

Refugee and migrant youth in Sudan - Profiles, access to income, protection risks and assistance needs

Sudan is at the centre of mixed movements from East and the Horn of Africa towards North Africa and Europe, serving as a host, transit, and origin country for refugees and migrants. An estimated 122,000¹ out of more than 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers² are youth in Sudan, whereas the proportion of youth within the migrant population is unknown.³ Based on 4Mi survey data, this snapshot sheds light on the profiles, income-generating activities, perceived protection risks and assistance needs of young refugees and migrants aged 18-24 in Sudan. This snapshot is produced as part of a research partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) focusing on children and youth on the move along the Central Mediterranean Route.

Note: Data collection for this snapshot took place prior to the conflict that began in Sudan on 15 April 2023. As fighting continues it can be expected that increasing numbers of refugees and migrants who are in Sudan and are able to flee will do so, with three options: seeking a safer place within Sudan, returning to their home country or secondary displacement to another country. Owing to their existing vulnerabilities, many if not most refugees and migrants caught up in the conflict will be trapped and unable to flee. As data for this snapshot were collected prior to these events, the findings presented here on the needs of young refugees and migrants in Sudan have likely shifted and increased due to active security threats and a dire humanitarian situation. MMC has recently published an article on the [mixed migration consequences of Sudan's conflict](#).

Key findings

- 52% of interviewed youth reported having some form of income in Sudan, most notably through work, either casual work (33/90) or regular paid jobs (23/90), while over one third received money from family or relatives (36/90).
- The most common protection risk that respondents perceived for female and male youth in Sudan was verbal abuse/non-physical violence (62% citing this for both female and male youth). Sexual violence was the second-most perceived protection risk for female youth (37%). Perceived risks of physical violence (27% for female youth vs. 29% for male youth), insecurity (26% vs. 28%) and discrimination (26% vs. 25%) followed.
- Respondents considered domestic work to carry the highest risk of labour exploitation for both young men and women.⁴
- All interviewed youth reported needing assistance, mostly in the form of resettlement, access to work and medical assistance.

Data and profiles

This snapshot draws on 172 4Mi surveys conducted remotely with refugees and migrants aged 18-24 years in Sudan in 2022, who had been in the country for less than two years.⁵ This group was purposively sampled based on their age. Respondents were interviewed in Khartoum (70%) and Kassala (29%; 9% in Kassala town and 20% in Wad Sharife). The majority of respondents had arrived in Sudan less than 6 months before the interview.

1 Figures provided by UNHCR Sudan, January 2023.

2 UNHCR (2023). [UNHCR Sudan Data Portal \(as of 28 February\)](#).

3 Sudan hosts approximately 775,570 migrants. IOM (2023). [DTM Sudan](#).

4 Defined as per [ILO Forced Labour Convention 1930](#): All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.

5 In Sudan, youth respondents represented approximately 36% of MMC's overall 4Mi dataset in 2022.

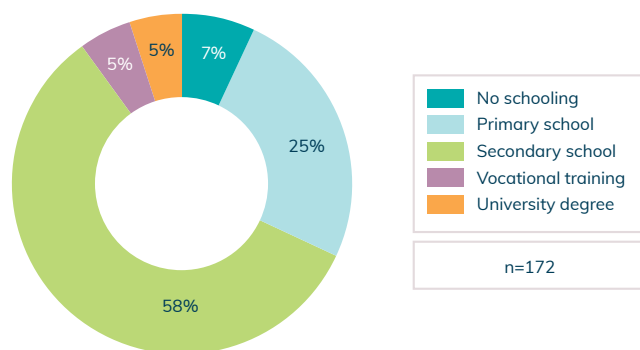
Table 1. Respondents' time of arrival (n=172)

Respondents' time of arrival	% of respondents
Less than 6 months before the interview	42%
6 months - 1 year before the interview	23%
1-2 years before the interview	35%

69% of respondents are men and 31% are women. Their countries of nationality are Eritrea (51%), Ethiopia (21%), Central African Republic (CAR) (13%), Chad (10.5%), Niger (3.5%) and South Sudan (1%). 7% of respondents had not received any schooling, 25% had completed primary school, 58% completed secondary school, 5% completed a vocational training program and 5% had a university degree (Figure 1).

Close to all (98%) interviewed youth indicated that they had not reached the end of their journey. The top preferred destinations were Canada (39%), Australia (9%), Belgium (5%), the United Kingdom (5%), Germany (4%), France (4%) and the United States of America (3%).

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



In Sudan, half of youth respondents received some form of income, mainly from family and casual work

52% (n=90) of youth respondents had some form of income in Sudan, at times coming from multiple sources. 36/90 received money from family or relatives, 33/90 engaged in casual or occasional work, 23/90 had regular paid jobs, 5/90 made money through begging and 3 had a business activity. Among those receiving money from family or relatives, the majority relied exclusively on this source of income. Of those working (n=84), most are involved in small businesses (shop, catering or services) (31) or domestic work (28). **Half of women respondents with an income relied on money from family or relatives, while men more often relied on casual work 40% (25/62).**

Interestingly, a smaller proportion of respondents with tertiary education (university degree or vocational training) (5/17; 29%) and secondary education (29%) were working than those with just primary schooling (40%). While the sample size is small so caution must be taken with interpretation, there may be a link to limited skilled and semi-skilled work opportunities. Those who indicated not having any source of income in Sudan (n=81) explained this is because they cannot find a job (63/81), the work offered does not meet their expectations (7), they are being paid in-kind (non-monetary remuneration) (5), they are sick and unable to work (4) or are students (1).

Verbal abuse is the most reported risk for men and women

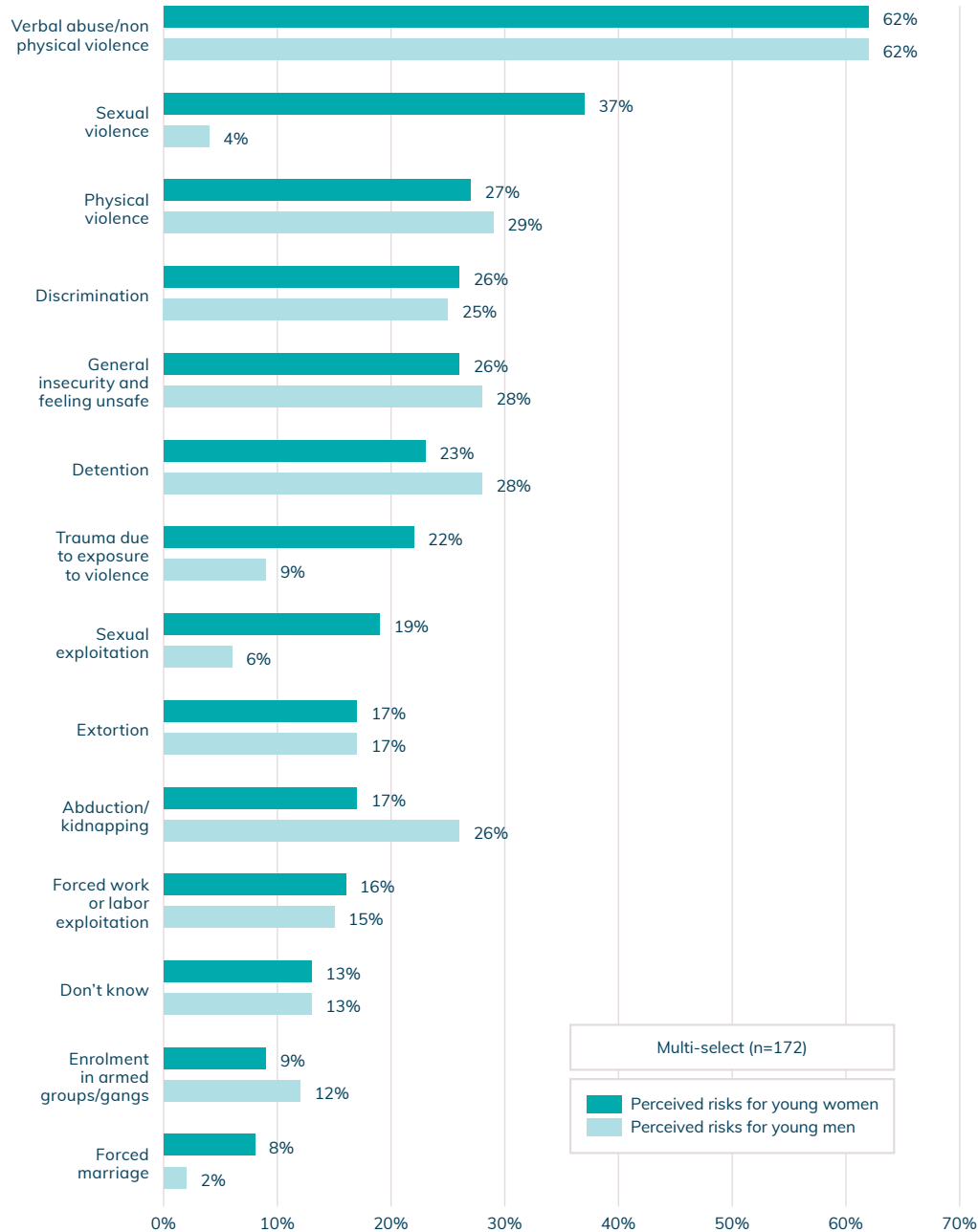
The most common protection risk that respondents perceived for female and male youth in Sudan was verbal abuse/non-physical violence (62% citing this for both female and male youth).

"Verbal abuse is something that happens all the time even when I'm walking with my friends. This happens especially when they realize that you are not Sudanese which still happens even after I dress and try to look like them. The people do not respect you as a human being. Physical harassment also happens especially when you're walking alone."

19-year-old Eritrean woman interviewed by MMC in Khartoum, Sudan

Figure 2. What risks do young men/women refugees and migrants face in your current location?

(Questions asked to all respondents - one on risks faced by men and one of risks faced by women)



In addition to verbal abuse, men and women were perceived to face similar risks of physical violence (27% for female youth vs. 29% for male youth), insecurity (26% vs. 28%) and discrimination (26% vs. 25%). By contrast, women were perceived to be more exposed to sexual violence, which was the second-most perceived risk for female youth (37%), as well as trauma due to exposure to violence, sexual exploitation and forced marriage. The difference in perceived risk of sexual violence may be at least partly linked to additional stigma around discussing sexual abuse experienced by men. Men were perceived as more exposed to abduction or kidnapping (Figure 2).

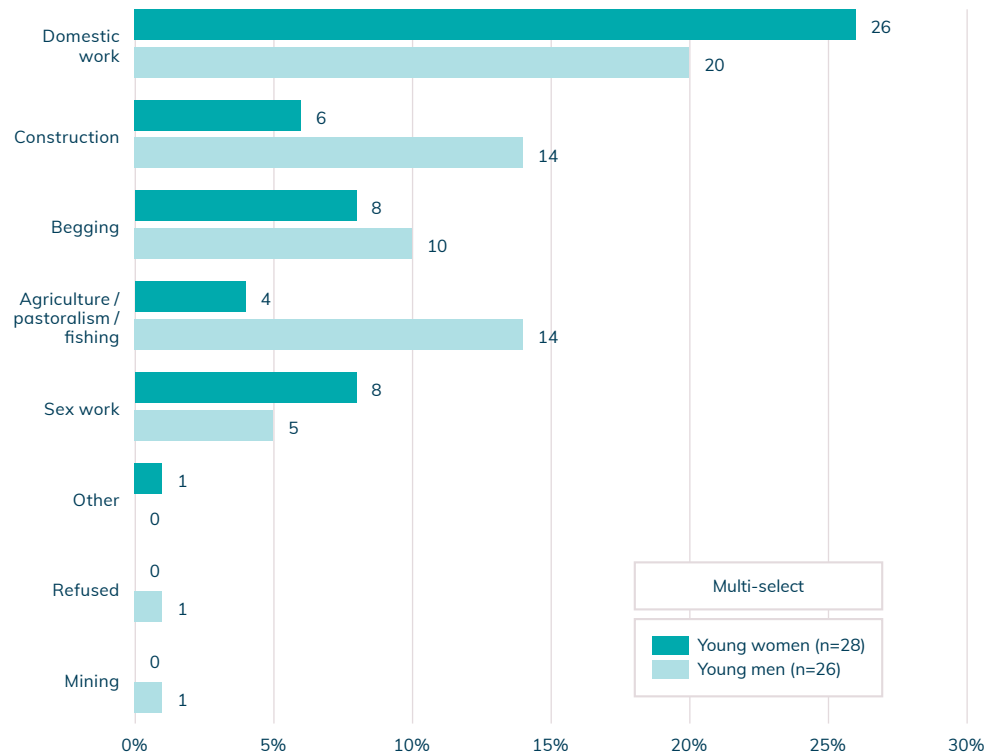
Forced work or labour exploitation most common in domestic work for both young women and men

For women, the most common sectors or work activities perceived to be linked to forced work or labour exploitation were domestic work (26/28), sex work (8) and begging (8). For young men, domestic work (20/26), construction (14), agriculture, pastoralism or fishing (14) and begging (10) were most often linked to forced work or labour exploitation. According to the US Department of State, Sudanese traffickers coerce Ethiopian women into domestic work in Khartoum and other urban centers as well as force some Ethiopian women into commercial sex by manipulating debts and other forms of coercion.⁶ The link between domestic work and human trafficking in Sudan was highlighted by the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking in Sudan (NCCT) at a workshop in September 2019.

6 US Department of State (2022). [2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sudan](#).

Figure 3. Please specify work

(Among those selecting 'Forced work or labour exploitation' as a risk for young men and women in Sudan)



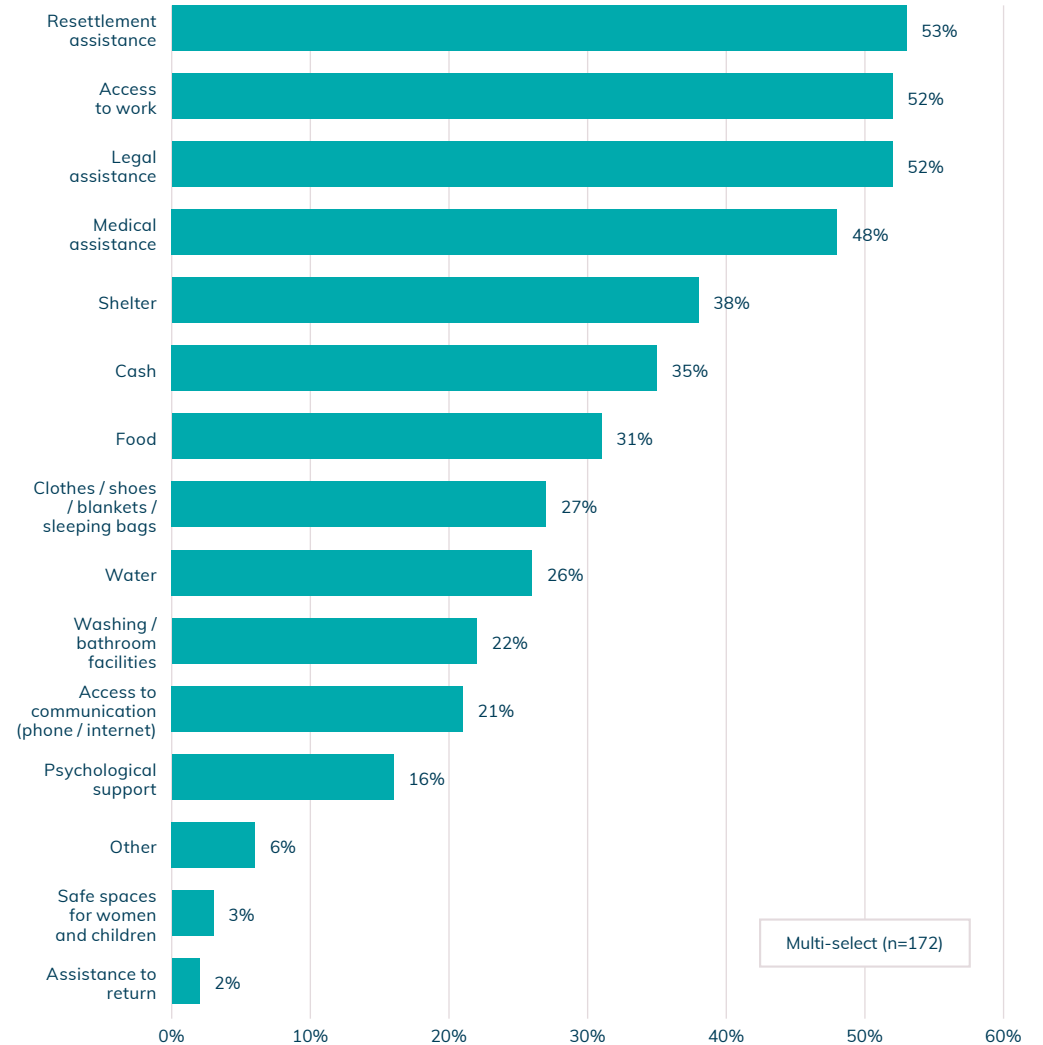
All respondents need assistance in Sudan, mostly resettlement and access to work assistance

All respondents mentioned needing assistance at the time of interview and many reported multiple needs. The most common needs were for resettlement assistance⁷ (53%), access to work (52%), legal assistance (52%), medical assistance (48%), shelter (38%) and cash (35%). 98% of those who identified access to work as a need also reported that they had not reached the end of their journey, hence, it is possible that income is needed to finance onward movement as opposed to supporting settling in Sudan.

⁷ While resettlement is a durable solution for refugees, surveyed refugees and migrants perceived resettlement as a form of assistance. It was cited more as a desire to be assisted to move to a third country, rather than an indicator of those engaged in any formal resettlement processes.

Figure 4. What kind of assistance do you need?

(Among those who reported being in need of assistance now)



All (n=172) respondents were also asked about specific medical and educational priority needs. Respondents cited general healthcare services (69%), followed by mental health and psychosocial support (17%) as the most needed types of medical assistance types. Regarding education, respondents expressed a desire for foreign language training (54%), vocational training (30%), basic language skills (24%) and higher education (23%).

In case of an emergency, respondents would reach out to support networks inside Sudan

In case of an emergency, 54% of respondents said they would reach out to neighbours in Sudan, 37% cited they would reach out to relatives in their current location and 22% to friends and their community of co-nationals in their current location. No respondents cited they would reach out to NGOs or local associations. This could indicate neighbours, relatives, friends and their community of co-nationals in Sudan are perceived as easier to access and reach than those in origin or third countries. Moreover, it is possible that NGOs or local associations in Sudan would be perceived as attempting to impede their irregular onward movement, and therefore less preferable to contact in case of emergency.



4Mi data collection

[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 enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with refugees and migrants in Eastern and Southern Africa, North Africa, West Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at:

www.mixedmigration.org/4mi