RAPID ASSESSMENT

NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNATIONAL RETURN MIGRANTS IN CHATTOGRAM

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

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 Chattogram.

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 report results highlight that international returnee respondents have faced a diverse set of socio-economic vulnerabilities and challenges since they returned to their home districts. A majority of the respondents experienced a severe drop in their income due to a lack of employment opportunities and the loss of remittances since they returned. Moreover, respondents also reported that finding employment, financial problems and physical health are some of their primary concerns. Notably, a large proportion of returnees (94%) would like to re-migrate after COVID-19 ends, preferrably to the same country from which they returned.

CHATTOGRAM
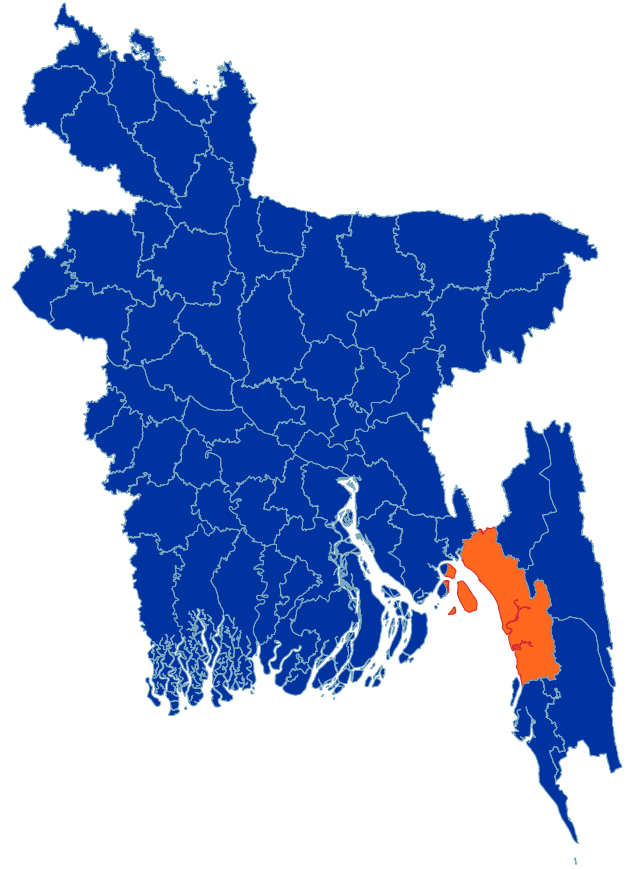
RESPONDENTS

229

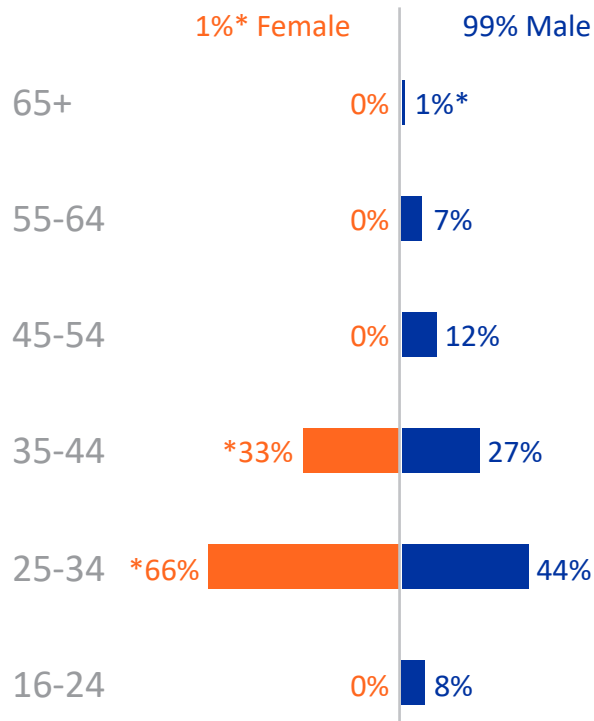TOTAL INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES SURVEYED IN CHATTOGRAM

INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

POPULATION PYRAMID

1%* Female   99% Male

Age	Female	Male
65+	0%	1%*
55-64	0%	7%
45-54	0%	12%
35-44	*33%	27%
25-34	*66%	44%
16-24	0%	8%

Average household size including respondent — **6.5**

Average number of household members living abroad — **1.4**

Respondents who are married — **75%**

Respondents who have children — **63%**

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

Respondents who did not have formal education but can read/write — **0%**

EDUCATION LEVEL (top 5 answers)

Primary education	Secondary education	Secondary school certificate or equivalent	Higher secondary certificate or equivalent	Post graduate or equivalent
17%	36%	23%	13%	5%

CURRENT TOTAL AVERAGE MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN BDT

No income	5,000-10,000	10,001-15,000	20001-25000	More than 35,000
58%	7%	8%	6%	6%
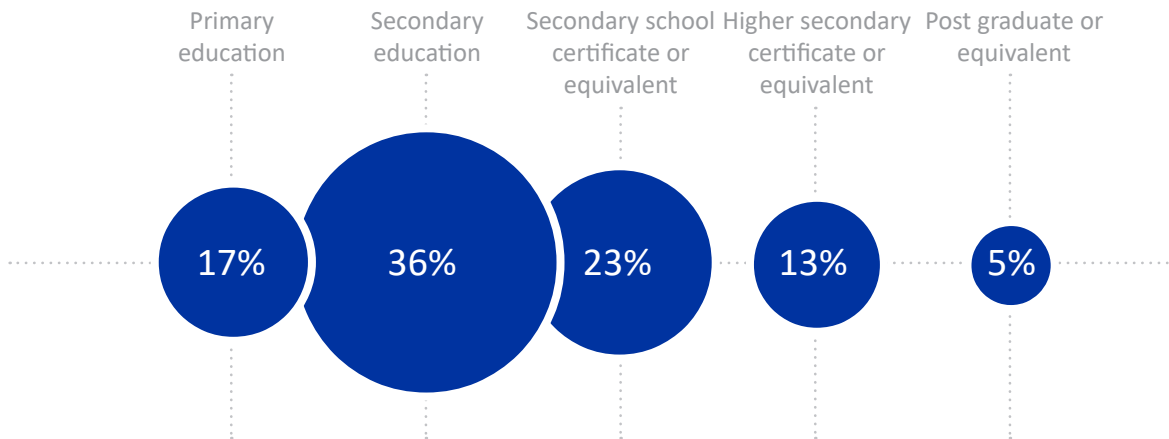
The majority of the sample population were male in between 25 and 44 years old. Seventy-five per cent of respondents reported being married at the time of the interview, and of respondents who were married or had been married, 63 per cent had children.

A large majority of respondents had completed some form of formal education (99%). Of those, the most common level of completion was secondary education (36%), followed by primary education (17%). More than half of respondents reported that their households were earning no income (58%) at the time of the interview.

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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	24%	62%	3%*	40%
Public sector	0%	2%*	0%	5%
Daily wages	13%	21%	4%*	13%
Contractor	2%*	4%	0%	5%
Self-employed/ business	28%	11%	6%	33%
Unemployed	19%	0%	83%	1%*
Student	13%	0%	0%	0%
Retired	0%	0%	0%	0%
Housewife	1%*	0%	1%*	0%
Other	0%	0%	1%*	0%
I don't know	0%	0%	0%	7%
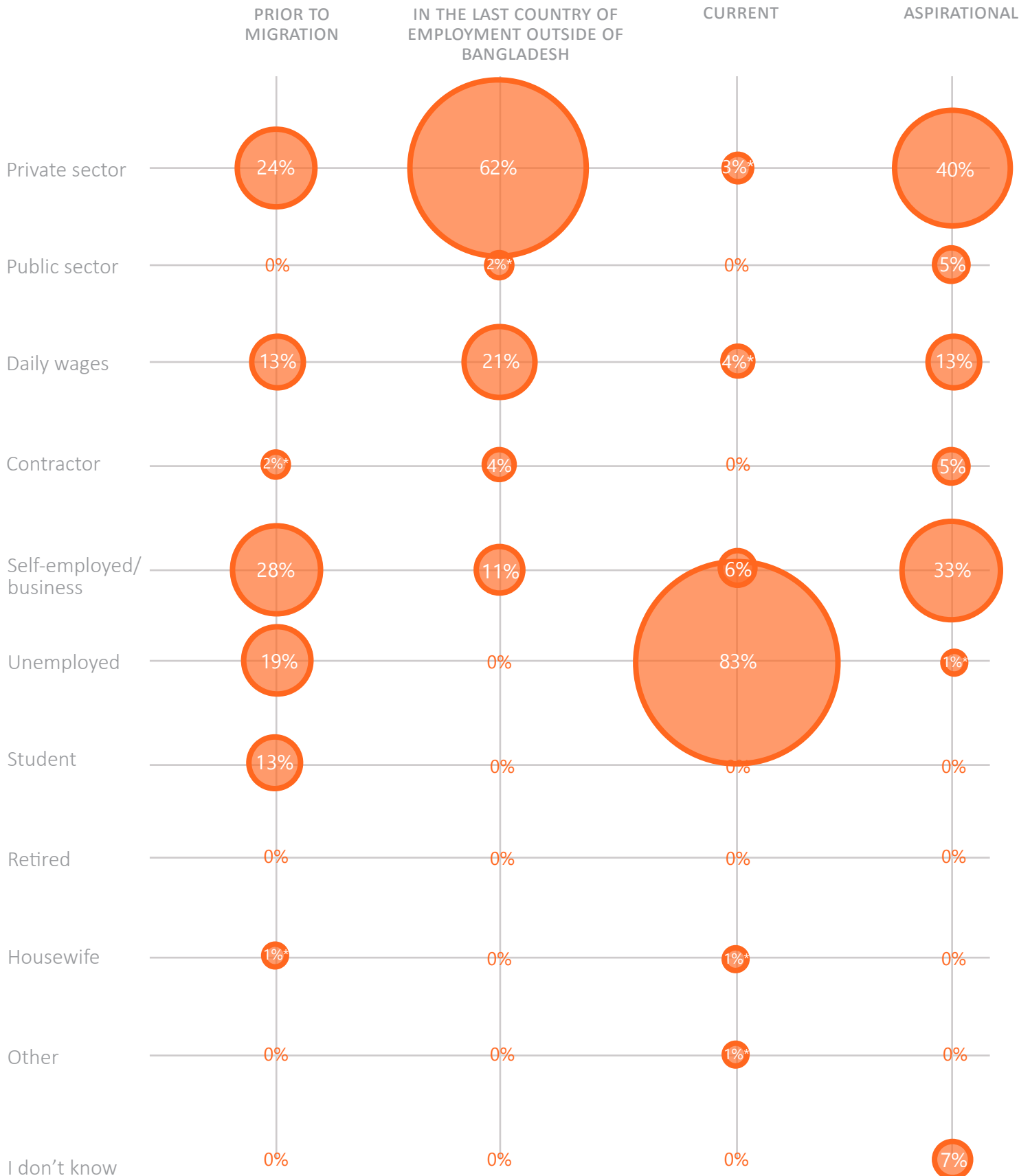
Note: 2% of respondents responded "Do not want to answer" when asked about their aspirational employment status.

OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR (top 7 answers)

PRIOR TO MIGRATION

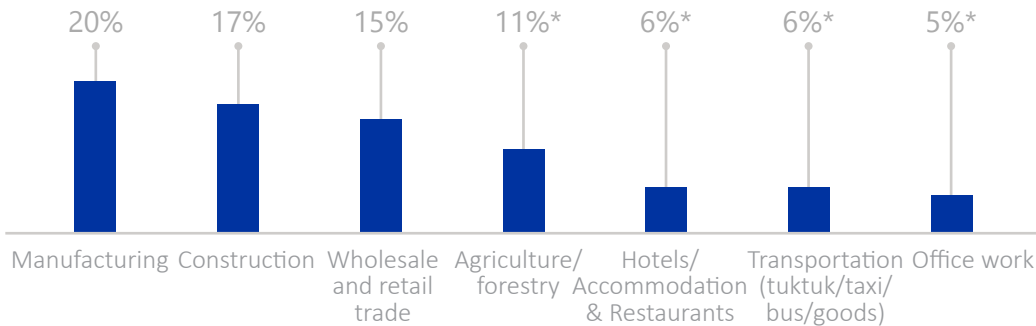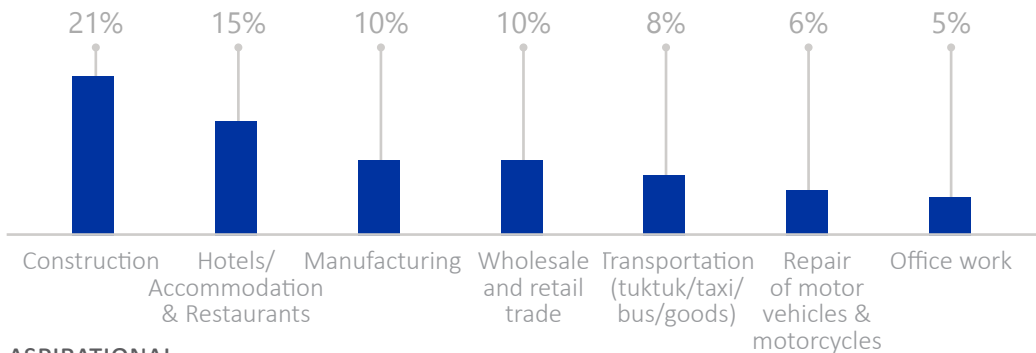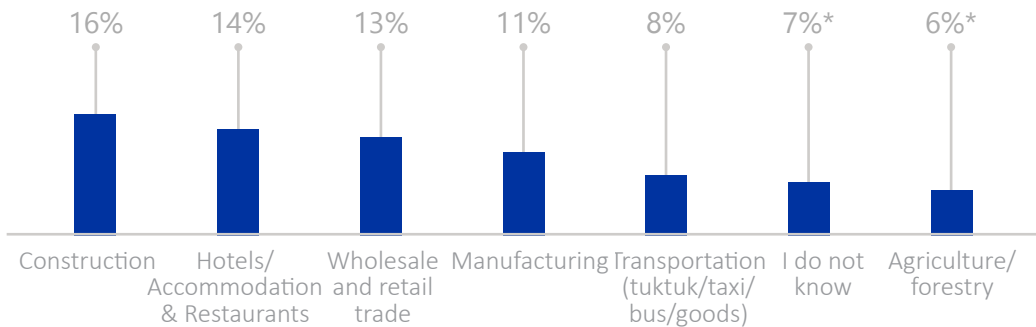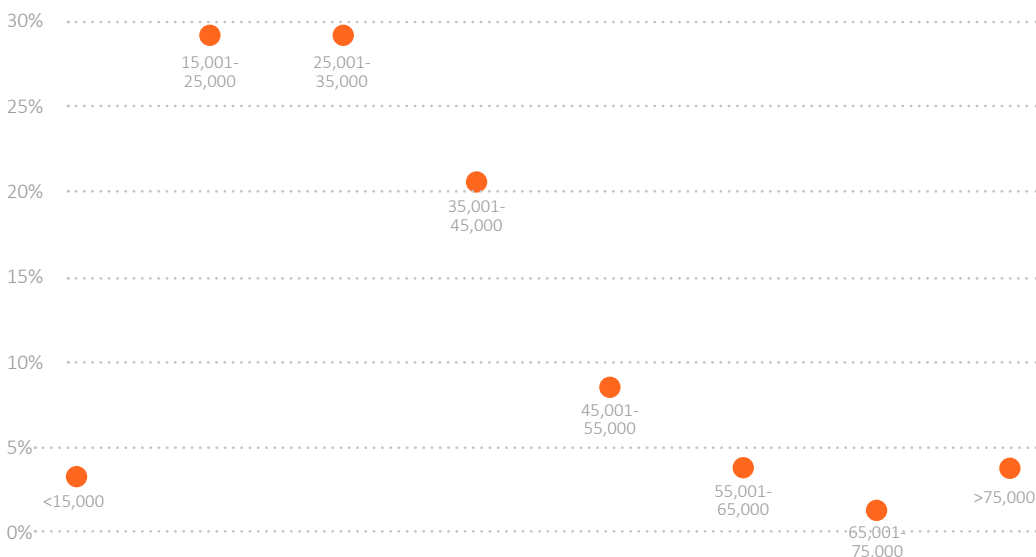| 20%	17%	15%	11%*	6%*	6%*	5%*
Manufacturing	Construction	Wholesale and retail trade	Agriculture/ forestry	Hotels/ Accommodation & Restaurants	Transportation (tuktuk/taxi/ bus/goods)	Office work

IN THE LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF BANGLADESH

21%	15%	10%	10%	8%	6%	5%
Construction	Hotels/ Accommodation & Restaurants	Manufacturing	Wholesale and retail trade	Transportation (tuktuk/taxi/ bus/goods)	Repair of motor vehicles & motorcycles	Office work

ASPIRATIONAL

16%	14%	13%	11%	8%	7%*	6%*
Construction	Hotels/ Accommodation & Restaurants	Wholesale and retail trade	Manufacturing	Transportation (tuktuk/taxi/ bus/goods)	I do not know	Agriculture/ forestry

MONTHLY INCOME IN LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT (BDT)

- 15,001-25,000 — ~29%
- 25,001-35,000 — ~29%
- 35,001-45,000 — ~20.5%
- 45,001-55,000 — ~8.5%
- <15,000 — ~3%
- 55,001-65,000 — ~4.5%
- 65,001-75,000 — ~1%
- >75,000 — ~4.5%

The primary form of employment for international returnee respondents prior to migration was self-employment (28%). Another 24 per cent was active in the private sector and 13 per cent worked for daily wages. However, 19 per cent of respondents reported to be unemployed prior to migration. In the last country of employment, both working in the private sector (62%) and working for daily wages (21%) became more significant as opposed to prior to migration (24% and 13%). During the reporting period, a large majority of respondents reported that they were unemployed (83%). 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 (40%) in the future. This was followed by self-employment (33%) and daily wages (13%).
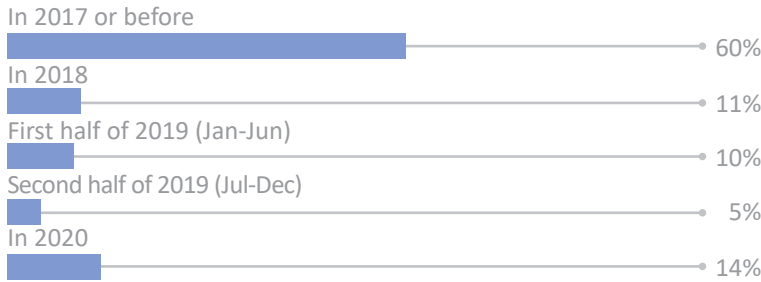
Occupational sectors also shifted throughout international returnee respondents' migration journey. Prior to migration manufacturing was the most common occupational sector (20%), while construction and hospitality were the most common in respondents' last country of employment (21% and 15%) and aspirationally (16% and 14%). On the other hand, work in wholesale and retail trade stayed relatively consistent prior to migration (15%), in the last country of employment (10%) and aspirationally (13%).

The majority of respondents (82%) earned less than BDT 45,000 (530.66 USD)* per month in their last country of employment, with three per cent earning less than BDT 15,000 (176.90 USD)* (23%). Four per cent of respondents earned more than BDT 75,000 (884.43 USD)* per month in the last country of employment.
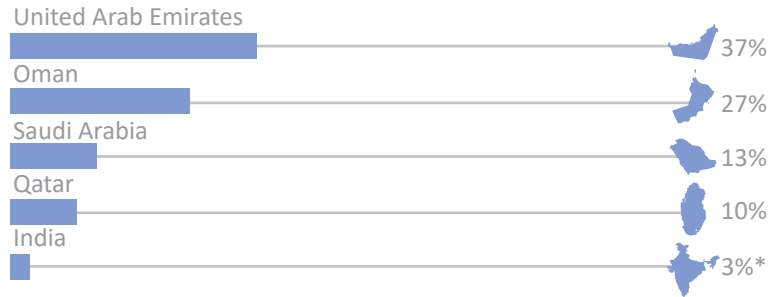
*Exchange rates are 84.8 BDT to 1 USD, according to the UN Operational Rates of Exchange between 1 August to 1 September 2020.

MIGRATION AND RETURN JOURNEY OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

WHEN DID YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME DISTRICT?

In 2017 or before — 60%
In 2018 — 11%
First half of 2019 (Jan-Jun) — 10%
Second half of 2019 (Jul-Dec) — 5%
In 2020 — 14%

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

United Arab Emirates — 37%
Oman — 27%
Saudi Arabia — 13%
Qatar — 10%
India — 3%*

DID YOU GO ABROAD THROUGH THE BMET OR GOVERNMENT CHANNELS?

27% YES

HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY FOR THE FACILITATION OF MIGRATION?

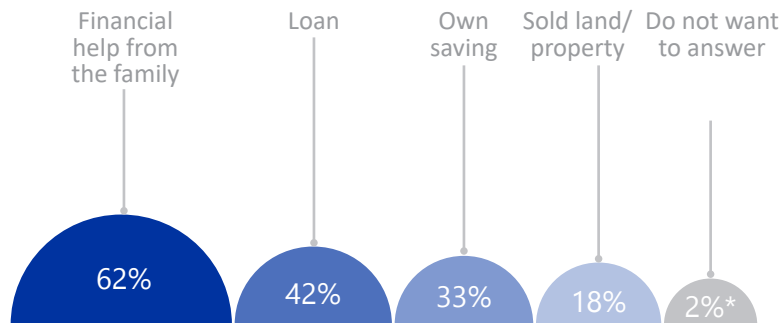# BDT 415,175
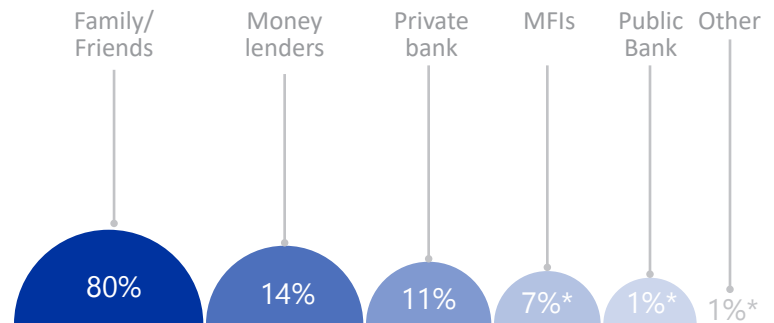Average amount paid by those who went abroad through BMET or government channels (USD 4,895.93)*

BDT 367,367
Average amount paid by those who did not go abroad through BMET or government channels (USD 4,332.16)*

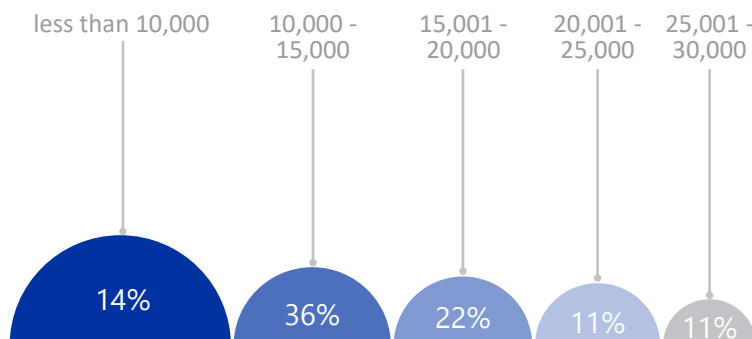## HOW DID YOU OBTAIN MONEY FOR MIGRATION FACILITATION? (multiple answers possible)

Financial help from the family — 62%
Loan — 42%
Own saving — 33%
Sold land/ property — 18%
Do not want to answer — 2%*

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

Family/ Friends — 80%
Money lenders — 14%
Private bank — 11%
MFIs — 7%*
Public Bank — 1%*
Other — 1%*

REMITTANCES IN BDT (top 5 answers)

83% Of respondents sent money home every month

less than 10,000 — 14%
10,000 - 15,000 — 36%
15,001 - 20,000 — 22%
20,001 - 25,000 — 11%
25,001 - 30,000 — 11%

WHEN DID YOU RETURN?

Between three and six months ago — 27%
Between two and three months ago — 65%
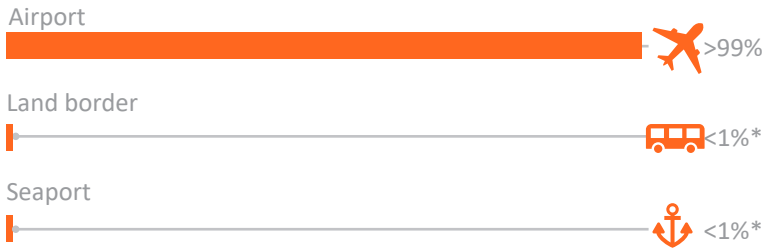31-60 days ago — 8%
15-30 days ago — 0%
8-14 days ago — 0%
0-7 days ago — 0%

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

WHAT WAS YOUR POINT OF ENTRY?
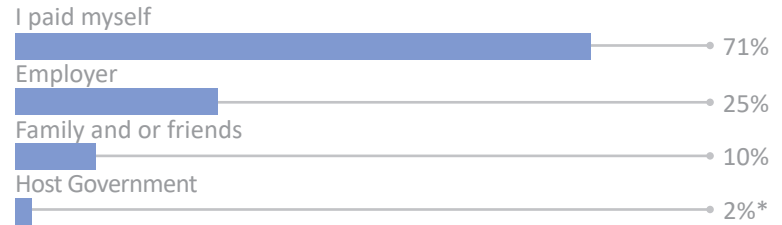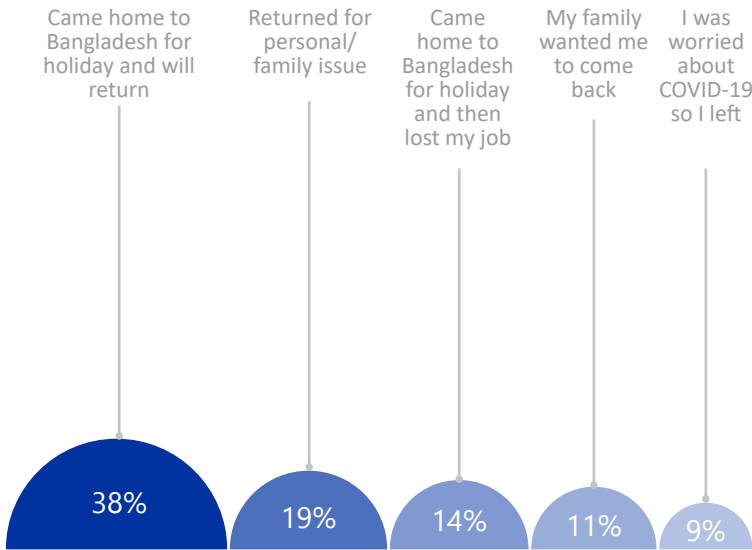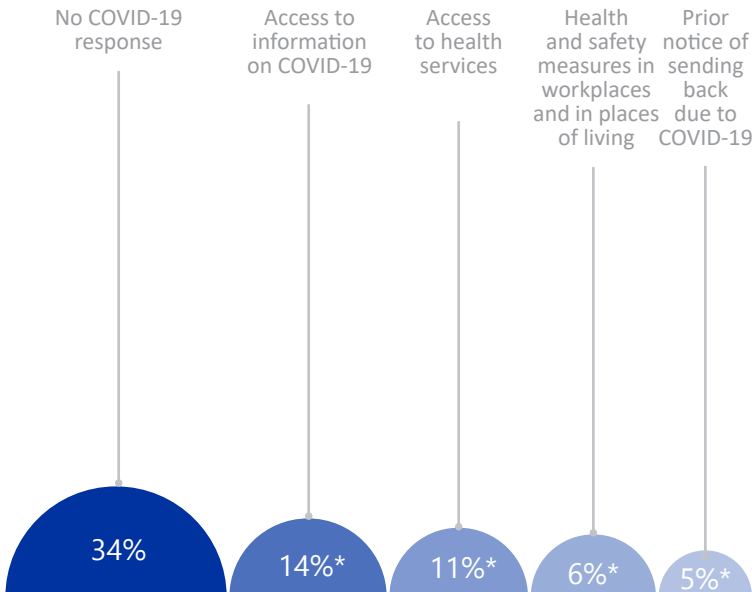
Airport — >99%

Land border — <1%*

Seaport — <1%*

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

I paid myself — 71%

Employer — 25%

Family and or friends — 10%

Host Government — 2%*

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

Came home to Bangladesh for holiday and will return	Returned for personal/family issue	Came home to Bangladesh for holiday and then lost my job	My family wanted me to come back	I was worried about COVID-19 so I left
38%	19%	14%	11%	9%

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	Access to information on COVID-19	Access to health services	Health and safety measures in workplaces and in places of living	Prior notice of sending back due to COVID-19
34%	14%*	11%*	6%*	5%*

70% Of respondents received their final wages before returning

More than half of respondents had emigrated from Bangladesh during or before 2017 (60%), with 27 per cent having gone abroad via the BMET or government channels. Money for migration was obtained largely through financial help from friends and family (62%). Eighty-three per cent of the sample population sent remittances home, most often less than BDT 20,000 (235.85 USD)* (72%).

Ninety-two per cent of respondents returned to Bangladesh between two and six months ago. The majority returned via air travel (>99%), while the remaining returned via a land border (<1%) or a seaport (<1%). Seventy-one per cent paid for their return journeys by themselves and 25 per cent were supported by their employers.

When asked the reason for their return, 52 per cent of respondents reported that they came home to Bangladesh for holidays. Of those 38 per cent reported that they will return after holidays, while 14 per cent lost their job after they returned for holidays. Nineteen per cent reported that they returned for personal issues. Another 11 per cent of the respondents returned because their family wanted them to come back. Nine per cent returned because they were worried about COVID-19.

According to 34 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. Eleven per cent of respondents had access to health services and 6 per cent experienced health and safety measures in workplaces and in places of living. Only five per cent of respondents received prior notice of sending back due to COVID-19. Twenty-nine 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.
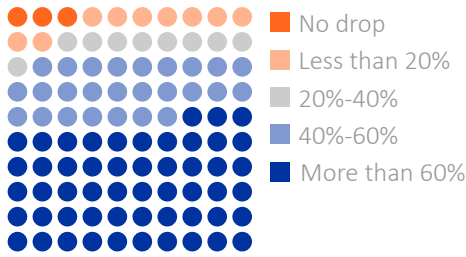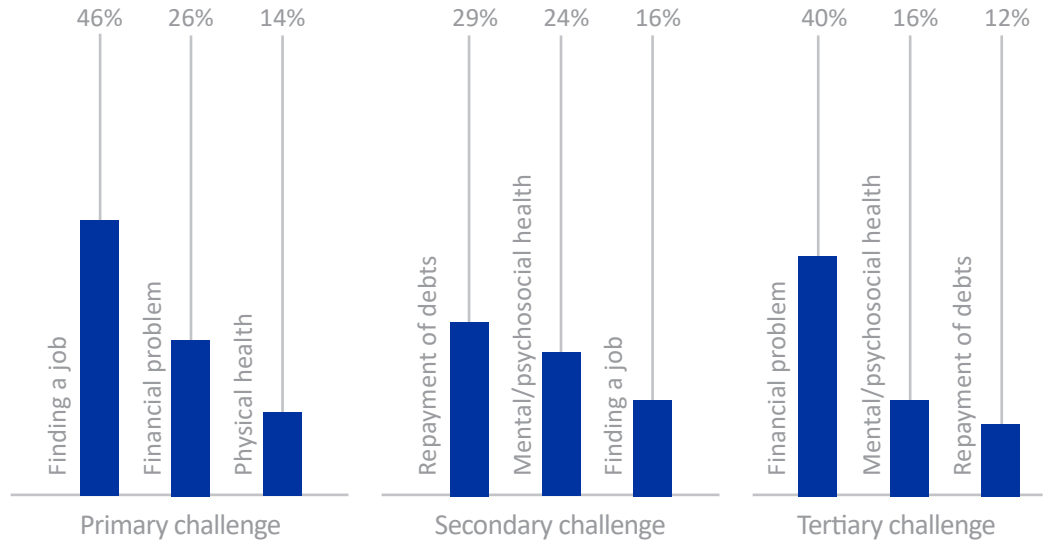
7

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

45%

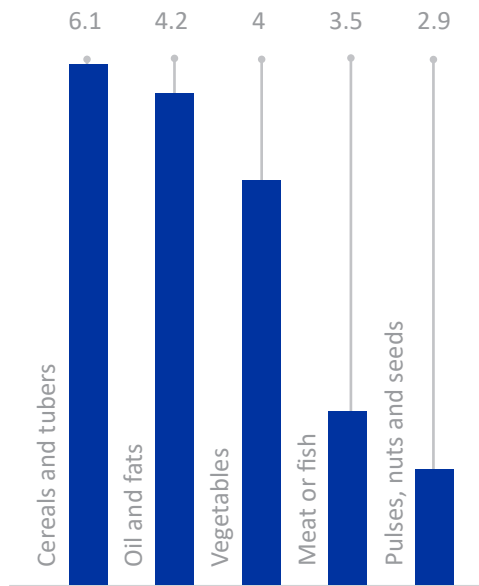Of respondents experienced challenges upon returning to their community

Drop in household income after return

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

CHALLENGES (top 3 answers)

Primary challenge
- Finding a job — 46%
- Financial problem — 26%
- Physical health — 14%

Secondary challenge
- Repayment of debts — 29%
- Mental/psychosocial health — 24%
- Finding a job — 16%

Tertiary challenge
- Financial problem — 40%
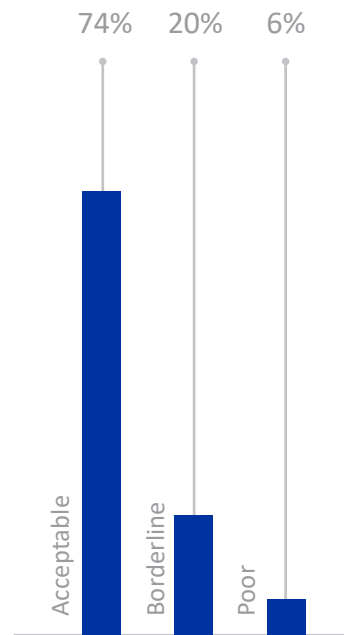- Mental/psychosocial health — 16%
- Repayment of debts — 12%

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?

- Cereals and tubers — 6.1
- Oil and fats — 4.2
- Vegetables — 4
- Meat or fish — 3.5
- Pulses, nuts and seeds — 2.9

FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORES

- Acceptable — 74%
- Borderline — 20%
- Poor — 6%

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%
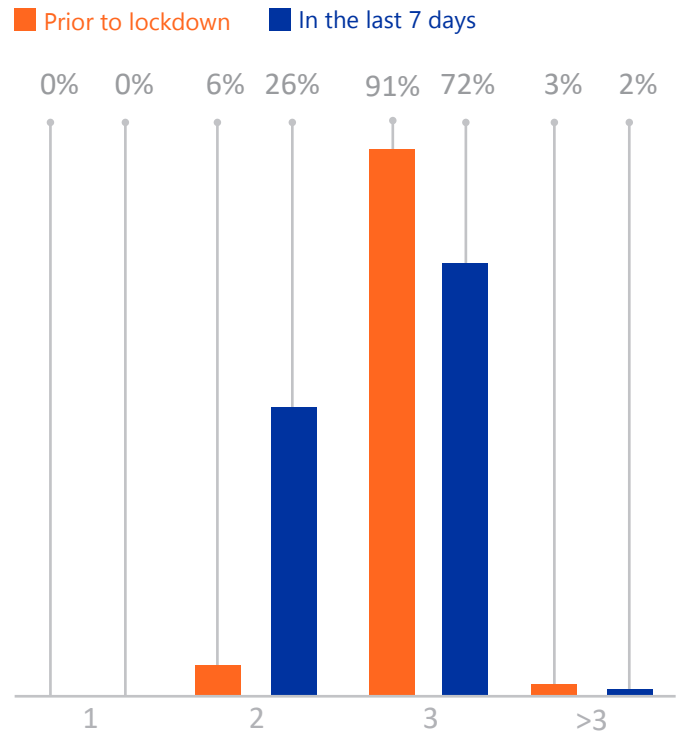
Nearly half of all respondents experienced challenges upon returning to Bangladesh (45%). Returnees' main primary challenge was finding a job (46%) followed by financial problems (26%) and physical health (14%). However, it is important to note the relevance of the main secondary challenges: repayment of debts (29%), mental/psychosocial health issues (24%) and finding a job (16%). These issues reflect the multi-faceted effects of COVID-19 and its relationship with both social and economic factors.
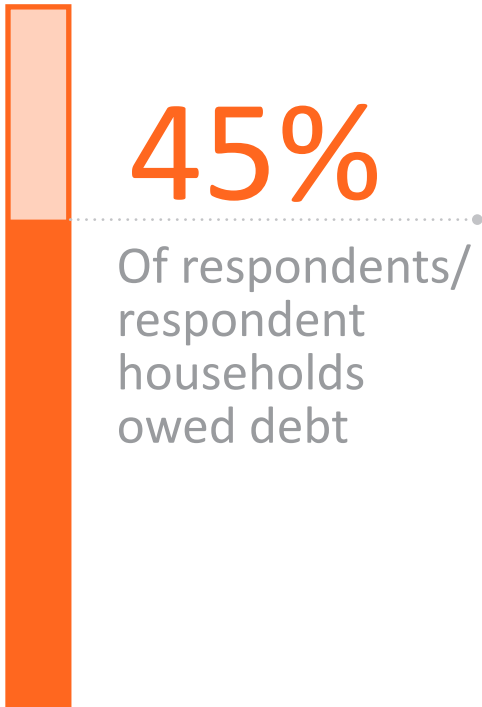
Another indication of household challenges is the drop in income after the respondents' return. Fifty-three per cent of respondents reported a more than 60 per cent drop in household income and 26 per cent reported a drop between 40 and 60 per cent. A convergence of factors, such as the loss of remittances, 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.

*14.4% of interviews with international returnees were conducted during Ramadan, which could be a contributing factor to the decrease in meals.

DEBT AMONG INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES
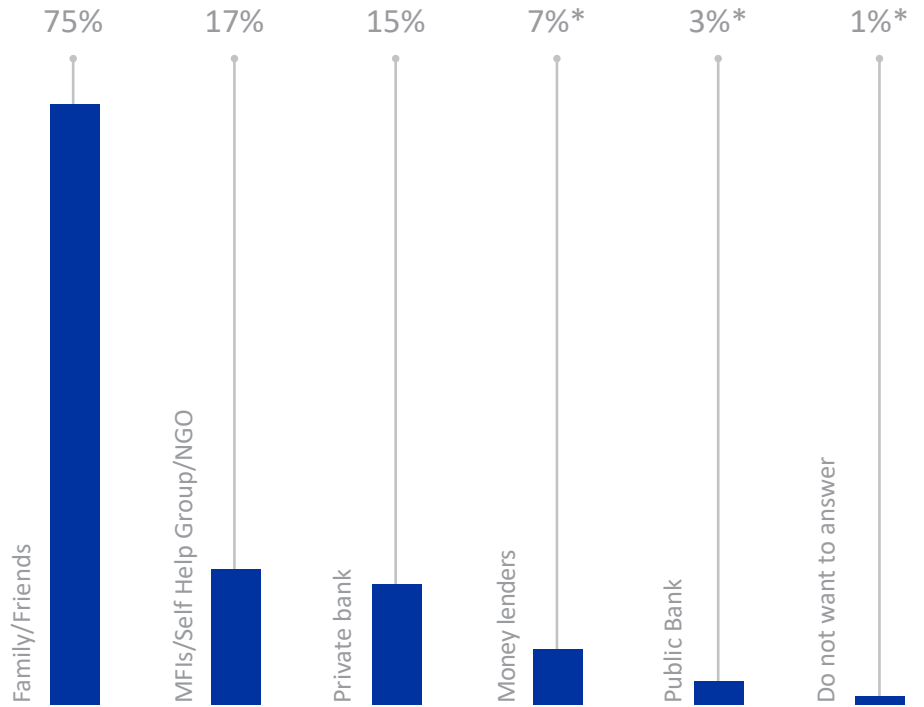
DO YOU OR YOUR HOUSEHOLD OWE DEBT?

45%

Of respondents/ respondent households owed debt

TO WHOM DO YOU OWE YOUR DEBT?

75%	17%	15%	7%*	3%*	1%*
Family/Friends	MFIs/Self Help Group/NGO	Private bank	Money lenders	Public Bank	Do not want to answer

In total, 45 per cent of respondents or respondent households reported that they owed debt, a majority of which was owed to family and friends (75%), MFIs/Self help groups/NGOs (17%) and private bank (15%).

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 (73%). Another 16 per cent reported income made through business activities as a debt repayment method. Thirteen per cent reported income/job earnings from family members. Eight per cent indicated that they did not know how to repay their debt.
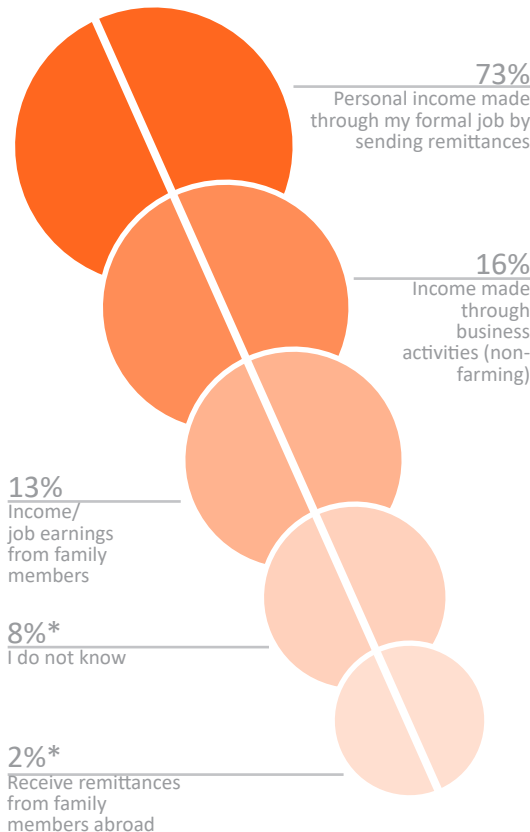
Alternatively, 40 per cent of respondents did not know how they would repay their debt after having returned to their home districts. Twenty per cent planned to repay their debt with personal income made through a formal job. This was followed by income/job earnings from family members (17%), income made through business activities (12%) and borrowing from family and friends (11%).
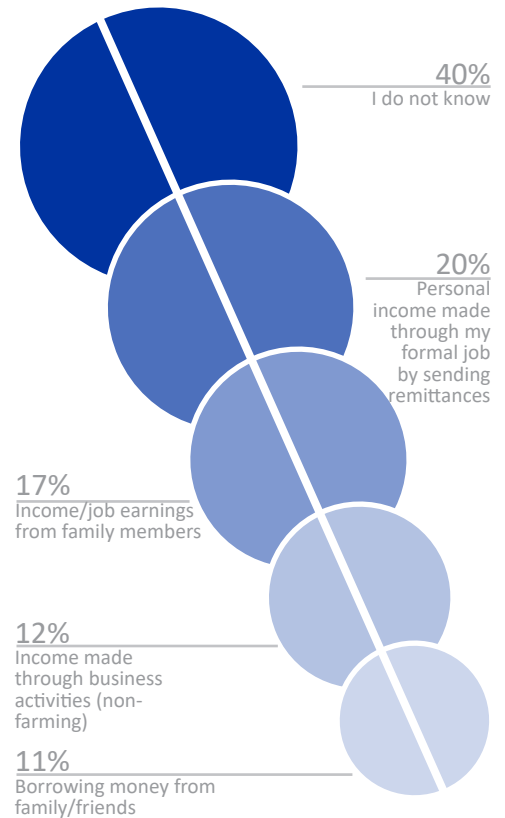
DEBT REPAYMENT (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

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

**73%** Personal income made through my formal job by sending remittances

16% Income made through business activities (non-farming)

13% Income/ job earnings from family members

8%* I do not know

2%* Receive remittances from family members abroad

How do you plan to repay this debt now?

40% I do not know

20% Personal income made through my formal job by sending remittances

17% Income/job earnings from family members

12% Income made through business activities (non-farming)
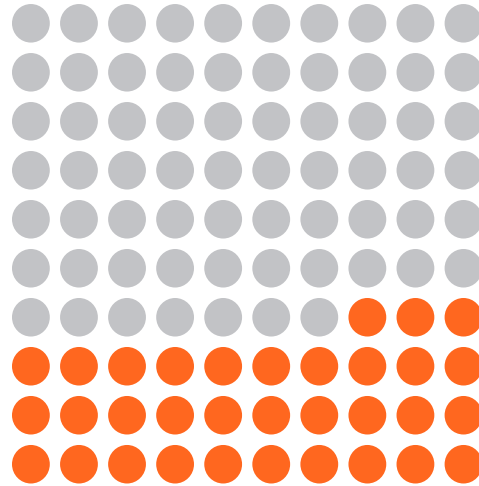
11% Borrowing money from family/friends

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO BE EMPLOYED
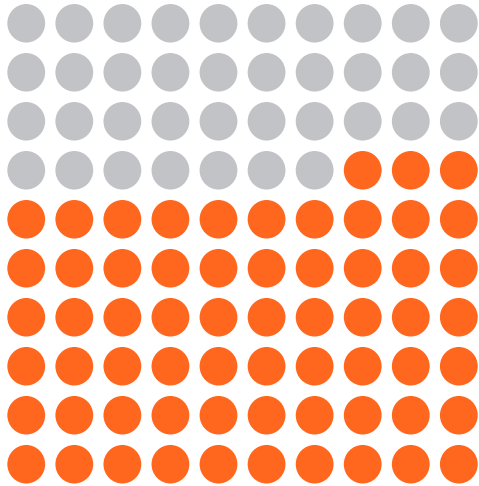
63%
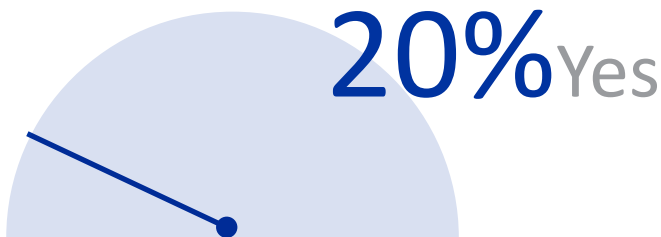Of respondents were planning to be employed in the private sector, employed in the public sector, work for daily wages, or work as a contractor

RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED

33%
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?

20% Yes

Among international returnee respondents, 63 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, 33 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, 20 per cent had seed money to start their business. Those who did not, planned to arrange for seed money primarily through loans (65%). Family finances were also an important method through which respondents planned to attain seed money (53%), followed by selling land or property (9%).

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

- 65% — Loan
- 53% — Family finance
- 9%* — Sell land/property
- 9%* — Other
- 2%* — Do not want to answer
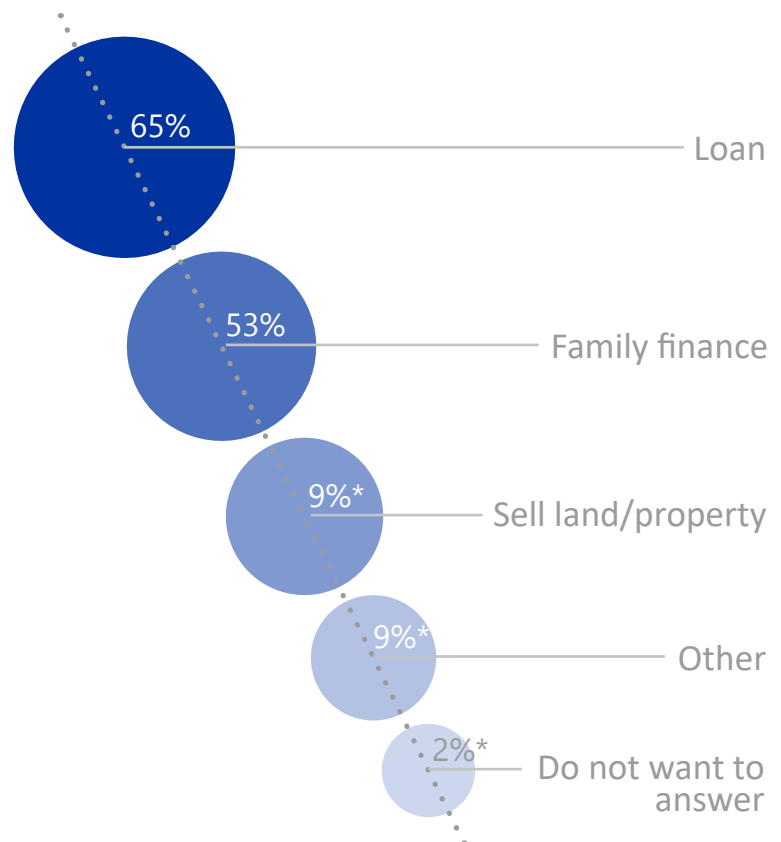
FUTURE MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

When asked whether they would want to re-migrate, 75 per cent of the sample population responded positively to international migration, while only four respondents wanted to re-migrate internally. Eighteen 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 (73%). 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 (94%). Meanwhile, 70 per cent of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set. Twenty-eight per cent have already taken training to upgrade their skill set and of those, 21 per cent have a training certificate.

DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE?

75%
Yes - abroad (outside Bangladesh)

18%
No

5%
I do not know

2%*
Yes - internal
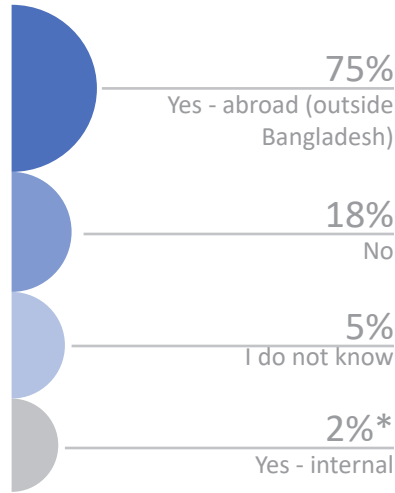
28%
Of respondents have taken training to upgrade their skill set

21%
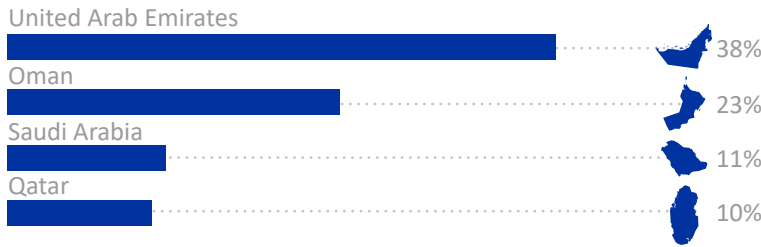Of respondents who have taken training to upgrade their skill set have a **training certificate**

70%
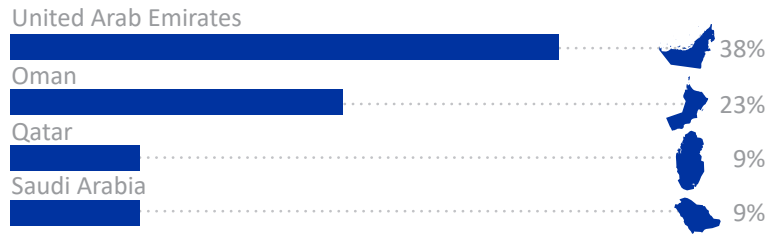Of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set

94%
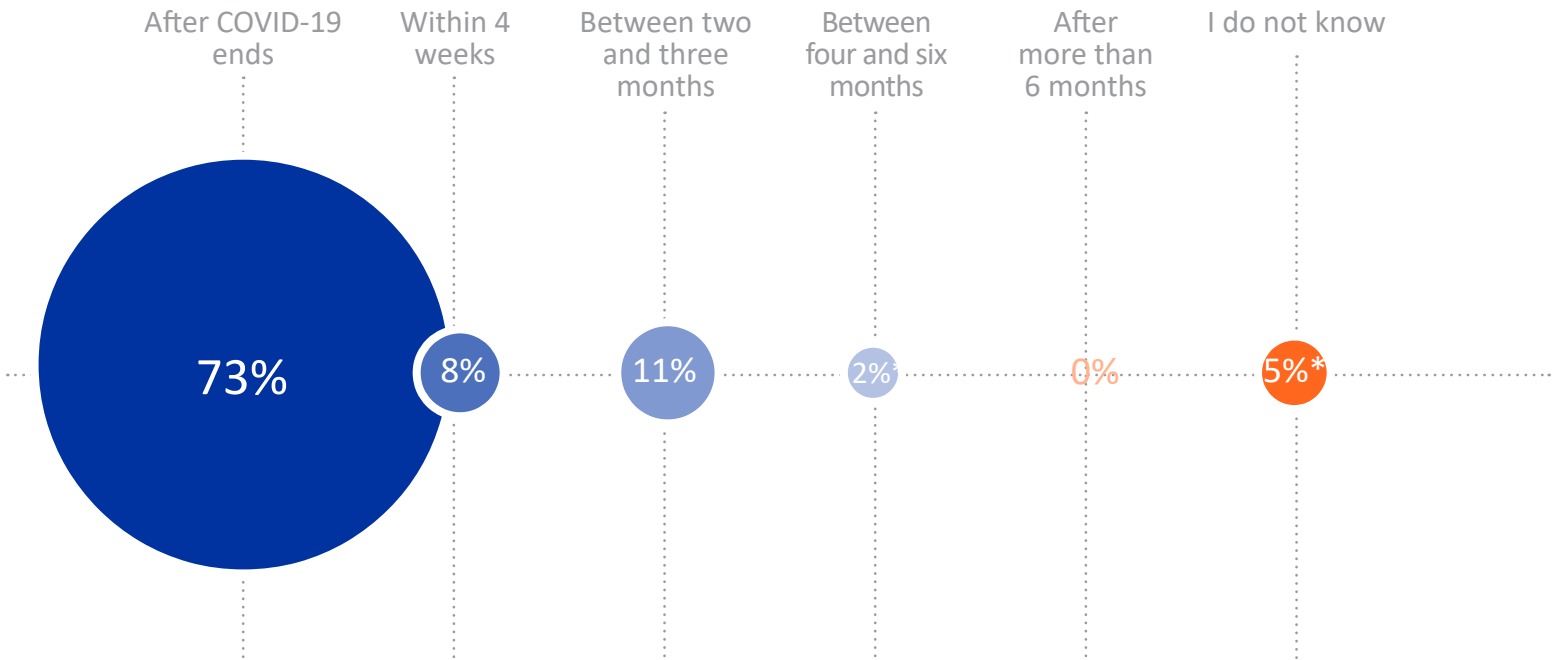Of respondents want to re-migrate to the same country

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

United Arab Emirates — 38%
Oman — 23%
Saudi Arabia — 11%
Qatar — 10%

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

United Arab Emirates — 38%
Oman — 23%
Qatar — 9%
Saudi Arabia — 9%

IF YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE, WHEN?

After COVID-19 ends	Within 4 weeks	Between two and three months	Between four and six months	After more than 6 months	I do not know
73%	8%	11%	2%*	0%	5%*