



COVID-19 — FLOW MONITORING REGISTRY

Publication date:
June 2021

Mobility Trends in West & Central Africa (2019 – 2021)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally shaped mobility in the region, as the sanitary situation, mobility restrictions and other economic measures adopted by states heavily impacted population movements. The Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR) is a tool of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) which records movements crossing areas of high-density mobility (areas of departure, transit and destination). FMR gathers data on the numbers, profiles, provenance and destinations of travellers crossing these strategic transit points.

To better understand the ways and the extent to which the COVID-19 crisis is impacting mobility in the region, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been working to analyse Flow Monitoring Registry data collected at key transit points in West and Central Africa. This report presents an examination of trends in migration flows at Flow Monitoring Points in Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria (where FMPs were active throughout the reporting period) between 2019 and the first quarter of 2021, in order to examine the impact of COVID-19 mobility restriction measures on regional migration as well as the evolution of mobility throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Volume of flows: The number of travellers registered at FMPs across the West and Central Africa region witnessed a significant jump between 2020 and 2021. Despite the fact that most land border crossing are still officially closed, cross-border flows grew by 33 per cent in the first quarter of 2021 (when compared to the same period in 2020), while internal flows increased by 24 per cent, reflecting the fact that migration flows increased substantially in the first three months of 2021.

Chart I compares flows observed at FMPs in 2020 and 2021 with flows recorded on the same month, one year earlier. The graphs illustrates the fact that, at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, flows decreased substantially, reaching levels much lower than in 2019 between March and June 2020. In the second half of the year, as mobility grew, migration flows were much larger than in 2019, peaking in October. This growing trend continued in 2021, as the comparative volume of flows increased significantly when compared to the same period in 2020. This increase in long-term flows is explained by multiple factors including growing numbers of seasonal labour migrants travelling to mining sites and agricultural lands throughout the region as well as North Africa..

Weekly flows: Population flows observed significant upheaval in 2020 and 2021, as shown in **Chart II**. As borders were closed and mobility restriction measures adopted, flows decreased drastically between March and June 2020, before witnessing a progressive increase from July 2020 onwards after internal and cross-border mobility restarted and controls were loosened. Migration flows then stabilized in the final quarter of the year 2020. Mobility grew in January and February 2021 before dropping substantially in March 2021, a trend observed each year linked to movements during the end-of-year holidays.

Types of flows: As displayed in **Chart III**, cross-border and internal flows followed the same patterns during the reporting period. Both declined in the second quarter of 2020, before increasing gradually in the second half of the year and in 2021. Internal movements grew at a more rapid pace, as restrictions in internal mobility were eased more swiftly and international borders remained closed, making cross-boundary mobility more difficult. and internal movements (Chart IV) were both affected by COVID-19 mobility restriction measures.

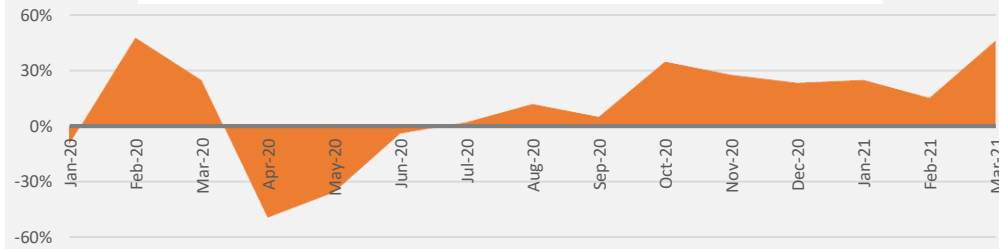
+33%

CHANGE IN **CROSS-BORDER FLOWS** OBSERVED BETWEEN 1ST QUARTER OF 2020 AND 1ST QUARTER 2021

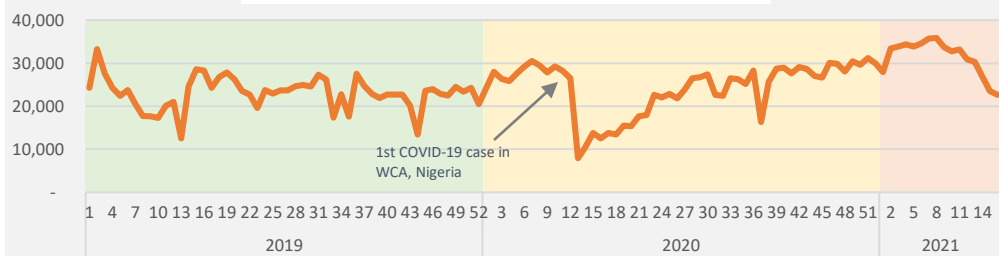
+24%

CHANGE IN **INTERNAL FLOWS** OBSERVED BETWEEN 1ST QUARTER OF 2020 AND 1ST QUARTER 2021

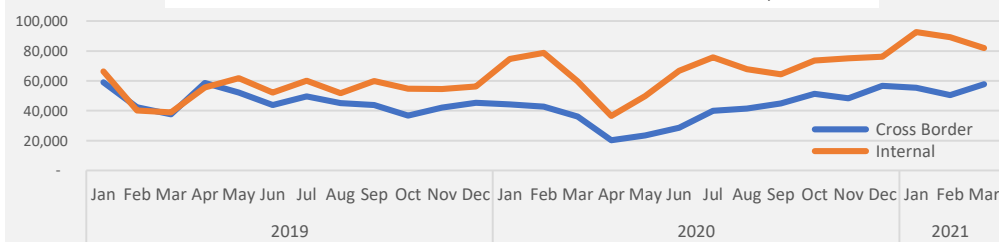
I. MOBILITY TRENDS IN WCA FMPs 2020-2021 (BASELINE FROM SAME MONTH, PREVIOUS YEAR)



II. WEEKLY NUMBER OF OBSERVED INDIVIDUALS AT FMPs, by WEEK



III. MONTHLY EVOLUTION OF CROSS-BORDER AND INTERNAL FLOWS, 2019-2021



INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION
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<https://dtm.iom.int/>
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When quoting, paraphrasing, or in any other way using the information mentioned in this report, the source needs to be stated appropriately as follows: "Source: The International Organization for Migration [Month, Year], Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)"

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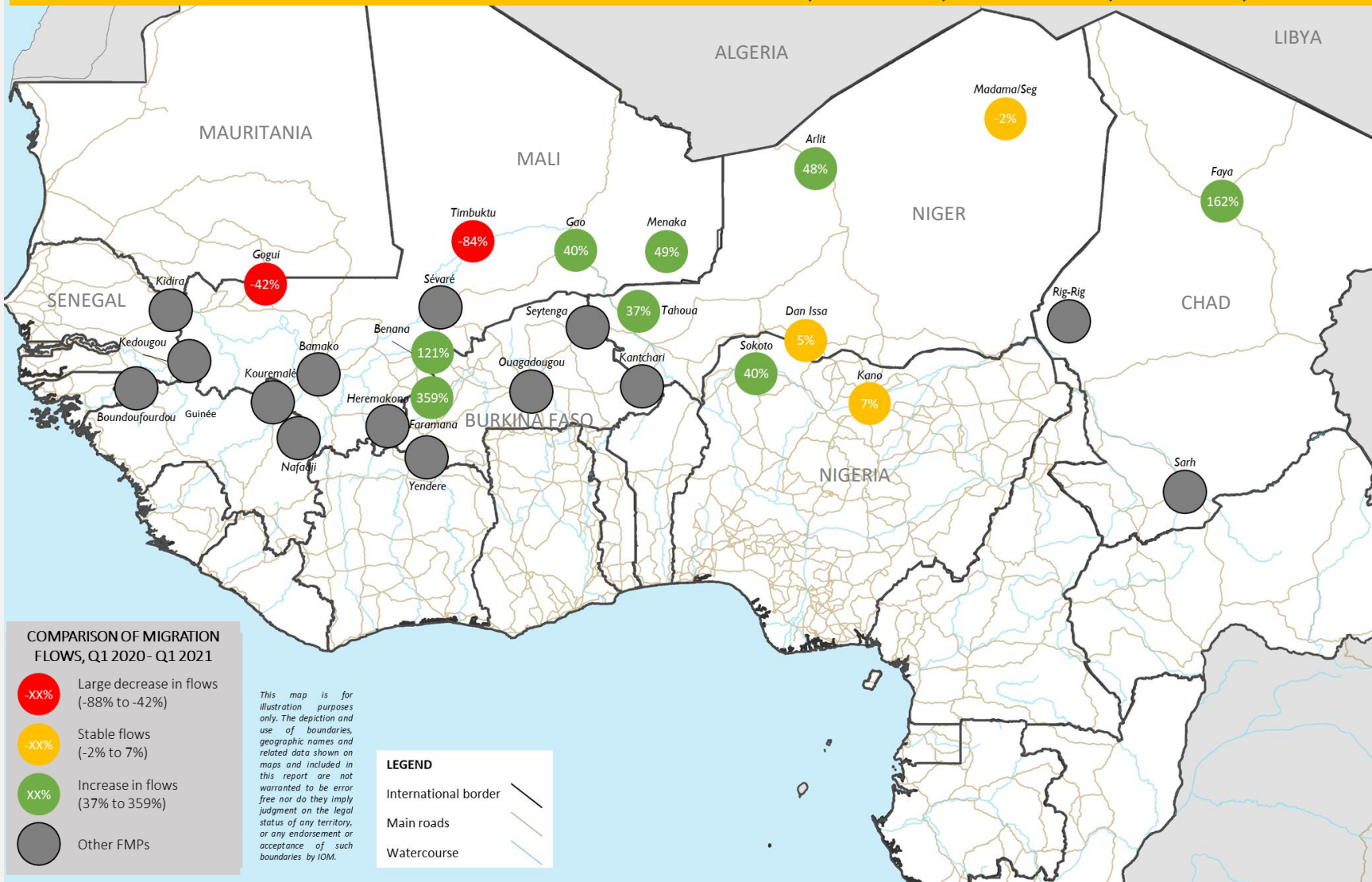
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COMPARISON OF CROSS-BORDER FLOWS BETWEEN 2020 (JAN-MAR) AND 2021 (JAN-MAR), BY FMP

This map illustrates the variation in volume of cross-border flows from 2020 to 2021 at Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) across West and Central Africa (WCA). Cross-border flows between Mali and Mauritania decreased, a trend which may be due to the fact that land borders in Mauritania continue to be closed, stringently enforced by border authorities. In contrast, large increases observed at FMPs along borders between Mali and Burkina Faso, Mali and Algeria, Niger and Algeria, presumably linked to the movements of seasonal labourers to mines and farms

Despite the fact that flows have been growing throughout West and Central Africa, many land border posts across the region are still officially closed to international travel.



COMPARISON OF MIGRATION FLOWS, Q1 2020 - Q1 2021

- -XX% Large decrease in flows (-88% to -42%)
- -XX% Stable flows (-2% to 7%)
- XX% Increase in flows (37% to 359%)
- Other FMPs

This map is for illustration purposes only. The depiction and use of boundaries, geographic names and related data shown on maps and included in this report are not warranted to be error free nor do they imply judgment on the legal status of any territory, or any endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries by IOM.

LEGEND

- International border
- Main roads
- Watercourse