

Refugees and migrants interviewed in Somaliland: a focus on profiles and drivers

This Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) snapshot presents the findings of data collected in Somaliland from refugees and migrants on the move into and through Somaliland in mixed movements.¹ The purpose of this snapshot is to provide information on profiles, drivers and decision making among refugees and migrants travelling to and transiting through Somaliland.

Key findings

- Respondents were more frequently found to be refugees and asylum seekers than migrants: 55% of respondents reported that they had either applied for asylum (23%) or were registered refugees (32%).²
- Violence (59%) and economic reasons (56%) are the most-cited reasons for leaving among respondents.
- Female respondents were more likely to cite violence and insecurity as a reason for leaving (70%), in comparison to men (47%).

Profiles

676 interviews were conducted in Berbera (206), Borama (49), Hargeisa (214), Loya Ade (2) and Waajale (205) between September 2019 and January 2020. Geographic areas for the data collection presented in this snapshot were agreed mutually between UNHCR and MMC, and include urban areas, border crossings, and places of destination. All respondents began their journeys outside Somalia.

Table 1. Nationality and gender of respondents

Nationality	Men	Women	Total
Ethiopia	334	139	473
Yemen	169	31	200
Total	503	170	673

This analysis is based on 673 interviews with 473 Ethiopians and 200 Yemenis (see Table 1). Three interviews were excluded from the analysis (with 2 Eritrean women, and 1 Syrian woman).

As in Figure 1 below, the majority of respondents were married at the time of interview (62%); 33% reported that they were single; and the remainder that they were either divorced/separated (4%) or widowed (1%). The proportion of married respondents (n=418) was higher among those who reported that Somaliland was their final destination (68%), than those who were travelling onward (23%). Married respondents were also more numerous among Ethiopians (n=473, 78%) than Yemenis (n=200, 41%). This may suggest that married respondents travel relatively shorter overland distances than their unmarried counterparts.

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."

² 4Mi uses a purposive sampling method to identify respondents. We do not know whether the respondent is a migrant or a refugee before the interview.

Figure 1. Marital status

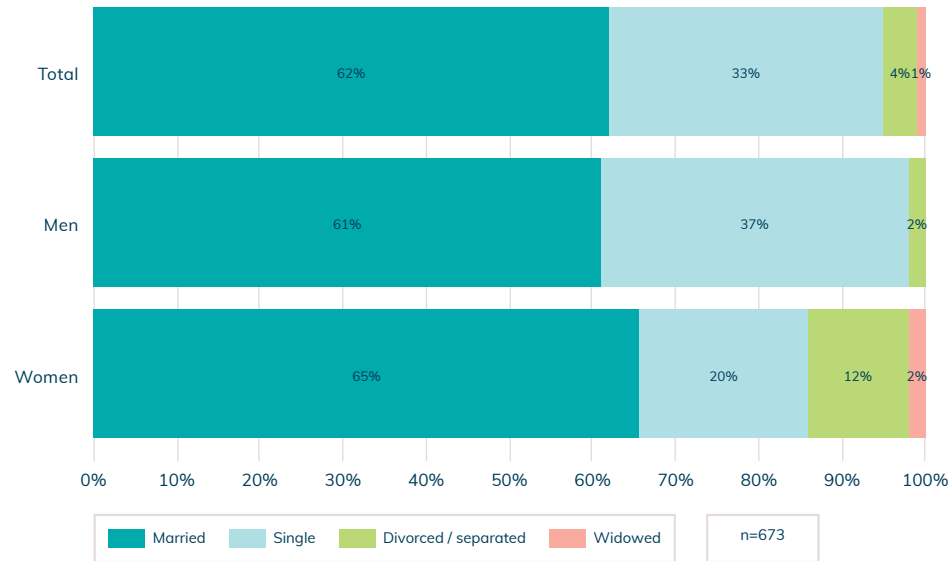
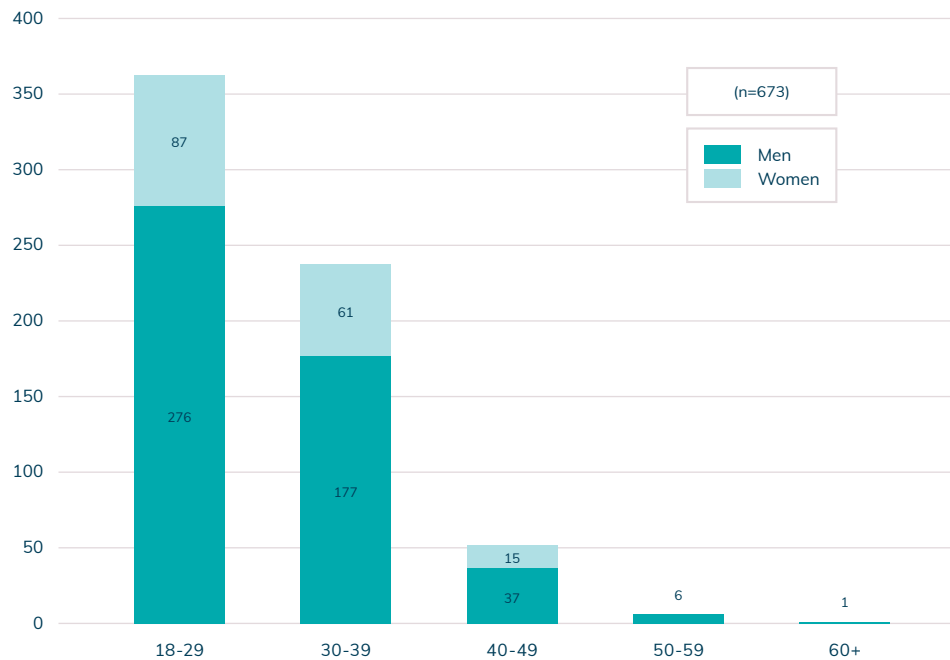


Figure 2. Age of respondents

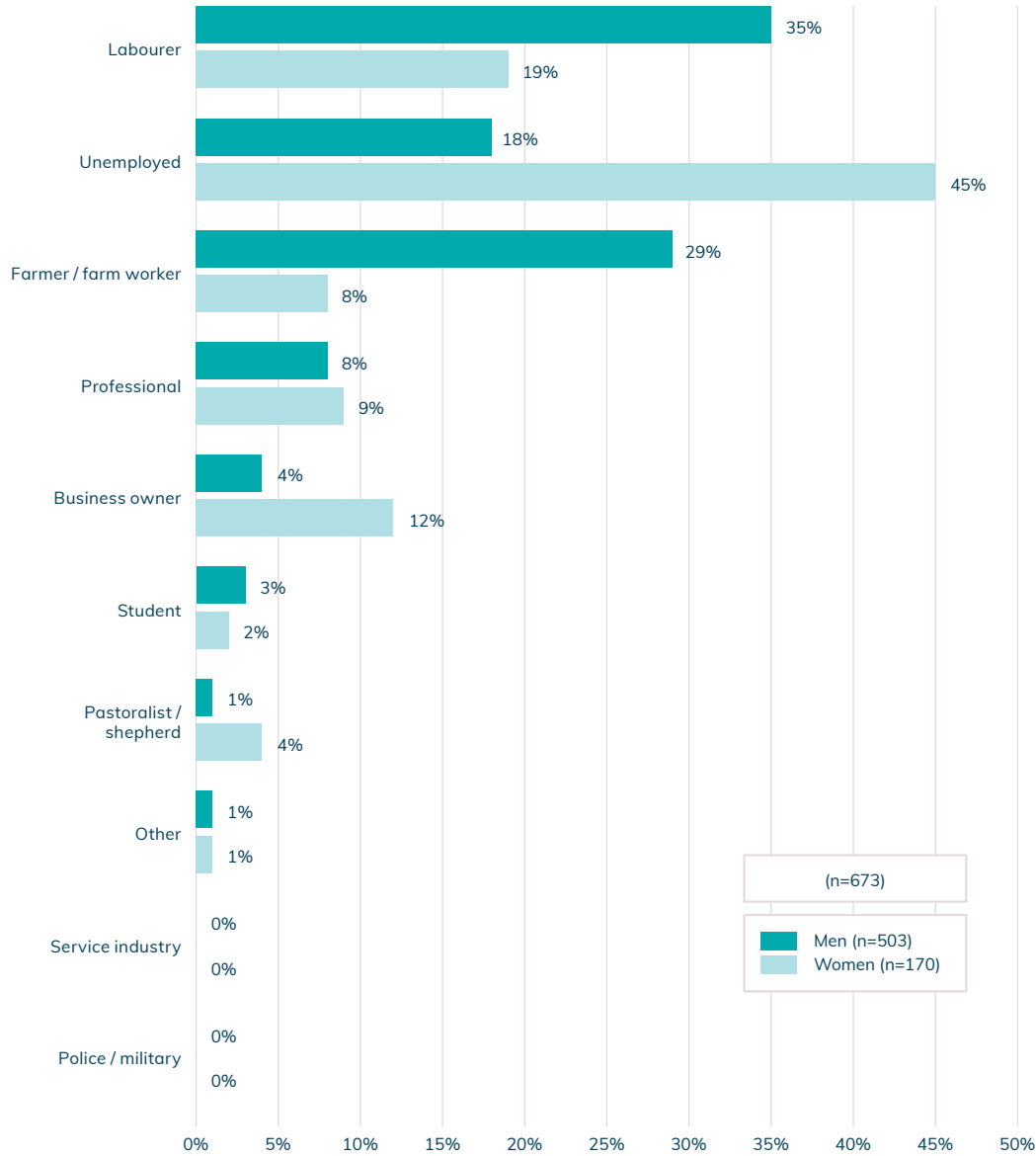


26% of respondents were women and 74% were men, with an average age of 30 years (both women and men had similar average ages). 54% of respondents were aged under 30. These profiles are in line with other data collected by MMC: unpublished data collected by 4Mi in Somaliland between 2016-2019 suggests that refugees and migrants travelling into or through Somaliland are predominantly male. Moreover, the 'Eastern Route', a well-established route for mixed movements to Yemen and the Gulf which has a few exit points in East Africa, including through Somaliland, [is largely made up of young men](#) (with estimates of nearly 20% women and around 10% children).

44% of Ethiopian respondents were from Oromia region (n=210). Oromia is the most populous region in Ethiopia and Oromos are reported to make up a [large proportion](#) of refugees and migrants travelling on the Eastern Route towards Yemen and the Gulf.

As seen in Figure 3 below, respondents were engaged in a variety of income-generating activities before embarking on their journeys. The most common occupation cited (by 31% of respondents) were working as casual labourers, without formal contracts or guarantee of hours.

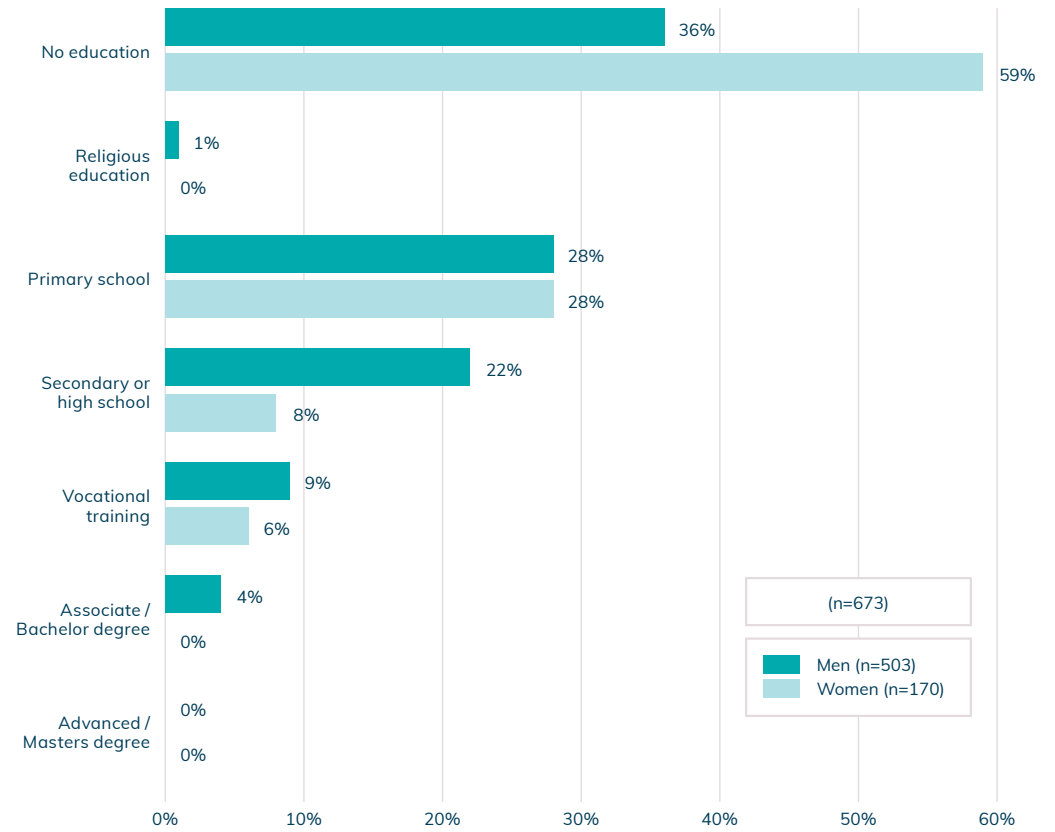
Figure 3. Occupation before departure



Many surveyed refugees and migrants had access to education

The majority of respondents (58%) had received some form of education before embarking on their journeys, ranging from primary school to university, see Figure 4. However, 42% had no access to education. Women’s access to education was lower (42%) than their male counterparts (64%). Ethiopian respondents in general had less access to formal education than those from Yemen; 46% of Ethiopian respondents had accessed education compared to 87% of Yemeni respondents.

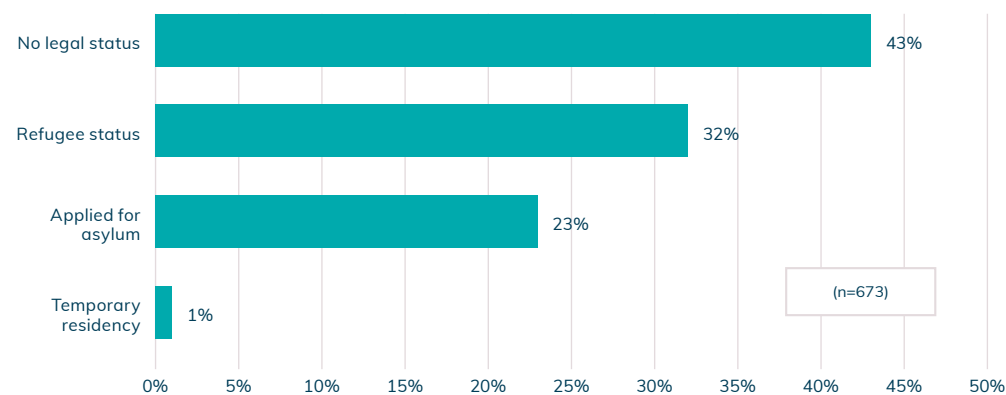
Figure 4. Highest level of education attained



Over half of surveyed respondents had sought asylum or were granted refugee status

When asked, “What is your current status?”, 43% of respondents reported that they had no legal status in Somaliland. This is consistent with the undocumented and irregular nature of mixed movements in the region. **55% of respondents reported that they had either applied for asylum (23%) or were registered refugees (32%).** 44% of respondents reported that they had not applied for asylum or been granted refugee status anywhere on their journeys. Of those who had not applied for asylum, and were on the move due to violence and general insecurity (n=71), 76% (54 respondents) said they had not applied as they were not aware that they could.

Figure 5. Legal status of interviewed respondents

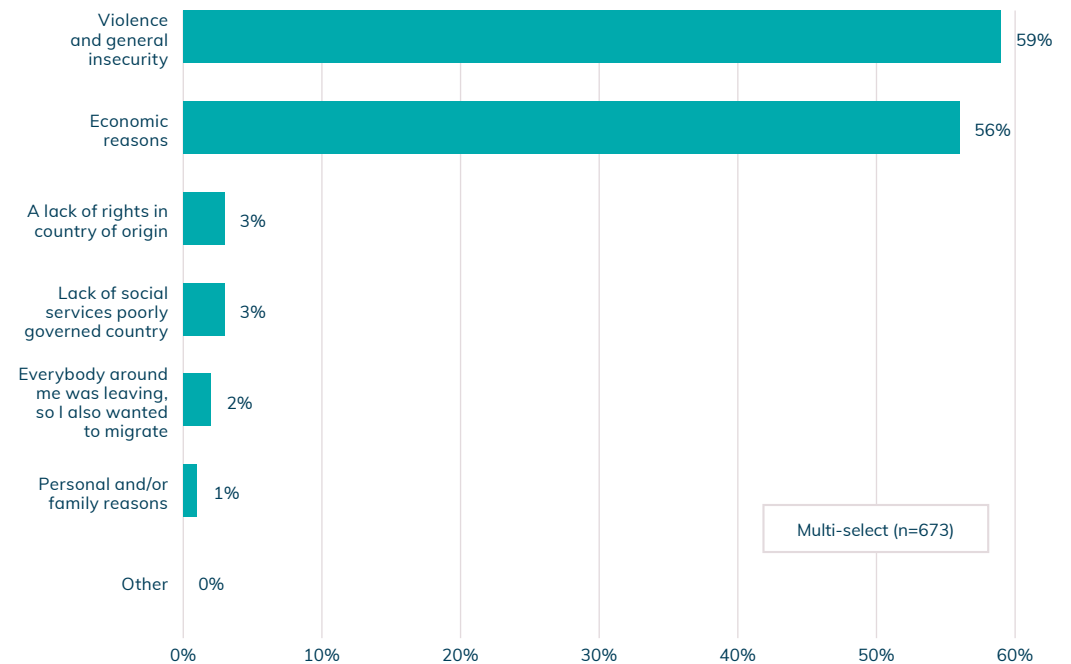


Violence and economic reasons drive movement

Respondents were able to select more than one answer option to the question “Why did you leave your country of departure?”. When analysed collectively (n=673), **the most-cited reason for leaving was violence and general insecurity (cited by 59% of respondents), followed by economic factors (56%).**

Most respondents (78%, n=525) reported that they were moving for one reason only. **Of those, 53% reported violence and insecurity as their reason for movement, and 46% cited economic reasons.** Female respondents were more likely to cite violence and insecurity as a reason for leaving (70%) than men (47%).

Figure 6. Why did you leave your country of departure?



22% of respondents gave more than one reason for movement (n=148), of which 91% gave two reasons, 9% three reasons, and 3% gave four reasons. The most common combination included both violence and economic reasons, accounting for 65% of responses. A breakdown of drivers by nationality reveals more nuance in reasons for leaving. Violence and general insecurity was a top factor for all groups, but was much

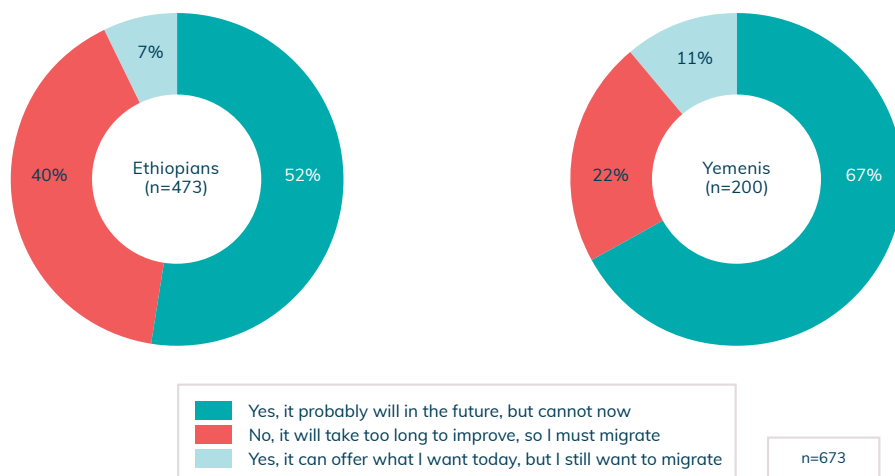
more of a concern among respondents from Yemen (89%, n=200), where the cumulative impact of years of conflict, poor governance and a declining economy has left 24 million people (around 80% of the population) [in need of humanitarian aid and protection](#).

Economic factors were cited more commonly among Ethiopian nationals (61%) than Yemeni nationals (45%). Unemployment was identified as the biggest challenge within this category, accounting for 58% of responses overall, but 70% of Ethiopian responses. Outside of the drivers listed, 39% of respondents (n=673) said that what their friends and family abroad were telling them influenced their decision to migrate.

Respondents felt compelled to move

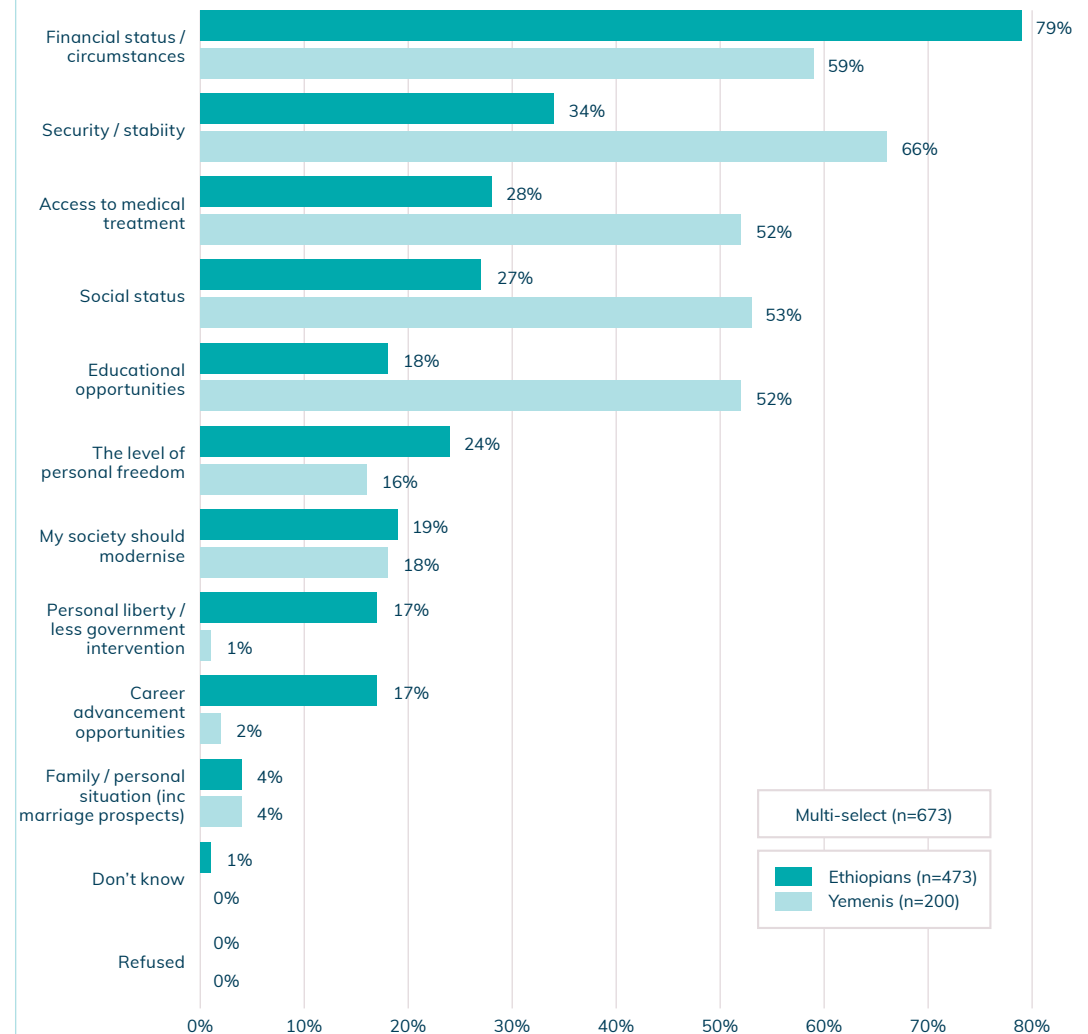
86% of respondents said they would have stayed in their country of departure had the reasons they cited not been affecting their lives. Refugees and migrants had mixed feelings about the prospects that their home countries would be able to offer in future. When asked whether their home countries would be able to offer the kind of life they want in the longer term, 57% of respondents answered 'yes, it probably will in the future but cannot now'. 32% were less hopeful, answering, 'no it will take too long to improve so I must migrate now'. 32% were less hopeful, answering, 'no it will take too long to improve so I must migrate now'.

Figure 7. Do you think your country will be able to offer you the kind of life you want in the future?



The [complexity of drivers](#) come to light when respondents are asked what should improve for them to have considered remaining in their country. The data in Figure 8 presents a whole range of issues, both structural and individual. Top answers included financial circumstances (73%), security and stability (44%), access to medical care (35%), and social status (34%). Yemeni respondents were most likely to cite security improvements (66%), while financial circumstances was top among Ethiopians (79%).

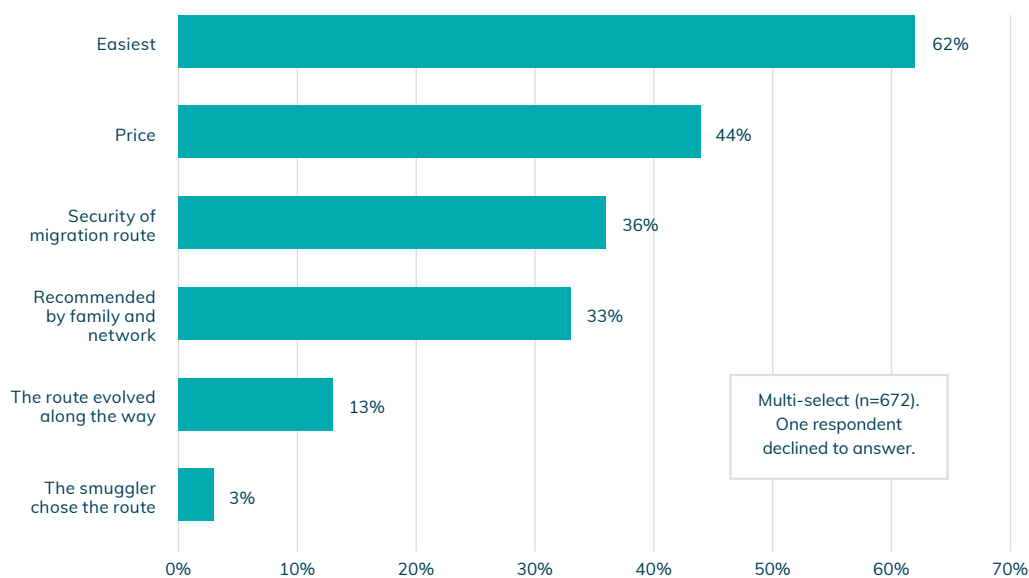
Figure 8. What should improve in order for you to have considered remaining in your country of departure?



Safety and security an important consideration in choosing route – but comes after price and ease

Security was an important consideration when choosing the route respondents took on their journeys. When asked why they had chosen the route they had used so far, 62% reported that it was the easiest,³ 44% that it was the cheapest, and 37% reported that they considered the safety of the route.

Figure 9. Reasons for choosing route



³ "Easiest" was an all-encompassing term that included factors such as shortest route, fastest route, and the route the respondent knew best.

For those who mentioned security of the route (n=245), the most important considerations were the number of checkpoints (49%), the risk of robbery (26%) and transiting through conflict areas (25%). Respondents from Ethiopia were more likely to consider the number of checkpoints (92%) than Yemeni respondents (30%). Similarly, Yemeni nationals were most likely to consider the risk of robbery (34%) and transit through conflict areas (17%) than Ethiopians, at 6% and 3% respectively.



4Mi

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, Europe and Latin America.

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

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.