What makes refugees and migrants vulnerable to detention in Libya?

A microlevel study of the determinants of detention

MMC Research Report, December 2019

Acknowledgements

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1. Executive Summary

Libya is a key destination and transit point for people on the move. Since 2017 – when the European Union (EU) endorsed a deal between Italy and Libya to crack down on irregular migration from Africa to Europe along the Central Migration Route – Libyan authorities and local armed groups have detained thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers in the country. An increasing number of reports from human rights organizations have revealed that detainees face massive overcrowding, dire sanitary conditions, and rampant human rights abuses. While there has been significant discussion of the potentially harmful effects of the current detention system in Libya, little is known about arrest and detention patterns and which refugee and migrant profiles are more vulnerable to being detained.

This report examines the social, economic, and demographic determinants of detention of refugees and migrants in Libya. Drawing on surveys of 5,144 refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers, it compares the profiles and characteristics of those who reported being detained and those who did not in order to identify what factors make people on the move more likely to end up in detention. While the report focuses on the Libyan context, its findings have implications for understanding the drivers, dynamics, and consequences of migrant detention elsewhere. This is important given the growing trend among EU and other Western countries of outsourcing asylum and migration control to transit states in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

1.1 Key Findings

- **Ten percent of people surveyed between May 2017 and June 2019 reported being detained in Libya, and the proportion of respondents experiencing detention increased over time.**[1] Three-quarters of detainees said they were not told why they were being detained, while a quarter claimed that they were held for ransom. Few of those detained reported receiving regular access to basic needs, including meals, drinking water, and sanitation facilities.[2]

- **Refugees and migrants of East African origin were four times more likely to be detained than those from West, Central, and North Africa**. This finding held even when controlling for respondents' gender, level of education, religion, previous occupation, migration status, and length of journey.

- **Men were more likely to experience detention, regardless of age, religion, and level of education.** This could be due to the fact that detainees in Libya often serve as a source of manual labour and, in some cases, have been forcibly conscripted by armed groups. The report found no evidence that refugees and migrants from certain religions (e.g., Christians), ethnicities, or age groups were more prone to being detained.

- **Respondents seeking to move to Europe were twice as likely to be detained as those seeking to remain in Libya or move to another non-European country.** This likely reflects the fact that many detainees had attempted to embark on sea crossings and were intercepted and detained by Libyan authorities and local armed groups, with the aim of deterring and punishing boat departures. Despite the crackdown, the proportion of respondents naming Libya as their final destination decreased significantly during our survey period, while the proportion intending to move to Europe remained relatively steady.

- **Respondents who cited war, violence, and a lack of rights among the factors motivating their mixed migrations were more vulnerable to detention than those who did not.** Movement is a complex process, and most respondents reported leaving their countries due to multiple factors – political, economic, social, and personal. But those who referenced violent conflict or persecution as a driver of migration faced a higher risk of being detained in Libya.

- **Respondents who were detained were more likely to report facing another protection risk while in Libya, including witnessing a migrant death, sexual assault, physical abuse, kidnapping, and theft.** At the same time, detainees were less likely to have experienced a protection issue en route to Libya. It therefore seems that detention exacerbates other protection risks, as indicated by investigations of detention conditions by humanitarian and human rights organizations.

- **Particular payment arrangements for smugglers can make refugees and migrants more susceptible to detention.** Respondents who reported not paying their smuggler until they arrived safely at their destination were four times less likely to be detained than those who made other payment arrangements (e.g., paying at the point of departure). Negotiating to pay smuggling fees upon safe arrival may therefore help refugees and migrants mitigate detention risk by giving smugglers an economic incentive to facilitate safe passage. This suggests that it is not necessarily whether people use smugglers that make them more vulnerable to detention, but how they use smugglers' services.

- **In a detention system where extortion serves as an important motivating factor, how easily refugees and migrants can be shaken down or exploited for their labor can influence their likelihood of being detained.** Similar to how they paid their smugglers, respondents' methods of accessing money during their journey also influenced their risk of detention. Those who reported using formal transfers to obtain money – e.g., through Western Union or Moneygram – and those who used mobile money were less prone to detention, even when controlling for other factors. In contrast, respondents who reported carrying cash on them or working for money during their journey were at a greater risk of detention. These results indicate that refugees and migrants with secure ways of accessing money are less likely to be detained, while those who carry cash or are forced to seek work in transit are more vulnerable.

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1   Beyond detention by Libyan DCIM officials and local armed groups, an additional three percent of respondents reported being kidnapped by smugglers in Libya.
2   The findings are based on 5,144 interviews conducted between May 2017 – June 2019. The sampling did not target individuals who were currently detained, as no interviews were conducted within the detention centres.

2. Introduction

Libya is a key transit country for refugees and migrants attempting to reach Europe. Long a destination and crossing point for people on the move, the country has become "the epicentre" of the Central Mediterranean migration route.[3] In 2017, the European Union (EU) endorsed a deal between Italy and Libya aimed at stemming irregular migration flows, and since then the EU has spent millions of euros training, equipping, and funding the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept boats of refugees and migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Europe.[4] Many of the intercepted are detained at centres overseen by Libya's Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM). Recent reports from human rights organizations have revealed that these centres suffer from massive overcrowding, dire sanitary conditions, and inadequate care.[5] Rampant human rights violations and widespread abuses against migrants have also been documented, including torture, beatings, extortion, and sexual assault.[6]

Although abuses in Libya's detention system have drawn increasing international scrutiny, little is known about arrest and detention patterns in the country, and which migrant profiles are more vulnerable to being detained. This report examines the social, economic, and demographic determinants of detention among refugees and migrants in Libya. Our analysis focuses on individuals who report being detained in centres run by the Libyan government's Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM); as such, the findings do not necessarily capture detention patterns and dynamics in informal settings. Drawing on survey and interview data from 5,144 refugees and migrants, we compare the profiles of detainees and non-detainees to identify what factors make people on the move more likely to end up in detention in Libya. While the report focuses on the Libyan context, its findings have implications for understanding the drivers, dynamics, and consequences of migrant detention elsewhere. This is important given the growing trend among EU and other Western countries of outsourcing asylum and migration control to transit countries in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. As one pair of scholars have observed, "the detention of 'unwanted' migrants is increasingly part and parcel of the governmental regulation of international immigration."[7]

The results of this report should be met with caution. Because it relies primarily on a quantitative analysis of survey data, we are only able to identify correlations between key variables and cannot make causal claims. The difficulty of researching refugee and migrant populations in an insecure environment such as Libya creates methodological limitations and the potential for biased data. We address these concerns in detail below. Moreover, the Libyan context is complex and evolving rapidly; our data only captures some of these dynamics and cannot account for all of the factors that may influence detention in the country. Despite these limitations, this report provides a unique opportunity to systematically analyze information on refugee and migrant experiences in Libya.

3. Background

3.1 Political and Security Context

Since the 2011 uprising and civil war that precipitated the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi, Libya has experienced persistent violence and insecurity. The internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) does not control most of the country outside the capital Tripoli, and it continues to be violently challenged by its Benghazi-based rival, the Libyan National Army (LNA). Without a functioning central government, unaccountable armed groups and criminal networks have filled the power vacuum, exploiting Libya's ongoing political turmoil and deepening economic crisis.[8] These actors operate with relative impunity, as the justice system is incapable of ensuring accountability for human rights abuses.[9] In this environment, human smuggling and trafficking has flourished into a multi-million euro industry, providing employment opportunities for many Libyans and a major source of income for armed groups.[10]

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3   Tinti and Reitano 2018: 90.
4   HRW 2019: 4.
5   Amnesty International 2017; Human Rights Watch 2019; IOM-DTM 2018; ODI 2016; UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018.
6   Ibid.
7   Leerkes and Broeders 2010.
8   Wehrey 2018.
9   Human Rights Watch 2019, Wehrey 2018.
10 Tinti and Reitano 2018: 123

3.2 Mixed Migration Numbers and Patterns

Libya's political crisis has effectively opened up the country's 1,000-mile coastline – the longest of any African country bordering the Mediterranean – to migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees striving for a better life in Europe. This includes migrants who came to the country before the 2011 uprising searching for work in its lucrative oil fields. Aided by smugglers, a growing number of individuals fleeing conflict, persecution, repression, and extreme poverty have made the journey to Libya as well. Refugee and migrant crossings through the Central Mediterranean Route jumped four-fold between 2014 and 2017,[11] up to 90 percent of which departed from Libya.[12] But the journey is a treacherous one: since 2017, more than 4,800 people have died attempting to cross from Libya to the Italian coast.[13]

IOM estimates that 655,144 migrants currently reside in Libya.[14] According to UNHCR, 8,794 of these individuals are refugees and 47,414 are asylum-seekers.[15] A majority originate from Sub-Saharan Africa (62 percent), while 30 percent hail from North Africa and eight percent from the Middle East and Asia.[16] The largest nationalities represented are Niger (20 percent), Egypt (15.5 percent), Chad (15 percent), Sudan (12 percent), Nigeria (9 percent), and Mali (4 percent).[17] Many face harassment, exploitation, and severe insecurity upon entering Libya. Some who originally intended to stay in the country, and who are able to mobilize sufficient resources, have opted to take the perilous journey across the Mediterranean in search of greater safety. Those who do not or are unable to successfully cross, risk becoming targets for criminals, traffickers, and armed groups. Abuses suffered by refugees and migrants – coupled with the recent escalation in fighting between the GNA and LNA for control over Tripoli – have made Libya increasingly dangerous for people on the move.

3.3 National and International Responses

Laws dating back to the Gaddafi era criminalize the undocumented entry of foreigners into Libya, which is punishable by fines and imprisonment pending deportation. The country lacks an asylum system and is neither a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor to the Geneva Conventions.[18] Libyan authorities have allowed UNHCR to register people belonging to seven nationalities – Eritreans, Ethiopians of Oromo ethnicity, Iraqis, Palestinians, Somalis, Syrians, and Sudanese of Darfuri origin – as persons of concern. Yet even these individuals have often been subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, and other human rights violations.[19] In general, people of all nationalities in Libya are treated as irregular migrants, which allows them to be easily exploited – with international media outlets having reported on the existence of migrant slave auctions in the country.[20]

In 2017, Italy brokered a deal with the GNA to bolster the capacity of Libyan authorities to crack down on irregular migrant crossings to Europe. [21] Under the agreement, which was subsequently endorsed by European leaders in the February 2017 Malta Declaration, the EU has provided funding and training to the Libyan Coast Guard to prevent boat departures of migrants and asylum seekers from Libya.[22] The Italian government, with support from the European Commission, has discouraged and even prevented human rights groups and NGOs from rescuing people stranded at sea.[23] According to Amnesty International, these efforts have essentially blocked the migration route through the central Mediterranean.[24]

Critics contend that EU policies are increasing refugees' and migrants' risk of abuse and detention by keeping them in Libya – which UNHCR does not consider to be a safe third country for asylum-seekers[25] – and encouraging local authorities and armed groups to expand their enforcement efforts. There are concerns that these crackdowns have altered the political economy of migration and human trafficking in Libya by turning refugees and migrants into valuable commodities

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11 IOM 2017b. The number of arrivals to Europe from the CMR have since declined, though Libya remains the main country of departure.
12 UNHCR Libya, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/libya.html
13 IOM, "Missing Migrants: Tracking Deaths Along Migratory Routes," https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?migrant_route%5B%5D=1376 (accessed 14 October 2019).
14 IOM defines a migrant broadly, as any person present in Libya who does not possess Libyan nationality. They therefore do not differentiate between migrant status (e.g., asylum-seekers and refugees). IOM DTM Round No. 26 (June - July 2019), https://www.globaldtm.info/libya/
15 UNHCR Population Data, http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview
16 IOM DTM Round No. 26 (June - July 2019). Among refugees, 52 percent are Palestinean, 23 percent are Iraqi, 11 percent are Sudanese and 6 percent are Eritrean. Among asylum-seekers, 49 percent are Syrian, 21 percent are Sudanese, 15 percent are Eritrean, and 7 percent are Somali (UNHCR Population Data, http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview).
17 Ibid.
18 Libya has, however, ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
19 Amnesty International 2017.
20 CNN 2017.
21 Amnesty International 2018b.
22 Amnesty International 2018b.
23 UN 2017, Stone 2018.
24 Amnesty International 2018a.
25 According to UNHCR (2018: 21), "Libya should not be regarded as a safe third country in light of the absence of a functioning asylum system, the widely reported difficulties and abuses faced by asylum-seekers and refugees in Libya, the absence of protection from such abuses and the lack of durable solutions."

to be extorted and traded.[26] Human rights groups have also accused the Libyan Coast Guard of reckless and violent conduct while intercepting boats, and of colluding with criminal gangs and smugglers in electing to detain or provide safe passage to migrants.[27] In response to these allegations, the International Criminal Court has considered an investigation into "migrant-related crimes" in Libya.[28]

3.4 Detention of Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees

Libya's criminalization of irregular entry – and the failure of authorities to draw distinctions between different categories of migrants – has meant that all individuals arriving in the country without a permit are at risk of detention at any time.[29] Moreover, detainees can be held indefinitely, and there are no standards in place providing access to judicial remedies.[30] EU policies appear to have led to an increase in refugee and migrant detention; in mid-2018, as the Libyan Coast Guard cracked down on Mediterranean crossings, the number of people in official detention centres nearly doubled from 5,000 to over 9,000.[31] Some researchers and journalists have therefore focused on the impact of EU policies on detention practices and conditions in Libya, particularly the "number of refugees and migrants dying in horrific conditions after being sent back to Libya as a direct result of EU Policy."[32] These reports accuse European policymakers of complicity in the establishment of a system of abuse, extortion, and human rights violations of migrants and asylum seekers. Since sea crossings are now less viable and therefore less profitable for smugglers and armed groups, detention and kidnapping have become a more lucrative way to make money off people on the move by holding them for ransom or using them for forced labour.[33]

The Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM), under the GNA Interior Ministry, operates 34 official detention centres, most of which are concentrated in northwest Libya near Tripoli. Founded in 2012, the DCIM has struggled to exert control over the various detention facilities scattered across the country, many of which were established by non-state actors after the 2011 uprising. Since detention centres lack an official

registration process, precisely how many individuals are detained remains unknown. The numbers tend to fluctuate, as authorities and local armed groups release people at their discretion, often after they pay a ransom.[34] The most recent estimates put the number of detained refugees and migrants in DCIM facilities at around 5,000.[35] Some 3,000 of them are thought to be in significant danger because their centres lie in close proximity to active conflict zones around the capital where GNA and LNA forces have clashed since April 2019. Detainees have been wounded by indiscriminate gunfire, and in July, an airstrike on the Tajura detention centre in a Tripoli suburb killed 53 migrants and injured 130.

The DCIM detainee estimates do not include the potentially thousands of refugees and migrants held in informal centres controlled by local armed groups, where detainees are particularly vulnerable to being held for ransom or sold for slave labor.[36] Even Libya's official detention facilities, while staffed with DCIM personnel, are effectively controlled by the armed group controlling the surrounding neighborhood.[37] The DCIM struggles to pay staff salaries and food for detainees, and provides little guidance regarding detention processes, protocols, and standards.[38] The body's institutional weaknesses and lack of its own security forces enable armed groups to act relatively autonomously within the detention centres.

Some detainees at DCIM centres are arrested in raids on smuggler camps and refugee and migrant neighborhoods, rounded up at checkpoints, or stopped on the streets. But according to human rights groups, the increase in sea interceptions by the Libyan Coast Guard has led to a surge in detentions, contributing to overcrowding and deteriorating conditions at DCIM facilities.[39] Refugees and migrants apprehended at sea are often automatically transferred to detention centres, including asylum seekers, refugees, and survivors of human trafficking. In August, in response to calls from the U.N. to shut down all detention centres in Libya, Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha announced that DCIM would close three facilities in Misrata, Tajoura, and Khoms.[40] Yet this has resulted in detainees being transferred to other

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26   Interviews with human trafficking and migration researchers in Tunis, October 2019.
27   Amnesty International 2017.
28   UNSC 2017.
29   Toaldo 2017.
30   HRW 2018.
31   HRW 2019. Between January and July 2019, the total number of recorded arrivals in Italy was 3,867 people, a significant decline from 2018, when 18,546 arrivals were recorded. In the same period in 2019, a total of 4,576 migrants were returned by the Libyan Coast Guard (IOM DTM 2019).
32   Hayden 2019.
33   Interviews with human trafficking and migration researchers in Tunis, October 2019.
34   Amnesty 2017.
35   PBS 2019.
36   HRW 2019.
37   HRW 2019.
38   HRW 2019.
39   Amnesty 2017, HRW 2019.
40   BBC 2019.

detention centres where it is reported that conditions are worse.[41] There remains little oversight of detention conditions by Libyan authorities, and the GNA lacks a legal framework regulating detention that would allow individuals to challenge their detention or appeal for their release.[42] Libya's judicial system has been severely weakened in recent years, as armed groups frequently threaten and harass lawyers and judges.[43]

Existing research on refugee and migrant detention in Libya has primarily documented the conditions, human rights violations, and abuses within the country's detention centres. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the OHCHR, and IOM have conducted in-depth interviews with refugees and migrants in detention between 2016 and 2019.[44] Reports from these groups describe conditions of massive overcrowding, dire sanitary conditions, and inadequate food and medical care. Widespread abuses inflicted by guards and militia members are also documented, including torture, forced recruitment, beatings, burning with cigarette butts, electric shocks, and extortion. Detainees are held indefinitely and told little about whether and when they will be released. Some have committed suicide. Conditions have reportedly worsened over time, resulting in rioting and protests by detainees.[45]

Some of these reports have also documented extensive collusion between smugglers, the Libyan Coast Guard, and DCIM authorities in exploiting people on the move. This collusion is part of an elaborate and highly profitable smuggling economy that has capitalized on Libya's instability and sought to meet the demand for transit to Europe. According to Amnesty International, smugglers profit from sending migrants out to sea, and then they alert the coast guard, which receives international assistance for intercepting these boats. Passengers are then transferred to detention centres, where they can only secure release by bribing the guards, who then refer the migrants to smugglers, restarting the cycle.[46] Therefore, as a result of international pressure, both illicit migration and the enforcement of it have become a lucrative business.

Although there has been significant discussion of the abusive and inhumane conditions of detention in Libya, along with the legality of EU migration policies and their impact on the detention system, little is known about actual arrest and detention patterns in the country. The profiles and nationalities of detainees vis-à-vis other migrants, and the factors that make people more or less likely to be detained, are unclear. Data from the Mixed Migration Centre and IOM shows that a substantial majority of detainees in Libya are East African.[47] Moreover, Amnesty International has reported that Christians in Libya face particular vulnerabilities and are often subjected to abuse and ill treatment, including inside detention centres.[48] Yet there has been no systematic analysis of socio-demographic vulnerabilities to detention in Libya. Ongoing fighting between the GNA and LNA – along with the reportedly dire circumstances in detention centres – has made a study of detention determinants an urgent need, since further deterioration of the security situation raises grave concerns about the impact of conflict on detainees. This report seeks to fill this gap by examining in detail the social and demographic profiles of detainees relative to the larger refugee and migrant population in Libya, including nationality, ethnicity, age, and religion. It also examines the role of other factors in contributing to the likelihood of detention, including transit routes, financial assets, and the use of smugglers.

4. Methodology

This report is based on surveys of 5,144 refugees and migrants in Libya conducted between May 2017 and June 2019.[49] The interviews were conducted in Tripoli, Benghazi, and Sabha. The sampling did not target individuals who were currently detained, as no interviews were conducted within the detention centres. The surveys contained a series of structured questions and several open-ended questions. They were conducted by monitors residing in diverse locations who often shared the nationality of the refugees and migrants they interviewed. Monitors were deployed to known migration "nodes" and "hotspots" – urban centres, border areas and along transit routes – where there is a large presence of people on the move.

Monitors were selected based on their knowledge of their locality and contacts with people on the move. This study sought to ensure diverse monitor profiles (gender, ethnicity, language skills, economic and social status) to target the broadest cross-section possible of refugees and migrants. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and security concerns in Libya, monitors employed non-randomized, purposive sampling. Survey respondents were primarily identified through the snowball sampling method. Monitors sought to balance the number of male and female respondents, and to diversify contact points and country of origin. No distinction was made in the

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41   MSF 2019.
42   Amnesty 2017.
43   Amnesty 2017.
44   Human Rights Watch 2019; Amnesty International 2017; UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018.
45   HRW 2019.
46   Amnesty International 2017.
47   IOM-DTM 2018.
48   Amnesty International 2015.
49   A small number of surveys (2 percent) were conducted in 2015. Removing them from the sample does not change our substantive findings.

sampling process between migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees. Individuals under the age of 18 were excluded from the sample. Refugees and migrants who had been continuously living in Libya for more than two years were also excluded, since the focus of this research is on people in the process of moving rather than on those who have settled in Libya for the long term.

Before being deployed, monitors were trained to use a custom-designed electronic application to submit survey responses to a central data repository operated by Qualtrics. This study utilized several procedures to ensure data quality. First, Project and Data Officers supervised the monitors and held monthly Skype calls to discuss quality and data collection issues. Second, Data Officers reviewed all survey data to ensure quality control, based on checking (a) the time taken to complete the survey, (b) the location where the survey was recorded, (c) actual completion of the survey, and (d) identification of repetitive responses and outliers. Third, supervisors conducted ad-hoc spot checks on monitors to ensure compliance with data collection protocols.

The survey questionnaires took approximately one to two hours to complete. Along with questions on respondent demographics, the surveys contained questions exploring the reasons for moving, experiences during their journey, whether they had been subjected to detention, and whether they suffered human rights abuses. Monitors were trained on the difference between detention and kidnapping and explicitly explained the distinction to respondents.[50] Moreover, the survey included an open-ended question in which many individuals responded with additional details on their detention to corroborate their responses to the closed-ended questions. All surveys were recorded anonymously; no data was collected on respondents' names and other personally identifying information. All participants were informed orally by monitors about the aim of the study as well as research ethics prior to participating, including confidentiality and the right to withdraw.

4.1 Model Specification
The research team used the survey responses to create a cross-sectional dataset, and generated dependent variables capturing the incidence of detention. On the measure of incidence – a binary indicator of whether a respondent reported being detained – we used logistic regression to evaluate whether a series of independent variables had a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of refugee and migrant detention. For each variable, we conducted a bivariate analysis using cross-tabulations and then multivariate analysis incorporating control variables. In addition to the quantitative analysis, the report uses qualitative evidence from responses to open-ended section of the survey to reinforce the statistical results.

4.2 Limitations
Several limitations to the data are worth noting. First, the sampling process was not randomized and, as a result, the survey responses are not representative of the entire refugee and migrant population. Indeed, in comparison to IOM estimates of refugee and migrant demographics, West Africans are overrepresented in our sample, while people from North Africa and the Middle East/Asia are underrepresented.[51] Our exclusion criteria for participation in the survey – namely, the omission of people living in Libya for more than two years – could have also biased our data, particularly responses regarding people's intended destinations. As such, the results of our analysis may not be generalizable to all people on the move in Libya.[52] We therefore weighted survey responses based on IOM's population estimates to help correct for potential sampling bias, and compared the results to those for the unweighted sample.[53] However, because IOM data are only estimates and may also be biased, this report presents the results for the unweighted sample. Findings for the weighted sample are provided in the appendix.

Second, the fact that the outcome of interest in this report (detention) is based on self-reporting raises concerns about accuracy and social desirability bias. Most data reported by respondents is not verifiable (e.g. incidents that occurred along their migration routes). Respondents may not have been comfortable discussing what happened to them and thus be reluctant to divulge information about potentially traumatic experiences. Because Libyan law criminalizes irregular migration, migrants and asylum seekers are often hesitant to report abuse to Libyan authorities; this could extend to what respondents were willing to report in a survey, particularly because they remained in the country where many abuses were taking place.[54]

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50 When surveying respondents, monitors provided a list of 35 known detention centres to help clarify the distinction between being held in these centres (detention) versus being locked in a house by a smuggler (kidnapping). The detention variable may therefore omit some observations for those who were detained in informal detention centres.

51 These include individuals from Nigeria (who comprise 39 percent of our sample compared to nine percent of the estimated refugee and migrant population), Ghana (10 percent versus 6 percent), Burkina Faso (six percent versus one percent), and Cameroon (five percent versus one percent). Meanwhile, Egyptians comprise less than one percent of our sample, compared to an estimated 15.5 percent of the population. People from Niger (5 percent compared to 20 percent) and Chad (5 percent compared to 15 percent) are also underrepresented in our sample. Our sample also contains no Syrians or Bangladeshis, even though they make up three and four percent of the estimated refugee and migrant population.

52 Weighting can be problematic because it can introduce instabilities into the data, increasing the standard errors of the estimates.

53 Under-represented nationalities received a weight larger than 1, and those in over-represented groups received a weight less than 1. Specific weights assigned were: Nigeria = .23, Ghana = .60, Burkina Faso = .17, Egypt = 129, Algeria = 50, Cameroon = .20, Cote D'Ivoire = .50, Eritrea = .17, Ghana = .60, Mali = 2, Niger = 4, Pakistan = 11.5, Somalia = 5.

54 UNSMIL 2018.

Concerns about social desirability are mitigated, however, by the fact that the monitors who conducted the survey were typically a part of local migrant networks. As a result, there was likely a higher level of trust between interviewer and interviewee that may have enabled monitors to elicit more forthcoming responses. Moreover, since the detention of refugees and migrants in Libya has received increased international scrutiny in recent years, migrant communities have sought to draw attention to the issue. This study found that respondents were often eager to discuss their experiences; those who were not were given the option to refuse responding to each survey question and/or to withdraw from the survey completely. Moreover, as we discuss in the results section, the number of self-reported detainees in our sample is on par with independent estimates of the proportion of refugees and migrants in Libya that have been held in detention in Libya. Finally, in our analysis we perform robustness checks to account for difficulties respondents may have faced in distinguishing detention from kidnapping.

Third, because our analysis relies on observational data, there is an inherent risk of omitted variable bias and endogeneity. While our models control for a variety of potential confounders, there may be some unobserved variable that correlates with our dependent variable (detention) and one or more of our independent variables, biasing the results. Moreover, the results for some of our independent variables – those pertaining to the use of smugglers, routes, and destinations – could reflect reverse causation. It is possible that detention influences the use of smugglers, the choice of certain routes, and people's intended destinations – as opposed to being influenced by these factors. This is of particular concern since the data do not include information about the precise timing of detention. Our results should therefore be met with caution. This report is based on observed correlations only, and we cannot claim causation.

5. Findings

The findings of this report are presented in three sections. The first section provides a descriptive overview of the data, including a breakdown of respondents by demographics, mixed migration dynamics, and the frequency of detention and other protection issues faced by respondents. The second section presents a bivariate analysis comparing detainees and non-detainees in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, mixed migration drivers and destinations, and the use of smuggling services. The third section discusses the results of a statistical analysis that examines the relationship between these key variables and the likelihood of being detained in Libya.

5.1 Data Overview

5.1.1 Demographics

Fifty-six percent of survey respondents were men and 44 percent were women. Our sample is therefore more female-heavy than the estimated refugee and migrant population in Libya, which according to IOM is 87 percent male.[55] The average age of our respondents was 30 years old, with 73 percent being between the ages of 25 and 39. This aligns with the broader literature on migration, which finds that younger age cohorts tend to be the most mobile.[56]

Five percent of respondents were UNHCR persons of concern (POCs): they were either registered as a refugee or had an asylum case pending.[57] As discussed in the background section, individuals from seven nationalities can qualify as POCs in Libya.[58] Yet in our sample, only half of eligible respondents reported being a POC, which could point to the difficulty that people have obtaining recognition as a person of concern in Libya. In terms of areas of origin, 70 percent of respondents were from West Africa, 19 percent were from East Africa, 11 percent were from Central Africa, and less than one percent hailed from North Africa.[59] As noted above, because the demographic profiles of survey respondents do not match those of the larger refugee and migrant population in Libya estimated by IOM, we use weights to correct for sampling error.

A majority of respondents (56 percent) identified as Christian, while 43 percent identified as Muslim. Education levels varied, but 46 percent had completed secondary school and ten percent possessed a university degree. Before leaving their countries, most respondents had worked as labourers (32 percent), service industry workers (25 percent), and farmers (12 percent). Some 11 percent of respondents reported being a university student.

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55 IOM DTM 2019.
56 IOM 2017a. Less than one percent of our respondents were over the age of 60. A majority (57 percent) were single, while 37 percent were unmarried, and 45 percent had at least one child.
57 60 percent had applied for asylum in Libya, 18 percent in Sudan, five percent in Chad, three percent in Ethiopia, three percent in Egypt, two percent in Italy, two percent in Niger.
58 Including Eritreans, Ethiopians of Oromo ethnicity, Iraqis, Palestinians, Somalis, Syrians, and Sudanese of Darfuri origin.
59 This compares to IOM's population estimates of 42 percent from West Africa, four percent from East Africa, 15.5 percent from Central Africa, and 30 percent from North Africa (IOM DTM 2019).

Table 1: Education of Respondents

Education level	%
No education	5%
Primary school	15%
Secondary school	47%
Vocational training	19%
Religious education	4%
University degree	10%

% of respondents (n = 5,144)
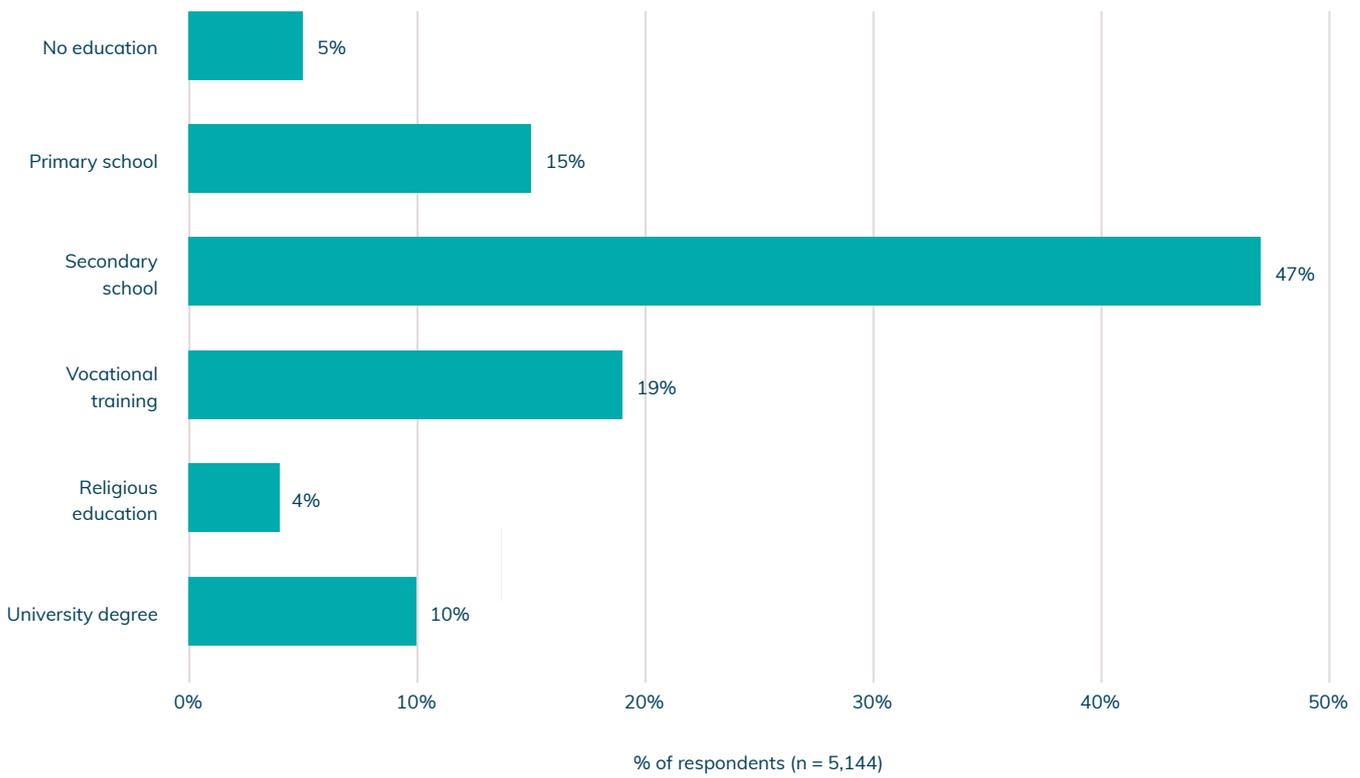
Table 2: Occupation of Respondents (Pre-Migration)

| Occupation	%
Farmer	12%
Labourer	32%
Unemployed	11%
Professional	8%
Service industry	25%
Student	11%

% of respondents (n = 5,144)
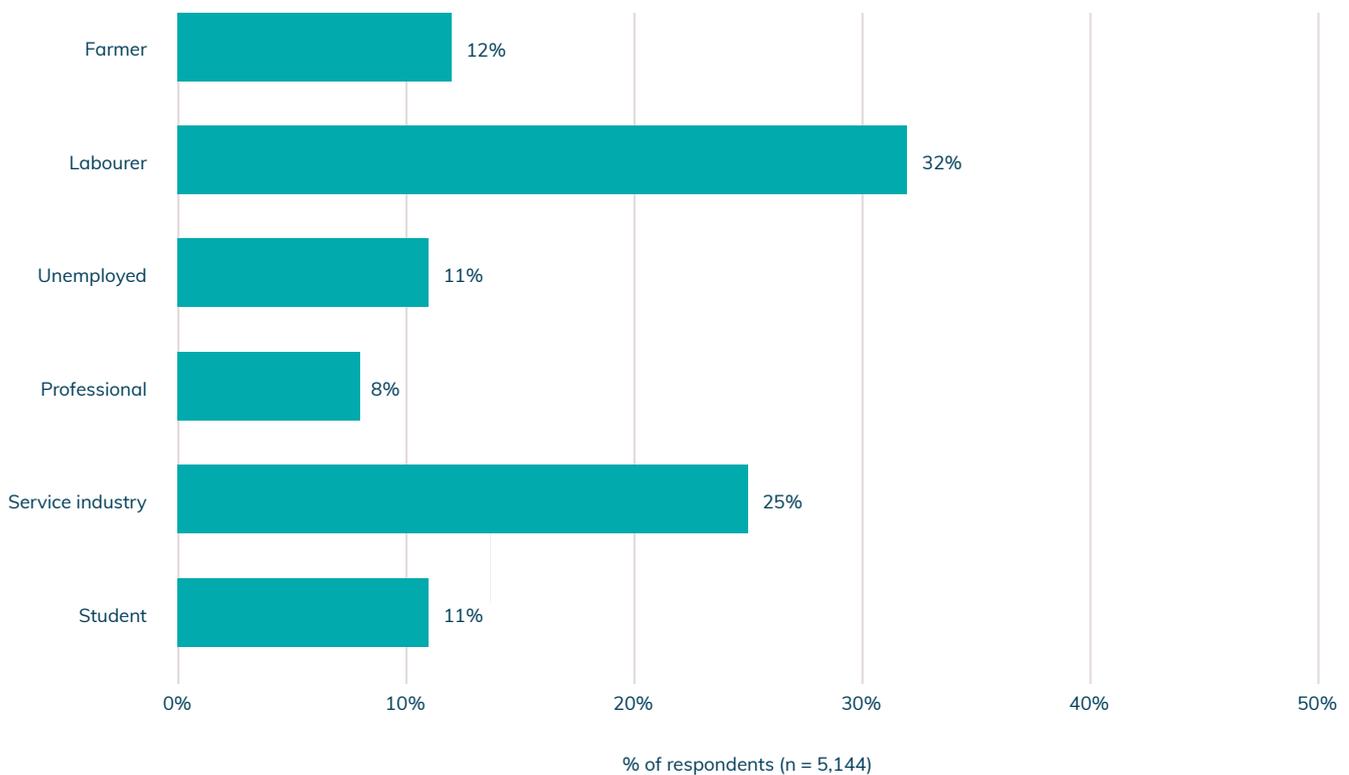
5.1.2 Mixed Migration Dynamics

At the time of the survey, one-quarter of respondents were less than a month into their journey. Thirty-nine percent had been in transit for one to eleven months, and 37 percent for at least a year.[60] When asked what drove their migration, respondents cited multiple factors, including war and violence, a lack of rights, economic conditions (e.g. unemployment and low wages), a lack of social services, and poor governance in their countries of origin. Some also highlighted personal reasons such as divorce, forced marriage, and a desire to join family members overseas. These findings underscore the complex and multi-faceted nature of movement, and indicate that the distinctions between different categories of migration in Libya are fluid and overlapping.

In terms of where people hoped to move, 19 percent of those surveyed said that Libya was their final destination, while 27 percent had not yet decided. Of those who preferred other destinations, the most common were Italy (34 percent), Germany (22 percent), and France (17 percent).[61] The proportion of respondents reporting Libya as their final destination decreased significantly during the survey period (Figure 1). While the proportion intending to migrate to Europe also declined initially, it has remained relatively steady at around half of all respondents.[62] The proportion of respondents who were undecided about their destination also increased over time.

Figure 1: Preferred Destination, by Month

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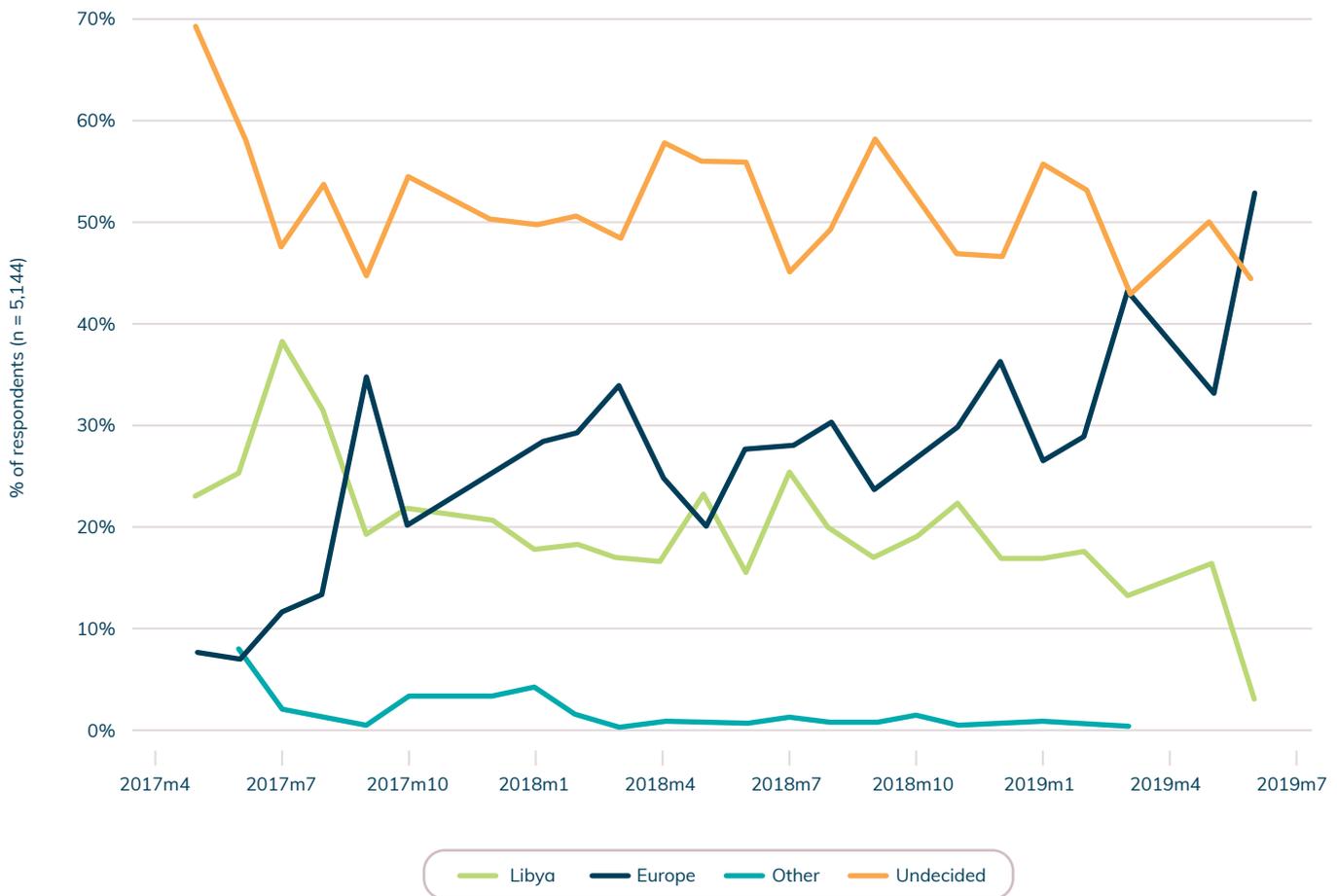
60   The median journey length was seven months. 60 percent of respondents had relocated within their countries before migrating abroad.
61   Most respondents (91 percent) had not changed their preferred destination country since leaving their homes.
62   More people planned to stay at their destination temporarily (41 percent) than those who intended to remain permanently (31 percent).

These trends may not be representative of all refugees and migrants in Libya, but they are still potentially important from a policy perspective for two reasons. First, they demonstrate that since Libyan authorities began cracking down on Mediterranean crossings, fewer survey respondents have expressed a desire to remain in Libya. This could be a consequence of growing instability in the country and/or a result of the human rights violations faced by people on the move, and may suggest that an increasing number of refugees and migrants are trapped in Libya – with conflict, insecurity, and a lack of economic opportunities preventing their onward movement or even their return home. Second, despite the effort by European countries to discourage irregular migration from Africa, the intentions of our respondents to reach Europe have only somewhat waned. This is important to consider given research showing that more stringent border policies do not stop migration, but only make it more dangerous.[63] Indeed, while the number of Mediterranean crossings to Europe has sharply declined since 2015, the incidence of death as a share of total refugee and migrant arrivals has increased over the same period.

5.1.3 Detention and other Protection Issues

**Figure 2: Reported Detention Over Time**

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63   See, for example, Paynter 2019; Tinti and Reitano 2018.

Twelve percent of survey respondents (620 people) reported being detained during their journey. Of those, a small fraction (eight percent, or 51) were detained more than once. A vast majority of detainees (84 percent) were detained in Libya, while 16 percent were held in other countries, particularly Niger and Sudan – popular transit states for West African and East African migrants, respectively. The rate of detention in Libya reported by our respondents (ten percent overall) is plausible given NGO estimates that, of the country's roughly 655,000 refugees and migrants, anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 are detained at one time.[64] While this only comprises one percent of Libya's refugee and migrant population, our surveys cover a two-year period, during which many people cycled in and out of detention. It is

important to note, however, that these figures – and the data in this report – focus on individuals detained in DCIM centres and may not capture refugees and migrants who have been detained in informal centres or 'ghettos.'

In terms of detention sites within Libya, our data may skew towards places close to our survey locations. Most detainees (17 percent) were apprehended in Tripoli and housed in Tajoura, Tarik al-Matar, Mitiga, Autres, and Ambucilin. Thirteen percent were detained in Sabha, 14 percent in Al-Kufra, 14 percent in Ajdabiya, 4 percent in Sabratha, 3 percent in Zuwara, and 7 percent in Benghazi (Table 3). Three-quarters of respondents said they were not told why they were being detained, while a quarter claimed that they were detained for a ransom. Few of

Table 3: Location of Detention in Libya

% of respondents (n = 518)

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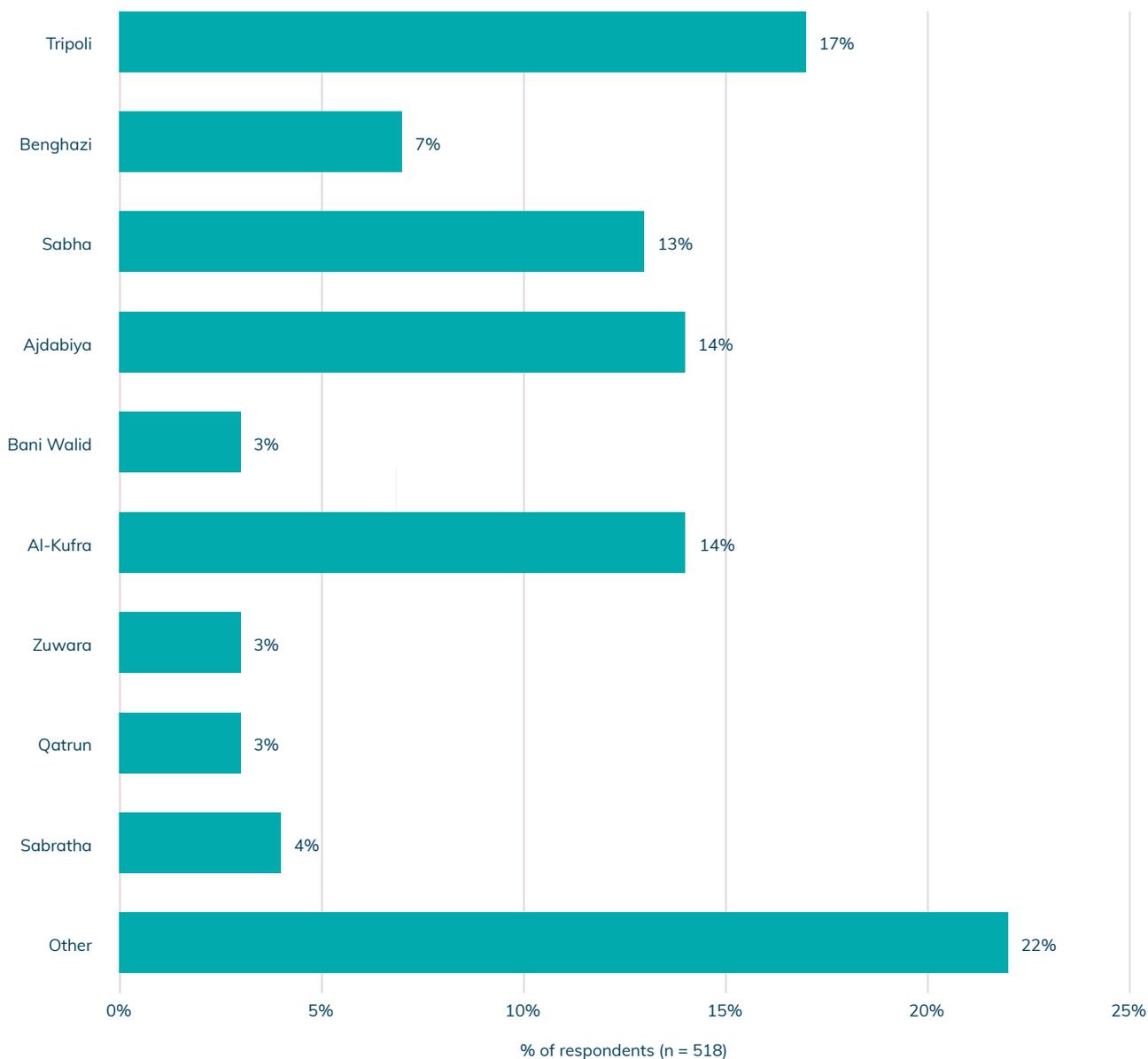
64 For example, in July 2018, Human Rights Watch (2019) reported that there were between 8,000 and 10,000 people in official detention centers in Libya. During the same period, IOM-DTM (2018) estimated the total refugee and migrant population in the country at 669,176.

those detained reported receiving regular access to basic needs. Only six percent said they were given regular meals, nine percent said they had access to water, and four percent reported regular access to a toilet.[65]

Comparing rates of detention with other protection-related incidents, five percent of those surveyed reported being kidnapped in Libya, mostly by smugglers and gangs.[66] Seven percent of respondents said they witnessed the death of a migrant while in Libya, and ten percent reported they had experienced or witnessed sexual assault or harassment. Some 17 percent had experienced or witnessed physical abuse in the country, and 11 percent had been robbed of money or their personal belongings. Thus among our sample of refugees and migrants, detention was about as common as other human rights violations experienced by respondents in Libya.

To summarize: there is significant variation in the survey sample regarding respondents' demographic characteristics, migration dynamics, and experiences with detention and other protection issues. In the following section, we leverage this variation to compare the profiles of detained respondents with those who were not detained in Libya. The data described above provide a series of key variables that we use to conduct a bivariate analysis of potential correlates of detention, based on results of cross-tabulations.

5.2 Bivariate Results

5.2.1 Country of Origin

Human rights groups have documented racial discrimination and xenophobia against sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants in Libya, including discriminatory practices in detention centers.[67] Our survey results suggest that refugees and migrants from East Africa are especially likely to be detained compared to people from countries in North Africa, Central Africa, and West Africa. Those of East African origin primarily included individuals from Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. A disproportionate number of these respondents reported experiencing detention: while East Africans made up 19 percent of our sample, they comprised nearly half of all detainees in Libya (Table 4). This difference is highly statistically significant for both the unweighted respondent sample (Chi-squared = 319.35, p < 0.001), and when survey weights based on nationality were taken into account (F-statistic = 144.68, p < 0.001).[68] These results are consistent with previous reporting that refugees and migrants from East Africa – namely Eritreans, Ethiopians, Sudanese, and Somalis – are disproportionately targeted for detention in Libya.[69]

This trend is reinforced by patterns of detention along different mixed migration routes. In our sample, the highest percentage of detained respondents (29 percent) were housed in detention centres in the eastern towns of Ajdabya and Al-Kufra – major transit hubs for refugees and migrants travelling to Libya from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan.[70] In comparison, 17 percent of detainees were housed in Tripoli – 20 percent of whom were East African. Moreover, detainees were much more likely to have moved through the eastern transit hubs compared to non-detainees. This difference was much smaller for those transiting through western hubs such as Sabha, Ghadames, and Ghat (Table 5).[71] These towns tend to be transited by respondents from West African countries.

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65   86 percent of respondents reported that they were offered "nothing" while in detention.
66   The distinction between detention and kidnapping can become blurry, and we address this later in the report. Overall, 12 percent of survey respondents experienced detention or kidnapping in Libya.
67   Amnesty International 2015; UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018.
68   Whether respondents' country of origin was a Muslim country made no difference: respondents from non-Muslim countries were not significantly more likely to be detained than those from Muslim countries.
69   Tinti and Reitano 2018: 125.
70   Amnesty International (2015) also found high rates of detention in Ajdabya.
71   The differences between detainees and non-detainees in those who transited through Ajdabya, Al-Kufra, Tripoli, and Benghazi were all statistically significant (p < 0.001 for the weighted samples for all four cities).

## Table 4: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Country of Origin
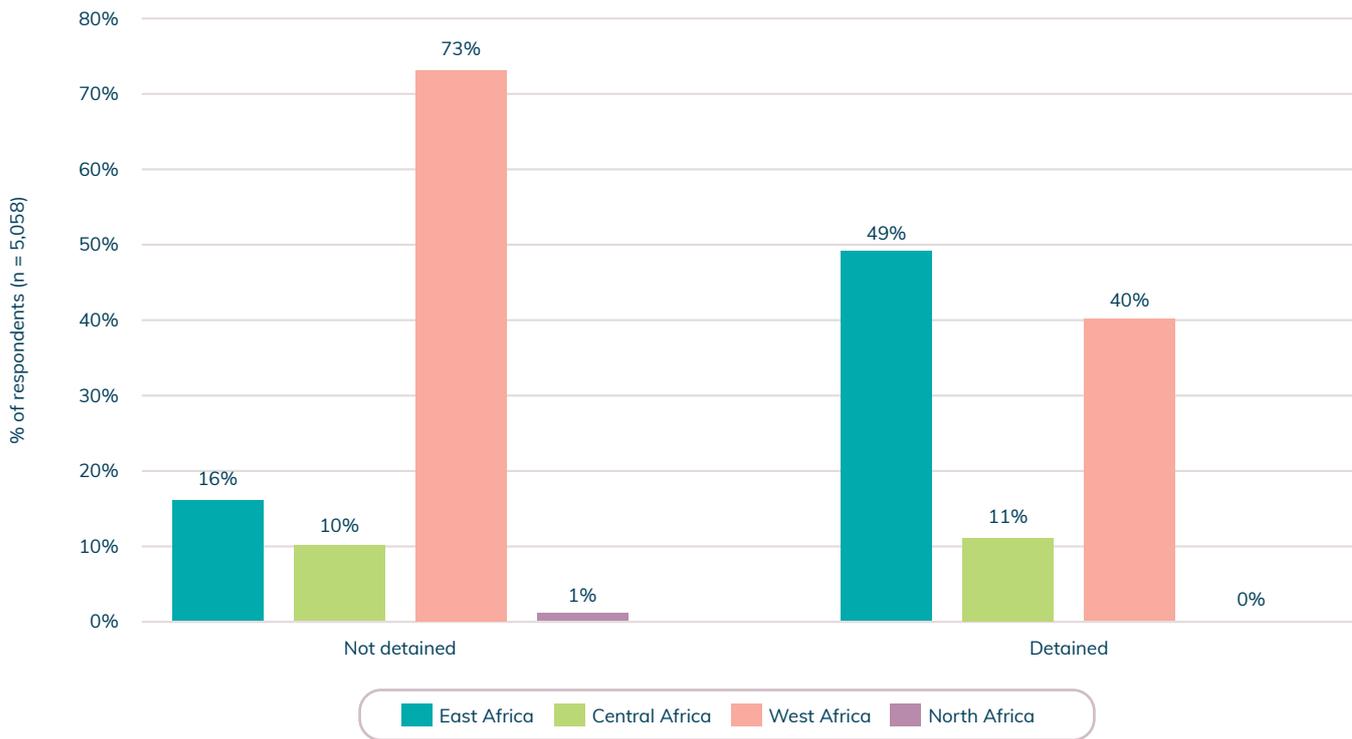
Table 5: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Migration Route
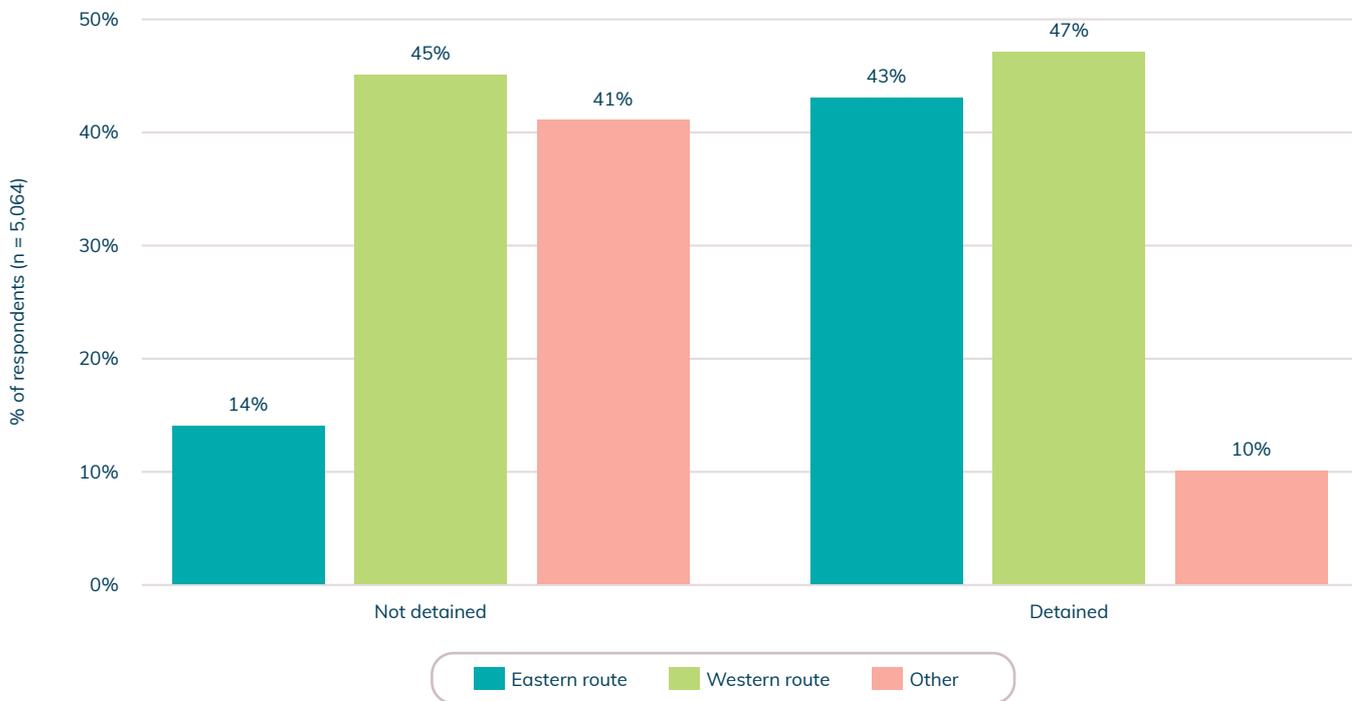
5.2.2 Religion and Ethnicity

Reporting by Amnesty International has suggested that Christians are often targeted for abuse in Muslim-majority Libya, including those detained in DCIM facilities.[72] Yet among our survey respondents, those who identified as Muslim were actually more likely to be detained than those who identified as Christian (Table 6). While these differences were not statistically significant for the weighted sample, Muslims did comprise a larger percentage of detained respondents compared to those who were not detained. We also find no evidence that certain ethnicities have been more likely to be detained in Libya.[73]

Table 6: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Religion

Legend: Muslim, Christian, Other
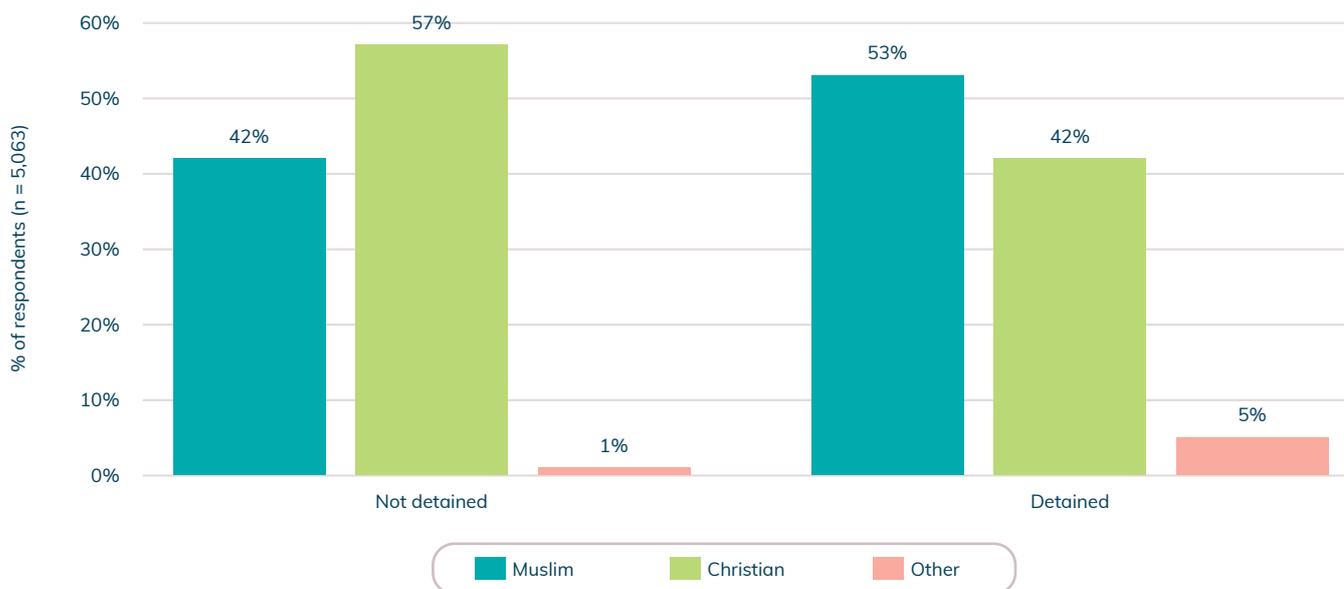
5.2.3 Age and Gender

Men were more likely to report being detained than women (Table 7), and the differences were statistically significant (Chi-squared = 27.32, $p < 0.001$). This could be due in part to the fact that detainees in Libya have served as a source of manual labour. Male detainees have even been forcibly recruited by armed groups in detention centres, particularly since the recent escalation in military battles between the GNA and LNA.[74] Their labour potential may therefore make male refugees and migrants attractive targets for detention. There was little difference in age, however, between detained and non-detained respondents. The median age for both groups was 29 years old, and no age group was disproportionately represented among detainees in the survey sample.

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72   Amnesty International 2015.
73   The largest ethnicities represented in our sample were Tigre (37 percent), Tigrinya (26 percent) and Amhara (17 percent).
74   Human Rights Watch 2019, UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018.

Table 7: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Gender
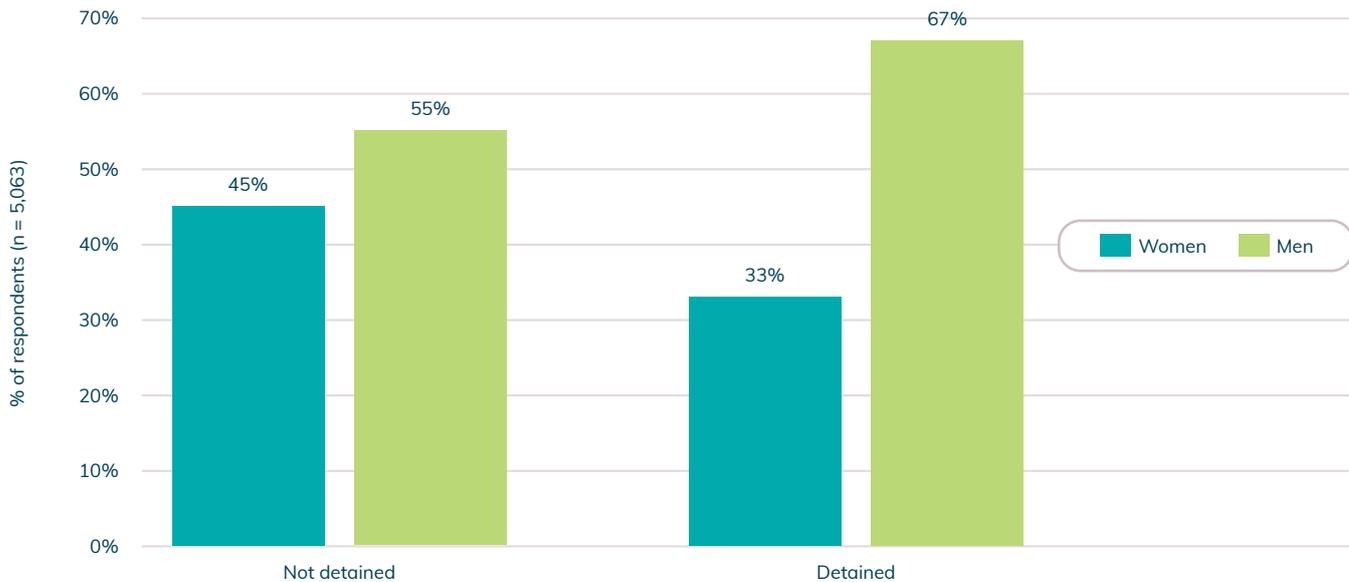
5.2.4 Mixed Migration Drivers

Drivers of mixed migration may also play a role in detention risk. The very impetus for refugee protection is predicated on the idea that people who move due to violence, insecurity, and persecution are more vulnerable than those who move for purely economic or personal reasons. Our survey results indicate that such individuals were at a higher risk of detention in Libya. Survey respondents who cited war, violence, and a lack of rights among their reasons for migrating were more likely to report being detained than those who did not cite these factors (Table 8).[75] For the weighted sample, the difference was highly statistically significant (F-statistic = 33.73, p < 0.001), particularly for those fleeing violence.

Table 8: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Drivers of Mixed Migration
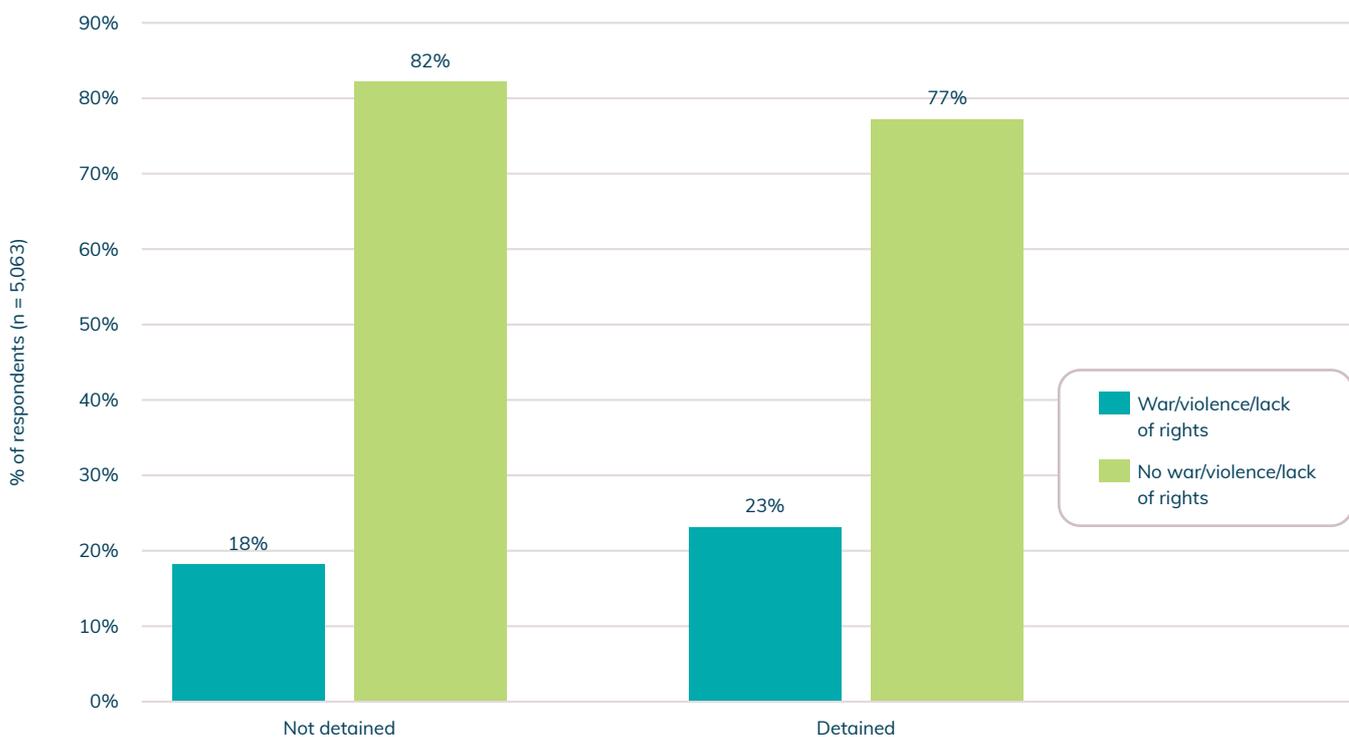
75 In total, seven percent of survey respondents cited war or violence as a factor driving their movement, while 15 percent cited a lack of rights.

5.2.5 Protection Risks

We find that respondents who faced protection risks in transit made up a smaller proportion of detainees than non-detainees. This includes those who reported witnessing migrant deaths, and those who reported witnessing or experiencing sexual assault, physical abuse, kidnapping, robbery, and detention. Respondents who reported giving a bribe in transit were also less prone to detention.

Unsurprisingly, however, respondents who reported being detained were also more likely to report facing another protection risk while in Libya (Table 9). The difference was highly statistically significant.[76] The higher rate of sexual assault reported by the detained

population in our sample vis-à-vis the non-detained population was particularly striking. Detainees were also more likely to have paid a bribe to authorities in Libya. Of course, it is unclear whether these violations occurred before, during, or after respondents' detention. We therefore cannot say whether other protection risks make people more susceptible to detention in Libya, or whether detention increases other protection risks – though as described earlier in this report, investigations by human rights groups provide evidence of the latter.

Table 9: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Protection Incidents in Libya

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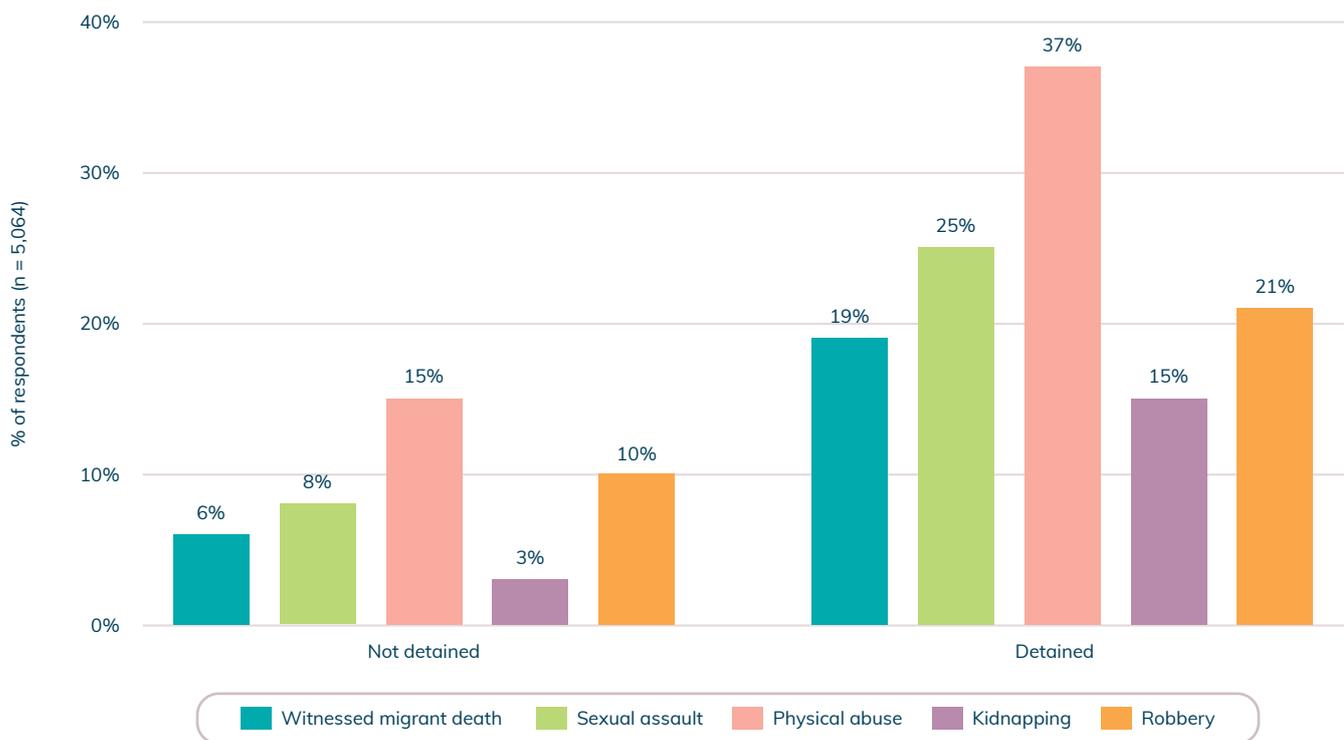
76   For the unweighted sample, Chi-squared = 256.47, p < 0.001, and for the weighted samples, F-statistic = 47.59, p < 0.001).

5.2.6 Use of Smugglers

Sixty-eight percent of respondents said they used a smuggler to help facilitate their journey. Only five percent said they relied on other sources such as friends and family, government agencies, and employers. Smugglers also tended to be people's primary information source on migration both prior to their departure and while in transit. For instance, 65 percent of respondents reported using smugglers as their first source of information on migration during their journey. In comparison, 30 percent said they relied on friends and family members, and only ten percent sourced information on migration from social media, even though more than a third had access to a smartphone.

Human rights groups have documented multiple instances of refugees and migrants reporting that their smugglers handed them over to detention officials upon arriving in Libya.[77] Given the collusion that has been reported between detention officials and smugglers, refugees and migrants who enlist a smuggling service may be more vulnerable to detention. The results of cross-tabulations do not support this: refugees and migrants who reported using smugglers to help initiate or continue their journey were less likely to be detained than those who did not mention using smugglers. According to Table 10, respondents who said they enlisted a smuggler made up a larger percentage of non-detainees (69 percent) than detainees (54 percent). Those who only used one smuggler were particularly less likely to end up in detention compared to those who used multiple smugglers. Cross-tabs for kidnapping yield similar results. Yet these patterns should be interpreted cautiously: it is unclear whether respondents who made no mention of enlisting smugglers actually did not use them or were simply not forthcoming about it. It is possible that in some cases, smugglers may offer protection from detention or help people avoid detection by Libyan authorities. But in the aggregate, the impact of using a smuggler remains uncertain.

Table 10: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Use of Smugglers

% of respondents (n = 5,064)

Legend: ■ Used one smuggler   ■ Used more than one smuggler   ■ Refused to answer / did not mention using a smuggler

Not detained: Used one smuggler 38%, Used more than one smuggler 31%, Refused/did not mention 31%

Detained: Used one smuggler 24%, Used more than one smuggler 30%, Refused/did not mention 46%

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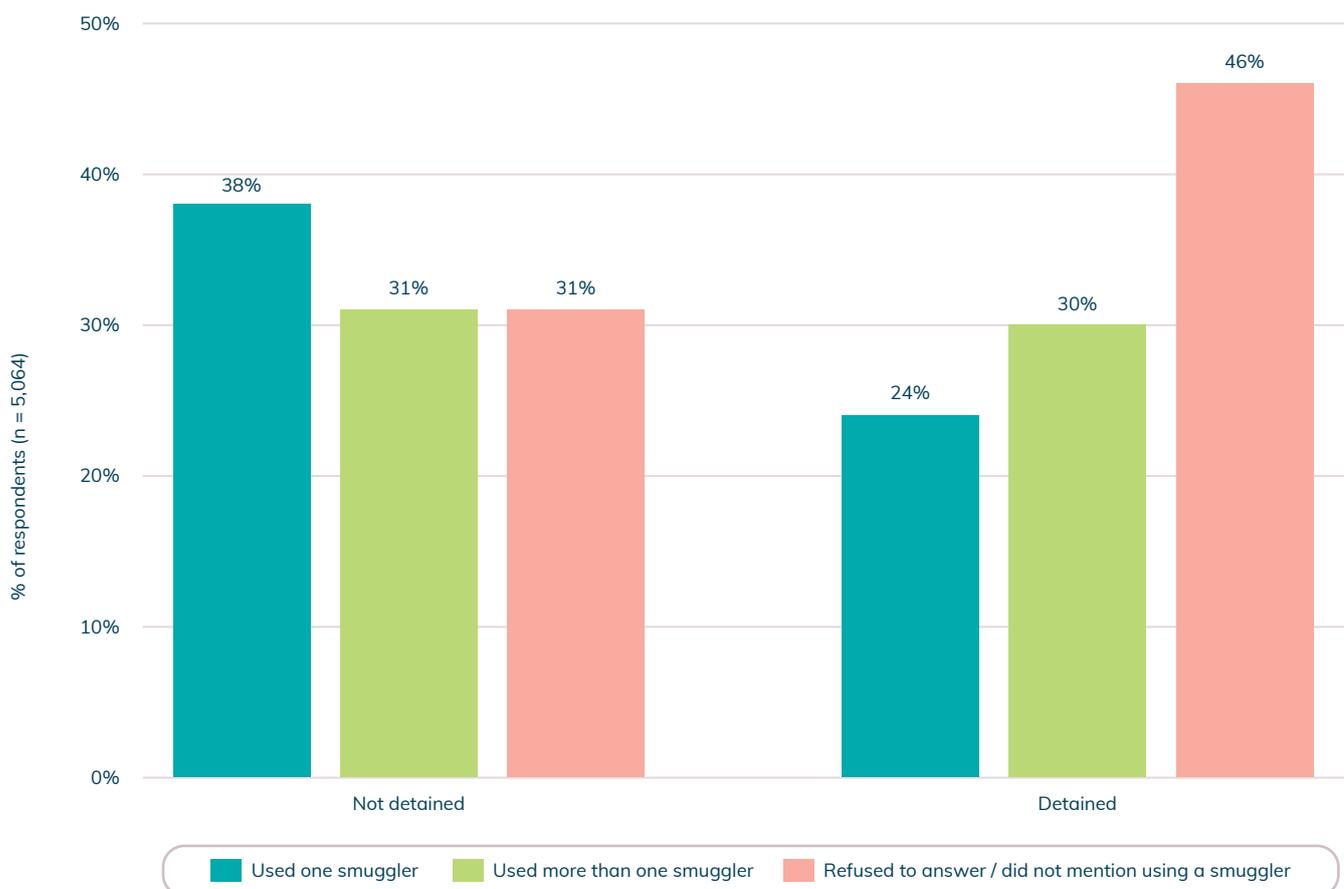
77   Amnesty International 2015.

Particular modalities of payment to smugglers seemed to mitigate one's risk of detention. Of those who reported using smugglers, respondents who planned to pay the smuggling fee after safely arriving at their destination comprised a much smaller percentage of detainees (11 percent) than non-detainees (41 percent). This was not the case for those who reported paying their smuggler at the point of departure (Table 11). Negotiating to pay smuggling fees upon safe arrival may therefore help refugees and migrants reduce detention risk by giving smugglers an economic incentive to facilitate safe passage. Similarly, how refugees and migrants accessed money may also make them more or less susceptible to detention. Respondents who carried cash with them or funded their trip by working along the way made up a larger segment of detainees than those who accessed money through formal transfers (e.g. Western Union, Moneygram), informal transfers (e.g. hawala networks), and mobile money (Table 12).

Taken together, these findings suggest that it is not necessarily whether refugees and migrants use a smuggler that makes them more vulnerable to detention, but rather how they use the services that smugglers provide.

Table 11: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Modality of Payment to Smugglers
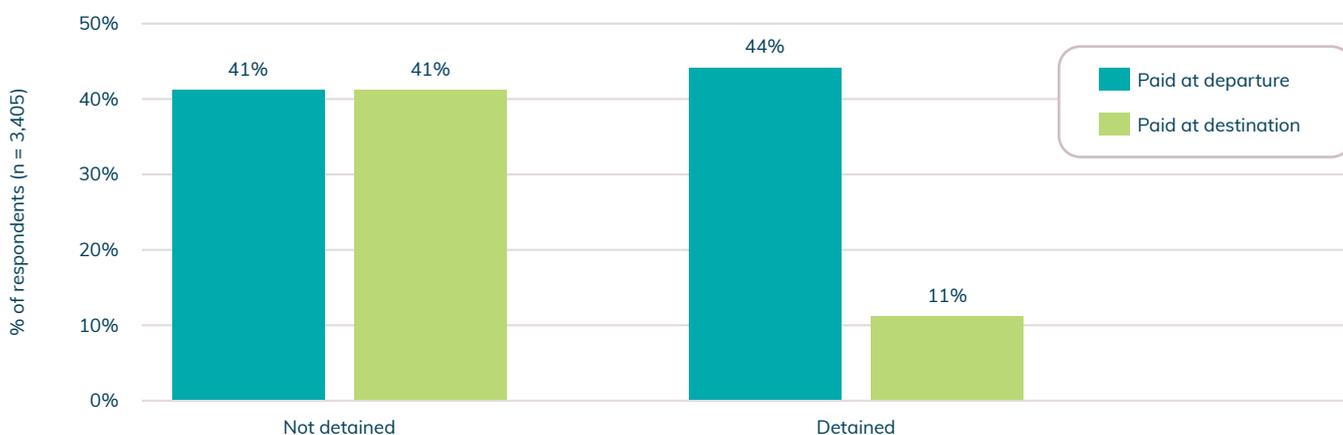

Table 12: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Method of Accessing Money
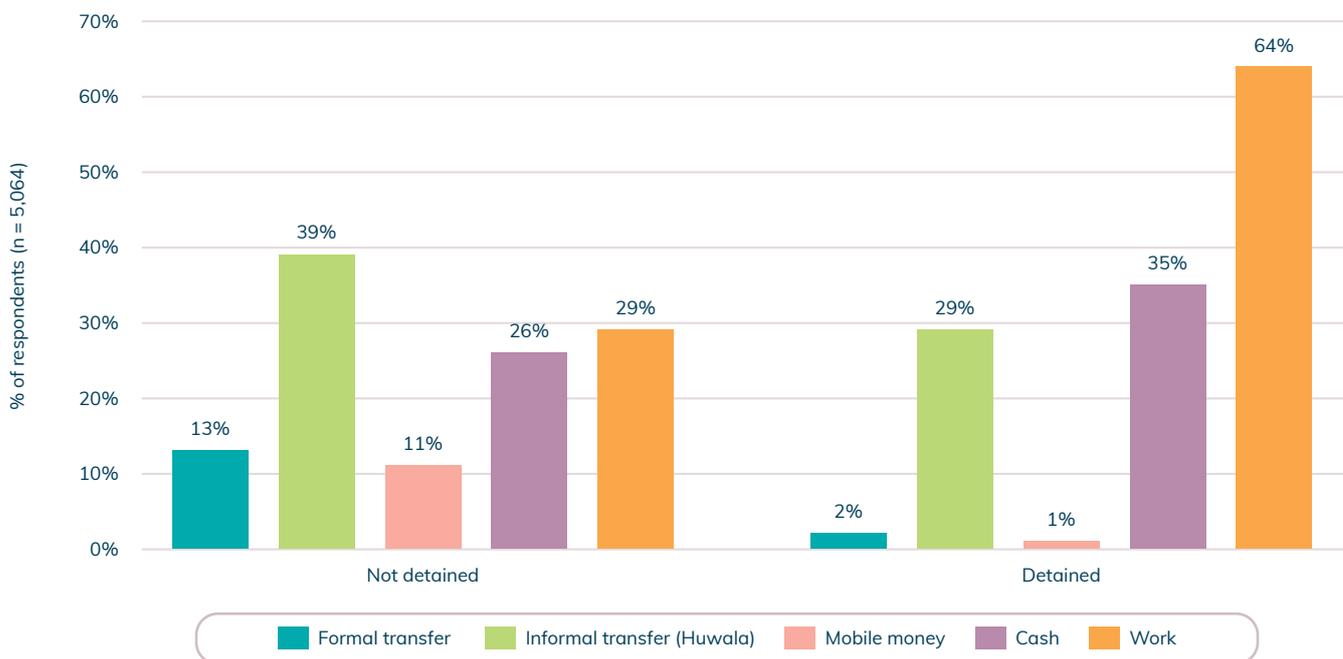
5.2.7 Preferred Destination

Recent reports indicate that many refugees and migrants have been detained after attempting to take the sea journey to Europe, and that Libyan authorities have increasingly used detention to prevent these boat departures.[78] While we do not have data on departure attempts, cross-tabs suggests that respondents aspiring to reach Europe were more prone to detention than those for whom Libya was their desired destination (Table 13). People aspiring to reach Europe made up a significantly higher proportion of detainees (71 percent) than non-detainees (49 percent). By comparison, respondents who named Libya as their final destination made up a much smaller slice of detainees (9 percent) than non-detainees (21 percent). These differences were statistically significant.[79]

Table 13: Breakdown of Respondents by Detention and Preferred Destination
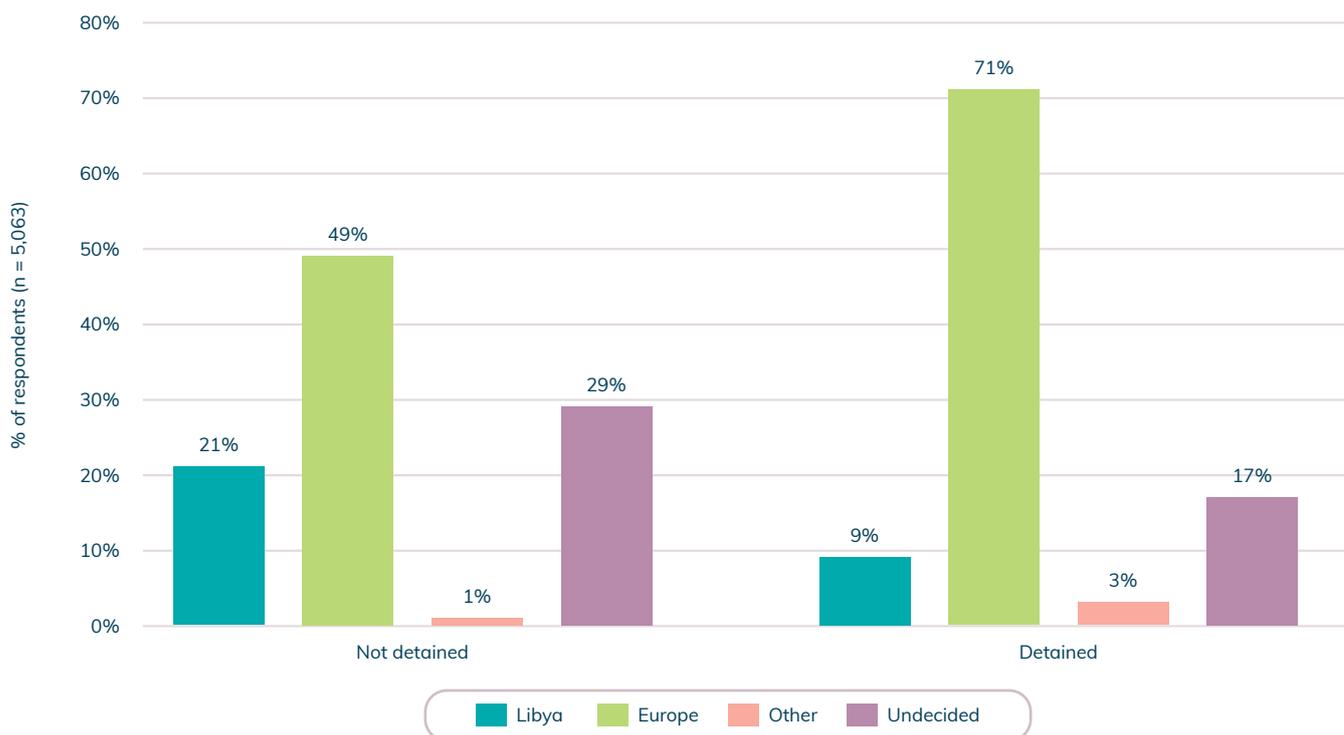
This relationship could be due in part to detainees electing Europe as their destination because of their experience in detention. However, as noted above, 91 percent of respondents said they had not changed their desired destination country since beginning their journey. It therefore seems that those aspiring to move to Europe are at a higher risk of detention.

5.3 Multivariate Results

This section explores whether the results of the bivariate analysis are robust to a multivariate specification. For our statistical tests, we use a binary dependent variable, detention, which indicates whether a respondent reported being detained in Libya. We also performed the analysis on a measure of detention that includes whether respondents reported being kidnapped in Libya. We estimated a series of logistic regression models to evaluate whether some of the potential correlates identified in the bivariate analysis had a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of refugee and migrant detention.[80]

The tables below include simplified models with no control variables and models that incorporated a series of controls. We controlled for factors that could confound the relationship between the independent variables and the outcome variable (detention). These include respondents' gender (whether a respondent was male), level of education, religion (whether a respondent was Christian), occupation in their home country, migration

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78 HRW 2019, UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018.

79 For the unweighted sample, Chi-squared = 115.21, p < 0.001, and for the weighted samples, F-statistic = 36.15, p < 0.001.

80 As a robustness check, we also estimated probit models. The results were not substantively different.

status (whether a respondent was a UNHCR person of concern), and length of journey (in months, logged). In Tables 15 and 16, some of the independent variables are correlated, so we ran multiple model specifications with different combinations of these variables to ensure consistency in the results. We also ran robustness checks in which we controlled for the location of the interview and for the interviewer, and the results did not substantively change.

For all models, we estimated two specifications: one with unweighted data, and one using the sampling weights described in Section 4.2. The tables below display the results for the unweighted results because they are more efficient and provide accurate standard errors.[81] Specifications with the weighted data are provided in the appendix, and produced substantively similar results to the unweighted ones except where noted.[82]

5.3.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 13 summarizes the results of logistic regressions that evaluate the influence of demographic characteristics on the likelihood of detention. Each column displays the regression coefficients for separate models, including simplified models with no controls and more complex models that control for potential confounders. According to multiple specifications – and consistent with the findings from the bivariate analysis – respondents from East Africa were more likely to be detained, and the results are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This finding holds even when controlling for other factors.

In terms of substantive results, in our sample East Africans were four times more likely to be detained than respondents from other regions.[83] The coefficients for male and whether respondents took the eastern route through Libya (which correlates with East African origin) are also positive and statistically significant in Table 13. This indicates that men are also more likely to experience detention, regardless of age, religion, and level of education.

Table 13: Logit Results for Detention (I)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
East Africa origin	1.61 $***$		0.91 $***$
	(0.10)		(0.21)
Eastern route		1.57 $***$	1.14 $***$
		(0.10)	(0.21)
Male			0.55 $***$
			(0.11)
Age			-0.00
			(0.01)
Christian			0.17
			(0.13)
Education			-0.02
			(0.04)
Labourer			$-0.41 ***$
			(0.11)
Journey duration (log)			0.01
			(0.03)
Person of concern			0.95 $***$
			(0.23)
Constant	$-2.67 ***$	$-2.59 ***$	$-2.99 ***$
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.27)
Observations	5063	5064	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Our finding that people of East African origin are more likely to be detained is consistent with reports from other organizations.[84] Because refugees and migrants from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia travel a longer distance to Libya – and because of their large and active diaspora communities – they are assumed to have more financial resources than refugees and migrants from elsewhere, making them prime targets for extortion.[85] Eritreans and Somalis are also considered more likely to attempt to cross the Mediterranean due to their high probability of obtaining refugee status in Europe.[86] The perception that East Africans are more "valuable" and pose a greater flight risk has provided smugglers, armed groups, and Libyan authorities with both economic and enforcement-related incentives to target these populations for detention.

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81 Winship and Radbill 1994. Survey weighting is controversial, and is discouraged by some because it can result in lower efficiency and statistical power, and inflate standard errors. See Bollen et al. 2016, Gelman 2007.
82 Regression diagnostics were also performed to evaluate model assumptions and identify influential observations.
83 Estimates calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2003).
84 Human Rights Watch 2019, UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018.
85 UNSMIL-OHCHR 2018: 28, Interviews with human trafficking and migration researchers in Tunis, October 2019.
86 Ibid.

5.3.2 Reasons for Migrating and Preferred Destination

Table 14 displays the results for regression models that incorporate respondents' stated reasons for migrating and whether Europe was their final destination. Again, similar to the findings in Section 5.2, people who fled their home countries due to persecution were more likely to be detained in Libya. Both of these findings are statistically significant across multiple specifications. Since there is no correlation between region of origin and reason for migrating, this cannot simply be attributed to nationality. Why people left their homes appears to further influence their risk of detention.

5.3.3 Protection Risks and Use of Smugglers

According to Table 15, people who used more than one smuggler to facilitate their journey – as opposed to only one smuggler – faced a higher risk of detention. While the coefficient for the number of smugglers (*no. smugglers*) is positive and statistically significant in Table 15, it loses significance in the weighted models (see appendix) and therefore is not a robust finding. The same is true for respondents who reported paying their smugglers at their point of departure. For this variable, the coefficient is negative and significant in Model 2 and positive and insignificant in Model 4.

Table 14: Logit Results for Detention (II)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Migrated due to persecution	0.24 ∗ ∗		0.34 ∗ ∗∗
	(0.11)		(0.12)
Destination Europe		0.98 ∗ ∗∗	0.64 ∗ ∗∗
		(0.10)	(0.12)
East Africa origin			1.47 ∗ ∗∗
			(0.14)
Male			0.56 ∗ ∗∗
			(0.11)
Age			0.00
			(0.01)
Christian			−0.02
			(0.12)
Education			−0.00
			(0.04)
Labourer			−0.44 ∗ ∗∗
			(0.11)
Journey duration (log)			0.01
			(0.04)
Person of concern			0.22
			(0.19)
Constant	−2.22 ∗ ∗∗	−2.77 ∗ ∗∗	−3.43 ∗ ∗∗
	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.28)
Observations	5063	5063	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

There is also a positive and statistically significant relationship between detention and the intended destination of migrants and refugees. Those seeking to migrate to Europe were twice as likely to be detained as those seeking to remain in Libya or move to another non-European country.[87] This seems to reflect the fact that many detainees had attempted to embark on sea crossings and were intercepted and detained by Libyan authorities and local armed groups, with the aim of deterring and punishing boat departures.

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87   Substantive results calculated using Clarify (Tomz et al. 2003).

Table 15: Logit Results for Detention (III)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
No. smugglers	0.43 ***			0.26*		
	(0.13)			(0.14)		
Paid smuggler at departure			−0.22 **		−0.12	
			(0.11)		(0.13)	
Paid smuggler at arrival		−1.85 ***				−1.06 ***
		(0.19)				(0.21)
Protection issue in Libya					1.38 ***	1.19 ***
					(0.11)	(0.11)
East Africa origin				2.07 ***	1.52 ***	1.42 ***
				(0.22)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Male				0.31 **	0.57 ***	0.58 ***
				(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age				0.01	0.01	0.01
				(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Christian				−0.10	0.08	0.20
				(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Education				0.11*	−0.00	0.00
				(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Labourer				−0.74 ***	−0.39 ***	−0.38 ***
				(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Journey duration (log)				0.05	−0.13 ***	−0.15 ***
				(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Person of concern				0.33	0.04	0.05
				(0.26)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Constant	−3.08 ***	−1.89 ***	−2.11 ***	−3.76 ***	−3.49 ***	−3.35 ***
	(0.20)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.47)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Observations	3436	5064	5064	3436	5063	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table 15 does yield two clear findings, however. The first is that those who did not pay smugglers until safely arriving at their destination faced a lower risk of detention than those who reported using smugglers but did not pay on arrival. In fact, paying on arrival made detention four times less likely for the respondents in our sample. The second finding in Table 15 reinforces the relationship between detention and other abuses suffered by refugees and migrants. Being subjected to other protection risks in Libya has a positive and statistically significant association with detention. As discussed in the previous section, this could simply reflect the likelihood of detainees facing abuse and other human rights violations in detention. Or it could indicate that those vulnerable to detention are similarly vulnerable to other protection risks. Indeed, some of the factors that make people susceptible to being detained in Libya likely exposed them to other abuses. For example, detainees were also more likely than non-detainees to have been kidnapped during their time in Libya.[88]

The final set of regression models explore whether the ways in which refugees and migrants access money influences their likelihood of detention. According to Table 16, respondents who reported using formal transfers to obtain money and those who used mobile money were less prone to detention.[89] The coefficients for these variables are negative and highly statistically significant (p < 0.01) across multiple specifications, including the use of different controls. In contrast, respondents who reported carrying cash on them or working for money during their journey were at a greater risk of detention, as the coefficients for these variables are consistently positive and significant. These results indicate that refugees and migrants with secure ways of accessing money are less likely to be detained, while those who carry cash or are forced to seek work in transit are more vulnerable. Coupled with the findings in Table 15, this suggests that, in a detention system where extortion serves as an important motivating factor, how easily refugees and migrants can be shaken down or exploited for their labor can influence their potential of being detained.

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88 Model not shown, but the coefficient for kidnapping in Libya is highly statistically significant (p < 0.01) as a predictor of detention.
89 A majority of respondents said they financed their journey with their own savings (52 percent), while 32 percent reported receiving funding from their home communities and 37 percent from friends and family abroad.

Table 16: Logit Results for Detention (IV)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Use formal money transfer	−1.96 ***				−1.63 ***		−1.57 ***
	(0.31)				(0.32)		(0.34)
Use informal money transfer		−0.42 ***			0.18		1.24 ***
		(0.10)			(0.13)		(0.16)
Use mobile money			−2.19 ***			−1.81 ***	−1.79 ***
			(0.38)			(0.40)	(0.41)
Use cash				1.16 ***		1.47 ***	1.83 ***
				(0.12)		(0.14)	(0.15)
Work for money				1.88 ***		1.43 ***	1.75 ***
				(0.12)		(0.14)	(0.15)
East Africa origin					1.62 ***	1.34 ***	1.35 ***
					(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Male					0.57 ***	0.46 ***	0.45 ***
					(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age					0.00	−0.00	−0.00
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Christian					0.01	0.19	0.05
					(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)
Education					−0.03	−0.02	−0.01
					(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Labourer					−0.41 ***	−0.58 ***	−0.36 ***
					(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Journey duration (log)					−0.01	0.04	0.07*
					(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Person of concern					0.18	0.66 ***	0.78 ***
					(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Constant	−2.05 ***	−2.03 ***	−2.07 ***	−3.41 ***	−2.84 ***	−3.74 ***	−4.39 ***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.12)	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.30)
Observations	5064	5064	5064	5064	5063	5063	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

As a robustness check, we re-ran the full models from Tables 13-16 using as the dependent variable an indicator of whether respondents reported being detained or being kidnapped. This is meant to address the potential confusion people faced in distinguishing whether to report their time in captivity as a case of detention or kidnapping. The findings, shown in Table B5 in the appendix, are similar to those in the main analysis. Thus, incorporating instances of kidnapping does not change the substantive results.

Conclusion

This report sought to shed light on detention patterns and the profiles of detained refugees and migrants in Libya. Through a systematic analysis of 5,144 surveys, we have attempted to identify key socio-demographic determinants of detention in order to better understand which refugees and migrants have been more or less vulnerable to being held by Libyan authorities. Using cross-tabulations and logistic regression, this report examined the link between detention and demographic characteristics – including nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, education, and occupation – along with respondents' reasons for migrating, use of smugglers, other protection risks they have faced, and preferred destination. We checked to ensure that our results were robust across multiple specifications, and used survey weighting and different measures of detention in order to compensate for sampling error and potential response bias. While we cannot claim causality, four primary conclusions can be drawn from this study:

First, nationality and gender conditioned one's likelihood of detention in Libya, but other socio-demographic characteristics did not. Refugees and migrants from East Africa were much more likely to be detained in Libya than those hailing from West, Central, and North Africa. The relationship between detention and nationality held even when controlling for respondents' gender, level of education, religion, previous occupation, migration status, and length of journey. This finding provides more robust evidence for the allegation that East Africans – including Eritreans, Ethiopians, Sudanese, and Somalis – are disproportionately targeted for detention because they are perceived as more "valuable" migrants. Moreover, male respondents in our survey were more likely to experience detention, regardless of age, religion, and level of education. The report found no evidence that refugees and migrants from certain religions – namely Christians – or of certain ethnicities were more prone to being detained.

Second, why people decided to move, and where they intended to go, both influenced detention risk. Movement is a complex process, and most respondents reported leaving their countries due to multiple political, economic, and social factors. Respondents who left their countries in part due to war, violence, and a lack of rights were more vulnerable to detention than those who did not cite these factors. Similarly, respondents aspiring to reach Europe were more likely to be detained than those who desired to remain in Libya or move to another non-European country. This most likely reflects the fact that many detainees were intercepted and detained by Libyan authorities while trying to cross the Mediterranean. Despite the crackdown on boat crossings, however, the proportion of survey respondents reporting Libya as their desired final destination decreased significantly during our survey period, while the proportion aspiring to move to Europe remained relatively steady. These findings may question the extent to which EU deterrence policies are actually discouraging refugees and migrants in Africa from attempting to enter Europe.

Third, detention seems to increase refugees' and migrants' risk of facing other protection issues. Respondents who were detained were also more likely to report facing another protection hazard during their time in Libya, including witnessing a refugee or migrant death or experiencing sexual assault, physical abuse, kidnapping, and theft. But detainees were also less likely to have experienced a protection issue en route to Libya. This indicates the extent to which Libya's detention system exposes refugees and migrants to a host of potential abuses.

Fourth, in a detention system where extortion serves as a prime motivator, how refugees and migrants access money and arrange payments to smugglers can significantly influence their likelihood of being detained. Respondents who reported using formal transfers or mobile money to obtain funds were less prone to detention, while those who reported carrying cash or working during their journey were at a greater risk. Moreover, individuals who did not pay their smuggler until after arriving at their destination were less likely to be detained than those who made other payment arrangements for smuggling. Detention risk therefore depended in part on whether refugees and migrants had secure methods of accessing money and were able to create incentives for smugglers to ensure their safe passage.

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Appendix B: Weighted Regression Model Results

Table B1: Logit Results for Detention (I, Weighted)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
East Africa origin	2.03 * **		1.89 * **
	(0.19)		(0.31)
Eastern route		0.86 * **	0.36
		(0.29)	(0.30)
Male			0.05
			(0.17)
Age			−0.00
			(0.01)
Christian			0.40*
			(0.23)
Education			−0.00
			(0.07)
Labourer			−1.00 * **
			(0.19)
Journey duration (log)			−0.22 * **
			(0.06)
Person of concern			0.46
			(0.39)
Constant	−2.80 * **	−2.61 * **	−2.16 * **
	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.49)
Observations	5063	5064	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table B2: Logit Results for Detention (II, Weighted)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Migrated due to persecution	1.18 * **		0.91 * **
	(0.21)		(0.20)
Destination Europe		1.94 * **	1.37 * **
		(0.25)	(0.24)
East Africa origin			1.41 * **
			(0.25)
Male			0.24
			(0.17)
Age			0.00
			(0.01)
Christian			0.01
			(0.20)
Education			0.00
			(0.06)
Labourer			−0.85 * **
			(0.18)
Journey duration (log)			−0.17 * **
			(0.06)
Person of concern			0.20
			(0.39)
Constant	−2.40 * **	−3.28 * **	−3.14 * **
	(0.13)	(0.21)	(0.47)
Observations	5063	5063	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table B3: Logit Results for Detention (III, Weighted)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
No. smugglers	0.79 * **			0.61 * *		
	(0.24)			(0.25)		
Paid smuggler at departure			−0.29		−0.16	
			(0.24)		(0.23)	
Paid smuggler at arrival		−1.47 * **				−1.24 * **
		(0.31)				(0.34)
Protection issue in Libya					1.15 * **	1.07 * **
					(0.18)	(0.18)
East Africa origin				1.83 * **	1.82 * **	1.78 * **
				(0.30)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Male				−0.14	0.11	0.11
				(0.22)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Age				−0.01	−0.00	0.00
				(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Christian				−0.13	0.38*	0.60 * **
				(0.25)	(0.21)	(0.22)
Education				0.19 * *	0.02	0.03
				(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Labourer				−0.99 * **	−0.85 * **	−0.85 * **
				(0.27)	(0.18)	(0.19)
Journey duration (log)				−0.16	−0.27 * **	−0.29 * **
				(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Person of concern				0.08	0.36	0.38
				(0.35)	(0.38)	(0.39)
Constant	−3.40 * **	−2.10 * **	−2.13 * **	−2.82 * **	−2.50 * **	−2.48 * **
	(0.40)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.84)	(0.48)	(0.48)
Observations	3436	5064	5064	3436	5063	5063
Pseudo R^2						

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table B4: Logit Results for Detention (IV, Weighted)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Use formal money transfer	−1.42 ∗ ∗∗				−1.56 ∗ ∗∗		−1.63 ∗ ∗∗
	(0.44)				(0.45)		(0.46)
Use informal money transfer		0.46 ∗ ∗			0.74 ∗ ∗∗		1.75 ∗ ∗∗
		(0.20)			(0.22)		(0.31)
Use mobile money			−1.35 ∗ ∗∗			−0.92∗	−1.17 ∗ ∗
			(0.47)			(0.52)	(0.53)
Use cash				2.21 ∗ ∗∗		2.06 ∗ ∗∗	2.25 ∗ ∗∗
				(0.29)		(0.28)	(0.28)
Work for money				2.14 ∗ ∗∗		1.77 ∗ ∗∗	2.00 ∗ ∗∗
				(0.29)		(0.30)	(0.29)
East Africa origin					2.04 ∗ ∗∗	1.97 ∗ ∗∗	1.93 ∗ ∗∗
					(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.25)
Male					0.07	0.13	0.29
					(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.20)
Age					0.00	−0.01	−0.00
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Christian					0.19	0.41∗	0.15
					(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Education					0.01	−0.03	−0.02
					(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Labourer					−0.81 ∗ ∗∗	−0.96 ∗ ∗∗	−0.75 ∗ ∗∗
					(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.20)
Journey duration (log)					−0.23 ∗ ∗∗	−0.13 ∗ ∗	−0.14 ∗ ∗
					(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Person of concern					0.27	0.79∗	0.80∗
					(0.35)	(0.47)	(0.43)
Constant	−2.13 ∗ ∗∗	−2.28 ∗ ∗∗	−2.14 ∗ ∗∗	−4.28 ∗ ∗∗	−2.32 ∗ ∗∗	−3.76 ∗ ∗∗	−4.57 ∗ ∗∗
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.32)	(0.47)	(0.62)	(0.59)
Observations	5064	5064	5064	5064	5063	5063	5063

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

Table B5: Logit Results for Detention + Kidnapping

	1(UW)	2(UW)	3(UW)	4(W)	5(W)	6(W)
Migrated due to persecution	0.37 * **	0.22	0.64 * **	1.05 * **	0.63 * *	0.94 * **
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.20)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Destination Europe	0.72 * **	0.98 * **	0.39 * **	1.04 * **	1.94 * **	0.61 * **
	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.22)	(0.30)	(0.23)
No. smugglers		−0.10			0.21	
		(0.15)			(0.27)	
Paid smuggler at departure		−0.04			−0.40	
		(0.13)			(0.25)	
Paid smuggler at arrival		−1.34 * **			−1.68 * **	
		(0.18)			(0.37)	
Use formal money transfer			−1.24 * **			−1.92 * **
			(0.30)			(0.47)
Use informal money transfer			0.97 * **			1.71 * **
			(0.15)			(0.29)
Use mobile money			−1.88 * **			−0.88
			(0.34)			(0.62)
Use cash			1.29 * **			1.54 * **
			(0.14)			(0.26)
Work for money			1.15 * **			1.23 * **
			(0.13)			(0.29)
East Africa origin	1.30 * **	1.21 * **	1.08 * **	1.57 * **	0.50	1.63 * **
	(0.13)	(0.22)	(0.14)	(0.24)	(0.35)	(0.25)
Male	0.57 * **	0.34 * **	0.45 * **	0.14	0.27	0.20
	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.21)	(0.16)
Age	−0.00	0.02*	−0.00	0.00	−0.00	
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	
Christian	0.17*	0.23*	0.16	0.25	0.15	0.13
	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.22)
Education	−0.00	0.14 * **	−0.00	−0.01	0.24 * **	−0.00
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.06)
Labourer	−0.45 * **	−0.49 * **	−0.36 * **	−0.81 * **	−0.84 * **	−0.64 * **
	(0.10)	(0.18)	(0.11)	(0.18)	(0.27)	(0.18)
Journey duration (log)	0.10 * **	0.08	0.15 * **	−0.09	−0.06	−0.05
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.06)
Person of concern	0.05	0.19	0.52 * **	−0.07	0.18	0.24
	(0.18)	(0.28)	(0.20)	(0.36)	(0.38)	(0.40)
Constant	−3.17 * **	−3.59 * **	−3.98 * **	−2.85 * **	−3.34 * **	−4.18 * **
	(0.25)	(0.44)	(0.27)	(0.43)	(0.78)	(0.38)
Observations	5158	3488	5158	5158	3488	5158

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.010

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network consisting of six regional hubs (Asia, East Africa and Yemen, Europe, Middle East, North Africa & West Africa) and a central unit in Geneva. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of, and governed by, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector. The position of the MMC does not necessarily reflect the position of DRC.

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