to migration given that individuals surveyed were migrants in Libya and only the opposite assumption could be assessed (e.g. whether social networks are a driving force of migration). This however, does not allow us to claim that social networks cannot be a deterring driver of migration and it can only be assumed that if it can be a deciding factor in someone's decision to migrate it can most likely also be a discouraging factor.

- *Length of the survey*

A multitude of questions were required to capture the complex factors and circumstances that come into play in building, strengthening and preserving migrants' social networks.

However, an hour-long individual interview may still have some limitations in its ability to map in detail the hundreds of interactions, their nature and their impact in one's migration intentions and journey. This report

nonetheless helps to identify the broader trends which can provide an overall picture of the social networks dynamics at play among migrants in Libya.

- *Sensitivity*

Respondents were asked about information regarding their migration intentions, security status, friends, acquaintances and family members and their interactions with them. The sensitivity of this information may have led to under- or misreporting of certain issues. For example, the question on whether migrants feel safe in Libya yielded a higher than normal percentage of "don't want to answer" (4%) which may indicate respondents' hesitation to report particular information related to crime or violence.

- *Social networks while in transit*

Questions asked as part of this survey pertained to both social networks at home and in Libya. It should be noted that the connections made in transit, or [spontaneous networks](#)¹³, may influence migration experience and intentions. However, given the length of the survey (approximately one hour per interview conducted with each migrant) and the complexity of accounting for the differences in the length of transit as well as the numerous countries where migrants may have transited through, the analysis of migrants' social networks while on their journey from home to Libya are beyond the scope of this assessment.

Despite these limitations, the assessment is perceived as providing an accurate snapshot of migrants' social networks which can contribute to an enhanced understanding of migration dynamics for evidence-based programming.

11 IOM (2020d), "IOM Libya: Mobility Restrictions Dashboard 8 (1-30 September 2020)". Available at <https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya---mobility-restriction-dashboard-8-1-30-september-2020> (accessed November 2020).

12 United Nations Libya (2020). "ONE UN supporting Libya to tackle COVID-19". Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ONE%20UN%20supporting%20Libya%20to%20tackle%20COVID-19.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

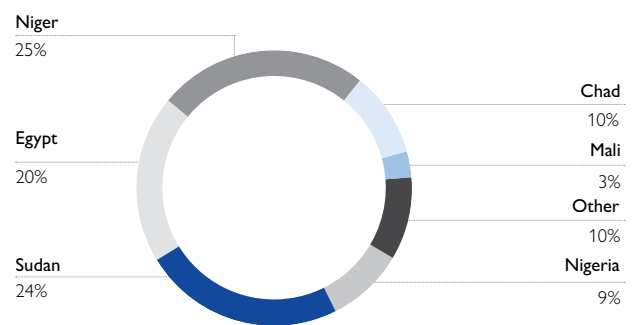
13 Collyer (2007). "In-Between Places: Trans-Saharan Transit Migrants in morocco and the Fragmented Journey to Europe". Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/i.1467-8330.2007.00546.x> (accessed December 2020).

MIGRANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Country of origin

Migrants surveyed were from 23 different nationalities. The majority of respondents came from neighbouring countries: Niger (25%), Sudan (24%), Egypt (20%) and Chad (9%) which is in line with previously observed trends identified via DTM’s Mobility Tracking (Round 33¹⁴). A smaller proportion came from other countries, mainly from West and Central Africa (16%) while minorities came from Northern Africa (3%), Asia and the Middle East (2%) and East and Horn of Africa (1%).

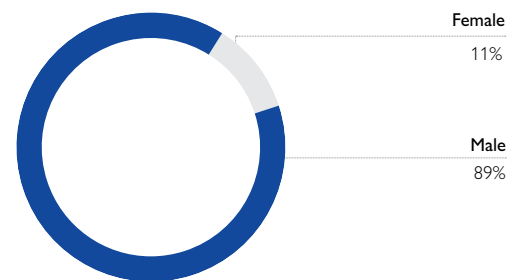
Fig 1 Respondents’ country of origin



Sex

The majority of surveys were conducted amongst male migrants (89%) while 11 per cent of respondents were female, which is in line with the proportion of male and female migrants identified in DTM Libya Migrant Report Round 33¹⁵.

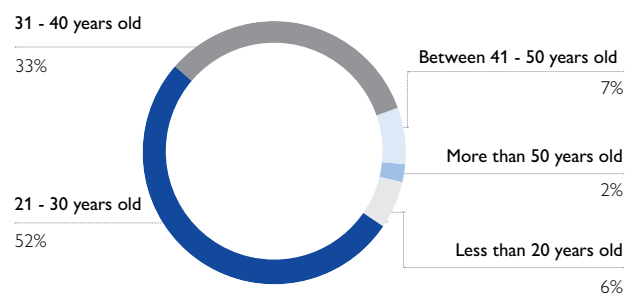
Fig 2 Respondents’ sex breakdown



Age

The average age of respondents was 30 years old. The majority of migrants (85%) were between the ages of 21 and 40 years old. A minority of migrants interviewed were 20 years old or younger (6%) or older than 40 (9%) with only one respondent older than 60 years old (<1%). This is in line with DTM latest findings (Round 33¹⁶) and highlights that the majority of migrants are young and of working-age.

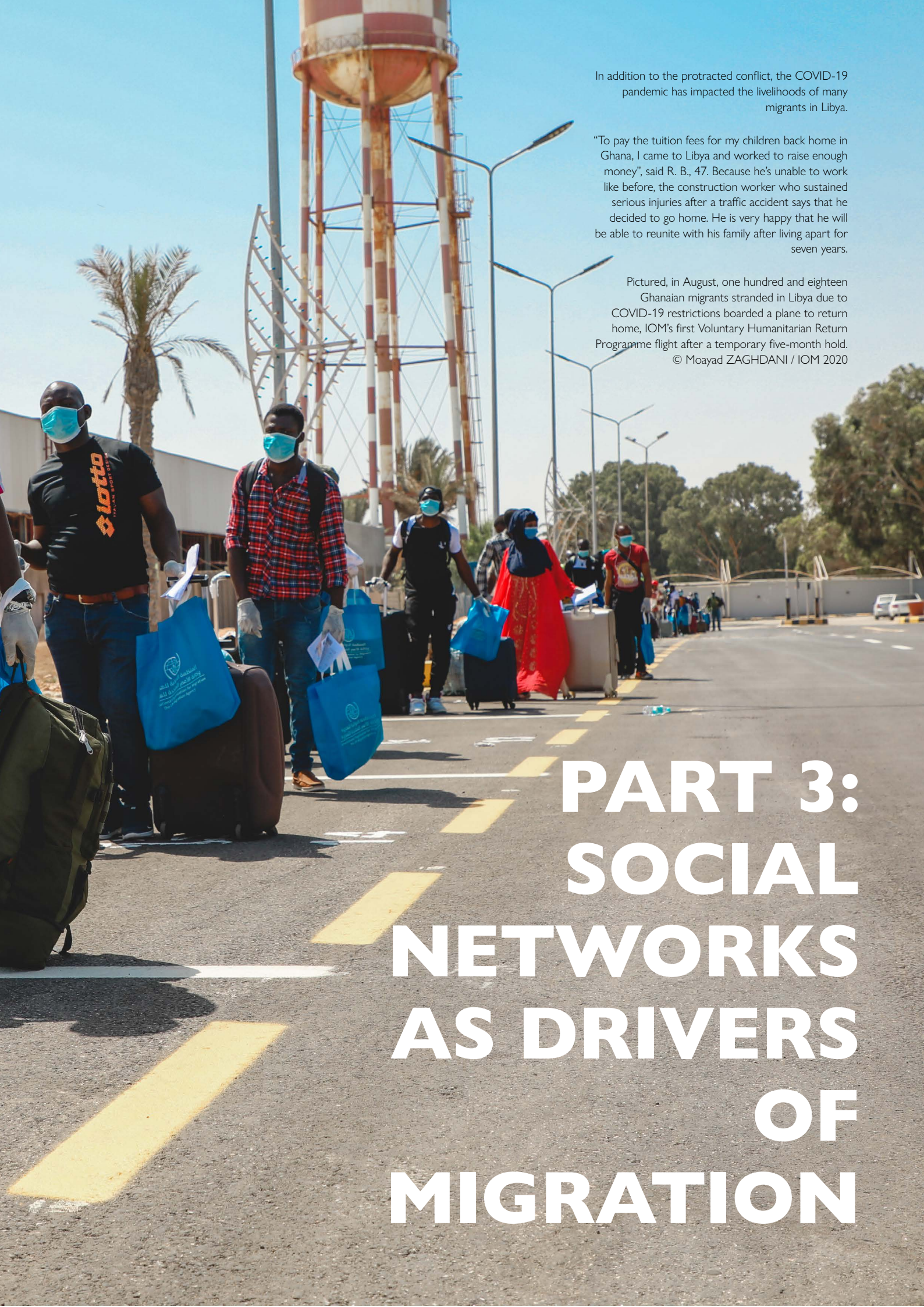
Fig 3 Respondents’ age breakdown



14 IOM (2020). "IOM Libya Migrant Report Round 33". Available at <https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya---migrant-report-33-september-october-2020> (accessed December 2020).

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.



In addition to the protracted conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the livelihoods of many migrants in Libya.

“To pay the tuition fees for my children back home in Ghana, I came to Libya and worked to raise enough money”, said R. B., 47. Because he’s unable to work like before, the construction worker who sustained serious injuries after a traffic accident says that he decided to go home. He is very happy that he will be able to reunite with his family after living apart for seven years.

Pictured, in August, one hundred and eighteen Ghanaian migrants stranded in Libya due to COVID-19 restrictions boarded a plane to return home, IOM’s first Voluntary Humanitarian Return Programme flight after a temporary five-month hold.
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PART 3: SOCIAL NETWORKS AS DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

Social networks as drivers of migration

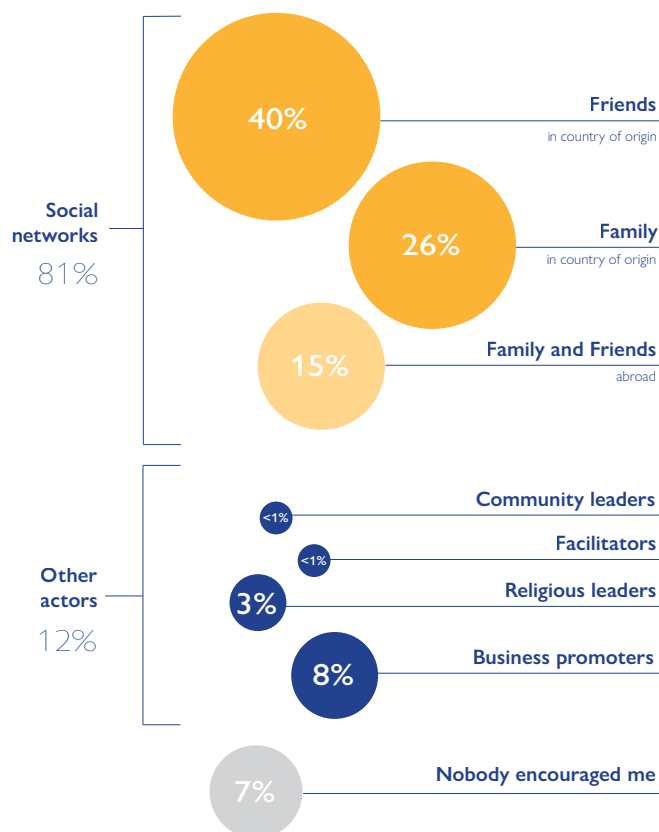
Social networks may [shape](#)¹⁷ individuals' choices through the ideas and behaviours transmitted through peers. Motivated by the desire and need for social approval and conformity, an individual may think and act in ways that are consistent with social norms. An individual's perspective or ambition may also be influenced by the resources that become available through their peers who engage in migration, which may include information and assistance.

However, having a social network is [one factor amongst many](#)¹⁸ which may influence the decision to migrate. Individual-level factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment and socio-economic status as well as societal-level factors, such as customs, immigration laws and policies, the political and economic situation of the country of intended destination may also influence an individual in their decision to migrate or not. This section explores the influence of some of these factors.

Who encouraged you most in your decision to migrate?

A review of DTM data collected from January 2019 – March 2020 reveals that a total of 81 per cent of migrants reported that either their family or friends (at home or abroad) influenced them most in their decision to migrate. More migrants stated that family or friends at home influenced them the most (26% and 40% respectively) compared to family or friends abroad, including those in Libya (15%) (Fig 4). Very few reported that business promoters (8%), community leaders (<1%), facilitators (3%) or religious leaders (<1%) encouraged them the most to migrate. Very few also reported that no one had encouraged them to migrate (7%).

Fig 4 Proportion of actors who influenced migrants most in their decision to migrate



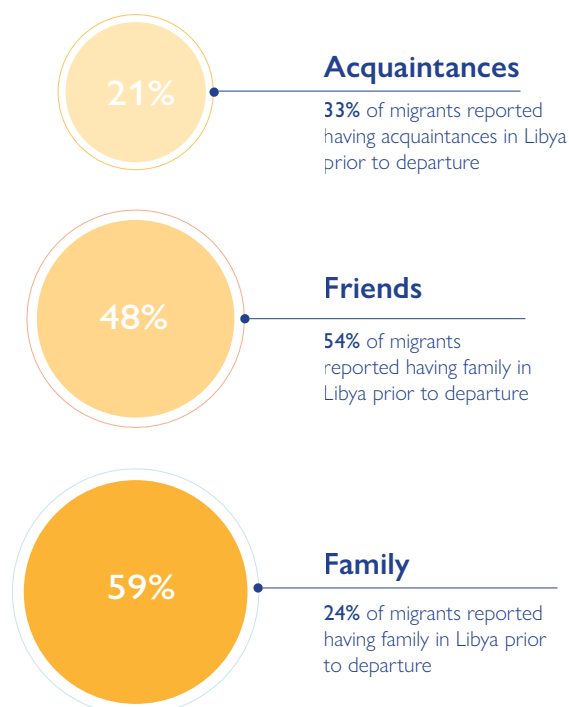
17 DiMaggio, P. and Garip, F. (2012). "Network Effects and Social Inequality". Available at https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/garip/files/dimaggio_garip_2012.pdf (accessed December 2020).

18 Timmerman et al (2014). "Imagining Europe from the Outside: The Role of Perceptions of Human Rights in Europe in Migration Aspirations in Turkey, Morocco, Senegal and Ukraine". Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304857149_Imagining_Europe_from_the_Outside_The_Role_of_Perceptions_of_Human_Rights_in_Europe_in_Migration_Aspirations_in_Turkey_Morocco_Senegal_and_Ukraine (accessed December 2020).

While migrants reported having been influenced mostly by friends in their decision to migrate, overall, family members more than friends or acquaintances appear to have a key influence in the decision-making process of individuals who intend to migrate to Libya.

The results of the survey show that prior to departure from their countries of origin, a quarter of migrants reported having family (24%) in Libya while more than half reported having friends in the country (54%) and a third had acquaintances (33%). However, more than half (59%) of migrants who had family members in Libya reported having based their decision to migrate to Libya *fully* on their family members (Fig 5). In comparison, 48 per cent of migrants who had friends and 21 per cent who had acquaintances stated having based their decision to migrate fully on friends and acquaintances, respectively.

Fig 5 Percentage of migrants who reported that acquaintances, friends and family were fully the reason they decided to migrate



The influence of gender

Amongst female respondents who reported having family in Libya (23%), all stated that they had based their decision to migrate to Libya either fully (62%) or partially (38%) on the fact they had family in the country. In comparison, fewer male migrants reported having based their decision fully (59%) or partially (34%) on the fact that they had family members in the country and seven per cent reported that their decision was made regardless of having family members in the country. Male respondents reported having been influenced by friends at home to a significantly greater extent (41%) than female respondents (19%).

Moreover, a greater proportion of male respondents (58%) stated having friends in Libya prior to departure compared to females (23%). However, amongst those who had friends prior to leaving for Libya, a greater percentage of female (54%) reported that they fully were the reason why they migrated to Libya compared to males (48%). On the contrary, fewer female respondents reported that the acquaintances they had in Libya prior to departure were the reason why they decided to migrate to Libya (4%) than male (7%).

This appears to confirm the results of a number of [studies](#)^{19 20} that found that women, being generally more risk-averse, tend to migrate internationally when and if they have a strong social network in place, such as family members, as it is perceived as offsetting some of the risks involved in the process of migration.

While migrants are [not inherently vulnerable](#)²¹, migration involves risks. Multiple and intersecting forms of uncertainties, prejudice (including racism and anti-immigrant sentiment), risks of abuse and inequality can arise in the process of migration and can lead to [new and increased risks](#)²² for women, such as exploitation and abuse.

19 IOM (2009). "Gender and Labour Migration in Asia". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/gender_and_labour_migration_asia.pdf (accessed December 2020).

20 Curran, S. R. and Saguy, A.C. (2001). "Migration and Cultural Change: A Role for Gender and Social Networks?". Available at <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1619&context=jjws> (accessed December 2020).

21 OHCHR and MGM (2017). "Principles and Guidelines, Supported by Practical Guidance, on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations". Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/PrinciplesAndGuidelines.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

22 ODI (2016). "Women on the Move: Migration, Gender Equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10731.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

Benefiting from strong networks of support can act as a [protective factor](#)²³ mitigating some of the risks of migration. Social networks provide an individual with the ability to reach out to others for practical help, borrowing money or food, emotional support or sharing information. To the contrary, isolation and the inability to get assistance from one's community or support networks is a risk factor which influences an individual's level of vulnerability.

Moreover, the analysis of 26,010 surveys conducted by DTM between January 2019 until March 2020 shows that a greater proportion of males reported having been most influenced, although minimally, by migration facilitators (3%) than female (1%) or by no one (7% and 2%, respectively). This could signal that women tend to base their decision to migrate on close ties (family and close friends), which could be linked to gender identities and the different notions of [vulnerability and honour](#)²⁴ between men and women.

The majority of women (62%) did not migrate independently and reported having travelled to Libya with their spouse.



Benefiting from strong networks of support can act as a [protective factor](#) mitigating some of the risks of migration.

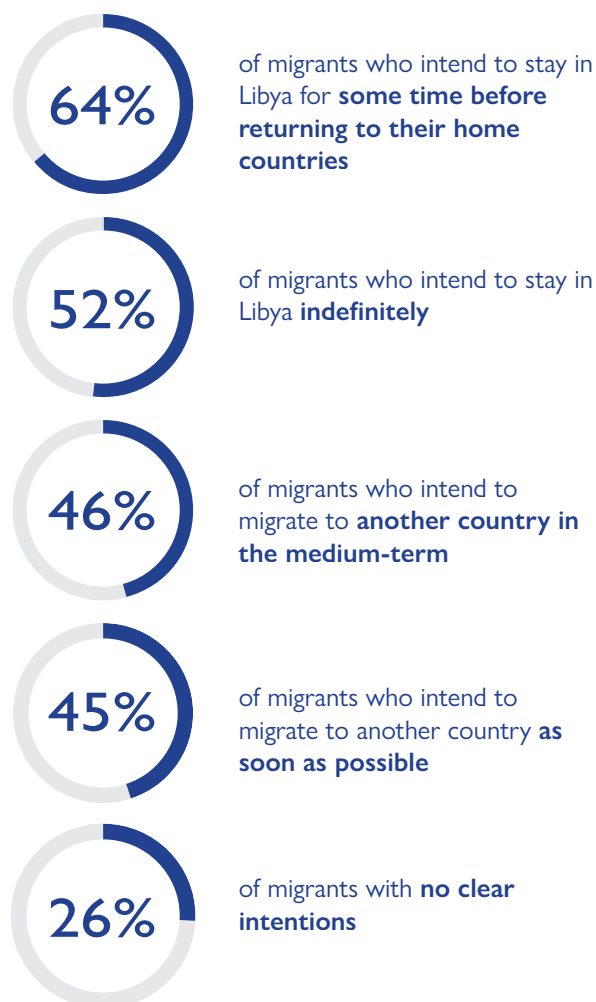
Migration intentions

The findings of the survey conducted from October until December 2020 appear to confirm the importance of family, friends and acquaintances in Libya prior to departure when analysing migration intentions. For example, a greater proportion of migrants who intend to stay indefinitely (52%) or for some time before returning to their home countries (64%) reported having friends in Libya prior to departure than migrants who intend to migrate to another country eventually (46%) or as soon as possible (45%) (Fig 6).

Similarly, a greater proportion of migrants who intend to stay indefinitely (37%) or for some time before returning to their home countries (32%) reported having acquaintances in Libya prior to departure than migrants who intend to migrate to another country eventually (28%) or as soon as possible (23%).

Regardless of their future migration intentions, a similar proportion of respondents who stated their intention to remain in Libya indefinitely (27%) or to leave as soon as possible (28%) reported having family members in Libya prior to departure. However, fewer migrants who had no clear intentions reported having family (6%) or friends (26%) in Libya prior to departure than migrants with any other type of intentions, which can be an indication of the key importance of family in migrants' decision making.

Fig 6 Percentage of migrants who reported having friends in Libya prior to departure per length of intended stay



23 IOM (2019c). "IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/avm_handbook.pdf (accessed December 2020).

24 KNOMAD (2016). "Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review". Available at https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-04/KNOMAD%20Working%20Paper%208%20final_Formatted.pdf (accessed December 2020).

Choice of destination

Data from January 2019 until March 2020 confirms that the majority of migrants (46%) stated having chosen their final destination country for its appealing socio-economic conditions (education, welfare system, social security, job opportunity, etc.).

While migrants may report they have chosen their final destination because of economic factors, it does not negate or exclude the influence of social networks on the choice of their final destination country.

For example, analysis of data collected from October until December 2020 highlights that more migrants who reported they intend to continue to a third country as soon as possible reported that their decision was motivated by appealing economic (77%) and living conditions (73%) than the intention to join friends (23%) or family members (17%). Even fewer reported their intention to leave Libya for a country where there is an established network of co-nationals (who are not family or friends) (8%). However, migrants were informed of appealing economic and living conditions mainly by their social networks.

Amongst migrants who reported their intention to continue onwards as soon as possible, more than half report that they were informed of appealing economic conditions by friends (59%) in Libya via Facebook (67%) or WhatsApp groups (33%). More than a quarter were informed by migration facilitators (26%) mainly via Facebook (80%) while a minority were informed by transporters (7%) or family in Libya (5%) via Facebook or WhatsApp.

Friends in particular appear to weigh more heavily in migrants' decision-making process. A greater proportion of migrants (67%) who reported having been informed of appealing economic and living conditions in the intended country of destination by their friends reported they intend to migrate elsewhere as soon as possible compared to those who reported they had no fixed intentions (28%). On the contrary, migrants who reported that they had no clear intentions stated having been informed of appealing socioeconomic standards in the intended country of destination by migration facilitators to a greater extent (48%) than those who intend to leave in the short term (12%).

Very few migrants reported having been informed about appealing economic conditions through either the media (2%), such as TV or newspaper, or by searching on the internet on web-based search engines like Google (1%).



77%

of migrants who intend to migrate to a third country cited appealing economic conditions amongst the main reasons to choose their country of final destination



59%

of migrants reported having been informed of appealing economic conditions in their country of intended final destination by friends through social media and messaging apps

Arriving in Libya

The majority of migrants reported having arrived in Libya with a group (84%) while a minority arrived alone (16%). On the whole, arriving with a group appears to be linked to increased risks of abuse or exploitation. A systematically greater proportion of migrants who arrived in Libya *in group* reported facing difficulties at the time of the survey such as hunger, thirst, attacks, assaults, financial issues, lack of information or lack of identity documents in Libya than migrants who arrived *alone* (Fig 7).

Generally, migrants who reported arriving alone had higher levels of education as well as employment prior to coming to, as well as while in Libya. Having a more stable income and a higher level of education are significant [protective factors](#)²⁵ and associated with greater resilience to violence, exploitation and abuse. Moreover, arriving with a group is not synonymous with having a social network. For example, amongst those who arrived as a group fewer than half (38%) reported having arrived with a group which included at least one family member.

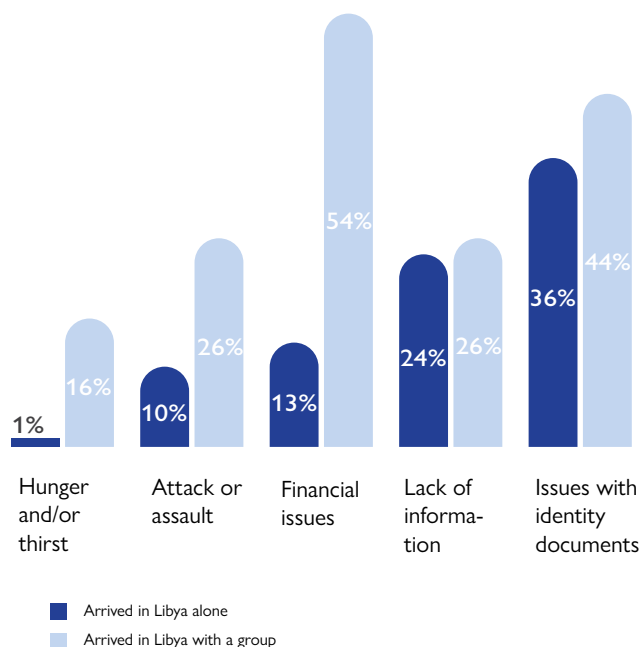
A greater percentage of migrants who travelled alone reported having been employed or self-employed prior to leaving Libya (67%) compared to those who arrived with a group (51%). Similarly, the employment rate in Libya of those who arrived alone was greater (95%) than those who arrived with a group (80%). It is also worth noting that the level of educational achievement of those who arrived alone was systematically higher than those who arrived with a group. For example, 23 per cent of migrants who arrived alone reported having no formal education compared to more than a third (36%) for those who arrived with a group.

Moreover, nearly three quarters of respondents (73%) who travelled with a group reported having hired the services of migration facilitators while fewer than half (36%) of those who travelled alone reported the same

According to other studies, a substantial proportion of recorded [protection incidents](#), especially sexual and physical abuse, involve migration facilitators.

Overall, nearly all migrants from West and Central Africa (97%) reported arriving with a group. In comparison fewer migrants from the Middle East (89%), Southern Asia (82%), East & the Horn of Africa (80%) and North Africa (71%) reported arriving with a group. A greater proportion of Nigerians and Nigeriens arrived in Libya with a group (99% and 100%, respectively) and using migration facilitators (94% and 81%) than Chadians (69%), Egyptians (56%) or Sudanese (54%).

Fig 7 Proportion of migrants who reported issues



25 IOM (2019c). "IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/avm_handbook.pdf (accessed December 2020).

Marital status

A total of 12 per cent of migrants reported having arrived with their spouse, nearly a third (32%) of those who were married. More than two thirds of respondents (38%) reported being married while 57 per cent stated they were single or never married.

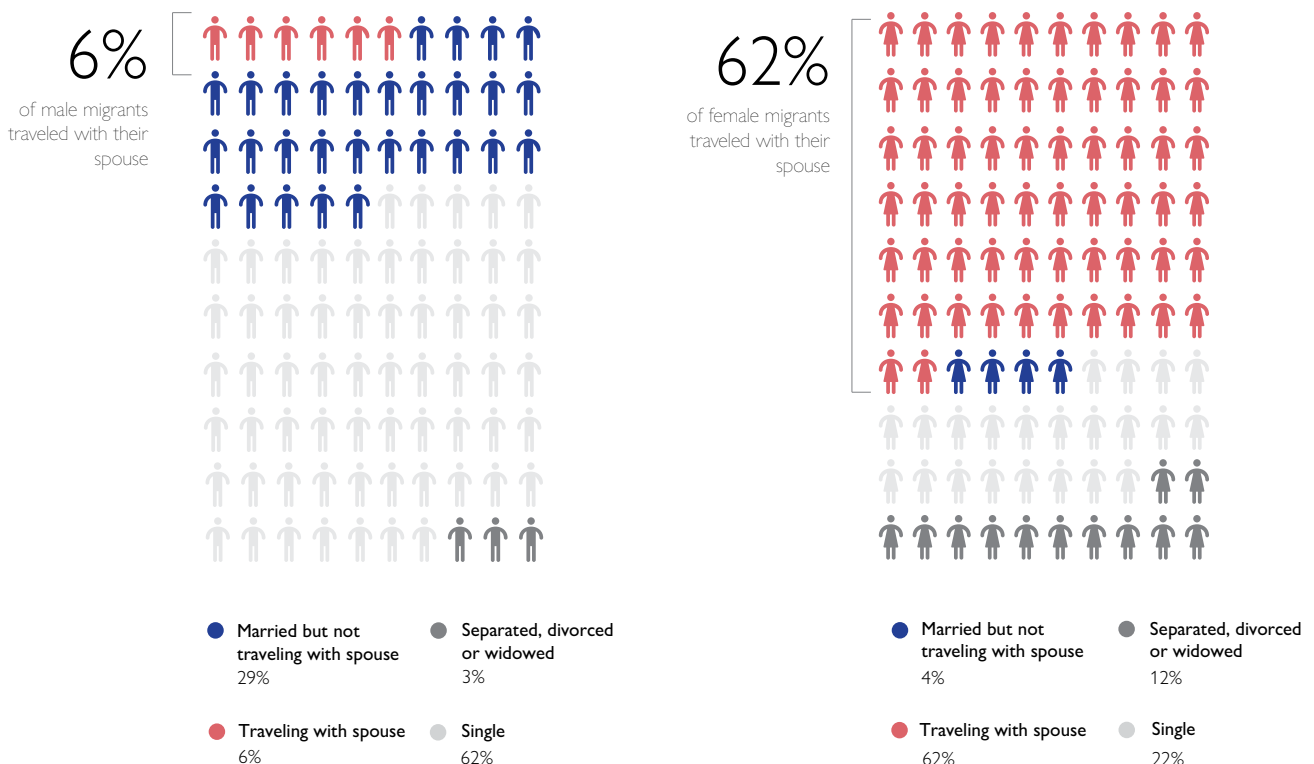
Six per cent of migrants among the 35 per cent male migrants who are married reported having travelled to Libya with their spouse compared to 62 per cent of among the 66 per cent of married female (Fig 8).

Single travellers were more likely to be male (94%) than female (6%). A total of 47 per cent of women who travelled without a spouse (married or not) were accompanied by a family member, such as a male extended family member.

This highlights that gender norms and societal expectations and acceptability in countries of origin also [influence](#)²⁶ migratory decision-making. Moreover as a result of gender-based ideologies and legal considerations, men and women may face different obstacles and opportunities, which can in turn also shape their and their family's expectations.

For example, some national laws and customs might [prohibit or discourage](#)²⁷ women from traveling independently or seeking employment outside of their home countries while some male migrants may [feel a loss of status or purpose](#)²⁸ if unemployed and unable to send remittances as it clashes with the cultural norm of being providers for their families.

Fig 8 Percentage of male and female migrants traveling with their spouses and marital statuses



26 IOM (2018). "Data Bulletin Series: Informing the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration". Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/gm-dacbulletins.pdf> (accessed December 2020).
 27 OECD (2014). "The Role of Discriminatory Social Institutions in Female South-South Migration". Available at https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/SIGI%20and%20Female%20Migration_final.pdf (accessed December 2020).
 28 World Bank (2019). "Gender in Waiting: Men and Women Asylum Seekers in European Reception Facilities". Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/532181547235243643/text/133693-Gender-in-Waiting-Men-and-Women-Asylum-Seekers-in-European-Reception-Facilities.txt> (accessed December 2020).

PART 4: SOCIAL NETWORKS AS SAFETY NETS

Photo: Pictured are two 15 year-old boys who met in Libya after migrating from Niger. They found shelter in a compound in Azzawya with elders from their community who became their guardians. They are always by one and another's sides, whether they are waiting in line for their meals, praying or playing around.

Through the Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM) programme, IOM staff provided them with clothing and hygiene kits. They were also informed on COVID-19 prevention measures, key symptoms and how to reach health care providers. © Nour Moman ABDULHAKIM / IOM 2020

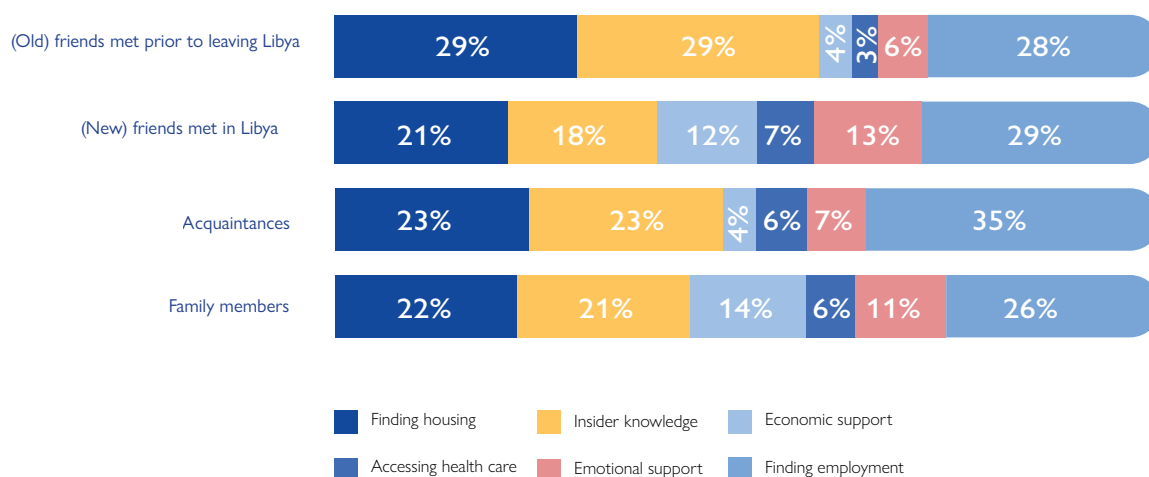


Social networks as safety nets

More than two-thirds of migrants (67%) reported having either family, friends or acquaintances in Libya prior to departure. The majority of migrants reported relying on old (98%) and new friends (90%), acquaintances (78%) or family members (92%) for an array of services including help in finding employment, housing, insider knowledge on the experience of migrating to Libya as well as emotional or financial support (Fig 9).

A number corroborate the results of this survey. A [UNHCR study](#)²⁹, found that a migrant's or refugee's social network in the country is amongst the most important factors that shape their experiences along with their regions of origin, their language skills, their religious affiliation, the length of time spent in Libya and their intentions. In addition, a [Mixed Migration Centre study](#)³⁰ found that in conjunction with other types of assistance, family and friends can constitute an important social safety net for and help with the provision of food, shelter, cash, clothing as well as advice and information related to legal, medical and psychosocial assistance.

Fig 9 Distribution of services migrants rely on per type of relationship



29 UNHCR (2018). "Mixed Migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya in 2018. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/impact_liby_report_mixed_migration_routes_and_dynamics_in_2018_june_2019.pdf (accessed December 2020).

30 Mixed Migration Centre (2018). "Protection Concerns of People on the Move Across West Africa and Libya. Available at http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/045_fraught-with-risk.pdf (accessed December 2020).

Housing

Overall, 80 per cent of migrants reported relying most on friends whom they had met before coming to Libya to help them find housing. A recent [DTM study of migrants' housing conditions](#)³¹ highlighted that the majority of migrants (65%) secured their accommodation within four weeks of arriving in Libya. Given that finding housing is a priority upon arrival in Libya it appears that migrants tend to rely more on friends and family whom they knew before coming to Libya rather than on new friends or acquaintances met in transit or in Libya.

Analysis of a recent survey on migrants' housing conditions, a total of 72 per cent of migrants reported having found their current accommodation through either other migrants (68%) or Libyans (4%). A minority reported that relatives in Libya (10%) or at home (1%) had helped them, while fewer relied on migrant community leader (8%), their employer (6%) or an NGO (1%).

Family and friends may provide temporary shelter which might allow newly arrived migrants to avoid indebtedness while seeking work or while they are unable to work, for example.

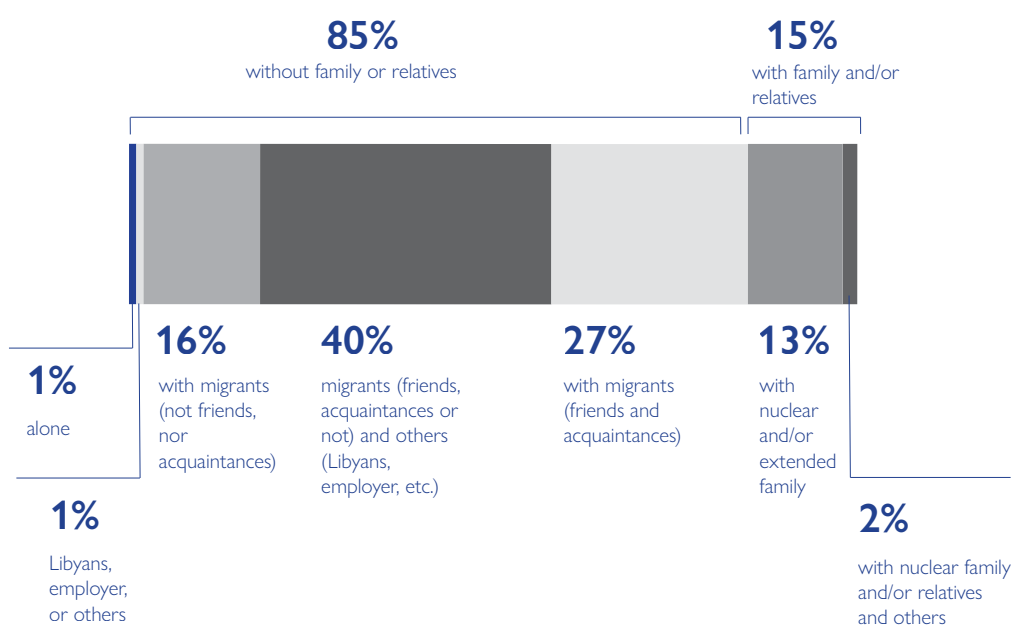
More than a quarter (28%) of migrants who reported being hosted for free were accommodated by Libyans or fellow migrant friends or family (4 per cent of overall sample).

In a recent [DTM report on migrants' housing conditions](#)³², the majority of migrants (68%) reported they lived with other migrants who they are not related to. Very few migrants (1%) reported living alone.

The majority of migrants lived without family or relatives (85%) (Fig 10). A total of seven per cent lived only with their immediate family and five per cent lived only with extended family members. Migrants living in single-family dwellings lived on average with five other family members, including on average two children (under 18 years old). In comparison, migrants who lived solely with other migrants lived with on average with eleven other individuals (Fig 11).

Amongst those living only with their family, the majority of households (95%) were headed by men between the age of 18 and 64 years old, a minority reported that the head of household was a man over the age of 65 (4%) or a female (1%). There were on average five family members per household.

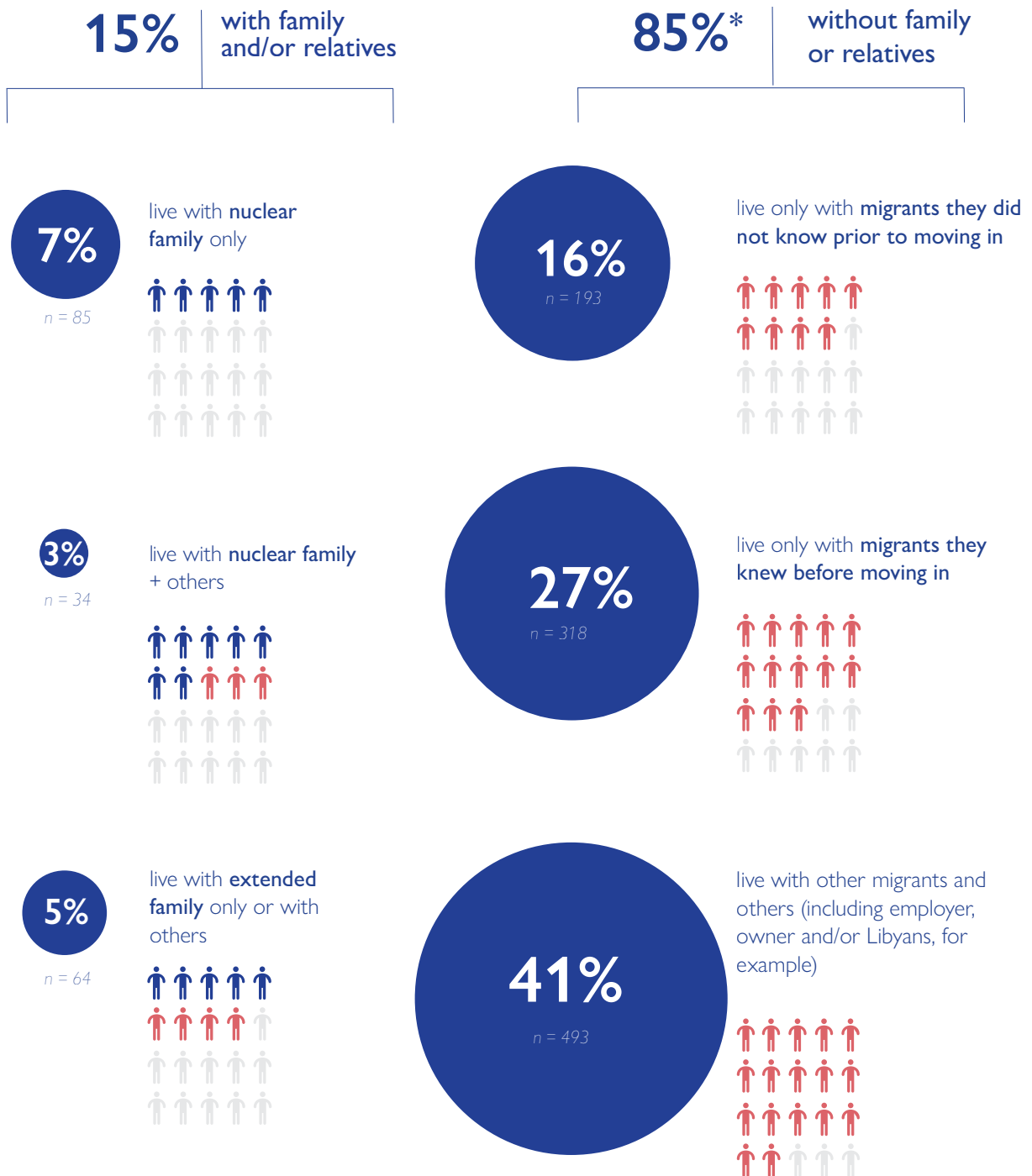
Fig 10 Proportion of migrants by living arrangements



31 IOM (2020d), "A Long Way from Home: Migrants' Housing Conditions in Libya". Available at <https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya-long-way-home-migrants-housing-conditions-libya-23-nov-2020> (accessed December 2020).

32 IOM (2020d), "A Long Way from Home: Migrants' Housing Conditions in Libya". Available at <https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya-long-way-home-migrants-housing-conditions-libya-23-nov-2020> (accessed December 2020).

Fig 11 Proportion of migrants by living arrangements and average number of individuals in accommodation



Average number of individuals per accommodation

-  family members
-  non-family members (other migrants, Libyans, employer, etc.)

*including 1% who live alone

In some cases, living as part of a large household comprised of many family members can mean increased financial responsibilities and can therefore be a proxy indicator³³ of vulnerability. The analysis of the livelihood coping strategies for essential needs³⁴ highlights that migrants living in larger households adopted systematically more livelihood coping strategies (Fig 12). Migrants living alone reported using less severe and to a lesser extent livelihood coping strategies compared to migrants only living with their family or a combination of their family and relatives.

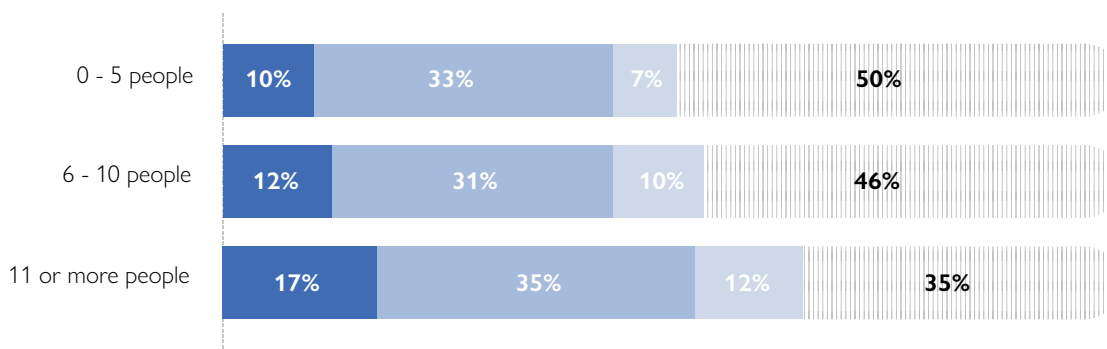
The high proportion of individuals engaging in crisis and emergency livelihood strategies amongst those living in larger households shows that individuals are unable to meet their immediate needs without depleting their assets which can compromise their future ability to provide for themselves or deal with future shocks.

Livelihood Coping Strategies

The livelihood coping strategies index captures behaviours in which vulnerable individuals engage to meet their basic needs in times of crisis or shock. The excessive use of coping strategies signals the inability to meet short-term basic needs, which may erode their longer-term productive ability. Strategies are grouped under three categories:

- Stress strategies indicate a reduced ability to deal with future shocks because of a current reduction in resources or an increase in debts.
- Crisis strategies directly reduce future productivity, including human capital formation.
- Emergency strategies affect future productivity or the human dignity of household members and are more difficult to reverse.

Fig 12 Livelihood coping strategies scores per number of people per accommodation



33 IOM (2019c). "IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/avm_handbook.pdf (accessed December 2020).

34 WFP (2020). "Essential Needs Assessment: Guidance Note". Available at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/essential-needs-guidelines-july-2018> (accessed December 2020).

Employment

While finding job opportunities was perceived as a key challenge for 75 per cent of interviewed migrants, social networks appear to influence access to the labour market and social networks, by means of information sharing, social support and contacts, appear to [facilitate finding employment](#)³⁵.

Overall, nearly two-thirds of migrants (64%) reported having found employment through their social networks, mainly amongst migrants from their own country (36%) or Libyans (18%). Across nearly almost all sectors, migrants reported relying on their social networks with migrants from their country the most to find employment, except those working in the mining and hospitality sectors.

Family connections appear to play a more prominent role in obtaining employment in the sectors of agriculture (13%), domestic work (10%) and retail or sales (9%) than any other sectors. Very few migrants reported relying on migrants from other countries to find employment except those working in mining (9%) and agriculture (8%).

A total of eight respondents (1%) reported having access to no social network with either friends, family or acquaintances in Libya. Not being a member of a wider community can translate into a lack of social capital which could increase migrant's vulnerability and be a barrier to securing a livelihood. Amongst those eight migrants, nearly two-thirds (63%) were unemployed despite having been in Libya for longer than a year on average.

Migration facilitators

A total of 11 per cent of migrants reported having found employment through migration facilitators. The majority of migrants who reported having found work through migration facilitators were employed in the sectors of mining (73%), plant and machine operation (28%), agriculture (17%), construction (10%) and domestic work (10%). Migration facilitators appeared to play only a minimal role in most other sectors.

While migration facilitators nor smuggling are [inherently violent](#)³⁶, those migrants who are unable to access legitimate forms of employment and social protection

could face increased [vulnerability](#)³⁷, while pockets of instability and insecurity in Libya further [exacerbates](#) the issue³⁸.

Only migrants who have arrived less than two years ago reported relying on facilitators either prior or after having arrived for employment whereas those who have been in Libya for longer did not. All migrants who reported having found their employment through facilitators prior to leaving Libya were interviewed in Benghazi (98%) and in Derna (2%) and were from Egypt (52%) and Sudan (48%).

Less than one per cent of migrants reported having found work through migration facilitators *after* having arrived in Libya.

64%

of migrants reported finding employment through their social networks

New friends, new community of support

Meeting new friends in Libya is strongly correlated with the ability to secure employment. There were twice as many unemployed migrants amongst those who reported not having made any new friends (28%) compared to those who had (14%). Similarly, the proportion of unemployed migrants was greater for those who reported having no family members in Libya prior to migrating (18%) compared to those who did (10%). Overall, a greater proportion of migrants who reported not having a social network (family, friends and acquaintances) in Libya prior to migrating systematically reported facing more difficulties whilst looking for employment than migrants who did (Fig 13).

35 Rainer, H. and Siedler, T. (2009). "The Role of Social Networks in Determining Migration and Labour Market Outcomes". Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1468-0351.2009.00365.x> (accessed November 2020).

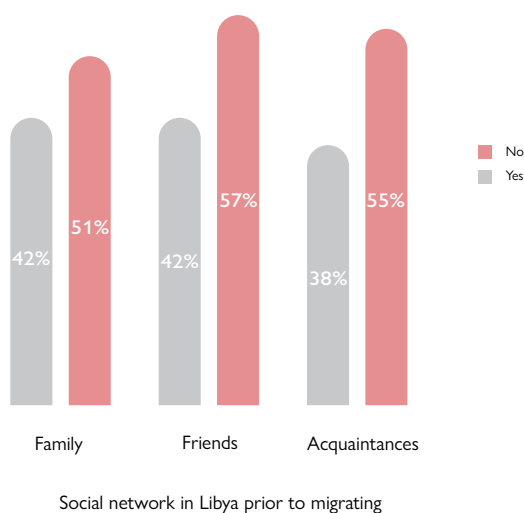
36 IOM (2020b). "Migration in West and North Africa and Across the Mediterranean: Trends, Risks, Development and Governance", Chapter 18. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/ch18-migrant-smuggling-in-the-libyan-context.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

37 IOM (2019a). "Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf (accessed December 2020).

38 IOM (2020e). "IOM, UNHCR Call for Urgent Action after 45 Die in Largest Recorded Shipwreck off Libya Coast in 2020". Available at <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-unhcr-call-urgent-action-after-45-die-largest-recorded-shipwreck-libya-coast-2020> (accessed December 2020).

A community and social networks may be of importance to some newly arrived migrants who may [face](#)³⁹ practical difficulties in obtaining information regarding employment, housing as well as information necessary to meaningfully exercise their rights. Through their social capital – the social resources embedded in their social relations – migrants can [obtain](#)⁴⁰ information and assistance in navigating a new context.

Fig 13 Proportion of migrants who reported facing difficulties while searching for employment



The findings of this survey highlight that migrants who have arrived in Libya more recently (less than a year) reported relying on the support of their friends for help in securing employment to a greater extent than migrants who have been in the country for longer. At the same time, migrants who have arrived less than a year ago reported relying on finding work at recruitment places to a greater extent (31%) than those who have been in Libya for longer than four years (2%).

Different intentions, different networks

Migration intentions appear to influence the development of migrants' social networks in the host country. For example, a greater proportion of migrants intending to stay long-term (90%) reported having made new friends in the country compared to those who intend to migrate

to another country as soon as possible (83%). However, a minority of migrants reported relying on migrants from other countries to find employment, regardless of the length of time they have been in Libya. More specifically, four per cent of migrants who have been in Libya for less than a year reported having found their job through network with migrants from other countries compared to six per cent of migrants who have been in Libya for less than a year.

The overreliance on co-ethnic networks can also in some instances reinforce existing linkages to specific sectors of migrant groups. For example, a REACH [report](#)⁴¹ found that migrants from certain countries tend to work in specific employment sectors partly because of the stereotypes perpetuated or popular perception about their abilities and skills (e.g. Syrians are good cooks, West Africans more suited for manual labour).

The analysis of Egyptian migrants highlights the benefits and obstacles that may arise from the dependency on social networks to find work. On the one hand, a larger proportion of Egyptians were employed (95%) compared to migrants from other nationalities and the overall average (82%). In addition, fewer migrants from Egypt (28%) reported facing difficulties when looking for work in Libya than migrants from other neighbouring countries such as Chad (49%), Sudan (51%) or Niger (61%). A recent [IOM study](#)⁴² on long-term migrants in Libya highlighted that, because of historical migration linkages Egyptians in Libya benefit from strong connections which are helpful in finding work.

On the other hand, amongst respondents who reported facing difficulties in securing employment, a greater proportion of Egyptian migrants (42%) stated that not having strong social connections was an issue compared to fewer migrants from Sudan (32%), Niger (20%) or Chad (19%). This issue was more acute for migrants surveyed in the East (47%) compared to those in the West (25%) or South (12%). Egyptians constitute the [bulk of migrants](#)⁴³ in the Eastern coastal regions, such as Al Jabal Akhdar, Derna, Almark, Tobruk and Benghazi. Furthermore, a greater percentage of migrants interviewed in the East reported that they faced difficulties in finding employment

41 REACH (2017). "Refugees and Migrants' Access to Resources, Housing and Healthcare in Libya". Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/reach_lby_report_merf_december_2017_0.pdf (accessed November 2020).

42 IOM (2019b). "Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya". Available at <https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/living-and-working-in-the-midst-of-conflict.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8403> (accessed December 2020).

43 IOM (2020c). "IOM Libya Migrant Report Round 33". Available at <https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya---migrant-report-33-september-october-2020> (accessed December 2020).

39 United Nations Human Rights Council (2010). "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Jorge Bustamante". Available at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4eef18a42.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

40 Lu, Y. et al (2014). "Social Capital and Economic Integration of Migrants in Urban China". Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3872127/> (accessed October 2020).

because employers reportedly preferred employees of a different nationality (17%) compared to those from the West (10%) or South (7%). This highlights that while co-ethnic networks may help in finding employment it may also be challenging for some migrants who do not have the necessary connections if it is the only avenue to access the labour market.

Developing a new system of support

That migrants rely on a more extensive and diverse social networks may be beneficial in searching for work. For example, the longer migrants have been in Libya the lower their rate of unemployment. At the same time, a greater proportion of long-term migrants in Libya reported relying on social networks with Libyans to find employment. Migrants who have been in Libya for longer than four years reported relying on social networks with Libyans to the greatest extent (44%). A minority of migrants who have been in Libya for less than a year (6%), between one and two years (15%) and between two and four years (14%) reported relying on social networks with Libyans.

This appears to be in line with a [study](#)⁴⁴ conducted by UNHCR which highlighted that economic migrants who had been in Libya for longer periods of time and intended to stay in the country were working on improving their situations and minimising risks by building social networks with Libyans, amongst other things. In turn, through more diversified and stronger social networks, some respondents were able to find support and employment where they were paid regular wages, which afforded them some level of protection against abuse and exploitation.

Fewer migrants from West and Central Africa reported having found employment through their social networks with Libyans than migrants from any other regions. Migrants from West and Central Africa reported having suffered delays in compensation in the previous 12 months to a greater extent than migrants from Northern Africa. The fact that nearly twice as many migrants from West and Central Africa have been in Libya for less than a year (28%) compared to those from Northern Africa (16%) may signal that it is also a more common occurrence for migrants from West and Central Africa (when adjusting for equal length of exposure).

Analysis of the data highlights that fewer migrants from Northern Africa, Southern Asia, East and the Horn of Africa as well as the Middle East tended to work in the sector of agriculture compared to migrants from West and Central Africa. Workers in the agricultural sector can work in remote and sometimes isolated areas which can be conducive to [increased](#)⁴⁵ exploitation as it is out of sight of the authorities and the wider society.

Migrants from Western and Central Africa were generally younger and less educated than migrants from any other regions.



The overreliance on co-ethnic networks can limit prospects of employment.

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Gender and employment

The findings of this survey highlight the [influence](#)⁴⁶ of gender identity on the development of social networks during migration – the kinds, number, intensity and meaning of relationships developed over time which can in turn also influence social constructions and expectations, by reinforcing or changing gender roles and gender division of labour, for example.

While the unemployment rate amongst female migrants was lower (7%) compared to male (17%), 12 per cent of female migrants reported not working but also not seeking to work. Amongst those, the majority (86%) were in Libya with their spouse, which could suggest they are employed in traditional unpaid care and domestic labour at home.

Amongst employed female migrants, the majority (68%) reported having found their main employment through

44 UNHCR and REACH (2018). "Mixed Migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya". Available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/reach_lyb_so_mixed_migration_routes_and_dynamics_in_libya.pdf (accessed November 2020).

45 IOM (2019a). "Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf (accessed December 2020).

46 Curran, S. R. and Saguy, A.C. (2001). "Migration and Cultural Change: A Role for Gender and Social Networks?". Available at <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1619&context=jjws> (accessed December 2020).

their social networks, a proportion which is higher than for males (60%). However, a greater proportion of female migrants reported relying on other migrants from their country and from extended family connections (44% and 9%, respectively) compared to their male counterparts (35% and 5%, respectively). Only male migrants reported relying on migrants from other countries (4%).

None of the employed female migrants reported having found employment at work recruitment places or other meeting points compared to 20 per cent of men. The majority of men (78%) who reported having found employment at work recruitment points where jobs offered tend to be physically demanding were young and between 17-30 years old.

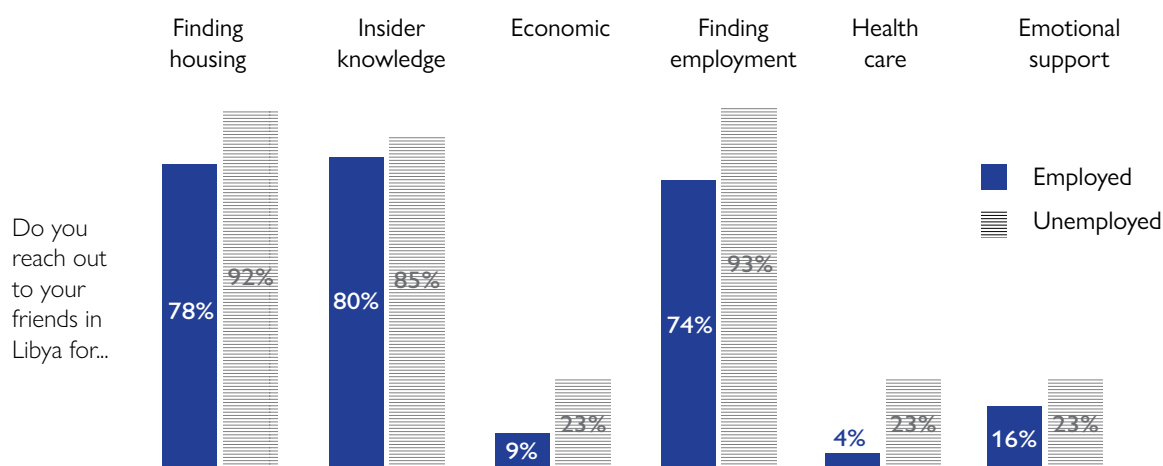
Amongst employed female migrants surveyed in Libya, nearly half (46%) were employed in traditionally 'feminized' sectors⁴⁷, such as service, care or domestic workers. These sectors are associated with higher risks⁴⁸ of abuse and exploitation, including forced labour and confinement, due to the isolated nature of the work.

Coping strategy for unemployed migrants

People on the move rely⁴⁹ on social networks for an array of services, including finding safety and a livelihood. As such, the mobility restrictions implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19 such as border closures, lockdowns, physical distancing and curfews have been disrupting and continue to disrupt migrant's coping mechanisms by, for example, halting the movement of people, goods and money thereby increasing socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Social networks appear to be a key coping strategy for unemployed migrants, who reported reaching out to friends to a greater extent and consistently for all types of assistance than those who were employed (Fig 14). In addition, unemployed migrants reported fewer of their friends reached out to them for economic as well as emotional support, help in finding employment and, to a lesser extent, help in accessing health care.

Fig 14 Proportion of migrants who reach out to their friends for support by employment status



47 IOM (2020g). "World Migration Report". Migration and Health: Current Issues, Governance and Knowledge Gaps. Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf#page=232 (accessed November 2020).

48 IOM (2020h). "Guideline 6: Communicate Effectively with Migrants". Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/mcic-guidelines-action-g-06-communicate-effectively-migrants> (accessed October 2020).

49 World Bank (2020). "(Im)mobility and Social Networks: The Impact of COVID-19 on Critical Coping Mechanisms for Urban Refugees". Available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/immobility-and-social-networks-impact-covid-19-critical-coping-mechanisms-urban-refugees> (accessed November 2020).

Security

Over a third of migrants (37%) reported feeling unsafe in Libya. Staying in groups was the second most widely adopted coping strategy (69%) by migrants to cope with insecurity after staying indoors in the evenings (73%).

A greater proportion of migrants surveyed for the purpose of this study who reported having arrived in Libya with at least one family member (61%) or a friend (69%) reported feeling systematically safer in Libya than those who arrived without family members or friends (53% and 52%, respectively). Similarly, a total of 83 per cent of migrants (5 individuals) who had friends, family and acquaintances in Libya prior to leaving or during their journey reported feeling safe, while amongst those migrants who had no friends, family or acquaintances, 55 per cent felt safe (28 individuals).

A similar proportion of women reported feeling unsafe compared to male respondents. However, a greater proportion of married women with their spouse reported feeling safer (68%) compared to those who were single or married but in Libya without their partner (64%).

Amongst respondents who felt unsafe a large number were in the regions of Aljufra (100%), Tripoli (86%), Aljfara (60%), Sebha (50%), Murzuq (44%) and Alkufra (40%) (Fig 15). In a recent [IOM study](#)⁵⁰ Aljfara, Aljufra, Murzuq, Sebha and Tripoli were perceived by long-term migrants amongst the most unsafe mantikas and strongly correlated with a perceived sense of lack of safety, risk of abuse and threats.

In addition, Sebha, Murzuq, Aljufra and Alkufra are transit locations along the main migratory routes. Having arrived more recently is one of the main risks to [migrants' vulnerability](#)⁵¹ in Libya. Long-term migrants are thought to be more likely to have adjusted to security and living conditions by developing a network among the more established migrant community, especially co-nationals, and choosing neighbourhoods that they perceive as safer. This is also confirmed by a [UNHCR study](#)⁵², which highlighted that by staying put, migrants invest in developing social ties in their community as well as with Libyans, which also helped them find decent work and accommodation, affording them more protection.

A greater proportion of migrants from the East and Horn of Africa reported feeling unsafe (80%) compared to the rest of migrants regardless of their regions of origin and the global average (36%). In comparison, migrants from the Middle East and Southern Asia reported feeling the safest amongst all (72% and 67%, respectively). A greater proportion of migrants interviewed from the East and Horn of Africa (60%) reported having been in Libya for less than one year than migrants from any other regions. In comparison, the majority of migrants from the Middle East and South Asia (90%) reported having been in Libya for longer than two years.



69%

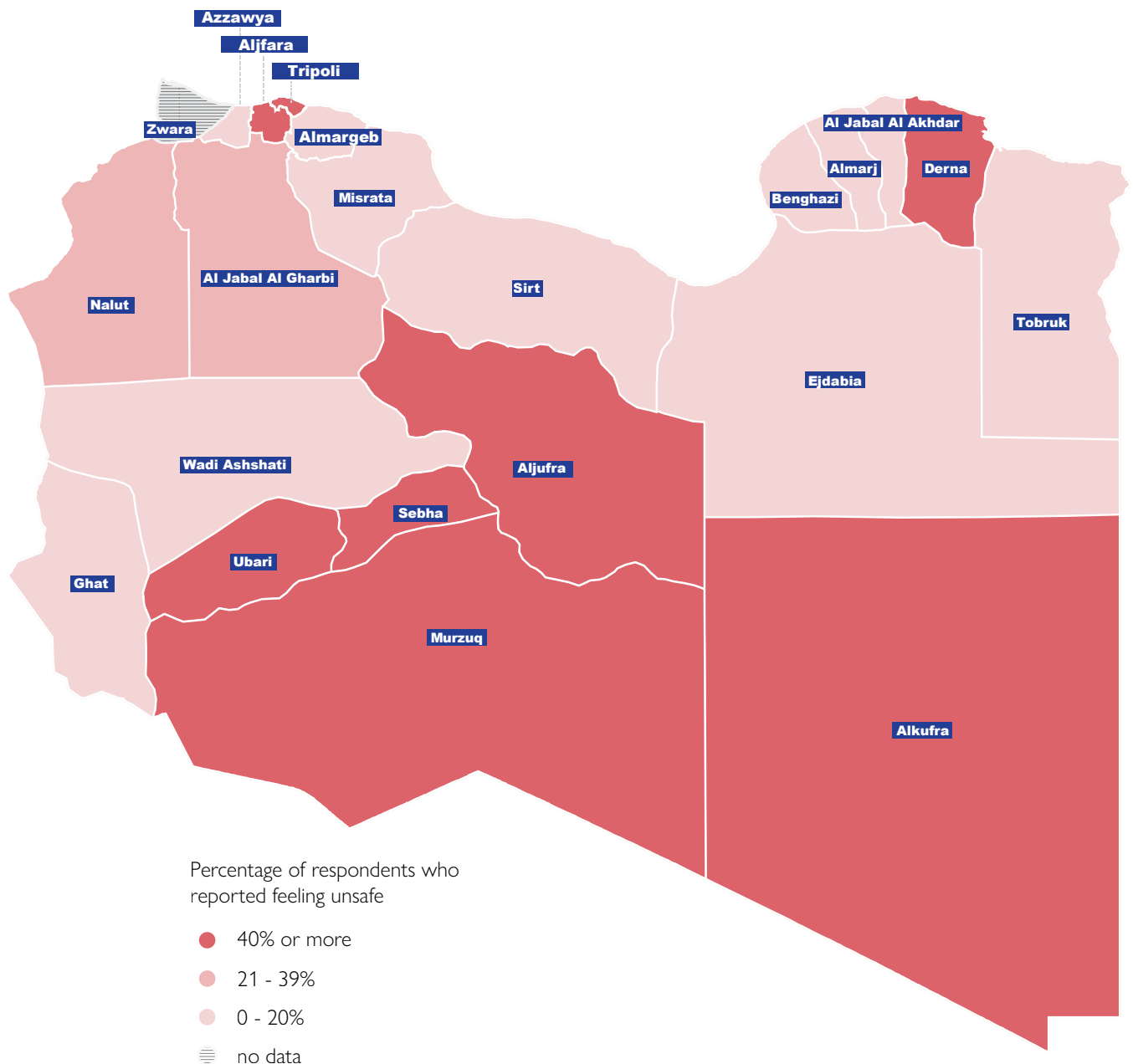
of migrants reported that staying in groups was a strategy they used to stay safe in Libya

50 IOM (2019b). "Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya". Available at <https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/living-and-working-in-the-midst-of-conflict.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8403> (accessed December 2020).

51 Ibid.

52 UNHCR and REACH (2018). "Mixed Migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya". Available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/reach_lyb_so_mixed_migration_routes_and_dynamics_in_libya.pdf (accessed November 2020).

Fig 15 Proportion of migrants who reported feeling unsafe by mantika



Mechanisms for justice

When asked who migrants would turn to for justice if victim of a crime, nearly a third of migrants (27%) reported they would turn to their unofficial channels such as their social networks, which included other migrants from their country (18%), family (4%), friends and acquaintances amongst their community, including community leaders (5%). The majority of migrants reported they would turn to the police (32%). Fewer reported they would turn to security forces (9%), religious leaders (1%), migrants from other countries (<1%) or their employer (<1%) for support.

In comparison, a recent [IOM study](#)⁵³ found that amongst the long-term migrants who reported having been victim of abuse in the past (15 per cent of the whole sample) the majority turned to their social networks such as friends and family members (42%) while a minority turned to police (13%).

A quarter of migrants (25%) reported they would not turn to anyone for justice. The fear of arbitrary detention or being deported for lack of identity or legal documents as well as discrimination may limit migrants' access or perceived access to official justice channels and protection from relevant actors. A recent [IOM study](#)⁵⁴ found that the majority of long-term migrants are living almost exclusively within the informal economy. Having limited trust of authorities may also [increase vulnerability](#)⁵⁵ of migrants as it limits their avenues to seek and obtain assistance.

According to [OHCHR and UNSMIL](#)⁵⁶, because of deficiencies in the rule of law, migrants are disproportionately being preyed upon, arrested or victims of other types of abuse at the hands of police or armed groups because the offenders are aware of their limited support network and inability to obtain justice.

27%

of migrants stated they would turn to their social networks if they were victim of a crime

53 IOM (2019b). "Living and Working in the Midst of Conflict: The Status of Long-term Migrants in Libya". Available at <https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/living-and-working-in-the-midst-of-conflict.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8403> (accessed December 2020).

54 Ibid.

55 IOM (2017). "Addressing the Situation of Migrants in Countries in Crisis". Available at https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Migrants-in-Countries-in-Crisis.pdf (accessed December 2020).

56 OHCHR and UNSMIL (2018). "Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the Human Rights Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Libya". Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/LibyaMigrationReport.pdf> (accessed October 2020).

Photo: In September, IOM launched a series of outreach campaigns and awareness raising sessions on COVID-19 prevention measures, key symptoms and how to seek medical help when needed. To ensure no one is left behind, informative leaflets were provided in six languages and “door-to-door” campaigns were carried out in remote areas.

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PART 5: SOCIAL NETWORKS AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Social networks as source of information

Information – whether on transportation, costs, security risks or routes – is [essential](#)⁵⁷ in the migration journey of an individual.

In preparing to migrate to Libya

In preparation to migrate respondents reported having used a variety of information sources. With greater and more readily available access to internet, potential migrants may be [exposed](#)⁵⁸ to a greater variety of sources of information and assistance than previously. However, the results of this survey confirm that traditional social networks, mainly friends, acquaintances and family, were instrumental sources of information on migration to Libya as well as of assistance with finding housing, employment or obtention of documents.

Sources of information

In preparing to migrate, the majority of respondents surveyed reported relying on a combination of sources for information on migration to Libya which mainly included friends (74%), acquaintances (38%) and family (26%) (Fig 16). While migrant facilitators, brokers and transporters can also be sources of information, they appear to play a smaller role as a source of information. A fifth of migrants (21%) reported that migration facilitators had been a source of information and six per cent of migrant gathered information from transporters. Migrants with a lower level of education reported relying on their social networks (friends, family and acquaintances) to a greater extent than those with a higher level of educational attainment.

Overall, a greater proportion of migrants reported that the single most trusted and influential source of information they relied on were friends (53%) than family (15%), acquaintances (11%) or migration facilitators (13%). In all cases migrants reported relying on social

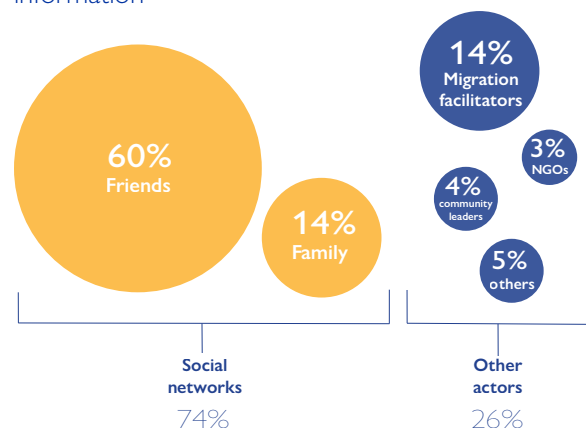
connections who had been to Libya before in a majority of cases, with the exception of migration facilitators or brokers.

Migrants from the Middle East (56%) and from Northern Africa (18%) reported relying on migration facilitator for information to a greater extent than migrants from any other regions. For example, a greater proportion of Egyptians (74%) and Sudanese (71%) than migrants from any other nationalities reported relying on migration facilitators while relying less on their family, friends and acquaintances.

A greater proportion of Nigeriens (88%), Nigerians (82%) and Chadians (81%) reported that their family, friends and acquaintances constituted the most important source of information than migrants from any other nationalities and the global average (79%).

A greater proportion of Egyptians (7%) than Nigeriens (1%), Chadians (1%) and Sudanese (1%) or the global average (3%) reported that Libyan friends and acquaintances had been a source of information, amongst others. No Nigeriens, Chadians or Nigerians reported that the single most important source of information on migration to Libya were Libyan friends or acquaintances compared to one and two per cent of Egyptians and Sudanese, respectively.

Fig 16 Migrants' single most trusted source of information



57 IOM (2015). "Irregular Migration Between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean. Available at <https://fmmwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/en-altai.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

58 Meeteren, M. v. and Pereira, S. (2016). "New Roles for Social Networks in Migration? Assistance in Brazilian Migration to Portugal and the Netherlands. Available at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137539212_3 (accessed November 2020).

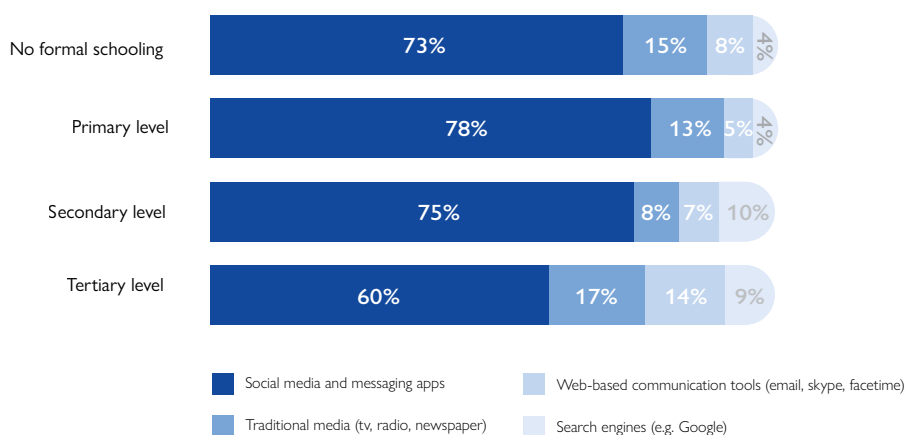
Channels of communication

The majority of migrants reported having gathered information on the experience of migration to Libya on social media platforms such as Facebook (44%) through their friends (46%) or family (18%), acquaintances (13%) as well as from migration facilitator or broker (22%) and to a lesser extent from religious leaders (1%) or others (4%). A minority reported relying either on broadcast media (TV or radio (11%)) or the internet and search engines (7%).

This is in line with a [study](#)⁵⁹ conducted by the Oversea Development Institute which highlighted that migrants reported using Facebook as well as other social media platforms to gather information about migration routes, communicate with other migrants.

Migrants with higher levels of education (secondary and tertiary) reported relying on search engines (such as Google) to a greater extent (5% and 7%, respectively) than those with a primary level of education or no formal education (4% in both cases) (Fig 17). Moreover, migrants with a higher level of education relied on a more varied range of channels to gain information and reported getting information through social media to a lesser extent than those with a primary or secondary level of education or those with no formal education backgrounds.

Fig 17 Channels used by migrants for information on migration to Libya



Sufficient information

Nearly a third of migrants (28%) reported feeling insufficiently informed prior to embarking on their journey to Libya. Amongst those who reported feeling inadequately informed, the majority of migrants reported having been ill-informed on security risks (kidnapping, theft, crime) (57%) and living conditions (27%). A greater percentage of Nigerians (32%) and Nigeriens (31%) reported a lack of information, mainly on security risks and living conditions compared to migrants from Sudan (29%), Chad (23%) or Egypt (19%).

The findings of this study confirm that [truthful information](#)⁶⁰ about border crossing and the risks involved in the experience of migration is a challenge amongst migrants. Limited access to information or resources can lead to increased vulnerability as it may force migrants to rely on third parties or intermediaries.

 **28%**

of migrants stated they felt inadequately informed prior to migrating to Libya

59 ODI (2016). "Migration in Libya: Transit Zone of Final Destination". Available at <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/migration-in-libya.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

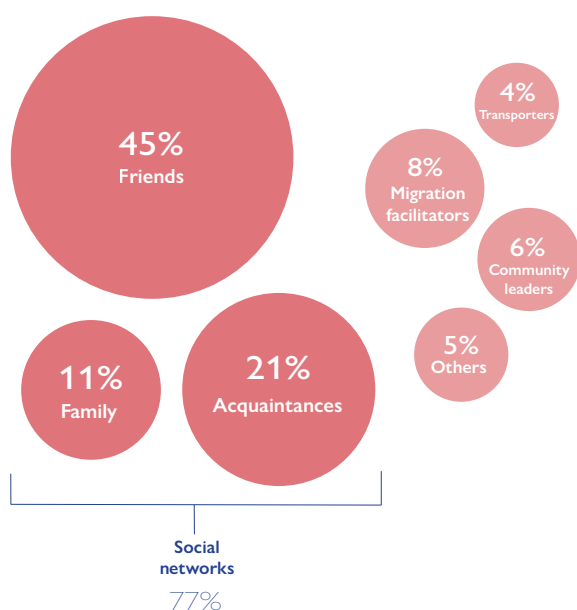
60 IOM (2019a). "Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf (accessed December 2020).

Inaccurate information and sources

Nearly a third of migrants (31%) reported that some of the information they had gathered prior to embarking on their migration journey to Libya was inaccurate. Amongst these, most migrants reported that the inaccurate information that had been shared with them came from friends (45%), acquaintances (21%) and family members (11%). Fewer migrants reported that the inaccurate information they had gathered came from migration facilitators (8%) (Fig 18).

The majority of migrants who reported getting inaccurate information prior to traveling to Libya reported having acquired this information through two main channels: social media and messaging apps (Facebook and WhatsApp groups) (45%) and in-person conversation (44%). These results are in line with a previous [study](#)⁶¹ amongst West African returnees which highlighted that a majority were unprepared for their journey because their most trusted source of information – friends and family – did not convey an accurate picture of the migration journey to and through Libya. Another hypothesis is that upon their return migrants tend [not to share information](#)⁶² about their failures or incidents amongst many people in their community, if at all.

Fig 18 Sources of inaccurate information



61 European Commission (2017). "How West African Migrants Engage with Migration Information En-Route to Europe". Available at <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2018/jul/eu-com-migrant-info-channels-west-african-migrants-en-route-to-europe-6-18.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

62 IOM (2014). "Assessment of Priorities for the Development of Libya's Migration Policy: A Strategic Vision". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/libya_rapid_assessment.pdf (accessed December 2020).

More migrants from the Middle East (67%) and from West and Central Africa (61%) than any other nationalities reported relying on their friends in Libya as their most trusted source to obtain information on migration to and through Libya.

A greater percentage of migrants who had no formal education (38%) reported that some of the information they had before going to Libya turned out to be inaccurate than those with some level of education whether primary (27%), secondary (28%) or tertiary (23%).

A smaller proportion of migrants from neighbouring countries such as Niger (31%), Egypt (31%), Sudan (31%) or Chad (38%) reported that some of the information they had access to before migrating to Libya turned out to be inaccurate than Somali, South Sudanese, Eritrean, and Syrian (41%) migrants. This is likely as a result of repeat migration and is in line with a [UNHCR study](#)⁶³ which found that information on the journey to Libya is common knowledge in some villages where many migrants have been migrating from, particularly from Chad, Niger and Sudan.

Research has also [shown](#)⁶⁴ that the role of migrant networks in migration is context specific and as such depends on the context of arrival or departure as well as migratory intentions. Although migrant workers were [found](#)⁶⁵ to base their decision on a greater wealth of information gathered over a period of time, some can also sometimes be under immense pressure from leaving because of debt.

Amongst migrants, those from the East and Horn of Africa and the Middle East reported having fewer friends in Libya prior to migrating than respondents from any other regions. A total of 10 per cent of migrants from the East and Horn of Africa and 22 per cent from the Middle East reported having friends prior to leaving compared to 57 per cent of West and Central African, 52 per cent of Northern Africans, 36 per cent of migrants from Southern Asia. A total of 51 per cent of South Sudanese migrants (78 individuals) reported that 'no one had encouraged them to migrate' – the highest proportion amongst migrants of any other nationalities.

63 UNHCR and Altai Consulting (2013). "Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads". Available at http://www.altaiconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Altai_Consulting-UNHCR-Mixed_Migration_Libya-1.pdf (accessed December 2020).

64 Collyer, M. (2006). "When do Social Networks Fail to Explain Migration? Accounting for the Movement of Algerian Asylum-Seekers to the UK". Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13691830500109852> (accessed November 2020).

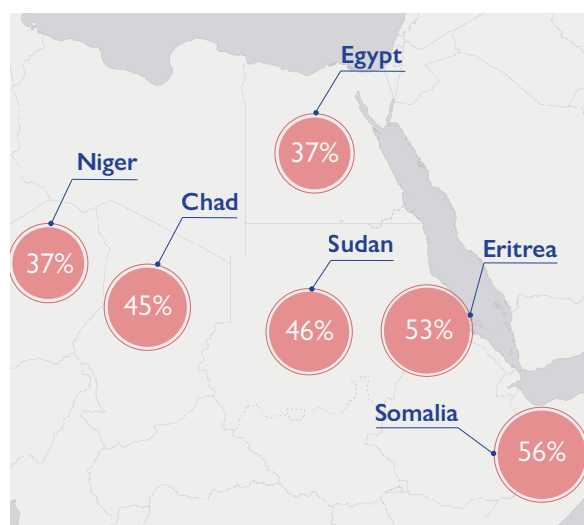
65 IOM (2015). "Irregular Migration Between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean". Available at <https://immwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/en-altai.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

This could be linked to the fact that a smaller proportion of migrants from the East and Horn of Africa reported that they intended to remain in Libya (20%) and a greater proportion reported their intention to migrate to another country (80%) than the global average (73% and 19%, respectively). However, this does not necessarily undermine the potential importance of social networks in the process of migration. For example, a [UNHCR study](#)⁶⁶ highlights that more than two-thirds of Eritrean migrants interviewed in Italy (69%) had immediate family in Europe.

The apparent weaker social networks in Libya of migrants surveyed from the East and Horn of Africa and the Middle East could potentially be a factor, [amongst others](#)⁶⁷, such as reasons for migrating (e.g. fleeing violence or conflict) as well as migration logistics (using migration facilitators), that has an influence on migrants' vulnerability.

Somali and Eritrean's social network in Europe and North America and their heightened vulnerability could explain why despite constituting a minority of migrants in Libya ([around 2%](#)⁶⁸), a greater proportion of Somali (56%) and Eritrean (53%) migrants reported being aware of the risks involved in the migration journey to Libya than migrants from Niger (37%), Egypt (37%), Chad (45%) or Sudan (46%) (Fig 19).

Fig 19 Level of risk awareness per country of origin



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

66 UNHCR (2019). "Eritrean, Guinean and Sudanese Refugees and Migrants in Italy". Available at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c667ab84.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

67 IOM (2019d). "IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse". Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/avm_handbook.pdf (accessed December 2020).

68 IOM (2020c). "IOM Libya Migrant Report Round 33". Available at <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/libya---migrant-report-33-september-october-2020> (accessed December 2020).

Contacting facilitators

Human mobility across the Sahara is [historically rooted](#)⁶⁹ in networks of migrant, trader and pastoral communities, which have shaped the urban and socio-economic development of the area and have created active links between Western and Northern Africa.

The analysis of DTM data reveals that more than two-thirds of migrants (67%) reached Libya by dealing with a facilitator network. Out of these 67 per cent, the majority made contact with migration facilitators through friends (36%) or direct contact (34%). A minority reported having hired the services of migration facilitators through family (15%), social media (7%), acquaintances (4%) or neighbours (3%). While the majority of migrants use the services of migration facilitators, the decision to migrate is not based on information provided by migration facilitators in the majority of cases.

More migrants with a secondary (10%) and tertiary education (10%) reported contacting migration facilitators through social media compared to those with a primary (3%) or no formal level of education (2%).

More Sudanese (16%) and Egyptians (18%) reported using social media to contact migration facilitators than migrants from Chad (1%) or Niger (none). This is in line with a [Global Initiative study](#)⁷⁰ which highlights that facilitators networks which operate in Sudan for example use social networks to source and communicate with potential clients. Because of its location, Sudan is a [primary transit country](#)⁷¹ for migrants from the East and Horn of Africa traveling to North Africa and/or further north where a number of migration facilitators operate and are generally connected by ties of kinship, ethnicity, religion and language.

More than half of migrants from Niger (52%) reported relying on friends to get in touch with migration facilitators compared to less than a third of Nigerians (31%), Sudanese (27%), Chadians (24%) or Egyptians (23%). On the contrary, fewer migrants from Niger reported relying on migration facilitators (9%) than the global average (14%) and from migrants from other

69 Bredeloup, S. and Pliez, O. (2011). "The Libyan Migration Corridor". Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265309726_The_Libyan_Migration_Corridor (accessed December 2020).

70 Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2017). "Integrated Responses to Human Smuggling from the Horn of Africa to Europe". Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/global-initiative-human-smuggling-from-the-horn-of-africa-may-2017-web.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

71 Chalk, P. et al (2020). "Sudanese Human Smuggling Networks: Fueling Instability from North Africa to Europe". Available at <https://icct.nl/publication/sudanese-human-smuggling-networks-fueling-instability-from-north-africa-to-europe/> (accessed December 2020).

neighbouring countries such as Chadians (11%), Egyptians (19%), Sudanese (19%).

The majority of Chadians reported contacting migration facilitators directly without the intermediary of family, friends or anyone else, which is more than for migrants of any other nationalities.



More migrants with a secondary (10%) and tertiary (10%) education reported contacting migration facilitators through social media compared to those with a primary (3%) or no formal level of education (2%).

Risk Awareness

Having been mostly influenced to migrate by friends or family at home or abroad does not appear to make a difference in the proportion of migrants who reported being aware of the risks involved in their migration journey. The majority of migrants (56%) who reported having been encouraged to migrate the most by friends or family abroad stated that they were not aware of the risks they might encounter during their migration journey to Libya. In comparison, 55 per cent of migrants who reported having been mostly influenced to migrate by friends or family at home reported not being aware of the potential risks awaiting them on their journey.

Based on the information and the idea they had of migrating to or through Libya prior to departure a greater proportion of migrants from neighbouring countries reported that their experience was neither worse or better than they had expected than migrants from other countries. For example, migrants from neighbouring countries such as Egypt (47%), Sudan (47%), Chad (45%), Niger (38%) reported that their experiences were as expected, whereas fewer migrants from Mali (32%) and Nigeria (32%) reported the same.

This could be linked to the fact that a greater proportion of migrants from West and Central as well as Northern

Africa reported having friends in Libya prior to departure than those from the Middle East, East and Horn of Africa and Southern Asia, which is in line with the historical migration flows to Libya that have been heavily shaped by geographical proximity and social ties. More specifically, migrants from Egypt (65%) and Niger (62%) reported having friends prior to departure to a greater extent than migrants from Nigeria (49%), Chad (45%) or Sudan (42%).

This is in line with a previous [study](#)⁷² conducted by UNHCR which highlighted that migrants from neighbouring countries (Niger, Chad and Sudan) tended to be better informed on migration to Libya and the associated risks than migrants from other nationalities.

Having a strong network of support can afford an individual with better [protection](#)⁷³ while being isolated can be associated with greater risks of abuse and exploitation. Moreover, friends and family may provide a pool of information, in their own language, which can help make them [‘streetwise’](#)⁷⁴. The majority of migrants reported reaching out to friends in Libya whom they had met prior to embarking on their journey (81%) and family (56%) for insider knowledge.

A slightly higher proportion of female migrants (47%) reported being aware of the risks involved in the migration process than their male counterparts (41%). Women migrants, especially when in irregular situation, may be more [exposed](#)⁷⁵ to a variety of risks compared to their male counterparts, which may perpetuate the preconception in some cultures that international migration is [tied to masculinity](#)⁷⁶ and riskier for women. Moreover, across the African continent, women also tend to generally move [internally or over shorter distances](#)⁷⁷ for short-term cross-border trade between and within regions, for example, than men. Among the migrant population in Libya, for example, a minority of migrants are women (11%) compared to men (89%).

72 UNHCR (2017). “Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges”. Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/595a02b44/mixed-migration-trends-libya-changing-dynamics-protection-challenges.html> (accessed December 2020).

73 IOM (2019d). “IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse”. Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/avm_handbook.pdf (accessed December 2020).

74 International Migration Institute (2012). “How Social Media Transform Migrant Networks and Facilitate Migration”. Available at <https://www.migrationinstitute.org/publications/wp-64-12> (accessed December 2020).

75 IOM (2013). “The Double Danger of being both a Migrant and a Woman”. Available at <https://www.iom.int/newsletter/issue-24> (accessed November 2020).

76 Kanaiaupuni (2000). “Reframing the Migration Question: An Analysis of Men, Women, and Gender in Mexico”. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3006176?seq=1> (accessed November 2020).

77 Institute of Development Studies (2005). “Gender and Migration: Overview Report”. Available at <https://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/CEP-Mig-OR.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

In Libya

Social media can not only be a source of information but a [means](#)⁷⁸ for migrants to communicate with their social networks while in transit and in Libya. To connect with their network in Libya migrants reported communicating mainly in-person (66%) or using social media and messaging apps (Facebook (51%) and WhatsApp groups (57%)).

With family and friends back home

To communicate with family and friends in their countries of origin, migrants reported using mainly phone calls (60%) as well as messaging platforms and social media and messaging platforms such as WhatsApp (61%) and Facebook (58%). A minority reported using web-conference apps such as Skype or Facetime (9%) or other social media such as Instagram (6%) or TikTok (1%).

 **51%**

of migrants reported using social networks platforms, such as Facebook, to connect with their social network in Libya

78 European Commission (2017). "How West African Migrants Engage with Migration Information En-Route to Europe". Available at <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2018/jul/eu-com-migrant-info-channels-west-african-migrants-en-route-to-europe-6-18.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

Social networks as source of financing

Funding their journey to Libya

The analysis of DTM surveys collected between January 2019 and March 2020 shows that a fifth of migrants (21%) funded their journey to Libya fully or partially (in combination with taking on debt or selling assets, such as property) with the help of family or friends (at home or abroad). Only two per cent reported having funded their journey to Libya solely with the help of family or friends in the country of departure or abroad.

More than half of migrants (52%) reported having taken on debts to fund their journey, the majority of which was from family or friends (92%). The majority of migrants reported having taken on debts from family and friends in their country of origin (79%) while a minority reported having taken on debts from family or friends in Libya or living in transit countries along the way to Libya (12%) and one per cent reported having taken on debts from family or friends in a destination country that is not Libya.

The high number of migrants who rely on financial support from family and friends to migrate to Libya signals that the decision to migrate is generally one that is [made](#)⁷⁹ at the household level, often with the help of friends, as it [aims](#)⁸⁰ to improve the overall economic situation of the family.

For example, very few migrants (8%) and only those from West and Central and Northern Africa (mainly Egyptians and Nigeriens) reported that the remittance they send home are going to help fund the migration of another member of their household. No migrants from South Asia, the Middle East or the East and Horn of Africa reported sending remittances that would fund the migration of another household members.

Furthermore, the analysis of the percentage of remittances sent according to migration intentions also highlights the nature of the economic investment that circular migrants make by using migration as a tool for [financial management](#)⁸¹ for their family who stayed in their home country. Amongst those who send remittances, a quarter of migrants (24%) reported that the money they send home is the primary source of income of their household in their country of origin, particularly in the case of North African (29%) and South Asian migrants (67%).

It also points towards the expectation and hopes of the family and relatives of the person who leaves their country of origin to migrate which can be a source of [social pressure and stigma](#)⁸² in the community of origin for those who might be unable to repay a loan or for those who may perceive their return home as a failed attempt to achieve a successful life abroad. Interviews conducted among migrants traveling from Libya to Europe [revealed](#)⁸³ that family pressures -- either as a result of the financial toll the migrants' inability to send remittances to repay debts or to provide for their family's financial needs -- were often cited as a reason to attempt crossing the Mediterranean sea.

 **92%**

of migrants who incurred debt to fund their travel to Libya reported having taken a loan from friends or family

79 European Commission (2017). "How West African Migrants Engage with Migration Information En-Route to Europe". Available at <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2018/jul/eu-com-migrant-info-channels-west-african-migrants-en-route-to-europe-6-18.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

80 Hamood (2006). "African Transit Migration Through Libya to Europe: The Human Cost". Available at <http://www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/hamood-libya.pdf> (accessed November 2020).

81 Clemens, M.A. and Ogden, T.N. (2019). "Migration and Household Finances: How a Different Framing can Improve Thinking about Migration". Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dpr.12471> (accessed December 2020).

82 IOM (2020a). "Returned Migrants' Debts and Their Impacts on Reintegration in the Gambia". Available at <https://rodakari.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/OIM%20-%20RAPPORT%20-%20GAMBIE%20-%20FINAL.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

83 IOM (2020). "Migrants Smuggling in the Libyan Context: Re-examining the Evidence". Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/ch18-migrant-smuggling-in-the-libyan-context.pdf> (accessed December 2020).

In Libya

More migrants reported relying on family members for financial support (38%) as well as new friends made in Libya (25%) compared to already established friendships (17%) or acquaintances (12%).

A total of eight per cent of migrants reported relying on financial support from family when their income was not sufficient to cover their basic needs such as food, water and medicines, either solely or in combination with other strategies such as daily labour or charity. This strategy was more common amongst women (40%) who are estimated to constitute 11 per cent⁸⁴ of the migrant population than amongst men (60%) who constitute the majority of the migrant population (89%).

84 IOM (2020c). "IOM Libya Migrant Report Round 33". Available at <https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya---migrant-report-33-september-october-2020> (accessed December 2020).

Photo: In October, 154 Bangladeshi and seven Indian migrants returned home through the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme on a charter flight from Benghazi Benina airport.

Over 4,800 stranded migrants in Libya are registered with IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme to return to their countries of origin amid the COVID-19 restrictions.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants can become stranded for a range of reasons, including, but not limited to, mobility and travel restrictions, the reduced number of international flights as well as the loss of livelihoods and resources. As a result of this, being stranded can exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, lack of access to services and insecurity which in turn increases the risks of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

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PART 6: CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that a migrant's social networks affect many aspects of migrants' experiences, including employment opportunities, security and information sharing. At the same time, other factors such as socio-economic status, education level and gender also influence a migrant's experience as well as the ways in which they connect with their networks.

While, social networks can be helpful to migrants as a source of information, this study also found that information shared between migrants, especially from friends, is not always accurate.

Recommendations

This report highlights the dynamic nature of migration and the ever-evolving risks it involves. Through the migration process, specific vulnerability and protection needs may arise, such as the inability to access one's social networks, being ill-informed, migration motivations as well as having recently arrived in Libya. In addition to being age- and gender-sensitive, any programmatic interventions should aim to consider these vulnerabilities and needs. More specifically, to guide programmatic efforts:

- Continue providing information on the known risks of planned migration pathways, especially for migrants coming from countries not bordering Libya.
- Establish, when needed, or continue developing communication channels to engage with migrants on the sensitivities around "failed" attempts to migrate and lead a successful life abroad, for example, which may lead some individuals to share inaccurate information.
- Information campaigns could aim to reach migrants through the different channels that are used by a large number of respondents: these are mainly social media platforms, such as Facebook, and messaging apps such as WhatsApp.

- Strengthen the protection environment to address the limited availability of migrants to reach out to official justice mechanisms and the absence of effective institutional capacities.

- Advocate among employers the need to help protect migrants by reducing risk exposure through ensuring decent work conditions.

- Provide emergency contact details for relevant embassies, consulates and local authorities as well as referral services.

- Expand the use of migrant communities and their social networks as backbone for effective and sustainable programming

Research recommendations

Given that social networks are dynamic and context specific, the nature of their influence on a migrant's experience cannot be entirely understood through quantitative data. Qualitative research should be conducted to better understand the nuances of the relationships that tie migrants to family, friends and acquaintances at home, abroad and in transit, how they may be sources of support or tension, how it may change over time and how it relates to their vulnerability and protection needs.

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To consult all DTM Libya reports, datasets, static and interactive maps and dashboards, please visit:

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