



SNAPSHOT

Data gaps and mixed migration between West and North Africa and Europe

1 in 3 African migrants is a Child¹





Since 2015, around 1.5 million people of mixed migration movements have travelled to Europe.² Whether they are escaping violent conflict, internal displacement or climate change; or seeking to reunify with family, get a better education or to find a job to support their family back home, they are united in the hope for a better life. UNICEF estimates that around 400,000 children were among those taking the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean from 2015-2018 – or 1 in 4 of the migrants arriving in Europe.³

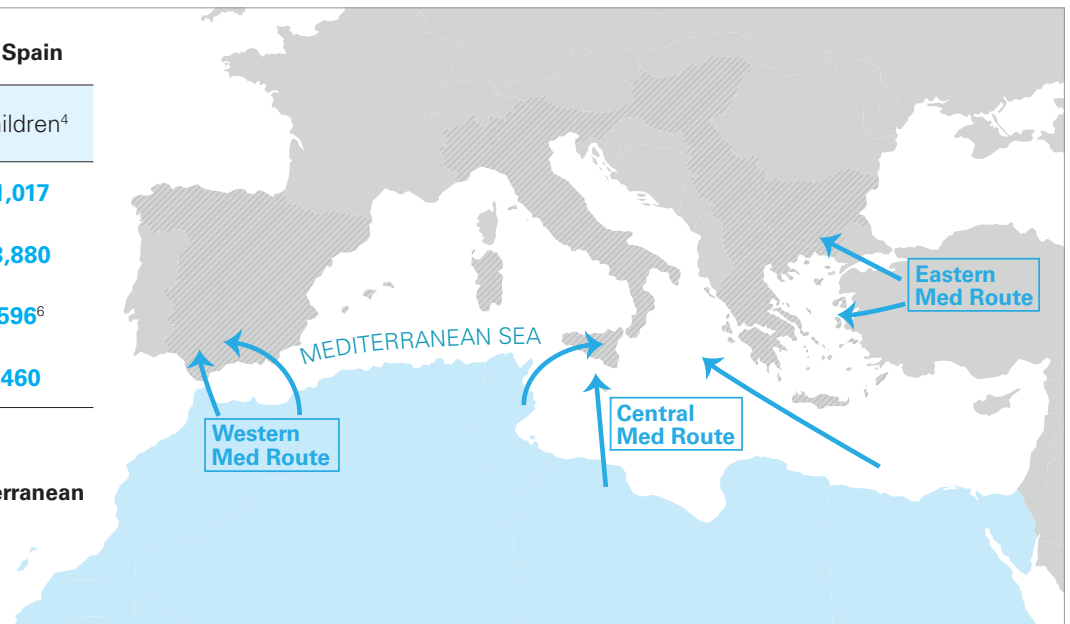
Most migrants and refugees travelled to Europe via the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes (EMR and CMR), but an increasing number of people are using the Western Mediterranean route (WMR) to Spain. UNHCR estimates that some 28,000 people went to Spain in 2017, marking a steep threefold rise as compared to 2016.³ This rise in the total number of migrants pales in comparison to the almost sevenfold increase in the number of

Number of children arriving in Spain

Years	Total	Children ⁴
2018 ⁵	6,479	1,017
2017	28,349	3,880
2016	14,094	596⁶
2015	16,263	460

Main routes across the Mediterranean

-  Arrival countries in Europe
-  Countries of origin



¹ UNICEF analysis based on UN DESA, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 revision*, New York, 2017.

² UNHCR, June 11, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

³ Based on numbers of migrant arrivals in Greece, Italy and Spain. UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR *Global Trends 2017*, Geneva 2018.

⁴ UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR *Global Trends 2017*, Geneva 2018.

⁵ UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR, *Global Trends 2017*, Geneva 2018. Age disaggregated data only available from January through April 2018, where children make up 15.7% of total arrivals. UNHCR estimates the total number of people arriving in Spain in 2018 by sea and land to be 12,219 as of June 13, <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226>.

⁶ Data only available for the period January-October 2016.

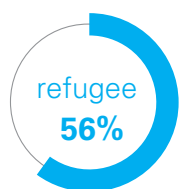
children arriving in Spain between 2016 and 2017 (from 569 to 3,880).⁷ In 2017, these children mainly came from Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea.⁸

The estimates give a sense of the scale of children travelling the WMR, but the data we have on these children are incomplete, forcing us to rely on a patchwork of sources. For example, while UNHCR estimates the number of people arriving in Spain both by land and by sea, the Spanish government counts only those arriving by sea.⁹ As a result the true number of child migrants arriving or currently residing in Spain will remain unknown – and these data gaps severely obstruct our ability to provide children with the care and protection they need.

Data to protect

The lack of data is a global problem: Data on migrant and displaced populations are generally of poor quality, and UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, Eurostat and OECD recently released a joint Call to Action: Protecting children on the move starts with better data to address this issue.¹¹ The call asks States and key stakeholders to invest in better data to help provide the protection that children need in order to live up to their full potential and contribute to the societies they live in.

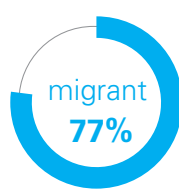
Age-disaggregated data on migrants and forcibly displaced people are incomplete:



Only around **56%** of **refugee** data have information on age¹²



Only **20%** of countries and territories with data on conflict-related **internally displaced persons** (IDPs) disaggregate the data by age¹³



Overall, **77%** of countries and territories have age-disaggregated **migrant** stock data, including only **57%** in **Africa**¹⁴

To devise an adequate protection response and to better estimate child migrants' vulnerabilities, needs, and how migration and asylum policies may affect them, we should ideally know children's ages and sex, where they come from, where they are going, why they move, and whether they move with their families or alone. Most importantly, however, any and all data on children must be collected in full compliance with child protection standards and be used for the purpose of protection only.

Total children arriving in Europe (UNHCR data)¹⁰

2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
265,388	92,336	32,249	5,885	395,858

Worldwide millions of children live in migration or displacement.

As of 2017, around

1 in 76
of the world's children

were living in forced displacement – an estimated 30 million

This number does not include 6 million children, who were internally displaced by disasters in 2017 alone¹⁵

As of 2017, around

30 million
children

were living outside their country of birth

They had moved for a range of reasons, including joining family members, pursuing educational opportunities – or fleeing conflict, violence or persecution¹⁶

⁷ UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR, *Global Trends 2017*, Geneva 2018.

⁸ UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM. "Refugee and Migrant Children- Including Unaccompanied and Separated Children - in Europe (Jan-Dec 2017)," March 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/58431.pdf>.

⁹ For arrivals in 2017, for instance, the Spanish Ministry of Interior lists 2471 children arriving by sea but makes no attempt to measure the number of people arriving on land: Data from Spanish Ministry of Interior, June 2018.

¹⁰ Based on numbers of migrant arrivals in Greece, Italy and Spain. UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR, *Global Trends 2017*, Geneva 2018.

¹¹ UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, Eurostat, OECD, A call to action: Protecting children on the move starts with better data, New York, 2018. <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Migration_advocacy_brief.pdf>.

¹² Refugees under UNHCR mandate only. UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2016*, Geneva 2017. Geneva 2017, Annex Tables v4, 2017, <<http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>>.

¹³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, p. 74, <<http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>>.

¹⁴ Migrant stock data describe the number of migrants living in a country who were born abroad. UN DESA, *International Migration Report 2017: Highlights*, New York, 2017, p. 3, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf>.

¹⁵ UNICEF analysis based on UNHCR *Global Trends 2017*, Geneva 2018; Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, *2018 Global Report on Internal Displacement*, Geneva 2018; and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2017. <<https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2017>>.

¹⁶ Ibid.



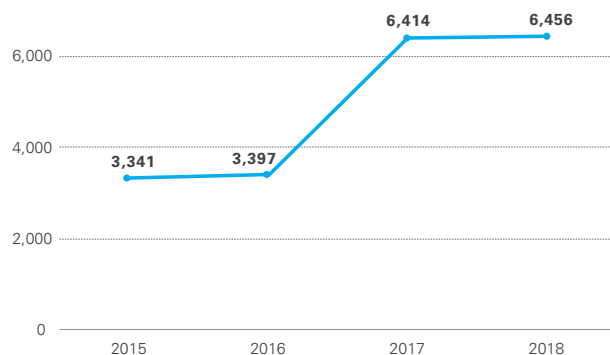
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Data gaps and vulnerability

The lack of adequate data challenges our ability to protect. This is particularly worrying given the dangers and vulnerabilities that children face on the journey. In 2017, UNICEF and IOM found that children were far more likely than adults to experience violence and exploitation on the CMR and EMR, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa, those travelling alone or those with little education.¹⁷ Research among adults conducted on the routes going through Niger and Mali identified similar protection needs, including sexual and physical abuse, detention, bribery, and robberies.¹⁸

These data on children’s experiences on their journey are particularly crucial given the high number of unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) making their way to Spain. Currently, more than 6,000 UASC receive protection services in Spain, but the total number of UASC in the country is likely much higher. Many of these children will have made similar experiences during their journeys as the children arriving in Italy or Greece.

Number of unaccompanied or separated children in protective services in Spain, 2015-2018¹⁹



Not all of these children remain in Spain; some travel on to other countries in Europe often on their own and in acute danger of becoming victims of trafficking networks. A recent UNICEF study also found that those groups of children who have little chance of receiving international protection upon turning 18, choose to live underground making them even more vulnerable.²⁰

A Call to action for protection through data and research

Given the acute protection concerns and the meager data availability - in Spain and worldwide – it is paramount that States redouble their efforts and invest in data and research on migrant and forcibly displaced children. This will allow us to better live up to our commitment to ensure children their rights as they are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6 action points for better data on children:

- Disaggregate data by age and sex
- Cover key issues relating to children affected by migration and displacement
- Make better use of existing data, and share it
- Coordinate data efforts within countries and across borders
- Make special efforts to collect and analyze data on children
- Collect data in compliance with child protection standards and use it for the purpose of protection

¹⁷ UNICEF and IOM, *Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation*, New York 2017, p. 8.

¹⁸ Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat West Africa. “West Africa Monthly 4Mi Update. Covering Data Collected by 4Mi in Mali and Niger in April,” April 2018, p. 3. Both are transit countries used by migrants travelling across the Mediterranean, predominantly across WMR or CMR.

¹⁹ The main countries of origin were: Morocco (4399//Female 203 / Male 4196); Algerians (521//F 25/M 496); Guinea (300//F 30/M 270); Cote d’Ivoire (225//F 30/M 195); Romania (90//F 43 / M 47).

²⁰ UNICEF, *Protected on Paper? An analysis of Nordic country responses to asylum-seeking children*, Florence 2018; Ombudsman for Children Sweden, *Ensamkommande Barn Som Försvinner*, Stockholm 2017.