



# COVID-19 and social and economic rights of migrants in Mali:

Analysis of 4Mi data collected in Mali between July 2020 and January 2021



January 2022



The Mixed Migration Centre produced this 4Mi data analysis with the financial and technical support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The analysis is part of a broader OHCHR project focusing on the socio-economic impacts of migrants' human rights in Niger in the context of COVID-19, under the auspices of OHCHR's Surge Initiative and its objective to develop disaggregated data and evidence to inform legal, policy, planning and programming at the country level. The outcomes of this analysis will also serve as a basis for future activities of the PROMIS project, a UNODC-OHCHR joint initiative aimed at promoting a human rights-based response to smuggling of migrants and to effectively respond to human rights violations related to irregular migration in West Africa.

The analysis is based on primary data collected in Niger through the 4Mi, which 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.

**Front cover photo credit:**

DRC 2020. Migrants wait at a migrant shelter in Gao.



This report has been prepared within the framework of a UNODC-OHCHR joint initiative (PROMIS) aimed at promoting a human rights-based response to smuggling of migrants and to respond to human rights violations related to irregular migration in West Africa. The report was initiated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Regional Office for West Africa (OHCHR WARO) and produced by the Mixed Migration Centre based on 4Mi data collected with migrants in Mali.

While acknowledging the range of human rights concerns related to irregular migrants, this analysis specifically sets out the challenges faced by migrants with regard to economic and social rights in the COVID-19 context. This analysis will inform OHCHR's actions, and also serve as a basis for future activities of the PROMIS project, a UNODC-OHCHR joint initiative aimed at promoting a human rights-based response to smuggling of migrants and to effectively respond to human rights violations related to irregular migration in West Africa.

The analysis also aims to provide reliable data to follow up on two 2018 UPR recommendations relevant to migrants, which were both supported by Mali and inform the upcoming reviews of Mali by the Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the overall aim is to inform the Government of Mali, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), civil society organizations and other stakeholders' analysis of the immediate and longer-term barriers that prevent migrants from enjoying economic and social rights in Mali. This analysis aims to feed into the upcoming Common Country Analysis (CCA) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

The analysis is based on primary data collected in Mali through 4Mi, which is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps and inform policy and response in relation to mixed migratory movements.

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1 The report focuses on the economic and social aspects of these recommendations - See [UPR Mali, Third Cycle, 2018](#) Matrix of Recommendations  
-114.81 Adopt all measures necessary to ensure the right to education in emergencies and conflict situations, and ensure that education is available to all, in particular migrants, refugees and asylum-seeking children (Honduras); A/HRC/38/7 - Para. 114  
-114.131 Adopt concrete measures in favour of migrants and asylum seekers (Haiti):  
Source of position: A/HRC/38/7 - Para. 114

# Context

The West African region is known for high levels of intra-regional migration. Mali is traditionally a country of origin, transit and destination of mixed migration flows. Due to its geographical location, at the crossroads of the region's commercial, cultural and mobility axes, Mali is one of the main routes used by migrants in West and Central Africa. Mobility is often seen as a strategy to cope with pre-existing socio-economic problems such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, abuses and violence, social pressures (e.g. early marriage) and socio-cultural traditions (migration is often seen as a rite of passage to adulthood).

Women and children comprise an important part of these flows. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in Mali, 49% of the 485,800 international migrants in mid-2020 were women migrants.<sup>2</sup>

The humanitarian situation in the country is deteriorating while conflict further leads to displacement, particularly in the regions bordering Burkina Faso and Niger. More than 377,781 Malians were displaced (as of July 2021). According to UNHCR, Mali hosts 46,919 refugees mainly from Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.<sup>3</sup>

## Relevant policy and legal framework

### Economic, social and cultural rights

Economic, social and cultural rights are described as “those human rights relating to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life, and access to housing, food, water, health care and education.”<sup>4</sup>

Although economic and social rights may be expressed differently depending on the context, they generally include, though are not limited to, worker's rights, the right to social protection, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to health and the right to education.

Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental components of international human rights law and essential to the exercise and enjoyment of economic and social rights.<sup>5</sup>

The following provides a brief overview of the international legal framework in relation to these rights:

- The preamble, Articles 1(3) and 55 of the UN Charter and Article 2(1) of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** prohibit discrimination in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. International treaties on racial discrimination and discrimination against women as well as the rights of refugees, stateless persons, children, migrant workers and members of their families and persons with disabilities include the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, while other treaties require the elimination of discrimination in specific fields, such as employment and education.
- Article 2(2) of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** obliges each State Party “to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” The human rights obligations of equality and non-discrimination under this Covenant are also considered as obligations of immediate effect. The ICESCR has made clear that “protection from discrimination cannot be made conditional upon an individual having a regular status in the host country”.
- **The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW)** contains a general provision on the prohibition of discrimination with respect to the rights it covers. The rights to equal conditions of work, to social security, to urgent medical care and to education, among others, are applicable to all migrant workers and members of their families, whether they are documented or in an irregular situation. Part IV of the Convention guarantees certain additional rights to documented migrants and migrants in a regular situation.
- Objective 15 of the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** carries forward the rights contained in international human rights law, as it aims “to ensure that all migrants, regardless of migration status, have access to basic services” and “to strengthen migrant-inclusive service delivery systems, notwithstanding that nationals and regular migrants may be entitled to more comprehensive service provision, while ensuring that any differential treatment must be based on law, be proportionate and pursue a legitimate aim.”

2 UN DESA (2020) [International Migration 2020 Highlights](#) (ST/ESA/SER.A/452).

3 UNHCR Operational data portal on [Mali](#)

4 OHCHR (2008) [Fact Sheet No. 33: Frequently Asked Questions on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

5 OHCHR (2014) [The Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Migrants in an Irregular Situation](#)

The current analysis is anchored in this human rights framework,<sup>6</sup> as well as the wealth of analysis and recommendations of various UN human rights mechanisms.<sup>7</sup> The analysis is also anchored in the 2030 Agenda,<sup>8</sup> in particular its pledge to leave no one behind,<sup>9</sup> and in particular SDG target 10.7, which calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. SDG 10.2,<sup>10</sup> 10.3<sup>11</sup> and 10.4<sup>12</sup> calling on States to combat social and other forms of inequality, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices are also of particular relevance.

Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic is an enormous challenge for both States and societies as a whole and requires particular attention to the State's obligations to "leave no one behind" - the 2030 Agenda pledge mirroring the international human rights obligation of equality and non-discrimination. The need to mitigate the negative effects of measures aimed at containing the spread of the virus in line with human rights obligations is also necessary. Respect for human rights, including the protection of economic and social rights, is central in an effective strategy to contain the virus, and to respond and recover from it better and in a more sustainable manner.

COVID-19 disproportionately affects the ability to exercise human rights, including the economic and social rights, of people and communities in vulnerable situations, exacerbating previously existing challenges. Migrants, particularly those who are in an irregular situation, are frequently invisible and fearful of claiming their rights due to their irregular status within a given country. This often leads to the denial of their rights and freedoms; they are also disproportionately exposed to discrimination and marginalization. When it comes to economic and social rights, migrants often face difficulties when it comes to fully enjoying their rights. The pandemic has rendered migrants even more vulnerable.

### Legal and policy context in Mali

Mali has ratified the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW), as well as other Core Human Rights Treaties including on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR), on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and on Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>13</sup>

In 2014, a National Migration Policy (PONAM) was adopted by the Malian Government and this policy seeks to make migration an "asset for the development of the country," improving the management of migration "so that it contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable development of the country."<sup>14</sup> This same vision was reiterated in Mali's 2018 Voluntary National Review, which also recognized the important role migrants play in the socio-economic development of the country. However, it is important to note that the PONAM focuses primarily on improving conditions and providing support for prospective, current and returned Malian migrants, rather than for international migrants in Mali.<sup>15</sup>

A 2018 profile on migration governance in Mali underscores that Mali's laws related to health care and education do not distinguish between Malian citizens and migrants, and therefore migrants in theory should have equal access to social services.<sup>16</sup>

A 2020 MMC case study focusing on urban migration in Bamako found that when asked about risks facing migrants there, key informants and migrant respondents focused on socio-economic risks and challenges to a greater extent than risks related to violence and aggression.<sup>17</sup>

## Contextual background with regard to economic and social rights in Mali

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN System in Mali adopted a response framework to, *inter alia*, propose and support mitigation and recovery measures capable of reducing the impact of the socio-economic crisis brought about by the pandemic on the living conditions of the general population, with particular emphasis on vulnerable groups, notably migrants. For example, the UN registered increases in the prices of basic imported products, such as in the northern region of Gao, which is one of the main transit routes for migrants in Mali, thereby placing an unexpected

6 For more information, please visit [UN Treaty Body Database on Mali](#)

7 See for instance, [Universal Periodic Review 2018 for Mali](#); [Mali 2018 report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

8 For more information, please visit [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

9 For more information, please visit [Principle Two: Leave No One Behind](#)

10 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

11 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

12 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

13 For more information, please visit [UN Treaty Body Database on Mali](#)

14 République du Mali (2018) [Rapport National Volontaire sur la Mise en Oeuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable](#).

15 Mixed Migration Centre (2020), [Urban Mixed Migration - Bamako case study](#).

16 International Organization for Migration (2018) [Migration governance profile: Republic of Mali](#).

17 Mixed Migration Centre, [Op Cit](#).

financial strain on their usually meager budgets. This is in addition to pushbacks at border crossings, associated exploitations involved in turning to smugglers to facilitate border crossings or circumvent border closure measures, exposure to abductions or physical harm while on the move, and school closures due to COVID-19 preventive measures instituted by the Government. These constraints associated with the pandemic added a layer of complexity to already existing issues that migrants - whether considering Mali as a point of departure, transit, or destination - had to take into account, particularly the ongoing armed conflict in many parts of the country and transnational organized crimes.

More broadly, as also reflected in the 2018 Committee on Economic and Cultural Rights review of Mali,<sup>18</sup> violence and armed conflict across swathes of Mali continue to have a significant adverse effect on the enjoyment of economic and social rights. For instance, armed violence has forced inhabitants in many villages, especially in Central Mali, to abandon their economic activities and major sources of livelihood, including animal husbandry and farming, thus increasing hardship. In some instances, armed groups or militias have conducted raids on livestock, also preventing agriculturalists from cultivating crops. Moreover, attacks on educational and medical facilities and threats against teachers and medical or humanitarian personnel perpetrated by extremist groups have led to the closure of numerous schools and hospitals in Central and Northern Mali - where there are already significant inequalities in terms of access to social services - leaving children without access to education and the general civilian population without healthcare services. This phenomenon is increasingly being documented in previously unaffected parts of Southern Mali, as violence shifts southward. The densely populated rural areas of the South account for 90% of the country's poverty.<sup>19</sup>

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18 For example, "the Committee is concerned about the negative impact of the internal armed conflicts and confrontations in the northern and central areas of the country on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights." para. 4. [E/C.12/MLI/CO/1](#)

19 World Bank (2021) [Mali Country Overview](#)

# Key Findings

Based on the Mixed Migration Centre's 4Mi survey conducted in Mali between July 2020 and January 2021 with 1,436 migrants<sup>20</sup> (20% women, 80% men), this analysis provides insights on the impact of COVID-19 on their mobility, livelihood situation and certain social and economic rights, namely access to health services and education. It also looks at their situations of sanitation and housing in light of virus prevention. Key findings include:

## Profile

- **Over half of the respondents reported being irregularly present in Mali (56%).** Women more often reported having irregular status (70%) than men (52%). The majority of these respondents came from ECOWAS countries which allow free movement among member states; a lack of valid travel document or certificate is one possible explanation for their irregular status.

## Impact on the journey

SDG 10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well managed migration policies.

- **Migration plans largely withstood the pandemic although COVID-19 did have a considerable impact on respondents' journeys.** Just 34% reported some change in their migration plans although 74% of respondents reported that COVID-19 had impacted their journey.
- **Respondents who left after the pandemic was declared generally did not perceive COVID-19 to have explicitly influenced their migration decision.** 32% indicated that COVID-19 influenced their decision to leave. When COVID-19 did play a role, respondents most often reported economic factors related to the pandemic.
- **The majority of respondents in Mali agreed that according to their experience, there had been an increase in the risk of extortion (60%) and theft (52%) since the beginning of the pandemic.** A minority although notable proportion of respondents agreed that the risk of detention (49%), labor exploitation (37%), domestic violence (33%), pushback at borders (30%), deportation (29%), and sexual exploitation (28%) had increased.

- **45% of respondents reported that the need for smuggling has been greater since the beginning of the pandemic.** At the same time, 49% of respondents believed that their access to smugglers had become more difficult.

## Impact on children's education access

SDG 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.

- **COVID-19 negatively impacted children's access to education.** Of the 28 respondents who had children enrolled in school prior to the pandemic, 18 of these said their children had not received any schooling since the outbreak.

## Impact on access to health

SDG 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

- **Slightly more than half of respondents felt they could access health services if they had COVID-19 symptoms (55%)** or other urgent health needs more generally (54%). Gender differentials were seen in terms of access to health services, as well as barriers to access. For example, a smaller proportion of men felt they could access health services (52%) compared to women (67%) if they had COVID-19 symptoms. More men reported not being able to pay for services (49%) and not knowing where to go (15%) than women (35% and 9%, respectively).
- **16% of respondents reported not taking any measures against COVID-19, with more men reporting not taking measures (18%) than women (6%).** Men not taking measures were more unsure what to do than women respondents (18% versus 0%) and lacked protective equipment to a greater extent (47% versus 11%).

20 MMC normally applies the term 'refugees and migrants' when referring to all those in mixed migration movements, unless referring to a particular group of people with a defined status within these flows. See MMC's full definition of mixed migration and associated terminology [here](#). Since there is no universal and legal definition of a "migrant", OHCHR, in accordance with the mandate to promote and protect the human rights of all persons, describes an international migrant as "any person who is outside a State of which they are a citizen or national" and uses the term 'migrant' as a neutral (and umbrella) term to refer to both migrants and refugees. In light of the partnership between OHCHR and MMC to develop this joint publication the term 'migrants' is used throughout the document.

## Adequate housing

SDG 6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

- Respondents' housing situations may have negatively impacted their ability to prevent COVID-19. **Slightly less than half (49%) of respondents reported living in a place with enough room to allow the recommended physical distance of 1.5 meters from others**, and just 38% of respondents had access to a private toilet at the time of interview. Whereas no women respondents reported living in an abandoned shelter or on the streets, or lacking access to a toilet, these vulnerabilities were reported respectively by 4% and 5% of men respondents.

## Impact on work

SDG 8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

- 45% of respondents had no income prior to the pandemic, which likely already placed them in a state of vulnerability. **Of those who had income prior to the pandemic, 43% reported a loss of work income (45% men, 35% women), and 27% reported a loss of financial support from their family (29% men, 22% women).** 32% of respondents who had income prior to COVID-19 reported no change in income (31% men, 38% women).
- **The economic impacts of COVID-19 were wide-ranging with some differences according to gender. Men may in fact have started off more financially secure, as they reported falling into debt at a lower rate (26%) than women (49%) as a result of the pandemic.** Additionally, 77% of men respondents reported using up savings compared to 65% of women respondents. Being unable to afford basic goods (40%) and increased worry and anxiety (30%) were other common consequences of income loss with minimal difference between genders.

# Methodology

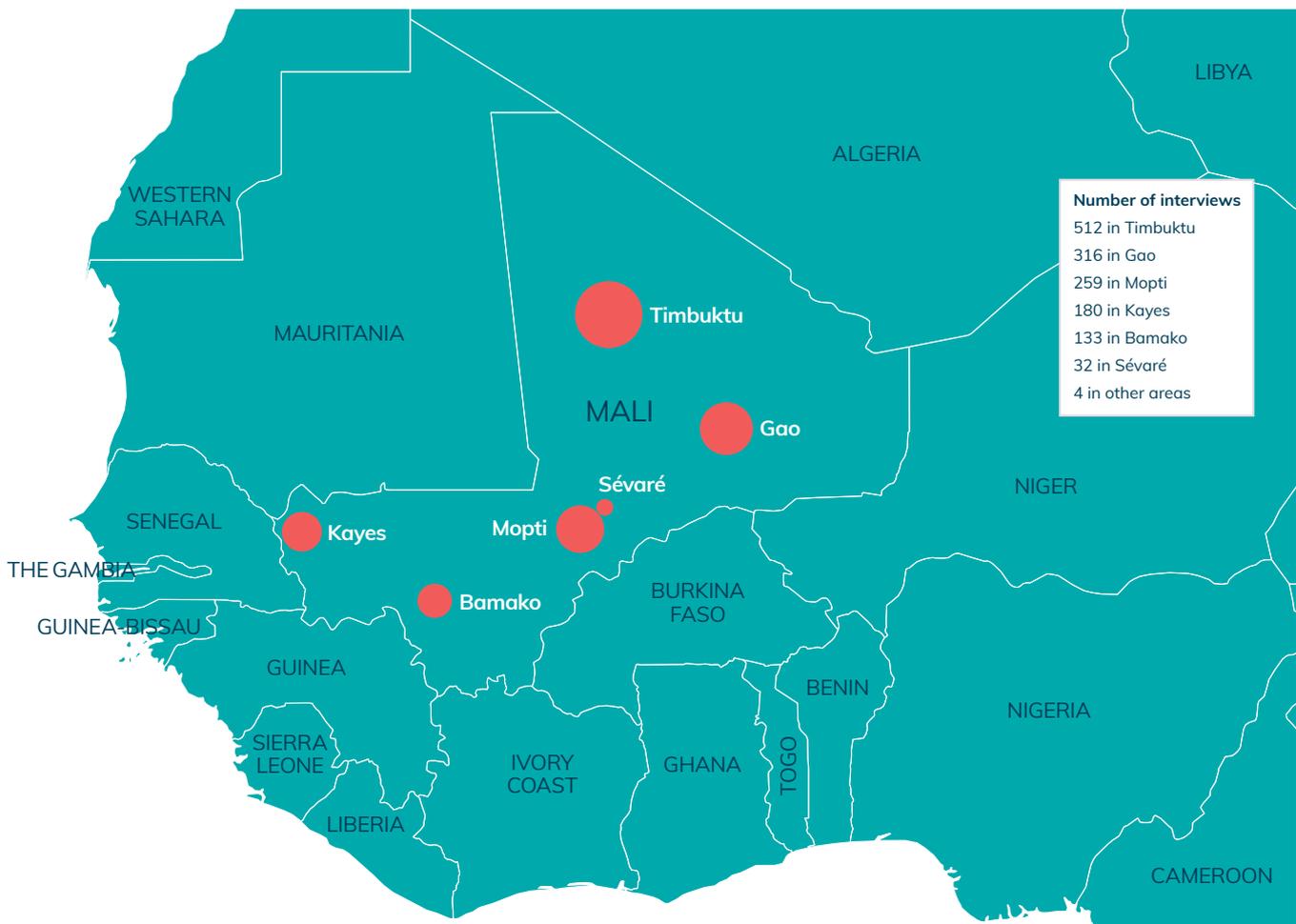
4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements. The recruitment of respondents normally takes place face-to-face. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face recruitment and data collection was suspended or paused for different periods of time in all 20 countries where 4Mi is being implemented across six regions.

Respondents were instead recruited through a number of remote or third-party mechanisms; with sampling occurring through a mixture of purposive and snowball approaches. A new survey was developed to focus on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants, and this was administered in West Africa in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Given that 4Mi's methodology is adapted to target people on the move – a population whose fluidity makes it both challenging to reach and difficult to count – 4Mi data collection uses a non-probability sampling approach, and therefore is not intended to be representative of the overall volume or characteristics of people on the move in the region.<sup>21</sup> Measures have been put in place to check and – to the extent possible – control for bias and to protect personal data, but the switch to remote recruitment and data collection results in additional potential bias and risks, which cannot be completely avoided.

See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at [www.mixedmigration.org/4mi](http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)

**Map 1. Locations of 4Mi interviews**



21 For more information, please visit [4Mi Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)

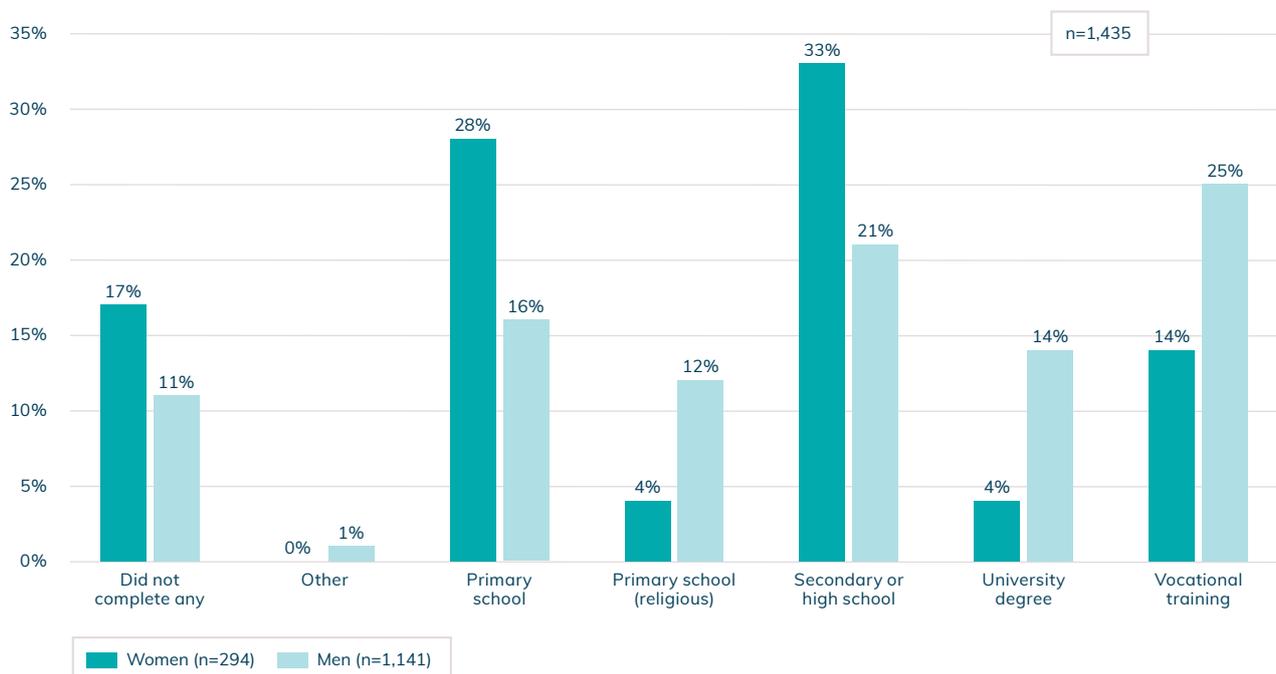
**Between July 2020 and January 2021, a total of 1,436 migrants were interviewed by 4Mi in Mali.** Fourteen enumerators interviewed both women (20%) and men (80%)<sup>22</sup> by telephone. Respondents in Mali were young, with 24% of respondents below the age of 25, 69% of respondents between the ages of 25 and 34, and 7% of respondents aged 35 and above. The most common nationalities among respondents were: Guinea (23%), Côte d'Ivoire (13%), Burkina Faso (11%), Senegal (11%) and Niger (9%). 97% of respondents were from ECOWAS countries.<sup>23</sup>

**Over half of the respondents reported being irregularly present in Mali (56%).** Women more often reported having irregular status (70%) than men (52%). Of those who reported being irregularly present in Mali (n=800), 19% were from Guinea, 15% from Côte d'Ivoire, 13% from Niger, 11% from Burkina Faso and 11% from Senegal, all member states of ECOWAS. Citizens from ECOWAS countries who reported being present in Mali irregularly, despite the free movement regulation within the ECOWAS region, may lack a valid ECOWAS Travel Certificate as institutionalized in 2014 by ECOWAS member states. 7% of respondents indicated that they did not know their legal status (n=107).

**Mali was the preferred destination for only two respondents** of those who specified an intended destination (n=1,377). Algeria (30%), Spain (12%) and France (10%) were the most common preferred destinations of respondents. Algeria was more frequently preferred by men (34% compared to 14% of women) and France was more favored by women (19% compared to 7% of men).

**Respondents reported various levels of formal education.** 29% of respondents had completed primary school, and 12% reported receiving no formal education. However, 23% of respondents had completed secondary or high school, 22% vocational training and 12% university. **There were noticeable gender differences among respondents.** For example, 17% of women did not complete any schooling versus 11% for men, and men respondents more often reported completing university than women (14% vs 4% respectively) as well as vocational training (25% vs 14%). On the other hand, women respondents more often reported completing non-religious primary school (28%) and secondary school (33%) as compared to men respondents (16% and 21% respectively).

**Figure 1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**



22 This is slightly above the percentage of women migrants captured in the [LOM DTM flow monitoring at the same period](#) (14% women reported between August and September 2020). MMC data collection uses an intentional methodology to ensure that women are represented in 4Mi data collection in order to reflect their experiences. Women on migration routes may be more hidden and difficult to access, for instance because they may be employed as domestic workers or moving with the assistance of larger, at times criminal, networks.

23 ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

**8% of respondents declared that they were travelling with children under 18 in their care (n=122).** Women more frequently reported this than men (22% versus 5%, respectively). 58% of respondents with children also reported that at least one child was too young to go to school, with more women reporting this (n=47) than men (n=24).

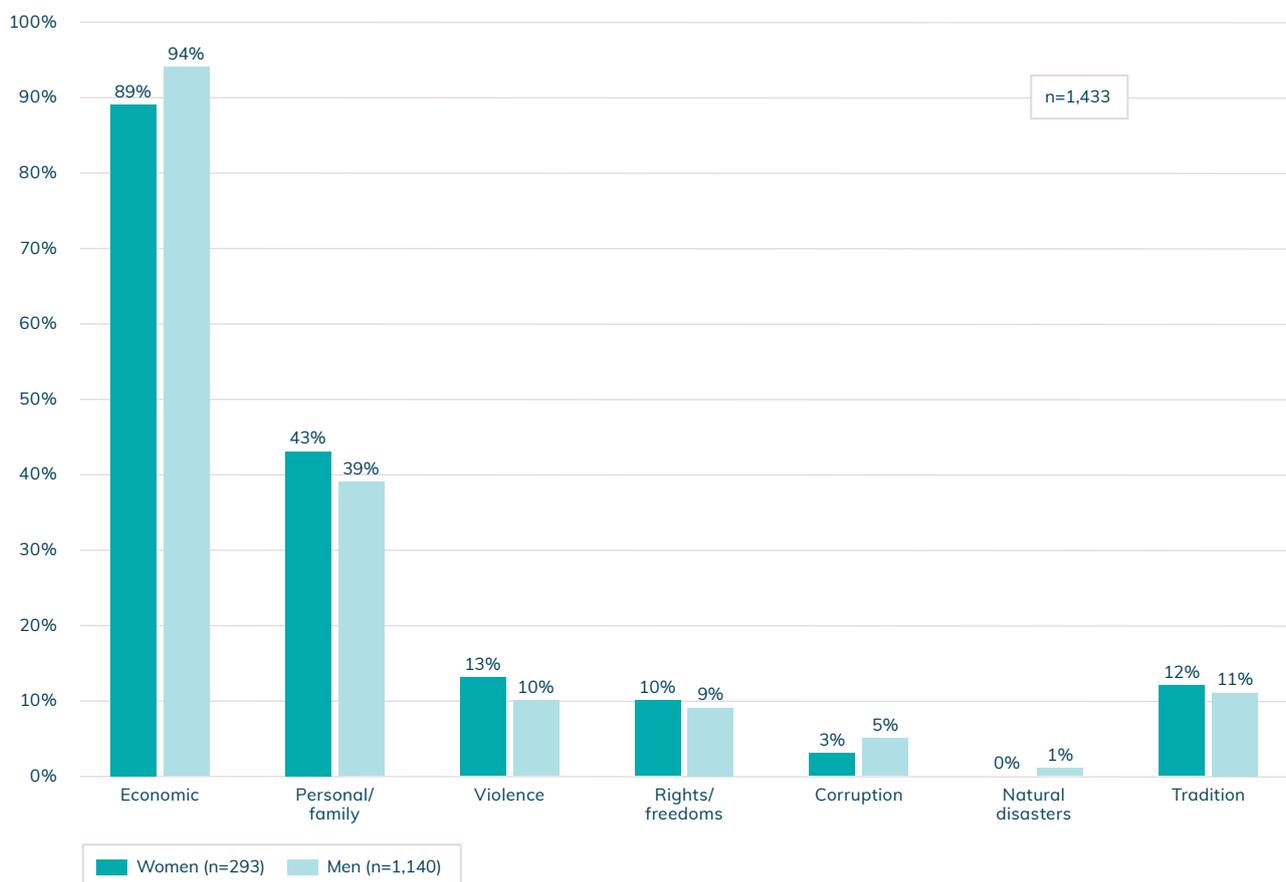
## COVID-19 and mobility

### Migration decisions

**Respondents overwhelmingly reported economic reasons, followed by personal/family reasons, as motivating their migration decisions, regardless of gender.** 93% of respondents in Mali reported leaving for economic reasons, while 40% left for personal/family reasons.

Of those respondents who indicated that they arrived in Mali after the outbreak of the pandemic<sup>24</sup> and who did not report leaving their country of departure before the crisis began (n = 1,122), **only 32% indicated that COVID-19 influenced their decision to leave**, with men's decisions appearing to be affected to a greater extent (34% of men compared to 15% of women). Among those whose decision was impacted by COVID-19 (n=360), economic reasons (94%) and family and/or personal reasons (28%) related to COVID-19 were the most frequently cited. Whether the decision was impacted by COVID-19 or not, economic and family/personal reasons remain the main drivers of migration.

**Figure 2. For what reasons did you leave?**



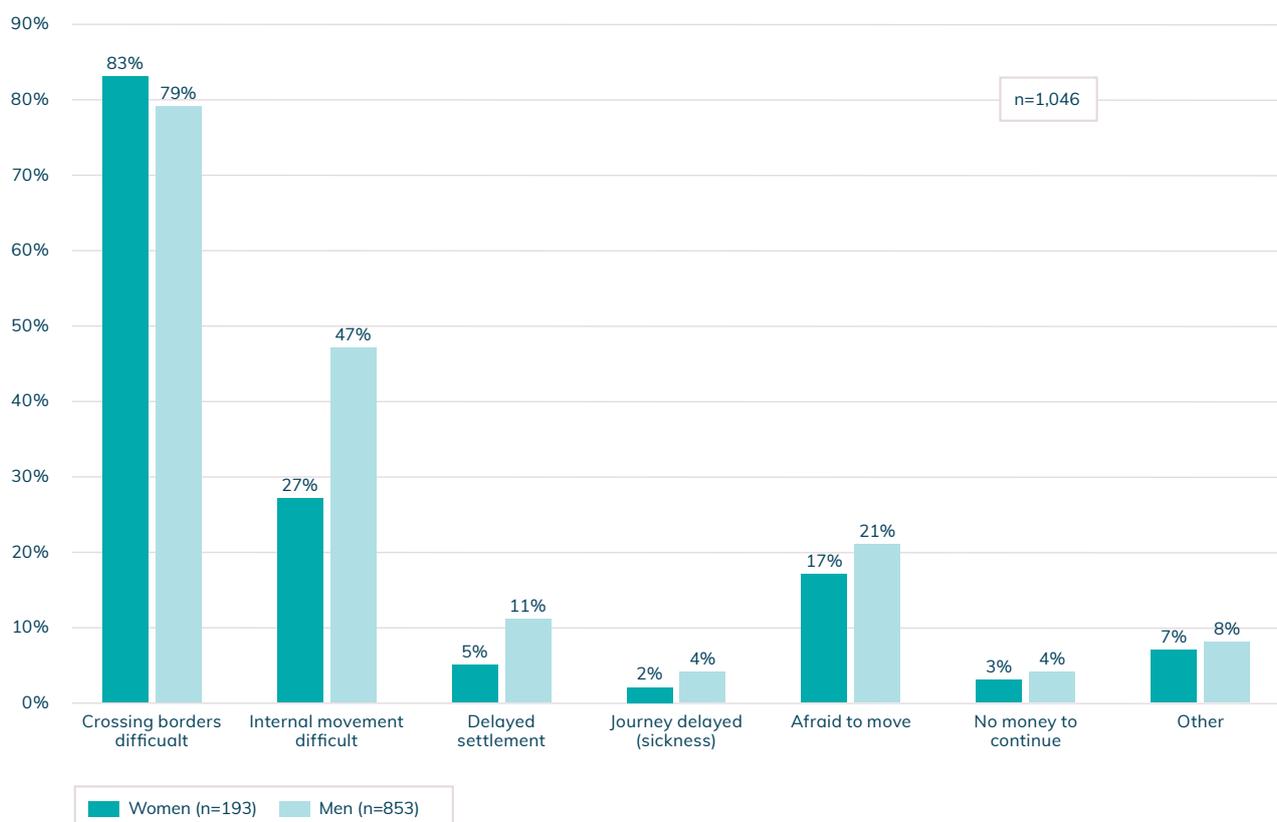
24 This is anyone who reports arriving in Mali as of 1 April.

## Journey and plans

74% of respondents reported that COVID-19 had impacted their journey, but less than half (34%) reported adjusting their plans. This seems to suggest that in the latter half of 2020, people's migration plans were withstanding even the constraints caused by the pandemic. For the 34% reporting some change in their migration plans, many changed their route but maintained the same destination (58%) and/or stopped longer (24%). A smaller percentage changed destination (8%) and/or decided to return home (11%).

Of the 74% of respondents who indicated that COVID-19 had an impact on their journey, the most common effects were increased difficulty crossing borders (80%) and moving internally (43%). Additionally, 13% of respondents indicated they felt too afraid to move due to the pandemic. Men reported more often that COVID-19 impacted their journey than women (75% versus 66%), with much of the difference flowing from men respondents more often experiencing difficulties moving internally (47% versus 27%).

**Figure 3. What impact has the coronavirus crisis had on your migration journey?**



## Smugglers

COVID-19 appeared to impact respondents' need for and access to smuggling, as well as their experience using smugglers. **For instance, 45% of respondents reported that the need for smuggling was greater since the beginning of the pandemic. At the same time, 49% of respondents believed that their access to smugglers had become more difficult** and 5% felt that smuggling fees had increased since the pandemic began. Perhaps related, 50% agreed that smugglers were using more dangerous routes since COVID-19 began.

**Women respondents were overall less aware of any impact of COVID-19 on smuggling.** 40% of women stated they did not know whether access to smugglers had become easier or more difficult since COVID-19, compared to 19% of men, and nor did 40% of women know if need for smugglers had increased or decreased, compared to 19% of men. Additionally, 41% of women did not know if the price for smugglers had changed compared to 21% of men. This may indicate women use smugglers less and/or are not directly involved in negotiating their use of smugglers.

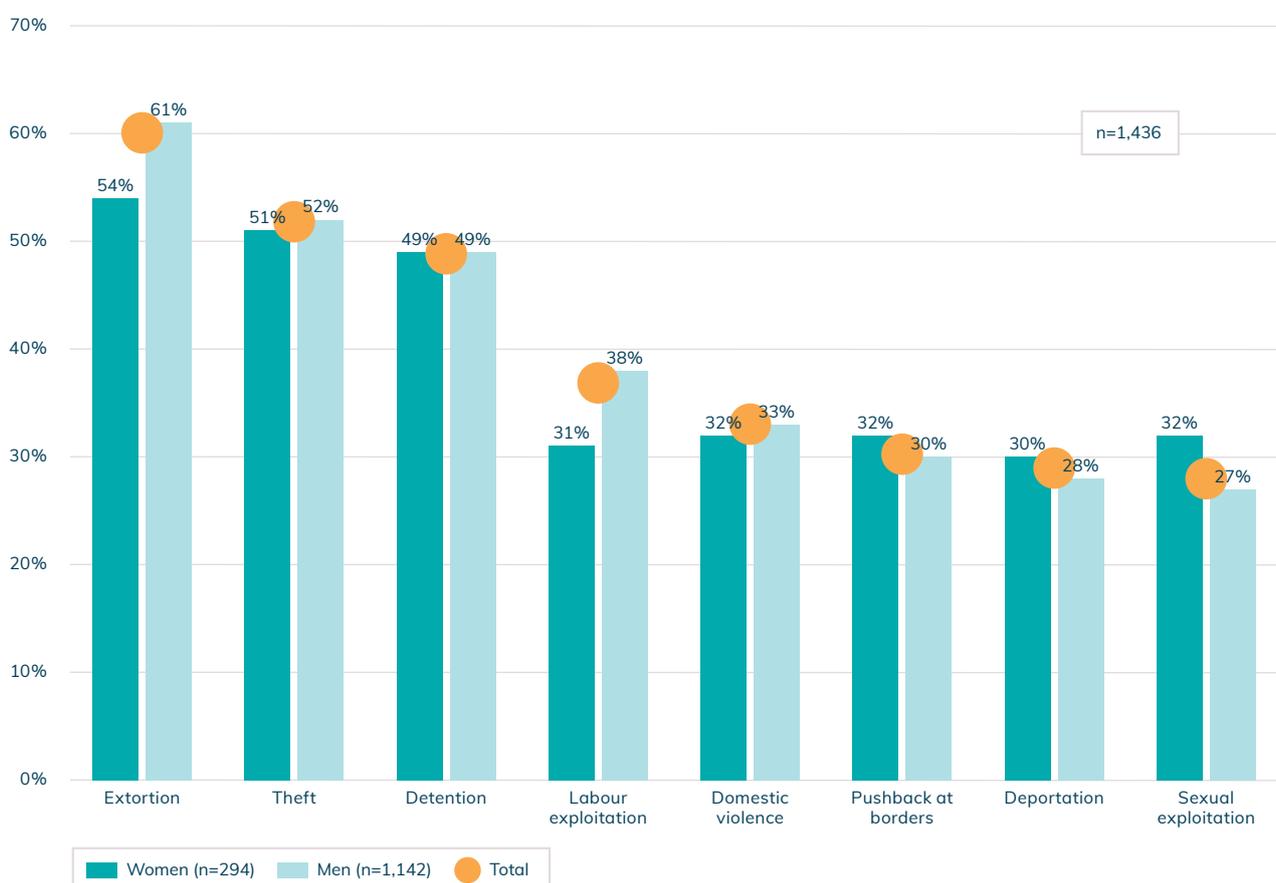
## COVID-19 and children's education access

Of 28 respondents who had at least one school-aged child enrolled in school prior to the pandemic (23% of respondents travelling with children), 18 said the children were no longer enrolled in school (three said their children were attending school full-time in person, five were attending part-time in person, and three reported distance learning).<sup>25</sup>

## Perceived higher risk of protection incidents

A majority of respondents in Mali agreed that according to their experience, there had been an increase in the risk of extortion (60%) and theft (52%) since the beginning of the pandemic. A minority although notable proportion of respondents agreed that the risk of detention (49%), labor exploitation (37%), domestic violence (33%), pushback at borders (30%),<sup>26</sup> deportation (29%), and sexual exploitation (28%) had increased. When aggregating all protection incidents covered in the survey,<sup>27</sup> gender differences were minimal, with 38% of women respondents on average agreeing that there was an increased risk of protection violations since COVID-19 compared to 40% of men.

**Figure 4. Percentage of respondents who agree and strongly agree there is an increase in protection risks since Covid-19 began.**



25 This was a multi-select question for which respondents could answer for multiple children, hence the greater number of children than respondents.

26 The wording of the question on pushbacks was changed partway through the data collection period from "There is an increased risk of pushback at borders since the COVID-19 pandemic began" to "Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, there is an increased risk of denial of entry and of pushback across borders for people seeking asylum or who have the right to cross the border." A question on pushbacks was therefore not asked of all respondents, but rather 1,000 out of 1,436 respondents. The above analysis combines both versions of the question.

27 The type of protection risks measured include: extortion, theft, detention, domestic violence, labor exploitation, pushback at borders, sexual exploitation and deportation.

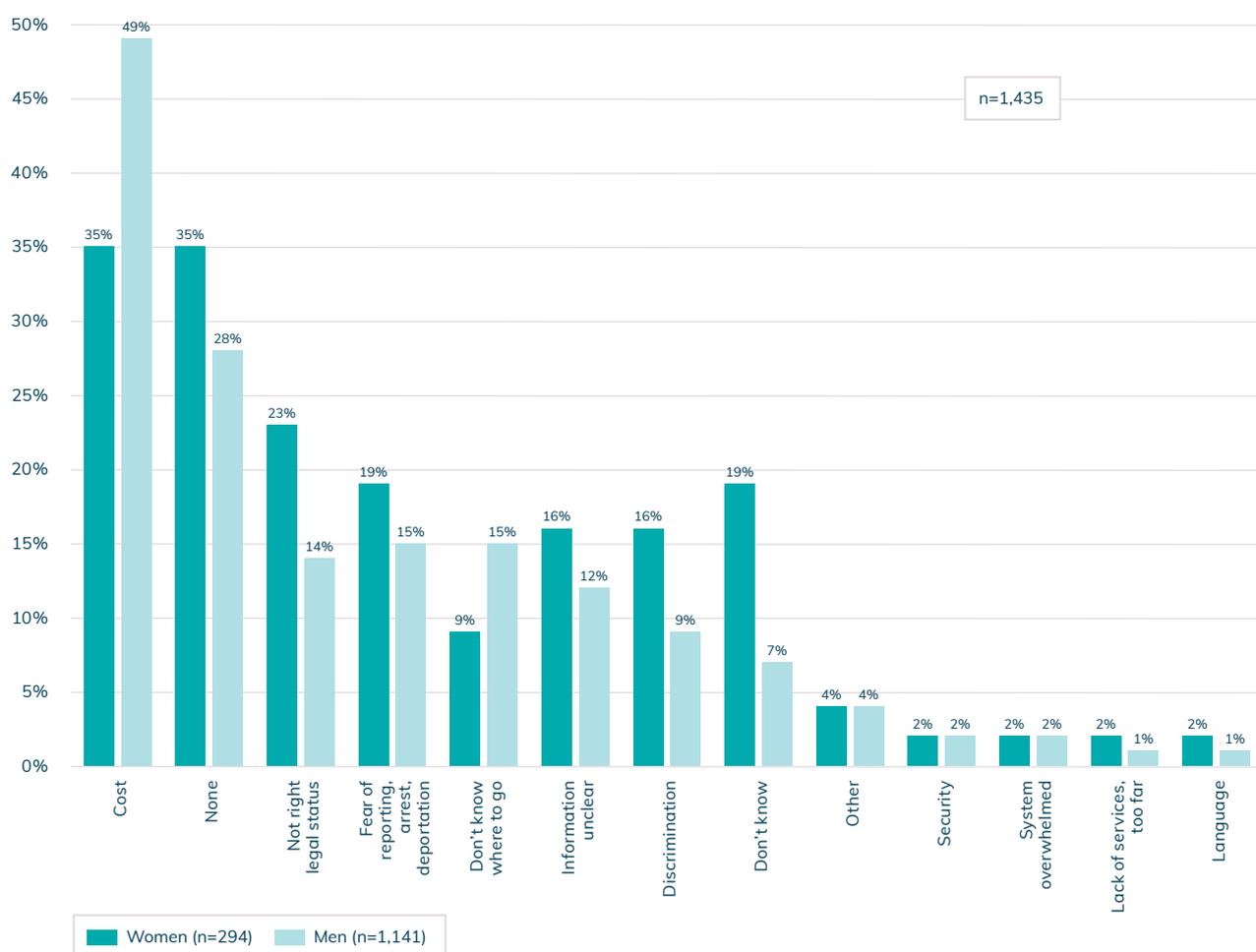
## Health and COVID-19

### Access to health services

The 2018 'Concluding observations on the initial report of Mali' by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights raised concerns that "many people do not have access to affordable health services,"<sup>28</sup> and **slightly more than half of respondents felt they could access health services if they had COVID-19 symptoms specifically (55%)** or other urgent health needs more generally (54%). The main barriers for accessing health services mentioned were: cost (46%), fear of arrest, deportation or being reported to authorities (16%), barriers due to legal status (16%), not knowing where to go (14%), and advice on testing and treatment being unclear (13%). 30% of respondents reported no barriers.

**A lower proportion of men (52%) felt they could access health services if they had COVID-19 symptoms compared to women (67%).** Gender also impacted respondents' perceived barriers to accessing health services. For example, more men reported not being able to pay (49%) and not knowing where to go (15%) than women (35% and 9% respectively). In contrast, women reported legal barriers more often than men (23% versus 14%), as well as greater fear of reporting, arrest or deportation (19% vs 15%), and discrimination (16% vs 9%), perhaps linked to more women respondents having irregular status in Mali compared to men (70% versus 52%). Women also more often reported there were no barriers to accessing healthcare (35% versus 28%).

**Figure 5. What are the barriers to accessing health services?**



28 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2018) [Concluding observations on the initial report of Mali](#) (E/C.12/MLI/CO/1).

## COVID-19 prevention efforts

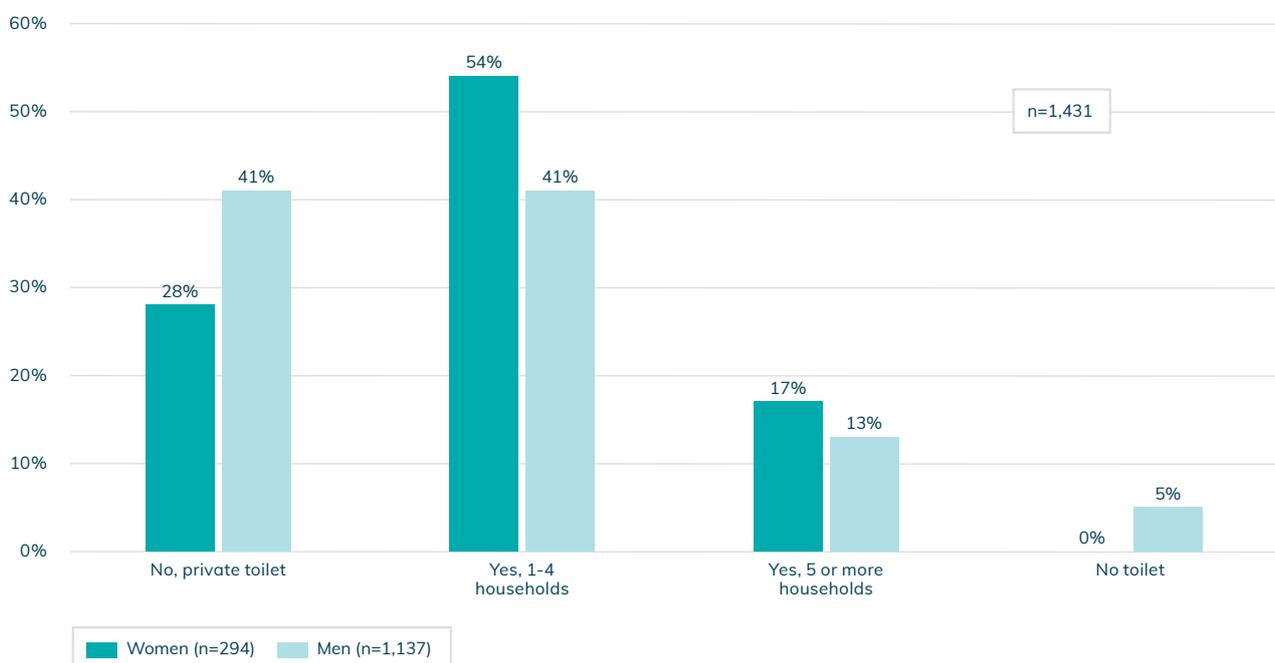
Overall, 93% of women respondents agreed they had the knowledge to protect themselves and others against COVID compared to 81% of men respondents. **This seems to be reflected in action, as more men respondents reported not taking measures to protect against COVID-19 (18%, n = 210) than women (6%, n = 18).** When asked why they were not taking measures, men reported being more unsure about what to do (18% versus 0%). They also more frequently cited a lack of access to protective equipment (47% versus 11%) and inability to practice physical distancing due to living conditions (45% versus 22%). Women not taking measures more often reported believing it was unnecessary (72%) than men (45%).

According to a key informant in Bamako, vaccines are available to non-Malians in Mali, and health professionals have encouraged migrant shelters to sensitize migrants about vaccination. However, Mali is characterized by high levels of vaccine distrust and reluctance among Malians and migrants alike.

## Sanitation, housing, and physical distancing capacity

Respondents' overall housing situation suggested vulnerabilities in terms of COVID-19 prevention, given that space and sanitation conditions at home likely affect individuals' ability to protect themselves from COVID-19. 21% of respondents reported living in situations that a priori seem to suggest greater vulnerability: living on the streets or in an abandoned building, or in detention centers or other collective shelters. Just under half (49%) of respondents declared that they live in a place with enough room to be able to respect the recommended distancing of 1.5m apart from each other (50% for men and 45% for women). It could be that women reported this slightly less frequently than men since they more often have children with them. However, men showed other vulnerabilities in relation to housing and sanitation. **Just 38% of respondents had access to a private toilet at the time of interview,** and while men more often reported having access to a private toilet (41%) than women (28%), 5% of men also had no access to a toilet at all compared to 0% of women and 4% of men respondents declared living in an abandoned shelter or living on the streets compared to 0% of women.

**Figure 6. Do you share a toilet with other households?**

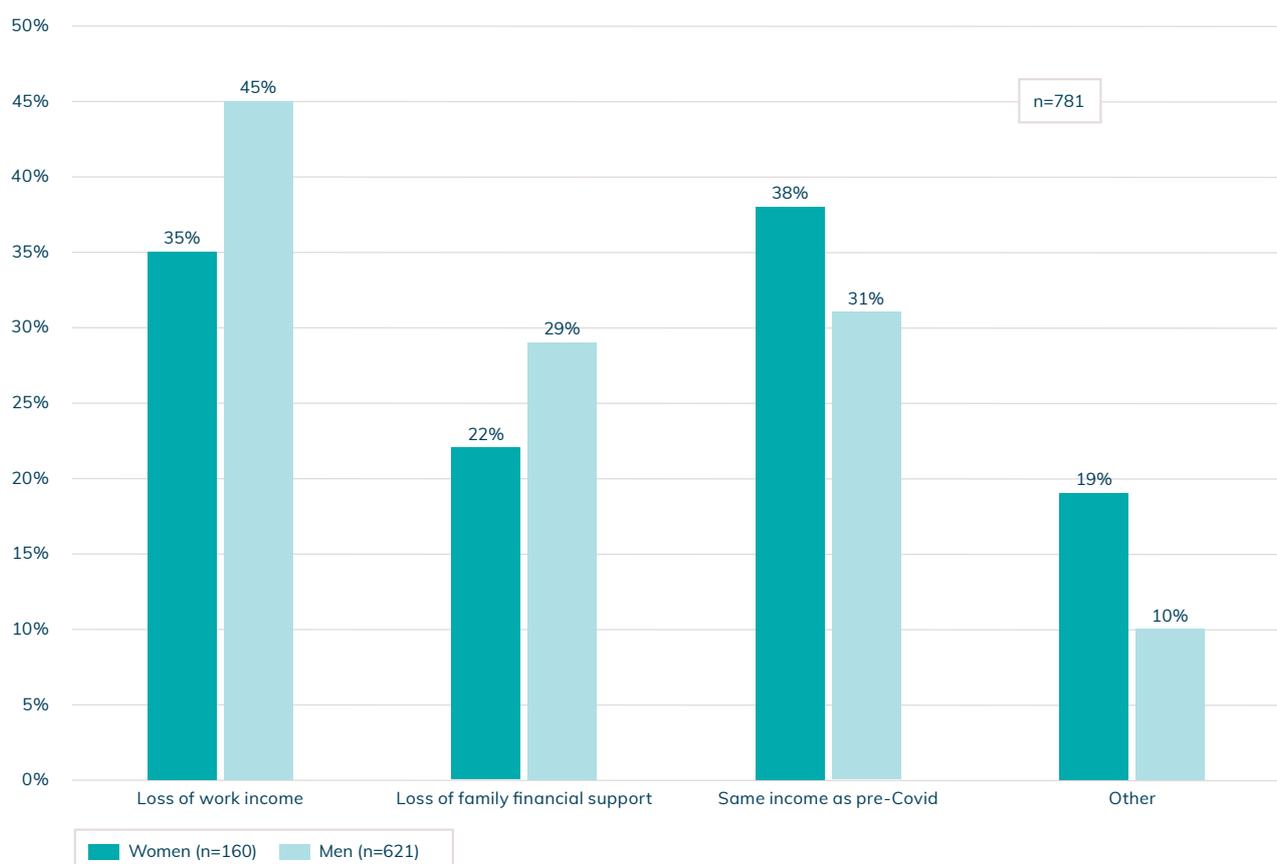


## COVID-19 impacts on economic rights

43% of respondents who had some type of income prior to the pandemic (n=781) reported a loss of work income (45% men, 35% women), 27% reported a loss of family support (29% men, 22% women) and 12% reported some other type of income loss (10% men, 19% women).<sup>29</sup> 32% of respondents who had income prior to COVID-19 reported no change in income (31% men, 38% women).

The impacts of losing income were wide-ranging and substantial: of the respondents who lost income (n=441), 75% reported using up their savings and 30% reported falling into debt, 40% declared they were unable to afford basic goods, 11% were unable to continue their journey, 10% had ceased or decreased remittance payments and 10% had lost housing. Additionally, 30% reported increased worry and anxiety.

**Figure 7. Have you lost income due to coronavirus restrictions?**



The pandemic's economic consequences also showed some variations based on gender, in a context where women already face economic vulnerabilities.<sup>30</sup> Of those who had lost income due to the pandemic, women respondents in Mali more often reported falling into debt (49%) than men (26%). Women less often reported using up their savings (65% versus 77% of men) although given that women more frequently reported indebtedness, this may also suggest that some women respondents did not have savings prior to the pandemic. It is also possible that jobs done disproportionately by women, such as domestic work or hospitality work, were affected to a greater extent by the

pandemic. In an earlier MMC study focusing specifically on Bamako, there were some indications of this, at least for a period of time.<sup>31</sup>

Women also reported they were unable to continue their journey because of this loss of income (17%) more often than men (10%). Given the pre-existing vulnerabilities related to work noted by the ICESCR, women's relatively higher proportion of indebtedness, and the fact that 19% of women who lost income reported losing 'other' income (compared to 10% of men), their economic situation appears particularly precarious but also somewhat opaque, and further investigation could be useful.

<sup>29</sup> 45% of respondents had no income prior to the pandemic (n=133 women, n=519 men).

<sup>30</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, [Op.Cit.](#)

<sup>31</sup> Mixed Migration Centre, [Op.Cit.](#)



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