



THE MIGRATION PULSE

Understanding the needs and food security situation of migrants in Libya

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Interviewed migrants have come from **36 different countries**, majority originating from West Africa, North Africa and the Middle East. Backgrounds of migrants and other demographics were considered in the data collection, analysis and conclusions.
- One third of respondents reported **insecurity and violence concerns**, which were found to be particularly high in West and South Libya. One fifth of migrants are also **struggling to find jobs**, and nearly 40 percent reported unstable casual labour as their main income source.
- **High food prices** have also been identified as a major challenge for 20 percent of respondents and more than half of respondents **voiced their worries to obtain sufficient food to eat**. To cope with the **lack of food**, more than a quarter of respondents have **gone a whole day without eating** and 15 percent have **skipped meals** in the 30 days before the survey.
- A high percentage of interviewed migrants preferred **unrestricted cash** as a delivery modality to meet their **basic food needs**, which mirrors their vulnerability levels combined with ongoing severe cash shortages across Libya. **Restricted** cash-based transfers came second, with 11 percent selecting cash to buy food, closely followed by **in-kind** food reported by 8 percent of respondents as their preferred modality of assistance.
- Migrants who come from **East African and South/Southeast Asian countries** were found to be more vulnerable to food insecurity. In-depth analysis revealed high vulnerability levels among certain **migrant subgroups**. Overall, those residing in **eastern Libya** are more prone to vulnerability compared to other regions. **Migrants that arrived recently** are also significantly more vulnerable to food insecurity.



Background

An estimated 2.5 million migrants were in Libya before the 2011 revolution¹ – it offered the best job opportunities in the region and the economy was heavily dependent on the migrant workforce in many sectors (oil and gas, construction, health, agriculture, etc.). Majority of foreign workers left Libya after the 2011 revolution and 2014 civil war, however, nearly 700,000 migrants are currently present in Libya.² Despite the decrease in migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Italy³, there are still important flows of migrants coming to Libya, mainly by land through Niger, Egypt and Chad⁴. Following the most recent spike in conflict (April 2019), to control the capital city of Tripoli, migrants close to the conflict zones were the most affected as they faced additional difficulties in finding safe shelters and food.⁵

As the situation inside Libya continues to be extremely unstable, it is crucial to continue to monitor trends and effects on the needs of migrants. Hence, the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping unit (VAM) in WFP designed and implemented a web-based survey⁶ with the objective to better understand and assess the overall situation of migrants inside the country, including challenges, needs and food security. This report presents key findings from these web-based responses.

Methodology

The web survey ran inside Libya from January to May 2019, capturing responses from **2,545 migrants** which included **827 West Africans, 442 East Africans, 526 North Africans, 507 Middle Easterners** and **243 South and Southeast Asians**.⁷

Internet usage in Libya has grown significantly since the early 2000s, and mobile ownership covers nearly 95 percent of the population.⁸ However, a level of bias cannot be ruled out. Given the nature of the web-based methodology, this sample only considers migrants who are literate internet users, with connectivity to the internet. Hence, it is not representative of the general population in Libya. Furthermore, this technology does not necessarily capture respondents who are transiting quickly through the country or end up in detention centres. Survey weights were introduced in the analysis to calibrate⁹ the distribution of region of origin¹⁰ and reduce part of the bias introduced by the technology.

Profile of survey respondents

Out of the interviewed migrants, about one third were women respondents. Furthermore, around two-thirds of the sampled population group was found to be under the age of 34, including 11 percent of minors (between 14-17 years). Out of these children, 34 percent were identified as unaccompanied minors. Similar results relating to children were also captured in the latest Flow Monitoring Report on Migrants in Libya¹¹.

¹ IOM (2011): The humanitarian response to the Libyan crisis:

² <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/libya—migrant-report-25-march—may-2019>

³ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>

⁴ <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/libya—migrant-report-25-march—may-2019>

⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/dtm-libya-urban-migrants-situation-update-rapid-assessment-6-may-2019>

⁶ WFP contracted RIWI Corporation to implement web-based surveys using its patented Random Domain Intercept Technology (RDIT™). Detailed information regarding RDIT can be found on the service provider's website: <https://riwi.com/>

⁷ The minimum sample requirement was 400 completed surveys for East Africans, North Africans and Middle Easterners (95% confidence level, margin of error inferior of 5%), 800 completed surveys for West Africans and 240 completed surveys for South/Southeast Asians. Sample requirement have been reached and exceeded for all groups.

⁸ World Bank (2017): Individuals using the internet (% of population): <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/it.net.user.zs>

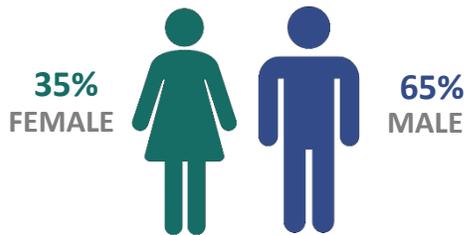
⁹ Calibration is a statistical technique to reproduce known population totals in survey data.

¹⁰ Population figures by region of origin of migrants are based on IOM DTM's Flow Monitoring Report in Libya (April-May 2019)

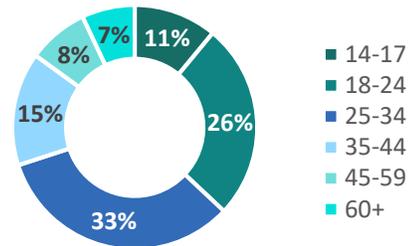
¹¹ IOM also identified similar numbers with 9 percent of minors, of which 34 percent were unaccompanied

To help gain a better understanding of the migrant situation in Libya, other parameters were also considered in the data collection. Characteristics and demographics such as origins, education level and living situation in Libya were included. In terms of education level, one third of migrants reported having completed either secondary school or vocational training, while 25 percent of respondents are university graduates, illustrating that a significant number of interviewed migrants are highly literate. Meanwhile, 22 percent said they attended religious school or primary school, and the remaining 22 percent have incomplete or no education.

Sex of respondents



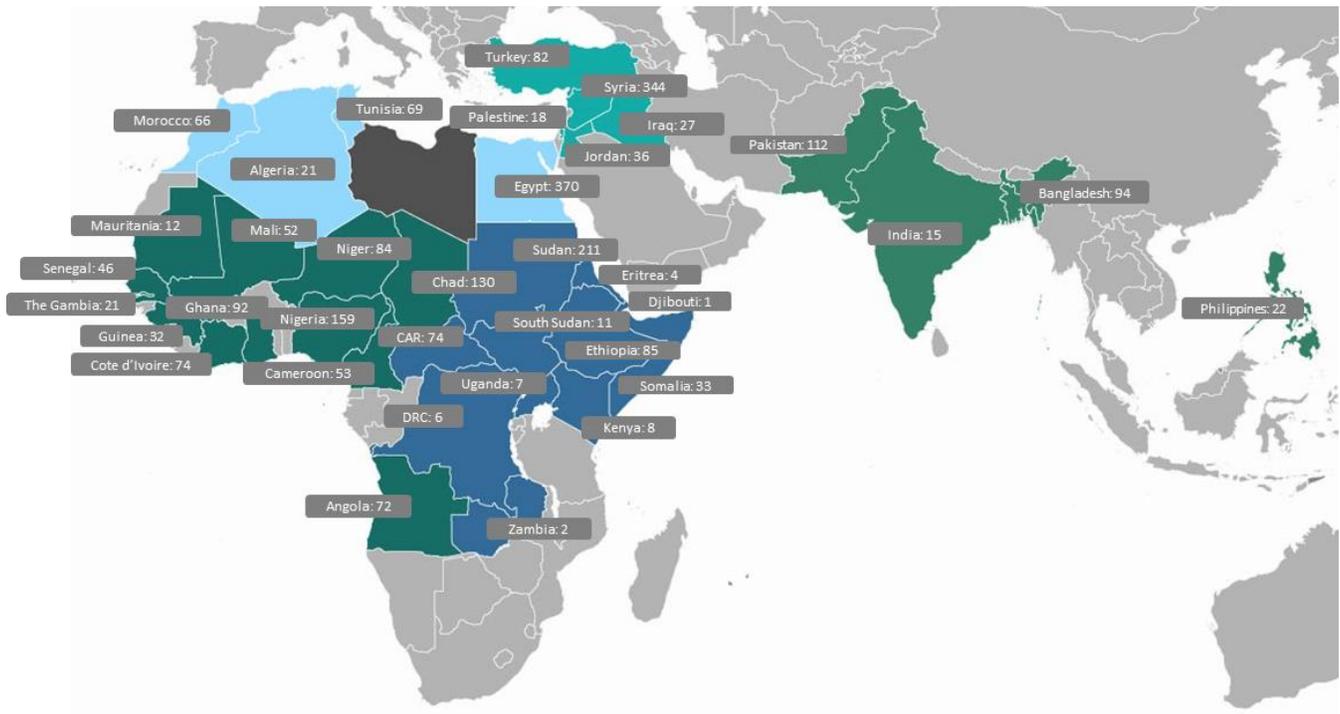
Age of respondents



Analysis results showed that interviewed migrants have originated from 36 countries located in West, East and North Africa, the Middle East as well as South/Southeast Asia regions. Most migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa come from Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Ghana, Ethiopia and Niger, while those from Asia originated mostly from Pakistan and Bangladesh. In addition, the survey also captured a significant number of Syrian respondents.

Arrival times into Libya varied among interviewed migrants, where one in five migrants reported to have recently arrived into Libya (between 2018 and early 2019), majority being from West Africa (60%), followed by East Africa (17%).

Map 1: Number of migrant respondents by country of origin



Living situation of migrants in Libya

Migrants were surveyed across the entire country, covering all 22 mantikas¹². Nearly one in two respondents were based in West Libya, 40 percent reported to be living in East Libya, while the remaining 10 percent were identified in South Libya. In the West, Tripoli hosts nearly one fourth of the entire sample of respondents, while 13 percent were identified in Benghazi and 9 percent in Tobruk (East).

The living situation of migrants inside Libya was found to be quite complex, as 43 percent of respondents reported to be living alone. Out of those, one third are women and 9 percent are unaccompanied minors (14-17 years). Another 12 percent are single persons living with at least one child under 18, of which 40 percent are women. Twenty-eight percent reported to be living with immediate family members, while 17 percent are living with other people (non-family members).



In terms of accommodation arrangements, 28 percent reported to be renting an apartment, while 13 percent said to be renting a room or a bed in, for example, so-called unfinished buildings that landlords set up to rent for migrants. Another 17 percent of respondents also reported to be either hosted for free or living with their employers who provide them with accommodation. More concerning, 13 percent of migrants reported they were either squatting (i.e. occupying abandoned buildings) or living on the streets, while the remaining reported other types of accommodation arrangements. Migrants who have recently arrived in Libya, between 2018 and early 2019, reported to be squatting or living on the streets (23%) to higher extent compared to 17 percent of those who arrived in the earlier years, prior to 2011 and up to 2017. Further research and complementary qualitative data can help better understand this finding.



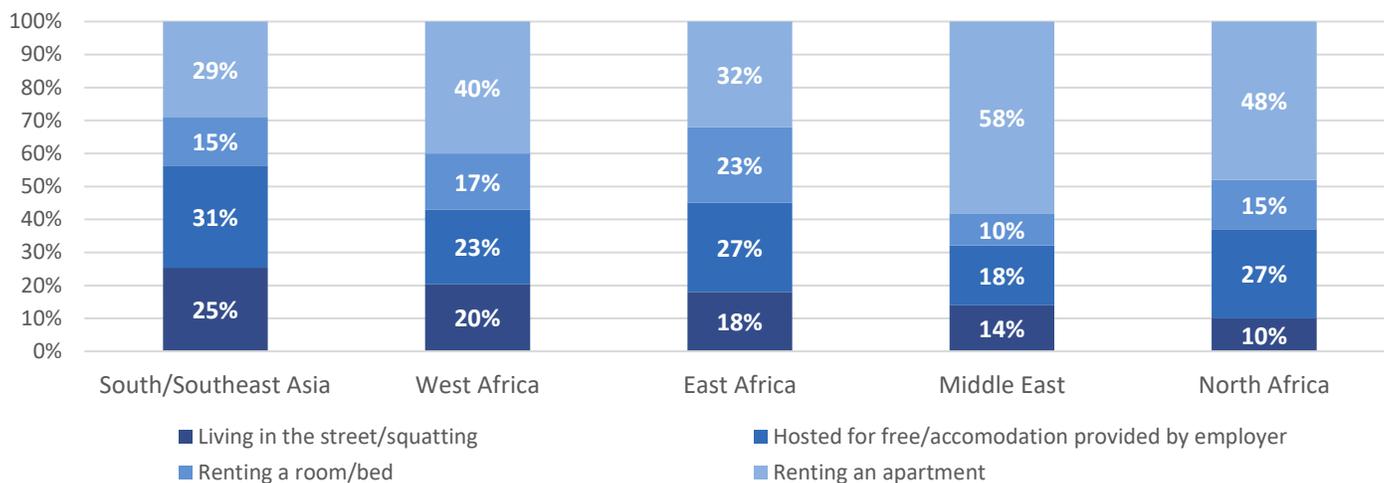
Living arrangements varied among different groups of migrants. Most surprisingly, nearly half of single persons with at least one child reported to be squatting in abandoned buildings or living on the streets, compared to around 8 percent of respondents living with their families. This may indicate that families with more than one adult tend to have more income sources compared to those composed of single persons with minors. In relation to this, it was

¹² Administrative level II of Libya – equates to a geographical division.

also found that one fifth of respondents living alone with children were either hosted for free or living with their employers, which could raise potential protection issues.

Chart 2 also shows some variations in accommodation arrangements by region of origin of migrants. Comparisons between the accommodation types of migrant groups revealed that one in four South/Southeast Asians are either squatting or living on the streets, which is vastly different for Middle Eastern and North African migrants. Similarly, this group has also reported being hosted for free or living with their employer than others.

Chart 2: Accommodation arrangements by region of origin



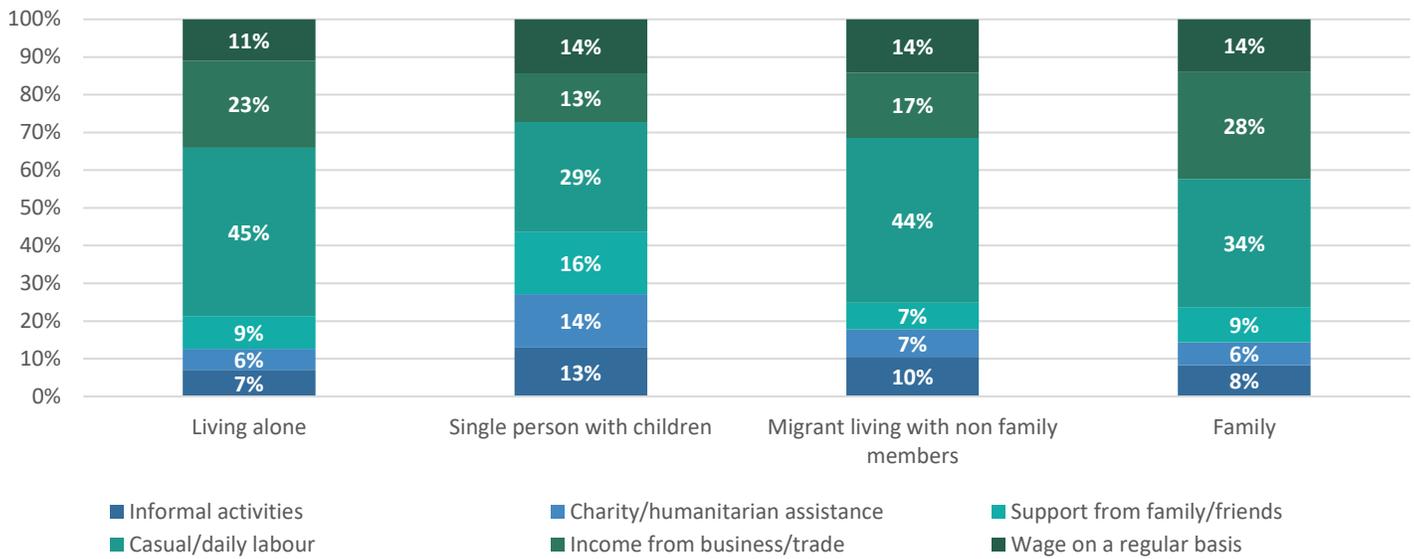
Livelihood activities

More than two-thirds of migrants rely on casual or daily labour for generating income, and 22 percent reported earning income through small personal businesses. Only 13 percent of respondents reported receiving wages on a regular basis. Another 9 percent said they are relying on support from family and friends to survive, while 7 percent depend on assistance from charities or humanitarian organizations. More concerning, nine percent of migrants are engaging in informal activities, including begging, scavenging and other risky activities to support themselves.

Comparisons between women and men revealed that women tend to be slightly more reliant on support from family and friends (11%), as well as charity or humanitarian assistance (9%) than men (8% and 6%, respectively). Further complementing this information with qualitative data can help better understand the dynamics at play. A decisive factor is also the year of arrival in Libya, with people who migrated in 2018-2019 relying more on informal activities than those who arrived earlier.

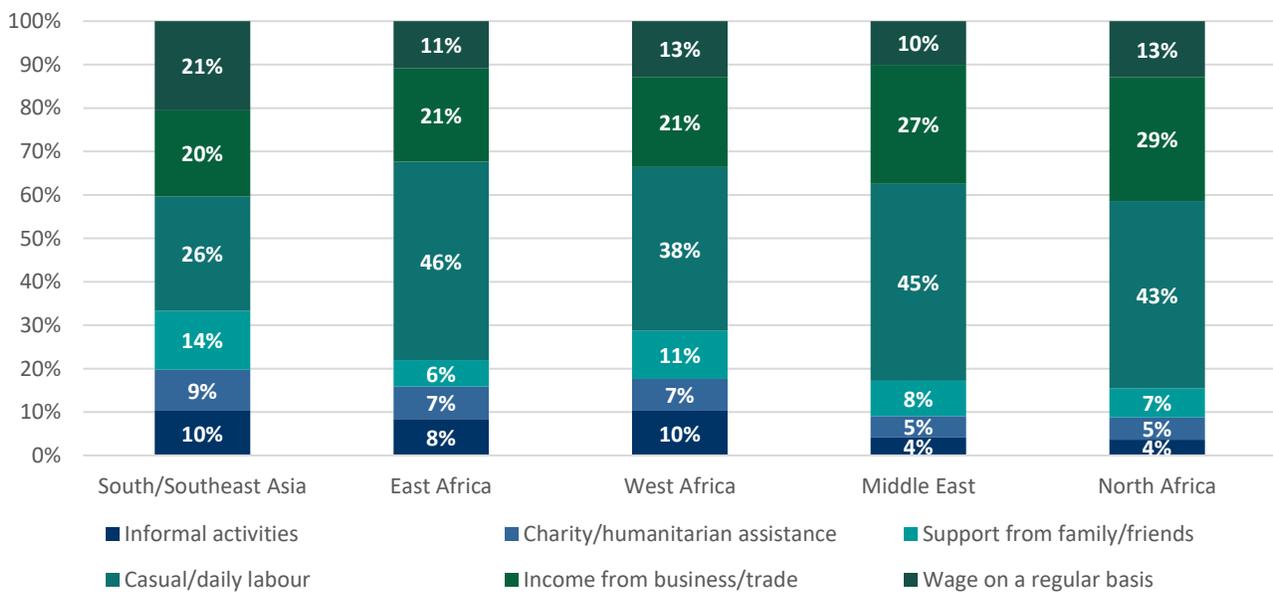
Income sources also varied according to different groups of migrants (see chart 3). Noticeable is the higher share of single migrants living with children who depend on support, informal activities and charity to survive. In contrast, this same group reported to be doing casual labour or owning a small business to a much lower extent than others, most likely due to difficulties between working and taking care of children.

Chart 3: Main livelihood activities by migrant groups



In terms of region of origin of migrants, chart 4 shows that a higher share of South/Southeast Asian migrants receive a wage on a regular basis – Bangladeshi and Pakistani have a long tradition of immigrating to Libya, some of them have been established in the country for many years, which could explain that they have more stable livelihoods.

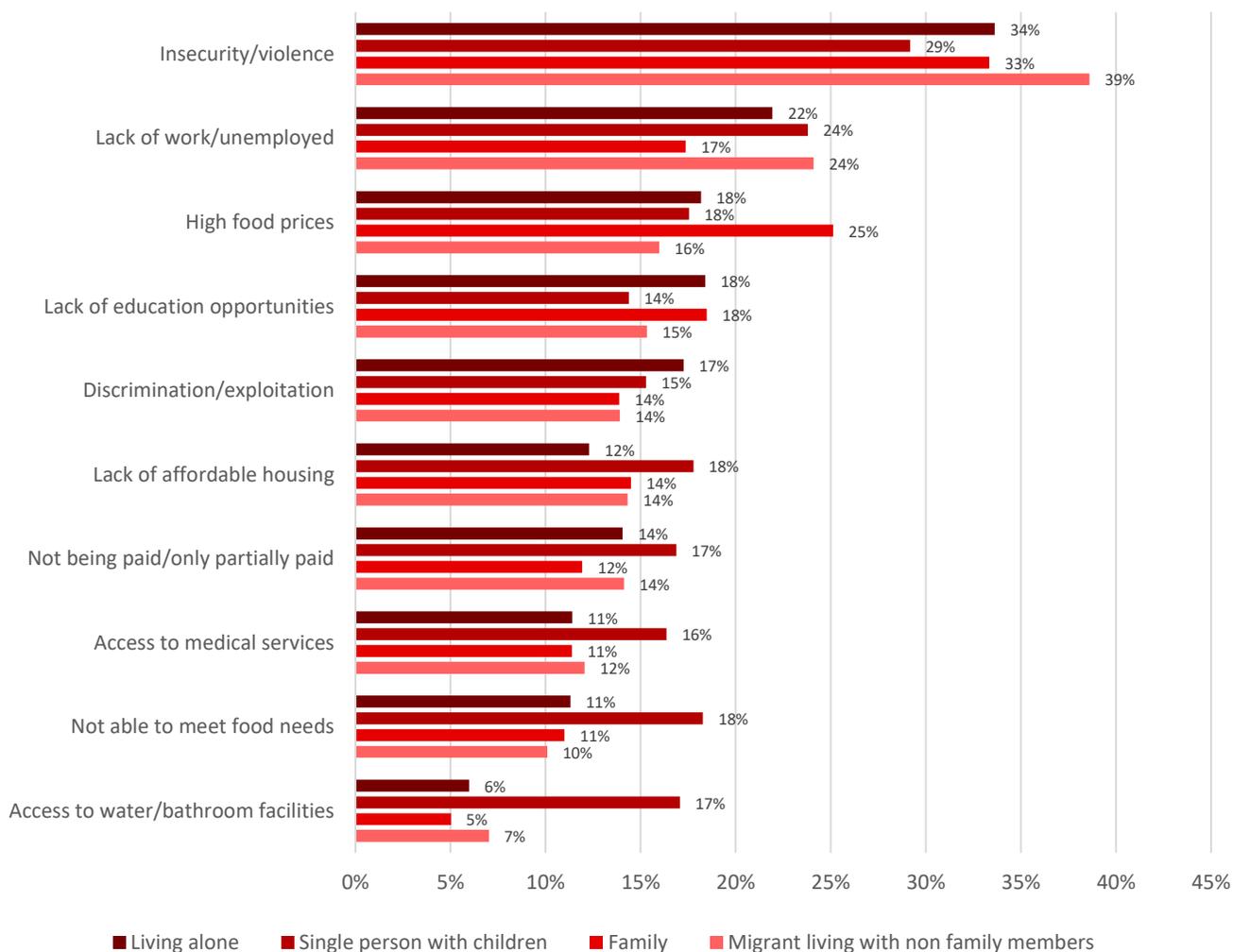
Chart 4: Main livelihood activities by region of origin



Main challenges and needs

When migrants were asked to report on their top two concerns in their current location, one third of migrants from all regions of origin reported insecurity and violence as their main preoccupation. This was followed by lack of work/unemployment (21%) and high food prices (20%). Lack of education opportunities (17%) as well as discrimination and exploitation (16%) were also found to be quite high among respondents. When applying a gender lens, limited work opportunities was reported more often by women than men, combined with facing more difficulties in getting paid for their work. Overall, 12 percent of migrants said to be facing issues in meeting their food needs. Chart 5 illustrates the differences in concerns by main groups of migrants.

Chart 5: Migrants' main concerns in Libya
(Multiple response - top 2)

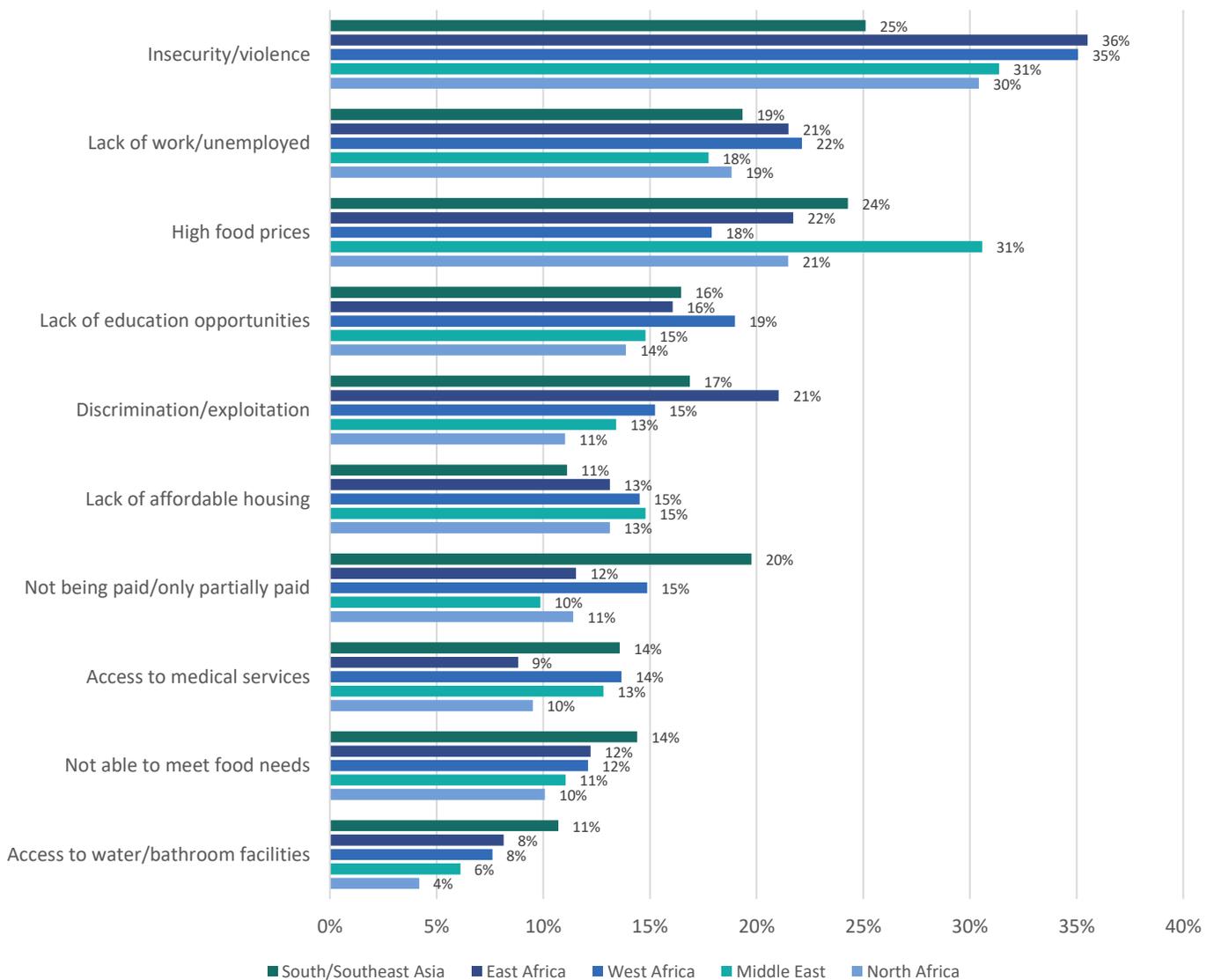


Results showed a noticeable percentage of migrants living with non-family members who reported insecurity and violence, which may reflect high vulnerability levels. On the other hand, high food prices were found to be a concern for families living together. Most concerning, however, are the findings related to single persons living alone with children. Compared to other groups, they face a significantly greater challenge to meet their food needs.

Challenges faced by migrants also differ by region in Libya. Across regions, noticeable is the higher share of respondents reporting insecurity and violence in West and South Libya, which is most likely due to the higher presence of armed groups/militias in these regions. Insecurity and violence were reported to a greater extent by migrants in Azzawaya, Almargeb, Tripoli and Murzuq. Although some differences were identified by mantika, high food prices were reported as an issue almost evenly across all regions. In fact, despite the introduction of economic reforms to facilitate the importation of food imports and stabilise the economy, food prices are still fluctuating (see [JMMI monthly reports](#)) and are significantly higher in the south of the country compared to other parts (e.g. food basket was found to be 27% more expensive in Ghat compared to Tripoli on June 2019). Lastly, difficulties to meet food needs were found to be of concern for migrants in Al Jabal, Al Akhdar and Almarj.

Chart 6 also illustrates how concerns vary by region of origin of migrants. It particularly emphasizes on the higher concern of insecurity and violence among East and Western Africans. Closely linked to this, a higher share of East Africans is challenged by discrimination and exploitation compared to other groups. High food prices are a great concern among Middle Eastern migrants, while the challenge to meet food needs is a major concern of South/Southeast Asians. The latter group is also considerably struggling with being paid for their work, which could partially explain why they are also struggling to meet their food needs.

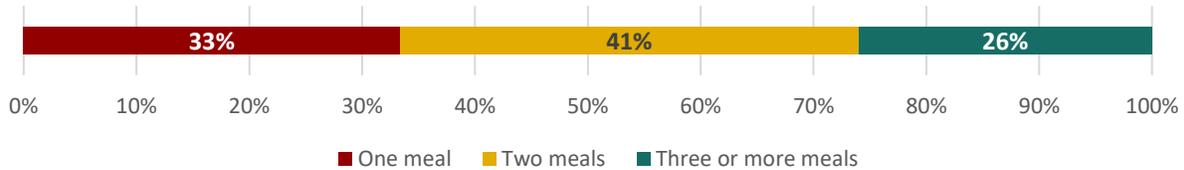
Chart 6: Migrants' main concerns by region of origin
(Multiple response of the main 2 concerns)



Food security situation of migrants in Libya

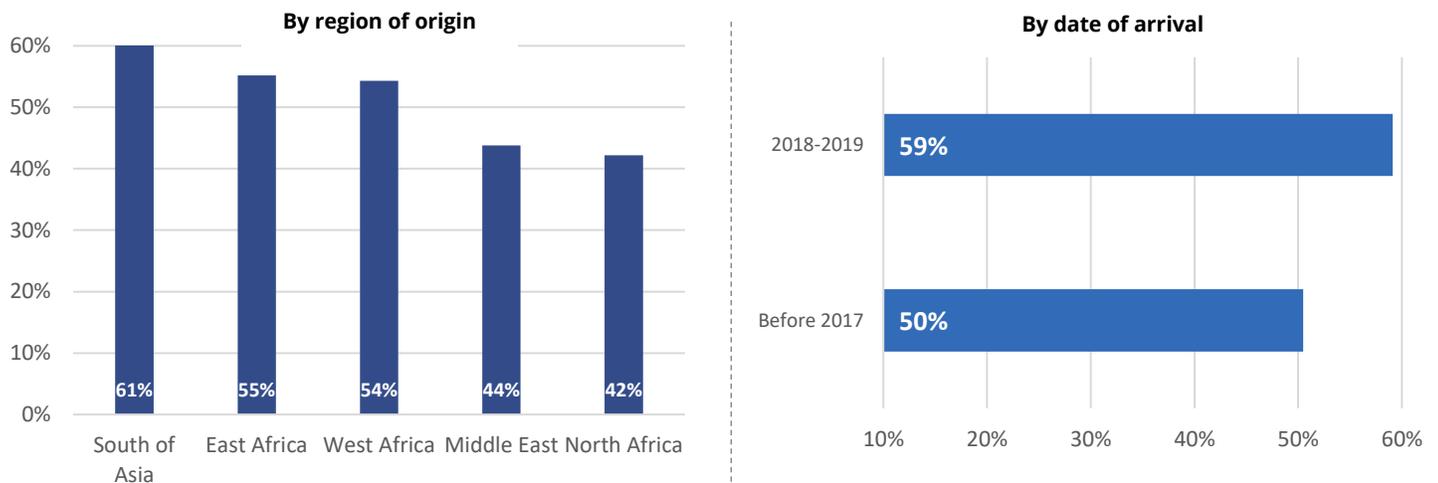
Even though meeting food needs did not emerge as a top concern, many migrants in Libya tend to be compromising their food consumption. As illustrated in chart 7, one third of the population reported to have eaten only one meal in the previous day to the survey.

Chart 7: Number of meals consumed in the previous day



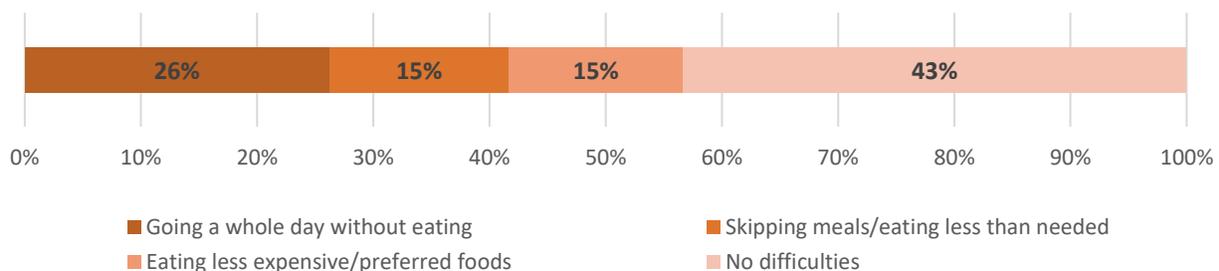
While some migrants may choose to eat less to save money or meet other pressing needs, not having enough food to eat was still found as a significant source of stress for these groups. About half (52%) of migrants in Libya reported to have been worried about not having enough food to eat over the past month. Women tend to be more concerned about food compared to men (56% vs. 51%). Minors (14-17 years) and elders (over 60 years) were also identified as groups who were more worried. Chart 8 shows the levels of concern by region of origin of migrants, and by time of arrival in Libya.

Chart 8: Worried about not having enough food to eat in the past 30 days



The adoption of food coping strategies due to lack of food or means to buy food were found to be widely adopted by respondents (57%). Most concerning, one in four migrants reported to have gone a whole day without eating in the past month.

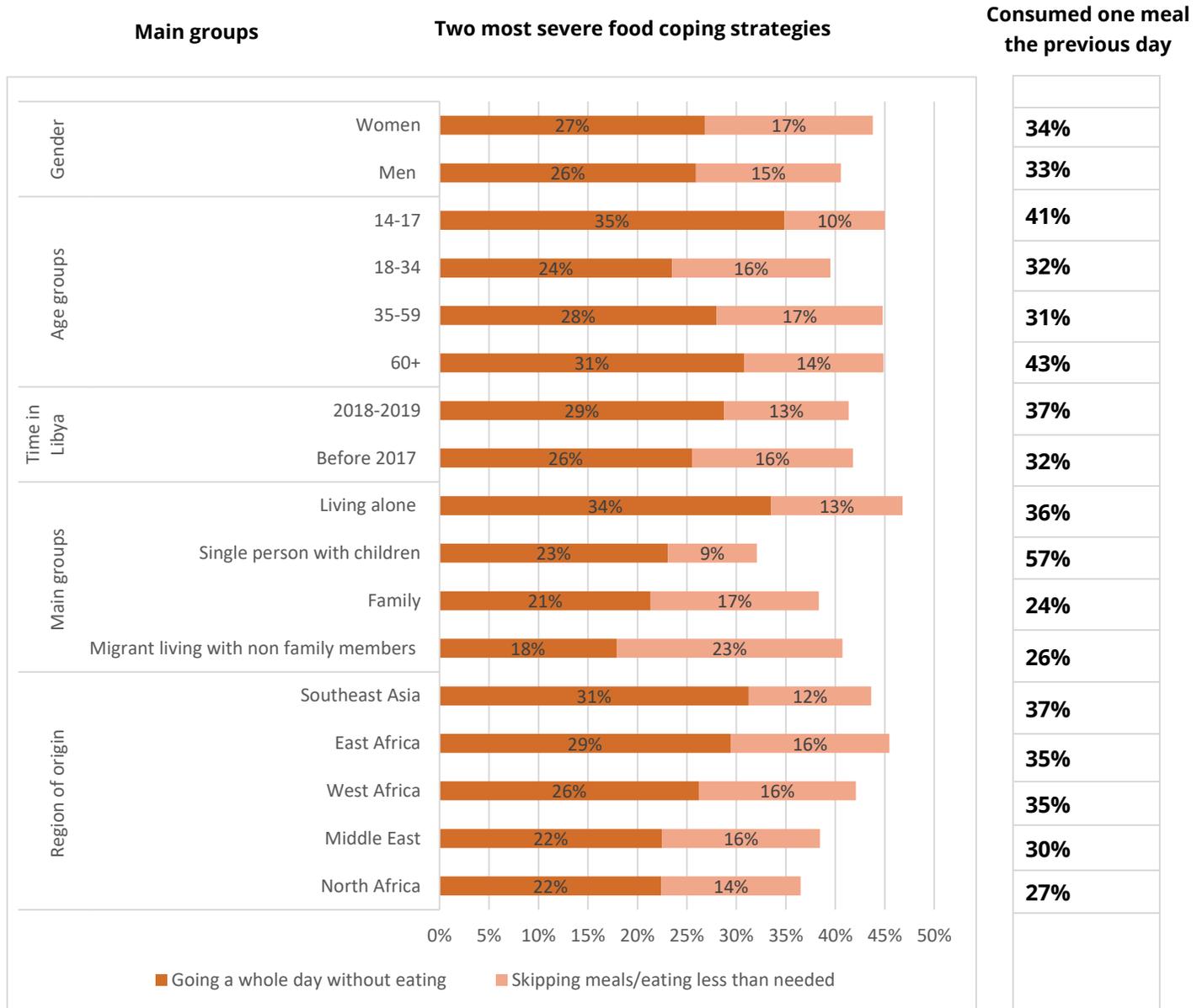
Chart 9: Adoption of food coping strategies in the past 30 days



Who are the food insecure migrants?

The food security status of migrants varied according to key characteristics of respondents. Chart 10 provides a summary of these variations. Age and gender were found to be important discriminants of migrants' food security. Findings show that women are applying slightly more severe food coping strategies as well as compromising their food consumption more than men. Minors (14-17) and the older generation of migrants (60+) were also found to be more vulnerable to food insecurity compared to other age groups.

Chart 10: Food coping and food consumption by migrant groups

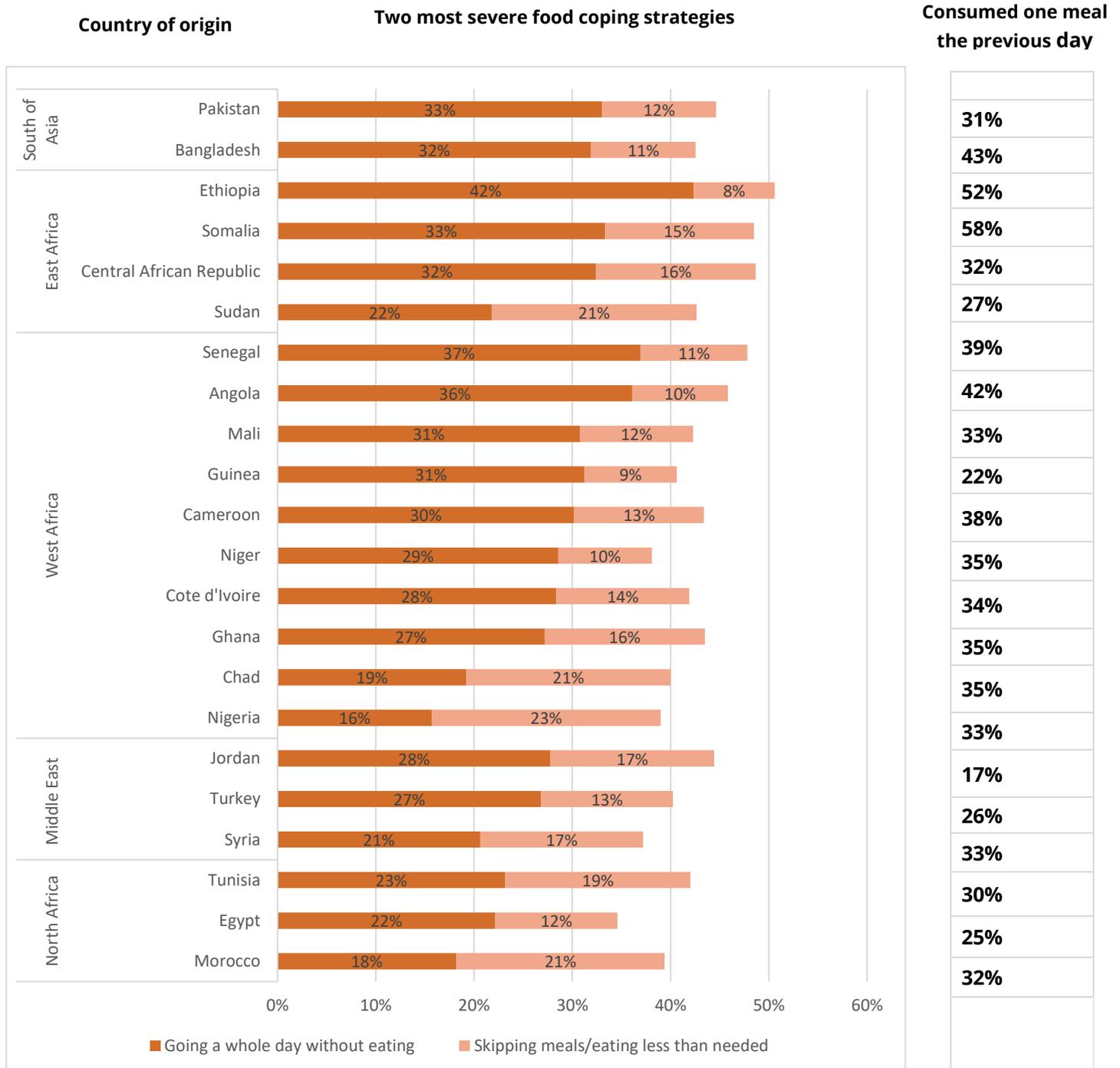


Migrants who have recently arrived in Libya have also been identified to be facing greater difficulties in getting food than those who have been established for a longer period. Those living alone as well as single persons living with at least one child below 18 have also reported concerning levels of food coping and consuming a reduced number of meals per day. Results are especially alarming for single people with children, with 57 percent of respondents reporting to have eaten only one meal in the previous day. Unaccompanied minors are also of concern, with nearly half reporting having gone a whole day without eating and 46 percent who ate only one meal in the previous day.

This compares to 27 percent of other minors who went a whole day without eating and 38 percent who ate only one meal.

In terms of region of origin, a higher share of South Asians and East Africans respondents are resorting to extreme coping strategies and eating only one meal per day compared to other groups. They are the same groups who also reported being very worried about not having enough food to eat. These findings are also in line with the previous section on main challenges, where a higher proportion of South/Southeast Asians followed by East Africans reported higher concern to meet their food needs. Chart 11 further demonstrates the countries of origin of the respondents most vulnerable to food insecurity. Migrants from Ethiopia, Angola, Senegal, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh were found to be the most food insecure and therefore require attention.

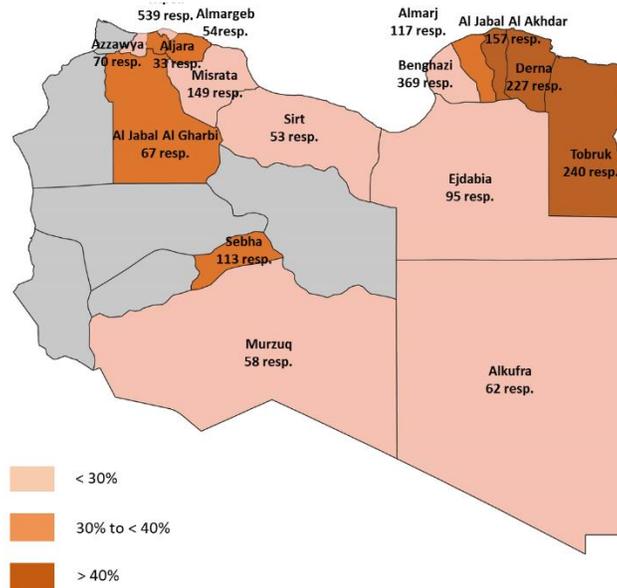
Chart 11: Food coping and food consumption by country of origin



Where are the food insecure migrants in Libya?

Geographically, food insecurity was found to be more concentrated in the East of Libya (Tobruk, Derna and Ejdaba). This contrasts with the food insecurity of the Libyan population that is more prevalent in the South and West (MSNA 2018). However, the survey gathered insufficient completed surveys in a majority of mantikas in the South of Libya to fully understand the situation in those areas.

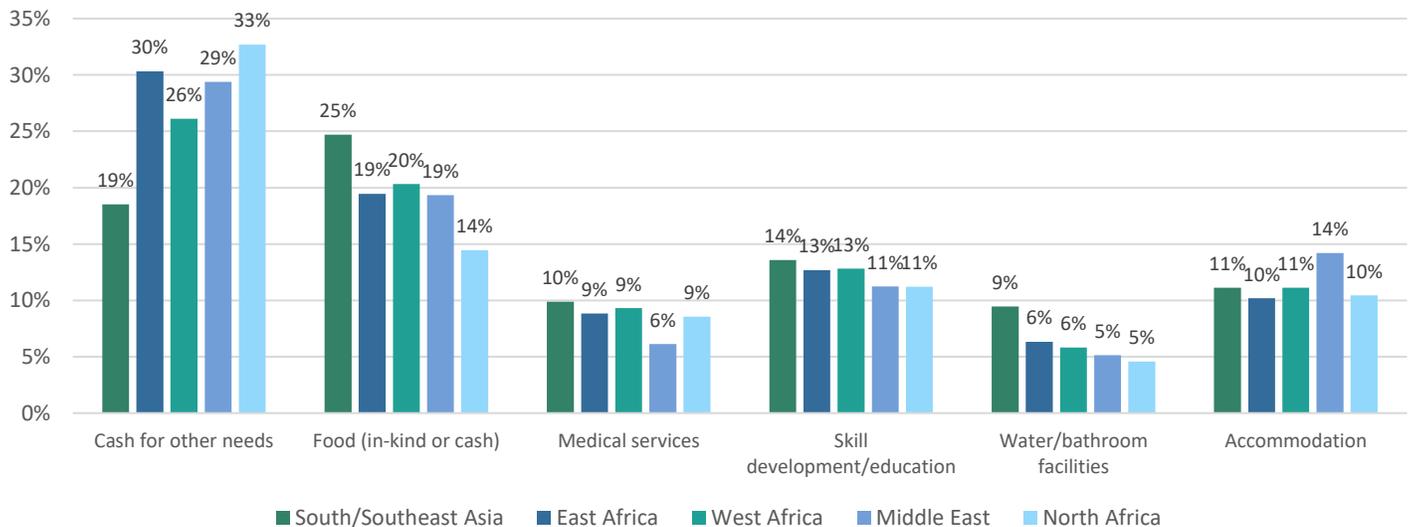
Map 2: Proportion of migrants reporting to have consumed one meal in the previous day



What type of assistance do migrants need?

Overall, migrants across Libya reported the need for cash for other needs (28%) and food, either in-kind or cash (19%). This is followed by skill development and education (13%), accommodation (11%), medical services (8%) and water and bathroom facilities (6%). Another 15 percent of the respondents reported the need for other types of assistance. Chart 13 illustrates the type of assistance required by the region of origin of migrants. Noticeable is how the need for food assistance is higher for South/Southeast Asian migrants compared to groups from other regions.

Chart 13: Assistance needed by region of origin



Concluding remarks

Through a second round of web-based surveys, the Migration Pulse aimed at assessing the overall needs and food security situation of migrants in Libya. Human security and livelihood instability remain the main key issues for the migrant population in the country. High food prices have also emerged as a key concern for nearly one fifth of respondents. The current instability and conflict in Libya, in combination with the ongoing liquidity crisis may be the key drivers of price fluctuations, which should be closely monitored over the coming months.

Although meeting food needs was not found as a main challenge for many respondents, there is still a significant group of migrants who show high levels of vulnerability to food insecurity. Based on the food coping and food consumption indicators, specific subgroups of migrants were identified as requiring special attention.

Women migrants tend to be more concerned with having enough food to eat, and they are also applying more extreme food coping strategies than men. **Single migrants living with children** are of particular concern, significantly compromising their consumption of food daily. In addition, those migrants living alone have also shown worrying levels of food coping. **Younger migrants** (14-17) and the **elderly** are compromising their food consumption and adopting more severe coping strategies compared to other age groups. In addition, migrants who have more **recently arrived** (2018/2019), who live in the **East of Libya** and who originate from **South Asia** (Bangladesh and Pakistan) and **Eastern Africa** (Ethiopia and Somalia) are struggling more to meet their food needs.

As the situation inside Libya continues to be extremely volatile due to the ongoing clashes in Tripoli and surrounding areas, it is strongly recommended to continue monitoring the situation in coming months. The following recommendations can help guide future research as well as inform the upcoming distribution of food assistance to migrants living outside of detention centres:

1. Ensure that vulnerable groups such as single migrants with children, young adults, women and elderly are prioritized for assistance.
2. Explore reasons behind higher vulnerability levels of East Africans and South/Southeast Asians compared to other migrants, mainly in relation to income-generating opportunities and access to cash in Libya.
3. Further investigate drivers of food insecurity in the East of Libya.
4. Look into why both women and men rely on relatives and humanitarian assistance, to cover their basic needs, at similar levels. Understanding the contextual dynamics for women migrants could better direct future interventions.



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