

This is the fourth in a series of global thematic updates on 4Mi data collected remotely by MMC about the impact of Covid-19 on refugees and migrants travelling along mixed migration routes in Africa, Asia and Latin America. After the initial roll-out of our adapted 4Mi survey focusing on the immediate impact of the pandemic in April, we moved into a new data collection phase in July, further zooming in on the impact of the pandemic on mixed migration.

This is the 9th and last global update based on MMC's global data collection since the pandemic was declared. As such it offers a future outlook towards 2021, focusing on the potential longer-term impact of the pandemic, which is expected mainly to manifest itself through the effect on people's decision to migrate. This final global thematic update therefore presents data on the extent to which Covid-19 has already been a factor in people's decision to leave their country of origin. Similar to MMC's previous global data updates since the start of the pandemic, these thematic reports provide an aggregated overview from regions; more detailed, thematic and response-oriented Covid-19 snapshots are developed in each of the MMC regional offices and available [here](#).

Key messages

- The pandemic has already become a driver of migration among our sample of refugees and migrants: drawing from our total, **more than one-third of respondents indicate that the Covid-19 related crisis was in some way a factor in their decision to leave.**
- **Covid-19 is adding to economic pressures to migrate.** For the vast majority of respondents who said Covid-19 played a role in their decision to leave, it is the impact of the crisis on economic factors. 29% of all respondents indicate that the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on economic factors influenced their decision to leave.
- **This finding is supported by a comparison of data from people who left before the pandemic and those who left after:** 71% of respondents who left before April 2020 (5,744 respondents in total) say they left for economic reasons (among others); this figure rises to 87% among those who left after (2,004 respondents in total). A comparison of other drivers (violence and conflict, rights and freedoms, socio-cultural, environmental) found a smaller disparity, and a drop in frequency among those who left after the pandemic was declared.*

* Note that this data is indicative, as sample compositions differ and have not been weighted.

Profiles

This update is based on **1,928 interviews**** conducted between 2 July and 31 October 2020, with respondents who began their journey after 1 April 2020 (i.e. after the pandemic was declared and restrictions on mobility had been widely implemented across the globe). Respondents are grouped by region of origin, and region of interview.

Interviews continue to be conducted across all regions, but most interviews have been collected with people who left before the pandemic was declared, and they could therefore not be included in this analysis. In total, 9,241 interviews have been conducted since July 2020.

Methodology

A summary of 4Mi methodology can be found [here](#). All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number. From among the full 9,241 interviews conducted since July 2020, 161 interviews were discarded from analysis due to questionnaire incompleteness or data quality issues. 114 interviews were excluded from the analysis because the respondent either had not heard of Covid-19 (79) or refused to say whether they had heard of it (35).

Table 1. Interviews analysed in this update

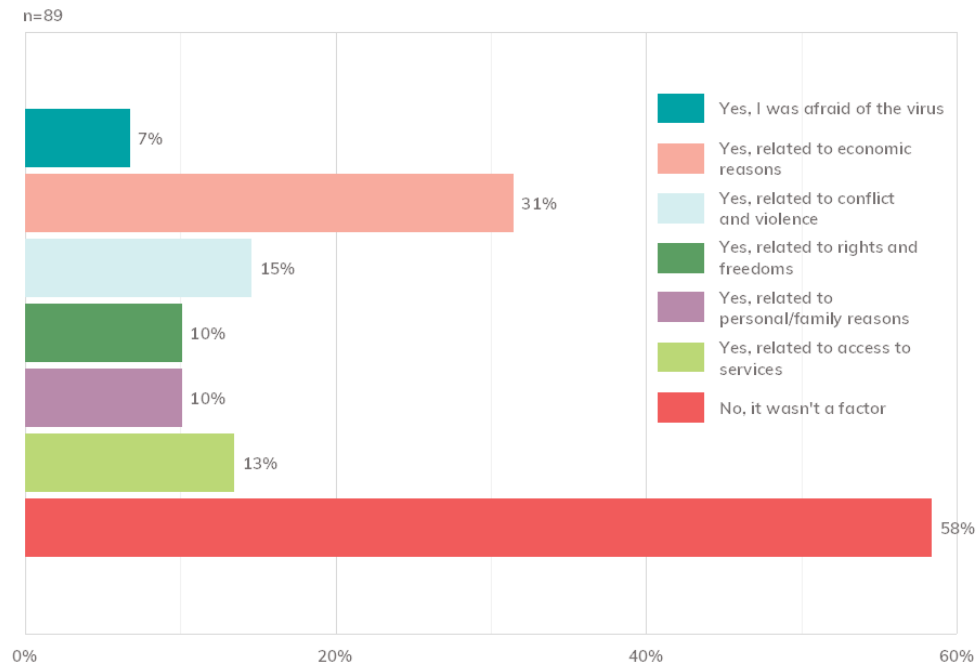
Sample	No. of interviews	%age women
East Africans interviewed in East Africa Main nationalities: Ethiopia (285); Yemen (64); Eritrea (54); remaining from Somalia and DRC	416	22%
East Africans interviewed in North Africa Main nationalities: Eritrea (19); South Sudan (19), remaining from Ethiopia, Somalia, Comoros, Burundi, Kenya, DRC, Rwanda	66	21%
West Africans interviewed in West Africa 21 nationalities including Guinea (200); Côte d'Ivoire (125); Nigeria (109); Niger (105)	1,185	26%
West Africans interviewed in North Africa 16 nationalities including Nigeria (60); Chad (34), Niger (19)	172	30%
Latin Americans interviewed in Latin America 6 nationalities including Honduras (47), Venezuela (24), El Salvador (14)	89	45%
Total	1,928	26%

** These thematic updates report on the findings from the revised 4Mi COVID-19 survey implemented since July 2020. Data collected between April and July (5,906 interviews) using a different survey has been reported in a series of global updates and regional snapshots.

Respondents from Latin America

While more than half of Latin American respondents (52 out of 89) said Covid-19 was not a factor in their decision to move, that leaves more than one-third who felt it did. Among them, Covid-19's economic impact was the most frequently cited (28 out of 89 respondents, and 28 out of 37 respondents who mention a Covid-related impact) followed by concerns for its impact on violence and crime, and on access to services.

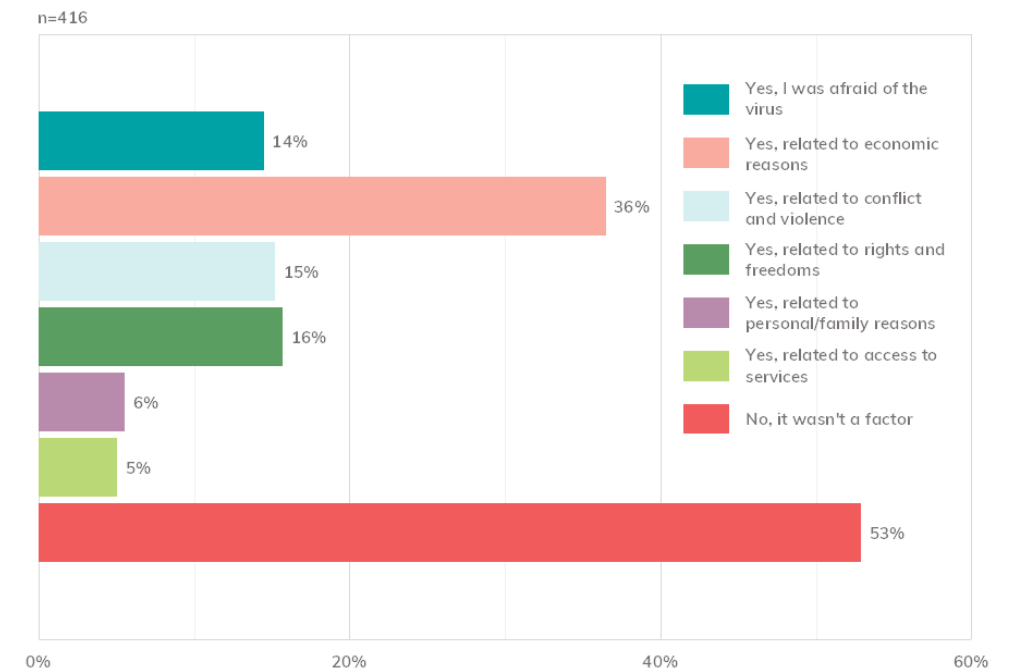
Figure 1. Was Covid-19 a factor in your decision to leave? In Latin America



Respondents from East Africa

The reported role of Covid-19 in the decision to migrate varies between our samples of East Africans in different regions. In East Africa, 53% say it did not play a role. More than a third of all respondents said it played a role relating to economic factors (which equates to around three-quarters of those who said it played a role at all). A smaller proportion said that the virus was in itself a reason for leaving, and that its impact on rights and freedoms, and access to services, impacted the decision to leave.

Figure 2. Was Covid-19 a factor in your decision to leave? East Africans in East Africa

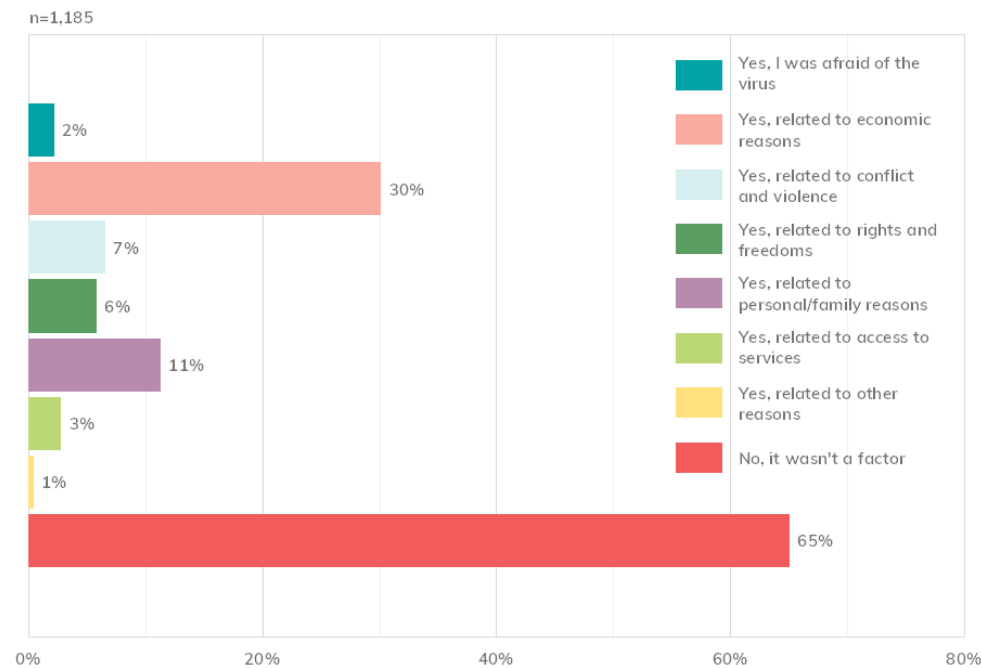


In North Africa (note a small sample of 66 East African respondents), 62 respondents – the overwhelming majority – said Covid-19 had no influence at all on their decision to leave.

Respondents from West Africa

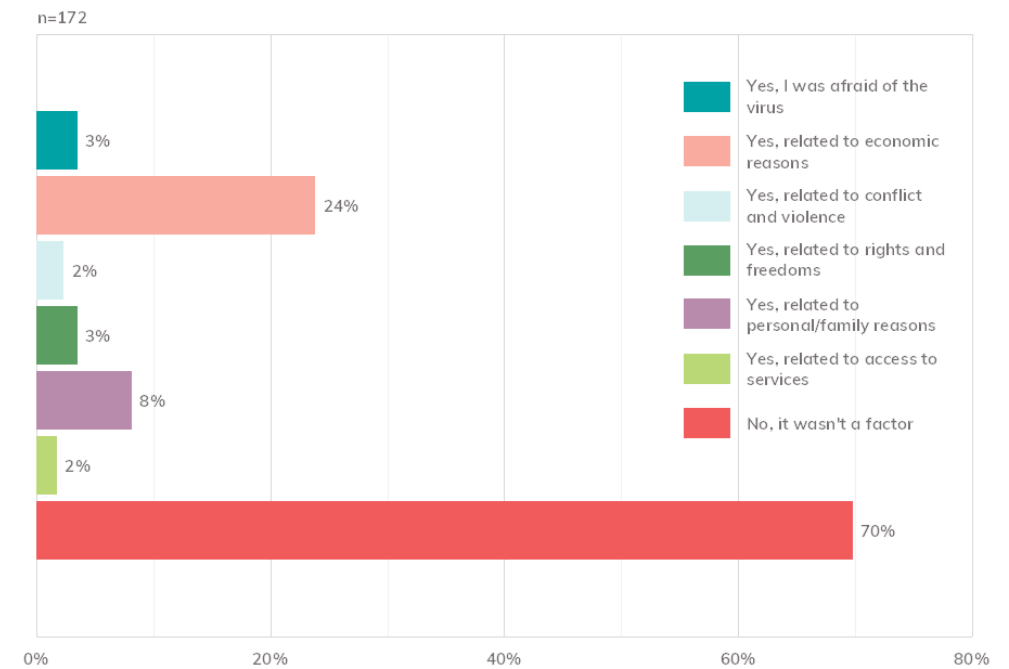
There was a closer resemblance in the answers from West Africans interviewed in different regions. 65% of respondents in West Africa said Covid-19 was not a factor. 30% of respondents said the economic-related impact of Covid-19 was a factor (which is 86% of those who mentioned that Covid-19 was a factor). 11% of all respondents said a personal factor related to Covid-19 influenced their decision.

Figure 3. Was Covid-19 a factor in your decision to leave? West Africans in West Africa



In North Africa, 70% of West African respondents said Covid-19 was not a factor, 24% said economic-related impacts of the pandemic had influenced their decision, and personal impacts of Covid-19 related to the decision for 8% of respondents.

Figure 4. Was Covid-19 a factor in your decision to leave among West Africans in North Africa



A future outlook on shifting migration dynamics: Covid-19 adds to pressures to migrate, but impacts ability to migrate

There is most often a time lapse between the decision to leave a country and the act, to allow for preparation and planning, which makes it all the more striking that already, among people interviewed between three and seven months after the pandemic was declared, we find that Covid-19 is affecting the decision to migrate, primarily through multiplying economic pressures.

The economic impact of the crisis is expected to persist, and even to intensify, in the future. And while we expect mobility restrictions to change – especially once large-scale vaccination starts across the globe - it is hard to predict what those changes will be and to what extent some mobility restrictions may remain in place.

What we can [expect](#) – and are already seeing – is a change in migration dynamics following the pandemic, as its impact both affects people’s aspiration or even need to migrate (for example due to economic pressures resulting from pandemic containment measures) but also their capability to do so (for example lacking the resources to be able to afford migration or because of mobility restrictions). The combination of how the pandemic impacts on aspirations and capability plays out differently in different contexts and regions, and is already leading to changes in migration trends and dynamics.

For example, the economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis have led to increased numbers of North Africans (Tunisians, Moroccans and Algerians) migrating across the Mediterranean to Europe, while the number of sub-Saharan Africans migrating along the Central Mediterranean route have decreased to very low numbers. The number of crossings of West and North Africans across the Atlantic to the Canary Islands increased considerably in 2020, while on the route between the Horn of Africa and Yemen – traditionally used by thousands of refugees and migrants every month – numbers dropped to the lowest recorded in many years.

These different and rapidly changing dynamics make it difficult to predict the longer-lasting impact of the pandemic on mixed migration. With some of the drivers of migration – especially economic drivers - further intensifying over the coming months or possibly even years, but with more people likely to lack the resources to afford often expensive,

irregular migration journeys, prospective migrants may look closer to home. This could lead to even larger migration movements within regions and towards cities. Or people may become stuck, either at home or in transit – with their migration aspirations unfulfilled – or in destination, unable or unwilling to return home. Yet others may undertake riskier journeys as alternatives are blocked, which is likely to have an impact on smuggling dynamics.

How mixed migration routes and dynamics will be affected in the aftermath of the pandemic will be a key migration trend to watch in 2021. Routes and destinations are likely to change, as the pathways, means and opportunities available shift. This final global Covid-19 update by MMC offered a preliminary insight into how the pandemic is already impacting on people’s reasons to migrate, but undoubtedly the impacts will become even more visible in the months to come.

Refugee and migrant voices

“Actually the virus has really delayed my plan of moving to Europe, but I still intend to move whenever the opportunity comes, because Libya is not conducive to stay due to crisis and general insecurity within the country.”

30-year-old man from Niger interviewed in Libya

“Yes, migration is so difficult, especially with this moment of the health crisis which has also become an economic crisis. We do not have access to work, nothing is going the way we wanted, although we left our country of origin for economic reasons.”

24-year-old man from Chad interviewed in Niger

“Well, I left Venezuela because of the situation in the country – there is no food, no water, no medicine. When I got to Colombia I was fine, I was working selling candy and chops on the street, but since the pandemic I have not been able to work, I can only go out to sell on my assigned ID days and therefore my sales have dropped.”

25-year-old woman from Venezuela interviewed in Colombia

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. Normally, the recruitment of respondents and interviews take place face-to-face. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face recruitment and data collection has been suspended 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. 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

The development of this global update is supported by*:



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