

Access to information among Afghans on the move towards Greece

Since November 2019, through its data collection initiative [4Mi](#), MMC Europe has been interviewing Afghans in Greece. Based on 954 interviews, this snapshot offers an overview of the different ways in which Afghan refugees and migrants have accessed information before and during their journey, what sources and means they use, and to what extent this might influence their migration decision-making. The snapshot 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 in the country.

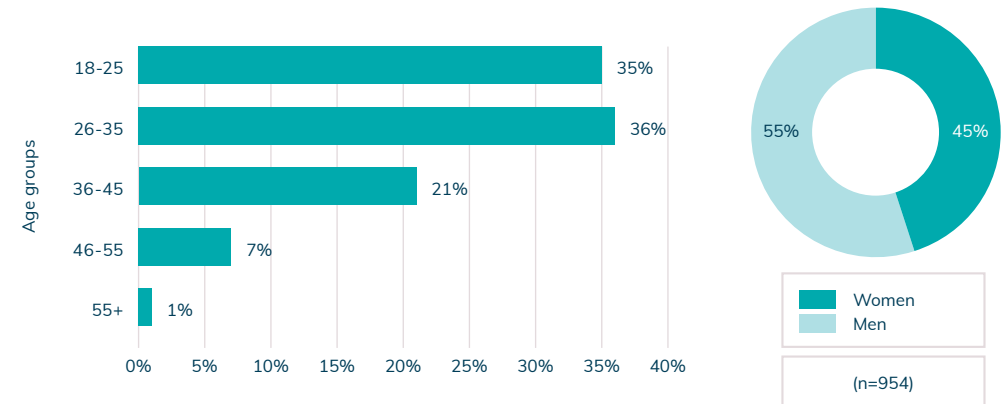
Key findings

- **Over a third of respondents say they started their journey without accessing any information**, and didn't access information during the journey.
- **Migrants' social networks (family, friends, and other migrants) are the most cited sources of information** both before departure and while on the move.
- **Smugglers play a key role in providing information** to Afghan migrants and refugees: they are among the top three sources of information both before departure and during the journey.
- **Family/friends in another country are most often considered the most reliable source of information** (30% of respondents) followed by smugglers (22%) and other migrants (12%).
- **The role of NGOs and the UN as information providers is marginal** (used by 10-15% of respondents), **and the role of national authorities as well as foreign embassies and consulates is even lower**, never cited by more than 2% of respondents. Only 1% consider these sources as the most reliable.
- **Afghans mostly use social media or messaging apps to get information**, both before (87%) and during (84%) the journey, thus showing the importance of having a phone for access to information.

Profiles

This analysis draws from interviews with 954 Afghans (523 men and 431 women) conducted face-to-face and by phone in Greece between November 2019 and September 2021. All respondents had arrived in Greece within the past 5 years. Respondents were predominantly aged between 18 and 35 (71%), with an average age of 31.

Figure 1. Sex and age ranges

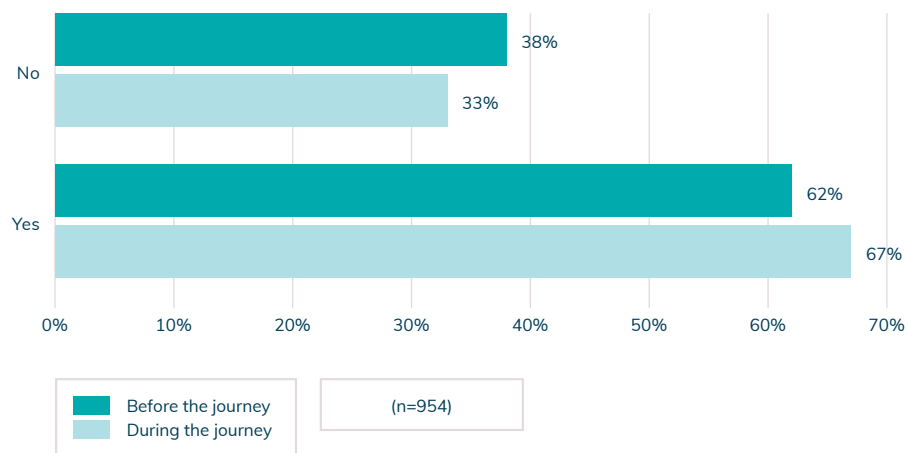


Over 30% didn't access information about the journey

Access to reliable information is crucial for migrants and refugees to make informed decisions about their journey. However, 4Mi data shows that over a third of the respondents started their journey without accessing any information, and didn't access information during the journey (see Figure 2).

Given the dangers of the journey and concerns about information gaps, access to information would seem to be insufficient.

Figure 2. Did you access information before or during the journey?



Family/friends in another country and smugglers, are most used and most reliable source of information

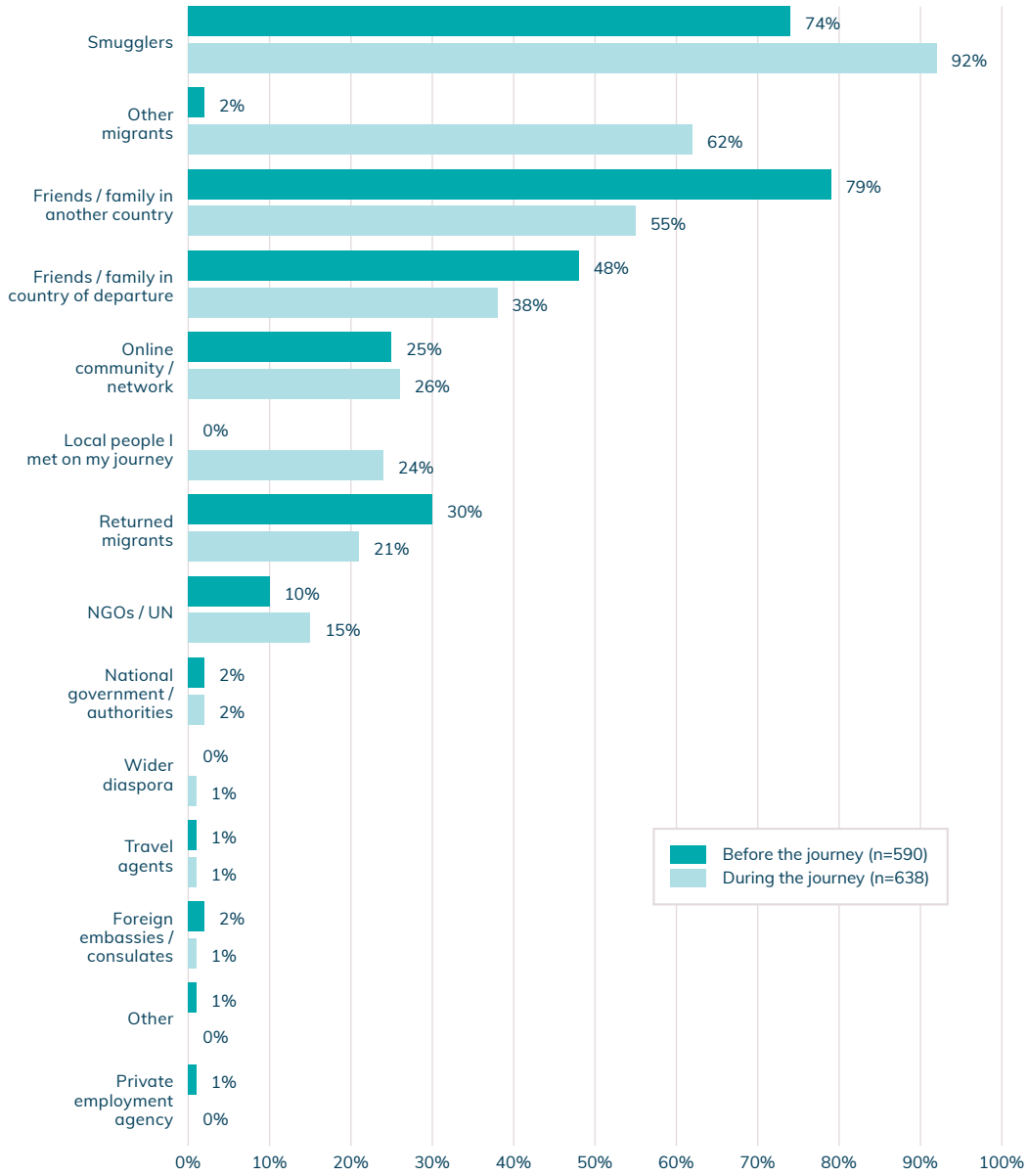
Almost all respondents (99%) who accessed information had used a smuggler, and Figure 3 shows that refugees and migrants frequently rely on them for information. 74% of Afghans mentioned using smugglers to access information before the journey, while during the journey the percentage went up to 92%. Smugglers came second, however, in terms of the most reliable source of information (see Figure 4).

Similarly, family/friends are among the most common sources cited before and during the journey. Friends/family in another country are the main source of information for Afghans before departure (cited by 79% of the respondents) and the third after departure (55%), and they are most often considered as most reliable (30%). Interestingly, friends/family in country of departure are seldom considered as most reliable.

Reliance on family/friends decreases slightly after departure, probably because, once on the way, migrants and refugees prefer or have better access to "first-hand" information coming, for instance, from other migrants and smugglers. "Other migrants" are an almost irrelevant source of information before departure (reported by only 2% of respondents), but become much more important during the journey (reported by 62% of respondents).

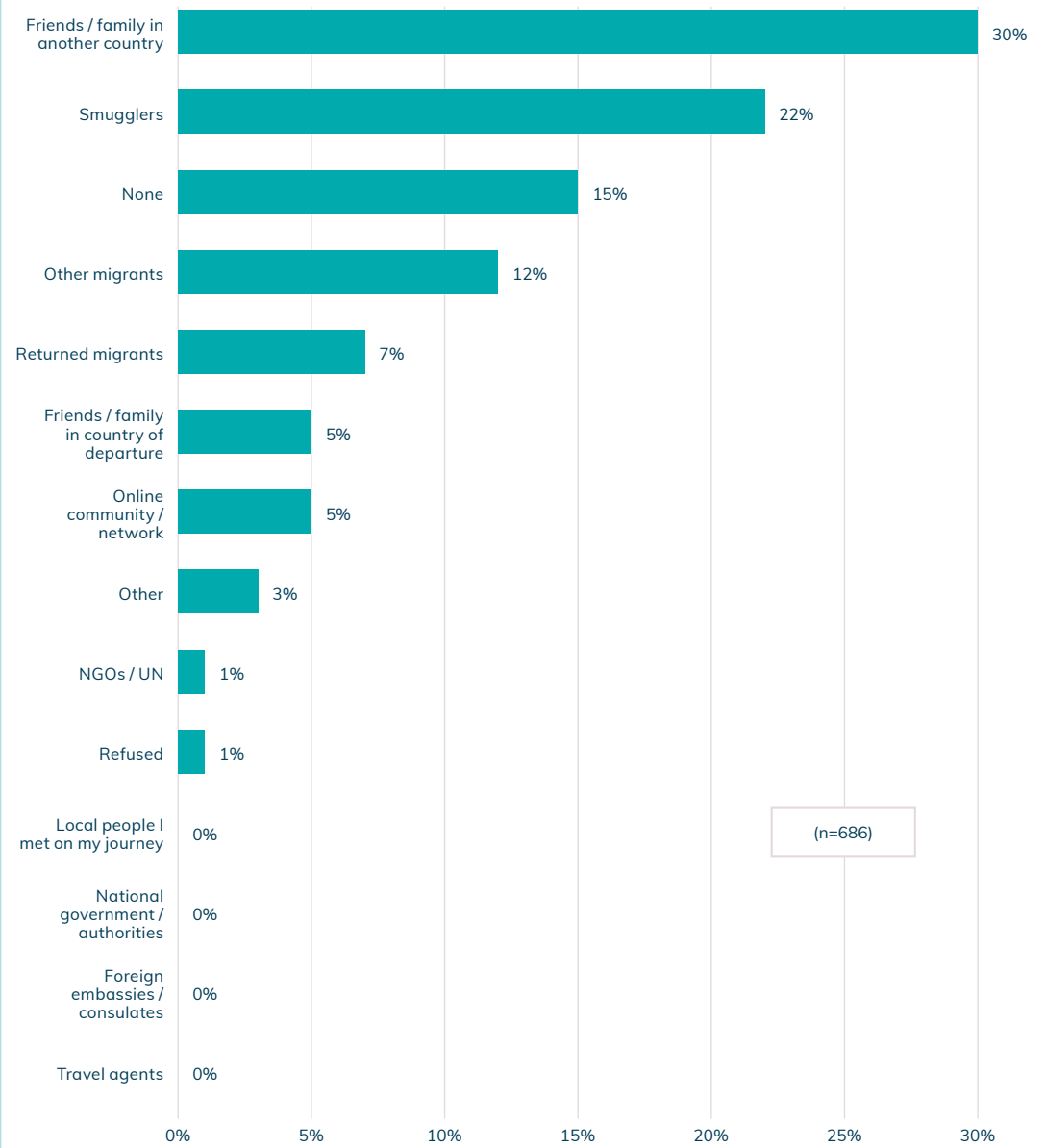
These results should not be surprising considering that people on the move are likely to get information from fellow migrants that are in a similar situation and/or are travelling along similar routes. However, other migrants are considered a reliable source by only 12% of the respondents.

Figure 3. Sources of information before and during the journey



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

Figure 4. Most reliable source of information



Note: the sample (n=686) is composed of migrants and refugees who said they accessed information before or during the journey

This analysis finds that while the most frequent sources of information are generally considered the most reliable, a fair proportion (15%) consider that no information sources were particularly trustworthy. The data also highlights a gap between access to information and quality of information: the most reliable information source (friends / family in another country) is the source whose usage falls most during the journey, as dependence on in-person communication with people on the journey appears to increase, despite being considered less reliable.

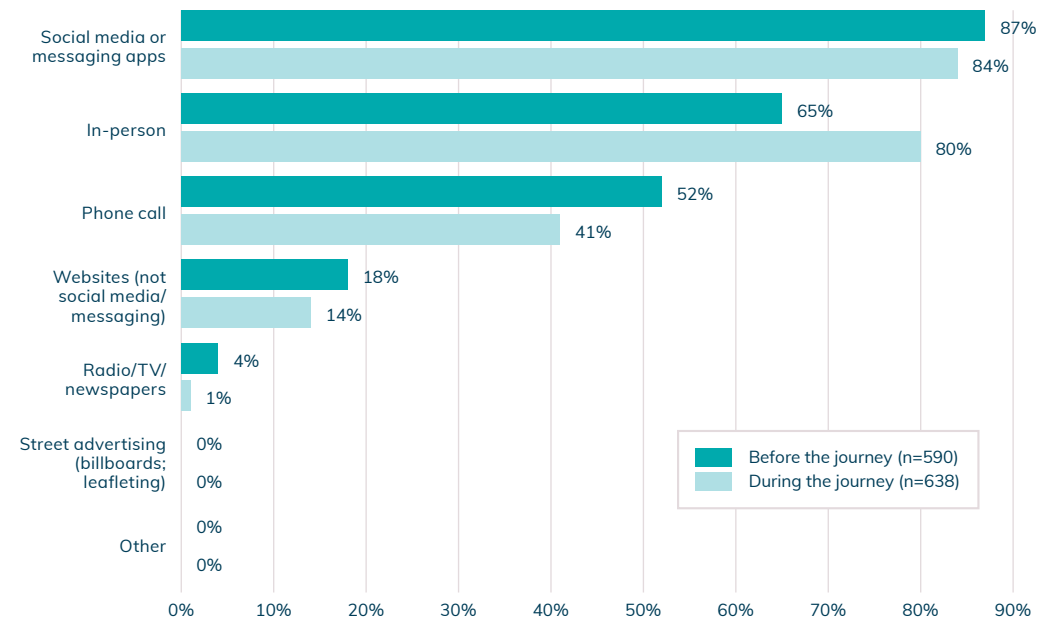
The data also shows how marginal the information coming from more official and institutional sources is (NGOs/UN, and national authorities and foreign embassies/consulates). NGOs and the UN are cited as sources of information by only 10% of respondents before the journey and 15% during the journey. These figures suggest that information campaigns are not reaching refugees and migrants. Only 1% considered NGOs/UN to be the most reliable source of information.

National authorities and foreign embassies/consulates are barely reported as information sources: never by more than 2% of respondents, and less than 1% considered them the most reliable source.

Social media or messaging apps are the main means of information

Among those who received information, social media or messaging apps are the main means of information both before and during the journey, reported by 87% and 84% of respondents, respectively, followed by in-person conversations (65%; 80%), and phone calls (52%, 41%). Websites, radio/TV or newspaper were collectively reported less often (22% before the journey and 15% during the journey). While social media and messaging are key, in-person encounters appear more important during the journey than beforehand. The scarce reliance on websites, radio/TV or newspapers reflects the greater value of social networks: perhaps they are more trusted, provide more relevant information, or are easier to access. More official, broadcast media (through which it is often easier to access more institutional information sources) may be less useful or accessible.

Figure 5. Means of information before and during the journey

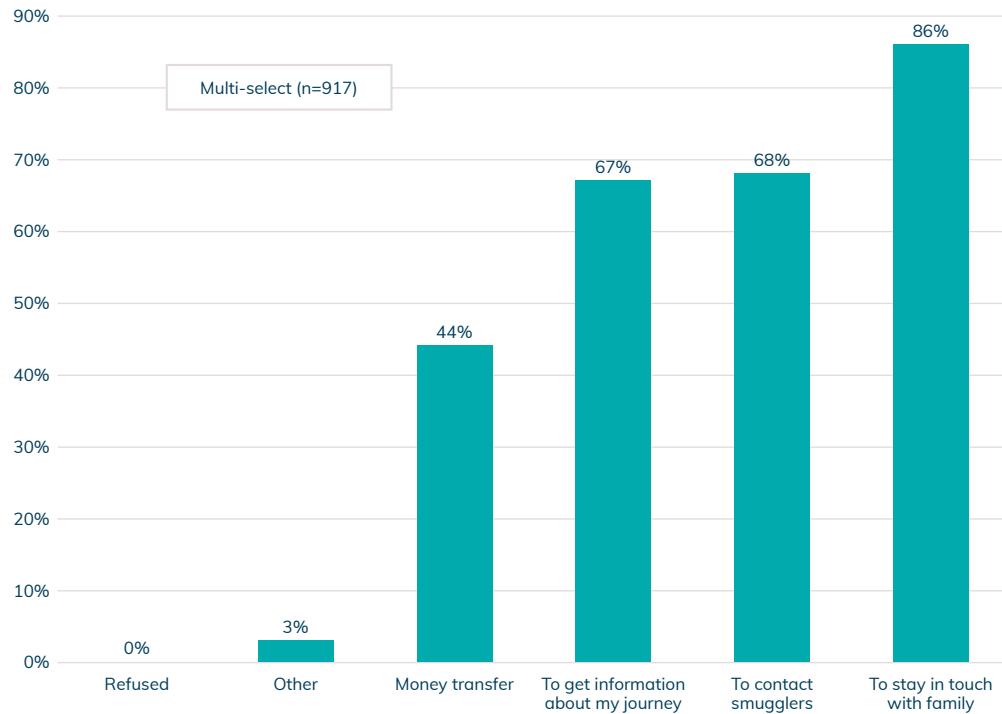


Note: Respondents may select more than one answer to this question.

Phone possession facilitates access to information

Given the importance of social media and phone calls as means to access information, having a smartphone is obviously a very important asset for Afghans on the move. 85% of those interviewed owned a smartphone with internet access, and 11% had a phone without internet access. As shown in Figure 6, of those reporting having either a smartphone or a basic phone (n=917), 67% reported using it to get information about their journey.

Figure 6. Did you use the phone for any of the following?

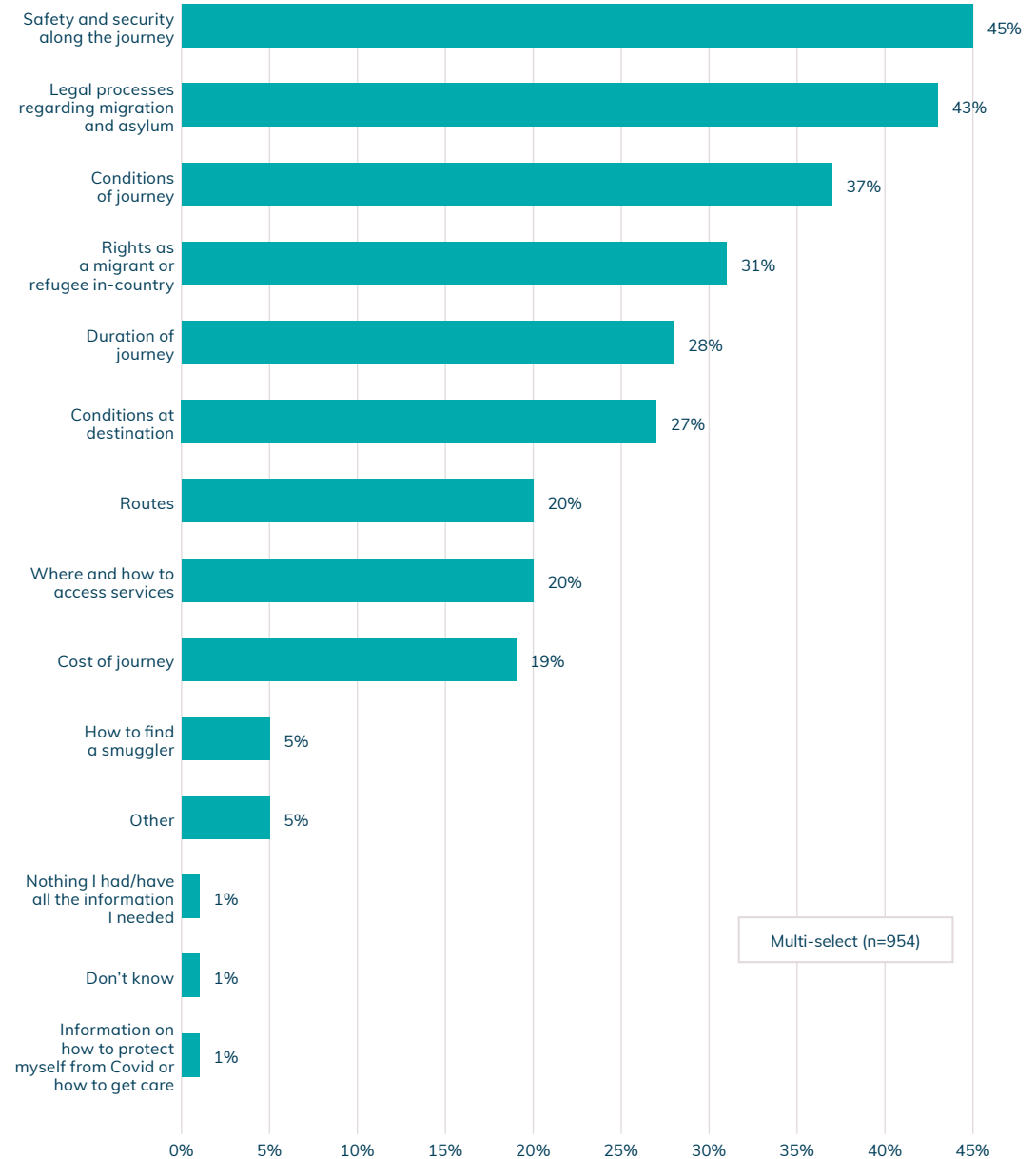


Only 1% of respondents indicated having all the information they needed...

Despite most having accessed information, only 1% of all respondents (n= 954) judged the information to be complete and exhaustive. The main information gaps relate to safety and security along the journey (45%) and legal procedures regarding migration and asylum (43%). Information on the conditions of the journey is also lacking, reported by 37% of respondents.

These results support concerns about the reliability of the main information sources used, especially regarding some important topics. It is unlikely that smugglers are completely truthful about the potential risks of the journey, or that personal connections can provide accurate and reliable information on administrative processes. Conversely, respondents seem to be very well informed about how to find smugglers, showing how widespread and accessible smugglers networks are. Gaps around routes and access to services were also smaller, suggesting that existing sources are relatively useful and accurate in these areas.

Figure 7. What information would have been most useful that you did not receive?

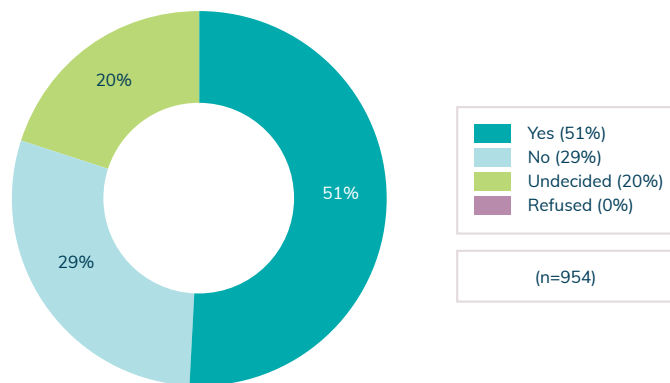


... yet they would have started the journey anyway

Figure 8 shows that more than half of respondents (51%) would have started the journey anyway, even with everything they have learned since starting out. This suggests that more accurate and reliable information would not prevent the majority of migrants and refugees from beginning their journey.

For people escaping violent and insecure contexts, such as Afghanistan, the decision to leave is a necessity rather than an option. Public actors, international organizations and NGOs should therefore engage more deeply in providing the information that refugees and migrants need, via means and modalities that would better and easily reach them. This might make the journey safer.

Figure 8. Would you have started this journey knowing what you know now?



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4Mi data collection

[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 enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with refugees and migrants in West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at www.mixedmigration.org/4mi