

YOUTH ON THE MOVE TRAVELLING BY SEA AND BY LAND TO EUROPE IN 2023

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Italy,
Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, Kosovo*

FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS
EUROPE REGIONAL REPORT

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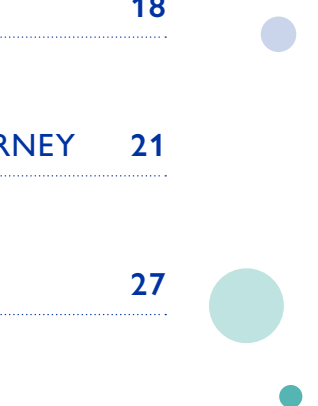
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth on the move



This report focuses on youth “on the move” to Europe by sea and by land, a population category that includes adolescents (children between 14 and 17 years old) and young adults (18-24 years old). It highlights the profiles, needs and challenges faced by these age groups during their mixed migration journeys to Europe, by using the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) conducted in 2023 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, Kosovo.

Main profiles



Afghanistan (15%), Morocco (12%), Pakistan (9%), Bangladesh (7%) and Guinea (6%) were the main nationalities among young respondents, with 50 different nationalities represented in the sample. Boys and young men represented 90 per cent of the sample, while girls and young women made up the remaining 10 per cent. The report systematically compares the profiles, experiences and needs of youth respondents by main migration route to Europe.

Education and employment status before departure:



A third of respondents (33%) completed lower secondary education, 30 per cent completed primary education, and 21 per cent had no formal education. Smaller shares had higher secondary (12%) or tertiary education (4%). Education levels vary by route and female respondents generally had higher education levels than male interviewees (8% versus 4% with tertiary education). Before migration, 37 per cent were job-seeking, 37 per cent were employed, while only 15 per cent were students, with a higher student share among adolescents (39%) compared to young adults (12%).

Journey costs and financial burdens



The cost of migration varies significantly depending on the route. The Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR) were reported as the most expensive, with some migrants spending more than \$10,000. This has significant implications for the safety and security of young migrants, who often exhaust their resources while still on the move, and need to seek employment to earn money needed to continue the journey.

Intentions



The five most common countries of intended destinations are Italy (35%), Spain (21%), Germany (15%), France (11%) and Greece (5%). Most young migrants on the CMR reported Italy as their intended destination (81%). Young migrants in Greece mentioned the intention to stay in Greece (35%), Germany (19%) or another European country (24%). Over two thirds of respondents in Spain wanted to remain in Spain, while others indicated France, Italy and Germany as destinations. About a third (35%) mentioned having (extended) family in Europe.

Current needs and challenges



Young migrants identified the need for support with employment, legal documentation, language courses, and adult education at the moment of the interview. The expressed needs vary depending on the migration route, reflecting the different challenges and stages of their migration journey.

Protection risks



About 42 per cent of the surveyed adolescents and young adults experienced protection-related issues during their journeys, such as financial problems, hunger, robbery, lack of shelter and health issues. These risks were particularly high on the CMR, where almost two thirds (65%) of respondents reported one protection-related problem. Also, about one in five respondents reported severe health challenges and problems due to living and travelling in precarious circumstances, with no, scarce or dirty food and water, while others were linked to experienced violence especially at border crossings.

Abuse, violence, exploitation



Over two thirds (68%) of youth respondents have experienced at least one of eight types of incidents relating to abuse, violence or exploitation that the survey describes. These are aimed at capturing information on unpaid work, forced work, offered marriage, deprivation of liberty, physical violence, forced travel, deceived to travel or access to identity documents. Most incidents were reported on the CMR (86%), the Western Balkans Route (WBR) and the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) (77% each), while the shares were lower, but still remarkably high, for migrants on the EMR (54%) and the WAAR (44%). Adolescents are more vulnerable than young adults, and youth overall are more vulnerable than adults to experiences of abuse, violence and exploitation, providing further evidence of the specific conditions lived by youth on the move on irregular journeys, especially for those who travel alone or without family members.

1 CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS ON THE MOVE

1.1 INVESTIGATING YOUTH – WHY IT MATTERS

It is widely accepted that children require special safeguards and additional considerations due to the vulnerabilities inherent to their developmental stage. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the age of 18 is commonly recognized as the beginning of legal adulthood. However, the needs associated with young age do not simply vanish upon reaching this age milestone and there is a general understanding at international level that individuals between 14 and 24 navigate a particularly transformative period of their lives, transitioning from dependency to autonomy, while consolidating their personal identity.

While migration at a young age can be a “source of opportunity and social mobility”¹ it is also fraught with risks resulting from changing and volatile family and social networks, uncompleted education paths, or lack of employment (experience). A report issued by the European Commission highlights the “challenges of acculturation faced by young people who move to a new place without social and familial networks around them”.² This blend of opportunities and difficulties is further compounded by unstable material circumstances and changing legal frameworks, by moving through countries while aging. Therefore, vigilance regarding the heightened vulnerability and complexity of young migrants’ journeys is essential.

The intersection of youth and migration remains insufficiently investigated by research and policy makers around the world.³ Despite the common agreement on the need for more and better migration data “disaggregated by age, sex, migration status, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”,⁴ there is a scarcity of available and comparable statistical data on children and young adults. Consequently, the research and evidence base remain limited. Most studies either target those under 18 or adults, overlooking the intricacies of the transitional age group. This neglects the specific conditions of adolescents and young adults between 14 and 24 and their coming of age. Global data on youth migration is notably inconsistent and incomplete, often highly fragmented.⁵ Dissent among scholars, coupled

with a lack of consensus among statistical offices and institutions at global, regional, national levels, using varied age brackets and definitions, hinder efforts to address the challenges unique to this age category. The European Union categorizes youth as ranging from 13 to 30 years of age, the WFPA and WHO 10 to 24 years of age, while the UN defines youth as the group between 15 to 24 years of age.⁶ Clearly, inconsistent approaches in statistical definitions and legal provisions foreseen for different population groups complicate analysing and addressing the challenges and needs of the population in question. As shown by a report on youth in Italy by UNICEF and IOM,⁷ the transition from childhood to adulthood significantly shapes subsequent life trajectories. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the uniqueness of this stage of life and to explore how it affects individual and collective experiences in migration contexts.

Box 1: Children on the move

The International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) – a cross-sectoral global coalition jointly led by Eurostat, IOM, OECD, UNHCR and UNICEF – uses the term “children on the move” to refer to children who are directly or indirectly affected by migration and displacement, either internationally or within the borders of the same country. Hence, it includes migrant children and children of migrants; children in need of international protection, such as refugee and asylum-seeking children or unaccompanied children; internally displaced children; and children indirectly affected by migration and displacement (children left behind, stateless children and child victims of cross-border trafficking). Please see the latest update on 9 Facts about Children on the Move [here](#) (August 2024).

This report addresses the abovementioned topics and delves into the complex issues faced by children and youth on the move in the context of mixed migration flows to Europe, which are understood as the movements of

1 [European Commission, 2020:4.](#)

2 *Ibid.*:4-5.

3 [IDAC, 2022.](#)

4 [UN, 2018](#), Global Compact for Migration, Objective 1.

5 [IOM, 2019a.](#)

6 *Ibid.*

7 [IOM and UNICEF, 2019.](#)

persons who migrate for several and different reasons but using the same routes and means of transport.⁸ It discusses the main findings from IOM’s DTM Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) conducted with migrants aged 14 to 24 travelling to Europe by sea and by land in 2023, presenting an updated look at previous analyses carried out by IOM and partners in the Mediterranean context.⁹

Box 2: Age categories

Children:	below 18 years old
Adolescents:	14 – 17 years old
Youth:	14 – 24 years old
Young adults:	18 – 24 years old
Adults:	18 years old and over

Box 3: Route-based approach

IOM and other humanitarian agencies¹⁰ employ a route-based approach to comprehensively analyse the intersection of factors at different stages of mixed-migration routes, thereby informing and tailoring humanitarian response. This approach recognizes the compounded vulnerabilities to which migrants and refugees alike are exposed to in all segments of their journey. As migrants navigate irregular pathways, they face not only separation from social support systems but also exposure to risks including trafficking, social and political adversities, lack of infrastructure and hostile and inhospitable terrains. Consequently, it is crucial to consider migration routes as central analytical perspective when researching mixed-migration dynamics. To this end, FMS are designed to investigate and to link the circumstances and realities experienced by migrants in the countries of origin, transit, and destination.

1.2 DATA ON MIGRANT YOUTH ARRIVING BY SEA AND BY LAND TO EUROPE

IOM systematically monitors mixed migration flows to Europe through selected sea and land routes, consolidating data on arrivals by sea and by land across the region. National authorities rarely publish such data disaggregated by age, sex, and nationalities. Nevertheless, children, including those travelling alone, unaccompanied or separated, are known to represent an important share of total arrivals to Europe. For this reason, IOM together with UNHCR and UNICEF, compiles and shares figures on children on the move to Europe with annual factsheets.¹¹

In 2023, 55,704 children are reported to have arrived in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Italy, Malta and Spain. Almost two thirds (64%, 35,510) were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC).¹² The highest share of UASC arriving was in Italy,¹³ where 69 per cent of all children arrived in 2023 (27,420) were considered to be unaccompanied upon arrival. The main nationalities of children arriving by sea to Italy were Tunisia (18%), Guinea (15%), Côte d'Ivoire (12%), Egypt (9%), and the Gambia (7%). In Greece, 23 per cent of all arrivals were children (10,612) in 2023,¹⁴

with about 1,987 UASC being in reception by the end of the year, mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic.¹⁵ In Spain, about 10,300 children are estimated to have arrived by sea and by land in 2023.¹⁶

Data on asylum applications lodged by children in Europe can be considered as an additional source of information. However, it should be noted that different legal provisions, applicable safeguards and protection mechanisms for migrants below 18, result in different figures for children arriving in Europe by sea and by land compared to those represented in asylum statistics.¹⁷ In 2023, 255,240 first-time asylum applications in the 27 European Union (EU) countries were lodged by children, representing 24 per cent of the total. The main countries of asylum applications by children were Germany (41%), France (15%), Spain (12%), Austria (8%), Greece (5%) and Italy (4%). Overall, girls constituted 41 per cent of child asylum-seekers with 16 per cent of applications being lodged by children considered to be unaccompanied. The main nationalities among children were Syrian Arab Republic (22%),

⁸ IOM, 2019b. Individuals who “are part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation.” Please see the [IOM Glossary](#).

⁹ Galos, E., L. Bartolini, H. Cook and N. Grant, 2017; IOM and UNICEF, 2017

¹⁰ UNHCR, 2024. For further information on the route-based approach as well as broader context beyond research on its implementation.

¹¹ DTM Europe portal

¹² IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, 2024.

¹³ DTM Europe from Italy’s Ministry of Interior data for 2023.

¹⁴ DTM Europe from Greece’s Ministry of Migration and Asylum data for January-September 2023.

¹⁵ Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2024.

¹⁶ IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, 2024.

¹⁷ Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2023. In Italy, for example, a residence permit “for minor age” is granted to most migrant children being found unaccompanied and being placed in dedicated reception facilities. There were 23,226 unaccompanied migrant children in reception in Italy at the end of 2023.

Afghanistan (13%), Türkiye (11%), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (11%), and Colombia (5%), reflecting a mix of different routes and travel modalities to seek protection in Europe.

When looking at the main countries of entry into the EU by its southern and south-eastern sea and land borders, first-time applications in Greece lodged by children (13,790, 24% of total applications) were mainly from Afghanistan (30%), Syrian Arab Republic (20%), Iraq (14%), Somalia (8%) and Occupied Palestinian Territory (5%), with about

20 per cent of applicants being considered UASC. In Spain, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (36%), Colombia (33%), Peru (12%), Honduras (3%) and Syrian Arab Republic (2%) were the top nationalities for child asylum-seekers (30,710, 19% of total applications), with only 30 of them being registered as UASC. In Italy, child asylum-seekers (10,335, 8% of total applicants) were mainly from Peru (16%), Tunisia (14%), Côte d'Ivoire (9%), Afghanistan (5%), and Pakistan (5%), with 21 per cent being UASC.^{18,19}

2 MIGRANT YOUTH IN EUROPE'S SURVEYS

2.1 SAMPLE SIZE

In 2023, DTM Europe collected 5,029 FMS surveys from migrants travelling by sea and by land to Europe in nine countries.²⁰ The remainder of the report focuses on surveys done with adolescents between 14 and 17 years old and young adults between 18 and 24 years old. This represents 2,082 surveys, or 41 per cent of the total sample.²¹

Nearly two thirds (65%) of respondents entered the country of the survey by sea. Most of those who entered by land (35%) were surveyed in the Western Balkans or Greece.

Table 1. Number and share of respondents by route and total, by age group

FMS 2023	CMR	EMR	WMR	WAAR	WBR	Total	Total%
Total	1,057	916	623	1,030	1,403	5,029	100%
14-17	93	112	0	0	43	248	5%
18-24	446	169	158	470	591	1,834	36%
18+	518	635	465	560	769	2,947	59%

It is not possible to fully validate the sample structure against the reference population, as arrival data disaggregated by age, sex and nationalities are not available for all countries where surveys were conducted (see section 1.2). Nevertheless, the profiles, by nationality and sex, of adolescents and young adults surveyed

resemble the known characteristics of the population group in each arrival country. The remainder of the report presents findings by route (see box 4), and compares the experiences of male and female respondents, and of adolescents versus young adults, depending on data availability.²²

¹⁸ Eurostat, 2024a.

¹⁹ Eurostat, 2024b.

²⁰ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, Kosovo* (*all references to Kosovo shall be understood in reference to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)).

²¹ Please consult the [Methodology](#) for more on the FMS overall implementation and the sampling approach.

²² Children were not surveyed in Spain, hence findings for the WMR and WAAR only refer to young adults.

Box 4: Mixed migration routes to Europe

- **CMR:** Surveys collected in Italy, with migrants arrived by sea
- **EMR:** Surveys collected in Greece, with migrants arrived by sea and by land
- **WMR:** Surveys collected in Spain, with migrants arrived by sea and by land in mainland Spain, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla or the Balearic Islands
- **WAAR:** Surveys collected in Spain, with migrants arrived by sea in the Canary Islands
- **WBR:** Surveys collected in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo²³, and in the North-East of Italy with migrants transited or arrived by land

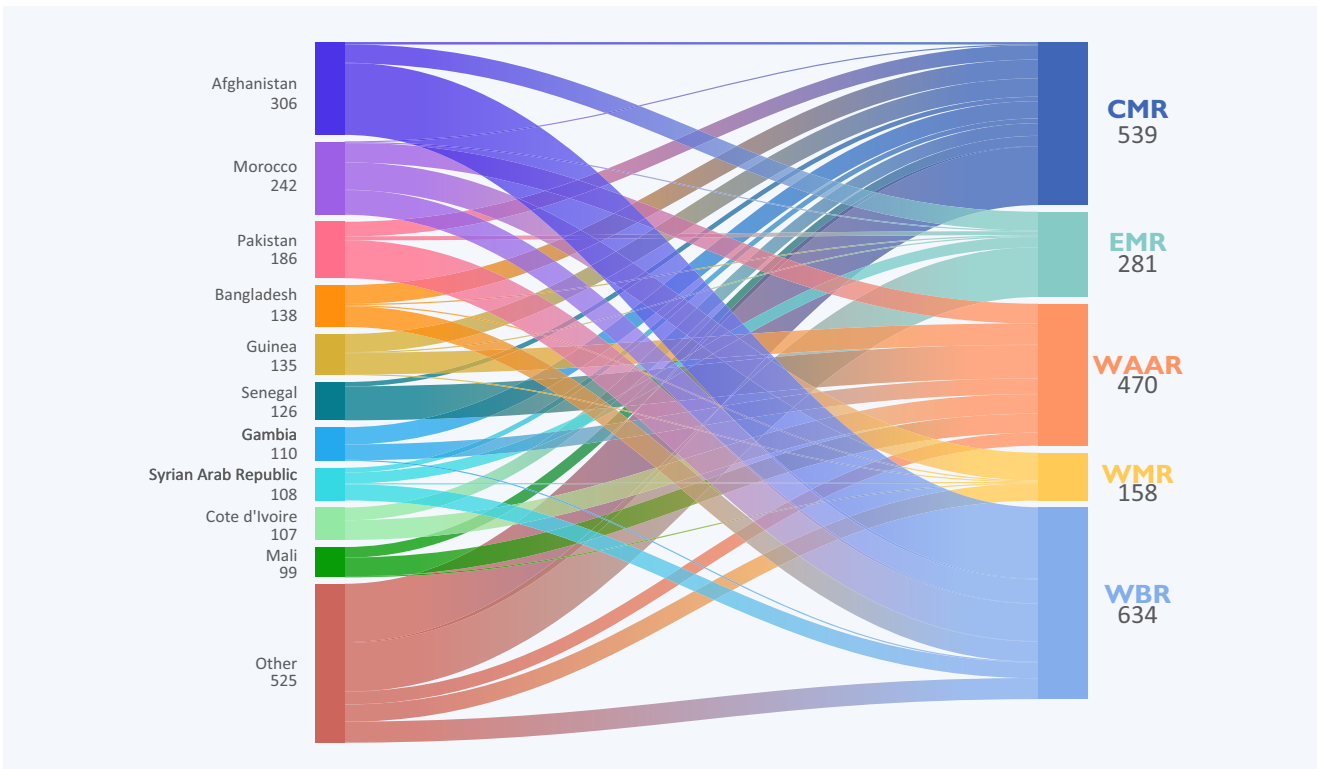
2.2 MAIN NATIONALITIES

Afghanistan (15%), Morocco (12%), Pakistan (9%), Bangladesh (7%) and Guinea (6%) were the main nationalities among young respondents, with 50 different nationalities represented in the overall sample. The main nationalities varied considerably by route, as shown in figure 1 below.²⁴

On the CMR, the top nationalities of respondents were Bangladesh (12%), Guinea (11%), the Gambia (11%), Pakistan (9%) and Côte d'Ivoire (8%). On the EMR, the

top nationalities are Afghanistan (22%), Egypt (16%), Syrian Arab Republic (13%), Iraq (11%) and Somalia (8%). On the WMR, migrants from Morocco (58%) and Algeria (35%) made up most of respondents. On the WAAR, main nationalities were Senegal (24%), Guinea (15%), Morocco (14%), Côte d'Ivoire (14%), Mali (13%). As for the WBR, Afghanistan (37%), Pakistan (20%), Morocco (13%), Bangladesh (11%), Syrian Arab Republic (8%) were the main nationalities of respondents on the WBR.

Figure 1. Main nationalities of respondents, by route



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

²³ All references to Kosovo shall be understood in reference to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

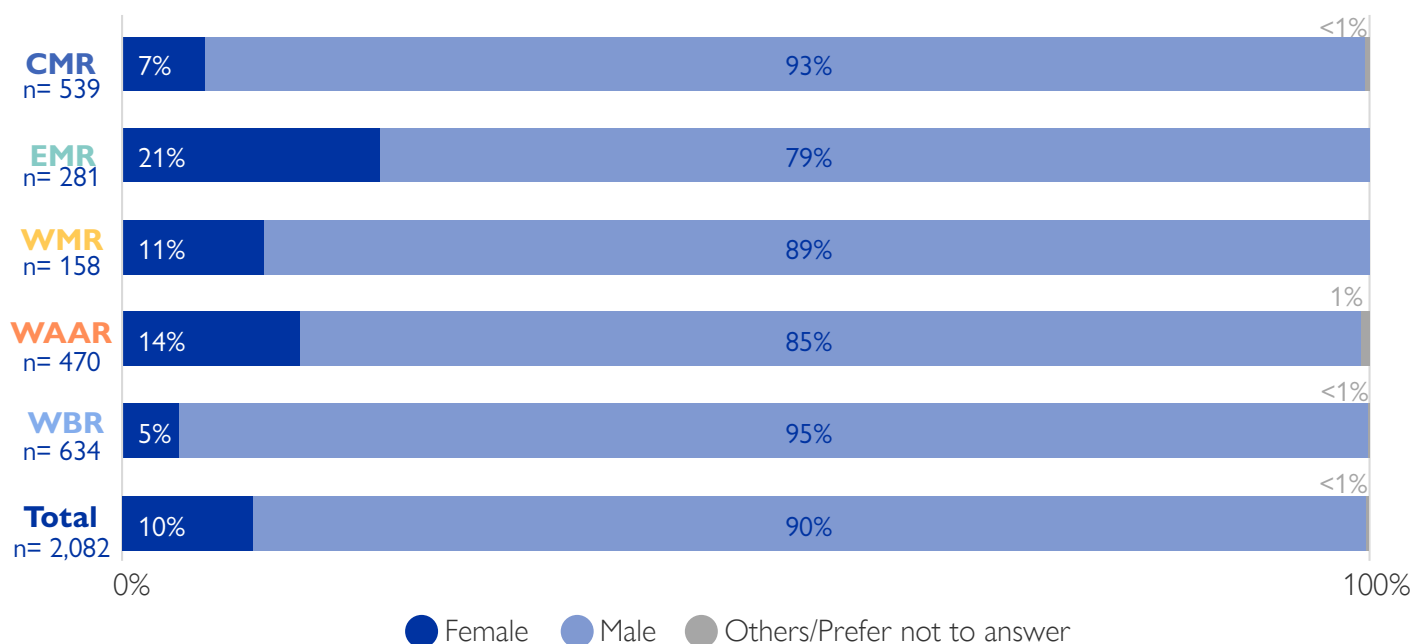
²⁴ IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, 2024.

2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Boys and young men represented 90 per cent of the sample, while girls and young women made up the remaining 10 per cent. Less than 1 per cent (6 respondents) did not identify either as female or male or preferred not to specify. The share of female respondents was the highest on the EMR (21%) and on the WAAR (14%). Among the

main nationalities in the sample, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Algeria and Syrian Arab Republic had shares of female interviewees higher than the average (between 32% and 12% of the total). On the other side, respondents from Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Gambia were almost exclusively male (97% and above).

Figure 2: Number and share of surveys by sex and by route



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

About 92 per cent of the sample were single (97% among children), while 7 per cent were married and the rest was in a partnership, widowed or divorced (1%). The share of respondents in a couple was higher among females

(27%) than among males (5%). Similarly, one fifth (21%) of female interviewees reported to have children compared to only 3.5 per cent of male respondents. None of the respondents below 18 years of age had children.

2.4 EDUCATION

One third (33%) of respondents reported having completed lower secondary education, 30 per cent had completed primary education, 21 per cent had no formal education, while smaller shares held higher secondary education (12%) or tertiary education (4%).²⁵

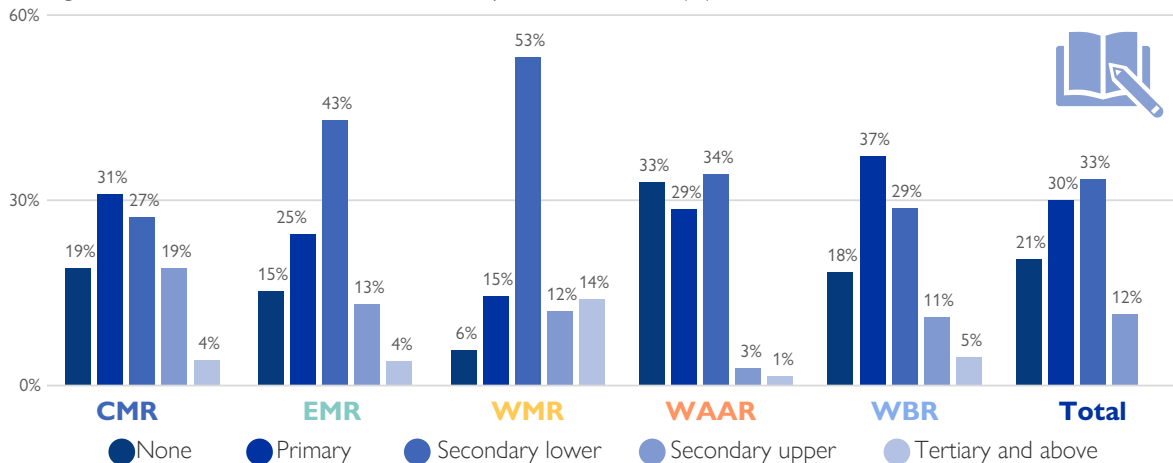
Young adults on the WMR had the highest education level on average, with 15 per cent reporting to have tertiary education and only 6 per cent reporting no formal education at all. In contrast, migrants on the WAAR exhibited the lowest educational attainment, with one third (33%) having no formal education and merely 4% having attained higher secondary education or above.

Young women reported slightly higher education levels than boys and young men (8% held tertiary education, while this figure was only 4% among male respondents). Young respondents exhibited lower levels of educational attainment as they have had fewer opportunities to engage in formal education.

Almost half (48%) of the children reported to have left school more than 2 years before participating in the survey. Another quarter (24%) of respondents last attended school less than one year prior to the survey, while 18 percent had left school between one and two years ago.

²⁵ Education levels are based on the [ISCED](#) international classification. Upper secondary education comprises ISCED levels 3 and 4. Tertiary education comprises ISCED levels from 5 to 8: Short-cycle tertiary education, Bachelor's or equivalent level, Master's or equivalent level, Doctoral or equivalent level.

Figure 3: Highest level of educational achievement, by route and total (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

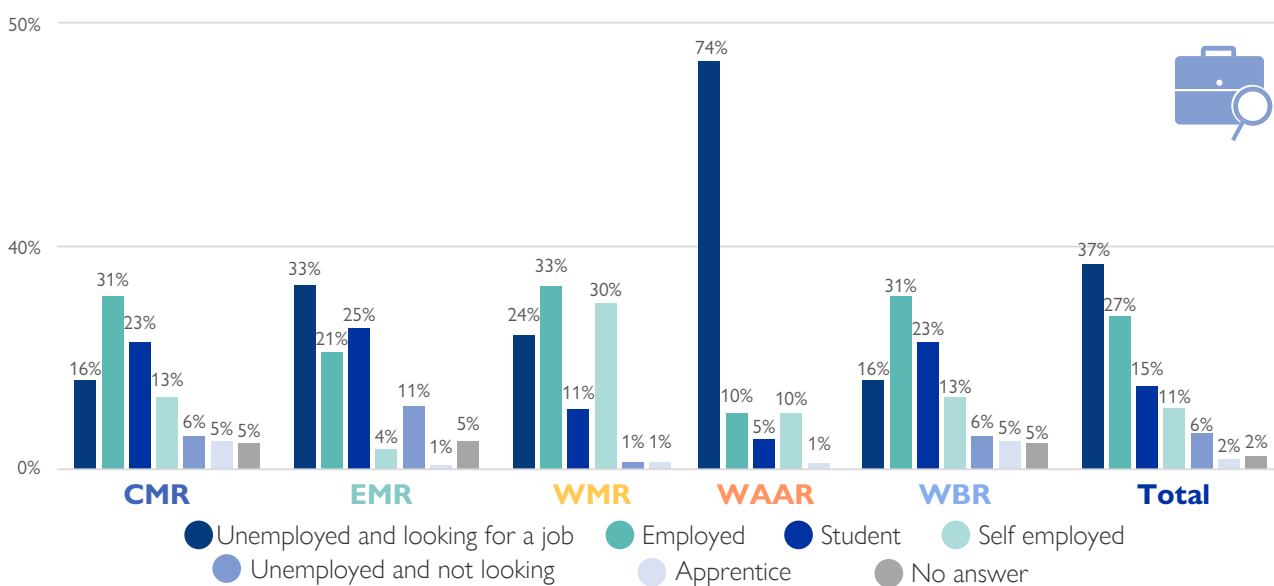
2.5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS BEFORE DEPARTURE

The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, and it refers to work is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and/or interferes with their schooling.²⁶ Survey data does not allow to fully unpack experiences of work and employment of young adults and adolescents before migration considering their age and other factors, but can give an indication of how many reported to have an occupation or were actively looking for one to sustain themselves and their families.

About 37 per cent of children and young adults were unemployed and looking for a job before leaving their

country of origin, and another 37 per cent were employed or self-employed. Only 15 per cent were students before departing — a share that is much higher among adolescents (39%) than among young adults (12%). Migrants on the WMR were most frequently employed or self-employed (63%), while those travelling on the WAAR mainly reported unemployment before departure (74%). Among those travelling on the EMR and the CMR, the proportion of individuals who were students before departure was the highest (25% and 23%, respectively). The share of female respondents who were unemployed and actively seeking employment was generally higher compared to male interviewees. (46% compared to 36%).



Figure 4: Employment status before departure, by route and total (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

²⁶ Please refer to the latest [ILO and UNICEF](#) publication with global estimates on child labour released in 2021.

Table 2: Occupation among those who were employed before departure, by route, sex, age and total (%)

Occupation	CMR	EMR	WMR	WAAR	WBR			14-17y	18-24y	Total
Skilled manual	25%	18%	15%	28%	33%	12%	27%	34%	26%	27%
Elementary occupation	36%	21%	8%	6%	27%	15%	25%	22%	24%	24%
Service and sales	14%	21%	10%	30%	14%	41%	15%	12%	17%	16%
Craft and related trade	8%	20%	32%	22%	13%	10%	16%	25%	14%	15%
Plant and machine operators	8%	4%	22%	8%	3%	0%	8%	2%	8%	8%
Technicians	4%	6%	7%	1%	2%	12%	3%	6%	3%	4%
Clerical support workers	3%	3%	5%	1%	2%	0%	3%	0%	3%	3%
Professionals	1%	1%	2%	3%	4%	10%	2%	0%	3%	2%
Armed forces	<1%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Managers	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	<1%

Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

The respondents who declared that they had been employed before leaving their country of origin (825 interviewees) primarily worked in skilled manual occupations (27%), elementary jobs (24%), and as service and sales workers (16%). The most commonly reported sectors of occupation were agriculture and forestry (22%), manufacturing (15%) and construction (14%).²⁷

Along the CMR, most respondents who were employed before migration had elementary occupations (36%) or skilled manual occupations (25%), prevalently working in the agricultural sectors (26%) and in manufacturing (13%).

Along the EMR, most employed migrants were previously in service and sales and elementary occupations (21% each), and in craft and related trade occupations (20%). Main sectors of activity were construction (25%), wholesale and retail (16%) and agriculture and forestry (14%).

Those employed before travelling along the WAAR were in services and sales activities (30%), followed by craft and related trade occupations (22%). Main sectors were fishing

(18%), agriculture and forestry (12%) and construction (12%).

Along the WMR, migrants were mostly working in craft and related trade occupations (33%) as plant and machine operators (22%), working in manufacturing (27%), agriculture and forestry (11%) and in construction (10%) as main sectors.

Youth from Afghanistan who were employed, mainly worked in skilled manual occupations (26%) and elementary occupations (22%), in the agricultural sector (21%) and in manufacturing (16%). Moroccan respondents were mostly in craft and related trade occupations (31%), elementary occupations (18%), manufacturing (22%) and construction (16%). About 41 per cent of Pakistani respondents who worked prior to departing were in the agricultural sector, followed by 18 per cent in manufacturing. Migrants from Bangladesh who were in employment, prevalently worked in agriculture and forestry (34%) and in construction (22%). Guineans reported to be employed mostly in wholesale and retail (24%) and in mining (13%).

²⁷ DTM surveys in Europe adopt the 'International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities' (ISIC) by ILO, which in the European Union is reflected in the NACE classification: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nace> and the International Classification of Occupations (ISCO) by ILO.











3 DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

3.1 REASONS FOR LEAVING THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The reasons for leaving one’s country of origin are varied and complex, reflecting a diverse picture across the different migration routes. The survey investigates the main migration drivers, by asking the respondents to identify the two main reasons for leaving the country

of origin and starting the migration journey. Additionally, the interviewees could provide open-ended responses to further explain and contextualise their rationale of moving.²⁸

Table 3: Main reasons for leaving the country of origin, by sex, route and total (%)

Main reasons	CMR	EMR	WMR	WAAR	WBR			Total
 Economic	30%	23%	62%	67%	47%	28%	47%	45%
 War and Conflict	32%	59%	4%	11%	37%	35%	30%	30%
 Personal Violence	29%	24%	6%	19%	18%	35%	20%	21%
 Limited Basic Services	16%	17%	17%	4%	8%	8%	12%	11%
 Slow Env. Changes	4%	4%	46%	4%	3%	7%	7%	7%
 Education	5%	2%	1%	1%	3%	4%	3%	3%
 Avoid Military Service	1%	5%	<1%	0%	2%	<1%	2%	2%
 Others	4%	4%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%

Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

The main reported driver for leaving one’s country were economic reasons (45%), closely followed by grounds related to the presence of war or conflicts in the origin country (30%) and the desire to escape from personal or targeted violence (21%). Young women and girls cited economic reasons less commonly than male respondents (28% versus 47%), while they mentioned reasons related to safety and security more frequently (war and conflict 35% versus 30%, personal violence 35% versus 20%). Respondents between 14 and 24 tended to cite economic reasons more frequently compared to the whole sample including all ages (45% versus 39% in the total sample).

Some differences by route are worth noticing. The main migration driver reported by nearly two thirds of young migrants along the EMR was the presence of war and conflicts in the origin country (59%), followed by personal or targeted violence (24%), while economic reasons were mentioned by 23 per cent of respondents. For those

travelling along the CMR, war and conflicts were the main migration driver reported (32%), followed by personal violence (29%) and economic reasons (30%). Migrants arriving in Spain through the WAAR instead reported primarily economic reasons for leaving their country of origin (67%), followed by personal violence (19%) and the presence of war and conflicts (11%). This picture differs significantly for female respondents: more than half (51%) of the young women travelling on the WAAR reported that they had left their country of origin due to personal violence while 46 per cent pointed to economic reasons. Migrants arriving in Spain via the WMR, largely reported economic reasons (62%), slow environmental changes in the origin country (46%), as well as limited access to basic services (17%) as main reasons for moving.

Exploring the respondents’ accounts of violence and threats for personal safety and security, migrants reported different types of risks and conditions in their area or

²⁸ Asking reasons for movement may lead to disclosure of sensitive information by respondents to enumerators. Please consult the Methodology on how the “do not harm” principle is part of the DTM approach to surveys.

country of origin. These frequently depended on their belonging to a specific group based on their nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion or political position.

Along the CMR, family disputes, issues on inheritance, and conflicts among groups and communities were reported frequently. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned episodes of domestic violence and harm relating to ethnicity, religious belief, gender and sexual orientation. Finally, interviewees cited political tensions and insecurity in their country of origin.

Along the EMR, some of the respondents revealed belonging to the Yazidi²⁹ ethno-religious community or being Kurdish, and suffering discrimination and violence in their own locations of origin between Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye. Others reported fear of persecution by Daesh, ISIL, Al-Shabaab, Taliban³⁰ or other groups, next to domestic and gender-based violence.

Along the WAAR, the willingness to avoid unwanted or forced marriages is the most common contextual background to reports of personal violence. This instance was reported by more than 20 young women all originating from Western and Central African countries, followed by domestic violence, abuse, and cases of rape, inside the household of origin or of that of the groom.³¹ As for the male respondents travelling on the WAAR, family disputes, political instability and conflicts were mentioned

3.2 ONWARD MOVEMENT

Approximately 17 per cent of respondents stayed in a country other than their country of origin for more than a year. This is quite frequent (41%) among those who travelled along the Western Balkans, having spent at least one year in a country different than that of origin before moving again. It is instead quite rare among those travelling on the CMR (5%), on the EMR (6%), on the WAAR (8%) and WMR (1%). Unsurprisingly, Türkiye and Greece (18 and 13%, respectively) were the main countries in which people remained for more than one year before moving onwards via the WBR. Those who travelled the CMR and remained in a country different from that of origin reported to have spent this time Tunisia or Libya, while respondents migrating to Spain cited Mauritania, Senegal and Morocco. It stands out that 46 per cent of the individuals departing Mauritania, though citizens of other

frequently. Interviewees from Senegal almost exclusively mentioned the political circumstances as their central grounds for leaving, likely referring to the political turmoil the country experienced in 2023, among other aspects. These qualitative accounts are consistent with the fact that, personal or targeted violence is more commonly reported by young women than by young men, especially among those arriving to the Canary Islands (51% of females versus 14% of males).

Slow environmental changes were reported by about 7 per cent of the total sample, and about 14 per cent of migrants interviewed in Spain. This is the first time since FMS were deployed in Europe that this factor was selected by a sizeable number of respondents.³² Among young Algerians, 40 per cent reported environmental changes as the reason for migrating, while this figure amounted to 19 per cent among Moroccan respondents. The survey findings reflect that the North African region is highly prone to climate-induced changes. These include the intensification of droughts, erosion and rising temperatures, impacting already strained socioecological, economic and political circumstances. These are recently more visible in political movements and protests problematizing the aggravating water scarcity and high temperatures for breeding and agriculture, which are in line with the high incidence of young respondents citing slow environmental change as a critical reason for leaving their origin country.³³

countries, had resided there for more than a year. This figure is only 9 per cent among migrants departing from Senegal and 5 per cent among interviewees departing from Morocco.

The reasons why these migrants decided to move again after having been resident in another country may differ from the initial reasons they had to leave their origin country. Regardless of how long they stayed, most respondents said they sought to avoid repatriation (42%) from countries which tightened controls and promoted new migration policies aimed at increasing returns to origin countries. This was followed by the desire to live in better economic circumstances (30%) and other driving factors such as limited access to basic services (13%), personal violence (5%) and other reasons (10%).

²⁹ IOM Iraq, 2024 and EUAA, 2021.

³⁰ EUAA, 2023, 2024. For additional information, please see the [EUAA Country Guidance on Afghanistan](#), last updated in May 2024 and the relevant [EUAA press-release](#).

³¹ According to UNICEF, 2024, around 1 in 5 adolescent girls have experienced recent intimate partner violence in the past year.

³² As a reference, about 5 per cent of migrants interviewed in Spain reported "slow environmental change" as primary reason for leaving in 2022.

³³ UNDP, 2023. For more detailed information on the environmental complexities and vulnerabilities of the Maghreb region, please refer to the report titled "Change, Environmental Degradation, Conflict, and Displacement," published by UNDP.

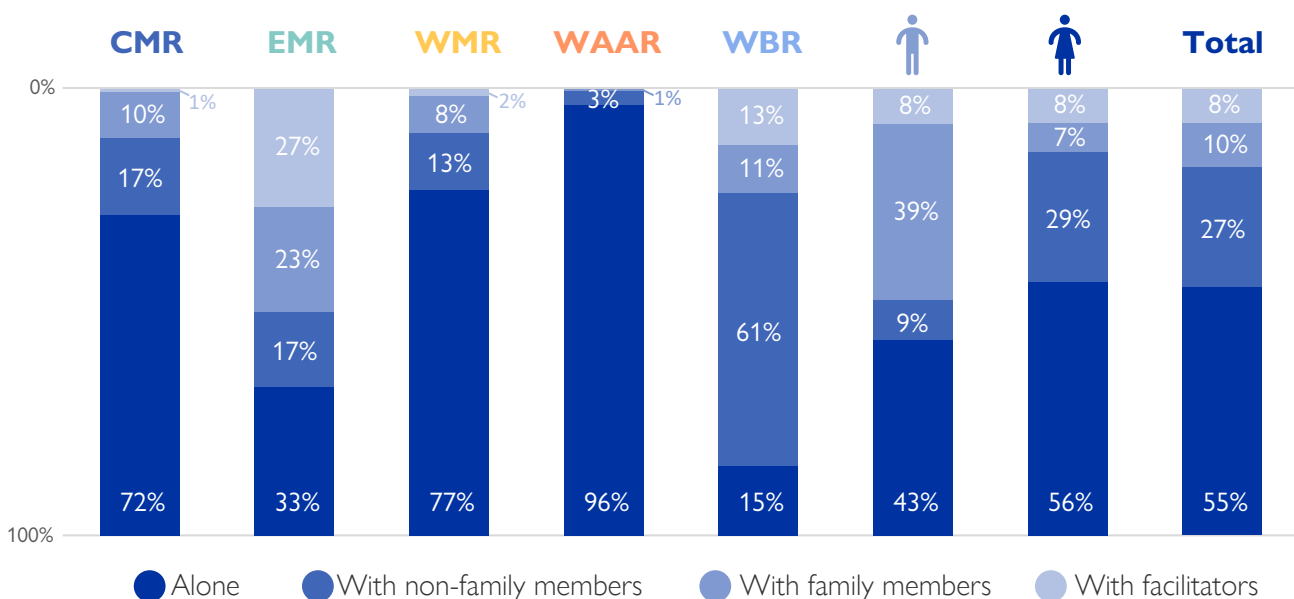
4 JOURNEYS: MODALITIES, COSTS, ROUTES

4.1 MODE OF TRAVEL

Most respondents (55%) travelled alone, while the remainder travelled as part of a group (45%).³⁴ Those who did travel in groups did so with non-family companions (60%), family members (22%), or with facilitators (18%). More male than female interviewees travelled alone (56% and 43%, respectively), while young women were more likely to be in a group with at least one other family member (69% of female respondents and 15% of male

respondents, if travelling in a group). Migrants along the WAAR almost exclusively travelled alone (96%). This travel mode was also prevalent among migrants along the WMR (77%) and the CMR (72%). In contrast, migrants on the EMR were more likely to travel with facilitators (27%) and family members (23%), while 33 per cent reported travelling alone or with other non-family members (17%).

Figure 5: Mode of travel by route, sex and total (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

4.2 READMISSIONS, PUSHBACKS AND TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

About 13 per cent of adolescents and young adults reported to have been readmitted or returned by the authorities³⁵ at least once from one country to another during their journey (17% among children). This share was higher than what was found among adults (11%). Generally, being returned was more commonly reported by migrants along the WBR (24%), the EMR (18%) and CMR (13%), while almost never reported by those interviewed in Spain. This may be due to the fact that

individuals moving by land in the Western Balkans may have to cross the borders of several countries,³⁶ whereas most African nationals travelling towards Spain have, up to a certain point in the journey, freedom of movement.³⁷

Moreover, migrants along the EMR relied more frequently than others on services or recruitment agencies to organize the journey in full or in part (37% among youth, versus 21% on average for the total sample), while others resorted to information and support from family and

³⁴ The question "Who are you travelling with (with whom did the respondent start the journey)?" presented two options namely a.) Alone, or b.) With a group. If b.) (with a group), a follow-up question was asked: "The group was made of, a) non-family/non-relatives, b) Family/Relatives, c) Facilitators (agents/employer/smugglers)."

³⁵ This question refers to returns to another country, with migrants crossing a border. It is worth noticing that removals and transfers from central to most peripheral parts of most North African countries are also reported.

³⁶ IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2024.

³⁷ ECOWAS, 1979. In 1979, ECOWAS member states have adopted a first protocol on the freedom of movement, residence and establishment of ECOWAS citizens in other member states.

friends in their community of origin (29%). The trend in using services to organize their journey is also reflected for young migrants crossing the Western Balkans, with 42 per cent of respondents reporting to having done so. Some use the same provider of services across multiple

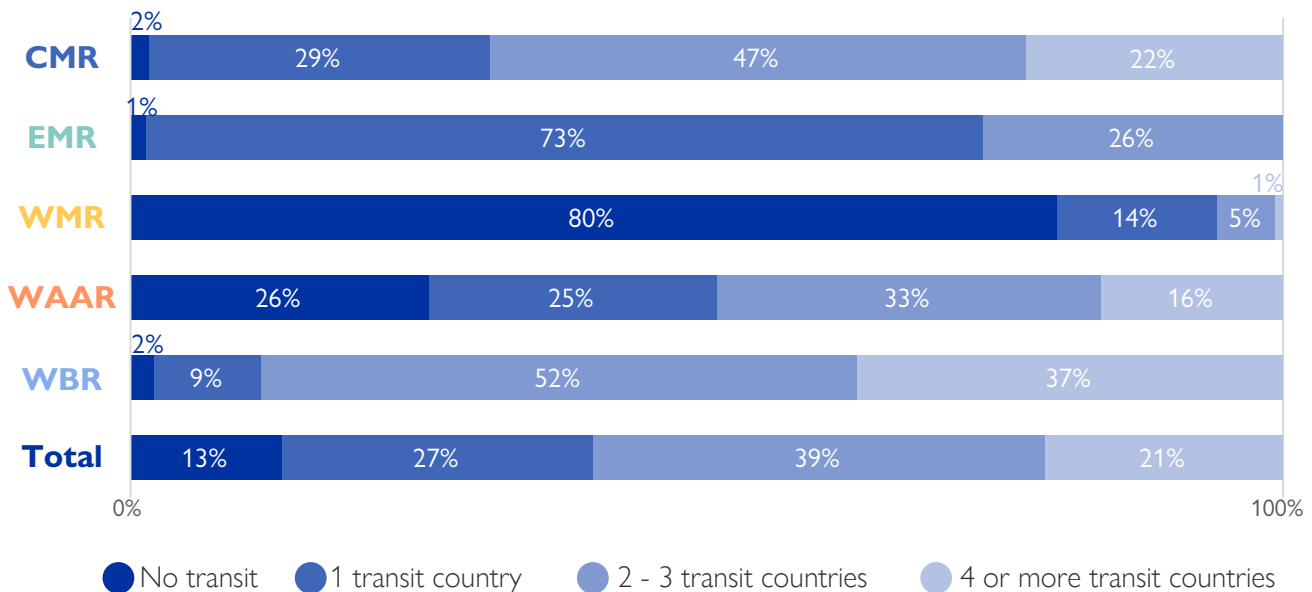
countries. On the contrary, most migrants travelling along WMR, CMR, and WAAR (87%, 65% and 65% respectively) reported to have received no help to organize the journey, while others relied on information and help from family and communities in the country of origin or at destination.

4.3 LENGTH OF THE JOURNEY

Migrants travelling along the WMR are those with the shortest and most direct journeys: about 82 per cent of them departed directly from Morocco or Algeria, arriving in Spain the same day they left their departure location. As for those landing in the Canary Islands and directly departing from the coasts of Senegal, Morocco, Mauritania, or the Gambia, this figure amounts to 26 per cent. Direct arrival from location of departure to the country of the survey is much rarer among migrants interviewed in Greece (3%) and Italy (1%). Nearly two thirds (61%) of those travelling along the EMR reported

to have transited only one country – Türkiye – to reach Greece from their departure location, either entering by land from its southern and eastern borders with the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, or by flying directly to Istanbul or Ankara from farther African and Asian countries. Longer journeys with more transit countries were reported by migrants in Italy; 69 per cent of them transited through two countries or more. About a third of them travelled for longer than one year, slightly more than in the sample including all age groups, indicating more complex journeys among younger migrants.

Figure 6: Number of transited countries to reach the country of the survey, by route and total (%)



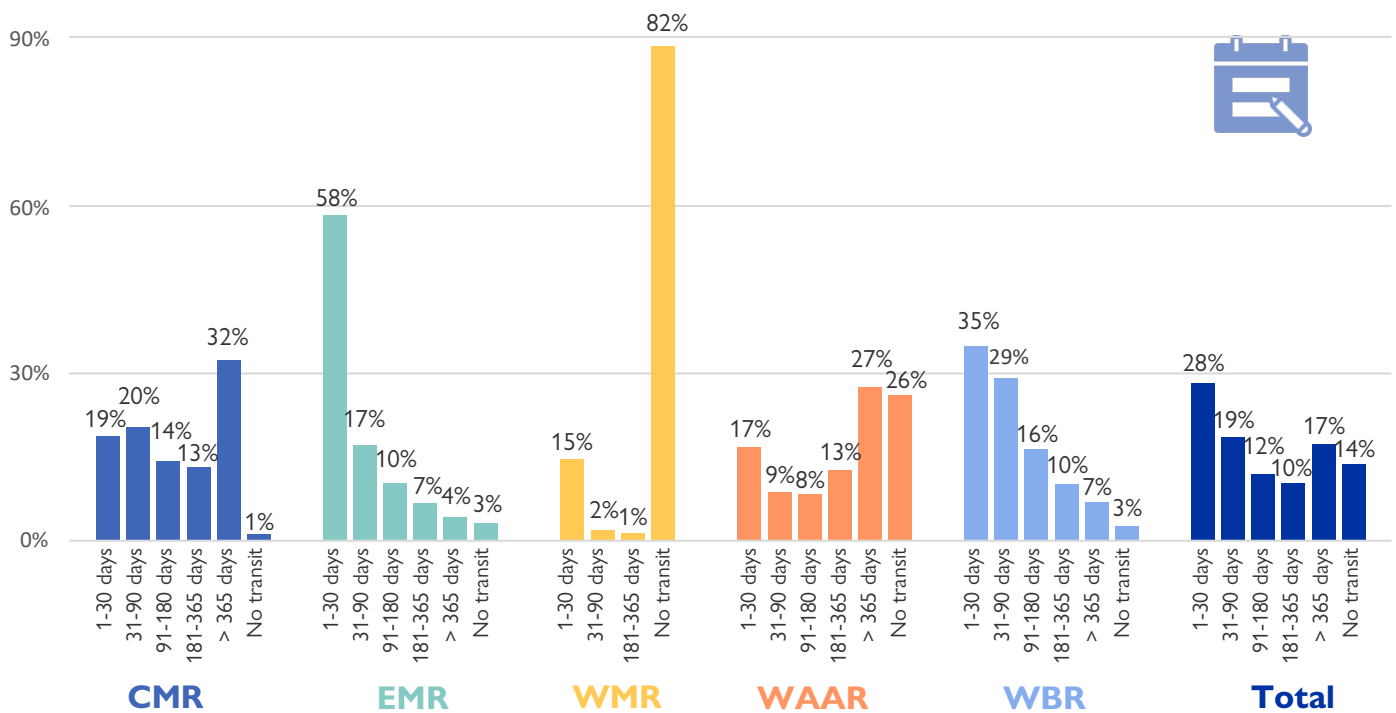
Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

Box 5: Coming of age while on the move

Long journeys to Europe mean that some migrants who arrived as adults in Europe left their homes and educational paths when they were still adolescents. About 9 per cent of young adults in the sample started their journey as children. This is more frequent on the CMR and the EMR (15%, respectively) and less so on the other routes. Becoming of age while being on the move, together with the high share of respondents starting the journey alone, has significant repercussions on the life and experiences during the journey, which will be further explored in [Chapter 6](#).



Figure 7: Days spent in transit from the departure location to the arrival in country of the survey, by route (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

4.4 COST OF TRAVELLING TO EUROPE

The estimated total cost of the journey from departure to the survey country varies depending on the route taken and by the number of countries transited, while it was found to be similar between male and female respondents on average.

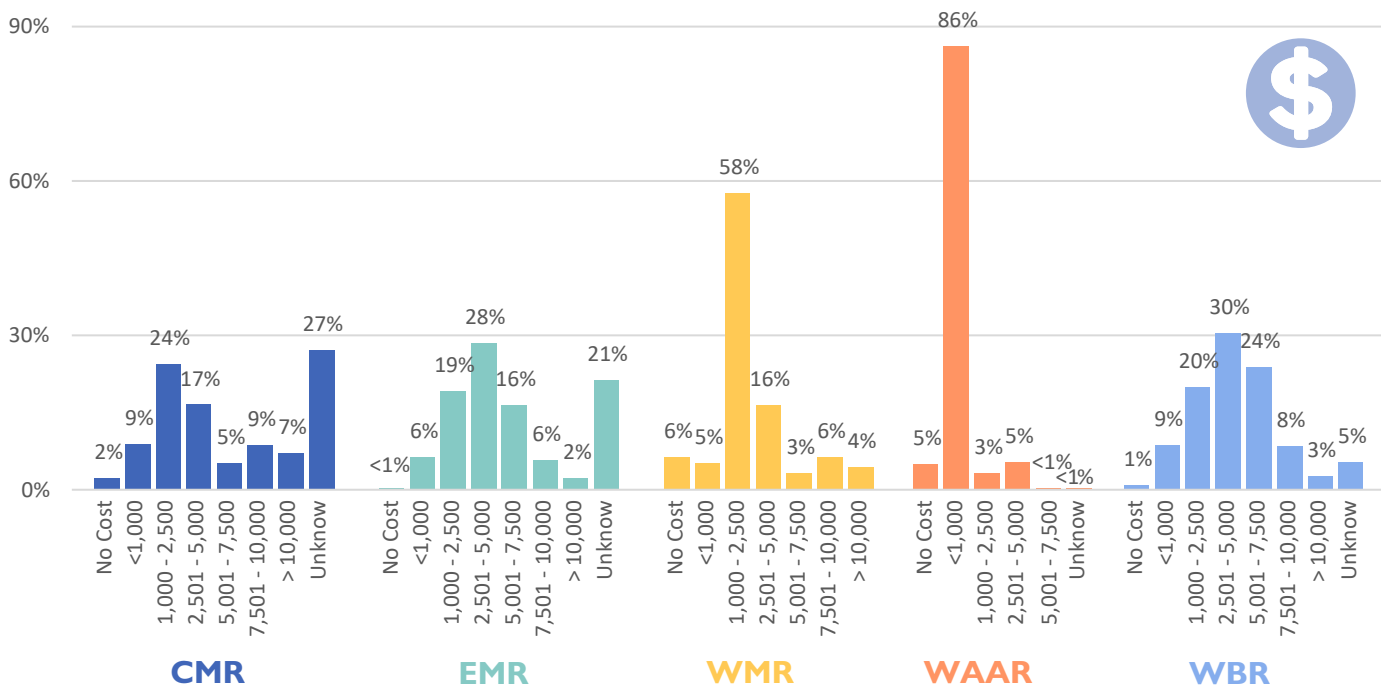
Young migrants travelling on the EMR and CMR were those reporting higher costs, followed by those travelling the WAAR or WMR. On the CMR, African nationals spent less money than migrants departing from Asian countries. On WMR and WAAR, most respondents reported to have paid the entire journey upfront. In contrast, on EMR and CMR, payments were more likely to be split according to individual legs of the journey. Comparing the responses of younger migrants to the overall population, the cost of the journey, per bracket, remained largely unchanged.

Overall, migrants travelling along the WMR had the shortest and most direct trips, while those travelling along the CMR had the longest and most complex ones. Findings from this section show that migrants paid different amounts, using different methods depending on their route and that their departure location and transit countries determine the characteristics of their journey. Those travelling the EMR and WBR were most likely to

experience returns and push backs, while the group was also most likely to travel with family members. With more migration along the WAAR in 2023, the number of deadly shipwrecks also increased. While the WAAR is riskier than other routes due to very long crossings and poorly equipped, small boats, migrants reported the crossing to the Canary Islands to be more affordable. Of those interviewees who embarked on the crossing, 86 per cent reported to have paid less than 1,000 USD for their journey. It should be noted that, if departing from Nouadhibou, Mauritania, a crossing to the Canary Islands is a journey of approximately 775 kilometres.³⁸ More than one third of the respondents who travelled on the WAAR indicated that they departed from Mauritania. Interviewees travelling along the CMR were more varied by nationality and by travel arrangements. Length, complexity and costs of the journey for young migrants reaching Italy via the CMR are even more pronounced when the number of countries to be transited increases. On all routes, young migrants and children showed a higher incidence of being intercepted, pushed back or returned by authorities than adults.

³⁸ Black, 2019:10.

Figure 8: Estimated total cost of the journey since departure in USD, by route (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082



Migrant child drawing, migrants' hub in Catania, Sicily, September 2024. ©IOM Italy 2024

5 CURRENT NEEDS AND INTENTIONS

5.1 CURRENT MIGRANTS' NEEDS

Respondents were asked about their two most important needs at the moment of the survey. Overall, young migrants expressed the need for support with employment (37%), support with documentation (23%), language courses (12%), adult education (12%), and legal services (9%) with some variations across routes. This highlights the variety of urgent humanitarian and emergency needs for individuals who still consider themselves in transit. These needs also relate to their desire to regularize their legal status and start a new life at their destination. In comparison to all age groups the need for education and language courses was more pronounced among younger respondents.

Along the CMR, half of the respondents mentioned the need of support with documentation (47%), followed by support with employment (31%) or access to adult education (30%). The latter indication is particularly notable, mentioned by only 19 percent of the total sample across all age groups surveyed. Further needs mentioned by young migrants travelling on the CMR were language courses (21%) and long-term accommodation (12%).

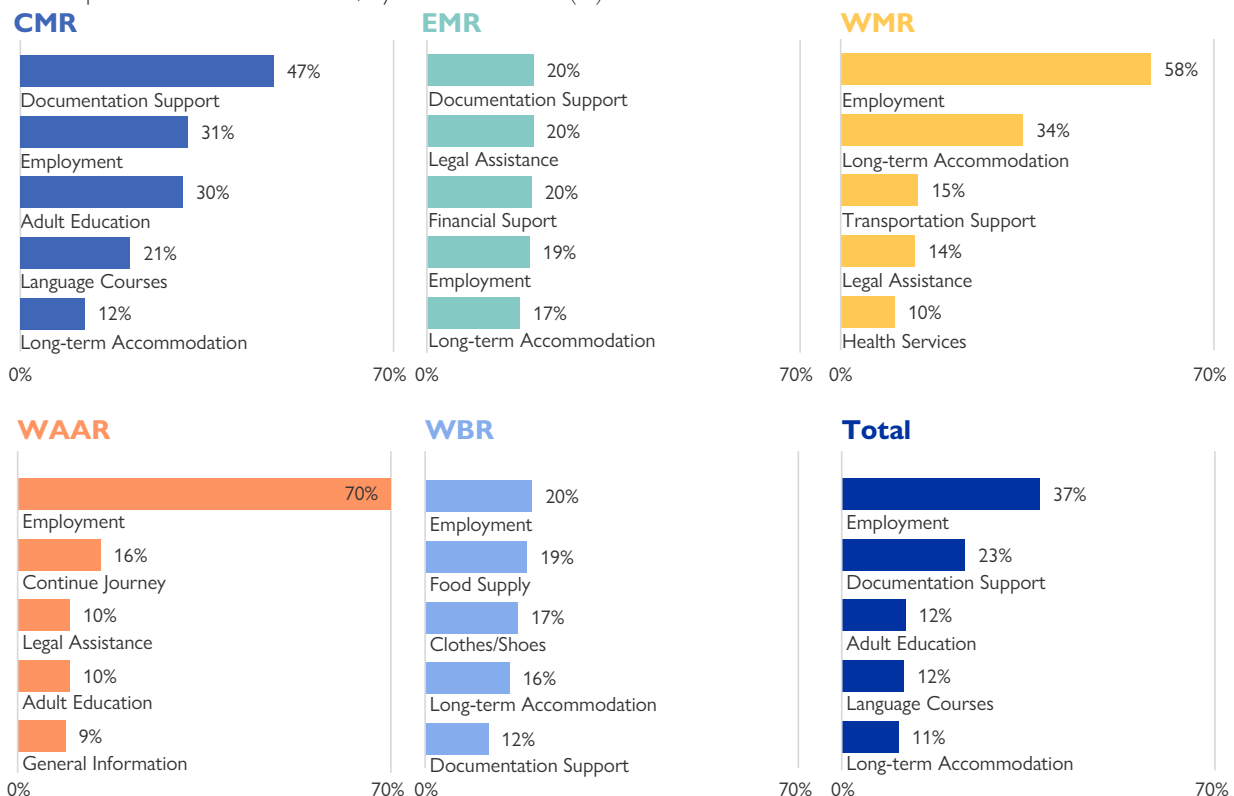
Along the EMR, migrants mentioned employment and

financial support (19% and 20%), documentation assistance (20%) and legal services (20%) as their most pressing needs. An almost congruent picture unfolds along the EMR's tangent, the Western Balkan Route. On average, migrants that travel along the EMR are older than on the other routes, potentially reflected in a higher incidence of the need for health assistance. Only 11 per cent of young migrants reported this need while it was almost twice this figure in the overall sample. This trend is also observable when comparing figures across all routes. Ten per cent of respondents of all age groups mentioned the need for health assistance while it was merely six among younger migrants.

Along the WMR, employment support was mentioned in more than half of the cases (58%), followed by support with documentation (34%), transportation support (15%), legal services (14%) and health services (10%).

Along the WAAR, employment support was mentioned by almost three quarters of migrants (70%) with others mentioning the desire to continue their journey (16%), legal services (10%) and support with documentation (9%), and adult education (10%).

Figure 9: Top 5 needs at the moment, by route and total (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n = 2,082- more than 1 answer possible, total is higher than 100%

5.2 INTENDED DESTINATION

Italy (35%), Spain (21%), Germany (15%), France (11%) and Greece (5%) were reported as top 5 countries of intended destination, with some differences across routes, age and sex of the respondents.

Most young migrants arriving in Italy stated that Italy is their final destination for the time being (81%), with a minority mentioning Germany (6%) or France (5%) as their desired final destination.



The intended destinations of young migrants in Greece were more evenly split between those who intended to stay in Greece (35%), those who mentioned Germany (19%) and those who wanted to reach another European

country (24%). The desire to continue their journeys towards another European country was slightly more pronounced among older respondents than for adolescents and children.

Children and adolescents travelling along the WMR primarily intended to remain in Spain (77%), 20 per cent intended to reach France while 1 per cent mentioned Germany.

The respondents that arrived through the WAAR also intended to remain in Spain in most cases (66%), with others mentioning France (25%), Italy (3%) or Germany (2%).

Table 4: Top countries of intended destination, by route, sex and total (%)

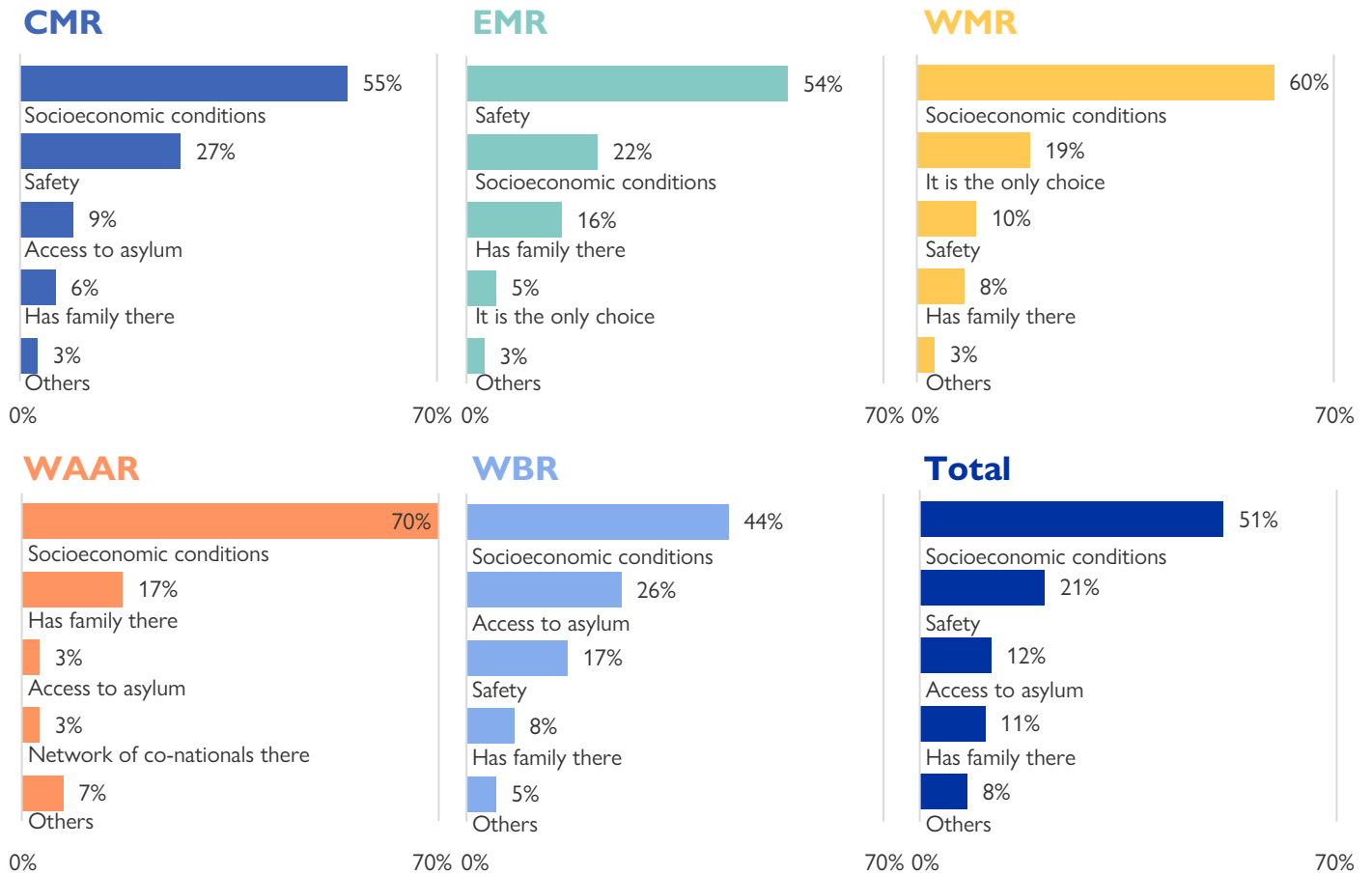
Destination	CMR	EMR	WMR	WAAR	WBR			Total
Italy	81%	5%	0%	3%	40%	19%	36%	35%
Spain	1%	0%	77%	66%	1%	17%	22%	21%
Germany	6%	19%	1%	2%	33%	16%	15%	15%
France	5%	2%	20%	25%	8%	23%	10%	11%
Greece	0%	35%	0%	0%	0%	7%	4%	5%
Europe	0%	24%	0%	0%	0%	9%	3%	3%

Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

Slightly more than half (51%) of the young migrants interviewed, stated that they chose their country of destination due to appealing socioeconomic conditions, including the education and welfare system, social security, and job opportunities. Twenty-one per cent said that the choice was made due to safety reasons, while 11 per cent reported to have some members of the (extended) family already at the intended destination. About 39 per cent of respondents reported to have information about how to access the asylum system or how to regularize their status once at destination. Notably, across all routes, younger respondents, in comparison to older migrants that have participated in the survey, demonstrated an elevated tendency to choose their country of destination based on socioeconomic considerations.

For young migrants along the EMR, safety was the central reason driving their decision (54%). Young migrants in Italy mentioned the socioeconomic conditions more frequently than the average (55% versus 51%), while the presence of family members was most prominently mentioned by young migrants travelling along the EMR and the WAAR (16% and 17%, respectively). Young migrants arriving in Spain via the WMR more frequently reported that their intended destination is “the only choice” (19%, compared to 3% overall). Notably, children and adolescents that travelled on the WBR, more often mentioned that ease in accessing asylum procedures is a central motivation for choosing their destination. The incidence here was more than twice the average (26% versus 12%).

Figure 10: Main reasons to choose the intended destination, by route and total (%)



Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

Thirty-five per cent of young adolescents and children mentioned that they had family members somewhere in Europe. Specifically, 16 per cent had at least one family member at destination and none elsewhere, while 8 per cent mentioned family elsewhere in Europe but not in the country of destination. Some 11 per cent stated that they had family members both at destination and somewhere

else. Primarily, these contacts are with persons belonging to the extended family. Comparing different age groups, there is little difference as to whether the respondent had family members in the country of destination, varying from 28 per cent for children below the age of 18 to 30 per cent for adults above 24.



6 VULNERABILITY AND PROTECTION RISKS DURING THE JOURNEY

6.1 PROTECTION PROBLEMS DURING THE JOURNEY

Over half (53%) of the adolescents and young adults reported experiencing at least one of the following problems during their journey: financial difficulties, hunger, robbery, lack of shelter, health issues, document-related issues, or attacks by others. This was 11 percentage points higher than what was found among respondents older than 24 years,³⁹ and it was the highest among youth on the CMR. These findings are consistent with previous rounds of FMS in Europe.⁴⁰

In particular, travelling along the CMR is associated with multiple problems experienced at the same time. Many respondents reported to have experienced financial issues (64%), hunger (63%), and robbery (59%). High shares of problems were also found on the WBR and on the EMR, with financial problems, lack of shelter and hunger most frequently reported. Shares below 10 per cent for any of the listed problems were only found among respondents on the WMR and WAAR.

Table 5: Share of respondents reporting problems during the journey, by route, sex and total (%)

Protection Problems	CMR	EMR	WMR	WAAR	WBR			Total
At least 1 of the below	65%	45%	11%	23%	58%	45%	54%	42%
Financial	64%	27%	1%	6%	47%	30%	36%	36%
Hunger	63%	24%	8%	6%	31%	26%	31%	31%
No shelter	42%	18%	1%	6%	38%	21%	27%	26%
Robbery	59%	13%	1%	7%	20%	18%	26%	25%
Health issues	39%	11%	5%	6%	15%	19%	18%	18%
Lost or stolen documents	32%	12%	3%	4%	6%	8%	13%	13%
Attacks	13%	12%	2%	1%	4%	9%	7%	7%
Others	17%	7%	4%	1%	5%	6%	7%	7%

Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

Health issues were usually related to living and travelling in precarious circumstances, with no, scarce or dirty food and water, while they were also reported to be linked to violence, especially at border crossings. Female respondents more frequently reported health issues and attacks by others compared to male respondents. Please consult Box 6 for more detailed information.

Some respondents supplemented their accounts with contextual information about the problems they encountered during their journey. A wide range of issues

was reported, including problems related to the conditions of the journey itself (experienced hardship on boats or walking long distances in desert or forest areas), episodes of theft and robbery of money, phones, documents and other personal belongings, occurrences of violence and imprisonment, which will be further investigated in the next section.

Overall and with few exceptions, incidents reported happened at the last stages of the journey, in countries that are closer to Europe and from where migrants eventually

³⁹ IOM, 2024. On average, 42 per cent of the whole sample reported at least one problem.

⁴⁰ Galos, E., L. Bartolini, H. Cook and N. Grant (2017); IOM and UNICEF (2017).

arrive in a European country. Libya (23%) remained the country with the highest number of recorded problems despite not being the main departure point for migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean in 2023. This figure

was followed by respondents who reported experiencing at least one problem in Tunisia (13%), Algeria (12%), and in Türkiye, Greece, and Italy, each at 9%.

Box 6: Most frequently reported health issues

Injuries and Physical Traumas:

- Broken bones (arms, legs, ribs, teeth)
- Scars and burns, injuries due to walking long distances and to crossing barbed and to being beaten or tortured (various body parts)

Respiratory Problems:

- Asthma and breathing difficulties
- Cough, bronchitis and pulmonary infections (pneumonia, tuberculosis)

Skin Conditions:

- Skin infections
- Allergies and rashes
- Scabies
- Itchy skin, bedbug bites
- Burns from the boat journey

Digestive Issues:

- Stomach aches and pain
- Infections (stomach virus, typhoid fever)

Dental Issues:

- Toothache and dental infections
- Broken teeth

Psychological and Emotional Health:

- Depression and stress
- Anxiety and trauma from torture
- Sleep disturbances

General Pain and Weakness:

- Body pain (back, legs, arms), muscle and joint pain
- Chronic headaches
- Fatigue and weakness

Fever and Infections:

- Frequent fever
- Blood infections
- Ear infections
- COVID-19

Reproductive Health:

- Pregnancy complications
- Sexual health issues

Chronic or pre-journey conditions:

- High or low blood pressure
- Diabetes

6.2 INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND EXPLOITATION

The questionnaire also included a module that gathers data on migrants' vulnerability to different forms of abuse, violence, and exploitation they may have experienced or witnessed during the journey. Overall, the 2023 survey included eight questions aiming at capturing information on unpaid work, forced work, offered marriage, deprivation of liberty, physical violence, forced travel, deception, access to identity documents.

While these questions are not meant to identify potential victims of trafficking or abuse and exploitation, they provide indications about recurrent instances and risks to which migrants are exposed during their journeys. If

interviewers came across respondents who requested further support, they referred these cases to the relevant protection actors.⁴¹

Over two thirds (68%) of all youth in the sample reported to have experienced at least one of the eight types of incidents described in the survey. The share of respondents that preferred not to reply ranged from zero to two per cent for any of these questions.

The share of reported incidents was higher for adolescents and young adults travelling along the CMR (86%), the WBR and the WMR (77%, respectively), while it was lower than



⁴¹ For more information, please refer to the [Methodology](#).

the average for migrants along the EMR (54%) and the WAAR (44%). Female respondents, on average, reported the covered incidents less frequently than males. This can be partially explained by the fact that the list of indicators pertains more to the sphere of travel and work, while it does not specifically target types of violence which are more frequently associated with girls and women like sexual violence. Additionally, this can result from the fact that the young females in the sample were more likely to

travel with other family members and that being in a family group could act as a protective factor.

Overall, children in the sample reported experiencing almost all of the issues covered by the survey more frequently than young adults.⁴² This provides additional evidence of the specific vulnerabilities to different types of abuses and violence during these irregular journeys experienced by children, especially for those who travel alone or without family members.

Table 7: Share of respondents reporting problems during the journey, by route, sex and total (%)

	CMR	EMR	WMR	WAAR	WBR			14-17y	18-24y	Total
1 Unpaid work	36%	7%	0%	2%	13%	9%	15%	20%	14%	15%
2 Forced to work	14%	4%	0%	0%	2%	3%	5%	11%	4%	5%
3 Offered marriage	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	3%	<1%	0%	1%	1%
4 Held against will	31%	6%	0%	0%	6%	4%	12%	19%	10%	11%
5 Physical violence	54%	21%	1%	1%	24%	15%	25%	35%	23%	24%
6 Forced to travel	7%	8%	0%	0%	4%	7%	4%	4%	4%	4%
7 Lied to travel	7%	12%	1%	0%	12%	5%	8%	9%	8%	8%
8 Access to identity document										
Never had	49%	19%	79%	55%	49%	38%	49%	61%	46%	48%
Someone else has control over them	14%	4%	0%	2%	2%	2%	6%	2%	6%	6%
Lost	15%	7%	6%	5%	8%	4%	10%	14%	8%	9%
Stolen	1%	4%	2%	<1%	10%	2%	5%	3%	5%	4%
At least 1 out of all	86%	54%	77%	44%	77%	48%	71%	83%	66%	68%
At least 1 out of 1-4	50%	12%	0%	2%	18%	13%	22%	31%	19%	21%
At least 1 out of 1-5	65%	25%	1%	3%	35%	23%	33%	41%	30%	32%
At least 1 out of 1-7	70%	40%	6%	6%	45%	26%	40%	50%	38%	39%

Source: DTM FMS Europe. n=2,082

⁴² IOM, 2024. Overall, children and young adults report more incidents than adults older than 24 years of age.

6.2.1 UNPAID LABOUR

About 15 per cent of respondents (20% of children and 14% of young adults) reported that they have worked without receiving the expected payment at least once during the journey. The share is the highest along the CMR (36%) and the lowest along the WMR (<1%). Boys and young men reported unpaid work more frequently than young women (15% compared to 9%).

About 30 per cent of the reported experiences happened in Libya. Other countries frequently mentioned were Türkiye (17%), Algeria (16%), Tunisia (13%), and Romania (10%).

Respondents described instances of unpaid labour in various kinds of manual work within the construction sector (stonework, painting, truck unloading), in farming and in the cleaning sector (in private houses, in restaurants, in car washing sites, on the streets).



In Libya, I was breaking stones in a construction site without being paid.
 Young man from South Sudan, 18 years old, interviewed in Sicily, Italy



6.2.2 FORCED LABOUR



About five per cent reported having been forced to work or conduct activities against their will. This almost exclusively happened to migrants along the CMR (14%) and to a lesser extent along the EMR (4%). Children reported forced labour more than young adults (11% compared to 4%).

Most incidents happened in Libya (59%), while others are reported to have happened in Türkiye (13%), Algeria (10%), Tunisia (9%), Morocco (3%) and others.

In the case of forced labour the most frequently mentioned sectors are construction, farming, and cleaning, although in a few instances female respondents also mentioned sex work and hard manual work while being imprisoned by smugglers or armed groups.



I had to call my family to send me 5,000 dollars to be released from detention. I did not want to do it, but I could die under their torture
 Young man from Pakistan, 22 years old, interviewed in Sicily, Italy



6.2.3 OFFERS OF AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE

One per cent of respondents (13 respondents, 6 females and 7 males) reported they had been approached by someone offering a marriage. Offers of arranged marriage to respondents or close family members are reported to have happened mostly in Libya, Türkiye, and Greece.



6.2.4 BEING KEPT AT A CERTAIN LOCATION AGAINST THEIR WILL

Eleven per cent of respondents (19% of children, 10% of young adults) reported they had been held in a location against their will during their journey by individuals or groups other than official authorities. This was never reported by migrants along the WAAR and WMR, seldomly reported by migrants travelling along the EMR and WBR (6%, respectively), and more frequently cited (31%) among those on the CMR.



The dynamics in Libya stand out in this context. Some 57 per cent of the respondents reported to have spent periods in detention-like conditions, held against their will. This was linked to the periods spent waiting for the transportation to be arranged from cities in the desert to the northern part of the country, transfers from different coastal cities (for example, from Misrata to Tripoli), or accounts of “kidnapping for ransom” or “detention” by smugglers to obtain more money to be freed and to be able to reach locations from where to embark on different kinds of vessels (rubber boats, wooden fishing boats) to cross the Mediterranean.⁴³ Algeria (11%), Tunisia (8%), Türkiye (7%) and other countries were also mentioned by the respondents.



I was kidnapped at the entrance in Libya and detained for 15 months until my family paid 9,000 dollars to save my life selling their land and made debts.

Young man from Somalia, 18 years old, interviewed in Sicily, Italy



6.2.5 EXPERIENCED SOME FORM OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

About 24 per cent of interviewees (35% of all children compared to 23% of young adults) reported to have experienced some form of physical violence during their journeys. This indicates a higher prevalence of experienced violence for younger migrants than for older brackets of the sample population. Similarly, as for other indicators, physical violence was reported mostly among migrants travelling along the CMR (54%), and to a lesser extent among migrants on the EMR (21%) and WBR (24%) while rarely among migrants on the WMR and WAAR (<1% and <1% respectively). Coherently, instances of physical violence (503 in total) were reported to have happened mostly in Libya (31%), Tunisia (13%), Türkiye (12%), Algeria (11%), Bulgaria (10%) and other transit countries.

Some accounts were in relation to practices of smugglers and facilitators at some point of the journey, while others referred to the activities of police and other authorities especially while patrolling border areas.



I was hit by a smuggler when I was in Türkiye. He was supposed to get me across the border with Bulgaria.

Young man from Morocco, 18 years old, interviewed in Kosovo*



⁴³ UN, 2023. This is in line with existing evidence from UN agencies and academic studies. Please see the latest Secretary-General's annual report on migrant smuggling and human trafficking off the coast of Libya, covering developments from 30 August 2022 to 10 August 2023.

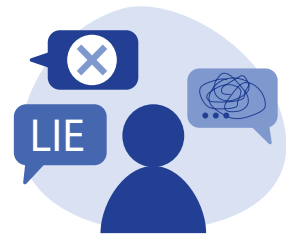


6.2.6 FORCED TO TRAVEL OR MOVE⁴⁴

Four per cent of respondents reported that they were forced to travel or to move (7% on the CMR, 8% on the EMR, 4% on the WBR and less than 1% on WMR and WAAR). These incidents were reported to have taken place in Türkiye (20%), Romania (19%), Libya (16%) and Greece (11%).

6.2.7 DECEIVED TO TRAVEL⁴⁵

Eight per cent of the respondents stated that they had been lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises, or otherwise deceived to travel or to move (12% on the EMR, 12% on the WBR, 7% on the CMR, 1% on the WMR and none on the WAAR). False information and indebtedness were described both in relation to the journey (logistics, organization) and in relation to the type of work to be found at destination. This was reported to have happened in Libya (25%), Türkiye (20%), Algeria (11%) and Romania (9%).



“I was told the boat was going to Italy, not to Greece”

Boy from Egypt, 17 years old, interviewed in Greece



6.2.8 TRAVEL DOCUMENTS⁴⁶



Almost 48 per cent of the young interviewees reported that they never had their own travel documents, while 9 per cent reported they lost them during the journey, 6 per cent said that someone else had control over them and 4 per cent stated they had been stolen. About 5 per cent preferred not to answer to the question.

Overall, the share of those who never had documents is higher on the WMR (79%), on the WAAR (55%) and on the CMR (49%), while it is lower among migrants on the EMR (19%). Notably, migrants on the CMR reported more frequently than those on the other routes that they had no control over their own travel documents (14%). The lack of valid travel documentation was reported more frequently by children than by young adults: 61 per cent of those younger than 18 reported that they never had access to valid travel documentation, compared to 46 per cent for those between 18 and 24.

⁴⁴ This question has been included in the FMS questionnaire in 2023.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This report explores the challenges faced by adolescents and young migrants within mixed migration flows to Europe, focusing on findings from IOM's DTM Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) conducted in 2023 with migrants aged 14 to 24. It offers an updated perspective on previous analyses conducted by IOM in the region, by examining data from 5,029 FMS surveys collected in nine countries, with 2,082 of these surveys (41%) specifically from adolescents and young adults.

Although the sample structure cannot be fully validated against the reference population due to the lack of age, sex and nationality disaggregated data for arrivals to Europe via the Mediterranean, Western African Atlantic and Western Balkan routes, the surveyed group's profile aligns with known characteristics of migrants on each monitored route to Europe. The report further analyses differences in experiences based on gender and age group across various migration routes.

While the definition of youth changes with circumstances and across different countries in relation to the demographic, sociocultural and economic contexts, using the 14-24 age group serves the purpose of proposing a systematic and quantitative account of the needs and experiences of young individuals moving to Europe by mainly irregular means.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood presents unique challenges that are not fully addressed by current research or policy frameworks. Moreover, the lack of comprehensive, disaggregated data on migrant youth as provided by national authorities complicates efforts to have an overall understanding of main profiles and trends, and the ability to develop effective and tailored policies in the countries which are the main destination of the adolescents and young adults on the move to Europe.

The report hence promotes a more comprehensive and systematic data collection on migration flows to Europe disaggregated by sex, age, nationality and migration status in line with the first objective of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)⁴⁷ and other relevant international frameworks.

Migrant youth, particularly those below 18 years of age and those travelling alone, face significant protection risks, including physical violence and exploitation. This report underscores the necessity of implementing stronger protection mechanisms tailored to the specific needs of young migrants and it emphasises the need for research and policies that “do not create, exacerbate or unintentionally increase vulnerabilities of migrants” as they fail to apply “a human rights-based, gender- and disability-responsive, as well as age- and child-sensitive approach” (GCM, Objective 7).⁴⁸



Clothes lying outside the containers, migrants' reception center in Udine, Friuli Venezia Giulia, September 2024. ©IOM Italy 2024

⁴⁷ UN, 2018. Global Compact for Migration.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Objective 7.

8 METHODOLOGY

FMS are part of the IOM's DTM activities in the Mediterranean and WB region. These started in October 2015 and are conducted within the framework of the IOM's research on populations on the move through the

Mediterranean, Western Balkan, and Western African Atlantic routes to Europe. All analyses, together with the latest data, can be accessed via DTM's Europe portal: <https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals>.

8.1 TARGET POPULATION

The FMS in Europe target the following migrant and refugee population:

- third country (non-European) nationals who travel to or arrived in Europe by land and by sea, irrespective of their legal status;

- individuals aged 14 and above;
- individuals who have arrived in the country of the survey no more than one year prior to the interview;
- individuals who have not taken the same survey over the past year.

8.2 CONSENT

The survey is voluntary and anonymous. Adults consent verbally while the written consent of a parent or legal guardian is required to propose the survey to potential respondents between 14 and 17 years of age.⁴⁹ In the case of unaccompanied children, the consent to approach and propose them to participate was obtained from the assigned legal guardian in the dedicated reception facility. IOM staff in the field follows relevant child protection safeguards when engaging with adolescents and has a

referral mechanism in place to provide further information and to support vulnerable migrants including children when needed.

Interviews are carried out one-on-one with participants in safe and isolated settings, and only those who consent are included. Migrants could decline to respond to individual questions or to interrupt the interview if they wished to do so.

8.3 DEPLOYMENT

In 2023, the FMS questionnaire was available in e-format in Kobo (English, French, Arabic) and in paper forms translated into Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Italian, Greek, Pashto, Spanish and Urdu.

The fieldwork was conducted by teams of DTM 56

trained enumerators (28 men, 28 women), with a variety of profiles and linguistic skills. DTM enumerators are trained on DTM standards, survey content and technique, data protection, gender mainstreaming, GBV and child protection mechanisms and referrals.

8.4 SAMPLING

Although the total number of arrivals and new registrations in the countries covered by the FMS is available for the reference period, in many countries data disaggregated by sex, age, nationalities and locations of entry are not available. Considering this and due to limited resources and access to different locations depending on the country,

IOM's DTM mapped a list of locations – flow monitoring points (FMPs) – that are known as key points of entry, transit or stay of migrants arriving by land and by sea. A selection of FMPs to be covered by the data collection has been made considering the access to land and sea border crossing points and disembarkation areas, registration

⁴⁹ In Spain, the survey was proposed only to individuals who were 18 years old or older.

centres, reception centres of various kinds for irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, transit points and connection hubs (train and bus stations) and alike.

8.5 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

DTM's FMS aims at gathering information about migrants' profiles, their background in the country of origin, their journeys, reasons for moving and intentions. It also includes questions that may provide indication about risks and vulnerabilities of migrants during their journeys.

Baseline module. It captures data on the demographic profile of the respondents, their education and employment background, the circumstances of their migration journey and migration drivers, their place of origin or their last country of habitual residence, main needs and intended countries of destination.

Violence, abuse and exploitation. It captures experiences of exploitation, violence and abuse that may amount to human trafficking, lived by the respondents during the journey. The module was developed together with IOM's Migrant Protection Unit and gathers information on events and practices, experienced directly by the respondent or by their family member(s), or that are witnessed by the respondent during the journey. The module was revised in 2023 to include three new questions on travel organization and access to documents, which were added to the existing ones after a pilot phase. It is composed of eight questions that aim to capture information about whether the respondent, during their journey:

1. Worked or performed other activities without receiving the expected payment
2. Was forced to perform work or other activities against their will
3. Was approached by someone offering a marriage (to either the respondent or to a close family member)
4. Was kept at a certain location against their will (by

8.6 ANALYSIS

Raw country-datasets from Kobo have been cleaned with automatic routines and manual checks, including AI-powered translations of all qualitative comments by respondents into English from other languages used by enumerators (Spanish, French, Italian), and merged in a single dataset. The descriptive analysis of this report focuses on differences by main population groups

DTM enumerators applied a non-random convenience sampling procedure in each of the selected FMPs for the data collection.

- persons other than the authorities of the country)
5. Had experienced any form of physical violence
6. Was forced to travel or to move
7. Was lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises, or otherwise deceived to move or to travel
8. Had access to travel documents during the journey

The experiences described in these questions do not aim to identify cases of human trafficking as defined by international and national legal instruments.

Return awareness. The module contains questions related to return intentions, connecting with outreach activities on the existence and functioning of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes in several countries where the survey is deployed.

Overall, the formulation of the questions and guidance to DTM enumerators is made in line with the "Do No Harm" principles and the principles of Protection Information Management (PIM) and the IOM's institutional approach to protection in [emergency and crisis contexts](#), including the [IOM's Institutional Framework for Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Crises](#). Some questions and specifically those included in the second module of the survey may lead to disclosure of sensitive information and protection incidents by respondents. IOM's DTM staff in the field follows relevant protection safeguards, including those specifically developed for child migrants, and has a referral mechanism in place to provide further information and support to vulnerable migrants including children when needed.⁵⁰

considering systematically the age group, the sex, the nationality and the route of the respondents. A chi-square test of independence was performed between pair of variables and all presented correlations are statistically significant. Statistically significant correlations do not imply causality between the variables. Anonymized citations are also included.

⁵⁰ IOM, 2022. Please see the DTM data collection section of the IOM's Emergency Manual.

8.7 LIMITATIONS

The findings are representative of the individuals surveyed in the covered locations and during the indicated timeframe. The data should not be generalized and should not represent a full picture of regional mixed migration flows to Europe.

From the information available about the target population in the period covered, some groups or profile may be over or underrepresented depending on the access to different types of locations. Migrants can also have different attitudes in being interviewed, depending on the location, the overall context, individual characteristics and the availability of time and sense of safety. Although data collectors were trained before and throughout the data collection, other selection biases cannot be completely ruled out. Migrants' willingness to share their experiences may depend, among others, on issues related to the sensitivity of certain topics, the existence of different

cultural norms, level of trust and interest in sharing personal stories, the possible fatigue among the targeted individuals with interviews, the specific conditions of each FMP where surveys were conducted, physical space to allow privacy, the gender and the language spoken of both migrants and interviewers.

Finally, women overall provided a lower rate of positive responses than men to questions related to abuse, violence, and exploitation. This might be due to their lower propensity to share their stories compared to men, and from the fact that FMS do not include questions on sexual exploitation or gender-based violence, besides the one on arranged marriage, which are abuses disproportionately more frequently reported by women and girls in migration. Some of these incidents have been nevertheless mentioned by both female and male respondents in the open comments.

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