

**REFUGEE RIGHTS
EUROPE**

In partnership with:



**Denise
Charlton
& Associates**

IN DANGEROUS TRANSIT

**FILLING INFORMATION GAPS RELATING TO REFUGEES
AND DISPLACED PEOPLE IN VENTIMIGLIA, ITALY**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DATES OF RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

The name Ventimiglia means 'twenty miles' in Italian, referring to the town's distance from the French border.

Located on the Italian Riviera, Ventimiglia is a well-known transit point for refugees and displaced people trying to enter France. It has sometimes been dubbed the 'Italian Calais', most likely due to its bottle-neck scenario and squalid conditions - both of which were heightened after France declared a state of emergency and closed its borders in 2015, making passage more difficult. The closed border means that displaced people are making fewer attempts to reach France by train, instead taking their chances through the so-called 'Pass of Death' through the mountains, or walking through motorway tunnels.

In July 2017, Caritas estimated that there were approximately 700 refugees in and around the town; 400 hosted in the Red Cross camp and 300 sleeping rough in unsanitary conditions on riverbeds and under bridges.¹ Another grassroots group estimated that there were between 600-800 people at the

time of our study, approximately 80% of whom were Sudanese. The vast majority of individuals in Ventimiglia appear to be young men in their teens, twenties and thirties, arriving directly from Libya. The striking absence of women making their way through the Ventimiglia transit point could possibly be attributed to the extent of sex trafficking in southern Italy and North Africa.²

ANOTHER GRASSROOTS GROUP ESTIMATED THAT THERE WERE BETWEEN 600-800 PEOPLE AT THE TIME OF OUR STUDY, APPROXIMATELY 80% OF WHOM WERE SUDANESE.

In 2016 Caritas reported they had hosted 3,000 unaccompanied and separated children throughout the year in their Ventimiglia shelter.³ Moreover, UNICEF and REACH published a report relating to protection risks faced by unaccompanied minors in Ventimiglia in February 2017, finding that children are left without recourse to international protection, stranded in Ventimiglia for considerable lengths of time in conditions characterised by high levels of insecurity.⁴ In August 2017, the Refugee Youth Service was tragically forced to close down its monitoring and protection programme in Ventimiglia due to a lack of resources, leaving minors with even fewer safe spaces to resort to.

The Red Cross camp, which is located four kilometers from the town itself, requires

residents to provide fingerprints on entrance. However, many refugees appear to be reluctant to provide these as it remains unclear how their fingerprints will be used by the authorities.⁵ The camp offers very limited facilities - there is an absence of legal support, noteworthy recreational activities, educational opportunities and communal areas.⁶ The camp is also well-known to be at or beyond maximum capacity and highly unsafe, putting women and children at particular risk.⁷ As such, many individuals choose to stay away from the camp and resort to destitution.

Despite the striking absence of viable alternatives, the Italian authorities have carried out numerous raids in Ventimiglia. They have demolished a number of informal encampments, and in June 2017 conducted a major eviction of large parts of the riverbed. These evictions have often been coupled with dispersals of refugees and displaced people back to the south of Italy. Meanwhile, at Ventimiglia train station, French CRS (Compagnies républicaines de sécurité) police are present on a daily basis, searching trains and carrying out detentions. Recently imposed anti-terror protocols give French police the power to conduct searches up to 20 kilometers inside Italy, and deport individuals across the border.

Ventimiglia's strategic location means it is unlikely to cease to be a transit point for refugees and displaced people seeking sanctuary in Europe. Despite the toughening of the border and regular push-backs, large numbers of individuals are demonstrably still willing to keep attempting to cross the border, risking their lives by resorting to dangerous mountain passes and putting themselves at the mercy of smugglers and traffickers.

¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/refugees-pass-death-italy-france-170726055256553.html>

² See e.g. <https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/stories-from-ventimiglia-an-unexpected-journey-59a8ac8b37aa>
http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=48673

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/07/african-migrant-women-face-shocking-sexual-abuse-journey-europe>

³ <http://www.reach-initiative.org/italy-unaccompanied-and-separated-children-at-risk-at-the-italian-french-border>

⁴ http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_ita_situation_overview_uasc_in_transit_in_ventimiglia_february_2017.pdf

⁵ Finger or hand prints are a common identification method for camps in Europe to govern who comes and goes. However, camp residents across RRE research locations typically express concerns that they don't know where these fingerprints will end up being used, and for what purpose.

⁶ As reported by camp residents and volunteer groups. See also: <https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/stories-from-ventimiglia-2-a-glimmers-of-hope-c2274826e62d>

⁷ As reported by camp residents, charities and volunteers.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of our first-hand data collection is to provide policymakers, advocacy groups and the general public with an insight into the conditions faced by refugees and displaced people within European borders.

In contrast to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) who are responsible for demographic data collection in many of the state-run camps across Europe, our data and research are independently collected with the aim of informing public debate and contributing to a long-term resolution to the current crisis. We achieve this by focusing specifically on human rights infringements and unmet humanitarian standards.

The data presented in this report was collected in the town of Ventimiglia, Italy from 21 to 24 August 2017. Over this period, five experienced RRE researchers, alongside one researcher from partner organisation Refugee Youth Service, conducted 150 surveys in Amharic, Arabic, English, Persian and Tigrinya. The format was semi-structured, and aimed to capture the lived experiences of individuals - primarily those over the age of 18. Based on the estimated population in Ventimiglia at the time of the study, our research sample

represents approximately 20% of the refugee population in the town.

Wherever possible, RRE adopts a methodology of random selection - using stratification and continuously monitoring the breakdown of demographic groups within the sample throughout its research studies, to ensure that the final data is representative of a

OUR DATA AND RESEARCH ARE INDEPENDENTLY COLLECTED WITH THE AIM OF INFORMING PUBLIC DEBATE AND CONTRIBUTING TO A LONG-TERM RESOLUTION TO THE CURRENT CRISIS.

given situation. However, in the context of Ventimiglia, external conditions and barriers made it necessary for us to be flexible in our approach. We surveyed as many individuals as possible in the town of Ventimiglia. However, we did not have access to the Red Cross camp, which meant we needed to meet and interview camp residents outside the camp gates or during food distributions in the town centre.

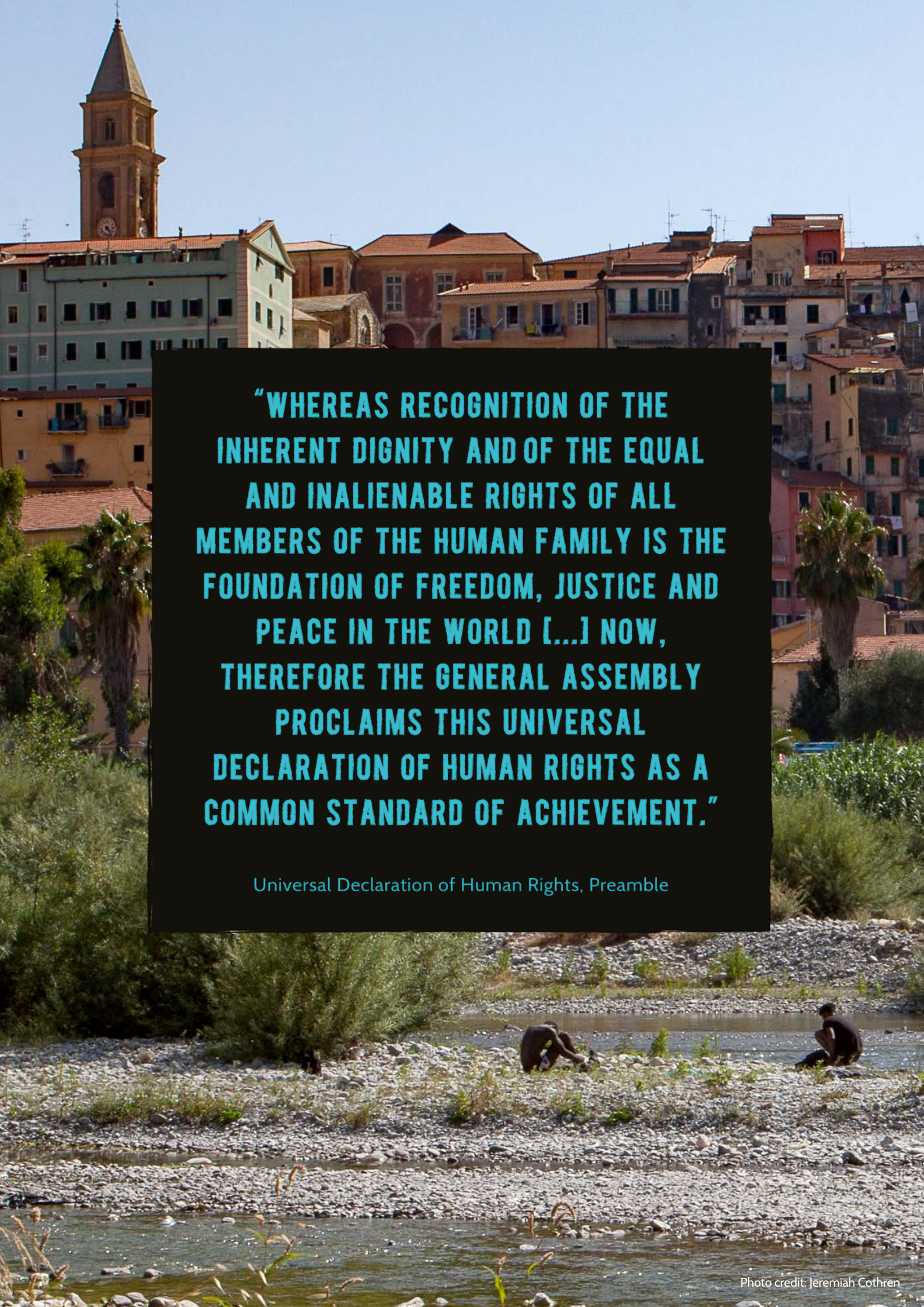
Rather than using random selection, we ended up mainly utilising so-called snowball sampling. As a result, selection bias could not always be avoided, and we were at times

unable to steer the sample as much as we would ideally have liked. The key limitations of the research sample include the under-representation of women and girls, as well as individuals from Afghanistan and of Kurdish background, who were not accessible to our researchers as they appeared to be largely hidden away - perhaps hosted by smugglers and/or traffickers and not open to speaking to the researchers. However, these demographic groups were very limited in size, and overall, we believe the country and age groups have been represented with relatively good accuracy.

The research team's observations and complementary informal interviews with charities and NGOs in Ventimiglia have served to corroborate the research findings. Each member of the RRE research team had field experience of working with refugees and displaced people, or similar groups. The researchers were recruited from RRE's pool and from the Refugee Youth Service team, and included native speakers of all key languages. The study was guided by ethical checklists that are underpinned by data protection policies, child safeguarding policies and a robust risk register to ensure the security and dignity of all participants. The researchers had previously attended a compulsory induction session to stress the importance of strict adherence to all RRE policies, and to discuss referral policies, child protection and issues pertaining to full and informed consent.



Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

A scenic view of a town with a prominent church tower and a river in the foreground. The town features multi-story buildings with terracotta roofs and a large, ornate church tower with a clock face. In the foreground, a river flows through a rocky, vegetated area. Two people are sitting on the rocky bank near the water. The sky is clear and blue.

**"WHEREAS RECOGNITION OF THE
INHERENT DIGNITY AND OF THE EQUAL
AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF ALL
MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY IS THE
FOUNDATION OF FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND
PEACE IN THE WORLD [...] NOW,
THEREFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PROCLAIMS THIS UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS A
COMMON STANDARD OF ACHIEVEMENT."**

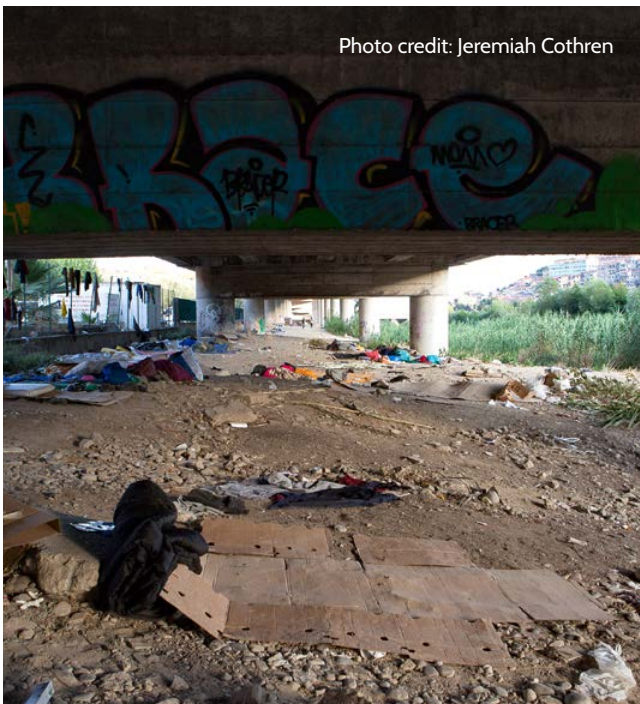
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble

ARTICLE 1

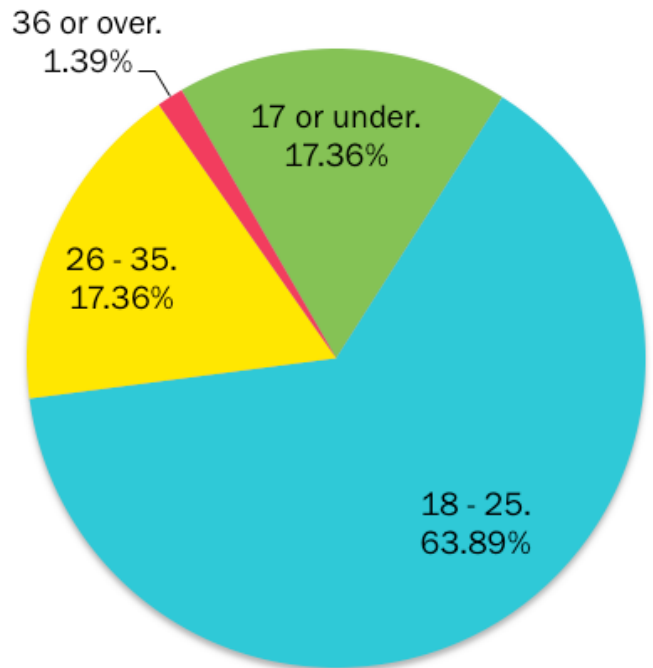
ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS. THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON AND CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN A SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD.

This section outlines the demographic composition of the research sample.

The largest age group represented in our sample was 18-25 year-olds. The average age of our respondents was 22 years, while a whole 17.4% of respondents were children aged 17 or under.



HOW OLD ARE YOU? ALL RESPONDENTS



The largest country group in Ventimiglia at the time of the study were from Sudan, followed by individuals from Chad, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and various African states. It is worth noting that the demographics in Ventimiglia tend to fluctuate over time, and none of the local actors appeared to have access to any precise figures at the time of the research study.

The 'other' category included respondents from Afghanistan, Central African Republic, the DRC, Egypt, Iran, Niger and Somalia.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? ALL RESPONDENTS

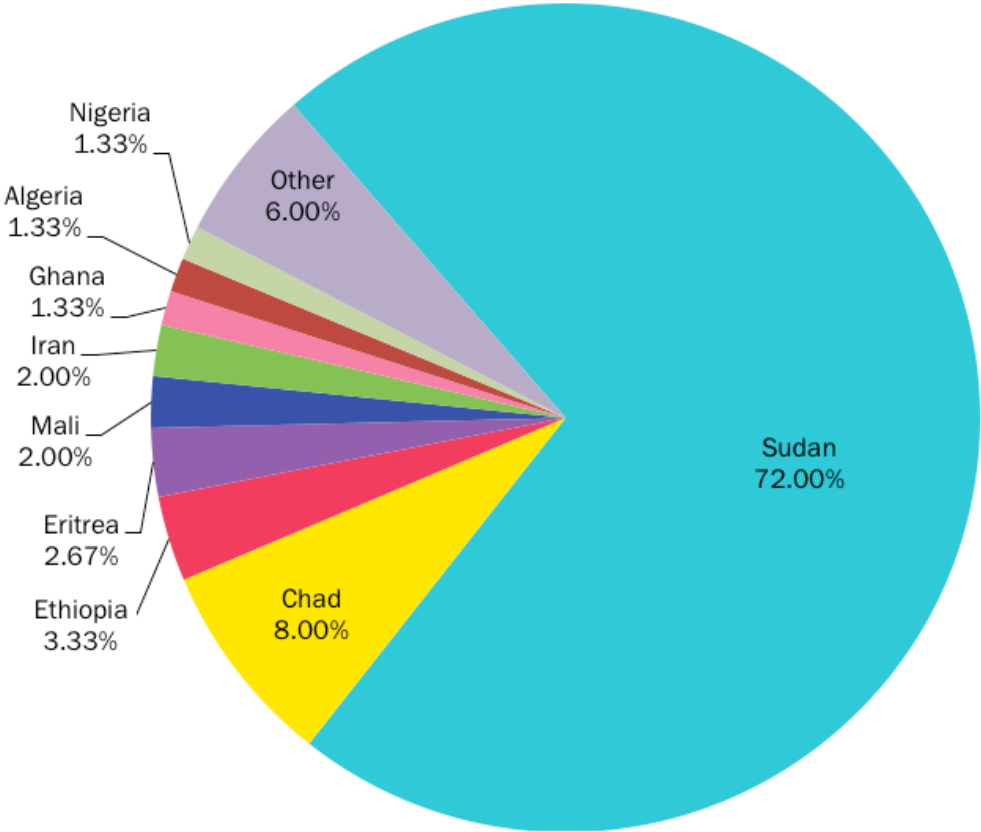


Photo credit: Samer Mustafa

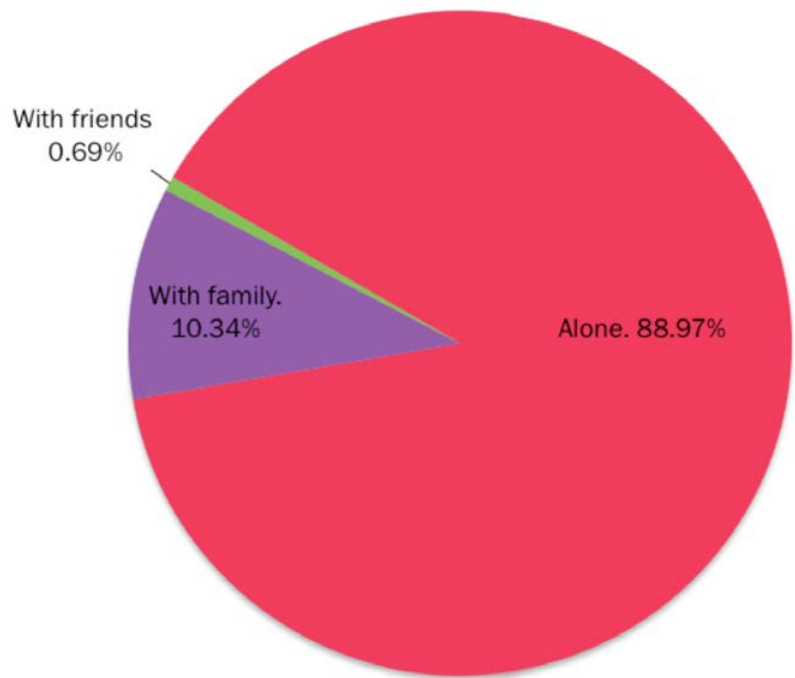
All of our respondents were male, as the small number of women and girls thought to be in Ventimiglia at the time of the study were difficult to reach. A leading local charity representative reported that, a few weeks prior to the RRE study, a significant number of women and their children were hosted in a local church in the town. However, the church was evicted by the Italian authorities in August 2017, upon which the authorities wanted to relocate the women and children to the Red Cross camp. The majority of women and children decided to avoid this fate by leaving the church prior to eviction and going into hiding. During the study, only a handful of women were spotted by the research team; some of them in the Red Cross camp and two in the town centre. Local charities and NGOs did not have any exact figures of the number of women and children in Ventimiglia, but estimates ranged between 5 and 20 females.



Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

The majority of respondents, 73%, had been in Ventimiglia for 1 to 3 months at the time of the study. 89% of the respondents were there alone, unaccompanied by friends or family members. 10.3% said they were there with family, and 0.7% with friends.

**WITH WHOM ARE YOU IN VENTIMIGLIA?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



ARTICLE 3

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF PERSON.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Feelings of insecurity are widespread among refugees in Ventimiglia.

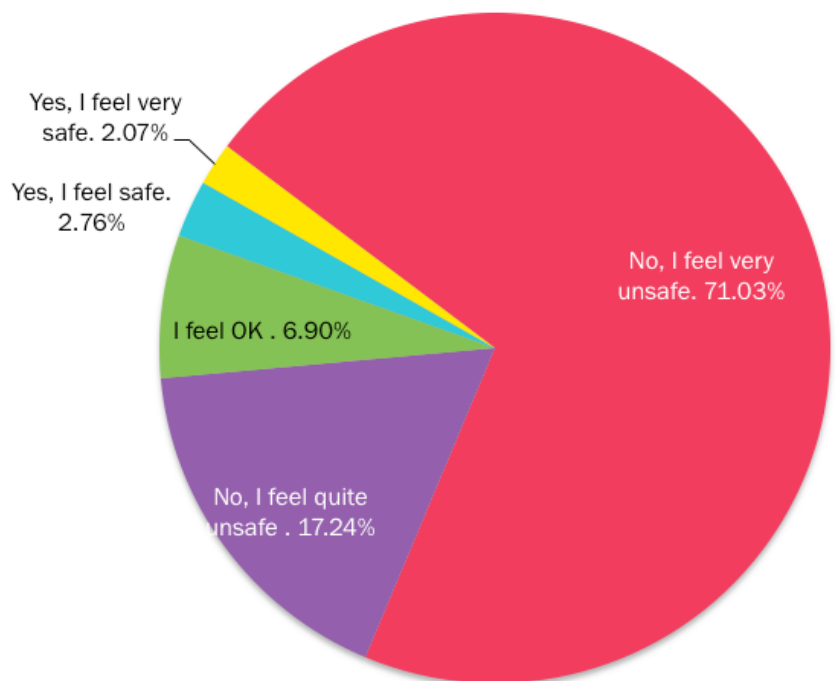
71% of respondents surveyed said that they “didn’t feel safe at all”, 17.2% felt “quite unsafe” while only 4.8% said they “safe” or “very safe”.

This widespread sense of insecurity appears to be, first and foremost, the result of an absence of security measures. However, other factors include the detrimental living conditions faced by people living in destitution and dangers at the border.



Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

DO YOU FEEL SAFE IN VENTIMIGLIA? ALL RESPONDENTS



THIS WIDESPREAD SENSE OF INSECURITY APPEARS TO BE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE RESULT OF AN ABSENCE OF SECURITY MEASURES.

Indeed, when asked about the biggest risks faced by people passing through Ventimiglia, the vast majority cited dangers related to border-crossings (cited by 74.8%). This was followed by the risk of not having access to sufficient food and water (63%) or medical help (51.9%). Some 7.4% feared being robbed or attacked by other displaced people due to the precarious context, while an alarming 8.8% cited the risk of violence or sexual abuse by police or Europeans.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BIGGEST RISKS FOR REFUGEES PASSING THROUGH VENTIMIGLIA? ALL RESPONDENTS

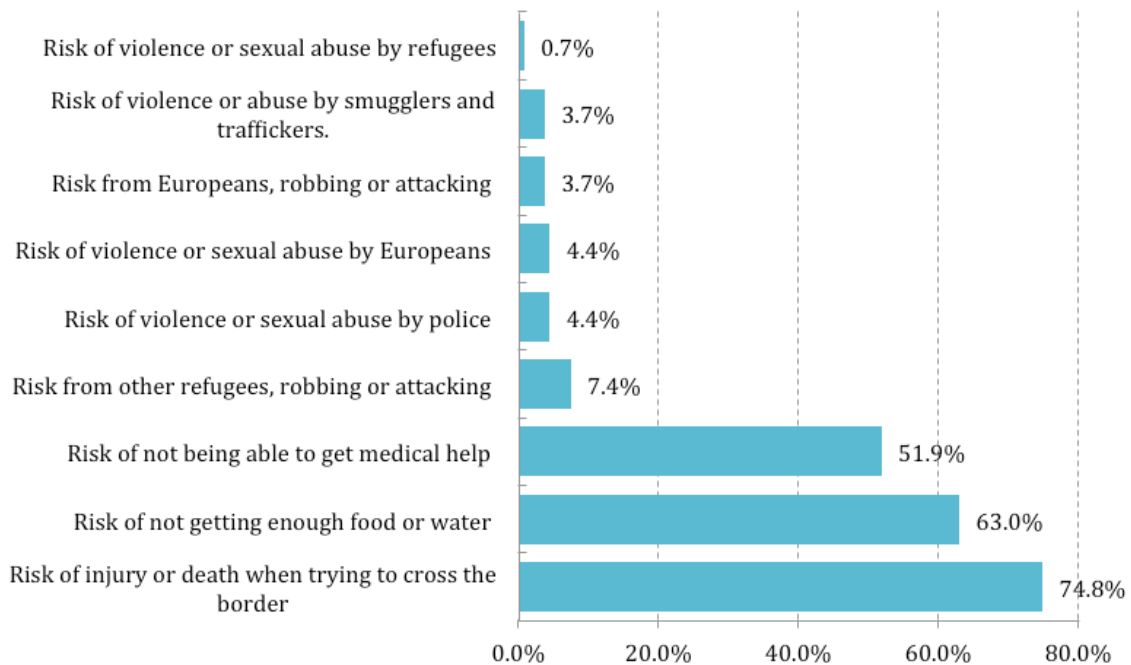


Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

While the RRE delegation was regrettably unable to reach women respondents directly, the researchers were nonetheless made aware of specific security issues facing women and girls through interviews with male camp residents and conversations with NGO staff. One Ethiopian Red Cross camp resident told our researchers that women and girls are at

RRE WAS MADE AWARE OF SPECIFIC SECURITY ISSUES FACING WOMEN AND GIRLS.

constant risk of abuse within the camp due to the lack of security measures. NGO staff, who wished to remain anonymous, corroborated this view, and explained that the camp was not adequately designed to safeguard women and children. Gender-specific toilets and washroom facilities were unprotected and unsupervised, and the lack of security staff meant that any camp resident could enter women's shelters at any time. Meanwhile, the acute risks faced by women being trafficked are outside the scope of this particular study, but ought to be urgently addressed due to the reported high prevalence of sex trafficking in Italy.⁸

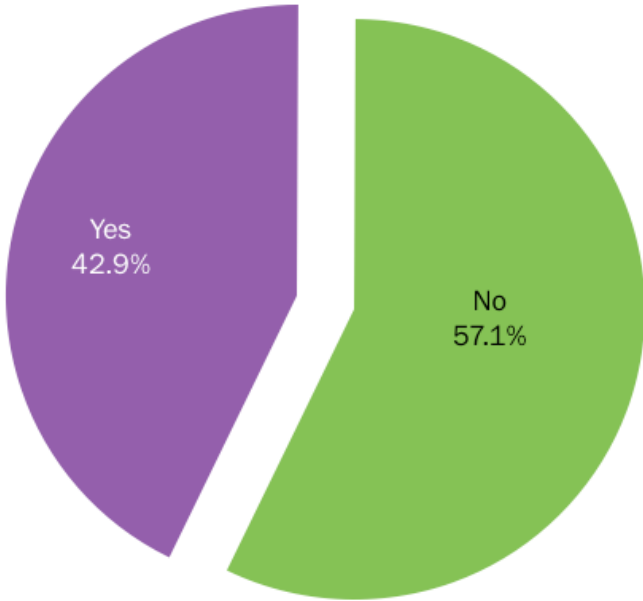
⁸ <http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/07/african-migrant-women-face-shocking-sexual-abuse-journey-europe>

FATALITIES

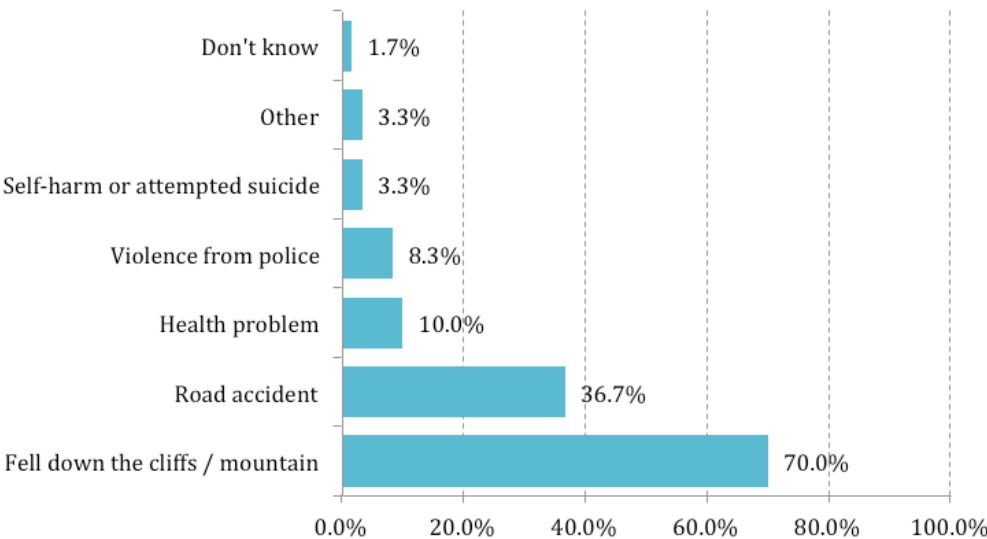
Alarmingly, a whole 42.9% of respondents knew of at least one refugee who had died in Italy or at the French border. While it should be acknowledged that many of these respondents were referring to the same incidents (meaning that the figure is not indicative of the occurrence of death in Ventimiglia), it is nonetheless alarming that 70% of these respondents said the persons in question had died by falling down a cliff or mountain when trying to cross the border. 36.7% cited road accidents as the reason for death. A group of Iranian men reported that the police would intentionally leave people to walk 3 to 4 hours from the border back to Ventimiglia in the heat, which forced people onto risky highway roads as they had no other option. By the same token, the stretch between the Red Cross camp and Ventimiglia town is only accessible via dangerous highways, which reportedly led to the death of a number of refugees in the months prior to the research study.

Some 10% of respondents cited health problems as the reason for death, and 8.3% said the death had occurred as a result of violence by the police. 3.3% said that the death was caused by suicide and 1.7% didn't know the cause.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY REFUGEES WHO DIED IN ITALY OR AT THE FRENCH BORDER? ALL RESPONDENTS



WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE DEATH? ALL RESPONDENTS



70% OF THESE RESPONDENTS SAID THE PERSON IN QUESTION HAD DIED BY FALLING DOWN A CLIFF OR MOUNTAIN

In addition to being tragic for the victim, witnessing fatalities could also be a highly traumatic experience for the witness. This is particularly concerning given that so many individuals have arrived from Libya where death, torture and other forms of violence are commonplace.



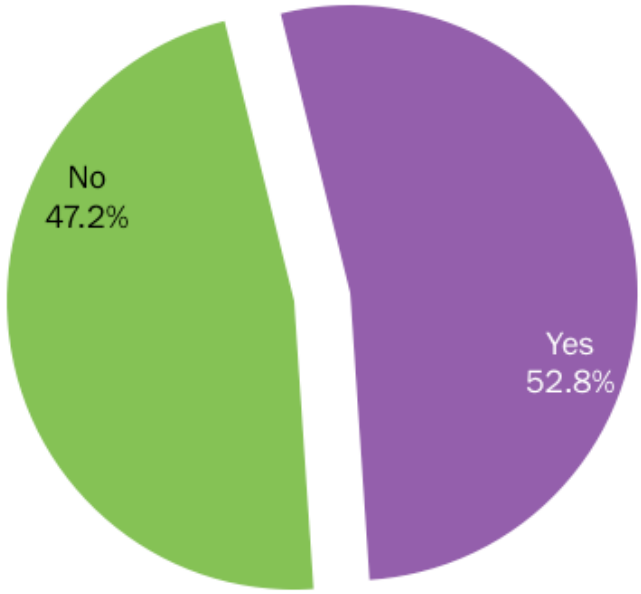
52.8% of respondents had experienced violence by Italian citizens. Of those, 91.8% said they had been subjected to verbal abuse, while only 1.4% had been subjected to physical citizen violence. Six respondents described the incidence as sexual abuse.

SOME RESPONDENTS HAD RECEIVED COMMENTS ABOUT BEING "BLACK" AND NOT WELCOME.

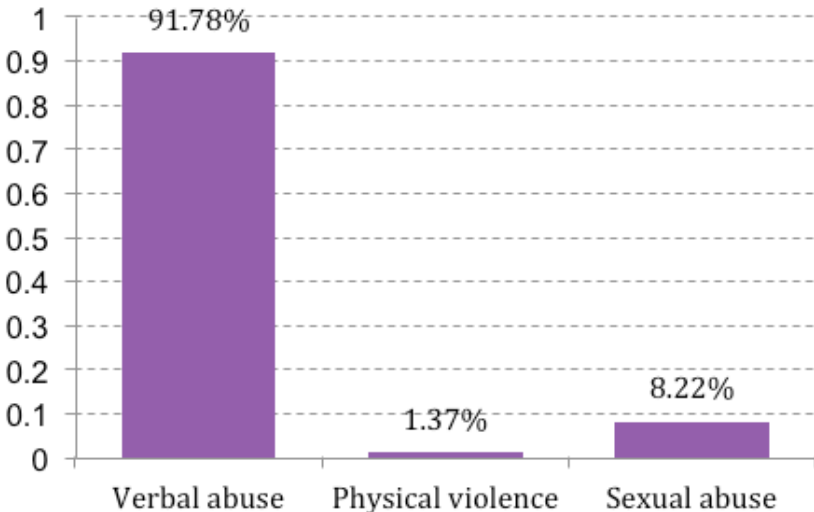
Many respondents cited be subject to regular racial verbal abuse, as well as hostile body language or facial expressions. Some respondents had received comments about being 'black' and not welcome. One 29-year-old Eritrean man shared his experience: "Generally the people in Ventimiglia are very racist. They attack us with verbal abuse, and it happens everywhere in Ventimiglia, and this happens because they hate us." A Sudanese 24-year-old described the verbal citizen abuse directed at him: "It was real bad and I felt very bad. It was aggressive verbal abuse, because they are racist, they don't like migrants." One 17-year-old Eritrean shared his view about the citizen violence: "It happens frequently and it is very bad. It is inhuman."

Several respondents reported, on separate occasions, that citizens had thrown buckets of water onto them from their balconies as refugees walked past on the pavement beneath. Others recounted being denied drinking water in the city centre because they were refugees. Meanwhile, the number of reports of more serious forms of physical citizen violence remains relatively low.

**HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY ITALIAN CITIZENS?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**WHAT KIND OF CITIZEN VIOLENCE DID YOU EXPERIENCE?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



ARTICLE 5

NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR TO CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT.

VIOLENCE BY ITALIAN POLICE

More than a third of respondents, 40.4%, had experienced police violence by Italian police.

Nearly half, 47.5%, of these said they had been subjected to verbal abuse, 33.9% had been exposed to tear gas, and 23.7% had experienced physical violence other than tear gas. Several respondents described the police violence as sexual abuse but did not disclose any further information.

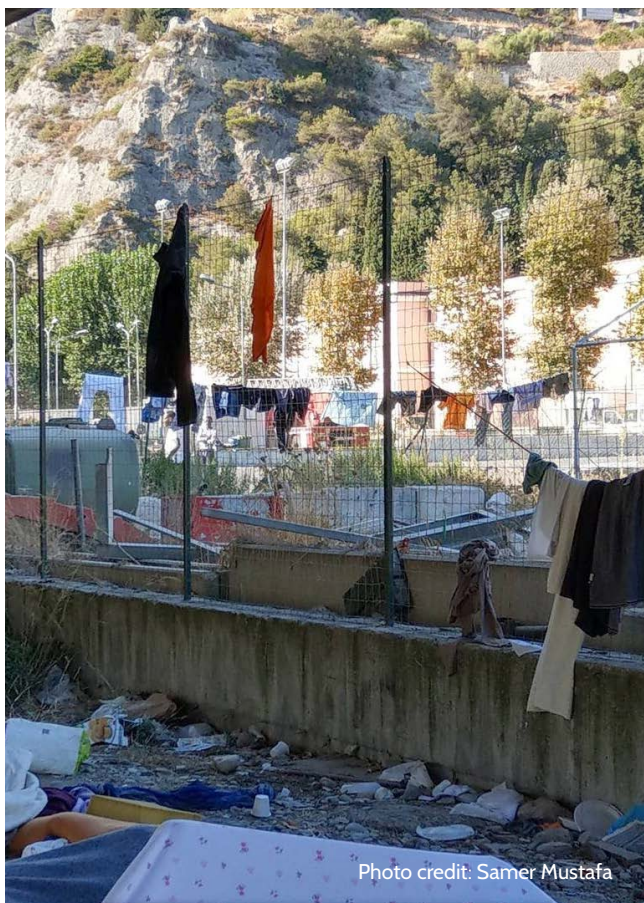
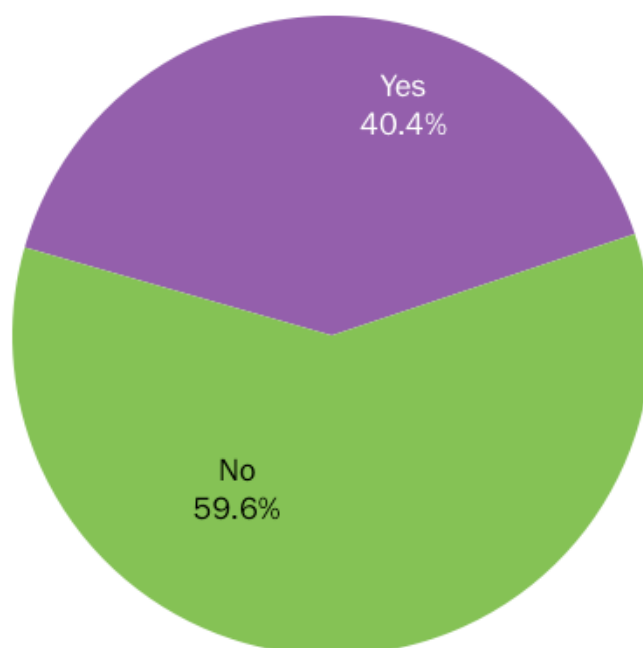


Photo credit: Samer Mustafa

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY ITALIAN POLICE?
ALL RESPONDENTS



"THEY CAME TO ME DIRECTLY AND THEY SPRAYED ME WITH THE GAS ON MY FACE. I WAS REALLY IN A VERY BAD SITUATION BY THE RIVERSIDE IN VENTIMIGLIA."

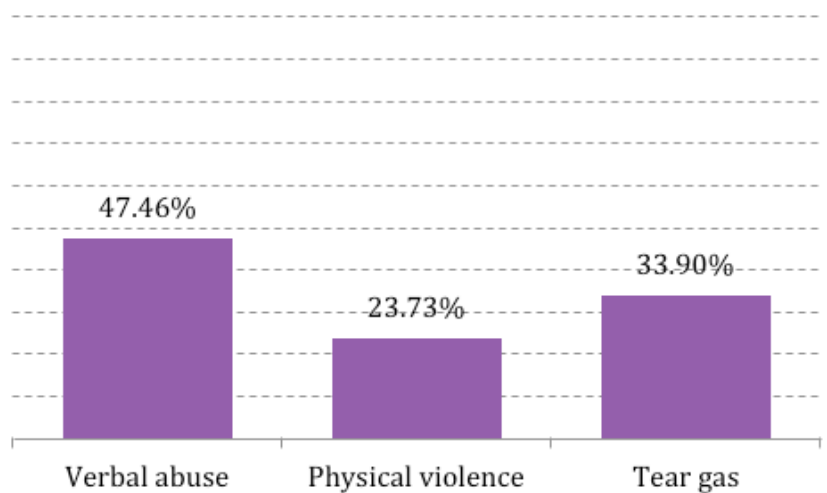
18-year-old Sudanese man



Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

Most of the police violence appears to have taken place during attempted border crossings, while some incidents were reported to have occurred without any specific provocation. Speaking of his experience with tear gas by the river in Ventimiglia, one Sudanese 18-year-old explained: *“It was really bad. They came to me directly and they sprayed me with the gas on my face. I was really in a very bad situation by the riverside in Ventimiglia.”*

**WHAT KIND OF POLICE VIOLENCE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BY ITALIAN POLICE?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



VIOLENCE BY FRENCH POLICE

A larger proportion, 53.1%, had experienced violence by French police at the border, and many respondents described their treatment by French police as particularly brutal. More than half of those respondents, 52.6% had experienced verbal abuse by French police, while 39.5% had been subjected to physical violence, 35.5% tear gas, and eight individuals some form of sexual abuse.

Many respondents recalled being exposed to tear gas at the border. One 24-year-old from Sudan said: *“While I was crossing the border, the police ran after me and caught me. They beat me, they sprayed tear gas. It was bad, I don’t know why this happens, I was just crossing the border.”* One 18-year-old from Sudan said: *“When I was crossing the border they caught me and they beat me and they sprayed tear gas. It was the worst thing in the border.”*

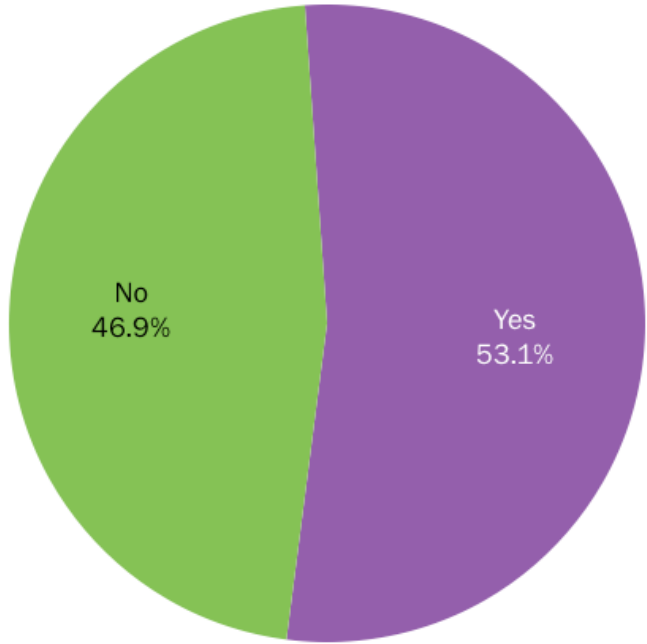


“WHILE I WAS CROSSING THE BORDER, THE POLICE RAN AFTER ME AND CAUGHT ME. THEY BEAT ME, THEY SPRAYED TEAR GAS. IT WAS BAD, I DON’T KNOW WHY THIS HAPPENS, I WAS JUST CROSSING THE BORDER.”

24-year-old Sudanese man

Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY FRENCH POLICE? ALL RESPONDENTS



Another Sudanese 18-year-old recounted his recent experience of violence: *“My right shoulder was broken and my neck was injured by French police at the border. There was French army deporting people as well. In Ventimiglia my nose was broken by Italian police at the train station. I was sent back many times to Taranto, I don’t feel safe in Italy at all.”* Meanwhile, a Sudanese 24-year-old man said police had chased him while he travelled along the pass in the mountains. This had caused him to fall and cut his face. The man said he was detained in the mountains without food or water, before being taken by bus to the southern Italian city of Taranto.

53.1% HAD EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY FRENCH POLICE AT THE BORDER, AND MANY RESPONDENTS DESCRIBED THEIR TREATMENT BY FRENCH POLICE AS PARTICULARLY BRUTAL.

Of the 85.4% who had been forced by French police onto trains returning from France to Italy, 54.2% described the incident as “violent”. 23.7% said it had been “okay” and another 22% described it as “peaceful”.

There were also reports of humiliating acts perpetrated by police - one respondent said police had thrown old apples at him.

WHAT KIND OF POLICE VIOLENCE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BY FRENCH POLICE AT THE BORDER? ALL RESPONDENTS

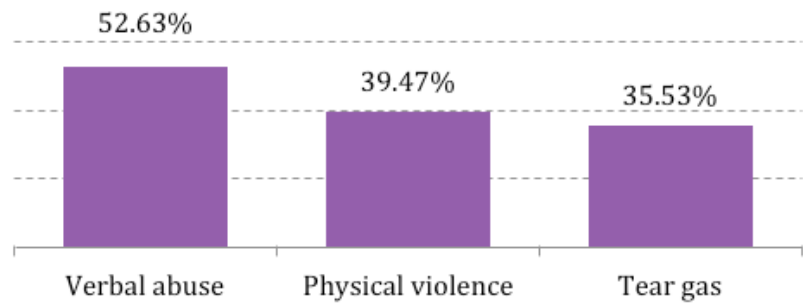


Photo credit: Samer Mustafa



DETENTIONS AND DISPERSALS

Some 73.8% of respondents had been arrested since arriving in Europe. Most of the instances of detention seem to occur during attempted border crossings between Italy and France, upon which individuals are held in a detention centre close to the border. The research findings suggest a certain correlation between detentions and police violence, indicating that arrests and detentions are likely to have been accompanied by violence.

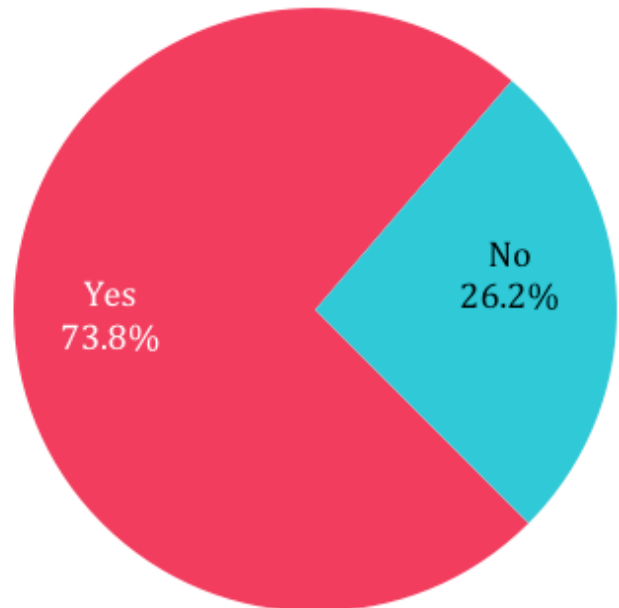
MOST OF THE INSTANCES OF DETENTION SEEM TO OCCUR DURING ATTEMPTED BORDER CROSSINGS BETWEEN ITALY AND FRANCE.

Respondents explained they tended to be released from detention several hours' walk away from Ventimiglia. Some were sent further afield and spent several days walking or riding trains back to Ventimiglia in the hope of trying to cross the border again. Removals to Taranto were commonplace, with 61.2% of respondents having experienced this once or several times since arriving in Ventimiglia.⁹ Individuals appeared to be selected at random, and neither refugees nor local charities knew whether there was a specific system in place for choosing which individuals were deported back to Taranto. Most reported that the police picked up people if they had space left in the coaches coming from the detention centre through Ventimiglia on their way to Taranto. RRE's statistical analysis did not indicate any variance between country groups, signalling that there doesn't seem to be any specific pattern or targeted national groups.

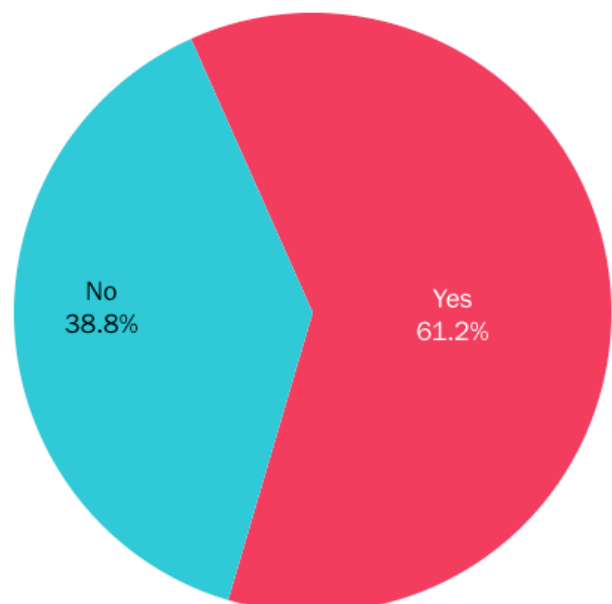
Several respondents explained that they had been at the evening food distribution spot eating their daily meal when they were caught and bussed down to Taranto, and one respondent explained that he was picked up by police while he was sleeping. Some respondents said they had been given a pill before boarding the bus to sedate them throughout the journey. This raises serious concerns about consent, although RRE is unable to confirm the exact details of such incidents.

SEVERAL RESPONDENTS EXPLAINED THAT THEY HAD BEEN AT THE EVENING FOOD DISTRIBUTION SPOT EATING THEIR DAILY MEAL WHEN THEY WERE CAUGHT AND BUSSED DOWN TO TARANTO.

HAVE YOU BEEN ARRESTED IN ITALY OR FRANCE? ALL RESPONDENTS



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN STOPPED AND DISPERSED BACK TO TARANTO? ALL RESPONDENTS



⁹ Taranto is located more than 1,000 kilometres from Ventimiglia in the southern part of Italy. Respondents did not appear to know the purpose of these removals, other than delaying their next attempt to cross the French border.

"MY RIGHT SHOULDER WAS BROKEN AND MY NECK WAS INJURED BY FRENCH POLICE AT THE BORDER. THERE WAS FRENCH ARMY DEPORTING PEOPLE AS WELL. IN VENTIMIGLIA MY NOSE WAS BROKEN BY ITALIAN POLICE AT THE TRAIN STATION."

18-year-old Sudanese man



ARTICLE 25(1)

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO A STANDARD OF LIVING ADEQUATE FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS FAMILY, INCLUDING FOOD, CLOTHING, HOUSING AND MEDICAL CARE.

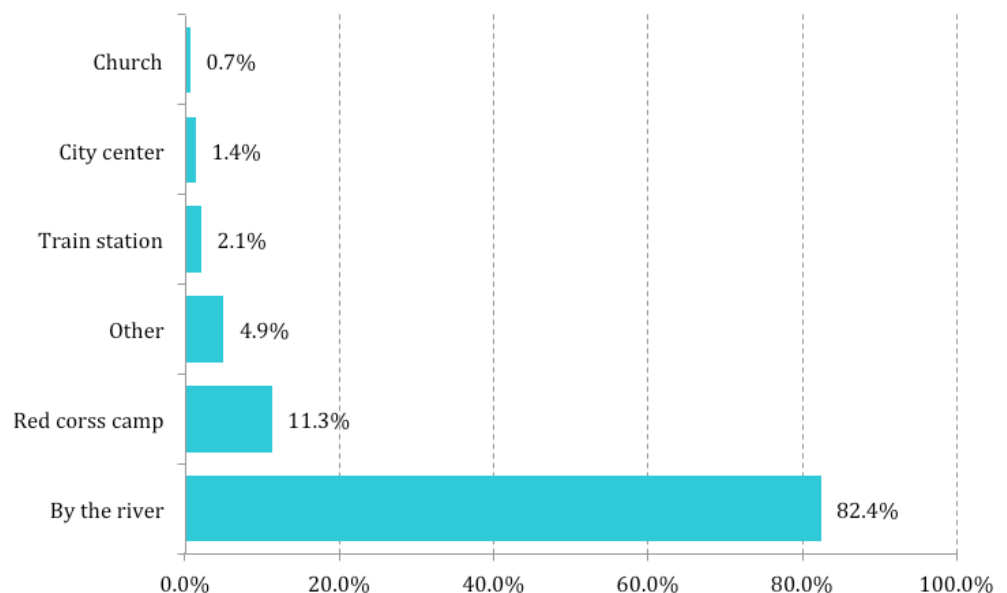
LIVING CONDITIONS



While 400 to 500 displaced people were hosted in the Red Cross camp some 4 kilometres from the town centre, an estimated 200 to 300 individuals were destitute at the time of the study, sleeping rough under bridges and by the riverbank.

The living conditions they face are wholly inadequate, characterised by an acute lack of clean drinking water or sanitation facilities.

WHERE DO YOU USUALLY SLEEP? ALL RESPONDENTS



WATER AND SANITATION

While 81.3% of Red Cross camp residents said they had enough water to drink, 82.1% of the overall respondents said this was not the case. Many reported having been abused in the town centre when trying to ask for water to drink. Meanwhile, Red Cross camp residents reported that there were only four toilets between them - two for women and children, and two for all of the men.

MANY REPORTED HAVING BEEN ABUSED IN THE TOWN CENTRE WHEN TRYING TO ASK FOR WATER TO DRINK.

DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH WATER TO DRINK? ALL RESPONDENTS

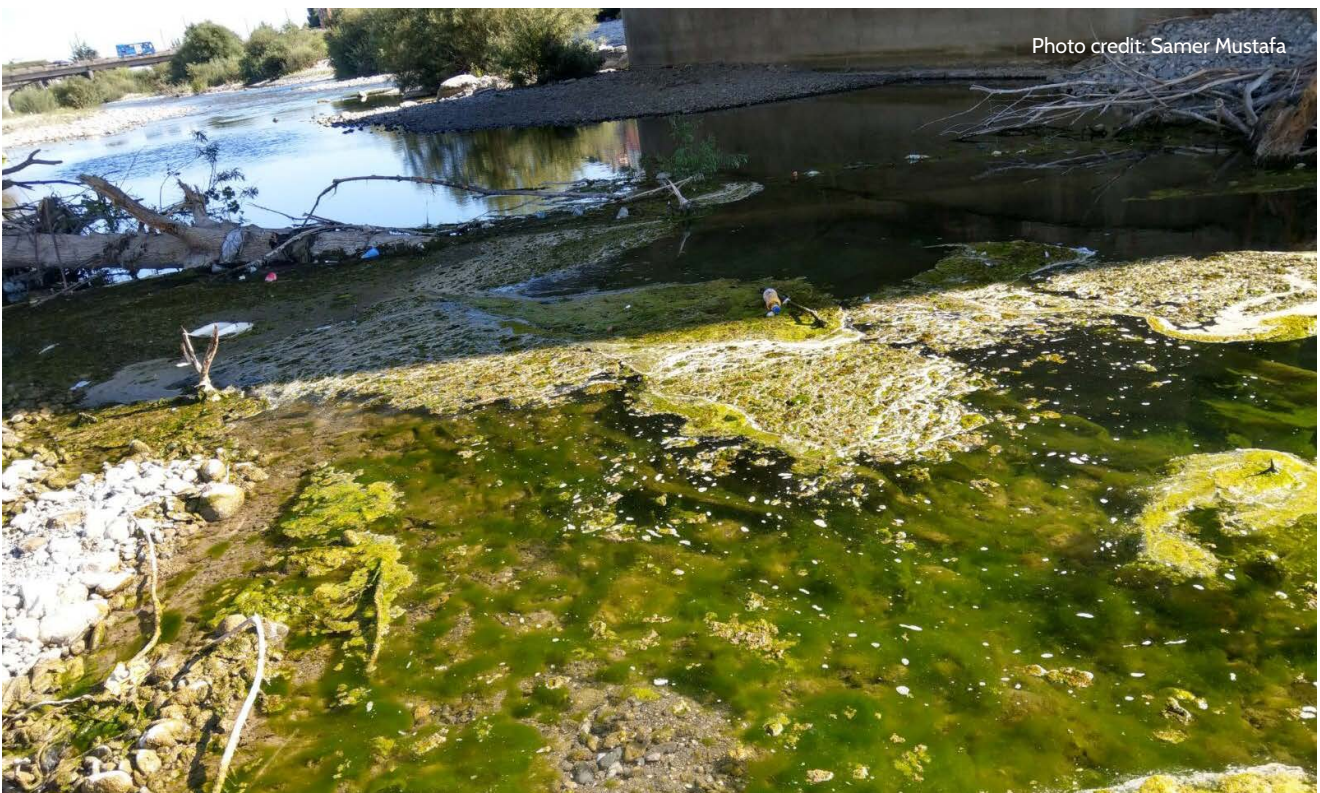
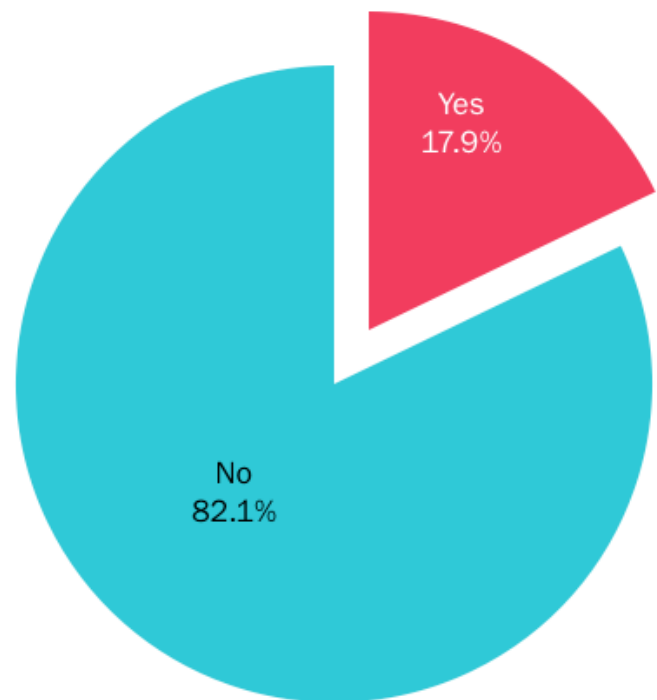


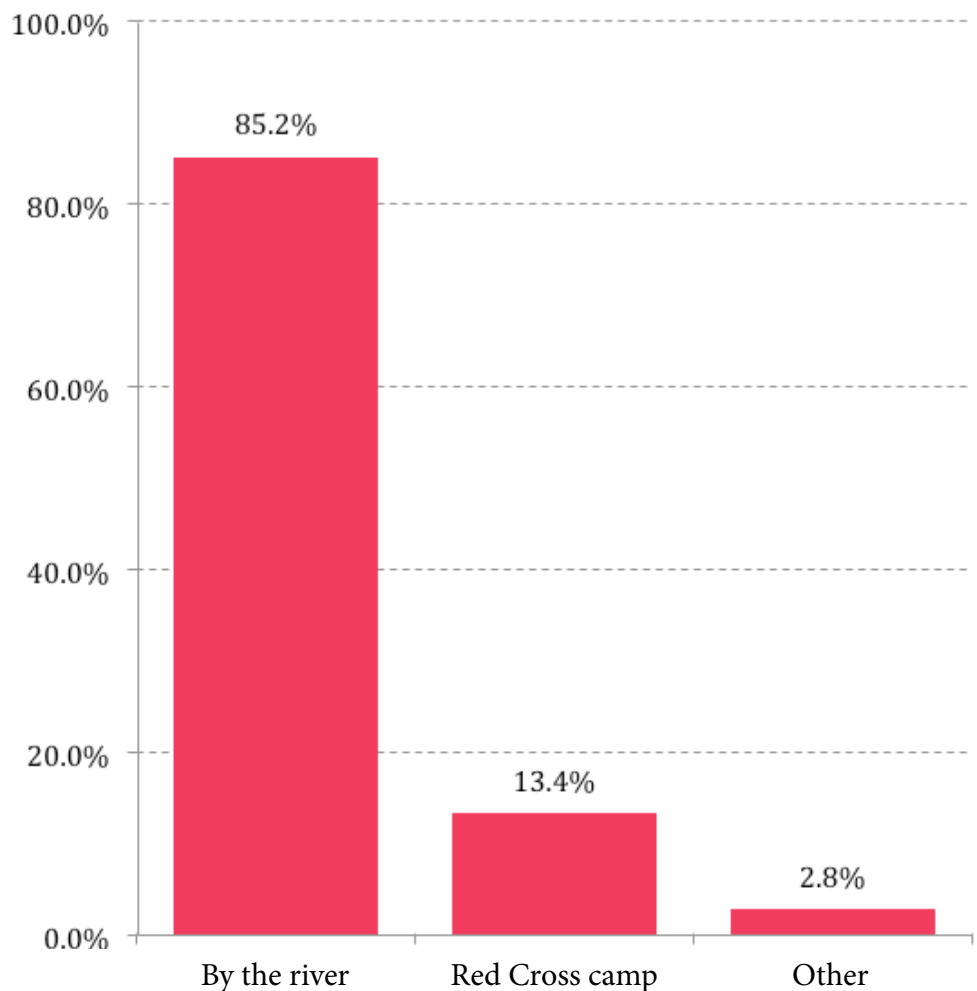


Photo credit: Samer Mustafa

The overall living environment for destitute refugees is highly unsanitary and dirty. Alarming, the majority, 85.2%, would use the water in the river to wash themselves. They also used the river to go to the toilet and sometimes also to drink when desperate. This raises serious concerns for the wellbeing of these individuals. Local health care professionals reported a large number of dermatological conditions, including scabies, were widespread due to these unhealthy living conditions.

**THE MAJORITY,
85.2%, WOULD USE
THE WATER IN THE
RIVER TO WASH
THEMSELVES.**

WHERE DO YOU USUALLY WASH YOURSELF? ALL RESPONDENTS

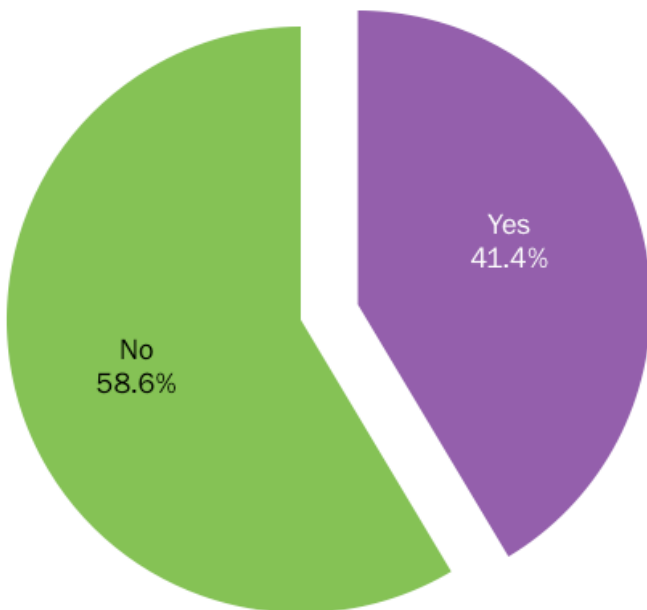


ACCESS TO FOOD

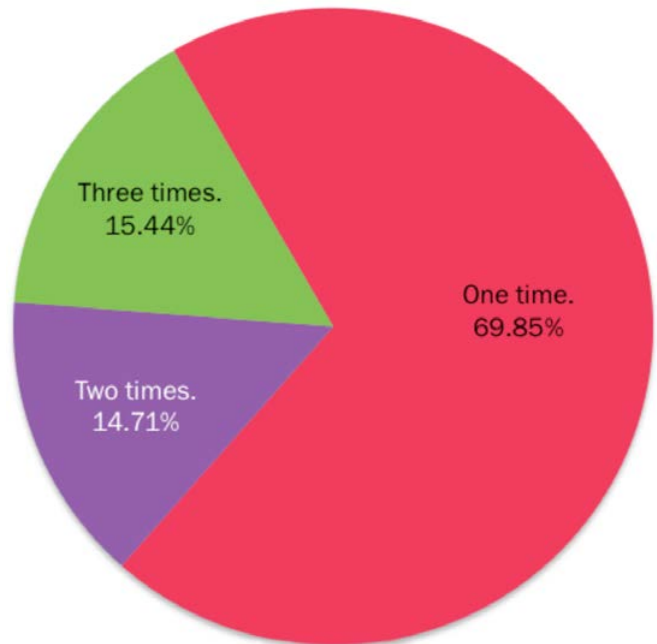
While all of the Red Cross camp residents interviewed said they had access to food every day (93.3% of them said they had access to three meals per day), only 41.4% of the destitute refugees said they had food every day. 69.9% of those with access to food said they could only have one meal per day.

A volunteer-driven grassroots initiative provided hot meals to refugees every evening, and the Caritas centre provided breakfast for all. According to anonymous charity workers or volunteers, lunch was no longer available due to police pressure.

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO FOOD EVERY DAY? ALL RESPONDENTS



HOW MANY TIMES PER DAY CAN YOU USUALLY HAVE A MEAL? ALL RESPONDENTS



PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Some 60.1% of respondents said they had experienced health problems since arriving in Italy. While 28% reported suffering from a common health problem that could happen anywhere, 43.9% believed the health problem had started due to the unhealthy living conditions. 17.1% said the health issue had started before arriving in Italy, but had deteriorated due to the current conditions.

Many of the pre-existing physical ailments had begun in Libya, prior to arrival in Europe. A 24-year-old man from Chad reported that he was unwell from being beaten across the spine with a Kalashnikov in a Libyan camp, where he had spent three months prior to arriving in Italy. As a consequence, he was suffering from back and internal problems. Various forms of torture were reported from Libya. One Sudanese minor had been hung by his fingers for an extended period of time by Libyan traffickers and showed his disfigured fingers to the RRE research team.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY HEALTH ISSUES WHILE IN VENTIMIGLIA?
ALL RESPONDENTS

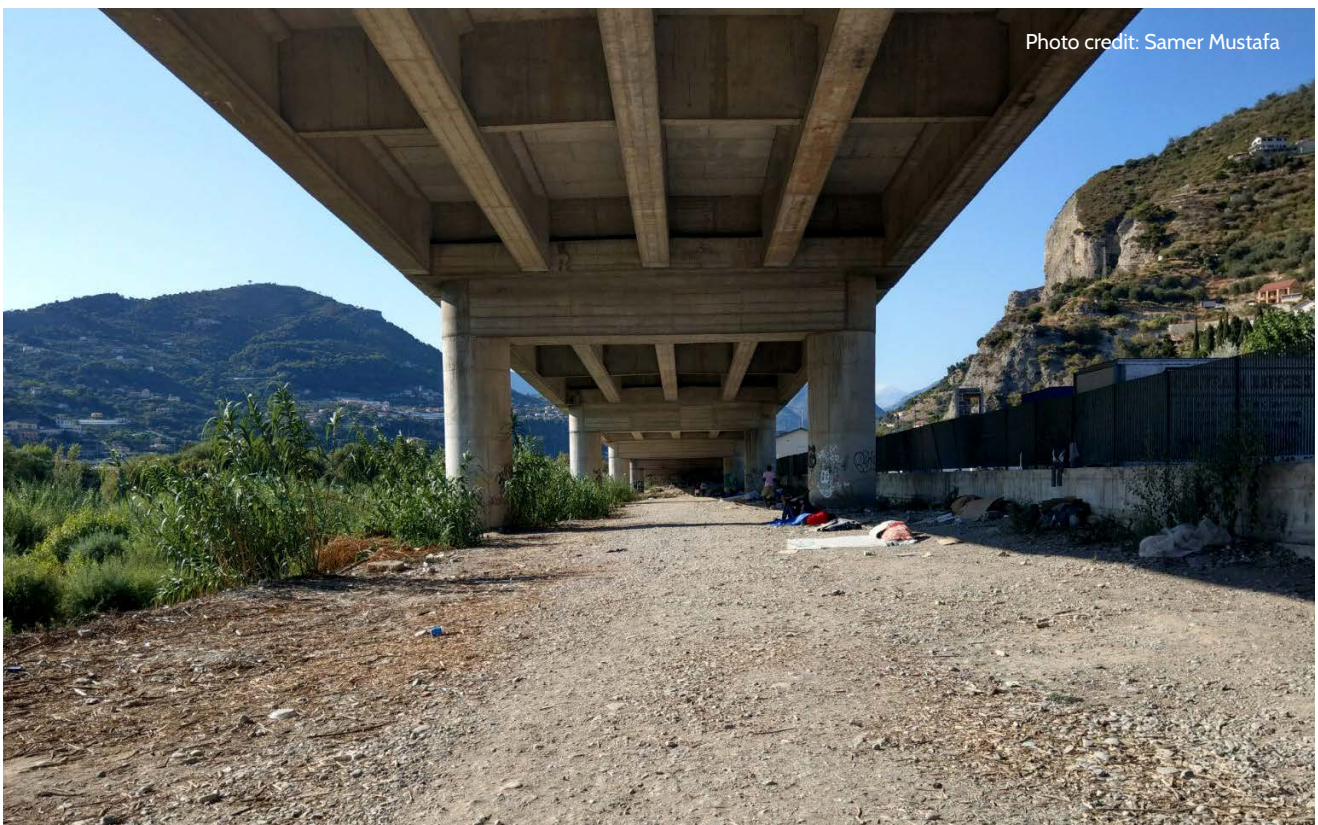
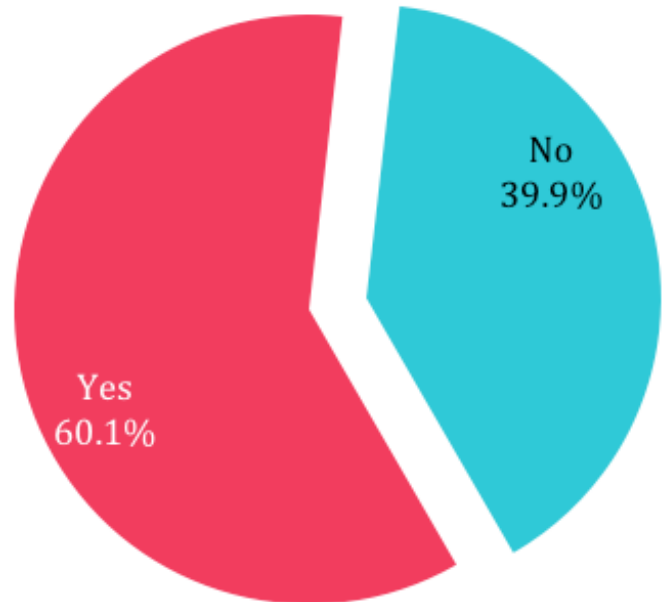




Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE HEALTH ISSUE?
ALL RESPONDENTS



ONE MAN SAID HE WAS FEELING UNWELL BECAUSE HE HAD BAD MEMORIES SEEING HUNDREDS OF FELLOW REFUGEES SHOT DEAD IN LIBYA.

Alarming, 17.1% described their health problem as a mental health issue rather than a physical ailment. Researchers noted that the vast majority of sufferers had travelled through Libya, recounting highly alarming experiences. One Sudanese man explained that he had lost his brother at sea when their vessel sank, and that

he witnessed an infant being shot by Libyans whilst in his mother's arms in the vessel. Another respondent explained that he had been tortured in Libya, whilst his captors called his family asking for a ransom to be paid. One man said he was feeling unwell because he had bad memories seeing hundreds of fellow refugees shot dead in Libya. He explained that there had been some 450 of them to begin with, but only himself and 70 others managed to survive.



LACK OF MEDICAL CARE

THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES ARE SIMPLY NOT SUFFICIENT TO DEAL WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION UNFOLDING IN VENTIMIGLIA.

It is deeply concerning that only 14.5% of those with mental and physical health problems had been able to access medical care - despite tireless efforts by groups such as Médecins Sans Frontières who provide crucial services for refugees in Ventimiglia from a clinic hosted by Caritas, as well as outreach services by InterSOS. The available resources are simply not sufficient to deal with the current situation unfolding in Ventimiglia.

According to local charity workers, only the Red Cross camp is able to refer displaced people to hospital to access free healthcare. Other groups have limited capacity to handle many of the cases which require referrals. This also means that those hundreds of displaced people living outside the Red Cross camp would be highly unlikely to access health care beyond the services provided by the charity clinics. Meanwhile, the Red Cross medical service was described by camp residents as inadequate, regularly without the presence of a doctor (it should be noted that RRE has not been able to verify the timetable and presence of the camp doctor as this did not seem to be publicly available). Only 33.3% of those Red Cross camp residents with a health issue said they had been able to access medical help.

HUNDREDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE LIVING OUTSIDE THE RED CROSS CAMP WOULD BE HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO ACCESS HEALTH CARE BEYOND THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CHARITY CLINICS.

For those respondents who had accessed hospital care in Italy, the experience was described as inadequate or even frightening. One Iranian man recalled that he had a seizure and was taken to hospital. He was very scared

HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS MEDICAL CARE IN VENTIMIGLIA? ALL RESPONDENTS

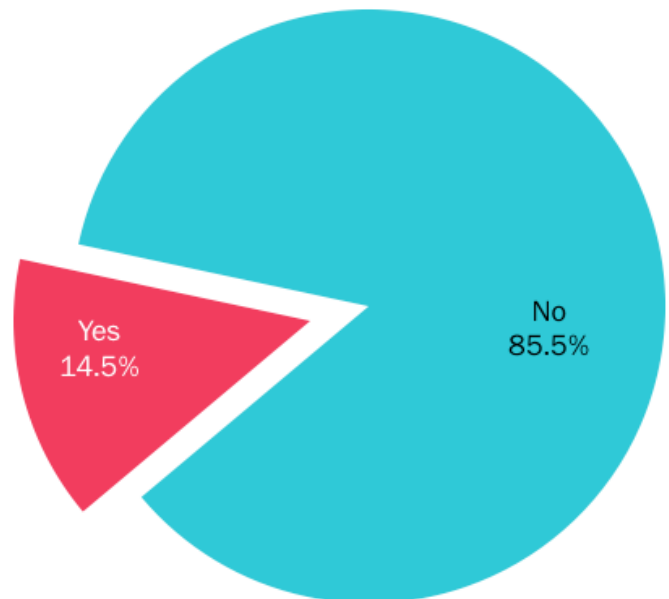


Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

as he didn't know what the doctors were doing, and there were no interpreters to explain. He said the doctors pushed on his chest and he felt he couldn't breathe. They then tied his hands to the bed and inserted a tube down his throat which he found extremely traumatic. There was also a tube inserted into his backside causing bleeding for three days afterwards. The respondent said he didn't know why they had done this and that the procedure felt like torture, adding he thought it would have been better if he had access to an interpreter and they explained what was happening.

Another respondent, a 20-year-old from Chad, talked of being beaten in Libya. He showed RRE's researchers scars across his arms and a large open wound on his leg that cut to the bone. He had been to hospital six times but they had not done anything about his leg, except taking blood. He wore a dirty bandage on his ankle, and his friend explained that the medical care in the Red Cross camp had been inadequate.

ARTICLE 25(2)

MOTHERHOOD AND CHILDHOOD ARE ENTITLED TO SPECIAL CARE AND ASSISTANCE. ALL CHILDREN WHETHER BORN IN OR OUT OF WEDLOCK, SHALL ENJOY THE SAME SOCIAL PROTECTION.

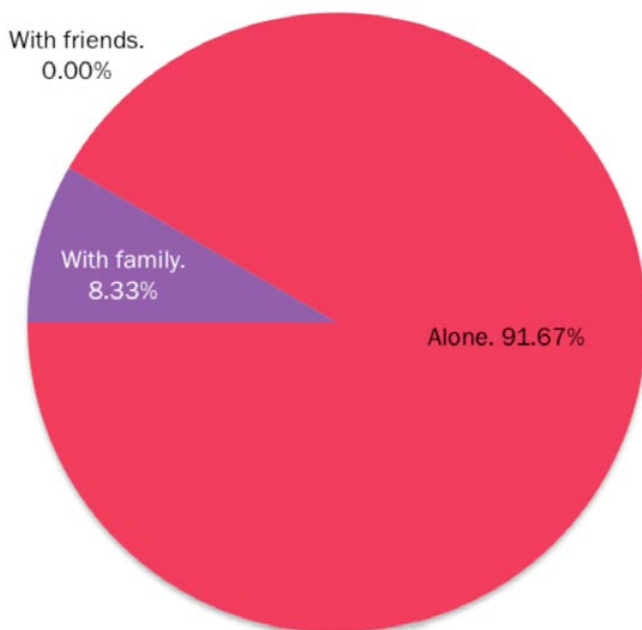
CHILDHOOD

The current conditions in Ventimiglia are particularly harmful to children, most of whom tend to be unaccompanied or separated from their guardians.

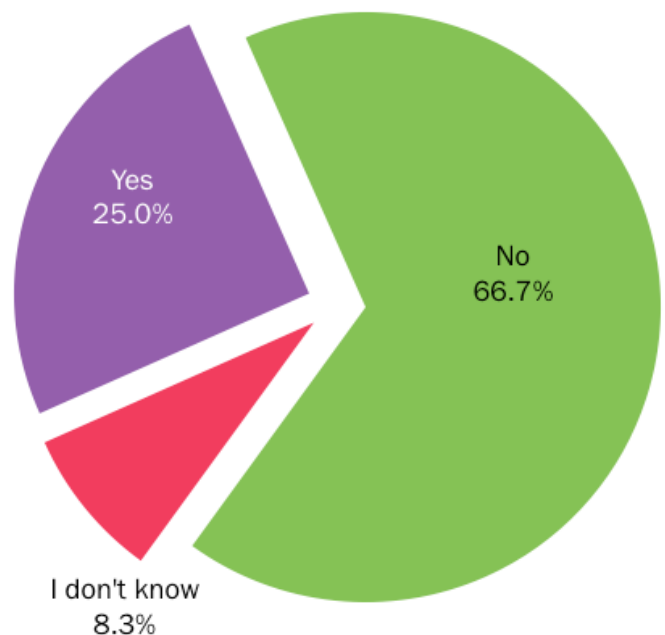
91.7% of minors interviewed were unaccompanied. Of these, 25% reported they have family somewhere in Europe while 8.7% did not knowing whether they had family in Europe or not. In total, 80% of the children had spent 1 to 3 months in Italy, and 67% had spent 1 to 3 months in Ventimiglia's highly inadequate conditions. As regards the

demographic composition of respondents, 88% of minors surveyed were from Sudan, 8% from Eritrea and 4% from Niger. All of the minors interviewed were boys.

WHO ARE YOU WITH IN VENTIMIGLIA? MINORS ONLY

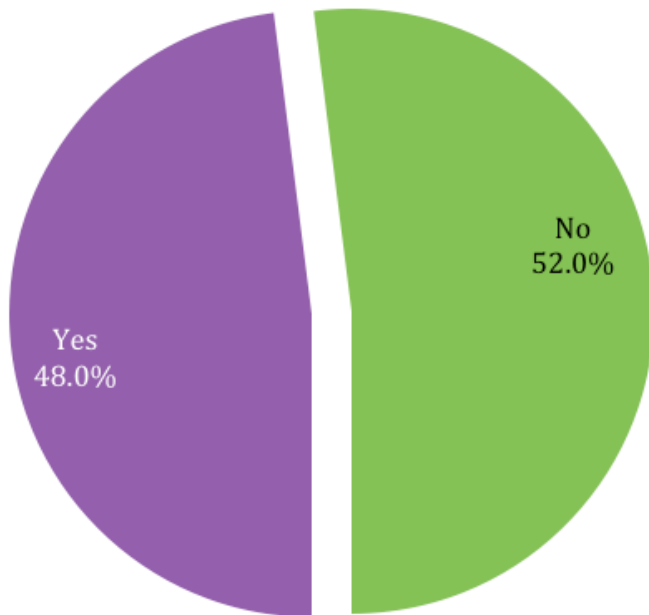


DO YOU HAVE FAMILY IN EUROPE? MINORS ONLY

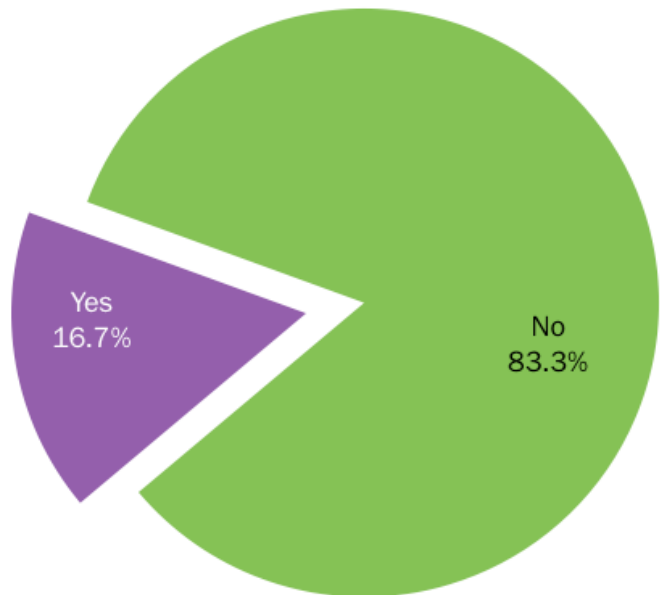


CHILDREN'S HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY HEALTH PROBLEMS IN ITALY?
MINORS ONLY



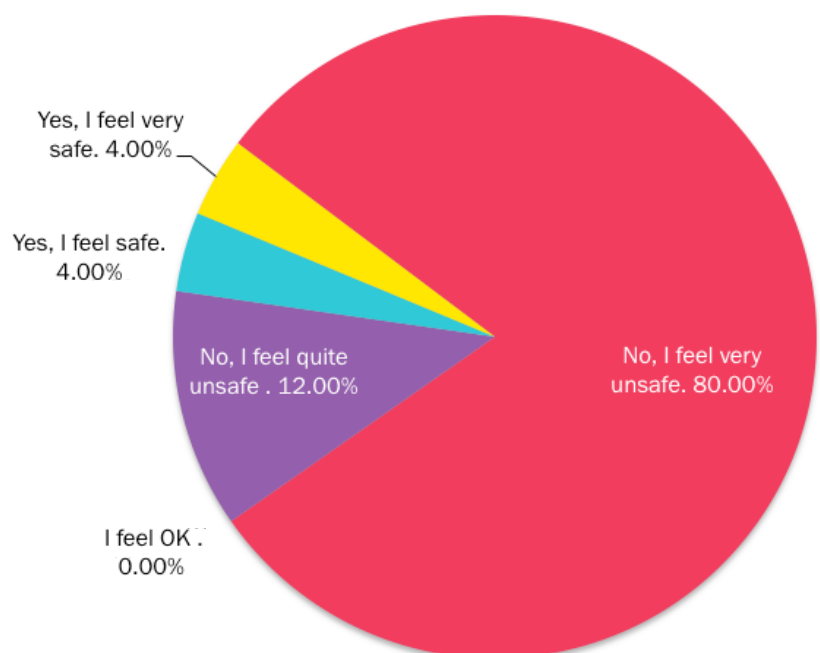
HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS MEDICAL CARE?
MINORS ONLY



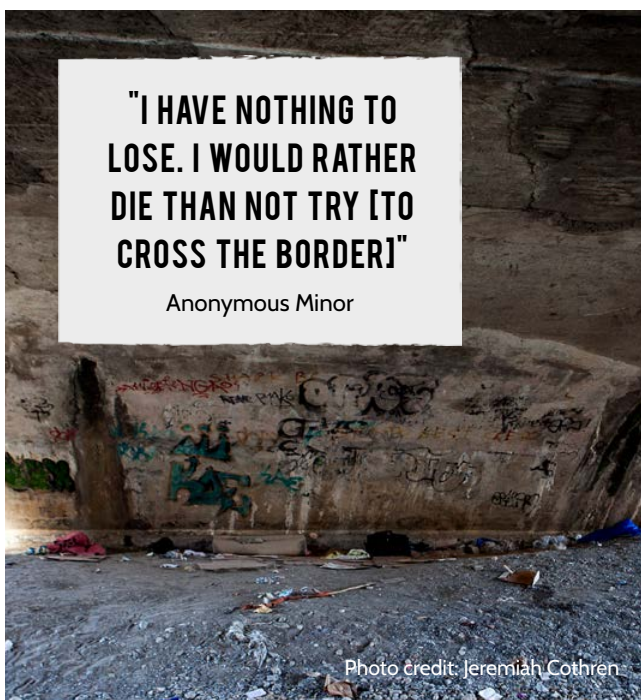
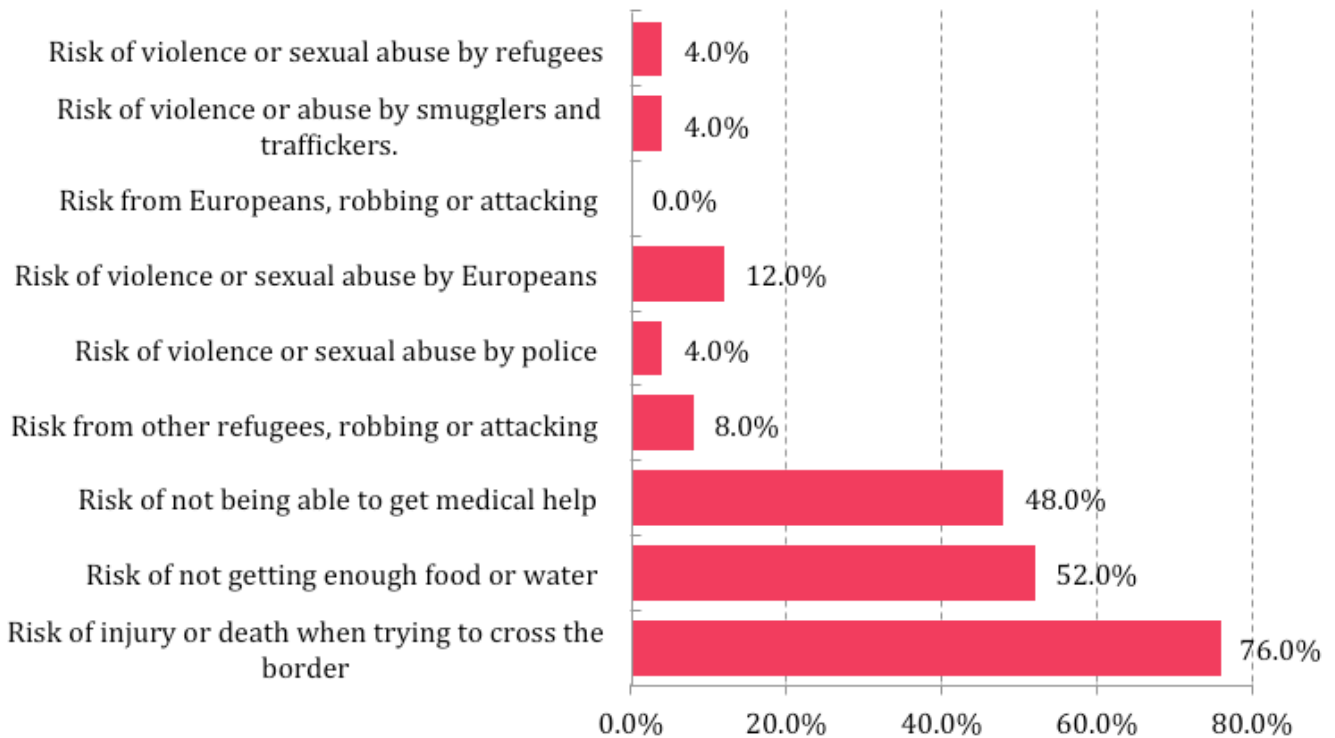
92% of children interviewed said they usually slept by the river, with only 4% sleeping in the Red Cross camp. 68% said they didn't have access to food every day. Only 4% of children said they had enough water to drink. 48% of children said they had experienced health problems, yet only 16.7% of those respondents had been able to access medical care.

Unsurprisingly, 92% of minors said they felt unsafe in Ventimiglia. When asked what they thought were the biggest risks for people passing through Ventimiglia, 76% cited risk of injury or death at the border. 52% cited the risk of not having sufficient food or water, while 48% cited the lack of access to medical care. Alarmingly, a whole 12% of children said they believed sexual violence as a major risk. When asked this question, one minor quietly explained that sexual violence from other refugees and Europeans was one of the main risks for young people in Ventimiglia.

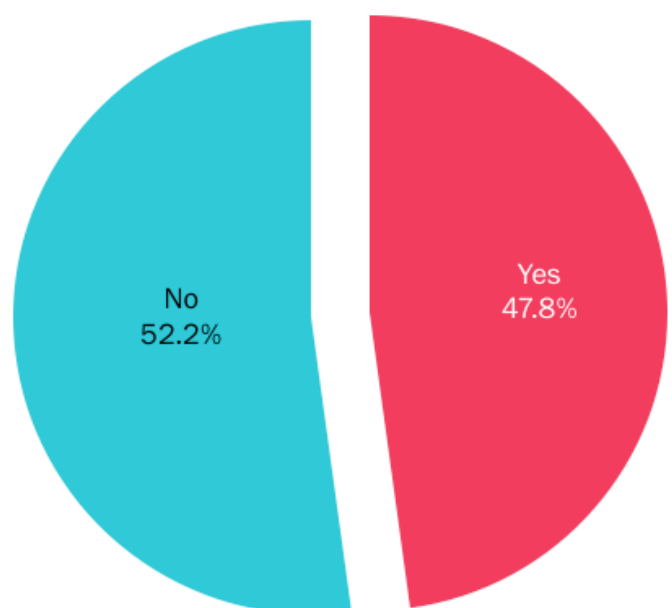
DO YOU FEEL SAFE IN VENTIMIGLIA?
MINORS ONLY



**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BIGGEST RISKS FOR REFUGEES PASSING THROUGH VENTIMIGLIA?
MINORS ONLY**



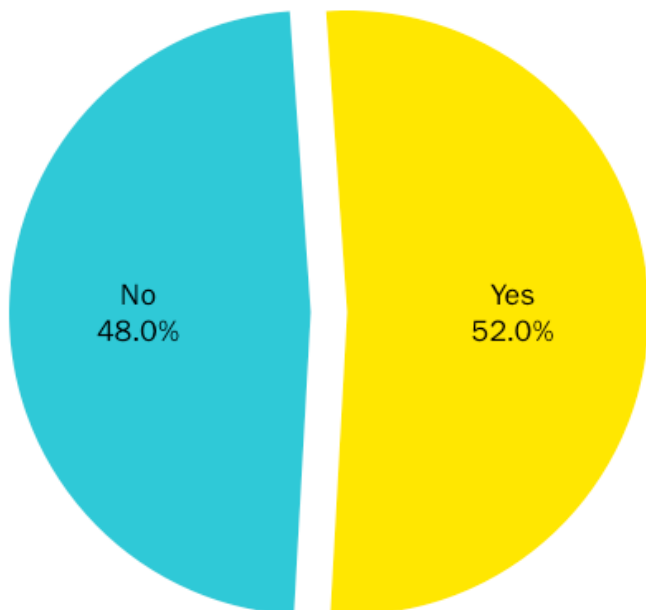
**DO YOU KNOW OF ANY REFUGEES WHO DIED IN ITALY OR AT THE FRENCH BORDER?
MINORS ONLY**



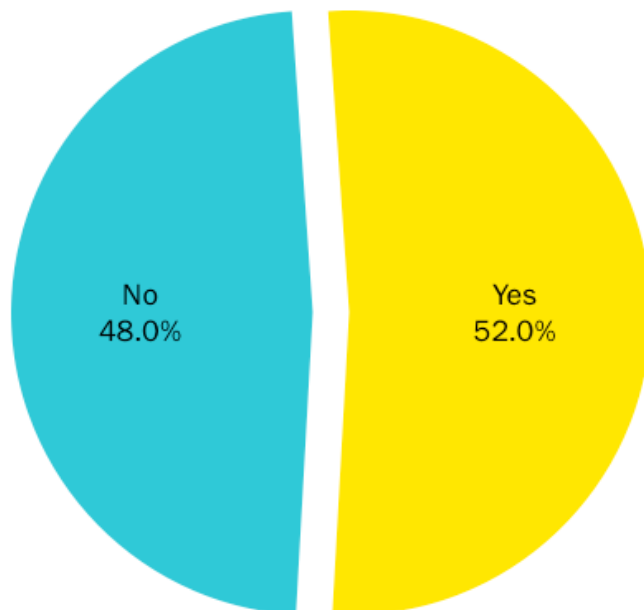
47.8% of minors knew of another refugee who had died in Ventimiglia or at the border, which is likely to be a particularly traumatic experience for children. Nonetheless, one minor explained: *"I have nothing to lose. I would rather die than not try [to cross the border]."*

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY ITALIAN POLICE?
MINORS ONLY



HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY FRENCH POLICE AT THE BORDER?
MINORS ONLY



More than half of the children interviewed, 54.2%, had experienced citizen violence. This usually took the form of verbal abuse. When talking about citizen violence, a 14-year-old Sudanese boy said: *“When we walk on the street we are verbally abused. It happens very often.”*

52% of minors had experienced violence by Italian police, and the same percentage had experienced violence by French police. One minor interviewed said the police had thrown stones and chased him while in the mountainous areas. It was unclear whether this was perpetrated by French or

Italian police. A 17-year-old Sudanese boy interviewed said he had his hands tied while the French police kicked him and told him to go back to Italy. He had tried to cross three times but kept being sent back.

One Sudanese 17-year-old boy explained that he had been verbally abused by police while he was drinking water in Ventimiglia.

All minors interviewed said they had experienced being forced back on the train from France to Ventimiglia. 50% of those respondents described the incident as *“violent”*.

A 17-YEAR-OLD SUDANESE BOY INTERVIEWED SAID HE HAD HIS HANDS TIED WHILE THE FRENCH POLICE KICKED HIM AND TOLD HIM TO GO BACK TO ITALY.

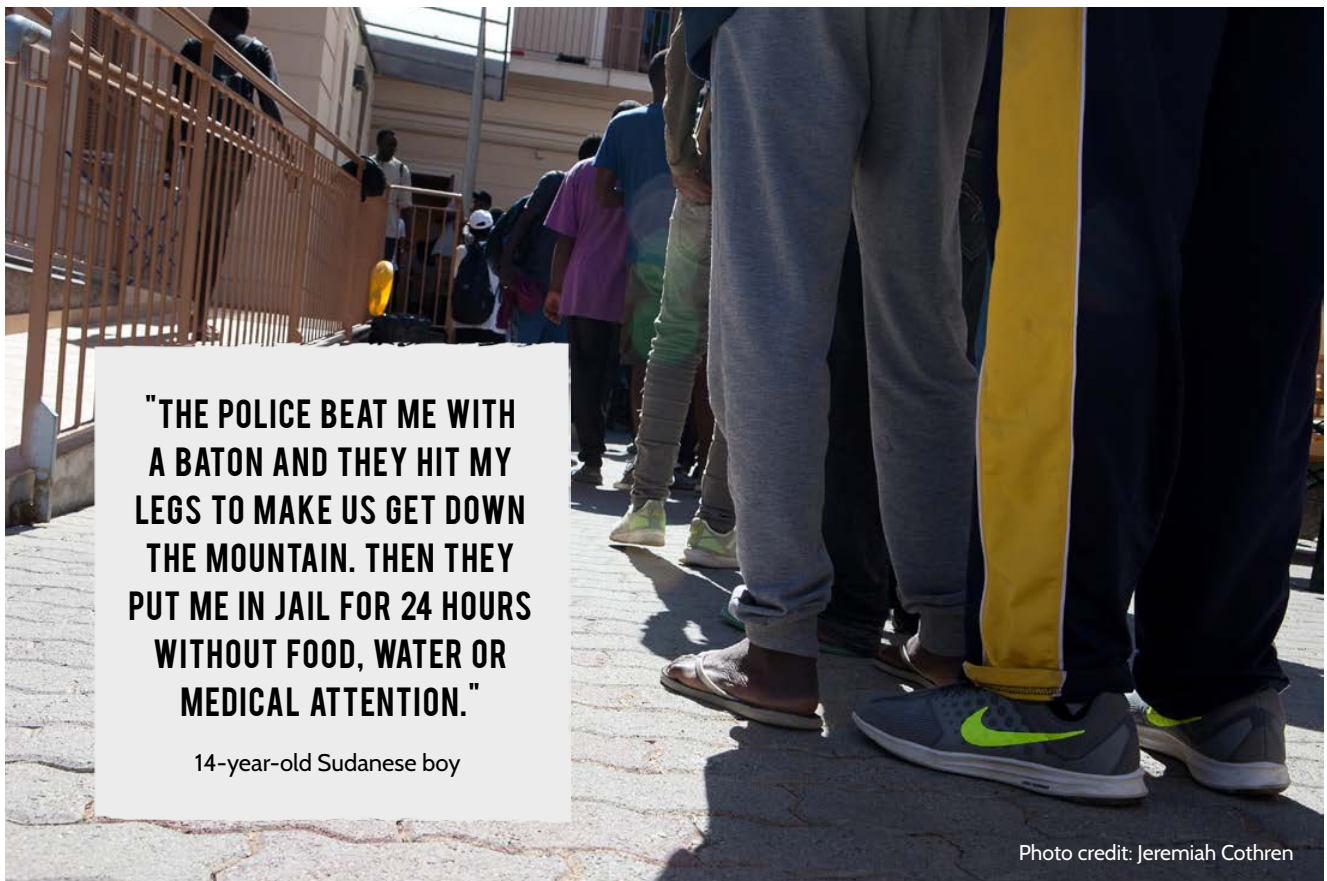
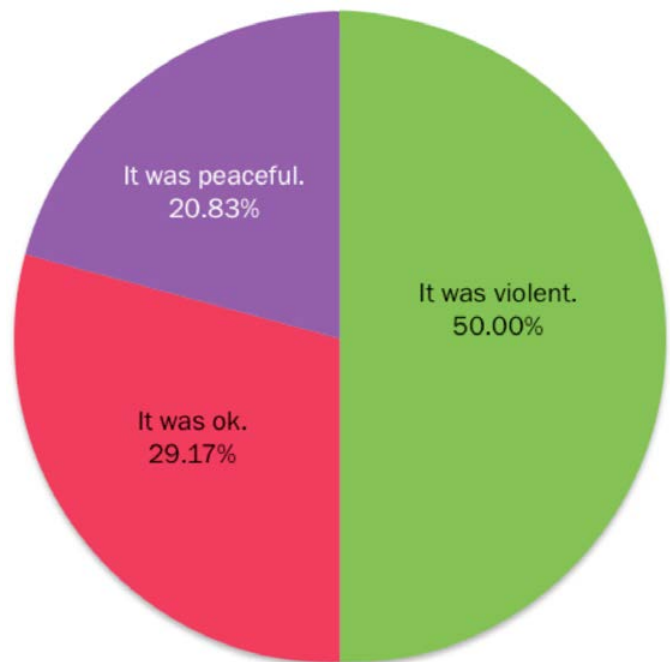


Photo credit: Samer Mustafa

Alarming, 80% of children had been detained in Italy or France, usually while trying to cross the border. One 14-year-old Sudanese boy explained: *"The police beat me with a baton and they hit my legs to make us get down the mountain. Then they put me in jail for 24 hours without food, water or medical attention."* 40% of children had been sent back to Taranto in southern Italy and subsequently made their own way back to Ventimiglia. One 17-year-old Sudanese respondent told the RRE research team that he was currently waiting for his brother to make it back to Ventimiglia, but he was unable to call him as they didn't have mobile phones.

By the same token, 100% of the child respondents had been forced back on a train from France to Italy by French police. It is RRE's understanding that these constitute illegal push-backs; minors arriving on French soil should become the concern of French authorities.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE INCIDENT OF BEING SENT BACK ON A TRAIN FROM FRANCE TO ITALY? MINORS ONLY



"THE POLICE BEAT ME WITH A BATON AND THEY HIT MY LEGS TO MAKE US GET DOWN THE MOUNTAIN. THEN THEY PUT ME IN JAIL FOR 24 HOURS WITHOUT FOOD, WATER OR MEDICAL ATTENTION."

14-year-old Sudanese boy

Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO INFORMATION

ONE POLICE OFFICER TOLD A MINOR THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW OLD HE IS; HE CANNOT STAY IN FRANCE IRRESPECTIVE OF AGE.

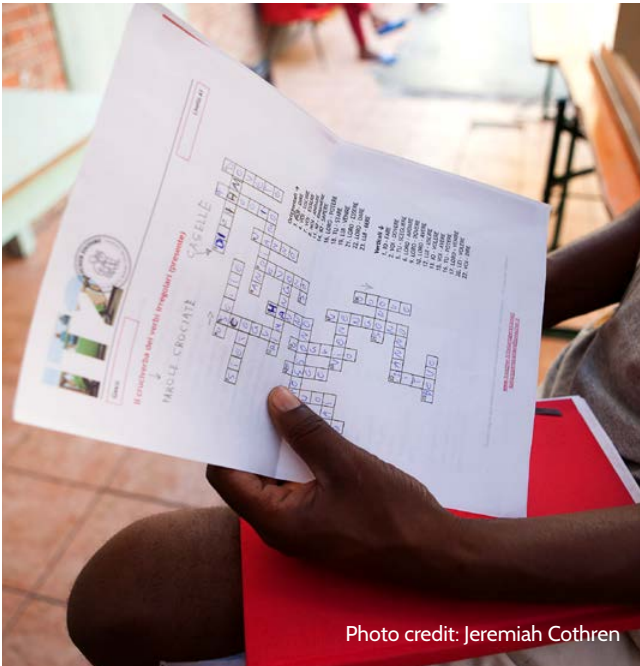
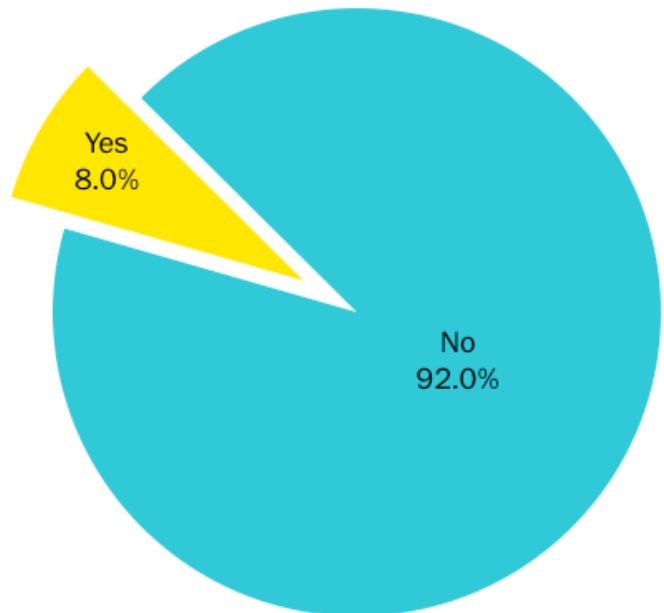


Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

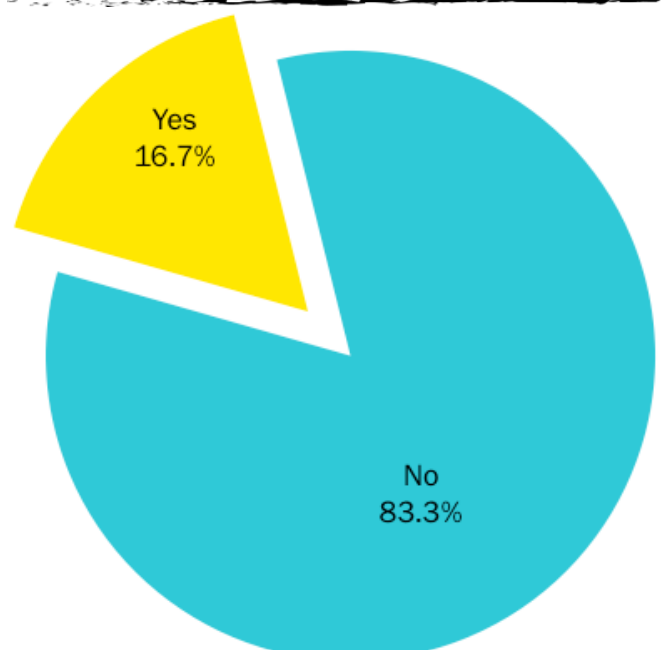
Only 8% of children said they had access to information about their rights and opportunities, while just 16.7% had access to information about European immigration rules and asylum law. This information was obtained from internet sources, other refugees, and in some cases from government or NGO-sources. Only 4.2% said they had access to legal representation.

It is worrying that French police at the Menton Garavan station were overheard providing minors with false or misleading information. For instance, one police officer told a minor that it doesn't matter how old he is; he cannot stay in France irrespective of age. Police officers were similarly overheard telling a minor that individuals who are not European cannot be in France under any circumstances, and that if one wants to be in France they must speak French. Such nonsensical arguments presented by officials is harmful to minors who are sorely lacking reliable sources of information and guidance; it is also a violation of European Directives.

**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES?
MINORS ONLY**



**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT EUROPEAN ASYLUM LAW AND IMMIGRATION RULES?
MINORS ONLY**



ARTICLE 28

EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO A SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER IN WHICH THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS SET FORTH IN THIS DECLARATION CAN BE FULLY REALIZED.

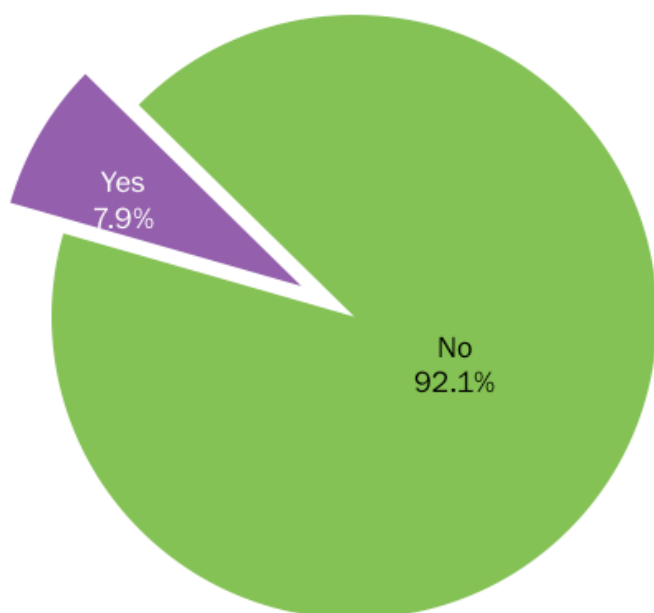
ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Most of the documents given by authorities to displaced people in Ventimiglia appear to be available in Italian only.

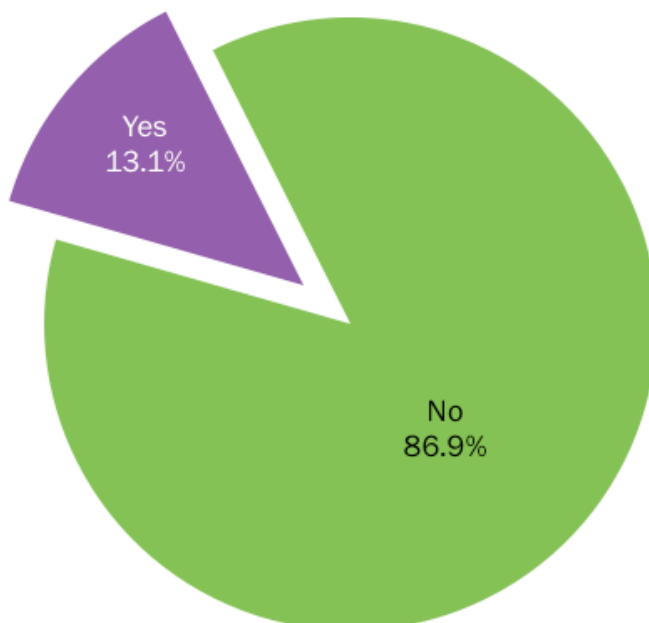
Some of these documents seen by RRE related to deportations from Italy, while others contained information about how to claim asylum in Italy. Respondents were largely unable to decipher the information in these documents, signalling an alarming failure on part of the Italian authorities to communicate effectively with displaced people.

In total, 7.9% said they had access to information about their rights and opportunities to change their situation, while only 13.1% had access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules. As few as 3.7% of respondents said they had access to legal representation, most likely individuals from the Red Cross camp who had managed to secure some time with a pro bono solicitor based there.

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES?
ALL RESPONDENTS



DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT EUROPEAN ASYLUM LAW AND IMMIGRATION RULES?
ALL RESPONDENTS



ONWARD JOURNEY

9.6% of respondents had been in another European country prior to their current stay in Ventimiglia, mostly France, but some had also entered Italy via Greece by boat.

Most respondents expressed shock at the conditions and treatment they found in Europe. However, the vast majority, 82.4%, said they cannot go back to their countries of origin, due to fears of war, conflict and persecution. A significant number, 12.7%, said they didn't know if they would be able to go back.

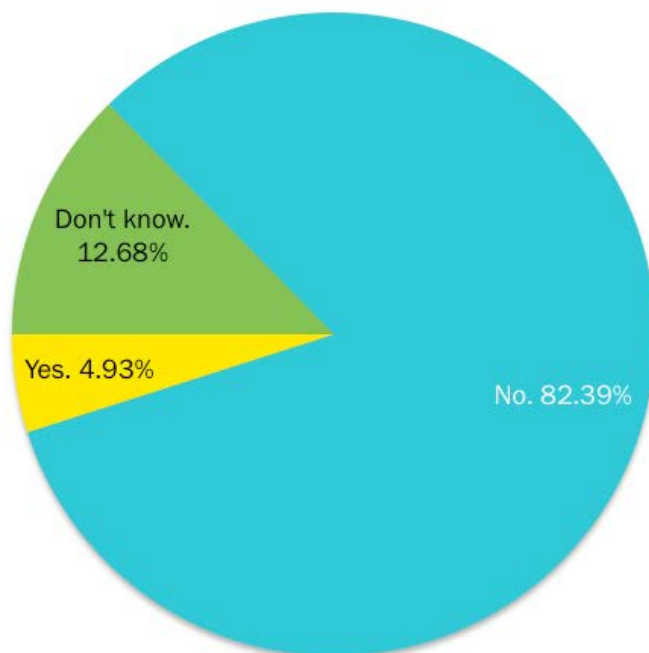
82.4% SAID THEY CANNOT GO BACK TO THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, DUE TO FEARS OF WAR, CONFLICT AND PERSECUTION.

27.5% of respondents said they had family in another European country (mainly cousins, uncles and aunts, but also nuclear family such as siblings), and 7.2% didn't know if they had family in Europe. Of all respondents, 11% said they had family in France, 7.1% in the United Kingdom, while some cited family in Germany, Sweden, Serbia, Norway and Denmark.

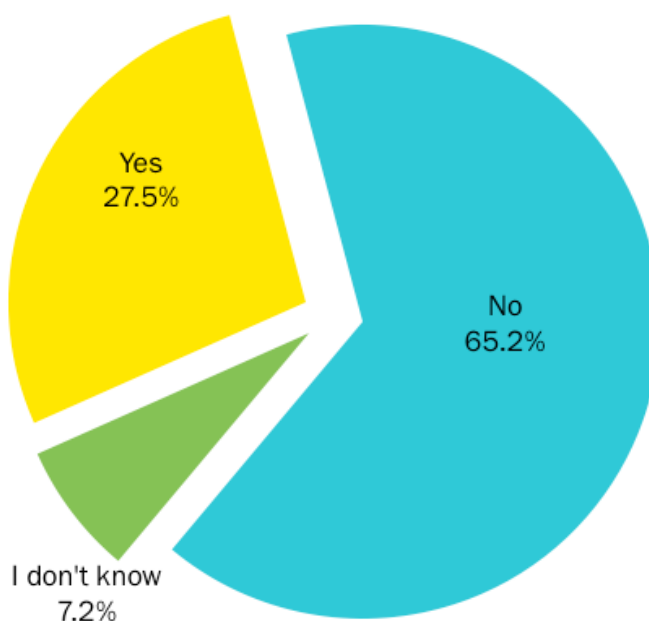


Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

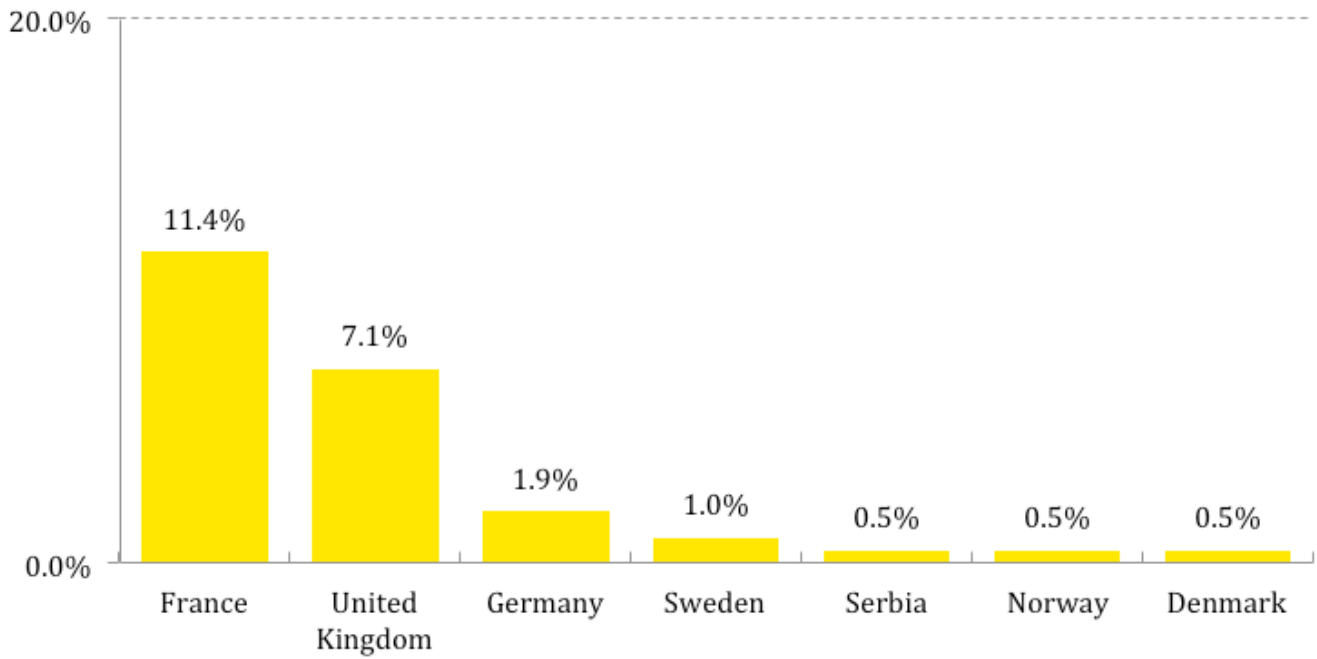
CAN YOU GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN? ALL RESPONDENTS



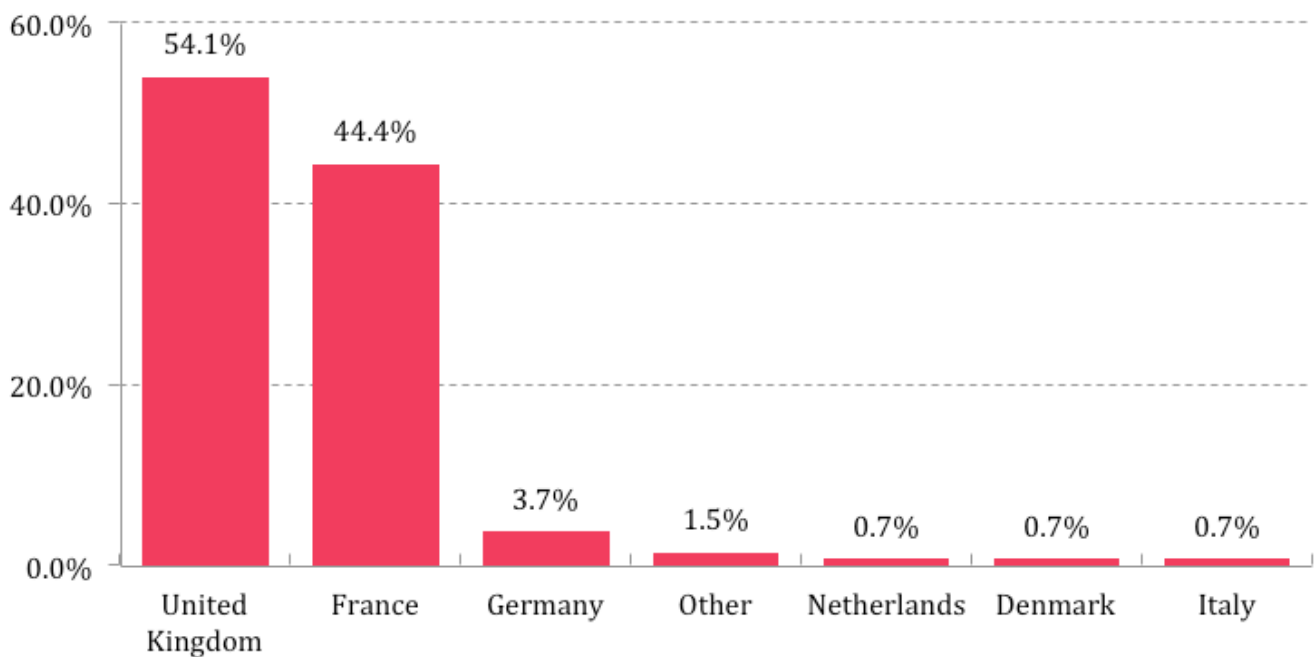
DO YOU HAVE ANY FAMILY MEMBERS IN EUROPE? ALL RESPONDENTS



**IN WHICH COUNTRY/COUNTRIES ARE YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**WHICH COUNTRY IN EUROPE ARE YOU TRYING TO GO TO?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



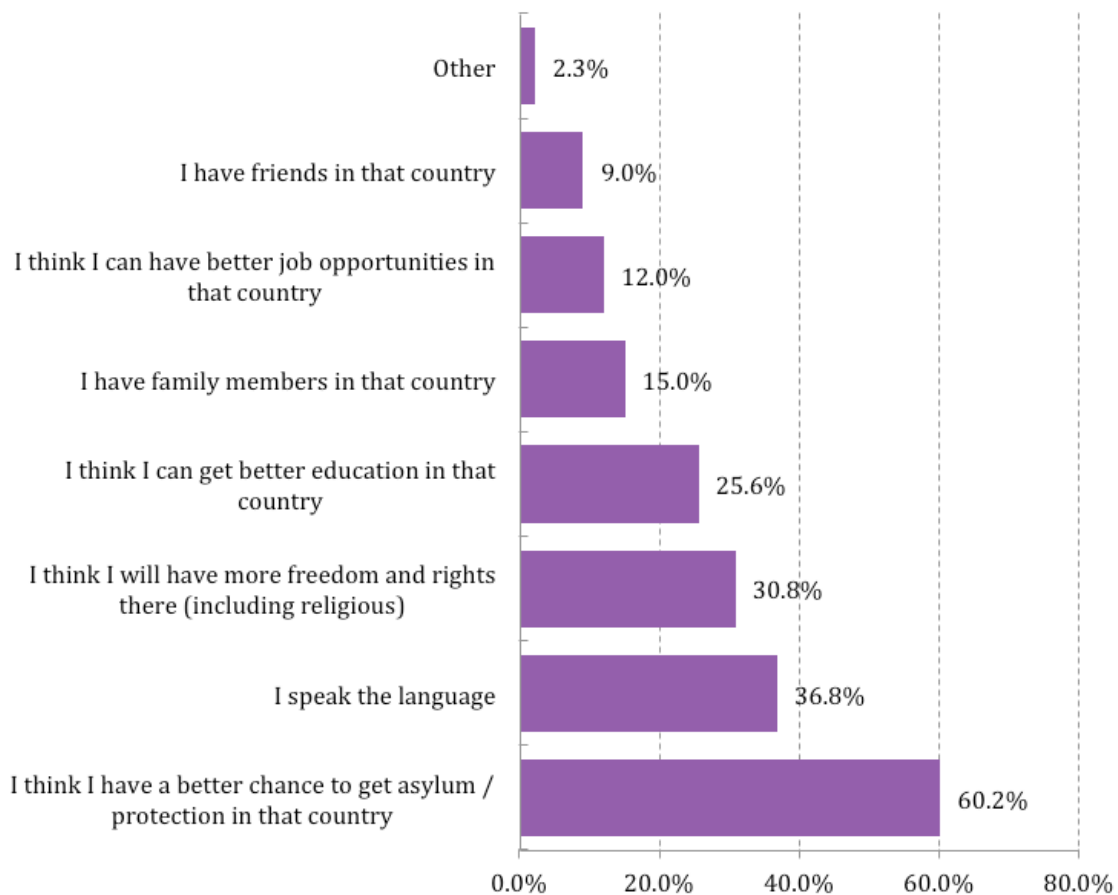
When asked where in Europe they were trying to go, 54.1% cited the United Kingdom and 44.4% France. Others were seeking to travel to Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Italy. In total, 60% said their top motivation for wishing to go to a certain European country was a belief that they would have a better chance to be granted asylum or humanitarian protection there.

Meanwhile, 36.8% indicated that their knowledge of the official language (English or French) was the main reason for wishing to go to a particular country. Another 30.8% were motivated by a belief that their rights and freedoms would be respected in a certain country. 15% cited family ties as the main driver and 12% spoke of job opportunities. A 17-year-old Sudanese boy said: *"I don't know how my family are. I don't have a phone and neither do they. I feel sometimes there is no one who can hear me crying inside. When I reach the UK, I would like to study human rights so I can help people in the future."*



Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren

WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT COUNTRY? ALL RESPONDENTS



A photograph showing a makeshift shelter under a bridge. The shelter is made of cardboard and has a yellow blanket on the floor. In the background, there is a view of a town and hills. A black text box with white text is overlaid on the image.

ARTICLE 30

NOTHING IN THIS DECLARATION MAY BE INTERPRETED AS IMPLYING FOR ANY STATE, GROUP OR PERSON ANY RIGHT TO ENGAGE IN ANY ACTIVITY OR TO PERFORM ANY ACT AIMED AT THE DESTRUCTION OF ANY OF THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS SET FORTH HEREIN.

CONCLUSION

The research findings outlined in this report suggest that the current situation in Ventimiglia is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of displaced people passing through this Italian transit point.

The lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation raises serious concerns, as does the striking absence of information and support services. The combination of repeated push-backs and police violence on both sides of the border, in the absence of any viable alternatives, appear detrimental to displaced people's mental and physical well-being.

THE CURRENT STATE RESPONSE ON BOTH ITALIAN AND FRENCH SIDES DISREGARDS THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The living conditions are largely inadequate, even within the official Red Cross camp, according to the camp residents themselves. Untreated physical and mental health problems are widespread, and the relentless work of charities and NGOs to address the situation is insufficient in the absence of a coordinated multi-agency response. The fact that most of the displaced people in

Ventimiglia had recently arrived from Libya means that the majority have been exposed to, or experienced first-hand, torture and ill-treatment which tends to give rise to serious cases of post-traumatic stress disorder. This requires professional treatment and support. In Ventimiglia, such conditions are further exacerbated by inhumane living conditions and repeated dispersals and deportations leading to gradual mental exhaustion.

In light of RRE's findings, it is evident that the current state response on both Italian and French sides disregards the principles of universal human rights. This risks having a detrimental impact on displaced people seeking sanctuary at Europe's shore. Therefore, the health, safety and human rights of the displaced people arriving in Ventimiglia must be placed at the centre of policy making, and increased resources and services need to be allocated to ensure the standards at this transit point are urgently improved. Unaccompanied minors in particular are in urgent need of a protection framework, and further investigation into sex trafficking of women and girls must be immediately prioritised.



Photo credit: Jeremiah Cothren



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