

# Impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants with children

This is the third in a series of global thematic updates on 4Mi data collected remotely by MMC about the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants travelling along mixed migration routes in Africa, Asia and Latin America. After the initial roll-out of our adapted 4Mi survey focusing on the immediate impact of the pandemic in April, we moved into a new data collection phase in July, further zooming in on the impact of the pandemic on mixed migration. This third monthly thematic update focuses on how people travelling with children are affected by the COVID-19 crisis and, where relevant, how this compares to refugees and migrants who are without children under their care. Similar to MMC's previous global data updates since the start of the pandemic, these thematic reports provide an aggregated overview from all regions; more detailed, thematic and response-oriented COVID-19 snapshots are developed in each of the MMC regional offices and available [here](#).

## Key messages

- People with children in their care more often say **they don't have the space to maintain a reasonable physical distance** than those who do not have children in their care.
- Loss of income, and particularly **loss of income through loss of work**, is more frequently reported among people with children.
- In East Africa, respondents with children are **more frequently affected by lack of basic goods**.
- People with children more frequently report a **need for extra help, and for food and cash**.
- **Access to schooling has dropped considerably since the COVID-19 crisis began**. Many respondents' children had been in school before the pandemic, but now, in most regions, the vast majority of respondents with children said they had not been able to access any formal education.

## Context

Early on in the COVID-19 crisis, the [UN](#), among others, highlighted that while children were escaping the worst health effects of the disease itself, the crisis was still likely to have a severe effect on them, and in four main areas: poverty, survival and health, learning, and protection and safety. In May, [UNICEF](#) indicated the particular vulnerability of refugee and migrant children. Moreover, numerous organisations, as well as media sources, have highlighted protection [risks and incidents](#), ranging from [family tensions](#) to [expulsions](#) and [the suspension of education](#). This update explores the most recent 4Mi dataset relating to the lives of refugees and migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic to better understand the effects on people travelling with children.

## Profiles

4Mi does not interview children, so this analysis explores their experiences indirectly, by looking at what refugees and migrants who are travelling with children are reporting. This update is based on **6,104\* interviews** conducted between 2 July and 30 September 2020, including 1,594 interviews with adults travelling with children.

Within our sample, **women are more often travelling with children than men**: for each country of interview, women make up a larger share of the group travelling with children, and a smaller share of the group travelling without children. As such, in countries with a higher proportion of women respondents, there is a higher proportion of respondents travelling with children. **The lowest proportion of respondents travelling with children is found in Africa**: 12% in West Africa, 14% in North Africa, 13% in East Africa, compared to 40% in Asia and 63% in Latin America.

Overall, the sample in Latin America seems more settled (78% have reached the end of their journey) than in other regions (7% in West Africa and 19-22% in North Africa, East Africa, and Asia). In West Africa, East Africa, and Latin America, people travelling with children more frequently reported they had reached the end of their journey than those without; there was little difference between the groups in North Africa; and in Asia, people without children more frequently said they had reached the end of their journey (further research would be needed, but this may be because of the large number of families awaiting resettlement).

Note that the data here does not represent respondents' actual experience of incidents, rather respondents' direct perception of the prevailing situation, based on their own experience (this is made explicit during the interview). It depends on respondents' interpretation of the situation and contributes to an explanation of the relatively high number of neutral responses to some questions. It is an indicator of the prevalence of a phenomenon, not the severity.

Region	Country	Travelling with children	Travelling without children	Total
West Africa	Burkina Faso	65	437	502
	Mali	64	537	601
	Niger	74	447	521
North Africa	Libya	69	769	838
	Sudan	30	86	116
	Tunisia	147	722	869
East Africa	Djibouti	11	387	398
	Ethiopia	6	19	25
	Kenya	29	60	89
	Somalia	77	335	412
Latin America	Colombia	493	190	683
	Guatemala	54	85	139
	Mexico	86	98	184
	Peru	195	104	299
Asia	India	90	56	146
	Indonesia	65	94	159
	Malaysia	39	140	179

## Methodology

A summary of 4Mi methodology can be found [here](#). All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number. 144 interviews were discarded from analysis due to questionnaire incompleteness or data quality issues. 58 interviews were excluded from the analysis because the respondent either had not heard of COVID-19 (49) or refused to say whether they had heard of it (9). Since sample sizes at country level are still small for respondents travelling with children, there is no analysis by country.

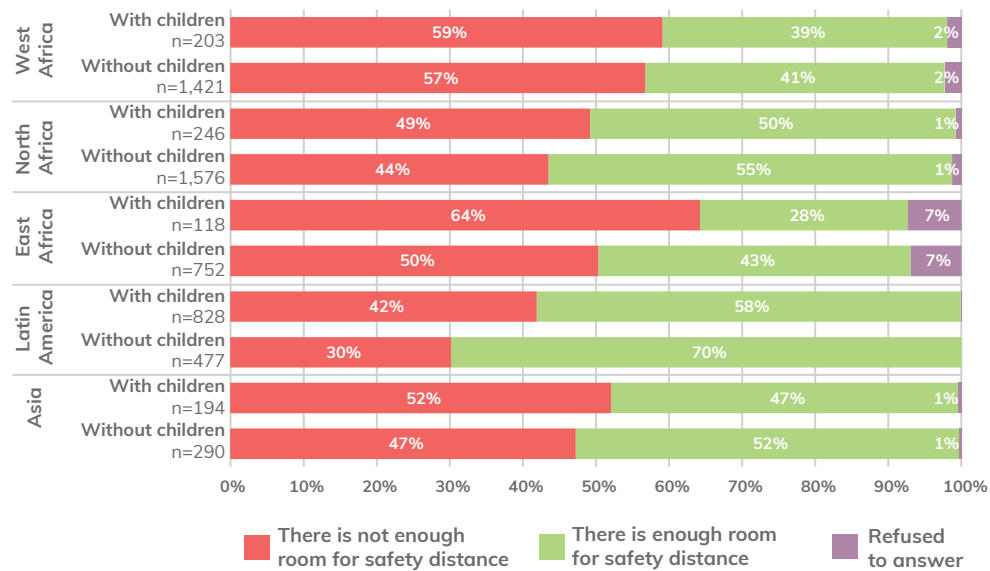
\* These thematic updates report on the findings from the revised 4Mi COVID-19 survey implemented since July 2020. Data collected between April and July (5,906 interviews) using a different survey has been reported in a series of global updates and regional snapshots.

## Living conditions

People travelling with children more frequently say they don't have the space to maintain a reasonable physical distance than those without. The disparity was higher among respondents in East Africa than among those in Latin America.

With regard to sanitation, one in three people with children said they share a toilet with people from 5 or more different households.

**Figure 1. Can you maintain physical distancing in your home?**



## Impact on daily life and income

**Figure 2. Have you lost income because of the COVID-19 pandemic?\***

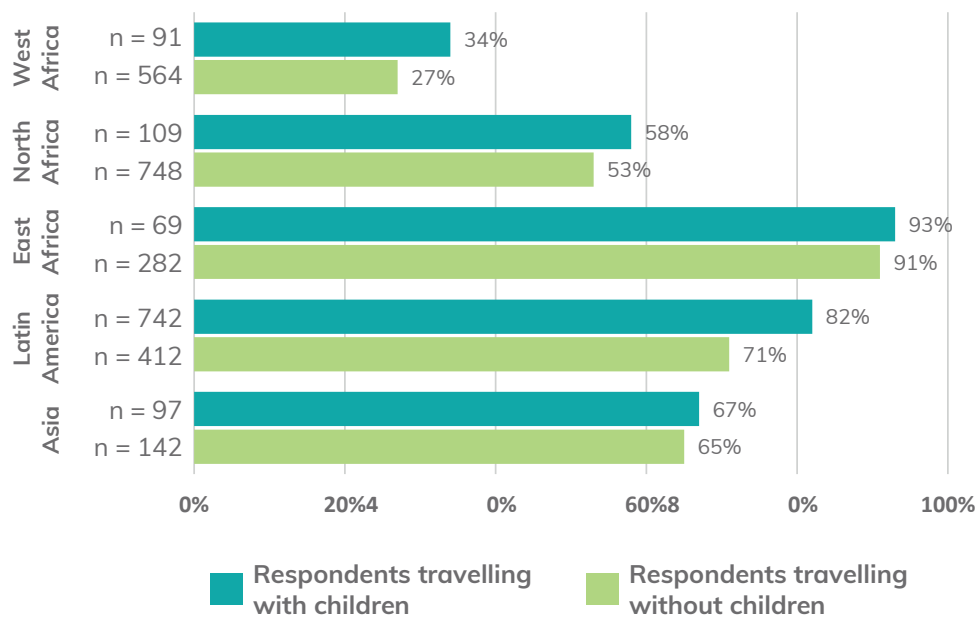


\* This is the percentage of respondents who were receiving an income before the pandemic. Number of respondents who said they were not receiving an income before the pandemic (with children, and without children, respectively): West Africa: 61, 490; North Africa: 95, 403; East Africa: 40, 407; Latin America: 49, 40; Asia: 86, 126.

When asked about the general impact on their lives, people with children in East Africa and Latin America more frequently reported an impact on their access to work (63% compared to 51%, and 89% compared to 83%), whereas it was people without children who were more frequently concerned in West Africa (62% compared to 52%). When asked directly about loss of income, **people who had children with them were generally more likely to say they had lost income, and lost that income through loss of work.** Figure 2 shows that while the majority of all respondents have lost income, those without children have more frequently continued to receive the same income.

When asked about the impact of income loss, people travelling with families were generally more likely to say they had reduced access to basic goods, they were experiencing increased worry and anxiety, and were falling into increasing debt.

**Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who cannot afford basic goods\***



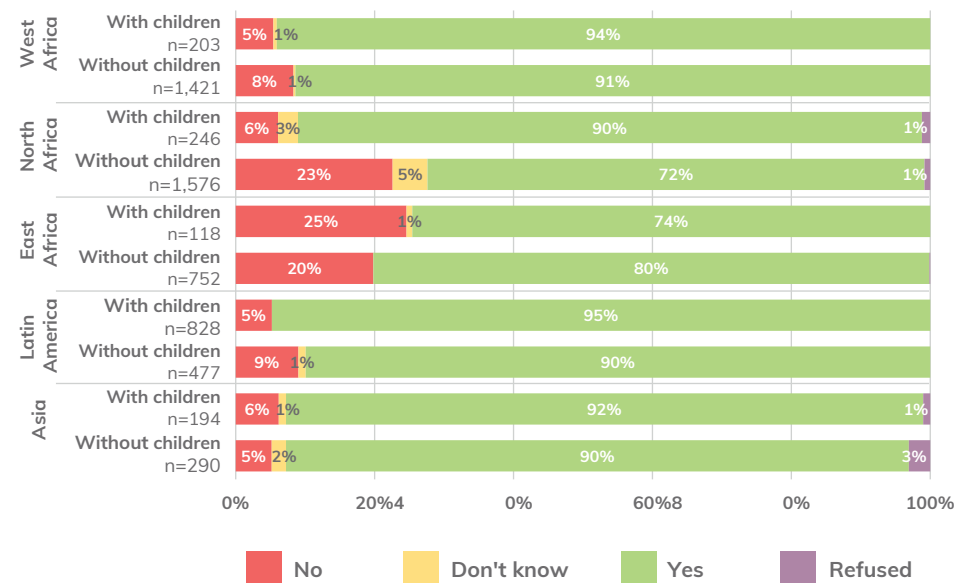
\* This is analysis of one response - respondents can provide multiple answers to the question of the impact of loss of income.

## Need for assistance

**People travelling with children more frequently report the need for extra help, particularly in North Africa,** which is in line with the more frequent impact on income among those with children in their care. (In East Africa, respondents taking care of children were less likely to say they were in need of help, despite more frequently reporting difficulties accessing basic goods. This is an area that merits further investigation).

Respondents with children in their care are slightly more likely to report a need for cash, although patterns in needs differentiate little between those with and without children. Cash is the most frequent need for both groups (ranging from 53% among respondents without children in East Africa to 89% among those with children in West Africa). Other frequently reported needs are food and access to health services.

**Figure 4. Are you in need of extra help?**

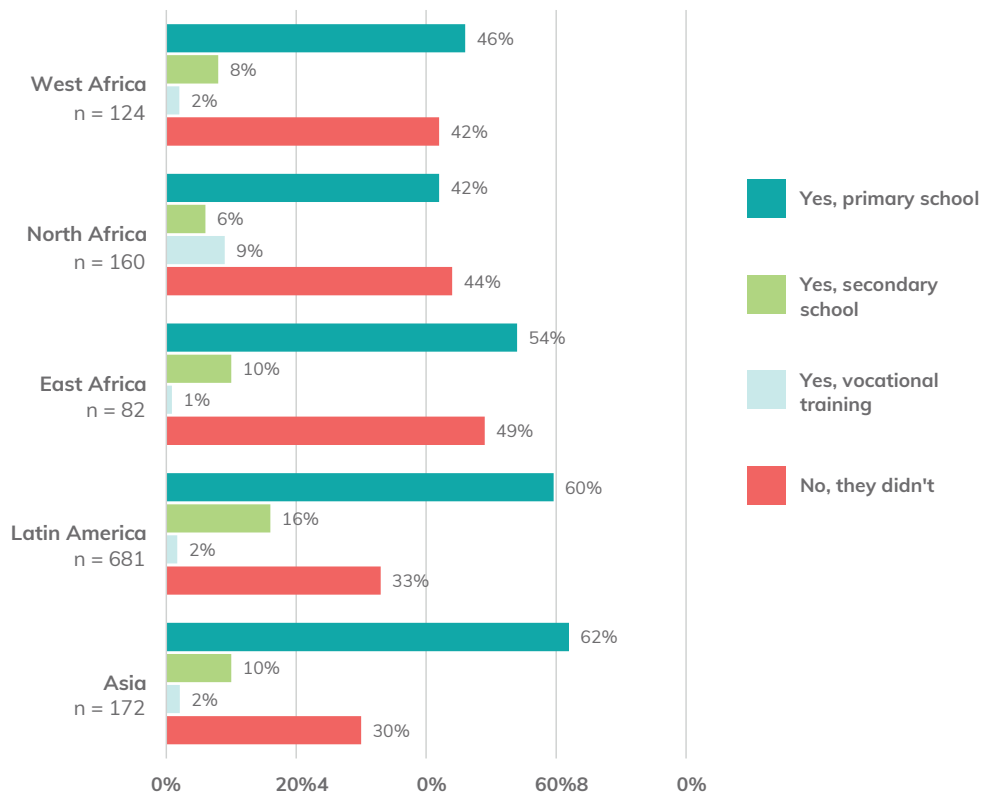


A relatively large share of respondents with children who needed cash intended to spend it on education: around 40% in North Africa, East Africa and Asia, 24% in West Africa, and 10% in Latin America.

## Children's access to learning

Overall, around two-thirds of respondents reported that their children were accessing education before COVID-19, either full-time or part-time. Even among populations that are considered to be highly mobile and very much in transit, such as in West Africa, over half of respondents said their children were in school.

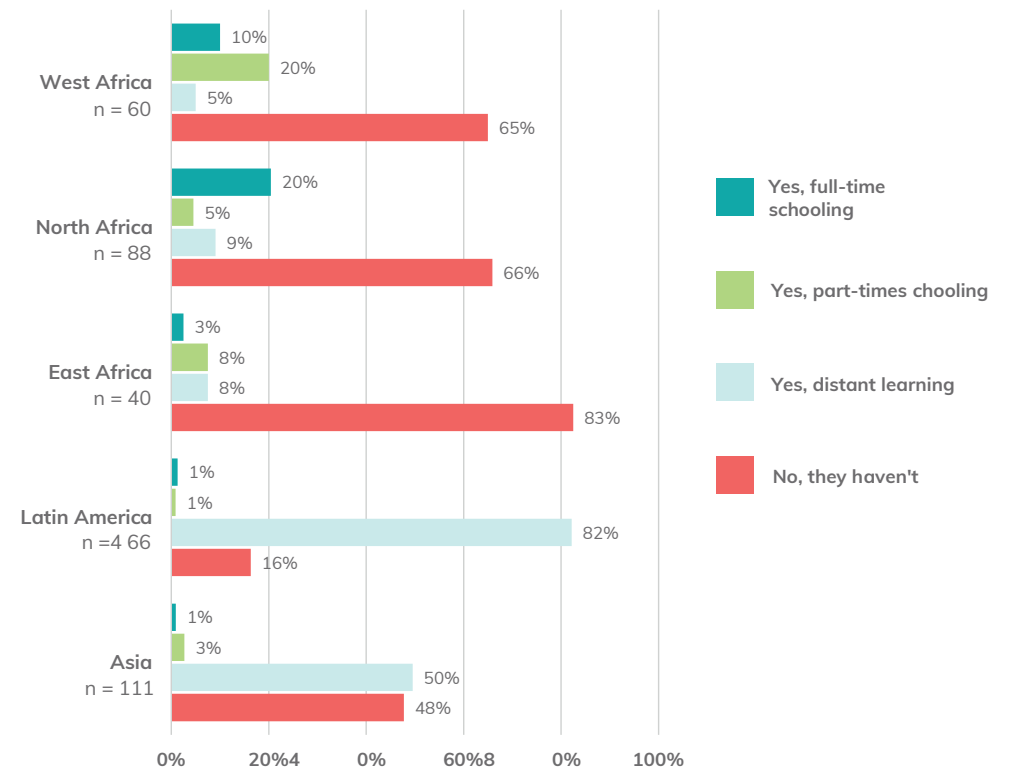
**Figure 5. Did your children receive schooling before the pandemic?\***



\* Respondents who indicated that their children were too young to access schooling were not included in the analysis. Respondents who say yes can provide more than one answer.

When those who had children in school were asked about education since COVID-19, a large majority in North Africa, West Africa and East Africa said their children had not received any schooling, and 48% reported the same in Asia. The situation is better in Latin America, where 82% said their children had access to distance learning.

**Figure 6. Have your children been receiving schooling during the pandemic?\***



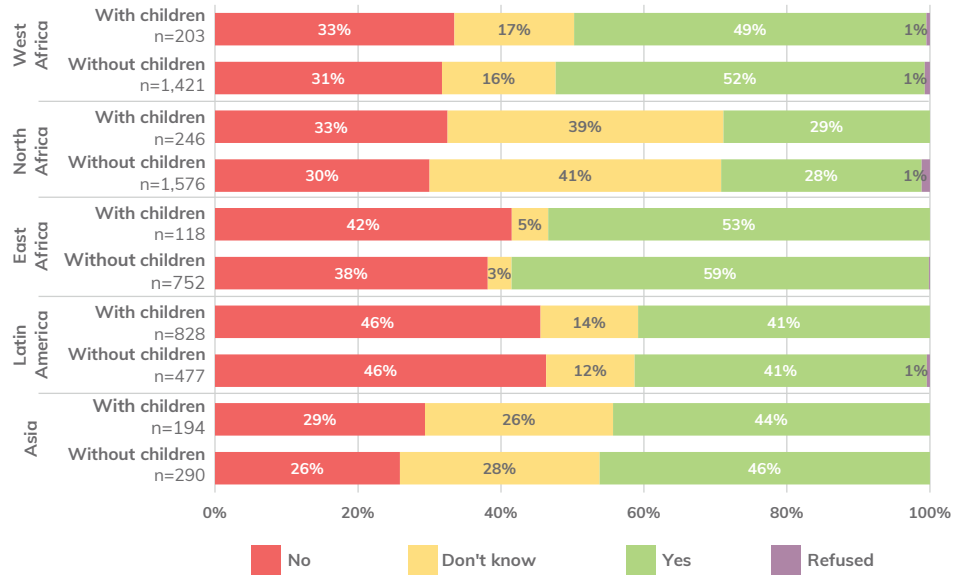
In conclusion, these figures indicate that **overall access to schooling among the children of respondents has fallen from a majority to a very concerning small minority** (except in Latin America).

\* Only respondents whose children did have access to education are asked this question, hence the small sample size. Respondents who say yes can supply more than one answer.

## Access to health services

It can be assumed that people travelling with children are generally more likely to need access to health services, for themselves or their children; it is therefore a concern that perceived access to health services (for any reason) is around the same, and in fact slightly lower among respondents with children in their care in West Africa, East Africa, and Asia.

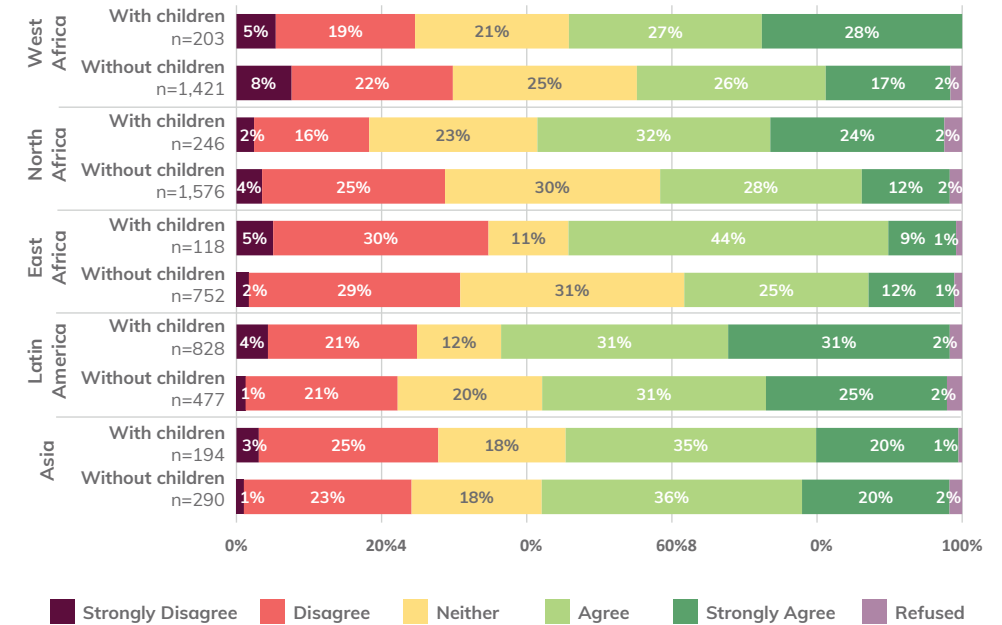
**Figure 7. Would you be able to access health services today?**



## Domestic violence

The [previous global update](#) highlighted that more than 40% of respondents in all regions agreed that domestic violence had increased, with more than 50% of women agreeing in all regions except East Africa. This finding persists, with the percentage higher among people travelling with children (which includes a higher proportion of women respondents, see profiles on page 1).

**Figure 8. Would you agree that domestic violence has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began?**



## Refugee and migrant voices

*“Personally if I was not obliged [to migrate], I would go home rather than suffering all these risks with my children.”*

**23-year-old woman from Benin interviewed in Burkina Faso**

*“Often we have to think a thousand times before making certain decisions, especially when we have children in our care. Better to suffer at home than to go through an ordeal in a foreign country, and unfortunately in my case it is a shame for me to return to my country after having made this journey.”*

**24-year-old woman from Guinea interviewed in Mali**

*“During our trip my daughter was infected with an illness (measles) which is why I stopped here. We were hospitalized and I spent a lot of money.”*

**30-year-old woman from Chad interviewed in Niger**

*“...Here in Colombia I have worked selling coffee and doing little jobs that come up – cleaning houses and things like that. I am alone with my daughters, I have not paid the rent and the lady of the house is asking me to leave.”*

**22-year-old woman from Venezuela interviewed in Colombia**

*“The one who I negotiated with told me that I would pass safely, that although we were going through the irregular border crossings it was safe because we were all family. [...] Several Wayuu came out to chase us armed, on motorcycles because we got lost. They threatened us that if we didn't give them money we would have to get off the vehicle. [...] It is useless to migrate if you are going to die in the middle of the irregular border crossings. It is not worth risking our children's lives or ours.”*

**42-year-old woman from Venezuela interviewed in Colombia**

\* The Wayuu are an indigenous people who live in La Guajira, a border region between Colombia and Venezuela, and control territory - including irregular border crossings - in that area.

*“Even though I am not having a good migration experience I'm ready to bear this situation because of my children. In Afghanistan my children were not able to go out without any threat, even for to their school and education.”*

**50-year-old woman from Afghanistan interviewed in India**

## 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](http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)

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