

# Refugees & migrants interviewed in Somaliland: a focus on financing, information & protection risks

This snapshot is the second presenting the findings of data collected in Somaliland from refugees and migrants.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this snapshot is to provide information on financing, decision making and journey conditions of refugees and migrants travelling to and transiting through Somaliland.

## Key findings

- Somaliland is a destination for 65% of respondents, and a point of transit for 27% of respondents. 41% of those transiting through Somaliland were headed towards Gulf States.
- Most respondents (59%) received help from family and friends to start their journeys. Few relied on smugglers.
- Respondents reported numerous human rights violations on their journeys. Among those who experienced violations, smugglers were cited among the most common perpetrators.
- Only 16% of respondents said they received assistance on their journeys.

## Profiles

This data set is based on 676 interviews conducted in Berbera (206), Borama (49), Hargeisa (214), Loya Ade (2) and Waajale (205) between September 2019 and January 2020. Geographic areas for the data collection presented in this snapshot were agreed mutually between UNHCR and MMC, and include urban areas, border crossings, and places of destination. All respondents began their journeys outside Somalia.

**Table 1. Nationality and gender of respondents**

Nationality	Men	Women	Total
Ethiopia	334	139	473
Yemen	169	31	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>673</b>

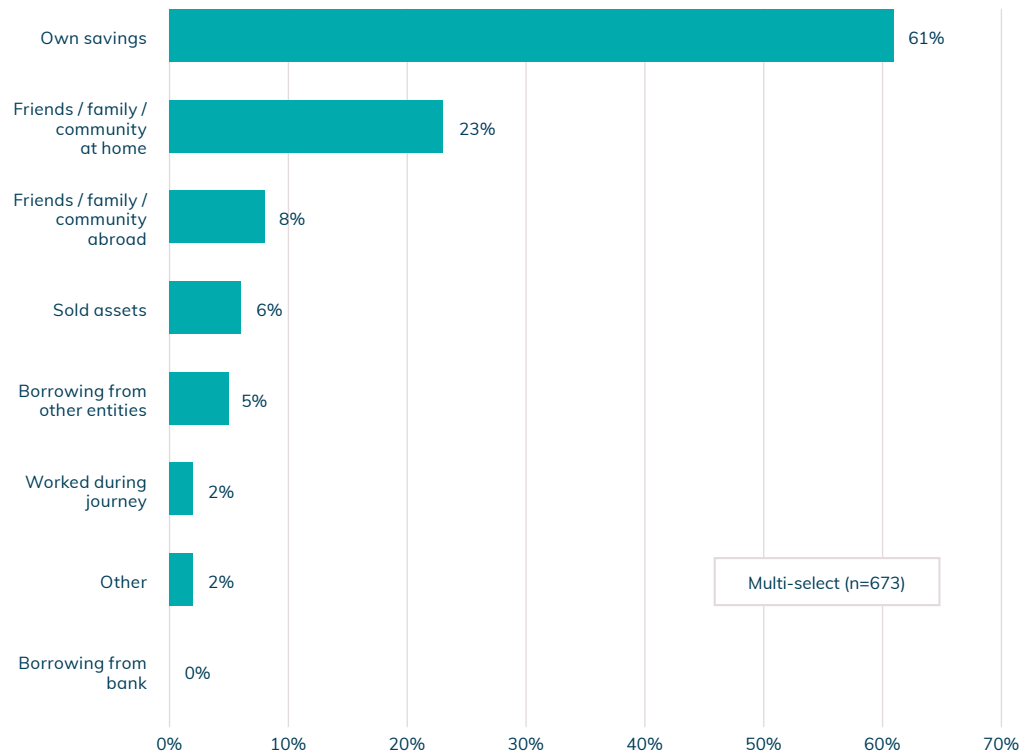
This analysis is based on 673 interviews with 473 Ethiopians and 200 Yemenis (see Table 1). Three interviews were excluded from the analysis (with 2 Eritrean women, and 1 Syrian woman).

## Journeys largely financed by respondents' savings

59% of respondents said they had received help from their family and friends to start their journey, and 39% said that they started the journey without help from others.

<sup>1</sup> 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."

**Figure 1. How journeys were financed**

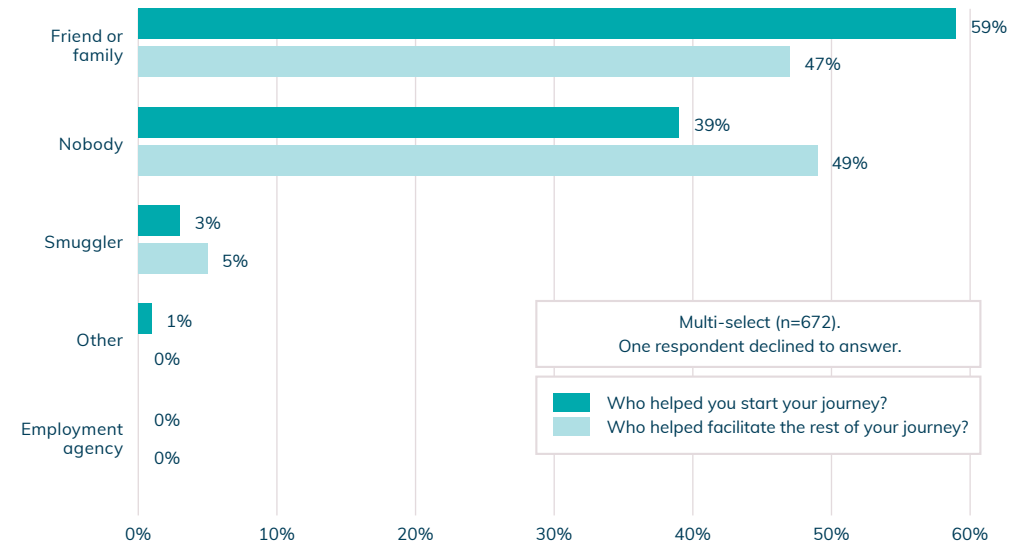


Respondents had financed their journeys in a variety of ways, however 89% paid for their trips from a single source. The top source of financing was savings (61%), followed with a large margin by support from friends and family in the home country (23%).

## Few respondents used smugglers

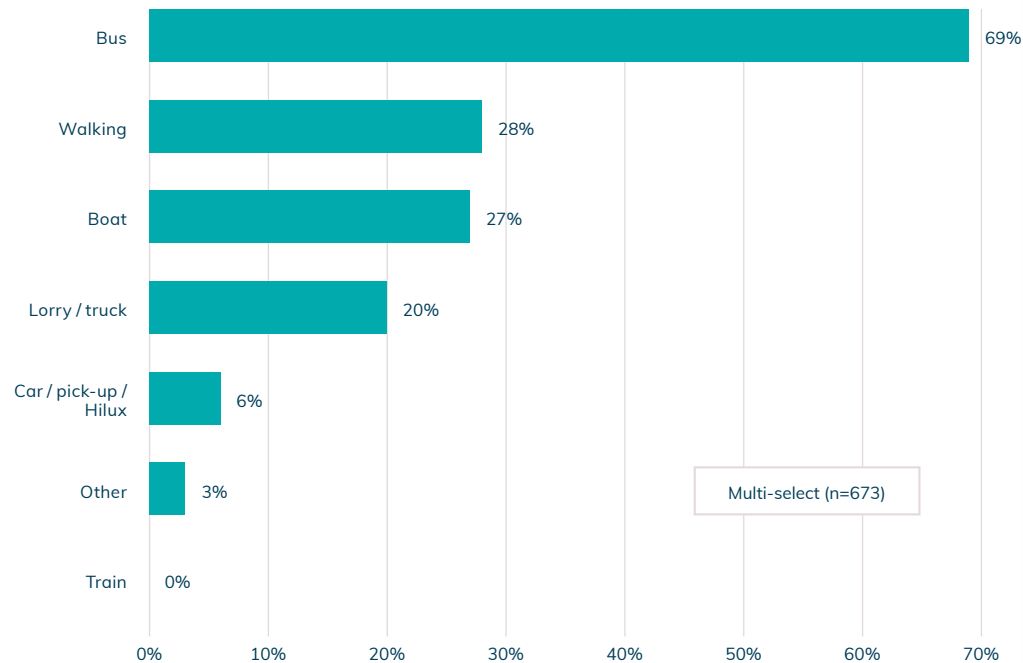
The use of smugglers among respondents was fairly low. Only 3% of respondents said that a smuggler helped them leave, rising to 5% once the journey had begun. This is likely reflective of the porous nature of the Ethiopia-Somalia border, and the availability of commercial and fishing boats travelling between Yemen and Somalia, reducing the need for a smuggler.

**Figure 2. Facilitation of journeys**



45% of respondents used a mix of transport to travel from their country of origin to Somaliland. The most frequently used means of transportation among respondents was bus (68%), followed by walking (28%), boat (27%, exclusively reported by Yemenis), and lorry/truck (20%), among others.

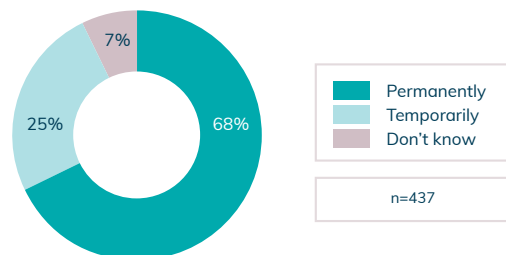
**Figure 3. What means of transport did you use?**



## Somaliland is the main destination

65% of respondents stated that Somaliland was their final destination (n=437). This was higher among respondents who had left their countries of departure due to violence and insecurity alone (55%, n=278) compared to those who had left due to economic reasons alone (45%, n=243). This was also more frequently noted among respondents who had applied for asylum (87%, n=157), compared to those with no legal status (60%, n=294) and registered refugees (56%, n=215).

**Figure 4. Do you intend to stay in Somaliland permanently or temporarily?**



Of those who said Somaliland was their final destination (n=437), 68% of respondents intended to remain permanently in Somaliland, 25% temporarily, and 7% were undecided.

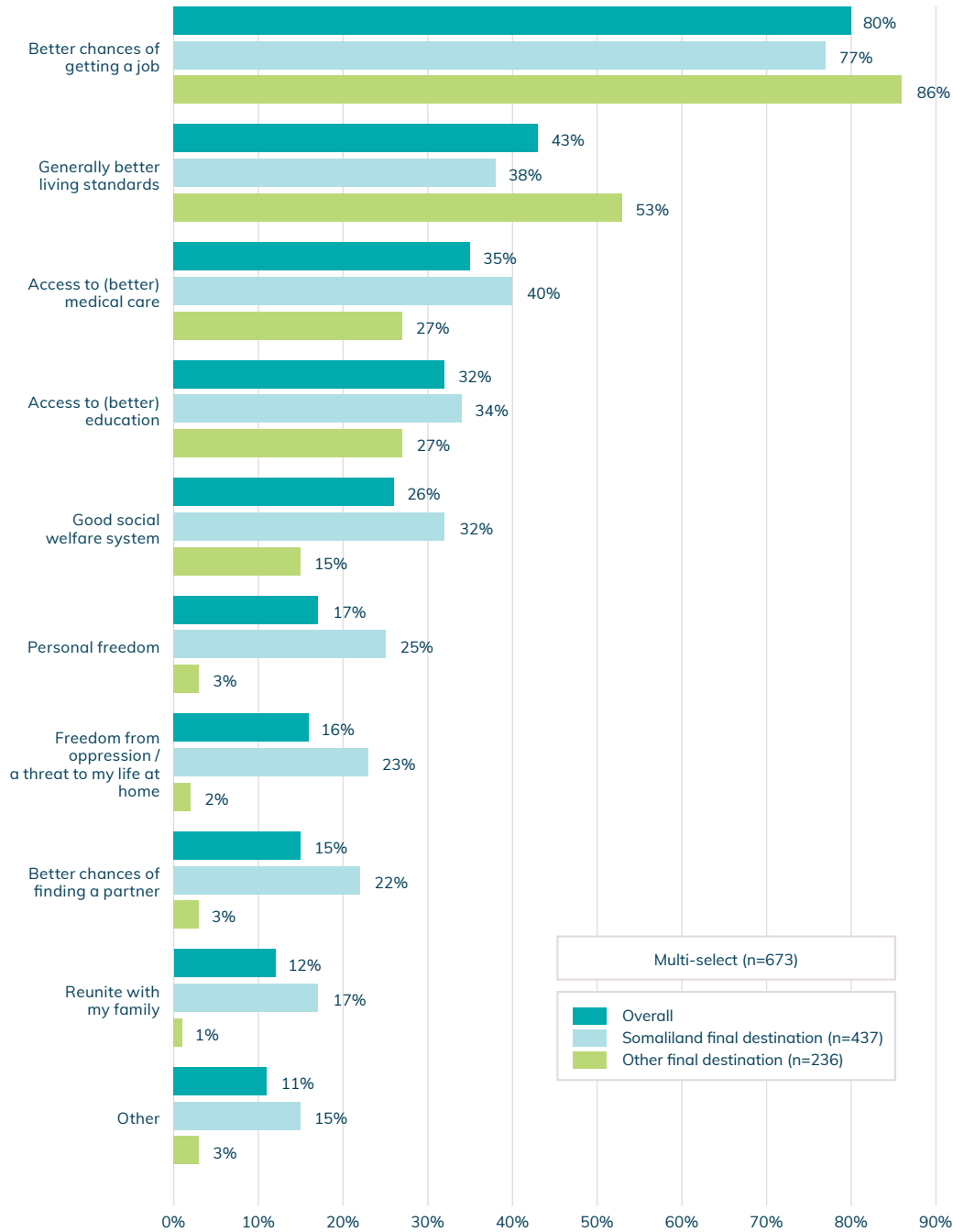
27% of respondents had not yet reached their destinations (n=183). Among these, the most popular destinations include the Gulf countries (41%), using the Eastern route; Europe (26%), using the Northern route; other African countries (15%), the Americas (12%) and Australasia (4%). 8% of respondents had not settled on a location at the time of interview.

Of the 183 respondents who had yet to reach their final destination, 43% reported that they intend to apply for asylum when they arrive. This was highest among respondents who reported that they had left their country of origin due to violence and general insecurity alone (62%) than for others who cited other single factors (33%).

Overall, interviews show that respondents are choosing their destination countries based on 'better chances of getting a job' (80%), access to better medical care (43%), and better living standards (35%), among others (see Figure 5).

As in Figure 5 below, work prospects and better living standards were more of a concern among respondents who were still on their journeys (86% and 53%, respectively) than those who said that Somaliland was their final destination (77% and 38%, respectively). The pattern is reversed for all other factors, with respondents intending to remain in Somaliland more likely to consider the than those who were still on their journeys. This is particularly notable for factors such as personal freedom and freedom from oppression, which may indicate that Somaliland offers a more wholesome balance of opportunities for respondents beyond financial gain. 92% of respondents with an intention to travel to Gulf countries, for example, report that they chose the destination because of job prospects, which is [in line with other findings](#) among refugees and migrants on the Eastern Route. Other factors include better living standards (51%), access to better medical care (29%) and better education (n=28%), among others.

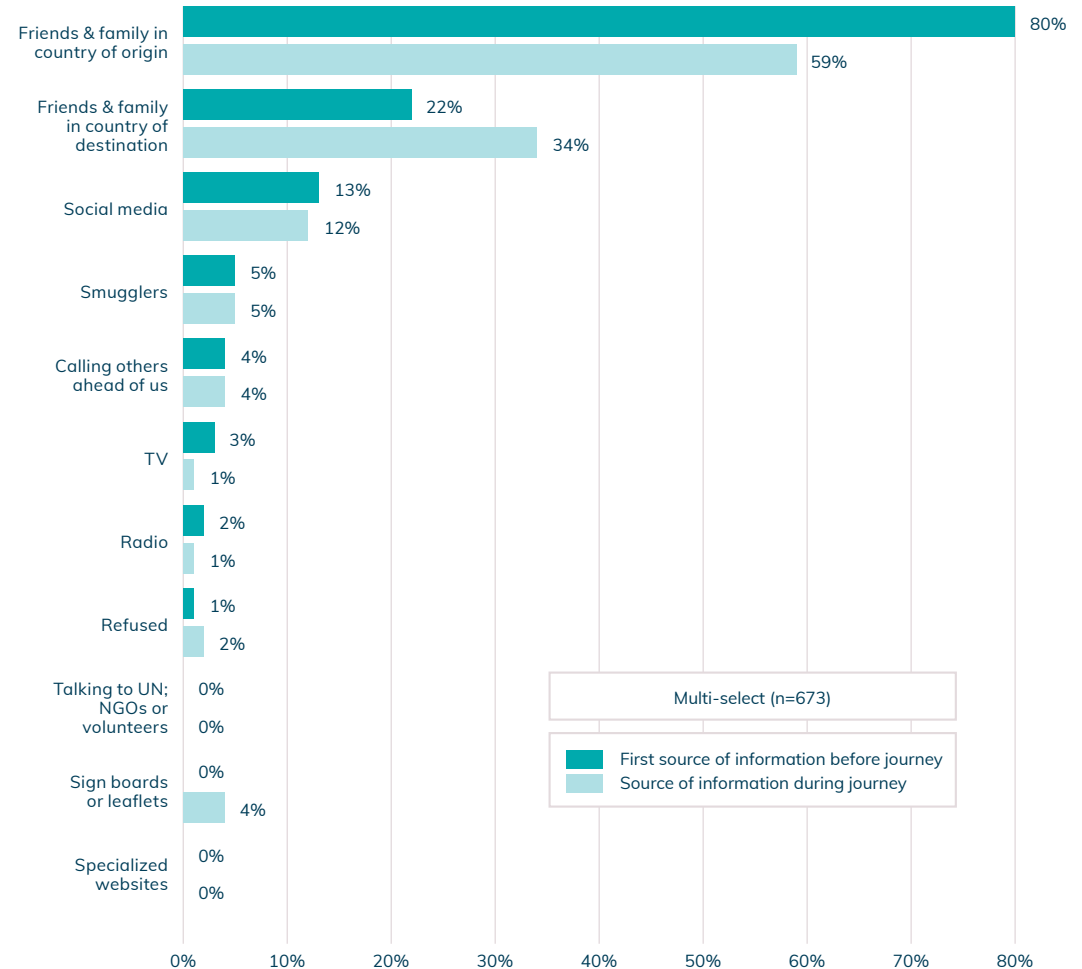
**Figure 5. Criteria for choosing destination**



## Family and friends the most important information source

80% of respondents noted that friends and family in the country of origin were their first source of information about the journey and family and friends in country of destination were the second most important source (22%). Other sources include social media (13%), smugglers (5%), and calling others ahead on the journey (4%).

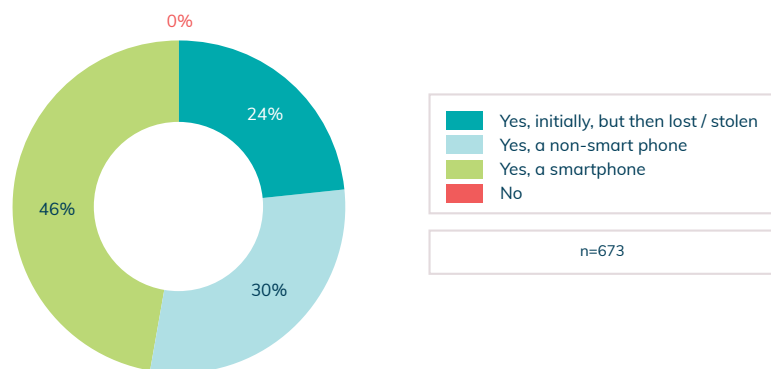
**Figure 6. Source of information on migration (including routes, destinations, costs and risks)**



While family and friends in the country of origin remained a frequent source of information once the journey had begun (59%), family and friends in the country of destination became an increasingly frequent source, climbing from 22% to 34%.

46% of respondents noted that they did not have a phone with them on the migration journey, which may impact the sources of information they access, including their ability to get and share information from family and friends. 30% reported that they had a smartphone, and 24% said that they had a non-smart phone.

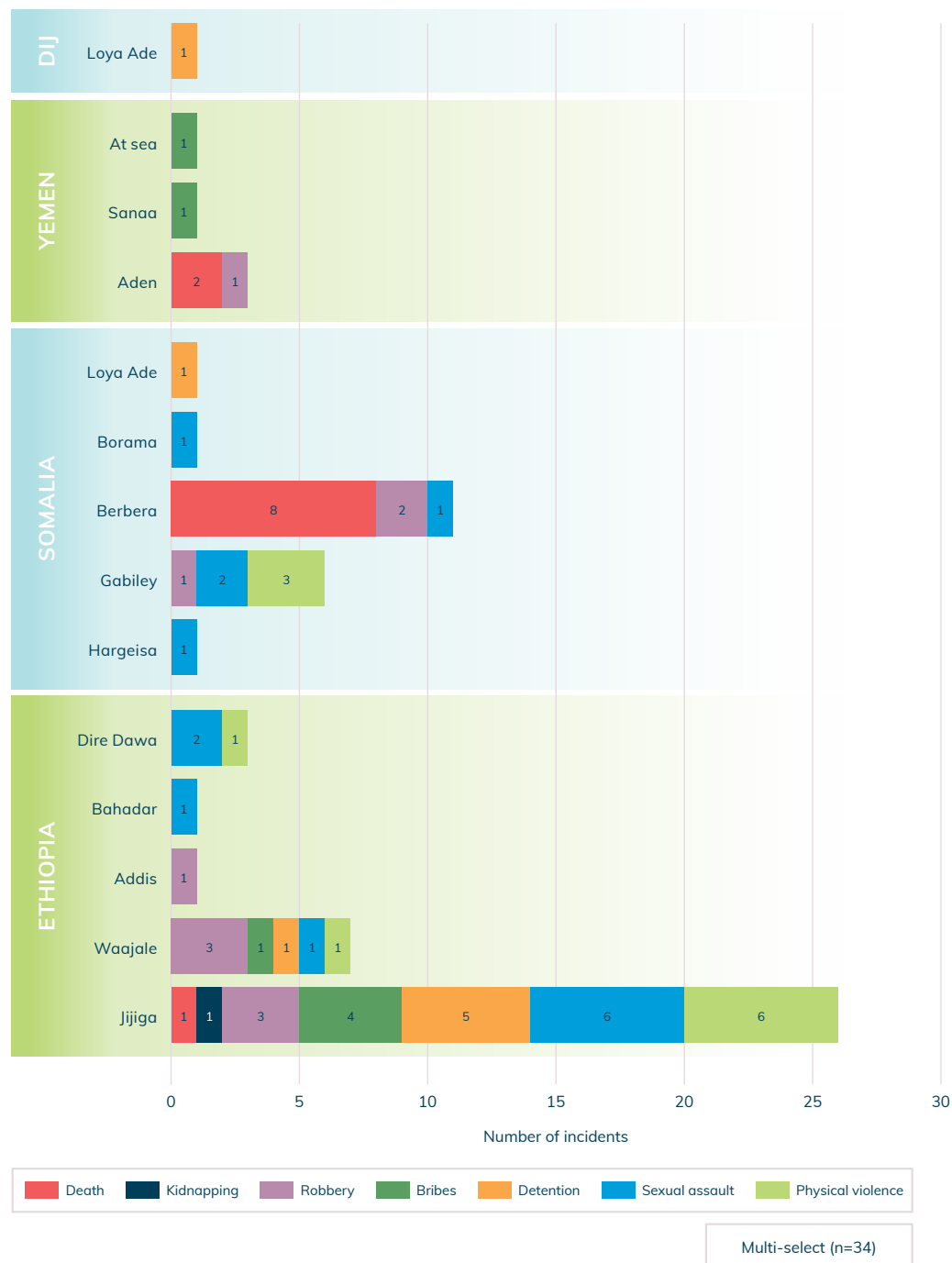
**Figure 7. Did you have a phone with you during your migration journey?**



## Protection incidents en route a serious concern

34 refugees and migrants travelling through or into Somaliland reported being witness to or victims of 68 incidents of abuse, including sexual assault, bribery, detention, physical abuse and 11 cases of death. The refugees and migrants interviewed in Somaliland have travelled relatively short distances, and it is likely that the scale of abuse is in fact much higher, both because this sample does not cover full journeys, and because refugees and migrants are believed to [underreport crimes and abuse](#) perpetrated against them.

**Figure 8. Where protection incidents occurred**



The majority of incidents were reported in Ethiopia, where sexual assault and physical harassment were most frequently reported. A high number of incidents were also reported in Somaliland. Physical harassment accounted for 18 reported occurrences of abuse and sexual assault was mentioned in 14 incidents.

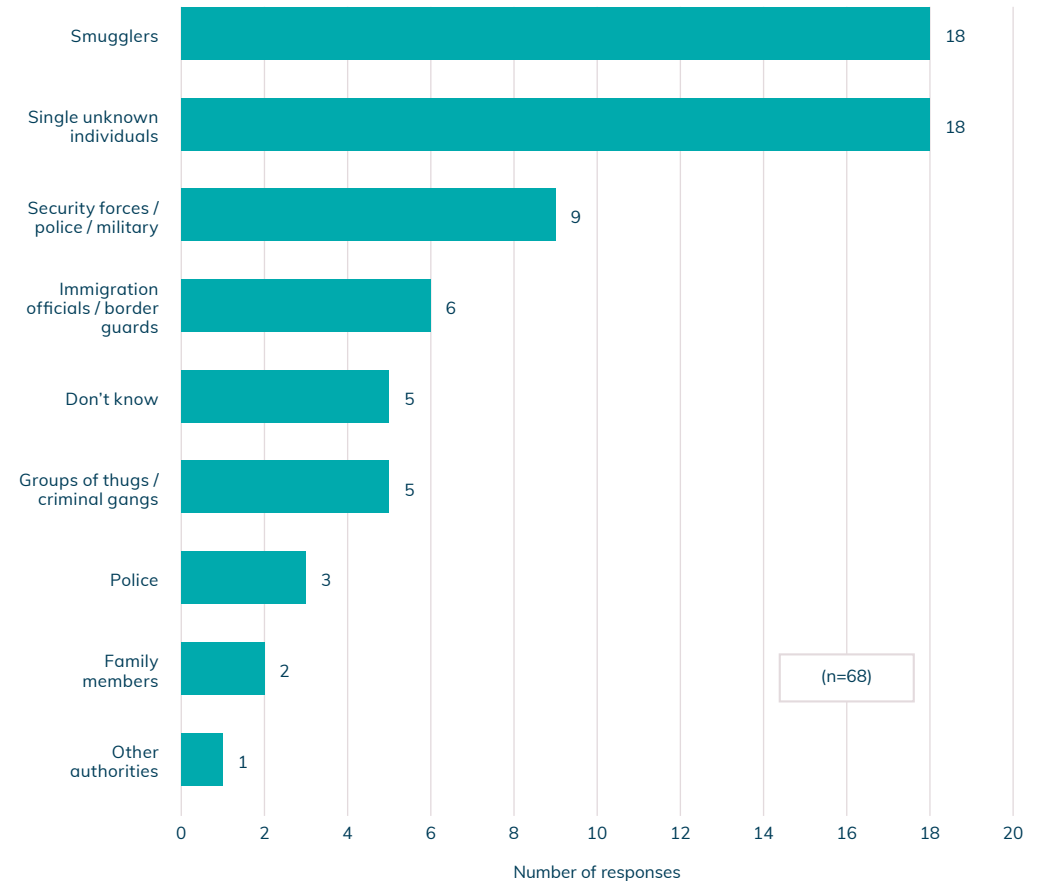
All instances of physical abuse reportedly involved behaviour such as slapping and beating, and in several instances in combination with verbal abuse (n=3), sleep deprivation, forced labour and stoning (n=1 each). Sexual abuse reportedly included indecent assault (n=7) and rape (n=4). 10 of the 11 reported deaths were a result of vehicle accidents, and one was the result of shooting/stabbing.

## Smugglers are key perpetrators of abuses

Of the 68 incidents of abuse, smugglers and unknown individuals were most frequently cited as responsible (n=18, respectively). Security forces were also cited by 9 respondents, and border guards by 6 respondents.

Smugglers were identified as perpetrators in more than half of the abuses reported, although smugglers were only involved in a very small percentage of respondents' journeys (see page 2). Smugglers are often identified among the [top perpetrators](#) of human rights abuses against refugees and migrants on the Eastern Route, however 4Mi data collected during COVID-19 suggests that border closures have reduced refugees' and migrants' access to smugglers, thereby reducing exposure to risk.

**Figure 9. Perpetrator of protection abuses**

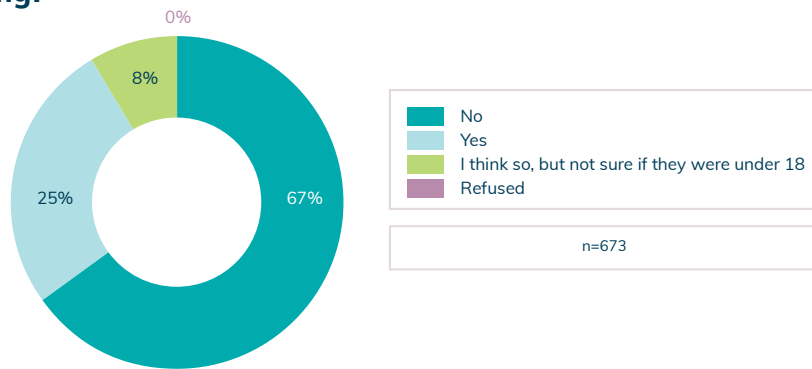


Ethiopians were most likely to use a smuggler; only 1 Yemeni respondent noted they used a smuggler. Of those who used a smuggler, more reported using at least 2 smugglers during the journey (n=21), and 13 reported having used only 1 smuggler. Where engaged, smuggler services were typically used for safe transport across borders (n=19) and transportation to holding places (n=8).

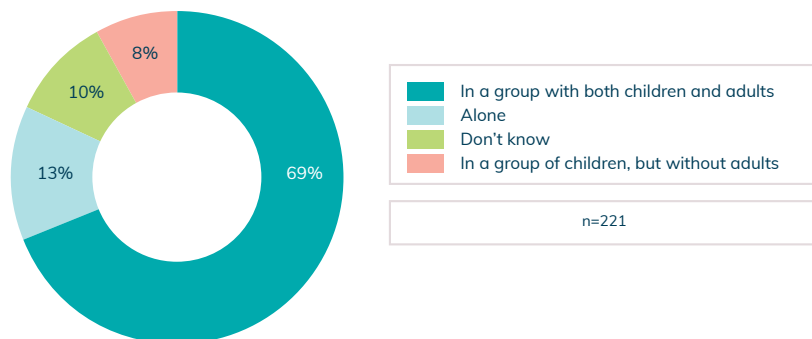
## A quarter of respondents have seen children in mixed flows

There are serious concerns for the safety and protection of children and young people on the move, and children in mixed flows risk falling outside the protection mechanisms that could keep them safe. In this survey, 25% of respondents (n=177) reported that they saw children under 18 traveling. Of these respondents, 88% said the children were traveling in a group with both children and adults; 16% said they believed the children were traveling alone (n=29), and 8% said they thought they were traveling in a group of children without adults (n=17).

**Figure 10. During your journey, did you see any children under 18 traveling?**



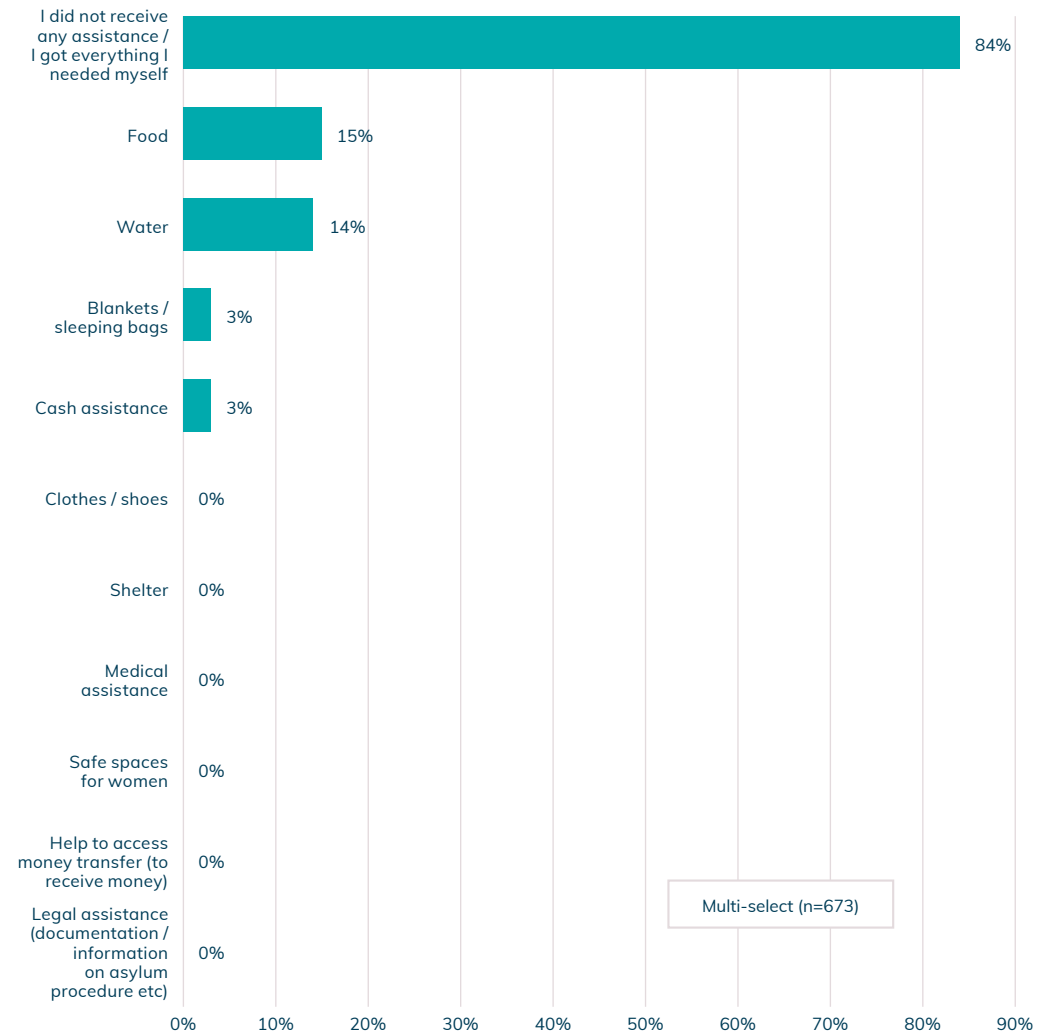
**Figure 11. Were the children you saw traveling with others or alone?**



## Refugees and migrants most in need of food and water during their journey

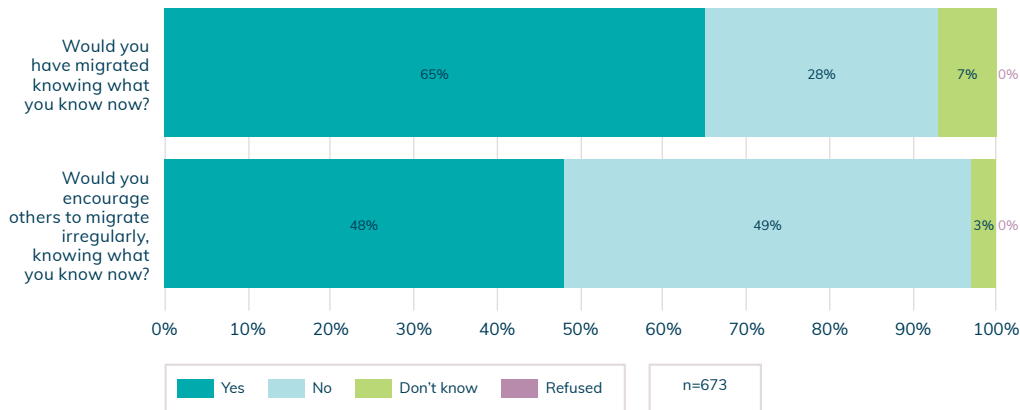
Interviews show that most respondents (84%) did not receive assistance during their journeys. Where they did receive assistance, food and water were the most frequently provided. The main providers of assistance were the local population, and friends and family.

**Figure 12. Assistance during journeys**



Despite the protection risks that people experience and the uncertainty of their destination, 65% of respondents would still choose to move irregularly based on what they now know. However, only 48% would encourage others to move irregularly, possibly indicating that they would not want others to experience the same hardships that they have.

**Figure 13. Would you migrate irregularly or encourage others, knowing what you know now?**



## 4Mi

The [Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative](https://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi) (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](https://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)

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