

Niger at the crossroads

Understanding refugee and migrant primary movements to Niger

PACES

Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformations

This infographic is part of a two-publication series examining primary and secondary movements to, within and onward from Niger. The research series draws on a longitudinal design,¹ administering surveys to the same individuals at different points in time. The data presented in this infographic offer insights into the profiles of refugees and migrants moving to Niger, their aspirations upon departure, and journey conditions, with a focus on smuggler use and dangers along migration routes. The analysis also takes a closer look at what drives Nigerians' primary movements to Niger, reflecting the emphasis placed on this nationality within international protection frameworks and programs in Niger.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE SIZE: 512

SAMPLING CRITERIA AND TARGETS: ≥40% Nigerians,

minimum stay of 3 months in Niger since arrival

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD:

April-May 2024

DATA COLLECTION SITES:

Niamey (n=125), Zinder (n=128), Agadez (n=136), Diffa (n=123)

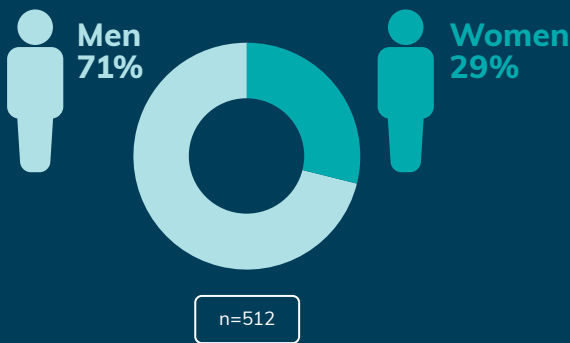
METHOD: In-person interviews

Key findings

- Nigerians make up more than half (55%) of the sample. Among them (n=279), the majority come from only two regions: Borno (36%) and Kano (25%).
- Refugees and migrants moving to Niger cite economic aspirations as their main motivation (93%), with violence, insecurity and conflict as additional factors (24%).
- Migration decisions among Nigerians whose journey began in Borno State (n=100) were overwhelmingly driven by violence, insecurity, and conflict (90%). Only 26% reported holding refugee status in Niger.
- Two-thirds (66%) of Nigerians tried alternatives to international migration before departure, rising to nearly all respondents (96%) from Borno State.
- Primary movements into Niger tend to be quick, with 65% of all respondents making the trip in 3 days or less. The majority (76%) started their journey from a neighbouring country.
- Dangers along the route are common and differ according to nationality. Nigerians often face robbery (34%), witness death (23%) or experience physical violence (21%) while other nationalities (n=233) report bribery and extortion (28%) as the most common risk.
- Nigerians relied slightly less on smugglers (56%, n=157) compared to other nationalities (64%, n=148). Smugglers are hired by other nationalities mainly to facilitate cross-border (90%) and in-country (64%) transportation, while Nigerians use them more for accommodation (61%) and food or water (56%).

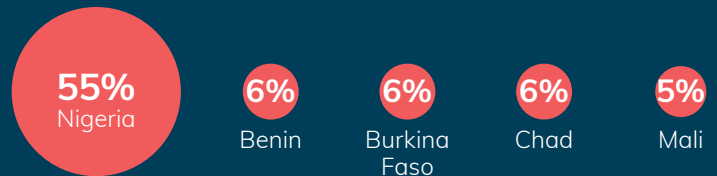
Respondents' profiles

Gender



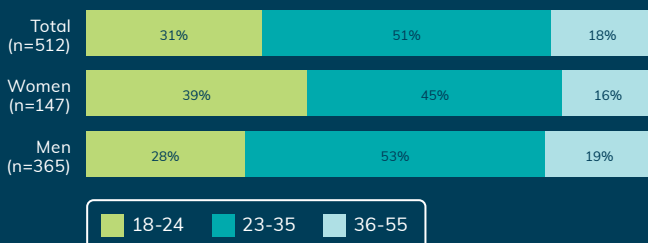
Top 5 countries of origin among all respondents

Respondents came from 19 different countries, with **Nigerians accounting for over half of the sample** due to their purposive selection in the sampling strategy.

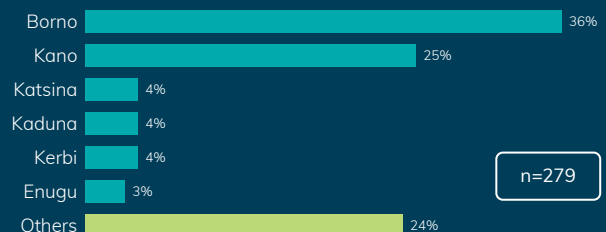


Most Nigerians migrating to Niger came from Borno and Kano, where long-running insurgency, economic hardship, and governance gaps have forced many to leave their homes.

Age



Regions of origin of Nigerian respondents



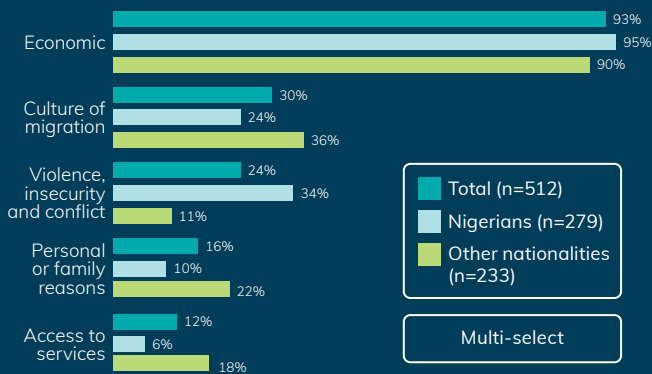
1. For more information about MMC's longitudinal methodology, visit: Georgia Cale, Flannery Dyon, Susan Gichuhi, Jane Linekar (2022), [Longitudinal research with people on the move](#), MMC

2. Other countries of origin included Togo (5%), Cameroon (3%), Senegal (3%), Côte d'Ivoire (2%), Guinea (2%), Sierra Leone (2%), Ghana (1%), Gambia (1%), Liberia (1%), Sudan (1%), CAR (<1%), DRC (<1%), Guinea-Bissau (<1%), and Libya (<1%).

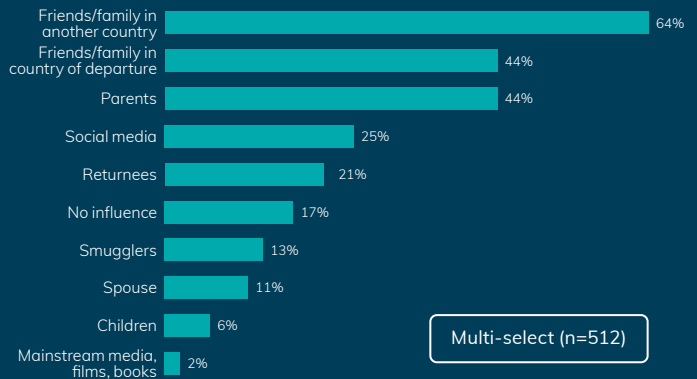
Drivers of primary movement

Decisions to migrate to Niger are shaped by a combination of factors: while economic motives play a role, they are often intertwined with conflict as well as social and personal influences

For what reasons did you leave your country of departure? Top 5 answers³



Did anyone influence your decision to move?



58% of all respondents cited **multiple reasons for leaving their country of origin**, with nearly all respondents citing **economic aspirations** (93%) and other drivers being considerably less often cited.

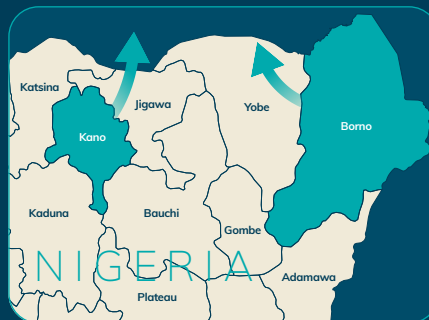
83% of all respondents reported that **someone influenced their decision to leave their country of origin**, with no difference between Nigerians and other nationalities.

Nigerians move for different reasons depending on their region of origin, shaping migration status upon their arrival in Niger

Among respondents from **Kano** (n=71):

- None cited violence and conflict as reasons for migrating. Instead, **economic factors** (65/71) and a prevailing **culture of migration** (31/71) were the two main drivers of primary movement.
- Over half (40/71) reported having **regular status without needing a permit** in Niger, a sharp contrast to only 28% in the rest of the sample.⁴ This points to stronger travel preparedness among Kano respondents, including securing the necessary documentation before departure.

Primary movements from Kano and Borno States

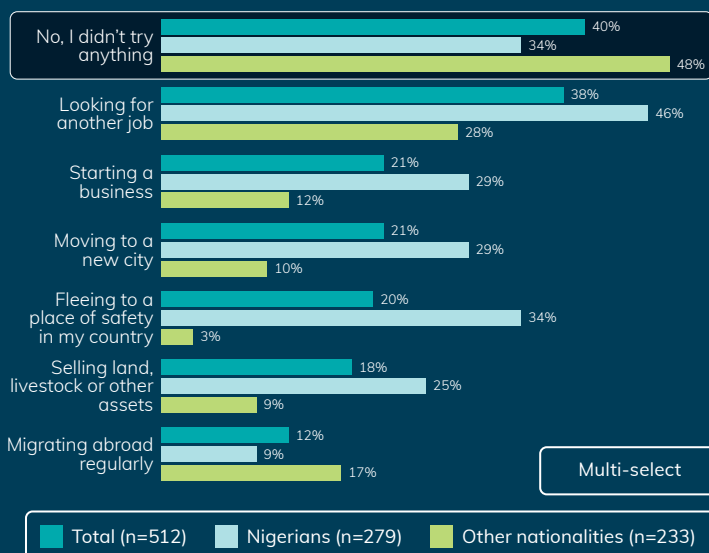


Among respondents from **Borno** (n=100):

- Nearly all reported reasons related to **violence, insecurity and conflict (90%)**, also overlapping with economic factors (95%).
- A higher share had access to **refugee status (26%)** compared to the overall sample (6%), underscoring the need for international protection.
- Two-thirds (68%) were in an **irregular situation** in Niger, suggesting more sudden departures and limited capacity to plan travel.

Alternatives to migration

Did you do anything to address the reasons you gave for leaving? Top 7 answers⁵



Nigerians stood out for trying alternatives to migration more often than other nationalities

Almost all respondents from **Borno** (96%) tried alternatives to migration before departure, including **moving to a safer place within Nigeria (92%)**, finding a new job (81%), or **selling land, livestock, or other assets (65%)**.

Only a third of respondents from **Kano** tried alternatives to migration before departure (24/71), with most focusing on **finding a new job (19/71)**.

³ Other reasons were rights and freedom (5%) and natural disaster or environmental factors (2%).

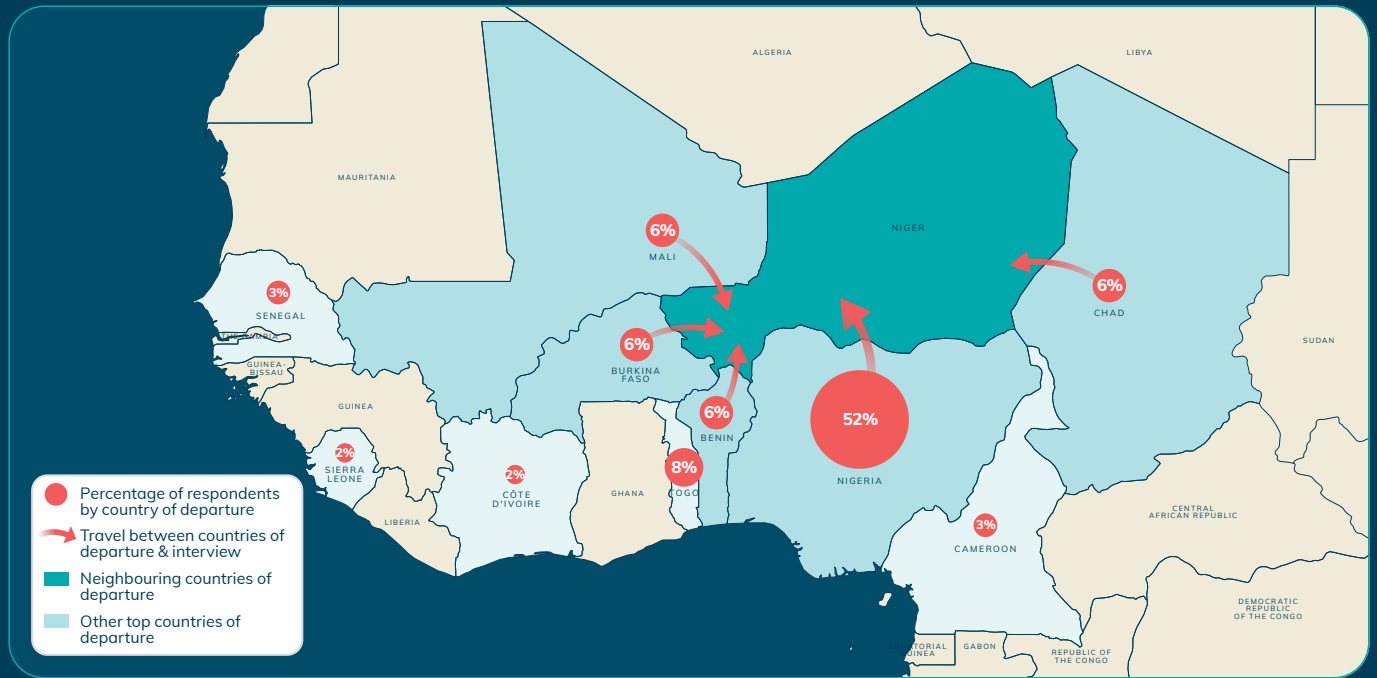
⁴ At the time of the interview in Niger, nearly half of all respondents (46%) were in an irregular situation, 28% had regular status, 10% held temporary residency permits, 6%

were refugees, 5% had temporary protection, 3% were permanent residents, and 1% reported expired permits.

⁵ Other response options included moving in with family/friends (5%), continuing education (3%), and 'Don't know' (4%).

Primary movements to Niger

Top ten countries of departure (n=512)



Most respondents reached Niger quickly after departing from nearby countries⁶

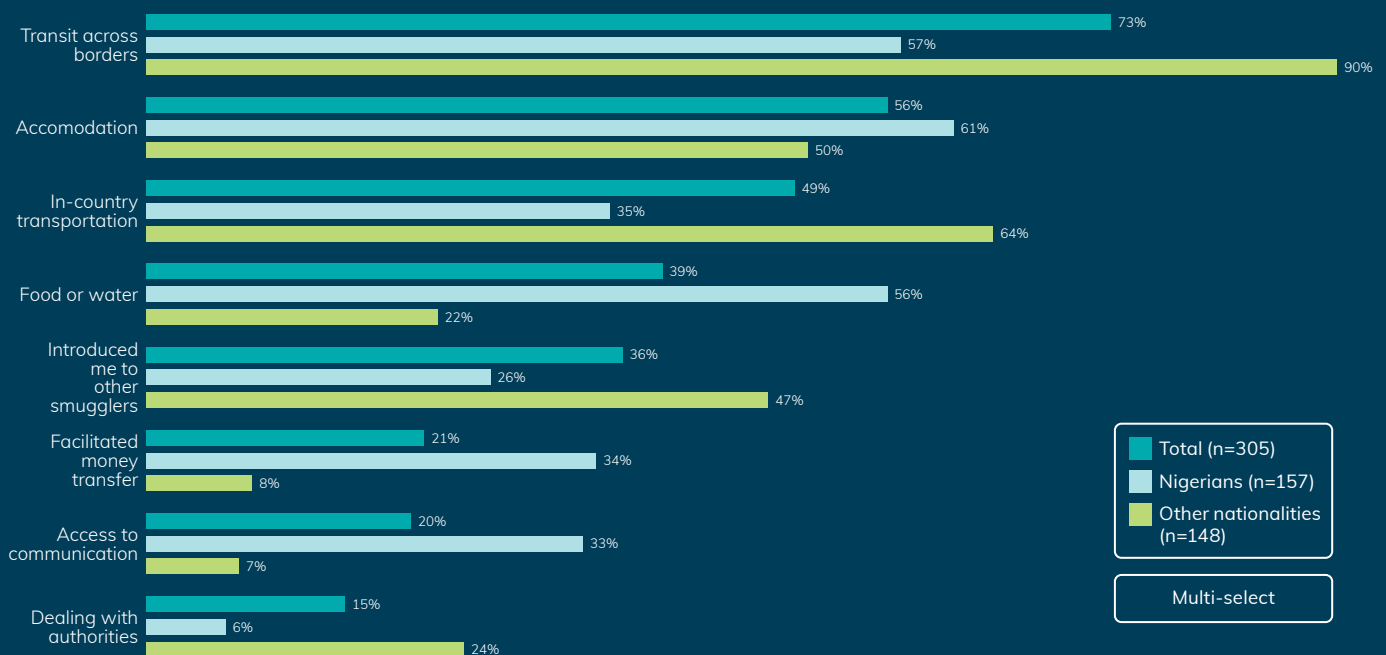
- **65%** of all respondents reported **journeys lasting only 0 to 3 days** from their departure until reaching their place of living or transit in Niger.
- Respondents tend to choose routes **recommended** by their networks (**60%**), perceived as **safe** (**55%**), or **familiar** to them (**47%**), while also prioritizing low cost (**44%**) and travel **speed** (**34%**).
- **91%** reported **accessing information about routes, conditions and risks during their journey to Niger**, primarily from other migrants (60%), friends or family abroad (55%), and smugglers (46%).

Smuggling dynamics en route to and within Niger

Nigerians hire smugglers for a variety of services, while other nationalities use them primarily to facilitate movement

- 60% of all respondents used **smuggler services** to travel to and through Niger.
- **Nigerians report smuggler use (56%) slightly less often** than other nationalities (64%).
- Among smuggler users, a majority of Nigerians (**55%**) relied on **a single smuggler for their entire journey**, compared with just 16% of other nationalities. Other nationalities more often hired multiple smugglers along the route (41%) than Nigerians did (7%).

What did the smuggler provide you with? Among smuggler-users, top 8 services⁷



⁶ 76% of all respondents crossed directly from a neighbouring country to Niger without transiting through any other country.

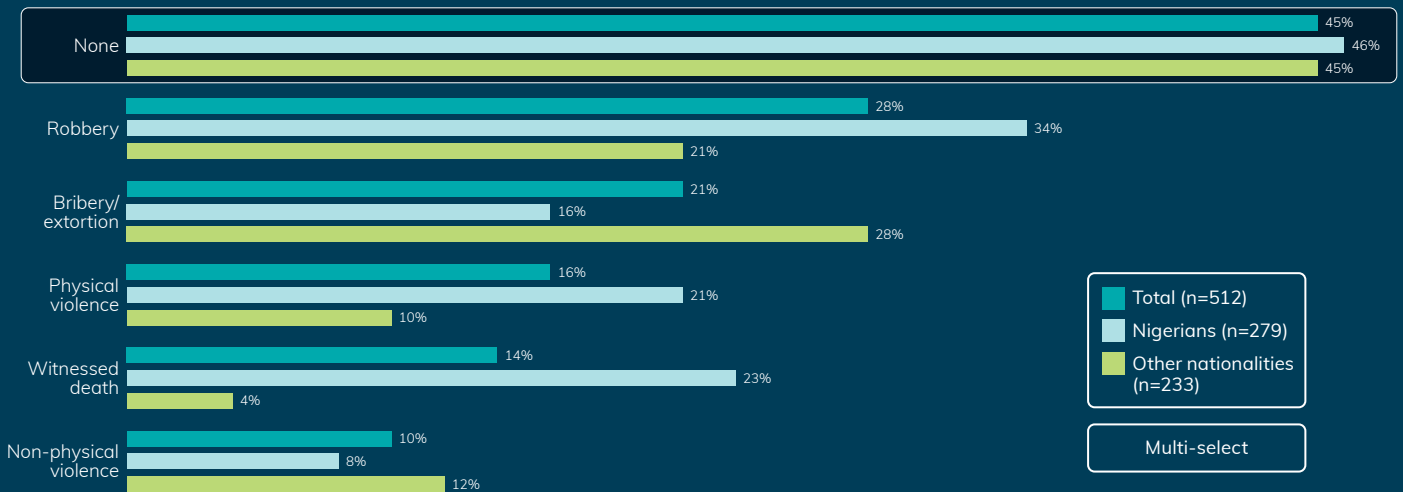
⁷ Other response options include medicine (8%), facilitation of release from detention (4%), provision of documents (3%), help find a job (3%).

Dangers along migration routes to and within Niger

Nigerians report experiencing violence or witnessing deaths during their journey more often

Have you personally experienced any of these types of incidents on your journey?

Top 5 reported incidents⁸



Most of those who **witnessed death on their journey to Niger** had departed from **Borno** State in Nigeria (64/74).



Non-Nigerians who used smuggler services reported the highest rates of **bribery and extortion (39%)** across all groups.⁹



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



⁸ Other response options include detention (5%), kidnapping (5%), sexual violence (1%), trafficking and exploitation (1%).

⁹ Among 148 non-Nigerian smuggler-users. Comparing to 8% among non-Nigerian independent travellers and 27% among Nigerian smuggler-users.