RAPID ASSESSMENT

NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNATIONAL RETURN MIGRANTS IN BRAHAMANBARIA

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

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DEFINITIONS

Returnee: The term "returnee" in this document refers to former Bangladeshi migrants who returned to their point of departure within Bangladesh during the survey period. This could be within the territorial boundaries of Bangladesh or between a country of destination or transit and Bangladesh.

ACRONYMS

BDT: Bangladeshi Taka

BMET: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training

DTM: Displacement Tracking Matrix

IOM: International Organization for Migration

MFI: Microfinace institution

NGO: Non-governmental organization

NPM: Needs and Population Monitoring

REMAP: Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy

USD: United States Dollar

Stastical Notes:
1. When the label "Multiple answers possible" appears above a graph, 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.
2. Statistics representing less than 10 people will be marked with an asterisk. Percentages of zero are automatically assumed to represent less than 10 people since the total sample size in this report is less than 1000.

DISCLAIMER

This report is part of the outputs under the European Union funded project "Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (REMAP)". The objective of DTM REMAP is to strengthen the evidence-based formulation and implementation of humanitarian and development policy and programming on migration and forced displacement in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan through the use of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM, its Member States, the European Union or other donors. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the work do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

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BACKGROUND

As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged globally, migrant workers, both internationally and within Bangladesh, found themselves facing a new set of challenges and vulnerabilities. With limited access to income-generating activities, social services, healthcare systems, and social support networks, many have opted to return home. During May and June 2020, IOM, supported by the European Union under the regional program REMAP, along with the NPM team based in Cox's Bazar, completed data collection on the needs and vulnerabilities of international and internal Bangladeshi migrant returnees. A rapid assessment report on all surveyed migrants was developed shortly afterwards, focusing on the demographic and socio-economic profile of returnees, their livelihoods and employment, their migration and return experiences and practices, and their economic and social challenges and aspirations.

Following the country-level rapid assessment, data was analysed on the district level in order to gauge potential geographical distinctions and provide greater nuance and detail to the focus themes. This district-level report summarizes the findings in Brahamanbaria.

Snowball sampling was used from a returnee list provided by the Government of Bangladesh in order to determine a sample population for this study. Due to mobility restrictions, data collection was phone-based. As a result of the sampling method, the survey is non-probabilistic, meaning that the sample is not necessarily representative of the returnee population of Bangladesh. Additionally, the number of female respondents was low, so the report does not necessarily represent the needs and vulnerabilities of female returnees.

The survey results highlighted various socio-economic vulnerabilities and challenges experienced by migrants since their return to the district of Brahamanbaria. Both the loss of remittances and the currently high level of unemployment contribute to severe drops in income. Moreover, international returnee respondents reported challenges related to finding a job as well as social and mental issues since they returned to their home district. Debt and debt repayment are also significant concerns to international returnee respondents. Notably, a large proportion of respondents (97%) indicated that they want to re-migrate after COVID-19 ends, often back to the country from which they returned.

BRAHAMANBARIA
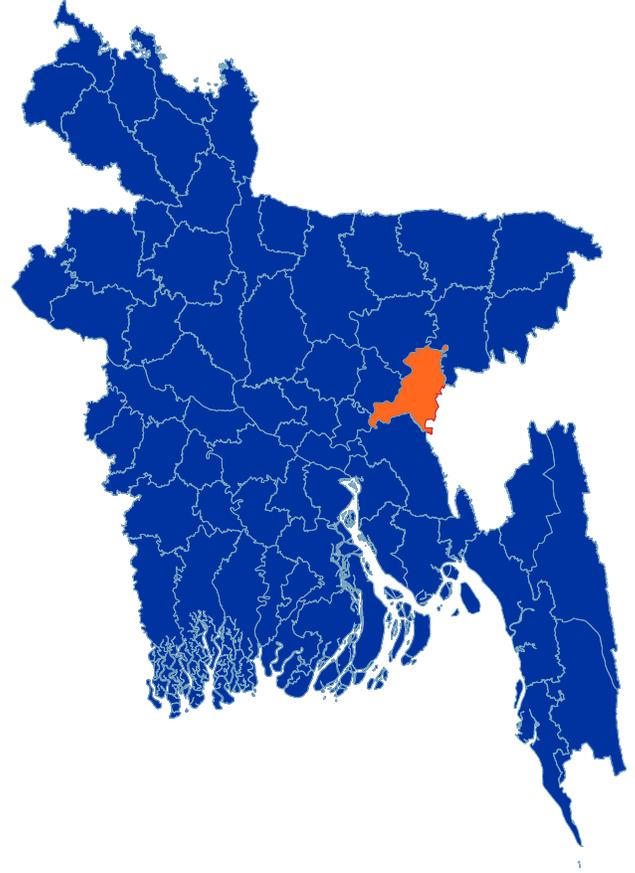
RESPONDENTS

136

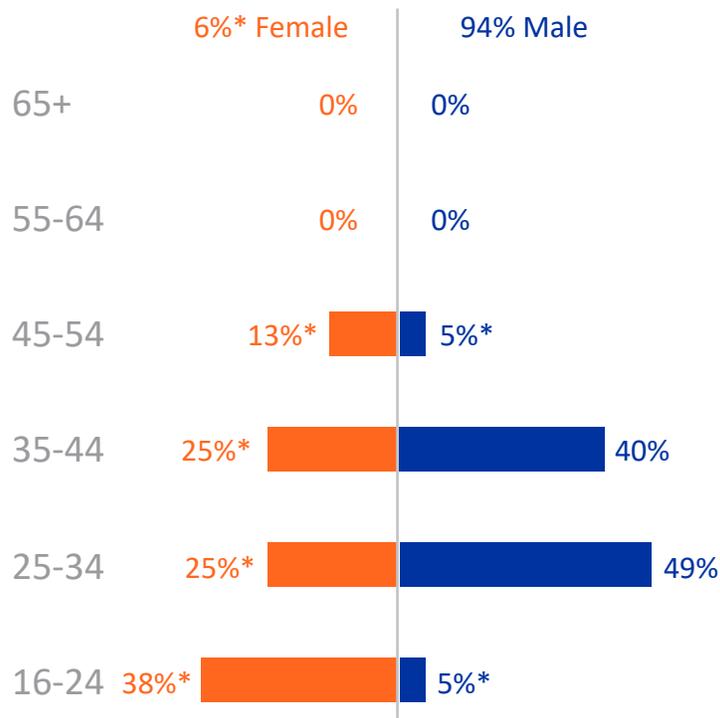TOTAL INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES SURVEYED IN BRAHAMANBARIA

INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

POPULATION PYRAMID

6%* Female   94% Male

Age	Female	Male
65+	0%	0%
55-64	0%	0%
45-54	13%*	5%*
35-44	25%*	40%
25-34	25%*	49%
16-24	38%*	5%*

Average household size including respondent — **6.3**

Average number of household members living abroad — **1.3**

Respondents who are married — **83%**

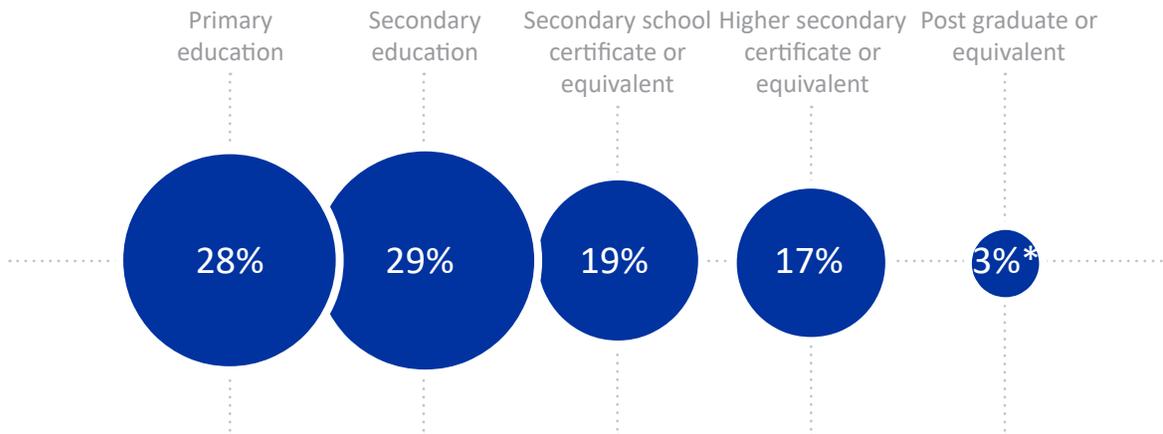Respondents who have children — **68%**

Respondents who had some form of formal education — **99%**

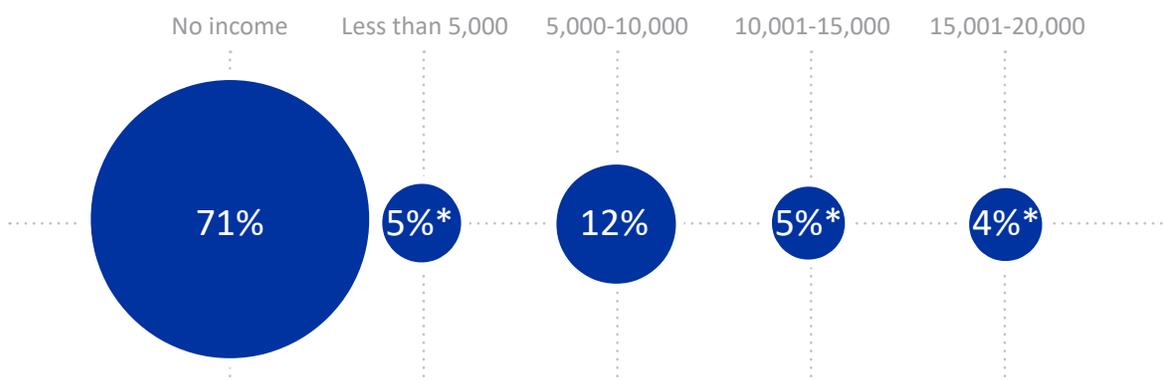Respondents who did not have formal education but can read/write — **1%***

EDUCATION LEVEL (top 5 answers)

Primary education	Secondary education	Secondary school certificate or equivalent	Higher secondary certificate or equivalent	Post graduate or equivalent
28%	29%	19%	17%	3%*

CURRENT TOTAL AVERAGE MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN BDT

No income	Less than 5,000	5,000-10,000	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000
71%	5%*	12%	5%*	4%*

The majority of the sample population were male in between 25 and 44 years old. Eighty-three per cent of respondents reported being married at the time of the interview, and of respondents who were married or had been married, 68 per cent had children.

A large majority of respondents had completed some form of formal education (99%). Of those, the most common level of completion was secondary education (29%), followed by primary education (28%). A large majority of respondents reported that their households were earning no income (71%) at the time of the interview.
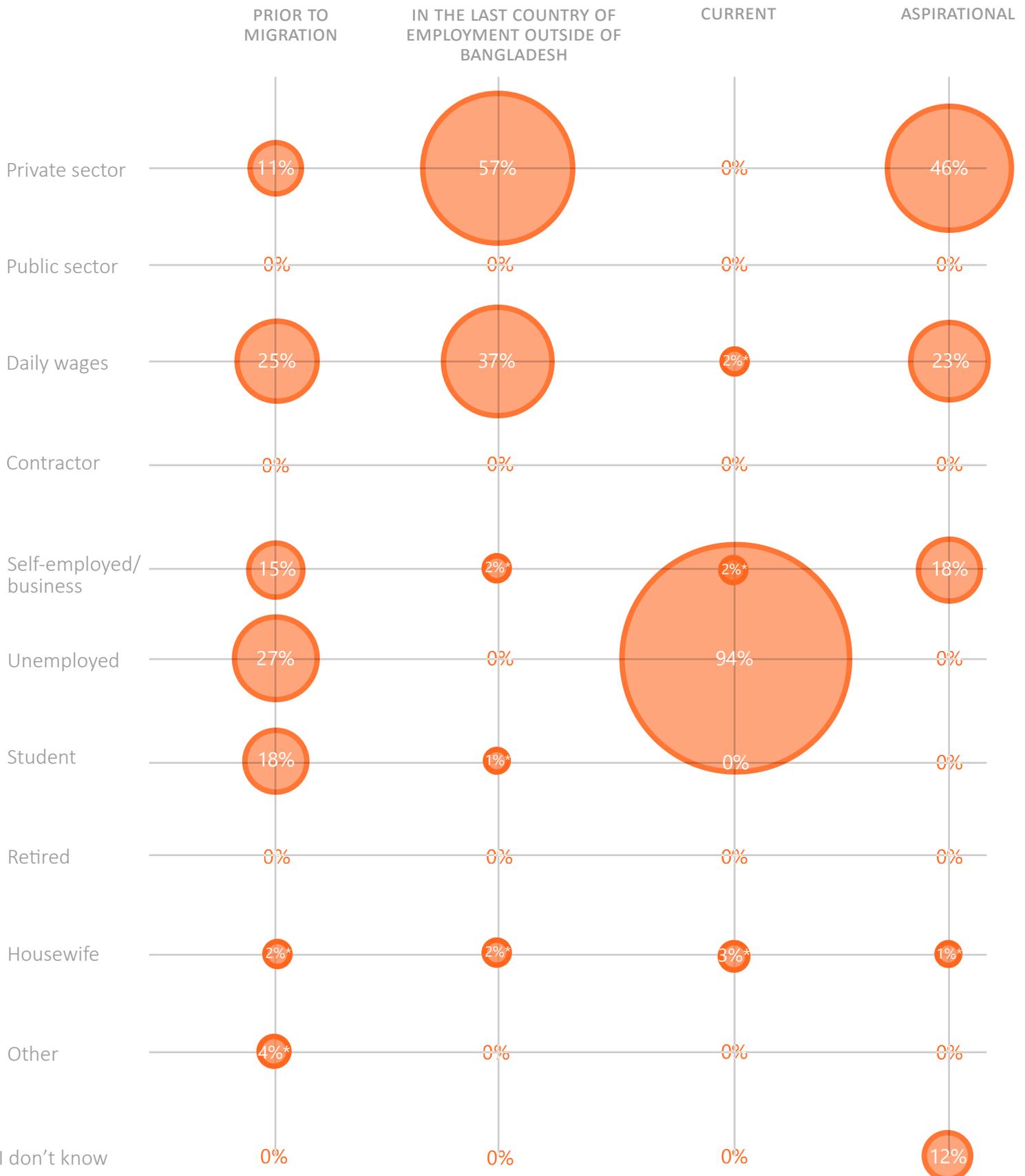
EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

EMPLOYMENT STATUS (multiple answers possible)

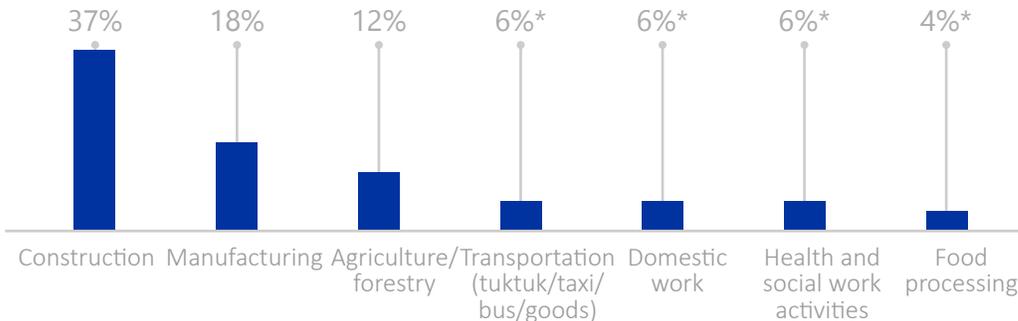|	PRIOR TO MIGRATION	IN THE LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF BANGLADESH	CURRENT	ASPIRATIONAL
Private sector	11%	57%	0%	46%
Public sector	0%	0%	0%	0%
Daily wages	25%	37%	2%*	23%
Contractor	0%	0%	0%	0%
Self-employed/ business	15%	2%*	2%*	18%
Unemployed	27%	0%	94%	0%
Student	18%	1%*	0%	0%
Retired	0%	0%	0%	0%
Housewife	2%*	2%*	3%*	1%*
Other	4%*	0%	0%	0%
I don't know	0%	0%	0%	12%

Note: 2% of respondents responded "Do not want to answer" when asked about their employment status in the last country of employment.
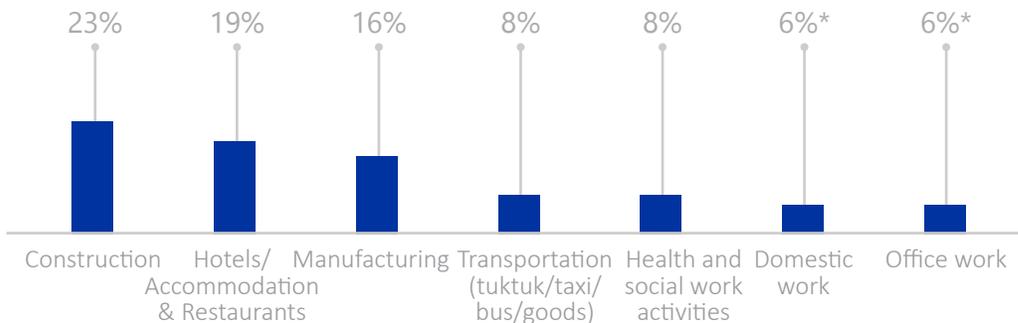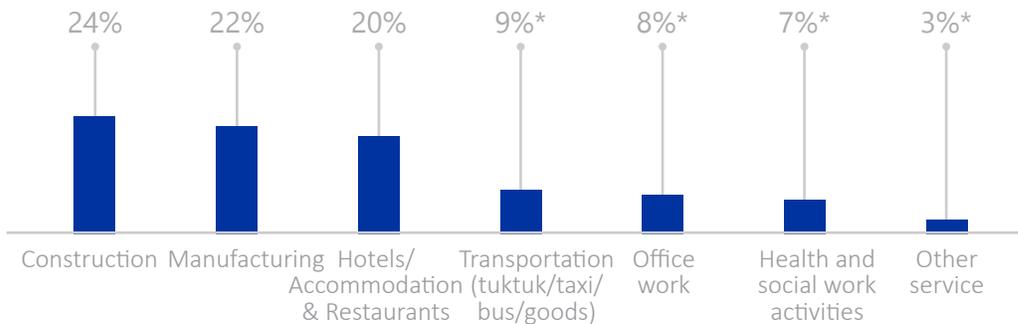
OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR (top 7 answers)
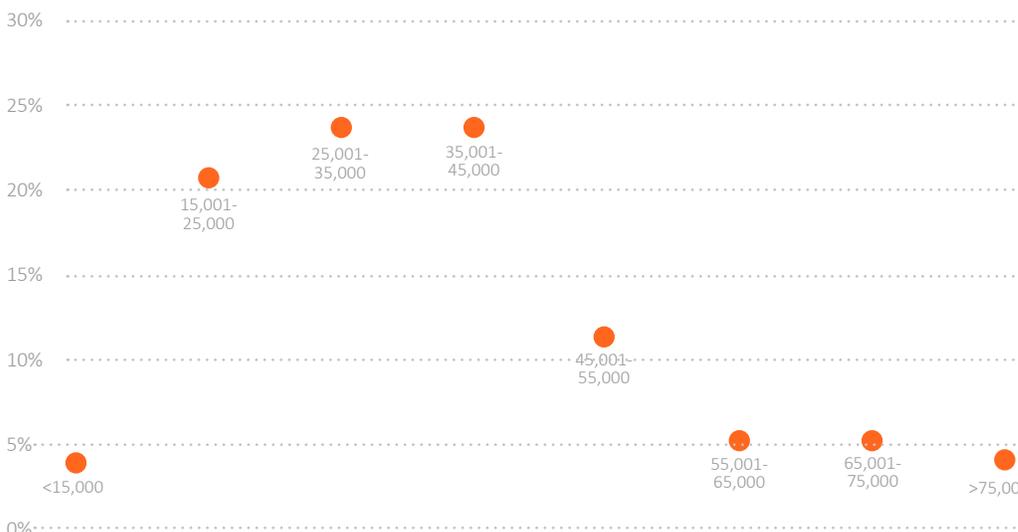
PRIOR TO MIGRATION

37%	18%	12%	6%*	6%*	6%*	4%*
Construction	Manufacturing	Agriculture/forestry	Transportation (tuktuk/taxi/bus/goods)	Domestic work	Health and social work activities	Food processing

IN THE LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF BANGLADESH

23%	19%	16%	8%	8%	6%*	6%*
Construction	Hotels/Accommodation & Restaurants	Manufacturing	Transportation (tuktuk/taxi/bus/goods)	Health and social work activities	Domestic work	Office work

ASPIRATIONAL

24%	22%	20%	9%*	8%*	7%*	3%*
Construction	Manufacturing	Hotels/Accommodation & Restaurants	Transportation (tuktuk/taxi/bus/goods)	Office work	Health and social work activities	Other service

MONTHLY INCOME IN LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT (BDT)

- <15,000
- 15,001-25,000
- 25,001-35,000
- 35,001-45,000
- 45,001-55,000
- 55,001-65,000
- 65,001-75,000
- >75,000

The primary form of employment for international returnee respondents prior to migration was daily wages (25%). However, 27 per cent of respondents reported to be unemployed prior to migration. In the last country of employment, both working in the private sector (57%) and working for daily wages (37%) became more significant as opposed to prior to migration (11% and 25%). During the reporting period, nearly all of respondents reported that they were unemployed (94%). This reflects the current challenges with livelihood opportunities due to COVID-19 response measures. A large proportion of respondents aspired to work in the private sector (46%) in the future. This was followed by working for daily wages (23%) and self-employment (18%).

Occupational sectors also shifted throughout international returnee respondents' migration journeys, with hospitality becoming more significant in the last country of employment (19%) and aspirationally (20%) as opposed to prior to migration (0%). On the other hand, work in construction and manufacturing stayed relatively consistent prior to migration (37% and 18%), in the last country of employment (23% and 16%) and aspirationally (24% and 22%).
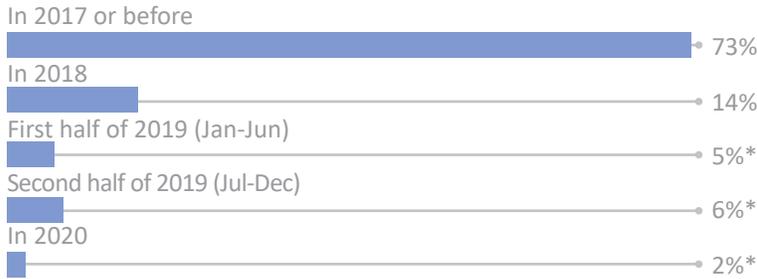
The majority of respondents (73%) earned less than BDT 45,000 (530.66 USD)* per month in their last country of employment, with only four per cent earning less than BDT 15,000 (176.90 USD)*. Four per cent of respondents earned more than BDT 75,000 (884.43 USD)* per month in the last country of employment.

*Exchange rates are 84.8 BDT to 1 USD, according to the UN Operational Rates of Exchange between 1 August to 1 September 2020.

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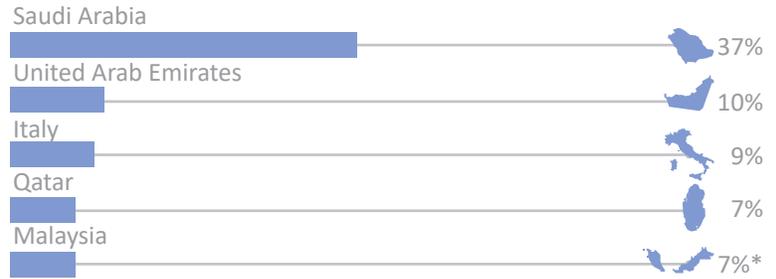# MIGRATION AND RETURN JOURNEY OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

WHEN DID YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME DISTRICT?

In 2017 or before — 73%
In 2018 — 14%
First half of 2019 (Jan-Jun) — 5%*
Second half of 2019 (Jul-Dec) — 6%*
In 2020 — 2%*

FROM WHICH COUNTRY DID YOU RETURN?
(top 5 answers)

Saudi Arabia — 37%
United Arab Emirates — 10%
Italy — 9%
Qatar — 7%
Malaysia — 7%*

DID YOU GO ABROAD THROUGH THE BMET OR GOVERNMENT CHANNELS?

18% YES

HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY FOR THE FACILITATION OF MIGRATION?

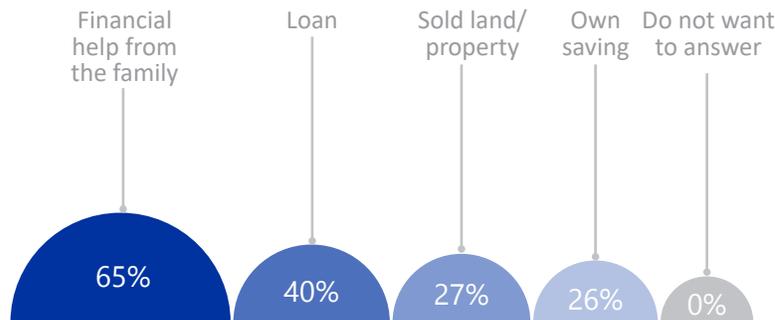# BDT 349,565
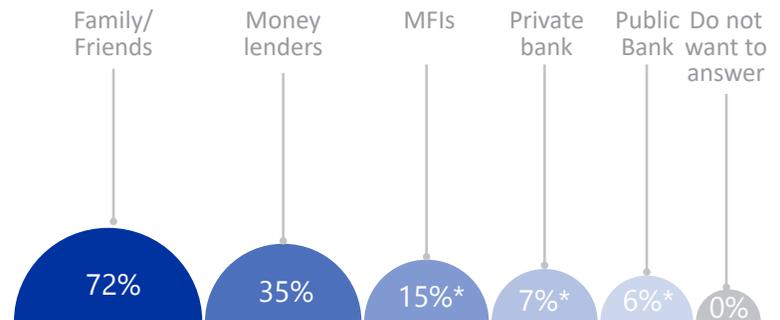Average amount paid by those who went abroad through BMET or government channels (USD 4,122.23)*

BDT 349,384
Average amount paid by those who did not go abroad through BMET or government channels (USD 4,120.10)*

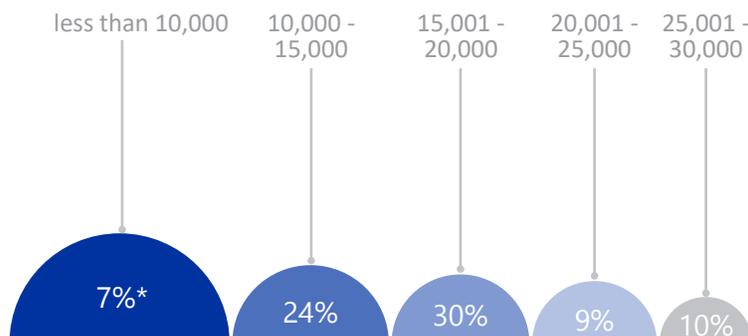## HOW DID YOU OBTAIN MONEY FOR MIGRATION FACILITATION? (multiple answers possible)

Financial help from the family	Loan	Sold land/property	Own saving	Do not want to answer
65%	40%	27%	26%	0%

IF YOU USED A LOAN TO OBTAIN MONEY, WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF THE LOAN? (multiple answers possible)

Family/Friends	Money lenders	MFIs	Private bank	Public Bank	Do not want to answer
72%	35%	15%*	7%*	6%*	0%

REMITTANCES IN BDT (top 5 answers)

88% Of respondents sent money home every month
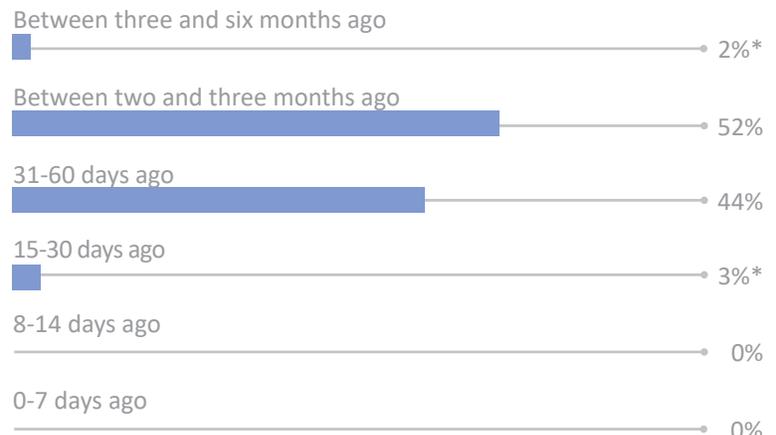
less than 10,000	10,000 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	20,001 - 25,000	25,001 - 30,000
7%*	24%	30%	9%	10%

WHEN DID YOU RETURN?

Between three and six months ago — 2%*
Between two and three months ago — 52%
31-60 days ago — 44%
15-30 days ago — 3%*
8-14 days ago — 0%
0-7 days ago — 0%

*Exchange rates are 84.8 BDT to 1 USD, according to the UN Operational Rates of Exchange between 1 August to 1 September 2020.

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WHAT WAS YOUR POINT OF ENTRY?
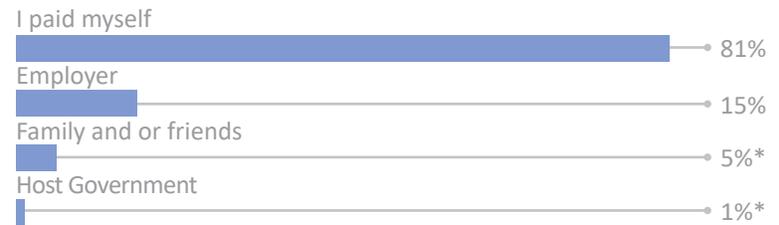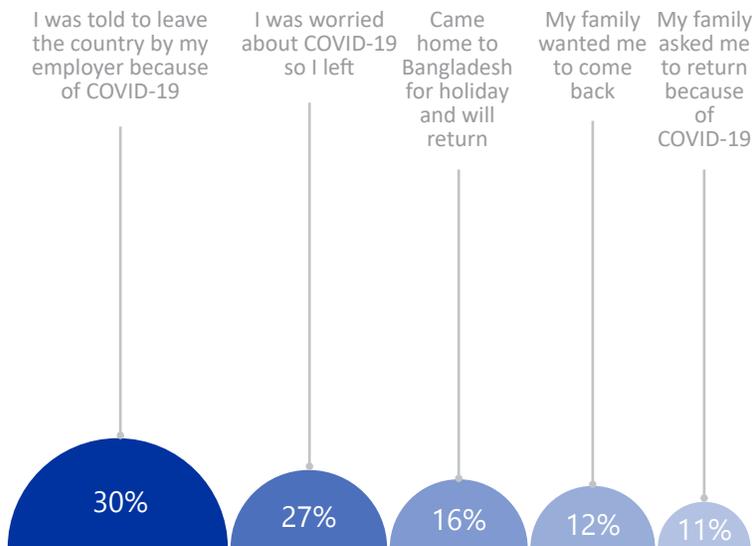
Airport ✈ 100%

Land border 🚌 0%

WHO PAID FOR YOUR RETURN JOURNEY?
(multiple answers possible)

I paid myself — 81%

Employer — 15%

Family and or friends — 5%*

Host Government — 1%*

WHY DID YOU RETURN? (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

I was told to leave the country by my employer because of COVID-19	I was worried about COVID-19 so I left	Came home to Bangladesh for holiday and will return	My family wanted me to come back	My family asked me to return because of COVID-19
30%	27%	16%	12%	11%

IF YOUR RETURN WAS DUE TO COVID-19, HOW WERE YOU TREATED IN THE COUNTRY FROM WHICH YOU RETURNED AFTER COVID-19 CAME INTO EFFECT? (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

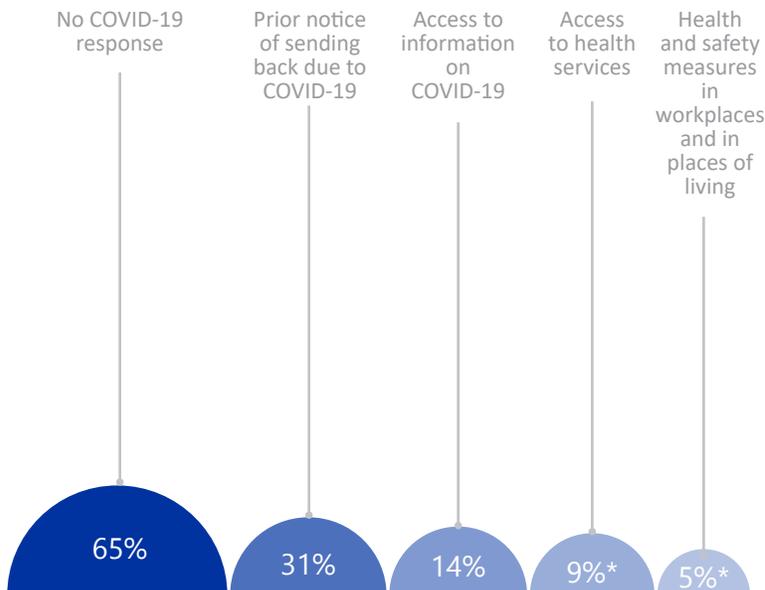| No COVID-19 response	Prior notice of sending back due to COVID-19	Access to information on COVID-19	Access to health services	Health and safety measures in workplaces and in places of living
65%	31%	14%	9%*	5%*

85% Of respondents received their final wages before returning

A large majority of respondents had emigrated from Bangladesh during or before 2017 (73%), with 18 per cent having gone abroad via the BMET or government channels. Money for migration was obtained largely through financial help from friends and family (65%). Eighty-eight per cent of the sample population sent remittances home, most often less than BDT 20,000 (235.85 USD)* (61%).

Ninety-six per cent of respondents returned to Bangladesh one to three months ago, aligning with the timeline of the emergence of COVID-19 and the implementation of response measures. All of the international returnee respondents returned via air travel. Eighty-one per cent paid for their return journeys by themselves and 15 per cent were supported by their employers.

When asked the reason for their return, 30 per cent of respondents reported that they were told to leave the country, while 27 per cent reported that they were worried about COVID-19. Family decision-making was also an important factor in returning to Bangladesh, with 23 per cent of respondents citing that their family either wanted them to come back (12%) or that they asked them to come back (11%). Sixteen per cent of responents decided to return for holiday.

According to 65 per cent of respondents, there was no COVID-19 response in the country from which they returned. However, 14 per cent received access to information on COVID-19 and 31 per cent had prior notice of being sent back to Bangladesh due to COVID-19. Fifteen per cent of international returnee respondents did not receive their final wages before returning to the country.
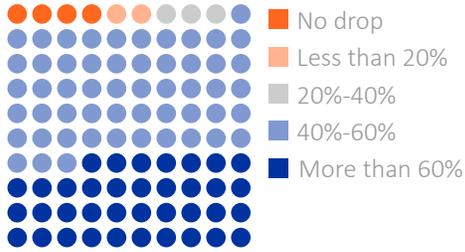
*Exchange rates are 84.8 BDT to 1 USD, according to the UN Operational Rates of Exchange between 1 August to 1 September 2020.
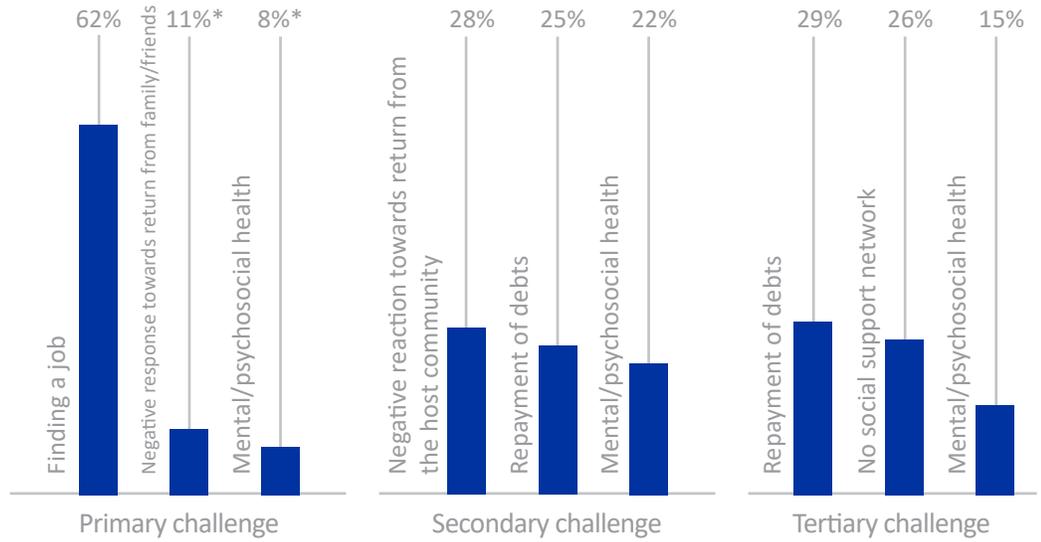
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CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

48%
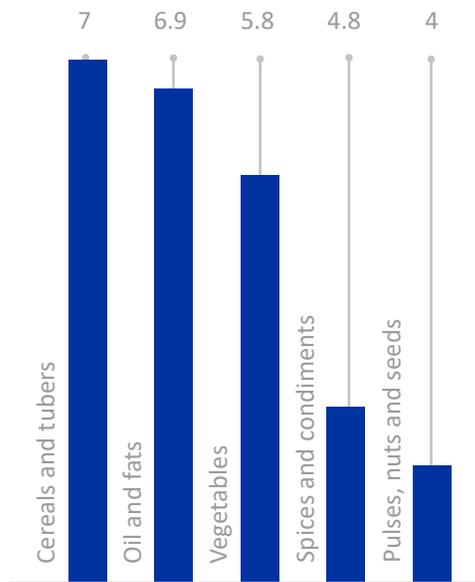Of respondents experienced challenges upon returning to their community

■ No drop
■ Less than 20%
■ 20%-40%
■ 40%-60%
■ More than 60%

Drop in household income after return

CHALLENGES (top 3 answers)

Primary challenge
- 62% Finding a job
- 11%* Negative response towards return from family/friends
- 8%* Mental/psychosocial health

Secondary challenge
- 28% Negative reaction towards return from the host community
- 25% Repayment of debts
- 22% Mental/psychosocial health

Tertiary challenge
- 29% Repayment of debts
- 26% No social support network
- 15% Mental/psychosocial health

FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION PER FOOD TYPE (top 5 answers)

Over the past 7 days, on how many days did you and your household consume these types of food?

- 7 Cereals and tubers
- 6.9 Oil and fats
- 5.8 Vegetables
- 4.8 Spices and condiments
- 4 Pulses, nuts and seeds

FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORES

- 96% Acceptable
- 0% Borderline
- 4%* Poor
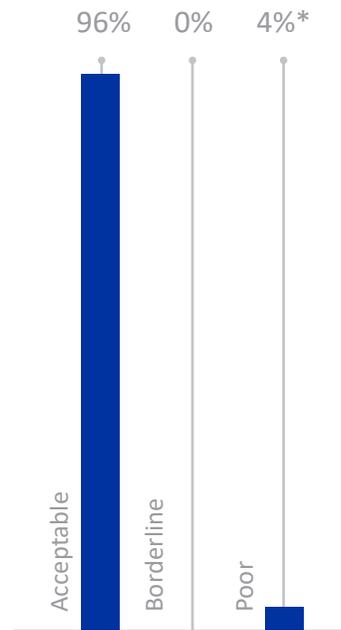
AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY MEALS CONSUMED BY HOUSEHOLD

■ Prior to lockdown ■ In the last 7 days

|	1	2	3	>3
Prior to lockdown	0%	6%	91%	3%
In the last 7 days	0%	26%	72%	2%
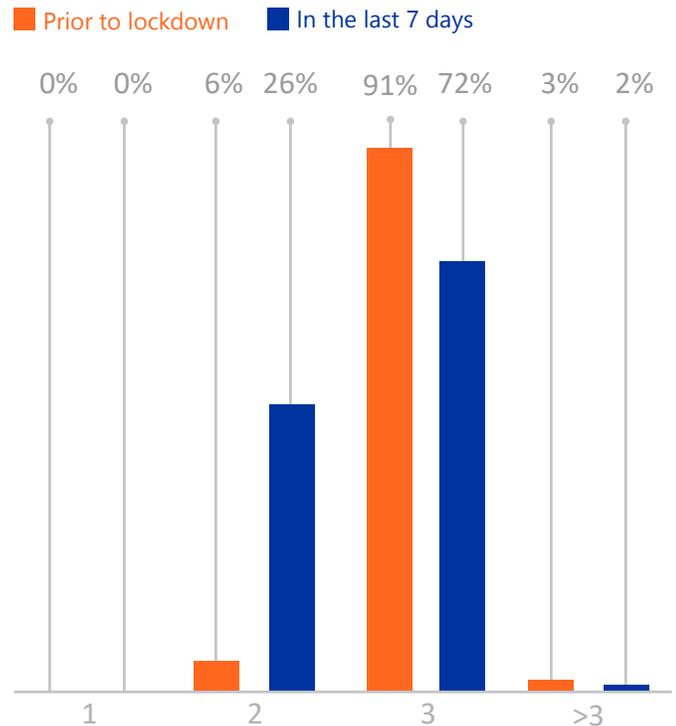
Nearly half of all respondents experienced challenges upon returning to Bangladesh (48%). Returnees' main primary challenge was finding a job (62%) followed by negative response towards return from family and friends (11%) and mental/psychosocial health (8%). However, it is important to note the relevance of the main secondary challenges: negative reaction towards return from the host community (28%), repayment of debts (25%) and mental/psychosocial health (22%). These issues reflect the multi-faceted effects of COVID-19 and its relationship with both social and economic factors.

Another indication of household challenges is the drop in income after the respondents' return. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents reported a more than 60 per cent drop in household income and 54 per cent reported a drop between 40 and 60 per cent. A convergence of factors, such as the loss of remittances, the scarcity of income generating activities due to COVID-19, the risk of working instead of isolating during the pandemic and others, may contribute to these drops in income.

DEBT AMONG INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

DO YOU OR YOUR HOUSEHOLD OWE DEBT?

54%
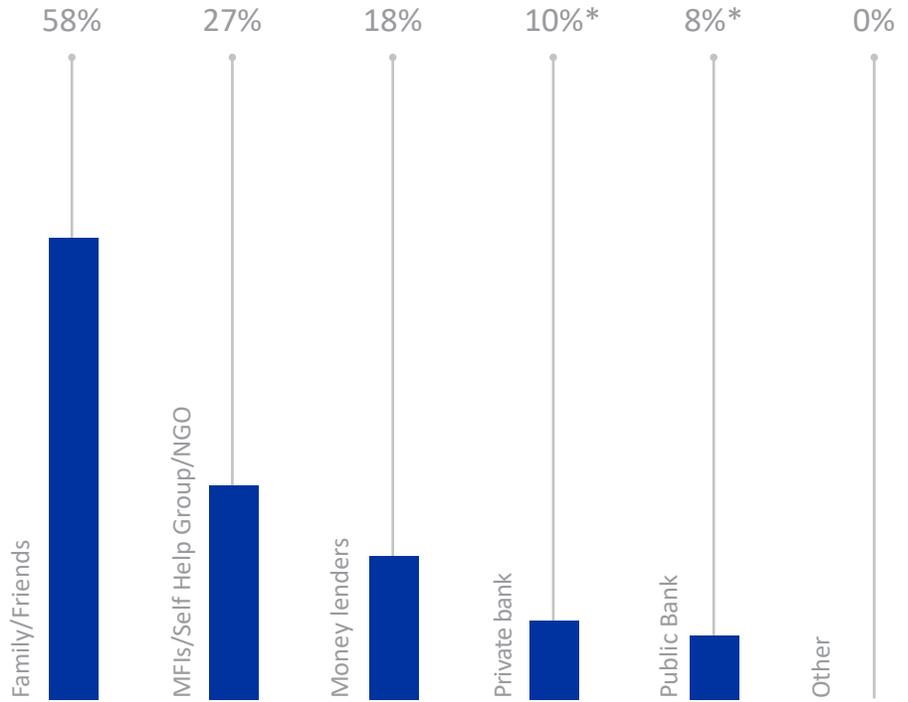
Of respondents/ respondent households owed debt
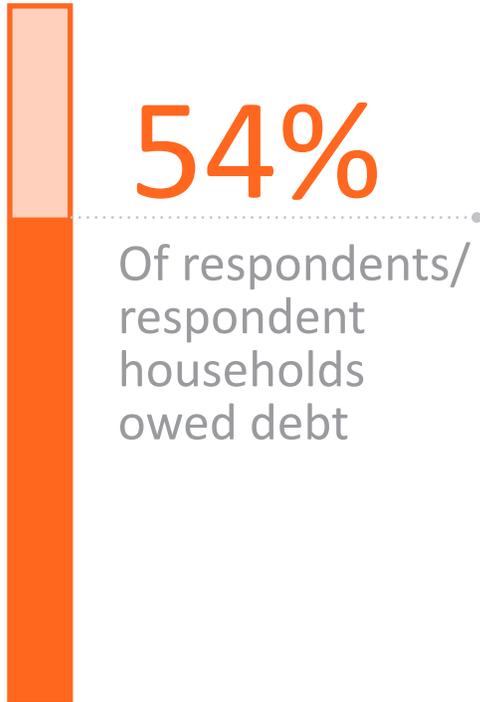
In total, 54 per cent of respondents or respondent households reported that they owed debt, a majority of which was owed to family and friends (58%), MFIs/Self help groups/NGOs (27%) and money lenders (18%). Ten per cent owed their debt to a private bank and eight per cent to a public bank.

Prior to returning, the majority of international returnee respondents planned to repay their debts with the personal income they would earn through their job abroad (96%). Another 4 per cent indicated that they did not know how they would repay their debts.
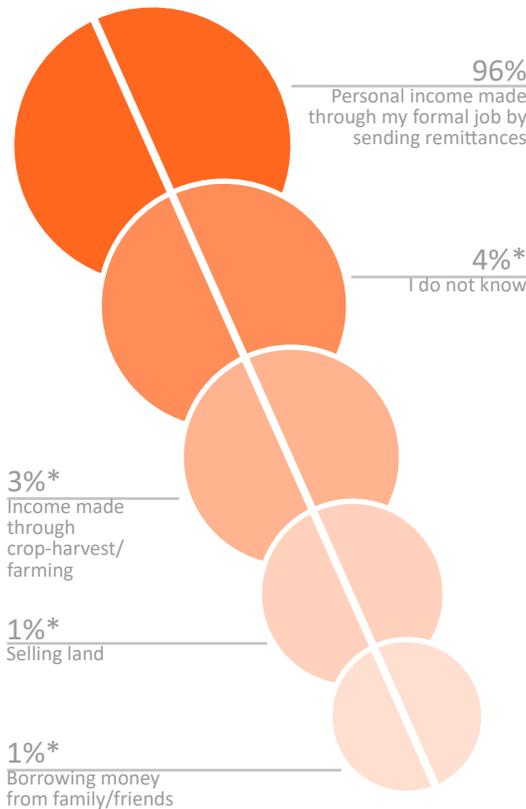
Alternatively, 47 per cent of respondents did not know how they would repay their debt after having returned to their home districts. Eighteen per cent planned to repay their debt with personal income made through a formal job (18%). This was followed by income/job earnings from family members (18%), selling assets (14%) and selling land (10%).
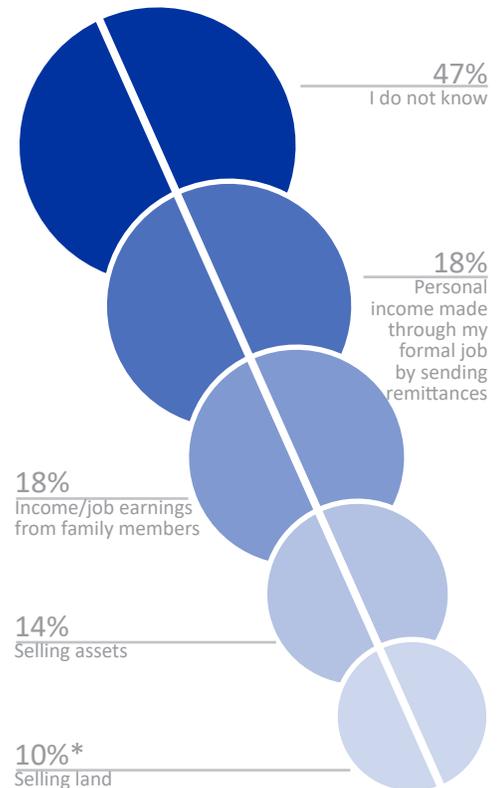
TO WHOM DO YOU OWE YOUR DEBT?

58%	27%	18%	10%*	8%*	0%
Family/Friends	MFIs/Self Help Group/NGO	Money lenders	Private bank	Public Bank	Other

DEBT REPAYMENT (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

Before your return, how did you plan to repay this debt?

96%
Personal income made through my formal job by sending remittances

4%*
I do not know

3%*
Income made through crop-harvest/ farming

1%*
Selling land

1%*
Borrowing money from family/friends

How do you plan to repay this debt now?

47%
I do not know

18%
Personal income made through my formal job by sending remittances

18%
Income/job earnings from family members
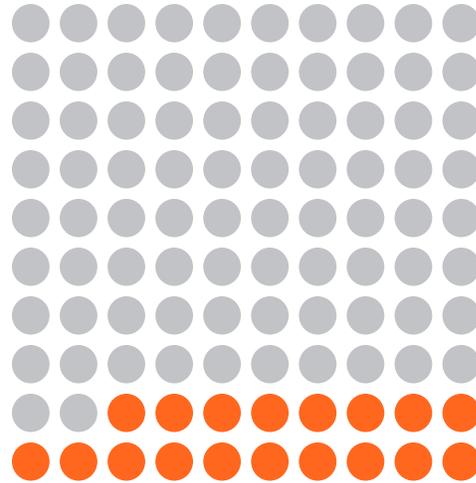
14%
Selling assets

10%*
Selling land

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES
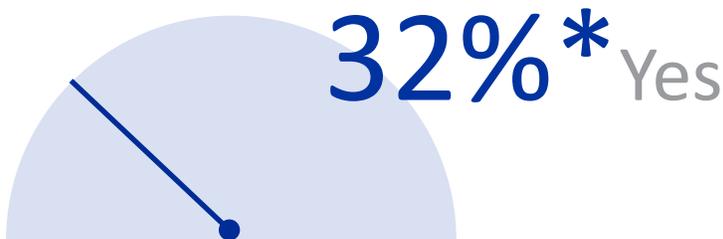
RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO BE EMPLOYED
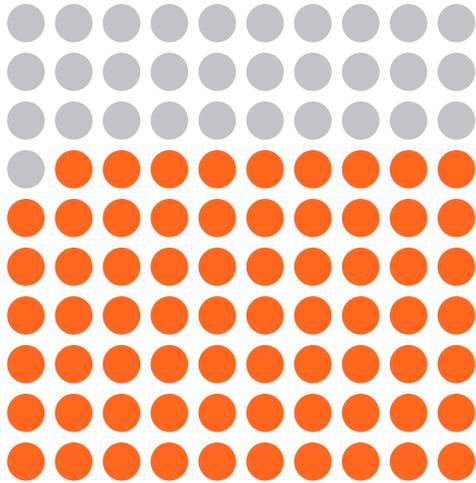
69% Of respondents were planning to be employed in the private sector, employed in the public sector, work for daily wages, or work as a contractor

RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED

18% Of respondents were planning to be self-employed or to start or own a business

IF YOU PLAN TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED, DO YOU HAVE THE SEED MONEY TO START YOUR BUSINESS?

32%* Yes

Among international returnee respondents, 69 per cent were planning to be employed in the future. This included those wanting to work in the private sector, in the public sector, for daily wages and as contractors. Alternatively, 18 per cent of respondents aspired to be self-employed in the future, either starting or running their own business.

Of the respondents who planned to be self-employed, 32 per cent had seed money to start their business. Those who did not, planned to arrange for seed money primarily through loans (82%). Family finances were also an important method through which respondents planned to attain seed money (65%), followed by selling land or property (12%).

One per cent of female international returnee respondents planned to be housewives in the future.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE SEED MONEY YET, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ARRANGE FOR IT?
(multiple answers possible)

82% — Loan

65% — Family finance

12%* — Sell land/property

0% — Other

0% — Do not want to answer
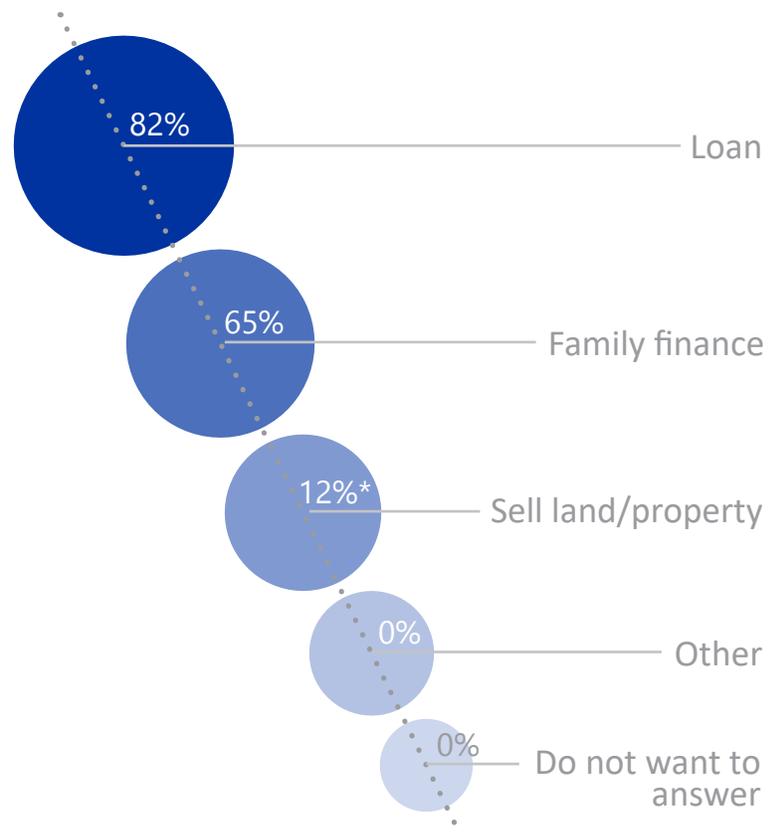
FUTURE MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

When asked whether they would want to re-migrate, 85 per cent of the sample population responded positively to international migration. Twelve per cent of respondents reported that they would not want to re-migrate. Among those that wanted to re-migrate, the majority of respondents reported that they want to leave after COVID-19 ends (90%). Five per cent of respondents did not know when they would re-migrate.

Almost all respondents who want to re-migrate would choose to go back to the same country they were working in before returning to Bangladesh (97%). Meanwhile, 49 per cent of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set. Ninety-one per cent have already taken training to upgrade their skill set and of those, 25 per cent have a training certificate.

DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE?

85%
Yes - abroad (outside Bangladesh)

12%
No

3%*
I do not know

1%*
Do not want to answer
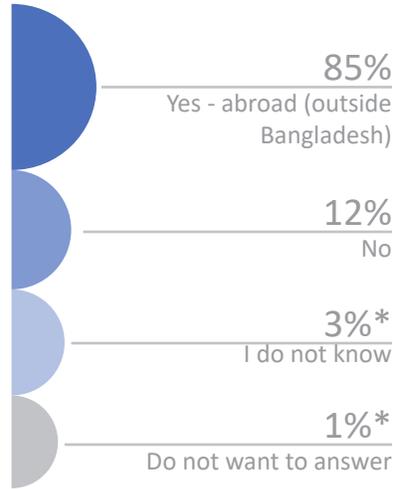
91%
Of respondents have taken training to upgrade their skill set

25%*
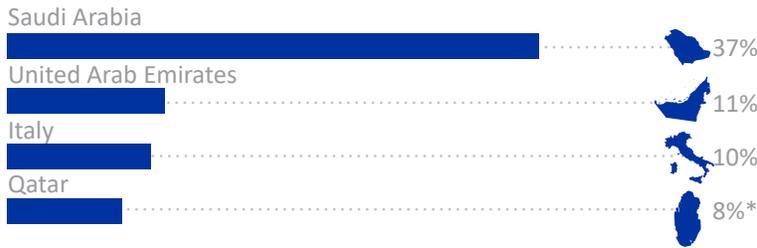Of respondents who have taken training to upgrade their skill set have a **training certificate**

49%
Of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set
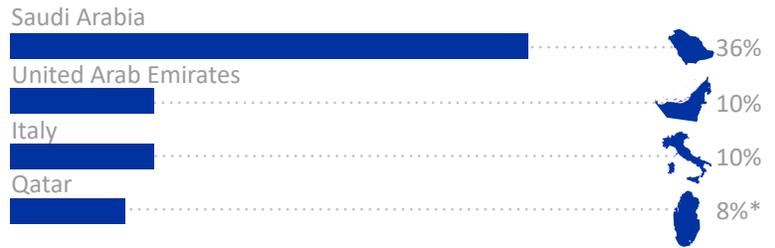
97%
Of respondents want to re-migrate to the same country

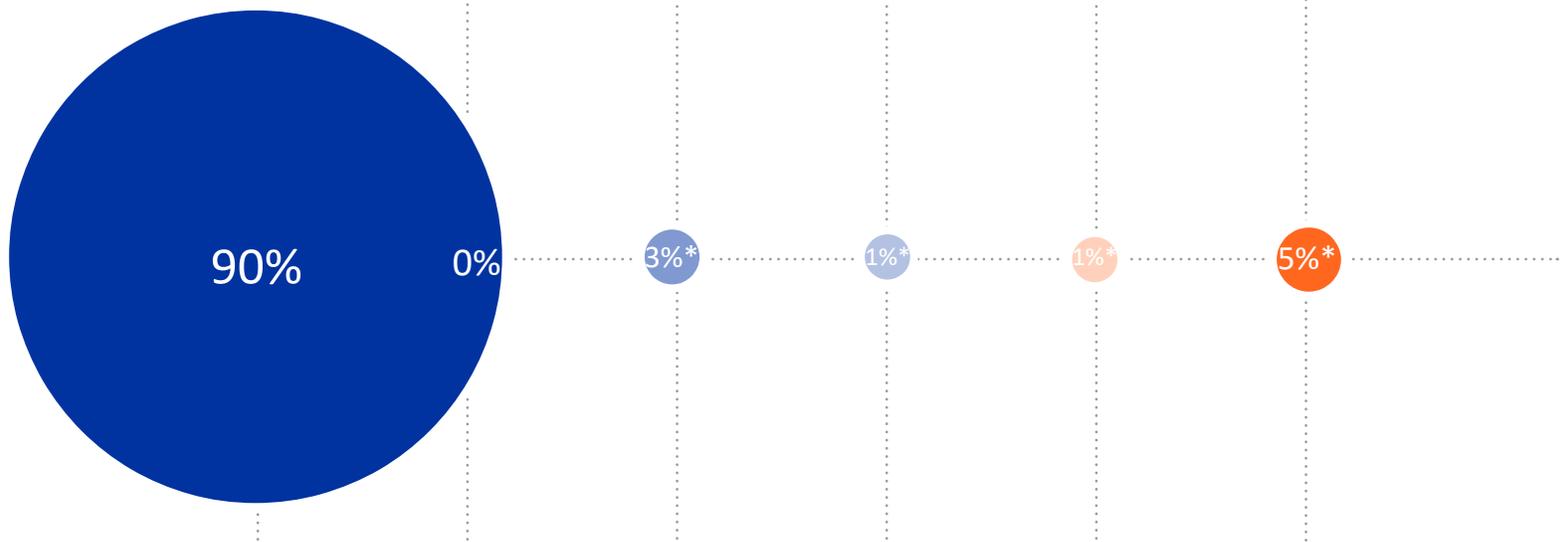## IF YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE, WHERE? INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS (top 4 answers)

Saudi Arabia — 37%
United Arab Emirates — 11%
Italy — 10%
Qatar — 8%*

IF YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE TO THE SAME COUNTRY, WHICH ONE? (top 4 answers)

Saudi Arabia — 36%
United Arab Emirates — 10%
Italy — 10%
Qatar — 8%*

IF YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE, WHEN?

After COVID-19 ends — 90%
Within 4 weeks — 0%
Between two and three months — 3%*
Between four and six months — 1%*
After more than 6 months — 1%*
I do not know — 5%*