

Assistance needed and received among migrants and refugees in Guatemala and Mexico

This snapshot focuses on the increased need for humanitarian assistance caused by the COVID-19 pandemic among refugees and migrants in Guatemala and Mexico, as well as the additional assistance that they received during this crisis. It aims to contribute to building 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.

Recommendations

- Increase humanitarian assistance to limit the adverse impact of the COVID-19 crisis for refugees and migrants and avoid negative coping mechanisms.
- Prioritize cash-based assistance to ensure that refugees and migrants can cover their most pressing needs.
- Ensure that refugees and migrants are adequately included in government relief programs related to COVID-19.

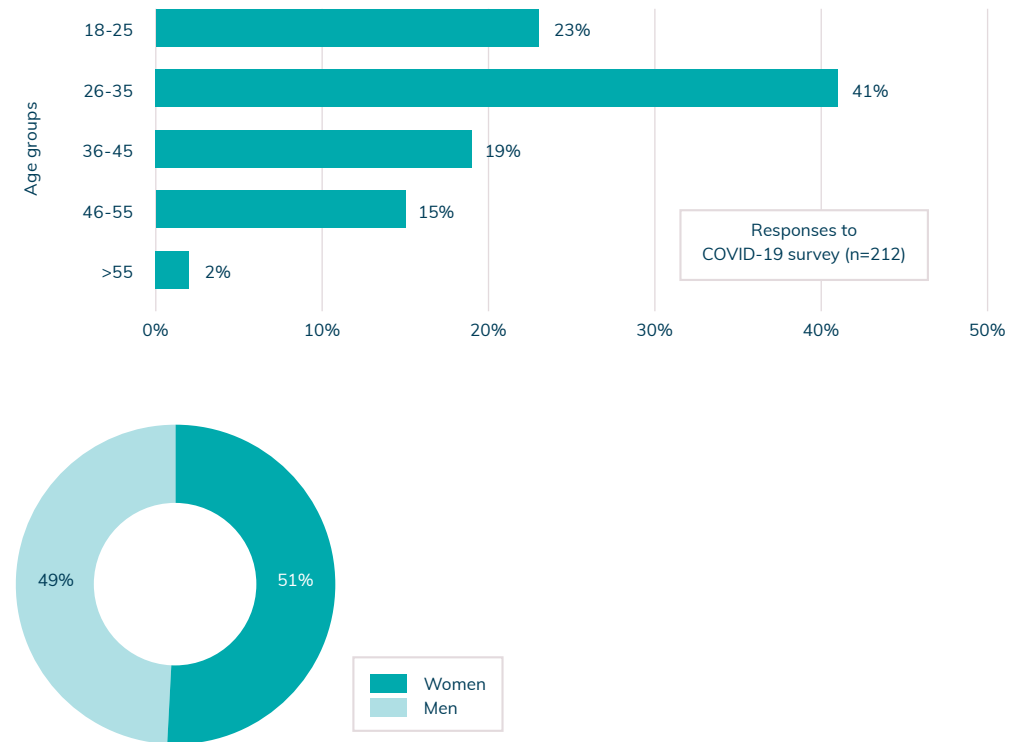
Profiles

This analysis is based on 212 surveys conducted between 13 July and 29 August 2020. Data collection was carried out remotely by phone.

59% of respondents were interviewed in Guatemala and 41% in Mexico. 87% of those interviewed in Guatemala were in Guatemala City and 13% were in other cities such as Chimaltenango, Escuintla, Quetzaltenango, Sacatepéquez. 91% of respondents in Mexico were in Tapachula (State of Chiapas) and the remaining 9% were in different cities including Ciudad Hidalgo and Escuintla.

51% of respondents were women and 49% were men. The average age of respondents was 34. (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Age range and sex



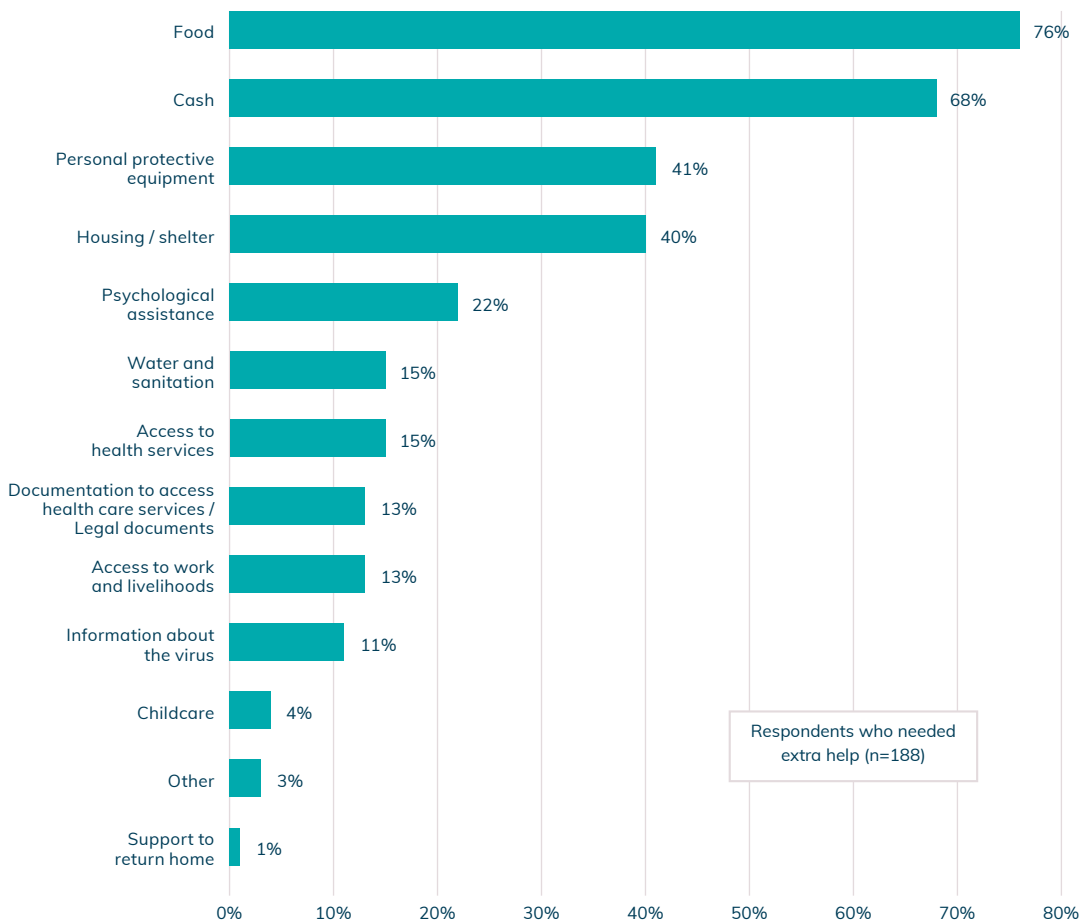
38% of respondents had completed high school, followed by elementary school (25%), vocational training (19%) and higher education (13%).

Respondents were mainly from Honduras (87 of 212, or 41%), El Salvador (58 of 212, or 27%) and Nicaragua (41 of 212, or 19%). 13% of respondents came from other countries: Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Mexico. As more interviews are conducted in Mexico, the proportion of Guatemalan respondents is likely to increase.

Widespread need for additional assistance

The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has left refugees and migrants in Guatemala and Mexico struggling: 89% of all respondents reported needing additional assistance during the crisis. Regarding the type of assistance needed, respondents most frequently cited food (76% of respondents), followed by cash (68%). Personal protective equipment such as soap, mask, gloves, etc. and housing or shelter were also frequently reported, by 41% and 40% of respondents, respectively. 22% indicated needing psychological assistance, while 15% mentioned water and/or sanitation and access to medical services (see Figure 2).

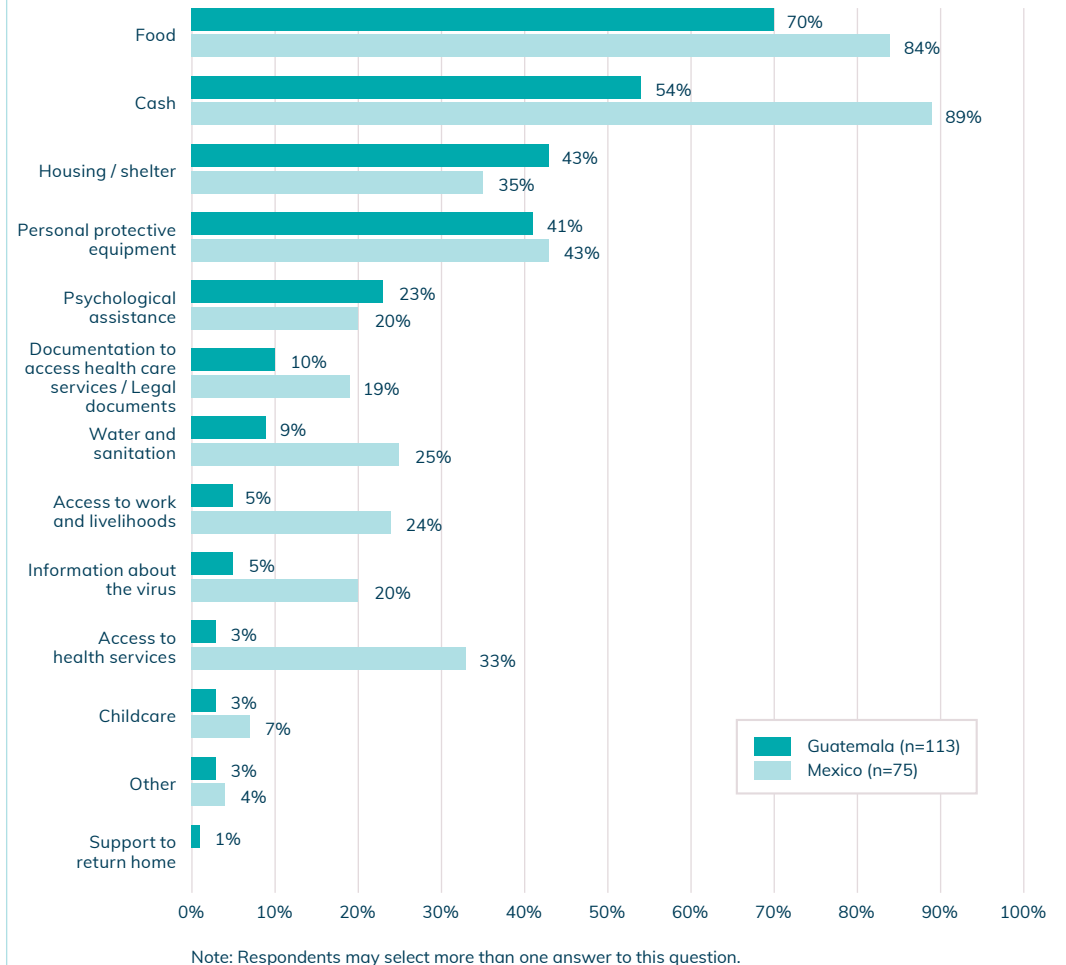
Figure 2. What kind of extra help have you needed?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

A disaggregated analysis shows significant differences¹ between the data collected in the two countries of interview, with most types of assistance needs being more frequently cited among refugees and migrants in Mexico, although results must be interpreted with caution, given the relatively low number of interviews. 84% of respondents in Mexico reported needing food, versus 70% of respondents in Guatemala. Likewise, 89% of interviewees in Mexico indicated a need for cash-based assistance, versus 54% of respondents in Guatemala. The need for housing and/or shelter, on the contrary, seems to be more pronounced among respondents in Guatemala (43%) than in Mexico (35%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Country comparison: What kind of extra help do you need?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

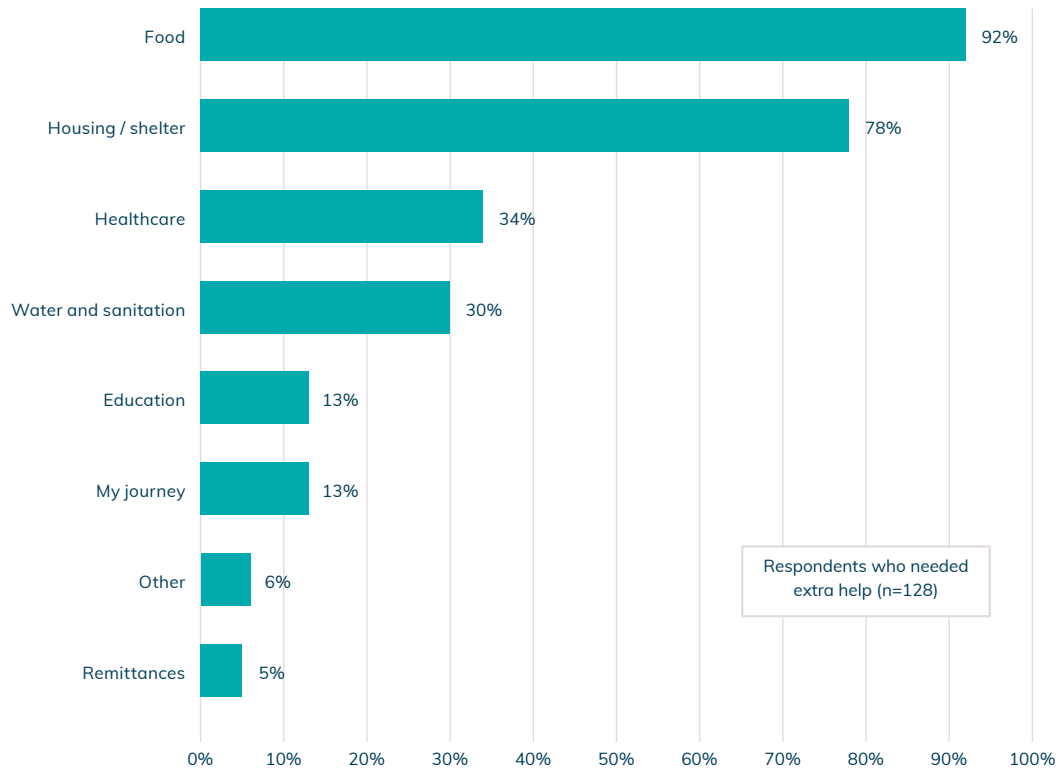
¹ p-value= 0.000.

"I am very much in need. I am no longer afraid of deportation, but I am afraid of starving."

23-year-old Honduran man in Ciudad Hidalgo (Mexico)

Among respondents who answered that they needed cash, the vast majority stated that they needed it to cover basic needs: 92% indicated that the cash would be to purchase food, 78% for shelter or housing, 34% for medical care, while 30% for water and/or sanitation expenses. Only a small minority (13%) stated that they would use cash-based assistance to continue their migration journey (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. What do you need the cash for?

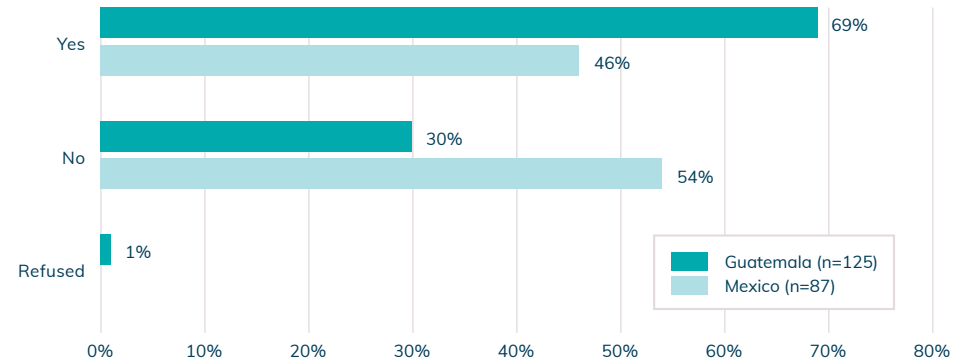


Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

Almost half of respondents had not received additional assistance

40% of migrants and refugees interviewed in Guatemala and Mexico indicated not having received any additional assistance since the COVID-19 crisis began. While 60% of all respondents did receive additional assistance, there was a significant difference² between the two countries of interview: 69% of respondents in Guatemala had received assistance, compared to only 46% of respondents in Mexico (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Have you received additional assistance since the coronavirus crisis began?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

It should be noted that, in both countries, most respondents were referred to 4Mi by local NGOs that are providing humanitarian assistance., therefore the percentage of those who received assistance among the general migrant and refugee population is likely to be lower.

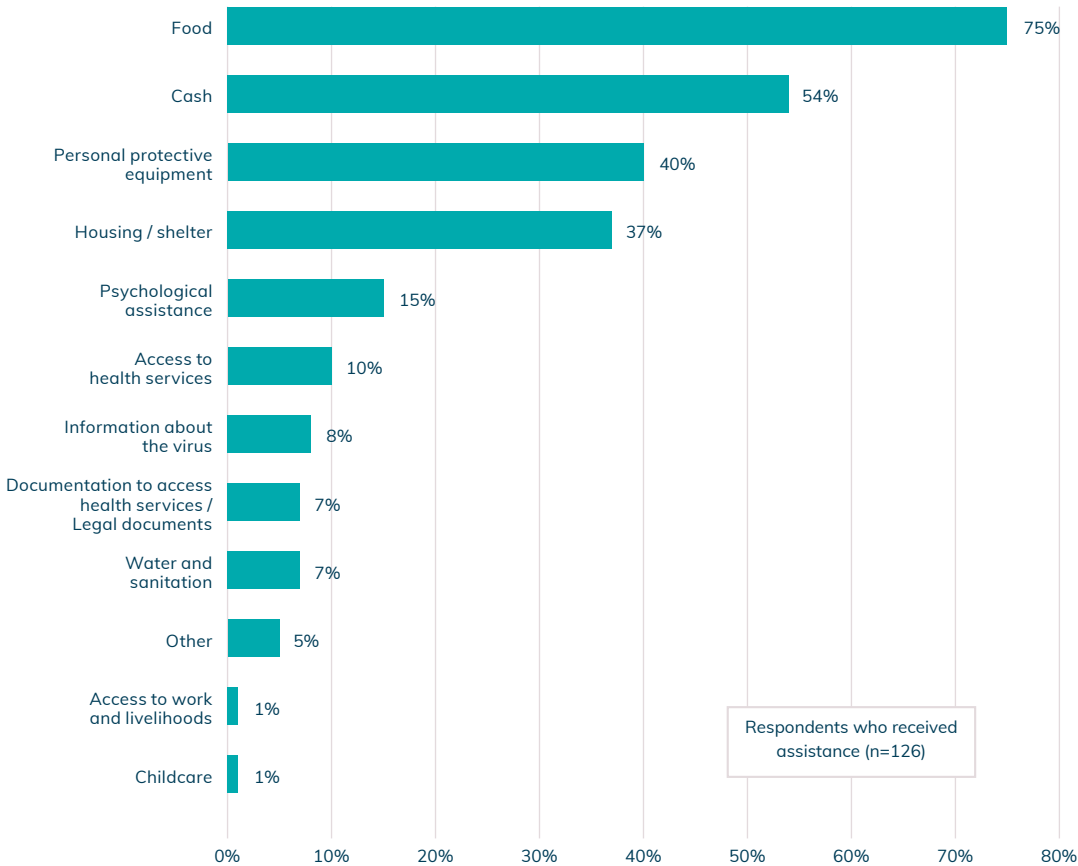
"I feel abandoned and frustrated, because migrants don't receive real help and assistance, and they often humiliate us when we seek help."

29-year-old Salvadoran woman in Guatemala City, Guatemala

² p-value= 0.002.

The main type of assistance that refugees and migrants received during the pandemic was food (75% of those who received assistance), followed by cash-based assistance (54%), personal protective equipment against the virus (40%), housing or shelter (37%) and psychological assistance (15%), among other mentions (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. What assistance was that?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

The forms of assistance received by respondents largely match their reported needs, although the extent seems to be insufficient.

"[The assistance provided] is not enough. [...] I am thankful for the good intentions, but the planning of assistance distribution is poor. They give you pasta, but you don't have enough money to buy tomatoes or onions or oil."

33-year-old Honduran woman in Guatemala City (Guatemala)

There are significant differences³ between the type of assistance received by respondents in the two countries of interview, with most forms of assistance being much more frequently cited in Guatemala than in Mexico. For example, while 79% of respondents (68 of 86) who received assistance in Guatemala reported having received food, only 65% of those in Mexico (26 of 40) did. In the same way, 53% of respondents (46 of 86) in Guatemala received personal protection equipment, versus 13% of respondents (5 of 40) in Mexico. Additionally, 51% of respondents (44 of 86) in Guatemala stated having received assistance for housing or shelter, compared to only 5% of respondents (2 of 40) in Mexico.

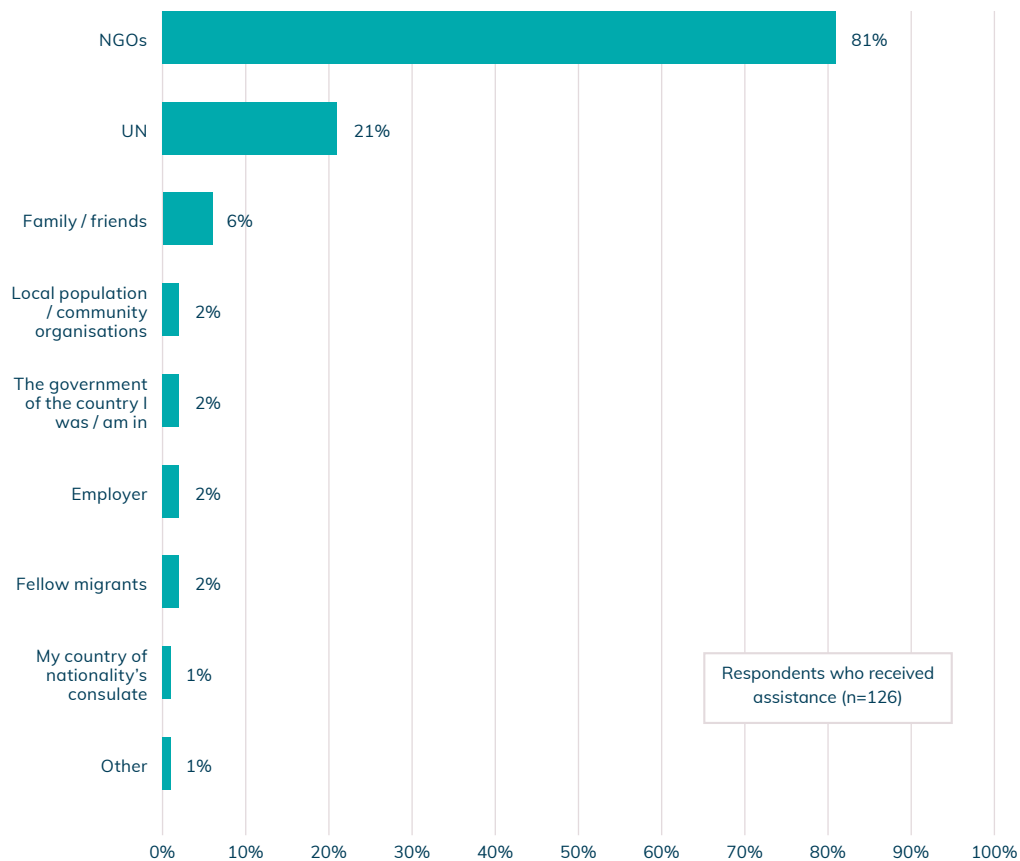
NGOs are the main assistance provider

The main assistance provider indicated by respondents in both Guatemala and Mexico were NGOs (81% of those interviewed), followed by the United Nations (21%) and friends and/or family (6%). Virtually no respondent had received assistance from the authorities of the host country (see Figure 7). A higher percentage of respondents mentioned a UN agency as assistance provider in Guatemala (21 of 86 respondents, or 24%) compared to Mexico (5 of 40 respondents, or 13%).

As previously mentioned, however, most respondents were referred to 4Mi by local NGOs that provide humanitarian assistance, which might cause some bias in the answer to this question.

³ p-value= 0.000.

Figure 7. Who did you receive it from?



Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

Respondents who received assistance (n=126)

“Migration can be different if you seek support from organizations that give that kind of help, because traveling alone is very difficult. You risk being mistreated and even abused in different ways.”
33-year-old Honduran woman in Guatemala City (Guatemala)



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

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