

MIGRATING IN SEARCH OF THE SOUTHERN DREAM

THE EXPERIENCES OF ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS
MOVING ALONG THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

MAY 2022



This study was produced with the financial support of the European Union and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), nor those of the European Union or the United States. IOM, the European Union, and the United States do not make claims – expressed or implied – on the completeness, accuracy and suitability of the information provided through this report. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Union, or the United States.

Publisher: International Organization for Migration
Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa
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This publication was issued without formal editing by IOM.

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Report design by We2 – www.we2.co
This reported was copy edited by Zeina Wairoa.

Cover photo: © IOM 2021 / Yonas Tadesse

Required Citation: IOM. (2022). Migrating in Search of the Southern Dream – The Experiences of Ethiopian Migrants Moving Along the Southern Route.

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ABOUT IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL DATA HUB

Established in early 2018 at IOM's Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa, the Regional Data Hub (RDH) aims to support evidence-based, strategic and policy-level discussion on migration through a combination of initiatives. The RDH aims to enhance the availability of migration related data in the region and promote its dissemination to achieve stronger governance outcomes and positive impacts for migrants and societies as a whole. Through a combination of IOM data collection methodologies, research initiatives, and continuous engagements with National Statistical Offices (NSOs), key line Ministries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the RDH aims to fill the existing gaps in strengthening the regional evidence base on migration. This contribution will, in turn, help improve policy-making, programming and coordination between all the stakeholders involved. The [RDH strategy](#) is structured along three pillars, in line with [IOM's Migration Data Strategy](#). Publications can be consulted at <https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/regional-data-hub>. The RDH and this research project are largely funded through the generous support of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa (EU-IOM JI).

ABOUT THE EU-IOM JOINT INITIATIVE PROGRAMME

The EU-IOM JI programme was launched in December 2016 and is funded by the European Union (EU) Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The programme brings together 26 African countries of the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa regions, along with the EU and IOM around the goal of ensuring that migration is safer, more informed and better governed for both migrants and their communities. The programme enables migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way.

ABOUT THE PRM-FUNDED AFRICA REGIONAL MIGRATION PROGRAM

The Africa Regional Migration Program (ARMP) is funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and was developed in coordination with relevant target country IOM missions and governments in four IOM regions in Africa: East and Horn of Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa. The main goal of the programme is to appropriately respond to persisting needs and capacity gaps through a coordinated, well-planned, sequenced programme that systematically builds national capacity and regional and inter-country cooperation, adapting to political instability, changing leaderships, and to lacking or limited resources. The overall objective of the program is to support the governments in target countries to manage migration in a sustainable and humane manner.

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ACRONYMS

AVRR Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

COVID-19 Coronavirus disease 2019

FM Flow Monitoring

IOM International Organization for Migration

RDH Regional Data Hub

SNNPR Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region

USD United States Dollar

DEFINITIONS¹

Household: a group of people living together/sharing the same dwelling and cooking arrangements.

Internal migrant: Any person who is moving or has moved within a State for the purpose of establishing a new temporary or permanent residence or because of displacement.

Irregular migrant: A person who moves or has moved across an international border and is not authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.

Labour migration: Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment.

Missing migrant: Any person, who has died or gone missing in the process of migration towards an international destination.

Network migration: The phenomenon through which the initial migration of a few persons leads to more migration, either through informal recruitment of workers or through family reunion.

Reintegration: A process that enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life. In the context of international return migration, reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with possible (re)migration drivers.

International return migration: The movement of persons returning to their country of origin after having moved away from their place of habitual residence and crossed an international border. Return migration may or may not be voluntary and includes voluntary repatriation.

Unaccompanied child: Children,² as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

¹ All definitions are taken from the [IOM glossary](#) unless indicated otherwise.

² Every human being younger than 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

For over a decade, the United Republic of Tanzania has seen a substantial number of irregular migrants transiting through its territory along the Southern Route, which runs from the Horn of Africa (particularly Ethiopia and Somalia) towards the southern countries in the continent – and specifically towards the Republic of South Africa.³ This irregular journey entails travel by road, water or, less frequently, air, depending on the migrants' economic status. The Southern Route is dominated by Ethiopian and Somali migrants and their movements are facilitated by an intricate network of migrant smugglers.⁴ This journey is characterized by harsh experiences including violence, exploitation, abuse and a severe lack of access to basic needs and services. Irregular migration along the Southern Route is driven by factors such as poverty, political instability, climatic shocks and a lack of opportunity at origin.⁵ Simultaneously, prospective migrants tend to view South Africa as a destination with lucrative employment opportunities, facilitated by the presence of well-established Ethiopian and Somali diasporas that often sponsor the movement of individuals from their home towns and provide employment once migrants arrive at destination.

Irregular migrants from the Horn of Africa invariably transit through the United Republic of Tanzania on their way down south, using the country as a transit corridor to Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia en-route to South Africa.⁶ As a result of border patrol and immigration law enforcement by the United Republic of Tanzania, many migrants are detained and tried under the Immigration Act of the United Republic of Tanzania and its clauses pertaining to irregular entry. In some instances, migrants are detained for a long time prior to trial due to bottlenecks in the judiciary. While the exact number of migrants moving along the Southern Route is difficult to ascertain, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Tanzania has continuously conducted verification visits to different detention facilities throughout the country

where irregular migrants are held; the data collected serve as helpful proxy indicators for the number of migrants detained. Between 2019 to 2021, visits were conducted in 34 prisons across 16 regions of the country where IOM counted 3,274 migrants. These exercises were carried out in close coordination with the Ethiopian Embassy, often as the first step to ascertain immediate needs, and subsequently provide Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration assistance (AVRR) to return to their country of origin. From 2016 to date, IOM has assisted over 3,216 migrants through this scheme.

This report builds on a round of verification visits conducted from 6 August to 4 September 2021. At the request of the Embassy of Ethiopia in Dar es Salaam, and with the financial support of the US State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, through the *Africa Regional Migration Program*, IOM and the Ethiopian Embassy conducted identity verification missions and data collection with Ethiopian migrants in detention across nine different prisons in the three regions of Mbeya, Morogoro and Tanga. Additionally, migrants who were staying at the Salvation Army shelter in Dar es Salaam while awaiting AVRR travel were also included. Overall, 793 Ethiopian migrants were identified, of whom 382 were interviewed.

The tool IOM used for data collection was developed by the IOM Regional Data Hub (RDH) in Nairobi in coordination with IOM Tanzania. The mission was carried out by a team of officers from the Tanzanian government, the Ethiopian Embassy and IOM. The RDH further led the research process and final production of this report.

3 IOM, 2009. See also Cosmas G, 2015.

4 IOM, 2009.

5 IOM, 2021a.

6 Rutachokozibwa, 2017.

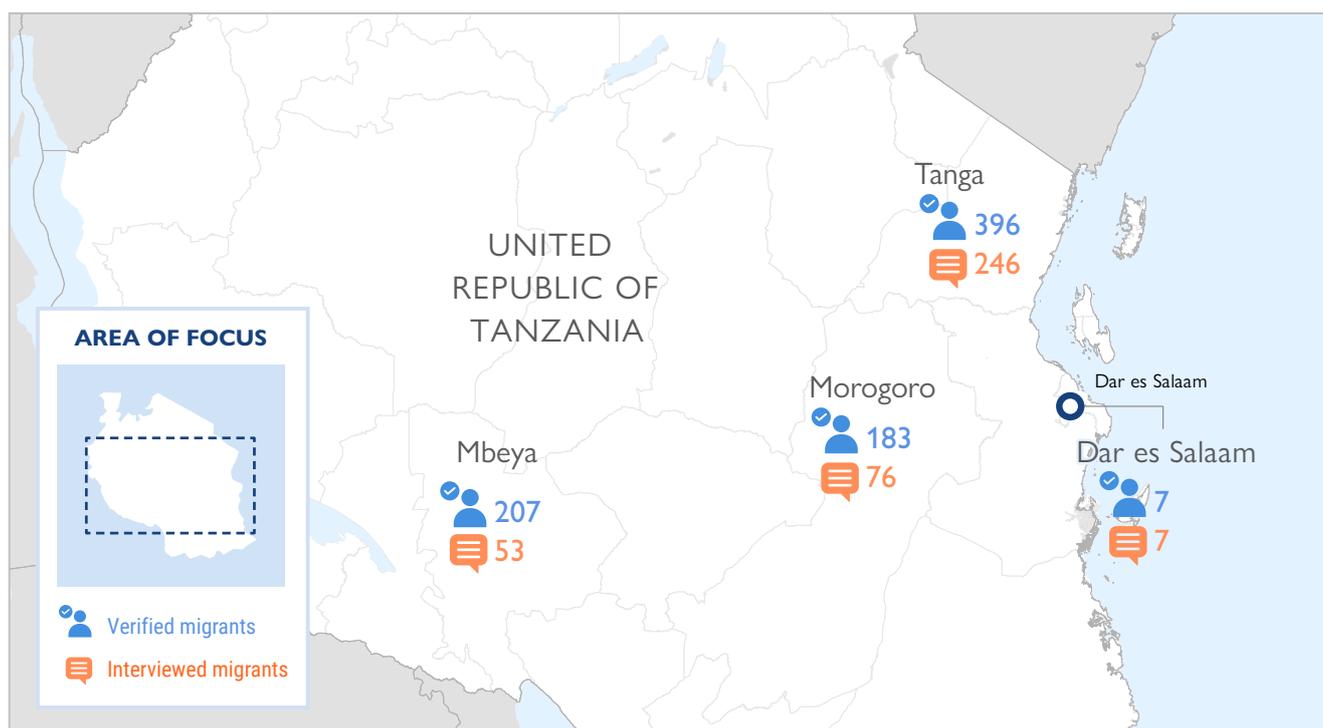
Table 1: Distribution of verified and interviewed migrants by detention centre and region in the United Republic of Tanzania

REGION	DETENTION CENTRE	NUMBER OF MIGRANTS VERIFIED	NUMBER OF MIGRANTS INTERVIEWED
Tanga	Maweni	396	246
Morogoro	Kihonda	183	76
	Mahabusu		
	Mbigiri		
Mbeya	Idete	207	53
	Ruanda		
	Songwe		
	Mbozi		
Ngwala			
Dar es Salaam	Salvation Army shelter	7	7
Total		793	382

This study is the first report of the IOM Southern Route research series, aiming to update the 2009 IOM study *In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity Assessment of the Irregular Movement of Men from East Africa and the Horn to South Africa*. This series intends to deepen the understanding of migrants' experiences and dynamics along this particular route, which remains substantially understudied. This contribution will, in turn, help improve policy-making, programming and coordination for IOM and other humanitarian and development actors in the region.

This report presents the findings of the individual interviews administered to the sample of 382 migrants. Following a brief overview of the research context and a profile of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, the document is structured around five themes: (i) main drivers of migration; (ii) the migration decision-making process, including the role of family, friends, brokers and returnees; (iii) culture of migration and existence of transnational linkages between communities of origin and South Africa; (iv) migrants' experiences en route, including routes taken, the cost of the journey and difficulties encountered along the route; and (v) expectations regarding the outcome of their migration and future intentions.

Figure 1: Distribution of verified and interviewed migrants by detention centre and region in the United Republic of Tanzania



“ My first son died in a car accident in South Africa. Even though I lost my son, I would encourage people to do their best to try to go to South Africa because everyone has a different story. Our life has changed a lot because four of my children and my husband lived in South Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

The Southern Route, which runs from the East and Horn of Africa towards the Republic of South Africa, is one of the main routes used by Ethiopians and Somali migrants. Migration from southern Ethiopia to South Africa dates to the 1990s, when the Derg's military regime in Ethiopia ended, facilitating international mobility.⁷ At the same time, the early 1990s also marked the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and with it the introduction of progressive asylum laws permitting asylum seekers and migrants to work and study while their claims were being processed.⁸ These developments laid the foundation of the Southern migratory corridor and to the establishment of the first diaspora generation in South Africa. In the early 2000s, migration along the Southern Corridor increased in response to the appointment of an Ethiopian Ambassador to South Africa, who arranged job opportunities for migrants from the Hosaena and Durame areas in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) region, the main region of origin of Ethiopians along the Southern Route to this day.⁹

Next, the opportunities offered by the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa increased the flows of migrants to include would-be entrepreneurs and traders.¹⁰ Concurrently, it is assumed that Saudi Arabia's 2013 decision to seal its borders, and subsequent deportation of irregular Ethiopian migrants, may have also pushed some to opt for the Southern Route.¹¹ By that time, transnational smuggling networks were established and consolidated in perpetuating migration movements from communities of origin to South Africa.¹²

In addition to Southern Ethiopia's growing links to South Africa, this last wave appears to have been driven by the economic transformations associated with rapid Gross Domestic Product growth, an aspect that seems to be missing – or at least much less significant – in the initial waves of migration.¹³ The rapid expansion of formal schooling, the changing aspirations and expectations of young people and the pursuit of better-paying work in South Africa are crucial in understanding the development of this migration trajectory.¹⁴

The Southern Route is also largely understudied compared to other migration routes. In 2009, IOM estimated the number of Ethiopians and Somalis travelling along the Southern Route to South Africa at 17,000–20,000 males per year, of whom Ethiopians were the majority.¹⁵ In 2016 the figure was revised using Ethiopian asylum applications in South Africa to project the number of migrants and set slightly below, at around 14,750–16,850 individuals per year.¹⁶

According to IOM Flow Monitoring data, around 41,000 movements were tracked in 2021 at the Moyale Flow Monitoring Point located at the border with Kenya, of which 25 per cent were headed to South Africa (10,243 movements).¹⁷ Migrants, most commonly Ethiopian men from the two regions of SNNP and Oromia, cross at Moyale and proceed via Isiolo to Nairobi and then to the United Republic of Tanzania and onward to South Africa. In 2021, 1 per cent of migrants headed to South Africa were females and 8 per cent were male children.

7 Fransen and Kushminder, 2009.

8 IOM, 2009; Estifanos, 2017.

9 IOM, 2009; Kanko, Bailey & Teller, 2013.

10 Estifanos & Zack, 2020.

11 IOM, 2009.

12 Estifanos, 2018.

13 Schewel and Asmamaw, 2021.

14 Kuschminder and Siegel, 2014.

15 The estimate was compiled based on several data points; in particular, around 60 per cent of the Ethiopians passed through a refugee camp in Malawi where their nationality was registered. IOM, 2009.

16 Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS), 2017.

17 Kenya was the most mentioned destination (65%) while 8% of movements were headed to Uganda, 1% to South Sudan and less than 1% to Tanzania. IOM Flow Monitoring Data.

According to interviews conducted at Moyale, around 90 per cent of migrants were unemployed in Ethiopia and were travelling in search of a job or other livelihood opportunities. Nearly three quarters had strong ties at destination – family or friends.

According to UNDESA, the stock of Ethiopian migrants living in South Africa is estimated at around 44,000 individuals.¹⁸ However, figures are thought to be much larger. In 2021, a labour and migration survey conducted by the Central Statistical Office in urban and rural areas of all regions except Tigray set the number of ‘recent’ migrants in South Africa (those who left the country since January 2016) at around 110,000 individuals.¹⁹ Most Ethiopians are settled in Johannesburg and Durban and other urban and rural townships – following in the footsteps of early migrants who pioneered the small-scale retail phenomenon and experienced business and financial success.²⁰

The same survey found that close to 51,000 Ethiopian migrants have gone missing since 2016. According to the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs in Southern Ethiopia, 4,265 deaths and 1,707 disappearances of migrants from the Southern districts of Hadiya and Kembata Tembaro were recorded along the Southern route to South Africa between 2012 and 2019. Several Ethiopian families interviewed in the context of the Missing Migrant’s Project confirmed having lost at least one family member along the Southern Route, suggesting that smuggling along this route has become more violent, exploitative and perilous.²¹

Migrants also go ‘missing’ when stranded or detained in transit countries en route to South Africa – in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.²² In 2015, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya estimated that around 1,000 migrants were arrested and held in detention every year – around 90 per cent of whom were Ethiopians 20 to 40 years old.²³ In 2021, IOM verified the presence of around 800 Ethiopians in detention centres in the United Republic of Tanzania. However, it is estimated that their number is above 2,200, as not all prisons holding Ethiopian migrants were assessed.²⁴ In January 2021, the Tanzanian President John Pombe Magufuli pardoned and ordered the release of 1,789 Ethiopian irregular migrants, some of whom had served sentences for as long as seven years.²⁵ Sometimes migrants also experience multiple detentions in different countries along the route to South Africa.

18 United Nations Population Division, 2020. [International Migrant Stock](#).

19 CSA, 2021.

20 ACMS, 2019.

21 The data was collected from testimonies of families and survivors in Hadiya and Kembata Tembaro districts and reports of Ethiopian embassies along the southern route, then was gathered by BOLSA officials together with local offices of IOM (IOM, Mengiste, 2021).

22 Irregular migrants can be detained by law or as a de facto policy to control migration flows, deter future migrants, for security or health reasons, protection of the labour market, or when there are no resources available for deportation, or detention centres are not available or full. RMMS, 2015.

23 The organization also acknowledged that 1,000 irregular migrants per year was a very conservative estimate (RMMS, 2015).

24 IOM, 2021a.

25 Africa News, 2021. [Tanzania’s president Magufuli releases 1,789 imprisoned Ethiopian migrants](#).

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Overall, 382 migrants (of the 793 who were verified) were interviewed.²⁶ Among them, 78 were minors (20%). Most minors (52 individuals) were travelling alone or with a group of unknown people, which means that they were detained without adults familiar to them, either a family member or a friend.²⁷

Interviewed migrants are nearly all single (86%) and male (99%). Their average age is 20 years, with 20 per cent of them younger than 18 years. In addition to being very young, migrants have a relatively high level of education (only 5% have no education, while 30% have completed upper secondary school or above), compared to those interviewed along the Eastern Route, where most were in the 20–24 years age group and over half had not received more than primary education (21% had no education and 34% a primary degree).²⁸

The overwhelming prevalence of men and boys in the sample can be explained by the fact that women and girls are less likely to travel the Southern Route compared to the Eastern Route, where they are employed as domestic workers.²⁹ And yet female presence along the Southern Route may be increasing. Qualitative evidence collected during the Rapid Assessment for the Bilateral Labour Migration Agreement³⁰ suggests that families in Ethiopia are sending girls and young women more frequently because

they are considered more reliable remitters than males. However, females are more likely to use regular channels of migration or different paths to reach South Africa, which make them less visible. Whereas males would travel in large groups in trucks, females would often fly to Mozambique, or move very slowly, staying with family members along the way. IOM data collected in Misha (in Hadiya, SNNP) confirm how female migration is more linked to domestic work in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries or ‘regular’ marriage or reunification flows to South Africa.

Migrants tend to come from very large households (the average size is seven members versus a national figure of five),³¹ and they are likely to have had some source of earnings in Ethiopia (81%), although not necessarily the only source of income for the household nor the main one: 239 individuals reported that the household was/is depending on their earnings (65% of all individuals). Internal migration – to Addis Ababa (56%) or Dire Dawa (3%) – was also commonly reported,³² confirming that rural–urban migration is often the first step towards international migration.³³ The high incidence of internal migration may also be linked to the specific origin of migrants. Nearly all come from Hadiya (68%) or Kembata (25%), two zones where internal migration is traditionally a livelihood coping mechanism.³⁴

26 A total of 385 individuals were approached but one refused to be interviewed and two were not interviewed because they were younger than 15 years.

27 Detention of children is prohibited under Tanzanian law. The presence of minors in detention may be underestimated because they tend to declare an older age to avoid guardianship. According to flow monitoring data, the presence of unaccompanied minors along the Southern Route stands at 0.1 per cent.

28 Upper secondary school is often seen as the ‘threshold’ for considering alternatives to education especially if boys/girls are not performing well in school and are at risk of failing the exams. Apparently, this is where the investment in education becomes not – or somewhat less – convenient compared to other options, including migration. According to the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2016, both the enrolment and the completion rate in upper secondary are very low (26% and 13% respectively). DHS, 2016.

29 This finding could also be linked to the particular setting of interviews, considering that the presence of women was rarely found in the course of verification missions conducted by IOM in the United Republic of Tanzania. Even Refugee Consortium of Kenya had hardly come across any women and few children (less than 2%) migrants in the course of verification missions carried out in Kenyan detention centres.

30 IOM, 2021. [Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements \(BLMAs\). Rapid Assessment of the Southern Corridor \(Ethiopia - Kenya - Tanzania - South Africa\)](#).

31 Mini-DHS, 2019.

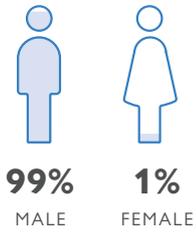
32 Since the 2000s, internal migration trajectories have been increasingly directed toward urban areas and their fringes, replacing traditional rural–rural movements for land, seasonal employment or marriage. A recent [survey](#) implemented by Ethiopia Central Statistics Agency with IOM support revealed that 17.1 per cent of the population (not including Tigray region) are internal migrants.

33 In urban settings migrants may acquire the means and aspirations to migrate (Bundervoet T., 2018).

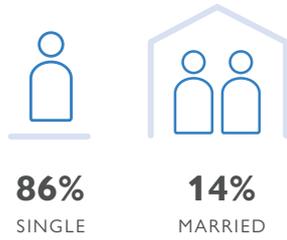
34 Forum for Social Studies (FSS), 2015.

FIGURE 2: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS IN YEARS

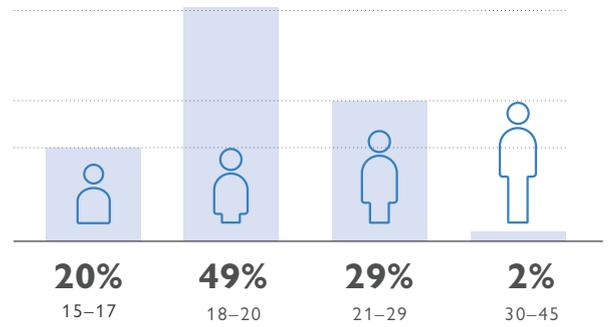
SEX



MARITAL STATUS



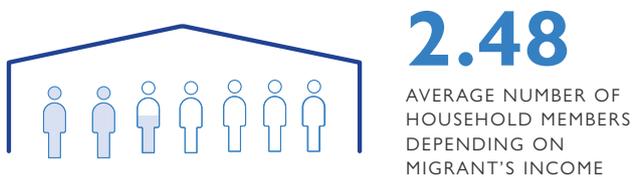
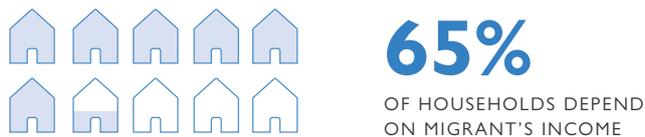
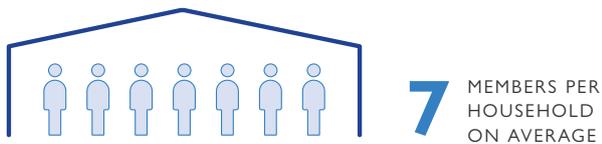
AGE GROUP



LEVEL OF EDUCATION



RESPONDENTS' HOUSEHOLDS IN ETHIOPIA



MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

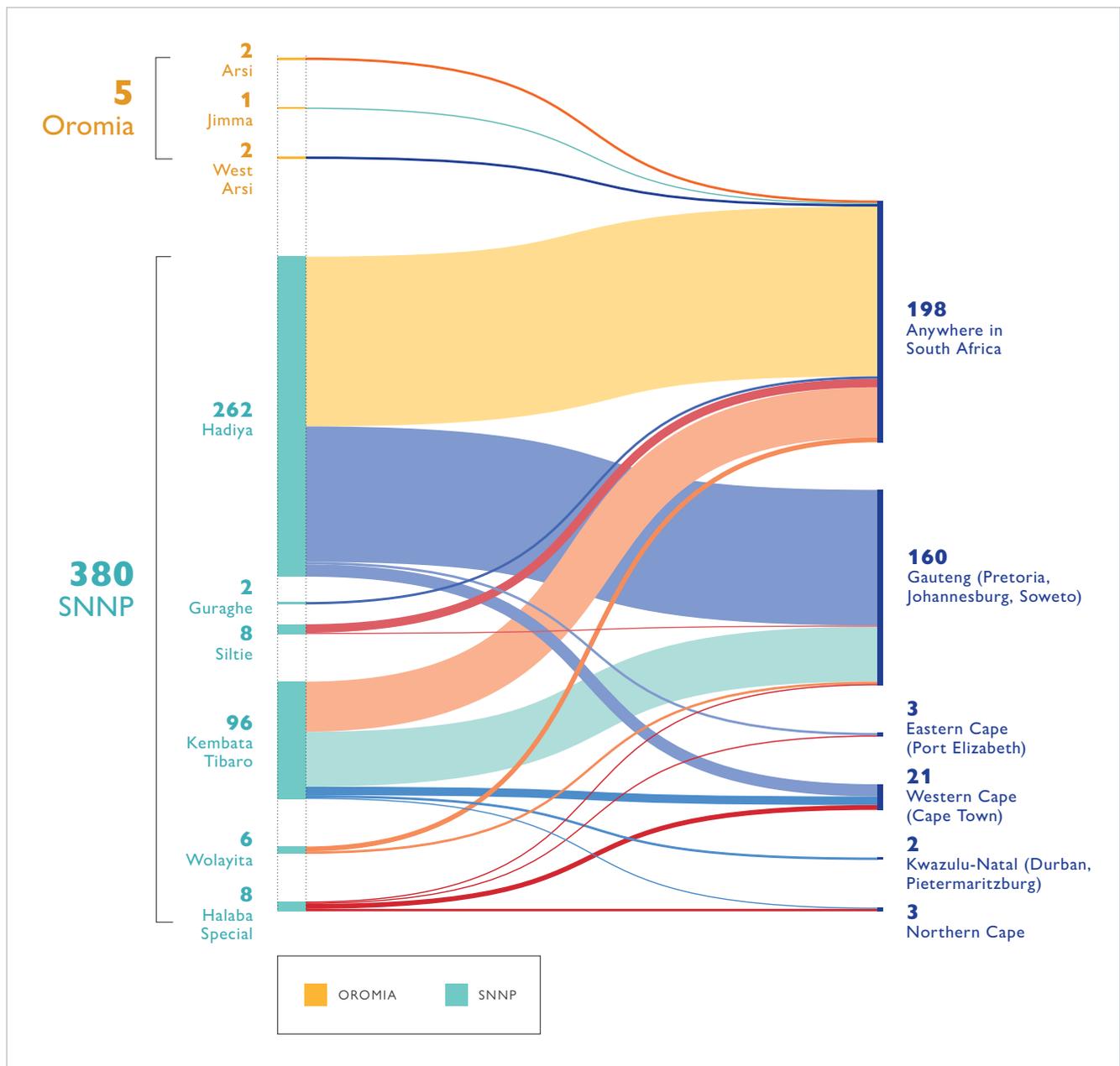


DESTINATION AND TRAVEL ROUTES

Nearly all migrants are originally from the SNNP region and mainly from the two zones of Hadiya (68%) and Kembata (25%). Only five individuals were from the Oromia region. All migrants were headed to South Africa: 42 per cent reported Gauteng province as their intended destination, whereas only very few were headed to the Western Cape (3%), the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape or Kwazulu-Natal province (less than 1% each) before they were intercepted in transit. Around half had

no specific destination in South Africa in mind (52%). Data show that migrants often follow in the footsteps of relatives who have already migrated. Forty-four per cent of migrants had at least one family member who migrated to South Africa and, if known, their intended province of destination coincided with that of the relative; similarly, if the destination of the relative was unknown, migrants were more likely to have no set province in mind.

Figure 3: Region and zone of origin in Ethiopia and region of destination in South Africa



The most common point of exit from Ethiopia was through the town of Moyale, on the border between Moyale woreda in the Oromia region and the Kenyan district of Moyale (329 individuals mentioned passing through it, 86% of all migrants).³⁵ From there, most migrants moved on to Nairobi and then to Mombasa, where they entered the United Republic of Tanzania at Tanga by land or, less frequently, by sea. Very few individuals mentioned entering the United Republic of Tanzania near Kilimanjaro (around Arusha) and moving southeast to the coastal towns of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam

from there. Most journeys ended on the coastal strip between Tanga and Dar es Salaam (where most migrants are currently detained). Thirteen per cent of migrants mentioned the city of Morogoro, possibly, on their way from the coast to the city of Mbeya. However, less than 10 per cent mentioned reaching the town of Mbeya or surroundings (the Songwe region or Tukuyu) – Mbeya is a common crossing into Malawi or Zambia on the way to South Africa. Only one migrant mentioned reaching the United Republic of Tanzania through Sudan and Uganda.

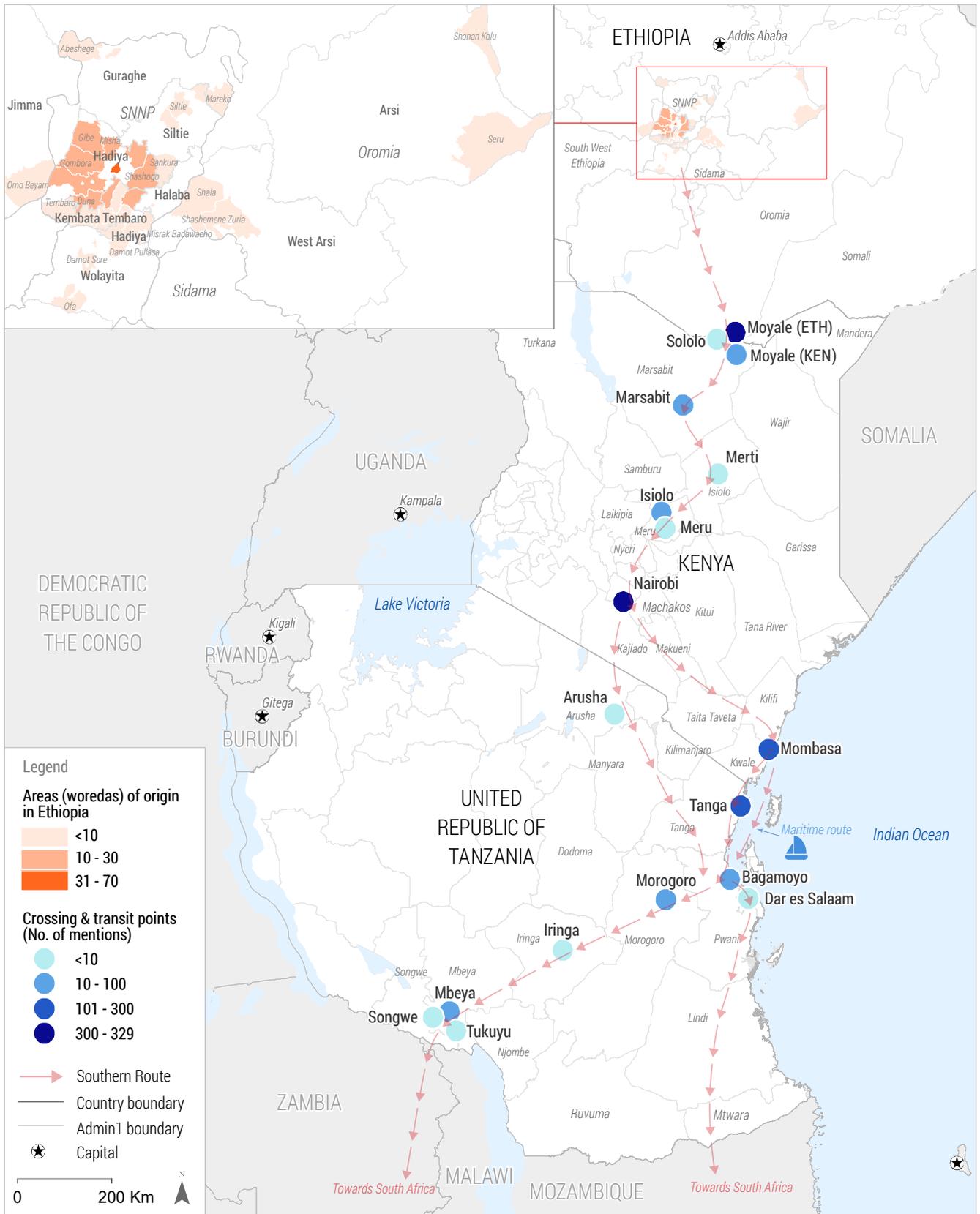
DATA FROM MOYALE BORDER POINT

The Moyale Flow Monitoring Point (FMP) located in Ethiopia at the border with Kenya is the main gateway from Ethiopia to the Southern Route. In 2021, around 41,000 movements were tracked at the Moyale crossing – nearly all of whom of Ethiopians. The majority were headed towards Kenya (65%) and South Africa (25%, around 10,200), with residual flows directed towards Uganda (8%), South Sudan (1%) or the United Republic of Tanzania (<1%). Migrants crossing at Moyale and headed to South Africa were nearly all Ethiopian men from the two regions of SNNP and Oromia. In 2021, only 1 per cent of individuals were females and 8 per cent were male children.

Surveys with Ethiopian migrants randomly selected among those travelling through Moyale and headed to South Africa provide further insights: nearly all migrants were unemployed in Ethiopia and travelling in search of a job or other livelihood opportunities. Nearly three quarters had strong ties to their intended destination (family or friends), 40 per cent of whom had financially contributed to their journeys. All migrants were travelling in a group – often with their spouse/partner, family or other household member (39%) – and all were planning to move permanently. These findings are consistent with studies that describe the Southern Route as largely dominated by the labour migration of men, as it entails a dangerous and exhausting journey across multiple countries. Since March 2021, IOM has been operating a Migration Response Centre in Moyaletto provide direct assistance, including food and temporary shelter, information and service referrals to migrants on the move. By December 2021, 1,401 individuals had been registered (14% of individuals at all Ethiopia Migration Response Centres in 2021), 87 per cent of whom were headed towards South Africa and around 98 per cent of whom were male.

³⁵ Migrants were asked to mention the places they had passed through on their way to the point of interception. Figures are likely underestimated since migrants did not always know the names of the places they have been taken through or recall them correctly in hindsight.

Figure 4: Points of crossing and transit (number of mentions)



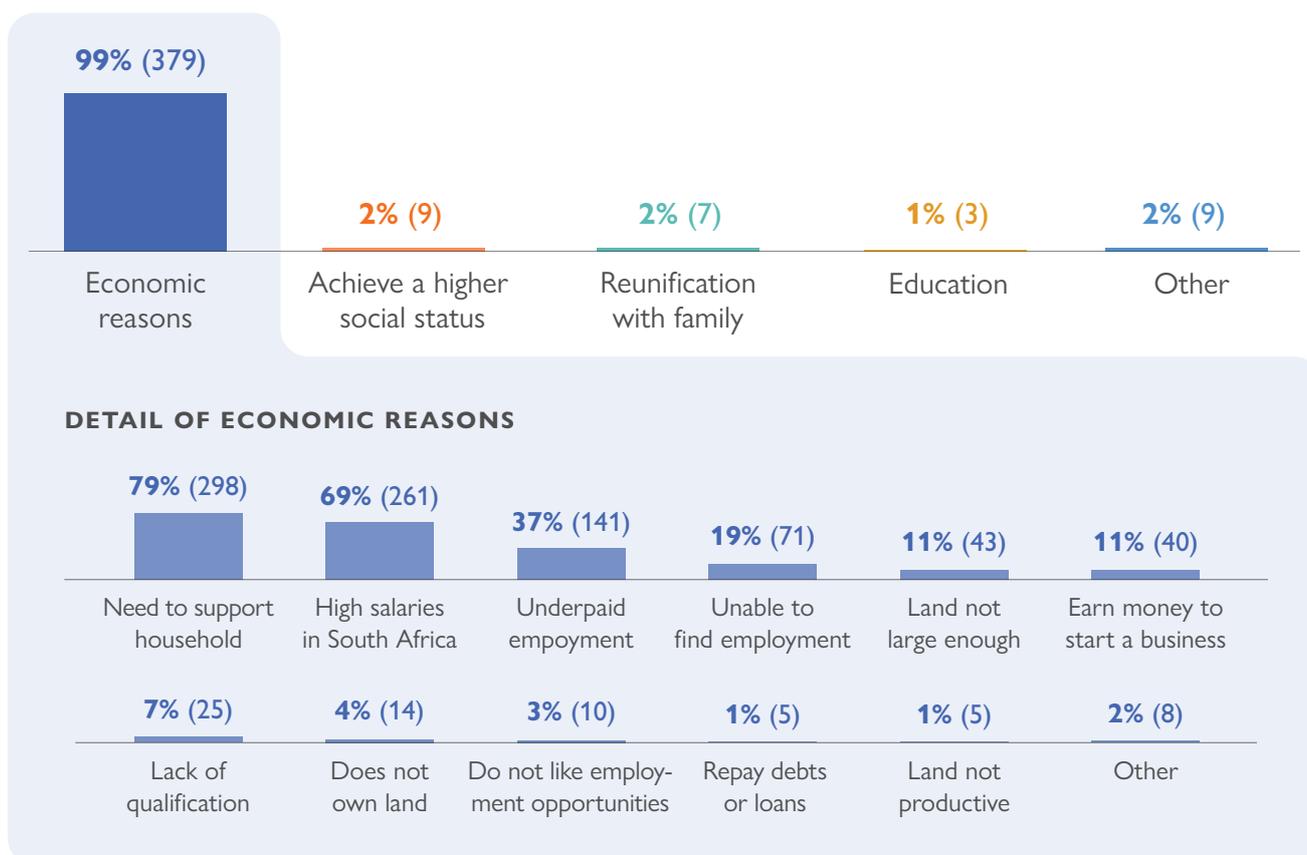
LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Similar to the Eastern Route, migration along the Southern route is mainly economically driven: 379 individuals mentioned economic factors among the main drivers of their migration (99% of all migrants). High salaries in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the most commonly mentioned pull factor (69%), while the need to support the household was the top economic push factor (79%) followed by difficulties in finding a well-paid job (37%) – or even a job at all (17%). Twenty-one per cent of migrants did not have any source of income in Ethiopia and those who did earned an average of 3,500 birr per month (70 United States dollars - USD), with the lowest earnings among those farming land – either other people’s land (1,431 birr, USD 29) or their own (2,170 birr, USD 43).

Conversely, migrants expected to earn as much as 70,500 birr (USD 1,420) if they make it to South Africa, with a mean estimated wage differential of around 67,000 birr (USD 1,350).

Migration directly associated with land issues³⁶ was mentioned by 59 individuals – most of whom reported their land being ‘too small’ (43 individuals) – however, land-related drivers may be even stronger, considering that migrants reporting reliance on land were slightly more likely to adopt coping strategies, such as skipping meals and/or reducing portions, and more frequently reported being unable to meet basic needs than those relying on other sources of income.³⁷

Figure 5: Main drivers of migration³⁸



36 Shortage of agricultural land is a serious challenge among the Hadiya and Kambata ethnic groups due to extremely high population density. Both areas are among the most densely populated in Ethiopia (Girmachew, 2018).

37 Around 70 per cent of migrants (264 individuals) reported that their household was unable to cover basic needs and adopted coping strategies in the 12 months before their departure. Where farming was among the main sources of earnings, figures increase to around 80 per cent.

38 The first three reasons for migrating were asked.

“ I was the first person in my family to leave to South Africa. I lived there for six years. I did not go on foot, like many others do; I flew to South Africa. I came back to help my wife and raise the children. Later, I sent four of my sons. South Africa is the most comfortable place for me to work. I bought land and built a big house in Ethiopia with the money that I made there. I even built a small hospital where one of my daughters works as manager.

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Figure 6: Comparison between actual and expected occupation

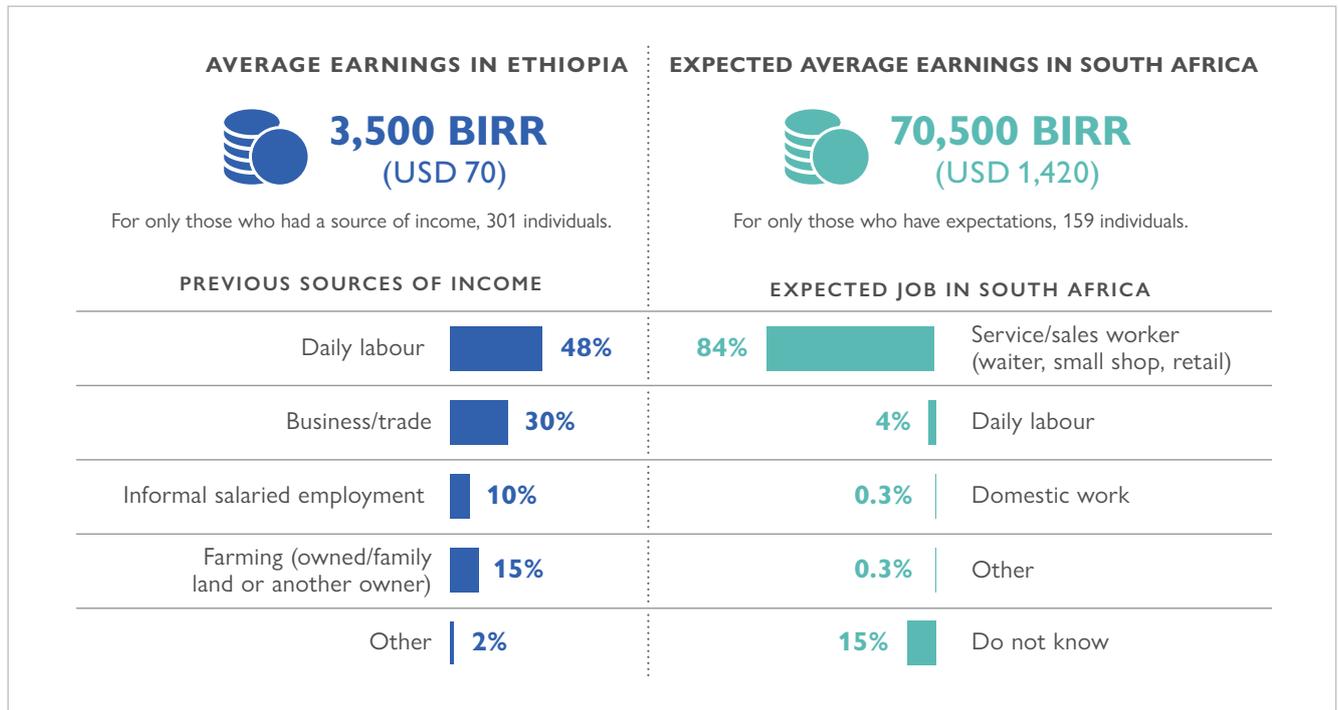
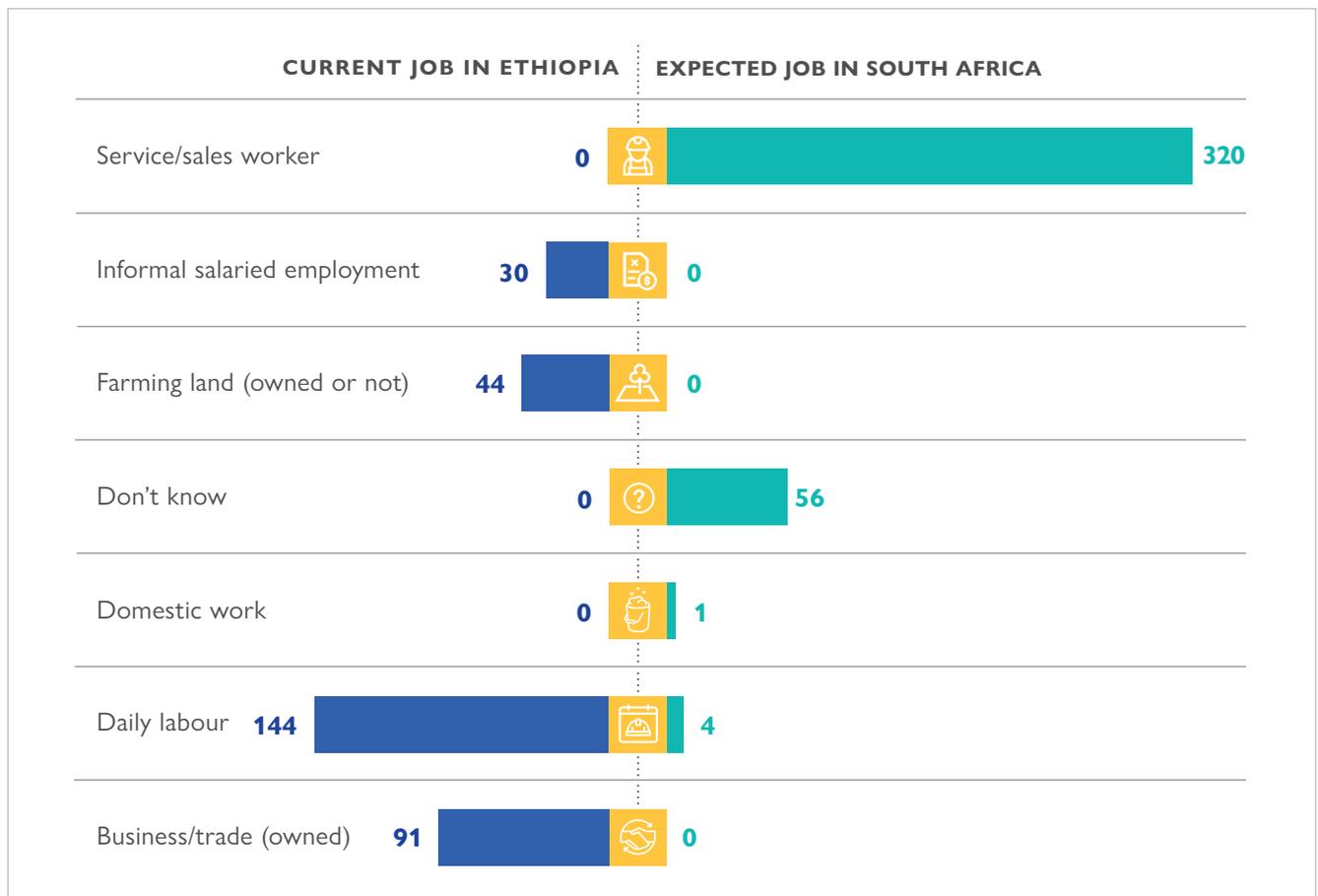


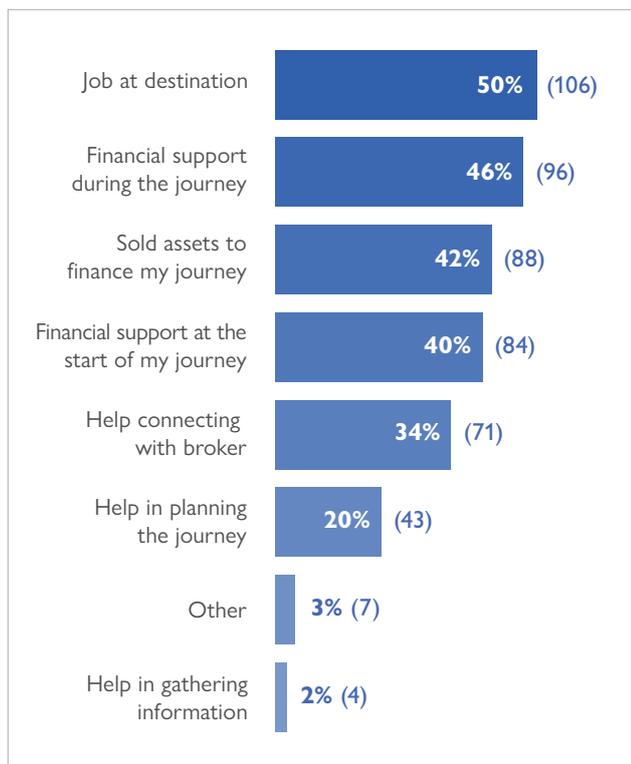
Figure 7: Sources of earnings (previous versus expected, number of individuals)



THE CULTURE OF MIGRATION AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILY

Most migrants come from areas where migration along the Southern Route is perceived as being frequent (62%) or very frequent (8%) and where transnational networks have consolidated over time. Around one in two migrants has a household member who has migrated South, nearly all to South Africa (45%). As a consequence, family – at origin (40%), at destination (36%) or in both (23%) – was often involved in the migration experience: 272 individuals informed their household of their decision to migrate before departure (71% of all migrants) and 210 received support from family members (55%), most often in the form of providing a job at destination or financial support before and during the journey, including the selling of household’s assets.

Figure 8: Type of support provided (multiple responses possible, number of individuals)

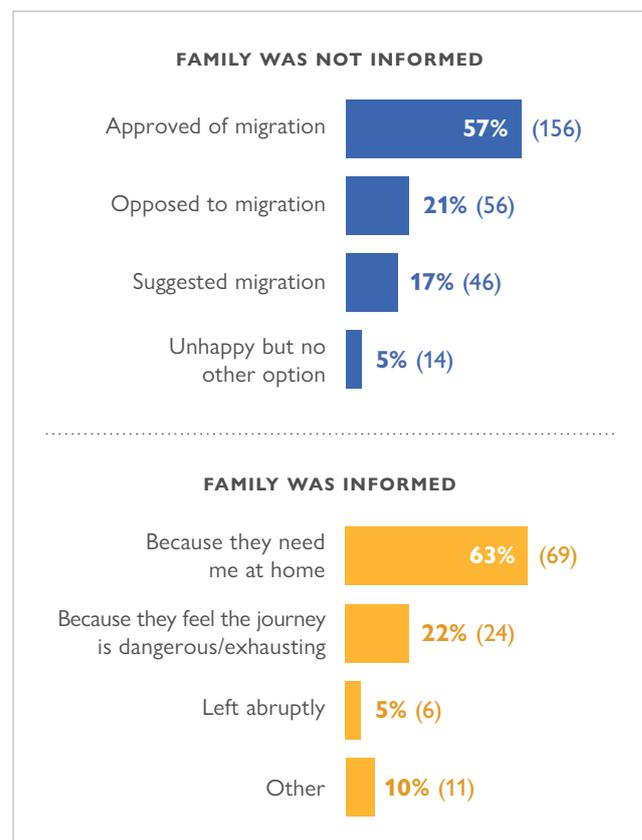


In most cases, the household reportedly reacted positively to the decision to migrate, approving (162 individuals, 60%) or even suggesting it in the first place (66 individuals, 24%). However, 160 individuals reported that their family was ‘unhappy’ about their decision and an additional

110 migrants chose not to inform their families before leaving because they were afraid that they would stop them from going, either because they were needed at home or because the journey was too dangerous.

It appears that the share of migrants informing their families is significantly higher than what has been observed in similar research projects along the Eastern Route, where only 35 per cent of young Ethiopians informed their families of their migration before their departure. This finding can be linked to the presence of strong transnational networks, where migration is a more socially acceptable livelihood strategy and where migrants have the ability to access resources from the start. In communities where transnational ties are weaker, migrants are more likely to inform their families en route (once it is too late for their families to prevent them from leaving) and ask for financial support.

Figure 9: Families’ perception of migration (families who were informed versus families who were not informed, number of individuals)

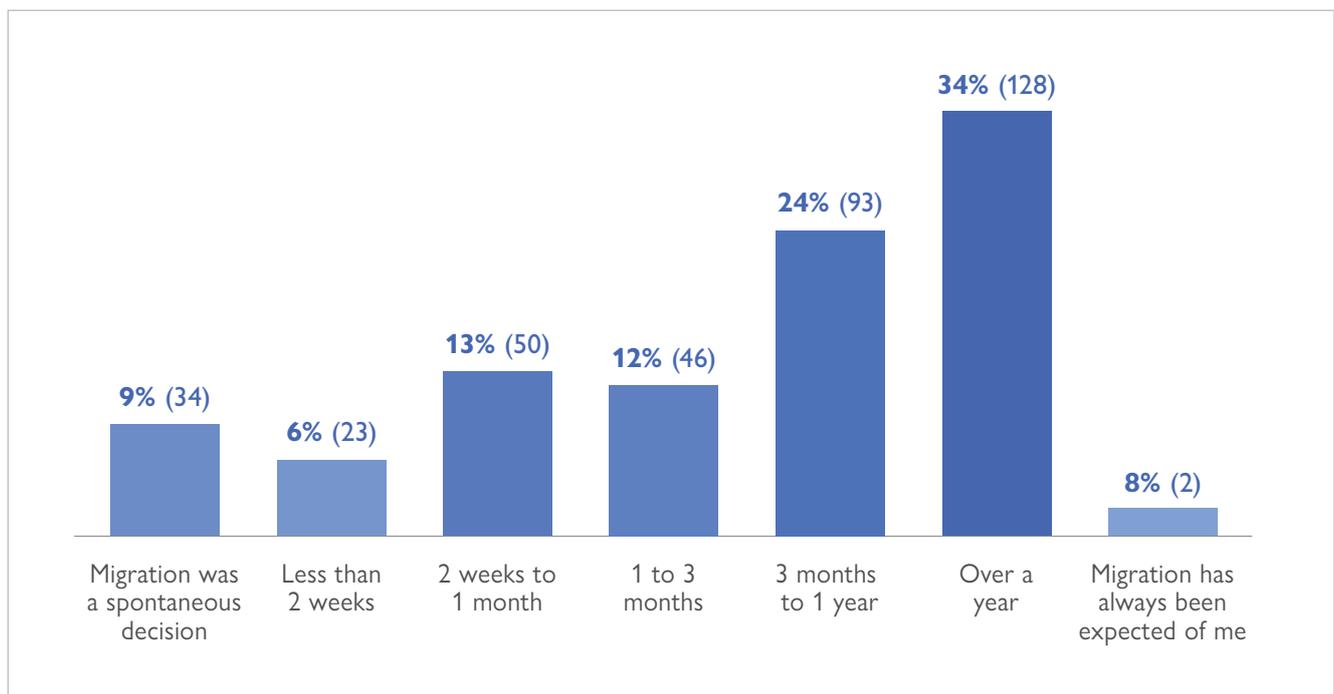


INFORMATION ABOUT MIGRATION

The decision to migrate is generally not taken abruptly: around one third of individuals started thinking about migration more than one year before departure, around one quarter between three months and one year before departing, around 10 per cent between one and three months and the rest less than a month prior to departure.

This finding suggests a more thought-through decision – often taken together and/or supported by families in communities of origin or relatives at destination – compared to what occurs along the Eastern Route, where around one in five young migrants reported that they left ‘spontaneously’ (17%), with little to no time to properly organize the journey and without collecting information prior to leaving.

Figure 10: How long before departure did you start thinking about migration? (number of individuals)



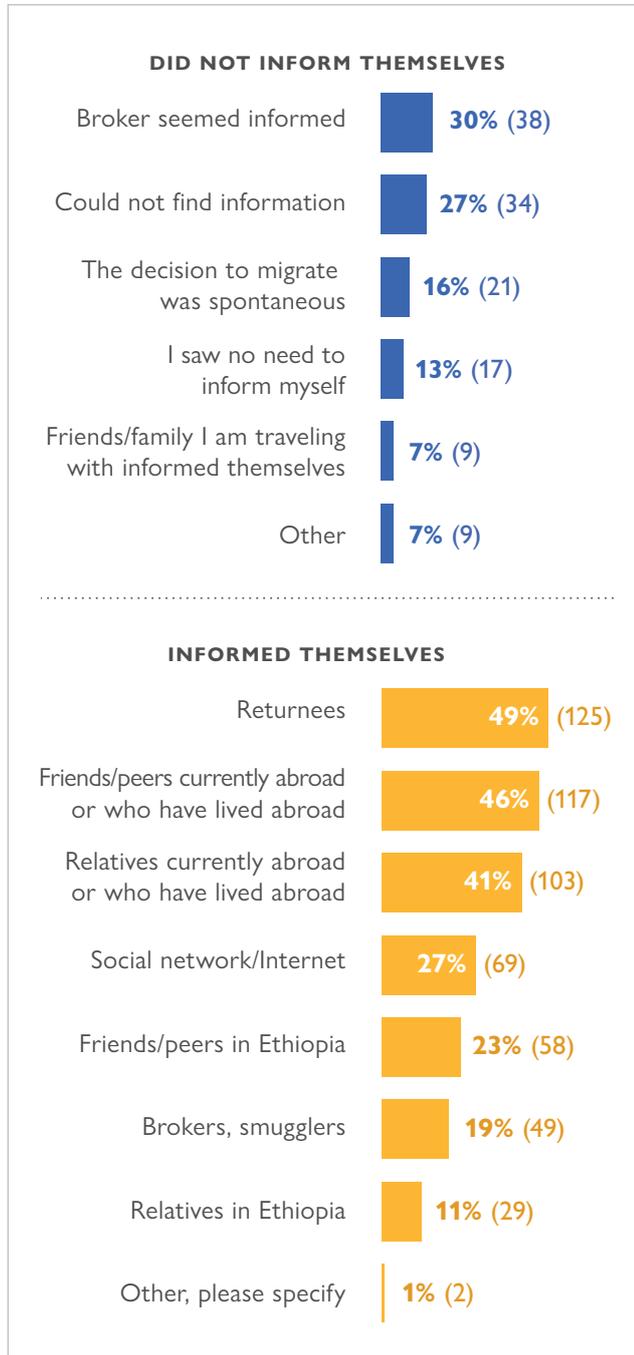
Longer periods of journey planning seem to also mean that more migrants searched for information on the journey before leaving (66%, 254 individuals) and reached out for advice, generally from more than one source. Most respondents currently, or who had previously lived abroad reported seeking advice from returnees (49%), friends (46%) or relatives (41%). One in four also searched for information online, on social networks or the Internet,³⁹ and one in five reached out to brokers. Among those who did not inform themselves (34%, 128 individuals), most stated that they relied on brokers (37%) or could not

find information (27%). The rest did not have the time to search for it (16%) or felt it was unnecessary (13%); only few relied on family, friends or peers (7%).

Once again, comparison with individuals migrating along the Eastern Route shows how migrants along the Southern Route were keener to seek information themselves before making the decision to migrate: only one in two migrants interviewed in Obock and Bossaso informed themselves, while most relied on brokers, left abruptly with no planning, or delayed the collection of information while en route.

39 Slightly less than half of migrants reported being able to access Internet in their community of origin (185 individuals, 48%). Nearly all access Internet through their personal cell phone (96%). The most used apps/social media platforms are IMO (95%), Facebook (75%), WhatsApp (65%) and Telegram (23%). Instagram, YouTube, Viber, Twitter, Skype and Gmail were each mentioned by fewer than 20 users.

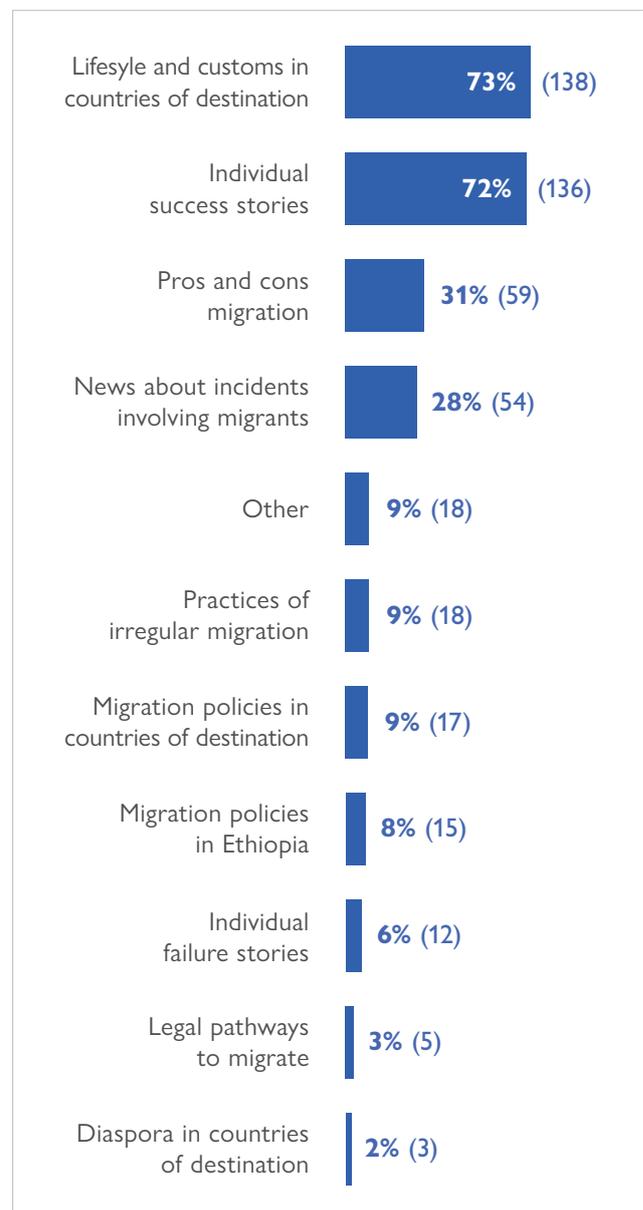
Figure 11: Sources of information about migration (migrants who informed themselves versus those who did not, number of responses)



In addition to actively searching for information, migrants displayed a relatively high level of passive exposure to information on migration: 190 individuals (50%) had heard or seen information about migration in the six months before departure. Most of this information was somewhat positive and concerned the lifestyle and customs

in countries of destination or individual success stories. Less than 30 per cent of individuals had heard or seen news about negative incidents involving migrants (such as shipwrecks, drowning, deportation or death). Almost none reported having been exposed to information on practices of irregular migration (trafficking/smuggling, detention), migration policies in Ethiopia or in countries of destination (for instance bans or closure of borders also in relation to the coronavirus disease 2019 - COVID-19), legal pathways to migrate or individual failure stories (less than 10% of individuals mentioned each option).

Figure 12: Have you seen or heard about... (individuals who heard or saw information about migration, multiple responses possible)



THE JOURNEY

Most migrants took between two weeks and three months to reach the United Republic of Tanzania (80%, corresponding to 307 individuals, of whom around half had been en route between two weeks and one month and the rest between one and three months) and had already paid 250,000 birr (around USD 5,000) for the journey.⁴⁰ Money to pay for the trip mostly came from family (both at destination and at home, as already mentioned), often as a result of selling assets (37%). Twenty per cent of individuals were able to co-finance migration with their own funds – and only 3 per cent reported a self-sustained migration. Around 20 per cent of individuals had to borrow money to finance their migration and 14 per cent were supported by friends.

Nearly all migrants were travelling in a group, and only eight individuals stated that they had been travelling alone. Travel companions were most likely unknown (66%, 252 individuals) and, less frequently, friends (31%) or family members (2%).

Figure 13: Financing the journey (multiple responses possible)

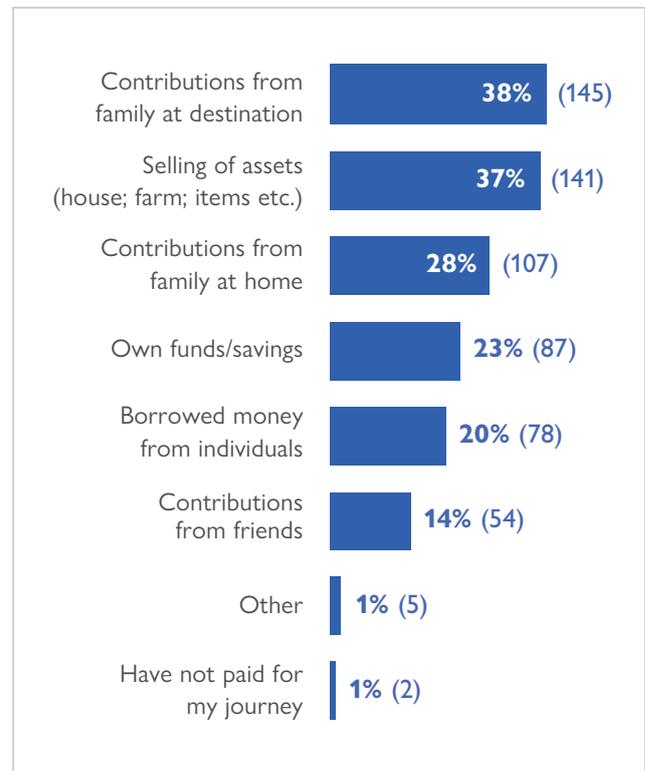
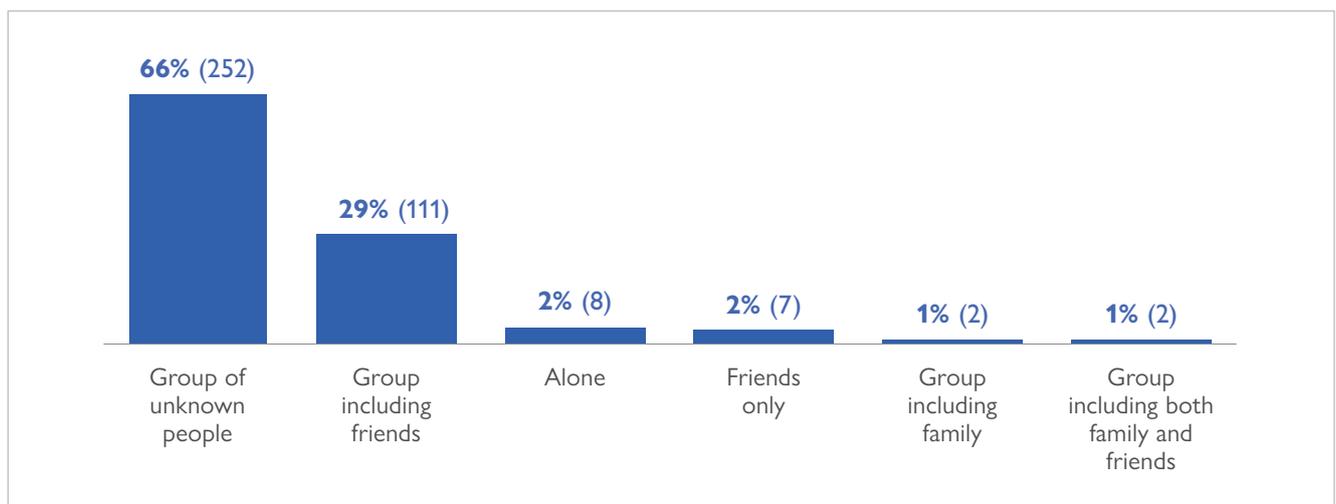


Figure 14: Travelling with (number of individuals)



40 In the 2009 IOM study, migrants reported paying between approximately USD 1,750 and USD 2,000 for the journey from the Horn of Africa to South Africa. In 2013, IOM set a new estimate at USD 2,500 and in 2015–2016 raised it again at USD 3,372 (USD 5,000 for the route through Zambia and Mozambique) to reflect the rise in costs recorded in the same period. Costs appear to have risen again due to increased surveillance along the route.

“ I have two brothers who live in South Africa. My two brothers there support our family, but I am scared for them because I heard about the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. I just want them to come home in peace. Before I got married, I also wanted to go to South Africa, but now it is too late for me because I am married with three kids.

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PROTECTION RISKS

All migrants, except for one person, were travelling with a broker and hence were smuggled migrants;⁴¹ however, exploitation and deception were often employed and smugglers often withheld, misinformed or actively deceived them, an indication that smuggling of persons may in some instances result in human trafficking along this route. More specifically, 73 per cent of migrants (280 individuals) were unaware they would be travelling with multiple brokers and 19 per cent (73 individuals) were asked to make additional payments. Thirty migrants recounted incidents involving extortion/theft, with brokers beating up migrants or stealing their assets (generally their phones; 18 individuals suffered or witnessed incidents or unbearable conditions related to means of travel, 10 individuals provided indirect accounts of brokers abandoning or starving other migrants to death and eight individuals were exposed to dangers in the forest (generally wild animals or crossing dangerous waters).

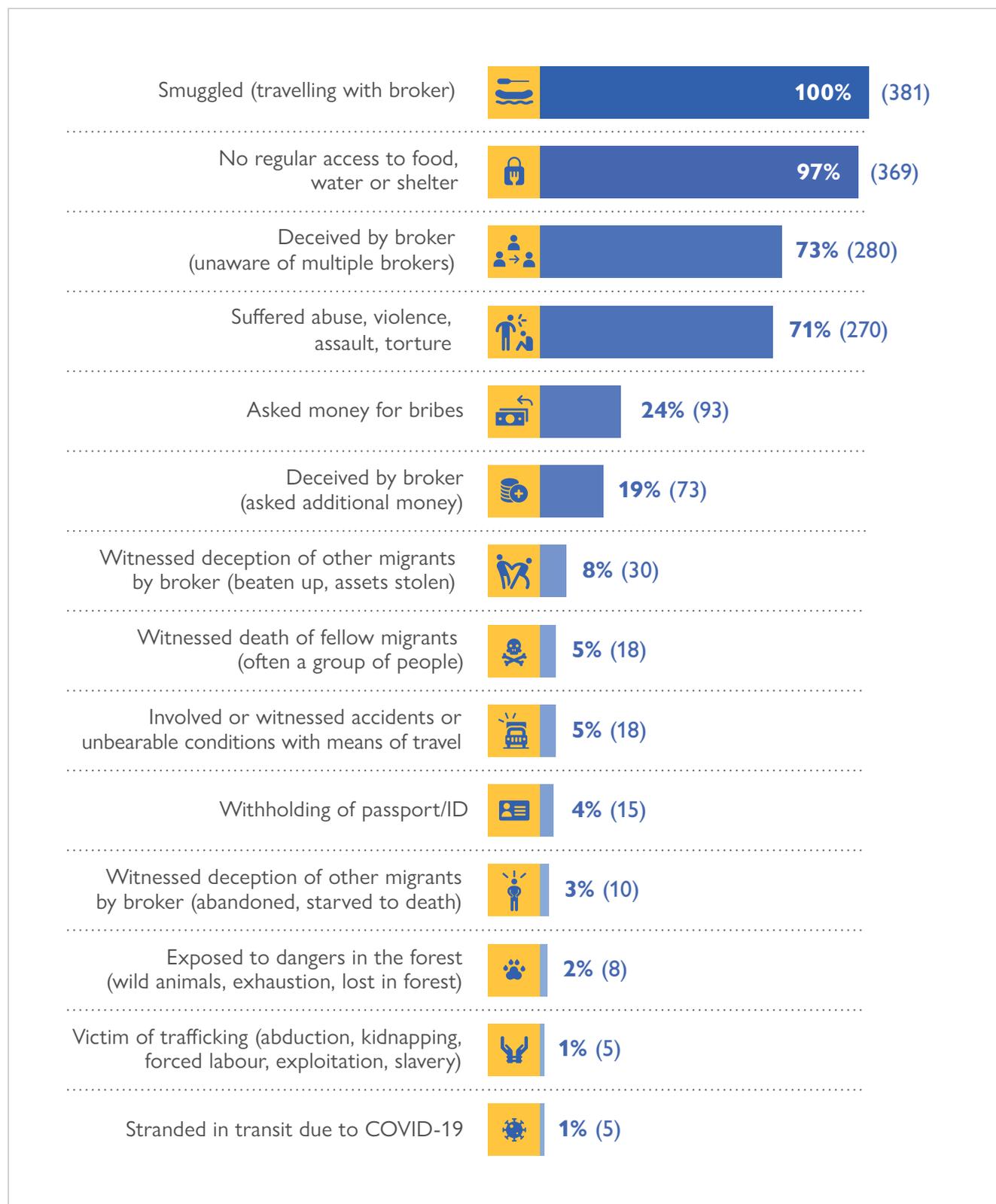
An overwhelming number of migrants stated that they experienced a severe lack of food, water or shelter (97%, 369 individuals) and/or suffered abuse, violence, assault or torture (71%, 270 individuals) which also points in the direction of deception by smugglers – although their involvement is not clearly specified. As for trafficking, five migrants stated that they had been victims of abduction or kidnapping – including two minors – and eight reported that they had experienced forced labour/exploitation or slavery. In addition, one in four migrants were asked (24%, 93 individuals) to pay bribes, adding to the average of USD 5,000 already paid for the journey, and 15 migrants reported that their documents had been confiscated. In both cases, it is unclear who the perpetrator was and if money or the documents were taken directly by the smugglers or other actors.

Eighteen migrants voluntarily reported to have witnessed the death of fellow migrants. These episodes often involved a group of migrants (“some”) – sometimes, two or three people, and in one case, “15 out of a group of 60 people”. Migrants disappeared/were lost/left behind, starved to death, killed during incidents or shot. Three people reported that migrants were allegedly shot by national police forces, possibly referring to a single incident that took place close to the Moyale border point.

Finally, five migrants reported that they were stranded in transit due to COVID-19. The low number of people reporting issues due to the pandemic is possibly due to the fact that, on average, irregular migrants spend around two years in Tanzanian prisons, which means that most migrants who were interviewed may have been arrested before the beginning of the pandemic.

41 Migrant smuggling is defined as the intentional organization or facilitation of the irregular movement of persons across state borders with their consent in exchange of financial or other gain. Therefore, smuggling is distinct from trafficking, which is aimed at the exploitation of the victim and involves physical or psychological violence, deception and coercion. However, the distinction between these two types of crime can become blurred in practice and often smuggled migrants also become victims of violence or other forms of exploitation, as it is in this case. The tough conditions of the journey (including ending in detention) are also attested by the unwillingness of migrants to recommend migration: of all individuals interviewed, only one stated that he would recommend migration to friends or family members.

Fig 15: Smuggling, trafficking, exploitation and incidents (multiple responses possible)



FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

Nearly all migrants reported that they plan on “returning home” and look for a job (80%), continuing their education (8% with peaks of 11% among younger migrants aged 15–19 years), resume their previous occupation (7%, including farming, often family land) or open an activity/business (5%) once they are released from detention. Less than 5 per cent were thinking of migrating again

– either elsewhere in Ethiopia (3%, 12 individuals) or to another country not in southern Africa (one individual only). Among those who plan to find a job, around one in two believed that it is not going to be easy (45% consider it “unlikely” or “impossible”), with migrants heading home slightly more optimistic than those planning to move internally within Ethiopia.

Fig 16: Future plans (number of individuals)

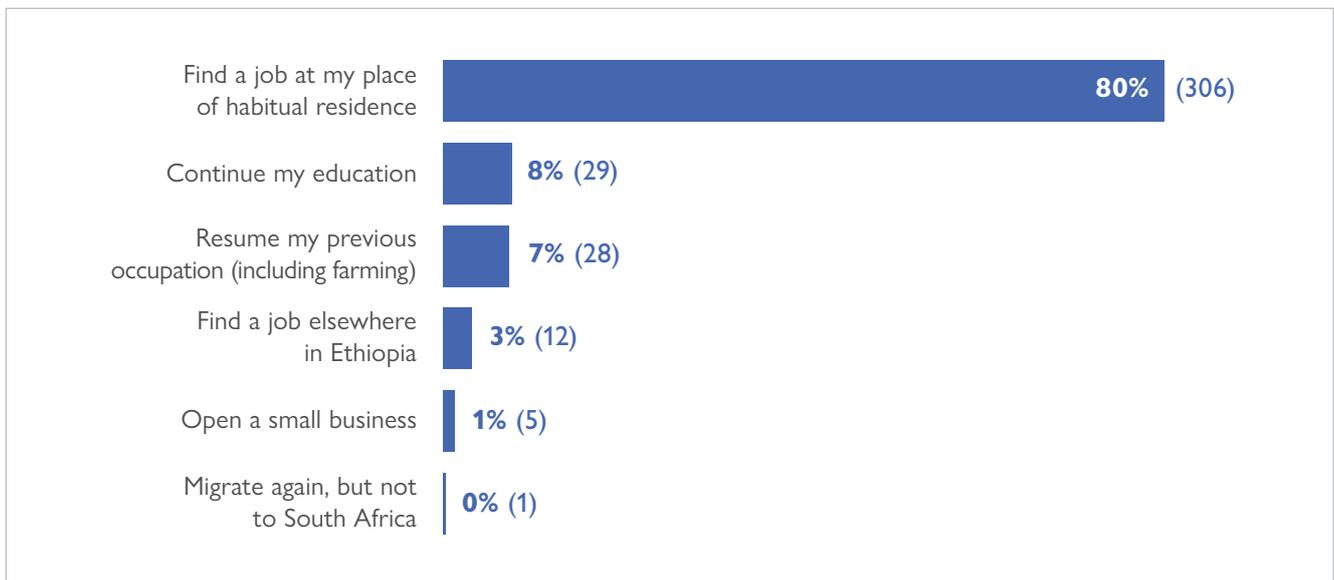
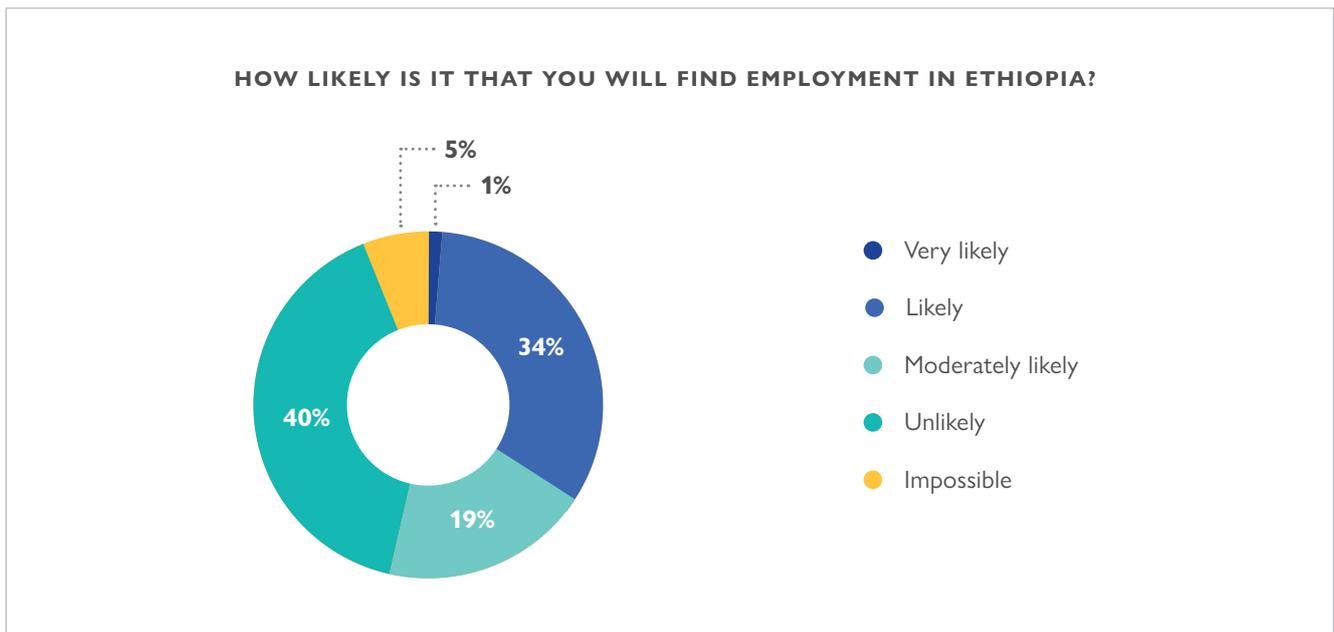


Fig 17: Likelihood of finding employment (only migrants who plan to find a job)



CONCLUSION

Irregular migration from Ethiopia to South Africa along the Southern Route through Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania has been taking place since the 1990s. Labour prospects make South Africa a particularly attractive destination for Ethiopian migrants, with (expected) monthly earnings differentials between Ethiopia and South Africa in the order of around USD 1,300 – USD 1,400. However, migration is not within everyone's reach: the journey is long, expensive and involves crossing several countries where migrants face various forms of protection risks including violence, exploitation and abuse en route and at destination (and a heavy reliance on a number of intermediaries in transit countries).

When interviewed, nearly all respondents stated that it took them between two weeks and three months to reach the United Republic of Tanzania, (around 40% had been en route between one and three months) and that they paid 250,000 birr (around USD 5,000) for the journey. Within the same time frame, Ethiopian migrants travelling along the Eastern Route would have already reached their final intended destination (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and paid less than one sixth of this amount.⁴²

Although very young, individuals travelling to South Africa had a higher level of education and were relatively better off compared to their counterparts interviewed in transit countries along the Eastern Route. Around 80 per cent had a source of income in Ethiopia and monthly earnings of around 3,500 birr (USD 70) – versus 25 per cent and 1,500 birr (USD 35) for those travelling along the Eastern Route.

Flows were also nearly exclusively male-driven. This finding can be explained by the preference of women and girls for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (where they are employed as domestic workers) or 'regular' marriage or reunification channels to South Africa. And yet female presence along the Southern Route may be increasing. Qualitative evidence⁴³ suggests that families in Ethiopia are sending girls and young women more frequently because they are considered more reliable remitters

than males. However, females are less visible due to their preference for regular channels or different modes of travel to reach South Africa: females would often fly to Mozambique, or move very slowly, staying with family members along the way.

Migration to South Africa is particularly prevalent in communities in southern Ethiopia – mainly in the two zones of Hadiya and Kembata in SNNP, both of which seem to have established strong ties with South Africa (particularly the Gauteng province). Desk review suggests that the impact of remittances on the locations of origin is intimately connected to network migration dynamics.⁴⁴ In the southern regions of SNNP and Oromia, international migration is a consolidated livelihood household strategy and it is often seen as socially acceptable. This means that a large share of migrants can count on family involvement to plan and sustain their journey from origin to destination. In the community of Misha (SNNP), in 52 per cent of households with experience of migration, migrants followed the footsteps of a family member and in 82 per cent of households migration was financially supported by family, either through savings or sale of household's assets.

Nonetheless, the distance travelled, the multiple border crossings, the reliance on brokers and the switching of intermediaries along the way may expose migrants to numerous protection risks. Migrants are subject to deception, exploitation, ill treatment and even death. The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that they experienced severe lack of food, water or shelter (97%, 369 individuals) and/or suffered abuse, violence, assault or torture (71%, 270 individuals). Eighteen of them reported to have witnessed the death of fellow migrants – sometimes two or three people, and in one case, '15 out of a group of 60 people'. Several families interviewed in the context of Missing Migrant's project confirmed having lost at least one member along the Southern Route, suggesting that this route may have become more violent, exploitative and perilous.

42 The Eastern Route to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries via Djibouti (and Somalia) is considered to be one of the cheaper migration routes out of Ethiopia. According to the data collected in Obock and Bossaso the expected cost of the journey from Ethiopia to Saudi Arabia for first-time migrants cost an average of 795 USD. IOM, 2021a.

43 IOM, 2021c.

44 Estifanos and Zack, 2017.



“ My cousin Yosef was 18 years old when he died in Tanzania on the road to South Africa. He died in a truck because he could not breathe. I've heard of many people dying on the way to South Africa so I never want to go there.

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Project funded by the European Union
Project implemented by IOM