BANGLADESH:

SURVEY ON DRIVERS OF MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS' PROFILE

REGIONAL EVIDENCE FOR MIGRATION POLICY AND ANALYSIS (REMAP)
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)

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Disclaimer

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ACRONYMS

BDT: Bangladeshi Taka

BMET: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training. The Bangladeshi ministry that is responsible for aiding Bangladeshi international migrants.

DEMO: District Employment and Manpower Office. District offices that offer government assistance with migration.

IOM: International Organization for Migration

REMAP: Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy

USD: United States Dollar

GLOSSARY

Migrant: An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from their place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

Potential Migrant: **Potential migrant** will be defined under this study as an individual who intends to move out of Bangladesh to an international destination and has already made various preparations for his or her migration.*

Migration: The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State. For this report, **migration** will refer to the movement of individuals across Bangladesh’s international border.

Regular Migrant: A person who moves or has moved across an international border and is authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.

Regular Potential Migrant: **Regular potential migrant** will be defined under this study as an individual who intends to move out of Bangladesh to an international destination and has already made various preparations for his or her migration through channels provided by Govt. of Bangladesh such as registering with BMET. Since the individuals interviewed for this report had not left Bangladesh, this designation is based on their intention of choosing a specific migration channel (regular or irregular) and is not based on their actual migration status.*

Irregular Potential Migrant: For this report, **irregular potential migrant** will be defined under this study as an individual who intends to move out of Bangladesh to an international destination and has already made various preparations for his or her migration but who did not register their intention to migrate with the Bangladeshi government, and instead received assistance from a migration facilitator for their migration. It does not necessarily imply the migrant’s possession of documentation that proves their identity or their right to enter or stay in a country.*

Migration facilitator: Within this study, **migration facilitator** refers to anyone that is involved in the facilitation of migration services (irregular and regular) via air, land or sea routes in exchange for money. Those services can reach from consultative services for visa application and acquiring (fraudulent) documents, to transportation arrangement, to the facilitation of border crossings. The term used does not intend to neglect the differences in services and often used terms for those persons providing the migration services.*

NOTE: When the label "Multiple answers possible" appears above a graph or when a dagger symbol (†) appears in the text, it means that a single respondent was allowed to provide more than one answer. For this reason, totals do not add up to 100 per cent.

*These are the definitions of potential migrant, regular potential migrant, irregular potential migrant and migration facilitator used in this study. They are not the official definition endorsed by the IOM. For the official definitions, please look here.

Secretary
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

সচিব
প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ও বৈদেশিক কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

FOREWORD

It is my immense pleasure to write this foreword for the report entitled "Bangladesh: Survey on Drivers of Migration and Migrants' Profile". The question of why people migrate has been a central concern in policymaking to understand and consequently implement targeted programmes. Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 also stated the need to address the root causes of migration.

Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in her introductory speech at the first meeting of the National Steering Committee on Migration on 25 August 2019, urged to prepare a database of people going abroad for jobs with details such as their socio-economic background and to formulate better-informed migration scenarios for the future. This report represents a step towards better understanding of conditions and assumptions to develop future migration scenarios.

As we know, labour migration is immensely important for the economic and social development of Bangladesh. In 2019 alone, approximately 700 thousand migrants went abroad, sending approximately 18.35 billion US dollars as remittances. The Government of Bangladesh is committed to ensure self-selected overseas employment through safe and dignified migration as well as overseas employment, improvement of quality of life and overall social security for migrant workers and their family members which will accelerate national development through contributing to eliminating unemployment as well as poverty. In the post COVID world we will face many challenges to realise this target. the greater understanding of socioeconomic background of migrants, an up-to-date, in-depth profile of migrants, and what drives them to leave home will play an important role in facilitating the migration process. This report provides better understanding on the factors that shape international labour migration from Bangladesh and translating that knowledge into a resource to support policy and practice.

I must thank IOM, Bangladesh for undertaking this initiative for providing vital evidence for policy makers in Bangladesh which will facilitate better policies and programming. I also thank the EU for supporting the REMAP project.

Dr. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen
Secretary

FOREWORD BY IOM BANGLADESH CHIEF OF MISSION

Bangladesh is the sixth largest origin country for international migrants in the world, with 7.5 million Bangladeshi migrants living abroad as of 2019 (World Migration Report, 2020). The remittances sent by migrants make significant contributions towards accelerating economic development of the country, such as poverty reduction, addressing unemployment problems, and increasing foreign exchange reserves. Because of the importance of international migration, the Government of Bangladesh has prioritized migration as a development strategy in their Seventh Five Year Plan. Evidence based policy formulation and programming is a key to achieve better migration management in any context. In last two years, I have tried to expand the research and data portfolio of our operations in Bangladesh in line with objective one of Global Compact for Migration. As a coordinator and secretariat of Bangladesh UN Migration Network, IOM has been conducting various researches and studies. Here, I present to you one such initiative which focuses on understating elucidates what drives people to migrate and the profile of potential migrants.

People migrate in search of better living conditions for themselves and for their families. However, migration can also be a consequence of inequalities within and between countries. Taken together, these can be understood as the 'drivers' of migration. Though, a lot of research and studies have been conducted on the drivers of migration, there remain a gap of a comprehensive study which covers whole of Bangladesh. The present research has tried to fill the gap by conducting a research with more than 11,000 potential migrants in all 64 districts of Bangladesh. Along with unpacking the nuances of what drives people to migrate, the research also focused on "who are the migrants" by presenting demographic and socio-economic profile of the migrants.

The study was conducted in conjunction with the Government of Bangladesh under the collaborative project "Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (REMAP) – Asia and the Middle East" funded by the European Union. The objective of REMAP is to strengthen the evidence-based formulation and implementation of humanitarian and development policy and programming on migration in Bangladesh and other countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan).

The UN Sustainable Agenda 2030 reemphasized to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed policies (Target 10.7). Informed public dialogue supported by evidence-based research is pivotal to the progressive achievement of the target and improving policy discourse on migration. The report presents pre COVID-19 dynamics, however, the comprehensive analysis of drivers of migration and profile of migrants will allow us to understand the post COVID-19 migration issues as well. We hope that this study will spark a discussion around the broader socioeconomic drivers of migration, and guide policymakers to invest in migration and in youth for more sustainable migration management and development policies.

I would like to thank Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment for their leadership in creating a safe and regular migration systems in Bangladesh. My special thanks go to European Union for supporting us with necessary resources to support Government of Bangladesh in evidence-based policy formulation and programming.

Giorgi Gigauri
Chief of Mission
IOM Bangladesh

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I. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is the sixth largest origin country for international migrants in the world, with 7.8 million Bangladeshi migrants living abroad as of 2019 (UNDESA, 2019). Over 2.2 million young adults join the job market in Bangladesh each year (IOM, 2017), but the domestic labour market is unable to employ all of these individuals. Instead, many migrate internationally to secure employment and send remittances home, which are used to repay loans and to support migrant families (ibid). Remittances are an important part of the Bangladeshi economy and make up an equivalent of 5.4 per cent of the national GDP (IOM, 2018).

As a result of the importance of international migration to Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi government has prioritized migration as a development strategy in their Seventh Five-Year Plan. Additionally, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment continues to support safe migration and migration best practices through the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET). BMET assists migrants in the regular migration process, promotes workers' rights and facilitates training prior to migration (BMET, 2018).

The majority of Bangladeshi nationals are living abroad in Saudi Arabia and India (UNDESA, 2019). In 2019, Saudi Arabia was the largest destination country for new Bangladeshi migrants (BMET, 2019). Only two per cent of migrants are considered "professional", and 48 per cent are considered low skilled (IOM, 2017; BMET, 2019). Many migrants work in construction or hazardous jobs in countries of destination (IOM, 2017; IOM, 2020).

Bangladeshi women joined the international migrant labour pool in 1991, and they increased in number after 2004, when government restrictions on female migrants decreased (IOM, 2017). Women often migrate to countries in the Middle East, where they are employed as domestic workers.

Migration from Bangladesh is facilitated by either the government or by private recruitment agencies in Bangladesh; the government of Bangladesh facilitates the migration process at a lower cost than what is charged by private recruitment agencies (IOM, 2017). Intermediaries and sub-agents help to connect the larger private recruitment agencies to migrants at local levels (IOM, 2020). Like the government, private recruitment agencies also provide skills training prior to migration (ibid).

This quantitative study is part of a three-year research and policy program conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and financed by the European Union under a regional program called Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (REMAP). The objective of REMAP is to strengthen the evidence-based formulation and implementation of humanitarian and development policy and programming on migration in Bangladesh, as well as in Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Pakistan. The research was done in conjunction with the Government of Bangladesh.

Data were collected from November to December 2019 and reflect migration intentions in Bangladesh before the first cases of Sars-CoV-2 (Covid-19) were confirmed in the country in 2020. The study focused on potential regular and irregular migrants throughout Bangladesh who were planning to migrate within the next six months. Respondents were interviewed in person using a structured questionnaire. A total of 11,415 potential migrants were interviewed in all 64 districts. The survey objective was to unpack the drivers of migration in Bangladesh among regular and irregular potential migrants and present a comparative analysis of the drivers between the two groups.

The report is divided into six main sections. The first section will begin with an explanation of the methodology, including the research method and sampling, limitations and definitions. This will be followed by an analysis of the demographic and socio-economic profiles of the potential migrants. The third chapter will examine the costs potential migrants paid for their migration. Then, the fourth chapter will explore the reasons and drivers of migration, including the push factors (the reasons potential migrants have chosen to leave Bangladesh) and the pull factors (the reasons potential migrants have chosen specific intended destinations). Next, the migration experience is examined in the fifth chapter, including where potential migrants get information, and who they get support from during the migration process. Finally, the sixth chapter will explore what improvements potential migrants require in order to stay in Bangladesh.

Note: The individuals' designation as regular or irregular potential migrant is based on their reported intention to choose a specific migration channel (regular or irregular) and is not based on their actual migration status.

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II. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One key finding of the report is that Bangladeshi regular and irregular potential migrants share many characteristics. Regular and irregular potential migrant respondents were the same ages and had similar levels of education and employment prior to the decision to migrate. Furthermore, 71 per cent of regular potential migrants also paid migration facilitators for assistance with their migration, and they paid similar amounts as irregular potential migrants did.

Another insight is that potential migrants were driven to migrate by the possibility of improved work opportunities and support from a strong social network. Many respondents were planning to move to a destination where they already had family or friends. Many potential migrants were moving elsewhere in the Global South, rather than to a country in the Global North.

2.1 Demographics and socioeconomic profile

The majority of respondents were male (89%), and 11 per cent were female. On average, female potential migrants were older (29.7 years) than male potential migrants (27.2 years), but the age differences between regular and irregular potential migrants were negligible. Male respondents were more likely to be irregular potential migrants than female respondents – 53 per cent of men compared to only 28 per cent of women. Only 10 per cent of potential migrants had migrated before.

Approximately half of the respondents were married (49%), and 42 per cent of the respondents had children.

The majority of respondents (97%) had completed some level of education, and 66 per cent had finished middle school. Forty-two per cent of regular potential migrants had attained more than a primary school education, while 58 per cent of irregular potential migrants had.

Before migrating, 40 per cent of respondents reported being unemployed. Fifty-three per cent of those who reported being unemployed were regular potential migrants, and 47 per cent were irregular. Only nine per cent of all potential migrants had formal employment in either the public or private sector.

The majority of potential migrants stated that they had either no personal income (41%) or insufficient income (49%). The majority of potential migrants (92%) reported a monthly household income of less than BDT 25,000 (USD 295)*. Most households (70%) had assets below BDT 1 million (USD 11,786). The responses to questions on both income and assets were consistent between regular and irregular potential migrants.

2.2 Migration costs

This section explores the costs related to potential migrants' decisions to migrate. Regular potential migrants who had registered with the government or planned to do so made up half of the potential migrants surveyed. Most regular potential migrants (86%) paid less than BDT 500 (USD 5.89) to register with the government. Six per cent paid more than BDT 2,000 (USD 23.57), and only two per cent paid more than BDT 4,000 (USD 47.14).

Eighty-five per cent of potential migrants in the survey paid a migration facilitator to assist with their migration. This includes 71 per cent of regular potential migrants and all irregular potential migrants.

Regular and irregular potential migrants paid very similar amounts to migration facilitators for support with their planned travel. Regular potential migrants who also paid migration facilitators were slightly more likely to pay more to migration facilitators for their support than irregular potential migrants. The average amount paid by regular potential migrants was BDT 243,651 (USD 2,871), while irregular potential migrants on average paid BDT 229,488 (USD 2,705).

All female regular potential migrants paid at least BDT 100 (USD 1.18) to register with the government, and 68 per cent of female regular potential migrants paid less than BDT 500 (USD 5.89). Female regular potential migrants had a higher likelihood of paying more to the government for their migration than regular potential migrants overall, but women paid less on average to migration facilitators than potential migrants as a whole. Female irregular potential migrants paid on average only BDT 104,655 (USD 1,233), while men paid on average BDT 237,498 (USD 2,799).

2.3.1 Push factors: reasons for leaving Bangladesh

This section explores the factors that guide migrant decision-making. The majority of respondents reported that they chose to migrate to find better job and livelihood opportunities (73%). Other common reasons were financial (13%) and to enhance their social status (11%). The reasons for migration cited were consistent between those planning to go to different destinations and between regular and irregular potential migrants.

The top three causes of a potential migrant's final decision to migrate were unemployment (33%), joining a family member or members who were migrating at the same time (27%) and access to a community abroad (25%).

Eighty-nine per cent of prospective migrants reported facing personal challenges, including insufficient income and financial difficulty. At a household level, 90 per cent of potential migrants reported facing challenges, again listing insufficient income and financial problems as the most common challenges. At the community level, 84 per cent of potential migrants say that their communities face challenges, specifying a lack of jobs as a top challenge.

2.3.2 Pull factors: reasons for going to a specific destination

This section explores the factors behind respondents' decisions to migrate. The most common reason cited for choosing a specific destination country was the presence of a social network in that country (43%), which highlights the importance of transnational networks. Potential migrants also chose a destination based on the availability of jobs in that country and the promise of better salaries compared to Bangladesh (28%). Twenty per cent of potential migrants chose their destination based on the accessibility of the country's migration process. The reasons given for migration were very similar between regular and irregular potential migrants, and the reasons for migration did not vary widely between different destination regions.

Eighty per cent of potential migrants were planning to travel to the Middle East and Western Asia, and 17 per cent were planning to migrate to Asia and the Pacific. The most common destination reported was Saudi Arabia (64%).

2.4 Migration networks, support and planning

The SDM found that only 12 per cent of potential migrants had at least one member of their household living abroad, but 66 per cent reported having friends or extended family living in the country to which they planned to travel. Ninety-six per cent of these potential migrants reported being helped by said friends or family members. Help often took the form of support with documents (83%), help with securing employment (76%) or financial assistance (63%).† Potential migrants also cited receiving support with migration preparations and arrangements from family and friends still in Bangladesh (82%), from a broker (50%) and from family and friends in other countries (19%).†

Fifty per cent of potential migrants reported receiving information about migrating from their social network, including friends and family both in Bangladesh and abroad. Other potential migrants (44%) reported that the media (internet, social media, newspapers and television) was their main source of information.

Most potential migrants were planning to be away for more than one year, with 77 per cent of potential migrants planning to be away for more than three years.

2.5 Conditions to stay

Potential migrants were asked what would need to change in their home country to convince them to stay. When asked, 99 per cent of potential migrants listed better job opportunities. Respondents also said they would stay if there were improvements to the rule of law (38%), a better security situation (36%) and more accessible health services (29%).† Ninety-one per cent of potential migrants said they would stay in Bangladesh if there were more work opportunities, 49 per cent of potential migrants would stay in Bangladesh if they had opportunities to study and 77 per cent would stay if the security situation improved.

Note: The individuals' designation as regular or irregular potential migrant is based on their reported intention to choose a specific migration channel (regular or irregular) and is not based on their actual migration status.

*December 2019, USD 1 = BDT 84.85 (UN official rate of exchange)

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1. METHODOLOGY

1.1 Research and sampling method

A quantitative approach was adopted to conduct the Survey on Drivers of Migration and to analyse specific thematic areas: socio-economic profiles, drivers and reasons for migration, challenges and access to services in Bangladesh and migration networks and aspirations. A quantitative approach was preferred among other methods because it allowed for systematic, standardised comparison of factors that contribute to different migration choices and aspirations. This could then be used to find a pattern in migration in Bangladesh, looking for differences between the geographical origin of potential migrants, their intended destinations and in the decision making of regular and irregular potential migrants.

The research focused on potential migrants in Bangladesh in 2019 who planned to migrate within the next six months. Potential migrants were categorized as regular or irregular, based on whether they had registered their intention to move with the government or not.

Potential migrants were surveyed on demographic information, household information, education and previous employment. Individuals were also asked if they had registered their intention to migration with the government and if they had paid a migration facilitator for support. The survey included questions about how much they had paid, who they paid it to and what services they had paid for. The study also looked at migration intentions and the reasons behind the decision to migrate, as well as respondents' challenges and access to services, and the type of support and information used to get information about migration. Long term aspirations were also explored.

IOM Bangladesh used a third-party research team to conduct the data collection. Eleven teams made up of five enumerators and one supervisor were spread across all 64 districts of Bangladesh. Eighteen per cent of the field research team were female. Data was collected through in-person conversations at tea stalls, DEMOs,* markets and homes. Regular potential migrants were selected randomly from individuals who were visiting DEMOs to register their migration paperwork. Irregular potential migrants were found by first talking to representatives from recruiting agencies, then asking respondents for the contact information of other potential migrants. Female potential migrants were difficult for the enumerators to find, so all female potential migrants who could be found were surveyed.

Teams interviewed 11,415 respondents; all efforts were made to ensure that regular and irregular potential migrants made up half of the surveyed group respectively. Convenience sampling was used to sample regular potential migrants and snowball sampling was used to sample irregular potential migrants. Both techniques are commonly used research methods for quantitative research and are particularly useful when the total population is unknown or options for probabilistic sampling do not exist.

To reduce potential biases, the research team regularly monitored the data collection for indications of error. Additionally, there were four quality control officers who randomly checked 15 per cent of the data for accuracy. Both of these approaches limited possible errors in the original data and the data analysis.

1.2 Limitations

The survey was non-probabilistic, due to the sampling strategy. This means that the sample is not necessarily representative of the migrant population of Bangladesh. To reduce the instances of bias and to make the survey as representative as possible, the research team constructed a profile of the target population before beginning data collection. This was then used to determine who might be under- or over-represented and to brainstorm ways to address this problem. Nonetheless, the results of the study must be interpreted carefully.

Another limitation of the survey was the difficulty in finding and accessing irregular potential migrants. While regular potential migrants were accessible through government offices, there was no system available to access irregular potential migrants in Bangladesh, and therefore the snowball method was the only method available. Both of these increase the odds that bias could have entered into the sample. However, this is a common limitation with snowball sampling and was planned for from the beginning of the data collection.

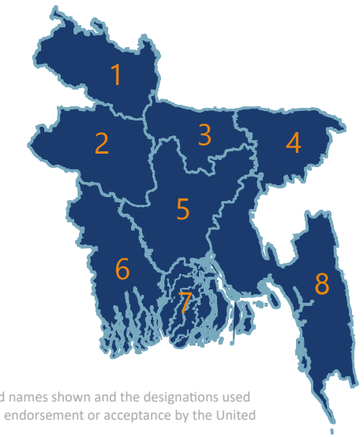
1.3 Data analysis rationale

For the first part of the data analysis, potential migrants were grouped as regular and irregular to understand how these groups differed. Next, potential migrants were grouped into categories based on their intended destinations: Europe and the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and Western Asia and Africa. Finally, potential migrant data were analysed based on their home division, which is the highest sub-national administrative unit in Bangladesh. These groupings were chosen because of the likelihood of the respondents in these categories having more in common than they did not.

*District offices that assist with regular migration.

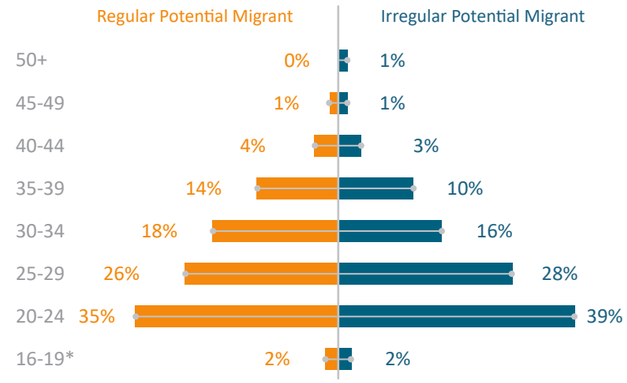
DIVISION MAP

1. Rangpur
2. Rajshahi
3. Mymensingh
4. Sylhet
5. Dhaka
6. Khulna
7. Barishal
8. Chattogram



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

AGE PYRAMID OF REGULAR AND IRREGULAR POTENTIAL MIGRANTS



*Individuals younger than 16 were not surveyed.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY DIVISION

Barishal	Chattogram	Dhaka	Khulna
1,080 Respondents	1,850 Respondents	2,496 Respondents	1,875 Respondents
62% Married	42% Married	48% Married	49% Married
Mymensingh	**Rajshahi**	**Rangpur**	**Sylhet**
715 Respondents	1,506 Respondents	1,133 Respondents	760 Respondents
57% Married	54% Married	44% Married	35% Married

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2. DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 Demographic and socio-economic profile

The majority of respondents were male (89%), and 11 per cent were female, which is consistent with BMET data from 2019 that shows a similar proportion of male to female migrants (85% male and 15% female) (BMET, 2019). In the SDM, men were more likely to be irregular potential migrants than women – 53 per cent of men compared to only 28 per cent of women.

The average age of respondents was 27.8, and 64 per cent of respondents were in their twenties. This is slightly younger than the BMET reported average age of regular migrants collected in 2019: 30.4 (BMET, 2019). Age differences between regular and irregular potential migrants were negligible, as were the age differences between migrants planning to travel to different destinations. Potential female migrants were older on average than potential male migrants, with an average age of 29.7.

Approximately half of the respondents were married (49%), and 49 per cent of the respondents were single. The older respondents were more likely to be married: 75 per cent of respondents over the age of 25 were married, and 92 per cent of respondents over 30 were married.

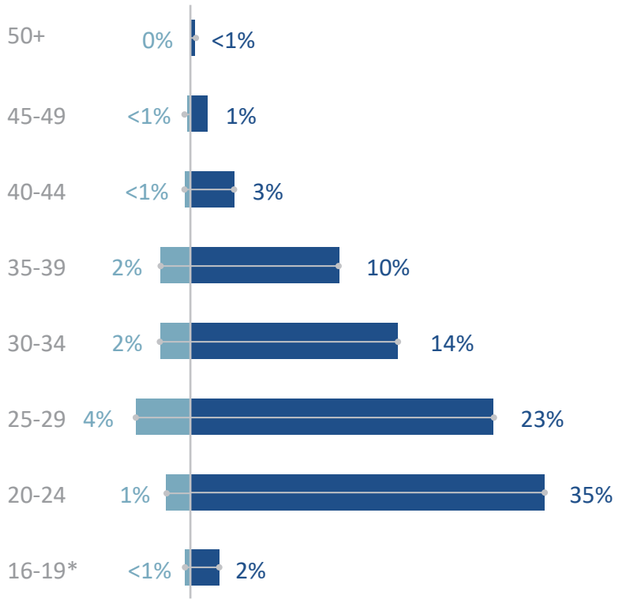
Of the respondents, 42 per cent had children. Thirty-eight per cent of irregular potential migrants had children, and 46 per cent of regular potential migrants had children.

11,415
RESPONDENTS

WOMEN 11%

MEN 89%

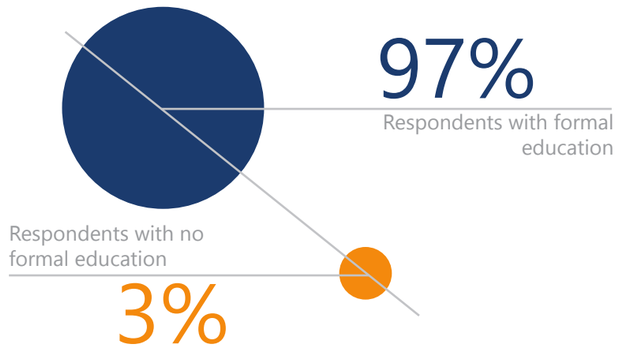
POPULATION PYRAMID



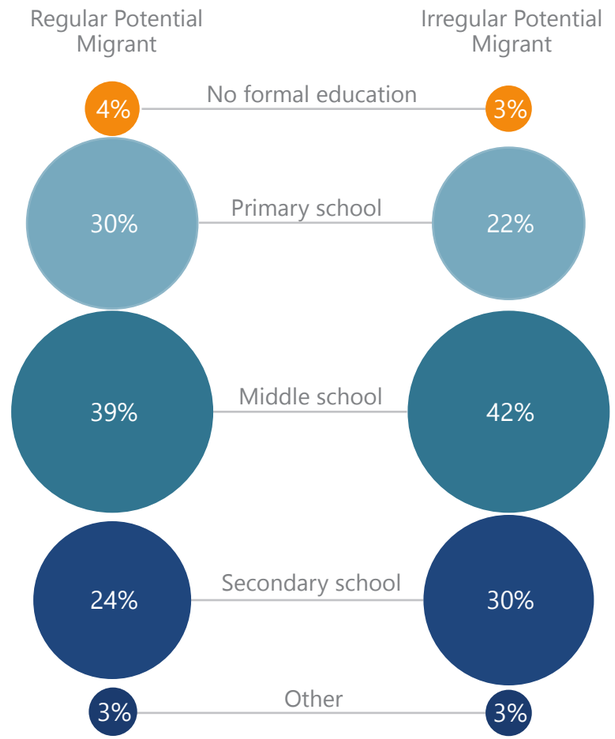
*Individuals younger than 16 were not surveyed.

Ninety-seven per cent of respondents had completed some level of education, and 66 per cent had finished middle school. Fifty-eight per cent of potential migrants who had achieved a primary school level or less were regular potential migrants, compared to 42 per cent of irregular potential migrants. However, overall, regular and irregular potential migrants had achieved similar levels of education.

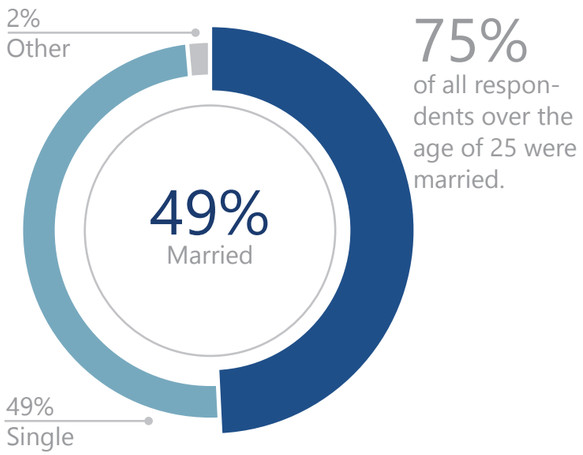
Potential migrants planning to travel to Europe and the Americas or Asia and the Pacific were more likely to have completed a secondary school education or higher – 67 per cent of potential migrants to Europe and the Americas and 51 per cent of potential migrants to Asia and the Pacific. In comparison, less than 25 per cent of potential migrants to the Middle East and Africa had completed secondary school or above.



RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATION LEVEL
(top 5 answers)

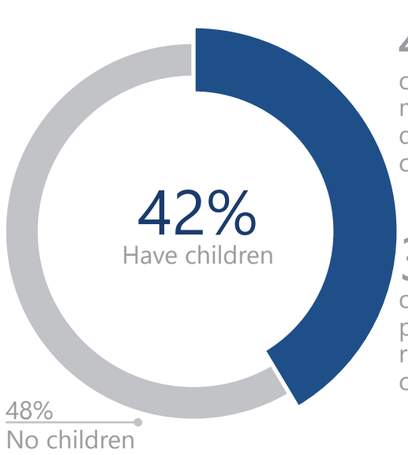


MARITAL STATUS



75%
of all respondents over the age of 25 were married.

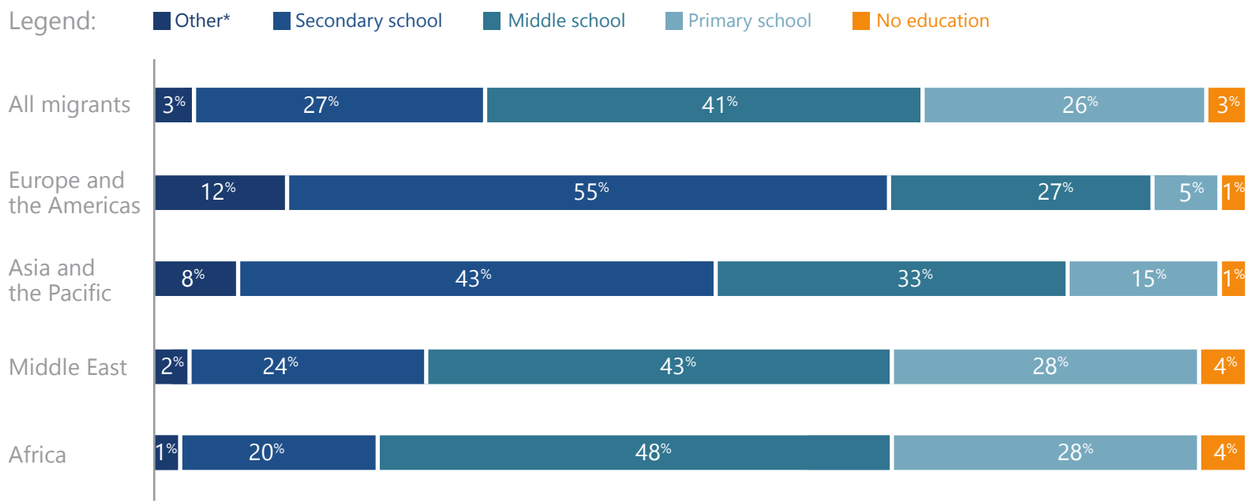
CHILDREN



46%
of regular potential migrant respondents have children.

38%
of irregular potential migrant respondents have children.

EDUCATION LEVEL BY DESTINATION



*Other included individuals who had completed bachelor degrees, certificate courses, medical school, engineering school, and other postsecondary education

Respondents were asked about their employment status prior to making the decision to migrate in order to understand how employment or lack of employment can affect migration status. Prior to migration, 40 per cent of respondents reported being unemployed. Fifty-three per cent of unemployed, Bangladeshi, potential migrants were regular potential migrants, and 47 per cent were irregular. Only nine per cent of potential migrants reported holding formal employment at the time of data collection in either the public or private sector. The employment breakdown shown above was consistent for both regular and irregular potential migrants.

Students made up a large number of the migrants planning to travel to the Americas (23%) and to Europe (16%). Laborers made up a substantial proportion of migrants planning to travel to the Middle East (23%) and Africa (32%). Unemployed individuals were the largest group of potential migrants to Europe and the Americas (47%), Asia and the Pacific (40%) and the Middle East (40%), and the second largest to Africa (25%).

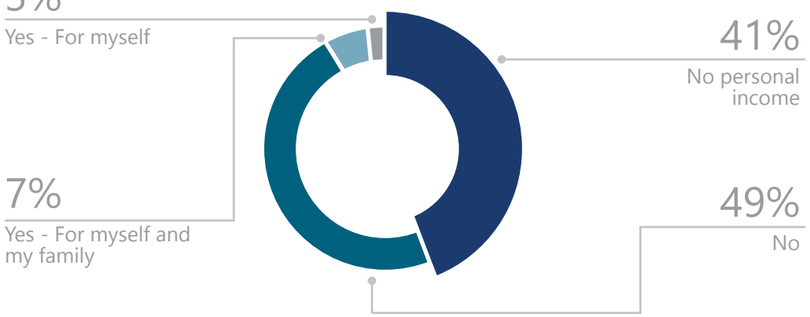
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The majority of potential migrants stated that they had either no personal income (41%) or insufficient income (49%). These responses were consistent between regular and irregular potential migrants.

The average household size was five people. The majority of potential migrants (92%) reported a monthly household income of less than BDT 25,000 (USD 295).* Most households (70%) had assets below BDT 1 million (USD 11,786), 25 per cent had assets between BDT 1 million and BDT 2 million (USD 11.786-23,571) and the remaining 5 per cent had assets over BDT 2 million (USD 23,571). This was similar for both regular and irregular potential migrants. Potential migrants to Europe and the Americas were more likely to have assets over BDT 1 million (USD 23,571) (57%).

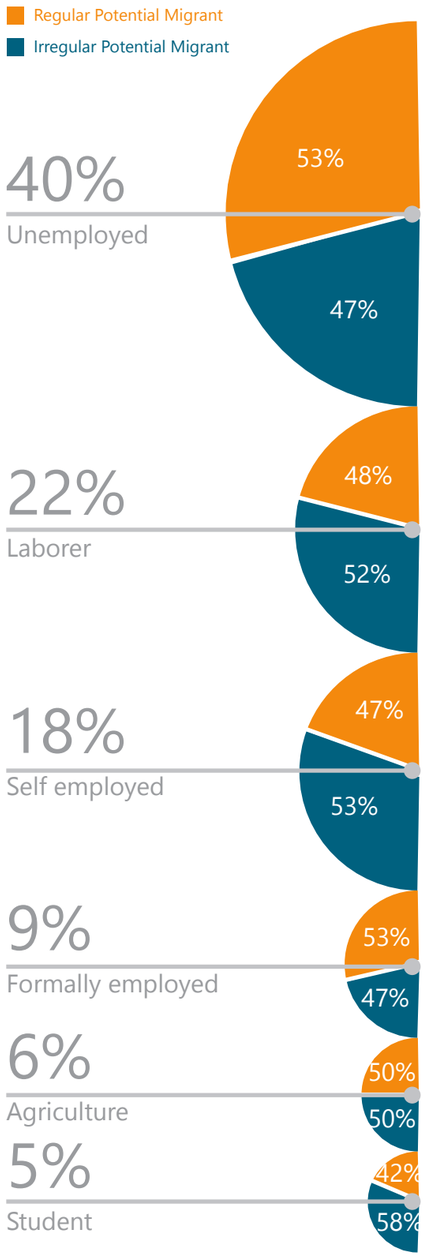
The average household income increased as household size decreased, while the average household's assets increased as the household size increased. The average household income per family member was BDT 2,000-5,000 (USD 23.57-58.92), and the average value of assets per family member was BDT 897,000 (USD 10,571).

WAS PERSONAL INCOME SUFFICIENT?

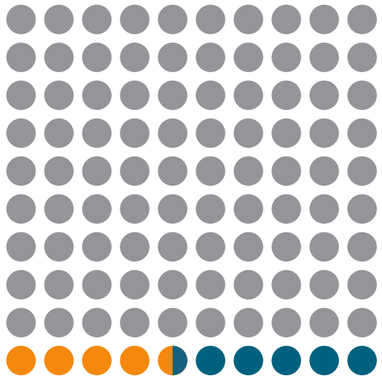


OCCUPATION DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS

(top 5 answers)



PREVIOUS MIGRATION EXPERIENCE



10%

Had migrated internationaly before

Respondents were asked about their previous migration experiences to explore the extent to which previous migration plays a role in current migration patterns and decision making. Ten per cent of potential migrants reported having migrated before. Of those, 46 per cent were irregular potential migrants and 54 per cent were regular potential migrants. Potential migrants with previous migration experience were more likely to be older than potential migrants who had not migrated before – the average age of these potential migrants was 33, and 70 per cent of potential migrants who had migrated before were older than 30.

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*December 2019, USD 1 = BDT 84.85 (UN official rate of exchange)

2.2 Costs of migration

Respondents were asked if they had registered with the government and if they had paid a migration facilitator to assist them with their migration. If the potential migrant answered yes to either of these questions, they were also asked how much they had paid.

Half of the potential migrants (50%) surveyed had registered their intention to migrate with the government or planned to do so. For the purposes of the study, these migrants were considered to be regular potential migrants.

Most regular potential migrants (86%) paid less than BDT 500 (USD 5.89) to register with the government. Six per cent paid more than BDT 2000 (USD 23.57), and two per cent paid more than BDT 4000 (USD 47.14). The highest amount paid was BDT 450,000 (USD 5,303). Respondents reported paying for registration, biometric registration,* training and passports, in addition to travel and visa costs.** Individuals from Rangpur were more likely to pay larger sums for their government registration than respondents in other divisions. Eighty-five per cent of potential migrants paid a migration facilitator to assist with their migration. This percentage includes 71 per cent of regular potential migrants as well as all irregular potential migrants. The largest amount paid to a migration facilitator was BDT 1.6 million (USD 18,857). Potential migrants to Europe and the Americas and the Middle East paid more to migrate than those going to other destinations. The average amount irregular potential migrants reported paying was BDT 229,488 (USD 2,705), and 10 per cent of irregular migrants paid less than BDT 50,000 (USD 589).

Regular and irregular potential migrants paid very similar amounts to migration facilitators to assist with their journeys. Regular potential migrants who paid migration facilitators for support were slightly more likely to pay more for their service than irregular potential migrants. Twenty-two per cent of regular potential migrants reported paying BDT 350,000-450,000 (USD 4,125-5,303) to migration facilitators, while only 18 per cent of irregular potential migrants reported doing so. The average amount paid by regular potential migrants was BDT 243,651 (USD 2,871), which is slightly higher than the average amount paid by irregular potential migrants: BDT 229,488 (USD 2,705).

Respondents who paid migration facilitators report primarily paying for support with their travel and visa. Migration facilitators who help arrange travel and visas are often a subagent or a broker working with recruitment agencies both in Bangladesh and in destination countries (IOM, 2020). The Bangladeshi government has set limits on how much private migration agencies can charge for migration services, which is dependent on the potential migrant's intended destination (IOM, 2020). In 2017, private migration agencies were allowed to charge the most for migration to Saudi Arabia (BDT 165,000 (USD 1,945)) and less for other countries (IOM, 2020, p.17). However, potential migrants often end up paying migration facilitators significantly more than prescribed rates, due to a number of hidden fees that dramatically increase the costs. These fees can include money for faster processing times, as well as fees for the migration agencies, brokers and subagents, both in Bangladesh and in the destination country (IOM, 2020).

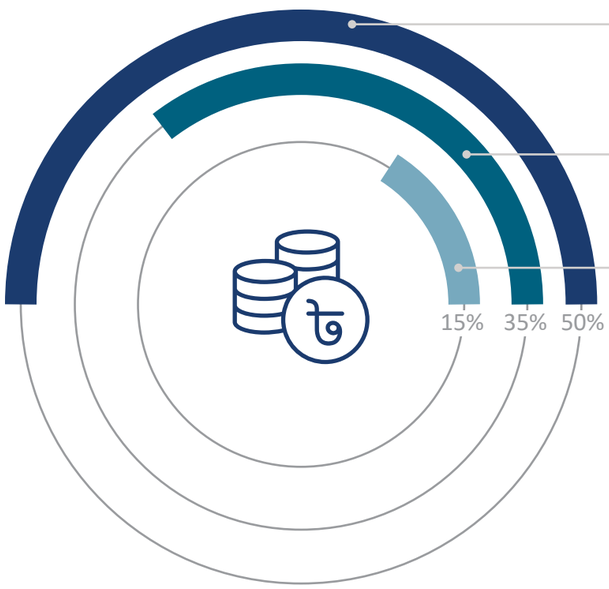
All female regular potential migrants paid at least BDT 100 (USD 1.18) to register with the government, and 68 per cent of female regular potential migrants paid less than BDT 500 (USD 5.89). Female regular potential migrants had a higher likelihood of paying more to the government for their migration than regular potential migrants overall; 13 per cent of female regular potential migrants paid more than BDT 2,000 (USD 23.57) in comparison to six per cent of regular potential migrants overall. Even though the Bangladeshi government has implemented zero-cost migration for female regular migrants to Saudi Arabia (IOM, 2020), 13 per cent of the 644 female regular potential migrants to Saudi Arabia paid more than BDT 2,000 (USD 23.57).

Thirty-seven per cent of regular potential migrants also paid a migration facilitator to assist with their migration. However, women reported paying much less on average to migration facilitators than potential migrants reported as a whole. Female irregular potential migrants paid on average BDT 104,655 (USD 1,233), while male irregular potential migrants on average paid BDT 237,498 (USD 2,799).

*Fingerprinting

**According to a key informant interview with a ministry official, regular potential migrants paid local government offices for registration, finger printing and a pre-departure briefing. These services costs BDT 200-400 (USD 2.36-4.71). Afterwards, they pay for smart cards, wage-earner welfare funds, insurance, and the visa, at the national office in Dhaka which all together can cost up to BDT 4740 (USD 55.86).

RECIPIENTS OF COSTS PAID BY TOTAL POTENTIAL MIGRANTS



Did not register with the government and **ONLY paid a migration facilitator** for assistance with their migration

AVERAGE COSTS PAID
BDT 229,488

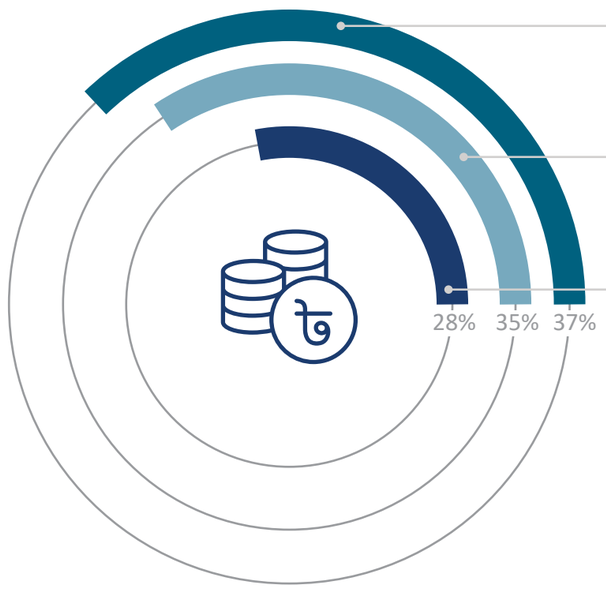
Registered with the government and paid **BOTH the government and a migration facilitator** for assistance with their migration

AVERAGE COSTS PAID
BDT 243,871

Registered with the government and **ONLY paid the government** for assistance with their migration

AVERAGE COSTS PAID
BDT 220

RECIPIENTS OF COSTS PAID BY FEMALE POTENTIAL MIGRANTS



Registered with the government and paid **BOTH the government and a migration facilitator** for assistance with their migration

AVERAGE COSTS PAID
BDT 50,220

Registered with the government and **ONLY paid the government** for assistance with their migration

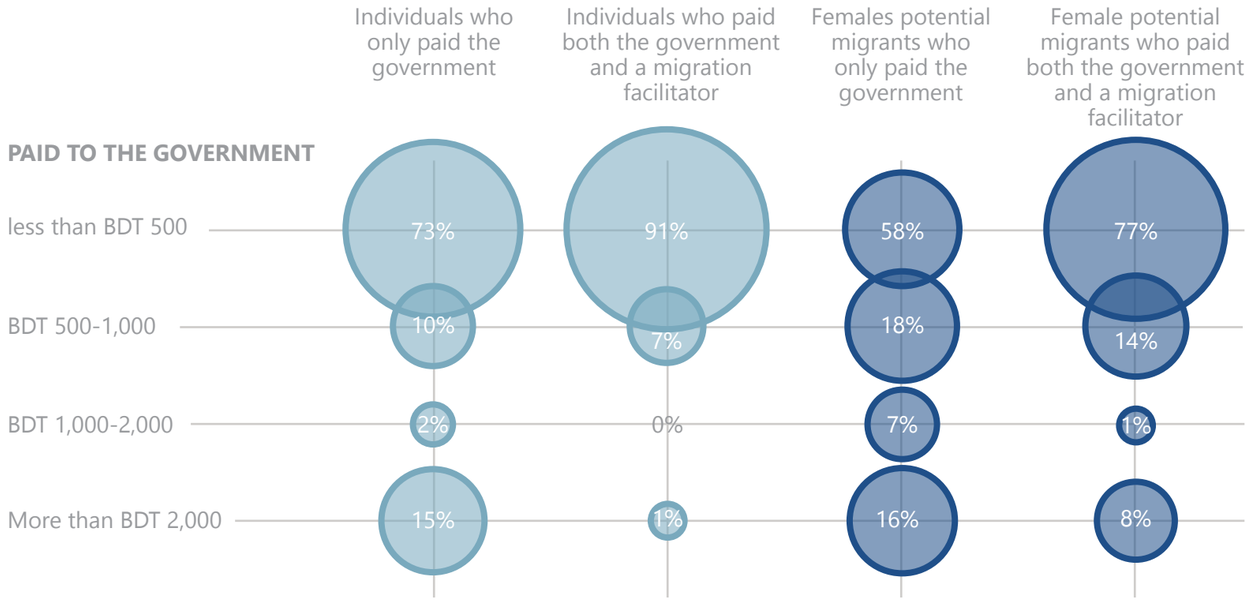
AVERAGE COSTS PAID
BDT 220

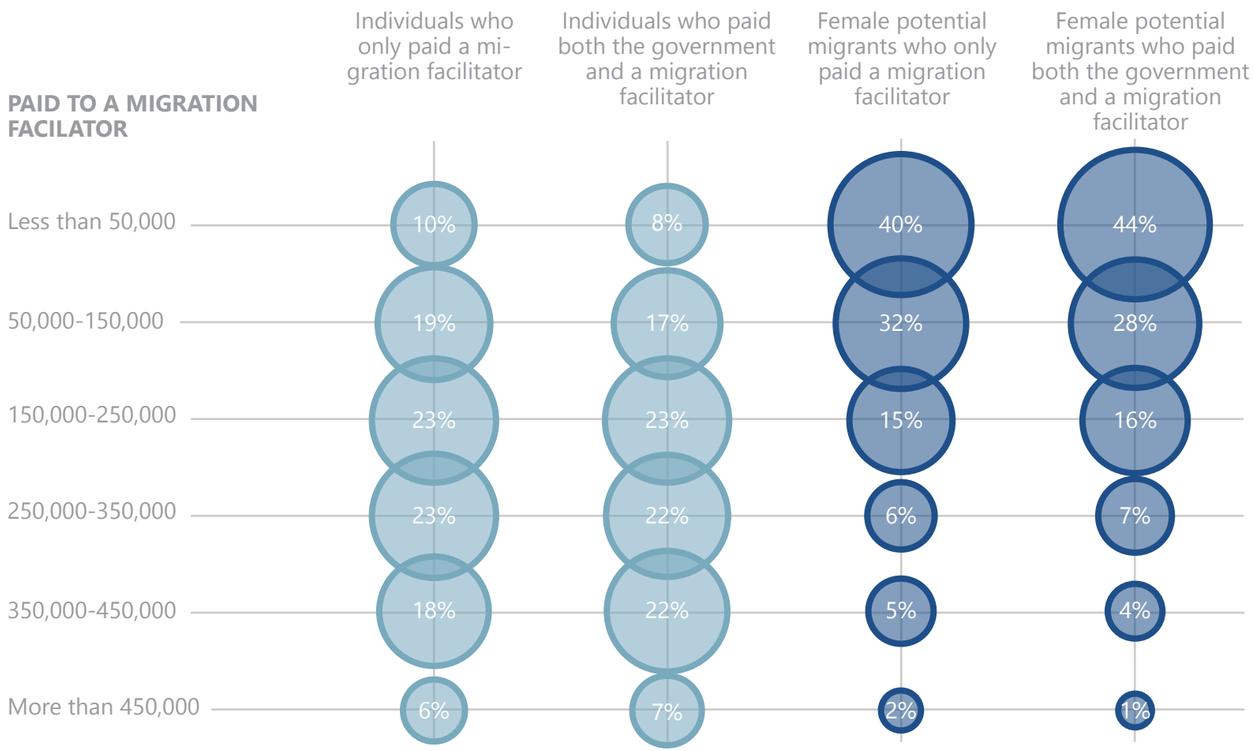
Did not register with the government and **ONLY paid a migration facilitator** for assistance with their migration

AVERAGE COSTS PAID
BDT 50,000

Note: Median was used for average costs paid to the government due to the high skew of outliers.

COSTS PAID BY POTENTIAL MIGRANTS

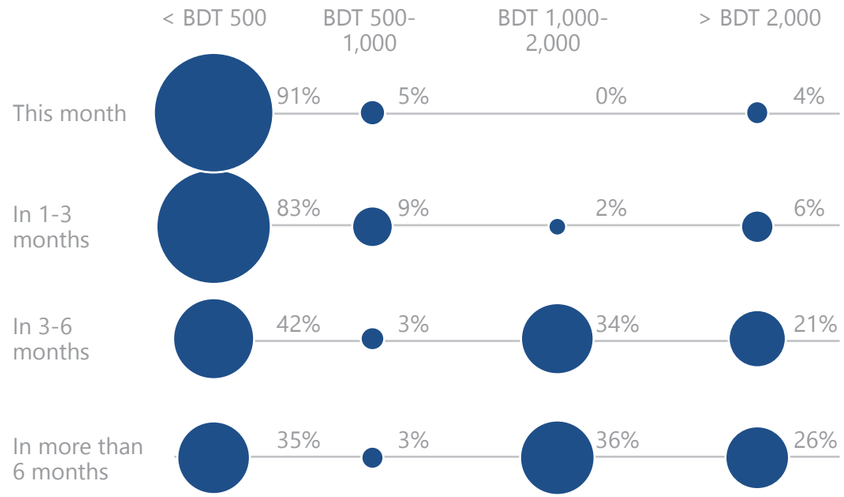




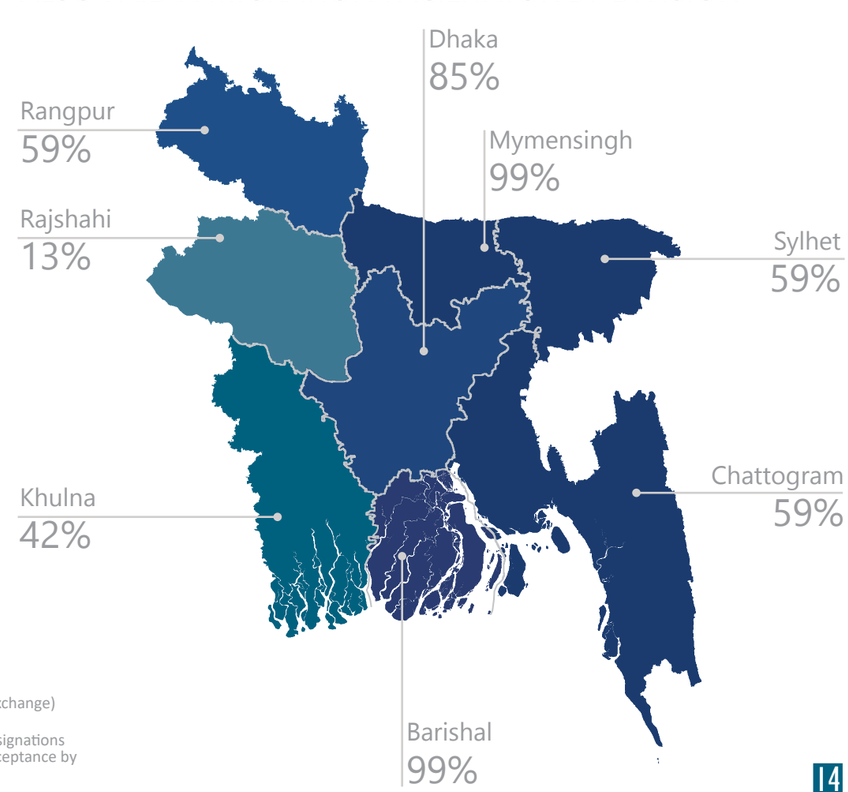
The study found that regular potential migrants who had paid more money to the government generally planned to leave later than those who had paid less. Of the potential migrants who were expecting to leave Bangladesh in the next month, 91 per cent had paid less than BDT 500 (USD 5.89). Of the potential migrants who were expecting to leave Bangladesh in three to six months, 42 per cent had paid less than BDT 500 (USD 5.89) and 21 per cent had paid more than BDT 2,000 (USD 23.57). Results show that in fact there is not an obvious link between how much an individual pays and how fast they depart. The study also did not find that differences in amounts paid were linked to where regular potential migrants were in the migration process, and the topic invites further research.

In addition to registering their intention to migrate with the Government of Bangladesh, 85% of regular potential migrants in the Dhaka division also paid migration facilitators to assist with their migration, and over 90 per cent of potential regular migrants in the Barisal, Chattogram, Mymensingh, and Sylhet divisions paid migration facilitators. Only 13 per cent of potential migrants in the Rajshahi division paid migration facilitators.

AMOUNT PAID TO GOVERNMENT AND EXPECTED TIMELINE OF DEPARTURE



PERCENTAGE OF POTENTIAL REGULAR MIGRANTS WHO ALSO PAID A MIGRATION FACILITATOR BY DIVISION



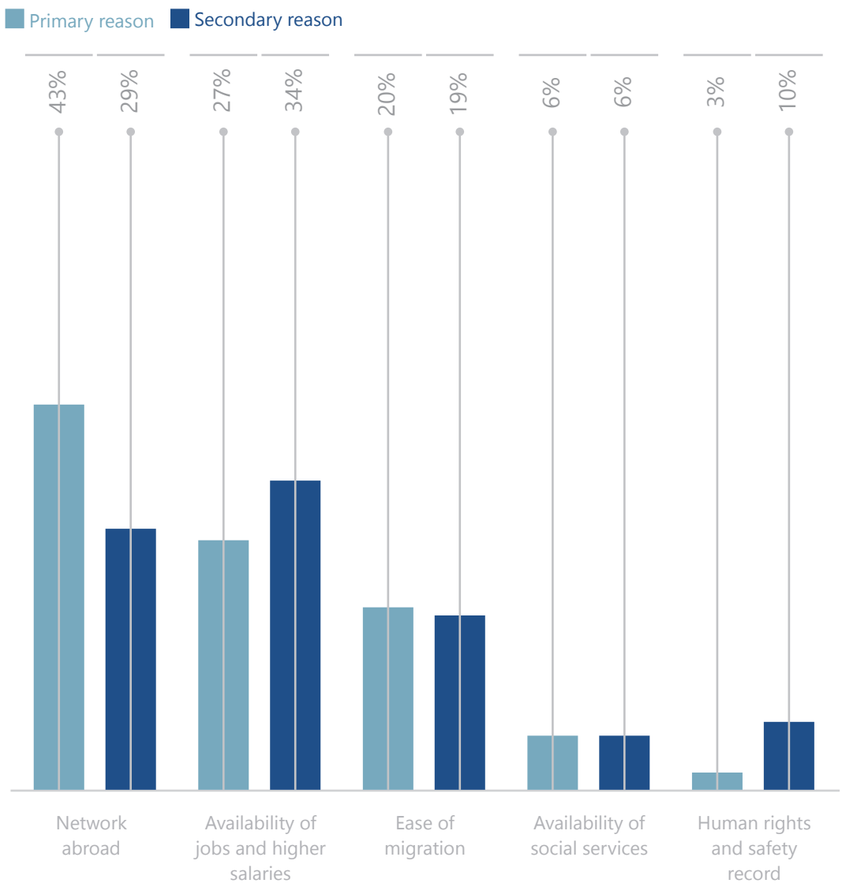
*December 2019, USD 1 = BDT 84.85 (UN official rate of exchange)

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

2.3 Reasons and drivers for migration

2.3.1 Pull factors

MAIN REASONS FOR CHOOSING INTENDED DESTINATION (top 5 answers)



Another way to understand what drives migration is through the use of pull factors, which are the features that attract migrants to a specific destination (Dorigo and Tobler, 1983). The study found that the most common reason potential migrants selected a specific destination country was the presence of a social network in that country, specifically a network including family, friends, neighbours or the Bangladeshi diaspora. The second most common reason was the availability of jobs in that country and the promise of better salaries compared to Bangladesh. The third reason potential migrants reported was ease of migration; for some potential migrants, this meant support from the Bangladeshi government, migration facilitators or relatives with migrating to the country, for others, it meant that they could get a low cost or free visa from the Bangladeshi government. Other reasons reported were the country's human rights and safety record, the ability to do hajj in the country or the availability of social services and benefits.

Female potential migrants were slightly more likely to select countries of intended destination based on the ease of migration (25% for female potential migrants, compared to 20% for all potential migrants). The study found that regular and irregular potential migrants cited similar reasons for migration, indicating that they had similar motivations for choosing where to migrate. Despite differences in the intended countries of destination, the reasons for migration did not vary widely between different destination regions.

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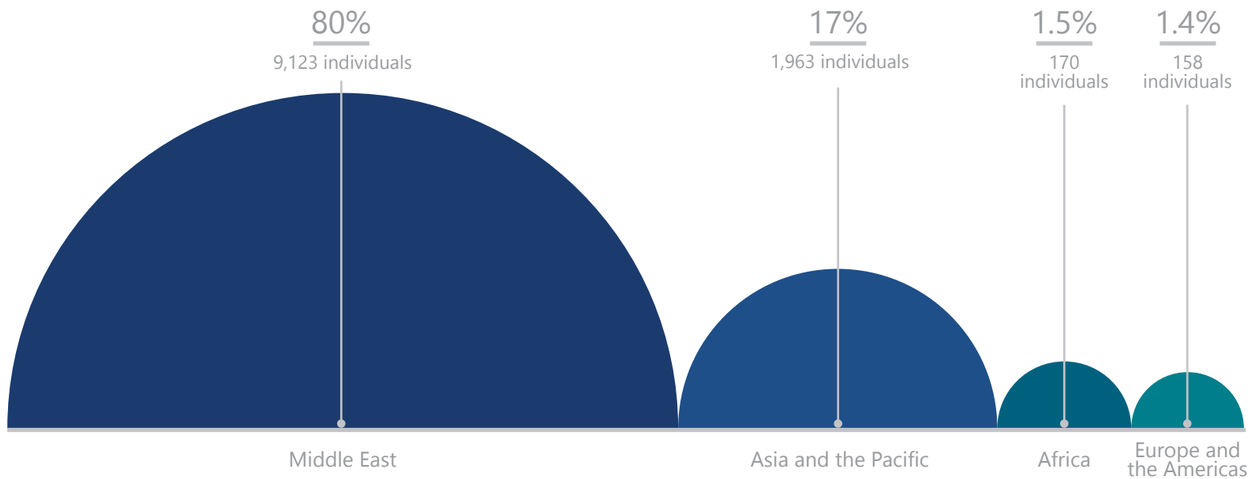
Eighty per cent of respondents plan to travel to the Middle East and Western Asia* with 65 per cent specifically planning to travel to Saudi Arabia. This percentage is even higher among female potential migrants; 95 per cent of whom reported planning to migrate to the Middle East and 73 per cent to Saudi Arabia specifically. According to 2019 data from BMET, 82 per cent of the total regular migrants went to the Middle East and 98 per cent of the total regular female migrants went to the Middle East (BMET, 2019). Both of these correspond with the destinations of potential migrants in this study.

Asia and the Pacific was the next most common destination region cited by respondents under this study (17%).** According to data from the Government of Bangladesh, in 2019 seven per cent of Bangladeshi regular migrants traveled to Asia and the Pacific (BMET, 2019).

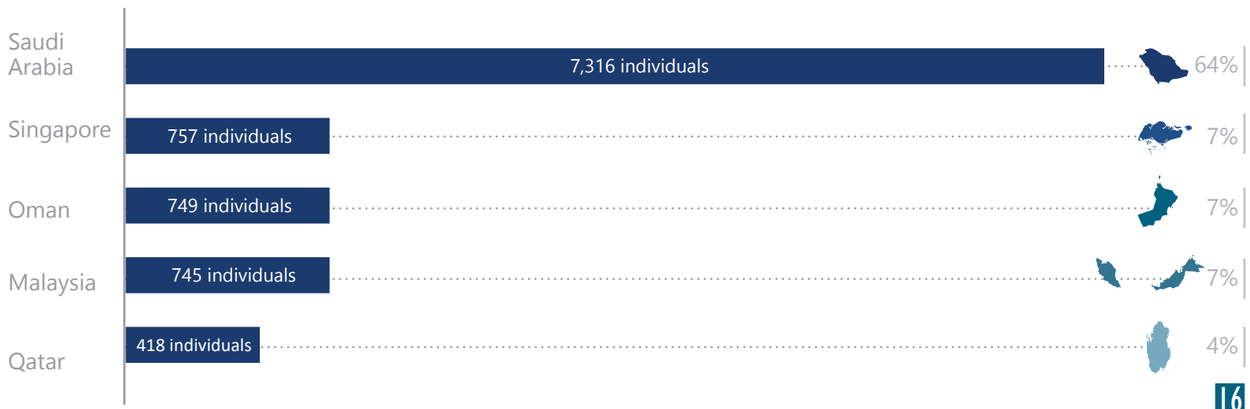
Very few migrants planned to travel directly to Europe and the Americas*** (1.4%) or to Africa (1.5%). Often, the perception is that migrants leave countries in the Global South to travel to countries in the Global North, but as can be seen in the data, this is not the case in Bangladesh. Instead, migration is predominately South - South, with most migrants going to countries in the Middle East or elsewhere in Asia (Joseph et al., 2013).

*Includes Gulf Countries, Middle Eastern countries, and countries in Western Asia such as Iran and Turkey.
**Includes Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, and South Eastern Asia, as well as Pacific countries such as Fiji and Australia.
***Includes European countries as well as countries in both North and South America.

DESTINATION REGIONS

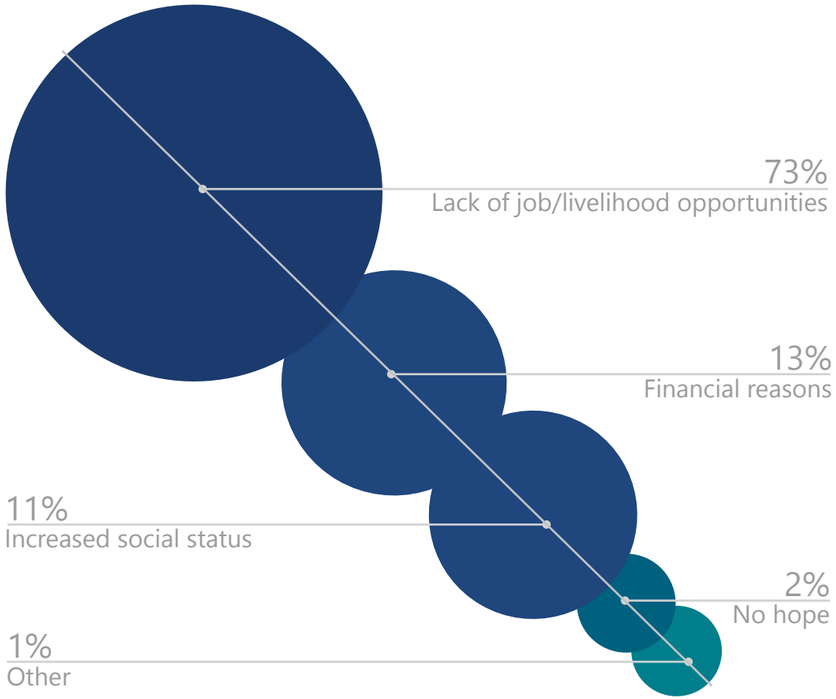


DESTINATION COUNTRIES (top 5 answers)



2.3.2 Push factors

MAIN REASONS FOR MIGRATION



Push factors are the conditions of a migrant's origin that cause them to make the choice to leave their homes (Dorigo and Tobler, 1983). Although there are other, more complex ways to analyse the drivers of migration, push factors are a simple way to begin to understand the reasons behind migration.

Respondents were asked to list their primary and secondary reasons for migration, 73 per cent responded that the main reason behind their intention to migrate was to find better job and livelihood opportunities. Other motivations were financial (including financial problems and debts), to enhance their social status, no hope of a future in Bangladesh and a lack of high-quality social services (including health care and education). Financial reasons and enhanced social status were potential migrants' top secondary reasons to migrate.

Male and female potential migrants reported the same reasons for deciding to migrate. Reasons for migration cited in the study were also consistent across intended destinations and between regular and irregular potential migrants.

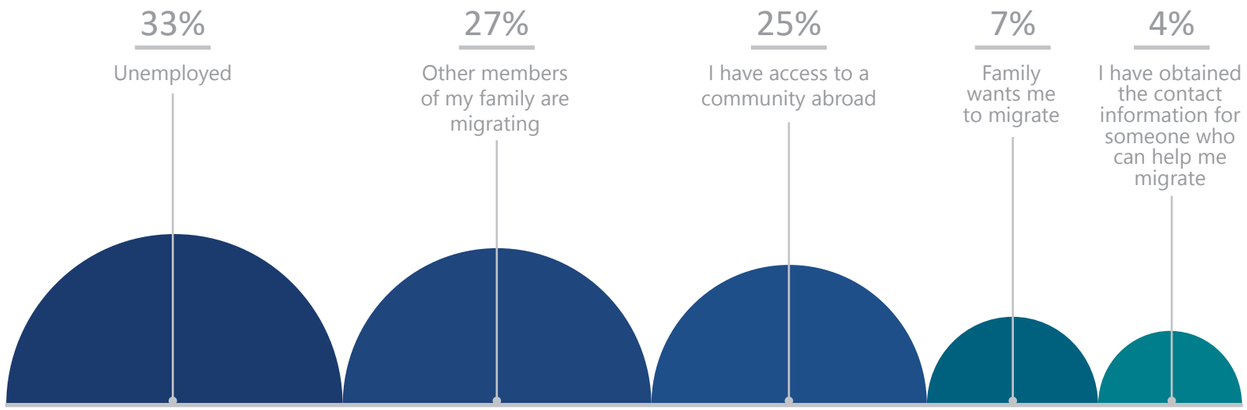
RESPONDENT QUOTE

"I can't lead a decent life with the money I earn in this country. Many people are doing better by going abroad, that's why I've also decided to go there."

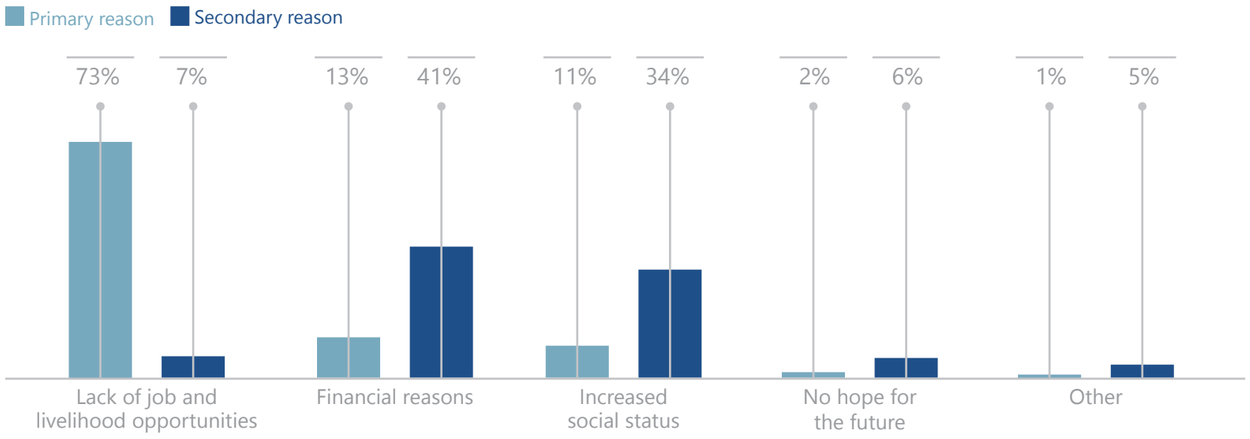
Respondents were also asked what specifically made them make the final decision to migrate; one of the most common responses was unemployment. Potential migrants also cited joining a family member or members who had decided to migrate and the existence of a community abroad. Some potential migrants reported that their families wanted them to migrate. Four per cent of potential migrants decided to leave because they had received the contact information of someone who could help them with their journey. The reasons potential migrants gave for what influenced their final decision to move reinforce the primary push factors identified by the study: jobs and livelihoods, as well as social and familial factors.

The life events that respondents stated influenced their final decision to migrate are consistent across gender and method of migration: unemployment and family and social support.

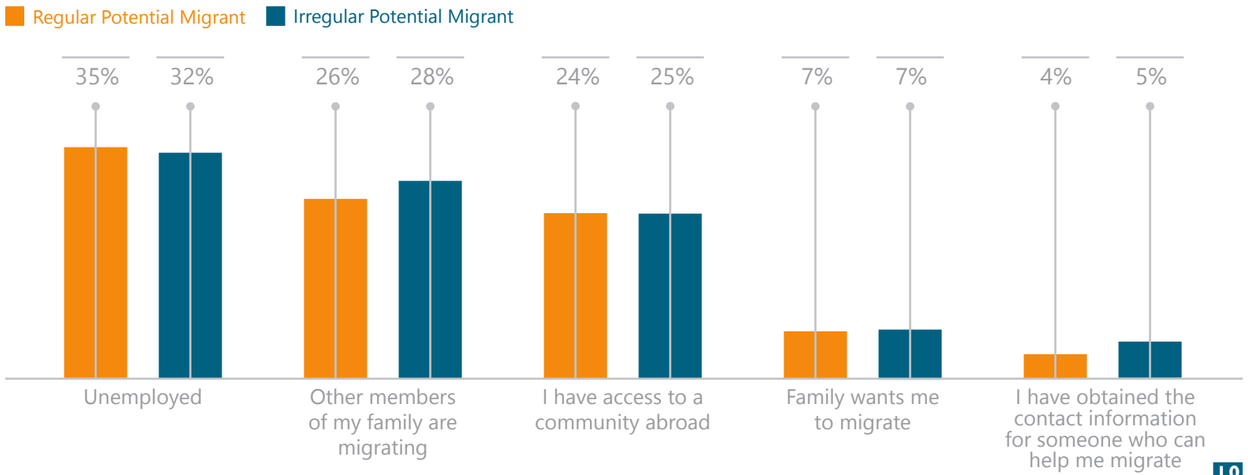
LIFE EVENT THAT TRIGGERED MIGRATION (top 5 answers)



PRIMARY AND SECONDARY REASON FOR MIGRATION (top 5 answers)



LIFE EVENT THAT TRIGGERED MIGRATION BY RESPONDENT TYPE (top five answers)



Respondents were also asked to identify specific challenges they faced at personal, household and community levels to support the understanding of how drivers of migration might affect individuals at different levels in different ways.

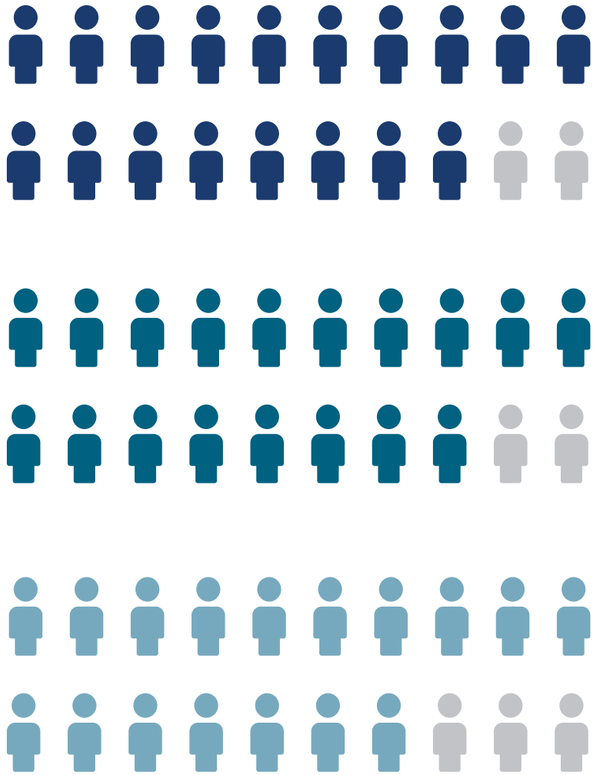
Eighty-nine per cent of potential migrants reported facing personal challenges during the previous six months. Insufficient income was the most commonly reported primary personal challenge, and financial difficulties were the most commonly reported secondary personal challenge. This is consistent with the earlier finding that 90 per cent of potential migrants had either no income or insufficient income.

At the household level, 90 per cent of potential migrants reported facing challenges. As with personal challenges, insufficient income was the most common primary household challenge and financial problems were the most cited secondary household challenge. The distributions of personal and household challenges were fairly similar.

At the community level, 84 per cent of potential migrants reported that their communities face challenges. The most common challenge cited is a lack of jobs. However, unlike the personal and household level challenges, potential migrants listed the lack of social services as the most common secondary community challenge they faced. Financial difficulties were also listed, as were concerns about corruption, conflict and the lack of rule of law.

Though a lack of social services was cited more frequently on the community level than on the personal and household levels, there was no significant difference in the challenges potential migrants identified across the three levels. There were also no significant differences between the challenges reported by regular and irregular potential migrants or by those planning to travel to different destinations. Additionally, male and female potential migrants reported facing similar challenges at all levels.

SHARE OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES



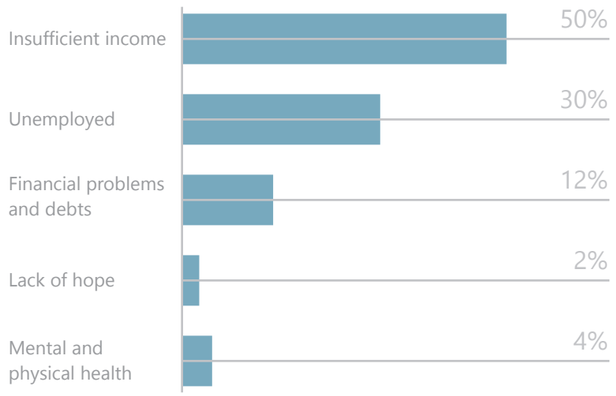
89%
Of respondents reported facing challenges at the personal level

90%
Of respondents reported facing challenges at the household level

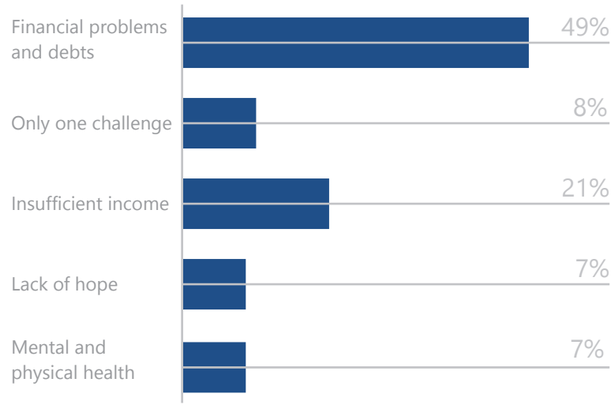
84%
Of respondents reported facing challenges at the community level

2.3.3 MOST COMMON REPORTED CHALLENGES*

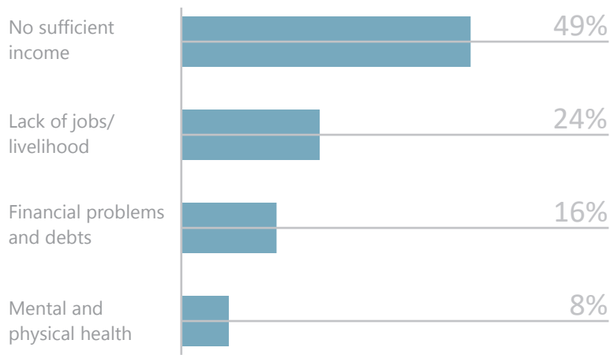
Primary personal challenges (top 5 answers)



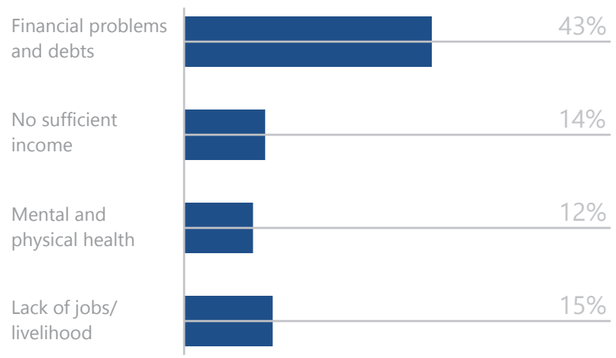
Secondary personal challenges (top 5 answers)



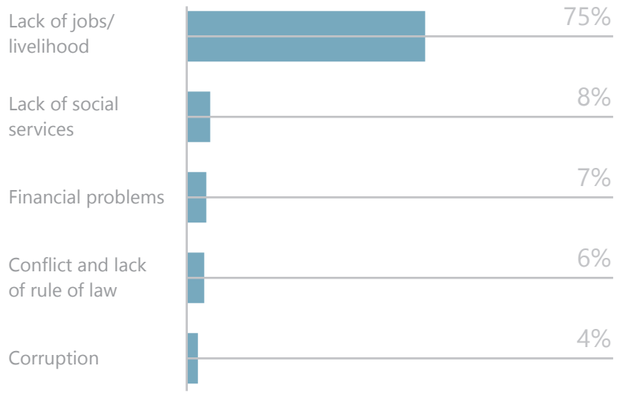
Primary household challenges (top 4 answers)



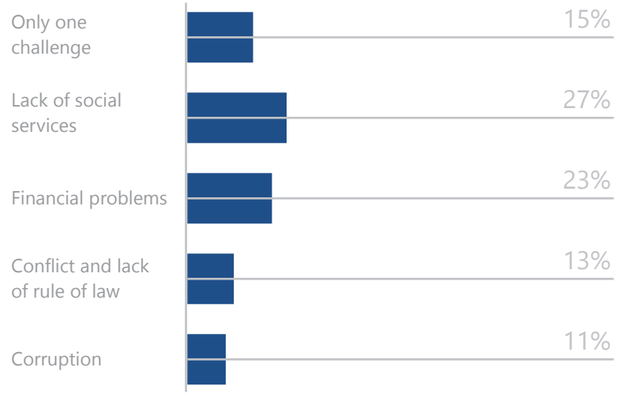
Secondary household challenges (top 4 answers)



Primary community challenges (top 5 answers)



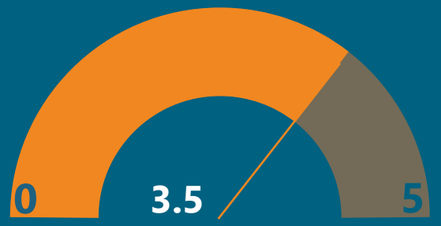
Secondary community challenges (top 4 answers)



* These questions were only asked to respondents who responded "yes" to whether they experienced challenges for each level.

2.3.4 MIGRANT PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL SERVICES

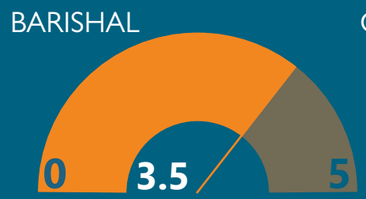
BANGLADESH

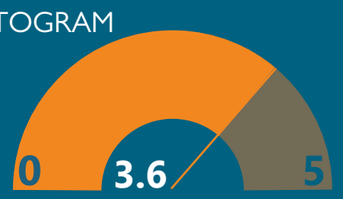


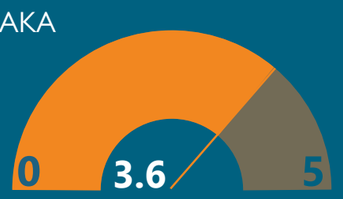
1=very poor 2=poor 3=average 4=good 5=very good

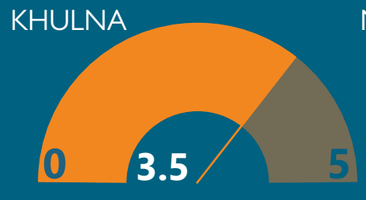
Bangladeshi potential migrants were asked to rate the services present in their communities. By averaging the ratings given to different services, a service quality index was created for each division where surveys took place. A service quality matrix was created by averaging each survey rating per each division.

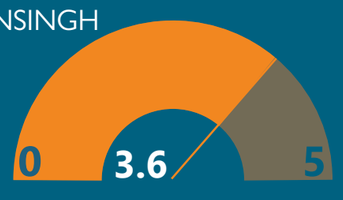
SERVICE QUALITY BY DIVISION OF ORIGIN

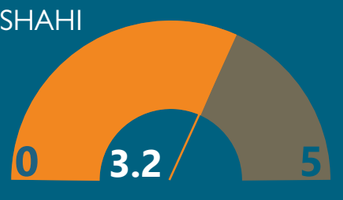


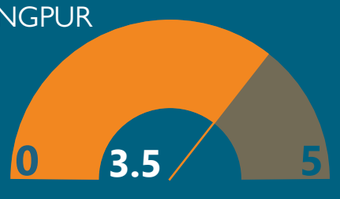


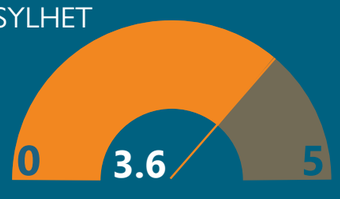




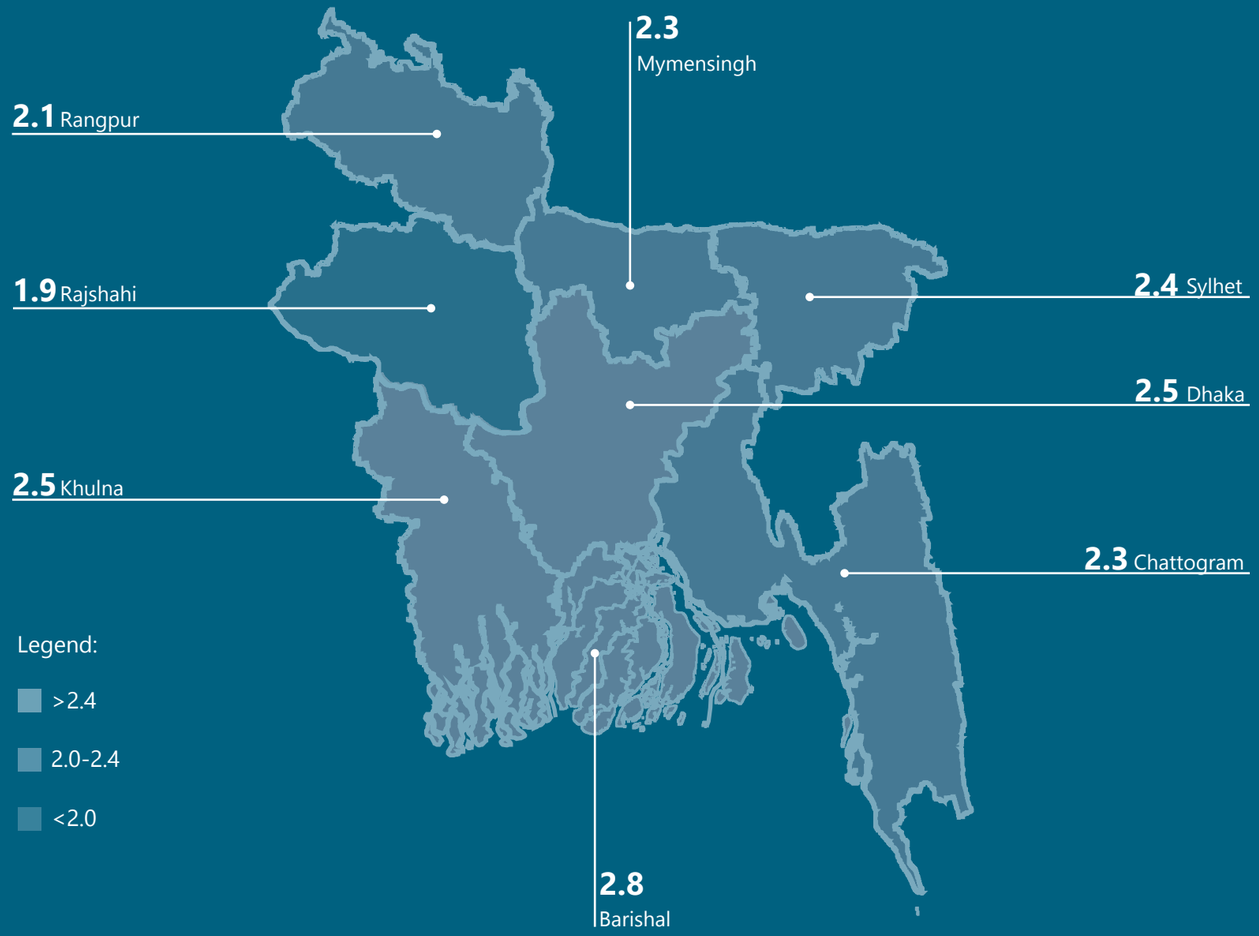








SERVICE QUALITY BY DISTRICT



The ratings give an understanding of potential migrants' perceptions about their local services and are not a statement about the actual state of services in each division. Since these are potential migrant' perceptions, they must be interpreted with care, as they are subjective and may have been influenced by individuals' exposure to services elsewhere.

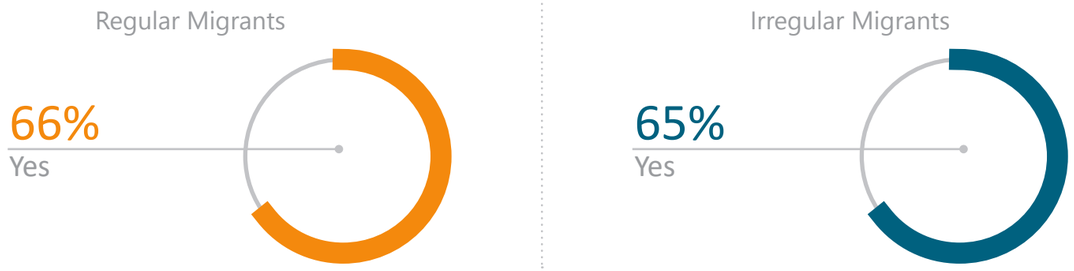
The service quality ratings as a whole indicate that potential migrants believe the provision of services is average with a rating of 3.5 overall. Job and salary ratings were reported as poor to average, which is consistent with the reasons potential migrants gave for their migration – searching for new jobs and better livelihoods. Education and healthcare had the highest ratings, which, as neither of these were cited as major driving factors of migration, corresponds with the study's findings. Although the rating for utilities was average (3.2), when separated into different types of utilities, gas and sewage services were much lower (2.6 and 2.2, respectively). This reflects the higher percentage of respondents who listed the service as a 0 - not available.

The ratings were fairly consistent throughout the different divisions in the country, with all divisions except for Rajshahi division earning a rating of 3.5-3.6. Rajshahi division had the lowest rating with an average of 3.2.

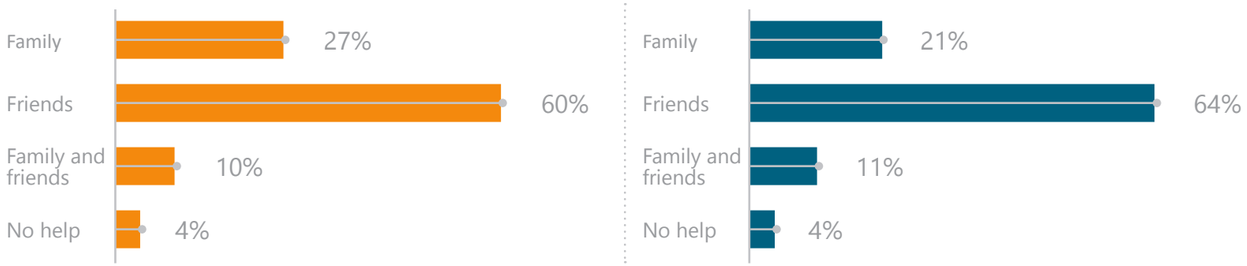
Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

2.4 Migration networks, support and planning

DO YOU HAVE FRIENDS OR FAMILY ALREADY IN THE INTENDED DESTINATION? BY DESTINATION

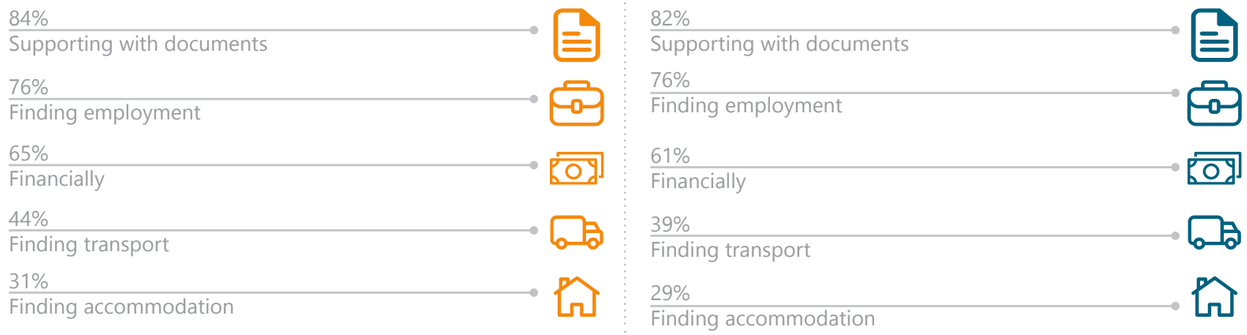


HAVE ANY OF THEM SUPPORTED YOU WITH YOUR MIGRATION ARRANGEMENTS?



HOW HAVE THEY SUPPORTED YOU WITH YOUR MIGRATION ARRANGEMENTS?

(top 5 answers only, multiple answers possible)



OTHER SUPPORT FOR MIGRATION (top 3 answers, multiple answers possible)

Migrant networks are a set of interpersonal, transnational relationships between former migrants, migrants and non-migrants who share similar places of origin, friendship and family kinships (MPI, 2011). Migrant networks are an important source of support for Bangladeshi migrants.

Twelve per cent of potential migrants reported that at least one member of their household lives abroad, and 66 per cent reported friends or extended family living in the destination they plan to travel to. Potential migrants to the Middle East were slightly more likely to have a friend or family member in the country of intended destination (68%). Regular and irregular potential migrants had almost the same likelihood of having a friend or family member in the destination country– 65 per cent for irregular potential migrants and 66 per cent for regular potential migrants.

Of the potential migrants with friends or family members in intended countries of destination, 96 per cent reported having received support from them. This support often takes the form of help with documents (83%), help with securing employment (76%) or help with financial assistance (63%).†

Potential migrants also report receiving support with preparations and arrangements for migration from family and friends still in Bangladesh (82%), from a broker (50%) and from friends and family members in other countries (19%).†

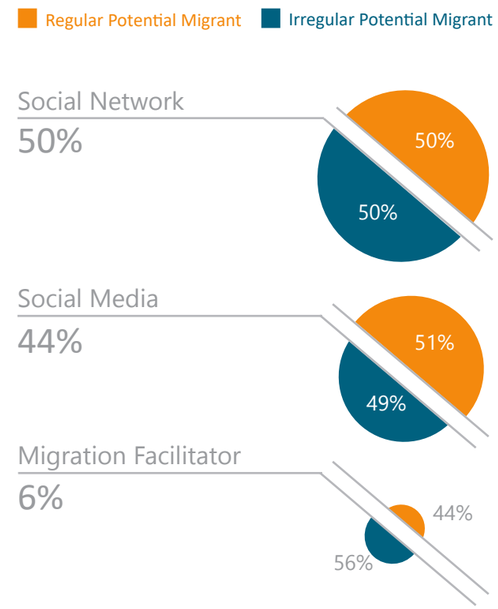
Half of respondents (50%) reported that their social network was their primary source of information,* while 44 per cent of potential migrants listed media their main information source. Media included social media (Viber, WhatsApp, Skype and Facebook), the internet (Google, YouTube and Wikipedia), newspapers and television.

The study shows that regular and irregular potential migrants utilize similar information sources. The use of certain information sources is also consistent across education levels.

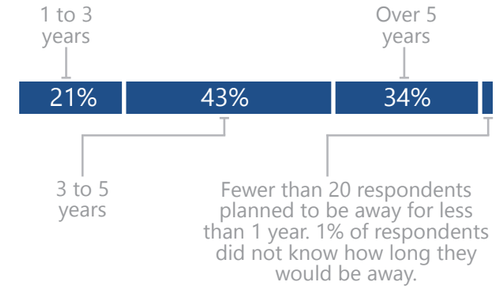
Most potentials migrants reported planning to be away for more than one year, with 77 per cent of potential migrants planning to be away for more than three years. According to the data collected, regular and irregular potential migrants plan to be away for similar amounts of time. The study did not find any significant differences in planned time away by intended country of destination.

*"Social network" included information from family, friends, or contacts both in Bangladesh and abroad.

INFORMATION SOURCES ABOUT MIGRATION



PLANNED TIME AWAY



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2.5 Conditions to Stay

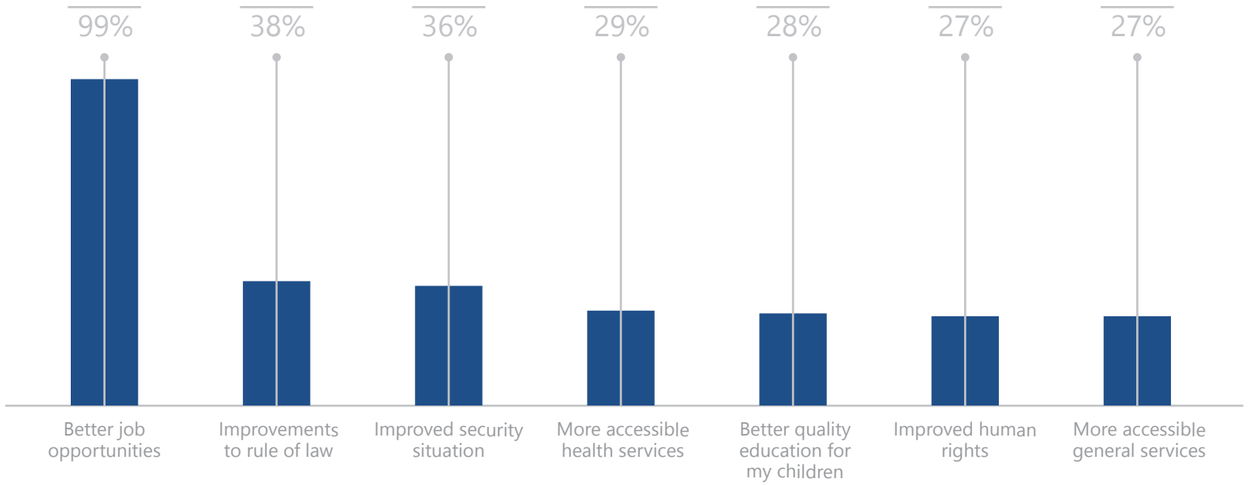
Potential migrants were asked what changes needed to occur and whether they would consider remaining in Bangladesh if these changes took place. These questions were asked to understand the space for future policy action. Better job opportunities were cited by almost every respondent (99%), and other answers included improvements to the rule of law, security situation or human rights, as well as more accessible services (including health care and education). Thirty-two per cent of said respondents reported that they would consider remaining in the country if there were better job opportunities, while the remaining 68 per cent reported that they would consider staying if there were better job opportunities and if additional conditions changed.[†]

According to the survey, 91 per cent of potential migrants would consider staying in Bangladesh if there were more work opportunities, but 46 per cent of them had conditions on that answer. Most of the conditions were related to better quality of work, including better salaries (63%) and better opportunities for work (33%).

Forty-nine per cent of potential migrants answered that they would consider remaining in Bangladesh if there were more opportunities to study, and 20 per cent of these respondents specified that additional conditions would need to be met as well for them to stay including more affordable or higher quality education.

When asked if they would stay if the security situation improved, 77 per cent responded yes, and 30 per cent cited a number of ways in which it could be improved, including less corruption and improved rule of law.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE FOR YOU TO STAY? (top 7 answers, multiple answers possible)



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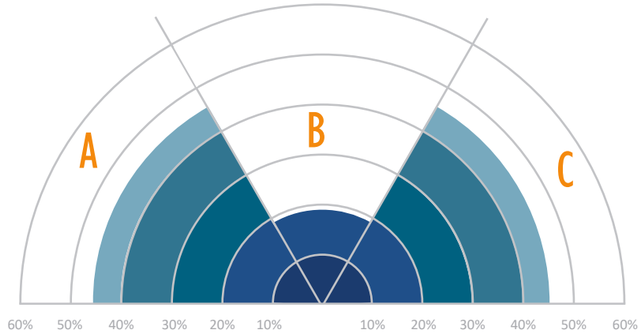
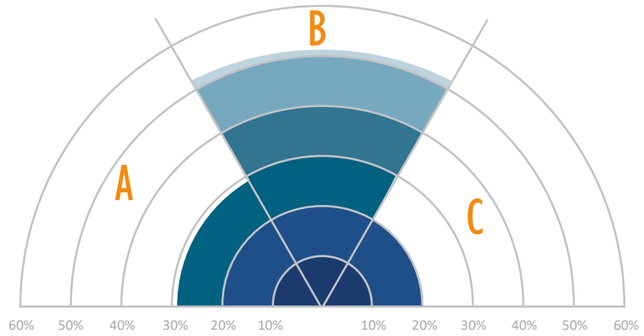
WOULD YOU CONSIDER STAYING IN BANGLADESH IF...?

Would you stay in Bangladesh if you had the opportunity to work?



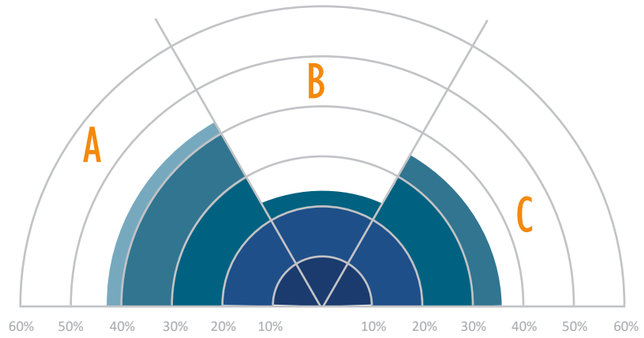
A	45%	Yes
B	9%	No
C	46%	Yes, with conditions

Would you stay in Bangladesh if you had the opportunity to study?



A	29%	Yes
B	51%	No
C	20%	Yes, with conditions

Would you stay in Bangladesh if the security situation were better?



A	42%	Yes
B	23%	No
C	35%	Yes, with conditions

3. CONCLUSION

The majority of potential migrants were young, working age men who had attained at least some level of formal education. Forty per cent of potential migrants were unemployed before electing to migrate, and 90 per cent had no personal income or insufficient income. This profile is in line with the drivers of migration identified in the report: most potential migrants were planning to migrate because they wanted better job opportunities and livelihoods. Another important reason for migration was to increase potential migrants' social statuses. The same things drew potential migrants to specific countries: the availability of jobs, access to social networks or the migration of a family member.

This report found that Bangladeshi regular and irregular potential migrants are very similar. A general perception of migration in Bangladesh has been that irregular migrants are younger, less well educated and less likely to be employed (The Asia Foundation, 2013). Instead, the report found that regular and irregular potential migrants are the same ages and have similar levels of education. Regular potential migrants were more likely to be unemployed than irregular potential migrants (42% of regular potential migrants compared to 37% of irregular). While the general perception is that irregular migrants make use of migration facilitators and their services, the findings from the study indicate that 71 per cent of migrants, who have registered their intention to travel with the government, also use migration facilitators to arrange their travel. These potential migrants paid similar amounts to migration facilitators as the irregular migrants did. While regular potential migrants who only paid the government had low migration costs, the additional costs that some potential migrants paid to migration facilitators made the total costs paid by regular and irregular potential migrants comparable overall.

Note: The individuals' designation as regular or irregular potential migrant is based on their reported intention to choose a specific migration channel (regular or irregular) and is not based on their actual migration status.

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