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SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS

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The United Nations defines smuggling of migrants as:

*the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.*¹

The criminal, under this definition, is the smuggler, not the smuggled. The aim of the Migrant Smuggling Protocol is not to stop illegal immigration. It is to stop organized criminals from profiting off an inherently vulnerable population.

This population is vulnerable because of the great differences in opportunities experienced in different parts of the world. By accident of birth, many young people face a much bleaker future than their counterparts abroad, if they accept the impermeability of national borders. A large number of people are willing to take great risks in order to gain a chance at a better future away from their homeland, including violating immigration laws. In some communities, the practice is very common, and illegal immigration bears no social stigma.

Because they must enter their destination country illegally, undocumented migrants may feel compelled to enlist the help of smugglers, either for the purposes of entering the country clandestinely or for assistance in acquiring fraudulent paperwork to secure a visa. Because these services are illegal, those who provide them have tremendous power over

their charges, and abuses are commonplace, particularly when the movement is clandestine. Many die on their way to their destination, or are abandoned without resources en route. As with many other illegal transnational activities, efforts to stop illegal immigration can create opportunities for organized criminals.

The interdependency of the global economy today explains why migrant smuggling is a growing criminal enterprise. Capital flows virtually unimpeded around the world; the same is not true for labour. The two are connected, however, as a growing share of national incomes are dependent on transnational remittance flows, particularly in the smaller economies. Remittance flows are largest for lower-middle income countries, not the poorest of the poor. These flows do not necessarily come from the richest countries – they need only be richer than the source countries to attract labour.

Both developing and developed countries need well-regulated migration. Many developed countries are facing low or even negative population growth, and populations are ageing. At the same time, many developing countries are still seeing population growth that exceeds economic growth, but restrictions on legal migration have arguably increased in the last thirty years.

There are an estimated 50 million irregular international migrants in the world today.² A good share of these people paid for assistance in illegally crossing borders. The fees involved can be many times their

FIG. 40:

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX, 2007

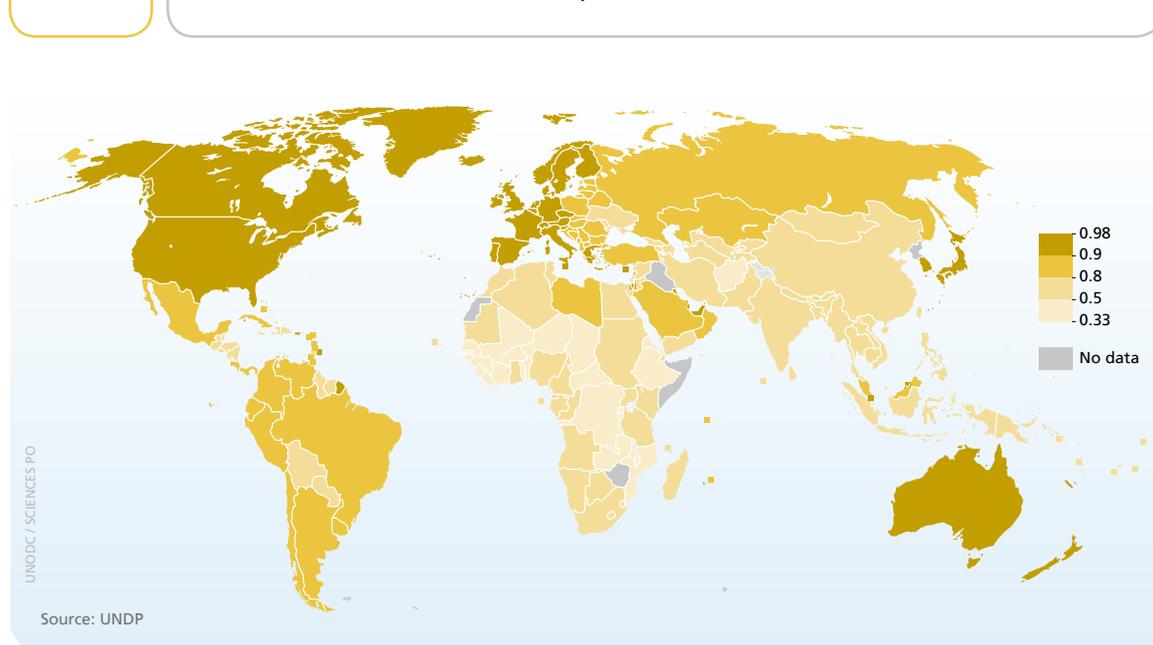
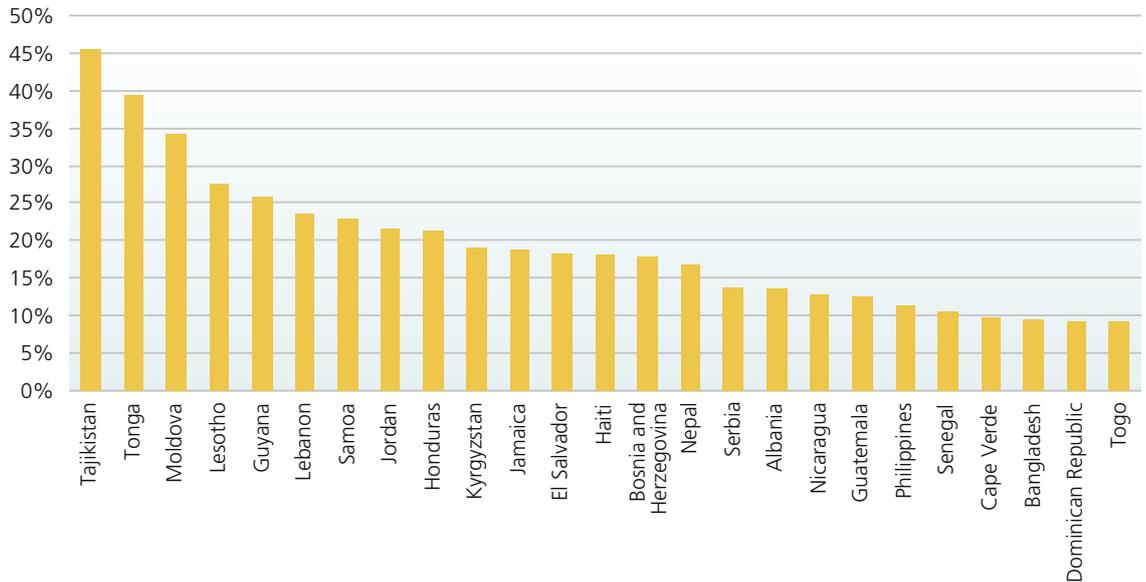


FIG. 41:

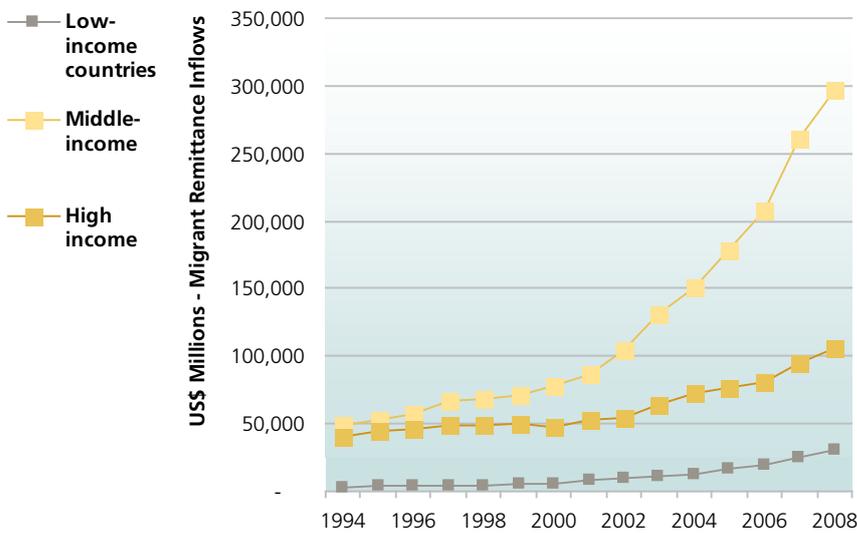
MIGRANTS' REMITTANCES AS A SHARE OF NATIONAL GDP (TOP 25 COUNTRIES), 2007



Source: World Bank

FIG. 42:

TRENDS IN REMITTANCE INFLOWS, 1994-2008



Source: World Bank

annual income before migrating. They may borrow heavily against the expectation of greater future earnings, and their debtors may be equally poor people who invest everything in the hope of forthcoming remittances.

Of course, not every illegal migrant requires assistance in getting to their destination, but a surprising share do, even when the path seems fairly direct. A number of factors can favour high levels of organization, including the distance to be travelled, the

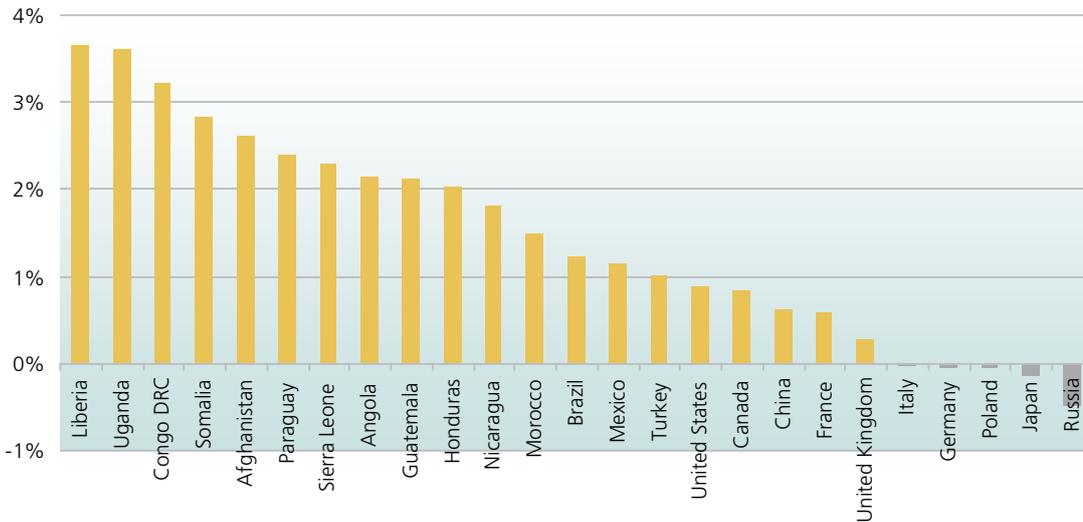
degree of cultural isolation of the migrants and the difficulties of evading law enforcement. In practice, migrants may pay for assistance in making some border crossings while tackling others independently. They may travel alone until they meet resistance, and only then seek assistance.

The nature of that assistance is likewise varied. Many “smugglers” may also run legitimate businesses. For example, licensed travel agents may provide advice and assistance to people wishing to migrate illegally.³ Some are merely opportunistic carriers or hospitality providers who choose to look the other way. Demand for transport and sanctuary may suddenly emerge as migration routes shift, and in some parts of the world, small businesspeople cannot afford to be choosy about their clientele.⁴ Many may fail to appreciate the moral downside of helping people find a better life. On the other hand, full-time professional criminals – some specialized in smuggling people, some not – are important in many flows around the world. Both formal and informal structures may operate without conflict, so long as business is plentiful.

Smugglers are often either of the national origin or ethnic background of the migrant group they serve, or of the country of transit, depending on the role played. One typology distinguishes “local smugglers” from “stage coordinators”. Stage coordinators help migrants navigate through a particular country or part of their journey, and, for reasons of communication and trust, are generally of the same

FIG. 43:

POPULATION GROWTH RATE, SELECTED COUNTRIES (MOST RECENT)



Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank

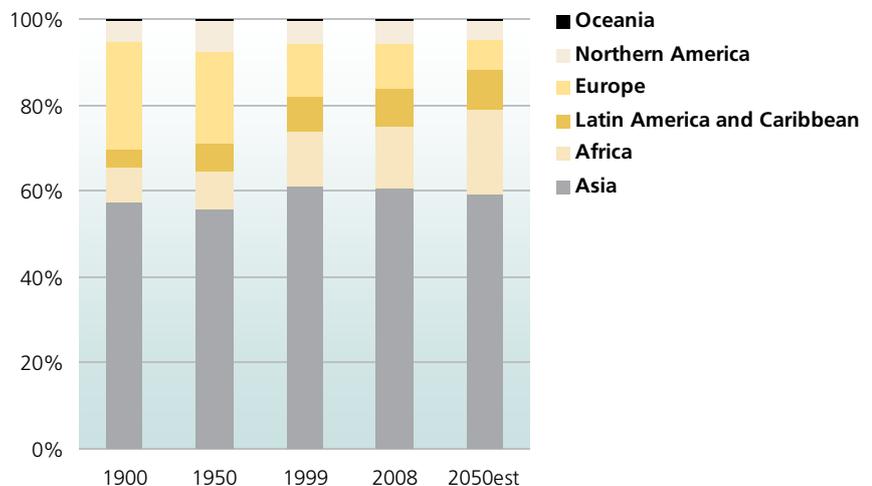
ethnic background/origin as the migrants. They subcontract services to smugglers who come from the area to be crossed and thus know the terrain best.⁵

Services may be purchased as a package from origin to destination, or piecemeal, with more comprehensive and safe approaches commanding higher prices. Air travel with visa fraud is the preferred route for most who can afford it, and those less well-resourced are compelled to take their chances with more arduous land and sea voyages.⁶ Many migrants optimize their value for money by combining strategies.⁷

The following two flow studies exemplify many of these observations, and illustrate the pull the affluent north has upon its southern neighbors. The largest number of migrant apprehensions found anywhere in the world is along the southern border of the USA, a flow that, despite proximity, is largely handled by organized groups. A flow with similar dynamics and growing potential is that from Africa to Europe. These are not the only two major illegal migration flows in the world, of course. There are also a number of undocumented migrants from East Africa to Yemen, and a flow of people through Central Asia to the Russian Federation and beyond. But the flows to the USA and Europe are probably the most lucrative ones for smugglers, and so they are the topic of the flow studies below.

FIG. 44:

REGIONAL SHARES OF WORLD POPULATION, HISTORICAL AND PREDICTED



Source: Population Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs



3.1. From Latin America to North America

Route

Source:	<i>Mexico, Central America and other Latin American countries</i>
Vector:	<i>Land – trucks/foot/rail</i>
Destination:	<i>Mainly USA</i>

Dimensions

Annual market volume:	<i>About 3 million entries (one migrant may enter more than once per year)</i>
Annual value at destination:	<i>About US\$6.6 billion (income for smugglers)</i>

Smugglers

Groups involved:	<i>Transnational Mexico-based crime groups (Gulf Cartel/Zetas, MS-13 and others), Linea 13 and other groups specialized in human smuggling, occasional and part-time smugglers</i>
Residence of smugglers:	<i>Mexico and USA</i>

Threat

Estimated trend:	<i>Declining</i>
Potential effects:	<i>Irregular migration and vulnerability of migrants</i>
Likelihood of effects being realized:	<i>High</i>

What is the nature of the market?

The USA is a nation of immigrants, and its receptivity to immigration has long been one of the country's strengths. It presently hosts – in absolute terms - by far the largest foreign-born population of any country in the world. This situation is a manifestation of deeply held American values, including a belief in social mobility and self-reliance. Compared to the European Union, for example, the USA offers a relatively slender social safety net to new arrivals. From an economic perspective, it therefore risks less by allowing an immigrant into the country.

People emigrate to the USA from all over the world, but Latin America provides the largest regional share, accounting for over a third of the foreign-born population. Most of these migrants are authorized, but it is estimated that just under a third of all immigrants to the USA are illegal, and about 80% of the illegal emigrant population in the country is from Latin America.⁸

Of all illegal immigrants in the USA, an estimated 25-40% entered the country on a legal visa and

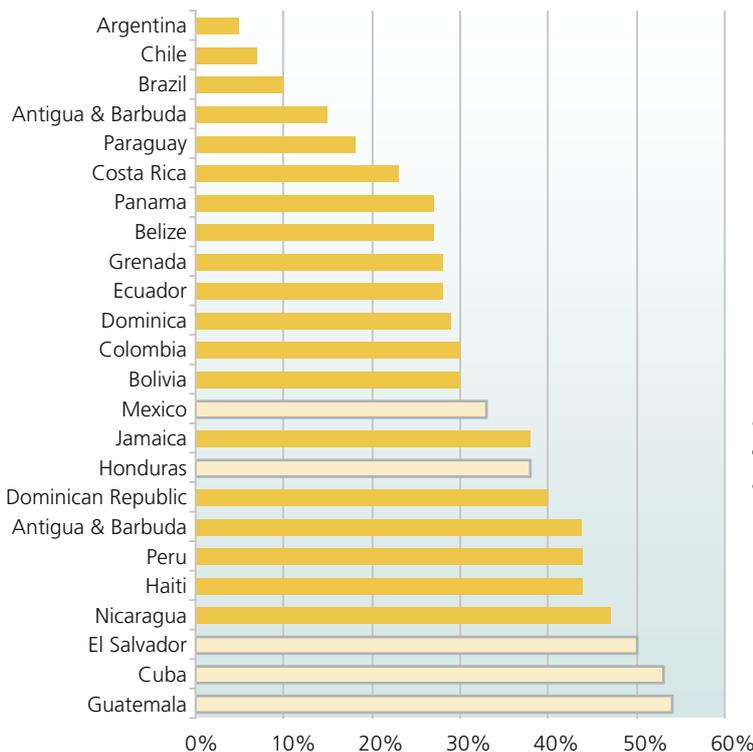
then overstayed, with the remainder having entered the country clandestinely. The nationalities most likely to be denied a visa are also among those most likely to be detected entering clandestinely. Most clandestine entrants to the USA come across the Mexican border, and most of these entrants are Mexican. Given the proximity of the country, it is not surprising that most Mexican illegal immigrants enter the country by clandestinely crossing the border, rather than relying on a visa overstay or other overt means.¹⁰ As is explained below, over 90% of illegal Mexican migrants are assisted by professional smugglers.

The USA hosts the second-largest Spanish-speaking population in the world. More than 9 million people born in Mexico alone were living in the USA at the time of the 2000 census, the single largest foreign national contributor to the population. Over a third of the population speaks Spanish in the border states of California, Texas and New Mexico. Combined with the fact that some 150 million Latin Americans live on less than two dollars per day, this expatriate population exerts a powerful pull on the poorer states to the south.¹¹ Mexican immigrants can expect to greatly improve their standard of living without having to master a new language or leaving behind their cultural group.

Migrants make an important contribution to the economy of Latin American countries. Remittances from Mexican migrants to the USA increased from US\$3.6 billion in 1995 to US\$20 billion in 2005.¹² Central American countries figure prominently

FIG. 46:

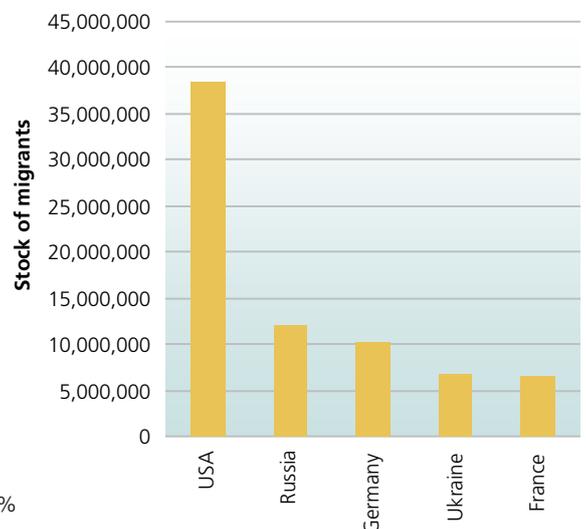
REFUSAL RATE FOR VISA REQUESTS (B-VISAS ONLY), FOR LATIN AMERICANS (FY 2007). IN LIGHT YELLOW, THE TOP 5 NATIONALITIES FOR IRREGULAR MIGRANTS APPREHENDED AT THE BORDER⁹



Source: US Department of State

FIG. 45:

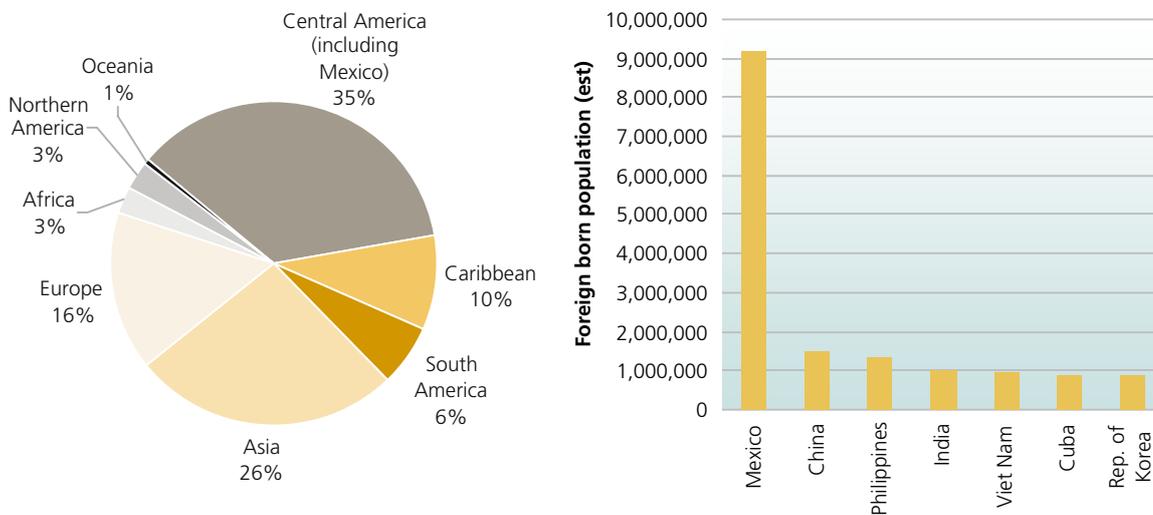
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STOCK, TOTAL BY COUNTRY, 2005



Source: World Development Indicators

FIG. 48:

ORIGIN OF ESTIMATED FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN THE USA (LEFT) AND TOP COUNTRIES OF FOREIGN BIRTH (RIGHT), 2000



Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

among those countries with the highest share of GDP attributable to remittances.

But remittances do not come from nowhere – they represent value created in the US economy. As the US population becomes more skilled, there is a demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour, particularly in industries such as construction and agriculture.¹³ Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan testified before Congress that illegal immigration significantly supported the US economy by providing a flexible workforce and creating a “safety value” to accommodate fluctuations in demand for labour.¹⁴ Unfortunately, it also creates opportunities for organized crime.

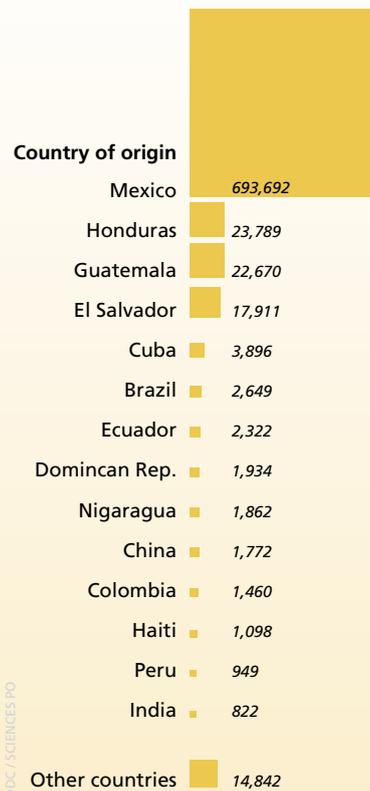
How is the smuggling conducted?

The 3,000 kilometre south-west border of the USA is relatively sparsely populated, much of it desert, with the thin Rio Grande river separating Mexico and the US state of Texas. It is among the most crossed international borders in the world, dotted with a series of twin cities, the most prominent of which are San Diego/Tijuana, El Paso/Juarez, Nogales/Nogales, Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, McAllen/Reynosa and Brownsville/Matamoros. Many of these pairings allow day commuters to pass with limited controls, with security checks only some distance from the border. This necessary accommodation of the hundreds of thousands of people who cross every day effectively broadens the area where illegal entry is possible.

FIG. 47:

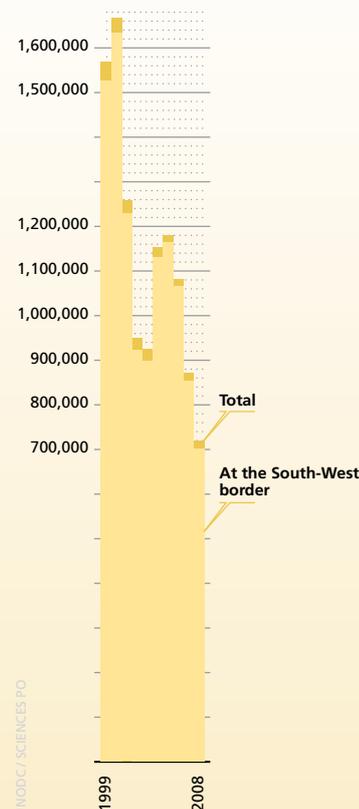
APPREHENSIONS OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS AT THE US BORDERS

Number of apprehensions at all borders, 2008



Source: US Department of Homeland Security

Evolution of apprehensions in the USA (number of migrants), 1999-2008



Source: US Department of Homeland Security

FIG. 49:

MIGRANT FLOWS FROM LATIN AMERICA TO THE USA, 1999-2008



Some 97% of the illegal migrants who enter the USA clandestinely do so over this border.¹⁵ Coastal apprehensions comprised less than 1% of the total unauthorized migrants intercepted in 2005.¹⁶ Currently, Arizona sees more illegal border crossers than any other state, which was not the case ten years ago, while California recently regained some lost “popularity”.

Some 88% of the total 792,000 migrants apprehended in 2008 were Mexican nationals. The remainder were mostly other Latin Americans.¹⁷ The number of apprehensions of irregular “other than Mexican” migrants increased rapidly in the beginning of this decade (up 220% from 2002 to 2005)¹⁸ but decreased in the last few years (down 60% from 2005 to 2008).¹⁹

Given the scale and scope of migration in this area, and cultural affinities between the USA and Mexico, the need for assistance in crossing the border might be unclear. But US border enforcement is apparently quite effective at deterring independent border crossers, because a very large and growing share of detected migrants say they paid smugglers for assistance.²⁰ Enforcement has also pushed migrant flows into increasingly harsh terrains, such as eastern California and the Sonoran desert of Arizona, which

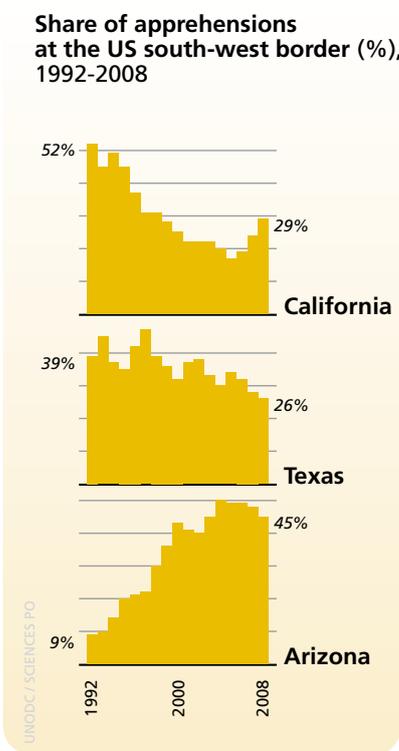
may be the reason behind a growing number of detected migrant deaths.²¹

Although migrants have been detected travelling by rail, on foot, and even using dedicated tunnels, most migrants are smuggled in trucks.²² The smuggling generally takes the migrants some distance from the border. Smuggled migrants may be collected in “stash houses”, either before the crossing or once inside the USA.²³ The smugglers group the migrants in these houses in order to receive the rest of the smuggling fee. This is normally paid by migrants’ relatives in the country of origin or in the USA.²⁴

While delaying payment until the crossing is complete provides some security that migrants will not simply be dumped in the desert, it also transforms the migrants into hostages, the collateral on which the transaction is secured. In 2004, among 275 people arrested for migrant smuggling in the USA, 36 (25%) were also charged with hostage taking, and 15% of the smuggled aliens concerned had been held against their will in attempts to extort additional payments.²⁵ It appears that this practice is expanding within Mexico as well, as non-Mexican migrants are being held for ransom in Tabasco and other states.

FIG. 50:

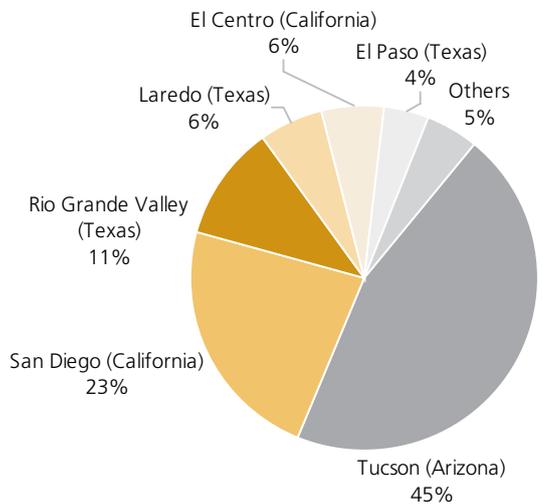
TRENDS IN APPREHENSIONS AT THE US SOUTH-WEST BORDER, 1992-2008



Source: US Congressional Research Service (CRS) presentation of data from the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Center for Immigration Research (CIR)

FIG. 51:

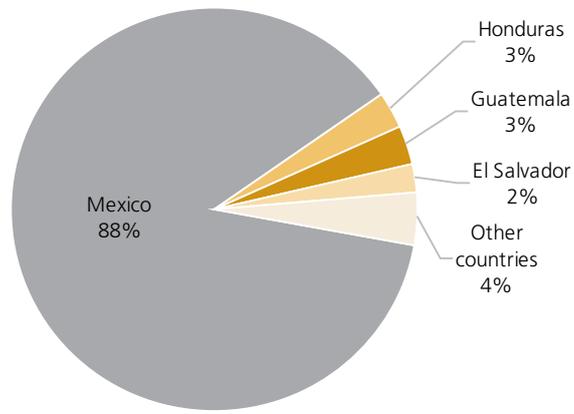
SHARE OF BORDER SECTORS IN TOTAL APPREHENSIONS, FY 2008



Source: US Department of Homeland Security

FIG. 52:

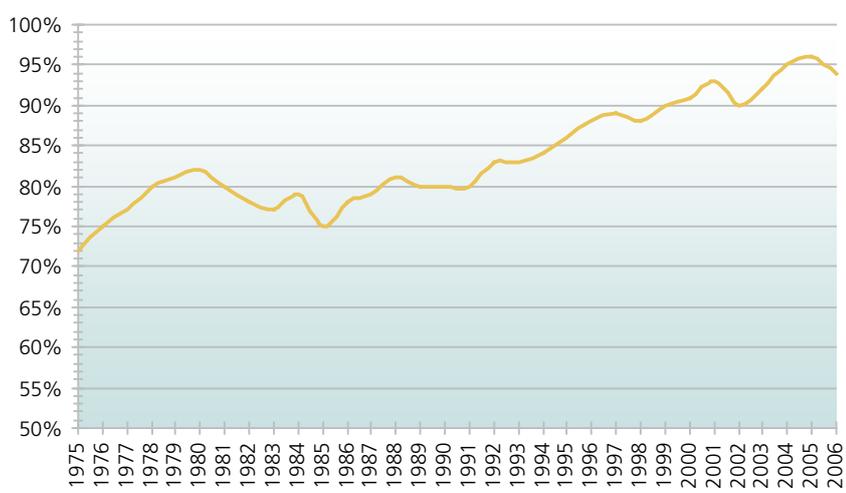
NATIONALITIES (SHARE) OF THOSE APPREHENDED AT US BORDERS, FY 2008



Source: US Department of Homeland Security

FIG. 53:

SHARE OF MEXICAN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS MAKING USE OF SMUGGLERS, 1975-2006

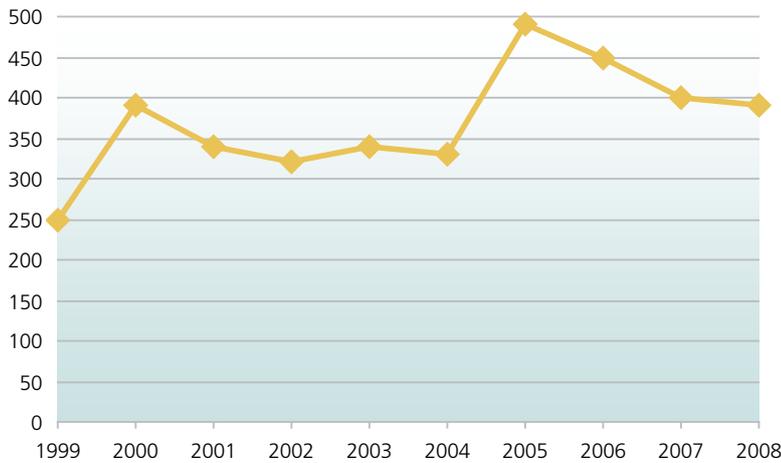


Source: Mexican Migration Project

The smuggling of Mexicans is somewhat different from the irregular migration of other nationals. In contrast to Mexicans' illegal border crossing, other Latin Americans cross the border mainly at the eastern sectors of Texas (80% of "other than Mexican" apprehensions in 2005).²⁶ This may be related to the repatriation agreements between the USA and origin countries. Once apprehended at the border, a Mexican migrant is repatriated immediately on the legal base of bilateral agreements. Because of a lack of such agreements with the Central American countries, when irregular non-Mexican migrants are apprehended, they are detained

FIG. 54:

MIGRANT DEATHS AT THE US SOUTH-WEST BORDER, 1999-2008



Source: CRS presentation of CIR and CBP Data

until the country of origin accepts repatriation. In this context, the migrant may be ‘released on their own recognizance’ with an order to leave the country.²⁷ Release of irregular migrants is more likely to occur in areas where centres have less bed space, such as the Texas sectors of McAllen and Del Rio, where more than 90% of the “other than Mexicans” apprehended are released.²⁸ Thus, when entering illegally through the eastern sectors of the border, Mexican nationals hide and run, while other nationals may wait to be detected.²⁹

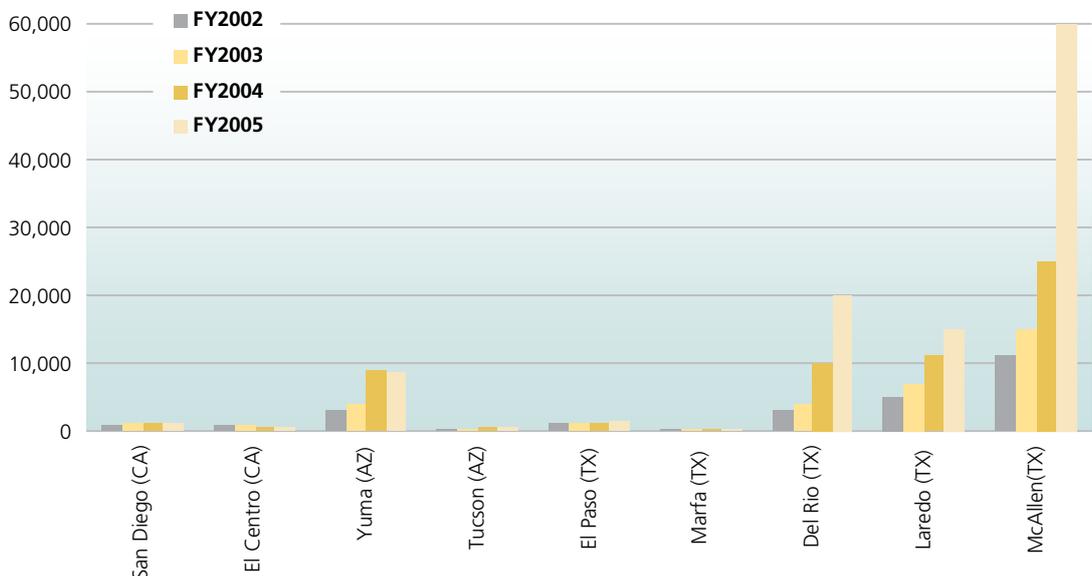
Who are the smugglers?

It appears that smugglers face little risk of arrest, since they normally pretend to be irregular migrants, and are immediately repatriated.³⁰ With low risks and high demand, it should come as no surprise that a wide range of smuggling groups is currently plying the trade. Some have argued that migrant smuggling from Mexico is mainly a mom-and-pop type of activity, primarily conducted by part-time smugglers.³¹ Others have claimed that drug smuggling gangs are implicated.³² Both might be true.

As mentioned above, the crossing points of Mexican and other migrants are different. It may be easier for Mexican migrants to acquire the name of a local small-scale smuggler through family or social connections than it would be for nationals of countries further south. Also, non-Mexicans may need assistance travelling the entire length of Mexico illegally. As a result, it is possible that trans-Mexican smuggling of other nationals has become the domain of Mexico’s premier national organized crime groups: the drug cartels. Most of the cocaine entering the USA crosses the Texas border, just like the ‘other than Mexican’ migrants, particularly along the plazas (crossing spots) controlled by the Gulf Cartel. The Gulf Cartel has operations and allies (including their former enforcement wing, the now autonomous Zetas), down the east coast of Mexico to the Central American border, and may have links with Central American organized crime

FIG. 55:

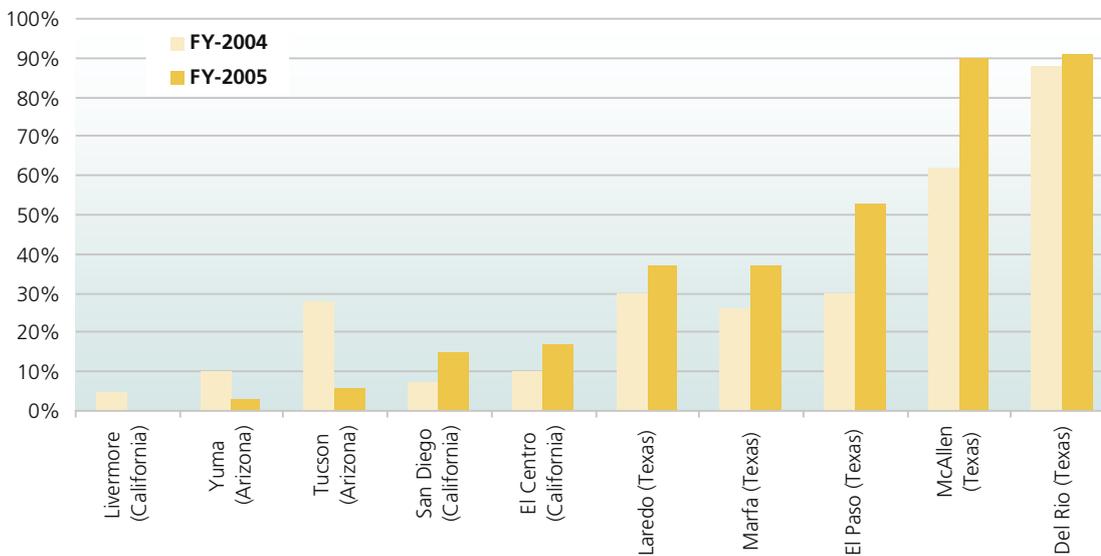
APPREHENSIONS OF ‘OTHER THAN MEXICANS,’ BY RESPONSIBLE BORDER OFFICE, FY 2002-2005



Source: CRS analysis of CBP Data

FIG. 56:

PERCENTAGE OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS (NON-MEXICANS) RELEASED ON THEIR OWN RECOGNIZANCE BY US AUTHORITIES BY RESPONSIBLE BORDER OFFICE, FY 2004-2005



Source: CRS analysis of CBP Data

groups. There have been anecdotal reports of their involvement in migrant smuggling.³³

In addition to the drug trafficking organizations, police have disrupted sophisticated organizations dedicated to migrant smuggling along the borders with California³⁴ and Arizona.³⁵ For example, Manuel Valdez-Gomez led a migrant smuggling group based in Arizona from 1997 until his arrest in 2005. The group, which began as a family-run illegal enterprise with 20 members, evolved into a large network active in document falsification, mail and wire fraud and social security fraud. They used a large network of truck drivers and “stash houses” for illegal transportation of aliens to Ohio, California, Florida, Nevada, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and other states.

The conviction of Valdez-Gomez was hailed as the elimination of “one of the largest and most lucrative human smuggling organizations on the Southern border,”³⁶ yet authorities report that they may have smuggled only 100 migrants.³⁷ Even if the true figure were ten times higher, this would be a drop in the bucket compared to the hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants who enter the country each year, some 90% of whom are believed to have been assisted. This suggests that most illegal immigration from Mexico is in the hands of a large number of small operators.

How big is the flow?

For this calculation it is necessary to distinguish between migration by Mexicans and ‘other than Mexicans’.

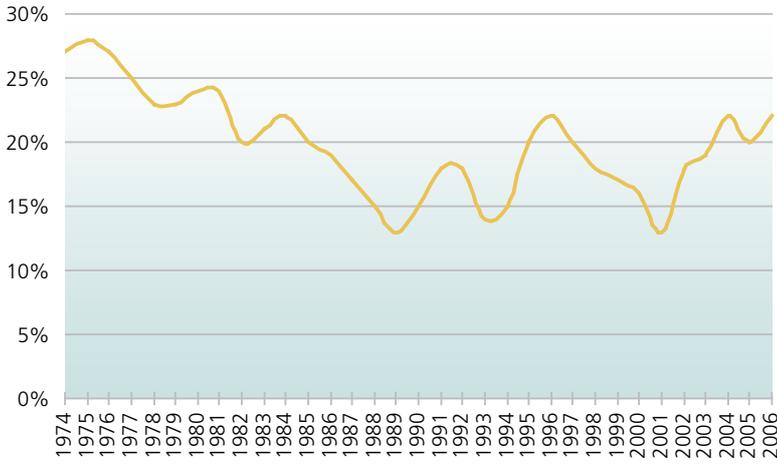
The Mexican Migration Project has been surveying Mexicans who have migrated to the USA about their migratory experiences since 1974.³⁸ Based on this extensive experience, they estimate that the probability of being apprehended at the border is about 20% for Mexicans (one in five attempts).

Some 661,000 Mexicans were apprehended at the border in 2008. Some of these may be the same people caught multiple times,³⁹ so it is more accurate to refer to these as ‘entries’. Five times 661,000 is 3.3 million entries. The amount paid per migrant has varied substantially over time, but is currently in the neighbourhood of US\$2,000. This would suggest that migrant smugglers could earn more than US\$6 billion annually off the Mexican market alone.

In contrast, as discussed above, other nationals have less to fear from being apprehended, and being taken into custody may actually facilitate their migration. Assuming that most are, in fact, caught, then some 65,000-100,000 entries ‘of other than Mexicans’ occur each year. These people come from a wide range of origin countries, including in Asia and Africa, but most are from Latin America.

FIG. 57:

PROBABILITY OF APPREHENSION DURING AN UNDOCUMENTED BORDER CROSSING, 1974-2006



Source: Mexican Migration Project

FIG. 58:

AVERAGE PRICE PAID BY MEXICANS TO BE SMUGGLED INTO THE USA (AVERAGE ALL CROSSINGS), 1980-2008



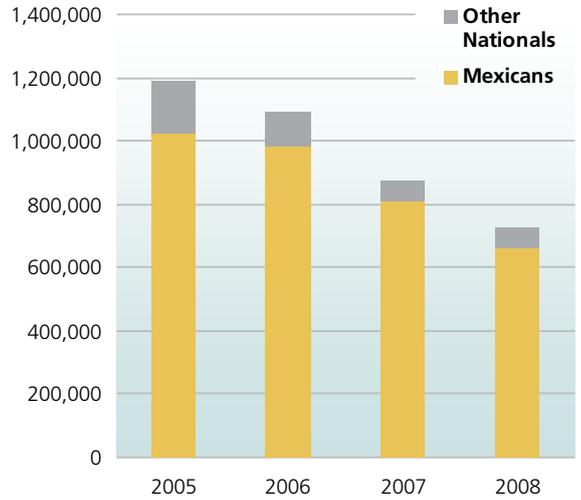
Source: Mexican Migration Project

Different source countries and routes may result in different pricing, and migrants outside Mexico have less basis for comparison, but one source suggests a price as high as US\$10,000 for the trip from the south-eastern coast of Mexico across the border.⁴⁰ But as the numbers involved are much smaller, so is the value of this market, realizing at most 1 billion dollars per year.

Overall, it appears that about 3 million Latin Americans are smuggled illegally across the southern border of the USA every year. Since 90% of them are assisted by smugglers, the total income for the smugglers is likely to be around 6.6 billion dollars per year.

FIG. 59:

APPREHENSIONS OF MEXICANS AND OTHER NATIONALS AT THE BORDER (BY YEAR), 2005-2008



Source: US Border Patrol

This market appears to have been in sharp decline since 2005. Between 2005 and 2008, the number of Mexican apprehensions decreased by 35% and apprehensions of other nationals decreased by 62%.⁴¹



3.2. From Africa to Europe

Route

Source:

Africa (mainly North Africa; some from West and East Africa)

Vector:

Land and sea

Destination:

EU (mainly Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom)

Dimensions

Annual market volume:

55,000 migrants smuggled

Annual value at destination:

US\$150 million (income for smugglers)

Smugglers

Groups involved:

Moroccans, Libyans and Turks on the coasts; different brokers at the hubs

Residence of smugglers:

Points of departure on the coasts, hubs along the routes and at destinations

Threat

Estimated trend:

Declining

Potential effects in region:

Irregular migration, death of migrants

Likelihood of effects being realized:

High

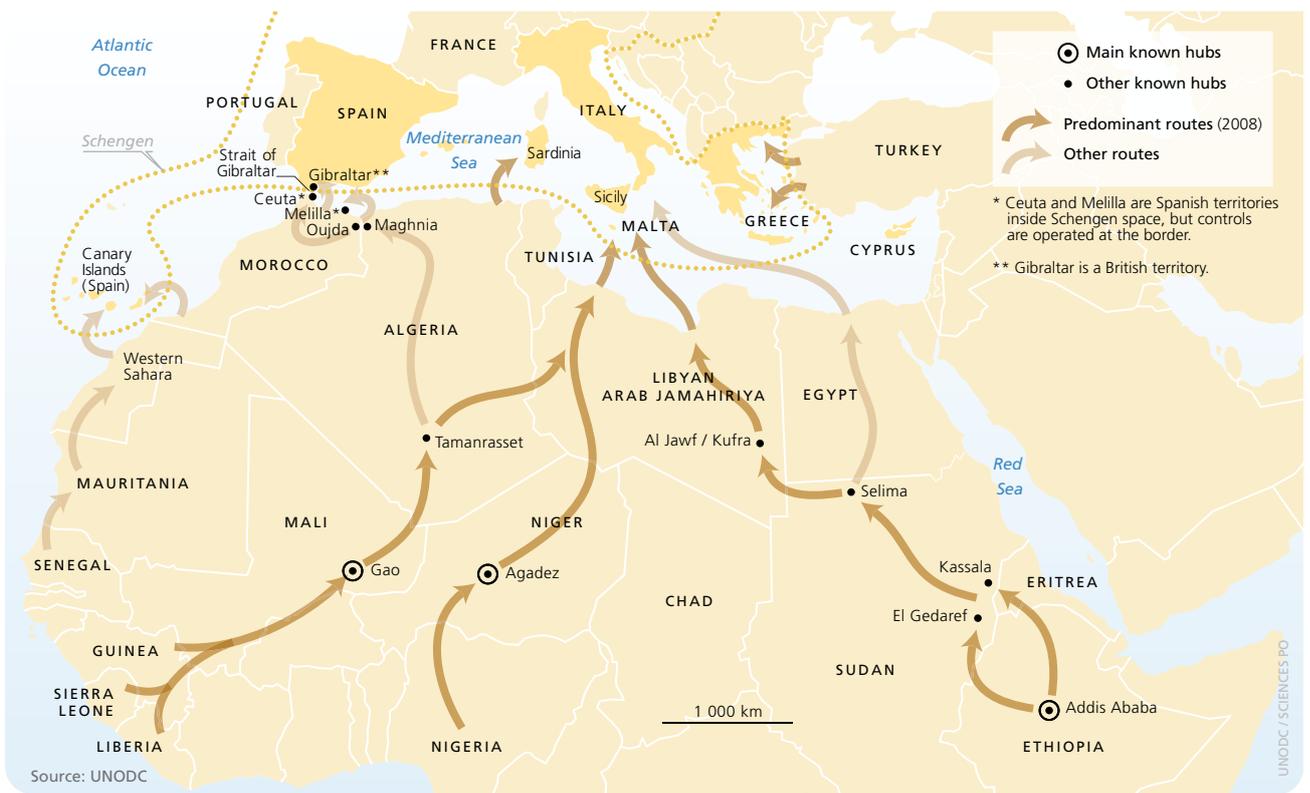
What is the nature of the market?

The dynamics behind African migration to Europe are similar to those behind Latin American migration to the USA, except that the push and pull factors are even stronger. Poverty in Africa is much more severe than in Latin America, and European welfare and labour standards promise a more comfortable life for low-skill workers who manage to immigrate. It is surprising, then, that illegal immigration from Africa to Europe is a fraction the size of that from Latin America to the USA. One explanation for this difference is the relative difficulty of making the crossing and a smaller diaspora.

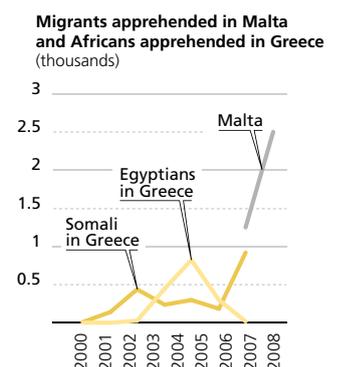
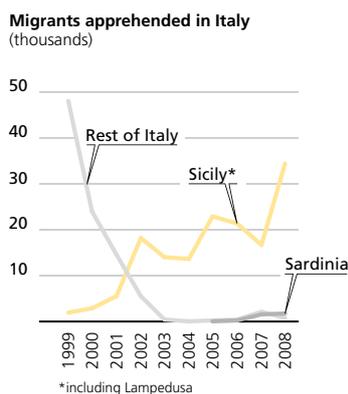
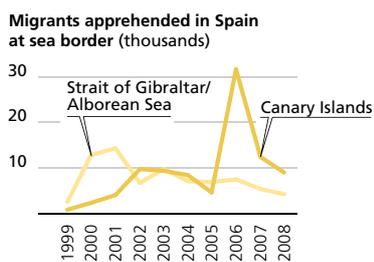
As on the other side of the Atlantic, some migrants secure visas and overstay, but this form of travel is beyond the means of many Africans. For most, there is a simpler, but more hazardous, way of reaching their destination. If they can make it by sea to one of the European islands close to the African coast, they know they will be transported to the mainland for processing. Like the “other than Mexican” migrants, chances are they will eventually be released with a written order to depart the country, because many European countries lack repatriation agreements with the relevant African countries. If no identity documents are carried, it can be difficult to determine the national origin of the migrant at all. Once released, most ignore the order to depart.

FIG. 60:

MAIN ROUTES FOR AFRICAN IRREGULAR MIGRANTS TO EUROPE, 1999-2008

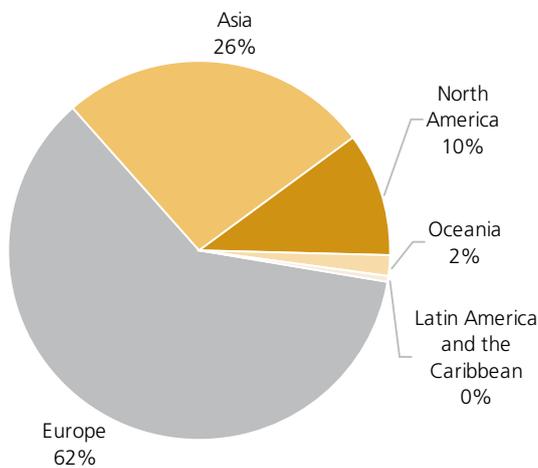


EVOLUTION OF APPREHENSIONS AT SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' BORDERS, 1999-2008 (VERTICAL SCALES ARE DIFFERENT)



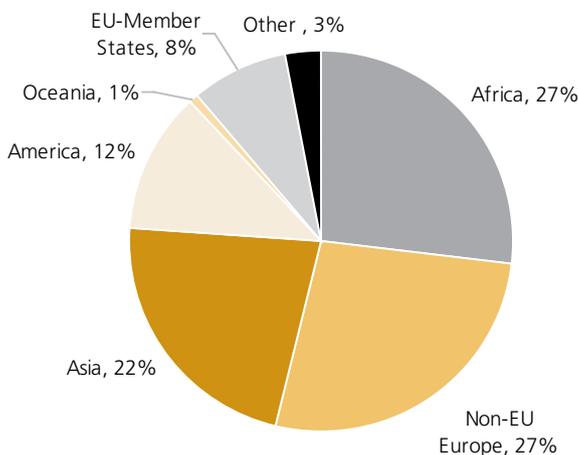
Although the numbers are not comparable to the Latin American presence in the USA, Europe does host the largest African-born population outside Africa, and Africans comprise, together with 'non-EU Europeans,' the largest group of foreign-born citizens in the European Union. African migrants' remittances from Europe account for a sizeable portion of the gross domestic product in a number of countries, particularly in West and North Africa.

FIG. 61: CONTINENT OF RESIDENCE OF AFRICAN MIGRANTS OUTSIDE AFRICA (% OF TOTAL AFRICAN EMIGRANT STOCK), 2000-2002



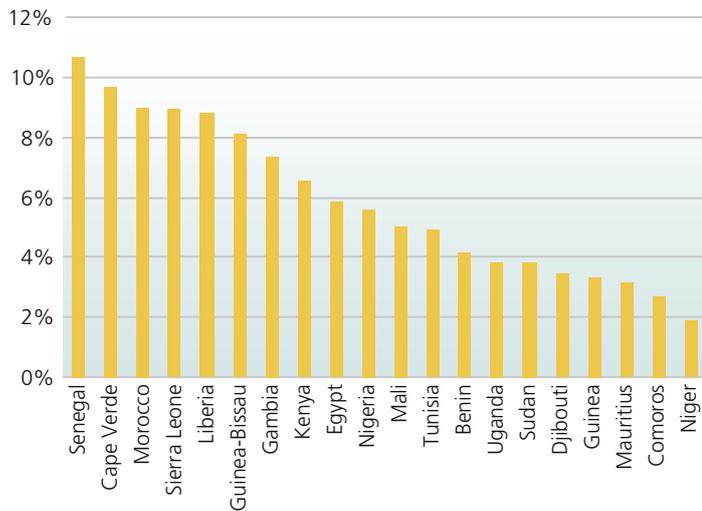
Source: UNDR, 2009 Human Development Report

FIG. 63: SHARE OF NEW EU CITIZENS BY CONTINENT OF ORIGIN, 2006



Source: Eurostat

FIG. 62: REMITTANCES AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP; TOP 20 AFRICAN COUNTRIES, 2007



Source: World Bank

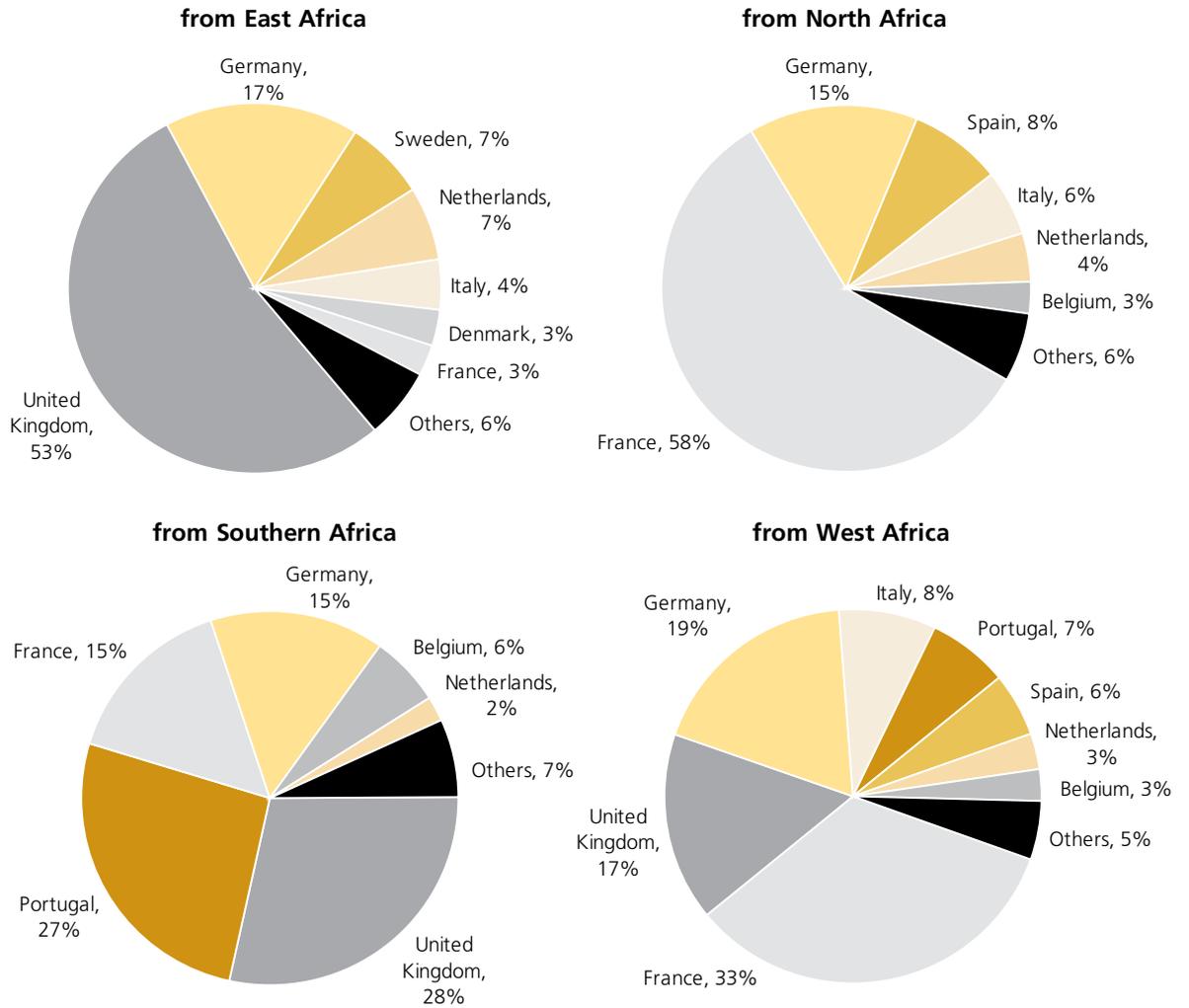
The motivation to emigrate from Africa to Europe is strong, but so is Europe's need for these migrants. What little population growth there is in Europe is attributable to migration. In 2005, the net gain from immigration (1.8 million people) accounted for almost 85% of Europe's total population growth.⁴² The European population is also ageing. With rapid population growth, Africa has young workers to spare.

Partly for language reasons, African regular migrants tend to move to the countries that formerly colonized their region. For example, the main destination for legal East African migrants is the United Kingdom, almost 60% of legal migrants from the Maghreb go to France, and most migrants from Southern Africa go to the United Kingdom and Portugal. Germany, however, is relatively popular across the continent, despite not having much of a colonial past, and France is popular among Southern Africans, despite the lack of Francophone countries in that region. Some of these anomalies may be explained in terms of immigration policy, social welfare policies or proximity to Africa. Eight to ten countries of the 27 in the EU receive the vast majority of African migrants.

Globally, West Africans are more likely to emigrate than Africans from other regions, but in the EU, North Africans are the most prominent regional group. In 2006, Moroccans were the largest national group to have acquired nationality in an EU state, and the largest group of immigrants in the EU-27.

FIG. 64:

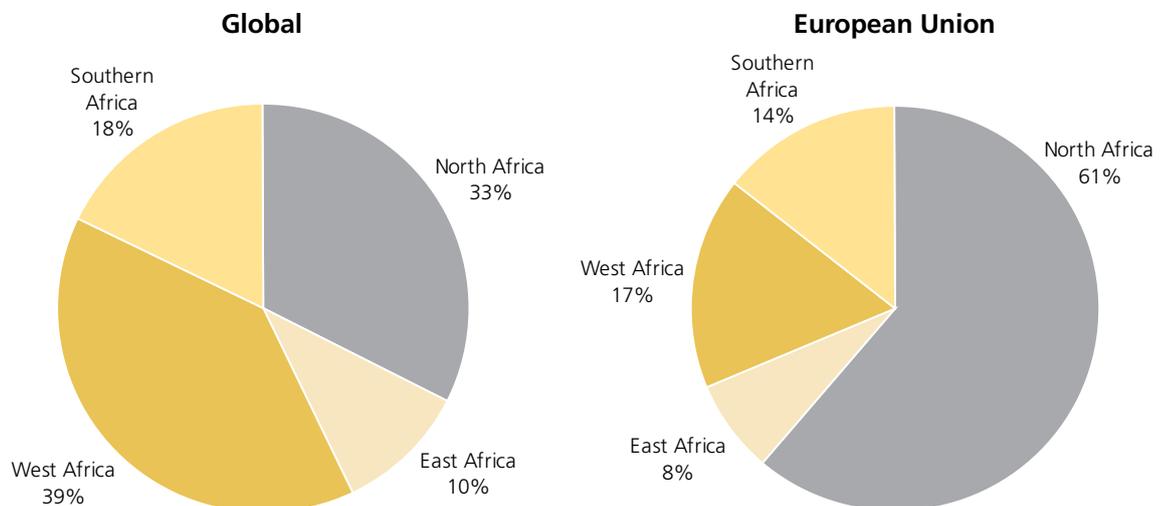
DESTINATION OF LEGAL MIGRATION FLOWS FROM AFRICA TO THE EUROPEAN UNION, BY SUBREGION OF ORIGIN, 2000



Source: Global migration origin database – UNODC elaboration

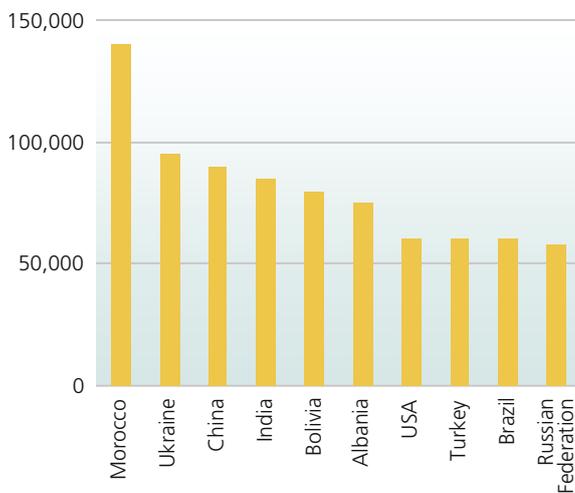
FIG. 65:

SHARE OF AFRICAN EMIGRATION, BY AFRICAN SUBREGION, 2000



Source: Global migration origin database – UNODC elaboration

FIG. 66:

TOP TEN NATIONAL GROUPS RECEIVING CITIZENSHIP IN THE EU-27, 2006


Source: Eurostat estimate

How is the smuggling conducted?

Illegal migration from Africa proceeds along a number of well-established paths, although the exact route any particular migrant may take is rarely predetermined. Aside from those who can afford to purchase “full-packet solutions”, which frequently involve air travel and visa overstays, most migrants purchase services piecemeal at one of several well-known hubs along the way.⁴³ The journey from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe may take several years, and migrants may stop for longer periods along the way to collect resources for the journey onward.⁴⁴

Two significant hubs from West Africa on the way north are Gao (Mali) and Agadez (Niger). From here, migrants are collected in trucks departing to Algeria and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. On the Algerian side of the border, the city of Tamanrasset is another centre where many sub-Saharan migrants work in order to finance the rest of the journey.⁴⁵ In Algeria, migrants head north by road and cross the border with Morocco at the Oujda (Morocco) - Maghnia (Algeria) border for the Moroccan departure points.⁴⁶

On the other side of the continent, East African migrants gather in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Somalis reach Addis Ababa either from the eastern border crossing with Ethiopia near Hargeisa (Somalia), or from the southern border crossing in Dolo (Ethiopia). From Addis Ababa, Somalis and Ethiopians travel across the Sudan, passing by El Gedaref and then north to Selima (Sudan) and Al Jawf / Kufra

(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya). Recently, Somalis have started travelling to Sudan via Kenya and Uganda, as the Ethiopian southern border is more strictly controlled. Kassala, on the border between the Sudan and Eritrea, is another transit point for Eritreans and Ethiopians. From here, migrants travel directly to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya or to the Egyptian coasts.

Once migrants have reached the African coast, the journey to Europe can be completed via four routes:

- by sea from West Africa to the Canary Islands (Spain);
- by sea/land through Morocco and to southern Spain, Ceuta and Melilla;
- by sea from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya/Algeria/Egypt to southern Italy and Malta; and
- by sea/land from Turkey to Greece.

Canary Islands

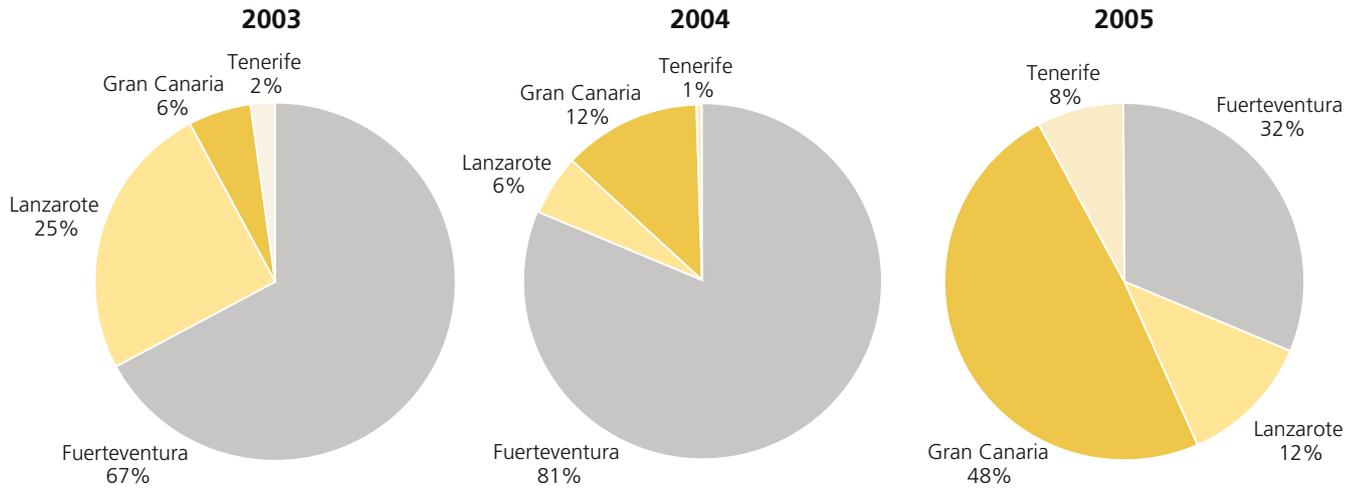
The overall share of migrants using this route has decreased markedly since 2006, but the Canary Islands remain popular for North and West Africans trying to reach the EU. Moroccan, Algerian, Senegalese, Gambian and Guinean migrants are the most frequently encountered national groups along this route. Departure points are on the western African coasts, including in the territories of Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal, with most embarking in small wooden boats (cayucos from Mauritania and Senegal, pateras from the Maghreb) and, more recently, inflatable rubber boats. These boats are able to carry about 70 people at a time. Crews may be equipped with GPS and satellite telephones. The passage from the African coast to the Canary Islands may cost some €1,000-€1,500.

West Africans may initially go to Gao (Mali) by land, and from there, westward to the coast. Alternatively, sub-Saharan migrants depart from the Gulf of Guinea with larger boats. In this case, the boats follow the coast to the Canary Islands.

The shores on the western coasts of the Sahara, between Laayoune and Tarfaya are departure points for the Canary Islands, as the distance to the islands is no more than 115 km from there. Other points are Cape Bojador, El-Aaiun, Dakhla and Lagouira in Morocco, Fann, Ngor, Zinguichor, Casamance and St-Louis in Senegal, and Nouadhibou in Mauritania. Cape Verde has also been a point of departure in the last few years. Migrants may arrive at the islands of Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria (in the area of Las Palmas), Tenerife or, more recently, La Gomera.

FIG. 67:

SHARE OF MIGRANTS ARRIVING AT THE CANARY ISLANDS, BY ISLAND, 2003-2005



Source: Ministerio de educacion, politica y deporte, Spain

The passage is extremely risky due to the rough sea, the long distance and the fragile boats used by migrants. The survivors landing in the Canary Islands wait to be detected by the Spanish authorities and then to be transported and sheltered on the mainland. In the absence of bilateral agreements with the countries of origin or when the nationality cannot be ascertained, migrants receive an order compelling them to leave the country and are then released.

Southern Spain, including Ceuta and Melilla

These routes are used mainly by North and West Africans. The latter cross the Sahara en route to Morocco. The risks and number of deaths during this leg of the journey are commensurate to the size and harshness of the desert.

The Spanish land and sea borders to Ceuta, Melilla and Andalusia are strictly controlled by the authorities. A 6-foot fence has been installed around Ceuta and Melilla - two Spanish cities on the North African coast - and a radar system that covers the Strait of Gibraltar easily detects boats leaving the Moroccan coast.

Algerians manage to enter Ceuta and Melilla by making use of forged Moroccan documents.⁴⁷ Sub-Saharan Africans try to clandestinely cross the fence, but few people succeed and it appears these attempts occur in a rather disorganized manner.⁴⁸ Migrants camp in the areas beside the fence, waiting for a chance to take the final step into Europe. These spontaneous camps are in Mount Gourougou out-

side Melilla⁴⁹ and Mount Hacho and Mount Jebel Musa outside Ceuta.⁵⁰ Mass border crossing attempts have taken place in the last few years.⁵¹ While smugglers play no role in the clandestine crossing of the fence, some Asian migrants have reported having paid smugglers to get into the EU, only to then be abandoned outside the fence.⁵²

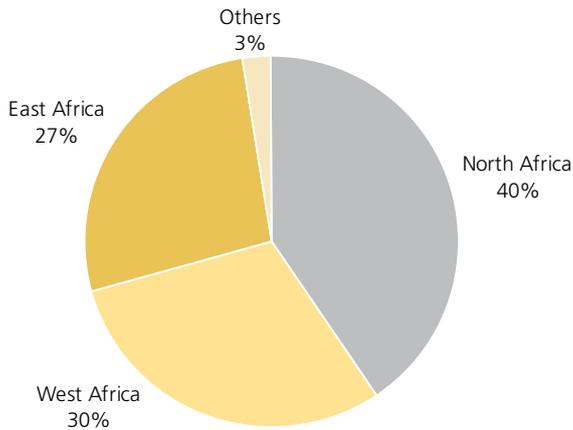
In 2007, about 7,000 migrants reached Spain by crossing the Mediterranean sea from Morocco. Boats depart in the direction of Grenada and Almería or the Balearic islands. Small boats are used from the coast between Tangier and Rabat (Morocco) on the Atlantic coast to reach Cádiz (Spain). On the Mediterranean side of the Strait, the departure areas are Tétouan and Oued Laou (Morocco).

Across the Alboran Sea, boats leave Morocco close to Melilla, and land in Grenada and Almería (Spain).⁵³ Migrants may camp near the departure points while the trip is being prepared. Smugglers drop the migrants off 100 meters or more from the Spanish shores to minimize the risk of interception. While the sea smugglers return to Morocco, migrants may either meet the “smuggling receiving team” in Spain or simply be left on their own to continue inland.⁵⁴

Southern Italy and Malta

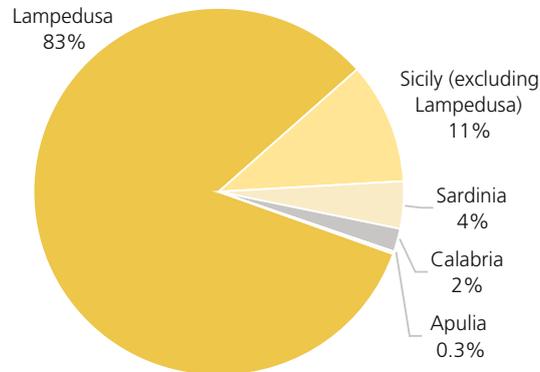
Although drastically reduced in the second half of 2009, the most prominent migrant smuggling routes from Africa to Europe in recent years have been those destined for the Italian islands of Lampedusa, Sicily and Sardinia. Many of these migrants inadvertently find themselves, however, arriving in

FIG. 68:

ORIGIN OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS ARRIVING IN ITALY BY SEA, BY SUBREGION, 2008


Source: Ministero dell' Interno, Italy

FIG. 69:

SHARE OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS ARRIVING IN ITALY BY SEA, BY AREA OF LANDING, 2008


Source: Ministero dell' Interno, Italy

Malta. In 2008, some 37,000 migrants arrived in Italy by sea. Africans from the Maghreb, Egypt, the Horn of Africa and West Africa are crossing this part of the Mediterranean, embarking mainly from the Libyan coasts.

As a result of greater enforcement efforts at departure points, the sea route from Alexandria (Egypt) to Italy almost disappeared in 2008/2009. This route used to involve large fishing boats carrying more than a hundred migrants. The migrants were embarked and disembarked in open sea, using small boats.⁵⁵

In the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, departure points are mainly Zuwara, Zliten, Misratah and Tripoli. Smugglers embark migrants in fibreglass boats and give them instructions on how to reach Lampedusa. They do not board with the migrants. Keeping the compass on 0:0, it should take some six to seven hours to cover the 260 kilometres between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Lampedusa. If the migrants miss Lampedusa, they should reach Sicily in 12 hours or more. Although the sea journey is relatively short, the fragile boats and the weather conditions result in the death of many of these migrants.⁵⁶

While departures from Tunisia have nowadays virtually disappeared, the number of migrants starting from Algeria and landing in Sardinia has increased in the last few years (800% growth from 2005), totalling 1,621 migrants in 2008.⁵⁷

Algerian boats depart from the harbour and shores of Annaba.⁵⁸ The boats used are fishing boats containing 15-20 people.⁵⁹ While some have hypothe-

sized that 'mother ships' are used on this route, this has never been proven.⁶⁰ On the contrary, according to Algerian accounts,⁶¹ most of the attempts are carried out in a rather disorganized manner, with little or no involvement of smugglers or smuggling organizations. Migrants using this route are mainly young Algerian males,⁶² and the distance separating Annaba from the southern coast of Sardinia is no more than 355 kilometres.

Eastern Greece

Most of the migrants who use the Greece-Turkey route are Asians. However, Somali migrants have been increasingly entering the EU from Turkey, and in 2007, they were the second largest national group among the migrants apprehended at the Greek sea border.

Migrants depart from Turkey to land on the Greek islands of Samos, Chios and Lesbos, just 1.5 kilometres from the Turkish coast.

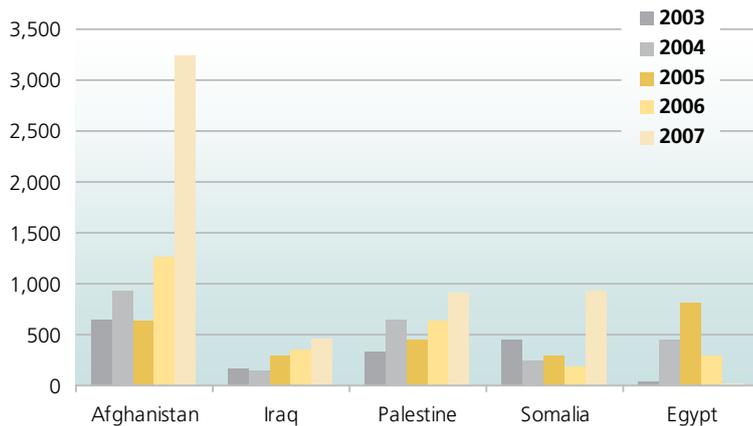
The land route used by Somalis to reach Turkey has not been documented. Some have hypothesized that the passage to the Greek islands is the final leg of a journey that started by crossing the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, across the Arabian Peninsula, to the Syrian Arab Republic and then to Turkey.⁶³ It is known that a large number of Somalis enter Yemen irregularly by sea.

On the other hand, it is possible that Somalis follow the above-mentioned East African route across Ethiopia and the Sudan to Egypt. Palestinians and Egyptians are among the largest communities of

migrants arriving on the Greek islands, and it appears that Somalis are starting to follow. Once in Greece, Somalis would be assisted and granted asylum or expelled. If expelled, in the absence of repatriation agreements, they would be released with an order to leave the country.

FIG. 70:

TOP FIVE ORIGINS OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS ARRIVING AT THE GREEK SEA BORDER, 2003-2007



Source: Greek Ministry of the Merchant Marine

Who are the smugglers?

Migrants receive various kinds of assistance from diverse groups of people along their journey, although it would be difficult to describe many of the ‘helpers’ as organized crime figures. Some attempts appear to be entirely self-directed, including the efforts of Algerian young men to reach Italy by sea,⁶⁴ although Algerian migrants may also pay professional criminals for forged papers to enter Ceuta and Melilla. To cross the Sahara desert clandestinely requires professional assistance,⁶⁵ and others who manage and broker services to migrants at the hubs may be full-time criminals.

For example, in Saguia El Hamra, about 20 well-organized smuggling groups were providing passage to the Canary Islands in 2004. These groups purchased pateras from central Morocco for the sole purpose of carrying migrants for around €3,000. For each vessel that arrived, they earned about €7,000. Each group was provided protection by its own law enforcement connections, and maintained recruitment operations in Rabat and Casablanca. Similarly structured groups have been found to operate in Mali, Mauritania and Senegal.⁶⁶

Moroccan organizations have a monopoly on the passage across the Alboran Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar into the south of Spain, as well as the

document forgery operations aimed at gaining admission to Ceuta and Melilla.⁶⁷ These groups employ a wide range of actors out of necessity. They may have links to receiving groups on the Spanish mainland, and even with Spanish employers in need of cheap labour.⁶⁸

The situation is quite similar in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The large number of migrants departing from that country is transported by organized smuggling rings located in the main points of departure, such as Zuwara, Zliten and others. Italian authorities indicate that at least five Libyan groups are active in Zuwara alone.⁶⁹ Libyan groups may use Egyptian or Tunisian sailors, if sailors are used at all.⁷⁰ At Laayoune, the boats used are bought for the purpose of migrant smuggling. They are quite cheap (€5,000) and can carry some 25-30 migrants. The sea leg costs about €2,000 per migrant, making the passage extremely profitable for the smugglers.⁷¹ Libyan groups may be connected with other smuggling rings operating along routes from West and East Africa. There are indications of small regional networks, such as those connecting groups based in the main points of departure with those operating along the desert routes of the Sudan and Chad and in the hub of Kufra (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya).⁷²

Gao and Agadez are two important hubs for all of West Africa. Smugglers here work differently than those on the coasts. They act as brokers, providing all types of migration services, from forged documents to desert transportation. Truck drivers or “passeur” are traditionally Tuareg who know the desert and its harsh conditions. The brokers may be Tuareg, but the Tuareg mainly seem to be used as service providers, navigating the sands as far as Morocco or the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Addis Ababa plays a similar role for the East African route. Agents or brokers work with different types of migrants, according to ethno-linguistic or tribal ties. The broker is known by reputation among the community of reference, and is the best guarantee for the longevity of the business.⁷³ Again, documents or merely passage can be purchased.⁷⁴ As Tuareg are used in West Africa, other nomadic groups are used in the East. As is true everywhere, the migration business sees a lot of individuals at the disposal of the brokers on a part-time basis. While these people are not truly members of a smuggling group, the broker can rely on them when needed.⁷⁵

Smuggler networks on the Turkish coasts (en route to Samos and Lesbos) are also structured organiza-

tions.⁷⁶ Based at departure points, these groups are in contact with intermediaries at transit stations.

The smugglers operating in the Middle Eastern transit points to Turkey are local agents or brokers. These agents take responsibility for different legs of the immigrants' journey. As seen for the other routes, these networks are characterized by national, ethnic, kinship or friendship connections.⁷⁷

How big is the flow?

Almost all irregular migrants arriving in Spain, Italy and Malta by sea are Africans. Arrivals in Spain by sea are mainly concentrated in the Canary Islands, the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alboran Sea. When migrants arrive on the Canary Islands, almost all are apprehended since they rely on the lack of repatriation facilities to be released on the Spanish mainland. When migrants arrive on the Spanish mainland, some prefer to escape rather than face processing. Apprehensions at the Spanish sea border peaked in 2006 with about 40,000 detected migrants, mostly in the Canaries. In 2008, only 14,000 apprehensions were recorded.

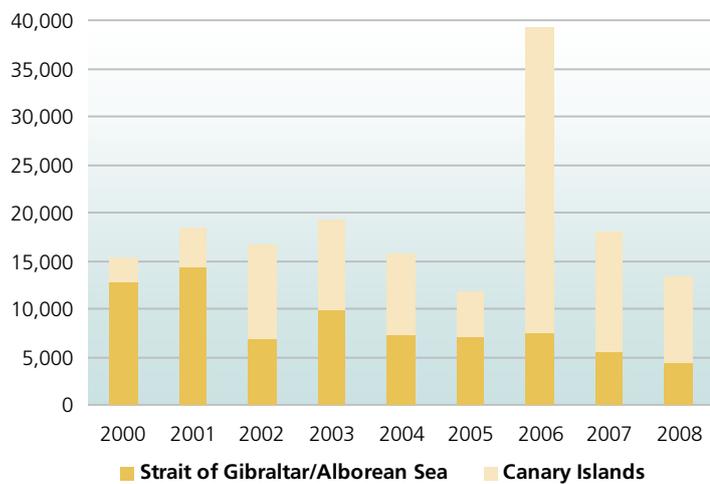
African migrants arriving in Lampedusa do not want to remain there. Therefore, they ensure that they are detected in order to be transported to mainland Italy. Border apprehensions along the Italian coasts peaked in 2008 with about 36,000 migrants intercepted, mostly in Lampedusa and Sicily.

In addition, arrivals on the coasts of Malta totalled about 1,200 in 2007 and 2,500 in 2008. It is likely that all irregular migrants here are apprehended. Additionally, a few hundred East Africans and Egyptians (about 1,000 in total) land in Greece. Thus, the total number of African migrants apprehended at sea borders with the European Union in 2008 was likely between 52,000 and 54,000.⁷⁹

Since most of these migrants wish to be detected, these numbers are close to the number of migrants that paid to be smuggled. But not all the migrants who pay smugglers survive the trip. An estimated 1,000 migrants died or disappeared in 2008.⁸⁰ Also, a number of migrants arriving in mainland Spain may wish to avoid detection. The Spanish authorities intercept at least 86% of the boats detected through their Electronic Surveillance System, so perhaps some 750 migrants entered Spain undetected in 2008. Finally, an unknown number of migrants may enter Ceuta and Melilla by making use of forged documents. All told, it can be estimated that about 55,000 migrants paid to be smuggled to Europe in 2008.

FIG. 71:

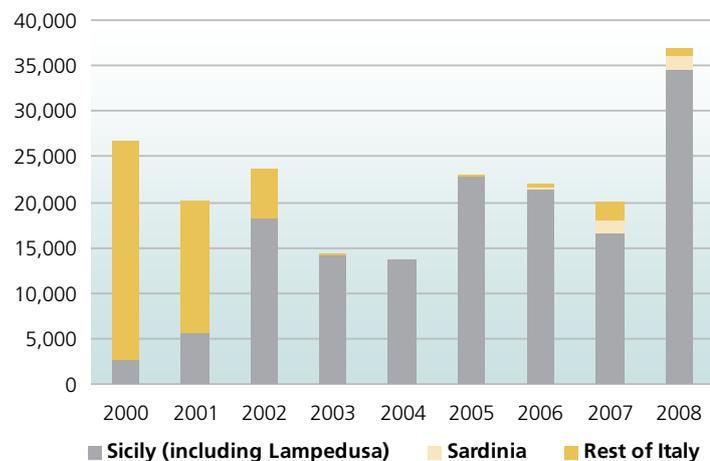
INTERCEPTION POINTS FOR MIGRANTS APPREHENDED AT THE SPANISH SEA BORDER, 2000-2008



Source: Ministerio asunto sociales, Spain

FIG. 72:

INTERCEPTION POINTS FOR MIGRANTS APPREHENDED AT THE ITALIAN SEA BORDER, 2000-2008⁷⁸

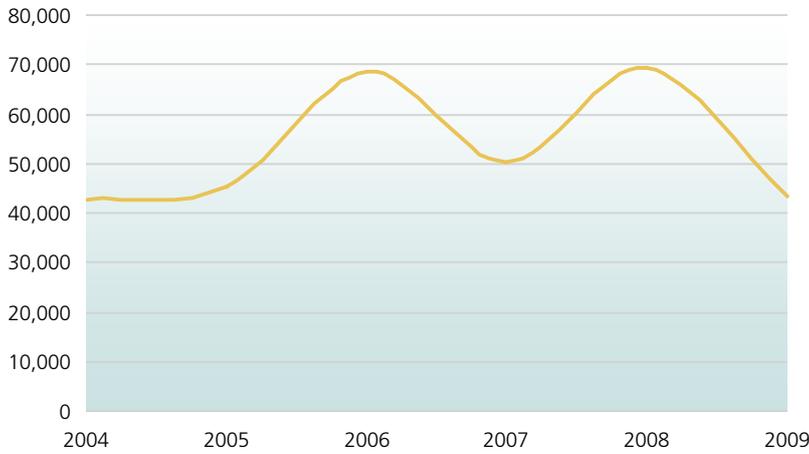


Source: Ministero dell' Interno, Italy

The amount they paid varies depending on the services required. The cost of the sea journey to either the Canary Islands or Lampedusa is in the range of €2,000 to €2,500. Since most migrants purchase this service, coastal smugglers may earn in the region of US\$110-140 million per year. For sub-Saharan migrants, it is often necessary to purchase passage across the desert as well. Although the prices cited for this service vary widely, it is unlikely that total revenues exceed US\$10 million annually. In sum, smugglers moving migrants from Africa to Europe probably grossed about US\$150 million in 2008.

FIG. 73:

NUMBER OF MIGRANTS APPREHENDED IN SPAIN, ITALY, MALTA AND GREECE AT SEA BORDERS, 2004-2009

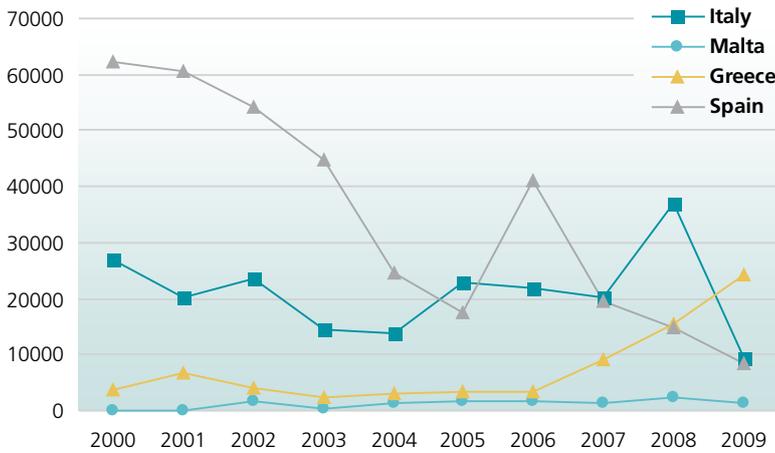


Source: UNODC elaboration of official figures

number of detections along Italian sea borders declined 74% between 2008 and 2009, with not a single landing recorded in Lampedusa in the last three months of the year. This sharp decline appears to have displaced some of the flow to the eastern coasts of Italy (Apulia and East Sicily) and possibly to Greece. The overall effect will only be determined as 2009 data become available for all affected regions.

FIG. 74:

IRREGULAR MIGRANTS APPREHENDED IN ITALY, MALTA, GREECE AND SPAIN BY COUNTRY OF APPREHENSION, 2000-2009



Source: UNODC elaboration of official figures

The trend for this market has been generally upward since 2003. In terms of specific routes, the trends have been mixed. Many former routes, such as the use of Gibraltar and Tunisia, have all but disappeared. Arrivals in Spain increased steadily, with a peak in 2006, then sharply decreased in 2007 and 2008. Compensating for these decreases, arrivals in Italy increased in 2008 and the first half of 2009.

Cooperative agreements between Italy and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya signed in May 2009 appear to have had an impact. The number of migrants detected in Italy was steadily rising until May, at which point they abruptly declined. Overall, the

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESPONSE

Smuggling of migrants is largely an opportunistic crime. This is best seen in Africa, where the routes have shifted so much over time that it is difficult for any smuggling organization to have much longevity. This means efforts directed at the smuggling groups are unlikely to have much effect, aside from perhaps diverting the flow once again. The hopes and dreams of the migrants themselves are driving this market. The smugglers are merely a parasitic infection, but one that is difficult to avoid.

What does seem to have had impact in stemming the tide on both sides of the Atlantic is the perception of declining opportunity. People will not pay to be smuggled unless there are good prospects of making this money back. The key to preventing smuggling, then, is to send the signal to migrants that it is not worth the expense and risk.

The same signal must be sent to the other end of the trafficking chain. Migrants who are willing to be packed shoulder to shoulder on a leaking wreck and launched onto the open sea are not likely to be deterred by a stern official and a written order to depart. Their employers, on the other hand, have considerably more to lose if they are caught in breach of the law, but only if that law is enforced. They could be deemed complicit in migrant smuggling, or in operating a criminal enterprise, if prosecutors were so inclined. It would not take more than a few forfeitures to erode the competitive advantage of exploiting foreign labour.