THE JAPA REPORT

Factors Driving Migration Wave among Young Nigerians

The Japa Report:

Factors Driving Migration Wave Among Young Nigerians.

LEAP AFRICA

Credit: Alexis Akwagyiram/Semafor

This report seeks to showcase policy-relevant research findings on the migration wave among young people in Nigeria. The research was conducted independently and without the influence of the management of LEAP Africa. The ideas and facts presented are findings from the data analysis undertaken by the research team and, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the official position of LEAP Africa or project partners.

The research team apologises for any errors or omissions of copyright and would be grateful if notified of any corrections to be incorporated.

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Declarations

Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards set out by LEAP Africa's Child and Youth Protection Policy and in compliance with The Belmont Report's guidelines for the protection of human research participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation. Confidentiality and data security principles were followed.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicting interests that might have influenced the content of this research publication.

Limitations of study

This study has few limitations worth noting. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the factors influencing emigration intention are numerous and complex, and this study may not have captured all of them. Additionally, the survey was conducted in English and administered on the internet, potentially excluding young Nigerians lacking English proficiency or internet access. However, despite these limitations, this study has offered valuable insights into the underlying factors and concerns shaping migration intentions among young Nigerians. Furthermore, the recommendations derived from the findings offer potential pathways for various stakeholders to address these factors.

Reporting notes

Survey results have been rounded off to zero decimal places, due to which some figures might not add up to 100%. Some survey questions have multiple answers (such as "What are the primary reasons for considering relocation?"); responses in these cases will add up to more than 100%. All quotes were rendered verbatim as entered by the respondents, except curse or derogatory words, which were replaced with [obscenity].

Credit: LEAP Africa

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About LEAP Africa

LEAP Africa is a youth-focused leadership development organisation committed to raising leaders who will transform Africa; through interventions for young people, that bridges the gap in five areas: Education, Entrepreneurship, Employability, Active Citizenship and Health and Wellbeing (3Es+AH). As a mission driven organization, we recognize that youth leadership and inclusion is critical to nation building and wealth creation.

Our cutting-edge programmatic thrusts inspire and equip young people, changing their mindset, to lead ethically and motivating them to deliver positive change in their communities; while also supporting social entrepreneurs to build systems and structures that are crucial for business sustainability, thereby contributing to individual, social and national development.

As a foremost youth-focused non-profit in Nigeria, our focus is centred on two big pillars; making secondary education work for young people and raising talents for the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

LEAP Africa actively contributes to the body of knowledge leveraging our strategic direction of ecosystem building, thought leadership and advocacy. Our extensive research forms the basis for our books, articles, research papers and reports.

With millions of direct and indirect beneficiaries and footprints across Nigeria and 48 African countries, LEAP Africa is committed to our mission of raising leaders and empowering youth agencies across the continent to transform the Africa of our dreams.

Vision

An inclusive and thriving Africa built through dynamic, innovative and ethical youth leaders.

Mission

To inspire and empower African youth by developing capacity and providing resources for transformative personal, organizational, and community leadership.

IN **22** YEARS

Direct beneficiaries
80 Thousand +

Indirect beneficiaries
12 Million

48 African countries

Impact Investments
500 Million +

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a study on the migration wave among young people in Nigeria. The study aims to generate evidence and policy-relevant insights, encompassing a broad and ambitious scope. By collecting and analysing both primary and secondary data, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of migration intentions among young Nigerians, highlighting the associated factors, assumptions, expectations, and offering key recommendations.

Keywords: Nigeria, japa, migration, young Nigerians, push factors, pull factors, assumptions, recommendations

Background

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a significant surge in emigration drive among its youth. This phenomenon, colloquially known as the "**Japa wave**," reflects a growing desire among Nigerian youth to seek opportunities abroad and has led to an increasing number of young Nigerian emigrants and aspiring emigrants. "Japa" is a Yoruba term, which literally means to escape or flee from danger or unpleasant situations. While the term itself connotes a prevailing negative perception of young Nigerians about the country, the overall implications of this human capital loss on the country is even more concerning.

The Japa wave has attracted significant interest from policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders alike, prompting a closer examination of its underlying drivers, and implications for the individuals involved, their families and communities, the Nigeria state, and the destination countries.

One of the fundamental principles in migration theories is the differentiation between "push" and "pull" factors. Push factors refer to the conditions or circumstances in migrants' countries of origin that compel them to leave, while pull factors represent the attractions or opportunities in destination countries that draw migrants to relocate. These factors often vary significantly across countries, regions, and demographic groups.

This study investigated the factors and concerns influencing migration intention among young Nigerians, shedding light on the associated risks, assumptions, fears, and expectations underlying their decisions.

Study components

The study employed a semi-structured questionnaire deployed to young Nigerians through online platforms. The data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and GraphPad Prism. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the sociodemographic characteristics and responses. To assess if there were significant associations between selected sociodemographic or socioeconomic factors and migration intention among the respondents, Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests were performed at a confidence level of 95%.

A total of 491 young Nigerians across the six geopolitical regions of the country participated in the study, 55% were males and 45% were females, while 3% identified as persons living with disabilities.

Key study findings

A. Migration intention

The findings revealed a high prevalence of migration intention among young Nigerians,
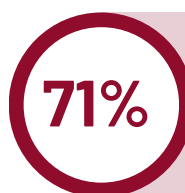
71% 71% of the participants are considering relocating abroad, **while 85%** expressed that they will migrate from Nigeria if they have the opportunity.

70% Majority (70%) expressed their preference to migrate to three countries: **Canada** (29%), the **United States of America** (22%) and the **United Kingdom** (19%).

The major approaches the respondents intend to migrate are through **education-based** (63%) and **skilled worker visa-based** (43%).

61% More than half of the respondents plan to relocate within **2024** (39%) and **2025** (22%), demonstrating a strong commitment to their migration aspirations.

Financially, many individuals are willing to invest substantial amounts, with over half intending to use personal savings and nearly one-fifth considering selling their properties. Notably, a portion (26%) expects to recoup their migration expenses within the first-year post-relocation, underscoring their optimism about economic opportunities in their chosen destinations.

B. Push and pull factors

The respondents indicated that their intention to migrate from Nigeria is primarily driven by a combination of push and pull factors.

Economic factors, such as the desire for a better standard of living (60%), improved job opportunities (58%), and economic stability (42%), play a significant role.

Educational prospects (52%) also factor into their decision-making process. Additionally, issues related to **politics and governance,** including insecurity (37%), inadequate social amenities (33%), and political instability (18%), serve as drivers of migration intention among young Nigerians.
A prevailing theme of eroding trust and hope in governance and public sector in the country was evident among participants.

Social factors, such as social network expectations and information from social media, also exert considerable influence on migration decisions. Furthermore, hypothesis testing revealed that personal aspirations, along with economic, political, and social factors, hold greater significance compared to demographic factors in explaining migration intention among young Nigerians.

C. Risks, assumptions and fears

While migration intention is primarily driven by a mix of push and pull factors, the fears, uncertainties, assumptions, and expectations related to the migration process also influence migration decisions.

This study found that many participants **(67%) are open to taking temporary jobs in the informal sector** upon migration. A notable percentage (41%) also intend to migrate with their spouses, while others plan to include their children (23%) and siblings (22%). This highlights that while the intending migrants are willing to adapt to challenging circumstances, they also wish to maintain familial bonds and support systems in their new environment.

Respondents also shed light on their fears and concerns regarding migration. Close to half **(49%) of the respondents expressed fears related to xenophobic attacks**, racial discrimination, or exploitation in destination countries, while others cited concerns about cultural barriers, communication issues, unemployment, financial instability, and discrimination based on certificates or skills. Respondents also expressed fears about **misinformation and unmet expectations**.

The impact of these fears on migration plans varied among young Nigerians. Some emphasised the importance of planning and adaptability, while others have experienced a change of mind. Additionally, some respondents are motivated to seek alternative approaches to migration, such as remote work opportunities.

D. Perceived impacts of mass migration

The findings revealed nuanced perspectives on the perceived benefits and negative impacts of mass migration among respondents.

45% Less than half (45%) believed the country benefits from mass migration, contrasting with the majority (55%) who expressed doubt or uncertainty.

50% Globalisation was cited by 50% as a benefit

43% while 43% identified migrant remittances,

32% 32% noted increased opportunities for those remaining in Nigeria.

72% However, majority (72%) believed mass migration negatively impacts the country,

73% with brain drain (73%),

54% global perception of a failed state (54%),

51% revenue loss (51%),

50% increased demand for foreign currencies (50%),

43% and demotivated workers (43%) among the cited negative consequences.

Furthermore, concerns about increased crime rates, public or political apathy, and exacerbated desperation for affluence are also expressed. These highlight divergent views on the implications of mass migration among young Nigerians.

E. Reconsiderations & recommendations

Participants also shared insights about the things that would make them reconsider their intention to migrate or encourage them to return to the country in the future.

55% Over half of the respondents (55%) expressed a desire to return to Nigeria permanently in the future if they migrate.

The motivations for this included

1 a **"sense of attachment to one's homeland,"**

2 **"family ties,"** and

3 the aspiration for a **"triumphant return"** after achieving success.

Additionally, two prevailing attitudes toward the Nigerian project were observed among the respondents: a willingness to return

A *if the country improves* (Attitude A) or

B *to contribute to its development* (Attitude B).

Findings showed that certain economic, political, and social factors could make young Nigerians reconsider migrating from the country or motivate them to consider returning to the country if they eventually migrate. These factors mirror those driving them to consider migration in the first place and include good governance, a peaceful and safe environment, access to basic amenities, favourable economic conditions, remote job opportunities, and a good standard of living.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides insights into the intricate interplay of personal aspirations and various economic, social, and political factors in shaping migration intentions among young Nigerians. It is evident that there is a growing desire among young Nigerians to japa due to the country's perceived increasing inadequacy in meeting their needs and aspirations. Maslow's hierarchy of human needs could serve as a framework to illustrate the needs and aspirations of young Nigerians and their expectations from the Nigerian state and society. This highlights that in order to achieve the Nigeria that young Nigerians wish to see, there is a need for collective efforts from the government, public institutions, society, and populace to address the push and pull factors. By doing this, Nigeria can become an enabling environment, encouraging young Nigerians to remain in the country and contribute to its progress and development.

Application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to push and pull factors of migration among young Nigerians

Note: Society in this chart encompasses the NGOs, CSOs, for profit organisations, and the society at large.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory that proposes a hierarchical structure of human needs, categorised into five levels: At the base are physiological needs, which are the most basic and fundamental requirements for human survival, followed by safety needs for security and stability. The next level encompasses social needs, followed by esteem needs for self-respect and recognition. At the pinnacle is self-actualization, representing the realisation of one's potential and pursuit of personal growth. According to Maslow, individuals strive to fulfil these needs in a sequential manner, with higher-level needs becoming relevant only after lower-level needs are satisfied. This theory suggests that satisfying basic needs is essential for individuals to pursue higher-level goals and aspirations. In this chart, the push and pull factors driving migration intention among young Nigerians are placed into their equivalent levels in Maslow's theory.

Credit: Temi KOGBE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1.0

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a significant surge in emigration drive among its youth. This phenomenon, colloquially known as the "**Japa wave**," reflects a growing desire among Nigerian youth to seek opportunities abroad and has led to an increasing number of young Nigerian emigrants and aspiring emigrants.

The Japa wave has garnered widespread attention from policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders alike, prompting a closer examination of its underlying drivers, and implications for the individuals involved, their families and communities, the Nigeria state, and the destination countries.

Migration is a complex process that involves individuals or communities moving from one geographical location to another. Migration broadly takes two forms: within a country (internal migration) and across international boundaries (external migration). In international migration, migrants are broadly classified as "migrants," "refugees", and "asylum seekers," depending on the circumstances surrounding their migration.[1] While there is no consensus on the length of stay to define a migrant, there are a few widely accepted guidelines to distinguish migrants from temporary travellers and tourists. A short-term migrant is a person that has lived between 3 and 12 months outside their country of birth, while a long-term migrant is a person that has lived for at least a year outside their country of birth.[2]

For decades, migration has attracted interest globally due to its complexity and impacts. Developmental studies have shown that migration could have both beneficial and detrimental impacts on the individuals, origin country and destination country. For individuals, migration presents opportunities for personal and professional growth, including access to better career opportunities, higher wages, improved living standards, and enhanced educational opportunities.[3] However, migration can also entail challenges such as cultural adaptation, social isolation, and separation from family and community.[3,4] For origin countries, migration can alleviate unemployment, and through remittances contribute to reduction of poverty and economic growth.

However, it may also lead to loss of human resources, loss of skilled labour, and demographic imbalances. Host countries may benefit from migration by addressing labour shortages, contributing to economic growth, and enriching cultural diversity. Nonetheless, migration can strain public facilities, exacerbate social tensions, and raise concerns about integration and security.[3]

In both research and international development, several migration theories have been developed with special focus on economic, sociological, cultural, and geographical factors.[5] These theories provide foundational concepts and frameworks for understanding the drivers, dynamics, and consequences of human migration across borders.

One of the central tenets of migration theories is the distinction between "push" and "pull" factors. Push factors refer to the conditions or circumstances in migrants' countries of origin that compel them to leave, such as poverty, political instability, conflict, environmental degradation, and lack of economic opportunities.[6,7] In contrast, pull factors represent the attractions or opportunities in destination countries that draw migrants to relocate, including economic prosperity, job opportunities, access to education and healthcare, political stability, and social networks.[6,7]

While there is a consensus in the literature regarding the role of push and pull factors in shaping migration patterns, studies have shown that these factors can vary significantly across countries, regions, and demographic groups.[3,8] Migration studies emphasise the need to localise analyses and consider context-specific factors that influence migration decisions, taking into account differences in socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, political contexts, and historical factors.

In Nigeria, following independence in 1960, migration patterns could be grouped into four eras: the civil and political unrest stages of the 1960s; the downfall of the petroleum boom in the 1980s; the military regime of the mid-1990s and the past two decades of mass migration from Nigeria to other countries across the world.[9] Various studies have investigated these different eras, the associated factors and impacts.

In particular, the most recent trend of mass migration of Nigerians, popularly known as "Japa wave" has attracted significant interest. "Japa" is a Yoruba term, which literally means to escape or flee from danger or unpleasant situations.[8] While the term itself connotes a prevailing negative perception of young Nigerians about the country, the overall implications of this human capital loss on the country is even more concerning.

The mass exodus of skilled, educated, and young Nigerians contributes to a growing brain drain phenomenon in the country, depriving Nigeria of valuable human capital and hindering its efforts towards sustainable development. Reports have shown that this human capital loss is compounding the existing challenges in sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology.[10–12]

Studies have shown that a number of economic and political factors contribute to the recent surge of migration among Nigerians.[8,13–17] Economic factors include widespread unemployment, underemployment, and limited economic opportunities within the country. While political factors include corruption level, insecurity, and inadequate infrastructure. These factors, when compared to better opportunities, infrastructures, amenities and living standards in the destination countries, compel many Nigerians to want to emigrate.

"Japa" is a Yoruba term, which literally means to escape or flee from danger or unpleasant situations. While the term itself connotes a prevailing negative perception of young Nigerians about the country, the overall implications of this human capital loss on the country is even more concerning.

While existing literature offers valuable insights into the Japa phenomenon, a few gaps and areas needing further exploration exist. Firstly, many studies focused on specific sectors (such as healthcare) and destination countries (such as the UK). Additionally, many studies primarily examined demographics, migration intention and driving factors. Furthermore, methodological gaps such as small sample size, non-nationally representative sample, lack of qualitative or quantitative data limited the generalizability of findings from existing studies. This study focuses on factors and concerns driving migration intention among young Nigerians in various sectors across the country, shedding light on their risks, assumptions, fears, and expectations. It provides insights and recommendations that could inform policies and initiatives towards building the Nigeria many young Nigerians aspire to see.

METHODOLOGY

Credit: LEAP Africa

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study setting

Nigeria is a country located in the western region of the Africa continent. It comprises a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and 36 states across 6 geopolitical zones: North East, North West, North Central, South East, South West, and South South. The national capital, Abuja, is situated in the FCT, which falls within the North Central geopolitical zone. Nigeria has a population of approximately 230 million people, with more than 300 ethnic groups and over 500 languages.[18] The official language of Nigeria is English. About 98% of the population identifies as either Muslim (50%) or Christian (48%), while 2% practice other religions or no religion.[19] The statutory disaggregation of gender in the country is into male and female.

2.2 Study design and instrument

This research employed a cross-sectional design. The study utilised a pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire developed in the English Language. The questionnaire was administered using convenience sampling through a SurveyMonkey link shared on multiple online platforms such as email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Responses were collected from 26th January to 5th April 2024, when the survey was closed.

Figure 2.1

Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states and six geopolitical zones
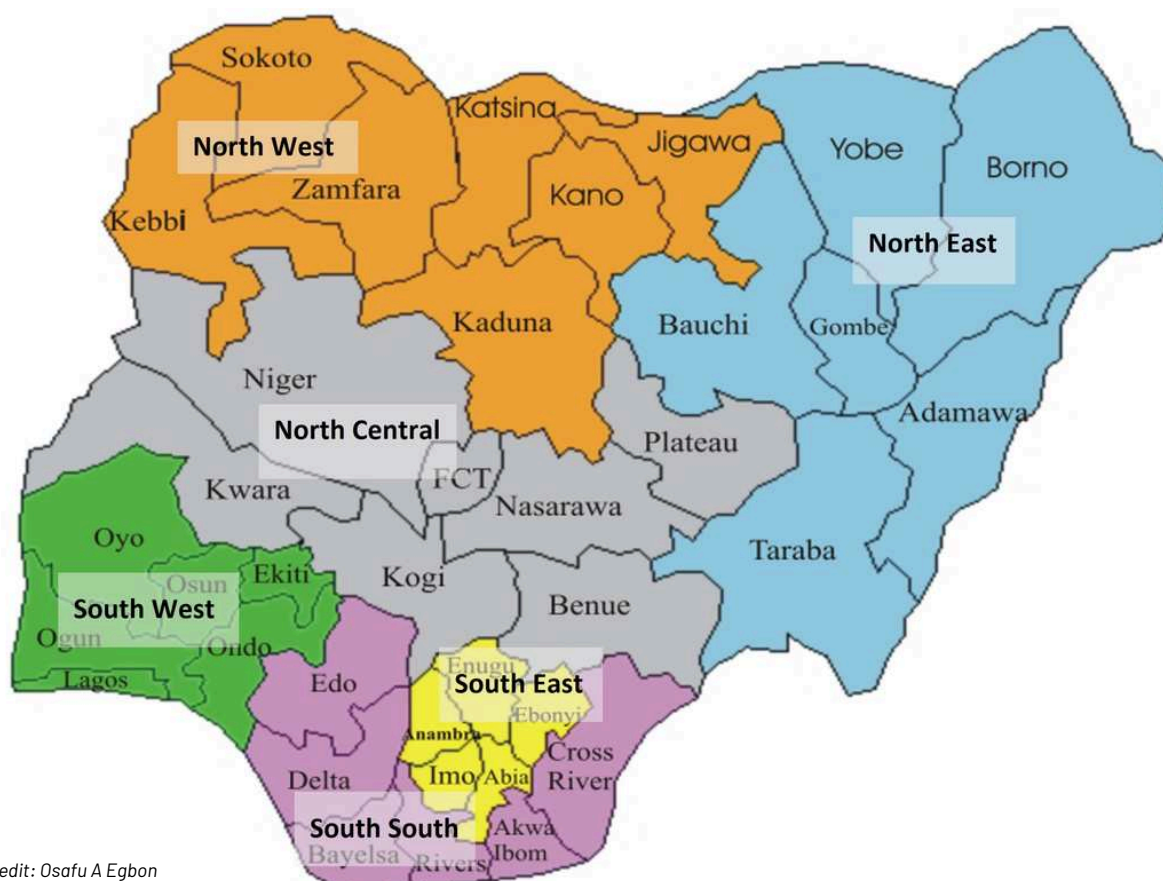
Credit: Osafu A Egbon

2.3 Study participants

The study targeted young Nigerians. The sample size was determined based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, which resulted in a minimum sample size of 385 responses. A total of 530 responses were received at the end of the study. Participants who were below the age of 18, above the age of 40, and those who only provided consent but did not respond to any of the survey questions were excluded. This led to a reduction to 491 responses, which were then used for the analysis.

2.4 Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and GraphPad Prism (version 10). Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequencies, were used to summarise the sociodemographic characteristics and responses of the participants. To assess if there are significant associations between selected sociodemographic/socioeconomic factors and migration intention among the respondents, Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test (were appropriate) were performed at a confidence level of 95%. A p value ≤ 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

Credit: LEAP Africa

FINDINGS

FINDINGS

3.0

3.1 Overview of participants

A. Sociodemographic characteristics

The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents are as presented in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1. The gender distribution indicates a slight majority of males (55%) compared to females (45%). This aligns with a recent report,[20] indicating a higher proportion of male social media users compared to female users in Nigeria, as the survey respondents were predominantly recruited through social media platforms. The majority of respondents fall within the 26 to 35 age group (63%), often characterised by individuals who have completed their education and are in the early stages of their careers or professional endeavours. A small percentage of respondents (3%) identified as persons living with disabilities. While this proportion may seem relatively low, it closely mirrors the national average of approximately 2.3%.[21]

The education levels among the respondents show that a substantial proportion holds at least a bachelor's degree (61%) or higher educational qualifications such as master's degrees or post-graduate diplomas (22%). This reflects a relatively high level of educational attainment, which could have implications for their socio-economic aspirations, expectations, and social mobility. Marital status data reveals that the majority of respondents are single (69%), followed by married individuals (30%). This aligns with global trends of delaying marriage among young adults.[22] About 98% of the respondents identify as either Muslim (26%) or Christian (73%). This underscores the significance of these two faiths within the nation's religious landscape. The respondents were spread across different regions of Nigeria, encompassing both urban and rural locales. A slight majority were from the southern region (56%) compared to the northern region (44%). The majority of respondents reside in urban areas (64%), followed by semi-urban (28%) and rural areas (8%).

Figure 3.1
Some sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Educational qualification

Bachelors Degree	61%
Master's or PGD	22%
Diploma	10%
Secondary School	6%
Other	1%
PhD	<1%
Primary School	<1%

491 Participants
45% Females
55% Males
3% PWD

Geographical distribution

North Central	**21%**
North West	**10%**
North East	**12%**
South South	**10%**
South West	**39%**
South East	**8%**

Urban	**64%**
Rural	**28%**
Semi-urban	**8%**
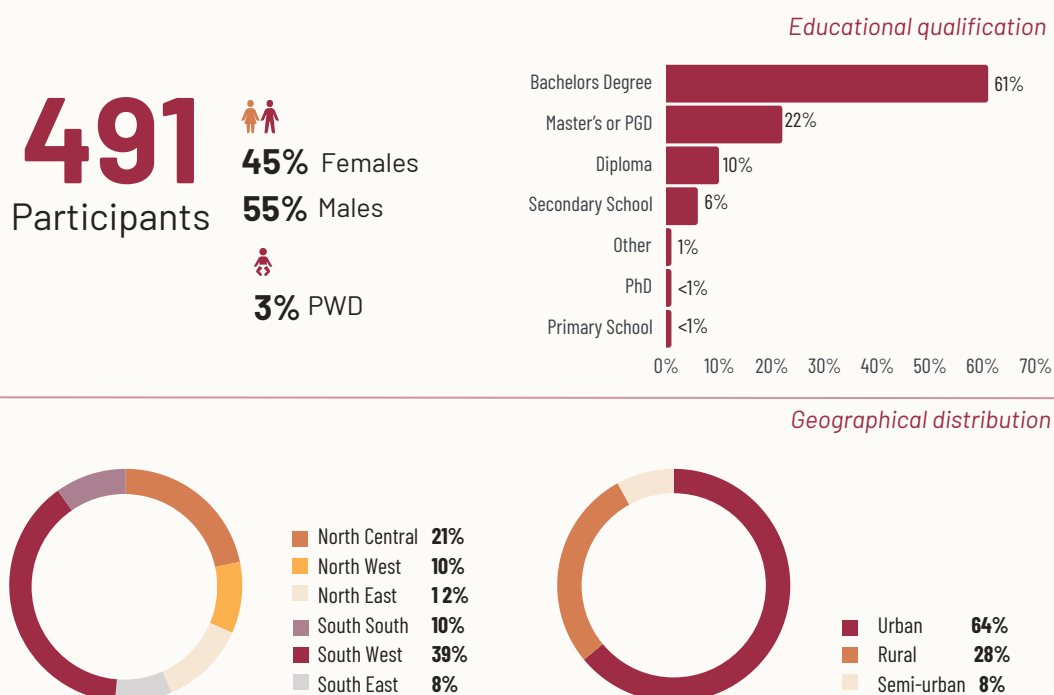
Table 3.1

Other sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Percentage (%)
Age-group	
18 to 25	24
26 to 35	63
36 to 40	13
Marital status	
Married	30
Single	69
Separated /Divorced	<1
Widowed	<1
Religion	
Christianity (Christian)	73
Islam (Muslim)	26
Prefer not to say	1
Other	<1

B. Socioeconomic characteristics

The socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents were captured in terms of their employment status, sector of employment and salary range (Figure 3.2). Majority of the respondents are either employed by organisations (48%) or are self-employed through businesses or freelancing (23%). A considerable portion of respondents are also students (15%) or unemployed (12%). The sectoral distribution of employment reveals that notable percentages of the respondents are from the NGO or non-profit (25%), education (17%) and healthcare (9%) sectors. Additionally, a considerable proportion works in the IT/Telecom (5%), manufacturing (5%) and finance & insurance (4%) sectors. The monthly salary ranges show a diverse spectrum of earnings among the respondents. Majority fall within the lower income brackets, with 11% earning below N30,000, the national minimum wage and 19% earning just about 2 to 3 times the national minimum. A similar percentage (18%) indicated "None (or Not Applicable)" as their salary range, suggesting a considerable proportion of the respondents may not be receiving regular income or may not feel comfortable disclosing their earnings.

Figure 3.2

Socioeconomic characteristics of participants

Employment status

Other		**2%**
Unemployed		**12%**
Student		**15%**
Self-employed (I own a business/Freelancing)		**23%**
Employed (I work for an organisation)		**48%**

What sector do you currently work in?

Sector	Percentage
NGO or Non-profit	25%
Education	17%
None (Not Applicable)	17%
Others	15%
Healthcare	9%
IT/Telecom	5%
Manufacturing	5%
Finance & insurance	4%
Entertainment	2%
Oil & Gas	2%

What is your current monthly salary range?

Salary range	Percentage
Under N30,000	11%
N30,000–N49,000	10%
N50,000–N99,000	19%
N100,000–N149,000	12%
N150,000–N199,000	6%
N200,000–N249,000	6%
N250,000–N449,000	10%
N500,000–N1,000,000	3%
Above N1,000,000	3%
None (Not Applicable)	18%

Credit: LEAP Africa

3.2 Emigration intention among young Nigerians

To assess the emigration intention of the participants, two key questions were asked in the survey. Q1: Are you considering relocating out of the country? and Q2: Would you migrate from Nigeria if the opportunity presents itself? The possible answers were "yes," "no" and "not sure." Participants who indicated intention to migrate were asked follow-up questions on their preferred destinations and anticipated time of migration.

Q1 (Consideration to migrate):

As shown in Figure 3.3, a significant majority (71%) of respondents are contemplating relocating out of Nigeria, highlighting the widespread desire among young Nigerians to explore opportunities abroad. Only 15% firmly expressed no intention to relocate, while 14% were uncertain.

Q2 (Willingness to migrate):

As shown in Figure 3.3, an overwhelming majority (85%) indicated their readiness to migrate if presented with the opportunity. Notably, about half of those that expressed no intention to relocate or were uncertain indicated that they would migrate if they had the opportunity. This high level of willingness underscores the determination of young Nigerians to seek better prospects beyond their homeland, despite potential challenges associated with migration.

Figure 3.3

Migration intention among young Nigerians

Are you considering relocating out of the country?

■	Yes	**71%**
■	No	**15%**
■	Not sure	**14%**

Would you migrate from Nigeria if the opportunity presents itself?

■	Yes	**85%**
■	No	**8%**
■	Not sure	**8%**
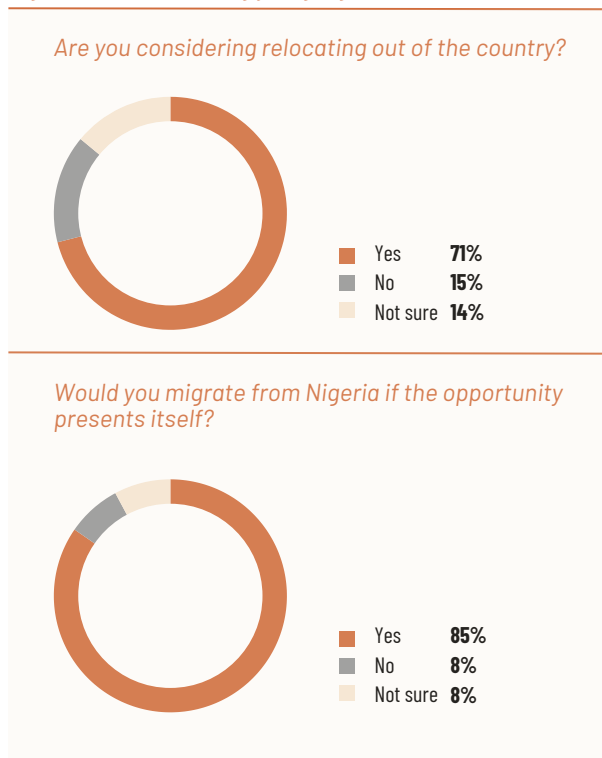
7 out of 10 young Nigerians are considering relocation from the country; 8 out of 10 young Nigerians would migrate if presented with the opportunity.

Figure 3.4

Preferred migration destinations among young Nigerians

Country	%
Canada	29%
United States of America	22%
United Kingdom	19%
Not Applicable	13%
Others	6%
Netherlands	5%
Australia	3%
Sweden	2%
Asia	1%
South Africa	1%
Ghana	<1%
Middle East	<1%
North Africa	0%
Central/South America	0%
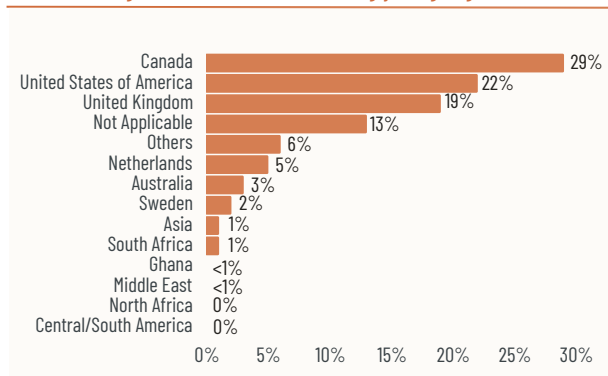
Preferred destinations:

Majority of the respondents (70%) expressed their preference for three countries. Canada was the most preferred destination, with 29% expressing a desire to migrate there. This preference could be attributed to Canada's welcoming immigration policies, robust economy, and diverse opportunities. The United States of America (USA: 22%) and the United Kingdom (UK: 19%) followed closely, indicating the allure of these Western nations for young Nigerians seeking opportunities abroad.

Anticipated time of migration:

A notable portion of the respondents (39%) envision relocating from Nigeria within 2024, suggesting a sense of urgency in their migration intent. A similar percentage (31%) are contemplating relocating within the next two years. This shows a near-term outlook among young Nigerians regarding their relocation aspirations.

> **More than 50% of participants intend to relocate within 2024 and 2025.**

How firm is the intention to migrate?

While the numbers that show the emigration intention among young Nigerians may suggest a significant wave of emigration in the foreseeable future, it is important to differentiate between intention and action. People might express interest to relocate or even have tentative timelines but have yet to undertake any definite steps towards achieving their migration intent. However, intention could strongly correlate with actual migration. In a study involving mostly European respondents, utilising both an initial survey and a follow-up survey after 2 years, it was found that approximately 70% of participants who expressed an intention to migrate eventually followed through and left their countries.[23] In this study, a few questions were used to gauge the strength of the migration intentions among the respondents.

Specific plans:

Only 11% of respondents claim to have everything meticulously planned, ready to embark on their journey (Figure 3.6). A larger proportion (28%) expressed a moderate level of preparation, believing that their plans will materialise successfully. The majority (46%) admitted to lacking concrete plans but expressed optimism in figuring it out eventually. However, among the 11% that have specific plans, more than half (53%) intend to migrate within 2024, while an additional 40% are expected to relocate within the next two years.

Figure 3.5

Anticipated time of migration among young Nigerians

What year do you have in mind to relocate... ?

2024	39%
2025	22%
2026	9%
2027	2%
2028	2%
Not sure	16%
Not Applicable	11%
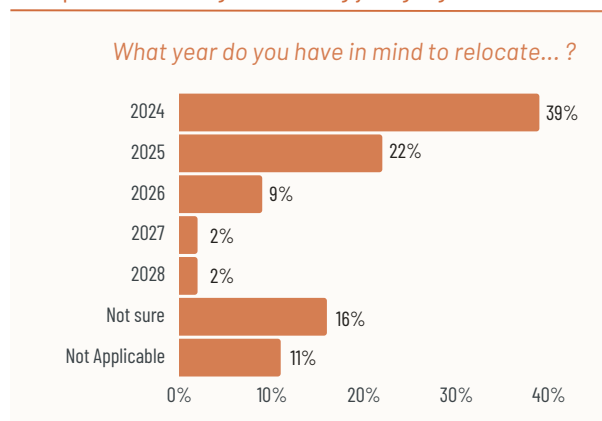
Figure 3.6

Specific plans for migration among young Nigerians

Do you have any specific plans... ?

Yes, I have everything planned and set; I just have to board the plane	11%
Sort of, and I believe everything will work out	28%
No, I don't, but I will figure it out, hopefully	46%
Not Applicable	14%
Others	1%
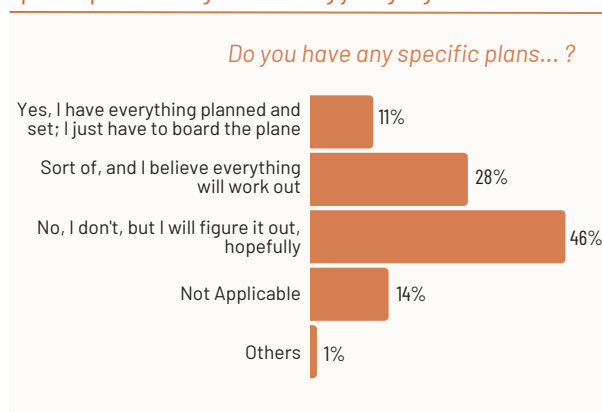
Travel documents:

Majority of the respondents (76%) have not travelled outside of the country before, suggesting a lack of experience with navigating international travel processes (Figure 3.7). However, no significant association was found between respondents' experience with international travel and their consideration of emigration (Appendix 2). Conversely, a significant association was observed between travel experience and emigration intention in terms of willingness (Appendix 5). Specifically, respondents without international travel experiences were more inclined to consider migrating if presented with the opportunity.

A high percentage (61%) possess valid international passports. Among this group, 65% have not experienced international travel, suggesting a level of preparedness towards their emigration intention. In addition, a significant association was observed between possessing an international passport and having emigration intention (Appendix 2).

Financial commitment:

While a significant number of young Nigerians expressed intentions to emigrate, a major limiting factor would be the financial implications. Migration is a capital-intensive venture. Intending migrants are often required to spend on various expenses such as applications, travel documents, language proficiency tests, flights, settlement expenses, health insurance, tuition, and proof of funds. These expenses could range from hundreds to thousands of dollars depending on the type of visa and country. Therefore, financial preparedness and commitment could suggest the strength of an aspiring migrant' intent.

Figure 3.7

Travel experience and document of respondents

Have you ever travelled outside of the country before?

| | Yes | **24%** |
| | No | **76%** |

Do you have a valid international passport?

| | Yes | **61%** |
| | No | **39%** |
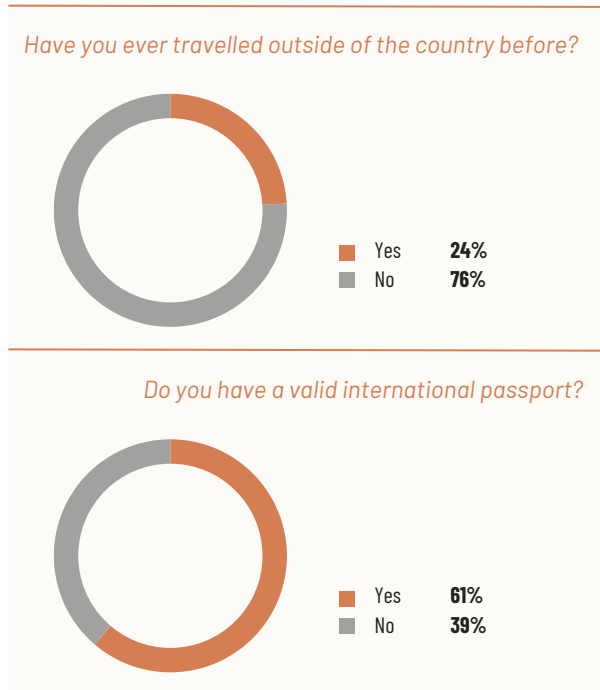
Figure 3.8

Intended financial commitment for migration

How do you intend to gather funds for your migration?

Personal savings 53%
Loans from friends/families 25%
Sale of private properties 18%
Loans from financial institutions 14%
Not sure 19%
Not Applicable 19%
Others 9%

How much are you willing to spend on your migration?

Under N500,000 8%
N500,000–N999,999 9%
1,000,000–N1,999,999 8%
N2,000,000–N4,999,999 14%
N5,000,000–N10,000,000 20%
Above N10,000,000 10%
Not sure 17%
Not Applicable 15%

More than half of the respondents (53%) intended to use their personal savings, while 18% stated that they could sell their private properties to fund their emigration plans (Figure 3.8). Additionally, substantial percentages would consider taking loans from friends/family (25%) and from financial institutions (14%).

Responses varied widely in terms of the amount respondents were willing to spend on their migration plans. However, about one-third indicated a willingness to invest significant sums, with 20% willing to spend between N5,000,000 and N10,000,000 and 10% willing to spend above N10,000,000 (Figure 3.8). These values are high considering the fact that about 95% of Nigerians have less than N500,000 in their bank accounts in the past eight years.[24] It shows the strong intent of the aspiring migrants and the extent to which they are willing to go to pursue their emigration aspirations. These findings corroborate previous reports that more and more Nigerians are spending their savings, selling off their properties, and taking loans to pursue greener pastures abroad.[13,14]

Credit: Damir Khabirov/Getty Images

Figure 3.9

Factors driving migration intention among young Nigerians
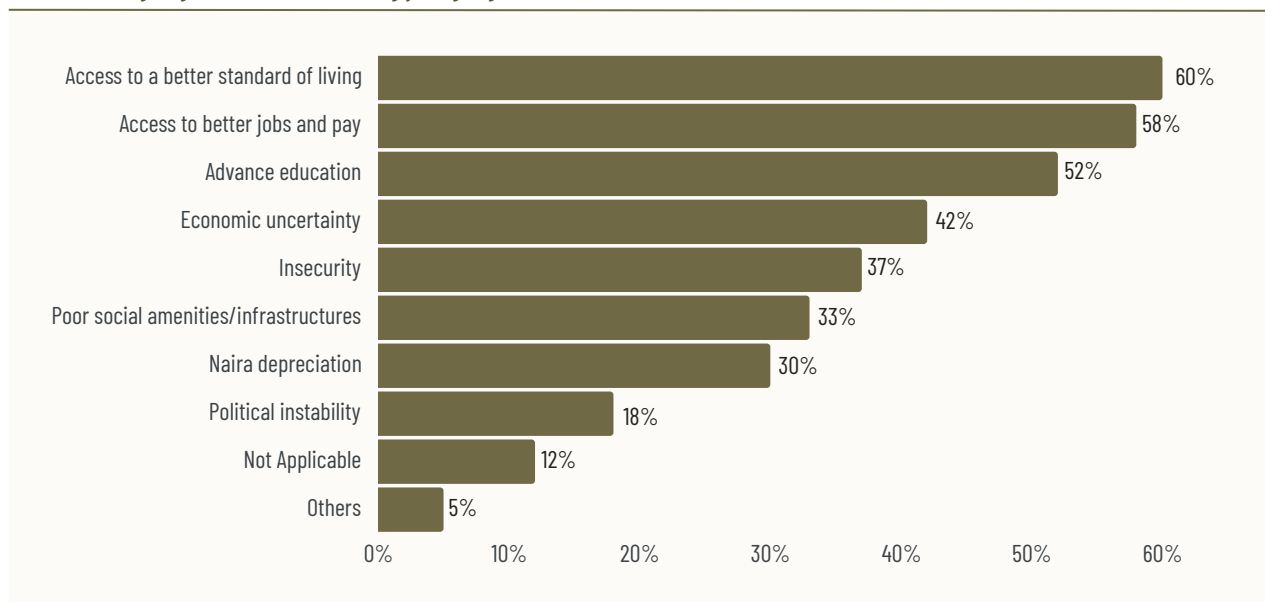
3.3 Factors influencing emigration intention among young Nigerians

A number of questions were used to assess the "Push" and "Pull" factors influencing young Nigerians to consider emigrating from the country. Figure 3.9 shows the major motivating factors and concerns associated with migration intention among the respondents.

Economic motivation:
The findings showed that economic factors strongly have both push and pull effects on the aspiring young Nigerian emigrants.

More than half of the respondents (58%) are considering emigration to have *access to better jobs and pay*. This indicates a strong pull factor for migration. And suggests that many young Nigerians perceive limited job opportunities or inadequate pay in the country and seek better prospects abroad. The allure of higher salaries and more promising career trajectories abroad can be a strong motivator.

The allure of higher salaries and more promising career trajectories abroad can be a strong motivator. Particularly, considering that about 70% of the aspiring migrants intend to relocate to either Canada, USA, or UK.

Particularly, considering that about 70% of the aspiring migrants intend to relocate to either Canada, USA, or UK. A comparative analysis of national minimum wage rates in these countries illuminates the economic disparity. The monthly minimum wage in Nigeria stands at N30,000 (approximately US$21 based on the Central Bank of Nigeria rate as at the time of this study)[25], while in the aforementioned countries, it ranges from US$7 to US$13 per hour. This highlights how in just a few hours, an average worker in those countries can earn what their Nigerian counterpart earns in an entire month.

Closely tied to the desire for better jobs and pay is the desire for a better standard of living. The findings revealed that **access to a better standard of living** is a compelling pull factor. About 60% of the respondents identified it as a key factor driving their consideration to migrate. This high percentage suggests that many young Nigerians perceive a gap between their current standard of living and their aspirations, prompting them to consider migration as a means to improve their quality of life. Standard of living is defined as the material well-being of the average person in a given population and is typically measured using gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.[26] If we consider the gaps between the GDP per capita of Nigeria and the three countries (Figure 3.10), it becomes clearer why the attraction of relocating to these countries holds considerable sway over a majority of the respondents. It also highlights that while there has been substantial difference in GDP per capita between Nigeria and these countries for the past three decades, the gap has become increasingly wider in recent years. This may explain the new wave of emigration intention among young Nigerians.

Economic uncertainty is a major push factor for the aspiring migrants. Close to half of the respondents (42%) cited **economic uncertainty** as part of the reasons for considering migration.

Economic instability and uncertainty can erode confidence in the future, leading individuals to seek more stable environments elsewhere. This factor suggests that a sizable portion of young Nigerians view economic conditions in the country as unreliable or unpredictable.

Naira depreciation is also a concerning factor for young Nigerians, having a push effect on about one-third of the respondents (30%). Between January 2023 and January 2024, the Naira experienced a depreciation exceeding 100% against the US dollar, Canadian dollar, and British pound.[25] A respondent expressed his frustration about the Naira in the following statement:

"The fluctuation of the exchange rate i.e. the Naira depreciation has devalued my 5 years saving, hence worth less than 40% of the actual amount needed to migrate, whereas with the previous government, my savings will be 96%, almost sufficient for my migration process."

Currency devaluation can negatively impact purchasing power and financial stability. The depreciation of the Naira likely contributes to the perception of economic uncertainty and may drive individuals to seek opportunities in countries with more stable currencies.

Figure 3.10
GDP per capita of Nigeria, Canada, US, and UK (1980–2024, US dollars)
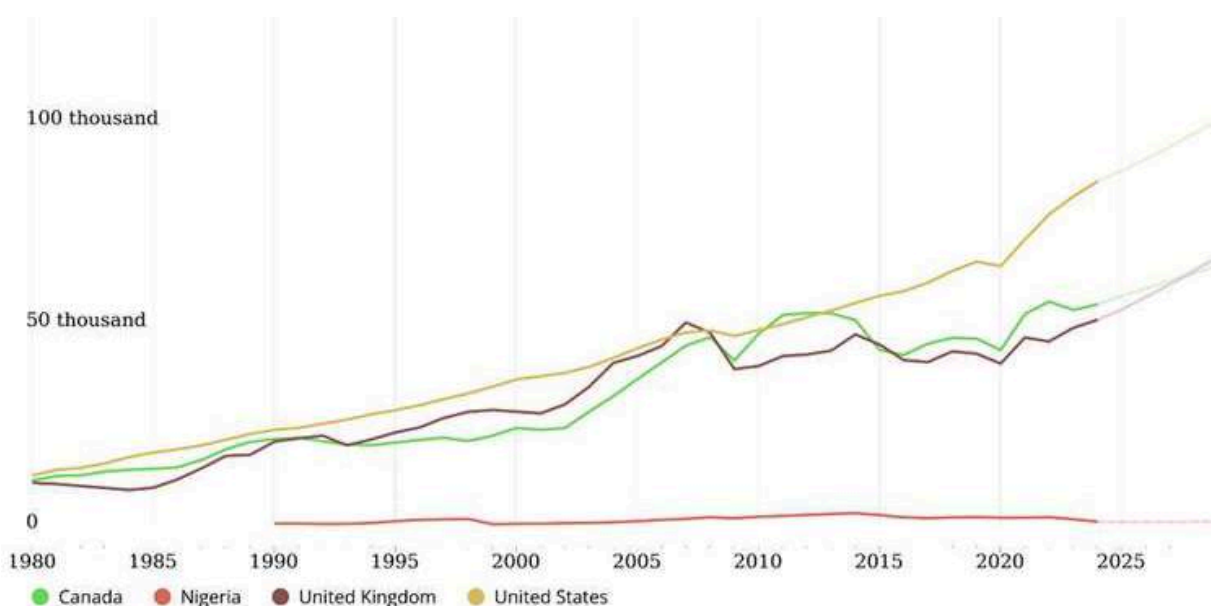
Source: World Economic Outlook, April 2024.[27]

To further understand the effects of these economic factors on the respondents, hypothesis testing was conducted. The results showed that there is no statistically significant association between the socioeconomic status of the respondents and their inclination towards migration (Appendices 2 and 5). This suggests that factors such as employment status or salary level, whether below the Nigerian minimum wage or close to minimum wages in the US or Canada, do not significantly influence the decision to relocate. It points to the fact that intending migrants are looking beyond immediate economic gains.

When asked how these factors have influenced their decision to relocate from Nigeria, a respondent noted that:

"I live in an environment where the common man cannot afford a decent living. There's a caste system that does not support the advancement of the common man... I am privileged to afford most things and I would love my children to live waaay above average."

Another stated that:

"I'm constantly being reminded of the future of my children. How will they navigate through this hardship, insecurity, economic disaster? I don't want them to face what I'm currently facing."

This indicates that, while economic motivations undeniably play an important role in driving migration intentions, it's crucial to recognise that many migrants are also considering long-term prospects. Beyond seeking immediate financial opportunities, migrants often envision a better future for themselves and their families, characterised by improved access to education, healthcare, and overall quality of life.

Educational opportunities:

Education also has both push and pull effects on migration intention among young Nigerians. More than half of the respondents (52%) identified the need for *advance education* as a driving factor for their interest in relocation. Education is often

seen as a pathway to better opportunities and personal development. The high percentage of respondents citing educational advancement as a reason for considering relocation indicates a strong desire for access to high-quality education beyond what is available in Nigeria. Highlighting this, a respondent stated that:

"(This factor) influenced my decision because the standard of education abroad is way better than Nigeria"

Another stated that:

"My intended research cannot be accommodated in any lab in Nigeria."

The role of education as an important tool for both individual and national development has been widely recognised. However, in Nigeria, particularly at the tertiary level, education has consistently fallen short of expectations on many fronts. This has been attributed to several factors, including poor-quality education, insufficient infrastructure, inadequate funding, and socio-political interference.[28,29]

Infrastructure deficits, such as inadequate classroom and laboratory facilities, outdated equipment, and insufficient library and learning materials, hinder the learning process, undermine research efforts, and limit the capacity of institutions to provide a high standard of education. Furthermore, the quality of education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is often compromised by factors such as outdated curriculum, limited access to technology, and a shortage of qualified faculty. These issues contribute to a gap between the skills and knowledge acquired by students and the demands of the modern workforce, leading to concerns about graduate employability and competitiveness in the global job market.

Respondents also drew attention to the incessant strikes in Nigerian public tertiary institutions. A young Nigerian stated that:

> "I want to go and further my education where there is no hindrance like ASUU strike."

The labour unions within these institutions are often embroiled in industrial disputes with the Nigerian government over issues such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, salary arrears, and policy disagreements. These strikes have been a persistent challenge, often disrupting academic calendars and affecting students' progress and graduation. For instance, it was reported that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) went on strike for 580 days (nearly two years) between 2018 and 2022.[30] As a result, a one-year programme could extend to two to three years. Students are left frustrated, with some abandoning the programme altogether. This contributes to a loss of confidence in the educational system, as students and parents grapple with uncertainty about the continuity and quality of their education.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Nigerians constitute a high percentage of immigrants seeking education in the US, Canada, and the UK. International student data from the US indicates that between 2021 and 2022, the number of Nigerian students in the country increased by 22%.[31] Similarly, there was a 160% increase in Nigerian students reported in Canada between 2020 and 2022.[31] In the UK, the number of Nigerian students as of 2022 was 65,929, marking a 686% increase from 2020.[32]

While the foregoing highlights the discontent of young Nigerians with the education system in the country, it is imperative to underscore the dire circumstances faced by faculty members within Nigerian institutions. A respondent alluded to this:

> "Even my salary is not certain with NIGERIAN government anymore. The poor masses are suffering, lecturers that build nation are not well treated. Salary package for lecturers is very poor."

During an extended period of industrial action in 2022, when the federal government imposed the no work, no pay rule, reports emerged that Professors in Nigerian universities were reaching out to their colleagues abroad, pleading for assistance to Japa.[33] This desperate plea included their willingness to undertake any job, even driving cabs. This disturbing picture starkly illustrates the profound challenges entrenched within the education sector in the country.

Credit: PM News/YNaija

Credit: *PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP*

Politics and governance:

The findings also revealed that there are several political and governance-related factors that are driving young Nigerians to consider migrating from the country.

Insecurity: More than one-third of the respondents (37%) cited insecurity as a push factor influencing their intention to relocate from the country. In recent times, Nigeria has faced unprecedented security challenges, including Boko Haram insurgency, militancy, banditry, kidnapping and civil unrest.

The Boko Haram insurgency, in particular, has been a major security challenge, ravaging many communities in northeastern Nigeria. The group has been responsible for numerous attacks, including bombings, abductions, and mass killings, resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of millions of people.[34,35] Speaking on this crisis, a respondent remarked that:

> "As a graduate below 30 years and living in the northeast, I believe I have every reason to want to leave Nigeria, legally, at the slightest opportunity. For about two decades and more, this region of the country has suffered, and now struggling to recover from the jeopardy resulted by the activities of Boko Haram."

While Boko Haram attacks have primarily been concentrated in northeastern Nigeria, the issue of kidnapping is widespread across the country (Figure 3.11). Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed a surge in kidnappings for ransom, targeting individuals from various backgrounds, including influential citizens, expatriates, and even schoolchildren. This prevalence of kidnapping has eroded confidence in law enforcement agencies and governance in Nigeria. A respondent highlighted this issue, stating:

> "Nigeria is getting harder. It's harder to live, harder to breathe. Running up and down only to find yourself kidnapped or paying for ransom. It is just not worth it."

The eroding confidence in law enforcement agencies is further exacerbated by the brutality and injustices suffered by young Nigerians at the hands of rogue security officers. A respondent alluded to this, stating:

> "Well, I am a young Nigerian, lived my past 28 years believing it's going to get better every day but has rather turned bad the more ... No life matters any more in the country, your existence doesn't matter. There is no security agencies that is still upholding to the call of justice... Personnels that're supposed to protect us are the ones slaughtering us."

Figure 3.11
Distribution of abduction incidences in Nigeria from January 1, 2019 to March 8, 2024
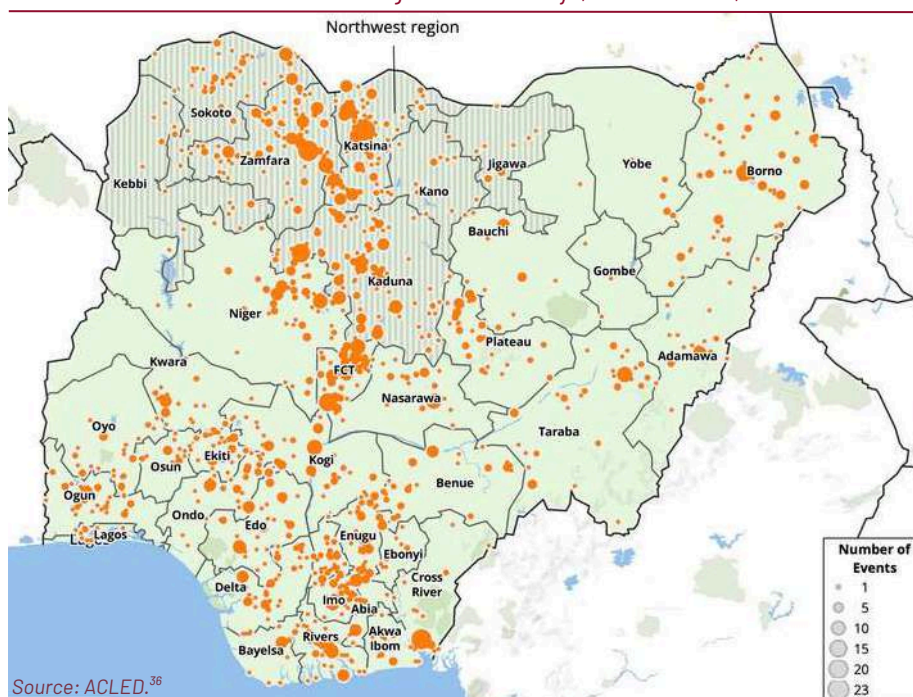
The issue of kidnapping is widespread across the country

The #EndSARS movement, which gained international attention in 2020, highlighted the widespread outrage and condemnation against police brutality in Nigeria. The movement, largely led by young people, was alleged to have been ruthlessly aborted by the Nigerian government.[37] Findings here indicate that some young Nigerians have not healed from the trauma of the #EndSARS struggle. Rather, recent events have heightened their fears and their desire to flee from the country. This corroborates previous reports that the aborted #EndSARS movement had contributed to the new wave of emigration intention among young Nigerians.[14]

Poor social amenities and infrastructures: About one third of the respondents (33%) identified poor social amenities/infrastructures as a factor driving them to consider emigration. This highlights the dissatisfaction of young Nigerians with the state of infrastructure and social amenities in the country. The lack of basic social amenities such as reliable electricity, good healthcare facilities, good transportation systems and good water supply has been a huge obstacle to the development of Nigeria.

The issue of poor electricity supply has been a longstanding problem, characterised by frequent blackouts, voltage fluctuations, and inadequate coverage in the country. For instance, when the national electricity grid collapsed in March this year, reports emerged that in the last ten years, the grid has experienced more than 140 collapses, underscoring the severity of the issue.[38]

This inconsistency hampers the operations of businesses, disrupts industrial activities, and undermines the productivity of both formal and informal sectors. Speaking on this factor, a respondent stated that:

> "The poor social amenities has given me a strong will to relocate. In 2024, I shouldn't be worried about something as basic as electricity."

The poor state of healthcare system in Nigeria is also a push factor highlighted by the respondents. The quality of healthcare in Nigeria is compromised by various systemic issues such as inadequate facilities, insufficient funding, understaffing, poor welfare, incessant strikes, and corruption. Nigeria has a doctor-to-patient ratio of one to 10,000, one of the lowest in the world.[39] In comparison, the doctor-to-patient ratio in the US, Canada, and the UK is approximately 3 to 1000.[40] In addition, strike is not an uncommon occurrence in the Nigerian health sector. Across the tenure of the former president, Muhammadu Buhari, health workers were on strike for over 160 days.[41] These issues have contributed to the reasons why many Nigerians, including the political leaders, are travelling abroad for medical treatment. It was reported that during his tenure, Buhari and his family spent over 250 days abroad for medical treatment.[42] A respondent strongly expressed her opinion on the healthcare sector, stating that:

> "In Nigeria today the health care system is [obscenity] and everyone have right to good health and wellbeing."

Credit: Legit.ng

Political and governance uncertainties: The findings showed that uncertainties associated with politics and governance contribute to the desire for emigration among young Nigerians. The Nigeria political landscape has been home to many challenges, including political instability, poor governance, corruption, ethnic and religious tensions, political violence, and contentious elections. Among the respondents, 18% cited political instability as a motivating factor for their relocation intention. While this percentage is lower compared to other factors, the consequences of political and governance uncertainties are profound and far-reaching, impacting various aspects of Nigerian society. A respondent noted that:

> "Political instability and the instability/depreciation of our currency drive many of the other challenges highlighted. The standards of living continue to reduce as people are no longer able to afford the basics and luxuries that they could afford a few years ago. This uncertainty affects mental, emotional and physical health of patriots who will otherwise not leave the country."

Respondents also brought to the fore the role of government in creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. Nigeria's average Ease of Doing Business score stands at 56.9, below the global average of 63.[43] In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a mass exit of multinational companies including Unilever, GlaxoSmithKline, and Sanofi-Aventis, from the country.[44] While this exodus has been primarily attributed to the devaluation of the naira, generally the business environment in Nigeria is deemed unfavourable. A respondent remarked thus:

> "With the current economic realities in Nigeria, where small scale businesses are no more thriving as a result of the bad economic policies that are not business friendly. It is the obligation of government at all levels in providing enabling environment for both small and large businesses to thrive."

Waning trust and hope: A strong theme that emerged from the responses of the participants points to waning trust and hope in governance and public sector in the country. Many respondents fingered poor governance and corruption as major hindrances to the country's progress and development. Nigeria has a Corruption Perceptions Index score of 25, which is lower than the global average of 43.[45] The widespread corruption and poor governance have contributed to growing distrust in governance and public institutions in the country. A respondent expressed that:

> "I have to leave, this country is [obscenity] up already and with the look of things Nigerian governments are not ready to change the status quo."

Another stated that:

"Set of leadership, policies and governance in Nigeria don't seem to show any sign of improvement."

Another said this about hope:

> "Nothing works presently, no realistic hope in sight for the country."

Another stated that: "Future looks bleak. It doesn't seem like everything will get better anytime soon."

These findings are consistent with previous reports that poor governance and corruption promote the perception of failure and hopelessness in a country and drive citizens towards emigration.[46,47] This points to the State Fragility framework, which indicates that when a state fails to fulfil its obligations to ensure security, uphold the rule of law and justice and provide public services, it leads to an increase in criminal activities, internal displacement, and migration of its populace.[14,48,49]

Social factors:

In an era characterised by unprecedented connectivity and digital engagement, social factors such as social networks and social media have emerged as influential forces, shaping various aspects of individuals' lives. Studies have indicated that social networks, both online and offline, play a crucial role in information sharing, shaping perceptions of opportunities abroad, and providing social support networks for potential migrants.[16,50] To examine the effects of selected social factors on emigration intention among young Nigerians, a few questions were asked, followed by hypothesis testing.

Migration status of social network: Majority of the respondents reported having friends (74%), other relatives (45%), and colleagues (48%) who have already migrated from Nigeria (Figure 3.12). Additionally, a substantial percentage of respondents reported that their friends (78%), colleagues (54%), siblings or parents (41%) and other relatives (40%) are planning to migrate from the country. Altogether, about 90% of the respondents have at least one person who has migrated and at least one person who is planning to migrate from the country. This suggests a prevalent aspiration or intention to migrate within their immediate social circles.

Furthermore, the responses regarding whether participants have friends, family members, or colleagues who have already migrated from or are planning to migrate from Nigeria show a strong association with migration intention, in terms of consideration (Appendix 3) and willingness (Appendix 6). This indicates that young Nigerians who have social connections (friends, relatives, colleagues) who have migrated or are planning to migrate are more likely to have intentions to migrate themselves. This association may be due to factors such as social influence, shared aspirations, or access to information about migration opportunities.

Figure 3.12
Prevalence of migration aspirations among respondents' social networks

Do you have people in the following categories who have already migrated from the country?

Friends	74%
Colleagues	48%
Other relatives	45%
Siblings/Parents	27%
None (Not Applicable)	12%

Do you have people in the following categories who are planning to migrate from the country?

Friends	78%
Colleagues	54%
Siblings/Parents	41%
Other relatives	40%
None (Not Applicable)	12%

Influence of social network expectations on migration decision: Regarding the influence of social network expectations on migration decisions, approximately 40% of respondents acknowledged that the expectations from friends, family, and society have influenced their decision about migration (Figure 3.13). This suggests a considerable impact of social pressure and norms on migration choices among young Nigerians. A respondent noted the push effect of expectations from family and relatives:

> "They believe I will do better outside the country, so I can take care of them and other relatives."

Respondents also pointed to the pull effect of expectations from their social network. A participant stated that:

> "They have made me desire more, looking at what they have achieved since they left the shores of Nigeria."

Figure 3.13
Has the expectations from friends, family, and society influenced your decision about migration?

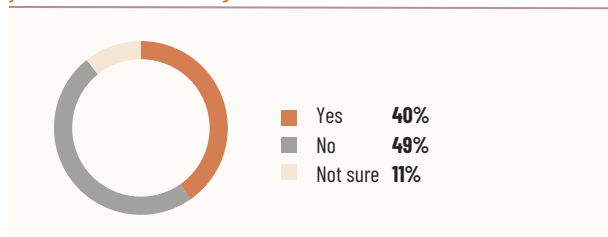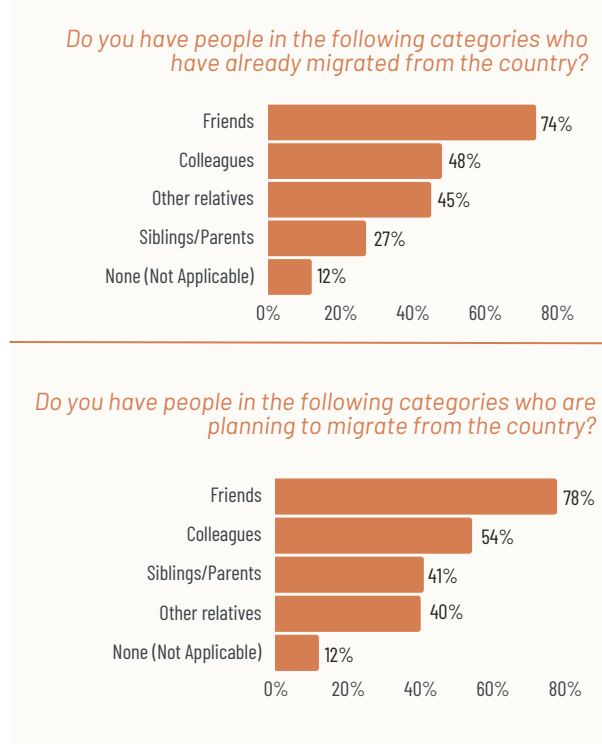|		
●	Yes	**40%**
●	No	**49%**
●	Not sure	**11%**

In contrast, nearly half of the respondents (49%) stated that their migration decisions were not influenced by social network expectations. However, hypothesis testing showed a significant association between social network expectations and migration intention among the respondents, indicating that participants influenced by their social network expectations are more likely to be considering (Appendix 3) or willing (Appendix 6) to migrate. This confirms that social pressure and norms play a crucial role in shaping individuals' migration decisions, aligning with theories of social influence and conformity.[51,52]

Influence of social media on migration perception: About 42% of the respondents reported that the information consumed on social media has influenced their decisions or perceptions of migration (Figure 3.14). This underscores the role of online social platforms in information sharing, shaping people's understanding and perspectives on migration.
Respondents talked about the push and pull effects of the information they consumed on social media:

"Seeing people thriving over there is a huge motivating factor to travel."

"Because they always talk about opportunities, advice and testimonies... and a better life, better than what is obtainable here."

"It's mostly through social media I see that the standard of living is better, and people have more opportunities abroad."

Figure 3.14
Has the information you consumed on social media influenced your decisions/perception of migration?

■ Yes	**42%**	
■ No	**50%**	
■ Not sure	**8%**	
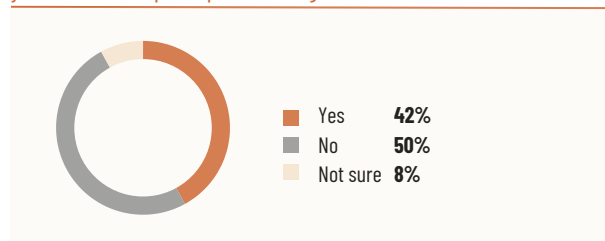
Findings also point to the popular belief that "Japa" is a "trend". And many are caught in the wave because of me-tooism.

"I can see on social media that everybody has plans of leaving. I don't want to wake up one day and be the only one left."

These reflections were supported by hypothesis testing, which indicated that there is a significant association between perception of social media influence and migration intention among the respondents. Participants that perceived that they were influenced by social media are more likely to be considering (Appendix 3) or willing (Appendix 6) to migrate.

However, about 50% of the respondents stated that social media did not influence their migration decisions or perceptions. This suggests a mixed impact of social media on migration attitudes, with some individuals being more susceptible to its influence than others.

Credit: The Sun

Other sociodemographic factors

Hypothesis testing showed that there is no significant association between the respondents' age-group, level of education, marital status, disability status, religion, place of residence (urban, semi-urban or rural), and migration intention (Appendices 1 and 4). This suggests that these factors do not play a significant role in determining whether young Nigerians intend to migrate.

A significant association was identified between respondents' gender and their migration intention. Specifically, while both male and female respondents exhibited a similar level of interest in considering migration, gender differences emerged in the expression of uncertainty (not sure) regarding migration intentions. Female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to express uncertainty about whether they intend to migrate.

In addition, a significant association was identified between respondents' geopolitical zone of residence and their migration intention. The results indicated that respondents in the southern and northeastern regions of the country are more likely to be considering migration compared to respondents in the North Central and North West. This finding aligns with an earlier study[8], which suggested that Nigerians residing in the south exhibited a greater likelihood of intending to emigrate than those in the north. Moreover, the current study provides additional insights, revealing that within the northern region of the country, those in the North East have a higher likelihood of intending to emigrate. This may be related to the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency and the resultant humanitarian crisis in the region.

These findings suggest that personal aspirations, as well as economic, political, and social factors, hold greater significance compared to demographic factors in explaining migration intention among young Nigerians.

3.4 Risks, fears, assumptions, and expectations of aspiring migrants

While the intention to migrate is often primarily driven by a combination of push and pull factors, as highlighted in the previous section, aspiring migrants also often harbour various fears, uncertainties, assumptions, and expectations regarding migration. These factors could significantly influence their decision to ultimately migrate or not.

Risks, assumptions, and expectations:
Some findings related to risks and assumptions such as specific plans and financial considerations of the participants have been discussed under the subsection: *How firm is the intention to migrate?* Other findings are as follows.

Approaches to relocation: Majority of the respondents (63%) expressed a preference for education-based migration, primarily through scholarships. About a quarter (26%) of the respondents also indicated that they are willing to self-fund or rely on family support for their education abroad, highlighting their

Figure 3.15
Major approaches respondents intend to use for migration

Approach	%
Education (Scholarship)	63%
Skilled Worker visa	43%
Education (Self/family-funded)	26%
Visa lottery programmes	11%
Visit visa	9%
Not Applicable	11%
Others	3%
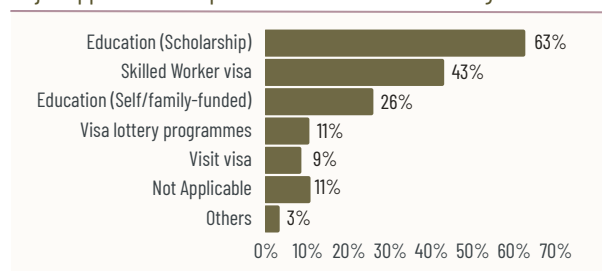
determination to pursue educational opportunities outside Nigeria. This is consistent with the findings reported in section 3.3 and underscores the push and pull effect of education on migration intention among young Nigerians. While this may suggest the quest of young Nigerians for quality education, previous reports have indicated that education abroad has become a more attractive route for migration due to the attendant benefits such as work rights while studying, dependant visas and post-study work visas.[14,53]

Close to half (43%) of the respondents also indicated an intention to migrate through skilled worker visas. Obtaining a skilled worker visa often requires meeting specific criteria, including qualifications, work experience, and employer sponsorship, which may pose challenges. However, some of the preferred destination countries, such as Canada, have an attractive Skilled Worker Programme for skilled migrants with work experience to become permanent residents.[54] This could explain the influx of skilled Nigerian professionals to these countries. For instance, it was reported that over 1,600 Nigerian doctors migrated to the UK in 2023.[55]

A small portion of the respondents expressed interest in considering migration via Visa Lottery Programmes (11%) and visit visa (9%). While a few other countries have similar but restrictive visa lottery programmes, the US Diversity Immigrant Visa is notably the most popular and open; however, Nigerians have been ineligible to participate since 2015.[56–58] Also, travelling on a visit visa would typically offer temporary stays without legal rights to work, making a long-term settlement less feasible.

Expected timeframe for financial recovery: The various amounts the respondents were willing to commit to their migration plans have been discussed in Section 3.2. The financial expectations of the respondents were captured in a subsequent question (Figure 3.16). Approximately a quarter (26%) of the respondents anticipate recovering their migration expenses within the first year after relocation, suggesting that they expect relatively quick returns on their investment in migration. A similar percentage (28%) foresee recovering their migration expenses within 1 to 2 years.

These expectations underscore the perceived economic opportunities in the destination countries among the respondents. While about one third of the respondents intended to spend N5,000,0000 and above on their migration plans, it is noteworthy that the monthly minimum wage in Nigeria is N30,000. In comparison, the monthly minimum wage in the US, Canada and the UK ranges approximately from $1200 to $2000 (equivalent to about N1,700,000 to N2,800,000).[25] Although the cost of living, taxes and economic conditions in these countries are more expensive, the wide disparity in earnings could explain why the intending migrants have such financial expectations.

In addition, these expectations may have been influenced by testimonies from actual migrants within their social networks. A respondent alluded to this sentiment:

> *"All of them are doing better within a short period of time they left the country. That's already encouraging."*

Despite the allure of success testimonies, accounts from Nigerian immigrants have shown that the experiences of immigrants abroad are diverse and nuanced, often reflecting a mix of challenges, successes, adaptations, and frustrations.

Figure 3.16
Expected timeframe for financial recovery
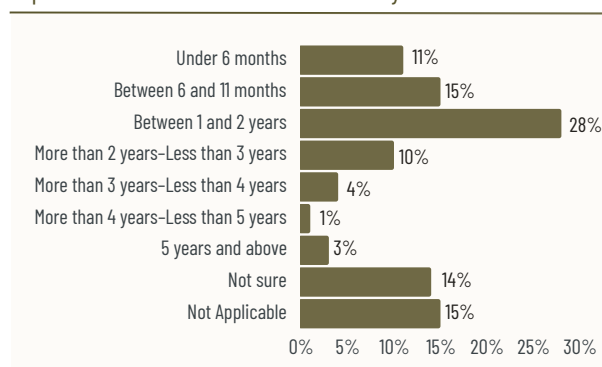
Figure 3.17
Would you consider taking a temporary job in the informal sector (e.g. cashier, carer) at your destination country after migration?

Yes	**67%**
No	**11%**
Not sure	**12%**
Not Applicable	**10%**
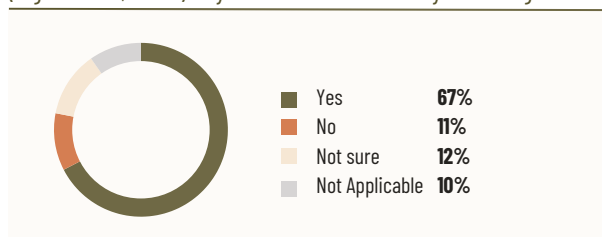
Employment flexibility and adaptability: Approximately two-third (67%) of the participants expressed willingness to take temporary jobs (such as cashier, carer, and sales attendant) in the informal sector upon migration (Figure 3.17). There have been many reports criticising Nigerian travellers for leaving the country to take up "menial jobs" abroad, in spite of their level of education and profession.[59,60] However, this willingness could suggest a high level of openness among young Nigerians to explore diverse employment opportunities, even if they are outside the formal sector.

Migrants might have anticipated challenges in accessing formal employment opportunities immediately upon arrival, and thus may view informal sector jobs as a means to quickly secure income and support themselves financially in the early stages of their travel. This is an indication of their readiness to adapt to circumstances. Indeed, many Nigerian travellers have stooped to conquer. There are many accounts by Nigerians, including past and current political leaders, recounting their challenging days abroad, having to take up menial jobs (such as driving cabs) to survive.[61–63] Such accounts were given to reflect their resilience as a Nigerian and to motivate the younger generations not to falter in their aspirations.

In addition, being willing to work in the informal sector could open opportunities to migrate via the skilled worker visa route. Many jobs termed "menial" could qualify for a skilled worker visa if the aspiring migrant possesses appropriate skill and experience. For example, in 2023, reports emerged that over 18,000 Nigerians migrated to the UK as care workers and home carers under the Skilled Worker Health and Care visa category.[64]

Dependants and support networks: A notable percentage (41%) intend to migrate with their spouses (Figure 3.18). Additionally, a considerable number express intentions to migrate with their children (23%) and siblings (22%). This indicates a desire to maintain familial bonds and support systems in their new environment. In fact, among the married aspiring migrants, about 90%, expressed their intention to migrate with their spouses. Interestingly, even among single respondents, a substantial proportion, around 40%, indicated their intention to migrate with a spouse. These findings underscore the importance of family ties and committed relationships in shaping migration plans.

However, there have been growing concerns regarding the large number of dependants accompanying immigrants and the strain it puts on economic opportunities, social services, and public facilities in the destination countries. For instance, the UK revealed that a disproportionate 120,000 dependants accompanied 100,000 care workers to the country in 2023, suggesting an abuse of visa privileges.[65] In response to these concerns, some countries have begun implementing new policies aimed at preventing immigrants from bringing dependants or imposing stricter criteria for dependants.[65,66] While such policies aim to address legitimate concerns, they also raise ethical questions about the rights of immigrants and could greatly influence the plans of prospective migrants.

Figure 3.18
Respondents' intended dependants when migrating

Category	Percentage
Spouse	41%
Children	23%
Siblings	22%
Parents	13%
Other relatives	5%
Others	1%
None	22%
Not Applicable	16%
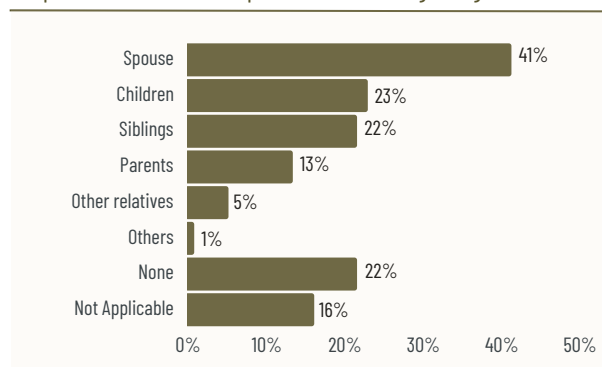
Credit:Tekedia

Fears:

The findings also provide insights into the fears and concerns of young Nigerians regarding migration, shedding more light on the multifaceted challenges they anticipate when considering relocating abroad (Figure 3.19).

Social and cultural concerns: The highest percentage of respondents (49%), expressed fears related to xenophobic attacks, racial discrimination, or exploitation in their destination countries. This fear is understandable given the prevalence of such incidents globally and the vulnerability that immigrants often face in unfamiliar environments. While there have been several cases of racial discrimination around the world in recent years, xenophobic attacks against foreigners, especially Nigerians, in South Africa have attracted global attention, portraying the country as unwelcoming to Nigerians.[67] This could partly explain why less than 1% of the respondents indicated interest in migrating to South Africa.

A notable portion of respondents (35%) cited concerns about cultural barriers or differences. This fear reflects apprehensions about adapting to new cultural norms, values, and social practices, which can affect an individual's sense of belonging and integration into the host society. For example, a mother highlighted the fear of moving from a conservative society to a more liberal environment.

"LGBTQ community frightens me. I'm a mum of two, and my reservation is, Nigeria still remains a safe place for my children."

Figure 3.19

What are your fears about migration?

Fear	Percentage
Xenophobic attack/racial discrimination...	49%
Cultural barriers/differences	35%
Unemployment	29%
Climate differences	28%
Financial instability	26%
Misinformation/unmet expectations	25%
Loneliness	25%
Certificate/skill discrimination	17%
None (Not Applicable)	14%
Communication/language problems	13%
Others	2%
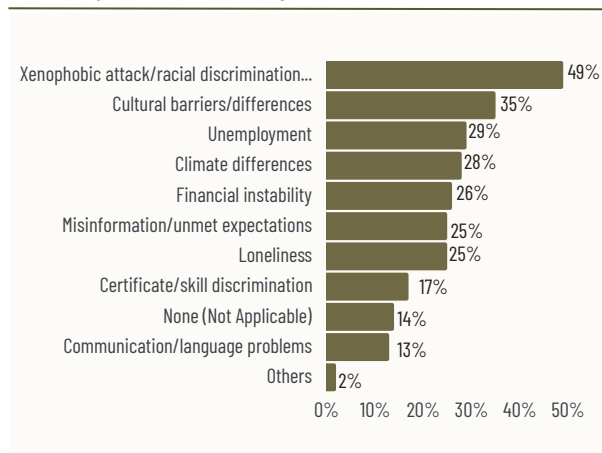
A smaller percentage of respondents (13%) expressed fears about communication or language problems, reflecting concerns about difficulties in effectively communicating with others in the destination country. This could partly explain why the majority of respondents indicated interest in migrating to English-speaking countries.

Credit: PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP

Employment and professional concerns: Nearly one-third of respondents (29%) expressed fears related to unemployment. Additionally, approximately a quarter of respondents (26%) cited fears related to financial instability, while about 17% expressed concerns about certificate or skill discrimination. These findings underscore their concerns about job opportunities and economic challenges in the destination countries and rationalise their openness to jobs in the informal sector.

Personal and emotional well-being: Nearly one-third (28%) of respondents expressed fears about climate differences, reflecting their concerns about adjusting to new environmental conditions, which can impact their health, comfort, and overall well-being. Additionally, approximately a quarter of respondents (25%) expressed fears about loneliness, further highlighting concerns about social isolation and the emotional toll of being separated from family, friends, and a familiar environment. Similarly, a comparable percentage (25%) cited fears related to misinformation or unmet expectations. This suggests concerns about the accuracy of information regarding migration opportunities, as well as the possibility of experiencing disillusionment or disappointment if expectations about life abroad are not met.

Credit: da-kuk/Getty Images

Impacts of fears on migration intention and plans:
The major themes that emerged when the respondents were asked about the impact of those fears on their migration plans are as follows.

Research and careful planning: Many respondents emphasised the importance of thorough research and careful planning in mitigating their fears. They recognised the need to gather information about potential destination countries, immigration processes, and job opportunities to make informed decisions about their migration plans. Respondents stated these:

"They make me prepare myself and plan better."

"Making adequate research and preparation to mitigate such fears."

Adaptability: Some respondents demonstrated a resilient mindset, expressing a belief that fears could be managed and that taking risks is part of life. They were willing to confront challenges head-on and adapt to new environments.

"IT COULD BE MANAGED"

"Life's a risk, so I'll rather risk it than do nothing. So, these fears are the least of my worries."

Desperation: For some respondents, the desire for a better life outweighed their fears. They expressed a sense of desperation, indicating that they would pursue migration regardless of the risks involved, viewing it as a preferable option to staying in Nigeria. A respondent noted that:

"Still cannot change my mind... It is better I die trying than staying in Nigeria."

Alternative opportunities: Some respondents indicated that their fears about migration have made them seek alternative opportunities, such as remote work, as a means of improving their financial prospects without necessarily relocating to another country. A respondent remarked that:

"I'm seeking other opportunities that can allow me earn more, especially through remote opportunities."

Hesitancy: For some respondents, their fears have made them to become hesitant and sceptical about whether migration would truly improve their circumstances. They acknowledged the possibility that the grass may not be greener on the other side but remained committed to their plans.

"They just make me wonder if I am making the right decision."

"It somewhat diminished my intention whenever a thought of racism, loneliness and climate factors swings over my head. Yet, I never give up on my dream of relocating from Nigeria."

Hindrance: For others, their fears, particularly related to financial instability, acted as a significant hindrance to their ability to relocate. They cited financial constraints as a barrier preventing them from pursuing their migration plans.

A respondent stated that:

"I have been unable to relocate because of this same financial instability"

Resignation or change of mind: A portion of the respondents indicated that their fears have led to a change of mind or a delay in their migration plans. They expressed resignation to their current situation or a reluctance to proceed with their plans due to the perceived challenges.

"It's putting a hold to my plans as I fear I would not be able to cope"

"Making me endure the Nation"

Strengthened resolve or undeterred: Conversely, some respondents reported that their fears had little to no impact on their resolve to migrate. They remained determined in their commitment to pursuing migration despite the challenges and obstacles they may encounter along the way.

"It isn't affecting my plans, it is better equipping me for the unexpected"

"Still courageous to relocate, as nothing good comes easy."

Credit: Alexis Akwagyiram/Semafor

3.5 Impact of mass migration on Nigeria

While the previous sections have focused on factors associated with migration intention among young Nigerians, migration has multifaceted implications for both the individuals and the countries involved. A few questions were used to explore the perceptions of young Nigerians regarding the benefits and negative implications of mass emigration of Nigerians on the country.

Benefits of mass migration

Less than half (45%) of the respondents believed that the country is benefitting from mass migration of its citizens. On the other hand, more than half (55%) of the respondents did not believe (37%) or were uncertain (18%) that the country is benefitting from mass migration of its citizens (Figure 3.20). This indicates mixed perceptions among respondents regarding the overall positive impact of migration on the country.

Figure 3.20

Perceived benefits of mass migration among respondents

Do you believe Nigeria is benefitting from the mass migration of its people?

Yes	**45%**
No	**37%**
Not sure	**18%**

The ways the respondents believed Nigeria is benefitting from the mass migration of its people

Globalisation (increase global presence)	50%
Migrant remittances	43%
Relative increase in opportunities for those left	32%
None (Not Applicable)	28%
Others	3%
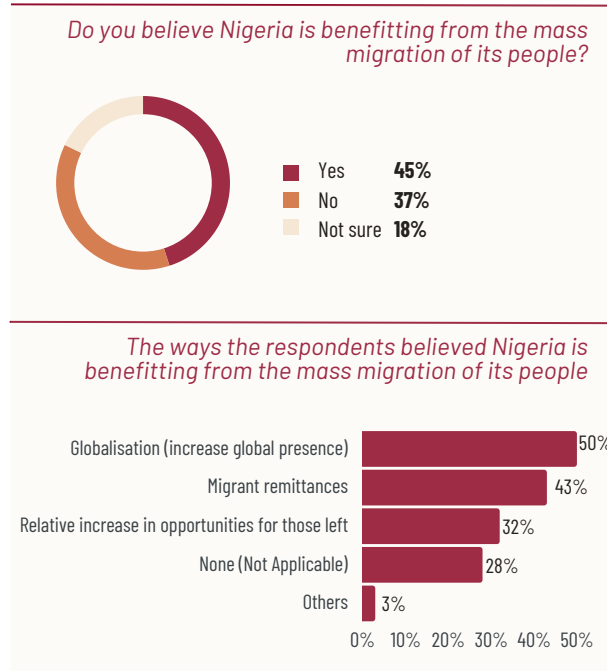
Credit: Alexis Akwagyiram/Semafor

The perceived ways the country is benefitting from mass migration

Migrant remittances: A considerable number of the respondents (43%) identified migrant remittances as a way the country is benefitting from mass migration. This aligns with the popular belief that the money sent by migrants to their families or communities in their home countries can contribute to household welfare, poverty reduction and economic growth of the country.

In a previous study, it was reported that the mean income of households with migrants abroad was two and a half times greater than that of non-migrant households, attributing this disparity to migrant remittances.[68] Other reports have indicated that migrant remittances have become one of the most important sources of capital inflow in Africa, with Nigeria leading among remittance recipients in sub-Saharan Africa.[69,70] Furthermore, World Bank data showed that in 2017, Nigeria received $22.00 billion in migrant remittances, amounting to about 5.86% of the country's GDP.[15]

Given the impact of these remittances, some[71] have called for collaborative initiatives between the Nigerian government and destination countries to sustain these inflows and support economic growth. Recently, a state governor in the country announced plans to secure jobs abroad for 4000 youths from his state.[72] This initiative has been lauded as audacious and visionary and a pragmatic way of approaching the mass migration issue.[72] Analysts have opined that remittances from such state-sponsored youths could be used to drive the development of their state and the nation.[73]

Other analysts have criticised such viewpoints and downplayed the perceived benefits of remittances to the nation. Yarhere and Mohammed[15] highlighted that despite Nigeria receiving $22.00 billion in migrant remittances, equivalent to 5.86% of the country's GDP in 2017, the average transaction cost of transferring these remittances amounted to 18.30% of the

nation's GDP that same year. Furthermore, the country only experienced a GDP growth rate of 0.801% in the same period.[10,15] Therefore, the impact of these remittances on the country's growth and development may not be as substantial as perceived, beyond the typical individual consumption by recipient households.

Globalisation: Half of the respondents (50%) perceived globalisation as a benefit of mass migration to the country. Globalisation and migration are deeply intertwined, with both driving each other. Studies have shown that increasing globalisation and improved communication associated with this digital age appear to facilitate migration.[74,75] Migrants can enhance their countries' international connections, cultural exchange, and diplomatic relations, contributing to the visibility and influence on the global stage. In this regard, many Nigerians abroad have made notable contributions across various fields, including academia, arts, sports, and politics, thereby raising the country's profile and influence on the international stage.

Relative increase in opportunities for those left: About one-third of the respondents (32%) believed that there is a relative increase in opportunities for those who remain in Nigeria due to mass migration. This suggests a perception that migration creates vacancies or openings in the labour market, which can potentially benefit individuals who choose to stay in the country by reducing competition for jobs or creating opportunities for skills development and advancement. This position is not surprising, given the prevalence of unemployment among young people in Nigeria.[76] A respondent stated this:

> "I encourage it. My thought was that our large and unproductive population causes all these hardships. So, migrating from the country will depopulate the country to the extent that the job available will be equal as the population. So, no more competition."

Negative impacts of mass migration

Majority of the respondents (72%) expressed that they believed that mass migration of Nigerians is negatively impacting the country (Figure 3.21). Conversely, less than one-third (29%) of the respondents indicated that they do not believe (19%) or were uncertain (9%) about whether mass migration is having negative impacts on the country. This suggests mixed perceptions among the respondents regarding the negative impact of migration on the country, which could stem from various factors, such as lack of information, conflicting viewpoints, or personal ambivalence towards the issue. However, comparing these responses to those regarding the benefits indicates that more Nigerians believe the negative consequences of mass emigration on Nigeria outweigh the benefits.

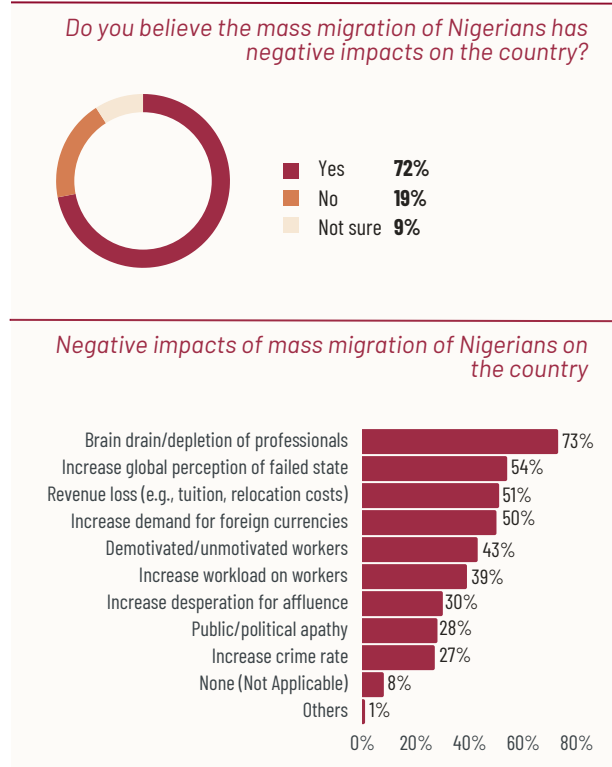### The perceived negative impacts of mass migration on the country

Brain drain: The most cited negative consequence, with approximately 73% of respondents selecting it, is the brain drain or depletion of professionals. This indicates a widespread concern among young Nigerians regarding the loss of skilled individuals and talents by the country, with potential repercussions across sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology. These concerns are consistent with prevailing sentiments within the country regarding the departure of skilled individuals and its adverse impacts. Many have expressed concerns that the core structures of some organisations and institutions in the country are increasingly becoming brittle, with senior members, who impart experiential knowledge and culture leaving the country.[12]

Increase global perception of failed state: More than half of the respondents (54%) believe that mass migration contributes to an increase in the global perception of Nigeria as a failed state. This perception can have far-reaching consequences for the country's international reputation, investment opportunities, and diplomatic relations.

States are often classified into four types: the strong state, the weak state, the failed state, and the collapsed state. These classifications are determined by the extent to which they can meet fundamental public needs, including physical security,

Figure 3.21
Perceived negative effects of mass migration among respondents

Do you believe the mass migration of Nigerians has negative impacts on the country?

Yes	**72%**	
No	**19%**	
Not sure	**9%**	

Negative impacts of mass migration of Nigerians on the country

Brain drain/depletion of professionals	73%
Increase global perception of failed state	54%
Revenue loss (e.g., tuition, relocation costs)	51%
Increase demand for foreign currencies	50%
Demotivated/unmotivated workers	43%
Increase workload on workers	39%
Increase desperation for affluence	30%
Public/political apathy	28%
Increase crime rate	27%
None (Not Applicable)	8%
Others	1%

incorruptible political institutions, a strong economy, and social welfare.[77] However, within the field of international development, two additional classifications often emerge between the weak state and the failed state: the "fragile state", and the "crisis state."[78]

There have been many debates and discourses[77–81] regarding the extent to which the Nigerian state is fulfilling the basic needs of its citizens and its rightful place among the classes of states. While there is no consensus on this subject, a prevailing sentiment is that Nigeria has fallen short in meeting the essential needs of its populace, with many indicators pointing towards characteristics akin to those of a fragile or failed state.

State failure is not merely a failure of government but an outcome of collective and chronic institutional failures. Therefore, to revive and strengthen the Nigerian state, there is an urgent need for effective governance, comprehensive public reforms, strong institutional frameworks, and active citizenship.

Revenue loss: About half (51%) of the respondents identified revenue loss as a negative impact of mass migration on the country. Migration is typically financially demanding, with migrants often required to cover various expenses that can amount to thousands in foreign currency. For instance, data from London Economics reveals that Nigerian students alone contributed about £3.2 billion to the UK economy during the 2018/2019 academic year.[82] This underscores the substantial financial loss to the Nigerian economy resulting from the mass migration of its populace.

Increase demand for foreign currencies: Half (50%) of the respondents cited the increase in demand for foreign currencies as a negative impact of mass migration on the country. This result suggests that many young Nigerians are cognizant of the strain that mass migration places on the country's foreign exchange reserves and its broader economic stability. Although migrant remittances contribute to the inflow of forex to the country, the growing number of Nigerians migrating exacerbates the demand for foreign currencies, placing pressure on the foreign exchange market. This is evident in the continued depreciation of the country's exchange rate,[83,84] driven by the high demand for foreign currencies in comparison to the available supply.

Demotivated or unmotivated workers: A substantial proportion (43%) of respondents expressed concerns that the mass migration could lead to demotivation among workers. This concern is valid, as the loss of colleagues to migration could promote job dissatisfaction and amplify perceptions of limited opportunities for personal and professional growth within the workplace. Additionally, the attraction of better prospects abroad may discourage individuals from fully engaging in the development and advancement of their careers at home, further contributing to workforce apathy.

Increase workload on workers: A considerable percentage (40%) of respondents also expressed concerns about the potential increase in workload on workers. This mirrors widespread concerns regarding the migration of skilled individuals, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology, and its potential strain on the remaining workforce. For instance, in 2022, the president of the Nigerian Medical Association expressed concerns over the high rate of brain drain in the health sector, highlighting the mass migration of skilled health professionals from the country.[85] Nigeria's doctor-to-patient ratio, approximately 1:10,000 falls well below the World Health Organisation's (WHO) minimum required standard of 1:600.[39] This has led to healthcare workers having to work longer hours. Consequently, their health and productivity suffer, leading to errors in diagnosis and treatment, compounded by attempts to flee the country as well in response to poor working conditions.[11]

Increase desperation for affluence and increase crime rate: About one-third of the respondents (30%) identified an increase in the desperation for affluence as a negative consequence of mass migration. Similarly, approximately 27% expressed concerns that mass migration of Nigerians could contribute to an increase in the crime rate in the country. This suggests that the pursuit of economic opportunities abroad may foster a culture of materialism and heightened aspirations among those remaining in the country. Studies[39,86] have indicated that the ostentatious display, especially on social media, by some migrants of their newfound wealth and good life abroad could elicit envy from people in their social network and raise their ambitions to embark on a similar journey toward perceived social status transformation. Desperate individuals who lack the means for migration could resort to other means such as crime in pursuit of affluence.

Public and political apathy: About one-third of the respondents (28%) also expressed concerns about public and political apathy resulting from mass migration. This indicates that the increasing migration of Nigerians abroad could result in reduced civic participation and political engagement within the country. The potential causes for this concern are multifaceted. Primarily, given there are several unsatisfactory political and governance-related factors driving young Nigerians to contemplate migration in the first place. Prospective or intending migrants may become less inclined toward civic participation and political engagement, as their focus shifts elsewhere. Additionally, seeing large numbers of Nigerians leaving the countries in search of opportunities elsewhere might amplify dissatisfaction among those who remain, impacting their motivation to participate in public or political activities.

3.6 Future plans and intentions regarding permanent return to Nigeria

While there are many ways a country could benefit from the migration of its populace, some of these benefits are largely dependent on the return of the migrants. Migrants often acquire new skills and knowledge abroad, whether through education, training, or work experience. When they return to the country, they bring back valuable expertise that can contribute to economic development, innovation, and capacity building in various sectors. In fact, some scholars have suggested that the Nigerian government could incentivize the return migration of skilled Nigerians in the diaspora, citing examples such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Barth Nnaji, and Jelani Aliyu and their contributions to the country.[87] Scholars have further argued that such models have been successfully adopted by some countries such as Ireland and China to drive the development of their nations.

Findings here provide insights into the perspectives of young Nigerians regarding their intentions to return to the country if they migrate, as well as the factors that would motivate or demotivate them in doing so (Figure 3.22).

Intention to return

More than half of the respondents (55%) expressed their intention to return to Nigeria permanently in the future if they migrate from the country. This finding suggests a strong attachment to Nigeria among a considerable portion of the young population despite their current considerations of leaving. When asked "why?", three major themes emerged in their responses as motivating factors for return migration.

1. *A sense of attachment to one's homeland*

"I love my country, so definitely I must return no matter where I go to"

2. *Family ties*

"Because I have families and relatives here"

3. *Triumphant return*

"Because I'm coming back to Nigeria after making it"

Figure 3.22
Intentions regarding permanent return to Nigeria in the future

If you migrate from Nigeria, would you intend to return to Nigeria permanently in the future?

■ Yes	**55%**
■ No	**14%**
■ Not sure	**27%**
■ Not Applicable	**4%**
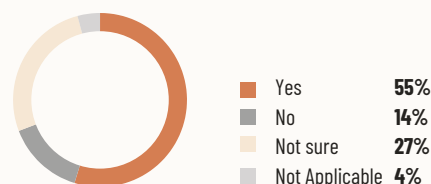
Motivating factors for young aspiring migrants to return to Nigeria in the future

To contribute to nation building	61%
Setting up business/investment	49%
Philanthropy/human developmt efforts	48%
Reconnecting with family & friends	48%
Political aspiration	17%
Securing a job	6%
Others	2%
None (Not Applicable)	15%
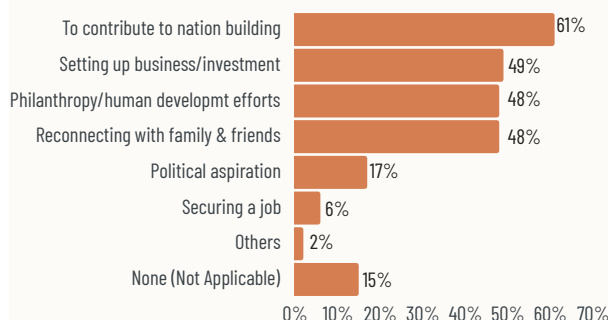
The responses also revealed two prevailing sentiments among the prospective migrants, which could reflect the attitudes of young Nigerians toward the Nigerian project. I would return to Nigeria

Attitude A: "If the country gets better"

Attitude B: "To help in the development of the nation"

Credit: Peoples Gazette

Uncertainty about return

Less than one-third of the respondents (27%) indicated uncertainty about their future return to Nigeria. This uncertainty may stem from factors such as ambiguity about career opportunities, socio-economic conditions, or personal circumstances that could influence their migration trajectory. A respondent captured this, indicating that such a decision is dependent on the situation of Nigeria by that time.

> "Because the conditions I meet will influence my decision to stay or not"

Decision to not return

A smaller percentage of respondents (14%) expressed their intention not to return to Nigeria permanently in the future. The underlying reasons behind this decision likely encompass those factors that drive them to consider leaving the country in the first place. However, their responses when asked "why?" were in sharp contrast to those of respondents intending to return. This underscores the importance of national and family ties as motivating factors for return migration.

> "I don't foresee a near future rehabilitation of the Nigerian state..."

> "I'll be moving with my family, so I don't have anything to come back for"

Motivating factors for return migration

Respondents that indicated intention to return to Nigeria in the future were further provided with options regarding what they would like to do when they return to the country (Figure 24).

Contribution to nation building: The most commonly cited reason, with 61% of respondents selecting it, is the desire to contribute to nation-building efforts. This finding underscores *Theme 1* above and indicates a strong sense of civic responsibility and patriotism among some young Nigerians, who perceive themselves as having a role to play in shaping the future of their country. Factors such as improving governance, addressing socio-economic challenges, and promoting social cohesion may motivate individuals to return and contribute their skills and expertise.

Setting up business or investment: About half of the respondents (49%) identified setting up a business or investment as a primary reason for intending to return permanently to Nigeria. This alludes to *Theme 3* above and highlights that some young Nigerians recognise the entrepreneurial opportunities and the potential for economic growth within the country. It also suggests a desire to contribute to economic growth and job creation in their homeland. Creating an enabling environment for business development, including access to capital, regulatory reforms, and infrastructure improvements, is crucial for encouraging entrepreneurial ventures and attracting investment.

Philanthropy or human development efforts: Nearly half of the respondents (48%) expressed a desire to engage in philanthropic or human development efforts upon their return to Nigeria. This reflects a commitment to social responsibility and the desire to contribute to the well-being of communities and individuals in need. Initiatives focused on education, healthcare, poverty alleviation, and community development can provide avenues for young Nigerians to make meaningful contributions to society.

Reconnecting with family and friends: Nearly half of the respondents (48%) cited reconnecting with family and friends as a motivating factor for returning to Nigeria permanently. This points to *Theme 2* above and underscores the importance of social connections and familial ties in shaping individuals' migration decisions and sense of belonging.

Political aspiration: A smaller percentage of respondents (17%) expressed political aspiration as a reason for intending to return to Nigeria permanently in the future. This suggests a desire to engage in the political process and contribute to governance and policy-making, potentially driven by a sense of civic duty or the aspiration for positive societal change.

Securing a job: A low percentage (6%) indicated that if they return to the country, they would be looking to secure a job. Although this could be influenced by various factors, including personal circumstances, economic conditions, and the prevailing standard of living, it however underscores the importance of addressing issues such as underemployment, poor working conditions, and unfavourable living conditions.

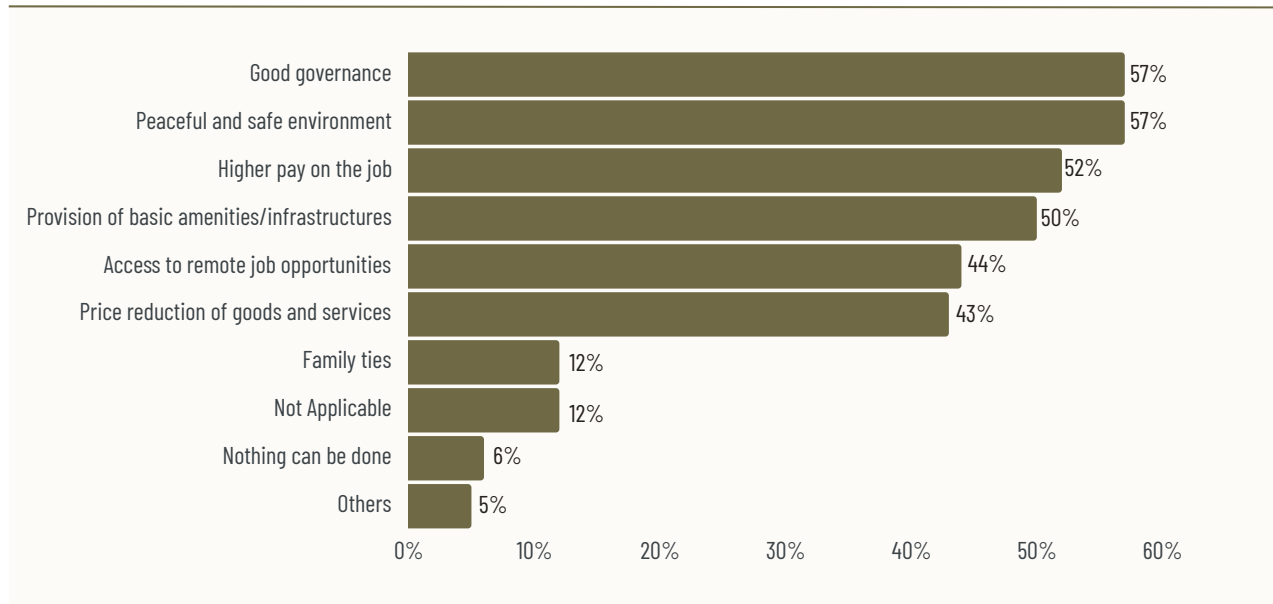**Reconsiderations & Recommendations**

Credit: Tobi Banjoko/Medium

Reconsiderations & Recommendations

4.0

Figure 4.1

Respondents recommendations on factors that could make them reconsider leaving the country

Factor	Percentage
Good governance	57%
Peaceful and safe environment	57%
Higher pay on the job	52%
Provision of basic amenities/infrastructures	50%
Access to remote job opportunities	44%
Price reduction of goods and services	43%
Family ties	12%
Not Applicable	12%
Nothing can be done	6%
Others	5%

The participants were asked to provide their insights and recommendations about the things that would make them reconsider their decision to migrate from the country and that will encourage Nigerians in diaspora to return to the country.

Governance and policy

The respondents identified some governance-related factors that if they were in place, they would reconsider their intention to migrate from the country.

Good governance: Majority (57%) of the respondents highlighted good governance as a factor that could influence their decision to stay in the country; it underscores the importance of effective and accountable governance in retaining young talents within Nigeria. Good governance encompasses various aspects such as transparency, accountability, rule of law, and efficient public service delivery. Addressing issues related to corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political instability can significantly improve the confidence of young Nigerians in the country's governance structures.

Peaceful and safe environment: Nearly equal in importance to good governance, 57% of respondents emphasised the significance of a peaceful and safe environment. This underscores the critical need for security and stability in shaping individuals' decisions regarding their future in Nigeria. Addressing challenges related to insecurity, including crime rates, insurgency, and communal conflicts, is essential for creating an environment where young Nigerians feel secure and can thrive personally and professionally.

Provision of basic amenities and infrastructures: Half of the respondents (50%) identified the provision of basic amenities and infrastructures as a crucial factor that could influence them to remain in the country. Access to essential services such as reliable electricity, healthcare facilities, education, and transportation infrastructure is fundamental for enhancing the quality of life and economic opportunities within Nigeria. Improving infrastructure development and ensuring equitable access to basic amenities can significantly contribute to retaining young Nigerians within the country.

Economic factors

Higher pay on the job: With 52% of respondents indicating higher pay as a factor that could make them reconsider leaving the country, it highlights the importance of economic incentives in retaining talent within Nigeria. The desire for better financial prospects reflects the aspirations of young Nigerians for improved standards of living and financial stability. Addressing issues such as wage disparities, income inequality, and creating avenues for career advancement and higher earning potential can contribute to retaining skilled individuals within the country.

Access to remote job opportunities: Close to half (44%) of the respondents identify access to remote job opportunities as a factor that could influence their decision to stay in Nigeria. This finding underscores the growing importance of flexible work arrangements and digital connectivity in today's globalised world. Providing policies and initiatives to promote remote work in the labour sector and job market could reduce the urge to migrate in search of flexible jobs elsewhere.

Price reduction of goods and services: Approximately 43% of respondents highlighted the importance of price reduction of goods and services in influencing their decision to remain in Nigeria. The cost of living, including the prices of essential goods and services, significantly impacts individuals' purchasing power and overall quality of life. Addressing factors such as inflation, affordability of basic necessities, and implementing measures to stabilize prices can alleviate financial burdens and improve the attractiveness of staying in Nigeria.

> "Though not planning to relocate, but having a safe and peaceful society and a stable/thriving economy are conditions that would make me not to ever consider to japa."

Social and cultural factors

A small percentage (12%) of the respondents identified that sociocultural factors could make them reconsider their decision to leave the country. This suggests that for a segment of young Nigerians, a strong attachment to their culture and social networks serves as a foundational aspect of their sense of self and belonging. To this group, Nigeria's rich cultural heritage is a source of national pride and identity. A respondent expressed this sentiment:

> "I would always choose the Nigeria culture over any other. The values and norms are unbeatable. I believe if I start a family here, I would have the liberty to raise my children the right way like my parents did."

This points to the importance of national orientation efforts that celebrate Nigeria's cultural diversity, promote community cohesion, and empower citizens to actively participate in nation-building. These are essential for promoting a sense of pride, belonging, and commitment among young Nigerians.

Nothing can be done

A smaller percentage of respondents (6%) expressed a pessimistic view, indicating that they believe nothing can be done to make them reconsider their decision to leave the country. This sentiment reflects a perception of systemic challenges or a lack of confidence in the potential for meaningful change to address the issues influencing their migration intentions. This underscores the need for efforts to promote a positive national identity and empower young Nigerians to actively participate in shaping the future of their country, which can strengthen their sense of agency and commitment to Nigeria's development.

CONCLUSION

Figure 5.1

Application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to push and pull factors of migration among young Nigerians
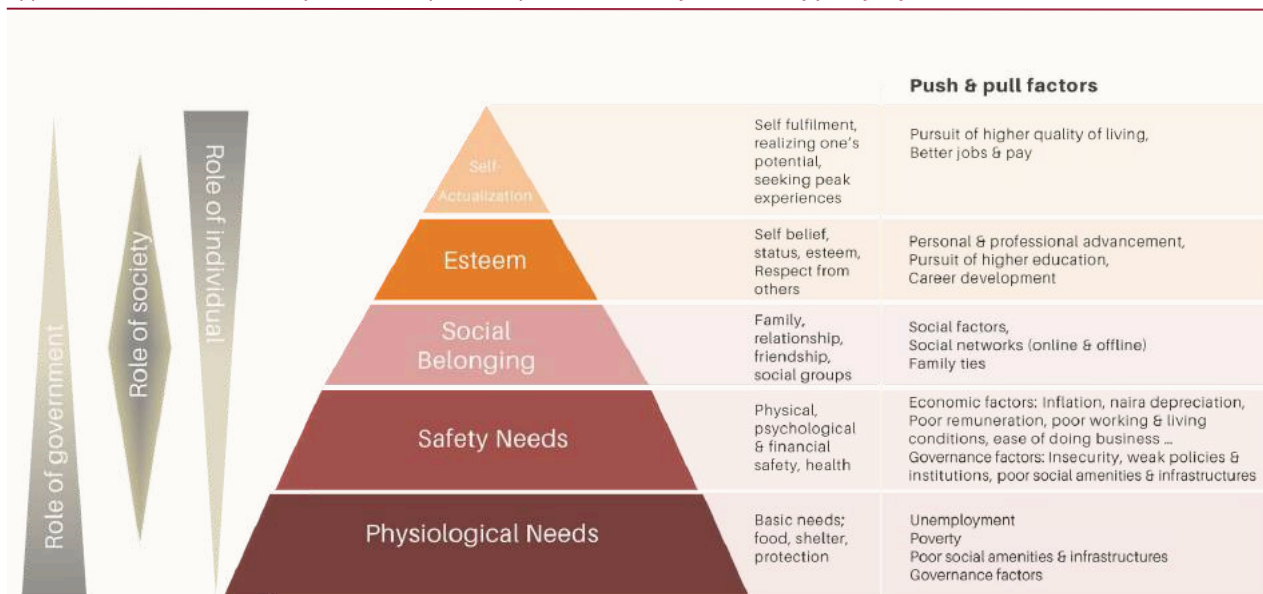
Source: Adapted from Dohlman et al.[88]

Note: Society in this chart encompasses the NGOs, CSOs, for profit organisations, and the society at large.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory that proposes a hierarchical structure of human needs, categorised into five levels: At the base are physiological needs, which are the most basic and fundamental requirements for human survival, followed by safety needs for security and stability. The next level encompasses social needs, followed by esteem needs for self-respect and recognition. At the pinnacle is self-actualization, representing the realisation of one's potential and pursuit of personal growth. According to Maslow, individuals strive to fulfil these needs in a sequential manner, with higher-level needs becoming relevant only after lower-level needs are satisfied. This theory suggests that satisfying basic needs is essential for individuals to pursue higher-level goals and aspirations. In this chart, the push and pull factors driving migration intention among young Nigerians are placed into their equivalent levels in Maslow's theory.

In conclusion, this study examined the intentions and attitudes of young Nigerians toward relocating from their country and analysed the factors influencing these intentions and attitudes. The findings emphasise the intricate interplay of personal aspirations and various economic, social, political, and structural factors in shaping migration intentions among young Nigerians. Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (Figure 5.1) provided a valuable framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of the push and pull factors driving migration intention among young Nigerians. It underscores the necessity for collective efforts from the government, public institutions, society, and populace to address these factors. This calls for comprehensive approaches, including policy reforms, investment in infrastructure, promotion of good governance, and measures to enhance economic opportunities and the standard of living. By addressing these factors, Nigeria can become an enabling environment, encouraging young Nigerians to remain in the country and contribute to its progress and development.

Credit: LEAP Africa

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Relationship between sociodemographic factors and migration intention (consideration) among young Nigerians

Variables	Migration Intention			X^2, df	p value
	Yes	No	Not sure		
Gender					
Male	142	38	20	10.07, 2	0.0065*
Female	116	18	33		
Age-group					
18 to 25	68	10	9	8.79, 4	0.0667
26 to 35	159	33	39		
36 to 40	31	13	5		
Are you a person living with a disability?					
Yes	7	1	1	NA	>0.9999
No	251	55	52		
Highest educational qualification					
Primary School Certificate#	1	0	0	1.96, 6	0.9226
Secondary School Certificate	16	3	3		
Diploma/Higher Educational Certificates	24	6	8		
Bachelors Degree	159	33	30		
Master's degree or Post-graduate diploma	55	14	12		
Others#	3	0	0		
Marital status					
Married	77	23	11	5.50, 2	0.0638
Single	180	32	41		
Separated /Divorce#	0	1	1		
Widowed#	1	0	0		
Religion					
Christianity (Christian)	194	40	35	2.89, 2	0.2360
Islam (Muslim)	59	16	18		
Prefer not to say#	3	0	0		
Others#	2	0	0		
Geopolitical zone					
North East	32	8	5	24.3, 10	0.0068*
North West	16	7	8		
North Central	44	17	14		
South East	18	1	8		
South West	119	17	15		
South South	29	6	3		
Classification of place of residence					
Urban	165	39	31	NA	0.3383
Semi-urban	72	10	18		
Rural	21	7	4		

NA: not applicable; #not included in the analysis *statistically significant (p ≤ 0.05)

Appendix 2:

Relationship between socioeconomic factors and migration intention (consideration) among young Nigerians

Variables	Migration Intention			X^2, df	p value
	Yes	No	Not sure		
Employment status					
Student	41	5	6	NA	0.0661
Employed (I work for an organisation)	115	27	27		
Self-employed (I own a business/ Freelancing)	64	17	11		
Unemployed	35	7	5		
Others	3	0	4		
What sector do you currently work in?					
Finance & insurance	11	1	2	NA	0.1897
Entertainment	6	2	0		
IT/Telecom	13	5	0		
Education	41	7	10		
NGO or Non-profit	56	17	15		
Oil & Gas	4	1	0		
Manufacturing	15	3	2		
Healthcare	28	0	4		
None (Not Applicable)	50	7	8		
Others	34	13	12		
What is your current monthly salary range?					
Under N30,000	32	5	3	15.7, 18	0.6114
N30,000–N49,000	25	5	9		
N50,000–N99,000	49	12	11		
N100,000–N149,000	30	8	6		
N150,000–N199,000	16	3	3		
N200,000–N249,000	16	3	3		
N250,000–N449,000	25	4	8		
N500,000–N1,000,000	11	3	2		
Above N1,000,000	4	4	0		
None (Not Applicable)	48	8	8		
Others#	2	1	0		
Have you ever travelled outside of the country before?					
Yes	55	19	9	5.38, 2	0.0678
No	186	34	42		
Do you have a valid international passport?					
Yes	153	21	22	19.26, 2	<0.0001*
No	68	29	27		

NA: not applicable; #not included in the analysis *statistically significant (p ≤ 0.05)

Appendix 3:

Relationship between social factors and migration intention (consideration) among young Nigerians

Variables	Migration Intention			X^2, df	p value
	Yes	No	Not sure		
Do you have people in the following categories who have already migrated from the country?					
Friends	190	34	33	16.20, 8	0.0395*
Siblings/Parents	67	18	7		
Other relatives	112	24	20		
Colleagues	123	20	22		
None (Not Applicable)	20	12	9		
Do you have people in the following categories who are planning to migrate from the country?					
Friends	197	34	37	17.03, 8	0.0298*
Siblings/Parents	107	14	20		
Other relatives	106	14	18		
Colleagues	144	19	24		
None (Not Applicable)	23	13	5		
Has the expectations from friends, family, and society influenced your decision about migration?					
Yes	116	5	18	31.54, 4	<0.0001*
No	101	43	25		
Not sure	24	5	8		
Has the information you consumed on social media influenced your decisions/perception of migration?					
Yes	118	11	16	NA	0.0002*
No	105	39	27		
Not sure	18	3	8		

NA: not applicable; *statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$)

Appendix 4:

Relationship between sociodemographic factors and migration intention (willingness) among young Nigerians

Variables	Migration Intention			X^2, df	p value
	Yes	No	Not sure		
Gender					
Male	157	19	13	4.11, 2	0.1278
Female	135	7	14		
Age-group					
18 to 25	69	4	7	NA	0.8264
26 to 35	187	18	18		
36 to 40	36	4	2		
Are you a person living with a disability?					
Yes	6	1	2	NA	0.1462
No	286	25	25		
Highest educational qualification					
Primary School Certificate#	1	0	0	7.24, 6	0.2995
Secondary School Certificate	18	1	3		
Diploma/Higher Educational Certificates	28	4	4		
Bachelors Degree	176	18	12		
Master's degree or Post-graduate diploma	67	2	8		
Others#	2	1	0		
Marital status					
Married	85	8	7	0.24, 2	0.8886
Single	205	17	20		
Separated /Divorce#	1	1	0		
Widowed#	1	0	0		
Religion					
Christianity (Christian)	215	16	21	2.42, 2	0.2970
Islam (Muslim)	72	10	6		
Prefer not to say#	3	0	0		
Others#	2	0	0		
Geopolitical zone					
North East	35	6	3	8.07, 10	0.6216
North West	24	3	4		
North Central	57	7	6		
South East	24	1	1		
South West	124	6	11		
South South	28	3	2		
Classification of place of residence					
Urban	184	20	20	NA	0.1451
Semi-urban	85	3	4		
Rural	23	3	3		

NA: not applicable; #not included in the analysis *statistically significant (p ≤ 0.05)

Appendix 5:

Relationship between socioeconomic factors and migration intention (willingness) among young Nigerians

Variables	Migration Intention			X^2, df	p value
	Yes	No	Not sure		
Employment status					
Student	43	3	4	NA	0.5248
Employed (I work for an organisation)	137	11	11		
Self-employed (I own a business/ Freelancing)	70	6	10		
Unemployed	36	6	1		
Others	6	0	1		
What sector do you currently work in?					
Finance & insurance	12	1	1	NA	0.1753
Entertainment	4	0	2		
IT/Telecom	15	3	0		
Education	48	1	6		
NGO or Non-profit	71	9	6		
Oil & Gas	5	0	0		
Manufacturing	15	2	2		
Healthcare	28	0	0		
None (Not Applicable)	52	4	3		
Others	42	6	7		
What is your current monthly salary range?					
Under N30,000	30	3	5	16.2, 18	0.5806
N30,000–N49,000	32	2	3		
N50,000–N99,000	61	3	4		
N100,000–N149,000	32	5	3		
N150,000–N199,000	19	0	0		
N200,000–N249,000	18	3	1		
N250,000–N449,000	30	2	4		
N500,000–N1,000,000	13	0	2		
Above N1,000,000	5	2	1		
None (Not Applicable)	50	5	4		
Others#	2	1	0		
Have you ever travelled outside of the country before?					
Yes	64	13	6	10.36, 2	0.0056*
No	228	13	21		
Do you have a valid international passport?					
Yes	173	10	13	5.54, 2	0.0625
No	98	14	12		

NA: not applicable; #not included in the analysis *statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$)

Appendix 6:

Relationship between social factors and migration intention (willingness) among young Nigerians

Variables	Migration Intention			X^2, df	p value
	Yes	No	Not sure		
Do you have people in the following categories who have already migrated from the country?					
Friends	223	16	18	NA	0.0099*
Siblings/Parents	81	3	8		
Other relatives	134	10	12		
Colleagues	146	7	12		
None (Not Applicable)	26	7	8		
Do you have people in the following categories who are planning to migrate from the country?					
Friends	233	16	19	NA	0.0005*
Siblings/Parents	126	4	11		
Other relatives	122	5	11		
Colleagues	167	8	12		
None (Not Applicable)	27	9	5		
Has the expectations from friends, family, and society influenced your decision about migration?					
Yes	133	2	4	NA	<0.0001*
No	128	23	18		
Not sure	31	1	5		
Has the information you consumed on social media influenced your decisions/perception of migration?					
Yes	134	3	8	NA	0.001*
No	134	22	15		
Not sure	24	1	4		

NA: not applicable; *statistically significant (p ≤ 0.05)

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