



Federal Office
for Migration
and Refugees



Assisted Voluntary Return from Germany: Motives and Reintegration

An Evaluation Study of the StarthilfePlus Federal Programme

Research Report 34

Martin Schmitt / Maria Bitterwolf / Tatjana Baraulina



Forschung



Research Centre
Migration, Integration and Asylum

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Key Findings

With a large number of persons not allowed to stay in Germany due to invalid residence permits, the German Federal Government introduced the return assistance programme StarthilfePlus in February 2017. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (FOMR) in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implements the programme. The central component of the programme is the financial support of voluntary returnees from Germany. With this programme, the goal of the federal government is to motivate migrants, particularly those with very low chances of success in the asylum process, to voluntarily make the decision to return. Furthermore, the programme also aims to raise awareness of the option and conditions of voluntary return, thus facilitating well-informed return decisions. The StarthilfePlus programme supports persons who are obliged to leave the country and persons whose asylum procedure has not yet been completed. In addition, those whose deportation has been suspended (Persons with “Duldung”) or who are eligible for protection under German law can also have their return funded under certain conditions.

IOM and the Research Centre of the FOMR have been evaluating the StarthilfePlus programme. This report presents the results of the first study within a larger evaluation initiative. The main data for the report comes from a survey of 1,339 persons who returned with the assistance of StarthilfePlus. The collected data provides insights into the returnees’ decision-making processes as well as the living conditions in the first months in the respective places of return. The results of the study facilitate the further evidence-based development of the programme and can be used to conceive further measures for return and reintegration assistance.

- The persons surveyed as part of the study originally left their countries of origin due to fear of

violence and persecution, but also for economic reasons and for the prospect of a better future for their children. Almost all study participants came to Germany during the increased asylum migration between 2014 and 2017. The majority spent up to two years in Germany. Most of the respondents were men and relatively young. The proportion of women in the survey was 20%.

- Persons who left Germany in 2017 – the first year of the StarthilfePlus programme’s implementation – made up the majority of all survey participants. In that year, the majority of the returnees participating in the StarthilfePlus programme were persons whose asylum application had been rejected. Accordingly, two-thirds of the study participants’ applications had received a notice of denial at the time of their return decision. The other one-third were still in the midst of the procedure.
- The majority of the survey participants highlighted the absence of long-term legal prospects to stay in Germany as the most important motive for returning. The legal situation, however, is rarely the only reason. A desire to be near family in the country of origin and the feeling of being foreign in Germany also play an important role. In Germany, returnees value good medical care, good future prospects for their family and opportunities in the job market. These aspects made a return decision very hard for the respondents. For some of the returnees, the fear of violence and persecution also remained relevant obstacles to returning.
- The financial assistance only very rarely played a major role in encouraging the general willingness to return. If persons were thinking of returning, however, the financial assistance made a big difference in their final decision. Especially for those with high costs for returning, such as larger

families, the funding made a significant difference in solidifying their decision.

- One part of the programme is impartial return counselling through counselling centres. Those interested in returning can benefit from this offer before submitting their application for the StarthilfePlus programme. The survey respondents stated that this counselling is at least as important for the decision process as the financial support. Over 60% of respondents, regardless of the duration of their stay and their residence status, pointed out that the counselling was relevant for their return decision.
- The surveyed StarthilfePlus participants returned to Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as six other countries. The countries were chosen due to the high numbers of persons returning there with the help of the StarthilfePlus programme. Most of the respondents returned to the places where they had lived before migrating. Besides safety aspects, mainly the proximity to family and friends was of central importance when selecting their place of return. Relationships with family and friends are meaningful to the respondents and provide support as the returnee rebuilds their life and prospects after returning.
- About 40% of the respondents were satisfied with their lives at their place of return in general and another 30% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. Sufficient income and access to medical care played an important role in general life satisfaction.
- On average, respondents had achieved moderate employment rates of about 39% within the first eight months after returning. Only 15% earned enough to cover their daily needs. Correspondingly, many respondents strongly desired receiving support finding employment or establishing a business at the place of return. Men took up paid employment much more frequently than women and were more likely to earn enough to cover their daily needs.
- After returning, the majority of respondents were at least partially financially responsible for multiple family members or relatives. For returnees, caring for large groups of family members at their place of return presented a challenge. The income of these respondents was often not enough to cover daily needs.
- As the majority of respondents did not earn enough money in the first months after return, financial support was of great value. This was primarily used to cover daily needs so that the returnees could buy time to develop individual reintegration strategies.
- About 60% of respondents consider migrating again. Persons who did not have work or who felt unsafe at their place of return were more likely to leave their country or region again. Only 12% of all respondents reported a desire to migrate again regardless of circumstances. The migration plans of the respondents are very vague: most of them have not yet established a concrete time frame for onward migration. Of those wanting to migrate, some report not having the financial means or only wishing to do so through regular avenues.
- Over 80% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the StarthilfePlus programme. These high numbers demonstrate that the persons receiving assistance viewed the programme as meaningful and helpful.

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1 Introduction

Promoting voluntary return of people without a residence permit is an essential component of the German and European migration policy. This voluntary return policy became even more important in the wake of an increase in asylum migration to Germany from 2014 to 2017 and the resulting challenges. As part of the European migration agenda introduced by the European Commission in May 2015, which sees effective and humane return policies as essential, the Commission established action plans on return.¹ In its coalition agreement, the German Federal Government considers supporting voluntary return as a central pillar of its migration policy (CDU/CSU/SPD 2018: 16). The Migration Masterplan, introduced by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (FMI) in July 2018, strives to bolster the joint return programmes of the federal and state governments considerably (FMI 2018: 21).

German return policy gives preference to assisted voluntary returns over forced returns (CDU/CSU/SPD 2018: 108). This preference has been set based on the understanding that voluntary return is more humane, less expensive and more efficient (Kuschminder 2017a: 3-4). However, the term voluntary is controversial, as the persons to whom the current return policies apply are often unable to obtain a long-term residency status and/or are required to leave Germany. Their decision-making agency is thus limited. Studies by the Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (FOMR) argue, however, that there is a certain degree of voluntariness involved when persons return without the application of direct force by the government (Kreienbrink 2006; Baraulina 2013: 31). The International Organization

for Migration (IOM) considers a decision to be voluntary within the context of assisted return when it is made on the basis of current, unbiased and reliable information and when there is no physical or psychological pressure to participate in a return programme (IOM 2018a: 6).

In Germany, the federal and state programmes REAG/GARP provide organisational and financial support for voluntary return since the 1970s. Further, various support programmes exist on the state and municipal level (Grote 2015: 40-44). In addition to these existing programmes, further return programmes have been initiated in recent years. Specifically, the German Federal Government introduced the return programme StarthilfePlus in February 2017. By providing financial assistance, the StarthilfePlus programme aims to motivate persons with a very low chance of success in the asylum procedure in particular to make a decision to leave Germany voluntarily. If possible, this decision should be made already during the asylum procedure but – in case of a negative asylum decision – no later than the official deadline for departure. Furthermore, the Start-hilfePlus programme is also meant to support asylum seekers who, although they may have better chances in the asylum procedure, would prefer to return to their country of origin.² Under certain circumstances, the programme also assists persons whose deportation has been temporarily suspended (persons with “Duldung”).³ IOM implements the programme.

1 See online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_17_350 (13/11/2018).

2 See online: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2017/02/workshop-rueckkehrberatung.html> (13.11.2018).

3 By the end of 2016 when the programme was introduced, the Central Register of Foreign Nationals (AZR) listed 207,484 persons who were required to leave the country, with 153,047 of these whose deportation has been suspended (Persons with

In addition to return assistance, reintegration assistance in the return regions was also intensified. For example, country-specific reintegration projects have been implemented in Kosovo⁴ (UNSCR 1244) (URA) and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).⁵ Further, Germany has partnered with several other EU member states to participate in the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN). The network supports the reintegration of returnees in 13 countries.⁶ The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has run the programme *Perspektive Heimat* on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development since 2017. Among other services, it provides counselling on employment opportunities, vocational training, and further educational and training measures in 10 select partner countries.⁷

Evaluation of Return Programmes

Despite the growth of German return and reintegration programmes, there still is a lack of comprehensive scientific evaluation and monitoring of such programmes due to the challenges posed by collecting data in the return regions and sampling a sufficient number of returnees. Accordingly, both political and academic circles consistently call for regular evaluations of and research on return assistance programmes (Paasche 2014: 4).

A series of evaluations had been performed by or on behalf of IOM in select countries of return. For example, various research and consulting institutions evaluated IOM support measures for the voluntary return of migrants to Libya and Egypt over the past years (Altai Consulting 2017; Center for Development Services 2017). The Samuel Hall Think Tank (2014) also performed a large survey of internally displaced persons and refugees who returned from Pakistan

and the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan as part of an evaluation of the return and reintegration activities of IOM in Afghanistan.⁸

In recent times, monitoring and evaluation have been increasingly included in the return programmes of some EU member states. For example, IOM (2015) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD 2015) evaluated Austria's and Hungary's reintegration support measures through surveying returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR 1244). The State Secretariat for Migration and IOM (2018b) regularly monitor the Swiss reintegration programme. In the United Kingdom, the aid organisation Refugee Action (2013) compiled a report on the experiences of persons who had received support after their return. Furthermore, the UK Home Office (2010) released a study on the process and impact of a return and reintegration programme with Pakistan as a case study. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (NDI) commissioned a larger comparative study to examine various support measures, involving field work in Norway and four return regions (Strand et al. 2016).

The European Migration Network (EMN 2016) recently established a set of non-binding guidelines to promote the monitoring and evaluation of return and reintegration support programmes in the EU member states and to facilitate better data comparisons. With the Reintegration Impact Assessment Tool (RIAT), in mid-2017, the Common Support Initiative (CSI)⁹ additionally developed a standardised system for collecting data on the impact of reintegration support for multiple countries.

Research Task

IOM and the Research Centre of the FOMR evaluated the *StarthilfePlus* programme on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (FMI). The study aims to learn from respondents' return decisions and their living conditions after return – particularly with regard to importance of programme funding. It also examines how satisfied

⁴ "Duldung") (SVR 2017: 7). A total of 433,719 persons were still in the midst of the asylum procedure. FOMR asylum operations statistics for the month of December 2016, see online: <http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201612-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf?blob=publicationFile> (13/11/2018).

⁵ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁶ See online: <http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Dossiers/DE/ura-dossier-2017.html?nn=1367824¬First=true&docId=9285042> (21/03/2019) and <http://germany.iom.int/en/integrated-reintegration-iraq-kurdistan-region> (21/03/2019).

⁷ See online: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehr/Reintegration/ProgrammERRIN/programm-errin-node.html> (21/03/2019). ERRIN replaced the previous programme European Reintegration Network (ERIN) in June 2018.

⁸ See online: http://www.bmz.de/en/issues/Sonderinitiative-Fluchtursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/deutsche_politik/perspektive_heimat/index.jsp (21/03/2019).

⁹ Other evaluations performed internally and externally can be found at <https://www.iom.int/internaloig-evaluations> and <https://www.iom.int/external-evaluations> (19/11/2018).

⁹ The project CSI was launched in 2013 by the Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL) and aims to improve exchange and ease collaboration between participating European countries in the area of voluntary return. For more information, see online: <https://www.fedasil.be/en/international/fedasil-eu-and-return> (12/12/2018)

the respondents are with the assistance they received from the StarthilfePlus programme.¹⁰

To allow a greater generalisation of results, the study tried to reach as many participants as possible. During the research project, 1,339 persons who returned to 12 countries with support from StarthilfePlus answered the questions in an Internet-based standardised survey. The survey looked at respondents' circumstances, the motives for their return decisions and the first phase of their reintegration. The results of the survey will be used to develop and advance the StarthilfePlus programme as well as return and reintegration policy in general based on empirical evidence.

Report Structure

This study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 describes the StarthilfePlus programme and how returnees took advantage of it. Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the study's design, while Chapters 4 through 7 discuss the profiles of respondents, their motivations for returning, the first steps of reintegration and their intentions for settling or migrating again. Chapter 8 provides an analysis of respondents' experiences with the StarthilfePlus programme. The main results are then summarised in Chapter 9. In the final chapter of the study, future research needs are identified.

¹⁰ This study does not examine the operational processes of the StarthilfePlus programme. An intermediate evaluation examining these operational processes and the general programme set-up as well as identifying potential for improvement was performed by IOM for the programme year 2017 (unpublished).

2 The StarthilfePlus Federal Programme

The StarthilfePlus return assistance programme was introduced on February 1, 2017. The programme is renewed and adjusted each year. It primarily focuses on providing financial return and reintegration assistance, which is paid in two instalments – one before and one after the person leaves Germany.

The StarthilfePlus programme supplements the existing REAG/GARP programme. With the support programmes REAG (Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany) and GARP (Government Assisted Repatriation Programme), initiated in 1979 and 1989 respectively, the German federal and state governments aim to help persons return voluntarily to their country of origin or migrate onwards to another country willing to accept them. While REAG covers travel costs (plane, train, bus), petrol costs and travel grants, GARP helps persons to start anew specifically in those countries which play an important role in the German Migration Policy. Start-hilfePlus supplements this REAG/GARP support with additional financial incentives, particularly for those migrants for whom chances of being granted asylum in Germany are very low. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) organises departure from Germany through the support programme.¹¹

2.1 Programme Details

At its inception, the StarthilfePlus programme established two levels of assistance with the amount of financial assistance received varying dependent on

when the person decided to return (see Figure 1).¹² Persons who withdrew their request for asylum and committed to leaving Germany before their asylum procedure was completed, received financial assistance of EUR 1,200 (**Level 1**). Rejected asylum applicants who decided to leave Germany with the assistance of the programme within the established departure time frame and who did not appeal their asylum decision, received EUR 800 (**Level 2**). Funding was paid in full to persons 12 years of age or older, with children under 12 years of age receiving half of the specified sum. A family allowance consisting of EUR 500 was also paid out when more than four family members left the country together.

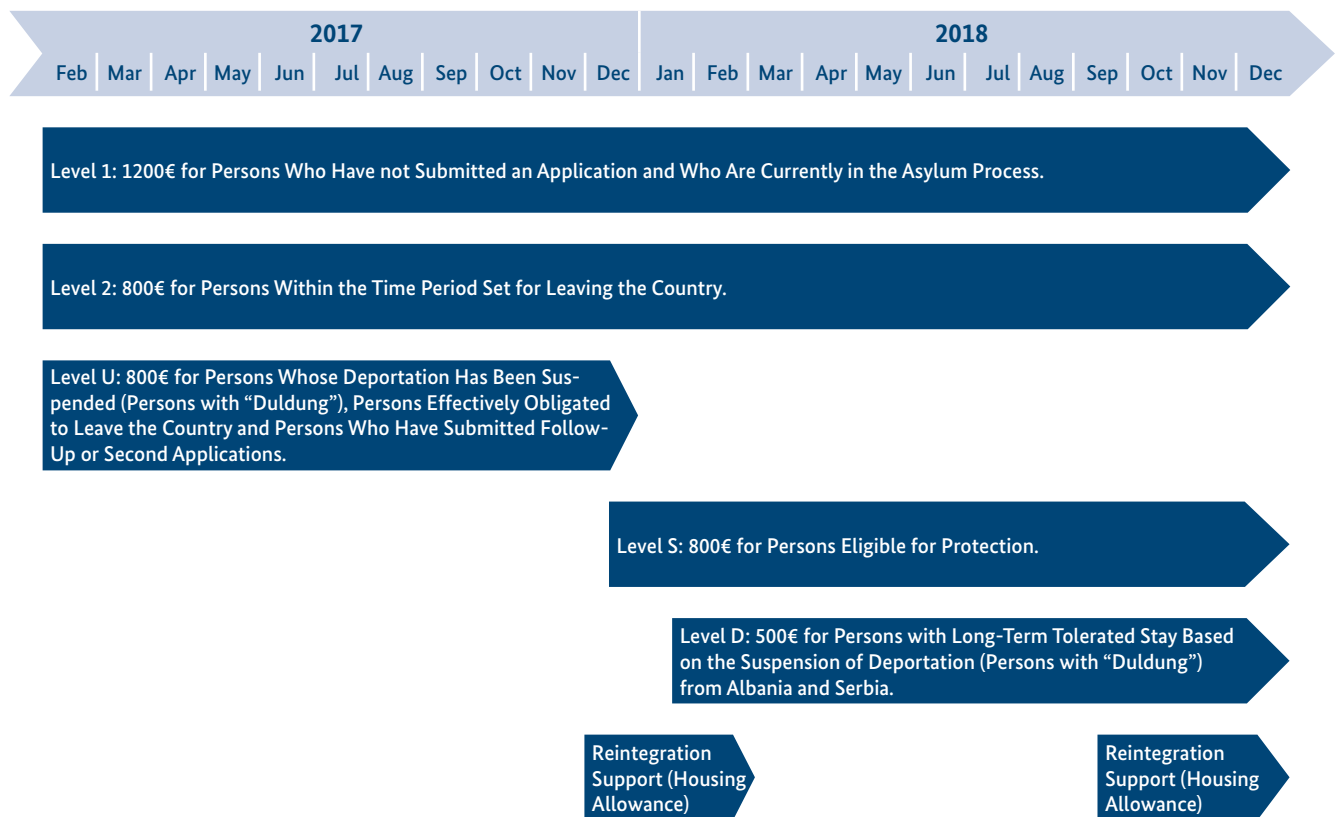
For the period from February 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017, an additional temporary arrangement (**Level U**) was created for those who did not fall within one of the levels described above, specifically returnees who were registered in Germany before February 1, 2017 and were required to leave the country before August 1, 2017; those whose deportation had been suspended (“Duldung”); and those who had submitted a follow-up or second asylum application. These groups received EUR 800.

Funding within the context of the StarthilfePlus programme is available to both persons returning to their country of origin and to those who plan on migrating onwards to another country prepared to accept them.¹³ At the introduction of the programme, citizens from 39 countries in Africa and Asia were eligible for

¹¹ See online: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehr/Rueckkehrprogramme/FoerderprogrammREAGGARP/foerderprogramm-reag-garp-node.html> (18/09/2018).

¹² See online: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2017/01/starthilfe-plus.html> (18/09/2018) and <http://germany.iom.int/de/starthilfeplus> (06/11/2017).

¹³ Due to safety concerns, IOM does not support travel from Germany under REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus to Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Figure 1: Components of the StarthilfePlus Support Programme

Source: Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

support in accordance with Level 1 and 2.¹⁴ Citizens from an additional six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine) could receive support exclusively through the Level U temporary arrangement. To prevent misuse of the programme, citizens from certain countries were excluded (e.g. Western Balkan States due to relatively low travelling costs) and the assistance for returnees receiving Level U was limited.¹⁵ Applicants must further demonstrate that they lack the financial means necessary for return to qualify for support through StarthilfePlus.¹⁶

¹⁴ Afghanistan, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Mongolia, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia and Viet Nam. The countries listed in this report contain states, provinces and territories. The term “country” is used without prejudice to the German Government’s position on the status of any given country or region. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

¹⁵ An example of misuse could be someone who enters Germany only for the purpose of returning with the help of the return assistance programme and thereby to solely obtain a financial benefit.

¹⁶ A person is considered to be without financial means when the person leaving the country does not have enough money to pay

After the temporary arrangement expired on January 1, 2018, citizens from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, who had previously received support exclusively through this level, were no longer able to apply for assistance. Since December 1, 2017, however, these citizens had the right to receive the support provided for in Levels 1 and 2 as long as the relevant requirements are met and the applicant’s asylum procedure started before December 1, 2017.¹⁷ One exception was made for Georgian and Ukrainian citizens. They may only request assistance if they entered Germany prior to the date on which their countries’ visa liberalisation came into effect.

After Level U expired, two new levels were introduced: **Level S**, which took effect on December 1, 2017, provided assistance of EUR 800 to persons who, according to German law, were entitled to asylum and who

the expenses associated with returning or migrating onwards. See online: http://files.returningfromgermany.de/files/REAGGARP-Merkblatt%202018_Visa.pdf (12/12/2018).

¹⁷ See online: http://files.returningfromgermany.de/files/Merkblatt%20StarthilfePlus%20ab%20Jan%202018_final.pdf (19/09/2018).

returned to their country of origin.¹⁸ As of January 1, 2018, persons from Albania and Serbia received EUR 500 in financial return assistance if they were able to demonstrate that they have lived in Germany for at least two years with a suspension of deportation (“Duldung”) (**Level D**). Additionally, such persons could receive a grant for certain housing related costs or medical expenses.

For a limited time, starting at the end of 2017, the StarthilfePlus programme also provided for the additional component **“Your Country. Your Future. Now!”**, which granted additional reintegration support for housing related costs. From December 1, 2017 to February 28, 2018, returnees were able to apply for housing allowances (e.g. for rent or renovation costs). IOM provided in-kind of up to EUR 3,000 for families and up to EUR 1,000 for individuals. The assistance was disbursed by IOM missions in respective countries of return on behalf of the German government.¹⁹ In autumn 2018, this additional component was re-launched.²⁰ Applications for covering housing related costs could be submitted from September 15, 2018 to December 31, 2018. Those persons receiving support according to Levels S and D were excluded from housing-related reintegration assistance under this programme.

At the beginning of 2019, the REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus assistance programmes were restructured. The most significant change was to standardise the return assistance for citizens from the GARP countries. In addition to this support, the revised StarthilfePlus programme also offers financial or housing-related assistance depending on the country of return.²¹

2.2 Programme Procedure

Over 1,000 counselling centres are available nationwide to migrants who are considering returning to

either their country of origin or to a third country prepared to accept them (see Figure 2). These counselling centres also act as referral agencies as they submit the migrant’s REAG/GARP application after having provided return counselling. They constitute a wide network of different organisations such as independent counselling centres (e.g. welfare organisations and non-governmental organisations), governmental counselling centres (e.g. welfare or immigration authorities) and IOM. Return counselling is offered to migrants on an individual, impartial and non-binding basis. If migrants seeking counselling decide to return voluntarily, they may submit an application for the assistance programmes REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus. Applicants for the programme must sign a declaration that they will refrain from submitting a request for asylum in Germany or a request to continue the asylum procedure. If an applicant already has received a decision on their asylum application, then the applicant must agree to reject the asylum status and refrain from taking further legal action or cease current legal actions concerning the decision on their asylum application.²²

The referral agencies send the applications to IOM, where a check is completed to confirm that the applicants are eligible for REAG/GARP assistance. If it is determined that the applicant is eligible, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (FOMR) will receive the waiver declaration, verify their current status in the asylum procedure and then makes a final decision on the person’s eligibility for support as well as the amount of support to which they are entitled. The referral agency will be informed of the FOMR’s decision and will help the applicant obtain the necessary travel documents if needed. IOM further organises the return travel arrangements, giving preferential assistance to beneficiaries with special medical needs and pregnant women.

Level 1 and Level 2 StarthilfePlus assistance is disbursed in two equal instalments.²³ IOM provides the beneficiaries leaving Germany with the first instalment of the StarthilfePlus assistance and the regular GARP grant at the airport before departure. The second instalment of StarthilfePlus is then paid within six to eight months after leaving Germany at the IOM missions in the respective countries of return. The beneficiaries must appear in person and be able to identify themselves to claim their grant. Assistance

¹⁸ Other than in Levels 1 and 2, citizens of all countries receiving support from the REAG programme are eligible to receive Level S support.

¹⁹ See online: <http://files.returningfromgermany.de/files/Informationsblatt%20Reintegration%20StarthilfePlus.pdf> (18/09/2018).

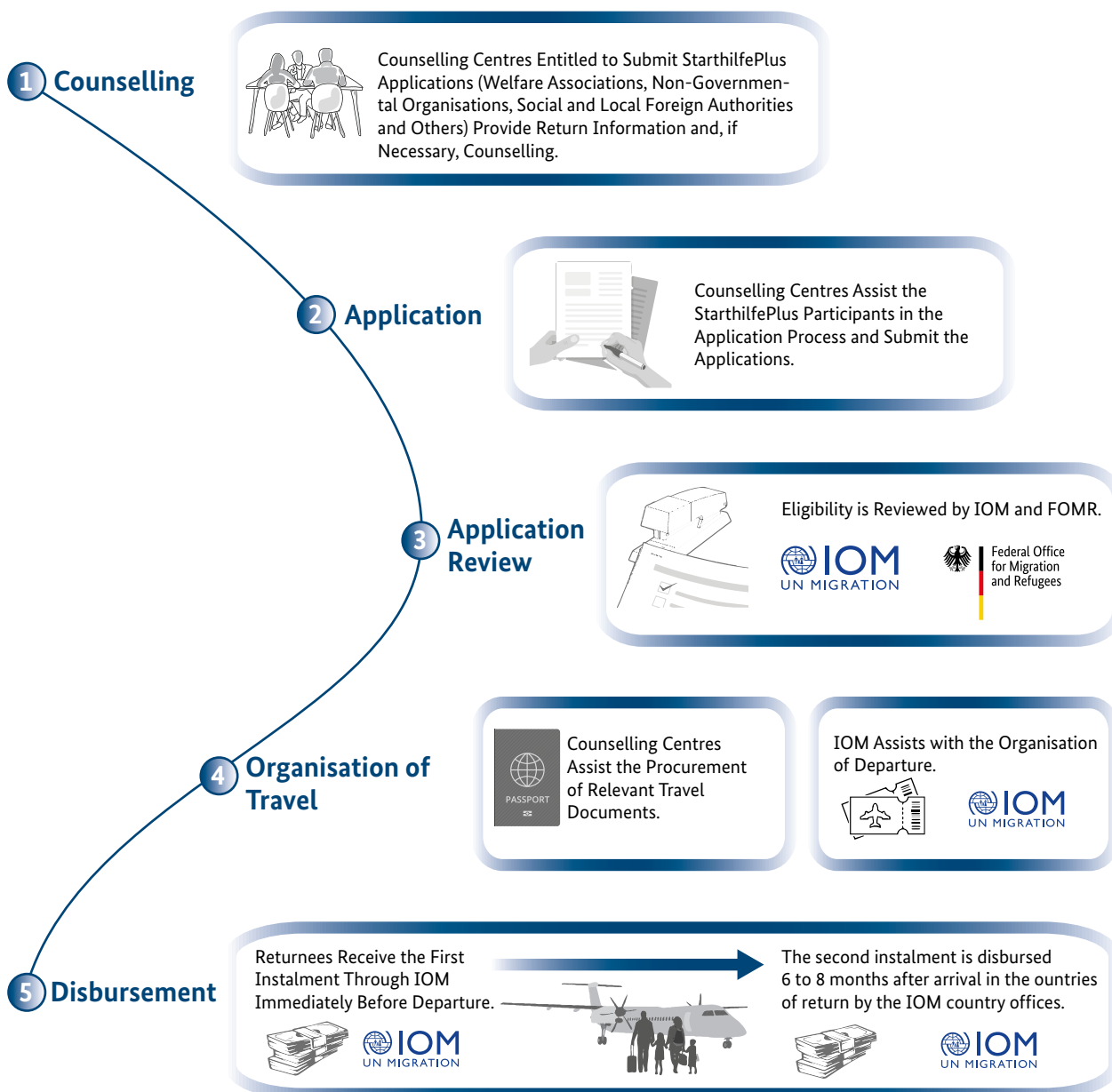
²⁰ See online: <https://www.returningfromgermany.de/de/programmes/starthilfe-plus> (18/09/2018).

²¹ Respondents to this survey left Germany between 01/02/2017 and 19/04/2018 (see Chapter 3.5). As the new support structures do not affect the survey participants, a detailed description will not be provided here. Further information can be found online: http://files.returningfromgermany.de/files/REAGGARP%20Infoblatt_2019%20mit%20Reintegration.pdf (18/03/2019).

²² See online: http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Rueckkehr/verzichtserklaerung-starthilfe-Plus.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (19/09/2018).

²³ See online: http://files.returningfromgermany.de/files/2018_01_Handout%20StarthilfePlus_allgemein.pdf (19/09/2018).

Figure 2: StarthilfePlus Programme Procedure in 2017 and 2018



Source: Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

provided according to Level U is also paid in two instalments as previously described. The staggered payment of the second instalment in the respective return country aims to contribute to the reintegration of the returnee.²⁴ One exception to this model is Level S in which beneficiaries receive their grant in one lump sum at the airport before departure. A further exception is Level D in which beneficiaries receive their grant also in one lump sum. However, it is disbursed in the country of return.

²⁴ See Bundestag printed materials 19/2762, p. 5.

2.3 Participation in the Programme

Of the 10,000 StarthilfePlus beneficiaries who left Germany in 2017, the majority had a temporary suspension of deportation (Persons with “Duldung”) and received support according to Level U. A little more than 20% of the beneficiaries made the decision to return either before applying for asylum, during the asylum procedure or within the allowed departure period (Level 1 and 2) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Persons Departing Germany with StarthilfePlus according to Level in 2017 and 2018

	Feb. to Dec. 2017		Jan. to Dec. 2018*	
	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage
Level 1: Persons Who Have not Submitted an Application and Who Are Currently in the Asylum Pro	1,325	13.3%	701	13.5%
Level 2: Persons Within the Time Period Set for Leaving the Country	858	8.6%	3215	62.0%
Level U: Persons Whose Deportation Has Been Suspended (Persons with “Duldung”), Persons Effectively Obligated to Leave the Country and Persons Who Have Submitted Follow-Up or Second Applications	7,782	77.8%	419	8.1%
Level S: Persons Eligible for Protection	35	0.4%	562	10.8%
Level D: Long-Term Tolerated Stay Based on the Suspension of Deportation (Persons with “Duldung”) from Albania and Serbia			285	5.5%
Total	10,000	100.0%	5,182	100.0%

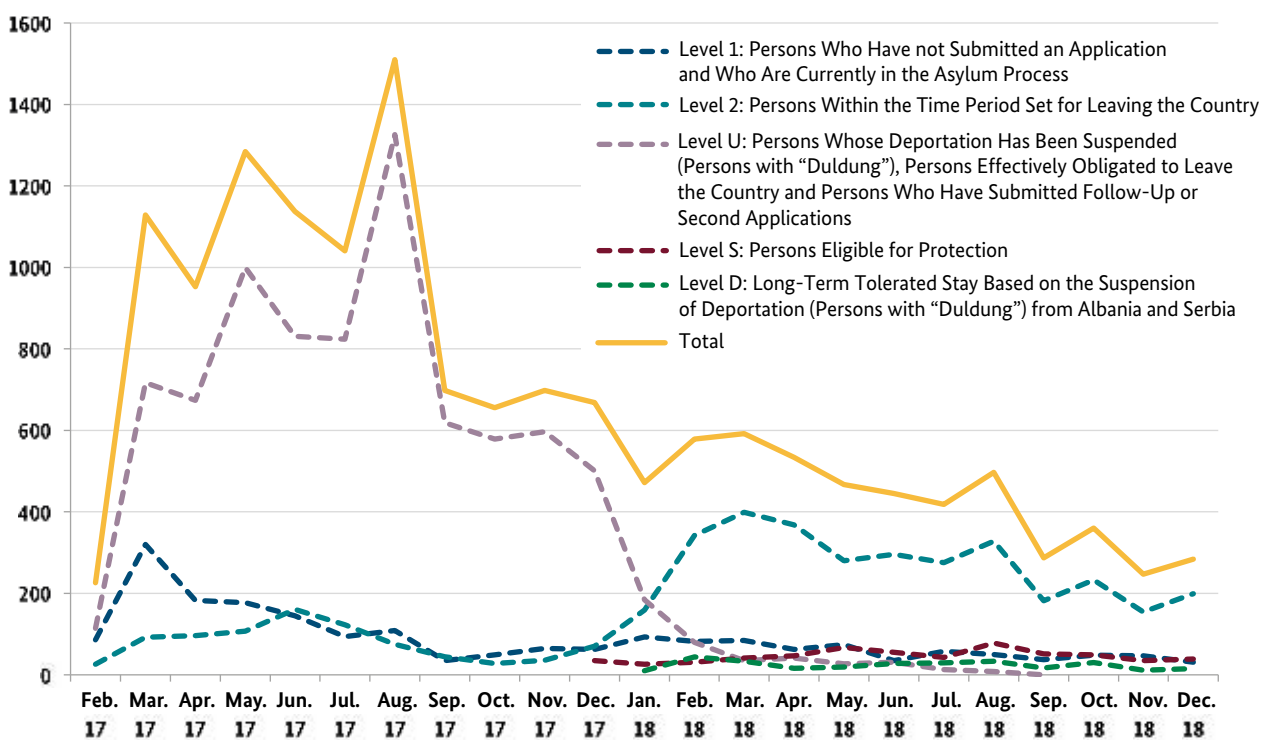
*Preliminary numbers (as of 17/04/2019).

Source: IOM, Calculation and Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

These numbers changed with the introduction and discontinuation of the respective levels at the end of 2017/beginning of 2018. Of the total 5,182 beneficiaries in 2018, about 75% decided to leave either before applying for asylum, during the asylum procedure or within the given departure period (Level 1 and 2). Those with a suspension of deportation (“Duldung”) and other groups within Level U who had already submitted an application for support the previous year, as

well as persons participating through the newly established Level D (long-term residence based on the suspension of deportation [Persons with “Duldung”) from Albania and Serbia), comprised less than 15%. Around 10% of the beneficiaries in 2018 were persons who had been granted asylum in Germany.

From December 2017 to February 2018, a total of 1,871 beneficiaries made use of the first edition

Figure 3: Development of the Number of Persons Departing from Germany with StarthilfePlus according to Level in 2017 and 2018*

*Preliminary numbers (as of 17/04/2019).

Source: IOM, Calculation and Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

of the housing-related reintegration support programme “Your country. Your future. Now!”. During the second edition of this programme, which accepted applications from October 2018 to December 2018, 702 beneficiaries had left Germany as of the report date.²⁵

The number of StarthilfePlus beneficiaries returning from Germany increased tendentially in the first months following the programme’s introduction, reaching a peak of 1,510 returnees in August 2017 (see Figure 3). Participant numbers then trended downwards until the end of 2018 (between approximately 250 and 700 beneficiaries left Germany per month). In particular, one notices the expiration of the assistance for persons whose deportation has been suspended (Persons with “Duldung”) according to Level U at the end of 2017 in the declining overall numbers. This was somewhat counterbalanced by the increase in beneficiaries eligible for Level 2, who decided to return within the defined period.

In 2017 and 2018, StarthilfePlus beneficiaries returned to a total of 57 countries. During this time, the highest number of beneficiaries returned to Iraq, the Russian Federation, Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Over 70% of all beneficiaries travelled to these countries, with 800 to 3,650 persons returning to each country (see Figure 4).

²⁵ Since the housing-related reintegration component had not yet been completed at the time of the report, these are preliminary numbers.

Between 100 and 700 persons returned to each of the 12 other countries between 2017 and 2018 and less than 100 participants travelled to each of the other 38 countries.

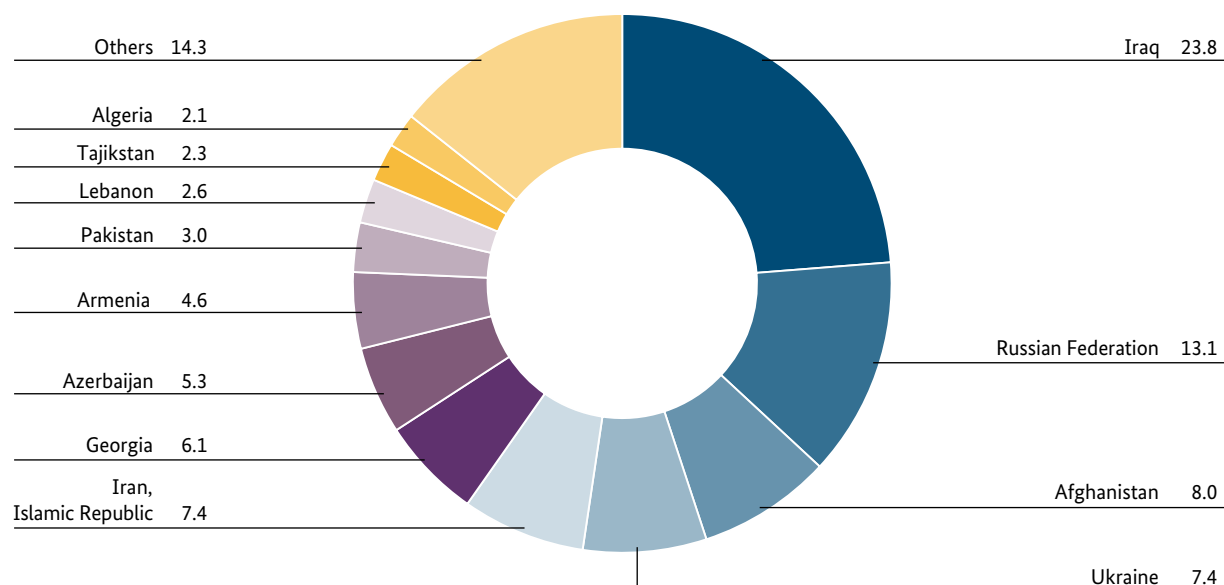
Only very few respondents (about 1%) travelled to a country of which they were not a citizen between 2017 and 2018. They were mainly nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic and persons from the Palestinian Territories who immigrated to neighbouring countries in the region or to the USA or Canada.

Table 2 shows the retrieval rate of the second instalment for the StarthilfePlus beneficiaries who left Germany in 2017.²⁶ This second instalment was not retrieved in every case. A total of 78% of the 10,000 StarthilfePlus participants (7,813 persons) retrieved the second instalment. The retrieval rates varied according to the country of return. Payment of the second instalment was generally only refused when the beneficiary failed to appear at the IOM offices in the country of return within the specified time period (six to eight months after departure from Germany). Exceptions to this required time period were made in justified cases, such as in cases of illness.²⁷

²⁶ For Levels 1 and 2, the disbursement of StarthilfePlus assistance is made in two equal instalments issued before departure and about 6 to 8 months after departure (see Chapter 2.2). Within this context, the description of retrieval rates is thus limited to 2017, since it was not yet possible to clearly determine the retrieval rate for persons who had departed in 2018 at the time of the report.

²⁷ See Bundestag printed materials 19/2762, p. 3.

Figure 4: Persons Departing Germany with StarthilfePlus according to Country of Return in 2017 and 2018* (in Percent)



*Preliminary numbers (as of 17/04/2019).

Source: IOM, Calculation and Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

Table 2: Second Instalment Retrieval Rates for StarthilfePlus according to Country of Return in 2017*

Country of return	Departures (quantity)	2. Instalment received (quantity)	2. Instalment received (in Percent)
Benin	9	9	100%
Burkina Faso	5	5	100%
Niger	2	2	100%
Sierra Leone, Republic	6	6	100%
Mongolia	91	88	97%
Russian Federation	1297	1190	92%
Georgia	771	693	90%
Armenia	452	404	89%
Viet Nam	25	22	88%
Guinea, Republic	22	19	86%
Sudan	41	35	85%
Azerbaijan	469	391	83%
Ukraine	917	764	83%
Tajikistan	217	177	82%
Iraq	2265	1813	80%
Tunisia	38	30	79%
India	228	176	77%
Lebanon	267	206	77%
Ethiopia	39	30	77%
Togo	4	3	75%
Pakistan	316	234	74%
Egypt	46	34	74%
Morocco	53	38	72%
Sri Lanka	14	10	71%
Turkey	108	77	71%
Ghana	45	32	71%
Iran, Islamic Republic	730	518	71%
Senegal	20	14	70%
Somalia	22	15	68%
Côte d'Ivoire	6	4	67%
Kenya	3	2	67%
Gambia	41	26	63%
Mali, Republic	5	3	60%
Bangladesh	46	27	59%
Nigeria	129	75	58%
Afghanistan	950	502	53%
Algeria	138	68	49%
China, People's Republic	115	50	43%
Guinea Bissau	3	1	33%
Australia	1	0	0%
Cameroon	3	0	0%
Canada	9	0	0%
Kazakhstan	1	0	0%
Kyrgyzstan	1	0	0%
Congo, Democratic Republic	1	0	0%
South Africa	1	0	0%
United States of America	8	0	0%
Belarus	3	0	0%
Total	10,000	7,806	78%

*Preliminary numbers (as of 17/07/2019).

Source: IOM, Calculation by IOM and FOMR.

3

Research Design

3.1 Research Aims

The scientific monitoring of the StarthilfePlus programme aims to gain insight into return processes as such evidence is relevant to the general implementation of return assistance, and to the further development of the StarthilfePlus programme in particular. The following questions were posed in this study:

1. What motivates StarthilfePlus participants to return?
2. What role did return counselling and StarthilfePlus financial assistance play in the decision to return?
3. How can returnees' local living conditions be best described?
4. What factors influence returnees' satisfaction with their living conditions?
5. To what extent does financial assistance help to create the conditions for a better life in the return areas?
6. How satisfied are participants with the StarthilfePlus programme?

This evaluation of the StarthilfePlus programme is the first large-scale survey of asylum seekers who have recently returned from Germany to their countries of origin or a third country. Until now, surveys on support programmes normally had a very small sample size and focused on individual return regions.²⁸

²⁸ Reports based on application and monitoring data have been published for the projects carried out by IOM in the area of

3.2 Selection of Survey Countries

The study examines a total of 12 StarthilfePlus countries of return (see Figure 5). In order to reach as many returnees as possible, the selection of survey countries was based mainly on the number of StarthilfePlus programme participants in the respective country, including the 10 countries of return with the highest number of participants at the time of the study: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Returnees travelling to these countries represented 85% of all StarthilfePlus beneficiaries in 2017 and 76% of all beneficiaries in 2018. In order to consider returnees to African countries, the study included also persons who had returned to Nigeria and Ghana, despite the relatively low numbers of departures. The selection of these countries further ensured that the survey represented all support levels (Level 1, Level 2, Level U – see Chapter 2.1).

The selection of survey countries largely represents those countries of origin where, in 2017 and 2018,

the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), see online <http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/KRGRR/Downloads/Ergebnisbericht2015-2017.pdf> (09/11/2018) and <http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/KRGRR/Downloads/Ergebnisbericht2012-2015.pdf> (09/11/2018). An internal evaluation of the return project URA was performed by the FOMR. In this evaluation, programme participants who returned to Kosovo between 2012 and 2014 either voluntarily or forcibly were surveyed. Furthermore, the aid organisation "Solidarity with Women in Distress" (SOLWODI) publishes annual reports on their return project, which specialises in helping women from developing countries as well as Central and Eastern European countries. For 2017 see online: https://daten2.verwaltungsportal.de/dateien/seitengenerator/jahresbericht_2017_-_rueckkehrprojekt.pdf (30/11/2018).

Figure 5: Selected Survey Countries

Source: Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

most persons seeking asylum in Germany came from.²⁹ These countries were: Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, the Russian Federation as well as Eritrea and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, due to the precarious safety conditions in the two latter countries, return assistance was suspended or only granted in exceptional cases (see Chapter 2.1). They were thus not included in this study. Similarly, Somalia and Turkey were among the ten countries with the highest numbers of asylum seekers to Germany between 2017 and 2018, but were not included in the

survey as relatively few returnees received return assistance at the time of the study.

The return regions selected for the survey demonstrate significantly divergent living standards. Using several key development indexes, Table 3 demonstrates this considerable difference in living standards between the 12 countries. For example, the Human Development Index (HDI)³⁰ considers the Russian Federation a “very highly” developed country and classifies most of the other sampled countries as “highly” developed (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and Ukraine). However, the

²⁹ See the FOMR Asylum Annual Report for the month of December 2017, online: http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201712-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (18/10/2018) as well as the FOMR Asylum Annual Report for the month of December 2018, online: http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201812-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (16/04/2019).

³⁰ The Human Development Index (HDI) determines the development of a country by taking into consideration three key dimensions (life expectancy, education, standard of living or income). The range is from 0 to 1, with 0 being the lowest and 1 the highest value achievable. See online: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14_technical_notes.pdf (19/10/2018).

Table 3: Selected Key Information on the Respondents' Countries of Origin

	Human Development Index (2018) ¹	Freedom House Index (2018) ²	Human Security Index (2010) ³	Population (2017) ⁴	Refugees by Countries ¹	Internally Displaced People (2017) ¹	Literacy (2015) ⁴	Internet Users (2016) ¹	Mobile Phone Subscriptions per 100 People (2016) ¹	Urban Population (2018) ⁴
Russian Federation	0.816	20/100	0,645	142.257.500	61.600	19.000	99,7%	73,1%	159,2	74.4%
Iran, Islamic Republic	0.798	18/100	0,603	82.021.600	118.300	N/A	86,8%	53,2%	100,3	74.9%
Georgia	0.780	64/100	0,646	4.926.300	6500	289.000	99,8%	58,0%	140,9	58.6%
Azerbaijan	0.757	12/100	0,673	9.961.400	10.300	393.000	99,8%	78,2%	104,8	55.7%
Lebanon	0.757	43/100	0,591	6.229.800	5300	11.000	93,9%	76,1%	81,4	88.6%
Armenia	0.755	45/100	0,666	3.045.200	10.800	8.400	99,7%	67,0%	117,4	63.1%
Ukraine	0.751	62/100	0,650	44.034.900	139.300	800.000	99,8%	52,5%	135,2	69.4%
Iraq	0.685	31/100	0,491	39.192.100	360.600	2.648.000	79,7%	21,2%	81,2	70.5%
Pakistan	0.562	43/100	0,499	204.924.900	128.900	249.000	57,9%	15,5%	70,6	36.7%
Ghana	0.592	83/100	0,551	27.499.900	17.000	N/A	76,6%	34,7%	135,8	56.1%
Nigeria	0.532	50/100	0,447	190.632.300	216.000	1.707.000	59,6%	25,7%	83,0	50.3%
Afghanistan	0.498	26/100	0,336	34.124.800	2621100	1.286.000	38.2%	10,6%	62,3	25.5%

Source:

- 1 United Nations Development Programme (<http://hdr.undp.org/en>),
 - 2 Freedom House (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>),
 - 3 Human Security Index (http://www.humansecurityindex.org/?page_id=28&ex.org/?page_id=28),
 - 4 CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>),
- All Data Retrieved in October 2018, Illustration by IOM and FOMR.

Note: The colouring of the values was done per respective measurement. The darker the fields are coloured, the better should the general conditions for respondents' reintegration or survey participation be.

HDI categorized Ghana, Iraq and Pakistan as “medium” and Afghanistan and Nigeria as “low”. Security considerations are particularly relevant for Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Nigeria as these countries, sometimes for decades, have been concerned by a long history of events inducing forced migration movements and by a precarious security situation (Human Security Index).³¹ Further, important democracy and

freedom indexes produce very different scores for the countries included in the study. According to the Freedom House Index,³² the political and civil liberties in Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation are particularly limited, whereas Ghana has some of the highest values in this domain.³³

31 The Human Security Index (HSI) is an extension of the Human Development Index and was first published in 2009 by the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). The second and most recent edition was published at the end of 2010 and includes more than 230 countries. The index brings together 30 indicators from the areas of economy, environment and social issues, with the scale used being similar to that of the HDI. See online: http://www.humansecurityindex.org/?page_id=2 (22/10/2018). However, taking into consideration that the latest available data is from 2010 and security situations can change very quickly, especially in countries where armed conflicts or natural disasters have occurred, the HSI represents only a rough estimation.

32 The Freedom House Index was created by the non-governmental organisation Freedom House and has been published annually as part of the “Freedom in the World” reports since 1973. It assesses the degree of democracy and freedom in 195 countries and 14 regions. Political rights and civic freedoms are measured. Table 3 lists the overall assessments, which can range from 0 (lowest value) to 100 (highest value). See online: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2018-table-country-scores> (22/10/2018).

33 The presented information may be – particularly in countries affected by armed conflict – based in part on estimates. Furthermore, most of the values are average values that can vary considerably within the regions of a country. Despite these points of criticism, the determined values can still be used for rough classification.

It cannot be ruled out that these, in some cases very strongly varying living standards affect the survey results.³⁴ For example, it is likely that poor security conditions in certain parts of a country may reduce willingness to participate in the survey. Likewise, persons living in authoritarian states with few civil freedoms may be afraid to give answers that could be viewed as critical of the political system or punishable in the respective country (Tannenberg 2017: 19). Based on this context, the returnees were explicitly informed that participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Each question also allowed for the respondent to leave a blank response.

3.3 Recruitment of Survey Participants and Survey Tool

This study employs quantitative, standardised survey tools covering a broad thematic range. It aims to gather reliable data from adult participants in the StarthilfePlus programmes.

As a low response rate was expected, the study aimed to survey the entire target population rather than to draw a random or systematic sample. Returnees were contacted through two contact points.³⁵ First, when the persons who had decided to return with the help of the StarthilfePlus programme submitted their applications, they were informed of the study at referral agencies in Germany (see Chapter 2.2). For this purpose, a multi-language information sheet was created. It provided a web address where interested participants could register for the survey. Secondly, persons who had already returned, were informed on the option to participate in the study when they arrived to collect their second instalment at one of the more than 30 IOM offices in the 12 survey countries. At this point, potential respondents also received information sheets with relevant details for study participation. All interested persons received personalised access to the Internet-based survey (CAWI – Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing).

The respondents could complete the online form of the questionnaire at home via their web browser. Respondents were also given the option of filling out the questionnaire on tablet computers reserved exclusively for this purpose in IOM offices. Employees at IOM offices helped study participants with any issues they had difficulty understanding. Ninety-five percent of respondents filled out the questionnaire at IOM offices. The remaining 5% participated in the survey outside of IOM offices, for example at home or at the home of a relative/acquaintance. All persons who participated in the survey received an incentive equivalent to EUR 15.³⁶

The fact that respondents predominantly completed the questionnaire at IOM offices bore the risk of socially desirable responses or even non-participation due to reservations against the institutions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (FOMR) and IOM.³⁷ In order to calm any reservations, employees at IOM offices informed respondents expressly, in writing and orally, that the survey data would be kept strictly confidential.

In sensitive fields of refugee research, Internet-based surveys such as the Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) survey used in this study are becoming increasingly important as the studies can help to encourage more truthful answers from respondents as their anonymity can be guaranteed (IOM 2017a: 186–187). Distortions caused by socially desired answers are generally less prevalent in independently filled-out questionnaires as compared to other methods such as phone or face-to-face interviews (Bogner/Landrock 2015: 2).

One disadvantage of the chosen survey tool is the lack of control over the survey situation. Possible factors influencing answering behaviour and therefore the data quality may have been present when respondents completed the survey at IOM offices or independently. In particular, this may have been due to the presence of and assistance provided by IOM employees at the IOM offices (interviewer effects), as well as the presence or support of third parties in private environments. For example, it is impossible to exclude that respondents' response behaviour remained uninfluenced by family members present during the survey.

³⁴ A systematic analysis of the influence of regional living conditions on the response behaviour of survey participant was not included in this report. Methodical reflections on this matter should be included in other publications as necessary.

³⁵ The use of various recruitment methods follows guidelines for mixed-method research designs and helps increase the response quota (de Leeuw et al. 2008: 300). However, this practice does raise questions regarding the impact on response behaviour and by consequence the comparability of the data.

³⁶ For further information on the use of monetary incentives to increase response rates in surveys, see Groves et al. (2009: 183) and Laurie/Lynn (2009: 230).

³⁷ Since only very few people filled out the questionnaire outside of the IOM offices, the answer behaviour associated with the different methods of collecting data was only investigated in-depth for select questions (see Chapter 8.4).

Despite the limitations described above, the survey proved to be an effective and efficient tool. For example, the Internet-based survey allowed for more efficient data collection at locations that are difficult for researchers to access. Further, alternative survey methods, such as conducting phone or in-person interviews in the 12 countries of return or hiring local enumerators, were not taken into consideration due to their large time commitment, their cost intensity as well as quality-related risks.

3.4 Implementation of the Online Survey

A standardised questionnaire was developed that contained questions on respondents' satisfaction and experiences with the StarthilfePlus programme. Further questions focused on the reasons why respondents left their countries of origin, their journey to and their living situation in Germany. Additional questions inquired about the return decision, specifically asking about respondents' motives for returning, about their living situation in the country of return as well as their plans to migrate onwards after returning (see Annex 1). Existing surveys on returnees³⁸ and discussions with experts from the FOMR Research Centre and the IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) informed the design of the questionnaire's content and structure.

The questionnaire was translated into 12 languages (Arabic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Dari, English, Farsi, Georgian, Pashto, Russian, Sorani, Ukrainian and Urdu). This selection represented the official languages and the most important language groups of all sampled countries, as some languages are spoken in several countries.

The questionnaire was then converted to a computer-supported version. First, the questionnaire was programmed for use on tablets and computers. It was possible to utilise Community Response Map,³⁹ a plat-

form run by IOM that is used to collect and visualise data on migrants in various international projects. Secondly, the questionnaire was programmed for use on mobile phones as an app. This offered the advantage that data could be collected offline and then synchronised when Internet service was available.

A pre-test to pilot the data collection tools and improve their quality is an important part of the survey creation process (Diekmann 2010: 195). However, due to time and organisational constraints, it was not possible to perform a pre-test with potential respondents in the 12 countries. Nonetheless, IOM employees tested the linguistic and technical implementation of the questionnaire in the survey countries to ensure the best possible quality. This was also helpful, as the employees who are native speakers of the respective languages are familiar with the situation of returnees and with the programme and were thus able to assess the comprehensibility of the questions.

Before the survey was launched, IOM staff who were expected to assist the respondents were given information and rules of conduct when enumerating the survey. The employees also attended a webinar that explained the technical details of implementation. In the course of the survey, regular contact with the responsible employees on-site was maintained over phone and via e-mail.

3.5 Participation in the Online Survey

During the survey period from February 15 to October 25, 2018, a total of 1,367 questionnaires were completed by respondents from the 12 selected countries of return (see Chapter 3.2). These were filled out by StarthilfePlus recipients who left Germany between February 1, 2017 and April 19, 2018. In addition to the assistance from the StarthilfePlus programme, a small share of the beneficiaries also received additional funding from the programme component "Your country. Your future. Now!"⁴⁰

Most of the respondents had lived in their return regions for between six to eight months. Some IOM

38 Consideration was given to the studies of the European Migration Network and RIAT tool mentioned in the introduction, but also specifically the questionnaire used for the "Database on Return Migrants" (DReM) that was developed and deployed over the course of two research projects. The primary data for the DReM was collected from about 2,000 face-to-face interviews in Algeria, Armenia, Mali, Morocco and Tunisia and are freely accessible in the DReM. See online: <http://www.jeanpierrecassarin.com/datasets/dataset-on-return-migrants/> (03/11/2018).

39 See online: <https://communityresponsemap.org/> (23/10/2018).

40 The effectiveness of the programme component "Your country. Your future. Now!" was not separately evaluated in this study since only 85 study participants had received full funding under this special supplementary programme at the time the survey was performed.

offices even took the initiative to contact specific individuals who had left Germany with the help of the StarthilfePlus programme and who had already lived in the return regions for an extended period of time (up to 17 months). The IOM offices thus made it possible for 391 more people to participate in the survey, with the number of additional people varying per country (see Figure 6).

Figure 7 shows the number of questionnaires received during the period of the study. Once the survey had been launched and the initial difficulties had been resolved, the number of responses increased continually, with a peak of 270 questionnaires received in May. The decline to about 130 questionnaires in the last few months corresponds to the decrease in people who had left Germany in the previous six months and who therefore had the chance to complete the questionnaire when retrieving the second instalment in the IOM offices.

Of the total of 1,367 completed questionnaires received, only a small number of 28 questionnaires originated from the Russian Federation. Given the high number of returns to this country, these surveys were excluded from the analysis as they would have distorted the results. A total of 1,339 questionnaires were thus included in the analysis.

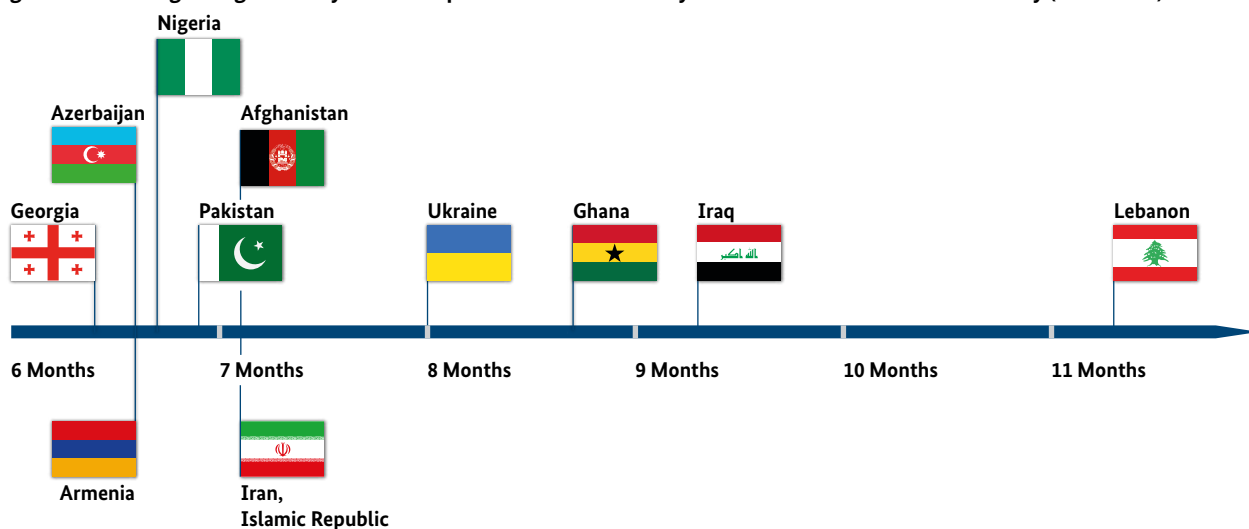
Inclusion criteria with regard to the study population were: (1) beneficiaries of the StarthilfePlus programme, who (2) returned to one of the selected countries (excluding the Russian Federation), (3) from

February 1, 2017 (programme start) to April 19, 2018 and (4) were at least 18 years old at the time of the survey (see Chapter 3.2). Data and information gathered by IOM during the enrolment and return process of StarthilfePlus served as the foundation for determining the study population's baseline characteristics. Six thousand seven hundred sixty-one persons met the above criteria. Thus, the adjusted response rate was 19.8%. There were considerable differences in the response rates between countries (Table 4). The highest rates of response, about 30%, were recorded in Iraq and Georgia. The lowest response rates, about 5%, were recorded in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

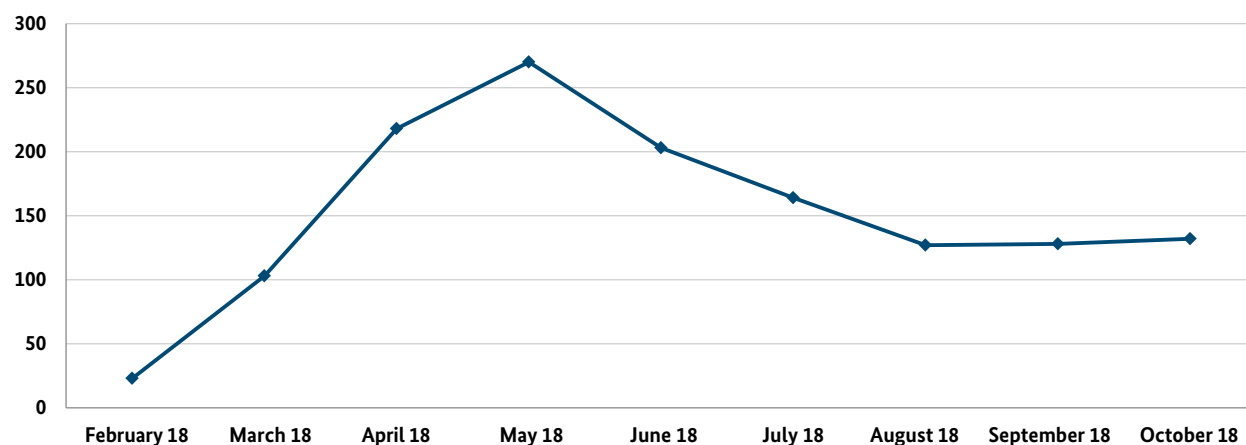
On the whole, returnees to Iraq constituted the largest group of respondents in the study (Table 4), comprising over 600 of the total survey respondents, almost half of all sampled. The second largest group were those who had returned to Georgia, 14% of all respondents. The lowest proportion of total responses were from returnees to Ghana and Pakistan. When comparing response rates by country with the overall returnee population, Iraq and Georgia are overrepresented. In contrast, respondents from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan are underrepresented.

In almost all cases, people returned to the countries in which they were citizens. As was the case with the study's total population, only very few respondents who participated in the survey migrated to a third country (1 percent). One example are citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic who returned to Iraq.

Figure 6: Average Length of Stay of the Respondents in the Country of Return at the Time of the Survey (in Months)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339, weighted.

Figure 7: Completed Questionnaires Over Time

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,367.

Table 4: Adjusted Response Numbers and Total Population according to Country of Return

Country of Return	Total Number of Responses	Total Population	Response Rate	Percentage of Total Response Rate	Percentage of Total Population
Afghanistan	91	921	9.9%	6.8%	13.6%
Armenia	87	402	21.6%	6.5%	6.0%
Azerbaijan	68	416	16.3%	5.1%	6.2%
Georgia	188	624	30.1%	14.0%	9.2%
Ghana	6	48	12.5%	0.5%	0.7%
Iraq	632	2,130	29.7%	47.2%	31.5%
Iran, Isl. Rep.	40	769	5.2%	3.0%	11.4%
Lebanon	49	235	20.9%	3.7%	3.5%
Nigeria	40	161	24.8%	3.0%	2.4%
Pakistan	20	348	5.7%	1.5%	5.2%
Ukraine	118	707	16.7%	8.8%	10.5%
Total	1,339	6,761	19.8%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, organisation's own description.

Note: The colouring of the values was done per respective measurement. The darkest blue corresponds to the highest value.

Table 5 shows the gender distribution in the sample and in the total population.⁴¹ Overall, the sample gender ratio (20% women to 80% men) differs somewhat from the total population gender ratio (25% women to 75% men). Relatively high percentages of female respondents were recorded from Georgia and Armenia. The lowest percentages of female respondents came from Afghanistan and Pakistan. In relation to the total population, women were over-

represented in the African countries albeit with small absolute numbers. Particularly in Azerbaijan and Ukraine, women study participants were underrepresented in relation to the total population.

⁴¹ Only persons who reported themselves as a man or woman participated in the survey. Reference is therefore made solely to these two genders in this report.

Table 5: Adjusted Response Numbers and Total Population according to Country of Return and Gender (in Percent)

Country of Return	Respondents		Total Population	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Afghanistan	3	97	10	90
Armenia	44	56	44	56
Azerbaijan	22	78	39	61
Georgia	40	60	34	66
Ghana	17	83	8	92
Iraq	9	91	20	80
Iran, Isl. Rep.	24	76	23	77
Lebanon	22	78	33	67
Nigeria	15	85	7	93
Pakistan	5	95	4	96
Ukraine	35	65	49	51
Total	20	80	25	75

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study.

Table 6 shows the age distribution of survey respondents and of the total population. The average age of respondents (34.7 years) was somewhat older than of the total population (33.5 years). This is true for both genders. On average, the youngest returnees were from Afghanistan, regarding both the total population and respondents (29 and 26.7 respectively), the oldest were from Armenia (45.2 and 41.9 years). Young adults between 18 and 30 years of age comprised the largest age group in both the total population and in the survey sample with 45% of the total respondents.

Persons with limited formal education are often underrepresented in online surveys (Bethlehem 2010: 167). It is therefore important to consider that there may be a relatively high risk of self-selection biases regarding respondents' levels of education. However, the data from the study demonstrated it was possible to reach persons with little to no formal education in all sampled countries (see Chapter 4.2). That most persons completed the online questionnaire at the IOM offices rather than independently at home and could thus receive support during the process was likely one major reason the study mitigated such bias.

Internet coverage in the survey countries was another significant consideration when estimating response rates in the sampled countries. About three-quarters of the population had access to the Internet in countries such as Azerbaijan, Lebanon and the Russian Federation. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, only about 10 or

Table 6: Adjusted Response Numbers and Total Population according to Country of Return and Age (in Years)

Country of Return	Average Age	
	Respondents	Total Population
Afghanistan	29.0	26.7
Armenia	45.2	41.9
Azerbaijan	36.6	34.9
Georgia	34.4	34.1
Ghana	34.7	35.6
Iraq	33.3	32.9
Iran, Isl. Rep.	34.4	33.8
Lebanon	37.6	33.0
Nigeria	33.4	32.2
Pakistan	32.3	34.6
Ukraine	37.8	37.5
Total	34.7	33.5

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study.

15% had such access (see Chapter 3.2, Table 3). Connection to mobile phone networks is widespread, but again, the lowest availability was seen in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Options for accessing digital communication are particularly limited in rural regions. Additionally, the IOM offices where the survey was facilitated are located exclusively in the major cities of

each country, meaning that the majority of respondents lived in major cities or in urban areas with at least 50,000 residents. Nonetheless, 21% of study participants were returnees to rural areas (see Chapter 4.6).

3.6 Data Preparation and Weighting

During the analysis, it became clear that respondents misunderstood some questions. As a result, these questions were excluded from the final analysis.⁴² Further, some respondents' answers were not plausible. These were marked accordingly during data preparation and were also not included in the final analysis.

Following the data cleaning, with respondents' consent, their survey responses were linked to the data and information gathered by IOM during the enrolment and return process of StarthilfePlus. Such data included arrival and departure information, demographic information (gender, age, citizenship, country of birth) and information on respondents' legal or asylum status prior to departure.

To reduce potential biases in the sample (Chapter 3.2 and 3.3), such as those flowing from systematic non-response in the population, and to ensure that certain variables for the survey sample match the total population distribution, the data was weighted. Since the study did not draw a random sample but was designed as a complete enumeration, only post-stratification weighting (redressement) was conducted to align the sample distribution with the total population according to the variables age group, gender and country of return (Gabler et al. 2015: 6; Gabler/Ganninger 2010: 144; 153).⁴³

Strongly overrepresented in the survey, the responses of Iraqi survey participants lost considerable weight during this process, while answers given by returnees from other countries, in particular from the Islamic

Republic of Iran and Pakistan gained power. Further, in some of the sampled countries the responses according to gender were often disproportionate and were thus given more or less weight in the analysis respectively.⁴⁴

3.7 Expert Interviews

In addition to the quantitative survey at the core of the study, expert interviews were conducted with employees at return counselling centres to learn about their experiences working as counsellors in Germany and/or in the return regions. Since information in the framework of the online survey could only be collected retrospectively, the provided expert knowledge on counselling practices and processes allowed for deeper insights into return contexts and circumstances, as well as returnees' decision-making processes and motives of return. In the areas of return, questions about local circumstances, conditions and opportunities for reintegration were of central interest. The interviews validated the evidence provided by respondents and added further nuance and context to the findings.⁴⁵

Over 1,000 referral agencies process StarthilfePlus applications across Germany (see Chapter 2.2). The thematic focus of the study made it very important to choose interview partners who had wide-ranging experience in the field. Thus, counselling centres which had a relatively high number of return cases and experience on the investigated topics, were sampled. Interviews were conducted in two German federal states with nine employees in four governmental and non-governmental counselling centres. Interviews with the relevant actors in the regions of returns were performed via video call or over the phone. Interviews were performed with five employees of local and international organisations in Iraq, Afghanistan and

42 One example of this is the formal educational experience of the returnees in Germany. A very high number of respondents – particularly older persons – indicated that they had attended a school or university in Germany. Considering the experience of Worbs et al. (2016), this indicates that respondents most probably counted the language and integration courses they attended as formal education. Unfortunately, this meant it was not possible to analyse this question.

43 The authors would like to take this opportunity to thank Jasper Tjaden (IOM GMDAC) for his assistance in calculating the weighting factors.

44 Due to the very small numbers of respondents for some subcategories of respondents – such as Afghani women over 40 years of age – there was the risk that even after the weighting data would be strongly selective. In countries with few or very unevenly distributed respondents, it is therefore not recommendable to analyse specific groups of returnees. Nevertheless, due to the relevance of the variables used to calculate the weighting factors (age group, gender and country of return), the decision was made to use the three specified variables to determine weighting, even though for some sub-groups a specific analysis was not possible anymore.

45 For information on the use of expert interviews for validation or as a “behind the scenes check” in evaluations, see the work group “Evaluation von Entwicklungspolitik in der Gesellschaft für Evaluation e.V.” (2009) and the Centrum für Evaluation (2009).

Georgia, since these countries had a high response rate in the quantitative survey and a relatively large number of programme participants. The interviewees possessed many years of experience working with returnees. All interviews took place at the same time as the quantitative data collection (January to August 2018).

3.8 Significance of the Data Obtained

Given the above-mentioned self-selection and non-response biases such as the exclusion of returnees who were unaware of the study or who were unable to participate (for example due to infrastructural barriers), systematic distortions and biases regarding some critical variables such as education may exist in the sample. For this reason, the results are not representative. However – regarding certain key variables such as age, gender and country of return (see Chapter 3.5), family status (see Chapter 4.5) and residence status of the respondents before leaving Germany (see Chapter 4.4) – the survey sample matches the total population distribution to a large extent. The information obtained in this study is thus relevant to a large portion of the returnees in the StarthilfePlus programme.

Beyond the question of representativeness, the fact that no data has been collected from control groups limits the scope of this report's findings.⁴⁶ It was impossible to implement an experimental design since it is very difficult to reach persons who leave Germany without government assistance.⁴⁷ As a result, the study focused mainly on comparing programme participants thus gaining nuanced knowledge on the significance of StarthilfePlus support for different groups of returnees. Beyond programme-related information, this study also provides initial data on the return of persons who sought asylum in Germany from 2014 to 2017.

As the respondents had only been living in the return regions for a relatively short period of time (generally between six and 12 months), the study results refer mainly to the orientation phase after returning.

At that time, potential findings on the prospects for establishing sustainable livelihoods in the return locations are still limited (see Chapter 6). The authors thus built in the option to perform a follow-up survey into the questionnaire design, which has been conducted by IOM and the FOMR Research Centre since 2019. Flowing from the indicators for sustainable reintegration developed by IOM as part of the MEASURE project, the new survey will be conducted about two years after the first.⁴⁸ After this period of time, respondents are likely to be no longer in the initial orientation phase. The objective of the follow-up survey is then to observe relevant changes over time and to gain a better understanding of the reintegration processes of assisted returnees from Germany.

⁴⁶ The evaluation of the StarthilfePlus programme is based on the principles of a contribution analysis. For information on the principles of contribution analysis, see Delahais/Toulemonde (2012).

⁴⁷ For further information on the difficulties of reaching people who returned to their respective countries of return without assistance, see also Baraulina/Kreienbrink (2013: 27-28).

⁴⁸ For more information on the MEASURE project, see Majidi/Nozarian (2019).

4

Profiles of the Study Participants

At a glance

- Most of the respondents were male and relatively young. About 45% of all respondents were between 18 and 30 years of age. A little more than half of them were single.
- The respondents had a rather diverse educational background, although the majority had no formal vocational or academic training.
- The respondents left their countries of origin mainly due to fear of violence and persecution, but also due to economic reasons and for the prospect of a better future for their children.
- Most respondents spent up to two years in Germany and lived a maximum of four years outside their country of origin.
- About 30% of the respondents returned as a family unit, with the average family size being three to four persons.
- Most of the respondents returned to live in cities with populations of over 50,000. In Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran there was a relatively high number of respondents who settled in smaller towns of less than 5,000 residents.
- About 44% of respondents returned to a different place from that in which they had lived before migrating. Approximately 17% of respondents were forced to settle in a new place due to safety concerns.
- Safety was an important factor for respondents when selecting a return location followed by proximity to family and friends. In contrast, employment opportunities played a smaller role.

This chapter describes the respondents' migration histories, as well as key socio-demographic characteristics: age, gender, the duration of residence in Germany, marital status, household structure at the time of return and selection of place to return. This information is essential in order to better understand the respondents' return decisions and their living conditions in the return regions. For instance, the original reasons for migrating or time spent abroad may influence returnees' decisions or their reintegration. Moreover, the decision to return may be linked with social obligations

to persons in the host country or in the place of origin. The household and family structure thus likely influences respondents' return processes. Furthermore, certain factors such as age, gender and education influence individual behaviours and opportunities for participation at the places of return.

4.1 Age and Gender

Chapter 3.5 provides information on respondents according to citizenship, age and gender. Most respondents were male and relatively young. Almost 50% of all survey participants were men under 31 years of age, with another 30% being men between 31 and 45 (see Table 7).

4.2 Education

The survey recorded respondents' educational experiences in their respective countries of origin. However, the validity of this information is limited as the educational systems in the countries of return are not directly comparable to the German system. Hence, respondents may have misunderstood questions on

educational background (Worbs et al. 2016: 108, 123-124), as described above.⁴⁹ About 4% of all answers to questions about school education in the country of origin were deemed implausible. Response behaviour further demonstrated that education is a very sensitive topic and extremely difficult for returnees to respond to. For example, about 26% of the respondents did not answer questions pertaining to school education. In Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, over one-third did not answer the question while in Pakistan this was the case with over half.

The information gathered on school and higher education in the country of origin shows a high level of heterogeneity regarding returnees' educational backgrounds (see Table 8). While about a quarter of respondents reported that they had not attended any

⁴⁹ Due to the high number of implausible answers received (see Chapter 3.6), questions relating to respondents' educational experience in Germany were thus not assessed in this study.

Table 7: Study Participants according to Age and Gender

Age Groups	Number of Women	Women as a Percentage of Survey Participants	Number of Men	Men as a Percentage of Survey Participants
18 to 30 Years	87	6.5%	518	38.7%
31 to 45 Years	93	7.0%	398	29.7%
46 Years and Older	83	6.2%	160	12.0%
Total	263	19.6%	1,076	80.4%

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339.

Table 8: Formal School Education of Study Participants (in Percent)

School Education in Years	Did not Attend School at all	1-4 Years of School	5-10 Years of School	Over 10 Years of School	No Answer
Afghanistan	25.9	10.9	13.0	14.4	35.9
Armenia	0.0	1.1	93.1	2.4	3.3
Azerbaijan	27.7	8.6	2.5	20.0	41.3
Georgia	17.0	3.8	25.9	30.5	22.8
Iraq	28.0	6.5	26.1	14.4	25.0
Iran, Isl. Republic	47.4	6.6	21.8	7.0	17.2
Lebanon	14.9	5.1	44.4	31.5	4.1
Nigeria	37.3	2.5	24.0	11.0	25.2
Ukraine	2.7	0.0	40.5	28.0	28.8
Total	24.6	5.5	27.5	16.2	26.2

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers returned (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

school, about 16% had attended over 10 years of school.

Similar to the responses on school education, there was a shortage of valid answers to questions regarding academic or vocational training. Approximately one-third of the respondents did not provide any information on vocational or academic educational background. Of the respondents who did answer, 22% reported having received formal vocational training or having earned an academic degree. Another 20% of respondents stated they had received semi-skilled training at a company. About 7% of the returnees started academic studies at a university before migrating to Germany but did not receive an academic degree. Overall, the diversity in terms of respondents' educational backgrounds reflects the educational heterogeneity of the persons who applied for asylum in Germany between 2013 and 2016 (Brücker et al. 2016a: 6).

4.3 Reasons for Migrating

The survey asked respondents why they left their countries of origin. They could choose multiple answers. The respondents most often chose fear of violence and persecution as the reason for leaving home. This was the main motivation for nearly half of the respondents.⁵⁰ Further, about one-third of the respondents stated that the future of their children was important for the decision to migrate. Twenty-three percent of respondents hoped to earn more money in Germany. The prospect of better medical care motivated 22% to migrate (see Figure 8).

⁵⁰ Similar results were also reported by Brücker et al. (2016a: 24) in the IAB-FOMR-SOEP survey of refugees who applied for asylum in Germany between January 2013 and January 2016.

The hopes and concerns present when the respondents decided to leave their country of origin seemed to remain relevant during the return decision-making process. Concerns about aspects such as access to medical care or opportunities to earn enough to cover the daily needs in the country of origin remained important for the respondents (see Chapter 5.1 and 5.2).

4.4 Residency in Germany

Regardless of their individual reasons for migrating, almost all respondents applied for asylum in Germany. At the time of making their decision to return, most respondents' asylum application had been rejected. For one-third of respondents, the asylum procedure was still ongoing at the time they made their decision to return. The total population of StarthilfePlus participants displayed similar distributions (see Table 9).

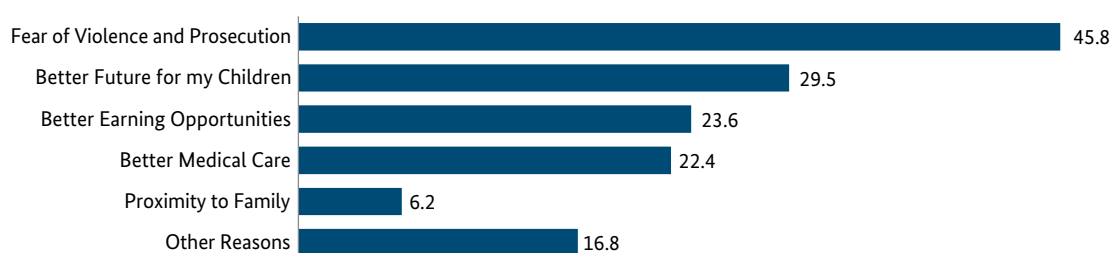
Table 9: Residence Permit Status at the Time of the Return Decision (as a percentage)

	Percentage of all Respondents	Percentage of the Total Population
Asylum Request Denied	69.1	64.3
Procedure not yet Commenced	30.0	33.4
Other Cases	0.9	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339, weighted.

Most respondents had spent up to two years in Germany. About 23% of respondents had been in Germany for under a year and 37% had been in Germany between one and two years. Only 4% of respondents had lived in Germany for more than four years. This means that most of the respondents were in

Figure 8: Reasons for Leaving the Country of Origin (in Percent)

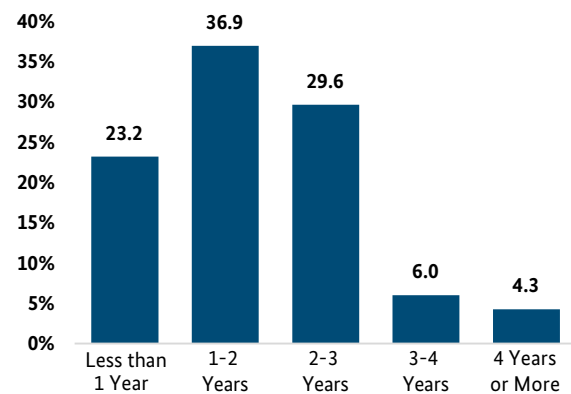


Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, multiple answers possible, n = 1,272, weighted.

the group of asylum seekers who came to Germany during the increased asylum migration from 2014 to 2017 (see Figure 9).

Overall, respondents spent an average of about 2.5 years outside of their country of origin. Respondents from Georgia, Nigeria and Afghanistan spent longer periods of time away from the country of origin. Such persons have spent time in other countries for transit or temporary settling before entering Germany.⁵¹ People from the Islamic Republic of Iran spent the least amount of time outside their country of origin, returning after staying away little over a year on average (see Figure 10).

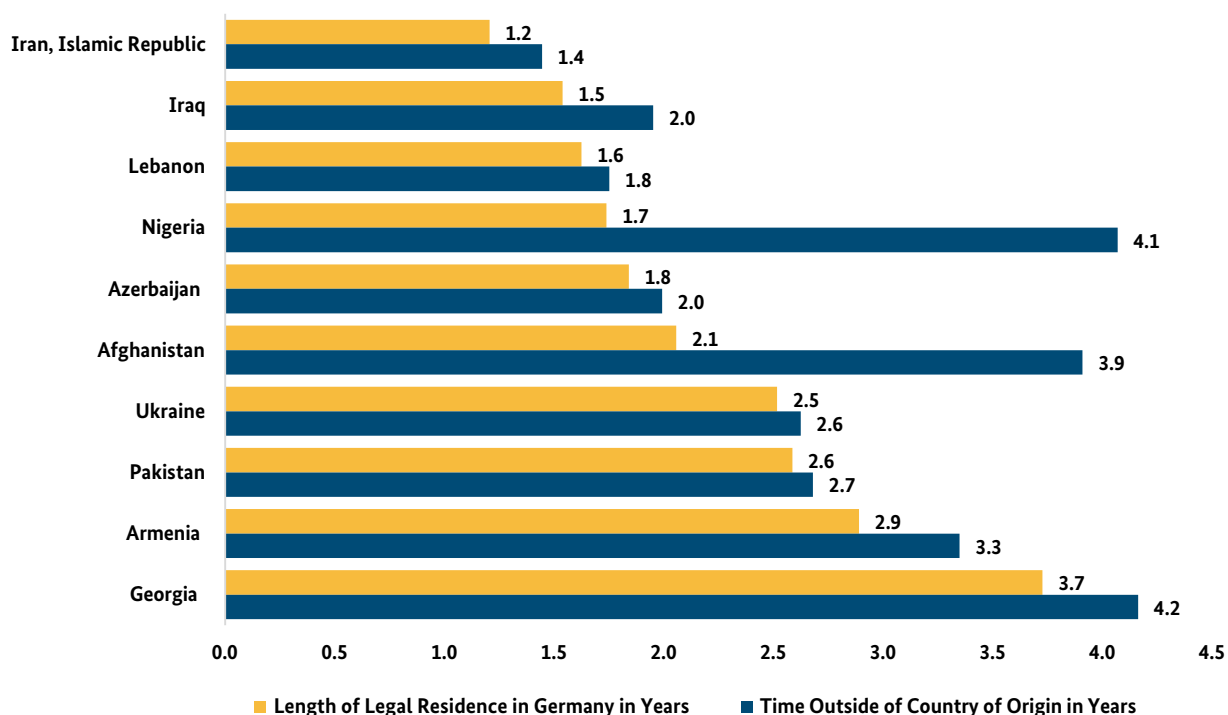
Figure 9: Study Participants' Duration of Residence in Germany (in Years)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339, weighted.

⁵¹ The IAB-FOMR-SOEP survey of refugees determined that the duration of migration for asylum seekers once they have left their country of origin also varies considerably by region of origin. Persons from African countries in particular tend to have migration journeys with very long durations (Brücker et al. 2016b: 5-6).

Figure 10: Study Participants' Average Duration of Residence in Germany and Length of Stay Outside Country of Origin (in Years)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,328, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana is not listed.

4.5 Marital Status and Household Structure at the Time of Return

A little over half of the respondents were single, 43% were married. Women respondents (34%) were less likely to be single compared to men (57%). With regard to marital status, there is no significant difference between the study participants and the total population of returnees participating in the StarthilfePlus programme (see Table 10). As it was mainly young people who participated in the survey, the relatively high number of single persons among the respondents fits overall demographic trends.

Table 10: Respondents according to Marital Status (in Percent)

	Percentage of all Respondents (Weighted)	Percentage of the Total Population (Unweighted)
Single	51.5	48.6
Married	42.6	45.8
Other	6.0	5.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339.

Around 67% of all respondents left Germany alone, the majority of whom had also arrived in Germany alone and without accompanying family members. For most respondents, the decision to return was thus something that primarily affected themselves and did not involve other family members staying in Germany.

Around 11% of respondents left Germany alone, even though they had arrived with other family members. These cases can involve a variety of different household compositions. First, this group may include adults who decided to return on their own or in agreement with their families, while their family members or relatives remained in Germany. It is thus likely that – as long as they maintained relationships with their family and relatives – such respondents also maintained a connection to Germany after returning. Furthermore, this group may include persons who returned ahead of the rest of the family in order to check on the general living conditions and/or safety situation in the country of return before the rest of the family returns. Finally, this group may include persons who returned to

be with family members or relatives who had already returned before them.

A total of 33% of respondents returned with family members and/or other close relatives. Persons from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine were most frequently represented in this group (see Table 11). Among the respondents, the average group of returnees consisted of three to four persons.

Table 11: Household Composition of the Respondents at the Time of Return (in Percent)

Country of Return	Individual Returnees	Returnees in Family Unit
Afghanistan	95.3	4.7
Armenia	57.3	42.7
Azerbaijan	39.1	60.9
Georgia	45.4	54.6
Ghana	100.0	0.0
Iraq	72.6	27.4
Iran, Isl. Republic	88.2	11.8
Lebanon	58.8	41.2
Nigeria	100.0	0.0
Pakistan	94.9	5.2
Ukraine	47.8	52.2
Total	70.5	29.5

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339, weighted.

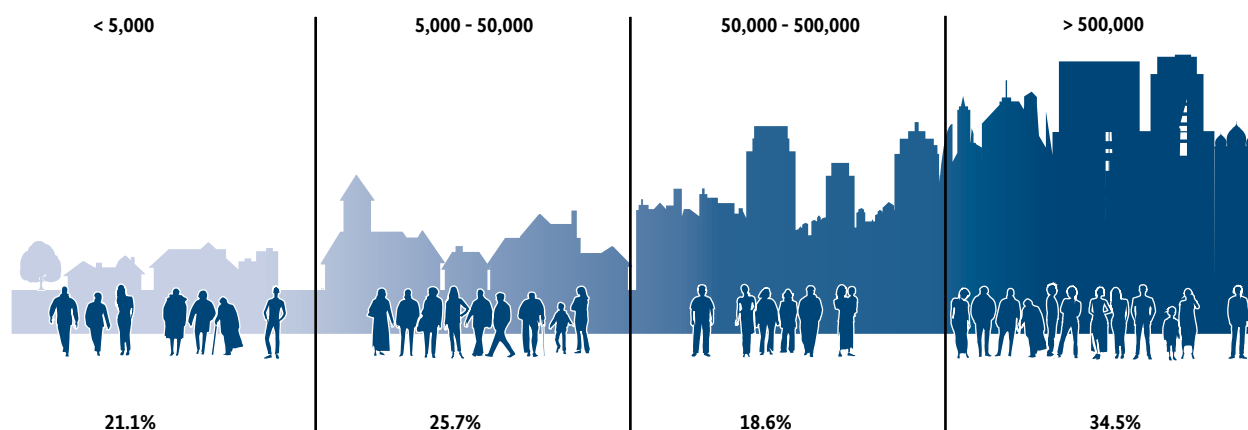
4.6 Return Locations

The survey recorded the size of the places to which the respondents returned. This information is relevant to the extent that the living conditions of the respondents can vary considerably depending on whether they returned to urban or rural areas. However, only 924 persons answered this question. This means that about one-third of respondents were unable to estimate the size of their place of residence.

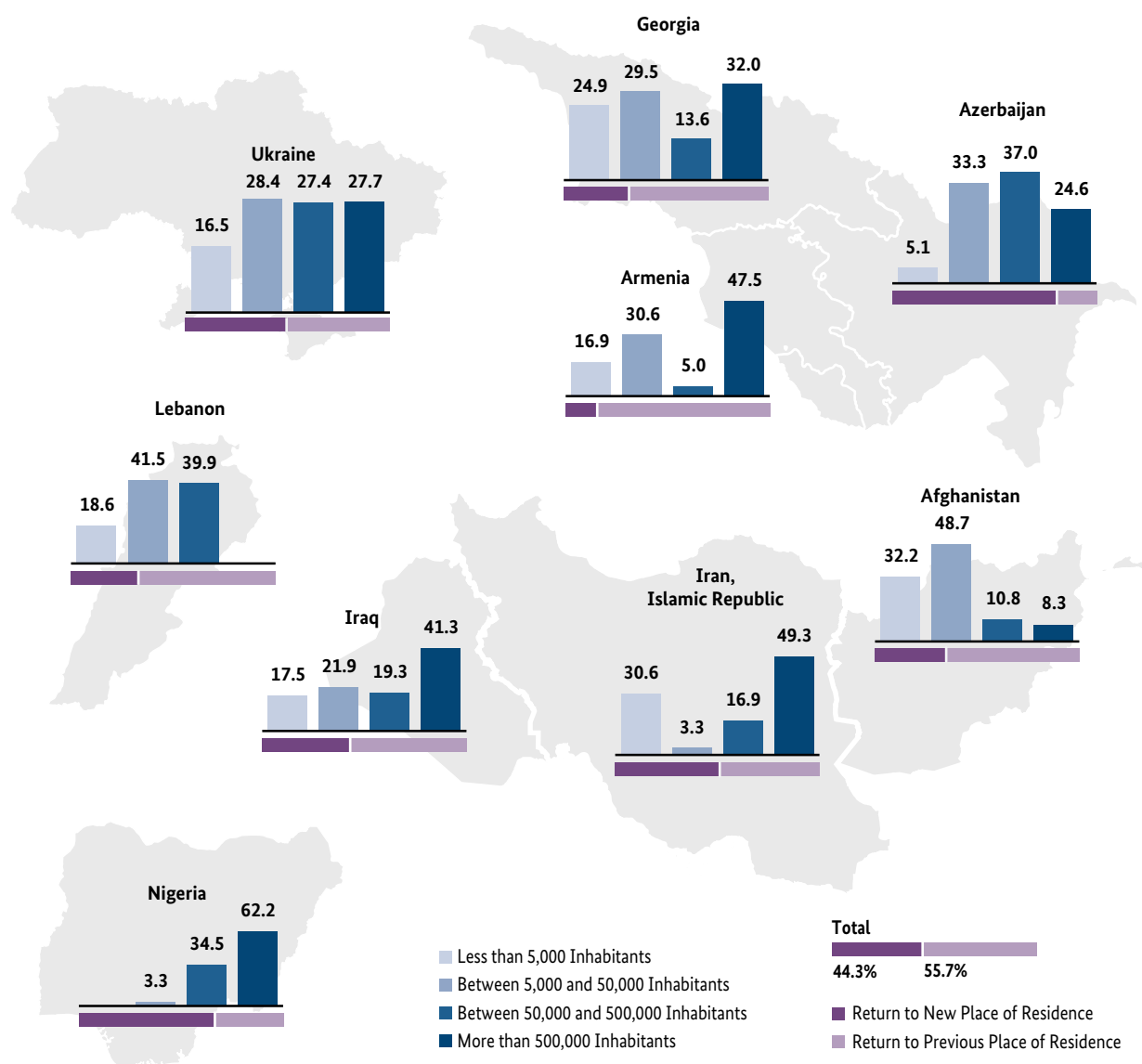
Most respondents stated that they lived in cities with 50,000 or more residents. About 20% of respondents lived in smaller towns and villages with populations under 5,000 residents (see Figure 11). Respondents in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran were much more likely to reside in smaller towns and villages (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Size of Respondents' Return Location (in Percent)

Respondents by the Size of the Return Place (n = 924)



Choice of the Return Place (n=1,268)



Source: Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Most respondents (56%) stated that they had returned to the city where they had lived prior to migrating. However, there were significant differences regarding the respondents' selection of a place of residence according to the country of return (see Figure 11). Most respondents in Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq and Lebanon settled at the place of residence in which they had lived before, while respondents in Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Nigeria tended to choose new places of residence.

This confirms that returning to their place of origin was not an option for a considerable number of respondents and that they were forced to build a life in a completely new place after returning. The living situation of these returnees could be compared to that of internally displaced persons (Grawert 2018: 14). The availability of employment opportunities was much less important in the selection of a return area when compared to other factors such as proximity to family and friends or security.

Respondents gave various reasons as to why they decided to settle in their particular place of residence (see Table 12). Proximity to family and friends as well as the availability of housing generally played an important role. Safety and security concerns were also important considerations. For example, respondents often chose to settle in a place of residence that was new to them due to favourable security conditions there. Such persons comprised 17% of all respondents.

Table 12: Reasons for Choosing the Place of Return (in Percent)

	Respondent Lived in this Place of Residence Previously	Respondent is Living in a New Place of Residence	All Respondents
I wanted to live near my family and friends.	17.0	33.7	24.4
I wanted to live in a safe place.	9.9	38.9	22.8
The healthcare is good in this city.	0.0	5.1	2.3
I had found a place to live in this city./It was easier to find a place to live in this city.	11.6	14.0	12.7
My family/children have a better future in this city.	1.2	5.4	3.1
I thought it would be easier to find work in this city.	3.1	12.7	7.4
Other reasons	1.3	17.5	8.5

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, multiple answers possible, n = 1,268, weighted.

5

Motives For and Against Return

At a glance

- Surveyed StarthilfePlus participants' most important motives to return were a desire to be close to family and friends as well as their limited prospects for permanent residence in Germany.
- Germany's healthcare system was a particularly compelling reason deterring return. For some respondents – particularly those from conflict-affected or post-conflict countries – the fear of violence and persecution also remained relevant deterrents to returning.
- Only 4% of respondents reported that their return decision was impeded by worries about the reaction of their families in the country of return. In contrast, family ties to respondents' home countries were likely to encourage the respondent to consider returning.
- The financial assistance provided as part of the REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus programme was rarely a central motivation for respondents to return. However, if persons are contemplating returning, the financial support can significantly contribute to their final decision.
- Financial return assistance was particularly significant for those respondents whose return from Germany was associated with high costs.
- Almost half of the respondents' decisions to leave were influenced by both the financial assistance and the return counselling. About one-third of the respondents made the decision to return independently of the financial support and return counselling provided.
- Return counselling and information play vital roles in the decision-making process. They are relevant for persons who are still going through the asylum process as well as for those who have already received an asylum notice. The duration of residence in Germany is not a decisive factor in the return decision-making process.

One fundamental question in the context of programmes for voluntary return: What motivates persons to return to their countries of origin and how can respective programmes best meet the needs of potential returnees?

Researchers have developed various theoretical approaches and models reflecting the decision-making processes for return migration.⁵² The current

scientific discourse emphasizes that individual return decisions depend on various factors, including the economic, social and political conditions, as well as the security situation in the respective country of origin. With regards to the host countries, the legal situation also plays a vital role – for instance the likelihood of receiving a residency permit which regulates the access to work. Quality of healthcare and educational and career opportunities are factors influencing host as well as country of return related return motives. The decision to return thus takes into consideration the conditions and opportunities in the

⁵² Currle (2006) offers an overview of the theoretical development on the subject.

country of origin and the host country (Black et al. 2004).

Grawert (2018: 24–25) emphasizes the central role personal values and individual experiences play in return decisions. Particularly, family-related motivations constitute relevant considerations for return in a number of ways. For example, the desire to have or maintain a closer relationship with family members may influence a return decision. Further, family expectations and the social environment in both the country of origin and the host country can similarly motivate or disincentivize a return decision. Various studies indicate that returning is often not an individual decision, but rather the result of a complex familial negotiation process (Koser/Kuschminder 2017: 261). In addition to social support structures, the anticipated value of individual skills and resources in the return region, such as language skills or professional qualifications, also play a role in a decision for or against returning (Baraulina/Kreienbrink 2013: 20).

However, it is difficult to generalise research findings of former studies as returnees' legal, economic and social realities are extremely disparate in the host countries, as well as in countries of return. Further, results are often based on a relatively small sample of returnees. Additionally, Koser and Kuschminder (2015: 12) state that research on the return of refugees has predominantly concentrated on populations returning from neighbouring countries. Very little information is available on the return decisions of refugees returning from industrialised countries. There is also a lack of research focused specifically on irregular migrants and people whose asylum applications were rejected. By researching the group of StarthilfePlus participants, which consists mainly of persons who are not likely to be granted or were already rejected residency in Germany, this study aims to contribute to closing this knowledge gap.

This study differentiates between return motives and return decisions. The following chapter first describes the motivations for and against returning, demonstrating why the study participants opted for returning (Chapter 5.1 and 5.2). However, return motives do not explain under which specific circumstances the person made the final decision to return.

Return decisions result from weighing the different motives for and against return. The current state of research defines a return decision as a decision made by the returnee themselves or following a discussion with family members to return permanently or temporarily to their country of origin. In addition to the return

motives, other factors influence returnees' decisions to leave the host country. For example, in most cases, returnees only decide to voluntarily return once they feel prepared to do so (Cassarino 2004). The degree of preparedness may involve psychological, emotional and material components. The information basis available to persons considering returning, such as information about the situation in the country of origin and on return programmes, are also essential (Black et al. 2004). The significance of financial support and counselling offered by the StarthilfePlus programme for the return decision is discussed in Chapter 5.3 and 5.4 respectively.

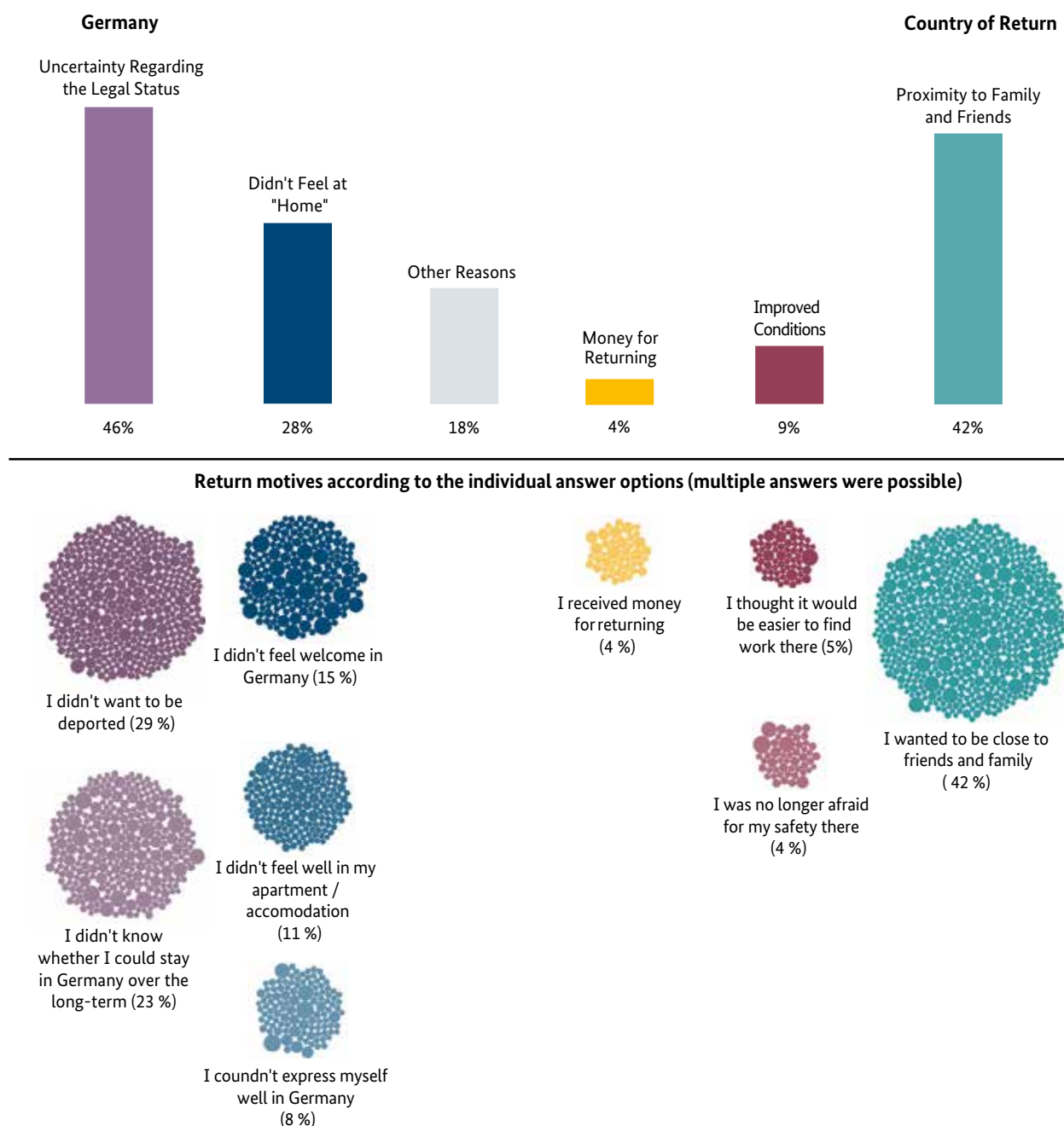
5.1 Motives For Return

Of the 1,339 study participants, a total of 1,288 respondents answered the question about their most important motivations to return home. In order to capture the complexity of motivations, respondents were able to select up to three answer options for this question. The results are summarised in Figure 12.

Fear of deportation (29%) and a low likelihood of being granted a long-term residency permit in Germany (23%) were the most important motives instigating respondents' returns. Forty-six percent of respondents pointed out either both or at least one of these two reasons. The uncertainty about the legal status was a central motivation for almost half of respondents (49%) whose asylum application had been rejected.⁵³ Persons whose asylum application was still ongoing at the time of their decision to leave Germany less often indicated uncertainty about their legal status as a principal return motive (36%), whereas familial reasons were more important (47%) for this group. Of the respondents whose asylum application was ongoing and who came from a country with a relatively low overall protection rate (under 20%),⁵⁴ one-third named fear of deportation as a main motive for returning. Comparatively, for those respondents originating from

⁵³ An uncertain legal status was also identified as a central motive for returning in other studies (Koser/Kuschminder 2017; Strand et al. 2016).

⁵⁴ The classification of countries according to the overall protection rate is based on the classification of the application, decision and population statistics of the FOMR in the reporting period 01/01/2017–31/12/2017. This yields the following grouping: Countries with an overall protection rate of under 20%: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ghana, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ukraine; countries with a general asylum acceptance rate of over 20%: Afghanistan, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran (FOMR 2018).

Figure 12: Respondents' Return Motives

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, multiple answers possible, n = 1,288, weighted. The figure was created using Flourish.

Reading example: The percentages for the respective return motives refer to persons who have chosen at least one response option. For example, 46% of those surveyed cited uncertainty regarding the legal status as a motive for return.

These respondents gave at least one of the two answers ("I didn't know whether I could stay in Germany long-term" or "I didn't want be deported").

countries with higher overall protection rates that had still not received a final decision on their asylum application, only one-fifth reported fear of deportation as a main motive for returning.

As it has been argued in other studies (Black et al. 2004; Brekke 2015: 30), family and other social ties

in the country of return are also essential motivators for returning. Forty-two percent of all respondents indicated proximity to family and friends as relevant for their decision (see Figure 12). Expert interviews with return counsellors in Germany provided examples of such familial considerations in return decision processes. For instance, persons seeking counselling

particularly considered returning home once family members in their country of origin had fallen ill, needed care or had died. Family celebrations, such as a marriage or a birth among their close relatives could also motivate people to return. For those who were seriously ill, the desire to die in their country of origin was an important factor. The interviewed experts also report that family in the country of origin often exercised a great deal of influence over the asylum seekers' return motivations. For example, young men might be convinced by their families to return if they were unable to establish themselves in Germany or if they needed to take over as the head of the family following the death of a family member (see Strand et al. 2016: 2).

A total of 28% of all respondents provided at least one answer which described a subjective perception of not feeling at home and/or feeling shut out of society in Germany. About 15% of respondents thus started to favour returning because they did not feel welcome in Germany, they were not comfortable in their place of residence (11%) or because of language barriers (8%). The expert interviews provided insight into this finding, citing disappointed expectations, difficulties with social values and gender relations, problems experienced by their children in the German education system and family conflicts arising from these issues.

Only a minority of respondents mentioned better conditions in their country of origin. Nine percent of respondents reported that they hoped it would be easier to find work in the country to which they returned or that they believed the security situation had improved.

Financial assistance of the StarthilfePlus programme constituted an important return motive for a small percentage of the respondents (4%).⁵⁵ Other studies have also identified that financial assistance is generally not a central factor to a person's motivation to return as it cannot compensate for certain concerns, such as security risks and unemployment at the place of returns (Black et al. 2004: 20).

5.2 Motives Against Return

Due to the significant consequences returning engenders, persons considering returning often rigorously deliberated the pros and cons of the decision to return. Interestingly, of the returnees surveyed for the study, 24% stated that there were no reasons speaking against returning.

Figure 13 shows the most common that respondents mentioned would speak against returning. Better living conditions in Germany was a critical reason for the respondents to remain in Germany. Within this category, better medical care was the most relevant reason to stay for 28% of respondents. About 20% of respondents assumed that their family would have a better future in Germany, 18% felt there would be better opportunities for them in the German labour market and 15% stated that they had a suitable place to live. Thirty-nine percent of respondents provided at least one of these reasons for remaining in Germany.

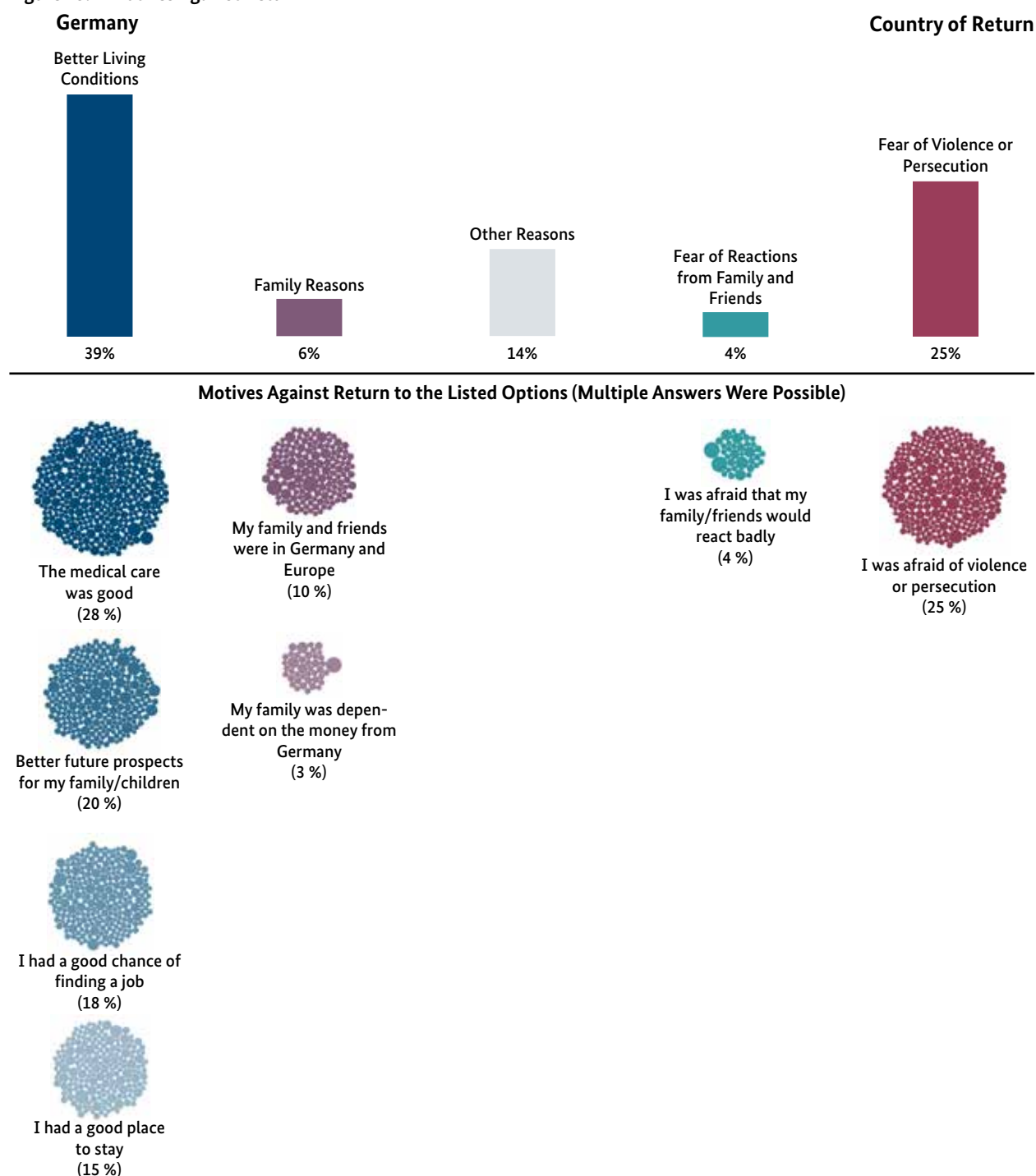
Fear of violence and persecution in the country of return was a relevant reason for almost one-quarter of the respondents, making their decision to return voluntarily more difficult. This was especially true for returnees to countries with active conflicts and/or post-conflict situations such as Ukraine and Afghanistan. For these countries, over 40% of respondents mentioned this concern specifically.

Expert interviews with return counsellors showed that individuals' reasons for not returning were often closely associated with their original reasons for leaving their country of origin. This is also true for the participants in the study: Significant motivators such as the good healthcare system in Germany, fear of violence and persecution in the country of origin, better prospects for the future and better job opportunities played a vital role in the decision to leave the countries of origin and hindered the decision to return.

Family-related factors against a return were relevant for comparatively few respondents. Connections to family and friends in Germany or in Europe only complicated the decision-making process for 10% of the respondents. Having family members in their countries of origin who depended on remittances was a deterrent factor in the return decision for only about 3% of respondents. Fear of conflict with friends or family members, which the literature often cites as a key

⁵⁵ The role of financial support in the return decision is examined in more detail in Chapter 5.3.

Figure 13: Motives Against Return



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, multiple answers possible, n = 1,000, weighted. The figure was created using Flourish.

Reading example: The percentages for the respective motives against return refer to persons who have chosen at least one response option. For example, 6 % of those surveyed cited family reasons as a motive against returning. These respondents gave at least one of the two answers ("My family and friends were in Germany or Europe" or "My family was dependent on money from Germany").

deterrent for returning,⁵⁶ only played a significant role for a few respondents in this study (4%).

Men and women differed in regard to reasons speaking against return. Compared to men, female respondents more often named familial reasons such as the prospects for the family in Germany or social and familial networks in Germany or Europe as a deterrent for returning. In contrast, men regularly reported that

⁵⁶ See Malakooti (2016: 67) and Schuster/Majidi (2015)

they had hopes for good job prospects in Germany. Healthcare in Germany, as well as the fear of violence and persecution in the country of origin were significant motives against returning for both women and men.

The diversity of motives given both for and against returning clearly illustrates the complexity of the decision-making process. In most cases, it would therefore not be appropriate to isolate individual reasons. A decision is ultimately shaped by the interplay between several pros and cons. Nine out of ten respondents gave more than one motive for or against returning, with over half of them providing at least three motives. The interviewed counsellors confirmed that decision-making can sometimes be a complex, lengthy and multi-layered process. Once returnees made the decision to leave, it was not always acted upon and could also change (multiple times). Decisions did not always seem rational to the counsellors. For instance, counsellors reported respondents' decisions to return to what was objectively a much worse situation.

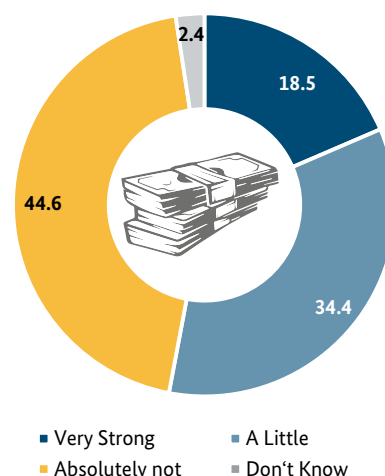
5.3 Return Decision: Importance of Financial Support

As described in Chapter 5.1, only a few respondents (under 5%) chose financial return assistance as one of the main motivations for return. Nonetheless, over half of all respondents confirmed that the money they received for their return influenced their return decision at least to some degree (see Figure 14); about 19% of respondents stated that the financial support strongly influenced their decision to return. This was equally true for both men and women.

This finding can be explained by the fact that the StarthilfePlus programme only supports persons who would not have been able to finance their return by themselves (see Chapter 2.1). For most respondents, it would have been nearly impossible to return without the provision of financial support.

In-depth analyses indicated that financial support is especially likely to encourage persons whose return would be comparatively expensive.⁵⁷ This is particularly

Figure 14: Influence of Financial Support on the Return Decision (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,302, weighted.

true for returning families.⁵⁸ Respondents who left Germany with other people reported much more frequently that the financial assistance influenced their decision to return than respondents who left Germany alone.⁵⁹

The importance of financial support in the decision to leave Germany is largely independent of the motives a person had for returning. In each motive group, the percentage of respondents reporting that the financial assistance influenced their return decision remained between 54% and 63%. This also holds true regarding the reasons speaking against return. Depending on the reasons speaking against returning, the percentage of respondents who said that the financial assistance influenced their return decision ranged between 51% and 65%. Even the answers of respondents who named no reasons to remain in Germany any longer did not differ significantly in terms of the importance of the financial support on their final decision.

Overall, the study found out that the financial return assistance seldom was the main motivation for returning. Importantly, however, it did make the decision easier. With monetary assistance, respondents could execute their return plans without returning empty-handed and thus depending on urgent help

tions remained statistically significant even when controlling for various characteristics. This study refrains from interpreting the effect size of individual coefficients (see Annex 2.1).

⁵⁸ In this study, a family unit is considered to be a group of at least two persons travelling together.

⁵⁹ The result is statistically significant when controlled for age, gender, number of children, country of return, duration of residence in Germany and marital status.

⁵⁷ Further analyses were performed on the basis of linear and – in the case of binary dependent variables – logistic regression analyses. The intent of this was to validate if bivariate correla-

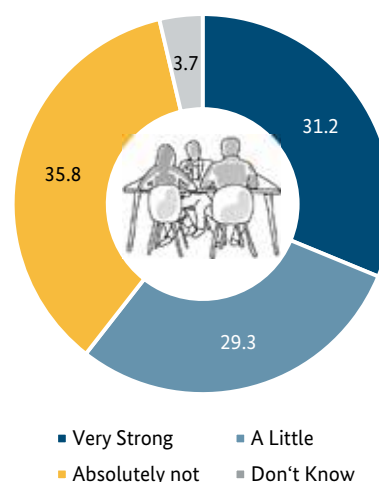
from friends or relatives immediately. The expert interviews at the return counselling centres confirmed this finding.

5.4 Return Decision: Importance of Return Counselling

In addition to financial support, independent and unbiased return counselling is another essential aspect of return assistance in Germany (AG Freiwillige Rückkehr 2015: 2). Only those who have access to comprehensive and unbiased information can make an informed decision (IOM 2018a: 6). Even though the key stakeholders in this area have often expressed the critical role of counselling in contributing to informed return decisions, little consideration has been given to this component in research (Kuschminder 2017a: 6; Leerkes et al. 2017: 9). The return counsellors interviewed in this study indicated that particularly those who are still undecided about a return benefit from counselling because it helps to clarify their individual situation and provides tailored information on perspectives to stay or to return. In contrast, those who have already decided to return look to counselling to assist them in their departure preparations or to help them find further support options.

The data provided here clearly illustrates the importance of return counselling in the decision to leave Germany. Over 60% of the respondents stated that receiving information and counselling were relevant for their decision to return (see Figure 15). About one-third reported that counselling had a very strong influence.

Figure 15: Influence of Return Counselling for Return Decisions (in Percent)



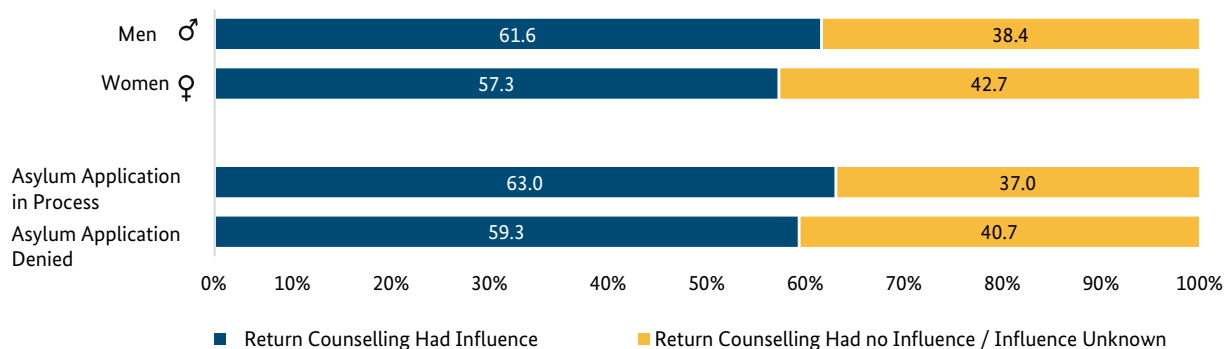
Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,294, weighted.

Similar to the impact of financial support, the influence of counselling on returnees' decisions is largely independent from their individual return motives. The percentage of respondents who said counselling influenced their return decision at least to a small extent remained between 51% and 68%, depending on their respective return motivation.

Figure 16 illustrates that counselling was equally significant for both men and women. Further, it becomes apparent that both respondents who had received a rejection of their asylum application and those with ongoing asylum applications considered return counselling to be relevant for their return decision.

Independent of the length of time respondents spent in Germany, the majority of respondents (between 56% and 69%) indicated that counselling was relevant

Figure 16: Relevance of Return Counselling according to Gender and Asylum Status (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,294/1,279, weighted.

to their decision to return.⁶⁰ This means that people who contacted a return counselling centre almost immediately after entering Germany and respondents who only considered returning after a longer stay in Germany benefited equally from the information and counselling.

Table 13 illustrates the perceived influence of counselling as well as of financial support on the respondents' return decisions. Almost half of all respondents stated that the combination of both was relevant to their decision. In contrast, about one-third of respondents would have decided to return even without monetary support and counselling. It can be assumed that these respondents participated in the return assistance programme after having decided to return in order to

take advantage of the programme's additional benefits (e.g. information, support in travel preparations, financial support).

In general, the findings indicate counselling was relevant for most respondents regardless of their gender, education, duration of residence in Germany, asylum status and return motives. Participating in counselling was at least equally important to the decision-making as the financial support. However, it is important to keep in mind that the study only represents persons who actually left Germany. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine how many people decided not to return despite having the option to receive counselling and financial support and why they did so.

⁶⁰ Even a multivariate analysis of the correlation between the duration of residence in Germany and the probability that return counselling will influence the return decision did not reveal any statistically significant differences (see Annex 2.1).

Table 13: Influence of Financial Support and Counselling on the Return Decision (in Percent)

		Financial Return Assistance		
		Unimportant	Important	Total
Return Counselling	Unimportant	30.3	8.9	39.1
	Important	15.5	45.4	60.9
	Total	45.8	54.2	100.0

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,239, weighted.

6

Living Conditions After Return

At a glance

- About 40% of the respondents were satisfied with their lives at their place of return. Sufficient income plays an important role in general life satisfaction.
- Respondents had achieved moderate employment rates (about 39%) within eight months after returning. Only 15% of respondents were earning enough to cover the daily expenses at the time of the survey.
- Women are much less likely to attain employment compared to men. Only 4% of all female respondents were able to support their livelihood through employment.
- Respondents were often responsible for multiple family members or relatives after returning. The larger the family units relying upon the returnee, the less likely it is that his or her income (from employment or self-employed work) will cover living costs.
- In most of the regions where the survey was conducted, the returnees were rather satisfied with the security situation. Afghanistan and Lebanon were two exceptions: one in two of the respondents found the safety situation there difficult. Furthermore, 30% of respondents in Ukraine and Nigeria reported security concerns.
- Relatives, friends or neighbours rarely rejected respondents at their place of return. In contrast, relationships with family and friends were meaningful for returnees and provided support in their reintegration process.
- Respondents who returned to rural areas and smaller towns did experience structural disadvantages such as limited access to medical care. They were, however, more likely to benefit from relationships with the neighbours at their place of return.
- Financial support from the StarthilfePlus programme helped respondents to finance the first months following their arrival. As most returnees did not have regular individual income during these months, such support proved critical. Using the support money to cover living costs gave the respondents time to orientate themselves and to develop a reintegration strategy.

In order to perform a comprehensive analysis of the StarthilfePlus programme, it is essential to consider the situation of returnees after they left Germany. The programme mainly aims to facilitate the return decision of asylum seekers and people whose asylum application has been rejected. However, return assistance is unsustainable when persons fail to reintegrate in the economy and society at their places of return.

Unsuccessful reintegration of returnees can lead to more poverty and local conflicts and as a result to further forced migration movements.

Over the course of this study, the respondents were asked about their living situation at the respective place of return within six to 17 months after their return. The living situation was examined based on the

concept of reintegration. Reintegration is conceptualized as an individual strategy aiming at social, structural and economic participation in the return context (Baraulina 2013: 21). This study focuses on examining access to essential social goods and services such as medical care or housing (structural reintegration), acquirement of income-generating work (economic reintegration) as well as the establishment and maintenance of social connections and relationships in the local community (social reintegration).

On average, the respondents had spent eight months at their places of return. This is a very short time in which to expect sustained and comprehensive reintegration. This study is therefore limited to analysing basic reintegration aspects. Sustainable reintegration depends on several other factors that go beyond those considered above. IOM, for example, uses in its reintegration monitoring concept, developed within the MEASURE project, almost 30 different indicators to assess sustainable reintegration (Majidi/Nozarian 2019).

From IOM's perspective, "reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity." (IOM 2017b: 3).⁶¹ In accordance with this definition, sustainability entails the gradual stabilisation of one's living situation after returning. This can be best observed over time. It is therefore very difficult to determine sustainability within the context of a one-time cross-sectional survey – like this one – particularly considering the relatively short period of time that had passed since return.

6.1 Access to Medical Care, Housing Situation, Perception of Safety

The countries' respondents returned to displayed varying capacities for providing basic goods and services and for guaranteeing protection against violence and

despotism (IOM 2018a: 15). The access to basic public goods and the safety situation were especially difficult in countries that are still dealing with the aftermath of armed conflict, such as Afghanistan or Iraq (Van Engeland-Nourai 2008; Grawert 2018). As a result of the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, in addition to security risks, there were structural shortages in the provision of public goods, particularly in the Eastern regions.

Respondents considered structural and security aspects in their decision-making on selecting a place to live. Around 17% of all respondents chose not to settle in their original places of residence for security reasons (see Chapter 4.6). Further, the access to essential goods and services seems vital in order to establish sustainable livelihoods. This study considers access to medical care and housing as critical. Previous analyses of return motives have clearly shown that the availability of medical care is one of the most fundamental considerations of returnees (see Chapter 5.2). Suitable housing is another aspect that shapes the respondents' perception of their life satisfaction after return. When there is a shortage of housing, the risk of homelessness rises. In such instances, individuals run further the risk of becoming permanently dependent on others for their accommodation such as relatives (Carling et al. 2015: 33).

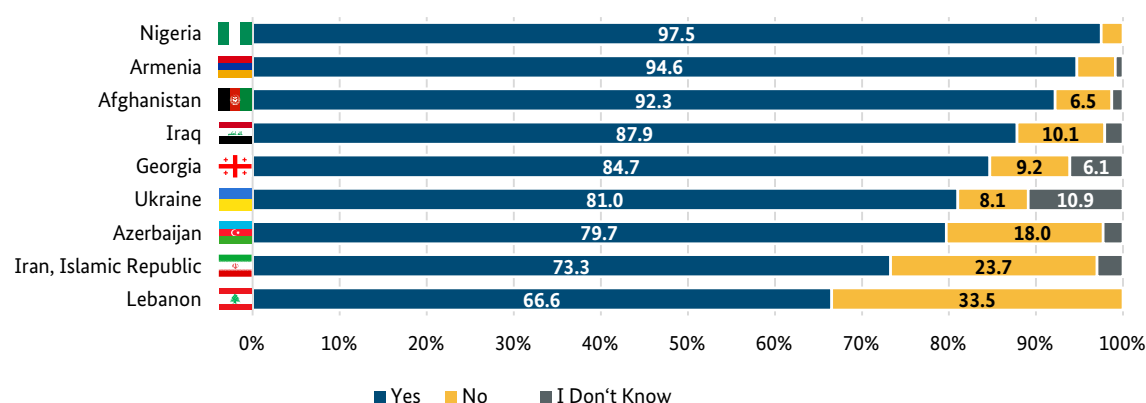
Access to Medical Care

Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated that they would be able to see a doctor if they were to fall ill. Almost all respondents returning to post-conflict and conflict regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Ukraine reported that they had access to medical care. The responses in these countries were comparable to the responses given by persons who settled in regions with long periods of stability and with relatively good infrastructure (such as Armenia or Georgia). Only in Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Azerbaijan, between 20% and 30% of respondents reported no accessibility to medical care (see Figure 17).

As only very few women participated in the survey in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ghana, it was impossible to make determinations about gender-specific access to medical care in these countries. Excluding these countries from the analysis, about 90% of women and 80% of men reported the ability to seek medical help were illness to befall them.

Twenty percent of the respondents who lived in a town with fewer than 5,000 residents did not have access to medical care, while just 5% of those living

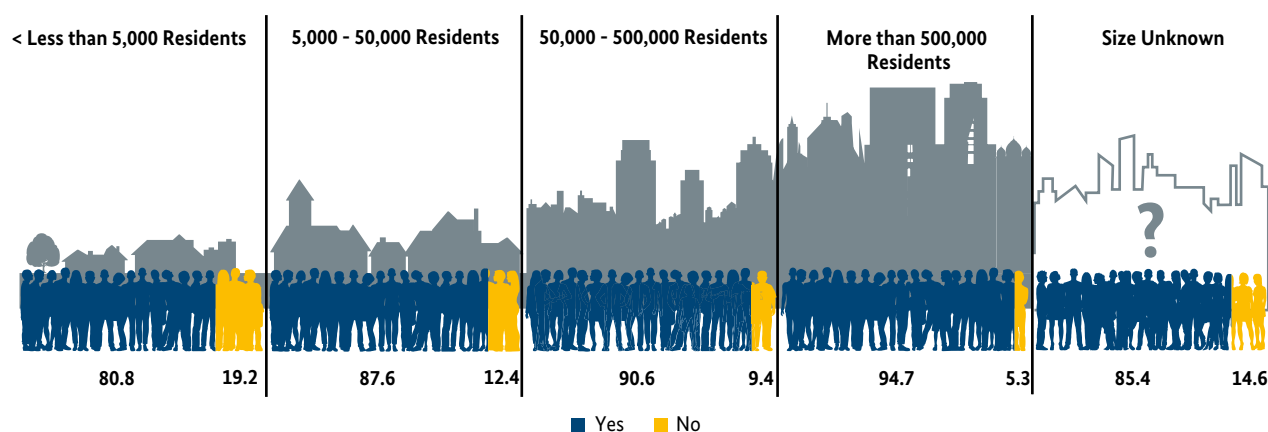
⁶¹ IOM has developed a framework for voluntary return and reintegration, which applies the definition of sustainable reintegration given above (Graviano/Darbellay 2019).

Figure 17: Access to Medical Care according to Country of Return (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,296, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 5% are not shown.

Figure 18: Access to Medical Care according to the Size of Residence (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,233, weighted.

in major cities had no access to medical care (see Figure 18).⁶²

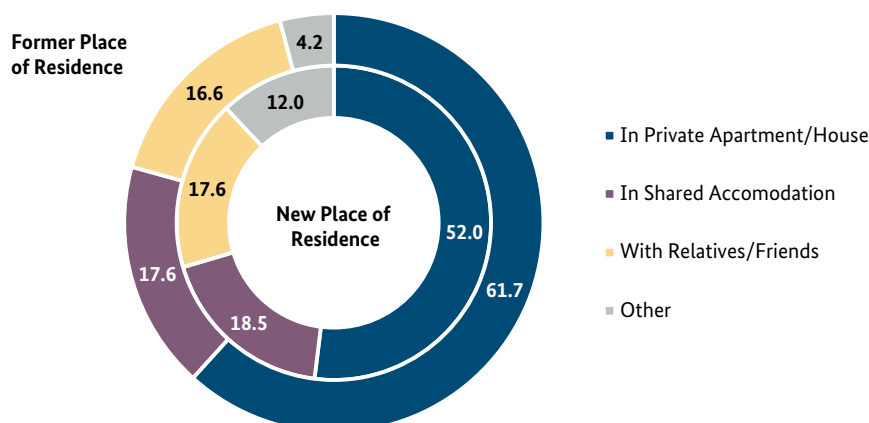
Housing Situation After Return

Most of the respondents who returned to places in which they had lived previously, but also persons who settled in a novel place found accommodation in a private housing arrangement (see Figure 19). About 17% of respondents stayed with friends or relatives.

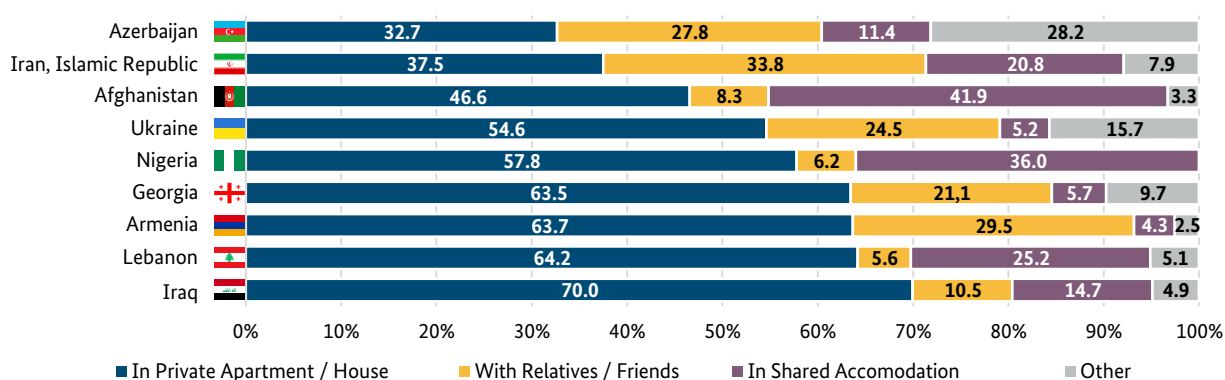
Seventeen percent of study participants lived in shared accommodation. This type of accommodation seems to be particularly precarious because of the limited private space it affords. Permanent residence in shared accommodation is rarely the desired long-term solution. It is, thus, to be expected that shared housing does not contribute to a returnee's personal stability nor to a persons' permanent settlement at the place of return.

Respondents from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine rarely lived in shared accommodation compared to respondents from other countries (see Figure 20). However, respondents from Afghanistan and Nigeria often indicated at the time of the survey (that is within six to 17 months after return) that they were sharing accommodations. The highest percentage (at 42%) of persons reporting to live in a shared accommodation was taken up by returnees to Afghanistan.

⁶² About one-quarter of respondents were unable to provide information on the number of inhabitants in their current place of residence. This was often the case in Afghanistan, Lebanon and Nigeria. The answers given by these respondents were below the average values from surveyed returnees from other countries in many aspects. It is not possible to determine the degree to which this systematic unit non-response affected the results of reintegration according to the size of the city or village of return.

Figure 19: Housing Situation After Return (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,308, weighted.

Figure 20: Housing Situation According to Country of Return (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,286, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 2% are not shown.

Respondents in Armenia, Georgia, Iraq and Lebanon mostly settled in private apartments or houses. In some countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, respondents often resided with their family and relatives.

The study did not examine the quality of the private housing, nor the advantages and disadvantages of living with friends and relatives. However, it is likely that such living arrangements differ widely depending on the country. As an example, experts reported that returnees in Georgia often moved back into the apartments and houses they had owned before leaving. Some returnees even invested the financial return assistance in property renovations – some of which had stood vacant for years. In Iraq, many returnees rented homes and subsequently faced the challenge of high rental costs (REACH Initiative 2017). IOM experts

for Iraq have stated that the financial return assistance was generally used to cover the rental costs.⁶³

Living with relatives or friends has different outcomes depending on the return context. Experts in Georgia reported that younger, single returnees often moved in with their parents, which is a widespread and accepted practice. On the other hand, a study on returnees' living conditions in Afghanistan revealed that some returnees had no alternative other than to move in with relatives. Returnees often viewed such dependent relationship with the host as a burden (REACH Initiative/Mixed Migration Platform 2017).

⁶³ On the use of financial support after return, see Chapter 6.5.

Satisfaction with the Security Situation

Fear of violence and prosecution in the country of origin was an important obstacle to returning. One in five persons chose their current place of residence because they deemed it to be safe. A subjective feeling of security thus seems to be an important consideration for returnees settling at the place of return.

Respondents' satisfaction with their security situation differed considerably depending on the country of return (see Figure 21). For example, one in two people in Afghanistan and Lebanon were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied with their security situation. In both Ukraine and Nigeria, about 30% of respondents were concerned about their security situation. Despite this, most respondents were satisfied with the security at their place of return. Satisfaction values exceeding 60% were recorded in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iraq.

Respondents from rural places or small, mid-sized or large cities in their respective countries reported a similar assessment of their security situation. The subjective perception of the security situation therefore did not depend on whether respondents returned to rural or urban areas.

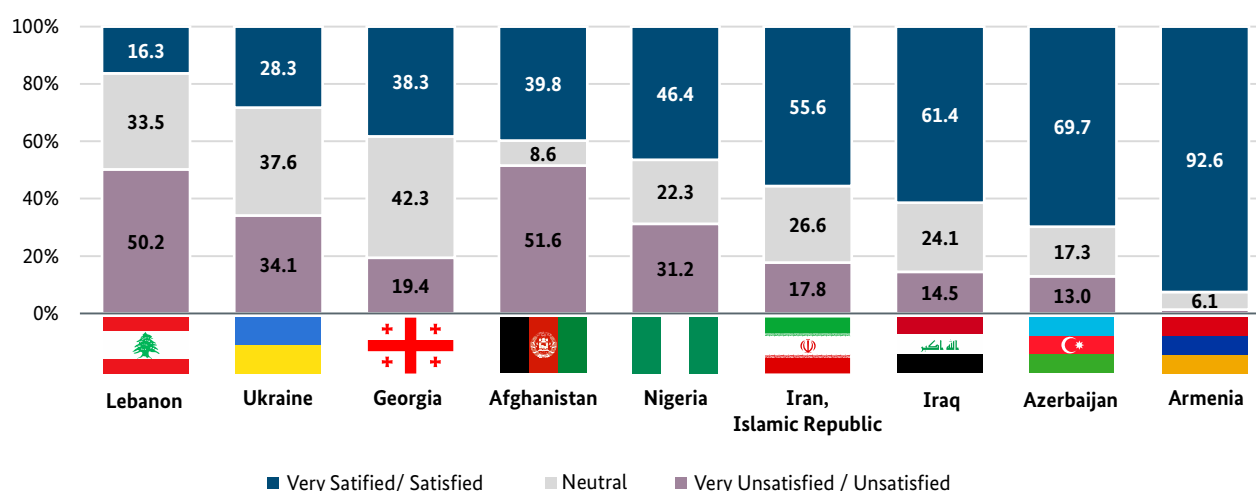
6.2 Income and Financial Responsibilities

The economic situation of returnees partly depends on the extent to which they have access to income-generating resources. This might include saved or inherited money, as well as ownership of property or land (Davis/van Houte 2008: 174). Furthermore, sources of income such as remittances, money transfers from relatives within the country, as well as income from employment or self-employment are also relevant (Sauer et al. 2018). Regardless of other sources of income, income from employment or self-employment plays a central role in establishing an economically sustainable livelihood after return (Black et al. 2004). In this study, respondents' employment status and the subsequent income represented the key indicator for economic reintegration.

Employment Status and Income

Thirty-two percent of respondents reported that they were employed full-time or that they were self-employed. The percentage of persons employed full-time or self-employed was particularly low in Azerbaijan, where the rate of full-time employment or self-employment was about 20%. In all other countries, the percentage of persons employed full-time ranged from 30% to 37% (see Figure 22). Including respondents working irregularly and/or working for multiple employers, the employment rate rose to 39%. In almost all countries, about half of the respondents

Figure 21: Satisfaction with the Current Security Situation according to Country of Return (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,285, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 5% are not shown.

received no income at all from either employment or self-employment. In Afghanistan this figure was as high as 60%.

In Ukraine, an especially high number of respondents (21%) reported working odd jobs or as day labourers for various employers. Such precarious forms of employment were reported by about 15% of respondents in Lebanon and about 10% in both Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Women were much less likely to pursue paid employment or self-employment activities (see Table 14). They were more likely to report undertaking household duties and caring for family needs.

Table 14: Gender-Specific Employment Rates (in Percent)

	Women	Men
Employed	27.4	47.6
House Husband/Housewife	25.7	7.7
No Work at Present	57.5	46.2

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,154, weighted.

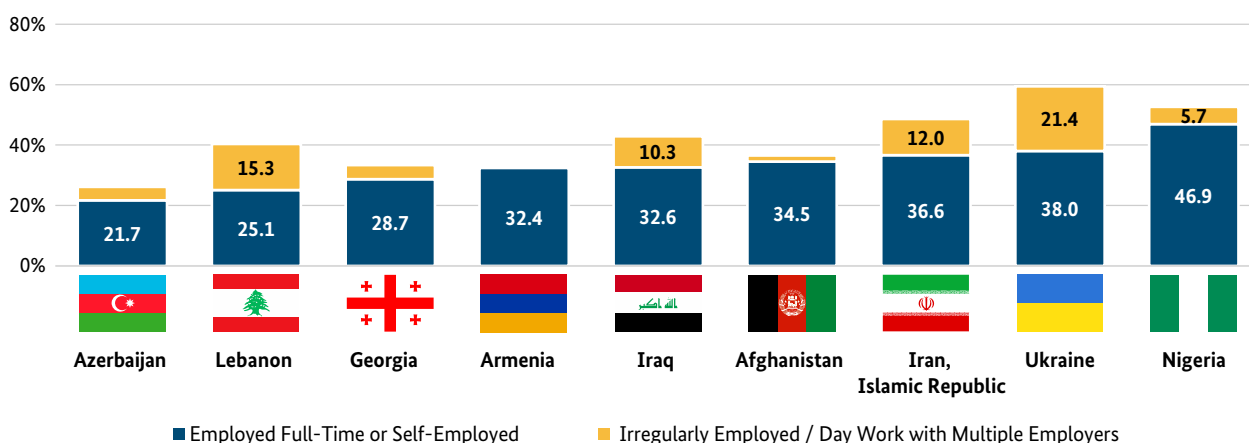
Note: Multiple answers possible, which is why the total values add up to more than 100%. Only persons between the ages of 18 and 65 were included in the calculations.

One in every five persons who returned from Germany to Armenia and Georgia reported being retired in their country of return. About 10% of all respondents in Ukraine were retirees. In the other countries, the percentage of retirees was usually very low, mainly due to the very young age of most respondents. About 5% of the total respondents were retirees. The vast majority of these retirees indicated that they did not pursue any economic activities at the time of the survey. About 4% of all respondents reported attending classes at an educational institution (as students or trainees). These respondents were not able to participate in the job market at that time.

In addition to the moderate employment rates mentioned above, the data also showed that employment itself often did not guarantee a wage that is sufficient to cover the daily needs within the return regions. Only 15% of all respondents earned enough income from employment or self-employment to cover their daily living costs. The proportion of women who reported earning enough to cover their daily needs was 4%. In contrast, about 18% of men reported that their income was sufficient to meet their daily needs.

In summary, only a minority of the respondents earned a sufficient amount of income from employment or self-employment. However, it is important to consider that respondents answered the survey within an average of eight months after their return and were

Figure 22: Employment Status After Return (in Percent)*



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,247, weighted.

Only persons between the ages of 18 and 65 were included in the calculations.

Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 5% are not shown.

* In this study, respondents were asked to record what kind of work they undertook (see Annex 1). A list of nine possible answers describing income-generating activities was available to choose from. Respondents could also answer that they did not have any work, that their main occupation was in the home (caring for family, managing household affairs and doing housework) or that they were retired or studying. Choosing multiple answers was possible. For example, respondents could report that they worked in the home and at that they also worked odd jobs or as a day labourer. In order to avoid ambiguity, only answers from persons who were of an age where they could plausibly work and who indicated in a prior question that they did some kind of work to earn income were included in Figure 22.

therefore only in the initial stages of their economic reintegration process. Nonetheless, similar results were found in other studies that were conducted later on in the reintegration process. For example, Fransen and Bilgili (2018) and ICMPD (2015) concluded that securing employment, which generated enough money to cover the daily needs, was a major challenge for returnees to Burundi and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), respectively.

Qualifications Obtained Abroad and the Employment Status

Current research on return highlights the significance of qualifications and skills obtained abroad for a successful economic reintegration upon return (Black/Gent 2006: 29; Koser/Kuschminder 2015: 16). According to this research, obtaining qualifications in the host country can enable returnees to find employment quicker after their return. In some cases, the professional experience and qualifications obtained by migrants in host countries were directly applicable to the labour market at their places of return. Migrants who acquired professional work experience in their host countries also returned with greater confidence, which in turn assisted with their job search (ICMPD 2015: 19). Conversely, this also means that people who did not obtain professional qualifications and expertise in the host country (due to legal restrictions, for example) had fewer options for securing a stable income after returning (Cassarino 2004: 274).

In this study, respondents who acquired professional experience in Germany or who learned German were employed at a higher rate after return (see Table 15). However, when controlling for other factors such as gender and country of origin, respondents with professional working experience in Germany were not significantly more likely to secure employment in their countries of return (see Annex 2.2).

In addition to employment status, this study also asked respondents whether they considered the professional experience they obtained in Germany as useful. About half of the respondents who had obtained professional experience responded positively.⁶⁴ It shows, that obtaining some professional experience in Germany bolstered respondents' feelings of self-worth and thus, helped them in their job search after return.

A deeper analysis on the correlation between work experience obtained in Germany and labour market

success upon return was however not possible. During the study, respondents were asked only if they acquired professional experience in Germany. They were not asked how long they had worked in Germany or what type of work they had undertaken. As the StarthilfePlus programme aims to assist persons whose access to the job market in Germany is usually very limited, it is possible that respondents had worked irregularly or had pursued other precarious forms of employment. More comprehensive research on the reintegration effects of rather limited professional experience and qualifications abroad is required (Baraulina 2013: 50-53; Koser/Kuschminder 2015: 59).

Table 15: Acquired Skills and the Employment Status After Return

	Case Count	Employment in the Return Region (Full-Time, Self-Employment, Partially or Day-to-Day for Various Employers)
Work Experience in Germany	265	47.2%
No Work Experience in Germany	922	40.5%
At Least a Good Command of German	275	42.9%
No (Good) Command of German	866	40.6%

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study.

Note: Only persons between the ages of 18 and 65 who gave information about their current job status were included in the calculations.

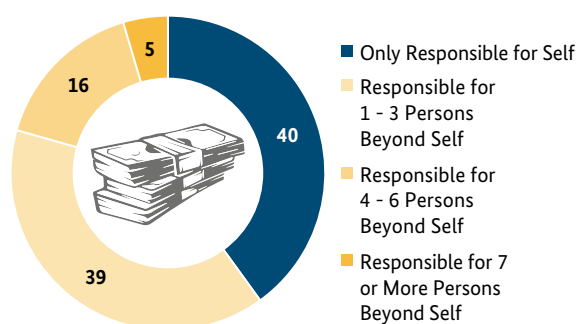
Financial Responsibilities

Respondents' economic situation largely depended on the number of people for whom they were financially responsible once they returned.⁶⁵ In general, the more people a returnee was responsible for, the more income he or she had to earn to establish a sustainable livelihood for the entire family unit. About 60% of respondents were financially responsible for other people in the household, in addition to themselves.

⁶⁴ A total of 232 respondents with professional experience in Germany answered the question.

⁶⁵ Usually just one person per family unit leaving Germany participated in the survey. In most cases, this person is the one who applied for StarthilfePlus support and who was formally acting as the head of the household at the time of departure.

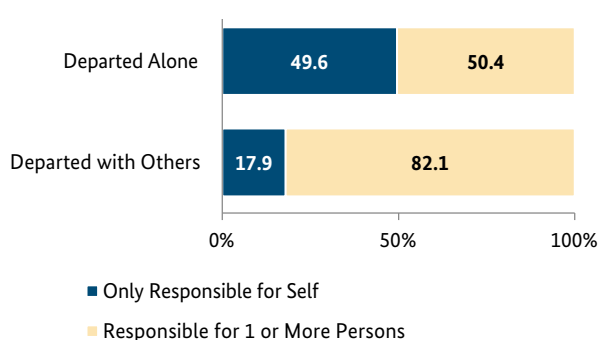
Figure 23: Financial Responsibilities at the Place of Return (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,272, weighted.

Most respondents who returned in a family unit continued to be financially responsible for their family members at their place of return. Also, persons who returned alone were often financially responsible for additional family members once they arrived. About 50% of all respondents who had left Germany alone had financial responsibility not only for themselves, but also for other persons upon returning (see Figure 24). The greater the number of financially dependent persons, the more likely respondents were to state that their income was insufficient to cover their daily living costs.

Figure 24: Household Structure at the Time of Departure and Financial Responsibility at Place of Return (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,272, weighted.

6.3 Relationships with Relatives and Neighbours at Place of Return

The current literature on reintegration highlights the importance of social connections with family members and relatives and the local community. Good relationships with family, friends and neighbours help to overcome the stigma of returning, rebuild trust in the community and develop future plans (Black et al. 2011: 15). Building a self-sufficient livelihood after returning is difficult, particularly when returnees encounter hostility from the communities they inhabit. Such animosity may be aimed at returnees for receiving reintegration support or, conversely, because they returned “with empty hands” (IOM 2018a: 14). Good contact with the local community appears to be particularly important for those returning to conflict and post-conflict regions as social welfare structures and administrative institutions are commonly underdeveloped or even non-existent. Access to the labour market, accommodation, education and other important public goods, thus, often depend on support from private networks (Davis/van Houte 2008: 185-186).

To measure social reintegration, this study recorded the respondents’ levels of satisfaction with family relationships and with their relationships with friends and neighbours.

Relationship with Family and Friends

Most respondents (79%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their relationships with family and friends. However, the level of satisfaction varied according to the regions of return (see Figure 25). The highest percentage of satisfied respondents was found in Afghanistan and Armenia. In contrast, returnees to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nigeria were more likely to report that they were unsatisfied with their relationships with friends and family. There were no gender differences in this regard.

Interviews with experts for the countries of return of Georgia, Afghanistan and Iraq emphasized the positive and supportive role family and friends play in the reintegration process through providing extensive support to returnees. However, this often results in stress for the persons providing the support. For example, experts interviewed in Iraq reported that if returnees remain dependent on their families for extended periods of time, the potential for intra-family conflict

increases. As this study examined only the first phase of social reintegration (e.g. within the first months after return), it did not address how social relationships may evolve in a place of return over time.

Relationships with Neighbours

About 68% of respondents reported satisfactory relationships with neighbours at their places of return. Respondents' levels of neighbour satisfaction were particularly high in Armenia (see Figure 26). In contrast, the respondents in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and Ukraine were more likely to have a neutral or even negative attitude toward their neighbours.

These findings suggest that returnees were rarely openly rejected by their neighbours. Nevertheless, respondents were not as satisfied with their relationships with neighbours as they were with their relationships with family and friends.

Respondents from larger cities (with 50,000 or more residents) were more likely to have problems with their neighbours than those in less populated areas. In these more populated places, 12% reported that they were dissatisfied with their relationships with the neighbours. At the same time, only 6% of respondents from smaller towns and rural areas were dissatisfied in this respect. In sum, it can be observed that even though respondents from rural areas and smaller

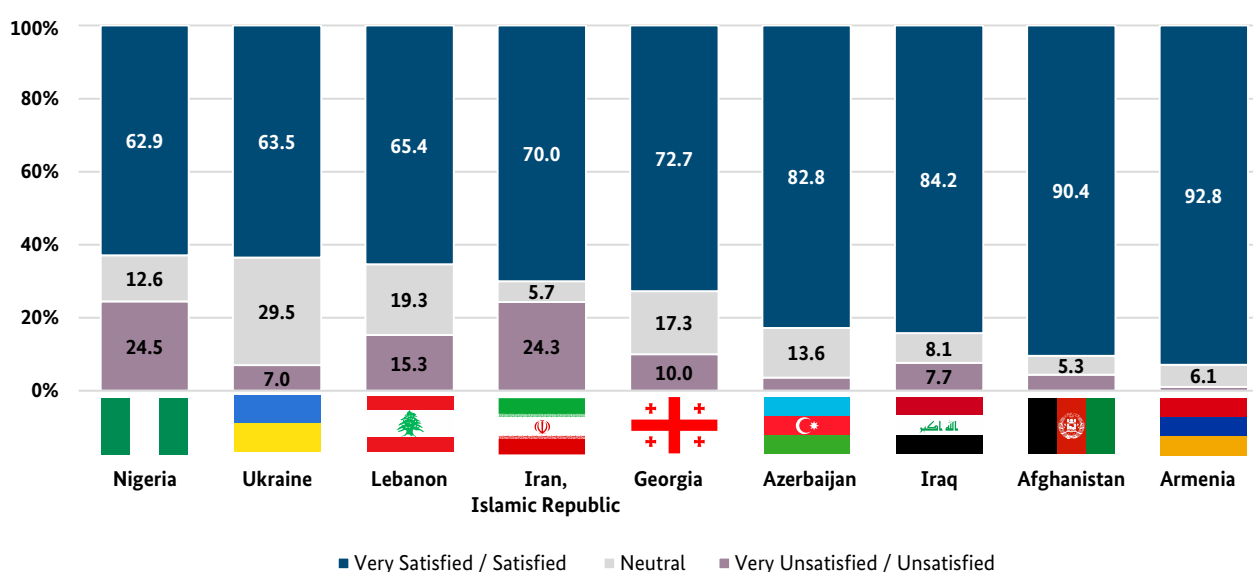
towns faced structural reintegration disadvantages, such as access to medical care (see Chapter 6.1), they were more likely to establish positive relationships within the local community.

6.4 Reintegration and Life Satisfaction

Measuring structural, economic and social reintegration processes individually does not provide enough information to assess whether respondents were satisfied with their life upon return. For example, successful economic reintegration cannot compensate for a poor security situation or for problems with one's family and the local community. Conversely, a stable security situation is important for reintegrating into the country of return, although it is usually not enough for returnees who have insufficient economic resources or are socially isolated. A holistic assessment of the living conditions must therefore be based on the interplay of individual reintegration indicators (e.g. structural, economic and social).

In order to illustrate this interplay, the authors designed a reintegration index. It is based on the structure of the index developed by Koser and Kuschminder (2017: 264-265). In their work, Koser and Kuschminder

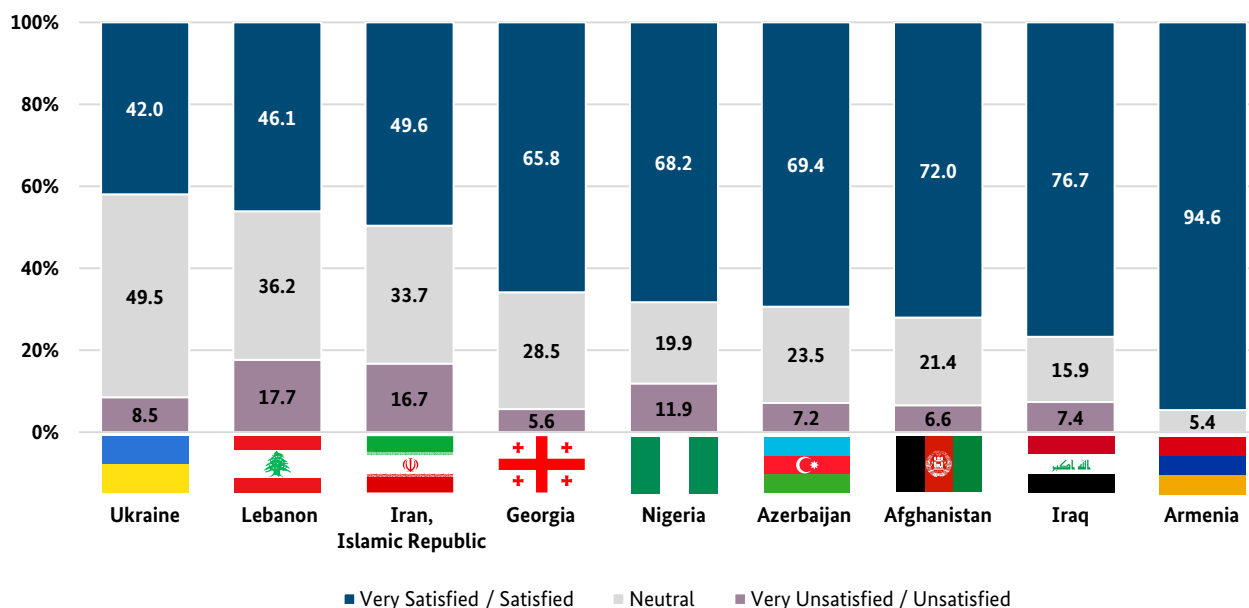
Figure 25: Satisfaction with Relationships with Family and Friends (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,309, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 5% are not shown.

Figure 26: Satisfaction with Relationships with Neighbours (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,275, weighted.

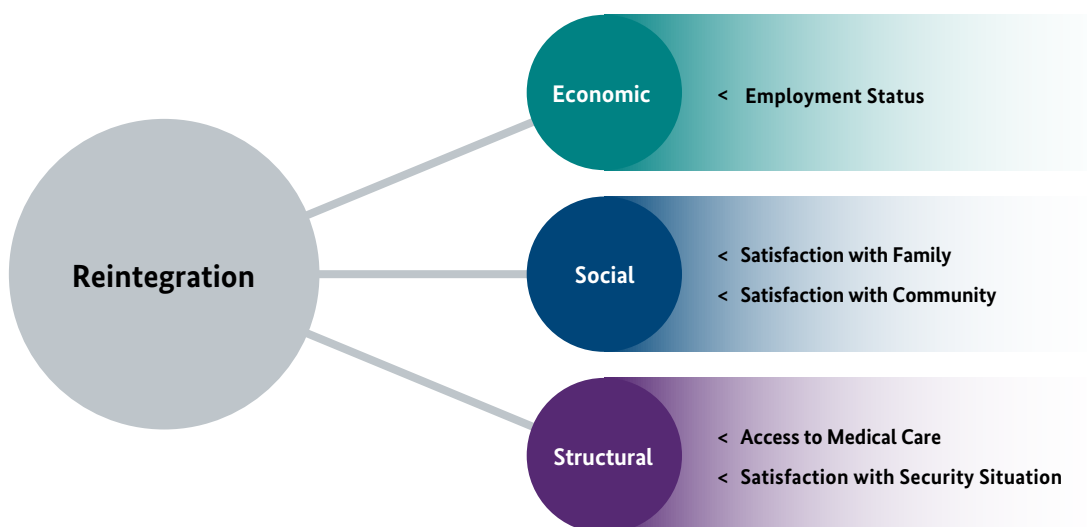
Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

identified three reintegration dimensions (economic, socio-cultural and security dimension) with five measurable reintegration indicators per dimension.

The index designed for this study also deployed three reintegration dimensions: a) structural reintegration, b) economic reintegration and c) social reintegration (see Figure 27). Unlike Koser and Kuschminder, only one or two reintegration indicators were identified per dimension. The authors chose fewer indicators as the survey was conducted within a relatively short period

of time after return. Sustained reintegration in the return regions could, thus, not have reasonably been expected at this time. That is why the reintegration measurements were restricted to a few central indicators (see Table 16).

The index measures the level of reintegration on a scale from 0 to 1 (see Table 16). If the sum of all indicators exceeded 0.6 points, it was presumed that returnees had achieved a satisfactory level of reintegration at the time of the survey.

Figure 27: Dimensions of the Reintegration Index

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study.

Table 16: Reintegration Index according to Individual Indicators

Indicator	Criteria for Successful Reintegration	Reintegration Rate	Weighting Factor	Number of Respondents
Economic Dimensions				
Employment Rate	Returnee has a formal or informal professional job.	39.0%	0.3	1,305
Social Dimension				
Satisfaction with Relationships within Neighbours	Returnees are satisfied with their relationship with the neighbours.	67.8%	0.15	1,298
Satisfaction with Family	Returnees are satisfied with their relationship with family.	79.0%	0.15	1,309
Structural Dimension				
Access to Medical Care	Returnee has access to a doctor.	85.2%	0.1	1,318
Security	Returnees are satisfied with the security situation.	53.6%	0.3	1,308
Reintegration Index				
	Proportion of persons who have achieved a value exceeding 0.6 in the index.	55.4%		1,230

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,230, weighted.

In the first year following return, structural reintegration was considered satisfactory if the respondent had access to medical care and if they were satisfied with the security situation in the country. The study included another aspect of structural reintegration – the access to private accommodation (see Chapter 6.1). However, as access to housing was heavily dependent on the returnee's economic situation, which in turn is closely correlated with securing employment, there is a strong endogeneity between economic reintegration and access to housing. This can cause biases in the index. With this in mind, this index refrained from including access to housing.

In the first year following return, economic reintegration was considered satisfactory if respondents had secured employment. Employment also included self-employment. Further, given the reality that securing permanent employment within the first year of return was unlikely in some countries, employment was broadly defined in this study including irregular jobs with multiple employers, such as day labour. No information was collected on other sources of income, such as financial support from other household members, remittances or financial support from relatives within the country. Furthermore, respondents were not asked about the amount of income, but rather to determine whether they subjectively perceived their income to be sufficient for covering daily living costs. Thus, it was not possible to calculate total income and to include it in the reintegration index.

In the first year following return, social reintegration was considered successful if the respondents were satisfied with their relationships with family, friends and neighbours.

The individual reintegration criteria were weighted according to their significance in terms of reintegration (see Table 16).⁶⁶ Subjective satisfaction with the security and employment status were, thus, considered extremely relevant prerequisites to the respondent's ability to establish long-term perspectives at their place of return. Access to medical care was also considered critical. However, because the survey did not gather information on the quality of healthcare or respondents' satisfaction with it, this criterion was assigned less weight within the structural dimension. A stable relationship with family and nearby neighbours was evaluated as being similarly important. The three dimensions of the reintegration index forming the foundation for the calculation – economic (factor of 0.3), structural (factor of 0.4) and social (factor of 0.3) – were assigned about the same weight.

According to the criteria identified above, about half of the respondents considered their living conditions as satisfactory. The lowest scores were generally seen in employment. On the other hand, the social dimension of reintegration stood out as especially positive.

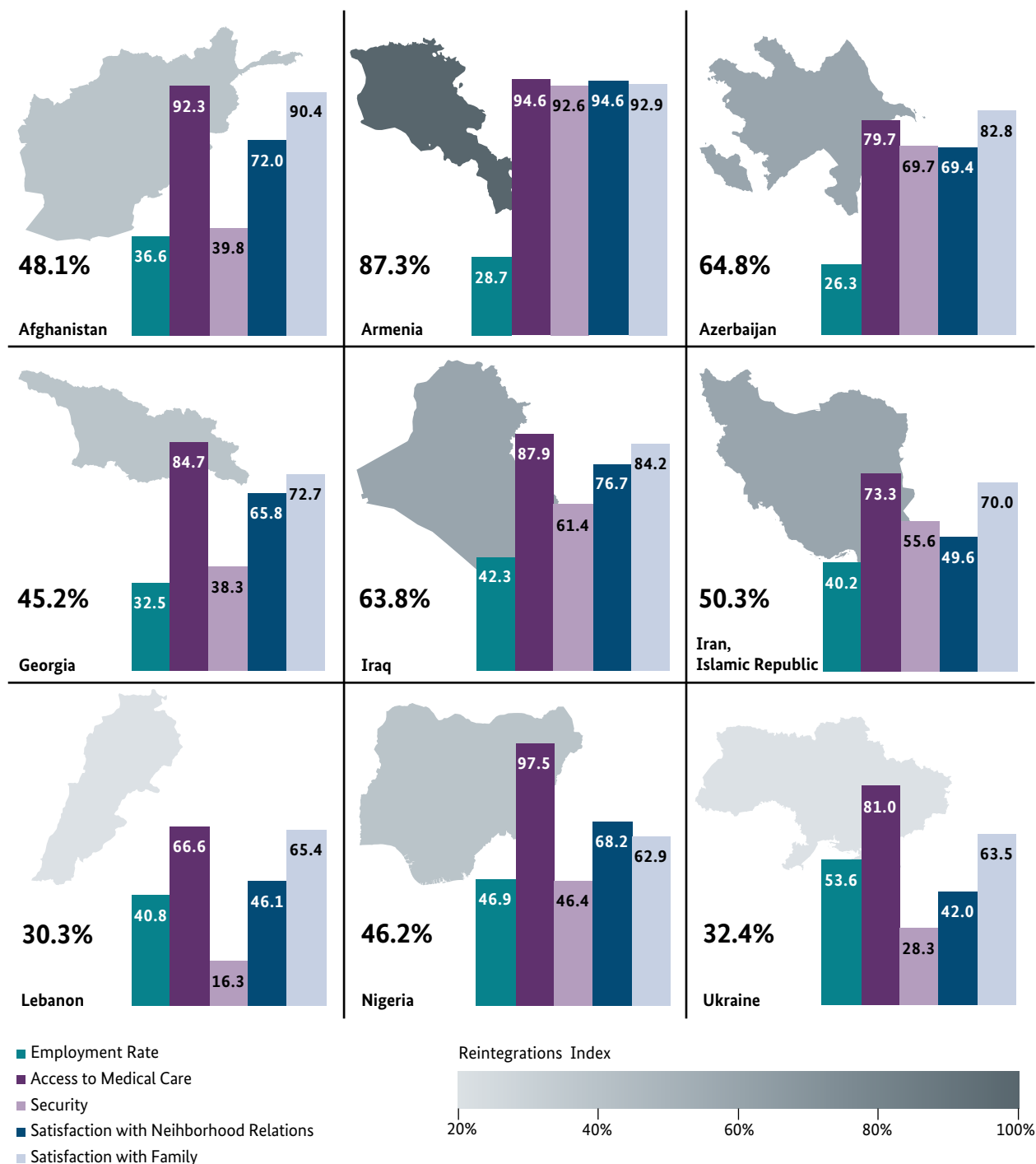
⁶⁶ The weighting factors used in this index were examined in a robustness test.

The reintegration index varied significantly between countries of return. Just 30% of respondents in Lebanon, compared to 87% of respondents in Armenia, had achieved a high degree of reintegration - at least 0.6 out of 1 (see Figure 28).

There are clear gender differences regarding the degree of reintegration among the respondents. In all

countries, men achieved higher reintegration rates than women. Controlling for country of return, age, size of place of return, and duration of stay in the country of return, gender differences remained statistically significant. One explanation for this is that men were more likely to engage in paid employment and, thus, achieved considerably better results within the economic dimension (see Chapter 6.2). Other return

Figure 28: Reintegration Index according to Country of Return and Individual Dimensions (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,135, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

and reintegration studies have also shown that the reintegration processes differ between women and men (Wong 2013; Koser/Kuschminder 2015: 54).

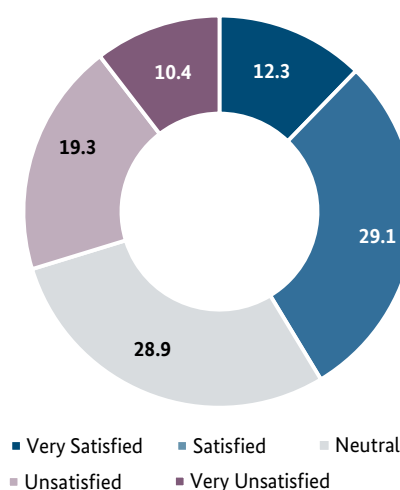
The reintegration study by Koser and Kuschminder (2015: 55), which surveyed returnees in multiple countries, identified a positive correlation between the education level of the respondents and their reintegration. In this survey, however, it was not possible to decisively confirm that higher education made reintegration easier for respondents per se. Respondents with a moderate level of education (defined here as comprising between 5 to 10 years of formal school education) demonstrated significantly better reintegration scores than respondents without formal education (see Annex 2.3). Respondents with higher education degrees, on the other hand, did not show higher reintegration scores. Respondents' educational skill sets were therefore not always relevant at their places of return.

Life Satisfaction

A positive attitude is fundamental for returnees establishing long-term prospects at their places of return. Such an outlook helps returnees manage the many everyday challenges they face in the reintegration process (Strand et al. 2016). The reintegration index described above did not record respondents' general life satisfaction in their places of return; thus, an additional question measured this.

A little over 40% of the respondents were satisfied with their lives at their places of return, about 30% were not satisfied (see Figure 29).

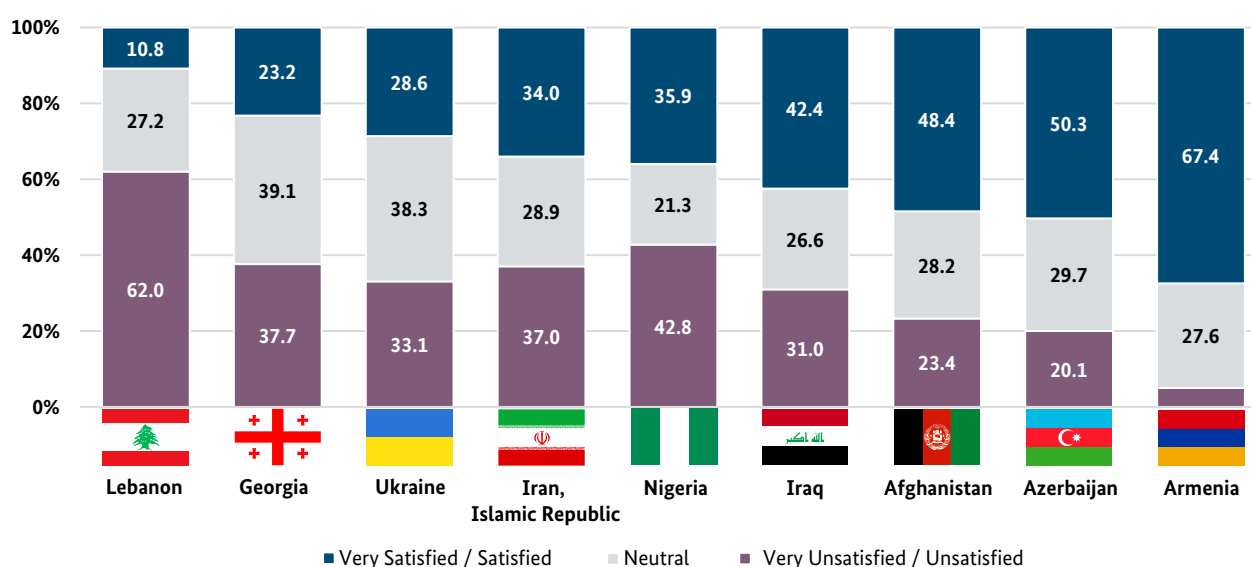
Figure 29: Life Satisfaction after Return (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,304, weighted.

The responses on life satisfaction and the reintegration index did not match completely, but they did display a high correlation ($r = 0.55$). Respondents who demonstrated considerably high levels of life satisfaction were returnees to Armenia, the country with the highest reintegration rate (see Figure 30). In contrast,

Figure 30: Life Satisfaction according to Countries of Return (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,281, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed. Values under 5% are not shown.

in Lebanon, just 11% of respondents were satisfied with their life and correspondingly reported the lowest reintegration rate.

While education, gender and age did not have a statistically significant influence on life satisfaction, income played an important role. Respondents earning enough in their jobs to cover the daily needs after returning, reported considerably higher levels of satisfaction with their current living situation compared to those, whose income did not cover their daily costs of living. Access to medical care also influenced general life satisfaction. Even after controlling for characteristics such as age, gender, country of origin and others, returnees who had access to medical care were significantly more satisfied with their lives than those who reported being unable to see a doctor if they fell ill (see Annex 2.3). This could explain some of the low satisfaction scores in Lebanon, where about one-third of respondents did not have access to a doctor.

6.5 Return Assistance and Reintegration

The majority of respondents received financial support between EUR 1,000 to EUR 2,000 per returnee or family (see Figure 31). About 20% received between EUR 2,000 and EUR 4,000 and a small proportion (5% of respondents) received EUR 4,000 in support or more, the latter being generally larger family units. The maxi-

mum amount of financial support received by a respondent in this study was EUR 6,800 per family unit.

To evaluate the significance of the provided financial support, the study asked respondents to elaborate how they had used the money. IOM paid out financial support in two instalments – the first immediately before departure and the second within six to eight months after arrival in their country of return (see Chapter 2.2). As returnees typically participated in the survey at the time they collected the second instalment, the survey asked how respondents used the first instalment and then, how they planned to use the second instalment. In some cases, the second instalment had already been spent at the time of the survey. Such cases were analyzed together with those respondents who had not yet spent the money but had plans on how to spend it.

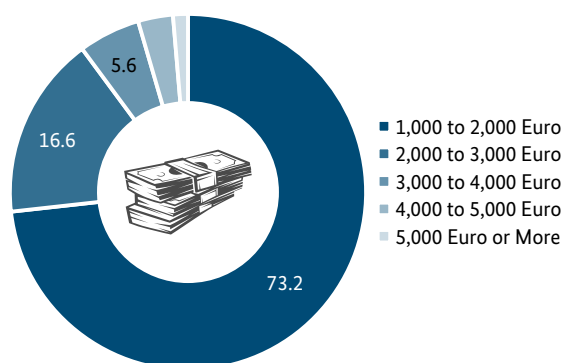
The study did not aim to assess how respondents handled the money they had received. The individual nature of each respondent's return and the demands they face can vary considerably, especially in the initial months upon return. Apart from that, in the early stages of the reintegration process, it is difficult to assess which expenditures will have a positive effect on respondents' future prospects.

Use of the First and Second Instalments

The study found that financial support provided to the returnees rarely served a singular purpose. Most respondents (80%) used the first instalment to cover their daily living costs (see Figure 32). It is not just the returnees who benefit from the support (see Chapter 6.3), but also local family and friends as returnees often provided financial support to such individuals. Although about 7% of respondents invested the money to start a business, 6% of respondents reported having used the money to pay outstanding debts. Debt repayment was a significant expenditure among respondents in Lebanon (20%) and Afghanistan (10%). It is likely that some respondents had borrowed funds to finance their migration to Germany and were, thus, repaying them upon return. Only a very small portion of respondents used the money to pay authorities. Interestingly, there were no gender differences regarding the use of financial assistance.

Frequently, returnees planned to use the second instalment of financial assistance to start businesses and invest in their education (see Figure 32). The money was less frequently planned to make payments to authorities or to other family members and relatives. Of particular interest was that respondents regularly

Figure 31: Total Amount of Return Assistance Received (in Percent)

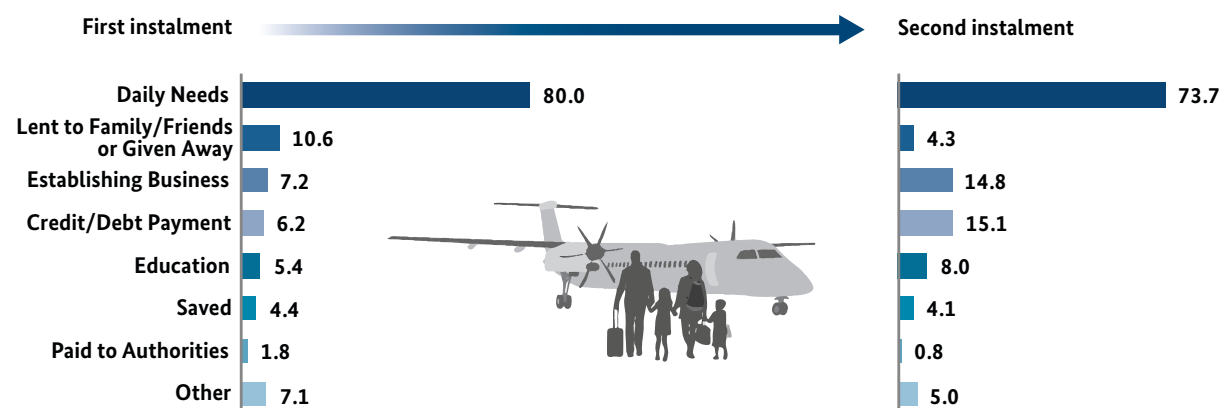


Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,339, weighted.

Note: The information includes REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus support per family without the supplementary components "Your Country. Your Future. Now!"

Values under 5% are not shown.

Figure 32: Comparing the Use of the First and Second Instalment of the Financial Assistance (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, multiple answers possible, n = 1,332 (first instalment), n = 1,209 (second instalment), weighted.

planned to repay debts with the second instalment. In addition to the migration-related debts hypothesized above, this could also have included payment of loans taken out after their return.

Despite these changes, payment for the daily living costs remained the most common use of the second instalment. This was not surprising as respondents were rarely able to achieve sufficient income at the time the survey was completed (see Chapter 6.2). In conclusion, return assistance compensated for

economic uncertainty at the beginning of the reintegration process (Baraulina 2013: 55).

Based on the lack of variance of how the support money was used as well as the short time in the country of return, the study is unable to draw conclusions on how much the financial assistance influences the sustainable reintegration of the respondents. It would therefore be insightful to survey the respondents again in order to assess long-term reintegration processes over time (see Chapter 3.8).

7

Intentions to Stay or to Migrate Onwards

At a glance

- About four out of 10 respondents were not considering onward migration. Another 22% would only move onwards through legal avenues. One in eight respondents wanted to leave their place of return by all means.
- Almost two-thirds of respondents who considered moving onwards wanted to migrate across international borders, while 7% considered internal migration. Germany was the preferred destination. About 30% still had no destination in mind for potential onward migration.
- There was a wide discrepancy between the general desire to leave and fixed plans for departure. Only one in four respondents who reported that they were considering migrating again had a concrete time frame in mind (within one year) in which this should occur.
- Most respondents wanted to leave their place of return because they could not earn sufficient income or because they did not feel safe. Security reasons were particularly relevant for respondents in post-conflict countries.
- Respondents who were poorly reintegrated and who were dissatisfied with their living situation were more likely to consider migrating onwards. Further research is needed to further investigate the interrelation between plans to migrate onwards and sustainable reintegration.

In the political context, a lack of desire among returnees to migrate again after returning is often used as one of the main indicators for successful reintegration, or “sustainable return” (CBSA 2014, ICMPD 2015, Kuschminder 2017b: 1). The higher the percentage of returnees wishing to remain in the respective country of return long-term, the more sustainable and, therefore, successful the return project is considered to be. However, this perspective neglects the fact that very poorly integrated people often lack the financial means, as well as the necessary social contacts to migrate again. In contrast, people who reintegrated successfully are more often capable of moving onwards within a region or internationally because they may have access to new personal con-

tacts or professional opportunities. In such cases, it would be misleading to conclude that reintegration failed whenever someone migrates onwards (Fonseca et al. 2015: 19).⁶⁷ The (absence) of onward migration is therefore not a valid indicator for assessing reintegration in and of itself (Kuschminder 2017b: 2; Strand et al. 2011: 64).

⁶⁷ The need for more precise differentiation is also reflected in the definition of sustainable reintegration used by IOM: here it is clearly emphasized that legal further migration after a return is not a criterion for excluding sustainable reintegration as long as the decision is made of a person's own free will and is not due to a lack of alternatives (IOM 2017b: 3).

Due to the growing criticism about the lack of evidence on the correlation between successful and sustainable reintegration and no further migration endeavors,⁶⁸ the focus of current research is increasingly shifting toward an in-depth analysis of migration aspirations upon return. Such analysis, for example, differentiates between the type of migration planned (regular/irregular) and the different time-related components (vague plan/concrete plan) (Kuschminder 2017b: 3). This debate in the literature underlines the significant discrepancy between the desire to migrate and actual migration rates. The study recently published by the Joint Research Centre, for example, concluded that limiting the debate to migration plans, without differentiating them according to the potential migrant's time frame for migrating onwards or how concrete these plans are, cannot reliably predict potential migration movements (Migali/Scipioni 2018: 28). After all, only a small portion of persons who express a desire to migrate ultimately act upon this will.

This chapter takes a closer look at respondents' intentions for onward migration in order to gain insight into the motivation and possible time frames for such movements. Furthermore, the authors examine the results within the framework of the previous chapter on reintegration (see Chapter 6) resulting in a more nuanced understanding of the connection between reintegration and onward migration.

7.1 Intentions to Migrate Onwards and Potential Destinations

As part of the study, respondents were asked about their plans to migrate again. Forty percent of respondents reported that they would definitely not migrate onwards. A narrow majority of respondents (60%) reported a general willingness to consider re-migration. This result included internal migration, as well as international migration.

About one in eight respondents definitely wanted to leave their current place of residence at the time of the survey and would consider irregular migration if necessary. A much greater percentage (22%) had a concrete plan to leave the region or country to which they had returned, but only through legal avenues. An almost equal proportion (12.5%) of the respondents

stated at the time of the survey that they were unsure about a possible onward migration or that they would indeed like to leave the country but could not afford it (see Figure 33).

Per the study design, only respondents who were living in the countries of return at the time of the survey participated in the study. As a result, persons who may have already migrated were not surveyed. Therefore, the percentage of persons migrating again after return could not be assessed.

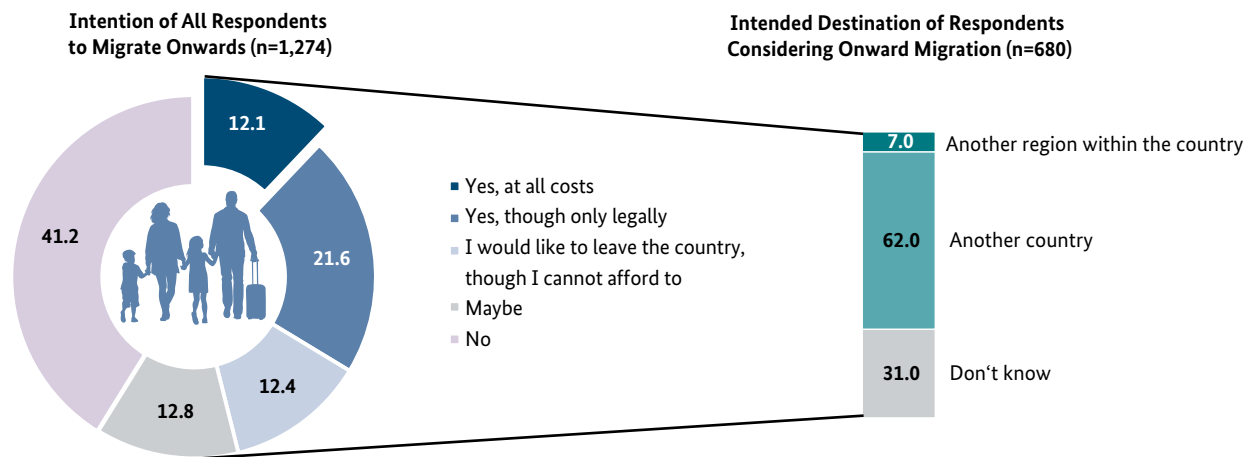
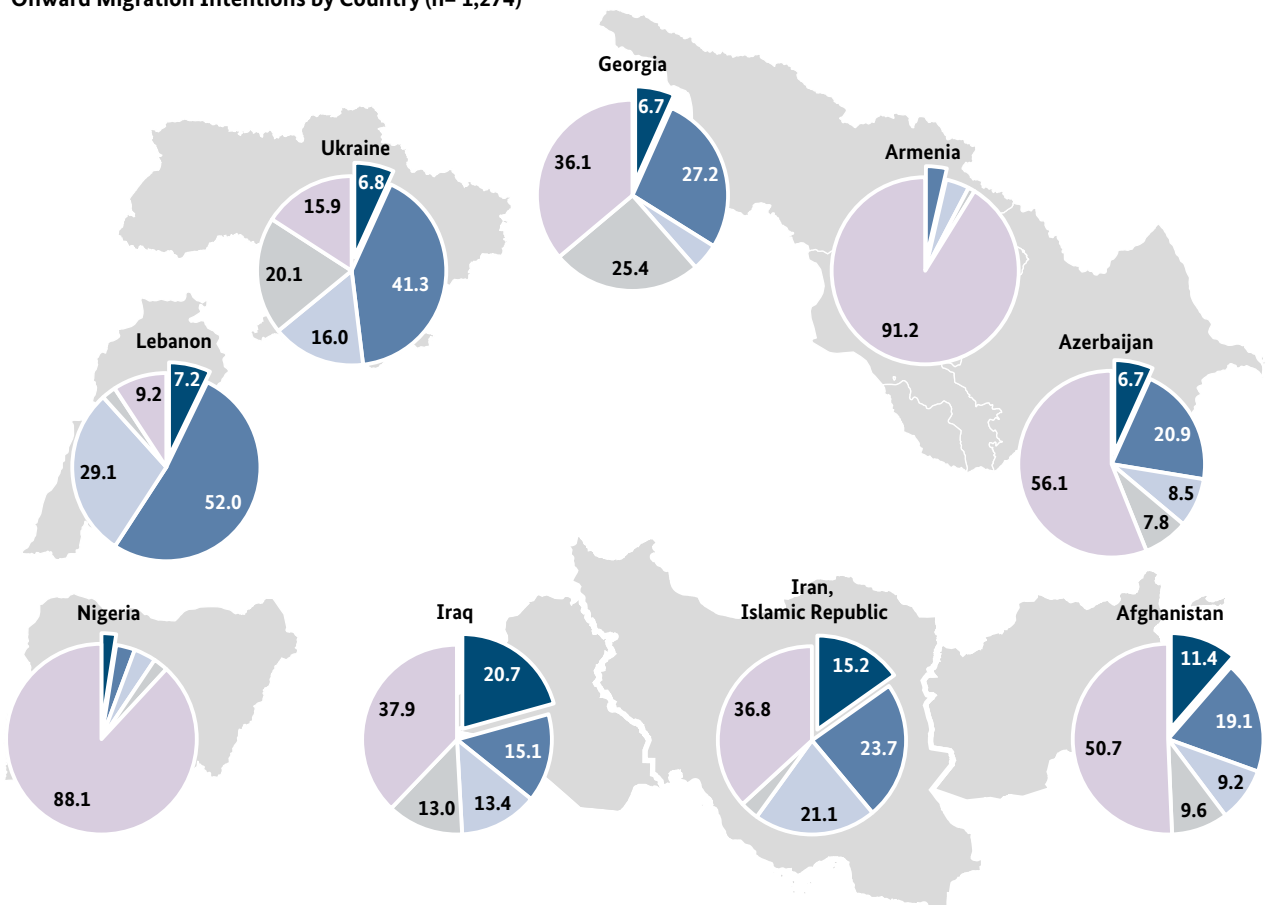
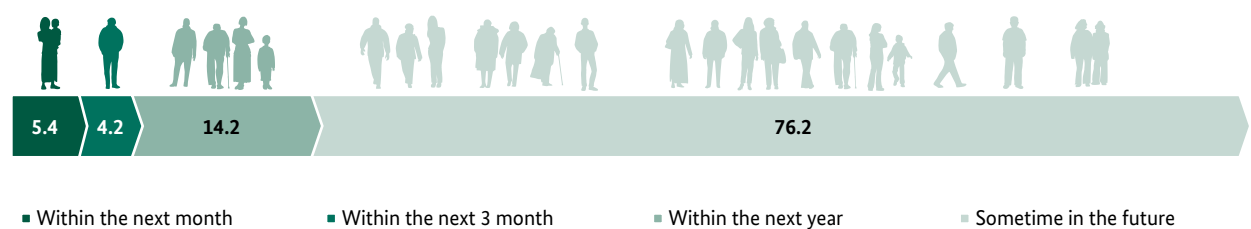
There was indeed a relatively high number of respondents who were considering migrating again. However, moving abroad was not an option for everyone. Seven percent of respondents willing to move onward had plans for internal migration while 31% had not decided if they wanted to migrate internally or internationally. For the vast majority wishing to move onwards, international migrating was the reported desire (see Figure 33).

Regarding the intended destination of a possible onward migration, at 66% Germany was the most frequently named destination country by far. With quite a large gap, Canada, Turkey and the United Kingdom came in second place, with at least 6% or 5% of respondents wanting to migrate there. The distribution to other countries is spread out quite broadly and generally featured in the answers of less than 10 persons in the survey.

Aspirations to migrate again can vary greatly depending on the country to which a person returns (see Figure 33). In Lebanon and Ukraine, a relatively small number of respondents reported that onward migration was no option for them. Also, the proportion of respondents who were considering only regular migration was considerably higher in these two countries. With returnees to Ukraine and Georgia in particular, a stronger focus on legal avenues could be the result of relaxed entry conditions brought about by the EU visa liberalisation introduced for these countries in the middle of 2017 (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik 2019: 44). Only a relatively small percentage of respondents from Nigeria and Armenia intended to leave their country or region again.

A particularly high number of respondents who returned to Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq reported the desire to leave their place of return under all circumstances. In all three countries, the percentage of such persons was over 10%; in Iraq one in five of the study participants returning from Germany reported wanting to leave by all means.

⁶⁸ See u. a. Kuschminder (2017b: 2).

Figure 33: Respondents' Intentions to Stay or to Migrate Onwards (in Percent)

Onward Migration Intentions by Country (n= 1,274)

Time Line of Emigration Plans (n=621, in Percent)


Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, weighted.

Note: Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 5% are not shown.

7.2 Time Frame and Concrete Plans for Onward Migration

One important component for assessing returnees' plans for onward migration is the time frame in which they reported the desire to migrate again (Kuschminder 2017b: 3). It could generally be determined that persons who want to move onwards within their respective country had more concrete time frames than those who wanted to cross international borders. As might be expected, those respondents who planned to migrate onwards but were not sure if they wanted to do so within the country or across international borders usually did not have any specific time frame for their plan.

Overall, the majority of returnees surveyed considered onward migration as something they could imagine doing. However, it is more of a distant goal without any specific plans for which they made no specific preparations. More than three out of four respondents indicated that they could imagine migrating onwards sometime in the future. Less than 10% of respondents who reported wanting to leave the country again planned to do so within the coming three months and fewer than one-quarter planned to do so within one year (see Figure 33). Of all respondents who can generally imagine migrating to Germany, only a very small percentage (4%) of respondents intended to implement this idea within a year of the survey.

Yet, it remains unclear whether respondents will implement such plans. Not all migration plans will be realized. Rather, the responses capture moments in time or statements of intent. Additionally, respon-

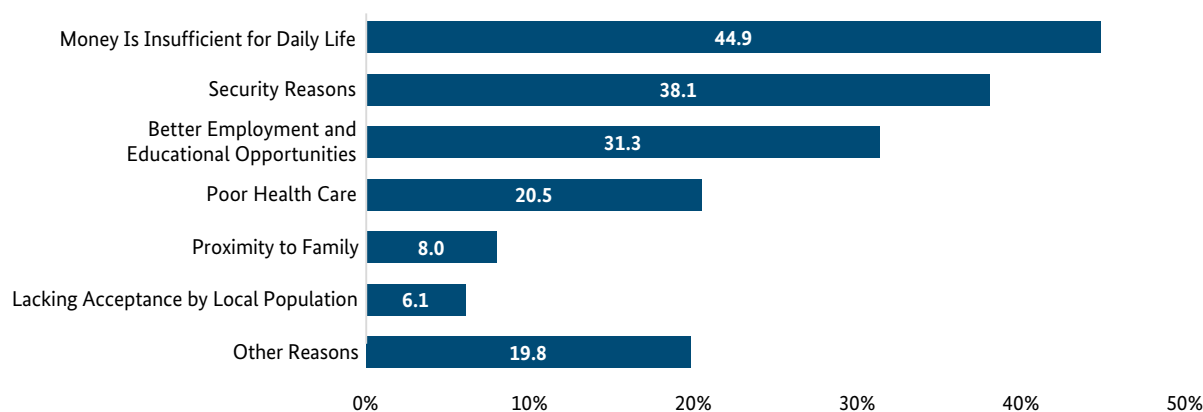
dents may abandon migration decisions or delay migration plans due to, e.g. a lack of (financial) options. Other studies demonstrated similar findings, as they indicated that only a minority of those who consider migrating ultimately end up doing so (Migali/Scipioni 2018: 28).

7.3 Motives for Onward Migration

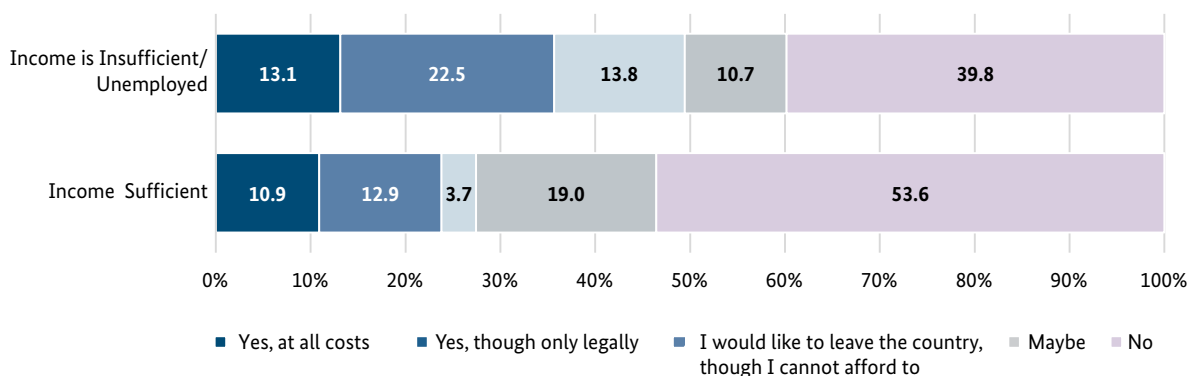
As previously mentioned, migrating onwards or remaining at the place of return cannot readily be associated with unsuccessful or successful reintegration. Some of those who stay at their place of return simply cannot afford to migrate again. At the same time, unsuccessful economic reintegration can also increase a person's willingness to migrate again (Fonseca 2015: 14).

Figure 34 displays the motives of respondents for migrating again. Insufficient financial means is the most frequent reason respondents provided for wanting to leave their place of return. Almost half (45%) of respondents who are thinking of migrating onwards indicated that they did not have enough money to meet their daily needs. The significance of available financial resources was also visible when comparing respondents of different incomes (see Chapter 6.2). Respondents who are either employed or self-employed and whose income is sufficient to cover their daily needs were less likely to consider remigrating than those who are unemployed or unable to live off the money earned through their work (see Figure 35).

Figure 34: Motives for Onward Migrating After Return (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, multiple answers possible, n = 720, weighted.

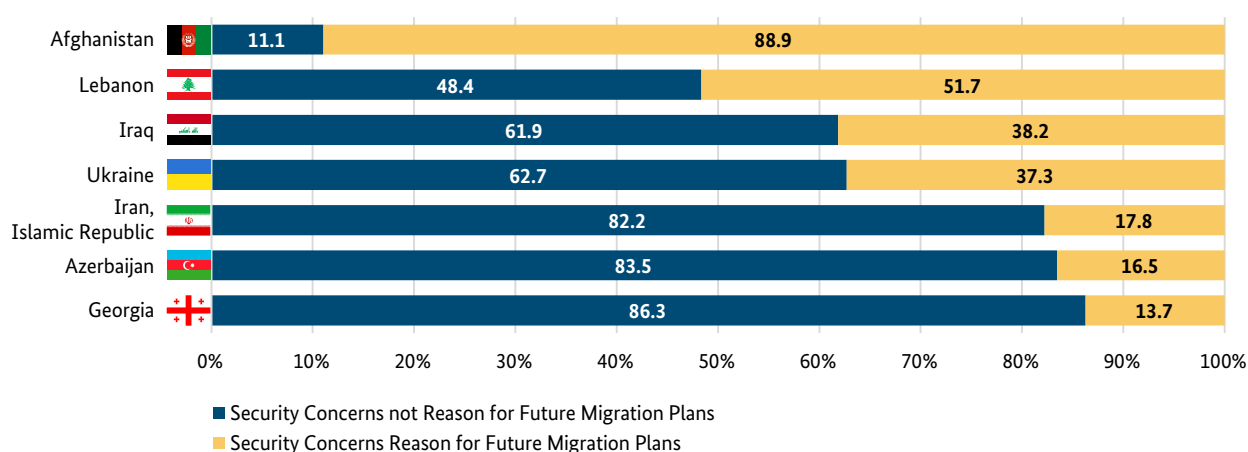
Figure 35: Income from Employment and Intention to Migrate Onwards (in Percent)


Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,195, weighted.

In addition to the difficulties in generating income, the poor security situation at the place of return was another key reason to migrate onwards for 38% of the respondents (see Figure 34). This percentage was especially high in conflict and post-conflict countries. Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine, three of the four countries with the highest rate of respondents providing security as one of their main reasons for considering migrating onwards, were conflict or post-conflict countries (see Figure 36). The security situation in the country of return also influenced the timeframe of onward migration plans. For about 46% of respondents who wanted to leave their place of return within the next month or the next three months, security-related concerns were decisive. Over 80% of those who reported wanting to leave their country of return within the next month came from Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine.

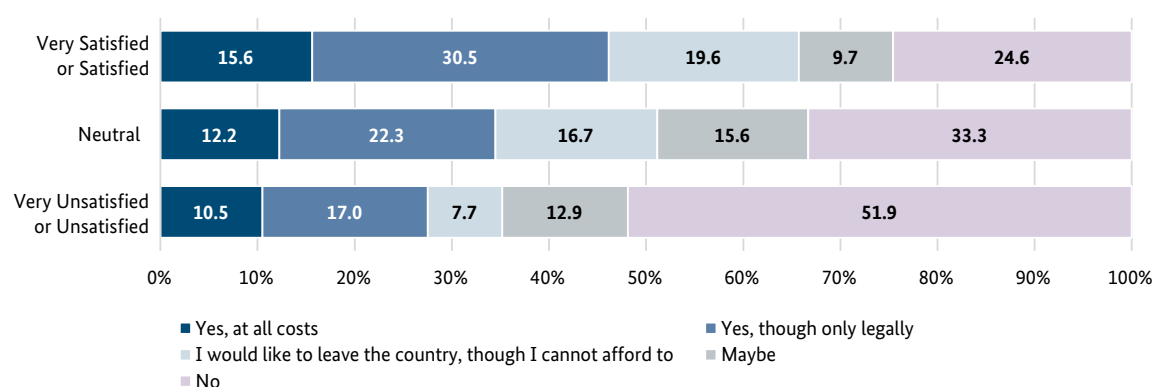
The security situation appears to be highly significant for the respondents' intention to stay. Over half of respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with the security situation rejected the idea of migrating onwards (see Figure 37). In contrast, of the respondents who fear for their safety (e.g. are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the security situation) only about one-quarter say that migrating again is out of the question.

In addition to acute financial and security considerations, other motives for migrating onwards played a role, as well. About one-third of study participants reported that better employment or educational opportunities in another region within their country of return or abroad influence their plans to migrate onwards. One-fifth would like to migrate onwards due to poor medical care (see Figure 34). Few respondents reported lack of acceptance by the local population as a reason for migrating again.

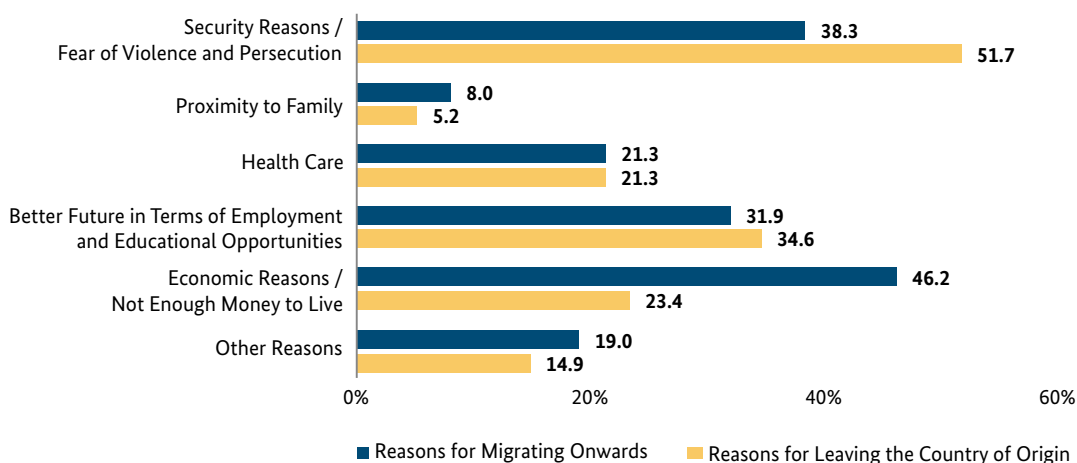
Figure 36: Intention to Migrate Onwards due to Security-Related Concerns (in Percent)


Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 697, weighted.

Note: Countries with under 20 persons wanting to leave are not listed.

Figure 37: Intention to Migrate Onwards according to Satisfaction with the Security Situation (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,254, weighted.

Figure 38: Motives for Leaving the Country of Origin and Motives for Migrating Onwards (in Percent)

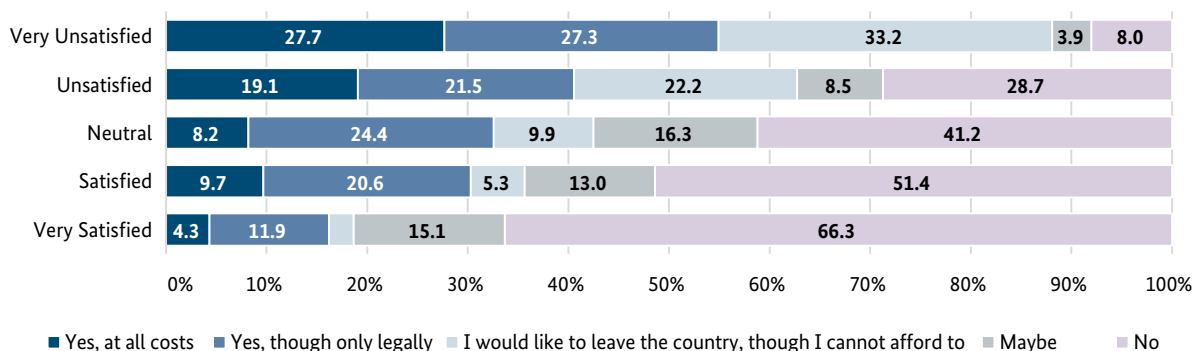
Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 695, weighted.

Of those respondents who considered onward migration, the motives that caused them to originally migrate to Germany are still very relevant (see Figure 38). However, respondents reported economically motivated migration plans more frequently after returning. In contrast, security-related reasons became less significant upon return, though respondents still reported them frequently. These shifts in the motivation to migrate may be partially explained by the fact that some respondents from areas with acute security risks returned to other regions within their country (see Chapter 4.6) and that some respondents had insufficient time to build up new networks and establish themselves in a job since their return.

7.4 Relationship Between Reintegration and Intentions to Migrate Onwards

General life satisfaction and the reintegration index are closely related to the prevalence of onward migration plans. Persons who are not well integrated into society or the economy of the respective place of return or who are more dissatisfied with their current living situation are more likely to express the wish to leave their place of return and migrate again.

Figure 39 shows how the intentions of respondents to migrate onward correlate with their life satisfaction. While almost two-thirds of respondents who were very satisfied with their current living situation would not consider migrating onward, only 8% of persons

Figure 39: Intentions to Migrate Onwards and Life Satisfaction (in Percent)

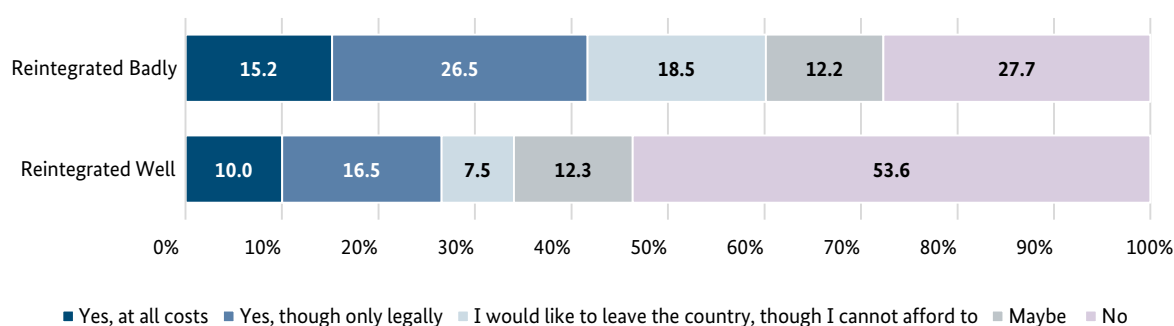
Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,254, weighted.
Values under 3% are not shown.

who said that they are very dissatisfied reported the same. Conversely, those reporting wanting to leave their current place of residence under all circumstances, and those who would like to migrate onward but are not able to do so for financial reasons, comprised the greatest percentage of those respondents who were very dissatisfied. Returnees who would only consider migrating through legal avenues comprised a larger percentage of the dissatisfied respondents.

A comparison of intentions to migrate onward with the reintegration index yields similar results (see Figure 40). Over half of the well-reintegrated respondents would not consider moving onward from their place of return. Another 12% are still unsure about onward migration. About 10% of the well-reintegrated respondents want to migrate under all circumstances. In contrast, only one-quarter of those whose reintegration was unsuccessful are against migrating again.

Although such findings suggest a very clear correlation between successful reintegration and onward migration intentions, there is still a multitude of other factors

that might influence the plans for further migration; as illustrated by the migration plans of respondents in Nigeria and Armenia. Figure 33 (see Chapter 7.1) shows that there is generally a very low tendency in both countries to migrate onwards. Considering the reintegration rates of the respondents from these countries, it seems that they have very different reasons to stay. While a large percentage of returnees to Armenia were able to reintegrate relatively well into the return community, this was only the case for a minority of respondents who returned to Nigeria (see Chapter 6.4). In the case of Nigeria, the high percentage of persons planning to stay could be partly due to the fact that cross-border migration from West Africa, concerning migration towards Central or Western Europe, is logistically very demanding, financially expensive and very dangerous. Similar reasons may apply in Afghanistan, where about half of the respondents have no intention to migrate onwards despite the comparably low reintegration rates. In both countries, a substantial portion of relatively poorly integrated respondents say that they do not want to leave the country again (Nigeria 82% and Afghanistan 41%).

Figure 40: Intentions to Migrate Onwards and Reintegration Index (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,183, weighted.

8

Assessment of the StarthilfePlus Programme

At a glance

- The overwhelming majority of respondents were satisfied with the programme. Over 80% of respondents said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the information and counselling they received, the time until departure, the organisation of the return and StarthilfePlus as a whole. The proportion of dissatisfied and very dissatisfied respondents remained in single digits.
- Most respondents learned about the programme for the first time from governmental and non-governmental organisations (43% and 18% respectively). Informal channels such as family, friends and volunteers were the first source of information for rather few respondents.
- Half of the respondents received an appointment for return counselling within two weeks. For nearly 30% of respondents, the initial counselling appointment took place within three to four weeks. Almost 20% had to wait over one month for an appointment.
- The overall structure of return assistance and of StarthilfePlus was somewhat unclear for respondents as well as counsellors. Respondents had difficulties to understand which group of beneficiaries they did belong to, which assistance amounts they could get, and which payment methods were available for them. Also, counsellors did not always understand if and how much funding individual applicants were eligible to receive within the StarthilfePlus programme.
- Almost two-thirds of respondents said that they did not know whether they had been granted other assistance in addition to StarthilfePlus, and if so, which kind. It appears that the target groups of return policies were not fully aware of the available funding opportunities and that they could not differentiate between them.
- Respondents addressed a need for further assistance beyond the StarthilfePlus programme. Employment-related support was mentioned most often. Almost 40% of the respondents reported that they would have liked assistance in the job search and 18% asked for help in establishing their own business.
- Financial support was very useful in the beginning of the reintegration phase. However, this support is not enough. The clear majority of respondents are in need of further reintegration assistance, particularly for establishing sustainable livelihoods and good future prospects.

The return assistance, provided by the federal government aims to provide return counselling and advice to ensure informed return decisions.⁶⁹ For IOM (2018a: 8) the timely access to current, unbiased and reliable information is fundamental to make an informed decision and to accept the responsibility for the return process. First and foremost, individual counselling aims to empower individuals by providing them with information on their rights and options in Germany and in the potential countries of return, as well. Knowing these options, people can decide if returning is the best alternative for them.

Another goal of return assistance from the federal government and IOM is to enable safe and dignified return (IOM 2018a: 10). Travel preparations encompass a wide variety of administrative and logistical preparations, specifically: organising all necessary documents, booking tickets and providing assistance with departure and arrival, particularly for persons with special needs such as the elderly, minors travelling alone or persons who are in poor health. The return trip should be organised in the most suitable and practical way. For example, returnees should travel commercially as this is cost-effective, saves time and also preserves the dignity and anonymity of the returnees (IOM 2018a: 10).

This chapter first addresses, how study participants gained access to the StarthilfePlus programme. It also contains information on return counselling and the comprehensibility of the information provided. Furthermore, this chapter examines how satisfied respondents were with the StarthilfePlus programme

and, from the respondents' perspective, what additional support would be important.

8.1 Access to the Programme

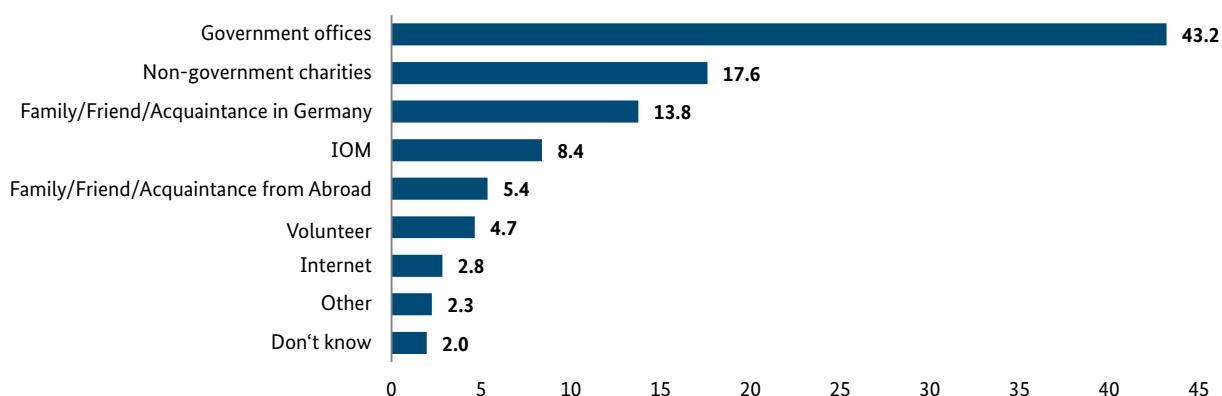
The overwhelming majority of respondents who received support through StarthilfePlus first heard about the programme through official channels in Germany (see Figure 41). Forty-three percent learned of the programme specifically through government offices and official regulatory services such as immigration offices, social services offices or the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (FOMR). Another 18% of respondents heard of the return assistance through non-governmental organisations (for example welfare organisations). About 8% of respondents learned about the programme through IOM.

A smaller percentage of respondents indicated that they first heard of the programme through informal channels, for whom family, friends and acquaintances in Germany (14%) and abroad (5%) were the most important sources of information. Another 5% of respondents first learned about the programme through volunteers and assistants. Only very few respondents (3%) came across the programme through websites or social media, such as the information portal for voluntary return (returningfromgermany.de).

The longer the time respondents have spent in Germany, the more important governmental organisations became as an initial source of information about return assistance. While just one-third of respondents learned about return assistance through governmental

⁶⁹ See online: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehr/Informationsangebote/informationsangebote-rueckkehr-node.html> (22/02/2019).

Figure 41: Channels for Accessing the StarthilfePlus Programme (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,327, weighted.

organisations in the first six months after their arrival in Germany, about half of respondents who stayed in Germany for over 30 months learned about the programme this way. In the (comparably few) cases where volunteers and other assistants provided initial information, it was apparent that this occurred frequently during the first six months following the arrival in Germany. This means that volunteers – even if very few people are reached overall – can act as trusted advisers, particularly in the beginning. In contrast, governmental organisations increasingly serve as sources of information as the duration of stay increases.

Access to timely return counselling is a very important part of the StarthilfePlus programme, particularly since returnees must apply for certain forms of support by certain deadlines (for Level 1 before completion of the asylum procedure and for Level 2 by the departure deadline, see Chapter 2.1). About half of the returnees surveyed obtained their first counselling appointment quickly, meaning within one to two weeks (see Figure 42). For nearly 30% of respondents, the initial counselling appointment took place within three to four weeks, while almost 20% had to wait for over one month for an appointment.

Long waiting times for the first counselling appointment are problematic, since those interested in returning voluntarily often decide to apply for return counselling shortly before or after their departure deadline. The experts interviewed reported that some persons required to leave sought out counselling so late that they were no longer formally eligible to apply for support. Even when persons eligible for support learn about counselling services within the period set for their departure, it is generally unrealistic for them to decide whether or not to return within a month or even within a week, which might be the case for persons with manifestly unfounded asylum applications.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ In accordance with Section 30 Para. 3 AsylVfG, an asylum application will be rejected as manifestly unfounded if it is not possible to substantiate the main points of assertions made by the applicant or if their assertions are contradictory. If the rejection is outright, the individual in question is set a deadline of 30 days

Decision-making processes sometimes involve very complex, lengthy and multi-tiered processes dependent on various factors (see Chapter 5.2). For example, it is often necessary to discuss and negotiate the decision with family members.

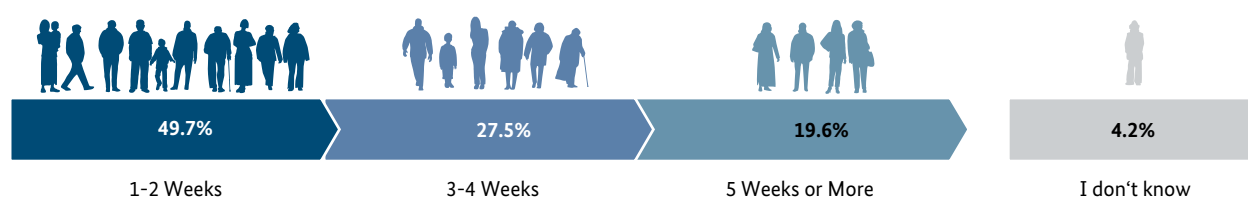
8.2 Comprehensibility of Information

Surveyed returnees as well as the counsellors indicated that the overall structure of return assistance and of the StarthilfePlus programme specifically (see Chapter 2.1) is somewhat complicated and difficult for the target group to understand. In addition to support from StarthilfePlus and REAG/GARP, some returnees were also eligible for supplementary support, like the housing support “Your Country. Your Future. Now!” that could have been applied for as a supplementary component to the StarthilfePlus programme for a few months in 2017 and 2018 (see Chapter 2.1). Beyond that, returnees can also receive support in certain regions of return from ERIN (ERRIN as of June 2018). Further, some federal states as well as municipalities offer additional separate return assistance with varying amounts of subsidies (see Chapter 1).

It is striking that almost two-thirds of the returnees surveyed for this study (63%) reported that they did not know if they had received supplementary support and if so, under which programme. Data from the applications show that 22% (n = 301) of respondents also received housing assistance through

in which to leave the country, whereas if the asylum application is rejected as “manifestly unfounded”, the deadline period for leaving is only one week. If the person does not depart voluntarily within the legal period allowed, they will be forcibly removed by the responsible immigration office. See online: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Fluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylv/AusgangVerfahren/Aufenthaltsbeendigung/aufenthaltsbeendigung-node.html> (11/04/2019).

Figure 42: Waiting Time Until First Counselling Appointment



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,287, weighted.

the supplementary programme “Your Country. Your Future. Now!”. However, only a small percentage of respondents (4%, n = 54) reported that they had made use of the supplementary component. It appears that the target groups are not fully aware of individual support measures, do not understand these measures or cannot differentiate between them.⁷¹

The counsellors surveyed reported that migrants interested in returning voluntarily often gather information on support options before the counselling meeting through (social) media, other asylum seekers and returnees, as well as social services. They often estimate the amount incorrectly because the structure is unclear to them. Incorrect information is also often spread within migrant communities. Correspondingly, counsellors must then correct this overestimation.

It can also sometimes be difficult for counsellors to understand if and how much support has been approved within the StarthilfePlus programme. The application and approval process are opaque and lack clarity. As a result, all counsellors surveyed reported refraining from quoting specific amounts of support money to persons interested in returning. Formally, the applicant must sign a waiver or declaration withdrawing from the asylum application process, which they then must submit together with the StarthilfePlus

application (see Chapter 2.2), although this is sometimes handled differently in practice. As a result, applicants must make a binding decision to leave the country and withdraw their asylum application or waive their right to legal remedy without being assured if, and how much of the support they are applying for will be approved. For persons whose decision hinges in part on the amount of support they will receive, such a reality may constitute a major obstacle to participating in the support programme.

Beyond the amount of support itself, the payment methods used in the StarthilfePlus programme are also difficult to communicate. There exists confusion among returnees, even before they leave, about who they must contact locally in order to receive the StarthilfePlus instalments and when they should get in contact (see Chapter 2.2). During return counselling, some returnees also expressed concerns that they would not receive the second instalment, which is paid out six to eight months after departure from Germany in the countries of return.

8.3 Access to the Support in the Countries of Return

As described in Chapter 2.3, some of the persons who left Germany with the StarthilfePlus programme did not collect the second instalment. Table 17 shows the different retrieval rates per survey country. While

⁷¹ Brandt et al. saw similar results (2015: 219–220) for the field of migration counselling for adult immigrants (MBE). Scientific tracking of the offer determined that very few of the persons who made use of the programme were aware of the proper name for the programme or were able to connect the support services with a certain programme (10%).

Table 17: Retrieval Rates for the Second Instalment of StarthilfePlus according to Country (2017)*

Country of Return	Departures (Quantity)	2. Instalment received (Quantity)	2. Instalment Received (Percentage)
Georgia	771	693	90%
Armenia	452	404	89%
Ukraine	917	764	83%
Azerbaijan	469	391	83%
Iraq	2,265	1,813	80%
Lebanon	267	206	77%
Pakistan	316	234	74%
Ghana	45	32	71%
Iran, Islamic Republic	730	518	71%
Nigeria	129	75	58%
Afghanistan	950	502	53%

*Preliminary numbers (status: 17/04/2019).

Source: Data from IOM, organisation's own description.

90% retrieved the second instalment in Georgia, just over half of those entitled to the second instalment appeared to have retrieved it in Afghanistan. In almost all cases, participation in the survey was contingent on retrieving the second instalment at the IOM missions (see Chapter 3.5). It was not possible to contact those who did not retrieve that instalment for this study. It is thus impossible to directly understand the reasons for why they did not retrieve their payment.

The survey asked respondents if they experienced difficulties collecting the second instalment. A little over 15% reported problems. Study participants from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan were more likely to say they had experienced problems with retrieval than others. Similarly, the retrieval rates in these countries are relatively low, which may indicate that the problems experienced by these respondents were also relevant for persons who did not retrieve the second instalment and were thus not surveyed. Respondents most frequently reported problems contacting IOM as an obstacle to retrieval (6%). Another problem was that some people lived in very remote areas and it was very difficult for them to travel to the IOM offices.

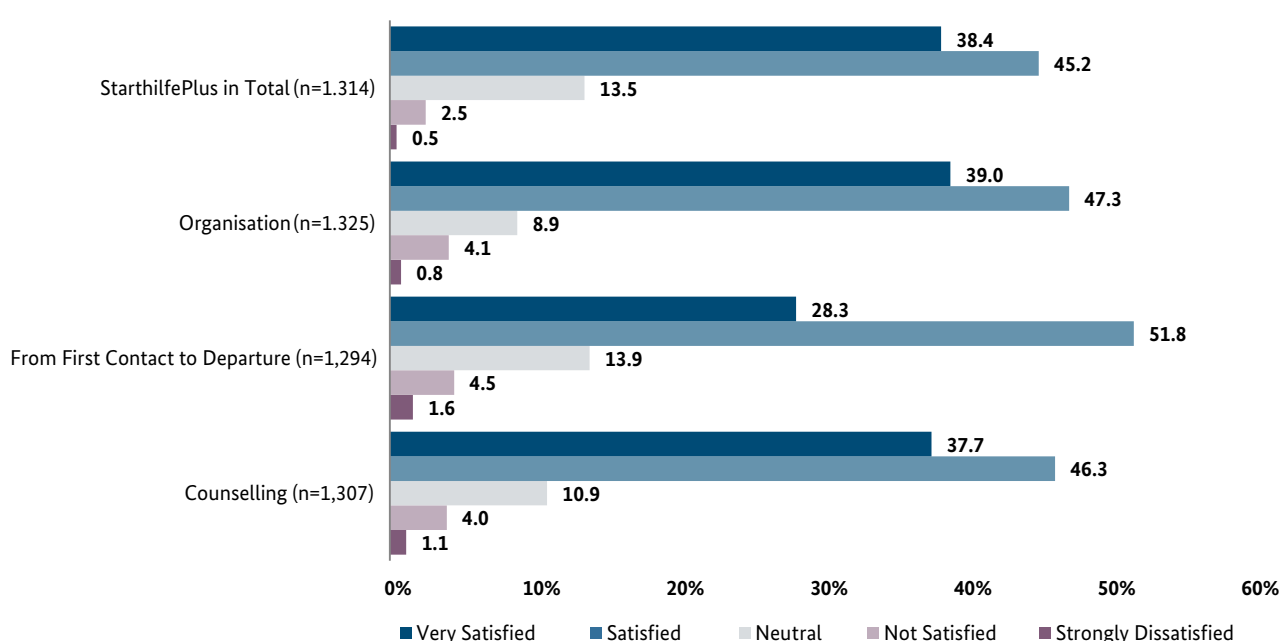
8.4 Satisfaction with the Programme

The survey asked respondents about their satisfaction with individual aspects of the programme (information and counselling, time until departure, organisation of return), as well as their satisfaction with the Start-hilfePlus programme overall. A relatively high level of satisfaction was seen among respondents in all areas. Overall, over 80% of respondents said that they were satisfied or very satisfied, while the percentage of dissatisfied and very dissatisfied respondents remained in the single digits (see Figure 43).

Satisfaction with Counselling

About 46% and 38% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the provided information and return counselling (see Figure 43). A minority had an overall negative experience with the information provided and the counselling experience: 4% were dissatisfied and 1% were very dissatisfied. Those persons who negatively assessed the information and counselling (as well as other aspects), were given the opportunity to state the reasons for their dissatisfaction in an open box. These respondents mainly criticised insufficient information about return and departure. They also complained about a lack of communication and problems with understanding, which was partly due

Figure 43: Satisfaction with the StarthilfePlus Programme (in Percent)



Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, weighted.

to insufficient translation. Furthermore, they also felt that counsellors were pressuring them to return.

There was a slight negative correlation between the satisfaction with information and counselling and the time spent waiting for the first counselling appointment: Respondents who had to wait a very long time (5 weeks or more) (see Chapter 8.1) were somewhat more dissatisfied with counselling overall than those who received a quicker appointment.

Satisfaction with the Time until Departure

The individual steps that have to be taken to prepare for departure determine the time between the first contact with the counsellor or the first counselling session and the final departure. Preparations for departure included submitting the application or reviewing their eligibility for support, obtaining travel documents if necessary and organising the journey itself (see Chapter 2.2).

Over half of the returnees surveyed for the study (52%) were satisfied with how long their return process took, while 28% said they were very satisfied (see Figure 43). Only a small proportion of respondents were dissatisfied (5%) or very dissatisfied (2%). Whether the period of time between their decision to return and their actual return is seen as appropriate, too short or too long can vary from person to person and depends on the specific situation. One important factor is whether the time available is seen as sufficient to get matters in order and prepare oneself for return. There are also persons for whom it is very important to return as soon as possible. Certain circumstances in the country of return or children needing to enter school at a certain period may result in respondents viewing a period of several months until departure as very long.

Satisfaction with the Organisation of Departure

Almost half of the respondents (47%) were satisfied with the organisation of departure, while another 39% were very satisfied (see Figure 43). Similarly, high satisfaction values were also observable for persons with medical needs, as well as elderly persons whose special situation was taken into account by the organisation. One and 4% of respondents were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the organisation respectively. A lack of information and assistance on the way to the airport left some of these persons feeling abandoned. In some cases, it was also problematic that travel plans were changed multiple times before the flight

and that the travel costs to the airport, as well as fees for extra luggage were not covered.

Overall Satisfaction with the Programme

Forty-five percent of respondents were satisfied and 38% were very satisfied with the StarthilfePlus programme as a whole (see Figure 43). Just 3% of respondents were (very) unsatisfied. There was a clear correlation between respondents' satisfaction with the programme and general life satisfaction at the time of the survey. Returnees who were more satisfied with their lives were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the programme. Similarly, persons who were not very satisfied with their lives were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with the programme. This correlation is seen even after controlling for country of return, gender, education and age (see Annex 2.4). The direction of the causality, however, cannot be determined from the data.

The finding that the majority of respondents were very satisfied with the StarthilfePlus programme shows that the persons receiving support themselves find the programme to be very meaningful and helpful. However, it is also important to consider the risk that questions concerning satisfaction with the programme may be answered more frequently with what are deemed to be socially acceptable answers as the institutions running the programme (IOM and FOMR) were conducting the survey. Yet, a comparison of the answering behaviour of respondents who answered the questionnaire at home with those who answered it in the IOM office did not yield any systematic differences in this respect (see Chapter 3.3).

That being said, culturally conditioned responses regarding satisfaction questions are a well-known phenomenon documented in cultural comparison research (Haas 2007: 6, Glösenkamp 2012: 10). However, it was not possible to identify any systematic differences with regards to the satisfaction values in the survey countries of this study.

It must still be recognised that this finding has limited applicability, since it relates only to persons participating in this study. This included mainly persons who retrieved the second support instalment. In specific countries like Afghanistan and Nigeria this applies to just over half of the programme participants (see Chapter 8.3). It is not possible to draw any conclusions from the study about the motives and satisfaction of returnees who did not retrieve the second instalment.

8.5 Other Needs for Support

Respondents could specify areas in which they wished additional support had been provided through Start-hilfePlus. In order to identify the most urgent needs, only one answer was possible. Overall, there was a relatively high need for further support than it was provided through StarthilfePlus at the time of the survey,⁷² as only less than 10% of respondents reported not requiring any further assistance (see Figure 44).

Overall Need for Support

Employment-related support was most important to respondents by far. Almost 40% said they would like assistance with their job search and another 18% prioritised help in establishing their own businesses. These answers corresponded with the findings on the reintegration status of returnees at the time of the survey as finding paid employment was one of the central challenges for the respondents regardless of the place of return (see Chapter 6.2).

The third most urgent need was financial support. One in seven respondents would have liked more money for their return. A little over 12% of respondents reported that they would like assistance in finding a place to live or acquiring property. About 4% of respondents found support in seeking out education as particularly important. Closer examination in this regard revealed that this was less about educating their children (only one of the respondents reporting a desire for educational support had school-aged children) and more about continuing one's own education.

As described in Chapter 6.5, the financial support at the beginning is definitely helpful. It helps returnees to cover costs during the initial period after they arrive at their place of return. Covering costs for daily needs with this money buys time for the returnee to get oriented and develop an individual reintegration strategy. However, the results demonstrate that respondents viewed this financial support as insufficient.

Need for Support According to Gender, Age and Country of Origin

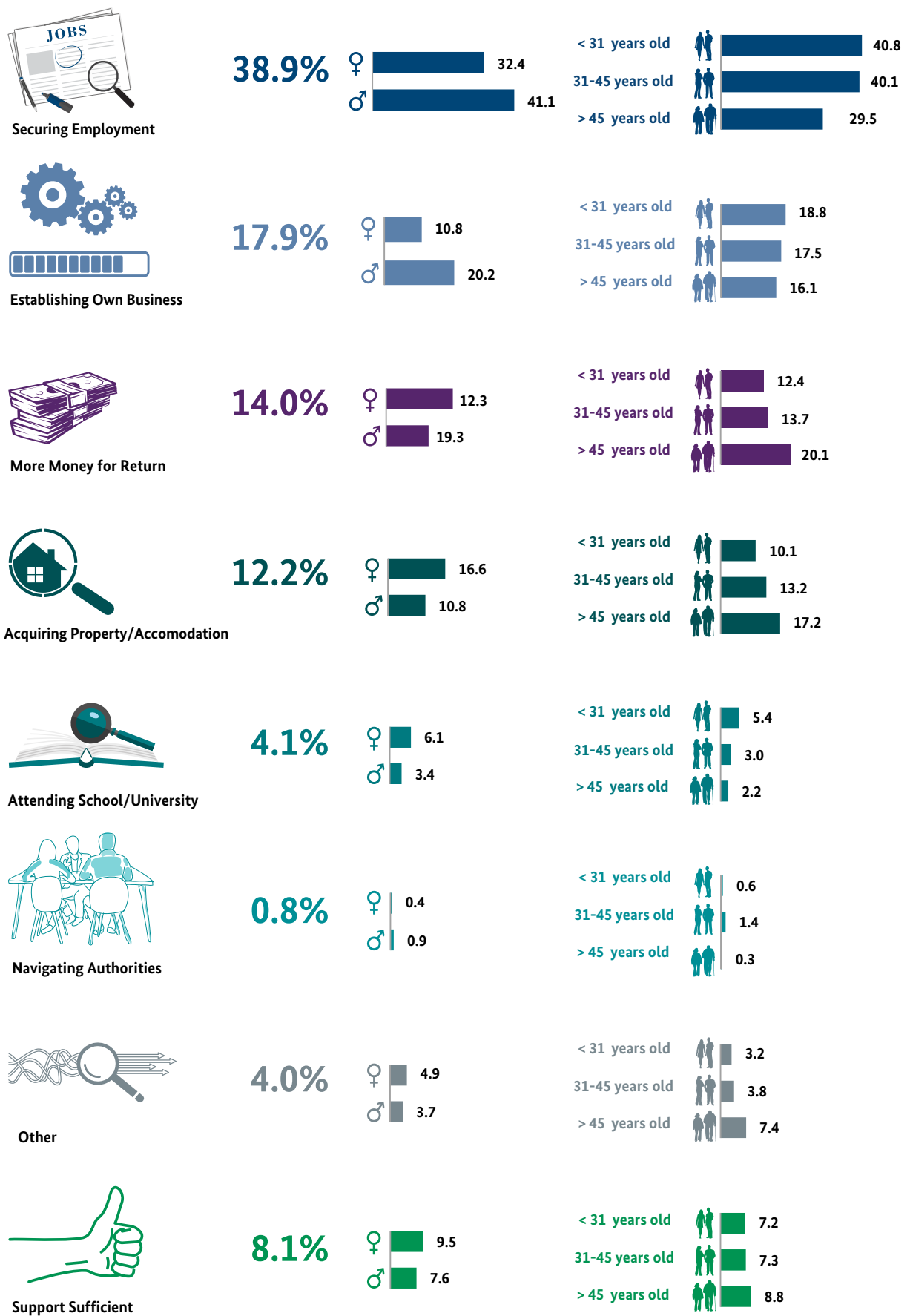
Men express the desire for support in finding a job or starting a business more often than women. For example, in both areas, around 9% more male respondents reported this need. In contrast, women valued further financial support (+7%), support in securing accommodation (+6%) and education (+3%) much more.

As expected, as age increases the need for job-related support and support securing (school or university) education decreases. In contrast, the desire for assistance in securing accommodation or acquiring property, as well as for financial support increases according to age, especially for respondents older than 45 years of age (see Figure 44).

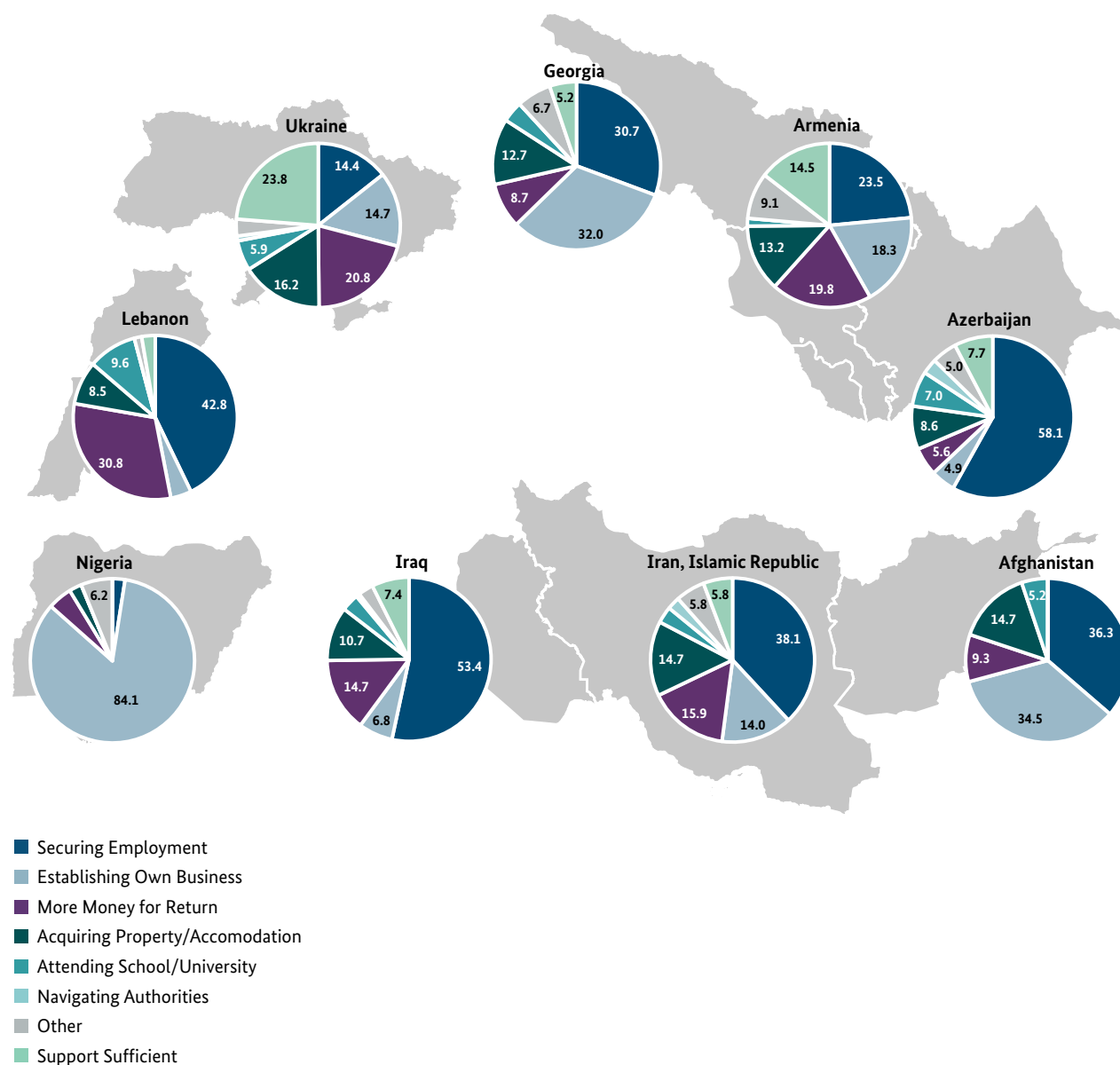
In some cases, there are striking differences between the additional needs for support per country (see Figure 45). The highest rates of respondents reporting a wish for "support with the job search" are found in Azerbaijan (58%), Iraq (53%) and Lebanon (43%). The desire for support in starting a business is expressed frequently by respondents from Nigeria (84%), followed by Afghanistan (35%) and Georgia (32%).

Respondents from Ukraine (24%) and Armenia (15%) were most likely to say that the assistance received was sufficient. In the two countries with lowest level of development, Afghanistan and Nigeria (see Chapter 3.2), none of the respondents felt that the support received was sufficient.

⁷² At the time of the study, existing programmes for return and reintegration support were already providing support services in addition to the support provided by StarthilfePlus. ERRIN, for example, or the programme Perspektive Heimat provide targeted local reintegration assistance in areas such as employment support or housing. Nonetheless, sustainable reintegration also remains dependent on the local conditions.

Figure 44: Further Needs for Support Overall and according to Gender and Age Group (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,279, weighted.

Figure 45: Further Needs for Support according to Country (in Percent)

Source: FOMR IOM Return Study, n = 1,279, weighted.

Due to the low number of valid answers (< 20), Ghana and Pakistan are not listed.

Values under 3% are not shown.

9

Summary

In light of the high number of people obliged to leave the country, the German Federal Government created the return programme StarthilfePlus in February 2017. The programme, which is run by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (FOMR) in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), grants financial support to returnees. The programme aims at motivating persons, particularly those with very low chances of success in the asylum process, to voluntarily decide to leave the country. The return decision should happen during the asylum procedure whenever possible, but no later than within the mandatory departure period. Under certain circumstances, the programme is also directed towards persons with a temporary suspension of deportation (Persons with “Duldung”) offering assistance through a transitional regulation available for a limited time.

IOM and the Research Centre of the FOMR conduct monitoring and evaluation activities for the StarthilfePlus programme. In the study, 1,339 persons who returned as part of the StarthilfePlus programme answered questions through an Internet-based standardised survey pertaining to the motivations for their return decision and the first steps they took to reintegrate. The 12 countries surveyed are those with the most returned persons receiving support through the programme.

The study is the first major survey of persons who have applied for asylum in Germany over the past several years and afterwards returned to their country of origin. Due to the difficulty of reaching the target group, the survey is not representative. However, the sample is comparable with the total population of returnees participating in the StarthilfePlus programme with respect to relevant characteristics. Therefore, the knowledge obtained is most likely relevant for a

large portion of the returnees in the StarthilfePlus programme. The results of the study facilitate the continual evidence-based development of the StarthilfePlus programme, and can inspire further return and reintegration support measures.

StarthilfePlus Participants Are Mainly Young and Male

StarthilfePlus participants returned to a total of 49 countries in the year 2017, with almost 70% of all departures to just six countries of return. The main countries of return were Iraq, the Russian Federation, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. These countries as well as another six which had comparatively high numbers of returnees from Germany were included in the survey. Only respondents from the Russian Federation were excluded due to the low response rate.

The majority of respondents stayed up to two years in Germany and lived outside of their country of origin for no longer than four years. Thus, almost all the respondents came to Germany during the increased asylum migration between 2014 and 2017. They originally left their countries of origin due to fear of violence and persecution, but also for other reasons, such as economic motivations or the prospect of a better future for their children.

Overall, StarthilfePlus participants were relatively young. In the countries surveyed, young adults between 18 and 30 years of age comprised 45% of all adult programme participants. Thus, the percentage of respondents in these age groups was high. About 43% of study participants were married, with a little over one half reporting being single. Considerably more men than women participated in both the programme as a whole and in the survey. On average,

men comprised about 75% of the persons departing to the aforementioned countries.

StarthilfePlus Mainly Reaches Persons Who Received a Negative Asylum Decision

During the first year the programme was implemented, persons receiving assistance under the temporarily existing Level U applied for the program most frequently. This included persons whose deportation has been suspended (Persons with “Duldung”), persons obliged to leave and persons who have submitted a follow-up or a second asylum application. The programme reached relatively few people in the original target group of the programme – persons whose asylum process was ongoing or who decided to return within the mandatory departure period.

The data from this survey indicates that StarthilfePlus support is particularly reaching persons who have already received a denial of their asylum application. Two-thirds of the study participants decided to return after they had received a negative asylum decision and only about one-third were still in the midst of the procedure.

Complex Structures of the Return Assistance Programmes Make the Return Decision More Difficult

The various German return assistance programmes constitute a complex structure of divergent support measures on the federal, state and municipal level with REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus among them. It appears that the returnees are not fully aware of the specific support measures, being unable to distinguish between the various options. For example, very few respondents knew which return assistance programmes they had participated in. Furthermore, the amount of payment received, as well as the payment methods are not always clear to returnees and counsellors. Since 2019, responding to the survey results, a major standardisation of federal return assistance programmes occurred.

Waiting Times for Counselling Can Make the Decision to Return More Difficult

The decision for or against returning is generally very complex as potential returnees must weigh multiple factors. For example, about 30% of respondents did not leave the country alone, indicating multiple people were involved in the decision-making process. Family members remaining behind in Germany

and in the countries of origin are often involved in the negotiation process, as well. Furthermore, the decision-making process is not linear in every case – once a decision is made, it does not necessarily have to remain the same.

Providing information and counselling can be of great help in the decision-making process. However, counselling appointments do not always occur in a timely manner. Half of the study participants received an appointment for an initial counselling session within two weeks, while nearly 30% of respondents attended their first counselling appointment within three to four weeks and almost one in five had to wait longer than one month.

Financial Return Assistance Rarely Motivates Persons to Return, but in Combination with Return Counselling, It Can Make the Final Decision Easier

The financial support provided very rarely was a relevant motive for study participants to return. If persons were thinking of returning, however, the financial support made a big difference in their final decision. For those with high travel costs, such as larger families, the funding made a significant difference in solidifying their decision.

Return counselling and information play vital roles in the decision-making process. Regardless of how long respondents had resided in Germany or their residence status, the majority of respondents reported counselling and information were relevant. The counselling sessions influenced respondents' decisions to return at least as much as the financial support did.

About one-third of the respondents made the decision to return independently of financial support and return counselling.

Lack of Prospects for Staying in Germany and Family in the Country of Origin Are the Most Important Motives to Return

Respondents reported that limited prospects to get a legal status in Germany was the most important motive for returning. This was particularly relevant for those who originated from a country with lower overall protection rates in the German asylum process. However, the legal situation was rarely the only return reason. There are generally multiple motives influencing returnees' decisions. For example, desire to be close to family in the country of origin played an important role, as well.

Additionally, respondents often reported the relatively good medical care in Germany, better prospects for their families' futures and better opportunities in the German job market as reasons speaking against returning. For some of the respondents, the fear of violence and persecution also remained relevant motives against returning. The reasons originally motivating respondents to migrate often continued to be relevant in their return decisions.

Family Is an Important Resource Within the Entire Return Process

Family in the country of origin was a main reason why respondents considered returning. Forty-two percent of respondents reported that they returned to be close to family and friends. Only very few people indicated that they were worried about returning due to possible reactions from family.

Family ties are not just an important return motive. Closeness to family and friends is also vitally important when selecting a place of return. Respondents who returned to the place where they had lived before stated that they choose the place because family and friends were living there. This was particularly the case in Armenia, Georgia, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

Contrary to the widespread assumption that returnees are viewed as "failures" and stigmatised by relatives, friends and neighbours at their places of return, respondents rarely reported being rejected by their communities. Relationships with family and friends were meaningful for returnees and provided support.

Returnees to Rural Areas and Larger Cities Sometimes Encountered Different Reintegration Conditions

The majority of the respondents lived in larger cities with populations of over 50,000 residents. In Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, there was a relatively high number of returnees who lived in smaller towns with less than 5,000 residents.

The security situation of returnees in rural regions and large cities were perceived as similar. However, structural differences were apparent elsewhere. For example, returnees to large cities tended to have better access to medical care. On the other hand, respondents in rural areas and smaller cities were more likely to benefit from their relationships with the local community.

Returnees Assume Financial Responsibility for Family Members in the Countries of Return

About two-thirds of respondents left Germany alone. Only about 30% of respondents returned as a family unit, with an average family size of three to four persons. Still, a majority of respondents were financially responsible for multiple family members at their places of return. About 60% of returnees surveyed were financially responsible not only for themselves but also for other persons in the household. The larger the family units that depend on the returnee, the more unlikely it is that their income from employment or self-employed work would cover the costs of daily life.

Financial Support Is Important for the Initial Period

The first instalment of StarthilfePlus is paid out shortly before departure, with returnees receiving the second instalment six to eight months later at the IOM missions in the respective countries of return. The financial support is extremely useful after returning, used mainly to cover daily expenses during the first few months. As most returnees were not able to earn enough money in the first few months to cover their costs of living, such support was critical to bridge the economically uncertain times and develop an individual reintegration strategy.

Even though both instalments are used mainly to cover daily expenses, the survey also shows that the second instalment was used more frequently for investments, to start a business or to pay for education.

Returnees Do not Always Pick-Up the Second Instalment of the Return Assistance

Depending on the survey country, between about 10% and 50% did not appear to retrieve their second instalment. The reasons for not retrieving the money are unknown. Some of the respondents (15%) who received the second instalment did report difficulties in retrieving it, mainly involving problems in contacting IOM. Responding to these results, IOM has dealt with these difficulties in the countries affected. Some persons living in remote areas or far distances from the local IOM office reported difficulties to reach an IOM office. Some of the persons seeking out return counselling anticipated such problems even before they left, expressing concern that they would not receive the second instalment.

Returnees Ask for Additional Support to Achieve Economic Independence

Although financial support remains very useful during the initial period, most respondents indicated that further reintegration support would be helpful, with the general agreement that it does not have to be monetary. About 40% of respondents wanted assistance with the job search, another 18% reported assistance starting their own business as the top priority. Such employment-related support was a major need for both men and women. Help in accessing housing and formal education was also considered to be important.

Respondents' generally moderate employment rates (about 39%) eight months after their return contextualizes such preoccupation with employment-related assistance. Only 15% of the study participants can live off the income earned through their employment.

Women are much less likely than men to pursue work that generates income. Only 4% of all women surveyed earned enough money to cover their daily needs.

The Security Situation Plays a Major Role in All Phases of the Return Process

Fear of violence and prosecution in the country of origin was an important motive against returning. One in five persons also chose their current place of residence because they had deemed it to be safe. This information shows the importance of security aspects for return decisions.

In most of the areas surveyed, the returnees were quite satisfied with the security situation. However, the satisfaction values differ between countries of return. Half of the respondents found the safety situation problematic in Afghanistan and Lebanon. Furthermore, almost one-third of respondents in Ukraine and Nigeria reported concerns about the security situation.

Feeling safe is an important prerequisite for returnees to remain in their chosen place of return. In addition to the difficulties earning a living, the poor security situation was one of the main reasons for persons to consider leaving their place of return.

Only Very Few Returnees Wish to Leave Their Place of Return by Any Means

About 60% of respondents would not rule out migrating again. However, just 12% of all study

participants wished to leave the place they have returned to regardless of the circumstances. Respondents with poorer scores for economic, social and structural reintegration were more willing to leave the country or their region again than those with higher scores.

Migration plans were vague. The majority of persons contemplating migrating onwards did not have a set timeframe. Some of those wanting to migrate again reported not having the financial means to do so or only wishing to do so legally.

Respondents Were Generally Very Satisfied with the StarthilfePlus Programme

The survey collected information about respondents' satisfaction with individual aspects of the programme (information and counselling, time until departure, organisation of return), as well as their satisfaction with the StarthilfePlus programme overall. Over 80% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with each aspect of the programme. The proportion of dissatisfied respondents is in the single digits. Such high satisfaction numbers demonstrate that the persons participating in the programme perceive it as being meaningful and helpful.

However, this finding has limited applicability, as it only relates to persons who participated in the survey, which consisted primarily of persons who retrieved the second financial instalment. In some countries, just over half of StarthilfePlus participants did so. The study cannot assess the satisfaction of those returnees who did not retrieve the second instalment.

10 Outlook

The main goal of this study was to obtain data on StarthilfePlus participants that is as reliable as possible. It provides information on the return motives and living conditions after returning, as well as initial steps toward reintegration. At its core are persons who have applied for asylum in Germany and afterwards returned to their countries of origin. As the study covers a relatively broad range of topics, the study aims at giving an overview of several aspects of their migration cycle.

The study clearly shows that reintegration can differ depending on gender, education, family status, as well as the place to which a person returns. However, partly due to the small number of cases in some countries, the study cannot sufficiently illuminate the differences between individual countries of return. More context-specific studies on return and reintegration are important. Deeper knowledge of local return conditions would facilitate the development of tailored support in order to better meet the needs of persons in the respective return contexts. Some current research projects are focusing on filling these gaps.⁷³

Since the majority of returnees at the time of the survey had only spent a relatively short period of time – six to eight months – at their place of return, the ability of the study to come to conclusions about the sustainability of return is very limited. Based on the IOM framework for sustainable reintegration, the study design included an option to perform a follow-up survey. About 70% of respondents agreed to be contacted again. IOM and the FOMR Research Centre will conduct a follow-up survey in 2019 and 2020.

⁷³ One example of this is the study conducted by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). The study examined the structural conditions of reintegration in specific return regions (Western Balkans, West Africa and the Middle East). See online: <https://www.bicc.de/press/press-releases/press/news/new-research-project-trajectories-of-reintegration-and-social-change-605/> (22/02/2019).

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Annex

Annex 1: Questionnaire

Legend:

IDK: I don't know

NR: No response

Your experience with the return programme 'StarthilfePlus'

You are receiving support through the 'StarthilfePlus' programme for your return from Germany. We would like to know how your experience with the programme has been.

1. How did you first hear about the 'StarthilfePlus' return programme in Germany? Through ...

- ☐ Government offices (e.g. Ausländerbehörde, Sozialamt, BAMF)
- ☐ Non-government charities (e.g. Caritas, Red Cross, church charities, AWO)
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Family/friends/acquaintances in Germany
- ☐ Family/friends/acquaintances abroad
- ☐ International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- ☐ Internet (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, returningfromgermany.de)
- ☐ Other
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

2. How long did you wait for your first appointment for information or advice about returning?

- ☐ 1–2 weeks
- ☐ 3–4 weeks
- ☐ 5 weeks or more
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

3. How strongly did this information/advice influence your decision about returning?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

How satisfied were you with ...

4. the information or counselling?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

5. the time between first contacting an adviser to your departure?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

6. the organisation of your departure from Germany?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

7. [Filter, if 4. | 5. | 6. == dissatisfied or very dissatisfied]

You have specified that you were (very) dissatisfied with X, Y and Z. Could you please explain why you were [very] dissatisfied?

If you would not like to answer this question, simply click on 'continue'.

[Offene Angabe]

- ☐ NR

8. How much money did you and your family receive **in total** for your return (through StarthilfePlus and any other support programmes)?

- ☐ €1,000-€2,000
☐ €2,000-€3,000
☐ €3,000-€4,000
☐ €4,000-€5,000
☐ €5,000 or more
☐ IDK
☐ NR

9. How much did the **total** amount of money received for your return influence your decision about returning?

- ☐ Very strongly
☐ A little
☐ Not at all
☐ IDK
☐ NR

10. What other programmes for voluntary return/reintegration did you participate in, apart from REAG/GARP and StarthilfePlus? (multiple responses possible)

- ☐ 'Dein Land, deine Zukunft. Jetzt!' ("Your country, your future. Now!")
☐ ERIN (European Reintegration Network)
☐ Other return/reintegration programmes in Germany
☐ Other reintegration programmes at the place to which you are returning
☐ IDK
☐ NR

11. What was the main thing for which you used the first instalment of StarthilfePlus – the one you received before departure at the airport in Germany?

(max. three possible responses)

I spent it on ...

- ☐ daily necessities (rent, food, clothing, medicine/medical treatment, etc.).
- ☐ my education or my children's education.
- ☐ developing my own business.
- ☐ payments to authorities (government offices, police, soldiers, etc.).
- ☐ repaying debts or loans.
- ☐ I gave/lent it to family/friends.
- ☐ I saved the money.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ NR [→go to 13]

12. [Filter if 11>1 response ; or if 11 != NR]

You have specified that you spent the first instalment of StarthilfePlus mainly on [Response 1], [Response 2] and [Response 3]. What did you spend most of the money on?

- ☐ [Response 1]
- ☐ [Response 2]
- ☐ [Response 3]
- ☐ NR

13. Did you have difficulties getting paid the **second** instalment of the StarthilfePlus programme six months after your return?

(multiple responses possible)

I had difficulties ...

- ☐ with authorities (e.g. police, military, government offices) at my return destination.
- ☐ obtaining the required documents.
- ☐ contacting IOM.
- ☐ because I live in a remote area.
- ☐ I had other difficulties.
- ☐ I haven't yet collected the second instalment and am planning to do so. [→go to 15]
- ☐ I did not have difficulties.
- ☐ NR

14. What was the main thing you spent the second instalment of StarthilfePlus on?

(max. three possible responses)

I spent it on ...

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not spent the second instalment yet. | [→go to 15] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> daily necessities (rent, food, clothing, medicine/medical treatment, etc.). | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my education or my children's education. | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> developing my own business. | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> payments to authorities (government offices, police, soldiers, etc.). | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> repaying debts or loans. | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I gave/lent it to family/friends. | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I saved the money. | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | [→go to 16] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NR | [→go to 16] |

15. [Filter, if 13=I haven't yet collected the second instalment and am planning to do so. or
if 14= I have not spent the second instalment yet]

What will you spend the second instalment of StarthilfePlus on?

(max. three possible responses)

I will spend it on ...

- ☐ daily necessities (rent, food, clothing, medicine/medical treatment, etc.).
- ☐ my education or my children's education.
- ☐ developing my own business.
- ☐ payments to authorities (government offices, police, military, etc.).
- ☐ repaying debts or loans.
- ☐ I will give/lend it to family/friends.
- ☐ I will save it.
- ☐ I will not collect the second instalment.
- ☐ NR

16. [Filter, if 10= Dein Land, Deine Zukunft. Jetzt!]

What are you using the money received in the programme 'Dein Land, deine Zukunft. Jetzt!' for?

(multiple responses possible)

- ☐ Rent
- ☐ Renovations
- ☐ Expansion of apartment/house
- ☐ Purchasing apartment/house
- ☐ Fitting out my kitchen/bathroom
- ☐ Other
- ☐ NR

17. [Filter, if 10= Dein Land, Deine Zukunft. Jetzt!]

Has the additional money from the programme 'Dein Land, deine Zukunft. Jetzt!' helped you settle in to your new place of residence?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

18. How satisfied were you with **StarthilfePlus overall?**

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

19. In which areas do you wish you had had more help in your return country?

(multiple responses possible)

I wish I had had more help ...

- ☐ when looking for a school/university.
- ☐ when looking for work.
- ☐ when looking for property/a place to live.
- ☐ when developing my own business.
- ☐ with authorities.
- ☐ I wish I had had more money for returning.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I received sufficient help.
- ☐ NR
- ☐ KA

Your decision to return

Think about your time in Germany. In the following questions, we would like to ask you why you decided to leave Germany.

20. What was your residence status in Germany at the time of deciding to return?
(multiple responses possible)

- ☐ I still had permission to stay for another ___ years and ___ months. [Number Dropdown]
- ☐ I had a Duldung (postponed deportation)
- ☐ I had to leave Germany (Ausreiseaufforderung/exit order) [→go to 22]
- ☐ NR

21. What were the main reasons **for** deciding to return?
(max. three possible responses)

- ☐ I did not want to be deported.
- ☐ I did not know if I could stay in Germany over the long term.
- ☐ I received money to return.
- ☐ I wanted to be near family or friends.
- ☐ I did not feel well in my accommodation/where I lived.
- ☐ I thought it would be easier to find work at my return destination.
- ☐ I had communication problems in Germany.
- ☐ I did not feel welcome in Germany.
- ☐ I no longer had safety fears at my return destination.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ NR

22. What reasons were there **against** deciding to return?
(max. three possible responses)

- ☐ There were no reasons not to return.
- ☐ I was afraid of violence or persecution at my return destination.
- ☐ My family/friends are in Germany/Europe.
- ☐ I had a good place to live in Germany.
- ☐ I had good chances of finding work in Germany.
- ☐ My family/children have a good future in Germany.
- ☐ Healthcare in Germany was good.
- ☐ I was afraid that my family/friends would react badly to my return.
- ☐ My family relied on money from Germany.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ NR

Your life after returning

Now we would like to know more about your current life situation after returning from Germany.

23. How large is the population of the place where you now live?

- ☐ Fewer than 5,000 inhabitants
- ☐ 5,000 to 50,000 inhabitants
- ☐ 50,000 to 500,000 inhabitants
- ☐ More than 500,000 inhabitants
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

24. Why have you chosen this place of residence?
(multiple responses possible)

- ☐ I thought this place was safe.
- ☐ I have lived here previously.
- ☐ I still had a house/apartment here or could find one easily.
- ☐ I wanted to be near family or friends.
- ☐ I thought it would be easier to find work here.
- ☐ My family/children have a good future here.
- ☐ Healthcare is good.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ NR

25. Where do you currently live?

- ☐ In a private apartment/house.
- ☐ In a shared accommodation.
- ☐ With relatives/friends.
- ☐ None of the above.
- ☐ NR

26. How many people are you currently financially responsible for?

- ☐ I am only responsible for myself. [→go to 29]
- ☐ Children ____ [Number Dropdown] [→ if Children =0 →go to 29]
- ☐ Relatives ____ [Number Dropdown]
- ☐ Other people ____ [Number Dropdown]
- ☐ NR

27. [Filter, if 26 → Children > 0]
How old are your children?

- ☐ 0–5 years ____ [Number Dropdown]
- ☐ 6–15 years ____ [Number Dropdown]
- ☐ 16 years or older ____ [Number Dropdown]
- ☐ NR

28. [Filter, if 26 → Children > 0 & 27→6-15 years >0]
How many of your children go to school?

- ☐ All of my children go to school.
- ☐ ____ [Number Dropdown] of my children go to school.
- ☐ My children do not attend school at the moment.
- ☐ NR

29. Do you have access to a doctor when you are sick where you live?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

30. What is your current occupation?
(multiple answers possible)

- ☐ I am employed full-time by an employer.
- ☐ I am self-employed.
- ☐ I work irregularly/casually for various employers.
- ☐ I am a pensioner. [→ go to 32]
- ☐ I take care of the home and family. [→ go to 32]
- ☐ I am currently unemployed. [→ go to 32]
- ☐ I am in study or training. [→ go to 32]
- ☐ Other (e.g. military service)
- ☐ NR

31. [Filter, if 30== full-time employed, self-employed or irregularly]
Is your income from employment sufficient to cover your living costs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ NR

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very satisfied' and 5 'very dissatisfied', how satisfied are you right now with ...

32. your relationship to family and friends?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

33. relationships in your community?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

34. the current security situation in your region?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

35. How satisfied are you with your life in general at the moment?

- ☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ neutral ☐ dissatisfied ☐ very dissatisfied ☐ NR

36. Are you thinking about moving to another region or a different country?

- ☐ Yes, at all costs. [→ go to 37]
- ☐ Yes, though only legally. [→ go to 37]
- ☐ I would like to leave the country, though I cannot afford to. [→ go to 37]
- ☐ No [→ go to 40]
- ☐ Maybe [→ go to 37]
- ☐ NR [→ go to 40]

37. Where are you considering moving to?

- ☐ To another region within this country.
- ☐ To another country, namely _____ [Dropdown]
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

38. Why do you want to move?
(multiple responses possible)

- ☐ I don't feel safe here.
- ☐ The people living here don't accept me.
- ☐ I want to be near my family.
- ☐ I/my children have better work/education opportunities elsewhere.
- ☐ I find the healthcare here bad.
- ☐ My money isn't enough for daily life.
- ☐ Other reasons
- ☐ NR

39. When do you plan to move?

- ☐ Within the next month.
- ☐ Within the next three months.
- ☐ Within the next year.
- ☐ Sometime in the future.
- ☐ NR

Your life before leaving Germany

So that we can better understand your responses, we would like to learn some more about your life before you came to Germany and what your life in Germany was like.

40. For how long did you go to school outside of Germany?
(If you can't remember the exact answer, please guess.)

- ☐ I didn't attend school. [→ go to 42]
- ☐ I went to school for ____ year(s).
- ☐ NR [→ go to 42]

41. Have you studied at a technical college or university outside of Germany?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, I have a bachelor's or master's degree.
- ☐ Yes, I have a doctorate degree.
- ☐ Yes, I have studied though didn't graduate.
- ☐ NR

42. Were you trained in an occupation before you came to Germany?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, I received on-the-job training.
- ☐ Yes, I went to a vocational school.
- ☐ Yes, though I stopped training before it was completed.
- ☐ NR

Your journey to Germany

43. Between leaving your country of origin and arriving in Germany, how much time did you spend travelling?

- ☐ ___ years and ___ months [each Number Dropdown]
- ☐ NR

44. Who did you arrive in Germany with?
(multiple responses possible)

- ☐ Alone
- ☐ Spouse, fiancé(e), partner
- ☐ Child(ren)
- ☐ Parents or other relatives
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Other people
- ☐ NR

45. Why did you leave your country of origin?
(multiple responses possible)

- ☐ I was afraid of violence or persecution.
- ☐ I thought I could make more money in Germany.
- ☐ I wanted to join my family.
- ☐ I wanted a better future for my children.
- ☐ I wanted better healthcare.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ NR

Your life in Germany

46. What sort of accommodation did you last live in?

- ☐ Shared accommodation, e.g. asylum seeker reception centre, refugee home, emergency accommodation
- ☐ Private residence
- ☐ Stayed with a family
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ NR

47. Did you go to school/university in Germany?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [→ go to 49]
- ☐ NR [→ go to 49]

48. Did you complete school/university studies in Germany?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ NR

49. Did you gain work experience in Germany?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [→ go to 52]
- ☐ NR [→ go to 52]

50. Did you get a vocational qualification in Germany?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ NR

51. [Filter, if 49 == yes & 30== full-time employed, self-employed or irregularly]

Did the work experience you gained in Germany help you after returning from Germany?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

52. How is your knowledge of the **German** language?

- ☐ No knowledge
- ☐ Basic knowledge
- ☐ Good knowledge
- ☐ Fluent
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

53. [Filter, if 52!=No knowledge/NR]

Were your German skills useful after returning?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ IDK
- ☐ NR

Final questions

54. Did you fill out this questionnaire by yourself or did someone help you?

- ☐ Filled out by myself
- ☐ IOM employee helped me
- ☐ Family/friends helped me
- ☐ NR

55. Where did you complete this questionnaire?

- ☐ In my apartment/house or at my accommodation
- ☐ At my friend's/relative's/acquaintance's place
- ☐ IOM office
- ☐ Public place (university, library, cafe, etc.)
- ☐ Other place
- ☐ NR

56. Do you give your permission for us (IOM and BAMF research centre) to contact you again about another survey on return/reintegration at a later point in time?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Thank you for participating!

57. Please enter your mobile phone number so that we can send you your phone credit. After you send this questionnaire, your phone number will be immediately separated from the rest of your responses so that you remain anonymous.

____ [Country with Countrycode, Dropdown] _____ [open field]

Annex 2: Regression Tables

Annex 2.1: Regression Table of Influence on Return Assistance and Counselling⁷⁴

VARIABLES	(1) Money influences the return decision (no/yes)	(2) Information influences the return decision (no/yes)
Gender (male)	0,031 (0,162)	0,169 (0,115)
Age in years	0,001 (0,008)	0,001 (0,007)
Formal education (Ref.: no education)		
Little form. education	0,098 (0,719)	0,026 (0,350)
Moderate form. education	0,451 (0,410)	0,214 (0,248)
High level of form. education	0,099 (0,361)	0,103 (0,176)
No answer	-0,191 (0,282)	-0,397** (0,191)
Marital status (Ref.: single)		
Married	0,037 (0,200)	0,141 (0,183)
Other marital status	0,119 (0,313)	0,145 (0,388)
Number of children	-0,008 (0,043)	-0,019 (0,087)
Residence duration in Germany in years	0,032 (0,026)	-0,008 (0,014)
Left Germany alone (yes)	-0,405*** (0,083)	-0,242 (0,160)
Financ. return assistance in Euro (adjusted for purchasing power)	0,000 (0,000)	0,000 (0,000)
Constant	0,044 (1,461)	0,044 (0,450)
Observations	1.196	1.212
Pseudo-R ²	0.068	0.050

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

⁷⁴ Logistic regression models were used for regressions with binary dependent variables. Since regression models are only intended as so-called shadow controls, linear regression models (OLS) were used due to their ease of interpretation for metric dependent variables. All regressions were calculated with standard errors clustered at country level and using a country dummy. This is not shown in the regression tables for clarity reasons.

Annex 2.2: Regression Table of Employment After Return⁷⁵

VARIABLES	Employment after return (no/yes)
Worked in Germany (no)	-0,083
German knowledge (Ref: no knowledge)	(0,166)
Basic knowledge	0.268* (0,159)
Good knowledge	-0,048 (0,321)
Fluent	0,421 (0,406)
I don't know	-0,195 (0,542)
Gender (male)	1,198*** (0,188)
Age in years	-0,021*** (0,006)
Formal education (Ref.: no education) Little form. education	0,214* (0,120)
Moderate form. education	0,196 (0,276)
High level of form. education	0,092 (0,218)
No answer	0,269 (0,208)
Number of residents in the return city (Ref. less than 5,000 residents)	
5,000 - 50,000 residents	0.126 (0,193)
50,000 - 500,000 residents	0,010 (0,257)
More than 500,000 residents	0,005 (0,165)
Size of the city of residence unknown	-0,359 (0,387)
Marital status (Ref.: single) Married	0,252* (0,133)
Other marital status	0,566 (0,357)
Time outside of Germany in years	-0,044 (0,050)
Time in the return country in days	0,001 (0,001)
Constant	-2,405*** (0,586)
Observations	1.138
Pseudo R ²	0.078

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

⁷⁵ All regressions were calculated with standard errors clustered at country level and a country dummy. This is not shown in the regression tables for clarity reasons.

Annex 2.3: Regression Table of General Life Satisfaction and Reintegration Index⁷⁶

VARIABLES	(1) General life satisfaction (1-5)	(2) Reintegration index (0-100)
Age in years	-0,006 (0,004)	-0,162* (0,077)
Gender (male)	-0,195	6.274**
Formal education (Ref.: no education)	(0,118)	(2,137)
Little form. education	0,226* (0,104)	2,883 (6,425)
Moderate form. education	0,209 (0,140)	7.335** (2,703)
High level of form. education	0,304** (0,104)	3,998 (5,085)
No answer	0,184 (0,105)	5.972** (2,515)
Number of children	-0,024 (0,029)	0,474 (0,586)
Family size	-0,019	-0,314
Marital status (Ref.: single)	(0,026)	(1,387)
Married	0,168 (0,116)	0,759 (4,457)
Other marital status	0,066	0,296
Income from work enough to live (Ref. enough to live)	(0,151)	(5,542)
Not enough	-0,625*** (0,065)	
No work	-0,917*** (0,115)	
No answer	-0,512**	
Number of residents in the return city (Ref. less than 5,000 residents)	(0,213)	
5,000 - 50,000 residents	-0,178 (0,141)	-1,627 (3,534)
50,000 - 500,000 residents	-0,240 (0,142)	-2,913 (4,128)
More than 500,000 residents	-0,193 (0,135)	-3,350 (2,519)
Size of the city of residence unknown	-0,223** (0,087)	-11,986*** (2,648)
Accommodation in Germany (Ref.: private residence)	-0,215***	-5,793***
Shared accommodation	(0,061)	(1,406)
With friends/relatives	-0,216* (0,112)	-11,953*** (2,987)
Other accommodation	-0,158 (0,127)	-14,877*** (4,212)
Time outside of Germany in years	0,005 (0,011)	-0,241 (0,443)

⁷⁶ All regressions were calculated with standard errors clustered at country level and a country dummy. This is not shown in the regression tables for clarity reasons.

VARIABLES	(1) General life satisfaction (1-5)	(2) Reintegration index (0-100)
Time in the return country in days	-0,001 (0,001)	-0,005 (0,014)
Access to doctor (yes)	0,549*** (0,118)	
Constant	4,261*** (0,365)	65,265*** (4,782)
Observations	1,160	1.048
R ² (corr.)	0,227	0,138

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Annex 2.4: Regression Table of Satisfaction with StarthilfePlus as a Whole⁷⁷

VARIABLES	Satisfaction with StarthilfePlus (1-5)
Life satisfaction in general	0,104 ** (0,038)
Waiting time for counselling appointment (Ref.: 1 - 2 weeks)	
3 - 4 weeks	-0,027 (0,056)
5 weeks or more	-0,054 (0,076)
I don't know	-0,221 (0,167)
Gender (male)	-0,006 (0,054)
Formal education (Ref.: no education)	
Little form. education	0,026 (0,084)
Moderate form. education	-0,018 (0,092)
High level of form. education	-0,062 (0,054)
No answer	0,034 (0,099)
Age in years	0,001 (0,004)
Time in the return country in days	-0,001* (0,001)
Financ. return assistance in Euro (adjusted for purchasing power)	-0,000 (0,000)
Constant	4,271*** (0,470)
Observations	1.234
R ² (corr.)	0,118

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

⁷⁷ All regressions were calculated with standard errors clustered at country level and a country dummy. This is not shown in the regression tables for clarity reasons.

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