



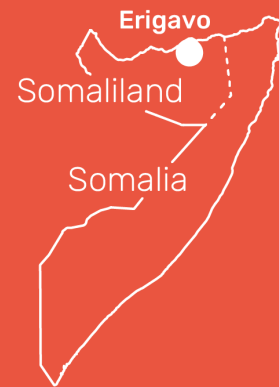
Migration and development dynamics in Erigavo, Somalia (Somaliland)

Young adults are hopeful for the future of Erigavo amid sustained improvement in security and expansion in infrastructure. Migration aspirations are low, but many still expect to leave.

Relative to other locations in Somalia and Somaliland, Erigavo is considered safe by residents. Some 67% consider it safe to walk the streets at night.

Among those young adults who would prefer to stay in Somalia over the next five years (69%), the majority (77%) would rather stay in Erigavo than migrate internally.

However, two-thirds (66%) of young adults expect to leave Erigavo in the next five years, often for better livelihoods, health services or education opportunities elsewhere in the country.



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Photo: Fatuma Ahmed for MIGNEX.

Erigavo is the capital of Sanaag, a semi-arid, rural region in the North of Somalia and Somaliland.¹ The region hosts around 280,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom live in rural areas. Erigavo is the regional capital with a population of around 41,000.²

Over the last decade, Erigavo has seen a sustained improvement in security. The town has remained stable, despite occasional conflicts in the wider region of Sanaag. Erigavo has also experienced significant development in road infrastructure, health and education – mainly due to local government or diaspora

investments. Although the land remains relatively fertile, agriculture has been impacted considerably by droughts, with a significant loss of livestock. Climate change and a lack of infrastructure threaten agriculture and the future of farmer livelihoods. Just 2% of young adults surveyed in Erigavo were found to work in agriculture.

Many young people are now seeking alternative livelihoods in construction, small-scale business, domestic work and government. Others work in gold and mineral mining, with many privately owned mining sites operational in the area since 2018.

Despite ongoing developments, the town’s employment rate is low and there are few reliable jobs. Over half (60%) of surveyed young adults consider it difficult to find a good job in Erigavo. One in two (53%) consider it manageable to earn a living and feed a family.

This case study brief is based on fieldwork and survey data. The MIGNEX team also conducted research in Baidoa and carried out a review of migration-relevant policies in Somalia.³

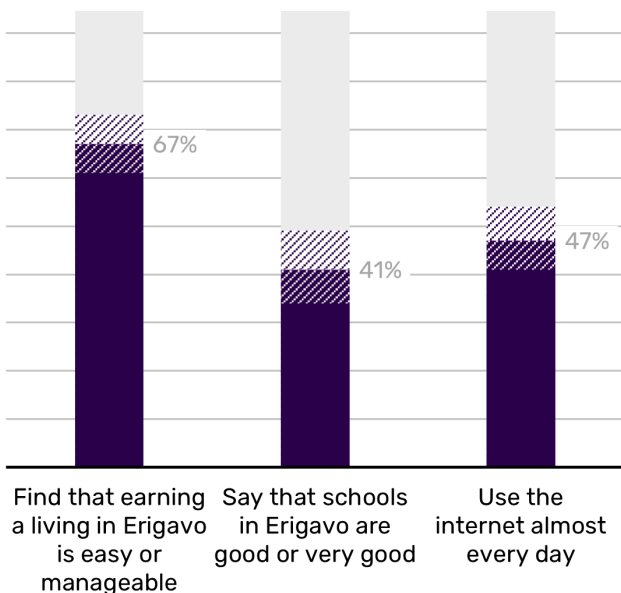


Figure 1. Indicators of development

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

Migration from Erigavo

Out-migration from Erigavo used to be high, particularly following the collapse of the state in 1991 and subsequent civil wars. Over half (54%) of surveyed young adults have family or friends living abroad, mostly in the United

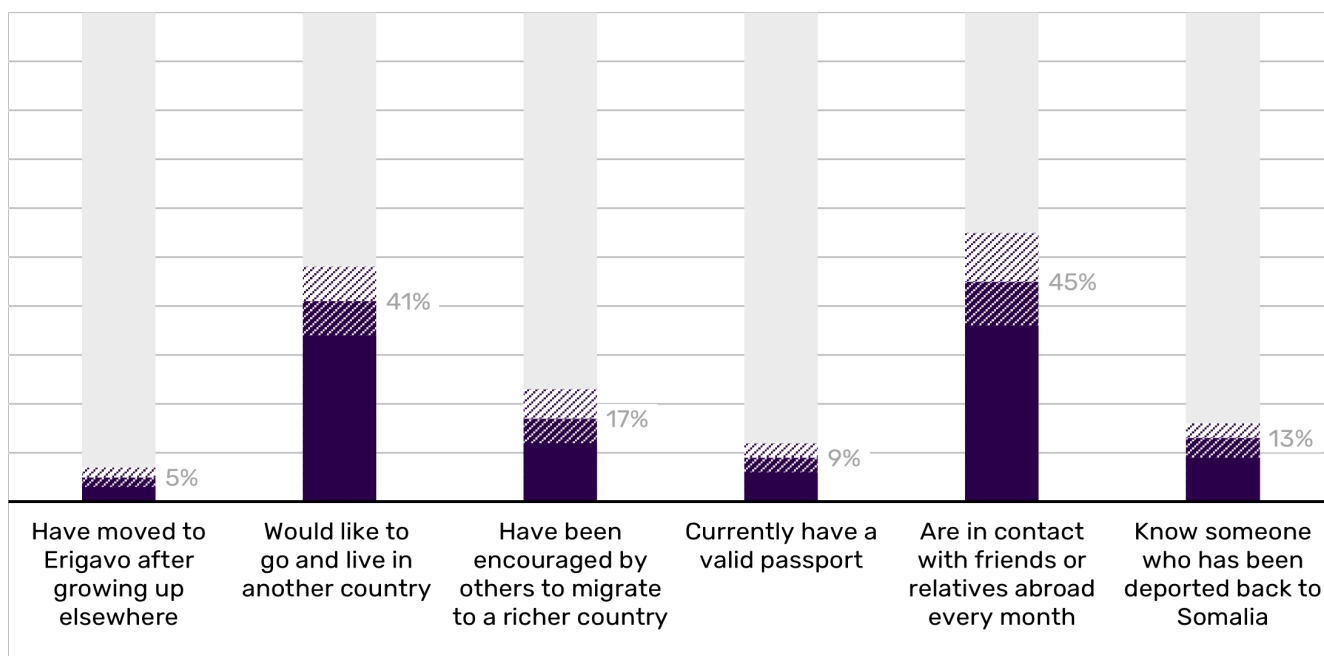


Figure 2. Indicators of migration dynamics

Source: MIGNEX survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

States (46%), the United Kingdom (34%) and Sweden (14%).

This trend has changed in the last ten years, alongside improved security and development in the town. While people see the importance of remittances, they also talk of the negative impact of people leaving the town and the dangers of travelling. Fewer now travel to Europe and America as the dangers of irregular migration are well known within the community. Around one-fifth (21%) of young adults know someone who has died on their way to another country.

Instead, internal migration is more common. Half (50%) of surveyed young adults know of someone from Erigavo who has migrated internally in the past five years. Most often, this is to Hargeisa and other major towns for improved education, health services and work opportunities and overall standards of living.

Migration aspirations

Many young adults have hope for the future of Erigavo and migration aspirations are low. Of those young adults who would prefer to stay in Somalia over the next five years (69%), the majority (77%) would rather stay in Erigavo than migrate internally.

Many noted constructions across the region as a promising sign of development. Notably, the road that connects Burao and Erigavo is expected to boost the local economy with greater national and international connections. Moreover, access to education has expanded significantly with secondary schools and university education available in the town.

Despite this generally positive outlook, many young adults expect to leave Erigavo, largely for better livelihoods, health services or education opportunities elsewhere in the country. Two-thirds (66%) of surveyed young adults expect to leave in the next five years. Around one-fifth (21%) have seriously considered migrating internationally in the past year.

Gender and migration

Men and women differ markedly in how they migrate from Erigavo, except for when families move together. While these instances

The expectation of Erigavo is getting hopeful every year ... People can move in and out just like other big cities. Rural people are moving daily to make their living.

Focus group participant

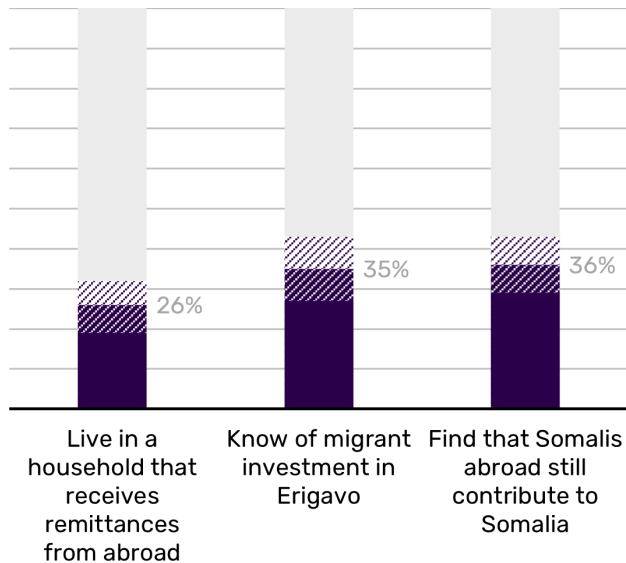


Figure 3. Migration–development interactions

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

are relatively low, over three times as many men (10%) as women (3%) have lived abroad for at least one year.

Gender norms mean international migration is generally discouraged for women. Families prefer women to move to other cities in the country, where they are required to find a relative to live with. Internal migration is therefore much more common among young women.

Aspirations for international migration also vary somewhat between young men and women. A higher share of young men (65%) would prefer to migrate to a richer country if given the opportunity, compared to young women (50%).

In-migration

Internal migration to Erigavo is not common: almost all (95%) of the surveyed young adults

grew up there. However, internal migrants have come recently from the surrounding rural areas and Baidoa. In 2017, extreme drought forced many to leave their homes and move to Erigavo to seek better livelihoods.

Links between migration and development

Strong connections exist with the Erigavo diaspora. Over two-thirds (68%) of young adults have been in contact with migrant family or friends abroad in the past year. Nearly half (49%) of young adults' households have received remittances in the past year.

There are not many reliable jobs in Erigavo and many rely on remittances. Some 10% of young adults stated that remittances are the most important source of income for their household. Over one-third (35%) of young adults know of migrant investment in Erigavo. Most notably, the construction of a road connecting the Maydh Jetty Port and Erigavo, funded solely by the diaspora. This is expected to have a significant impact on the region's economy, supporting new companies to operate in the city and improved mobility across the country.

Notes

1. Both Somaliland/Somalia are used as MIGNEX does not imply any recognition of states or territories. For brevity, Somalia will be used throughout the rest of this brief.
2. Data draws on International Solidarity Foundation, Country Programme 2022 – 2025.
3. Fieldwork consisting of key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations was carried out by Fatuma Ahmed in June 2021. A face-to-face survey of 500 randomly selected residents (aged 18–39) was conducted by Samuel Hall in June 2021.

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MIGNEX – Aligning Migration Management and the Migration-Development Nexus – is a five-year research project (2018–2023) with the core ambition of creating new knowledge on migration, development and policy. It is carried out by a consortium of nine partners: The Peace Research Institute Oslo (coordinator), Danube University Krems, the University of Ghana, Koç University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Maastricht University, ODI, the University of Oxford and Samuel Hall.

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