



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



EUMAGINE
*Imagining Europe
from the Outside*

Migration aspirations in Senegal: Who wants to leave and why does it matter?

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding migration aspirations is important

International migration from Senegal is long-standing. Even so, the social, economic and political impacts of migration and transnationalism have intensified in recent decades. In addition to those who actually leave, millions of others have a wish to do so.

Understanding migration aspirations is important for two reasons. First, they are an essential part of migration dynamics. Even if most of the people who would like to migrate to another country never do so—because of restrictive policies or insufficient resources, for instance—large-scale migration pressure has consequences. It makes migration management more challenging, and it affects the migration experience for those who have the opportunity to go.

The second reason why migration aspirations are important is that they could affect resource allocation more broadly. It is a problem for society if families devote scarce resources to unsuccessful migration attempts. Similarly, it is a problem if willingness to invest locally is dampened by faint hopes of being able to emigrate.

Migration brings important benefits to Senegal

Alongside these potential negative consequences, it is important to stress that migration brings important benefits to Senegal. Remittances alleviate poverty and finance investments, and the mobility of people facilitates trade. The same entrepreneurial spirit that motivates people to migrate also drives local activity.

The wish to leave Senegal does not imply giving up on the country. On the contrary, migration is often seen as a temporary investment in bettering the lives of those who stay behind, or in ensuring a better future after returning to Senegal.

The research underlying this policy brief was conducted in four different areas

The research underlying this Policy Brief was conducted in four areas that represent a diversity of local contexts (Figure 1). They include a religious town and its rural hinterland (Darou Mousty), an agricultural area in the heart of the Peanut Basin (Lambaye), a middle-class suburb of the capital Dakar (Golf Sud), and a remote rural area on the border with Mauritania (Orkadière).

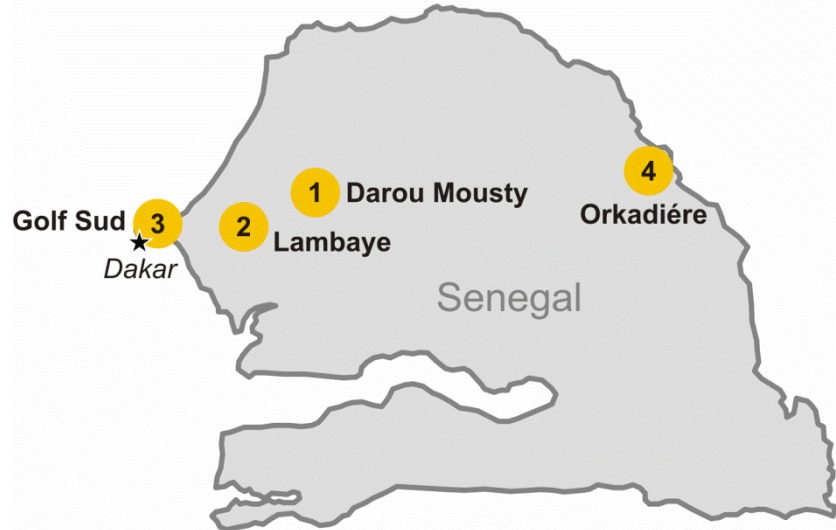


Figure 1. Research areas in Senegal

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Migration aspirations are high in all areas

A large-scale survey in four different areas of Senegal showed that the majority of young adults wish to emigrate within the next five years. The survey covered a random sample of 500 people aged 18–39 in each research area.

To measure migration aspirations, respondents were asked ‘ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go abroad to live or work some time during the next five years, or would you prefer staying in Senegal?’ The proportion of people who would prefer to emigrate ranged from 64 per cent to 82 per cent (Table 1). In all the research areas, the vast majority of those who wish to emigrate have Europe as their preferred destination.

The highest prevalence of migration aspirations is found in Orkadière. This is a remote area, but also well-connected to the outside world through a long-standing tradition of emigration to other African countries and France.

Table 1. Migration aspirations by research area, percent

	Do not wish to emigrate	Wish to emigrate		Total
		To Europe	Elsewhere	
Darou Mousty	36	52	12	64
Lambaye	24	61	15	76
Golf Sud	26	53	20	74
Orkadière	18	68	13	82

Source: EUMAGINE Survey data. Complex weighting applied to reflect sampling design. N=2000.

Even people who do not wish to emigrate would go if the opportunity appeared

Migration aspirations are only slightly more widespread among men than among women

Emigration—especially to Europe—is widely known to be difficult. Since it is a sought-after opportunity, even people who are not particularly inclined to emigrate would seize the opportunity if it appeared. In fact, more than one third of the people who said they would prefer staying in Senegal said that they would go to Europe to live or work if they were offered the necessary papers to do so.

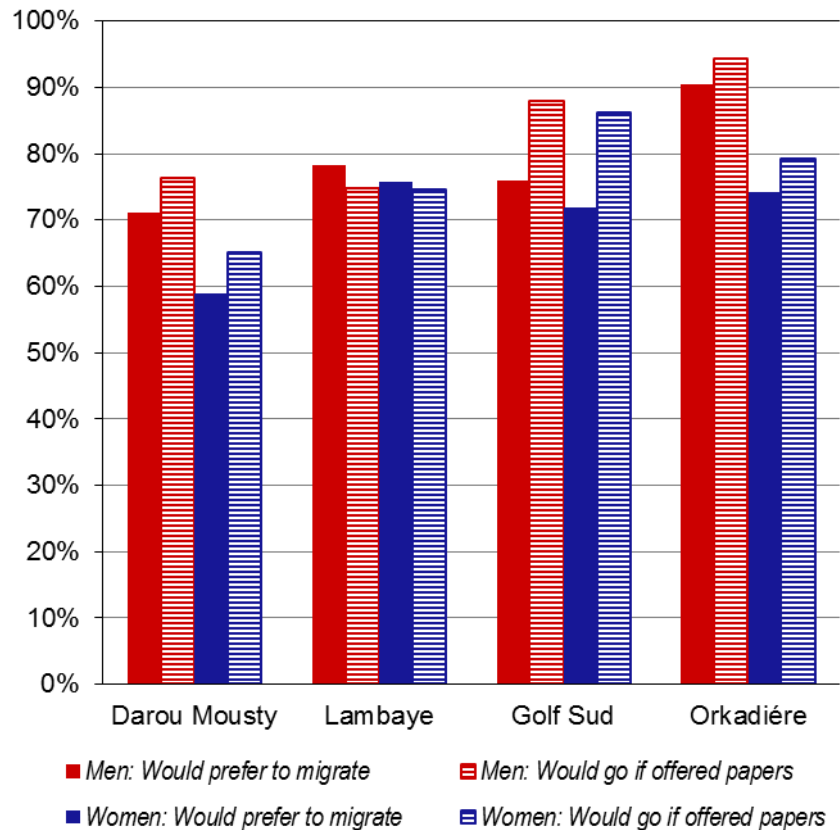


Figure 2. Migration aspirations, by research area and sex

Source: EUMAGINE Survey data. Complex weighting applied to reflect sampling design. N=2000.

Figure 2 shows migration aspirations by gender and research area, measured with two different survey questions. These statistics confirm that the overall level of migration aspirations is high.

Although actual migration from Senegal remains heavily male-dominated, migration aspirations are almost as widespread among women as among men. The gender difference is negligible in Golf Sud and Lambaye, and somewhat larger in Darou Mousty and Orkadière.

There are substantial gender differences in the prevalence of preparations for migration

It varies considerably to what extent migration aspirations lead to migration attempts and actual migration. With the EUMAGINE survey data, we can estimate the proportion of individuals who have taken steps to prepare for migration. Preparations include applying for a visa, applying for admission to a university, or actively seeking information about employment opportunities. Figure 3 shows the proportion of men and women in each research area who have taken such preparatory steps, as well as the proportion of passport holders.

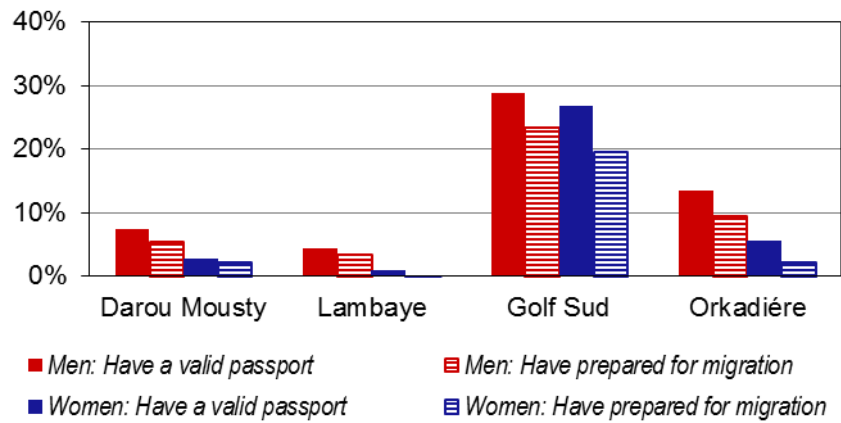


Figure 3. Migration preparations, by research area and sex

Source: EUMAGINE Survey data. Complex weighting applied to reflect sampling design. N=2000.

One in five persons in Golf Sud have taken steps to leave Senegal

Several points about Figure 3 merit attention. First, when we compare with Figure 2, it is evident that there is a large gap between aspirations and preparations. The majority of people who would like to emigrate have not obtained a passport or taken other preparatory measures.

Second, gender differences are much more pronounced with respect to preparations and passport ownership than with respect to migration aspiration. This does not hold true in Golf Sud, which is less socially conservative, but in the other research areas, men are roughly three times more likely than women to hold a valid passport.

Third, the difference between the research areas is much greater when we consider preparations and passport ownership, than what we saw with respect to migration aspirations.

Fourth, the prevalence of preparation for migration is remarkably high in Golf Sud, where roughly one in five persons have taken steps to leave the country.

The preference for different destinations varies greatly between the research areas

There are considerable differences between the regions in the preference for specific destinations (Figure 4). These differences broadly reflect the patterns of past migration and current transnational networks. The data come from a follow-up question in the survey, in which those who said they would like to emigrate were asked to which country they would prefer to go.

In Darou Mousty and Lambaye, Italy is the most desired destination, followed by Spain, France and North America. Golf Sud stands out with a greater diversity of preferences than any of the other research areas. No single destination appeals to more than a third of the prospective migrants, and European countries other than France, Italy and Spain are comparatively popular destinations. North America is a more widely preferred destination in Golf Sud than anywhere else.

In Orkadière, by contrast, France completely dominates the picture of preferred destinations, accounting for 80 per cent of the respondents who would like to emigrate.

Golf Sud is the area where preferences for migration destinations are most diverse

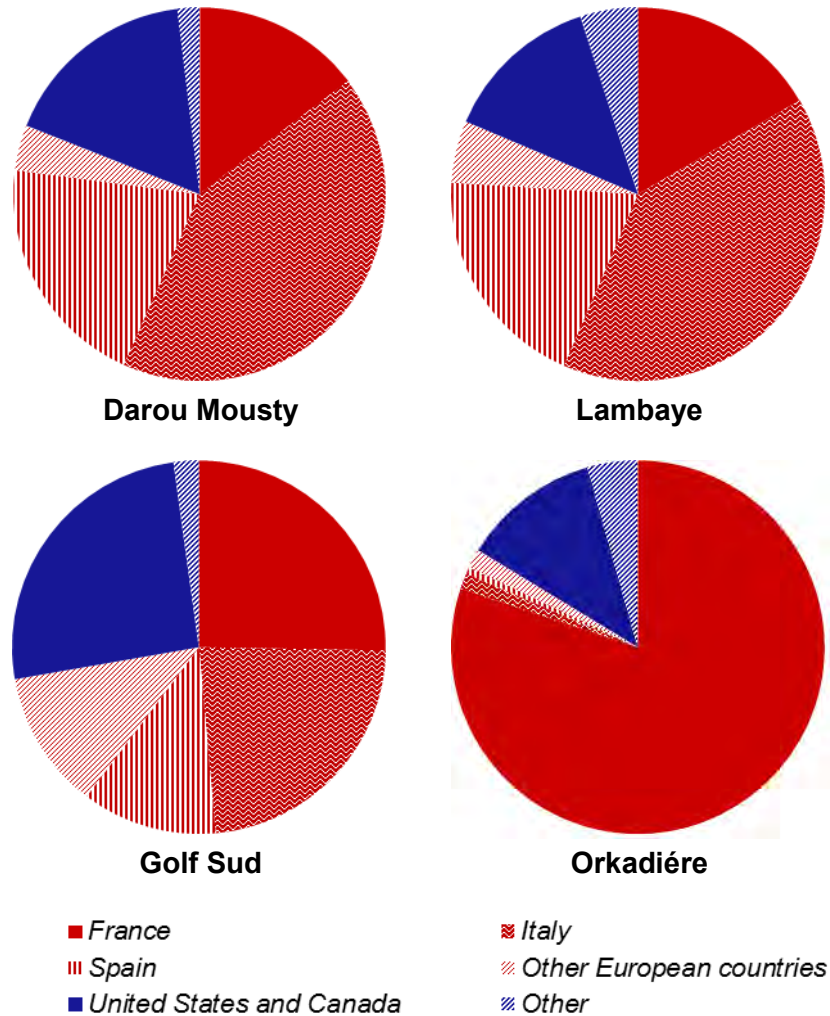


Figure 4. Preferred migration destinations, by research area

Source: EUMAGINE Survey data. Complex weighting applied to reflect sampling design.

The survey measured people's perceptions of Europe and of Senegal

The survey included a range of questions about perceptions of Europe and perceptions of Senegal. These questions addressed specific issues such as the quality of health care and education, corruption, safety from crime, and employment opportunities. Parallel questions were asked for Europe and for Senegal.

This information was used to construct summary measures of each person's perceptions of Europe and of Senegal. These summary measures, in turn, were combined to estimate the *relative* perceptions of Europe and Senegal. The largest group of respondents held a slightly more positive view of Europe than of Senegal, all things considered (Figure 5). The second-largest group had perceptions that were not more favourable in one direction or the other.

One would expect that people with a positive perception of Europe relative to Senegal would be more inclined to hold migration aspirations. Such a pattern is very faint in the data, and not a finding that emerges clearly.

Figure 5 shows how the prevalence of migration aspirations varies by people's relative perceptions of Senegal and Europe. The dashed lines indicate the 95 per cent confidence interval of the estimates.

The largest group of respondents held a slightly more positive view of Europe than of Senegal

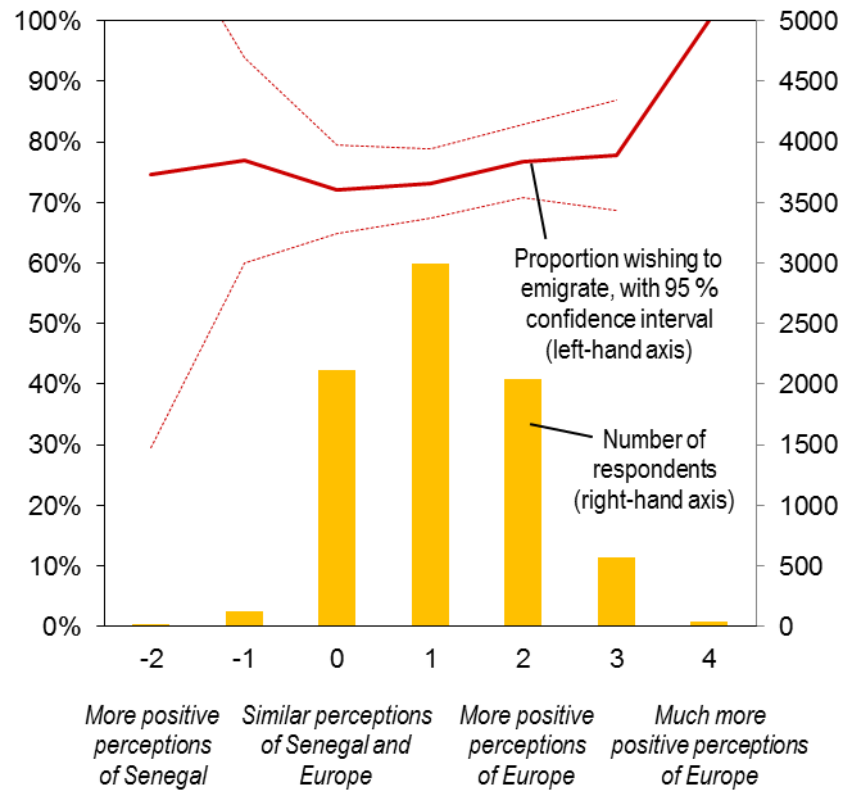


Figure 5. Migration aspirations by relative perceptions of Senegal and Europe, all research areas combined.

Source: EUMAGINE Survey data. Complex weighting applied to reflect sampling design. N=2000. Aspirations operationalized by means of the question *Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go abroad to live or work some time during the next five years, or would you prefer staying in Senegal?*

Relative perceptions of Senegal and Europe have no clear impact on migration aspirations

The right-hand end of the curve shows that *everyone* who had *much* more positive perceptions of Europe than of Senegal would like to emigrate. However, these were only nine respondents.

The other extreme—more positive perceptions of Senegal than of Europe—was also very rare. Consequently, there is great uncertainty about the result. This uncertainty is represented by the wide confidence interval in the graph.

In the middle-ranges of the figure, where respondents are numerous and the confidence interval narrow, migration aspirations vary very little. In each group, defined by relative perceptions of Senegal and Europe, around three quarters of the respondents would prefer to emigrate within the next five years, as opposed to staying in Senegal.

The curve does slope slightly upward, indicating that positive perceptions of Europe relative to Senegal are associated with somewhat higher prevalence of migration aspirations. However, this is so slight that it is within the statistical margin of error.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Different stakeholders may have conflicting interests

The research underlying this policy brief is not driven by specific policy objectives. However, it addresses issues that are high on several policy agendas. International migration is a contested policy area, so in discussing implications it is important to acknowledge that different stakeholders may legitimately have conflicting interests.

Several key objectives can be identified. European governments have an interest in ensuring that migration is effectively regulated in accordance with relevant policies, that actual migration benefits European labour markets and is in accordance with international humanitarian obligations, and that the costs of migration control are minimized.

The official policy of the Senegalese government is to maintain the current levels of emigration. It is also in Senegal's interest to maximize the development impacts of the migration that occurs. Senegal has a policy of encouraging the return of citizens.

Migrants and their families have an interest in making migration less restricted, less costly, and less dangerous

Migrants and their families may have interests that differ from those of governments. It is in their interest to make migration less restricted, less costly, and less dangerous. These objectives can be at odds with European efforts to regulate migration tightly.

The research presented here shows that migration from Senegal is strongly demand-driven. The supply of migrants greatly outweighs opportunities for migration. Not only do many people hold unfulfilled migration aspirations, but even people without migration aspirations would emigrate if they were given the opportunity.

Emigrants are a potentially valuable resource

Migration aspirations are not driven by a fundamentally and radically more positive view of Europe than of Senegal. The economic opportunities in Europe are admired, but so are other aspects of life in Senegal.

This finding implies that migrants will sustain strong transnational ties and often leave with the intention of return. Consequently, policies aimed at improving the lives of Senegalese in Europe can ultimately benefit the development process in Senegal. If migrants can earn a living in Europe and travel freely back and forth to Senegal, resources are likely to be channelled to their communities of origin.

Circular migration should be encouraged

Circular migration should be encouraged for the benefit of both Senegal and European countries. Such mobility can be promoted through specific programmes. In addition, it is likely that regularizing the status of currently undocumented Senegalese migrants in Europe will increase mobility and circulation and not necessarily promote permanent settlement in Europe.

Widespread migration aspirations can create challenges

Even if there are conflicting interests regarding the preferred level of migration, the current discrepancy between migration aspirations and migration opportunities represents a liability to all stakeholders. It increases the costs of migration management, and may shift resources away from local investments without producing other yields.

Since a massive expansion of migration is not realistic, governments should work together to address the problems to which people see migration as a solution. These are, most importantly, the obstacles to creating secure family livelihoods. Promoting merit-based hiring and thereby ensuring returns to education and prospects for social mobility can be important for reducing migration aspirations among the more highly educated.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

EUMAGINE seeks to understand why people want to migrate to Europe or not

Imagining Europe from the Outside (EUMAGINE) set out to understand why people in Europe's neighbouring regions may or may not want to migrate to Europe. The project paid particular attention to people's perceptions of human rights and democracy—both in Europe and in their own country.

Data collection was carried out in Senegal, Morocco, Turkey and Ukraine. Within each country, the project team selected four research areas to represent diverse socio-economic and migration contexts.

A detailed survey was conducted with 8000 people

Quantitative data collection consisted of a survey that was carried out with 500 respondents in each Research Area, yielding a project-wide total of 8000. Plans for random sampling were elaborated for each research area, depending on local conditions.

A detailed questionnaire was developed over a ten-month period, including extensive pilot testing in each research area. Questions covered household migration histories, individual migration aspirations, perceptions of human rights and democracy, and a range of other issues.

Qualitative interviews provided deeper insights

Qualitative data collection entailed in-depth interviews and observation. In each research area the team conducted twenty interviews. The qualitative material provided an opportunity to contextualize the quantitative results and understand more of the social processes behind statistical patterns.

The qualitative interviews also allowed for addressing the effects of the financial crisis in Europe, which unfolded while data collection was under way.

The interview transcripts and observation reports were analysed with a specialized software (NVivo) for analysis of qualitative data.

PROJECT IDENTITY

Coordinator	Prof. Christiane Timmerman (University of Antwerp, BE)
Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Antwerp, BE • University of Oxford, UK • Peace Research Institute Oslo, NO • Koç University, TR • Université Mohamed V – Agdal, MA • Centre of Sociological Research, UA • Université Cheikh Anta Diop, SN
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Website	www.eumagine.org
Further reading on the topic of this policy brief	<p>Carling, J; and Hernández-Carretero, M. (2011) Protecting Europe and Protecting Migrants? Strategies for Managing Unauthorised Migration from Africa. <i>British Journal of Politics & International Relations</i>, 13(1): 42-58.</p> <p>Diop M.C. ed. (2008) <i>Le Sénégal des migrations. Mobilités, identités et sociétés</i>. Paris: Karthala</p> <p>Fall, P.D.; Sarr, M.Y.; Carling, J.; Hernández-Carretero, M.; and Wu, J. (2012) Within-country analysis: Senegal. <i>EUMAGINE Project Paper</i> 12. Antwerp: University of Antwerp.</p> <p>Hernández-Carretero, M.; and Carling, J. (2012) Beyond "Kamikaze Migrants": Risk Taking in West African Boat Migration to Europe. <i>Human Organization</i>, 71(4): 407-416.</p>
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