

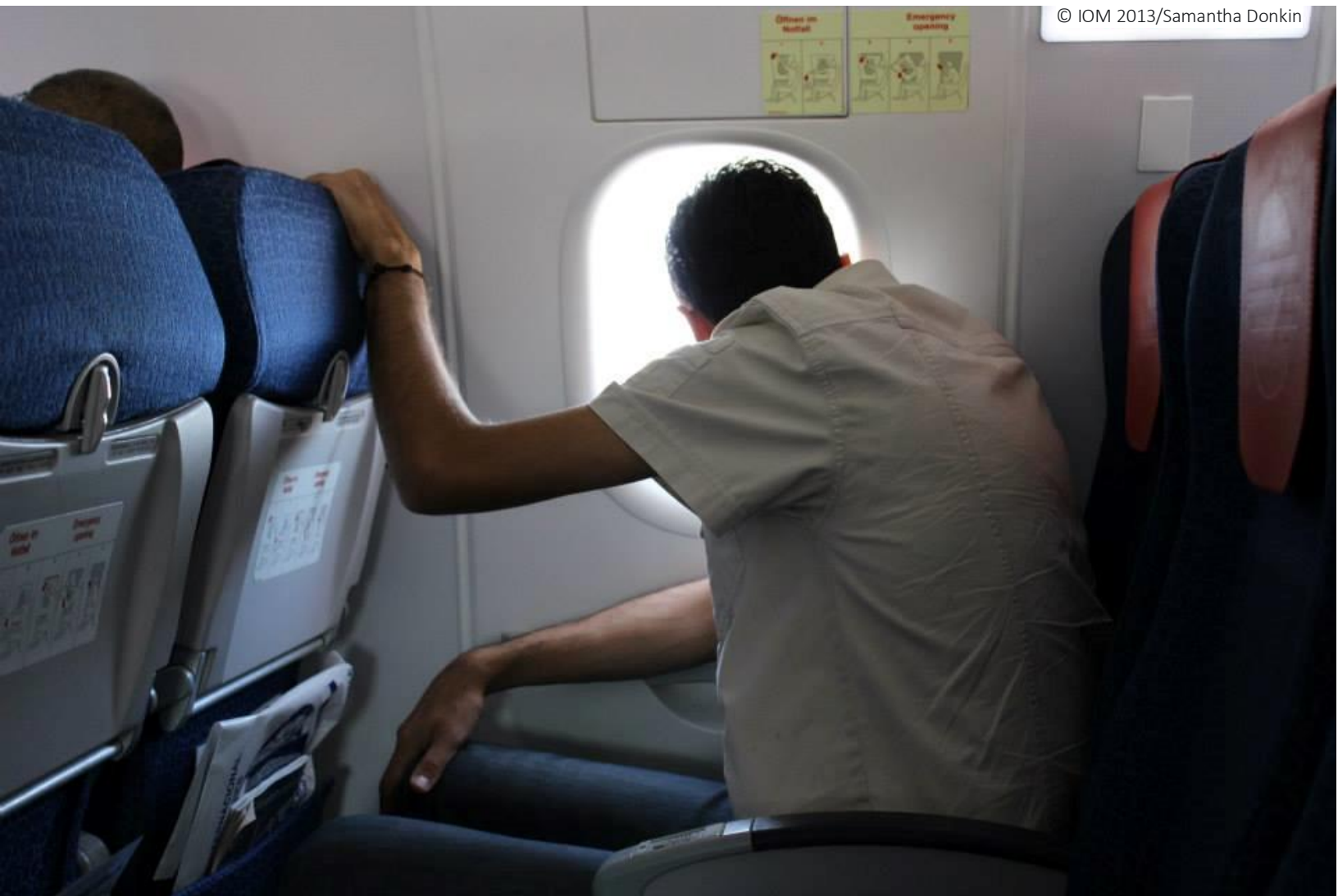


International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

IRAQI MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

A SNAPSHOT REPORT ON IRAQI MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)



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Netherlands

Iraqi migrants in The Netherlands:

A snapshot report on Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands

This snapshot report is part of the outputs of the last phase of IOM's project implementation on data collection to enable a better understanding of migration flows from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia towards Europe, a collaborative effort by the DTM support team and relevant IOM field missions funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM or its Member States. 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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Geneva, Switzerland

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BACKGROUND

The project “Enabling a better understanding of migration flows (and its root-causes) from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia towards Europe” was designed by IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MinBuZa). The IOM DTM, is a set of tools and methodologies to enable systematic and regular primary data collection, analysis and dissemination on human mobility and forced migration (both internal and cross-borders) and has been deployed in over 80 countries since 2004, positioning IOM as a key contributor to humanitarian response in natural disasters, conflicts, and complex emergencies alike.

The research study draws its analysis from four different target population – potential migrants that have not yet left their country of residence, migrants en route to Europe, migrants in destination countries and migrants upon return to their country of origin. Although the entire study aims to understand the migration patterns of six nationalities, this snapshot only focuses on Iraqi migrants that have made it to Europe, more precisely to the Netherlands. In order to increase the understanding of migration flows (and its root-causes) from Iraq towards Europe the “Comprehensive Migration Flows Survey (CMFS)” was chosen as the most suitable DTM component. For the implementation of the CMFS with regards to Iraqi nationals, different field locations for data collection activities were chosen: Iraq as the country of origin/departure; Bulgaria and Greece as transit countries, as well as the Netherlands as a destination country. The data collection in each of the field location aims to shed light on six thematic areas which have been designed under this project:

THEMATIC AREAS

TA 1	TA 2	TA 3	TA 4	TA 5	TA 6
Migrant profiles (socio- demographic)	Migration drivers and decision making	Vulnerability factors in origin, transit and destination countries	Role of intermediaries	Migrants’ perceptions towards Europe	Migration choices and options

The findings outlined in the next part of this snapshot report are not necessarily representative for the whole Iraqi migrant population that has recently migrated to Europe. This snapshot report, for which data collection took place from July to October 2017, only aims to provide general findings of Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands. Since the sample size is small (n=195) results should not be overinterpreted.

IRAQI MIGRANTS

IRAQI PROFILES

IOM DTM collected information on the profiles of Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands to better define their demographic composition and socio-economic background. Out of a total sample of 195 Iraqi nationals in the Netherlands 30 per cent were women (59) and 70 per cent men (136).

Half of the sample were aged between 18 and 32 years old, while 31 per cent were between 33 and 47 years old. Fifteen per cent of the respondents were between 48 and 62 years old and just 4 per cent were 63 years or older.

Sixty per cent of the surveyed population reported being married at the time of the survey. Thirty-one per cent reported they were single and the remaining 9 per cent were either engaged, divorced or widowed. To better understand the household compositions of the migrants, they were asked if they had children, and if so how many and where they were located at the time of the interview. The data shows that 41 per cent of the sample did not have any children. Of the 113 individuals (59%) that reported having children, the largest share indicated that all or at least some of their children were with them in the Netherlands (82%). Almost a third of the interviewees (27%) reported that they still had children in Iraq.

Figure 1: Age distribution of Iraqi migrants in NL

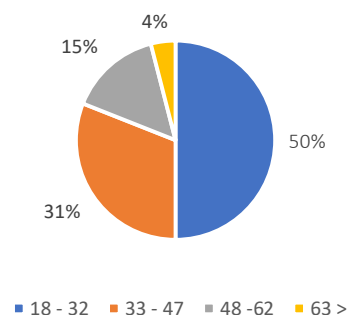
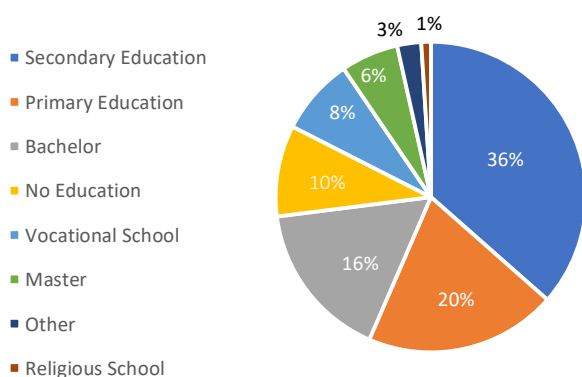


Figure 2: Education Levels of Iraqi Migrants in NL



total indicated that they arrived between January and September 2017. Just 10.5 per cent of the sample arrived in 2016, while 1.5 per cent arrived prior to 2015 and 2.5 per cent could not specify their exact time of arrival to the Netherlands. The data analysis shows that the educational background of the sample population was quite diverse. The largest shares of the sample completed

secondary education (36%) or primary education (20%) and 23 per cent completed a Bachelor and/or Master degree. Nine per cent reported to have no form of education. Of those 9 per cent without any education, 61 per cent reported they were unable to read or write.

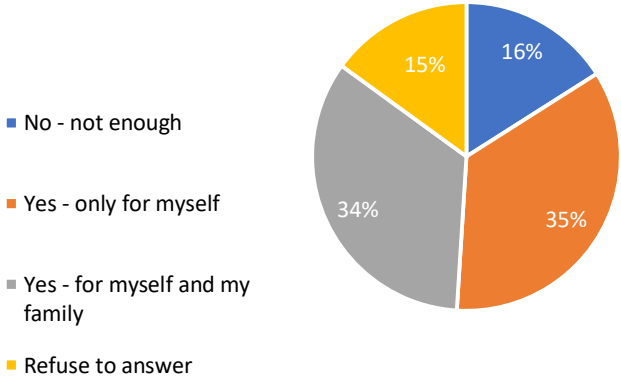
The data shows that the top five origin locations of Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands were: Baghdad (36%), Ninawa (18%), Sulaymaniyah (9%), Erbil (7%) and Basrah (6%).

MIGRATION DRIVERS AND DECISIONMAKING PROCESS

Drivers

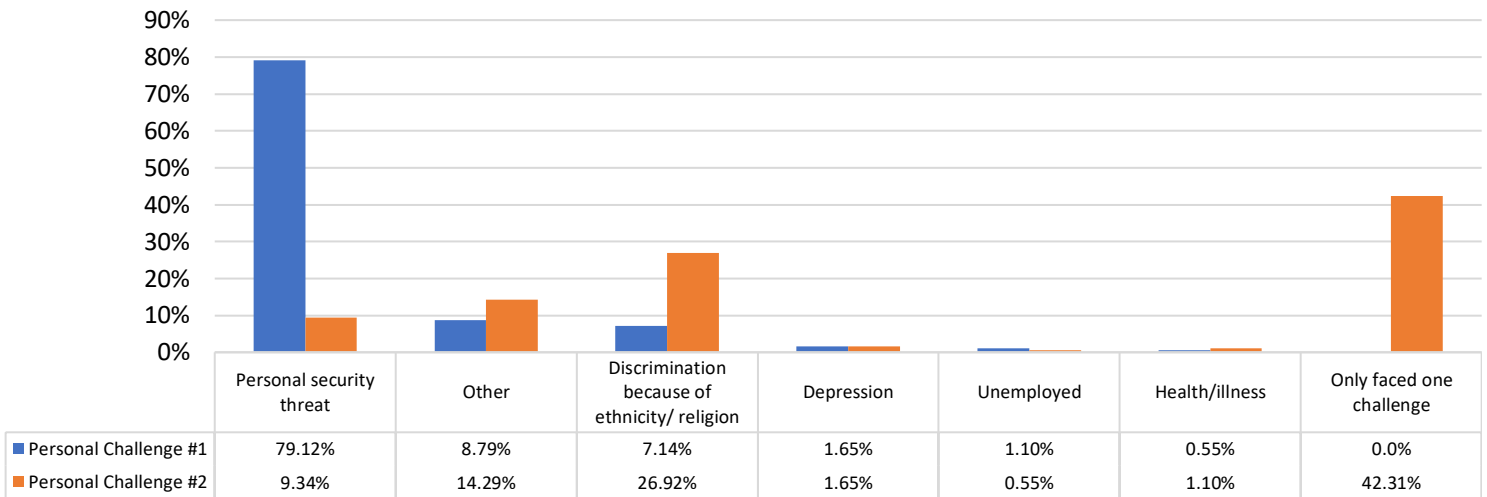
Drivers of migration are often considered intersectional factors which can take place at the individual, community or country level. In order to understand the full picture of the drivers that led Iraqi migrants to leave for Europe, those different perspective were taken into account by DTM. Before turning to the drivers of migration some socio-economic characteristics of Iraqi migrants are analyzed to understand their conditions prior to departure. Most interviewees (73%) were employed before they left Iraq, yet 16 per cent of the sample answered that their income was not sufficient to meet monthly expenses.

Figure 3: Sufficient monthly income before migration



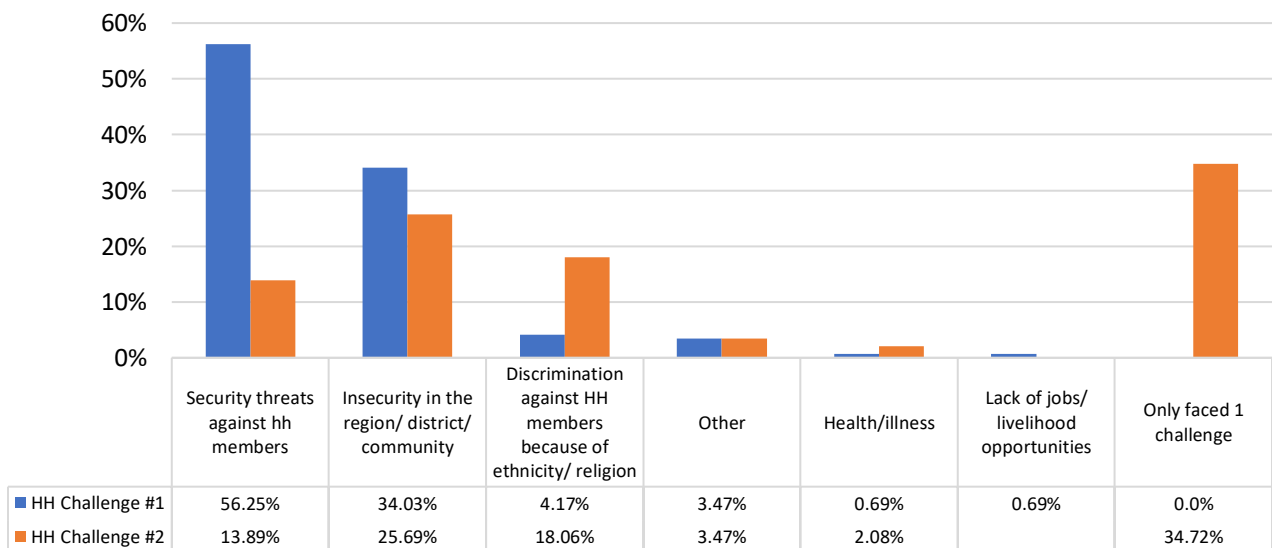
To better understand the drivers of migration on a micro and meso level, the respondents were asked to name their top two personal, household as well as community challenges during the six-months before their departure. Overall, 93 per cent of the sample indicated to have faced personal challenges in the six-months prior to their departure. Figure 4 shows that the most pressing challenges were associated with personal security threats, and discrimination because of ethnicity or religion.

Figure 4: Top Two Personal Challenges before migration



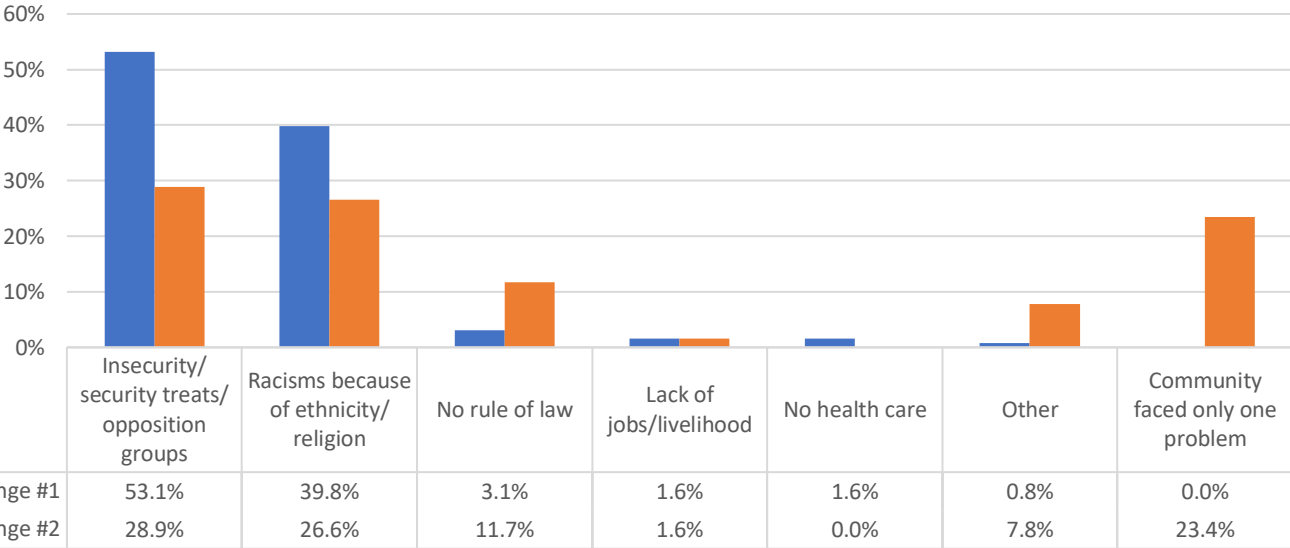
Seventy-four per cent of the surveyed population reported having faced challenges on the household level in the six-months before their departure. In this case, the two main challenges were associated with security threats either towards individual household members or at the regional/district level.

Figure 5: Top Two Household Challenges before migration



Sixty-five per cent of interviewees reported that they have faced challenges on the community level. The majority (53%) mentioned insecurity due to the presence of opposition groups in the region as their main challenge. Racism because of ethnicity or religion was the second most reported primary challenge at the community level (40%).

Figure 6: Top Two Community Challenges before migration



In addition to the questions on the challenges faced in Iraq, respondents were also asked directly about the main reasons for leaving the country. The data shows clear links between the main reasons for leaving with the previously identified challenges as most people reported leaving due to insecurity on a personal and family level (53%), followed by the presence of war and conflict in the country (13%) as well as experiencing discrimination against one’s own ethnicity/religion (6%). Next to the main challenges before migration and reasons to leave Iraq, the respondents were also asked about the triggering event that ultimately lead them to make the final decision to leave their country of origin. More than 85 per cent of the respondents mentioned that it was a security incident committed either against them, a family member or the community as the event that triggered their migration. Under the “other” option many respondents specified that the presence of ISIS in the community triggered their migration.

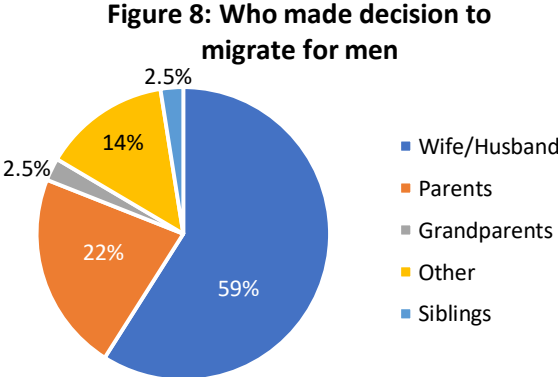
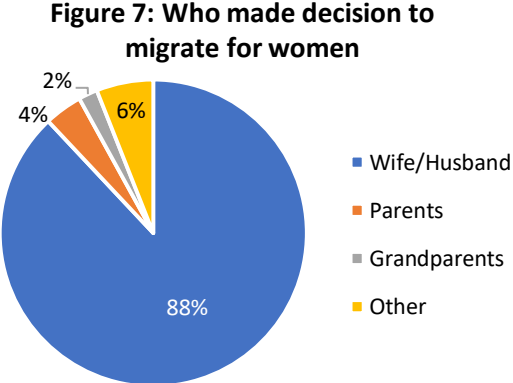
Previous migration experiences can foster future migration decisions. As such, the survey included a question on internal displacement and on previous migration movements. Around 20 per cent of the sample indicated that they were internally displaced before. Those who were most likely to have experienced internal displacement came from the provinces of Anbar, Ninewa and Sulaymaniyah. As the

sample sizes for each of the provinces are however relatively small, the results should not be over interpreted. Around 36 per cent of the sample reported that they migrated across an international border before their last journey to Europe. The two main destinations of people with previous migration experiences were Europe (63%) and the Middle East (53%).

The survey included two questions on the presence of family and friends in Europe to further analyze the eventual presence of a migration network between the origin and the destination country. The data shows that 52 per cent of the interviewees had family living in Europe prior to their departure and 33 per cent confirmed that they had friends living in Europe.

Decision making process

Several questions were included in the survey to better comprehend the different factors influencing the decision-making process of Iraqi migrants. Whilst looking at external academic work, various scholars state that migration is often used as a household coping mechanism or as a family consumption smoothing strategy. Sending one family member to Europe could represent a significant financial improvement for the family which stays behind due to the remittances sent back by the migrant. Alternatively, sending a family member abroad could allow for family reunification and for a whole change in the lifestyle of the household. The data shows that half of the sample population indicated that they did not take the decision to migrate themselves. Maybe surprisingly, no significant relation can be drawn when correlating the decision making with the different age groups of the interviewees. Yet, this is not the case when we correlate decision making with gender, as only 35 per cent of the men reported that someone else took the decision for them, while up to 85 per cent of women reported so. Of the women that did not make the decision themselves, 88 per cent indicated that their husband made the decision for them.



Of the other half of the interviewees that reported having made the decision to migrate on their own, 61 per cent indicated that they still discussed their migration with someone else. The large majority (83%) mentioned that they discussed their migration intention with their family in Iraq, while a few (7%) discussed it with their family in Europe. Eighty-three per cent of the people they talked to were supportive of the respondent's decision to migrate.

Figure 9: Sources of Information for decision to migrate

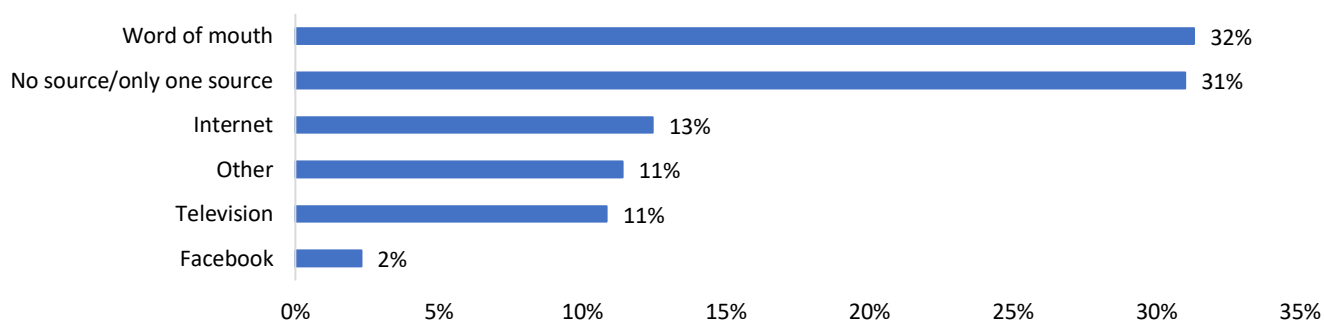
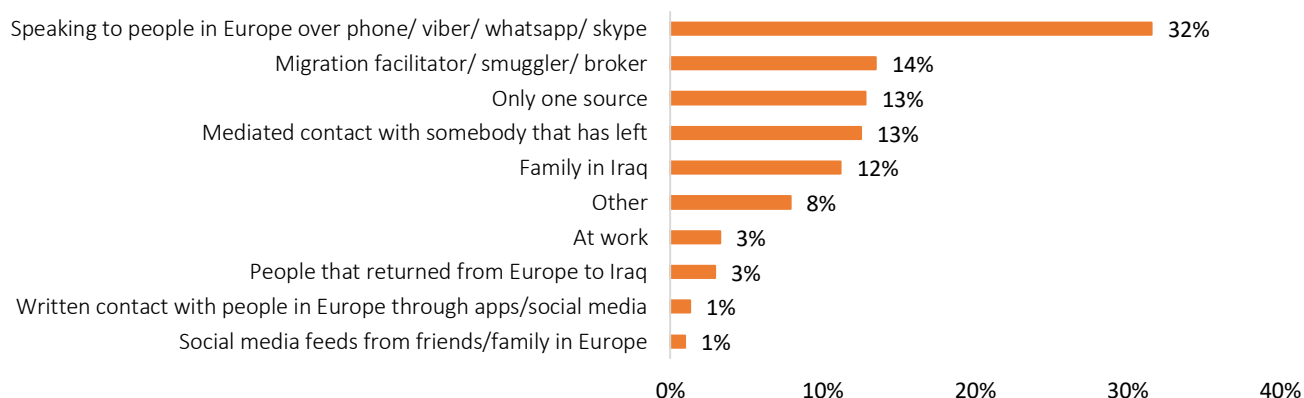


Figure 10: Specifying 'word of mouth'

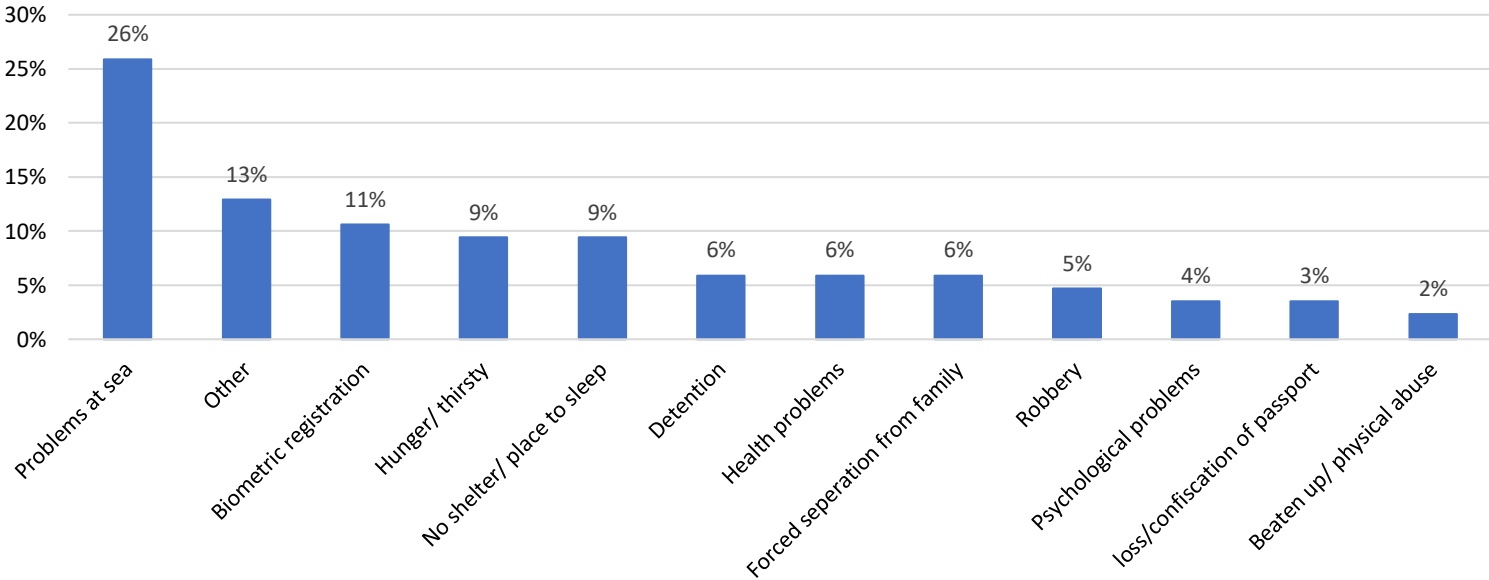


In order to understand the factors influencing the decision-making process respondents were asked “what were the sources of information on which you based your decision to migrate to Europe?” As figures 9 and 10 below show, next to claiming that they did not base the decision on any sources, 31 per cent of people reported that they based their decision to migrate on information received through channels of “word of mouth”. The most often mentioned sources for word of mouth were contacts with friends and family in Europe over the phone/WhatsApp/Skype or other messaging services (32%), with migration facilitators (14%) or with people that had previously left for Europe (13%).

CHALLENGES AND RELATED VULNERABILITIES EN ROUTE TO EUROPE

This section of the report aims to shed light on challenges, problems and related vulnerabilities Iraqi migrants face along their journey to Europe. The data shows that roughly 44 per cent of the Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands reported facing problems on their way to Europe. Respondents who reported facing problems en-route were also asked to list the three main problems encountered, 44 per cent of the responded reported facing one problem while travelling to Europe, 16 per cent reported a second problem and 8 per cent faced a third problem. As shown in Figure 11 the main problems faced were related to the sea crossing (26%), and biometric registration¹ (11%). Common problems were also hunger/thirst (9%) and the lack of proper shelter (9%).

Figure 11: Problems faced en route



The travel mode of migrants en route is often used as an indicator of potential vulnerabilities – do migrants travel by themselves or are they accompanied by family, other travelers or the migration facilitator? It is not unusual for migrants to travel with multiple people for different parts of their journey. The data

¹ Biometric registration: The collection of biometric information and registration is part of the Dublin Agreement whereby biometric information is collected at the first port of entry. However, from the perspective of Iraqi migrants it may be viewed as coercive because Iraqi migrants are aware that registering their biometric information in transit, (but technically their first port of entry to Europe) may hinder the asylum processes in their destination country. Hence, from the migrants’ perspective it was reported as a problem encountered in the journey.

showed that 42 per cent of the interviewees reported to have travelled at least part of their journey by themselves, others travelled with their spouse (38%) and/or their children (42%) and with other family members (8%).

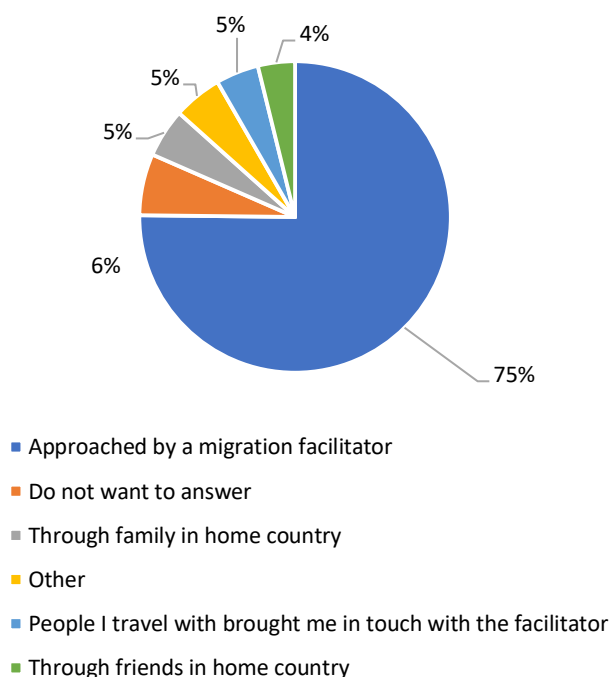
ROLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

Under this research study, DTM aims to increase the knowledge on the role of intermediaries in facilitating Iraqi migrants' journeys. The data shows that four respondents out of five (82%) used a migration facilitator² at some point of their journey. On average, a migrant used two to three migration facilitators to reach the Netherlands. In attempt to better understand the networks behind migrant smuggling, respondents were asked how they found their first migration facilitator. Seventy-four per cent reported that the migration facilitator approached them first.

The large majority of the interviewees (79%) indicated that they paid the full amount of their

journey up front, before they left Iraq. The remaining share reported to have paid in cash installments throughout the journey. The data shows that the average amount spent for the journey was around USD 8,500 – to go from the province of residence in Iraq to the Netherlands. Around 25 per cent of the respondents indicated that they did not know how much they paid for the entire journey. The data revealed that migrants used a combination of financial strategies to pay for their journey. Almost 80 per cent of the sample made use of savings to pay for their migration, 25 per cent paid at least part of their

Figure 11: How was the first facilitator found



² Migration facilitator: Within this study the term 'migration facilitator' refers to anyone that is involved in the facilitation of migration services (irregular and regular) via air, land or sea routes in exchange for money. Those services can reach from consultative services for visa application and acquiring (fraudulent) documents, to transportation arrangement, to the facilitation of border crossings. The term used does not intend to neglect the differences in services and often used terms for those persons providing the migration services

journey by borrowing money from family in Iraq, and 16 per cent had to sell assets such as gold, furniture or other belongings.

Respondents were asked what their preparation prior to migration consisted of besides finding a migration facilitator and mobilizing funds for the journey. Seventy-nine per cent of the sample population indicated they did not make any other preparations. Most respondents reported that they needed less than a month to prepare everything for their migration journey. Around 14 per cent needed between one and two months and the remaining 10 per cent took more than 3 months to finish all their preparations.

PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS EUROPE

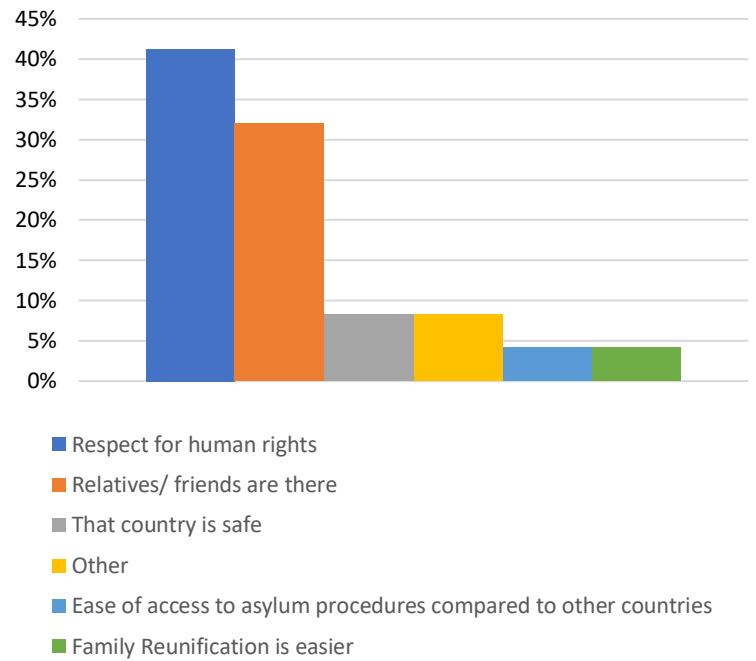
This section aims to provide a better understanding on the perceptions of Iraqi migrants towards Europe before their departure, and the extent to which those perceptions were fulfilled upon arrival in the destination country. The respondents were asked about their intended destination country prior to their departure and why they wanted to go there. If the intended destination country was not the Netherlands, they were asked how they ended up going to the Netherlands instead.

The data shows that the preferred country of destination was the Netherlands (50%). Twenty-nine per cent of the respondents just wanted to reach Europe but did not have an exact destination in mind, 7 per cent intended to go to the UK and 6 per cent to Sweden.

In order to understand why some countries were more popular than others, the respondents were asked about the two main reasons why they intended to go to that specific country. In general, the main reasons for choosing a destination country were determined by the presence of family and friends in that country, the respect of human rights, and safety standards.

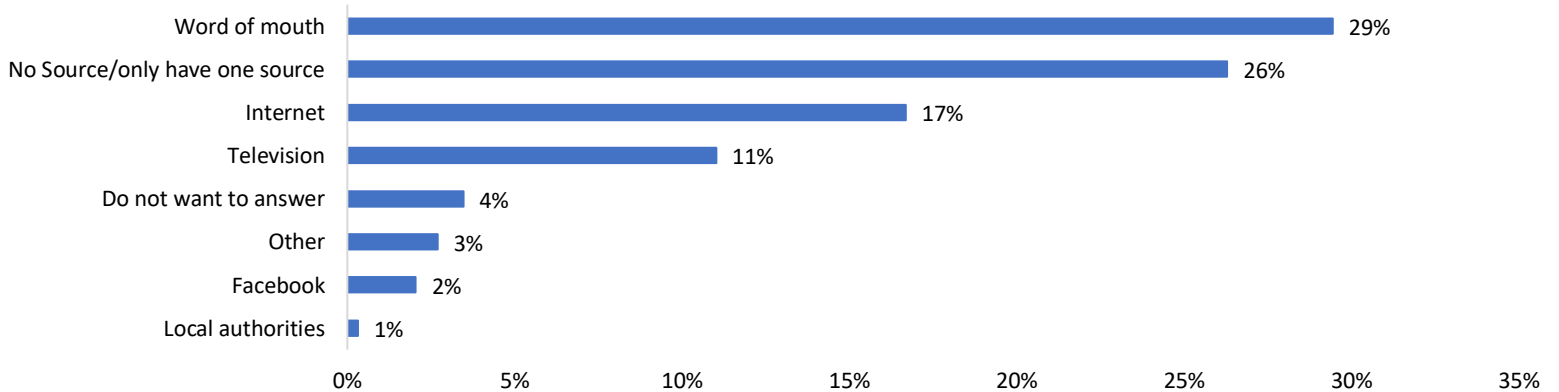
The same reasons were reported when looking at the reasons why the Netherlands was chosen as a destination country (see figure 12). Half of the sample population reported that the Netherlands was not their initial intended destination country. When they were asked what made them change their initial plans and why they ended up going to the Netherlands they mentioned various reasons. The most commonly reported reasons were that the migration facilitator changed plans (16%), some ended up in the Netherlands by coincidence (12%), and that it would be easier to get asylum in the Netherlands (10%). Some migrants also simply said they don't know why they went to the Netherlands (16%). When asked if the migrants intend to stay in the Netherlands, almost all participants (98%) confirmed that they wanted to stay.

Figure 12 - Main Reason for Choosing the Netherlands



³Migrants were asked about the sources on which they based their impression/perception of Europe before leaving Iraq. As outlined in Figure 13, the main impressions were shaped by channels of “word of mouth” as well as the internet and television.

Figure 13: Key sources of information for 'impression/perception of life in Europe'

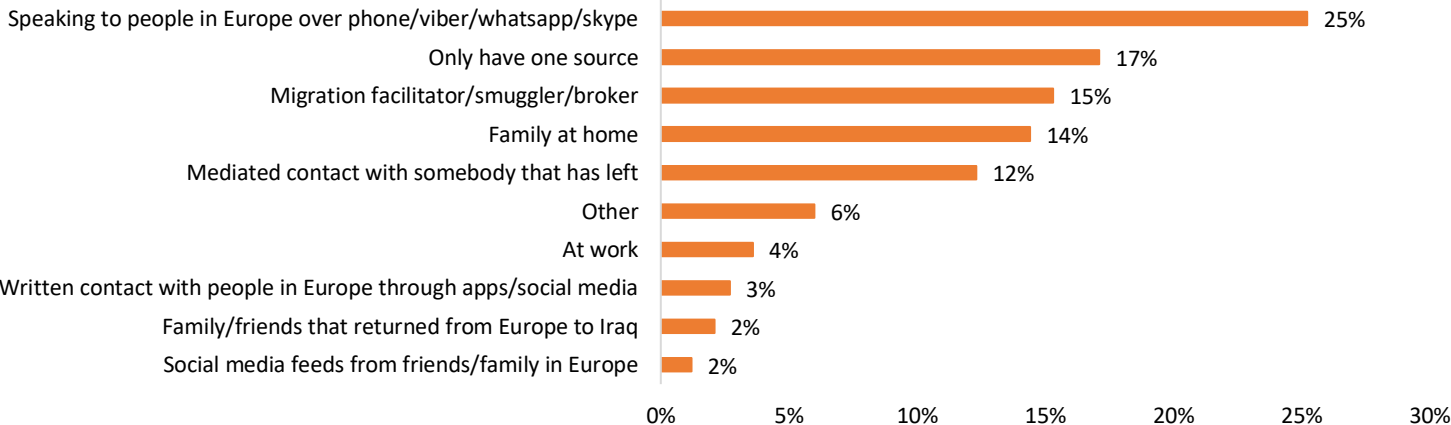


³ Figure 13 only presents the key answers provided in the survey

The main sources of word of mouth that respondents referred to were speaking with family/friends in Europe through applications such as Skype or WhatsApp (25%). Yet, migration facilitators seem to have quite an important role in shaping migrant impressions towards Europe as 15 per cent of the respondents based their impressions on information received from facilitators. The family at home (14%) and contact with people that had already left Iraq (12%) also played a role in shaping perception.

In order to find out more about the communication of migrants, the Iraqi respondents in the Netherlands were asked about their phone usage during the journey. The data showed that 65 per cent of the sample had a smartphone while travelling. Over half of the migrant population (53%) reported that they used their phone to stay in touch with family and friends at home, while 19 per cent used the phone to communicate with family and friends in the destination county or in Europe in general. Around 5 per cent mentioned that their phone did not work during the journey since they could not get service. A smaller share used the phone to communicate with facilitators (4%) and others used it for GPS guidance (3%). Most used apps during the journey to Europe were (multiple answers possible): Viber (48%), internet browser (19%), Skype (14%), Facebook (13%) as well as WhatsApp and Google maps (both 10%).

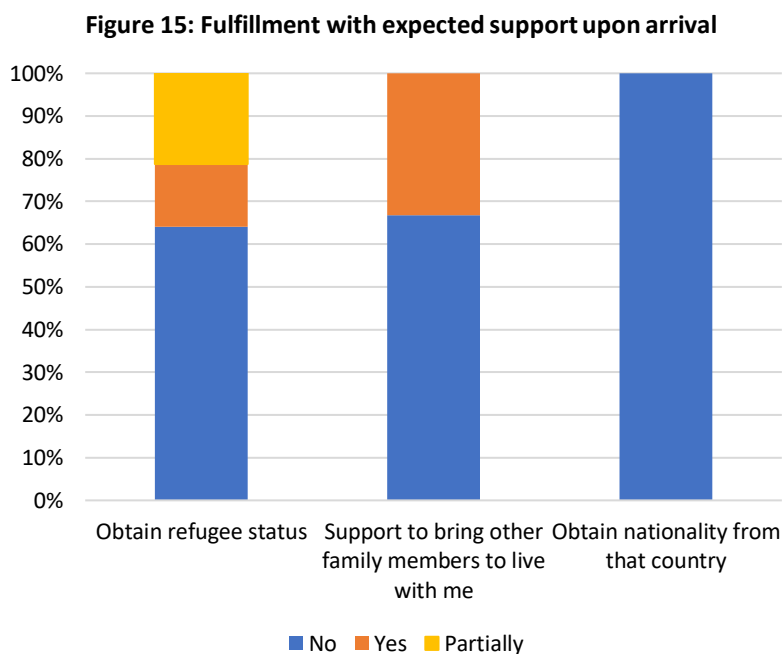
Figure 14: Specifying 'word of mouth'



As the previous outcomes show, migrants made decisions based on specific expectations they have on a certain country. Despite the amount of information and expectations migrants have before reaching their destination country, it is not clear the extent to which that information was reliable and matched upon arrival. The next section will explore migrants’ expectations once they arrive in the preferred destination countries, asking them about their priorities upon arrival, their expected support from the government and the likelihood of facing problems in the new host community

When asked about their first priority upon arrival, 97 per cent of the sample stated that it was to claim asylum. Eighty-two per cent of the sample reported having only one priority. As secondary priorities (for the 18 per cent that named a second priority) finding work, reunifying with family and learning the local language were the most commonly mentioned objectives.

The support migrants expected to receive upon their arrival in the Netherlands closely aligns with their reported priorities. The large majority of the respondents (88%) expected to receive support on the asylum application, 7 per cent did not expect any support, 3 per cent expected to receive the Dutch nationality and 2 per cent would have liked to get support in bringing other family members to Europe. Figure 15 illustrates the extent to which migrants received the expected support, which is relatively



low for all the main support expectations. Given that the majority of the surveyed population indicated that both their first priority and their main expectation of support were related to claiming asylum in the Netherlands, it is maybe unsurprising that 54 per cent of them expressed fear that their asylum application may be rejected. On the other hand, 30 per cent did not expect to face any problems upon arrival.

Since the vast majority of the sample population expressed their intention to apply for asylum, respondents were also asked if they knew what an asylum procedure was and if they could explain it. Only 28 per cent of the sample reported to know what an asylum procedure was and made an attempt at explaining it. Correlating the education level of the respondents with the knowledge on the asylum procedure no clear conclusion could be drawn. The qualitative question evolving around the understanding of asylum procedures in Europe reveal that the large majority of the respondents identified an asylum procedure as a way to secure protection, safety and peace. Often respondents also mentioned that the process needs to be based on well-funded evidence proving why someone needs protection in Europe. A large share also seemed to be aware of the long waiting periods that are linked to an asylum application.

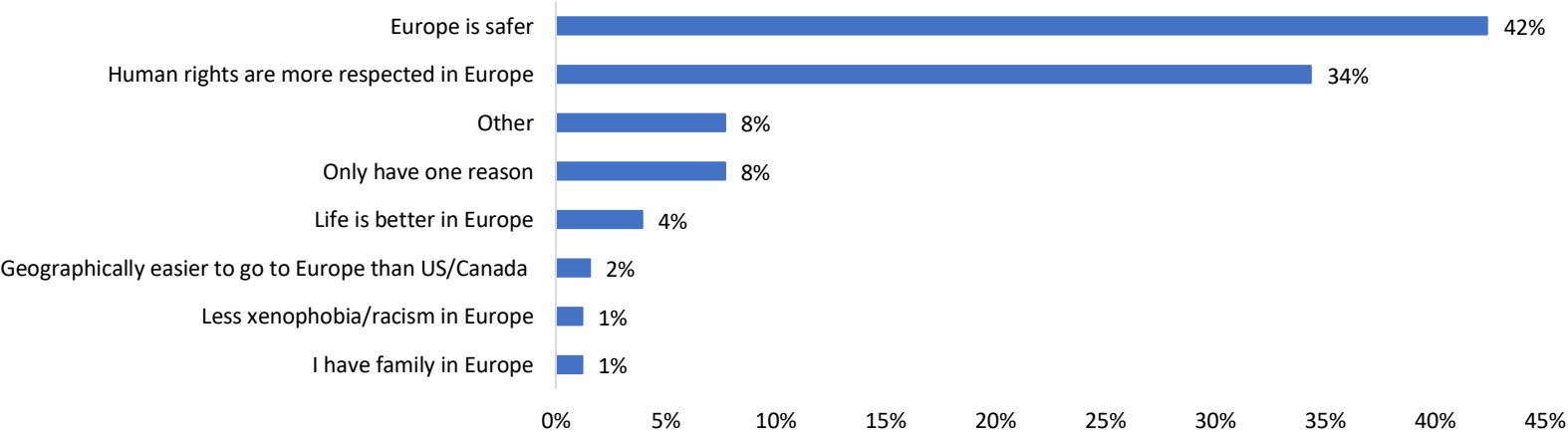
Migrants in the Netherlands were asked whether they would advise others to migrate to Europe. Forty-four per cent of the respondents said they would not advise others to migrate, 50 per cent stated they would and 6 per cent did not want to answer this question. The most cited reasons for advising others to migrate were levels of safety/security in Europe (57%), respect for human rights (37%) and the absence of a good future in Iraq (22%). On the other hand, the reasons for not advising others to migrate to Europe include the fact that migrants do not feel in the position to advise others (28%), the difficulties of obtaining a legal status (18%) as well as the perception that their life is not what they expected it to be before they left (15%). Around of 10 per cent also explained that people should only leave if they have a good/well founded reason, otherwise they would advise to stay in Iraq. Around 10 per cent of the interviewees also mentioned that they would advise against migration to Europe as it does not seem to respect human rights.

MIGRATION OPTIONS AND CHOICES

While thematic area five provides a good overview of why people chose to go to Europe and what kind of expectation they have about their life there, less is known about why certain migrants chose migration to Europe over regional migration.

⁴Migrants were therefore asked why they preferred migration to Europe instead of migration in the region. The main reasons reported by the respondents relate to Europe being safer (42%), and human rights being more respected in Europe than in the region (34%).

Figure 16: Reasons for migrating to Europe instead of staying in the region



⁴ Figure 16: Respondents could provide two reasons for “migration to Europe instead of staying within their region of origin”.

In order to better understand migrants' motivations to leave the region, the respondents were asked if they would have considered staying if they were offered employment/study opportunities in the region. Five per cent of the sample reported that they would have considered staying in the region if they were provided with better economic opportunities, while only 1 per cent would have stayed in the region if study opportunities were provided to them.

It often remains unclear if migrants are aware of the different migration options in terms of regular and irregular channels. Therefore respondents were asked how they planned to obtain their permission to stay. The majority answered that they claimed asylum (92%), while 7 per cent reported they already had a visa/refugee status and 1 per cent did not plan to obtain any permission to stay. Those results are aligned with the responses to the question on the knowledge of legal opportunities for migration, with 77 per cent of the respondents reporting being aware of legal paths for migration. The majority named the process of claiming asylum (81%) as the main option to obtain a legal status. A relatively large portion also knew about the Schengen visa (56%).

OUTLOOK

Future return intentions of Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands were also explored by the DTM survey, and migrants were asked if they would consider returning to Iraq. Ninety-one per cent of the sample rejected that idea and 9 per cent expressed their willingness to return home. For the 9 per cent that expressed interest in returning the main reason was a rejected asylum claim and being tired of waiting for its approval. The lack of safety in Iraq was mentioned as the main reason for people not wanting to return to Iraq (83%). The second most cited reason was the lack of future prospects back in Iraq (35%). Additionally, 27 per cent of the respondents based their decision not to go back to Iraq on the risk of being displaced within Iraq due to events induced by climate change. When concretely asked what needed to change for them to consider returning, 80 per cent answered that they never want to return, no matter the circumstances. Eighteen per cent claimed that with the end of conflict/war in the country they would consider returning.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

This data collection and analysis exercise on Iraqi migrants in the Netherlands presents results across several areas. In demographic terms, 30 per cent of the sample is composed of women and 70 per cent men, representing a similar gender distribution as in 2017 asylum statistics. Almost half of the sample population arrived in the Netherlands in 2015 and one third during the course of 2017. The average age of the respondents was 36, with the largest share of them being between 18 and 32 years old. The main places of origin in Iraq were Bagdad, Ninawa, Sulaymaniyah and Erbil.

In terms of social economic characteristics, less than one quarter of the interviewees were unemployed before leaving Iraq and the majority indicated that income was sufficient to meet their monthly expenses prior to migration. Analyzing the main drivers of migration on a personal, household and community level, the data revealed that for all three levels the most pressing issues were related to security threats, insecurity in the region and racism because of ethnicity/religion. Those results are aligned with the answers given by respondents when asked to define the main reason for migration and the triggering event that led to the final migration decision. In both cases, answers were linked to security threats, insecurity, and discrimination. With regard to the decision-making process women appear to be less likely than men to make the decision to migrate by themselves. It was reported that this decision was often taken by their husband.

About half of the respondents reported some form of problems along the route. The main vulnerabilities en route were ascribed to be problems at sea, the practice of forced fingerprinting, and experiencing hunger and thirst. Most migrants reported that most vulnerabilities were caused by smugglers and/or national police/officials.

More than three quarters of the sample made use of a migration facilitator at some point of the journey on average respondents used between 2 and 3 migration facilitators. Most migrants financed their journeys through savings and by borrowing money from family in Iraq. The majority of the sample paid the full amount up front before the departure.

The survey revealed that the Netherlands was the migrants' primary destination, nevertheless about one fifth of the sample intended to go to another country but ended up in the Netherlands despite their initial intentions. This change in their migration trajectory was usually due to the facilitator changing plans, coincidence or due to the perception that it was easier to get asylum in the Netherlands as compared to the previously chosen destination country.

"Word of mouth" channels were one of the most used sources of information. Migrants reported using word of mouth when collecting information on the decision-making process and on what to expect in Europe. The majority received information from family/friends in Europe through the usage of apps such as WhatsApp, Viber etc.

The data also revealed that the most pressing priority upon reaching Europe was to claim asylum. Similarly, the main expected support from the host government was being granted asylum. Nevertheless, the sample population had a limited knowledge on asylum claims and procedures.

The large majority of the sample does not consider the option to return to Iraq feasible due to violence in the country and the lack of human rights. More than three quarter of the sample concretely stated that it does not matter what changes in the country, return is not a viable option for them to consider.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES

This study highlights various immediate needs and challenges for Iraqi migrants prior to their departure, en route as well as when in the destination country.

As the section on challenges, problems and related vulnerabilities showed, around half of the migrants faced at least one problem along the route. Various of the reported problems could be potentially avoided by better informing migrants on where they can obtain access to basic needs such as food, shelter, referral mechanisms and legal assistance along the route but also in the destination country.

The access to information could be improved in different aspects. Migrants need to be better informed along the route (in home and transit countries), about potential destination countries in Europe, and what services and rights they will have access to within these different European countries. Furthermore, migrants need to be given more information about the complex process to receive asylum in European countries.

In conclusion, this data collection activity has also shown how important messaging application communication as well as social media is in the decision-making process and in defining perceptions and expectations of life in Europe. The increasing use and importance of apps and social media should be taken into account when designing information campaigns as well as when trying to understand communication means in the context of migration

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