

Gender in migration aspirations and decision-making, trajectories and policies



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This paper looks at recent discussions on how social norms, culture and class intersect with gender to influence migration decisions, with a focus on Africa. By doing so, it seeks to answer how individual characteristics and institutions influence gendered migration decisions. It pulls together evidence exploring four assumptions about gendered migration decisions: about rationality in migration, discrimination and migration, women vulnerability, and human agency in migration trajectories. It lays the basis for empirical research focused on gendered migration decisions in Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal, paying particular attention to the social norms that govern gender relations and affect migration decision-making.

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Executive summary

This paper presents recent evidence on gendered aspects of migration decision-making pertaining to Africa. Migration decisions are compounded by categories of privilege that intersect with gender, so that being a woman, man or other identity differentiates aspiration and opportunities to migrate, and the ‘twists and turns’ of the journeys. These differentiations are conditioned by social norms that define gender relations.

Drawing on institutional theoretical frames and concepts of agency, it aims to present evidence about meso-level influences on gendered migration decisions. It explores four categories of intuitive explanations about gendered migration (on rationality in migration decisions; discrimination and migration; women vulnerability; and human agency in migration trajectories) and reviews evidence highlighting the conditionalities of the four assumptions about migration decisions. The paper sets gender relations and intersections between gender and socially constructed categories as key concepts for empirical research focused on gendered migration decisions in selected African countries – Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal.

The evidence shows that rationality in migration decisions aside, individual traits and economic preferences in the context of social norms shape the aspirations and capabilities to migrate and migration experiences. While most social orders privilege men, and women remain vulnerable, navigating discriminatory experiences through the exercise of agency shifts gender relations. These shifts in gender relations are particularly relevant to the Global South, where gendered migration trajectories take multiple ‘twists and turns’.

Introduction

The analysis of migration aspirations has evolved a rich literature since the 1990s, and together with the rapid growth in gender studies, has resulted in an improved understanding of how sexual orientation and gender identities matter to migration decisions (Aslany et al., 2021). It is now established that migration is gendered and that there are significant differences across the globe regarding men, women and other gender identities' aspiration to migrate (Aslany et al., 2021; Carling, 2014; Carling & Collins, 2018), as well as patterns and multiple trajectories (Le Jeune et al., 2004).

However, gender relations and intersectionalities of gender with institutionally constructed categories of culture and class are understudied in migration decision-making concerning the Global South (see Izaguirre & Walsham, 2021). At the same time, the literature on gendered migration in the African context is only just expanding beyond a focus on women, with emerging studies on masculinities (Pasura and Christou, 2018) and other gender identities (Setrana and Kleist, 2022; Lewis, 2019).

Migration decisions are often influenced by the intersection of various discriminatory factors, including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, social class, and prevailing cultural norms (Izaguirre & Walsham, 2021). Additionally, gender's interaction with several socially constructed categories such as sexuality, religion, age or generational differences (Nnaemeka, 2004; Aslany et al., 2021; Izaguirre &

Walsham, 2021; Kofman & Raghuram, 2022) adds another layer of complexity.¹ These categories are subjects of privilege among gender identities. Relations of privilege are defined and upheld at the family and community level and even by national laws. While some of the institutions influencing migration decisions are formal, such as migration laws and regulations, other informal institutions such as cultural norms and values also have significant impacts, particularly in Africa. These imply that migration is not solely driven by personal decisions but also significantly influenced by formal and non-formal institutions, infrastructures and migration policies.

Institutions also affect migration decisions by regulating and enforcing human behaviour (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). The family is one such institution that regulates social and cultural norms. The state too regulates behaviour through legal institutions and policies. These institutions impact migration aspirations differently for men, women and other gender identities (De Jong, 2000). Through the migration infrastructure available, such as technologies and actors (see Xiang & Lindquist, 2014), institutions facilitate and condition mobility. This infrastructure can be regulatory in forms of agencies so tasked; commercial as are recruitment intermediaries; political, for example, borders; or social, including migrant networks (see Düvell & Preiss, 2022).

Among the institutions and their coordinating infrastructure we highlight migration policies as pivotal external factors shaping individuals' desires and capabilities to migrate (Solano & Huddleston, 2022; Düvell & Preiss, 2022, p.85). Although there is an active academic debate about how precisely policy impacts migration flows, it is generally agreed that, overall, more restrictive interventions reduce arrivals at

¹ For instance, women who wish to migrate to escape discriminatory cultural norms at the same time face fewer opportunities to do so because of income, religion and other factors (see Izaguirre and Walsham, 2021; Aslany et al., 2021).

destination, albeit having a lesser effect on the aspirations to migrate (de Haas et al., 2019, p. 907; 914, Carling & Collins, 2018, Aslany et al. 2021). Also, more restrictive national laws and policies may discriminatorily affect unskilled migrants, as evidenced among African women who tend to enter the labour market through the informal sector (Andall, 2018).

Rather than pull together the literature as in a mosaic, the paper provides evidence on four assumptions about migration decisions of women, men and other gender identities that are taken for granted. These assumptions are that one, the decision to migrate is strictly rational; two, discriminatory social norms restrict migration aspirations; three, women are vulnerable; and four, migration trajectories are personal decisions.

Our constructivist approach reveals what is known and what is only assumed about gender identities and migration decisions, building on the gendered migration aspirations literature as it applies to the Global South (Izaguirre & Walsham, 2021).²We pay particular attention to four countries of interest in the DYNAMIG project, namely Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal.

Objectives of the paper

Our state-of-the-art conceptual paper emerges from a need to better understand how personal (micro), cultural and institutional (structural, macro) aspects come together to determine migration decisions (meso). Our report seeks to answer the following questions:

² Gendering is important because migration aspirations, drivers and outcomes are strongly gendered, such that whether migration is independent or tied, social norms are capable of stifling migration and routes to integration into the labour market at the destination, among others.

- What is the state of literature on individual characteristics and institutions that influence gendered migration decisions?
- How do gender relations and intersections of gender with other socially constructed categories affect migration decision-making?

Structure of the paper

Section 2 presents gendered migration trends using OECD Sexual Identity and Gender indicators (SIGI, 2021), as well as data on various gendered differentiations of migrant populations by United Nations agencies (ILO, IOM, UNDESA, UNHCR). It discusses how embedded gender norms affect women's capabilities to migrate (Connell, 1990; Andall, 2018; Eckert et al., 2019). It also examines the trends across migration corridors between Africa and Europe.

Section 3 explores meso-level influences on migration decisions. The significant literature on migration agency highlight those choices of men, women and other gender identities that matter in the migration decision, yet structural influences impact on these decisions. Gender relations are dynamic, and migration has led to improvement of outcomes for women, as shown in an evolving African literature on migrant workers who experience changing gender relations at origin (Ohonba and Agbontaen-eghafona, 2019; Teye et al., 2023). It conceptualises intersectionality in a wider context of social and cultural norms in the tradition of Bastia et al (2023).

Section 4 questions some assumptions about gender migration to unwrap multiple strata of explanations. It is sceptical about selected truisms and highlights the nuances that the literature reveals. Four of those supposed truisms are debated.

First, it scrutinises the assumption that gendered migration decisions are strictly rational drawing on the rich literature that connects migration to personality traits (Ayan et al., 2020, Hagen-zanker and Hennessey, 2021). Similarly, through the works of Falk et al. (2018, 2021), Fillipin (2022), and Zhan & Deole (2022) as well as using the Global Preference Survey datasets (2018, 2021), it shows that economic preferences are significant to migrant behaviour.

Second, it questions how discriminatory social norms restrict migration aspiration. The evidence shows that oppression at source country does increase aspiration to migrate but only up to a threshold (Ferrant et al., 2014). Further, female migration is changing some of the gender roles and institutional rules (Ohonba & Agbontaen-eghafona, 2019). Here it uses the Gallup data (2021) to discuss gendered differences in aspirations to migrate, norms, and indicators of wellbeing.

Third, it contends that women are indeed vulnerable, but the resilience of women in shifting gendered norms and roles is significant. Studies on masculinities similarly show shifting cultural practices that question hegemonic positions (Dery, 2020; Teye et al., 2023).

Fourth, it resists the summation that migration decisions are personal decisions, showcasing the systems that contribute to multiplicity of journeys that characterise the Global South (Africa). These spaces and temporality of journeys and experiences differ significantly by gender.

Section 5 is the concluding section. The paper shows that household, communal, national and supranational levels of influence shape migration decisions and that these have important gendered differences. For instance, there are large regional and gender differences in economic preferences, which also show up at the national

level. For the Global South, this means multiple places of transfer and experiences of involuntary mobility.

Gendered migration trends

Gender differences in international migration vary widely across Africa. This is visible in the percentage of women among migrants, with the lowest from Seychelles (30%) and the highest from Chad (53.9%) (United Nations & Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2017). Also, the countries of research interest in this study, Nigeria (45.1%), Senegal (46.9%), Morocco (49.8%), and Kenya (51.0%) have strong country variations in women's migration (UNDESA, 2017). Indices such as labour migration participation rates further reflect discrepancies in favour of men (58.5%), when compared to women (41.5 %) (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). Gendered differences are tied to the opportunities that migrants have at source (Ferrant et al., 2014) and destination (Timmerman et al., 2014) places. For instance, the IOM (2015) showed that 69.7% of female migrant workers resided in high-income countries, partly reflecting their higher demand in care sectors (as cited in Izaguirre & Walsham, 2021).

Among all migrant workers, 58.5% are men and 41.5% are women. However, this average shows strong geographical variations (ILO, 2021). While in Northern, Southern and Western Europe, and Central and Western Asia there are more women migrant workers than men, the converse is the case in Southern Asia, the Arab States, the Caribbean and Africa (ILO, 2021, p. 37). Negative attitudes towards working mothers further hampers participation in the labour force (OECD SIGI, 2021, p. 31). The geographical differences in the way that migration is gendered also show up in the same continent and even region, such as between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Senegal (Vause & Toma, 2015).

A significant but as yet not precisely measured number of women in Africa are involved in particular forms of migration whether it be rural-urban, regional and/or international. Their migration patterns replicate embedded gendered norms affecting African women's capabilities (see Connell, 1990). Among cross-border traders, older women are known to trade in agricultural goods (Andall, 2018), while younger women are more interested in work opportunities in other countries outside of Africa (Eckert et al., 2019). Their multiple trajectories include step-wise migration to urban areas, which can become a transit for future journeys (Eckert et al., 2019). Among this group, the absence of data on intra-African migration is remarked, for instance on student mobility and skill exchange within the continent, such as within West Africa and/or to South Africa and Morocco.

In terms of where documented migrants concentrate in industrialised countries, there are some common migration corridors originating in African countries of concern to the study. Common destinations from Kenya and Nigeria are the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany; for study and employment purposes. There has also been a more recent dispersal of Africans, particularly to Sweden and the Netherlands (Olarinde, 2021). At the same time, there are significant variations among these countries in the migration stock and flows to the same destinations. For instance, there are significantly more Nigerians (312,000) than Kenyans (144,000) in the United Kingdom according to the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2021). The literature on this group has so far concentrated on human capital flight, particularly in the care sector, with little attention given to gendered data collection and analysis of African regular skilled and highly educated women moving for study, work and accompanying spouses. Collecting and analysing disaggregated data is crucial to developing gender-responsive policies, programmes and laws that address migration's specificities across genders.

Significant attention has focussed rather on exploring irregular land and sea crossings, particularly to Europe. Moroccans are among the top users of the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) as well as the West African Route (WR) (FRONTEX, 2023). More recent FRONTEX (2023) data showed a shift in migration trajectories from Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and the WR, with Nigeria now being among the top users of the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR) to Europe.³

The CMR is currently the most popular and most used by West and Central African migrants who try to reach North Africa and, to a lesser extent, Europe. This route connects Niger, Libya, Italy and Malta. However, estimates show that only 20% of migrants using this corridor are able to reach Europe, while the remaining 80% stay in North-Africa and ECOWAS. Their migration should be seen as trans-Saharan, temporary and (mostly) circular, which is part of an intra-African livelihood strategy (Molenaar & Kamouni-janssen, 2017).

The WMR, the sea crossing from Morocco to mainland Spain and land crossings into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, connects West and Central Africa with Morocco and Spain. Mali is the main transit country for people using this route. In more recent years, the number of migrants using this route has fluctuated, while generally increasing. The number of migrants using this route peaked in 2018.

The Western African Route connects West and Central Africa with the Spanish Canary Islands, with Mauritania being one of the main transit countries on this route. It is especially popular among Moroccans and Senegalese. The Western Balkan route has been one of the main migratory paths into Europe, reflecting the influx on the Eastern Mediterranean route. After the record number of arrivals in the

³ See Appendix 2.

European Union (EU) in 2015, the number of irregular migrants choosing the WR fell steadily for a few years and has started to pick up again from 2019 onwards.

While there are some studies at the national level showing migrant distribution across these routes, they are not adequately delineated by gender to show preferred routes, risks, trip duration and composition of family migrants. There remains a need to more purposely focus on women and other gender identities, particularly as skilled and educated migrants and on their mobility within Africa. Collecting and analysing disaggregated data is key to developing gender-responsive policies, programmes and laws that address migration's specificities across genders.

Individual and institutional factors influence gendered migration decisions

In this section, we conceptualise migration decisions as individual preferences, while remaining conscious of the structural influences of these decisions. We use concepts that are consistent with gendered migration decisions. We recognise the agency of individuals while still accounting for external factors on their decision-making, and label as meso the combination of agency and structural factors. Lastly, we consider concepts that allow us to observe multiple dimensions of migration decisions in time and space.

An important part of gendered migration decisions is taken by individual men, women, and other gender identities aspiring to migrate. A large economic literature evaluates individual migration choices using the utility and the cost benefit frameworks. For instance, Akerlof & Kranton (2005) use game trees to explain migrants' utility optimisation while deciding whether to uphold their cultural norms. In addition to these, over the last four decades, behavioural economics (Thaler, 1980) has provided insights on how personality and heuristic rules (rules of the thumb) determine migrant decision-making (Czaika et al., 2021). Behavioural traits also manifest through social preferences (patience, risk, trust, positive reciprocity, negative reciprocity and altruism) that sway migrant choices (Falk et al., 2018).

An ensemble of individual and institutional factors operates at the household, community, national and supranational levels to affect migration decisions.

Particularly in Africa, since (Stark & Bloom, 1985) theorisation of the family as a migration decision unit, evidence emerged to support the role of the family in shaping aspirations and providing opportunities to migrate. Households influence who migrates under a number of institutionally constructed categories such as gender, age, marital status, and even religious and cultural norms and beliefs.

Many factors external to the individual in decision-making can be considered institutional factors. Institutional arrangements are humanly devised rules governing behaviour and by extension, determining migration decisions. This broad conceptualisation common to institutional economics literature (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) is useful to describe the range of economic, social and political constraints on decision-making. Importantly, the institutional approach explains the spaces in which social categories are constructed and how norms are embedded and reproduced through people's actions and by institutions (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). Since institutions are not static, they also contribute to understanding changing gender relations.

We explore gender as a conceptual frame to explain decision variations between men, women and other gender identities in aspirations and capabilities to migrate. Gender theory covers “what is considered as masculine, feminine, and queer behaviour in any given context, society, community or field of study” (Jule, 2014). As Connell (1985) argues on gender relations theory, a mutually constitutive interaction between institutions and agency provides the individual with the ability to make choices that change both the relations and the structures that establish them, while still recognising the restraints that such structures place on women (see Nawyn,

2010). Connell's relations approach is strong in showing dynamics in gender relations, which can be maintained, challenged or reconstructed (Nawyn, 2010).

Institutional and social structures determine how attitudes and social expectations are organised by gender (see Connell, 1985) in what is generally known as social gender theory. It entails that sex differences precede sex roles. Institutions uphold and shape gender norms, in this way governing gendered migration. Gender norms are pervasive across the world, with cultural differences in how gender is perceived (Bursztyn et al., 2023; Teye et al., 2023a). Other aspects, such as institutional rules that affect economic living conditions, also exert a gendered effect. Institutions could stifle women's migration aspirations, but they also motivate women to escape discriminatory practices. These play out in cases where women may prefer to migrate rather than face social discrimination related to female genital mutilation, domestic and sexual violence, forced and early marriage, absence or stigmatisation of divorce, or obstacles in accessing employment on account of their sex (Ferrant et al., 2014; Cislighi & Heise, 2020).

While it is recognised that most gender orders privilege men and disadvantage women (Connell, 2005), since Connell's gender relations framework in 1985, there has been increasing evidence of possible interventions on cultural norms and how these change in response to migration experiences (see IOM (International Organisation for Migration), 2023). For instance, Ojong (2017), as cited in Kofman & Raghuram (2022), observed that men may take up jobs in feminised sectors, such as care work of the elderly, when migration opportunities arise. Similar examples exist for women, where migration changed norms governing women's participation in labour markets; as happened over the 19th century in the Dominican Republic, when men encouraged wives to seek employment in the United States, where it was deemed more acceptable for women to work outside the household (Grasmuck &

Pessar, 1991). Also, in Indonesia, cultural norms which shape women's labour market participation have become relaxed upon migration (Asriani & Ramdlaningrum, 2019; Cameron et al., 2019). Particularly, Asriani & Ramdlaningrum (2019) argue that Indonesian women are encouraged to migrate to countries in the Gulf region for more inflow of remittances.

Migration has been shown to lead to improvements in outcomes for women migrant workers who experience changing gender relations and hold power over economic and social aspects of life (Miller, 2019; Teye et al., 2023b). Women migration can affect family structures in the source country by giving more decision-making powers to migrants' mothers who are recipients and administrators of remittances (Belanger et al., 2009; Ohonba & Agbontaen-eghafona, 2019). Migrant brides can transcend social and economic difficulties through a marriage route to migration, opportunities which men do not have as often (Miller, 2019). Women migrants also change patriarchal norms through remittances. Teye et al. (2023a) show that in the Nkoranza community in Ghana, remittances from migrant women changed the family's perceptions against educational investment in the girl child.⁴ Ohonba & Agbontaen-eghafona (2019) show that some migrant women from Edo state in Nigeria used sex work to transcend social cultural norms that inhibited them from inheriting property. According to Ohonba & Agbontaen-eghafona (2019), when migrant women sent remittances and became breadwinners, they gained decision-making powers within the family and could afford to purchase property on their own.

Gender relations are neither static nor occur in isolation of power hierarchies.

Institutional arrangements are also visible in power relations, a system that governs

⁴ In some African communities, patriarchal norms encourage investing in education of boys over girls, under the assumption that girls get married and become unable to support their parents (see for instance, Teye et al., 2023a).

social interactions of various genders, and shapes and organises migration (Cantú, 2009). These power relations or structural constraints are reflected in the gender wage gap and gender division of labour approaches. In Crenshaw's words (1989, p. 139) "race and gender are not mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis". Since the identification of power hierarchies as intersections of gender, race and class in the foundational work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), intersectionality has become attributed to a broad range of oppressive categories (see Bastia et al., 2023 for an extensive discussion).

Bastia et al. (2023) are critical of the use of intersectionality theory outside of anti-racist and feminist studies and even more critical of any attempt to erase its origins in Black feminist movements. Bastia et al. (2023) assert that the shift in how intersectionality is conceptualised is partly attributable to how uncomfortable issues of race are. At the same time, Carbado (2013) asserts that the contemporary use of intersectionalities for broader categories of socially constructed indicators of privilege is essential to capturing the compounding and confounding dimension of discrimination. Bastia et al. (2023, p. 466) argue for understanding intersectionality in a wider context of social and cultural norms. Building on these thoughts, our paper approaches intersectionalities by addressing a broader category of privilege and oppression (see Misra et al., 2020). In this way, we treat gender as an identity category that intersects with institutional power arrangements (as in Crenshaw, 1989) that confound and constrict migration possibilities. This allows us to capture institutional arrangements at the intersections between gender, class and culture.

Following this conceptualisation of what gendered migration implies in the context of personal decisions, institutions and gender theories in migration decision-making, the next section reflects on four taken-for-granted assumptions that recent literature

clarifies on how sexual orientation and gender identity matter in migration decision-making.

Four assumptions to question in gendered migration explanations

We consider these assumptions as taken for granted because the intuitive channels through which migration decisions are gendered contain multiple strata of explanation, which we seek to unpack. We consider the evidence along our theoretical ideas of individual preference, institutions and changing gender relations. We will examine these assumptions one at a time using the most recent literature.

1. The decision to migrate is strictly rational

There is no doubt that economic motivation remains a strong factor in migration decisions (see Urbański, 2022). However, the difficulty in finding evidence to confirm the rationality of migration decisions has persisted (see Crawley & Hagen-Zanker, 2019). In the drive for more precise determinants of migration decisions, a growing number of studies relying on aspirations-capabilities frameworks and preference arrangements examine migration decisions using behavioural traits. They have been useful in explaining how individual characteristics matter to migration decisions. There remains sparse attention to how institutional arrangements such as family rules and cultural norms encourage the development of these traits by gender.

Since Mabogunje's (1970) characterisation of the 'city dweller' as one who responds promptly to opportunities at destinations, an increasing number of studies have focussed on linking migration to personality traits. Characteristics such as work oriented, higher achievement and power motivation, as well as lower affiliation motivation and family centrality have been identified as making migration more likely (Boneva & Frieze, 2001 as cited in Aslany, 2021). Other personality traits that matter in the decision to migrate are curiosity, extroversion, confidence in one's ability, openness to new experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness and emotional stability (Ayhan et al., 2020; Beazley, 2015; Canache et al., 2013; Conrad Suso, C.T., 2020; Hagen-zanker & Hennessey, 2021).

Another channel through which individual choice is expressed in migration decision-making is through economic preferences, which are important predictors of migration. In addition to the well examined economic variables such as income and wages, Nowotny (2014) shows that risk and time preferences are important to migration behaviour. While there is evidence of gendered differences in risk taking, which suggests that women are more risk averse than men, the conclusions depend on the measure of risk aversion (Filippin, 2022). These risk and time preferences are further extended by Zhan & Deole (2022), who find a higher migration propensity among individuals who are more altruistic, patient, and trusting, conditional on age, gender, education, and a series of origin-country economic and political factors. The degree of selectivity regarding preferences is also heterogeneous across demographics and origin-country characteristics.

Remarkably, economic preferences show large regional differences, with North African countries and the Middle East being less patient, more risk taking, having more positive and negative reciprocity, and displaying more altruistic and trusting behaviour compared to the world average. Participants south of the Sahara are

more risk taking, but less patient, altruistic and trusting, and show less positive and negative reciprocity compared to the world average (see Appendix 1, based on Global Preferences Survey (Falk et al. 2018, 2023), following the approach by Falk et al., 2018).

Table 1: Economic preferences by gender, selected African countries – Kenya, Morocco and Nigeria

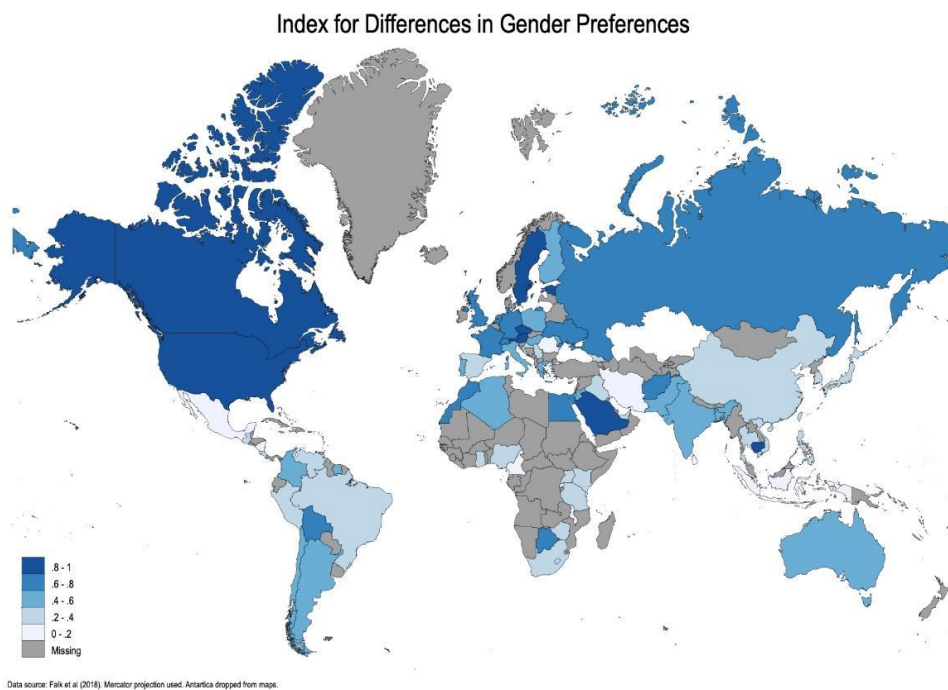
	Patience	Risk taking	Positive reciprocity	Negative reciprocity	Altruism	Trust	N
Kenya	-0.07622	0.2439	-0.31849	-0.09605	-0.31699	-0.4223	1000
Kenya – Men	-0.15607	0.34722	-0.29421	-0.07224	-0.32271	-0.40366	517
Kenya – Women	0.00084	0.14416	-0.34194	-0.11904	-0.31147	-0.4403	483
Morocco	-0.31073	-0.06896	0.55314	-0.48759	0.55904	-0.09031	1000
Morocco – Men	-0.36913	0.14695	0.47473	-0.34747	0.51559	-0.05484	463
Morocco – Women	-0.25566	-0.27315	0.62728	-0.61994	0.59988	-0.12351	537
Nigeria	-0.20042	0.38598	-0.37476	0.1765	-0.14436	-0.0578	1000
Nigeria – Men	-0.18012	0.56523	-0.41107	0.1633	-0.16964	-0.02882	560
Nigeria – Women	-0.22101	0.2027	-0.33805	0.18985	-0.11878	-0.08792	440

Notes to Table 1: Global Preferences Survey Datasets (Falk et al., 2018; Falk et al., 2023). Patience means willingness to wait. Risk taking refers to respondents' self-assessed willingness to take risk based on lottery choice sequencing. Positive reciprocity measures the willingness to return a favour in exchange for help. Negative reciprocity is the willingness to revenge as well as the willingness to punish unfair behaviour. Altruism refers to willingness to give to a good cause. Trust is the perception that people have only the best intentions. For a detailed description of the variables and their assigned weights, please see Falk et al. (2018).

Table 1 shows the results for economic preferences based on the Global Preference Survey (GPS) for three selected African countries, namely, Kenya, Morocco and

Nigeria, and separated by gender. Kenya fits in line with the general results for south of the Sahara. Participants in Nigeria are however more risk taking than the average participant while also showing more negative reciprocity. Moroccan participants are less patient, more altruistic and show more positive reciprocity, which is in line with the general results for North Africa and the Middle East. However, they are in general less risk taking, show less negative reciprocity, and are less trusting. With regard to risk taking there are large differences in all three countries, with men being much more risk taking than women, and Kenyan and Moroccan women being more patient than men in these countries.

Figure 1: Gender differences in preferences



Source: Global preference survey (Falk et al., 2018, 2023).

Notes to Figure 1: Following Falk et al (2018), the Index for Differences in Gender Preferences is measured as a summary difference of measures of: risk-taking, patience, altruism, trust, positive reciprocity and negative reciprocity – across the male and the female genders.

Gender differences in economic preferences (Figure 1) were found to be strongly positively associated with economic development as well as gender equality. These relationships held for each preference separately as well as for a summary index of differences in all preferences jointly (Falk, A. & Hermle, 2018).

2. Discriminatory social norms restrict migration aspirations

Gendered migration aspiration theory is a concept that has been developed to explain the motivations and aspirations of individuals who migrate from one country to another. Gender is an important factor in the decision-making process of migrants, as gender-specific aspirations and motivations influence the decision to migrate. Carling & Collins (2018, p. 915) speak about aspirations as "the most established term for the conviction that leaving would be better than staying".⁵ However, there are variations in the measurement of this 'conviction', as desires, preferences and wishes are unstandardised in the migration literature and can be subsumed with migration aspirations (Carling & Collins, 2018). Gender migration experience has taken new turns in the last 30 years. In Africa, institutional rules such as property rights, gender roles and access to credit that have affected women's migration are changing gradually (see Ohonba & Agbontaen-eghafona, 2019; Teye et al., 2023b).

⁵ For a detailed dissection of desires, aspirations and drivers of migration as analytical concepts, and a list of terms applied to the potentiality of migration, see Carling and Collins (2018).

Aspirations can be formed outside of missing opportunities, as cultural norms are among the strongest institutional arrangements that influence gendered decisions to migrate.⁶ One channel is when cultural embeddedness and normalcy in migration drive migration aspirations (Aslany et al., 2021). For example, Curran & Saguy (2001) show for Thailand that it is normal for rural dwellers to send young women family members to the city as seasonal migrants. Also, cultures where migration is predominantly undertaken by men such as in Burkina Faso and Senegal have lower migration aspirations among women than men (Langill et al., 2023). Women from a culture that values traditional gender roles may be less likely to migrate to a country with more progressive gender norms (Massey et al., 2006). In addition, societal gender structure matters, as matrifocal countries are associated with higher women migration rates (Massey et al., 2006). Teye et al. (2023a) also show that property inheritance rights along the mother's line, in matrilineal societies, give women more control over the use of remittances.

Discriminatory social norms prevalent across the globe and also in Africa (OECD, SIGI, 2021) correlate with larger volumes of women's migration up to a threshold after which higher discrimination means lower migration (Ferrant et al., 2014).

Women may face additional barriers to migration, through exploitation and gender-based violence (O'Neil et al., 2017). Ferrant et al. (2014, p.5) did not find that discriminatory practices affected men in the same way as women, partly because men were free to make migration decisions, not having the same constraints that shaped women choices. For example, access to productive and financial resources affect capabilities to migrate making financial obligations of migration difficult to meet (Christou & Kofman, 2022; Ruysen & Salomone, 2018).

This may be associated with more women migrants using irregular migration

⁶ What constitutes culture could be difficult to delineate, for example as Nnaemeka (2004, p 372) observes spousal violence described as crimes of passion in the United States are considered violence against women but for Africa these could be erroneously depicted in the literature as cultural. Nnaemeka (2004, p. 381) provides lessons about negotiating cultural spaces in policy making by framing policies in culturally sensitive contexts.

channels, and affect women in the informal sector. In addition, studies have found that women's decision to migrate is often influenced by their family responsibilities, such as caring for children or elderly relatives (Hidrobo et al., 2022).

Gender discriminatory social norms also affected women's aspirations and access to education, confining them to specific work sectors and job positions, and restricting their access to financial resources (Ferrant et al., 2014; OECD SIGI, 2021).

Similarly, education increases positive life aspirations and migration aspirations (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016), as it is a pathway to social mobility, while at the same time, restrictions on education and a professional future can spur aspirations to migrate (Schewel & Fransen, 2018). As Thorsen (2010) shows in his study on Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, images of success from transnational migrants spur women's imaginations and aspiration to migrate.

The migration decision is compounded because women's access to information communication and technology (ICT) tools are limited due to discriminatory social norms such as unequal decision-making power in the household (OECD SIGI, 2021). These limitations in access to ICT tools also affect how migrant women can negotiate their workspaces after migration, such as by obtaining knowledge and information and seeking protection from discrimination (Andersson, 2019). Access to ICT among migrant women also helps them to communicate with family left behind maintaining family bonds and sometimes facilitates their role as distant caregivers (Andersson, 2019; Cogo, 2017). Conversely, social networks can reduce potential migrant aspirations by giving unfavourable information such as discrimination, racism, difficulty in getting good employment, strict immigration law and others that can deter aspiration to migrate (Fonseca et al., 2016; Snel et al., 2016). The use of social media has also been linked to higher migration aspirations and preparations,

with a stronger enabling impact of the latter [migration preparations] (Dekker et al., 2018; Grubanov-Boskovic et al., 2021).

In part, different networks arise because friendship and social circles are differentiated by gender, which influences the information and help available to them (Sha, 2021). Curran & Rivero-Fuentes (2003) show that social networks are more important for women in international migration because they benefit more than men from being accompanied during the journey or from information about safe routes. In some cases, men would migrate first over longer distances and, in a second stage, bring women into the host country, which should be reflected in reasonably higher migration rates for males. The impacts of social networks on the probability of migration vary by gender because the costs, risks and benefits of migration differ by gender. Women in low-skilled work who did not have digital skills or access to mobile phones had lower ability than their high-skilled counterparts to build social capital outside home-based networks (Cuban, 2016).

Women also assume the bulk of unpaid domestic and care work in Africa (OECD SIGI, 2021 p. 30), and African women spend four times more on unpaid care work than men (OECD, SIGI 2021). Assuming migration is a collective household decision, Stark & Bloom (1985) means that gender inequality within the family affects female migration. For Baudassé et al. (2020 and Baudassé & Bazillier (2014), cultural issues reflect on the family as a strong unit that exerts influence over a daughter or a son even after they have become adults. For instance, Baudassé & Bazillier (2014) showed that gender equality had a positive influence on the brain drain of girls and women, who invested more in skill formation when discrimination reduced. There is also some evidence that poorer relationships with parents is associated with higher likelihood of migration among Mexican youth (Hoffman et al., 2015).

OECD (SIGI 2021, p. 120) shows that formal borrowing in Africa is very low for both men and women, and the gender gap in formal borrowing is also low. However, borrowing tends to be through family and friends using informal channels. The OECD SIGI (2021) also demonstrated that women faced more constraints in borrowing than men (lack of potential collateral), leading to more unfavourable financial terms such as high interest rates and smaller loans. The OECD SIGI (2021) further showed high indices for Nigeria on levels of discrimination against women in the family (while medium for Kenya and very high for Morocco), restricted access to productive and financial resources, and restricted civil liberties (medium for Kenya and high for Morocco, p. 77).

In terms of gendered civil liberties, Nigeria had 6% female representation in parliament and no legal quota for participation (OECD, SIGI, 2021). In Kenya, where minimum female participation is defined by law, there were no consequences for not meeting that quota in the 2017 elections (OECD, SIGI, 2021 p. 85), Morocco also had quota defined by law and about 20% female representation in parliament (OECD, SIGI; 2021). Negative attitudes towards women in leadership positions, and negative attitudes towards women in public life further hamper women's participation in the public sphere.

Yet, the Gallup data presented in Table 2, does not show strong variations, in our sample countries, between women and men leadership positions. In a study using Gallup data sets, Migali & Scipioni (2019 p. 188) showed that for low-income countries in their sample, most of which were African, dissatisfaction with living standards and pessimistic view of the future was associated with a higher 'wish' to migrate. At the same time, dissatisfaction with living standards in low-income countries was not associated with more preparation to migrate, affirming both the

migration hump hypothesis and the divergences between aspirations and capabilities (Migali & Scipioni, 2019). In the selected countries for this study, Table 2 shows that optimism exceeded the overall average for Africa except for Kenya and Morocco, where the values were close to the average.

Table 2: Gender differences between conviction to leave, norms, and indicators of wellbeing

	Migration aspirations	Migration plans	Migration preparation	Importance religion	Discrimination minorities	Women dignity	Women leader	Optimistic	Standard of living	Life today	Life in 5 years	N
All	0.257	0.019	0.007	0.955	0.689	0.528	0.873	0.870	1.809	4.695	6.961	72587
All-Men	0.295	0.025	0.009	0.947	0.691	0.559	0.825	0.868	1.830	4.649	6.893	36819
All- Women	0.220	0.013	0.005	0.963	0.687	0.499	0.921	0.872	1.790	4.740	7.028	35768
Senegal	0.286	0.033	0.008	0.974	0.858	0.583	0.911	0.938	1.772	4.436	7.109	14000
Senegal – Men	0.342	0.045	0.010	0.973	0.868	0.615	0.886	0.950	1.783	4.374	7.074	7344
Senegal – Women	0.235	0.022	0.005	0.975	0.848	0.553	0.935	0.928	1.761	4.493	7.142	6656
Kenya	0.190	0.009	0.004	0.946	0.692	0.370	0.896	0.801	1.981	4.363	6.581	15201
Kenya – Men	0.201	0.009	0.004	0.936	0.695	0.406	0.855	0.856	2.006	4.310	6.545	7427
Kenya – Women	0.179	0.009	0.004	0.955	0.689	0.336	0.935	0.748	1.958	4.412	6.615	7774
Nigeria	0.313	0.016	0.005	0.961	0.667	0.483	0.853	0.893	1.784	4.926	7.945	17002
Nigeria – Men	0.331	0.020	0.006	0.953	0.666	0.506	0.791	0.890	1.790	4.983	7.937	9573
Nigeria – Women	0.294	0.012	0.005	0.969	0.668	0.459	0.917	0.896	1.778	4.867	7.954	7429
Morocco	0.233	0.017	0.006	0.956	0.593	0.543	.	0.845	1.652	5.042	6.656	12094
Morocco – Men	0.282	0.022	0.008	0.948	0.600	0.575	.	0.835	1.685	4.891	6.434	5303
Morocco – Women	0.186	0.012	0.004	0.964	0.586	0.513	.	0.856	1.621	5.188	6.877	67

Notes to Table 2: Source: Gallup poll datasets, 2021. Summary statistics based on Gallup data set; Migration aspirations: "If you had the opportunity, would you like to move abroad permanently" Yes=1, No=0; Migration plans: "Planning to Move Next 12 months" Yes=1, No=0; Migration preparations "Preparation for Move Abroad" Yes=1, No=0; Importance religion "Is religion an important part of your daily life?" Yes=1, No=0; Discrimination minorities "Is the city or area where you live a good place or not a good place to live for racial and ethnic minorities?", Yes=1, No=0; Women Dignity "Do you believe women in (Country) are treated with respect and dignity, or not? Yes=1, No=0; Women leader "Women: Leadership Positions", Yes=1, No=0; Optimistic "Optimistic", Yes=1, No=0; Standard of living "Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?" 1=Better, 2= Same, 3=Getting worse; Life today "Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?"; Life in 5 years "Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. Just your best guess, on which step do you think you will stand in the future, say about five years from now?"

Table 2 further depicts that migration aspirations, plans and preparations are generally lower for women in Africa than for men. Aspirations to migrate depicts that the person would like to migrate abroad permanently, should the opportunity arise. In this regard, Nigeria, Senegal and Morocco, arranged in descending order of aspirations, all had above overall measures of migration aspirations. Moreover, only in Nigeria were aspirations to migrate among women higher than the overall measure. Kenya was substantially below the overall measure of aspirations to migrate for both sexes. Overall, fewer women aspired to migrate when compared to men, particularly in Morocco and Senegal.

Noticeable in Table 2, as the questions move away from aspirations towards plans and preparations to migrate, the gap widens between men and women, particularly in Senegal and Morocco. This conforms with the literature on gendered migration aspirations in the Global South showing that women had relatively lower gaps in aspirations to migrate than in preparations to migrate (Aslany et al., 2021; Carling, 2014). In Kenya, plans and preparations to migrate for men and women are at par; while in Nigeria, there were gendered variations in favour of men, more significantly in plans, and less so in preparations to migrate.

As Table 2 describes, the conviction to migrate is matched with migration preparations. The literature shows clearly that differences in aspirations to migrate

widen with disparities in the opportunities to migrate. Income and wealth are among the widely discussed important contributors to the aspiration and decision to migrate (Aslany et al., 2021; Grubanov-Boskovic et al., 2021, Migali & Scipioni, 2019).

Carling et al. (2013) show, in a study on Senegal, that while aspirations to migrate are somewhat close among men (75%) and women (65%) between the ages of 18 and 39, only 10% of women from this group have taken a step to migrate by processing a passport, obtaining a visa or actively seeking employment abroad, compared 20% of men.

The indicators of wellbeing and position in society in Table 2 again are lower for women, based on respondents' self-assessment. While the descriptive dataset is small, higher aspirations to migrate were not associated with worse standard of living or reflection on position in life today and in five years. For instance, in Nigeria, self-reported estimates of life today were close to those in Morocco, and optimism was higher, while migration aspirations were far higher in Nigeria. The normalcy and embeddedness of migration in cases such as Nigeria, which could be proxied by migration flows and the advantages of existing migration infrastructure, are worth considering as explanations for higher migration aspirations. For example, Migali & Scipioni (2019, p. 188) associate an increased wish to migrate with previous migration experience. The table also shows high levels of religiousness among the selected African countries, providing some common characteristics through which associated personal traits, such as risk and altruism, could be examined.

The employed are likely to move

Table 3 depicts that gender matters in the likelihood to move and that country specific differences exist. Women were less likely to move than men. These differences between gender in the likelihood to move were more pronounced in

Senegal. Nigeria and Morocco had similar gaps of around 3% higher likelihood to migration for men, while for Kenya women were about 2% more likely to migrate than men.

The table also shows that employment status matters to whether respondents would like to migrate, but the relationship is not intuitive. Migali & Scipioni (2019, p. 188) show that an increased wish to migrate is associated with being foreign born, having secondary or tertiary level education and being employed. In the Gallup dataset, employed persons more than unemployed reported they would like to move, and particularly those who are self-employed. Remarkably, the Gallup sample covered men and women with similar employment status, and men having about 2% higher unemployment than women.

The employment composition in the Gallup data, in which men and women had similar employment rates, was useful to show that the variations between women and men likely to move, were not biased by differences in employment status. The Gallup data set showed that women were not likely to move if they were out of the work force or unemployed, but this was not the case for men. These reflect the lack of opportunities for women who did not have financial autonomy. Men reported that they were likely to move even when they were unemployed.⁷

⁷ Please see Pearson's correlations in Appendix 3.

Table 3: Employment status and likelihood to move, disaggregated by men and women

WOMEN	Nigeria			Senegal			Kenya			Morocco		
Employment status	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)
Employed full time for an employer	469.207	7.730	7.730	279.967	5.310	5.310	738.262	16.250	16.250	433.566	6.850	6.850
Employed full time for self	1530.344	25.220	32.950	298.508	5.660	10.970	1295.694	28.510	44.760	161.829	2.560	9.410
Employed part time do not want full time	887.150	14.620	47.560	342.203	6.490	17.460	443.252	9.750	54.520	202.561	3.200	12.610
Unemployed	419.150	6.910	54.470	501.604	9.510	26.980	417.097	9.180	63.700	546.353	8.630	21.240
Employed part time want full time	541.808	8.930	63.400	758.910	14.400	41.370	542.682	11.940	75.640	204.374	3.230	24.470
Out of workforce	2221.341	36.600	100.000	3090.808	58.630	100.000	1107.013	24.360	100.000	4780.317	75.530	100.000
Total:	6069.000	100.000		5272.000	100.000		4544.000	100.000		6329.000	100.000	
Likely to move	2420.629	32.580	32.580	1632.294	24.520	24.520	1971.659	26.550	26.550	1601.496	25.610	25.610
Unlikely to move	4470.253	60.170	92.760	4780.639	71.820	96.350	5285.733	71.170	97.720	4470.989	71.490	97.100
(DK)	523.145	7.040	99.800	240.504	3.610	99.960	168.059	2.260	99.980	172.265	2.750	99.850
(Refused)	14.973	0.200	100.000	2.564	0.040	100.000	1.550	0.020	100.000	9.250	0.150	100.000
Total:	7429	100		6656	100		7427	100		6254	100	

DYNAMIG

MEN	Nigeria			Senegal			Kenya			Morocco		
Employment status	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cum. (%)
Employed full time for an employer	1336.410	16.850	16.850	852.277	14.880	14.880	1179.006	26.460	26.460	1120.674	23.550	23.550
Employed full time for self	2332.770	29.410	46.250	786.193	13.730	28.610	1336.189	29.990	56.450	799.425	16.800	40.350
Employed part time do not want full time	986.443	12.430	58.690	448.055	7.820	36.440	420.670	9.440	65.890	264.305	5.550	45.900
Unemployed	538.028	6.780	65.470	621.164	10.850	47.290	356.408	8.000	73.880	512.865	10.780	56.680
Employed part time want full time	917.687	11.570	77.040	1068.303	18.660	65.940	502.158	11.270	85.150	522.611	10.980	67.660
Out of workforce	1821.662	22.960	100.000	1950.008	34.060	100.000	661.569	14.850	100.000	1539.121	32.340	100.000
Total:	7933.000	100.000		5726.000	100.000		4456.000	100.000		4759.000	100.000	
Likely to move	3449.333	36.030	36.030	2709.891	36.900	36.900	1903.011	24.480	24.480	1388.237	28.680	28.680
Unlikely to move	5494.158	57.390	93.420	4386.071	59.720	96.620	5634.008	72.470	96.950	3314.259	68.480	97.160
(DK)	614.056	6.410	99.840	236.473	3.220	99.840	234.303	3.010	99.970	131.625	2.720	99.880
(Refused)	15.453	0.160	100.000	11.564	0.160	100.000	2.678	0.030	100.000	5.879	0.120	100.000
Total:	9573	100		7344	100		7774	100		4840	100	

Source: Gallup poll datasets, 2021.

Notes to Table 3: Summary statistics based on Gallup data set; to collect the answers on the Employment Status's question: "What is your current employment status?", Gallup classifies respondents into one of six employment categories: Employed full time for an employer = 1; Employed full time for self = 2; Employed part time, but do not want to work full time = 3; Employed part time, but want to work full time = 4; Unemployed = 5; and Out of the workforce = 6. Underemployed respondents are employed part time, but want to work full time, or they are unemployed. Unemployed respondents are those within the underemployed group who are not employed, even for one hour a week, but are available and looking for work. Unemployment and underemployment are calculated as a percentage of the workforce. DK means do not know and respondents who refused to answer the question are marked as refused.

In conclusion, while migration aspirations and migration flows move in the same direction, opportunities to migrate differ significantly across the globe, so that more people aspire to migrate than those who actually do (Aslany et al., 2021). Among the studies examining the implications of discriminatory social norms on migration, the conclusion is that more women want to escape discriminatory practices at origin countries, but this shows as an inverted-U relationship; so that beyond a threshold more discrimination means lower migration (Ferrant et al., 2014). Moreover, discriminatory social norms restrain women's capabilities to migrate through fewer financial and educational opportunities (OECD, SIGI 2021), gender care roles and expectations around caregiving and marital status. As Migali and Scipioni (2019) show, the 'probability to wish to migrate' is generally higher among men, although what accounts for the differences deserves more attention. While counterintuitive, given that unemployment can be a driver of migration, it is the case that the employed are likely to move. In terms of gender interacting with other indicators of oppression, unemployment discriminately affects women being 'likely to move' significantly differently for men.

3. Women are vulnerable

Much of the migration literature has focussed on men (Bah & Batista, 2018; Munshi & Rosenzweig, 2016; Shrestha, 2020), incorrectly assuming that women do not migrate for work or education and are often lumped together as tied migrants or vulnerable and forced (see Cooke, 2008). The focus of gender and migration studies has therefore relegated the resilience of female migrants to the background. This ignores how women negotiate challenging circumstances in migration decision-making evident in studies showing that migrants, including women, tend to be more entrepreneurial than non-migrants.

In Bakewell's (2013) view, migration could reflect women grasping opportunities to fulfil their needs. A few initiatives, such as Migrant Women for Development in Africa (WMIDA), focus on providing opportunities by engaging women to use remittances to build small businesses, empower women to build sources of livelihood, and engage in other migratory practices, such as cross-border trade⁸. Several studies (Bisong, 2019; Plambech, 2017) suggest a shift from the narrative of vulnerabilities to resilience for instance through differentiating sex work from sex trafficking. While the evidence is overwhelming that women face discriminatory practices, there is increasing attention to the opportunities women have created to navigate these circumstances and how migration empowers women (Aimée-Noël, 2018; Ohonba & Agbontaen-eghafona, 2019).

The focus on women as resilient in the face of challenges is not a denial that gender intersects with multiple forms of discrimination, and migration itself can be a channel

⁸ Cross-border trade, particularly in Africa, is gendered, strongly dominated by women using informal work to enter into the labour market. Sectors such as beauty sectors provide opportunities for women to build a source of livelihood.

of discrimination. In other words, discrimination can arise from being both a migrant and a woman (Ruysen & Salomone, 2018). Yet one way in which women show resilience is that once they break away from discriminatory practices through migration, they may return after achieving their migration aspiration and continue maintaining transnational linkages and multiple trajectories.

The issue of return migration cuts across several ideas on the interplay between gender preferences. For example, where stigmatisation exists, return migrants may choose not to settle in their community or even country of origin and may make multiple attempts at migration. There is also increasing evidence of changing gender relations associated with migration; for instance, when women increasingly participate in agriculture following men's migration. However, the impact of gender participation depends on family structures. For example, that is the case in Burkina Faso, where women's increased participation in agricultural labour depended on whether the migrant was the household head (Langil et al., 2023).

On the other hand, masculinity could also be vulnerable, particularly when challenged by changes in gender norms. Pasura & Christou (2018) show this while studying how transnational migration transforms gender relations and disrupts fixed notions of gender identities and masculinities. Men negotiate challenges to their masculine identities through several strategies (Pasura & Christou, 2018). They may choose to withdraw and return 'home' as a strategy to regain their previous gender privileges when their masculinity is challenged, while others could accommodate, resist, endorse and subvert (Pasura & Christou, 2018).

Existing studies on masculinity suggest that cultural practices such as patriarchal relationships within the same gender, between older and younger men, which are

hierarchical, paternalistic and reflect the social privilege of elderhood, have been sustained within Africa (Dery, 2020, p. 1774, 1778). Equally insightful to masculine hierarchies is Dery's (2020) positionality as young, heterosexual, unmarried and male, which reflects elements of power acquired through (marital) status and indicates the importance of sexuality. However, patriarchal male hierarchies can be resisted, as Teye et al. (2023a) show when fathers' control of household finances are resisted by their migrant sons through threats of withholding remittances unless these are spent according to the remitter's wishes.

The evidence that women face far more discriminatory practices than men does not imply it is to be taken for granted that women are to be approached from a perspective of the need for protection. Women through migration are changing gender relations and gaining decision-making powers within the family.

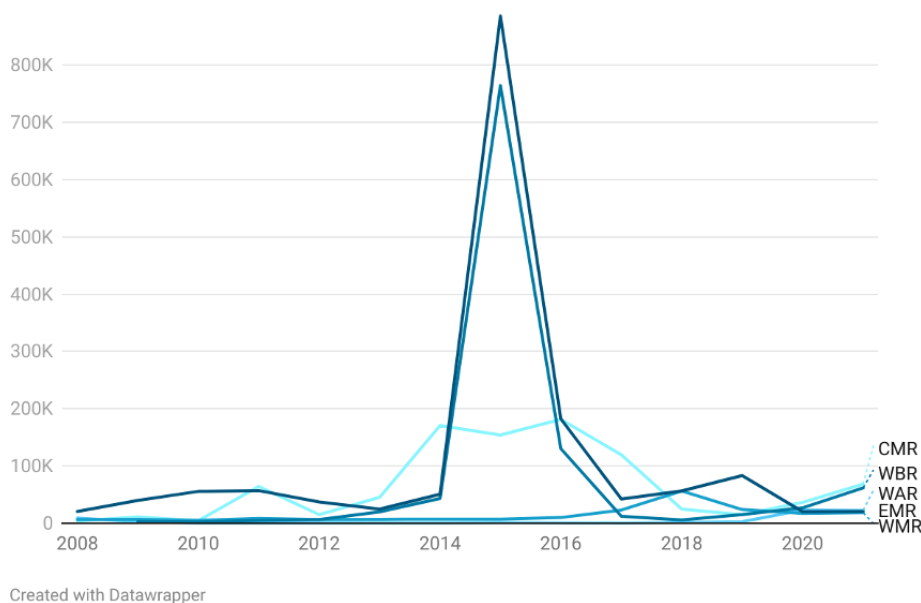
4. Migration trajectories are personal decisions

Migration trajectories are spatiotemporal processes that can capture the dynamics of multiple journeys and are constituted from specific spatial dynamics such as detours, transit points, and changeable networks and frictions they entail (border, waiting, detention) (Schapendonk et al., 2020). Trajectories, or the 'twists and turns of a journey' are different when they occur in the Global South when compared to privileged mobilities of the Global North (Schapendonk et al., 2020). One key feature of Global South trajectories is the multiplicity of journeys through transit routes, with a high probability that migrants will be stuck before arriving at their destination (Schapendonk et al., 2020). These multiplicities of journeys are affected by migration regulations within the region and beyond. While most migration is wanted

and regular, there are many processes for Global South migrants between departure, transit and arrival (Triandafyllidou, 2022). At the same time, women migration patterns are changing with multiple move trajectories (Le Jeune et al., 2004). In addition, the job opportunities available matter in gendered migration trajectories, as men from Africa migrate to Europe, North America and North Africa, while a reasonable number of women migrate to the Middle East to work as a domestic workers or housemaids (Awumbila et al., 2019; Kandilige et al., 2023).

Migration journeys that depict gendered variations are insightful to how agency, institutions and policy impact men, women and other gender identities differently. However, there is sparse gender-disaggregated data on migration and even less on migrant trajectories. Generally, it has remained difficult to distinguish the autonomous migration of women from family, particularly in the cases of tied migration through the study route (see Kofman & Raghuram, 2022). Understanding migrant journeys is important for migration governance and policy-making (Triandafyllidou, 2019). Crawley & Jones (2021) argue that migration journeys from the Global South are not unidirectional from source to transit to destination, but those spaces in-between represent places that migrants live, often permanently. Whether overland or overseas, migration routes vary with personal and institutional factors, including policy.

Figure 1: Migration corridors out of Africa



Source: FRONTEX, 2021. Note: CMR: Central Mediterranean Route, WBR Western Balkan region, WR: Western African Route, EMR: Eastern Mediterranean Route, WMR: Western Mediterranean Route.

Figure 1 shows changes in migration routes over time, particularly significant between 2014 and 2016 reflecting the Syrian crisis (FRONTEX, 2021). It also depicts a more recent preference for the West African Route (WR) and the Western Balkan Route (WBR) and a decreased preference of the Western Mediterranean route, which coincides with border management interventions on the route.

Individual and household choices show important variations among women, men and other gender identities in migration trajectories. For example, while women's migration from Morocco is slightly higher than Nigeria (OECD, SIGI, 2021), evidence suggests that Moroccan women migrated more to join their spouses abroad (Van der Erf & Heering, 2002), yet an increasing number of Moroccan women are

migrating for work (Haas, 2009). Specifically, Moroccan women increasingly migrate independently, for work in domestic care and the agricultural sector in small industries in southern Europe (Berriane et al., 2015, p. 507). On the other hand, Nigerian women migrate more through the study and employment routes. Also, for Nigeria where over 80% of victims of trafficking are women (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, (NAPTIP) 2021, p. 53), migration choices are very different among men and women using overland routes. Kuschminder (2021) compares Eritrean and Nigerian migration journeys, showing that the overland migration process from Nigeria requires comparatively 'less planning' given the ECOWAS free movement area, so spontaneity is a feature of these Nigerian mobilities. In terms of entry routes, Nigerian journeys to Italy through Libya are also more often through Sabha in the Southwest, a contested territory where they could be detained by smugglers (Kuschminder, 2021).

Among institutional factors, legal institutions are important because they more often hinder the migration of women and other gender identities as compared to men. Labour laws can restrict the jobs that women can take and when, as well as where they are permitted to work (Roy, 2019). Gendered restrictions in origin countries subjugate women, restricting married women from migrating or requiring that they seek permission from their husbands before they are allowed to travel internationally (Roy, 2019). For example, in Qatar, an unmarried woman will require the permission of a male guardian to migrate (St John, 2023). Destinations may also restrict visas to certain occupations, such as health and domestic workers, which is most likely to affect the gender ratio of the migrants. In other cases, some other countries limit women from higher-paying jobs compared to men (Roy, 2019). The discrimination that women face is in these ways enshrined in institutional practices that compound their migration decisions and experiences.

However, reforming institutions may often require understanding social norms as what other people believe or approve and targeting changing those perceptions (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). When policy does not target cultural influences of the aspirations to migrate, such as embeddedness and normalcy in mobility and gendered aspects of societal norms, this can limit its acceptance. Nnaemeka (2004) presents such a case in which cultural contexts improved policy efficacy in Africa by framing the intervention in culturally appealing terms.

Environmental conditions and gendered trajectories

Among the more understood factors influencing migration decisions and trajectories are environmental conditions. Climate change can impact migration directly through increased floods, tsunamis, landslides, earthquakes, wildfires and volcanic eruptions (Twinomuhangi et al., 2023), while indirect effects include land degradation, declining land productivity, especially for those that engage in agriculture as a means of living and may be forced to migrate from rural to urban areas (Delazeri et al., 2022). A significant part of intraregional migration in Africa is driven by environmental conditions (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016).

Gender disparities in climate change vulnerability not only reflect pre-existing gender imbalance but also reinforce them because they are most likely to be averagely poor, less educated, limited access to or ownership of resources and have lower health status (Eastin, 2018). Women are more vulnerable to environmental change, as socio-cultural norms may limit women's influence on household decision-making on how to mitigate and cope with the impacts of climate change, including the decision to leave home (Braham, 2018).

The report on human mobility and climate change in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023), showed that limited economic opportunities and social-cultural norms already affecting women combined with climate change make women more vulnerable to gender inequalities. Men also tend to move with larger animals that can be sold at higher economic value; at the same time, when men are unable to sell livestock, women are often left behind to take care of the sick, elderly and children (UNHCR, 2023). Women are also left with younger animals that cannot be sold and can die faster due to drought (UNHCR, 2023).

Globally, in 2022, there was an all-time high of 71.2 million people internally displaced, out of which 62.5 million were displaced as a result of conflict and violence while the remaining 8.6 million displacements resulted from disasters (Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2023). The increase may be as a result of ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, conflict in Sudan and Somalia, and insecurity in the Northeast of Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Eritrea, among others. Still, the African continent accounted for one-third of this figure (IDMC, 2023).

Climate change has been a source of internal displacement around the Niger river areas and is associated with herder-farmer conflicts in West Africa. According to UNHCR (2022), there are 3.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), most of whom have been forced to flee their homes in Northeastern Nigeria due to insurgency and farmer-herder conflicts. Little is known about onward movements of IDPs outside the African continent. Insecurity associated with their displacement is a significant determinant of aspirations and the decision to migrate. However, while

they may not have the financial and educational capabilities to migrate out of the continent, the reduced agricultural production that their displacement puts pressure on limited resources and raises aspirations to migrate and can hence create spillover effects.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the literature on gendered aspects of migration decisions with a focus on changing gender relations and intersections of gender with socially constructed variables. Its application of institutions as normative rules that have gender implications on the decision to migrate, allowed an examination of individual, community, national and supranational levels of influences on migration decision. These levels of influence on migration decisions capture meso and dynamic features of migration decisions.

Gender is not a standalone indicator of the decision to migrate but intersects with other measures of discrimination, such as culture and class and socially constructed categories, impacting the decision to migrate. Culture and class can become additional layers of discrimination that negatively affect the aspiration and capabilities to migration by gender. This review of the recent literature on personal and institutional influences examined gendered migration decisions using four assumptions that are usually taken for granted. These four assumptions are not exhaustive but provide valuable insights on the state of the literature on gendered migration decisions.

First, migration decisions are neither always rational nor always reflective of individual preferences. There has been a rise in studies that link personality traits and social preferences to migration decisions. These show that traits such as optimism and curiosity as well as economic preferences such as risk taking and time value are important to the migration decision of men, women and other gender identities. On the side of whether choices are individual, the literature shows that

household, communal, national and supranational levels of influence are exerted on migration decisions. Indeed, there are large regional and gender differences in economic preferences, and even within the same region, these variations persist. In addition, gendered preferences are associated with level of development and gender equality. Meso-level influences are dynamic and occur in multiple trajectories or ‘twists and turns’.

Second, the literature on whether discriminatory social norms led to more migration shows that migration increased with discrimination only up until a threshold, after which less migration occurred even in the face of discriminatory social norms. Part of the explanation is that countries with more discriminatory norms also have reduced capabilities to migrate, so there are fewer opportunities to migrate for those facing higher discrimination. Institutional arrangements such as laws and cultural norms continue to perpetuate discrimination against women joining certain professions, advancing their education, migrating without permission of a spouse or a guardian, and accessing finance to pay for a migration journey. In these circumstances, women could migrate as a means to escape discriminatory practices. As social and economic institutions such as access to education improve women’s aspirations to migrate work to be more gender inclusive, notably relatively fewer opportunities make women less able to migrate than men. At the same time, in cases of strong cultural norms associated with gender relations, migrants preferred to go to societies with similar norms. Aspirations as well as capabilities to migrate are lower among women than men with only sparse literature explaining migration opportunities of other gender identities.

Aspirations reflect more than missing opportunities at source countries and can arise through a number of channels, from which we identify three. One, cultural embeddedness in and normalcy of migration can perpetuate existing gendered

migration trajectories. Two, women's migration trajectories from societies with strong cultural institutions and gendered cultural values tend towards destinations with similar values. In some instances, changing gendered cultural practices mean that opportunities emerge for women to migrate as a means of livelihood and support to their families; sometimes these cultural changes are precipitated by migration.

Three, family structures are important institutions to gendered migration as matrifocal societies have more women migrants. In all these, opportunities continue to be important in differentiating between those who only aspire to migrate and those with the capabilities to migrate.

Third, migration literature most often focuses on women's vulnerabilities while neglecting their resilience. Instead of negating the discrimination against women, we want to move the discussion forward so that vulnerabilities and opportunities of men, women and other gender identities are observed and studied more completely. The literature shows that through migration, gender relations can change for men and women. In the case of women, it is most often the case that migration offers new opportunities to negotiate their social and economic lives. At the same time, migration can disrupt masculine hegemonies causing men to cope with changing gendered relations.

Fourth, migration decisions reflect spatiotemporal processes affected by multiple individual and institutional factors. Trajectories of migrations in the Global South are reflective of immobilising factors with multiple transit and destination points.

Migration journeys from the Global South often occur through multiple places of transfer and experiences of involuntary mobility. Challenges with mobility are particularly important for Africa, where changing environmental conditions have led to the displacement of many with few strategies to adapt or move onwards in a

regular and orderly manner. Beyond cultural and institutional arrangements not being explicitly discriminatory but remaining gender blind, they need to be examined for constraints on women's mobility to afford better participation of women.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Regional averages

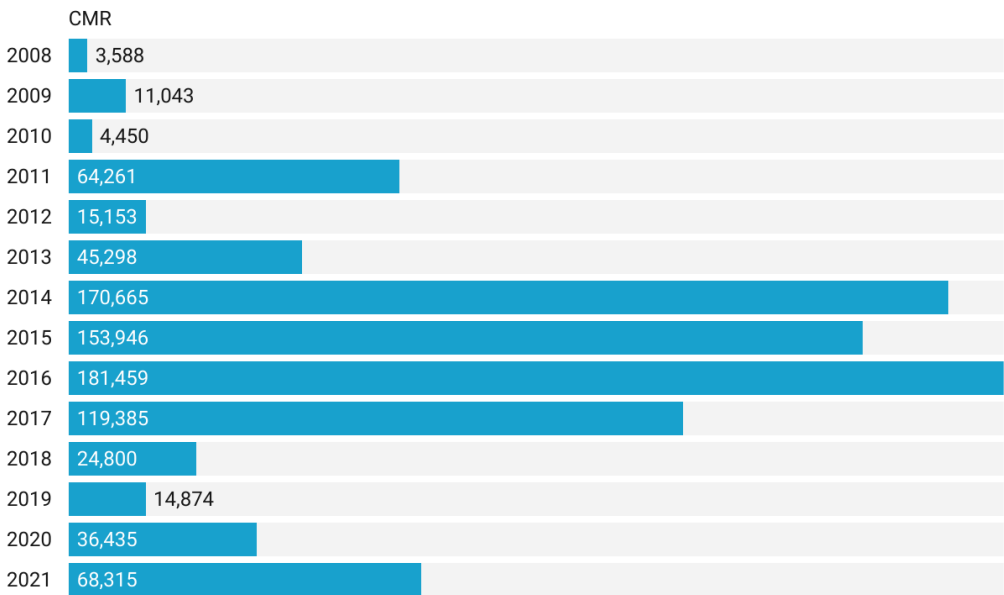
	Patience	Risk taking	Pos. recip.	Neg. recip.	Altruism	Trust	#Obs
Europe	0.187	-0.133	-0.012	0.078	-0.214	0.004	22
Mena countries	-0.143	0.161	0.072	0.080	0.129	0.231	9
Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.164	0.340	-0.34	-0.108	-0.152	-0.334	11
Middle East	-0.053	-0.098	-0.013	0.057	0.219	-0.188	4
South and East Asia	-0.100	-0.113	0.114	0.007	-0.008	0.207	5
North America	0.765	0.15	0.200	0.017	0.318	0.198	2
South and Middle America	-0.231	-0.042	-0.106	-0.18	-0.067	-0.119	12

Notes: Data global preference survey (Falk et al., 2018, 2023). Own calculation following the approach by Falk et al. (2018). Europe includes Austria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom ; Mena countries include Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sub-Saharan African countries include Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe; Middle Eastern countries include Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka; South Asian countries include Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam ; North American countries include the US and Canada; South and Middle American countries include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela.

Appendix 2: Migration corridors between Africa and Europe

The Central, Eastern and Western Mediterranean routes, as well as the West African Route and the Balkan Route are all significantly used by Africans migrating overland to Europe (FRONTEX, 2023). Overland, there are similar migration corridors for Nigerians and Moroccans, namely, the Central, the Eastern and the Western Mediterranean routes (WMR), as well as the overland route to Spain.

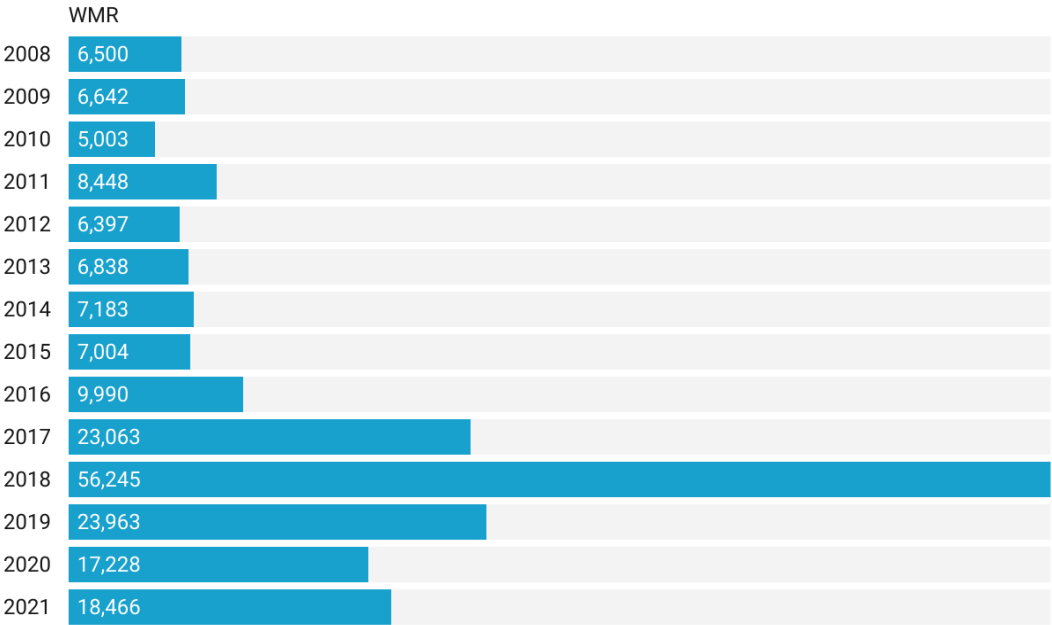
Central Mediterranean Route



Created with Datawrapper

Source: Frontex, 2023.

Western Mediterranean Route

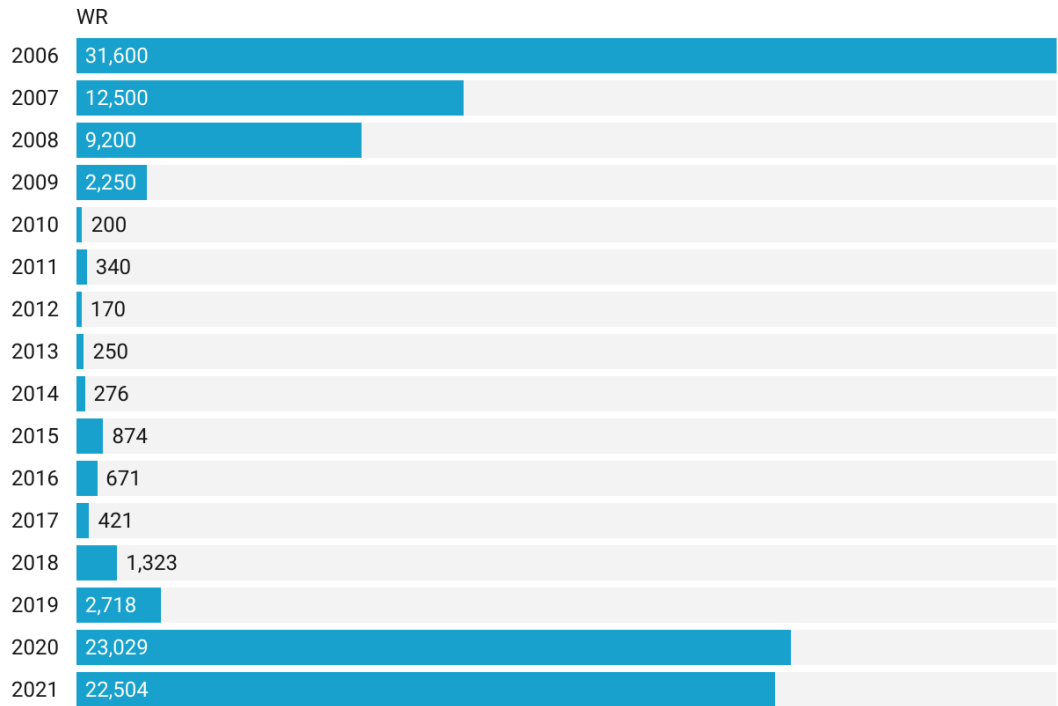


Created with Datawrapper

Source: Frontex, 2023.

For many years, the WMR route has been widely popular, especially among Guinean, Ivorian and Gambian migrants.

West African Route



Created with Datawrapper

Source: Frontex, 2023.

The West African Route is not a fully active smuggling route at present, as 671 irregular border crossings were registered in 2016 (FRONTEX, 2023). However, the existing literature remarks that this route could be easily re-activated by either regional instability or conflicts or by a drop in vigilance and border management efforts.

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Appendix 3: Pearson correlations of migration aspirations of men and women plan and preparations with selected social indicators

<i>WOMEN</i>	<i>Migration aspirations</i>	<i>Migration plans</i>	<i>Migration preparation</i>	<i>Importance religion</i>	<i>Discrimination minorities</i>	<i>Women dignity</i>	<i>Women leader</i>	<i>Optimistic</i>	<i>Standard of living</i>	<i>Life today</i>	<i>Life in 5 years</i>
Migration aspirations	1										
Migration plans	0.302	1.000									
Migration preparation	0.680	0.532	1.000								
Importance religion	0.624	0.710	0.253	1.000							
Discrimination minorities	0.344	0.583	-0.013	0.815	1.000						
Women dignity	0.016	0.426	0.610	-0.090	-0.482	1.000					
Women leader	0.394	0.180	0.579	-0.022	0.248	-0.117	1.000				
Optimistic	0.550	0.688	0.826	0.451	-0.020	0.808	0.048	1.000			
Standard of living	-0.112	-0.309	-0.059	-0.393	0.130	-0.540	0.766	-0.595	1.000		
Life today	0.024	-0.262	-0.110	-0.047	-0.544	0.393	-0.797	0.300	-0.824	1.000	
Life in 5 years	0.929	0.216	0.376	0.746	0.489	-0.227	0.152	0.357	-0.208	0.118	1.000
<i>MEN</i>	<i>Migration aspirations</i>	<i>Migration plans</i>	<i>Migration preparation</i>	<i>Importance religion</i>	<i>Discrimination minorities</i>	<i>Women dignity</i>	<i>Women leader</i>	<i>Optimistic</i>	<i>Standard of living</i>	<i>Life today</i>	<i>Life in 5 years</i>
Migration aspirations	1										
Migration plans	0.790	1.000									
Migration preparation	0.493	0.591	1.000								
Importance religion	0.470	0.528	-0.362	1.000							
Discrimination minorities	0.075	0.268	-0.596	0.886	1.000						
Women dignity	0.669	0.734	0.954	-0.121	-0.454	1.000					
Women leader	0.059	0.133	-0.096	0.160	0.397	-0.225	1.000				
Optimistic	0.642	0.781	0.161	0.689	0.623	0.249	0.661	1.000			
Standard of living	-0.663	-0.466	-0.177	-0.475	-0.043	-0.450	0.645	-0.077	1.000		
Life today	0.421	-0.137	0.098	-0.107	-0.462	0.219	-0.554	-0.362	-0.653	1.000	
Life in 5 years	0.437	0.038	-0.494	0.620	0.536	-0.365	0.404	0.468	-0.207	0.308	1.000

Source: Gallup poll datasets, 2021, see Table 3. Notes: Summary statistics based on Gallup data set; to collect the answers on the Employment Status's question: "What is your current employment status?", Gallup classifies respondents into one of six employment categories: Employed full time for an employer = 1; Employed full time for self = 2; Employed part time, but do not want to work full time = 3; Employed part time, but want to work full time = 4; Unemployed = 5; and Out of the workforce = 6. Underemployed respondents are employed part time, but want to work full time, or they are unemployed. Unemployed respondents are those within the underemployed group who are not employed, even for one hour a week, but are available and looking for work. Unemployment and underemployment are calculated as a percentage of the workforce. DK means do not know and respondents who refused to answer the question are marked as refused.

Appendix 4: Pearson correlations of employment status and likely to move

<i>WOMEN</i>	<i>Employed full time for an employer</i>	<i>Employed full time for self</i>	<i>Employed part time do not want full time</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Employed part time want full time</i>	<i>Out of workforce</i>	<i>Likely to move</i>	<i>Unlikely to move</i>
Employed full time for an employer	1							
Employed full time for self	0.632102854	1						
Employed part time do not want full time	0.157081847	0.857037225	1					
Unemployed	-0.630050385	-0.966925006	-0.781548085	1				
Employed part time want full time	-0.2099728	0.230255244	0.306567753	-0.429367615	1			
Out of workforce	-0.655681848	-0.830386609	-0.554550818	0.941849896	-0.569463187	1		
Likely to move	0.36800472	0.934296458	0.972469147	-0.842791078	0.165685366	-0.615215521	1	
Unlikely to move	0.673697852	0.280235676	-0.176636017	-0.468024009	0.38387798	-0.720386615	-0.073160887	1
<i>MEN</i>	<i>Employed full time for an employer</i>	<i>Employed full time for self</i>	<i>Employed part time do not want full time</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Employed part time want full time</i>	<i>Out of workforce</i>	<i>Likely to move</i>	<i>Unlikely to move</i>
Employed full time for an employer	1							
Employed full time for self	0.825843168	1						
Employed part time do not want full time	0.598810788	0.936533753	1					
Unemployed	-0.489172926	-0.145270946	0.188609696	1				
Employed part time want full time	-0.370515179	0.184612206	0.51354532	0.821667855	1			
Out of workforce	-0.285597343	0.040690178	0.3487202	0.975449814	0.800301421	1		
Likely to move	0.208800436	0.7170167	0.907350649	0.455242344	0.812967742	0.540874731	1	
Unlikely to move	0.473035622	0.723912465	0.639108227	-0.44495291	0.126363981	-0.383269263	0.568812608	1

Notes. Data from Gallup poll data, 2021, see Table 3. Colour codes are applied only to likely to move and unlikely to move for emphasis. Summary statistics based on Gallup data set; to collect the answers on the Employment Status's question: "What is your current employment status?", Gallup classifies respondents into one of six employment categories: Employed full time for an employer = 1; Employed full time for self = 2; Employed part time, but do not want to work full time = 3; Employed part time, but want to work full time = 4; Unemployed = 5; and Out of the workforce = 6. Underemployed respondents are employed part time, but want to work full time, or they are unemployed. Unemployed respondents are those within the underemployed group who are not employed, even for one hour a week, but are available and looking for work. Unemployment and underemployment are calculated as a percentage of the workforce. DK means do not know and respondents who refused to answer the question are marked as refused.

About DYNAMIG

DYNAMIG is a three-year project that aims to create a more thorough understanding of how people make decisions on whether or not to migrate and on how they migrate. Focusing on Africa and Europe, we will analyse to what extent migration policies – or policies that impact migration – take into account the factors that shape migration decisions, and look at how effective these policies are in influencing decisions and behaviour.

Website

dynamig.org



Funded by
the European Union

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