

Movements, experiences and aspirations of refugees and migrants in Eastern Sudan during the Sudan war

Since war broke out in Sudan in April 2023, millions of people have been displaced within and outside the country. Among those impacted are refugees and migrants (non-Sudanese in Sudan) who were seeking safety and a better life in the country and those in transit along the Central Mediterranean Route towards North Africa and Europe. This infographic explores the movement intentions and protection experiences of these refugees and migrants.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION SITES:

Port Sudan (n=238), Gedaref city (n=113), Um-Rakouba camp (n=23), Kassala city (n=8), Tunaydbah camp (n=5), Um-Gargour camp (5), Village 8 camp (5), El-Faw (3), Shagarab camp (3), Wad Sharife camp (2) and Khartoum (2).

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD:

March – May 2024

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION:

Phone surveys

SAMPLE:

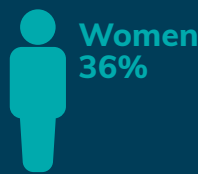
407 refugees and migrants

Key findings

- **Before the war, Sudan was a place of refuge for many:** It was the second-largest host of refugees and asylum seekers in Africa, with over 1.1 million largely from neighboring countries, but also Syria and Yemen.¹ Sudan was also the main transit country for people from East and the Horn of Africa seeking to move along the Central Mediterranean Route.
- **Largest displacement crisis in the world:** As of June 2024, more than 9.2 million have been forcibly displaced, including 1.9 million to neighboring countries.² The vast majority of those displaced are Sudanese, but refugees and migrants in Sudan have also been impacted.
- **Challenges finding refuge in neighboring countries:** Border regions in Chad and South Sudan are facing acute humanitarian crises and struggling to meet the basic protection and assistance needs of the newly displaced.³ Visa requirements including delayed processing in Egypt and Ethiopia have hampered many from seeking asylum. In Egypt, those unable or unwilling to wait for visas have resorted to using smugglers to cross the border irregularly and risk death in the desert and protection incidents like deportation.⁴ Limited access to assistance and insecurity in Ethiopia's Amhara region has contributed to several thousand Sudanese refugees leaving the camps close to the border.⁵
- **Allegations of extreme abuse against Sudanese and non-Sudanese women in Sudan:** Reports of rape, forced marriage and the trafficking of women and girls continue to emerge.⁶
- **Looming famine threatens millions in Sudan:** According to Integrated Food Security (IPC), 25.6 million people are facing acute food insecurity (IPC3+) and are at risk of famine.⁷

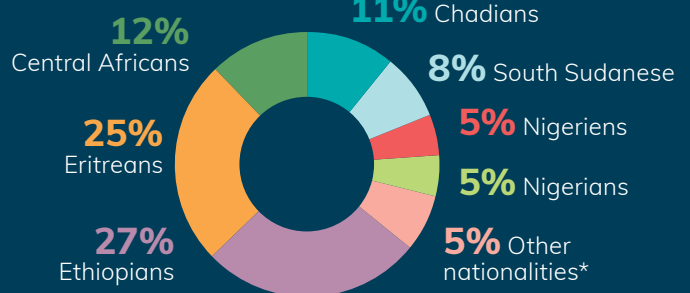
Respondents profiles

Sex



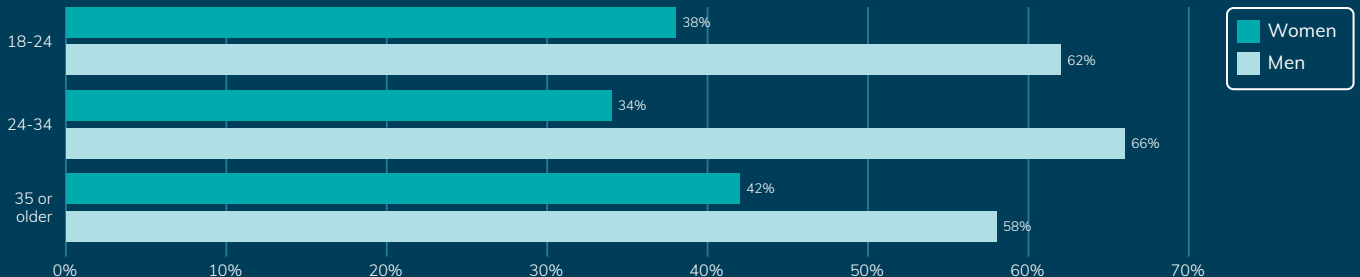
23% were traveling or living with children in their care

Nationality



*Other nationalities include 8 Cameroonians, 6 Congolese, 3 Burundians, 2 Somalis, 2 Sierra Leoneans, 2 Comorians, 2 Malians, 2 Liberians, 1 Egyptian, 1 Syrian and 1 Burkinabe.

Age



1 UNHCR (March 2023). [Operational Data Portal](#).

2 UNHCR (June 2024). [Sudan situation](#).

3 New York Times (November 2023). [Chad: Humanitarian Situation Overview](#).

4 Ayin Network (July 2024). [Death and detention: the struggles of Sudanese migrants crossing into Egypt](#).

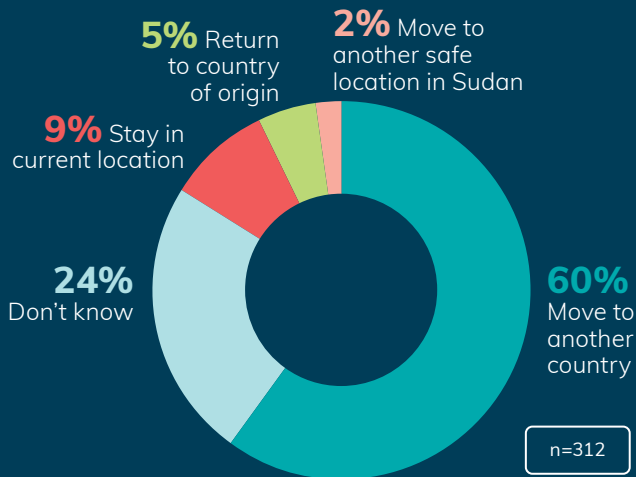
5 Migration.info (May 2024). [Desperation and Hope: Sudanese Refugees' Struggle in Amhara Region Camps](#).

6 OCHA & OSRSG (April 2024). [Sudan: Scourge of sexual violence amid ongoing conflict demands urgent response](#).

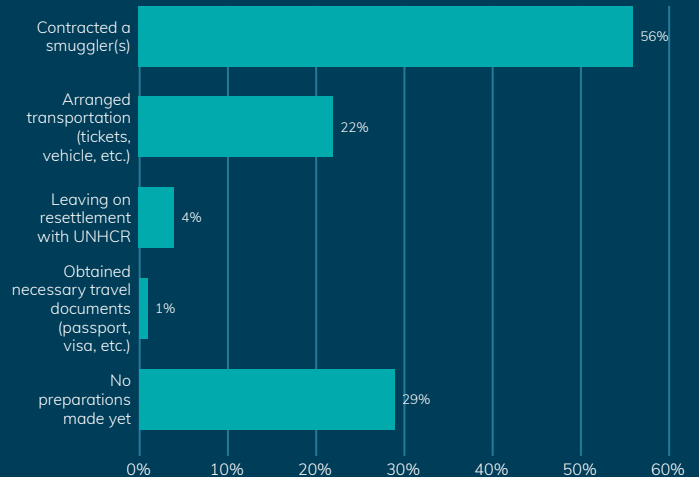
7 IPC (June 2024). [Sudan acute food insecurity snapshot June 2024 – February 2025](#).

Short-term onward movement intentions

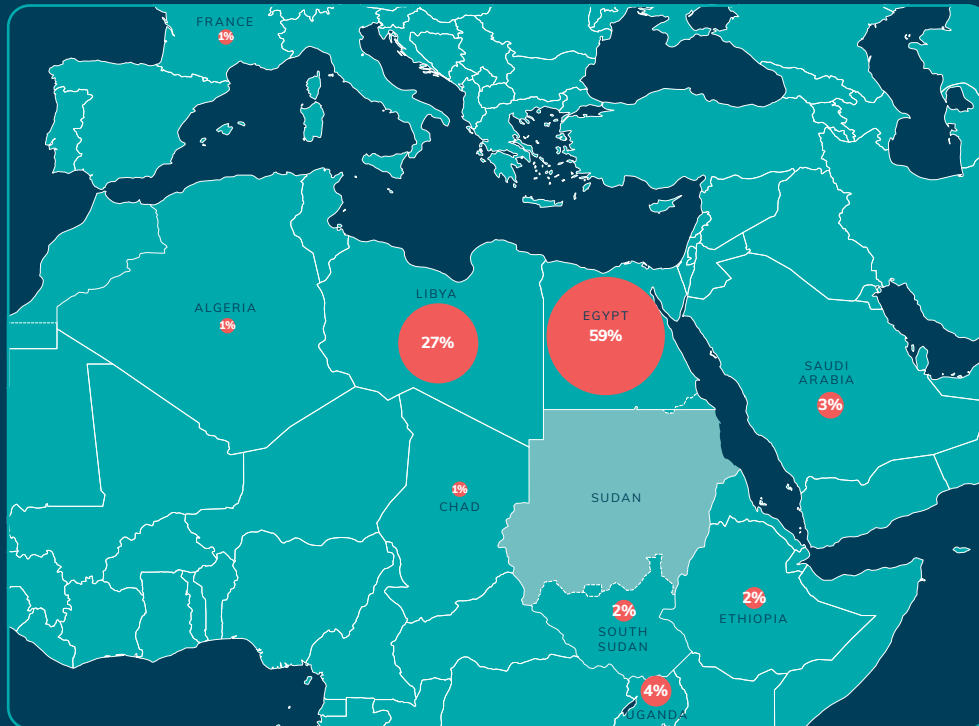
What are your movement intentions within the next three months?⁸



What preparations have you made to move to another country?⁹



To which country do you plan to move to within the next 3 months?



58/94

respondents who contracted a smuggler to leave Sudan had never engaged the services of a smuggler before

Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNHCR and MMC.

Key findings

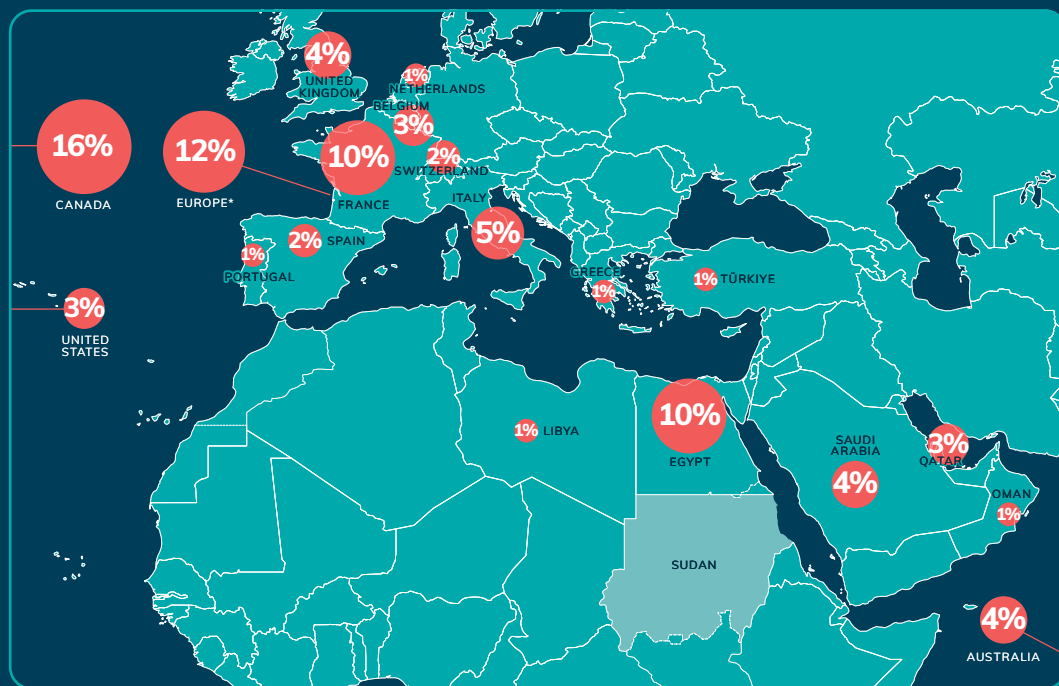
- 60% of respondents planned to move to another country within three months; the majority of whom intended to reach Egypt (59%) and Libya (27%).
- 56% (n=94) had contracted a smuggler to prepare for their travel and were planning to move to Egypt (58), Libya (27), Uganda (5), Saudi Arabia (2) and Algeria (2).
- 29% (n=49) had not yet prepared for their onward journey; hence, it is possible their short-term movement intentions – largely to Egypt (32), Libya (10) and Saudi Arabia (4) – were more akin to aspirations.
- Of the 16 respondents planning to return to their origin countries, 5 were Chadian, 4 Nigerian, 3 South Sudanese, 2 Central African, 1 Nigerien, and 1 Sierra Leonean.
- 24% (73 out of 312) were undecided about moving, suggesting that how the war and security situation unfolds in Sudan may determine their onward movement decision-making.
- Short-term movement intentions were similar among men and women and across age groups.

⁸ 95 respondents (23%) reported arriving in Sudan after the conflict and thus did not answer conflict-related questions on MMC's 4Mi survey.

⁹ The question "What preparations have you made to move to another country?" was added after data collection had begun, thus, 19 respondents out of 188 who intend to move to another country were not asked the question.

Long-term onward movement aspirations

What country is your preferred destination?¹⁰



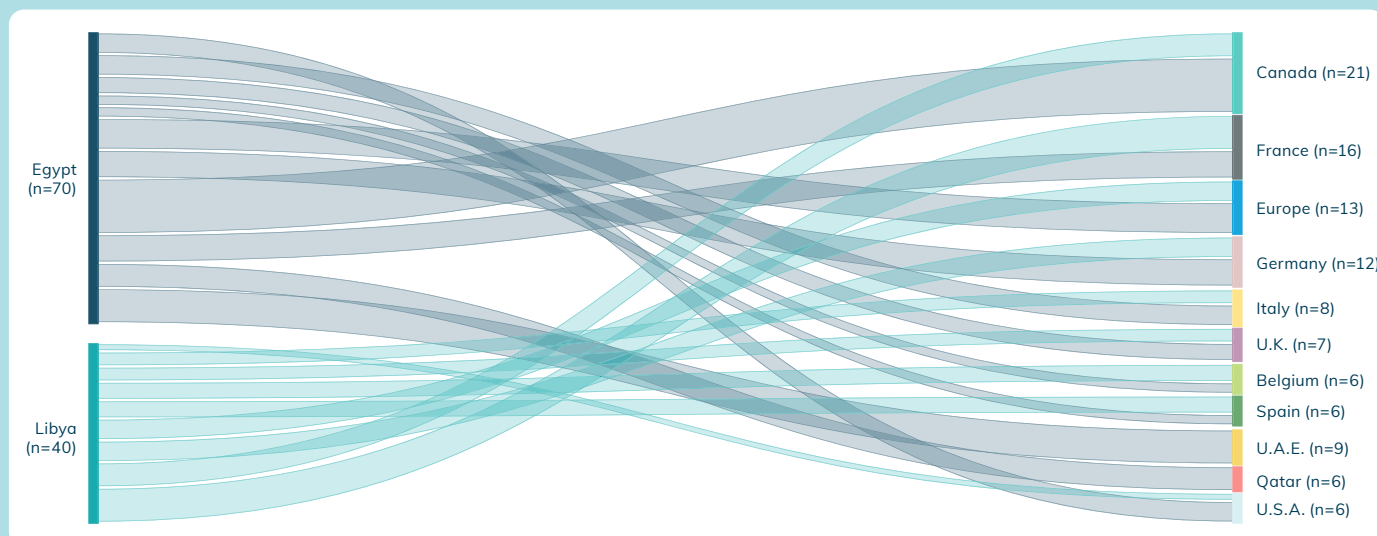
87%

aspired to move onward to a destination outside of Sudan

*Rather than cite a specific country, some respondents reported aspiring to reach the European continent.
 **Other preferred destinations include Israel: <1%, DR Congo: <1% and New Zealand: <1%.

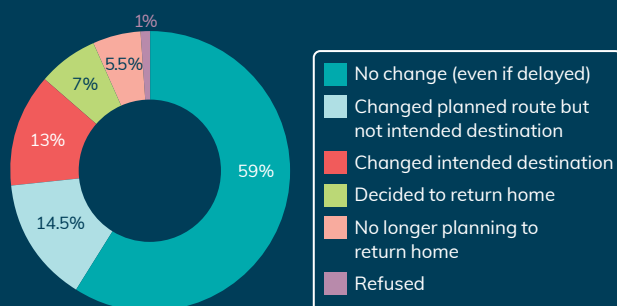
Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNHCR and MMC.

Preferred destinations of respondents planning to reach Egypt or Libya in the next 3 months



Have you changed your movement plans since starting your journey?

(Among respondents who were in Sudan when the conflict broke out)



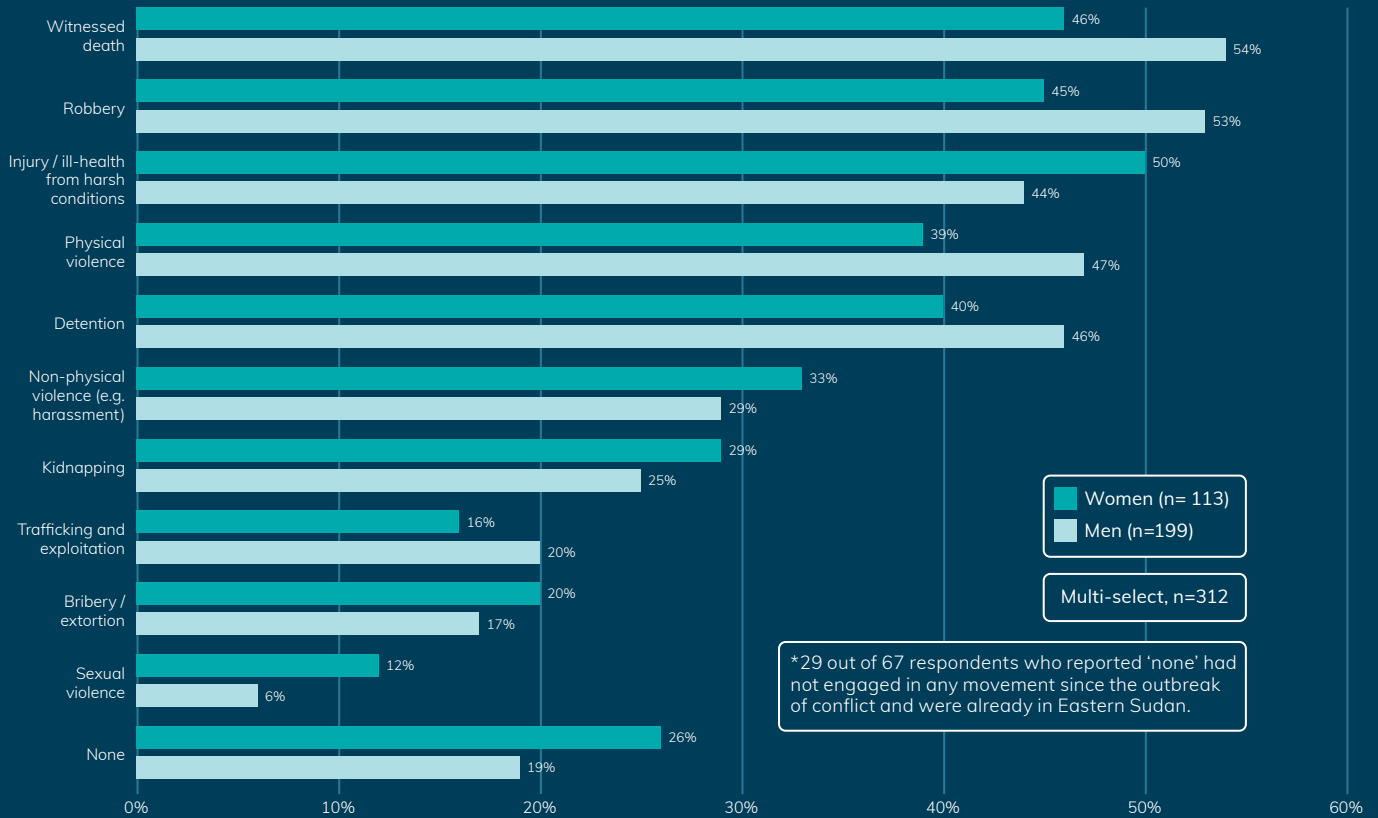
n=312

- In the next 3 months, 60% of respondents intend to move to another country.
- In the longer term, an even greater majority (87%) aspire to move onward and leave Sudan.
- Large variation exists between short versus long-term onward movement destinations. Short-term plans appear more realistic, to nearby countries, while long-term intentions likely reflect where respondents perceive more opportunities to rebuild their lives.
- For instance, while 1% of respondents cited Europe as a short-term destination, more than 50% report it as their long-term intended destination.
- Indeed, most respondents perceived their intended destination to have better economic opportunities (87%) and better living conditions (78%).

10 This question was asked to respondents who had stated that they had not reached the end of their journey and aspired to move onward (87% or 355 out of 407 respondents).

Abuses and hardships experienced or witnessed since the start of war

Did you witness or experience protection incidents or hardships while in Sudan during the war?¹¹



Sources of information on safe locations for respondents displaced by the war



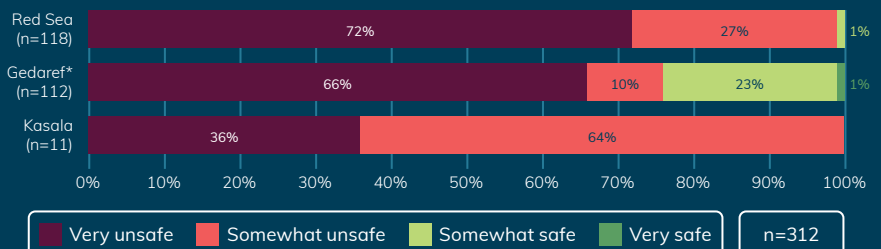
48% had received information on safe locations to flee to after the outbreak of war



65% of respondents who had received information on safe locations had relied on online communities

*Other sources included locals along the journey (38%), other refugees and migrants (32%), smugglers (17%), UN agencies and NGOs (10%), among others.

To what extent do you feel safe in your current location in Sudan? By state.



- 23 out of 28 respondents (all in Gedaref State) who reported feeling somewhat safe planned to remain in their current location within the next three months.

* Security in Gedaref has deteriorated since the surveys were conducted from March – May 2024, with the RSF advancement to Sennar in late June.

**1 respondent interviewed in Khartoum cited feeling very unsafe there.

Key findings

- Most respondents (78%) experienced abuse and injury since the outbreak of the war, including witnessing death (51%), robbery (50%), injury or ill health due to harsh conditions (46%) and physical violence (44%).
- In addition, abuses that can signify trafficking dynamics – e.g., sexual violence, trafficking and exploitation and kidnapping – were reported by a combined total of 41% of respondents.
- Women reported a higher exposure to harassment, kidnapping, bribery or extortion and sexual violence. Sexual violence is likely underreported due to stigma that many victims, both men and women, face.

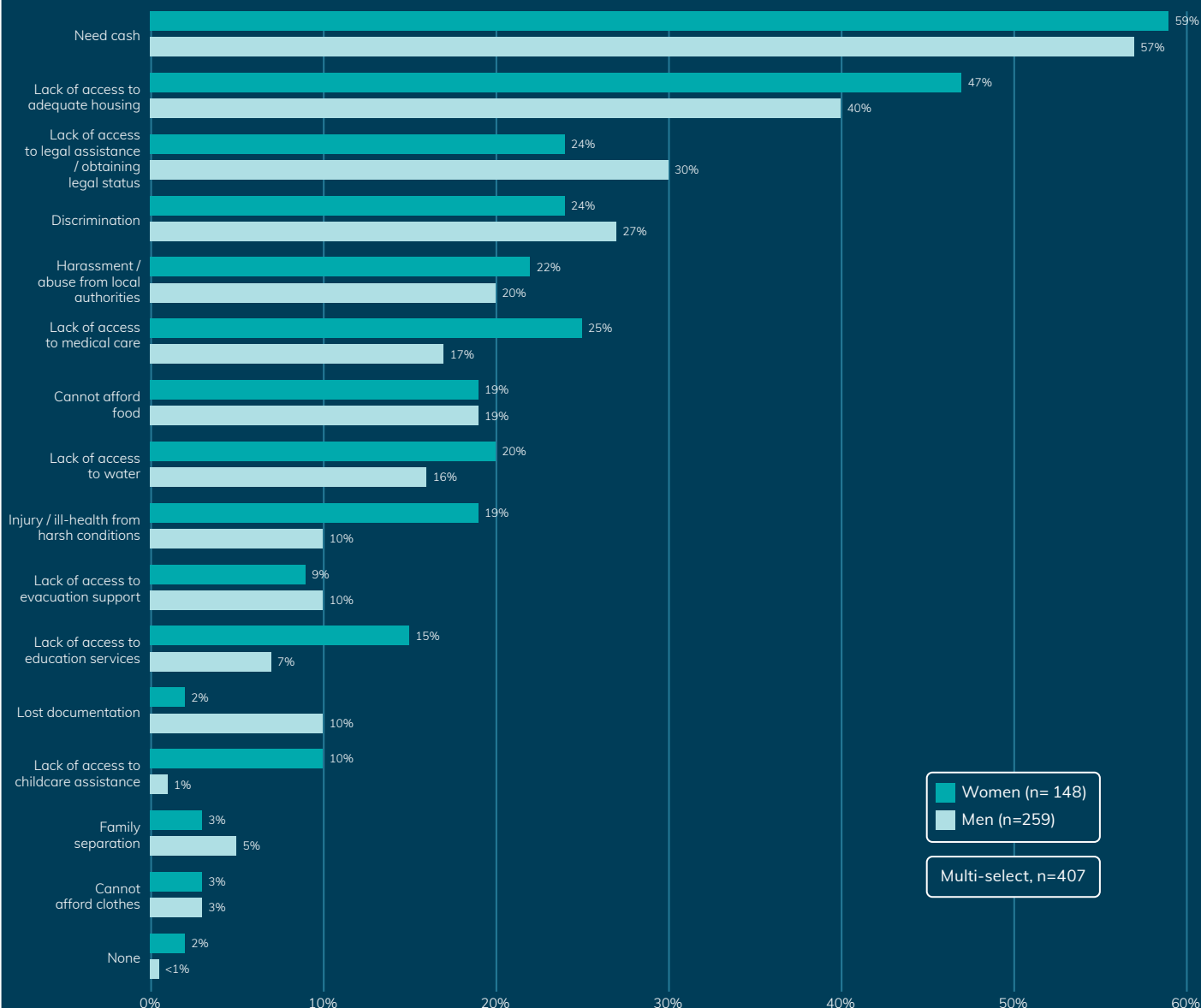
- Across every type of abuse, younger respondents, particularly youth aged 18-24, reported greater exposure than those aged 25-34 and 35+.
- Overwhelmingly, respondents felt unsafe in their locations in Eastern Sudan. As such, many wanted to move onward and leave the country.
- The data also reveal a decline in perceptions of safety, when compared with responses from August-December 2023 in Red Sea and Gedaref.¹²
- Few respondents had reported receiving information on safe locations from foreign embassies / consulates (6%) and national authorities (5%).

11 95 respondents (23%) reported arriving in Sudan after the conflict and thus did not answer conflict-related questions on MMC's 4Mi survey.

12 MMC (2024) [Routes, protection incidents and future intentions of people displaced by the Sudan war.](#)

Current challenges faced by respondents in Eastern Sudan

What are the current challenges you face?



Key findings

- Nearly all respondents (99%) faced challenges in their interview locations in Eastern Sudan, most notably with accessing cash (62%) and adequate housing (56%).
- A higher proportion of women reported challenges in accessing housing (47% vs 40%), medical care (25% vs 17%), water (20% vs 16%), education services (15% vs 7%), childcare assistance (10% vs 1%) and in exposure to injury or ill health due to harsh conditions (19% vs 10%).
- A higher proportion of men reported challenges in accessing legal assistance (30% vs 24%), discrimination (27% vs 24%) and lost documentation (10% vs 2%).
- While samples are not representative and comparisons should be treated with caution, respondents interviewed in Red Sea State cited a greater number and extent of challenges than those in Gedaref State. Disparities were observed in lacking cash (62% vs 50%), adequate housing (56% vs 23%) and legal assistance (39% vs 12%) and in experiencing discrimination (41% vs 3%).
- Exceptionally, being able to afford food was a challenge raised more often by respondents in Gedaref State (31%) than Red Sea State (12%), which may stem from the greater number of respondents interviewed in camps in Gedaref State.

Note on Terminology

MMC applies the term “[mixed migration](#)” to refer to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and economic opportunities. UNHCR and IOM - among other refugee protection actors - apply the term “mixed movement”, defined as: the cross-border movement of people, generally in an irregular manner, involving individuals and groups who travel alongside each other, using similar routes and means of transport or facilitators, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have different needs and profiles, and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, stateless persons and migrants (including migrants in irregular situations or migrants in vulnerable situations). In light of the partnership between UNHCR, IOM and MMC in publishing this snapshot, the term “mixed movement” is used.



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 migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with 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

