# Box 8.3: Understanding 4Mi data

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Asylum data can also reflect demographic patterns. Some applicants are children born in the EU+ to an asylum-seeking parent, in some cases making up more than 10% of all applicants. These figures reflect how status can persist intergenerationally without clear legal resolution.

Looking ahead, under the Interoperability Regulation, the Central Repository for Reporting and Statistics (CRRS), currently under development, is expected to deliver cross-system statistics that will significantly improve our understanding of these dynamics. It will enable anonymous tracking across databases and provide more precise insights into how individuals move through stages of irregular entry, legal stay, asylum and status withdrawal.

In short, asylum data provide a valuable but incomplete window into migration stocks. They reflect both regular and irregular situations but must be interpreted with care. Analysts should consider visa status, secondary movements, repeated applications and related demographic patterns. When triangulated with detections at the border, visa records, and Dublin statistics, asylum data help clarify not only the scale of irregular presence, but also how individuals engage with EU+ migration and protection frameworks.

**Box 8.3: Understanding 4Mi data**

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**What is 4Mi?**

4Mi, developed by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), is an innovative and global data collection platform[10] that provides independent and in-depth insights into the experiences of migrants moving along mixed migration routes. Since 2014, 4Mi has become the world's largest globally comparable primary data collection system focused specifically on people on the move, with more than 130,000 interviews conducted in over 30 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

**Rationale and scope**

4Mi was created to fill a major evidence gap around the realities faced by migrants and refugees in transit—populations often invisible in traditional migration statistics due to their irregular or non-camp-based status. The initiative contributes directly to the Global Compact for Migration's Objective 1 by providing accurate and disaggregated data for informed policy-making.

**Methodology**

Data are collected through one-on-one, structured interviews using standardized yet adaptable survey tools, administered by a large network community-based enumerators (approx. 130 as of 2025), most of whom are migrants or refugees themselves. These enumerators are embedded in local contexts, ensuring high trust and access to hard-to-reach groups. In countries where MMC is not established, data are collected through local partners rooted in the countries. Surveys are quantitative, enabling statistically robust analysis, but also include open-ended questions to capture personal narratives. Sampling is purposive, with enumerators operating in migration hubs identified through scoping and mapping exercises. While not statistically representative, the data are highly indicative, enabling rich, contextual understanding of profiles, drivers, journeys,, vulnerabilities, and aspirations of people on the move.

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10  See https://mixedmigration.org/4mi/4mi-faq/

**Tools and flexibility**

The model is flexible, allowing for add-ons on topics such as youth migration, climate mobility, and urban integration. Innovations include longitudinal follow-ups, remote data collection, and interactive dashboards for public data exploration. This flexibility was key to rapidly launching Covid-19-specific modules, through which 25,500 interviews were conducted in 2020 alone.

**Data use and outputs**

4Mi data feed into MMC's research publications,[11] interactive dashboards[12] and presentations towards evidence-based programming and policy-making. The data are also shared with partners such as UN agencies and NGOs under data-sharing agreements. Outputs include statistical analyses in the form of research reports, briefing papers, snapshots, infographics and policy briefings, as well as real-time response tools for humanitarian actors.

**A unique complement to flow data**

By providing in-depth, qualitative insights into the human dimension of migration, 4Mi complements other data collection and flow monitoring systems (e.g., IOM's DTM), which focus more on volumes. 4Mi captures lived experiences, decisions, and risks in a globally comparable format, enabling cross-regional and route-based analysis. Its integration of quantitative scale with qualitative depth ensures that the perspectives of (irregular) migrants—often missing from mainstream migration discourse—are not only heard but systematically analyzed. In doing so, 4Mi plays a vital role in providing an evidence base for the development of more humane, inclusive, and responsive migration policy and practice worldwide.[13]

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11  See https://mixedmigration.org/resources/

12  See https://mixedmigration.org/4mi/4mi-interactive/

13  More information on 4Mi can be found at
https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/4Mi-Introduction.pdf