

Aspirations and intended destinations of people on the move in Sudan

Sudan hosts one of the largest refugee and migrant populations in Africa (more than 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers as of August 2021¹ and close to 400,000 migrants as of March 2021),² yet there is limited research and information on the aspirations and intended destinations of this population.³ This snapshot uses 4Mi data to shed light on the topic, providing insights into the intentions, intended destinations, main factors driving destination choices and the aspirations of refugees and migrants in Sudan.

Key findings

- While most South Sudanese had reached the end of their journey, respondents of other nationalities were planning onward movements.
- Europe is the most common intended destination for interviewed refugees and migrants of most nationalities. Chadian respondents, however, intend to travel to Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
- Over the course of their journeys, the majority of respondents had not changed their intended destination.
- Economic opportunities, better living standards and respect for human rights are factors driving destination choices.
- Most interviewed refugees and migrants intend to stay permanently and apply for asylum at their final intended destination, except for Chadians.

1 UNHCR (2021) [Overview of Refugees and Asylum-seekers in Sudan Dashboard as of 31 August 2021](#)

2 IOM (2021) [DTM](#)

3 See MMC (2021) [4Mi snapshot: The Impact of the Tigray crisis on Ethiopian and Eritrean Onward Movements within Sudan and to Libya and Tunisia](#)

Profiles

This snapshot draws on data collected through 920 surveys with refugees and migrants interviewed in Sudan between July 2020 and September 2021.⁴ The sample consists of 32% women and 68% men, aged between 18 and 55 years with an average age of 29. Most respondents were interviewed in Greater Khartoum (75%), followed by Kassala (5%), Dongola (3%), El Fasher (2%), Atbara (2%) and Nyala (2%).⁵ More than half (53%) had been in Sudan for less than a year at time of interview, while 47% had been there between 1 and 2 years.

The most common nationalities of respondents were: Eritrean (23%), Ethiopian (18%), Chadian (16%), South Sudanese (9%), Somali (4%), Cameroonian (3%) and Nigerian (3%). A quarter of respondents said they were currently travelling or living with children under their care.

The majority of respondents were planning to move onward, except South Sudanese

Almost three-quarters (74%; n=682) of respondents reported they had not reached the end of their journey, indicating they were transiting Sudan. 19% reported that they had reached the end of their journey in Sudan and 7% did not know. Compared to other nationalities,⁶ a high proportion of South Sudanese respondents (53/79, 67%) cited that

4 Some findings are based on variables only present in surveys conducted after 25 February 2021, totaling 550 surveys. There is no variation in the proportion of women and men when comparing this smaller sample to the full sample, while main nationalities varied slightly: Eritreans accounted for 27% of the sample, Ethiopians 22%, Chadians 13%, South Sudanese 10%, Somali 2%, Cameroonians 3%, Nigerians 2%.

5 The remaining 11% of respondents were sampled mostly in the states of Gedaref, Sennar, Blue Nile and Red Sea, with no one location reaching more than 1% of the sample.

6 The majority of Eritreans (173/209), Chadians (133/147), Ethiopians (122/166), Somalis (32/34), Cameroonians (21/29) and Nigerians (21/29) did not consider Sudan to be the end of their journey and intended to move forward.

they had reached the end of their journey in Sudan. This may reflect the family reunification movements of former Sudanese IDPs returning to and South Sudanese refugees entering Sudan from South Sudan since the 2013 partition. The greater proportion of South Sudanese respondents intending on staying in Sudan may also be the result of the more settled and protracted nature of South Sudanese displacement in Sudan.

The majority of respondents aspire to move to Europe, with considerable variation by nationality

Figure 1: What country is your preferred destination? (n=682)



Among respondents who had not reached the end of their journey (n=682), 62% were planning to travel to Europe, 12% intended to reach Canada, 9% Saudi Arabia, 4% Yemen, 3% Australia, 3% the USA, 5% other countries and 3% did not know or refused to answer. Among those planning to reach Europe (n=425), 32% did not specify which country, 17% identified Germany, 9% Italy, 7% Switzerland and 6% the UK, among others.

The intended destinations varied according to nationality. Among Ethiopians (n=122), the majority (77%) identified Europe, followed by Canada (7%), the USA (7%) and Australia (6%). Similarly, the majority (69%) of Eritreans (n=173) aimed to reach Europe, although a comparatively higher proportion (20%) reported Canada as their intended destination. Chadian respondents (n=113), however, showed very different destination aspirations, with most intending to reach Saudi Arabia (48%), followed by Yemen (21%). Europe was identified by 12% of Chadian respondents, indicating that Sudan is a key transit location for routes towards the Arabian Peninsula, not only for the 'Northern' route further into North Africa and onwards to Europe. More than three-quarters of respondents from Nigeria, Cameroon, Somalia and South Sudan not planning to stay in Sudan identified Europe or Canada as their intended destination.

The majority of respondents had not changed their intended destination

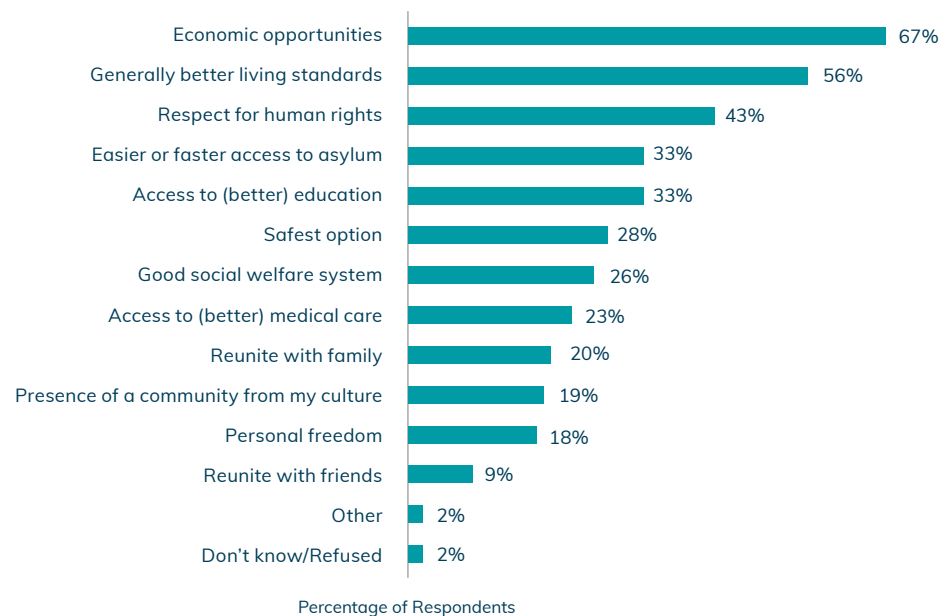
When asked whether respondents had changed their plans over the course of their journeys, 50% said nothing had changed; 25% had maintained their intended destination, but had changed their planned route; and 16% had decided to stop in Sudan for longer than anticipated. It was uncommon for respondents to have changed their intended destination (4%), or to decide to return home (2%).

Economic opportunities, better living standards and respect for human rights are together driving destination choices

Findings presented from this point onwards are based on 550 surveys conducted after 25 February 2021, when key variables were added to the survey.

Refugees and migrants that specified their intended destination⁷ (n=424) were asked why they had chosen the specific country (Figure 2). The majority (75%) selected multiple reasons, reflecting the multi-faceted nature of their migration decision. Overall, economic opportunities were the most commonly identified reason (67%). This was followed by generally better living standards (56%) and respect for human rights (43%), underlining that the search for protection and safety exists alongside the search for livelihoods. While not in the top three factors, the search for better access to asylum, education and welfare were among the more commonly cited drivers, suggesting that in addition to basic livelihood and safety needs, improved rights and key services are sought out as priorities.

Figure 2: Why did you select this destination (n=424)



⁷ i.e. Did not answer "None", "Don't Know" or "Refused" to the question: What is your intended destination?

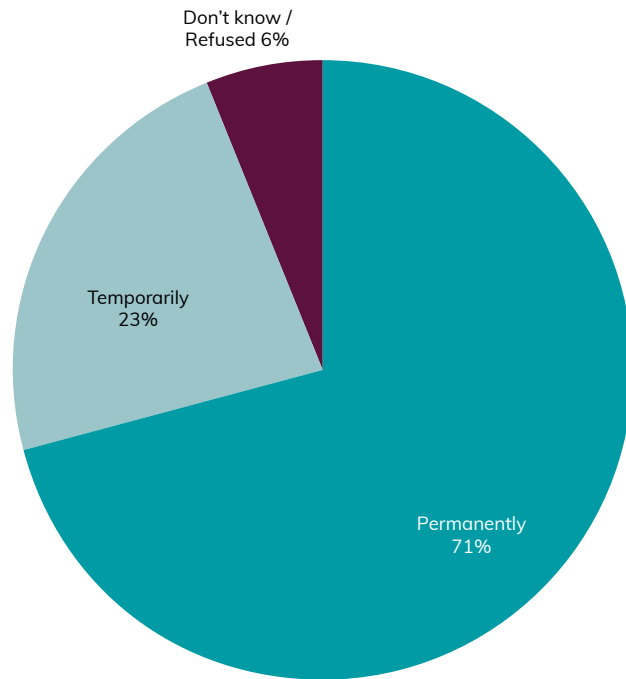
Different intended destinations are chosen for different reasons

When disaggregating the data by destination, those aiming to reach Canada and Australia – often Ethiopian and Eritrean respondents – more commonly selected access to (better) education (38/67 of those intending to reach Canada and 10/18 of those intending to reach Australia) as a reason for selecting their destination. Easier or faster access to asylum was also more commonly selected by respondents intending to travel to Canada (35/67). Most respondents travelling to Saudi Arabia (most of them Chadian) outlined their decision was driven by economic opportunities (20/22) and generally better living standards (15/22). Respondents travelling to Yemen (also mostly Chadians) frequently identified the presence of a community of their own culture as a reason for choosing their destination. All Chadian respondents travelling to Yemen were men, and although not specified in the 4Mi survey, qualitative data from 4Mi enumerators indicate that Chadian men frequently travel to Yemen to join armed forces which pay attractive wages.

Most refugee and migrant respondents plan to stay permanently in their intended destinations outside of Sudan and apply for asylum

Among respondents who planned to move onward from Sudan to other destinations (n=424), 71% reported they intended to settle at their intended destination permanently once they reached it, 23% intended to stay only temporarily, and 6% did not know or refused to answer. It was slightly more common for respondents travelling with children to intend to settle permanently (82%) than it was for those without (67%), as it was for women (76%) than men (69%). Respondents from Eritrea (110/126) and Ethiopia (73/85) overwhelmingly intended to stay permanently, compared to less than half (23/52) of Chadians. This is probably linked to Chadian respondents' destination choice in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, where migrants tend to journey temporarily for work opportunities.

Figure 3: Do you intend to stay at your destination permanently or temporarily? (n=424)?



76% of respondents planning to move onward outside of Sudan intended to apply for asylum once they had reached their destination. Similarly to what was observed when asked about their plans for long-term settlement, many Chadian respondents did not plan to apply for asylum/seek asylum (28/52), while most Ethiopians (77/85) and Eritreans (114/126) did. Also similar to what was observed on long-term settlement, respondents travelling with children more commonly expressed wanting to apply for asylum at their destination (85%) than those without children (72%), reflecting the different drivers and the once-in-a-lifetime decision that those travelling with children may have made.



4Mi data collection

4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for refugees and migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with refugees and migrants in West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi