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HARROWING JOURNEYS

Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation

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September 2017

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and well-being of migrants.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary

6

CHAPTER 1

Tracking some of the world's most dangerous migration routes 10

Box 1: Adolescents and youth	11
The surveys	12
Vignette: A chance to tell their stories	12
Survey limitations	14
Two routes, different stories	14
Box 2: Bangladeshis in Libya.....	16

CHAPTER 2

Easy prey for traffickers and other exploiters 20

Infographic: Trafficking is a serious risk for children on the move	21
More vulnerable than adults	22
Box 3: Across the world, or right next door	22
Held against their will	24
Exploitative work	24
Vignettes: "We were like slaves"	26
Infographic: What factors make adolescents and youth more likely to be exploited?	28

CHAPTER 3

Vulnerability and resilience emerge from an interplay of variables 30

Alone and vulnerable	31
Education protects	33
Infographic: On the move and out of school	34
Prolonged journeys and detention	34
Vignettes: Detained	35

CHAPTER 4

Xenophobia and racism contribute to exploitation 38

Vignette: Racism in Europe	39
Sub-Saharan Africans are especially vulnerable	39
Echoing first-person accounts from the Central route	40
Infographic: Layers of protection – and their limits ...	41
Vignette: Treated differently as a result of racism	42
Unheard stories on the Eastern route	42

CHAPTER 5

Protecting children on the move from trafficking and exploitation 44

Outside the law	45
Infographic: Without safe and regular migration pathways, children and youth are at risk	46
Vignette: "Everybody has an AK-47".....	47
Unanswered questions, clear imperatives	48
Box 4: Promising practices	49
Policy recommendations	50
Annex	54
References	56



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young migrants and refugees set out to escape harm or secure better futures – and face staggering risks in the process. For 17-year-old Mohammad, who travelled through Libya to seek asylum in Italy, violence and persecution back home meant the choice was clear: “We risked our lives to come here,” he says, “we crossed a sea. We knew it is not safe, so we sacrificed. We do it, or we die.”¹

For children and youth on the move via the Mediterranean Sea routes to Europe, the journey is marked by high levels of abuse, trafficking and exploitation. Some are more vulnerable than others: those travelling alone, those with low levels of education and those undertaking longer journeys. Most vulnerable of all are those who, like Mohammad, come from sub-Saharan Africa.²

These findings come from a new UNICEF and International Organization for Migration (IOM) analysis of the journeys of some 11,000 migrant and refugee children (adolescents aged 14–17) and youth (18–24), as recorded in their responses to the Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys conducted by IOM along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes to Europe in 2016 and 2017.

The analysis reveals that while adolescents and youth are at greater risk than adults on both routes, the Central Mediterranean route to Italy is singularly dangerous. It takes most young migrants and refugees through Libya, where they contend with pervasive lawlessness and violence and are often detained, by state authorities and others.

On both routes, additional years of education and travelling in a group, whether with family or not, afford young migrants and refugees a measure of protection. But where they come from outweighs either of these factors. An adolescent boy from sub-Saharan Africa, who has secondary education and travels in a group along the Central Mediterranean route, faces a 75 per cent risk of being exploited. If he came from another region, the risk would drop to 38 per cent.

Anecdotal reports and qualitative research from the Mediterranean region and elsewhere suggest that racism underlies this difference. Countless testimonies from young migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa make clear that they are treated more harshly and targeted for exploitation because of the colour of their skin.

The story that emerges from the data confirms the tragic reality that adolescents and youth are prepared to pay a high price for a chance at a better life. Those interviewed in the surveys are among millions on the move worldwide, as recent decades have seen high levels of displacement, across borders and within countries. Many flee brutal conflicts or violence, while others move in search of prospects for better education or livelihoods.

With regular migration pathways barred for most, those seeking to make their way across borders often place their fates in the hands of smugglers. This alone leaves them dependent and vulnerable. They risk life and limb as they travel through harsh environments – and suffer appalling abuse and exploitation if they fall into the hands of traffickers, armed groups or other predators.

As the world continues to grapple with the reality of migration and displacement, the findings from this report underscore the urgent need for action. To protect the most vulnerable among those on the move, UNICEF and IOM call for a multi-pronged strategy that addresses the interplay of factors that expose migrant and refugee children and youth to risk – or help keep them safe.

Such a strategy includes expanding safe and regular migration channels to dampen the demand for smugglers, while fighting trafficking and exploitation. To enhance the resilience and protect the rights of children and youth, it entails investing in education and other basic services, coordinating child protection efforts across countries, and fighting racism and xenophobia in the countries migrants and refugees travel through and the ones in which they seek to make their lives.

1. Interview by Ashley Gilbertson, 17 May 2016 in Italy.

2. Sub-Saharan Africa includes: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

KEY FINDINGS

Adolescents and youth on the move along the **Central Mediterranean route** (CMR) and the **Eastern Mediterranean route** (EMR) contend with high levels of abuse, exploitation and discrimination. The **risks are much higher on the CMR** and are especially acute for some young migrants and refugees:

1 Adolescents and youth on the move are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation than adults

The risks are high for everyone on the CMR – but even higher for adolescents and youth, 77% of whom reported exploitation, compared to 69% of adults 25 and up.

On the CMR
 **8 of 10** adolescents and youth reported exploitation

On the EMR, 17% of adolescents and youth reported exploitation, compared with 10% of those 25 and older.

On the EMR
 adolescents and youth face nearly **2x the risk** 


2 Adolescents and youth from sub-Saharan Africa are at particularly high risk of trafficking and exploitation

On the EMR, the risk is four times higher for sub-Saharan African adolescents and youth – 65% report exploitation, versus 15% of those from other regions.

On the CMR, adolescents and youth from sub-Saharan Africa also face considerably higher risks – 83% report exploitation, versus 56% of those from other regions.

Anecdotal accounts and qualitative research point to racism as a factor underlying this differential treatment.

On the EMR
4x higher risk 
for Sub-Saharan African adolescents and youth

3 Adolescents and youth travelling alone are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation than those in groups

On the EMR, 28% of adolescents and youth travelling alone reported exploitation, compared with 12% of those travelling in groups, whether with family or not.

On the CMR, being in a group confers some measure of protection, with 79% of adolescents and youth travelling alone reporting exploitation, compared with 72% of those travelling in groups.

On the EMR
 travelling alone more than **doubles the risk**

2x 

4 Adolescents with lower levels of education are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation

On the EMR, the risks for adolescents with no education are two thirds higher than for those with secondary education – with 23% of the former reporting exploitation, and 14% of the latter.

Adolescents with no education face higher risks on the CMR as well, with 90% reporting exploitation, compared with 75% of those with secondary education.

On the CMR
9 of 10 adolescents **with no education** reported exploitation

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016-May 2017

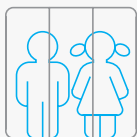
UNICEF AGENDA FOR ACTION

UNICEF is calling for a six-point plan to keep refugee and migrant children safe



PROTECT UPROOTED CHILDREN FROM EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE

Refugee and migrant children are extremely vulnerable to violence and abuse, and to being preyed upon by smugglers and even enslaved by traffickers. UNICEF calls for increasing safe and legal channels for children to migrate and to seek refuge. Cracking down on trafficking, strengthening child protection systems and expanding access to information and assistance can help keep children safe. Children and families should never be returned to face persecution or life-threatening danger in their countries of origin.



END THE DETENTION OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN BY CREATING PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES

Detention is harmful to children's health and well-being – and can undermine their development. UNICEF calls for practical alternatives to detention for all children. Unaccompanied and separated children should be placed in foster care, supervised independent living, or other family- or community-based living arrangements. Children should not be detained in adult facilities.



KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER AND GIVE CHILDREN LEGAL STATUS

Children who are travelling alone or who have been separated from their families are more easily preyed upon and more vulnerable to violence and abuse. UNICEF calls for stronger policies to prevent children from being separated from their parents and other family members in transit; and faster procedures to reunite children with their families, including in destination countries. All children need a legal identity and should be registered at birth.



HELP UPROOTED CHILDREN TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND STAY HEALTHY

Many refugee and migrant children miss out on an education – and many lack access to health care and other essential services. UNICEF calls for increased collective effort by governments, communities and the private sector to provide uprooted children with access to education and health services, and to shelter, nutrition, water and sanitation. A child's migration status should never be a barrier to accessing basic services.



PRESS FOR ACTION ON THE CAUSES THAT UPROOT CHILDREN FROM THEIR HOMES

Protracted conflicts, persistent violence and extreme poverty and disadvantage drive millions of children from their homes. UNICEF calls for greater effort to protect children from conflict and to address the root causes of violence and poverty, including by increasing access to education, strengthening health and child protection systems and social safety nets, expanding opportunities for family income and youth employment, and facilitating peaceful conflict resolution and tolerance.



COMBAT XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION

Uprooted children are often victimized by discrimination, xenophobia and stigma – both on their journeys and in their final destinations. Everyone has a part to play in welcoming uprooted children into our cities and communities. UNICEF calls on local leaders, religious groups, NGOs, the media and the private sector to help combat xenophobia and facilitate greater understanding between uprooted children and families with host communities. Governments should also set up stronger measures to combat discrimination and marginalization in countries of transit and destination.

1

TRACKING SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS MIGRATION ROUTES

Some of the world's most dangerous migration routes cross the Mediterranean Sea – a major pathway to Europe for migrants and refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. While over 480,000 have crossed the sea since 2016, thousands have died in the attempt.¹ An uncounted number of others have perished crossing the Sahara Desert.² Migrants and refugees using these routes navigate not only dangerous environments, but also the treachery and predatory behaviour of fellow humans. Moving through irregular channels – often dealing with smugglers and others operating outside the law – they face high risks of abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

As large numbers of migrants and refugees made their way to Europe, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) initiated the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys in the Mediterranean region. In addition to gathering data on who they are, where they came from and why they left home, the surveys ask a series of questions about how migrants and refugees fared on their journeys – including about experiences that may indicate they were trafficked or exploited.³

A photograph showing a person in a green hoodie and dark pants, carrying a red backpack, climbing a chain-link fence. The person is seen from behind, moving away from the camera. The fence is supported by metal poles and runs along a concrete wall. In the background, there are trees and a clear sky.

A Nigerian asylum seeker sneaks into the Moria Refugee Camp, where all arrivals in Lesbos stay for 25 days.

UNICEF and IOM undertook a new analysis of this data – disaggregating it by age to zero in on the experiences of adolescents and youth on the move across the Mediterranean.

As documented in several recent reports from UNICEF, IOM and others,⁴ the young migrants and refugees travelling these routes are acutely vulnerable to a range of perils. Over 100,000 migrants and refugees under 18 are known to have made the journey in 2016.⁵ Many travelled on their own.⁶ Whether they are unaccompanied or with their families, a staggering proportion report experiences that suggest they may have been trafficked or otherwise exploited.

This report takes a deep dive into data from the Flow Monitoring Surveys that represent the experiences of older adolescents, aged 14–17, and youth, aged 18–24 (see Box 1). The analysis reveals the interplay of factors – from origin and education to the trajectory and duration of transit – that render them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

While the survey findings form the core of this report, evidence from other research and anecdotal reports are presented alongside them to further illuminate the risks facing young migrants and refugees. This report focuses on those heading to Europe – but echoes of their experiences and testimonies can be found among migrants and refugees around the world.



Box 1:

Adolescents and youth

The United Nations defines adolescence as the period between ages 10 and 19 and youth as the period between 15 and 24. A 'child' is anyone under the age of 18, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Because of how the Flow Monitoring Surveys were designed, this report focuses on two age groups: older adolescents (14–17), referred to as 'adolescents' – who, as children, are entitled to protection under the CRC – and young adults (18–24), referred to as 'youth'. The two age groups together are referred to as 'young migrants and refugees'.

The surveys

The DTM Flow Monitoring Surveys, which IOM conducts in various parts of the world, were designed to enhance the quality of data about people on the move – to monitor their movements and better understand their needs and the risks they face, including trafficking and exploitation. The evidence would then inform more effective measures to defend their rights and offer the assistance they need.

Surveys are ongoing in Italy (the Central Mediterranean route) since June 2016, and in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the Eastern Mediterranean route) since December 2015. Trained data collectors – male and female, with a mix of cultural and linguistic backgrounds – administer the survey in 11 languages: Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Italian, Pashto, Somali, Tigrinya and Urdu. The surveys are conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the *IOM Data Protection Manual*.⁷

The surveys collect testimonies from migrants and refugees aged 14 and older. Respondents come from non-European countries and arrived in the survey country no more than a year prior to the interview. The sample comprises some 22,000 responses, 2,706 of which are from adolescents and 8,380 from youth. On the Central route, they were interviewed between June 2016 and May 2017,⁸ and on the Eastern route, between January 2016 and May 2017.⁹



A chance to tell their stories

An IOM interviewer in Italy said that adolescents sometimes approached her, curious about who she was and what she was doing there. They were eager to share their experiences, proud of having made the long journey on their own.¹⁰ Another interviewer, in Bulgaria, said that people queued up of their own accord near the room where she conducted interviews. Many were excited about the opportunity to talk to someone and tell their stories.¹¹

To gain insight into the extent to which migrants and refugees are vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation during their journeys, IOM's Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants Unit developed a Human Trafficking and Exploitative Practices survey module, first used in the Mediterranean region in December 2015.

The module includes questions about the types of experiences that may be associated with falling victim to human trafficking or other exploitative practices during the journey to Europe, as well as the types of environments that enable predatory behaviour. It asks migrants if and where, during their journeys, they or their family members:

- had been held against their will by parties other than government authorities,
- had been forced to work or perform other activities against their will,

- had worked without being paid the agreed-upon wage, or
- had been offered an arranged marriage.¹²

The objective of the module is not to identify a victim of human trafficking or to gather conclusive evidence that exploitation or human trafficking occurred while in transit. Data collection on human trafficking, as defined by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol),¹³ is difficult to undertake in the context of busy and often chaotic migration routes. The act, means and purposes are the three main elements of human trafficking, and ascertaining their presence often requires a wide range of different questions and discussion.

While the data collectors did not identify or screen potential victims of human trafficking, the IOM flow monitoring operations act as an entry point for referral to protection operations by IOM and partners. Data collectors have been trained to refer migrants who have protection needs to the appropriate IOM teams and other relevant organizations in the area for assistance. The Flow Monitoring Surveys are anonymous and do not collect personally identifying information about anyone, including potential perpetrators, in order to protect everyone involved.



Survey limitations

This report covers two groups of people that are difficult to monitor: people on the move and victims of trafficking. While IOM's surveys provide invaluable information about the realities facing migrants and refugees en route to Europe, it is important to keep certain limitations in mind.

First, accurate results hinge, among other things, on the accuracy of answers from respondents, which in most cases cannot be verified. Self-reported nationalities, for instance, cannot be ascertained beyond doubt, and that could be a source of error. Some Governments dispute the validity of self-reported citizenship.

IOM aimed to obtain a stratified sample based on nationality, sex and age, but because of the dynamic and difficult environment, sampling varied with the context and location in each country, and throughout the year. In all locations, data collectors approached respondents in an ad hoc manner to explain the purpose of the survey and obtain explicit consent to be interviewed.

Although the respondents' nationalities and sex largely reflect the mixed migrant population arriving via the Mediterranean routes to Europe, the age distribution of the sample is not in line with the overall population. Children under 14 years of age were not interviewed due to ethical and practical considerations, and are therefore not included in the data.

Especially on the Eastern Mediterranean route, adolescent girls and young women are under-represented in the data, making up a smaller proportion of survey respondents than of total arrivals by land. This could create a skewed picture, as girls and young women may have different experiences during migration.

It must be noted that the surveys do not cover all experiences that relate to human trafficking and exploitation. They do not ask about sexual exploitation or gender-based violence, which other data has shown account for a large proportion of detected trafficking cases, especially among girls and women.

The level of detail provided by the surveys is limited, restricting insight into the contexts in which trafficking and exploitation occur. While the data indicates the country where exploitation occurred, it does not specify the location within that country. When respondents report being held against their will by actors other than state authorities, the responses do not specify for what purpose – whether for ransom or for forced labour, for instance.

Two routes, different stories

Surveys conducted in Italy capture information about people arriving via the **Central Mediterranean route** (see Figure 2). About a quarter of those interviewed were adolescents aged 14–17, while just under half were youth aged 18–24 (see Figure 3).¹⁴ Most were male, and the overwhelming majority had migrated without their families (see Figures 4 and 5).¹⁵ Among those surveyed, the proportion of children was slightly greater than among the overall migrant population coming into Italy.¹⁶

The largest groups of adolescents and youth on this route said they came from Nigeria, followed by the Gambia, Guinea, Eritrea and Bangladesh (see Annex and Box 2), although these self-reported nationalities could not be verified.¹⁷ Most traveled through Libya, where some stayed for extended periods before crossing the sea. Italy was most commonly cited as the intended destination (see Figure 6).¹⁸

The tough decision to leave home rarely stems from just one reason, and the survey responses reflect multiple, overlapping motivations. Of those surveyed in 2017, when the survey allowed for multiple answers, a large majority on the Central Mediterranean route said they were fleeing harm – citing either violence and persecution or war and conflict. Many also cited lack of economic opportunities back home,¹⁹ and some mentioned other common reasons for migrating – like pursuing educational opportunities, accessing other basic services or rejoining family (see Figure 1).

Recent research suggests that the reasons for migration may change as the journey goes on, and migrants and refugees may also change their minds about where they want to end up. When interviewed for surveys conducted by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat in Niger and Mali, most sub-Saharan African migrants said they were on the move for economic reasons, attracted by job prospects in northern African countries like Libya.²⁰

Migrants and refugees interviewed as part of a recent UNICEF report also indicated northern Africa as their primary intended destination.²¹ This need not be seen as contradicting the Flow Monitoring Survey results. Circumstances at the original destination may prompt migrants and refugees to change their minds about staying.

Surveys conducted in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia capture information about the **Eastern Mediterranean route** (see Figure 2).

Only about 5 per cent of those surveyed on this route were adolescents, while about a third were youth (see Figure 3).²² The actual proportion of children among migrants and refugees on this route is higher – but the survey tended to interview parents rather than children.²³ About a third of adolescents and a quarter of youth interviewed had travelled with their families, a much higher proportion than on the Central route (see Figure 4).²⁴ Just like on the Central route, only around 10 per cent were female (see Figure 5).²⁵

The overwhelming majority of adolescents and youth interviewed on the Eastern route said they came from Afghanistan, followed by Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic, with smaller numbers from Iraq (see Annex).³¹ Their journeys took them through Turkey, where many stayed for some time before moving on to Europe. Germany was most often cited as the intended destination (see Figure 6).²⁶

Escape from war, conflict or violence was the primary motivation behind their decisions to leave their countries of origin. Only about a third of adolescents and just under half of youth cited economic reasons (see Figure 1).²⁷ The motivations cited in survey responses echo those reported in other, qualitative research.²⁸

While the reasons for migrating are similar, the responses of adolescents and youth on the two routes add up to two very different stories – not only in terms of origins, trajectories and travel arrangements. The stories diverge sharply when it comes to experiences that suggest potential trafficking or exploitation.

As the findings presented in the following chapters will show, those whose journeys take them along the Central Mediterranean route are at substantially higher risk. This route is more dangerous because it goes through Libya, where state institutions are weak and lawlessness and violence widespread. Young migrants and refugees on this route are also more likely to experience exploitation because they are more likely to travel alone, spend more time in transit, and generally have less access to protective systems.

A close look at the survey data reveals that many factors play into the likelihood that an individual migrant or refugee will fall prey to trafficking or exploitation. Overall, however, a clear pattern emerges: being young and moving through the Central Mediterranean route involves a higher risk of abuse, trafficking and exploitation, with the highest risks for those from sub-Saharan Africa. Discrimination stemming from xenophobia and racism compounds the perils of the journeys.

Most adolescents and youth migrated to escape from harm or find better opportunities

Fig. 1: Reasons to leave country of origin for survey respondents 14–24, size of text proportional to the frequency of mention, 2017



Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.



Box 2: Bangladeshis in Libya

At first glance, it may seem strange that Bangladeshis make up such a substantial proportion of migrants and refugees on the Central Mediterranean route, embarking to Italy from Libya. But longstanding patterns of labour migration can explain this anomalous fact.

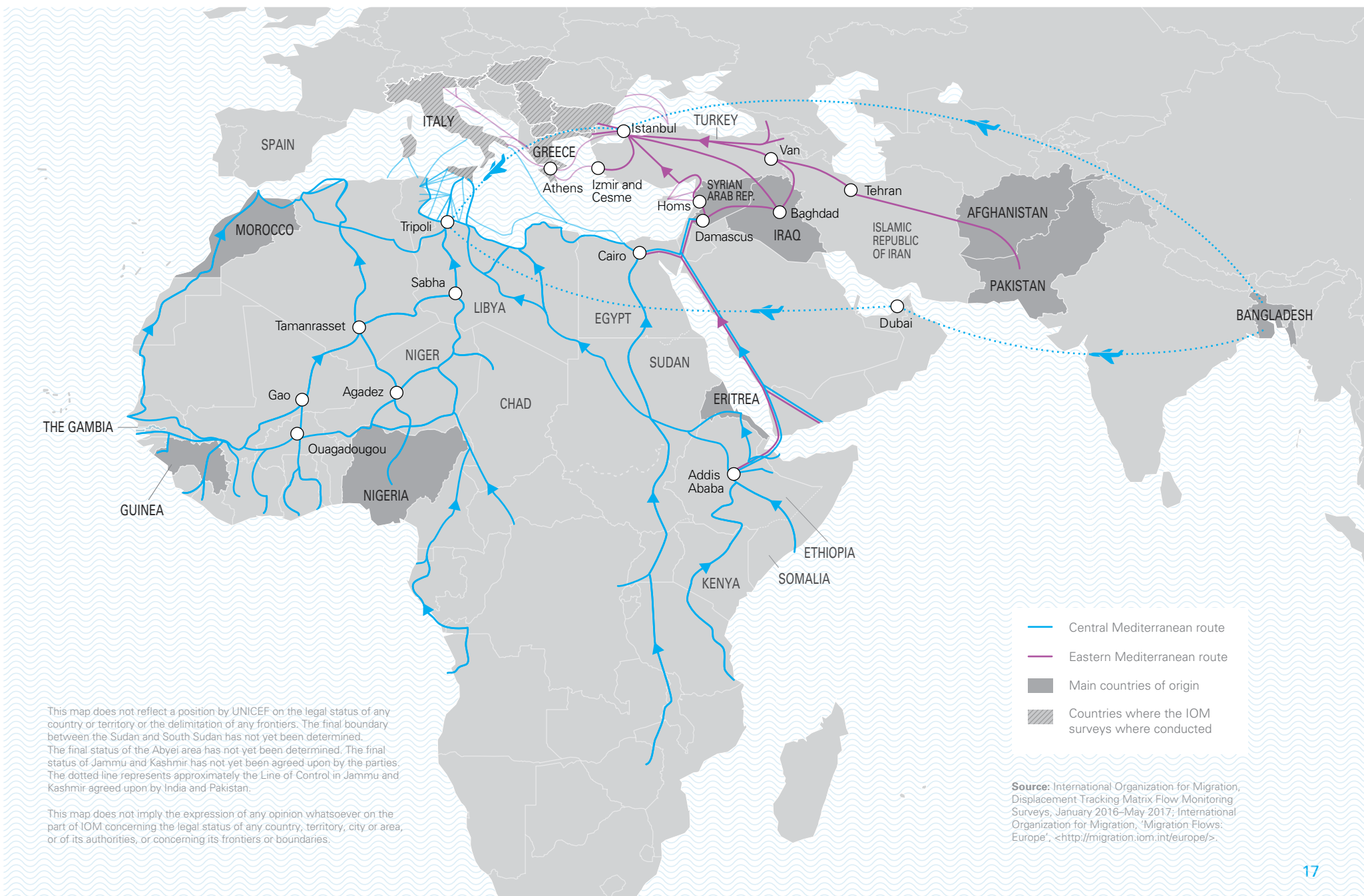
Since the 1980s, Libya has been a major destination for Bangladeshi workers looking for jobs overseas²⁹ – some travelling spontaneously, others recruited by agencies promising work that would allow them to send remittances to their families back home.³⁰ Aside from Libya, other major destinations include Malaysia, Thailand and Saudi Arabia.³¹

Some Bangladeshi migrant workers take on huge debts to pay the recruitment agencies' fees. This puts them at risk of debt bondage. Upon arrival, they encounter not the decent jobs the agencies promised – but rather, what amounts to forced labour.³² When later interviewed by IOM, a high proportion said they experienced abuse or exploitation during their stay in Libya.³³

As conditions in Libya have worsened with the increasing lawlessness and violence since 2011, many of these young migrant workers have decided to move on.³⁴ This time, the destination is often Europe. Bangladeshis already settled in Italy help their fellow nationals make the journey.³⁵

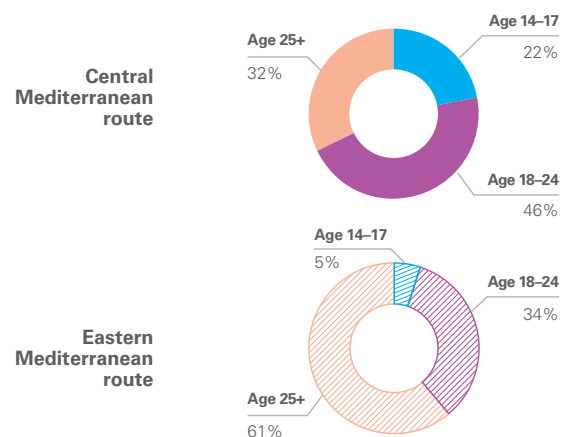
The experiences of migrants and refugees travelling the two main Mediterranean routes to Europe add up to two very different stories

Fig. 2: Central (blue) and Eastern (purple) Mediterranean mixed migration routes with main countries of origin for survey respondents



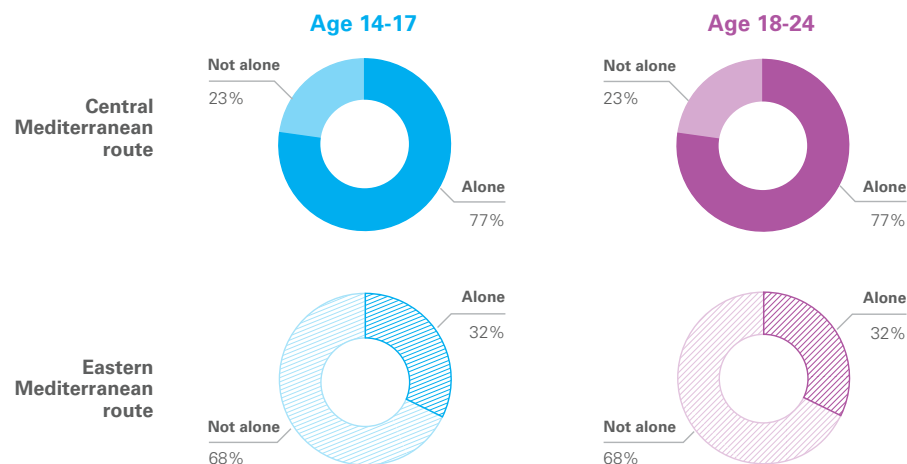
Adolescents and youth made up a greater proportion of migrants and refugees interviewed on the Central Mediterranean route...

Fig. 3: Survey respondents on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes by age, 2016–2017



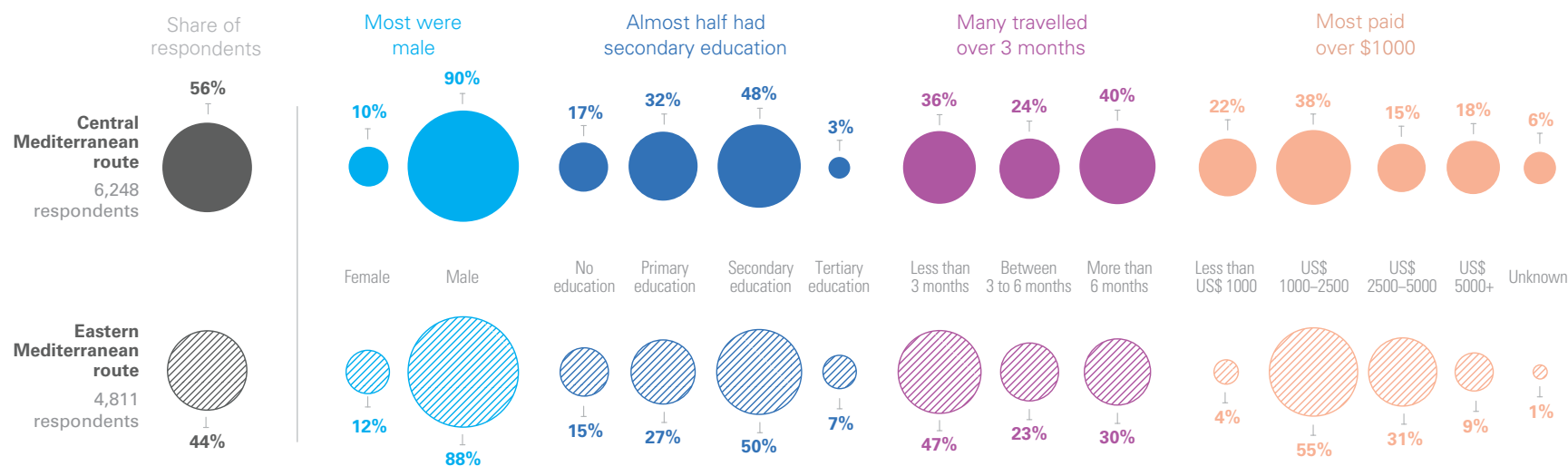
On the Central Mediterranean route, most travelled alone, while on the Eastern route, most travelled in groups...

Fig. 4: Proportions of survey respondents traveling alone or in a group (family or non-family) on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes by age, 2016–2017



...otherwise, those surveyed on both routes have similar profiles...

Fig. 5: Survey respondents aged 14-24 on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes by sex, education, and duration and cost of journey, 2016–2017

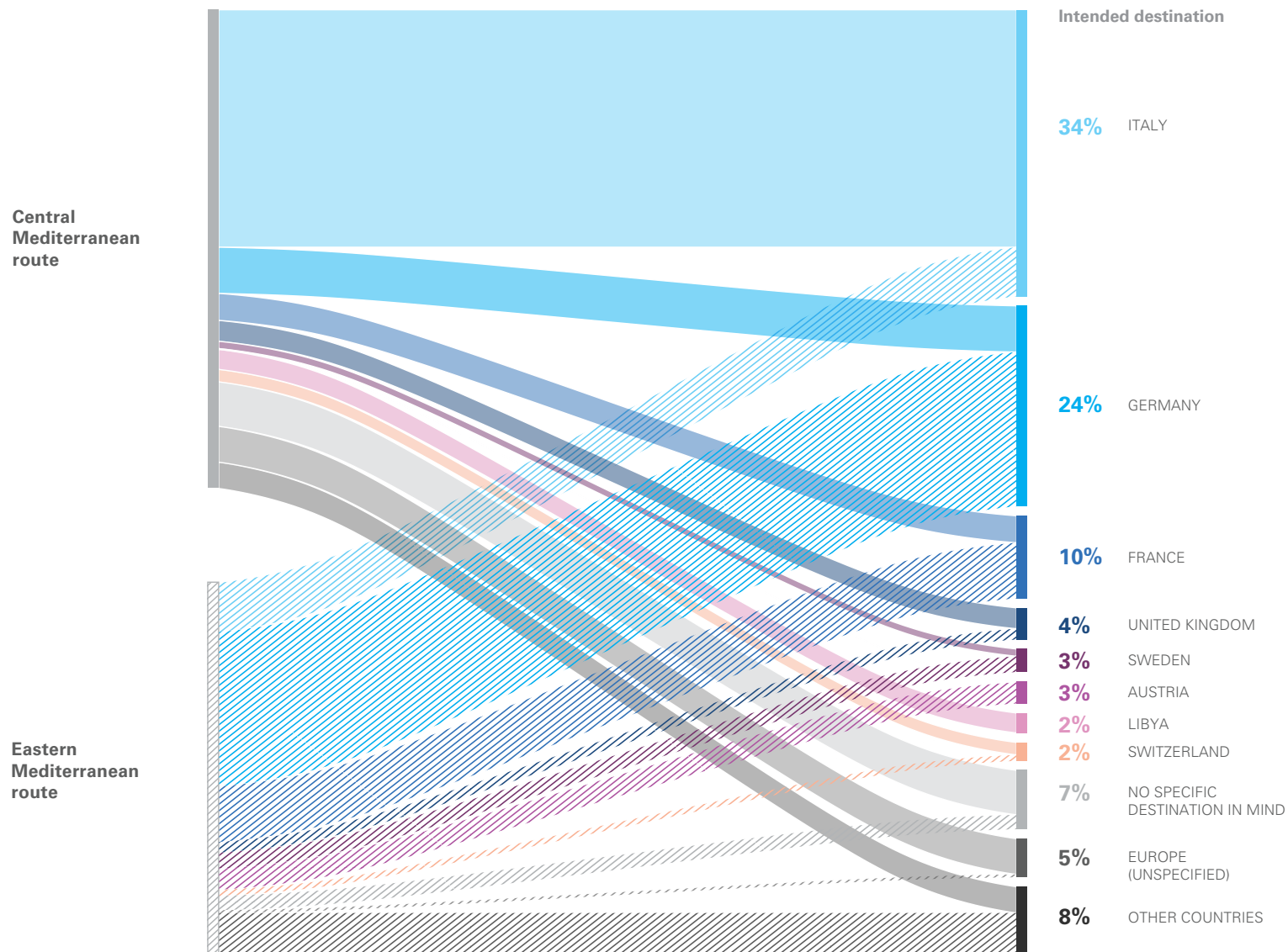


Note: In Fig. 4, proportions are indeed identical for ages 14-17 and 18-24 on both routes. Percentages in Fig. 5 may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Duration of journey on the Eastern route was calculated with 71 fewer respondents, for whom the information was missing.

Source for all figures on this page: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

... and Italy and Germany were at the top of the list of their intended destinations on both routes

Fig. 6: Intended country of destination at the time of departure as reported by survey respondents aged 14–24 years, by migration route, 2016–2017



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

2

EASY PREY FOR TRAFFICKERS AND OTHER EXPLOITERS

Children and youth migrating to escape harm or seek a better future find few safe and regular pathways. Regular migration channels – enabled by humanitarian, student or work visas, programmes for family reunification, or refugee resettlement – are limited, and closed to most.

This leaves many with little choice but to engage smugglers to help them cross borders. Driven underground, young migrants and refugees navigate a multitude of dangers – braving desert heat packed into pickup trucks, hitching rides atop freight trains, crossing rough seas in boats never meant to hold so many people. They may become stuck in transit, deprived of basics like safe shelter, clean water, health care and education. Desperation to move on may drive them into exploitative work.

Adults upon whom children depend to assist them during their journeys – like the smugglers they may hire – may take advantage of their vulnerability. Children may fall victim to abuse and violence, or be trafficked into sexual exploitation or forced labour (see infographic, p. 21). Perpetrators range from smugglers and traffickers on the one hand, to border guards, militias or police on the other.¹



Nadira, 14, sees few opportunities in Hargeisa, Somalia, and plans to leave. Her sister left with traffickers, who extorted money from the family but did not tell them where she was.

Trafficking is a serious risk for children on the move

Traffickers in human beings recruit, transport, transfer, harbour or receive people for the purpose of exploitation.¹

Exploitation is a form of abuse and violence from which the perpetrator benefits – either making money or securing some form of social, political or other gain.

Trafficking and other forms of exploitation undermine victims' physical and mental health, and compromise children's development and education.²

Traffickers meet demand in industries like manufacturing, agriculture and domestic services – where employers want cheap labour and consumers want cheap goods and services. Traffickers are also involved in the sexual exploitation of children.

Trafficked children may experience:



The experiences of trafficking victims vary depending on whether they are girls or boys

Detected trafficking victims

20% girls



8% boys



72%

of detected female victims suffer **sexual exploitation**

86%

of detected male victims suffer **forced labour**

Children on the move are especially vulnerable because of their age and migration status



Large-scale migration creates opportunity for human traffickers

57% of detected victims are trafficked across borders, and global trafficking routes overlap with migration routes.

Traffickers take advantage of the vulnerability and desperation of migrants and refugees, who often move irregularly and lack protection.



Children make up over a quarter of detected trafficking victims worldwide³

The share of children is particularly high in some regions:

64%

in sub-Saharan Africa

62%

in Central America and the Caribbean

No country is immune from human trafficking

60,000 trafficking victims

were detected in more than 100 countries and territories during 2012–2014.

Countless victims remain undetected

The actual number of victims can be assumed to be significantly higher. Many are hidden from national authorities and anti-trafficking organizations.

Justice is out of reach for many

Many victims do not come forward, as they fear repercussions from traffickers, prosecution for their coerced involvement in crimes like prostitution, or – if they are undocumented – being detained and deported.

¹ United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, art 3(a), 2000.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Action for the Rights of Children, 'Critical Issues: Abuse and Exploitation', UNHCR 2001, p. 7.

³ Children accounted for 28% of detected trafficking victims according to the latest global data, from 2014.

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, UNODC, 2016, p. 11; United Nations Children's Fund, *A Child Is a Child: Protecting children on the move from violence, exploitation and abuse*, UNICEF, 2017, pp. 21ff and pp. 39-40

More vulnerable than adults

The children whose survey responses make up much of the evidence base for this report are in fact older adolescents; the youngest among them are 14 years old.²

Many adolescents show striking independence and resourcefulness – not least, in undertaking life-transforming journeys through foreign countries on their own. Recent research from West Africa suggests that many make the decision to migrate without their families' input – whether because they do not want to worry their parents, want to avoid arguments within the family, or have no parent or caregiver to rely on.³

Still, adolescents are children, and their capacities to take care of themselves and make judgements about people and situations are still developing. Adolescents have a substantial degree of dependence on adults and, generally, are at a disadvantage in terms of the knowledge that comes from life experience and education – and in terms of resources.

Even when a person turns 18 and crosses the threshold into what most countries deem adulthood, the needs, dependencies and vulnerabilities associated with childhood do not disappear. Some of the same factors that heighten children's risks of exploitation and abuse – especially travelling alone and lack of resources – also leave youth more vulnerable than older adults 25 and up.⁴



Box 3:

Across the world, or right next door

By the end of 2015, 31 million children across the world were living outside their countries of birth, having crossed borders in pursuit of safety or the opportunity for a better life. Additionally, at the end of 2016 an estimated 23 million children were internally displaced, 16 million by conflict, 7 million by natural disasters.⁵

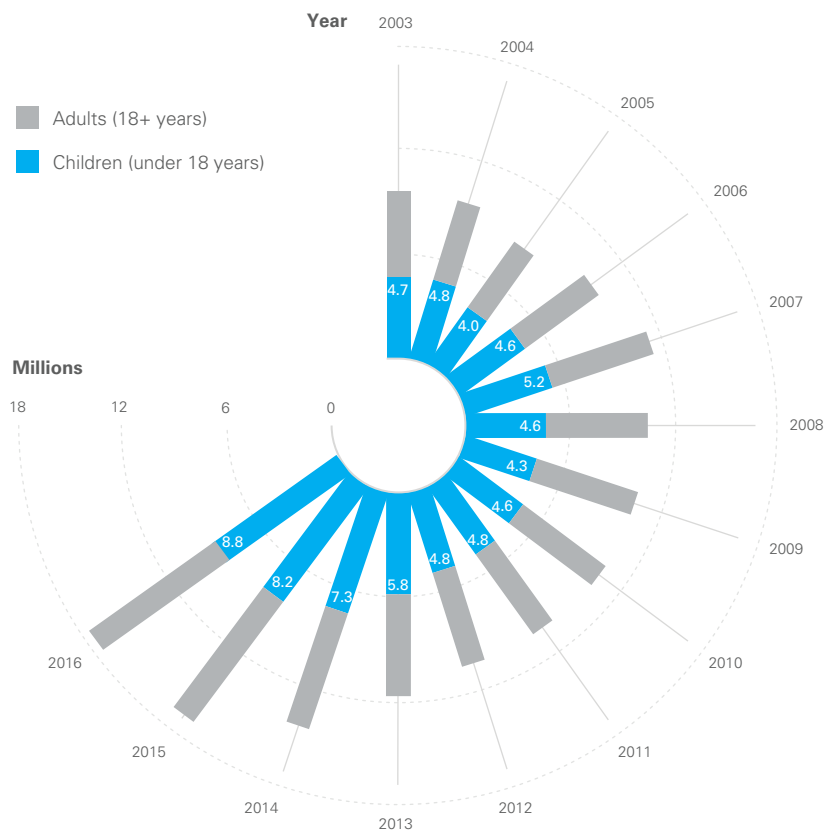
Among children on the move internationally, as of the end of 2016, almost 9 million were refugees under UNHCR's mandate, having escaped armed conflict, violence or persecution. Children make up half the world's refugees (see Figure 7).⁶

The adolescents and youth interviewed in the Flow Monitoring Surveys are among the small share of the world's migrants and refugees who head to Europe (see Figures 8 and 9).⁷ The overwhelming majority migrate or find refuge within the region they come from; their journeys are shaped by historical and linguistic ties, and in some cases by regional agreements that facilitate movement.

More than 80 per cent of African refugees find asylum in other African countries, and the scale of circular migration within the African continent far exceeds that of intercontinental migration.⁸ A high proportion of children on the move in Asia and the Americas also remain within their regions of origin.⁹

Half of refugees under UNHCR's mandate are children, and their numbers have nearly doubled since the mid-2000s

Fig. 7: Number of refugees by age, 2003–2016

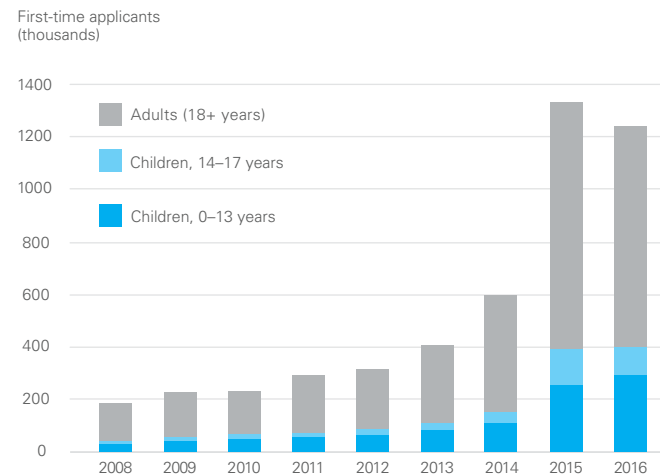


Note: All numbers refer to refugees and refugee-like situations under UNHCR's mandate only. The total number of children is estimated based on the share of children in countries for which age-disaggregated data is available.

Source: UNICEF analysis based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Population Statistics Database, UNHCR, 2017.

The numbers of children seeking asylum in Europe skyrocketed in the mid-2010s...

Fig. 8: Number of asylum seekers in 32 European countries by age, 2008–2016

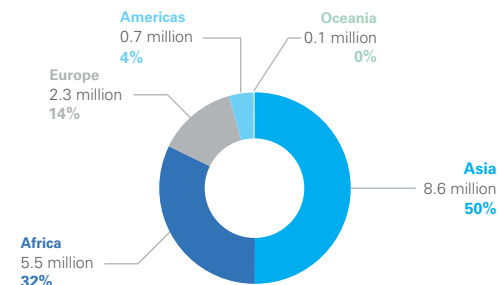


Note: The 32 countries include European Union countries and the four countries of the European Free Trade Association. Data include first-time applicants only. Comparing the number of asylum applications by children in January–May 2017 to the same period in 2016 shows a **60 per cent decrease**.

Source: Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database>, accessed 14 July 2017

...but most of the world's refugees are in other regions, especially Asia and Africa

Fig. 9: Number of refugees by region of residence, 2016



Note: Refugees under UNHCR's mandate. An additional 5.3 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic are not included.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2016*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2017.

The survey responses of both adolescents and youth on the two routes highlight their acute vulnerability to exploitation, as compared to adults (see Figure 10).

On the Central Mediterranean route, over three quarters of both age groups reported experiences that suggest they may have been trafficked or otherwise exploited. Amidst extremely high levels of exploitation and abuse overall, this is a rate around 13 per cent higher compared to those aged 25 and up.¹⁰ While adolescents and youth on the Eastern route reported such experiences at much lower rates – under a fifth of each age group – they did so at a rate over 70 per cent higher than those 25 and older.¹¹

Responses to questions about being held against their will, being forced to work, and working and not being paid the agreed-upon wage provide further insight into the experiences of adolescents and youth during their journeys (see Figure 11).¹² Many reported multiple experiences that suggest exploitation (see Figure 12).¹³

Held against their will

When young migrants and refugees move through irregular channels, they risk being detained and deprived of their freedom to move. They may be held by state agents, like border guards or police – or by smugglers, traffickers or armed groups. The Flow Monitoring Surveys ask specifically about being held against one's will by parties other than government authorities. In some contexts, though – as in Libya – it may be hard to tell whether uniformed, armed men are affiliated with government authorities or not, and survey responses are not always clear.

Nearly two thirds of adolescents and youth on the Central Mediterranean route reported being held against their will, compared with about half of people 25 and older.¹⁴ This experience is not nearly as common on the Eastern route¹⁵ – but adolescents are over twice as likely to report being held against their will than youth or adults 25 and older (see Figure 11).¹⁶ On both routes, boys were more likely to report it than girls.¹⁷

Exploitative work

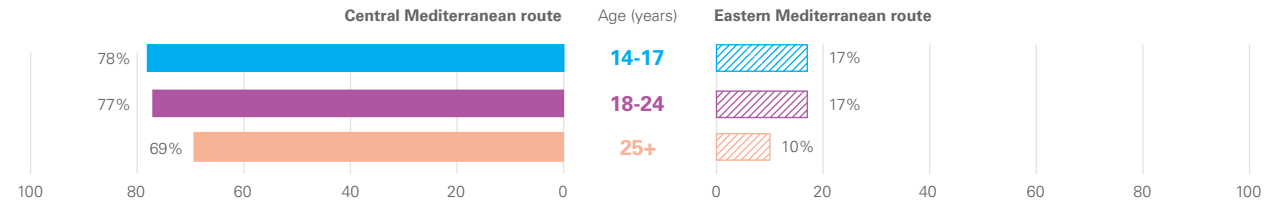
Just under half of adolescents and youth on the Central Mediterranean route report being forced to work, compared with 37 per cent of people 25 and older.¹⁸ While there are many accounts of young migrants and refugees on the Eastern route falling prey to exploitative work,¹⁹ only a small proportion of those interviewed reported such experiences (see Figure 11).²⁰

Adolescents and youth on the move may find themselves in exploitative work situations for a number of reasons. Legally prevented from working because of age or migration status, they still need income to support themselves and their families, or to fund their onward journeys. They may resort to informal work that is less visible – and tends to be more dangerous and potentially exploitative.²¹

High fees charged by smugglers may also force adolescents and youth to seek any work they can find, or may require them to work in lieu of payment, or to incur debts. If they have trouble paying these debts, smugglers may force them to work or hand them over to traffickers.²²

Adolescents and youth on the move are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation than adults...

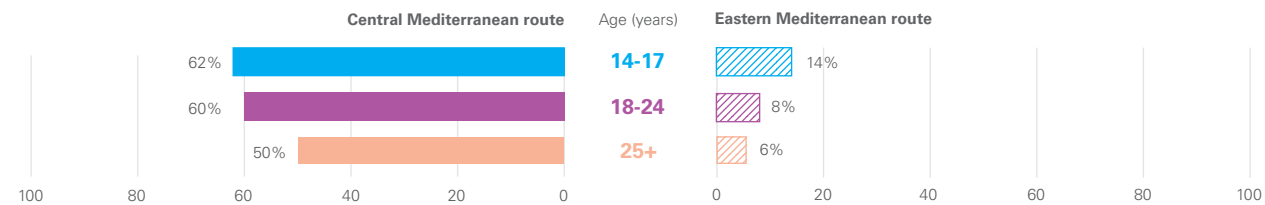
Fig. 10: Proportions of survey respondents reporting exploitation of any type on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by age, 2016–2017



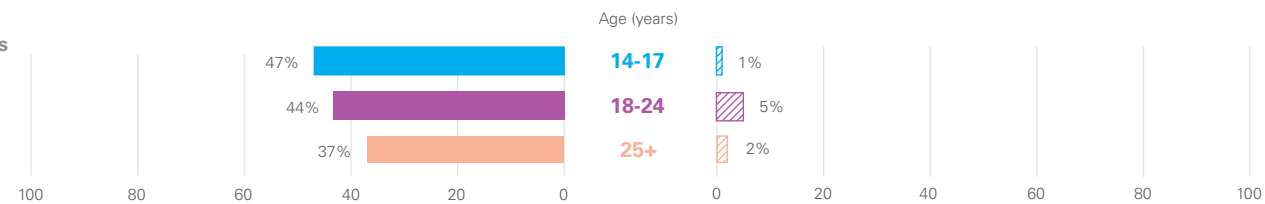
...they are acutely vulnerable to being held against their will or falling victim to exploitative work

Fig. 11: Proportions of survey respondents reporting any type of exploitation, on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by type of exploitation and age, 2016–2017

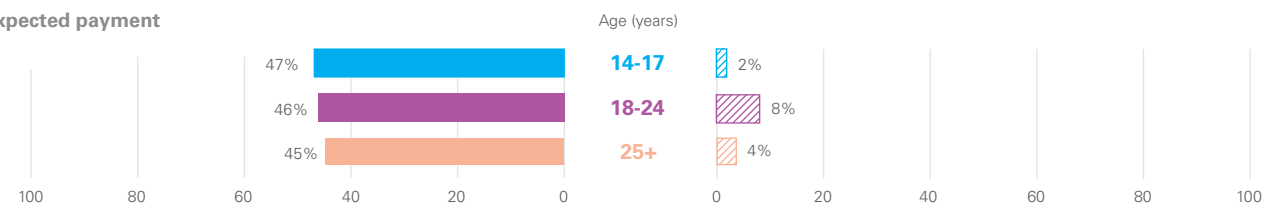
Held against will



Forced to perform work or other activities



Worked without the expected payment



Source for all figures on this page: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.



“We were like slaves”

Twin brothers Aimamo and Ibrahim, 16, migrated from the Gambia on their own, their journey to be paid for in exchange for labour upon arrival in Libya. They did not expect this work to be akin to slavery.

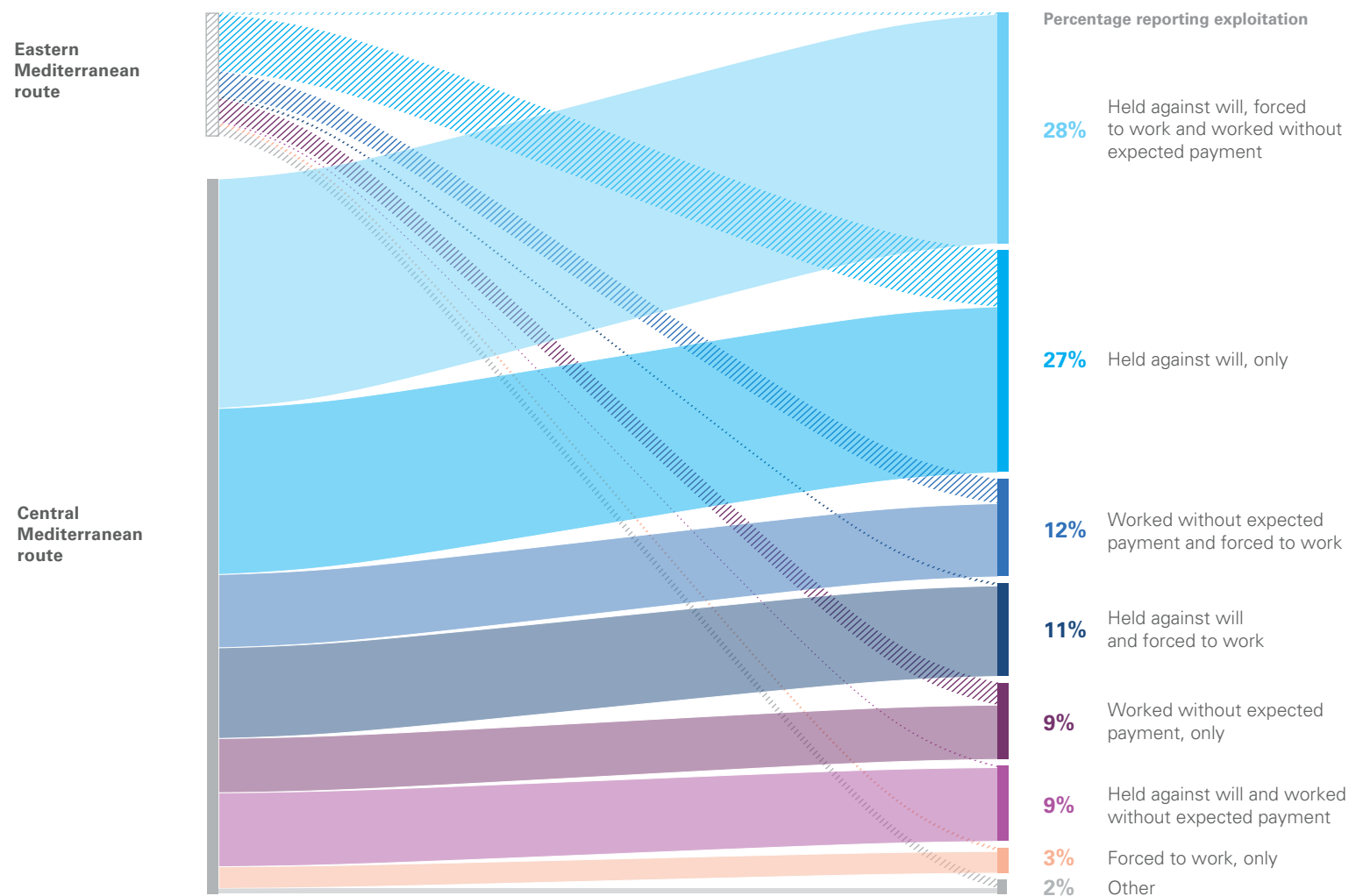
Along with 200 other sub-Saharan Africans, they spent two months working on a farm – and enduring beatings and threats. When work was done for the day, they were locked in to prevent them from escaping. After that ordeal, getting on the flimsy inflatable raft that took them to Italy was a relief.²³

Another migrant from the Gambia, 17-year-old Sanna, described being willing to take any work to get the money he needed to continue on his way. “But the Libyans sometimes refused to pay us,” he says, “and if we discussed it with them, they would bring a gun. You cannot do anything; we were like slaves.”²⁴



On the Central Mediterranean route, many adolescents and youth experienced multiple types of exploitation

Fig. 12: Most common reported exploitation experiences of survey respondents aged 14–24 years, by migration route, 2016–2017



Note: Subsumed under the category 'other' are indications of exploitative practices such as "received offers of arranged marriage" and further combinations of types of exploitation. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

What factors make adolescents and youth more likely to be exploited?

Whether an individual will fall prey to trafficking or exploitation depends on a range of factors – all intertwined. In the case of an actual person, it is often impossible to tease out what made the critical difference.

Real life is messy, but quantitative data – like the responses of 22,000 migrants and refugees to a standardized set of questions – can reduce its complexity into clear-cut categories that can be analyzed to make generalizations and reveal patterns.

Using a logistic regression model, data from the Flow Monitoring Surveys were analyzed to identify which factors are associated with a higher risk of exploitation, while controlling for other factors. Determining what makes a difference is key to finding ways to better protect children and youth as they move – by mitigating factors that increase risk, while reinforcing those that enhance resilience.

A number of characteristics of migrants and their journeys have a statistically significant association with exploitation – meaning that the relationship between these factors and heightened risk is not merely due to chance.

The outcome of the model can be used to calculate predicted probabilities of being exploited – that is, the probability expected based on the model for a migrant with a specific set of characteristics.

The examples here vary one factor at a time, while all other factors stay the same. Then, the probabilities of being exploited are compared – showing that some factors are more important than others in determining vulnerability.

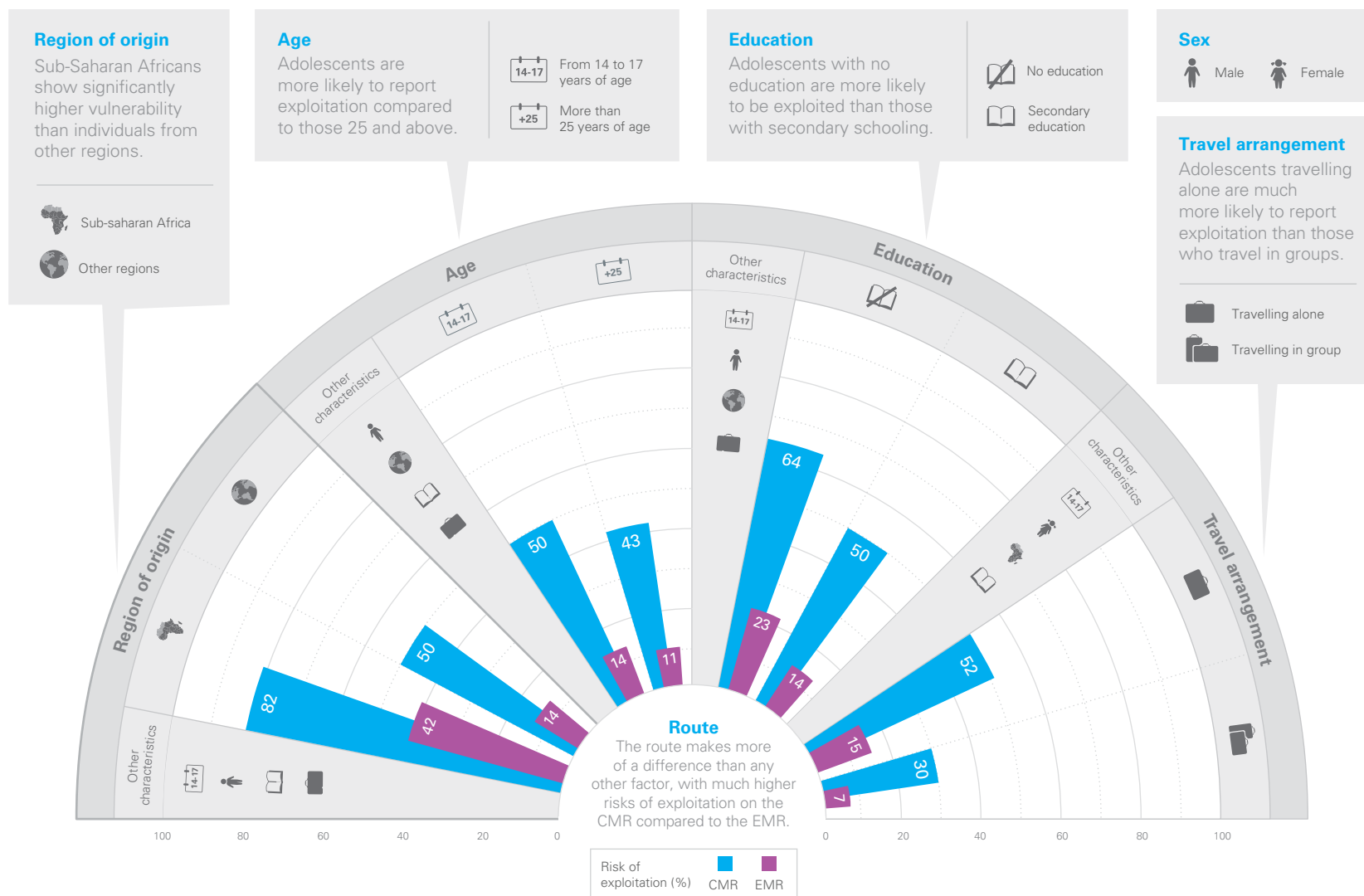
How to read this chart



- Each wedge of the half circle represents one example.
- Each example represents a hypothetical person with a certain set of characteristics. One of these characteristics – such as region of origin – is changed to see how it affects the person's likelihood of being exploited. The other characteristics stay the same in both cases.
- The blue and purple bars represent the likelihood of being exploited on each route. Blue stands for the Central Mediterranean route, purple for the Eastern Mediterranean route.

For example, the wedge shown for 'Region of origin' would read as follows:

- For an adolescent boy from sub-Saharan Africa with secondary education travelling alone for less than three months on the Central Mediterranean route, the predicted probability of exploitation is 82 per cent.
- If he comes from a region other than sub-Saharan Africa, it is far lower – yet still very high, at 50 per cent.
- If he takes the Eastern Mediterranean route, the probabilities would be 42 per cent if he is from sub-Saharan Africa and 14 per cent if he is from another region.



Predicted probabilities of experiencing exploitation based on a logistic regression model for migrants with a specific set of characteristics travelling on the Central Mediterranean route (CMR, blue) and the Eastern Mediterranean route (EMR, purple)

Note: The examples presented here highlight selected factors that make a difference in the likelihood of exploitation; this is not an exhaustive list. Within each example, the differences in probability between the highlighted variables remain even when other variables are changed. The model does not test the interactions between factors.

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016-May 2017.

3

VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE EMERGE FROM AN INTERPLAY OF VARIABLES

All children on the move are vulnerable to the risks that arise during dangerous journeys through irregular channels. But they can be more or less susceptible to violence, abuse and exploitation depending on a number of factors.

A nuanced picture emerges from the responses of adolescents and youth interviewed for the Flow Monitoring Surveys. The findings highlight factors that render them vulnerable – but also elements that help keep them safe. Three that make a significant difference are whether adolescents and youth migrate alone or in a group, how much education they have, and how long they travel.

The risk of trafficking and exploitation rises for adolescents and youth travelling alone and those with little education

At a train yard outside Thessaloniki, Greece, Hamza, 17, and Mohammad, 18, wait to continue their attempt to reach central Europe.



Alone and vulnerable

Significant proportions of children seeking asylum in Europe either embarked on the journey without their families or lost them along the way (see Figure 13).¹ The proportion of unaccompanied and separated children is especially striking on the Central Mediterranean route, where they accounted for over 90 per cent of children (0–17) arriving in Italy in the first half of 2017.²

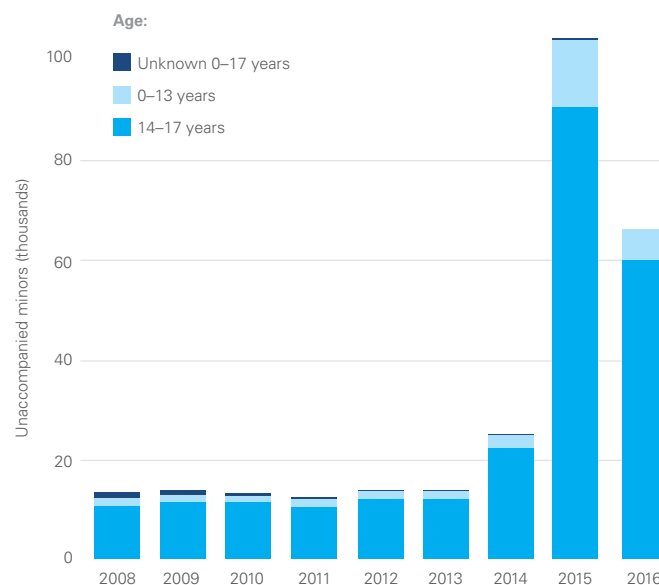
Adolescents and youth on the move are acutely vulnerable when they travel alone. The presence of family confers a measure of protection from exploitation. Migrants may also find greater safety if they travel in groups, even if those they travel with are not related to them. As one IOM interviewer noted, their travel companions may be like brothers or sisters to them, even if they are not related by blood.³

On the Eastern Mediterranean route, about a quarter of adolescents and youth travelling alone reported exploitation – compared to 12 per cent of adolescents and 14 per cent of youth travelling with family or in groups.⁴ While there was not as much of a difference on the more dangerous Central Mediterranean route, adolescents and youth travelling alone reported exploitation at somewhat higher rates than those with family or in groups (see Figure 14).⁵

Boys and young men are more likely than girls and young women to travel alone (see Figure 15). This may contribute to the higher rates at which they reported exploitation, at least on the Central route (see Figure 16). But the finding that points to their heightened vulnerability may be skewed, as the survey data do not cover some types of exploitation – such as sexual exploitation – to which girls tend to be more vulnerable.⁶

The number of unaccompanied and separated children applying for asylum in Europe has surged since 2014

Fig. 13: Number of unaccompanied and separated children among asylum seekers in 32 European countries, by age, 2008–2016



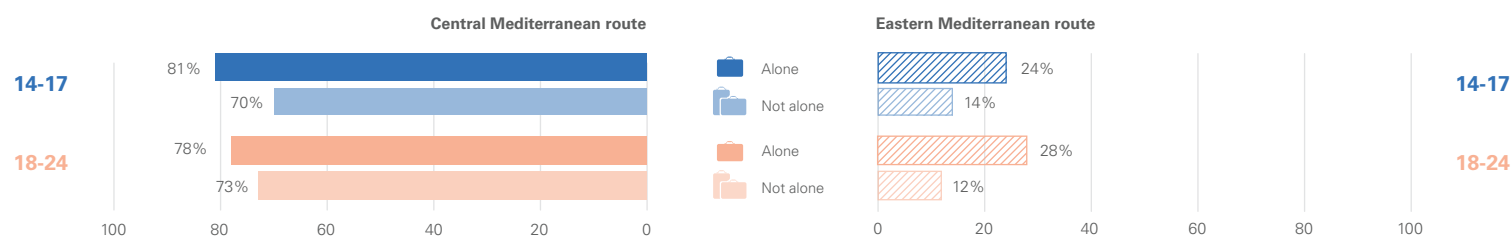
Over a fifth of the nearly **800,000** children who applied for asylum in Europe in 2015 and 2016 were considered **unaccompanied**

Note: The 32 countries include European Union countries and the four countries of the European Free Trade Association. Data include first-time applicants only.

Source: Eurostat, <<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database>>, accessed 2 August 2017.

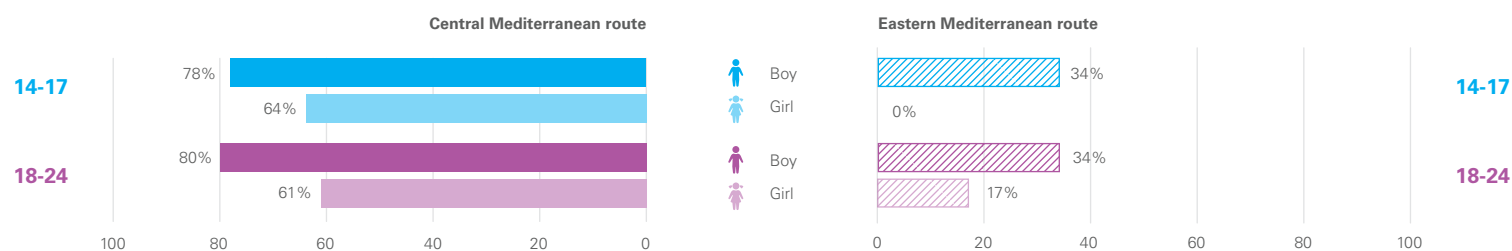
Travelling alone heightens the risk of trafficking and exploitation – but on the Central Mediterranean route, being in a group confers little protection

Fig. 14: Proportions of survey respondents travelling alone or in a group (family or non-family) reporting exploitation on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by age, 2016–2017



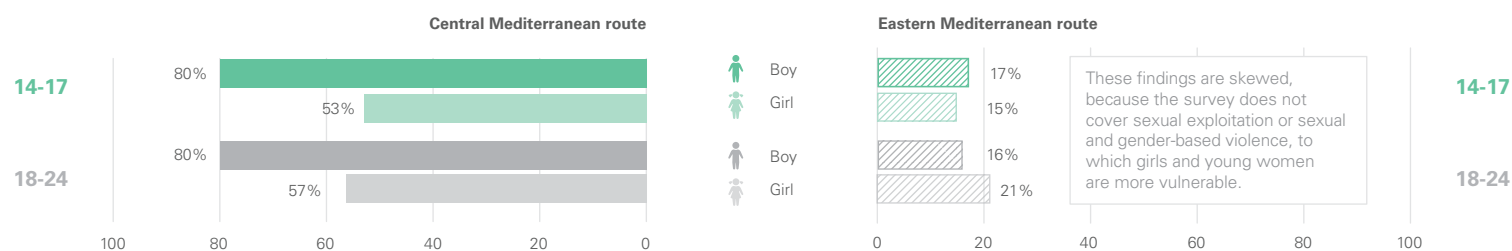
Boys and young men are more likely to travel alone

Fig. 15: Proportions of survey respondents travelling alone on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by age and sex, 2016–2017



On the Central Mediterranean route, boys and young men were more likely than girls and young women to report exploitation – but the picture is more mixed on the Eastern route

Fig. 16: Proportions of survey respondents reporting exploitation on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by age and sex, 2016–2017



Source for all figures on this page: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

Education protects

The survey findings suggest a link between lower levels of education and higher rates of exploitation. On the Central Mediterranean route, 90 per cent of adolescents without any education reported exploitation, compared with about three quarters of those with primary or secondary education. On the Eastern route, the proportion of adolescents reporting exploitation, while lower overall, is likewise higher among those with lower levels of education (see Figure 17).⁷

Controlling for other factors – including sex, age, the duration of the journey and the country of origin – the analysis shows the extent to which low levels of education increase the likelihood of falling victim to exploitation (see infographic on p. 29). On the Central route, for instance, boys and young men with no education or only primary education are 28 per cent more likely to be exploited than those with secondary education or higher, and 64 per cent more likely on the Eastern route.⁸

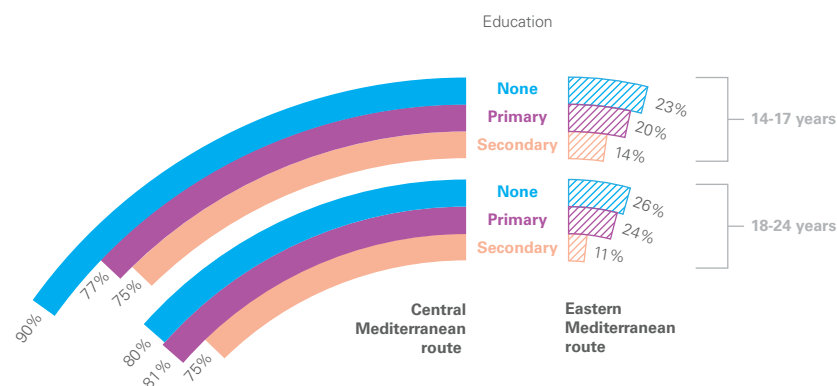
Education is a strong asset for people on the move, enhancing their resilience. But with limited data available, we can only speculate as to why.

Adolescents and youth with more education may be better equipped to navigate the perils of the journey – the dangerous situations and offers of work or assistance that may land migrants in exploiters' hands. Being literate, speaking a foreign language or knowing their rights may help them negotiate unfamiliar environments, interact

with people and stay out of harm's way. Those with education may have more financial resources, allowing them to travel by safer means and making exploitation through pay-as-you-go schemes less likely.

Adolescents and youth with more education are at somewhat lower risk of trafficking and exploitation

Fig. 17: Proportions of survey respondents reporting exploitation on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by education and age, 2016–2017

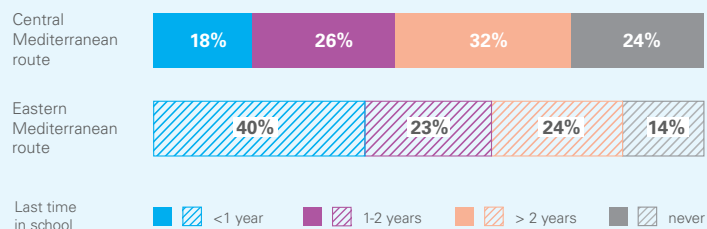


Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

On the move and out of school

Prolonged migration journeys disrupt education – or compound lack of educational opportunity in countries of origin.

Many adolescents interviewed on both routes had been out of school for at least a year



Last time in school for survey respondents aged 14–17, 2017.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016-May 2017.

The situation is especially dire among adolescents on the Central Mediterranean route, less than 20 per cent of whom had been to school in the previous year. About a quarter had never been in school.⁹

Deprivation of education is in itself a serious violation of the rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It can have devastating repercussions, leaving adolescents and youth unequipped to fulfil their full potential and contribute to their societies.

Prolonged journeys and detention

The longer their journeys, the more likely adolescents and youth on the move are to suffer exploitation and abuse. As studies from the Horn of Africa have shown, the increased time and distance from home depletes migrants' and refugees' resources – including money, networks and information about the areas they find themselves in.¹⁰ Arduous journeys can drain resilience by compromising physical health, while the uncertainty of prolonged transit takes a psychological toll.¹¹

Limited options on long journeys may force migrants and refugees to take additional risks. Families stuck in makeshift camps in poor living conditions, with little prospect of schooling for their children, may decide to move again, by any means they can find. Migrants and refugees who need to earn money – because their funds run out or because they entered into a pay-as-you-go agreement with smugglers – find few options for work.

The survey data from the Central Mediterranean route – where most adolescents and youth travelled for over three months, and many for over six months¹² – clearly shows the heightened risks that longer journeys bring (see Figure 18). The proportion reporting exploitation rises with the journey's length – from just over two thirds of those travelling less than three months to over 80 per cent of those travelling more than six months.¹³ The effect is less clear-cut on the Eastern route, where journeys tend to be shorter – even if distances are long – and fewer migrants reported exploitation.¹⁴

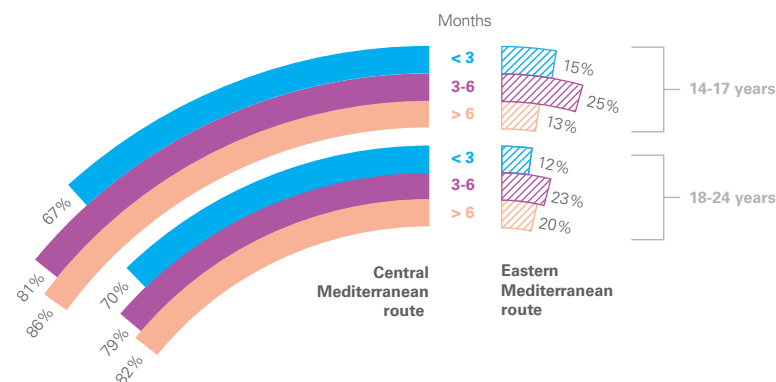
Detention was the most cited reason for prolonged transit on the Central route, reported by about a quarter of adolescents and a fifth of youth (see Figure 19).¹⁵ These findings are supported by

other research indicating that significant numbers of migrants and refugees travelling through Libya are detained by police or local militias for extended periods of time.¹⁶ Smugglers may also keep them in houses along with other migrants, until the next leg of the journey is arranged.¹⁷

In May 2017, IOM reported that hundreds of migrants were being held in detention centres throughout Libya.¹⁸ Conditions are often deplorable, with overcrowded, unventilated cells, not enough food, inadequate sanitation facilities – and abuse and exploitation at the hands of guards.¹⁹

Especially on the Central Mediterranean route, longer journeys mean greater risk of trafficking and exploitation

Fig. 18: Proportions of survey respondents reporting exploitation on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by duration of journey and age, 2016–2017



Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

Migrants detained in Libya have spoken of beatings, shootings, stabbings and sexual violence.²⁰ Those interviewed in Italy by the

United Nations Support Mission in Libya often have injuries, including gunshot or knife wounds. These, they say, were caused by guards in Department for Combating Illegal Migration detention centres, or by employers or those in charge of ‘connection houses’.²¹

It is not only in the chaos of Libya that young migrants and refugees face detention. Adolescents and youth on the move report being detained in European countries, too. In Hungary, new legislation allows for the detention of asylum-seeking children as young as 14.²²

Fear of being arrested and deprived of their freedom to move often drives young migrants and refugees underground. In May 2017 in Serbia, around 120 unaccompanied and separated children were transferred from informal settlements like ‘the Barracks’ outside of Belgrade, where they had squatted to avoid authorities.²³



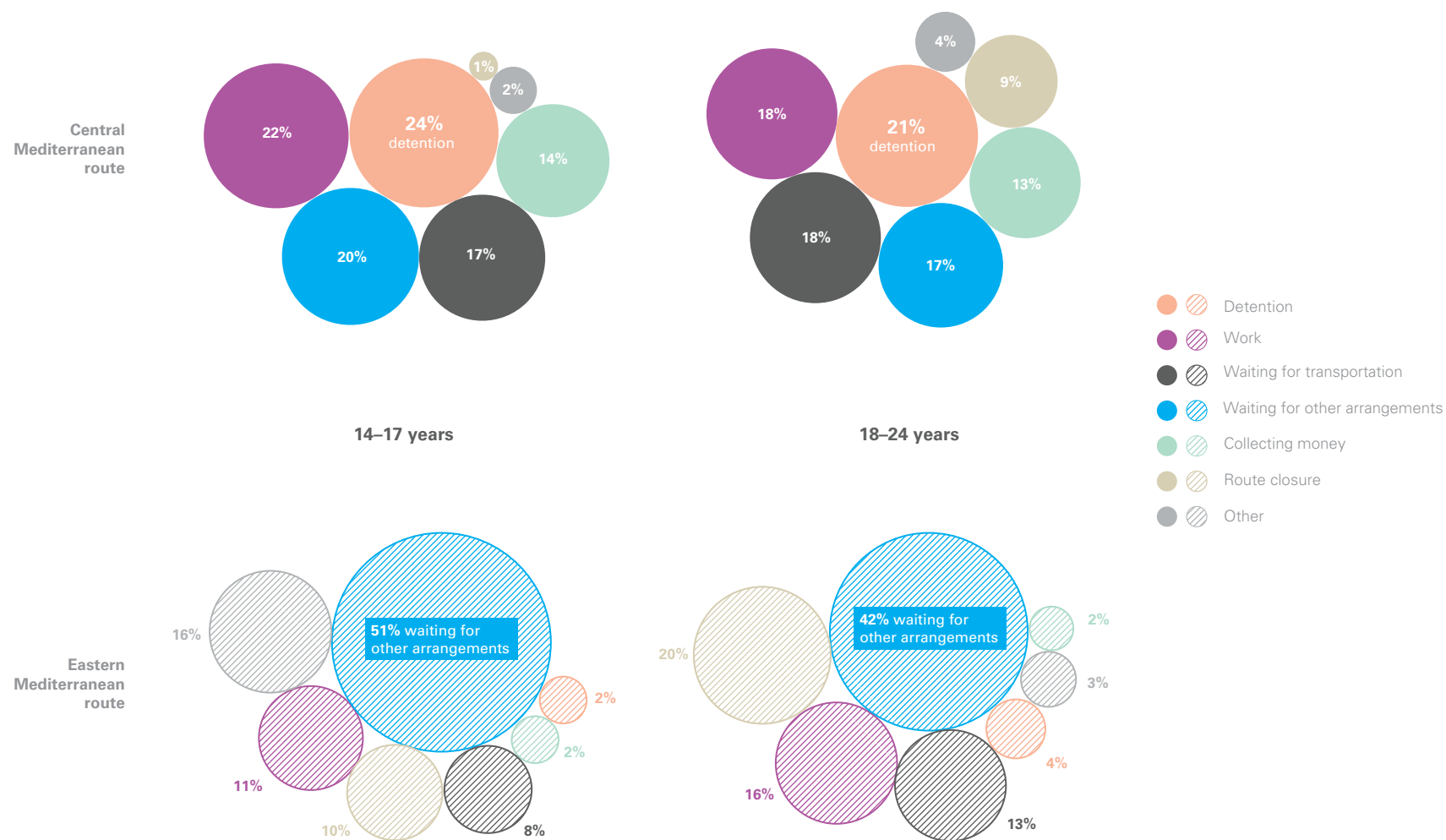
Detained

Lovette, 16, who left Nigeria and travelled through Libya, described being arrested along with the other migrants in her group, and detained for not having papers. Packed into an overcrowded cell, the women and girls were fed only three days a week, and beaten by guards if they complained. Lovette and her cellmates broke down a door to escape. They immediately fled and got on a boat to Italy.²⁴

Ahmed, 17, an unaccompanied refugee from Qamishli, Syrian Arab Republic, travelling with his 16-year-old brother, described being held in a police station for weeks upon entering Greece, because authorities could find no other place for him.²⁵

Detention often accounts for prolonged transit on the Central Mediterranean route, but not on the Eastern route

Fig. 19: Survey respondents' reasons for spending more than 5 days in a transit country by age, 2016–2017



Note: Subsumed under the category 'other' are: health, document problems, waiting to rejoin family. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.



4

XENOPHOBIA AND RACISM CONTRIBUTE TO EXPLOITATION

Xenophobia and racism are pervasive throughout the world, and they underpin some of the abuse and exploitation that migrants and refugees face during their journeys and when they reach their destinations.

In the motivations of those who exploit and abuse people on the move, racism – discrimination based on ancestry¹ – intersects with xenophobia – hatred or fear of foreigners. Violent and exploitative practices and attitudes towards migrants may, for instance, target people from a particular region, people whose skin colour is darker or different, or people who simply look different or seem to be foreigners.

Around the world, from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe and the Americas, people of colour contend with racism that ranges from violent actions to hateful speech to being ignored or excluded. As the number of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe has grown, hate speech expressing negative perceptions of them, and hate crimes against them, have been on the rise as well.²

A young girl with dark skin and hair, wearing a black headscarf with small white dots, is looking out from a yellow metal shutter of a building. She is holding a colorful patterned bag. The background is a textured, light brown wall.

A young girl peers out of a building at the Mangaize refugee camp, Niger, January 2017.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has linked this to the rise in nationalistic populism in Europe.³ Over 2,500 offences were committed against asylum seekers and refugees in Germany in 2016 – up from 199 in 2014. In England and Wales, the number of racist hate crimes rose by more than 15 per cent between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 – totaling almost 50,000 offences.⁴

The Flow Monitoring Surveys do not explicitly address racism or xenophobia; these words do not appear in the questions. But what does become clear from the data is that not all migrants and refugees are treated alike. The likelihood of falling prey to exploitation and abuse depends on their region of origin.



Racism in Europe

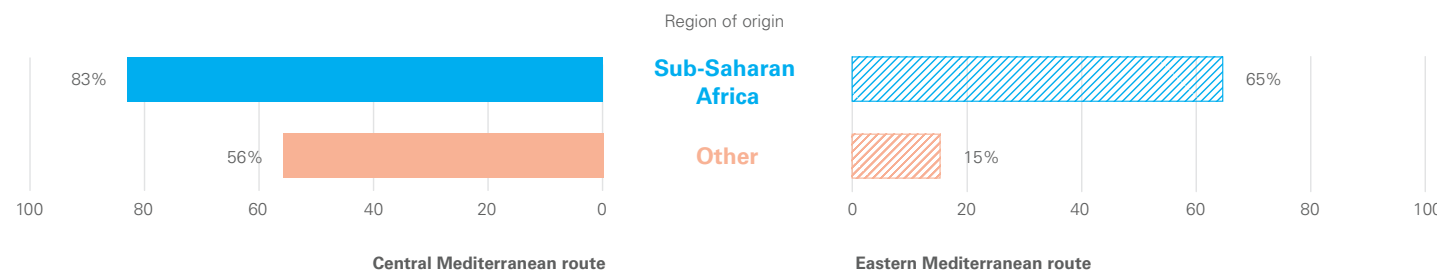
Filly, 17, migrated alone from the Gambia to Palermo, Italy – where racism now shadows him daily. A woman spat at him on the street the other day, and people on the bus stand up and move away if he sits next to them. “Some people will run away from you,” he says, “like they are seeing an animal.”⁵

Sub-Saharan Africans are especially vulnerable

The difference is striking on the Central Mediterranean route. Over 80 per cent of adolescents and young people from sub-Saharan Africa reported exploitation – compared to around 55 per cent of those originating from elsewhere (see Figure 20).⁶

Adolescents and youth from sub-Saharan Africa are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation than those from other regions

Fig. 20: Proportions of survey respondents aged 14–24 reporting exploitation on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes, by region of origin, 2016–2017



Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.

While overall levels of reported exploitation are lower on the Eastern Mediterranean route, the differences are even more striking: among adolescents and youth, about two thirds of those from sub-Saharan Africa reported exploitation – a rate over four times higher than their peers from other regions (see Figure 20).⁷

It is important to note that the largest group of people on the move on this route – Syrians⁸ – are accorded *prima facie* refugee status, and thereby have immediate access to protection, amidst stable conditions in neighbouring Turkey.⁹ These circumstances may contribute to their lower rates of exploitation compared to irregular migrants from other countries.

Controlling for the effects of other variables – such as education levels and duration of journeys – using the regression model pinpoints the difference that origin makes (see infographics on pp. 29 and 41). For example, a male adolescent or youth (aged 14–24) from sub-Saharan Africa, with secondary education and travelling alone for less than three months, is 63 per cent more likely to be exploited compared to a migrant from another region (who otherwise has the same characteristics), if he takes the Central route – and on the Eastern route, three times more likely.¹⁰

Echoing first-person accounts from the Central route

These findings are consistent with anecdotal reports of racism and xenophobia in northern Africa and elsewhere, as well as other recent research.¹¹ In December 2016, the North Africa Mixed Migration Hub found that 92 per cent of their interviewees – predominantly migrants from sub-Saharan Africa – had witnessed or experienced racism and discrimination during their travels in Tunisia.¹² Similar

experiences have long been reported by migrants and refugees travelling through Egypt.¹³

In Libya, xenophobia and racism against migrants appear to be increasing, especially in coastal areas, where foreign nationals are blamed for the rise of criminal groups and smuggling networks. Research by Amnesty International reveals that increasing numbers of migrants and refugees report being forced to work without pay, physically assaulted or robbed.¹⁴

Migrant workers face widespread discrimination and persecution from their employers, by criminal groups and in immigration detention centres.¹⁵ Among foreign nationals, those from sub-Saharan Africa are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation. Employers take advantage of their vulnerability as irregular migrants, unable to complain or seek remedy from authorities.¹⁶

Adolescents and youth from sub-Saharan Africa on the move through Libya have described in detail the abuse and exploitation they faced there. For many, the racism was a new experience. A 17-year-old Gambian boy, interviewed in Sicily in January 2015, remarked that in Libya, the racism came from both authorities and society: “They don’t like black people, and when you walk down the street you are always scared of being arrested by soldiers or attacked by [youth gang members].”¹⁷

An IOM interviewer in Italy noted that many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa reported widespread racism, and that those who are black are singled out for abuse, kidnapping for ransom, and exploitation. Many sub-Saharan Africans, she says, have spoken to her of being treated “worse than animals.”¹⁸

Layers of protection – and their limits

Young migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa are some of the most vulnerable people on the move. But certain factors – especially additional education or the company of others as they travel – can make their journeys safer.

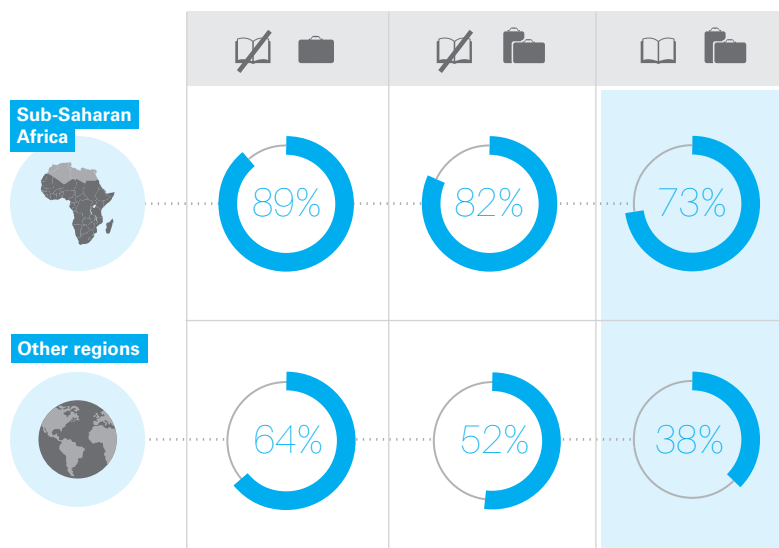
Among those travelling less than three months on the Central Mediterranean route, an adolescent from sub-Saharan Africa with no education, travelling alone, faces the highest risk of exploitation – **89 per cent**.

If he or she travels in a group, the risk decreases substantially. Adding the further protective layer of secondary education, the risk goes down further, to **73 per cent**.

But even with these protective factors, young migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa are still in greater danger than those from other regions. An adolescent boy with the same characteristics (with secondary education, travelling in a group for less than three months), but from another region, is at substantially lower risk of exploitation, at **38 per cent**.



Predicted probability for experiencing exploitation based on a logistic regression model for a male adolescent (14-17) migrant, travelling on the Central Mediterranean route for less than 3 months, by travel arrangement, education and region.



- Secondary education
- No education
- Travelling in group
- Travelling alone



Note: See box on pp. 28–29 for more details on the regression model.

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016–May 2017.



Treated differently as a result of racism

Christelle, 15, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who came to Libya with her family, described being stopped and extorted by police. “People here do not like black people at all,” she says, “On the contrary, black people are mistreated.”¹⁹

A Syrian refugee embarking on the sea voyage from Libya to Italy – a dangerous journey for everyone – described that the smugglers loaded the Africans onto the boat first, to travel on the even more dangerous lower deck, with himself and other Syrians on the upper deck.²⁰

Unheard stories on the Eastern route

Over two thirds of sub-Saharan Africans aged 14–24²¹ who travelled through Turkey reported being exploited there – compared with less than 10 per cent of adolescents and youth from other regions.²² Surprisingly, very few sub-Saharan Africans in this age group reported exploitation in other countries – but this finding may be skewed because hardly any were interviewed in Bulgaria, where other migrants report high levels of exploitation.²³ The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has noted an alarming rise in xenophobia there, including aggressively anti-migrant statements from public officials,²⁴ and there are numerous reports of violence against migrants and refugees.²⁵

The findings that show a high proportion of reported exploitation in Turkey are consistent with other reports that have highlighted xenophobia and the vulnerability of refugees there.²⁶ The devastating stories of those interviewed in the Flow Monitoring Surveys – where sub-Saharan Africans on the Eastern route reported exploitation at rates four times greater than others – remain otherwise unheard.

As on the Central route, the most frequently reported forms of exploitation are being held against their will and working without receiving the expected payment.²⁷ Many migrants and refugees reported having to wait and work in Turkey before moving on to Europe. This may be related to the EU-Turkey statement, which reduced the flow of migrants and refugees from Turkey towards Europe. As their funds run out, migrants and refugees may accept exploitative work, to survive or save up for their onward journeys.²⁸

Other groups on the Eastern route are vulnerable as well. Afghan adolescents and youth report high rates of exploitation, primarily in Turkey or Bulgaria (for just over a third), followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran (for a fifth).²⁹ While Afghans have long reported mistreatment and second-class status in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, the high levels of exploitation they report in Bulgaria and Turkey indicate continued vulnerability throughout their journey.³⁰

Afghans on the move have documented their harrowing experiences via social media, posting about violence and abuse by police – including shootings – and by civilians in Bulgaria, Hungary, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.³¹ Research has shown that such experiences in transit – on top of the trauma of armed conflict back home – contribute to mental health problems that persist long after the journey is over.³²



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PROTECTING CHILDREN ON THE MOVE FROM TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

The stories that emerge from the Flow Monitoring Survey data highlight the interplay of factors that render adolescents and youth vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

Some of these factors stem from circumstances in countries of origin – as with curtailed educations that leave adolescents and youth at greater risk, or lack of prospects that drives them to set out into the unknown without their families.

Other factors have to do with the journey itself – as with the drain on resources and resilience the longer it drags on. Finally, some have more to do with particular pathways and characteristics of transit countries – which determine what kind of welcome, protections and risks adolescents and youth encounter along the way.

This interplay of variables occurs against a backdrop of institutions and policies – or lack thereof – that can leave young migrants and refugees unprotected.

In Libya, a young migrant stands in the courtyard of a detention centre that has no electricity or running water. With no government funds, migrants often have nothing to eat.

Millions of people around the world continue to find themselves compelled to leave home, whether as a matter of survival or of wanting a future in which they can flourish. But they face a dearth of opportunities to move safely and regularly. As UNICEF and IOM have documented, in reports including *A Child Is a Child* and *Assessing the Risks of Migration along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Routes*, this does not stop people from moving – it only drives them underground and onto more dangerous routes. And that puts them at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, including trafficking.

The lack of safe and regular migration pathways heightens the risk of trafficking and exploitation for adolescents and young people on the move

Outside the law

When migrants and refugees have no choice but to engage smugglers and take dangerous routes, their journeys intersect with the operations of criminals – from large international networks, to local gangs and armed groups, to opportunistic individuals.

Networks may operate within migrant communities, in some cases as part of criminal organizations based around a particular nationality or ethnicity. For instance, Nigerian trafficking networks operating in Italy recruit girls in Nigeria and arrange their journeys to Italy – and then force them into exploitative work once they arrive.¹

In other cases, smugglers may be individuals operating alone or via informal networks that spring up when people get into the business to make some money by helping others from the same country or ethnic groups make the journey.²

Smugglers are not necessarily exploiters or abusers, but the lines may blur. In some cases, smuggling operations may have direct links to human trafficking, through organized crime or personal connections (see infographic on p. 46). More evidence is needed to clarify these links – and to detail the impacts of smuggling on migrants and the risks they face, as well as on patterns of irregular migration, in terms of who moves, at what scale, and where.

What does clearly come through in testimonies from migrants and refugees around the world is that the transaction between migrant and smuggler has the potential to go awry for the former in a number of ways. When children or families take on debts to pay smugglers' fees, and then cannot repay them, smugglers may resort to violence or exploitation, or hand their charges over to traffickers.

Pay-as-you-go arrangements, whereby migrants do not pay the entire cost of the journey up front, may result in exploitative work arrangements.³ Where migrants themselves cannot pay, smugglers or kidnappers may place financial demands on relatives back home, which can strain the resources of impoverished families and communities.⁴

Vulnerability is also heightened for migrants and refugees who come from crisis-affected communities or countries, because of limited access to legal protections, safety nets, social networks

and other support systems.⁵ Data from the surveys, especially the differences between the Central and Eastern routes, also point to the grave dangers of traversing crisis-affected areas. Migrants and refugees who travel through countries characterized by high levels of lawlessness and violence – where political upheavals, economic downturns, or disasters have shaken the foundations of state institutions – face especially high risks of exploitation and abuse.⁶

In such contexts, law enforcement authorities may be unable to uphold law and order, and corrupt officers may be involved in smuggling operations, accepting bribes or detaining migrants until their families pay to have them released. Some parts of a country's territory may be out of the Government's control, subject to armed groups or embroiled in conflict.⁷ Such contexts provide ideal conditions for human traffickers.⁸

The high risks migrants face when their journeys take them through States with weak institutions and high levels of violence and lawlessness have been documented in a number of countries.

Since the 2011 intervention and subsequent armed conflict, Libya has become a fragile State characterized by extremely high levels of violence.⁹ For migrants and refugees who find few or no legal migration pathways to Europe, Libya's lawlessness means both risk and opportunity.¹⁰

With few options for safe and regular migration, children and youth on the move become easy prey for traffickers and other exploiters

Migrant and refugee children and youth rely on smugglers to help them cross borders



Strict border enforcement and lack of regular pathways lead those escaping conflict, violence and poverty to hire smugglers.

About 90% of those entering Europe irregularly in 2015 were suspected of having used facilitation services, often through smuggling networks.

Using smugglers leaves young migrants and refugees dependent and vulnerable



Children and youth put their lives in smugglers' hands – giving smugglers ample opportunity to abuse and exploit.

Smugglers may offer a 'pay as you go' deal – migrate now and pay later. Those who cannot pay may be held for ransom or forced to work under atrocious conditions.

The smuggling-trafficking nexus



Smugglers and traffickers are not the same. But smugglers connected to organized crime have significant links to traffickers.

Europol estimates that 20% of suspected smugglers on its radar had links to human trafficking, and 22% to drug trafficking.

Source: Europol, *Migrant Smuggling in the EU*, Europol, 2016, p. 4; United Nations Children's Fund, *A Child Is a Child: Protecting children on the move from violence, exploitation and abuse*, UNICEF, 2017, pp. 21ff and pp. 39–40.

As tightened border regimes in some countries have closed off other routes, Libya has become the main point of departure for the Mediterranean Sea crossing.¹¹ About two thirds of surveyed migrants who had travelled through Libya reported some form of exploitation.¹² Over 90 per cent of all reported exploitation events on the Central Mediterranean route occurred there. Migrant and refugee children who had stayed in Libya for over a month, when interviewed in Italy as part of another UNICEF study, reported that their stay there was the most traumatizing part of their journey, and described appalling conditions, discrimination, exploitative work, violence, kidnapping and imprisonment.¹³



“Everybody has an AK-47”

Alieu, 17, who travelled through Libya on his journey from the Gambia to Italy, where he is seeking asylum, described shockingly pervasive violence: “Everybody has a gun,” he says, “Small boys – that’s what really surprised me – old men. Everybody has an AK-47. Every day you hear boom-boom, boom-boom.” His friend, Abdullah, 15, chimed in, “I was in Tripoli for three weeks,” he said, “They were fighting, shooting everywhere. That is the life of the Libyans.”¹⁴

An IOM study described three common stages of a migrant’s experience in Libya: (1) upon arrival, being held for ransom, (2) for those unable to pay, being put to work, and (3) after working under slavery-like conditions, being put on a boat to Europe.¹⁵ While the

survey data and other evidence suggest that racism and xenophobia play a role in determining who is targeted, exploiters and abusers in Libya – where state institutions are weak – are somewhat less discriminating in selecting their victims. Migration is more dangerous overall, no matter the migrants’ origins.¹⁶

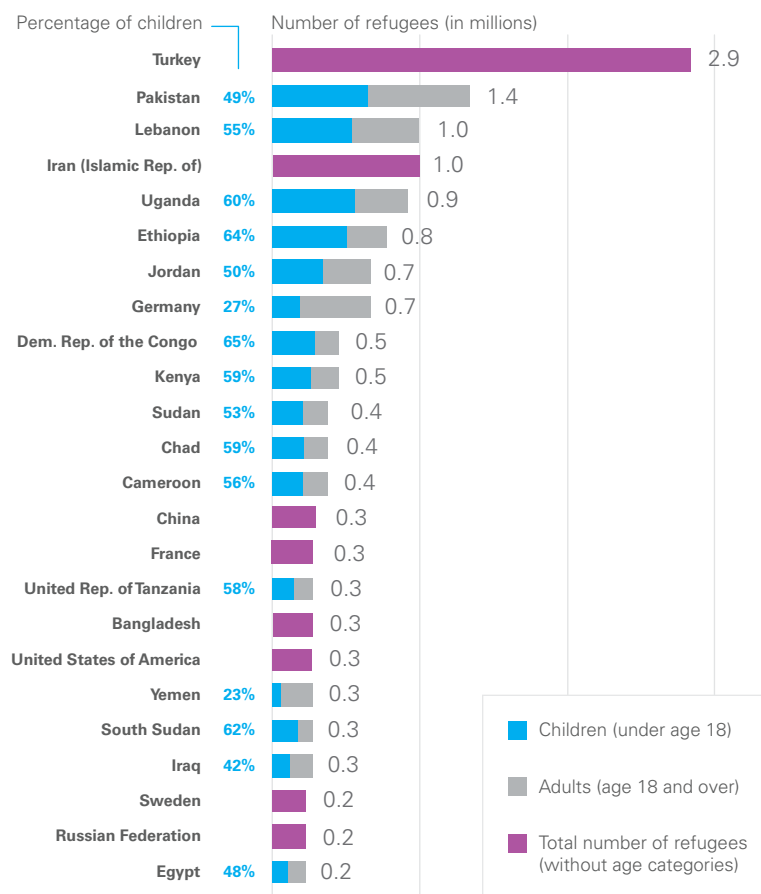
On the Eastern Mediterranean route, the proportion of adolescents and youth who reported exploitation was dramatically lower than on the Central route – about four to five times lower.¹⁷

A number of factors likely play into the lower rates of exploitation on the Eastern route. Transit countries such as Turkey typically have institutions that are able to enforce national legislation and executive policies – including ones that target smuggling. This limits opportunities for smugglers to operate.¹⁸

While the Eastern route seems much safer compared to the Central route, the data clearly shows that migrants and refugees remain at risk. In Turkey – which hosts nearly 3 million refugees, more than any other country (see Figure 21)¹⁹ – humanitarian actors have noted operational challenges, including insufficient data, uneven service quality and coverage, and not enough people trained in working with migrants and refugees. Inadequate protections leave young migrants and refugees exposed to risks. This is the case in destination countries in Europe as well.²⁰

Turkey hosts nearly 3 million refugees, more than any other country

Fig. 21: Number of refugees by age and country of residence (countries with more than 200,000 refugees only), 2016 (in millions)



Note: Refugees under UNHCR's mandate. An additional 5.3 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic are not included. Age categories shown for countries with information on age for at least 50 per cent of the population.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2016*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2017.

Unanswered questions, clear imperatives

Analysis of the survey data yields many intriguing findings that tell a nuanced story of adolescent migrants' vulnerability to abuse, trafficking and exploitation. Some of the findings confirm evidence from other research and echo the voices of adolescents and youth on the move through the Mediterranean and elsewhere, as documented in news stories, international agency reports and academic literature.

Other findings currently seem to stand alone, with little in the way of existing research or first-person accounts to bolster them. They raise a multitude of questions – for instance, how can the factors that protect adolescents and youth reinforce each other? How can we protect young migrants and refugees from those who seek to abuse, traffic and exploit them? What understanding do they have of risks before they set out on their journey? This report should serve as a starting point for further research, including additional data collection and interviews with adolescents and youth on the move, through the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Above all, the findings of this report point to an urgent need for action. Keeping adolescents and youth safe as they move calls for a multi-pronged strategy that tackles the factors that put them in danger throughout the journey, from origin through transit to destination.



Box 4:
Promising practices

The **European Commission** introduced a policy to guide EU Member States in addressing the rights and needs of all children on the move. It links migration, asylum and child protection and covers children migrating on their own and with their families. It covers appointment of guardians; boosting child protection at all levels; improving data collection; a comprehensive approach to durable solutions; and better monitoring and cooperation among States.²¹

In April 2017, **Italy's** Parliament passed the 'Zampa' or Provision of Protection for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors Law. Along with an 'absolute prohibition on refoulement', it calls for a structured national reception system, with minimum standards in all reception facilities; attention to the best interests of the child; education and health rights for all child migrants; the right to be heard in administrative and judicial proceedings, even in the absence of a guardian; and the right to legal assistance.²²

The **Economic Community of West African States** adopted a set of common standards for Member States to better protect and care for children on the move.²³ They promote inter-country case management and set out a 'minimum support package', outlining the steps required to make decisions in a child's best interests, for example, by detailing the various circumstances in which it is not advisable to return children to their families in their countries of origin.

That means addressing the root causes that lead adolescents and youth to leave home – such as conflict and violence on the one hand, and poverty and lack of educational and livelihood opportunities on the other. At the same time, those who must move need safe and regular pathways, and ways for families to stay together. Migrant and refugee adolescents and youth need better educational opportunities, in countries of origin and at transit points and camps where they often spend extended periods of time – because education bolsters resilience in the present and builds a foundation for the future.

Fighting traffickers and exploiters is also an essential part, and entails not only law enforcement, but also addressing the factors that put adolescents and youth in desperate situations that make them susceptible to exploiters. Victims need protection, so they can recover from their experiences and not fear being prosecuted or subjected to further harm. A comprehensive approach needs to address the demand side of trafficking and exploitation, which requires engaging those who create demand, including the private sector and consumers themselves.

Finally, keeping adolescents and youth on the move safe takes a concerted effort to combat xenophobia, racism and discrimination. These persist all over the world, and the exclusion and marginalization they create put young migrants and refugees at acute risk of abuse and exploitation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

All concerned parties – countries of origin, transit and destination, the African Union, the European Union, international and national organizations with support from the donor community – should prioritize the following actions:

Listen to the voices of migrant and refugee children and youth

Adolescents and youth exercise agency and show resilience during their journeys. Their voices should be heard in the design, implementation and evaluation of services, policies and interventions – as guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child – and the legitimacy of their aspirations should be recognized. New opportunities for meaningful participation should be created, along with programmes that tap into and strengthen their resilience.

Provide safe and regular pathways for children and youth seeking escape from harm or better opportunities

For children and youth fleeing armed conflict, persecution and violence, as well as those seeking better opportunities, create more channels to move safely and regularly, including through an increase in humanitarian admissions, resettlement and expanded options for families to migrate together or reunite.

The research shows a higher likelihood of exploitation the longer the journey and transit; family reunification procedures for children who have family members in countries of destination would alleviate the risks associated with undertaking these journeys unaccompanied. For youth, also expand safe and regular labour migration options that match demand in destination countries for workers with different skill levels, and create more opportunities to move to pursue education.

Work together across borders to protect children and youth on the move and fight trafficking and exploitation

Facilitate a high-level dialogue among States along the main migration routes to formulate a regional approach to preventing abuse and exploitation, including trafficking in persons, and to protect children and youth through a continuum of care.

Establish cross-border mechanisms to enable families to reunite, provided it is in the best interest of the child; develop mechanisms for transnational cooperation among child protection authorities, including among European Union countries; and facilitate family tracing and best interest assessments for children, including – but not limited to – those who have been trafficked or subjected to exploitation, violence, abuse or other violations of their rights.

Strengthen services to protect migrant and refugee children within countries of origin, transit and destination

Migrant and refugee children are children first. No matter where they came from, why they left or how they arrived in a country, they are entitled to all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, just like every child within that country's territory.

IOM and UNICEF recommend enhanced efforts for early identification of migrants and refugees at risk, and specifically children on the move. Identification is critical to preventing and protecting migrant and refugee children from risks of trafficking, exploitation and other forms of violence and abuse, and it is particularly important for those on longer journeys.

Identification and protection should be based on individual vulnerability assessments to ensure that the rights of all migrants

are upheld, regardless of their migration status. For instance, the research finds that male adolescents and youth are at risk of exploitation, violence and other rights violations, and should be able to access protection services. Protection systems should ensure that processes for best interest assessment and determination and alternative care arrangements are in place.

To make sure that all migrant and refugee children enjoy their rights, regardless of their legal status or nationality, national child protection services and systems in countries of origin, transit and destination should be strengthened, especially in Libya and Turkey, as the research indicates. National resources and action need to prioritize the strengthening of existing systems to serve both national and non-national children, with a focus on all children in vulnerable situations or at risk of social exclusion.

Make sure that children and youth on the move have access to education and other services

Migrants and refugees, particularly children, often have limited access to services – especially if they have irregular status or undertake longer journeys. Information and access to resources and services – such as food and water, health care, shelter and sanitation – are crucial in protecting young migrants and refugees.

As the research in this report shows, education reduces the likelihood that adolescents and youth on the move will face exploitation during their journeys. UNICEF and IOM recommend investing in making quality education available and accessible for all. Strengthening investment in quality education in countries of origin and making education accessible to children stuck in transit countries will be key.

End the detention of children on the move

Put an immediate end to the detention of children for immigration purposes and develop alternatives to detention that preserve family unity. For all others, youth and adults, immigration detention should also be avoided. Arbitrary and unlawful detention is never acceptable – and any detention that is not carried out based on an individual risk assessment and as a last resort is considered arbitrary. Seeking alternatives to detention must be the priority. At a minimum, conditions in detention facilities for adults should be drastically improved.

Alternatives to detention – such as community-based solutions, including community centres, and family care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children (including reunification) – should be created and supported as a matter of urgency.

Protect working children and youth from exploitation

Given the high level of labour exploitation in transit and destination countries, strengthen labour inspectorates and build their capacity to protect the rights of migrant and asylum-seeking adolescents and youth, including by keeping their activities separate from immigration control and enforcement and by facilitating migrants' access to assistance and justice.

Provide adolescents and youth with access to safe and regular recruiting systems and respect their labour rights. Enforce non-discrimination and equality of treatment and opportunity in employment and training for all young migrants. Work with the private sector to ensure that the dignity and rights of migrant and refugee workers are respected during recruitment and employment.

Fight racism, xenophobia and discrimination against migrants and refugees

Address racism, xenophobia and discrimination against all migrants and refugees, with a particular emphasis on children and youth who experience these risks at a heightened level, such as those from sub-Saharan Africa. Public social services should be made available for all, regardless of their status, nationality and ethnicity, everywhere. Carry out awareness-raising campaigns to improve the relationship between local populations and migrants and refugees, and contribute to increased awareness of the positive aspects of migration.

Gather more evidence on children and youth on the move

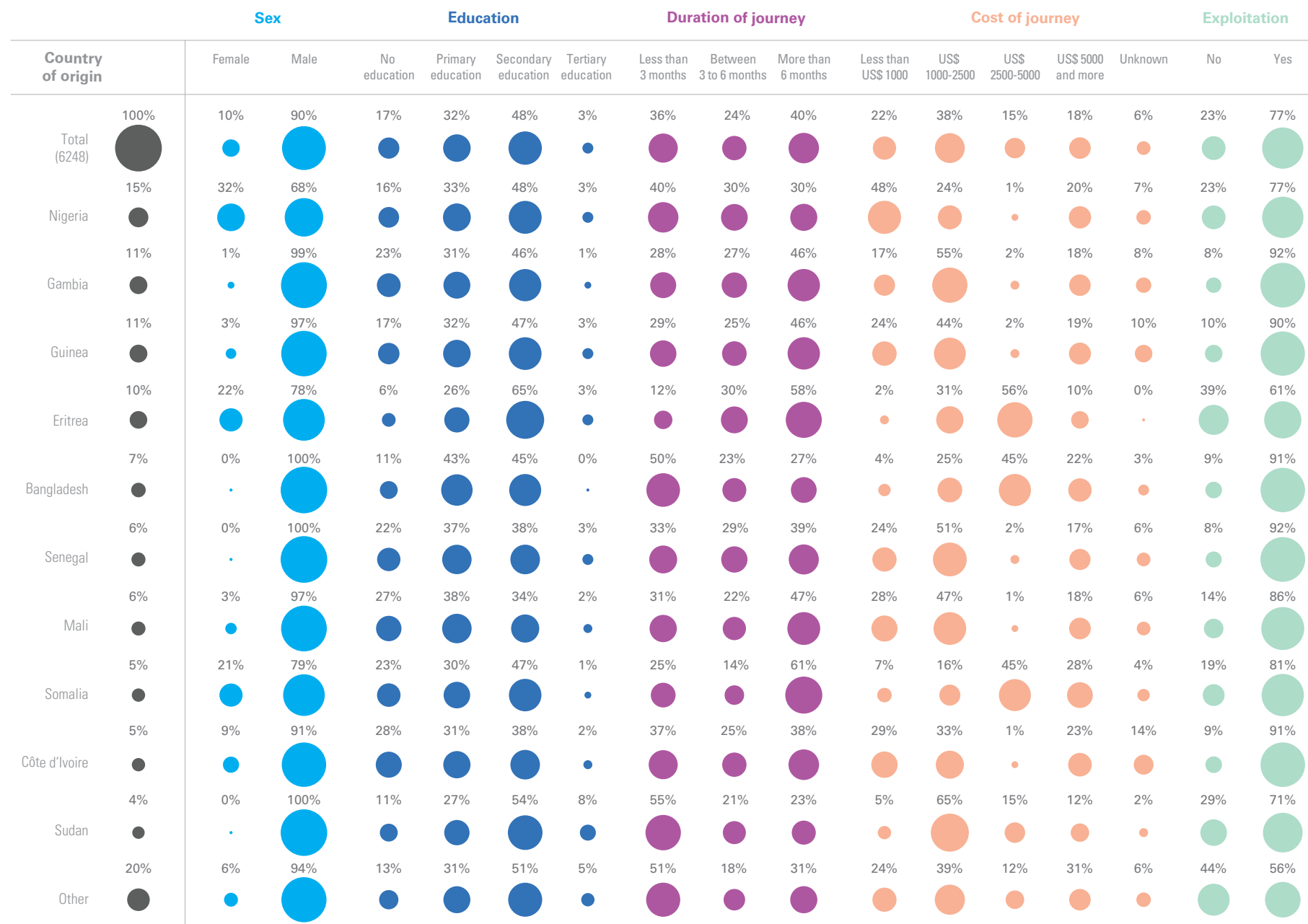
Build a larger evidence base on the situation and urgent needs of children – including adolescents – and youth on the move. Research initiatives should investigate how children become separated from their families, and systematically review child protection systems across routes, with specific attention to community-based systems as well as trusted and common sources of information for children and youth moving on their own. Surveys and other research should disaggregate data by age, using standard age categories and covering both younger (ages 10–14) and older (15–19) adolescents, as well as younger children.



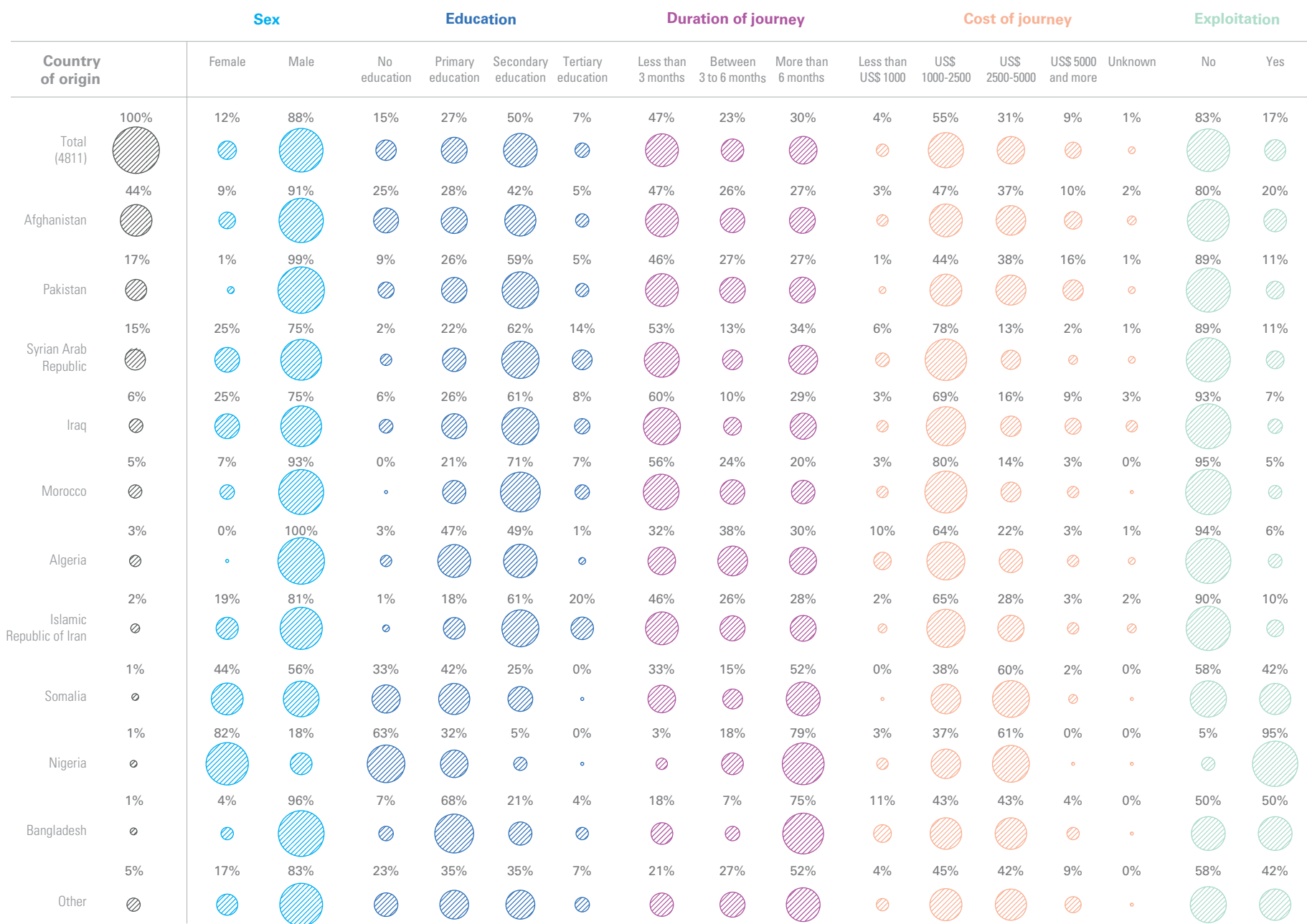
ANNEX

Profiles and experiences of adolescents and youth on each route

Central Mediterranean route: Sex, education, duration of journey, cost of journey, and exploitation experiences of survey respondents aged 14-24, by country of origin



Eastern Mediterranean route: Sex, education, duration of journey, cost of journey, and exploitation experiences of survey respondents aged 14-24, by country of origin



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: International Organization for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Surveys, January 2016-May 2017.

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