Monthly Migration Movements
Family Structures
July 2018

Introduction

To date, few studies have been conducted on Afghan families migrating jointly as well as the role of family members in individual migration processes.[1]

The present report using 4Mi data discusses trends among Afghans migrating as part of a family. 1,242 Afghans were interviewed for the report, out of which 242 cases were traveling with close family members; equal to one out of every fifth respondent. The migration drivers identified by those travelling with close family seems to be different from those who are migrating alone; individuals migrating as part of a family usually indicate that they migrate due to political reasons, notably fleeing from conflict/insecurity or ethnic/religious discrimination. The main preferred destinations are Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

In general, interviewees in the sample are by large Pashtun, Hazara and Tajik men coming from rural areas in Afghanistan. The majority have completed primary or secondary/high school level education (65%) and worked as laborers, farmers or were unemployed before initiating their migration journey. Most of them originate from the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunduz, Balkh, Herat, Ghazni and Daykundi.

Size and composition of families on the move

Among the current sample, 40% of the respondents indicated that they migrate on their own, leaving their nuclear/ and extended family members behind. 20% travel with close family members, 7% with extended family members, or friends, neighbors, classmates or colleagues (33%) (Graph 1).

Among those respondents who travel with their close family members, the average size of a family on the migration route consists of 4 to 5 members; on average this included two children and more than one adult. It is not common to bring members of a family who are +60 years old. In terms of the gender composition of families, the ratio of women and men is almost equal. This contrasts with the migration of individuals where men are more prevalent than women, which indicates women migrate more as part of a family unit.
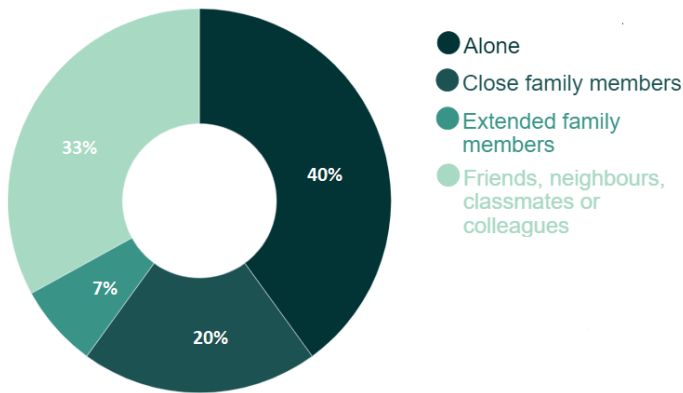
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[1] For example, see: https://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/afghanistan_migration_profile.pdf, http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/c-knowledge-systems/c16-unfolding-central-asia/global-migration-and-afghan-family.html, https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016_Survey-of-the-Afghan-People_full-survey.Dec2016.pdf

Graph 1. Who are you currently traveling with? (n = 1242)

Legend:
- Alone — 40%
- Close family members — 20%
- Extended family members — 7%
- Friends, neighbours, classmates or colleagues — 33%

monitors in the field, these families usually travel to Iran or Turkey and thereafter continue their journey onwards to countries which are part of the European Union, if feasible.

Graph 2. Destination countries (n = 1242)

Legend:
- Those who migate alone or without their family members
- Those who migrate with their family members

Data:
- Haven't made my mind yet: 6, 18
- Iran: 51, 35
- Pakistan: 8, 17
- Turkey: 21, 12
- European Countries: 11, 12
- Others: 3, 6

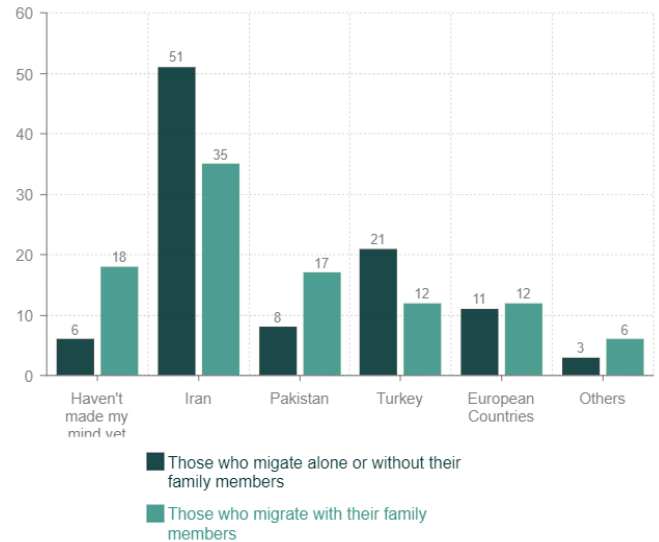## Why do families migrate and where to?

Different trends emerge when comparing the main reasons for migration among those travelling with their family or alone/in another structure. Among those who migrate alone or with people other than their family members, economic factors (40%) seems to be the main reason to leave the country, while 16% mention political factors as the main driver for migration. Among those migrating with their family members, the opposite trend is seen with economic reasons comprising a small share (12%) of responses and political reasons (30%) being a more common reason for leaving. For 28% of those migrating as part of a family, multiple reasons influence their decision to want to leave.

There are also differences between families and others migrating when it comes to choosing a preferred destination country (see: graph 2).

Iran seems to be a stronger preference for people that are not travelling in a family structure (51%) compared to families (35%). A total of 17% of people travelling with family members prefer Pakistan as a country of destination. According to 4Mi monitors in the field, the deteriorating security situation in the eastern provinces in Afghanistan such as Nangarhar, has caused many families to leave their cities and villages. Since the security situation is also poor in most of the neighboring areas, these families are likely to migrate to Pakistan as it becomes the closest accessible option. In general, Turkey also seems to become an attractive destination for Afghans. 12% of those who migrate with their families indicate that Turkey is their preferred destination. Finally, a total of 18% of the 4Mi respondents travelling as part of a family structure indicate that they have not yet chosen a specific destination country. Based on the 4Mi

Who stays behind?

Migration of families does not necessarily mean that all family members migrate together. In many cases, some of the close or extended family members are left at home for different reasons; some do not want to migrate, some perceive the journey as dangerous, and some remain to take care of their property, land and home. Among 4Mi respondents, the older generation within the family are the main members who usually stay behind (53%) while the rest of the family migrate. However, it should be noted that many of the respondents are married and head of households; so, their parents may reside in a separate household while remaining part of the family unit. Spouses and children are less likely to be left behind (4% and 6%, respectively).

The 4Mi findings indicate the main reason why some family members choose not to leave is to avoid being uprooted (40%). This is not surprising since most people who stay are part of the older generation within the family units. The lack of monetary resources (20%) is another reason why some cannot accompany their families; as the number of family members increase, the costs of the journey also increase. Other reasons that influence family members to stay comprises of looking after other relatives (12%), feeling that the journey is too risky (10%), and being too vulnerable to travel (5%).

However, it should be noted that while some family members stay back, there is still a desire for family reunification by the migrating family members. Among the respondents with family on route, 32% mentioned that they have plans to reunite with those who stayed behind by bringing them to their destination country in the future. The same desire is also seen among those who are traveling as individuals without any family members (29%).

Graph 3. Are you planning to bring family members to your country of destination?

Those traveling with their family members (n=242)

● Yes
● No
● Don't know
● Refused

Those traveling without their family members (n= 1000)