



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The UN Migration Agency

## Triangulation of Migrants Stock in Egypt July 2022

### Background

Egypt is the most densely populated country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. According to the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the Egyptian population reached 103,334,623 (April 2022). Yet, due to its central position within the MENA region, Egypt is considered a country of origin, destination, and transit. It has been welcoming millions of migrants and refugees of various nationalities during different periods of history<sup>1</sup>.

Currently, migrants in Egypt are regularly referred to as a stock of six million people. This has been presented on several occasions by the Government of Egypt. In order to refine the understanding of the migrant stock in Egypt, IOM has worked on a reassessment of migrants profiles in Egypt in order to provide an updated accurate estimation of the number of migrants in the country, supported by disaggregated data collected between January and June 2022. This quantitative research exercise aimed at providing a better understanding of the size of the migrant populations in Egypt and the migrants' needs which would allow the Government of Egypt and the United Nations at large to develop a more tailored response.

### Multimethodology

In 2019, IOM Egypt carried out a migrant stock assessment in Egypt. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to deliver more specialized services, based on the existing vulnerabilities of migrants in Egypt.

Due to the complexity of the exercise, the exercise used different research methods to get the most accurate number and profile of migrants in Egypt. The results shown in this paper are based on the compiled data and information from different sources.

International migrant stocks are estimates of "the total number of international migrants present in a given country at a particular point in time".<sup>2</sup> The results presented in this paper reflect the current relative migrant stock residing in Egypt. These numbers are subjective to be increased or decreased over time. Also, data related to irregular migrants in Egypt is in substantially short supply and inaccurate, however, empirical research suggests that the number is high. Many of these categories of migrants reside in Egypt for years until they find an opportunity to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, either through regular or irregular channels.<sup>3</sup>

- **Consultations with Embassies:** IOM approached all the diplomatic representations accredited in Egypt with a written request to provide data on the number of each embassy's compatriots. These requests were sent out in January 2021. Additionally, embassies provided disaggregated data including information on age, gender, location, duration of stay, and purpose of stay.
- **Community Leaders Survey:** the survey aimed to assess the accessibility of migrants to basic services in Egypt. It was conducted by IOM Egypt in December 2021. The data was collected via phone interviews with 63 community leaders from different nationalities, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Palestine, Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The survey included questions on the estimated number of populations of each nationality and information about migrants' demographic characteristics (i.e. age, gender, and location).
- **Desk Review, official statements, and IOM Protection Officers' daily monitoring.**

<sup>1</sup> Al-Sharmani, M. (2014). Refugee Migration to Egypt: Settlement or Transit?. Transit Migration in Europe (IMISCOE Research), Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses. (2017). Retrieved 16 April 2022, from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/international-migration/2020-Handbook-Migration-and-Censuses-E.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2021). Vulnerable migrants' population in Egypt – Methodology of assessment and estimation.

## Main Findings

### Migrants' population in Egypt

According to the Government of Egypt, the country is hosting around 6 million migrants.<sup>4</sup> Triangulation of different sources including information from Embassies on migrants' communities in the country, migrants' service providers and academia corroborates that this estimation has increased. Estimates the migrant community in Egypt to reach 9 million, with the Sudanese, the Libyan, the Syrian and the Yemeni populations counting among the main communities.<sup>5</sup>

The total number of the Egyptian population at the time of writing this document is 103,334,623, based on this number and IOM's revised estimation of migrant stocks in Egypt, migrants would constitute roughly around 8.7% of the Egyptian population. This percentage is a variable ratio subjective to change with the change of the migrant stocks.

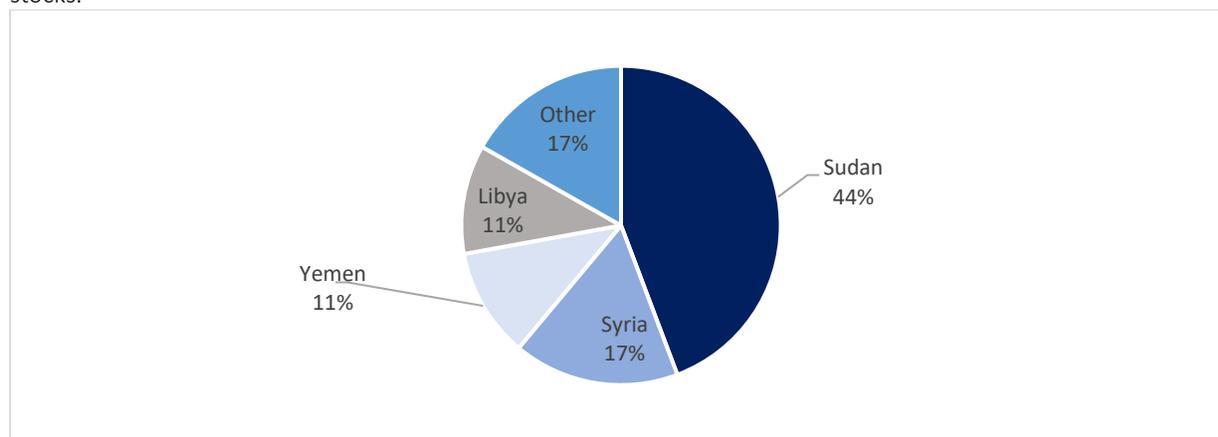


Chart 1: Top main migrants' nationalities in Egypt

The current overall estimate of the number of migrants in Egypt is 9 million<sup>6</sup>, with 80% of this population belonging to one of the four main countries of origin: Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. An estimated four million Sudanese nationals, 1.5 million Syrians, one million Libyans, and one million Yemenis currently live in Egypt. More than 130 nationalities are represented in the remaining migrant communities, representing around 109,650 persons.

The table below shows the estimated population of the top ten nationalities

Nationality	Estimated population
Sudan	4,000,000
Syria	1,500,000
Yemen	1,000,000
Libya	1,000,000
Saudi Arabia	600,000
South Sudan	300,000
Somalia	200,000
Iraq	150,000
Palestine	135,932
Ethiopia	17,000
Other nationalities (132)	109,650
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,012,582</b>

Table 1: Top 10 Nationalities live in Egypt

<sup>4</sup> H.E. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi mentioned "the nearly six million migrants and refugees who have been forced to leave their countries due to wars, political crises or difficult economic conditions [...currently hosted by Egypt] on its land" in his statement before the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly-SIS in September 2020.

<sup>5</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2021). Vulnerable migrants' population in Egypt – Methodology of assessment and estimation.

<sup>6</sup> A Statement by H.E. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi before the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly

Egypt remains both a transit and a destination country for refugees and asylum-seekers. Those registered with UNHCR stand at 281,102 individuals as of the end of March 2022 with 140,789 Syrians (50%) and 140,313 from other 65 nationalities (23%).<sup>7</sup>

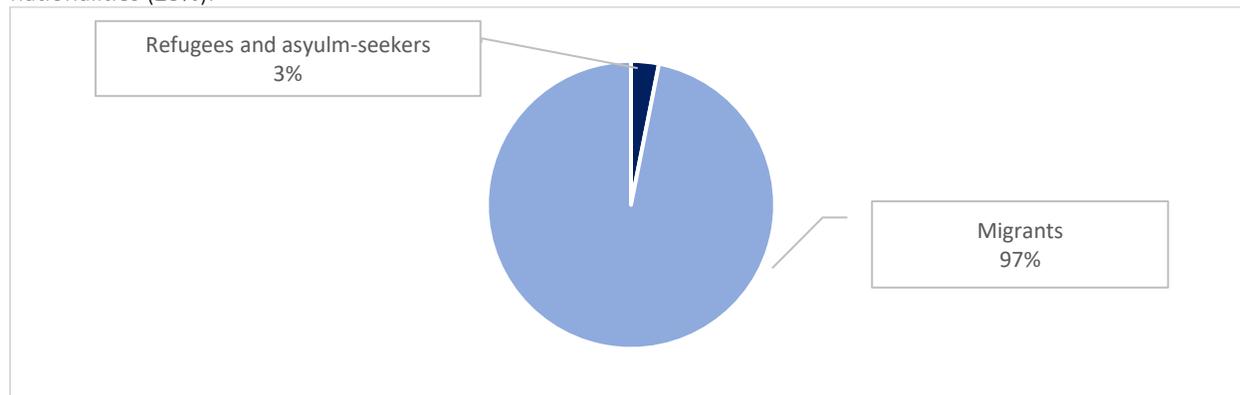


Chart 2: Percentage of registered refugees and asylum seekers among migrants' population

Whilst including 65 nationalities, the population of concern to UNHCR in Egypt comprises two main groups: Syrian refugees, who arrived as the result of the conflict in Syria; and asylum-seekers and refugees from other countries, mainly Sudan and sub-Saharan African, as well as other Middle Eastern countries such as Yemen and Iraq.

### Who is in need?

#### Migrants' vulnerabilities

IOM is using several approaches to assess vulnerabilities of the migrants and persons of concern. The vulnerability assessment and associated eligibility relies on a complex set of different socio-economic criteria (see in Annex 2 for the full sets of criteria used for the vulnerability assessment).<sup>8</sup>

According to IOM Egypt data, 13% of migrants reaching out to IOM for assistance often met one or several of the three above criteria, and by adding other existing criteria, the percentage can reach 15%. By applying these percentages to the overall migrants' population estimated to live in Egypt, it leads to 1,100,000 to 1,300,000 individuals who can be described as "vulnerable" or "people of concern", who might need a direct assistance.

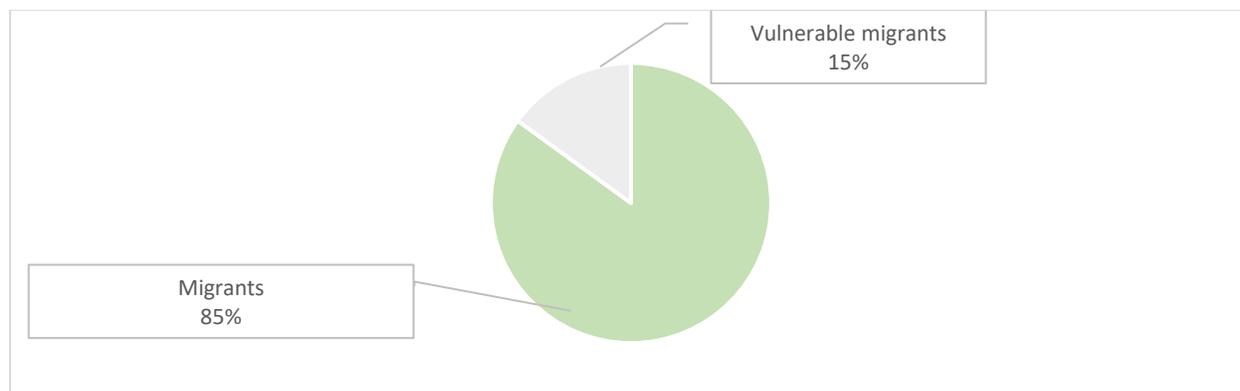


Chart 3: Percentage of vulnerable migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers among migrants' population

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR Egypt Monthly Statistical Report. (2022). Retrieved 11 May 2022, from <https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2022/04/Monthly-statistical-Report-March-2022.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> IOM Egypt, Vulnerable migrants' population in Egypt – Methodology of assessment and estimation, March 2021.

### Location

With respect to the region of residence, it has been noticed that 37.9% of migrants reside in urban governorates, while 28% reside in lower Egypt governorates. Migrants who live in upper Egypt governorates compromise 32% of the total population with only 1.4% living in the frontiers.

The analysis showed that more than 56% of migrants reside in five governorates which are Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Damietta and Dakhaleya (mainly Yemeni). This aligns with the desk review stating that migrants and refugees mostly reside in some of the poorest areas of Greater Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta.<sup>9</sup>

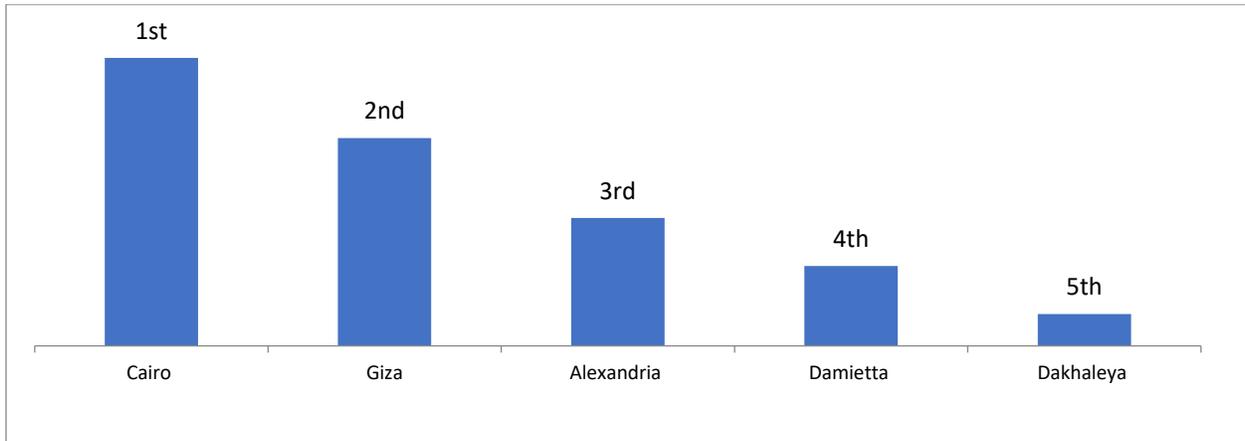


Figure 1: Top five governorates hosting migrant communities.

The rest of the migrant communities are divided over governorates including Qaliuyiba Ismailia, Port Said, Suez, Sharqyia, Gharbiya, Menoufiya, Matruh, Minya Qena, Sohag, Assiut, Red Sea Governorate (Hurghada, Sharm Al-Sheikh with small numbers in Sinai Peninsula specifically Dahab city), Luxor and Aswan.

### Age & Gender

With respect to the age composition of migrants, it may be concluded that on average, migrants are young with an age average of 35.2 years, which constitutes the majority of migrant population, with 2.4% only who are 60 years old or above.<sup>10</sup> Data received from the embassies showed a balanced percentage of male to female migrants, with 49.6% females to 50.4% males.

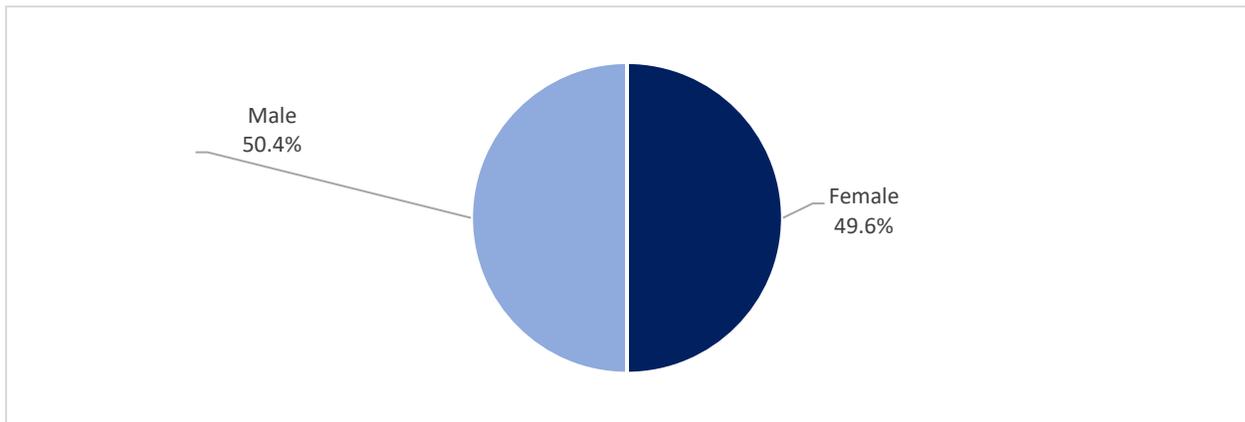


Chart 4: Gender disaggregation of migrant stocks in Egypt

<sup>9</sup> Common Situational Analysis: Education and Health Services for Migrants and Refugees in Egypt, Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees, March 2022.

<sup>10</sup> The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research (Baseera), "COVID-19 and Mobility: Reflections on resources", May 2022.

Despite the lack of sex-disaggregated data on migrants, the analysis aligns with the registered population with UNHCR which is almost equally distributed between gender with 49% women and 51% men, while 40% of the total registered population in Egypt are children.<sup>11</sup>

### Working Status

The analysis shows an increase of the unemployment rates among Syrians, other nationalities, and hence among the overall population before and after COVID-19. It estimates the percentage of migrants who are out of the labor force (those who are not working and not looking for work) to be 45.7%.

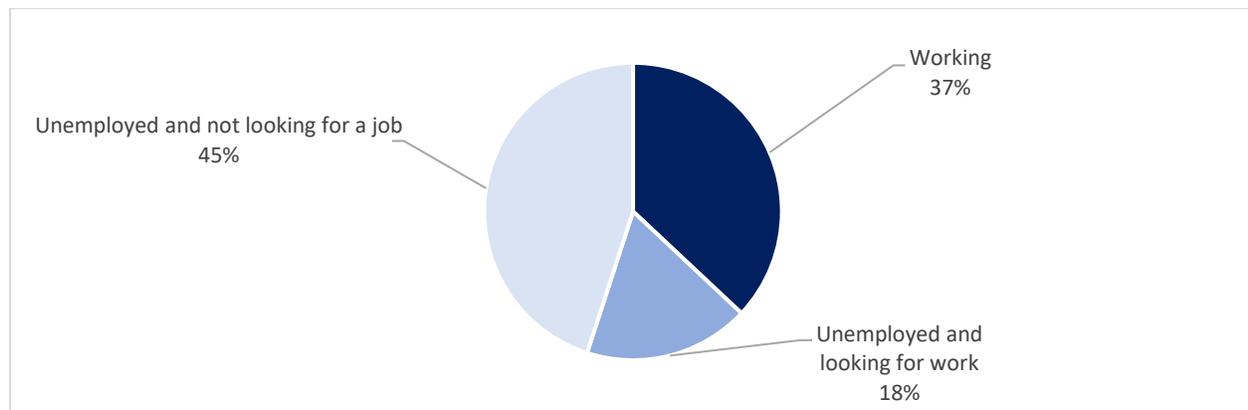


Chart 5: Work Status of migrants in Egypt

A recent study for IOM Egypt done by the Egyptian Center for Public opinion research showed that the majority of migrant workers hired without work contracts and primarily work at the private/informal sector.<sup>12</sup>

Official data and statements indicated that the levels of influx of foreign workers slightly increased during 2019, as the total number of registered foreign workers during 2019 reached about 14,950 workers, including 12,236 males and 2,714 females, compared to about 14,777 foreigners during 2018, an increase of About 1.2%.<sup>13</sup>

According to CAPMAS, foreigners coming from “non-Arab” Asian countries constitute the largest number of foreigners working in the private and investment sector for 2019, and their number reached about 6,423 foreigners, or 43%, and most of them are from Bangladesh (1,924 constitutes 30%), followed by expatriate workers from China, (1,197 constitutes 18.6%), and European countries (3655 constitutes 24.4%), and from the United Kingdom (1,110 for 30.4%).<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, Syrians -who constitutes 17% of international migrants’ stocks in Egypt- are one of the top nationalities contributing positively to the labour market and the Egyptian economy. Syrian migrants work mainly in food industries, traditional crafts as well as textile industries and real estate.<sup>15</sup> In 2022, the amount of funds invested by around 30,000 registered Syrian investors in Egypt is estimated to a total of approximately 1 billion dollars. This reflects how migrants in Egypt specially the larger communities are positively integrated economically and socially in the Egyptian society.

### Duration and Purpose of stay

As for the duration of stay of migrants in Egypt, data indicate that the average duration of stay is 11.2 years, with more than 94% having duration less than 15 years. Only 5.7 % of the population are in Egypt for 15 years or more.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR Egypt Monthly Statistical Report. (2022). Retrieved 11 May 2022, from [https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2022/04/Monthly-statistical-Report\\_March\\_2022.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2022/04/Monthly-statistical-Report_March_2022.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research (Baseera), “COVID-19 and Mobility: Reflections on resources”, May 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Foreign nationalities enter the Egyptian labor market. (2020). Retrieved 30 May 2022, [Accessible here](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ten foreign nationalities dominate the Egyptian labor market. (2021). Retrieved 3 June 2022, [Accessible here](#)

<sup>15</sup> BBC News Arabic, (2019), Argument in Egypt on Syrians investments, Retrieved 17 July 2022, from [Accessible here](#)

The analysis showed that the main purposes of staying in Egypt are work, high education, applying for refugee status or asylum-seeking, medication, and marriage.

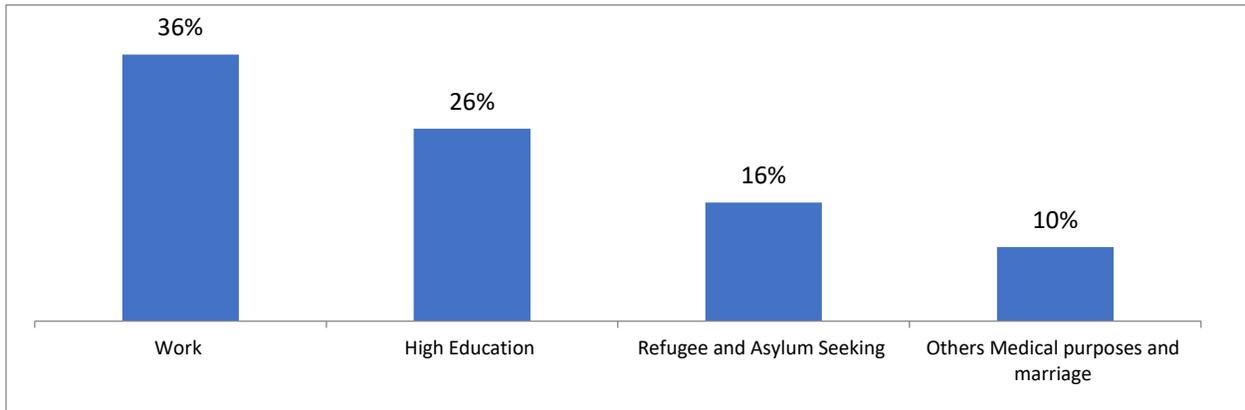


Figure 2: Main reasons of stay in Egypt for migrants

The main reported purposes of stay/choosing Egypt as a destination country are:

- Employment opportunities:** Data from embassies showed that work is one of the top reasons of stay in Egypt, with domestic work being the main job for a large number of migrants from Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, and Sri Lanka. The analysis showed that 97% of migrants' population registered with the Government work in the private sector and only 3% work in the public sector.

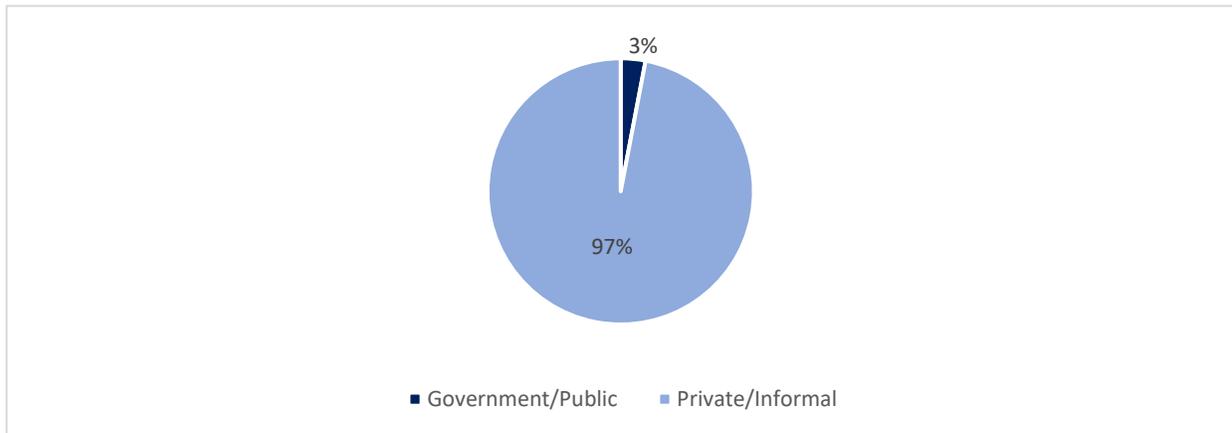


Chart 6: Working sector for migrants

- Education:** Consultations with Embassies showed enrollment at Egyptian universities as one of the main purposes of stay of their compatriots in Egypt. Desk review showed that the number of migrant and refugee students enrolled in Egyptian universities for the 2020/2021 school year was 102,000 students, mainly from Arab nationalities including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Jordan, Iraq, and Qatar, with 70% males and 30% females. Kuwaiti students constitute the largest number of this group (estimate of 20,000 students).<sup>16</sup>

Studying at Al-Azhar University is one of the reasons of the stay of many Asian migrants in Egypt. According to the foreign students' department at Al-Azhar, the number of registered foreign students for 2020/2021 is

<sup>16</sup> Head of Foreign students Department at the Ministry of Higher Education: "The state's plan is to enroll 200,000 foreign students by 2025", Number 1 News Website, January 2021, [مدير إدارة الوافدين بالتعليم العالي : خطة الدولة أن يصل عدد الطلاب الوافدين في عام 2025 إلى 200 ألف طالب - نمبر 1 نيوز](#), Number1News

38,000 from 120 countries, with 11,000 from 36 African Countries<sup>17</sup>, among them, 97 received a full scholarship.<sup>18</sup> The top nationalities among these populations are Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Cambodia, Malisa, Nigeria, and India.

According to General Borhan, the current Chairman of the Sovereignty Council in Sudan, in his official meeting with Al-Sisi in March 2022, the majority of Sudanese live in Egypt have been here for generations, and many others migrate to Egypt for the purposes of education and receiving medical services.<sup>19</sup>

- **Refugee and asylum seeking:** As a transit country, it is considered a preferred route by many North Africans going via the Mediterranean to Europe<sup>20</sup>, Thus, it is a key player in humanitarian crises within the MENA region. The analysis showed that applying for refugee status and seeking asylum through UNHCR offices in Egypt is one of the main reasons of residing in Egypt for migrants mainly from Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, and Eretria.
- **Retirement:** the exercise shows that some nationalities (i.e 600,000 Saudis) chose to move to Egypt after retirement, among them groups travel to spend a specific season, especially summer in Egypt.
- **Hospitability, similar culture/language, absence of visa requirement, geographical proximity and peace security with good economic conditions** are among the other reasons mentioned.

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<sup>17</sup> Al-Azhar in the eyes of Foreign Students, 36 African countries send their students to Al-Azhar. (2021). Retrieved 7 May 2022, from <https://www.elbalad.news/4725729>

<sup>18</sup> Al-Azhar Foreign Students. (2022). Retrieved 7 April 2022, from <http://www.azhar.edu.eg/International-Students>

<sup>19</sup> Al-borhan: "Egypt hosts 4 million Sudanese". (2022). Retrieved 26 May 2022, from <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2562533>

<sup>20</sup> Vatican City, M. (2022). Retrieved 7 May 2022, from <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-CP-Egypt.pdf>

## Annex 1: Main nationalities

### Sudanese

The movement of Sudanese migrants to Egypt can be dated to the nineteenth century when Sudan was part of Egypt and was under British colonial rule. Up until the late 1980s, most of the early Sudanese who moved to Egypt were northerners and were able to take advantage of bilateral treaties between the two countries, which gave Sudanese many of the same rights as Egyptian nationals (e.g., right of employment, residence, free access to health and education, and the right to own property), stopped after 1995.

Until 1995, Sudanese nationals enjoyed visa-free entry into Egypt<sup>21</sup> and unrestricted access to social provisions, including employment, education, health coverage, and property ownership. These rights were secured by the 1976 Wadi El Nil bilateral agreement, which aimed to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Yet, the situation started to change since 1995 assassination attempt on Mubarak—allegedly by Sudanese Islamists—led to the agreement’s repeal.<sup>22</sup>

The Four Freedoms Agreement (2004) once again gave privileged status to the Sudanese. However, implementation has fallen short of its promise, and it remains virtually impossible for a new generation of Sudanese to formalize their status.<sup>23</sup> Currently, number of Sudanese migrants in Egypt is estimated to be 4 million with refugees and asylum-seekers constitute 1.3% (55,349)<sup>24</sup>.

### Syrians

After ten years of conflict, Syria remains the largest refugee crisis in the world. There are more than 5.6 million Syrian refugees hosted across the region, and over 6.2 million more are displaced inside Syria. Egypt remains a destination country for Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers, with estimated population of 1,500,000 among them 140,789 are registered with UNHCR.

### Yemeni

Since 2015, the conflict in Yemen has created a debilitating economic and humanitarian crisis and displaced millions of Yemenis. While the vast majority of displaced Yemenis remain within Yemen — around 3.65 million — Yemenis who do seek safety abroad most often flee to countries across the Arab world, including Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti and Jordan, as well as to Malaysia.

According to the Yemeni embassy in Cairo, between 911,000 and 1,000,000 Yemenis live in Egypt, a significant increase from before the war, when approximately 70,000 resided in the country.

Egypt has historically played an important political role in Yemeni affairs and there has been a sizable Yemeni community in Cairo since the Yemeni revolution of 1962. Despite this shared history, many Yemeni migrants and refugees in Egypt struggle to make ends meet in their new home. They often face economic difficulties as work opportunities are limited, and struggle to pay for medical care and their children’s education due to shortage of income.

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<sup>21</sup> One of the top reasons why Sudanese prefer to migrate to Egypt as showed by IOM’s analysis.

<sup>22</sup> Tsourapas, G. (2018). Egypt: Migration and Diaspora Politics in an Emerging Transit Country. Retrieved 7 May 2022, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/egypt-migration-and-diaspora-politics-emerging-transit-country>

<sup>23</sup> Karasapan, O. (2016). Who are the 5 million refugees and immigrants in Egypt?. Retrieved 7 May 2022, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2016/10/04/who-are-the-5-million-refugees-and-immigrants-in-egypt/>

## Libyans

Since the start of the Libyan revolution in 2011, large number of Libyans fled the country and Egypt was one of the main destinations because of the close location and similarity in language and culture.

The estimated number of Libyans currently reside in Egypt is around 1,000,000 in which small numbers among them are in vulnerable conditions.

## Somalis

The history of the movement of Somalis to Egypt can be traced to the late 1960s and 1970s, when limited numbers of Somali students started coming to Egypt to pursue their education at Egyptian universities, as part of bilateral educational agreements. In the 1980s, when many Somali labor sought employment opportunities in Gulf countries, Cairo became a popular place with Somali families who wanted to provide better educational opportunities for their children than were available in Somalia.<sup>25</sup>

With the downfall of the Somali government and the escalation of the civil war in 1991, Egypt saw a large influx of Somali refugees. While the majority of those early refugees came directly from Somalia, some others moved back from Gulf countries to join family members who either arrived from Somalia or were already in Cairo.

Before coming to Egypt, most did manual labour, construction work, auto-repair work or driving, and were involved in petty sales or (for women in the Gulf) in domestic work (Al-Sharmani 2005). Most Somali migrants and refugees live in overcrowded apartments which they share with other Somalis and are mainly concentrated in the neighborhoods of Ard il Liwa and Nasr City.

## Palestinians

It is repeatedly mentioned in different studies that the number of Palestinians residing in Egypt between 50,000 and 70,000<sup>26</sup>, however, the most recent number according to the World Bank data is 135,932.<sup>27</sup> Palestinians reside in the capital and the northern part of the country, specifically in Ismailia, Al-Sharqiya, Al-Arish, Port Said, and Rafah<sup>28</sup>.

Although the history of movements of Palestinian refugees to Egypt can be traced back to 1929, large-scale immigration of Palestinians took place during the 1948 and 1967 wars.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Opcit, Al-Sharmani, Pa. 57

<sup>26</sup> Opcit, Al-Sharmani, Pa. 55

<sup>27</sup> CIA – World Factbook. 2022. Egypt. Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/egypt/>. Accessed: January, 2022

<sup>28</sup> Palestinian Refugees in Egypt. (2014). Retrieved 7 May 2022, from <https://www.al-monitor.com/ar/contents/articles/originals/2013/04/palestinian-refugees-egypt-challenges.html>

<sup>29</sup> Opcit, Al-Sharmani, Pa. 59

Annex 2: Sets of criteria used for IOM vulnerability assessment

<p><b>High level of vulnerability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim of Trafficking</li> <li>• Victim of Sexual and Gender Based Violence</li> <li>• Single Parent (children not attending school)</li> <li>• Family with 4 or more dependents (unemployed)</li> <li>• High risk medical or mental health condition</li> <li>• Woman at risk</li> <li>• Homeless</li> <li>• Elderly (65+) with serious health issues (without caregiver)</li> <li>• Single person with disabilities or has children with a disability that seriously limits their ability to work</li> <li>• Disabled dependent (unable to work)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Medium level of vulnerability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couple with less than 3 dependents</li> <li>• Medium risk medical condition</li> <li>• Elderly without health issues</li> <li>• Disabled dependent (with at least one household member still able to work)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Low level of vulnerability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single (no additional vulnerabilities)</li> <li>• Couple with no dependents nor medical issues</li> <li>• Employed</li> <li>• Low risk medical condition</li> <li>• Part-time job (insufficient income)</li> </ul>