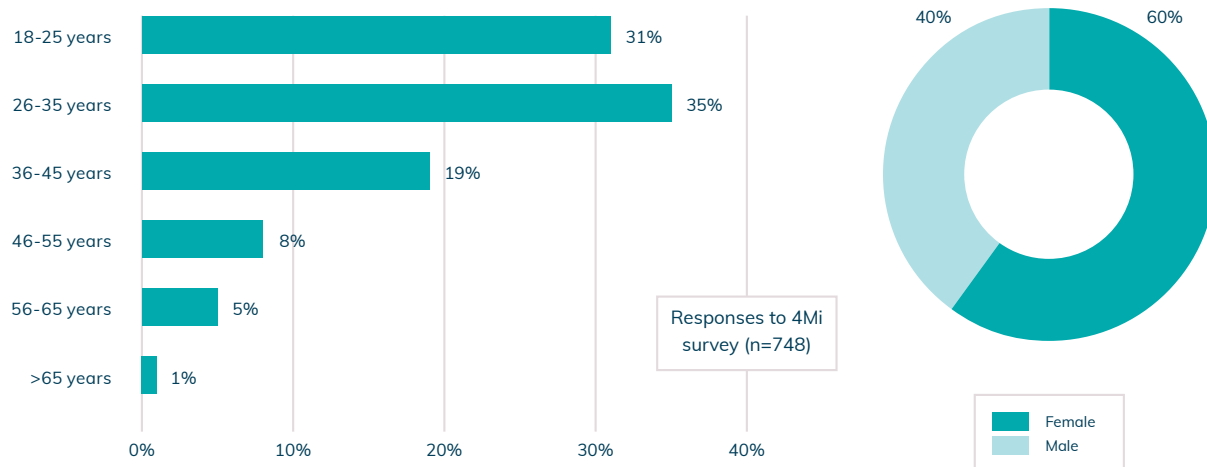


Protection risks for Venezuelans on the move

This snapshot highlights protection risks¹ faced by Venezuelan refugees and migrants along the route from Venezuela to Peru. The analysis is based on 748 interviews conducted between 9 November 2019 and 9 February 2020: 642 in Colombia and 106 in Peru. 60% of respondents were women and 40% were men. The average age among respondents was 33 years old.

Figure 1. Age range and sex



4Mi respondents are all asked ‘What were the most dangerous locations on your journey?’. For up to five locations, they are then asked ‘What were the main risks in this location’, and ‘Who were likely to be perpetrating such incidents?’*.² This snapshot analyses the answers to these questions.

Robbery is considered the most common protection risk

Figure 2 shows that robbery is most commonly reported as a protection risk (81% of those who indicated dangers along the route). This includes theft related to common crime, but also various forms of extortion perpetrated by criminal gangs, armed groups and state authorities. Theft and extortion leave Venezuelan refugees and migrants – who have very limited financial resources when they leave their place of origin³ – in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

Respondents frequently described their journey as very difficult or traumatic. According to an 18-year-old woman interviewed in Cúcuta (Colombia): “the journey is very tough: we have been humiliated and ill-treated, we had to beg for money and sleep on the streets. We have a one-year old daughter and another one coming soon”.

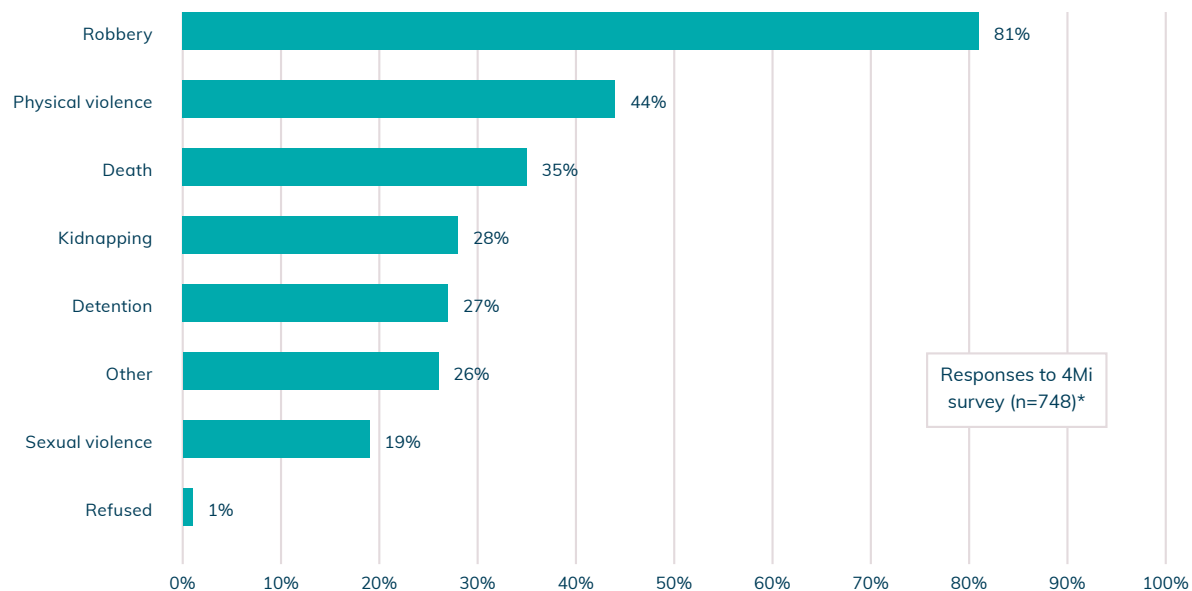
A 32-year-old woman interviewed in Lima (Peru) said “I wouldn’t travel like this again, it was horrible. It was the longest odyssey of my life. I was robbed, someone stole my food. I ran out of money and milk and diapers for my baby. I had to drink water out of public bathrooms”.

¹ For the purpose of the 4Mi survey, protection risks are intended as risks of being a victim of violence or other crime.

² The 4Mi survey was revised in 2019: respondents are no longer asked about personal experiences of protection incidents or incidents they directly witnessed.

³ See MMC, [Waning Welcome: the growing challenges facing mixed migration flows from Venezuela](#), p. 7.

Figure 2. Protection risks



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

Other risks frequently mentioned include physical violence (44% of respondents), and death (35%). Irregular border crossings, in particular, are perceived as posing a danger of physical violence or death. A 30-year-old woman interviewed in Barranquilla, Colombia, said: “while I was going through the irregular border crossing, there were shootouts between smugglers and the police because the police would not let the smugglers pass some goods; we were caught in the crossfire with no possibility to move”.

Temporary restrictions on freedom of movement

Administrative detention of people on the move by state authorities and detention by armed groups is not common in the region, but 4Mi respondents nonetheless report risks of kidnapping (28% of respondents) and detention (27%). This can be attributed to respondents’ inclusion of short-term restrictions of freedom of movement in these categories, when smugglers and state authorities prevent them from continuing their journey until money has been found to pay fees.

4Mi monitors have also observed an increase in the number of respondents mentioning a risk of smugglers temporarily kidnapping a family member – usually a woman or a child – while facilitating a family crossing the border between Venezuelan and Colombia irregularly, in order to force people on the move to pay a higher fee.

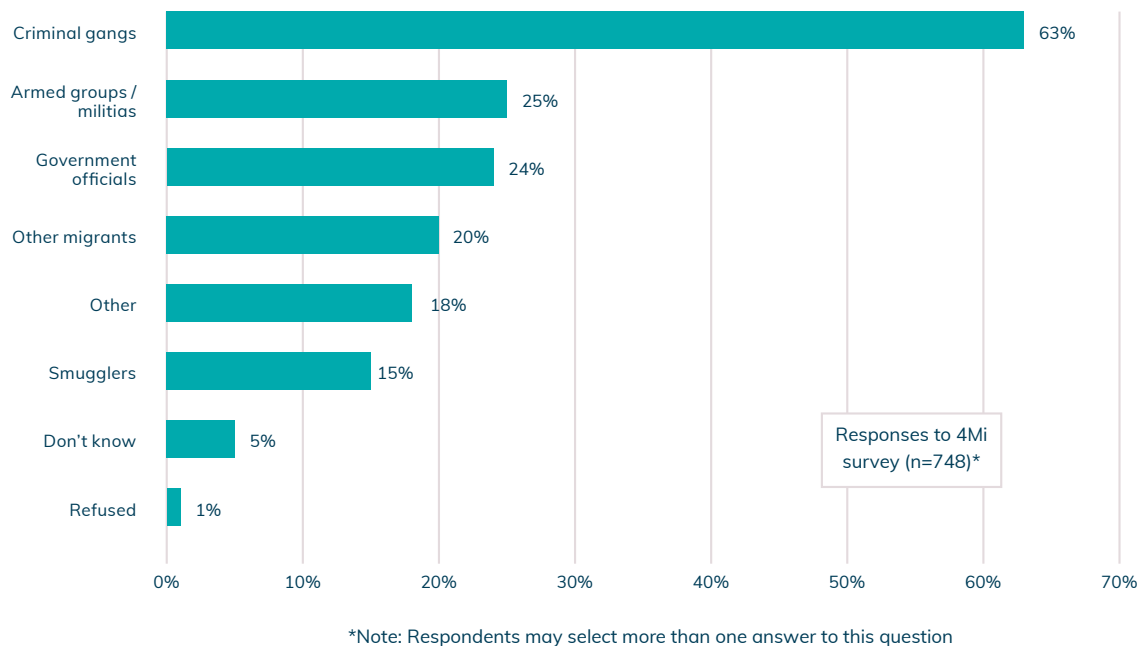
Criminal gangs as main perpetrators of protection risks

Most migrants and refugees interviewed indicated criminal gangs as perpetrators of protection risks (63% of respondents). This includes the criminal actors controlling irregular border crossings in areas such as the Guajira peninsula, but also other criminal groups who target refugees and migrants for robbery in various locations across Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

As Figure 3 shows, smugglers are rarely indicated as perpetrators of protection risks (15% of respondents). It must be noted, however, that smuggling between Venezuela and Colombia as well as between Colombia and Ecuador is, in most areas, handled by armed groups or other criminal actors that controlled the border before the Venezuelan migration crisis started. Respondents usually only indicate criminal gangs or armed groups as perpetrators of protection risks at border crossings although they are, in practice, also their smugglers.

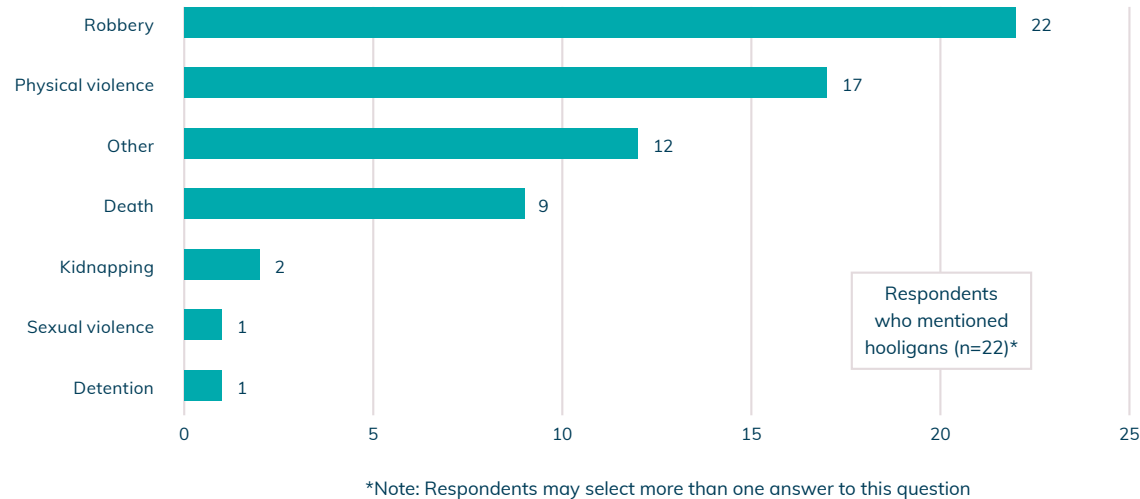
Among the category “government officials”, the Venezuelan Bolivarian Guard is the authority most frequently mentioned by the Venezuelan refugees and migrants interviewed as causing protection risks – mainly theft and extortion at checkpoints within Venezuelan territory along the routes usually used by Venezuelans to leave their country. This is based on information that 4Mi respondents volunteered regarding the type of government officials perpetrating protection incidents, although this is not a specific question in the survey.

Figure 3. Perpetrators of protection incidents



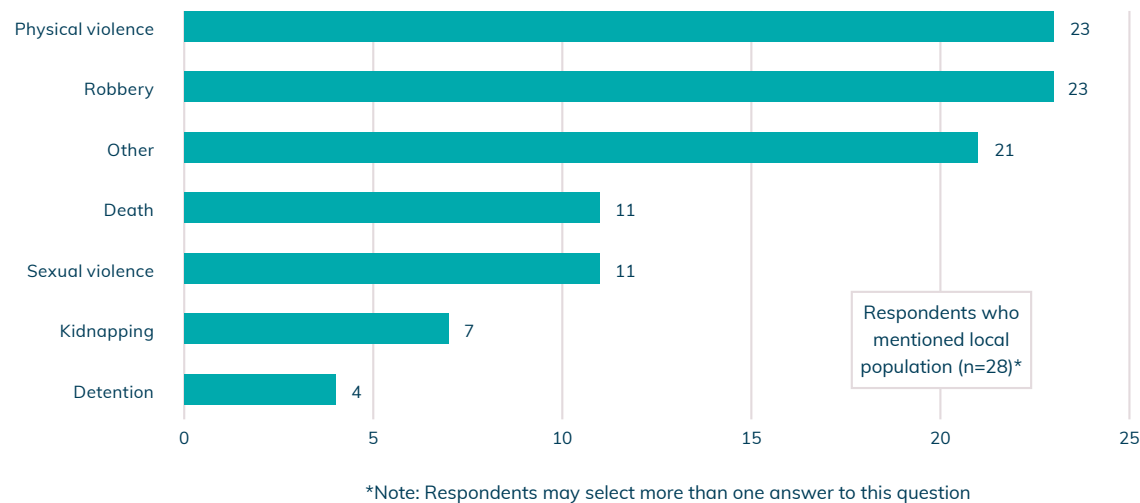
22 respondents indicated football hooligans as perpetrators of protection risks, a tendency that appears to be on the rise in Colombia, according to 4Mi monitors' observations. In some urban areas – including Bucaramanga, Bogotá and Cali – refugees and migrants report having been targeted based on their nationality by violent groups of football supporters, and having suffered or witnessed verbal attacks, robberies and even extreme physical violence at their hands.

Figure 4. Type of protection risk attributed to hooligans



On some occasions, the local population has also been indicated as the perpetrator, and of the full range of protection risks (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Type of protection risk attributed to local population



More protection risks at irregular border crossings around Maicao

82% of respondents identified at least one dangerous location along their migration route. The locations most frequently reported as dangerous were irregular border crossings in the area of Maicao, in La Guajira department; the city of Cúcuta; the city of Maicao; and irregular border crossings near Cúcuta.

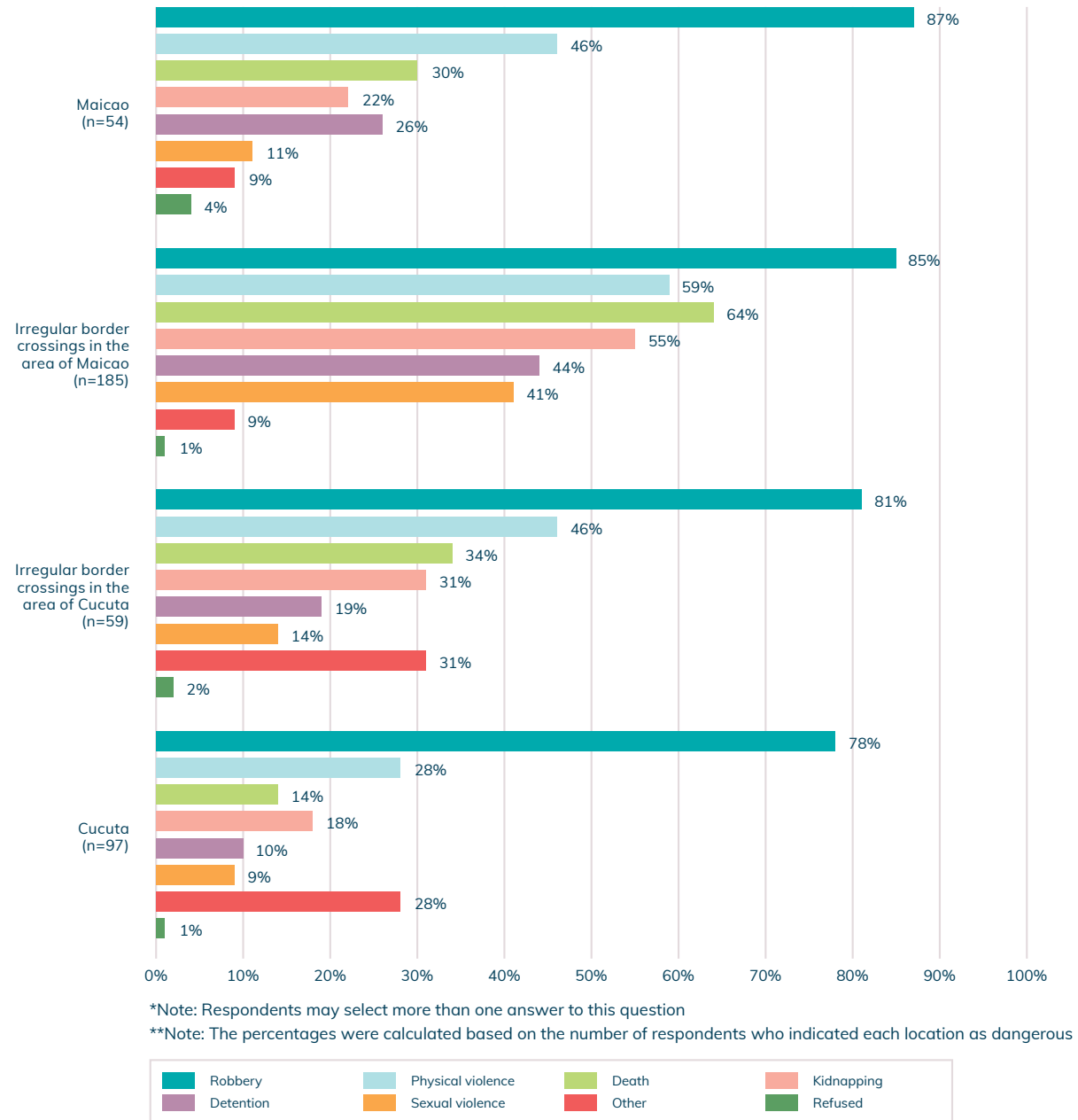
Figure 6. Locations most often reported as dangerous



As indicated in Figure 7, robbery is the most commonly reported across the four locations.

Figure 7 also shows that the irregular border crossings around Maicao are considered to pose greater dangers; the respondents who indicated this location as dangerous reported far more kinds of dangers. A risk of sexual violence was four times more likely to be reported for border crossings around Maicao than in the three other most dangerous locations highlighted in this snapshot.

Figure 7. Dangerous locations and protection risks





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 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 covers humanitarian aid activities implemented with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the European Union, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.