

# ASSISTANCE TO VOLUNTARY AND HUMANITARIAN RETURN

Jan – Jun 2020



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 in the first semester of 2020 (8,260) 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 individuals whose application for asylum was rejected or withdrawn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

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





I. TOTAL FOR 2020 (Jan – Jun)

# I. TOTAL FOR 2020

## 1.1. TRENDS IN 2020

During the first semester of 2020, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has organized the return of more than 8,200 nationals of West and Central African countries. Though most returns were organized from Niger (71%), another 40 countries support these operations from Europe, North Africa, West and Central Africa, East Africa and many other regions around the globe.

There was a significant decrease of returns during the first six months of 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019 with over 14,100 returns, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, resulting in border closures and other mobility restriction in West and Central Africa in March 2020.

No return assistance was registered in April 2020 but AVRR and VHR support restarted in May 2020 as a result of a good collaboration between IOM and Governments in host countries and countries of origin

### VOLUNTARY AND HUMANITARIAN RETURNS BY MONTH IN 2020:

January: 28% (2,325)

February: 42% (3,447)

March: 22% (1,780)

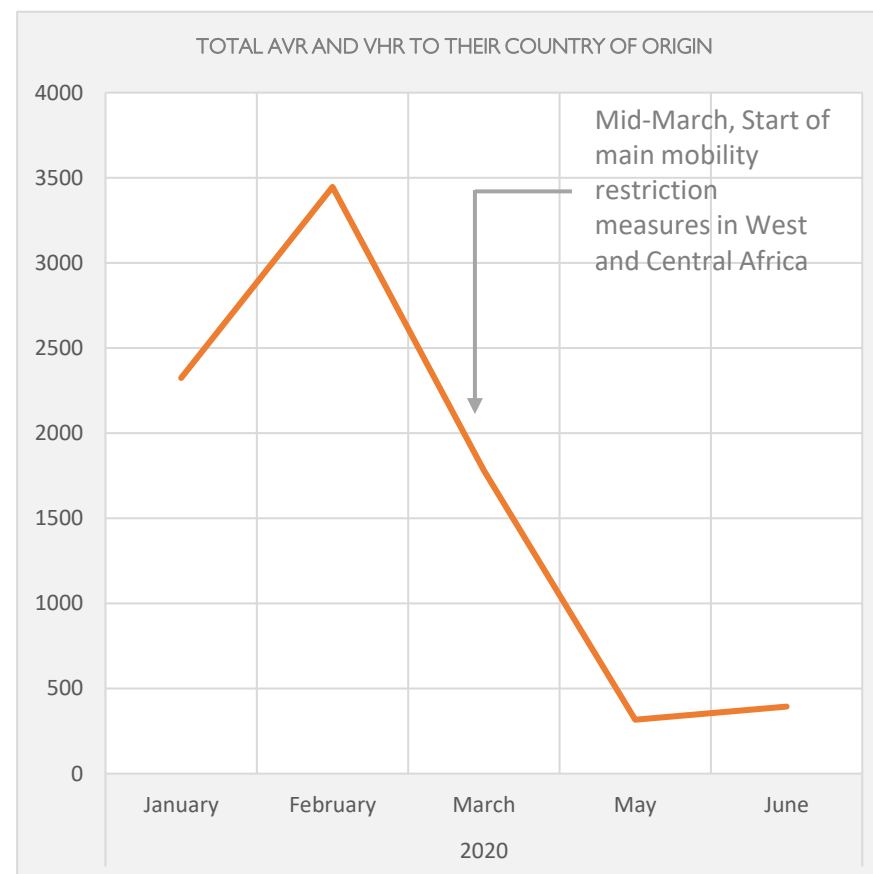
April: 0

May: 4% (316)

June: 5% (394)

# 8,262

ASSISTED IN THEIR RETURN BY IOM TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA IN 2020 (JAN-JUN)

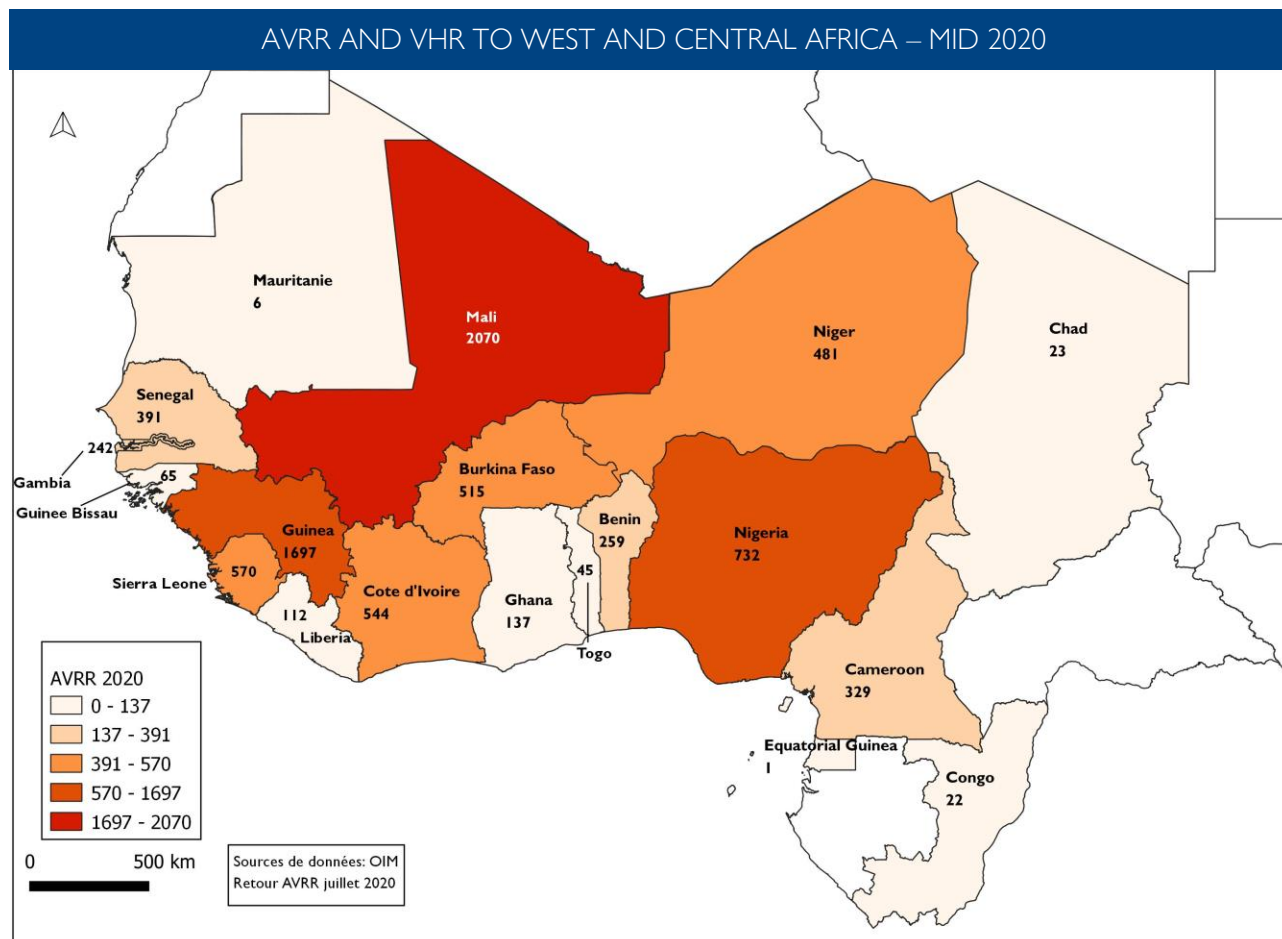
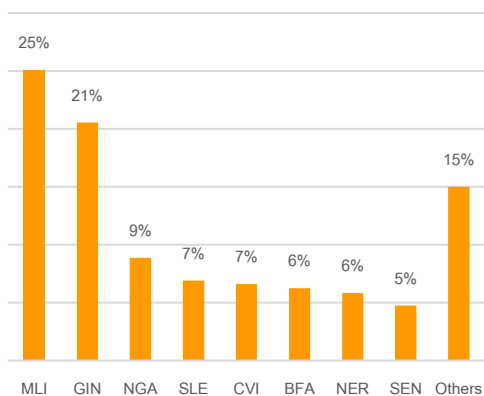


# I. TOTAL FOR 2020

## 1.2. BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Two main countries of origin for than 45% of all AVRR and VHR from West and Central Africa during the first six months of 2020: Mali (2,070), and Guinea (1,697). In total, 20 country offices covered by IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa received migrants in their return.

TOTAL AVRR AND VHR ASSISTED BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (JAN-JUN 2020)



# I. TOTAL FOR 2020

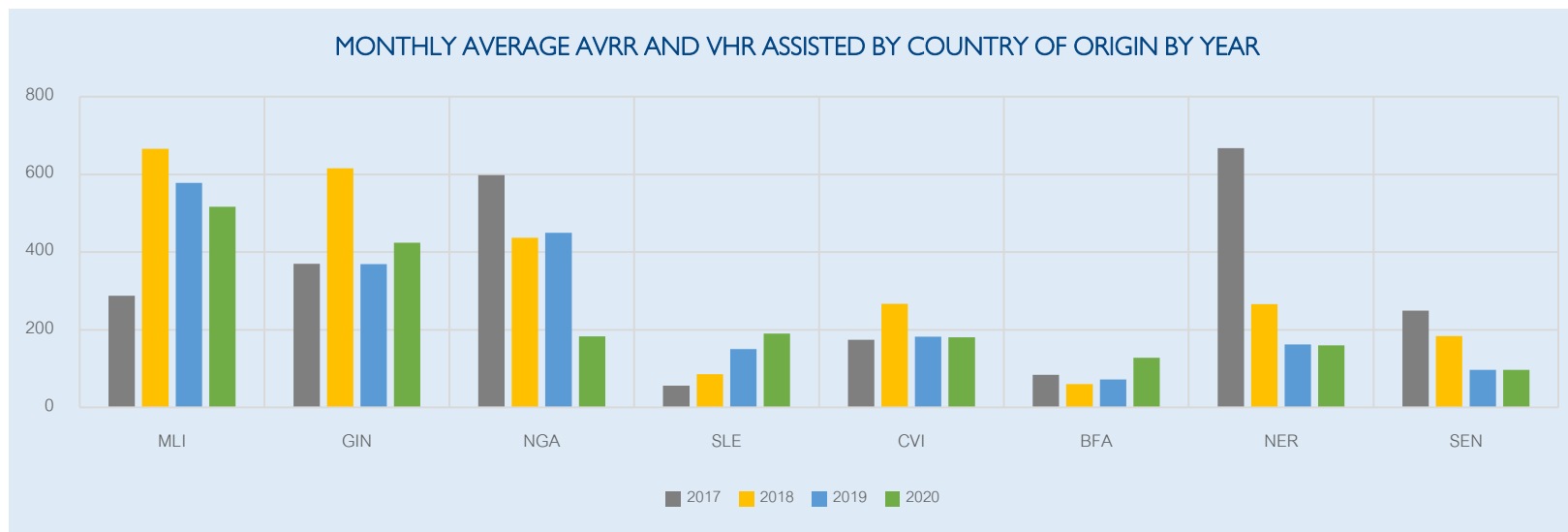
## 1.3. Impact of COVID-19 on 2020 AVRR / VHR

With border closures and other mobility restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, very few AVRR / VHR were recorded in most WCA countries from April to June 2020. In this context, IOM successfully put in place humanitarian corridors in collaboration with governments in host countries and countries of origin to support stranded migrants with return assistance across the West and Central Africa region.

The average number of returns per month in the region went from 2 620 before March 2020 to 355 after March 2020. Despite this decrease, as of June 2020, the monthly average number of returns in the main countries

of origin was not affected due to an increase of returns in these countries during the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period last year, except for Nigeria.

The priority for AVRR and VHR support was given to stranded migrants in transit centres across the WCA region before the outbreak of COVID19. There were no return from North Africa, Europe other regions after March 2020 except 11 returns from Lebanon to Nigeria







## II. HOST COUNTRIES

## II. HOST COUNTRIES

### 2.1. MAIN REGIONS AND HOST COUNTRIES

Of the 8,260 individuals assisted in their return by IOM to their country of origin in WCA during the first six months of 2020, 78% (or 6,419) were assisted to return from another country in West and Central Africa (mainly Niger).

North Africa was the second main region of return for WCA individuals assisted in their return (20%, or 1,630 individuals assisted from a country in the region), mainly Libya.

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. This remained constant during the first semester of 2020.

Returns from Europe represent a bit more than 1% of the total number of returns organized by IOM during the first six months of 2020

Main host countries of destination (countries that assisted migrants in the return) in 2020 were Niger (5,888) followed by Libya (956).

# 8,260

INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED IN THEIR RETURN BY IOM TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA AS OF JUNE 2020

## 1,630

ASSISTED FROM NORTH AFRICA (20%)

## 6,419

ASSISTED FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA (78%)

## 138

ASSISTED FROM EUROPE (1%)

## 73

ASSISTED FROM OTHER CONTINENTS (1%)

TOP COUNTRIES

NIGER

5,888

LIBYA

956

MOROCCO

384

MALI

174

## II. HOST COUNTRIES

### 2.2. TREND OVER TIME FOR HOST COUNTRIES AND COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

In 2017, Nigeria was the main of country of origin for AVRR and VHR assistances provided by IOM in the WCA region. Since 2018, this trend changed in favour of Mali which remains the main country of origin until the first semester of 2020. Côte d'Ivoire is within the top 5 countries of origin since 2018

TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN MID-2020	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN 2019	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN 2018	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN 2017	% of AVRR/VHR
MALI	25%	MALI	23%	MALI	22%	NIGERIA	25%
GUINEA	21%	NIGERIA	19%	GUINEA	20%	GUINEA	16%
NIGERIA	9%	GUINEA	15%	NIGERIA	14%	NIGER	12%
SIERRA LEONE	7%	COTE D'IVOIRE	7%	COTE D'IVOIRE	9%	SENEGAL	11%
COTE D'IVOIRE	7%	NIGER	7%	NIGER	7%	GAMBIA	9%

Niger became the main host countries for AVRR and VR assistances in 2018 after Libya in 2017. This remained unchanged over years until the first semester of 2020 with increasing proportion of the total return assistance in the region over years: 2017 (9%), 2018 (41%), 2019 (55%), first semester of 2020 (71%). In opposite, the same proportions for Libya are decreasing over years.

TOP HOST COUNTRIES MID-2020	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP HOST COUNTRIES 2019	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP HOST COUNTRIES 2018	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP HOST COUNTRIES 2017	% of AVRR/VHR
NIGER	71%	NIGER	55%	NIGER	41%	LIBYA	69%
LIBYA	12%	LIBYA	24%	LIBYA	40%	NIGER	19%
MOROCCO	5%	MALI	4%	MALI	5%	MOROCCO	5%
MALI	2%	MOROCCO	4%	ALGERIA	4%	TUNISIA	2%
CHAD	2%	ALGERIA	3%	MOROCCO	4%	GERMANY	1%

## II. HOST COUNTRIES

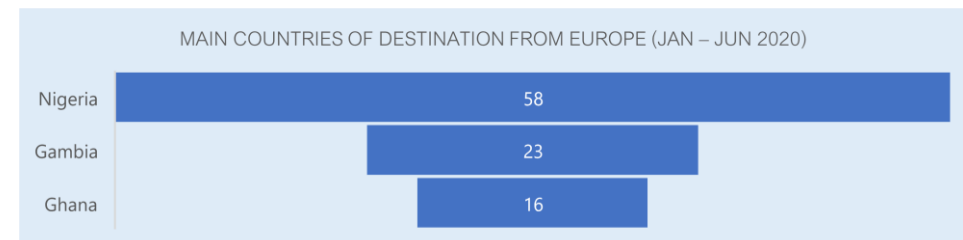
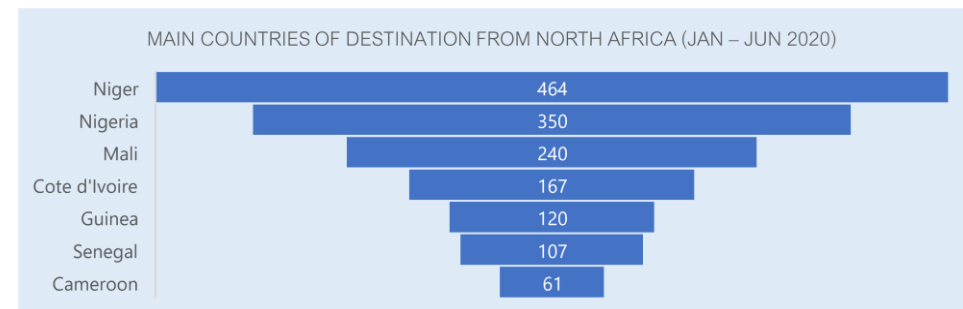
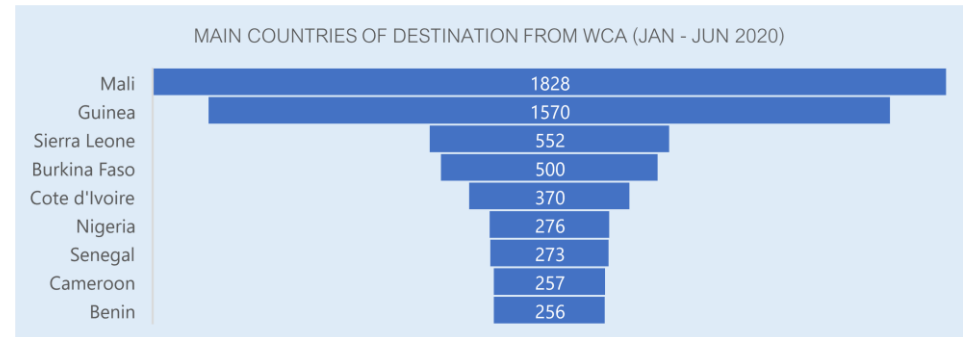
### 2.3. CROSS ANALYSIS OF HOST AND ORIGIN COUNTRIES IN 2020

During the first semester of 2020, most return assistances provided from Niger were toward Mali (30%) and Guinea Conakry (25%) while returns from Libya were toward Niger (46%), Nigeria (30%) and Mali (19%).

Germany, Austria and Greece were the top 3 host countries of returns from Europe during the first semester of 2020. Most returns from these countries were toward English speaking countries, Nigeria (45%), Gambia (20%), and Ghana (11%).

#### TOP HOST COUNTRIES MID 2020

- NIGER 5,888
- LIBYA 956
- MOROCCO 384
- MALI 174
- CHAD 150
- ALGERIA 123
- MAURITANIA 104
- TUNISIA 94
- BURKINA FASO 89





## II. HOST COUNTRIES

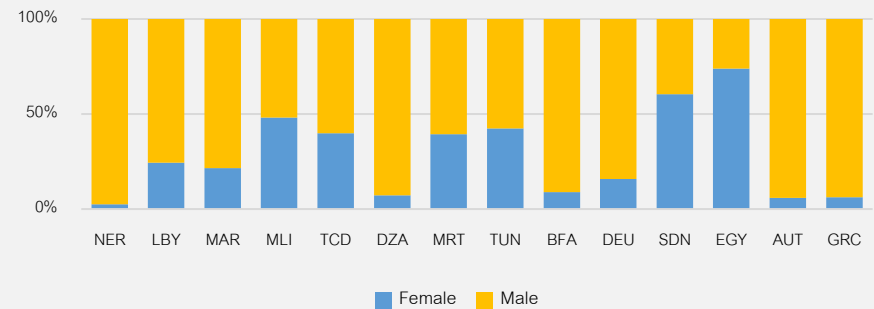
### 2.4. HOST COUNTRIES BY GENDER AND AGE

Host countries have a very different gender balance in their AVRR and VHR caseload from WCA during the first semester of 2020..

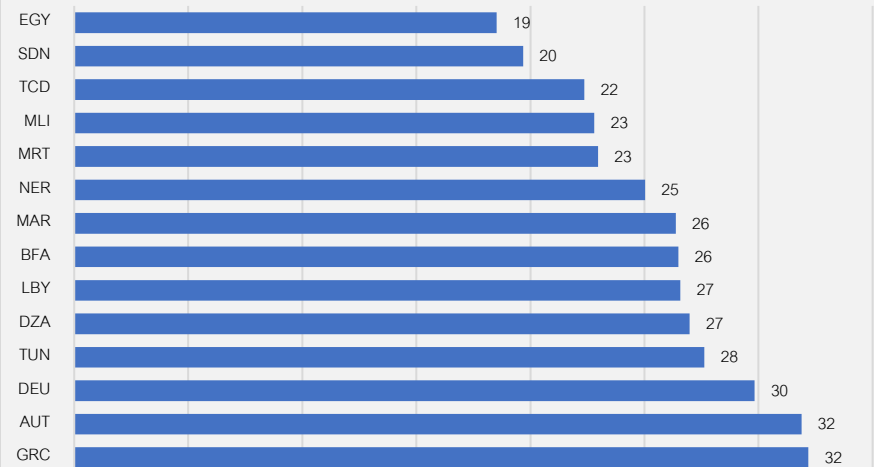
If AVRR and VHR assisted to return from Burkina Faso (91%), Algeria (93%), Niger, (97%) Germany (84%), Austria (94%) and Greece (94%) are in vast majority males other countries are, on the contrary, displaying high proportion of female among AVRR and VHR from the region: Egypt (74%), Sudan (60%) Tunisia (43%), Mali (48%), and Chad (40%). Individuals returned from countries such as Lebanon, Oman, and Iraq, were entirely 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 a lot based on the host country. Egypt and Sudan (both countries with a high proportion of women among the AVRR caseload from West and Central Africa as of mid 2020), have, on average, the youngest AVRR from WCA. On average, AVRR from WCA supported in Egypt and Sudan are respectively 19 and 20 years old. On the contrary, AVRR assisted to return to WCA from Europe (Germany, Austria, Greece) are all on average above 30.

AVRR AND VHR GENDER DISTRIBUTION BY HOST COUNTRY (MID 2020)



AVERAGE AGE BY HOST COUNTRY (MID 2020)





### III. GENDER AND AGE

## III. GENDER AND AGE

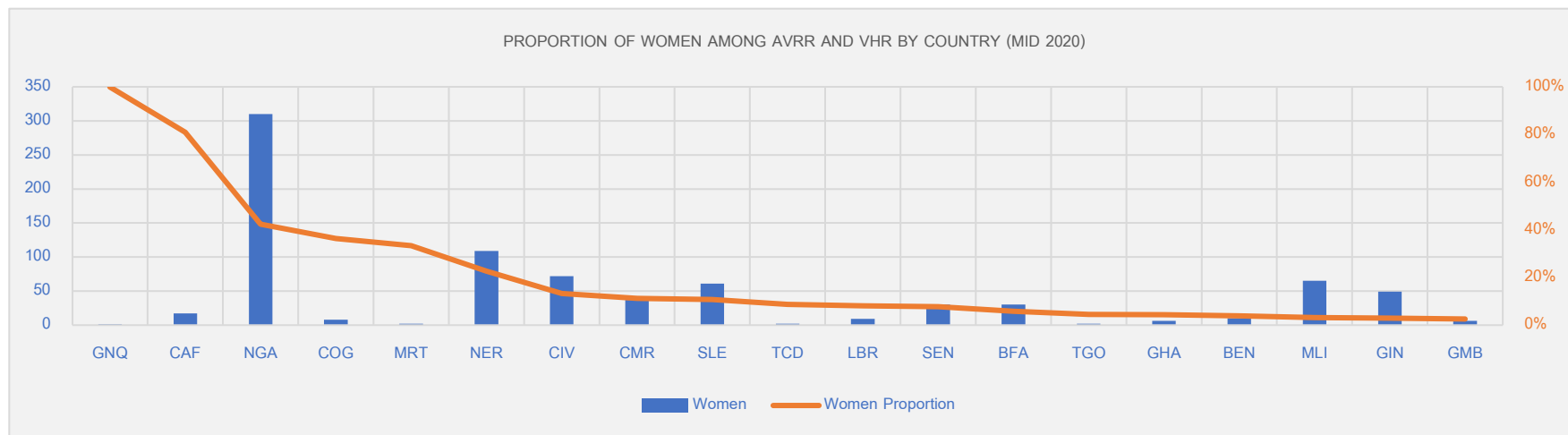
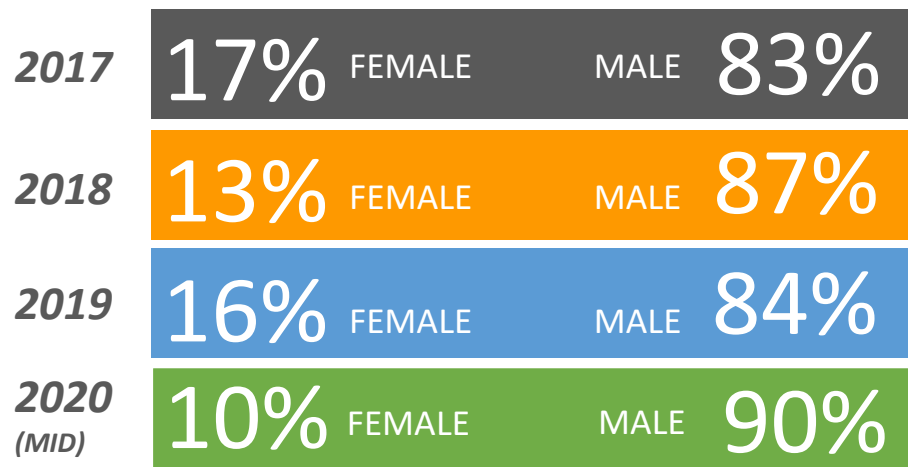
### 3.1 GENDER

During the first semester of 2020, more than 800 women were assisted in their return by IOM back to their country of origin in West and Central Africa, representing 10% of the total AVRR and VHR caseload in that period.

The proportion of women returnees (10%) in the first semester of 2020 is lower than the one of the same period last year (18%). This can be partially explained by the decrease of total number of returns in WCA compared to the same period last year.

From the main countries of origin in term of number of returns as of mid-2020, Nigeria has the highest proportion of women (42%) among the returnees., representing 38% of total number of women returnees during that period throughout the region. Mali and Guinea recorded the among the lowest proportion of women (3% for both countries).

**15%** FEMALE      MALE **85%**

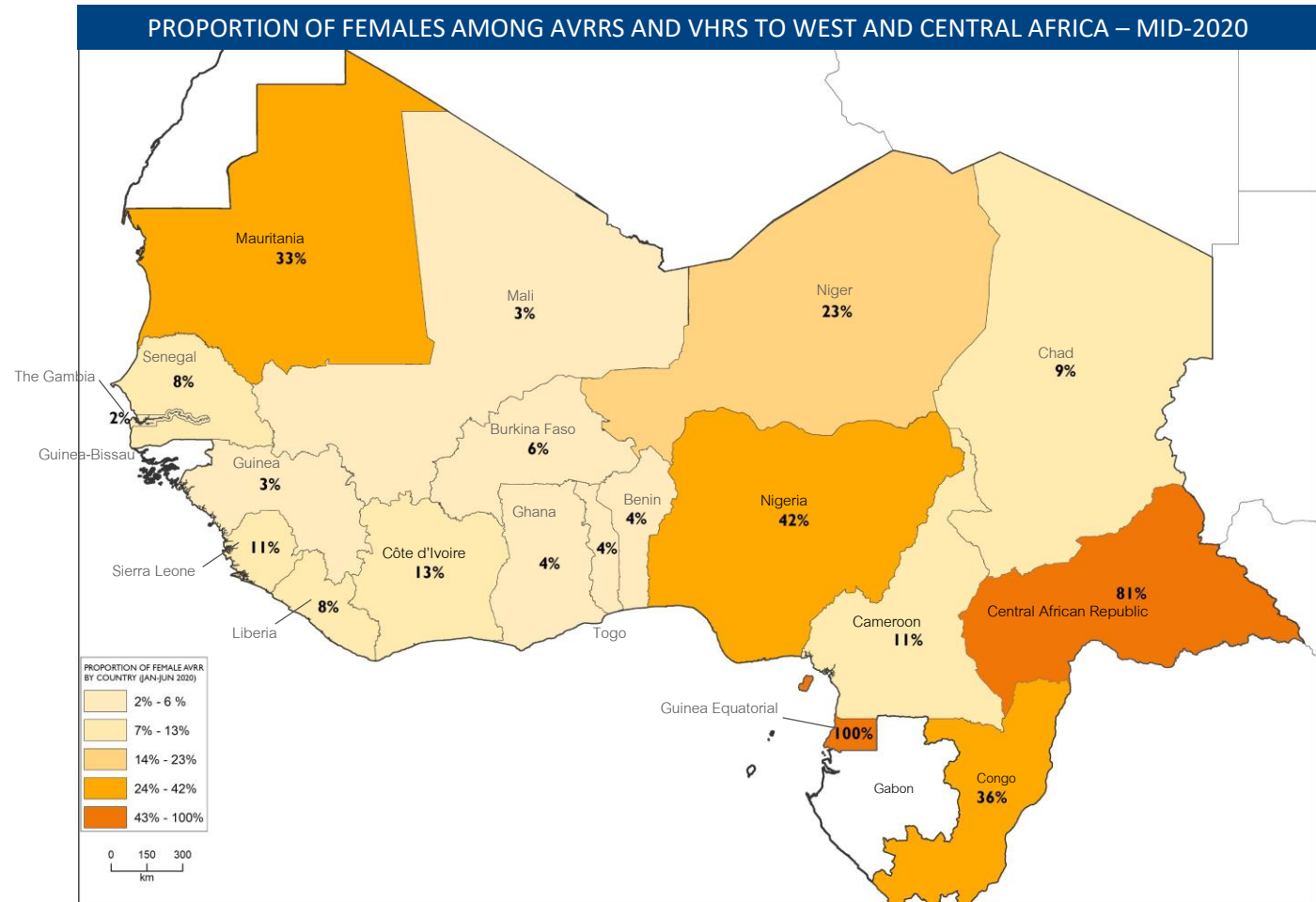


# III. GENDER AND AGE

## 3.2. GENDER BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The highest proportion of women in the total caseload of AVRR and VHR is identified in Nigeria, Niger, Mauritania and Central Africa Republic, in the Republic of Congo (though in a much smaller proportion for the last three countries mentioned).

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



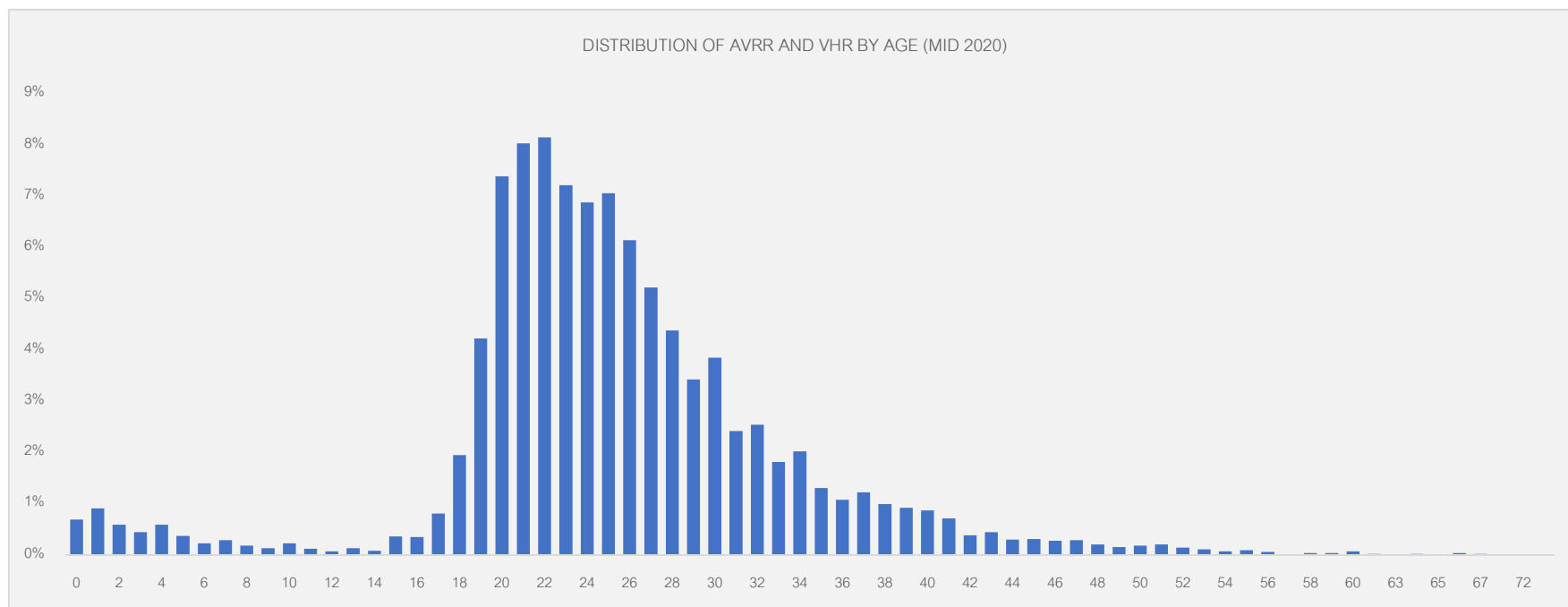


# III. GENDER AND AGE

## 3.3. AGE BY YEAR

On average, the individuals assisted in their return by IOM, during the first semester of 2020, were 25 years old at the time of the return. Below chart shows the distribution by age (min: 0, max: 72, mode: 22). 7% of individuals assisted were under 18, 44% between 18 and 25 years old and 40% between 26 and 35 years old. The remaining 9% were 36 years old and above

# 25 AVERAGE AGE

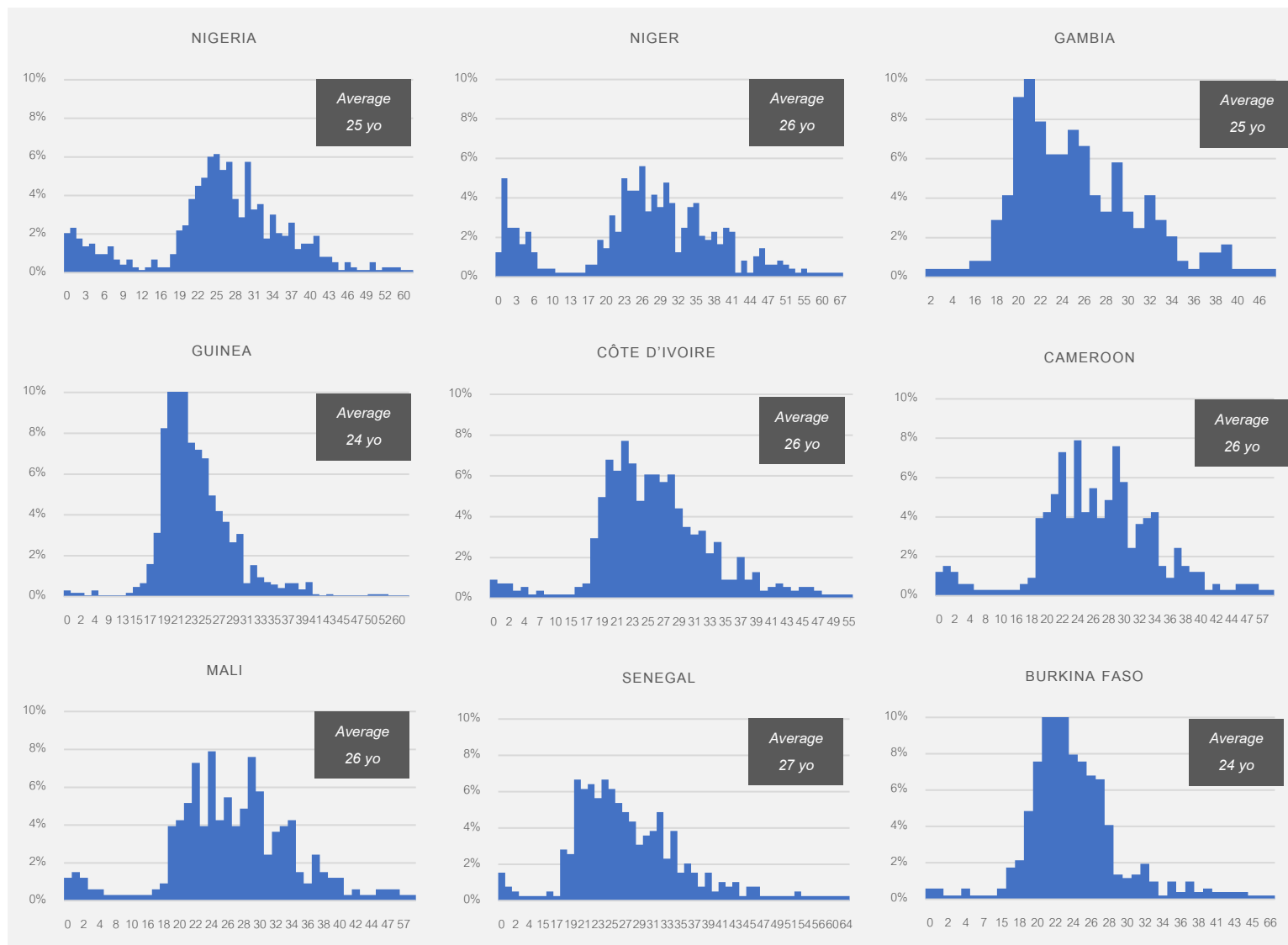


# III. GENDER AND AGE

## 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 during the first six months of 2020.

The shape of the Burkina Faso and Guinea charts displays a particularly young population (24 years old and with the mode, most frequent value, being 21 years old), while the shape of the age pyramid in Senegal present an older population (average above 27 with the mode at 24 years old).



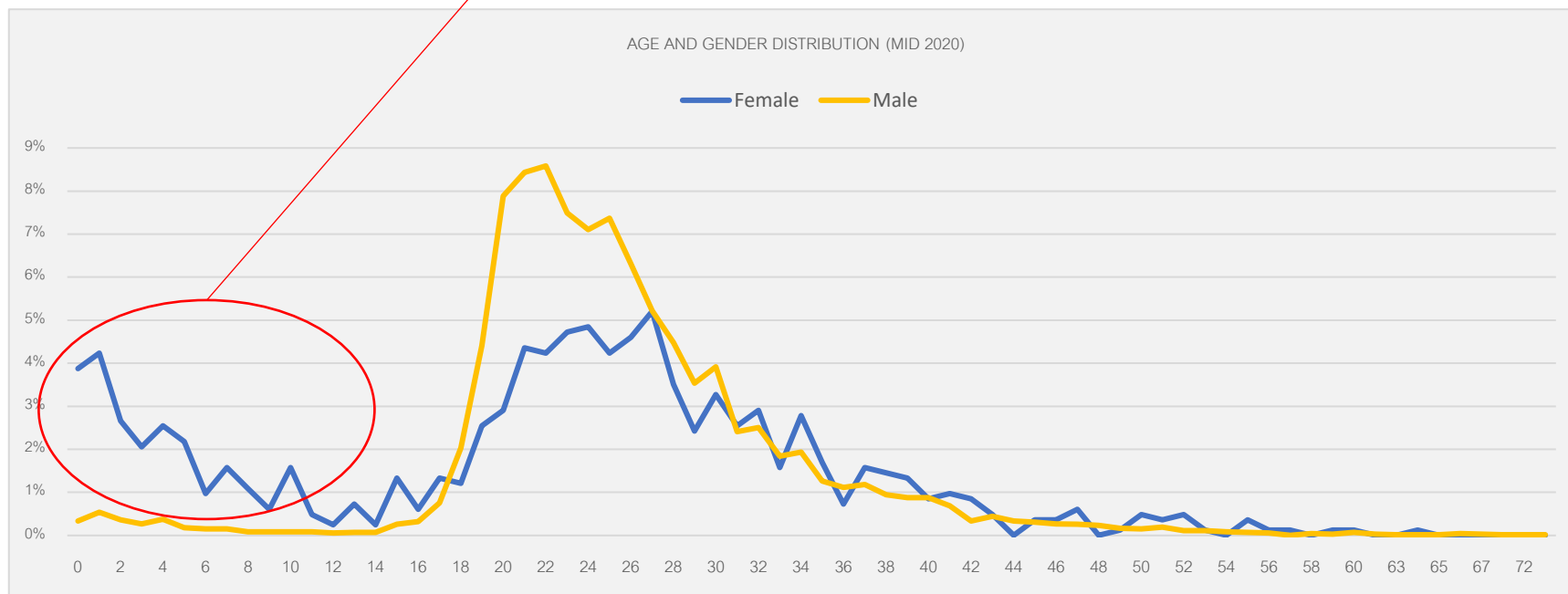
# III. GENDER AND AGE

## 3.5. GENDER & AGE

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

1. Women supported to return are on average younger (22 years old) than men (26 years old).
2. The proportion of minors within women is higher than the same proportion for men. Minors are mainly nationals from Nigeria (21%), Niger (17%) Mali (16%) and Guinea (13%), returning from Niger and Libya

FEMALE 22 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 during the first semester of 2020. For this period, Kankan in Guinea, Bamako, Mali, and Western Area Urban, Sierra Leone are the three main regions of origin.

Evolution of regions of origin from 2017 to mid 2020 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 Kayes (Mali), Bamako (Mali), and Nzerekore (Guinea Conakry). In 2019, the top 3 were: Bamako (Mali) and Lagunes (Côte d'Ivoire), and Edo State (Nigeria). In the first semester of 2020, the top 3 were: Kankan (Guinea Conakry), Bamako (Mali), and the Western Area Urban (Sierra Leone).

However, for 2020, the regions of return were not documented for several returnees (mainly in Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Liberia and Senegal). The number of returnees with not documented information on their region of origin represent 4% of the total number of return assistance provided during the first semester of 2020 in the WCA region

TOP REGIONS MID-2020	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP REGIONS 2019	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP REGIONS 2018	% of AVRR/VHR	TOP REGIONS 2017	% of AVRR/VHR
KANKAN (GUI)	15%	BAMAKO (MLI)	12%	KAYES (MLI)	5%	EDO (NGA)	14%
BAMAKO (MLI)	13%	LAGUNES (CIV)	6%	BAMAKO (MLI)	4%	TAHOUA (NER)	9%
WESTERN AREA URBAN (SLE)	7%	EDO (NGA)	5%	NZEREKORE (GUI)	4%	DELTA (NGA)	5%
KAYES (MLI)	6%	NZEREKORE (GUI)	5%	LAGUNES (CIV)	4%	BRIKAMA LGA (GMB)	4%
NIAMEY (NER)	6%	TAHOUA (NER)	4%	TAHOUA (NER)	3%	KOLDA (SEN)	3%
LITTORAL (CMR)	6%	MAMOU (GUI)	4%	EDO (NGA)	3%	BAMAKO (MLI)	3%
LAGOS (NGA)	5%	LITTORAL (CIV)	3%	MAMOU (GUI)	3%	KAYES (MLI)	2%
CENTRE (BFA)	5%	MONROVIA (LBR)	3%	LITTORAL (CMR)	2%	CENTRE-EST (BFA)	2%
LAGUNES (CIV)	5%	CENTRE (BFA)	3%	CENTRE (BFA)	2%	TILLABERI (NER)	2%
CONAKRY (GUI)	4%	KAYES (MLI)	3%	KINDIA (GUI)	2%	KANIFING (GMB)	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 the first semester of 2020). Top regions of origin of migrants are displayed on the tables below.

BURKINA FASO	
Centre	82%
Centre-Est	15%
Centre-Nord	6%

CAMEROON	
Littoral	65%
Centre	4%
Sud-Ouest	1%

CHAD	
Ndjamena	100%

CÔTE D'IVOIRE	
Lagunes	74%
Haut-Sassandra	6%
18 Montagnes	5%

GAMBIA (The)	
Banjul	100%

GHANA	
Grt Accra Reg	35%
Ashanti	20%
Central	15%

GUINEA	
Kankan	71%
Conakry	18%
Nzerekore	4%

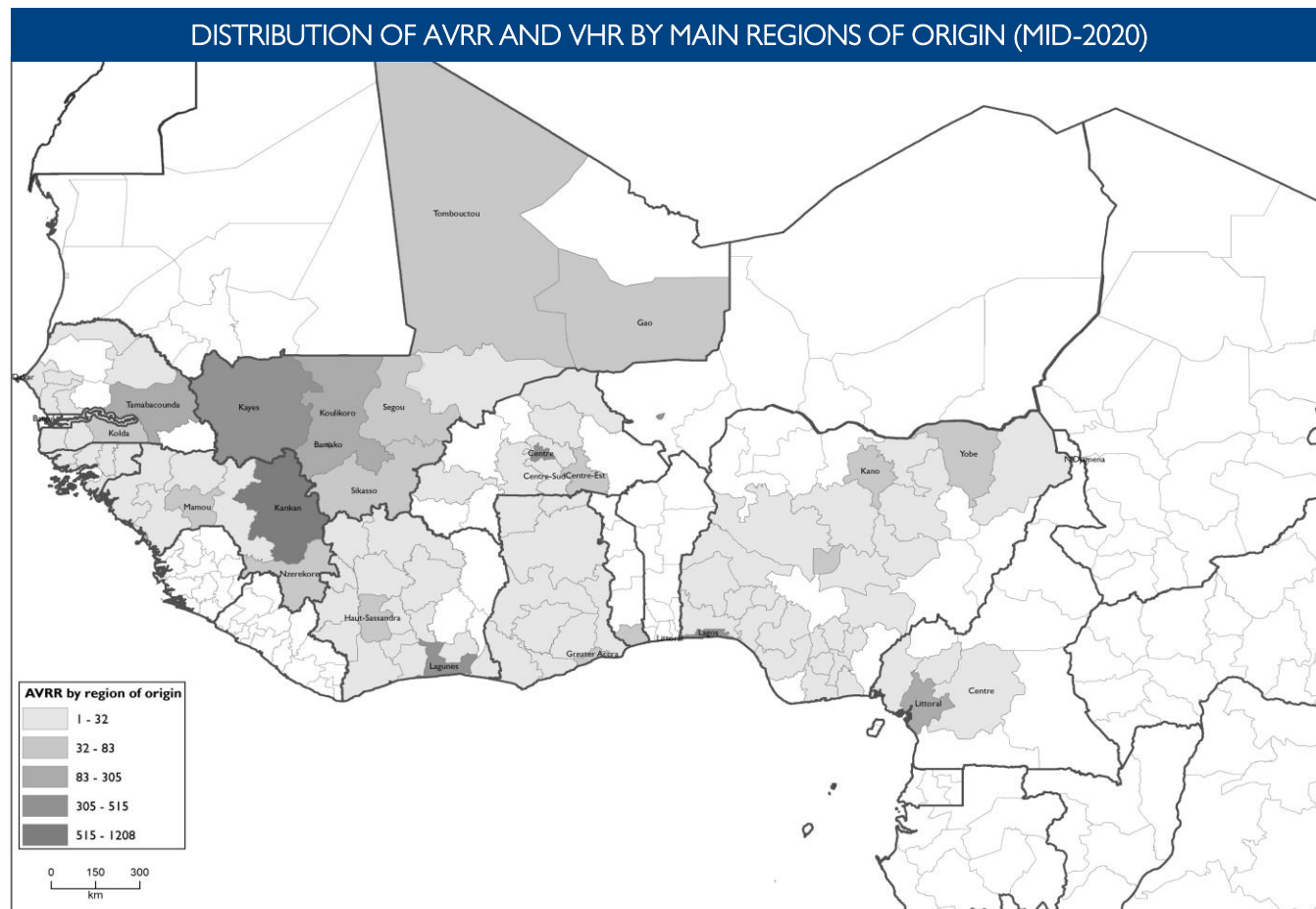
GUINEA-BISSAU	
Gabu	45%
Bissau	26%
Oio	11%

MALI	
Bamako	52%
Kayes	25%
Koulikoro	19%

NIGER	
Niamey	100%

NIGERIA	
Lagos	60%
Yobe	9%
Federal Capital	9%

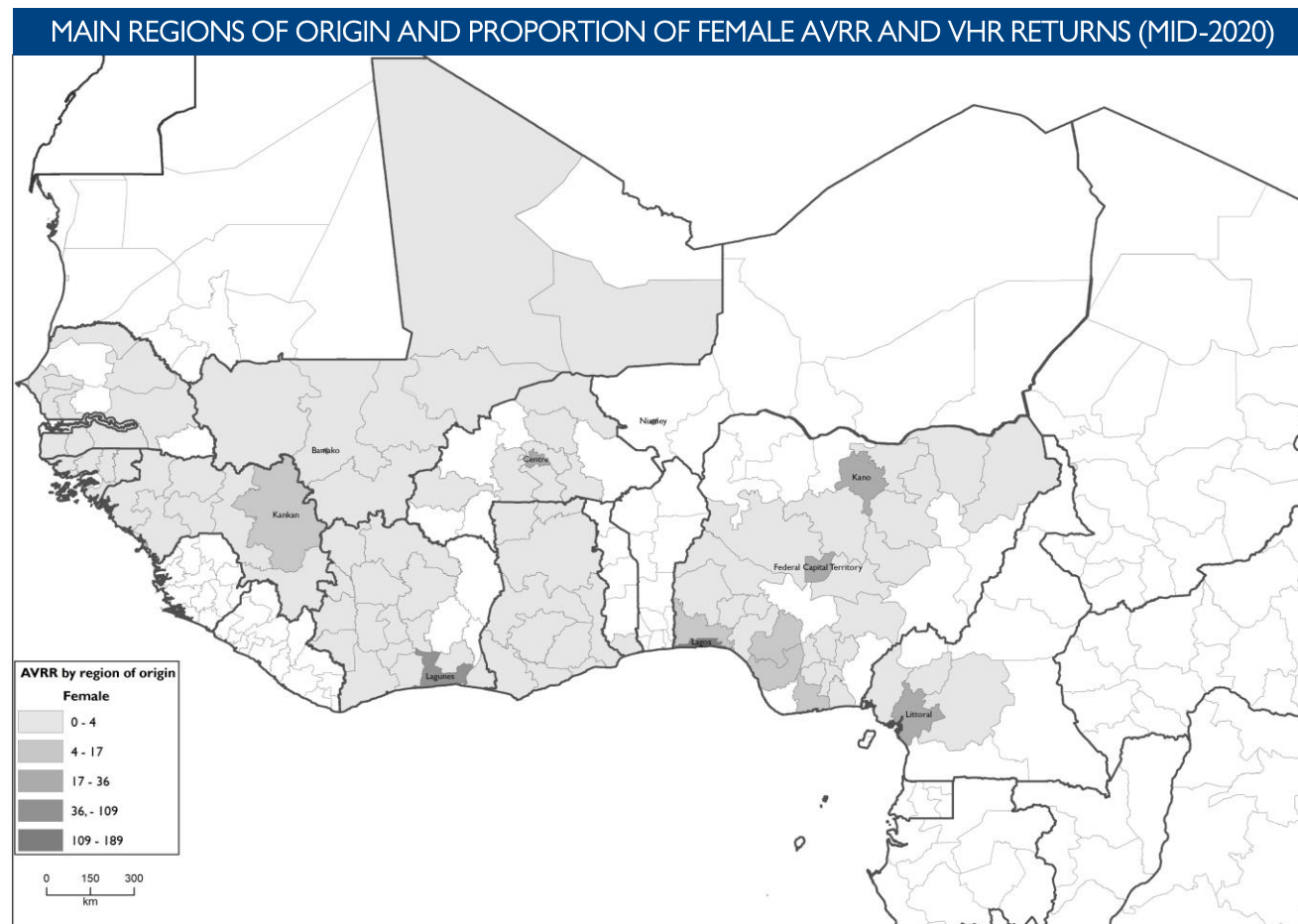
SENEGAL	
Tambacounda	38%
Dakar	26%
Kolda	15%



## 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 (Lagos, Federal Capital, Kano) and Sierra Leone (Western Area Urban), Mal (Bamako), Côte d'Ivoire (Lagunes), Niger (Niamey), Guinea (Conakry), Burkina Faso (Centre) as well as Cameroon (Littoral)





V. PROTECTION CASES



# V. PROTECTION CASES

## 5.1. PROTECTION CASE OVERVIEW MID-2020

Data collected based on discussions upon departure or return with the assisted migrants shows that nearly 2% had been temporarily detained during their migration experience. Burkinabe nationals were the main nationality detained followed by Cameroonian and Chadian nationals. About 92% of returnees (first semester of 2020) temporarily detained were men and 90% of them are within 18 and 35 years old.

Nearly 1% of all migrants assisted to return were unaccompanied children. These are mainly nationals from Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Gambia returning from Mali and Niger.

The main regions of origin for unaccompanied children include Conakry (Guinea Conakry), Lagunes (Cote d'Ivoire), Banjul (Gambia)

1% of total individuals assisted in the first semester of 2020, indicated being victim during their journey or stay. About 89% of reported victims of trafficking are women and nearly 92% are within 18 and 35 years old.

The main regions of return for reported victims of trafficking include Lagos and Rivers (Nigeria) and Lagunes (Cote d'Ivoire)

**65**

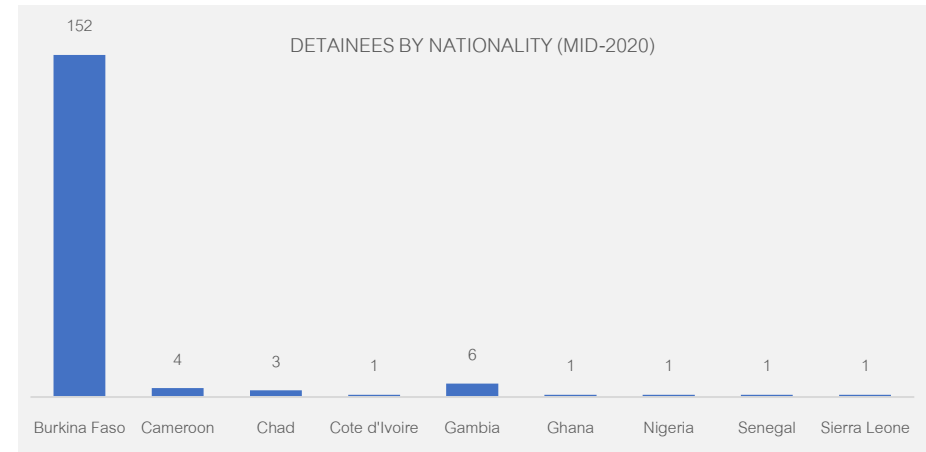
**UNACCOMPANIED  
CHILDREN (1%)**

**170**

**TEMPORARILY  
DETAINED (2%)**

**86**

**VICTIMS OF  
TRAFFICKING (1%)**



# 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 8,260 migrants assisted in their voluntary return by IOM during the first semester of 2020. 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](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/a_framework_for_avrr_online_pdf_optimized_20181112.pdf)





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