

Experience of abuse, seeking safety and decision-making among refugees and migrants in Italy

How past events link to destination intentions

PACES

Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformations

This infographic is part of a larger project exploring decision-making among refugees and migrants travelling towards and along the **Central Mediterranean Route**. Drawing on longitudinal¹ data collected among those who reached Italy, it offers insights into their situation before departure and reasons for leaving, their route and experience of protection violations along the route, and the factors motivating them to remain in Italy.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE SIZE

BASELINE: 503

LONGITUDINAL FOLLOW-UPS:

96 after 6 months, 55 after 12 months

SAMPLING CRITERIA AND TARGETS:

Of an African nationality; arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route; arrival between 60 days and 3 years before first interview. Non-probabilistic sampling strategy does not allow for further generalisation of results.

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD

BASELINE: March-September 2024.

Longitudinal follow up 1: November 2024- February 2025.

Longitudinal follow up 2: June-July 2025.

DATA COLLECTION SITES:

Piedmont (383, of which 268 in Turin) and Veneto regions (120, of which 96 in Verona).

METHOD

BASELINE: In-person interviews

(93%) and phone interviews (7%) with respondents residing in remote reception centres.

LONGITUDINAL FOLLOW UP:

phone interviews.

Regions of data collection in Italy

(n=503)

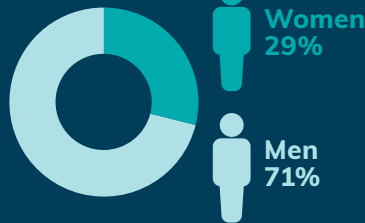


Key findings

- **73% of respondents** who had recently arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route had **direct experience of violence or abuse** along the journey to Italy.
- **The data indicate that migration routes including Tunisia cannot be considered safe:** experiences of abuse along migration journeys were similarly distributed among people travelling via Libya and via Tunisia. This calls for careful scrutiny of EU policy discussion around the designation of safe third countries.
- **78% of respondents intended to remain in Italy. 55% of those who intended to remain in Italy cited safety** as the most influential factor in their decision to remain, including 85% of respondents from sub-Saharan Africa (n=206).
- **After six months, intentions to remain in Italy remained stable, but reasons changed.** The proportion of respondents citing safety as **one of the top 3 reasons for staying** declined from 73% to 57%, and motivations linked to integration became more prominent.

Respondents' profiles

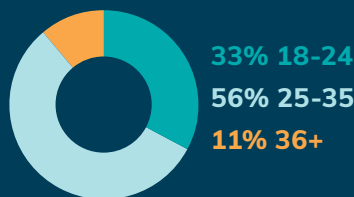
Gender



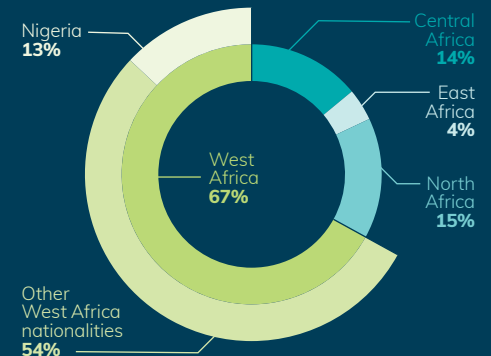
Respondents came from **32 countries**: 13% were from Nigeria (purposely selected) and 54% from other West African countries.

86% were refugees, asylum seekers or under another form of protection.

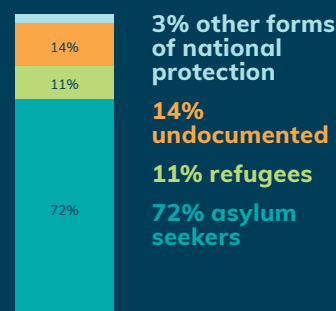
Age groups



Distribution of nationalities by region (n=503)



Legal status



Top 5 countries of origin among all respondents (n=503)²



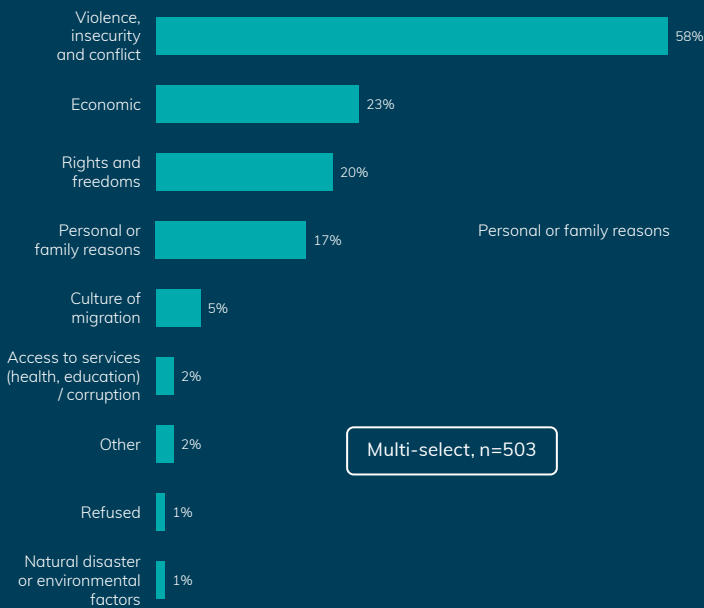
1 For more information about MMC's longitudinal methodology, see: Cole, G., Dyon, F., Gichuhi, S. and Linekar, J. (2022), [Longitudinal research with people on the move](#), Mixed Migration Centre.

2 Other countries included: West Africa: Guinea (4%); Senegal (4%); Ghana (3%); Gambia (2%); Benin (2%); Liberia (1%); Togo (1%); Niger (1%); Sierra Leone (1%); Guinea-Bissau (less than 1%). Central Africa: Democratic Republic of the Congo (1%); Republic of the Congo (1%); Central African Republic (1%); Gabon (1%); Chad (1%); Burundi (less than 1%). East Africa (≈3–5%): Sudan (2%); South Sudan (1%); Eritrea (less than 1%); Somalia (less than 1%). North Africa (≈1–3%): Morocco (1%); Algeria (less than 1%); Libya (less than 1%)

Drivers of primary movement

Violence and conflict play a prominent role in the decision to migrate. Economic, human rights, and personal motivations are secondary factors. 78% believed there wasn't anything they could have done to address the reasons for leaving, other than embark on this journey.

For what reasons did you leave your country of departure?

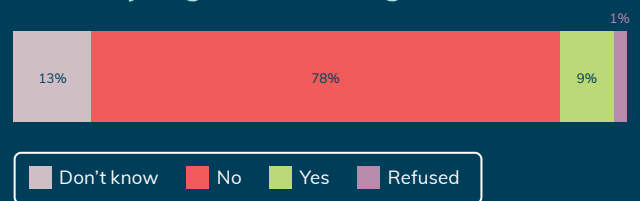


74% indicated they have left due to a single factor, 26% indicated a multiplicity of factors. 40% left due to violence, conflict and insecurity alone, in absence of any other factor.

Specific reasons linked to violence (n=294) were war, armed conflict and terrorism (47%) and crime and general insecurity (41%).

Women reported leaving for personal family reasons twice as often as men (28% of 151 women compared to 14% of 362 men).

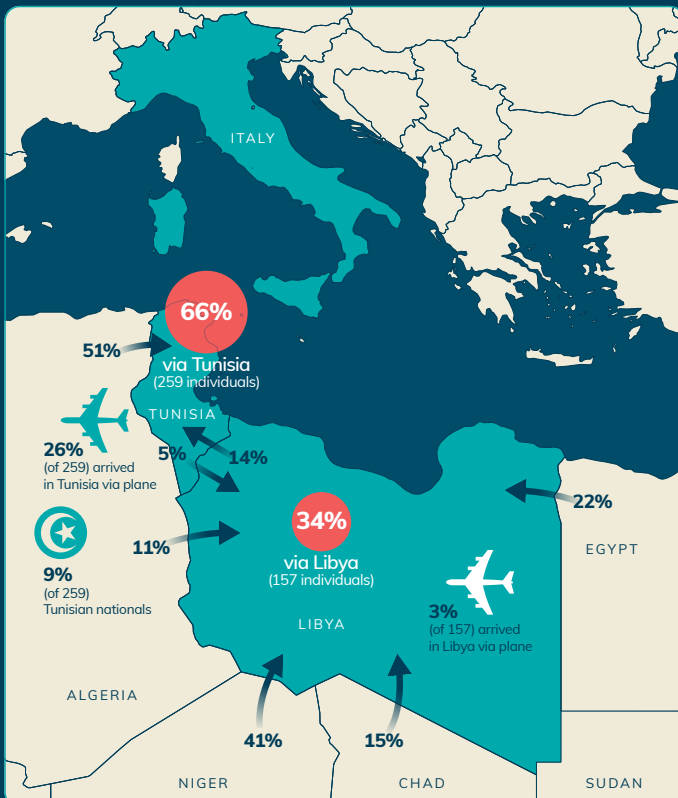
Before you started this journey, do you think you could do anything to address the reasons you gave for leaving?



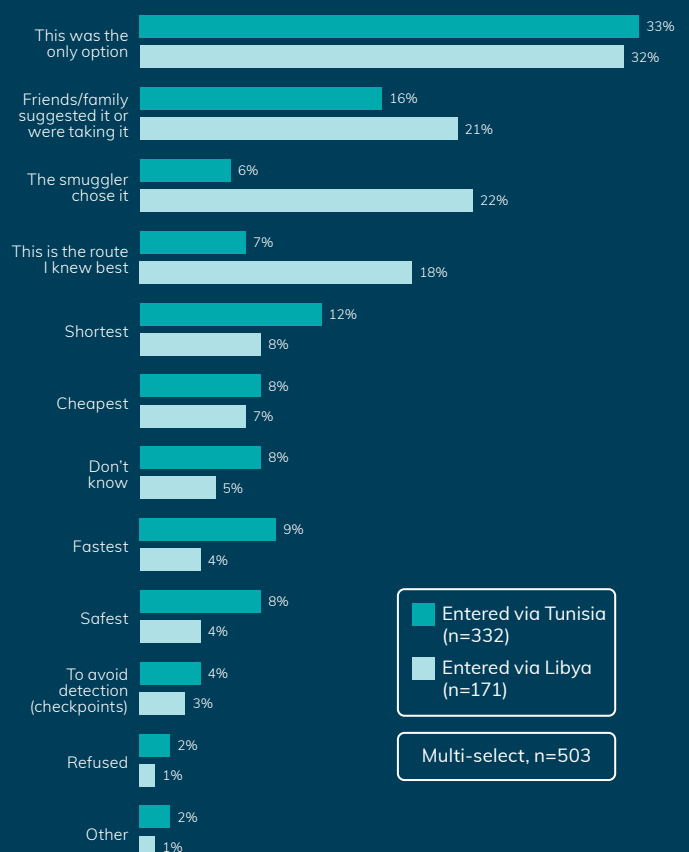
Route choice

More people entered Italy via Tunisia than via Libya. One third of respondents said the route they took was their only option. Knowledge of the route, as well as the smuggler's decision, emerged as a more frequent influence among respondents who travelled via Libya compared to those who embarked from Tunisia.

Main routes to Italy (n=503)



Why did you select this route?



Out of 68 Nigerians interviewed, 46 arrived via Libya (68%) and 23 arrived via Tunisia (32%), in opposition to the general trend of more frequent arrivals from Tunisia than Libya.

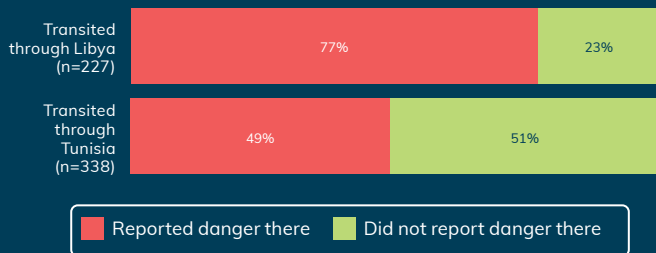
Links between past experiences of risk and/or abuse and current intention to remain in Italy

Protection incidents are widespread on route to Italy

93% of respondents reported feeling at risk at least once during their journey.

77% of respondents reported Libya as dangerous, and 49% of respondents reported Tunisia as dangerous.

Share of respondents reporting feeling at risk in Libya or Tunisia³



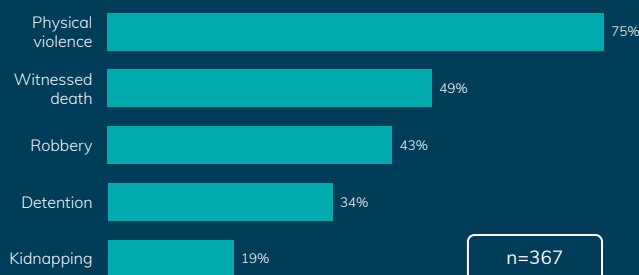
Direct experience of violence and abuse along the route is similar, regardless of migrants' point of embarkation.

Share of respondents reporting direct experience of violations and abuse along the route



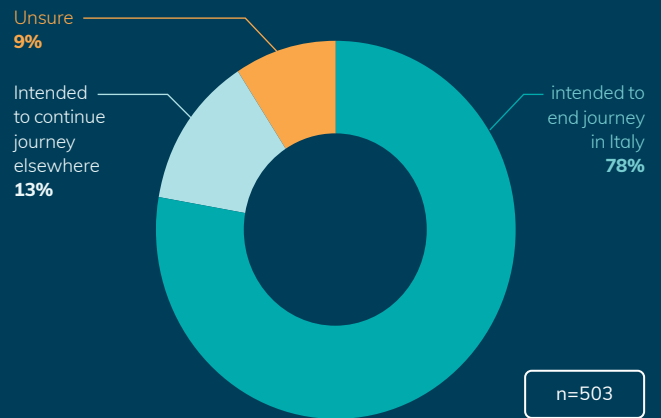
Libya is widely considered to be a dangerous country on the migration route towards Europe. This data strongly suggests that **routes that include Tunisia cannot be considered safe either**. 186 respondents who travelled via Tunisia without transiting Libya reported violence or abuse. **Risks were reported in Algeria, at sea in the Mediterranean, and within Tunisia itself**. This finding contrasts with ongoing EU legislative positioning⁴ and is supported by reporting from national and international actors.⁵

Top 5 incidents reported (migrants who experienced at least one violation)



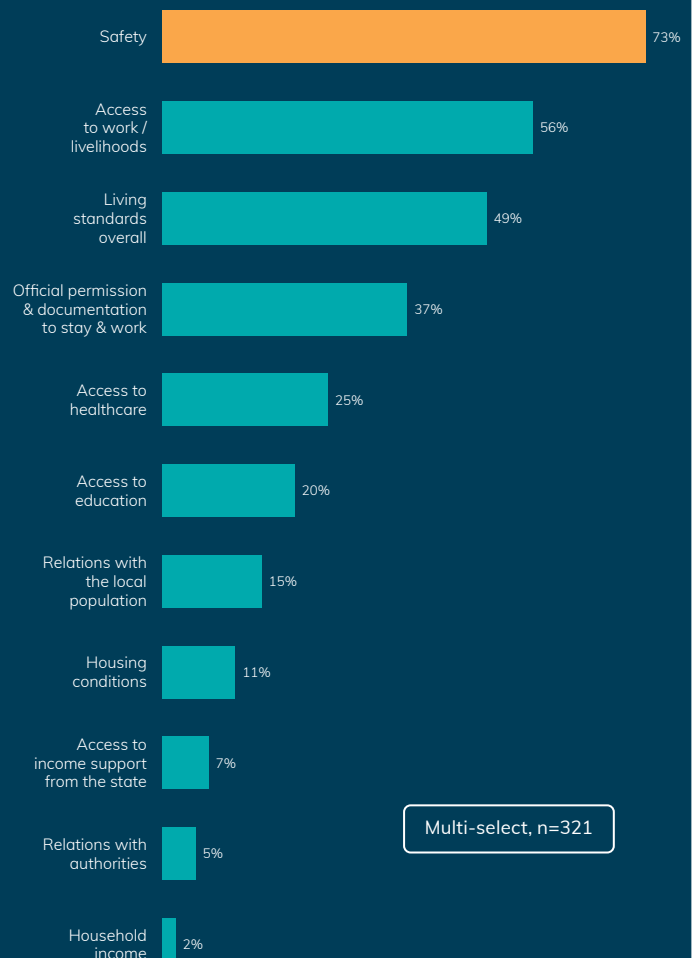
Safety is a key reason for remaining in Italy

Intentions to continue the journey



Safety was a key reason for remaining in Italy for 73% of those who intended to do so: it was the most important factor for 55%. Access to documentation to live and work mattered for 37%.

What factors influenced your decision to end your journey? (Choose the top 3 most influential)



3 Transit includes passage through a country, even if embarkation occurred elsewhere.
 4 See: European Commission (2025), [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending regulation \(EU\) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the 'safe third country' concept](#), 20 May 2025.
 5 See: Lighthouse Reports (2025) [Desert Dumps](#); Amnesty International (2025) [Nobody](#).

[Hears You When You Scream](#). UN OHCHR (2024) Tunisia: UN Expert concerned over safety of migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking. Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (2024) [Migrants Subsahariens en Tunisie. Profils, vecu et derives des politiques migratoires](#).(Organization Against Torture (OMCT) (2023). [Torture roads. Mapping of violations suffered by people on the move in Tunisia](#).

Onward movement intentions

Main intended destinations

Respondents intending to continue their journey

n=112

30% France

17% Switzerland

18% Germany

9% somewhere else in Italy

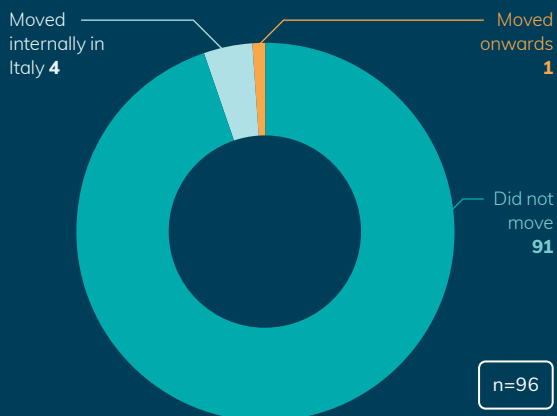
7% Belgium



Longitudinal follow ups and onward movement

Only four individuals among those who intended to continue the journey onwards consented to be recontacted for the follow ups. This means that longitudinal follow ups describe a static population with intentions to remain.

Location after six months



The sample's intended destination at baseline was overwhelmingly Italy (95/96).

67% of the follow up sample intends to remain in their destination country permanently, 29% temporarily, and 4% is unsure. Among the 55 respondents followed up 12 months after baseline, none had left Italy and only one had moved internally in Italy.



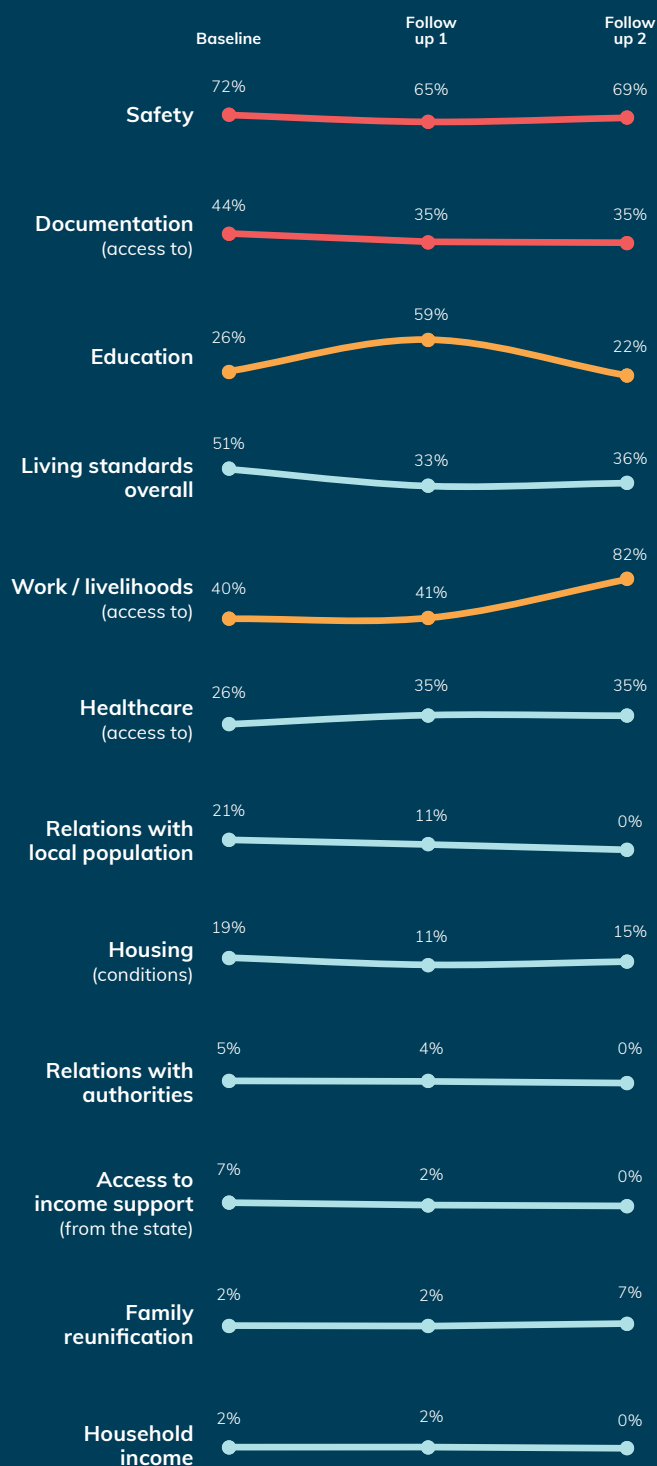
41% would consider returns to the country of departure only if forced by authorities.

Longitudinal data indicate a shift in the factors influencing decision-making

With time, the importance of safety and documentation decreases, access to education has some temporary influence, and access to work becomes prominent after 12 months.

Influencing factors to remain in Italy

This chart shows the evolution of top 3 influencing factors to remain in Italy for 55 respondents interviewed through all 3 rounds across time. Respondents could select up to 3 factors.





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 migration 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: mixedmigration.org/what-is-4mi-migration-data

