

Reintegration experiences and future aspirations of Ethiopian returnees

More than 800,000 Ethiopians are estimated to have left the country in the past five years, often moving irregularly, in search of economic opportunities,¹ fleeing conflict and violence and linked to extreme drought conditions.² On March 30th 2022, the Governments of Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement to repatriate more than 100,000 Ethiopians in an irregular situation in the Gulf country. Also, in July 2022, the Ethiopian Government committed to return Ethiopians who were living in 'dire situations' abroad through organized repatriations.³ This snapshot examines the challenges experienced upon return and the future movement aspirations of returnees.

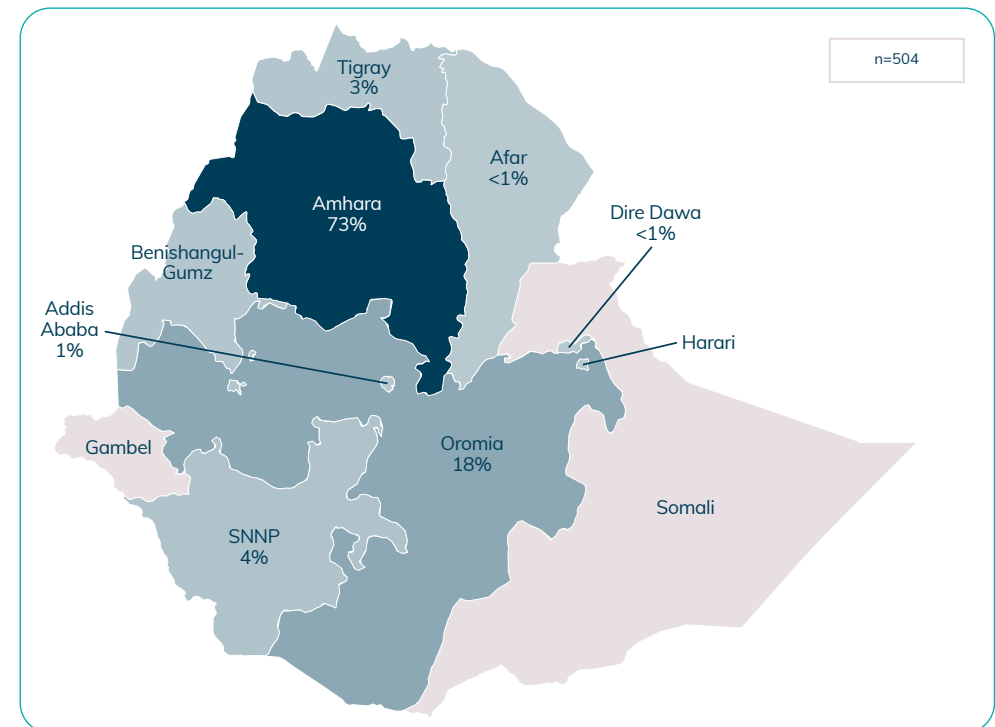
Key findings

- A majority of respondents are financially insecure upon return to Ethiopia: 79% reported challenges earning an income or livelihood upon return, and 52% felt economically and socially insecure upon return.
- Feeling failure and shame (38%) was the second most-cited challenge upon return, felt more often among youth.
- A minority of respondents stated they had received assistance upon return (38%), with a disparity in assistance access across gender as 17% of women respondents had received assistance, as opposed to 46% of men.
- Most respondents plan to stay in their current location in Ethiopia for the next 12 months (75%) while only a few planned to remigrate (5%).

Data and profiles

This snapshot draws on 504 4Mi Returns surveys conducted in January 2023 with Ethiopians who had returned to Ethiopia between 6 months and 2 years from the date of interview. The majority (73%) of respondents had initially migrated from Amhara, 18% from Oromia and 4% from SNNP (Figure 1). This is consistent with emigration data from Ethiopia which identifies Amhara, Oromia and SNNP as regions of high emigration.⁴ At the time of interview, the vast majority of respondents were in their regions of origin, with the exception of those from Tigray, who were interviewed in Addis Ababa.

Figure 1. Respondents' region of origin

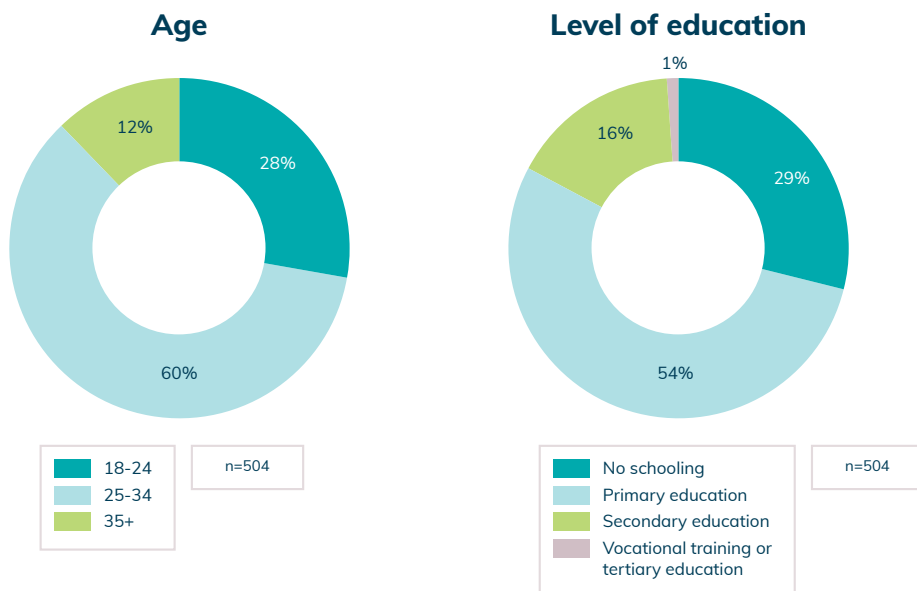


1 IOM (2021). [More than 800,000 Ethiopians migrated abroad over the past five years.](#)
 2 MMC (2022). 4Mi Snapshots: The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Djibouti and Somalia.
 3 MMC (2022). [Quarterly Mixed Migration Update Eastern and Southern Africa | Egypt & Yemen – Q3.](#)
 4 IOM (2021). [Return migration dynamics in five Ethiopian communities of high emigration.](#)

93% of respondents had returned from Saudi Arabia, 4% from Yemen, 1% Djibouti and 2% other countries. 60% of respondents were forced returnees (deported or expelled), 36% had participated in an assisted voluntary return program, and 4% had returned independently. This sample distribution allows comparisons between groups of forced returns, AVR and spontaneous returns and is not representative of the overall distribution of types of returns, which estimates that deportations from Saudi Arabia comprised 94% of all returns from 2018 until 2022.⁵

70% of respondents were men and 30% were women, and nearly half (48%) had children. Of note, 83% of women were forced returnees versus 50% of men, while all spontaneous returnees were men. Most respondents were aged 25-34 and had completed only primary education before their migration (Figure 2). Surveyed returnees' rates of educational attainment is consistent with the educational profiles of migrants travelling along the Eastern Route⁶, and lower than that of Ethiopians interviewed along other migration routes in Sudan and South Africa.⁷

Figure 2. Respondents' age and education level

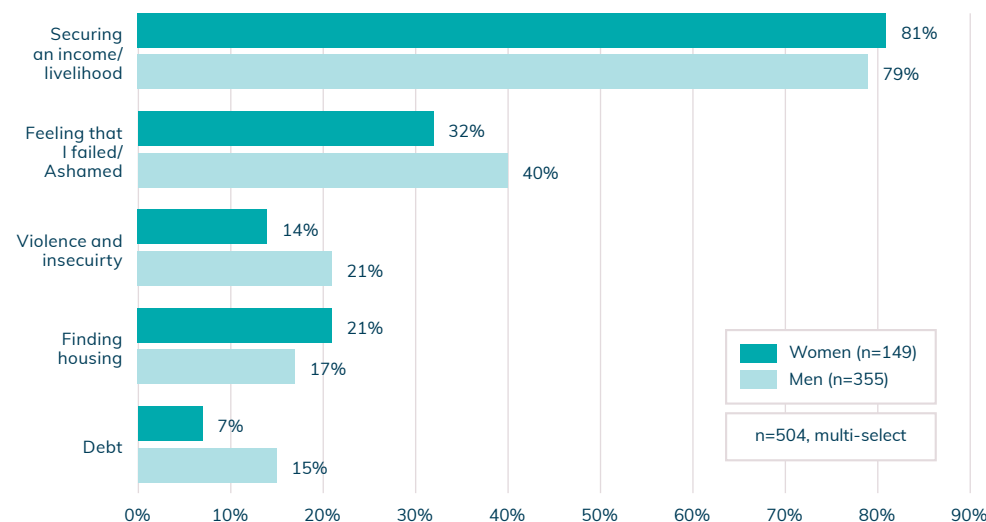


5 IOM (2022). [Overview of migrant returns](#).
 6 IOM (2022). [A region on the move 2021: East and Horn of Africa](#).
 7 MMC (2023). [4Mi Interactive](#)

Securing an income and feelings of failure are the main challenges faced by respondents upon return

A large majority struggled financially upon return, with 79% of respondents reporting challenges in earning an income or source of livelihood in Ethiopia. Other challenges in the place of return⁸ included feeling shame and that they had failed in their migration plan (38%), violence and insecurity (19%) and finding housing (18%). Feelings of shame and failure are likely linked to the high share of respondents who were forced to return, as 43% of forced returnees cited feeling shame compared to 29% of AVR returnees. Men also more often reported feelings of shame and failure (40%) compared to women (32%). This is notable as women respondents were mainly forced returnees. In fact, among forced returnees, men more often reported shame than women forced returnees (47% vs. 36%). Additionally, youth respondents (aged 18-24) more frequently reported feeling that they had failed (45%) compared to respondents aged 25-34 (37%) or aged 35 and older (26%).

Figure 3. Top 5 major challenges experienced by respondents upon arriving in Ethiopia

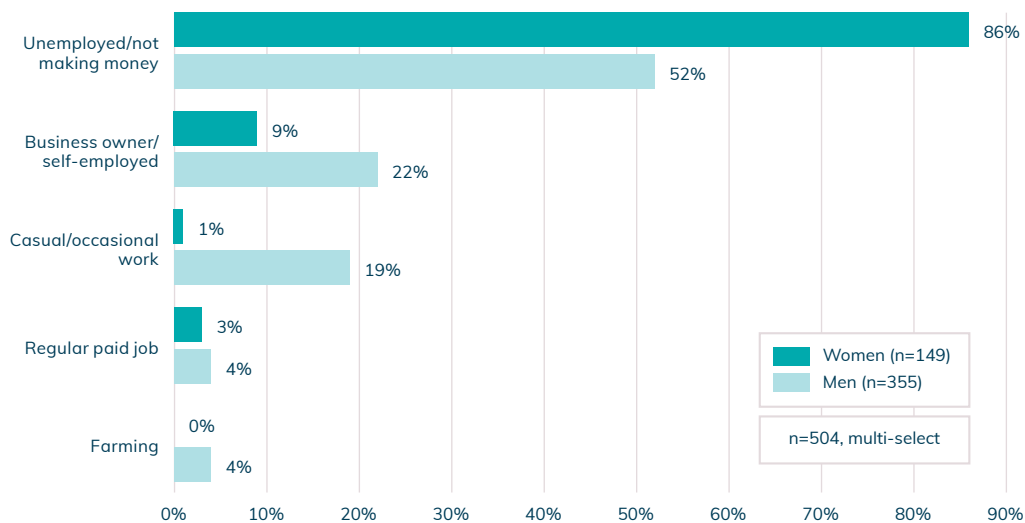


8 For the vast majority of respondents, this was also the place of origin.

The majority of respondents are unable to find work and do not feel economically and socially secure in Ethiopia

Similar to previously-mentioned data on challenges in Ethiopia, 68% of surveyed returnees were not earning an income at the time of interview, including a large majority of women (Figure 4). Of these, the majority (88%) were unable to find work. This supports earlier research, which suggests that women returnees face greater difficulties in accessing employment and training opportunities compared to their male counterparts and should therefore be considered for more targeted assistance.⁹ More generally, 52% of respondents reported feeling economically and socially insecure upon returning to Ethiopia, further highlighting the difficulties that returnees face in reintegrating into their communities.¹⁰ Less than a third (30%) of respondents felt secure and 18% were neutral.

Figure 4. How are you making money?



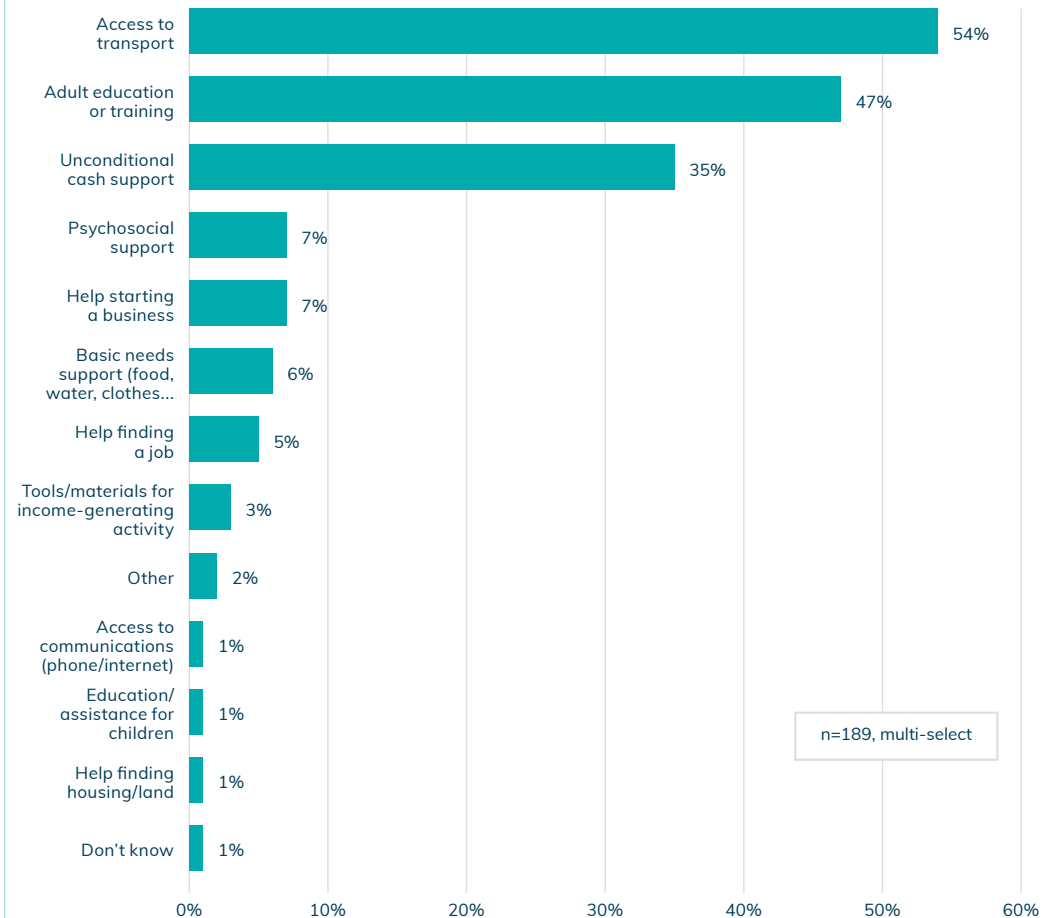
9 IOM (2021). [Return migration dynamics in five Ethiopian communities of high emigration.](#)

10 IOM (2021). [Return migration dynamics in five Ethiopian communities of high emigration.](#)

More men than women received assistance upon return

The majority of respondents indicated they had not received assistance upon return, despite participation in formal return programs and the high needs for income/livelihood support presented above. 38% of respondents had received assistance upon their return to Ethiopia. Disaggregating the data by gender revealed a considerable disparity, with 46% of men receiving assistance compared to 17% of women. As previously mentioned, women were more often forced returnees (83%) than men (50%), which compounds their limited access to assistance. The most frequently reported forms of assistance were transportation (54%), adult education or training (47%) and cash support (35%).

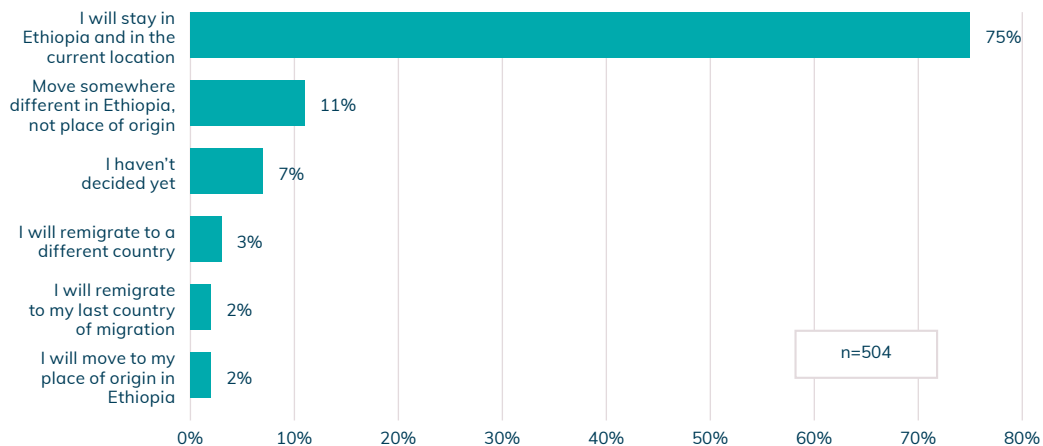
Figure 5. What kind of assistance or support have you received?



Most returnee respondents do not have any movement plans for the next 12 months

75% of surveyed returnees plan to stay in Ethiopia and in their current location for the next 12 months. 13% are planning moves within Ethiopia, with 11% considering moving to a location different from their birthplace and 2% to their place of origin. Few respondents were planning to leave Ethiopia: 2% stated they would remigrate to the country from which they recently returned and 3% to a new country. 7% had yet to decide. While most respondents did not intend to move at the time of interview, it is important to note that the majority of respondents had returned less than a year prior (64% of respondents returned in the April-June 2022 period). These intentions may change as respondents experience challenges in securing incomes and livelihoods in country. UN agencies and NGOs working with returnees should consult returnees further on their needs in their location of return and promote livelihood programming, across various return profiles and experiences.

Figure 6. What is your plan in terms of movement for the next 12 months?



This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government (PO8470 Programme addressing unsafe irregular migration through and from Ethiopia); however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

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 Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa, and West Africa.

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