

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Survey on Drivers of Migration (SDM) is part of the European Union (EU) funded Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) 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 Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Pakistan.

Through the SDM, between April 2021 and August 2021 (Round 3) the DTM team in Afghanistan interviewed 18,390 potential migrants<sup>1</sup> at informal migration hubs. The DTM Afghanistan team selected 6 provinces with high international outward migration in which to conduct data collection. The selection was based on the review of longitudinal multiyear flow monitoring data on outward migration from Islam Qala-Taybad and Zaranj-Milak border crossings to the Islamic Republic of Iran and beyond. The detailed findings of this survey will be soon published in a report (IOM, 2022). A quantitative approach was adopted to analyze the drivers of Afghan migration to Europe, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. The specific thematic areas for analysis include: socio-economic profiles, drivers and reasons for migration, travel arrangements, problems and vulnerabilities related to journey and mobility history. This summary brief, extracted from the forthcoming report, provides a background on the interviewed potential migrants. A summary of the main findings of the forthcoming report can be found in the Annex.

## II. RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

In total, 18,390 potential Afghan migrants were interviewed in the course of this study. Among them, 15,440 stated that they intended to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran (84%), 2,159 to Turkey (12%) and 791 people to Europe (4%). The top five reported provinces of origin were Herat (20%), Faryab (16%), Kunduz (9%), Balkh (9%) and Badghis (6%). Ninety-nine per cent of interviewees were male and one per cent were female. The highest share of interviewees was male and between the ages of 16 and 24 years old (54%).

The following table presents various socio-demographic indicators by final intended destination country. On average, 45 per cent of all respondents were married. While 49 per cent of interviewees who intended to go to the Islamic Republic of Iran were married, this percentage was lower among interviewed potential migrants to Europe and Turkey (23% and 25%). Similarly, fewer respondents who were planning to migrate to the Europe and Turkey had children (21% and 22% respectively), than their compatriots who indicated that they planned to go to the Islamic Republic of Iran (44%).

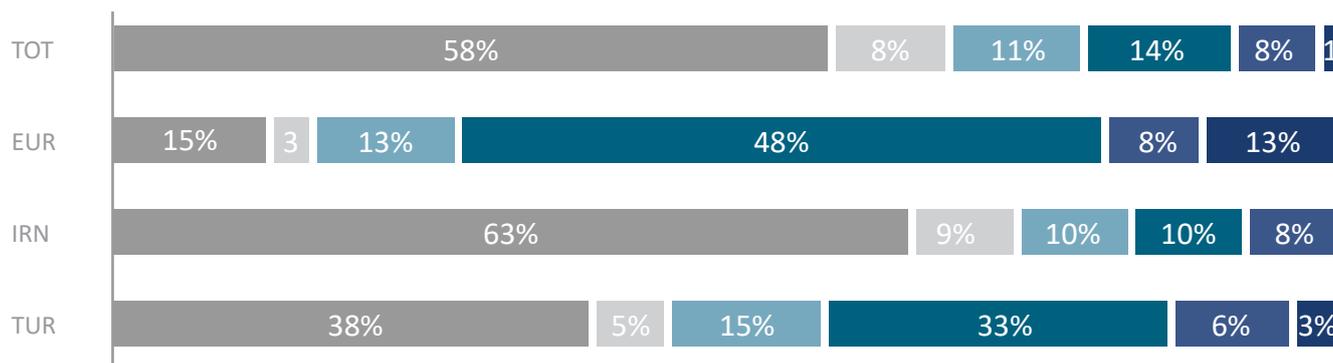
### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND (BY DESTINATION )

|     |  Respondents |  Married |  Have children |  Children not with them |  Average number of children |  Average number of relatives abroad |
|-----|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| TOT | 18,390  | 45%   | 41%   | 90%  | 3.4  | 0.5  |
| EUR | 791   | 23%   | 21%   | 94%  | 2.9  | 1.0  |
| IRN | 15,440  | 49%   | 44%   | 90%  | 3.4  | 0.5  |
| TUR | 2,159   | 25%   | 22%   | 94%  | 3.0  | 0.5  |

<sup>1</sup> The research focused on potential migrants who had taken concrete measures to migrate abroad, including: finding a migration facilitator; making payments for the journey to a migration facilitator; booking travel tickets for (parts) of the migration journey; obtaining a visa to travel to transit countries.

## HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

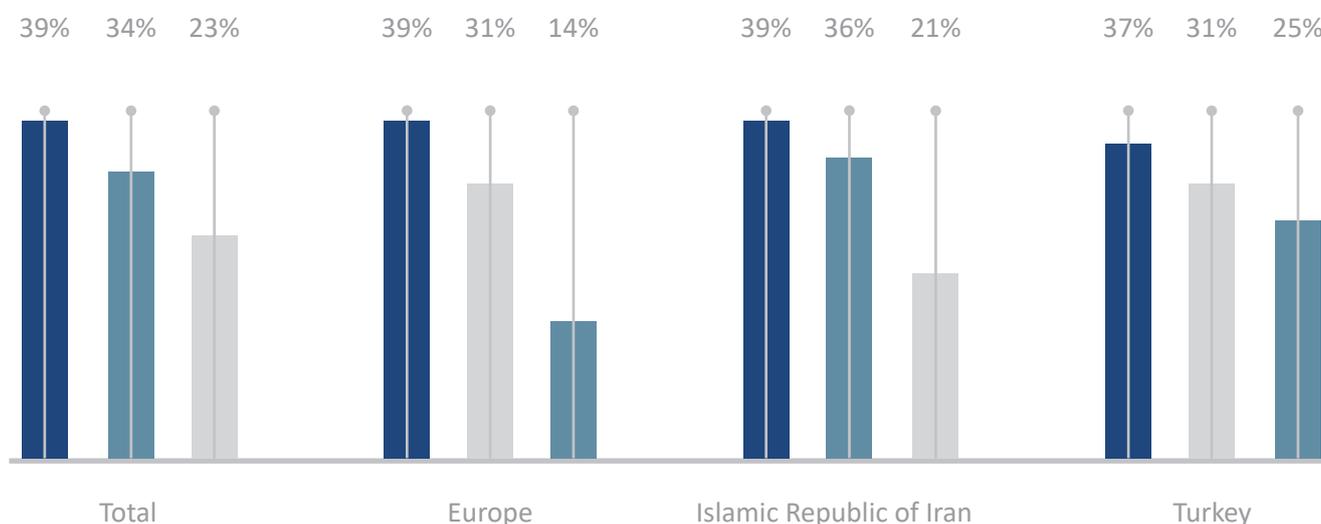
The below graph provides a detailed overview of highest educational levels by final destination country. The education level of the respondents varied significantly between different intended destinations. Sixty-two per cent of interviewees who reported the intention to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran had not completed any education. This percentage was lower amongst respondents intending to go to Europe (15%) and Turkey (38%). Thirteen per cent of Afghan nationals who were planning to migrate to Europe had completed education with a bachelor or a master's degree and 48 per cent at high school level. Those intending to go to Turkey represent the group with the second highest level of education, with six per cent who reported having a bachelor or master's degree and 33 per cent having high school as their highest educational level.



Legend:   
 No education   
 Primary education   
 Secondary education   
 High school   
 Diploma, vocational or religious   
 Bachelor and master's

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS DURING THE SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO INTERVIEWING

Respondents were asked about their employment status during the six months prior to interviewing. The following bar charts present the three most common employment categories (unemployed, daily wages and self-employed). Interviewees who were planning to migrate to Europe, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey were most commonly unemployed (39%, 37% and 37% respectively). The second most reported employment status for respondents intending to migrate to Europe and Turkey was self-employment (31% and 25% respectively) and for those intending to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran it was daily wages (36%).



Legend:   
 Unemployed   
 Daily wages   
 Self-employed

## DEBT, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE<sup>2</sup>

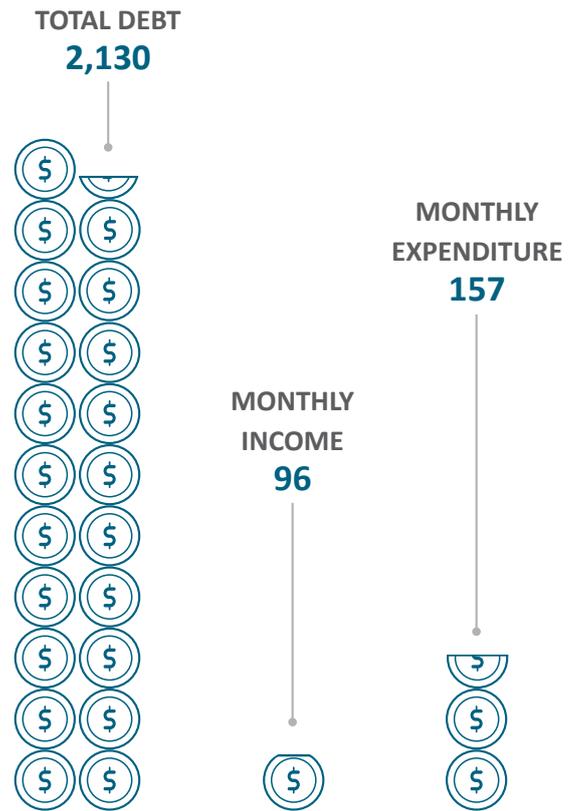
The following bar charts (where each stacked circle represents USD 100) display: i) average total accumulated debt, ii) average monthly household income and iii) average monthly household expenditure.

On average, interviewed potential migrants had a total accumulated debt of USD 2,130, a monthly household income of USD 96 and a monthly household expenditure of USD 157. Their total accumulated debt was 22 times their average monthly household income.

Interviewees who reported the intention to migrate to Turkey had the highest average accumulated level of debt, with USD 2,695; whereas those intending to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran had the lowest, with USD 2,039.

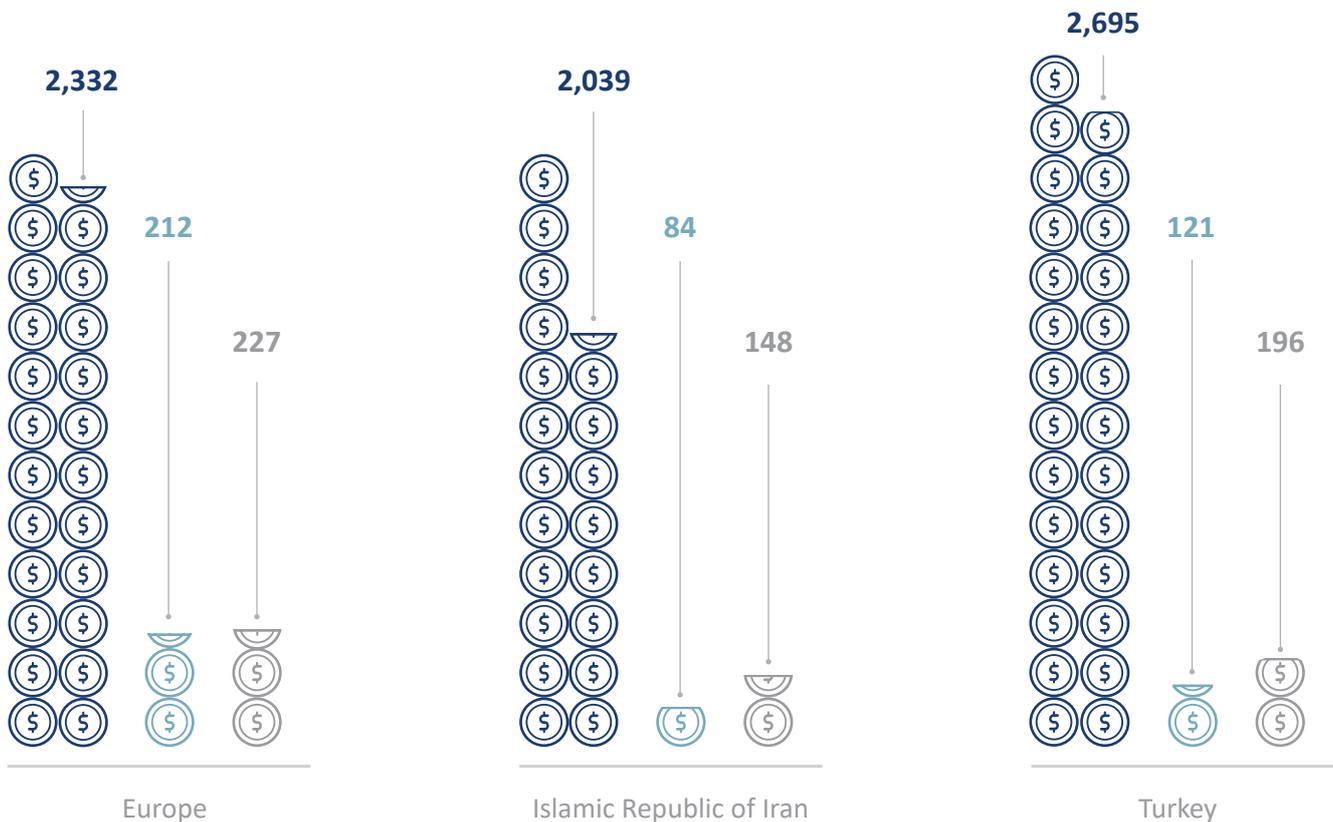
Respondents who were planning to migrate to Europe had the highest average monthly household income of USD 212 and the highest average monthly household expenditure of USD 227.

## GRAND TOTAL



1 = 100 USD

## DEBT, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE (BY DESTINATION)



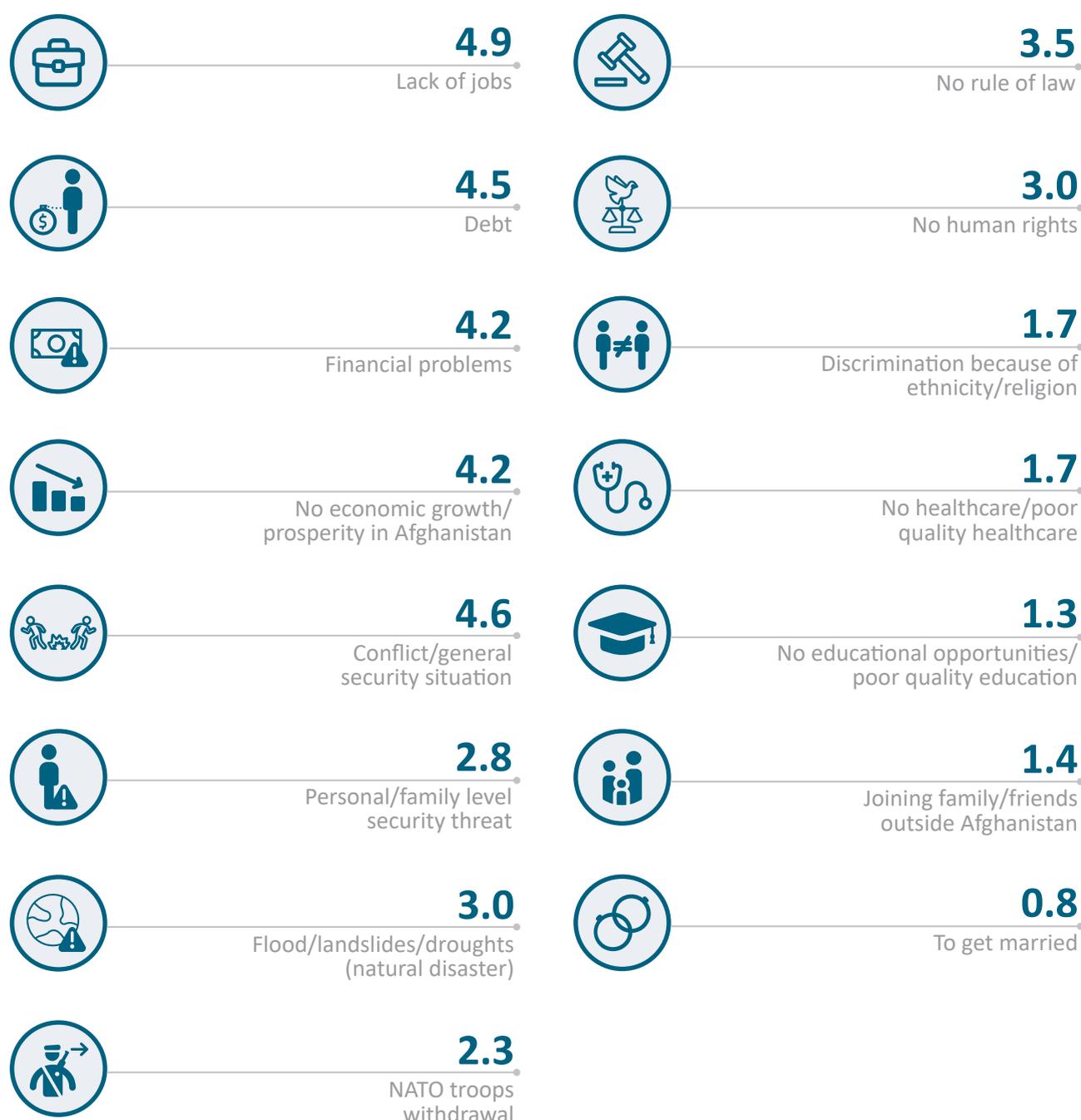
1 = 100 USD Legend: ■ Total debt ■ Monthly income ■ Monthly expenditure

<sup>2</sup>Data was originally collected in Afghan Afghani. The exchange rate was 1 AFN = 0.0125281 USD on 01 August 2021

## FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISION TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN

In the survey, respondents were also asked to rate the importance of various push factors in their decision to leave Afghanistan on a scale from zero to five (0= not applicable, 1= very unimportant, 2= unimportant, 3= slightly important, 4= important, 5= very important). On average, the factors that received the highest ratings, and were therefore of the highest significance, were: lack of jobs (4.9), conflict/general security situation (4.6) and debt (4.5). Other economic factors such as financial problems and the lack of country-level economic growth were also graded high at 4.2. This analysis demonstrates that while economic factors are a significant driver of Afghan migration, the presence of armed conflict and lack of security in the country are also a major incentives to leave Afghanistan. These economic conditions are consequences of prolonged conflict in the region, with decades of fighting resulting in not only insecurity, but also, limited opportunities for stable livelihoods and limited access to services such as healthcare and education. As such, the decision to leave Afghanistan is multifactorial and intersectional, and cannot be reduced to a single variable.

0=not applicable, 1=very unimportant 2=unimportant 3=slightly important, 4=important 5=very important



## FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISION TO CHOOSE A CERTAIN DESTINATION COUNTRY

Interviewees were then asked to rate the importance of various pull factors that impacted their decision to choose their intended destination on a scale from zero to five (0= not applicable, 1= very unimportant, 2= unimportant, 3= slightly important, 4= important, 5= very important). The corresponding visualisation has been disaggregated by country of destination in order to more easily demonstrate the differences in the incentives offered by each destination as envisioned by potential migrants.

For those planning to migrate to Europe, the most important pull factors were: to look for work/find a better livelihood (4.6), followed by obtaining the nationality of the destination country (4.0) and obtaining asylum/refugee status in the intended destination (3.4).

Alternatively, those intending to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey were mostly motivated by the opportunity to look for/find jobs (4.7 and 4.8 respectively) and to do actual work/earn an actual living (4.3 and 3.8 respectively).

Obtaining nationality or asylum/refugee status was more important for respondents who reported the intention to go to Turkey than they were for those planning to go to the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, it was not as important as for respondents who intended to go to Europe.

0=not applicable, 1=very unimportant 2=unimportant 3=slightly important, 4=important 5=very important

|     | To look for work/ livelihood opportunities | I was promised a job by someone in the destination | To do actual work/earn an actual living | To do business | To obtain the nationality of the destination | To obtain asylum/refugee status | To fight/be part of opposition group or government forces | To obtain education for myself | To obtain education for my children | To be with relatives who live in the destination | To join relatives who want to go to the destination | To get married |
|-----|--|--|---|----------------|--|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|----------------|
| TOT | 4.7  | 2.1  | 4.2                                     | 0.4            | 1.0  | 1.2                             | 0.4   | 0.6                            | 0.5                                 | 1.4  | 0.9   | 0.4            |
| EUR | 4.6  | 2.2  | 2.6                                     | 0.4            | 4.0  | 3.4                             | 0.3   | 2.1                            | 0.9                                 | 1.5  | 1.5   | 0.5            |
| IRN | 4.7  | 2.1  | 4.3                                     | 0.5            | 0.6  | 0.9                             | 0.4   | 0.4                            | 0.5                                 | 1.4  | 0.9   | 0.4            |
| TUR | 4.8  | 2.1  | 3.8                                     | 0.3            | 2.4  | 2.3                             | 0.3   | 1.0                            | 0.3                                 | 1.4  | 1.4   | 0.4            |

## ANNEX: III. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The key finding of SDM Round 3 is that, between April 2021 and August 2021, the decisions to leave Afghanistan and to choose a destination country revolved primarily around factors related to economic conditions and conflict within the country. Years of insecurity continued to reinforce an overall lack of economic growth and vice versa. Those leaving Afghanistan, therefore, were motivated by interlinked economic and security factors. Please note that these findings might be different after the August 2021 developments in the country.

The SDM Round 3 also focused on the travel arrangements, expected risks during the migration journey and mobility history of respondents. The findings from these data show variations between potential migrants depending on their intended destination, especially in regards to differences in the planning and expectations related to closer, more circular migration to the Islamic Republic of Iran and further, longer-term migration to Europe and Turkey.

### I.I DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES

The age demographic of interviewees skewed towards younger potential migrants, with 54 per cent of the total sample population between the ages of 16 and 24. On average, ninety-nine per cent of respondents were male and one per cent were female.

Overall, 42 per cent of interviewees had completed some form of education. However, the rates of education varied heavily when disaggregated by intended destination. Those who planned to migrate to Europe and Turkey saw much higher rates of education (85% and 62% respectively) than those intending to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran (37%).

Thirty-nine per cent of all interviewed potential migrants were unemployed at the time of interviewing, while 34 per cent were earning daily wages and 23 per cent were self-employed.

On average, interviewees had a total accumulated debt of USD 2,130, a monthly household income of USD 96 and a monthly household expenditure of USD 157. Interviewed potential migrants to Turkey had highest average accumulated level of debt of USD 2,695.

### I.II DRIVERS AND REASONS OF MIGRATION

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of several factors as they related to their decision to leave Afghanistan on a scale from zero to five. The factors that received the highest ratings, and were therefore of the highest significance, were: lack of jobs (4.9), conflict/general security situation (4.6), debt (4.5), financial problems (4.2) and a lack of country-level economic growth (4.2). This demonstrates how migration from Afghanistan is mainly fueled by economic conditions and security concerns, but that those factors are inextricably linked to one another through cause and effect.

In terms of decision-making and choice of destination, respondents cited finding a job/livelihood opportunities and doing actual work/earning an actual living across all intended destinations, earning average ratings of 4.7 and 4.2, respectively, among all respondents. Those who reported the intention to migrate to Europe and Turkey were also motivated by the possibility of obtaining their destination country's nationality or asylum/refugee status. This illustrates the divergence between longer-term, more permanent destinations and destinations more commonly associated with circular migration.

### I.III TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Most interviewees were planning to leave Afghanistan within the month of being interviewed (97%) and those who were not, were planning to leave in one to three months (3%).

When asked how long they planned to be abroad, clear differences emerged between respondents who reported the intention to go to Europe and Turkey and those intending to go to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Sixty-three per cent of interviewees who were planning to go to Europe intended to stay there forever, while 35 per cent of those planning to go to Turkey intended to stay for more than three years. Forty-six per cent of respondents who envisaged migrating to the Islamic Republic of Iran intended to stay there for one to three years.

Those planning to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey were more likely to be using a migration facilitator<sup>3</sup> (91% and 79%) than those planning to go to Europe (59%) at the time of interviewing. However, this data may be due to respondents being in different

<sup>3</sup> Migration facilitator: This term 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.



stages of preparation. When those who were not using a migration facilitator at the time of interviewing were asked if they eventually planned on using one for their journey, the majority of interviewed potential migrants to Europe, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey said yes (95%, 75% and 88%, respectively).

The decision to migrate was primarily an individual one, as 91 per cent of respondents reported that they had made the decision themselves. However, among female interviewees, this proportion was lowered to 59 per cent. While the majority of migration decisions were made individually, most respondents were receiving assistance on their journey from friends and family.

Estimated costs of the journey varied according to distance to the intended destination, with expected total journey costs to Europe being the highest at USD 6,850, followed by Turkey at USD 1,072 and the Islamic Republic of Iran at USD 288. At the time of interviewing, most interviewed Afghan nationals had not paid large shares of their migration costs; the average percentage already paid was 9 per cent.

Incurring debt was a popular method for paying for migration among all respondents (58%) as was borrowing from friends and family in Afghanistan (54%) and from a migration facilitator (37%). Interviewees who reported the intention to go to Europe were more likely to also borrow funds from friends and family in the destination (31%). In general, respondents used multiple combinations of payment methods to fund their migration journeys.

#### I.IV PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE JOURNEY

SDM Round 3 asked interviewees about their expectations regarding potential problems they might face during different stages of their migration journeys. Expectations regarding planning the journey were relatively homogenous across all respondents: the most primary concerns were incurring debt (86%) and a lack of funds (79%).

Respondents anticipated a wide range of potential problems to be encountered en route to their destinations, most commonly reporting concerns about deportation (93%), hunger/thirst (87%) and detention (83%). High shares of interviewees also reported a lack of shelter, robbery, car crashes, death, being physically beaten and financial extortion.

When asked about expected risks upon arrival to their destination, respondents most commonly reported fears of deportation (89%), detention (61%), racism/xenophobia (53%) and a lack of jobs (48%). Those who were planning to migrate to Europe and Turkey also reported concerns about rejection of asylum and not being able to obtain the destination country's nationality.

#### I.V MOBILITY HISTORY

In order to further understand the extent to which previous migration experiences play a role in shaping new mobility patterns, SDM Round 3 also asked about previous migration abroad and previous displacement. Sixty-eight per cent of migrants had attempted to migrate out of Afghanistan before, and 53 per cent had successfully completed the journey and returned to Afghanistan. Those who were planning to migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran had most commonly already migrated there (94%), implying that the country sees considerable re-migration from Afghanistan. Those who reported the intention to migrate to Europe and Turkey had most commonly already experienced migrating to the Islamic Republic of Iran (57% and 61%, respectively).

On average, thirty-three per cent of interviewees had been internally displaced before. Most respondents had been displaced once (58%) and had last been displaced in 2019 and 2020 (24% and 23% respectively). The average duration of displacement was 3.7 years. Respondents who reported the intention to migrate to Europe had the longest previous displacement, that had lasted on average 6.6 years.

## IV. REFERENCES

International Organization for Migration (2022). *Afghanistan - Survey on Drivers of Migration, Round 3*. (forthcoming)