



ASSISTANCE TO VOLUNTARY AND HUMANITARIAN RETURN 2017/2019

Profiles of migrants assisted to return to their country of origin
West and Central Africa

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INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

This document presents an analysis of interviews conducted with all individuals assisted in their voluntary return by IOM between 2017 and 2019 (94,608) to one of the 23 countries covered by the West and Central Africa region (WCA). The analysis combines datasets from both **Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)** and **Voluntary Humanitarian returns (VHR)**.

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) : Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management.

AVRR programmes provide administrative, logistical and financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host/transit country and who decide to return to their country of origin.

The successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including the migrants, civil society and the governments in both host and transit countries and countries of origin. The partnerships created by IOM and a diverse range of national and international stakeholders are essential to the effective implementation of AVRR – from the return preparation to the reintegration stage.

For migrants who need to return home but lack the means to do so, IOM's AVRR programmes are often the only solution to their immediate plight. Beneficiaries of IOM's assistance include:

1. individuals whose application for asylum was rejected or withdrawn
2. stranded migrants
3. victims of trafficking, and
4. other vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied migrant children, or those with health-related needs.

Voluntary Humanitarian returns (VHR) : In February 2011, civil unrest in Libya rapidly evolved into an armed conflict which led to the crossing of Libyan borders by some 706,000 migrants. This outflow of people fleeing the violence represented one of the largest migration emergencies in modern history. It was not only composed of nationals settled in Libya and originating from neighbouring countries but as well as “Third Country Nationals” mainly in transit in Libya and who represented more than 120 nationalities and 45% of the overall migration population in the country.

Since the onset of the crisis, IOM's strategy was to support Member States protect their nationals by providing evacuation assistance to stranded migrants in Libya through its “Voluntary Humanitarian Returns” programme. IOM deemed necessary to adopt a new terminology from AVR to VHR to stress the humanitarian nature of this operation.

The **objective of this document** is to provide an overview of the profile of those assisted by IOM to return to their country of origin through AVRR and VHR programmes.

Information about the questionnaire and the applied **methodology** and **limitations** is at the end of the report.



ACRONYMS

AND COUNTRY CODES

ACRONYMS

AVRR
Assistance to Voluntary Return
and Reintegration

VHR
Voluntary Humanitarian Return

IOM
International Organization for
Migration

WCA
West and Central Africa

COUNTRY CODE

BEN	Benin	KWT	Kuwait
BFA	Burkina Faso	LBR	Liberia
CHE	Switzerland	LBY	Libya
CIV	Côte d'Ivoire	MLI	Mali
CMR	Cameroon	MRT	Mauritania
COG	Congo	NER	Niger
DEU	Germany	NGA	Nigeria
DZA	Algeria	SEN	Senegal
EGY	Egypt	SLE	Sierra Leone
GIN	Guinea	TCD	Chad
GMB	The Gambia	TGO	Togo
GNB	Guinea-Bissau	TUN	Tunis
ITA	Italy		



I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

1.1. TRENDS BY YEAR

Between 2017 and 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has organized the return of more than 94,600 nationals of West and Central African countries. Though most returns were organized from Niger and Libya, another 96 countries support these operations from Europe, North Africa, West and Central Africa, East Africa and many other regions around the globe.

More assistance to voluntary and humanitarian returns were organized in 2018 (39% of the 94,600) with a high number of return throughout 2018, however the peak of return took place in the fourth Quarter of 2017 with the expansion of voluntary and humanitarian returns from Libya (more than 13,000 in only 4 months).

VOLUNTARY AND HUMANITARIAN RETURNS BY YEAR:

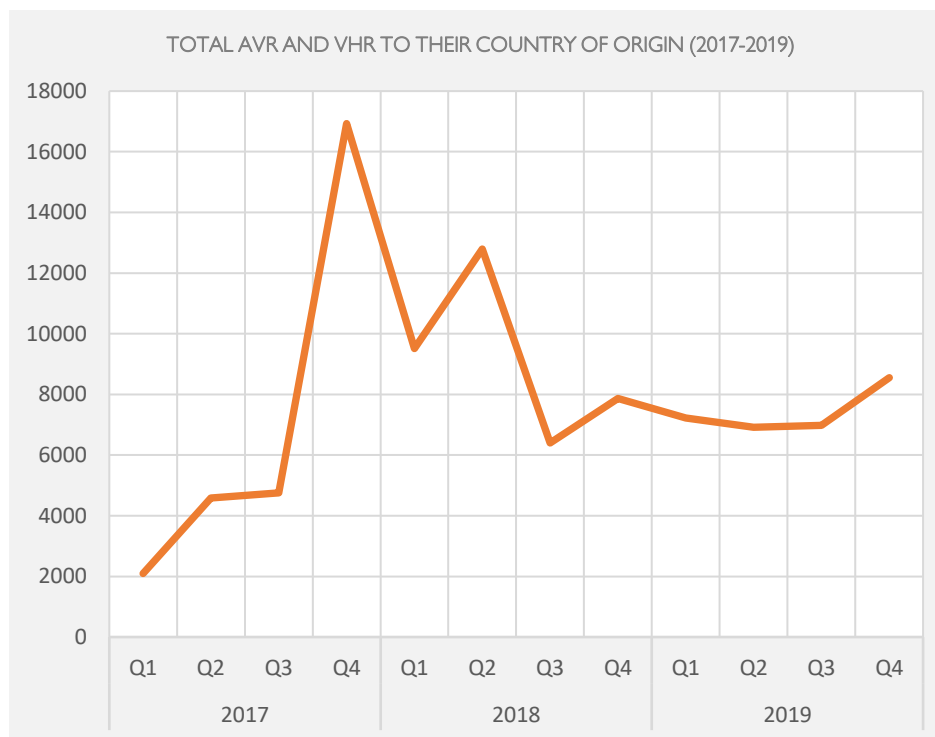
2017: 30% (28,361)

2018: 39% (36,578)

2019: 31% (29,669)

94,600

ASSISTED IN THEIR **RETURN** BY IOM TO
THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IN WEST AND
CENTRAL AFRICA

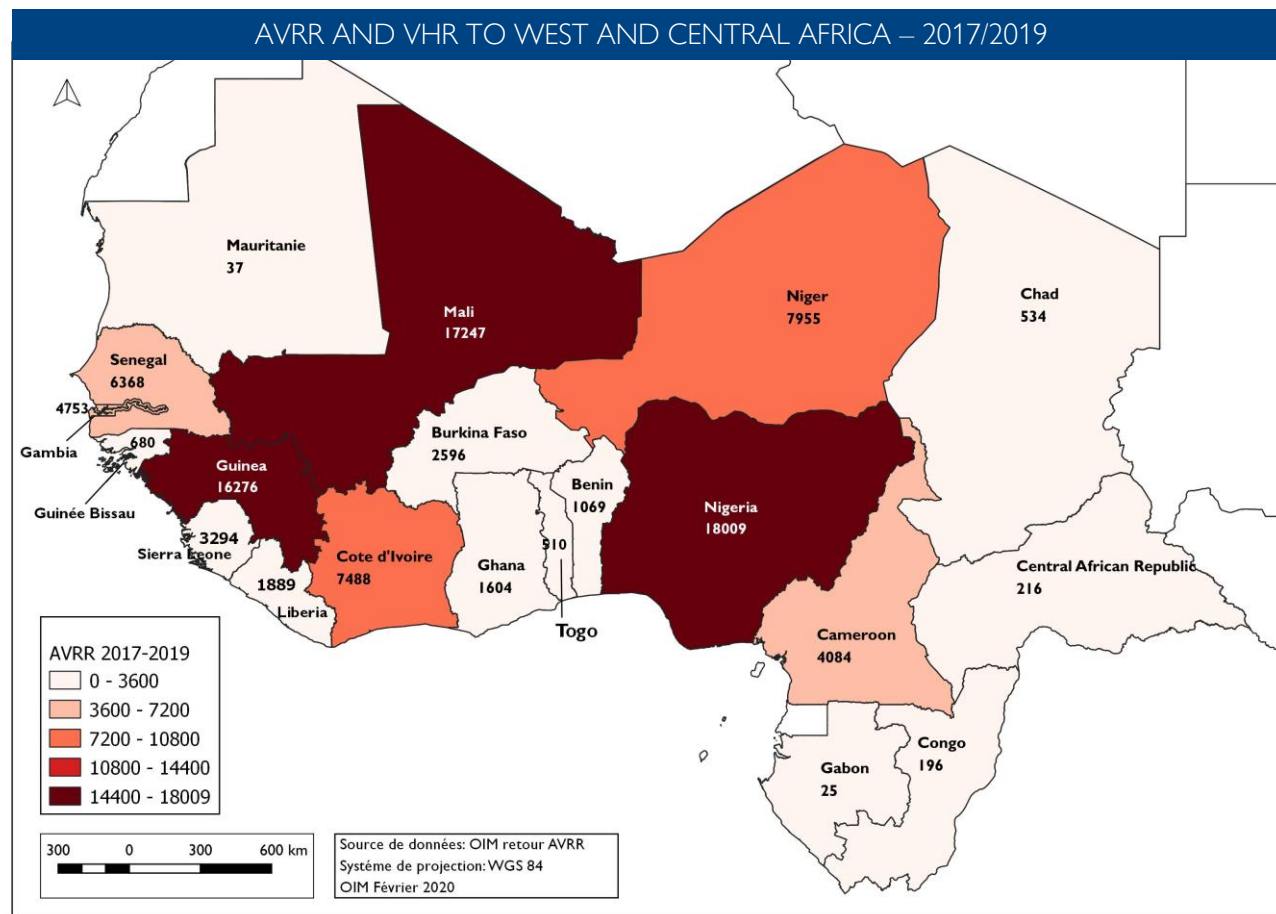
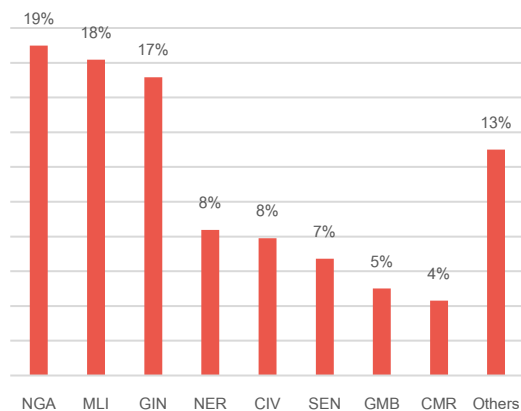


I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

1.2. BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Three countries received more than 54% of all AVRR and VHR to West and Central Africa in 2017-2019: Nigeria (17,800), Guinea (17,200), and Mali (16,000). In total, all 23 country offices covered by IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa assisted migrants to return.

TOTAL AVRR AND VHR ASSISTED BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (2017-2019)

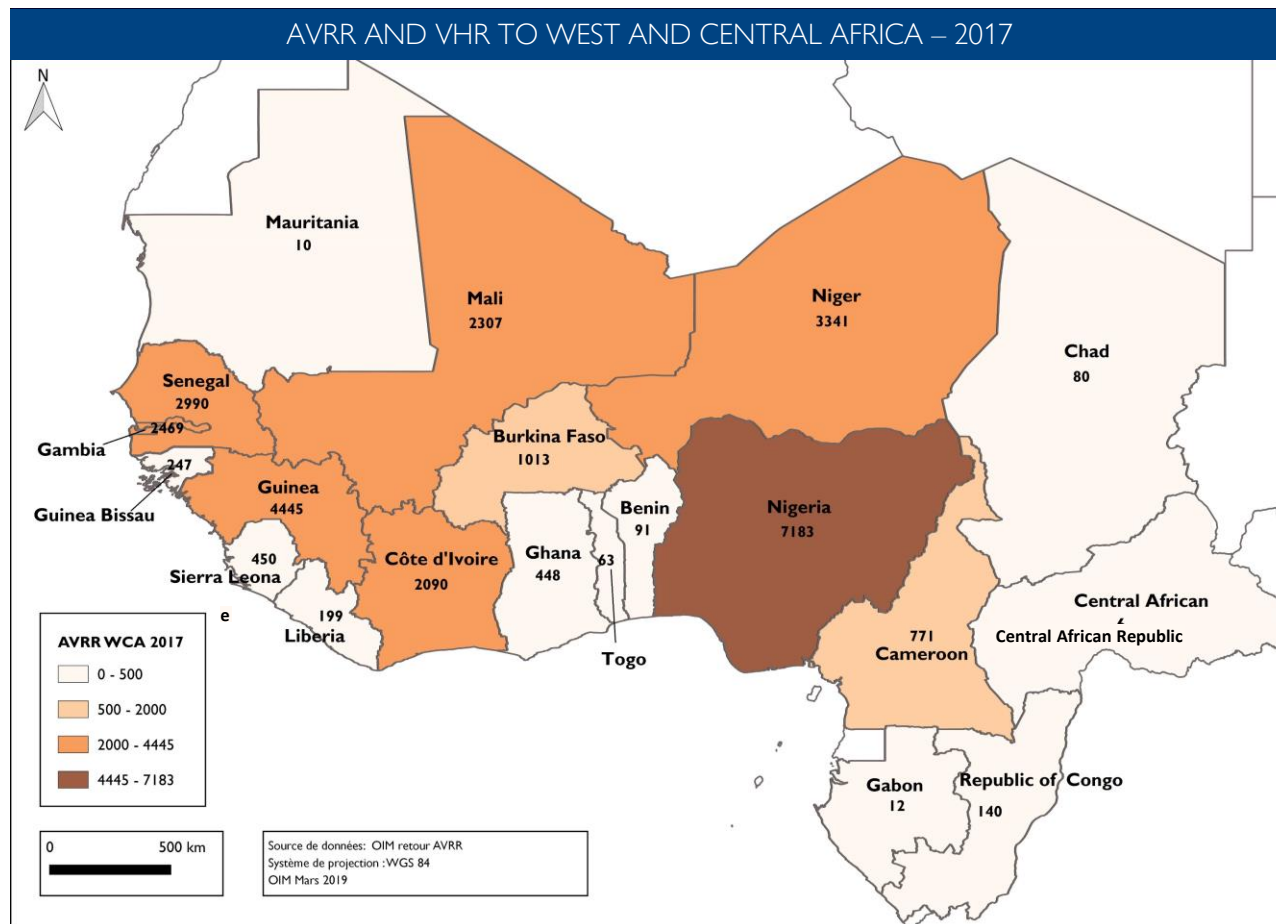
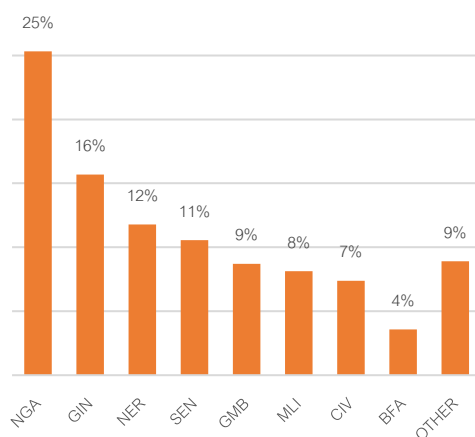


I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

1.3. BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN - 2017

In 2017, IOM has organized the return of more than 28,360 individuals of West and Central African countries. The map displays the main countries of origin (or in other words, countries of return). The main country of returns was Nigeria (7183) followed by Guinea (4445) and Niger (3341)

TOTAL AVRR AND VHR BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (2017)

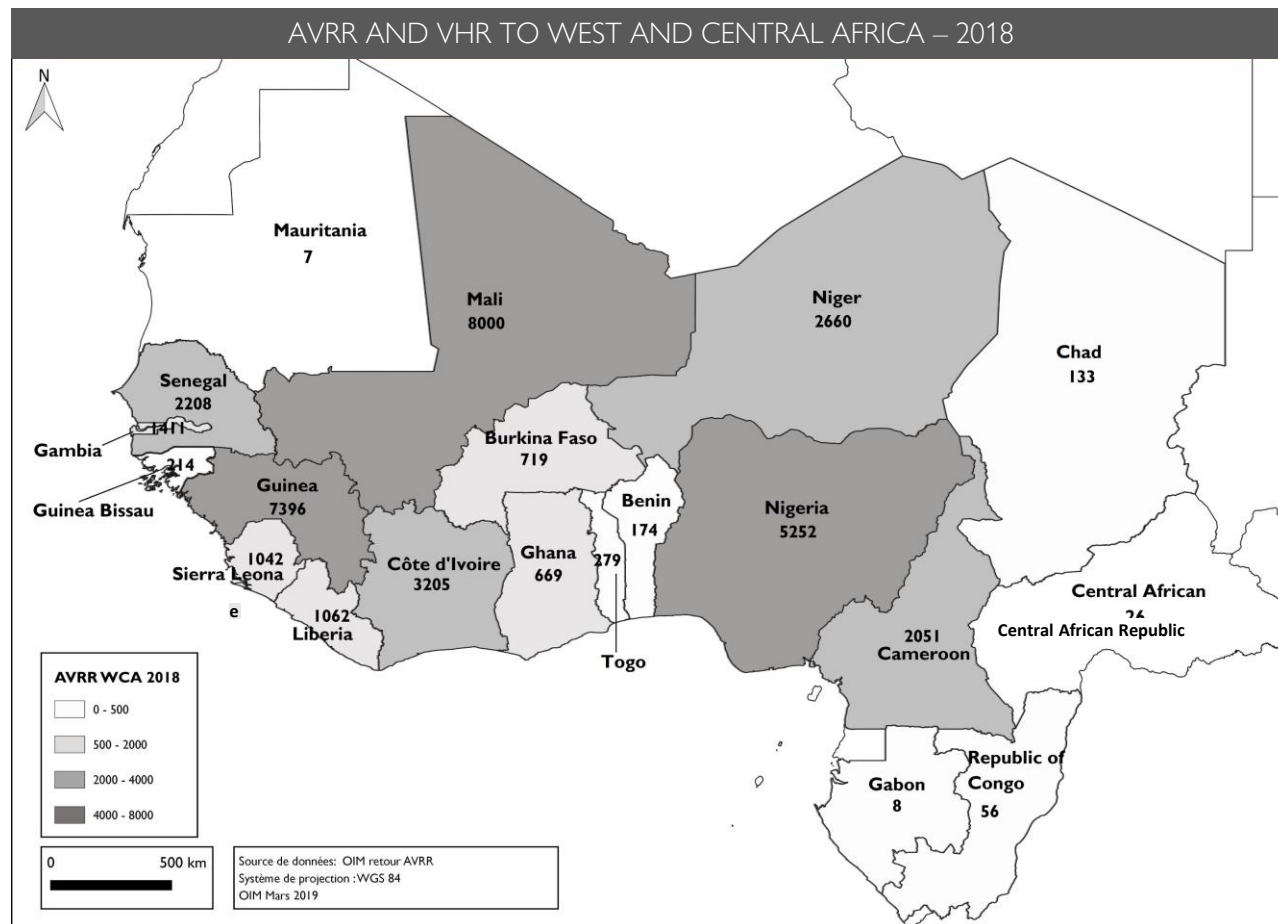
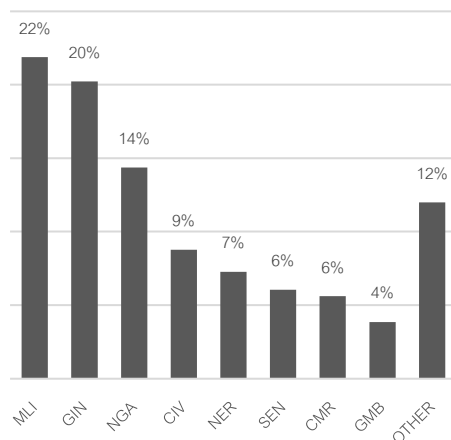


I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

1.4. BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN - 2018

In 2018, IOM has organized the return of more than 36,700 individuals of West and Central African countries. The map displays the main countries of origin (and therefore return). The main country of returns was Mali (8,000) followed by Guinea (7,396) and Nigeria (5,252).

TOTAL AVRR AND VHR BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (2018)

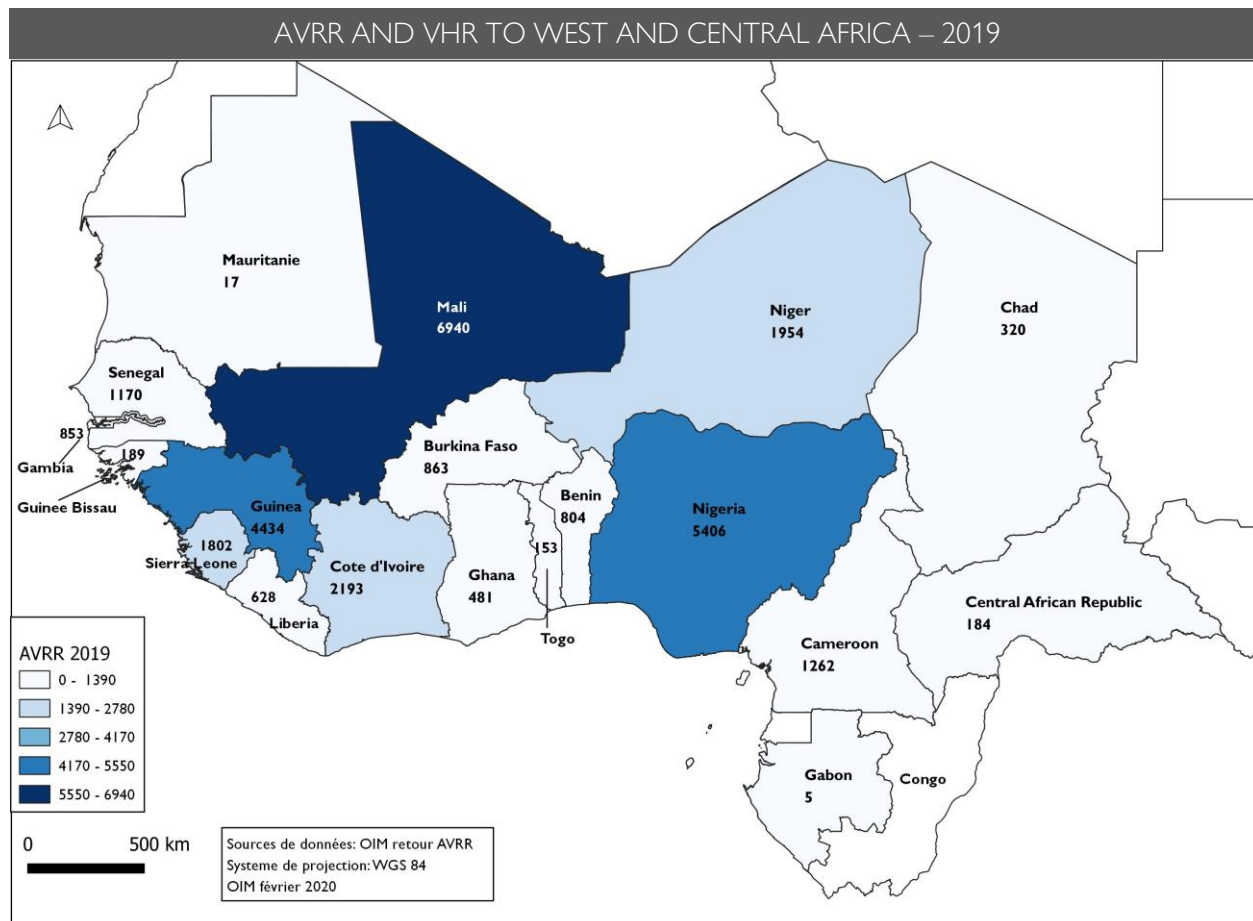
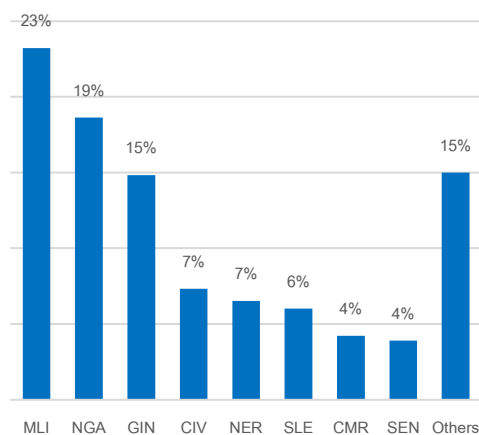


I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

1.4. BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN - 2019

In 2019, IOM has organized the return of more than 29,600 individuals of West and Central African countries. The map displays the main countries of origin (and therefore return). The main country of returns was Mali (6,940) followed by Nigeria (5,400) and Guinea (4,435)

TOTAL AVRR AND VHR BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (2019)



I. TOTAL FOR 2017-2019

1.5. Comparing 2017-2019

Trends over the past three years are showing significant differences which provide information on the state of both intra and inter-regional migration.

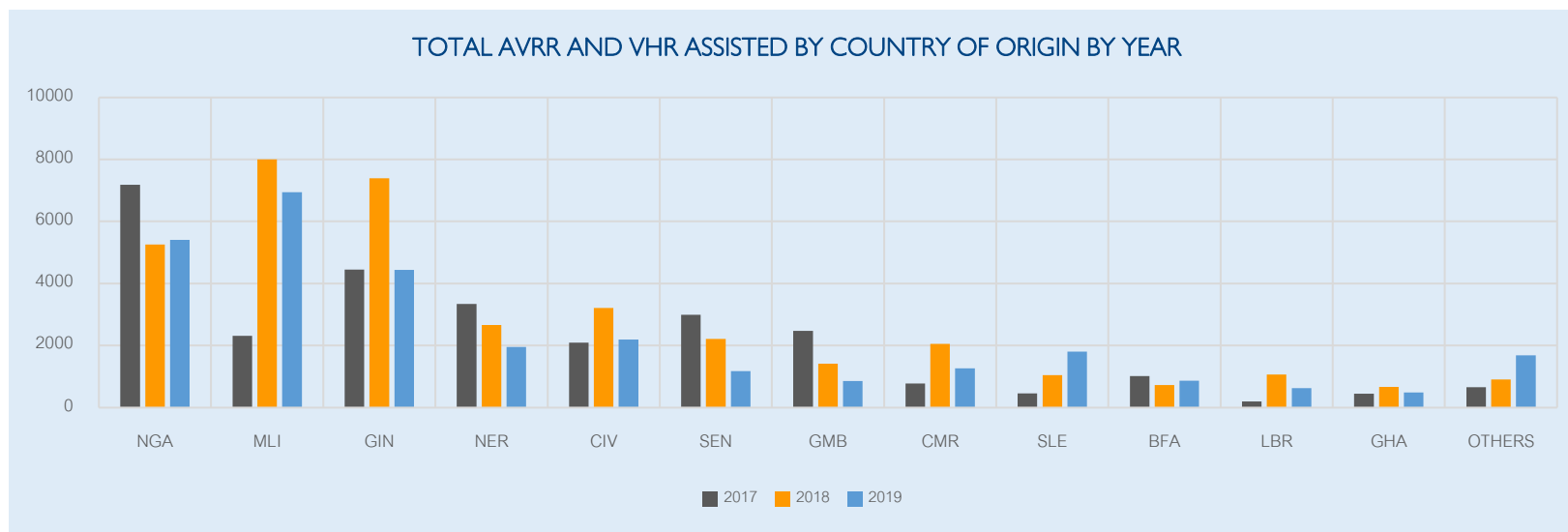
For example, in 2017, the assistance to voluntarily return provided to Nigerian nationals was the largest in the region. This is also to put in perspective with the arrivals in Europe in 2017. At that time, Nigeria was the top nationality of arrival in Italy.

In 2018, return assistance provided to Malian and Guinean nationals was the largest.

In 2019, the largest amount of return assistance were provided to Malian and Nigerian nationals

This may be linked to significant arrivals of Mali, Guinea nationals in Spain in 2018 (over 11,800) and 2019 (over 4,000) whereby nationals of both countries might have been encouraged by arrivals to Europe of friends or family to attempt similar travels.

Existing smuggling networks from those main countries and en-route might have also encouraged departure.



II. HOST COUNTRIES



II. HOST COUNTRIES

2.1. MAIN REGIONS AND HOST COUNTRIES

Of the 94,600 individuals assisted in their return by IOM to their country of origin in WCA, 53% (or 49,900) were assisted to return from a country in North Africa (mainly from Libya).

West and Central Africa was the second main region of return for WCA individuals assisted in their return (44%, or 42,000 individuals assisted from a country in the region), mainly from Niger.

The trend of returns from host countries is changing over years from North Africa to West and Central Africa with WCA being the region the highest number of returns in 2019

Returns from Europe represent a bit more than 2% of the total number of returns organized by IOM in 2017 and 2019

Main host countries of destination (countries that assisted migrants in the return) in 2017-2019 were Libya (41,400) followed by Niger (36,900).

94,600

INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED IN THEIR RETURN
BY IOM TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

49,900

ASSISTED FROM
NORTH AFRICA (53%)

42,000

ASSISTED FROM WEST AND
CENTRAL AFRICA (44%)

2,200

ASSISTED FROM
EUROPE (2%)

500

ASSISTED FROM
OTHER CONTINENTS (1%)

TOP COUNTRIES

LIBYA	NIGER	MOROCCO	MALI
41,400	36,900	3,990	3,240

II. HOST COUNTRIES

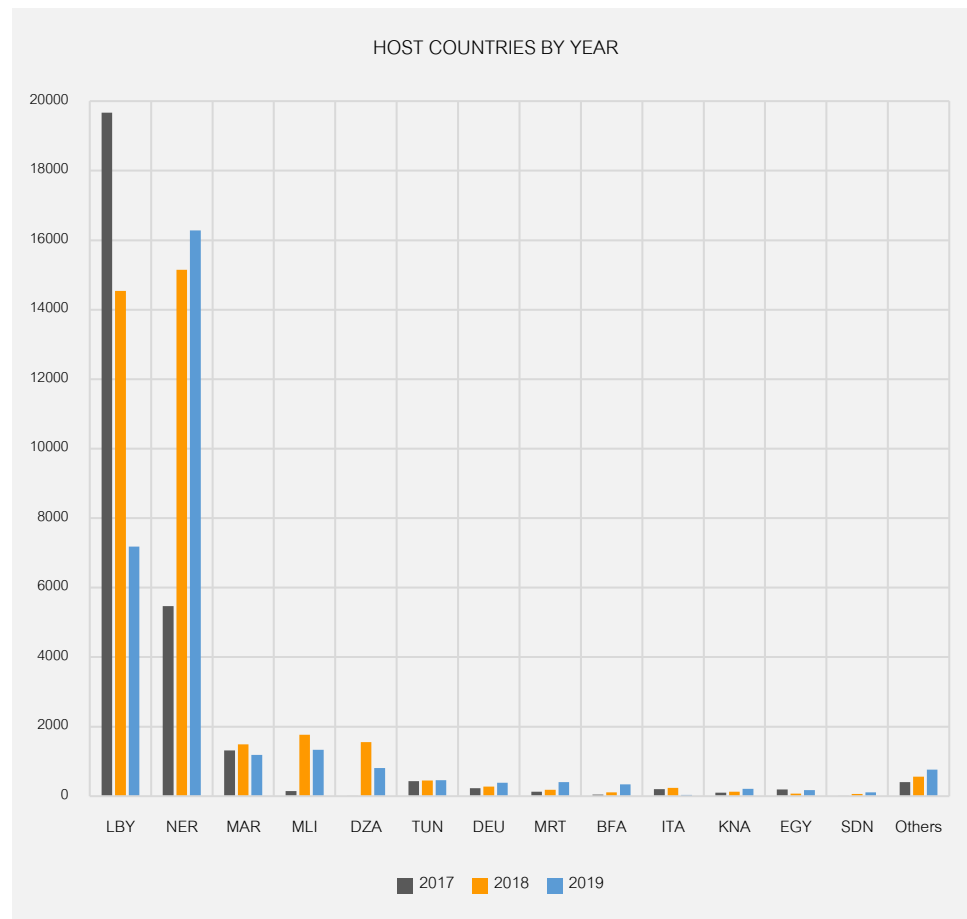
2.2. HOST COUNTRIES BY YEAR

The main host country has changed between 2017 and 2018. In 2017, the main host country was Libya (nearly 20,000 cases). In 2018, Niger became the main host country (over 15,160 cases). This remains unchanged in 2019 with Niger as the main host country (over 16,280 cases)

Two countries have seen significant increase in the number of returns in 2019 compared with 2018: Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

TOP HOST COUNTRIES 2017-2019

- LIBYA 41,400
- NIGER 36,900
- MOROCCO 3,990
- MALI 3,240
- ALGERIA 2,370
- TUNISIA 1,330
- GERMANY 895
- MAURITANIA 715
- BURKINA FASO 490



II. HOST COUNTRIES

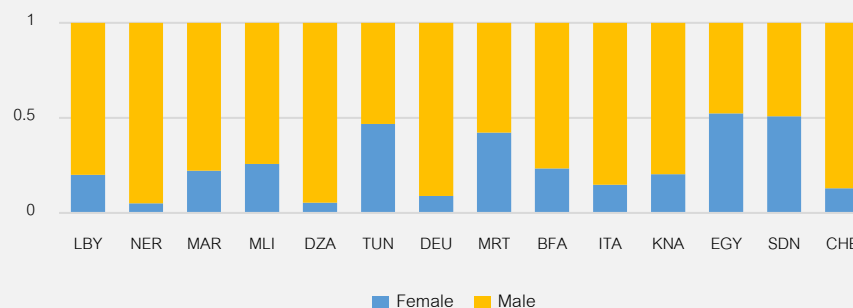
2.3. HOST COUNTRIES BY GENDER AND AGE

Host countries have a very different proportion of female and male from West and Central Africa in their AVRR and VHR caseload from 2017-2019.

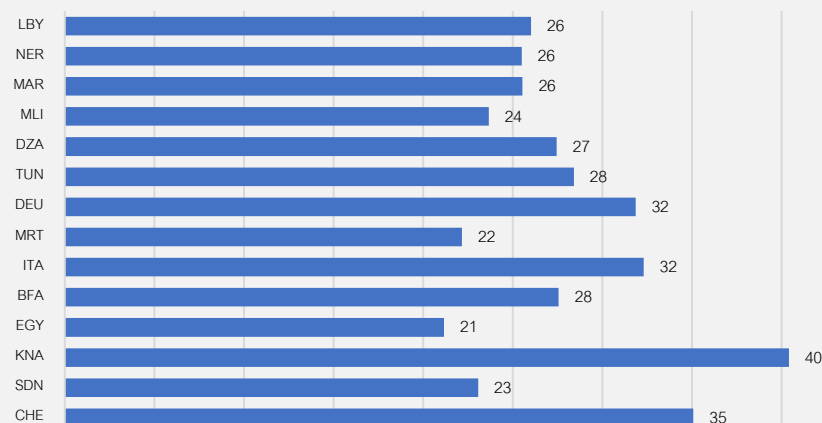
If AVRR and VHR assisted to return from Algeria, Niger, Germany, Switzerland are in vast majority males (94% for Algeria, 95% for Niger), other countries are, on the contrary, displaying high proportion of female among AVRR and VHR from the region: Egypt (53%) and Tunisia (47%). Return assistances from countries like Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Comoros, Israel and Iraq, were 100% women even though the total caseload from these countries is relatively low. Variation in gender distribution is largely due to different type of migration. Main destinations for domestic work and family migration, in which women from the WCA region engage in large part, are found in the Arabic Peninsula. .

The age variable is also changing quite a lot based on the host country. Egypt and Mauritania (both countries with a high proportion of women among the AVRR caseload from West and Central Africa), have, on average, the youngest AVRR from WCA. On average, AVRR from WCA supported in Egypt and Mauritania are respectively 22 and 21 years old. On the contrary, AVRR assisted to return to WCA from Europe (Germany, Italy, Switzerland) are all on average above 30.

AVRR AND VHR GENDER DISTRIBUTION BY HOST COUNTRY (2017-2019)



AVERAGE AGE BY HOST COUNTRY (2017-2019)



III. GENDER AND AGE



III. GENDER AND AGE

3.1 GENDER

Every year between 2017 and 2019, more than 4,000 women were assisted in their return by IOM back to their country of origin in West and Central Africa, representing 15% of the total AVRR and VHR caseload in 2017-2019.

In term of variation of the proportion of women among AVRR and VHR by country, the main decrease from 2017 to 2018 is identified in Benin (women represented 31% of the total caseload in 2017 against 12% of the caseload in 2018)..

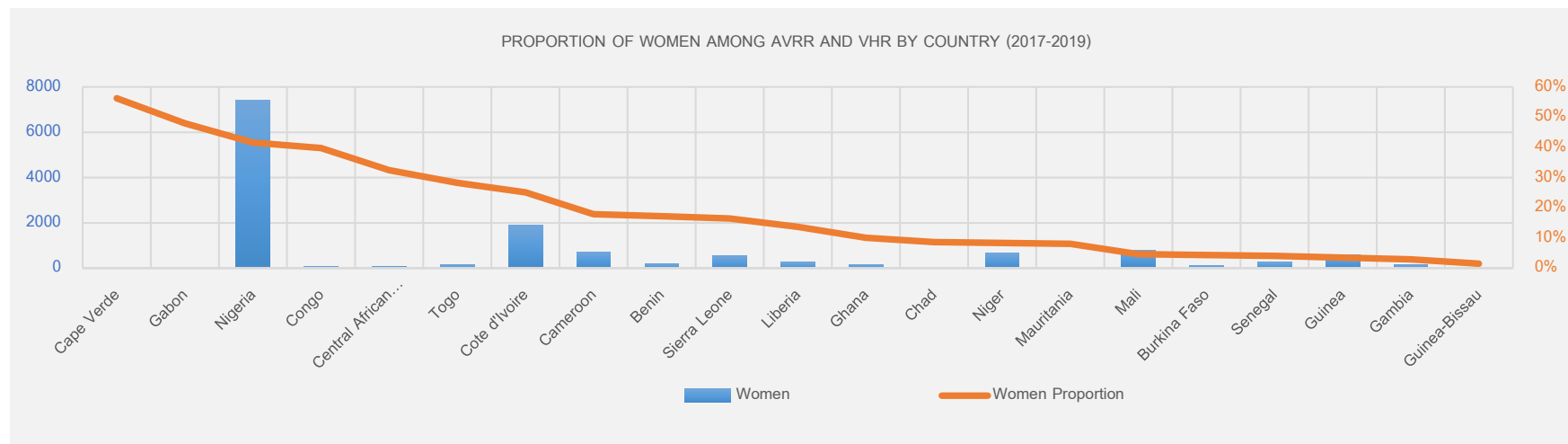
The main increase in the proportion of women among AVRR is in Nigeria from 40% in 2018 to 44% in 2019. Within the top three countries of origin for the number of returns, Nigeria has the highest proportion of women (42%) among the returnees., representing more than 53% of the total number of women returnees (14,100) in the region between 2017 and 2019.

15% FEMALE MALE **85%**

2017 **17%** FEMALE MALE **83%**

2018 **13%** FEMALE MALE **87%**

2019 **16%** FEMALE MALE **84%**



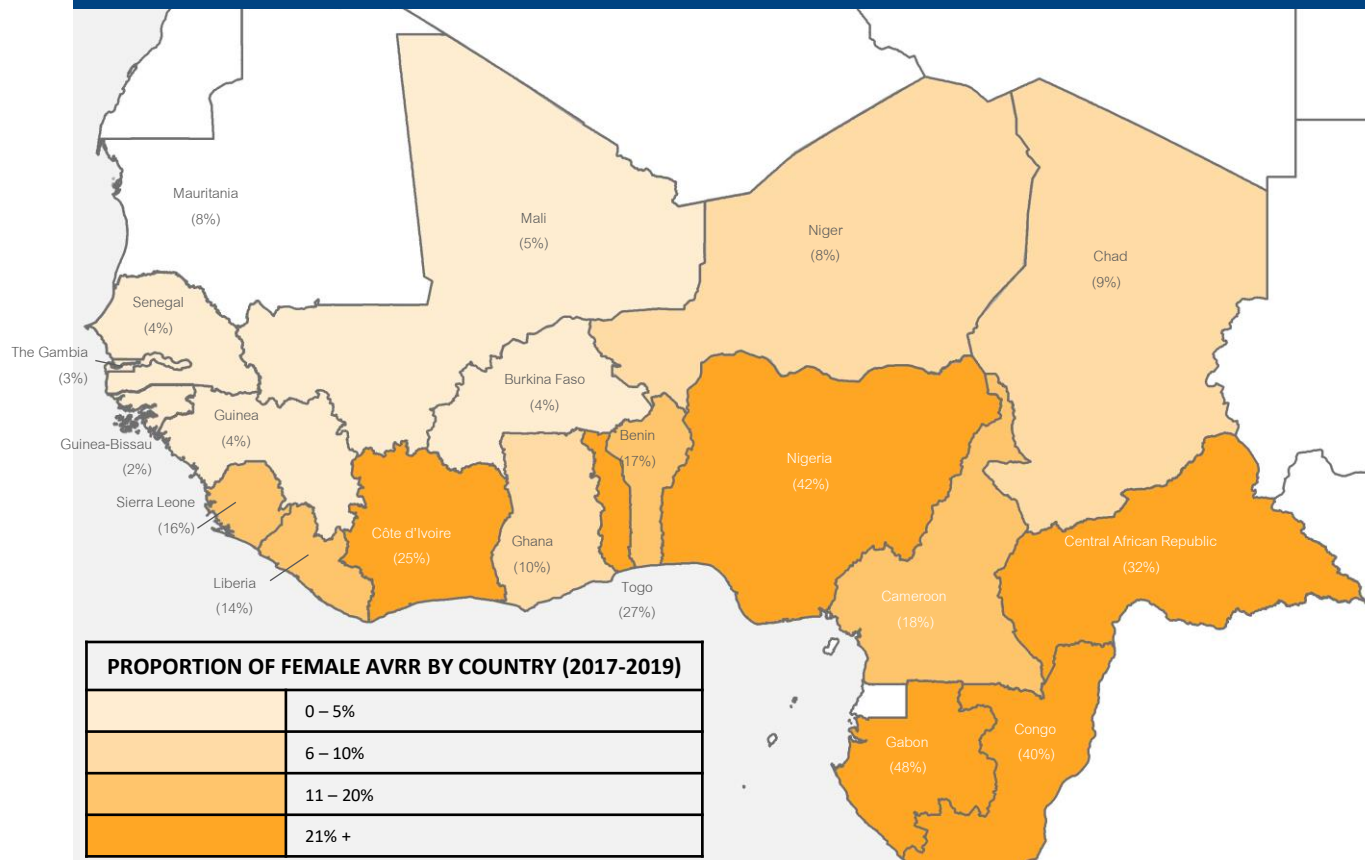
III. GENDER AND AGE

3.2. GENDER BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The highest proportion of women in the total caseload of AVRR and VHR is identified in Nigeria, Gabon and in the Republic of Congo (though in a much smaller proportion for the last two countries mentioned). Côte d'Ivoire also shows a significant proportion of female assisted in their return.

The feminization of migration in Nigeria may be explained by multiple underlying or conjunctural factors including poverty, cultural approach to migration among the community and the family, strong trafficking networks, and facility to access certain visa.

PROPORTION OF FEMALES AMONG AVRRS AND VHRS TO WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA – 2017-2019

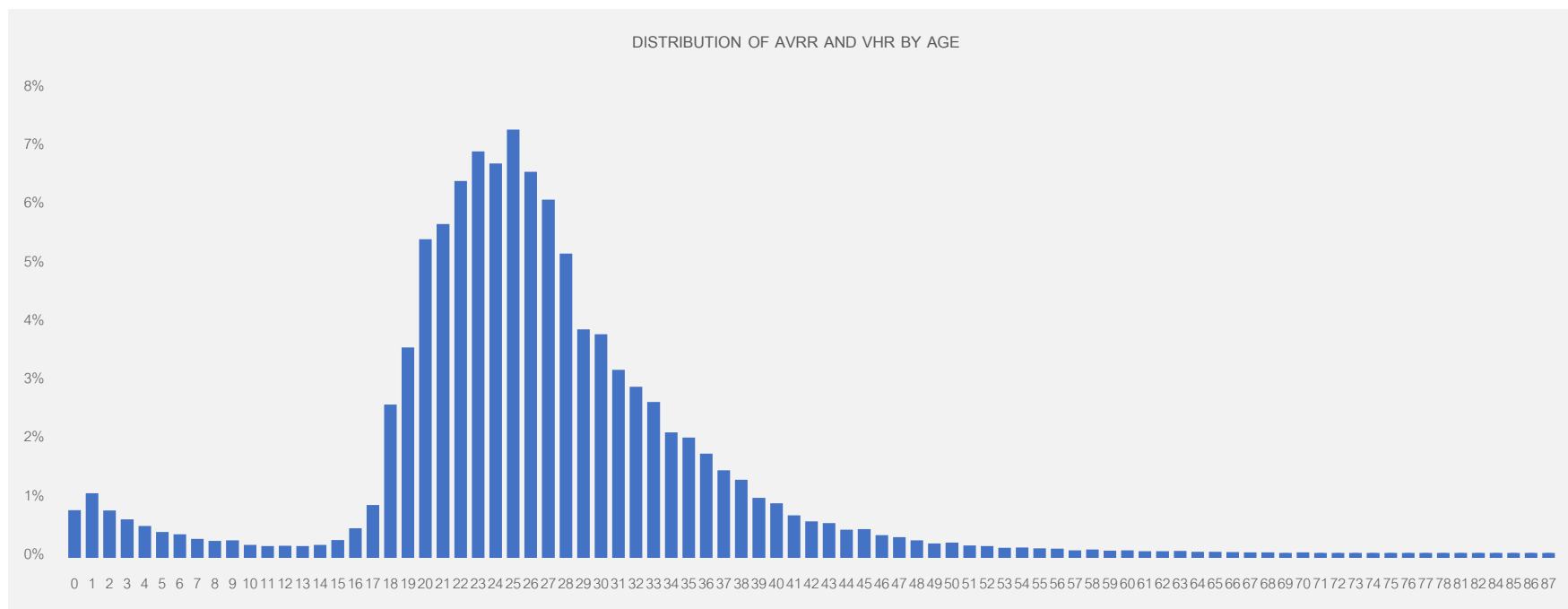


III. GENDER AND AGE

3.3. AGE BY YEAR

On average, the individuals assisted in their return by IOM were 26 years old at the time of the return. Below chart shows the distribution by age (min: 0, max: 87, mode: 25). 7% of individuals assisted were under 18, 44% between 18 and 25 years old and 38% between 26 and 35 years old. The remaining 11% were 36 years old and above

26 AVERAGE AGE

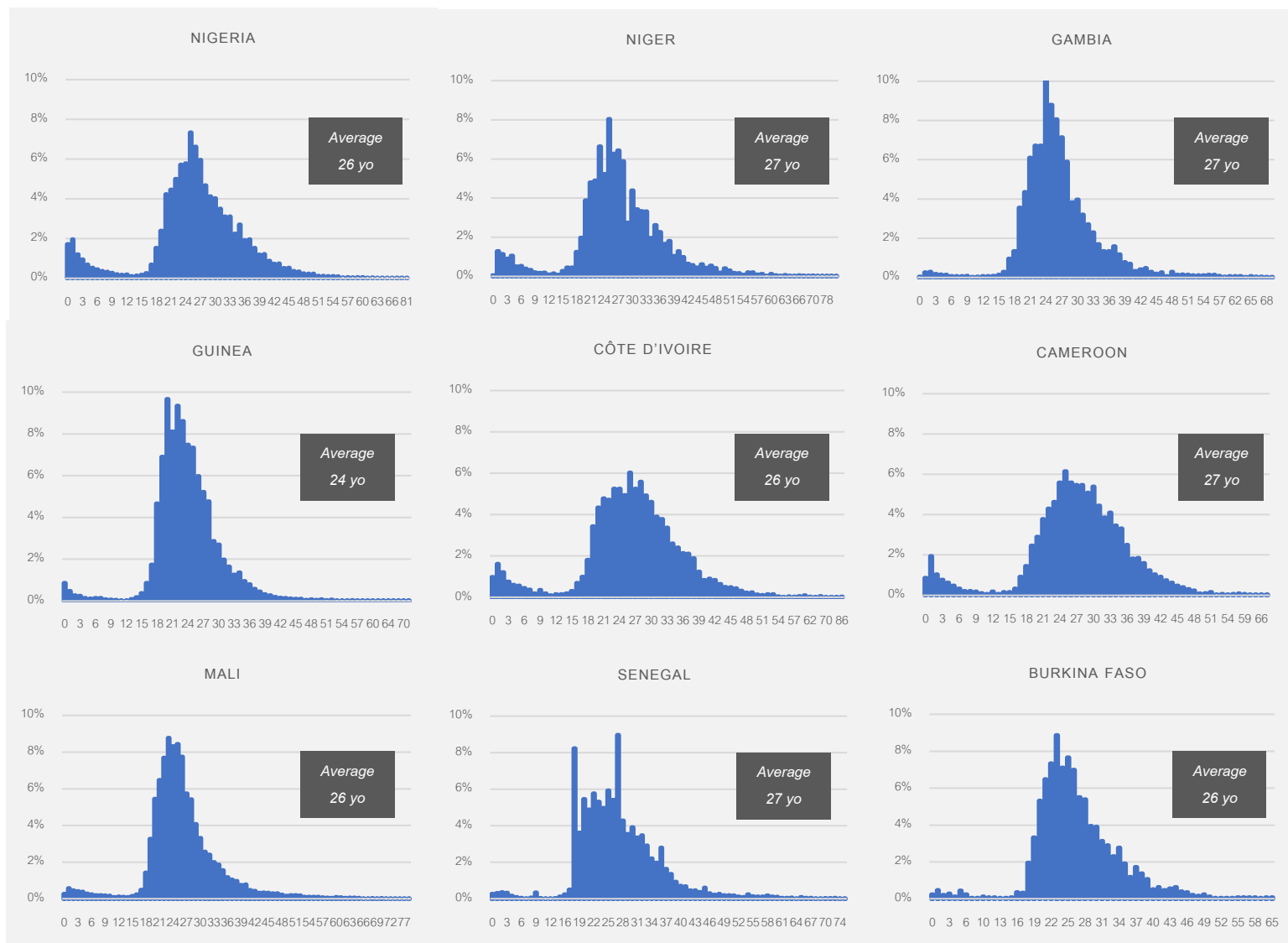


III. GENDER AND AGE

3.4. AGE DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

This page presents the age pyramids of the main countries of origin of AVRR and VHR assisted by IOM in 2017 and 2019.

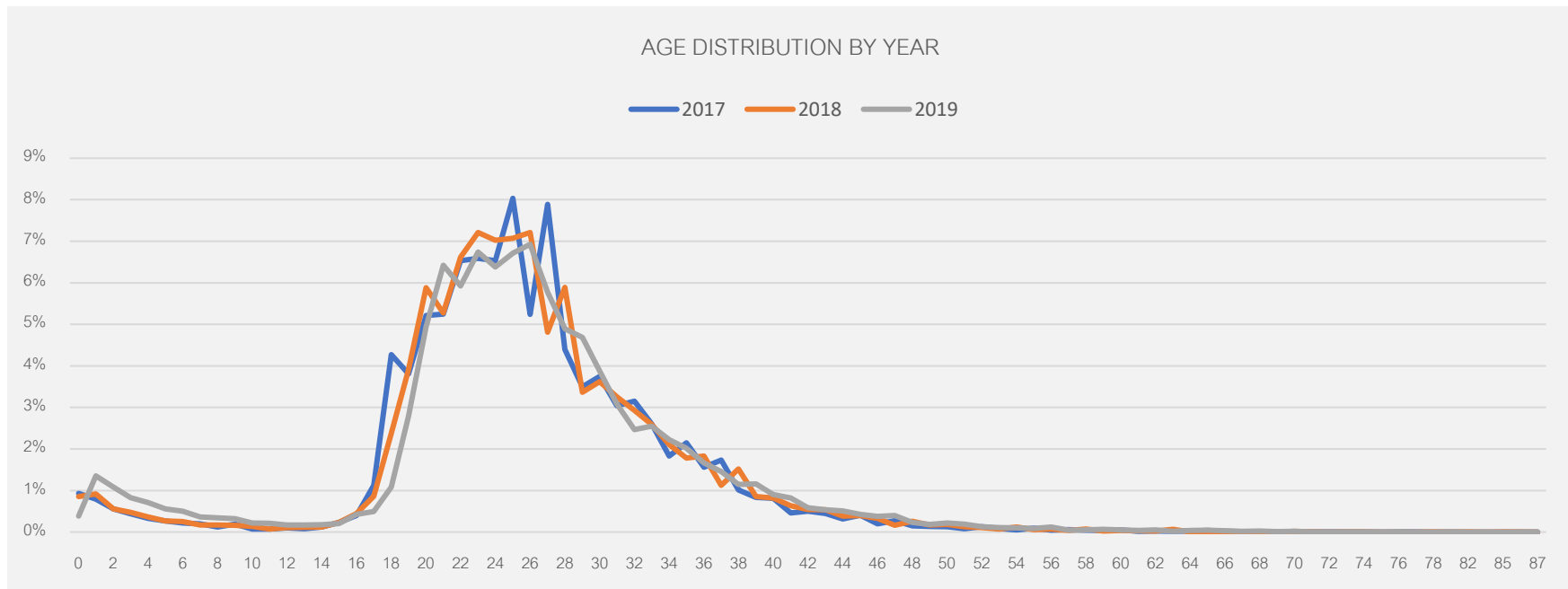
The shape of the Guinea chart displays a particularly young population (24 years old and with the mode, most frequent value, being 20 years old), while the shape of the age pyramid in Senegal present an older population (average above 27 with the mode at 27 years old).



III. GENDER AND AGE

3.5. AGE – COMPARING 2017 AND 2019

A comparison of the age distribution by year (2017-2019) doesn't show much differences between 2017 and 2019. Migrants assisted in their voluntary or humanitarian return in 2019 are slightly older (26 years old on average) than those assisted in their return in 2017 and 2018 (25,8 years old for AVRR and VHR in 2017 and 25,97 years old in 2018).



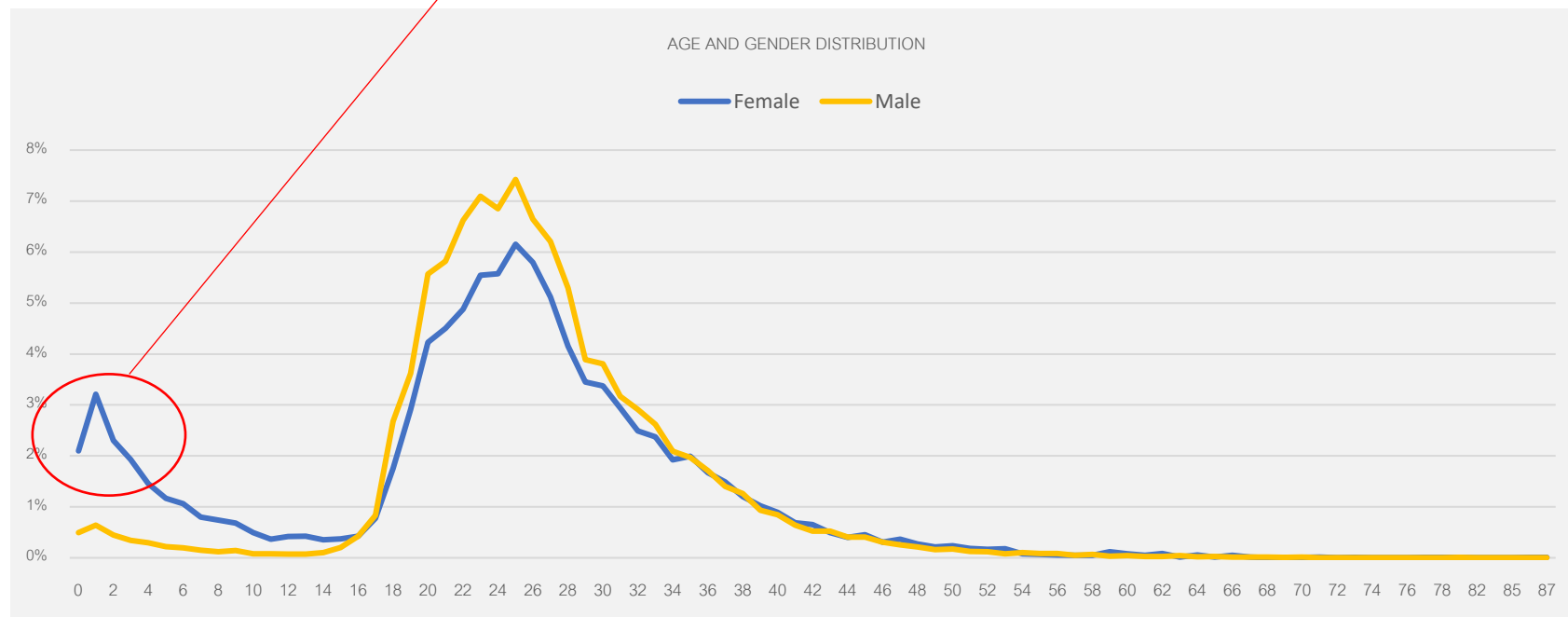
III. GENDER AND AGE

3.6. GENDER & AGE

When crossing age and gender variables together, two main results are visible:

1. Women supported to return are on average younger (24 years old) than men (26 years old).
2. There's a peak of female assisted age 0 to 5.

FEMALE 24 years old
MALE 26



IV. REGIONS OF ORIGIN



V. REGIONS OF ORIGIN

4.1. REGIONS OF ORIGIN FOR ASSISTED INDIVIDUALS

Top regions of origin are based on places of origin as declared by migrants assisted by IOM in 2017 and 2019. Over the past three years, Bamako in Mali, Edo State in Nigeria, and Tahoua in Niger are the three main regions of origin.

Evolution of regions of origin from 2017 to 2019 might be a good indication of changes in migration patterns. In 2017, the top three regions of origin were: Edo State (Nigeria), Tahoua (Niger) and Delta State (Nigeria). In 2018, the top 3 were Bamako (Mali), Lagunes (Côte d'Ivoire) and Edo State (Nigeria). In 2019, the top 3 were: Kayes (Mali), Bamako (Mali) and Nzerekore (Guinea Conakry)

However, within each of the top three countries, the regions of return were not documented for several returnees (34% in Mali, 11% in Guinea Conakry and 5% in Nigeria) for logistic reasons linked to the high number of returns within a short period. The number of returnees with not documented information on their region of origin represent 21% of the total number of return assistance provided between 2017 and 2019 in the region

TOP REGIONS 2017-2019	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP REGIONS 2017-2018	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP REGIONS 2017	% of AVRR/VHR
EDO	9%	EDO	10%	EDO	14%
BAMAKO	7%	BAMAKO	9%	TAHOUA	9%
TAHOUA	6%	TAHOUA	6%	DELTA	5%
ABIDJAN	5%	ABIDJAN	4%	BRIKAMA LGA	4%
DELTA	3%	DELTA	3%	KOLDA	3%
DOUALA	3%	KAYES	3%	BAMAKO	3%
BEYLA	3%	BRIKAMA LGA	3%	KAYES	2%
BRIKAMA LGA	3%	KOLDA	3%	CENTRE-EST	2%
KOLDA	2%	MONROVIA	2%	TILLABERI	2%
CENTRE-EST	2%	DOUALA	2%	KANIFING	2%

IV. REGIONS OF ORIGIN

4.2. REGIONS OF ORIGIN

Top regions are displayed in this map (top 45 regions of origin of AVRR and VHR in 2017 and 2019). Top regions of origin of migrants are displayed on the tables below.

BURKINA FASO	
Centre-Est	63%
Centre	12%
Centre-Sud	6%

CHAD	
Ndjamena	41%
Abeche	28%
Dourbali	9%

GAMBIA (The)	
Western	63%
Banjul	19%
Upper River	8%

GUINEA	
Nzerekore	21%
Mamou	17%
Kindia	13%

MALI	
Bamako	36%
Kayes	17%
Koulikoro	6%

NIGERIA	
Edo	38%
Delta	13%
Ogun	6%

CAMEROON	
Yaounde	45%
douala	31%
Centre	7%

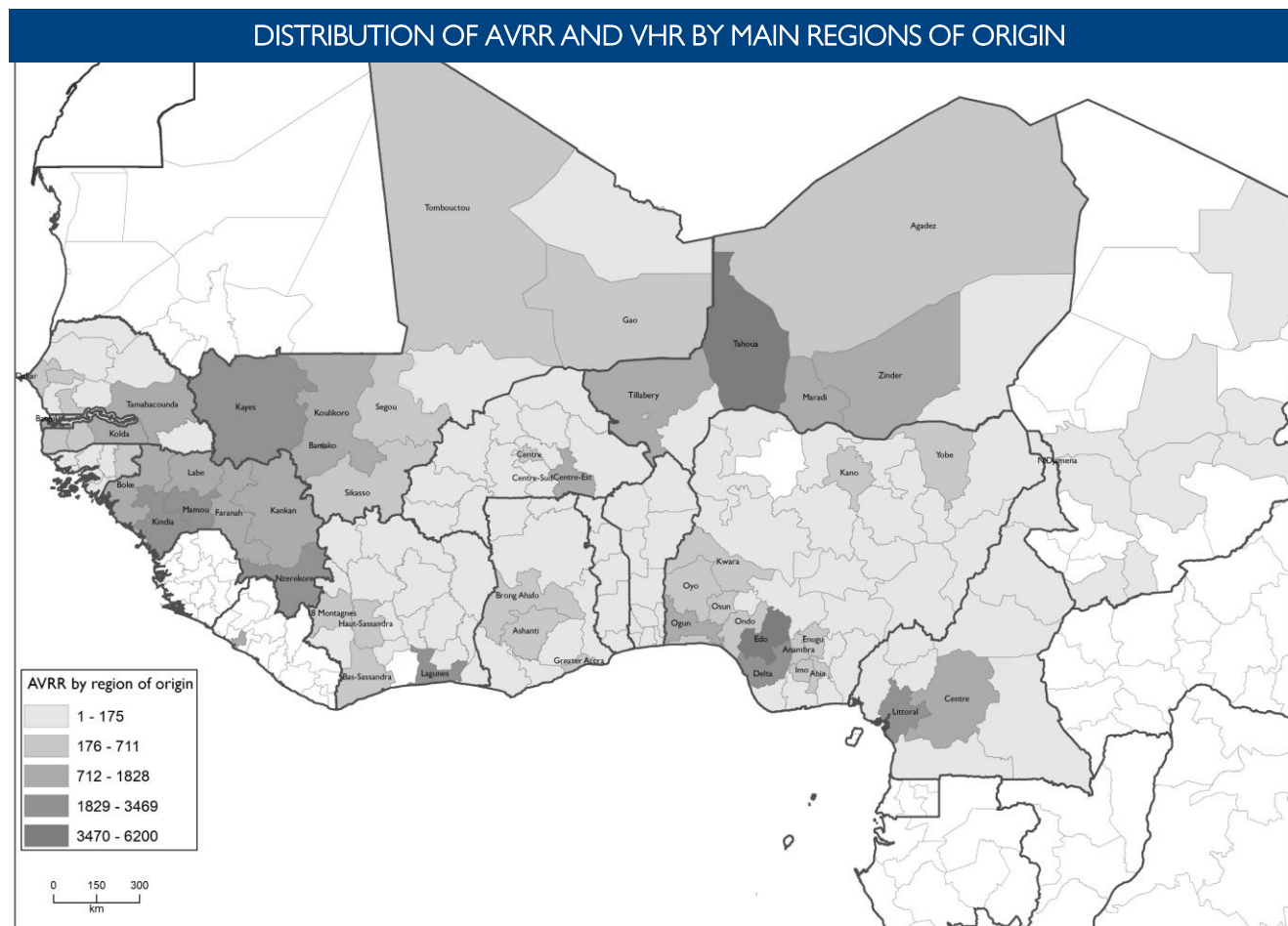
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	
Abidjan	74%
Daloa	4%
San Pedro	4%

GHANA	
Brong Ahafo	27%
Ashanti	20%
Grt Accra Reg	18%

GUINEA-BISSAU	
Gabu	60%
Bafata	18%
Oio	8%

NIGER	
Tahoua	55%
Maradi	12%
Zinder	12%

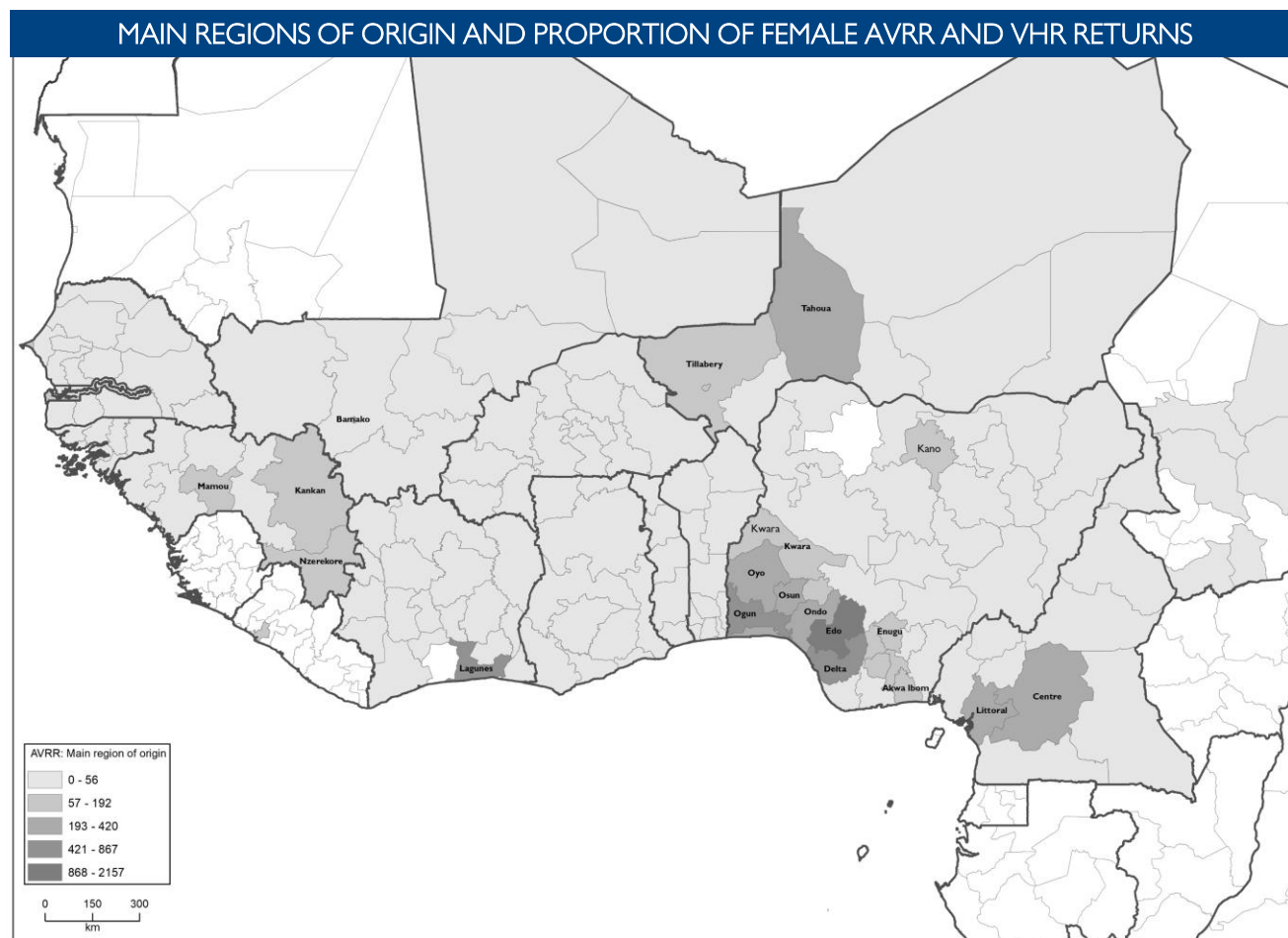
SENEGAL	
Kolda	27%
Dakar	15%
Tambacounda	14%



IV. REGIONS OF ORIGIN

4.3. REGIONS OF ORIGIN BY GENDER

Main regions of origins of female assisted to return by IOM are located in Nigeria (Edo, Delta, Ogun, Imo, Oyo) and Côte d'Ivoire (Lagune) as well as Cameroon (Littoral, Centre)



V. PROTECTION CASES



V. PROTECTION CASES

5.1. PROTECTION CASE OVERVIEW

Data collected based on discussions upon departure or return with the assisted migrants shows that nearly 15% had been temporarily detained during their migration experience. Nigerian nationals were the main nationality detained followed by Ivoirians and Burkinabe nationals. About 74% of returnees (2017-2019) temporarily detained were men and 92% of them are within 18 and 45 years old.

Nearly 1% of all migrants assisted to return were unaccompanied minors. These are mainly nationals from Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Guinea Conakry returning from Libya and Niger.

The main regions of origin for unaccompanied children include Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), Edo (Nigeria), Mamou (Guinea Conakry), Douala (Cameroon), and Bamako (Mali)

2% of total individuals assisted in 2017-2019 indicated being victim of trafficking and 3% experienced some form of exploitation during their journey or stay. About 82% of reported victims of trafficking are women and nearly 90% are within 18 and 35 years old.

The main regions of return for reported victims of trafficking include Edo, Delta, and Ogun in Nigeria and Abidjan in Cote d'Ivoire

620

**UNACCOMPANIED
MINORS (1%)**

1,880

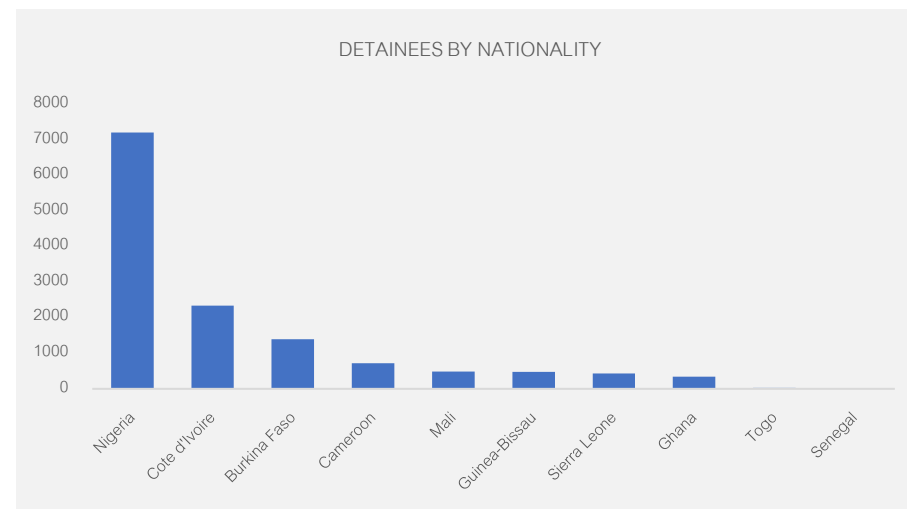
**VICTIMS OF EXPLOITATION OR
ABUSE (3%)**

13,400

**TEMPORARILY
DETAINED (19%)**

1,550

**VICTIMS OF
TRAFFICKING (2%)**



METHODOLOGY

This report displays analysis conducted thanks to data collected on individuals that IOM assisted in their voluntary or humanitarian returns.

METHODOLOGY

Data is being collected by enumerators upon departure and arrival of each individual participating to IOM voluntary or humanitarian return programmes.

All data is then being entered and stocked by each host and origins countries. The regional office for West and Central Africa works on a consolidated overview every month.

In case of protection concerns (victims of trafficking or abuse), returnees are going through specific discussions with medical and psychosocial professionals.

LIMITATIONS

Data displayed in this report presents the result of more than 94,600 migrants assisted in their voluntary return by IOM. It's therefore a particularly strong representation of inter-regional movements.

However, certain limitations should apply to these datasets. It does not represent accurately all movements and migration from the West and Central Africa region, it only represent migration that was attempted by those voluntarily assisted to return by IOM. Therefore, although the dataset allows for a

certain confidence in the data given it's width, it should not be considered as representative of all migration movements from the region.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The framework for assisted voluntary return and reintegration (hereinafter referred to as the Framework) builds on IOM's long-standing contribution in this area and marks an important milestone in the Organization's engagement in AVRR. Designed to guide both policymakers and AVRR practitioners, the scope of the Framework goes beyond IOM's own engagement.

Considering the diversity of AVRR projects' eligibility criteria, available resources, national policies, implementation partners and operational contexts, the Framework proposes a road map to address voluntary return and reintegration in a holistic way – one that responds to the needs of the individual returnees, the needs of the communities to which they return and the priorities of concerned governments, calling for the adoption of coordinated measures, policies, and practices between stakeholders responsible for migration management and development at the international, national and local levels.

https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/a_framework_for_avrr_online_pdf_optimized_20181112.pdf





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