Mixed Migration Centre

The impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants in Somaliland

Key findings from 4Mi data collection in Somaliland from August to December 2020

MMC Research Report, June 2021

Acknowledgements

About MMC

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network consisting of six regional hubs (Asia, East Africa & Yemen, Europe, North Africa, West Africa and Latin America & Caribbean) and a central unit in Geneva. The MMC is a leading source of independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of, and governed by, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector.

This report is produced with the financial and technical support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The information and views set out in this report are those of the Mixed Migration Centre and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Danish Refugee Council or of UNHCR. Responsibility for the content of this report lies entirely with the MMC.

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www.mixedmigration.org

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Executive Summary

On 25 March 2020, the Somaliland government confirmed its first two cases of coronavirus. This triggered a quick succession of regulations that closed air, land and sea ports of entry, and led to the closure of most public spaces including mosques, schools, and restaurants. At the same time, other governments across East Africa implemented strict travel restrictions and widespread border closures to combat the spread of the coronavirus. These restrictions significantly impacted mixed movements[1] throughout the region, and many migrants were stranded[2] and unable to move on or to return to their countries of origin. The restrictions also disrupted the movement of refugees and migrants[3] in mixed movements throughout Somaliland.

With the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2020 the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) collaborated on a partnership to strengthen the protection of people in mixed movements and to prevent the abuse of people on the move in Somaliland. Through MMC's flagship primary data collection program, the Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi), MMC collected systematic data directly from refugees and migrants at various entry and transit locations in Somaliland, which was used to understand the dynamics affecting movement and protection risks within the context of the pandemic.

About this report

This report is the part of a series of reports on mixed movements into and through Somalia that the MMC will publish in 2021 as part of the collaboration with UNHCR. This work is in line with the MMC strategic objectives to contribute to a better, more nuanced and balanced understanding of mixed migration, to effective evidence-based protection responses for people on the move, and to contribute to evidence-based advocacy and better informed regional and migration policies and debates.

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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   IOM (2021), Djibouti stranded migrants – February 2021.
3   MMC uses 'refugees and migrants' when referring to all those in mixed migration movements (including asylum seekers, stateless people and others on the move), unless referring to a particular group of people with a defined status within these movements.

Key findings

Profiles
1. 4Mi interviewed a total of 1,738 respondents, 79% were from Ethiopia and 21% were from Yemen. 72% were men and 28% were women with an average age of 29 years old.
2. Nearly all Yemeni respondents identified themselves as refugees (98%) or asylum seekers (1%), while the majority of Ethiopians (89%) identified themselves as migrants.
3. Overall, 58% of respondents had completed some form of schooling. However, Yemeni respondents were generally more educated than Ethiopian respondents; 92% Yemenis said that they had completed some schooling, compared with 49% of Ethiopians.
4. Conflict was reported as the main driver for Yemeni respondents (90%), while Ethiopian respondents most frequently cited economic factors as a reason for leaving (85%).
5. 63% of respondents (62% Ethiopians, 54% Yemenis) said that Somaliland was their final destination. Among those still on the move, most Ethiopians indicated Saudi Arabia as their preferred destination, while 50% of Yemenis said they preferred to travel to Europe.

Awareness, knowledge and risk perception
6. Most respondents were aware of coronavirus and concerned about contracting or transmitting the virus. However, 56% of respondents said that they were doing nothing to protect themselves.
7. This is linked to respondents not feeling that protective measures were necessary (45%), a lack of protective equipment (33%), and an inability to practice physical distancing in living spaces (25%).

Impact on the journey
8. 95% of Yemeni respondents said that conflict played a role in driving their movement from their country of departure, while 80% of Ethiopians said that economic conditions were a factor in their movement. For 57% of respondents, COVID-19 did not impact their decision to migrate. Where it did play a role however, respondents most often reported that this was linked to economic factors (64%) and conflict and violence (50%).
9. 65% of all respondents report that COVID-19 had impacted their journeys, with specific effects on mobility across borders (39%) and movement within countries (37%). However, 64% said their intentions to move remained the same even if they were delayed.

Impact on access to health
10. The majority of respondents interviewed in Somaliland felt they would not be able to access healthcare services if they presented COVID-19 symptoms (80%), or if they had other health concerns (79%). The most-frequently cited barriers to accessing health services noted by respondents were: not knowing where to go for healthcare (62%), and not having money to pay for health services (48%).

Impact on work and livelihoods
11. Income loss related to the COVID-19 crisis is contributing to rising vulnerability among refugees and migrants in Somaliland, as 68% say they are no longer able to afford basic goods, and 25% say they are falling into debt.
12. Basic needs which could limit the negative impacts of COVID-19 have not been met. 74% of respondents say they are in need of cash, and 50% in need of food.

Impact on protection risks
13. Almost half (49%) of surveyed respondents say that they travelled through dangerous locations on their journey. The town of Wajaale (on both Ethiopian and Somali sides of the border), was frequently mentioned by Ethiopian respondents, while Aden, Sana'a and Ta'iz were cited frequently by Yemeni respondents.
14. Physical violence, detention and death were identified as the top risks in the journey. Government officials, armed groups, criminal gangs and smugglers were identified among those likely to perpetrate a variety of abuses against those on the move.
15. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of arbitrary arrest/detention (60%) and deportation (54%) on the journey.

Overview: Mixed movements through Somaliland

Somaliland as a key area for mixed movements in East Africa

Somaliland is a key area of departure, transit and destination for people moving in mixed movements through the East Africa region. Every year, tens of thousands of refugees and migrants travel to Somaliland to look for safety and better opportunities, and many (including Somalis) transit through Somaliland on their way to other destinations within the region or further afield. Due to its geographical location, Somaliland is positioned along two primary routes for mixed movements: (a) the northern route towards North Africa through Ethiopia and often Sudan and Libya;[4] and (b) the eastern route[5] to the Arabian Peninsula, via Bossaso or Djibouti to Yemen. Since 2015, Somaliland's coastal town of Berbera has also served as a port of entry for (largely) Yemeni refugees and Somali and Ethiopian returnees fleeing conflict in Yemen.[6]

In January 2021, UNHCR estimated that the total number of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Somaliland was 13,634, the majority are Ethiopian (9,735) and Yemeni (3,125) nationals.[7] IOM further estimates that 44,188 migrants entered into Somaliland between February and December 2020, through crossing points at Buhoodle, Harirad, and Loya Ade.[8]

COVID-19 and the effect on movement through Somaliland

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic changed the landscape for refugee and migrant movements across the world. In Somaliland, the first two cases of COVID-19 were confirmed on 25 March 2020.[9] As of 20 February 2021, Somaliland reported a total of 1,480 cases.[10] In response to the global crisis, the Somaliland government set up a National Preparedness Committee on COVID-19, which issued directives to close schools, ban social events and gatherings, and restrict flights and travel into Somaliland. Simultaneously, the Somalia federal government directed the closure of land borders with Ethiopia and Djibouti, which neighbour Somaliland, on 26 March 2020.

These restrictions had a direct impact on the movement of refugees and migrants across Somaliland borders. As shown in Figure 1, inward movements into Somaliland dropped by 53% between March and April 2020, after the announcement of the first coronavirus cases, and remained suppressed throughout the year.

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4   Some also transit further along this route towards Europe.
5   IOM (2020), Comparative Eastern Corridor Route Analysis: Obock, Djibouti and Bossaso, Puntland.
6   See various updates by UNHCR on the Somalia Task Force on Yemen Situation.
7   UNHCR Somalia (2021), Population Dashboard January 2021.
8   IOM (2021), DTM Somalia Border Point Flow Monitoring
9   SomTribune (2020), Somaliland confirms 2 COVID-19 cases
10 Somaliland National Preparedness Committee for COVID-19 (2021), Somaliland COVID-19

Figure 1. Number of people crossing into Somaliland in 2019 and 2020[11]
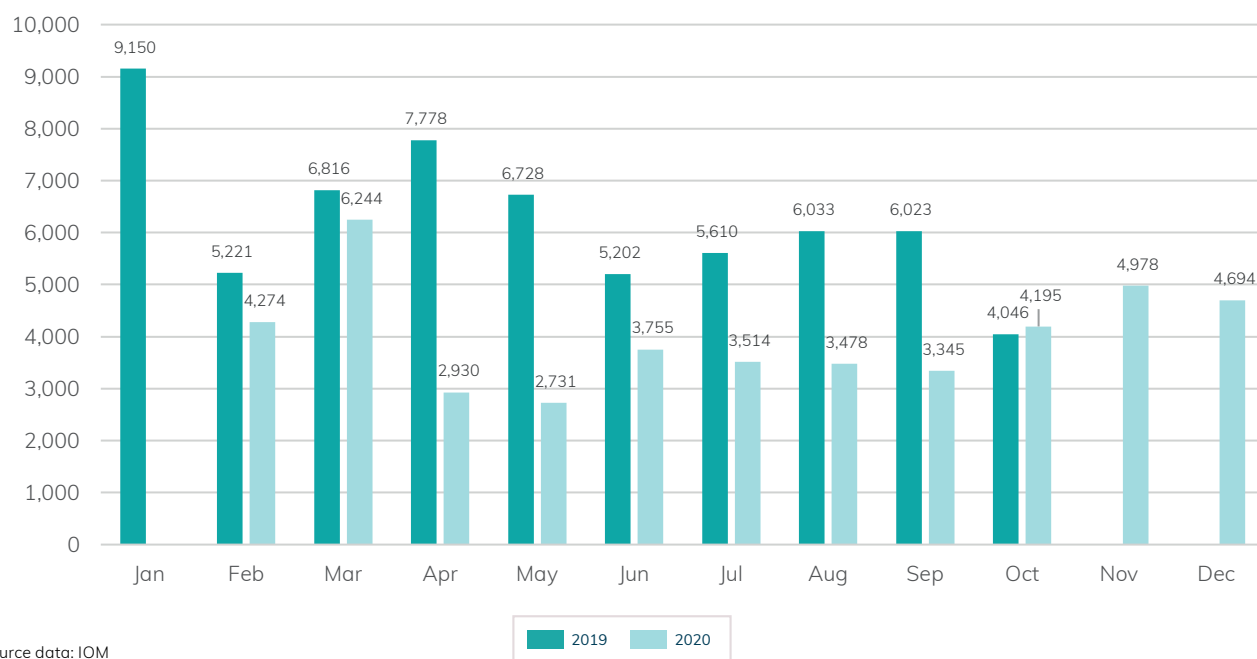
Source data: IOM

Based on a 4Mi survey conducted in Somaliland between August and December 2020, this analysis aims to provide some insights on the profiles of refugees and migrants in Somaliland in the context of the pandemic; their awareness and protective measures; and the impact of COVID-19 on their mobility, livelihood situations, needs and access to services and protection mechanisms.

4Mi methodology and COVID-19 adaptation

This report uses data from the MMC's flagship Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi), a unique primary data collection tool for interviewing people in mixed migration movements. 4Mi uses a closed-question survey to invite respondents to anonymously self-report on a wide range of issues that results in extensive data relating to individual profiles, migratory drivers, means of movement, conditions of movement, the smuggler economy, aspirations and destination choices. 4Mi helps to fill knowledge gaps, inform policy and contribute to more effective protection responses. It aims to provide an evidence base for decision-making.

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, MMC responded by changing the data it collects and the way it collects it. During April and June 2020, MMC revised its 4Mi methodology to be able to recruit and interview participants by phone instead of face-to-face. A new survey was developed - in collaboration with numerous agencies and partners working in the refugee and migrant space - to focus on the impact of COVID-19 on people on the move, awareness and access to information on COVID-19, access to health services, the impact of the crisis on individuals, changes in needs, changes in migration intentions, the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on migration journeys, protection issues, smuggling, the drivers of migration and migration routes.

Sampling for this project was achieved through a mixture of purposive and snowball approaches, and participants were recruited through a number of remote or third-party mechanisms, using social media, community networks, and assistance programs. Interviews were primarily conducted by phone. The survey revision considered the different constraints of telephone interviewing, including the more rapid onset of respondent fatigue. In order to remotely identify and interview respondents, some respondents were discreetly identified and recruited via social media. Others were recruited through contacts of previously interviewed respondents, and through community leaders working with refugees and migrants. The potential respondents are contacted by phone for interview, after obtaining informed consent. Data protection measures were in place to ensure that the data collected remains anonymous.

See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi

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11   IOM (2021), DTM Somalia Border Point Flow Monitoring. Data from border points at Buhoodle, Harirad, and Loya Ade. Figures for November-December 2019 and January 2020 are unavailable.

UNHCR partnership

For this joint partnership with UNHCR and DRC Somalia, 4Mi targeted non-Somali adults in Somaliland, irrespective of migration status, though often engaging in irregular migration. In collaboration with UNHCR, seven research locations in Somaliland were selected, namely Berbera, Borama, Burao, Erigabo, Hargeisa, Lasanod and Wajaale. A total of 10 monitors were recruited based on their knowledge of mixed movements, experience with data collection, language skills and access to the population on the move. After recruitment, monitors were trained on mixed movements in Somaliland, remote data collection techniques, ethics, and on the use of the 4Mi tool.

Map 1. Map of data collection locations in Somaliland

Legend:
- Roads
- Regional boundary
- International boundary

The designations employed on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of MMC, the Danish Refugee Council or of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

4Mi findings

Profiles and demographics

The analysis presented in this report is based on 1,738 interviews conducted with refugees and migrants in Somaliland between 28 August and 31 December 2020. 1,369 respondents were from Ethiopia and 369 were from Yemen. 72% of the respondents were men and 28% were women, with an average age of 29. Interpretations based on this sample should be made with caution, as it does not necessarily represent the view of the entire Ethiopian or Yemeni community in Somaliland.

Table 1. Location of interviews

Interview locations	Ethiopians		Yemenis		Total respondents		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Total
Berbera	31	127	48	197	79	324	403
Borama	72	73	0	0	72	73	145
Burao	43	131	1	25	44	156	200
Erigabo	18	121	0	1	18	122	140
Hargeisa	125	103	43	54	168	157	325
Lasanod	10	95	0	0	10	95	105
Wajaale	97	323	0	0	97	323	420
Total	396	973	92	277	488	1,250	1,738

Figure 2. Age range and sex of respondents
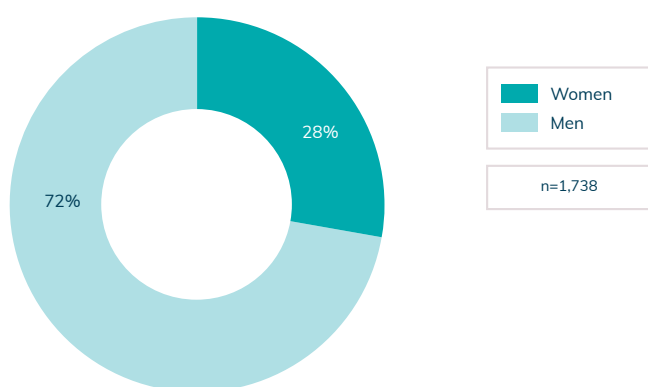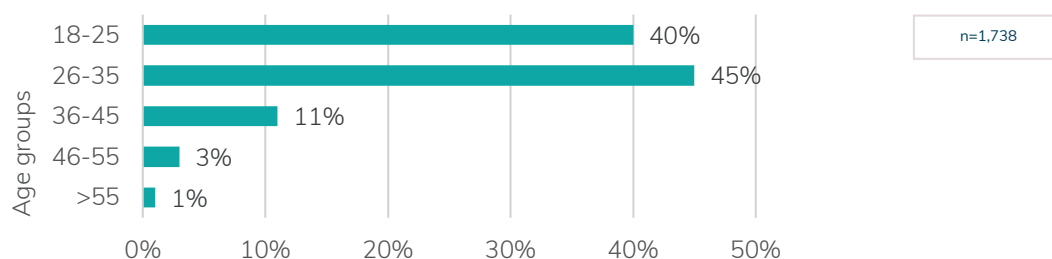
Overall, 58% of respondents had completed some form of schooling in their countries of departure. However, Yemeni respondents were generally more educated than Ethiopian respondents. 92% Yemenis said that they had completed some schooling, compared with 49% of Ethiopians. Yemenis were also more likely to have completed higher levels of education than Ethiopians. 54% of Yemenis said they had completed secondary education, vocational training or university education, compared with 18% of Ethiopians. Women were more likely to report not completing any schooling than men (respectively 53% versus 37%), and reported lower levels of education across the board.

The majority of respondents (59%) were living in private rented accommodation at the time of interview. However, Ethiopian respondents (n=1,369), were far more likely to be living in collective shelters[12] (24%) or on the streets (11%) than Yemeni respondents (n=369) (3% and 1% respectively). Ethiopian respondents were also more likely to say that they did not have access to a toilet (24% versus 1% Yemeni respondents), and that there was not enough room for people to safely distance 1.5m from one another (85% versus 34% respectively).

Status of respondents[13]

Almost all Yemeni respondents (99%) identified themselves as asylum seekers or refugees, while the majority of Ethiopians (89%) identified as migrants. Yemeni nationals qualify for *prima facie* refugee status in Somaliland, but 5 respondents did not apply for asylum. When asked why not, four respondents said they didn't know they could, and one respondent said they didn't want to. The majority of Ethiopians (88%) on the other hand, did not apply for asylum. When asked why not, 54% said they did not know that they could, 28% said that they didn't think they would qualify, and 16% said that they didn't want to.

Figure 3. Status of respondents
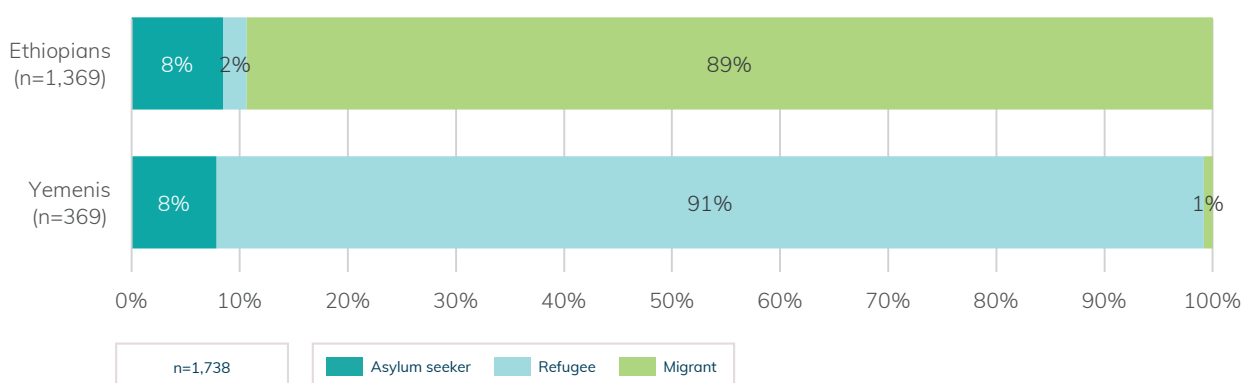
Somaliland was a destination for most respondents, with 63% reporting that they had reached the end of their journey (62% Ethiopians, 54% Yemenis). Among Ethiopians who were still on their journey (n=517), 69% indicated that they intended to travel to Saudi Arabia, and 6% to other countries in the Gulf. Among Yemenis still on the move (n=134), 50% said they wanted to travel to Europe.

For the majority of respondents (80%), this was their first attempt to leave their country, although this was higher among Ethiopian respondents than Yemeni respondents (85% versus 63% comparatively). 11% said that they had successfully migrated before, and 8% said that they had attempted the journey but were unsuccessful in reaching their destination.
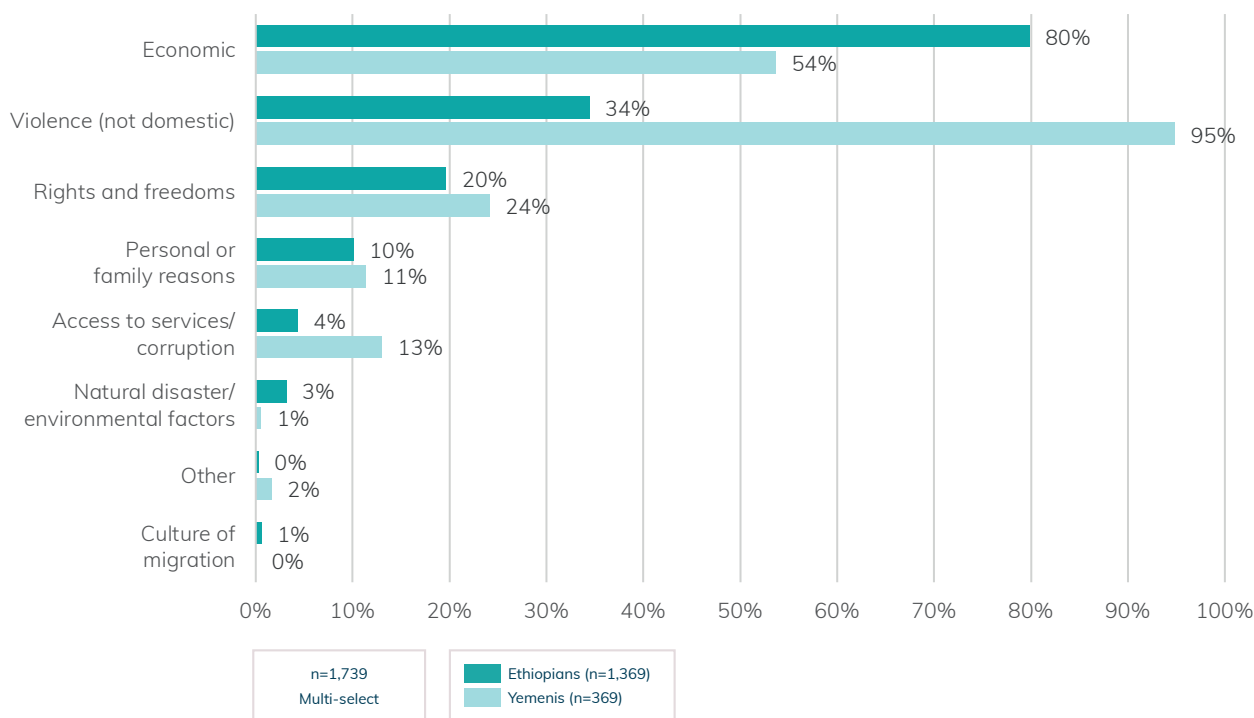
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12 Includes places such as schools, workplaces or places of worship
13 Respondents self-report their status. 4Mi does not ask for verifying documentation.

Drivers of movement

A mix of economic factors and violence are key drivers for most respondents interviewed in Somaliland. Economic reasons were the most frequently mentioned reason among Ethiopian respondents (80%), whereas violence was more frequently cited by Yemeni respondents (95%).

Figure 4. Why did you leave your country of departure?

	Ethiopians (n=1,369)	Yemenis (n=369)
Economic	80%	54%
Violence (not domestic)	34%	95%
Rights and freedoms	20%	24%
Personal or family reasons	10%	11%
Access to services/corruption	4%	13%
Natural disaster/environmental factors	3%	1%
Other	0%	2%
Culture of migration	1%	0%

n=1,739
Multi-select

The proportion of respondents who made the decision to leave based on a single factor (50%) was equal to those who made the decision based on multiple factors (50%), highlighting the complexity of decision making related to mixed movements. Nonetheless, and unsurprisingly given the different situation in both countries, economic issues remained a top factor among Ethiopians, and violence was most frequently cited among Yemenis (note: these interviews were conducted mainly before the start of the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region). Among Ethiopian respondents who named a single reason for moving (n=812), 84% of respondents cited economic issues, and where multiple factors were considered (n=557), 74% of responses included economic reasons. Among Yemeni respondents who named a single reason (n=101), 87% cited violence, and where multiple factors were considered (n=268), 98% of responses noted violence as an issue.

> *"My school has been closed from April this year to present day November so I had to seek life opportunities and follow the footsteps of my friends because they have changed their lives and the lives of their families when they started working in higher paying countries."*
> **Ethiopian man interviewed in Burao**

48% of Yemeni respondents (n=172) began their journeys after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic (in or after April 2020). Among this group, **69% (n=118) said that COVID-19 influenced their decision to leave**, and among this group most respondents said that this was linked to conflict and violence (81%) (Figure 5). The coronavirus pandemic has added a new stressor to Yemen's fragile health system that has already been impacted by multiple other disease outbreaks, including cholera and measles, and devastated by the impacts of war.[14] 39% of Ethiopian respondents (n=482) began their journeys after the onset of the pandemic. Among this group, **54% of Ethiopian respondents said that COVID-19 was not a factor in their decision to leave**, but of those who did note it was a factor (n=259), most said that this was linked to economic factors.

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14   Human Rights Watch (2020), <u>War and COVID-19 in Yemen</u>.

Figure 5. Was coronavirus a factor in your decision to leave? (yes responses only)

	Ethiopians (n=259)	Yemenis (n=118)
Yes, related to economic drivers	76%	61%
Yes, related to conflict and violence	26%	81%
Yes, related to personal or family reasons	6%	19%
Yes, related to rights and freedoms	10%	7%
Yes, related to access to services	6%	17%
Yes, because I was afraid of the virus	5%	1%
Yes, other unrelated to any of the above	0%	

n=377
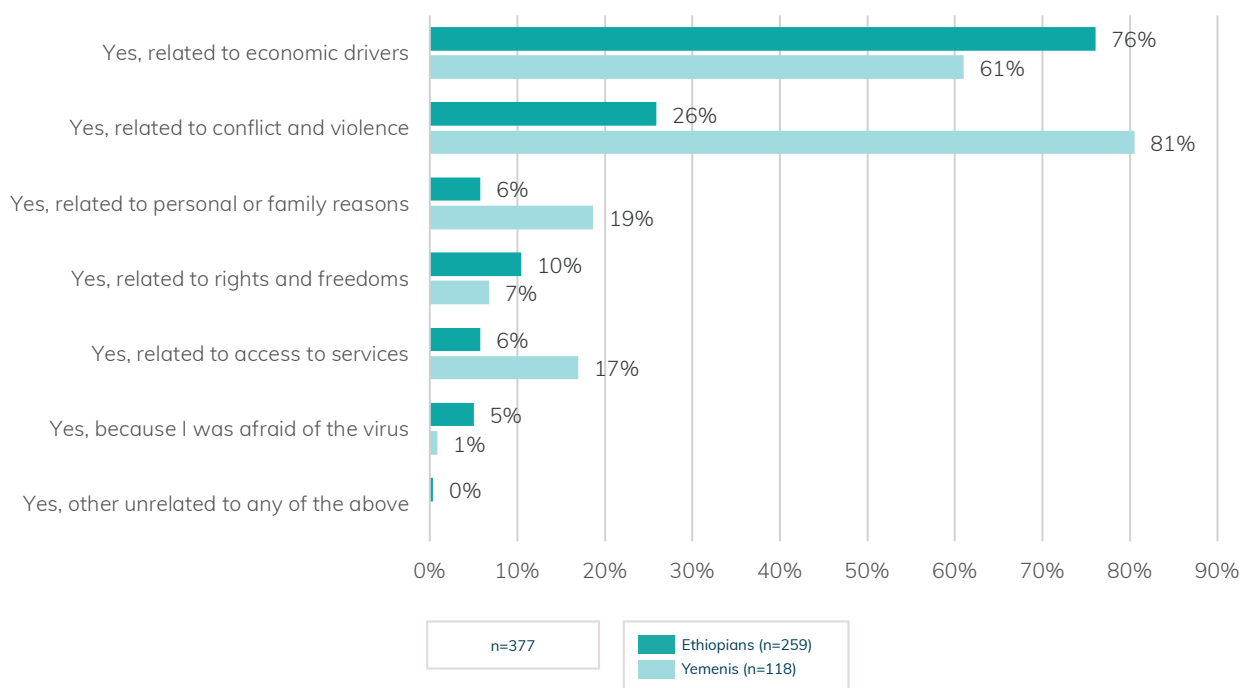
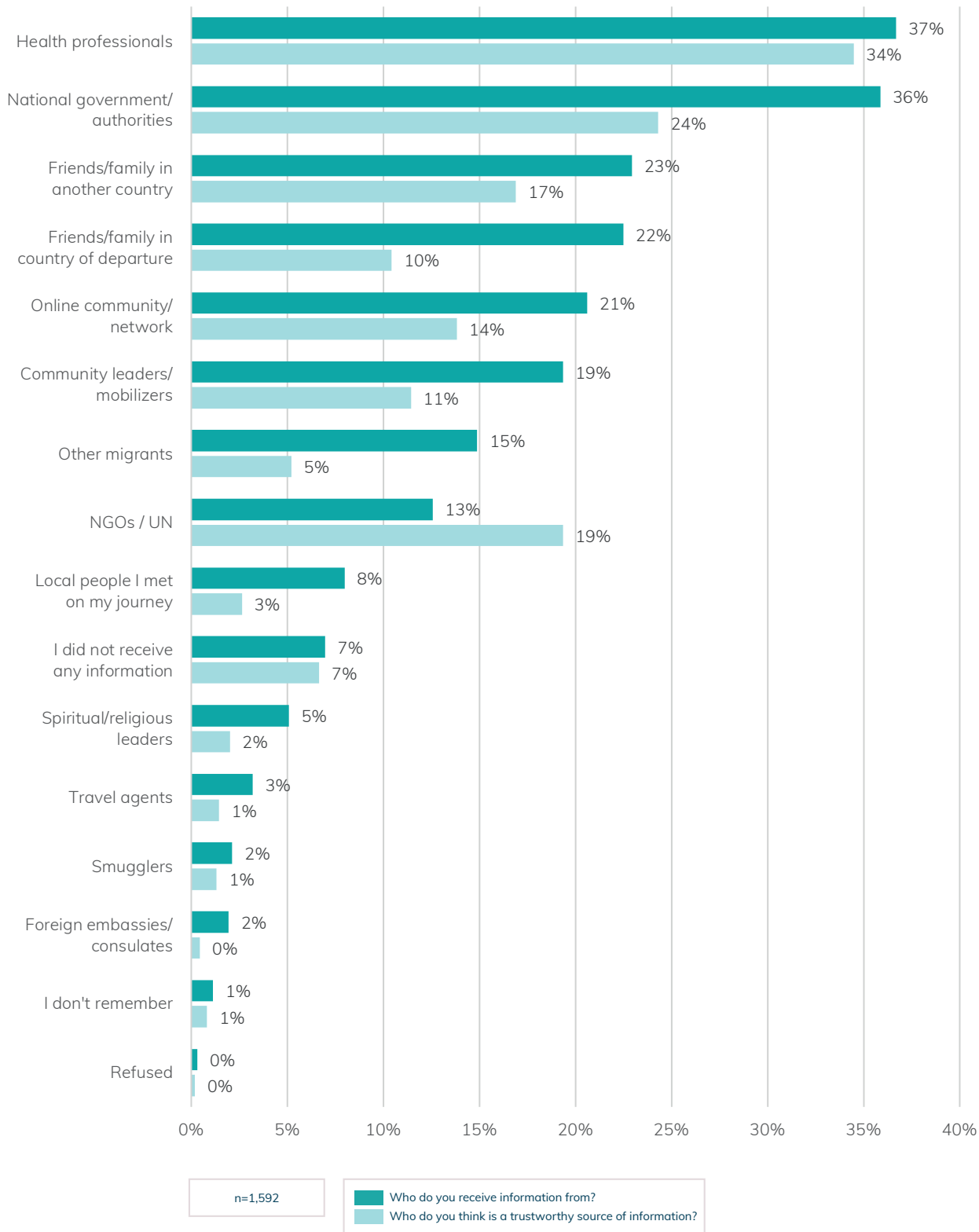# COVID-19: awareness, knowledge and risk perception

Awareness of coronavirus was high among respondents. When asked whether they had heard of COVID-19, 92% of respondents (n=1,738) said that they had. All remaining respondents had either not heard of the virus (n=71), or declined to answer the question (n=75). The following analysis on COVID-19 and its impacts will only include responses from those who were aware of COVID-19.

Most respondents are worried about catching or transmitting coronavirus. Overall, 73% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are worried about catching coronavirus, staying steady over time. In line with other 4Mi findings across the world, fewer respondents overall agreed or strongly agreed that they are worried about transmitting coronavirus (63%).[15]

93% of respondents said that they had received information about coronavirus. When asked about who they received information from, the top two sources for both nationality groups were health professionals (37%), and national government/authorities (36%). This also aligns with the sources that respondents considered to be most trustworthy (Figure 6). These findings are very different from the situation in Puntland, as reported in a companion report to this study, where health professionals and the national government, though also considered the most trustworthy, are among the information sources least often encountered. As shown in figure 6, there is a much better alignment between trustworthiness and use of information sources in Somaliland compared to Puntland. Most respondents reported receiving the information via Radio/TV (69%), followed by in-person (32%) and street advertising (25%). Yemeni respondents (n=360) were more likely to receive information through social media (35%) and websites (27%) than Ethiopian respondents (9% and 7% respectively). This may be explained by the fact that 45% of Yemenis said they had access to a smart phone during their journey, compared with just 6% of Ethiopians.

Figure 6. Sources of information on COVID-19

Source	Who do you receive information from?	Who do you think is a trustworthy source of information?
Health professionals	37%	34%
National government/authorities	36%	24%
Friends/family in another country	23%	17%
Friends/family in country of departure	22%	10%
Online community/network	21%	14%
Community leaders/mobilizers	19%	11%
Other migrants	15%	5%
NGOs / UN	13%	19%
Local people I met on my journey	8%	3%
I did not receive any information	7%	7%
Spiritual/religious leaders	5%	2%
Travel agents	3%	1%
Smugglers	2%	1%
Foreign embassies/consulates	2%	0%
I don't remember	1%	1%
Refused	0%	0%

n=1,592

Despite the reported high levels of awareness, overall 56% of respondents said that they were doing nothing to protect themselves against coronavirus. This proportion was higher among Ethiopian respondents (n=1,231) at 61% than Yemeni respondents (n=361) at 40%.

When asked why they were not taking any measures to protect themselves (n=899), respondents most frequently cited that they did not feel it was necessary to take precautions (45%). Some commentators have pointed to a sense of apathy among the general population in Somalia,16 which may also affect the refugee and migrant population in Somaliland. Beyond this, respondents' answers varied across nationality groups. Ethiopian respondents (n=755) for example, were far more likely to say that they did not know which precautions to take than Yemeni respondents (n=144) (22% versus 2% respectively).

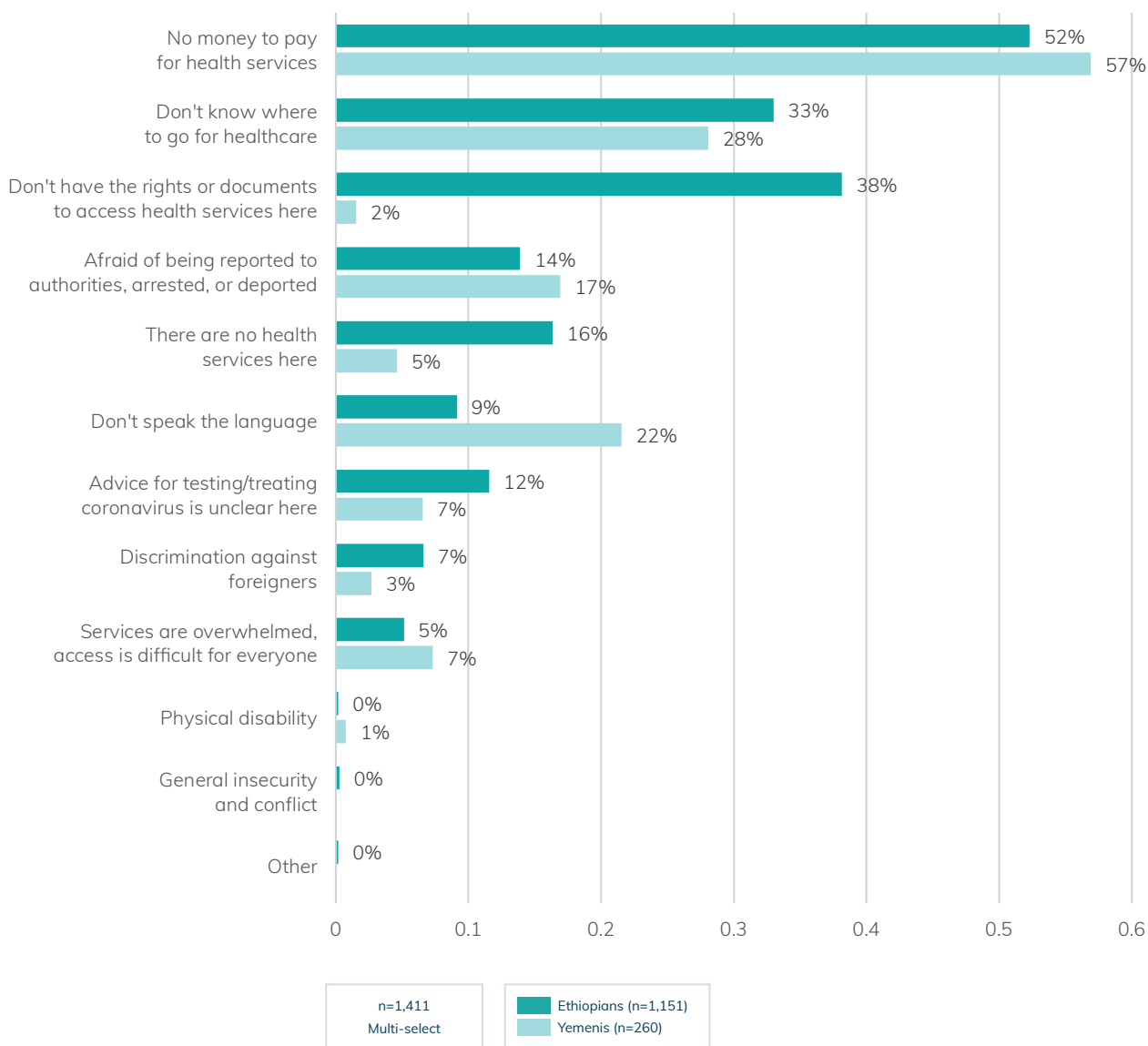## Figure 7. Why are you not taking any protective measures?

n=889 Multi-select	Ethiopians (n=755)	Yemenis (n=144)
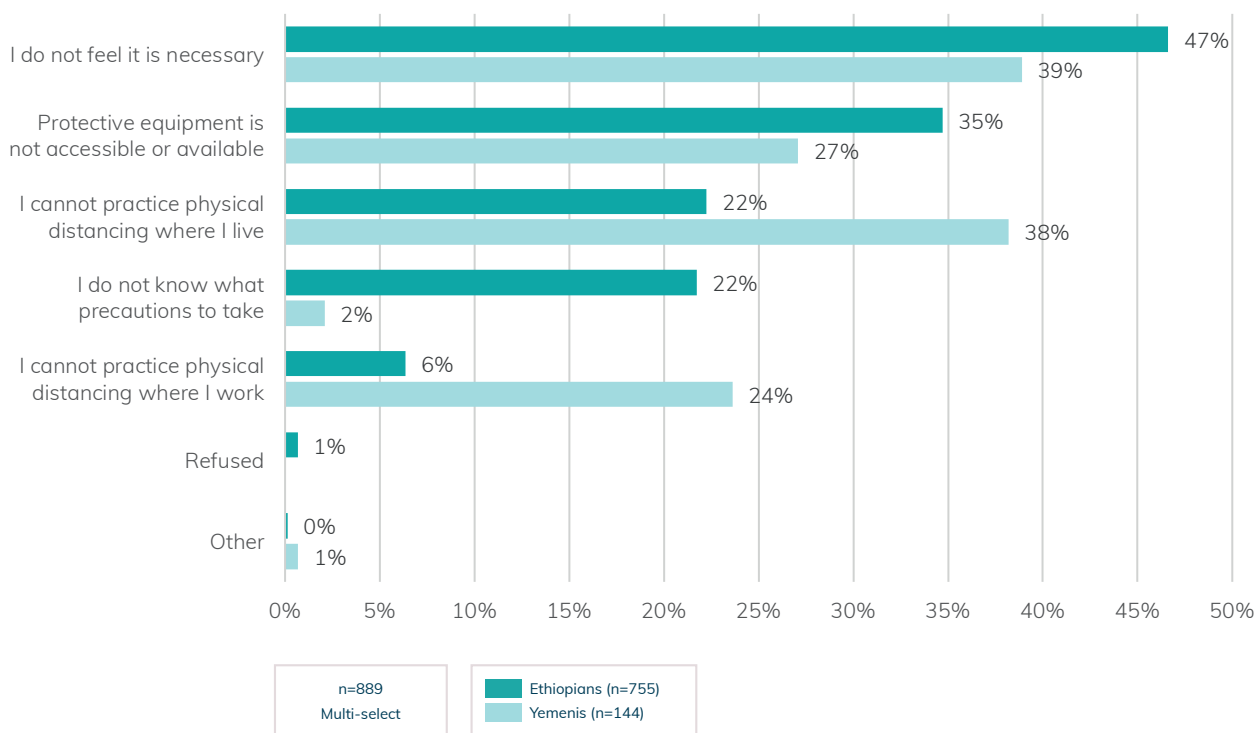
Access to health services is limited

Most respondents say that they have limited access to healthcare in Somaliland. Only a fifth of respondents said they would be able to access health services in the event they had coronavirus symptoms and needed care (20%), or if they had any other urgent health needs (21%). However, this proportion was lower among Ethiopian respondents (13% and 14% respectively) than Yemeni respondents (42% each).

89% of respondents reported that they faced barriers to accessing health services in Somaliland. The most-frequently cited barrier by both nationality groups was a lack of money to pay for services. Ethiopian respondents were far more likely to say that they lacked the documents to access services than Yemeni respondents (38% versus 2% respectively). Partners operating in Somaliland suggest that refugees and asylum seekers can access free health services in Somaliland, but this is limited to health centres/hospitals in Hargeisa and as such services may be inaccessible for those in other locations. However, migrants do not have the required refugee papers to access free healthcare, and must pay to access health services.

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16   Arkansas Democrat Gazette (2021), Pandemic apathy has a last stand in Somalia

Figure 8. Barriers to accessing health services

Barrier	Ethiopians (n=1,151)	Yemenis (n=260)
No money to pay for health services	52%	57%
Don't know where to go for healthcare	33%	28%
Don't have the rights or documents to access health services here	38%	2%
Afraid of being reported to authorities, arrested, or deported	14%	17%
There are no health services here	16%	5%
Don't speak the language	9%	22%
Advice for testing/treating coronavirus is unclear here	12%	7%
Discrimination against foreigners	7%	3%
Services are overwhelmed, access is difficult for everyone	5%	7%
Physical disability	0%	1%
General insecurity and conflict	0%	
Other	0%	

n=1,411
Multi-select

Ethiopians (n=1,151)
Yemenis (n=260)

The socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

Overall, 40% of respondents had no income[17] before the COVID-19 pandemic and were potentially already in a vulnerable socio-economic situation. The proportion of those without income was higher among Ethiopian respondents than Yemeni respondents (45% versus 21% respectively).

Among respondents who had an income prior to the pandemic (n=940), **only 11% reported that they had retained their pre-COVID income level, indicating that a large proportion had experienced a drop in income, likely increasing their vulnerability.** Yemenis were more likely to report a loss of work income than Ethiopians (49% versus 16% respectively).

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17   This includes both income from work and financial support from family.

Figure 9. Have you lost income due to coronavirus restrictions?
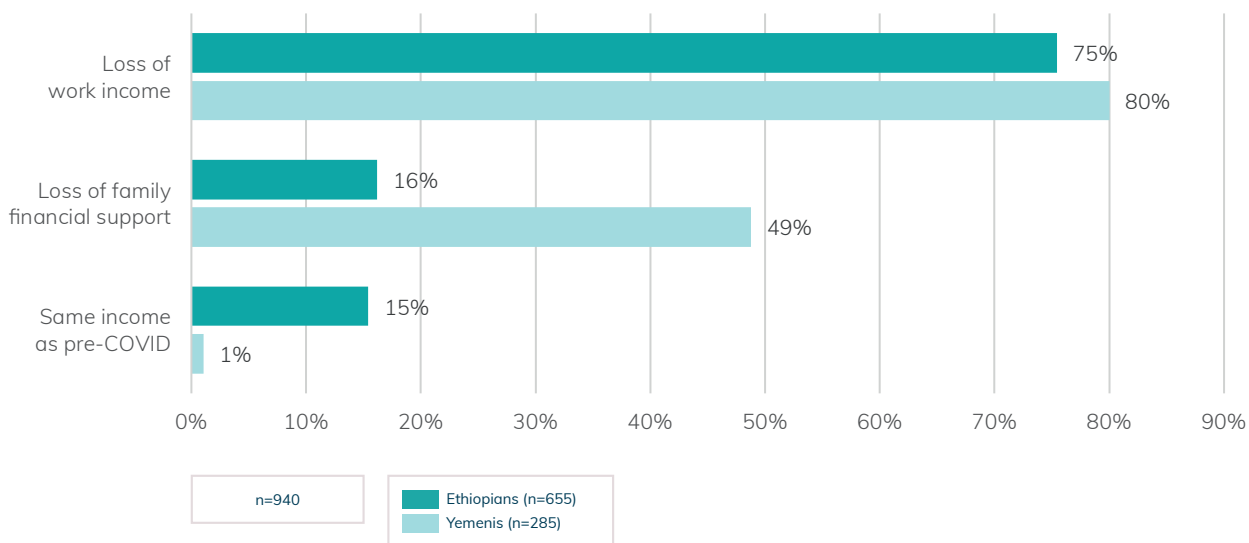
A combination of reduced income and increased prices of basic commodities is likely to have made more respondents vulnerable. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported on shortages and increased prices of most basic commodities in Somalia as early as April 2020.[18] By December 2020, 68% of respondents indicated that they were unable to afford basic goods as a result of their income loss.

Figure 10. What impact has the loss of income had?

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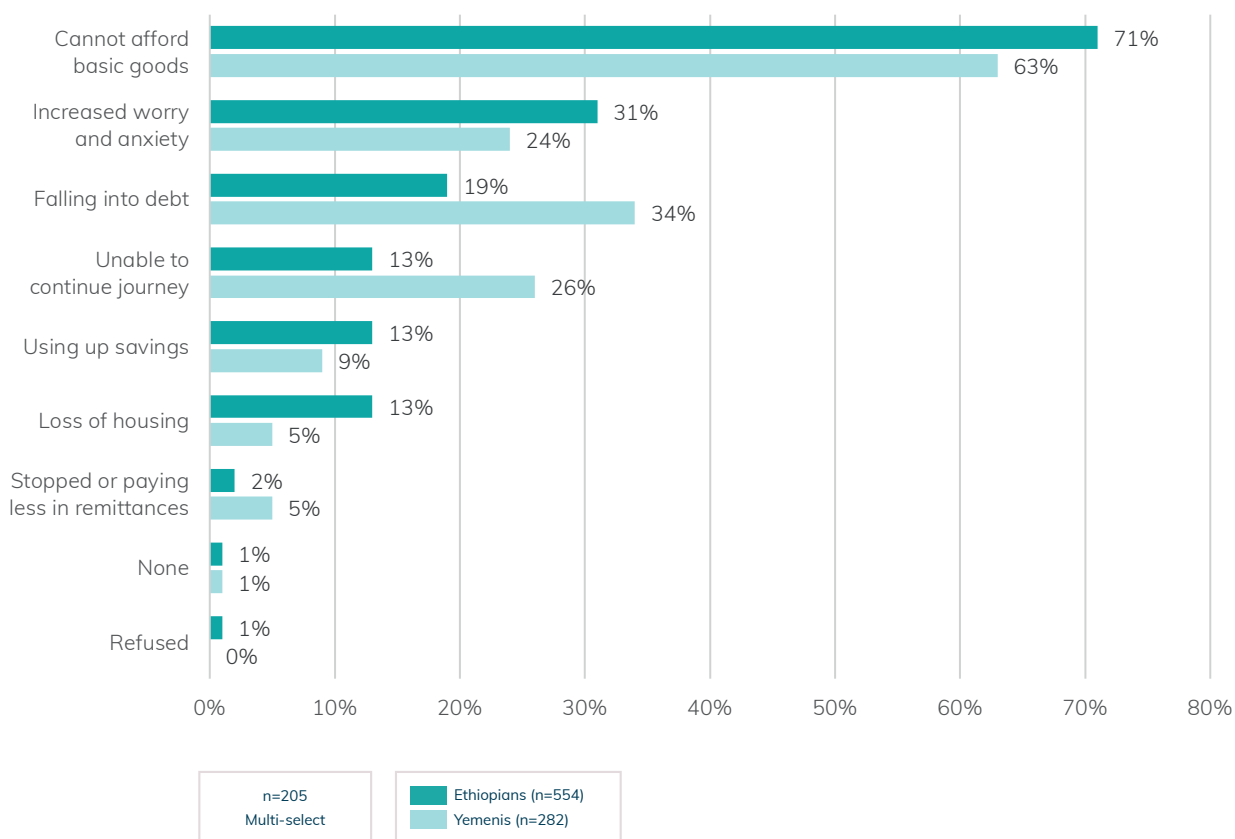
18   UNOCHA, Somalia Overview COVID-19 Directives

The data also suggests that **respondents may be using negative or damaging coping mechanisms at an accelerating rate.** As shown in Figure 11, the proportion of respondents who say that they were falling into debt shows an upward trajectory over time, however those reporting using up savings and losing housing dropped over time.

Figure 11. Percentage of respondents using negative coping mechanisms or losing housing, over time
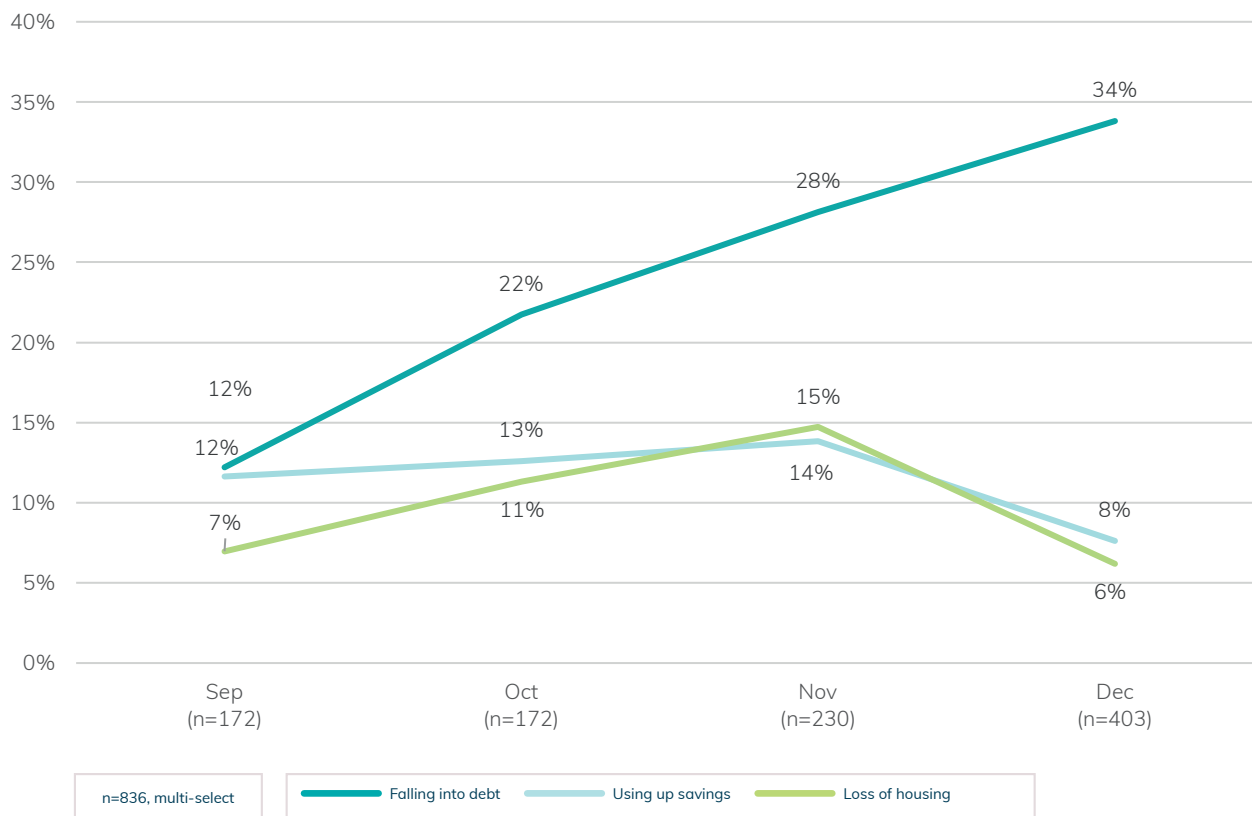
"*Although the lives of migrants are very difficult, the problem has been doubled by the coronavirus. No matter how hard it was to get a job before coronavirus, at least some of us could get a job, but now no one will hire you. People discriminate against me and tell me that I am spreading coronavirus and that causes me anxiety.*"
Ethiopian woman interviewed in Wajaale

The effects of the pandemic have left many refugees and migrants in Somaliland in need of extra assistance. The majority of respondents (77%) said they needed extra help since the onset of the pandemic, however only 12% said that they had received additional assistance. When asked about the type of help they required (n=758), the most frequently reported needs across both nationality groups were cash (74%), food (50%), and access to work and livelihoods (43%).

Figure 12. What kind of extra help are you in need of?

Category	Ethiopians (n=895)	Yemenis (n=332)
Cash	70%	85%
Food	53%	40%
Access to work and livelihoods	44%	42%
Access to health services	31%	26%
Housing/shelter	29%	9%
Water and sanitation	26%	16%
Documentation to access health services	28%	3%
Childcare	11%	8%
Information about the virus	12%	4%
Psychological assistance	1%	2%
Support to return home	2%	0%
Other	0%	

n=1,227
Multi-select

Ethiopians (n=895)
Yemenis (n=332)

COVID-19 and the impact on mobility

Most respondents say that the COVID-19 pandemic has limited their mobility. 39% of respondents said that it was more difficult to move around inside countries, and 37% said that the crisis had made it more difficult to cross borders. 35% of respondents said that the crisis had no impact on their migration journey, however this was higher among respondents who said that they had reached the end of their journey, than those still on the move (45% versus 17% respectively).

Figure 13. What impact has the coronavirus crisis had on your migration journey?

Increased difficulty moving around inside countries — 35% (Ethiopians), 52% (Yemenis)
Increased difficulty crossing borders — 36% (Ethiopians), 41% (Yemenis)
None — 35% (Ethiopians), 35% (Yemenis)
I feel too afraid to move — 15% (Ethiopians), 22% (Yemenis)
I can't afford the journey any more — 7% (Ethiopians), 7% (Yemenis)
My resettlement has been delayed — 2% (Ethiopians), 2% (Yemenis)
Refused — 2% (Ethiopians)
I've been delayed because I was sick, or had to stop and take care of others — 1% (Ethiopians), 1% (Yemenis)
Other — 0%

n=1,592
Multi-select

Ethiopians (n=1,231)
Yemenis (n=361)

Despite these difficulties, overall 64% of respondents said that their intentions to migrate remained the same, even if they were delayed. The proportion of respondents with this view was much higher among Ethiopian respondents than among Yemeni respondents (69% versus 46% respectively). Yemenis were also more likely to say that they were no longer planning on returning home (27% versus 4% of Ethiopian respondents).

> *"I have decided to go Kenya in my next migration journey, but I am unable to continue my journey due to the lack of income."*
> **Yemeni man interviewed in Berbera**

Impact of COVID-19 on smuggling

Respondents are unsure about the impacts on smuggling through Somaliland since the onset of the pandemic.
When asked how the need for smugglers had changed, 37% said that smugglers were no longer needed. An equal 16% of respondents said that the need was either greater, smaller or they were unsure. When asked about how access to smugglers had changed, 14% of respondents each, said it was either somewhat more difficult, no different, or they were unsure. When asked how the pandemic had affected smuggling fees, 25% of respondents were unsure and 20% said that the fees had gone up.

The proportion of respondents who reported that they were unsure about the impacts of the pandemic on smuggling was higher in Somaliland than in Puntland, [19] where 10% of respondents said they were unsure about how the pandemic impacted the need for smugglers, 6% were unsure about access, and 12% were unsure about fees. This may be explained by the fact few refugees and migrants in Somaliland report using smugglers to facilitate their journeys,[20] most likely because – compared to Puntland – a much higher proportion of respondents in Somaliland consider Somaliland and their final destination. As such there is less need for a smuggler, and the more limited interaction with smugglers may mean that they are less aware about how smuggling networks have been affected during the pandemic. It may also suggest that smuggling networks are operating more in more discreet or haphazard way in Somaliland, but this requires more research.

32% of 4Mi respondents in Somaliland agreed or strongly agreed that smugglers were taking more dangerous routes since the start of the pandemic. Research shows that when smugglers move further underground to evade detection, they often employ riskier tactics, including taking more dangerous routes, with major consequences for migrant safety.[21]

> *"COVID-19 has affected all our journeys. Every border was closed, so the smugglers are using more dangerous routes."*
> **Yemeni man interviewed in Berbera**

Protection risks

49% of respondents said that they had travelled through a dangerous location on their journey; 45% said they had not travelled through a dangerous location, 6% were unsure, and 1% declined to answer. As shown in Figure 14,[22] most dangerous locations in Ethiopia were identified in transit and border areas with Somalia, such as Jijiga and Tog Wajaale. The border town of Wajaale was also frequently reported as a dangerous location in Somalia, and corresponds to partner reports about dangers on journeys into Somaliland. In Yemen, major cities such as Aden and Sana's were identified as dangerous locations.
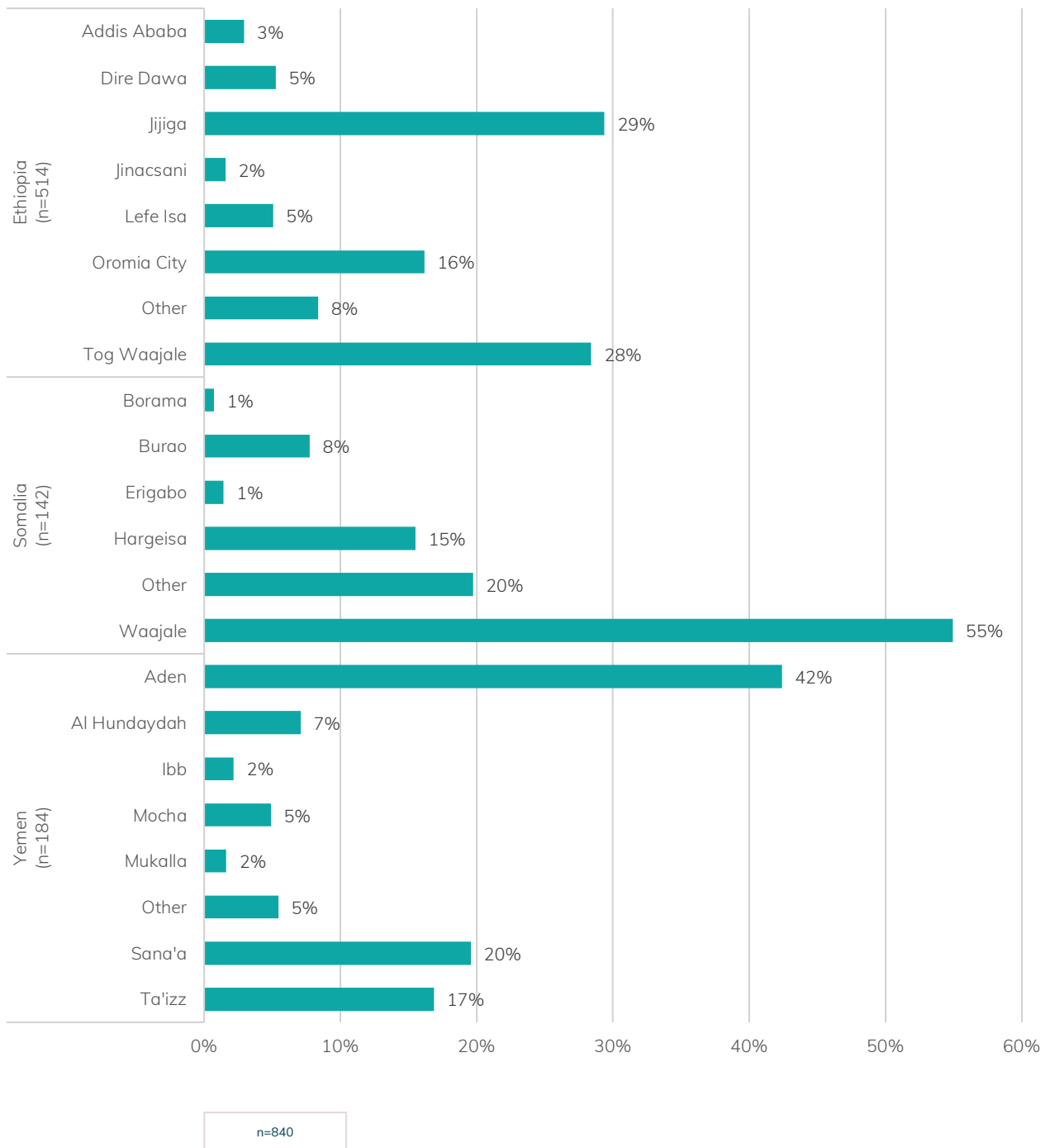
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19   4Mi interviews with 895 Ethiopians in Puntland between August and December 2020.
20   MMC (2020), 4Mi Snapshot: Refugees & migrants interviewed in Somaliland: a focus on financing, information & protection risks
21   The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2018). Understanding contemporary human smuggling as a vector in migration
22   Locations in Djibouti (n=5), Sudan (n=1) were also noted.

Figure 14. What was the most dangerous location on your journey?

Ethiopia (n=514)
- Addis Ababa — 3%
- Dire Dawa — 5%
- Jijiga — 29%
- Jinacsani — 2%
- Lefe Isa — 5%
- Oromia City — 16%
- Other — 8%
- Tog Waajale — 28%

Somalia (n=142)
- Borama — 1%
- Burao — 8%
- Erigabo — 1%
- Hargeisa — 15%
- Other — 20%
- Waajale — 55%

Yemen (n=184)
- Aden — 42%
- Al Hundaydah — 7%
- Ibb — 2%
- Mocha — 5%
- Mukalla — 2%
- Other — 5%
- Sana'a — 20%
- Ta'izz — 17%

n=840

When asked about the main risks in these locations, responses varied by country (Figure 15). In Ethiopia, physical violence and detention were the most frequently cited risks by respondents by a large margin (63% and 59% respectively). It is unclear why Ethiopian respondents cited the risk of (non-immigration) detention inside their own country, and needs further exploration. The same two risks were the most reported in Somalia, albeit at lower levels (35% and 49% respectively). Whereas in Yemen, death and physical violence were cited by most respondents (65% and 53% respectively).

Figure 15. What were the main risks in this location?

n=840
Multi-select

Ethiopia (n=514)
Somalia (n=142)
Yemen (n=184)
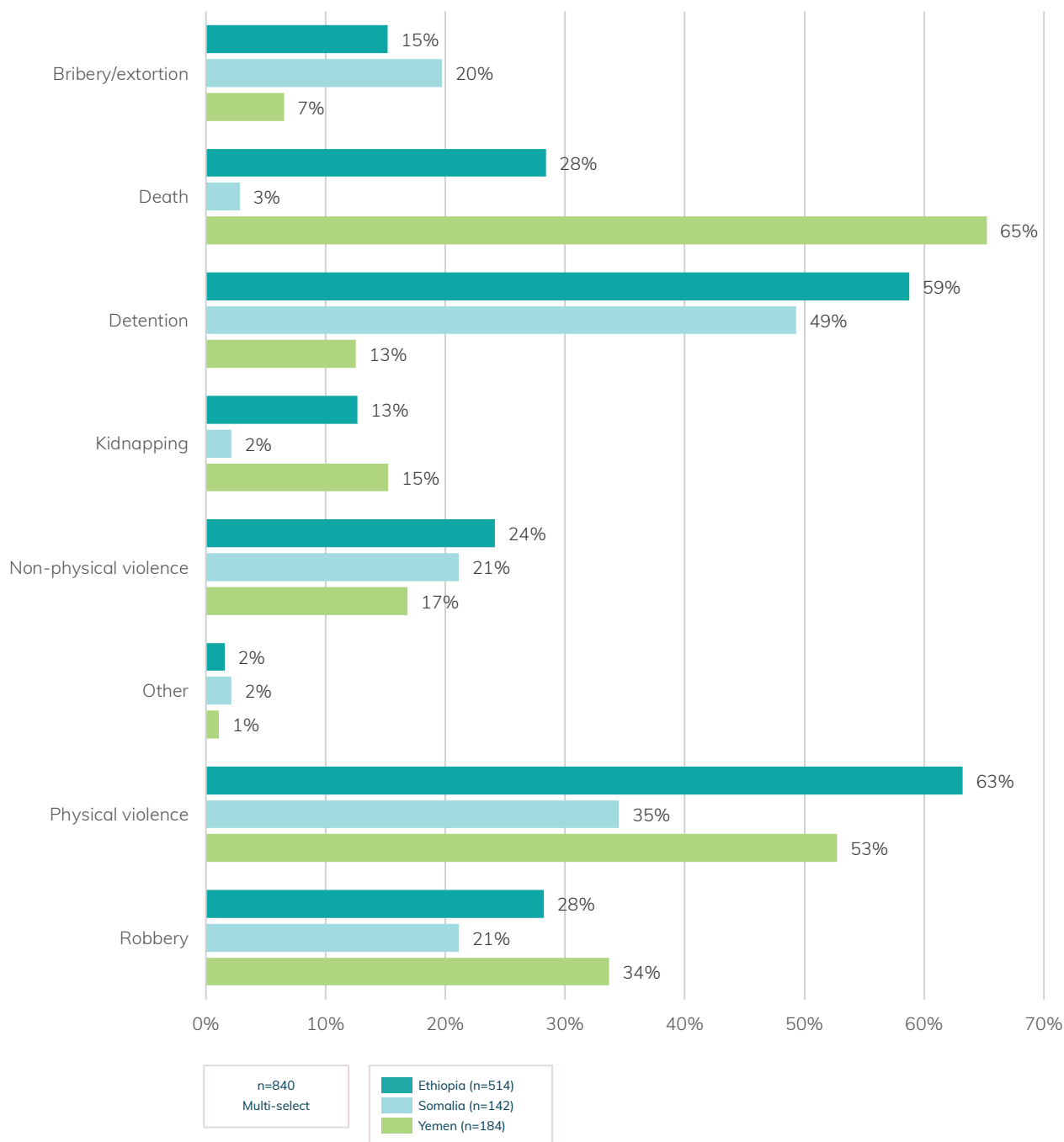
"I have experienced a lot of suffering on my journey. There were fierce battles and my life was in danger several times. I got on a small boat in Aden and it was being thrown violently around by the waves in the sea, I was sure it would fall apart."
**Yemeni woman interviewed in Hargeisa**

Figure 16 shows the main risks in Somaliland by location. In the border town of Wajaale, a major crossing point between Ethiopia and Somaliland, the most cited risk was detention.

Figure 16. Types of risk, by location in Somaliland
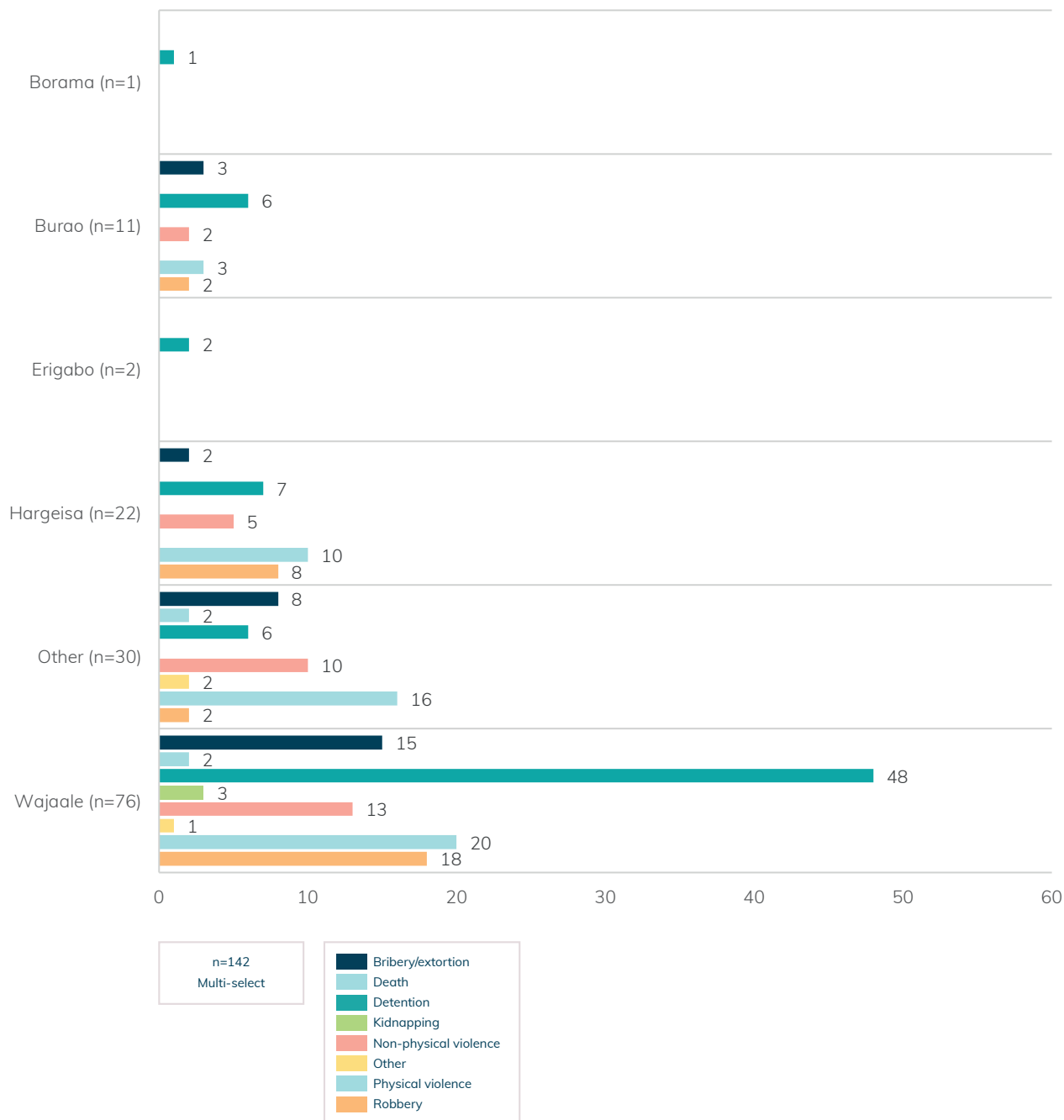
When asked who was likely to be perpetrating such acts, respondents most frequently cited government officials (46%). This coincides with the types of risks noted particularly in Ethiopia and Somalia. Detention was identified as a risk in 66% and 70% of the instances in Ethiopia (n=280) and Somalia (n=80) respectively where government officials were cited as likely perpetrators. Armed groups/militia (28%), criminal gangs (28%) and smugglers (24%) were also frequently mentioned as likely perpetrators.
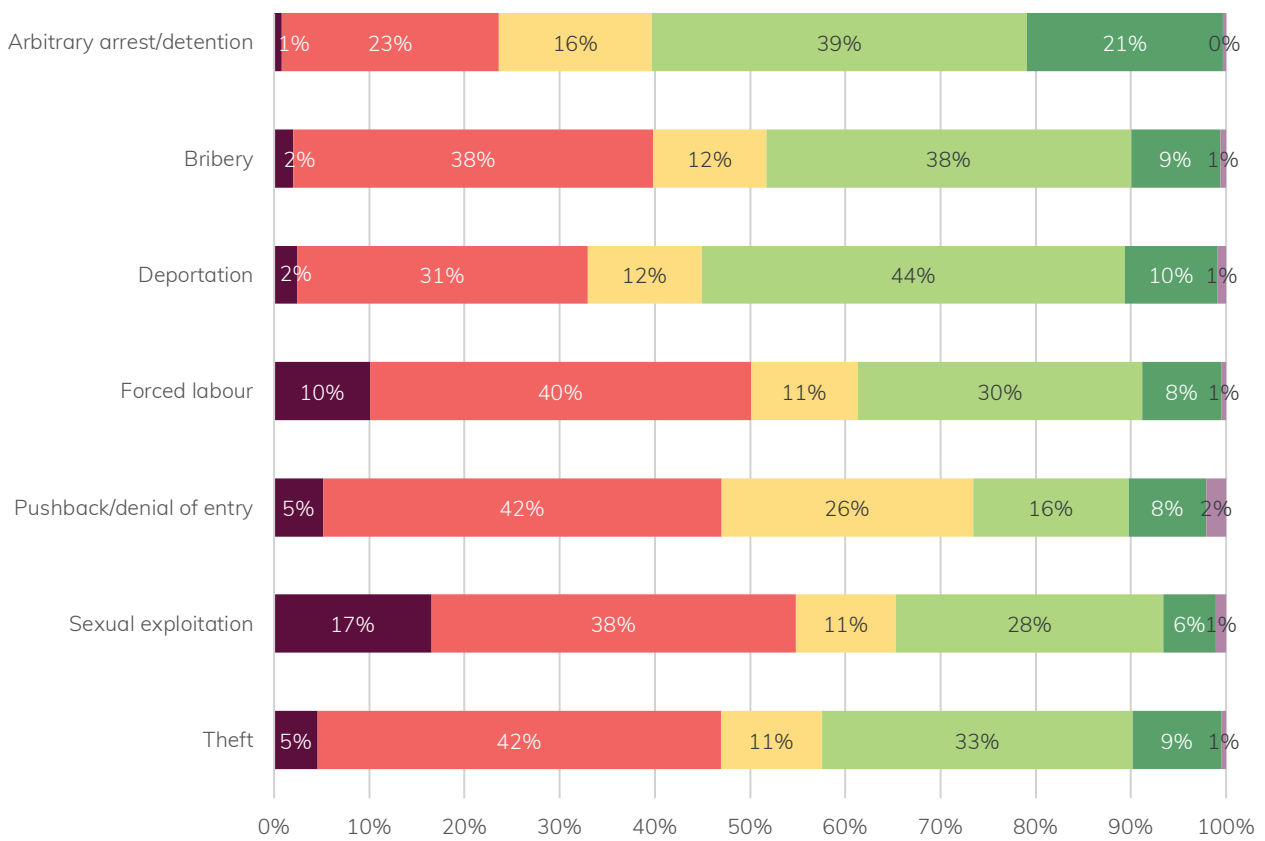
Figure 17. Who was likely to be perpetrating such acts?

	n=840 Multi-select

Ethiopia (n=514)
Somalia (n=142)
Yemen (n=184)
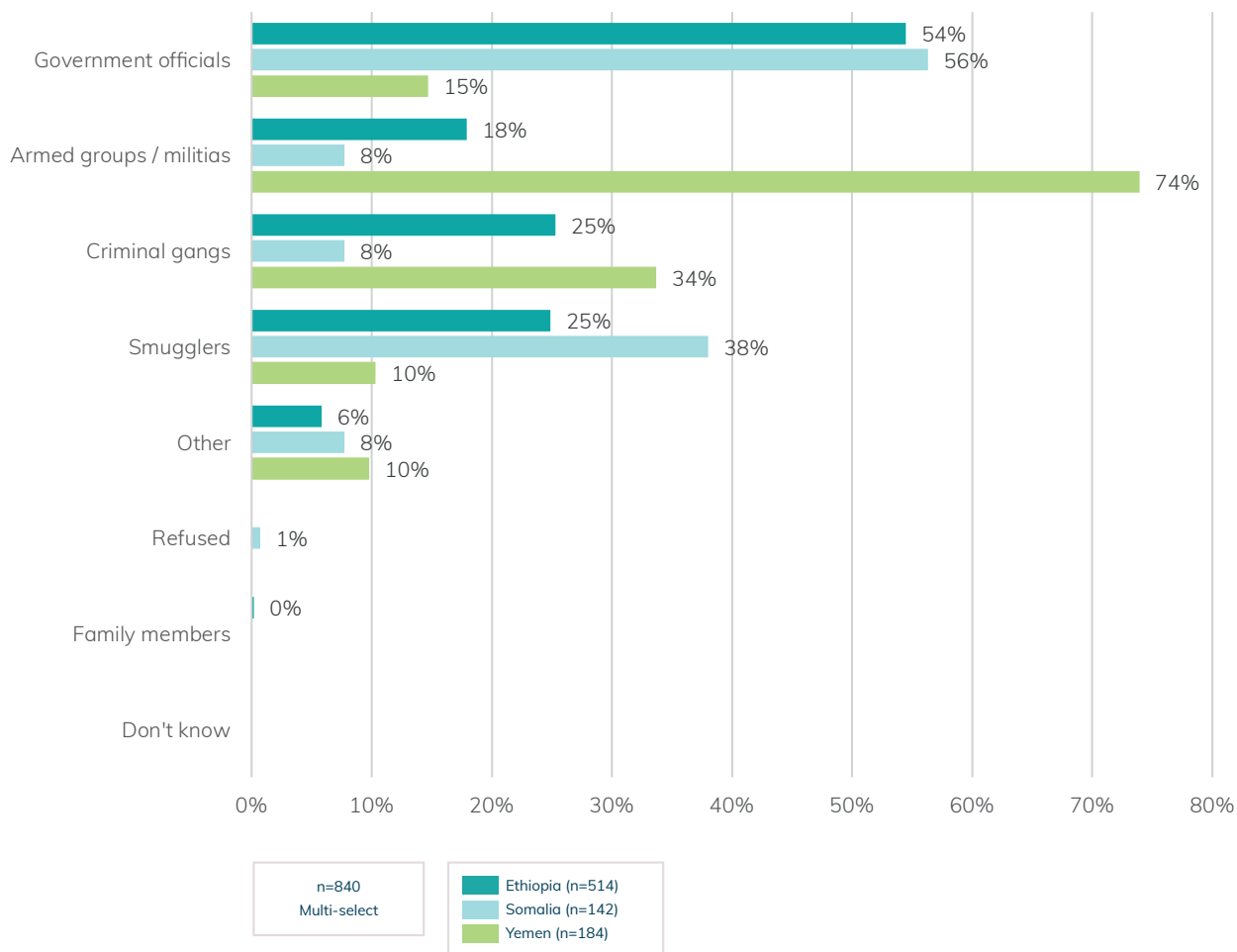
The majority of respondents reported that according to their experience, the COVID-19 pandemic had increased a number of protections risks for people on the move. 60% of respondents for example, agreed or strongly agreed the risk of arbitrary arrest/detention had increased since the onset of the pandemic. A further 54% said the pandemic had increased the risk of deportation, and more respondents (48%) agreed that the risk of bribery had increased, compared to those who did not.

Conversely, most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there had been an increased risk of sexual exploitation (55%), labour exploitation (50%), theft (47%), or pushback/denial of entry (47%) than those who did.

Figure 18. Protection risk perception[23]

Arbitrary arrest/detention: Strongly disagree 1%, Disagree 23%, Neither agree nor disagree 16%, Agree 39%, Strongly agree 21%, Refused 0%

Bribery: Strongly disagree 2%, Disagree 38%, Neither agree nor disagree 12%, Agree 38%, Strongly agree 9%, Refused 1%

Deportation: Strongly disagree 2%, Disagree 31%, Neither agree nor disagree 12%, Agree 44%, Strongly agree 10%, Refused 1%

Forced labour: Strongly disagree 10%, Disagree 40%, Neither agree nor disagree 11%, Agree 30%, Strongly agree 8%, Refused 1%

Pushback/denial of entry: Strongly disagree 5%, Disagree 42%, Neither agree nor disagree 26%, Agree 16%, Strongly agree 8%, Refused 2%

Sexual exploitation: Strongly disagree 17%, Disagree 38%, Neither agree nor disagree 11%, Agree 28%, Strongly agree 6%, Refused 1%

Theft: Strongly disagree 5%, Disagree 42%, Neither agree nor disagree 11%, Agree 33%, Strongly agree 9%, Refused 1%

n=1,592
"There is an increased risk of [ ] since the COVID-19 pandemic began"

Legend: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Refused
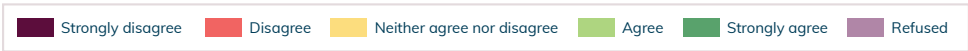
23 Note that the data does not represent respondent's actual experience of incidents, rather respondents' direct perception of the prevailing situation, based on their own experience (this is made explicit during interview). It depends on respondents' interpretation of the situation and contributes to 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.

Recommendations

- Increase the engagement of UN agencies, NGOs and local stakeholders in the dissemination of comprehensive information on COVID-19, with practical information about how to avoid transmission of the virus.

- Enable and support accessibility of health services for refugees, especially in districts outside Hargeisa (such as Burao, Berbera, Las'anod and Wajaale), and for migrants in all locations.

- Support implementing partners to strengthen multi-sector programming to address the needs of refugees and migrants in Somaliland and to mitigate the adoption of negative and damaging coping strategies.

- Increase capacity building among frontline officials and security actors on refugee and human rights law, and human rights-based approaches to border management, and promote alternatives to administrative detention of refugees and migrants

- Support local authorities to establish protection structures and mechanisms (such as information and referral desks at border points and training on rights-based border management) which support vulnerable refugees and migrants on the move.

- Expand research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and women and girls in mixed movements, with particular attention to protection risks and socioeconomic impact.

The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

For more information visit:
mixedmigration.org and follow us at @Mixed_Migration