

IRAQ CROSS-BORDER MONITORING

# MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS ENTERING AND EXITING IRAQ

Data collection period: September 2020 – September 2021



## CONTENTS

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Methodology	5
1. Labour migration	6
2. Seeking safety and protection	9
3. Deportations	11
Conclusion	13

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DTM Iraq collects data at five border crossing points with neighbouring countries – Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey, Fishkhabour, bordering Syria, and Bashmagh, Zurbatiyah (Wassit Terminal) and Al-Shalamcha, bordering Iran – to better understand migration movements in the Middle East. This report, funded by UNDAF, examines this data collected between 1 September 2020 and 30 September 2021 to identify migrants in vulnerable situations entering and departing Iraq who may be susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation along their migratory journey. Three key groups of migrants were identified as the most susceptible to these kinds of exploitation:

## 1. Labour Migration

This group included incoming travellers seeking employment or following the receipt of a job offer in Iraq and willing to stay longer than three months in the country of destination. This constitutes the largest share of travellers who may be susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation along their migratory journey. The majority were adult males entering from Iran via the Bashmagh border crossing point. Whilst education levels among this group were similar to the other groups examined, there was a significant proportion (21%) who had completed only primary education or below. Further, 17 per cent reported engaging in daily wage labour or were looking for a job when in Iraq, indicating that they do not have secure employment. A small proportion (2%) reported travelling with a group of unknown people which could be a proxy indicator for travelling with other trafficked individuals, and a very large proportion reported paying for the travel with their own savings (95%), or through negative coping strategies such as making money during the travel (3%) and borrowing (2%). These groups should be considered particularly vulnerable when it comes to navigating labour markets and possible labour-based exploitation due to a lack of awareness or access to information on legal channels of migration as well as rights and available services in the country of destination.

## 2. Seeking Safety and Protection

This group included outgoing travellers departing Iraq for humanitarian reasons including refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons. All travellers in this group were leaving Iraq through the

Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point with Turkey, and again the majority were young adult males. Education levels were similar to the first group, though a slightly higher proportion had completed secondary education (60% versus 50% in the first group). A much higher proportion were not working and seeking employment (42% versus 4% in the first group) highlighting that a lack of opportunities inside Iraq was a significant push factor for migration. The majority (70%) used savings to pay for their migration, but the use of other negative coping strategies was more prominent than in the first group as 31 per cent reported they sold assets and 20 per cent borrowed money. A significant proportion reported an intention to reach countries in Europe (30%) whilst 2 per cent reported an intention to reach Belarus which has become a common migration route for people from the Middle East region seeking to reach Europe. Additionally, 63 per cent reported Turkey as their intended destination, and it is likely that some among this group will travel onwards from Turkey towards Europe. This group are particularly susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation along their migratory journey, particularly once outside of Iraq, as evidenced by the finding that among those that had help arranging for migration 41 per cent had used a smuggler or broker. Additionally, it is likely that they may seek international protection upon arrival to their intended destination.

## 3. Deportations

This group included individuals deported from Turkey and Iran to Iraq by authorities, because of their lack of legal status to remain in the country from which they were deported. Individuals deported from Iran and Turkey were also primarily young men with a lower education level than the previous two groups. This may be negatively impacting their ability to navigate the legal frameworks around formal migration channels. Most were deported from Turkey where many reportedly intended to migrate onwards towards Europe, and despite being banned from re-entering the country it can be anticipated that many among this group will reattempt migration when their financial circumstances allow. Upon their return to Iraq, this group may be more vulnerable to exploitation as a result of having sold their assets to finance the initial journey, as well as willing to take risks in order to gather the resources needed to reattempt migration.

# INTRODUCTION

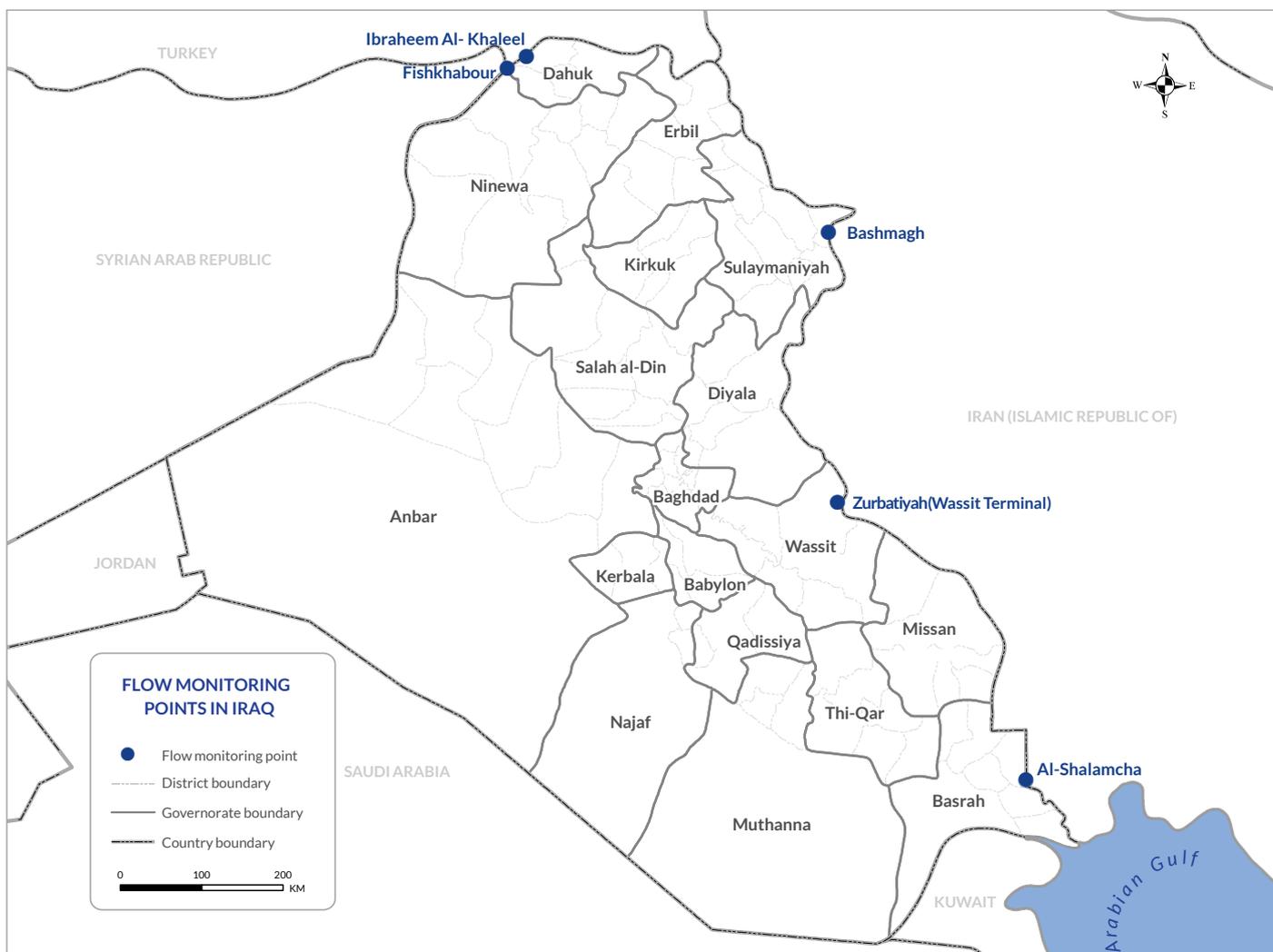
DTM Iraq collects data at border crossing points with neighbouring countries – the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran), the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Turkey – to better understand migration movements in the Middle East. Cross-border monitoring is designed to capture and describe migration flows, and is part of IOM DTM's Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (REMAP) project, funded by the European Union. The project aims to capture and describe migration flows in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) funded this piece of research.

This report seeks to identify migrants in vulnerable situations entering and departing Iraq who may be susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation along their migratory journey. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the

profile of the vulnerable groups, the means of organizing travel, push-factors in the decision-making process, level of risk-awareness and problems encountered during the journey.

Data displayed in this report were collected using two approaches: a headcount of all travellers entering or departing Iraq through the specified border points where DTM have data collection teams stationed and a survey of randomly selected travellers. Data collection took place between 1 September 2020 and 30 September 2021 at five border crossing points: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey, Fishkhabour, bordering Syria, and Bashmagh, Zurbatiyah (Wassit Terminal) and Al-Shalamcha, bordering Iran.<sup>2</sup> During this period, a total of 14,598 interviews were conducted with randomly selected travellers entering and departing Iraq.

Map 1: Border crossing points monitored by IOM DTM



1 An interactive dashboard presenting data on the volume of travellers, border crossing point used, socio-demographic characteristics, reasons for travel, and awareness of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) symptoms, prevention measures and vulnerable populations can be found on the Iraq DTM portal, available at <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/Remap#Dashboard>

2 Due to mobility restrictions imposed by Iraqi authorities since March 2020 aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19, data collection did not take place at Al-Shalamcha and Zurbatiyah points between 1 September 2020 and 11 October 2020. After resuming data collection starting from 12 October 2020, these points witnessed a low flow of travellers. Please refer to the report 'Iraq Mobility Restrictions due to COVID-19' for more details on the mobility restrictions. Available at: <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/COVID19/MovementRestrictions>

This report is focussed on three groups of travellers in relation to indicators highlighted during interviews conducted at border points and that might indicate exposure to protection risks including trafficking and smuggling. The three groups selected are:

1. Incoming travellers seeking employment or following the receipt of a job offer in Iraq and willing to stay longer than three months in the country of destination ( $n = 183$  travellers);
2. Outgoing travellers departing Iraq for humanitarian reason including refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons ( $n = 51$  travellers);
3. Individuals deported from Turkey and Iran to Iraq by authorities, because of their lack of legal status to remain in the country from which they were deported ( $n = 12$  travellers), as well as a headcount of deportees from Turkey to Iraq through the Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point over the specified data collection period. Due to insufficient sample size, findings cannot

be generalized to a broader population and quantitative analysis cannot be conducted. The analysis of this section is qualitative and combined with the observations of IOM enumerators and border point employees stationed at the border crossing points.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of these groups of travellers and identification of migrants in vulnerable situations who may be susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation was not the initial purpose of the flow monitoring survey. Hence further research is required to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of these groups and how these vulnerabilities impact their migratory journey.

Due to the sensitive nature of these topics, migrants in vulnerable situations might seek to avoid answering questions on the nature of their travel, and therefore the percentages in this report should be considered as underreported.

## METHODOLOGY

Data gathering for this report took place at five border crossing points between 1 September 2020 and 30 September 2021 on weekdays only, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a lunch break of 30 minutes between 12:30 p.m. and 1 p.m. Data were collected through IOM's enumerators, composed of 14 staff members deployed across Iraq (35% of enumerators are female). The border crossing points were selected based on observations conducted in May 2019 by IOM's Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs).<sup>4</sup> Specific criteria were used to select the border crossing points, including: 1) high volumes of daily crossings to and from neighbouring countries; 2) diversity, both in geography and type of border point (official/unofficial border points, bus stations, etc.); and 3) ability of staff to reach and operate from the location for daily data collection and fund optimization. Out of 16 locations assessed, five border crossing points were selected for data collection:

- Ibrahim Al-Khalil in Dahuk Governorate, bordering Turkey;
- Fishkhabour in Dahuk Governorate, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic;
- Bashmagh in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- Zurbatiyah (Wassit Terminal) in Wassit Governorate, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- Al-Shalamcha in Basrah Governorate, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The data collection methodology for cross-border monitoring in Iraq was developed in cooperation with IPAZIA Ricerche and includes a survey of randomly sampled travellers identified as entering or exiting Iraq.

The survey aims to collect information about travellers and was conducted through face-to-face interviews, using tablets to record socio-demographic characteristics, mobility history and reasons for travel. Respondents were selected randomly through the adoption of a 'systematic step/interval' – that is, travellers are systematically selected at fixed intervals from the start of the workday. The interval was fixed at 1:3 (one in every three individuals were selected for an interview). All travellers aged 18 years and older who were crossing borders were eligible for an interview, regardless of their nationality. Sampling weights were applied to generalize the characteristics of travellers. DTM identified 381,745 individuals crossing the border points during the reporting period, and 14,598 interviews were conducted.

<sup>3</sup> Overall numbers of deportees were only available for the Ibrahim al Khalil border crossing point with Turkey. The number of those deported through other assessed border points is unknown. No additional information on this group is shared by the Iraqi authorities.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the methodological note for more details. Available online at: <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/>

# 1. LABOUR MIGRATION:

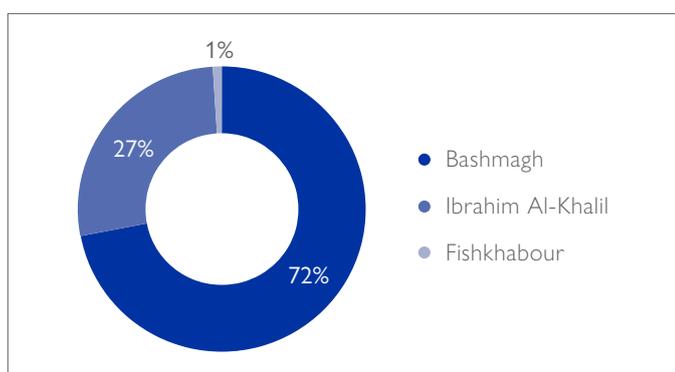
## INCOMING TRAVELLERS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT OR FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF A JOB OFFER IN IRAQ AND WILLING TO STAY LONGER THAN THREE MONTHS

This group of travellers was selected for further analysis based on the observations of IOM enumerators and border-point employees stationed at the border crossing points. This information shows that migrants entering Iraq for work assignments might encounter a

situation of labour exploitation while in country. This section of the report is aimed at examining the profile of incoming migrant workers and identifying possible vulnerable groups among them. This group forms a sample of 183 travellers who are profiled below.

### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

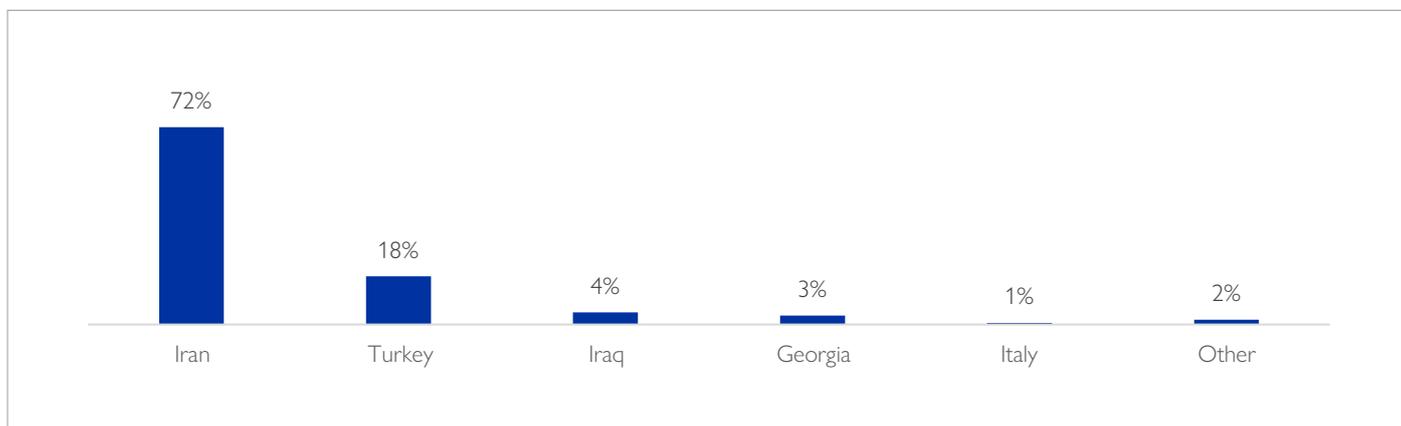
Figure 1: Point of entry



Among this group of travellers, the majority entered Iraq through the Bashmagh border crossing point with Iran (72%), followed by Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point with Turkey (27%). A small number also entered from Syria through Fishkhabour border crossing point (1%).

Most of the incoming travellers who entered Iraq following a job offer were males (73% versus 27% female). All were adults, with 35 per cent between the ages of 18–34 years and 65 per cent aged between 35–60 years. Half of the respondents were married (50%) while 41 per cent were single and 9 per cent divorced. The main countries of habitual residence were Iran (72%), followed by Turkey (18%).

Figure 2: Main nationalities<sup>5</sup>

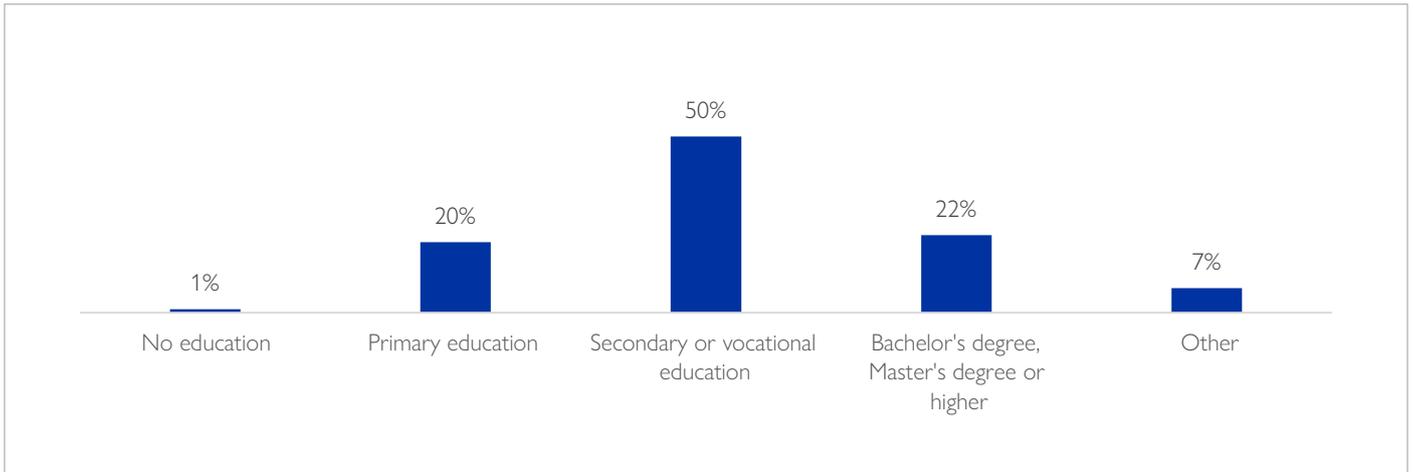


Half of the travellers had completed secondary or vocational-level education (50%), while 22 per cent had attained a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, 20 per cent had completed only primary-level education, and 1 per cent had no education at all. Low or no level of

educational attainment may make incoming travellers seeking employment more vulnerable to labour-based exploitation due to a lack of awareness or access to information on legal channels of migration as well as rights and available services in the country of destination.

5 Other includes the Philippines and the United Kingdom.

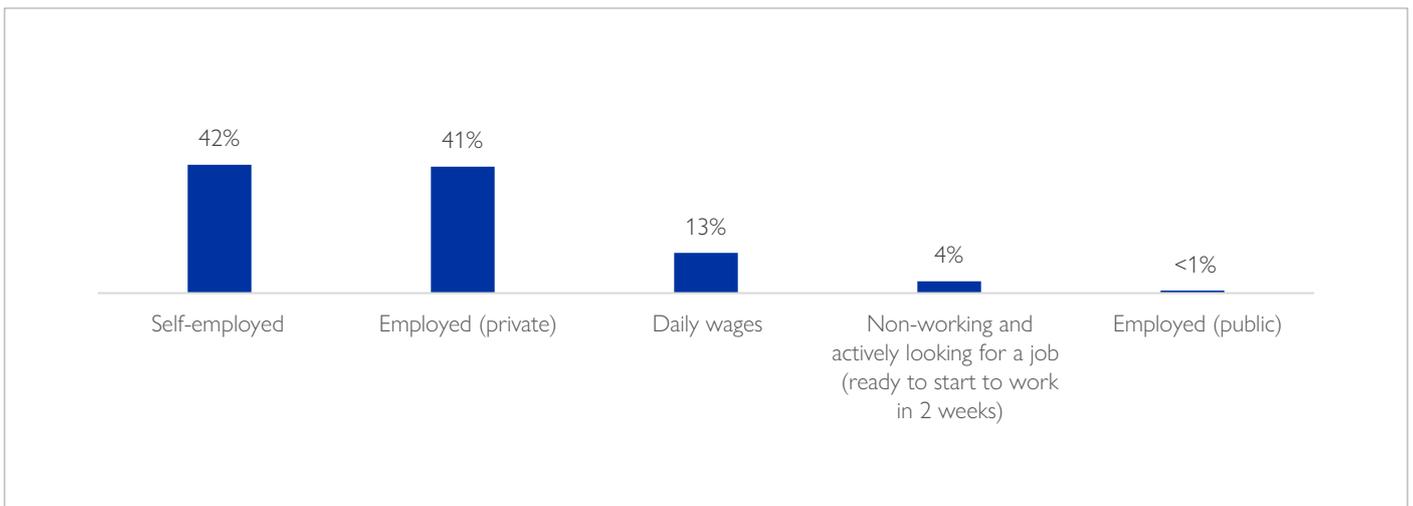
Figure 3: Level of educational attainment<sup>6</sup>



The largest share reported their employment status either as self-employed (42%) or employed in the private sector (41%). In addition, 13 per cent were workers with daily wages and 4 per cent reported that they did not have a job and were actively looking for one after they arrived in Iraq. Those who are working for daily wages and those

are not working but are actively looking for a job should be considered as the most vulnerable travellers among this group, particularly in relation to future violence, abuse and exploitation linked to negative coping mechanisms.

Figure 4: Employment status



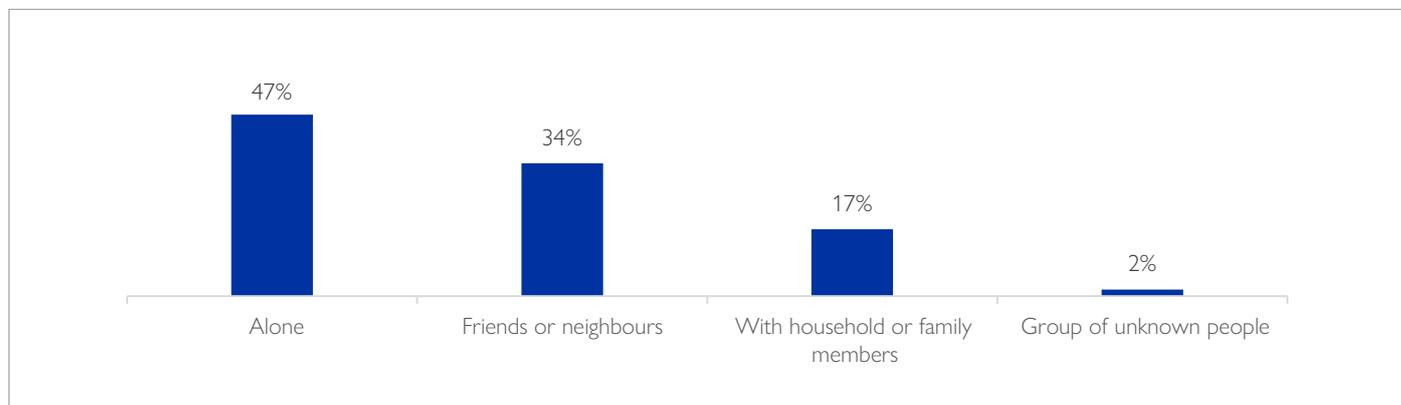
<sup>6</sup> 'Other' educational attainment includes diploma.

## NATURE OF THE TRAVEL

The largest share reported to be travelling alone (47%), whilst some travellers were with friends or neighbours (34%) or family/household members (17%), and a small proportion were travelling with a group of unknown people (2%). Those travelling with other unknown people

should be considered the most vulnerable due to the possibility that they are migrating alongside others for irregular labour inside Iraq. The main reported push factors for leaving the country of origin were employment and war/conflict/persecution.<sup>7</sup>

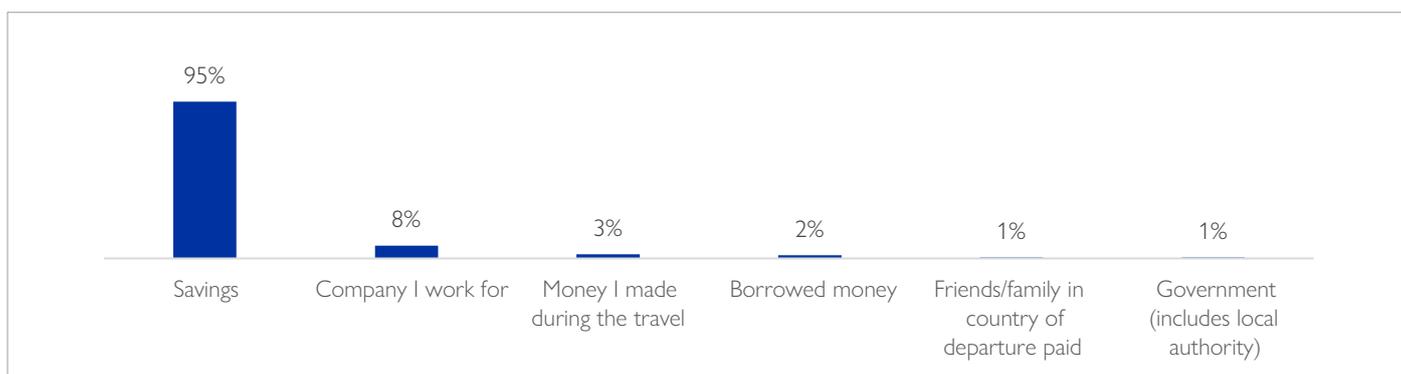
Figure 5: Travel group



Whilst the majority reportedly did not have help to arrange their migration, 17 per cent reported that they did receive support. For most of these, this help came from the company they work for (91%), from family (17%) and from a local leader or mukhtar (2%).<sup>8</sup> The vast majority used savings to pay for some or all their travel (95%). However, 3 per cent used money they had made during the journey and 2 per cent borrowed money to pay for the travel.<sup>9</sup> Those who financed their journey with borrowed money are likely incentivized

by the belief that they will be able to make more money once inside Iraq than they were able to in their previous country of residence, and may accept some level of risk to repay the debt that they have taken on to fund the travel. Additionally, those in who have to engage in income-generating activities along the way are more likely to engage in negative coping mechanisms leading to situations of violence and exploitation.

Figure 6: Means of paying for the travel<sup>10</sup>



When asked about awareness of any risks associated with the travel, all travellers reported that there were no risks or that they were not aware of any. Additionally, all reported that they did not experience any problems en route.<sup>11</sup> However, as this group of incoming

travellers were only part way into their journey when they answered the survey, and as they were seeking work inside Iraq, labour-based exploitation would likely take place at a later stage after they have reached their intended destination.

7 The question 'What made you leave your country of origin?' was only asked to respondents whose nationality was different than the country of habitual residence in the respondent profile of the questionnaire. Due to the small number of respondents that were asked this question, this finding is qualitative.

8 When asked from who they had received help, travellers could select multiple response options; therefore answers might total more than 100 per cent.

9 Those who borrowed money for the travel reported borrowing from family/friends in the destination country.

10 Question allowed multiple response options and therefore answers might total more than 100 per cent.

11 The survey also asked if the traveller witnessed other migrants facing problems during their journey. While no travellers answered that they did witness issues, 2 per cent (4 cases) reported that they did not wish to answer.

## 2. SEEKING SAFETY AND PROTECTION:

### OUTGOING TRAVELLERS DEPARTING IRAQ FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS INCLUDING REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND STATELESS PERSONS

#### Translated comments made by travellers during flow monitoring survey:

"We want support to go to Sweden because life is difficult and not safe." – Male, 68, originally from Baghdad

"I want to go to Europe with my wife whatever it costs." – Male, 25, originally from Dahuk

"We ask international organizations to deal with us as immigrants and take us to Europe or any country." – Male, 30, originally from Anbar

#### Translated comments made by enumerator after flow monitoring survey:

"The traveler departed legally by bus [and plans to travel onwards to Europe] but no details were given about how and when he is going to get to Europe."

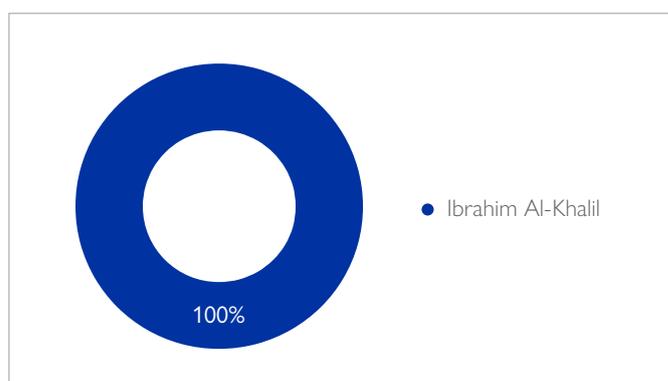
"Most of the young Iraqis from the age of 19 - 20 are planning to emigrate, but they do not say the truth. It's obvious from their look and attire that they intend to emigrate."

"The traveler said if the road is safe, he will immigrate illegally to Europe through a smuggler."

This group of travellers was selected for further analysis based on the observations of IOM enumerators and border-point employees stationed at the border crossing points. This information shows that migrants departing Iraq for humanitarian reasons, while leaving the country through legal migration channels, may be vulnerable to trafficking in persons or other high-risk irregular migration through neighbouring countries and potentially on to Europe or other destinations at a later stage in their journey. This section of the report is aimed at examining the profile of outgoing migrants departing for humanitarian reasons and identifying possible vulnerable groups among them. This group forms a sample of 51 travellers who are profiled below.

#### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 7: Point of exit



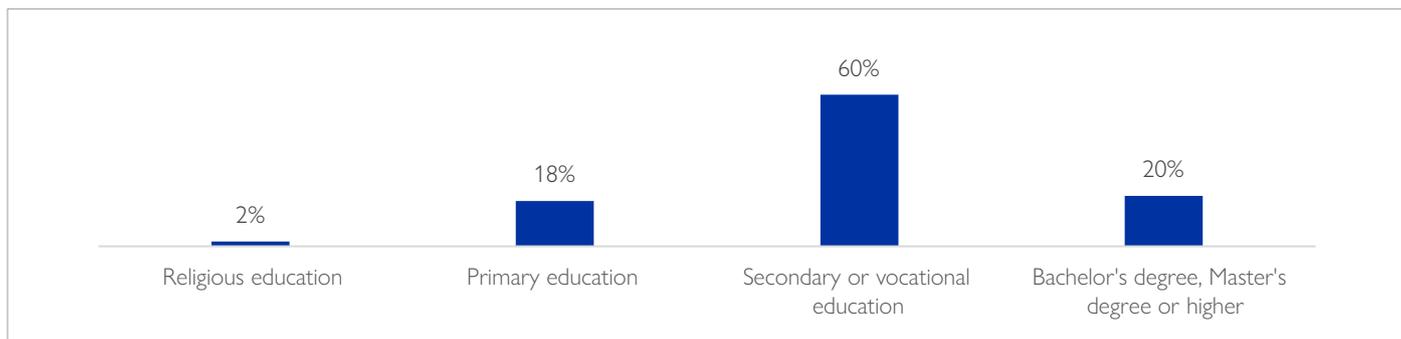
All outgoing travellers (100%) that reported departing Iraq for humanitarian reasons departed through the Ibrahim al-Khalil border point with Turkey.

Among this group of travellers, 92 per cent were male and 8 per cent female. The majority were young adults aged between 18-34 (66%), with 28 per cent aged between 35-60 and 6 per cent aged over 60. All (100%) were Iraqi nationals, with 86 per cent citing Iraq as their country of habitual residence and 14 per cent citing Turkey.<sup>12</sup> Half of the travellers were single (50%), whilst 43 per cent were married, 6 per cent divorced and 1 per cent widowed.

Sixty per cent of travellers had completed secondary or vocational-level education, with 20 per cent having completed some form of higher education: a bachelor's degree or higher, 18 per cent had only completed primary-level education and 2 per cent with religious education. The level of educational attainment was similar among this group than among the incoming travellers. Again, travellers with primary or no education might be considered the most vulnerable to trafficking in persons or other high-risk migration channels among this group, as they are less likely to be able to navigate the complex legal environment surrounding formal migration, and to have reduced access to job opportunities or other pathways that may enable legal migration across borders.

12 Among those who reported Iraq as their country of habitual residence, 34 per cent were from Baghdad, 33% from Dahuk, 10 per cent from Sulaimaniyah, 7 per cent from Erbil, 4 per cent from Kirkuk, 3 per cent each from Diyala and Anbar, 2 per cent from each from Muthanna and Babylon, and 1 per cent each from Wassit and Basrah.

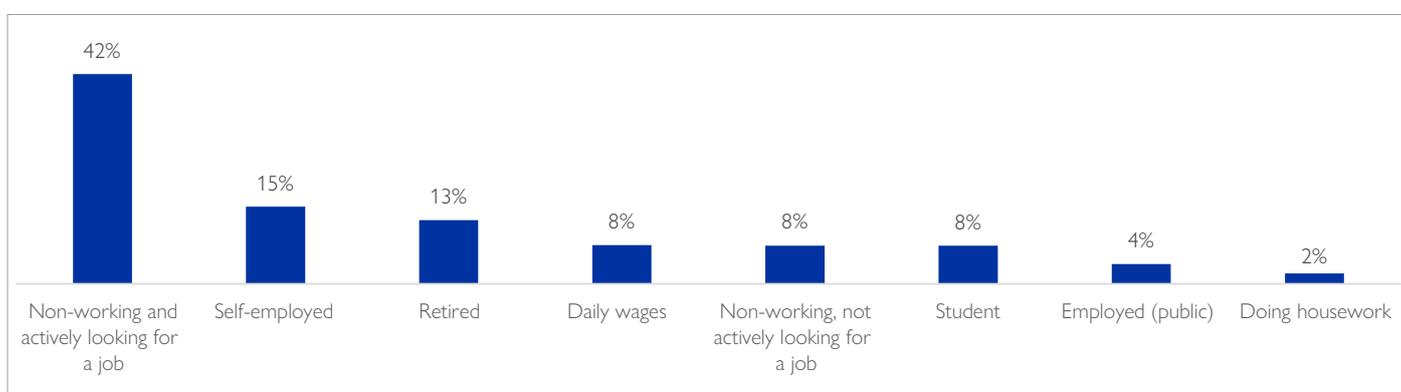
Figure 8: Level of educational attainment



Among this group, the largest share was not working and seeking employment (42%) which is likely to be a significant push factor in

the decision to leave Iraq. In addition, there are substantial numbers of self-employed individuals, workers with daily wages, and students.

Figure 9: Employment status



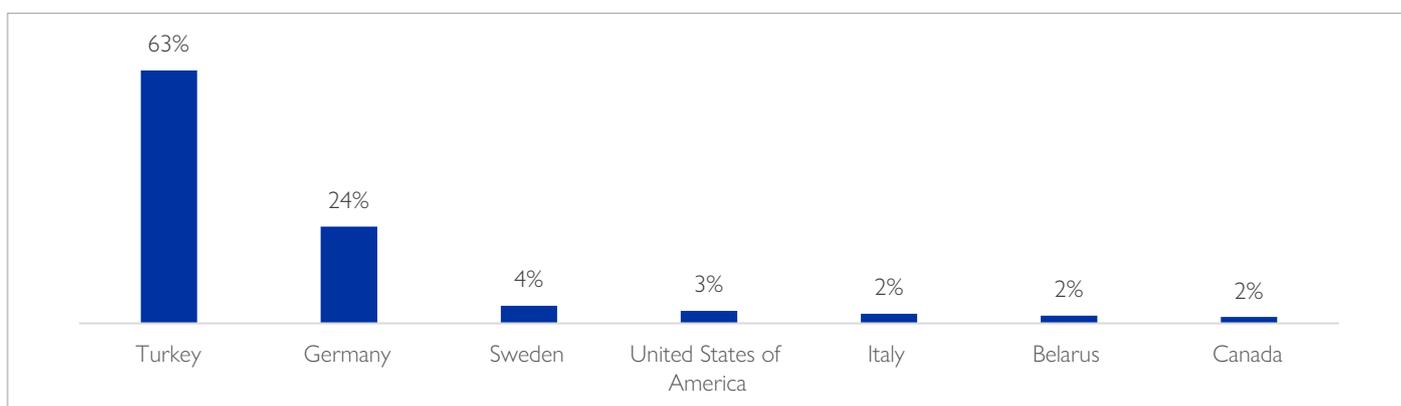
## NATURE OF THE TRAVEL

Among the departing travellers who reported Iraq as their country of habitual residence (45 individuals), 49 per cent reported that they do not know when they will return, 18 per cent reported that they will never return, with the remaining 9 per cent reported a planned return in less than three years.<sup>13</sup>

Around half were travelling with family members (48%), 32 per cent were travelling alone and 19 per cent with friends. Only 1

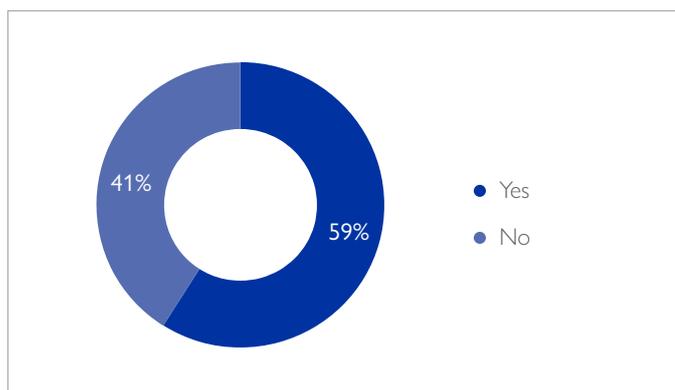
per cent reported travelling with a group of unknown persons. The main reported destination country was Turkey, though it is possible that travellers pass through Turkey en route to another destination. Thirty-one per cent reported European Union (EU) countries as their intended destination, and 1 per cent reported an intention to travel to Belarus, from where they may attempt to cross the border into Poland. The main reported reasons for travel were war/conflict/persecution, employment, and family reunification.

Figure 10: Intended destination



<sup>13</sup> Five per cent reported an anticipated return in 3–6 months, 2 per cent in 6–12 months and 1 per cent in 1–3 years.

Figure 11: Help arranging the migration



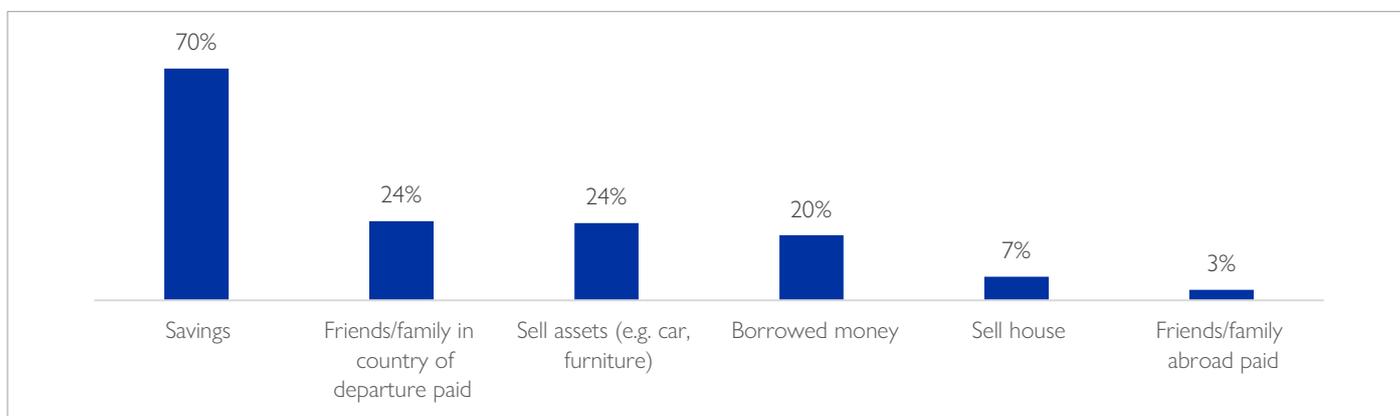
Most travellers (59%) had help arranging for migration, though 41 per cent reported that they did not receive any help. Among those who

did receive help (33 individuals), 81 per cent reported friends/family as the source of this support and 41 per cent reported smuggler/broker.<sup>14</sup>

A higher proportion than in the first group also reported that they were aware they would face some risks during travel, with 24 per cent reporting awareness. However, all travellers (100%) reported that they had not faced any risk at this early stage of the journey, nor had they witnessed other migrants having problems during the travel.<sup>15</sup> The main anticipated risks reported were hunger/thirst, followed by lack of shelter and robbery.

The majority were using their savings to finance the journey (70%), while others were using negative coping strategies such as selling assets, such as car, furniture, or even house (31%) or borrowing (20%).

Figure 12: Means of paying for the travel<sup>16</sup>



### 3. DEPORTATIONS:

#### INDIVIDUALS DEPORTED FROM TURKEY AND IRAN TO IRAQ BY AUTHORITIES, BECAUSE OF THEIR LACK OF LEGAL STATUS TO REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY FROM WHICH THEY WERE DEPORTED

**Translated comments made by deportees during flow monitoring survey:**

*“I was deported from Turkey and I want to travel to Europe, and I will try again.” – Male, 29, originally from Ninewa*

*“We do not want to stay in Iraq. We want to live in Europe.” – Male, 26, originally from Sulaymaniyah*

**Translated comments made by enumerator after flow monitoring survey:**

*“The traveller intended to travel one way or another to Europe and he was accompanied by all his family members and everyone was crying because he was at the return point” – IOM enumerator*

This group of travellers was selected for further analysis based on the observations of IOM enumerators and border-point employees stationed at the border crossing points. This information shows that deportations are taking place regularly, although most travellers are being deported back to Iraq across the border in the early morning between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m. before the monitoring time, which covers the period 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, and therefore are not captured through this data collection exercise. Of the travellers who answered the flow monitoring survey, only 12 travellers reported having been deported. Due to insufficient sample size, quantitative analysis cannot be conducted, and the following analysis is only qualitative.

14 When asked from who they had received help, travellers could select multiple response options; therefore, answers might total more than 100 per cent.

15 The majority of the travellers are in the early stages of a longer journey, and may be more likely to face issues later in the journey.

16 Question allowed multiple response options; therefore, answers might total more than 100 per cent.

### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Nearly all deportees came through the Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point with Turkey, and a small proportion came through Bashmagh border crossing point with Iran. Among the deportees, the majority were male and a minority were female. The most common age group was the 18–34 years bracket, with a smaller proportion in the 35–60 years group. Most were Iraqi nationals, the majority of whom were understood to be from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The majority had been away from Iraq for a period of 3–6 months, whilst a small proportion had been away from Iraq for longer (1–3 years).

The education level among this group was lower than among the first two groups. The most common level of educational attainment was secondary level, followed by primary level. Very few among the group had completed higher level education of a bachelor's degree or higher.

Most deportees reported that they were travelling with a group of unknown people, followed by family/household members and then

friends/neighbours. The primary motivating factors to leave their country of origin were war/conflict/persecution, employment, and family reunification.

Most reported that they have no legal status to remain in the country of habitual residence, whilst a minority reported that they did have a residence permit. The largest share also reported that they do not wish to return to their country of origin.

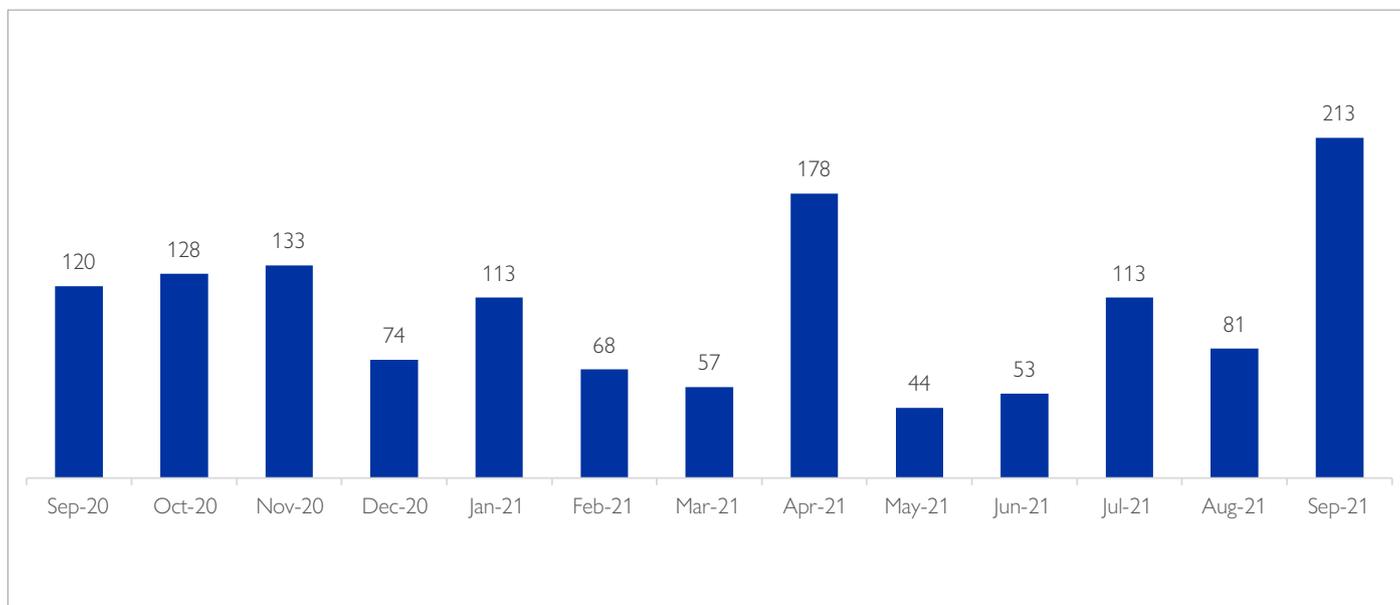
Most of the deportees had not had help organizing their migration, although some reported that they had received help from family/friends. The travel was largely paid for through savings. Regarding risks associated with the travel, few deportees reported that they knew of risks before they embarked upon the journey. Among those who were aware of the risks, the main reported risks were deportation, detention and hunger/thirst.

### DEPORTEES MOVING THROUGH IBRAHIM AL-KHALIL

Border staff were able to obtain a headcount of deportees moving from Turkey to Iraq through the Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point, and some additional qualitative information was also gathered on this group of travellers. However, this information is not available for the other assessed border crossing points. Figure 13

below shows the estimated number of persons deported from Turkey via the Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point per month over the period covered in this report: 1 September 2020–30 September 2021.

Figure 13: Number of deportees passing through Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point into Iraq per month



The main reported reasons for deportation were illegal border crossing or lack of legal status to remain in Turkey. Deportees were generally transported to the border via bus, and crossed in the early morning between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m. Based on qualitative information provided, deportees are banned from re-entering Turkey for a period of 3–5 years following their deportation, though it is believed that

many will reattempt the journey despite this measure. The majority were believed to be intending to reach Europe, with Germany a key destination within Europe due to the government's more flexible approach to migrants. The main driving factors for migration were believed to be unemployment, security, and family reunification. Most commonly, migrants are stopped at the Turkey-Greece

and Turkey-Bulgaria border crossing points, as well as inside Turkey, and then transported back to Iraq. Smugglers are often involved in planning the journey, and the estimated cost of the journey is USD 12,000 per person, though this figure can vary considerably. Whilst many start the journey with their official documents, these documents are often lost or confiscated, leaving migrants undocumented and

making proving their legal identity difficult when they are deported. Upon return, many face financial challenges as they have commonly sold their assets to pay for the cost of the journey as well as stigma and possible mental health and psychosocial needs linked to the migration experience.

## CONCLUSION

The first group of travellers examined in this report – incoming travellers seeking employment in Iraq and willing to stay longer than three months – constitutes the largest share of travellers who may be susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation along their migratory journey. The majority among this group were adult males entering from Iran via the Bashmagh border crossing point, but on examination some more vulnerable groups emerge. Whilst education levels among this group were similar to the other groups examined, there was a significant proportion (21%) who had completed only primary education or below. Further, 17 per cent reported engaging in daily wage labour or were looking for a job when in Iraq, indicating that they do not have secure employment. A small proportion (2%) reported travelling with a group of unknown people which could be a proxy indicator for travelling with other trafficked individuals, and a very large proportion reported paying for the travel with their own savings (95%), or through negative coping strategies such as making money during the travel (3%) and borrowing (2%). These groups should be considered particularly vulnerable when it comes to navigating labour markets and possible labour-based exploitation due to a lack of awareness or access to information on legal channels of migration as well as rights and available services in the country of destination.

Among the second group of travellers leaving Iraq due to humanitarian reasons, all were leaving Iraq through the Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point with Turkey, and again the majority were young adult males. Education levels were similar to the first group, though a slightly higher proportion had completed secondary education (60% versus 50% in the first group). A much higher proportion were not working and seeking employment (42% versus 4% in the first group) highlighting that a lack of opportunities inside Iraq was a significant

push factor for migration. The majority (70%) used savings to pay for their migration, but the use of other negative coping strategies was more prominent than in the first group as 31 per cent reported they sold assets and 20 per cent borrowed money. A significant proportion reported an intention to reach countries in Europe (30%) whilst 2 per cent reported an intention to reach Belarus which has become a common migration route for people from the Middle East region seeking to reach Europe. Additionally, 63 per cent reported Turkey as their intended destination, and it is likely that some among this group will travel onwards from Turkey towards Europe. This group are particularly susceptible to trafficking in persons and/or other forms of abuse, violence and exploitation along their migratory journey, particularly once outside of Iraq, evidenced by the finding that among those that had help arranging for migration 41 per cent had used a smuggler or broker. Additionally, it is likely that they may seek international protection upon arrival to their intended destination.

Among the third group of migrants examined – individuals deported from Iran and Turkey because of their lack of legal status to remain in the country from which they were deported – findings suggest that the majority were also young men with a lower education level than the previous two groups. This may be negatively impacting their ability to navigate the legal frameworks around formal migration channels. Most were deported from Turkey where many intended to migrate onwards towards Europe, and despite being banned from re-entering the country it can be anticipated that many among this group will reattempt migration when their financial circumstances allow. Upon their return to Iraq, this group may be more vulnerable to exploitation as a result of having sold their assets to make the initial journey, as well as willing to take risks in order to gather the resources needed to reattempt migration.

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