



الباروميتر العربي  
ARAB BAROMETER

# Arab Barometer V

## Migration Report

2019

## Executive summary

Across the Middle East and North Africa, roughly one-in-three citizens are considering emigrating from their homeland. This level represents a dramatic increase since 2016, which ended a long-term decline in the percentage of citizens who considered migrating. For example, the percentage of Jordanians who want to migrate is 23-points higher than in 2016 while the increase among Moroccans is 17 points during the same period. Smaller but sizable increases have also taken place in other countries like Egypt (+10 points).

Citizens are more likely to want to leave if they are young, well educated and male. Youth are the more likely to want to leave, with more than half of those ages 18-29 thinking about migrating in five of 11 countries surveyed. Additionally, in most countries those with a higher level of education are also more disposed to move abroad, raising the specter of brain drain in many countries.

The predominate reason some Arab citizens seek to leave their homeland are economic reasons, reflecting a broader frustration of years of economic stagnation. Other commonly cited reasons include corruption, security concerns or to pursue educational opportunities. Notably, older potential migrants are more likely to cite economic factors as the primary reason behind their decision while younger potential migrants are more likely to name corruption, for example.

Europe is the most commonly cited destination for potential migrants, especially among those living in the Maghrib countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The next most commonly favored destination are Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, particularly among migrants from Egypt, Yemen and Sudan. Meanwhile, Jordanians and Lebanese are especially likely to favor the U.S. or Canada.

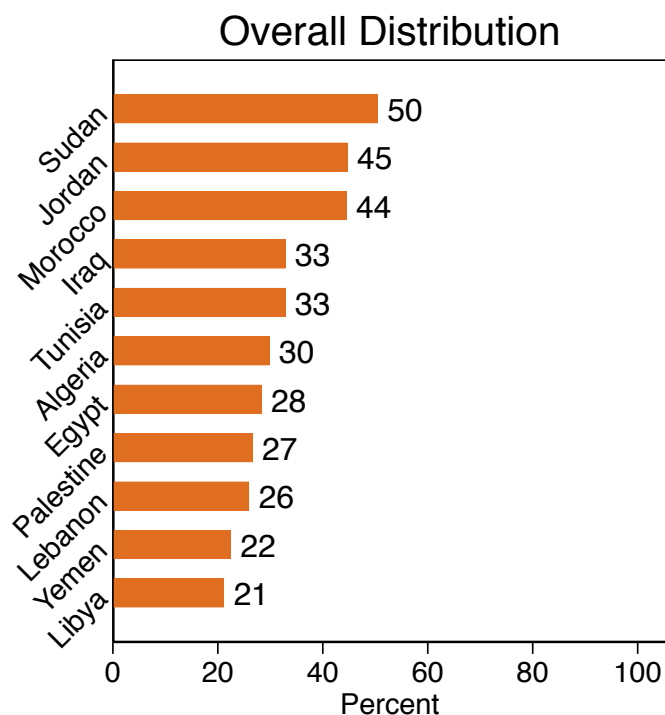
Although most potential migrants would only leave if they had the required papers, substantial percentages say they would consider migrating illegally, including roughly four-in-ten in six of 11 countries surveyed. Those who would consider migrating illegally are more likely to be young, male, and have lower levels of education, likely reflecting the limited opportunities these citizens perceive for a future in their homeland.

These are among the key findings from 11 nationally representative public opinion surveys conducted in across the Middle East and North Africa by the Arab Barometer in September 2018-May 2019. The surveys included more than 27,000 face-to-face interviews in the respondent's place of residence and each has a margin of error of  $\pm 2$  percent.

## Emigration

Desire to emigrate is high across the region, with at least one-in-five considering migrating in all countries surveyed. The desire to migrate is highest in Sudan, where half say they want to move abroad. More than four-in-ten say the same in Jordan (45 percent) and Morocco (44 percent). Substantial percentages also want to leave in Iraq (33 percent), Tunisia (33 percent), Algeria (30 percent), Egypt (28 percent), Palestine (27 percent) and Lebanon (26 percent). Notably, citizens in Yemen (22 percent) and Libya (21 percent) are the least likely to have considered emigrating, perhaps reflecting the challenges involved with leaving or transiting through war zones in their respective countries.

**Desire to Emigrate**  
*% saying they have considered emigrating.*



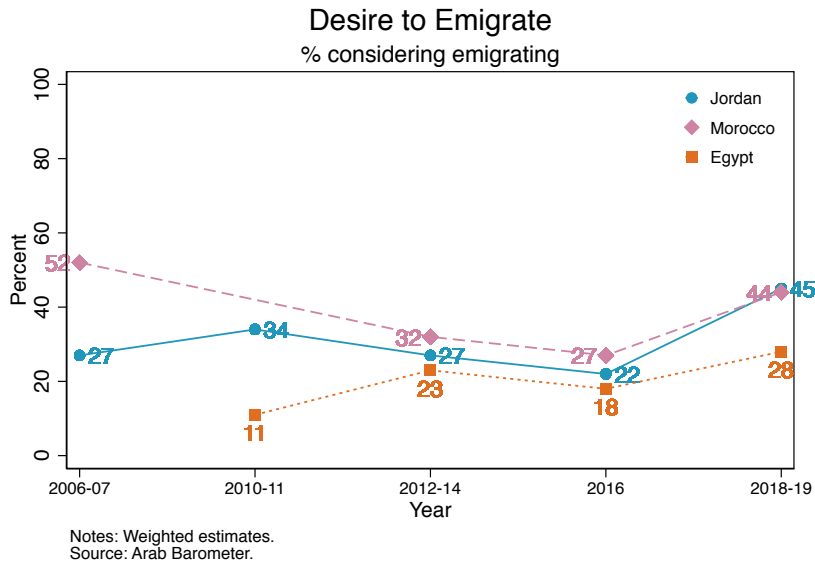
Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer V.

From 2006 to 2016, the percentage of citizens who considered migrating generally decreased. For example, in Algeria the percentage fell from 52 percent to 22 percent during this period, while the percentage in Lebanon declined from 51 percent to 30 percent during this same period.

Since 2016, however, the percentage considering emigrating has increased across the region as a whole. For example, in Jordan the percentage has increased by

23 points. Similarly, there have been significant increases in Morocco (17 points), Egypt (10 points), and Algeria (8 points), among others.

**Desire to Emigrate Over Time**  
 % saying they have considered emigrating.

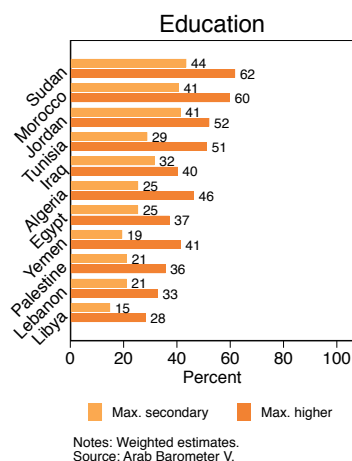
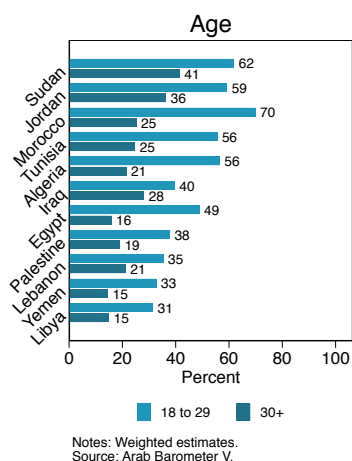


Youth are significantly more likely to want to leave their homeland than older generations in all countries. In fact, more than half of youth ages 18-29 want to migrate in Morocco (70 percent), Sudan (62 percent), Jordan (59 percent), Algeria (56 percent), and Tunisia (56 percent). Nowhere do more than roughly four-in-ten of those 30 and older want to leave. The gap between young and old is greatest in Morocco (+45 points), Egypt (+33 points), Jordan (+23 points), and Sudan (+21 points).

There is also a significant possibility for brain drain as those with higher levels of education are more likely to want to move abroad in all countries surveyed. Among those with university degrees, more than half want to migrate in Sudan (62 percent), Morocco (60 percent), Jordan (52 percent), and Tunisia (51 percent). The gap by level of education is highest in Tunisia (+22 points), Algeria (+21 points), Morocco (+19 points) and Sudan (+18 points).

## Desire to Emigrate

% saying they have considered emigrating.



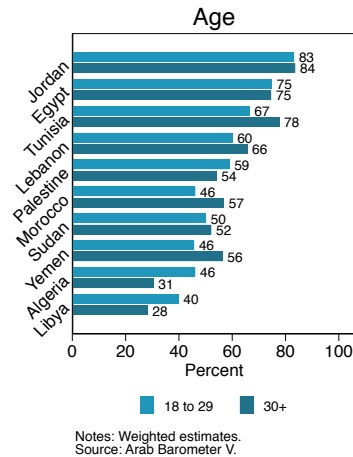
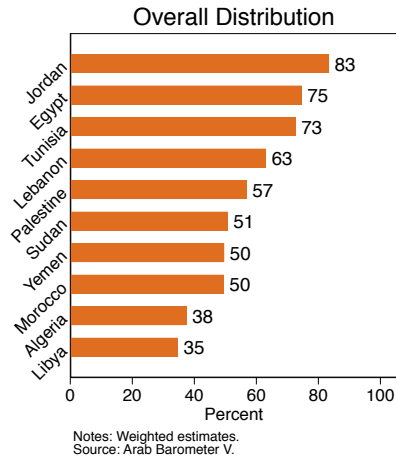
Men are also more likely to want to leave than women in all countries except Libya (-4 points). More than half of all men want to emigrate in Morocco (61 percent), Sudan (59 percent), and Jordan (53 percent). The difference by gender is greatest in Egypt (+38 points), Morocco (+33 points), Algeria (+25 points), and Tunisia (+21 points).

## Reasons for Emigrating

Among those who are considering emigrating, across the region the predominate reason is because of economic conditions. The next most commonly cited factor is corruption, followed by security concerns, political factors, and to pursue educational opportunities.

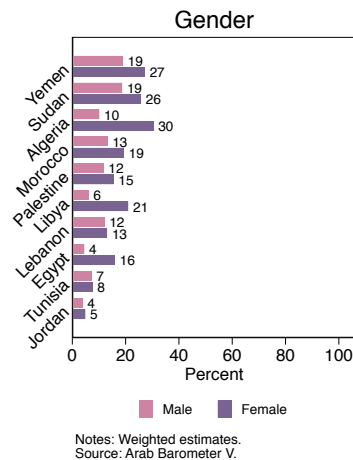
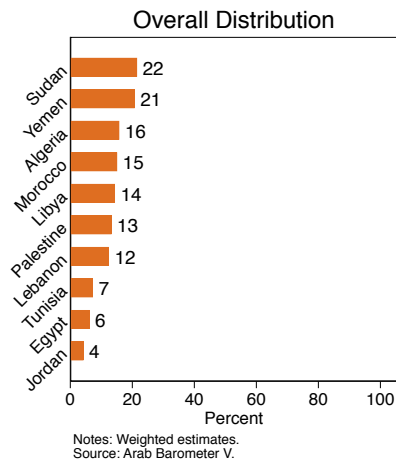
However, there is significant variation in the reasons for emigrating across country. For example, 83 percent of Jordanians say it is for economic reasons, as do 75 percent of Egyptians and 73 percent of Tunisians. By contrast, only 38 percent in Algeria and 35 percent in Libya say the same. Economic reasons drive potential migrants of all ages, while there is not a consistent pattern by education. However, economic factors are significantly more likely to motivate men to want to migrate than women. The gender gap is 30 points in Egypt, 27 points in Algeria and Morocco, 25 points in Yemen, 12 points in Sudan, and 9 points in Lebanon.

### Why Are You Considering Emigrating? % saying economic reasons.



Although the second most common factor across the region, many fewer cite corruption than economic conditions. However, substantial percentages of potential migrants do blame corruption in a number of countries, including Sudan (22 percent), Yemen (21 percent), Algeria (16 percent), and Morocco (15 percent).

### Why Are You Considering Emigrating? % saying corruption.



Notably, youth are more likely to blame corruption than older cohorts in all countries. For example, those ages 18-29 are more likely to cite corruption than those

who are 30 and older in Sudan (+19 points), Yemen (+19 points), Morocco (+19 points), Lebanon (+14 points), Tunisia (+10 points), Palestine (+10 points), and Libya (+8 points). Moreover, women are significantly more likely to say corruption than men, including by 20 points in Algeria, 15 points in Libya, 12 points in Egypt, 8 points in Yemen, and 7 points in Sudan.

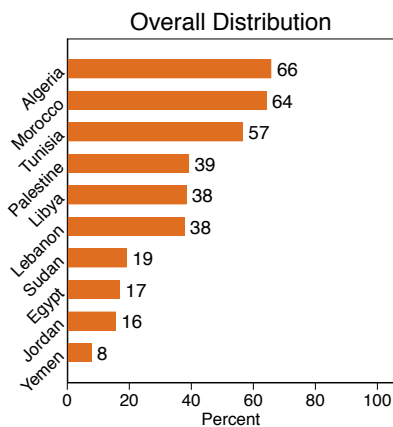
Additionally, those who are better educated are more likely to cite corruption than those who have lower levels of education, including in Libya (+17 points), Morocco (+14 points), Algeria (+12 points), Lebanon (+10 points), and Yemen (+10 points). Thus, although corruption is a less common cause than economic conditions, it is a significant factor pushing educated youth, particularly women, to want to leave their homeland.

## Destination Countries

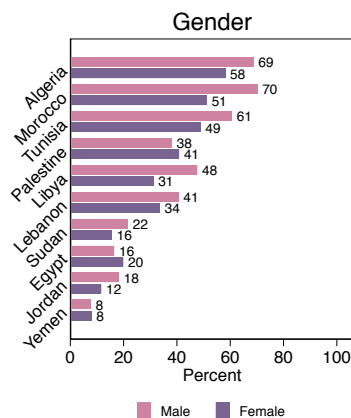
Across the region, the most commonly preferred destination is Europe, followed by a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country, the U.S. or Canada, and a non-GCC MENA country.

The desired destination of migrants varies significantly by sub-region within MENA. Those in the Maghrib are by far most likely to look to Europe. Roughly two-thirds of potential migrants from Algeria (66 percent) and Morocco (64 percent) prefer Europe, as do 57 percent of those in Tunisia. Meanwhile, roughly four-in-ten in Palestine (39 percent), Libya (38 percent) and Lebanon (38 percent) favor Europe. However, fewer than one-in-five do in other countries surveyed, including just 8 percent of those in Yemen.

### Where Are You Considering Emigrating? % saying Europe.



Notes: Weighted estimates.  
 Source: Arab Barometer V.

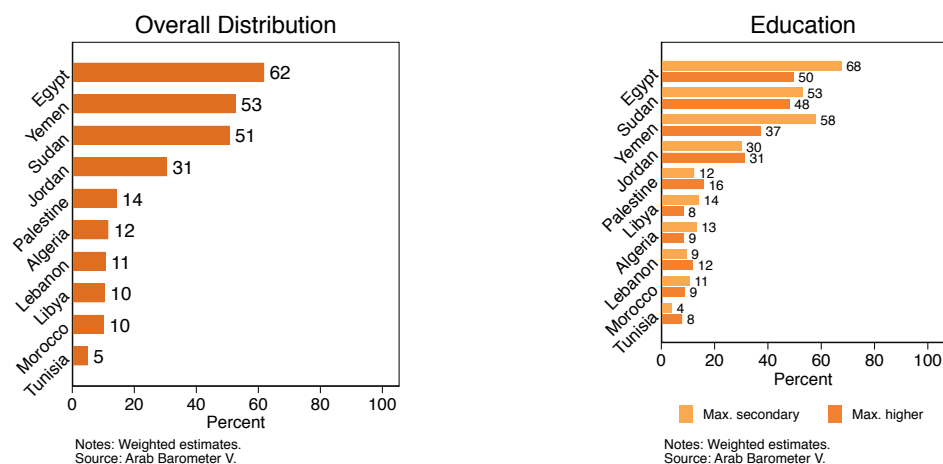


Notes: Weighted estimates.  
 Source: Arab Barometer V.

Notably, in Maghrib countries, men are significantly more likely to want to go to Europe than women, including by 19 points in Morocco, 12 points in Tunisia, and 11 points in Algeria.

Many potential Arab migrants want to go to the GCC, especially from countries that have historically been significant exporters of labor to the GCC. More than half of potential migrants from Egypt (62 percent), Yemen (53 percent) and Sudan (51 percent) want to go to the GCC, as do three-in-ten (31 percent) of those in Jordan. In most other countries, only about one-in-ten want to go to the GCC.

### Where Are You Considering Emigrating? % saying GCC.

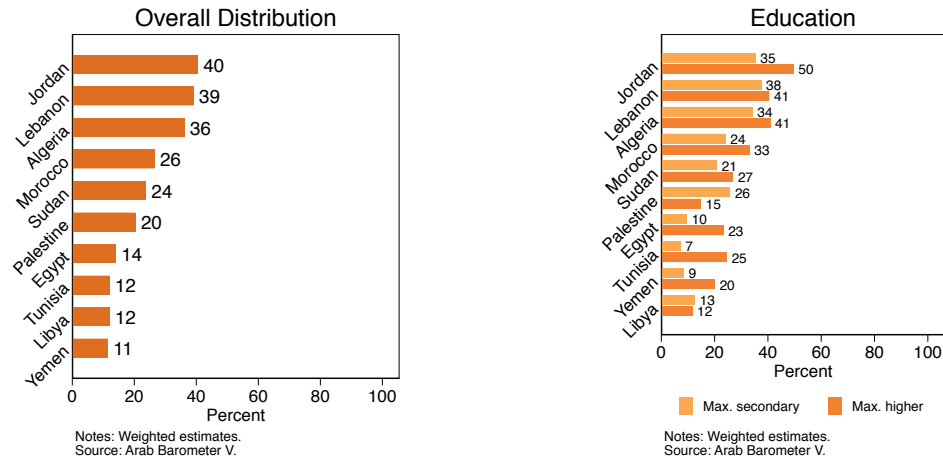


Among potential migrants, those who are older and have lower levels of education are especially likely to want to go to the GCC. Migrants 30 years and older prefer the GCC in Yemen (+13 points), Sudan (+12 points) and Egypt (+7 points), while those with lower levels of education favor the GCC by 21 points in Yemen, 18 points from Egypt, and 5 points in Sudan. These trends suggest that unlike Europe, migration to the GCC is driven by lower skilled migrants looking to send remittances back to their families.

There is no country where the majority of potential migrants want to go to the U.S. or Canada, although roughly four-in-ten do in Jordan and Lebanon while 36 percent do from Algeria. In other countries, roughly a quarter or fewer hope to move to North America. Those from Tunisia (12 percent), Libya (12 percent), and Yemen (11 percent) are the least likely to want to do so.



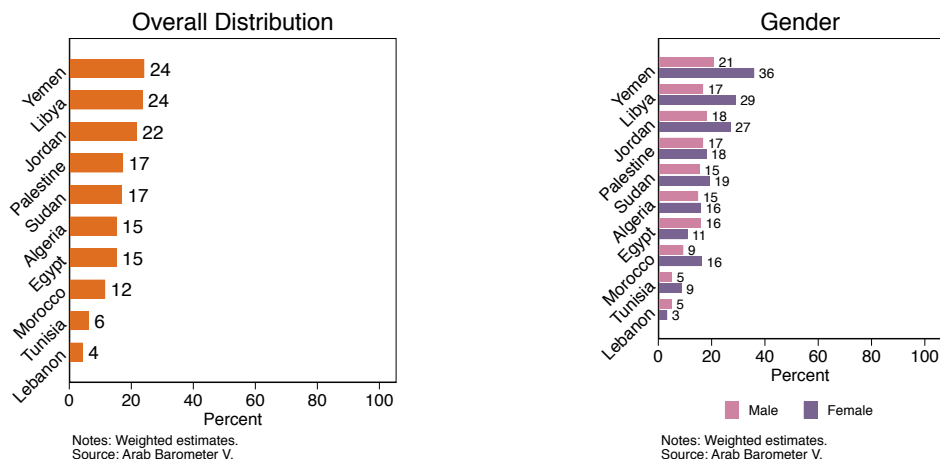
## Where Are You Considering Emigrating? % saying North America.



Notably, those with a higher level of education are more likely to look to North America. A gap between migrants who have a university degree and those who do not is found in Tunisia (+18 points), Jordan (+15 points), Egypt (+13 points), Yemen (+11 points), Morocco (+9 points), and Algeria (+7 points).

A comparatively small percentage of migrants are considering going to another MENA country outside the GCC. Roughly a quarter in Yemen and Libya (24 percent, respectively), hope to do so, perhaps reflecting the desperation to leave a conflict zone for a nearby country. Additionally, 22 percent in Jordan and 17 percent in Palestine and Sudan, respectively, want to go to a non-GCC country in MENA. However, in Tunisia and Lebanon, only 6 percent and 4 percent of potential migrants say the same.

## Where Are You Considering Emigrating? % saying non-GCC country in MENA.



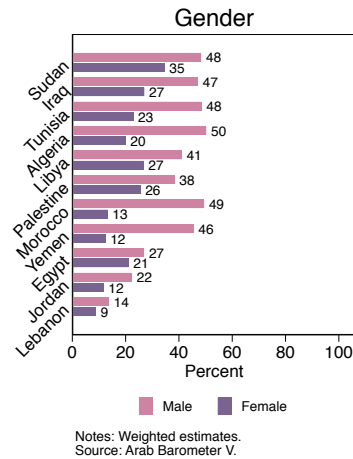
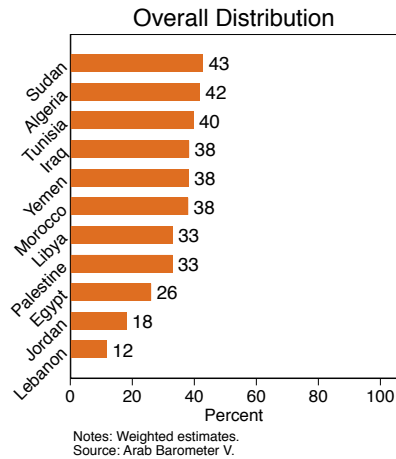
Notably, female migrants are generally more likely to want to move to a non-GCC country in MENA. The gap is 15 points in Yemen, 12 points in Libya, 9 points in Jordan, and seven points in Morocco.

## Illegal Migration

Potential migrants were asked if they would be willing to emigrate even if they lacked the necessary papers to allow them to do so. In no country do a majority of potential migrants say they would consider leaving illegally, however substantial minorities say they would consider doing so. Roughly four-in-ten potential migrants would do so in Sudan (43 percent), Algeria (42 percent), Tunisia (40 percent), Iraq, Yemen, and Morocco (38 percent, each). Meanwhile, a third in Libya and Palestine would consider doing so, compared with a quarter in Egypt (26 percent), 18 percent in Jordan, and 12 percent in Lebanon.

Men are far more likely to consider emigrating illegally compared with women. Significant gender gaps are found in all countries: Morocco (+36 points), Yemen (+34 points), Algeria (+30 points), Tunisia (+25 points), Iraq (+20 points), Libya (+14 points), Sudan (+13 points), Palestine (+12 points), Jordan (+10 points), Egypt (+6 points), and Lebanon (+5 points).

## Would you Consider Migrating without the Necessary Papers? % saying yes.



Potential migrants who are younger or who have lower levels of education are somewhat more likely to consider doing so illegally, although only in some countries across the region. For age, younger potential migrants are more likely to think about doing so without papers in Algeria (+31 points), Tunisia (+13 points), Iraq, (+12 points), Sudan (+9 points), and Libya (+9 points), but not in other countries. Similarly, less educated potential migrants are more likely consider illegal migration in Libya (+25 points), Tunisia (+21 points), Morocco (+16 points), Egypt (+13 points), and Algeria (+7 points), but not in other countries.



## About Arab Barometer

The Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insights into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world.

We have been conducting rigorous, and nationally representative face-to-face public opinion surveys on probability samples of the adult populations across the Arab world since 2006. The margin of error is  $\pm 3$  percent.

The Arab Barometer is the largest repository of publicly available data on the views of men and women in the MENA region. Our findings give a voice to the needs and concerns of Arab publics.



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