

Destination Europe – Migrants and refugees in Italy looking back at their migration journey

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) collects information about mixed migration flows through a network of field monitors continuously conducting interviews with people on the move. The 4Mi survey primarily provides structured quantitative data but also collects few narrative quotes with respondents. It offers indicative findings to inform policy and programming. For more information, see www.mixedmigration.org/4mi/.

This report introduces the first analysis of the 4Mi data collected in Italy. It looks at those migrants and refugees that have made it to Europe, Italy, and their reflections on the migration journey. What information would have been useful to receive during the migration journey to Italy? Would they migrate knowing what they know now having reached Europe? And would they encourage others to do the same?

Conditions for refugees and migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic

This snapshot provides information on the situation for migrants and refugees in Italy before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. At the time of writing, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on living conditions for refugees and migrants in Italy remains uncertain. Government measures to contain the virus mean vulnerable people living on the streets face severe challenges to meet their basic needs, access to services is constrained, people cannot attend interviews for refugee status determination, and xenophobia has increased. However, we also witness an opening up of access, for example discussions around regularization of migrant workers and citizens in Italy. For more on this topic, see MMC Europe's [Quarterly Mixed Migration Update](#).

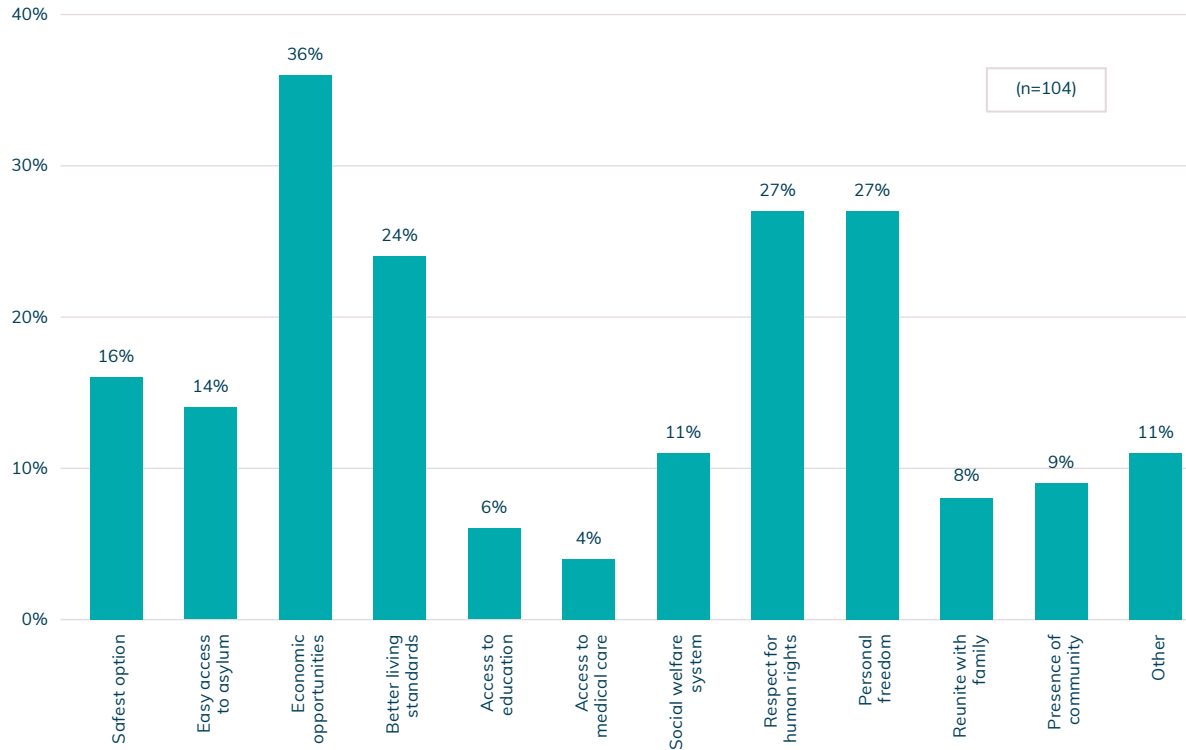
Profiles and Italy as a preferred destination country

The dataset used for the analysis includes 130 respondents (111 men and 29 women) and was collected between 25 November 2019 and 10 March 2020. The dataset is part of a larger 4Mi data collection that is being implemented across South, Central and North Italy and in three locations in Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki and Ioannina. More 4Mi snapshot reports will therefore be published covering different topics, migrant and refugee profiles and migration routes to Europe.

The respondents originate from Nigeria (66), Pakistan (35) and Ivory Coast (29)¹. The sample size is too small to look at the differences between nationalities, but given their very different profiles and journeys, this should be explored in future, as more data is gathered. 9 respondents had arrived in Italy less than 12 months before the interview, 42 between 12-24 months and 79 people more than 24 months. The majority (104) mention Italy as their preferred destination, most frequently due to economic opportunities (36%) and due to generally better living standards (24%), combined with a wish for personal freedom (27%) and respect for human rights (27%) in the country (Figure 1). The other respondents chose France, Germany and Sweden as destinations, with fewer citing countries outside Europe such as Canada (5) and the USA (1).

¹ For the first phase of the 4Mi data collection in Italy, it has been a deliberate choice to focus on the three mentioned nationalities as they have been among the main nationalities of migrant flows to the country since 2017 and represent three different migration routes. With time, 4Mi in Italy will expand and cover additional nationalities.

Figure 1. Why did you select Italy as your preferred destination?



However, Italy (indeed Europe), was not always the intended destination right from the start. Out of those selecting Italy (104), nearly one-third of respondents (33 people) initially intended to go somewhere else: 16 of them mentioned Libya as the initial preferred destination, but they changed their minds due to the conditions in the country including unmet economic expectations, as also reported [by MMC North Africa](#). Fewer mention countries further North in Europe such as for example Germany (6) and France (3) but since changed location as they gained new information about the destination country. 2 people refused to answer the question.

A need for information about safety and security along migration routes

A large number of respondents (68%) reported that they did not receive information about the migration journey including routes, destinations, risks, costs etc. before leaving, while 32% respondents said that they did. This points to a continued need for finding adequate channels to provide potential migrants and refugees with relevant information, enabling them to take informed decisions about migration. The findings could also indicate that the journey often turned out different than what they may feel their information reflected – a topic touched upon later in this snapshot.

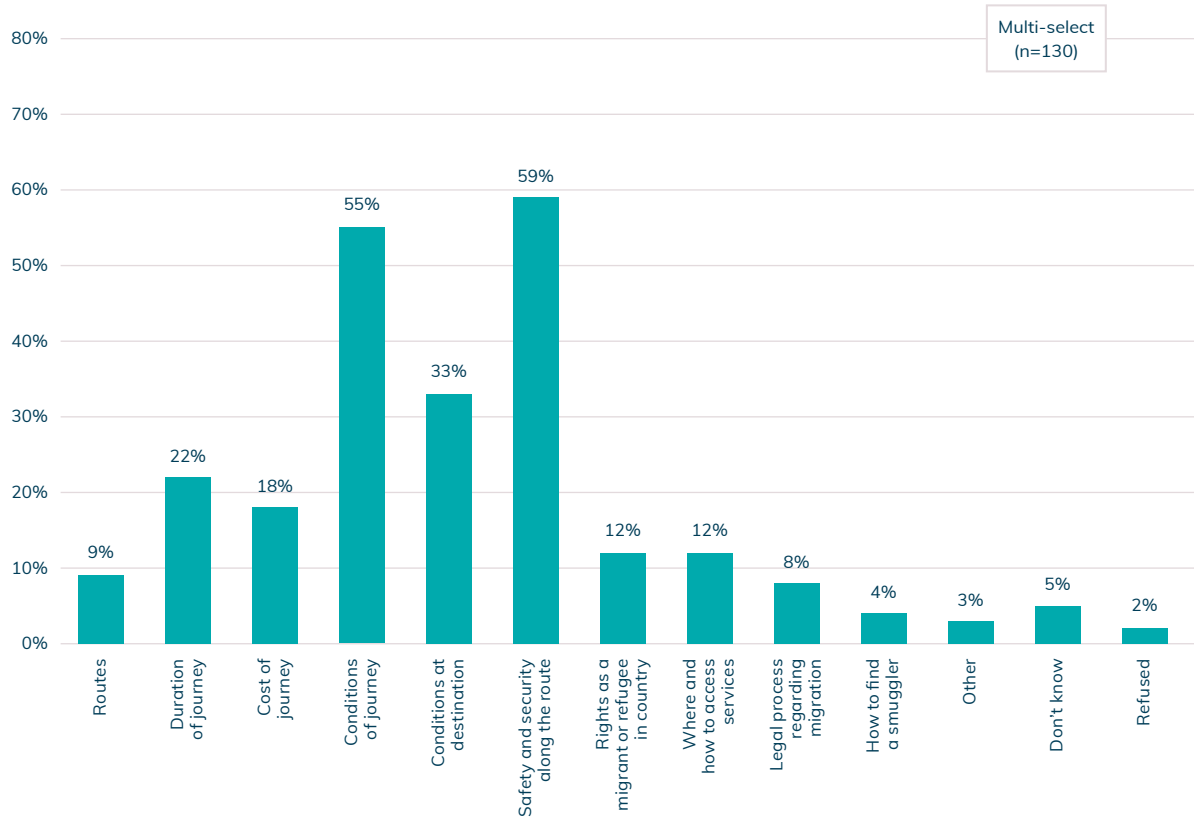
The safety and security along the route (59%) and the conditions of the journey (55%) are mentioned most frequently when asked what information would have been most useful that they did not receive (Figure 2). The need for more information about safety and security along the route is also reflected qualitatively. Here by a 27-year-old man originating from Nigeria who travelled through Niger and Libya to reach Italy:

“People don’t know how dangerous the journey is. Migrants are treated worse than animals.”

The third most ranked information that migrants and refugees point to is conditions at destination (33%). Put into words by a 22-year-old Nigerian woman who also travelled through Niger and Libya to reach Italy:

“It is not like it seems. Your life doesn’t change immediately. Sometimes you cry, you feel very alone. There is nobody to talk to.”

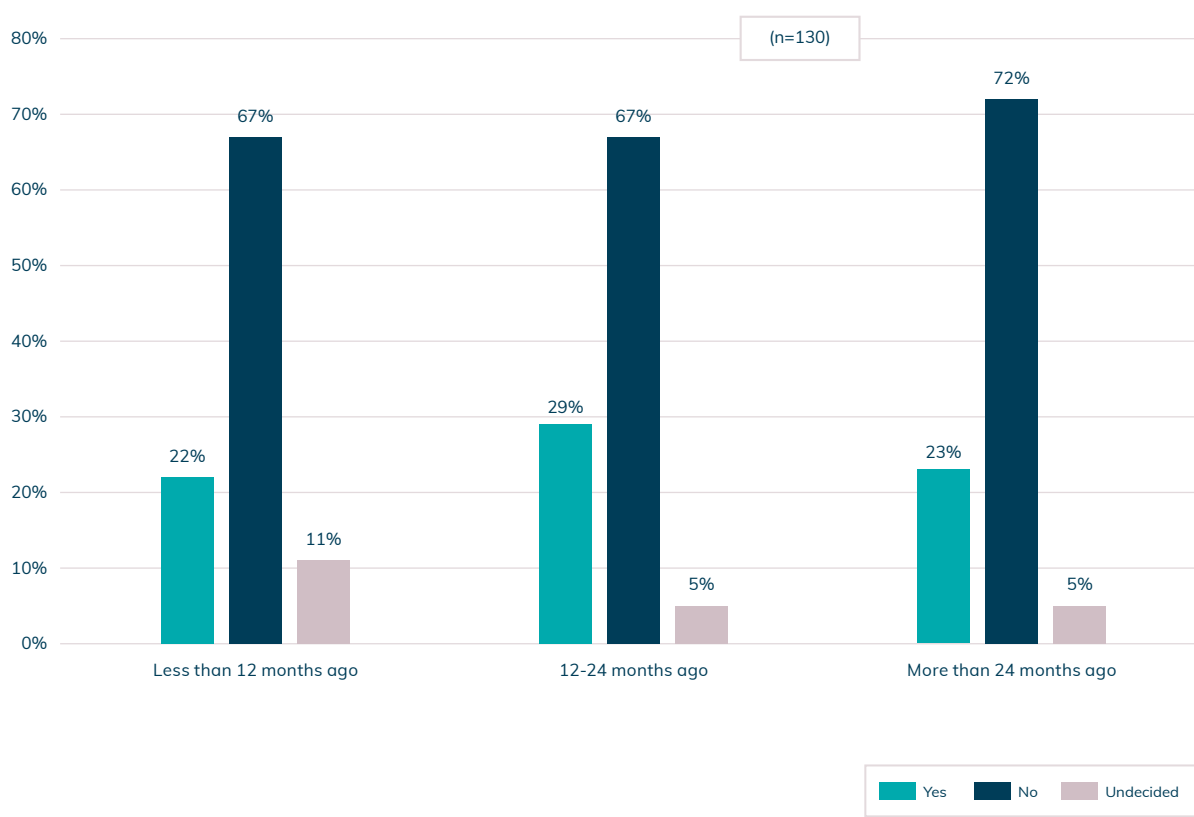
Figure 2. What information would have been most useful that you did not receive?



70% would not migrate knowing what they know now

When the respondents are then asked if they would have migrated knowing what they know now, 70% answer no while only 25% respond yes. 5% are undecided. This interestingly does not change much when the responses are disaggregated by the time spent in Italy (Figure 3). This could be due to multiple interlinked reasons: People feel “disappointed” upon arrival, but their expectations and initial reasons for migrating to the country are not met even as they stay longer in the country. Some might also have unreasonable expectations about how their life will immediately change, as was also reflected in the above quote.

Figure 3. Would you migrate knowing what you know now?



This hypothesis is further investigated in Figure 4, looking at the 74 respondents who selected Italy as their preferred destination and selected one or more of the top 4 reasons for doing so (economic opportunities, generally better living standards, respect for human rights and personal freedom – see Figure 1). This analysis shows a high proportion of the people who migrated to Italy with a wish for greater respect of human rights (90%) and personal freedom (70%) that would not migrate knowing what they know now. This does not mean their opinion on migrating relates directly to unmet expectations. Nonetheless, a 31-year-old woman from Nigeria that came to Italy more than 24 months ago explains:

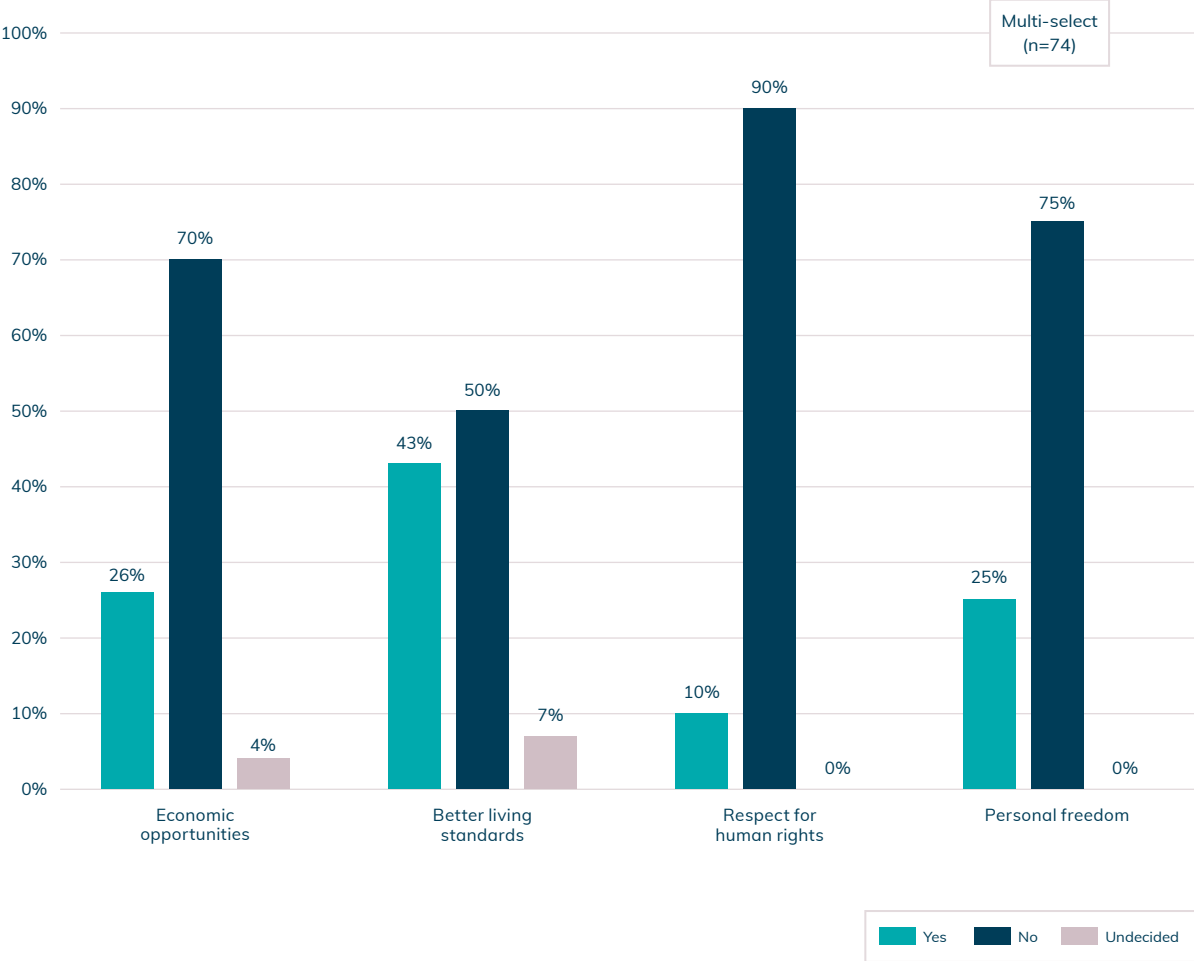
“I’ve been trafficked. I have deep scars on my skin and on my soul. I’ve been to jail in Italy because of what I was doing to pay my debt. Now I’m trying to help other girls to speak with the authorities.”

A 32-year-old Pakistani man who first travelled to Germany and then Italy also explains:

“I don’t believe in asylum anymore. In two countries they didn’t believe that I am a Christian.”

This data needs to be explored further as the dataset grows and combined with how peoples’ experiences on route relates to the question of whether people would migrate.

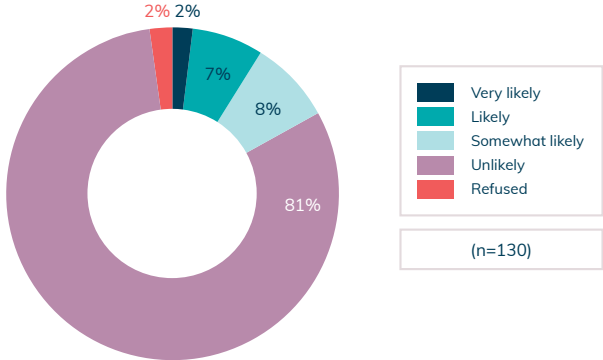
Figure 4. Would you migrate knowing what you know now?



81% find it unlikely that they will encourage others to migrate

Finally, in line with the above, 81% of the 130 respondents are unlikely to encourage others to migrate (Figure 5), presumably both because of the journey experienced but also due to unmet expectations at the destination.

Figure 5. How likely are you to encourage others to migrate?



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The [Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative](https://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi) (4Mi) is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for refugees and migrants on the move. 4Mi field monitors are currently collecting data through direct interviews with refugees and migrants in West Africa, East Africa and Yemen, North Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Sample sizes are clearly indicated and represent a limited section of those on the move. The findings derived from the surveyed sample should not be used to make any inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi