

Why do Malians migrate irregularly?

The factors behind one's decision to migrate are multiple and interconnected in a complex way.

1 Cultural factors

West Africans have always travelled throughout history

Migration is seen as a coming-of-age ritual



2 Self-propulsion

Emigrants tend to promote migration among peers and relatives

The diaspora can provide information & financial/logistical support



3 Hardship of accessing regular venues

Visas are hard to obtain

Embassies and consulates are often not accessible



4 Low levels of security

Terrorism and insecurity are widespread in some regions

Some Malians face personal persecution



5 Low levels of services and infrastructures

Drinking water and electricity are not available everywhere

Healthcare is often expensive

People feel they enjoy low quality of life



6 Socio-economic problems

Youth unemployment is very high

Education does not provide the required skills

Agriculture is not profitable

Climate change makes income unpredictable



What is the Malians' migration imaginary?



The perception of **MIGRATION**

Intra-African mobility is very rooted in **Malians' collective consciousness**

Mali is seen as a country of **no opportunities** while **Europe** is seen as a borderless continent of **infinite opportunities**

Paradoxically, Malians **refuse to be in low-wage jobs** in Mali but are **willing** to (temporarily) fill them in Europe

Malians have nearly **no knowledge** of **international protection** and asylum procedures

Many Malian migrants are driven by a great sense of **naïve curiosity** and **religious fatalism**

The increasing **awareness of risks** does not **suffice** to discourage irregular migration



The role of **FAMILIES**

Some families resort to migration to enhance their **prestige** or **appease competition** among siblings or within extended households

Some Malians migrate irregularly to send **remittances** and help families remove the **stigma of poverty**

Others migrate to **escape family dynamics**, e.g. arranged marriages



The role of the **DIASPORA**

The Malian diaspora is **increasingly aware of the downsides** of irregular migration: poor reception conditions, mounting xenophobia, language barriers and isolation

They play **conflicting roles**: advocating against irregular migration and shaping a distorted positive picture of migration in Europe through social media

Sometimes the **achievements of Malians living in Europe** fuel the wish to migrate irregularly

Returnees raising awareness on risks often **lack credibility** and struggle being acknowledged, trusted and heard

Malians abroad sometimes provide perspective migrants with **information on destination countries** and **migratory routes**

Malians in Italy and Spain

Spain and Italy are the top destinations for Malian migrants behind France
(European Commission, 2016)



Malians residents are the **37th national group in Italy** and the 6th among sub-Saharan African countries (ISTAT 2018)

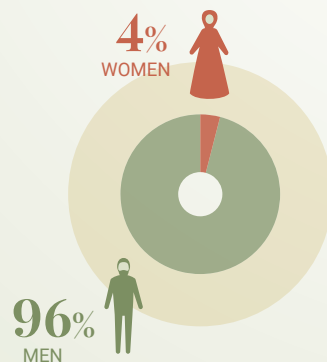
Arrivals by sea **peaked between 2014 and 2016** and continued to shrink since

Men/Women: 96%/4%
(ISTAT 2016-2018)

Regions with strongest presence:

- 1) **Lombardy**
- 2) **Lazio**
- 3) **Campania**

International protection has become the second reason for entry of non-EU citizens after family reunification (Italian Ministry of Interior & National Commission for the Right of Asylum)



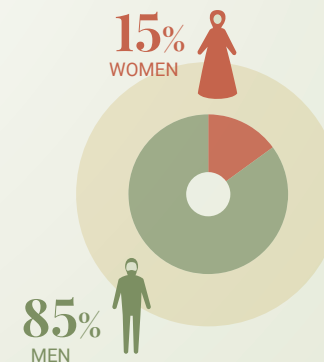
Malians accounted for **1.5-2% of the African migrant** population in Spain between 2009 and 2018 (Spanish Ministry of Labour, 2018)

Men/women: 85%/15%
(Spanish Ministry of Labour 2016-2018)

Regions with strongest presence:

- 1) **Catalonia**
- 2) **Andalusia**
- 3) **Valencia**

Spain and Mali signed a cooperation agreement on migration and in 2018 and set up a **voluntary return programme** for Malians



The role of the Malian diaspora in Italy and Spain



RETURN of Malians

Return can have a major impact on the **economic and social balance of families**

It is **widely underused** among the Malian diaspora as **conditions and compensations are not attractive** if not coupled with income generating activities

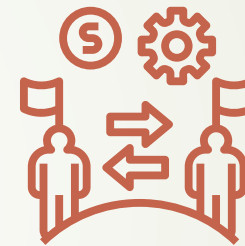
Returnees are **reluctant to share their experience** if return to Mali is perceived as a failure



The **IMPACT** on irregular migration

Malians abroad sometimes **support irregular migrants** out of **solidarity** or as an **investment**

Returnees raising awareness on risks often **lack credibility** and struggle being acknowledged, trusted and heard



Migration and **DEVELOPMENT** of Mali

The diaspora is currently engaged in **small-scale development projects** in Mali focusing on **emergency-oriented interventions** with **little development impact** (providing medical equipment and covering part of the medical staff's salaries)

Embassies often **fail** to enable the diaspora and **to act as a platform for coordination** and information exchange

Maliens' perception of local alternatives to irregular migration



Since 2011 several international cooperation projects have been launched, including:

Projects on **vulnerability and resilience** providing support before departure, along the route and and after return

Awareness-raising campaigns on the **risks of irregular migration** and the existence of alternative legal venues, especially international protection

Actions on **circular migration** and **intraregional migration** in West Africa

Resettlement projects targeting the Malian diaspora and leveraging their experience and assets to raise awareness on risks and creating employment opportunities in Mali

Maliens report some criticalities that hamper impact on migration and development in Mali:

More international cooperation is needed to dissuade people from using irregular venues

Circular migration, especially **seasonal work** and **vocational training**, is crucial but calls for more **bilateral agreements** between Mali and European countries as well as **visa facilitation**

Mali's development agenda lacks impact as it is too influenced by external actors and **does not respond to the socio-cultural specificities of the country**

Corruption is one of the top issues together with the **underdevelopment of basic infrastructures** and the inability to meet people's needs

The **Malian government's approach** to irregular migration is thought to be **ambiguous** since taking a harder stance against irregular migration would jeopardise the political mandate