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The Effect of Time and Departure on Entry into Ghana for Citizens from Five ECOWAS Member States from 1997 to 2019

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Abstract

Migration among West Africans has both historical and contemporary relevance. The implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol was aimed at improving current mobility and migration trends in the sub-region. However, the majority of the existing literature on mobility, migration, and protocol evaluation focused on implementation and operationalization challenges. The current study assesses the effect of time and departure of citizens of member states such as Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Togo, on entry into Ghana from 1997 to 2019, using regression analysis. Results from the regression analysis reveal that both time (measured in years) and departure influence the entry of citizens from ECOWAS member states into Ghana. Specifically, it was shown that time influenced the entry of citizens from Côte d'Ivoire, Nigerian, and Burkina Faso into Ghana. Additionally, departure influenced the entry of citizens from Liberia and Togo into Ghana. Overall, the present results suggest that the time and departure of citizens from ECOWAS member states influence entry and hence affect the successful implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol and its success.

Keywords: *ECOWAS; Ghana, Migration; Departure; Arrival; Time*

Introduction

West Africa, a sub-region of Africa, has been known as a vibrant economic hub for the trading of goods and services (Adepoju, 2015; Yeboah et al., 2020). The sub-region of ECOWAS is currently made up of the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. According to ECOWAS, member countries share cultural and geopolitical ties and have a common economic interest (ECOWAS, 2020). The astronomical trading of goods and services within the region, coupled with other factors like political, colonial legacies, ethnic, social, and religious etc., accounts for the constant mobility of people within the region (Agyei & Clottey, 2007; Adepoju, 2015; Awumbila et al., 2018; Yeboah et al., 2020). According to the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) in 2018, 72% of migration and mobility within the ECOWAS region was from citizens of ECOWAS member states (UN-DESA, 2018). This evidence contradicts alternative arguments that suggest West Africans migrate to the Western world for greener pastures (Yeboah et al., 2020). Previous studies examining migration in the region contend that political and economic stability and instability are major factors influencing movement in the region (Awumbila et al., 2018; Yeboah et al., 2020).

Despite the successes achieved within the region with the movement of people, goods and services, there are still some challenges. A major challenge is the removal of country

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boundaries created by colonialism. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1979 adopted the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment – Protocol A/P.1/5/79 to help reduce the challenge created by borders and boundaries because of colonialism (Teye et al., 2015; Awumbila et al., 2018; Yeboah et al., 2020). The overall goal of the protocol was to establish a single regional socio-cultural and economic space to allow ECOWAS citizens to prosper by taking advantage of opportunities across the region. Several hypothesized benefits of such a region were identified with the major ones being the employment of experts, unrestricted access to natural resources by member states, access to coastal resources, access and utilization of arable land for food and crop production (Adeniran, 2012; Awumbila et al., 2018; Yeboah et al., 2020; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2021). Implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment in 1979 – Protocol A/P.1/5/79 was done using a phased approach or strategy. Phase one focused on a visa free ECOWAS, where citizens of member states can enter other member states without a visa for 90 days. Phase two focused on residency for citizens of member states in other states, and phase three focused on the establishment of citizens of member states in other states (ECOWAS Commission, 1982; Yeboah et al., 2020).

The existing literature on the protocol at all levels of implementation has largely focused on phase one because most member states have increasingly executed phase one over the years, hence the availability of data for research and evaluation purposes (Awumbila et al., 2018). Phases two and three have received little or no implementation from member states due to several challenges, likely conflict between state sovereign laws on immigration and naturalization and the ECOWAS protocol (Adepoju, 2002; Dick & Schraven, 2019; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2021). Alternative studies on the implementation and operational challenges of the ECOWAS protocol can be found in countless studies (Adepoju et al., 2010; Clark, 2014; Adepoju, 2015; Teye et al., 2015; Awumbila et al., 2018; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2021). Furthermore, no studies in recent times have assessed phase one using longitudinal data generated over time. Therefore, based on these existing gaps in the literature, this study seeks to examine phase one of the protocol using Ghana as a case study. To achieve the aim of this study, data on time, arrival, and departure of citizens from five ECOWAS member states – Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Togo to Ghana from 1997 to 2019 was accessed and analyzed. Using time-series regression analysis, this study seeks to augment existing knowledge on the ECOWAS free movement protocol. Specifically, this study examines the effect of time - measured in years and departure on the arrival or acceptance of citizens of other ECOWAS member states in Ghana.

Literature Review

An Overview of Migration Trends in West Africa

West Africans share common characteristics. The shared characteristics allowed for easy integration and mobility among them. Mobility and migration among West Africans can be attributed to population pressure, poverty, poor economic performance, and endemic conflicts. Historically, the sub-region is regarded as an economic hub where people freely moved, and goods and services were traded with ease (Onwuka, 1982; Nita, 2013; Teye, Awumbila & Nikoi, 2019). To fully comprehend contemporary migration within the region, it is important to provide a brief historical context for migration in the sub-region. Pre-

colonial migration in ECOWAS happened usually because of the search for security, new land for safe settlement and fertile land for farming. However, colonization altered the motivation and composition of migration in the sub-region by introducing and administering various blends of political, religious, social, and economic structures, imposing tax regimes, and establishing territorial boundaries. The implementation of these policies was geared towards stimulating regional labor migration to improve the region's overall economy. For example, many West Africans from Mali, Togo, and Upper Volta migrated to Ghana and Ivory Coast to work in construction, plantation, and the mines (Onwuka, 1982; Adepoju, 2000; Carling, 2002). Therefore, contemporary migration patterns in West Africa are rooted in socio-economic, political and 'histo-cultural' factors. Current forms of migration within the sub-region include temporary cross-border workers, female traders and farm laborers, professionals, clandestine workers, and refugees (Adepoju, Boulton& Levin, 2010; Aydemir, 2011; Castillejo, 2019). In the early 1970s, Nigeria experienced increased numbers of migrants from the sub-region because of the discovery of oil (Onwuka, 1982; Adepoju, 2000; Uzomah & Madu, 2020). This observation from Nigeria suggests that the discovery of natural resources or the possibility for an improved economy of a member state attracts citizens from other member states. Improvements in gender migration have led to a decrease in the large male migration phenomenon recorded previously to gradual growth in educated, single, female migration within the sub-region (Adepoju, 2000; Carling, 2002; Yusuff, 2014). Conclusively, various factors influence the migration and mobility of citizens of a member state to other member states in the region. However economic and security reasons continue to be the most dominant explanations.

The ECOWAS Free Movement of People Protocol

In May 1979, approximately 42 years ago, ECOWAS member states adopted their first protocol relating to the free movement of persons, residence, and establishments. The protocol stipulated the right of ECOWAS citizens to enter, reside and establish economic activities in the territory of other member states and offered a three-step roadmap of five years each to achieve free movement of persons after fifteen years (Clark, 2014; Olusegun-Bolarinwa, 2015; Awumbila, Teye & Nikoi, 2018; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2021). The first phase of the protocol regards the right to a visa-free entry, and the second phase deals with the right of residency and the third phase deals with the right of establishment in other member states (Awumbila, Teye & Nikoi, 2018; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2021). According to ECOWAS phases one and two of the protocol have been fully implemented because ECOWAS citizens have obtained ECOWAS residence card or permit in fellow member states, though various empirical evidence suggests that only phase one has been successfully implemented and phases two and three have more implementation challenges than successes (Awumbila, Teye & Nikoi, 2018; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2021). Furthermore, ECOWAS member states have implemented policies like the ECOWAS common passport, the ECOWAS travel certificate, the ECOWAS brown card, a motorist insurance policy that is applicable to all member states to allow motorists to move freely among member states to help intra-regional travel and movement (Adepoju, 2015; Malindisa, 2017; Yusuf, 2019). Despite implementing the following policies to improve mobility and migration within the region, the challenges to fully realizing this objective continue to linger. The lingering questions are, how successful was phase one – visa free entry for ECOWAS citizens? What lessons can be learned from the implementation of phase one? How can phase one be used

as the foundational piece for developing and implementing more practical policies on mobility and migration in the region? The present study seeks to improve our understanding of how time and departure influence entry into other member states. Specifically, the effect of time and department for citizens from Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Togo on entry into Ghana.

Method

Data

The aggregate time-series data used in this study was obtained from the Ghana Open Data Initiative (GODI)[2] and further compared with data from Ghana Immigration Service (GIS). GODI is an online government platform that collects aggregated data from over 20 agencies and ministries in Ghana, including the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), for easy access to the general public and the researchers. The data from both sources were compared and examined for inconsistencies and irregularities. Five ECOWAS member states – Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia, and Togo were covered in the data. Furthermore, the data obtained and used in this study spans a period of 23 years – from 1997 to 2019. Four major variables were identified in the data – country, years, arrival, and departure numbers and used in the present analysis.

Measures & Variables

The aggregate and time-series data used in this study has four variables which are discussed below.

Country: The country of origin of the arrival and departure of citizens of ECOWAS member states to Ghana. The data covers five Economic Communities of West African States (ECOWAS), namely Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia, and Togo.

Time: The variable time was measured as years which started from 1997 to 2019.

Arrival: These arrival variables in the data measure actual accepted arrival numbers to Ghana at all ports of entry. The arrival measures provide yearly arrivals from the five ECOWAS member states to Ghana from 1997 to 2019.

Departure: The third variable included in this study is a departure variable. This variable measures actual departure from Ghana for the five ECOWAS member states examined in this study.

Analytical Strategy

This study conducted two major analyses to examine the effect of time (years) and departure on arrival of citizens from five ECOWAS member states into Ghana. First, a summary or descriptive analysis was conducted to assess the distribution of scores for the variables used in this study. The descriptive analysis focused on the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values (see Table 1). Second, a time series regression analysis was conducted to assess the effect of time – years and departure on arrival trends of citizens of Côte d'Ivoire,

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[2] The Ghana Open Data Initiative (https://data.gov.gh) was started by the Ghana government data sharing policy.

Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia, and Togo to Ghana. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, correlation analysis was done to understand the relationship between the variables.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the data used in this study are shown in Table 1 below. Table 1 shows the total arrival and departure for each country with valid percentages then followed by the means, standard deviation, minimum and maximum arrival numbers. Based on these statistics, for the period under consideration in this study – 1997 to 2019, citizens from the five ECOWAS member states – Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia, and Togo together totaled 2,821,552 arrivals and 2,799,114 departures to and from Ghana for various reasons. It can be observed that 99% of citizens from these five ECOWAS states departed from Ghana after achieving the purpose of visiting. Within the same era, the breakdown of arrivals of citizens from the ECOWAS member countries listed above is as follows starting from the highest to the lowest: Nigeria (1,552,200 representing 55% of the total arrivals), Côte d'Ivoire (465,405 representing 16% of the total arrivals), then followed by Burkina Faso and Liberia with each constituting 10% of the total arrival. Togo constituted 9% of all arrivals which represents 256,233 arrivals.

Furthermore, Table 1 indicates Nigerians have the highest departure rate from Ghana at 56% followed by Ivorians with a 15% departure rate. Liberians come next with a departure rate of 11%, then Togolese at 10% and Burkinabe at 9%. In conclusion, Nigerians record the highest arrival and departure rates, followed by Ivorians to Ghana. Neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso and Togo record much lower rates for both arrival and departure to Ghana. Previous studies suggest that the language barrier is a major explanation for this phenomenon. Burkina Faso and Togo are Francophone countries as opposed to Ghana and Nigeria that are Anglophone countries (Marmon-Halm, 2018). However, alternative studies suggest some of the ethnic groups in Burkina Faso and Togo also exist in Ghana and though the official language of these countries might present a barrier to navigate immigration issues, their shared ethnic dialects and common cultural practices should be enough mutual grounds to improve communication and mobility within the region (Adepoju, 2015). Appendix 1 provides further details about yearly arrival and departure for each country included in this study.

Table 1. Summary Statistics for arrival & departure of citizens of five (5) ECOWAS member states to Ghana from 1997 to 2019

Country	*Arrival*					*Departure*				
	Total (Valid%)	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Total (Valid%)	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Côte d'Ivoire	465405 (16%)	20235	8889	3614	33865	431034 (15%)	18741	6395	3873	30043
Burkina Faso	277480 (10%)	12064	6715	1917	24551	247571 (9%)	10764	5875	2669	23526
Nigeria	1552200 (55%)	67487	35582	8167	109548	1554974 (56%)	67608	35103	16959	114696
Liberia	270234 (10%)	11749	5139	2496	17631	295188 (11%)	12834	5033	3009	21236
Togo	256233 (9%)	11141	5517	1697	21681	270347 (10%)	11754	4682	4457	22580

Note(s): Total arrivals of citizens from Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia and Togo to Ghana from 1997 to 2019 was 2,821,552. Total departure of citizens from Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia and Togo to Ghana from 1997 to 2019 was 2,799,114

Estimating the effect of time & departure on arrival to Ghana

The results from the regression models for this study are present in Table 2. The models estimate the effect of years and departure on arrival patterns for citizens of each of the five ECOWAS member countries examined in this study. Previous studies suggest that as the population of immigrants from member states increases in a host country, public outcry to control the influx of immigrants increases because of several factors (see Adepoju, 2007; Jimam, 2008; McCann & Boateng, 2020; Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). From Table 2, it can be observed that each model for the five ECOWAS member countries has separate predictive strength. The model for Nigeria recorded the highest predictive strength of 95%, followed by Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia with predictive strengths of 74% and 74%, respectively. Burkina Faso's model had a predictive strength of 62% then, followed by Togo with 48%.

Furthermore, the following were identified for each country's model to predict arrivals to Ghana. With Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Nigerian years was identified as a predictor. However, departure showed no significance. The estimates for the effect of years on arrival to Ghana for Côte d'Ivoire was ($t = 2.18$; $p<0.05$); the estimates for the effect of years on arrival to Ghana for Burkina Faso was ($t = 2.91$; $p<0.01$); and the estimates for the effect of years on arrival to Ghana for Nigeria was ($t = 2.68$; $p<0.01$). The regression analysis shows that year was a stronger predictor of arrivals for Nigerian and Burkina Faso at $p<0.01$ compared to Côte d'Ivoire at $p<0.05$. The present results are consistent with studies that suggest that economic stability and instability influence mobility within the ECOWAS region (Adepoju, 2003; Yaro, 2008).

Table 2. Regression models estimating the effect of departure, and time (years) on arrival of citizens of five (5) ECOWAS member states to Ghana from 1997 to 2019

Country	Coeff.	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CL from Coeff.		R
					Lower	Upper	(Adj. R²)
Côte d'Ivoire							
Intercept	-686314.99	313512.95	-2.19	0.04*	-1340291.5	-32338.44	0.77 (0.74)
years	342.39	156.79	2.18	0.04*	15.32	669.45	
Departure	1.01	0.166	6.11	5.713	0.67	1.36	
Burkina Faso							
Intercept	-1193143.2	411360.86	-2.90	0.01**	-2051227	-335059.53	0.66 (0.62)
years	598.69	205.85	2.91	0.01**	169.29	1028.09	
Departure	0.282	0.237	1.19	0.25	-0.21	0.78	
Nigeria							
Intercept	-3091290.2	1153118.72	-2.68	0.01**	-5496653.7	-685926.73	0.95 (0.95)
years	1549.12	577.64	2.68	0.01**	344.17	2754.07	
Departure	0.71	0.11	6.38	3.18	0.48	0.94	
Liberia							
Intercept	-399667.3	231312.67	-1.73	0.09	-882177.06	82842.46	0.76 (0.74)
years	200.53	115.89	1.73	0.09	-41.22	442.29	
Departure	0.68	0.16	4.36	0.000***	0.36	1.01	
Togo							
Intercept	-84148.31	259343.94	-0.32	0.75	-625130.3	456833.67	0.53 (0.48)
years	42.55	129.43	0.33	0.75	-227.43	312.54	
Departure	0.84	0.19	4.46	0.000***	0.45	1.23	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Moreover, two other ECOWAS member states, Liberia and Togo, had departure as a predictor of arrivals as opposed to a year. For Liberia, the estimates for the effect of departure

on arrival to Ghana was: t = 4.36 (p<0.001) and for Togo, the estimate for the effect of departure on arrival to Ghana was t = 4.46 (p<0.001). A plausible explanation for the effect of departure on arrival for Liberia in the existing literature is the sizeable Liberian refugee population in Ghana and the perception of their association with crime (Porter et al., 2008; Codjoe et al., 2013; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017). Departure was a predictor of arrivals from Liberia and Togo at p<0.001, respectively. Overall, this study observed that both departure and years are predictors of arrival in Ghana. In essence, the free movement of people (arrival) within the ECOWAS region is influenced by time (year) and departure. Future studies can focus on examining the factors that contribute to whether years or departure predict arrival from ECOWAS member states to other member states.

Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine the effect of time (year) and departure on arrivals to Ghana from five ECOWAS member states - Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigerian, Liberia, and Togo using a time series regression analysis. The results from the regression model suggest that time (years) and departure influence arrival in Ghana, hence the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol for the Free Movement of People in Ghana. Through the various analyses – description, correlation and regression, the following observations were made. Overall, 99% of the citizens from the five ECOWAS member states that arrived in Ghana from 1997 to 2019 departed from Ghana. Second, Nigerians recorded the highest arrival and departure for the same period constituting more than half of the arrival and departure to Ghana. Ghana and Nigerian historically share a unique relationship and have seen their citizens migrate between these two nations. For example, Nigerians and Ghanaians share marital ties, economic, social, political, and colonial ties among others which explains the influx of Nigerians to Ghana (Adepoju, 2015; Teye, Awumbila & Nikoi, 2019). Third, departure was a stronger predictor of arrival compared to years. However, this varies from country to country. Various factors like refugee population of member states, crime perception, the hostility of host country, economic prosperity and decline etc., account for why years or departure influence arrivals (Adepoju, 2003; Yaro, 2008; Porter et al., 2008; Codjoe et al., 2013; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017). Future studies can further examine some of these variables to improve our understanding.

Beside this general observation, there are specific intriguing observations made by this study worth discussing. First, time – years was a strong predictor of arrival for three of the ECOWAS member states included in this study. Arrivals to Ghana from Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso together were influenced by the time variable. Previous studies have found time to be associated with political, economic, and cultural trends that also influence the mobility of people within the ECOWAS region (Awumbila et al., 2018; Yeboah et al., 2020). Although this study is limited in its ability to provide specific understanding regarding the effect of time (years) on arrival to Ghana from ECOWAS member countries, future studies can further explore the time variable to improve our understanding. Second, arrivals of citizens from Liberia and Togo to Ghana were influenced by departures instead of time (years). This trend in the data, especially for Liberia, can be attributed to the large refugee population of Liberians in Ghana and the negative perception towards them (Porter et al., 2008; Codjoe et al., 2013; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2017). With Togo, the explanations for the influence of departure on arrival can be attributed to its proximity to Ghana and the Ewe ethnic group in both Ghana and Togo (Adepoju, 2015; Yeboah et al., 2020). However, future

studies can further explore this variable to improve our understanding. The present study shows that arrivals (free movement of people) from other ECOWAS countries to Ghana are influenced by both time (years) and departure.

Despite this study's intriguing observations, there are some limitations worth acknowledging. First, the data was limited in terms of the variables it presented. The data provided three major variables – time (years), yearly arrival and departure numbers for the five countries used in this study. This limitation did not allow for the inclusion of other predictive variables identified by other studies to influence mobility and migration among citizens of ECOWAS member states. Second, the data was at the aggregate level and any errors in aggregating the data could not be controlled or accounted for. Therefore, the results presented in this study are not void of such errors. Readers are cautioned from further interpretation of data beyond what is presented and outlined in the study. Efforts to mitigate this weakness by comparing the data obtained from GODI with the GIS, was less successful because both sources only provided aggregate data. The time variable measured in years does not account for significant events that occurred over the time period when the data was collected. Issues like economic prosperity or decline, natural disasters, man-made disasters etc., were not controlled for in the present analysis because the data does not have measures on these issues. Therefore, the results presented in this study can be under or over estimated. To address the weaknesses of the present study, future studies should consider using public opinion data on migration in the ECOWAS region. Despite these limitations, the present study also provides important observations and findings that contribute to both theory building and practice. Also, the present study serves as an exploratory study for future studies seeking to understand migration and mobility in West Africa.

In conclusion, these present findings have serious implications for policy and theory building. Regarding theory building, the results provide further evidence to augment existing empirical evidence suggesting public disapproval of a high immigrant population. Specifically, in this study, the results suggest that departure influences the arrival of new immigrants to Ghana. Policy-wise, an interesting question for ECOWAS leaders to address is whether citizens prefer free movement that allows other citizens of member states to reside in other countries temporarily or permanently? Since, departure influences arrival, would citizens be more willing to support temporary residence over permanent residence? This can help refine the policy to ensure it has the support of both leadership and the public and it is well implemented across member states. Furthermore, another policy question worth exploring is how time (years) influence mobility in the region and how can member states take advantage of that to ensure accomplishment of the Free Movement Protocol.

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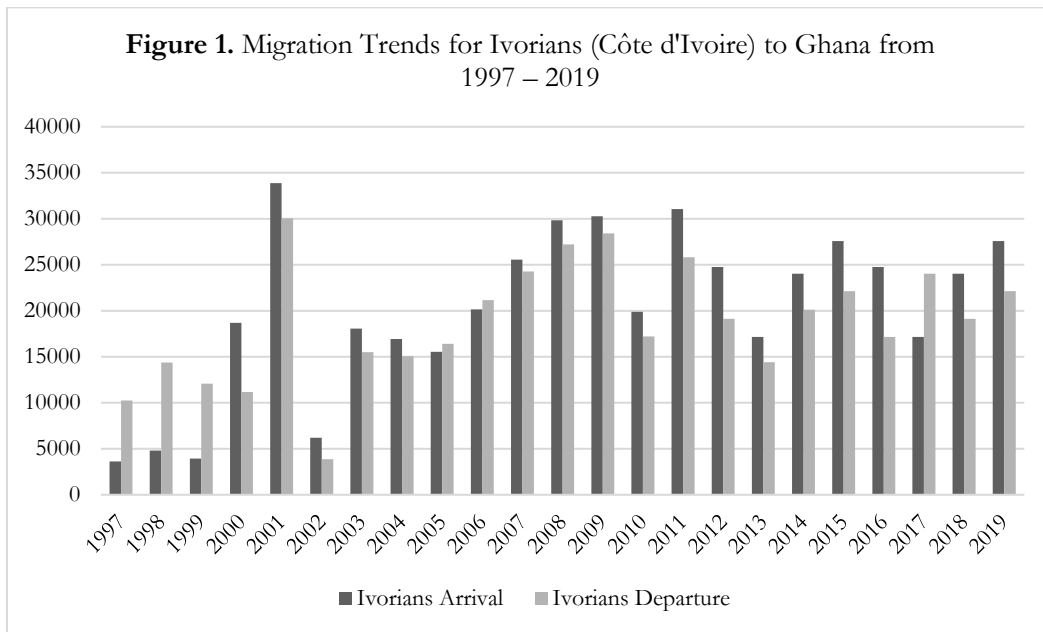
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Appendix

Figure 1. Migration Trends for Ivorians (Côte d'Ivoire) to Ghana from 1997 – 2019

Figure 2. Migration Trends for Burkinabe's (Burkina Faso) to Ghana from 1997 – 2019
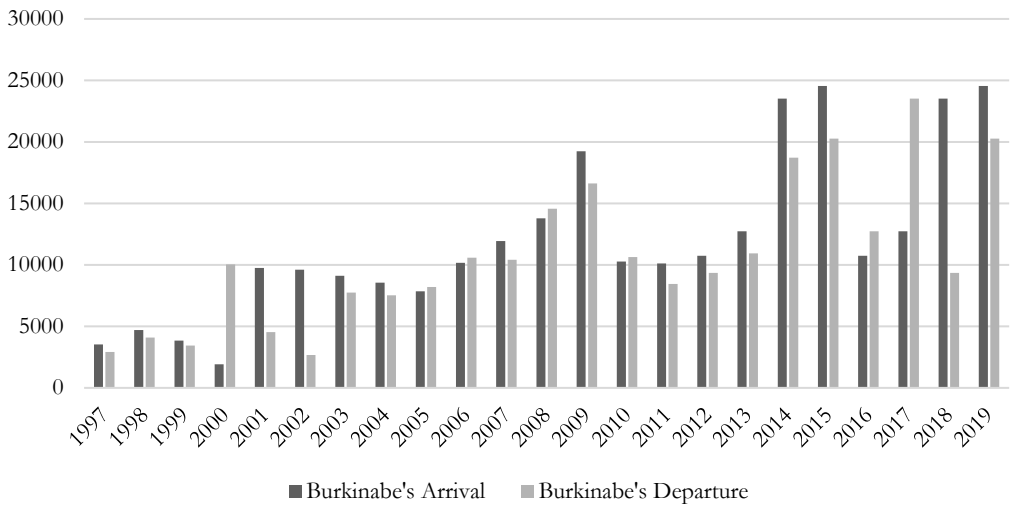

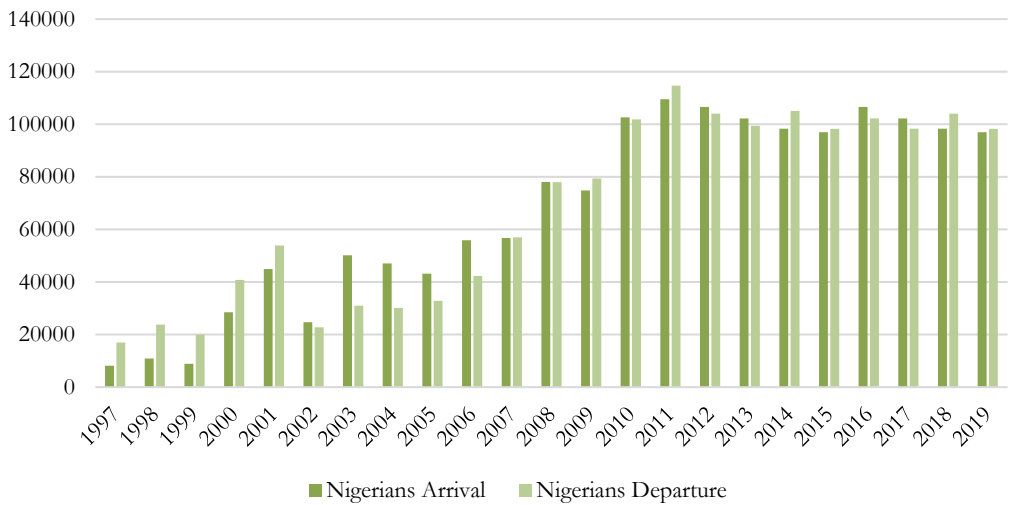**Figure 3**. Migration Trends for Nigerians (Nigerian) to Ghana from 1997 – 2019

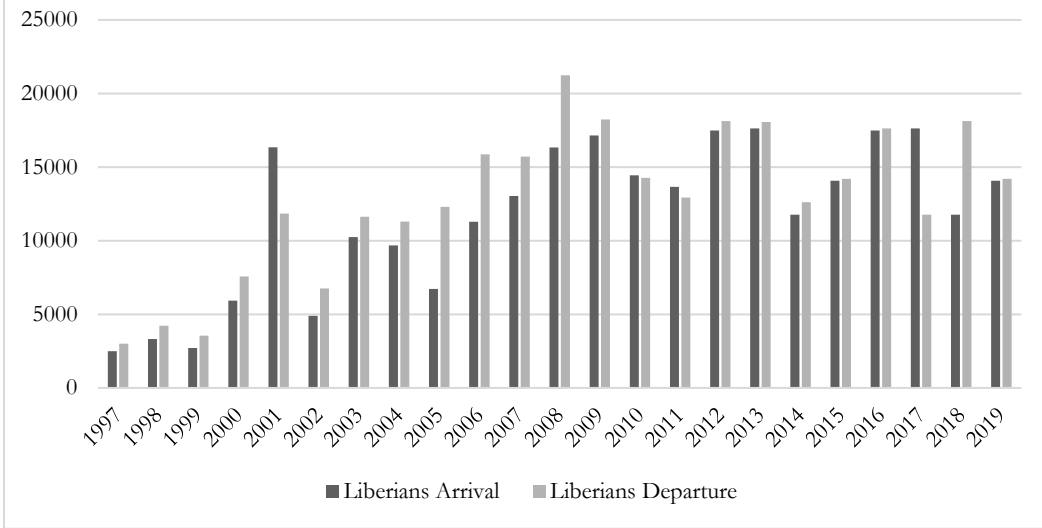**Figure 4.** Migration Trends for Liberians (Liberia) to Ghana from 1997 − 2019

Figure 5. Migration Trends for Togolese (Togo) to Ghana from 1997 − 2019