

4Mi: The Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative



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What is 4Mi?

Why 4Mi?

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) is the MMC's flagship primary data collection project on [mixed migration](#).

Despite the high interest and concern around the rising phenomenon of mixed migration, policy formation, political debate and humanitarian programming are taking place in a context that often lacks concrete quantitative data.

One of the reasons for this is the challenges associated with collecting data on a mobile, heterogeneous, and hard-to-reach population spread across the globe.

4Mi's data contributes to MMC's three core objectives of improving knowledge, informing policy, and contributing to more effective protection responses. It provides an evidence base for decision-making.

What questions is 4Mi trying to answer?

Since 4Mi conducts continuous data collection with a broad and heterogeneous target population, its research questions are broad. More precise questions are formulated when conducting specific analyses. The broad underlying questions are:

- Who are undertaking mixed migration journeys?
- What do refugees' and migrants' journeys look like: route, duration, conditions, financing?
- What is motivating refugees and migrants to make the journey?
- What are the aspirations and intentions of refugees and migrants?
- What dangers do refugees and migrants face on the journey and where?
- How vulnerable are migrants on their journey, and what determines their vulnerability?
- How prevalent is smuggling and how does it manifest itself?
- How are decisions made regarding migration and the migration journey and what influences those decisions?

When did 4Mi start?

4Mi started in East Africa (Nairobi) in 2014 and was conceived by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS, which is now the East Africa & Yemen hub of the Mixed Migration Centre), to fill information gaps around mixed migration, especially protection risks and vulnerabilities of people on the move.

Where does 4Mi collect data?

As of end 2019, 4Mi collects data in the following regions and countries:

- Asia: Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia
- East Africa & Yemen: Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Yemen
- Europe: Denmark, Greece, Italy, Germany,
- North Africa: Libya, Egypt, Tunisia
- West Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger
- South America: Colombia

For sampling locations within these countries, see [Where exactly does 4Mi collect data?](#)

How does 4Mi data help refugee and migrants?

4Mi provides invaluable data collected directly among refugees and migrants. Its data and quantitative analysis means that migration policies, debates, and protection responses for people on the move can be grounded in evidence.

How is 4Mi funded?

4Mi is supported by a wide range of donors, both funding individual 4Mi projects and MMC regional hubs, as well as core and cross-regional activities.

Donors in 2018 and 2019 include the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, GIZ, Intergovernment Authority on Development (IGAD), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNICEF.

What is the relationship between 4Mi, MMC, and DRC?

4Mi is MMC's flagship primary data collection project. It is run by MMC staff and 4Mi data feeds into a large number of MMC's knowledge products. MMC is part of and is governed by DRC. While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work, including that of 4Mi, is grounded in operational reality and can adapt to those realities, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis, and policy development on mixed migration. The position of the MMC does not necessarily reflect that of DRC. In different countries or along routes, MMC, often including 4Mi data collection, works alongside DRC in joint programmes to provide evidence on the situation of people in mixed migration flows.

What is the difference between 4Mi and other data collection projects on people on the move?

4Mi complements other data collection projects because it:

- collects original first-hand data directly among refugees and migrants
- collects in-depth, yet quantitative data on the range of refugees' and migrants' experiences
- collects data continuously, ensuring up-to-date information and enabling a degree of comparison over time
- uses the same tool across all regions and routes, enabling global and cross-regional comparison

Does 4Mi provide real-time data?

Although 4Mi uses continuous data collection, and provides timely [snapshots and reports](#), it does not provide real-time data.

Does 4Mi provide longitudinal data?

No. 4Mi is continuous, but it only interviews respondents once and does not follow the same subjects (respondents) over a longer period of time with repeated measurements.

Is 4Mi quantitative or qualitative?

4Mi is quantitative data collection. It uses standardised, structured surveys with almost exclusively closed-ended questions providing measurable data which can be used in statistical analysis. The nature and length of the survey and the type of questions, means that, while being quantitative, 4Mi data provides rich and in-depth insights.

Does 4Mi work with partners?

Yes. 4Mi works with partners in different ways. Where 4Mi is unable to set up an office in a country or directly contract monitors, we often work with subcontracting partners on data collection. Where there is interest in a time-bound data collection project on a specific theme, we work with partners on developing a specific, customized survey. We also have data sharing agreements, and contribute 4Mi data and analysis to specific products and projects on an ad hoc basis.

Does 4Mi do needs assessment?

No, 4Mi is not a needs assessment tool, although the data can point to information gaps, provide contextual knowledge and provide strong indications on the prevalence of specific needs and risks in certain locations that enables more targeted needs assessments.

How are new 4Mi projects set up?

Setting up 4Mi is a collaboration between DRC, MMC and donors, according to MMC's strategic priorities as well as those of DRC and donors.

What methodology does 4Mi use?

What sampling method does 4Mi use?

4Mi utilizes a mix of purposive and snowball sampling methods. That is, potential survey respondents are selected at key locations (see **Where exactly does 4Mi collect data?**) according to a small set of criteria (see **What are your selection criteria?**). Selected respondents often refer others who also fit the criteria, and so on.

At the end of 2019, 4Mi began reporting whether respondents are recruited directly by the monitors or via referrals, and also recorded any relationships between respondents and between respondents and monitors, in order to control for bias when analysing the data.

Is 4Mi data representative of the migrant population?

Due to the purposive and snowball sampling methods used 4Mi data is not representative of national or international migration flows. It therefore cannot be used to provide estimates of the volume or characteristics of the overall migrant population.

4Mi takes a number of measures to improve the diversity of its sample. These include the quantity of interviews (more than 10,000 interviews are conducted each year), careful selection of recruitment locations, and careful recruitment of monitors. For example, 4Mi policy is to recruit a minimum of one male and one female monitor in each location, as this ensures a better male:female ratio of respondents. (The 4Mi dataset as of late 2019 has approximately 36% responses from women). 4Mi is also in the process of implementing a sampling schedule in some regions, to ensure an approximately even presence of monitors across recruitment locations and recruitment times at each location.

Where exactly does 4Mi collect data?

4Mi attempts to place monitors in locations that will maximize effective data collection, although security considerations as well as practical access concerns are also taken into account. 4Mi recruitment locations are mainly gathering-points such as bus stations in key travel hubs or border crossing-points, where it is likely the monitors are able to interview a considerable number of respondents.

How many interviews does 4Mi conduct?

This obviously differs per region and 4Mi programme and can differ per year depending on the number of 4Mi projects. Since its inception in 2014, 4Mi has conducted more than 35,000 interviews (as of end 2019). Since 2017, 4Mi has conducted approximately 10,000 interviews per year.

What questions and topics are included in the 4Mi survey?

The main 4Mi survey consists of an in-depth structured questionnaire of 212 items. Most items are questions, and a range of measures (nominal, ordinal, and interval) and answer options (forced-choice, multiple-choice, and likert scale) are used to record the respondents' answers.

The core 4Mi survey questions covers 8 key areas.

1. **Profile:** age, nationality, religion, sex, socio-economic status, etc.
2. **Route and journey conditions:** country of departure, transit countries, number of people travelling together, etc.
3. **Drivers and aspirations:** reasons for leaving, decision-making, determination to reach destination, etc.
4. **Protection risks:** perceived risks and dangerous locations, perpetrators, etc.
5. **Assistance:** type of assistance needed, assistance providers, locations where assistance is most needed, etc.
6. **Smugglers:** services provided by smugglers, payment arrangements, migrants' perceptions of smugglers, etc.
7. **Financing the journey:** sums paid, access to money while travelling, bribes paid, etc.
8. **Access to information:** sources of information used before and during the journey, phone and internet access, social media use, etc.

Respondents are asked one open-ended question, to allow them to speak more in their own words about any particular aspect of their migration experience they would like to share.

Finally, the questionnaire includes questions (some for the monitor) on selection criteria and other metadata covering interview conditions, possible sources of bias, etc. Respondents are also invited to ask questions at the end.

The core 4Mi survey is the same across all regions. No questions can be removed from the core survey, to enable comparison and ensure consistency, but optional modules are being developed – which can be very short – to cover specific themes that may not be administered long-term, or may be particularly relevant to some regions or target groups but not to others.

How are interviews conducted?

Monitors use the same protocol to interview respondents across all regions. First, monitors read a script to respondents, informing them about DRC and MMC, the purpose and scope of the interview, and that the information shared by them is voluntary, anonymous and confidential.

Monitors are trained to ensure that interviews are conducted in places where both they and the respondent feel comfortable, often a public place that offers a degree of privacy. They strive to conduct the interview uninterrupted, but it can take place on more than one occasion.

The monitor uses a smartphone to administer the questionnaire, reading out the questions and (where prompting is required) answer options. At the end of the interview, monitors also record any challenges during the interview.

How long does the survey take to complete?

The survey takes around 45 minutes to complete. Questionnaires that were completed in less than 20 minutes are discarded from analysis (see **How is quality assured?**).

Do you record the number of participants who refuse to participate?

Yes. At the end of 2019, 4Mi monitors began recording how many participants refused to participate, so that response rate can be computed and compared between monitors and regions.

In which languages is the survey administered?

The written questionnaire is available in Arabic, English, Dari, French, Pashto and Spanish, and some monitors simultaneously translate the survey while administering it, in order to reach a more diverse sample and, where possible, administer the survey in the respondent's native language.

Does 4Mi administer other surveys?

Yes. Where possible, safe and relevant, 4Mi also administers a survey to smugglers in most of its countries of operation (**Where does 4Mi collect data?**). The monitors are expected to split their workload to administer 90% of migrant surveys and 10% of smuggler surveys. The smuggler survey is considerably shorter than the migrant survey and focuses on: the incentives of smugglers, the links of smugglers to other actors including state and non-state actors, smugglers' modus operandi and the ways in which smugglers interact with refugees and migrants mixed migration flows.

4Mi also develops and conducts surveys with partners on particular topics, for limited time periods, using the 4Mi core survey as a base: one example is a survey developed and administered with UNFPA among young migrants and refugees in key cities in Africa and the Middle East.

MMC aims to maintain 4Mi's agility to adjust to future developments and timely issues that arise and fill information gaps: one key current topic is that of returnees, and several regions are currently working on this.

What are the limitations of 4Mi data?

4Mi data is not representative of the general refugee and migrant population (see **Is 4Mi data representative of the migrant population?**) and cannot be used to estimate the numbers of migrants and/or migration fluxes in the regions where it operates.

4Mi data is also self-reported and MMC has no means to verify, for example, reported incidents.

How does 4Mi adhere to ethical standards?

4Mi deals with potentially sensitive topics and monitors will engage with participants that may have been exposed to physical and sexual abuse or other traumatic experiences. It is therefore vital that monitors are trained properly on how to approach participants and that they understand the importance of informing participants about the purpose of the interview and listen, show empathy and respect the limits of what the respondent wishes to share. All participants are informed orally by the monitors about the aim of the study as well as research ethics prior to participating, including confidentiality and the right to withdraw. At the end of each interview time is set aside for participants to ask questions making sure that participants are not left with unaddressed concerns. All interviewees are anonymous and once a monitor has uploaded a questionnaire to the 4Mi server the monitor no longer has access to the data. It is 4Mi's aim that all monitors are trained on research ethics prior to data collection.

Who provides oversight over 4Mi?

In 2017, MMC established a 4Mi External Ethical & Methodological Review Team (ExERT) consisting of professionals and academics able to assist 4Mi as an independent, external panel looking at the survey tools, training, recruitment of monitors and other elements of the 4Mi methodology. Operationally, 4Mi programmes are managed by regional MMC teams and fall under the responsibility of the respective DRC regions. Technical oversight and quality assurance are provided by regional MMC coordinators as well as MMC in Geneva.

Who collects the data?

Who are your monitors?

The monitors who conduct the structured interviews are either from among the refugee and migrant community themselves, or (in some regions, for example depending on profiles and language skills) they can be nationals of the country in which the interviews takes place. Attention is paid during monitor recruitment to monitors' profiles (e.g. age, sex, languages spoken), as this contributes to the diversity of the sample. In August 2019, MMC had 103 monitors, with the following profile:

4Mi Monitors' Profile	
Number of monitors	103
Average age	32 years old
Gender	30% women, 70% men
Education level	47% high school and above
Nationalities represented	14
Average length of employment	2.5 years

What is the nationality of the monitors?

This depends. As of mid-2019, the monitors are from 14 different countries. Some are refugees and migrants themselves, but approximately 50% percent of the monitors are nationals in the country where they operate.

Are the monitors paid?

Yes. Most 4Mi monitors are paid on a per-questionnaire basis, and a small number are on full-time contracts with DRC or partners.

How do you train the monitors?

The monitors receive a specific training following recruitment. Where possible, this is face-to-face and run by MMC staff. As well as in-depth sessions on administering the survey, training covers the concepts around mixed migration and primary data collection sampling methods, and ethical considerations. MMC staff provide continuous quality control and feedback.

Are the monitors MMC or DRC staff?

Most monitors are under contract to DRC, and they are most often paid per questionnaire, or at a daily rate. Where DRC cannot support monitors (most often because DRC is not registered in the country of operations), MMC works with partners, who contract monitors.

Who are 4Mi respondents?

What is 4Mi's target group?

4Mi's target group for the core survey is adults on the move away from their country of departure in mixed migration journeys, irrespective of status, though often engaging (at least for parts of the journey) in irregular migration. For the smuggler survey, 4Mi targets individuals who facilitate irregular movements of people.

What are your selection criteria?

For the standard migrant survey 4Mi uses the following criteria to select respondents:

- Respondents must be 18 years or older
- Respondents must have left their country of origin
- Respondents must have arrived in the location of interview no longer than 1 or 2 years ago (this depends on the country: for example, people interviewed in Athens are likely to have been involuntarily immobile for more than 12 months elsewhere in Greece before recruitment).
- Respondents must not be returning to their home country or country of departure
- Respondents must not have been interviewed by 4Mi before

In case of specific 4Mi programmes, these criteria might differ. For example, MMC worked with UNICEF on a child-specific survey interviewing respondents below 18 years old; in some programmes also interviews respondents who are still within their country of origin; and is in the process of implementing a 4Mi returns survey.

Does 4Mi provide assistance or refer respondents in need of help?

4Mi is a data collection and research tool and does not provide assistance. 4Mi monitors are not trained to provide assistance and MMC is not an operational organisation. However, while maintaining a necessary boundary between data collection and research on the one hand and provision of assistance on the other, throughout 2018 and 2019, MMC has been piloting various

approaches to signposting (i.e. providing information on where to find help) and will explore this further in the future, making use of MMC's embeddedness within a large humanitarian organisation.

Does 4Mi pay respondents?

No. Respondents are told that participation is voluntary and that they will not be compensated in any way before they provide consent. Respondents may be invited to a soft drink or snack during the interview, paid by the monitor.

Why do respondents participate?

Although there is no direct advantage for respondents to participate, they are told that the information they share will be used to better help refugees and migrants on the move.

Do respondents provide informed consent?

Yes, monitors are obliged to obtain consent after the introductory script (see also **How does 4Mi adhere to ethical standards?**) and before the interview can begin.

How do you ensure the anonymity of the respondents?

The respondent's names are not recorded, and instead an ID number is automatically generated. Furthermore, monitors cannot access the data once they have submitted it.

Are respondents free to stop the interview at any time?

Yes. Participants can withdraw from the interview at any time and are also told that they can refuse to answer any question.

Do you share results with respondents?

As the 4Mi survey is anonymous, results cannot be shared directly with the respondents. That said, respondents are told about the MMC and its website, where results are published.

Can respondents provide feedback?

Yes. Respondents can ask questions and make comments at the end of the interview, and these are recorded.

What happens to 4Mi data?

How does 4Mi store and process data? How is quality assured?

After a monitor submits a completed interview to the 4Mi online system, the raw data is stored on a server in the United States. Data that is exported is stored locally, in one of the MMC hubs, and periodically duplicated and transferred to Geneva or Copenhagen.

Data is then subject to quality control. Survey validation procedures minimize the risk that fraudulent or fabricated data, or even errors in inputting, are introduced in the 4Mi dataset. For example, interviews that were completed in less than 20 minutes or that do not match the interview locations assigned to the monitors are discarded (the survey application automatically registers the GPS location of the interview).

Data cleaning involves checking for internal inconsistencies in responses, unclear responses, and checking with the monitor.

Data analysis varies according to the size of the dataset and the task. 4Mi snapshots are produced by regions, and generally present descriptive statistics as visuals. More in-depth studies use regional or cross-regional datasets and can include inferential statistics (regression analysis, etc.). See the [4Mi page](#) for more.

How do you deal with missing data? Is there a lot of missing data?

Since the 4Mi questionnaire is the same across regions and most of its items are compulsory, the amount of missing data is very low. Refusals and don't knows are, as a rule, reported in publications.

What is 4Mi data used for?

4Mi data is used in most MMC reports and publications, as well as in visuals posted directly onto the MMC website. MMC frequently presents 4Mi findings at conferences and seminars. It is also used to respond to ad hoc requests for information, both from DRC staff and external organizations. 4Mi data has been used in a wide range of non-MMC projects and reports, including IOM's "Missing Migrants" project (with whom MMC has a data sharing agreement) and in reports by several organisations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA, OHCHR, Clingendael and the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration.

4Mi data and analysis provide contextual insights and evidence to support new thinking about the focus and location of new operations by DRC and other actors, increased the knowledge base on mixed migration and contributes to new insights for policy makers.

Can 4Mi be used to inform humanitarian programming?

Yes. 4Mi can provide the necessary contextual analysis, provide credible evidence on where and why there is a need to develop a response for refugees and migrants on the move. It can provide the project rationale, followed by more targeted needs assessment, independent of 4Mi. In terms of a programme cycle, 4Mi plays a particular role in the initial analysis, strategic design and (as a consequence) resource mobilisation. Given the limitations of the methodology, 4Mi cannot provide rapid data on the need for real-time flexible adjustments during programme implementation, though during longer-term programmes it can provide indications of shifting trends and needs.

Is 4Mi a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool?

No. Though 4Mi has the word 'monitoring' in its full name, it is not a tool that can be used to monitor programme implementation.

How can I use 4Mi data?

4Mi data and infographics can inform humanitarian response programming, policy making, and additional research into mixed migration. Graphs and data published in MMC publications or on the MMC website can be used freely in external publications or presentations, as long as the source is acknowledged as "4Mi data – Mixed Migration Centre".

Does 4Mi share its data?

MMC has a number of 4Mi data sharing agreements with selected organisations, and responds to ad hoc requests for parts of the dataset and/or data analysis on a case by case basis and depending on the nature of the request and available resources. MMC does not publish or share the full raw data set.