

This 4Mi snapshot is the third of its kind in West Africa and follows overviews of profiles and reasons for departure (published [here](#)) and aspirations of refugees and migrants from West Africa (published [here](#)). It is based on data collected by 4Mi monitors between 1 July and 31 December 2018.

During this period 2535 refugees and migrants were interviewed in West Africa in Mali (Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu, Ber and Kayes), Niger (Niamey, Diffa and Agadez) and Burkina Faso (Dori, Bobo Dioulasso and Kantchari).

The aim of this snapshot is to provide an overview of the different ways in which refugees and migrants access information about migration in West Africa and how this access is influenced by their socioeconomic profile.

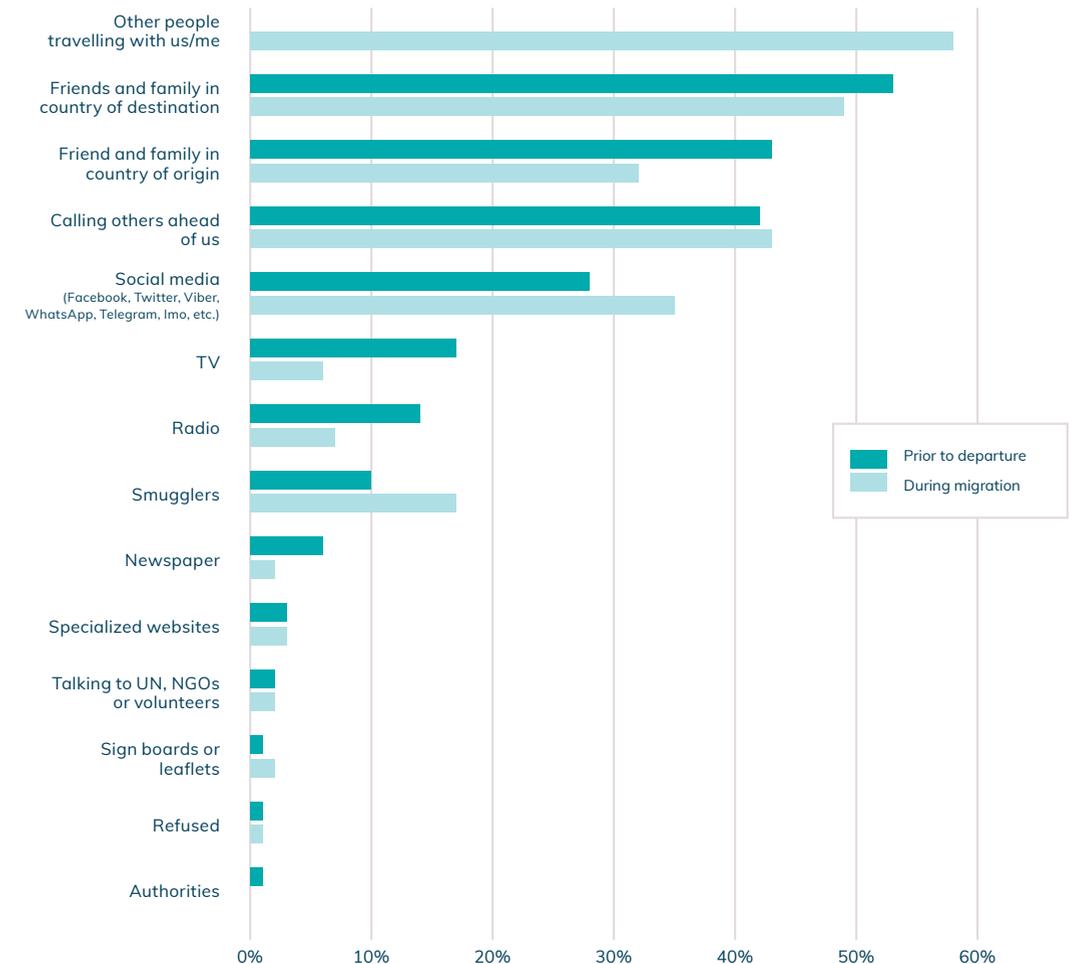
1. Profiles

Of the 2535 migrants and refugees interviewed, 72% are men and 28% are women. 9,7% of those interviewed come from rural areas and 90% indicate having an urban background (0,3% refused to answer this question). The most prominent nationalities interviewed were Guinea (15%), Burkina Faso (13%), Côte d'Ivoire (12%), Senegal (9%) and Niger (7%).

2. Main source of information on migration prior to departure and during migration

Friends and family in the country of destination (53%) and origin (43%) and calling others that are ahead on migration routes (42%) are most often cited as the main information sources on migration prior to departure. An interesting difference between male and female respondents is that, prior to departure, women tend to rely more on friends and family in countries of destination (59% of women vs. 51% of men) whereas men rely more often on friends and family in countries of origin (39% of women vs. 44% of men).

Main source of information prior to departure and during migration

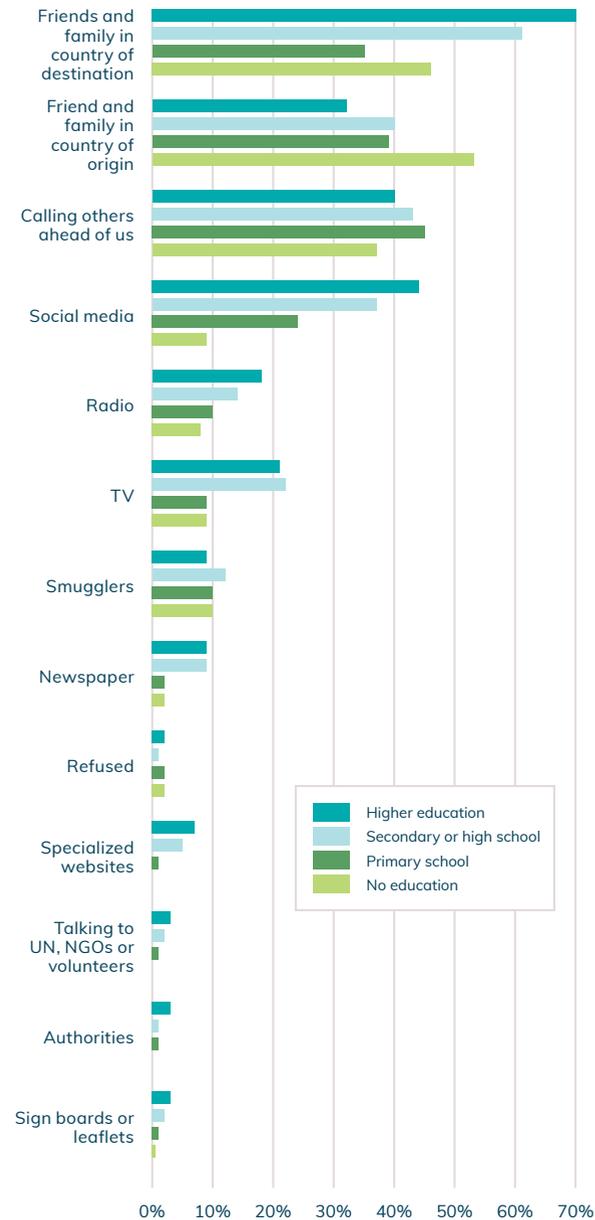


4Mi data suggests that during migration the primary information source shifts somewhat. Other migrants and refugees become the first source of information (60% of women vs. 58% of men) followed by friends and family in the country of destination (53% of women vs. 47% of men) and phone calls to others further ahead on migration routes (48% of women vs. 41% of men).

An interesting observation is that, both prior to and during migration, authorities (1%), sign boards and leaflets (1%), the UN, NGOs or volunteers (2%), only account as the main source of information on migration for 4% of those interviewed. This is a low number given the emphasis that many international organisations and NGO's have put in recent years on better informing and sensitising migrants.

Education levels seem to have a significant impact on how a person accesses information on migration, both before departure as during migration. The category of migrants and refugees interviewed by 4Mi that received the highest levels of education (master's or bachelor's degree or equivalent) more often gets its information from social media, radio, television, newspapers. They are also more often in touch with friends and family in countries of destination, origin and they call other migrants ahead of them more often. Their access to information is clearly more diversified than that of their less educated counterparts.

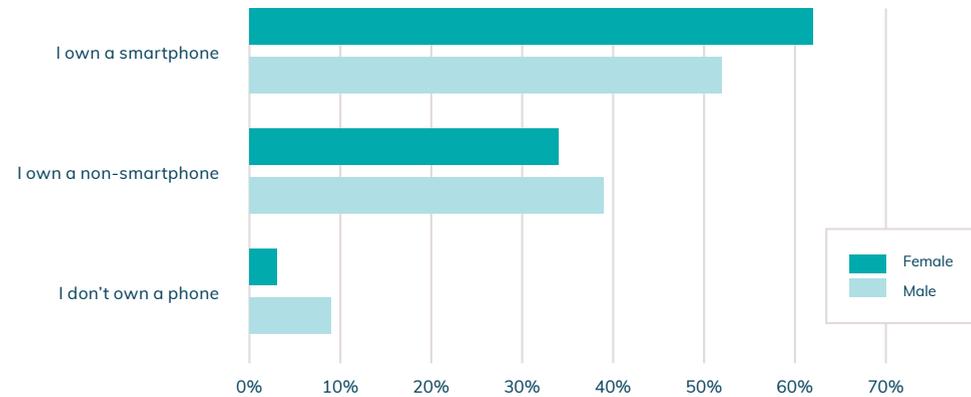
Main source of information on migration prior to departure by education level



3. Access to phones and social media

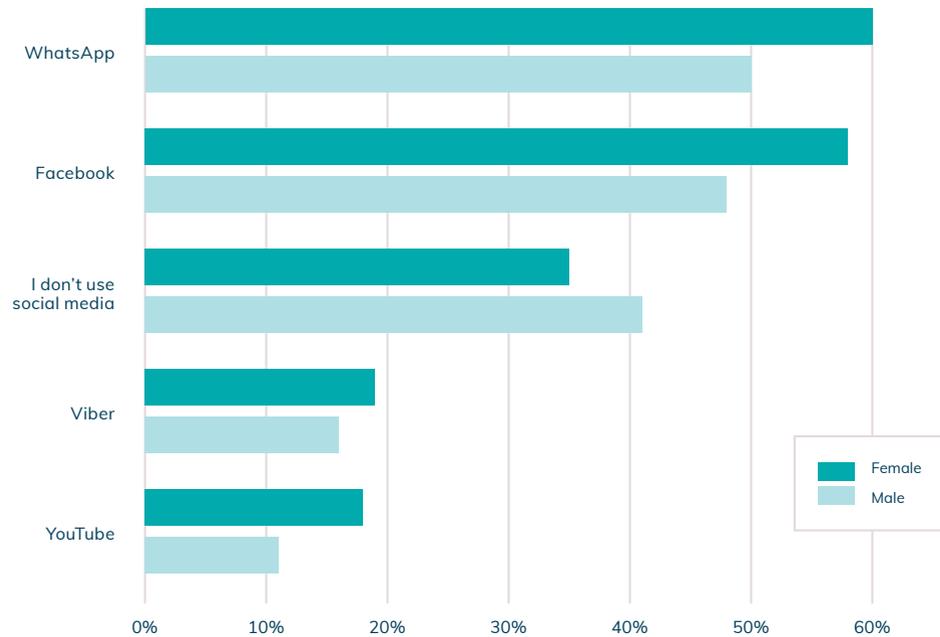
An important factor in the way a migrant or refugee accesses information prior to departure and during migration is the extent to which he or she has access to a phone. Phone access and the type of phone to which a person has access will determine the extent to which this person can access a more diverse set of information sources. 4Mi data shows that 92% of those interviewed own a phone, which is a smartphone in 54% of responses.

Phone possession by gender



Among the respondents, women have more access to phones than men, especially when it comes to smartphones (62% of interviewed women vs. 52% of interviewed men own a smartphone). Education levels clearly play a role, with those having enjoyed higher education (master's or bachelor's degree) owning a smartphone 86% of the time vs. 23% of the time for those with no education. This clearly links phone possession to the overall socioeconomic background of the migrant or refugee, given that those with higher education are likely better off than those with lower education. The urban-rural origin of the interviewed migrant or refugee does not seem to play a significant role in access to phones. Parallel to the results on access to phones are the findings in terms of access to social media, which is higher for women and those with higher education levels. WhatsApp and Facebook are the most commonly used social media platforms of those interviewed.

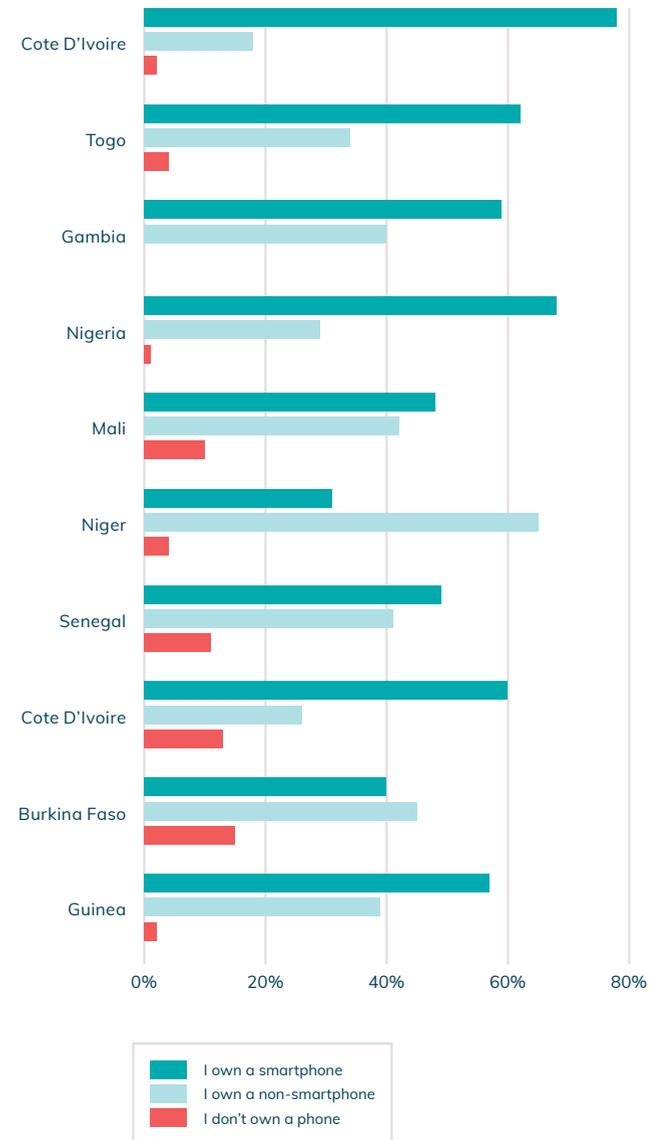
Top 5 most used social media by gender



Access to phones differs also depending on the country of origin of those interviewed. Migrants and refugees from Cameroon (78%), Nigeria (68%) and Togo (62%) have the highest rates of smartphone usage whereas those from Niger (65%), Burkina Faso (45%) and Senegal (41%) most often report using a non-smartphone. Not having access to any type of phone is most often reported by people from Burkina Faso (15%), Côte d'Ivoire (13%) and Senegal (11%)¹. These are worrying numbers given that migrants and refugees, even though their main source of information during migration is other migrants travelling with them, still largely depend on access-to-information strategies that depend on phones.

¹ The fact that 1 in 6 Burkinabe does not have access to a phone is especially problematic since people from Burkina Faso constitute the second largest nationality surveyed by 4Mi monitors from July to December 2018 (13.4% of surveys).

Phone possession by nationality

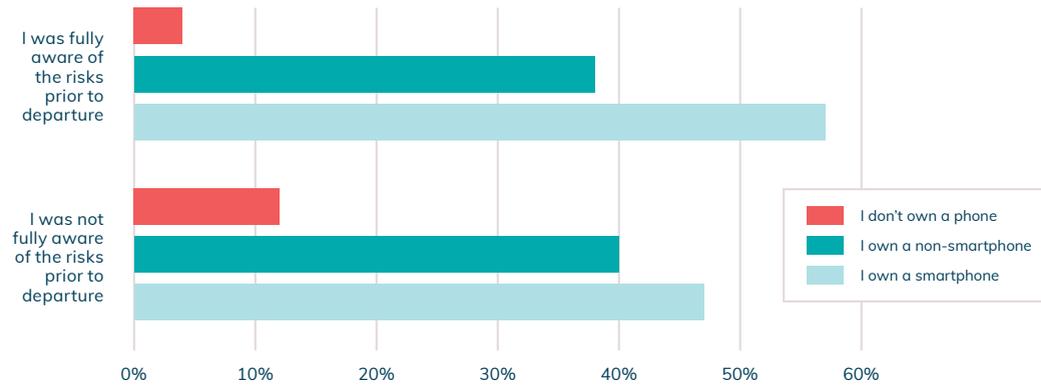


An article of the Mixed Migration Centre from January on the use of smartphones and social media in global mixed migration flows (published [here](#)) found that those refugees and migrants who do not have a phone rely more heavily on smugglers for their access to information on migration. It also pointed out the differences in context and the fact that in West Africa smugglers are a less important source of information in general. It is clear that coupling access to phones on the one hand to risk awareness and exposure to risk on the other is a tricky exercise. As outlined above phones clearly play an important role in accessing information. The question is however whether they increase risk awareness or, on the contrary, exposure to risk.

If there is one thing that 4Mi data confirms it is that one needs to be careful in linking up variables. On the one hand interviewed refugees and migrants that do not possess a phone are three times more likely to indicate that they were not fully aware of all risks related to their migration journey prior to departure. This seems to confirm the fact that possessing a phone is a critical element in being properly informed about potential risks on migration routes. On the other hand, women, who we have shown above to more often possess a phone, are more likely to indicate that they were not fully aware of those risks (39% of

women vs. 25% of men), seemingly contradicting a direct correlation between phone possession and risk awareness. Attempts to plot exposure to protection incidents against phone possession did not render any noteworthy tendencies.

Risk awareness vs. phone possession



While further research that goes beyond the scope of this snapshot would be needed, these findings seem to indicate that phone possession, while being an important enabler of access-to-information strategies, is only one factor in a complex set of variables that expose migrants and refugees to protection incidents on migration routes. It is clear however that given their role as an access-to-information multiplier, phones can increase refugees' and migrants' empowerment in how and from how many different sources they access information.

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) is an innovative approach for the collection and analysis of data along major mixed migration corridors, responding to the need for better data on protection issues with regards to asylum seekers, refugees and other people on the move. In Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, 4Mi seeks to help fill the knowledge gaps regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for refugees and migrants on the move within and from West Africa.

4Mi data, graphics and analysis are based on the accumulated, ongoing data collection by 4Mi field monitors through direct interviews with refugees and migrants on the move. Sample sizes are clearly indicated and represent a limited section of those on the move. All findings derived from the surveyed sample of migrants/refugees should not be used to make any inferences about the total population.

