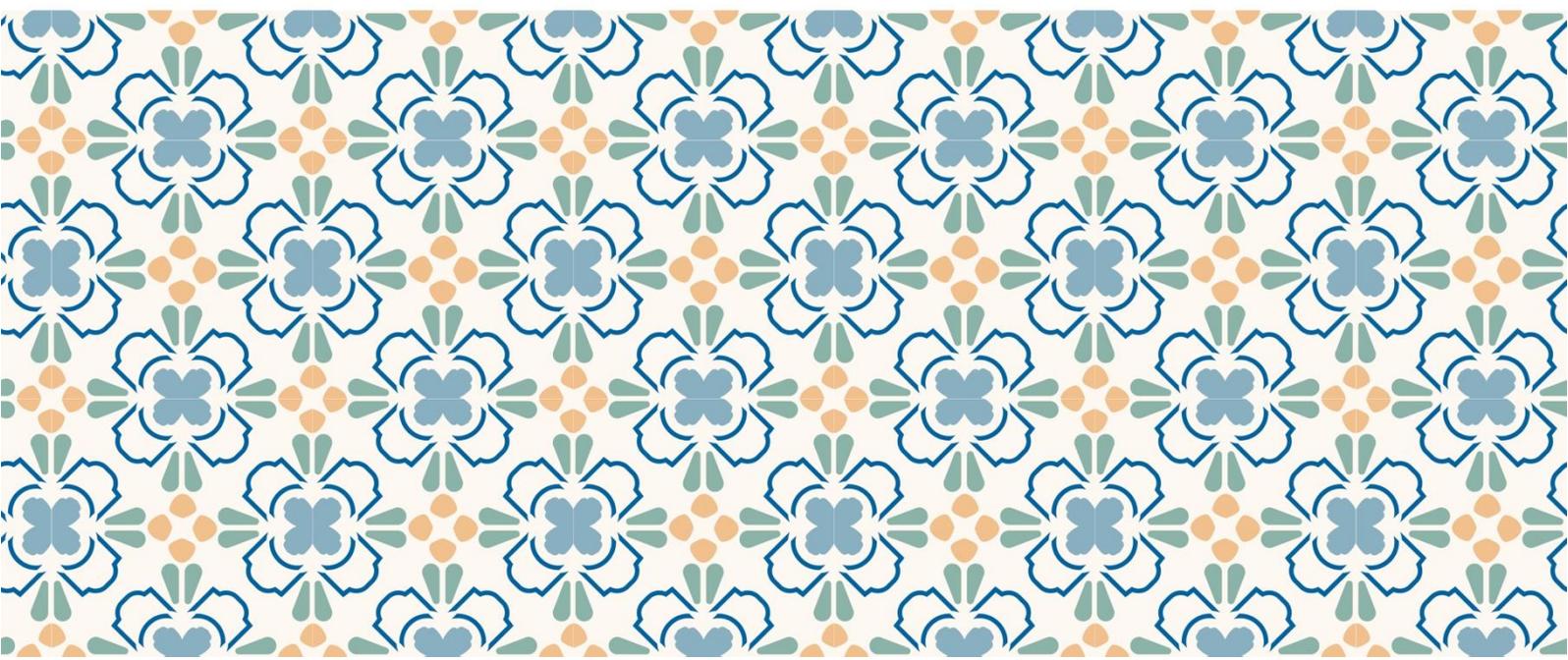


**MIRAMI**  
RAISING AWARENESS  
*on irregular migration in Iraq*

# Irregular pathways: Probing migration dynamics in Iraq and the significance of information campaigns

**Christina Khoury, Marco Mogiani, and João Reis**

Final Report – March 2024



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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Acronyms and abbreviations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>2 Contextual Overview</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	12
2.2 Migration from Iraq: patterns & trends .....	12
2.2.1 Current political factors affecting migration – patterns & trends .....	12
2.3 Policy and Institutional framework in Iraq .....	13
2.3.1 Local migration governance .....	13
2.3.2 Partnerships and cooperation .....	14
2.3.3 Engagement of international and local stakeholders in Iraq.....	15
<b>3 Methodology</b> .....	<b>18</b>
3.1 Research design and data collection .....	18
3.2 Ethical considerations .....	21
3.3 Limitation and challenges of the study .....	21
<b>4 Information and awareness raising measures</b> .....	<b>23</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	23
4.2 The security narrative .....	25
4.3 The humanitarian narrative .....	27
4.4 MRC’s work on the ground .....	28
4.5 Ethical and practical considerations for the campaign development.....	32
<b>5 Migrant profile</b> .....	<b>34</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	34
5.2 The migrant profile in focus .....	34
5.3 The migration desire: Intentions and influences.....	41
5.4 In anticipation: The migrant’s preparatory phase.....	56
5.5 Information confidence levels and risk awareness .....	63
<b>6 Messaging, messengers, and channels</b> .....	<b>71</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	71
6.2 Messaging .....	71
6.3 Messengers .....	75
6.4 Channels of communication and information .....	79
<b>7 Summary of findings and recommendations for the MIRAMI campaign</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>8 References</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>Annex 2 – Questionnaire</b> .....	<b>99</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Visual of the number of respondents in each Iraqi Governorate .....	19
Figure 2: Total number of people reached via social media channels .....	29
Figure 3: Engagement with the Migrant Resource Centre .....	30
Figure 4: Gender .....	35
Figure 5: Age groups .....	35
Figure 6: Ethno-religious groups .....	35
Figure 7: Governorate of origin .....	36
Figure 8: Educational attainment of the sample .....	36
Figure 9: Employment status .....	37
Figure 10: Distribution of respondents by simplified activeness in the labour market .....	38
Figure 11: Individual income of all sample .....	38
Figure 12: Countries of return .....	41
Figure 13: Reasons of return.....	41
Figure 14: Potential migration out of Iraq .....	42
Figure 15: Likelihood to migrate in the near future .....	43
Figure 16: Planned timing for migration.....	44
Figure 17: Likelihood of migration by gender.....	44
Figure 18: Male's intentions to migrate according to age.....	45
Figure 19: Reasons for delaying migration .....	45
Figure 20: Factors influencing migration decision.....	46
Figure 21: Factors influencing male's decisions to migrate by age and governorate .....	47
Figure 22: Factors influencing migration decision by governorate .....	48
Figure 23: Key Influencers in Decision-making .....	49
Figure 24: Considered country for migration .....	50
Figure 25: Reasons for choosing destination.....	50
Figure 26: Considering irregular migration.....	52
Figure 27: Considering irregular migration by governorate .....	52
Figure 28: Considering irregular migration by ability to finance it and source of information .....	53
Figure 29: Main factors for considering irregular migration .....	54
Figure 30: Intentions of irregular migration by access to information about migration.....	54
Figure 31: Main factors for considering irregular migration by source of information.....	54
Figure 32: Irregular migrant profile .....	55
Figure 33: Preparatory steps by likelihood of migration .....	57
Figure 34: Preparatory steps by likelihood of migration (age group below 30 years old) .....	57
Figure 35: Financial planning for migration .....	58
Figure 36: Financing sources of migration by individual income.....	59
Figure 37: Financial planning by likelihood of migrating and eligibility to migrate.....	60
Figure 38: Primary supporters in migration planning by type of support .....	61

Figure 39: Migration preparation challenges .....	62
Figure 40: Challenges in migration preparation by age group .....	62
Figure 41: Access to migration options.....	63
Figure 42: Confidence in information accuracy .....	64
Figure 43: Awareness of legal rights as a migrant .....	65
Figure 44: Lack of knowledge on migrant legal rights .....	65
Figure 45: Options for legal migration .....	66
Figure 46: Options individuals eligible to migrate .....	66
Figure 47: Options available to irregular migrants in the destination country .....	67
Figure 48: Familiarity with irregular migration risks.....	67
Figure 49: Knowledge on migration journey risks .....	68
Figure 50: Awareness of entities to contact when facing migration journey risks.....	68
Figure 51: Awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration.....	69
Figure 52: Intentions of irregular migration after knowledge of the risks .....	69
Figure 53: Intentions of irregular migration by self-reported eligibility to migrate legally.....	70
Figure 54: Information / Support needs .....	73
Figure 55: Type of information or support to make a more informed decision about migration.....	74
Figure 56: Aspects of migration encountered in campaigns .....	74
Figure 57: Key influencers and type of influence on migration intentions .....	76
Figure 58: Social networks in desired destination by likelihood to migrate.....	76
Figure 59: Source of migration planning support by employment status and age group .....	78
Figure 60: Sources of information about migration options .....	80
Figure 61: Sources of migration information by age group.....	80
Figure 62: Sources of migration information by level of awareness about migrants' legal rights .....	81
Figure 63: Sources of information by eligibility to migrate legally .....	82
Figure 64: Sources of information by familiarity with issues of irregular migration .....	83
Figure 65: Sources of migration news over the last year .....	84
Figure 66: Number of platforms used as sources of migration information .....	84
Figure 67: Effectiveness of campaign messages by communication methods.....	85
Figure 68: Social media popular channels in Iraq in 2023 .....	85

## List of Tables

Table 1: Number of people reached via social media.....	31
Table 2: Number of people reached via community / group outreach.....	31
Table 3: Likelihood of migrating in the near future by age group.....	39
Table 4: Preferred destination of future migration by country of return.....	51
Table 5: Preparatory steps of migration.....	56
Table 6: Key influencers in migration intentions and source of migration support.....	77
Table 7: Impact of migration information campaigns on potential migrants.....	86

## List of Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ARCP</b>	Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs
<b>BAMF</b>	The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
<b>CAPI</b>	Computer Assisted Personal Interviews
<b>CD4CD2</b>	Connecting Diaspora for Development 2
<b>CDO</b>	Civil Development Organisation
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>DG HOME</b>	European Commission Department of Migration and Home Affairs
<b>EJCC</b>	Erbil Joint Crisis Coordination Centre
<b>ETTC</b>	European Technology and Training Centre
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
<b>GSCoM</b>	General Secretariat for Council of Ministries
<b>ICMPD</b>	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and Communication Technologies
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IOM-DTM</b>	International Organization for Migration - Displacement Tracking Matrix
<b>JCC</b>	Joint Crisis Coordination Centre
<b>KRG</b>	Kurdistan Regional Government
<b>KRI</b>	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
<b>MCCs</b>	Migration Communication Campaigns
<b>MGI</b>	Migration Governance Indicator
<b>MoFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq
<b>MoLSA</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
<b>MoMD</b>	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MRC</b>	Migrant Resource Centre
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>NMS</b>	National Migration Strategy
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism
<b>RPI</b>	Reintegration Programme in Iraq
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>UNAMI</b>	The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>ZME</b>	Centres for Migration and Development

## Executive Summary

This study aims at providing a comprehensive overview of the research project conducted in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq between October 2023 and February 2024.

The survey was administered between December 2023 and January 2024, targeting 1,024 potential migrants (including IDPs) across the KRI governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah. The survey targeted both aspiring and intending migrants of Iraqi nationality.

### Main Findings

The surveyed demographic consists of young, educated individuals, often employed in service-related sectors. Notably, many live within multi-earner households, with a significant proportion being single. While the survey took place in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, a portion of respondents originate from federal Iraq.

Findings indicate that a considerable portion of respondents often think of migration, with some actively preparing for it. Young people, particularly in Dohuk and Erbil, show a higher inclination to migrate than those in Sulaymaniyah.

The primary drivers of migration among individuals are lack of economic opportunities and bad quality of life, followed by political instability and restricted personal freedoms. Younger respondents attribute their desire to migrate to the lack of economic opportunities.

In Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah, the leading drivers of migration are lack of economic opportunities and bad quality of life and well-being, while in Erbil concerns are more balanced across lack of economic opportunities, political instability, and unstable security conditions.

Family influence plays a significant role on migration decisions, often discouraging potential migrants from migrating. Contrastingly, friends both in Iraq and abroad, alongside community leaders, generally

encourage migration. These findings are consistent across various demographic analyses.

There is a distinct inclination towards Europe as a preferred destination. Germany, UK, and Canada are the most favoured countries. Primary motivations for selecting these destinations are the prospects of enhanced economic situation and a better quality of life. Interestingly, familial ties appear to be a less influential factor in destination choice. These pull factors align with the push factors for leaving Iraq.

Regarding information needs, the information on the cost of the migration journey is identified as the most valuable information, followed by legal migration processes and requirements, advice on how to assess the credibility of migration agents, as well as personal stories from migrants who have successfully followed legal pathways. Female respondents and older people give more value to such information than male and younger respondents. This finding highlights the significance of developing customised campaigns that cater to the unique information needs of various demographic sub-groups of potential migrants.

A significant majority of potential migrants have not taken any preparatory steps towards migration yet. Among those who have, gathering information on migration and contacting personal networks (friends and family) for assistance are the first steps. Those likely to migrate in the near future have a higher level of readiness compared to the others.

Timeline for preparatory steps varies, with the majority taking three to six months to complete them.

The majority of respondents plan to finance their migration using their personal savings, while sponsorship from parents or siblings emerge as the second most popular financing option, particularly among the younger age

cohort, reflecting a greater financial dependency. Conversely, selling houses and assets constitute significant funding sources for the older cohort.

Family and friends in Iraq and abroad emerge as a source of assistance. While family is the primary source of financial support, friends are the most substantial source of information. The biggest challenges faced during migration preparation are acquiring the necessary funds and obtaining a visa. Obtaining the required documents and navigating slow bureaucratic processes also emerge as issues. Finding a credible agent does not seem to be a relevant challenge.

The majority of respondents dismiss the idea of travelling without a valid passport and legal documents. Only a small portion of respondents indicate willingness to undertake such travel. Female respondents, on the other hand, express a firm rejection to migrate irregularly. Younger respondents are more open to undergo irregular migration. Those who are not able to finance the journey seem more willing to reject irregular migration.

Those who rely on family and friends are the least likely to consider irregular migration, while those who rely on TV and radio are more open to the idea. The two main significant reasons for choosing irregular migration are being quicker and cheaper.

With regard to access to information on migration, many respondents report partial access and moderate awareness of options. The majority feel moderately confident of the accuracy of the information they have. Social media and personal networks emerge as key sources of information, while MRCs and government websites are less trusted for their reliability, especially among the young cohort.

Moreover, respondents feel well-informed on their legal rights as migrants. The areas where

they lack information are asylum procedures, documentation, and legal status, as well as dealing with law enforcement.

Understanding of legal pathways varies: While only few respondents are not aware of any options, the majority believe to be eligible for work visa and humanitarian assistance. Younger respondents concentrate more on student visas, while the older cohort focuses on family reunification visas. A considerable percentage of respondents feel ineligible or are uncertain about their options.

Social inclusion, housing, and employment are perceived as the most accessible aspects in the destination country in the event of irregular migration. Conversely, asylum acceptance, unemployment benefits, and language learning are considered more difficult to achieve. Results indicate that services provided by or dependent on the government are more difficult to achieve than services gained through personal connections and efforts.

Family members in the destination country influence migration. The more frequent the contact with family is, the higher the influence and, in this case, the encouragement to migrate are.

Migration information primarily reaches the public through social media platforms, followed by family and friends, other migrants, and TV and radio. When inquiring about the most effective communication methods for delivering campaign messages, social media platforms remain the most popular channel, followed by TV and Radio.

Lastly, with regard to the impact of migration information campaigns, half of the respondents feel that campaigns discourage migration, while a smaller fraction feel that they do not have a significant impact. Very few respondents feel that they encourage migration.

# 1 Introduction

Iraq, a country with a rich history and diverse cultural heritage, has faced significant challenges in recent decades, including political instability, armed conflict, and economic hardship. The conflict against Iran in the 1980s, the Gulf War in 1990-1991, the 2003 US-led invasion of the country, the 2006-07 sectarian violence, and the conflict against ISIS have displaced millions of people, both within the country and internationally. Although many have managed to return to their places of origin or build a life abroad, others are still in displacement and, in some cases, planning to migrate abroad. Within this context, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has emerged as a relatively stable and prosperous region, attracting individuals from across Iraq and neighbouring countries seeking refuge, economic opportunities, and a better quality of life. However, the region also grapples with its own unique set of socio-economic and political issues, including internal displacement, ethnic tensions, and limited employment opportunities, prompting many Iraqis to leave their country.

For these reasons, the KRI represents a crucial place for understanding migration patterns and dynamics in the region. This research project seeks to contribute to the existing knowledge on migration in and from Iraq by providing empirical insights into the aspirations, concerns, perceived risk awareness and knowledge on migration, information needs, and decision-making processes of individuals contemplating migration, thereby informing the development of targeted interventions to support potential migrants in the region. A more nuanced, deeper understanding of the needs, knowledge, and perceptions of potential migrants contributes greatly to the design of effective migration information campaigns that address their concerns and empower them to make informed decisions on migration.

Against this background, the project *Migration information and awareness raising on the risks of irregular migration in Iraq* (MIRAMI) aims at creating and developing migration information campaigns to raise awareness among potential irregular migrants from Iraq about the risks and consequences of irregular migration and inform them about potential legal pathways or their rights in the countries of destination. In doing so, the overall project shall contribute to (1) increased safe legal migration from Iraq, (2) reduced irregular migration from Iraq and (3) improved access to information, thus providing concrete support to potential Iraqi migrants. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this research offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics of migration in the region and lays the groundwork for the development and implementation of targeted migration information campaigns.

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the research conducted in the KRI between October 2023 and February 2024. It analyses the results of the current research in light of existing research on the topic as well as of ICMPD's practical experience in migration awareness campaigns. Besides, it brings together the relevant findings and lessons from different research strands that have been conducted since the beginning of the MIRAMI Project, namely the background research, the returnee report, and the qualitative and quantitative research conducted in the field. In doing so, the report attempts to grasp and understand the information needs, risk awareness, and preparation levels of potential migrants in Iraq, thus informing the campaign design during the following steps and enriching ICMPD work on the ground.

The primary target group of the project – and main beneficiary of the campaign – is, therefore, potential migrants in Iraq. As emerged from field research, the profile of potential migrants in the KRI is similar to that of other potential migrants.<sup>1</sup> In line with other empirical findings,<sup>2</sup> our research

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<sup>1</sup> REACH, 'Iraqi Migration to Europe in 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return' (Geneva, June 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Maybritt Jill Alpes and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, 'Migration Risk Campaigns Are Based on Wrong Assumptions' (Copenhagen, 2015); Djamila Schans and Caitlin Optekamp, 'Raising Awareness, Changing Behavior? Combatting Irregular Migration through Information Campaigns' (Amsterdam, 2016), [https://www.eerstekamer.nl/overig/20170328/raising\\_awareness\\_changing](https://www.eerstekamer.nl/overig/20170328/raising_awareness_changing).

reveals that potential migrants tend to believe that they have good or enough information on the migration process in general as well as on the specific situation at the intended countries of destination. Family and friends abroad or within their own community are usually perceived to be the most reliable and trustworthy sources of information, although the literature has shown that the information they share might overlook the risks and challenges of irregular migration and overemphasise the socio-economic conditions in the countries of destination. For this reason, migration information and awareness raising campaigns can provide useful and reliable information on migration, guiding or supporting potential migrants in their decision-making process.

This report is organised as follows: After the introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of migration intentions and aspirations, shedding light on the underlying motivations and desires propelling individuals towards migration, while also analysing the prevailing migration patterns and trends within the Iraqi context. Additionally, the chapter provides a summary of the previously discussed insights outlined in an earlier Background Report and integrates any emergent trends or developments observed since its publication and up to the present time. Moving forward, Chapter 3 thoroughly outlines the methodology and research design employed in the study, providing insights into the systematic approach adopted to collect and analyse relevant data. In Chapter 4, attention is directed towards analysing information and awareness-raising measures on migration, highlighting the strategies employed to disseminate crucial information and enhance awareness among potential migrants. Chapter 5 is dedicated to an in-depth examination of migrant profiles, meticulously examining their demographic characteristics, the barriers or facilitators influencing migration decisions, structural drivers shaping migration from Iraq, as well as the levels of risk awareness and confidence prevalent among potential migrants. Chapter 6 focuses on the intricate dynamics of messaging, messengers, and communication channels utilised in the context of migration from Iraq, analysing their effectiveness and impact on potential migrants. Finally, Chapter 7 draws conclusions based on key findings, as well as actionable recommendations aimed at advocating for a comprehensive approach to designing information and awareness-raising campaigns for potential migrants.

## 2 Contextual Overview

### 2.1 Introduction

This section explores the main migration patterns and trends from Iraq. By closely examining the contemporary political factors influencing migration, we aim to provide insights into the complex interplay between socio-political dynamics and migration flows. Moreover, our analysis delves into the policy and institutional framework within Iraq, shedding light on the regulatory landscape and administrative structures that shape migration processes. Through this in-depth exploration, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted aspects surrounding migration from Iraq.

### 2.2 Migration from Iraq: patterns & trends

Migration dynamics in Iraq present a complex scenario shaped by a myriad of push and pull factors, including successive waves of conflict, socio-economic challenges, and climate change.<sup>3</sup> The Background Report charted the main characteristics, trends, and patterns of migration within, from, and to Iraq, in order to offer a clear understanding of the main migration dynamics and factors in the country, as well as to lay the foundations for the design and implementation of quantitative and qualitative research in the field.<sup>4</sup> The report focuses particularly on the period since the defeat of ISIS in December 2017, during which Iraq has witnessed relative stability, economic improvements in certain regions, and the return of displaced individuals to their homes. However, unemployment, political uncertainty, and a desire for freedom continued to propel young people out of the country, often in an irregular way due to the lack of legal migration pathways. The KRI, though relatively stable, has also experienced emigration due to economic and political instability. Demographic trends, marked by a significant increase in the working-age population and high youth unemployment, have intensified migration pressures. Nevertheless, there has been limited research focusing on Iraqi emigration trends. The subsequent section will delve deeper into the current contemporary political factors influencing migration decisions as well as economic and environmental drivers of migration.

#### 2.2.1 *Current political factors affecting migration – patterns & trends*

The trends and patterns of migration from Iraq have been significantly influenced by various factors over the years, including conflict, economic instability, and environmental challenges. Migration from northern Iraq is predominantly driven by conflict, while that from southern Iraq migration tends to be linked to economic and environmental factors such as the decrease of arable land due to desertification, salinisation, and water scarcity. The situation in Iraq remains precarious for civilians, with thousands being displaced by violence and persecution, making refuge both internally and in neighbouring countries increasingly difficult.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of 2024, Iraq continues to face a number of challenges due to a complicated political landscape, volatile security situation, as well as protracted humanitarian and development needs.<sup>6</sup> Despite the end of the conflict with ISIS, the humanitarian situation remains dire, characterised by general instability, protracted internal displacement, and lack or poor quality of public services. As a

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<sup>3</sup> IOM. "IOM Strategy for Iraq (2022–2024)." Baghdad: International Organization for Migration, 2022. [https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/documents/Future%20-%20IOM%20Iraq%20Strategy%20%282022-24%29\\_0.pdf](https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/documents/Future%20-%20IOM%20Iraq%20Strategy%20%282022-24%29_0.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Mogiani, Marco. "Displacement, Emigration, and Return: Understanding Migration Dynamics and Patterns within, to, and from Iraq." MIRAMI Background Report. ICMPD, 2023, unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> IOM, "Government of Iraq and IOM Share Findings of First Ever Nationwide Migration Profile [AR]" (International Organization for Migration, 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/government-iraq-and-iom-share-findings-first-ever-nationwide-migration-profile-enarku>.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, "Iraq Situation - Global Focus" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023), <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/iraq-situation>.

result of years of violent conflict, Iraq continues to face a multitude of challenges on both humanitarian and structural levels, including displacements of populations, social and economic dysfunctions, and unresolved tensions and grievances.<sup>7</sup> Humanitarian and protection needs remain significant across the country, as indicated by the latest figures from the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). DTM data also show that more than 4.8 million individuals have returned to their areas of origin (mainly Ninewa, Anbar, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Baghdad), among whom more than 600,000 live in locations with particularly challenging conditions. Around 1.3 million IDPs are mainly located in Ninewa, Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Anbar, among whom more than 160,000 live in camps.<sup>8</sup>

A combination of complex challenges impedes the return and effective local integration of many individuals, particularly in terms of accessing basic public services. Marginalised groups, including women, girls, and individuals with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to increased security and protection risks due to various barriers. These obstacles may include traumas resulting from conflicts, stigmatisation and social norms, harassment, and limited livelihood opportunities. Risks include exploitation and abuse, trafficking in persons, economic insecurity, and inadequate access to essential public services such as health care and education. In addition, many face mobility restrictions due to a lack of civil documentation.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.3 Policy and Institutional framework in Iraq

### 2.3.1 Local migration governance

Since the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime in 2003, Iraq's demographic and political landscape has undergone a significant shift. Previously perceived as predominantly Sunni Arab in its identity, the power dynamics in Iraq have seen a transition towards a Shia-Kurdish alliance. This realignment has led to the political and social marginalisation of Sunni Arab communities, altering the fabric of Iraq's national identity and its sectarian and ethnic power balance.<sup>10</sup>

The current state of governance in Iraq presents a complex picture marked by on-going challenges and developments. The governance structure in Iraq is characterised by efforts towards democratisation and stability, as evidenced by the provincial council elections held in December 2023, the first since 2013. These elections saw a dominant performance by a coalition of Shi'a political parties known as the Coordination Framework, which supports the current government. In the KRI, the political landscape has been marked by delays and uncertainties surrounding parliamentary elections. Initially scheduled for October 2022, the elections were postponed due to disagreements between the two major Kurdish political parties and subsequent legal disputes. Although a new date was set for February 2024, the Independent Electoral High Commission informed the KRG of its inability to conduct elections on this date, leading to further postponements.<sup>11</sup>

The inclusion of minorities in Iraq's democratic system is a critical yet complex task. The country's religious diversity and historical minority communities such as Yazidis, Christians, and others, face significant challenges, including violent attacks, displacement, and economic struggles. Strengthening minority representation in government is essential for addressing these issues. Nonetheless, in the

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<sup>7</sup> IOM, "Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2024" (Baghdad: International Organization for Migration, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> IOM DTM-Iraq, 'IRAQ DTM', 2024, <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/>.

<sup>9</sup> IOM, 'Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2024'.

<sup>10</sup> Mathieu Margaux, "The Role of Ethno-Confessional Factors and Their Impact on Iraqi Instability from 2003 to the Present Day" (Centre Français de recherche sur l'Irak, 2024), <https://cfri-irak.com/en/article/the-role-of-ethno-confessional-factors-and-their-impact-on-iraqi-instability-from-2003-to-the-present-day-2024-03-01>.

<sup>11</sup> Security Council Report, 'Monthly Forecast', 2024, [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/2024\\_02\\_forecast.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/2024_02_forecast.pdf).

2021 elections, larger factions took advantage of the new electoral law to secure control over minority seats, thereby diminishing the ability of smaller communities to select their representatives.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding migration policies and challenges, Iraq experiences notable pressure due to internal displacement and the return of refugees and IDPs. The country is encouraged to find durable solutions for IDPs and to address the humanitarian needs of returnees and repatriates from camps. Support by the international community is deemed essential for Iraq to effectively manage these challenges.

At the national level, several measures have been taken to address migration. In 2019, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) developed the National Policy for the Involvement of Iraqis abroad in National development, which has, however, not yet been approved. In 2020, the Iraqi government in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) undertook an assessment known as the Migration Governance Indicator (MGI). This assessment examined 90 facets of Iraq's national capacity for managing migration, adhering to international reference standards across six key areas. The assessment underlined both strengths and areas requiring enhancement within Iraq's migration management framework. Subsequently, these findings led to the establishment of a Technical Working Group encompassing various ministries and officials from the KRG, and the development of a National Migration Strategy (NMS). While the MoMD internally approved this strategy, it awaits further ratification from the Prime Minister's Office.<sup>13</sup>

### *2.3.2 Partnerships and cooperation*

Iraq has been actively engaged in regional consultative processes regarding migration, including participation in the Bali Process since 2002, the Budapest Process since 2010, and the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP) since 2015. In 2019, Iraq, along with other countries, endorsed the Istanbul Commitments on the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration, focusing on key areas such as regular migration, labour market assessments, and student mobility. Furthermore, the Government incorporated migration-related matters into cooperation agreements with Finland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Norway in 2021, as well as a similar agreement with Sweden in 2022. Additionally, informal cooperation arrangements on migration have been established with Syria and Türkiye in 2021.<sup>14</sup> Within the Budapest Process, Iraq co-chairs - with Bulgaria - a Committee on Law Enforcement Cooperation, since 2023.

At the international level, Iraq has received support and acknowledgment for its efforts towards stability and reform. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and various countries have recognised Iraq's commitment to improving public services, pursuing economic diversification, and addressing humanitarian needs. However, concerns remain regarding the continued attacks by non-State armed groups and the regional spillover of conflicts, which threaten Iraq's progress.<sup>15</sup> The EU has been a longstanding partner to Iraq in its migration efforts, particularly regarding the implementation of the NMS and compliance to the UN Global Compact for Migration. The EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (2012) outlined the aim for a comprehensive dialogue on migration-related issues, including 'illegal migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human

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<sup>12</sup> Knox Thames and Sarhang Hamasaeed, "A New Test for Iraq's Democracy and Stability," United States Institute of Peace (blog), March 7, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/new-test-iraqs-democracy-and-stability>.

<sup>13</sup> Christina Khoury and Marco Mogiani, "Engaging Return Migrants in Information Campaigns in Iraq Challenges, Reintegration, and Prospects," MIRAMI Returnee Report (Vienna: ICMPD, 2024), unpublished.

<sup>14</sup> IOM, "Migration Governance Indicators Second Profile 2023 – Republic of Iraq" (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2023), <https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-governance-indicators-second-profile-2023-republic-iraq>.

<sup>15</sup> UNSC, "Restraint Crucial to Preserve Hard-Won Stability, Achieve Durable Progress in Iraq, Top UN Official Tells Security Council, Amid US Air Strikes, Ongoing Gaza Conflict" (United Nations Security Council, February 6, 2024), <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/restraint-crucial-preserve-hard-won-stability-achieve-durable-progress-iraq-top-un-official-tells-security-council-amid-us-air-strikes-ongoing-gaza-conflict>.

beings as well as the inclusion of the migration concerns in the national strategies for economic and social development' (article 105).<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the collaboration between Austria and Iraq on migration matters has intensified since the opening of the Austrian Embassy in Baghdad in September 2023, with a focus on intensified information exchange related to combating cross-border crime, including human trafficking, return and reintegration assistance, and awareness-raising on the risks of irregular migration.<sup>17</sup> Iraq is party to several international agreements on migration. In 2021, the MoMD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNDP to support the return and reintegration of displaced people and an enabling environment for stabilisation in Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.3.3 Engagement of international and local stakeholders in Iraq

Irregular migration has spurred significant engagement in Iraq from both international organisations and local stakeholders over the years. The complex phenomenon of irregularity<sup>19</sup> has prompted collaboration efforts aimed to understand the underlying factors and devise effective strategies for addressing it. The IOM actively worked in preparation for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) Regional Review Conference that took place in 2021. They organised a one-day National Outreach Event, gathering 21 representatives of non-government GCM stakeholders from 18 different organisations. Collectively, they agreed that drivers of migration from Iraq include economic conditions as well as political and security issues. Moreover, stakeholders called for Iraq to further develop the rule of law and join binding international agreements, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the ILO 1958 Discrimination Convention in order to better protect migrants in Iraq. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of efficient, community-oriented, and protection-based border management processes and adequate facilities.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Irregular migration situation in Iraq*

Engaging in interviews with stakeholders provided a nuanced perspective on the state of irregular migration in Iraq. One recurring theme was the challenging environment and the living conditions of the youth in KRI, where irregular migration is perceived to be increasing. This sentiment is observed in the whole of Iraq, where the situation is impacting its youth population due to economic instability, displacement, and on-going conflict. As one stakeholder put it:

*'Iraq is always facing a crisis and especially the youth are bearing a disproportionate burden. With all the conflict and displacement that have happened in the past, there is a protracted economic crisis that leaves the young increasingly hopeless and frustrated. Tens of thousands of Iraqis are deciding to leave their home country, despite the logistical difficulties and the risk to their lives. They know*

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<sup>16</sup> European Union, "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Its Member States, of the One Part, and the Republic of Iraq, of the Other Part" (Official Journal of the European Union, July 31, 2012), [http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree\\_internation/2012/418/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2012/418/oj).

<sup>17</sup> BMEIA, "Successes of Austrian-Iraqi Cooperation Against Illegal Migration" (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, 2024), <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/ministerium/presse/aktuelles/2024/01/successes-of-austrian-iraqi-cooperation-against-illegal-migration>.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, 'Minister of Migration and Displaced and UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Sign MoU on Community Reintegration at Anbar Interfaith Religious Conference', 2021, <https://www.undp.org/iraq/press-releases/minister-migration-and-displaced-and-undp-iraq-resident-representative-sign-mou-community-reintegration-anbar-interfaith>.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Triandafyllidou and Laura Bartolini, "Understanding Irregularity," in *Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe*, ed. Anna Triandafyllidou and Sarah Spencer (New York: Springer, 2020), 11–31, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34324-8\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34324-8_2).

<sup>20</sup> Migration Network, "Global Compact for Migration Iraq National Stakeholder Outreach Event Report," 2021, [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1416/files/docs/gcm\\_iraq\\_national\\_stakeholder\\_outreach\\_event\\_report.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1416/files/docs/gcm_iraq_national_stakeholder_outreach_event_report.pdf).

*about this. Many made it to Europe after weeks of journey. Based on how we see the situation, illegal immigration is still continuous in spite of all the focus on transition and development in all sectors of NGOs.’ (LUTKA, 2024).*

However, despite the difficulties and risks associated with irregular migration, a significant number of Iraqis, especially among the Yazidi community, are forced to leave, with return often deemed impossible due to security reasons in their areas of origin. As another stakeholder highlighted:

*‘It [irregular migration] has definitely increased among the Yazidi community because they have been living in IDP camps and their area of origin (Sinjar/Shingal) is still not safe due to various armed groups there that make return impossible.’ (Yazda, 2024).*

Other stakeholders claimed that irregular migration has been increasing, driven by aspirations for either family re-unification visas in Europe or encouragement from relatives abroad. The decrease in support from governmental and non-governmental sources might also contribute to a sense of being let down, further encouraging irregular migration.

*‘[Border crossing out of Iraq] has increased. Yeah, more than before because of the situation in Kurdistan and in Iraq generally, you know. Many people are jobless. Some travellers when they mention Europe, they say they will try to get to Italy, for example, because they can move to another country easily. I think Germany and The Netherlands are where most people want to go.’ (IOM, 2024).*

*‘Irregular migration is increasing actually, because there are many families here working on the documentation to process the family reunification visa with their relatives in Europe. I can’t stop them because we promised them that there will be more support for them here year by year, either by the government or by NGOs. In fact, support started decreasing while at the same time people is asking for more help.’ (Um al Noor Church of Ankawa, 2024).*

*‘In Sulaimani it [irregular migration] is increasing because many people here have many relatives and friends who are living in Europe. These relatives abroad encourage the people here to leave. So, it keeps increasing and more illegally because it is the fastest way to leave.’ (Haji Osman Alaf Mosque, 2024).*

Interestingly, there were different views from the stakeholders regarding the trajectory of irregular migration, with some participants indicating a perception of increasing trends, while others understanding it as a decreasing phenomenon. The decreasing shift is attributed to a growing realisation among those individuals that seeking economic opportunities in Iraq may be more preferable than engaging in irregular migration, despite all the challenges. The impact of past migration experiences, such as witnessing deaths during migration attempts, and demographic shifts, particularly the mass migration of certain religious groups, might also play a role in negatively shaping migration decisions.

*‘I feel it is decreasing because people realise now that, if they stay here and find a job and keep trying, this is better than wasting time in illegal stuff.’ (Five one Labs, 2024).*

*‘For now, we can say it is decreasing because we have witnessed many death cases of people migrating irregularly. This has impacted people’s decisions. The other reason, specifically for Mosul, is that the majority of Christians and Yazidis have already migrated in large quantities and left Mosul, so there’s not many left now and those who have stayed will stay.’ (Al-Tahreer Association for Development, 2024).*

Stakeholders’ interviews were crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of their operational activities, their collaborative partners, and related aspect of their on-the-groundwork. This overview is beneficial to either identify the gaps in service provision or identify the stakeholders that can be leveraged for the migration information campaigns. The types of activities and services varied among the stakeholders, with mostly being involved in empowerment and support for vulnerable groups (including refugees, IDPs, youth, women), providing services and facilitating them

in finding job opportunities. Religious leaders tend to play an important role in sensitising and informing community members, thus representing crucial actors in the discussion on (irregular) migration.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, interviews were conducted with Christian and Muslim leaders in Ankawa and Sulaymaniyah. They emphasised their role in guiding and advising individuals amidst challenging circumstance, by providing support and discouraging people from migrating to Europe or the USA.

*‘As a church, our role is to advice people not to leave for Europe or America. Our focus is on Christian IDPs that were planning to leave and migrate to Europe. Some families have stayed and decided to rent houses or live in small cabins funded by the church here in the neighbourhood until the situation gets better in their place of origin, such as Bashiqa and Mosul. Then they can return there.’* (Um Al Noor, Church of Ankawa, 2024).

*‘As mosque and religious leaders, our role is mainly to talk to people through our speeches on Fridays. Sometimes we touch the topic of illegal migration.’* (Haji Osman Alaf Mosque, 2024).

Such leaders leverage their platforms to discuss these issues, and their collective goals is to raise awareness among the youth about the risks associated with irregular migration and empower them to make informed decisions about their futures. Furthermore, local NGOs have also had a significant role in assisting community members, providing training sessions on CV writing skills as well as informative sessions on migration. Other stakeholders were involved in protection and gender-based violence, offering legal assistance. An interesting initiative by the local NGO ‘The House of Coexistence’ called the Sinjar Open Space Dialogue<sup>22</sup> offers a platform to engage with the youth, offering the space to advocate for various issues, including migration. This organisation facilitates dialogue, raises awareness, and gathers perspectives on migration issues and other topics that are of relevance to the community. This approach aims at empowering the youth to voice their concerns and collaborate on solutions, and hence, committing to address the issue of migration and replacing it with initiatives led by the community. Overall, local organisations working on migration related issues focused particularly on awareness sessions about migration risks, youth empowerment, civic engagement, and community development. They collaborate with various governmental entities and international organisations to implement projects aimed at raising awareness about irregular migration. Moreover, they also provide support to displaced populations, promoting peace and cooperation among different ethno-religious groups.

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<sup>21</sup> IOM Ethiopia, “IOM Organizes a Consultative Meeting with Religious Leaders on Irregular Migration” (International Organization for Migration, 2015), <https://ethiopia.iom.int/news/iom-organizes-consultative-meeting-religious-leaders-irregular-migration>.

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/SinjarOpenSpace/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/SinjarOpenSpace/?_rdr)

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research design and data collection

The research component of the MIRAMI Project encompasses four distinct research strands, namely, the background research the main migration drivers in the country, the survey on needs, ambitions, aspirations, and decision-making processes of potential migrants, the mapping and interviewing of relevant stakeholder active in the field of migration, and the validation meetings. These research strands, which employ both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, contribute to the findings of this Final Report and provide essential insights crucial for the development of improved migration information campaigns.

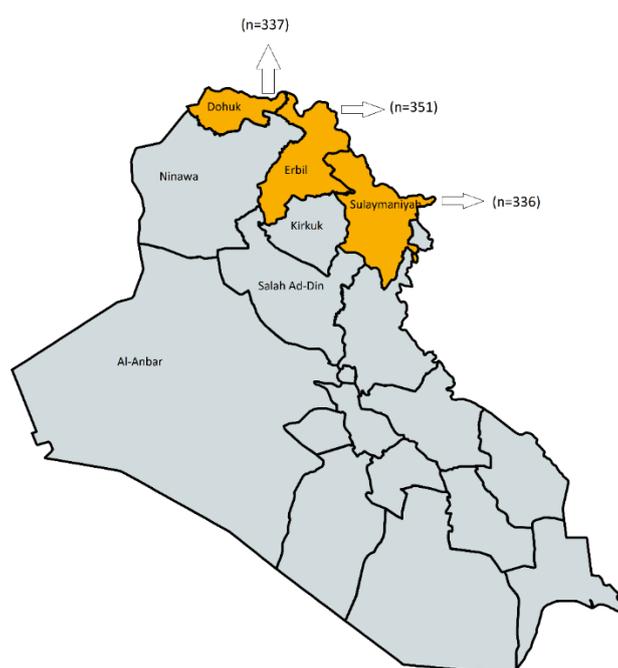
By analysing these research strands, we can gain insights into the various factors that influence migration decisions among potential Iraqi migrants and better understand their information needs. Additionally, we can pinpoint influential communicators to support effective dissemination of information and explore the preferred channels to reach migrants, thereby improving the quality and impact of information provided. Below, we delve into each of the four research strands in greater detail.

**Background research:** In the first months, an extensive background research was conducted to establish a solid groundwork for the empirical research. The Background Report aimed at addressing three primary objectives: i) Providing a conceptual framework for the implementation of the research, in order to define the main target group of the project and outline the main characteristics and challenges associated with such definition; ii) Examining the main migration trends and patterns in light of the main historical developments of the country, including the driving forces influencing the migration decisions of Iraqis both within the country and at the international level; iii) Exploring the significance of migration information campaigns targeting migrants in countries of origin and evaluating the design and effectiveness of such campaigns in order to extract insights for future campaign strategies. The selection of the study region – the KRI – was confirmed by the groundwork established in the background research. In particular, the empirical research focused on three of the four governorates in the KRI, i.e., Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Dohuk.

**Survey:** The survey constitutes the empirical basis for the future implementation of the campaign. It aimed at identifying the information needs and gaps among potential (irregular) Iraqi migrants, including their migration intentions, risk awareness and confidence levels, preparation levels, key influencers, and preferred communication channels for effective dissemination of migration-related information.

The survey was administered by Social Inquiry, a local research organisation with extensive experience in conducting research in the region and widespread knowledge of the main migration dynamics in the country. The survey was conducted among potential migrants across the KRI governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah (see Figure 1). This region for implementing the MIRAMI survey was determined by the background research conducted previously by ICMPD, in which the respondents were much more likely to express a desire to migrate compared to respondents from the central and southern governorates of the country. The survey aimed at covering 1,000 respondents, comprising 250 respondents from each governorate as well as 250 IDPs across the KRI. Ultimately, 1,024 respondents were identified, in particular 257 respondents in Erbil governorate, 275 in Sulaymaniyah governorate, 243 in Dohuk governorate, and 249 IDPs across the KRI. Despite slight variations in respondent numbers among different governorates, such differences do not affect the statistical comparability between them.

Figure 1: Visual of the number of respondents in each Iraqi Governorate



Source: Authors' elaboration using mapchart.net

The survey targeted potential Iraqi migrants aged 18 or above. This definition includes both 'aspiring' and 'intending' migrants, that is, adults who either possess a desire or a concrete plan to migrate abroad.<sup>23</sup> In order to proceed with the questionnaire, respondents had to affirm their Iraqi nationality and their intention to migrate. Data collection was based on convenience sampling across target locations, a non-random sampling technique that allows to select respondents based on their immediate availability or reachability.<sup>24</sup> Respondents were indeed approached in the street, in public places, and, in some cases, in their houses. Apart from their nationality and intention to migrate, no other exclusion factor or quota in terms of gender or age was applied. However, particular attention was dedicated to diversifying the sample as much as possible, particularly in terms of gender. The final profile derived from the surveyed population tended to align with the anticipated profile of a potential migrant, as indicated by the Background Report and existing research, specifically, a relatively educated young male individual.

The survey questionnaire was designed by ICMPD with active inputs from both Social Inquiry and ICMPD colleagues in the field to ensure it resonated with local nuances. Initially drafted in English, it was later translated into Arabic and Kurdish to ensure accessibility to all relevant individuals. Emphasis was placed on training and selecting enumerators with community ties, local knowledge, and who shared the same language of respondents, in order to enhance data accuracy. Enumerators underwent extensive training sessions in each of the three governorates on the sampling technique and survey tools and protocols. Subsequently, they conducted face-to-face interviews in both urban centres and rural areas over a four-week period spanning December 2023 to January 2024 employing the Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) method. Prior to widespread deployment, the translated questionnaire underwent successful pilot testing, ensuring its efficacy in capturing relevant data.

<sup>23</sup> Katharina Hahn-Schaur, *Awareness Raising and Information Campaigns on the Risks of Irregular Migration from Pakistan: Background Report* (Vienna: ICMPD, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> William Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Pearson, 2009).

When analysing and interpreting data presented in this report, it is essential to note that the sum of percentages may not necessarily equate to 100%, especially in multiple choice questions. Instead, each percentage should be understood as the proportion of respondents who consider a particular factor significant in their decision-making process. This is why we decided to design the survey question with multiple choice, acknowledging that migrants seldom leave their places of origin due to a single reason, rather, the drivers of migration are typically numerous and interlinked.

The analytical approach conducted by ICMPD involved multiple cross-tabulations and visual elements spanning diverse dimensions, including demographics, drivers of migration, social and support networks, preparation levels for migration, risk perception and confidence levels, pre-migration knowledge acquisition, preference for channels disseminating migration-related information, sources of migration information, engagement with MRCs, and the perceived usefulness derived from such interactions. The analysis predominantly used Microsoft Excel software, in particular through Pivot Tables.

Survey respondents were categorised into four distinct age groups 18-25, 26-34, 35-49, and 50-65. This age categorisation was selected due to its common usage in comparable research, with 65 years old representing the upper limit of age among our respondents. The survey company has also employed a further age division into two groups, those below 30 years of age (constituting 68% of the whole sample) and those who are 30 years and older.

**Stakeholder mapping and key informant interviews:** In combination with the survey, a detailed mapping was conducted to identify pertinent stakeholders in Iraq dealing with potential migrants, returnees, or IDPs, along with those who could potentially serve as campaign partners. In total, the mapping identified 59 stakeholders across the whole Iraq, with particular focus on the three main governorates of the KRI as well as in Baghdad. The stakeholders represent a spectrum of actors at the district, provincial, and national levels, including governmental bodies, international organisations, NGOs, travel agencies, and specialised consultants. Out of the identified stakeholders, fifteen were approached for in-depth interviews aimed at understanding the scope of their work and drawing their insights on drivers of migration from Iraq. These stakeholders are actively engaged in providing support to Iraqi migrants, offering a range of services such as humanitarian aid, educational assistance, legal guidance, and employment opportunities. The qualitative information obtained proved invaluable in contextualising and validating the findings of the survey.

**Validation meetings:** Two Validation Meetings with Consortium Partners and National Stakeholders were conducted on 6 and 7 March 2024, respectively. The purpose of the Validation Meetings was to present results, gather further insights from relevant stakeholders, and attain their validation of preliminary findings. The first Validation Meeting with the Consortium Partners for MIRAMI took place on 6 March 2024, online. All consortium partners attended the Validation meeting, namely the European Commission Department of Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), the Ministry of Interior of Austria, the Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, and ICMPD, represented by the Regional Coordination Office for the Silk Routes and the Research Unit.

The second Validation Meeting with Iraqi Stakeholders took place on 7 March 2024, online. The meeting saw the participation of Iraqi counterparts active in the area of migration and related service provision, both from civil society and at the governmental level, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) of the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Ministry of Planning (MoP), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) of the Central Government, the Civil Development Organisation (CDO), the RPD, the General Secretariat For Council of Ministries (GSCoM), the Iraqi Civil Aviation Authority, the International Centre for Training and Development, the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC), the Rwanda Foundation, the European Technology and Training Centre (ETTC), and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC).

The meeting was facilitated by the MIRAMI Project Manager and two ICMPD Researchers who led the implementation of specific research-related deliverables. Subsequent discussions delved into the specificity of the findings, with particular interest in how potential and intending migrants use social media to obtain information on migration. In general, the Consortium Partners and the national stakeholders endorsed the findings presented, expressing their satisfaction with the development of the research project.

### 3.2 Ethical considerations

In conducting this quantitative study, we prioritised several ethical considerations to ensure and uphold the integrity and well-being of both researchers and participants.

Regarding the field team, the enumerators were recruited from the local community, not just to ensure that their background and language match with those of the respondents but also to foster trust between researchers and respondents and guarantee a more accurate reporting during the survey. Field researchers were fluent in Arabic and the local Kurdish dialect in each governorate and, in some cases, other languages such as Assyrian or Turkmani. Three one-day training sessions, one in each governorate, were conducted prior to data collection to ensure that enumerators familiarise not only with the research objectives, the survey tool, and the input of data, but also with ethical concerns and do-no-harm policies.

With regard to the respondent, central to our approach was obtaining informed consent, where participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and procedure. After explaining the aim of the interview, the field researchers would ensure that respondents joined the survey voluntarily and without any form of pressure, knowing that they could have withdrawn from the research at any time without consequences or refused to answer certain questions. Respondents were also informed that not participating in the research would not have carried negative consequences on their personal situation. Anonymity and confidentiality were also crucial to protect the participants' privacy. For this reason, information such as name or address of the respondents were not collected, to guarantee the respondents' confidentiality and prevent tracing them back in any way. The data collection through tablets ensured that the data was cleared from the devices after the completed forms were submitted at the end of each day.

### 3.3 Limitation and challenges of the study

Conducting a study focusing on potential Iraqi migrants presents its own methodological challenges. The first challenge consists in the identification of the target group, due to both conceptual and practical reasons. Conceptually, the definitions of 'aspiring' and 'intending' migrants are so broad as to include any person with a slight desire to migrate from the country and yet so difficult to establish that can only be identified by the respondent. While the initial probing question could mitigate this challenge, further questions throughout the interview concerned more specifically migration plans and irregular migration intentions, in order to identify a sub-group within the main sample. Here, however, practical challenges might emerge, as people might be reluctant to provide their personal information and hesitant to speak to strangers, especially on highly sensitive matters such as their irregular migration intentions. To mitigate these potential challenges, the careful explanation of the objective of the research and the obtaining of the informed consent from the respondents were necessary to ensure trust between the researchers and the target group.

Given the employment of a non-representative sample, it is also worth noting that our findings cannot be generalised to the whole population of potential migrants in Iraq. Since the sample should have responded to specific characteristics (Iraqi nationals with intentions to migrate), we necessarily operated with a smaller sub-sample of the population, concentrated in the KRI, with different characteristics across the governorates. Although this might allow us to offer a greater diversification of the sample, the change in its composition may result in a parallel diversification of the findings, with some characteristics more represented in specific governorates than in others. Considering the

sensitivity of the topic, the sample can also present issues of social desirability bias, i.e., the tendency of survey respondents to answer questions according to socially acceptable standards, under-representing bad behaviours or over-representing good ones. For all these reasons, the findings of our research cannot be generalised.

Although no particular incident was reported by the research teams during the fieldwork, it is worth mentioning that, since many interviews took place in public spaces, many Syrian refugees and migrants working there expressed their willingness to participate in the survey. However, due to the aforementioned limitations, only Iraqi nationals could complete the survey. Interestingly, these Syrian individuals expressed their intention to seek regular pathways for onward migration to Europe (for example, through family reunification) but, since they did not know how to navigate the legal and bureaucratic procedures, they would rely instead on irregular migration options. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to conduct specific research on this population profile to understand their migration intentions and inform tailored migration information campaigns accordingly.

## 4 Information and awareness raising measures

### 4.1 Introduction

In recent years, migration campaigns have become instrumental as policy responses among many European countries, with policymakers and donors increasingly investing in them. These campaigns often employ diverse messages that highlight different aspects of the migration experience, according to the specific objective they aim to achieve and the audience they target. Whether they employ a more positive or negative message, migration campaigns have been criticised under several aspects. First, they may deprive migrants of their political agency, portraying them as passive and vulnerable subjects.<sup>25</sup> Besides, they assume that migrants do not have correct or trustworthy knowledge of migration as they purportedly rely on social networks which provide them with biased or deceitful information, although this might not always be the case.<sup>26</sup> Other scholars have highlighted the scarce or unclear impact of such campaigns, which might be not only difficult to measure but also to achieve.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, migration campaigns might be considered part and parcel of migration management strategies to control and regular migration movements, supplementing rather than counteracting bordering practices and enlarging the distance between ‘us’ (broadly conceived as Western citizens and saviours) and ‘them’ (as foreigners in/as danger).<sup>28</sup>

While being aware of the nexus between securitarian and humanitarian discourses in migration studies more generally<sup>29</sup> and in the analysis of information campaigns more specifically,<sup>30</sup> we explore the relative campaigns according to the values they refer to and the messages they employ, following the IOM distinction between pro-migration and anti-migration narratives.<sup>31</sup> This would allow us to

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<sup>25</sup> Myria Georgiou, “Does the Subaltern Speak? Migrant Voices in Digital Europe,” *Popular Communication* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 45–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2017.1412440>; Anke Fiedler, “From Being Aware to Going There: On the Awareness and Decision-Making of (Prospective) Migrants,” *Mass Communication and Society* 23, no. 3 (2020): 356–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2019.1666992>.

<sup>26</sup> Bernd Beber and Alexandra Scacco, “The Myth of the Misinformed Migrant? Survey Insights from Nigeria’s Irregular Migration Epicenter,” *Ruhr Economic Papers* (Essen: RWI - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, 2019); Sjoerd van Bommel, “The Perception of Risk among Unauthorized Migrants in Ghana,” *Journal of Risk Research* 23, no. 1 (January 2019): 47–61.

<sup>27</sup> Jasper Tjaden, Sandra Morgenstern, and Frank Laczko, “Evaluating the Impact of Information Campaigns in the Field of Migration: A Systematic Review of the Evidence, and Practical Guidance,” *Central Mediterranean Route Thematic Report Series* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2018); Raffaella Pagogna and Patrick Sakdapolrak, “Disciplining Migration Aspirations through Migration-information Campaigns: A Systematic Review of the Literature,” *Geography Compass* 15, no. 7 (July 2021).

<sup>28</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, “Aware Migrants: The Role of Information Campaigns in the Management of Migration,” *European Journal of Communication* 34, no. 6 (December 2019): 629–40; Juliette Howard, “Beyond the Humanitarian Rhetoric of Migrant Information Campaigns,” *E-International Relations*, 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/06/14/beyond-the-humanitarian-rhetoric-of-migrant-information-campaigns/>; Anissa Maâ, Julia Van Dessel, and Amandine Van Neste-Gottignies, “Information Directed Towards Migrants and the (Un)Making of Borders: An Interdisciplinary Perspective Between Countries of Origin, Transit, and Destination,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 38, no. 6 (November 2, 2023): 895–900, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2023.2261455>.

<sup>29</sup> William Walters, ‘Foucault and Frontiers: Notes on the Birth of the Humanitarian Border’, in *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*, ed. Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann, and Thomas Lemke (New York: Routledge, 2010), 138–64; William Walters, ‘Reflections on Migration and Governmentality’, *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015); Polly Pallister-Wilkins, *Humanitarian Borders: Unequal Mobility and Saving Lives* (London: Verso, 2022).

<sup>30</sup> Ceri Oeppen, “‘Leaving Afghanistan! Are You Sure?’ European Efforts to Deter Potential Migrants through Information Campaigns”, *Human Geography* 9, no. 2 (2016): 57–68; Pierluigi Musarò, ‘Aware Migrants: The Role of Information Campaigns in the Management of Migration’, *European Journal of Communication* 34, no. 6 (December 2019): 629–40.

<sup>31</sup> IOM, ‘Communicating on Migration’, in *The Essentials of Migration Management (EMM2.0)* (International Organization for Migration, 2023), <https://emm.iom.int/handbooks>.

distinguish between campaigns employing more stringent and negative messages and others using a more rights-based language, while at the same time placing them along an overarching spectrum that goes from a securitarian narrative, on the one side, to a more humanitarian narrative, on the other.

In this respect, some campaigns employ a more stringent approach, framing migration as a security issue and portraying migrants as potential threats to national security. These campaigns – which are implemented not only in countries of origin and transit but also in countries of destination – often draw on (and reproduce) stereotypes and fear-mongering tactics to depict migrants as criminals, terrorists, or carriers of diseases, contributing to the stigmatisation and demonisation of migrant communities. By framing migration through a security lens, these campaigns seek to justify restrictive immigration policies, border controls, and surveillance measures under the guise of protecting national interests. Moving alongside the spectrum, other campaigns revolve around the plight of migrants, shedding light on the challenges they face during their journey or in the countries of destination, including exploitation, discrimination, and forced displacement. By amplifying the voices of migrants and showcasing their (often difficult) experiences, these campaigns generally seek to provide potential migrants in countries of origin with reliable information on the risks of irregular migration or on the legal and socio-economic situation in countries of destination, with the aim of deterring them from undertaking the journey in an irregular way.

At the other end of the spectrum, some campaigns employ a language focused on access to rights and knowledge, providing migrants with relevant information on their basic rights during the journey or in countries of destination, potential contacts in case of emergency or troubles along the way, as well as on how access to essential services and opportunities for integration. Other campaigns focus on migrants' need for better and more accurate information on regular migration channels and the possibilities to access them, thus empowering them in making more informed decisions on migration. Among the campaigns employing a positive framing we also include those aiming at providing migrants with information and concrete opportunities on how to contribute to the social and economic development of their own countries.

While it is necessary to take into consideration the critiques surrounding migration information campaigns, particularly their potential to reinforce power dynamics and perpetuate stereotypes, it is also important to acknowledge recent studies that suggest that, despite their limitations and challenges as well as their difficulty to be translated into immediate action, these campaigns still have some impact, particularly in terms of increasing awareness among migrants.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the effectiveness of these campaigns seems to be contingent upon their focus. More targeted and focused campaigns are likely to be beneficial to the target audience, emphasising the need for nuanced and context-specific approaches. However, it is also important to complement such campaigns with concrete policies that facilitate regular access to European countries, reducing the risks of irregular migration and the implementation of strict border enforcement.

The Background Report has provided a comprehensive analysis of migration information campaigns, not only exploring their effectiveness but also analysing in depth those campaigns targeting potential Iraqi migrants. Drawing from it, the following section looks at the specific framing of these campaigns in terms of security and humanitarian messages, respectively. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for the design of more robust migration information campaigns.

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<sup>32</sup> Felipe Alexander Dunsch, Jasper Tjaden, and William Quiviger, 'Migrants as Messengers: The Impact of Peer-to-Peer Communication on Potential Migrants in Senegal' (Geneva, 2019); Oumarou Hebie, Mawugnon F E Sessou, and Jasper Tjaden, 'Irregular Migration from West Africa: Robust Evaluation of Peer-to-Peer Awareness-Raising Activities in Four Countries' (Geneva, 2023); M Bia-Zafinikamia, J Tjaden, and H Gninafon, *The Impact of Mobile Cinema Events on Potential Migrants in Guinea. Impact Evaluation Report* (Geneva: IOM, 2020).

## 4.2 The security narrative

As discussed in previous ICMPD research, migration information campaigns can have different objectives and target groups, thus conveying specific messages accordingly.<sup>33</sup> When looking at campaigns targeting Iraqi migrants (either in their country of origin or in transit), a prevailing approach, steeped in apprehensions about terrorism, crime, and the perceived risks associated with irregular migration, has emerged – one that conceives migrants as potential threats to national security. In some cases, these campaigns tend to portray the country of destination in a negative light, highlighting the difficulties of socio-economic integration in order to make them less appealing for potential migrants.<sup>34</sup> In other cases, they specifically aim at intimidating migrants and preventing them from reaching a specific territory through harsh deterrent messages. Consequently, they are in line with other policy measures such as stringent border controls, heightened surveillance, and restrictive immigration policies.

The Australian government has been particularly active in implementing deterrent campaigns targeting potential irregular migrants. The Operation *Sovereign Borders*, launched in 2013 and still ongoing, has employed posters, digital media contents, videos, and even a film throughout the years,<sup>35</sup> with the aim of ‘protecting Australia’s borders, combatting people smuggling in our region, and importantly, preventing people from risking their lives at sea’.<sup>36</sup> Among the most iconic representation of such campaign, worth mentioning is the 90-minute fictional film, *The Journey*, which aimed at deterring potential migrants and asylum seekers – from Iraq as well as from Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, where the film was also broadcast – from attempting to reach Australia.<sup>37</sup> As seen in the Background Report, the campaign has been harshly criticised not only for its exorbitant costs but also for its uncertain effectiveness, especially considering the already harsh and restrictive migration policies against asylum seekers implemented in the country.

Other notable deterrent campaigns targeting Iraqi migrants have been implemented by the Belgian and Finnish governments, especially during the peak of the ‘long summer of migration’,<sup>38</sup> to signal specific (and usually more restrictive) policy changes. In September 2015, the then Belgian Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration Theo Francken started a Facebook campaign – targeting in particular young men in and around Baghdad through commercial banners – with the aim of discouraging Iraqi migrants to travel to Belgium and apply for asylum in the country, with the pretext that they would often disguise as Syrian asylum seekers to obtain asylum in the country. According to the promoters, the campaign was very successful, leading to the reduction in the number of arrivals of Iraqi migrants into Belgium and to the increase in the number of returns of Iraqi citizens to their country.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Katharina Hahn-Schaur, “Awareness Raising and Information Campaigns on the Risks of Irregular Migration from Pakistan: Background Report.”

<sup>34</sup> Falk Hartig, “Deterrence by Public Diplomacy: The Negative Dimension of International Political Communication,” *Journal of Communication Management* 21, no. 4 (November 6, 2017): 342–54.

<sup>35</sup> Djamilia Schans and Caitlin Optekamp, “Raising Awareness, Changing Behavior? Combatting Irregular Migration through Information Campaigns” (Den Haag: WODC, 2016), [https://repository.wodc.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12832/175/Cahier\\_2016-11\\_2683\\_Volledige\\_tekst\\_tcm28-239610.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://repository.wodc.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12832/175/Cahier_2016-11_2683_Volledige_tekst_tcm28-239610.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y).

<sup>36</sup> Australian Government, “Operation Sovereign Borders,” Department of Home Affairs, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://osb.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

<sup>37</sup> Sarah C. Bishop, “An International Analysis of Governmental Media Campaigns to Deter Asylum Seekers,” *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 1092–1114.

<sup>38</sup> Bernd Kasperek and Marc Speer, “Of Hope. Hungary and the long Summer of Migration,” *bordermonitoring.eu* (blog), September 9, 2015, <https://bordermonitoring.eu/ungarn/2015/09/of-hope-en/>.

<sup>39</sup> Schans and Optekamp, “Raising Awareness, Changing Behavior?”, see also [https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20150927\\_01889637](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20150927_01889637) and [https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20160105\\_02050466](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20160105_02050466)

In October 2015, the Finnish Foreign Ministry launched a similar Facebook-based campaign, called *Don't come* and rolled out in Arabic, targeting potential migrants in Iraq and Türkiye, particularly in view of the expected surge in the number of asylum seekers entering the country. According to then chairman of the Finns Party in the country's Parliament, the campaign aimed at warning potential migrants against spending thousands of Euros in the attempt to reach Finland, as they would have been repatriated to their country. Few days after the launch of the campaign, the Foreign Ministry declared that the Facebook update had received about 80,000 views.<sup>40</sup>

To a certain extent, campaigns highlighting the plight of migrants during the journey and the risks of (irregular) migration could be included under this framing. This is the case of the social enterprise Seefar-implemented campaigns *On The Move* and *The Migrant Project*. The first campaign, running from April to December 2020, aimed at informing transit migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Pakistan about the risks of irregular migration and providing them with reliable information on asylum procedures and other legal alternatives in countries of transit and destination. Despite its presumed successes (portrayed by the organisation in [a short post](#)), the *On The Move* campaign was strongly criticised in the media for being allegedly funded by the UK government in an attempt to reduce irregular migration through the Channel and from the countries of origin<sup>41</sup> and its website was removed once the project ended. Even the second campaign received media attention for its supposed financial support by the Home Office; however, its website is still running, providing migrants with information on the risks of irregular migration and the difficult life for (irregular) migrants in the destination countries, often with stories of returnees who did not "make it".<sup>42</sup>

Whether they employ strong, fearsome messages or they simply attempt to provide information on the risks of irregular migration, such campaigns tend to, first, oversimplify the multifaceted nature of migration, neglecting the underlying socio-economic, political, and humanitarian factors that drive individuals to migrate; second, they may fuel discrimination and xenophobia in host countries, thus exacerbating societal divisions rather than addressing the complexities of migration; and third, they might reproduce restrictive bordering practices and migration policies to protect citizens' safety while shifting the responsibility of the risks of the journey onto migrants themselves.<sup>43</sup> Most importantly, several research findings suggest that campaigns using deterrent messages rarely work, running the risk of being either misunderstood<sup>44</sup> or even mocked by migrants themselves.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Schans and Optekamp, "Raising Awareness, Changing Behavior?", see also <https://yle.fi/a/3-8404359>.

<sup>41</sup> Lizzie Dearden, "Home Office Spent Millions on 'Ineffective' Adverts to Deter Asylum Seekers with More Now Planned on Rwanda Campaign," *Independent*, April 23, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/rwanda-deal-migrants-communications-home-office-b2063558.html>; see also Verena K. Brändle, "Claiming Authority Over 'Truths' and 'Facts': Information Risk Campaigns to Prevent Irregular Migration," in *Europe in the Age of Post-Truth Politics: Populism, Disinformation and the Public Sphere*, ed. Maximilian Conrad et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 151–76.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.themigrantproject.org/>.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Hodge, "A Grievable Life? The Criminalisation and Securing of Asylum Seeker Bodies in the 'Violent Frames' of Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders," *Geoforum* 58 (2015): 122–31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2014.11.006>; Patrick Van Berlo, "Australia's Operation Sovereign Borders: Discourse, Power, and Policy from a Crimmigration Perspective: Table 1.," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (December 2015): 75–104, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdv011>; Ceri Oeppen, "'Leaving Afghanistan! Are You Sure?' European Efforts to Deter Potential Migrants through Information Campaigns," *Human Geography* 9, no. 2 (2016): 57–68.

<sup>44</sup> Seefar, "3E Impact. Ethical, Engaged & Effective. Running Communications on Irregular Migration from Kos to Kandahar" (SEEFAR, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Charles Heller, "Perception Management - Deterring Potential Migrants through Information Campaigns," *Global Media and Communication* 10, no. 3 (2014): 303–18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766514552355>.

### 4.3 The humanitarian narrative

To increase their impact, certain migration campaigns have adopted a more humanitarian approach, highlighting the rights and needs of migrants and showing empathy, solidarity, and respect for their rights. Rather than conceiving potential migrants as security threats, these campaigns aim to provide them with more reliable and trustworthy information on regular migration channels and the rights connected to (regular) migration. For this purpose, also such campaigns employ a wide variety of messages, messengers, and channels of communication, according to the specific target group they try to reach or to the objective they wish to achieve. Exploring the dynamics and impact of migration information campaigns employing a humanitarian narrative is essential in understanding their role in attempting to shape migrants' knowledge, attitudes, and intentions.

In the case of Iraq, particularly active in the implementation of migration information campaigns is the social enterprise Seefar. As already discussed in the Background Report, in May 2019, Seefar launched the *Migration Communication Campaign (Phase 2)* in Nigeria and the KRI, which ran for two years. The campaign, which was financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and evaluated by the Centre for Evaluation and Development, aimed at changing people's behaviour and attitudes towards irregular migration, by specifically focusing on their personal needs for information and opportunities. In particular, in the KRI the campaign targeted 14 potential migrants between 16 and 34 years old, mostly from Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, their family members and close friends, as well as other influencers such as community leaders and their relative communities. While most respondents pointed out economic, security, and legal-bureaucratic issues as the main reasons to migrate irregularly, some also mentioned their LGBTIQ+ identity as a potential ground for persecution and escape.

The campaign, which could leverage the extensive research conducted by Seefar itself since 2009 on the beneficiaries' personal needs for information and opportunities, included messages concerning both the risks associated with irregular migration and alternative pathways. These messages were disseminated through various channels such as Word-of-Mouth counsellors, face-to-face and remote consultations, community events, media engagement, online and social media outreach, and educational outreach. The evaluators highlighted the campaign's success in disseminating knowledge and raising awareness about migration, attributing it to the use of balanced messaging, involvement of well-trained local counsellors, and the delivery of tailored information. However, despite many respondents reconsidering their life plans after their participation in the campaign, a minority in the KRI remained inclined towards irregular migration.<sup>46</sup>

Other campaigns have focused more broadly on providing general information to all migrants, whether in their country of origin or on the move. This is the case of *InfoMigrants*,<sup>47</sup> a broad awareness-raising initiative created in 2017 with the participation of media outlets and press agencies from France, Germany, and Italy. The campaign, which operates through a website and across different social media, aims at providing migrants in countries of origin and transit with reliable information on migration in different languages (including Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Bangla, English, and French). Despite the efforts of such campaigns, research highlighted that individuals in their home country, living in camps, or in transit through other countries might have different needs, opportunities, and experiences, thus calling for the design and implementation of more target-specific campaigns.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Frederic Kamta, Ravi Baghel, and Johanna Kern, "Evaluation of Awareness Raising Campaigns for (Potential) Migrants" (Mannheim: Center for Evaluation and Development, 2023).

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/>

<sup>48</sup> Policy Research Institute, "Evaluation of the Telling the Real Story Project 2.0" (Geneva: UNHCR, 2021).

#### 4.4 MRC's work on the ground

In recent years, several governments, NGOs, and international organisations have run Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) across the world, with the aim of providing migrants with information, training, and guidance for their migration experience, including preparation for employment abroad and re-integration upon return.<sup>49</sup> ICMPD's Silk Routes Regional Office has been actively involved in setting up several MRCs. Currently, they have operational MRCs in Lahore and Islamabad, Pakistan; Kabul, Afghanistan; Baghdad, Iraq - with a new MRC in Erbil being setup for the launch in mid-April 2024; and Dushanbe, Tajikistan.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, five MRC Hubs have been set up in coordination with MoLSA and are operational - albeit to a varying degree - in Iraq (Thi Qar, Basra, Karbala, Diwaniya, and Najaf).

In the context of Iraq, the MRC focuses on the dissemination of comprehensible and accessible information to potential migrants, with the primary objective of facilitating orderly migration processes. This encompasses the provision of transparent details regarding the opportunities available for migration, including the associated regulations and prerequisites, thereby equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge for informed decision-making prior to departure. Additionally, the MRC in Baghdad offers pre-departure orientation sessions, elucidating aspects related to employment prospects, living conditions overseas, and the rights and responsibilities entailed therein. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on raising awareness among potential migrants regarding the risks and dangers of irregular migration. The MRC extended its outreach beyond the general populace to encompass institutional stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, who wield direct or indirect influence in the domain of migration facilitation and communication. This inclusive approach manifests through information dissemination sessions conducted at various educational institutions and within communities, underscoring the imperative of collaboration with diverse entities.<sup>51</sup> The MRC employs a multifaceted approach to reach and support populations, through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The MRC in Baghdad extends its reach to potential migrants across Iraq; in October and November 2023 alone, it reached over 14,000 individuals via these platforms, with Facebook being the most popular medium (see Figure 2). Furthermore, the personal outreach activities carried out by the MRC in Baghdad, including community and university events, complement its digital efforts. These activities focus on delivering comprehensive migration-related information, emphasising legal migration channels and available re-integration services for returnees.<sup>52</sup>

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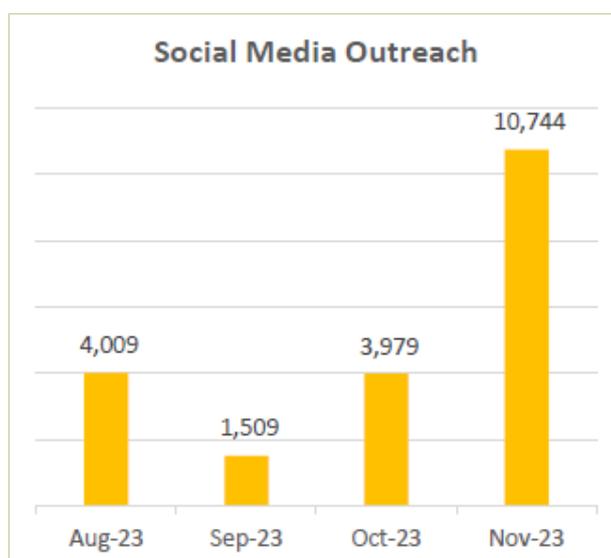
<sup>49</sup> Jane Pillinger, "Running an Effective Migrant Resource Centre: A Handbook for Practitioners" (Budapest: International Organization for Migration, 2015), <https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2015-06/RunninganEffectiveMigrantResourceCentre-AHandbookforPractitioners.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> ICMPD, 'Migrant Resource Centres (MRC)', accessed 15 February 2024, <https://www.migrantresources.org/>.

<sup>51</sup> MRC Iraq, "Migrant Resource Centre," MRC Iraq, accessed February 28, 2024, <https://www.mrciraq.iq/en/>.

<sup>52</sup> ICMPD, "Migration Trends Analysis for Iraq - October-November 2023" (ICMPD, 2023), unpublished.

Figure 2: Total number of people reached via social media channels



Source: ICMPD Migration Trends Analysis for Iraq

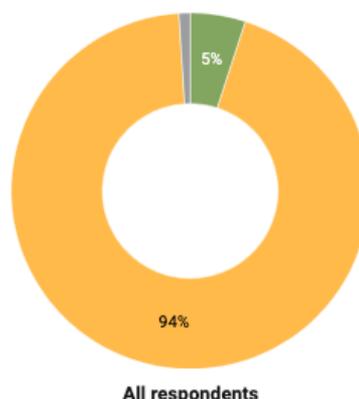
Despite the services offered by the MRC and their collaborative efforts with governmental and non-governmental entities, there **appears to persist a notable lack of awareness among potential migrants in KRI regarding the MRC operations in Iraq**. This may be due to the operational status of the MRC, with the one in Baghdad fully operational but geographically remote and the recently established one in Erbil relatively new and not yet fully functional.

The findings in our survey reveal that only a small minority of respondents (5%) have previously engaged with MRC in Iraq (see Figure 3). Despite the MRCs efforts to disseminate accurate information regarding migration risks and legal pathways through various information campaigns, participation rates vary across different governorates. Specifically, **Dohuk governorate exhibits the highest – though still low overall – frequency of respondents who participated in MRC campaigns (8%)**, followed by Sulaymaniyah (6%), with Erbil recording the lowest participation rate (2%). While no significant disparities are observed based on age or gender, participation rates are notably higher among IDPs (9%) compared to local residents (4%).

Figure 3: Engagement with the Migrant Resource Centre

Have you participated in any information campaigns conducted by the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Iraq?

- Yes, I have participated
- No, I have not participated
- [Did not know]



Among those surveyed for this study, a significant majority of respondents (**83%**) express positive views regarding the effectiveness of the MRC's information campaigns. Specifically, 31% of respondents rate the campaigns as 'very effective and beneficial', and 52% consider them 'somewhat effective'. However, a **small portion of respondents (11%) consider the campaigns 'not very effective', while 4% rate them as 'not at all effective'** and an additional 2% remain uncertain about the effectiveness of the campaigns. Due to the limited participation in MRC campaigns among respondents, caution is advised in interpreting these results, as they may not be fully representative of the broader population.

Richer data is available from MRC counselling work in Baghdad, which provides a comprehensive overview of social media engagement and reach across various platforms, specifically Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, along with WhatsApp and Telegram announcement groups for the years 2022 and 2023 (see Table 1). Regarding Facebook, in 2023 the page reached 3,955,791 people and 12,209 new followers, indicating however a slight decrease from the previous year. The engagement metrics are further analysed by gender, showing a higher engagement among females (387,269) compared to males (220,172) in Facebook live sessions. Instagram also shows robust engagement with 700,339 total page reach in 2022, significantly increasing to 1,935,387 in 2023. The year-over-year comparison, gender breakdown, and platform specific metrics suggest a strategic approach to understanding audience interaction and the effectiveness of content dissemination across different social media channels.

Furthermore, insights from the data on community outreach activities over 2022 and 2023 reveal 3,417 participants in outreach sessions led by MRC partners in 2022, and 1,538 participants in 2023. Orientation sessions at vocational training centres had a total attendance of 1,628 individuals in 2022, dropping to 1,103 in 2023. A significant decline is observed in the number of male participants over 18 years from 637 in 2022 to 366 in 2023. Skills training sessions saw a decline from 21 participants in 2022 to 15 in 2023. These trends suggest a decrease in participation rates in most of the activities from 2022 to 2023, with the most consistent gender trends being higher female participation in most categories (see table 2).

**Table 1: Number of people reached via social media**

Indicator	Total 2022	Total 2023
<b>Facebook</b>		
Total page reach	4,369,157	3,955,791
Total followers	16,686	12,209
Total engagement	220,172	4,524
<b>Facebook live sessions (MRC)</b>		
Total reach	387,269	205,244
Total engagement	1,045	1,448
Total likes	968	622
Total views	188,087	99,208
<b>Instagram</b>		
Total page reach	700,339	1,935,387
Total engagement	38,922	2,550
Total followers	1,060	866

**Table 2: Number of people reached via community / group outreach**

Indicator	Total 2022	Total 2023
<b>Number of participants in outreach sessions – MRC partner-led</b>	<b>3,417</b>	<b>1,533</b>
<b>Number of participants in orientation sessions at vocational training centres (VTCs)</b>		
(a) Male	637	366
(b) Female	991	737
Over 18 years old	1,576	347
Under 18 years old	52	2
Total	<b>1,628</b>	<b>1,103</b>
<b>Number of participants in orientation sessions at universities / educational institutions</b>		
(a) Male	486	922
(b) Female	489	775
Over 18 years old	975	955
Total	<b>975</b>	<b>1,697</b>
<b>Number of participants in group counselling sessions</b>		
(a) Male	84	50
(b) Female	16	24
Over 18 years old	21	70
Total	<b>100</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Number of participants in skills training sessions</b>		
(a) Male	7	19
(b) Female	14	2
Over 18 years old	21	21
Total	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,141</b>	<b>4,428</b>

*\*Table 1 and table 2 draw upon data provided by MRC Baghdad which have not been published yet.*

MRC can provide reliable and trustworthy information on legal pathways and migrants' rights along the journey and in countries of destination and therefore sensitise and empower potential migrants to make informed decisions about migration, thus having a potential impact on reducing irregular migration towards European and other destination countries. The design and implementation of targeted migration information campaigns, however, should always take into consideration specific ethical and practical concerns, in order to have the best interests of potential migrants at heart.

## 4.5 Ethical and practical considerations for the campaign development

The development of migration information campaign should pay particular attention to ethical and practical considerations in order to achieve its impact while considering the best interest of their target population. Drawing from relevant literature, this section provides an initial guidance to design campaigns targeting potential migrants, highlighting specific ethical and practical challenges and elaborating on potential solutions to overcome them.

- **Understanding the context:** As cliché as it might sound, it is fundamental for campaign implementers to understand and know the context in which they operate. This is particularly crucial in Iraq, where the social and political situation is volatile. Campaign developers should also consider that MRCs are embedded in governmental structures, which, as also emerged from our findings, do not constitute a particularly relevant source of information, and might contribute to potential distrust towards official institutions.
- **Identify the target group:** As we discuss in Chapter 5, we highlight some characteristics for the target group of ‘potential Iraqi migrants’; however, it is important to consider that such group is not necessarily homogenous in terms of gender, ethnicity, or religion. Therefore, while campaign developers should have a general target group in mind when designing and implementing the campaign, they should also consider the physiological differences within that group, in order to tailor the campaign message accordingly. As the Seefar guidelines for the implementation of campaign point out, ‘[t]here is rarely a homogenous ethnic audience within a source country, so your campaign approach (i.e. your channels and messages) needs to be sensitive to this.’<sup>53</sup> While our analysis will provide an overall profile of the target group, we will also discuss such differences and their potential impact for the design of the campaign.
- **Listening to the target population:** Beside the general differences within the target group, campaign developers should consider the more specific differences between individuals in terms of needs, ambitions, and aspirations. No matter how homogeneous we think our target group is, every person has different needs that need to be understood and taken into account for the design and development of campaigns. Our research will provide a glimpse on respondents’ intentions and desires, but continuous dialogue and engagement with the target group remain essential throughout the campaign development to achieve a stronger impact.
- **Shaping the right message:** Most literature on migration information campaigns would recommend employing messages that balance between negative and positive information, raising awareness of the risks of irregular migration while correctly informing on migrants’ rights along the route or in the countries of destination. However, it is also important to consider that, in some cases, information on risks during the journey and on arrival may have limited practical value to some potential migrants, which might already be aware thereof. In this respect, campaigns should also focus on positive stories, provide correct and reliable information on migration journeys, and raise migrants’ awareness of their rights in the countries of transit and destination, suggesting legal alternatives to irregular migration.
- **Applying the ‘do no harm’ principle:** Whatever their messages and objectives are, campaigns should always keep the ‘do no harm’ principle at their core, not only by engaging with migrants but also by providing them with useful and tailored information and giving voice to their needs and aspirations.<sup>54</sup> Campaign messages must avoid discriminatory or dehumanising language and respect social and cultural diversity; besides, they should actively consider the unintended

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<sup>53</sup> Seefar, ‘3E Impact. Ethical, Engaged & Effective. Running Communications on Irregular Migration from Kos to Kandahar’, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Ayesha Qaisrani, “Migration Insights: Understanding Onward Migration Dynamics among Afghan Nationals in Pakistan,” PARIM-II Background Report (Vienna: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2023), <https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/60522/file/D2.1-Background-report-16-08-2023-Final.pdf>.

negative consequences or the potential misuse of the information provided.<sup>55</sup> As the OHCHR suggests, campaigns should not perpetuate distinctions between people falling into different legal categories but similarly experiencing the effects of the campaign, nor should they give the impression that some people are more “deserving” than others in terms of rights or service provision, even if that happens unconsciously or inadvertently.<sup>56</sup> In sum, campaigns should put migrants at the centre, providing them with reliable and trustworthy information on migration options and rights, tailored on their needs and aspirations.

- **Choosing the right partners:** Campaign developers should foster extensive collaboration with local stakeholders for the implementation of the campaign, in particular with community or religious leaders. The engagement of these figures, well-known and respected among their community, might help build the trust of the target population, thus ensuring a more impactful outcome of the campaign. In some cases, campaign developers can also join forces with specific local institutions or NGOs, provided that they are trusted among the community.
- **Selecting the right channels:** There are multiple ways to reach the target population, with social media and traditional means of communication usually preferred for their ability to reach a wider segment of the population. While these channels might certainly be helpful to disseminate messages on a large scale, they might be ineffective in reaching the specific target population and inefficient in terms of costs and final impact. For this reason, it is important to ‘think local’,<sup>57</sup> employing participatory and accessible channels – such as community events, cultural performances, or social activities – that envisage the active participation of the target group and promote social interaction and solidarity within the community.
- **Knowing power and limits:** Finally, it is important for campaign developers to understand the power relations at play in the implementation of information campaigns. Whether governmental institutions, local authorities, or NGOs, campaign implementers are never neutral actors, but always embedded in a system of social relation and interconnections with the target group as well as with a myriad of other actors. It is important also to acknowledge that framing the choice of messengers, messages, and channels might have different and sometimes unintended consequences for the target group, ending up reproducing bordering practices and doing more harm than good to the intended target population. Understanding the power and limits of the campaign implementers might help not only achieve a stronger and more sustainable impact of the campaign, but also empower potential migrants in making more informed decisions on migration.

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<sup>55</sup> UNICEF, “Social and Behaviour Change at UNICEF,” UNICEF Pakistan (New York: UNICEF, 2023), [https://www.sbcguidance.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/UNICEF\\_SBC\\_Programme\\_Guidance\\_All\\_Tools.pdf](https://www.sbcguidance.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/UNICEF_SBC_Programme_Guidance_All_Tools.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> OHCHR, “Stand Up 4 Migrants - Informal Summary” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/campaigns/stand-up-for-migrants>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## 5 Migrant profile

### 5.1 Introduction

This section will look more in depth at the ‘potential (irregular) migrant from Iraq,’ outlining the main characteristics of this heterogeneous group. Before doing this, however, it is important to highlight the absence of a specific definition of ‘potential migrant’ within the literature. In Gallup’s surveys on Iraq, this category refers to *adults who express a desire to permanently migrate to another country if opportunity arose*.<sup>58</sup> The IOM applies a broad definition of potential emigrants that includes Iraqis who are leaving Iraq for a period of at least three months as well as Iraqis who have returned after being abroad for at least three months.<sup>59</sup> Identifying potential and aspiring migrants (i.e., the target group) and understanding their characteristics is crucial for the successful design and implementation of respective campaigns.<sup>60</sup> This section is dedicated to exploring the main characteristics that contribute to shaping the profile of potential migrant. It will delve into their intentions, addressing questions such as the reasoning behind their decision, where they aspire to go, how they plan to do so. Additionally, it will examine the preparatory measures taken and assess their awareness of risks and levels of confidence. The chapter synthesises findings from the MIRAMI survey and the validation meetings. In order to comprehensively understand the segmentation of the potential target group for the MIRAMI Information campaign, the results are compared across districts and various demographic factors.

### 5.2 The migrant profile in focus

The MIRAMI survey sample was established based on specific selection criteria, as outlined in the methodology section, thereby shaping the overall profile of the respondents. Respondents were filtered through a set of preliminary questions designed to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the study. Specifically, participants were asked about their nationality, with the requirement being an Iraqi citizen, and their willingness to migrate outside Iraq. Only those who met both criteria were invited to proceed with the survey. The following section gives an overview of the profile of respondents, while section 5.3 will delve into their migration intentions in greater detail.

#### *Descriptive results of MIRAMI survey respondents*

##### *Gender, Age, Ethno-Religious background and IDPs and governorate of origin*

The MIRAMI survey sample (n=1024) is comprised of **majority male respondents (84%)**, while females constitute only 16% (see Figure 4). This was no surprise, since other surveys such as the IOM-DTM study also indicated that through different migration phases, the majority of respondents are usually male.<sup>61</sup> The distribution of ages among participants reveals a concentration in the younger demographic, with **46% falling within the 26-34 age range** (see Figure 5). This is closely followed by the 18-25 age group, which comprises 42% of the sample. The representation decreases markedly in the old age range, with 11% in the 35-49 age range and a mere 1% aged 50 to 65. This age distribution provides insight into the age-related composition of the survey’s demographic. **A significant 68% of the sample is comprised of individuals below the age of 30**, while 32% are 30 years of age or above. This aligns with the most recent data on Iraq, indicating that the majority of the population is under

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<sup>58</sup> IOM, “Gallup World Poll: The Many Faces of Global Migration,” IOM Migration Research Series (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> IOM Iraq-DTM, ‘Migrants Profile - September 2020-February 2021’ (Baghdad, 2021), [https://iraqdtm.iom.int/files/BorderMonitoring/2023152838335\\_cross\\_border\\_monitoring\\_Sep2020\\_Feb2021.pdf](https://iraqdtm.iom.int/files/BorderMonitoring/2023152838335_cross_border_monitoring_Sep2020_Feb2021.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Seefar and ECORYS, “Study on Best Practices in Irregular Migration Awareness Campaigns” (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021).

<sup>61</sup> IOM DTM- Iraq, “CMFS Brief: Iraqi Migrants (To Europe)” (International Organization for Migration, 2019), <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/iraq-%E2%80%93-cmfs-brief-iraqi-migrants-europe>.

39 years old.<sup>62</sup> Focusing on the data from the KRI, we find that the median age is 20.65 years,<sup>63</sup> which is very similar to our sample where the **median age is 26 years old**. In terms of ethnicity and religion, the largest demographic group within our sample is Muslim Kurds, accounting for 59% (see Figure 6). Muslim Arabs constitute 27% of respondents, reflecting the inclusion of IDPs in the sample, many of whom originate from other regions of Federal Iraq. Christians make up 12% of the sample.

Figure 4: Gender



Figure 5: Age groups

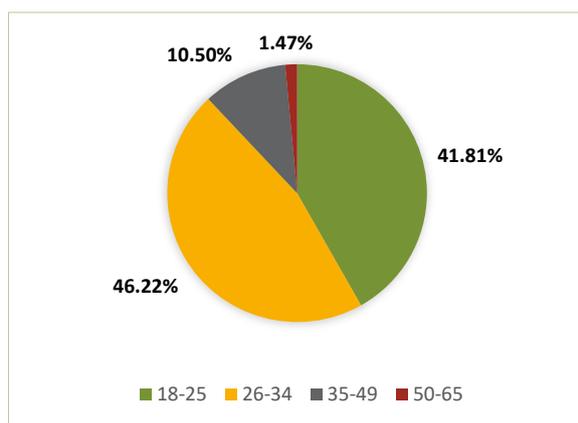
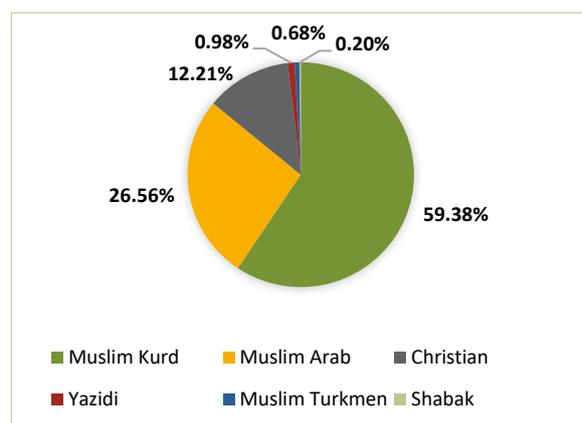


Figure 6: Ethno-religious groups



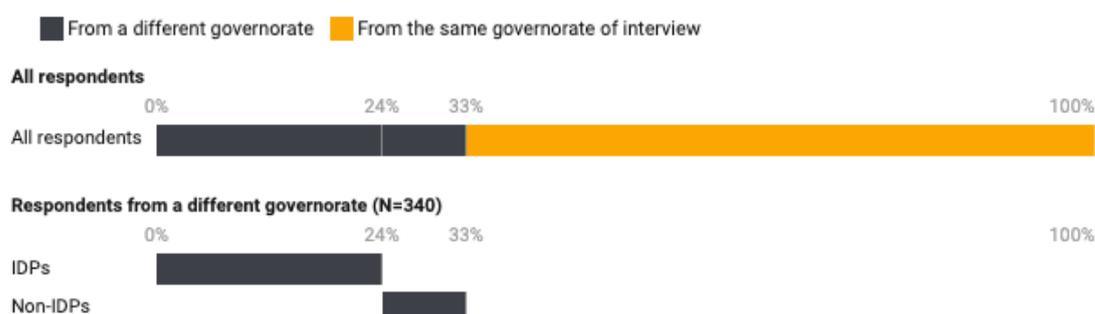
We also sought to identify IDPs within the sample by inquiring whether respondents originated from the same governorate where they were living (see Figure 7). About two thirds of respondents are from the same governorate, while 33% from a different one. Among the latter, a further question was posed regarding their status as internally displaced persons, to which 73% responded affirmatively. This culminates in a total of **248 individuals identified as IDPs** across the governorates, while 12% of those who do not originate from the governorate of the interview prefer to be classified as local residents rather than IDPs (see Figure 7). The majority of the IDPs have been living in their current governorates for five to ten years. This also aligns with the focus group discussions conducted with IDPs in Erbil and reported in the Returnee Report.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> WorldData.info, 'Iraq', 2024.

<sup>63</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government, 'Kurdistan Fact Sheet', Kurdistan Regional Government, 2024.

<sup>64</sup> Khoury and Mogiani, 'Engaging Return Migrants in Information Campaigns in Iraq Challenges, Reintegration, and Prospects'.

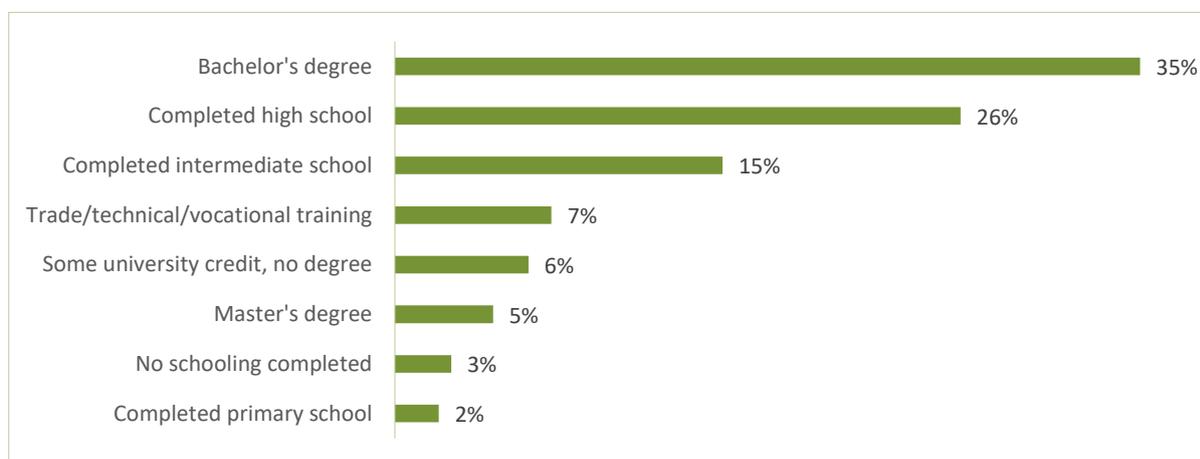
Figure 7: Governorate of origin



### Education, Employment Status and Employment Sector, and Income

The surveyed group has a high level of educational attainment (see Figure 8): 35% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree, 5% a master's degree, 6% have some university credit with no degree, 7% have acquired some technical or vocational training, and 26% have completed high school. Only 5% of the respondents have not completed any type of schooling or only completed primary school, while 15% have completed intermediate school. Given that the sample size is comprised of significantly young people, many of them might still be enrolled at the university.<sup>65</sup> Regarding the language proficiency, which may also reflect educational attainment, **77% speak Kurdish (the main language in the KRI)** and 64% Arabic, which is spoken both by IDPs and 55% of the total number of local residents in the KRI. Some respondents speak other languages depending on their ethnicity, for example Syriac (9%), Turkmani (4%), and Assyrian (2%). With regard to other languages, 36% of the sample speak also English, while others (2%) indicate proficiency in other European languages including German, Dutch, French, Italian, Swedish, and Turkish, supposedly reflecting the presence of returnees in the sample.

Figure 8: Educational attainment of the sample

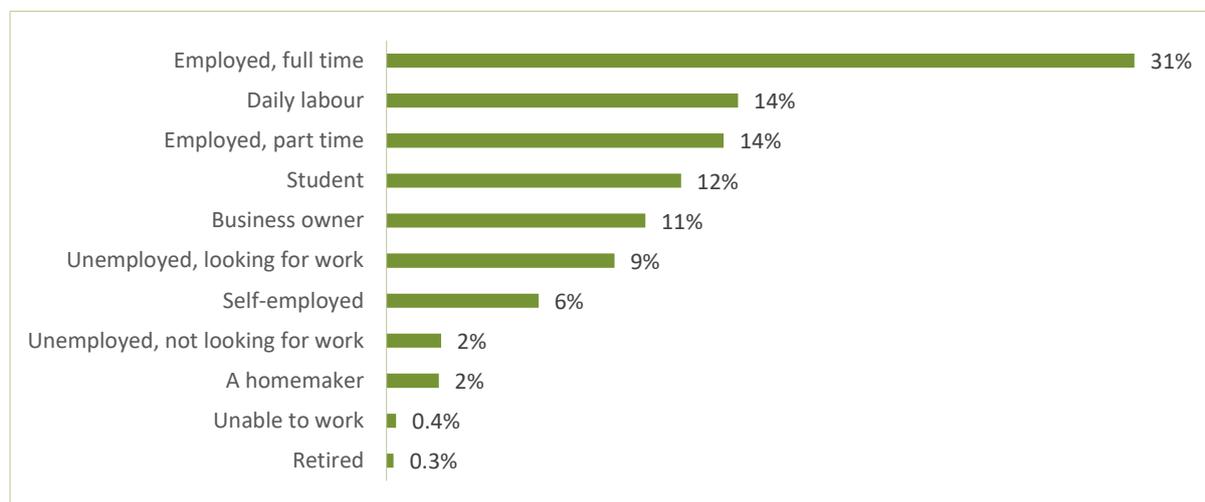


When looking at the employment status and employment sector of the respondents, we observe a wide range of statuses among the respondents (see Figure 9). **The majority of respondents are either employed full-time (31%) or part-time (14%).** The majority of respondents are active in the labour market. Full-time or part-time employees, business owners, and daily labourers constitute the majority of respondents. Unemployment does not feature as high as expected, although the lack of opportunities is one of the main reasons for migrating as mentioned in section 5.3. This lack of opportunities cited by many could be due to the nature of employment sector they work in. Overall,

<sup>65</sup> Social Inquiry, "Profiling Potential Migrants in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Quantitative Analysis of Information Needs, Intentions and Decision-Making," Survey Report (Erbil: Social Inquiry, 2024).

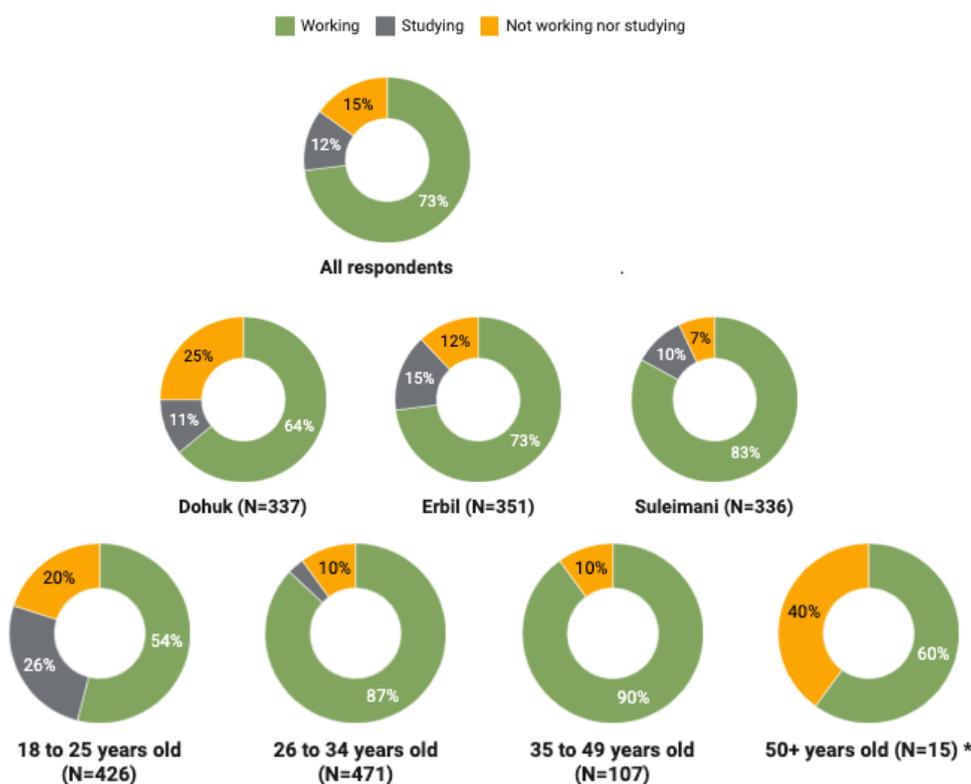
44% of those in full-time and part-time employment work in the service sector (i.e., commerce, restaurants, workshops, etc.), 11% work in the government or public sector, and another 4% in the security forces. The remaining respondents work across varying sectors such as industry (9%), construction (8%), transportation (6%), agriculture (3%), and hospitality (4%), while 11% of respondents indicate other sectors such as the medical sector, civic organisations and NGOs, financial services and banking, IT, and education.

**Figure 9: Employment status**



Looking at the data in more depth, amongst those 12% of respondents who identify as students, 7% have part-time jobs, whereas amongst those who are employed part-time (14%), only 6% are students. Figure 10 below illustrates the distribution of respondents' employment status according to governorate and age. When analysing the data across the different governorates, the percentages show slight variations, **with 83% of respondents in Sulaymaniyah actively participating in the labour market, followed by Erbil (73%) and Dohuk (64%)**. However, the job distribution by age indicates that **90% of respondents aged between 35 and 49 have the highest employment rate**, while the age group of 18-25 exhibits the lowest employment rate. This observation aligns with our earlier assumption, according to which many individuals in this younger age group may still be enrolled in universities. Moreover, the majority of those seeking employment fall into the 18-25 age group (15%), whereas only 4% of those aged 35-49 are unemployed and actively seeking employment.

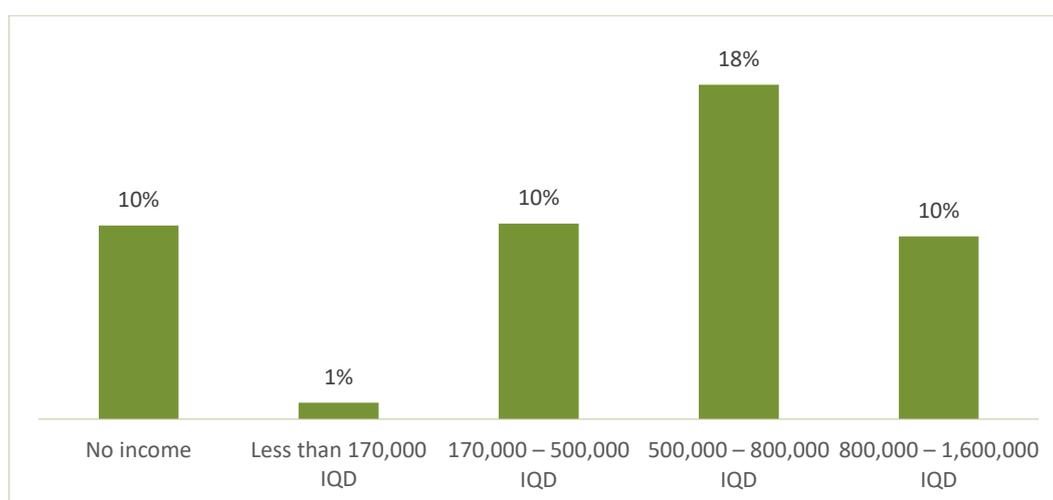
Figure 10: Distribution of respondents by simplified activeness in the labour market



Data for the 50+ years old group only very broadly indicative (N = 15).

When respondents were asked about their income (see Figure 11), nearly half of them (47%) chose not to disclose this information, posing a challenge to obtain a comprehensive overview of the entire sample. However, among the participants who did provide this information, 45% live in households with a monthly income ranging from 800,000 to 1,600,000 Iraqi Dinars (IQD, equivalent to USD 600 to 1200), and 36% report a monthly income exceeding IQD 1,600,000 (USD 1200).

Figure 11: Individual income of all sample



Furthermore, 75% of respondents live in households where several members contribute to the income. Approximately 52% of these households have two earning members, whereas 23% report three or more earners. Only 1% of households report having no earning members. **These findings suggest that the drivers of migration may not be due to lack of jobs (or not being active in the labour**

market generally), but rather to the nature of available occupations and the limited economic opportunities provided in Iraq.

*Living Conditions: marital status, number of children, and accommodation type*

The majority of potential migrants in the study are single (69%) and live with their parents (70%), which is indicative of the young age of respondents across the sample. Only 28% of the respondents are married and live together with their spouse or partner. It comes as no surprise that **only 3% of the respondents live alone**, as it is common in the Middle East for young adults to live with their parents and even grandparents emphasising familial bonds and connections. Furthermore, only 3% of the sample are divorced or separated and none widowed. With the exception of single individuals, the remaining participants were surveyed regarding the number of children they have. Results indicate that 21% of the entire sample have one to three children, while 5% have four or more children, and another 5% have no children. Regarding housing arrangements, the majority of respondents (45%) own a house, while 19% have rented a house and 8% an apartment. Only 6% own an apartment, and 21% prefer not to disclose this information.

The table below provides a visual representation of the findings from our survey, illustrating the profile of the typical potential Iraqi migrant segmented by demographic variables including age, employment status, marital status, gender, and educational attainment. Understanding the characteristics of potential migrants allows to tailor messaging to resonate with their needs and interests. Our analysis reveals that the **typical potential migrant from Iraq is a young, single male, well-educated (with completed secondary education or above), and currently engaged in the labour market**. It is crucial to highlight that the overrepresentation of young males in the likelihood of migration stems from their larger presence in the overall sample, rather than indicating a higher propensity to migrate compared to other groups.

**Table 3: Likelihood of migrating in the near future by age group.**

How likely are you to migrate to another country in the near future?	<i>Not likely at all</i>	<i>Slightly unlikely</i>	<i>Somewhat likely</i>	<i>Very likely</i>	<i>[Did not know]</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Age 18-25 (n = 426)</b>						
Employed	12 (55%)	81 (57%)	103 (58%)	43 (54%)	0 (0.00%)	239 (56%)
Single	21 (95%)	135 (94%)	171 (96%)	75 (94%)	2 (100%)	404 (95%)
Male	19 (86%)	123 (86%)	164 (92%)	69 (86%)	1 (50%)	376 (88%)
Secondary Education and Above	20 (91%)	135 (94%)	170 (95%)	75 (94%)	1 (50%)	401 (94%)
<b>Age 26-34 (n = 471)</b>						
Employed	20 (87%)	151 (96%)	173 (86%)	60 (71%)	4 (100%)	408 (87%)
Single	14 (61%)	85 (54%)	121 (60%)	56 (66%)	1 (25%)	277 (59%)
Male	18 (78%)	138 (87%)	165 (82%)	65 (76%)	1 (25%)	387 (82%)
Secondary Education and Above	22 (96%)	144 (91%)	195 (97%)	84 (99%)	4 (100%)	449 (95%)
<b>Age 35-49 (n = 107)</b>						
Employed	10 (77%)	43 (93%)	34 (87%)	7 (100%)	2 (100%)	96 (90%)
Single	1 (8%)	7 (15%)	7 (18%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	16 (15%)

Male	8 (63%)	39 (85%)	32 (82%)	6 (86%)	1 (50%)	86 (80%)
Secondary Education and Above	13 (100.00%)	42 (91%)	38 (97%)	7 (100.00%)	2 (100.00%)	102 (95%)

As anticipated, when age increases, there is a concurrent growth in both employment rates and marital status. This trend is evident across the entire sample, including those with higher intentions to migrate. However, notably among individuals aged 26 to 34, a strong inclination towards migration in the near future is associated with lower levels of employment. Within this age bracket, 71% of those indicating a ‘very likely’ inclination towards migration are employed, compared to 87% among those reporting ‘not likely at all’, 96% among those indicating ‘slightly unlikely’, and 86% among those expressing ‘somewhat likely’ intentions. This underscores the association between diminished employment opportunities and increased likelihood of migration, affirming the influence of economic factors as significant push and pull factors in migration decisions.

An additional interesting observation is that although males constitute the majority in every age group across all migration intentions, they are relatively more predominant in the age range of 18 to 25 years when expressing a ‘somewhat likely’ (92%) or ‘very likely’ (86%) likelihood of migrating to another country in the near future. While definitive conclusions cannot be drawn due to the limited sample size of women, these findings suggest a tendency for female respondents to migrate at slightly later stages in their life compared to male ones.

### *Individual Migration History*

Before delving into the analysis of migration intentions and driving factors, it is crucial to investigate the migration histories of our surveyed individuals. We inquired respondents about their prior experiences related to living abroad, the length of stay abroad, and the countries they have returned from. Our findings indicate that only a **small subset (10%) have lived outside Iraq**, with 66% of those who lived abroad staying between one and five years, 21% lived less than a year, and 12% lived abroad for more than five years. Among this group, a **significant portion (44%) have returned from Türkiye, making it the most prevalent country of return, followed by Syria (14%)**. Reasons for returning vary, with the most frequently cited being **improved economic conditions (19%)**, closely followed by family constraints (17%). Figure 12 shows a detailed breakdown of the countries from which respondents have returned, while Figure 13 shows the reasons for return, offering a glimpse into the individual migration realities of our sample.

Figure 12: Countries of return

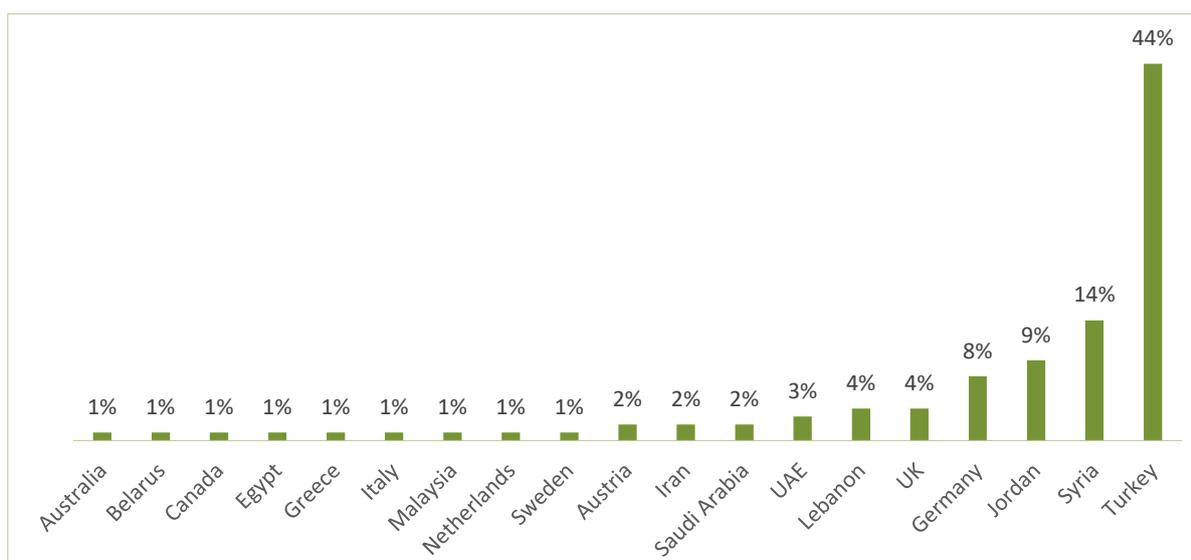
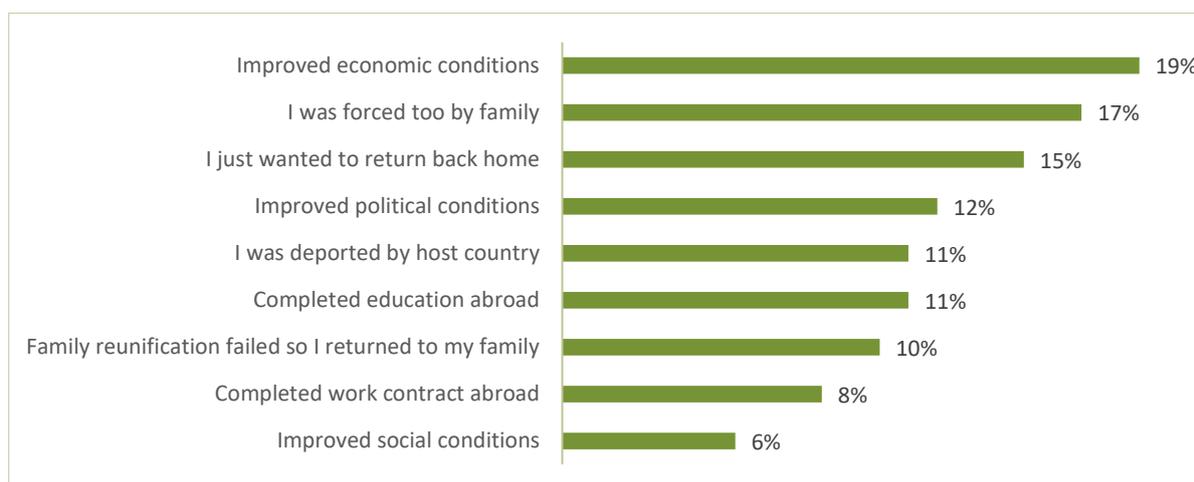


Figure 13: Reasons of return



### 5.3 The migration desire: Intentions and influences

Conceiving and considering migration constitute what Hagen-Zanker et al. referred to as imagination within the area of migration.<sup>66</sup> This encompasses various mental processes, such as pondering or envisioning a destination or a potential new life in a different country. However, not all visualisations or imaginations of migration materialise in reality. Throughout the migration journey, both tangible and intangible elements play a significant role in influencing and guiding migrants’ decisions on whether to migrate, how to migrate, and when, as well as through which channels. This section will focus on exploring the intentions to migrate, the anticipated timeline, the main drivers, and the key influencers that have an impact on potential migrants’ decision making. As stated previously, the initial query in our survey pertained to whether respondents are considering migrating out of Iraq. The below Figure 14 depicts the responses categorised by various demographics, including age groups, governorate, population group, and working status. Overall, about **47% of the respondents often think about migrating**, 41% occasionally think about it, and **10% have already made plans towards**

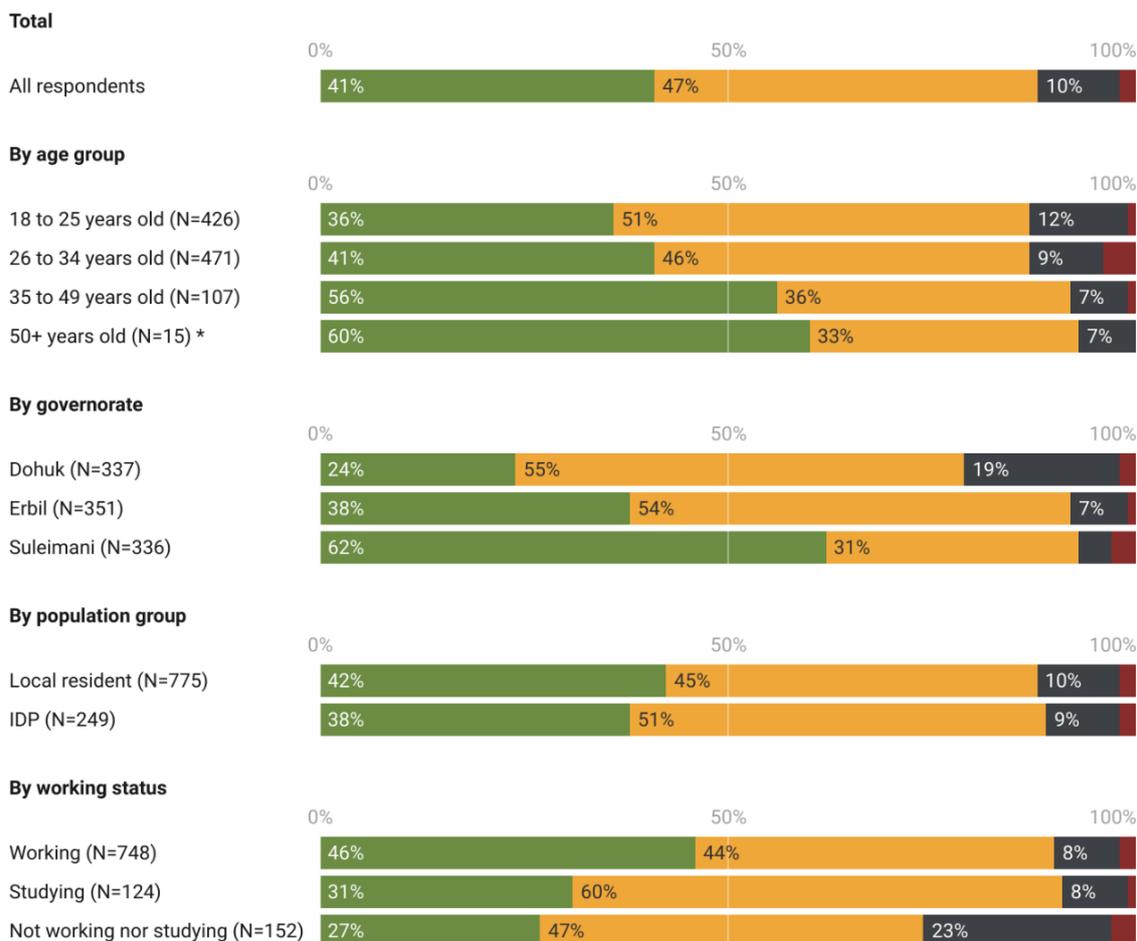
<sup>66</sup> Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Gemma Hennessey, and Caterina Mazzilli, “Subjective and Intangible Factors in Migration Decision-Making: A Review of Side-Lined Literature,” *Migration Studies* 11, no. 2 (2023): 2023–2349, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnad003>.

**migrating**, while a few (2%) have already tried to migrate recently. Upon analysing the age distribution, the younger cohort (18 to 25 years old) exhibits a higher tendency to consider migration (51%), whereas the older age groups show less consideration, particularly those aged 50 and above. This finding is consistent with the earlier results presented in the above table where we examined the different demographic characteristics to determine the profile of a potential migrant.

**Figure 14: Potential migration out of Iraq**

**Are you considering migrating out of Iraq?**

■ I sometimes think about migrating 
 ■ I often think about migrating 
 ■ I have already made some plans about migrating 
 ■ I have already tried to migrate



Following up on the previous observations, where it was noted that the highest likelihood to migrate was registered in Dohuk, **this governorate exhibits lower levels of development compared to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah**, along with a more tribal and conservative social structure. These factors may influence the younger demographic to consider migration with greater probability and/or frequency. Additionally, **Dohuk has an easy access to Türkiye**, which is the first destination en-route to Europe, as seen in the Returnee Report.

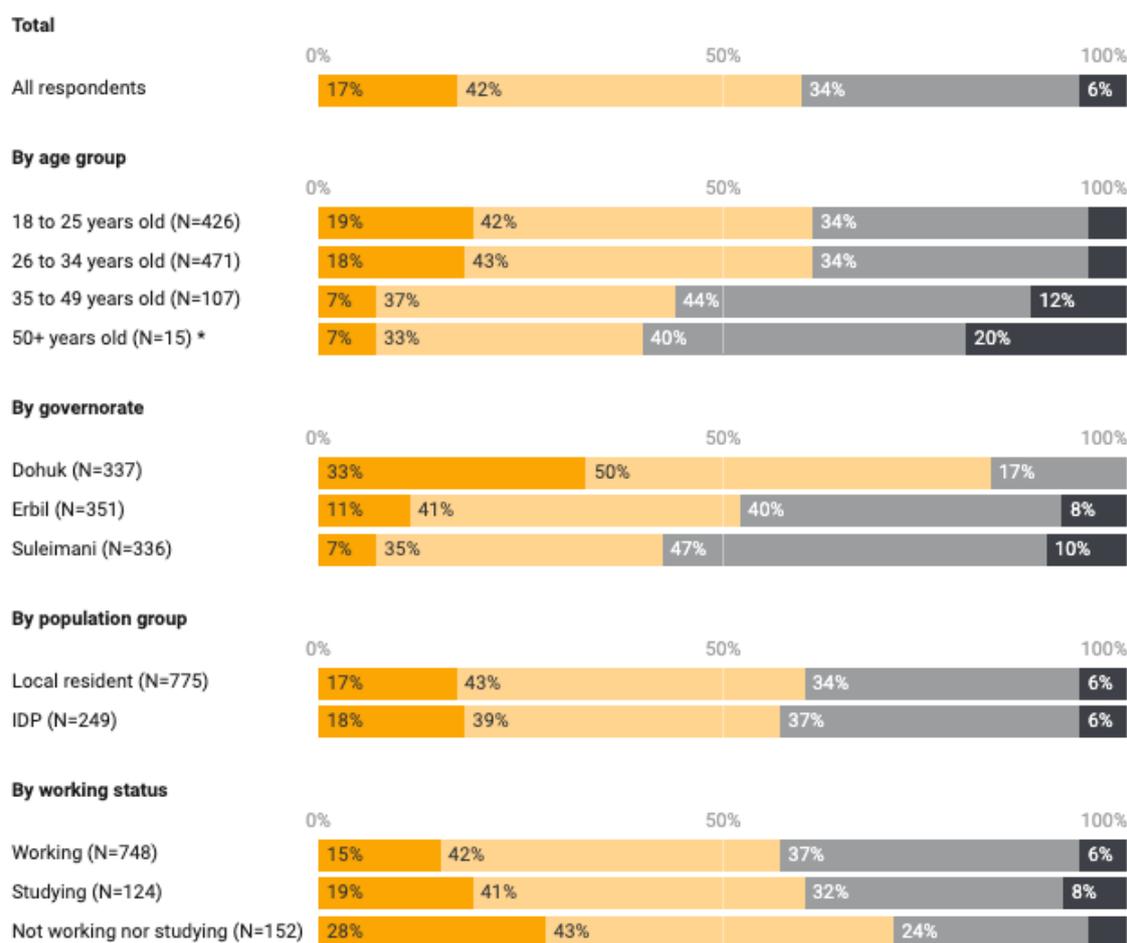
A section of the survey was dedicated to examining the respondents' migration intentions and decision-making processes (see Figure 15). The willingness to migrate varies significantly, with 42% of respondents considering migration as 'somewhat likely' and 17% indicating a high likelihood to migrate. Conversely, a substantial portion of respondents (40%) remain uncertain about migration, indicating that they are either 'slightly unlikely' or 'not likely at all' to migrate. Further analysis by age segmentation reveals a notable trend among the younger population, particularly those between 18 and 25 who show a higher tendency (19%) to migrate, with 'very likely' compared to just 7% in both age groups 35-49 and 50+. However, if 'very likely' and 'somewhat likely' are combined, we see that

both age groups 18-25 and 26-34 are equal percentages at 61% each. This underscores the younger generations' stronger inclination to migrate. Similarly, Dohuk registers the highest proportion of respondents (33%) who feel very likely to migrate, whereas Erbil and Sulaymaniyah present lower percentages (11% and 7%, respectively). Both IDPs and local residents present comparable findings, even though IDPs show a slightly higher likelihood to migrate. Within the working status category noteworthy observations arise; individuals not engaged in labour or education show the highest percentages of considering migration (28%). Further exploration into the likelihood of migrating in the near future in correlation with education levels demonstrate that, respondents with higher educational levels show a greater intention to migrate, notably those holding a bachelor's degree expressing a 'very likely' (22%) and 'somewhat likely' (42%) stance to migrate.

Figure 15: Likelihood to migrate in the near future

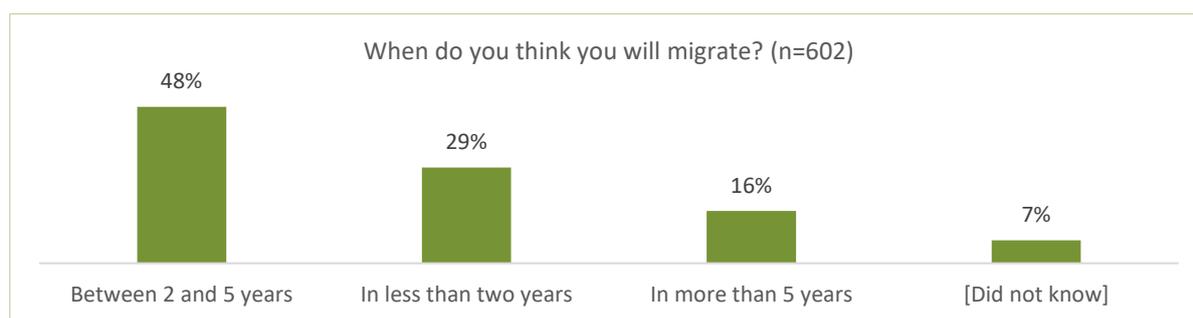
**How likely are you to migrate to another country in the near future?**

Very likely Somewhat likely Slightly unlikely Not likely at all



The anticipated timeline for migration among Iraqis who have previously indicated they are 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely' to migrate shows a **significant proportion (48%) predicting to migrate between two and five years**, suggesting a medium-term view of migration plans. In contrast, 29% of respondents anticipate migrating in less than two years, 16% foresee migration beyond the five years, and 7% remain uncertain about the timing of their migration attempts (see Figure 16).

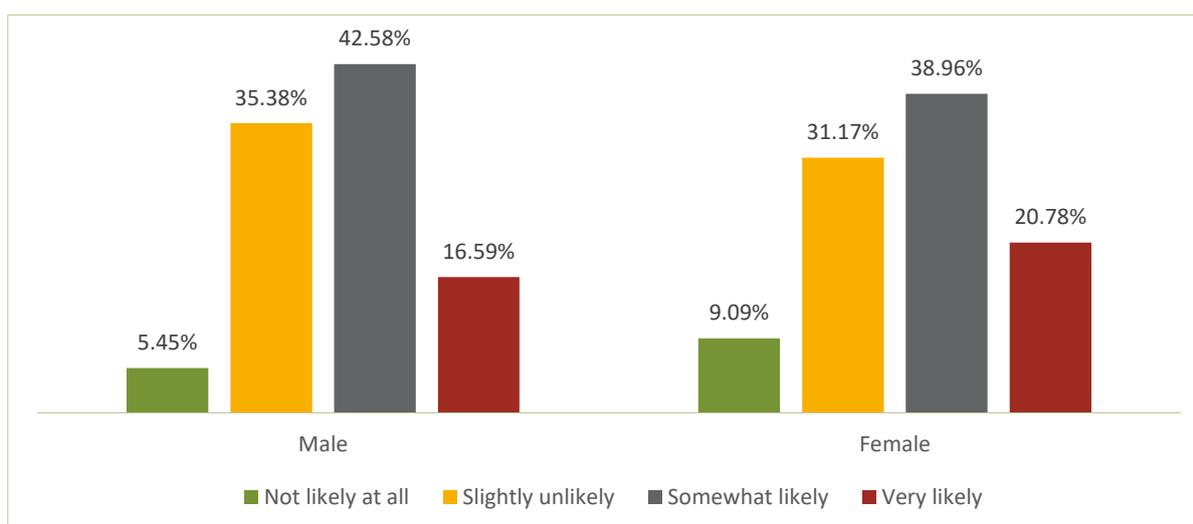
**Figure 16: Planned timing for migration**



*\*Only asked if respondent is 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely' to migrate*

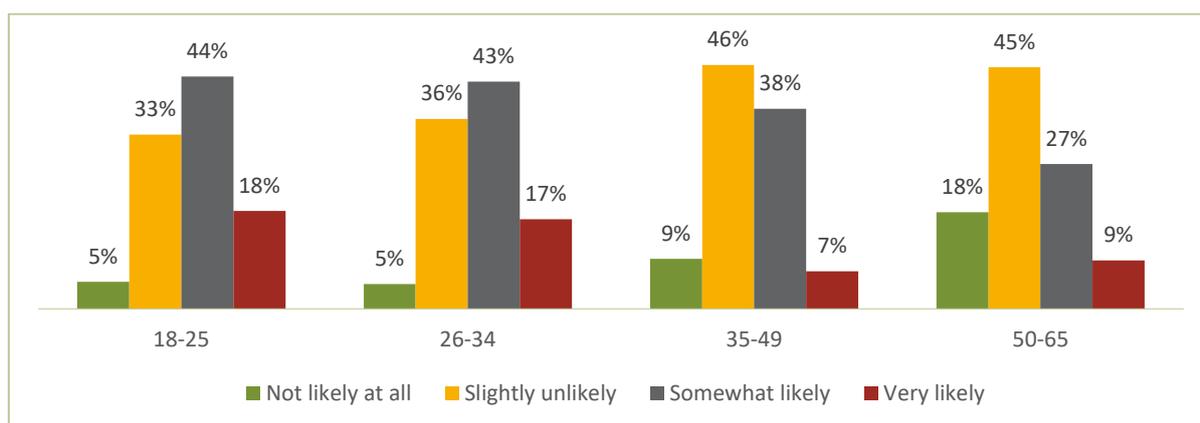
The likelihood of migration segmented by gender shows that both male and female respondents tend towards the 'somewhat likely' option when asked about the likelihood to migrate to another country in the near future (see Figure 17). Particularly noteworthy are the similarities in decision-makings between male and female respondents. Across all four categories of the scale (not likely at all, slightly unlikely, somewhat likely, and very likely), the selected options show remarkable similarity for both genders. The most chosen appears to be 'somewhat likely', followed by 'slightly unlikely', then 'very likely', with the least favoured option being 'completely unlikely'.

**Figure 17: Likelihood of migration by gender**



Further analysis was conducted to understand the age-based variations in migration intentions. The results in Figure 18 indicate varying attitudes towards migration among male respondents across various age groups. Younger males aged 18 to 25 show a moderate to high inclination towards migration, with a majority (44%) considering it 'somewhat likely', and a notable fraction (18%) deeming it 'very likely', indicating openness to the idea of moving to another country. In the 26-34 age group, this openness persists, with an increased likelihood of regarding migration as 'very likely'. A shift towards uncertainty becomes apparent in the responses of individuals aged **35 to 49**. Here, **nearly half of the respondents (46%) lean towards 'slightly unlikely', indicating a decreased inclination towards migration**, although a significant number still considers it as 'somewhat likely'. This scepticism peaks in the 50 to 65 age group, where there is a pronounced resistance to migration: the majority of respondents rate the likelihood of moving to another country as either 'not likely at all' or 'slightly unlikely' (64% combined). The percentage of those who consider migration 'very likely' drops sharply in this age group (10%), suggesting that the likelihood of migration diminishes with age. Overall, the trend across all age groups leans towards a 'somewhat likely' stance towards migration, indicating a general openness among males.

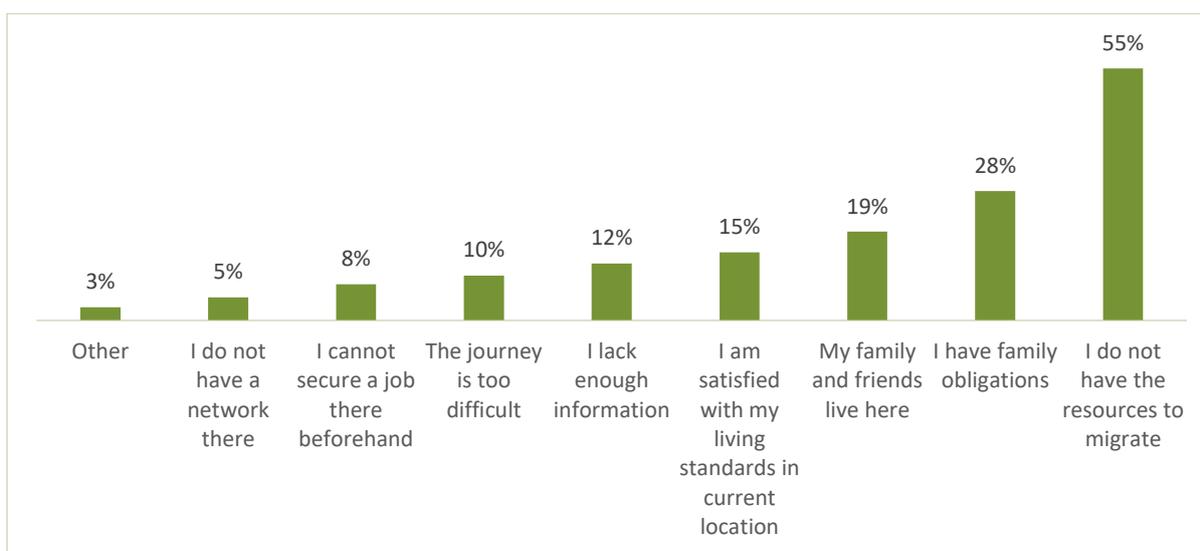
Figure 18: Male's intentions to migrate according to age



*Intentions to Migrate – why and why not? where, how, and with whom?*

Exploring the perspectives of individuals who are currently not considering migrating to another country unveil interesting insights (see Figure 19). The **majority of respondents (55%) attribute their decision to a lack of resources as the primary reason**, while **28% express being bound by family obligations**, and 19% mention the presence of their family and friends in Iraq. These individuals encompass those who have responded with ‘not likely at all’, ‘slightly unlikely’, or ‘do not know’.

Figure 19: Reasons for delaying migration

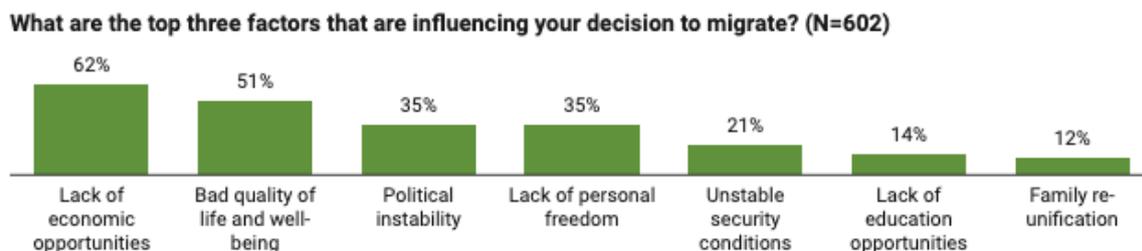


Numerous studies have investigated factors driving emigration from Iraq, shedding light on the elements shaping their decision-making process. According to the IOM, the deteriorating security situation and the economic crisis stand out as primary drivers, followed by political instability, insecurity, and corruption.<sup>67</sup> In the MIRAMI-survey findings, a substantial **62% of respondents who express a likelihood of migration (‘somewhat likely’ or ‘very likely’) identify the lack of economic opportunities as a key driver while 51% point to the poor quality of life and well-being**. This indicates that a majority perceive economic prospects as inadequate in their current location and are thus hoping for better prospects elsewhere. In fact, the economic and political challenges that have plagued Iraq since 2003 have also strained the healthcare system, diminishing its quality, efficiency,

<sup>67</sup> IOM Iraq-DTM, ‘Migration Flows From Iraq to Europe: Reasons Behind Migration’ (Baghdad, 2016).

and accessibility.<sup>68</sup> This could also shed light on the well-being aspect, since considerations regarding quality of life play a significant role in the desire to migrate, possibly also reflecting dissatisfaction with social services, health care, or community infrastructure. Furthermore, political instability is highlighted by 35% of respondents, underscoring concerns about the political climate and its impact on personal and societal stability. Although somewhat lower, the lack of personal freedom (35%) and unstable security conditions (21%) remain notable factors influencing migration decisions.

Figure 20: Factors influencing migration decision



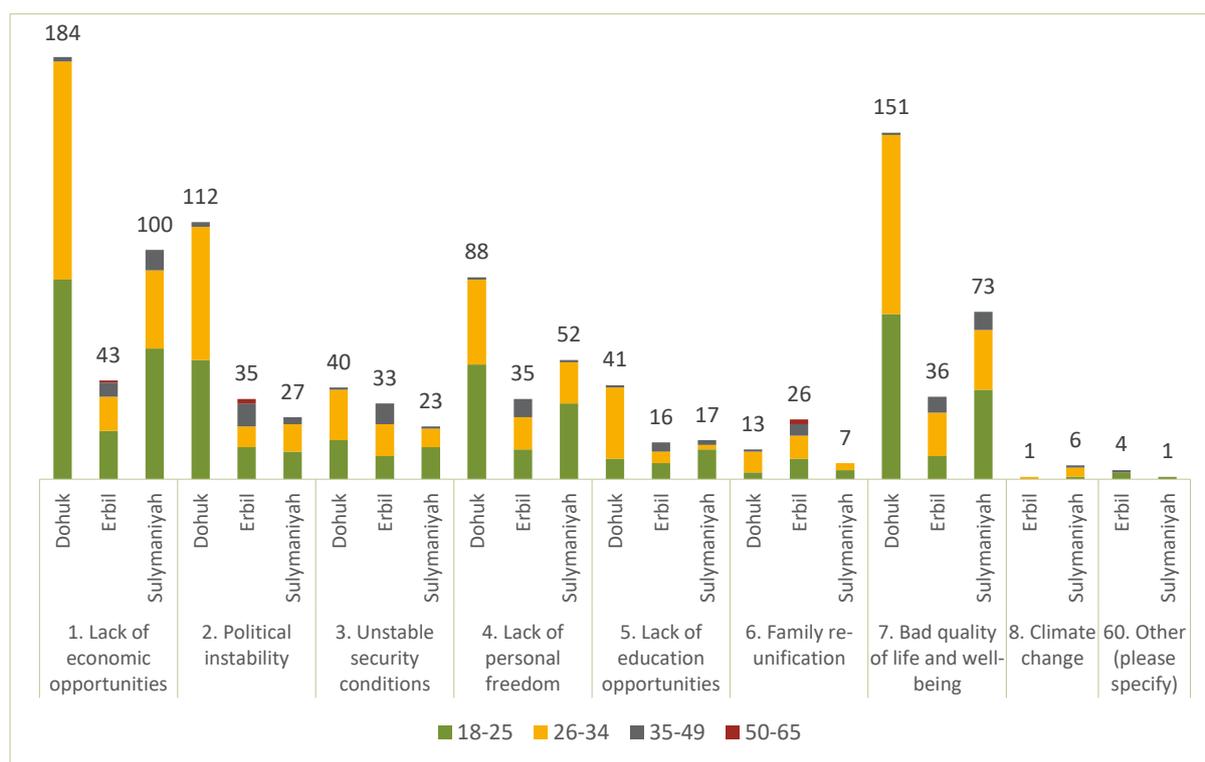
Only asked if respondent is 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely' to migrate.

Civil Development Organisation in their interview stated that governments should deeply consider the underlying reasons motivating people towards irregular migration, in order to address the root causes of this issue. During their information sessions, people always ask them to advocate on their behalf to the governments and high-level authorities, delivering their messages on the need to provide job opportunities at least.

The aim of our analysis is to ascertain whether the aggregate trends observed across the sample exhibit variations when subjected to cross-tabulation with different demographic characteristics or variables. This allows us to interpret the differential impact of these characteristics on the observed phenomena, thereby enhancing our understanding of the underlying dynamics at play. To achieve this, we compared the highlighted primary reasons influencing decisions across different age groups (Figure 21) and among respondents across all three distinct governorates (Figure 22). For respondents, **'lack of economic opportunities' is the most influential factor to migrate, with a notably higher incidence among the younger group (67%)** compared to the older demographic (48%). 'Bad quality of life and well-being' remain the second most influential factor, with higher prevalence among the younger group (54%). A noteworthy observation is that political instability is of greater concern for the older age group (40%), positioning it as the third influential factor for this demographic, followed by 'unstable security conditions' (24%). Overall, economic prospects stand out as the foremost determinant of migration decisions, particularly among the youth, while political and security concerns held more sway among the older group. The data thus indicate that while there are shared concerns across age groups, the intensity and prioritisation of these factors differ, likely reflecting different life stages and circumstance.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Istepanian, "Mapping Iraq's Post-2003 Health Crisis: Two Decades of Retrogression and Kleptocracy," Centre Français de Recherche Sur l'Irak (blog), January 31, 2024, <https://cfri-irak.com/en/article/mapping-iraqs-post-2003-health-crisis-two-decades-of-retrogression-and-kleptocracy-2024-01-31..>

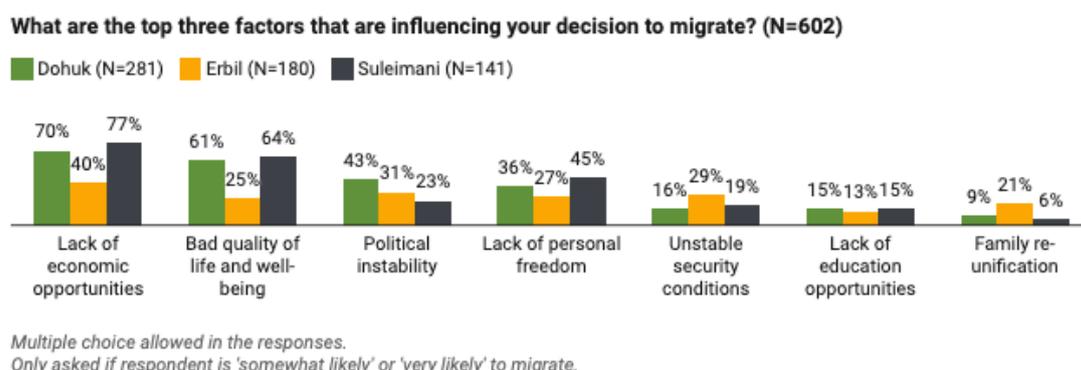
Figure 21: Factors influencing male's decisions to migrate by age and governorate



Upon incorporating the data segmented by governorates, it becomes evident that regional disparities significantly shape the factors influencing migration decisions. **Across all governorates the predominant factor remains the lack of economic opportunities, with the highest incidence observed in Sulaymaniyah (77%), followed by Dohuk (70%) and Erbil (40%).** Interestingly, Sulaymaniyah has the highest level of concern regarding the lack of economic opportunities, despite showing the lowest unemployment rates among respondents. Of particular interest is the order of leading factors influencing migration decisions, from 'lack of economic opportunities' to 'bad quality of life and well-being', followed by 'political instability' and 'lack of personal freedom'. However, when reviewed from the perspective of each governorate, not all factors follow the same order of influence. For instance, in Erbil the primary factor is lack of economic opportunities, followed by political instability (31%), unstable security conditions (29%), and lack of personal freedom (27%). This illustrates that the prioritisation of factors varies across contexts, highlighting the nuanced dynamics influencing migration decisions within each governorate. Several respondents identify more than one key factor influencing their decision to migrate. This overlap is critical for understanding the complexity of migration decisions, where multiple factors often interact to shape an individual's choice. Certain drivers, such as climate change, serve as indirect factors that may influence other drivers.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, individuals departing from the same location may do so for various reasons, thereby allowing respondents to select multiple factors they deem essential to their decision-making process.

<sup>69</sup> Bram Frouws et al., "Why People Migrate. Insights and Key Messages Drawn from a Decade of MMC Research and 4Mi Data Collection." (Mixed Migration Centre, 2022), [https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/217\\_Insights\\_and\\_key\\_messages\\_drawn\\_from\\_a\\_decade\\_of MMC\\_research\\_and\\_4Mi\\_data\\_collection.pdf](https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/217_Insights_and_key_messages_drawn_from_a_decade_of MMC_research_and_4Mi_data_collection.pdf).

Figure 22: Factors influencing migration decision by governorate



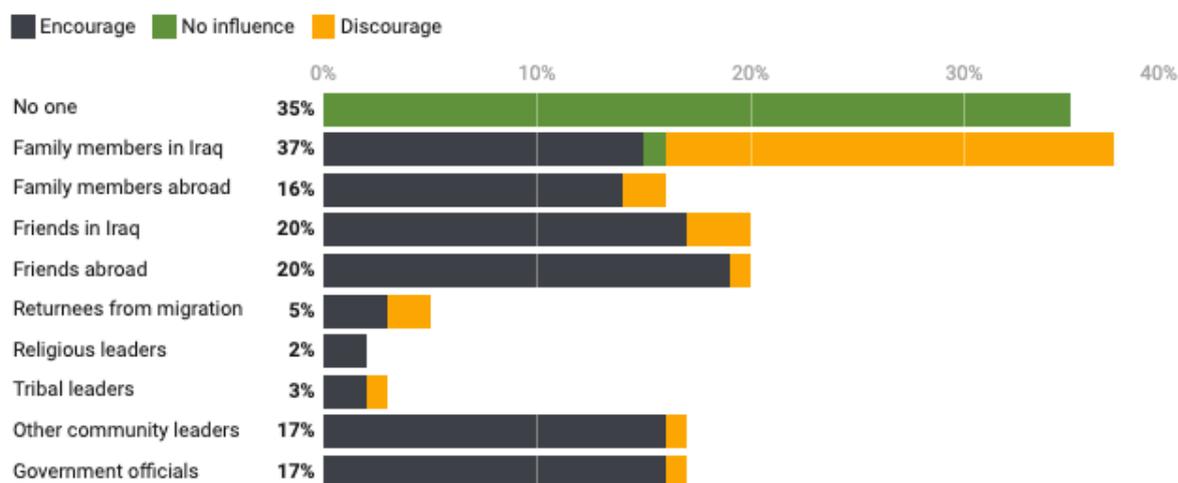
Further analysis was undertaken to examine the factors influencing male respondents' decision to migrate, segmented by age groups across the three governorates. **The most striking observation is the overwhelming impact of the lack of economic opportunities among both age groups 18-25 and 26-34.** Notably, Dohuk exhibits a pronounced spike not only in the lack of economic opportunities, but also in factors such as bad quality of life and well-being, political instability, and lack of personal freedom. **Dohuk generally tends to have the highest numbers across almost all factors except for family reunification, where Erbil has the lead.** Interestingly, no male respondent in Dohuk states climate change as factors that might influence their decisions to migrate, which may explain the heightened prominence of other factors. Moreover, climate change is also the least mentioned factor among male respondents in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, suggesting it may not be recognised as a pressing concern or is overshadowed by more immediate issues. The lack of economic opportunities emerges as a significant influencing factor among women as well. However, the significance varies across age groups and governorates. **The highest concern regarding the lack of economic opportunities is among women in the 26-34 age group in Erbil.** This may be influenced by the fact that out of the 159 female respondents surveyed in the sample, 85 of them live in Erbil.

#### *Key influencers in decision-making*

Our MIRAMI survey data show that individual agency and family or external pressures often intersect. Figure 23 supports the notion of individual agency as a significant driver of migration decisions, **with a notable 35% of respondents indicating that their choice to migrate is made independently of external influencers.** However, the chart also highlights the considerable role of family members in Iraq in influencing decision-making, whether they encourage or discourage migration. In this context, **57% of the respondents who mention family and friends in Iraq highlight that they have discouraged them from migrating.** The next significant influencers are friends in Iraq and abroad (both at 20%), who lean towards encouraging potential migrants to migrate. A striking finding from our analysis is that **17% of respondents identify government officials as key influencers, primarily in encouraging respondents' intentions to migrate.** Respondents do not refer to high-level officials but rather to public servants, who might even be connected to the respondents through kinship or friendship relations, and with whom respondents generally interact for routine administrative tasks. Overall, it appears that only family in Iraq has discouraged respondents from migrating, while other influencers have predominantly encouraged migration intentions.

Figure 23: Key Influencers in Decision-making

Who are the key influencers in your decision-making process regarding migration and what type of influence they have?



Multiple choice allowed except if 'no one' selected.

Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents in our sample (98%) highlight that it is their own choice to migrate. Among the remaining 2% who experience pressure to migrate, the main reasons are family pressure (38%) and both threats and coercion (13% each), while 38% state other reasons such as being asked by the husband (family reunification).

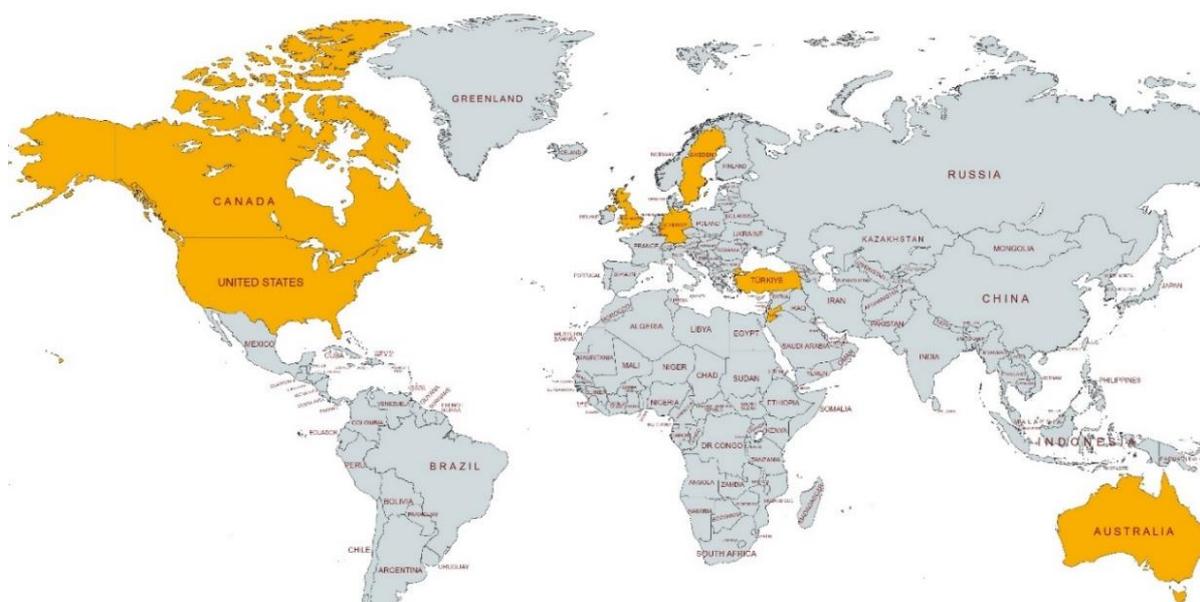
#### Preferred country of destination: why?

As mentioned earlier, migration choices are deeply personal and often linked to a search for better life, especially among those who feel socially marginalised or economically deprived. Upon examining the data on migration destination preferences, **Germany emerges as the most favoured country, with 19% of respondents selecting it.** This aligns with data from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), which highlight that the main countries of origin of migrants coming to Germany are Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq.<sup>70</sup> The UK is the second most popular choice (17%), followed by Canada (15%) and the USA (11%). Sweden is selected by 10% of the respondents, while 3% of respondents who have selected other non-European countries refer to destinations such as Türkiye and the UAE. **Overall, the data indicate a strong inclination towards European countries, with a combined 56%, some of which already host a significant Iraqi and Kurdish diaspora.** These results mirror those generated by Gallup’s World Poll, which interviewed nearly 600,000 individuals across 156 countries between 2013 and 2016. Their results also indicate that the top countries migrants want to move to are the USA (21%), Germany (6%), Canada (5%), and the UK (5%).<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> BAMF, “Migration Report 2021: Key Findings” (Berlin: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2021), [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2021-zentrale-ergebnisse.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2021-zentrale-ergebnisse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6).

<sup>71</sup> Charlotte Edmond, “Which Countries Do Migrants Want to Move To?,” World Economic Forum (blog), 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/these-are-the-countries-migrants-want-to-move-to/>.

Figure 24: Considered country for migration



Source: Authors' elaboration using mapchart.net

Following the inquiry about preferred destinations, our survey delved into the motivations behind these choices, which allowed participants to select multiple reasons for their selection (see Figure 25). Among the most frequently chosen countries of destination – Germany, the UK, Canada, the USA, and Sweden – our analysis reveals that the top reasons for selecting these destinations are **better economic opportunities and an improved quality of life**. This underscores the importance of economic prospects and lifestyle enhancements in the migration decision-making process.

Figure 25: Reasons for choosing destination

What are the reasons for choosing the above destinations?

	Germany (N=189)	UK (N=171)	Canada (N=150)	USA (N=114)	Sweden (N=101)
Better economic opportunities	62%	68%	57%	43%	57%
Improved quality of life	58%	55%	49%	53%	53%
Always wanted to live there	22%	23%	23%	29%	24%
Political stability	21%	11%	21%	22%	21%
Peace and safety	16%	23%	22%	18%	24%
Job opportunities in specific industries	13%	9%	7%	11%	12%
Popular destination among migrants	13%	27%	9%	14%	10%
Education	9%	5%	11%	5%	5%
Ease of asylum procedure	9%	11%	11%	0%	1%
Family already residing there	5%	9%	7%	11%	8%
Cultural or linguistic familiarity	5%	15%	9%	9%	7%

Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

We also conducted a cross-tabulation analysis on the 107 individuals who had previously lived outside of Iraq and subsequently returned. The analysis identified patterns and trends among migrants about their preference for returning to the same country, region, or elsewhere. A striking result is that all individuals who returned from the global south and Türkiye have either selected the global north as their preferred destination or have not chosen any destination (see Table 4).

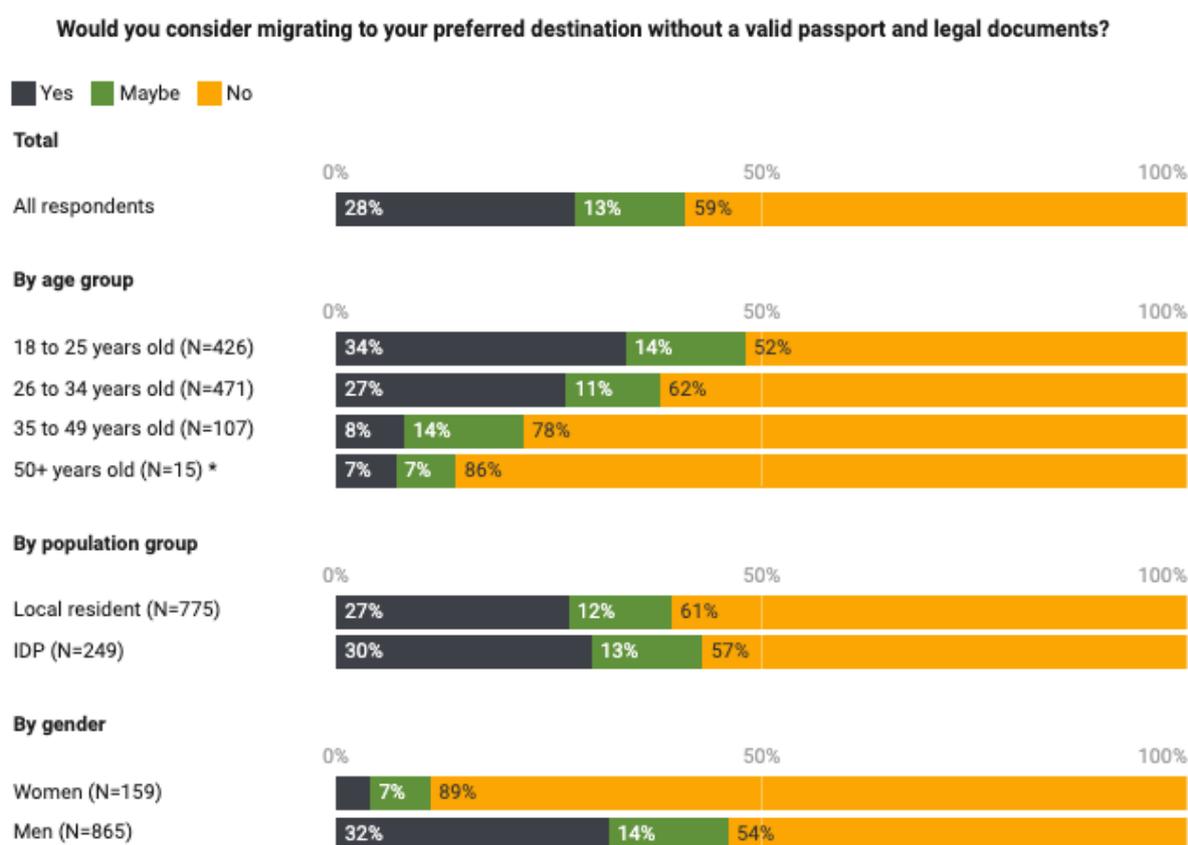
**Table 4: Preferred destination of future migration by country of return**

Countries of Return	Preferred Destination							
	USA	UK	Australia	Canada	Germany	Sweden	Türkiye	No specific destination
Australia			1					
Austria	1				1			
Canada				1				
Egypt					1			
Germany	1		1	1	3			1
Greece								1
Iran					1			
Jordan	3		3	1	3			
Lebanon			1	2	1			
Malaysia							1	
Netherlands								1
Saudi Arabia								2
Sweden						1		
Syria	2	3		2	5	2		
Türkiye	9	4	1	7	9	4	3	6
UAE					1			1
UK		3						

Given the sensitivity surrounding irregular migration, our survey took a cautious approach deliberately avoiding direct questions regarding irregularity and the irregular migration process to minimise potential discomfort. However, we asked participants if they would consider migrating to their preferred destination without a valid passport and the required legal documents. The responses reveal a notable distribution: **28% of participants indicate willingness to undertake such travel**, 13% remain uncertain, **while the majority (59%) explicitly dismiss the idea**, highlighting a strong preference for regular migration pathways (see Figure 26).

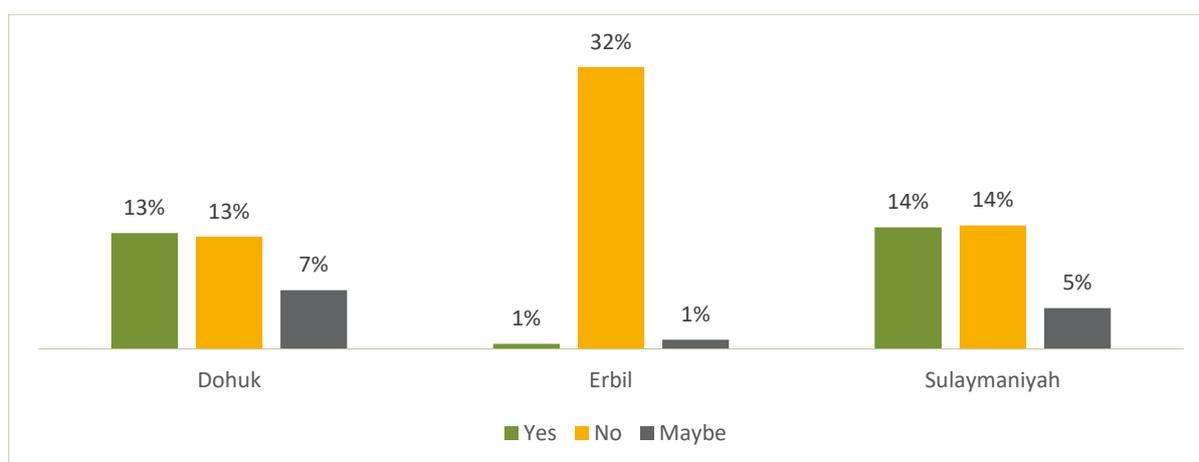
Interestingly, 89% of **female participants express a firm rejection to migrate irregularly**, while 7% of them are uncertain. A deeper examination reveals that older respondents are less inclined to migrate without a valid passport and legal documents (78% for those between 35 and 49 years old) and (86% for those older than 50), while this percentage decreases to 62% and 52% when considering those below 34 years old (see Figure 26). Despite the age disparity and the fact that the majority of respondents are young, still the tendency to not migrate irregularly prevails. Moreover, those who are studying also indicate lower inclination to travel irregularly compared to those who are active in the labour market.

Figure 26: Considering irregular migration



When analysing the data across the three governorates, we observe that the overwhelming majority of respondents in Erbil would refuse to undertake irregular migration, while in both Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah an almost equally balanced percentage of respondents either show interest to travel irregularly or would never consider it (see Figure 27). These findings underscore the importance of tailoring the campaign according to the specific needs and preferences of potential migrants.

Figure 27: Considering irregular migration by governorate



Furthermore, when examining the results in more detail by considering other factors such as the financial ability to migrate, it is observed that among those who are able to finance travelling without papers, the results are not very different from the overall sample, **with 32% of respondents who would consider it**, while 57% would not (see Figure 28). However, among those who are not able to finance it, the results drop significantly, with only 13% that who would consider it and a substantial

70% who would not, possibly due to the increased difficulties associated with the lack of resources. **Regarding the sources of information about migration, those who rely on family and friends are the least likely to consider irregular migration (24%), while those who rely on TV and radio are more open to the idea of travelling without papers (49%).** This finding mirrors the fact observed earlier, where we saw how influence received from the family is frequently to discourage migration.

**This suggests that the channels through which individuals receive information about migration are influenced by the type and way in which information is presented,** which will be explored more in the subsequent chapter.

Figure 28: Considering irregular migration by ability to finance it and source of information

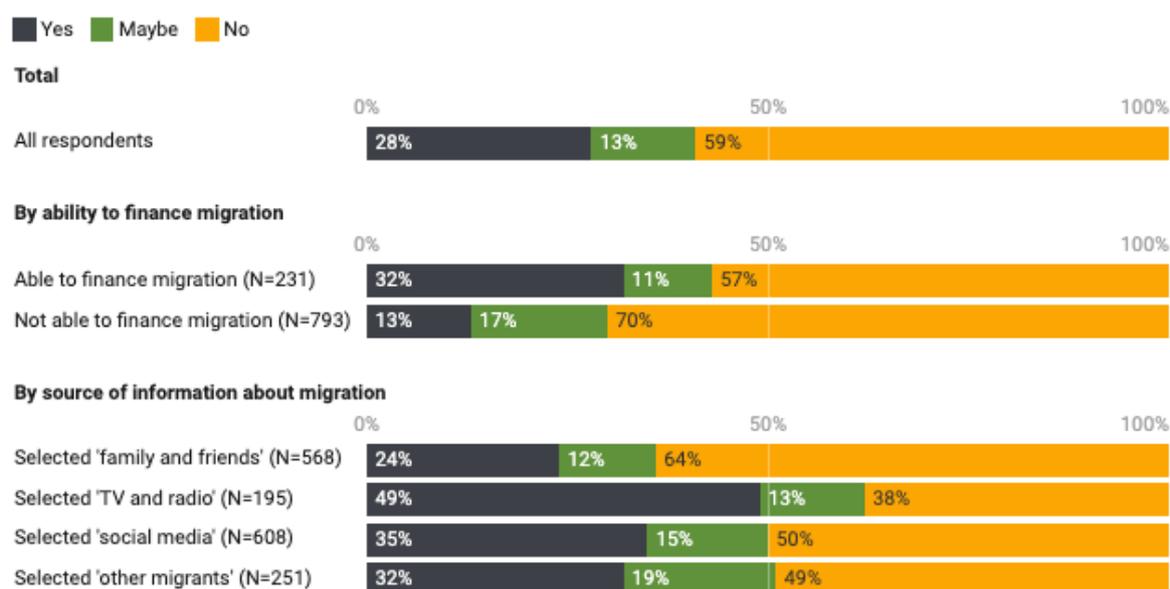
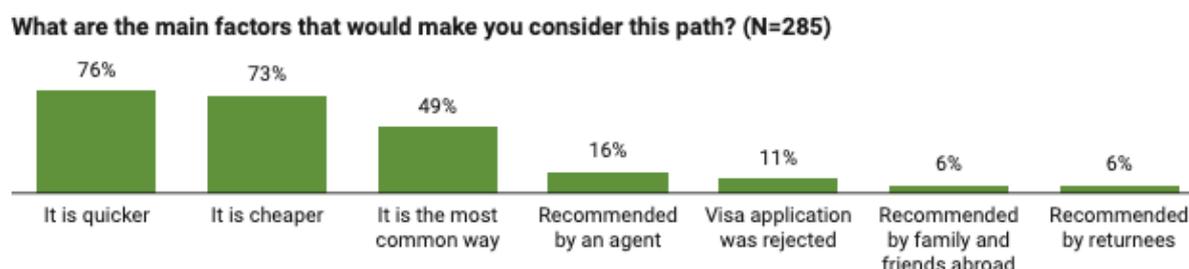


Figure 29 below highlights the main factors that may lead potential migrants to consider migrating irregularly. **The most significant results indicate that respondents perceive irregular migration as quicker (76%) and cheaper (73%)** than through legal channels, thus suggesting that **individuals might possess incorrect or inaccurate information** regarding this path. As highlighted by the IOM, the irregular journey to the intended destination can indeed take months or even years.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the fact that many other migrants have been migrating irregularly in the past is also a significant factor affecting people’s attitudes, as highlighted by 49% of the respondents. The other factors such as recommendations from family and friends abroad and returnees do not seem to be very significant.

Data on considering migrating irregularly was also disaggregated by access to information about migration (which will be discussed in more detail in section 5.5). Some trends show that respondents who have access to information about migration tend to not consider irregular migration, and their refusal to undertake this pact increases with their awareness of migration (see Figure 30). Those who consider to have access to information about migration (80%) are unlikely to travel irregularly.

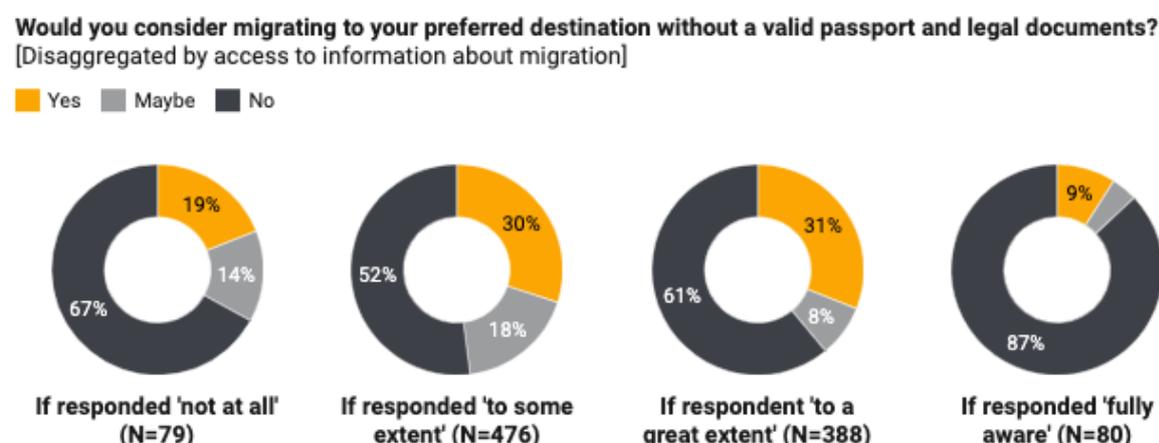
<sup>72</sup> IOM, “Key Migration Terms” (International Organization for Migration, 2024), <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

Figure 29: Main factors for considering irregular migration



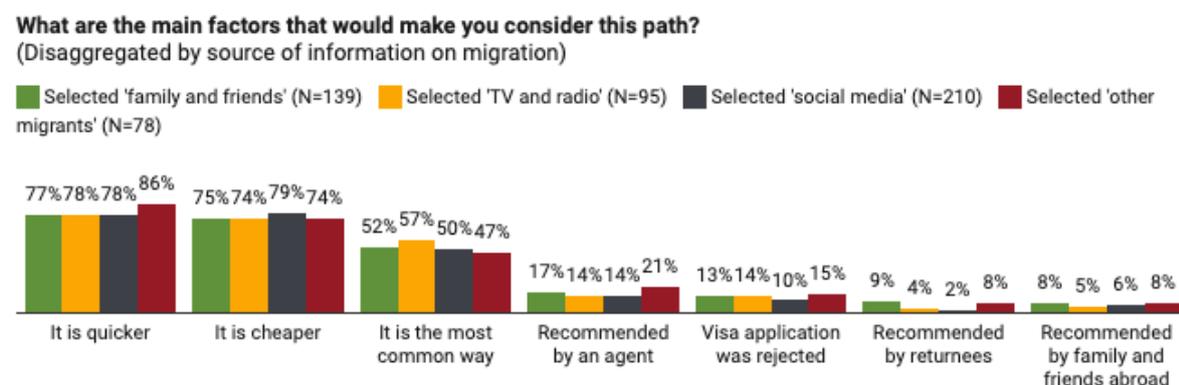
Only asked if respondent is considering migrating without passport and legal documents.  
Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

Figure 30: Intentions of irregular migration by access to information about migration



When the data is further disaggregated by the source of information on migration (Figure 31), it is noteworthy that respondents who rely on other migrants for their source of information tend to indicate that migrating irregularly is quicker (86%), making it the highest percentage among the different sources. While the difference may not be too significant from the rest of the responses, this finding underscores the potential influence of peer networks in shaping perceptions about irregular migration. Comparatively, the results are not significantly different between respondents who inform themselves through one source or another.

Figure 31: Main factors for considering irregular migration by source of information

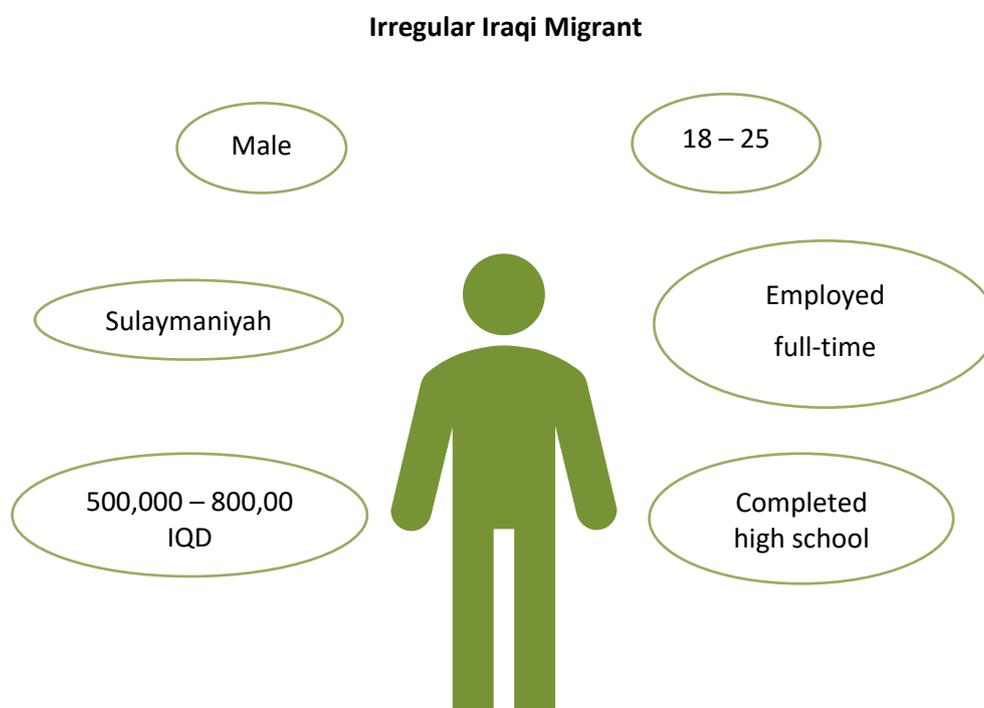


Multiple choice allowed in the responses.  
Only asked if respondent is 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely' to migrate.

Overall, looking at those with strong intentions to migrate, we can conclude that the composite potential irregular migrant profile is male (n=279), between 18 and 25 years old (n=144), based in

Sulaymaniyah (n=143), active in the labour market with full-time employment (n=99), with an individual income of 500,000 – 800,00 IQD (n=77), and with completed high school education (n=110).

Figure 32: Irregular migrant profile



## 5.4 In anticipation: The migrant's preparatory phase

This section delves into the preparatory phase of the migration, exploring the steps that respondents have already taken in preparation to migrate, their duration, the source and kind of support received, and the potential challenges they might have experienced.

Table 5: Preparatory steps of migration

Have you taken any preparatory steps for migrating to another country?				
		All respondents	If responded 'likely' to migrate	If responded 'unlikely' to migrate
1	Not yet	56%	38%	82%
2	I have gathered information on migrating to the preferred country of destination	28%	38%	14%
3	I have contacted friends and family for assistance	13%	20%	2%
4	I have applied for a visa to the intended country of destination	7%	12%	0%
5	I have collected the required documents	7%	11%	1%
6	I have contacted an agent	7%	11%	2%
7	I have applied for a passport	5%	8%	1%
8	I am learning the relevant language of the destination country	5%	7%	1%
9	I have made payment to an agent	1%	2%	0%
10	I have booked a ticket for the full or part of the journey	0%	1%	0%

From our survey, it is evident that **the majority of respondents (56%) have not taken any steps towards preparing for migration**. Among those likely to migrate, a smaller proportion (38%) have not taken any steps yet, suggesting a higher level of readiness or intent among this group compared to the general population of respondents. However, **an overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) have not begun preparations yet, which aligns with their stated low intentions to migrate**. Gathering information on the preferred country of destination is a common step for those considering migration, as indicated by 28% of all respondents. This step is equally common among those who specifically indicate their likelihood to migrate (38%), which may suggest that information gathering is a pivotal early step for those seriously considering migration. Even among those who are unlikely to migrate, 14% have also gathered this information. Moreover, lower percentages of respondents likely to migrate have taken more concrete steps towards the preparation, such as contacting friends and family for assistance (20%), applying for a visa (12%), collecting the required documents (11%), and contacting an agent (11%). Those unlikely to migrate state that they have not applied for a visa, and only 1% have collected the required documentation. Further down the list of preparatory steps, such as learning the language of the, making payments to an agent are even less common, with (5%) and (1%) of all respondents respectively have taken those steps. There is a clear distinction between those who are likely to migrate and those who are unlikely to migrate, with the former investing more efforts in the preparatory activities. It is noteworthy that the spectrum of preparedness ranges from initial information gathering to booking a ticket, **suggesting that the path to migration involves a series of concrete steps, each requiring access to specific information**.

With the Figure 33 below, we can generate different profile of responses with the aim of distinguishing between aspiring and intending migrants. Despite not seeing significant results, the largest profile

comprises of 37% of people who have started preparatory steps and is likely to migrate in the near future. This identifies an intending migrant as somebody who has concrete migration intentions, has started to make plans, and has taken preparatory steps. The remaining profiles draw different degrees of aspiring migrants, with 33% of respondents not having taken any preparatory steps and unlikely to migrate in the near future, followed by those who are likely to migrate but have not yet taken any preparatory steps (22%). The smallest group consists of respondents who have started their preparatory steps but are unlikely to migrate (7%). Further disaggregation of data by age reveals that 41% of younger respondents who are more likely to migrate have taken preparatory steps in this direction (Figure 34). This finding aligns with the finding that younger respondents are more likely to migrate, thus demonstrating a higher propensity to engage in preparatory steps.

Figure 33: Preparatory steps by likelihood of migration

	Has started preparatory steps	Has 'not' started preparatory steps
Responded 'likely' to migrate	37%	22%
Responded 'unlikely' to migrate	7%	33%
		100%

Figure 34: Preparatory steps by likelihood of migration (age group below 30 years old)

For respondents younger than 30 years old (N=700)

	Has started preparatory steps	Has 'not' started preparatory steps
Responded 'likely' to migrate	41%	21%
Responded 'unlikely' to migrate	8%	30%
		100%

The majority (35%) of those who have taken some preparatory steps have taken three to six months to go through them, while 24% have taken one to three months, 20% more than six months, and 18% less than a month. When querying our sample about their financial plans for their migration journey (see Figure 35), irrespective of their intention to migrate regularly or not, the majority (49%) indicates that they intend to use their personal savings. This preference remains consistent across all surveyed age groups but sees a slight increase to 52% among those identifying as local residents rather than an IDPs. Moreover, sponsorship from parents or siblings emerges as the second most popular option among all respondents (25%) and particularly among the younger age cohort (29%), which may reflect greater financial dependence on the family. In contrast, only 15% of the older age group rely on family support. Notably, selling houses and assets is a significant funding source for older respondents (29%), compared to only 11% of the younger group who would consider this option.

Figure 35: Financial planning for migration

How do you plan to finance your migration journey?

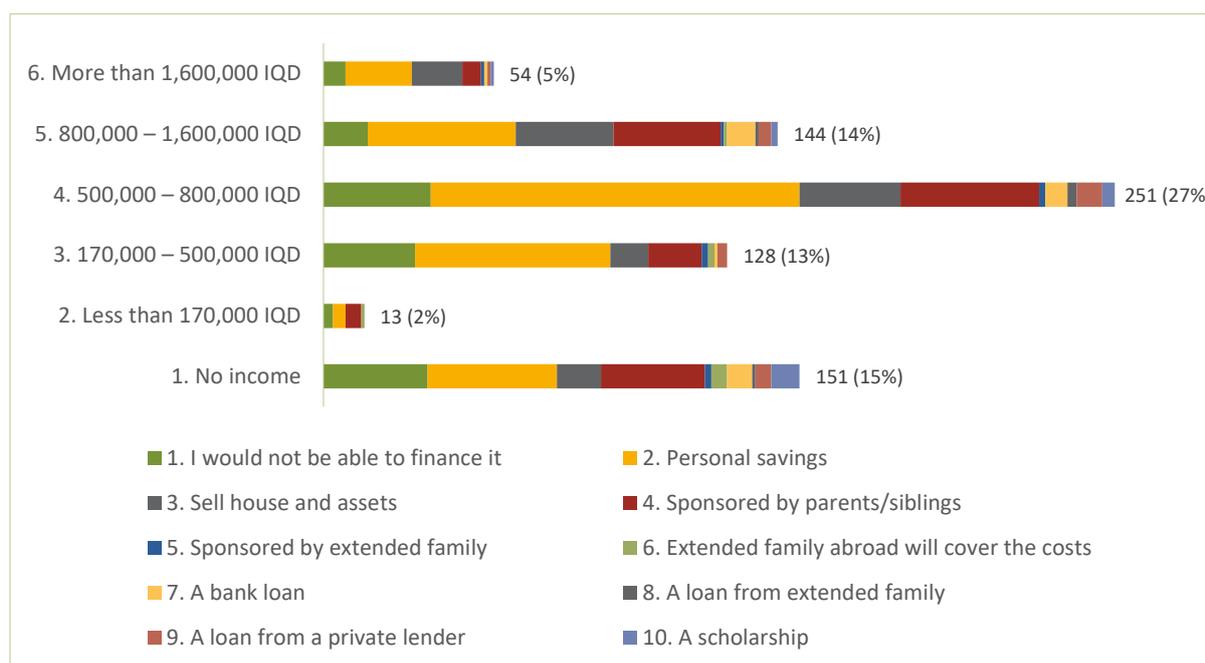
	All respondents	Below 30 years old (N=700)	30 years old and above (N=319)	Local resident (N=775)	IDP (N=249)
Personal savings	49%	49%	48%	52%	39%
Sponsored by parents/siblings	25%	29%	15%	25%	24%
Sell house and assets	16%	11%	29%	17%	15%
Sponsored by extended family abroad	4%	4%	2%	3%	4%
A bank loan	3%	4%	2%	3%	6%
A loan from a private lender	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
A scholarship	2%	3%	0%	2%	1%
Sponsored by extended family	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
A loan from extended family	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
I would not be able to finance it	23%	22%	23%	20%	31%

Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

The least chosen options for financing migration include sponsorship by extended family abroad, bank loans, loans from private lenders, and scholarships, each selected by 4% or less of all respondents. Notably, **23% of all respondents report that they would not be able to finance their migration journey**, indicating a significant barrier in planning for their migration journey. The multiple-choice question allowed respondents to select various sources to finance their migration.

In addition, we analysed the relationship between individual income and the methods of financing a migration journey (see Figure 36). Unsurprisingly, individuals with no income or very low income (less than IQD 160,000, or approximately USD 120) are most likely to report that they would not be able to finance their migration journey. Among those earning between IQD 500,000 and 800,000 (about USD 380 and 610), it is most common to rely on personal savings for financial support. The option of selling houses and assets is most prevalent among the middle-income earners (IQD 500,000-1,600,000, equivalent to about USD 380 and 1,200) but not among the highest income earners (more than IQD 1,600,000, or about USD 1,200), who can rely instead on their personal savings. Loans, both from banks and private lenders, appear sporadically across different income levels without a clear trend, possibly indicating that they are not the primary method of funding migration for most individuals.

**Figure 36: Financing sources of migration by individual income**



Furthermore, when aggregating the data based on their likelihood to migrate or on their eligibility to migrate legally to their preferred country of destination (see Figure 37), we notice that among the group who are more likely to migrate, the majority plan on using their personal savings (52%), followed by sponsorship from parents and siblings (36%), while a smaller portion would consider selling their houses and assets (17%). These findings are consistent with our earlier results, which indicated that these three methods of financing are the most commonly used across all respondents. **Interestingly, only 12% of those likely to migrate feel that they would not be able to finance their journey, suggesting a level of financial readiness among this group.** Conversely, among those who are unlikely to migrate, a significant proportion of respondents (38%) report that they would not be able to finance their journey. This might also indicate a correlation between perceived financial barriers and the likelihood of migration. For the respondents who perceived themselves to be eligible to migrate legally, the reliance on personal savings is the highest of all (61%), while 11% report that they cannot finance it, representing the lowest percentages across all groups.

Figure 37: Financial planning by likelihood of migrating and eligibility to migrate

How do you plan to finance your migration journey?

	Responded 'likely' to migrate (N=602)	Responded 'unlikely' to migrate (N=422)	Responded 'eligible to migrate legally' (N=498)	Responded 'not eligible to migrate legally' (N=338)	Responded 'do not know if eligible' (N=188)
Personal savings	52%	44%	61%	33%	44%
Sponsored by parents/siblings	36%	9%	25%	26%	23%
Sell house and assets	17%	15%	17%	17%	11%
Sponsored by extended family abroad	2%	0%	2%	1%	1%
A bank loan	5%	2%	4%	3%	2%
A loan from a private lender	3%	1%	3%	2%	0%
A scholarship	2%	1%	4%	0%	1%
Sponsored by extended family	5%	1%	4%	3%	3%
A loan from extended family	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
I would not be able to finance it	12%	38%	11%	36%	28%

Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

When asking respondents about who would accompany them on their journey, the **overwhelming majority (52%) states that they would be travelling alone**, while 25% mention that they would travel with their immediate family, and another 10% with friends. It is interesting to note that only 6% of respondents mention that they would travel with an agent, thus potentially suggesting that they see the agent as a facilitator rather than as the accompanying person. Moreover, 19% of those likely to migrate in the near future indicate that they will travel with their children.

Figure 38 presents the findings on the support received by individuals planning their migration, categorising the primary supporters and the type of support they have provided. This question was only asked to respondents who had previously indicated having taken preparatory steps. It is apparent that **family in Iraq** is the most significant source of support for potential migrants, indicated by 30% of the respondents. The **primary form of support that the family provides is financial support, in 79% of the cases**. Interestingly, 21% of respondents declare that they have not received any support from anyone. **Friends abroad** emerge as the next most substantial source of support (20%), which can provide mostly **information**. Support from family abroad and friends in Iraq is relatively less common. Overall, family in Iraq or abroad mainly provides financial assistance, while friends abroad and in Iraq usually provide information and, in some cases, connections with an agent or a facilitator. Other stakeholders such as governments, the MRC in Baghdad, NGOs, returnees, community networks, or smugglers, are not mentioned as sources of support. This does not come as a surprise, as generally Iraqis turn to friends and family when they need assistance.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> NDI Iraq, "Political Distrust and Frustration Mount as Pandemic Impacts Iraq. Key Findings of Qualitative Public Opinion Research Conducted in Five Provinces in Iraq" (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute, 2021).

**Figure 38: Primary supporters in migration planning by type of support**

Who has supported you the most in planning for your migration? (N=444)		In what way have they supported you?	
No one	21%	-	-
Family in Iraq	30%	Provided me with information	23%
		Provided me with financial support	79%
		Provided me with contacts	12%
		Connected me to an agent	8%
		Helped me arrange my documents	10%
		Helped me find a job in the country of destination	4%
		Helped me find accommodation in the country of destination	12%
Friends abroad	20%	Provided me with information	86%
		Provided me with financial support	14%
		Provided me with contacts	16%
		Connected me to an agent	6%
		Helped me arrange my documents	14%
		Helped me find a job in the country of destination	6%
		Helped me find accommodation in the country of destination	5%
Family abroad	13%	Provided me with information	70%
		Provided me with financial support	60%
		Provided me with contacts	18%
		Connected me to an agent	10%
		Helped me arrange my documents	32%
		Helped me find a job in the country of destination	20%
		Helped me find accommodation in the country of destination	23%
Friends in Iraq	11%	Provided me with information	73%
		Provided me with financial support	16%
		Provided me with contacts	18%
		Connected me to an agent	22%
		Helped me arrange my documents	22%
		Helped me find a job in the country of destination	4%
		Helped me find accommodation in the country of destination	8%
Other	5%	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>		

*Only asked for respondents who indicated having taken preparatory steps in the previous question.*

In terms of challenges faced by individuals who have taken preparatory steps (Figure 39), **the majority of respondents (51%) face challenges in arranging for the required funds**, which aligns with the previous findings according to which a significant number of potential migrants are unable to finance their journey. Following closely, 48% of respondents **identify obtaining a visa as a challenge**. Obtaining the required documents and navigating slow bureaucratic processes are also cited as challenges, experienced by 38% and 32% of respondents, respectively.

Figure 39: Migration preparation challenges

What challenges are you experiencing in your migration preparation? (N=445)

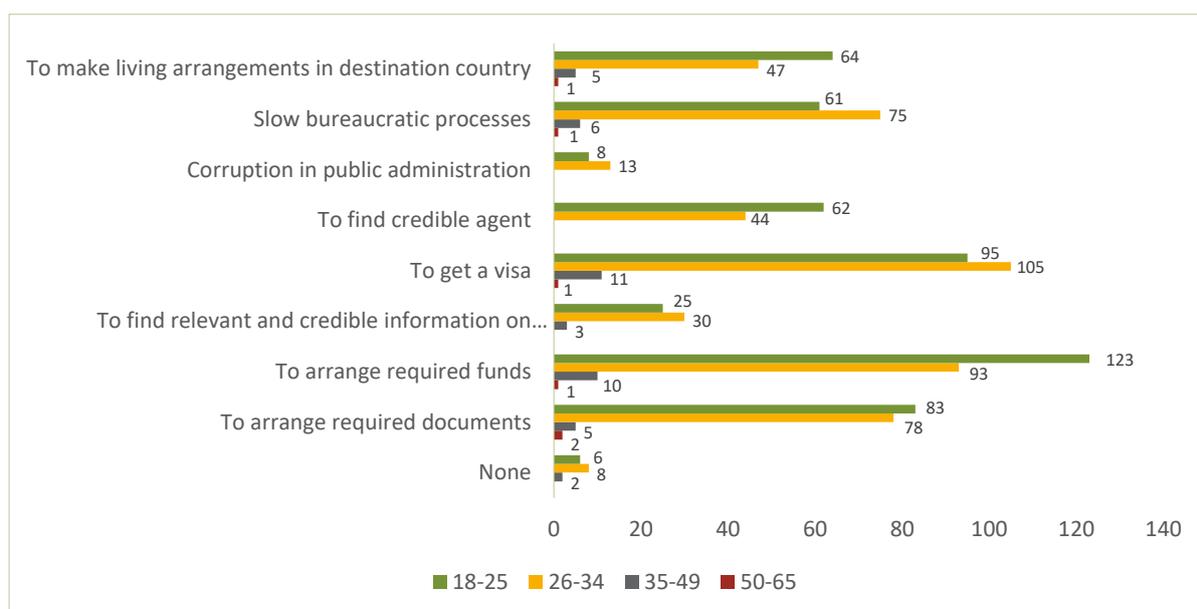
To arrange required funds	51%
To get a visa	48%
To arrange required documents	38%
Slow bureaucratic processes	32%
To make living arrangements in destination country	27%
To find credible agent	24%
To find relevant and credible information on destination country	13%
Corruption in public administration	5%
None	4%

Only asked for respondents who indicated having taken preparatory steps in the previous question.  
Multiple choice allowed in the responses except if answered 'none'.

Finding a credible agent and acquiring relevant and credible information on the destination country represent significant challenges for 24% and 13% of the respondents, respectively. These findings suggest that there are obstacles in obtaining credible information and guidance. Noteworthy is the fact that **finding a credible agent does not seem to be high on the list**. This aligns with a later finding regarding the need for a more informed decision to migrate, which reveals that knowing how to assess the credibility of agents is not a priority among respondents.

When we cross-tabulated the challenges with the age groups (see Figure 40), we noticed that those in the age category 18-25 face the most difficulty in arranging the required funds, followed by difficulties in obtaining a visa or making living arrangements in the destination country. Respondents between 26 and 34 years old mention that getting a visa represent their most significant challenge.

Figure 40: Challenges in migration preparation by age group



## 5.5 Information confidence levels and risk awareness

Recent research on risk awareness suggests that 1) potential migrants intending to migrate irregularly are often aware of the risks involved along the migration route; 2) they tend to overestimate their likelihood of successfully reaching the destination country and securing anticipated job opportunities; 3) there is an evident demand among potential migrants for improved access to migration-related information; 4) engagement in awareness-raising campaigns has been shown to influence potential migrants' perceptions of risk and their intentions regarding irregular migration.<sup>74</sup>

These align with the findings from our survey, which reveals varying levels of awareness among respondents regarding the complexities of irregular migration. The following section will allow for better understanding on potential migrants' basic knowledge of migration and the general risk awareness associated with travelling irregularly. The results obtained will help the design of tailored campaign messages by addressing knowledge gaps and focusing on less accessible information.

We asked the respondents to what extent they feel they have access to information about migration options in general (see Figure 41). **About half of the respondents (46%) indicate that they have 'to some extent' access to it**, while 38% have access to information to a great extent. The two most extreme options ('not having access at all' and 'fully aware of how to access the information') are selected by 8% of the respondents.

Figure 41: Access to migration options

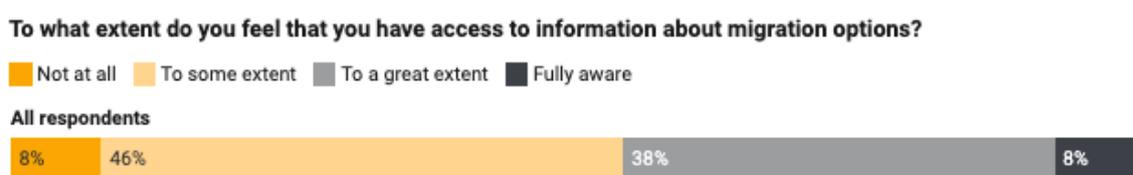
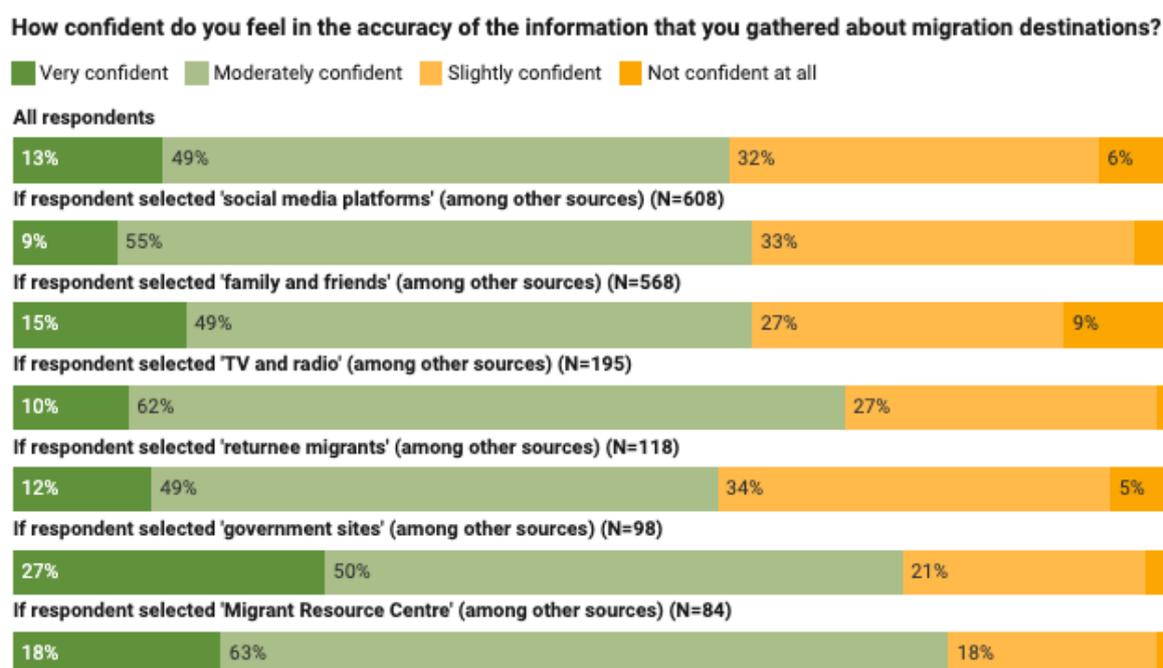


Figure 42 presents the confidence of the respondents in the accuracy of information they have gathered about migration destinations, segmented by the sources they have used to obtain this information from (more in-depth analysis of the sources of information will be discussed in chapter 6). **Overall, 62% of respondents are either 'moderately confident' (49%) or 'very confident' (13%),** opposed to the 38% of respondents who are 'slightly confident' (32%) and 'not confident at all' (6%).

When we delve into the specifics, respondents who have used social media platforms to gather information on migration show slightly less confidence, with only 9% feeling very confident and 3% not confident at all, thus suggesting that social media are perceived as less reliable. In contrast, those who rely on TV and radio express greater confidence compared to social media, with 10% being very confident. Individuals who rely on family and friends or returnees as their source of information exhibit a similar pattern to the overall results. **Those who gather information from government websites exhibit higher confidence (27% are 'very confident' and 50% 'moderately confident')**. The combined confidence level here is the highest among the groups, suggesting that official sources are perceived as more reliable. The most notable finding is related to the group that used the MRC information services, with 18% of respondents feeling 'very confident' of the information they have and a large segment being 'moderately confident' (63%).

<sup>74</sup> Eduardo Acostamadiedo and Oumarou Hebie, "Do Awareness-Raising Campaigns on the Risks of Irregular Migration Support Safer Migration Decisions? IOM Research Provides New Evidence.," Migration Data Portal (blog), 2023, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/blog/new-evidence-awareness-raising-campaigns>.

Figure 42: Confidence in information accuracy



Ranked by frequency of each information source.

Furthermore, we inquired whether respondents are well-informed of their legal rights as migrants in terms of asylum procedures, human rights, identity documents, legal status, or in dealing with police and border authorities (see Figure 43). **Those who feel fully informed account for 31% of the sample, while 15% believe that they are not informed at all.** Positive answers ('yes, fully' and 'yes, partially') constitute the majority of the sample (73%), indicating migrants' high level of knowledge. Nevertheless, the accuracy of such information remains uncertain, as it depends on the reliability of their sources. Disinformation, which is widespread, can be seen as an additional method employed to target vulnerable groups of society.<sup>75</sup> Within the context of this survey, we did not inquire about the respondents' perception of the accuracy of the information, but we might find this out based on their assessment of the source's reliability. When surveying participants about the **presence of family members or friends in their desired destination country**, and the extent to which they depend on them for accurate migration information, we find that 50% of the respondents have such connections abroad. Additionally, the majority (46%) only occasionally rely on these connections for accurate migration information. As stated in an interview with the Civil Development Organisation (CDO), getting information from family and friends or on social media might not always be accurate.

*'They get some rumours from relatives and friends or there are some groups on social media that they provide information some of them which are not true'. (CDO, 2024).*

The dependence on and confidence in social media are also evident in the interview with WEO, where they mention that information on migration is predominantly sourced from social media within the community. Potential migrants tend to trust social media platforms more than other sources, and this results in depending on social media as the primary source of information on migration.

*'People get all their information and ideas for migration from social media publications. Illegal migration is having an impact on society. Migrants believe in different sources but especially on what they see on social media groups and posts online. That is by far the main source.'* (WEO, 2024).

<sup>75</sup> Judit Szakacs and Eva Bogнар, "The Impact of Disinformation Campaigns about Migrants and Minority Groups in the EU" (Brussels: Directorate General for External Policies of the European Union, 2021).

Figure 43: Awareness of legal rights as a migrant

Do you feel you are well-informed of your legal rights as a migrant?

Yes, fully Yes, partially Not sure No

All respondents



Examining the remaining 15% of respondents who believe they are not well informed on migration, interesting patterns emerge (see Figure 44). Asylum procedures, identity documents, and legal status all have an equal percentage of respondents (40%). Additionally, 9% of this sub-group are unsure about the kind of information they would like to receive. **This indicates that no specific topic is crucial to disseminate among potential migrants, since they all have the same importance. Hence, all should be addressed in awareness campaigns.**

Figure 44: Lack of knowledge on migrant legal rights

Which of the following do you think you are not informed of? (N=593)



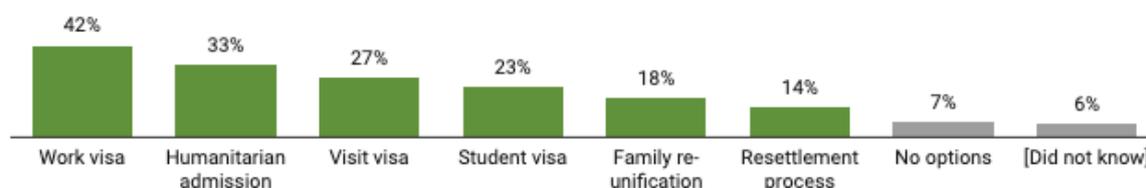
Only asked if respondent feels not well informed or partially informed of rights as a migrant.  
Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

Some of the interviewed stakeholders mentioned the need of more information on available support services for migrants in both Iraq and destination countries, which is usually lacking. WEO further emphasise that people usually get misleading information about the costs and risks associated with migration, especially in irregular migration. Stakeholders suggest that more accurate and comprehensive information should be given regarding legal pathways for migration, including on visa requirements and application procedures. They also believe that increasing the awareness of migrants on legal migration can encourage them to pursue safer and more sustainable migration options.

Knowledge still seemed to be robust among respondents when we inquired them about the legal options that they believe to be available for travelling to their destination country (Figure 45). Despite the multiple-choice nature of the question, work visa is identified as the most common option for legal travel (42%). This is followed by humanitarian admission (33%), while visit and student visas come after at 27% and 23%, respectively. Only 7% of respondents think that there are no options to legally travel. This sub-group is mostly comprised of male respondents (n=60), between the ages of 18 and 34 (n=56), employed full-time (n=15), and using social media (n=40) and family and friends (n=32) as their sources of information.

Figure 45: Options for legal migration

According to your knowledge, what are the options to legally travel to your preferred country of destination?



Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

Segmenting the data further to examine respondents' knowledge about their own eligibility to travel based on age and migration status, we observe that **work visa remains the most commonly perceived option for regular migration**. Overall, 24% of respondents believe they are eligible for student visas, but younger individuals are more optimistic (31%) compared to their older counterparts (10%). Similarly, humanitarian admission is viewed as an option by 23% of the respondents, with IDPs feeling relatively more eligible to this (28%) compared to other groups. The perception of ineligibility varies significantly across all groups, with approximately one third of respondents believing that they are not eligible for any of the migration options. Generally, **while work visas are considered the most eligible migration option, a considerable part of respondents either feels ineligible to migrate or is uncertain about their options**. Moreover, results suggest that perceptions of eligibility vary with age and displacement status (Figure 46).

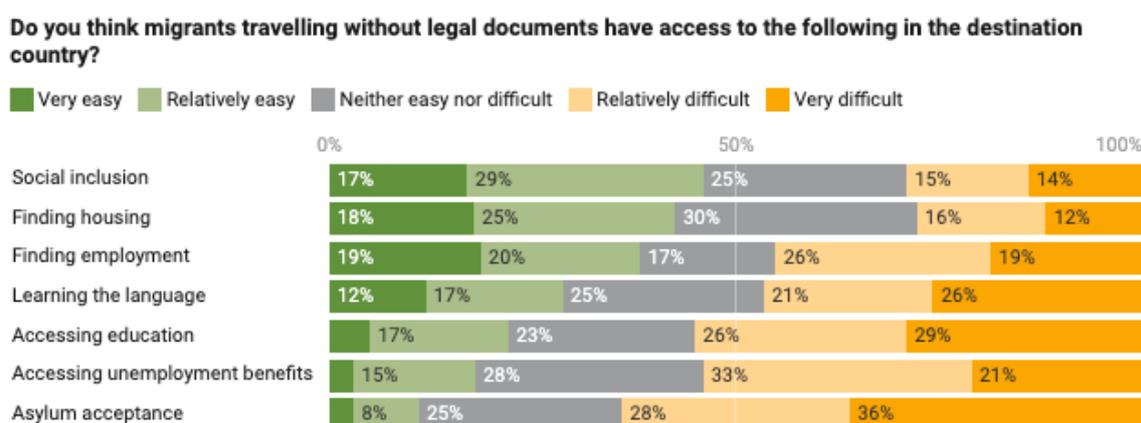
Figure 46: Options individuals eligible to migrate

	All respondents	Below 30 years old (N=700)	30 years old and above (N=319)	Local resident (N=775)	IDP (N=249)
Work visa	42%	44%	38%	44%	34%
Student visa	24%	31%	10%	25%	22%
Humanitarian admission	23%	25%	19%	21%	28%
Family re-unification	19%	13%	33%	18%	22%
Resettlement process	18%	18%	18%	16%	22%
Visit visa	14%	13%	18%	12%	24%
I am not eligible	33%	33%	32%	32%	36%
[Did not know]	18%	19%	17%	17%	21%

Multiple choice allowed in the responses except if selected 'I am not eligible'.

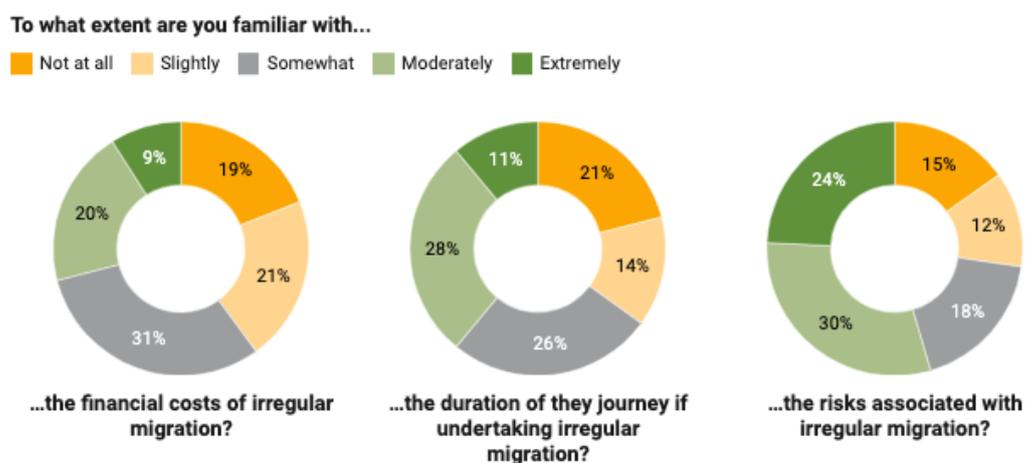
In the following section, pre-existing knowledge on access to rights and services in destination countries is discussed. In general, it appears that respondents perceive that it is difficult for irregular migrants to access these services (Figure 47). **Asylum acceptance is perceived as the most difficult to access in 46% of the cases, while the easiest is social inclusion (17%)**. Overall, social inclusion, housing, and employment are assessed 'easy' or 'relatively easy' to access for irregular migrants in the destination countries, **while education, unemployment benefits, and asylum are assessed to be 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to access**.

Figure 47: Options available to irregular migrants in the destination country



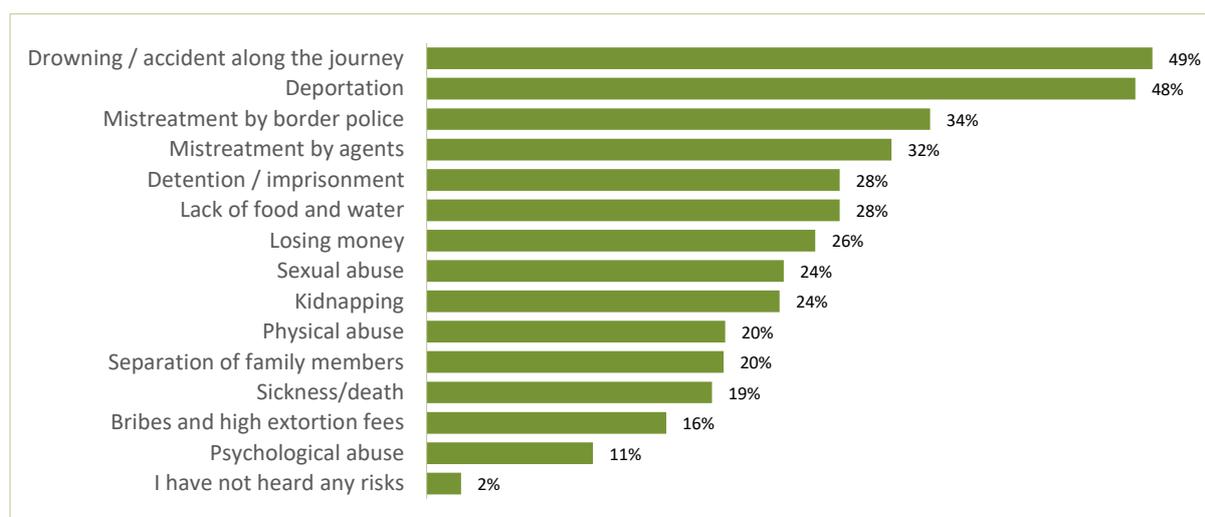
Notably, there are differing degrees of familiarity with key aspects of irregular migration. **Financial costs emerge as the least known aspect, with 40% of respondents** indicating that they are either not at all aware or slightly aware of them. Similarly, awareness of the duration of irregular migration journey shows comparable levels, with 35% falling into the lower awareness categories. However, a higher proportion of respondents (39%) demonstrate moderate to extreme awareness in this regard. Conversely, **respondents appear to be most aware of the risks associated with irregular migration**, with over half of the respondents (54%) indicating a solid knowledge of them. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of respondents (27%) remain unaware of these risks.

Figure 48: Familiarity with irregular migration risks



The respondents' knowledge of the types of risks during the irregular migration journey seems varied (see Figure 49). **The type of risk known to the majority of respondents is drowning or accidents along the journey (49%)**, closely followed by deportation (48%). Psychological abuse and bribes and extortion fees are mentioned by 11% and 16% of the respondents, respectively. Interestingly, only 2% of the respondents have not heard of any risks.

**Figure 49: Knowledge on migration journey risks**



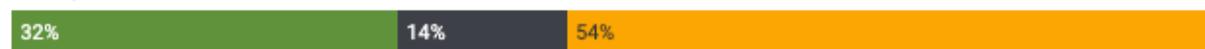
When asked about their awareness of any organisations or entities that they could contact in case of emergency during the journey, **the majority of respondents (54%) points out that they are not aware of any entities**, and 32% mention that they are aware of some, while 14% are not sure (see Figure 50). When asked about who to contact in case of risks, the most referred to entity is the Iraqi Embassy or Consulate in the preferred country of destination (83%), while the police and NGOs and international organisations are the second and third most cited entities, in 23% and 15% of the cases, respectively.

**Figure 50: Awareness of entities to contact when facing migration journey risks**

**In case you encounter any risks during the journey, are you aware of any organisations or entities you could contact?**

Yes Not sure No

All respondents

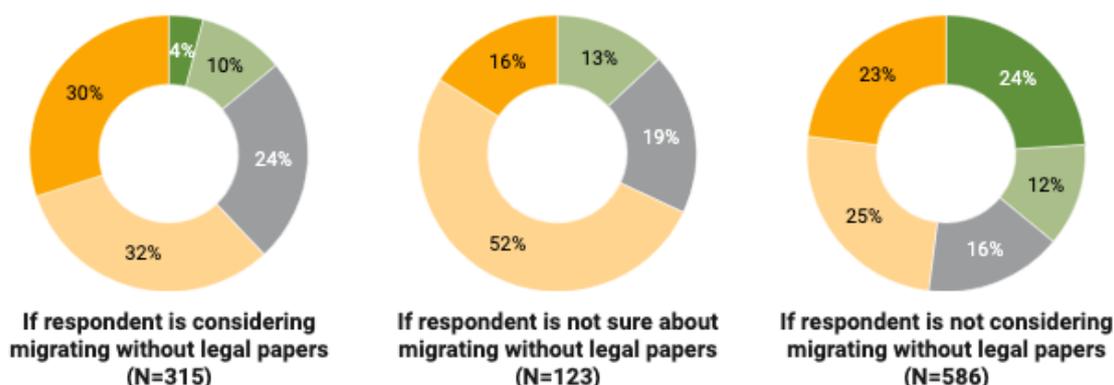


Afterwards, we inquired respondents about their perceived risk awareness associated with irregular migrations, especially if they were willing to migrate irregularly (Figure 51). Confirming earlier findings, **30% of respondents who are considering irregular migration are aware of the risks**. In contrast, among those who are not considering migrating irregularly, 24% of the respondents have no awareness at all. However, **if we group together those who are ‘moderately’ and ‘extremely’ aware of the risks, the sub-group of respondents who are not sure about migrating irregularly constitutes the larger one (68%)**. This could be the reason why they are not sure yet about their migration path. Building on this, when we asked respondents whether they would still consider migrating irregularly knowing the risks involved, the majority said no (57%), especially among the older age group (69%).

Figure 51: Awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration

To what extent are you aware of the risks associated with irregular migration?

Not at all Slightly Somewhat Moderately Extremely



When asked whether they would consider irregular migration despite the risks involved (see Figure 52), the majority of respondents (57%) answer negatively, while 31% of respondents respond affirmatively. Further data reveal that younger respondents (18 to 25 years old) are the most willing to consider migrating without legal papers, with 37% responding affirmatively. There is a clear trend that willingness to migrate without papers decreases with age. Gender differences are also notable, with a significantly lower proportion of females (9%) considering irregular migration. Furthermore, IDPs are slightly more willing to undergo irregular migration than local residents. Regardless of the disaggregation of the data, the majority of respondents would not consider irregular migration.

Figure 52: Intentions of irregular migration after knowledge of the risks

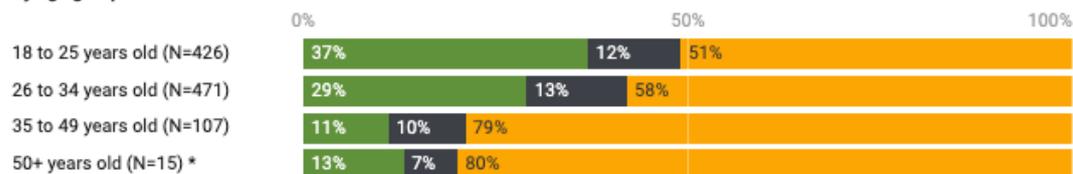
Would you consider migrating without legal papers knowing that there are risks involved?

Yes Not sure No

Total



By age group



By population group



By gender



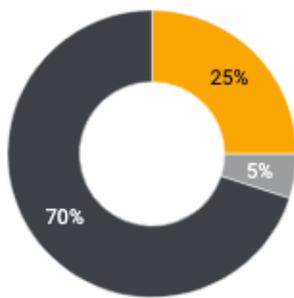
Further analysis was conducted based on self-reported eligibility to travel legally, in order to understand if this can or would influence respondents' considerations to migrate irregularly (Figure 53). When respondents indicate they could be eligible to migrate legally, they show a lower likelihood

to migrate irregularly (25%), as opposed to those who indicate not being eligible to travel regularly (34%). It is worth noting that being eligible to any migration option does not necessarily mean that the likelihood of a potential migrant to opt for irregular migration is eliminated.

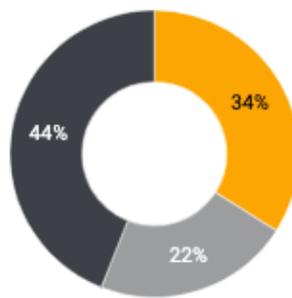
Figure 53: Intentions of irregular migration by self-reported eligibility to migrate legally

**Would you consider migrating to your preferred destination without a valid passport and legal documents?**  
Disaggregated by self-reported eligibility to migrate legally.

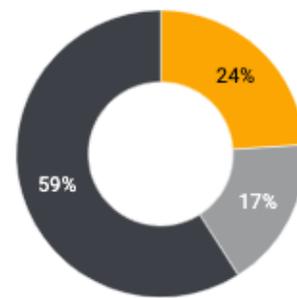
■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No



**If respondent reported at least one eligible legal option to migrate (N=498)**



**If respondent reported not being eligible to legally migrate (N=338)**



**If respondent reported not knowing if eligible to legally migrate (N=187)**

## 6 Messaging, messengers, and channels

### 6.1 Introduction

The primary objectives of communicating about migration issues frequently revolve around shaping public opinions, clarifying or addressing misconceptions, promoting positive attitudes towards immigrants, or influencing behaviours related to migration decision-making.<sup>76</sup> As highlighted by Sharif, the evolving communication landscape is marked by widespread disinformation, limited opportunities for detailed and unbiased reporting, as well as a growing influence of social media. This has made it crucial for EU policymakers, the media, and civil society to communicate information about migration effectively.<sup>77</sup> The following sections delve into some key findings from the MIRAMI survey on the kind of messaging to employ, the messengers and their role and influence, the most preferred channels of communication, and the impact of these information campaigns on decision-making processes.

### 6.2 Messaging

Effective messaging plays a vital role in shaping public perceptions and behaviour, particularly regarding important topics such as migration.<sup>78</sup> Research emphasises the complexity of message framing, highlighting its capacity to evoke specific emotional responses and ethical considerations among audiences. Positively framed persuasive messages, which highlight the advantageous results of actions or behaviours, generally elicit more favourable responses and reactions than negatively framed persuasive message. The interplay of anticipated emotions, such as guilt, further complicates the reception of framed messages. Elevation, triggered by selfless acts or morally commendable behaviour, often inspires positive action and enhances receptivity to positively framed messages. On the other hand, guilt, associated with the recognition of personal or collective shortcomings in addressing an issue, can sometimes motivate action but may also lead to avoidance or denial, particularly when messages are negatively framed.<sup>79</sup>

To complement the discussion on messaging and its impact, a systematic review reveals an increasing scholarly interest in migration information campaigns, particularly over the last decade.<sup>80</sup> The framing of messages in migration campaigns is a nuance strategy that governments and organisations employ to influence potential migrants' perceptions and decision-making processes. These campaigns often present migration in a negative light, using images, narratives, videos, and slogans to portray the dangers and hardships of irregular migration. This approach aims to deter individuals from taking such journeys by instilling a 'culture of immobility'.<sup>81</sup> Widespread mis- and disinformation regarding migration are other reasons for the development of information campaigns, which often aim at

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<sup>76</sup> James Dennison, "How to Perform Impact Assessments: Key Steps for Assessing Communication Interventions" (Vienna: ICMPD, 2020).

<sup>77</sup> Hind Sharif, "Communicating Effectively on Migration: Recommendations and Policy Options," Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Katie Blake, Takahiro Kubo, and Diogo Veríssimo, 'Measuring the Effectiveness of Value-Framing and Message Valence on Audience Engagement across Countries', *Global Environmental Psychology* 1 (6 November 2023), <https://doi.org/10.5964/gep.11181>.

<sup>79</sup> Silvia Grappi et al., "The Effect of Message Framing on Young Adult Consumers' Sustainable Fashion Consumption: The Role of Anticipated Emotions and Perceived Ethicality," *Journal of Business Research* 170 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114341>.

<sup>80</sup> Raffaella Pagogna and Patrick Sakdapolrak, 'Disciplining Migration Aspirations through Migration-information Campaigns: A Systematic Review of the Literature', *Geography Compass* 15, no. 7 (2 July 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12585>.

<sup>81</sup> Juliette Howard, 'Beyond the Humanitarian Rhetoric of Migrant Information Campaigns', 2021.

addressing these issues.<sup>82</sup> However, the effectiveness of these campaigns in discouraging migration is debatable. Information campaigns might oversimplify the complex reasons behind migration decisions, and overestimate the fact that the decision to migrate is not only due to the lack of information.<sup>83</sup> Information campaigns targeting potential migrants have generally gained momentum with the EU's toolbox to manage migration and prevent irregular migration, and their use has moved up higher on the EU's agenda after the 2015-2016 so-called 'refugee crisis'.<sup>84</sup> As per the interview conducted with the international organisation Youth Speak, broad messaging will not work, and government messages are not trusted by the population.

*'Any information the government puts out won't supersede informal or illegal networks. Young people feel such government messaging is propaganda. The KRG is intending to keep people where they are and dissuade people from going, and people want to go.'* (Youth Speak, 2024).

While many campaigns focus on highlighting the dangers ('If you choose to leave by boat, you risk your life!'), some also incorporate positive messages alongside these warnings. Moreover, these campaigns aim to provide accurate information to counterbalance the often misleading or false narratives. They do not just highlight the risks, but also include information about the realities of asylum regulations and the challenges of undocumented life in destination countries, while some even offer alternatives to irregular migration and legal pathways.<sup>85</sup> Information campaigns are strategically crafted, utilising various media channels<sup>86</sup> (which will be discussed further in the section 6.4) to disseminate clear, engaging messages to broad communities. Ensuring messages successfully get across requires engaging content, as it forms the foundation of effective communication. It is crucial to consider the recipients' interests and priorities when crafting messages. As organisational change expert Brian Wilson suggests, using clear, straightforward language is key to ensure that everyone understands and connects with the message. Additionally, addressing any potential resistance or concerns with empathy and proactive acknowledgement can help facilitate smoother communication.<sup>87</sup>

#### *Type of information to make an informed migration decision*

When participants were asked about the information necessary for their decision-making process on migration, information on the **cost of the migration journey and on the legal migration processes and requirements emerges as the most valuable one**, while that on potential risks of irregular migration is deemed to be the least relevant. When analysing the results in relation to other

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<sup>82</sup> Antoine Pécoud, Martin Geiger, and Antoine Pécoud, "Informing Migrants to Manage Migration? An Analysis of IOM's Information Campaigns," in *The Politics of International Migration Management* (London: Springer, 2010), 184–201, [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230294882\\_9](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230294882_9).

<sup>83</sup> Florian Trauner, Ilka Adam, and Omar N. Cham, "Why Information Campaigns Struggle to Dissuade Migrants from Coming to Europe," BRIDGES (blog), 2023, <https://www.bridges-migration.eu/publications/why-information-campaigns-struggle-to-dissuade-migrants-from-coming-to-europe/#:~:text=It%20starts%20from%20the%20idea,would%20certainly%20refrain%20from%20leaving.>

<sup>84</sup> Jan Paul Brekke and Kjersti Thorbjørnsrud, "Communicating Borders. Governments Deterring Asylum Seekers through Social Media Campaigns," *Migration Studies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 43–65; Florian Trauner, Omar N. Cham, and Rosangela Caleprico, "EU-Funded Information Campaigns Targeting Potential Migrants: State of the Art," BRIDGES Working Paper, 2022..

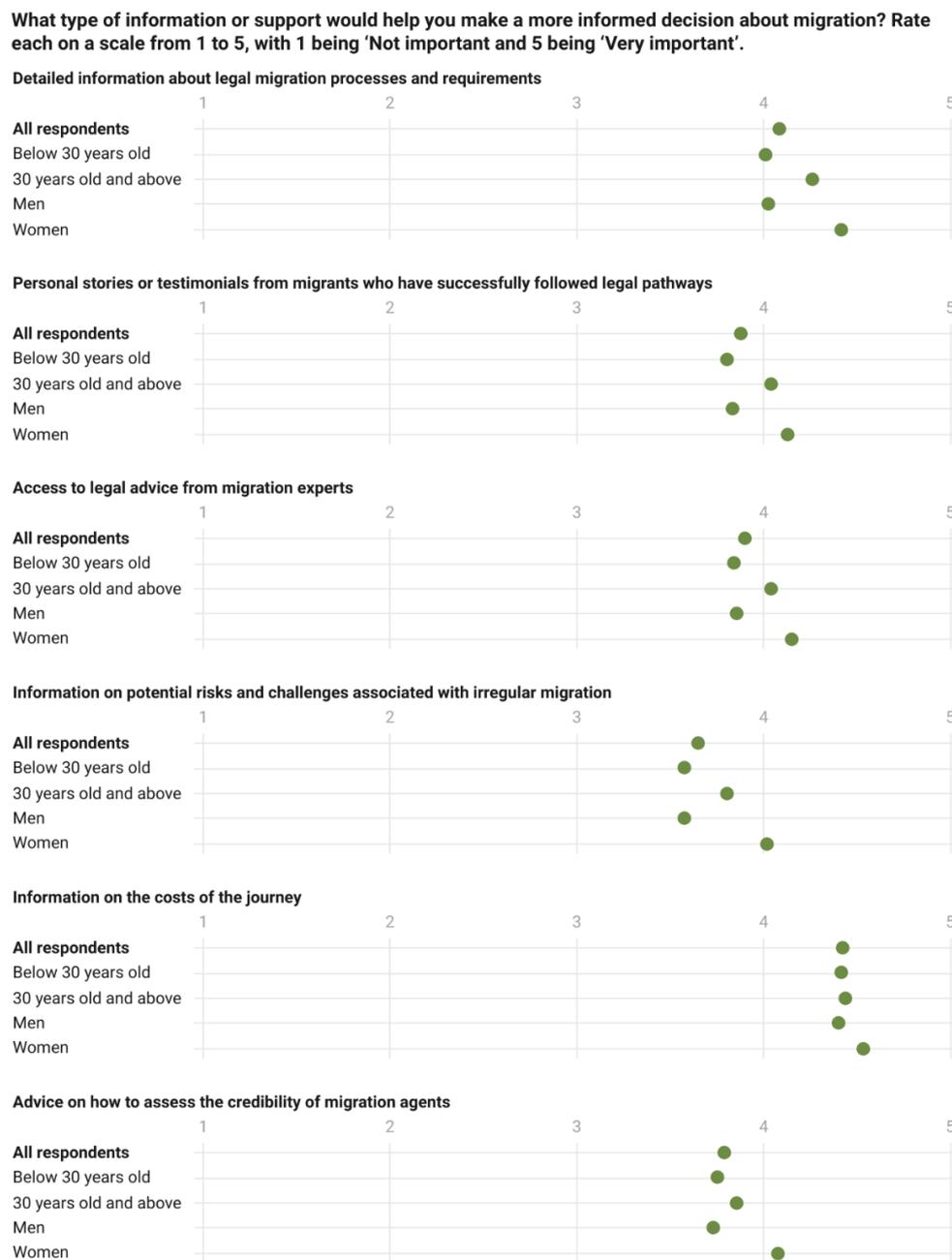
<sup>85</sup> Trauner, Cham, and Caleprico, 'EU-Funded Information Campaigns Targeting Potential Migrants: State of the Art'; Katharina Hahn-Schaur, "Leveraging Migration Information Campaigns for State and Migrant Security: Lessons Learned and Open Questions" (ICMPD, 2021), [https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/55837/file/API2021\\_PolicyBrief\\_Campaigns.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/55837/file/API2021_PolicyBrief_Campaigns.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> Caitlin Katsiaficas and Justyna Seges Frelak, 'The Role of Information Campaigns in Addressing Irregular Migration' (Vienna, 2022).

<sup>87</sup> Brian Wilson, "Empowering Change through Effective Communication: Strategies for Employees and Stakeholders," LinkedIn Pulse (blog), 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/empowering-change-through-effective-communication-employees-wilson/>.

demographic factors such as age and gender, it becomes evident that women and older participants exhibit a greater level of concern regarding obtaining information about various aspects of migration. More specifically, women more than men prioritise having access to information related to legal migration processes. Apart from this distinction, no other differences are evident (see Figure 54).

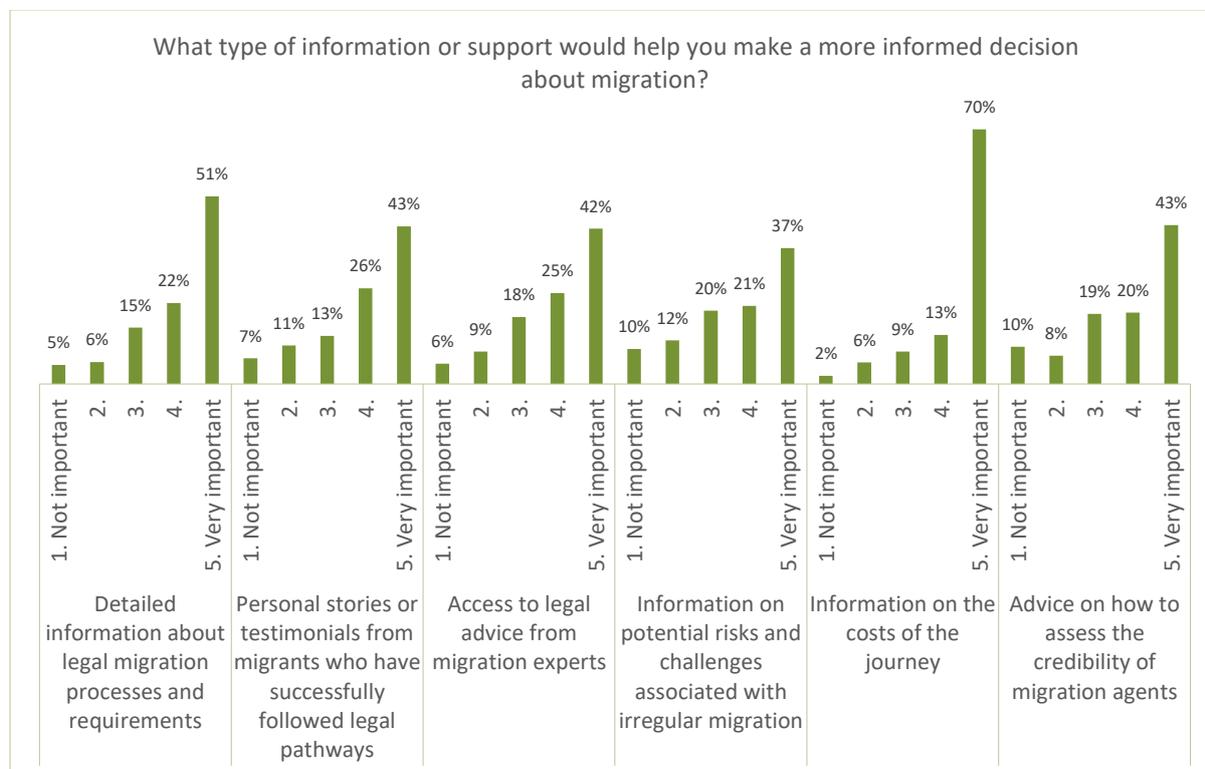
**Figure 54: Information / Support needs**



To further discuss the results regarding what type of information would facilitate a more informed migration decision, and to determine the type of messages to focus on for the campaigns, we hereby look at each type of information in detail (see Figure 55). Overall, the majority of respondents consider that receiving more information on all the aspects related to migration is 'important' or 'very important'; yet, some pieces of information seem more valuable than others. **83% of respondents, for example, value information on the costs of migration as 'important' or 'very important'**, in line with our previous findings according to which respondents state that they are not very familiar with the costs of the journey. Following closely, **73% of respondents would require more detailed**

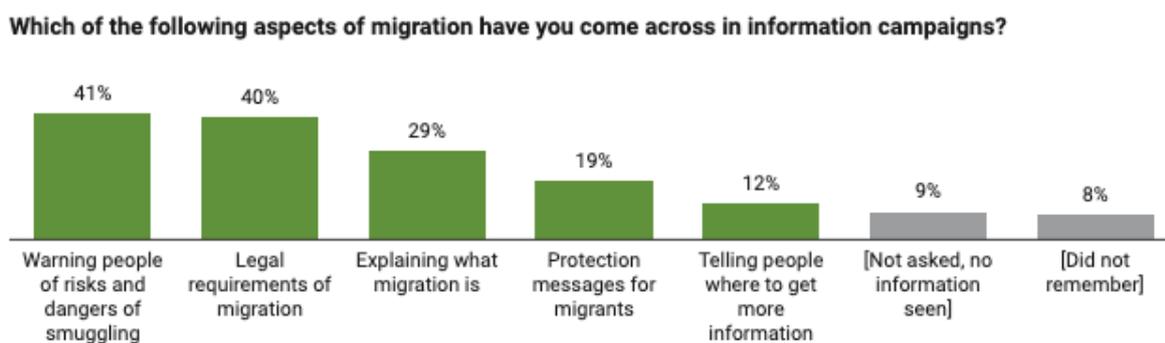
**information about the processes and requirements for legal migration** – considered the second most important piece of information. On the other hand, information on the risks of the journey, advice on how to assess the credibility of migration agents, and access to legal advice score the lowest, with 58%, 63%, and 67% of respondents, respectively, considering them important or very important.

**Figure 55: Type of information or support to make a more informed decision about migration**



Furthermore, we asked participants about their exposure to various aspects of migration in information campaigns, in order to gain a better understanding of their pre-existing awareness of these messages. **Results reveal that 41% of respondents have been exposed to warnings about the risks and dangers of human smuggling, 40% have come across information on the legal requirements for migration**, while 29% report to have encountered campaigns that have clarified the concept of migration (see Figure 56). Only 12% of participants report to have encountered campaigns that specifically indicated more sources of information on migration, suggesting a gap in comprehensive communication strategies within these campaigns. 29% of respondents do not know who the organisers of these information campaigns were, while 24% state that the campaigns they came across were organised by NGOs, 10% by INGOs, 9% by the Iraqi government, and 5% by the MRC in Baghdad.

**Figure 56: Aspects of migration encountered in campaigns**



*Multiple choice allowed in the responses.*

When we inquired stakeholders about the key information needs among potential migrants, one key element mentioned is the lack of offices with hotlines that could provide people with more information about migration. Additionally, the Department of Labour and Social Affairs in the Sulaymaniyah office notes that the use of TV channels to disseminate information effectively should be increased, especially among the youth. Furthermore, Yazda organisation states that people aim to have an overview of the most common route among potential migrants (such as Greece). Subsequently, they require insights into the difficulty of the route, and how border guards handle travellers. Finally, they seek a clear understanding of the challenges and benefits in the country they want to migrate to in order to make an informed decision on whether it is worth migrating too. All of the aforementioned points have been reiterated by numerous stakeholders we interviewed, all in alignment with the information needs of migrants.

### 6.3 Messengers

Beside the content of the message, the credibility of the messenger is another critical factor that must be considered in the design of an information campaign in order to increase its effectiveness. The analysis of the *Migrants as Messengers* project, for instance, which leverages the stories of returnees who have experienced the journey firsthand, shows that the personal connection between the messenger and the audience and the shared experience that the messenger can provide make the message more impactful.<sup>88</sup>

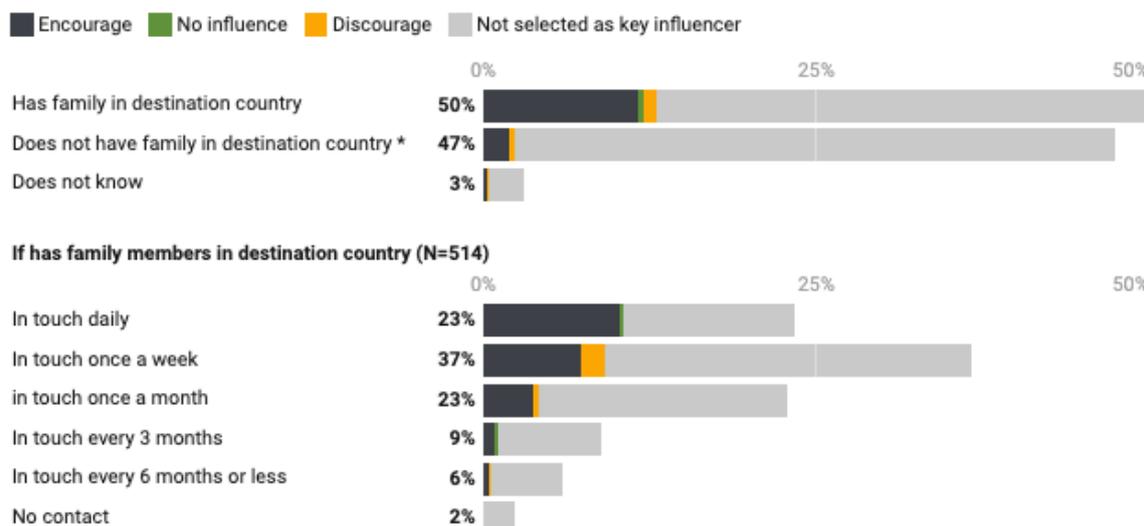
Figure 57 examines the influence of family ties on the decision-making process, outlining the impact of having family in the destination country and the frequency of contact with them. While the majority of respondents rely on family members as key influencers, the figure shows that **the majority of respondents (74%) who have family members in the destination country do not identify them as key influencers**, also aligning with our findings that their key influencers are actually family members in Iraq. In general, the more frequent the contacts are, the higher the influence and in this case the encouragement to migrate is. The only exception is represented by those who are in touch once a week (37%), who seem to have a stronger influence than those who are in touch daily (23%). In section 5.5, we have seen that among the 50% of the respondents who have social networks in the preferred country of destination, only 46% rely occasionally on these connections for accurate migration information. Looking at this sample in more depth, respondents that have social networks abroad are also those who indicated more likelihood to migrate in the near future (see Figure 58).

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<sup>88</sup> Felipe Alexander Dunsch, Jasper Tjaden, and William Quiviger, "Migrants as Messengers: The Impact of Peer-to-Peer Communication on Potential Migrants in Senegal," Impact Evaluation Report (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2019).

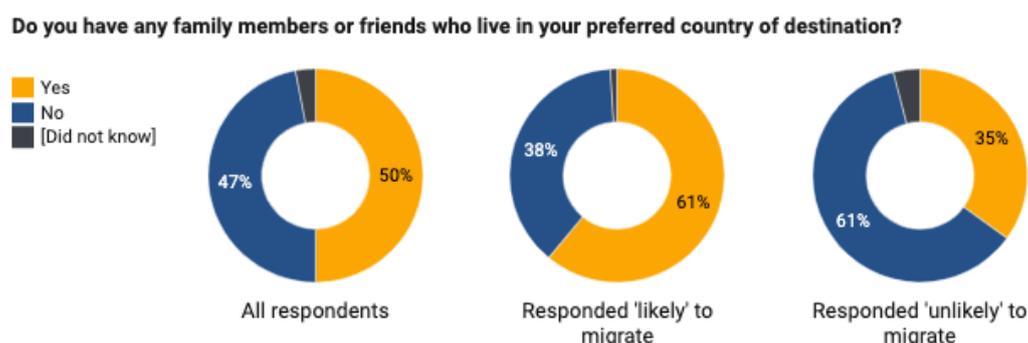
Figure 57: Key influencers and type of influence on migration intentions

**Who are the key influencers in your decision-making process regarding migration and what type of influence they have?**



\* This includes having no family members abroad at all or having them in other countries than destination country.

Figure 58: Social networks in desired destination by likelihood to migrate



As mentioned in the MIRAMI Background Report,<sup>89</sup> the role of returnees as influencers and messengers has not received much academic attention. However, and in virtue of their firsthand experience of migration, they do play a crucial role as messengers in information campaigns. This result was also evident in the IOM campaign *Migrants as Messengers*, which highlighted the central role that returnees play in the development, planning, and implementation of the campaign.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, during the focus group discussions conducted with returnees in Iraq for the Returnee Report, some highlighted their interest to act as messengers for potential (irregular) migrants and reported that they have been approached by friends and family members for insights into their migration experiences.<sup>91</sup> However, in our survey, returnees rank relatively low on the list of people that might influence migrants' decision-making process and support them in migration planning. This

<sup>89</sup> Mogiani, 'Displacement, Emigration, and Return: Understanding Migration Dynamics and Patterns within, to, and from Iraq.'

<sup>90</sup> Felipe Alexander Dunsch, Jasper Tjaden, and William Quiviger, "Migrants as Messengers: The Impact of Peer-to-Peer Communication on Potential Migrants in Senegal," Impact Evaluation Report (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2019).

<sup>91</sup> Khoury and Mogiani, 'Engaging Return Migrants in Information Campaigns in Iraq Challenges, Reintegration, and Prospects'.

can be attributed to the possibility that some of them might be referred to simply as family and friends rather than being identified by their migration status. While returnees can provide valuable insights and firsthand experiences, their influence may not always be explicitly recognised or attributed to their migration experience.

When looking into the most impactful influencers and supporters that would act as messengers in the campaigns, **family members in Iraq are the key influencers, as well as those who provide the most support in the planning of the migration journey** (see Table 7). Comparatively, families in Iraq play a crucial role both as influencers and supporters, though their influence is stronger in the decision-making process than in the planning phase. In both cases we see that no one has been a key influencer in their migration decision nor in the planning, suggesting that either they enjoy a high level of independence, or they actually lack any available support. Friends in Iraq or abroad are more significant as influencers than supporters in planning, indicating that their role may be more about providing advice than practical support. This was evident in chapter 5, which showed that friends usually provide information while family members provide financial assistance. Furthermore, we see the **absence of Iraqi government agencies and community networks, which could imply a gap in institutional support for potential migrants**. Overall, it is apparent that social networks are central to potential migrants and should therefore be mobilised as messengers in the campaigns.

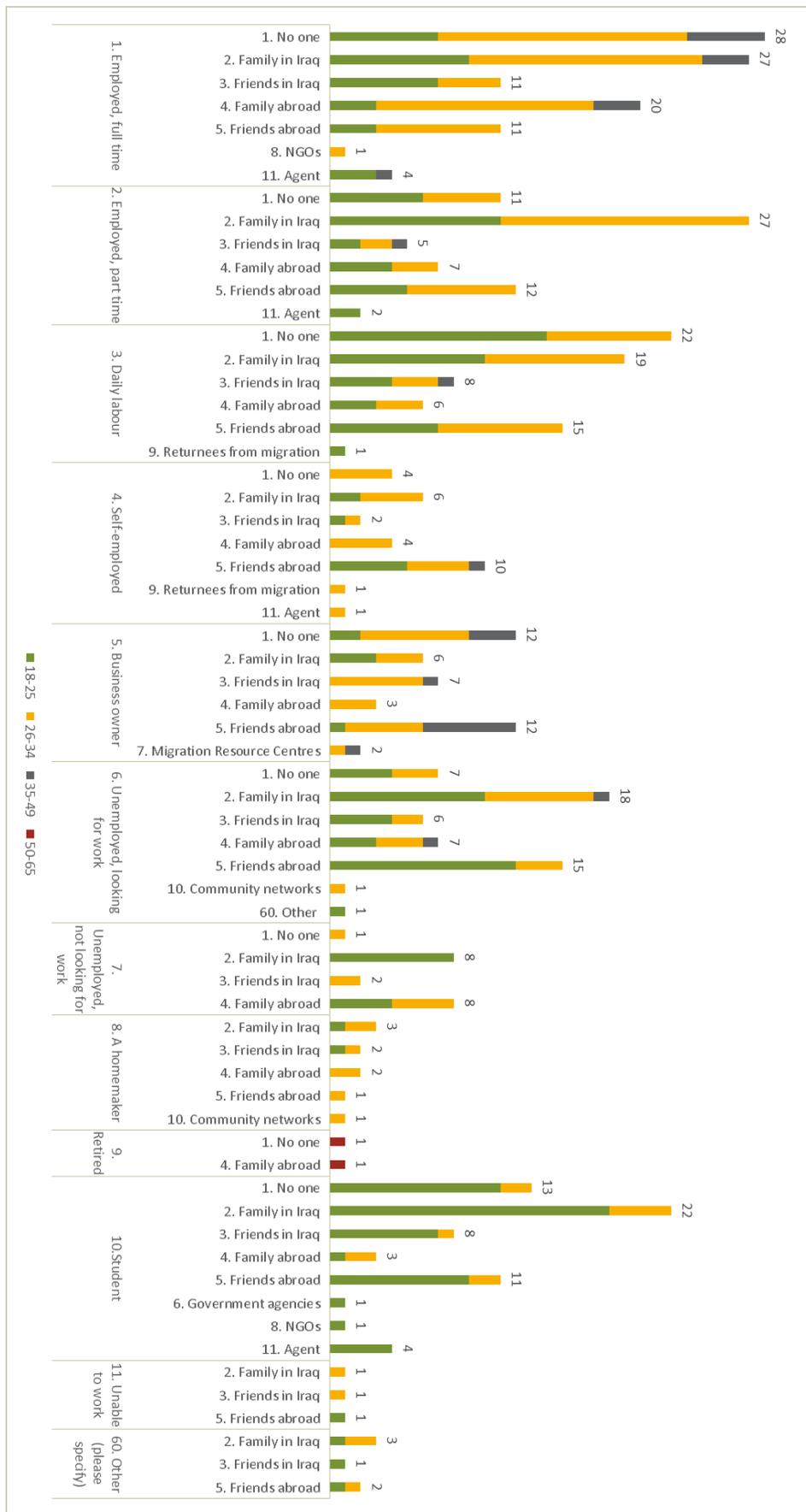
**Table 6: Key influencers in migration intentions and source of migration support**

	Individual / Entity	Percentage		Individual / Entity	Percentage
	<i>Who are the key influencers in your decision-making process?</i>	Family members in Iraq		37%	<i>Who has supported you the most in planning for your migration?</i>
No one		35%	No one	21%	
Friends in Iraq		21%	Friends abroad	20%	
Friends abroad		19%	Family abroad	13%	
Other community leaders		17%	Friends in Iraq	11%	
Government officials		17%	Agent	2%	
Family members abroad		16%	MRC	0%	
Returnees from migration		5%	Returnees from migration	0%	
Tribal leaders		3%	Government agencies	0%	
Religious leaders		2%	Community networks	0%	

Even though governments do not seem to play a key role in supporting potential migrants with their planning, they play a key role in disseminating information through specific programs. As cited in our interview with the IOM, the Iraqi government holds presentations for people to raise awareness of irregular migration.

Figure 59 shows the distribution of key supporters based on employment status and age. Focusing on the younger age groups, we observe that those employed full-time and part-time mostly depend on their family in Iraq for planning the migration journey. Generally, family in Iraq appears to be the predominant source of support across most employment and age groups. Interestingly, full-time employees and daily labourers show higher tendency to depend on themselves than those in part-time employment. We then see a drop in **self-dependence** among the unemployed, homemakers, and retired individuals. Among younger respondents there is a noteworthy support from friends both in Iraq and abroad. Additionally, despite the low numbers of respondents, **community networks** seem to be a more common source of support among unemployed individuals than among those active in the labour market. We also notice that students are the most likely to seek support from agents in comparison to other groups. In any case, **it seems that no matter how we disaggregate the data, family remains the main support network for potential migrants**.

Figure 59: Source of migration planning support by employment status and age group



## 6.4 Channels of communication and information

The choice of communication channels is crucial in ensuring that the message reaches the targeted audience effectively. Traditional media, social media, community events, and direct engagement are all viable channels, each with its strengths and limitations. For example, digital platforms may be more effective in reaching younger audiences, while community meeting and traditional media channels can be more effective for older audiences or in rural areas where digital access is limited.<sup>92</sup> The emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has significantly reshaped how (potential) migrants access information, offering them multiple platforms to connect socially worldwide. Particularly, social media platforms have become pivotal in facilitating the advertisement of legitimate or illegitimate services and the dissemination of (mis)information regarding migration routes and risks.<sup>93</sup>

For our sample, **the most preferred source of information is social media platforms (59%)**, particularly among those between 18 and 25 years old (65%) and those aged between 26 and 34 (60%), followed by **family and friends (55%)**. The latter source is more favoured by those aged 35 to 49 (60%) and those older than 50 years old (66%). Far behind, a quarter of all respondents rely on information from other migrants, followed by traditional means of communication such as TV and radio (19%). Less common sources within the sample include word of mouth (14%), returned migrants (12%), government websites (10%), community networks (9%) and MRCs, NGOs, and CSOs, with 8%, 6%, and 3% respectively. **Interestingly is the dependence on information from government websites and agencies for those aged 50 or more, making it the third source of information** after family and friends and social media platforms for this age group. This aligns with a survey conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2019 that revealed Iraqi people's low levels of trust in the government's ability to address major concerns such as jobs and unemployment.<sup>94</sup>

Overall, social media platforms and family and friends are the most cited sources of information across all age groups (see Figure 61). These preferences remain consistent across subcategories, suggesting a strong reliance on social networks for information regarding migration. Moreover, no one in the 50-65 age category has chosen 'other migrants' as a source, and only 29 people have chosen it from the 35-49 age brackets. This is a stark contrast to the 231 individuals in the younger age groups who consider other migrants as a significant source of information. This suggests a generational difference in the reliance on and trust in information from those with direct migration experience. However, it is worth noting that in our sample, those in the age bracket 50-65 constitute a small fraction. Further analysis of the sources of information according to gender yields the same results. No observation was noted of female respondents preferring a source of information more than male ones despite their small representation in the sample.

During an interview with Civil Development Organisation (CDO), they suggested that, if MRCs have social media accounts or channels, utilising them for spreading more awareness and sharing information and knowledge on regular migration would be beneficial. In their opinion and everyday experience, social media have the most significant impact and outreach.

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<sup>92</sup> Jonathan Morris, Wyn Morris, and Robert Bowen, 'Implications of the Digital Divide on Rural SME Resilience', *Journal of Rural Studies* 89 (January 2022): 369–77, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.01.005>.

<sup>93</sup> Katsiaticas and Seges Frelak, 'The Role of Information Campaigns in Addressing Irregular Migration'.

<sup>94</sup> NDI Iraq, "Improved Social Cohesion, but Iraqis Remain Dissatisfied with Government" (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute, 2019).

Figure 60: Sources of information about migration options

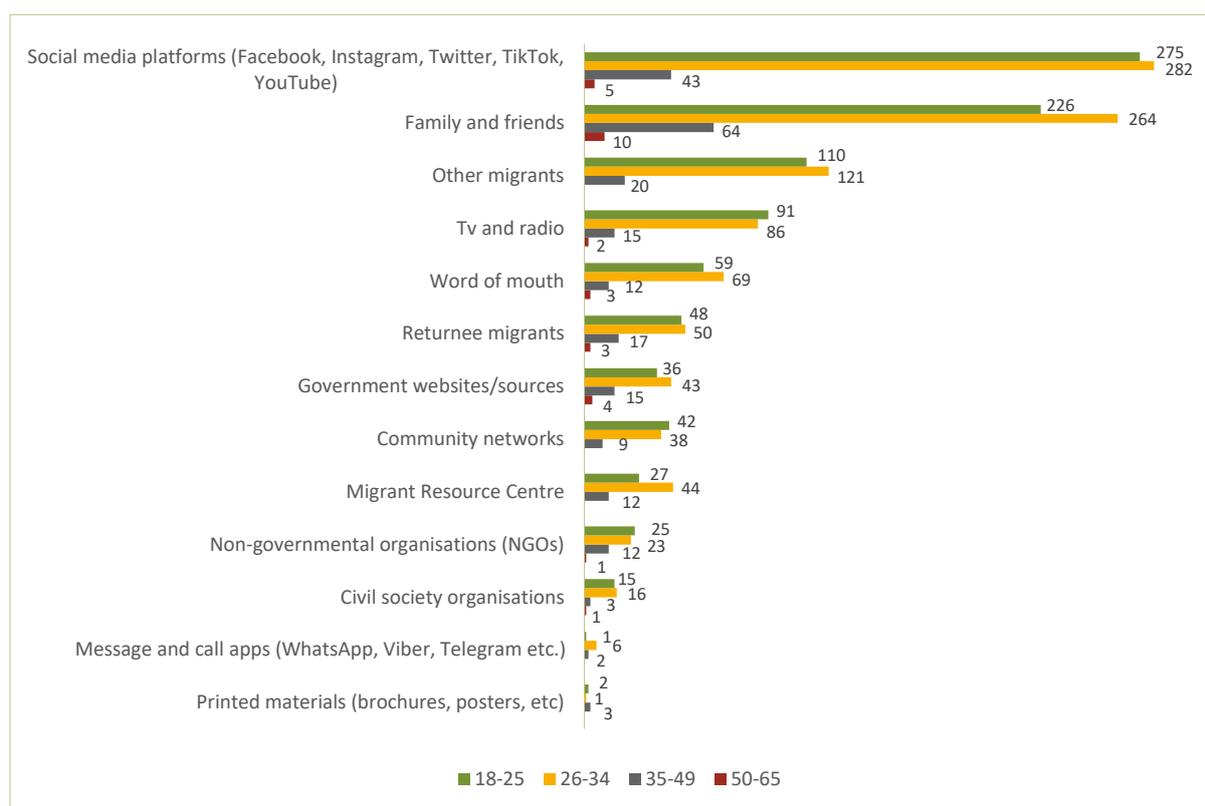
Which sources do you usually rely on for information about migration options and related subjects?

	All respondents	18 to 25 years old (N=426)	26 to 34 years old (N=471)	35 to 49 years old (N=107)	50+ years old (N=15) *
Social media platforms	59%	65%	60%	40%	33%
Family and friends	55%	53%	56%	60%	66%
Other migrants	25%	26%	26%	19%	0%
Tv and radio	19%	21%	18%	14%	13%
Word of mouth	14%	14%	15%	11%	20%
Returnee migrants	12%	11%	11%	16%	2%
Government websites/sources	10%	8%	9%	14%	27%
Community networks	9%	10%	8%	8%	0%
Migrant Resource Centre	8%	6%	9%	11%	0%
NGOs	6%	6%	5%	11%	7%
Civil society organisations	3%	4%	3%	3%	7%
Printed materials	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Message and call apps	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%

Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

\* Results are only very indicative due to low number of sample size.

Figure 61: Sources of migration information by age group



In order to explore potential variations based on the respondents' level of awareness regarding their legal rights as migrants, further analysis was conducted (Figure 62). The findings indicate that individuals who consider themselves fully informed on migration primarily depend on family and friends (59%), followed by social media platforms (44%). Conversely, those who perceive themselves as partially informed rely more on social media platforms than on family and friends. This suggests

that social media platforms are a key information source for all respondents, regardless of their level of awareness about their rights. Furthermore, across all levels of awareness, official sources such as government websites, NGOs, MRC in Baghdad, and Civil Society Organisations are less frequently consulted. This suggests a notable gap in institutional support for potential migrants.

**Figure 62: Sources of migration information by level of awareness about migrants' legal rights**

**Which sources do you usually rely on for information about migration options and related subjects?**  
Disaggregated by level of awareness about legal rights as a migrant.

	If respondent is 'fully informed' (N=314)	If respondent is 'partially informed' (N=435)	If respondent is 'not sure if informed' (N=116)	If respondent is 'not informed' (N=158)
Family and friends	59%	54%	52%	56%
Social media platforms	44%	63%	80%	66%
Other migrants	24%	22%	34%	24%
Word of mouth	15%	15%	4%	15%
Government websites/sources	12%	11%	3%	4%
NGOs	12%	5%	0%	1%
Tv and radio	11%	24%	22%	18%
Returnee migrants	10%	13%	9%	14%
Community networks	8%	8%	15%	9%
Migrant Resource Centre	7%	7%	14%	10%
Civil society organisations	6%	3%	1%	2%
Printed materials	1%	1%	1%	0%
Message and call apps	1%	2%	0%	0%

*Multiple choice allowed in the responses.*

We also examined whether respondents perceived themselves to be eligible to migrate legally in relation to the sources of information they rely on for their migration options, in order to see if any differences are revealed in terms of eligibility of migration (see Figure 63). However, no differences emerged between the respondents who reported at least one eligible legal option to migrate (first column) and those who reported not being eligible to migrate legally (second column). Social media and family and friends still remain the most common source of information no matter how the data is analysed.

Figure 63: Sources of information by eligibility to migrate legally

**Which sources do you usually rely on for information about migration options and related subjects?**

Disaggregated by self-reported eligibility to migrate legally.

	If respondent reported at least one eligible legal option to migrate (N=498)	If respondent reported not being eligible to legally migrate (N=338)	If respondent reported not knowing if eligible to legally migrate (N=187)
Family and friends	58%	59%	43%
Social media platforms	55%	55%	79%
Tv and radio	20%	20%	16%
Other migrants	19%	28%	31%
Word of mouth	13%	12%	20%
Government websites/sources	11%	12%	2%
Returnee migrants	8%	17%	11%
NGOs	8%	4%	4%
Community networks	6%	13%	9%
Migrant Resource Centre	6%	9%	12%
Civil society organisations	4%	4%	1%
Printed materials	1%	0%	0%
Message and call apps	1%	1%	1%

*Multiple choice allowed in the responses.*

Figure 64 shows the information sources of different sub-groups of respondents based on their familiarity with issues associated with irregular migration. Again, and in all cases, social media and family and friends remain the most important sources of information. In relation to the awareness of the risks associated with the journey (third column), 71% of this sub-groups rely on social media platforms. Furthermore, those who rely on other migrants as source of information tend to be more aware of the financial costs of migration.

Figure 64: Sources of information by familiarity with issues of irregular migration

**Which sources do you usually rely on for information about migration options and related subjects?**  
Disaggregated by familiarity with issues in irregular migration.

	If respondent is moderately or extremely familiar with the financial costs of migration (N=292)	If respondent is moderately or extremely familiar with the duration of the journey (N=403)	If respondent is moderately or extremely familiar with the risks associated (N=559)
Social media platforms	64%	60%	71%
Family and friends	61%	56%	51%
Other migrants	39%	32%	28%
Tv and radio	24%	21%	22%
Returnee migrants	22%	14%	13%
Migrant Resource Centre	17%	7%	11%
Community networks	15%	13%	12%
Word of mouth	13%	15%	14%
Government websites/sources	10%	7%	10%
NGOs	4%	5%	6%
Civil society organisations	3%	4%	4%
Printed materials	1%	1%	1%
Message and call apps	0%	1%	1%

*Multiple choice allowed in the responses.*

Regarding exposure to information campaigns, respondents were asked if they had encountered any information campaigns, whether through TV shows, events, or any other means of communication. **The majority of respondents (79%) report having seen information on migration through social media**, while 46% have been exposed to information through traditional TV advertisements or programs, and 44% through websites and the internet (see Figure 65). Workshops and radio programs account for about a fifth of responses. Posters and newspapers represent the least common means of communication to get information on migration, with 16% and 11% of responses, respectively. These findings are intriguing as **they respond to earlier studies documenting according to which workshop-type activities and cable TV advertisements are the most popular communication tools for campaigns.**<sup>95</sup>

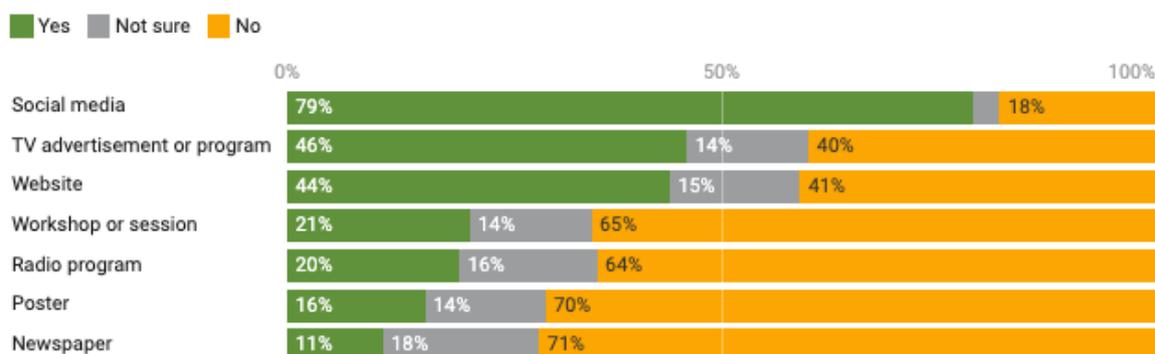
Even some of the stakeholders interviewed mentioned the importance of social media and TV programs in disseminating information, and the need for stronger presence on these platforms.

*‘There could be more presence in social media to provide more information and help people decide whether migrate or not. Social media in general, TV channels and counselling offices with good case management are the best ways to transmit this information’ (Al-Tahreer Association for Development, 2024).*

<sup>95</sup> Jasper Tjaden, Sandra Morgenstern, and Frank Laczko, “Evaluating the Impact of Information Campaigns in the Field of Migration: A Systematic Review of the Evidence, and Practical Guidance” (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2018).

Figure 65: Sources of migration news over the last year

Sometimes there are TV shows, events or other information about migration and about people moving from one country to another. Over the last year, have you seen or heard of any of the following in your area?



While digital platforms and traditional means of communication represent the most common channels to obtain information on migration, it is also noteworthy that potential migrants might encounter such information through various channels (see Figure 66). In fact, approximately a quarter of respondents have encountered relevant information on two or three different platforms (23% and 25%, respectively), while only 6% have encountered migration information on five platforms or more. Upon further disaggregation of the data, we still observe that the majority of respondents, regardless of their age, gender, or migration status (local resident vs. IDP), have encountered information on migration across multiple platforms. This suggests that outreach efforts typically span across various channels to reach potential migrants effectively.

Figure 66: Number of platforms used as sources of migration information

Number of platforms where respondents saw information about migration:

	All respondents (N=700)	Below 30 years old (N=700)	30 years old and above (N=319)	Local resident (N=775)	IDP (N=249)	Men (N=865)	Women (N=159)
No information seen at all	9%	8%	12%	9%	10%	8%	16%
Seen over 1 platform	21%	20%	23%	20%	24%	20%	24%
Seen over 2 platforms	23%	24%	20%	22%	27%	23%	24%
Seen over 3 platforms	25%	26%	25%	26%	23%	27%	18%
Seen over 4 platforms	16%	17%	13%	17%	11%	16%	11%
Seen over 5 platforms	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%
Seen over 6 platforms	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Seen over 7 platforms	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%

Compilation of platforms selected in the previous figure.

After inquiring about the type of information respondents have encountered and the kind of platforms through which they have accessed this information, we asked about the most effective communication methods for delivering campaign messages (see Figure 67). A significant majority of respondents (**84%**) favours **social media platforms**, followed by **TV and radio, reported by 45% of respondents**. Conversely, community workshops, printed materials, and personal counselling are chosen by only 16%, 13%, and 10% of the respondents, respectively. Even when further segmenting the data based on demographic characteristics, **social media platforms remain the top choice** across the board (see Figure 67).

Figure 67: Effectiveness of campaign messages by communication methods

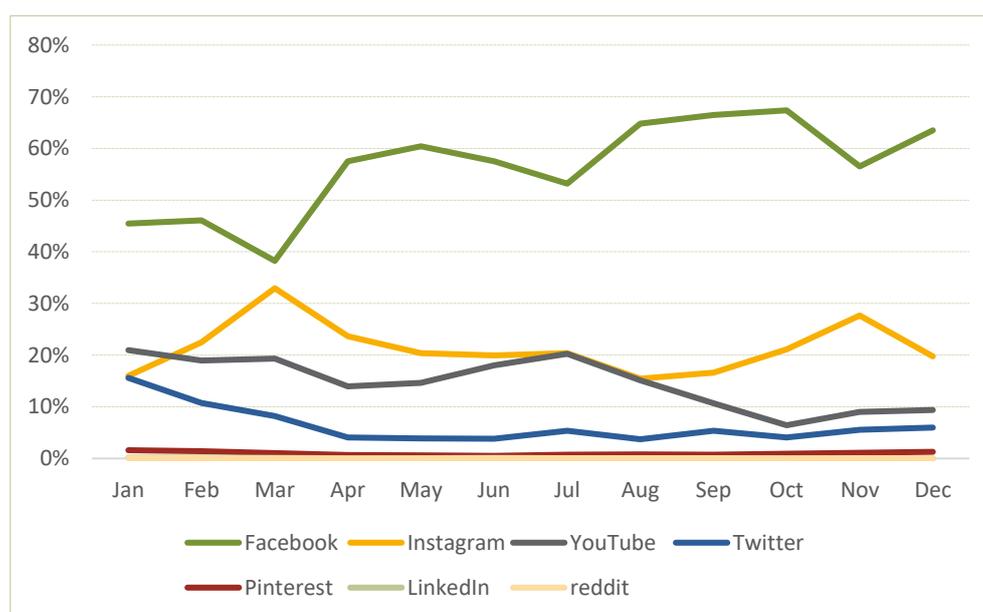
Which communication methods in your opinion would be the most effective in reaching you with campaign messages?

	All respondents	Below 30 years old (N=700)	30 years old and above (N=319)	Local resident (N=775)	IDP (N=249)	Men (N=865)	Women (N=159)
Social media platforms	84%	87%	77%	83%	87%	85%	75%
Tv and radio	45%	48%	37%	47%	37%	48%	27%
SMS	18%	19%	16%	19%	15%	19%	15%
Community workshops	16%	16%	16%	15%	19%	16%	18%
Printed materials	13%	14%	11%	13%	12%	14%	9%
Personal counselling	10%	8%	12%	9%	12%	10%	9%

Multiple choice allowed in the responses.

Our survey did not delve into the specific social media platforms used by migrants for information, but we were interested in determining the most popular channels used in Iraq. Research from Statcounter on the usage of social media platforms on all devices (mobile, desktop, tablet) in the year 2023 revealed that **Facebook was the most widely used platform, followed by Instagram and YouTube** (see Figure 68).

Figure 68: Social media popular channels in Iraq in 2023



\*Source: StatCounter Global Stats: <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/iraq/2023>

Despite the strategic use of messaging, messengers, and communication channels, migration information campaigns face several challenges. One such challenge is the consistency and robustness in evaluating their impact. Many campaigns lack a clearly defined objective or target group, making it difficult to assess their effectiveness. A systematic literature review highlighted the need for more consistent and robust evaluation to better understand the impact of these campaigns.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, while potential migrants are generally aware of the risks associated with irregular migration, there tends to be an overestimation of the chances of success. This optimism bias can dilute

<sup>96</sup> Jasper Tjaden, Sandra Morgenstern, and Frank Laczko, "Evaluating the Impact of Information Campaigns in the Field of Migration: A Systematic Review of the Evidence, and Practical Guidance".

the impact of risk-awareness campaigns. Therefore, campaigns must not only inform but also address these cognitive biases by providing tangible alternatives to irregular migration.

Assessing the impact of migration information campaigns on potential migrants has revealed intriguing findings (see Table 8). While **53% of respondents feel that migration information campaigns discourage migration, 32% feel that these campaigns have no significant impact.** Conversely, 10% of respondents lean towards feeling that these campaigns encourage potential (irregular) migrants to migrate, and 5% are not sure what their impact is.

**Table 7: Impact of migration information campaigns on potential migrants**

**In general, how do you perceive the impact of migration information campaigns on potential migrants?**

	<b>All respondents</b>
They significantly discourage migration	20%
They somewhat discourage migration	33%
They have no significant impact	32%
They somewhat encourage migration	7%
They significantly encourage migration	3%
Not sure	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

As previously mentioned, embracing change is often crucial for addressing past shortcomings and accomplishing learning and improvement. Cultivating a culture of open dialogue becomes paramount for facilitating this change. Implementing feedback mechanisms allows for two-way communication and provides a platform for freely expressing concerns. Since change is integral to campaigns aimed at altering perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of potential migrants, it is important to consider both short-term and long-term communication strategies.<sup>97</sup> While many campaigns are short-lived and lack follow ups, maintaining ongoing, long-term communication is essential for success. This involves updating campaigns as needed, utilising various tool from different organisational resources, and ensuring sustained engagement over time.

<sup>97</sup> Wilson, 'Empowering Change through Effective Communication: Strategies for Employees and Stakeholders'.

## 7 Summary of findings and recommendations for the MIRAMI campaign

Drawing from theoretical analysis, empirical findings of the MIRAMI survey, and the qualitative interviews with stakeholders, this report offers valuable insight that can inform the design of an impactful migration information campaign targeted at potential (irregular) migrants from Iraq. The survey designed by ICMPD and implemented by Social Inquiry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq explored the decision-making processes and information needs of potential migrants in Iraq, aiming to foster awareness about safe and legal migration pathways and address irregular migration through targeted information campaigns. The survey, designed comprehensively, spans various thematic areas, including migration history, intentions to migrate, decision-making processes, social networks of potential (irregular) migrants, information sources, and demographic backgrounds. Through analysing responses of 1,024 individuals from diverse populations across three governorates (Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah), the survey yields crucial insights into the myriad factors influencing migration decisions. It underscores the important role of information access and quality of information given the varieties in migration aspirations and preparations. The survey findings serve as guiding efforts to craft targeted information campaigns to benefit potential (irregular) migrants including IDPs. These targeted campaigns shall offer accurate and accessible information on alternatives to (irregular) migration channels, thus contributing to informed migration choices. Hence, this section will summarise the main findings from the research phase of the MIRAMI Project.

### Demographic profile of a potential migrant:

- ❖ The analysis shows that a typical Iraqi potential migrant is most likely to be male and under the age of 34, with 42% falling within the age group 18-25 and 46% within the 26-34 age group. Furthermore, a significant majority belong to the Muslim Kurdish ethno-religious group (59%), are single (69%), and live with their parents (70%). Notably, a significant portion of potential migrants have at least completed secondary education. Furthermore, the majority are actively engaged in the labour market, either full-time, part-time, on a daily basis, or as business owners and self-employed (76%).
- ❖ While demographic characteristics are generally similar across all governorates, Dohuk exhibits a heightened inclination towards migration. Conversely, a larger portion of individuals from Sulaymaniyah express reluctance to migrate in the near future.
- ❖ Despite regional variations, the data indicate that male respondents with higher education attainment levels display a stronger tendency to migrate across all three governorates.
- ❖ The analysis highlights a strong likelihood of migration among younger individuals, especially among 18-25 and 26-34 age groups (61% each).
- ❖ Based on this information, the profile of a potential migrant emerging from this data would likely be a young, single, male individual, well educated (with completed secondary education or above, and currently active in the labour market.

### Demographic profile of a potential irregular migrant:

- ❖ 28% of the respondents indicate willingness to undertake irregular travel (i.e., travel without a valid passport and legal documents), while 59% explicitly dismiss the idea.
- ❖ Female participants overwhelmingly reject irregular migration (89%).
- ❖ Older respondents show lower inclination towards irregular migration, with 78% and 86% of those aged 35-49 and 50+ respectively rejecting the idea.
- ❖ Younger respondents, particularly those below 34 years old, show relatively higher openness to irregular migration, although the prevailing response remains negative.
- ❖ Students are less inclined towards irregular migration compared to those active in the labour market. The highest percentage of respondents willing to travel irregularly stem from Sulaymaniyah (14%) while respondents in Erbil are less willing to travel irregularly (32%).

- ❖ Further disaggregation of the data on irregular travel based on ability to finance does not yield very different results.
- ❖ Those who rely on family and friends are the least likely to consider irregular migration (64%), while those who rely on TV and radio are more open to the idea of travelling without legal papers (49%). This suggests that the channels through which individuals receive information about migration might influence the type of migration.
- ❖ The most significant result in our survey indicates that respondents perceive irregular migration as quicker (76%) and cheaper (73%) than regular one.

#### Migration history and future projections:

- ❖ The analysis of migration patterns reveals that 10% of respondents have previously lived abroad, predominantly for one to five years (66%). The top countries of return are Türkiye (44%), Syria (14%), and Jordan (9%). Noteworthy reasons for returning from abroad include improved economic conditions (19%) and family constraints (17%).
- ❖ Projections indicate a predominant medium-term view of migration plans, with 48% of respondents foreseeing migration within two to five years, and 29% anticipating migration in less than two years.
- ❖ Age plays a significant role in migration inclination, with older participants showing a higher tendency towards remaining in Iraq.
- ❖ Among those not considering migration in the near future, 55% cite lack of resources as the primary hindrance, while 28% are bound by family obligations.
- ❖ The top three preferred destinations for migration are Germany (19%), the UK (17%), and Canada (15%). Overall, data indicate a strong inclination towards European countries with a combined 56%. Notably, factors such as better economic opportunities and improved quality of life outweigh the presence of family ties as the primary consideration for choosing the destination country.

#### Migration intentions:

- ❖ The main motivations for migration include economic instability, job scarcity, and the pursuit of better living conditions.
- ❖ A significant majority of respondents (62%) highlight the lack of economic opportunities as the primary driver for migration, followed by concerns about poor quality of life and well-being (51%). These findings emphasise a collective desire for better economic prospects and an improved standard of living among respondents, despite their current engagement in the labour market.
- ❖ While political instability, lack of personal freedom, and unstable security conditions remain influential factors in migration decisions, they are comparatively lower, at 35%, 35%, and 21% respectively.
- ❖ There is a noticeable generational divide in influential factors, with younger respondents predominantly citing lack of economic opportunities as the most compelling reason for migration, whereas political instability holds greater significance for older age groups.
- ❖ Analysis of governorate-specific data reveals a pronounced prevalence of lack of economic opportunities as a driving factor for migration in Dohuk. Notably, Dohuk consistently exhibits higher trends across various influencing factors, except for family reunification, where Erbil leads.

#### Key influencers in decision-making:

- ❖ The vast majority of respondents (98%) indicate that migration is a personal choice, emphasising a sense of personal agency in the migration process.
- ❖ When exploring the key influencers in migration decision-making, 35% of respondents report making their migration choice independently, without significant external influence. However, family members in Iraq play a notable role, albeit primarily in discouraging migration.

Additionally, both friends within Iraq and abroad exert influence, with 20% attributing encouragement to migrate from each group.

- ❖ Notably, 17% of respondents identify government officials as key influencers, primarily in encouraging migration. It is important to clarify that these government officials are perceived as public servants rather than high-level officials, likely connected to respondents through kinship or friendship.
- ❖ Among the various influencer groups, family members in Iraq are the sole influencers identified as discouraging migration, highlighting the complexity of familial dynamics in migration decision-making.
- ❖ Family and social networks play a significant role in influencing migration decisions. Leveraging these networks effectively can facilitate the dissemination of accurate migration information and support potential migrants in their preparatory phase.

#### **Migrant's preparatory phase:**

- ❖ The majority of respondents (56%) have not taken any preparatory steps for migration, indicating a prevalent lack of readiness among the surveyed population.
- ❖ Among those likely to migrate, a smaller proportion (38%) have yet to undertake any preparatory measures, suggesting a relatively higher level of readiness or intent within this sub-group. However, a significant majority (82%) have not commenced preparations, which aligns with their stated low intentions to migrate.
- ❖ Information gathering on the preferred destination country emerges as the most common initial step, reported by 28% of all respondents and equally prevalent among those likely to migrate (38%). This underscores the pivotal role of information gathering in the early stages of migration, with even 14% of those unlikely to migrate engaging in this activity.
- ❖ Notably, lower percentages of respondents likely to migrate have progressed to more concrete preparatory actions, such as contacting friends and family for assistance (20%), applying for a visa (12%), collecting required documents (11%), and contacting an agent (11%).
- ❖ A clear distinction is evident between those likely to migrate and those unlikely, with the former investing more efforts in preparatory activities. The range of preparedness spans from initial information gathering to advanced steps like booking a ticket, suggesting that the path to migration involves concrete actions, each contingent upon access to specific information.
- ❖ Among the respondents who have engaged in preparatory steps, 35% have typically spent three to six months on preparation, while 24% one to three months, 20% more than six months, and only 18% less than a month. Individuals under 30 years old, particularly those likely to migrate, are more proactive in initiating preparatory steps compared to those aged 30 and above, aligning with their higher tendency to migrate.
- ❖ 49% of respondents rely on personal savings to finance their migration plans. This preference is consistent across all age groups but slightly higher (52%) among local residents compared to IDPs. Notably, sponsorship from parents or siblings is the second most favoured option, particularly among the younger age cohort (29%), while selling houses and assets emerges as a significant funding source for older respondents (29%).
- ❖ Among different income groups, individuals with no or very low income are most likely to report inability to finance their migration journey, whereas personal savings are commonly relied upon by those earning between IQD 500,000 and 800,000 (approximately USD 380-610). Loans, both from banks and private lenders, are less common across income levels. Interestingly, among those likely to migrate legally, a majority plan to use personal savings (61%) and 25% would be sponsored by parents or siblings, while only 11% feel unable to finance their journey.
- ❖ Regarding travel companions, the majority of respondents express their intention to travel alone (52%), while 25% mention that they would travel with their immediate family, and another 10% with friends. Notably, only 6% mention that they would travel with an agent, suggesting the perception of agents as facilitators rather than companions.

- ❖ Family in Iraq emerges as the primary source of support for potential migrants, with 30% of respondents indicating this, primarily providing financial assistance (79%). Friends abroad are the next significant source of support (20%), mainly offering information on migration. Support from family abroad and friends in Iraq is comparatively less common, with family typically providing financial support and friends offering information and occasional connections with facilitators. Furthermore, 21% of respondents declare not having received any support from anyone. Other stakeholders such as governments, the MRC in Baghdad, NGOs, returned migrants, community networks, and smugglers are not mentioned as sources of support.

#### Migration challenges:

- ❖ Half of the respondents (50%) have encountered challenges in arranging the necessary funds, consistent with previous findings indicating financial constraints among potential migrants. 48% of them identify the obtaining of a visa as a challenge. Additionally, challenges related to obtaining required documents and navigating bureaucratic procedures are cited by 38% and 32% of respondents, respectively.
- ❖ Notably, finding a credible agent and acquiring reliable information on the destination country pose significant challenge for 24% and 13% of respondents, respectively. These findings suggest obstacles in accessing trustworthy guidance and information. Interestingly, finding a credible agent does not seem to be high on the list.
- ❖ When examining the challenges across age groups, individual aged 18-25 have encountered the most difficulties in arranging funds, followed by challenges related to obtaining a visa or securing accommodations in the destination country. Meanwhile, respondents aged 26-34 cite obtaining a visa as their primary challenge.

#### Information confidence levels and risk awareness:

- ❖ 46% of respondents report having some level of access to migration information, while 38% have extensive access. The remaining respondents either have no access to information at all or are fully aware of how to access information (8% each).
- ❖ Overall, 13% of respondents express high confidence in the accuracy of the information gathered, while 49% are moderately confident. In contrast, 32% of respondents feel slightly confident in the information collected, and 6% are 'not confident at all'.
- ❖ When the source of information is government website or MRCs, the respondents' level of confidence on the accuracy of information is higher compared to other information sources. However, only a minority selected these sources compared to others such as social media or family and friends.
- ❖ 73% of respondents feel that they are fully or partially informed about their legal rights as migrants, indicating the high level of knowledge. 50% of respondents have family members or friends in the destination country, and 46% of them occasionally rely on these connections for accurate information.
- ❖ Those who feel they are not informed of their legal rights as migrants or only partially informed indicate a lack of awareness regarding specific aspects such as asylum procedures and identity documents.
- ❖ Work visas are identified as the most eligible option for legal migration by 42% of respondents, followed by humanitarian admission (33%). Visit and student visas come after at 27% and 23%, respectively. 7% of the sub-sample say that there are no options available to legally travel. While work visas are considered the most eligible migration option, there is a considerable percentage of respondents that either feels ineligible or is uncertain about their options.
- ❖ When examining pre-existing knowledge on access to rights and services in destination countries, it appears that respondents perceive accessing such services as difficult. The most perceived difficulty is asylum acceptance (36%), while the easiest one is social inclusion (17%). Results indicate that services provided by or dependent on the government (such as asylum acceptance, accessing unemployment benefits, accessing education, and learning the

language) are more difficult than services gained through personal connections and efforts (such as social inclusion, housing, employment).

### Messaging

- ❖ The most beneficial information to help respondents make an informed decision concerns the cost of the migration journey and the legal migration processes and requirements.
- ❖ Potential risks of irregular migration are deemed to be the least relevant information.
- ❖ Overall, the majority of respondents considers that receiving more information on all the aspects related to migration is important or very important.
- ❖ 83% of the respondents, for example, value information on the costs of migration as important or very important. Following closely, 73% of respondents would require more detailed information about the processes and requirements for legal migration.
- ❖ Information on the risks of the journey, advice on how to assess the credibility of migration agents, and access to legal advice score the lowest, with 58%, 63%, and 67% of the respondents, respectively, considering them important or very important.

### Credible messengers

- ❖ Despite returnees do not seem to represent key influencers in migrants' decision-making process, leveraging them as messengers remains relevant. This relatively low importance of returnees as influencers in our survey might be attributed to the possibility that some returnees might be referred to as family and friends rather than being identified by their migration status.
- ❖ In examining the most impactful influencers and supporters who would serve as messengers in the campaigns, it is evident that family members in Iraq are the primary key influencers as well as those who provide the most support in the planning of the migration journey.
- ❖ As noted in earlier findings, government officials are seen as key influencers, primarily in encouraging migration. However, it must be noted that such governments officials that respondents refer to might be simply officers and clerks with whom respondents interact in their everyday lives.

### Effective channels of communication and information

- ❖ The most common source of information for respondents is social media platforms (59%), particularly among those between 18 and 25 years old (65%), followed by those aged between 26 and 34 (60%).
- ❖ Family and friends emerge in second place as the most common source of information (55%), mostly among those aged 35 to 49 (60%) and older than 50 (66%).
- ❖ Far behind, a quarter of all respondents rely on other migrants, followed by traditional means of communication such as TV and radio (19%). Other sources such as word of mouth (14%), returned migrants (12%), government websites (10%), community networks (9%), MRCs (8%), NGOs (6%), and CSOs (3%) are less prevalent among the sample.
- ❖ Interestingly, older respondents seem more dependent on getting information from government websites or agencies, making it their third source of information after family and friends and social media platforms.
- ❖ We explored potential variations based on the respondents' level of awareness regarding their legal rights as migrants, and findings indicate that individuals who consider themselves fully informed on migration primarily depend on family and friends (59%), followed by social media platforms (44%). Conversely, those who perceive themselves as partially informed rely more on social media platforms than on family and friends.

- ❖ Analysing the data across all levels of awareness, official sources such as government websites, NGOs, MRC in Baghdad, and Civil Society Organisations are less frequently consulted. This suggests a notable gap in institutional support for potential migrants.

### Lessons for the Information Campaigns:

The IOM's Public Communication Campaign Toolkit offers comprehensive guidance on selecting and utilising various communication channels to maximise campaign reach and engagement. Effective communication in all humanitarian and migration scenarios necessitates a two-way exchange. This is particularly crucial given the dynamic nature of the information sphere, constantly shaped by advancing technology and growing connectivity. As a result, communication methods are swiftly evolving. This evolution is especially notable in communication campaigns, where a major challenge lies in understanding audiences, communication channels, and context.<sup>98</sup> In designing the campaigns, it would be useful to consult with the IOM's campaign toolkit. In conclusion, and in order to craft impactful campaigns, below are some recommendations:

- ❖ Tailor the campaign message to the different needs of potential migrants, as well as their different backgrounds, age groups, and locations.
- ❖ Social media and traditional channels of communication might work, but also focus on more direct and engaging experiences.
- ❖ Right choice of messengers (one that is personally known to potential migrants) is fundamental to enhance campaign impact.
- ❖ Need to provide information but also concrete and tailored alternatives to irregular migration through policy changes and stakeholder engagement.
- ❖ Involve stakeholders in the design to be able to provide alternatives not just awareness.

### **The more targeted the campaign, the stronger its impact**

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<sup>98</sup> Hannah Murphy, Berti Olinto, and Ali Eren Guven, "IOM Public Communication Campaign Toolkit" (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2020).

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## Annex 2 – Questionnaire

### MIRAMI Survey

**interviewer. Field researcher name:**  
(LIST)

**governorate. Governorate of interview:**  
(LIST)

**district. District:**  
(LIST)

**location. Location name:**  
(LIST)

#### Introduction

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development invites you to participate in its MIRAMI survey. A survey designed to collect insights about peoples decision-making process and information needs for potential migrants in Iraq. It is part of a research project that aims at increasing awareness on safe and legal migration and reducing irregular migration through the development of targeted migration information campaigns.

Your responses will contribute to a better understanding of the information needs regarding migration preparation. The insights you provide will play a crucial role in shaping an awareness campaign aimed at assisting potential migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. The campaign aims to offer well-rounded information about migration options, legal pathways, skill development, and the realities of irregular migration. Your input will help tailor this campaign to your needs and ensure its effectiveness. Your participation is greatly valued and entirely voluntary. By completing the survey, you agree that the data will be used and analysed. You may choose not to participate. If you decide not to continue, you may also withdraw at any time.

It will take about \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to fill out the questionnaire. Your responses will be confidential, and we do not collect identifying information such as your name or address. We can assure you that all answers are anonymous, and the survey has no bearing on your situation.

All data is stored in a server. To help protect your confidentiality, the survey will not contain information that will personally identify you. At the end of the survey, you may choose to provide us with your email address, so we can contact you for future research. The results of this survey will be used for research purposes only. This research and project have been reviewed and accepted according to the EU regulations and procedures of conducting research.

Selecting the 'agree' button below indicates that:

- You have read the above information.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.
- You are at least 18 years of age.

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the 'disagree' button, or 'agree' to continue.

**consent. Do you wish to continue?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**language.** Language used for the interview:

- 1 Kurdish
- 2 Arabic
- 3 Assyrian

**Section A: Introductory questions**

**int1. a1. Are you an Iraqi national?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**int2. a2. Are you considering migrating out of Iraq?**

- 1 I do not think about migrating
- 2 I sometimes think about migrating
- 3 I often think about migrating
- 4 I have already made some plans about migrating
- 5 I have already tried to migrate

**int3. [if int2 = 5] a3. Are you considering migrating out of Iraq?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

[Questionnaire to proceed if a1 = 1 and a2 = 2-3-4-5 or a3 = 1]

**Section B: Migration History (6 questions)**

I will begin by asking you some questions about your migration history.

**b1. Have you ever lived outside Iraq?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**b2. [if b1 = 1] How much time did you spend abroad?**

- 1 Less than a year
- 2 Between 1 year and 5 years
- 3 More than 5 years
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**b3. [if b1 = 1] Which country have you returned from?**

(TEXT)

**b4. [if b1 = 1] When did you return? Write the year.**

(NUMBER)

**b5. [if b1 = 1] What were the reasons that made you return to Iraq?**

[Multiple choice]

- 1 Improved political conditions
- 2 Improved economic conditions
- 3 Improved social conditions
- 4 Completed education abroad
- 5 Completed work contract abroad

- 6 I was forced too by family
- 7 I was deported by host country
- 8 Family reunification failed so I returned to my family
- 9 I just wanted to return back home
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**b6. [if b1 = 1] Did you apply for a visa before going to that country?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**Section C: Migration Intentions and Decision-Making Processes/Motivations (22 questions)**

**Now I will ask you some questions about your migration intentions and decision-making process and your motivations and preparations**

**c1. How likely are you to migrate to another country in the near future?**

- 1 Not likely at all
- 2 Slightly unlikely
- 3 Somewhat likely
- 4 Very likely
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know

**c2. [if c1 = 3 or 4] When do you think you will migrate?**

- 1 In less than two years
- 2 Between 2 and 5 years
- 3 In more than 5 years
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know

**c3. [if c1 = 1 or 2 or 80] What are the main reasons for not considering migrating to another country yet? Choose two maximum.**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 I am satisfied with my living standards in current location
- 2 I do not have the resources to migrate
- 3 I have family obligations
- 4 My family and friends live here
- 5 The journey is too difficult
- 6 I lack enough information
- 7 I do not have a network there
- 8 I cannot secure a job there beforehand
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c4. [if c1 = 3 or 4] What are the top three factors that are influencing your decision to migrate?**

**[Do not read the options, let the respondent explain. Select maximum 3 options.]**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Lack of economic opportunities
- 2 Political instability
- 3 Unstable security conditions
- 4 Lack of personal freedom
- 5 Lack of education opportunities
- 6 Family re-unification

- 7 Bad quality of life and well-being
- 8 Climate change
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c5. Who are the key influencers in your decision-making process regarding migration?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 No one
- 2 Family members in Iraq
- 3 Family members abroad
- 4 Friends in Iraq
- 5 Friends abroad
- 6 Returnees from migration
- 7 Religious leaders
- 8 Tribal leaders
- 9 Other community leaders
- 10 Government officials
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c6. [if c5 is not 1 or 60 or 90] What type of influence did they have on your decision-making process?**

**[Answer only for the influencers that were picked in C4]**

	1 Encourage	2 Discourage	3 No Influence
<b>c6_2. Family members in Iraq</b>			
<b>c6_3. Family members abroad</b>			
<b>c6_4. Friends in Iraq</b>			
<b>c6_5. Friends abroad</b>			
<b>c6_6. Returnees</b>			
<b>c6_7. Religious leaders</b>			
<b>c6_8. Tribal leaders</b>			
<b>c6_9. Other community leaders</b>			
<b>c6_10. Government officials</b>			

**c7. Is it your own choice to migrate?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c8. [if c7 = 2] Is someone else pressuring you to migrate?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c9. [if c8 = 1] How are they pressuring you?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Threats
- 2 Family pressure
- 3 Violence
- 4 Kidnapping

- 5 Coercion
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c10. Which country are you considering migrating to as a final destination? Only one option allowed.**

- 1 No specific destination
- 2 Sweden
- 3 Germany
- 4 UK
- 5 USA
- 6 Canada
- 7 Australia
- 8 Turkey
- 9 Jordan
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c11. [if c10 = 2-9] What are the reasons for choosing the above destination? Choose maximum 3 options.**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Better economic opportunities
- 2 Political stability
- 3 Improved quality of life
- 4 Family already residing there
- 5 Cultural or linguistic familiarity
- 6 Presence of job opportunities in specific industries
- 7 Peace and safety
- 8 Always wanted to live there
- 9 Popular destination among migrants
- 10 Education
- 11 Ease of asylum procedure
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c12. What type of information or support would help you make a more informed decision about migration? Rate each on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'Not important and 5 being 'Very important'.**

- **c12\_1. Detailed information about legal migration processes and requirements**
  - 1 Not important
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 Very important
- **c12\_2. Personal stories or testimonials from migrants who have successfully followed legal pathways**
  - 1 Not important
  - 2
  - 3

- 4  
5 Very important
- **c12\_3. Access to legal advice from migration experts**

1 Not important  
2  
3  
4  
5 Very important
  - **c12\_4. Information on potential risks and challenges associated with irregular migration**

1 Not important  
2  
3  
4  
5 Very important
  - **c12\_5. Information on the costs of the journey**

1 Not important  
2  
3  
4  
5 Very important
  - **c12\_6. Advice on how to assess the credibility of migration agents**

1 Not important  
2  
3  
4  
5 Very important
  - **c12\_7. [Optional] Please add any other information you would like to have but not mentioned above. Leave blank if nothing to add.**  
(TEXT)

**c13. Have you taken any preparatory steps for migrating to another country?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Not yet  
2 I have gathered information on migrating to the preferred country of destination  
3 I have contacted friends and family for assistance  
4 I have applied for a passport  
5 I have applied for a visa to the intended country of destination  
6 I have collected the required documents  
7 I have contacted an agent  
8 I have made payment to an agent  
9 I have booked a ticket for the full or part of the journey  
10 I am learning the relevant language of the destination country  
60 Other (please specify)  
90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c14. [if c13 != 1 and 90] How long did it take you to go through the preparation steps?**

- 1 Less than a month  
2 1 – 3 months  
3 3 – 6 months  
4 More than 6 months  
90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c15. [if c13 != 1 and 90] Who has supported you the most in planning for your migration?**

- 1 No one
- 2 Family in Iraq
- 3 Friends in Iraq
- 4 Family abroad
- 5 Friends abroad
- 6 Government agencies
- 7 Migration Resource Centres
- 8 NGOs
- 9 Returnees from migration
- 10 Community networks
- 11 Agent
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c16. [if c15 = 2-60] In what way have they supported you?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Provided me with information
- 2 Provided me with financial support
- 3 Provided me with contacts
- 4 Connected me to an agent
- 5 Helped me arrange my documents
- 6 Helped me find a job in the country of destination
- 7 Helped me find accommodation in the country of destination
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c17. [if c13 != 1 and 90] What challenges are you experiencing in your migration preparation?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 None
- 2 To arrange required documents
- 3 To arrange required funds
- 4 To find relevant and credible information on destination country
- 5 To get a visa
- 6 To find credible agent
- 7 Corruption in public administration
- 8 Slow bureaucratic processes
- 9 To make living arrangements in destination country
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c18. How do you plan to finance your migration journey?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 I would not be able to finance it
- 2 Personal savings
- 3 Sell house and assets
- 4 Sponsored by parents/siblings
- 5 Sponsored by extended family
- 6 Extended family abroad will cover the costs
- 7 A bank loan
- 8 A loan from extended family

- 9 A loan from a private lender
- 10 A scholarship
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c19. Who would be accompanying you on your journey?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 No one, travelling alone
- 2 With immediate family (spouse/partner, children, parents, siblings)
- 3 With extended family members
- 4 With friends
- 5 With an unknown group
- 6 With an agent
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c20. Do you have the required travel documents for the preferred destination?**

- 1 Yes, complete documents
- 2 No, some documents
- 3 No
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c21. Would you consider migrating to your preferred destination without a valid passport and legal documents?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Maybe
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**c22. [if c21 = 1] What are the main factors that would make you consider this path?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 I do not have a passport
- 2 My visa application was rejected
- 3 It is cheaper
- 4 It is quicker
- 5 It is the most common way
- 6 It was recommended by family/friends abroad
- 7 It was recommended by returnees
- 8 It was recommended by an agent
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**Section D: Social Networks (3 questions)**

**I will now ask you some questions about your social networks.**

**d1. Do you have any family members or friends who live in your preferred country of destination?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**d2. [if d1 = 1] How often are you in touch with them?**

- 1 Daily
- 2 Once a week
- 3 Once a month
- 4 Every 3 months
- 5 Every 6 months or less
- 6 No contact, never talk to them
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**d3. [if d1 = 1 & d2 != 6] To what extent do you rely on those family members and friends to get accurate information on migration?**

- 1 Never
- 2 Rarely
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Very often
- 5 Always
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**Section E: Migration Information Sources / Needs and Awareness of Irregular Migration (16 questions)**

**e1. To what extent do you feel that you have access to information about migration options?**

- 1 Not at all
- 2 To some extent
- 3 To a great extent
- 4 Fully aware
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e2. Which sources do you usually rely on for information about migration options and related subjects?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Family and friends
- 2 Tv and radio
- 3 Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube)
- 4 Returnee migrants
- 5 Government websites/sources
- 6 Civil society organisations
- 7 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- 8 Community networks
- 9 Word of mouth
- 10 Other migrants
- 11 Printed materials (brochures, posters, etc)
- 12 Message and call apps (WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram etc.)
- 13 Migrant Resource Centre
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e3. How confident do you feel in the accuracy of the information that you gathered about migration destinations?**

- 1 Not confident at all
- 2 Slightly confident
- 3 Moderately confident
- 4 Very confident
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e4. Do you feel you are well-informed of your legal rights as a migrant? (For example, asylum procedures, human rights, identity documents, legal status, dealing with police/border authorities)**

- 1 Yes, fully
- 2 Yes, partially
- 3 No
- 4 Not sure
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e5. [if e4 = 2 or 3] Which of the following do you think you are not informed of? [Multiple choice]**

- 1 Asylum procedures
- 2 Identity documents
- 3 Legal status
- 4 Dealing with police/border authorities
- 5 Not sure
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e6. According to your knowledge, what are the options to legally travel to your preferred country of destination?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Work visa
- 2 Student visa
- 3 Humanitarian admission
- 4 Resettlement process
- 5 Visit visa
- 6 Family re-unification
- 7 No options
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e7. Do you think you are eligible to migrate through the above-mentioned legal options?**

- 1 Yes I am eligible
- 2 No, I am not eligible
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e8. [if e7 = 1] Which of the legal options you think you are eligible for?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Work visa
- 2 Student visa
- 3 Humanitarian admission
- 4 Resettlement process
- 5 Visit visa
- 6 Family re-unification

- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e9. To what extent are you familiar with the financial costs of irregular migration?**

- 1 Not at all familiar
- 2 Slightly familiar
- 3 Somewhat familiar
- 4 Moderately familiar
- 5 Extremely familiar
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e10. To what extent are you familiar with the duration of the journey if undertaking irregular migration?**

- 1 Not at all familiar
- 2 Slightly familiar
- 3 Somewhat familiar
- 4 Moderately familiar
- 5 Extremely familiar
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e11. To what extent are you aware of the risks associated with irregular migration?**

- 1 Not at all aware
- 2 Slightly aware
- 3 Somewhat aware
- 4 Moderately aware
- 5 Extremely aware
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e12. What types of risks have you heard of that occur while traveling without documentation?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 I have not heard any risks
- 2 Lack of food and water
- 3 Separation of family members
- 4 Bribes and high extortion fees
- 5 Kidnapping
- 6 Detention / imprisonment
- 7 Mistreatment by border police
- 8 Mistreatment by agents
- 9 Deportation
- 10 Losing money
- 11 Drowning / accident along the journey
- 12 Physical abuse
- 13 Sexual abuse
- 14 Psychological abuse
- 15 Sickness/death
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e13. [if e12 != 1 and 90] In case you encounter any of the mentioned risks during the journey, are you aware of any organisations or entities you could contact?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

- 3 Not sure
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e14. [if e13 = 1] Which entities are you aware of?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Iraqi Embassy or Consulate in the country
- 2 International organisations
- 3 NGOs
- 4 Police
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e15. Would you consider migrating without legal papers knowing that there are risks involved?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Not sure
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**e16. Do you think migrants travelling without legal documents have access to the following in the destination country?**

	1 Very easy	2 Relatively easy	3 Neither easy nor difficult	4 Relatively difficult	5 Very difficult
e16_1. Finding employment					
e16_2. Finding housing					
e16_3. Learning the language					
e16_4. Accessing unemployment benefits					
e16_5. Accessing education					
e16_6. Asylum acceptance					
e16_7. Social inclusion					

**Section F: Information Campaigns and Outreach (7 questions)**

**f1. Sometimes there are TV shows, events or other information about migration and about people moving from one country to another. Over the last year, have you seen or heard of any of the following in your area?**

- **f1\_1. TV advertisement of program**
  - 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 Not sure
- **f1\_2. Workshop or session**
  - 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 Not sure
- **f1\_3. Radio program**
  - 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 Not sure
- **f1\_4. Social media**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Not sure
- **f1\_5. Website**
  - 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 Not sure
- **f1\_6. Poster**
  - 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 Not sure
- **f1\_7. Newspaper**
  - 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 Not sure

**f2. [if any option in f1 = 1] Which of the following aspects of migration have you come across in information campaigns?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Explaining what migration is
- 2 Legal requirements of migration
- 3 Warning people of risks and dangers of smuggling
- 4 Protection messages for migrants
- 5 Telling people where to get more information
- 6 I do not remember
- 60 Other (please specify)

**f3. [if any option in f1 = 1] Who was the organiser?**

- 1 Government
- 2 NGO
- 3 International organisation
- 4 Migrant Resource Centre
- 5 Travel agent for visa
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**f4. Which communication methods in your opinion would be most effective in reaching you with campaign messages?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Tv and radio
- 2 Social media platforms
- 3 Community workshops
- 4 Personal counselling sessions
- 5 Printed materials (brochures, posters, etc.)
- 6 SMS
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**f5. In general, how do you perceive the impact of migration information campaigns on potential migrants?**

- 1 They significantly discourage migration
- 2 They somewhat discourage migration
- 3 They have no significant impact
- 4 They somewhat encourage migration
- 5 They significantly encourage migration
- 6 Not sure
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**f6. Have you participated in any information campaigns conducted by the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Iraq that provided accurate information on migration risks and legal pathways?**

- 1 Yes, I have participated
- 2 No, I have not participated
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**f7. [if f6 = 1] Was the campaign beneficial and effective to you?**

- 1 Very effective
- 2 Somewhat effective
- 3 Not very effective
- 4 Not at all effective
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**Section G: Demographic Information (21 questions)**

**g1. What is your age?**  
(NUMBER)

**g2. Gender:**

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g3. From what ethno-religious group are you?**

- 1 Muslim Kurd
- 2 Muslim Arab
- 3 Ezidi
- 4 Christian
- 5 Shabak
- 6 Muslim Turkmen
- 7 Kaka'i
- 60 Other (explain)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g4. What is your employment status?**  
**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Employed, full time
- 2 Employed, part time
- 3 Daily labour
- 4 Self-employed
- 5 Business owner
- 6 Unemployed, looking for work

- 7 Unemployed, not looking for work
- 8 A homemaker
- 9 Retired
- 10 Student
- 11 Unable to work
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g5. [if g4 = 1-5] What sector are you employed in?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Government / public sector
- 2 Security forces
- 3 Construction
- 4 Transportation
- 5 Agriculture
- 6 Industry
- 7 Service sector (commerce, restaurants, workshops, etc.)
- 8 Hospitality
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g6. What is the primary source of your household income?**

- 1 Respondent's salary / income
- 2 Other household members' salary / income
- 3 Humanitarian assistance
- 4 Remittances from abroad
- 5 Governmental social support
- 6 Family or community support
- 7 Charity
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g7. What is your household income, that is, what is the total income of all earning members in your household? Per month.**

- 1 Less than 170,000 IQD
- 2 170,000 – 500,000 IQD
- 3 500,000 – 800,000 IQD
- 4 800,000 – 1,600,000 IQD
- 5 More than 1,600,000 IQD
- 80 [Do not read] Do not know
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g8. What is your individual income? Per month.**

- 1 No income
- 2 Less than 170,000 IQD
- 3 170,000 – 500,000 IQD
- 4 500,000 – 800,000 IQD
- 5 800,000 – 1,600,000 IQD
- 6 More than 1,600,000 IQD
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g9. What is your highest level of education that you obtained?**

- 1 No schooling completed
- 2 Completed primary school
- 3 Completed intermediate school
- 4 Completed high school
- 5 Some university credit, no degree
- 6 Trade/technical/vocational training
- 7 Bachelor's degree
- 8 Master's degree
- 9 PhD
- 60 Other education (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g10. What is your marital status?**

- 1 Single
- 2 Married
- 3 Widowed
- 4 Divorced
- 5 Separated
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g11. [if g10 = 2-5] How many children do you have?  
(NUMBER)**

**g12. Which governorate do you originate from?**

- 1 This governorate
- 2 A different governorate
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g13. [if g12 = 2] Indicate your governorate of origin:  
(LIST)**

**g14. [if g12 = 2] Are you an internally displaced person (IDP)?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**g15. [if g12 = 2] How long have you been living here?**

- 1 Up to 1 year
- 2 Between 1 and 5 years
- 3 Between 5 and 10 years
- 4 More than 10 years
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g16. What type of accommodation do you live in?**

- 1 Owned apartment
- 2 Rented apartment
- 3 Owned house
- 4 Rented house
- 5 Irregular housing
- 6 Hosted by another family/employee
- 7 Compound

- 8 Camp
- 9 Dormitory
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g17. What is the size of your accommodation? In squared meters. Add 0 if do not know.**  
(NUMBER)

**g18. Who do you live with?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Alone
- 2 Parents
- 3 Spouse/partner
- 4 Children
- 5 Siblings
- 6 Other family members (please specify)
- 7 Roommates/friends
- 60 Other (please specify)
- 90 [Do not read] Prefer not to say

**g19. How many people live in your household including yourself?**  
(NUMBER)

**g20. How many earning members are in your household?**  
(NUMBER)

**g21. What languages do you speak?**

**[Multiple choice]**

- 1 Arabic
- 2 Kurdish
- 3 Turkmani
- 4 Assyrian
- 5 Syriac
- 6 Shabaki
- 7 Armenian
- 8 English
- 60 Other (please specify)

**Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses will contribute to a more effective awareness campaign and help address the needs of potential migrants and IDPs in Iraq. Should you be willing to contribute further to our research or participate in future follow-up interviews, kindly consider providing your email address and telephone number below.**