



UNITED NATIONS
NIGERIA



Internal migration trends in Nigeria



INTRODUCTION

This note uses newly available data from the sixth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) for Nigeria conducted in 2021 to examine the trends, drivers, challenges, and opportunities of internal migration. This analysis is important, firstly, because no systematically collected information exists on the migration of people within Nigeria. Secondly, the analysis helps understand some of the factors which influence people's decision to migrate and some of the potential risk factors.

In this note we show that there is a significant degree of internal migration within Nigeria with nearly 60% of women and almost 50% of men sampled having migrated at some point. Most of the migration appears to occur in waves, with people moving from rural areas to towns within the same state, and then to larger cities. We also show that states associated with larger internal migration are also associated with international migration which suggests common drivers for both types of migration. We show that Lagos and the FCT are the major destinations for inter-state migration. Finally, we show that economic incentives are likely to influence people's decision to migrate, alongside marriage and conflict.

2. DATA SOURCES

The data in this analysis is taken from the 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for Nigeria. This is a household survey designed to fill data gaps for monitoring human development and the situation of children and women. The survey is nationally representative with 41,532 households sampled, including 40,326 women and 37,148 men between the ages of 15 and 49. Also, 93,941 children between 5 and 17, and 31,103 children under five were sampled. Importantly, for the first time the survey asked questions about the migrant status of women and men including information about where they migrated from and when. The responses to these questions serve as the basis for this analysis.

3. TRENDS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION

Nigeria's population has grown significantly over the years from 44.92 million in 1960 to over 213.40 million in 2021 . The growth of the population has led to increased demand for resources and opportunities, which in turn may have influenced migration patterns with Nigeria. Data on these trends have, however, been largely unavailable. The 2019 World Population Review estimated that about 49% of Nigeria's population live in urban areas, compared to 16% in 1960. This implies significant internal migration. In this section we use data from the 2021 MICS to add new insights to these trends.

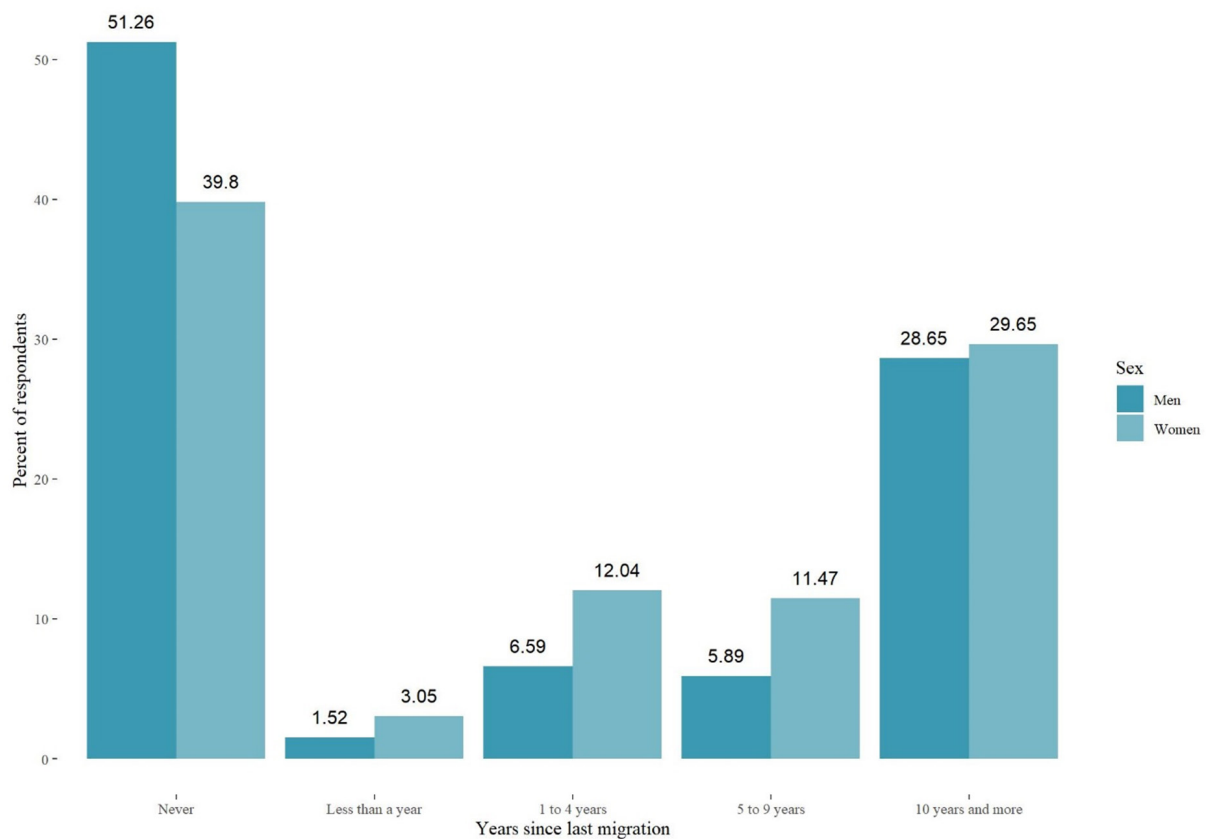


Fig 1: Years since most recent migration by gender.

The first and most relevant finding is that most people reported that they have migrated in the past. Just less than 40% of women and slightly over 50% of men reported that they had lived in their current location since birth. The trends in migration also appear to show some consistency over time. 29.7% of women and 28.7% of men who migrated said they did so over 10 years ago. 11.5% of women and 5.9% of men moved between five and nine years ago. 12% of women and 6.6% of men migrated between one and four years ago. Finally, the short-term (less than one year) migration figures were 3% and 1.5% for women and men, respectively. Most migrants, however, move within the states where they are located. Over 80% of women and men who migrated said that they moved from somewhere within the state they are currently located.

In general, there appears to be a pattern of migration with people first moving from rural areas to smaller towns and then to larger cities. For instance, of the 17,805 urban women surveyed, only 27% report that they have always lived in that urban area. Around 72% of women migrated from cities (39.9%), towns (44.3%) and rural areas (15.2%) in the preceding 10 years. Similarly, only 34.2% of the men in urban areas reported that they had never migrated. 30% reported that they migrated to the urban area from cities (50.6%) or towns (40.9%).

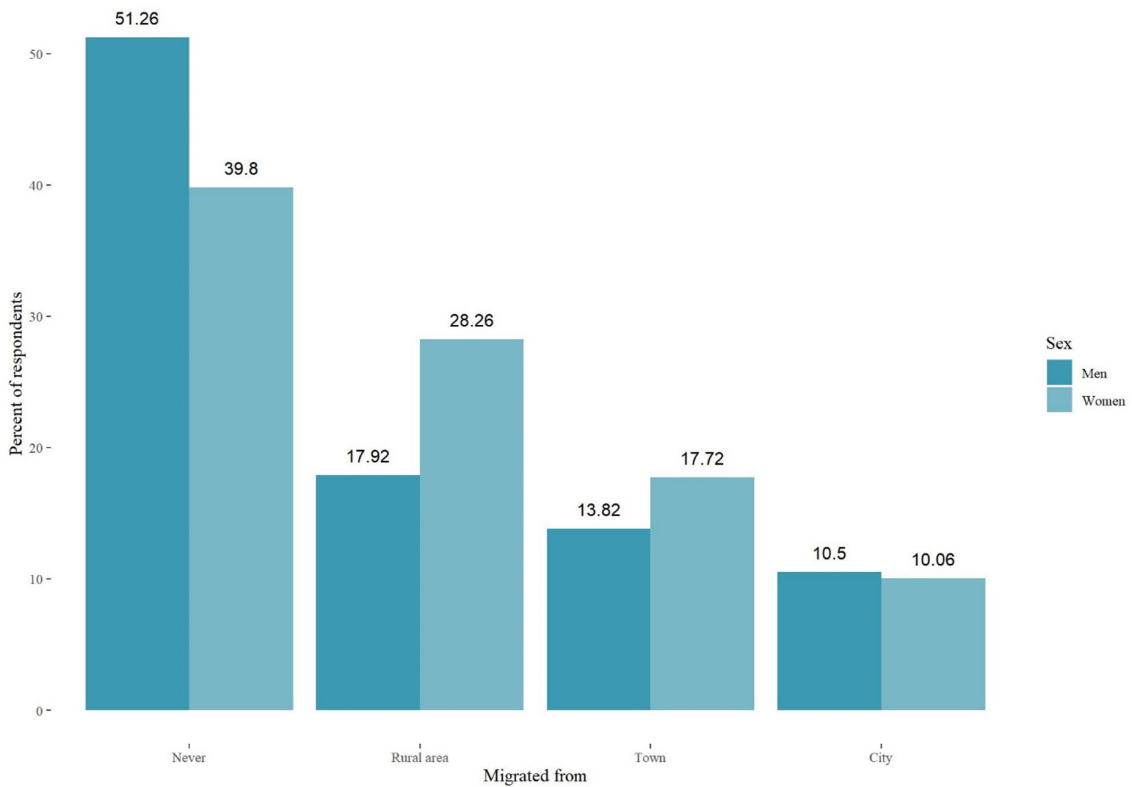


Fig 2: Source of migrants by gender.

The migration trends are not only limited to rural-urban migration. Only 44.3% of rural women say they never migrated. Of the migrants still living in rural areas, 68% migrated from other rural areas, while 21.2% and 9.9% say they migrated from a town or city, respectively. The trends are similar for men as well, although with a bit less return migration to rural areas. Only 37.3% of men say they migrated, with 60.1% 25.7%, and 12.9% saying they migrated from a rural area, town, or city, respectively.

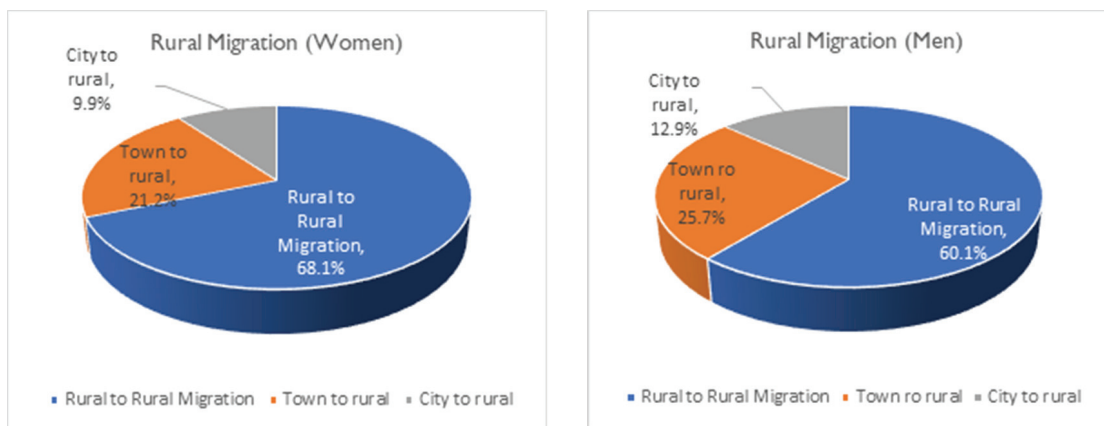


Fig 3: Migration destination and living in rural areas.

MIGRANT DESTINATIONS

The destination of migrants shows an expected pattern with Lagos and the FCT being the major destinations. A network analysis of sources and destinations states for migrants, however, shows much more complex migratory patterns than just people moving to the capital or to the major economic hub.

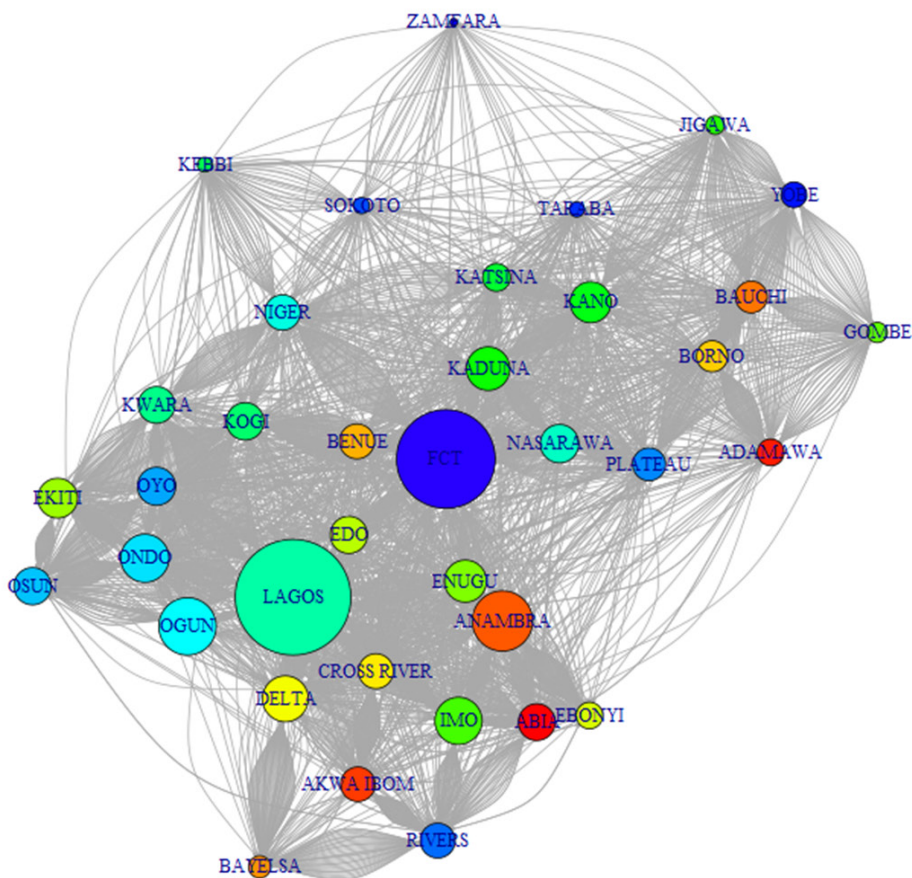


Fig 4: Network analysis showing links between states for women.

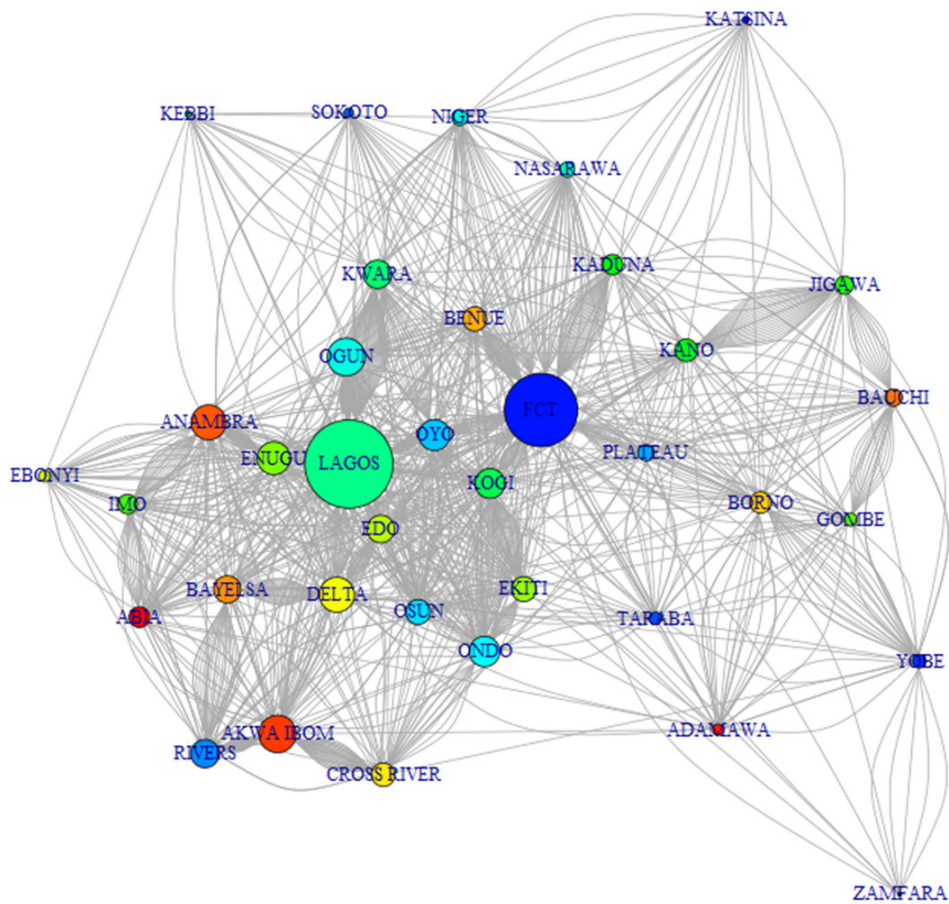


Fig 5: Network analysis showing links between states for men.

Among men and women, there are strong linkages between states near each other suggesting that migrants are likely to move to neighboring states. Migrants from Katsina state were more likely to have migrant linkages with neighboring Kaduna and Jigawa states, for instance. At the same time, the South-South states of Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River have similar linkages. Regardless, Lagos and FCT have the strongest pull for migrants.

Although the survey does not include respondents who are based outside Nigeria, there also appears to be a significant correlation between households who migrate internally within Nigeria and those who migrate abroad. The share of households who have at least one member in another state is very strongly correlated with the share of households who have at least one member abroad.

Migrant Household - Internal vs External

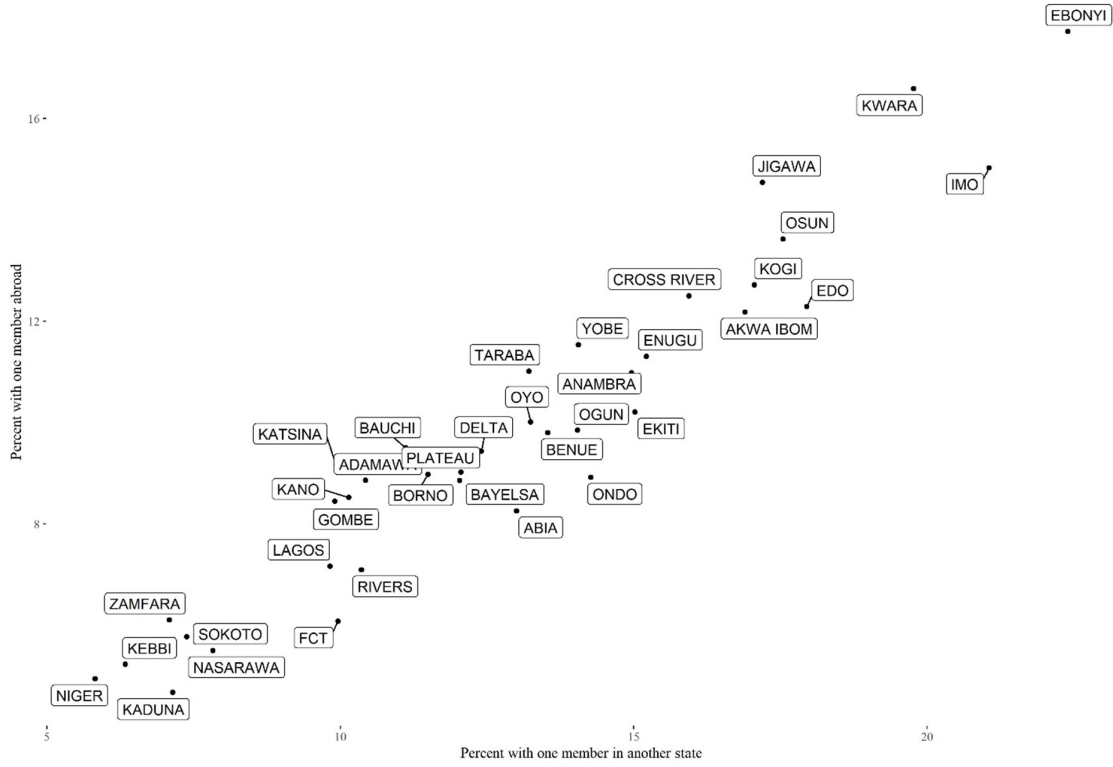


Fig 6: Percent of households with at least one member in another state vs percent of households with at least one member abroad.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT POPULATIONS

AGE GROUP ANALYSIS

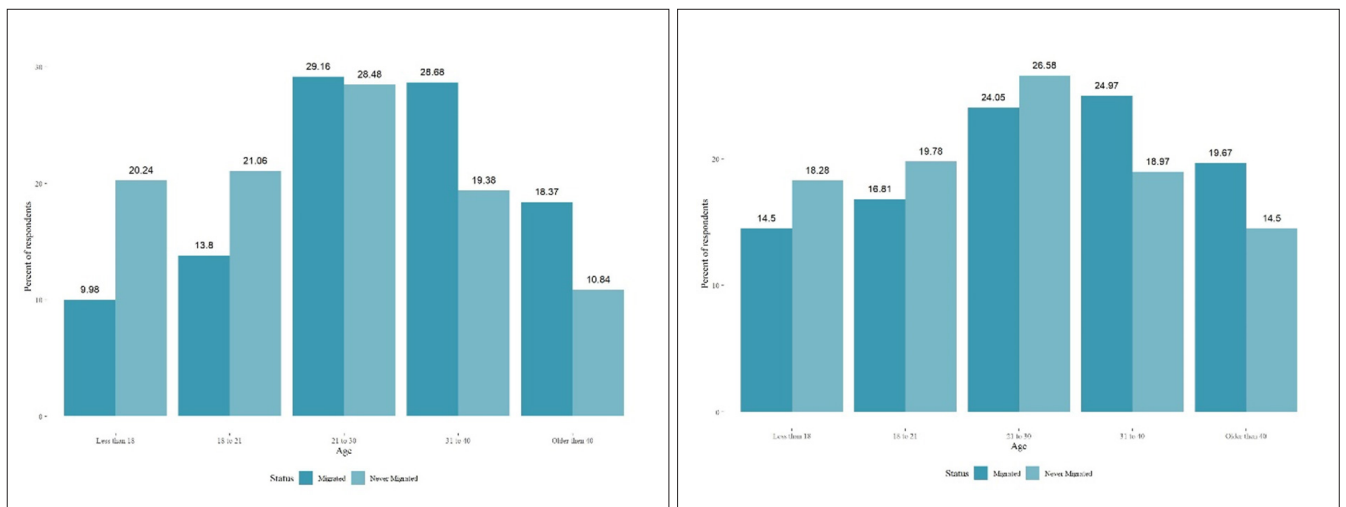


Fig 7: Age distribution of migrants vs non-migrants – Women and Men aged 15 to 49.

There are similarities in the age distribution of migrants versus non-migrants for both women and men. In general, most women and men below the age of 21 have never migrated, with the decision to not migrate at an early age significantly stronger for women. However, the tendency to migrate appears to increase with the likelihood of migrating increasing for both men and women as they get older. It can, therefore, be inferred that age is driving factor for people's decision to migrate from one place to another.

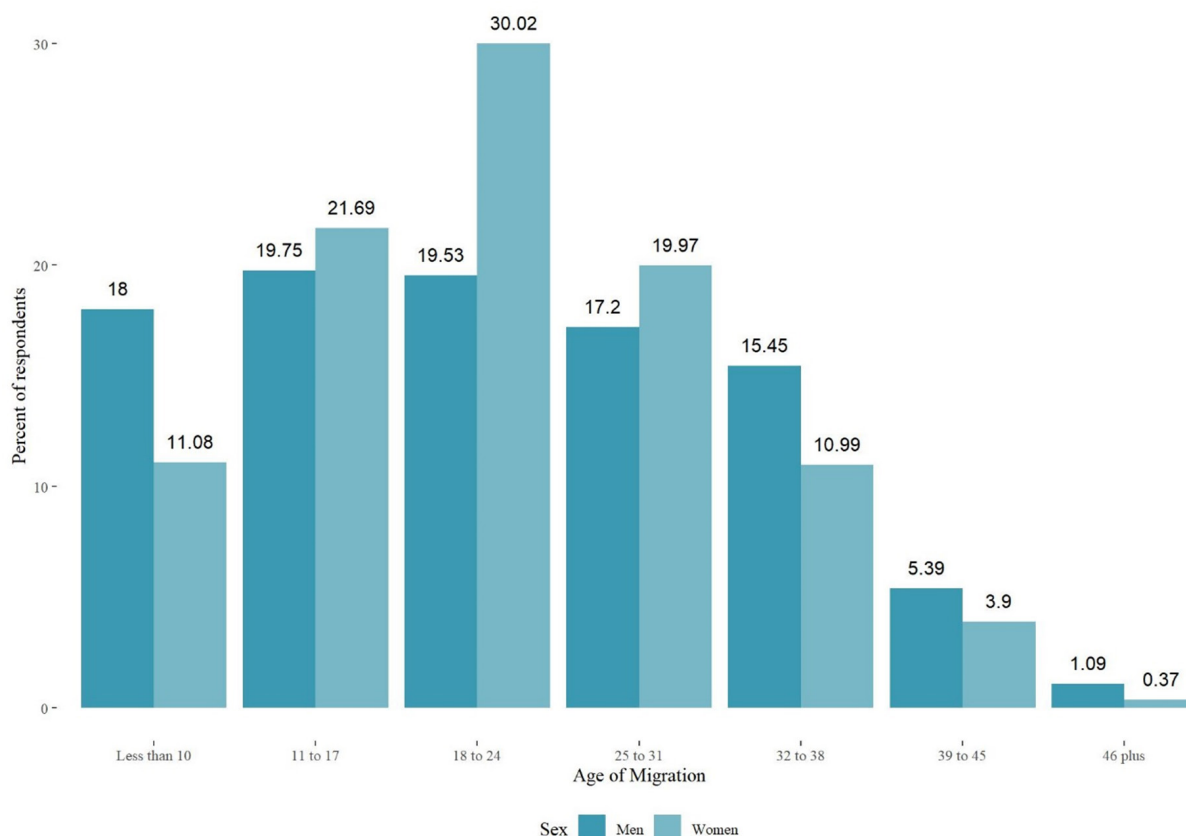


Fig 8: Age at which inter-state migrants last migrated².

However, an examination of the age at which people migrated, especially those who moved across states, shows stark differences between women and men. Whereas more men seem to have migrated more when they were younger, the trends for women appear to show a clustering of the likelihood of migration between the ages of 18 and 24³. The likelihood of migration, however, reduces significantly as migrants get older.

² This is the current age of the respondent minus that number of years they last migrated.

³ Discussed in more detail in the driver of migration section.

EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE MIGRATED PEOPLE

Out of the total migrated women, 22% do not have any education and around 38% attended senior secondary school, followed by tertiary level, primary level, and junior secondary level representing 17%, 14% and 8%, respectively. Unlike women, most of the men have a basic level of education, while only 12% of migrated men do not have any education. Around 46% men attended senior secondary school level, followed by higher education level (24%), primary school level (10%), and junior school level (8%). The data indicates that more than 50% of migrated men and women have senior secondary level education to tertiary level education. But data does not indicate whether those migrations were due to skill or study migration. However, both men and women have a notable proportion of respondents who migrated with no education. Overall, the chart shows that education is a key factor to consider in migration patterns.

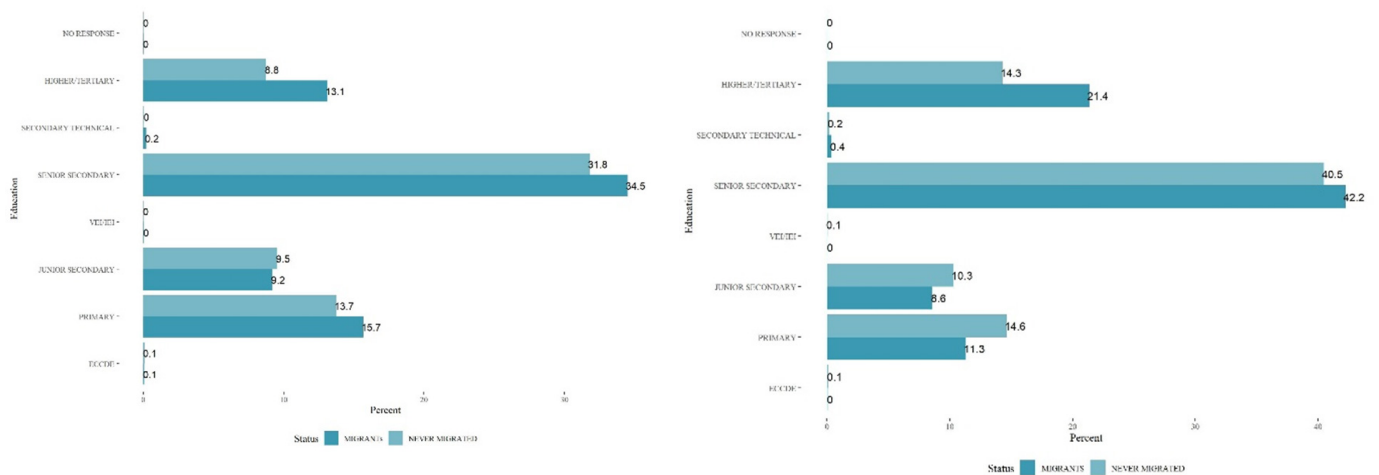


Fig 9: Educational background of migrants – Women and Men.

WEALTH INDEX ANALYSIS

Upon closer examination of their wealth index, it was discovered that 64% of men's (11,093) and women's (24,698) income classified as middle to richest. Among this group, 6,685 (60%) men and 17,074 (69%) women migrated to their current location and most of them migrated either from a city or a town. The remaining 36% of men (6,254) and women (14,109) were classified as poor to poorest. Among this group, men 2,245 (27%) and women 7582 (54%) migrated and most of them migrated from rural areas from their current location. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that those who are financially solvent are more prone to migrate internally from one place to another and mostly urban to urban migration. For those in the lower income tiers, migration is less likely and also more likely to be from rural to urban areas. It may also be that case that migration results in significant income gains and improvements in the quality of life for migrants.

5. DRIVERS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

The drivers of internal migration in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted. The MICS survey does not include questions on why people choose to migrate. In this section, we hypothesize on some of the potential drivers such as economic opportunities, marriage, and conflicts by comparing migration trends with other secondary data.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

A significant driver of internal migration appears to be economic opportunities, as people move from rural to urban areas in search of better employment prospects. This is expected because in many instances urban areas are expected to offer better-paying jobs, access to education, healthcare, and other social amenities.

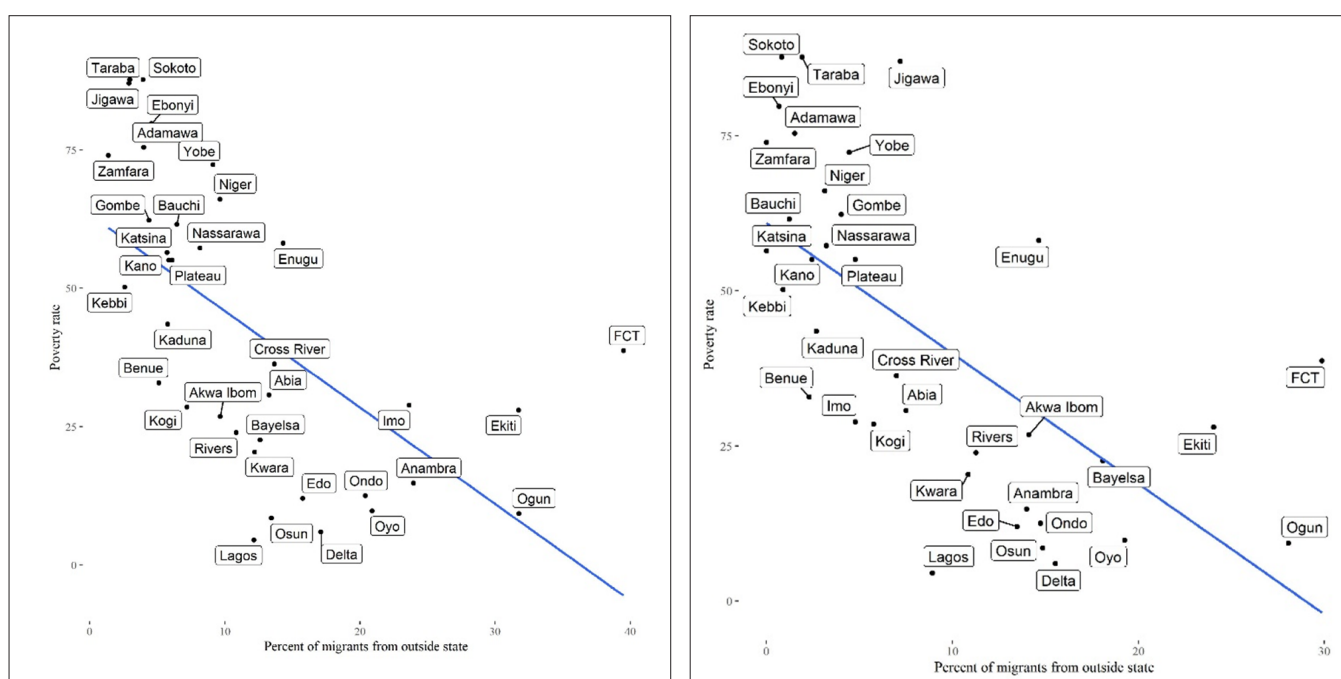


Fig 10: Percent of migrants from outside state vs Poverty rate for women and men⁴

Indeed, as shown in figure 10, there is a strong inverse correlation between the fraction of people living in poverty in each state and the share of people in the state who migrated from outside that state. In general, the states with lower poverty rates, and presumably more economic activity, tend to host more migrants, suggesting that economic reasons are an important pull factor.

⁴Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2019

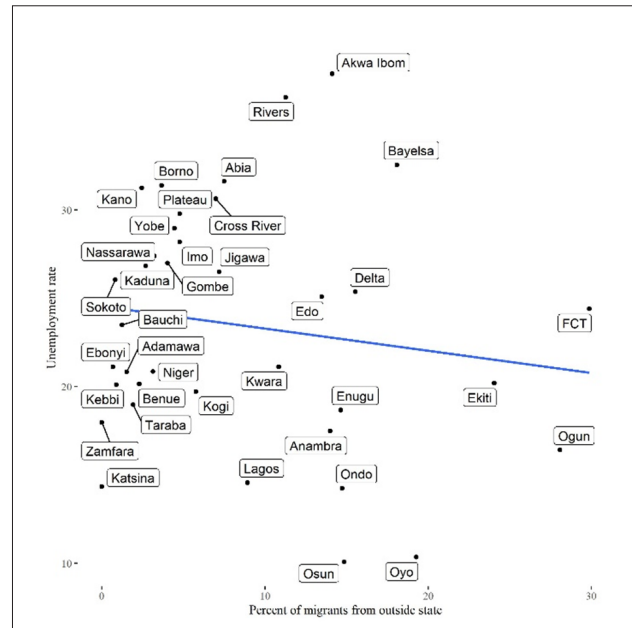
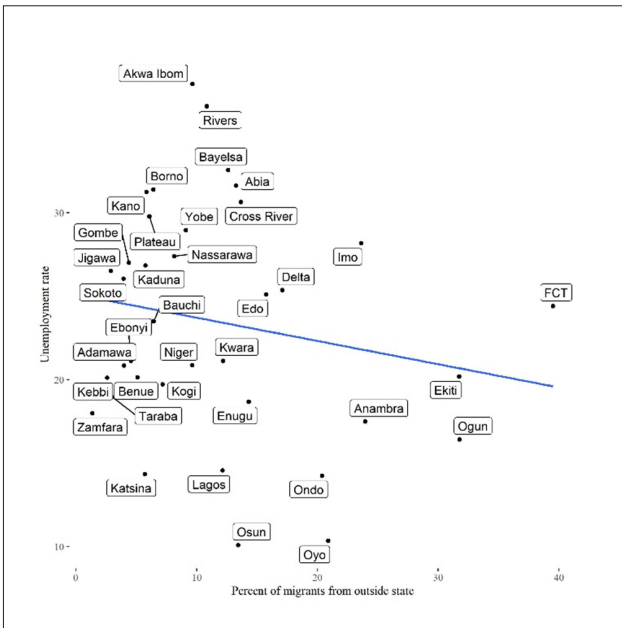


Fig 13: Percent of migrants from outside state vs Unemployment Rate

The correlation between the share of out-of-state migrants and unemployment is less clear. On average, states with a higher share of out-of-state migrants tend to have lower unemployment rates and vice versa. At the very least, out-of-state migrants are not contributing to unemployment challenges in the state where they migrate to.

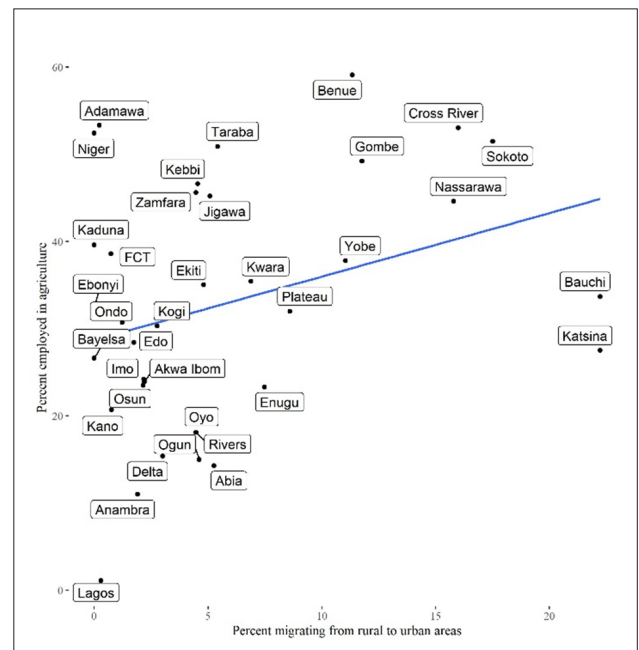
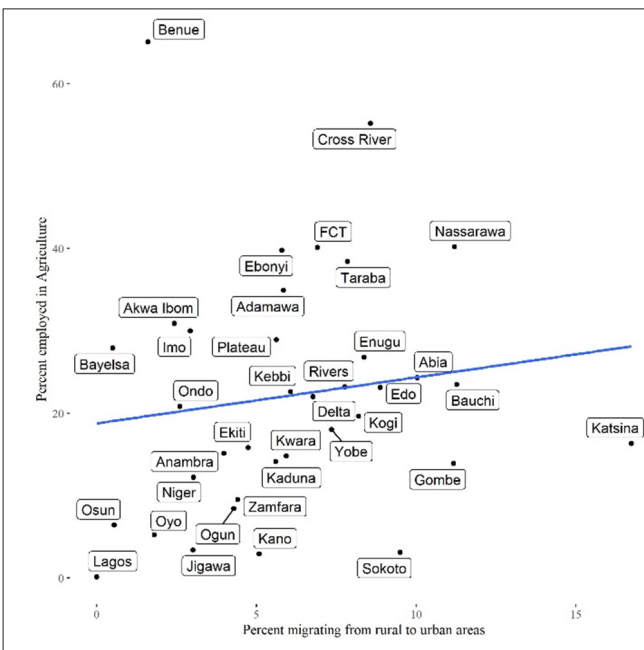


Fig 14: Percent migrating from rural to urban areas within the same state vs Percent employed in Agriculture for Women and Men

⁵ Source: National Bureau of Statistics Q3 2018

⁶ Source: 2019 General Household Survey – National Bureau of Statistics

Finally, trends in the expected patterns of rural-urban migration, from farm work to urban opportunities, also appear to be present. For instance, as shown in figure 15, states with larger numbers of women and men employed in (presumably rural) agriculture tend to have higher rates of rural to urban migration within the states. On the other hand, states with already large shares of urban population tend to have much lower rates of rural to urban migration as most people already live in urban areas.

MARRIAGE

Of the 25,997 women surveyed who were married or in a union, 29% remained in their current location without migrating, while 71% migrated within the last 10 years. Out of those who migrated, 44% did so from rural areas, while 54% migrated from either a city or a town. On the other hand, of 12,785 women who were never married, 50% have never migrated, 5.7% migrated within 6 months to their current location, 13% migrated between 1 to 4 years ago, and 32% migrated between 5 to 10 years ago. Most of these women, 69%, migrated from a city or a town, while 29% migrated from rural areas. Of the 7,811 men surveyed who were married or in a union, 45% remained in their current location without migrating, while 55% migrated within the last 10 years. Out of those who migrated, 29.3% did so from rural areas, while 70% migrated from either a city or town. Contrarily, of 9,536 men who were never married, 53% have never migrated, 1.5% migrated within 6 months to their current location, 9% migrated between 1 to 4 years ago, and 36% migrated between 5 to 10 years ago. Most of these men, 69%, migrated from a city or a town, while 29.5% migrated from rural areas. It can be concluded that marriage is one of the key contributing factors to internal migration.

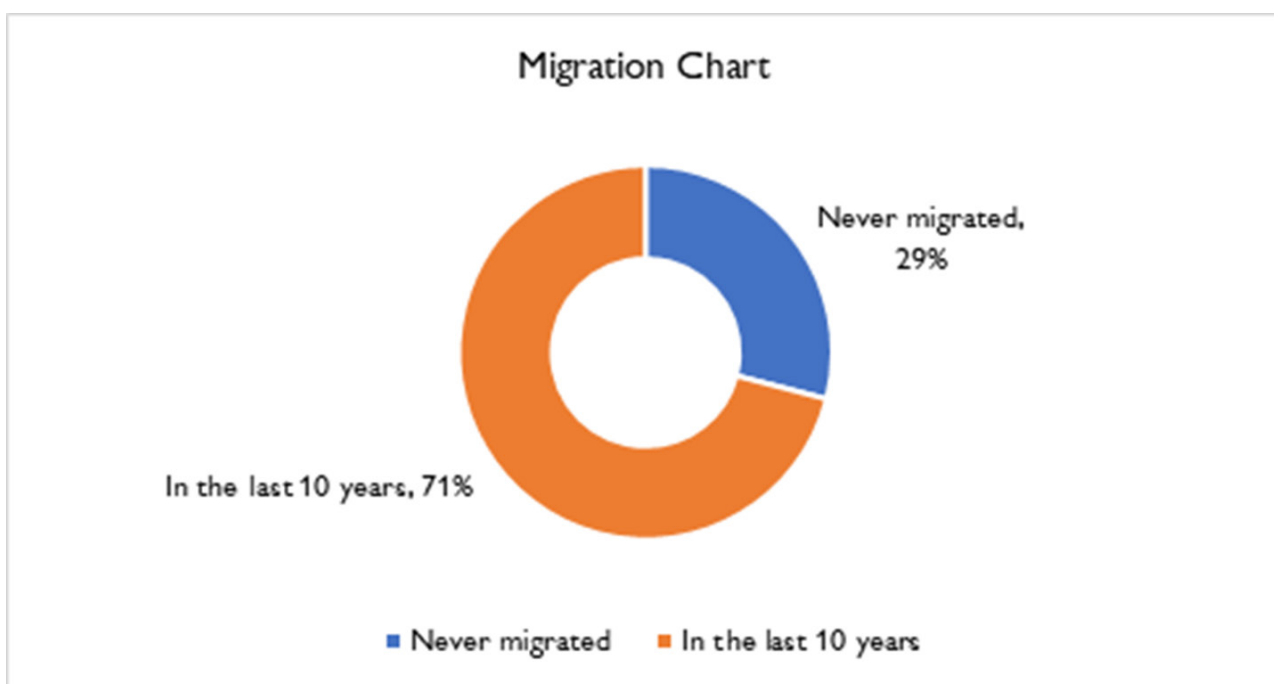


Fig 15: Marriage status of migrants.

Index	Married or in a Union	Never Married
Stayed in current location	29%	50%
Migrated within the last 10 years	71%	50%
Migrated from rural areas	Women: 44% Men: 29.3%	Women: 29% Men: 29.5%
Migrated from a city or town	Women: 54% Men: 70%	Women: 69% Men: 69%

The data indicates that a higher percentage of women who were married or in a union migrated compared to women who were never married. Men, regardless of their marital status, had a higher percentage of migration compared to women. The majority of those who migrated came from a city or town rather than a rural area. It is also notable that a relatively high percentage of never-married women migrated between 1 to 4 years ago, while most men who were never married have never migrated. Overall, the chart supports the conclusion that marriage is one of the key contributing factors to internal migration

CONFLICT

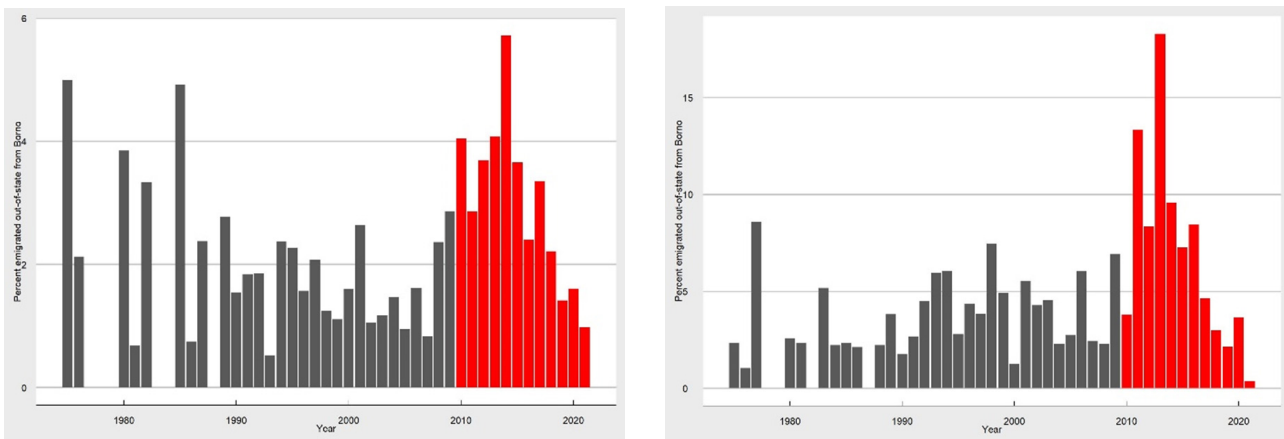


Fig 17: Percent of all out-of-state migrants who emigrated from Borno – Women and Men.

Nigeria has had to grapple with incidents of violence and conflict in recent decades with the conflict in the North-East perhaps the most significant. In principle, conflict tends to be a driver of emigration with people opting to move to safe places to maintain their livelihoods. We find some evidence of similar drivers in Nigeria. The Boko Haram conflict, by most accounts, became violent starting around 2009. We find that that the percent of out-of-state migrants who say they migrated from Borno starts to show a significant increase from 2009 for both women and men. Emigration only returned to pre-conflict levels in the past few years. This suggests that, at least in Borno, conflict was one of the drivers of migration. Although we do not analyze all conflict-related activities such as the farmer-herder clashes or conflicts in the Niger Delta, this evidence suggests that conflict could be one of the drivers of migration across Nigeria.

OTHERS

There are other potential factors not examined in this analysis which may have contributed to migration. Environmental factors such as desertification, soil erosion, and flooding may have forced people to migrate from rural to urban areas. Finally, social reasons like retirement, family reunification, or cultural affiliation may have also contributed to internal migration. As the data suggests, internal migration is not only rural-urban in nature. It is rural-rural, urban-urban, rural-urban, and urban-rural, and likely with all different drivers.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNAL MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

Internal migration in Nigeria also presents opportunities for development and growth. In theory, the movement of people can help to reduce poverty, increase economic growth, improve living standards, and create new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. Additionally, the diversification of culture and the exchange of ideas between people from various parts of the country can lead to the creation of new social networks, the development of innovative ideas and practices, and national integration.

People in Nigeria appear to have embraced the opportunities from migration with a significant percentage of the population migrating for a variety of reasons. This analysis only scratches the surface on these trends with significant room to further understand the challenges and consequences of this internal mobility to make migration work better. For instance, the impacts on the provision of infrastructure and basic amenities such as education, healthcare, and water supply in both rural and urban areas have not been adequately studied, and nor has the hypothesized impact of migration to urban areas and the proliferation of urban slums and overcrowding. The scale of migration, however, highlights the dangers of designing long-term development plans based solely on birthrates and mortality rates. Internal migration is therefore an important factor to consider when planning where to build schools, hospitals, public infrastructure and so on. The analysis also offers insights about the trends and drivers of international migration to and from Nigeria.

The trend of internal migration in Nigeria is likely to continue to change in the future. The factors that drive internal migration are constantly evolving and it is difficult to predict what the future trends will be. However, it is important to understand the factors that drive internal migration to develop effective policies to address its challenges and opportunities. The scale of migration in Nigeria also highlights the importance of research in understanding its effects. The impacts of migration on access to education, healthcare, water, and other basic services is still largely unresearched. The same case can be made for its drivers and the implications for urbanization and international migration. Ultimately, such research will inform policy to ensure migration works to improve the wellbeing of citizens.

PREPARED BY:

HAMIDOU POUFON. United Nations Children's Fund
MASUM Md. Reazul Al. International Organization for Migration
NONSO OBIKILI. United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
VICTOR LUTENCO. International Organization for Migration

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