

# Experiences of refugees and migrants fleeing Sudan to Addis Ababa as a result of the 2023 conflict

Conflict since April in Sudan has internally displaced more than 6 million people and forced almost 1.5 million to flee to South Sudan (501,000), Chad (497,000), Egypt (400,000), Ethiopia (43,000) and Central African Republic (26,000).<sup>1</sup> Among those forced to flee are Sudanese and refugees and migrants from other countries who were hosted, settled in or transiting through Sudan, which was a major refugee and migrant-hosting country before the conflict began, with over 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers,<sup>2</sup> and an estimated 1.4 million migrants, including many on the Northern migratory route towards North Africa and Europe.<sup>3</sup>

This snapshot delves into the movements, challenges and protection risks faced by refugees and migrants who have relocated to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, in the wake of the conflict, with a focus on youth and adults traveling with children in their care (UNHCR estimates that 42% of new arrivals in Ethiopia are under the age of 18).<sup>4</sup> It complements two other MMC snapshots on the conflict-affected movements of refugees and migrants to eastern Sudan<sup>5</sup> and to South Sudan.<sup>6</sup>

## Key findings

- Nearly all the respondents interviewed in Addis Ababa had been in Khartoum when the conflict began (96%) and transited Ad Damazin (74%) and Asosa City (73%) on their way to Addis Ababa.
- Active conflict/fighting (99%), limited access to transportation (60%) and difficulties in moving vulnerable individuals (pregnant women, older people, people with disabilities, children, among others) (59%) were the main obstacles in seeking safety.

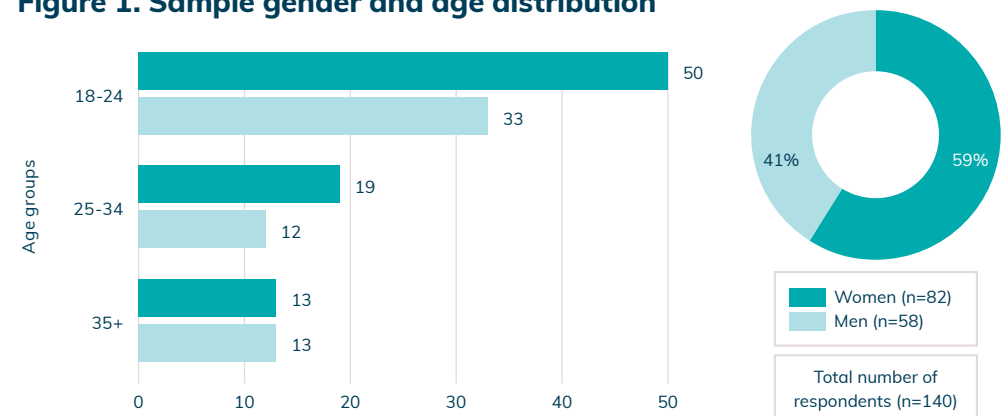
1 IOM (2024). [Population Movements from Sudan to the East and Horn of Africa](#) and UNHCR (2024). [Sudan Situation – Operational Data Portal](#)  
 2 UNHCR (2023). [Sudan Data Portal \(Accessed on 9 October 2023\)](#)  
 3 UNDESA (2020). [International Migrant Stock](#)  
 4 UNHCR (2023). [Protection Brief Ethiopia – Sudan Situation](#)  
 5 MMC (2023). [Movements, challenges and abuses of refugees and migrants in Eastern Sudan during the first months of the 2023 conflict](#)  
 6 MMC (2023). [The experience of refugees and migrants fleeing Sudan to Juba as a result of the 2023 conflict](#)

- 87% of respondents reported not having information on safe locations.
- Since the start of the conflict, the majority had witnessed and/or experienced death (96%), physical violence (94%), robbery (93%) and sexual violence (86%). Youth more commonly witnessed/experienced detention than did older respondents.
- In Addis Ababa, access to housing (95%), food (86%) and cash (62%) are the primary challenges cited by respondents. However, nearly all respondents (96%) consider Addis Ababa a place of safety.
- Most respondents (78%) intend to stay in Addis Ababa at least for the next three months, particularly women (71/82).

## Data and profiles

This snapshot is based on 140 surveys collected from August-October 2023, 4-6 months after the outbreak of the Sudan conflict. All respondents were in Sudan when the conflict started and fled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where they were interviewed. 59% of respondents are women and 41% are men. 59% are youth (18-24 years of age) while 41% are aged 25 or older. The majority of respondents (87%) are originally from South Sudan, while the rest are from Sudan (13%). Of the South Sudanese respondents, 37 South Sudanese were parents, traveling with children in their care.

**Figure 1. Sample gender and age distribution**



## Most fled Khartoum through Ad Damazine in Sudan and Asosa City in Ethiopia

Nearly all respondents (96%) were in Khartoum, the epicenter of the conflict, when the conflict began.<sup>7</sup> The majority reported stopping in Ad Damazine, Sudan (74%), and Asosa City, Ethiopia (73%) on their way to Addis Ababa, mainly stopping because it was safer there (75% of those who stopped in Ad Damazine and 77% of those who stopped in Asosa City) and to look for assistance (33% and 56%, respectively). Routes and stopping locations were similar across age groups, different family arrangements and gender.

**Figure 2. Map showing the route followed by respondents from Khartoum to Addis Ababa**



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by MMC or United Nations.

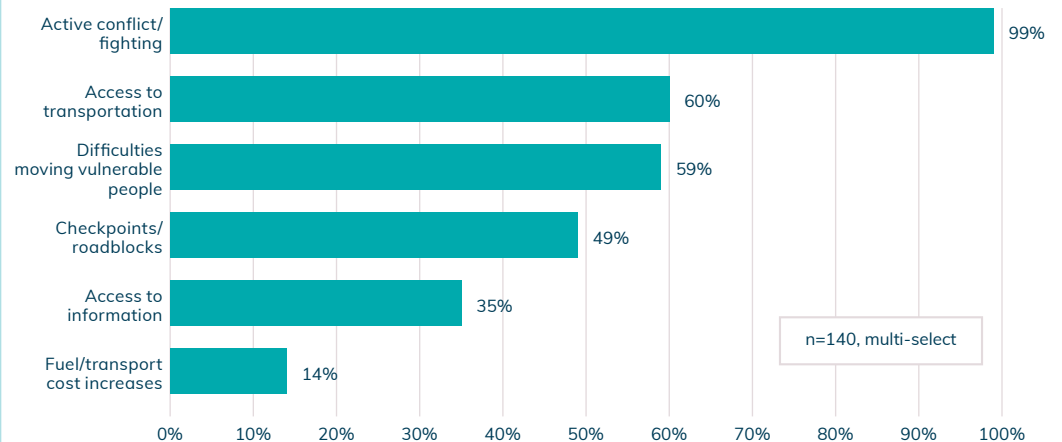
<sup>7</sup> Other locations were Gedaref (1), Central Darfur (1), Al Jazirah (1), Sennar (1), White Nile (1) and River Nile (1).

## Respondents report multiple obstacles in seeking safety

Respondents faced multiple challenges in seeking safety, with a majority citing active conflict/fighting (99%), limited access to transportation (60%) and difficulties moving vulnerable people (pregnant women, elderly, people with disabilities, children) (59%).

There were no observable differences in the challenges expressed by surveyed women versus men or different age groups. The majority (26/37; 70%) of respondents traveling with children in their care cited difficulties moving vulnerable family members, as compared to 59% of the sample overall.

**Figure 3. What were the main challenges in leaving the location you were in when the conflict started?**



## Most respondents did not have access to information on safe locations

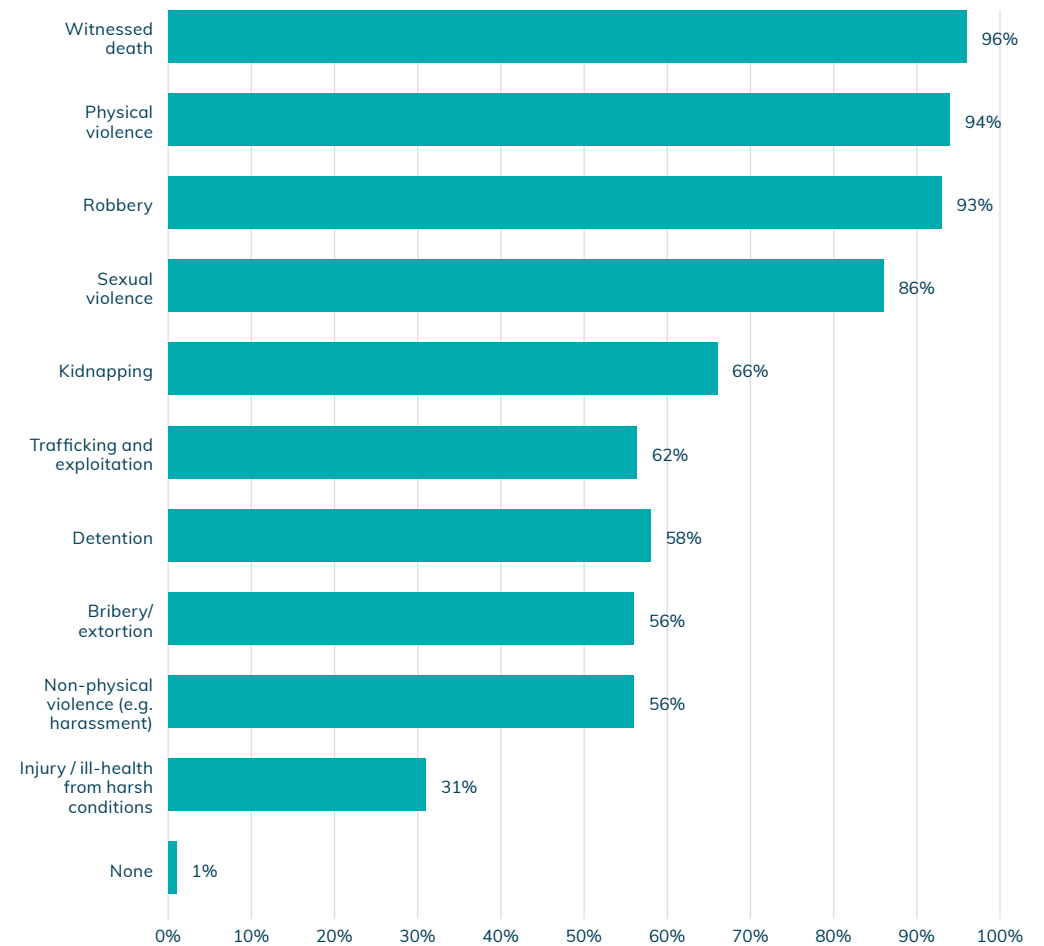
Respondents (87%) overwhelmingly faced a lack of access to information about safe locations over the course of their journey. While sample sizes are small and should be treated with caution, a higher share of adults aged 25 or older had access to information on safe locations (10/47) compared to youth (aged 18 to 24) (8/75), suggesting youth are more vulnerable in this regard.

None of the respondents reported receiving information about safe places from non-governmental organizations or United Nations organizations. The scarcity of information on safe locations highlights the immense challenges faced by individuals seeking safety amid the conflict.

## Most respondents had witnessed death and experienced abuse

Nearly all respondents (99%) had experienced or witnessed abuses during the outbreak of conflict. 96% had witnessed death, 94% had witnessed or experienced physical violence, 93% robbery and 86% sexual violence. Youth more commonly cited experiencing or witnessing detention (52/83) compared to adults over the age of 25 (29/57). Women more frequently reported experiencing injury/ill-health from harsh conditions (37/82 compared to 6/58 men) and non-physical violence (50/82 compared to 28/58 men), while men more often cited trafficking and exploitation (44/58 compared to 43/82 women). Caregivers showed no major differences in their experiences of abuse. Moreover, caregivers principally perceived injury or ill health from harsh conditions (36/37), death (35/37), sexual violence (33/37) and physical violence (32/37) as risks for the children under their care. The high prevalence of protection risks underscores the profound impact of the conflict on millions of individuals and emphasizes the need for comprehensive support and protection.

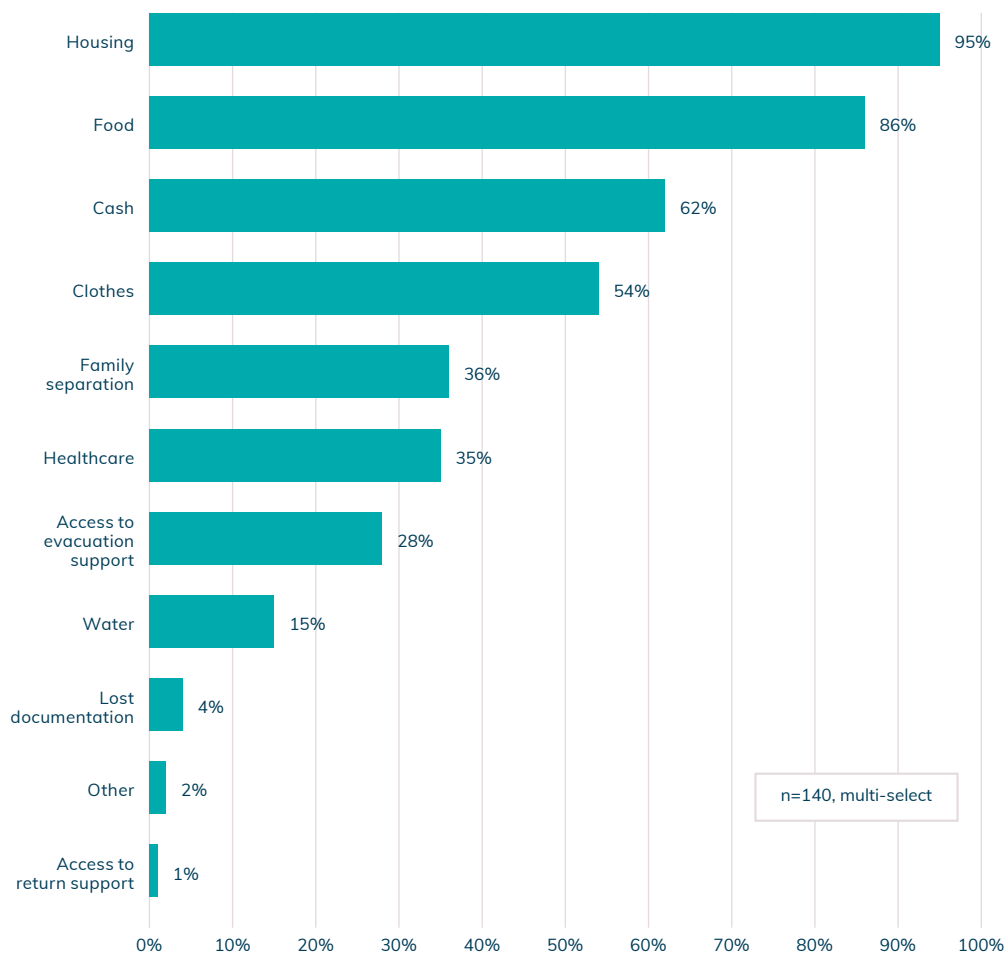
Figure 4. Have you witnessed or experienced abuses since April 15th?



## In Addis Ababa, respondents face challenges accessing housing, food and cash

The majority of the respondents (95%) cited housing as the main challenge in Addis Ababa, followed by food (86%) and cash (62%). All caregivers (37) cited housing as the main challenge, 31 also cited food, 23 cash and 22 cited access to clothes. Access to healthcare was more commonly cited as a challenge by older respondents: 27/57 of those 25 or older, compared to 22/83 of those aged 18 to 24. There were no observable differences in the challenges and needs expressed by surveyed women versus men. Nearly all (96%) reported feeling somewhat safe or very safe in Addis Ababa despite the challenges.

**Figure 5. What are the current challenges you face?**



## Majority of respondents intend to stay in Addis Ababa

Most (78%) respondents intended to stay in Addis Ababa for the next 3 months and 11% did not know their future plans. 9% intended to move to another country, mainly the United States of America, and 2% intended to move to another location in Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup> No respondents reported an intention to return to Sudan. Women more often intended

<sup>8</sup> Of the 12 respondents (9%) expressing an intention to move to another country, 5 stated the United States of America, 2 Russia, 1 South Sudan, 1 Norway, 1 Ireland, 1 Australia and 1 Saudi Arabia

to stay in Addis Ababa (71/82) than men (38/58), who more frequently reported not knowing their intentions for the next 3 months (13/58).

With the majority of respondents intending to stay in Addis Ababa, the limited access to services in the capital could increase their vulnerability to abuse and negative coping mechanisms. According to the government's planning of hosting asylum seekers and refugees who are arriving from Sudan outside the capital city, there is no registration system in Addis Ababa. This means that those who are seeking protection (and accompanying documentation) will be required to relocate from Addis Ababa to one of the registration centres close to the border with Sudan or South Sudan. Failure to comply could lead to arbitrary detention and forcible returns to Sudan.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR (2023). [Protection Brief Ethiopia: Sudan Situation – October 2023](#)



## 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 East 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](http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi)