

Impact of COVID-19 on daily lives and journeys of refugees and migrants interviewed in Somaliland

This snapshot is the second on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants in mixed movements¹ into and through Somaliland. It focuses on the impact of the virus on daily life and journeys, and protection risks. It aims to contribute towards a solid evidence base to inform targeted responses on the ground, as well as advocacy efforts related to the situation of refugees and migrants during the coronavirus pandemic.

Key findings

- Over 70% of refugees and migrants interviewed report anxiety and stress about COVID and the situation and nearly 20% report increased xenophobia and racism.
- 41% of respondents reported losing an income due to the coronavirus restrictions, increasing vulnerability.
- Death, physical violence, and robbery high among reported risks.

Profiles

The analysis is based on 102 interviews conducted with refugees and migrants in Somaliland between May 4 and June 4, 2020. Interviews were conducted in Berbera (27) Hargeisa (45), and Waajale (30). The respondents were from Ethiopia (57) and Yemen (45). 66 of them were men and 36 were women with an average age of 31. Interpretations based on this limited sample size should be made with caution, and does not necessarily represent the view of the entire Ethiopian or Yemeni communities in Somaliland, but findings will become more informative as the dataset continues to grow.

Table 1. Nationality and gender of respondents

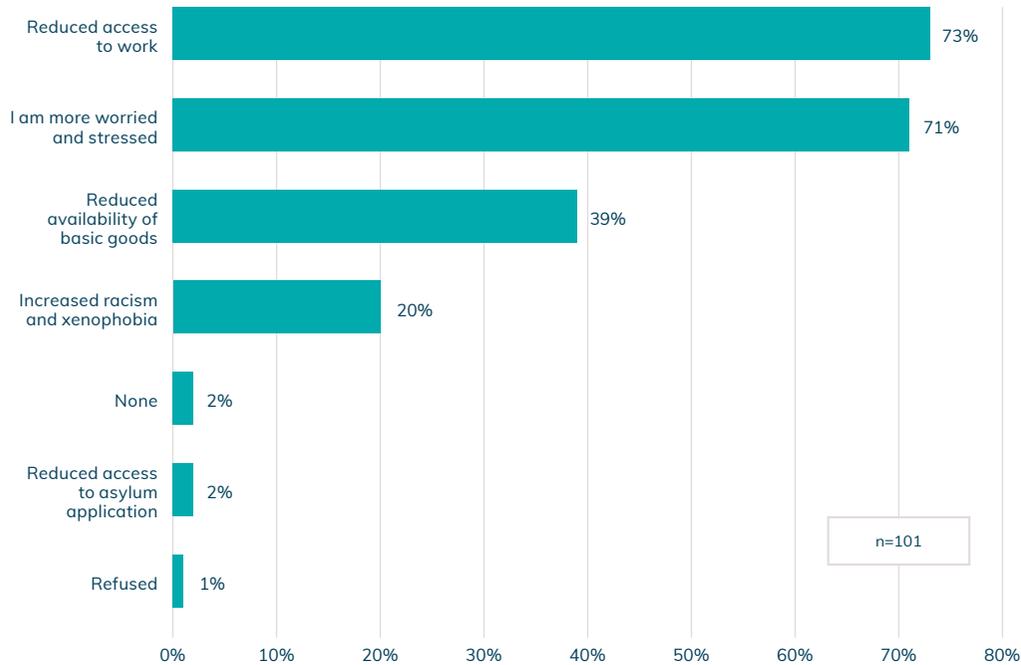
Nationality	Men	Women	Total
Ethiopia	44	13	57
Yemen	22	23	45
Total	66	36	102

Reduced access to work and more stress impacting the majority of respondents

As shown in Figure 1, the main impacts of COVID-19 on refugees' and migrants' lives have been reduced access to work (73%), more stress (71%), and reduced availability of basic goods (39%). These trends have remained consistent since the beginning of data collection in April 2020. Respondents also reported increased racism and xenophobia (20%).

¹ MMC normally applies the term 'mixed migration' to refer to cross-border movements of people including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities. See MMC's full definition of mixed migration and associated terminology [here](#). UNHCR applies the term 'mixed movement', defined as: The cross-border movement of people, generally in an irregular manner, involving individuals and groups who travel alongside each other, using similar routes and means of transport or facilitators, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have different needs and profiles and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, stateless persons, and migrants (including migrants in irregular situations or migrants in vulnerable situations). In light of the partnership between UNHCR and MMC to develop this joint publication the term 'mixed movement' is used."

Figure 1. What impacts has the crisis had on your daily life?



The majority of respondents (55%) were not receiving an income before the coronavirus restrictions. Of the remaining respondents, 41% said that they had lost income as a result of the restrictions. Of those who had lost income (n=41), the most reported impact was not being able to afford basic goods (n=37) and increased anxiety and worry (n=16). 8 respondents also noted that they were unable to continue their journey due to the loss of income.

Perceived protection risks

21 people answered questions about the most dangerous location on their journey. This relatively small proportion is likely linked to the relatively short distances refugees and migrants in this sample travelled.

Respondents noted that in Yemen, death, detention, robbery and physical violence were protection risks. In Ethiopia, robbery, detention, kidnapping and physical violence were noted as risks. And in Somalia, respondents noted robbery and physical violence as risks. Yemen was most frequently cited as dangerous, followed by Somalia and then Ethiopia.

The causes of death are not specified by respondents in the survey. However, where death was reported as a risk, armed groups/militia were often identified as likely perpetrators, indicating that this would be as a result of violence.

Figure 2. What were the main protection risks in the most dangerous location?



Armed groups or militias were reported to be likely perpetrators of abuse (n=11), followed by government officials (n=6) and criminal gangs (n=4). Smugglers were not identified as perpetrators. 4Mi data collected in the region often identifies [smugglers as one of the top perpetrators](#) of violence and abuse against refugees and migrants in mixed movements. While the sample size in this snapshot remains small and not representative, it may suggest that border closures have rendered refugee and migrant groups temporarily immobile, and consequently reduced access to smugglers, thereby reducing exposure to risk. Similarly, this may indicate that respondents are in increasing contact with government officials and armed groups (in Yemen specifically) as they increase their patrols to manage and prevent the movement of people and therefore, prevent the spread of coronavirus.

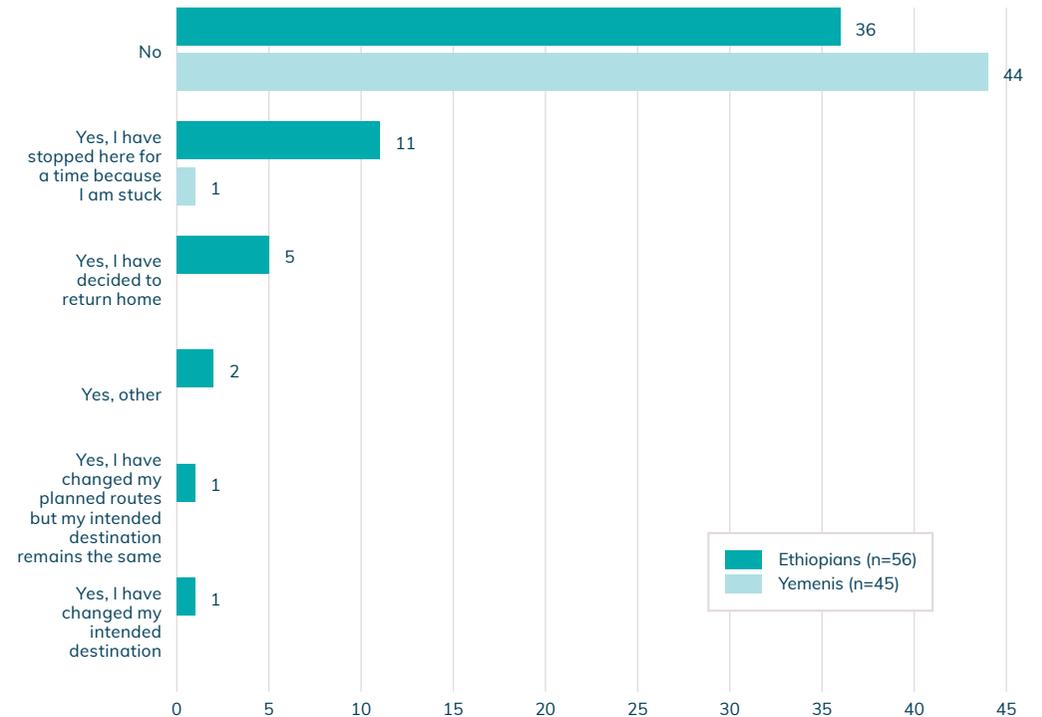
Figure 3. Who were likely to be perpetrating abuses?



Most respondents undeterred by challenges and intend to continue on journey

Despite the hardships, 79% of interviewed refugees and migrants have not changed their planned movement as a result of the coronavirus crisis (36 Ethiopians and 44 Yemenis). 12% indicated that they were now involuntarily immobile in Somaliland (11 Ethiopians and 1 Yemeni), and 5% indicated that they had decided to return home (5 Ethiopians).

Figure 4. Have you changed your plans as a result of the coronavirus outbreak?



Voices of people on the move

"I went through a lot of trouble during my journey and I was arrested."

Ethiopian man in Hargeisa

"My situation is really difficult. Getting a job here in order to survive is not easy. In addition, the local people in Wajaale believe that we, Ethiopians, are spreading the virus. My destination is not here and I can't continue my journey due to coronavirus."

Ethiopian man in Waajale

"Coronavirus has tremendously effected our lives due to lost income and we can't afford basic goods."

Yemeni woman in Berbera

"It's dangerous to travel on the sea and there were also tired and thirsty people while we were at sea."

Yemeni woman in Hargeisa

DRD DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL



4Mi & COVID-19

The [Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative \(4Mi\)](#) 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. Normally, the recruitment of respondents and interviews take place face-to-face. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face recruitment and data collection has been suspended in all countries.

MMC has responded to the COVID-19 crisis by changing the data it collects and the way it collects it. Respondents are recruited through a number of remote or third-party mechanisms; sampling is through a mixture of purposive and snowball approaches. A new survey focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants, and the surveys are administered by telephone, by the 4Mi monitors in West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Asia and Latin America. Findings derived from the surveyed sample should not be used to make inferences about the total population of refugees and migrants, as the sample is not representative. The switch to remote recruitment and data collection results in additional potential bias and risks, which cannot be completely avoided. Further measures have been put in place to check and – to the extent possible – control for bias and to protect personal data. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi

This document includes activities implemented with the financial assistance of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of UNHCR.