

# MIGRANT VULNERABILITY TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION BRIEF



KEY TRENDS FROM THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION ROUTES



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The UN Migration Agency



## KEY FINDINGS

Since 2015, IOM has interviewed thousands of migrants about their experiences on the Eastern and Central routes to Europe. This is the largest-scale survey yet to explore migrants' vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation on the Mediterranean routes to Europe. This brief is based on the report "Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes", which is the first to identify key factors associated with increased vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking during the migration journey. The report contains a general\* and in-depth statistical analysis\*\* of the survey data collected from over 16,500 migrants in seven countries. The in-depth statistical analysis identifies the factors that predict migrants' vulnerability to human trafficking and other exploitative practices and the factors that correlate with migrants' experiences of abuses. The findings improves the evidence available for policies policy makers to better identify and protect vulnerable migrants on their journeys.

### Predictors of Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking/Exploitation on the Migration Routes to Europe\*



Male



Traveling alone



Longer time spent on the journey



No education or primary/tertiary education



High cost of the journey (over \$5,000)



Departure from country of origin due to conflict



No close family in country of destination



Secondary movement (departing from a country that is not country of origin)



Departure from a country in conflict



Traveling along the Central Mediterranean Route

\* The findings presented here refer to a set of indicators of human trafficking and other exploitative practices that were included in IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys. In particular, the survey covered individual experiences of unpaid labour, forced labour, arranged marriage, to be offered employment, and to be held against will by non official forces. Indicators of sexual exploitation or sexual violence were not included in the survey.

Some of the key findings include:

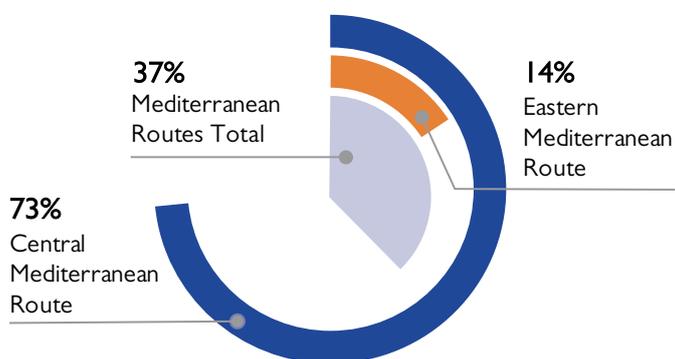
- **The presence of conflict in the country of departure can be a significant predictor of migrants' vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation during their journey to Europe.** Migrants travelling on the main routes to Europe and who departed from a country with an intermediate or a high level of armed conflict are more likely to be vulnerable to exploitation than migrants coming from countries with a low level of conflict. Migrants who reported war, conflict or natural disasters as the main reason for leaving their places of origin are predicted to be more vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking on the journey than migrants who left for other reasons
- **Migrants travelling along the Central Mediterranean route are more vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking than migrants travelling on the Eastern Mediterranean route.** The profiles of migrants and the characteristics of the journey on each route explain some of the difference in vulnerability. After accounting for all observable differences between migrants on the two routes and the observable differences in their journeys, 48 per cent of migrants who take the Central Mediterranean route are predicted to be vulnerable to exploitation or human trafficking, compared to 31 per cent of migrants taking the Eastern route. This difference between migrant experiences on the two routes is both substantively large (17 percentage points) and statistically significant.
- **Specific sociodemographic characteristics predict higher vulnerability to exploitation during the journey to Europe.** For example, men (compared to women) are more likely to be vulnerable to the kind of exploitative practices recorded by the survey. These findings should be considered with the caveat that vulnerability to sexual exploitation on the route is not measured.
- **West African migrants are the most likely to be vulnerable to exploitative practices on the migration journey, while North Africans appear the least likely to be vulnerable to such practices on both routes.** Anecdotal evidence and qualitative narratives point to discrimination and racism as a factor in the experiences of West Africans on the route.

\* descriptive statistics, that illustrate percentages of positive responses to the human trafficking/exploitation indicators in the survey

\*\* the advanced statistical analysis consists of a set of multilevel logistic regression models. It identifies the factors that make a difference in terms of vulnerability to human trafficking/exploitation

## Proportion of Positive Responses to Human Trafficking/Exploitation Indicators on the Migration Routes to Europe

The socio-demographic profiles of the migrants who travel on the two routes can explain some of the difference in vulnerability reported on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes.



## Countries on the route with the highest percentage of reported experiences

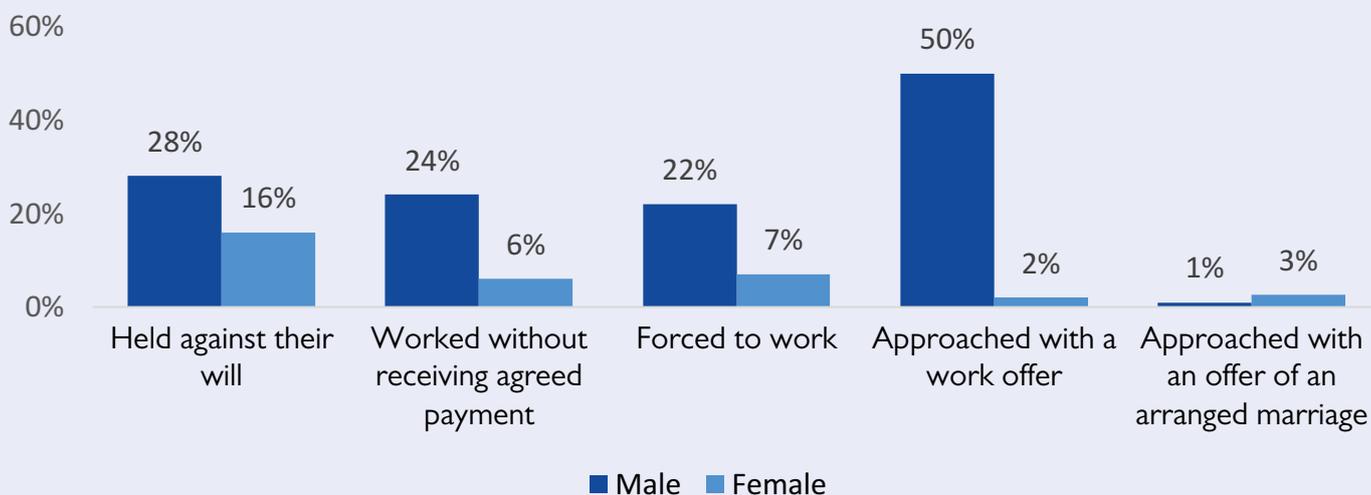
The final transit countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, are those where incidents indicating exploitation are most likely to be reported by migrants, together with Bulgaria and Greece. The findings indicate that Libya – as a transit country or an initial destination – is the country where migrants are most vulnerable to potential human trafficking and other exploitative practices. Libya stands out as a particularly unsafe country for all migrants, and as a driver of further migration towards what they perceive to be safer destinations.

LIBYA	79%	IRAN	2%
TURKEY	9%	GREECE	2%
BULGARIA	3%	SUDAN	1%
ALGERIA	2%	OTHER	2%

## Share of positive responses to each indicator of human trafficking/exploitation, by gender

26 per cent of migrants surveyed reported being held against their will on their journey to Europe, while 21 per cent reported doing work without receiving the agreed payment.

Women in the samples from both routes provided a lower rate of positive responses than men to the trafficking and exploitative practices indicators, with the exception of the indicator related to marriage.

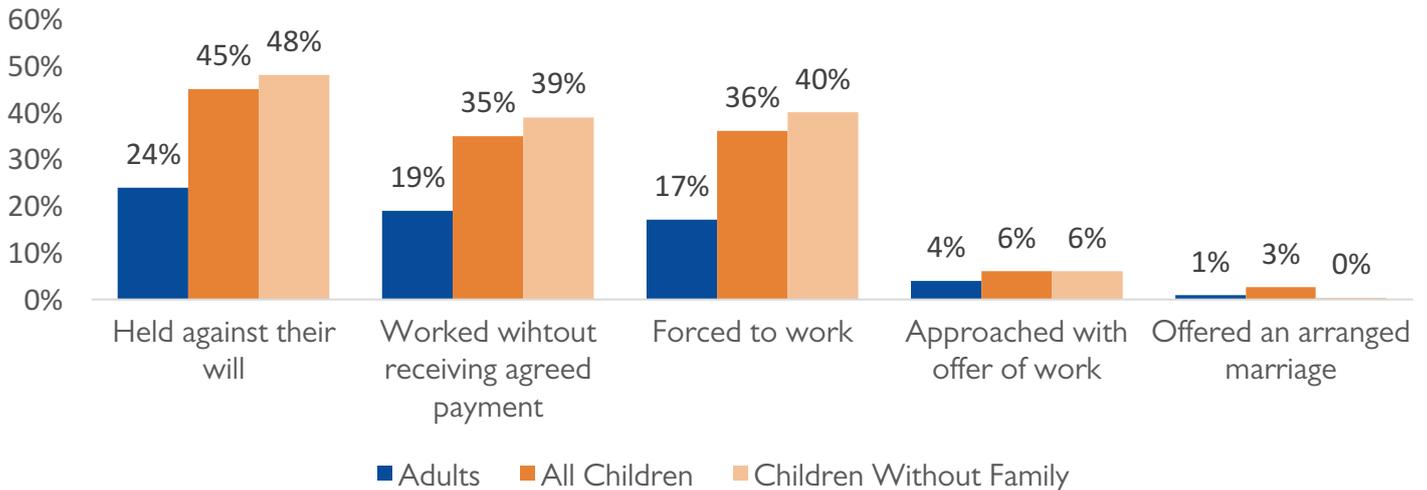




## OVERVIEW II

### Share of positive responses to indicators of human trafficking/exploitation for children and adults

Children are almost twice as likely as adults to report having been held against their will. They are also particularly vulnerable to being forced to work and to working without receiving the agreed payment.

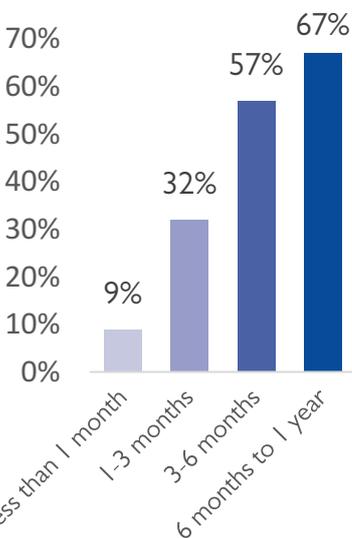


### Mohammad\*, 25, male, Syrian

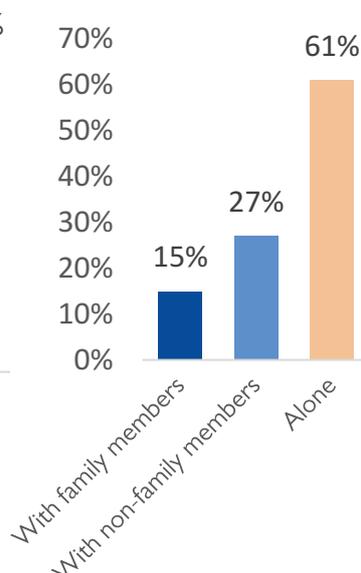
### Share of positive responses to indicators of human trafficking/exploitation by length of journey and travel companions

Migrants who travel alone are about 4x as likely to experience exploitation than those who travel with family.

#### Length of Journey



#### Travel Companions



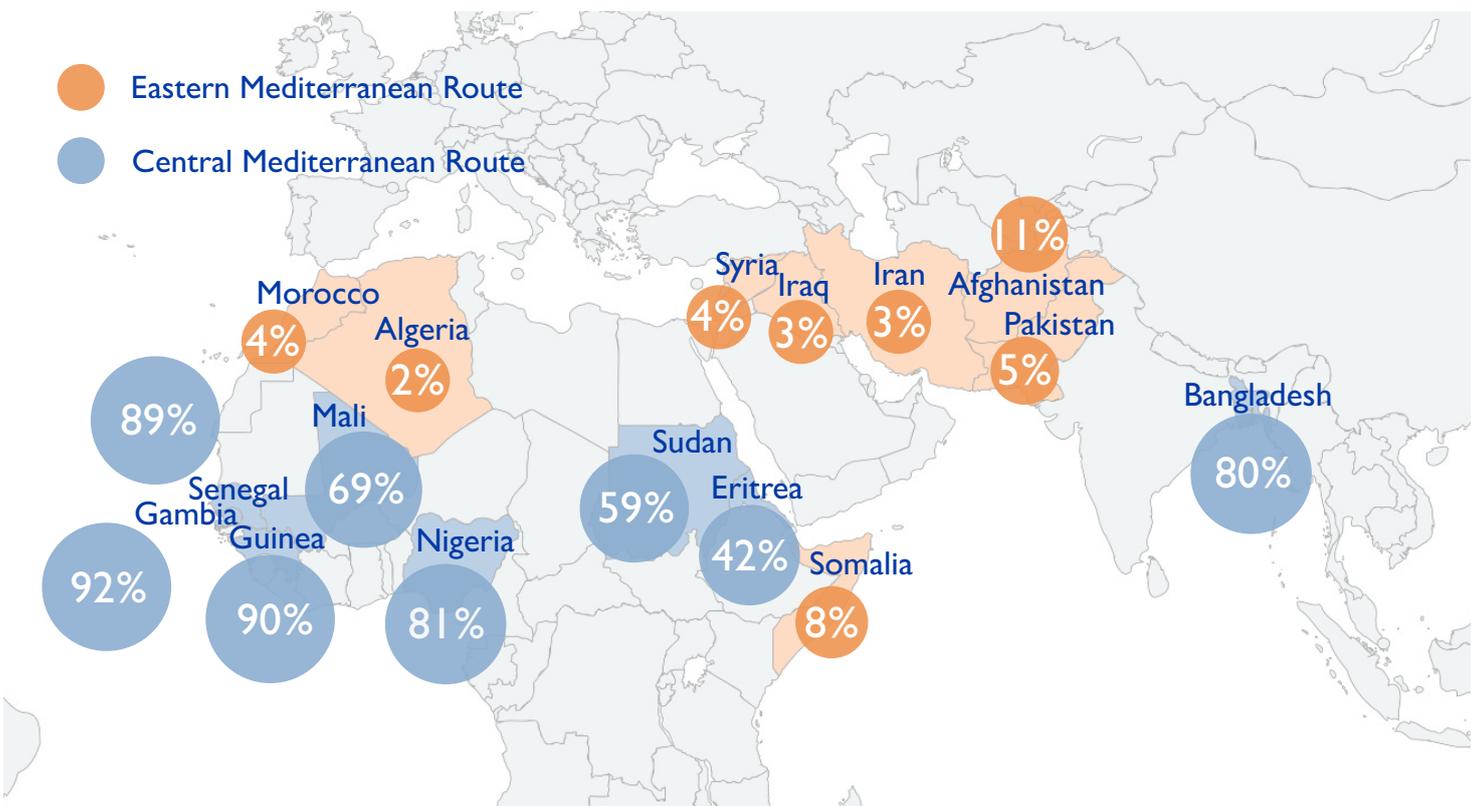
Mohammed, together with his wife and children, managed to reach Turkey from Syria, where they joined another group of 20 and agreed to pay 10,000 euros for a trip to Europe which they were promised would be one week and less than two hours walking. After the group reached the Turkish-Bulgarian border by truck, they spent long, exhausting days walking day and night. After reaching central Bulgaria, Mohammed was separated from his family by the smugglers, who threatened to cut off his body parts unless he made a call to a relative who would pay the smuggling group. After the ransom was paid, he and other men were released one by one in the middle of nowhere. The mother and children continued walking for one day, before being detained by the smugglers for three days without enough light, food or water. The smugglers were using this time to prepare the next stage of the journey and prevent their clients from leaving alone or finding another smuggling group. After a painful three weeks' journey, the mother and children eventually reached their destination in Serbia, but they were unable to find Mohammed and collect enough money to continue their journey.

\* name of victim and other details altered for anonymity



## Likelihood of migrants to report experiences of exploitation or trafficking on their journey

The highest predicted probabilities of positive responses are found amongst migrants predominantly on the Central migration route, where the main national groups from West Africa. Overall, West African migrants are the most vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation in transit, while North Africans appear the least likely to be vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.



Tommy\*, 25, female, Nigerian

Tommy suffered from abuse and violence by men from her family, and became pregnant at the age of 15. She found herself with the child alone, isolated by her family and the community. She left her village in Edo State with her son around three years ago to find a new life. She paid around 75000 Nigerian Naira to reach Libya. In the desert between Niger and Libya, she was caught and brought to Libya. She was kept in a closed garage, and she was asked to call her family to pay a ransom. ‘I had no one to call, and I was violated and beaten in front of my son’ she recalled, adding that they were threatening her and holding a gun to her head. She escaped one night thanks to the help of a Senegalese man, who asked her to marry him once in Italy in exchange for help. Although she refused the marriage, he helped anyway and paid for journey for her and the child on the boat in April 2016.

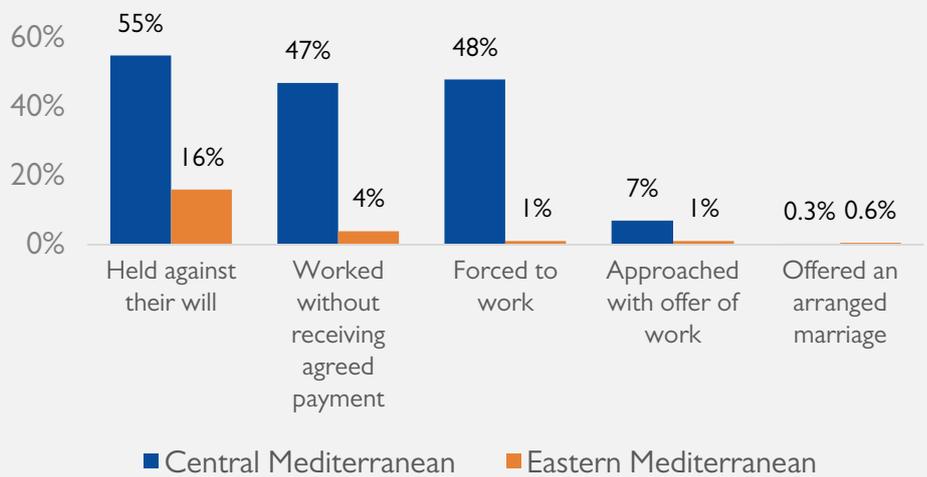
\* name of victim and other details altered for anonymity



Unaccompanied migrant children travelling towards Europe are reported to have reached an unprecedented number in 2016. Protection issues related to children on the migration routes or in reception and detention centres in the Balkans and Europe are increasingly reported by media and humanitarian organizations. National administrative records from both Greece and Italy confirm that accompanied children were more frequent on the Eastern Mediterranean route than on the Central Mediterranean one during 2016 (Eurostat 2017). In the survey samples, children on the Central Mediterranean route travel alone far more often than those on the Eastern route (75% vs 27% of the cases).

### Share of positive responses to indicators of exploitation/trafficking

45 per cent of migrant children were held against their will (double the rate of adults) and 35 per cent worked without receiving agreed payment.



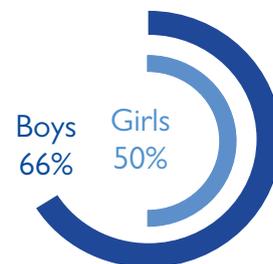
### Proportion of children traveling without their families by route

More children on the Central route travel alone than children on the Eastern route (75% vs 27%).



### Proportion of children traveling without their families who reported indicators of human trafficking/exploitation

66 per cent of boys and 50 per cent of girls traveling without their families reported experiences that could indicate human trafficking/exploitation.



Looking at differences between the two routes, children represent almost a quarter of all interviews along the Central Mediterranean route (24%) and 5 per cent of migrants interviewed along the Eastern Mediterranean route. While the majority of children on both routes declared to have obtained a secondary education degree (47% on the Central, 45% on the Eastern Mediterranean sample), followed by an almost equal share of primary educated children (43% and 45% respectively), 11 per cent of children interviewed in Italy declared no formal education compared with 8 per cent of children on the Eastern Mediterranean route.



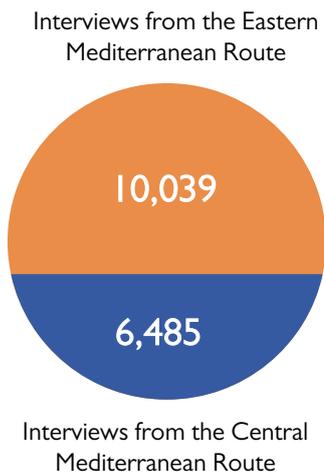
The quantitative analysis is based on data collected through the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS), which is part of IOM’s flow monitoring operations in the Mediterranean. These operations monitor populations on the move through the Mediterranean and Western Balkan Routes to Europe as well as along the Central Mediterranean route from Nigeria, to Libya and Italy. The survey started in October 2015, initially implemented in Croatia and subsequently in Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Italy.

Data collection on experiences of human trafficking (as defined by the Palermo Protocol) is difficult in the context of surveys on the migration routes. The act, means and purpose are the three main elements of human trafficking - and often they need a very wide range of questions to be identified. The survey had to settle on questions that capture certain aspects of these elements, and indicate potential human trafficking. The survey questions are short, few and they are not meant to identify a migrant as a victim of trafficking. The choice of survey questions reflect the nature of data collection – a survey whose primary purpose is to monitor flows.

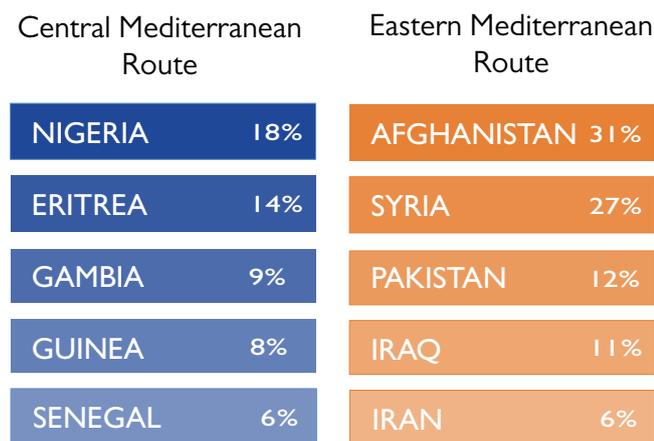
These questions capture information about whether or not the respondent has, during their journey:

1. **Worked or performed activities without getting the expected payment;**
2. **Been forced to perform work or activities against their will;**
3. **Been approached by someone offering employment opportunities;**
4. **Been approached by someone with offers of an arranged marriage (for the respondent or anyone in his or her family);**
5. **Been kept at a certain location against their will by persons other than the relevant authorities;**

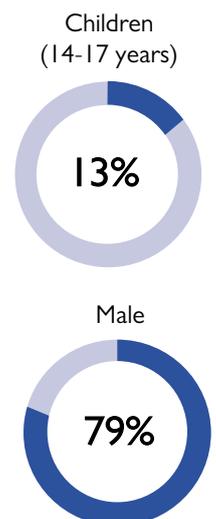
### Number of Interviews



### Top 5 nationalities surveyed on the Eastern and Central routes



### Demographics



This brief summarizes results from the report “Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes”, prepared for IOM by Eliza Galos, Laura Bartolini, Harry Cook and Naomi Grant in 2017. This brief was created by Kaylana Mueller-Hsia. The data on which the report analysis is based was collected through a network of field workers as part of IOM’s DTM flow monitoring operations in the Mediterranean, from December 2015 to November 2016.

The report can be accessed at: [migration.iom.int/europe](http://migration.iom.int/europe) or at <https://publications.iom.int/>.

Cover/Back

Syrian refugees crossing the Serbian-Croatian border.

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