

# The impact of Covid-19 on protection among Afghan refugees and migrants in Greece

This 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 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings presented here reflect the impact of Covid-19 on protection among Afghan refugees and migrants in Greece but should also be understood against the background of an increasingly tough approach to migration management in the country, including [detention of asylum seekers and migrants](#) and alleged [pushbacks at sea](#)<sup>1</sup>.

## Key findings

Overall, from the analysis of the surveys, it is perceived by the respondents that since the beginning of Covid-19 there has been an increase in the protection risks they face in Greece in several ways. More specifically:

- 75% of respondents think there is an increased risk of deportation.
- 78% of respondents think there is an increased risk of arbitrary arrest and detention.
- 66% of respondents believe that there has been an increase in domestic violence since the pandemic began.

The findings presented here, [correspond with the results from other regions](#) focused on the impact of Covid-19 on protection risks for refugees and migrants along mixed migration routes in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

<sup>1</sup> For more information see also a recent [New York Times article](#), and a report by [Deutsche Welle](#).

## Profiles

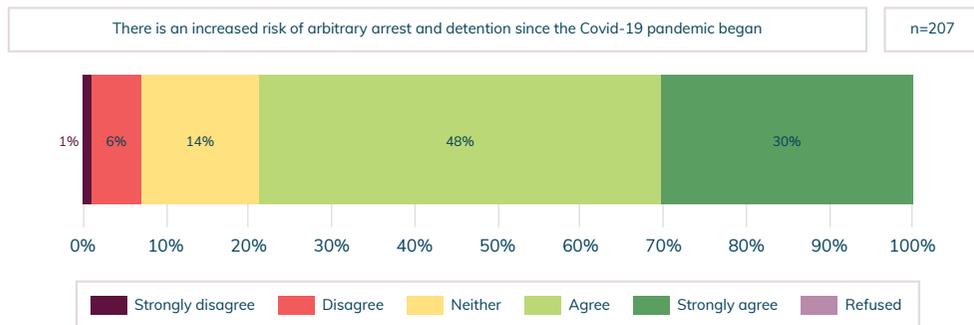
Respondents were asked to voice their level of agreement in a series of statements about protection violations since the pandemic began, based on their experience.<sup>2</sup> The sample for the snapshot report includes 207 surveys with Afghans conducted between 15th July and 31st August 2020. 56% of respondents are men (n=115) and 44% are women (n=92). The sample includes both people who have been travelling before and during the Covid-19 pandemic: from the 207 respondents, 36% (n=74) arrived in Greece in 2018, 39% (n=81) in 2019 and 25% (n=52) in 2020. Two Afghans had not heard of Covid-19 during the time of the interview and therefore they have been excluded from the sample. 4Mi also collects data on other nationalities in Greece including Syrians and Iraqis but given the limited number of interviews among these nationalities (5 and 1, respectively), these are not included in the analysis for this snapshot report.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the questions relate to perceptions based on experience, but do not relate to direct experiences.

## Nearly 80% believe that there is an increased risk of arbitrary arrest and detention

As shown in Figure 1, a total of 78% of respondents (n=163) either agree or strongly agree with the statement that there is an increased risk of arbitrary arrest and detention since the Covid-19 pandemic began. 14% (n=29) do not think that such risks have increased while only 6% (n=14) either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. The high number of respondents agreeing with the statement corresponds well to the reported tougher approach by the Greek government in relation to migration management in general and the results are stronger than in any other region where 4Mi has collected the same information: more than half disagreed with the statement on an increase in arbitrary arrest and detention in East Africa (71%), Asia (52%), and North Africa (51%).

**Figure 1. Increased risk of arbitrary arrest and detention**

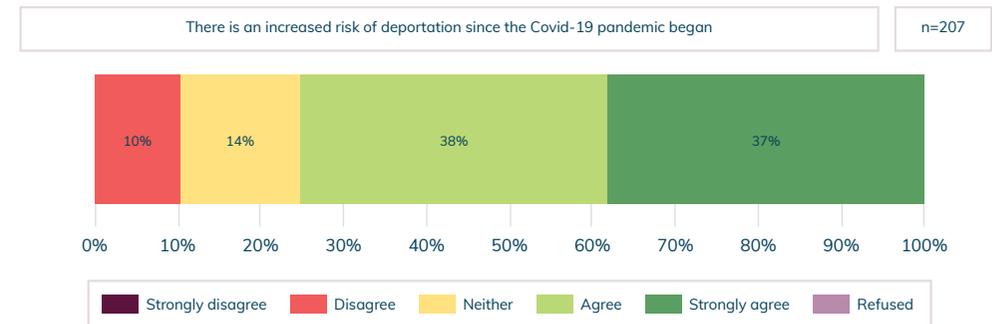


## Increased risks of deportation

As shown in Figure 2, there is likewise a reported perceived increased risk of deportation with 75% (n=156) agreeing with the statement. 14.5% (n=30) neither agree nor disagree while only 10.5% (n=21) disagree. Again, these results from surveys collected in Greece are [the highest of all regions](#).

As indicated earlier, this is likely a reflection of the tougher approach taken by Greece, which coincides with the pandemic. Earlier this year, the Greek government temporarily suspended the lodging of asylum claims by all people entering the country through irregular means and ordered their ["immediate deportation without registration, where possible, to their countries of origin or transit"](#). This was in response to the [dramatic increase](#) in arrivals from Turkey, as the Turkish government announced on 27th February that it would no longer stop asylum seekers and migrants from leaving to reach the EU. During the spring and summer, there have been reports of the Greek government promoting [forced deportations](#) or even [ignoring the fundamental right of non-refoulement](#).

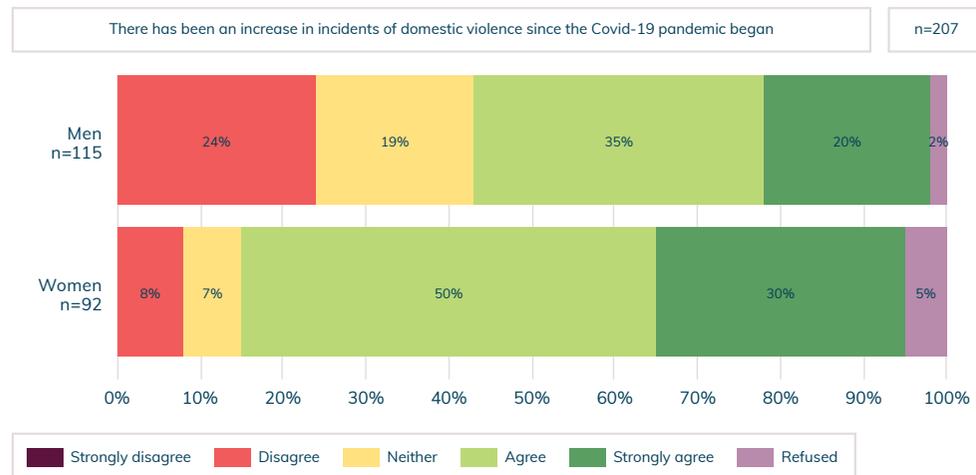
**Figure 2. Increased risk of deportation**



## 66% of all respondents agree that there has been an increase in incidents of domestic violence

When asked if there is an increase in domestic violence since the pandemic began, the difference in responses between genders showcase a potential variance in how domestic violence is understood among them. As shown in Figure 3, while 66% (n=137) of the entire sample agrees with the statement, the level of agreement rises for female respondents where 80% (n=74) strongly agree and/or agree compared to only 55% (n=63) of men. Fewer women - 7% (n=7)- disagree that there has been an increase in domestic violence while the opposite stands for men, where 24.5% (n=28) disagree. Compared to [results across other regions](#) including Asia, Latin America and West, North and East Africa, the data from Greece follow a general trend indicating an increase in domestic violence incidents since the pandemic began.

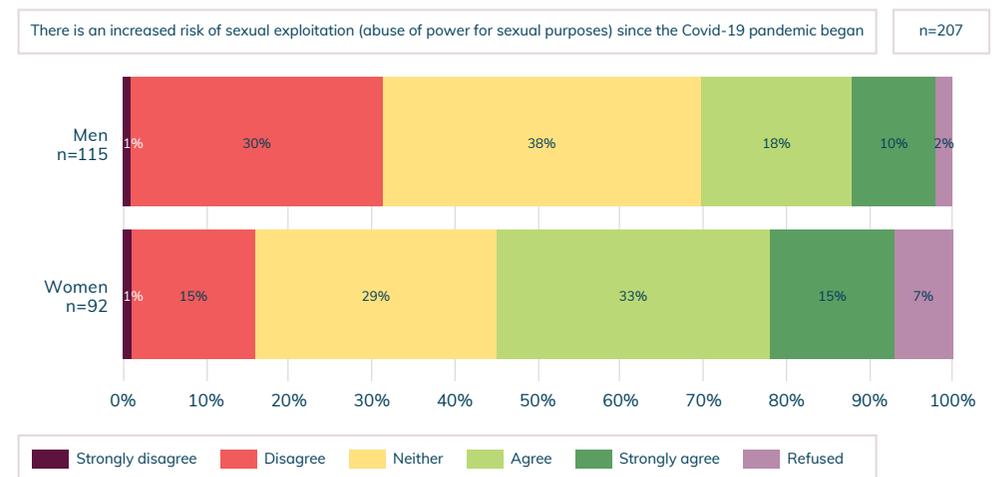
**Figure 3. Incidents of domestic violence have increased**



## Increased risk of sexual exploitation due to Covid-19

When asked about the increased risk of sexual exploitation, as shown in Figure 4, only 37% (n=77) of the total sample agrees that there is an increase in such since the Covid-19 pandemic began. However, here numbers also change when the sample is divided by gender: 48% (n=44) of female respondents believe that sexual exploitation is more pronounced since the pandemic began while only 28.5% (n=33) of male respondents agree with this statement. Such differences are also reflected on the opposite side of the graph: only 16% (n=15) of female respondents disagree with the notion of increased sexual exploitation since the Covid-19 pandemic began, whereas the figure almost doubles for male participants where 31% (n=36) disagree with the statement.

**Figure 4. Increased risk of sexual exploitation**



Results imply that some risks for Afghan refugees and migrants in Greece have not increased since the pandemic began, or where the responses are quite balanced thus no safe conclusions can be extracted. When asked about a potential increase in bribes since the pandemic began, 41% (n=85) of the sample did not agree or disagree with the statement, 29% (n=60) agreed, 23% (n=47) disagreed and 7% (n=15) refused to respond. Similar results were found regarding the potential increase in theft since Covid-19 began:

33% (n=68) of the sample agree, 29.5% (n=61) neither agree nor disagree, 35% (n=72) disagree and 2.5% (n=6) refuse to answer the question. Finally, only 23% (n=47) of respondents agree that there has been an increase in labour exploitation, 40.5% (n=84) neither agree nor disagree, 34% (n=71) disagree and 2.5% (n=5) refused to respond.



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## 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. The recruitment of respondents normally takes place face-to-face as was also the case for this snapshot report. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face recruitment and data collection have been suspended or paused for different periods of time 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. In Europe, elements of the Covid-19 survey have been implemented with face-to-face data collection. 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](http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)