Migrants or Refugees?

The internal and external drivers of migration from Eritrea

By Andreas Holm Røsberg and Kjetil Tronvoll

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1 Executive summary

Eritrea has in the last couple of decades become among the largest producers of refugees and asylum seekers in the world compared to its population size. The dominating narrative that seeks to explain this trend refers to a combination of a universal and mandatory never-ending and abusive national service program, and gross, widespread, and systematic human rights violations. This narrative has in recent years been increasingly challenged by those who argue that Eritrean migration is driven by economic aspirations – people are fleeing a stalled economy which deprives the citizens of any viable future. This study seeks to contribute to and nuance this **dichotomy of narratives**, something which is also reflected in the report title: *Migrants or refugees? The internal and external drivers of migration from Eritrea*. It fell beyond the mandate of the study to assess whether Eritrean migrants have a rightful legal claim to refugee status, or if they rightfully may claim asylum in third countries. The objective was rather to broaden the understanding of the various internal and external drivers of Eritrean migration and the interaction of these.

The report presents some of the main **methodological hurdles** to overcome and the approaches that may contribute to this task. Particularly important is the section on the trustworthiness of interview responses from Eritreans outside Eritrea; a group which in many cases are the primary source of new information. The report also presents a critical review of a selection of reports and scholarly articles on Eritrea, as they are used as "evidence" pro et contra the above-mentioned narratives. Many of these studies have a flawed or inadequate methodology to present empirical based conclusions on the drivers of flight from Eritrea. We argue that the long-duration (ethnographic) fieldwork inside Eritrea remains the most suited research design for collecting highly internally valid data given the current constrained situation in the country. The inherent weakness of this approach are limitations in the ability to generalize beyond the sample studied and the replicability of such studies. The qualitative multi-source research design is, if carefully implemented, able to provide convincing accounts of the Eritrean context, although its ability to do so largely depends on the number of independent sources and the triangulation of these.

The main part of the report seeks to formulate **typologies of flight from Eritrea** based on a combination of a comprehensive literature review of recent publications and collection of primary data from Eritrean migrants in refugee camps in northern Ethiopia. We find what we deem to be clear and convincing evidence that the primary internal drivers of migration for our sample are the combined effects of the national service, the human rights situation in Eritrea, and social/family and individual expectations. These three primary drivers of migration contribute to a situation characterized by a feeling of lost opportunities and a lack of any realistic hope for the future that drove a large share of our sample to illegally cross the border with Ethiopia. This tendency is further strengthened by external factors as the perception of economic opportunities, 'modernity', and a new type or form of Eritrean citizenship abroad.

While a number of contributions have dealt with general migration from Eritrea, the specific drivers of **migration of women and minors** remains to a large extent understudied. Through our assessment of existing literature and collection of primary our own data we found substantial evidence indicating that women are not migrating in order to avoid the national service to nearly the same extent as men. This may be because women seem to have greater opportunities for obtaining exemptions from the national service than men. The gender effect in our sample is much smaller when it comes to human rights issues and family/societal and individual expectations. We also found that minors in our sample are also less prone than adult men to migrate in order to avoid the national service. Minors appear instead to be motivated by improving the standard of living of themselves and/or their family. Minors in our sample also appear to be more driven to migration than adults by non-structural drivers of migration (drivers not necessarily directly connected with the Eritrean state structure and its governance). These non-structural drivers include the desire to reunite with family members or conflicts within the family.

2 Introduction

Eritrea has since the turn of the millennium become the largest producer of refugees in the world compared to its population's size.[1] The considerable outflow of refugees from Eritrea, by many referred to as an exodus, is puzzling given the absence of armed conflict in the country. This places Eritrea in stark contrast to other major refugee producing countries such as Syria and Afghanistan, which are ridden by civil war. Eritreans have over the recent years constituted the largest group of asylum seekers to Norway. The clear majority of these have had their request for asylum granted (93% in 2013, 95% in 2014, and close to 100% in 2015).[2]

This tendency of high approval rate for Eritrean asylum applications is justified in the dominating narrative of motivation for Eritrean flight. In this narrative Eritreans are fleeing their country in hundreds of thousands due to the combination of two key issues: a never-ending and abusive national service program, where Eritreans are forced to serve in whatever position (military or civilian) the state demands, in addition to and combination with gross, widespread, and systematic human rights violations. This dominating narrative further states that Eritrean asylum seekers cannot be returned to Eritrea as they have left the country illegally, and many have done so while conscripted in the National Service, making them susceptible for arrest and detention upon return, and ensuing fear of torture and mistreatment.

This dominating narrative, subscribed to by human rights organisations and most scholars researching Eritrea, has recently been challenged by a new set of reports issued by some national or trans-national immigration authorities that have reached the conclusion that most Eritreans flee their home country for economic reasons, and that Eritrean asylum seekers who have got their applications rejected may be returned without fearing persecution. This interpretation is also advanced by Eritrean government representatives, who have repeatedly stated that Eritreans fleeing the country should be considered economic migrants in search of a "better materialistic life," rather than as refugees or individuals justifiably seeking asylum. This is backed by observing some, although subtle, changes within the country. More recent information points to an alleged "reduction" of suppression and travel restrictions inside Eritrea. Concomitantly, Eritrean Government representatives have expressed to international diplomats and envoys that they are planning to restrict the National Service obligation to an effective 18 months' service, as prescribed by the law, hence removing the "never-ending" National Service as a motivation to flee. However, this promise, which was uttered in 2014, seems already to have been proven wrong, as the National Service has not yet been shortened, and new and contradictory statements from government officials has undermined the validity of this point.[3]

[1] Since independence there has been great confusion concerning Eritrea's population, as the demographics have been manipulated for political ends. The National Statistics Office of Eritrea estimated that the population in 2010 was 3,2 million people (NSO 2013). Considering the flight of youth over the last 6 years, and the relative low fertility rate in the country, the current population is estimated to be between 2,3-2,5 million people.

[2] UDI (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) reports that many Eritreans are granted asylum due to the high risk of detention
without a trial and/or forced conscription for individuals who have deserted from the army or avoided military service, who have left Eritrea without permission from authorities, who are critical of the government or perceived by the government to be critical, who belong to religious minorities not recognized by the government, who are related to persons who have deserted/avoided military service or otherwise broken the law and therefore are threatened by prosecution. In addition, some Eritrean citizens are granted asylum due to the threat of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) or other gender related persecution should they remain in or return to Eritrea. UDI Informasjonsnotat (2014). Available from: http://www.noas.no/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/UDI-halvårsrapport-no1-2014.pdf

[3] UK Home Office (2016c) "Country Information and Guidance – Eritrea: National (incl. Military Service)", version 3.0 (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/561f4e9f4.html) ; Blair, E. (2016) "Eritrea won't shorten national service despite migration fears", Reuters – Politics Special Reports (Available from: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eritrea-politics-insight-idUSKCN0VY0M5),

These two dichotomizing interpretations of the situation motivating flight from Eritrea lead to different explanations for the observable mass migration that has occurred over the last decade. The dominant view of the Eritrean situation points to a series of push-factors, particularly the national service program and the human rights situation in the country. The opposing view explains the level of migration from Eritrea as a series of pull-factors in the form of economic motivations and 'affluence living conditions' in the West.

This study undertakes a closer examination of the available literature and reporting underpinning the two competing narratives of the situation in Eritrea, complemented with primary data gathered from Eritrean refugees in the refugee camps of northern Ethiopia, in order to reach a deeper understanding of the classification of Eritreans as migrants or refugees. As this is a broad and complex topic this study limits its focus to the following:

1. A thorough and critical assessment of the data and methodology used to reach conclusions on the motivations for flight from Eritrea (migrant or refugee) within three bodies of work in order to reach an overall assessment on the validity and reliability of their conclusions. These bodies of work include:
    a. Immigration authorities Country of Origin (COI) reports and similar documents
    b. International human rights reporting on Eritrea
    c. Scholarly published literature on Eritrea
2. A comprehensive literature review on the drivers of migration from Eritrea, with attention to the motivations of women, women with children, and unaccompanied minors for migration, supplemented with survey based data from interviews conducted during the fall of 2016 with men, women, and unaccompanied minors in refugee camps in Ethiopia.
3. Use of quantitative data and statistics from immigration authorities (in Norway and Europe) on the composition of Eritrean refugees in Europe (ethnicity, religion, other particularistic features), in order to develop hypotheses on representativeness and reasons for flight from Eritrea.

Based on information and insight gained from the above three approaches the report suggests a series of typologies of motivation for fleeing Eritrea and the weight given the various typologies of motivation.

The structure of the reports is as follows. Section 1 presents the report's executive summary and section 2 contains the introduction. Section 3 presents an overview of some of the most prominent methodological approaches and challenges in research on Eritrea. Section 4 presents a critical review of a selection of recently published reports and scholarly publications on Eritrea. A complete overview of this assessment is in Appendix 1 (Section 9). In Section 5 we present our general findings on the drivers of migration from Eritrea based on a comprehensive literature study and data collected by ILPI in refugee camps in Ethiopia. Women and (unaccompanied) minors are underrepresented in much of the literature and scholarly work on Eritrea. Section 6 and 7 therefore present our findings on female and minor migration respectively, while section 8 presents finding on perceptions of possible non-voluntary return to Eritrea. The final section 9 presents a summary of findings in the report. We have also included 3 annexes to the report: section 10 presents a comprehensive overview of the methodological challenges doing research on such a restrictive country as Eritrea; section 11 presents an assessment of all publications reviewed for this report; and finally section 12 presents the data collection process and methodology (incl. descriptive statistics) used to compile this report.

3 Methodological challenges in research on Eritrea

Eritrea represents a highly challenging research environment. It is for all intents and purposes, with a few notable exceptions, nearly impossible to obtain permission to undertake critical and independent research within the country.[4] Independent and critical research and reporting on sensitive topics as human rights and migration is therefore largely relying on interviews with Eritreans who have already left0 Eritrea and/or reviews of existing secondary sources / literature. Moreover, the Eritrean government is widely known for its secrecy and non-disclosure of a number of important statistical data. Combined with the lack of a free press and independent civil society organizations, the implication is that there is a fundamental lack of updated, valid and reliable data gathered more or less all sectors of society in Eritrea; a lacuna that is even more pronounced when it comes to issues considered sensitive by the Eritrean government.[5]

This chapter of the report will present a brief overview of the data collection procedures used in our assessment of selected articles and reports on Eritrea and in the collection of interview data in refugee camps in Ethiopia. It will furthermore present a brief overview the two related considerations of the trustworthiness of respondents and the standard of proof. For a more comprehensive overview of methodological challenges in research on Eritrea please see Appendix 1.

3.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are core concepts in scientific research and the degree to which these requirements are fulfilled are key in an assessment of the credibility of research.[6] The concept of **reliability** refers to the exactness of data measurement in a given research project. A high degree of reliability means that a research procedure will lead to the same result if the process is repeated.[7] The concept of **validity** is used and defined in different ways by various researchers resulting in some confusion. This study will refer to two primary variations of validity:

i) Internal validity (also known as credibility) – the degree to which a research project, an interview question, or measurement instrument actually measures or tests what it intends

[4] Research and data gathering in Eritrea with an official recognized research permit can generally be obtained through two means: 1) institutional collaboration with Eritrea' public institutions (as various colleges or other agencies as for instance National Statistics office), were the research are conducted under close supervision by the Eritrean agency and the outputs are the property of the Eritrean agency; or 2) international students without any prior record of critical publications on Eritrea may be allowed to do fieldwork in the country, being an affiliate with an Eritrean public institution.

[5] Tecle, S., & Goldring, L. (2013). From 'remittance' to 'tax': the shifting meanings and strategies of capture of the Eritrean transnational party-state. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 189-207; Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); and EASO (2015). "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland

[6] We argue that this is the case although this has been subject to considerable debate. See for instance Hannes, K. (2011). Chapter 4: Critical appraisal of qualitative research. In: Noyes J, Booth A, Hannes K, Harden A, Harris J, Lewin S, Lockwood C (editors), *Supplementary Guidance for Inclusion of Qualitative Research in Cochrane Systematic Reviews of Interventions*. Version 1 (updated August 2011). Cochrane Collaboration Qualitative Methods Group, 2011. Available from URL http://cqrmg.cochrane.org/supplemental-handbook-guidance and Popay, R and Williams G. (1998): Rationale and Standards for the Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature in Health Care, Qualitative Health Research, vol. 8, pp. 341-351.

[7] King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press and Lund, Thorleif (ed.) (2002). *Innføring i forskningsmetodologi*. Oslo: Unipub

to measure or test (the degree to which the findings represent the reality it seeks to scrutinize).[8]

ii) External validity (also known as transferability) – the degree to which (internally valid) findings of a study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings.

3.2 Literature review

The literature review is among the most commonly used methodological approaches in social sciences as they are readily available and require less resources than many other alternative data collection strategies. Exclusively relying on pre-existing literature may be considered problematic as data collection on the ground ensures both that the data is updated and project-specific. With careful use, however, the literature review is generally considered as a process of obtaining valid and reliable data – particularly when combined with other sources of data.

The following approaches where used and issues considered in the collection and assessment of written sources for this report:

Critically assessing the validity and reliability of a source – Published material, both academic and others, do not necessarily contain valid and reliable information.[9] The reader must continually check or keep in mind:

i) Authority (who conducted the research and are they an authority on the issue)
ii) Where is the research from (educational institution, peer reviewed article, …)?
iii) The methodology of the research and its own source criticism.
iv) Is the source referenced to in other sources and is it consistent with the findings of other sources?
v) What is the publication date of the source and is it likely that more updated research is available?

Number and range of sources - The adequate sample size of written sources is generally deemed obtained when one reaches a saturation – whereby no new perspectives or information is obtained through the inclusion of additional sources. The size deemed sufficient will also depend on the allotted time, available resources, and the objective of the research.[10] However, all else equal a larger number of independent sources will lead to increased precision.

Intention of the authors – The context and intended meaning of a given written source can in some cases be overlooked. The meaning of a written contribution a reader is left with may not necessarily be the same as that of another reader, or that which the writer of the contribution intended to convey.[11] This is particularly important in politically contested terrain as Eritrea.[12] Research on Eritrea is known to be very much politicised, where scholars rallied behind the liberation front on the one hand, or defended Ethiopia's hegemony on the other. Patrick Gilkes, a long-term observer of the region, wrote in 1991:

[8] This is in some methodological literature also referred to as Concept Validity. Furthermore, Internal Validity as used in this paper should not be confused with the question of causality.
[9] Krippendorff, Klaus (1980). *Content Analysis. An Introduction to its Methodology*, Sage Publications.
[10] Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, SAGE Publications, Inc.
[11] Ryghaug, Marianne (2002). "Å bringe tekster i tale – mulige metodiske innfallsvinkler til tekstanalyse i statsvitenskap", Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift no.18: 303-327.
[12] Boswell, C. (2009) The Political Use of Expert Knowledge – Immigration Policy and Social Research, Cambridge University Press, New York.

> "Much, indeed, of the writing on Eritrea has been at the level of the polemic or a product of the 'guerrilla groupie.' A surprising number of eminent scholars and journalists have taken the leading Eritrean movement, the EPLF, at its own evaluation, and its historical claims as a fact. The results have impoverished the literature on Eritrea, and have created a distorted national mythology."[13]

Due to the continuation of conflict and wars in Eritrea after independence, the politically biased research has continued to be produced until this day. For instance, the recent debate over a controversial opinion pieces and reports written by the US think tank and lobby organisation the Atlantic Council is a case in point, where they inter alia debunk the UN Commission of Inquiry Report on Eritrea and claim it is a misrepresentation of the actual human rights conditions in the country.[14] Their views and interpretation of data was quickly rejected by other positioned observers, as it was discovered that the Atlantic Council received considerable financial support from the Canadian mining company Nevsun, which operates Eritrea's most profitable gold mine operation. Nevsun has been accused of using forced labour in its operations in Eritrea, and is currently facing charges raised by individuals who claim to have been used as forced labourer in their mine in Eritrea in Canadian court.[15] It is thus opportune for Nevsun to portray the human rights situation in Eritrea in the best possible manner, in order to undermine the charges raised against them in Candadian court.

Hence, the use of written material as sources therefore warrants an understanding and knowledge about the author's personal background as well as a careful reading of the contribution as a whole, avoiding mining for citations or quotes without presenting the context in which they were found.

Publication biases - Publication bias occurs when the findings or results of published studies systematically differ from those of unpublished research. At the core of this problem is the tendency of researchers to publish studies with "positive" results (results showing a significant or interesting finding) than studies with "negative" or unsupportive results.[16] In research on Eritrea, for instance, it could be the case that the research with clear findings systematically are more commonly and widely published. There are hardly any "negative" studies in our selection of contributions. This may, in large part, be a result of the qualitative and exploratory nature of much of the literature, where factors such as hypothesis testing is less of an issue. Landinfo (2016a) and Landinfo (2016b), however, admit that they have struggled to reach any conclusion and make very cautious claims.[17] None of the contributions present any discussion of the potential impact of publication biases in the form of a lack of reporting on "negative" findings.

[13] Gilkes, P. (1991), "Eritrea: Historiography and Mythology", in *African Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 362, p. 626.
[14] Bronwyn Bruton, "It's Bad in Eritrea, but Not That Bad", in The New York Times, 23. June 2016 (https://nyti.ms/28ZwXrR); Ashish Kumar Sen, "What the UN Gets Wrong About Rights in Eritrea", The Atlantic Council, 7 June 2016: http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-the-un-gets-wrong-about-rights-in-eritrea.
[15] See for instance Francois Christophe, "Forget Objectivity: For the Atlantic Council, Eritrea's Prison State Isn't That Bad", December 2016: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5vmnkIeHwDJUkVSaGh0eVB6X1U/view; and Dilwenberu Nega, "Atlantic Council shifts blame to rescue Eritrea from the wrath of USA", *Aiga Forum*, 17 September 2016: http://aigaforum.com/article2016/us-congress-hearing-on-eritrea-commentary.htm
[16] Associated biases include time lag bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published quickly), multiple publication bias (a set of positive or supportive results are more likely to result in multiple publications), location bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published in high-profile journals with a wide circulation), citation bias (positive findings are more likely to be cited), and language bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published in English) (Song, F., Hooper, L., & Loke, Y. (2013) Publication bias: what is it? How do we measure it? How do we avoid it?, Open Access Journal of Clinical Trials, Dove Press Journal).
[17] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf) and Landinfo (2016b) "Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetillatelse og ulovlig utreise" (Available from: http://landinfo.no/asset/3423/1/3423_1.pdf)

3.3 Interviews

Interviews with variously positioned individuals are commonly used to gain information that is difficult to otherwise obtain, such as an individual's experiences or perceptions of a given issue. They are also commonly used in situations where data collection through other means (e.g. randomized surveys) is difficult due to political or logistical restrictions.[18]

The following section presents a selection of approaches that where used and issues considered in the collection of our own interview data and in the assessment of the interview data used in other sources:

Number of respondents - Arriving at the required number of respondents, or the sample size of the project, deemed satisfactory for a given research project is not entirely straightforward. In qualitative research this is by many considered to be achieved when the inclusion of additional respondents does not result in additional perspectives or information – a situation referred to by the concept of saturation. Others have attempted to make approximate suggestions of number of respondents varying from 6-50 respondents.[19] Even if the requirements of sample size in qualitative research is less rigorous than in quantitative research it remains the case, all else being equal, that a larger sample leads to increased precision.

The range of respondents - The range of respondents is, just as their number, highly important in qualitative research. Different groups of respondents may have different but equally true accounts of a situation and their inclusion ensures that these perspectives are included in the study. A broader range of respondents is, all else equal, more internally valid than a narrower range of respondents. The considerable reliance on respondents outside Eritrea has an impact on the representativeness of the reporting and research on Eritrea. Many of those who illegally migrate, a group often used as respondents, are in many instances young draft evaders or deserters from the national service. The Eritrean national service is, particularly since the introduction of conscription through the completion of year 12 of school at Sawa military training camp in 2003, characterized by an overrepresentation of Orthodox Tigrinya speakers.[20]

Timing of the interview - The timing of the interview may have an impact on its outcome. In relation to interviews of refugees or asylum seekers it is often argued that the most valid data are collected as close to their migration date as possible. At this point their experiences will be fresh in their mind and their narrative "untainted" by experiences in exile. At the same time, however, the tremendous uncertainty and anxiety experienced by the respondents at this stage of their refugee, and the lack of trust in general to all authority representatives (as a researcher will most commonly be identified as), which in many instances characterizes the entire asylum seeking process, may make these individuals reluctant to answer as such, or may provide answers they believe may help and forward their own process of refuge.

Do-no-harm - The principle of "do-no-harm" has for decades been a vital baseline for research, particularly in fragile, authoritarian or conflict affected states or other locations characterized by a low

[18] Andersen, Svein S. (2006). "Aktiv informantintervjuing", *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* 22: 278-298 og Aberbach, J. and Rockman, B. (2002). "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews", *PS: Political Science and Politics,* vol.35, no. 4:673-676.

[19] Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications and Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In Denizin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S., Handbook of qualitative research (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[20] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf);

degree of security. The population in these situations are often vulnerable and in many cases also subject to marginalization and suppression. They are also at risk of exploitative and harmful research practices, however unintended this may be.[21]

3.4 The trustworthiness of respondents

The whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Witnesses in courts are in many countries asked to make a sworn testimony whereby they pledge to give "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (or some similar wording). In these cases, or in any case where one is asked to give a statement on or account of reality, an individual essentially has three choices which can lead to any of six outcomes.[22] An individual can, intentionally or unintentionally, give a true, partially true, or false account of reality.[23]

	Intentional	**Unintentional**
True	The account of the respondent intentionally completely corresponds with the reality	The account of the respondent unintentionally completely corresponds with reality
Partially true	The account of the respondent deliberately only covers part of actual reality	The account of the respondent unintentionally only covers part of actual reality
False	The account of the respondent intentionally does not correspond at all with reality	The account of the respondent unintentionally does not correspond at all with reality

Intentionally true or *intentionally false* statements or accounts of reality are relatively straightforward. The respondent chooses to give either a true or false account of reality and succeeds in doing so. *Unintentionally true* statements or accounts of reality are more theoretical occurrences, although it is possible that an individual could give a completely true account of reality despite their intention to do the opposite.

An *unintentionally false* or *unintentionally partially true* account may occur if a respondent wishes to give a true account, but unwittingly possesses false or only partially true information. The respondent is in this case giving what he or she perceives or believes to be an account that completely corresponds with reality but which, unbeknownst to him or her, doesn't. An *unintentionally partially true* account could also occur if the respondent for some reason mistakenly leaves out a part of the truth either

[21] Allotey, P. and Manderson, L. (2003) 'From case studies to casework: Ethics and obligations in research ethics with refugee women', in P. Allotey (ed.), The Health of Refugees: Public Health Perspectives from Crisis to Settlement, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press.

[22] The construction of these ideal-types of outcomes are in great part inspired by Cohen, S. (2001): States of Denial – Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press and Obligacion, F. (1994): "Managing perceived deception among respondents – A traveler's tale", Journal of contemporary ethnography, vol.23, no.1, pp.29-50.

[23] By reality we refer to *the state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear of might be imagined*. A true account is *an account that fully or completely corresponds with this reality*. This is a highly simplistic, and by no means unproblematic, presentation of the issue based on the assumption that there are in fact such a thing as "reality" and "truth". Reality and truth are among the central subjects in philosophy as well as some of the largest (See the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for an overview of some of the literature on these topics – www.plato.standord.edu)

because of a lapse of memory or because the respondent does not realize that the part he or she leaves out is of relevance. Finally, the *unintentionally partially true* account could also be the result of the respondent simply not having the same understanding as the researcher of certain concepts.[24]

The *intentionally partially true* account can occur for several reasons in an interview. The respondent may for instance frame their responses in a way thought or perceived to be more accepted or desired either by society or by the researcher.[25] The respondent may also similarly frame their response to an interviewer they do not trust, either by adding or subtracting to the truth, to construct an image of themselves and their role or to protect themselves or their community from harm.[26]

The incentive to misinform

All actors in interpreting a social phenomenon may have various incentives to misinform the facts of the phenomenon – so also in a refugee / asylum seeking process.

Asylum seekers and refugees: To obtain refugee or asylum status individuals must prove that they have well-founded fear of persecution or other cause for lack of safety in their homeland. Proving this is a difficult task in many instances and is further complicated by cultural differences, bureaucratic demands, and the challenge of accurately represent trauma.[27] The individuals who apply for refugee or asylum status often lacks written documentation of their persecution (arrest orders or the like), giving increasing weight to their oral testimonies given to immigration authorities. If the applicant fails to convince the immigration authorities of their fear of persecution they risk being sent back; a risk most applicants are acutely aware of.[28] There is therefore a strong incentive to give the "right answers" in these interviews, to give an intentionally partially true or even false account. This is the case even if a true account would warrant a positive outcome. The entire asylum seeking and refugee process is in many instances characterized by a lack of trust.[29] Why take the chance that the truth will suffice when embellishing this truth may increase the chance of success or at the very least is perceived to do so?

The incentive to misinform can also occur later in the process. An individual may unintentionally give a partially true account of his or her experience to immigration authorities, for instance forgetting certain aspects of their story or initially deeming this aspect irrelevant. Should they later realize this mistake, an attempt at correcting their story might weaken their case since their general credibility will be questioned, or more correctly and importantly, be perceived to do so. An applicant for asylum or refugee status may in these cases rather maintain their original story, which they now are aware is only partially true, rather than correct their story due to a real or perceived risk that immigration authorities will disregard their whole testimony.

[24] Obligacion, F. (1994): "Managing perceived deception among respondents – A traveler's tale", Journal of contemporary ethnography, vol.23, no.1, pp.29-50.
[25] Herbert, S. (2013). *Perception surveys in fragile and conflict-affected states* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 910). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
[26] Matsuo, H. et al (2001). "Cross-cultural Adaptation of Bosnian Refugees in St. Louis, Missouri: Methodological", American Anthropologist, 95(2), 467-468; Khali, J. (2012): The Reliability of Perception Surveys in Afghanistan, Households in Conflict Network, Institute of Development Studies, HICN Research Note 15, October 2012; Hynes, T. (2003): "The issue of 'trust' and 'mistrust' in research with refugees – Choices, caveats, and considerations for researchers", New Issues in Refugee Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit UNHCR Working Paper no.98.
[27] Rogers, H., Fox, S & Herlihy, J. (2015): "The importance of looking credible: the impact of behavioral sequelae of post-traumatic stress disorder on the credibility of asylum seekers", Psycology, Crime & Law, 21:2, pp.139-155.
[28] Shumam, A. and Bohmer, C. (2004): "Representing Trauma: political Asylum Narrative", The Journal of American Folklore, vol.117, no.466, pp.394-414.
[29] Hynes, T. (2003): "The issue of 'trust' and 'mistrust' in research with refugees – Choices, caveats, and considerations for researchers", New Issues in Refugee Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit UNHCR Working Paper no.98; Brekke, JP. and Aarset, M. (2009): "Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations", Institute for Social Research, Report 2009:12

Diaspora: Members of the Eritrean diaspora are spread all over the world and are in several instances used as informants for research on Eritrea. The *anti-government diaspora*, including opposition groups or individuals in exile, have every incentive to portray the current Eritrean government as worse than it actually may be. Reasons for this may include an effort to further weaken and isolate the current regime, or to further the justification of their flight. *Pro-government diaspora* members have every incentive to do the opposite. In addition to these personal incentives there may be considerable intra-group pressures for "desirable" replies. Finally, both groups may have family in Eritrea and concern for them could impact the incentive to misinform.

NGOs: NGOs may have several incentives to misinform. Those who still have access to Eritrea may misinform and mute criticism of the government to preserve this access and continue their work (and relevance) in Eritrea. Others, such as human rights organizations, may exaggerate the severity of the situation. For instance, the renowned Horn of Africa expert Alex de Waal (2016) confesses that he, while working for HRW in the 1990s, calculated that it "was better to err on the side of alarmism" and used the concept of "genocide" when reporting on the situation in the Nuba mountains, to ensure attention to the situation and placing it on the international agenda.[30]

Government and immigration authorities' representatives and diplomats / embassy staff: Like some NGOs, embassy staff inside Eritrea may choose to deliberately mute critical information and misinform to preserve their ongoing activities and, possibly, even their de facto access to the country. They would like to present their "posting" as more favourable and relevant than it might be, to attract attention from their MFA superiors in the home capitals or for some other strategic reason. Concomitantly, public servants (be that in Ministry of Justice or Foreign Affairs) work obligations are to project the interests of their governments; if their government has a certain stand on a country or a policy, diplomats very rarely dare to go on record countering such narratives (even if they know it is false and misleading).

Achieving the highest degree of trustworthiness

A respondent can, as previously argued, give any one of six types of accounts when asked to present his /her version of reality. These are intentional and unintentional true, partially true, and false accounts. Detecting which of these types of statements given by a respondent is a very challenging task. This is further complicated as the researcher may be more inclined to believe accounts confirming his or her own perceptions and biases.[31] The respondent may also be affected by who the researcher is, what he or she asks about, and how they ask their questions. In the same vein, researchers or others working with victims of war and authoritarianism, may also be susceptible for what is termed 'ethnographic seduction';[32] we *want* to believe the stories we are told by victims, and hence this influences our judgment to evaluate the validity and reliability of the information.

The arguably best approach for ensuring trustworthy relations with respondents is the long-term anthropological fieldwork. This approach permits the researcher to spend large amounts of time observing and re-interviewing respondents which whom they have gradually gained a relationship of trust through continuous interaction and community participation. Accounts given by respondents can

[30] de Waal, A. (2016): "Writing Human Rights and Getting It Wrong", Boston Review, 06.06.2016. (Available from: https://bostonreview.net/world/alex-de-waal-writing-human-rights)
[31] Berry, J. (2002): "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing", Political Science and Politics, vol.35, no.4, pp.679-682.
[32] Antonius C. G. M. Robben (1995), "The Politics of Truth and Emotions Among Victims and Perpetrators of Violence", in *Fieldwork under Fire*, eds. C. Nordstrom and A. Robben, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, pp. 83-4.

then be both viewed through the lese of a greater socio-cultural understanding of the respondent's social context and cross checked with observations as well as interviews of a later stage.[33]

The anthropological fieldwork is, however, in most cases not a practical option for current policy-driven analytical work and decision-making. There are nevertheless a few means of ensuring that respondents and their responses are as trustworthy as possible.

- *First*, all-potential respondents should be informed vigorously that participation is in no way mandatory and that refusal to participate will have no consequences for them in any way. They should furthermore be guaranteed anonymity of participation as well as the independence of the researcher from governments, authorities or others with any impact on the future of the respondent (where applicable). All else equal this should result in what we may call a *non-response bias* from individuals with the strongest incentives to misinform; a situation where respondents committed to intentionally false, and to a certain degree, intentionally partially true statements are less inclined to participate.[34] It is, however, certainly possible that some respondents, regardless of the best efforts of the researcher, do not fully understand that they are free to not participate or do participate due to an expectation of some form of benefit – material or otherwise.
- *Second*, iterative questioning, whereby an issue is covered several times with differently worded questions in order to detect possible contradictions in a statement may be useful, particularly in revealing intentionally false and partially true statements.[35]
- *Third*, member checks, where recorded testimony or data is read back to the respondent to ensure correlation with the respondents intended statements. This can reduce the occurrence of unintentional partially true statements as the respondent is given the opportunity to add to their original answers.[36]
- *Fourth*, the occurrence of "unbeneficial" statements or other examples of weaknesses, failures, humiliations or similar factors in an interview could imply a lower degree of intentional false or partially true statements.[37] The researcher should, however, be wary of making judgments on a respondent's answers in isolation due to reasons examined in some detail above.
- *Fifth*, the timing of the interview may impact the validity of responses. It is often argued that the most valid data are collected as close to their migration date as possible as their experiences will be fresh in their mind and their narrative "untainted" by experiences in exile. This must, however, be weighed against a number of other ethical and practical concerns.

[33] Bleek, W. (1987): "Lying Informants: A Fieldwork Experience from Ghana", Population and Development Review, vol.13, no.2, pp.314-322 and Salamone, F. (1977): "The Methodological Significance of the Lying Informant", Anthropological Quarterly, vol.50, no.3, pp.117-124.

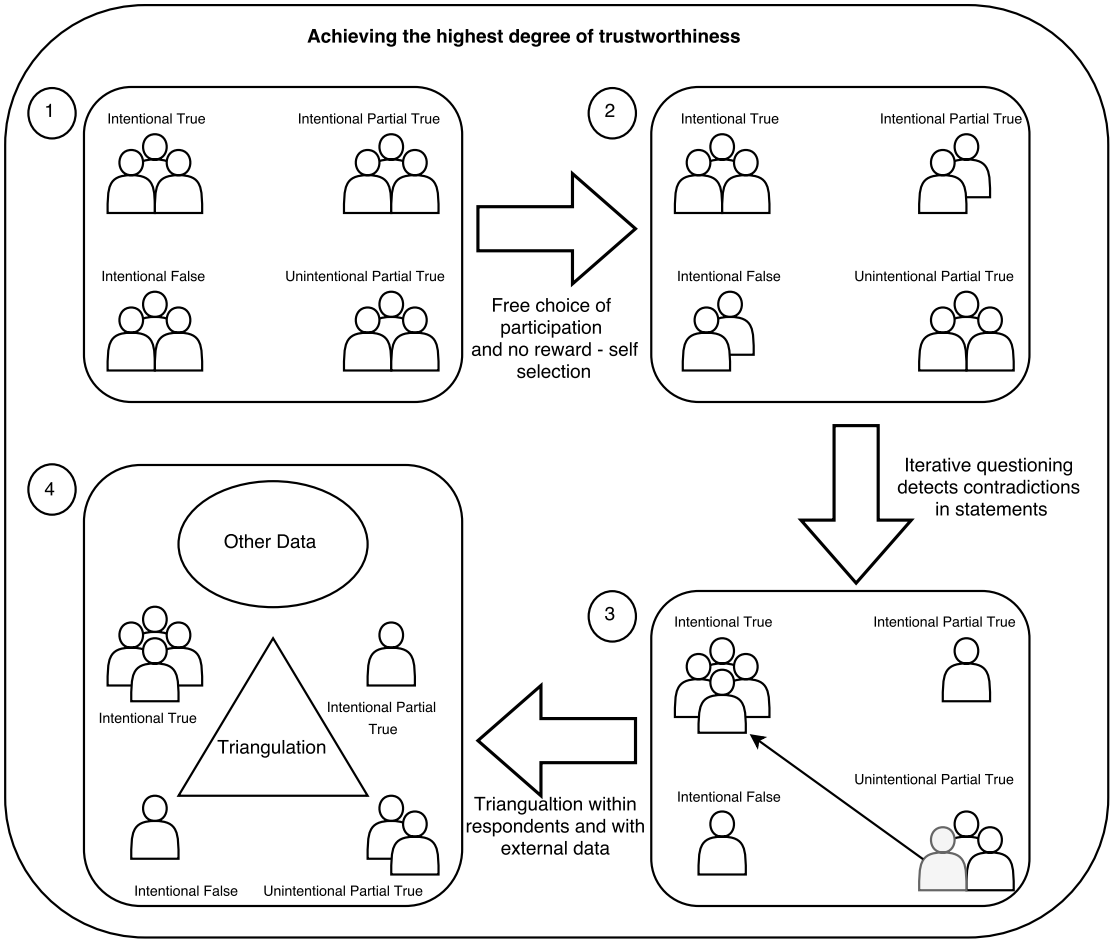
[34] Non-response bias, where participants for some reason do not participate in a study, is generally a problem as they may share characteristics and where their non-inclusion may harm the representativeness of the study (Herbert, S. (2013). *Perception surveys in fragile and conflict-affected states* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 910). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham).

[35] Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, *22*(2), 63-75.

[36] Morse, M. et al. (2002). "Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 1* (2), Article 2

[37] Brekke, JP. and Aarset, M. (2009): "Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations", Institute for Social Research, Report 2009:12.

Figure 1: Schematic idealized representation of the process of ensuring trustworthy respondents



1. The group of potential respondents with an equal distribution of individuals who will give intentionally true, intentionally partial true, intentionally false and unintentionally false statements
2. The group of potential respondents are informed that participation in the study is a free choice and that they can expect no reward from participating. Thus, some of those who would give intentional partially true or intentional false statements decline to participate.
3. Iterative questioning reveals one instance of intentional false and intentional partial true statements. Iterative questioning also changes one unintentional partial true statement (represented by grey figure) to an intentional true statement by reminding the respondent of an aspect of their story or making them realize that what they initially deemed irrelevant is important to the researcher
4.The data from the respondents – which now comprises of a larger group of respondents with intentional true statements, a lower number of respondents with unintentional partially true statements, and a low number of intentional partial true and intentional false statements is triangulated with other interview data as well as other data altogether.

3.5 Access

Only a limited number of researchers and organizations have the required permissions to conduct research inside Eritrea. This is highly problematic for several reasons. First, the lack of access results in a reliance on sources found outside Eritrea such as opposition movements, foreign experts and embassy staff, and migrants/refugees. Eritrean migrants/refugees are out of necessity being used as informants to a substantial degree, including this report, since access is denied to do data gathering inside the country, leaving research vulnerable to "migration bias". While the voices and accounts of Eritreans who have left Eritrea are important, they are not the only voices worth hearing. Access to

Eritrea can potentially result in a larger degree of horizontal and vertical inclusion in the study; the inclusion of accounts and opinions from a larger group of respondents from all socio-economic strata of Eritrean society. Individuals inside Eritrea can also be assumed to be less affected by incentives to misinform in order to potentially strengthen their asylum application, although it must be equally assumed that these informants may be impacted by other factors.

Second, the lack of access naturally also prevents any form of direct or participant observation inside Eritrea that potentially could provide highly useful information, particularly granted unrestricted access. Even restricted access, however, can provide useful information that may complement other sources of data as long as the researcher is aware that there are limitations to what they are permitted to observe and report. Asmara and Massawa, for instance, cannot be assumed to be representative of the country as a whole.

3.6 Standard of proof

Fragile and conflict affected contexts are very challenging environments to work in as a researcher. This makes it exceedingly difficult to attain data which contains a certainty that is expected in social science conducted in less challenging environments.[38] Mallet (2012) argues that there is a clear need for better data from fragile and conflict situations and that before this is achieved the *standard of proof* cannot be the same as that demanded elsewhere.[39]

The standard of proof, or degree of certainty, can be thought of as a continuum between the two extremes of guesswork at the one end and certainty at the other. The standard of proof deemed necessary or required in a given instance depends on the task at hand as well as its seriousness. Wilkinson (2011) compares the various standards of proof explicitly used in a number of Fact Finding Missions.[40] As the certainty of factual findings rarely is uniform, with some being more certain than others for instance, Wilkinson (2011) recommends a layered approach that enables a more accurately and nuanced reporting on findings and presents four working standards of proof that may be used for different claims in the same report[41]. These are:

- **Reasonable suspicion**: Grounds for suspicion that the incident in question occurred, one of the reasonable conclusions but other conclusions are possible (40% probability).
- **Balance of probabilities**: Where more evidence supports the finding than contradicts it (50+1% probability).

[38] See discussions on doing field research in the war contexts of the Horn of Africa in K. Tronvoll (2009), *War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia. The Making of Enemies and Allies in the Horn of Africa*, Woodbridge: James Currey.
[39] Mallett, R. (2012): How far do perception surveys take us in fragile and conflict affected situations, In Asia (27.06.2012). (Available from: http://asiafoundation.org/2012/06/27/how-far-do-perception-surveys-take-us-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations/)
[40] These are The commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (Yugoslavia Commission of Experts), The United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur January 2005, The United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (GFFM) September 2009, The International Commission of Inquiry mandated to establish the facts and circumstances of the events of 28 September 2009 in Guinea (ICIG), the OHCHR Mapping Report on the DRC (March 1993 – June 2003) August 2010, the International Commission of Inquiry to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (Libya Commission of Inquiry) June 2011, and The Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria Commission of Inquiry) November 2011.
[41] Wilkinson, S. (2011). Standards of Proof in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-Finding and Inquiry Missions. *Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*.

- **Clear and convincing evidence**: Very solid support for a given finding - significantly more evidence supports the finding and very limited and/or weak information suggests the contrary (60% probability).
- **Overwhelming evidence**: Conclusive or highly convincing evidence supports the finding (>80% probability).

The balance of probability seems to function somewhat like a baseline in many fact-finding missions or inquiries with similar mandates. Several factors may influence the choice of what the appropriate Standard of proof should, or could, be in a given situation. These include among others:

- Access – if access is granted to the researcher(s) one should require a higher standard of proof.
- Timeframe – a longer timeframe should result in a higher required standard of proof.
- Cooperation with "accused party" – cooperation from the accused party should result in a higher required standard of proof.

ILPI did not receive any reply to its request of research entry visas to Eritrea or any other requests. This lack of access and more general lack of cooperation from "the accused party" combined with the relatively short timeframe suggest a lower required standard of proof. We therefore argue that the standard of proof of "clear and convincing evidence" or higher is sufficient for most cases with the possibility of "balance of probabilities" being applicable in a few instances.

4 Critical review of a selection of reports and scholarly publications on Eritrea

In preparation for this report we selected a number of recently published academic articles and reports/notes from NGOs, immigration authorities, international multilateral organizations, and others. We limited the literature in our selection to only include contributions published between 2010 and 2016, with an emphasis on contributions from 2015-16. This choice was made to ensure that the contributions analysed were as updated as possible. We also abandoned a randomized selection of the authors of the contributions in our selection, to ensure that some of the most respected, controversial and referenced contributions from scholars, NGOs and immigration authorities were included in our sample.

By engaging in a comprehensive review process of these contributions on Eritrea in general and on migration from Eritrea in particular, we sought to determine whether the conclusions reached in these selected academic contributions are sufficiently based on valid and reliable data. Elements of consideration included the number and range of interviews and existing literature, measures used to ensure trustworthiness of respondents, explicit validity and reliability assessments, the justification of the use of secondary data, the comprehensiveness of triangulation procedures, the presentation and discussion of potential biases, and the degree to which the presented data supports the conclusions made. The degree to which these and other factors were found sufficiently fulfilled contributed in determining if: 1. Conclusion(s) completely supported; 2. Conclusion(s) to a large degree supported; 3. Conclusion(s) somewhat supported; 4. Conclusion(s) supported only to a limited degree; 5. Conclusion(s) not supported; or 6. Not possible to identify/determine.

It is important to note, however, that even though a publication may be classified as "conclusions not supported", this does not necessary entail that the conclusion in the paper is false; only that it lacks an empirical based and methodological robust underpinning in the said publication.

Below we present a summary of our critical review of the selected articles. A full overview of the assessment of all contributions selected for comprehensive analysis is presented in Appendix 2.

4.1 Academic articles or reports/notes

Conclusions to a large degree supported

Milena Belloni (2016) Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy[42]

The paper seeks to investigate the individual decision making underlying refugee mobility. This ethnographic case study, predominantly relies on hundreds of interviews conducted during anthropological fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2014 (exact number not specified). The paper established very credibly that many Eritrean refugees are aware of the legal and institutional

[42] Belloni, M. (2016). Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *14*(1), 104-119.

constraints (including the Dublin Regulation) on their aspirations for secondary migration, but that these constraints are considered to be challenges to overcome, rather than impenetrable barriers.

Assessment: The qualitative case study research design is well suited for securing a high degree of (internal) validity. This is perhaps particularly the case in long-term fieldwork as the researcher may be able to secure a level of trust with the respondent(s) that is near impossible to achieve through other means. This form of research is, however, generally faced with challenges related to reliability and, to an even higher extent, to external validity (the ability to generalize beyond the population of the study).

Tanja Müller (2015) Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv[43]

The paper seeks to demonstrate how the environment within Eritrea has made people refugees, and furthermore how this situation is being reinforced by the failure of the Israeli government in recognizing Eritreans as such. The paper is based on 20 in depth anonymized interviews, follow up conversations with formerly established informants, and 12 extensive informal conversations and a number of interviews with civil society organization staff, which were conducted during three visits to Tel Aviv between June 2010 and April 2012. The paper appears well researched and uses direct quotes from interviews to support or strengthen the arguments presented.

Assessment: As recognized by Tanja Müller in the paper itself the research design limits the ability to generalize beyond the timeframe of the paper itself. It can, however, be seen as a "snapshot" of the realities of Eritrean migrants in Tel Aviv during the period of the study and can as such present a realistic picture of the experiences and thoughts of many Eritrean refugees in this particular context. Reliability and external validity are, due to the research design and anonymization of respondents, a challenge.

Clare Cummings, Julia Pacitto et al. (2015) Why people move: Understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe[44]

Clare Cummings et al. seek to explore the drivers of irregular migration to Europe during the Mediterranean refugee crisis answering several questions including: What factors influence decisions to leave Sub-Saharan Africa and MENA and migrate to Europe via irregular means in this current crisis (with a focus on key source countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia)? In doing so they have conducted a meta-analysis where 138 primary and secondary sources deemed of high and medium quality following a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) as presented in the paper. The authors conclude that an individual's decision to migrate via irregular means operate at several levels at different times and locations and that international and national policies, economic conditions, and political situations seem important in determining why a person of a given nationality may migrate. Several factors seem to be particularly important: personal security from conflict, economic opportunity and security to rebuild and improve their and their family's life, and having the financial resources to be able to migrate.

Assessment: The data selected for this meta-study is, despite the REA, dependent on the researcher and as is as such vulnerable to the impact of the views and perceptions of the researcher (much like

[43] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27.
[44] Cummings, C., Pacitto, J., Lauro, D., & Foresti, M. (2015). *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. Working paper 430. London: Overseas Development Institute.

this section of the paper). The authors also present the possibility of a Publication bias due to a reliance on the available body of published studies. These have in recent years focused heavily on migration from conflict areas and may potentially impact the findings of the study as a whole and/or its validity towards non-conflict affected contexts.

Nicole Hirt and Abdulkader Saleh Mohammad (2013) Dreams don't come true in Eritrea: Anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarization of society[45]

This paper seeks to understand Eritrea's ongoing crisis within the framework of the theory of anomie (relative lawlessness or lack of rules). The data for the paper were collected during fieldwork inside and outside Eritrea by both authors between 2008 and 2010 and presents six cases out of a sample of fourteen. This data is also supplemented by a review of written sources. The authors argue that militarization, forced labour, mass exodus and the disintegration of 'traditional' family structures can be interpreted as the consequence of the collision between two incompatible value systems – the collectivist and militaristic worldview of the PDFJ and the 'traditional' cultural system of Eritrean society. This has resulted in a destabilization of the entire social fabric. In this context, migration can be seen to be the last alternative when all other legal or illegal means of securing exception from the open ended national service have failed and/or a rebellion of individuals caught between the incompatible expectations of the state and the expectations of family.

Assessment: The cases are, as recognized by the authors, not representative (externally valid) of the Eritrean population. The cases may, however, demonstrate some features common to many young Eritreans – particularly as the respondent group seems to cover a broad range. All but those who managed to secure exception from service also reported to perceive migration as the final option available if they ever are to aspire to more than what they are currently experiencing – increasing confidence in the validity of the data. As with all qualitative studies reliability and replicability remains a challenge (in addition to external validity mentioned above).

David Bozzini (2011) Low-tech Surveillance and the Despotica State in Eritrea[46]

This paper, based on data gathered during fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2007 in Eritrea (the number of primary observations used not specified, looks at the development and function of surveillance in Eritrea. It argues that the Eritrean state over the past decade has developed systems of surveillance of conscripts in the National Service, including the distribution of identification documents that must be presented at checkpoints throughout the country. Following the extension of the duration of the national service these structures are heavily occupied with identifying, preventing, and cracking down on defection and desertion from the national service. Bozzini further argues that despite severe limitations in the ability of the state to effectively conduct surveillance these systems have contributed to keeping thousands of conscripts in the national service. This is partially due to the system's ability to perpetuate and reproduce uncertainties, fears, beliefs and expectations that are the core of relative coercion in the National Service.

Assessment: The long duration of the fieldwork in Eritrea and principles for obtaining this information i) following informants as far as possible, ii) allowing informants to speak freely and then asking about details that may have been omitted, and iii) conducting in-depth interviews with people several times on the same issue allowing the collection of different versions of the same narrative-event ensures a high degree of validity for the data. As with all ethnographic qualitative fieldwork there are

[45] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.
[46] Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93.

issues with the reliability and replicability of the data and the ability to generalize beyond the selected respondents is limited.

Conclusions somewhat supported

Nicole Hirt (2016) Eritrean Refugees: The Pawns of European Interests[47]

This GIGA report, seemingly based on a literature review and the authors own experience and expertise, deals with the issue of migration to the EU and the attempts at stemming this flow through the Khartoum process and also approaches towards Eritrea, including possible financial support to the energy sector and strengthening of governance. Hirt argues that this approach fails to deal with the primary reasons for migration and that any development assistance should require and support reforms of the national service, the economy, and the legal structure of Eritrea. These reforms are, in her opinion, unlikely to materialize (at least in the short to medium term) on their own.

Assessment: Although it may be beyond the scope of this short contribution or opinion piece (7 pages) it fails to seriously discuss the validity, reliability and general academic robustness of its referenced sources (13 sources in the list of references). Given the limited scope of the conclusion reached, and the considerable academic credibility held by Nicole Hirt, it nevertheless seems like the conclusion is sufficiently supported by the data provided.

Mogos Brhane (2016) Understanding Why Eritreans go to Europe[48]

Mogos Brhane argues in this contribution, based on an unspecified number of interviews conducted with Eritrean migrants/refugees/asylum seekers in Sudan, Ethiopia and the UK that the poor conditions in refugee camps outside of Europe and the perception/hope that conditions are better in Europe act as push and pull factors that for many outweigh the significant risks involved in secondary migration. In camps in Ethiopia and Sudan, characterized by limited resources, one respondent reported they have nothing to do "but struggle with boredom and distress". In Sudan, Eritreans have been targeted by criminal groups for ransom. In Israel, the lack of recognition of Eritrean migrants as refugees' results in significant uncertainty and limited legal opportunities for work. Refugees have also been deported from Israel to Uganda and Rwanda. As long as the reasons for migration are left unaddressed and the conditions for refugees in neighbouring countries does not significantly improve, many Eritreans are likely to migrate onward to Europe - regardless of risk.

Assessment: This short contribution is based on data gathered with Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, Sudan and the UK. The exclusive use of data from interviews with migrants/refugees is in many instances problematic and should be verified and checked with other independent sources (particularly when the circumstances of the interviews, including duration and relation with respondent, are left unspecified. The migration bias is, however, in this particular case less of an issue as the contribution seeks to examine the drivers of secondary migration (migration from the first destination after migrating/fleeing Eritrea). As with nearly all qualitative studies based on anonymized interview data collection the reliability and replicability of the study is limited and the external validity or ability to generalize beyond the study is highly problematic.

[47] Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa.
[48] Brhane, M. O. (2016). Understanding why Eritreans go to Europe. *Forced Migration Review*, (51), 34.

Nicole Hirt (2014) The Eritrean Diaspora and its Impact on Regime Stability: Responses to UN Sanctions[49]

This article examines the impact of UN-sanctions on the stability of the Eritrean regime and on the reaction of the diaspora. The paper argues that the government and its supporters and opponents in the diaspora have used the sanctions for their own purposes – either as a call to rally behind the nation or to oppose the 2% tax levied by the government by arguing it is in breach of the sanctions. The article is well referenced (94 footnote references in a 21-page paper) by a combination of written sources (including official government statements and media reports), five in-depth interviews with Eritreans in opposition to the regime, and the expertise of the author gained through three decades of participant observation among the Eritrean diaspora and prolonged stays inside Eritrea between 1995 to 2010.

Assessment: While most of the claims of the paper seem well supported there are some issues with the relatively small number of interviews and the potential migration-bias (or diaspora bias) of these. While experience gathered over decades is highly valuable, particularly in a context where conducting research is challenging, it is difficult to independently assess the validity and reliability of this experience as such.

Jennifer Riggan (2013) Imagining Emigration: Debating National Duty in Eritrean Classrooms[50]

This article argues that the celebration of diasporic nationalism (during the war of independence) has resulted in a longing to return among the diaspora but at the same time resulted in an unintended longing among those who remain in Eritrea to leave. While emigration effectively remains illegal (completion of national service is a precondition for legally obtaining an exit visa) the large and celebrated diaspora have a greater degree of freedom to move in and out of the country and may even obtain land (denied Eritreans in Eritrea) provided they pay the infamous 2% tax. These contradictions were explored by examining classroom debates about emigration in Eritrea, allowing students and teachers to present and argue conflicting beliefs about national duty, personal aspirations, and the state. The study reveals that (many) Eritreans are keenly aware of these contradictions and many see emigration as a means to secure the freedoms granted (compliant) members of the diaspora. The young students all cared about the future development of the country, but many tried to cast their devotion in terms of loyally leaving the country so as to help it. Others clung to more traditional notions of sacrifice and duty and cast themselves as the truly sacrificing Eritreans.

Assessment: The use of classroom discussions inside of Eritrea in order to obtain information about perceptions about certain issues is highly interesting and potentially a great source of insight. The data presented in the paper seems to support the claim that the advantages given the diaspora contributes to the wish to leave Eritrea for those who remain and that many see emigration as their only option to reach their aspirations. The study does not, however, specify how many were in the class during the discussions and how many of these actively participated in the discussions (difficult to determine the number of primary "observations" and to independently gauge the validity of the data). As the students all are from a similar background and at similar stages in their lives (young and relatively highly educated) this limits the reach of the study. As with nearly all ethnographic case studies,

[49] Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061.
[50] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.

particularly when the protection of respondents is a concern, the reliability and external validity (ability to generalize) remains low.

Rachel Humphris (2013) Refugees and the Rashaida: Human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt[51]

This research paper is based on data collected through an unspecified number of interviews with civil society actors and NGOs in transit and destination countries, as well as the use of their pre-collected qualitative interview data. The paper explores the motivations and aspirations to leave Eritrea, the changing refugee dynamics in eastern Sudan, and the role of smugglers in migration to and through Sudan. As such the paper does not present a particular research question or narrow topic but rather structures the paper around the broader theme of the migration route from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt. Humphris argues that while a small number of individuals from the Rashaida ethnic group participate in the smuggling of Eritrean, this tendency is primarily the result and not a cause of insecurity in the region.

Assessment: The paper provides a sufficient amount of data for its conclusions on the role of smugglers (malign and/or benign). This is not, however, the case for the section on drivers of migration which seem seriously under referenced and partially based on old reporting on the subject. The decision to use pre-existing interview data of migrants in a refugee/asylum seeking situation is not, as far as we can tell, problematized or discussed. This is problematic as the researcher, again as far as we can tell by the paper itself, had no control over how these interviews were conducted and for what purpose. As with nearly all qualitative case studies there are great challenges to the reliability and external validity of the data.

Daniel Mekonnen and Meron Estefanos (2013) From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean tragedy of human trafficking[52]

This paper is based on more than 100 recorded interviews of Eritrean victims of trafficking and supplemented by other written sources. The authors human trafficking in Eritrea between mid-1990s to November 2011 and argues that this trend in later years increased exponentially resulting in a large number of Eritreans becoming victims to abuse by traffickers in the Sinai Desert. Finally, it proposes key recommendations aimed at alleviating the situation and the suffering of its victims. The authors recommend international cooperation in establishing security and law enforcement in the areas where the trafficking takes place.

Assessment: This paper is to a significant extent reliant on the use of pre-existing qualitative data and interviews without discussing the possible methodological challenges present in using pre-existing data of this type. It is also difficult to assess the validity of these data unless more information about them and how they were generated is presented. The arguments made are reasonably well referenced, but several passages could have been strengthened by broadening the group of sources. Reliability, replicability and external validity remains a challenge as in most qualitative case work.

[51] Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service.
[52] Mekonnen, D. R., & Estefanos, M. (2011). From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean Tragedy of Human Trafficking. *Available at SSRN 2055303*.

Gaim Kibreab (2014) The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration[53]

This report explores the drivers of migration from Eritrea and asks why so many young Eritreans choose to face the very real risks of migration. Kibreab argues that the ultimate cause of this migration is the entrenched and interconnected patters of economic, social, political, and environmental issues in Eritrea as well as the pervasive inequalities that characterize the global North-South divide. These factors are somewhat reinforced by the dense transnational networks that connect Eritreans world-wide. Since 2002, the single most important driver has been the open ended national service (extended by the Warsay-Yikealo Development Campaign or WYDC).

Assessment: The paper is largely based on an unspecified number of existing sources (55 footnotes in an 18-page paper) but these are not explicitly presented or otherwise discussed. Certain passages of the paper seem under-referenced and based on the knowledge and understanding of the author. Without further explanation or elaboration this is methodologically problematic, particularly when it comes to reliability. It also makes it difficult to independently assess the validity of the data used. The paper does, however, recognize the complexity of the social and political issues that underlie Eritrean migration.

4.2 NGO reports/publications

Conclusions to a large degree supported

Amnesty International (2013) Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom[54]

This report, which covers the arrests and detentions of a broad group of people including political opposition, journalists, deserters, illegal migrants and returned asylum seekers, is predominantly based on more than 40 interviews with refugees and asylum seekers conducted between 2010 and 2013. The paper argues that multiple violations of human rights, the indefinite duration of national service, severe limitations in employment and educational opportunities all contribute to mass migration from Eritrea. According to AI those who are arrested attempting to illegally migrate or who are returned as failed asylum seekers are at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention without charge. The paper also argues that testimonies and other information indicate that family members of those who illegally migrate can be targeted for arrest, particularly when those who have fled are of national service age.

Assessment: As AI makes clear, there are major challenges to overcome when doing research on Eritrea. AI has therefore had to rely on interviews with Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers in other countries, Eritrean activists and journalists in exile, humanitarian workers and diplomats formerly based in Eritrea, and partner organizations working on Eritrea. Research for this report also draws on media reports and reflects information contained in 20 years of Amnesty International's public documents covering Eritrea. This broad range of sources does increase the confidence and validity of the data. Due to the need to protect informants they have been anonymized and some information is

[53] Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.
[54] Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)

not referenced in order to further ensure anonymity. Reliability and replicability is therefore an inherent issue. The paper, furthermore, seems to consistently moderate the strength of the various claims made based on the number of sources supporting it and (apparently) the authors confidence in these sources.

Amnesty International (2015) Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees[55]

The report seeks to examine the current nature of the national service in Eritrea in order to determine if there have been any discernible changes in the policy and practice of conscription since 2013. Of particular interest was the guarantee given that conscription would be limited to 18 months. This is particularly relevant as some countries, including Denmark and the UK, in 2014 and 2015 claimed that there have been improvements in the conscription system to an extent where there are no longer grounds for applying for asylum. AI interviewed 72 Eritreans (58 male and 14 female) in Italy and Switzerland, who fled between July 2014 and July 2015. Respondents were between 16 and 43 years old. Additional interviews with 15 respondents were conducted in order to cross-check certain information. Additional information was collected from an unspecified number of Eritrean activists in exile. The paper concludes that conscription in the national service continues to be indefinite and that conscripts continue to be deployed in a manner that amounts to forced labour and are at a continued risk of further human rights violations in a system characterized by a lack of accountability.

Assessment: Amnesty International is unable to access Eritrea and is also barred from entering Ethiopia and Sudan. All interviews where therefore conducted among recently arrived Eritreans in Europe – and this opens up for potential biases and incentive structures that may be harmful for validity. The main conclusions i) that conscription continues to be of indefinite duration and ii) that the use of conscripts amounts to forced labour seems to be largely supported by the large amount of testimonies gathered and other sources presented. The qualitative design of the research, particularly combined with the need to protect the identities of respondents, makes reliability, replicability and generalizations based on the findings challenging. The high number of respondents (72) strengthens the validity of the findings (although number of locations could have been larger) as does the additional interviews conducted in order to cross-check some of the sections of the paper.

Human Rights Watch (2009) Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea[56]

This primary data for this report, gathered during research conducted between September 2008 and January 2009, consists interviews with 53 (almost exclusively male) Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers between 18 and 50 years old (all except 4 left Eritrea no more than 18 months before interview took place), an unspecified number of Eritrean exiles (academics, journalists, and activists) and London based experts, and 4 international officials living and working in Eritrea. In addition, HRW got access to medical reports from the Medical Foundation for Care of Victims of Torture (UK). Finally, an unofficial visit to Eritrea gave the opportunity to cross-check an unspecified number of issues. The report claims to document the Eritrean governments responsibility for patterns of serious human rights violations including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, forced labour, and inhuman conditions in detention; rigid restrictions on freedom of movement and expression; and religious persecution. It also analyses abuses related to the practice of indefinite conscription into national and

[55] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[56] Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)

military service, the lack of any provision for conscientious objection, and the risks facing refugees before, during and after migration

Assessment: It is unfortunate that HRW was unable to secure a broader gender representation in the respondents as great care was taken during the interviews. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews and cross-check information, the interviews were generally conducted in private in a separate room, with only the interviewee, a Human Rights Watch researcher, and a translator present to translate from Tigrinya into English—where translation was necessary. Different translators where used throughout the study to ensure that the translations were unbiased. The accounts gathered where cross-checked with other independent sources to ensure their credibility.

While the majority of the paper seems well supported there are some issues with certain sub-sections of Part II of the report, which seem to be overly reliant of interview data with little explicit cross-checking taking place. These passages would have been strengthened if they were cross-checked with additional independent sources. As with all qualitative case studies there are issues with reliability, replicability and the ability to generalize beyond the study itself.

Conclusions somewhat supported

Human Rights Watch (2014) I Wanted to Lie Down and Die[57]

This report is based on in-depth interviews with 23 Eritrean, 2 Ethiopian and 3 Sudanese nationals (32 men and 5 women) in addition to 22 interviews with Eritrean nationals conducted by an Egyptian NGO. Additional interviews were made with 3 Egyptian officials, 13 NGO and international humanitarian staff and 4 foreign embassy staff in Egypt. HRW also got access to 2 self-confessed traffickers. The paper argues that since mid-2010, and as recently as November 2013, Sudanese traffickers have kidnapped Eritreans in eastern Sudan and sold them to Egyptian traffickers in Sinai who have subjected at least hundreds to horrific violence in order to extort large sums of money from the victims' relatives. In some cases, these crimes are facilitated by collusion between traffickers and Sudanese and Egyptian police and the military who hand victims over to traffickers in police stations, turn a blind eye at checkpoints, and return escaped trafficking victims to traffickers. In 2010, the first reports surfaced of smugglers turning on their clients during the journey, kidnapping and abusing them to extort money from their relatives in exchange for onward travel. By 2011, Sudanese traffickers had started to kidnap Eritreans from inside or near the UN-run refugee camps near the town of Kassala in eastern Sudan and transferred them to Egyptian traffickers against their will.

Assessment: while the occurrence of horrible human rights violations in the trafficking in region is reasonably well supported by the sources presented other elements rest on a shakier foundation. This is particularly the case with the claim that Egyptian military and police forces participate in this system. This section would have been considerably strengthened if it had the support of additional independent sources (we do, however, realize that these may not exist or have existed during the time of writing this report).

The report as a whole relies perhaps too much on data gathered during interviews and the validity of the data could have been strengthened with additional independent sources. As with all qualitative studies based on interviews there are issues with the reliability and replicability of the data and the ability to generalize beyond the selected respondents is limited.

[57] Human Rights Watch (2014) "I Wanted to Lie Down and Die" (Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/11/i-wanted-lie-down-and-die/trafficking-and-torture-eritreans-sudan-and-egypt)

4.3 Country of Origin Information and other materials published by immigration authorities

Conclusions completely supported

Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Report - National Service[58]

Information for this report is based on 37 interviews (or "oral sources") collected during five country visits (last country visit in Jan/Feb 2016). Respondents include government representatives and regular Eritreans inside Eritrea as well as foreign embassy personnel. These interviews are supplemented by 40 "written sources". The report deals with the National Service in Eritrea and argues that it is being uses both as a tool to avert external threats, but also as an instrument to create a cohesive national identity and rebuilding the country. The Warsay Yekealo campaign, adopted in 2002, extended the duration of the national service for both men and women. Eritreans who evade national service are probably exposed to arbitrary punishment from local commanders, and there have been indications that Eritreans performing their national service in the military are subjected to more punishment than those serving in the civilian sector. Due to a lack of information, however, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions on this matter.

Assessment: The report recognizes the methodological challenges in doing research on Eritrea and presents a serious discussion of the impact of these challenges. This has a serious impact on one's own research as well as that of others making reliance on existing literature problematic due to problems of round-tripping (several sources citing the same potentially flawed original source) and the related problem of false confirmations (several sources, based on the same original source which all point in the same direction gives the impression that a particular statement is well grounded). Landinfo stresses that they have not had the opportunity to conduct systematic surveys or interviews of a large number of Eritreans. They have, in our opinion, to a large extent strived to ensure that the data is as updated and accurate as possible. In cases where the validity of the data is dubious, the authors have moderated and qualified their statements throughout the report.

Conclusions to a large degree supported

UK Home Office (2016) Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service[59]

The states purpose of this fact-finding mission was to gather accurate and up-to-date information from a range of sources about the national service, healthcare, and migration to and from Eritrea for use in the asylum decision making process. The mission was also conducted in order to determine the validity and accuracy of information obtained from sources outside Eritrea (cross-checking existing information). The team behind the report met more than 130 people and 31 of these are referenced as sources in the report (these include government officials, diplomats, UN representatives, returnees, and a series of anonymous respondents).

Assessment: the authors recognize that time constraints and other factors have had an impact on the comprehensiveness of the findings. Respondents were given the option to make amendments to interview notes (thereby improving validity) and to specify how they would like to be referenced (not

[58] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)
[59] UK Home Office (2016a), "Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57e2ae464.html)

all interviewees are therefore anonymized, although many are). The inclusion of government representatives and state-sponsored civic groups strengthens the paper as these individuals are ignored by a substantial number of reports and articles. The authors have also apparently taken considerable care in presenting their own observations as well as the account of respondents in a highly descriptive manner. Although it may be beyond the scope of a fact-finding mission it could have been strengthened if a more comprehensive assessment of the truthfulness of the considerably varying accounts presented had been conducted. As the identity of some respondents is explicit the reliability of some of the data is somewhat better than in many other reports. There are, as it nearly always is with qualitative case studies, issues with the external validity of some of the findings.

Conclusions somewhat supported

EASO (2015) EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus[60]

The report aims to provide information on a selection of topics that are relevant for international protection status determination including the national service, prisons and detention, religion, identity documents and exit, and punishment for illegal exits. The report is based on publicly available reports of COI units, UN agencies, human rights organizations, scholars, official and NGO papers, and government and diaspora media. This data has been complemented with information obtained during interviews. The paper contains references to 12 different groups of anonymous sources (not possible to determine how many actual individuals) and about 250 referenced written sources.

The report is written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012) which deals with methodological standards of neutrality, validity, etc. and presents a handbook for how to go about producing COI reports.

Assessment: The authors recognize that access to valid and reliable country of origin information about Eritrea in general, and the HR situation in the country in particular, is difficult. This is, the report states, due to a lack of access for HR monitors, restricted options for researchers, and the lack of a free press. The government does not release information on sensitive topics such as the national service. As such many sources, including those that make up the foundation of this report, have to rely on sources outside Eritrea (refugees, journalists, political activists, exiles, diplomats and international aid workers formerly stationed in Eritrea, academics, and representatives of international organization). There is a serious lack of access to comprehensive first-hand information. The EASO relies on a broad range of sources in an attempt to avoid issues such as round-tripping and false confirmation of information (see assessment of Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Report - National Service). The report does not present the methodology uses in the collection of data through interviews making the assessment of their validity difficult. The report is also somewhat less explicit about the validity and reliability assigned to various sources and the implication this may have on degree of certainty to a given claim made.

Landinfo -Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Query Response - Eritrea: Reaction towards returned asylum seekers [61]

This Query Response seeks to answer two questions: i) How do Eritrean authorities perceive an

[60] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf)

[61] Landinfo (2016c) "Query Response - Eritrea: Reaction towards returned asylum seekers", Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) – Translation Provided by the UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3383/1/3383_1.pdf)

application for asylum in itself; and ii) Has an application for asylum in itself led to reactions from Eritrean authorities? The report is partly based on information gathered during Landinfo's fact finding mission in Eritrea January and February 2016, and refers to 14 "oral sources" and 21 "written sources". There is very little empirical data on the topic, and it is very difficult to find reliable and verifiable information on which reactions returned asylum seekers are exposed to upon return. Most Eritrean asylum seekers have left the country without exit visas and the majority have deserted from or evaded national service. It is nearly impossible to determine if reactions against deported persons or persons who voluntarily returned is the result of illegal exits and/or dissertation or evasion from national service, or if it is a response to the action of applying for asylum in and of itself.

Assessment: due to fears of reprisals in different forms Landinfo has anonymized a number of its sources inside Eritrea making reliability and, to a certain extent, validity problematic. The overall lack of evidence on this issue can, potentially, be interpreted either way and does present a considerable challenge. The paper does also to some extent disregard the findings of Amnesty International based on testimonies they gathered from Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers in African and European countries. While such testimonies are methodologically challenging they could arguably have provided additional insight on this issue.

Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetilatelse og ulovlig utreise (Issuance of exit visas and illegal exits)[62]

This report, based on 20 "oral sources" (gathered inside Eritrea as well as in Ethiopia and including Government officials, embassy staff, and regular Eritreans) and 20 "written sources", seeks to answer the following questions: i) conditions for receiving exit visas; ii) who receives exit visas; ii) conditions that may exclude person from receiving exit visas; and iv) reactions to illegal exits. Landinfo expresses the perception that the Eritrean government considers the circumstances of the migration, eligibility for national service, political activity in exile, social networks in Eritrea, and payment of the 2% tax when determining responses to returned illegal immigrants. By signing the letter of apology, payment of the 2% tax and minimize participation in critique of the government individuals may be less exposed to reactions from the government compared to others. Contacts within the state apparatus are also likely an advantage.

Assessment: there seems to be a serious lack of valid sources on this topic and as such Landinfo struggles to reach a conclusion and remains very cautious in making its claims. A greater reliance on interviews with Eritreans outside the country could potentially have resulted in more information, although we recognize that the use of such data is fraught with methodological challenges as well. The issues of reliability, validity and generalizability are similar to other qualitative case studies.

Migrasjonsverket - Migrasjonsverkets rätts- och landinformastionssystem (2015) Landrapport Eritrea[63]

This report, based on 8 anonymized interviews (including three "diplomatic sources"), the accounts of Mr. Kibreab Gaim in addition to 36 written sources, presents a general overview of themes and issues that are of relevance in making decisions in asylum application cases. Initially, the report provides a brief overview of the situation in Eritrea. Subsequently, more detailed information on issues central to asylum examination is presented. In some areas, the available country of origin information is not

[62] Landinfo (2016b) "Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetillatelse og ulovlig utreise" (Available from: http://landinfo.no/asset/3423/1/3423_1.pdf)
[63] Migrasjonsverket (2015)," Landrapport Eritrea", LIFOS - Migrasjonsverkets rätts- och landinformastionssystem (Available from: http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=36406)

unambiguous. The report covers the Eritrean National Service, the People's Army militia, illegal exits, forced returns, and rejected asylum seekers. It also discusses possible punishment related to these topics. In its final section, the report sheds more light on human rights violations and war crimes.

The report recognizes several severe methodological challenges in doing research on a number of sensitive issues in Eritrea. It is generally difficult to find updated and valid information regarding the human rights situation and other sensitive topics in Eritrea and the government does not share this information and international human rights organizations are prohibited from entering. Reporting on these topics is therefore in many instances largely derived from sources outside Eritrea which is associated with a number of methodological issues. Some well-established and commonly used sources, including the US State Department, HRW and Amnesty International do not always make their sources explicit making it difficult to assess the validity of their findings. The data used in reports that do contain information from inside of Eritrea tends to consist of anecdotal information from representatives of the international community in Asmara and statements by government representatives.

Assessment: Lifos has attempted to use broad a range of sources as possible to avoid some of the methodological issues associated with research on Eritrea (such as round-tripping and false confirmations). They refer for instance to older data that still can be considered reliable. What data this is and how it was determined that these still remain reliable is not, as far as we can see, made explicit however. The number of sources (9 interviews and 36 written sources) is, even following a strict assessment of the validity and reliability of (written) sources, relatively small and the report could have benefitted from a larger number of sources (the validity and reliability of the interviews are apparently not assessed to the same extent). Lifos has, to its credit, moderated its claims in certain passages of the paper to reflect the limitations of valid data (or the limited availability of data altogether).

4.4 Reporting by the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea

The Human Rights Council (HRC) established, through resolution 26/24, the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in Eritrea in 2014. Its establishment followed the publication of two major reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, who had raised serious concern about the human rights situation in the country and called for an increased international scrutiny on Eritrea.[64] The HRC mandated the COI to "investigate violations of human rights law, as outlined in the reports of the special rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea".[65] Following the first report of the COI on Eritrea the HRC extended its duration for another year with the more specific mandate to "investigate systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights in Eritrea with a view to ensuring full accountability, including where these violations may amount to crimes against humanity".[66]

[64] See *First Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth*, A/HRC/23/53, 28 May 2013 [hereinafter "First Keetharuth Report"]; *Second Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth*, A/HRC/26/45, 13 May 2014 [hereinafter "Second Keetharuth Report"].

[65] HRC (2014) Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council: 26/24 Situation of human rights in Eritrea, HRC 26th session – Agenda item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention (A/HRC/RES/26/24). (Available from: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/082/92/PDF/G1408292.pdf?OpenElement)

[66] HRC (2015) 29/18 Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council: Situation of human rights in Eritrea, HRC 29th session – Agenda item 4 (A/HRC/RES/29/18). (Available from: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/163/44/PDF/G1516344.pdf?OpenElement)

HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1)[67]

This report, which covers the period between independence and 2015, is based on 550 confidential interviews with Eritreans and others in third countries (including Switzerland, Italy, the UK, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Germany, Sweden and the US), 160 written submissions, a list of 40 proclamations by the Eritrean government, 106 other written sources/publications, and satellite images provided by UNOSAT. The Commission of Inquiry was not granted access to Eritrea itself. The Commission took all necessary measures and precautions to protect the confidentiality of information and the identity of the individuals who provided information to the Commission and/or supported its work.

The Commission based its conclusions and findings on a "reasonable grounds to believe" standard of proof – where the requirement is that the evidence suggest that it is reasonable to believe that a given incident or event occurred. It is important to note that this standard does not demand that this conclusion is the *only* reasonable conclusion that can be made.

Based on the above data the Commission found that *systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations* have been and are being committed by the Government of Eritrea. The enjoyment of rights and freedoms are severely curtailed in an overall context of a total lack of rule of law and accountability. The Commission also found that the violations in the areas of extrajudicial executions, torture (including sexual torture), national service and forced labour may constitute crimes against humanity. They conclude that this human rights situation prompts thousands of Eritreans to leave the country each year.

Assessment: Given the methodological challenges generally associated with research on Eritrea and the substantial amount of attention surrounding the publication of the report there is little reason to be surprised that it has been severely criticized from a number of directions. The main critiques are presented below:[68]

- **Statistical data**: The Commission recognizes that the lack of trustworthy statistical data on almost every domain in Eritrea represents a serious challenge and may result in interpretations that are not evidence-based or where the evidence is of questionable validity and reliability.
- **Overly ambitious temporal scope**: the report covers the period from independence in 1991/93 to 2015 which perhaps is overly ambitious, even for a 450-page report. The report could have been more in depth if a less ambitious temporal scope had been chosen (beginning with the political crackdown in 2001-2002 for instance).
- **Methodology of the interviews**: the report does not present a comprehensive methodology for the selection of respondents or for the actual interview processes themselves. This makes it

[67] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)

[68] Muller, T. R. (2016) "Representing Eritrea: Geopolitics and narratives of oppression", Review of African Political Economy, vol.43, no.150, pp.658-667; Muller, T. R. (2016) Human rights as a political tool – Eritrea and the 'crimes against humanity' narrative, Aspiration and Revolution (10.06.2016) (Available from: https://tanjarmueller.wordpress.com/2016/06/10/human-rights-as-a-political-tool-eritrea-and-the-crimes-against-humanity-narrative/) ; Bereketab, R. (2016) Eritrea's refugee crisis and the role of the international community, The Nordic Africa Institute, Policy Note no.2:2016; UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"

difficult to independently assess the validity of the interviews and harms the validity of the report as a whole.

- **Characteristics of the sample**: the report does not present an overview describing the composition of respondents. As such it is near impossible to independently assess the presence of biases in this material as well as other issues of relevance.
- **Statistical representation/representativeness of respondents vis-à-vis the sample**: The report does not present the reader with statistics showing the share of testimonies gathered that support a given claim made in the report. How many of the respondents have for instance experienced abuse during national service or have been persecuted for their religious beliefs – a minority or majority of the sample?
- **Validity in interviews**: the question concerning the truthfulness of the respondents' responses is not sufficiently problematized and the measures taken to ensure a high degree of validity is not presented. The report only includes extracts form interviews making it nearly impossible to understand the surrounding context.
- **Selection of written sources**: The methodology concerning the treatment of written submissions is not entirely clear.
- **Limited number of references**: Many passages of the report are only supported by a small number of sources and would potentially have been substantially strengthened if more references where made explicit.

In order to garner the scholarly community's reflection on the methodological challenges of the COI report, we asked through an email interview several of the world leading scholars on Eritrea about their opinions. Several of them find that the report does present a methodologically sound analysis of the current situation in Eritrea, although some also offered critical remarks. These scholars represent the leading global academic community on Eritrean studies. As per our agreement with these researchers we have anonymized their identities.

Researcher 1 stated in communication with ILPI that the findings of the report correspond with his/her personal experiences from inside Eritrea between 1995 and 2010. He/she points out that the use of interviews with refugees/migrants/diaspora is methodologically problematic, but that there are few other viable alternatives as the Eritrean government has refused to cooperate with the HRC. Researcher 2 presents a similar assessment and states that the interviews with as many Eritreans as possible in locations outside of Eritrea is a viable approach, particularly when the findings are carefully interpreted and conceptualized. Researcher 3 further agrees with the overall validity of the findings of the HRC COI 2015 report.

Researcher 4 stated that the report presents a thorough assessment and detailed presentation of conditions in Eritrea and that it is highly useful for government agencies, human rights organizations, and the broader scholarly community. He/she argues, however, that there are some limitations in the usefulness of the data presented for scholarly work. The primary reason for this is that a substantial amount of the evidence is presented in the form of short quotations without information that could reveal the identity of the interviewee. While this is fully understandable, as the safety of respondents is paramount, it does result in decontextualized data which makes them less suitable for certain types of scholarly research.

Researcher 5 remains partially critical to the report and points to three methodological weaknesses. First, the lack of direct observation and research conducted in the country. While recognizing that the COI was not granted access and that Eritreans living in third countries can be precious sources of information, these sources cannot provide a full understanding of the situation in Eritrea. Second, the highly institutionalized nature of interviews conducted in a comparatively short time with a highly vulnerable group of individuals is likely to have negatively impacted the quality of the data collected. Third, the report does not fully take into account previous studies on Eritrea. Although there are issues with using pre-existing data some of these have been collected inside the country and could have represented useful sources of information.

ILPI finds that all of the above methodological concerns are relevant to problematize in relation to the report's very dire conclusion. We have not, however, had the resources or opportunity to thoroughly investigate how these methodological challenges have, if any, impaired the validity of the COI findings. Therefore, despite its possible methodological weaknesses, the HRC COI 2015 represents the most comprehensive report on Eritrea in more than a decade, and that is does provide the reader with a great amount of valid and valuable information. Furthermore, as the authors have explicitly stated that they make use of a "reasonable grounds to believe" standard of proof, our assessment is that the claims made in the report are supported to this extent.

HRC (2016) Detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/32/CRP.1)[69]

Following the Commission of Inquiry's presentation of its report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/29/42) during the HRCs 29th session it was decided to extend the mandate of the Commission with one year in order to further explore and investigate systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights in Eritrea with a view *to ensuring full accountability, including whether these violations may amount to crimes against humanity*. The Commission followed the methods of work described in its first report, including with regard to the protection of witnesses, investigative methods, its legal and factual findings, the historical background of Eritrea, the State's economic and political context and its legal framework. In its work, the Commission has been at all times guided by the principles of independence, impartiality, objectivity, transparency, integrity, and the principle of "do no harm". The report hence draws on a pool of interviews conducted in 13 countries (including experts, diplomatic staff, journalists, UN agencies, and NGOs). It also received 44,500 submissions from 39 countries.

Assessment: This report is less susceptible to some of the critiques directed against the 2015 report – most importantly the 2016 report is more concerned with human rights violations that explicitly occurred between June 2014 and the date of publication. It has, however, been criticized for its treatment of the submissions received.

The Commission made a selection of 2,500 (about 5%) of the 44,500 submissions received from 39 countries.[70] Each submitter of the selected sample was then contacted by telephone to verify their submission. This apparently revealed that many submissions were submitted involuntarily, either because the author had been coerced (government agents have allegedly informed that refusal to sign a submission would result in the state refusing to renew passports) or the submission signed without the knowledge of the signatory. In one country, a significant number of contributors stated that they had not appended their names to a petition and that their signatures had therefore been forged. Others were signed by Eritreans who left the country before or immediately after 1991 or their relatives. Finally, a significant amount of the submissions showed clear signs that the sender had not actually read the 2015 report. As one recognised international scholar pointed out to us the counter campaign against the HRC 2015 report was to a considerable extent initiated by the government and many of the statements given where provided by diaspora Eritreans with little access to Eritrea "beyond the main streets of Asmara and the hotels of Massawa".

[69] HRC (2016) Detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/32/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIEritrea/A_HRC_32_CRP.1_read-only.pdf)

[70] The submissions were categorized by country of origin and a number generator used to select samples from each country proportional to the total number of submissions received from that country.

We realize that some form of selection procedure was needed to provide an initial overview of the substantial number of submissions and that a great number of these may have been sent involuntarily, by individuals who have not lived in Eritrea for decades or by individuals who have not actually read the report. Their further treatment, however, which presents an analysis of common themes (apparently based on the randomized selection) followed by the conclusion that "the submissions do not undermine the findings of the first report" and a seemingly disregard of them for the remainder of the report is problematic. Given the attention to interview responses it makes the report open for critiques of intentional bias and political motivations that may undermine the sustained and intensive effort in producing this report.

In addition to the critique levelled against the report from its treatment of submissions there are a number of scholars and experts who are not fully convinced of the main conclusions. One prominent social scientist argued in communication with ILPI that while we may know that military service is indefinite, that a great number of Eritreans have a strong feeling of "un-freedom" and insecurity, and that mistreatment in the military may be quite common, we don't know how frequent, common, and widespread these abuses are. Are the abuses systematic and the result of government policy or the result of a lack of accountability and discipline within the army?

ILPI finds the treatment of a large number of submissions to be problematic, although it seems to be the case that a large number of these where submitted involuntarily and/or without having read the actual report. The methodological issues of the first report are also largely applicable for the second one too. This is problematic given the severity of the HRC 2016 mandate to the COI. Given the gravity of these allegations some of these methodological issues should have been further problematized; whether such an approach would have impacted the conclusions of the report is not something we have had resources to consider in this study.

4.5 Summary of the review of the selected reports and scholarly publications on Eritrea

The section above has underlined the significant challenges in doing research on Eritrea. The most significant barrier to the collection of internally and externally valid and reliable data[71] from inside Eritrea is the PFDJ government, which prevents entry for researchers and creates an environment of fear and self-censorship. Surveys on issues such as human rights and drivers of migration with a large and representative sample of Eritreans in Eritrea is, under the current government policies and attitudes, impossible to conduct.

We find that the long-duration (ethnographic) fieldwork inside Eritrea to be the research design most suited for collecting highly internally valid data. The downside of this approach is, as recognized by several of the contributions themselves, a low degree of externally valid and reliable data (i.e. the findings cannot be generalized beyond the sample and it is difficult to reproduce). This research design is furthermore resource intensive and/or time consuming and greatly dependent on the researcher's ability to over time establish trusting relationships with her respondents.

We also find the qualitative multi source research design, the most numerous approach in our selected sample of reports and publications, to be able to provide convening accounts of Eritrea. The degree to which this approach does so depends, however, to a large extent on the researchers' ability to gather a substantial number of independent sources of data and triangulate these in a robust manner.

[71] Please see the first few paragraphs of section 3 for the definitions of the concepts internal and external validity, and reliability as these are used in this report.

Numerous interviews in different locations combined with numerous literature references and participant observation inside Eritrea may potentially result in findings with a significant degree of internal validity. This approach may also to a certain extent arguably provide findings of some external validity as it can be shown to fit into a larger pattern or trend. The qualitative nature of this research does, however, place considerable limitations on the degree to which reliability can be achieved.

Finally, we find the implicit or explicit use of a standard of proof to highly impact the credibility of the different contributions. Several of the contributions in our sample could have improved their credibility if they had moderated the level of certainty to some of the claims made.

5 Typologies of flight from Eritrea

5.1 Introduction to Eritrean migration

Contemporary Eritrea is very different from the state which was envisaged in the early 1990s, as many promises given by the liberation leaders of a 'prosperous and peaceful development' have failed to materialize.[72] Eritrea has turned into an authoritarian state, labelled by the UN Security Council as a regional spoiler and hence justifying imposing international sanctions on the country.[73] The structures and functioning of the state largely reflects the decisions of President Isaias Afwerki and the political and military elite of the ruling party People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).[74]

The constitution adopted by the constituent assembly in 1997 has yet to be implemented, leaving Eritrea to be governed through institutions that originally were meant to be of a transitional nature. Following the devastating war with Ethiopia from 1998-2000, and the ensuing dissent movement ("G-15 ") and political crisis of 2001, the country has been ruled more or less by Presidential decree under an undeclared "state of emergency", resulting in a progressively more centralized political system where the primary functions of the state are directly controlled by the President and his office.[75]

Contemporary Eritrea has become one of the largest producers of refugees in the world, with a society affected by what Kibreab (2007) has termed a "powerful obsession to migrate".[76] Hundreds of thousands of Eritreans have left their home country and ended up in refugee camps in Sudan and Ethiopia, or in the global North as refugees and asylum seekers. What are the primary drivers or causes of this migration?

Answering this questions is no simple task as migration as a phenomenon is caused by a combination of economic, social, political, and cultural factors, and is based on both individual as well as collective experiences. Migration is often analysed in terms of some variant of a *push-pull model,* which seeks to identify the factors that drive people to leave their country (push factors), as well as the factors that draw people away from their country (pull factors). While it seems reasonable to assume that most people migrate in the hope to improve their and their family's conditions and opportunities, the simplistic push/pull model has received considerable critique. It has over the last couple of decades gradually become clear that the rigid differentiation between push and pull factors is a simplistic and artificial distinction, which obscures the more complex and convoluted reasoning behind flight. People

[72] Tronvoll, K. and Mekonnen, D. R (2014) *The African Garrison State – Human Rights and Political Developments in Eritrea*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2014.
[73] Although the UN Security Sanctions have been increasingly criticised as "unjustified" by some actors, the Security Council still vote to sustain the sanctions as of this is written.
[74] Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1)
[75] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)", and Mekonnen, D. R., & Estefanos, M. (2011). From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean Tragedy of Human Trafficking. *Available at SSRN 2055303*.
[76] Kibreab, G. (2007). The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation. In Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.) *The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa*, Lund University.

may migrate due to a combination of fears, uncertainties, hopes and aspirations that can be difficult to meaningfully separate from one another.[77]

The literature, interview material, and data collected in the process of writing this report revealed that many intertwined internal and external factors act as drivers for migration from Eritrea. This is further complicated as these drivers or the weight assigned to them by the individual decision-maker may change across time and space as the individual traverse the flight path and makes new experiences, forms new contracts and finds new opportunities. We have nevertheless attempted to present several the most commonly stated primary drivers of migration from Eritrea. We differentiate between internal drivers (traditional 'push' factors) and external drivers (traditional 'pull' factors) of primary migration.

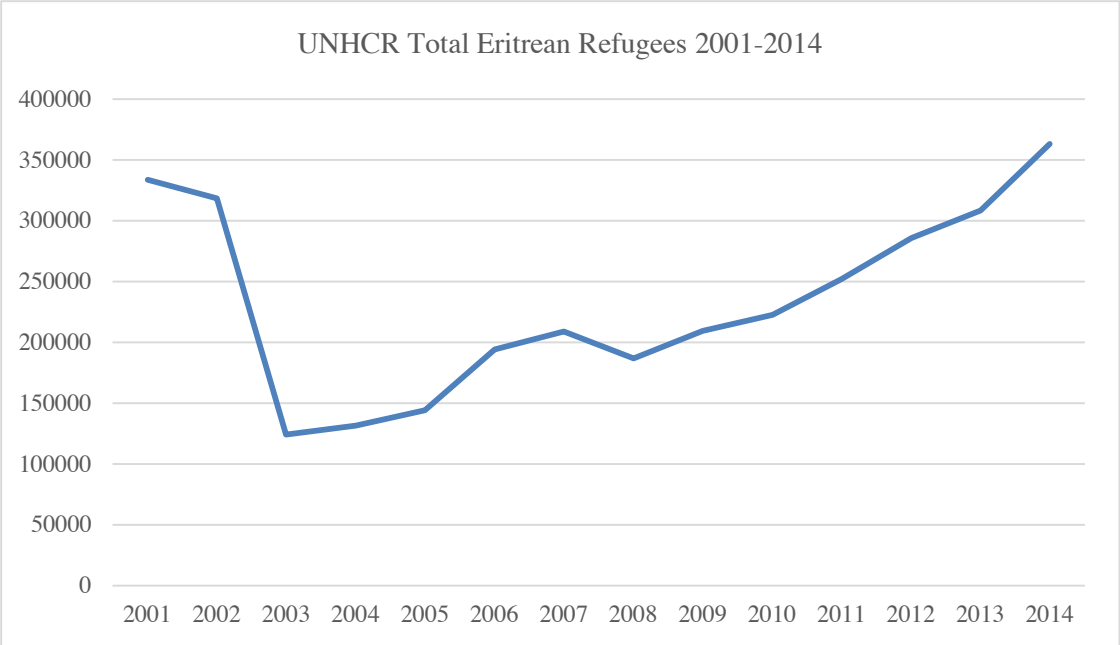
5.2 Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers in numbers

Migration from Eritrea has been considerable for the last couple of decades. Thousands fled the unrest following the Eritrean war for independence 1961-1991 and the Eritrean civil wars (between ELF and EPLF in 1972-74 and 1980-81). Additional spikes in refugee flows occurred during the Eritrean-Ethiopian war between 1998 and 2000. Others have fled or migrated from Eritrea for a hosts of other reasons during the same period.

Total Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers 2001-2014

The UNHCR defines refugees as "individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; its 1967 Protocol; the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; individuals granted complementary forms of protection; or those enjoying temporary protection. Since 2007, the refugee population also includes people in a refugee-like situation."

[77] Crisp, J. (2008): "Beyond the nexus: UNHCR's evolving perspective on refugee protection and international migration", New Issues in Refugee Research – Research Paper No.155, Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR and De Haas, Hein (2014): "What drives human migration", in Anderson, B and Keith, M. (eds.) Migration: A COMPAS Anthology, COMPAS, Oxford, 2014.



Data from UNHCR Population Statistics Reference Database (Available from: http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview)

The substantial decline in refugee numbers between 2001 and 2003 are in all likelihood the result of the end of the Eritrean-Ethiopian war.

The Eritrean refugees flee first to neighboring countries. According to UNHCR statistics Sudan held more than 324,000 Eritrean refugees in 2001, dwarfing the number of Eritrean refugees in other locations. Ethiopia was according to the same data home to 4,212 Eritrean refugees in the same period. This balance changed considerably over time. In 2005 Sudan housed more than 116,000 Eritrean refugees while the number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia had grown to 10,700. In 2010 the number of Eritrean refugees in Sudan further declined to 103,800 and the number grew in Ethiopia to 44,700. A large influx of Eritrean refugees between 2010 and 2014 have resulted in Ethiopia surpassing Sudan in the number of Eritrean refugees by 2014[78] – Ethiopia housing 123,700 and Sudan housing 109,200.[79]

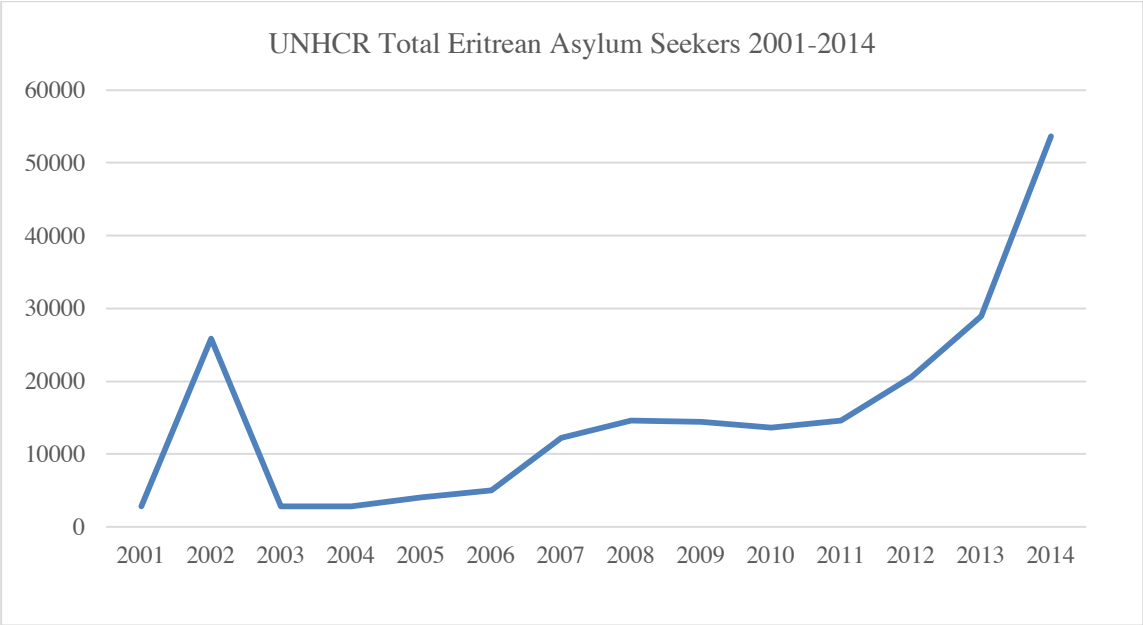
Interpreting these numbers may be more complicated than what meets the eye. The fact that the number of Eritreans classified as "refugees" residing in the Sudan have declined over the last decade, does not in itself mean that there are less Eritreans in the country, only that their status as "refugees" or not has shifted, due to a set of factors. Obviously many move on to third countries, but others are re-classified from "refugees" to other resident statuses within Sudan. There are still a considerable amount of Eritreans residing in refugee camps in Kassala in Eastern Sudan which fled Eritrea in the 1960s; but they are no longer represented on the official UN statistics on refugees in the Sudan.[80]

[78] There was a considerable number of missing values for 2014, and thus the total number of Eritrean refugees in 2014 may be higher.

[79] Sudan and Ethiopia are, according to UNHCR statistics, by far the most important recipient states of Eritrean refugees, and have been top two recipients the entire period. In 2001 the third and fourth major recipients of Eritrean refugees where the USA with 1153 and Australia with 708. In 2005 the UK housed 3617 and Germany 2746. In 2010 nearly 17,000 Eritrean refugees were in Israel and 10,850 were in Italy. Israel remained the third largest recipient of Eritrean refugees in 2014 with 32600 followed by Switzerland with 16,100.

[80] The author has visited these camps personally and done interviews with representatives of this first wave of Eritrean refugees. See also: http://awate.com/eritrean-refugees-in-sudan-50-years-and-counting/

The UNHCR defines asylum seekers as "individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined, irrespective of when they may have been lodged".



Data from UNHCR Population Statistics Reference Database (Available from: http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview)

The trend in the number of asylum seekers between 2001 and 2014[81] follows, according to UNHCR statistics, an overall similar trajectory to that of Eritrean refugees. However, the most important differences are first, a significant spike in the number of Eritrean asylum seekers in 2002 (contrary to declining "refugee" numbers in the same year); second, a steeper growth trajectory following 2010; and third, a much lower number overall. The spike in 2002 is predominantly the result of an influx of 23,442 Eritrean asylum seekers to Sudan this year. Although it is difficult to be certain this occurs following the general clamp down following the G-15 incident[82] in 2001 and coincides with the introduction of the Warsay Yekealo Development Campaign (WYDC) in 2002.

Whereas Sudan and Ethiopia in this period where the most important destinations for Eritrean refugees, this is not the case when it comes to asylum seekers. The most significant recipients of Eritrean asylum seekers in the period where Kenya (899) and Netherlands (554) in 2001, Germany (1,135) and South Africa (843) in 2005, Uganda (2,433) and Sudan (2,395) in 2010, and Czech Republic (15,819) and Slovakia (7,091) in 2014.

Total Eritrean asylum seekers to EU28, Norway and Switzerland 2008-2015

The UNHCR does not, unfortunately, provide additional information that may make it possible to investigate closer the background (gender, age, ethnicity, etc) of these Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees. Eurostat,[83] on the other hand, provides additional information that is of interest, though only

[81] There was a considerable number of missing values for 2014, and thus the total number of Eritrean asylum seekers in 2014 may be higher.
[82] G-15 is the name given to a group of former PFDJ members who in an open letter criticized Isayas Afewerki. Out of the 15 original members 11 are in prison, three are in the US, and one rejoined the government.
[83] Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union.

for asylum seekers (not "refugees") and only for the period 2008-2015. The table below presents the trends in Eritrean asylum seekers from EU28, Switzerland and Norway between 2008 and 2015.[84]

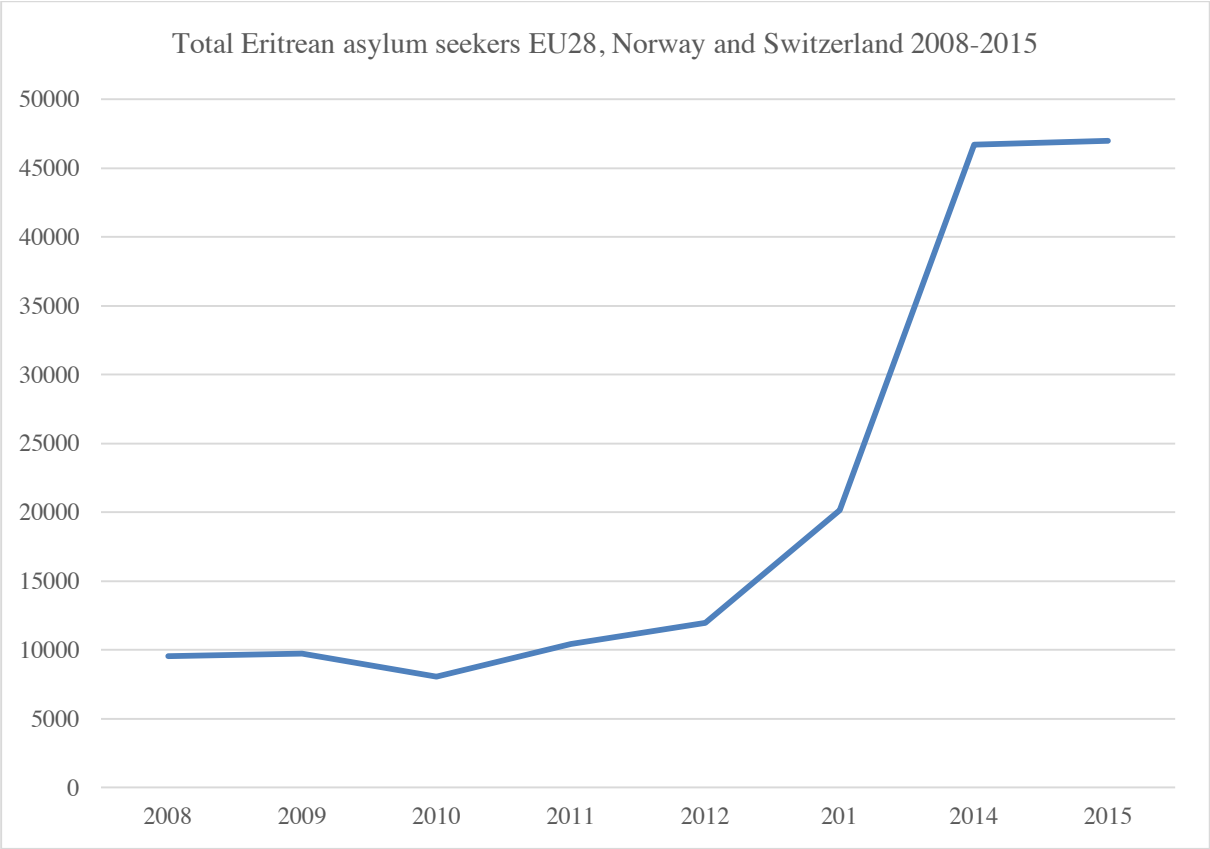


Figure based on Eurostat "Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age, and sex - Annual aggregated data (rounded) (Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database)

The trend of asylum seekers to EU28, Norway and Switzerland from 2008-2015 roughly follows the same trend seen in the table UNHCR Total Eritrean Asylum Seekers 2001-2014 for the same period. There has been a significant increase in both the number of Eritrean asylum seekers in general (UNHCR) and in Europe (Eurostat) since 2011/2012. The most significant total recipients of Eritrean asylum seekers for the entire period (2008-2015) among the EU28 are Sweden (31,135 or 28% of total EU28), Germany (30,450 or 27% of total EU28), Netherlands (14,410 or 13% of total EU28) and the UK (12,450 or 11% of total EU28).

[84] EU 28: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, UK.

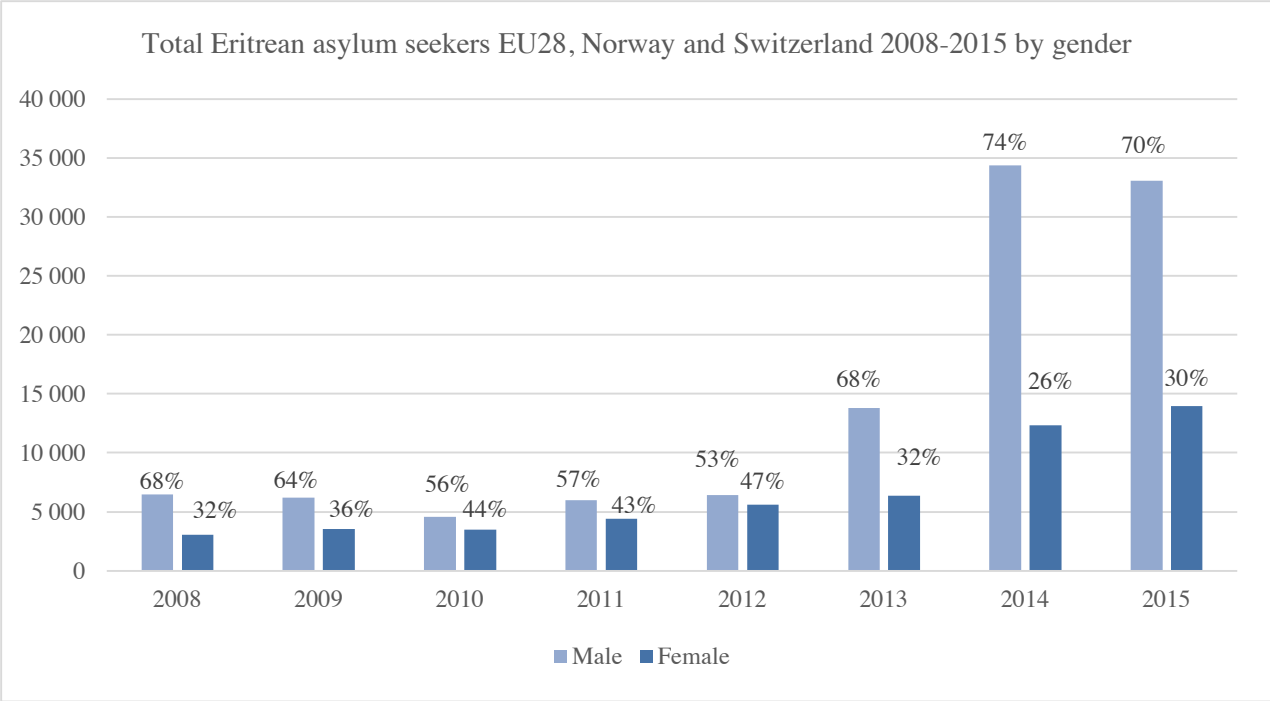


Figure based on Eurostat "Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age, and sex - Annual aggregated data (rounded). Annual percentages in parenthesis. (Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database)

The share of male and female Eritrean asylum seekers to EU28, Norway and Switzerland remained relatively similar between 2008 and 2012, as did the overall number of asylum seekers. Following 2012, however, the number of asylum seekers grew considerably, as did the relative share of male asylum seekers. While the number of female asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015 are roughly three times more than they were in 2008-2011, the number of male asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015 is nearly 5,5 times higher than in 2008-2011. The growth in the number of asylum seekers to EU28, Norway and Switzerland from 2012 and to 1015 is predominantly driven by a growth in male asylum seekers.

The table on the following page, labeled Total Eritrean asylum seekers EU28, Norway and Switzerland 2008-2015 by age, shows the changes in the age composition of Eritrean asylum seekers to EU28, Norway and Switzerland from 2008-2015. The first observation is that the number of asylum seekers older than 65 years old is negligible throughout the entire period (remaining less than one percent during the entire period). The other immediate observation is the dominance of the age group 18-34.[85] The vast majority of the growth in asylum applications are due to growth in asylum seekers from this age group. A third interesting observation is the growth in the share of under-aged Eritrean asylum seekers belonging to the age group 14-17. The share of this group increases from 5% of total Eritrean asylum seekers to the EU28, Norway and Switzerland in 2008 to 17% (7,760) in 2015.

Based on the Eurostat data is it possible to see that the number of Eritrean asylum seekers has growth considerably following 2011/2012 and that this growth trajectory is predominantly caused by an increase in male asylum seekers between 18-34 years old.

[85] The age groups are pre-made by Eurostat and not possible to change or disaggregate.

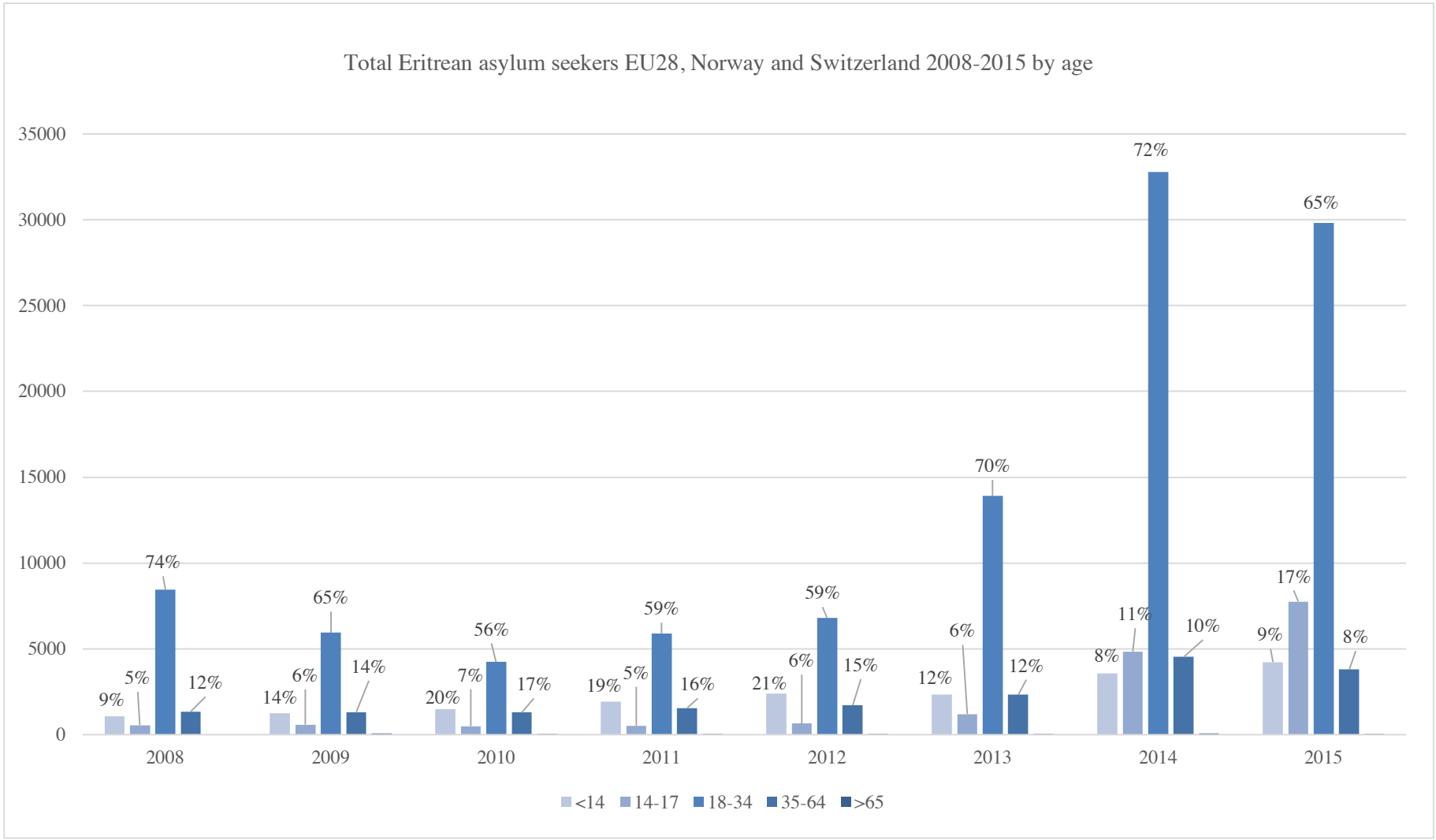


Figure based on Eurostat "Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age, and sex - Annual aggregated data (rounded). Annual percentages in parenthesis. (Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database)

Total Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway 2003-2015[86]

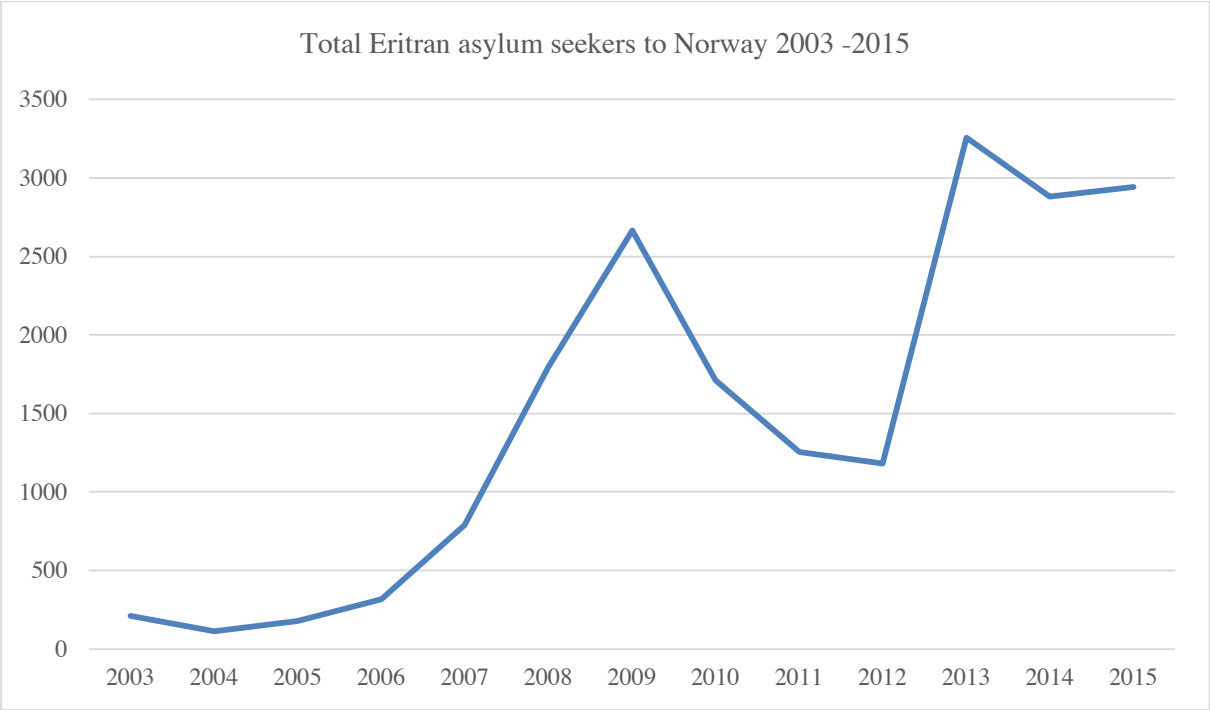


Figure based on data provided by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – Unit for Statistics and Analysis.

The trend in Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway between 2003 and 2015 is radically different from the other Eritrean asylum trends based on data from UNHCR and Eurostat presented above. The most significant difference is the dramatic growth between 2006 and 2009, and the subsequent dramatic decline between 2009 and 2012, before the number of Eritrean asylum seekers bounces back again. We have not had resources available to investigate the reasons for explaining this fluctuation, and whether this stems from Norwegian driven policies or from factors originating within Eritrea or along the route of flight.

The figure on the following page, 'Number of Eritrean Asylum Seekers by Gender 2003-2015', shows the annual share of male and female Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway between 2003 and 2015. The balance of men and women remains fairly equal between 2003 and 2005 (nearly 50/50). In the following years (2006-2012) males account for roughly 56-62% of Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway. The 2013-2015, however, shows a significant change in two ways – first, the number of asylum seekers spikes dramatically from a total of 1,035 in 2012 to 2,834 in 2013; and second, males suddenly account for 72-75% of all Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway. The higher number of males may be the result of a larger degree of exemption from national service for women, a real or perceived increase in risk associated with migration and/or greater difficulty for women to finance migration. We cannot fully explain this significant increase in (male) Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway and this question warrants additional research.

[86] We would like to express our sincerest thanks to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – Unit for statistics and analysis for sharing their data on Eritrean asylum seekers in Norway, and for clarifying any questions we had to these data.

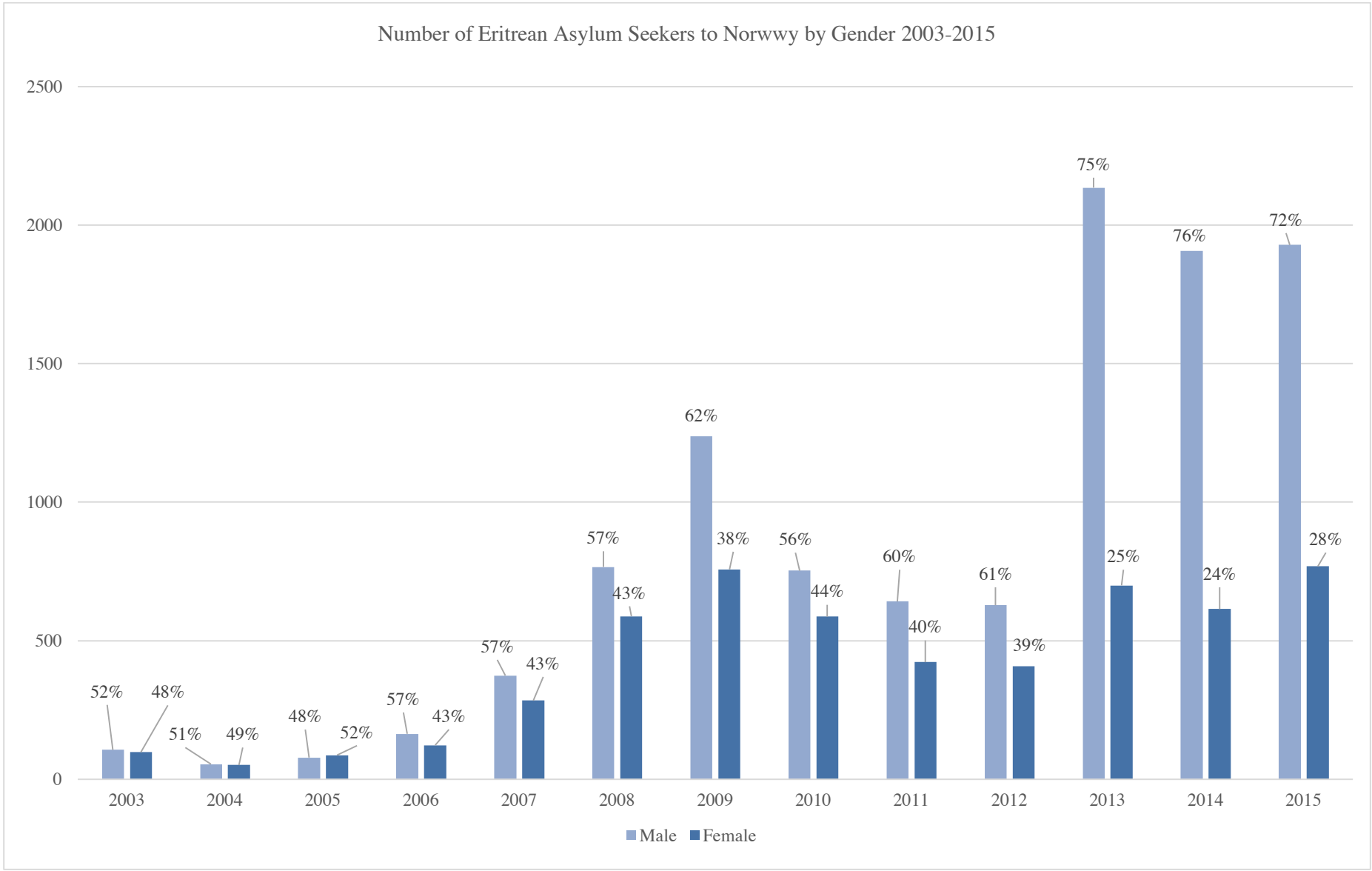


Figure based on data provided by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – Unit for Statistics and Analysis. Annual percentages in parenthesis.

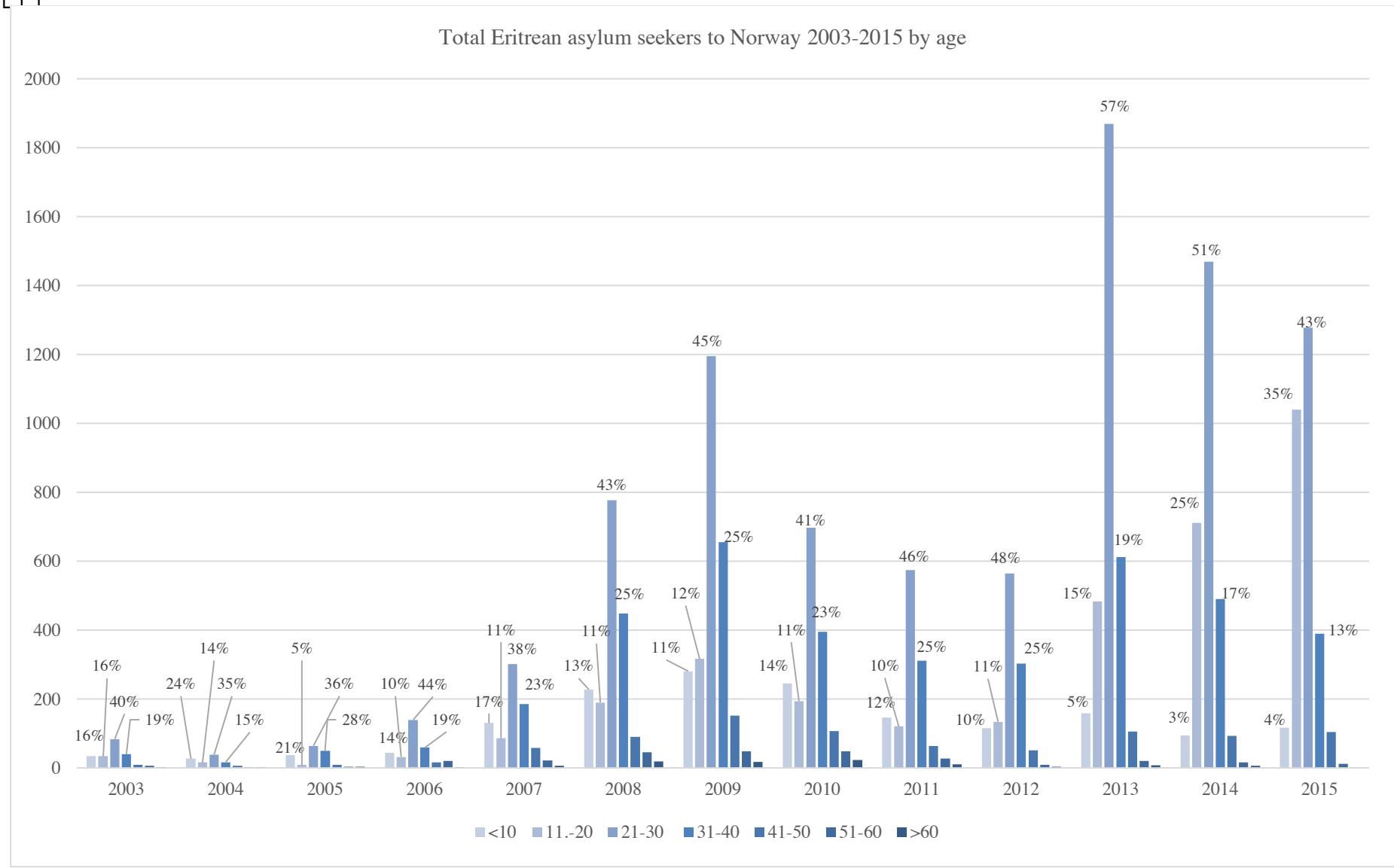


Figure based on data provided by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – Unit for Statistics and Analysis. Annual percentages in parenthesis. In order to enable reading of the figure only the four most significant age groups for each year are provided with an indication of their percentage contribution to all migration that year. These are in all cases age groups >10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40 and account for a total of 91% in 03, 89% in 04, 90% in 05, 88% in 06, 89% in 07, 91% in 08, 92% in 09, 90% in 10, 92% in 11, 95% in 12, 96% in 13, 96% in 14, and 96% in 15.

The figure above, 'Total Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway 2003-2015 by age', shows the total number of annual Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway by age group. Immediately apparent is the high share of individuals in the 21-30 age group, which remains dominant throughout the period. The second interesting observation is the different growth patterns for the various age groups. While there is some variation the changes in the age groups <10 (less than 10), 41-50 and 51-60 (the number of asylum seekers belonging to the age group >60 is negligible throughout the period) are relatively modest and the number of asylum seekers in these groups remain comparatively stable. On the other hand, the number of asylum seekers belonging to age groups 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40 vary greatly through this period. The rise and fall in the total number of Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway during this period is predominantly the result of changes in these three age groups. Finally, the age of Eritrean asylum seekers has decreased in the last years and the age group 11-20 has surpassed the age group 31-40. This may be the result of a greater lack of "loyalty" to the national service and the Eritrean nation among newer generations of Eritrean youth, or the share demographic imbalance of people belonging to the age group 31-40 left in Eritrea. It is, however, difficult to be certain of this without additional research.

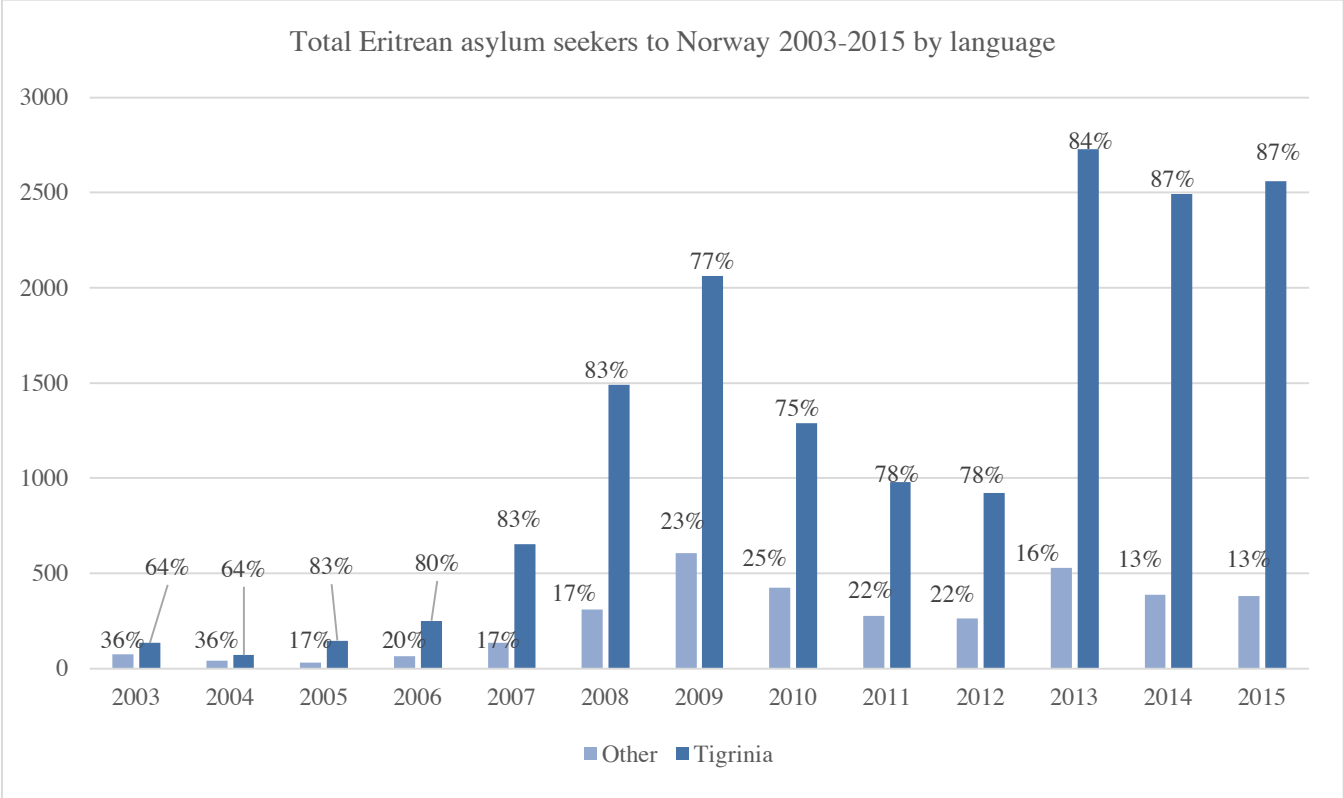


Figure based on data provided by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – Unit for Statistics and Analysis. Annual percentages in parenthesis. The other category includes a large number of different languages including Tigre, Bilin/Bilen, Amharic, Arabic, Saho, and Afar.

The figure above, 'Total Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway 2003-2005 by language', shows that Tigrinya speaking Eritreans have accounted for the clear majority of Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway. The dominance of Tigrinya speaking Eritreans has only increased in recent years coming close to 90% in 2014 and 2015. This trend may be due to a substantial existing Tigrinya speaking diaspora in the West/Europe/Norway that draws Tigrinya speaking Eritreans to this part of the world. The Tigrinya highlanders have are also generally more educated and well-positioned than the Eritrean lowlanders.

Tigrinya speakers are also all Christians[87] (predominantly Orthodox), which may lead to differences in preference for third country destinations. The Eritrean lowland Muslim population, it is believed, favour Middle-Eastern countries as refugee, or are settling in the Sudan. However, further research is warranted to seek out explanations for differences in migration routes and third country locations in relation to religion and ethnicity of Eritreans.

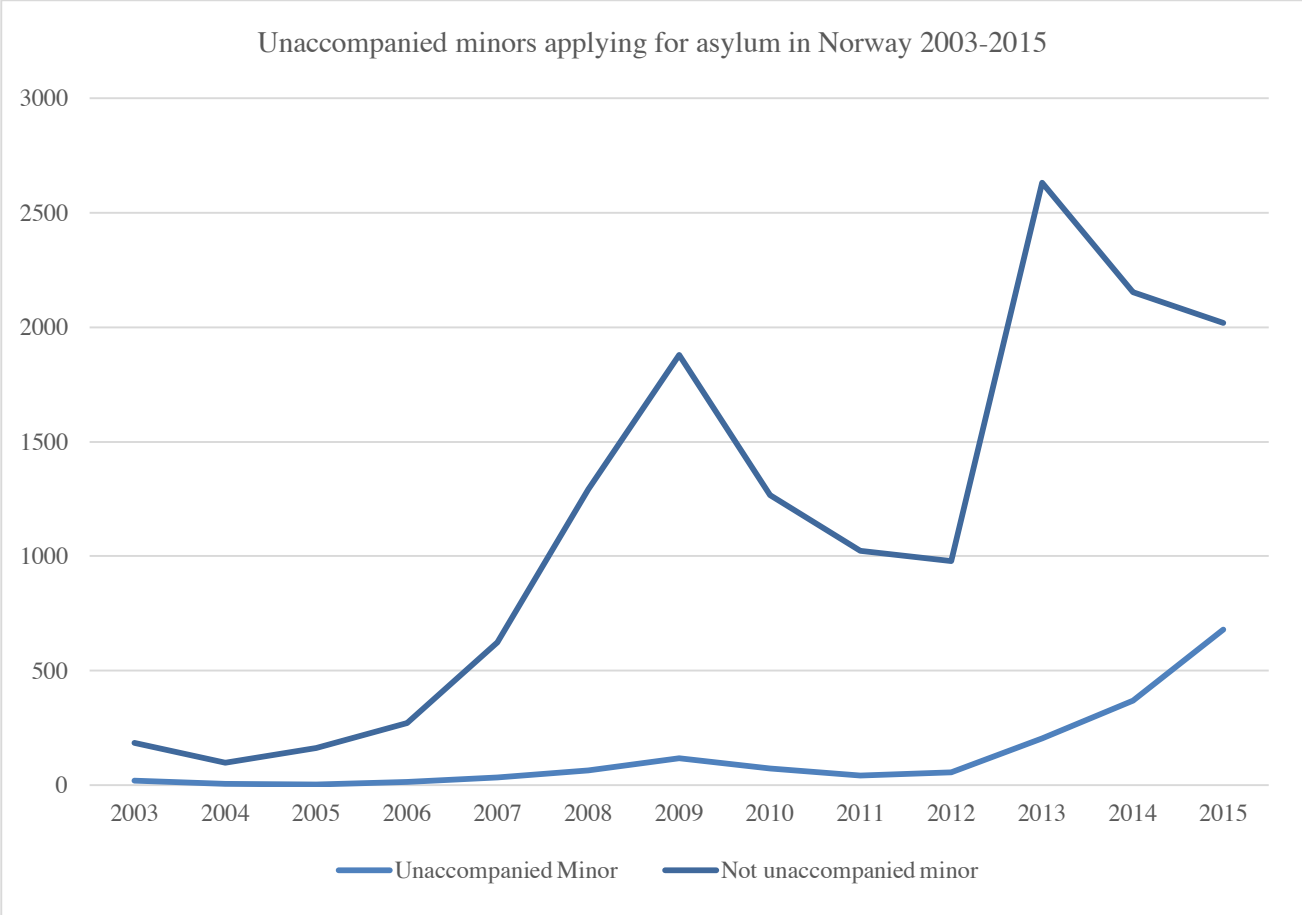


Figure based on data provided by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – Unit for Statistics and Analysis.

The number of unaccompanied minors from Eritrea applying for asylum in Norway is relatively small compared to the number of adults and non-unaccompanied minors. However their increase is radical, and the number of Eritrean unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Norway has grown from 55 in 2012 to 679 in 2015 – that is more than 12 times as many in just a few years! The significant increase in unaccompanied minors since 2012 is a worrying trend as these individuals are particularly vulnerable. This increase may be the result of a decrease in border control and an increase in a lack of hopes for the future among young Eritreans, although answering this question warrants more research.

UNHCR, Eurostat and UDI data all point in the direction of a substantial growth in the number of Eritrean asylum seekers (and refugees) between 2001 and 2015. These individuals are predominantly male, although a substantial number are female, relatively young (appear to become even younger) and

[87] With the exception of the Jebertis, who are Tigrinya-speaking Muslims traditionally residing in the urban centres of the highland.

Tigrinya speaking. The following sections of this chapter seeks to explain why thousands of Eritreans are leaving Eritrea.

5.3 ILPI Survey

In preparation for this study we conducted interviews with Eritreans in refugee camps in Ethiopia. Due to the limited time and resources for this study we chose an interview structure which combined questions with pre-determined replies as well as open-ended questions. This structure was chosen in an attempt to preserve some of the insight that open-ended questions enable while at the same time ensuring that a substantial amount of data would be easily comparable.

Interviews were conducted in Adi Harush, Hitsat, May Ayni and Shimbela refugee camps in Tigray, Ethiopia. The interviews were conducted in Tigrinya by a native-speaking scholar well experienced in social research, and later translated back to English (see annex for details about the survey methodology). ILPI was not able to conduct interviews inside Eritrea as our request for an entry visa when unanswered by the Eritrean embassy in Stockholm, Sweden. The data collected by ILPI in connection with this report includes the responses by 153 adults (119 male and 34 female respondents) between the ages of 18 and 68 (total average age of 32,8) - who left Eritrea between 1998 and 2016. We would have liked to ensure a higher degree of female responses but were unable to do so. This challenge could perhaps have been overcome if we had more time and resources available to establish our presence in each camp. Most adult respondents were Tigrinya speaking and adhere to government approved Christian faiths (mostly Orthodox) although there were a few other ethnicities and faiths represented in the sample as well. While many of the respondents are young and unmarried more than half are married and report to have one or more children. Educational level varies through the sample although the clear majority report to have achieved either partial primary or partial secondary education.

We also gathered responses from 56 minors (38 male and 18 female) between the ages of 12 and 17. The relatively low number of minor responders is due to the additional time and care used to secure contact with minors and ensure that they understood what they participated in. They all migrated to Ethiopia between 2012 and 2016, with 66% migrating in 2015 or 2016. One of these minors reported to be living with older immediate family while the rest reported to be living with younger immediate family or with no family at all – they are in other words unaccompanied minors. All 56 minors reported to be attending school in the camps, and while they mostly report significant uncertainty of the future more than 75% report that their current economic situation is good or moderate. Except for 3 minors reporting to be Kunama and 2 reporting to be Saho, all other minors are Tigrinya-speaking. 87% of all minors in our sample are state approved Christians – the clear majority of which are Orthodox.

Neither the adult nor the minor sample are not representative of the Eritrean population is general. Considerable care was taken, however, to ensure that these samples are as representative as possible of Eritreans in Adi Harush, Hitsat, May Ayni and Shimbela refugee camps at the time of data collection. Among the methodological challenges resulting from this is a lack of data from Eritreans who either have no wish to migrate or who have a wish to migrate but have been unable to do so yet.

5.4 Internal drivers of migration/push factors

5.4.1 National service

The infamous and compulsory national service programme for all men and women in Eritrea is reportedly the most common reason given for fleeing the country. Although it is the prerogative of any government, according to international law, to establish a mandatory national service military / civilian program, it is the organisation, length and abusiveness of the national service programme in Eritrea which are being criticised.

Short historic summary of the national service

The national service was introduced under the Proclamation of National Service (No.82/1995) in 1995. This initiative, declared mandatory for both men and women between the ages of 18 and 50 (those between the ages of 18 and 40 are conscriptable and are part of the reserve army until they reach the age of 50), consisted of six months of military training and one year of deployment in military or civilian government service. The objective of the national service at this point in time, when it still enjoyed significant popularity, was the contribution to the reconstruction of Eritrea following three decades of liberation war, to establish a strong defence force with a large pool of reservists, and to create a new breed of patriotic citizens who would favour the national Eritrean secular identity over ethnic, religious or region-based allegiances.[88]

Following the war with Ethiopia the government introduced the so-called Warsay-Ykealo Development Campaign (WYDC), justifying this policy with the "no war, no peace" outcome of the conflict.[89] As a result of this campaign those serving in the national service were deployed in the civilian service, national and local administration and state owned companies in addition to the military. The most significant effect of the WYDC was, however, that the national service no longer was limited to 18 months but became open ended in duration.[90]

[88] Tronvoll, K. (1999). "Borders of violence – boundaries of identity: demarcating the Eritrean nation-state" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 22, no.6, pp. 1037-1060; Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa; Müller, T. R. (2013): Human Resource Development and the State: Dynamics of the Militarisation of Education in Eritrea, Studien zum Horn von Afrika, Köln ; Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta – Malta; Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106; Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland

[89] Warsay, or "inheritor" or "follower", refers to the younger generation while Yikealo, or "wise elder person", refers to the generation of liberation fighters. This implies that the younger generations must follow the example of self-sacrifice and patriotism of those who fought for the independence of the Eritrean nation (See Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.)

[90] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168; Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta – Malta; Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa.

In 2012 the People's Army, apparently akin an extended national guard, was introduced and the government began re-arming and re-training Eritrean citizens falling outside of the national service system. Justification for this was allegedly incursion in the Afar region and in the Badme area by Ethiopian forces in early to mid 2012. Other interpretations for the introduction of the People's Army is the need of President Isaias to balance the power of the army with a new armed force, with a separate line of command. While this practice seems to lack any explicit policy or legal framework, it seems to include persons who have been demobilized and discharged from national service and individuals over 50 who no longer are members of the reserve force.[91]

The contemporary context of the national service

Several hundred thousand Eritreans serve in some capacity in the National Service, with additional tens of thousands of new recruits each year. The estimates of Eritrean military service personnel vary between 150,000 to 350,000; the World Bank's Armed forces personnel database claims however that in 2014 there were 201,750 people serving in the Eritrea standing forces.[92] These individuals first undergo six months of military training before being deployed in military units or in the civil service. It seems very likely that the less educated conscripts are more likely to be deployed in military units and/or construction and agricultural work, while those with secondary-, high school-, or higher education are more likely to be assigned to civil institutions or party offices. Those assigned to the civilian sectors are, however, classified as soldiers and can be mobilized in military roles on short notice should the need for this arise.[93]

Exemptions from national service

Although the national service is mandatory for all Eritreans between 18 and 50, there are exemptions to this rule. Those who fought in the EPLF during the war of independence, for example, were originally exempt from the national service.

Women who are married, pregnant, or have children and Muslim women from rural areas are usually also granted an exemption, at least from the military part of the national service, although this policy seems to lack any explicit formal backing and may be arbitrarily implemented. Amnesty International (2015) reports that a number of those they interviewed had themselves been exempted from the national service or that they knew of women who had been exempted due to marriage, children and/or pregnancy. Other respondents reported, however, that they themselves or women they knew were required to continue their service despite being married, indicating that this exception is somewhat arbitrarily implemented.[94]

[91] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf); Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

[92] Accessed 28.12.16: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1

[93] Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061; Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93 and Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)

[94] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland and Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

The 1995 National Service Proclamation further exempts people with disabilities such as invalidity, blindness and psychological illness. It also provides for a limited exemption on educational grounds. Several respondents to Amnesty International (2015) reported, however, that they were conscripted alongside people with various physical disabilities.[95]

Religious leaders of the four official religious communities in Eritrea (the Eritrean Orthodox Tawehedo Church, the Eritrean Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Sunni Islam) were originally partially exempt from military service. This practice seems however to have been discontinued since 2010. It is important to underline that the majority of granted exemptions from the national service technically are temporary in nature and the authorities can withdraw these at any time and at their own discretion.[96]

Conscription practices

The majority of conscription for the national service has since 2003 occurred during year 12 of school at the Sawa military training camp. Most of the pupils attending year 12 at Sawa are directly assigned to the national service following the completion of their final examinations. Between 10,000 and 25,000 new recruits for the national service are recruited in this manner annually.[97] Others are conscripted by the local administration (kebabi) when they reach the appropriate age and enrolled in the national service.[98]

Finally, there are the infamous *giffas* (round-ups) in urban areas or arrests of persons for enlistment in the service. While this practice seems to have been relatively frequently used in the 2000s, there are some indications that they currently may be occurring less frequently.[99] These round-ups appear to have been indiscriminate in who they detained. There are several reported instances where individuals who had obtained exemptions from the national service were collected through the *giffas* if they failed to sufficiently document their exemption. These individuals were however, in most instances released upon providing the required documentation.[100]

Penalties for avoiding national service

The National Service Act and the Eritrean Criminal Code set out the penalties for failing to participate in the national service, including failure to register for service, flight from active national service, and evasion by different means including deceit or self-inflicted harm. Sanctions against this behaviour can

[95] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[96] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland
[97] This form of conscription is predominantly carried out in the Eritrean highlands as this is where the Eritrean education system has the greatest reach. As a result, young Tigrinya men and women are over-represented at Sawa (UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)")
[98] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland and UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[99] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[100] Landinfo (2016a) "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office ; EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland and UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)".

be a two-year prison sentence and/or a fine of 3,000 birr.[101] Those who flee the country to avoid the national service and who further fail to return to Eritrea before the age of 40, face the punishment of 5 years in prison or until the person in question reaches the age of 50. The New Eritrean Criminal Code of 2015 reduces the maximum sentence in peacetime to three years in prison.[102]

There is some disagreement on how these penalties in practice are implemented however, and a lack of data on this issue makes making any confident judgement a very difficult task.[103] EASO (2016), for instance, finds that deserters in recent years may face less harsh repercussions that previously reported although it is imposed extrajudicially by military commanders.[104]

Compensation

There seems to be some disagreement concerning the actual amounts individuals conscripted in the national service receive. There is broad agreement, however, that the compensation or salary given to those serving in the national service is insufficient to meet the needs of conscripts and their families. According to Landinfo (2016) Eritrean authorities claim that the level of pay for public employees and recruits was substantially raised in July 2015.[105] EASO (2016) report that several of the sources they consulted claim that the implementation has started.[106] However, indications are that the actual net payment received by the individual conscript remains more or less the same, as the authorities have introduced a new procedure where they deduct additional "expenses" incurred by the conscript, as lodging and allowances.[107]

Duration

Following the war with Ethiopia and the introduction of the WYDC, the duration of the national service was extended indefinitely. Very few recruits have since actually been formally dismissed from the national service and the procedure for discharge is unclear.[108] Over the last few years the Government has announced reforms of the national service including a repeated promise to limit the length of duty to 18 months. This appears to not yet have come into effect.[109]

[101] The fines are reported in Birr as both the National Service Act and the Eritrean Criminal Code were written before Eritrea converted to the *nafka* as their national currency.
[102] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf) and Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.
[103] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)
[104] EASO (2016) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report – Eritrea National service and illegal exit", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/COI-%20Eritrea-Dec2016_LR.pdf)
[105] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf) and Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)
[106] EASO (2016) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report – Eritrea National service and illegal exit", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/COI-%20Eritrea-Dec2016_LR.pdf)
[107] Information received by the author from Eritreans interviewed in Addis Ababa, November 2016.
[108] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.
[109] EASO (2016) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report – Eritrea National service and illegal exit", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/COI-%20Eritrea-Dec2016_LR.pdf); Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

The actual duration of the service period is contested and appears to fluctuate considerably between individuals.[110] We suggest, however, that the following assumptions can give some general indication of its duration.

i) First, there seems to be a broad agreement that the completion of, or exemption from, the national service is a precondition for the issuance of exit visas.

ii) Second, there is also considerable support for the claim that while the conditions for the issuance of exit visas remain unclear, and may be subject to unannounced changes and the arbitrariness of the authorities, the following categories seem to generally be able to obtain a legal exit visa:[111]
- Men aged over 54
- Women aged over 47
- Children under age 13 (some uncertainty, UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) 2016 argues that the age limit 5 is best reflected in the present evidence they possess)
- Individuals with medical exception from national service
- Individuals travelling abroad for medical treatment and studies or conferences
- In some cases, businessmen and sportsmen
- Former freedom fighters (Tegadelti) and their family members
- Authority representatives in leading positions and their family members

iii) Finally, it therefore seems reasonable to argue that the national service in general does not last beyond the age of 54 for men and 47 for (unmarried and/or childless) women.

There is some uncertainty following the establishment of the People's Army in 2012 when it comes to exit visas (and therefore the end of service to the Eritrean state). The People's Army allegedly drafts men and (unmarried) women up towards 70 years old and may therefore be ineligible for an exit visa.[112] Others have, while recognizing that the evidence points in both directions, argued that there is no conclusive evidence that enrolment in the People's Army prevents an individual from obtaining an exit visa.

Leave

There seems to be no standardized entitlement to leave for conscripts in the national service, but appears instead to be granted at the discretion of the relevant commander. AI (2015) reports that some conscripts may experience leave relatively frequently (twice a year), while others have allegedly served for several years without being granted leave.[113]

[110] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[111] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland and UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[112] US State Department (2014) Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Eritrea 2014 Human Rights Report.
[113] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

State control

The Eritrean state has developed and implemented several surveillance systems and techniques to monitor and control its population, including the production and distribution of ID documents and travel passes that must be presented at checkpoints distributed throughout Eritrea. Since the introduction of the WYDC these surveillance mechanisms have predominantly been directed towards identifying, preventing and punishing defection from the national service. Despite considerable technical limitations this system successfully keeps hundreds of thousands of conscripts in the National Service through its ability to (re)produce uncertainties, fears, and expectations.[114] According to Zere (2016) the government has furthermore since October 2016 requested that internet cafes register detailed personal identification of users, thereby adding another mechanism for control.[115]

Forced labour

The national service, originally intended to reconstruct the nation, ensure its security, and build a common Eritrean national identity has developed into something else entirely. Enrolled conscripts have become an indefinite supplier of cheap labour to government owned enterprises or are "lent" to foreign companies.[116]

This system does according to several observers in fact constitute forced labour under Article 4(3) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of a type not permitted by Article 4(3) (a) – (d) of the same convention. There seems to be less support for the claim made that the national service as a whole constitute enslavement contrary to Article 4(1) of the ECHR. [117]

The national service as an internal driver of migration

Enrolment in the national service has in many cases represented indefinite military service and/or activities akin to forced labour with insufficient compensation. This appears to particularly have been the case since the introduction of the WYDC. They are subject to a considerable state operated surveillance system aimed at controlling them. Many are also subject to various forms of abuse. While not every woman is subject to sexualized violence or harassment or every recruit subject to abuse and torture, these violations do seem to be widespread and occur with little or no accountability on behalf of the perpetrators.[118]

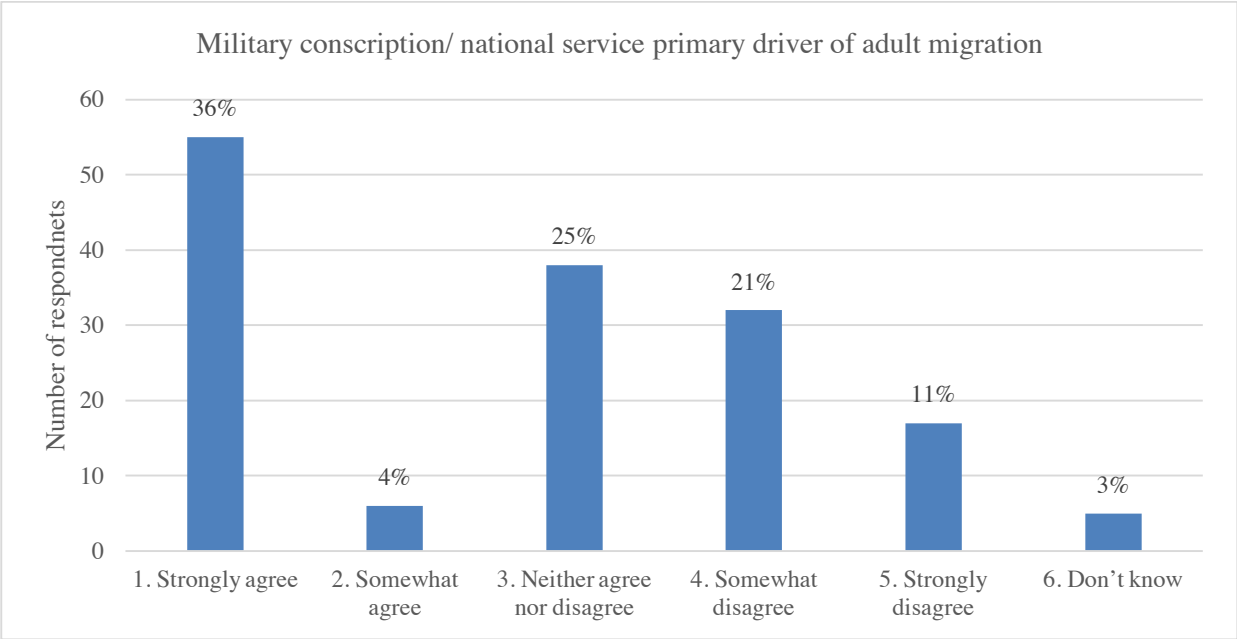
Illegal migration is just one of several alternative coping strategies used to avoid the national service. Many young Eritreans try to avoid being conscripted by failing to register for the service and ducking security agents looking for civilians without exemption documentation. Others do not report back to their units after being granted leave. Some even intentionally fail their exams to avoid graduating to year 12

[114] Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93.
[115] Zere A. T. (2016) "Eritrea: An exiled nation suspended in liminal space through social media", Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, Carnegie Ethics Online (https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/ethics_online/0125).
[116] Müller, T. R. (2012). From Rebel Governance to State Consolidation–Dynamics of loyalty and the securitisation of the state in Eritrea. *Geoforum*, *43*(4), 793-803 and Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.
[117] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx) and UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[118] Treiber, M. (2013) 'Grasping Kiflu's Fear - Informality and Existentialism in Migration from North-East Africa', Modern Africa Journal; Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061.

which is completed at Sawa military camp. An increasing number of under-aged girls and boys are fleeing Eritrea, presumably to avoid being caught in national service. Women reportedly marry young or even become pregnant out of wedlock to avoid the national service. Exemptions are another means of escaping the national service and can be obtained by feigning physical or mental illness or bribing those with the power to issue exemption documentation. Illegal immigration is the last alternative for those aiming to escape the national service.[119]

ILPI's findings on the national service as an internal driver of migration

We asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the following statement: "The duration of military conscription/national service is the primary reason it was decided that I would migrate".[120]



The national service was clearly given as an important driver of migration for our sample with 55 respondents (35%) reporting that they strongly agree and an additional 6 respondents (4%) reporting that they somewhat agree with the statement. There is, however, a significant proportion of our sample which either neither agree nor disagree with this statement, indicating that the national service for them was less of a driver of their migration than other factors. Finally, 49 respondents (32%) of our sample either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that military conscription/national service was the primary factor of their decision to migrate at all. The national service is clearly an important driver of migration for a large section of our sample, but it cannot in isolation explain the Eritrean exodus.

[119] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.
[120] See Annex 2 for a description of our sample of adult and minor respondents.

5.4.2 Human right situation

The Authoritarian Eritrean State

The current Eritrean leadership has captured the Eritrean state and ensures that it remains in control over its institutions and people through a broad set of institutions and policies of co-optation and coercion. The ruling PFDJ government has since independence, but particularly following the unresolved issues ensuing the war with Ethiopia 1998-2000 and the implementation of the (undeclared) state of emergency, sought to reorganize society to defend the nation from real and perceived internal and external threats. The security of the nation overrules, or is used to justify the disregard, other concerns, including the rule of law. Consequently, the written law, initially often unclear and opaque, has become secondary to the unaccountable and, in many instances arbitrary, governing practices of the PFDJ in an ever-increasing number of spheres.[121]

This has resulted in a lack of predictability, creating anxiety and generate mistrust in Eritrean society.[122] It has also contributed to a largely undisputed human rights situation of the greatest concern in Eritrea; a situation where freedom of expression and assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of movement are severely curtailed. The government may furthermore detain and mistreat those who question its policies with impunity. The nature of the human rights situation in Eritrea has over the years without doubt contributed to the flight of its citizens.[123]

Freedom of expression

While freedom of expression was restricted also before the 2001 post G-15 crackdown, it has since been severely curtailed.[124] Individuals risk being imprisoned or facing other repressive measures for calling for fundamental rights, for asking questions, or for critically discussing governmental policies. The UN, through statements from various treaty bodies and agencies, is among a number of observers of Eritrea that find that the Eritrean government severely and systematically silences those who question or protest the government and its policies.

The G-15 incident also resulted in, or at the very least coincided, with a crackdown on Eritrean independent newspapers including Seti, Admas, Keste Debena, Mana, Magaleh, Tsigenay, Wintana and Zemen, and the arrest of several journalists and editors on the grounds that they threatened the unity of

[121] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27; Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106; Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168; UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"

[122] Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93; Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.

[123] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"

[124] See Tronvoll and Mekonnen (2015), *The African Garrison State*, op. cit. The G-15 is the name given to a group of former PFDJ members who in an open letter criticized President Isaias and called for the implementation of the Eritrean Constitution (See Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf))

the nation. Many of those arrested are reported to remain incarcerated incommunicado and without charge until this day.[125]

The government followed up on this in the fall of 2006 with the first mass arrest of journalists working in the state-controlled media, allegedly due to a combination of suspicions that they were sending information about Eritrea abroad and an increase in the flight of journalists in general.[126] The severe restrictions on the freedom of expression and the crack-down on journalists in the state-controlled and independent media have resulted in Eritrea being ranked as the worst nation in the world (180/180) for several years in the Reporters without Borders press freedom index (including 2016).[127]

Freedom of religion

The Eritrean government put a ban in 2002 on all religious practices of faiths not officially recognised by the state: (Sunni) Islam, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church, the Eritrean Catholic church, and the Eritrean Evangelical Church.[128] Some religious denominations appear to have received the major brunt from the crack-down by the government. These include the Jehovah's witnesses as they on religious grounds refused to participate in the Eritrean referendum in 1991 and continue to refuse to serve in the (military part of the) national service, and the Pentecostal movement. The Pentecostal movement is apparently targeted heavily as it is considered to represent a conscious break with traditional practices (thereby potentially breeding dissent and spreading discontent) and due to the considerable number of the Eritrean middle class attracted by movement. These religious movements are also allegedly held suspected for their international linkages to Western religious groups and 'capitalist imperialism'.[129] Segments of Eritreans Muslim community also suffered considerable persecution in the early years of independence, but this seems to have subsided in more recent year.[130] It cannot be overstated, however, the dearth of data there is on the practice and development of political Islam and Salafism in Eritrea. Considering the extreme repression of religion in the country, and the politicisation of Islam in neighbouring countries, it could be deferred that Islam is currently playing a clandestine political mobilising role in Eritrea.

Several scholars and experts argue that the primary reason for the persecution of a number of religious movements is that they may threaten the all-encompassing sovereign power of the government and the modernist secularism and nationalism at the very core of their ideology.[131]

Detentions and torture

The Eritrean government has since independence used arbitrary arrests and detentions without charge or trial against real and suspected opposition and against those who fail to comply with the policy

[125] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[126] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[127] https://rsf.org/en/ranking
[128] Mekonnen, D. R., & van Reisen, M. (2011) 'Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge', Paper presented at the ESF-LiU Conference on "Religions, Gender and Human Rights: Challenges for Multicultural and Democratic Societies, 21-25 June 2011, Scandic Linköping Vast, Sweden
[129] Hepner, T. R. (2014). Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *44*(2), 151-188.
[130] Mekonnen, D. R., & van Reisen, M. (2011) 'Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge', Paper presented at the ESF-LiU Conference on "Religions, Gender and Human Rights: Challenges for Multicultural and Democratic Societies, 21-25 June 2011, Scandic Linköping Vast, Sweden
[131] Hepner, T. R. (2014). Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *44*(2), 151-188.

implemented. Many of these are held for long periods under inhumane conditions and incommunicado. This practice is characterized by a lack of transparency and oversight.[132] Much of the information available on the conditions in detention centres is derived from former inmates and/or their families and from various sites, such as the Facebook page "Sacttism: Classified Documents of Dwindling PFDJ", where allegedly leaked classified government documents and other information is posted.[133]

Conditions in Eritrean prisons and detention sites are in numerous HR reports described as dire and inhumane. Cells are reportedly often overcrowded with insufficient and poor hygiene conditions, with many cells located underground or in shipping containers. Inmates and detainees are allegedly in many cases given insufficient rations and subject to mistreatment, forced labour and torture. While women usually are separated from men, they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and sexualized violence. Death among inmates and detainees is, particularly in the harsher prisons and detention facilities, reported to be a frequent occurrence.[134]

It is important to note that HR monitoring institutions and organizations, including ICRC, are barred access to alleged detention sites and prisons, and that information on the conditions in prisons and detention centres are obtained outside Eritrea from former inmates or prison guards and has not been verified on site.

Torture is allegedly commonly used in Eritrean prisons and detention centres to force confessions, obtain information or simply as a means of punishing individuals for real or perceived wrongdoings. Methods are reported to include being chained at the hands and feet for several days, being kept in a tire, waterboarding, or being forced to walk barefoot on sharp objects or on the hot desert ground. Regular beatings and other forms of mistreatment are also reported to be relatively common.[135]

Human rights as an internal driver of migration

A broad range of policies and actions of the Eritrean government violate Eritrea's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), to which Eritrea is a state party.[136] While HR monitoring and research on Eritrea remains challenging as access is limited, it is largely uncontested that many Eritreans experience varying degrees of limitations on fundamental freedoms in a context characterized by a lack of rule of law. Some of these limitations concern the freedom to move at will, assembly, express themselves, practice their religion without interference, and obtain access to

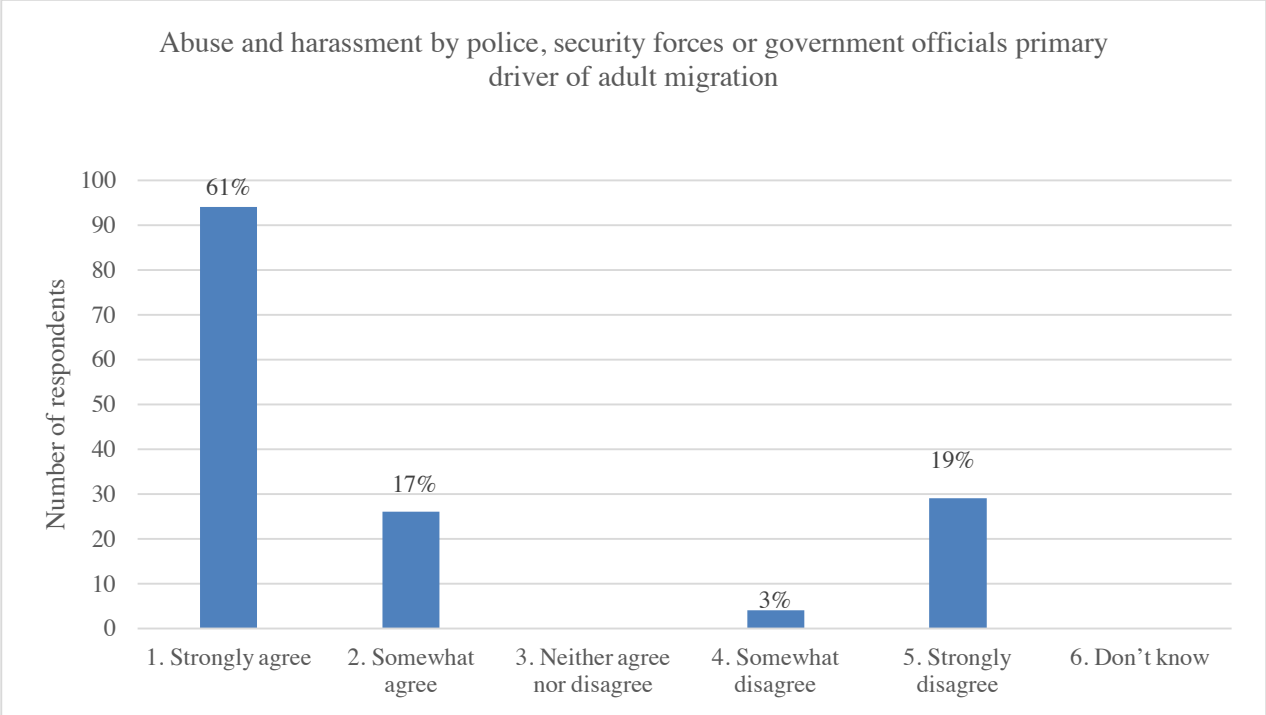
[132] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx) ; UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"; Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)
[133] Zere A. T. (2016) "Eritrea: An exiled nation suspended in liminal space through social media", Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, Carnegie Ethics Online (https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/ethics_online/0125).
[134] Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)
[135] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland
[136] Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)

information, to mention a few. Control systems are used to detect and silence those who protest or question this situation resulting in intensified self-censorship among the population. [137]

Many refugees and migrants have expressed a strong desire to return to Eritrea given that the current HR situation improves and the population is free to realize their fundamental rights as citizens of the nation.[138]

ILPI's findings on the human rights situation as an internal driver of migration

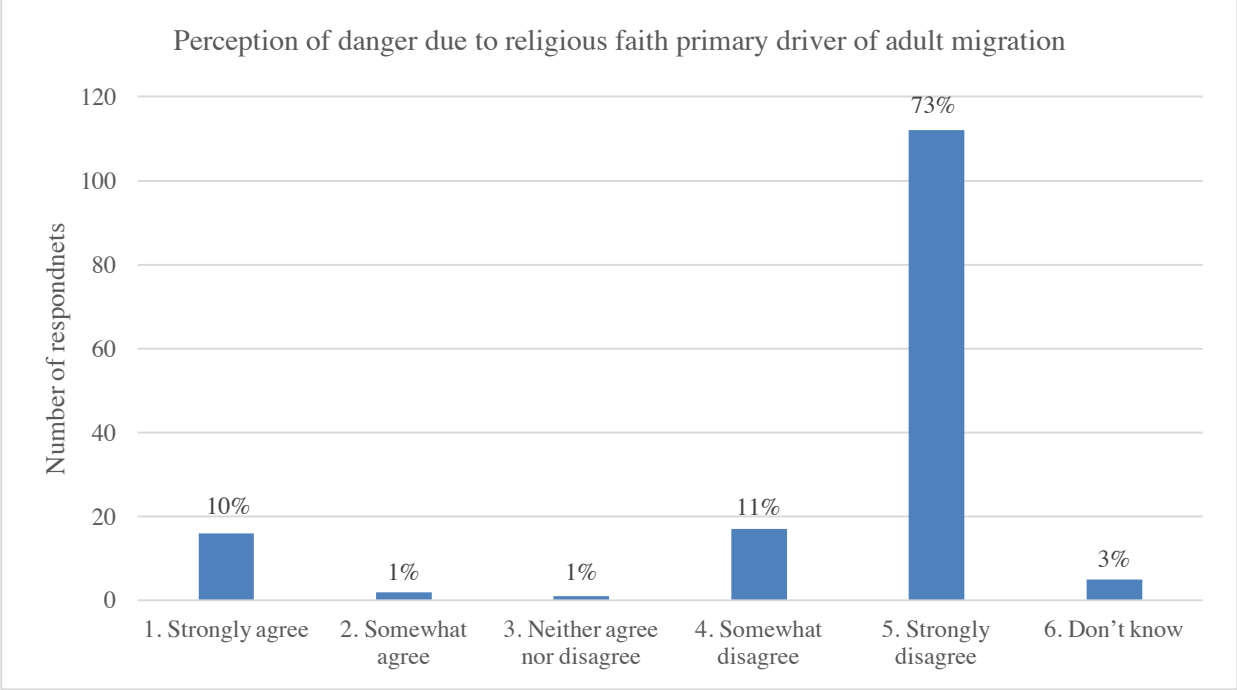
Human Rights can, even at the best of times, be an abstract and unwieldy concept. In order to ensure that our respondents fully comprehended our questions we therefore chose to divide this broad category into more manageable components such as the occurrence of abuse and harassment by police or fear of repression due to one's religious faith. We therefore asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the two following statements: "Abuse and harassment by the police, security forces or government officials was the primary reason for my decision to migrate" and "I was in danger as I adhere to a faith not approved by the Eritrean government".



120 respondents (78%) reported that they either strongly agree or somewhat agree with the notion that abuse and harassment by police, security forces or government officials (i.e. the state) was the primary driver of their migration from Eritrea. There is nevertheless a significant group of respondents (22%)

[137] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx); Bozzini, D. (2015). The Fines and the Spies: Fears of State Surveillance in Eritrea and in the Diaspora. *Social Analysis*, *59*(4), 32-49.
[138] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27.

that somewhat or strongly disagreed with this statement – indicating that this form of abuse only partially, and to varying degrees, can explain their migration from Eritrea.



Only 18 adult respondents out of our sample of 153 either strongly or somewhat agree with the statement that a perception of danger due to their faith was a primary factor in their choice to migrate from Eritrea. This number is puzzling for two reasons. First, while our sample contains 7 respondents who self-report to adhere to a non-state approved faith only one of these strongly agree with the statement and 5 strongly disagree. Second, 12 of the 18 respondents who either strongly or somewhat disagree with the statement have reported to adhere to a state approved Christian denomination. Finally, five of those who strongly or somewhat agree with the statement adhere to state approved Muslim denominations which may reflect the considerable crack-down on Muslim communities despite formal state approval that has occurred in recent years. The number may either be inflated by a real fear of religious persecution even among individuals who adhere to state approved versions of Christianity and Islam, and/or due to intentional misinformation from some respondents.

The clear majority of respondents (129 or 84%), however, either strongly disagree or somewhat disagree with the notion that a perception of danger due to their faith was a primary factor in their choice to migrate.

5.4.3 Expectations

Eritrean society is, as all societies, characterized by several co-existing sets of norms and values.[139] In Eritrea, such value systems may include "traditional" norms of the ethnic groups of Eritrea; religious doctrines, as well as norms and values introduced by the EPLF, and continued under the PFDJ, based on

[139] For an, albeit not all inclusive, overview of customary codes and norms in Eritrea, see Favali, L. and Pateman, R. (2003). *Blood, Land, and Sex. Legal and Political Pluralism in Eritrea*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

socialism, nationalism and self-reliance; and liberal values of individualism and democracy.[140] These value systems are furthermore associated with a number of expectations of what an individual's responsibilities are and what an individual should and shouldn't do. Balancing the social requirements of these and other value systems may place considerable strain on an individual and affect the decision to migrate.

Family/societal expectations

Intergenerational solidarity is at the core of many of the co-existing sets of norms and values in Eritrea. Although this is socially required from both men and women, it is generally men who are expected to supply the financial support of the household, as well as assist the extended family and lineage if possible. Remittances from the diaspora has become among the most established and socially acceptable strategies for providing for one's immediate and extended family. Eritreans in diaspora have provided a safety net for their relatives when the situation inside the country has deteriorated, and have as such given the diaspora Eritreans an important position in their own families and in larger society.[141]

Those (men) who are still in Eritrea may have a hard time to fulfil their intergenerational expectations of financial support for parents, spouses and children. Let alone, young men have difficulties achieving the financial autonomy needed to marry and establish a family. The primary cause of this is the national service of indefinite duration and very little compensation. These youths therefore have a choice – they can adhere to the norms and values of the PFDJ and complete their national service, or they can migrate to ensure that they fulfil their "traditional" obligations to their families.[142] Migration has therefore for some become a means to achieve elements of "traditionally" accepted adulthood and prove masculinity. Social expectations as such are among the primary factors driving Eritreans to avoid national service internally and ultimately to migration.[143]

Individual expectations

Broadly held personal aspirations such as establishing a family (and spending time with them), sustaining oneself beyond the bare minimum, getting an education and pursuing employment, and generally living up to personally defined individual goals are in many instances incompatible with the demands of the state. The younger generations of Eritreans seem, despite the best efforts of the Eritrean government, to lack the same willingness or acceptance of self-sacrifice as those who fought during the war of independence. Eritrean youths appear to be (moderately explicit) more turned towards private and individual fulfilment, as part of an increasingly globalised world. This generation have also shown more

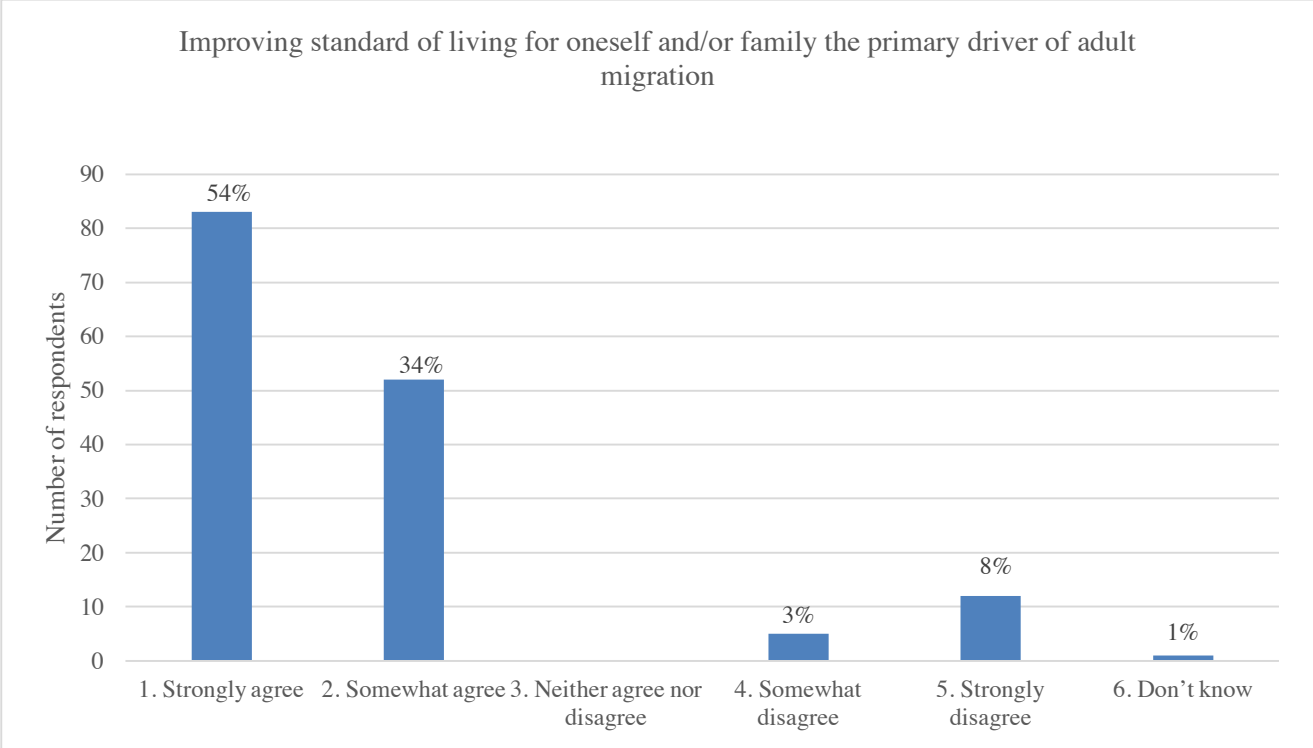
[140] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.
[141] Poole, A. (2013). Ransoms, remittances, and refugees: the gatekeeper state in Eritrea. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 66-82; Belloni, M. (2016). Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *14*(1), 104-119; Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061.
[142] Belloni (2016) explores the possibility of less extreme alternatives such as draft dodging. This strategy is, however, full of risk and prospects for a life beyond the bare minimum remain unlikely - Belloni, M. (2015) Cosmologies of Destinations – Roots and routes of Eritrean forced migration towards Europe. Doctoral dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, School of Social Sciences, August 2015.
[143] Treiber, M. (2009) "Trapped in Adolescence", Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty- First Century, 6, 92; Belloni, M. (2015) Cosmologies of Destinations – Roots and routes of Eritrean forced migration towards Europe. Doctoral dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, School of Social Sciences, August 2015.

resentment towards the failure of the government to make the promised future materialize and are less willing to (grudgingly) accept the demands of the state.[144]

Migration is, for many, perceived to be the last alternative in a series of coping strategies that may be utilized if one hopes for a future outside the Eritrean state's demands of unflinching patriotism and self-sacrifice. Since it is impossible to change the government through the ballot box, Eritrean youth are 'voting with their feet' and leaving the country in droves.

ILPI's findings on family/societal and individual expectations as an internal driver of migration

We asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the following statement: "The decision to migrate was motivated by improving the standard of living for myself and/or my family".



135 of our respondents (88%) have respondent that they strongly or somewhat agree with this statement indicating that their migration to a substantial amount is influenced by their desire to improve the standard of living for themselves and/or their families (i.e. meet the economic social and individual expectations they are faced with). This can therefore be categorized as among the most determining factors for migration in our sample. Only 17 respondents (11%) report that they either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the notion presented above.

[144] Müller, T. R. (2013): Human Resource Development and the State: Dynamics of the Militarization of Education in Eritrea, Studien zum Horn von Afrika, Köln; Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.

5.4.4 Lost opportunities/no hope for the future

The assessment of internal drivers or push factors has so far looked at the national service, the human rights situation, and social expectations as isolated drivers of migration. This division is, as discussed above, entirely artificial as these in reality are deeply interconnected categories on multiple levels; the whole arguably greater than the sum of its parts.

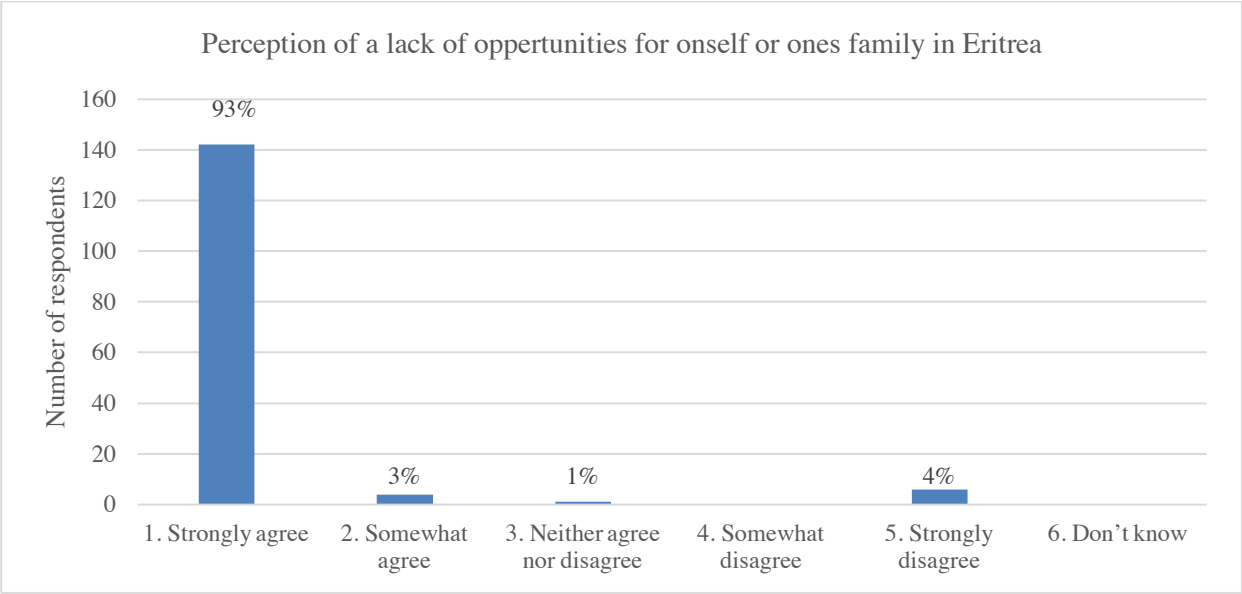
We argue that the primary internal driver of migration from Eritrea is *the perceived lack of opportunities and hope for any viable and desirable future*. The current context of the national service, mandatory for all of those who legally or illegally obtain an exemption, represents an indefinite period of service with minimal monetary compensation. The national service programme is the most significant among a number of challenges to ensuring the well-being of one's immediate and extended family, establishing oneself in a profession or career, and in getting married and having one's own family. The national service ensures, in sum, that it becomes nearly impossible to prepare for and establish a meaningful future.[145] Added to this is the extremely constrained context of private economic initiatives and establishing business. Eritrea is according to the World Bank Doing Business Ranking rated at 189/190 on the ease of doing business, just ahead of Somalia, which contributes to prevent private entrepreneurs to see a future in Eritrea.[146]

The current system does not contain any political or legal alternatives to protest on the situation, and even moderate deviant behaviour may result in incarceration without charge or other punitive measures.[147] Migration, while expensive and dangerous, represents for many young Eritreans a readily available and permanent means of escaping this context and to have a chance to hope for something more that indefinite service for an autocratic government that demands ever more self-sacrifice.

ILPI's findings on a perceived lack of opportunities as an internal driver of migration

We asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the following statement: "There are no opportunities for me or my family in Eritrea".

[145] Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service; Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27; Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa; Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[146] World Bank Group Doing Business (Available from: http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings)
[147] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)



142 out of our sample of 153 respondents (93%) strongly agree with the statement that they do not perceive there to be any opportunities for themselves or their families in Eritrea. While not directly connected to the decision to migrate, as the wording of the question is not framing this as a reason to migrate as such, this finding does show that most our sample is deeply affected by a perceived lack of opportunities and hope for any viable and desirable future.

5.4.5 The internal drivers of migration from Eritrea

A significant part of recently published reports and scholarly work on Eritrea identifies the national service, the human rights situation, and/or individual and societal/family expectations as the primary drivers of migration from Eritrea. ILPI found that all of these factors to varying degrees were important drivers of migration for the 153 adults in our sample.

- 88% strongly or somewhat agreed that improving standard of living for self or family (as a proxy for the importance of individual and social/family expectations) was an important driver of their migration. Only 11% somewhat or strongly disagreed with this notion.
- 78% strongly or somewhat agreed that HR issues (in the form of abuse by institutions of state such as police, security forces, and government representatives) was an important driver of their migration. 21% of the sample strongly or somewhat disagreed with this notion.
- 39% of our sample strongly or somewhat agreed that the military conscription/national service was an important driver of their migration. 49% either strongly or somewhat disagreed with this notion while 25% neither agree nor disagree with this.
- 12% of our sample strongly or somewhat agreed that HR issues (in the form of a perception of danger due to their religious faith) was an important driver of their migration. 84% strongly or somewhat disagreed with this notion.

We did find that these factors, as well as other issues, have resulted in a situation characterized by a general lack of hope for the future. It is important to keep in mind that the above categories of responses are not mutually exclusive. 95% of the adult respondents in our sample strongly or somewhat agree with the notion that there are no opportunities for themselves or their families in Eritrea. While our sample isn't representative in any way it does provide a snapshot of what seem to be commonly held perceptions and which are reflected in a number of independently produced reports and scholarly publications.

5.5 External drivers of migration/pull factors

5.5.1 Economic opportunities

The Eritrean economy has since independence struggled due to a lack of readily available resources and droughts – challenges exacerbated by restrictive economic policies under the control of the PFDJ government. According to the African Economic Outlook (2016), Eritrean growth has stagnated and is projected at 0.3% in 2015 compared to 1.7% in 2014 and 1.3% in 2013 due to challenges and restrictions in the domestic business and investment environment, combined with the poor global economic situation. While the current budget deficit is substantial at 10.3% in FY 2015/16, increasing revenue from mining, access to more grant resources, and a reduction in unproductive expenditure is expected to lower this somewhat to 9.9% in FY 2016/17. Inflation remains high at 12.5% due and food-crop production in 2015 was only at 50% of 2014 levels.[148] (A big caveat should be noted to these numbers, as Eritrea does hardly produce any reliable and independent statistics on its economic performances, and few outside the ruling elite have insight into how for instance budgetary decisions are made).[149]

There is little doubt that the Eritrean economy struggles and has struggled for years, although there appears to be some potential prospects for positive developments in the future (particularly related to the budget deficit). Eritrea scores very low on the Human Development Index with a score of 0.391,[150] ranking 186 out of 188 countries (ahead of only the Central African Republic and Niger) and is by the World Bank rated as one of the least conducive environments for establishing a business. In this situation of poor economic performance and very low levels of development, it is only naturally that some Eritreans have left Eritrea to seek economic opportunities elsewhere and that these individuals in this sense are no different from the larger group of African refugees and migrants in the larger framework of globalization that drives people out of Africa.[151]

Migration is also, as previously mentioned, often the last alternative available to those who wish to avoid the indefinite national service and the insufficient compensation provided to those who serve (generally agreed to be insufficient to meet the basic needs of conscripts and their dependent family members).[152]

ILPI's findings on economic opportunities as an external driver of migration

We unfortunately were unable to secure sufficient explicit data to make any claim on the issue of economic opportunities as an explicit external driver of migration from Eritrea. We argue, however, that our findings related to family/societal and individual expectations as an internal driver of migration naturally must be mirrored by a perception of economic opportunities abroad. 125 or 88% of our adult

[148] African Economic Outlook (2016) Special Theme: Sustainable Cities and Structural Transformation, African Development Bank (Available from: http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org).
[149] Freedom House (2016) Freedom in the World 2016 – Eritrea (Available from: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/eritrea)
[150] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators used to rank countries, from 0-1 where 1 is best, according to their level of human development (See http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi)
[151] Müller, T. R. (2016) "Representing Eritrea: Geopolitics and narratives of oppression", Review of African Political Economy, Vol.43, no.150, pp.658-667.
[152] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf); Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)

respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that improving standard of living for oneself and/or one's family was an important internal driver of their migration.

Perceived economic opportunities seem to be an important external driver of secondary migration as well. We asked our sample of 153 adults an open-ended question concerning their plan to continue their migration from Ethiopia to another country.[153] 149 adults from our sample were comfortable with responding to this question. Out of these 149 48 (32%) responded that improved employment opportunities are important in their desire to continue their migration. An additional 75 respondents (50%) reported their desire for a better life as an important driver of secondary migration. The remaining respondent reported the possibility to reunite with family, access to better healthcare or education as the most important external motivators for secondary migration from Ethiopia.

5.5.2 Citizenship rights and restrictions

The Eritrean state approaches its citizens within its borders and Eritreans in the diaspora very differently. Most young Eritreans in Eritrea are required to serve indefinitely in the national service, either in a military or civilian capacity, effectively preventing them from fulfilling obligations to their families and live up to their personal aspirations, and with very limited options to legally object. Failure to complete the national service may furthermore prevent an individual from the right to own land, to obtain an exit visa, and to (legally) obtain work. Obliging to the requirements of the national service is for many young Eritreans in Eritrea the only way of achieving full citizenship rights.[154]

The Eritrean state has historically celebrated the parts of the diaspora considered loyal to the government. These individuals have been portrayed as ideal citizens making sacrifices to the nation in the form of financial support to the cause, particularly during the war with Ethiopia. Monetary contributions of the diaspora were widely reported on by the media and their contribution depicted as being as important as or even more important than the sacrifices of Eritreans in Eritrea.[155] The celebration of the loyal and active diaspora has continued in the post-war phase. The diaspora is required to pay a two-percent income tax to the Eritrean state – funds which are collected through Eritrean embassies, consulates and semi-official representations (as the Eritrean information office in Oslo) around the world. Complying to the two-percent tax will facilitate government services such as gaining access to birth and marriage certificates, right to move freely in and out of Eritrea, to acquire land, to inherit from relatives living inside Eritrea, and to operate a private business. Provided those in the diaspora comply they are exempt from national service and may enjoy the full benefit of citizenship, seemingly without its negative attributes.[156]

Eritrea therefore practices what Riggan (2013) calls "graduated sovereignty" where the Eritrean state exerts considerable control and authoritarian power over Eritreans inside the country to ensure compliance with the demands of the national service, while cultivating the loyalty of the diaspora through relative leniency to continue the flow of financial resources.[157]

[153] The questions asked was "Do you plan to continue your migration to another country"?
[154] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.; Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061; Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.
[155] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.
[156] Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061; Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106
[157] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.

This paradox of this situation is exemplified in an Eritrean joke reported by Müller (2012):

> "A group of people tries to escape from Eritrea and is caught at the border by soldiers. The soldiers ask them, 'Why do you want to leave?' They answer, 'We have been giving one hundred percent to this country and this has not been recognized, those already outside the country just give two per cent and this is being recognized, they can come and go, they can buy houses, they can do everything – so we want to join those who give only two percent'."[158]

The celebration of the diaspora and the continued denial of full citizenship to those who remain may have resulted in a considerable desire to migrate. Migrants may, as such, contribute to the nation through defined financial contributions rather than indefinite service in hardship.[159]

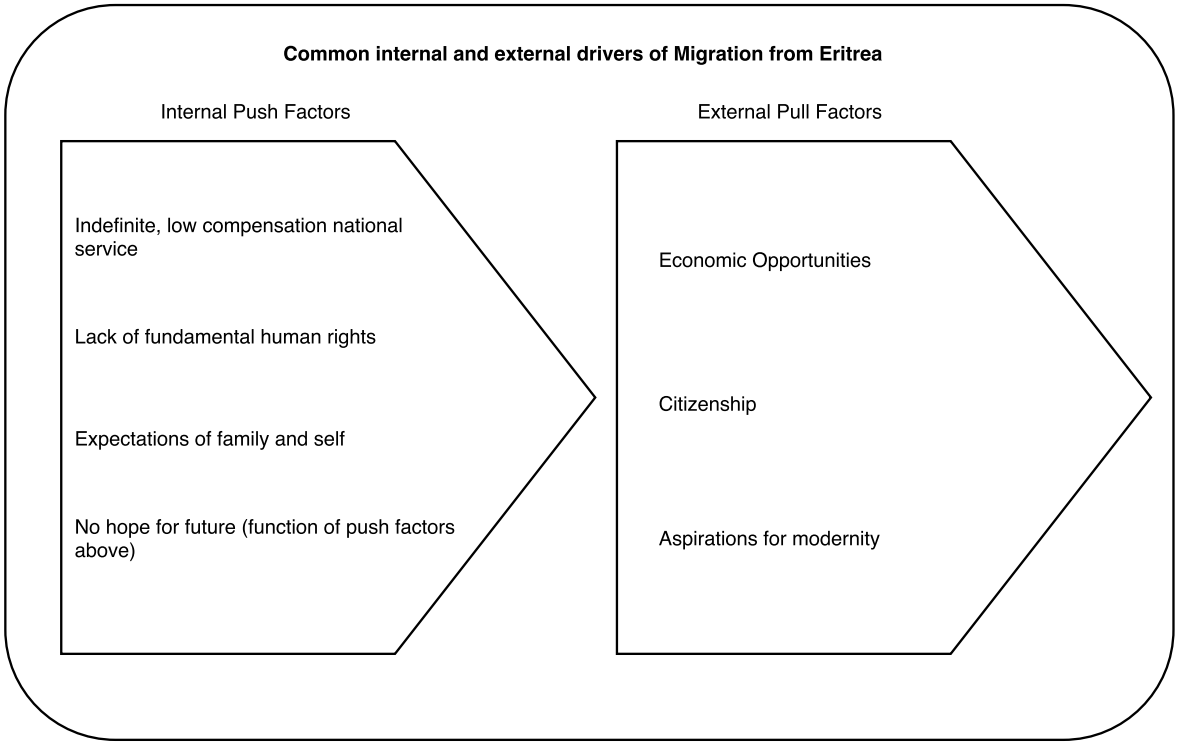
5.5.3 Aspirations for modernity

Broad parts of the literature on migration argues that social networks and flows of information are key factors in forming and influencing migrant decision-making on an individual level, as well as larger migration systems. Belloni (2015) argues in her thesis that this interaction has resulted in a broadly held "aspiration for modernity", whereby individuals desire to partake in the global capitalist order and the perceived associated lifestyles. This aspiration is beyond the mere material value or comfort "modern" societies may provide, but also represent a possibility to fulfil unmet desires of freedom and connectivity with the larger world. The perception of the outside "modern" world and the ability to aspire to participate in it are, according to Belloni (2015), important factors in prospective migrant and/or refugee decision making from Eritrea.[160]

5.6 Drivers of Eritrean migration

We have through our critical review of reports and scholarly publications on Eritrea and analysis of our own survey material identified what seems to be the primary internal and external drivers of migration from Eritrea. The figure below summarizes the argument presented in the previous sections of the paper.

[158] Müller, T. R. (2012). Beyond the siege state–tracing hybridity during a recent visit to Eritrea. *Review of African Political Economy*, *39*(133), 451-464.
[159] Riggan (2013) reports that this longing to serve the nation from the diaspora in many cases were in constant tension with the notions of duty to serve the nation from within (Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.). See also Müller, T. R. (2016), "Representing Eritrea: Geopolitics and narratives of oppression", Review of African Political Economy, Vol.43, no.150, pp.658-667.
[160] Belloni, M. (2015) Cosmologies of Destinations – Roots and routes of Eritrean forced migration towards Europe. Doctoral dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, School of Social Sciences, August 2015; Cummings, C., Pacitto, J., Lauro, D., & Foresti, M. (2015). *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. Working paper 430. London: Overseas Development Institute



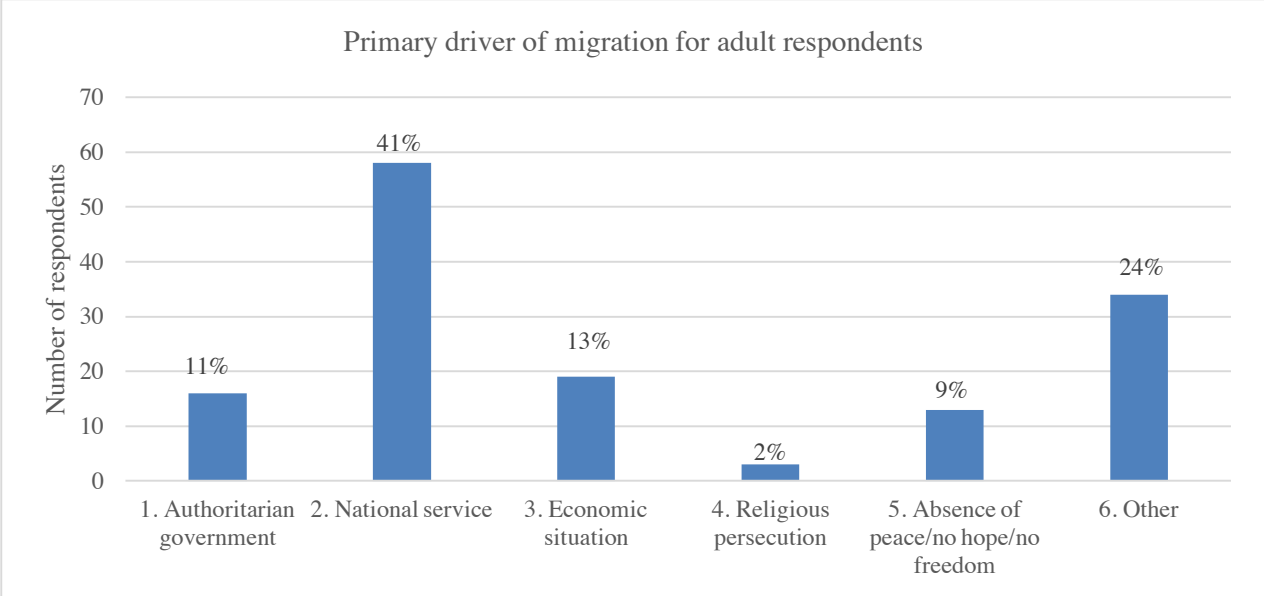
It is important to note, however, that there are still considerable lacunas in our understanding of the drivers of migration from Eritrea. There are still considerable internal and external validity issues associated with much of the research on Eritrea, leaving much to be desired when it comes to the (certainty of) the accuracy of findings and our ability to generalize findings to the Eritrean population. There is also uncertainty concerning how the identified drivers of migration, alone or through complex interaction, impact the individual's choice to migrate, although it seems appropriate to assume that it varies considerably between individuals and most likely over time as well. Another issue that is understudied is why those who remain chose to do so, given that many of them may feel a similar impact of push and pull factors. Which factors are pushing and pulling in the opposite direction? This dearth of information may be a direct result of the lack of access to Eritrea for many researchers, organizations and institutions, forcing them to rely on information from those who have migrated only, thereby resulting in a "migration bias" in our data and understanding of this complex phenomenon.

It seems evident, however, that many Eritreans of all ages find the combined effects of some, or all, of these factors to outweigh the very real internal and external risks and uncertainties associated with illegal migration from Eritrea. We would also argue that the current trend in migration from Eritrea is unlikely to change in the near to medium future unless the internal (or external) context changes dramatically.

ILPI's findings on drivers of Eritrean migration

We have in the sections above presented some of our findings based on interviews with a sample of adult Eritreans in refugee camps in Ethiopia. The figures presented have until now been based on a series of questions with predetermined answers (closed questions) (for more on the interview process and methodology please see Appendix 2). These structured questions do to some extent mask the complexity and interconnection between drivers and motivations that may impact an individual's choice to migrate. During the interview process we also asked the respondents an open-ended question concerning what drove them to make the decision to migrate, to which 143 responded. It must be stressed that the open ended question was asked before the respondents were presented with the closed questions. The individual responses are varied in length and content and difficult to fully represent within the scope of

this report and the various responses were categorized in the following broad typologies: 1) Authoritarian government, 2) National service, 3) Economic situation, 4) Religious persecution, 5) Absence of peace/no hope/no freedom and 6) Other. It is important to note that a large proportion of the responses include aspects from several of these. The final typology assigned to a response is based on an assessment of the weight of a given aspect on the decision to migrate.



Based on the replies on the open-ended question on the reason for migration from Eritrea:

Authoritarian government – responses in this category include those who were motivated by political exclusion, imprisonment for reasons such as expressing critique of the government, beatings by security forces.

National service – responses in this category include both those who explicitly state that they wanted to avoid the indefinite military conscription itself, those who have fled mistreatment while in the national service, and those who fled due to the impact of the indefinite national service on their ability to obtain an education or seek formal employment of their own choice.

Economic situation – responses in this category include those who reported to have migrated due to severe economic poverty, but also includes responses on economic difficulties resulting from husbands or other family members serving in the national service.

Religious persecution – responses in this category referred to "religious exclusion" as the primary driver of migration

Absence of peace/no hope/no freedom – responses in this category include those who in some form referred to the inability to be free or to live what they deemed a proper (including establishing a family) or to live a life "in peace".

Other – this category, more than any of the other, exemplify some of the social and circumstantial complexities of migration and the difficulty in constructing neat and tidy typologies. Responses in this category include individuals who sought to reunite with family members; individuals who migrated to receive better healthcare; individuals who migrated due to family conflicts or who married "undesired" individuals; individuals who migrated for no better reason than because their older brother chose to

migrate; a number of accounts of migration due to war or skirmishes along the border; and finally one account of migration because the respondent was branded as being an "evil eye" by their community.

The apparent weight given to the different internal drivers of migration seem to differ somewhat from the responses to the closed questions referred to earlier in this paper. For instance, through closed questions we found the largest share of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that improving the standard of living for oneself or one's family was an important internal driver of migration. Through the open-ended question the national service appears to be the most significant driver. We suggest that this apparent contradiction stems from the inherent limitation in the use of closed questions and in the analysis of responses to open ended questions through categorization of responses. The national service, the authoritarian PFDJ government, the abysmal economy, and the lack of hope are all part of the same context and cannot easily be separated from one another. Social complexities escape our best efforts for creating tidy analytical categories.

What seems clear is that our respondents overwhelmingly refer to internal drivers, such as the national service, the HR situation and authoritarian governance, and the economic situation as the primary causes of their migration. Discerning how these internal drivers interact with other drivers of migration, internal as well as external, and how they are weighted by migrants will require additional research.

6 Female migration from Eritrea

Drivers of female migration from Eritrea seems to be understudied compared to the larger and more general literature on this issue. One reason may be that migrants and refugees from Eritrea traditionally predominantly are (young) males.[161] Several contributions have also reported considerable difficulties in getting female responders, and women appear to be more reluctant to speak to researchers on these issues, possibly due to fear for their own safety as well as that of their families.[162] Additional challenges stem from the often arbitrary nature of the Eritrean administration and the lack of official policy concerning relevant issues, making it difficult to be certain of state practice and policy. While women in many cases seem to be exempted from the national service if they are married and/or become pregnant, this is not always the case. Finally, the restrictions on freedom of expression and the unwillingness of the Eritrean government to share information has resulted in a situation where rumours and facts intermingle to such an extent where it becomes difficult to entangle them.[163]

Much of what exists on the particular drivers of female migration from Eritrea appears to suffer from these challenges and is generally too circumstantial, lacking detail, or lacking additional sources to substantiate and validate the claims made. Thorough, reliable, and valid information on the drivers of female migration is in short supply, making robust conclusions on the issue difficult without further research. We will, however, present a summary of broadly held beliefs and assumptions concerning potential internal and external drivers of female migration from Eritrea and supplement these with our own findings. We find that there is a balance of probabilities that there are gender differences in how individuals are affected by the impact of internal and external drivers of migration. This issue remains highly important and warrants more research.

6.1 Internal drivers of migration/push factors

6.1.1 National Service

Exemption

Women's participation in the national service was initially one of its most contentious aspects with many communities resisting the conscription of women from the outset. The government rhetoric on this issue remained stern with the President stating in 2003 that "there cannot be different laws for men and women" and "there cannot be different laws for different people in one country."[164] There seems, however, that women are exempted from the national service in some cases.

[161] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27; Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93; Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.

[162] ILPI experienced a greater reluctance in securing responses from women. Our researcher was male and a greater number of female responders may have been secured if we had used a female researcher. HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)

[163] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)

[164] Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.

This paper has used assumed conditions for issuance of exit visas as the rough guideline of the maximum duration of the national service for men and women (aged 54 and aged 47 respectively) (see section 5.1.1 above). Women seem, however, in most cases to be exempted from the national service much sooner than this.[165]

More and more women appear to be either exempted or demobilized from national service due to marriage, pregnancy, and/or care for children. Young women and girls have been married off early to qualify for an exemption from the national service. One report suggests that he government has attempted to prohibit churches and mosques from officiating early marriages to curb this practice, although this is not, as far as we can see, supported by other evidence.[166]

Although it is not entirely clear it seems like women who may qualify for exemption must apply for demobilization, and it is not guaranteed that it will be granted.[167] There is also some evidence that some women are exempted on religious ground.[168] It is important to note, however, that there doesn't appear to be part of an explicit policy and is hence arbitrarily implemented at the discretion of local commanders and/or authorities. Discharged women can also in principle be recalled should the government or other relevant authorities deem this necessary.[169]

Many of the contributions are not entirely clear if they are referring to an exemption from the national service altogether or if the exemption refers to the military aspects of the service. Many women who are married, pregnant and/or care for children seem to work in government offices or in a civilian capacity for military units, indicating that the exemption, at least for a substantial number of women, only covers military service.[170] It is furthermore not entirely clear if these exemptions are formal and enables the exempted women to get privileges associated with the completion of the national service such as the possibility to apply for an exit visa and purchase land.[171]

[165] Müller, T. R. (2012). Beyond the siege state–tracing hybridity during a recent visit to Eritrea. *Review of African Political Economy*, *39*(133), 451-464;
[166] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx) ; Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[167]Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf); UK Home Office (2016b) "Country Policy and Information Note - Eritrea: National Service and Illegal Exit" (Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/563974/CPIN_-_Eritrea_-_NS_and_Illegal_Exit_-_October_2016.pdf)
[168] This seems to particularly be the case of Muslim women from rural areas or strictly religious cities such as Akortdat. Muslim women from cities such as Asmara, Keren and Assab are allegedly regarded as secularized and therefore not exempted from the national service (See Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)). Furthermore, it was early reported that Afar leaders protested female recruitment to the national service, and that the government made allowances to that discontent.
[169] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[170] Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.
[171] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf);

While exempted women, and women with children in particular, usually are not re-mobilized, they certainly could be give the arbitrariness of decision-making in Eritrea.[172] Amnesty International (2015) reported on a "recent practice of re-mobilizing women and women with children in Gash Barka region" (Western Eritrea), but there seems to be little other evidence supporting this claim.[173] Exempted women were also allegedly vulnerable of being rounded up during the so-called *giffas* if they failed to sufficiently demonstrate the reason for their exemption. There is some disagreement concerning the current frequencies of giffas. EASO (2016) reported in November 2016 that while some of their respondents had heard of giffas taking place in February 2016 others had not heard of any giffas for more than a year. UK Upper Tribunal (2016) argues that giffas probably are less frequent now than they were in the early 2000s.[174]

There seems to be some agreement that there is an (informal) age limit of (between 25 and) 27 years for women's participation in the National service and that women above 27 years are likely to be discharged.[175] This appears to have been the case since 2005, even if possibly illegal means of avoidance were used to avoid the national service.[176]

Sexual harassment and gender based violence

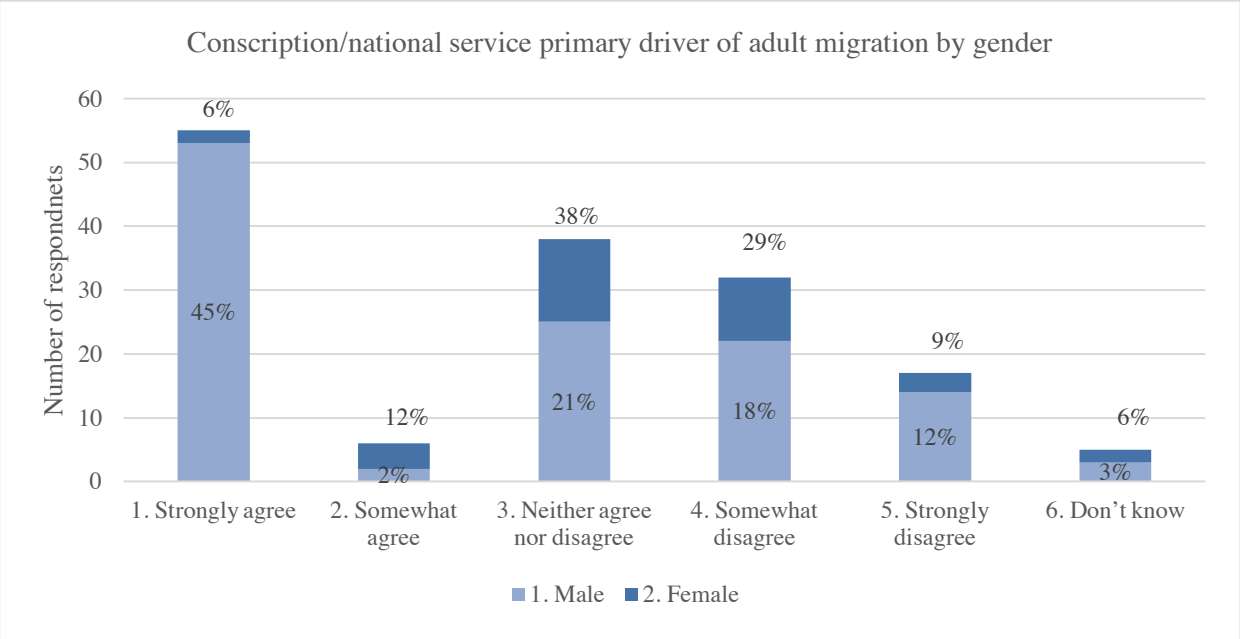
Abdulkadir (2008) stresses that the issue of sexual harassment and gender based violence is a highly sensitive issue in Eritrea (as in most countries), which may pose considerable methodological as well as ethical challenges to research. The HRC (2015) claims in their more recent contribution that sexual violence is difficult to document in Eritrea owing to the cultural context and the shame/stigma attached to victims of such abuse. Known victims may suffer ostracism and difficulties in getting married. In some cases, the victims may also fear violent reactions from their families if their experiences became known.[177] The methodological challenges stemming from the very sensitive nature of the issue is further confounded by the difficulties in distinguishing allegations, rumours and truths in a situation characterized by censorship and a lack of accountability.[178]

[172] UK Home Office (2016a), "Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57e2ae464.html)
[173] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[174] EASO (2016) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report – Eritrea National service and illegal exit", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/COI-%20Eritrea-Dec2016_LR.pdf)
; UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[175] Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa. ; Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf); UK Home Office (2016b) "Country Policy and Information Note - Eritrea: National Service and Illegal Exit" (Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/563974/CPIN_-_Eritrea_-_NS_and_Illegal_Exit_-_October_2016.pdf)
[176] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"; EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland
[177] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[178] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf);

Women who serve in the national service, particularly in a military capacity, are allegedly at considerable risk of sexual harassment, sexual assault and other gender based rights violations.[179] HRW (2011) reported that sexual abuse and rape supposedly were frequent in the national service and abuses included "forced abortions, continuous sexual violence, and possible forced pregnancy and sexual enslavement" and that some women committed suicide as a result of the mistreatment.[180] Other contributions have presented less extreme assessments of the situation. The UK Home Office (2016b), for instance, refers to reports of widespread sexual violence at Sawa, but points out that sources are inconsistent and does not suggest that this practice is systematic.[181]It is also important to note that allegations of sexual harassment and gender based violence have been strongly opposed by the Eritrean government, civil society and others. Reactions to the reporting on sexual violence seems to, at least in part, have motivated a substantial amount of the more than 44,000 submissions received following the publication of the report by HRC (2015)[182]

ILPI's findings on the national service as a driver of female migration

34 respondents (or 22%) of our sample of 153 adult respondents are female. We asked this entire sample if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; 6. Don't know to the statement: "The duration of military conscription/national service is the primary reason it was decided that I would migrate". In the figure below the responses to this are broken down by gender.



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

[179] Human Rights Watch (2009) Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea (Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/04/16/service-life/state-repression-and-indefinite-conscription-eritrea)
[180] HRW (2011) Ten Long Years – A Briefing on Eritrea's Missing Political Prisoners.
[181] UK Home Office (2016b) "Country Policy and Information Note - Eritrea: National Service and Illegal Exit" (Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/563974/CPIN_-_Eritrea_-_NS_and_Illegal_Exit_-_October_2016.pdf) ;
[182] HRC (2016) Detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/32/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIEritrea/A_HRC_32_CRP.1_read-only.pdf)

Only 6 female respondents out of a sample of 34 (18%) strongly or somewhat agree that the national service was the primary driver of their decision to migrate (compared to nearly 46% of the men). The majority of women in our sample either neither agree nor disagree or somewhat disagree with the statement presented (68%). While the national service was an important driver of migration for some of the women in our sample this was not the case for the majority.

6.1.2 Human rights situation

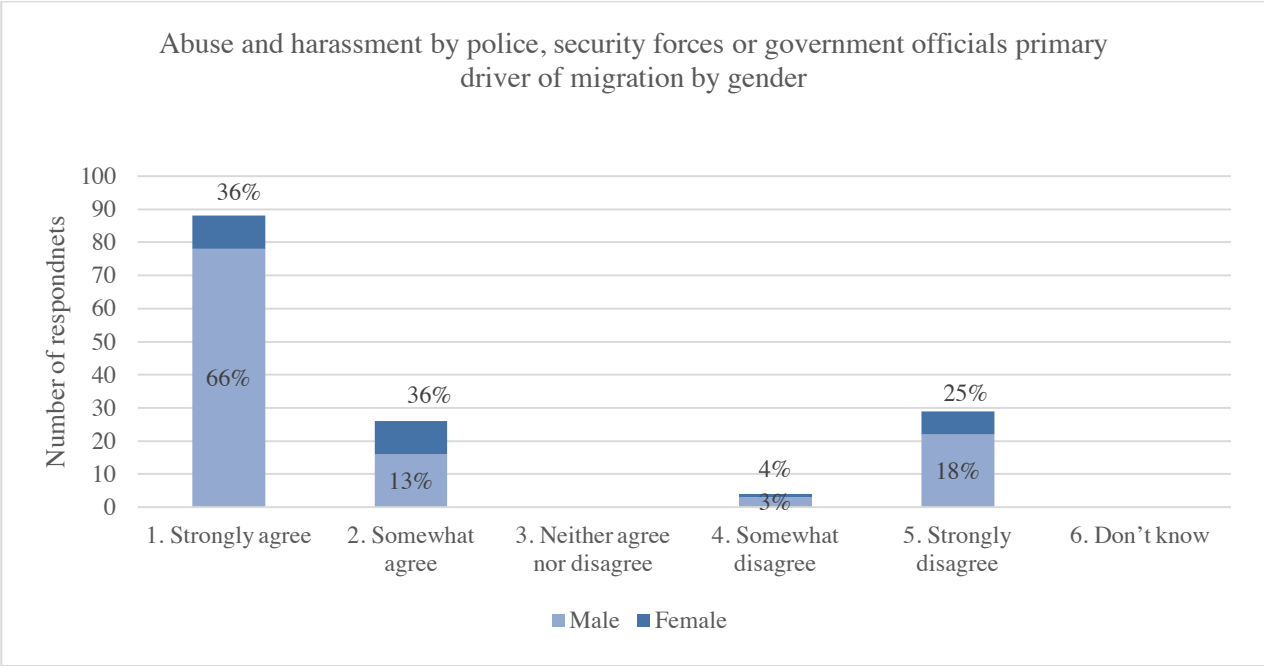
It seems like women in most cases face the same limitations to their fundamental human rights as men do in Eritrea. There is a case to be made, however, that women in addition to this are subject to a considerable number of gender specific traditional harmful practices, which in spite of some effort remain pervasive in many ethnic groups in the country.[183]

There are some indications however that women in Eritrea are treated with a greater degree of leniency by the state and that women have a greater freedom to travel freely.[184] How this impacts the decision to migrate is impossible to determine given the limited available data.

ILPI's findings on the human rights situation as a driver of female migration

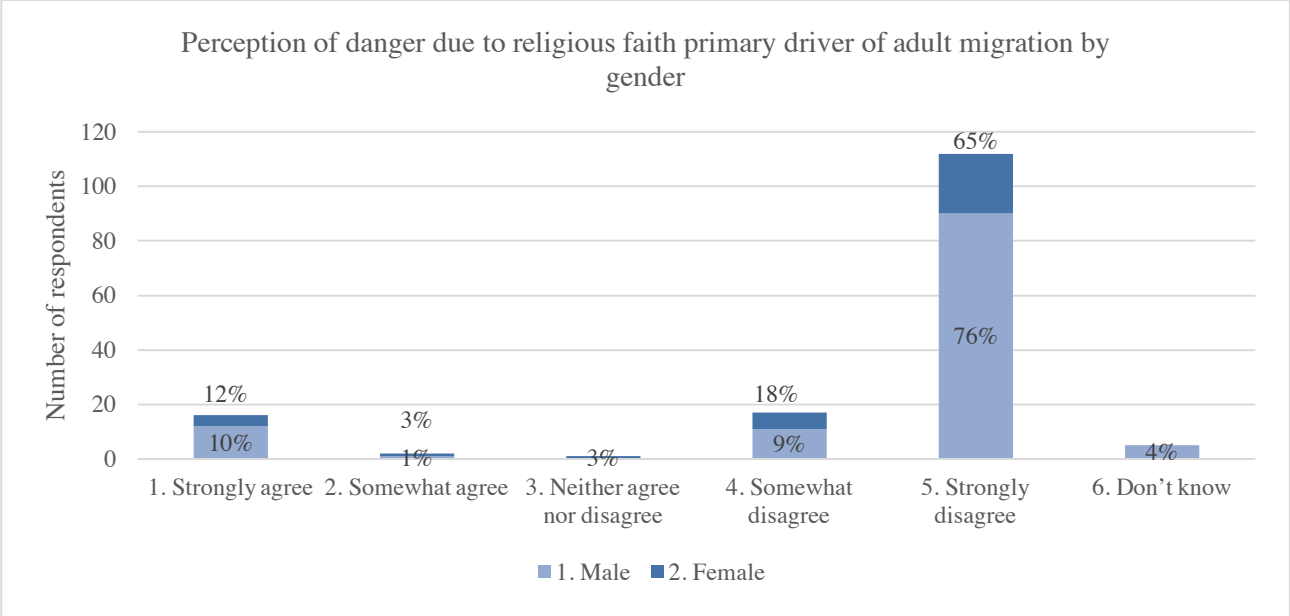
The impact of the Eritrean human rights situation on female migration from Eritrea is, just like the more general section on this topic presented above, based on smaller and more manageable components. We asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the two following statements: "Abuse and harassment by the police, security forces or government officials was the primary reason for my decision to migrate" and "I was in danger as I adhere to a faith not approved by the Eritrean government". In the figure below the responses are broken down by gender.

[183] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[184] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"; Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf); UK Home Office (2016b) "Country Policy and Information Note - Eritrea: National Service and Illegal Exit" (Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/563974/CPIN_-_Eritrea_-_NS_and_Illegal_Exit_-_October_2016.pdf);



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

The share of men and women in our sample who either strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement that abuse by police, security forces or government officials (i.e. the state) was the primary factor in their decision to migrate is nearly identical (76% of women and 78% of men).



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

There is no great disparity in our sample between men and women when it comes to the fear of unspecified persecution due to religious faith as a driver of migration. 65% of the women and 75% of the men in the sample strongly disagree with the notion that prosecution of their faith impacted their decision to migrate. However, 12% of women and 10% of men strongly agree with this notion (4 and 12 respondents respectively).

In our sample, there seems to be little if any gender difference in the weight of the human rights situation in Eritrea on the decision to migrate.

6.1.3 Expectations

It is argued earlier in this report that the notion of masculinity/manhood as a household provider, and the limited ability to be a provider while enrolled in the national service, is a driver of Eritrean (male) migration. Eritrea remains in a state where there is a considerable amount of tension between old and new values, and where the traditional notion of womanhood may have an impact on the decision to migrate or stay.

Family/societal expectations

Belloni (2015) argues that women are less driven by family/societal expectations to migrate than men.[185] It is conceivable, although we have little empirical support for this notion, that the impact of family/society expectations may actually work against migration. While some men may be expected to migrate to support their families, women on the other hand could in some cases plausibly be expected to remain to take care of family members including the elderly and the very young. This topic appears, however, to be under researched and requires additional data before any concrete statements on the issue can be made.

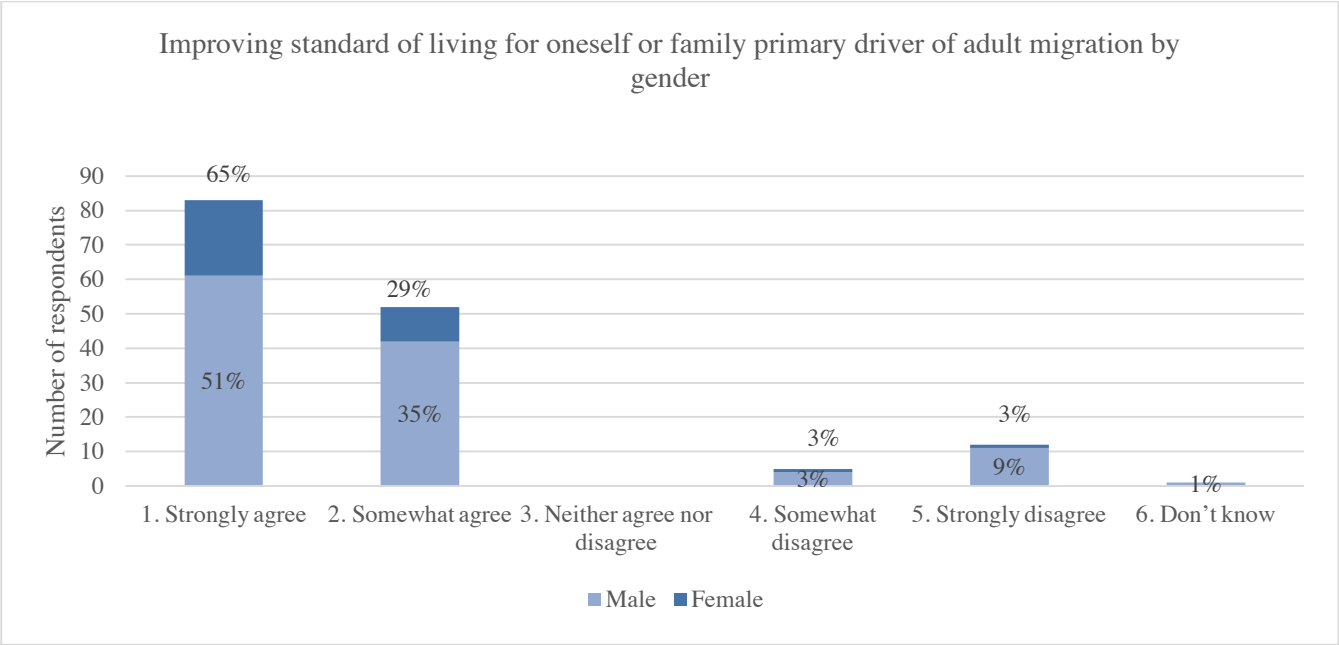
Personal expectations

While female Eritreans appear less directly driven than men to migrate due to family/societal expectations, there are indications that these expectations nevertheless 'indirectly' motivate migration. Belloni (2015) argues that several of the women included in her study in part migrated in search of greater social and economic independence and freedom from family and societal expectations in Eritrea.[186] This notion is somewhat supported by Müllers (2008) survey of 359 students at the University of Asmara in 2001. Among the two female respondents who at that time reported a desire to leave Eritrea permanently, one was motivated by notions of a lack of personal freedom from cultural restrictions.[187] Ironically, the main motivating force behind female recruitment to EPLF during the war of independence, was escaping patriarchy and harmful traditional practices.[188]

ILPI's findings on family/societal and individual expectations as a driver of female migration

We asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the following statement: "The decision to migrate was motivated by improving the standard of living for myself and/or my family". In the figure below the responses are broken down by gender.

[185] Belloni, M. (2015) Cosmologies of Destinations – Roots and routes of Eritrean forced migration towards Europe. Doctoral dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, School of Social Sciences, August 2015.
[186] Belloni, M. (2015) Cosmologies of Destinations – Roots and routes of Eritrean forced migration towards Europe. Doctoral dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, School of Social Sciences, August 2015.
[187] Müller, T. R. (2008) "Bare life and the developmental state: Implications of the militarization of higher education in Eritrea", Journal of Modern African Studies, 46:1, pp.111-131.
[188] Tronvoll, K. (1998) *Mai Weini – A Highland Village in Eritrea*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press.



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

The aspiration to improve the standard of living for oneself and/or one's family as a driver of migration is more or less equally distributed among men and women. 32 of the female respondents (94%) and 103 of the male respondents (87%) answered that they either strongly agree or somewhat agree that this was an important factor in their decision to migrate. We do not, unfortunately, have sufficient data to see if women to a larger extent are motivated by personal expectations rather than family/societal expectations – which to some extent is implied by the literature.

6.2 External drivers of migration/pull factors

6.2.1 Economic opportunities

Following the Eritrean governments demobilization program in the mid 1990s thousands of ex-freedom fighters, both men and women, found themselves unemployed. Left with few options for economic sustenance some reportedly resorted to "socially unacceptable forms of self-employment," while others migrated to the Middle East as domestic workers where many reportedly suffered mistreatment and abuse in various forms. This migration seems to have been largely motivated by economic opportunities, largely legal and may even have been facilitated by the Labour office.[189]

More recently there is little evidence available in our material which indicates that women are more or less motivated by economic opportunities outside of Eritrea than men. The possible exception is that men to a greater extent may be expected to find employment abroad to care for their families, and that some women may perceive economic opportunities abroad as a means to ensure their individual

[189] Mekonnen, D. R., & van Reisen, M. (2011) 'Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge', Paper presented at the ESF-LiU Conference on "Religions, Gender and Human Rights: Challenges for Multicultural and Democratic Societies, 21-25 June 2011, Scandic Linköping Vast, Sweden; Mekonnen, D. R., & Estefanos, M. (2011). From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean Tragedy of Human Trafficking. *Available at SSRN 2055303*.

economic independence and freedom from cultural expectations and pressures (See Expectations as a driver of migration in general and as a driver of female migration).

6.3 Trafficking and gender based violence as a deterrent to female migration?

Reports indicate that women may be highly vulnerable to violence as they are leaving the country and at the mercy of those who have facilitated the illegal migration (smugglers) and/ or those who have detected and prevented migration (border guards and police).[190] There are reports of sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence at the hands of smugglers, traffickers and armed personnel in Eritrea, Sudan, Egypt and Libya.[191]

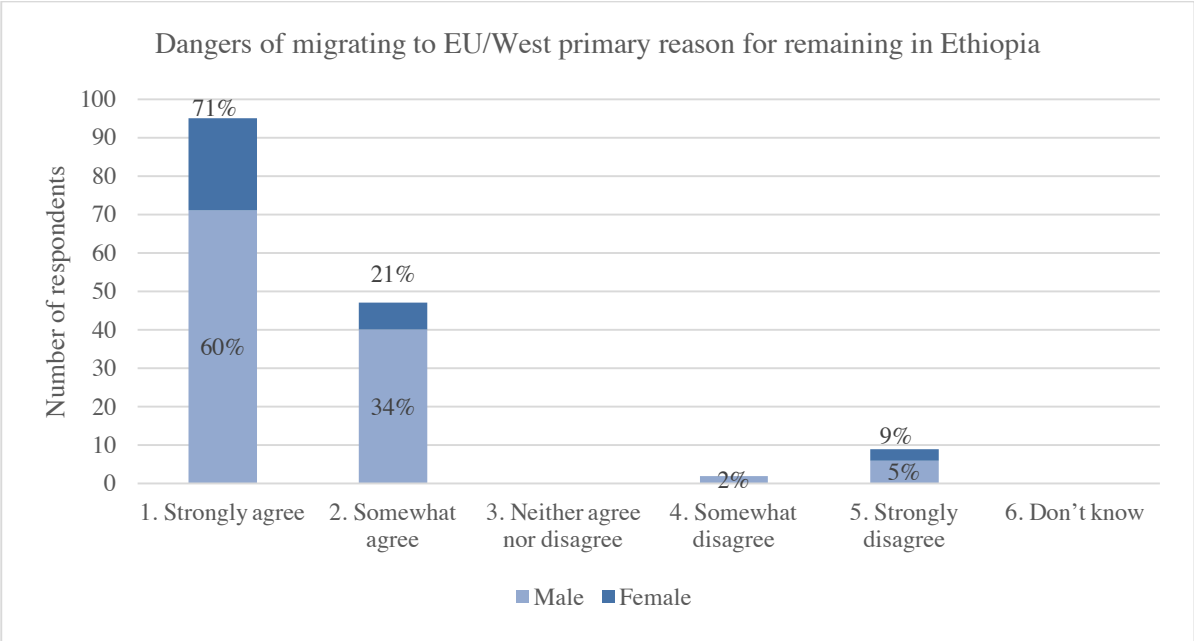
While many Eritreans have heard of these stories it is not at all clear how this knowledge effects their decision to migrate. While some may very well be deterred, others are clearly not and there are allegedly a number of women who have taken a contraceptive injection prior to migration in case of rape.[192]

ILPI's findings on the role of Gender Based Violence as a deterrent to female migration

All our respondents were interviewed in refugee camps in Ethiopia and have therefore already migrated. We would have to interview Eritreans inside Eritrea to fully understand how the risk of GBV along the migration route impacts the decision to migrate. All our respondents, both male and female, have migrated regardless of the risk GBV might pose to them. We did, however, attempt to figure out the extent to which the danger of migration has impacted our respondents' decision to continue their migration.

We asked our 153 adult respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the following statement: "The dangers of migrating to Europe are the main reason I am still in Ethiopia". In the figure below the responses are broken down by gender.

[190] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[191] SIAH (2015) Eritrea Report – A Chronic state of Agony: A report to the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (Available from: http://www.sihanet.org/sites/default/files/resourcedownload/Eritrea%20Situation%20Report%20(SIHA,2015).pdf); Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta – Malta; Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)
[192] Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service

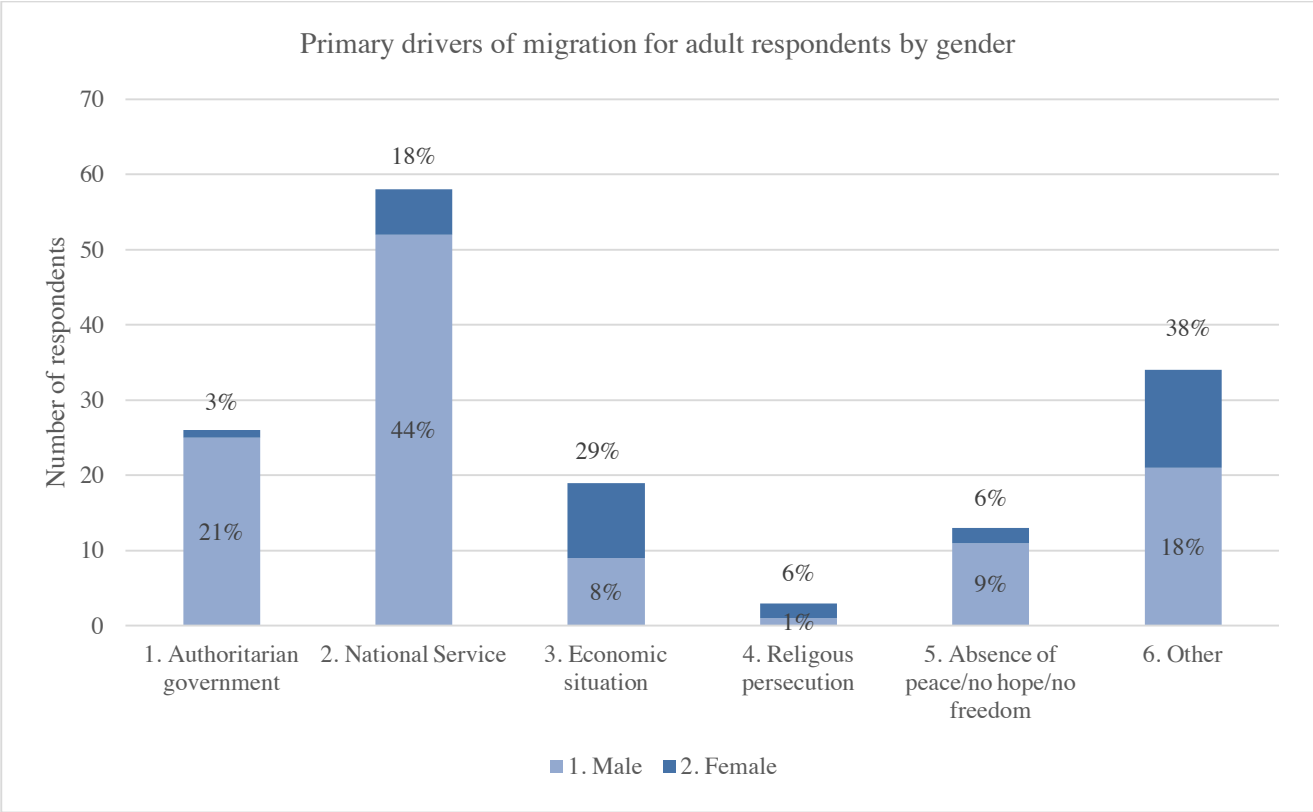


**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

31 of our female respondents (91% of all female respondents) and 111 of our male respondents (93%) either strongly or somewhat agree with the statement that the dangers of migration are the primary reason they have remained in Ethiopia and not continued their migration. We do not, unfortunately, have sufficient data to determine the degree to which GBV is part of this risk assessment.

6.4 Drivers of female migration from Eritrea

During the interview process we asked our 153 respondents an open-ended question about the drivers and motivations that impacted their decision to leave Eritrea. The responses to this open-ended question were divided into the following broad typologies: 1) Authoritarian government, 2) National service, 3) Economic situation, 4) Religious persecution, 5) Absence of peace/no hope/no freedom and 6) Other. It is important to note that a large proportion of the responses include aspects from several of these. The final typology assigned to a response is based on an assessment of the weight of a given aspect on the decision to migrate.



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

There are some considerable differences in the replies given to this open-ended question by gender. Of our 119 male respondents 25 (21%) reported the authoritarian nature of the Eritrean government and a lack of human rights as the primary reason for migration. Only 1 out of 34 (3%) female respondents reported the same. 52 of the male respondents (44%) replied that the national service was the primary driver of their choice to migrate while only 6 female respondents (18%) reported this. The share of female respondents who reported that economic considerations were the primary driver of their migration (10 out of 34 female respondents or 29%) outweigh the men who reported this (9 out of 119 male respondents or 8%). The other category for female respondents include social exclusion from being married to an individual of a different faith or nationality, husband being in the national service and failing to provide support, state confiscation of land, and searching for family.

7 Underage and child migration from Eritrea

The drivers of unaccompanied underage or child migration from Eritrea is, just like the drivers of female migration, understudied compared to the general literature of this topic. The reason for this lacuna in the literature may be the result of the relatively low number of underage and child migrants compared to the number of adult migrants. Minors and children may also potentially be warier of speaking with researchers.

The literature on drivers of unaccompanied underage and child migration from Eritrea seems to suffer from an even greater degree of methodological issues than the literature on female migration and is in many instances circumstantial, lacking detail, or lacking additional sources to substantiate and validate the claims made. We have nevertheless collected what seems to be relatively broadly held understandings of the drivers of these young migrants. These are further supported by primary data collected for this report. (Please see section 5.2 of this report for an introduction to the data collection process and a description of our sample.)

Occurrence

The number of unaccompanied minors and children seeking asylum from all locations has in recent years reached levels not seen since the UNHCR systematically began registering this in 2006. The actual numbers may be even larger due to challenges in identifying and registering all relevant cases around the world. In 2014 the number of underage and unaccompanied Eritreans applying for asylum reached more than 1,500 in Sweden and 920 in Germany alone.[193]

While it is difficult to make future projections of this trend it seems likely to remain stable or increase rather than decrease in the short to medium term.[194] The Eritrean government is apparently well aware of the issue and has possibly as a response further lowered the age limit for the issuance of legal exit visas.[195]

The National Service

Since 2003 much of conscription for the national service has occurred at the Sawa military training camp where pupils are expected to complete year 12 of compulsory schooling. Between 10,000 and 25,000 are recruited in this manner each year.[196] These students attend Sawa regardless of their age and conscripts are in many instances 17 years old or even younger. There are indications that nearly one of three new

[193] UNHCR (2014) Global Trends in Forced Displacement in 2014.
[194] Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (2014) CPPF Meeting on Eritrea Summary Note; Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); UNHCR (2014) Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2014.
[195] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf); UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"
[196] UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (2016) "Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) MST and Others (national service - risk categories) Eritrea CG (2016) UKUT 0043 (IAC)"

recruits were under 18 during the 21st round of recruitment in 2010.[197] Although the recruitment when graduating 12th degree is mandatory, there are reported exceptions. Children of high ranking officials are allegedly able to secure exemptions from the national service. Children not registered at birth and/or who are not registered for primary education are also reportedly able to avoid the national service.[198] Some young women and girls also allegedly marry and/or become pregnant earlier than they otherwise would to avoid the national service, and the number of early marriages is reportedly increasing although data on this issue is difficult to obtain.[199]

Underage and child migration from Eritrea is reported by several sources to be impacted by what these children have observed and heard of the experiences of their parents and older relatives have had with the national service. Determined to avoid the same fate and feeling that they have little to lose, unaccompanied minors are reported to illegally cross the border before they are conscripted, in many instances without telling their parents, to avoid a life of indefinite and mandatory labour without viable opportunities for themselves and their current and future families.[200]

ILPI's findings on the role of national service as a driver of the migration of unaccompanied minors

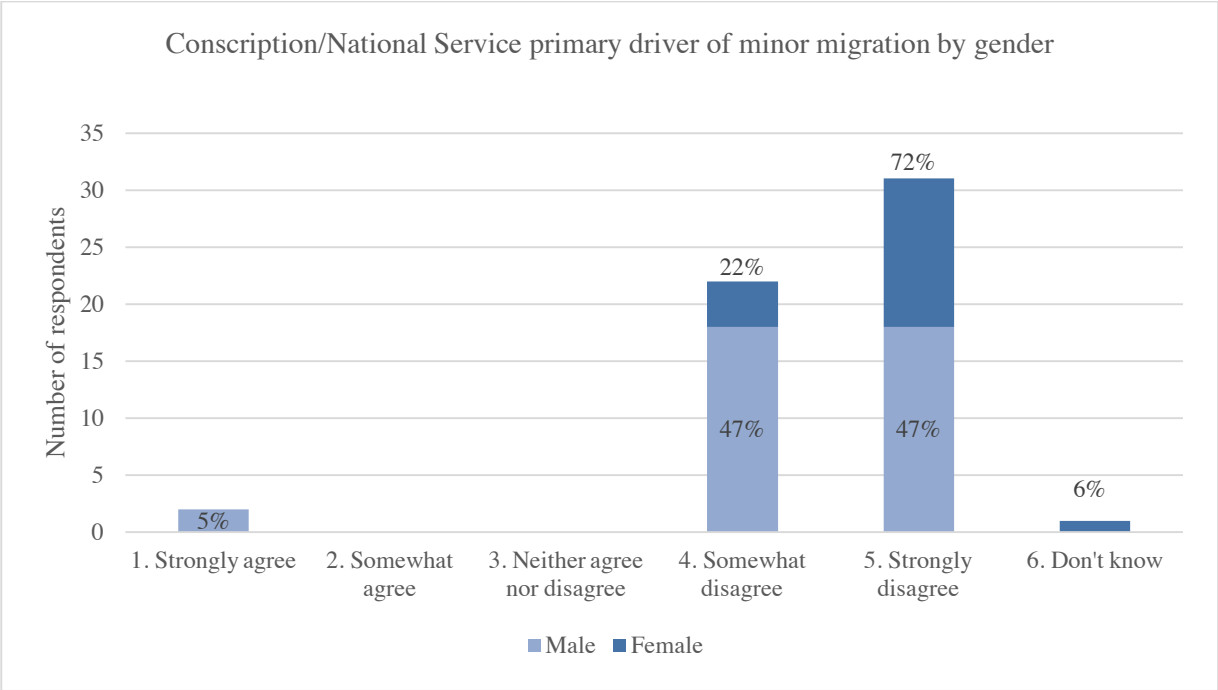
We asked our 56 unaccompanied minor respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the following statement: "The duration of military conscription/national service is the primary reason it was decided that I would migrate". In the figure below the responses are broken down by gender.

[197] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf); UNHCR (2011) UNHCR eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Eritrea, UNCHR, 20 April 2011 (HCR/EG/ERT/11/01)

[198] UNHCR (2011) UNHCR eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Eritrea, UNCHR, 20 April 2011 (HCR/EG/ERT/11/01)

[199] UNHCR (2011) UNHCR eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Eritrea, UNCHR, 20 April 2011 (HCR/EG/ERT/11/01); Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

[200] Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta – Malta; Laub, Z. (2015) Authoritarianism in Eritrea and the Migrant Crisis Council on Foreign Relations (Available from: http://www.cfr.org/eritrea/authoritarianism-eritrea-migrant-crisis/p37239); US committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2015) Forgotten Refugees: Eritrean Children in Northern Ethiopia – Findings and Recommendations, December 2015; International Crisis Group (2013) Eritrea: Scenarios for Future Transition – Arica Report No 200; Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

53 out of our sample of 56 unaccompanied minors, 36 male (94% of all males) and 17 female (95% of all females), either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the notion that military conscription and the national service was the primary driver of their choice to migrate. Only two males out of the entire sample strongly agree with the statement presented. This finding is contrary to an argument often made that there is a tendency for young Eritreans to migrate with the explicit desire to avoid the national service.

Educational opportunities

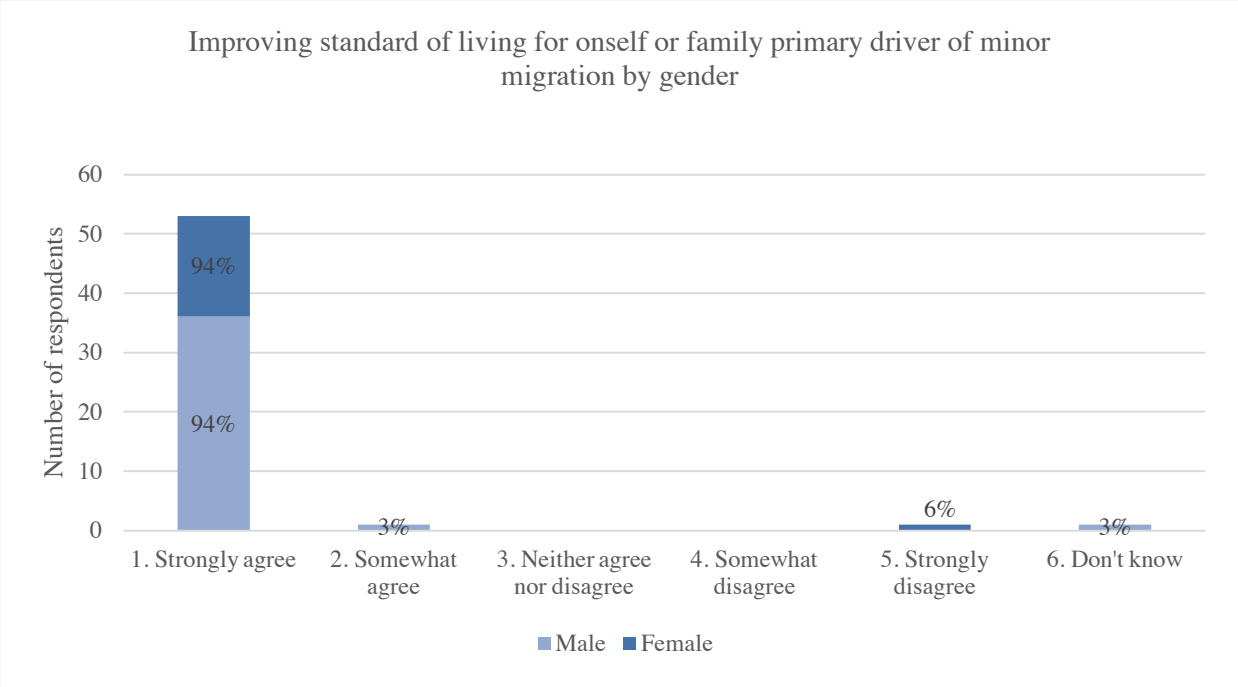
The national service is according to Amnesty International (2015) not only affecting the educational opportunities of young Eritreans directly through the mandatory 12th year at Sawa, but also indirectly. Long-term conscription of parents and older siblings apparently make families dependent on the economic contributions of minors at an early age. Respondents reported that this resulted in emotional stress as well as interruptions to their education as some were forced to leave school in order to earn money for the up-keeping of the household.[201] Minors have little official legal protection in this situation due to gaps in the legal framework, including a lack of specific penalties for employers of children in hazardous work or employers of children under the minimum age.[202]

There are also references to the so called *Maetot*, a national program under which children in grades 9-11 engage in agricultural, environmental, or hygiene-related public work for varying amounts of time

[201] Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[202] US Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2014) Findings on the worst forms of child labor, United States Department of Labor (Available from: https://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/2014TDA/2014TDA.pdf)

during holidays and other periods of time off from school. How this may impact their educational opportunities remains uncertain, as there is no research on the issue.[203]

ILPI's findings on the role of the improving one's standard of living as a driver of the migration of unaccompanied minors



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Nearly the entire sample of minor respondents (53 in all) strongly agree with the statement that their choice to migrate was heavily influenced by the desire to improve the standard of living for themselves and their family. Educational opportunities are clearly one aspect of this in addition to the more general potential for improving one's economic situation or that of one's family.

Human rights situation

Underage Eritreans face many of the same human rights related challenges as adults despite their age and legal status. Gender based violence is allegedly widespread due to a combination of harmful traditional practices, patriarchal power structures and societal discrimination. Failure to conform with certain expectations can result in harassment, violence and/or discrimination. Harmful traditional practices include female genital mutilation (FGM), which, despite being banned in 2007, allegedly remains widespread amongst nearly all ethnic and religious groups and is estimated to affect nearly 90% of the female population. The government has, however, in recent years allegedly been able to largely eliminate the continuation of the practice in urban areas through sustained effort.[204] A 2010 survey by the Ministry of Health's branch in the Central region claims that they found that only 17.7% of women aged

[203] US Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2014) Findings on the worst forms of child labor, United States Department of Labor (Available from: https://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/2014TDA/2014TDA.pdf)
[204] UNHCR (2011) UNHCR eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Eritrea, UNCHR, 20 April 2011 (HCR/EG/ERT/11/01)

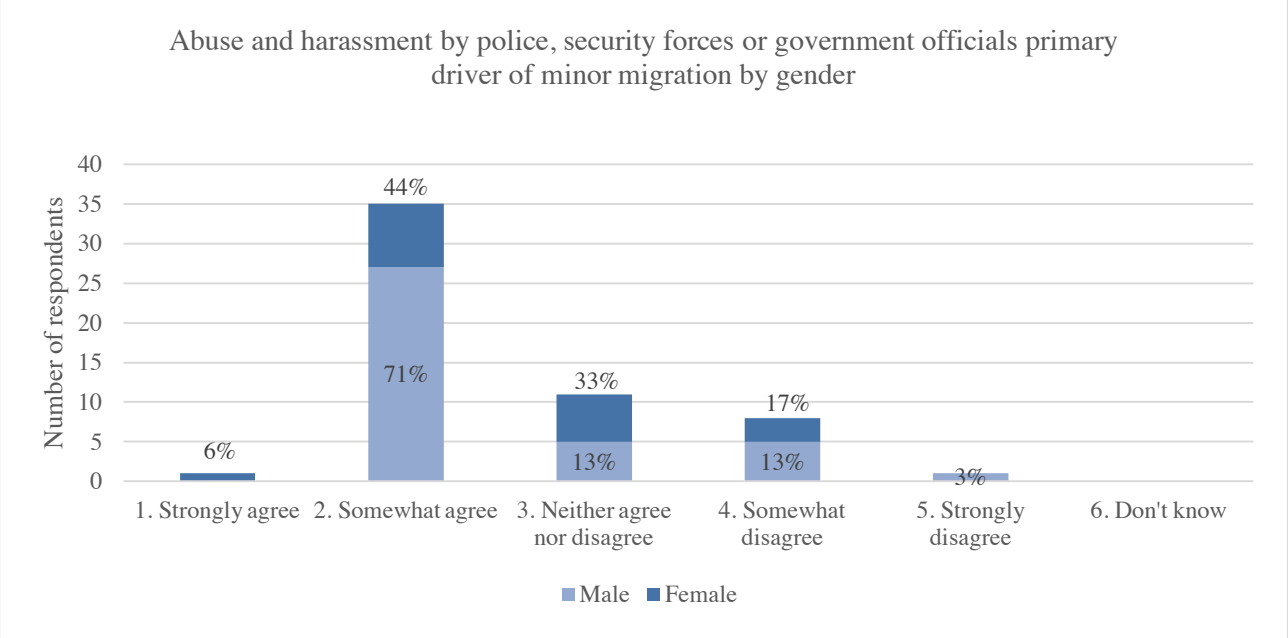
6-15 where circumcised compared to 74.4% of women aged 16-40, which would indicate significant progress on this issue.[205]

Minors and children who break the law or otherwise are selected for detention are in many instances held without charge, and are regardless of their age and legal status held alongside adults in appalling conditions. Many are subsequently enrolled in the national service. [206]

Although the sources on this topic are scarce there are some which claim that children in Eritrea may be vulnerable to forced labour, including forced begging, and some may even be subjected to domestic and international sex trafficking.[207]

ILPI's findings on the role of the human rights situation as a driver of the migration of unaccompanied minors

The assessment of the impact of the Eritrean human rights situation migration of unaccompanied minors was, just like the more general section on this topic presented earlier in this report, based on smaller and more manageable components. We asked our sample of 56 unaccompanied minor respondents if they 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know with the two following statements: "Abuse and harassment by the police, security forces or government officials was the primary reason for my decision to migrate" and "I was in danger as I adhere to a faith not approved by the Eritrean government". In the figure below the responses are broken down by gender.



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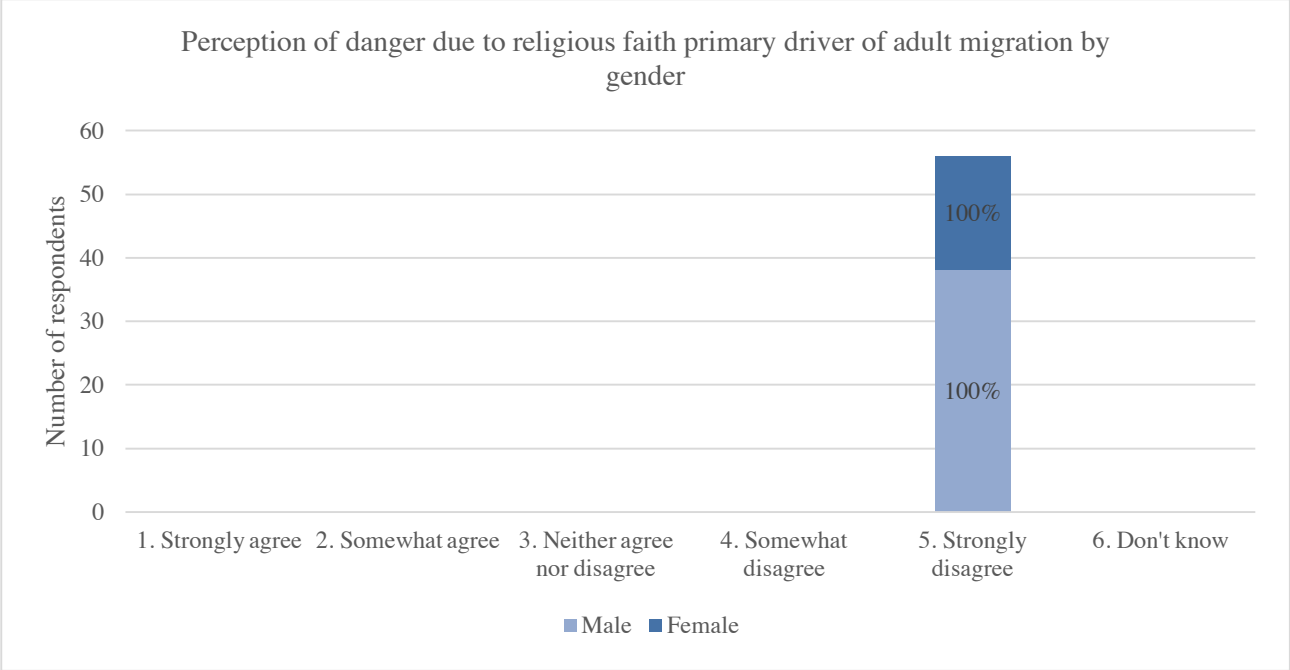
[205] National Union of Eritrean Women (2014) "10 years - Women in Eritrea", UNDP Eritrea. (Available from: http://www.er.undp.org/content/dam/eritrea/docs/WomenEmpowerment/UNDP%20NUEW%20Publication.pdf)
[206] Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[207] US Department of State (2016) Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2016 (Available from: http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258876.pdf)



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The entire sample responded that they strongly disagree with the statement concerning a perception of danger due to their religious faith – even if two of them reported to adhere to a non-state approved Christian denomination (See appendix 2 for a brief presentation of descriptive statistics of the sample). 35 respondents (8 female and 27 male) did, however, somewhat agree that abuse from police, security forces or government officials (i.e. the state) was the primary reason for their migration.

Risks in migration

While illegal migration from Eritrea is a highly dangerous endeavour with potential threats on both sides of the border, there is an argument that unaccompanied minors and children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other abuse. If captured inside Eritrea minors are reportedly detained without charge and held alongside adults. Minors also appear to be particularly vulnerable to kidnapping and sexual abuse along the migration route. Minors have reportedly been subject to torture in the Sinai.[208]

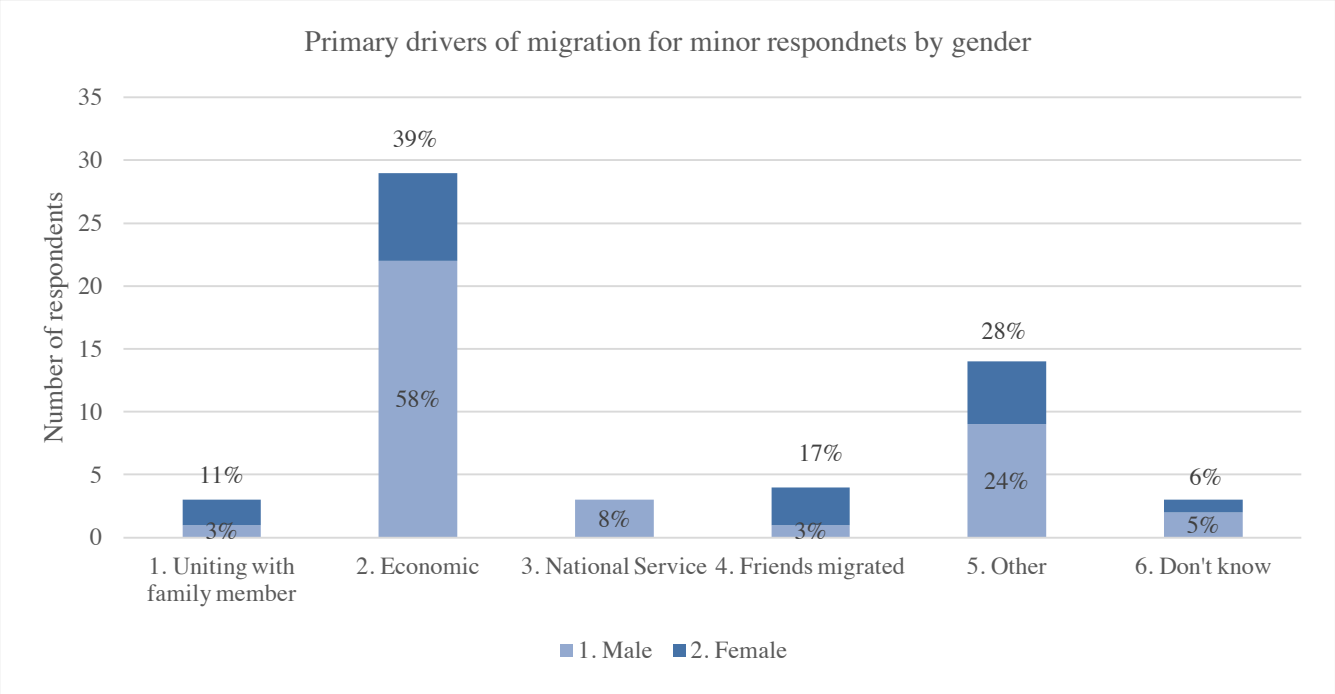
Drivers of migration of unaccompanied minors and children from Eritrea

Children flee alone, in many instances without telling their parents, to avoid a life of indefinite mandatory labour on low pay with not viable opportunities for themselves or their families.[209] We asked

[208] Van Reisen, M., Estefanos, M., & Rijken, C. (2012). *Human trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees between life and death*. S. Sellars-Shrestha (Ed.). Wolf Legal Publishers; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2014) Responses to Information Request (Available from: http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455660&pls=1); Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

[209] Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

our sample of 56 unaccompanied minors from Eritrea in Ethiopian refugee camps an open-ended question concerning the drivers and motivations behind their decision to migrate. The responses to this question were divided into the following broad typologies of migration: 1) Uniting with family member; 2) Economic situation; 3) National Service; 4) Friends migrated; 5) Other; and 6) Don't know.[210] The other category includes responses that refer to family problems and incarceration.



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Economic aspirations seem to be the primary driver of migration for both male and female minors in our sample. This is followed by the Other category which includes varied issues such as family conflicts, fear of detentions, and the desire to go to a developed country (not further specified by respondent). A small share of male minors (8%) reported to have migrated in an attempt to avoid the national service while no female minor respondents reported this. Female respondents are, however, overrepresented in reporting that they migrated because their friends were doing so (17% of female respondents and 3% of male respondents reported this) and in migration in order to unite with family member(s) (11% of female respondents and 3% of male respondents reported this).

The minors in our sample have reported substantially different reasons for migration than adult respondents. For instance, no minor respondents in our sample reported that they migrated due to the authoritarian nature of the Eritrean government while 21% of male adults reported this. The national service was also hugely more influential as a driver of migration for our adult sample than for the minor sample.

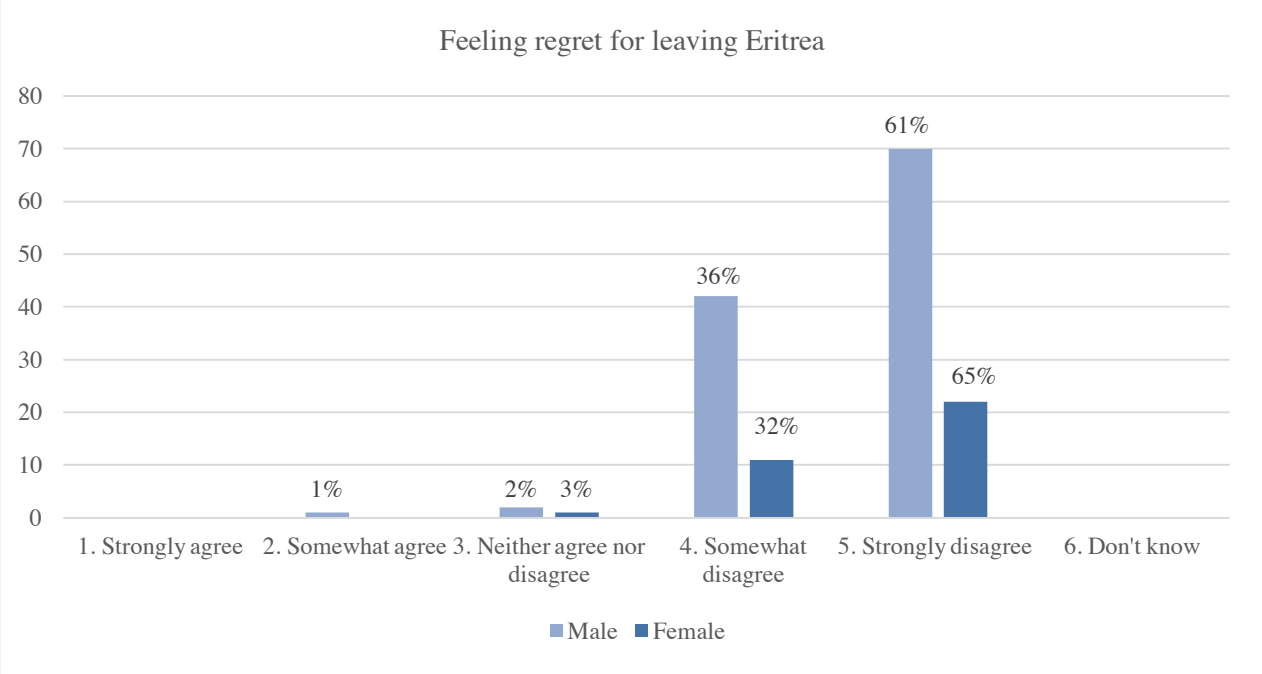
[210] The typologies of migration for unaccompanied minors are different from those of adults.

8 Concerning return

Most human rights observers on Eritrea claim that returnees face a concrete risk of arrest and mistreatment when reaching Eritrea. Amnesty International (2013) for instance, which is based on more than 40 testimonies gathered from Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers in third countries, states that asylum seekers who are forcibly returned to Eritrea are arbitrarily arrested and detained without charge. Those of national service age are at particular risk as their flight is seen as desertion from the national service. The period of arrest seems to vary significantly from a few days to several years.[211] Landinfo (2016c), on the other hand, had great difficulty in finding reliable and verifiable information about what actually happens, or is likely to happen, to (forcibly) returned asylum seekers.[212]

8.1 Adult perceptions of returning to Eritrea

The question of returning to Eritrea, voluntary or otherwise, is a methodologically difficult topic to probe, as one can assume that the incentive to misinform on this topic is significant. We nevertheless asked our sample of 153 adult respondents whether they: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the following statement: "I regret leaving Eritrea". 149 respondents where comfortable with replying to this question (115 male and 34 female).[213]

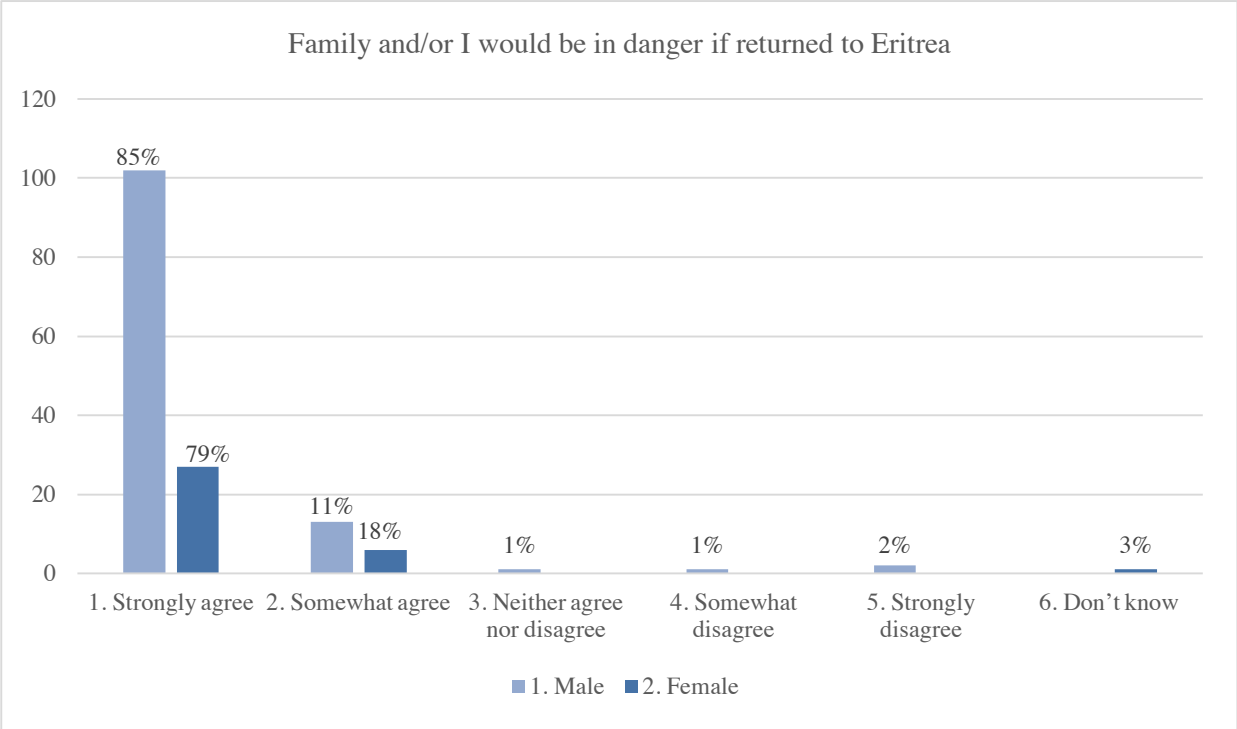


**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

[211] Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)
[212] Landinfo (2016c) "Query Response - Eritrea: Reaction towards returned asylum seekers", Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) – Translation Provided by the UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3383/1/3383_1.pdf)
[213] 4 male respondents from our adult sample are therefore not included here.

97% of all male and 97% of all female respondents in our sample either somewhat disagree or completely disagree with the notion that they regret leaving Eritrea. When asked if they would like to return to Eritrea, all those who responded made it clear that they do not. Our sample is completely made up of Eritreans who have migrated and it seems unlikely that they would return to Eritrea of their own accord in the near to medium future.

We followed up and asked our sample of 153 adult respondents whether they: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the following statement: "My family or I would be in danger if returned to Eritrea".



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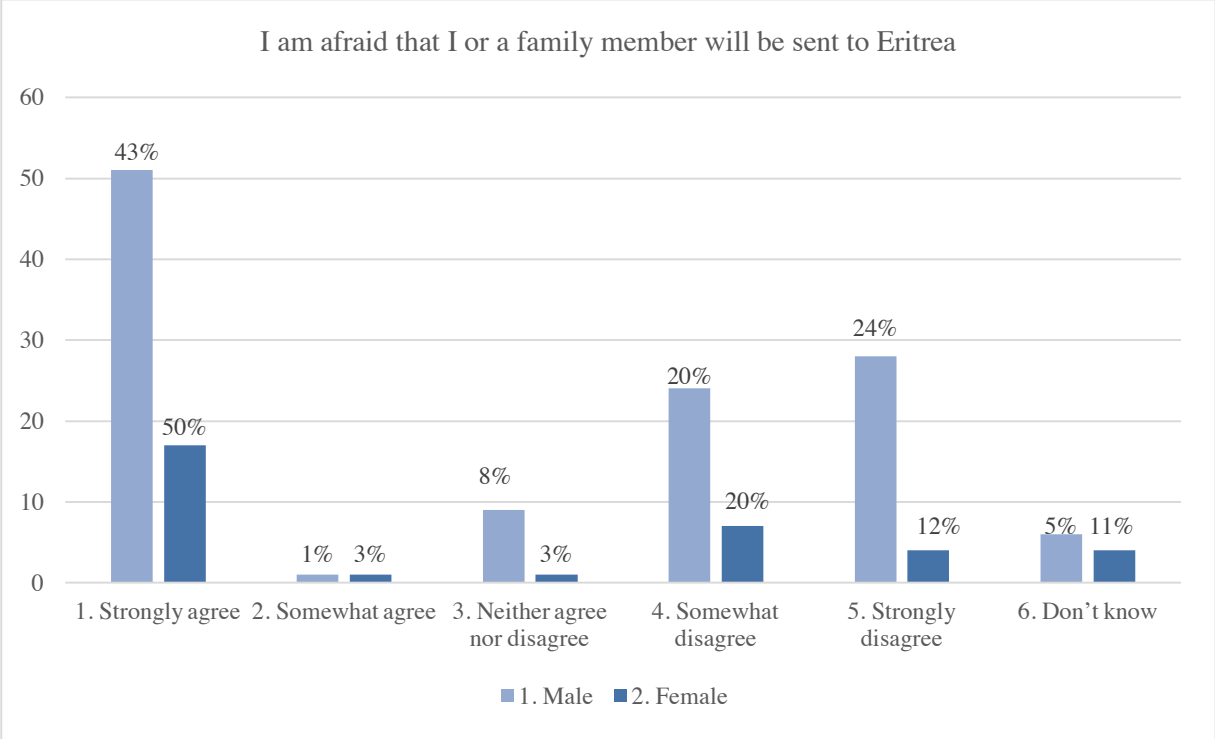
96% of male and 97% of our female respondents perceive returning to Eritrea to constitute a considerable threat to themselves and/or their families. 3% of our male respondents either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the notion. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient data to explore why these individuals do not perceive a return to constitute a threat to their wellbeing.

152 adult respondents (118 male and 34 female) responded to our open-ended question concerning what they think would happen to them if they were to return to Eritrea. *The vast majority of respondents (roughly 126 or 80%), both male and female, claim that they would be in danger of arrest and detention as they left Eritrea illegally*. A small number of respondents (5 male and 1 female) claimed that they expect that they may face execution if they were to return. The remaining 20 respondents (13%) express other worries such as again having to face economic destitution, religious persecution, family conflicts, or general lack of opportunities that affected their decision to migrate in the first place, or admit that they do not know what would face them if they were to return.

On the topic of returning to Eritrea we finally asked our sample of 153 adult respondents whether they: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the following statement: "I worry that I or my family will be returned to Eritrea".



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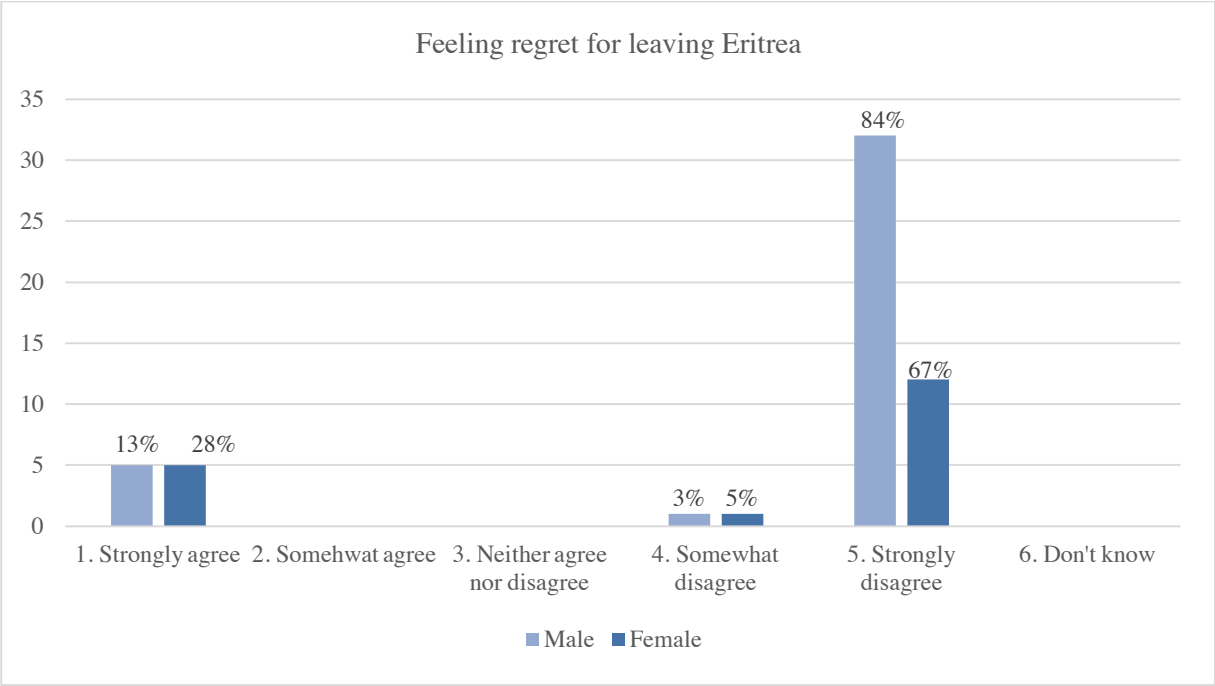
44% of male and 53% of female adult respondents in our sample either strongly or somewhat agree with the notion that they are afraid that they themselves or their family members will be returned to Eritrea. This understandable given the share of respondents who see returning to Eritrea as posing a risk to themselves or their families. 44% of male and 32% of respondents, however, either somewhat or strongly disagree with the statement presented to them. We do not unfortunately have sufficient data to explore why these individuals do not worry about being returned to Eritrea, as this would also be connected to their plans or not of further migration to a third country or not.

8.2 Minor perceptions of returning to Eritrea

We also asked our sample of 56 minors if they: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the following statement: "I regret leaving Eritrea".

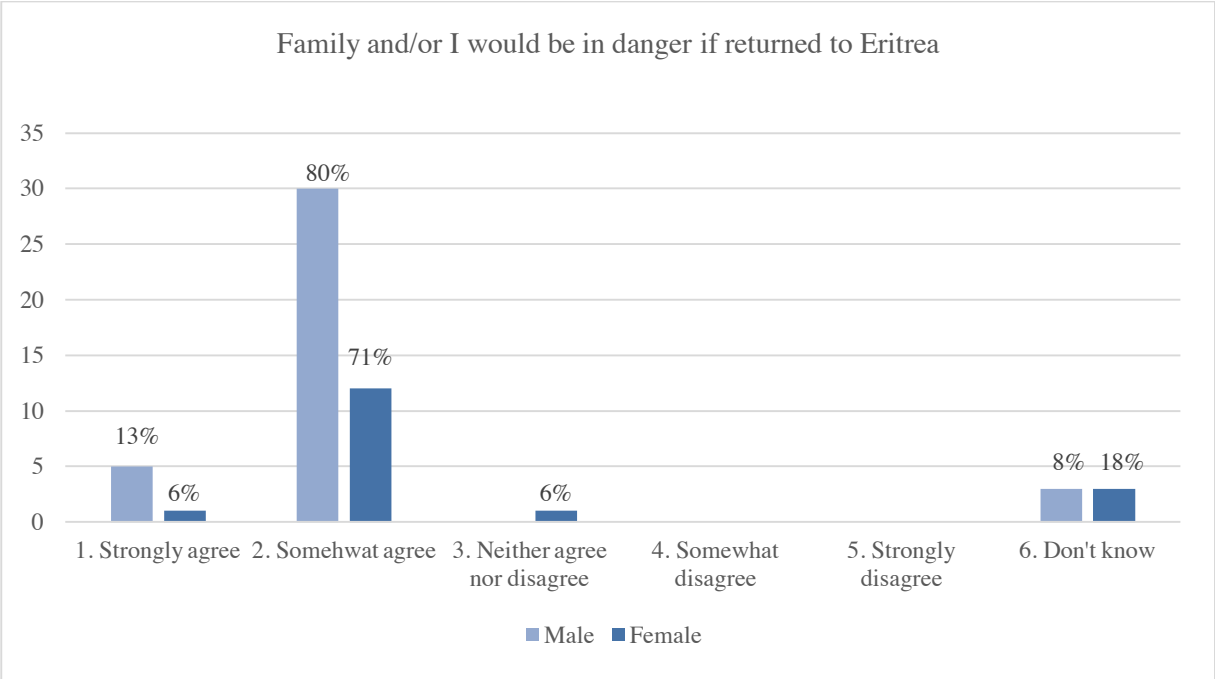


**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of minor male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

87% of all male and 72% of all female minor respondents either somewhat or completely disagree that they regret leaving Eritrea. While this constitutes a clear majority the share is somewhat smaller than for adults where 97% of both men and women disagreed with the statement. Responses from our minor sample on the question of regretting leaving Eritrea differs from that of our adult sample in two additional interesting ways. There is first of all some minor respondents (5 of each gender) who strongly agree with the notion presented and do regret leaving Eritrea. There were no adult responses of this type in our sample. Second, the share of minors who somewhat disagree with the statement presented (3% of males and 5% of females) is much smaller than for adults (36% of males and 32% of females). It therefore seems like minors have a less nuanced approach to this question and feel strongly either way.

As the sample is made up of individuals who have migrated the share of respondents who strongly disagree with the notion remain interesting. We do not, unfortunately, have sufficient data to provide a more nuanced explanation as to why this may be the case.

As with our adult respondents we followed up and asked our sample of 56 minor respondents if they: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the following statement: "My family or I would be in danger if returned to Eritrea". One female minor respondent abstained from responding to this question.



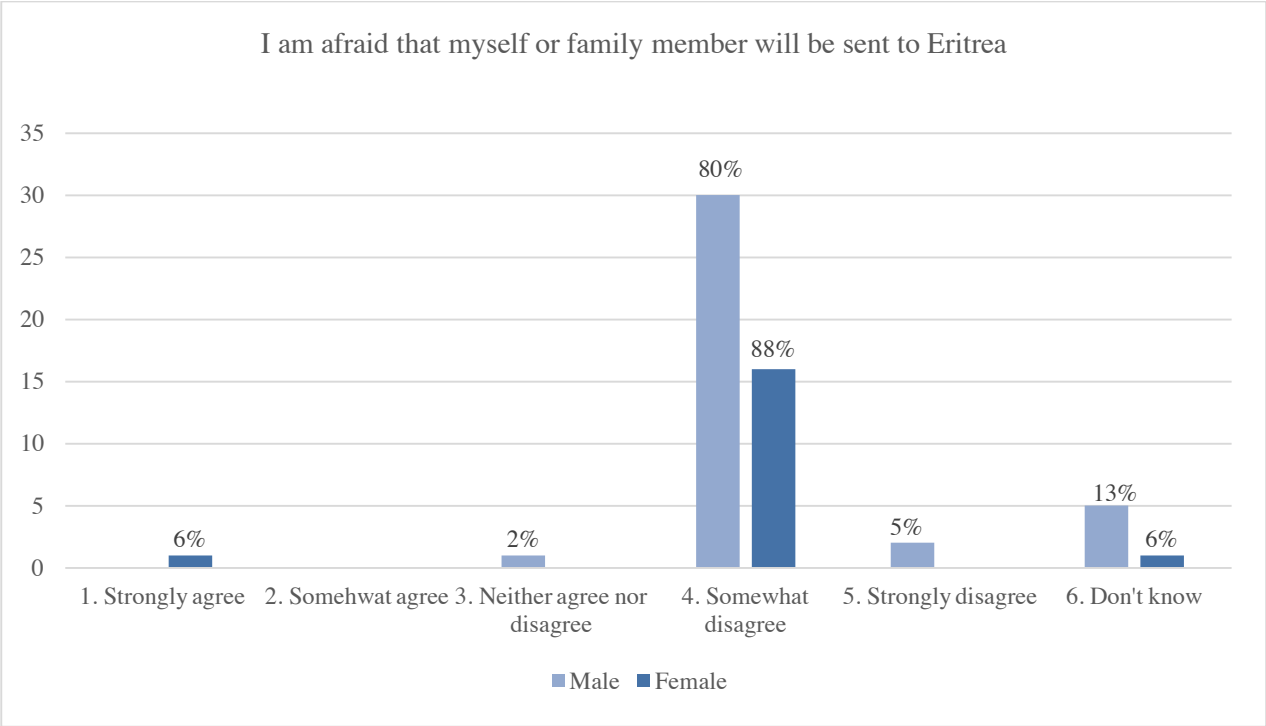
**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of minor male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

93% of minor males and 77% of minor females either strongly or somewhat agree with the statement presented to them compared to 96% of adult males and 97% of adult females. The lower share of minor females who agree with this notion is to a large extent caused by a comparatively large share of female respondents (18%) claiming that they do not know if they would be in danger upon return. There are no minor respondents who disagree in any way to the statement.

An additional observation is the majority of the minor respondents somewhat agree with the statement presented to them. The majority of adult respondents, however, responded that they strongly agreed with this notion. This could be interpreted to indicate that minors have a more limited understanding or perception of what returning implies. We do not, unfortunately, have the data to further explore the reasoning for the answers given to this question.

46 minor respondents (32 male and 14 female) responded to our open-ended question concerning what they think would happen to them if they were to return to Eritrea. 11 minors (8 male and 3 female), about 25%, claim that they will be arrested and/or forcibly conscripted upon return. Others refer to economic destitution as the primary concern upon return due to a lack of any opportunities. Finally, there are those who are not certain, but who express considerable unease about the prospects of returning.

On the topic of returning to Eritrea we finally asked our sample of 56 minor respondents if they: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Somewhat agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Somewhat disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; or 6. Don't know, with the following statement: "I worry that I or my family will be returned to Eritrea".



**The percentages in this table are presented as gendered percentages or share of minor male or female responses for a category. The sum of all percentages presented is therefore 200 and not 100.*

The vast majority of minor respondents somewhat disagree with this statement; a statement that as many as 44% of male and 53% of female adult respondents in our sample either strongly or somewhat agreed with. This could be interpreted to indicate that underage Eritrean refugees and migrants have a more limited understanding of the potential difficulties that await them and the possibility of return. On the other hand it could be interpreted to indicate a considerable degree of trust in an international system that they perceive is obligated to protect them after they have crossed the Eritrean border.

9 Summary of findings

The dominating narrative of Eritrean migration, which sees Eritreans leaving Eritrea to escape the combination of the infinite national service and human rights violations, has in recent years been challenged by a set of reports issued by some national and trans-national immigration authorities. These reports argue that Eritrean migration predominantly is motivated by economic aspirations and that Eritreans whose asylum applications are rejected may return without fear of persecution. This report has explored these narratives through literature reviews and primary data gathering to provide additional information on the opposing interpretations of the drivers of migration from Eritrea.

This debate is to a large extent a function of the considerable methodological challenges in doing research on Eritrea, as restricted access to the country prevents both systematized in-depth qualitative studies as well as rigorous large-N analysis to be implemented; leaving fully supported conclusions of one or the other narrative in wanting. Chapter 3 of this report presents an overview of some of the most prominent methodological challenges and approaches in research on Eritrea. The literature review and (qualitative) interview are among the most prominent approaches used in research on Eritrea.

The literature review should include a critical examination of the validity and reliability of individual sources as well as an assessment of the range and number of sources. The politicized nature of the situation in Eritrea spills over to a politicized or positioned research conduct on the country, which makes an assessment of the intentions of the authors highly important. The use of written material as sources therefore warrants an understanding and knowledge about the author's personal background as well as a careful reading of the contribution as a whole, avoiding mining for citations or quotes without presenting the context in which they were found.

Few, if any, researchers and institutions have permission to undertake critical and independent research inside Eritrea. As such a substantial share of research and reporting on Eritrea relies on interview data with Eritreans outside Eritrea. Many have argued that while interview data from these individuals provides important sources of information, they cannot provide a complete account of the situation inside the country. There is also the question of the trustworthiness of respondents and whether or not they intentionally or unintentionally are giving true, partially true, or false statements. Many potential informants have an incentive to misinform. Asylum seekers and refugees are in a vulnerable situation and may feel a strong incentive to give "the right answers". Members of the Eritrean diaspora tend to either support or oppose the current Eritrean government and this may significantly impact their accounts. NGOs may also have several incentives to misinform. Those who still have access to Eritrea may misinform in order to preserve their access and continue their work (and relevance) in Eritrea. Other NGOs, such as human rights organizations, may exaggerate in order to increase international attention to the situation (and the organization). Finally, government representatives, diplomats and embassy staff may choose to misinform to protect their ongoing activities inside Eritrea or for other more strategic (political or personal) reasons.

The incentive to misinform represents a considerable methodological challenge. We argue that the arguably best approach for ensuring trust with a respondent is the long-term anthropological fieldwork. In the cases when this is not a practical option the researcher may employ a series of techniques in an attempt to reduce the share of untrustworthy respondents. We utilized these techniques during the collection of data from respondents in refugee camps in Tigray, Ethiopia.

Chapter 4 presented a review of a selection of reports and scholarly publications on Eritrea. This overview underlines the considerable challenges in doing research on Eritrea and the difficulties in obtaining information from inside Eritrea itself. ILPI finds that the long-duration (ethnographic) fieldwork inside Eritrea may provide the collection of highly internally valid data, which results in the

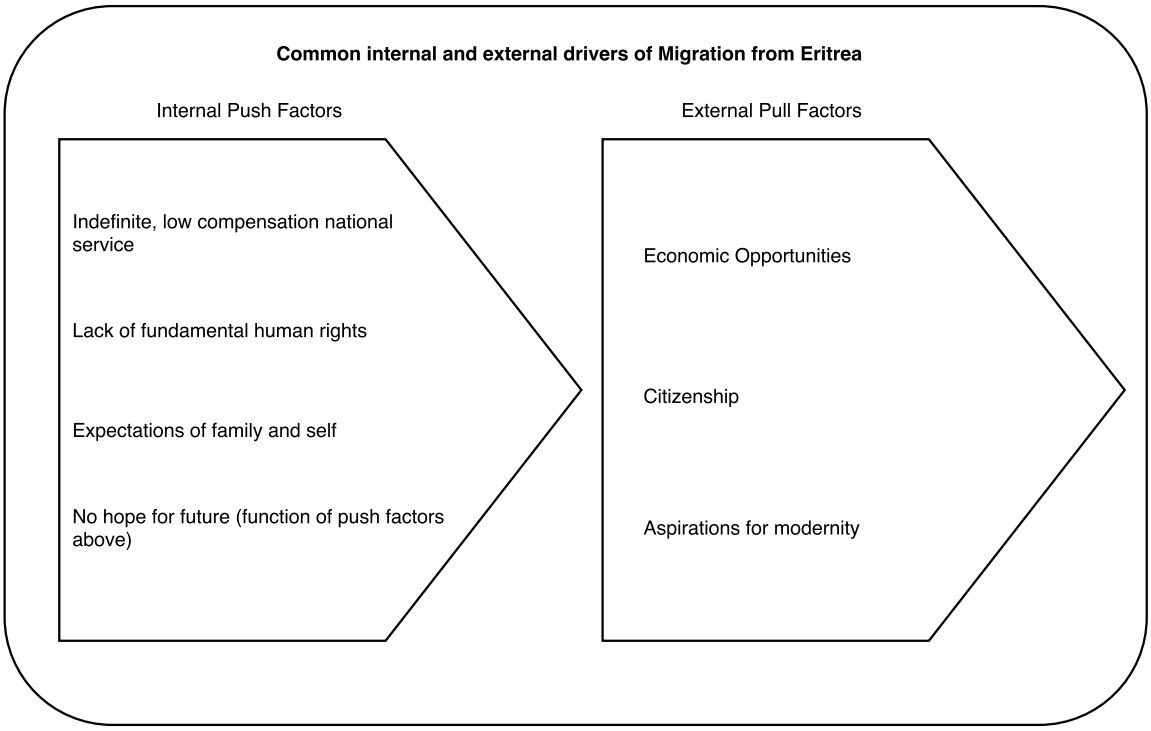
most empirical based explanatory publications. The careful use of a broad range of written sources and interview data can, however, in several instances provide findings with a significant degree of internal validity. Finally, there are some methodological issues that are difficult to overcome. One response to this can be a reduction in the certainty of claims made; an adjustment of the standard of proof required.

Chapter 5 presents the main analytical section of this report. The primary sources of data for this section are the reports and scholarly publications assessed in chapter 4 and interview data collected by ILPI. Interviews were conducted in Adi Harush, Hitsat, May Ayni and Shimbela refugee camps in Tigray, Ethiopia from a sample of 153 adults (119 male and 34 female) and 56 minors (38 male and 18 female). Neither of these samples are representative of the Eritrean population in general. Considerable care was taken, however, to ensure that the samples are as representative as possible of Eritreans in the aforementioned camps during the time of data collection.

The literature review identified the national service, the human rights situation and societal/family expectations to be highly important internal drivers of primary migration from Eritrea. The interview data collected by ILPI indicates that all of these factors where important drivers for the 153 adults in our sample. 88% of the adult sample strongly or somewhat agreed that improving the standard of living for themselves and/or their family (as a proxy for the importance of individual and social/family expectations) was an important driver of their migration. 78% of the same sample strongly or somewhat agreed that human rights issues were important drivers of their migration. Finally, 39% of our adult sample strongly or somewhat agreed that the national service was an important driver of their migration. These factors appear to undoubtedly constitute important drivers of migration in their own right. The interaction of the economic situation, the indefinite national service, and the human rights situation in Eritrea have furthermore conflated in a situation characterized by a general lack of hope for the future. 95% of the adult respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the notion that there are no opportunities or hope for themselves or their families in Eritrea. While our sample in no way is representative of the broader Eritrean population, this notion is reflected in a number of independently produced reports and scholarly publications and seems to be commonly held perceptions among those who leave Eritrea.

The literature review and interview data also identified a number of external drivers of migration from Eritrea. Economic opportunities may act as a significant external driver of migration as the Eritrean economy has struggled for years. In this situation of poor economic performance and low levels of development it is to be expected that some Eritreans leave Eritrea to seek economic opportunities elsewhere. A second external driver of migration may be the practice of “graduated sovereignty” where the Eritrean state exerts absolute control and coercive power at home to ensure compliance, while exhibiting relative leniency towards the diaspora who wants to return home for visits in order to both cultivate their loyalty and to harness economic privileges (as taxation and diaspora remittances). The celebration of the diaspora and the continued denial of full citizenship to those who remain may have resulted in a considerable desire to migrate. Migrants may, as such, contribute to the nation through defined financial contributions rather than indefinite service in hardship. Finally, aspirations for modernity, whereby individuals desire to partake both in the material values or comfort “modern” societies may provide and in the freedom and connectivity with the larger world associated with it, may be a driver in itself.

The figure below presents the core internal and external drivers of migration identified in this study.



It is important to note, however, that there are still considerable lacunas in our understanding of the drivers of migration from Eritrea. There are remaining internal and external validity issues associated with much of the research on Eritrea, leaving much to be desired when it comes to the (certainty of) the accuracy of findings and our ability to generalize findings to the Eritrean population at large. There is also uncertainty concerning how the identified drivers of migration, alone or through complex interaction, impact the individual's choice to migrate, although it seems appropriate to assume that it varies considerably between individuals and most likely over time as well. It seems evident, however, that many Eritreans of all ages find the combined effects of some, or all, of these factors to outweigh the very real internal and external risks and uncertainties associated with illegal migration from Eritrea.

Chapter 6 deals with female migration from Eritrea, a subject which remains relatively understudied compared to the larger and more general literature on this subject. Much of what exists on the particular drivers of female migration from Eritrea appears to suffer from the same challenges as noted above and is generally too circumstantial, lacking detail, or lacking additional sources to substantiate and validate the claims made. Thorough, reliable, and valid information on the drivers of female migration is in short supply, making robust conclusions on the issue difficult without further research. We found considerable gender differences in how our respondents answered in relation to internal and external drivers of migration from Eritrea. Only 18% of female respondents in our sample of Eritrean adults either strongly or somewhat agreed that the national service is an important driver of migration. This may be the result

of an increase in the number of women who are either exempted or demobilized from the national service, although the criteria for exemption are unclear and may be implemented differently throughout the country. Women seem in most cases however to face the same or similar human rights issues as men and to be as motivated as men by the desire to improve the standard of living for themselves and their families.

Chapter 7 looks at the migration of underage Eritreans. Our sample of Eritrean minors reported to be much less motivated to migrate by the indefinite national service than adults, and seem to be more inclined to migrate due to a desire to improve the standard of living for themselves and/or their families. Furthermore, no minor respondents in our sample reported that they migrated due to the authoritarian nature of the Eritrean government, while 21% of male adults reported this. The drivers migration affecting Eritrean minors seem to differ substantially from that of adults. A more nuanced understanding of which factors have the greatest impact and how these factors may interrelate with one another requires additional research.

Finally, chapter 8 briefly discusses the question of return. In our adult sample there seems to be a near universal lack of regret for leaving Eritrea. There is equally a near universal agreement that returning to Eritrea would constitute a threat to the respondent and/or their family. The majority of respondents claim that they would be in danger or arrest and detention if they are to return. A much smaller share of respondents claim that they would be executed upon return. The remaining respondents express other worries such as family conflicts, lack of opportunities, economic destitution, or religious persecution. Finally, 44% of male and 53% of female respondents either strongly or somewhat agree with the notion that they worry that they or their family will be sent back to Eritrea. The sample of Eritrean minors differ somewhat from the adult sample when it comes to the question of return. First, while the majority of minors do not regret leaving Eritrea, there are a number who do feel regret. Second, Eritrean minors seem somewhat less certain that they will be in danger if returned to Eritrea. Third, our sample of Eritrean minors seem less worried about being returned to Eritrea. We argue that this could indicate that these young individuals have a more limited understanding of the potential difficulties they may face or that there is a higher degree of trust in the international system among minors than adults. Finally, Minors in our sample also appear to be more driven to migration than adults by non-structural drivers of migration (drivers not necessarily directly connected with the Eritrean state structure and its governance). These non-structural drivers include the desire to reunite with family members or conflicts within the family.

Eritrea has in the last couple of decades become the largest producers of refugees in the world compared to its population size. The considerable outflow of refugees from Eritrea is somewhat puzzling given the absence of armed conflict in the country. This report has sought to expand our understanding of the particularities that have caused this mass migration. There are, as far as we can see, few concrete indications that migration from Eritrea will subside unless the primary drivers of migration are dealt with. This would entail a curbing of the duration of the national service, improvements of the economy, and the introduction of comprehensive political and governance reforms.

10 Appendix 1 – Comprehensive overview of methodological challenges in research on Eritrea

The counter narrative on reasons for flight from Eritrea (the "pull-factors" hypothesis) has criticised the methodology underpinning the dominating narrative (the "push-factors" hypothesis), as the majority of the research on contemporary Eritrean human rights / political issues are banned from being undertaken within the country. It is for all intents and purposes impossible to get permission to undertake critical and independent research within the country. Hence, research and reporting is to a large degree relying on interviews with Eritreans who have already left Eritrea, and thus a bias is being introduced in the data material. Likewise, the reporting advancing the "pull-factor" hypothesis has been equally criticised for a flawed methodological approach, relying to a large degree on official governmental spokespersons, government co-opted informants, or foreign diplomatic personnel posted in Eritrea who allegedly have their own interests to advance and protect. We have thus over the last couple of years been observing a discourse where methodological criticism has been used to undermine the legitimacy of the opposing narrative on the explanation of the Eritrean flight.

Reliability and validity are core concepts in scientific research and the degree to which these requirements are fulfilled are key in an assessment of the credibility of research.[214] The concept of **reliability** refers to the exactness of data measurement in a given research project. A high degree of reliability means that a research procedure will lead to the same result if the process is repeated.[215] The concept of **validity** is used and defined in different ways by various researchers resulting in some confusion. This study will refer to two primary variations of validity:

- Internal validity (also known as credibility) – the degree to which a research project, an interview question, or measurement instrument actually measures or tests what it intends to measure or test (the degree to which the findings represent the reality it seeks to scrutinize).[216]
- External validity (also known as transferability) – the degree to which (internally valid) findings of a study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings.

[214] We argue that this is the case although this has been subject to considerable debate. See for instance Hannes, K. (2011). Chapter 4: Critical appraisal of qualitative research. In: Noyes J, Booth A, Hannes K, Harden A, Harris J, Lewin S, Lockwood C (editors), *Supplementary Guidance for Inclusion of Qualitative Research in Cochrane Systematic Reviews of Interventions.* Version 1 (updated August 2011). Cochrane Collaboration Qualitative Methods Group, 2011. Available from URL http://cqrmg.cochrane.org/supplemental-handbook-guidance and Popay, R and Williams G. (1998): Rationale and Standards for the Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature in Health Care, Qualitative Health Research, vol. 8, pp. 341-351.

[215] King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press and Lund, Thorleif (ed.) (2002). *Innføring i forskningsmetodologi*. Oslo: Unipub

[216] This is in some methodological literature also referred to as Concept Validity. Furthermore, Internal Validity as used in this paper should not be confused with the question of causality.

Reliability and validity influence each other in several ways. Reliability, for instance, dictates the potential validity of research result but is not a guarantee for research validity. Reliable data are a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity.[217]

Eritrea represents a unique and challenging environment for research, with only a small number of researchers and others permitted to engage in comprehensive data collection inside the country. All known international monitoring groups, human rights organisations or UN treaty bodies requests for access are rejected and denied access to the country. Furthermore, there are strict restrictions on conditions for research and on the freedom of movement for individuals who are granted access. The Eritrean government is widely known for its secrecy and non-disclosure of key official policies and decisions. Eritrea is, for instance, the only known country in the world which does not make public its official government budget. Statistical data on more or less every policy area or sector of society is lacking; or where produced the methodology may be highly questionable (with some few exceptions), or the findings are made confidential. There is a broadly held consensus that the minimal information provided by the Eritrean government, which does not include sensitive topics such as the national service, should be used with caution. Combined with the lack of a free press and independent civil society organizations, the implication is that there is a fundamental lack of updated, valid and reliable data gathered more or less all sectors of society in Eritrea; a lacuna that is even more pronounced when it comes to issues considered sensitive by the Eritrean government.[218]

The critical review of a selection of existing reports and scholarly publications on Eritrea presented in the next chapter show that academics, scholars, human rights monitors, and immigration authority representatives have used several approaches to obtain valid and reliable data for their reporting on Eritrea. These approaches have pros and cons and have arguably been conducted with varying degrees of recognition of these pros and cons, as well as of adherence to good practice of scientific conduct in social sciences.

This appendix section will present a comprehensive overview of methodological procedures in qualitative literature reviews and interviews used both for this report and in other reporting on Eritrea. This includes a presentation of a number of methodological techniques and considerations that may be applied when assessing the trustworthiness of respondents (both when doing interviews oneself or when assessing the interview data in pre-existing reports and sources). Finally, this section presents how sources of data have been dealt with.

10.1 Literature review

Literature reviews are a commonly used approach in social sciences as they are readily available and cost much less money and time to gather than alternative data collection strategies. However, an exclusive reliance on pre-existing studies is by many considered somewhat problematic as data collection on the ground ensures both that the data is updated and project-specific, and that the

[217] One way to simplify these concepts is to think of a bathroom scale. The scale is reliable if it shows the same weight every time one uses it (as long as one's weight doesn't actually change). If the scale is broken and showing that you weigh 10 kg more than you actually do it can still be reliable as long as it is consistent, but not valid. For the scale to be reliable and valid it must show your actual weight each time you step on the scale.

[218] Tecle, S., & Goldring, L. (2013). From 'remittance' to 'tax': the shifting meanings and strategies of capture of the Eritrean transnational party-state. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 189-207; Amnesty International (2015). "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); and EASO (2015). "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland

researcher has control over the entire data collection process. With careful use, however, the literature review is generally considered as a process of obtaining valid and reliable data – particularly when combined with other sources of data.

10.1.1 Critically assessing the validity and reliability of the source

There is arguably a tendency to treat written sources with a lower degree of scrutiny than, for instance, interview responses or other sources of data. It is important to remember that even though a contribution has been published does not imply that all the information it contains is valid and reliable.[219] The reader must continually check or keep in mind:

vi) Authority (who conducted the research and are they an authority on the issue)
vii) Where is the research from (educational institution, peer reviewed article, …)?
viii) The methodology of the research and its own source criticism.
ix) Is the source referenced to in other sources and is it consistent with the findings of other sources?
x) What is the publication date of the source and is it likely that more updated research is available?

Some of the selected contributions in this study show signs of critical assessments of the validity and reliability of written sources. These contributions include Cummings et al. (2015) which is based on a meta-analysis of 138 primary and secondary sources deemed of high and medium quality following a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) process. Most contributions, however, do not present an explicit assessment of these issues. This is less problematic when a contribution is based a broad range of different forms of data. When the contribution is a literature review, such as GSDRC (2016), it does become a considerable issue.[220]

10.1.2 Number and range of sources

The adequate sample size of written sources is generally deemed obtained when one reaches a saturation – whereby no new perspectives or information is obtained through the inclusion of additional sources. The size deemed sufficient will also depend on the allotted time, available resources, and the objective of the research.[221] However, all else equal a larger sample will lead to increased precision.

The researcher should furthermore strive to ensure that the written contributions in the sample are as independent of one-another as possible. This may reduce the problem of the interrelated issues of round-tripping, where several sources may cite the same potentially flawed original source, and false confirmations, where several sources, all based on the same original source, all point in the same direction giving the impression that a statement is well grounded.[222] The combination of these two, where several sources based on an original flawed source give the impression that a particular statement is well grounded, is particularly problematic.

[219] Krippendorff, Klaus (1980). *Content Analysis. An Introduction to its Methodology*, Sage Publications.
[220] GSDRC (2016) "Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Fragility_Migration_Eritrea.pdf)
[221] Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, SAGE Publications, Inc.
[222] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)

The number and range of written references varies considerably between the various selected contributions reviewed for this study. These are, for the most part, used to establish the foundations of the contributions as well as to cross-check data obtained through other methods. There are few explicit descriptions of how it was decided that the number and range of sources was obtained.

10.1.3 Intentions of the authors

The context and intended meaning of a given written source can in some cases be overlooked. The meaning of a written contribution a reader is left with may not necessarily be the same as that of another reader, or that which the writer of the contribution intended to convey.[223] This is particularly important in politically contested terrain as Eritrea.[224] Research on Eritrea is known to be very much politicised, where scholars rallied behind the liberation front on the one hand, or defended Ethiopia's hegemony on the other. Patrick Gilkes, a long-term observer of the region, wrote in 1991:

> "Much, indeed, of the writing on Eritrea has been at the level of the polemic or a product of the 'guerrilla groupie.' A surprising number of eminent scholars and journalists have taken the leading Eritrean movement, the EPLF, at its own evaluation, and its historical claims as a fact. The results have impoverished the literature on Eritrea, and have created a distorted national mythology."[225]

Due to the continuation of conflict and wars in Eritrea after independence, the politically biased research has continued to be produced until this day. Hence, the use of written material as sources therefore warrants an understanding and knowledge about the author's personal background as well as a careful reading of the contribution as a whole, avoiding mining for citations or quotes without presenting the context in which they were found.

Some contributions may lack clear and demarcated definitions, leaving it to the reader to decipher what a given concept refers to. It is important to remember that similar concepts may refer to highly different phenomenon, and to put utmost attention into ensuring that one understands the authors intended meaning.

10.1.4 Publication bias(es)

Publication bias, in the conventional understanding of the concept, occurs when the findings or results of published studies systematically differ from those of unpublished research. At the core of this problem is the tendency of researchers to publish studies with "positive" results (results showing a significant or interesting finding) than studies with "negative" or unsupportive results.[226]

[223] Ryghaug, Marianne (2002). "Å bringe tekster i tale – mulige metodiske innfallsvinkler til tekstanalyse i statsvitenskap", Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift no.18: 303-327.
[224] Boswell, C. (2009) The Political Use of Expert Knowledge – Immigration Policy and Social Research, Cambridge University Press, New York.
[225] Gilkes, P. (1991), "Eritrea: Historiography and Mythology", in *African Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 362, p. 626.
[226] Associated biases include time lag bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published quickly), multiple publication bias (a set of positive or supportive results are more likely to result in multiple publications), location bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published in high-profile journals with a wide circulation), citation bias (positive findings are more likely to be cited), and language bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published in English) (Song, F., Hooper, L., & Loke, Y. (2013) Publication bias: what is it? How do we measure it? How do we avoid it?, Open Access Journal of Clinical Trials, Dove Press Journal).

While this particular bias is more commonly associated with quantitative research, it could potentially have an impact on qualitative research as well. In research on Eritrea, for instance, it could be the case that the research with clear findings systematically are more commonly and widely published.

There are hardly any "negative" studies in our selection of contributions. This may, in large part, be a result of the qualitative and exploratory nature of much of the literature, where factors such as hypothesis testing is less of an issue. Landinfo (2016a) and Landinfo (2016b), however, admit that they have struggled to reach any conclusion and make very cautious claims.[227] None of the contributions present any discussion of the potential impact of publication biases in the form of a lack of reporting on "negative" findings. Another form of publication bias is referred to by Cummings et al. (2015). They argue that the literature on migration in recent years has been heavily focused on migration from conflict affected areas. As such this literature is not immediately relevant for research on migration from areas not affected by armed conflict, as the Eritrean case presents.[228]

10.2 Interviews

Interviews with variously positioned individuals are commonly used to gain information that is difficult to otherwise obtain, such as an individual's experiences or perceptions of a given issue. They are also commonly used in situations where data collection through other means (e.g. randomized surveys) is difficult due to political or logistical restrictions.[229]

10.2.1 The structure of the interview

Interviews are generally divided into three groups – structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews (also known as standardized interview) seek to ensure that each interview is conducted in the same manner, with the same questions asked in the same order. While this ensures a high degree of reliability it does exclude, or at the very least limit, the possibility of new elements to appear. Unstructured interviews, often associated with anthropological research, are the opposite of structured interviews where the questions, or in many instances even topics, are not prearranged. While this allows for spontaneity and questions to develop during the interview it lacks reliability. The semi-structured interview represents a middle ground between the two other approaches as it ensures a degree of flexibility while at the same time maintaining some structure to the situation.[230]

All selected contributions on the Eritrean situation reviewed for this study have either explicitly stated or implicitly implied that they have used semi-structured or non-structured interviews in their research. Bozzini (2011) for instance reports that his process of repeated in-depth and open interview structure has contributed to additional insight and a high degree of validity in his data.[231] Such a research methodology is, however, time consuming and many researchers have instead relied on some form of semi-structured interview to obtain the information needed. The lack of structured interviews in research on Eritrea may

[227] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf) and Landinfo (2016b) "Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetillatelse og ulovlig utreise" (Available from: http://landinfo.no/asset/3423/1/3423_1.pdf)

[228] Cummings, C., Pacitto, J., Lauro, D., & Foresti, M. (2015). *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. Working paper 430. London: Overseas Development Institute.

[229] Andersen, Svein S. (2006). "Aktiv informantintervjuing", *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* 22: 278-298 og Aberbach, J. and Rockman, B. (2002). "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews", *PS: Political Science and Politics,* vol.35, no. 4:673-676.

[230] It is, however, important to note that the level of structure in semi-structured interviews can vary greatly from a list of conversation topics to a much more organized interview structure.

[231] Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93.

to a large extent be due to the lack of opportunity / permission to conduct systematic surveys with a large number of respondents, as reported by Landinfo (2016a), which is the context largely associated with this interview structure.[232]

10.2.2 Number of respondents

Arriving at the required number of respondents, or the sample size of the project, deemed satisfactory for a given research project is not entirely straightforward. In qualitative research this is by many considered to be achieved when the inclusion of additional respondents does not result in additional perspectives or information – a situation referred to by the concept of saturation. Others have attempted to make approximate suggestions of number of respondents varying from 6-50 respondents.[233] There are, however, no absolute rules in determining what number of respondents is appropriate in qualitative research and this number will be influenced by several factors, including allotted time, available resources, and the objective of study.[234]

Even if the requirements of sample size in qualitative research is less rigorous than in quantitative research it remains the case, all else being equal, that a larger sample leads to increased precision.

The number of respondents reported by the selected contributions that rely on interview data varies considerably from the HRC (2015) 550 confidential interviews to HRW (2013) 8 interviews.[235] Most contributions that make their number of respondents explicit, however, have around 50 respondents.[236] Many contributions do not, unfortunately, report on the exact number of respondents.[237] Although it is true that more interviews result in a higher validity, all else equal, this is not necessarily the case. Some contributions such as Hirt and Mohammad (2013) and Hirt (2014) have conducted a small number of in-depth, highly detailed interviews with a small number of respondents resulting in a potentially high

[232] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)
[233] Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications and Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In Denizin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S., Handbook of qualitative research (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
[234] Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
[235] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx) and Human Rights Watch (2013), "Hear No Evil: Forced Labor and Corporate Responsibility in Eritrea's Mining Sector" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/50f950a22.html)
[236] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27; Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf); Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/); Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html); Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf); UK Home Office (2016a), "Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57e2ae464.html) and Migrasjonsverket (2015)," Landrapport Eritrea", LIFOS - Migrasjonsverkets rätts- och landinformastionssystem (Available from: http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=36406)
[237] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106; Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93; Brhane, M. O. (2016). Understanding why Eritreans go to Europe. *Forced Migration Review*, (51), 34; and Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service

validity.[238]

10.2.3 The range of respondents

The range of respondents is, just as their number, highly important in qualitative research. Different groups of respondents may have different but equally true accounts of a situation and their inclusion ensures that these perspectives are included in the study. While there are techniques in quantitative research for obtaining representative random samples, where the sample is a small quantity of something that accurately reflects the larger entity, this is generally not the case in qualitative research. Some qualitative sampling techniques are, however, better at securing a broad range of respondents than others. Convenience sampling, where the sample consists of those most convenient to reach, is for instance considered less suited for securing a range of respondents compared to quota sampling, where the researcher establishes quotas based on key characteristics of the population of interests and randomly selects respondents from each quota. A broader range of respondents is, all else equal, more internally valid than a narrower range of respondents.

Different types of respondent may possess very different types of information. Interviews with individuals with close proximity to power who have participated (or still are participating) in certain processes of interests for the research project are often referred to as elite interviews. This type or respondents is in many instances used to get an "insiders" view or account of a given process or situation. While this can be immensely helpful in many situations it should be used with caution. Just like any interview respondent an elite respondent will give *their* positioned understanding or perception of an issue, and may exaggerate or justify their own role in a given process.[239]

The range of respondents varies, just like the number of respondents, considerably between the various selected contributions reviewed for this study. Among the most pressing issues concerning the range of respondents is the lack of access to Eritreans living within Eritrea, the lack of female respondents, and reliance on elite respondents.

Among the primary challenges to a broad range of interviews reported in the selected contributions is the lack of access to regular Eritreans in Eritrea. While this is not always the case, Müller (2015), Hirt and Mohammad (2013), Riggan (2013) and Landinfo (2016), have all collected data inside Eritrea, many researchers and organizations are barred from entry. Those who do not have access often rely on interviews with asylum seekers and refugees in an attempt to gain insight into current conditions in Eritrea.[240] These studies, which include AI (2015), Brhane (2016) and HRC (2016), have sought to ensure a broad range in their respondents by conducting interviews of Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees in different countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, the UK, Djibouti, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, and the US.

Only a few of studies *explicitly* provide the reader with the gender balance of the group of respondents. AIs (2015) respondent group is 19% female and in HRW (2009) the number of women is even less. It

[238] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168 and Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061.
[239] Berry, J. (2002): Validity and Reliability issues in Elite Interviewing, PS: Political Science and Politics, vol.35, no.4, pp. 679-682.
[240] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27; Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168; and Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.

seems reasonable to assume that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are not alone in struggling to ensure a balanced female respondent ratio, and that women's perspectives in research on Eritrea remains understudied.[241]

The considerable reliance on respondents outside Eritrea has an impact on the representativeness of the reporting and research on Eritrea. Many of those who illegally migrate, a group often used as respondents, are in many instances young draft evaders or deserters from the national service. The Eritrean national service is, particularly since the introduction of conscription through the completion of year 12 of school at Sawa military training camp in 2003, characterized by an overrepresentation of Orthodox Tigrinya speakers.[242] While individuals from with other religious and/or ethnic backgrounds do serve in the national service and do illegally migrate a representative inclusion of them as respondents will most likely demand some sort of stratified selection process. We have not seen this being explicitly done in our reading for this report.

Finally, some selected contributions for review have faced considerable criticism for their reliance on elite interviews. The report by the Danish Immigration Service (2014) is among these, relying on a small number of respondents from international organizations, UN agencies, embassies, UNHCR offices, and more.[243] Elite interviews can provide valuable information and may be considerably more convenient to collect (provided that access is granted). An overreliance on their contributions is problematic, particularly in Eritrea where the question of respondent trustworthiness is a crucial concern.

10.2.4 Timing of the interview

The timing of the interview may have an impact on its outcome. In relation to interviews of refugees or asylum seekers it is often argued that the most valid data are collected as close to their migration date as possible. At this point their experiences will be fresh in their mind and their narrative "untainted" by experiences in exile. At the same time, however, the tremendous uncertainty and anxiety experienced by the respondents at this stage of their refugee, and the lack of trust in general to all authority representatives (as a researcher will most commonly be identified as), which in many instances characterizes the entire asylum seeking process, may make these individuals reluctant to answer as such, or may provide answers they believe may help and forward their own process of refuge. There is also an ethical component to be considered in these instances, as newly arrived refugees or asylum seekers perhaps shouldn't be placed under additional strain a research interview may impose on them.[244]

Given the importance accredited to the time between departure from Eritrea and the interview process it is quite puzzling that so few contributions which rely on migrant responses reviewed for this study explicitly deal with this issue. The notable exceptions are AI (2015), which reports that its 72

[241] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/) and Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)
[242] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf);
[243] Danish Immigration Service (2014) Eritrea - Drivers and Root Causes of Emigration, National Service and the Possibility of Return (Available from: https://www.nyidanmark.dk/nr/rdonlyres/b28905f5-5c3f-409b-8a22-0df0dacbdaef/0/eritreareportendeligversion.pdf)
[244] Hynes, T. (2003): "The issue of 'trust' and 'mistrust' in research with refugees – Choices, caveats, and considerations for researchers", New Issues in Refugee Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit UNHCR Working Paper no.98; Brekke, JP. and Aarset, M. (2009): "Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations", Institute for Social Research, Report 2009:12

respondents all left Eritrea between July 2014 and July 2015, and HRW (2009) where 49 out of 53 respondents all left Eritrea no more than 18 months before the interview took place.[245]

10.2.5 The need to protect respondents

The principle of "do-no-harm" has for decades been a vital baseline for research, particularly in fragile, authoritarian or conflict affected states or other locations characterized by a low degree of security. The population in these situations are often vulnerable and in many cases also subject to marginalization and suppression. They are also at risk of exploitative and harmful research practices, however unintended this may be.[246]

Brekke and Aarset (2009) have in their study of why asylum seekers end up in a given country identified several potentially adverse consequences an asylum seeker or refugee might face if they choose to participate in a study as an informant.[247]

	Short term	Longer term
Individual	• Direct sanctions from group • Negative for individual's case • Put friends/family in danger • Sanction from helpers	• Stigma, traitor • Further sanctions • Financial difficulty in paying debt to smugglers
Group	• Travel routes blocked • More precise preventative measures	• Travel routes closed • Difficult for new arrivals, info spread to international cooperating officials • More finely tuned preventative system • Less chance of fellow countrymen to succeed

The anonymization of respondents is broadly used by the selected contributions to limit the potential harm respondents and/or their family may face from participating as responders. Some, such as AI (2015) have gone even further, however, and have explicitly refrained from providing any discernible context of the data collection process or even from referencing to a source at all. [248]

10.2.6 The use of interpreters

Much of the writing on the structuring and implementation of research interviews assume that the interviewer and interviewee have a shared language, and contexts where the researcher depends on

[245] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/) and Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)

[246] Allotey, P. and Manderson, L. (2003) 'From case studies to casework: Ethics and obligations in research ethics with refugee women', in P. Allotey (ed.), The Health of Refugees: Public Health Perspectives from Crisis to Settlement, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press.

[247] Brekke, JP. and Aarset, M. (2009): "Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations", Institute for Social Research, Report 2009:12

[248] Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf) and HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)

interlocutors before, during and after the interview is in many instances ignored. While some question the possibility of obtaining valid data through the use of an interpreter at all, others argue that this is less of a concern as long as the interpreter is selected with care. The translator may also provide both linguistic as well as socio-political translations; something which must be agreed upon and instructed in advance of an interview. In most situations, its vital that the background and social positioning of the interpreter is compatible with that of the interviewee.[249] It should also be noted here that allegation of refugee espionage has been raised against officially appointed immigration authorities interpreters of Eritrean origin, as it has been alleged that they have a bias in favour of the regime and are misinterpreting issues and reporting back to Asmara on individuals seeking asylum in Europe, making the issue of interpreters even more contested and fraught with problems.[250]

HRW (2009) is the only selected contribution reviewed which, as far as we can tell, explicitly deals with the issue of translation in research on Eritrea. They ensured that different translators were used throughout the study to ensure that the translations provided were unbiased. Data gathered using a translator were furthermore cross-checked by HRW with other independent sources to ensure their credibility.[251] One must assume that the use of translators is more common in research on Eritrea (as it is known that very few non-Eritrean researchers speak any of the local languages of the country), and it is unfortunate that the pros and cons of their use is not subject of more discussion.

10.2.7 The trustworthiness of respondents

The use of interviews in social science research has been critiqued from different perspectives, including the adherents of behaviourism and the approaches broadly labelled as post modernism.[252] Interviews remain despite this criticism among the most common means of gathering data in social research. The critique is not, however, entirely unwarranted, as interview are vulnerable to deliberate or unintentional misinformation - particularly if it seeks to gain insight into delicate issues.[253] Frank Salamone (1977) brought this problem to the fore and underlined the importance of checking the validity of information and to understanding the reasons behind why false information may be given in an interview.[254]

In this context, it is worthwhile also to probe a bit the absoluteness of 'truth' – and question 'whose' truth we are discussing? Social scientists working in contested and conflictual social terrains often hear multiple versions and interpretation of the same event or phenomenon (as does the police when

[249] Skjelsbæk, I (2016): "Interpreting the Interpreter – Navigating translation, interpretation, and mediation", Culture & Psycology, 22(4), 502-519 and Kapborg, I. and Berterö, C. (2002) Using and interpreter in qualitative interviews: Does it threaten validity? Nursing Inquiry, 9(2), 52-56

[250] Terlingen, S. (2015): "IND laat aanhangers Eritrees regime nog steeds tolken", One World (21.05.2015) (Available from: https://www.oneworld.nl/wereld/ind-laat-aanhangers-eritrees-regime-nog-steeds-tolken) and Knight, B. (2015) "Eritrean translators 'intimidating refugees' in Germany", Deutsche Welle (17.07.2015) (Available from: http://www.dw.com/en/eritrean-translators-intimidating-refugees-in-germany/a-18591144)

[251] Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)

[252] Atkinson, P., Coffey, A. and Delamont, S. (2003) *Key Themes in Qualitative Research: continuities and change*, Walnut Creek CA; Altamira and Dean, J. P. and Whyte, W. F. (1958) 'How do you know if the informant is telling the truth?', *Human Organization*, 17, 2, pp34-8; and Bartelson, J. (2007): "Postmodernisme", i Øyvind Østerud (red) Statsvitenskapelig Leksikon, Universitetsforlaget.

[253] This paper uses the word "misinformation" – the intentional or unintentional spread of false or incorrect information - rather than "lie" – a statement that the stating party believes to be false and that is made with the intention to deceive. Using the concept "misinformation" allows for the inclusion of unintentional as well as intentional falsehoods. It is in addition less associated with malintent.

[254] Salamone further argues that the anthropologist should be less concerned with revealing lies and more concerned with why a respondent may lie as this provides insight into sociocultural structures (Salamone, F. (1977): "The Methodological Significance of the Lying Informant", Anthropological Quarterly, vol.50, no.3, pp.117-124.)

interrogating witnesses to a crime); all of them may possibly be perceived as 'true' by the respective informants. Truth is as such a relative phenomenon, which needs to be contextualised in the setting where the event/phenomenon took place (in our case Eritrea) and in the setting where the information is conveyed to the relevant authority (i.e. refugee / immigration authorities); and then subsequently operationalised in the sense of understanding the forward-looking implications of the 'truth' on the person conveying it.

Such a complex understanding of the concept of 'truth' was a key challenge for South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) after the fall of apartheid. To tackle the concept of truth under their mandate to reconcile and heal the South African society, they defined four categories of truth:[255]

- *Factual or Forensic Truth*: This is a juridical inclined truth, based on the basic premises of: what happened to whom, where, when, and how, and who was involved.
- *Personal and Narrative Truth***:** This is truth of personal recollection and memory from victims as well as perpetrators, since by telling their stories "both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi- layered experiences of the South African story".
- *Social Truth*: This is a consensus inspired truth, defined by TRC jurist Albie Sachs as "The truth of experience that is established through interaction, discussion and debate," and which establishes a societal accepted narrative of events.
- *Healing and Restorative Truth*: This notion of truth became the key agenda for the TRC, as it rejects the general assumption that there are only two options of truth: factual, objective information or subjective opinions thereof. The TRC claims: "There is also 'healing' truth, the kind of truth that places facts and what they mean within the context of human relationships - both amongst citizens and between the state and its citizens."

Truth commissions obviously have a different mandate than immigration authorities; but both categories of authorities grapple with harnessing 'truth' which make sense and are compatible at a collective level (i.e. the political and human rights context in a given country, in our case Eritrea), as well as individually (i.e. all asylum seekers right to individual treatment of their case).[256] Likewise, the individual asylum seeker, on their side, will also face some quandaries when he / she is presenting their testimony for flight to the relevant immigration authorities.

True of false – intentional or unintentional misinformation

Witnesses in courts are in many countries asked to make a sworn testimony whereby they pledge to give "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (or some similar wording). In these cases, or in any case where one is asked to give a statement on or account of reality, an individual essentially has three choices which can lead to any of six outcomes.[257] An individual can, intentionally or unintentionally, give a true, partially true, or false account of reality.[258]

[255] *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1, pp. 110-114; accessed at: http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume%201.pdf

[256] On the various approaches of conceptualizing and dealing with the 'truth' in truth commissions, see Priscilla B. Hayner (2002), *Unspeakable Truth, Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 72-85.

[257] The construction of these ideal-types of outcomes are in great part inspired by Cohen, S. (2001): States of Denial – Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press and Obligacion, F. (1994): "Managing perceived deception among respondents – A traveler's tale", Journal of contemporary ethnography, vol.23, no.1, pp.29-50.

[258] By reality we refer to *the state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear of might be imagined*. A true account is *an account that fully or completely corresponds with this reality*. This is a highly simplistic, and by no means unproblematic, presentation of the issue based on the assumption that there are in fact such a thing as "reality" and "truth".

	Intentional	**Unintentional**
True	The account of the respondent intentionally completely corresponds with the reality	The account of the respondent unintentionally completely corresponds with reality
Partially true	The account of the respondent deliberately only covers part of actual reality	The account of the respondent unintentionally only covers part of actual reality
False	The account of the respondent intentionally does not correspond at all with reality	The account of the respondent unintentionally does not correspond at all with reality

Intentionally true or *intentionally false* statements or accounts of reality are relatively straightforward. The respondent chooses to give either a true or false account of reality and succeeds in doing so. *Unintentionally true* statements or accounts of reality are more theoretical occurrences, although it is possible that an individual could give a completely true account of reality despite their intention to do the opposite.

An *unintentionally false* or *unintentionally partially true* account may occur if a respondent wishes to give a true account, but unwittingly possesses false or only partially true information. The respondent is in this case giving what he or she perceives or believes to be an account that completely corresponds with reality but which, unbeknownst to him or her, doesn't. An *unintentionally partially true* account could also occur if the respondent for some reason mistakenly leaves out a part of the truth either because of a lapse of memory or because the respondent does not realize that the part he or she leaves out is of relevance. Finally, the *unintentionally partially true* account could also be the result of the respondent simply not having the same understanding as the researcher of certain concepts.[259]

The *intentionally partially true* account can occur for several reasons in an interview. The respondent may for instance frame their responses in a way thought or perceived to be more accepted or desired either by society or by the researcher.[260] The respondent may also similarly frame their response to an interviewer they do not trust, either by adding or subtracting to the truth, to construct an image of themselves and their role or to protect themselves or their community from harm.[261]

The incentive to intentionally misinform

The selected reports and scholarly publications reviewed for this study are based on a number of different respondents, all who may have incentives to intentionally misinform to varying degrees.

Reality and truth are among the central subjects in philosophy as well as some of the largest (See the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for an overview of some of the literature on these topics – www.plato.standord.edu)

[259] Obligacion, F. (1994): "Managing perceived deception among respondents – A traveler's tale", Journal of contemporary ethnography, vol.23, no.1, pp.29-50.

[260] Herbert, S. (2013). *Perception surveys in fragile and conflict-affected states* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 910). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

[261] Matsuo, H. et al (2001). "Cross-cultural Adaptation of Bosnian Refugees in St. Louis, Missouri: Methodological", American Anthropologist, 95(2), 467-468; Khali, J. (2012): The Reliability of Perception Surveys in Afghanistan, Households in Conflict Network, Institute of Development Studies, HICN Research Note 15, October 2012; Hynes, T. (2003): "The issue of 'trust' and 'mistrust' in research with refugees – Choices, caveats, and considerations for researchers", New Issues in Refugee Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit UNHCR Working Paper no.98.

Asylum seekers and refugees: To obtain refugee or asylum status individuals must prove that they have well-founded fear of persecution or other cause for lack of safety in their homeland. Proving this is a difficult task in many instances and is further complicated by cultural differences, bureaucratic demands, and the challenge of accurately represent trauma.[262] The individuals who apply for refugee or asylum status often lacks written documentation of their persecution (arrest orders or the like), making their oral testimonies given to immigration authorities very important. If the applicant fails to convince the immigration authorities they risk being sent back; a risk most applicants are acutely aware of.[263] There is therefore a strong incentive to give the "right answers" in these interviews, to give an intentionally partially true or even false account. This is the case even if a true account would warrant a positive outcome. The entire asylum seeking and refugee process is in many instances characterized by a lack of trust.[264] Why take the chance that the truth will suffice when embellishing this truth may increase the chance of success or at the very least is perceived to do so?

The incentive to misinform can also occur later in the process. An individual may unintentionally give a partially true account of his or her experience to immigration authorities, for instance forgetting certain aspects of their story or initially deeming this aspect irrelevant. Should they later realize this mistake, an attempt at correcting their story might weaken their case since their general credibility will be questioned, or more correctly and importantly, be perceived to do so. An applicant for asylum or refugee status may in these cases rather maintain their original story, which they now are aware is only partially true, rather than correct their story due to a real or perceived risk that immigration authorities will disregard their whole testimony.

Diaspora: Members of the Eritrean diaspora are spread all over the world and are in several instances used as informants for research on Eritrea. The *anti-government diaspora*, including opposition groups or individuals in exile, have every incentive to portray the current Eritrean government as worse than it actually may be. Reasons for this may include an effort to further weaken and isolate the current regime, or to further the justification of their flight. *Pro-government diaspora* members have every incentive to do the opposite. In addition to these personal incentives there may be considerable intra-group pressures for "desirable" replies. Finally, both groups may have family in Eritrea and concern for them could impact the incentive to misinform.

NGOs: NGOs may have several incentives to misinform. Those who still have access to Eritrea may misinform to preserve this access and continue their work (and relevance) in Eritrea. Others, such as human rights organizations, may exaggerate the severity of the situation. For instance, the renowned Horn of Africa expert Alex de Waal (2016) confesses that he, while working for HRW in the 1990s, calculated that it "was better to err on the side of alarmism" and used the concept of "genocide" when reporting on the situation in the Nuba mountains, to ensure attention to the situation and placing it on the international agenda.[265]

Diplomats and Embassy staff: Like some NGOs, embassy staff inside Eritrea may choose to misinform to preserve their ongoing activities and, possibly, even their de facto access to the country. They would

[262] Rogers, H., Fox, S & Herlihy, J. (2015): "The importance of looking credible: the impact of behavioral sequelae of post-traumatic stress disorder on the credibility of asylum seekers", Psycology, Crime & Law, 21:2, pp.139-155.
[263] Shumam, A. and Bohmer, C. (2004): "Representing Trauma: political Asylum Narrative", The Journal of American Folklore, vol.117, no.466, pp.394-414.
[264] Hynes, T. (2003): "The issue of 'trust' and 'mistrust' in research with refugees – Choices, caveats, and considerations for researchers", New Issues in Refugee Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit UNHCR Working Paper no.98; Brekke, JP. and Aarset, M. (2009): "Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations", Institute for Social Research, Report 2009:12
[265] de Waal, A. (2016): "Writing Human Rights and Getting It Wrong", Boston Review, 06.06.2016. (Available from: https://bostonreview.net/world/alex-de-waal-writing-human-rights)

like to present their "posting" as more favourable and relevant than it might be, to attract attention from their MFA superiors in the home capitals or for some other strategic reason. Concomitantly, diplomats' work obligations are to project the interests of their governments; if their government has a certain stand on a country or a policy, diplomats very rarely dare to go on record countering such narratives (even if they know it is false and misleading).

Perspectives on trustworthiness

The approaches to securing respondent trustworthiness used in the selected contributions reviewed for this study can roughly be divided into two main groups – anthropological and non-anthropological. The anthropologically based contributions, including Belloni (2016), Müller (2015), Müller (2014), Riggan (2013), and Bozzini (2011), have used the long-term fieldwork to secure a level of trust with their respondent(s) that is nearly impossible to otherwise obtain. These scholars have also gained access to Eritrea which ensures that at least part of their material is less vulnerable to validity challenges that affect interview data from refugees and asylum seekers.[266] There are still considerable challenges to the validity of these data as well, however. Riggan (2013) recognizes for instance that "the level of sensitivity of certain topics in Eritrea" and the lack of trust in the information provided by the government, "in many instances result in a seemingly seamless blend of partial information, gossip and rumours".[267] The long-term anthropological fieldwork (sometimes over years) may be better at preventing or detecting intentionally false and partially true accounts. It is, however, still vulnerable to unintentionally false or partially true accounts.[268]

The short-term 'one-off' non-anthropological approaches do not, in our opinion, to a satisfactory degree present the interview techniques and approaches used to ensure that respondent accounts are as trustworthy as possible. The UK Home Office (2016) is among the notable exceptions as it explicitly describes, for example, how respondents were given the chance to make amendments to interview notes (so-called member checks).[269]

10.2.8 Achieving the highest degree of trustworthiness

A respondent can, as previously argued, give any one of six types of accounts when asked to present his /her version of reality. These are intentional and unintentional true, partially true, and false accounts. Detecting which of these types of statements given by a respondent is a very challenging task. This is further complicated as the researcher may be more inclined to believe accounts confirming his or her own perceptions and biases.[270] In the same vein, researchers or others working with victims of war and authoritarianism, may also be susceptible for what is termed 'ethnographic seduction';[271] we *want* to believe the stories we are told by victims, and hence this influences our judgment to evaluate the validity

[266] Belloni, M. (2016). Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *14*(1), 104-119; Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27; Müller, T. R. (2013): Human Resource Development and the State: Dynamics of the Militarization of Education in Eritrea, Studien zum Horn von Afrika, Köln; Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93.

[267] Riggan, J. (2013b). "It seemed like a punishment": Teacher transfers, hollow nationalism, and the intimate state in Eritrea. *American Ethnologist*, *40*(4), 749-763.

[268] See methodological reflections on doing anthropological fieldwork and surveys in Eritrea in Kjetil Tronvoll (1998), *Mai Weini – A Highland Village in Eritrea*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, pp 10-13.

[269] UK Home Office (2016a), "Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57e2ae464.html)

[270] Berry, J. (2002): "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing", Political Science and Politics, vol.35, no.4, pp.679-682.

[271] Antonius C. G. M. Robben (1995), "The Politics of Truth and Emotions Among Victims and Perpetrators of Violence", in *Fieldwork under Fire*, eds. C. Nordstrom and A. Robben, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, pp. 83-4.

and reliability of the information. The researcher's perception of what a trustworthy respondent is like, may also influence his or her assessment of a respondent's trustworthiness; studies have even found that signs which by many are associated with lying are little more than stereotypes.[272]

The arguably best approach for ensuring trustworthy relations with respondents is the long-term anthropological fieldwork. This approach permits the researcher to spend large amounts of time observing and re-interviewing respondents which whom they have gradually gained a relationship of trust through continuous interaction and community participation. Accounts given by respondents can then be both viewed through the lese of a greater socio-cultural understanding of the respondent's social context and cross checked with observations as well as interviews of a later stage.[273] Milena Belloni (2015) encountered several lies and misrepresentations of the self during her fieldwork with Eritreans in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Italy. By observing and participating in the everyday lives of her informants Belloni could bridge the gap between the narratives given by her respondents and their practices. Moreover, she believes she build a set of shared experiences and knowledge with her respondents resulting in a deeper reciprocal understanding and trust.[274] The same was experienced by K. Tronvoll during his long-term fieldwork in Eritrea in 1991-93; when at the tail-end of his stay villagers admitted that they had deliberately lied in interviews conducted during the first half year of the fieldwork, since they were uncertain about the motivation behind the questions posed and the role and objective with Tronvoll's stay in the village. But after gaining trust during an almost 2-year long fieldwork process, many informants exposed their earlier misinformation and wanted to correct the impressions conveyed at the start of the work.[275]

The anthropological fieldwork is, however, in most cases not a practical option for current policy-driven analytical work and decision-making. There are nevertheless a few means of ensuring that respondents and their responses are as trustworthy as possible. *First*, all-potential respondents should be informed vigorously that participation is in no way mandatory and that refusal to participate will have no consequences for them in any way. They should furthermore be guaranteed anonymity of participation as well as the independence of the researcher from governments, authorities or others with any impact on the future of the respondent (where applicable). All else equal this should result in what we may call a *non-response bias* from individuals with the strongest incentives to misinform; a situation where respondents committed to intentionally false, and to a certain degree, intentionally partially true statements are less inclined to participate.[276] It is, however, certainly possible that some respondents, regardless of the best efforts of the researcher, do not fully understand that they are free to not participate or do participate due to an expectation of some form of benefit – material or otherwise. These

[272] Global Deception Research Team (2006). "A world of lies". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, vol. *37*, no.1, pp.60-74; Zuckerman, M., Koestner, R., & Driver, R. (1981) "Beliefs about cues associated with deception", Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, vol.6, no.2, pp.105-114; Köhnken, G. (1990): Credibility – Investigations of a psychological construct, München, Germany: Psychologie Verlag Union; Vrij, A. and Semin, GR. (1996): "Lie experts' belief about nonverbal indicators of deception", Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, vol.20, pp.65-80; Strömwall LA, Granhag PA (2003): "How to detect deception? Arresting the belief of police officers, prosecutors, and judges", Psychology, Crime & Law, vol.9, pp.19-36.

[273] Bleek, W. (1987): "Lying Informants: A Fieldwork Experience from Ghana", Population and Development Review, vol.13, no.2, pp.314-322 and Salamone, F. (1977): "The Methodological Significance of the Lying Informant", Anthropological Quarterly, vol.50, no.3, pp.117-124.

[274] Belloni, M. (2015) Cosmologies of Destinations – Roots and routes of Eritrean forced migration towards Europe. Doctoral dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, School of Social Sciences, August 2015.

[275] Kjetil Tronvoll (1998), *Mai Weini, A Highland Village in Eritrea*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea press.

[276] Non-response bias, where participants for some reason do not participate in a study, is generally a problem as they may share characteristics and where their non-inclusion may harm the representativeness of the study (Herbert, S. (2013). *Perception surveys in fragile and conflict-affected states* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 910). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham).

respondents may still be inclined to give intentionally false or partially true accounts. Although the "noise" resulting from intentionally partially true of false statements may be impossible to remove completely, there should be less of it for an independent researcher than for immigration authorities and the data gathered therefore more closely correlating with reality.

Second, iterative questioning, whereby an issue is covered several times with differently worded questions in order to detect possible contradictions in a statement may be useful, particularly in revealing intentionally false and partially true statements.[277]

Third, member checks, where recorded testimony or data is read back to the respondent to ensure correlation with the respondents intended statements. This can reduce the occurrence of unintentional partially true statements as the respondent is given the opportunity to add to their original answers.[278]

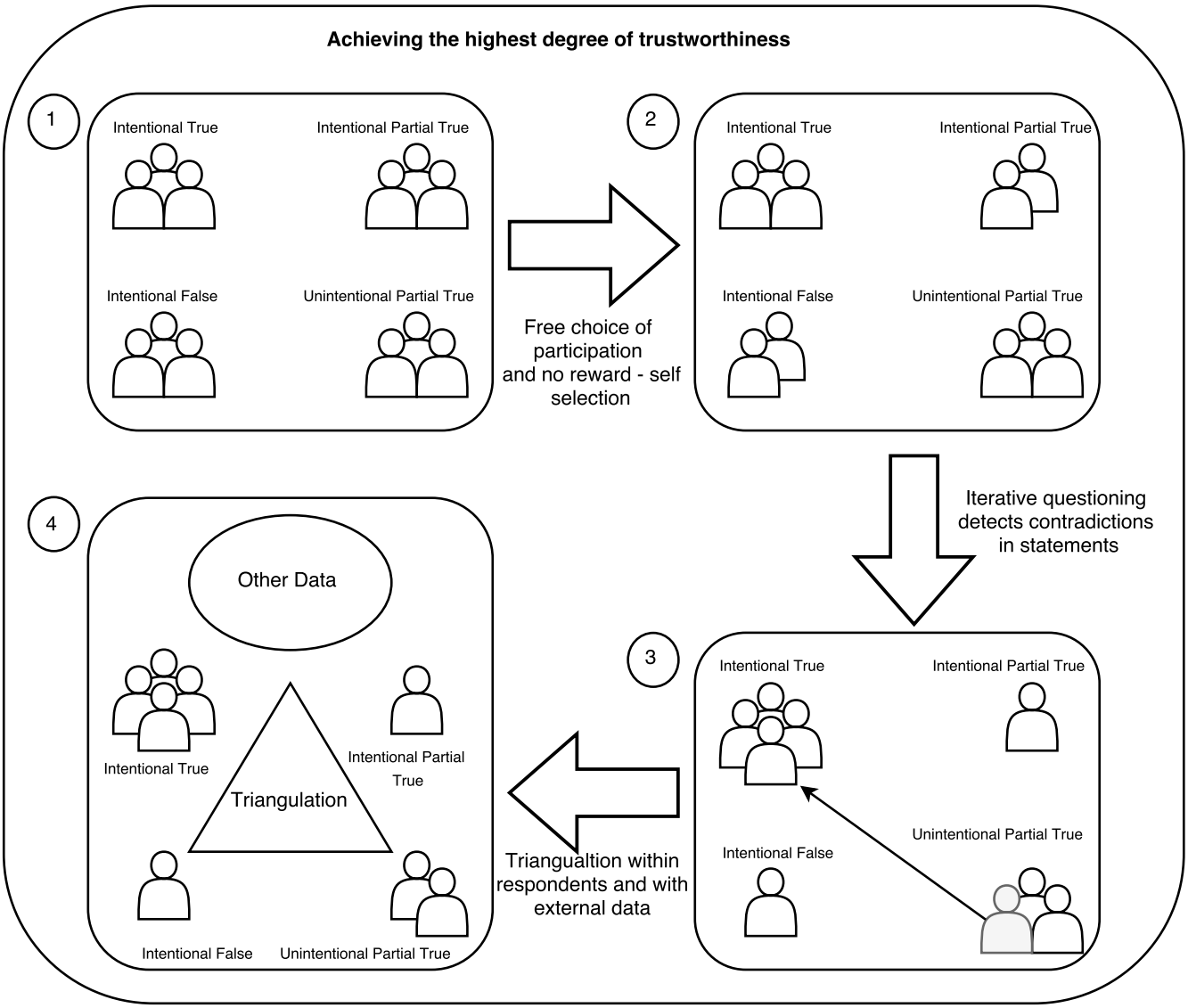
Fourth, the occurrence of "unbeneficial" statements or other examples of weaknesses, failures, humiliations or similar factors in an interview could imply a lower degree of intentional false or partially true statements.[279] The researcher should, however, be wary of making judgments on a respondent's answers in isolation due to reasons examined in some detail above.

Fifth, the timing of the interview may impact the validity of responses. It is often argued that the most valid data are collected as close to their migration date as possible as their experiences will be fresh in their mind and their narrative "untainted" by experiences in exile. This must, however, be weighed against a number of other ethical and practical concerns.

In isolation, it is nevertheless difficult to ensure a high degree of trustworthiness. The triangulation of an interview with other independent interviews and other sources of information entirely are therefore essential. The efficacy of triangulation is, however, a function of a number of factors including the number and range of respondents (see section on triangulation).

[277] Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, *22*(2), 63-75.
[278] Morse, M. et al. (2002). "Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 1* (2), Article 2
[279] Brekke, JP. and Aarset, M. (2009): "Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations", Institute for Social Research, Report 2009:12.

Figure 1: Schematic idealized representation of the process of ensuring trustworthy respondents



1. The group of potential respondents with an equal distribution of individuals who will give intentionally true, intentionally partial true, intentionally false and unintentionally false statements
2. The group of potential respondents are informed that participation in the study is a free choice and that they can expect no reward from participating. Thus, some of those who would give intentional partially true or intentional false statements decline to participate.
3. Iterative questioning reveals one instance of intentional false and intentional partial true statements. Iterative questioning also changes one unintentional partial true statement (represented by grey figure) to an intentional true statement by reminding the respondent of an aspect of their story or making them realize that what they initially deemed irrelevant is important to the researcher
4.The data from the respondents – which now comprises of a larger group of respondents with intentional true statements, a lower number of respondents with unintentional partially true statements, and a low number of intentional partial true and intentional false statements is triangulated with other interview data as well as other data altogether.

10.3 Literature review

Literature reviews are a commonly used approach in social sciences as they are readily available and cost much less money and time to gather than alternative data collection strategies. However, an exclusive reliance on pre-existing studies is by many considered somewhat problematic as data collection on the ground ensures both that the data is updated and project-specific, and that the researcher has control over the entire data collection process. With careful use, however, the literature review is generally considered as a process of obtaining valid and reliable data – particularly when combined with other sources of data.

10.3.1 Number and range of sources

The adequate sample size of written sources is, similarly to the sample size of respondents, deemed obtained when one reaches a saturation – whereby no new perspectives or information is obtained through the inclusion of additional sources. The size deemed sufficient will also depend on the allotted time, available resources, and the objective of the research.[280] However, all else equal a larger sample will lead to increased precision.

The researcher should furthermore strive to ensure that the written contributions in the sample are as independent of one-another as possible. This may reduce the problem of the interrelated issues of round-tripping, where several sources may cite the same potentially flawed original source, and false confirmations, where several sources, all based on the same original source, all point in the same direction giving the impression that a statement is well grounded.[281] The combination of these two, where several sources based on an original flawed source give the impression that a particular statement is well grounded, is particularly problematic.

The number and range of written references varies considerably between the various selected contributions reviewed for this study. These are, for the most part, used to establish the foundations of the contributions as well as to cross-check data obtained through other methods. There are few explicit descriptions of how it was decided that the number and range of sources was obtained.

10.3.2 Intentions of the authors

The context and intended meaning of a given written source can in some cases be overlooked. The meaning of a written contribution a reader is left with may not necessarily be the same as that of another reader, or that which the writer of the contribution intended to convey.[282] This is particularly important in politically contested terrain as Eritrea.[283] Research on Eritrea is known to be very much politicised, where scholars rallied behind the liberation front on the one hand, or defended Ethiopia's hegemony on the other. Patrick Gilkes, a long-term observer of the region, wrote in 1991:

> "Much, indeed, of the writing on Eritrea has been at the level of the polemic or a product of the 'guerrilla groupie.' A surprising number of eminent scholars and journalists have taken the

[280] Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, SAGE Publications, Inc.
[281] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)
[282] Ryghaug, Marianne (2002). "Å bringe tekster i tale – mulige metodiske innfallsvinkler til tekstanalyse i statsvitenskap", Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift no.18: 303-327.
[283] Boswell, C. (2009) The Political Use of Expert Knowledge – Immigration Policy and Social Research, Cambridge University Press, New York.

> leading Eritrean movement, the EPLF, at its own evaluation, and its historical claims as a fact. The results have impoverished the literature on Eritrea, and have created a distorted national mythology."[284]

Due to the continuation of conflict and wars in Eritrea after independence, the politically biased research has continued to be produced until this day. Hence, the use of written material as sources therefore warrants an understanding and knowledge about the author's personal background as well as a careful reading of the contribution as a whole, avoiding mining for citations or quotes without presenting the context in which they were found.

Some contributions may lack clear and demarcated definitions, leaving it to the reader to decipher what a given concept refers to. It is important to remember that similar concepts may refer to highly different phenomenon, and to put utmost attention into ensuring that one understands the authors intended meaning.

10.3.3 Critically assessing the validity and reliability of the source

There is arguably a tendency to treat written sources with a lower degree of scrutiny than, for instance, interview responses or other sources of data. It is important to remember that even though a contribution has been published does not imply that all the information it contains is valid and reliable.[285] The reader must continually check or keep in mind:

xi) Authority (who conducted the research and are they an authority on the issue)
xii) Where is the research from (educational institution, peer reviewed article, …)?
xiii) The methodology of the research and its own source criticism.
xiv) Is the source referenced to in other sources and is it consistent with the findings of other sources?
xv) What is the publication date of the source and is it likely that more updated research is available?

Some of the selected contributions in this study show signs of critical assessments of the validity and reliability of written sources. These contributions include Cummings et al. (2015) which is based on a meta-analysis of 138 primary and secondary sources deemed of high and medium quality following a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) process. Most contributions, however, do not present an explicit assessment of these issues. This is less problematic when a contribution is based a broad range of different forms of data. When the contribution is a literature review, such as GSDRC (2016), it does become a considerable issue.[286]

10.3.4 Publication bias(es)

Publication bias, in the conventional understanding of the concept, occurs when the findings or results of published studies systematically differ from those of unpublished research. At the core of this problem is the tendency of researchers to publish studies with "positive" results (results showing a significant or interesting finding) than studies with "negative" or unsupportive results.[287]

[284] Gilkes, P. (1991), "Eritrea: Historiography and Mythology", in *African Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 362, p. 626.
[285] Krippendorff, Klaus (1980). *Content Analysis. An Introduction to its Methodology*, Sage Publications.
[286] GSDRC (2016) "Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Fragility_Migration_Eritrea.pdf)
[287] Associated biases include time lag bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published quickly), multiple publication bias (a set of positive or supportive results are more likely to result in multiple publications), location bias (studies

While this particular bias is more commonly associated with quantitative research, it could potentially have an impact on qualitative research as well. In research on Eritrea, for instance, it could be the case that the research with clear findings systematically are more commonly and widely published.

There are hardly any "negative" studies in our selection of contributions. This may, in large part, be a result of the qualitative and exploratory nature of much of the literature, where factors such as hypothesis testing is less of an issue. Landinfo (2016a) and Landinfo (2016b), however, admit that they have struggled to reach any conclusion and make very cautious claims.[288] None of the contributions present any discussion of the potential impact of publication biases in the form of a lack of reporting on "negative" findings.

Another form of publication bias is referred to by Cummings et al. (2015). They argue that the literature on migration in recent years has been heavily focused on migration from conflict affected areas. As such this literature is not immediately relevant for research on migration from areas not affected by armed conflict, as the Eritrean case presents[289]

10.4 Other sources of data

10.4.1 Secondary qualitative and qualitative data

Not all research projects have the time and resources available to conduct their own collection of qualitative data through fieldwork or interviews. In these cases, they may use secondary qualitative data, data collected by someone other than the user. This data will, by definition, never be as up-to-date as data collected by the researcher him or herself, and the researcher using these secondary qualitative data does not necessarily have a complete understanding of how the original data was compiled. Secondary qualitative data should be accompanied with good documentation that provides the necessary background and context that ensures a broader understanding of what these data entail.

Tecle and Goldring (2013) urge caution in the use of quantitative data for Eritrea. They argue that the validity of large-scale survey data is limited, as much of what which exists consists of estimates inherited at independence. Caution is perhaps even more important in the economic sphere as the Eritrean economy is so intertwined with the informal economy that the data becomes of limited validity.[290]

Our literature review shows that several contributions, such as Humphris (2013), Mekonnen and Estefanos (2013), HRW (2014), EASO (2015) and LIFOS (2015) make use of pre-existing interview data without sufficiently problematizing their use or presenting comprehensive meta-data.[291] This poses a

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with positive findings are more likely to be published in high-profile journals with a wide circulation), citation bias (positive findings are more likely to be cited), and language bias (studies with positive findings are more likely to be published in English) (Song, F., Hooper, L., & Loke, Y. (2013) Publication bias: what is it? How do we measure it? How do we avoid it?, Open Access Journal of Clinical Trials, Dove Press Journal).

[288] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf) and Landinfo (2016b) "Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetillatelse og ulovlig utreise" (Available from: http://landinfo.no/asset/3423/1/3423_1.pdf)

[289] Cummings, C., Pacitto, J., Lauro, D., & Foresti, M. (2015). *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. Working paper 430. London: Overseas Development Institute.

[290] Tecle, S., & Goldring, L. (2013). From 'remittance' to 'tax': the shifting meanings and strategies of capture of the Eritrean transnational party-state. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 189-207

[291] Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service; Mekonnen, D. R., & Estefanos, M. (2011). From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean Tragedy of Human Trafficking. *Available at SSRN 2055303*; Human Rights Watch (2014) "I Wanted to Lie Down and Die" (Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/11/i-

methodological challenge as the researcher, as far as we can tell, had no control over how this data was collected and for what purpose. Without this information, it becomes difficult for a reader to make any independent validity and reliability assessment of the study.

10.4.2 Personal experience

Some reports and articles on Eritrea refer to the personal experience of the researcher(s). This is in some social science approaches considered problematic, unless one is considered experts on a subject and present a short summary of your credentials for the reader to assess. The reason it may be considered problematic is that it generally becomes impossible to cross-check this information for anyone wishing to do so. This form of data, which also can be referred to as data obtained through participant observation, is however, considered to contain high validity and is frequently used in qualitative research in general and in anthropological research in particular.

The impression of many of the contributions is that the personal experience and expertise of the author(s) in several instances is an important source of information. Few contributions are explicit in their use of this information however, with Nicole Hirt (2016, 2014) among the notable exceptions.[292]

10.5 Analysing the data

10.5.1 Standard of proof

Fragile and conflict affected contexts are very challenging environments to work in as a researcher. This makes it exceedingly difficult to attain data which contains a certainty that is expected in social science conducted in less challenging environments.[293] Mallet (2012) argues that there is a clear need for better data from fragile and conflict situations and that before this is achieved the *standard of proof* cannot be the same as that demanded elsewhere.[294]

The standard of proof, or degree of certainty, can be thought of as a continuum between the two extremes of guesswork at the one end and certainty at the other. The standard of proof deemed necessary or required in a given instance depends on the task at hand as well as its seriousness. Wilkinson (2011) compares the various standards of proof explicitly used in a number of Fact Finding Missions.[295] As the

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wanted-lie-down-and-die/trafficking-and-torture-eritreans-sudan-and-egypt); EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf); and Migrasjonsverket (2015)," Landrapport Eritrea", LIFOS - Migrasjonsverkets rätts- och landinformastionssystem (Available from: http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=36406).

[292] Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa and Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061

[293] See discussions on doing field research in the war contexts of the Horn of Africa in K. Tronvoll (2009), *War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia. The Making of Enemies and Allies in the Horn of Africa*, Woodbridge: James Currey.

[294] Mallett, R. (2012): How far do perception surveys take us in fragile and conflict affected situations, In Asia (27.06.2012). (Available from: http://asiafoundation.org/2012/06/27/how-far-do-perception-surveys-take-us-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations/)

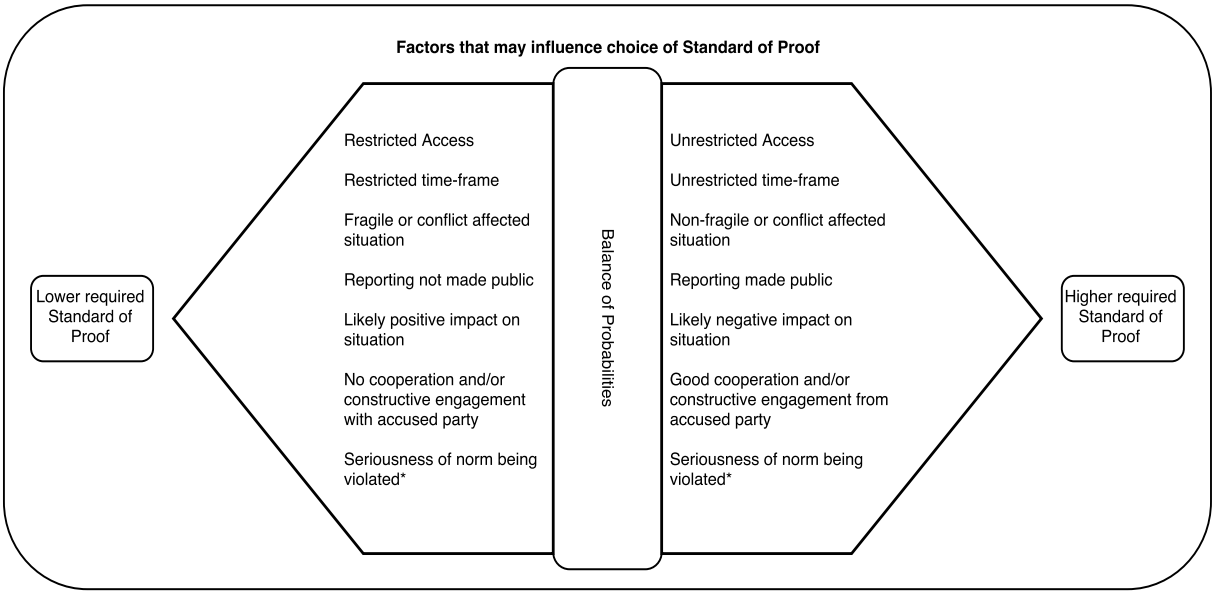
[295] These are The commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (Yugoslavia Commission of Experts), The United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur January 2005, The United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (GFFM) September 2009, The International Commission of Inquiry mandated to establish the facts and circumstances of the events of 28 September 2009 in Guinea (ICIG), the OHCHR Mapping Report on the DRC (March 1993 – June 2003) August 2010, the International Commission of Inquiry to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (Libya Commission of

certainty of factual findings rarely is uniform, with some being more certain than others for instance, Wilkinson (2011) recommends a layered approach that enables a more accurately and nuanced reporting on findings and presents four working standards of proof that may be used for different claims in the same report[296]. These are:

- **Reasonable suspicion**: Grounds for suspicion that the incident in question occurred, one of the reasonable conclusions but other conclusions are possible (40% probability).
- **Balance of probabilities**: Where more evidence supports the finding than contradicts it (50+1% probability).
- **Clear and convincing evidence**: Very solid support for a given finding - significantly more evidence supports the finding and very limited and/or weak information suggests the contrary (60% probability).
- **Overwhelming evidence**: Conclusive or highly convincing evidence supports the finding (>80% probability).

The balance of probability seems to function somewhat like a baseline in many fact-finding missions or inquiries with similar mandates. Several factors may influence the choice of what the appropriate Standard of proof should, or could, be in a given situation. These are presented in figure 2.

Figure 2: Factors that may influence the choice of Standard of Proof



While most of these factors are self-explanatory and deal with the ease of obtaining information concerning the issue under investigation, the "Seriousness of the norm being violated" warrants some explanation. There are arguments supporting that grave violations may require both a lower and a higher Standard of Proof. The idea that more serious abuses demand additional rigor is common both in national and intentional law. The International Court of Justice, for instance, applies different Standards of Proof according to the seriousness of the violation under examination. It could, however, be argued that very grave violations may require a lower level of scrutiny – particularly when the violator is the

Inquiry) June 2011, and The Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria Commission of Inquiry) November 2011.

[296] Wilkinson, S. (2011). Standards of Proof in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-Finding and Inquiry Missions. *Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*.

state. Some occurrences, like genocide and torture, are so grave, the argument goes, that one cannot risk failing to report them. Wilkinson (2011) argues that gravity of these instances means that a high standard of proof is required if the interests of the accused is the primary concern (priority is to avoid false positives or type I error), and a lower standard of proof is required if the interests of the potential victims are the primary concern (priority is to avoid false negatives or type II error).[297]

The decision of what standard(s) of proof to use in refugee research represents a dilemma, particularly in a situation of limited availability of data such as situations characterized by fragility or conflict, or by an uncooperative "accused party". If one chooses a higher standard of proof one risks that certain aspects of an issue go unreported (false negative or type II error). If the standard of proof chosen is too low the study it may present as facts that which is not sufficiently supported by evidence (false positive or type I error).[298] It is also conceivable that an overly strict or an overly lax requirement for Standard of Proof could lead to issues of credibility. This could be expected to be particularly relevant when the issue is heavily debated and/or politicized and where two or more clear "camps" can be identified. In such a case an overly strict standard of proof may lead to people dismissing correct reporting of a negative (non-convincing negative) or that an overly lax Standard of Proof requirement could fail to convince people in spite of a correct reporting of a positive (non-convincing positive). It should be stressed that Type I and Type II errors are serious and avoiding them should be prioritized over avoiding non-convincing negatives or positives.

	Did instance occur?	
	Yes	**No**
Standard of proof requirement of Overwhelming evidence (highest possible requirement)	Threat of false negative (Type II error)	Threat of non- convincing negative
Standard of proof requirement of Reasonable suspicion (lowest possible requirement)	Threat of non-convincing positive	Threat of false positive (Type I error)

Getting it wrong can have serious implications far beyond the robustness of a given report or the reputation of a researcher. This is certainly the case for research made public and particularly the case for research that for some reason gains the public attention. In these cases, the researcher loses control of the information contained in his or her work and it may be used by anyone for any number of purposes.[299]

[297] Wilkinson, S. (2011). Standards of Proof in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-Finding and Inquiry Missions. *Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*
[298] Wilkinson, S. (2011). Standards of Proof in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-Finding and Inquiry Missions. *Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*
[299] de Waal, A. (2016): "Writing Human Rights and Getting It Wrong", Boston Review, 06.06.2016. (Available from: https://bostonreview.net/world/alex-de-waal-writing-human-rights)

The comprehensive HRC (2015) report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea are among the few selected contributions that explicitly state its standard of proof. The Commission based its findings on a "reasonable grounds to believe" standard of proof, where the evidence suggests that it is reasonable to believe that a given incident or event occurred, but that this is not necessarily the only reasonable conclusions that can be made.[300] This seems to correlate to the "Reasonable suspicion" as presented by Wilkinson (2011). Given the considerable critique levied against this report by the Eritrean government and informally by some European immigration authorities, the standard of proof may have been too low and resulted in a "non-convincing positive".

Other contributions are not as explicit in their Standard of proof requirements, but have still moderated their conclusions according to some implicit Standard of proof. Examples of this can be found in the contributions from Landinfo (2016a) in passages such as:

> "Eritreans who evade national service are probably exposed to arbitrary punishment from local commanders, and there have been indications that Eritreans performing their national service in the military are subjected to more punishment than those serving in the civilian sector."

and

> "…by signing a letter of apology, payment of the 2% tax and a minimum of participation in critique of the government, individuals may be less exposed to reactions from the government compared to others. Contacts within the state apparatus are also likely an advantage (our underlines)."[301]

Based on these excerpts it seems like Landinfo (2016) available data does not fully fulfil the criteria of their implied Standard of proof. As such the claims made are cautious in an attempt to avoid false positives (Type I Error).

10.5.2 Triangulating

Triangulation is among the most commonly used tools for ensuring the reliability and validity of data. Although this approach originally was developed for quantitative research it is currently used extensively in qualitative research as well. In a difficult research context characterized by limited data availability, one should triangulate or cross check particular pieces of information with other independent pieces of information. One example is to see if one interview respondent's account of an occurrence is similar to another respondents' accounts of the same occurrence. Triangulation can also be used to cross-check information obtained through different data collection methods for the same research project. A piece of information which can be validated with interview data, a literature review, and on the ground observations can for instance be considered to be more valid than another piece of information with fewer sources of validation.[302] By combining multiple observations and methods researchers can hope to overcome some of the weaknesses and biases resulting from any individual approach.

[300] HRC (2015) Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (A/HRC/29/CRP.1) (Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIEritrea/Pages/ReportCoIEritrea.aspx)
[301] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf) and Landinfo (2016c) "Query Response - Eritrea: Reaction towards returned asylum seekers", Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) – Translation Provided by the UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3383/1/3383_1.pdf)
[302] Bryman, Alan (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Triangulation in some shape or form appears to be the primary tool for ensuring data validity in the selected contributions on Eritrea, and are used extensively in academic contributions, NGO reports and by immigration authorities.[303] It is worth mentioning that the ability to ensure valid and reliable data through triangulation is a function of the range and number of oral and written independent sources. So-called round tripping (where several sources cite the same potentially flawed original source) and false confirmations (where several sources based on the same original source all point in the same direction giving the impression that a particular statement is well grounded) are issues that can be overcome through triangulation as long as the number and range of sources is large enough.

10.5.3 Reporting methodology

Research on Eritrea represents a considerable challenge regardless of research topic, design and approach. In such a situation, it becomes nearly impossible to ensure an outcome where there are no issues with the reliability and internal and external validity of data and conclusions. Research on Eritrea is also conducted by a relatively broad range of actors belonging to different academic disciplines and schools, organizations and institutions. In such a situation, it is highly important to report on the data collection process and be thorough in the use of references to give the reader an opportunity to assess the methodological choices and the collection and analysis of data for themselves.[304]

The selected contributions reviewed for this study vary considerably in how comprehensively they present the methodological choices and processes in their work. The NGO reports and COI and other reporting by immigration authorities are in some instances the better candidates in this regard (although this is not by any means always the case). This is perhaps because they face less restrictions in terms of length of report than academics who are bound by restrictions imposed by the journal / publishing house they submit their work to, or perhaps they are more accustomed to be criticised by the governments they report on and are hence more aware to pre-empt methodological criticism. As a whole, however, it seems valid to claim that all parties could improve in their reporting on methodology so as to make assessments of validity and reliability of their work easier for all readers.

[303] See for instance Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168; Amnesty International (2015) "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" and EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf)

[304] King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

11 Appendix 2 – Complete overview of the assessment of all academic articles, NGO reports and COI documents reviewed

11.1 Academic articles or reports/notes

11.1.1 Conclusions to a large degree supported

Eritrea represents somewhat of a *terra nullius* in terms of ethnographic research and has, with the exception of some early work by Italian and British colonial officers rarely been the fieldwork of anthropologists in the last 50 years.[305] We find however, in spite of this dearth of ethnographic work, that articles based anthropological fieldwork has resulted in some of the most methodologically convincing research on Eritrea and Eritrean migration in recent years. Belloni (2016) and Bozzini (2011) have convincingly argued that this approach to social research may, if carefully implemented, over time ensure a level of trust with respondents that is difficult to otherwise obtain, which may result in data of a high internal validity.[306]

The data collection has in all cases, including in Hirt and Mohammad (2013) and Müller (2013), been a multi-year process combined with participant observation outside as well as inside of Eritrea with the range and number of respondents varying considerably between the various contributions.[307] The considerable advantage of gathering information inside Eritrea is that one can assume that the migration bias is greatly diminished, one can cross check claims about Eritrea with first hand observation, and one has a chance to speak to those who have chosen to remain in the country or not had the opportunity to leave yet. However, doing research work inside the country carries its inherent restrictions due to the political surveillance which inhibits open critical research; these limitations may generate another set of biases in particular related to the selection of informants.

These contributions do make the reader aware of some of the methodological limitations inherent in the research design. Müller (2015) recognizes that her research on Eritrean refugees in Tel Aviv holds limited external validity, or the ability to generalize beyond the paper itself. She argues, however, that the findings of the paper represent a "snapshot" of the experiences and thoughts of many Eritreans in this

[305] Kjetil Tronvoll was the first international anthropologist for decades conducting long-term fieldwork based ethnographic studies in Eritrea at the tail-end of the independence war, from 1991 to 1993. (See Tronvoll, K. (1998) *Mai Weini, A Highland Village in Eritrea, S Study of the People, Their Livelihood, and Land Tenure during Times of Turbulence*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press.

[306] Belloni, M. (2016). Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *14*(1), 104-119; Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93.

[307] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168; Müller, T. R. (2013): Human Resource Development and the State: Dynamics of the Militarization of Education in Eritrea, Studien zum Horn von Afrika, Köln

particular geographical and temporal context.[308] Riggan (2013) also points to the difficulties in discerning the seemingly seamless blend of partial information, gossip and rumours, when doing interview based research on sensitive topics in the context of contemporary Eritrea.[309]

While we agree that external validity (ability to generalize) and reliability is a severe challenge in anthropological research, we appreciate the authors willingness to make the reader aware of this concern and the great care taken to ensure that the data gathered are as (internally) valid as possible. Several of the contributions have in addition conducted their work inside Eritrea and have as such gathered data that in many cases are unique and/or in short supply.

While there is an overrepresentation of anthropological academic work in this category of our assessment of academic articles or reports/notes, there are contributions from other disciplines as well. We find Cummings et al. (2015) to provide a convincing contribution to the literature, although the paper focuses on Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Ethiopia in addition to Eritrea, through a meta-analysis of 138 primary and secondary sources following a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of potential sources. We also appreciate that the reader is made aware of potential biases due to the role of the researcher in the REA process and the great attention given to conflict generated migration in recent years (a publication bias in "favour" of this form of migration).[310]

Finally, we find Tecle and Goldring's (2013) study of the role of remittances and strategies of capture of the Eritrean state to fall within the category of 'largely supported'. Of great importance in this assessment is the careful presentation of all the potential flaws associated with pre-existing quantitative data on Eritrea and the following care in making claims based on this data.[311]

Milena Belloni (2016) Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy[312]

The paper seeks to investigate the individual decision making underlying refugee mobility. This ethnographic case study, predominantly relies on hundreds of interviews conducted during anthropological fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2014 (exact number not specified). The paper established very credibly that many Eritrean refugees are aware of the legal and institutional constraints (including the Dublin Regulation) on their aspirations for secondary migration, but that these constraints are considered to be challenges to overcome, rather than impenetrable barriers.

Issues: The qualitative case study research design is well suited for securing a high degree of (internal) validity. This is perhaps particularly the case in long-term fieldwork as the researcher may be able to secure a level of trust with the respondent(s) that is near impossible to achieve through other means. This form of research is, however, generally faced with challenges related to reliability and, to an even higher extent, to external validity (the ability to generalize beyond the population of the study).

[308] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27
[309] Riggan, J. (2013b). "It seemed like a punishment": Teacher transfers, hollow nationalism, and the intimate state in Eritrea. *American Ethnologist*, *40*(4), 749-763.
[310] Cummings, C., Pacitto, J., Lauro, D., & Foresti, M. (2015). *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. Working paper 430. London: Overseas Development Institute.
[311] Tecle, S., & Goldring, L. (2013). From 'remittance' to 'tax': the shifting meanings and strategies of capture of the Eritrean transnational party-state. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 189-207
[312] Belloni, M. (2016). Refugees as Gamblers: Eritreans Seeking to Migrate Through Italy. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *14*(1), 104-119.

Tanja Müller (2015) Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv[313]

The paper seeks to demonstrate how the environment within Eritrea has made people refugees, and furthermore how this situation is being reinforced by the failure of the Israeli government in recognizing Eritreans as such. The paper is based on 20 in depth anonymized interviews, follow up conversations with formerly established informants, and 12 extensive informal conversations and a number of interviews with civil society organization staff, which were conducted during three visits to Tel Aviv between June 2010 and April 2012. The paper appears well researched and uses direct quotes from interviews to support or strengthen the arguments presented.

Issues: As recognized by Tanja Müller in the paper itself the research design limits the ability to generalize beyond the timeframe of the paper itself. It can, however, be seen as a "snapshot" of the realities of Eritrean migrants in Tel Aviv during the period of the study and can as such present a realistic picture of the experiences and thoughts of many Eritrean refugees in this particular context. Reliability and external validity are, due to the research design and anonymization of respondents, a challenge.

Clare Cummings, Julia Pacitto et al. (2015) Why people move: Understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe[314]

Clare Cummings et al. seek to explore the drivers of irregular migration to Europe during the Mediterranean refugee crisis answering several questions including: What factors influence decisions to leave Sub-Saharan Africa and MENA and migrate to Europe via irregular means in this current crisis (with a focus on key source countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia)? In doing so they have conducted a meta-analysis where 138 primary and secondary sources deemed of high and medium quality following a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) as presented in the paper. The authors conclude that an individual's decision to migrate via irregular means operate at several levels at different times and locations and that international and national policies, economic conditions, and political situations seem important in determining why a person of a given nationality may migrate. Several factors seem to be particularly important: personal security from conflict, economic opportunity and security to rebuild and improve their and their family's life, and having the financial resources to be able to migrate.

Issues: The data selected for this meta-study is, despite the REA, dependent on the researcher and as is as such vulnerable to the impact of the views and perceptions of the researcher (much like this section of the paper). The authors also present the possibility of a Publication bias due to a reliance on the available body of published studies. These have in recent years focused heavily on migration from conflict areas and may potentially impact the findings of the study as a whole and/or its validity towards non-conflict affected contexts.

[313] Müller, T. R. (2015). Universal Rights versus Exclusionary Politics: Aspirations and Despair among Eritrean Refugees in Tel Aviv. *Africa Spectrum*, *50*(3), 3-27.
[314] Cummings, C., Pacitto, J., Lauro, D., & Foresti, M. (2015). *Why people move: understanding the drivers and trends of migration to Europe*. Working paper 430. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Tanja Müller (2013) Human Resource Development and the State: Dynamics of the Militarization of Education in Eritrea[315]

This ethnographic case study assesses the dynamics behind the militarization of the education system in Eritrea. Data has been collected between 1998 and 2006 among students at Asmara University and the College at May-Näfḥ (inside Eritrea). While the number of primary observations/respondents is not specified there are references to eleven different respondents in the footnotes. The contribution argues, by using higher education an example, that mobilization politics in later years have become a tool of oppression exercises through different forms of military control. But even oppressive systems require that its members willingly. The militarization of formal education looks likely to erode the country's human resources as a declining number of youths are willing to serve the nation regardless of personal costs and rather seek an exit strategy. The papers argument that education on all levels is used to socialize Eritreans to the liking of the government seems well supported (or at least is a broadly held perception of the respondents as well as a considerable scholarly literature). The other argument that this has been ineffective in bridging the increasingly growing divide between the old-guard political elite and many young Eritreans (with less willingness for sacrifice and perhaps broader and more varied aspirations) is also well supported by the sources presented in the paper.

Issues: As with all ethnographic qualitative fieldwork there are issues with the reliability and replicability of the data and the ability to generalize beyond the selected respondents is limited. This is particularly the case given the relatively small number of (referenced) respondents. The data has, however, been collected within Eritrea itself and is as such less vulnerable to some of the validity challenges that data collected from members of the established diaspora or more recent migrants face.

Nicole Hirt and Abdulkader Saleh Mohammad (2013) Dreams don't come true in Eritrea: Anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarization of society[316]

This paper seeks to understand Eritrea's ongoing crisis within the framework of the theory of anomie (relative lawlessness or lack of rules). The data for the paper were collected during fieldwork inside and outside Eritrea by both authors between 2008 and 2010 and presents six cases out of a sample of fourteen. This data is also supplemented by a review of written sources. The authors argue that militarization, forced labour, mass exodus and the disintegration of 'traditional' family structures can be interpreted as the consequence of the collision between two incompatible value systems – the collectivist and militaristic worldview of the PDFJ and the 'traditional' cultural system of Eritrean society. This has resulted in a destabilization of the entire social fabric. In this context, migration can be seen to be the last alternative when all other legal or illegal means of securing exception from the open ended national service have failed and/or a rebellion of individuals caught between the incompatible expectations of the state and the expectations of family.

Issues: The cases are, as recognized by the authors, not representative (externally valid) of the Eritrean population. The cases may, however, demonstrate some features common to many young Eritreans – particularly as the respondent group seems to cover a broad range. All but those who managed to secure exception from service also reported to perceive migration as the final option available if they ever are to aspire to more than what they are currently experiencing – increasing confidence in the validity of the

[315] Müller, T. R. (2013): Human Resource Development and the State: Dynamics of the Militarization of Education in Eritrea, Studien zum Horn von Afrika, Köln
[316] Hirt, N., & Mohammad, A. S. (2013). 'Dreams don't come true in Eritrea': anomie and family disintegration due to the structural militarisation of society. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *51*(01), 139-168.

data. As with all qualitative studies reliability and replicability remains a challenge (in addition to external validity mentioned above).

Samida Tecle and Luin Goldring (2013) From 'Remittance' to 'tax': the shifting meanings and strategies of capture of the Eritrean national party-state[317]

Tecle and Goldring have engaged in a qualitative case study predominantly based on a review of existing literature (about 70 individual referenced sources for a 15-page article) and quantitative data. They argue that the meaning of remittances has changed considerably from the voluntary contribution during the war of independence to a coerced tax in recent years. They furthermore argue that Eritrea continues to re-work these strategies of financial extraction to adapt to changing circumstances.

Issues: As recognized by the authors there are multiple and serious challenges in doing research on Eritrea and Eritrean society. There are for instance only a few researchers and others who do comprehensive data collection inside Eritrea. The authors argue that data provided by the government should be used with caution. The validity of large-scale survey data in Eritrea is questionable because much of what exists consists of estimates inherited at independence or gathered through referendum statistics. The informalities of the financial sector in Eritrea is another reason for caution in the use of this form of data.

Jennifer Riggan (2013) "It seemed like a punishment": Teacher transfers, hollow nationalism, and the intimate state in Eritrea[318]

This paper, based on an unspecified number of written sources and interviews, presents one instance of citizen expression of discontent with an authoritarian state with the case of teacher transfers in Eritrea and the affected teachers' strategies of avoiding these. The original perception of the state as a fair liberator has been replaced by the perception of the state as punishing. This is indicative of greater change. Service was once indicative of Eritrean national identity but has due to an increased use of coercion become increasingly seen and used as punishment. This state is contrasted with the 'dream or longing' for a fair state at the service of its people. The author has taken considerable care in the strength of her statements and conclusions so that they do not excessively exceed the data underlying them. The perception among respondents that relocation is a form of punishment by the state seems well established.

Issues: The author underlines the challenges in doing research in Eritrea. Among these is the obligation to 'protect' informants from harm by anonymizing their identities and even their surrounding context. This makes replication and validation of the data impossible. The level of sensitivity associated with certain topics in Eritrea and the often real lack of real information can in many instances result in a seemingly seamless blend of partial information, gossip and rumours making validity in a conventional sense a challenge. As with all case study research design the ability to generalize (external validity) outside the study is limited.

[317] Tecle, S., & Goldring, L. (2013). From 'remittance to 'tax': the shifting meanings and strategies of capture of the Eritrean transnational party-state. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 189-207.
[318] Riggan, J. (2013b). "It seemed like a punishment": Teacher transfers, hollow nationalism, and the intimate state in Eritrea. *American Ethnologist*, *40*(4), 749-763.

David Bozzini (2011) Low-tech Surveillance and the Despotica State in Eritrea[319]

This paper, based on data gathered during fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2007 in Eritrea (the number of primary observations used not specified, looks at the development and function of surveillance in Eritrea. It argues that the Eritrean state over the past decade has developed systems of surveillance of conscripts in the National Service, including the distribution of identification documents that must be presented at checkpoints throughout the country. Following the extension of the duration of the national service these structures are heavily occupied with identifying, preventing, and cracking down on defection and desertion from the national service. Bozzini further argues that despite severe limitations in the ability of the state to effectively conduct surveillance these systems have contributed to keeping thousands of conscripts in the national service. This is partially due to the system's ability to perpetuate and reproduce uncertainties, fears, beliefs and expectations that are the core of relative coercion in the National Service.

Issues: The long duration of the fieldwork in Eritrea and principles for obtaining this information i) following informants as far as possible, ii) allowing informants to speak freely and then asking about details that may have been omitted, and iii) conducting in-depth interviews with people several times on the same issue allowing the collection of different versions of the same narrative-event ensures a high degree of validity for the data. As with all ethnographic qualitative fieldwork there are issues with the reliability and replicability of the data and the ability to generalize beyond the selected respondents is limited.

11.1.2 Conclusions somewhat supported

Some of the academic contributions selected were found to suffer from varying, albeit limited, degrees of methodological concerns, which in our view have impacted the degree to which their conclusions are supported. As various journals and publishing outlets have differing standards and formats on how a contribution is supposed to be designed, some of the methodological criticism raised below may be attributed to the publishing outlets, rather than the individual authors.

A number of these contributions, including Hirt (2016), Mekonnen and Estefanos (2011), Hepner (2014) and Kibreab (2014), do not to a satisfactory degree discuss the data collection and analysis processes. Some of these contributions have also omitted to specify the number and range of respondents and sources used. Without this information, or meta-data if you will, it becomes difficult for an independent reader to assess the validity and reliability of the material as a whole.[320] A similar critique affects Humphris (2016), which makes extensive use of pre-existing qualitative interview data without providing the process through which these data were gathered or discussing the potential challenges from the use of pre-existing data.[321]

Other contributions seem, in our view, to be overly reliant on interview data with little verification with other independent sources. Brhane (2015) has for instance taken considerable care in ensuring that the

[319] Bozzini, D. M. (2011). Low-tech surveillance and the despotic state in Eritrea. *Surveillance & Society*, *9*(1/2), 93.
[320] Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa; Mekonnen, D. R., & Estefanos, M. (2011). From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean Tragedy of Human Trafficking. *Available at SSRN 2055303*; Hepner, T. R. (2014). Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *44*(2), 151-188; Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.
[321] Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service.

data used was collected from different countries. While we agree that this ensures that the interview data is more valid (as the observations will be more independent of one another), we would also argue that the article could have been strengthened if more non-interview based sources were included. Riggan (2013) has based her paper on a study of classroom discussions among Eritrean students which we find to be an innovative and very interesting approach. It is, however, difficult to determine the number of primary observations and the range of respondents is assumed to be narrow (young, majority Tigrinya(?) and relatively highly educated Eritreans in one location).[322]

Hirt (2014) is based on a relatively small number of written sources and interviews, in addition to the expertise of the author gathered through decades of participant observation inside Eritrea. We realize that there is some contention surrounding the use of individual observations in social research, and that this approach by some is considered methodological problematic.[323]

Finally, Humprhis (2016) is based on interviews with civil society actors and NGOs in addition to use of their pre-existing qualitative interview data. While the use of pre-existing qualitative data can provide great insights, it is also considered problematic as the researcher herself did not have full control in the data collection process.

Nicole Hirt (2016) Eritrean Refugees: The Pawns of European Interests[324]

This GIGA report, seemingly based on a literature review and the authors own experience and expertise, deals with the issue of migration to the EU and the attempts at stemming this flow through the Khartoum process and also approaches towards Eritrea, including possible financial support to the energy sector and strengthening of governance. Hirt argues that this approach fails to deal with the primary reasons for migration and that any development assistance should require and support reforms of the national service, the economy, and the legal structure of Eritrea. These reforms are, in her opinion, unlikely to materialize (at least in the short to medium term) on their own.

Issues: although it may be beyond the scope of this short contribution or opinion piece (7 pages) it fails to seriously discuss the validity, reliability and general academic robustness of its referenced sources (13 sources in the list of references). Given the limited scope of the conclusion reached it nevertheless seems like the conclusion is sufficiently supported by the data provided.

Mogos Brhane (2016) Understanding Why Eritreans go to Europe[325]

Mogos Brhane argues in this contribution, based on an unspecified number of interviews conducted with Eritrean migrants/refugees/asylum seekers in Sudan, Ethiopia and the UK that the poor conditions in refugee camps outside of Europe and the perception/hope that conditions are better in Europe act as push and pull factors that for many outweigh the significant risks involved in secondary migration. In camps in Ethiopia and Sudan, characterized by limited resources, one respondent reported they have nothing to do "but struggle with boredom and distress". In Sudan, Eritreans have been targeted by criminal groups for ransom. In Israel, the lack of recognition of Eritrean migrants as refugees' results in significant uncertainty and limited legal opportunities for work. Refugees have also been deported from Israel to

[322] Brhane, M. O. (2016). Understanding why Eritreans go to Europe. *Forced Migration Review*, (51), 34; Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.
[323] Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061.
[324] Hirt, N. (2016). Eritrean refugees: the pawns of European interests, GIGA Focus Africa.
[325] Brhane, M. O. (2016). Understanding why Eritreans go to Europe. *Forced Migration Review*, (51), 34.

Uganda and Rwanda. As long as the reasons for migration are left unaddressed and the conditions for refugees in neighbouring countries does not significantly improve, many Eritreans are likely to migrate onward to Europe - regardless of risk.

Issues: This short contribution is based on data gathered with Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, Sudan and the UK. The exclusive use of data from interviews with migrants/refugees is in many instances problematic and should be verified and checked with other independent sources (particularly when the circumstances of the interviews, including duration and relation with respondent, are left unspecified. The migration bias is, however, in this particular case less of an issue as the contribution seeks to examine the drivers of secondary migration (migration from the first destination after migrating/fleeing Eritrea). As with nearly all qualitative studies based on anonymized interview data collection the reliability and replicability of the study is limited and the external validity or ability to generalize beyond the study is highly problematic.

Nicole Hirt (2014) The Eritrean Diaspora and its Impact on Regime Stability: Responses to UN Sanctions[326]

This article examines the impact of UN-sanctions on the stability of the Eritrean regime and on the reaction of the diaspora. The paper argues that the government and its supporters and opponents in the diaspora have used the sanctions for their own purposes – either as a call to rally behind the nation or to oppose the 2% tax levied by the government by arguing it is in breach of the sanctions. The article is well referenced (94 footnote references in a 21-page paper) by a combination of written sources (including official government statements and media reports), five in-depth interviews with Eritreans in opposition to the regime, and the expertise of the author gained through three decades of participant observation among the Eritrean diaspora and prolonged stays inside Eritrea between 1995 to 2010.

Issues: While most of the claims of the paper seem well supported there are some issues with the relatively small number of interviews and the potential migration-bias (or diaspora bias) of these. While experience gathered over decades is highly valuable, particularly in a context where conducting research is challenging, it is difficult to independently assess the validity and reliability of this experience as such.

Jennifer Riggan (2013) Imagining Emigration: Debating National Duty in Eritrean Classrooms[327]

This article argues that the celebration of diasporic nationalism (during the war of independence) has resulted in a longing to return among the diaspora but at the same time resulted in an unintended longing among those who remain in Eritrea to leave. While emigration effectively remains illegal (completion of national service is a precondition for legally obtaining an exit visa) the large and celebrated diaspora have a greater degree of freedom to move in and out of the country and may even obtain land (denied Eritreans in Eritrea) provided they pay the infamous 2% tax. These contradictions were explored by examining classroom debates about emigration in Eritrea, allowing students and teachers to present and argue conflicting beliefs about national duty, personal aspirations, and the state. The study reveals that (many) Eritreans are keenly aware of these contradictions and many see emigration as a means to secure the freedoms granted (compliant) members of the diaspora. The young students all cared about the future development of the country, but many tried to cast their devotion in terms of loyally leaving the country so as to help it. Others clung to more traditional notions of sacrifice and duty and cast themselves as the truly sacrificing Eritreans.

[326] Hirt, N. (2014). The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions. *African Affairs*, adu061.
[327] Riggan, J. (2013a). Imagining emigration: debating national duty in Eritrean Classrooms. *Africa Today*, *60*(2), 84-106.

Issues: The use of classroom discussions inside of Eritrea in order to obtain information about perceptions about certain issues is highly interesting and potentially a great source of insight. The data presented in the paper seems to support the claim that the advantages given the diaspora contributes to the wish to leave Eritrea for those who remain and that many see emigration as their only option to reach their aspirations. The study does not, however, specify how many were in the class during the discussions and how many of these actively participated in the discussions (difficult to determine the number of primary "observations" and to independently gauge the validity of the data). As the students all are from a similar background and at similar stages in their lives (young and relatively highly educated) this limits the reach of the study. As with nearly all ethnographic case studies, particularly when the protection of respondents is a concern, the reliability and external validity (ability to generalize) remains low.

Rachel Humphris (2013) Refugees and the Rashaida: Human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt[328]

This research paper is based on data collected through an unspecified number of interviews with civil society actors and NGOs in transit and destination countries, as well as the use of their pre-collected qualitative interview data. The paper explores the motivations and aspirations to leave Eritrea, the changing refugee dynamics in eastern Sudan, and the role of smugglers in migration to and through Sudan. As such the paper does not present a particular research question or narrow topic but rather structures the paper around the broader theme of the migration route from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt. Humphris argues that while a small number of individuals from the Rashaida ethnic group participate in the smuggling of Eritrean, this tendency is primarily the result and not a cause of insecurity in the region.

Issues: The paper provides a sufficient amount of data for its conclusions on the role of smugglers (malign and/or benign). This is not, however, the case for the section on drivers of migration which seem seriously under referenced and partially based on old reporting on the subject. The decision to use pre-existing interview data of migrants in a refugee/asylum seeking situation is not, as far as we can tell, problematized or discussed. This is problematic as the researcher, again as far as we can tell by the paper itself, had no control over how these interviews were conducted and for what purpose. As with nearly all qualitative case studies there are great challenges to the reliability and external validity of the data.

Daniel Mekonnen and Meron Estefanos (2013) From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean tragedy of human trafficking[329]

This paper is based on more than 100 recorded interviews of Eritrean victims of trafficking and supplemented by other written sources. The authors human trafficking in Eritrea between mid-1990s to November 2011 and argues that this trend in later years increased exponentially resulting in a large number of Eritreans becoming victims to abuse by traffickers in the Sinai Desert. Finally, it proposes key recommendations aimed at alleviating the situation and the suffering of its victims. The authors recommend international cooperation in establishing security and law enforcement in the areas where the trafficking takes place.

[328] Humphris, R. (2016): *'Refugees and the Rashaida: human smuggling and trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt'*, New Issues in Refugee Research UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency Policy Development and Evaluation Service.
[329] Mekonnen, D. R., & Estefanos, M. (2011). From Sawa to the Sinai Desert: The Eritrean Tragedy of Human Trafficking. *Available at SSRN 2055303*.

Issues: This paper is to a significant extent reliant on the use of pre-existing qualitative data and interviews without discussing the possible methodological challenges present in using pre-existing data of this type. It is also difficult to assess the validity of these data unless more information about them and how they were generated is presented. The arguments made are reasonably well referenced, but several passages could have been strengthened by broadening the group of sources. Reliability, replicability and external validity remains a challenge as in most qualitative case work.

Tricia Redeker Hepner (2014) Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora[330]

While this paper is based on long term research on Eritrea, the Eritrean diaspora, and Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers, it does not specify the number of primary "observations" or respondents. The paper analyses the logic of the repression of religious identities and institutions from a historical and transnational perspective. It argues that contemporary religious repression is an expression of cultural, political, and generational conflicts related to the internal dynamics of Eritrea's post-revolution transition, the transnational configuration of the nation state, and the pressures of globalization. A key proposition is that repression of religion is related to both the modernist secularism of the nationalist regime and the ways in which human rights discourse intersects simultaneously with northern interventionism and transnational diaspora opposition to the Eritrean regime.

Issues: The lack of background information concerning the collection of primary data and their use makes independent evaluations of the validity of these data difficult. On the other hand the paper does refer to a large and broad literature strengthening the paper as a whole.

Gaim Kibreab (2014) The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration[331]

This report explores the drivers of migration from Eritrea and asks why so many young Eritreans choose to face the very real risks of migration. Kibreab argues that the ultimate cause of this migration is the entrenched and interconnected patters of economic, social, political, and environmental issues in Eritrea as well as the pervasive inequalities that characterize the global North-South divide. These factors are somewhat reinforced by the dense transnational networks that connect Eritreans world-wide. Since 2002, the single most important driver has been the open ended national service (extended by the Warsay-Yikealo Development Campaign or WYDC).

Issues: The paper is largely based on an unspecified number of existing sources (55 footnotes in an 18-page paper) but these are not explicitly presented or otherwise discussed. Certain passages of the paper seem under-referenced and based on the knowledge and understanding of the author. Without further explanation or elaboration this is methodologically problematic, particularly when it comes to reliability. It also makes it difficult to independently assess the validity of the data used. The paper does, however, recognize the complexity of the social and political issues that underlie Eritrean migration.

[330] Hepner, T. R. (2014). Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *44*(2), 151-188.
[331] Kibreab, G. (2014). The Open-Ended Eritrean National Service: The Driver of Forced Migration, paper for the European Asylum Support Office - Practical Cooperation meeting on Eritrea, 15-16 October 2014, Valetta - Malta.

11.1.3 Conclusions supported only to a small degree

Mekonnen and van Reisen (2011) fails to provide the reader with information on how the data was gathered and processed in order to reach the conclusions presented. Some of the argument made are furthermore based on a relatively small number of NGO reports. While the legal argument presented appears to be comprehensive and well-grounded, the section referring to persecution and mistreatment of religious minorities in Eritrea seems under referenced.[332]

Daniel Mekonnen and Mirjam van Reisen (2011) Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge[333]

This paper argues that Eritrea in recent years has seen egregious violations of human rights, where members who do not subscribe to the state ideology are punished and where religious persecution is systematic and widespread. Jehovah's Witnesses have been particularly targeted due to their refusal to participate in the compulsory national military service. Lately, other groups of Christian denominations and some segments of Islam have also seen increased hostility form the state.

Issues: the paper does not make explicit how data was gathered and processed in order to reach the conclusions presented. The argument concerning migration as a result of religious persecution is seemingly largely based on a relatively small number of NGO reports without problematizing the use of these or presenting action taken to alleviate some of the potential issues from their use. Other sections, particularly those referring to persecution and mistreatment of Jehovah's witnesses, Pentecostals and Muslims are all under referenced. The legal argument presented is much more comprehensive and seems well grounded, but rests on a shaky foundation due to the issues mentioned above.

11.2 NGO reports/notes

11.2.1 Conclusions to a large degree supported

Several selected NGO contributions, including Amnesty International (2015), Amnesty International (2013) and Human Rights Watch (2009) have gone to significant lengths to ensure a relatively large number of respondents, and have furthermore presented the reader with the characteristics of this sample and how the interview process was conducted.

These contributions have also taken additional action to strengthen the validity of their findings. Amnesty International (2013) recognizes that there are comprehensive challenges in doing research on Eritrea, particularly as they are not granted access to the country nor to Ethiopia and Sudan. As a result, they have moderated the individual claims made in the report in accordance with the validity of the data the individual claims rest on.[334] Amnesty International (2015) conducted additional independent

[332] Mekonnen, D. R., & van Reisen, M. (2011) 'Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge', Paper presented at the ESF-LiU Conference on "Religions, Gender and Human Rights: Challenges for Multicultural and Democratic Societies, 21-25 June 2011, Scandic Linköping Vast, Sweden
[333] Mekonnen, D. R., & van Reisen, M. (2011) 'Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge', Paper presented at the ESF-LiU Conference on "Religions, Gender and Human Rights: Challenges for Multicultural and Democratic Societies, 21-25 June 2011, Scandic Linköping Vast, Sweden
[334] Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)

interviews in order to cross-check and validate certain aspects of the report.[335] Human Rights Watch (2009) complemented its qualitative data on the occurrence of torture with medical reports from the Medical Foundation for Care of Victims of Torture (UK).[336]

Finally, the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2015) is also found to have its conclusions largely supported following a fact-finding mission to collect up-to-date information in several refugee camps. Although the reporting on the data collection process could have been stronger the limited scope of the paper (presenting the conditions in these camps) seem largely valid.[337]

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2015) Forgotten Refugees: Eritrean Children in Northern Ethiopia[338]

This report argues that secondary migration is common among the young (minors) and urban Eritrean refugees who arrive in Ethiopia and are settled in Shire camp. The paper reports on a substantial number of unmet needs in camps where underage and unaccompanied Eritrean refugees stay in Ethiopia. This, the paper claims, is the primary driver of secondary migration for this group of Eritrean refugees. The question in this situation is, according to the authors, not why these children leave but why would you expect them to stay indefinitely. Data gathering was carried out as part of a fact-finding mission with the America Team for Displaced Eritreans as well as other NGOs and volunteers in December 2015. The delegation visited the region and collected up-to-date information about Eritrean unaccompanied refugee children temporarily residing at and registered with the Endabaguna Screening and Reception Centre and those children living in the Adi-Harush, Hitsats, and Mai-Aini camps (the "Shire refugee camps"). Additional information was gathered from the UNHCR Ethiopia, the Ethiopian government and locally active NGOs.

Issues: The paper does not explicitly present the finer details of how data was gathered during the mission period (interview sheets or other relevant documents not included). The main sections of the paper seem nevertheless to present a clear argument of severe gaps in vital daily needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation and health, education and livelihoods, security, and supervision and care. The data collected in the camps are supplemented by findings of other mission sand the UNHCR. The limited explicit scope of the paper, the Shire camps as a case, ensures that the conclusions made are supported by the evidence provided.

Amnesty International (2013) Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom[339]

This report, which covers the arrests and detentions of a broad group of people including political opposition, journalists, deserters, illegal migrants and returned asylum seekers, is predominantly based on more than 40 interviews with refugees and asylum seekers conducted between 2010 and 2013. The paper argues that multiple violations of human rights, the indefinite duration of national service, severe limitations in employment and educational opportunities all contribute to mass migration from Eritrea.

[335] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)
[336] Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)
[337] US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2015), "Forgotten Refugees: Eritrean Children in Northern Ethiopia" (Available from: http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/USCRI-Report-Forgotten-Refugees.pdf)
[338] US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2015), "Forgotten Refugees: Eritrean Children in Northern Ethiopia" (Available from: http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/USCRI-Report-Forgotten-Refugees.pdf)
[339] Amnesty International (2013) "Eritrea: 20 Years of Independence, but still no freedom" (Available from: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/afr640012013.pdf)

According to AI those who are arrested attempting to illegally migrate or who are returned as failed asylum seekers are at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention without charge. The paper also argues that testimonies and other information indicate that family members of those who illegally migrate can be targeted for arrest, particularly when those who have fled are of national service age.

Issues: As AI makes clear, there are major challenges to overcome when doing research on Eritrea. AI has therefore had to rely on interviews with Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers in other countries, Eritrean activists and journalists in exile, humanitarian workers and diplomats formerly based in Eritrea, and partner organizations working on Eritrea. Research for this report also draws on media reports and reflects information contained in 20 years of Amnesty International's public documents covering Eritrea. This broad range of sources does increase the confidence and validity of the data. Due to the need to protect informants they have been anonymized and some information is not referenced in order to further ensure anonymity. Reliability and replicability is therefore an inherent issue. The paper, furthermore, seems to consistently moderate the strength of the various claims made based on the number of sources supporting it and (apparently) the authors confidence in these sources.

Amnesty International (2015) Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees[340]

The report seeks to examine the current nature of the national service in Eritrea in order to determine if there have been any discernible changes in the policy and practice of conscription since 2013. Of particular interest was the guarantee given that conscription would be limited to 18 months. This is particularly relevant as some countries, including Denmark and the UK, in 2014 and 2015 claimed that there have been improvements in the conscription system to an extent where there are no longer grounds for applying for asylum. AI interviewed 72 Eritreans (58 male and 14 female) in Italy and Switzerland, who fled between July 2014 and July 2015. Respondents were between 16 and 43 years old. Additional interviews with 15 respondents were conducted in order to cross-check certain information. Additional information was collected from an unspecified number of Eritrean activists in exile. The paper concludes that conscription in the national service continues to be indefinite and that conscripts continue to be deployed in a manner that amounts to forced labour and are at a continued risk of further human rights violations in a system characterized by a lack of accountability.

Issues: Amnesty International is unable to access Eritrea and is also barred from entering Ethiopia and Sudan. All interviews where therefore conducted among recently arrived Eritreans in Europe – and this opens up for potential biases and incentive structures that may be harmful for validity. The main conclusions i) that conscription continues to be of indefinite duration and ii) that the use of conscripts amounts to forced labour seems to be largely supported by the large amount of testimonies gathered and other sources presented. The qualitative design of the research, particularly combined with the need to protect the identities of respondents, makes reliability, replicability and generalizations based on the findings challenging. The high number of respondents (72) strengthens the validity of the findings (although number of locations could have been larger) as does the additional interviews conducted in order to cross-check some of the sections of the paper.

[340] Amnesty International (2015), "Just Deserters - Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees" (Available from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr64/2930/2015/en/)

Human Rights Watch (2009) Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea[341]

This primary data for this report, gathered during research conducted between September 2008 and January 2009, consists interviews with 53 (almost exclusively male) Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers between 18 and 50 years old (all except 4 left Eritrea no more than 18 months before interview took place), an unspecified number of Eritrean exiles (academics, journalists, and activists) and London based experts, and 4 international officials living and working in Eritrea. In addition, HRW got access to medical reports from the Medical Foundation for Care of Victims of Torture (UK). Finally, an unofficial visit to Eritrea gave the opportunity to cross-check an unspecified number of issues. The report claims to document the Eritrean governments responsibility for patterns of serious human rights violations including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, forced labour, and inhuman conditions in detention; rigid restrictions on freedom of movement and expression; and religious persecution. It also analyses abuses related to the practice of indefinite conscription into national and military service, the lack of any provision for conscientious objection, and the risks facing refugees before, during and after migration

Issues: it is unfortunate that HRW was unable to secure a broader gender representation in the respondents as great care was taken during the interviews. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews and cross-check information, the interviews were generally conducted in private in a separate room, with only the interviewee, a Human Rights Watch researcher, and a translator present to translate from Tigrinya into English—where translation was necessary. Different translators where used throughout the study to ensure that the translations were unbiased. The accounts gathered where cross-checked with other independent sources to ensure their credibility.

While the majority of the paper seems well supported there are some issues with certain sub-sections of Part II of the report, which seem to be overly reliant of interview data with little explicit cross-checking taking place. These passages would have been strengthened if they were cross-checked with additional independent sources. As with all qualitative case studies there are issues with reliability, replicability and the ability to generalize beyond the study itself.

11.2.2 Conclusions somewhat supported

Human Rights Watch (2014) bases its analysis of human trafficking in the eastern Sahel and Sinai on a relatively broad range of in-depth interviews with 23 Eritreans, 2 Ethiopians and 3 Sudanese nationals in addition to pre-existing data from 22 Eritreans gathered by an Egyptian NGO and interviews with 4 foreign embassy staff in Egypt and 2 self-confessed traffickers. While the occurrence of horrible human rights violations in the trafficking in the region seems well supported by the paper, other sections rest on a much shakier foundation. The report claims that elements of the Egyptian military and police participate in the trafficking system, but does not in our opinion provide a sufficient number of independent sources to support this serious accusation.[342]

[341] Human Rights Watch (2009) "Service for Life - State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e6dcc60.html)
[342] Human Rights Watch (2014) "I Wanted to Lie Down and Die" (Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/11/i-wanted-lie-down-and-die/trafficking-and-torture-eritreans-sudan-and-egypt)

Human Rights Watch (2014) I Wanted to Lie Down and Die[343]

This report is based on in-depth interviews with 23 Eritrean, 2 Ethiopian and 3 Sudanese nationals (32 men and 5 women) in addition to 22 interviews with Eritrean nationals conducted by an Egyptian NGO. Additional interviews were made with 3 Egyptian officials, 13 NGO and international humanitarian staff and 4 foreign embassy staff in Egypt. HRW also got access to 2 self-confessed traffickers. The paper argues that since mid-2010, and as recently as November 2013, Sudanese traffickers have kidnapped Eritreans in eastern Sudan and sold them to Egyptian traffickers in Sinai who have subjected at least hundreds to horrific violence in order to extort large sums of money from the victims' relatives. In some cases, these crimes are facilitated by collusion between traffickers and Sudanese and Egyptian police and the military who hand victims over to traffickers in police stations, turn a blind eye at checkpoints, and return escaped trafficking victims to traffickers. In 2010, the first reports surfaced of smugglers turning on their clients during the journey, kidnapping and abusing them to extort money from their relatives in exchange for onward travel. By 2011, Sudanese traffickers had started to kidnap Eritreans from inside or near the UN-run refugee camps near the town of Kassala in eastern Sudan and transferred them to Egyptian traffickers against their will.

Issues: while the occurrence of horrible human rights violations in the trafficking in region is reasonably well supported by the sources presented other elements rest on a shakier foundation. This is particularly the case with the claim that Egyptian military and police forces participate in this system. This section would have been considerably strengthened if it had the support of additional independent sources (we do, however, realize that these may not exist or have existed during the time of writing this report).

The report as a whole relies perhaps too much on data gathered during interviews and the validity of the data could have been strengthened with additional independent sources. As with all qualitative studies based on interviews there are issues with the reliability and replicability of the data and the ability to generalize beyond the selected respondents is limited.

11.2.3 Conclusions supported only to a small degree

GSDRC (2016) based on 18 days of seemingly comprehensive desk research provides a short overview of the literature on fragility and migration in and from Eritrea. While the paper as a whole is well referenced, there are some issues with certain passages. The methodological considerations of the paper also appear to be lacking both when it comes to the literature review and in the use of qualitative data.[344]

GSDRC (2016) Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Eritrea[345]

This report, based on 18 days of desk research (the paper includes about 175 different sources in its bibliography), provides a short overview of the literature on fragility and migration in and from Eritrea. It was prepared for the European Commission's Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace, European Union 2016.

[343] Human Rights Watch (2014) "I Wanted to Lie Down and Die" (Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/11/i-wanted-lie-down-and-die/trafficking-and-torture-eritreans-sudan-and-egypt)
[344] GSDRC (2016) "Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Fragility_Migration_Eritrea.pdf)
[345] GSDRC (2016) "Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Eritrea" (Available from: http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Fragility_Migration_Eritrea.pdf)

Issues: The paper is well referenced as a whole but there are some issues with certain passages. The paper makes few claims by itself but presents the findings of other sources. More problematic is it that it does not discuss the various advantages and/or disadvantages of using existing literature as the primary (only) sources and does not present a selection procedure or other measures taken. There are a number of references to secondary quantitative data (such as from the World Bank, IMF, UN-system and the US Department of State) but there is no discussion of the potential limitations of these data. While reliability and replicability is relatively good for this paper there are issues with its validity and the potential existence of biases.

11.2.4 Conclusions not supported or impossible to determine

Human Rights Watch (2013) seeks to investigate the supposed use of forced labour in the Eritrean mining sector – a sector that in recent years has seen a considerable increase in international investments. The primary challenge with this contribution is its very low number of interview respondents, with no more than four interviews with Eritreans who claim to have worked at the Bisha mine and only two of these claiming to have been former conscript labourers. While the report recognizes that this does not provide conclusive proof, the tone of the report as a whole seems to indicate that companies investing in Eritrea are in fact complicit in the use of forced labour. While we recognize that this topic is understudied, we find the validity issues too comprehensive to overlook in this instance.[346]

The Bertelmann Stiftung (2016) *Transformation Index* (BTI) assesses the transformation towards democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of political management in 129 countries, including Eritrea. We find that this report, with the exception of some references to data on key indicators from the World Bank, the UNDP Human Development Report, and others, does not provide its primary or secondary sources. The construction of the BTI furthermore seems overly reliant on the assessment and perspectives of the two country experts and the regional coordinator, who are responsible for its formulation. Without further information on the data used and the process of producing the BTI it is impossible to determine the level of support for its conclusions.[347]

Human Rights Watch (2013) Hear No Evil: Forced Labour and Corporate Responsibility in Eritrea's Mining Sector[348]

Eritrea has courted international investors by actively promoting its largely untapped mineral reserves. This paper argues that the experiences of these companies, and particularly Canadian Nevsun Resources, are walking into a minefield of human rights problems – particularly risking getting entangled in the national service program. Some national service conscripts are assigned to state-owned construction companies who exercise a complete monopoly in the field. International mining firms operating in the country face intense government pressure to engage these contractors to develop some of their project infrastructure. If they do so, they run a pronounced risk of at least indirect involvement in the use—and harsh mistreatment—of forced labourers.

[346] Human Rights Watch (2013), "Hear No Evil: Forced Labor and Corporate Responsibility in Eritrea's Mining Sector" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/50f950a22.html)
[347] Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016) BTI 2016 - Eritrean Country Report (Available from: https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI_2016_Eritrea.pdf)
[348] Human Rights Watch (2013), "Hear No Evil: Forced Labor and Corporate Responsibility in Eritrea's Mining Sector" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/50f950a22.html)

Issues: HRW was unable to visit Eritrea during the course of the research and has therefore had to rely interviews with officials from mining firms operating in Eritrea (Canadian Nevsun Resources, Australian South Boulder Mines, and South African SENET – principal contractor at Nevsun's mine in Eritrea). HRW also interviewed four Eritreans who worked at Bisha (operated by Canadian Nevsun Resources), out of which two claimed to have been former conscript labourers. HRW recognizes in the methodology section that the low number of respondents does not represent conclusive proof that any company operating in Eritrea has been complicit in the use of forced labour. The tone of the report as a whole, however, seems to implicitly argue that this is the case.

Recognizing that this is an understudied research topic (particularly during the time of publication) and the general methodological issues associated with doing research on Eritrea in general, the validity issues are found too comprehensive to provide any real support for the conclusions of the paper. As with nearly all qualitative case studies reliability, replicability and external validity is limited.

Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016) BTI 2016 - Eritrean Country Report[349]

This report is part of Bertelmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2016, which assesses the transformation towards democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of political management in 129 countries. The report argues that during the period under review (February 2013 to January 2015): i) the Eritrean government made no significant change to its political and economic agenda; ii) the economy deteriorated further with chronic electricity blackouts and shortages of fuel and drinking water; iii) PFDJ leaders continue to operate their own shops and businesses; iv) Eritrea remained a dictatorship in which public political participation is impossible and where human rights routinely are violated; v)absolutely no sign of progress towards democratization.

The BTI is created as follows[350]:

- The country report, a written assessment of the state of transformation and the management performance, and country rating, a numerical assessment of the state of transformation and the management performance, are produced.
- First review - each country report undergoes a process of blind review by a second country expert (the second country expert also provides ratings for the country independent of the first experts' rating. The regional coordinator reviews both the report and its review and may make adjustments in consultation with the first country expert.
- Each regional coordinator reviews ratings in his region and scores are calibrated to reflect differences among countries in the same region.
- The regional coordinators convene and review ratings across regions and scores are calibrated to reflect international differences and ensure global comparability.
- Editing where ratings are aggregated and the reports go through a final review.

Issues: The report does not, with the exception of some vague references to data on key indicators from the World Bank (such as World Bank Indicators), the UNDP Human Development Report, the World Economic Outlook, and data from SIPRI, explicitly state where the data is coming from. The report is apart from these not referring to any other primary or secondary sources. The construction of the index seems highly dependent on the assessment and perspectives of two country experts as well as the

[349] Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016) BTI 2016 - Eritrean Country Report (Available from: https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI_2016_Eritrea.pdf)
[350] Based on the description of the process in the BTI 2016 Codebook (Available from: https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Zusaetzliche_Downloads/Codebook_BTI_2016.pdf

regional coordinator. Together these do represent a comprehensive validity and reliability challenge. Without more information, however, it is impossible to determine the support for the report's conclusions.

11.3 Country of Origin Information and other materials published by immigration authorities

11.3.1 Conclusions to a large degree supported

Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Report - National Service[351]

Information for this report is based on 37 interviews (or "oral sources") collected during five country visits (last country visit in Jan/Feb 2016). Respondents include government representatives and regular Eritreans inside Eritrea as well as foreign embassy personnel. These interviews are supplemented by 40 "written sources". The report deals with the National Service in Eritrea and argues that it is being uses both as a tool to avert external threats, but also as an instrument to create a cohesive national identity and rebuilding the country. The Warsay Yekealo campaign, adopted in 2002, extended the duration of the national service for both men and women. Eritreans who evade national service are probably exposed to arbitrary punishment from local commanders, and there have been indications that Eritreans performing their national service in the military are subjected to more punishment than those serving in the civilian sector. Due to a lack of information, however, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions on this matter.

Issues: The report recognizes the methodological challenges in doing research on Eritrea and presents a serious discussion of the impact of these challenges. This has a serious impact on one's own research as well as that of others making reliance on existing literature problematic due to problems of round-tripping (several sources citing the same potentially flawed original source) and the related problem of false confirmations (several sources, based on the same original source which all point in the same direction gives the impression that a particular statement is well grounded). Landinfo stresses that they have not had the opportunity to conduct systematic surveys or interviews of a large number of Eritreans. They have, in our opinion, to a large extent strived to ensure that the data is as updated and accurate as possible. In cases where the validity of the data is dubious, the authors have moderated and qualified their statements throughout the report.

11.3.2 Conclusion somewhat supported

EASO (2015) EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus[352]

The report aims to provide information on a selection of topics that are relevant for international protection status determination including the national service, prisons and detention, religion, identity documents and exit, and punishment for illegal exits. The report is based on publicly available reports of COI units, UN agencies, human rights organizations, scholars, official and NGO papers, and government and diaspora media. This data has been complemented with information obtained during interviews. The

[351] Landinfo (2016a), "Report - National Service", Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) - Translation provided by UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3382/1/3382_1.pdf)
[352] EASO (2015) "EASO Country of Origin Information Report - Eritrea Country Focus", Drafted by State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), Division Analysis and Services, Switzerland (Available from: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/herkunftslaender/afrika/eri/ERI-ber-easo-e.pdf)

paper contains references to 12 different groups of anonymous sources (not possible to determine how many actual individuals) and about 250 referenced written sources.

The report is written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012) which deals with methodological standards of neutrality, validity, etc. and presents a handbook for how to go about producing COI reports.

Issues: The authors recognize that access to valid and reliable country of origin information about Eritrea in general, and the HR situation in the country in particular, is difficult. This is, the report states, due to a lack of access for HR monitors, restricted options for researchers, and the lack of a free press. The government does not release information on sensitive topics such as the national service. As such many sources, including those that make up the foundation of this report, have to rely on sources outside Eritrea (refugees, journalists, political activists, exiles, diplomats and international aid workers formerly stationed in Eritrea, academics, and representatives of international organization). There is a serious lack of access to comprehensive first-hand information. The EASO relies on a broad range of sources in an attempt to avoid issues such as round-tripping and false confirmation of information (see assessment of Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Report - National Service). The report does not present the methodology uses in the collection of data through interviews making the assessment of their validity difficult. The report is also somewhat less explicit about the validity and reliability assigned to various sources and the implication this may have on degree of certainty to a given claim made.

UK Home Office (2016) Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service[353]

The states purpose of this fact-finding mission was to gather accurate and up-to-date information from a range of sources about the national service, healthcare, and migration to and from Eritrea for use in the asylum decision making process. The mission was also conducted in order to determine the validity and accuracy of information obtained from sources outside Eritrea (cross-checking existing information). The team behind the report met more than 130 people and 31 of these are referenced as sources in the report (these include government officials, diplomats, UN representatives, returnees, and a series of anonymous respondents).

Issues: the authors recognize that time constraints and other factors have had an impact on the comprehensiveness of the findings. Respondents were given the option to make amendments to interview notes (thereby improving validity) and to specify how they would like to be referenced (not all interviewees are therefore anonymized, although many are). The inclusion of government representatives and state-sponsored civic groups strengthens the paper as these individuals are ignored by a substantial number of reports and articles. The authors have also apparently taken considerable care in presenting their own observations as well as the account of respondents in a highly descriptive manner.

Although it may be beyond the scope of a fact-finding mission it could have been strengthened if a more comprehensive assessment of the truthfulness of the considerably varying accounts presented had been conducted. As the identity of some respondents is explicit the reliability of some of the data is somewhat better than in many other reports. There are, as it nearly always is with qualitative case studies, issues with the external validity of some of the findings.

[353] UK Home Office (2016a), "Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Eritrea: Illegal exit and national service" (Available from: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57e2ae464.html)

Landinfo -Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Query Response - Eritrea: Reaction towards returned asylum seekers [354]

This Query Response seeks to answer two questions: i) How do Eritrean authorities perceive an application for asylum in itself; and ii) Has an application for asylum in itself led to reactions from Eritrean authorities? The report is partly based on information gathered during Landinfo's fact finding mission in Eritrea January and February 2016, and refers to 14 "oral sources" and 21 "written sources". There is very little empirical data on the topic, and it is very difficult to find reliable and verifiable information on which reactions returned asylum seekers are exposed to upon return. Most Eritrean asylum seekers have left the country without exit visas and the majority have deserted from or evaded national service. It is nearly impossible to determine if reactions against deported persons or persons who voluntarily returned is the result of illegal exits and/or dissertation or evasion from national service, or if it is a response to the action of applying for asylum in and of itself.

Issues: due to fears of reprisals in different forms Landinfo has anonymized a number of its sources inside Eritrea making reliability and, to a certain extent, validity problematic. The overall lack of evidence on this issue can, potentially, be interpreted either way and does present a considerable challenge. The paper does also to some extent disregard the findings of Amnesty International based on testimonies they gathered from Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers in African and European countries. While such testimonies are methodologically challenging they could arguably have provided additional insight on this issue.

Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre (2016) Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetilatelse og ulovlig utreise (Issuance of exit visas and illegal exits)[355]

This report, based on 20 "oral sources" (gathered inside Eritrea as well as in Ethiopia and including Government officials, embassy staff, and regular Eritreans) and 20 "written sources", seeks to answer the following questions: i) conditions for receiving exit visas; ii) who receives exit visas; ii) conditions that may exclude person from receiving exit visas; and iv) reactions to illegal exits. Landinfo expresses the perception that the Eritrean government considers the circumstances of the migration, eligibility for national service, political activity in exile, social networks in Eritrea, and payment of the 2% tax when determining responses to returned illegal immigrants. By signing the letter of apology, payment of the 2% tax and minimize participation in critique of the government individuals may be less exposed to reactions from the government compared to others. Contacts within the state apparatus are also likely an advantage.

Issues: there seems to be a serious lack of valid sources on this topic and as such Landinfo struggles to reach a conclusion and remains very cautious in making its claims. A greater reliance on interviews with Eritreans outside the country could potentially have resulted in more information, although we recognize that the use of such data is fraught with methodological challenges as well. The issues of reliability, validity and generalizability are similar to other qualitative case studies.

[354] Landinfo (2016c) "Query Response - Eritrea: Reaction towards returned asylum seekers", Country of Origin Information Centre (Norway) – Translation Provided by the UK Home Office (Available from: http://www.landinfo.no/asset/3383/1/3383_1.pdf)
[355] Landinfo (2016b) "Respons - Eritrea: Utstedelse av utreisetillatelse og ulovlig utreise" (Available from: http://landinfo.no/asset/3423/1/3423_1.pdf)

Migrasjonsverket - Migrasjonsverkets rätts- och landinformastionssystem (2015) Landrapport Eritrea[356]

This report, based on 8 anonymized interviews (including three "diplomatic sources"), the accounts of Mr. Kibreab Gaim in addition to 36 written sources, presents a general overview of themes and issues that are of relevance in making decisions in asylum application cases. Initially, the report provides a brief overview of the situation in Eritrea. Subsequently, more detailed information on issues central to asylum examination is presented. In some areas, the available country of origin information is not unambiguous. The report covers the Eritrean National Service, the People's Army militia, illegal exits, forced returns, and rejected asylum seekers. It also discusses possible punishment related to these topics. In its final section, the report sheds more light on human rights violations and war crimes.

The report recognizes several severe methodological challenges in doing research on a number of sensitive issues in Eritrea. It is generally difficult to find updated and valid information regarding the human rights situation and other sensitive topics in Eritrea and the government does not share this information and international human rights organizations are prohibited from entering. Reporting on these topics is therefore in many instances largely derived from sources outside Eritrea which is associated with a number of methodological issues. Some well-established and commonly used sources, including the US State Department, HRW and Amnesty International do not always make their sources explicit making it difficult to assess the validity of their findings. The data used in reports that do contain information from inside of Eritrea tends to consist of anecdotal information from representatives of the international community in Asmara and statements by government representatives.

Issues: Lifos has attempted to use broad a range of sources as possible to avoid some of the methodological issues associated with research on Eritrea (such as round-tripping and false confirmations). They refer for instance to older data that still can be considered reliable. What data this is and how it was determined that these still remain reliable is not, as far as we can see, made explicit however. The number of sources (9 interviews and 36 written sources) is, even following a strict assessment of the validity and reliability of (written) sources, relatively small and the report could have benefitted from a larger number of sources (the validity and reliability of the interviews are apparently not assessed to the same extent). Lifos has, to its credit, moderated its claims in certain passages of the paper to reflect the limitations of valid data (or the limited availability of data altogether).

11.3.3 Conclusions supported only to a small degree

UK Home Office (2016) Country Policy and Information Note - Eritrea: National Service and Illegal Exit[357]

This report, based on an unspecified number of sources (248 footnotes although the same document may be referenced in different sections), presents short summaries of a broad number of topics such as national service, exemptions to national service, duration of national service, desertion, punishment for illegal migration, treatment on return to Eritrea, etc.

[356] Migrasjonsverket (2015)," Landrapport Eritrea", LIFOS - Migrasjonsverkets rätts- och landinformastionssystem (Available from: http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=36406)
[357] UK Home Office (2016b) "Country Policy and Information Note - Eritrea: National Service and Illegal Exit" (Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/563974/CPIN_-_Eritrea_-_NS_and_Illegal_Exit_-_October_2016.pdf)

Issues: The various topics vary considerably in how well they are referenced. Sources include EU and other western country COI and other documents, NGO reports (including Amnesty International and HRW), academic researchers, the US state department, and various UN agencies to mention a few. The report presents an updated synthesis made up of other sources and does not, as far as we can tell, present its own explicit methodology. The report presents no apparent selection method for its sources and no assessment of their validity or reliability is made explicit. This makes it difficult to determine the validity of the paper itself and as such to determine the degree to which the data supports the conclusions made.

12 Appendix 3 – Data collection and descriptive statistics

12.1 Introduction

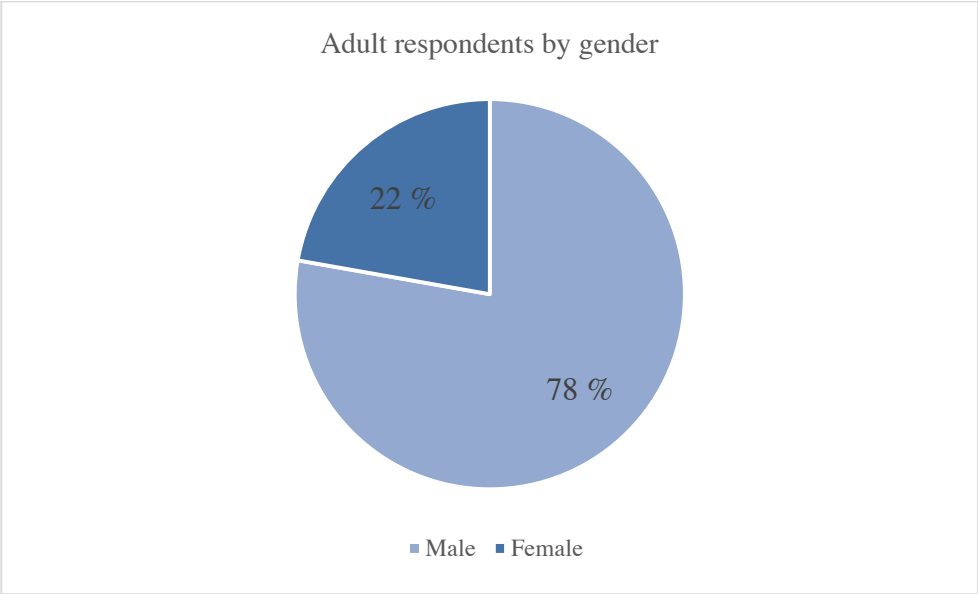
In preparation for this study we conducted interviews with Eritreans in refugee camps in Ethiopia. Due to the limited time and resources for this study we chose an interview structure which combined questions with pre-determined replies as well as open-ended questions. This structure was chosen in an attempt to preserve some of the insight that open-ended questions enable while at the same time ensuring that a substantial amount of data would be easily comparable. A relatively structured interview framework also ensured that the duration of each interview was limited to roughly 45 – 60 minutes, an advantage as we sought to get at least 120 adult respondents and at least 50 minor respondents.

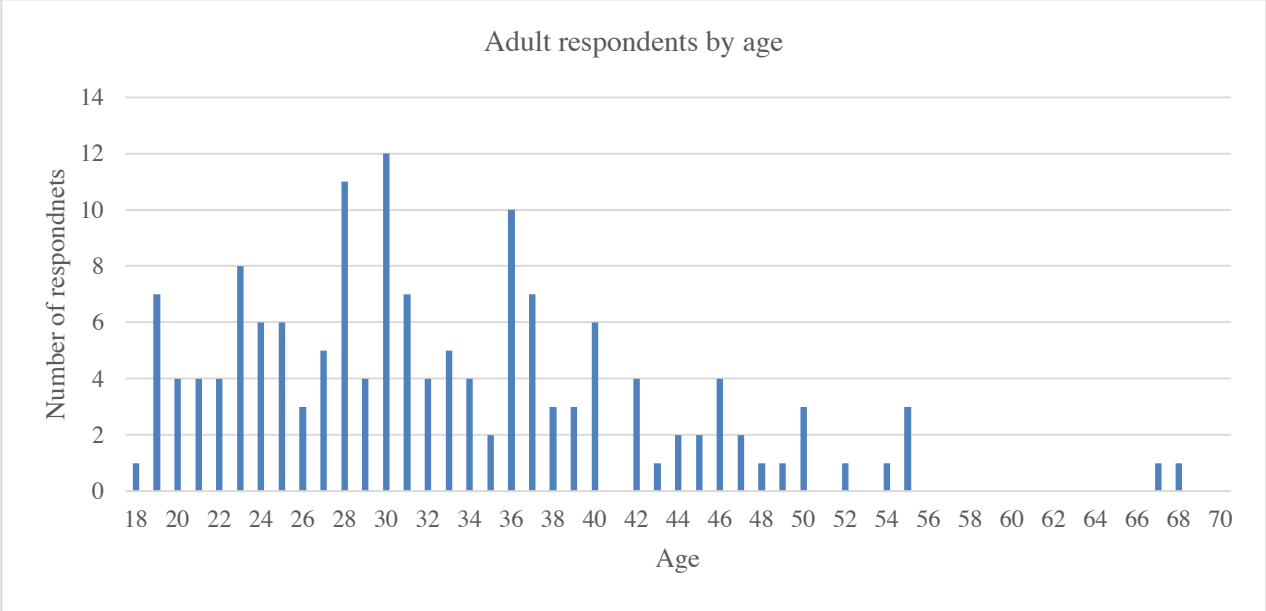
A local researcher conducted on the ground research in Adi Harush, Hitsat, May Ayni and Shimbela refugee camps in Tigray, Ethiopia, on behalf of ILPI. He engaged in the collection of data from the October 10th to November 15th 2016. The data collection process was somewhat delayed due to a combination of challenging weather conditions and the political unrest in Ethiopia in the research period.

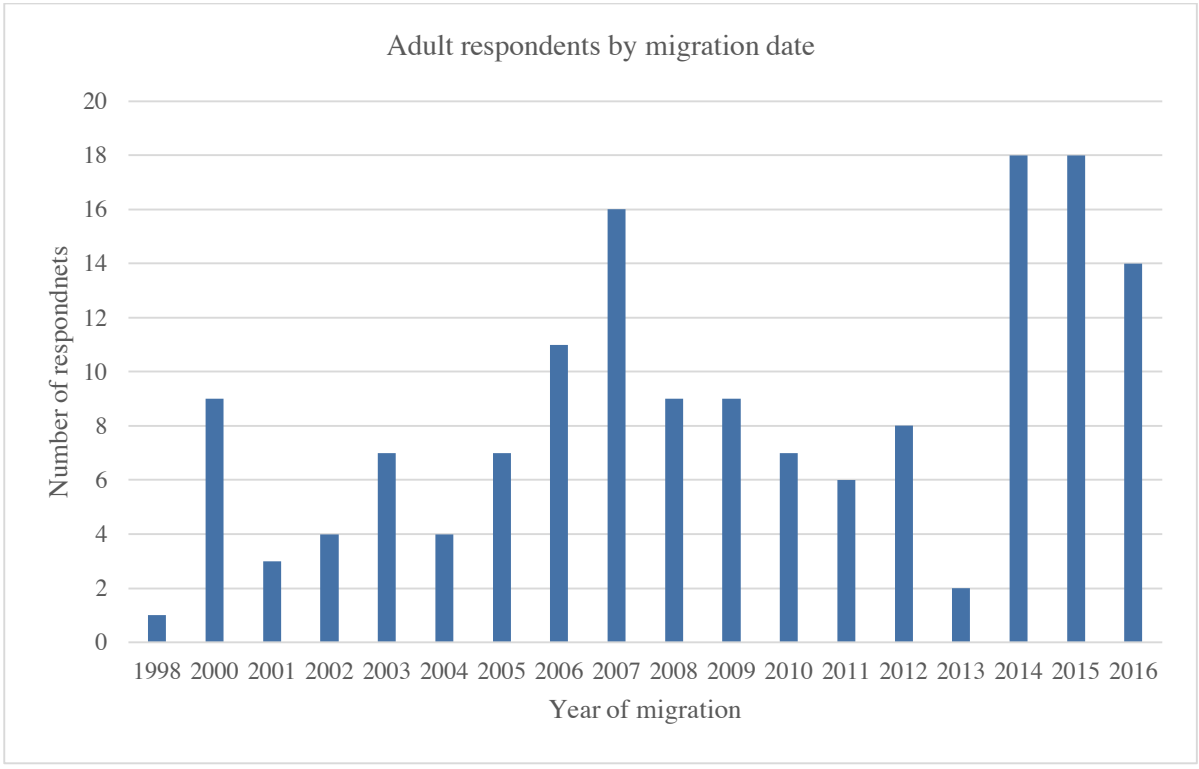
12.2 Description of the samples

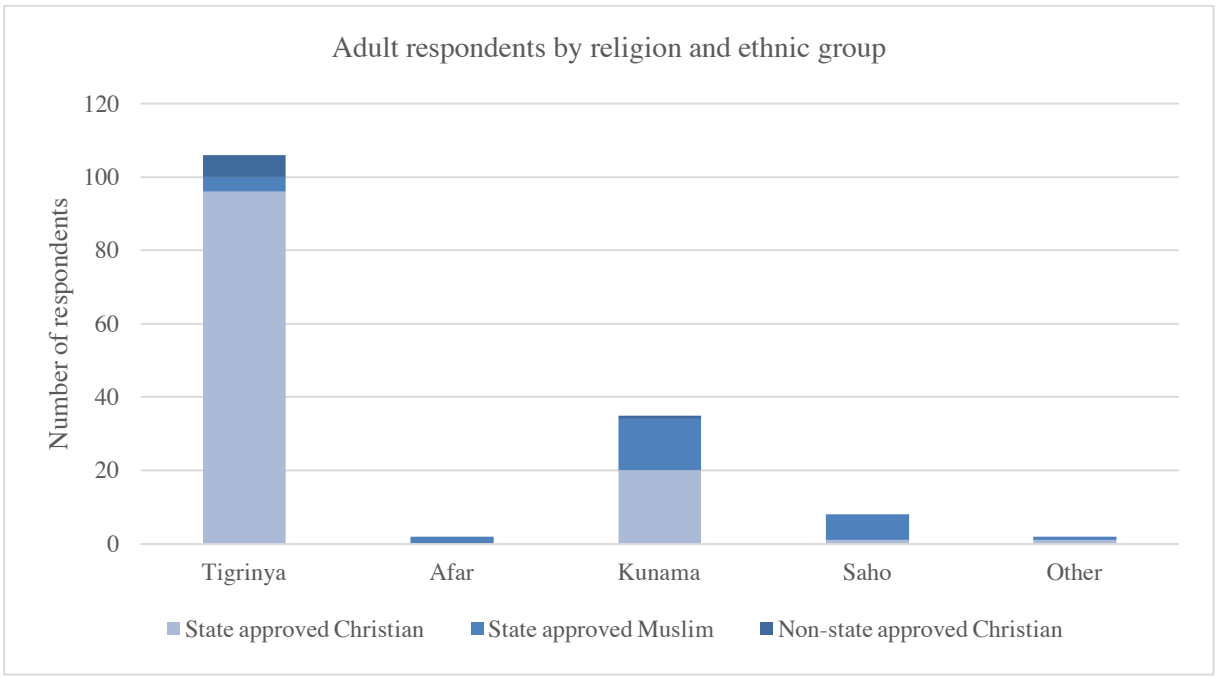
12.2.1 Adult sample

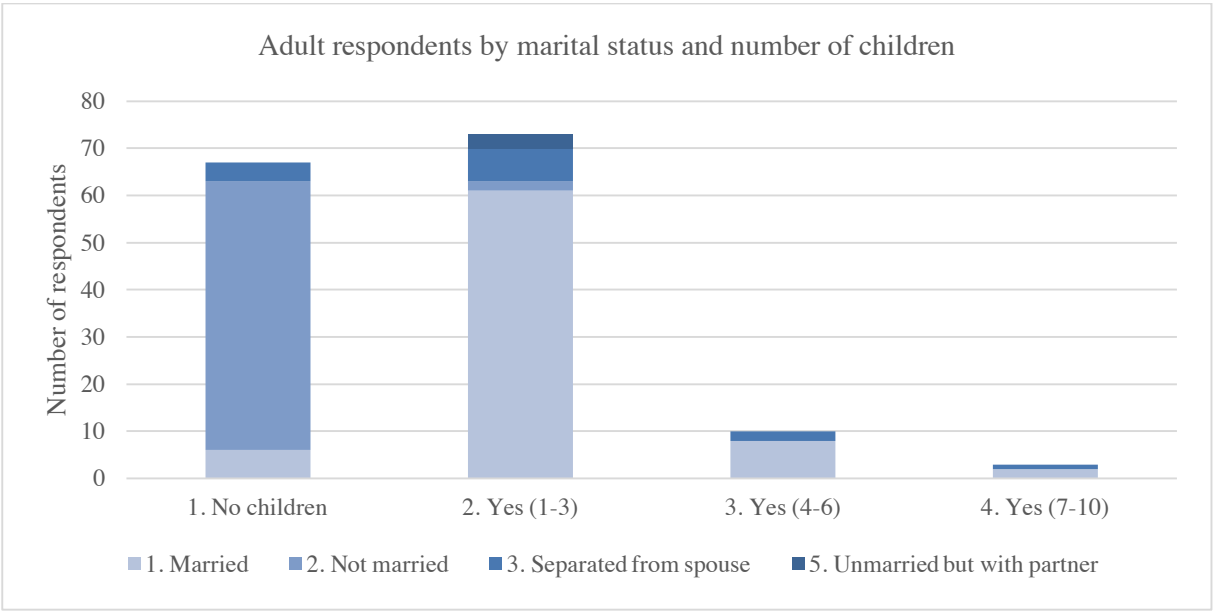
The data collected by ILPI in connection with this report includes the responses by 153 adults (119 male and 34 female respondents) between the ages of 18 and 68 (average age of 15,98) who left Eritrea between 1998 and 2016. We would have liked to ensure a higher degree of female responses but were unable to do so. This challenge could perhaps have been overcome if we had more time and resources available to establish our presence in each camp. Most adult respondents were Tigrinya speaking and adhere to government approved Christian faiths (mostly Orthodox) although there were a number of other ethnicities and faiths represented in the sample as well. While many of the respondents are young and unmarried more than half are married and report to have one or more children. Educational level varies through the sample although the clear majority report to have achieved either partial primary or partial secondary education. See the figures below for a more comprehensive overview of the composition of adult respondents.

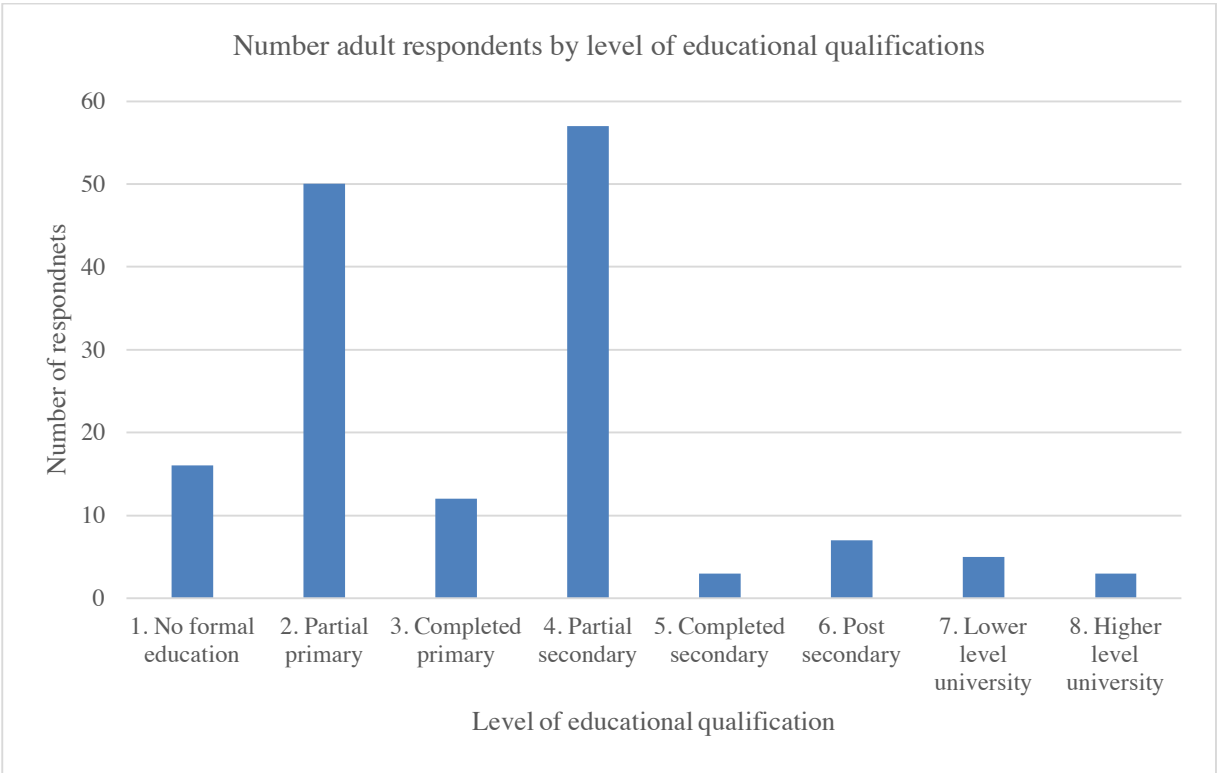

Adult respondents by gender
22 %
78 %
Male
Female


Adult respondents by age
Number of respondnets
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56 58 60 62 64 66 68 70
Age


Adult respondents by migration date
Number of respondnets
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16
18
20
1998
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
Year of migration

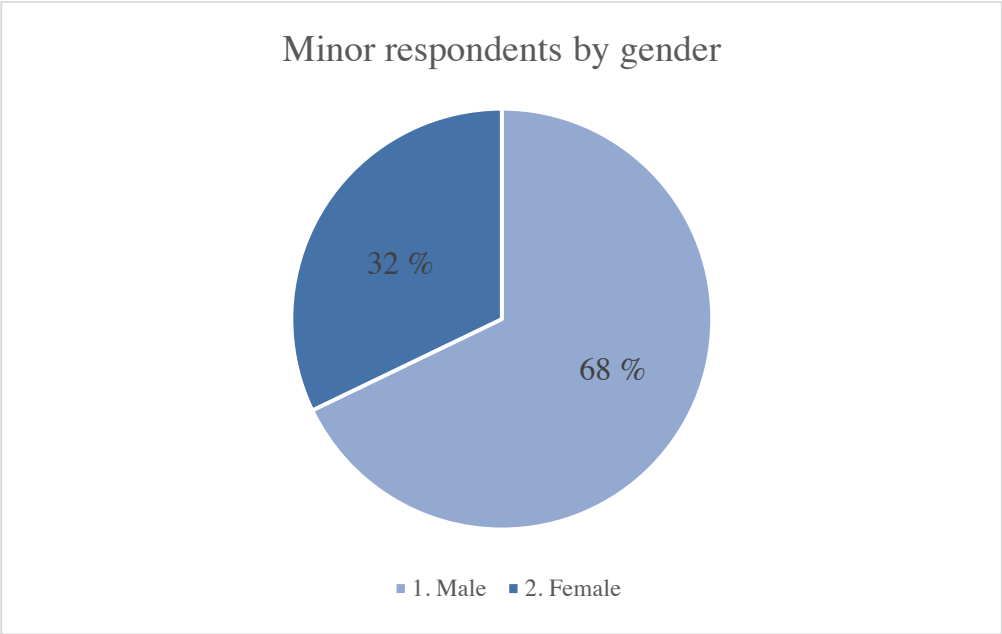

Adult respondents by religion and ethnic group
Number of respondents
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
Tigrinya
Afar
Kunama
Saho
Other
State approved Christian
State approved Muslim
Non-state approved Christian

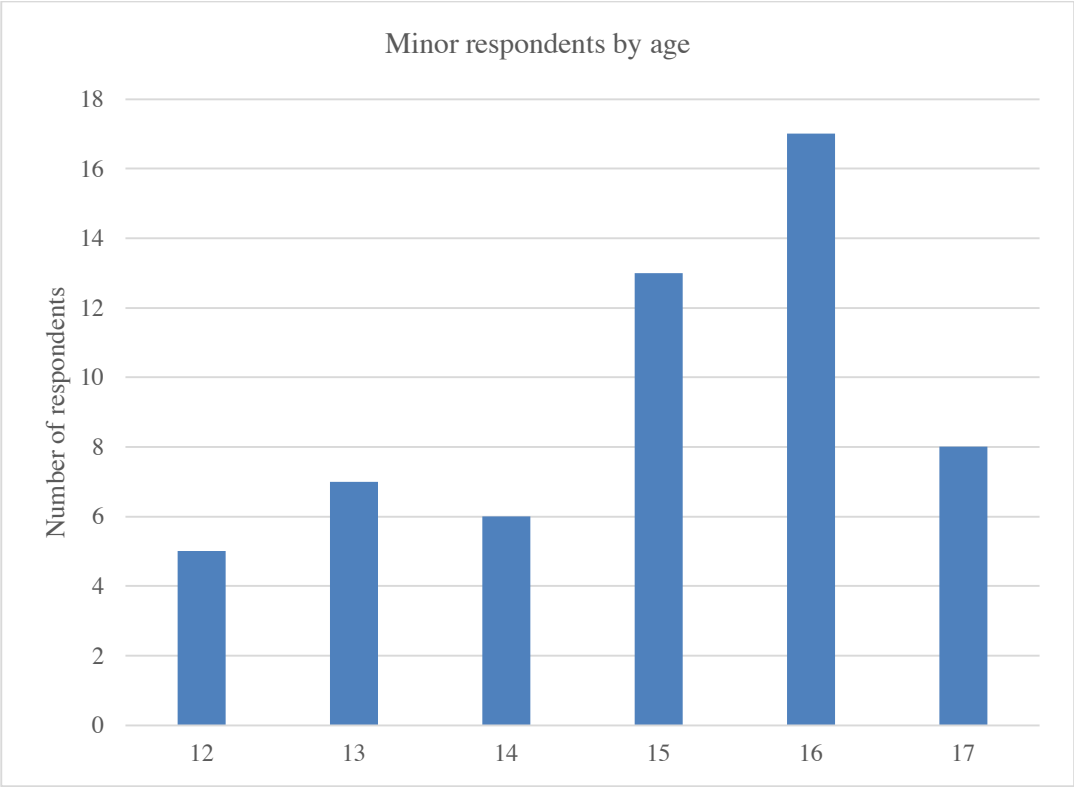

Adult respondents by marital status and number of children
Number of respondents
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1. No children
2. Yes (1-3)
3. Yes (4-6)
4. Yes (7-10)
1. Married
2. Not married
3. Separated from spouse
5. Unmarried but with partner

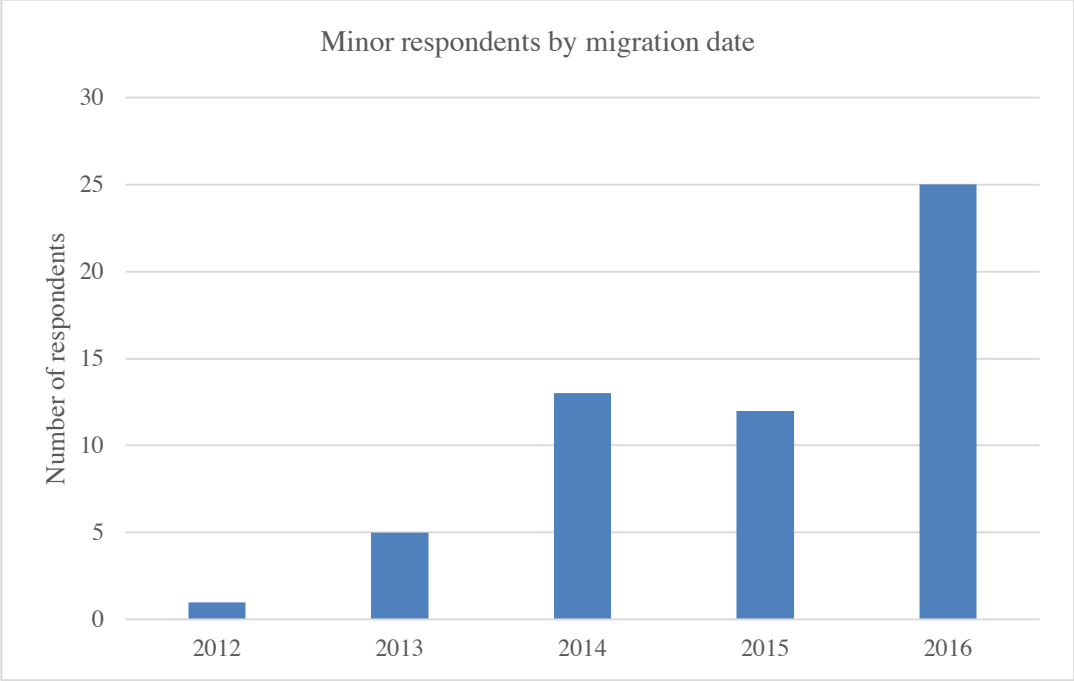

Number adult respondents by level of educational qualifications
Number of respondnets
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1. No formal education
2. Partial primary
3. Completed primary
4. Partial secondary
5. Completed secondary
6. Post secondary
7. Lower level university
8. Higher level university
Level of educational qualification

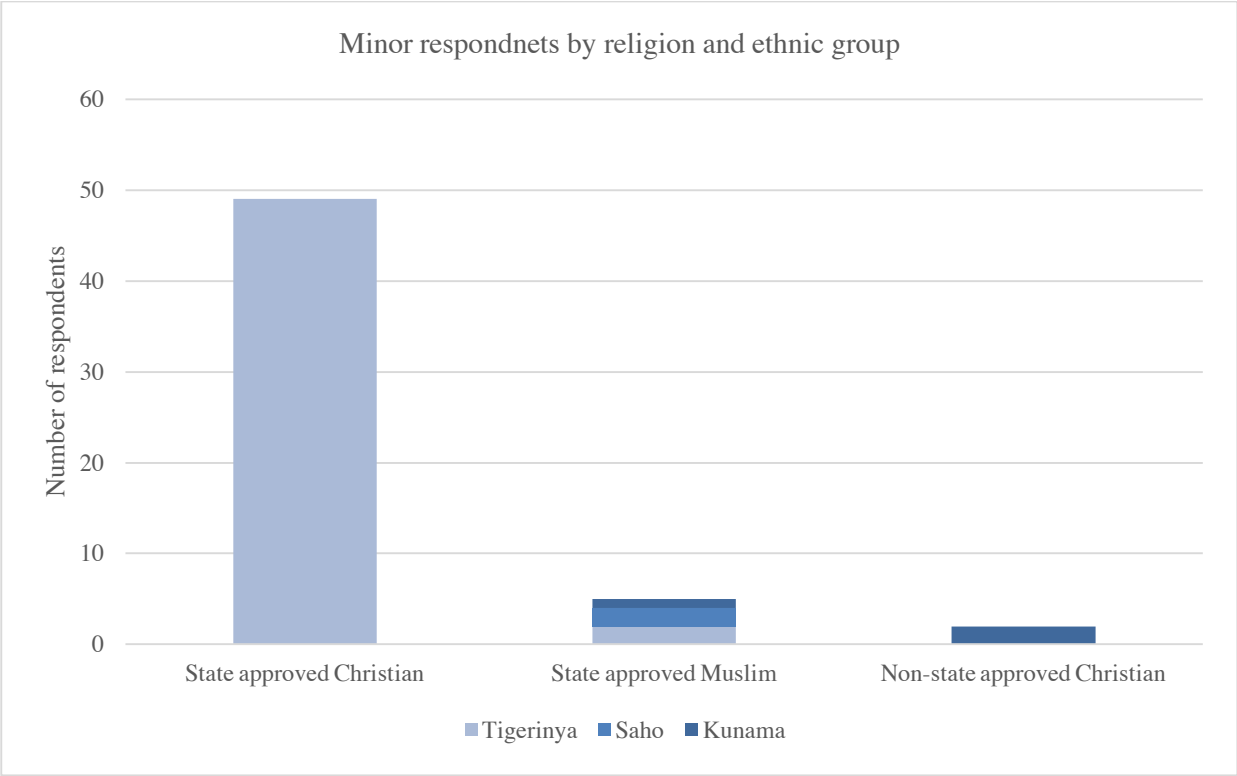
12.2.2 Minor sample

We also gathered responses from 56 minors (38 male and 18 female) between the ages of 12 and 17. They all migrated to Ethiopia between 2012 and 2016, with 66% migrating in 2015 or 2016. One of these minors reported to be living with older immediate family while the rest reported to be living with younger immediate family or with no family at all – they are in other words unaccompanied minors. All 56 minors reported to be attending school in the camps, and while they mostly report significant uncertainty of the future more than 75% report that their current economic situation is good or moderate. Except for 3 minors reporting to be Kunama and 2 reporting to be Saho, all other minors are Tigrinya-speaking. 87% of all minors in our sample are state approved Christians – the clear majority of which are Orthodox. See the figures below for a more comprehensive overview of the composition of minor respondents.




Minor respondents by age
Number of respondents
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
12
13
14
15
16
17


Minor respondents by migration date
Number of respondents
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016


Minor respondnets by religion and ethnic group
Number of respondents
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
State approved Christian
State approved Muslim
Non-state approved Christian
Tigerinya
Saho
Kunama

13 Literature

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