



RAPID ASSESSMENT

NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNATIONAL RETURN MIGRANTS IN CUMILLA

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: Microfinance institution

NGO: Non-governmental organization

NPM: Needs and Population Monitoring

REMAP: Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy

USD: United States Dollar

Statistical 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

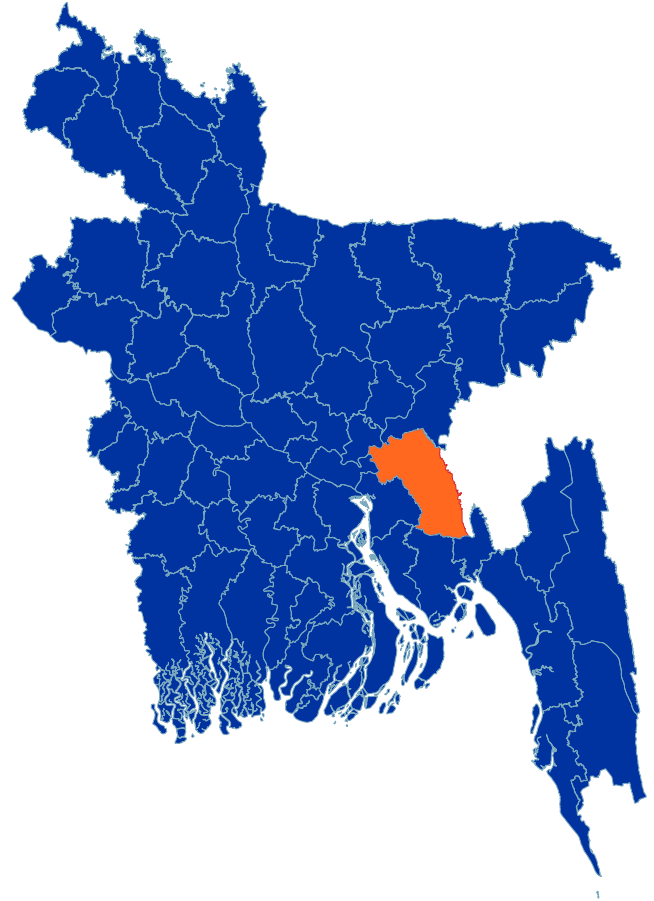
As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged globally, migrant workers, both internationally and within Bangladesh, found themselves facing a new set of challenges and vulnerabilities. With limited access to income-generating activities, social services, healthcare systems, and social support networks, many have 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 Cumilla.

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 highlights how international returnee respondents face several challenges and vulnerabilities since their return to their home district. Most notable, is the large drop in income, which is caused by their unemployment and a lack of employment opportunities, as well as the loss of remittances since they returned. However, the survey results show that respondents also face social and mental issues. Moreover, a large majority of respondents (99%) want to re-migrate when it is safe to do so, most preferably to the same country from which they returned.

CUMILLA



RESPONDENTS

 108

TOTAL INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES
SURVEYED IN CUMILLA

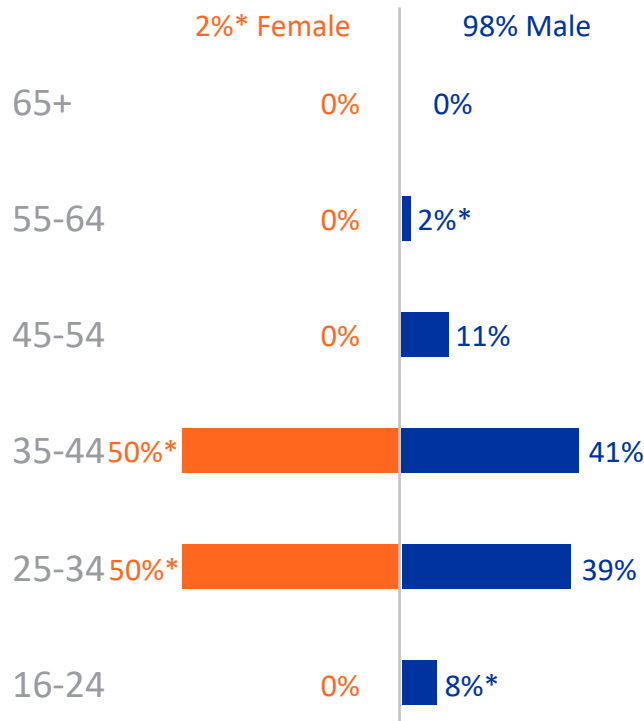
INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES





DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

POPULATION PYRAMID



Average household size including respondent **6.8**



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



Respondents who are married **80%**



Respondents who have children **63%**

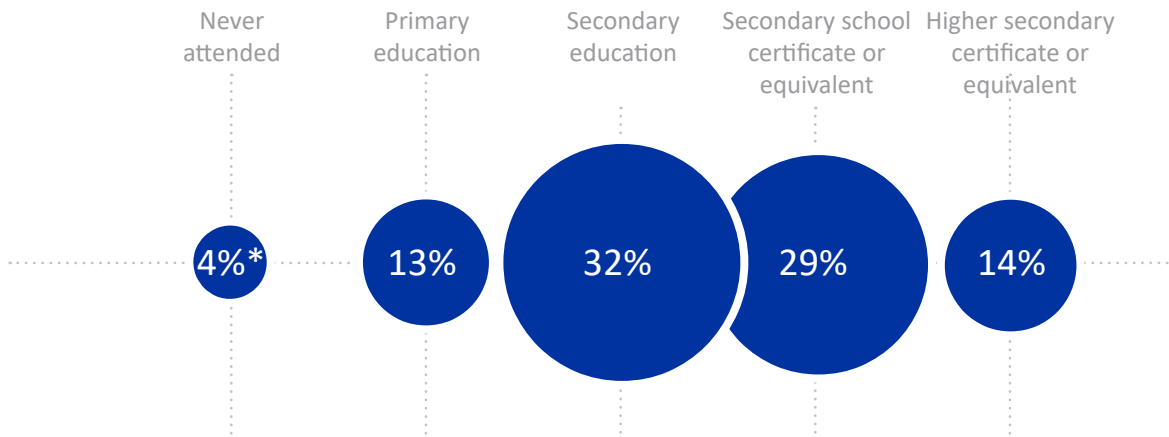


Respondents who had some form of formal education **94%**



Respondents who did not have formal education but can read/write **2%***

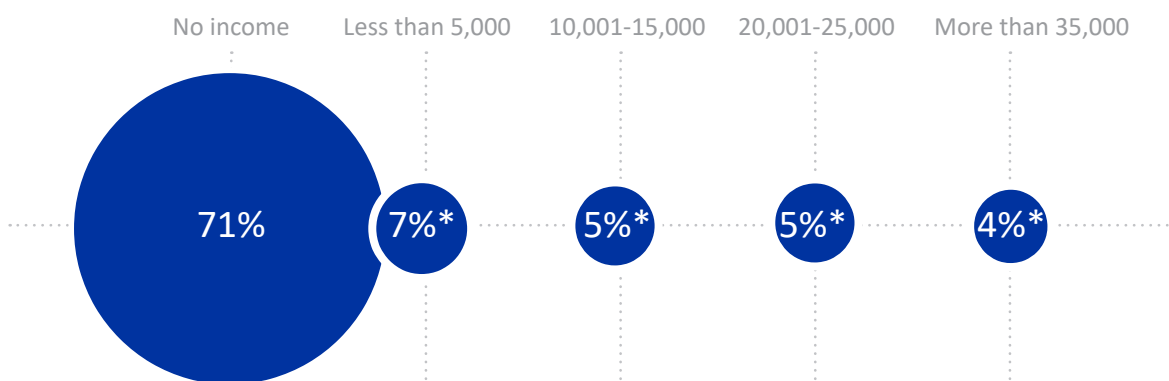
EDUCATION LEVEL (top 5 answers)



The majority of the sample population were male in between 25 and 44 years old. Eighty 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 (94%). Of those, the most common level of completion was secondary education (32%), followed by secondary school certificate or equivalent (29%). A large proportion of respondents reported that their households were earning no income (71%) at the time of the interview.

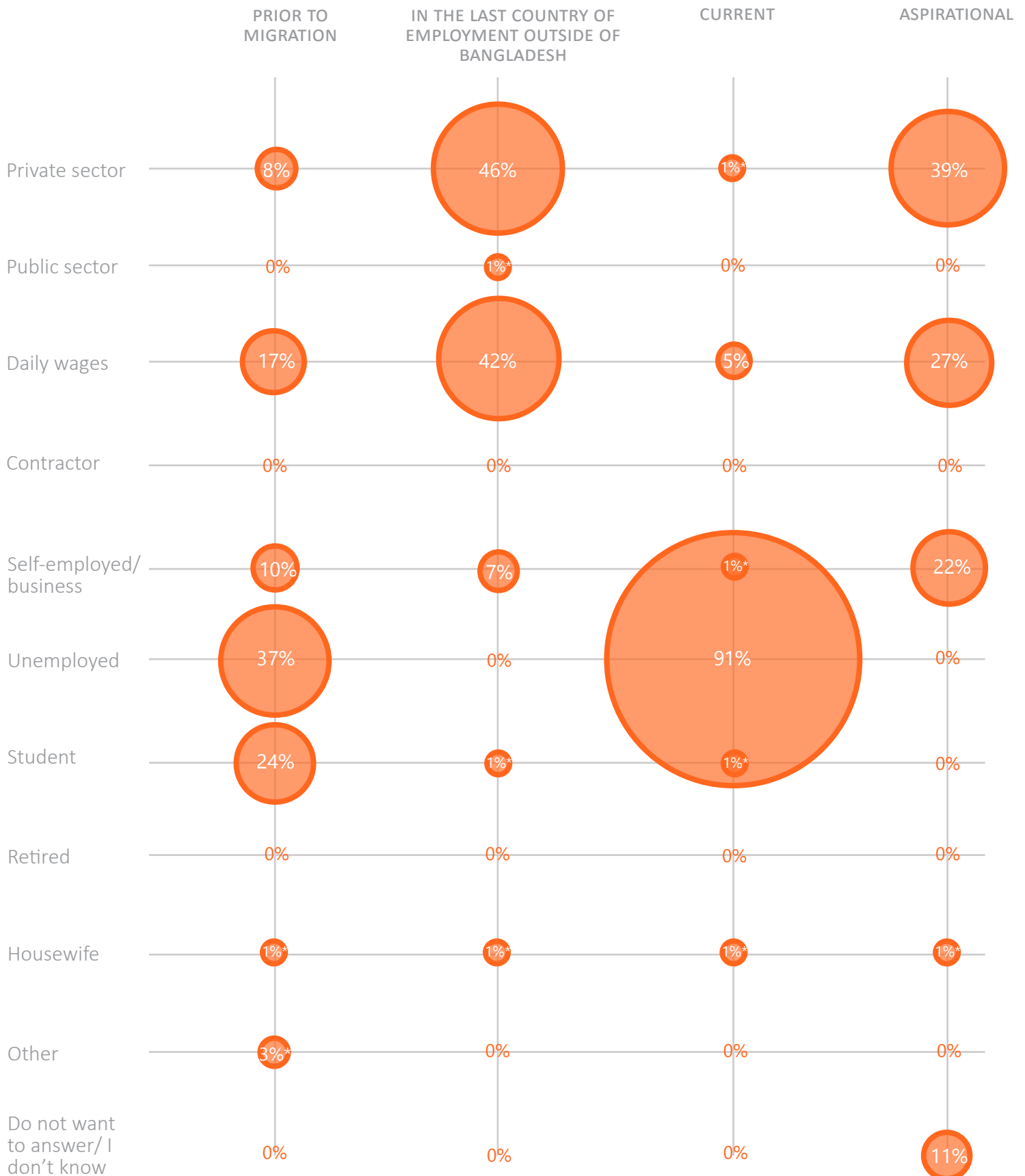
CURRENT TOTAL AVERAGE MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN BDT





EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

EMPLOYMENT STATUS (multiple answers possible)

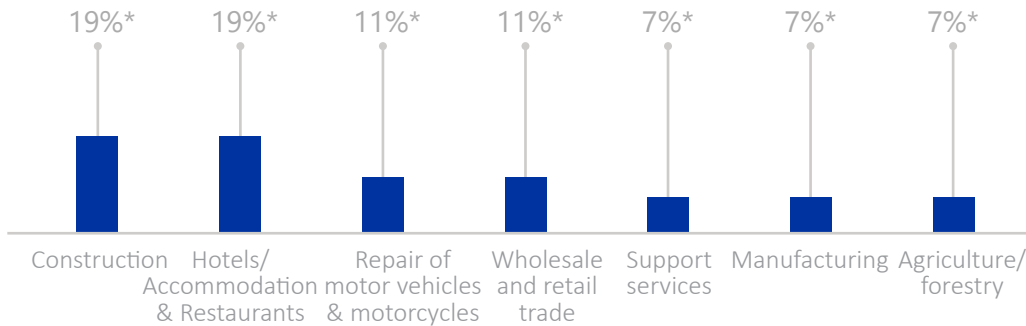


Note: 2% (last country of employment), 1% (current) and 2% (aspirational) of respondents responded "Do not want to answer" when asked about their employment status.

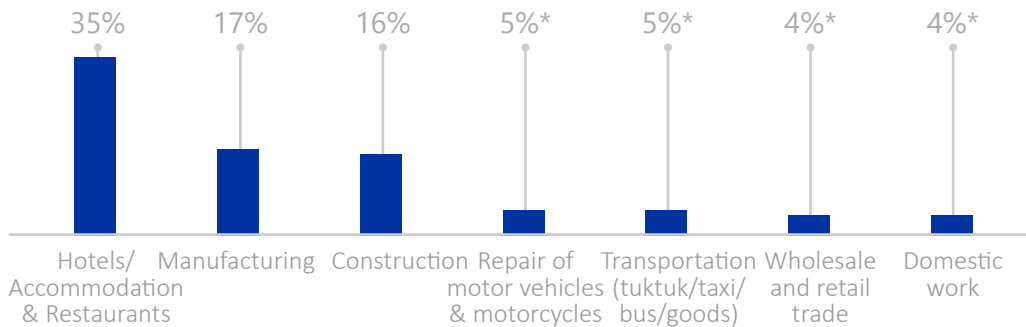


OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR (top 7 answers)

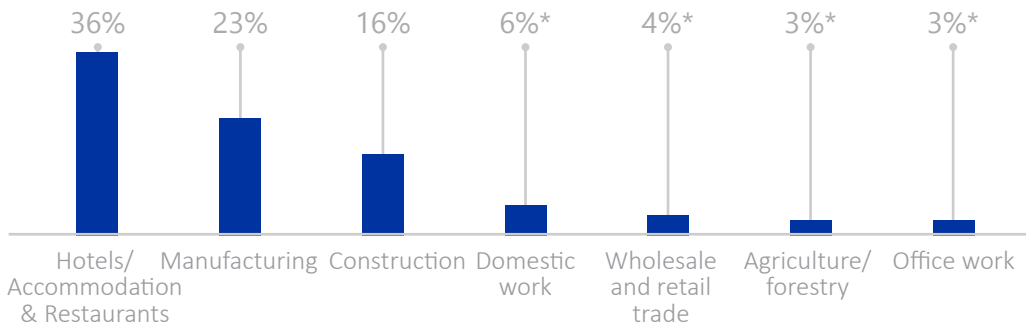
PRIOR TO MIGRATION



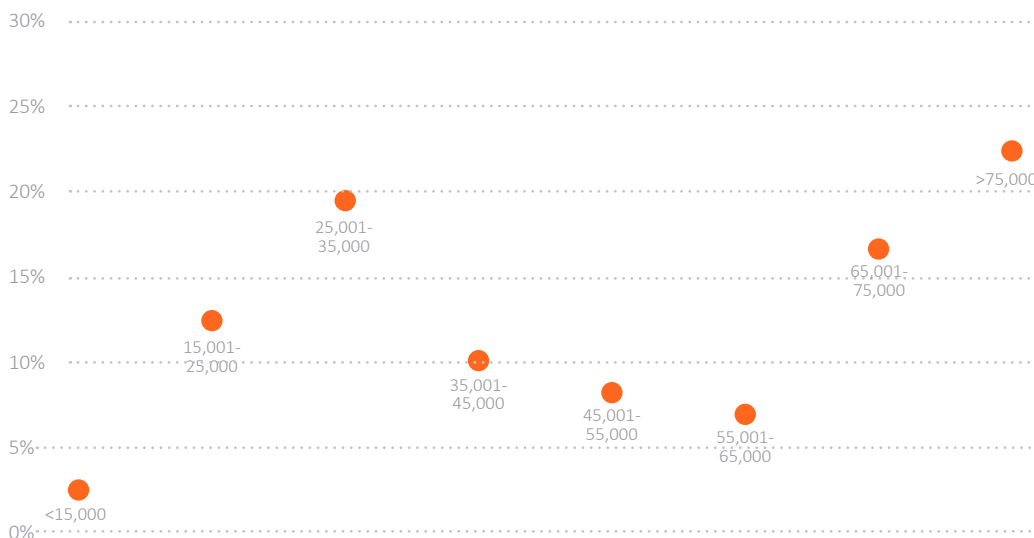
IN THE LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF BANGLADESH



ASPIRATIONAL



MONTHLY INCOME IN LAST COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT (BDT)



The primary form of employment for international returnee respondents prior to migration was daily wages (17%). In addition, 24 per cent of respondents reported that they were a student before they migrated. However, 37 per cent of respondents reported that they were unemployed prior to migration. In the last country of employment, both working in the private sector (46%) and working for daily wages (42%) became more significant as opposed to prior to migration (8% and 17%). At the time of the interview, a large proportion of respondents reported that they were unemployed (91%). 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 (39%) in the future. This was followed by working for daily wages (27%) and being self-employed (22%).

Occupational sectors also shifted throughout international returnee respondents' migration journeys, with hospitality and manufacturing becoming more significant in the last district of employment (35% and 17%) as opposed to prior to migration (19% and 7%). On the other hand, work in construction stayed relatively consistent prior to migration (19%), in the last country of employment (16%) and aspirationally (16%). Finally, 36 per cent of respondents aspire to work in hospitality in the future and 23 per cent in manufacturing.

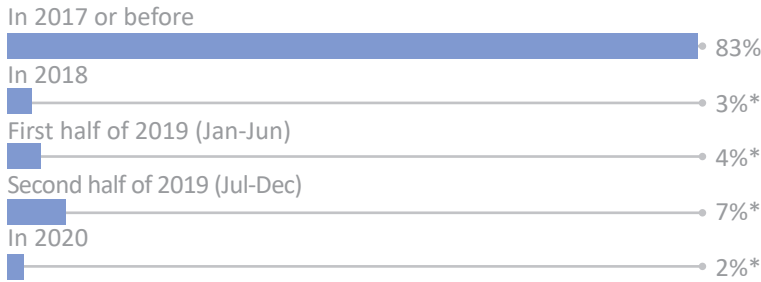
Thirty-five per cent of respondents earned less than BDT 35,000 (412.74 USD)* per month in their last country of employment, with only three per cent earning less than BDT 15,000 (176.90 USD)*. Forty per cent of respondents earned more than BDT 65,000 (766.51 USD)* per month in the last country of employment.

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



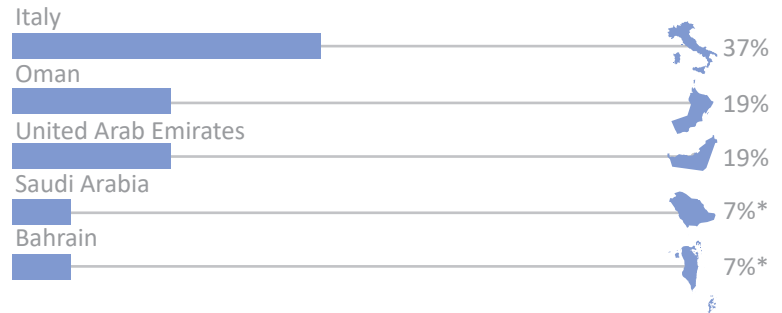
MIGRATION AND RETURN JOURNEY OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

WHEN DID YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME DISTRICT?



FROM WHICH COUNTRY DID YOU RETURN?

(top 5 answers)



DID YOU GO ABROAD THROUGH THE BMET OR GOVERNMENT CHANNELS?

19% YES



HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY FOR THE FACILITATION OF MIGRATION?

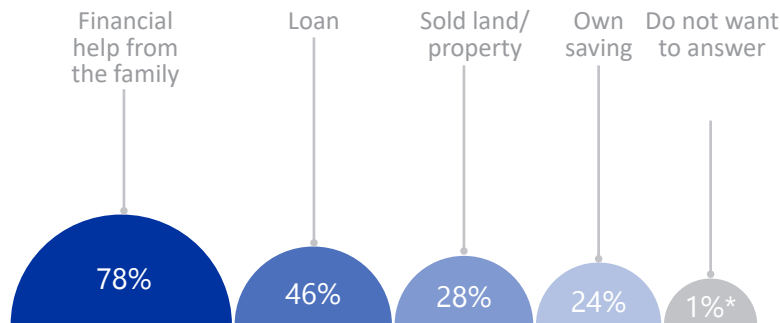
BDT 878,125

Average amount paid by those who went abroad through BMET or government channels (USD 10,355.25)*

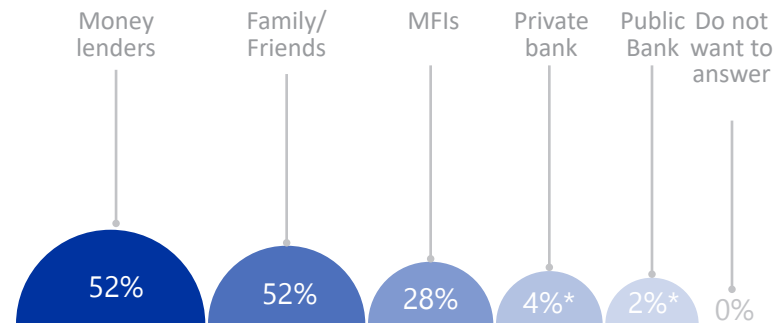
BDT 504,580

Average amount paid by those who did not go abroad through BMET or government channels (USD 5,950.24)*

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

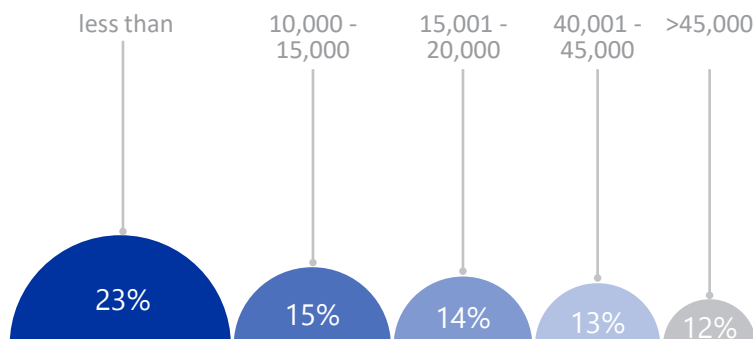


IF YOU USED A LOAN TO OBTAIN MONEY, WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF THE LOAN? (multiple answers possible)



REMITTANCES IN BDT (top 5 answers)

92% Of respondents sent money home every month



WHEN DID YOU RETURN?



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

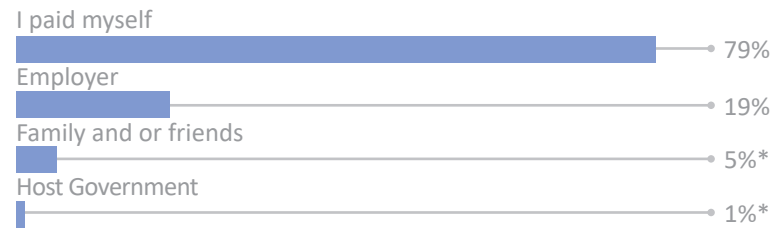


WHAT WAS YOUR POINT OF ENTRY?

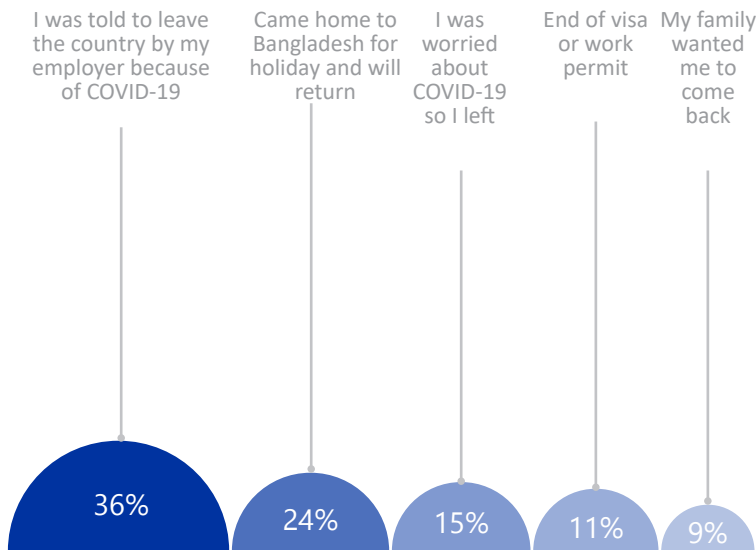


WHO PAID FOR YOUR RETURN JOURNEY?

(multiple answers possible)



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

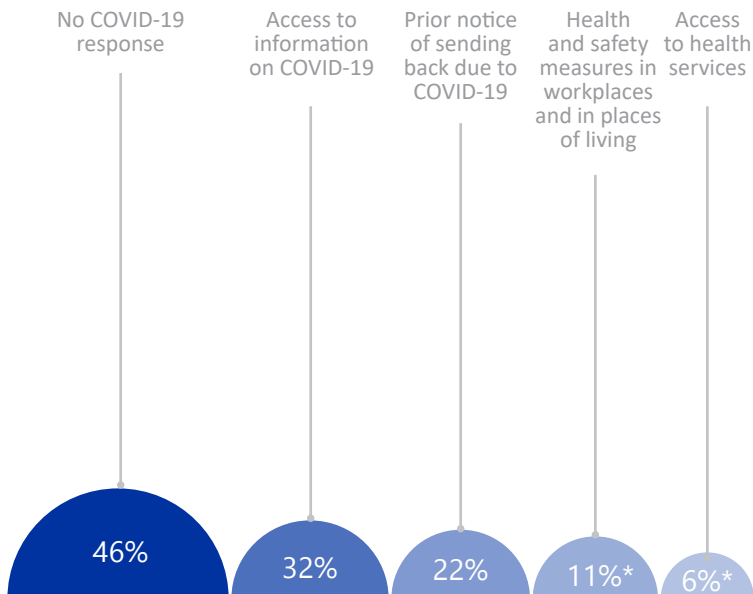


76% Of respondents received their final wages before returning

Eighty-three per cent of respondents had emigrated from Bangladesh during or before 2017, with 19 per cent having gone abroad via the BMET or government channels. Money for migration was obtained largely through financial help from friends and family (78%). Ninety-two per cent of the sample population sent remittances home, most often less than BDT 20,000 (235.85 USD)* (52%).

Ninety-two 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. The majority returned via air travel (99%) while the remaining returned via a land border (1%). Seventy-nine per cent paid for their return journeys by themselves and 19 per cent were supported by their employers.

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)



When asked the reason for their return, 36 per cent of respondents reported that they were told to leave the country, while 24 per cent reported that they returned for holiday and will return. Fifteen per cent returned because they were worried about COVID-19. Another 11 per cent returned because their visa or work permit was no longer valid. Nine per cent of respondents decided to return because their family wanted them to come back.

According to 46 per cent of respondents, there was no COVID-19 response in the country from which they returned. However, 32 per cent received access to information on COVID-19 and 22 per cent had prior notice of being sent back to Bangladesh due to COVID-19. Twenty-one per cent of international returnee respondents did not receive their final wages before returning to the country.

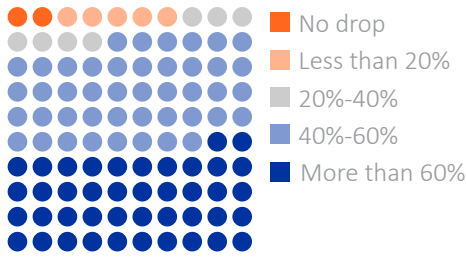
*Exchange rates are 84.8 BDT to 1 USD, according to the [UN Operational Rates of Exchange](#) between 1 August to 1 September 2020.



CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

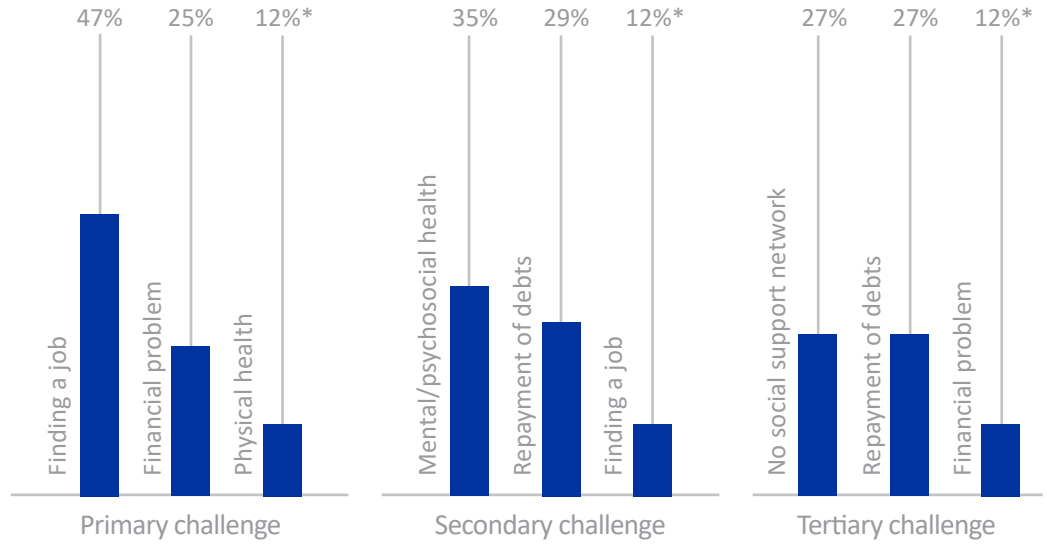
45%

Of respondents experienced challenges upon returning to their community



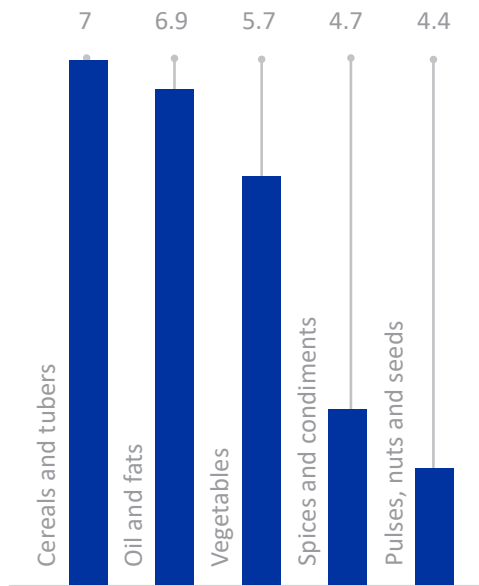
Drop in household income after return

CHALLENGES (top 3 answers)

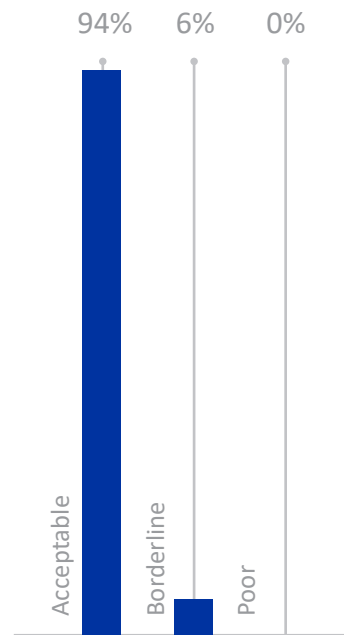


FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION PER FOOD TYPE (top 5 answers)

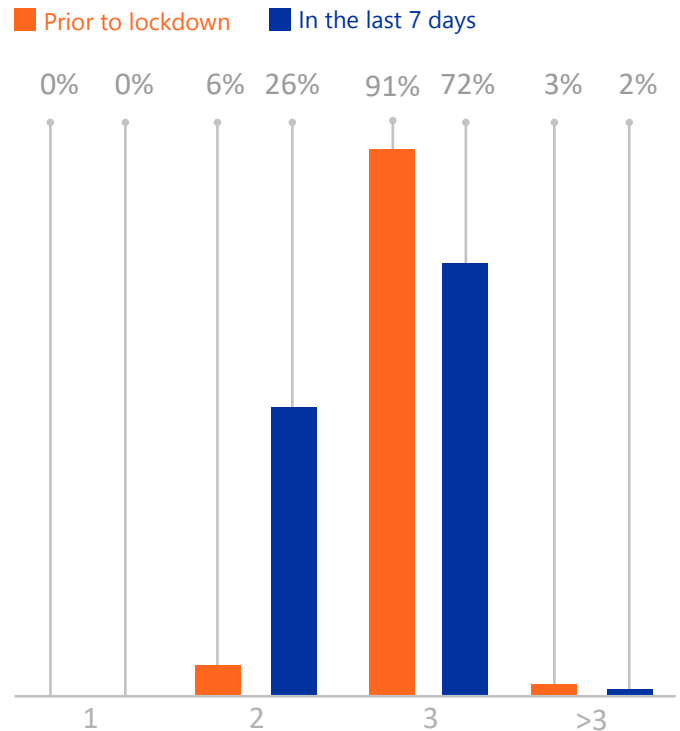
Over the past 7 days, on how many days did you and your household consume these types of food?



FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORES



AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY MEALS CONSUMED BY HOUSEHOLD*



Nearly half of all respondents experienced challenges upon returning to Bangladesh (45%). Returnees' main primary challenge was finding a job (47%) followed by financial problems (25%) and physical health (12%). However, it is important to note the relevance of the main secondary challenges: mental/psychosocial health issues (35%), repayment of debts (29%) and finding a job (12%). These issues reflect the multi-faceted effects of COVID-19 and its relationship with both social and economic factors.

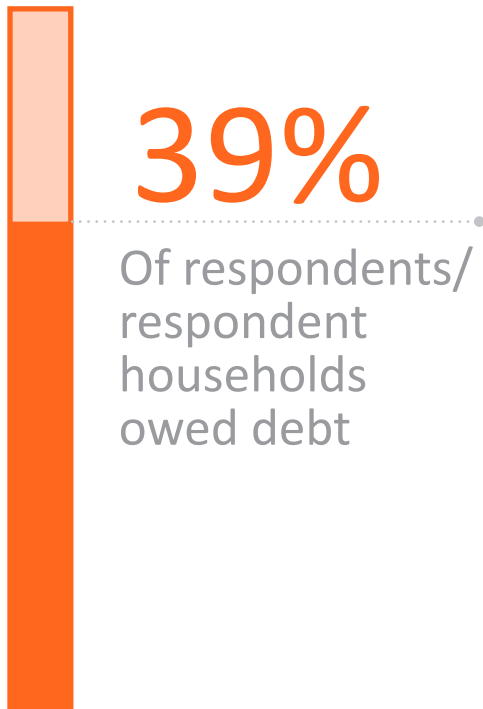
Another indication of household challenges is the drop in income after the respondents' return. Forty-two per cent of respondents reported a more than 60 per cent drop in household income and 44 per cent reported a drop between 40 and 60 per cent. A convergence of factors, such as the loss of remittances, 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.

*0.9% 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?

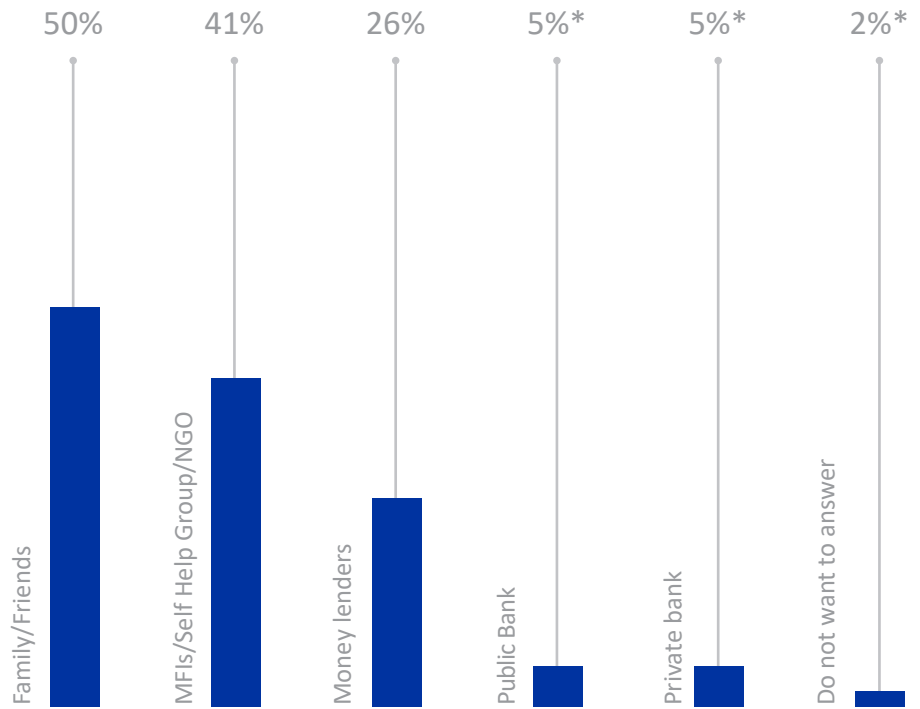


In total, 39 per cent of respondents or respondent households reported that they owed debt, a majority of which was owed to family and friends (50%), MFIs/Self help groups/NGOs (41%) and money lenders (26%).

Prior to returning, the majority of internal returnee respondents planned to repay their debts with the personal income they would earn through their job abroad (93%). Another five per cent reported income and job earnings from their family members as a debt repayment method.

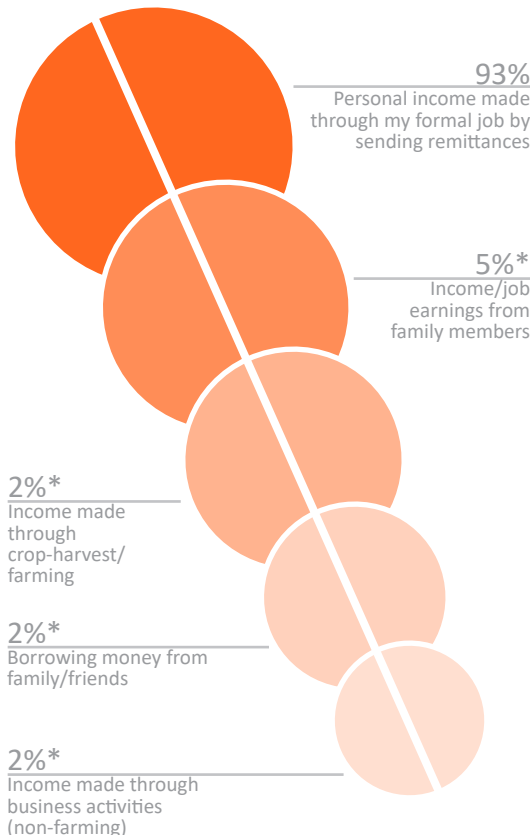
Alternatively, 60 per cent of respondents did not know how they would repay their debt after having returned to their home districts. Seventeen per cent planned to repay their debt with income/job earnings from family members. This was followed by selling land (12%), personal income made through a formal job (12%) and selling assets (7%).

TO WHOM DO YOU OWE YOUR DEBT?

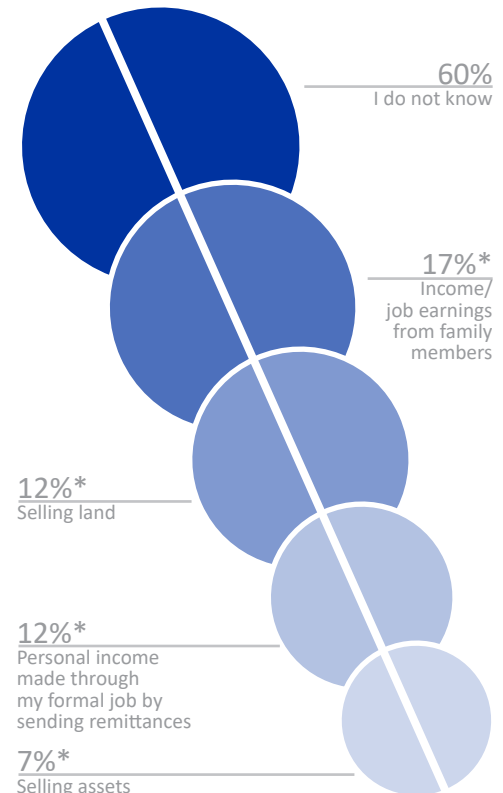


DEBT REPAYMENT (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

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



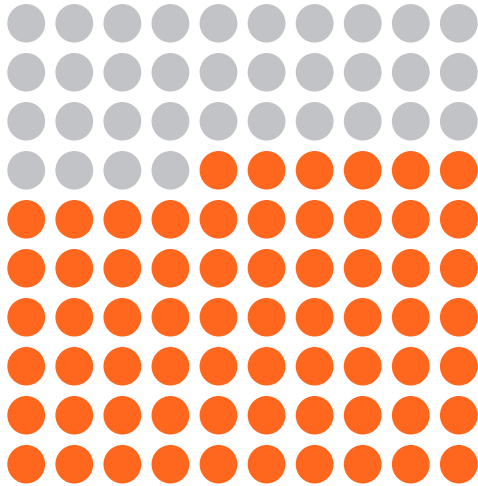
How do you plan to repay this debt now?





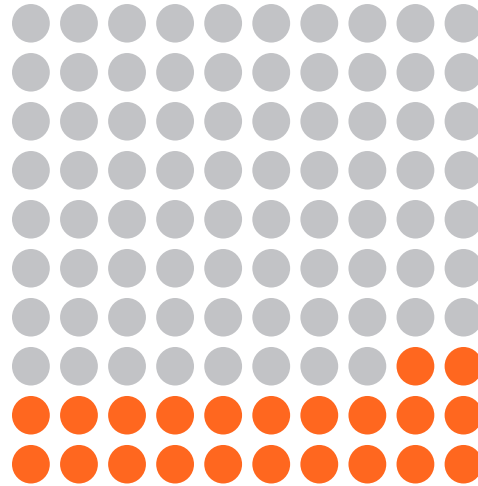
FUTURE EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO BE EMPLOYED



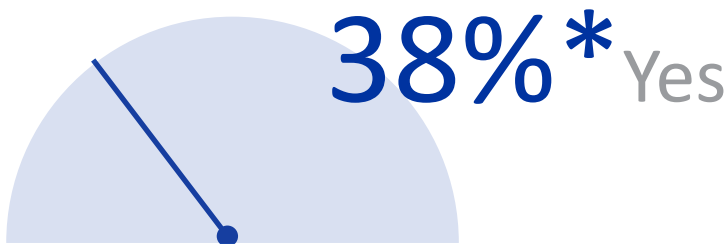
66% Of respondents were planning to be employed in the private sector, employed in the public sector, work for daily wages, or work as a contractor

RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED



22% 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?

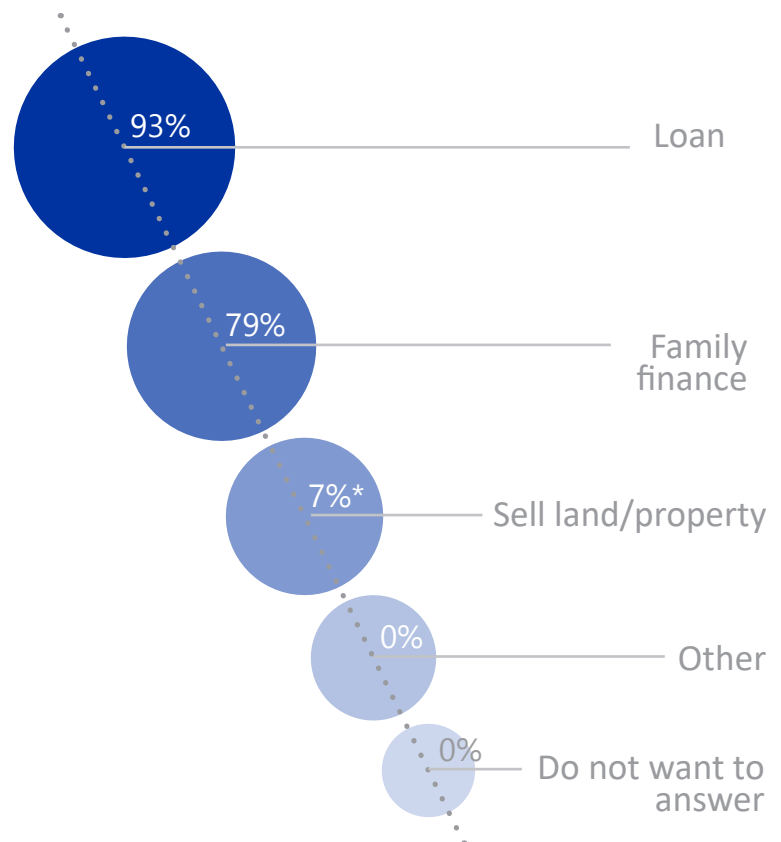


Among internal returnee respondents, 66 per cent were planning to be employed in the future. This included those wanting to work in the private sector, in the public sector, for daily wages and as contractors. Alternatively, 22 per cent of respondents aspired to be self-employed in the future, either starting or running their own business.

Of the respondents who planned to be self-employed, 38 per cent had seed money to start their business. Those who did not, planned to arrange for seed money primarily through loans (93%). Family finances were also an important method through which respondents planned to attain seed money (79%), followed by selling land or property (7%).

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)



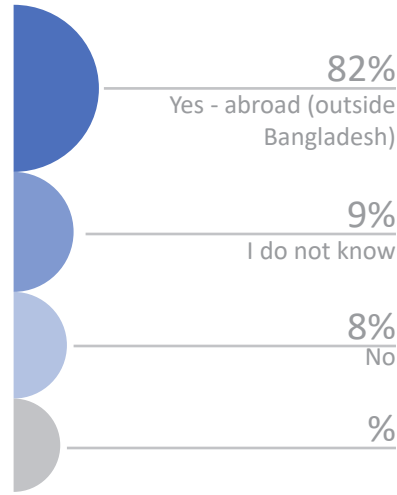


FUTURE MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

When asked whether they would want to re-migrate, 82 per cent of the sample population responded positively to international migration. Eight 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 (82%). Seventeen 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 (99%). Meanwhile, 43 per cent of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set. Five per cent have already taken training to upgrade their skill set and of those, 40 per cent have a training certificate.

DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE?



5%*

Of respondents have taken training to upgrade their skill set

40%*

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

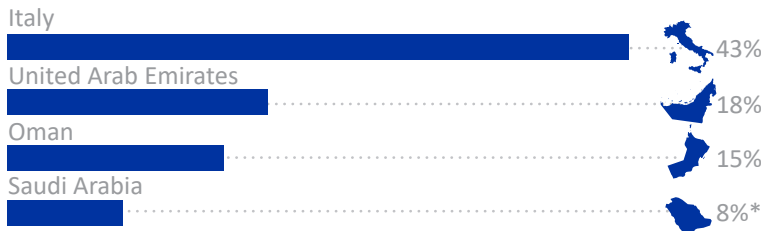
43%

Of respondents are interested in upgrading their skill set

99%

Of respondents want to re-migrate to the same country

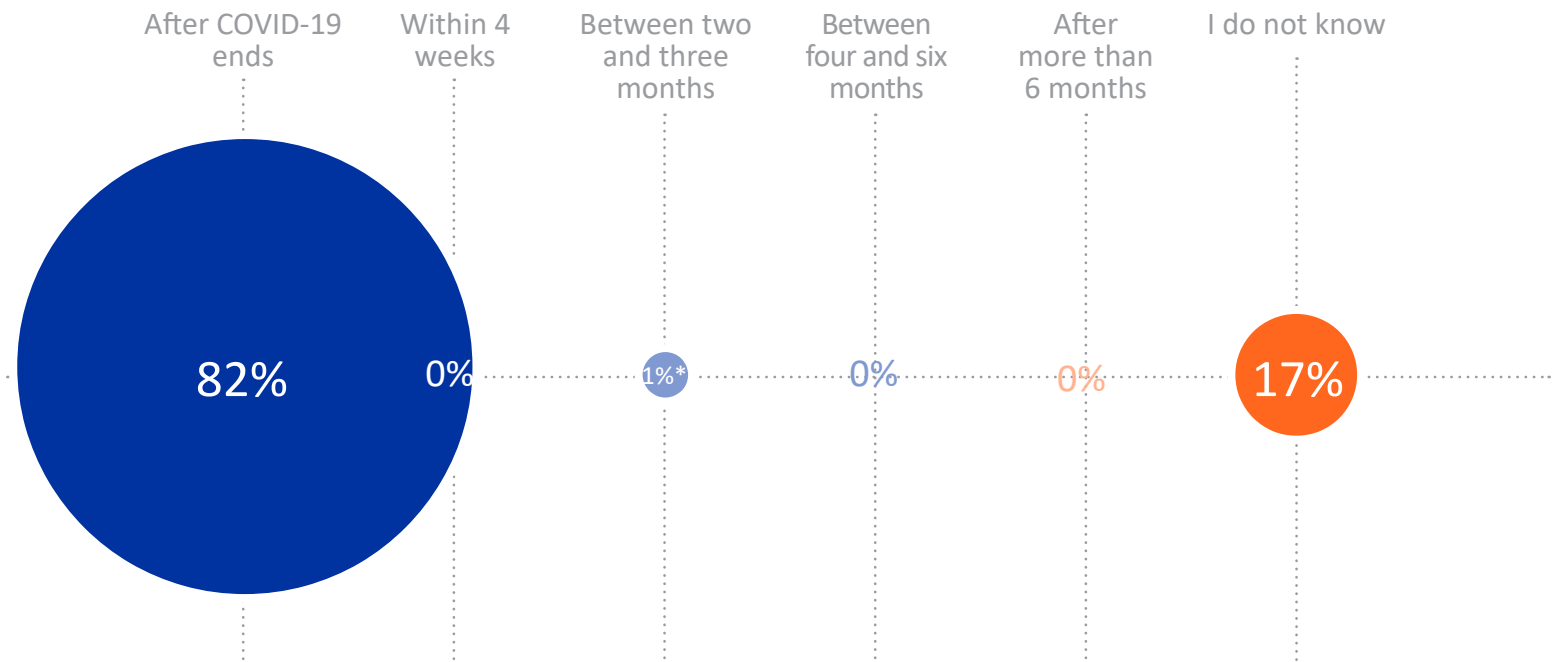
IF YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE, WHERE? INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS (top 4 answers)



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



IF YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE, WHEN?





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