

Introduction

This snapshot aims to provide an overview of the profiles and the journeys of young people on the move across four countries in West and North Africa. It draws on 1,196 surveys with refugees and migrants aged 18-24 conducted in Mali, Niger, Morocco, and Tunisia from June through November 2022.¹

As part of the implementation of Phase 1 of the project *Enfants et jeunes sur les routes migratoires en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Nord (EJM)*, this snapshot is the first in a series intended to inform programming meeting the needs of youth across the project's key sectors of focus, including protection, education, and socioeconomic integration. MMC is a member of the enlarged consortium of the EJM project and produced this snapshot in collaboration with consortium leads HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, la Fondation Terre des Hommes and GIZ.

Key findings

- Most young people in **Mali** took short journeys averaging less than a month to arrive there, about half of which (53%) began with friends or peers with whom they largely stayed throughout the journey (73%). A majority were working at the time of interview, representing an increase compared to those who reported working before the journey (49%).
- In **Niger**, short journeys averaging less than a month began with friends and continued that way, with 71% of respondents beginning their journeys with friends/peers and 70% of those who traveled with others staying with the same people throughout their journey. Most (69%) had been working before they left and were working at the time of interview.

- Long journeys averaging over 300 days to **Morocco** were undertaken equally alone (48%) as with peers (48%), with most (70%) who traveled with others not staying with the same people throughout. A vast majority of youths did not have a source of money at the time of interview (89%), whereas most (72%) had been working prior to departure.
- In **Tunisia**, just over half of youths (53%) began their long journey – taking on average more than one year – alone. Most (64%) were not making money prior to departure, in most cases because they were students at the time. A majority of young people had a source of money at the time of interview (78%) mainly consisting of money sent from family.
- Overall, a **higher percentage of young women (79%) reported having a source of money** at the time of interview as compared to young men (53%). In Niger, 82% of young women compared to 67% of young men had a source of money, in Tunisia 83% of women to 75% of men, in Mali 85% of women to 72% of men, and in Morocco (n=23) 17% of women compared to 9% of men.

Profiles

This snapshot is based on 1,196 surveys of refugees and migrants between the ages of 18 and 24, between June and November 2022. Data was collected using MMC's 4Mi tool, a standardized, closed-question survey with two additional modules delving further into the experiences of youths and caregivers (adults traveling with children in their care). 93% of respondents came from West or Central Africa.

¹ At the time this snapshot was produced, there were not sufficient validated surveys conducted in Guinea to include the country in this analysis due to the timing of the launch of data collection there. Following validation processes, MMC confirmed 283 valid surveys conducted in Guinea between October and November 2022, which will be included in later snapshots.

Table 1. Respondents' profiles by country of interview

	Mali	Niger	Morocco	Tunisia
Total	305	318	266	307
Main places of interview	Bamako city (72%), Sikasso city (28%)	Niamey (83%), Maradi town (17%)	Oujda (55%), Rabat (23%), Casablanca (22%)	Grand Tunis (49%), Medenine (25%), Sfax (15%), Other locations (11%)
Gender	Men (51%), Women (49%)	Men (79%), Women (21%)	Men (91%), Women (9%)	Men (64%), Women (36%)
Main nationalities	Côte d'Ivoire (26%), Guinea (14%), Burkina Faso (12%), Togo (11%)	Nigeria (21%), Burkina Faso (11%), Mali (11%), Benin (10%)	Guinea (34%), Cameroon (17%), Mali (15%), Côte d'Ivoire (10%)	Eritrea (12%), Cameroon (9%), Guinea (9%), Mali (7%), Gabon (7%)
Age (18-24)	24 (37%), 23 (27%), 22 (14%), 21 (7%), 20 (9%), 19 (4%), 18 (2%)	24 (11%), 23 (20%), 22 (16%), 21 (13%), 20 (17%), 19 (17%), 18 (8%)	24 (11%), 23 (17%), 22 (14%), 21 (22%), 20 (15%), 19 (11%), 18 (12%)	24 (30%), 23 (21%), 22 (19%), 21 (10%), 20 (11%), 19 (6%), 18 (4%)

MMC has disaggregated data by country of interview and by sex throughout the snapshot but has not analyzed a multi-level disaggregation, such as disaggregation by both country of interview and sex, due to the small sample sizes that such disaggregation would produce. Sample sizes of less than 100 (n < 100) generally do not permit reliable conclusions about the population in question. The sample sizes of men and women interviewed in each country are summarized in the table below.

Education

Profiles of respondents include a high proportion of students in **Tunisia**, and this is reflected in the level of schooling among respondents. More than one-third (36%) of respondents in Tunisia had a university degree, while 28% completed secondary or high school and 21% completed primary school. Seven percent completed vocational training.

In **Niger**, just 7% of respondents had a university degree, while 39% completed secondary school, 32% completed primary school (including 10% religious primary school) and 20% completed vocational training.

Seven percent of respondents in **Morocco** had completed university and more than half (52%) finished secondary or high school. 17% completed primary school and 16% did not complete any schooling. Five percent completed vocational training.

In **Mali**, 22% of respondents had a university degree and 31% a secondary or high school degree. About two-fifths of respondents completed primary school (19%) or vocational training (19%).

Youth in West Africa stayed with friends and peers with whom they started their journey²

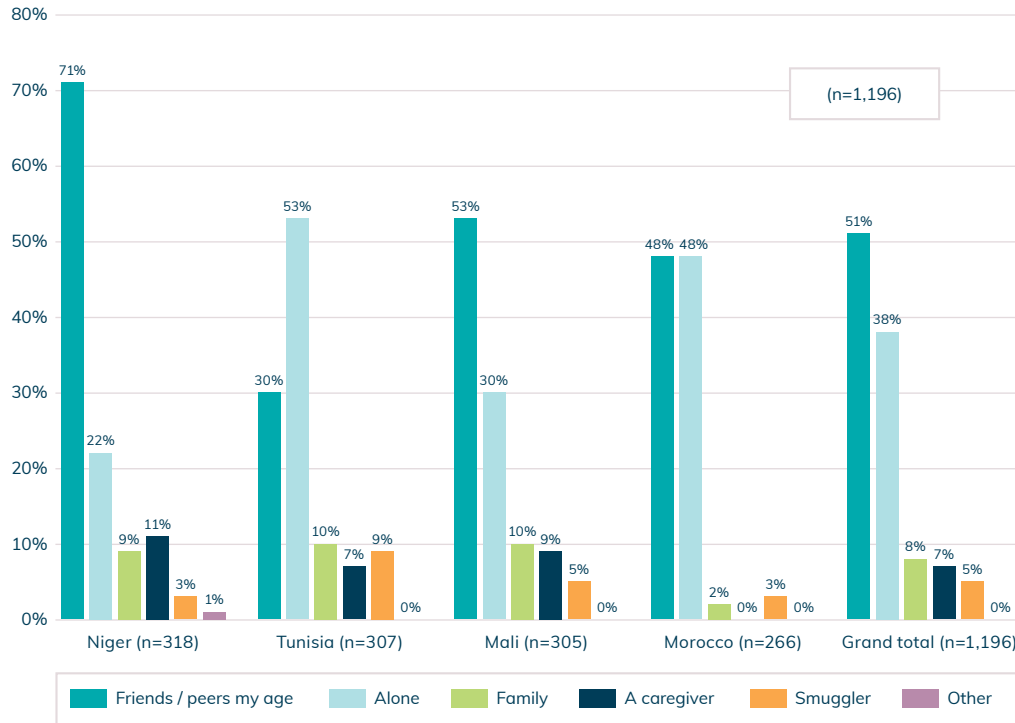
Respondents reported different experiences of accompaniment at the start of their journey and throughout. In **Mali** and **Niger**, a majority had started their journey with friends or peers of their own age (53% and 71%, respectively). Most youths surveyed in West African countries stayed with the same people throughout their journey (73% in Mali and 70% in Niger).

In **Tunisia**, just over half (53%) of respondents began migrating alone and in **Morocco** an equal proportion began their journey alone (48%) as with peers (48%). Of those who had travelled with others, a majority of respondents in Morocco (70%) and Tunisia (57%) reported that they did not stay with the same people on their journey. This could be due to a difference in length of journey, as routes to North African countries in the sample were on average far more than 10 times longer.³

2 Nearly half of respondents (48%, n=1,175) began their journey in the same year they were surveyed (2022), while about one-third (34%) left their country of departure in 2021. 10% of respondents began their journey in 2020 and 3% in 2019, whereas 1% or fewer left their country of departure sometime between 2013 and 2018. 21 of the 1,196 respondents surveyed did not remember when they started their journey or refused to answer the question and so are excluded from these figures.

3 Among youths surveyed in North Africa, the average duration of journey from start date to date of arrival is 522 days for respondents in Tunisia and 301 days for respondents in Morocco. The average duration of journey for those surveyed in Niger and Mali was 23 days and 24 days, respectively.

Figure 1. Who did you start your journey with?



Aggregated across all four countries, almost the same proportions of young women (39%) and young men (37%) began their journey alone. Among those who reported traveling with others, more than half of men (54%) started their journey with friends or peers and 6% with family, whereas there was slightly more variation among women: 44% began migrating with friends/peers and 12% with family. Of those who began their journey with others, just over half of men (53%) and most women (70%) stayed with the same people throughout their journey.

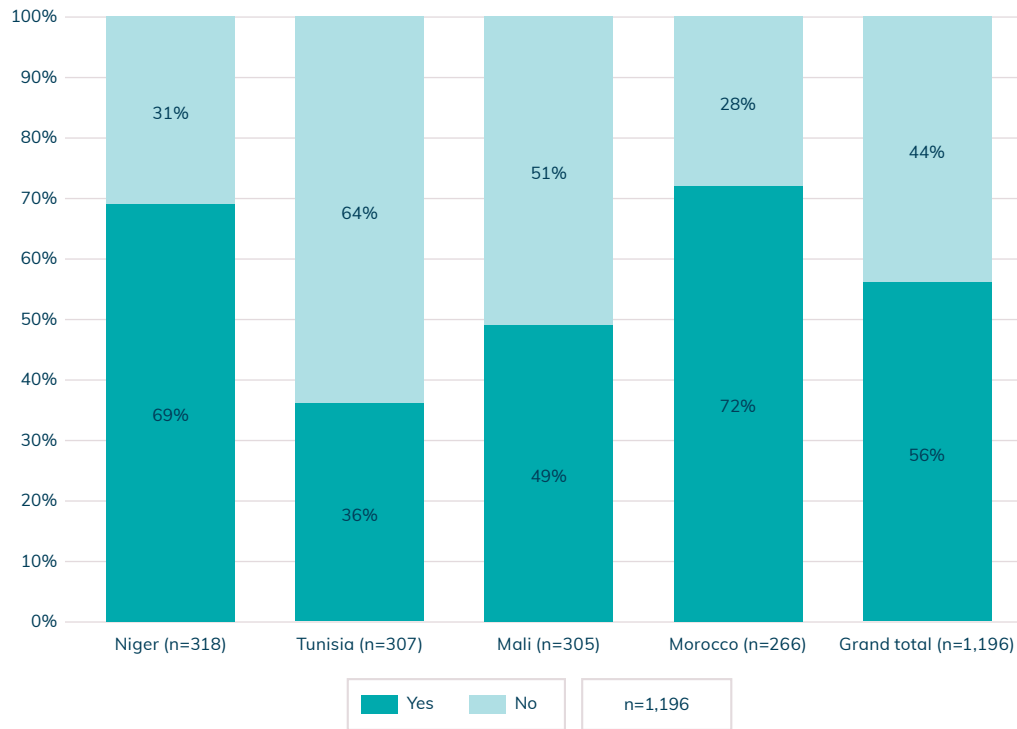
More men were making money prior to departure than women

Across all countries of interview, a greater proportion of men reported having made money working before leaving their country of departure (62%) whereas most women did not (60%). In the 12 months prior to beginning their journeys, most respondents surveyed in Niger (69%) and Morocco (72%) reported having had a source of income. In contrast, 64% of respondents in Tunisia and just over half of respondents in Mali (51%) reported that they had not been making money.

Of youths surveyed in **Niger** who said they were not making money prior to their journey, 72% cited unemployment and 28% were students. In **Tunisia**, 82% were students and 18% were unemployed. Among respondents in **Mali** who reported not making money prior to departure, 62% said they were unemployed, 31% said it was because they were a student, and 7% cited taking care of the home or children. In **Morocco**, 49% were students, 41% were unemployed, and 1% each reported taking care of the home/children or that they were sick.

The primary sector in which respondents made money before beginning their journeys was a small business (shop/catering/services). More women (66%) reported a small business, compared to 39% of men, who also reported a greater diversity of other sectors – including construction (19%), manufacturing (10%), agriculture/pastoralism/fishing (10%), and transportation (10%). For women, the main other sector was domestic work (16%).

Figure 2. Were you making money in the 12 months before your departure?

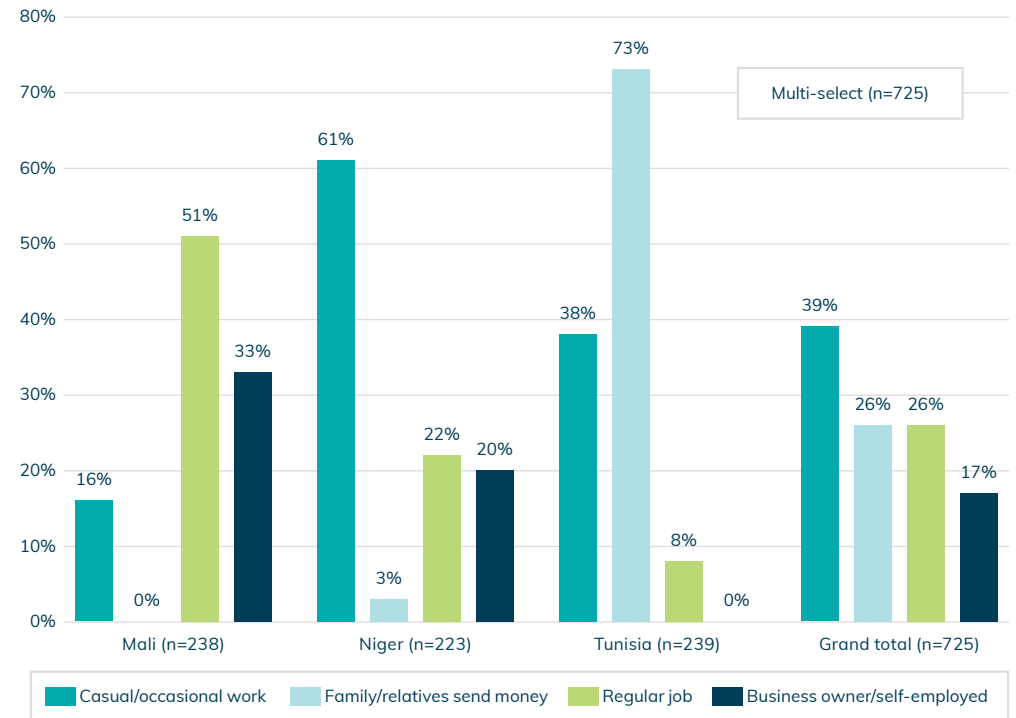


Most youth in Niger, Tunisia and Mali reported a source of income while a vast majority in Morocco did not

At the time of the survey, most respondents in Niger (70%), Tunisia (78%) and Mali (78%) reported having a source of money. In **Tunisia**, this is most often money sent from family, whereas this barely features for respondents in **Mali** and **Niger**, who are relying on paid work. There are clear differences between countries of interview in the way people are obtaining money.⁴

⁴ This question is multi-select, meaning respondents can select more than one source of money.

Figure 3. How do you currently get money?⁵



The vast majority (89%) of respondents in **Morocco** reported that they did not have a source of money at the time of survey. Of those, 80% indicated this was because they were not able to find a job. Previous MMC research has identified access to income as a major challenge faced by migrants and refugees in Morocco.⁶ Among those who couldn't find a job in Morocco, 69% (n=190) said there were no jobs available, while 27% said they don't know where to look, 13% said they are not allowed to work, and 11% said they weren't staying long enough to work. Those who did have a source of income in Morocco cited casual work (60%, n=25) and begging (40%), which reflect the challenges migrants and refugees experience in accessing the formal labour market, due to limited opportunities and barriers to obtaining a residency card.⁷

⁵ Morocco is excluded from Figure 3 due to the very small sample size of respondents there who reported a current source of money (n=25). Casual/Occasional work refers to work done informally and/or on an ad hoc basis without a contract, which can include work such as day labor on a construction site, domestic or cleaning work, or serving in a restaurant or café.

⁶ MMC, 2022. [Understanding the mixed migration landscape in Morocco](#), p. 12.

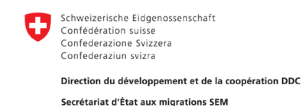
⁷ MMC, 2022. [Understanding the mixed migration landscape in Morocco](#), p. 12.

One additional consideration may contribute to youths in Morocco reporting a lack of income there. Fifty-five percent (147) of surveys in Morocco were collected in Oujda, primarily a city of transit, where migrants and refugees tend to stay for just a few days before continuing to other cities and so may not have sufficient time to find paid work.

Aggregated across the four countries, a higher percentage of women (79%) reported having a source of money as compared to men (53%). More men reported relying on casual work (47% compared to 25% of women) whereas more women reported a regular paid job (30%) or owning a business/being self-employed (27%) compared to men (24% and 11%, respectively). Young women and men receive money from family at nearly equal rates (27% and 26%, respectively).

Small businesses remained the top sector for migrants and refugees engaged in casual or regular paid work or self-employment in Mali (39%) and Morocco (7 of 17 respondents). Construction was most cited in Niger (38%) and Tunisia (35%). Most men worked in construction (39%) or a small business (26%) at the time they were surveyed. For women, small businesses (38%) and domestic work (11%) remained prevalent, similarly to the sectors in which they worked prior to beginning their journeys. In Mali, sex work was highly reported among respondents (25% overall; all respondents were women), taking precedence over domestic work (4%). This is possibly due to fact that nearly one-third (28%) of surveys conducted in Mali were in the gold mining area of Sikasso: many young women engage in sex work near mining sites in the country.⁸

8 See for example, IOM, 2019. [Not All that Glitters is Gold: How Gold Mines in West Africa Attract Thousands of Women Every Year.](#)



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 Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa, and West Africa.

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