SEEFAR

How the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being impact migration decision-making

Findings from Wave 4 of a longitudinal study on Afghan irregular migration

Results from the fourth wave of a longitudinal study of Afghans planning irregular migration to Europe

August 2019

SEEFAR

OUR VISION

is for a world in which vulnerable people have more opportunities to advance themselves.

THE PURPOSE

of our social enterprise is to work with those people to build a better future.

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Acronyms

EU - European Union

GOA - Government of Afghanistan

IDP - Internally displaced person

IOM - International Organisation for Migration

JWF - Joint Way Forward

NRC - Norwegian Refugee Council

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

SIGAR - Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

TMP - The Migrant Project

UNAMA - UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USD - United States Dollar

WOM - Word-of-mouth

Summary

Seefar is committed to helping stakeholders understand and responsibly respond to irregular migration. This requires a robust evidence base that allows the voices of affected women, men and children to impact programmes and policies designed to address this critical issue.

This report is the fourth component (Wave 4) of Seefar's longitudinal study into the dynamics of 240 Afghans intending to irregularly migrate to Europe. Data collection for the project has been ongoing from August 2016 through March 2019.

The first round of data collection (Wave 1) piloted the research methodology on a small sample of 40 male Afghans from Nangarhar planning irregular migration to Europe. The second round of data collection (Wave 2) broadened the sample size to 210 respondents in 14 provinces. Seefar administered a structured survey to these respondents in January and February 2018. The third round of data collection (Wave 3) was conducted in July 2018. It administered the same structured survey and reached 187 Afghans in 16 provinces.

Seefar collected data for Wave 4 in February and March 2019. This involved a structured survey of 97 respondents in 8 provinces (1 respondent was outside of Afghanistan at the time of the survey), each of whom had previously participated in the research. A detailed discussion of the research methodology can be found in Annex 1.

The longitudinal dimension of the study offers insight on how individual experiences and migration decision-making unfold over time. This is particularly valuable in the Afghan context, where potential migrants face long-standing structural challenges as well as rapidly-changing individual circumstances.[1] This report also specifically investigates:

- How migrant decision-making and perceptions have evolved since the previous rounds of data collection;
- The external and individual-level factors that influence migration decisions of Afghans planning to irregularly migrate to Europe and those who have abandoned their plans;[2]
- The motivations and key sources of influence and information in dissuading irregular migration plans to Europe; and

[1] This report uses the term 'migrant' broadly. Movement in and around Afghanistan is extremely complex and often multi-causal. In this context, the term 'migrant' should be viewed as an umbrella for various categories of people on the move, including asylum-seekers. This report makes no judgment on the merits of an individual respondents' potential claim to asylum.

[2] The study's screening criteria sought Afghans who hoped to migrate to Europe, and consequently the study's findings do not speak to Afghans interested in migrating to other locations.

- The motivations and key sources of influence and information in shaping irregular migration journeys.

Seefar will conduct one additional wave of data collection and publish a final longitudinal report in 2020. Due to its nonrandom sampling strategy, findings in this report are not intended to be representative of all potential Afghan irregular migrants to Europe but rather to offer indicative evidence for policymakers and migration actors to further explore.

Key findings

Optimism about peace process and an individual's future directly impacted migration planning

Respondents' optimism about their personal future in Afghanistan played a significant role in dissuading many from irregularly migrating. A large proportion of the Wave 4 sample was optimistic about their personal future because of the ongoing peace process, which in turn motivated them to delay or abandon their migration plans altogether. This suggests that even though the peace process encourages many respondents to stay, failing negotiations could initiate a re-consideration of migration plans.

Fewer respondents still intended to migrate irregularly

Migration plans among respondents changed considerably since Wave 3. 61% of Wave 4 respondents reported delaying or abandoning their initial plan to irregularly migrate, in contrast to 51% of Wave 3 respondents. Most of the Wave 4 respondents who reported changing their plans had abandoned them altogether, while in Wave 3 most had only delayed their migration plans. Many Wave 4 respondents who had delayed their irregular migration plans reported pursuing legal migration channels.

Migration plans were interlinked with emotional well-being

Decisions to delay or abandon irregular migration plans were linked to positive emotions for many. Most of the respondents who had changed their migration plans reported experiencing optimism, happiness, relief and excitement since changing their migration plans. On the other hand, respondents who were still planning to irregularly migrate reported feeling mainly negative emotions in the last 6 months, such as uncertainty, concern or defeat. This underscores how migration decision-making is highly interconnected with psychosocial well-being.[3]

[3] Research by DRC's Mixed Migration Secretariat and Seefar found emotions play a similar predictive role in migration decision-making. See: *Distant Dreams: Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees*.

Risk awareness, family and feelings of agency influenced migration plans

Respondents' migration plans were influenced by a multitude of external and individual factors. Perceptions of physical and financial risks of the journey were the most prominent influences in dissuading irregular migration plans, though there is no evidence that such perceptions were based on actual knowledge. Many reported changing their migration plans due to their family's desire for them to remain in Afghanistan. Respondents who reported feeling in control of their individual success or failure in Afghanistan were more likely to have changed their plans. Respondents who felt agency with regards to success or failure on the migration journey were more likely to remain committed to their irregular migration plans.

Returnees increasingly influenced migration aspirations

Many Wave 4 respondents knew someone who had returned and this returnee's experiences influenced the respondents' migration aspirations. Most returnees returned involuntarily due to deportation or family reasons. Others returned voluntarily out of fear for deportation, economic reasons or fear for their safety living abroad. Discussions with returnees discouraged half of the respondents from their migration plans and all of those who felt discouraged reported to have delayed or abandoned their migration plans. Even though 21% of respondents felt encouraged by the returnees experiences, they were not more likely to have migration plans. This suggests that negative returnee experiences have a relatively stronger influence on migration plans than positive experiences.

Respondents trusted WOM sources, distrusted official sources

Respondents used and trusted information from WOM sources above all other information sources. Television and Facebook were seen as secondary information sources. Facebook appears to be largely used for communicating with respondents' trusted sources, while respondents used television to get general migration information. Respondents also tended to report low trust in official sources (i.e. government and international organisations), highlighting the need for future trust-building activities (a finding consistent with previous waves of data collection).

Personal networks continued to influence migration plans

Respondents' personal networks at home and overseas continued to strongly influence migration planning. Information from family and friends in Afghanistan was the strongest influence on respondents' change of plans (i.e. abandoning or delaying migration plans). Discussions with family and friends were also considered the primary influence on the final decision to depart Afghanistan. Most respondents had a small network of up to 5 people outside of Afghanistan (45% of those networks in Europe) and these networks were important influences on destination choices.

Economic concerns increased as a migration driver

Both insecurity due to conflict and war and economic conditions have motivated irregular migration aspirations throughout the longitudinal study. Compared to Wave 3, economic concerns assumed more importance as the main reason to irregularly migrate for the current sample. As previous research has found, simple measures of employment were not predictive of migration aspirations. 67% of those intending to irregularly migrate in the sample were employed, reflecting how long-term economic uncertainty and underemployment were more powerful migration drivers. The disconnect between the sample's experiences (i.e. higher employment levels than in Wave 3) and the perceptions that finding work had become harder in Afghanistan could reflect the deep-seated frustration at the overall economic context in Afghanistan.

Background

Afghanistan today is characterised by political instability, economic difficulty, conflict and insecurity. This context has created a complex picture of migration and displacement marked by a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), outgoing migrants and returnees. Today, there are over 2.5 million IDPs in Afghanistan,[4] reflecting the broader humanitarian and development needs across the country. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that over 6.3 million Afghans are in need of assistance, half of whom are below 18 years.[5]

In addition to widespread internal displacement, more than 2.4 million Afghans living abroad have returned to Afghanistan since 2016.[6] Most returnees felt their return was involuntarily, often based on rumours or fears in Iran and Pakistan. In the first half of 2019, 184,185 people were recorded returning from Iran and Pakistan.[7] After experiencing traumatic experiences and hardships during migration and return journeys, many returnees need psychosocial assistance as well as more general humanitarian support. Yet, upon their return, most Afghans find themselves in a context with little assistance and few opportunities for self-reliance.[8]

An evolving migration context

Since Wave 3, Afghanistan's migration landscape has been shaped by ongoing political developments, the consequences of natural disasters, continued displacement due to conflict and unemployment, and high levels of involuntary returns.

Despite the cease-fire between the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and the Taliban in June 2018 and promising developments with regards to a formal peace process,[9] the number of people displaced by conflict and civilian casualties remain high. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reports that in the first 6 months of 2018, 1,692 civilians were killed – the highest number in 10 years.[10] UNAMA documented 10,993 civilian casualties (3,804 deaths and 7,189 injured) in 2018, which is a 5%

4 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). "Afghanistan Country Information." Accessed: May 2019.

5 OCHA. "Afghanistan: Key Figures." Accessed: May 2019.

6 MMC and Seefar, 2019. "Distant Dreams: Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees".

7 IOM, 2019. "Return of undocumented Afghans."

8 MMC and Seefar, 2019. "Distant Dreams: Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees".

9 United States Institute of Peace, 2019. "The Current Situation in Afghanistan". Accessed: May 2019.

10 UNAMA, 2018. "Highest recorded civilian deaths from conflict at a mid-year point".

increase in overall civilian casualties compared to 2017.[11] During ongoing negotiations between the US and Taliban, military operations have escalated at the beginning of 2019 and civilians continue to suffer.[12] The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) warns that the US-Taliban peace deal presents both opportunities and risks for Afghanistan's future, including threats to human rights.[13]

Natural hazards, including drought and floods, also continued to motivate internal and cross-border displacement and migration decisions in 2018. Two out of three provinces in Afghanistan were affected by a severe drought in 2018[14] which raised the number of people at risk for food insecurity to 13.5 million.[15] An estimated 92% of farmers did not have enough seeds during the past planting season (October 2018 - March 2019).[16] In 2019, 268,864 people have been affected by natural disasters to date in Afghanistan in 30 out of 34 provinces.[17]

Even though Afghanistan is officially a country in active conflict since 2017, many refugee-hosting countries deport arriving Afghans who are found to be ineligible for protection.[18] Under the Joint Way Forward (JWF) between the GoA and the European Union (EU) in 2016, European countries committed to the "orderly return" of Afghan nationals who do not fulfill the conditions for asylum in the EU.[19] International organisations, UN organisations, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations have all called for significant return support but reintegration needs far outweigh available support.[20] There is also little post-return monitoring available to capture the evolving returnee situation.[21]

Longitudinal research overview

Seefar began a longitudinal research study in 2016 to assess how shifting economic, conflict and political dynamics in Afghanistan contribute to irregular migration interest, trends and decision-making. The study has a

[11] UNAMA, 2018. "Afghanistan annual report on protection of civilians in armed conflict."

[12] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/world/asia/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-united-nations.html

[13] SIGAR,2019. "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress".

[14] OCHA, 2019. "Humanitarian Bulletin Afghanistan".

[15] FAO, 2019. "Afghanistan Situation Report - March 2019".

[16] FAO, 2019. "Afghanistan Situation Report - March 2019".

[17] OCHA. "Overview of Natural Disasters". Accessed May 219

[18] OCHA, 2017. "Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018."; UN General Assembly Security Council

[19] https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_afghanistan_joint_way_forward_on_migration_issues.pdf

[20] MMC and Seefar, 2019. "Distant Dreams: Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees".

[21] Ecre, 2019. "No reason for returns to Afghanistan".

total sample of 240 Afghan men who were purposively sampled for intention to irregularly migrate to Europe within 12 months.[22] Respondents were identified using a nonrandom snowball sampling technique through referral of other Afghans within the same target group.

This report is the fourth instalment (Wave 4) of the longitudinal study. By taking a longitudinal approach, this research aims to understand how irregular migration dynamics and decision making evolve over time and which key sources of influence and information are more important for migration plans and aspirations.

[22] Screening criteria were only applied to respondents during the wave of data collection when they first joined the study. This permits interest in irregular migration to change for each respondent over time.

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Highlights from Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3 and Wave 4 data collection

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
#1 reason for staying/migrating	Economic reasons	Economic reasons	Economic reasons	Economic reasons
Most preferred destination	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany
#1 source of information	Word-of-mouth	Word-of-mouth Facebook	Television Facebook	Word-of-mouth Facebook Television
Average expected length of the journey	1-3 months	4-6 months	1-4 weeks	1-3 months

Summary of key findings from Waves 1, 2 and 3

To date, the longitudinal study has found:

- Income and security concerns were the primary motivators for migration decisions. More respondents cited security concerns as their primary motivator over time, while the number of respondents citing economic concerns remained constant.
- Many respondents were comfortable delaying their migration plans, but most still intended to irregularly migrate in the future.

- Respondents understood that irregular journeys involve physical and financial dangers.[23] Physical risks of migration journeys and family reasons were the primary reasons why respondents delayed their migration plans.
- Migration decisions were made over a period of months.
- Social networks and family strongly influenced migration decisions.
- Word-of-mouth was the most important source of information about migration. Facebook gained increasing importance as an information source over time.
- Respondents held very high expectations of what life would be like once they arrived in their preferred destination.
- Respondents generally held negative views of returnees.

In Wave 4, researchers attempted to recontact all 240 respondents from Wave 1, 2 and 3. In addition to questions asked in Wave 3, the Wave 4 survey included questions on long-term goals, aspirations for life in Afghanistan, feelings of agency, perceptions of migration and more detailed questions on returnees.

In 2019, Seefar will continue to implement the longitudinal study via one more wave of data collection. For more information on the research design and approach, see Annex 1.

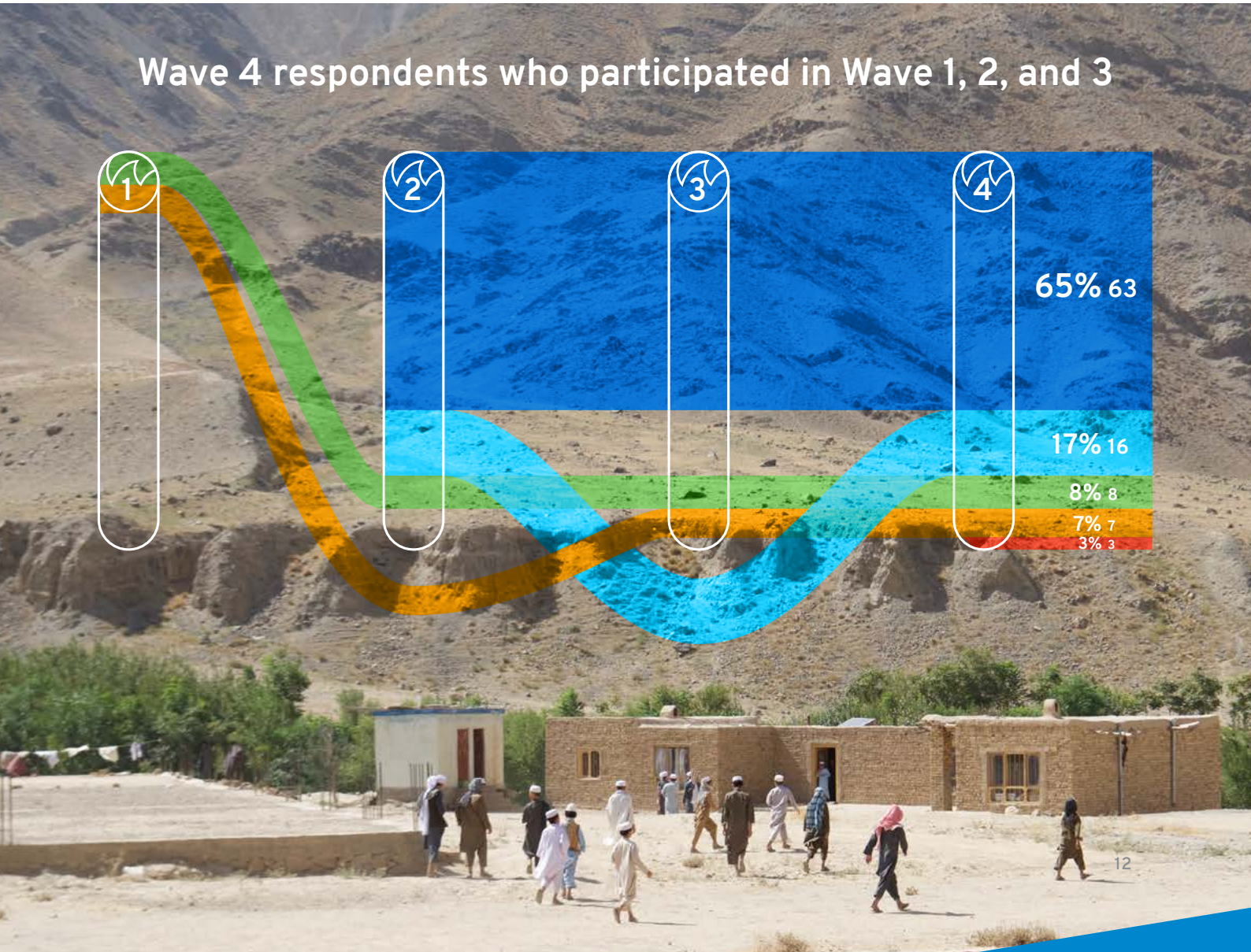
[23] See also: Seefar, 2018. "3E Impact: Ethical, Engaged and Effective: Running Communications on Irregular Migration from Kos to Kandahar."

Understanding the Wave 4 sample

The research focused specifically on Afghan men (15 years old and above) who plan to irregularly migrate to Europe. This reflects the fact that most Afghan arrivals in Europe are male.

Between Wave 1 and Wave 2, a total of 240 interviewees participated in the survey. In Wave 3, Seefar researchers attempted to re-contact all 240 past respondents. Of these 240 interview subjects, 187 Afghans were reached and participated in Wave 3 of the study. In Wave 4, 97 respondents who had previously participated in the study (40% of the original sample of 240) were successfully contacted across 8 provinces in February and March 2019.

As a multi-year longitudinal study of a highly mobile population, high attrition was anticipated in the research design. However, intention to irregularly migrate (as expressed in Wave 3) did not decrease participation

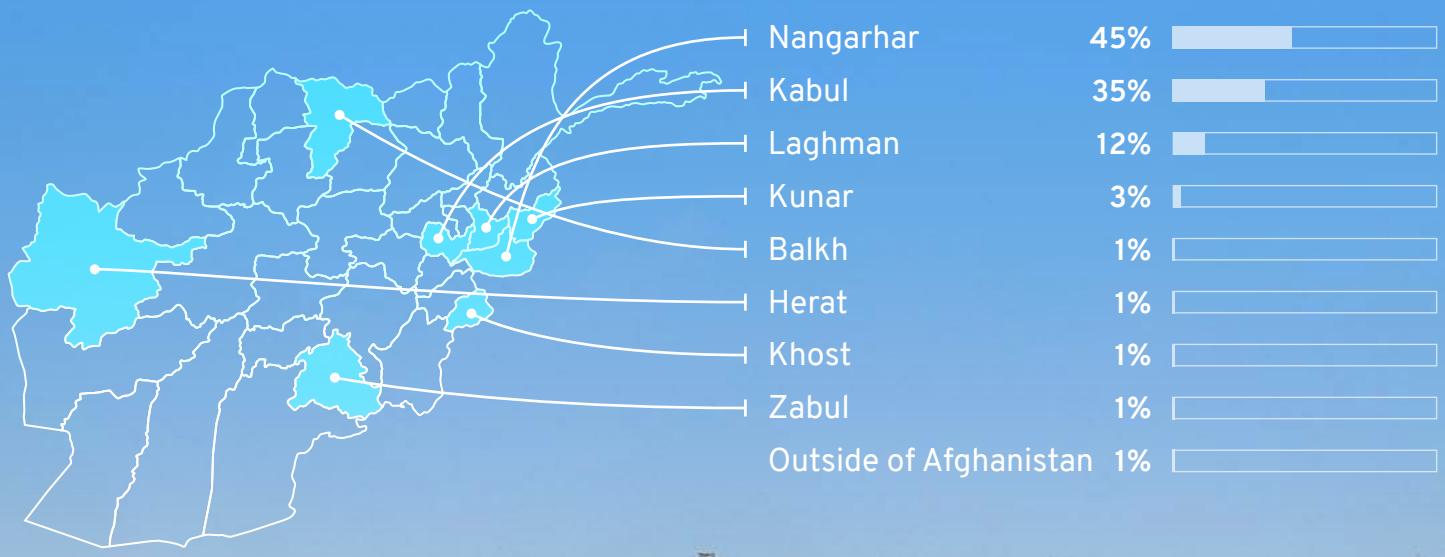


in Wave 4. Detailed attrition analysis can be found in Annex 1. These dynamics will continue to be closely monitored in Wave 5.[24]

Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile

The demographic composition of the Wave 4 sample remains similar to previous waves of data collection and consequently detailed demographic data are not displayed.

Provinces of residence



[24] Several respondents were dropped from subsequent waves of data collection for quality assurance reasons. In three cases, a clear link between participation in previous waves could not be established. These three respondents were assigned new unique identifiers and considered for analytical purposes new to the sample in Wave 4 (the red bar in the "Wave 4 respondents who participated in Wave 1, 2, and 3" graphic).

Demographic and economic profiles

Base: 97

Age

15-18 years old	8%	8
19-24 years old	32%	31
25-34 years old	53%	51
35-44 years old	6%	6
≥45 years old	1%	1

Employment

Full-time salaried employee	19%	18
Part-time salaried employee	7%	7
Self-employed	48%	47
Unemployed, looking for work	16%	15
Unemployed, unable to work	5%	5
In full-time education and not working	5%	5

Education

No formal education	12%	12
Primary	13%	13
Secondary	31%	30
Post-secondary	18%	17
University undergraduates	17%	16
University postgraduate	6%	6
Vocational	3%	3

Age: Most respondents (82 out of 97 respondents, 84%) to the Wave 4 survey were between 19 and 34 years old. 32% (31) were between 19 and 24 and 53% (51) were between 25 and 34 years old.

Province of origin: The majority of Wave 4 respondents were born in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces, with a total of 12 provinces represented in the sample. Nine respondents out of 97 (10%) were born outside of Afghanistan but currently lived in Afghanistan.

Province of residence: At the time of the interview, most respondents (91 out of 97 respondents, 94%) were living in Kabul, Nangarhar or Laghman. Five other provinces were represented in the data: Kunar, Khost, Herat, Zabuls and Balk. One respondent was currently living in Pakistan.

Education: Most respondents had completed primary education (13, 13%), secondary (30, 31%) or post-secondary education (17, 18%). Twelve participants (12%) had no formal education and 25 respondents (26%) had university degrees.

Employment: 70 respondents (72%) described themselves as the principal breadwinner in their household. 72 respondents (74%) were employed at the time of the survey, with the majority of respondents being self-employed (48%, 47 respondents).

This reflects a different economic profile from the Wave 3 sample, where only 29% described themselves as principal breadwinners and only half of the sample reported at least part-time employment.

Environment: 48% of respondents (47 respondents) in the Wave 4 sample were currently living in urban areas, a considerable decrease from the Wave 3 sample (78% of respondents in urban areas). The Wave 2 sample consisted of 90% of respondents living in urban areas. This indicates a potential trend where many respondents moved to rural areas. However, 81 out of 97 respondents (84%) indicated that they had lived in their current location for five or more years, suggesting that respondents defined the term 'urban' in different ways.[25] Data on urbanisation more broadly in Afghanistan remains lacking.[26]

[25] Respondents were asked if they lived in an urban or rural area but were not provided a definition of these terms, with the intention being to capture perceptions of environment rather than categorising respondents.

[26] Pinney, Andrew, 2012. "An Afghan Population Estimation."

A snapshot of life in Afghanistan

More than half of the Wave 4 respondents (58 respondents, 58%) said their life had not changed much during the past 12 months. Many expressed frustration about their situation, particularly if they had experienced difficulty obtaining work. Those who said that they had experienced significant changes to their lives during the past 12 months were either happy about finding a new job or sad about a family member's illness or death. Interestingly, none of the respondents said that migration-related decisions were the biggest changes in their lives. This suggests that migration was viewed as a response to other life changes, rather than as a major life change in its own right.

> "Every day brings a negative change to my life in Afghanistan. The saddest event [in the past 12 months] was that my father passed away."
>
> *35-44 year old respondent in Nangarhar*

Employment

Most of the employed respondents (72, 74%) were satisfied with their jobs. Almost three quarters of those who were employed (49 respondents out of 72, 68%) were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their work. Self-employed respondents were as satisfied with their jobs as were permanent employees.

> "The most important event for me [in the past 12 months] was that I started my own business offering construction sheltering services last year. I am very happy and satisfied with my work."
>
> *25–34 year old respondent in Nangarhar*

Even though employment levels increased compared to Wave 3, most of the Wave 4 respondents reported that it had become harder to find a job in Afghanistan. More than half of the respondents (53, 55%) said that it had become harder to find work in the past six months while only eight respondents said it had become easier to find work. The disconnect between the sample's experiences (i.e. higher employment levels than in Wave 3) and their perceptions of finding work could signal deep-seated frustration at the overall economic context in Afghanistan.

Economic conditions, conflict, insecurity and corruption were the main factors cited by respondents to explain why finding work in Afghanistan had become more challenging. Many mentioned that only those who knew government officials were able to get a job — a common theme in previous waves of the longitudinal study. This perception may be linked to the high percentage of self-employed respondents in the sample.

> "There are still no job opportunities in Afghanistan. If you are just an ordinary person, you won't be able to find a job. Only those who have a good connection to someone from the government are able to find a job."
>
> *35–44 year old respondent in Kabul*

Optimism about the future

When asked about their long term goals, many respondents mentioned their desire for higher education, sustainable employment and the ability to support one's family. Many respondents said they would like to work for the government

in order to "serve their people", reflecting the high value that respondents placed on government-related jobs in Afghanistan.

The Wave 4 respondents were generally optimistic about their personal future. Three quarters of respondents (72, 74%) said they were "somewhat" or "very" optimistic about their personal futures, while only 17% (16 respondents) were pessimistic. Respondents' optimism about their personal future was strongly related to their optimism about the future of Afghanistan, the ongoing peace process and their job satisfaction.[27] This suggests that the ongoing peace process may be a source of hope for many to achieve their long-term goals. However, it also suggests that failed peace negotiations could lead respondents to reevaluate their optimism about their personal life.

"[My long-term goal is to] develop my technical skills so that I can get a good job and secure my children's future."

35–44 year old respondent in Nangarhar

"I would like to get a good job so I will be able to support my family and serve our nation."

25–34 year old respondent in Kabul

Migration popularity

In comparison to Wave 3, there were mixed opinions on migration's popularity among Wave 4 respondents. A third of respondents (32, 33%) believed migration had grown more popular over the past year and 27% (26 respondents) reported no change in popularity. In comparison, 55% of respondents indicated that migration had become more popular in Wave 3. One quarter of the Wave 4 respondents (24 respondents, 25%) believed that migration had become less popular in the past year and the remaining respondents were not sure. This suggests that perceptions of migration popularity may be neither growing nor decreasing in the overall sample.

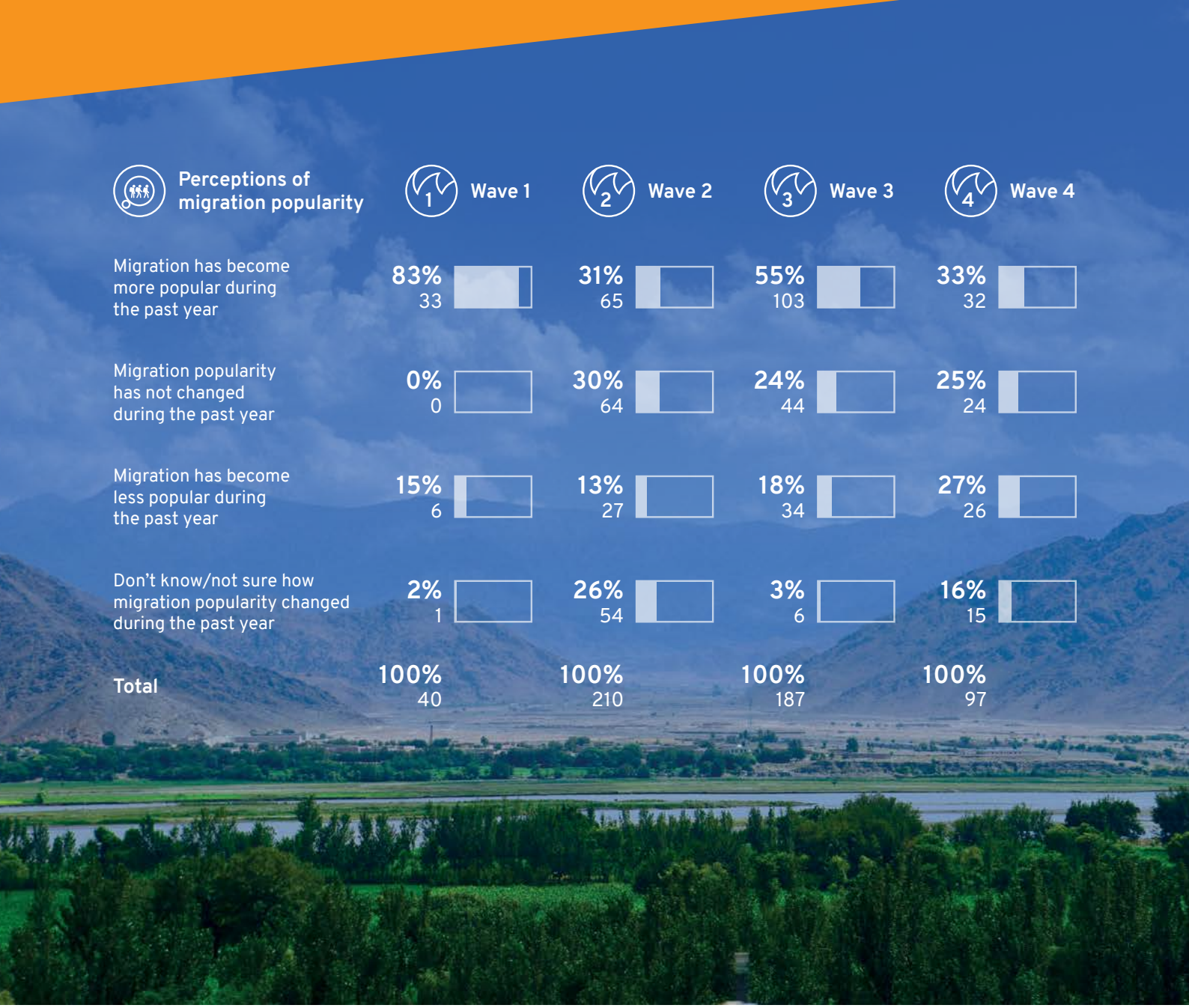
Respondents' perceptions of migration's popularity may vary based on their province. 60% of the respondents who thought that migration had become more popular were currently living in Nangarhar. These respondents were significantly more likely to say that migration had become more popular than respondents living in other provinces.[28] This finding aligns with previous research that has found Nangarhar to be a major hub for migration and displacement in Afghanistan.[29]

As in previous waves, respondents viewed insecurity and unemployment as the top reasons for migration's growing

[27] Regression analysis, $p<.05$. Respondents' optimism was unrelated to respondents' employment status, their age, education and location.

[28] T-test, $p<.01$.

[29] Perceptions of migration popularity were not different for different age groups, locations or respondents with different employment status. Having a network abroad was also not linked to different perceptions of migration popularity and no information source was linked to perceiving migration as less popular.



popularity. Respondents also cited social media content, television and radio as factors that had increased migration's popularity. The data from Wave 4 supports this theory: respondents who said that they used the radio and Facebook individually as channels for migration information were more likely to believe that migration had become more popular than those who did not use these channels.[30] The primary reasons cited for migration becoming less popular were physical dangers of the journey.

Consistent with the mixed views on migration's popularity, respondents tended to have ambivalent views of Afghans who choose to leave their country (in general). Similar to Wave 3, only a small percentage of Wave 4 respondents (5, 5%) had a negative impression of people who emigrate from Afghanistan, but more

"[Migration is growing more popular] because of war, conflict and lack of job opportunities. Many websites, social media, TV and the radio promote talk about migration."

25–34 year old respondent in Kabul

[30] T-test, $p<.05$.

than half of respondents said they had a 'mixed impression' of migrants (58 respondents, 60%). Only 13% (21 respondents) reported an overall positive impression with the remaining respondents holding a neutral impression.[31] This negative view could be a result of the fact that most respondents would like to stay in Afghanistan as discussed during the next section.

Understanding life in Afghanistan today sets the stage for how participants think about the decision to stay or leave.

> "[Migration is growing less popular] because people have more knowledge about the risks and troubles during the journey."
>
> *19–24 year old respondent in Nangarhar*

[31] Respondents who knew someone who had emigrated from Afghanistan compared to those who did not know anyone did not not hold more positive views of Afghan migrants.

Deciding to stay in Afghanistan

All original 240 members of the longitudinal cohort initially intended to irregularly migrate to a European country in the next 12 months, but many respondents have changed their migration plans over the course of the study. In Wave 3, 49% of respondents had changed their migration plans and no longer intended to irregularly migrate to Europe. In the current round of data collection, 61 respondents (61%) reported no intention to migrate within the next 12 months.

Six respondents had left for Iran and returned to Afghanistan between Waves 3 and 4 and returned involuntarily between May and December 2018, reflecting the reality of involuntary returns from Iran. Five out of these six respondents spent less than six months there. Half of these returnees did not intend to migrate in the future, but the remaining returnees wished to migrate again within 4–12 months due to a lack of employment opportunities. This is consistent with existing research that finds that many deported Afghans attempt re-migration. Returnees deterred by the deportation experience struggle with reintegration and adjustment due to the experienced trauma.[32]

> "Because I wanted my children to have a better future, I decided to leave Afghanistan to go to Europe. I was unlucky and was captured by Iranian forces and deported back to Afghanistan."
>
> *35–44 year old respondent in Kabul*

Changed migration plans associated with emotional well-being

Most of the Wave 4 respondents who changed their migration plans had completely abandoned their irregular migration plans or planned legal migration. The number of those who had completely abandoned their plans (48 out of 61, 78%) almost doubled compared to Wave 3 (38%). Only a minority of Wave 4 respondents who had changed their plans (13 respondents out of 61, 21%) still intended to migrate further in the future. Among these 13 respondents, all but two planned to pursue legal migration options and six had already applied for legal permission to migrate.

Migration plans were associated with respondents' emotional well-being. Most of the respondents who had changed their migration plans conveyed positive emotions about their decision, including optimism and happiness (37 respondents out of 61, 60%), relief (9 respondents, 15%) and excitement (5 respondents, 8%). The remaining 8 respondents felt uncertainty, fear or concern, which could suggest that they may still be re-

[32] Schuster & Majidi, 2013. "What happens post-deportation? The experience of deported Afghans." Migration Studies.

considering their decision. In comparison, most respondents who still intended to irregularly migrate within the next 12 months reported mainly feeling negative emotions such as uncertainty, concern or defeat (33 out of 36, 92%) when asked about their most prominent emotions in the past 6 months.

This could suggest that positive emotions can drive decisions to delay or abandon irregular migration plans; conversely, a decision to delay or abandon irregular migration plans could relieve negative emotions. The fundamental connection between emotions and migration decision-making emphasise the importance of counselling as an effective and responsible response to irregular migration.

External influences dissuading migration plans

Consistent with earlier findings, the decision to change migration plans was influenced by a multitude of factors. Physical dangers, financial risks and family reasons were the most prominent dissuading influences. Physical and financial risks were raised by a significantly larger proportion of the Wave 4 sample (97%)[33] than the Wave 3 sample (cited by 50-60% of respondents). 88% of respondents said their family's desire for them to remain in Afghanistan was an important dissuading influence. Improvements in security and employment situation remained secondarily relevant. The high proportion of respondents mentioning of migration risks could reflect increased risk awareness of the Wave 4 sample.

Those who had abandoned their plans completely were more likely to cite family reasons as their primary reason for changing their minds than those who had not fully abandoned migration aspirations. Those who intended to migrate almost exclusively cited physical dangers as a dissuading influence.[34] Thus, it seems that physical dangers alone may not always be enough to motivate people to completely abandon their plans and rather motivates to look for legal alternatives.

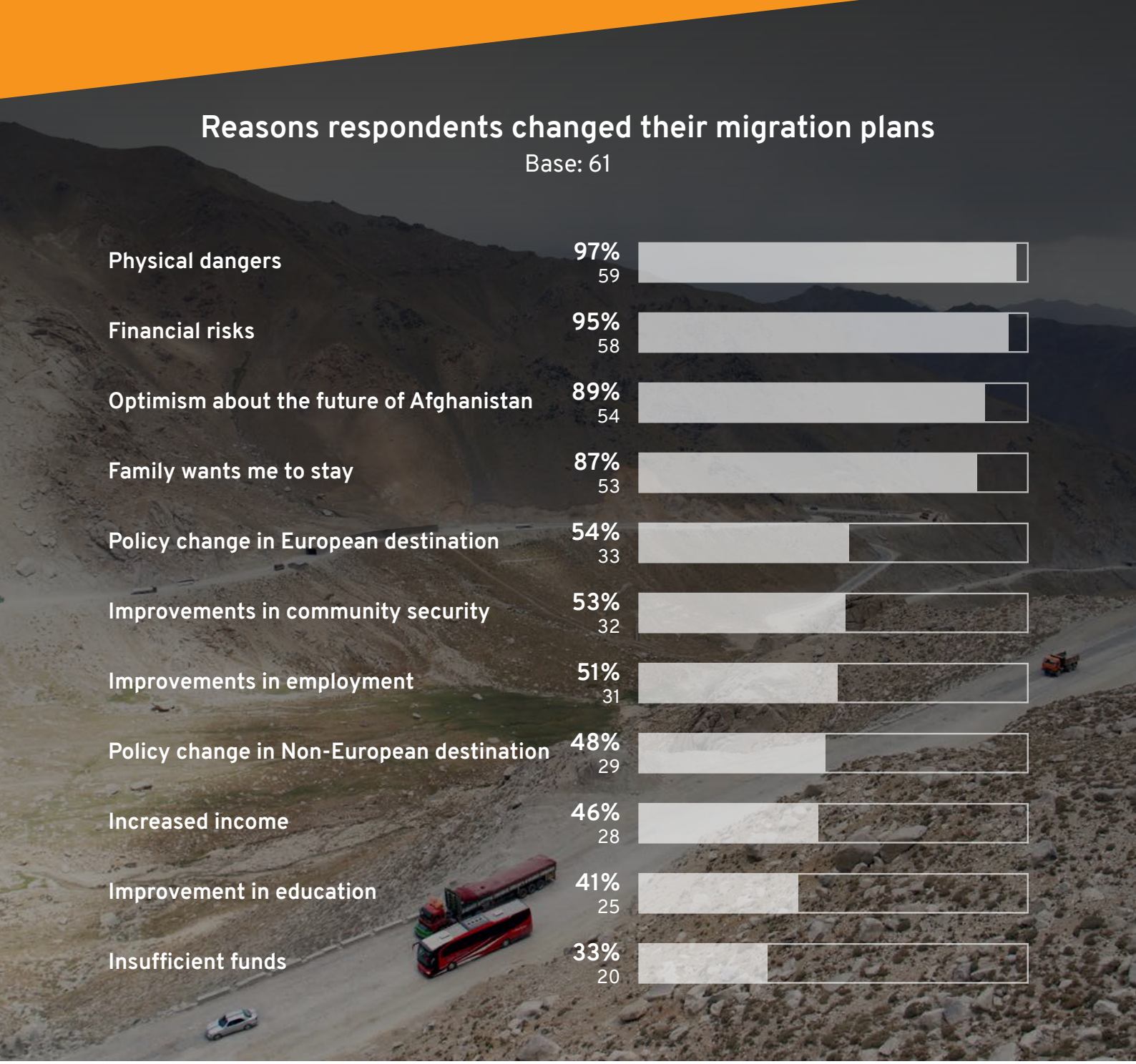
> "When I had a car accident, my whole family came to visit me in the hospital and helped me to recover. Their support made me feel hopeful and I decided not to leave Afghanistan under any circumstances. If this kind of accident would have happened to me abroad, no one would've been there to help me."
>
> *19–24 year old respondent in Kabul*

[33] In Wave 3, respondents were asked to all the factors that influenced their decision-making, while in Wave 4, respondents were asked a Yes/No question with regards to a list of possible factors.

[34] Chi-squared test, $p<.05$.

Reasons respondents changed their migration plans

Base: 61



Individual-level influences dissuading migration plans

Optimism about the future and migration popularity

On an individual level, respondents who reported being more optimistic about their personal future were less likely to have migration plans.[35] Optimism about one's personal future was strongly related to optimism about the future of Afghanistan and the ongoing peace process. This indicates that the peace

> "[My long-term goals] depend on the situation in Afghanistan. If the situation gets better, I would like to join the National Army. If it doesn't get better, I will definitely emigrate."
>
> *25–34 year old respondent in Nangarhar*

[35] Regression analysis, p<.05.

process in Afghanistan is a source of hope for many and may be crucial for future migration decision-making.

Feelings of agency over life in Afghanistan and the migration journey

Feelings of agency with regard to responsibility for success or failure in life in Afghanistan or on the migration journey influenced respondents' migration plans. Respondents who reported feeling agency over their success or failure in life in Afghanistan were less likely to have migration plans.[36] 73% (30 respondents out of 41) who said they themselves were responsible for their success or failure in life in Afghanistan as opposed to others, God or fate had changed their migration plans. 61% (25 respondents) had completely abandoned their plans. Conversely, respondents who felt they could influence success and failure on a migration journey were more likely to stick to their migration plans.[37] 69% (24 out of 35 respondents) with migration plans in the next 12 months reported feelings of agency with regards to success or failure of the migration journey. A lack of feeling agency over success or failure in life in Afghanistan may create a sense of hopelessness in which migration is perceived to be the only option. Feeling control over the outcome of one's migration journey, in turn, may be important for the final decision to take on the journey.

> "I will migrate to Europe because there is nothing left here. If I would stay here, I would spend the rest of my life hoping that tomorrow will be better."
>
> *25–34 year old respondent in Laghman*

Feelings of agency over success or failure in life in Afghanistan varied across respondents' provinces. Living in Kabul compared to other locations was related to feelings of agency, while respondents from Nangarhar were more likely to feel that others or God or fate were responsible for success or failure in life in Afghanistan.[38] External circumstances and environment might influence experiences of agency.

Information sources dissuading migration plans

Information received by friends and family in Afghanistan was the top reported information source dissuading migration (37 out of 61 respondents, 61%). Small minorities of respondents also cited international organisations (7 respondents, 11%) and information from returnees (6 respondents, 10%) as dissuading

[36] Regression analysis, $p<.05$.

[37] Regression analysis, $p<.05$. Neither socio-demographic characteristics, nor discussion with returnees or networks abroad, nor using different information sources influenced how people thought about who determined success and failure of a migration journey.

[38] T-test, $p<.05$.

Information sources which influenced respondent's change of migration plans

Base: 61

factors, neither of which were mentioned in Wave 3. Even though rarely mentioned as the most important information source, television, Facebook and radio influenced respondents' decision-making.[39]

[39] The type of information source that respondents were using to get migration information did not impact whether respondents had migration plans.

Returnees were increasingly influential

Many Wave 4 respondents (45, 46%) reported knowing someone who had returned from abroad, reflecting the increasing number of returnees in Afghanistan. In Wave 2, just 13 respondents knew a returnee. Almost half of the returnees (20, 44%) returned involuntarily due to deportation or homesickness. Reasons for voluntary returns included feared deportation, homesickness, economic reasons or fear for safety. One quarter of the returnees known by the respondents intended to migrate abroad again.

Discussions with returnees impacted respondents' migration plans. Almost half of the respondents who knew a returnee (21 respondents out of 45, 47%) said their stories discouraged their migration plans. If the returnees had returned voluntarily, respondents' were more likely to report that they felt discouraged in their migration plans.[40] All of the respondents who felt discouraged did not intend to migrate irregularly in the next 12 months. Five out of the nine respondents who felt encouraged by discussions with returnees planned to migrate in the next 12 months. This suggests that negative returnee experiences have a relatively stronger influence on migration plans than positive experiences.

[40] Chi-squared-test, $p<.05$.

Deciding to leave

Less than half of the Wave 4 sample reported their intention to irregularly migrate to Europe in the next 12 months (36, 37%). This reflects a decrease compared to Wave 3 where 52% of respondents planned to irregularly migrate. A minority of the Wave 4 sample still intended to irregularly migrate, but were not planning to leave within 12 months (13 out of 61 respondents, 21%).

Migration motivations

Conflict, war and lack of employment opportunities continued to be leading reasons for why respondents were interested in irregular migration. Employment concerns featured more prominently in Wave 4 than in Wave 3. Only 11% (4 respondents out of 36) out of those intending to irregularly migrate in the next 12 months cited security concerns as their primary migration reason.[41]

Respondents with migration plans were more likely to think that migration had become increasingly popular during the past year.[42] It is possible that those who plan migration are more exposed to migration information during the planning process and therefore think that more people are migrating. It could also be that perceptions of increased migration popularity may encourage respondents to plan migration themselves.

> "I am very pessimistic about my future in Afghanistan and as soon as I have enough money, I will migrate to Europe so that me and my children will have a better future."
>
> *25–34 year old respondent in Kabul*

Willingness to change irregular migration plans

Many respondents said they were willing to change their irregular migration plans if circumstances in Afghanistan would change. More than half of respondents intending to irregularly migrate (22 out of 36, 61%) were willing to adjust their plans. 39% (14 respondents) said they would leave regardless of change compared to only three respondents in Wave 3. Respondents who said they would leave regardless of change were not different in terms of their optimism about the future, their feelings of agency and work satisfaction to respondents who were willing to change their plans.

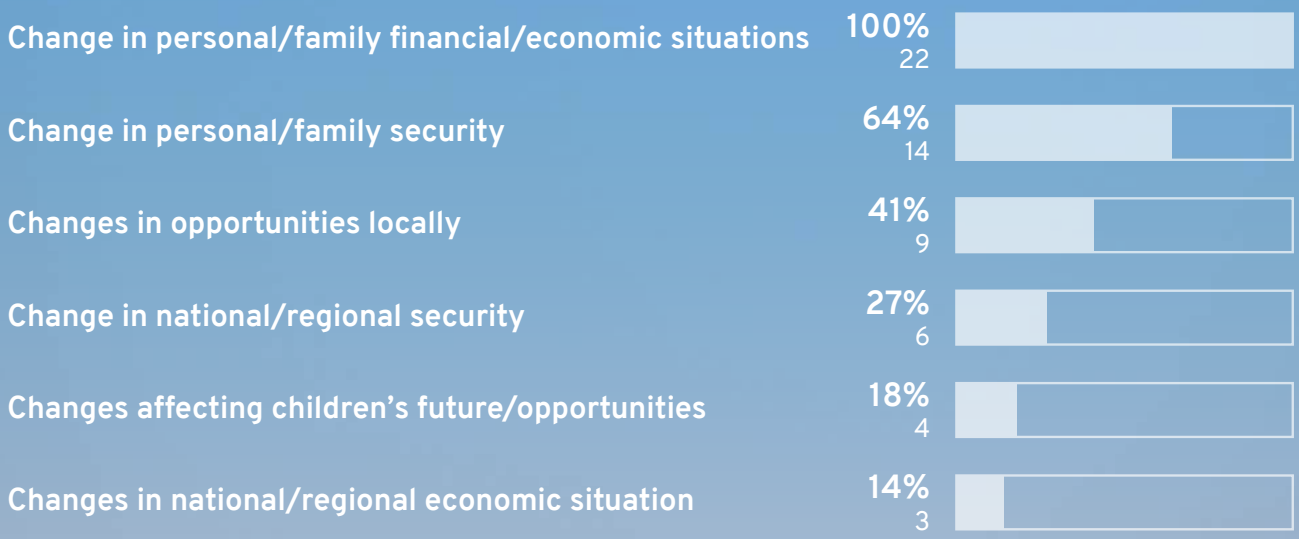
[41] Due to different phrasing of the question in Wave 4, it is not possible to compare this percentage to Wave 3. In wave 3, where respondents could mention several reasons why they were migrating 84% of respondents said that they were migrating because of security concerns and 91% mentioned unemployment as their primary migration driver.

[42] Chi-squared test, $p<.05$.

All of the respondents who were willing to change their mind cited improvements to their personal economic situation as a potential reason to stay. Improvements to personal security was a reason to stay for 14 out of 22 respondents (64%). None of the respondents mentioned changes in destination country policies as a reason to change their mind, suggesting that policy changes to reduce irregular migration, as employed by many European countries, may not necessarily be effective.

Changes that could affect migration plans

Base: 22



Planning the journey

Most Wave 4 respondents who were planning to leave Afghanistan in the next 12 months were still in a preliminary planning stage. 72% (26 out of 36 respondents) were currently making plans, or arranging finances for travel. 17% (6 respondents) were looking for a people smuggler. Only one respondent had already begun their migration journey. In the early stages of planning, many details are often unknown, including departure date, routes, costs and destination, or may be subject to change.

Departure dates: Slightly less than half of the respondents (15 out of 36, 42%) expected to depart within 7 to 12 months of the interview. A quarter (11 respondents, 32%) planned to migrate within four to six months and only eight respondents (22%) within the next three months. Respondents in more advanced planning stages did not have earlier departure dates.[43] This suggests that respondents do not necessarily have a good understanding of the amount of time needed to make migration plans.[44] Departure dates likely depend on a variety of influences besides planning stages.

Migration routes: The migration route via Iran and Turkey remained the most popular migration route in Wave 4. Consistent with previous waves of data collection, none of the respondents mentioned specific countries they would travel through in Europe in order to reach their destination, suggesting that respondents held a relatively low understanding about their migration route or destination.

Destination: Most respondents had a preferred destination (29 out of 36, 83%). As in Wave 3, Germany continued to be the top destination choice (8 respondents, 30%). The United Kingdom was the second most preferred destination, followed by Turkey and Italy. During previous waves, France, Belgium and Austria were often listed but were rarely mentioned for the current sample. The greater presence of Turkey as a destination could mirror the increased number of Afghan arrivals to Turkey in early 2018, or reflect that many Afghans have returned from Turkey over the last few years.

Destination choices expressed by respondents were largely determined by personal networks and contacts living abroad. 79% (77 respondents) had networks outside of Afghanistan and 62% knew one to five people abroad. 78% (25 out of 36 respondents) of those with migration plans said friends or relatives within Afghanistan and abroad were the top influences on their destination choice. Around one-quarter of respondents (18, 24%) had the strongest network in Germany, followed by France, Turkey and the UK. These networks align largely with the preferred destination

[43] Respondents who had a network abroad, knew a people smuggler, were less willing to change their plans or were more optimistic about the future did not have nearer departure dates.

[44] Seefar, 2018. "Windows of Opportunity"

choices. Among the respondents who said their largest network was in Germany, four out of eight (50%) intended to go to Germany. Three out of four respondents with the largest network in Turkey said that Turkey was their first preferred destination.

Seefar's previous research affirms this finding.[45] Potential Afghan migrants tend to choose their destination based on existing networks abroad. However, once an actual irregular migration journey begins, many migrants may adjust their destination choices en route in response to WOM information from fellow migrants and smugglers.[46]

Migration expectations

Expectations about the journey

Probability of arrival: Respondents continued to hold unrealistic expectations about the likelihood of arriving at their final destinations. Almost all of the respondents who were planning to migrate and had chosen a final destination (27 out of 30 respondents, 90%) thought it was realistic or very realistic that they would arrive at their preferred destination.

Costs of the journey: Respondents intending to travel to Turkey and Iran seemed to have a fairly accurate estimation of the costs of the travel. However, consistent with the Wave 3 finding, Wave 4 respondents who intended to migrate to Europe tended to underestimate the costs of the journey. 50% of these respondents (18 out of 36) expected to pay half of the cost before departure and the other half after arrival. Only 11 respondents (29%) expected to pay for everything after they arrive at the destination, compared to 87% or respondents in Wave 3. Most respondents estimated journey costs to between USD 2,000 and 6,000 (50%, 18 respondents out of 36). 2 respondents expected to pay less, 28% (10 respondents) expected to pay more and the remaining 17% (6 respondents) didn't know what their costs would be.

Length of the journey: Compared to Wave 3, expectations of the journey length became slightly more realistic. 31% (11 out of 36 respondents) believed it would take one to four weeks to arrive at their destination. This compared 84% of respondents who thought their journey would take one to four weeks in Wave 3. Using different information sources to receive migration information or having a network abroad did not influence estimations of the length of the journey.

[45] MMC and Seefar, 2019. "Distant Dreams: Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees".

[46] Seefar, 2018. "Windows of Opportunity"

Expectations upon arrival

Respondents continued to hold high expectations of life at their final destination. More than half of the respondents expected employment (20 out of 30, 67%) and better education (17 respondents, 57%). 45% (13 respondents) believed they would gain legal status within the first six months after arrival, but only 40% (12 respondents) believed they would make more money than they made in Afghanistan.

Almost half of the respondents (17 out of 36, 49%) said that they would migrate to a different destination if their first preferred destination didn't meet their expectations. This suggests that some of the respondents were aware of the possibility that not all of their expectations may be met.

> "Once I arrive in Europe, I am sure that I will adapt to everything very quickly. It will be as easy as drinking a sip of water."
>
> *35–44 year old respondent in Nangarhar*

Service providers were well-known but their services were occasionally misunderstood

More than half of the respondents (20 respondents out of 36, 56%) knew someone who could assist them with the migration process, such as a smuggler. For more than half (11 respondents, 55%) this person was a family member or friend and 35% (7 respondents) knew the service provider through their personal networks. This highlights that personal networks are a powerful resource at all stages of migration planning.

How people knew their service provider did not influence respondents' levels of trust in the service providers. More than half of the respondents (12 out of 20, 60%) said they trusted their service provider, while almost a third (6 respondents, 32%) said they didn't. Respondents' trust in smugglers may be dependent on the person itself, rather than trusting or distrusting smugglers as a group.

Even though service providers were easy to access, less than half of the respondents (9 out of 20, 45%) said that they were planning to use the services. Respondents who trusted their service providers more were not more likely to plan to use their services. Due to the ease of getting in contact with a people smuggler, this step is mostly taken relatively late in the migration planning process. As many respondents were still in the early stages of their planning process, they may not have considered this part of the process.

More than half of the respondents (11 out of 20, 55%) expected to receive contact information of other service providers along the route. However, similar to Wave 3, some respondents also held

misconceptions about the expected services that the service-provider would offer:

- 7 respondents (35%) expected to receive accommodation and food in transit;
- Around 20% (4 respondents) expected that their service provider would give transport along the route;
- Around 20% (4 respondents) expected to receive job opportunities abroad; and
- Around 20% (4 respondents) expected to receive legal documentation and refugee status upon arrival.

Research suggests that these services are often not provided by smugglers along the route, or are not provided to the degree that respondents expected.

Information sources

Waves 1 and 2 highlighted the powerful role of Word of Mouth (WOM) channels in conveying trusted migration information. Wave 3 highlighted the growing role of social media. Wave 4 data reaffirms the importance of WOM communications to migration decision-making, while social media such as Facebook appears to largely be used to communicate with trusted sources.

Personal networks

Previous rounds of data collection highlighted the influential role of personal networks for migration decision-making. Wave 4 respondents said that the three primary sources of migration information were WOM communication (88, 91%), television (43, 44%) and Facebook (35, 36%). Among those respondents who said that WOM communications were the primary source of information, three quarters (73 respondents, 75%) also said that it was their most trusted source of information.[47]

In Wave 3, respondents appeared to prefer gathering information via Facebook. In Wave 4, respondents communicated most often with networks abroad via Facebook Messenger (49 out of 76 respondents, 64%), followed by Viber (22%) and phone calls (21%). Other communication channels were FaceTime (17%), landline calls (16%) and WhatsApp (12%). Respondents emphasised that social media was not trusted in itself, but rather was used to connect with trusted contacts. After WOM communications, television (21%) and Facebook (15%) were the most trusted sources of information.

Government and international organisations

Respondents expressed misgivings towards migration information from government offices or migration-related organisations. Only 18% (18 respondents out of 97) said that there were government offices or migration-related organisations that they trusted. As the most trusted sources were WOM communications, this suggests that trust likely depends on personal knowledge of the source.

The two most commonly trusted organisations were the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC), mentioned by 11 respondents (11%) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), mentioned by eight respondents (8%). The Migrant Project (TMP) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) were also mentioned as trusted organisations by minorities of respondents. Respondents said that all of these organisations provided advice on legal migration options and raised awareness of the risks of irregular migration.

[47] Word of mouth communication refers to the transmission of information from one person to the other by oral communication.

Information sources used to receive migration information

Base: 97

	Most used	Most trusted
Word-of-mouth	91% 88	80% 78
Mainstream media: TV	44% 43	21% 20
Social media: Facebook	36% 35	15% 15
Mainstream media: radio	30% 30	9% 9
Afghan authorities	8% 8	0% 0
Non-religious community space	7% 7	1% 1
International organisations	7% 7	0% 0
Social media: other	5% 5	0% 0
Other	5% 5	18% 17
Religious community space	3% 3	4% 4
Foreign government/authorities	3% 3	0% 0
Social media: Twitter	2% 2	1% 1
Mainstream media: online	1% 1	1% 1

These high levels of distrust of international organisations may have deterred respondents from seeking more migration information from official sources. All respondents cited at least one source of information on migration; however, when asked if they were interested in receiving more information about specific topics, more than half of the respondents (42, 65%) said they were not interested in receiving such information. This suggests that respondents who are still actively planning to migrate prefer to seek migration information from their trusted sources—namely, from WOM sources.

Respondents who were more educated were more likely to report being interested in receiving migration-related information.[48] 65% (36 respondents out of 55) showed interest for information about legal migration, asylum processes and legal status in the country of destination. Other topics such as risks, destination countries, routes or deportations were mentioned by less than 10% of the respondents.

[48] Regression analysis, $p<.05$.

Conclusion

This longitudinal study offers critical insight on migration decision-making, influences, knowledge and perceptions among a number of Afghans who have seriously engaged in planning an irregular migration journey (or even attempted irregular migration in the past). Findings from this study are not representative but are deeply insightful on how respondents' perceptions and circumstances have impacted their individual migration decision-making over the course of the study. As such, they offer unique value to policymakers and migration actors to see 'decision-making in action' for individual Afghans who are considering irregular migration to Europe.

Wave 4 findings build on previous waves of data collection to continue to shed light on key migration dynamics in Afghanistan. The data indicate that:

- Economic and security factors in Afghanistan continue to drive migration interest in Afghanistan;
- Family and friends in Afghanistan play a powerful role in encouraging potential migrants to stay at home and providing migration information;
- Many potential migrants hold unrealistic expectations of their migration timelines;
- Many potential migrants prefer Germany as a country of destination and generally hold positive views of life abroad; and
- WOM communications are powerful channels in conveying trusted migration information and social media is largely used to communicate with trusted sources abroad

How will the peace process impact migration decision-making?

Evidence from Wave 4 suggests that **the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan is closely linked with personal perceptions of the future.** The strong overlap between optimism about personal future, optimism about the peace process and personal migration plans can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it could signal genuine confidence in efforts towards political stability in Afghanistan. Under this view, the success or failure of negotiations between the GoA and the Taliban could have significant repercussions on the migration landscape in Afghanistan.

Alternatively, the peace process could represent a proxy justification to explain migration decision-making (i.e. why a respondent has not yet departed). In this approach, the peace process–or 'optimism', more

broadly–is used to defend individual decision-making choices by potential migrants. For example, the general sense that respondents have found it more difficult to obtain work in Afghanistan conveys a strong sense of pessimism. This juxtaposition suggests that claims of increased optimism may not be linked to actual improvements to an individual respondent's personal situation. Under this view, migrants might ascribe more meaning to the peace process than it actually holds. Correspondingly, empowering potential migrants to confront their assumptions through counselling would help them to improve their migration decision-making, even if the peace process fails.

Emerging patterns and future research questions

Wave 4 also revealed several emerging patterns that are of key interest to policymakers and migration actors. Specifically, the study may suggest that:

- **Fewer respondents intend to migrate irregularly and many appear to have abandoned their migration plans completely.**
- **Psychosocial indicators are highly relevant to migration decision-making**. Feelings of agency over life in Afghanistan and emotions related to migration decisions (e.g. relief, worry) indicate the need for trusted migration counselling.
- **Returnees increasingly feature in the migration landscape and play important roles in encouraging or dissuading migration aspirations.** For returnees themselves, deportation may only be a temporary deterrent to re-migration.

Wave 4 also raises several questions for exploration in future research. Specific areas for follow-up in Wave 5 include:

- How do migration plans continue to change over time in relation to the ongoing political developments in Afghanistan?
- Do Wave 4 respondents who said they have abandoned their irregular plans sustain this change? Do respondents who said they plan legal migration options stick with the plan?
- How do respondents make their judgements on how much to trust a smuggler and what motivates their final decision to use their services?
- How does the role of returnees on migration decision-making continue to evolve in Afghanistan? What are the key points in discussions with returnees that can discourage or encourage migration plans?

Annex 1

Methodology

The first wave of data collection (Wave 1) sampled 40 Afghans in Nangarhar in August 2016. Respondents were purposively sampled for their intention to migrate onward to Europe within 12 months. Respondents were identified using a snowball sampling technique through referral of other Afghans within the same target group. While this technique reduces risk, it comes at the expense of introducing bias because the technique itself reduces the likelihood that the sample is representative of the larger population.

This study adopted a non-representative and non-random sampling strategy for several reasons. There is no central list of Afghans considering migration. A random sampling approach through enumeration poses security concerns, raises costs, and introduces bias in location selection. Last, the goal was to identify respondents who plan to migrate today and who would be willing to take part in future rounds of data collection. These screening criteria more easily applied to a non-random sample. To be clear, the report makes no claim of representativeness or causality. All claims of statistical significance are limited to the sample at hand.

Wave 2 of data collection followed this same approach on a larger scale. A total of 210 face-to-face and telephone surveys were conducted in January and February 2018 across Afghanistan. Two hundred of these respondents were new to the study. Each of the 200 new respondents were screened to ensure they intended to migrate to a European destination within the next 12 months. Researchers attempted to contact all 40 Wave 1 respondents, ultimately interviewing ten respondents who were a part of the preliminary report. These respondents were not screened for intention to migrate and were given an expanded survey that included specific questions targeting respondents who had abandoned their migration plans between Wave 1 and Wave 2.

Wave 3 and Wave 4 data collection attempted to contact all of the Wave 1 and Wave 2 respondents with varying success (see next section for a discussion of attrition between Wave 3 and Wave 4). Respondents were not screened for intention to migrate and were given an expanded survey that included questions to assess the development of migration dynamics over time and questions to assess additional contextual and individual level motivations.

There will be one more wave of data collection for this study. No new respondents will be added to the study and respondents from Wave 1 and Wave 2 will again be surveyed.

Attrition analysis

The study experienced sizable attrition over the course of the four waves of data collection.

- Among the original 40 respondents in Wave 1, 4 (10%) respondents did not participate in any subsequent waves of data collection.
- Among the 210 respondents in Wave 2, 34 (16%) respondents did not participate in any subsequent waves.
- Among the 187 respondents in Wave 3, 109 (58%) respondents did not participate in Wave 4.

Of the original 240 respondents, researchers were able to contact 131 (55%) during Wave 4 data collection. Among those, 18 respondents (14%) did not consent in the interview and another 16 (15%) respondents were identified as a different person (and thus excluded for quality assurance reasons). Of the 97 Wave 4 participants, 78 (80%) participated in Wave 3, 87 (90%) in Wave 2 and 15 (15%) in Wave 1. Eight respondents participated in all 4 Waves of data collection. The information provided by three respondents did not correspond with the information on file for them. As such, they were given new unique identifiers and assumed to have begun the study from Wave 4 (though they each recalled participating in previous wave of data collection).

High attrition naturally signals that many respondents had simply left Afghanistan. However, the data from previous waves calls this assumption into question:

- Respondents who did not participate in Wave 4 were *not* in more advanced planning stages in Wave 3 than those who remained in the study in Wave 4;
- Respondents who did not participate in Wave 4 did *not* report earlier departure dates in Wave 3 than those who remained in the study in Wave 4.[49]
- Respondents who intended to migrate within the next 12 months at the time of the Wave 3 survey were *less* likely to drop out of Wave 4 than those who reported their intention to irregularly migrate in Wave 3.[50]

Half of those who intended to migrate within 12 months in Wave 3 had changed their migration plans at the time of the Wave 4 survey. 47% of respondents with irregular migration plans in Wave 3 participated in Wave 4, while 64% of those who did not intend to migrate irregularly in Wave 3 dropped out of the study.

This data underscores the finding that most respondents changed their migration plans between waves of data collection and such plans can change extremely quickly. As previous research has found, migration plans and decision-making are a non-linear process that are highly dynamic and fast-changing. It could also be that respondents in advanced stages in their migration planning in Wave 3 were

[49] They also did not have a stronger networks abroad and were not more likely to have previous migration experience.

[50] Regression analysis, $p<.05$.

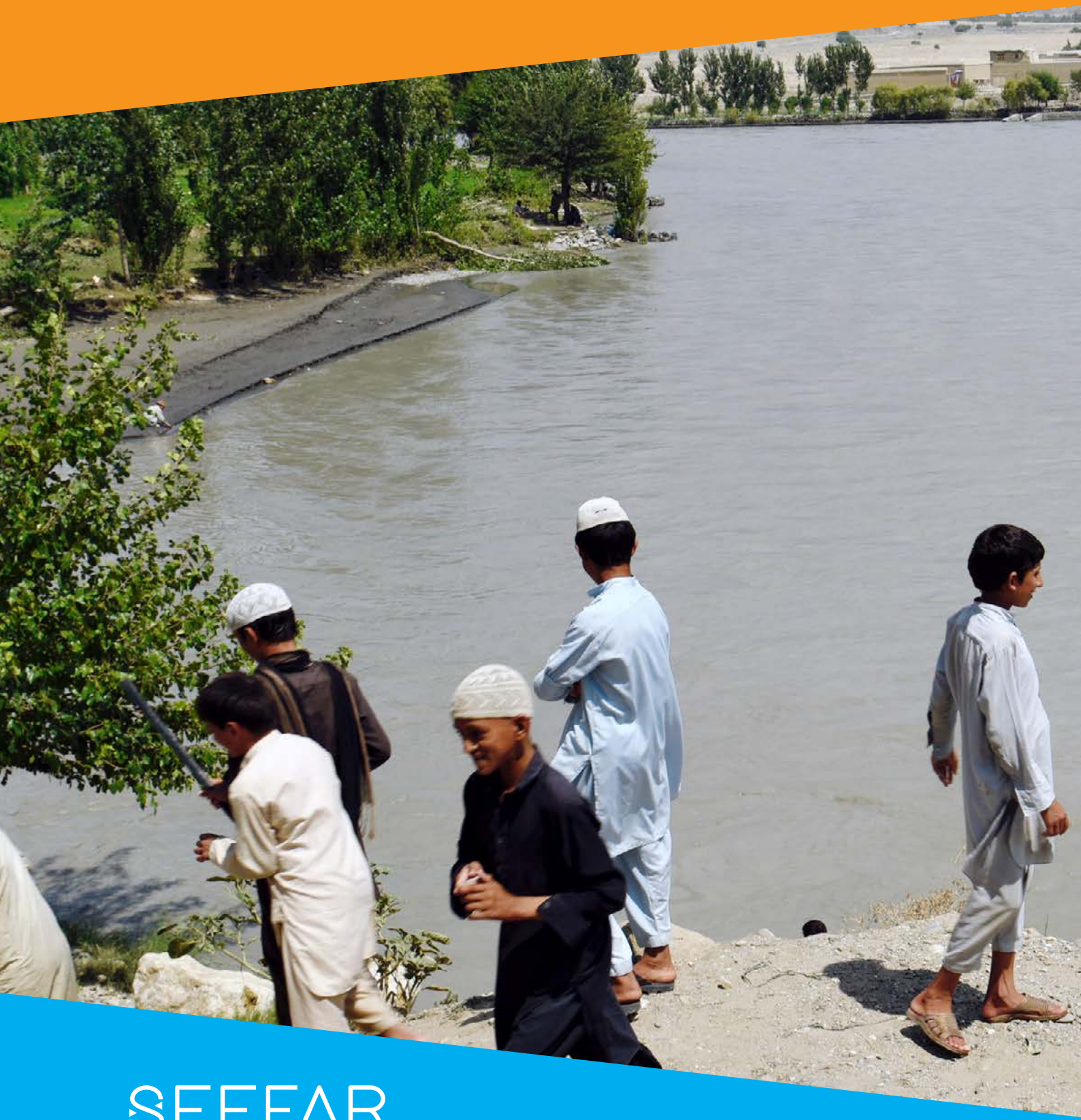
reluctant to share this information, afraid of "being stopped" last minute and may therefore not have revealed their true plans.[51]

Besides these differences, respondents who participated in Wave 4 were more likely to be employed, higher educated and more likely to live in Nangarhar and Kabul than in other provinces.[52] Part of this selection bias may be related to decreased levels of trust for international organisations outside of Nangarhar and Kabul, since almost all of the respondents who did not consent in the interview were not living in Nangarhar and Kabul at the time of the Wave 3 survey. International organisations may be disproportionately present in Nangarhar and Kabul which are major sites of displacement and contexts in need of humanitarian support. Unemployed respondents may have begun experiencing increased levels of frustration over the years and may therefore be less willing to talk about their situation.

As a nonrepresentative study intending to focus on individual decision-making overtime, attrition is not a threat to the research objectives. It is, however, an interesting dimension to the study that will be closely monitored in Wave 5.

[51] Note that it could also be that respondents could simply not be reached because they changed their phone number and contact information which is commonly observed in Afghanistan.

[52] Regression analysis, $p<.05$.



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