

AFGHANS IN IRAN: MIGRATION PATTERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران: الگوها و تمایلات مهاجرت

Afgaanit Iranissa: muuttoliike ja muuttohalukkuus

Afghans in Iran: Migration Patterns and Aspirations

المهاجرون الأفغان في إيران: أنماط الهجرة ودوافعها

Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Davood Eyvazlu & Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh

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Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Davood Eyvazlu
& Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh

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University of Turku
Department of Geography and Geology
Division of Geography



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research project

The research project *Afghans in Iran: Migration Patterns and Aspirations* focuses on migration patterns and aspirations of the Afghan population in the Islamic Republic of Iran (later, Iran). In addition, the national and international policies and contexts are discussed related to this migration.

During the past few decades, Iran has become a key area hosting Afghans. Through the years, the number has been smaller and larger than 3 million and has consisted of people with different legal statuses in Iran, including registered refugees recognized by the government of Iran and the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). In the early 2000s, the number was approximately one million, and this official number (951,142 Afghans) has remained without many changes for more than one decade (UNHCR 2019). Globally, Iran is one of the top countries hosting refugees.

Other Afghans also legally reside in Iran. Some are students or employees in various activities. Their movement to Iran is a common global example of migration from a poorer country to a wealthier neighbouring country. In recent years, many former Afghan refugees in Iran have changed their statuses to migrants with residence permits. There are also many legally residing Afghans who remain outside the active labour market, for example, taking care of their children and having an already advanced age. Usually, all these residents need an Afghan passport and a visa to remain in Iran. The number of Afghans with passport and valid visa in Iran has varied during the 2010s, but according to Iranian and Afghan authorities, official estimations are approximately half a million (450,000) persons (UNHCR 2018, 27), depending on the year and circumstances, as we will explain in detail in Chapter 2.

There are also Afghans who stay in Iran without proper permission to do so. Some of them do not bother to start the administrative processes to get work-related visas and pay for such processes. Others do not possess Afghan passports or other required documents needed for obtaining visas. There are also Afghans who enter Iran knowing they will never get visas to reside or work in Iran. These irregular Afghan migrants are many kinds of people from seasonal workers in agriculture to low-skilled labourers in specific economic activities, such as construction and clothing, as well as and high-skilled migrants in specific fields. Among irregular Afghans are also people who conduct activities in the grey shadows of societies. Their activities would not be tolerated by the Iranian authorities or even by the legally residing Afghan population in Iran. In total, the amount of irregular Afghan migrants in Iran has been estimated to be more than one and half a million (1.5–2 million Afghans, see IOM & UNHCR 2019)—more in the high season of agriculture and less in winter.

The research about Afghans in Iran uses empirical field material collected in Iran in October 2017 and in June–September 2019. Furthermore, information from earlier studies and policy documents regarding Afghans in Iran are utilized. This report is part of a broader research about urbanization and migration in Iran. The first report, based on the fieldwork in 2017, focused on Afghan migrants in less-central areas, including refugee guest towns (refugee settlements), and rural areas in the Kerman, Razavi Khorasan and Khuzestan provinces (see Jauhiainen & Eyvazlu 2018).

The research in 2017 was conducted in cooperation between the University of Turku (UTU, Finland) and the Shahid Beheshti University (Iran). The research in 2019 was conducted in cooperation between UTU and the Sharif Policy Research Institute's Iran Migration Observatory at the Sharif University of Technology (SPRI, Iran). The main researchers were Professor Jussi S. Jauhiainen (UTU), Dr. Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh (SPRI) and Dr. Davood Eyvazlu (SPRI). In addition, research assistants were engaged with the collection, processing and analysis of the material. In particular, MA Ekaterina Vorobeva (UTU) conducted analyses for this research report.

To conduct the research in 2019 in Iran, the important support from Dean of the Sharif Policy Research Institute Dr. Ali Maleki and the International Affairs Office of SUT is acknowledged, as well as the financial support from the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland (research consortium URMI). In addition, important support for the fieldwork was received from several institutes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including IMA (NGO in Isfahan City), AVA (Afghan Voice News Agency) and Tebyan (Socio-cultural Center, Mashhad Office). The Geography Section at UTU contributed financially to the analysis and publication of the research. The authors are thankful to all the people who responded to our survey and let us interview them. This research report briefly illustrates the key findings from the survey, especially regarding migration patterns and the aspirations of Afghans. However, detailed analyses will continue.

The research results and conclusions presented derive from the authors, as it is the case always in the academic research, and therefore they do not necessarily represent the broader viewpoints of their background institutions or those organizations that were interviewed during the research. Afghans in Iran responded according to their own views; the results indicate both their perspectives and our interpretation of them.

1.2 Research questions, material and methods

The main questions of the research are:

1. What have been the migration patterns by Afghans in Iran?

2. What are the migration aspirations by Afghans in Iran—in detail those of refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants—as regard migration in Iran, to Afghanistan and to third countries?

The research report is based on our empirical field research about Afghans in Iran in 2017 and 2019 and on earlier studies and information about Afghan migration and populations in Iran (e.g., Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2005; Hugo et al. 2012; Mahmoudian & Ghassemi-Ardahaee 2014; Abbasi-Shavazi & Sadeghi 2015; Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2016; UNHCR 2017b; Grawert & Mielke 2018; and Jauhiainen & Eyvazlu 2018).

The empirical material from the Kerman, Razavi Khorasan and Khuzestan provinces was collected in October 2017 and from the Tehran, Kerman, Isfahan and Mashhad urban regions from June–September 2019. In 2017, the main focus was on guest settlements, rural areas and semi-urban areas. In 2019, the main focus was on larger urban areas and neighbourhoods in the core and periphery of larger cities.

The notion of guest settlements requires a small explanation. In Iran, the specific settlements for refugees (in Farsi مهمانشهر) are usually translated in English as ‘guest cities.’ These locations are rather small and compact areas, up to a few square kilometres, hosting up to a few thousand Afghan refugees and usually substantially less people. The access to these sites and the residency are regulated by the Iranian authorities. Over the years, these sites have been called by various names, including refugee camps. In this publication, the term ‘guest settlements’ is used for these sites.

In the field research, a survey in the Farsi language was utilized. In 2017, the survey comprised of 79 questions, of which 50 were structural, 17 were semi-open and 12 were open questions. In 2019, most of the 79 survey questions were same. However, a small modification to the questionnaire was made to include the most recent changes in Iran. In the end, the survey had 42 structural, 12 semi-open and 25 open questions.

The survey was responded in total by 2,009 Afghans. In 2017, 644 persons (at least 15 years old) with Afghan background responded to the survey. Of the participants, 546 (85%) lived in one of the four studied guest settlements of Bani Najjar, Bardsir, Rafsanjan and Torbat-e-Jam, and the remaining 98 (15%) lived in urban areas and villages in the provinces of Kerman and Razavi Khorasan (Figure 1.1). In 2019, 1,365 persons (at least 15 years old) with Afghan background responded to the survey. Of the participants, 590 (43% of total respondents) were from Tehran, 240 (18%) from Mashhad, 346 (25%) from Isfahan and 189 (14%) from Kerman. More precisely, the Afghan migrant respondents in the Tehran province lived in the Tehran City and several other areas (Shahr-e Rey, Qarchak, Pishva, Varamin, Pakdasht, Rudehen, Islam Shahr and Shahriar regions) in the Tehran metropolitan area. In Mashhad City, surveys were conducted in

several neighbourhoods, such as Golshahr, Tollab, Panjtan. In Isfahan, surveys were conducted in several neighbourhoods in the city, such as Zeinabiye, Hasseh, Sabzeh Meidan, as well as in an industrial area in the north of Isfahan City and in several metropolitan areas of Isfahan City, such as Rahnan, Dolat Abad, Qahjavarestan, Marchin. In Kerman, the respondents were from several neighbourhoods, such as Sar-Asiyab, Sarbaz, Modiriyat as well as in the Sharf-Abad semi-urban area in the northwest of Kerman City (Figure 1.1).

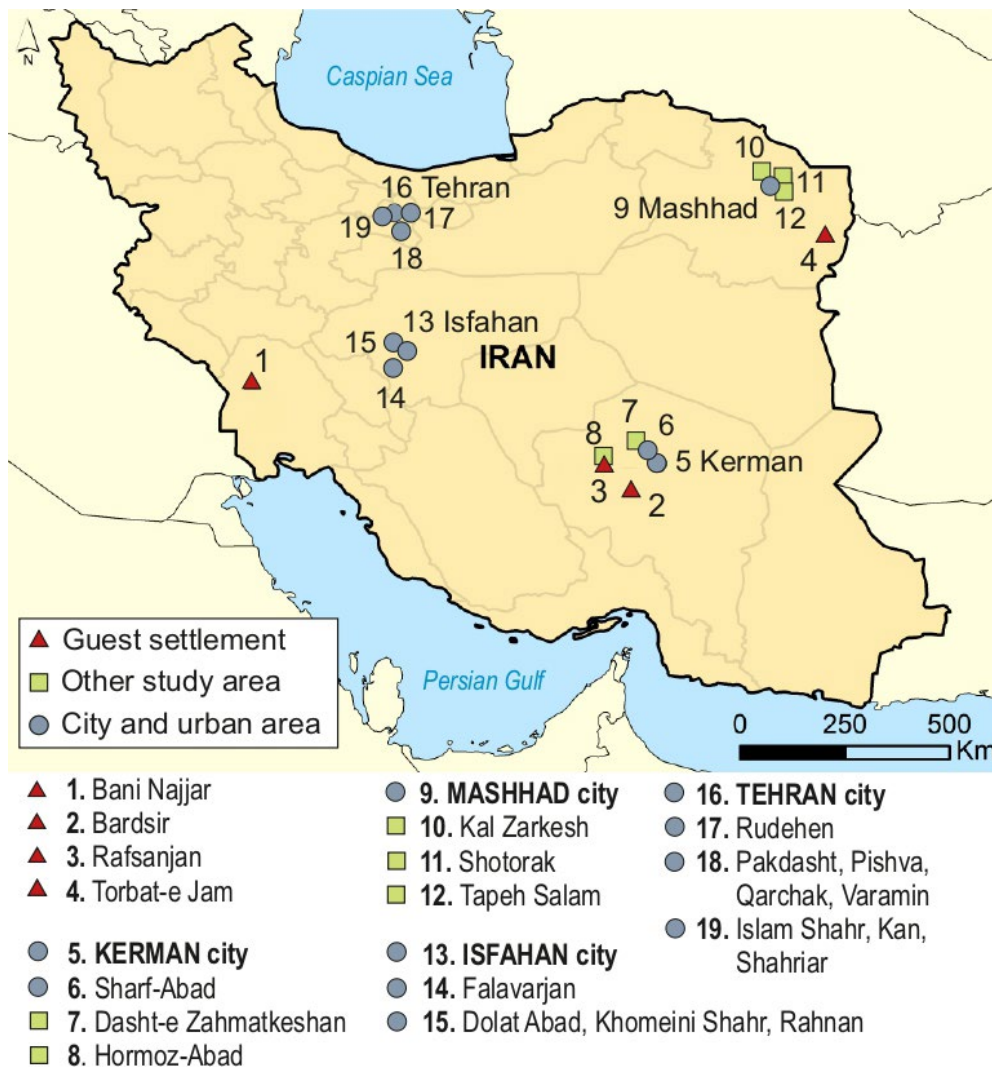


Figure 1.1. Study areas in Iran.

The research ethics issues were followed rigorously. All survey respondents remained anonymous, and they did not become identifiable. The scope and ethical background of the research were explained on the first page of the question-

naire. If the person agreed, then the questionnaire was provided to be filled. If necessary, a pen was also given. If the person was not willing, he or she was not pressured to take part in the research. The person could also withdraw from filling the questionnaire at any moment he or she wished or to leave unanswered the questions he or she did not want to answer.

Besides the survey, interviews were also conducted. During the fieldwork in 2017, 72 Afghan refugees and irregular migrants were interviewed in different sites of the study areas. Each interview took 5–20 minutes. Interviews had themes that were connected to the survey and facilitated a more in-depth understanding of the issues. In 2019, interviews were conducted with 44 Afghans in Iran. The interviewees were active in Afghan-related sociocultural and economic issues in Iran, such as students, businesspersons, NGO managers, et cetera. The interview topics took into account the respondents' backgrounds and covered different aspects of the Afghan migrants' lives in Iran. In the interviews, the names of the interviewed were sometimes known, especially by the organizations. However, this report does not provide such information to strictly respect confidentiality and anonymity.

Furthermore, in 2017, interviews were conducted with 54 official stakeholders related to Afghan refugees and irregular migrants. These included regional authorities, such as representatives of the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA; located in Razavi Khorasan and Khuzestan) of the Ministry of Interior and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, office located in Mashhad); public authorities in districts, municipalities and villages within the study areas; managers and council members in the four studied guest settlements; other public authorities; and private-sector representatives. All respondents are thanked for helping us.

Following the fieldwork, all survey responses were coded directly or through the N-Vivo program, and then inserted into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) program, and a database was created. The data were analysed quantitatively with descriptive statistics and cross tables. The interviews were analysed qualitatively in the N-Vivo program with content analysis. The research assistants are thanked for their help in the analyses, especially MA Ekaterina Vorobeva (UTU).

1.3 Migration-related concepts

As mentioned above and as will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Afghans in Iran consist of many kinds of people. In general, Afghans are considered immigrants in Iran (i.e., people who do not belong to the titular nation, Iranians). Some of them were born in Afghanistan and migrated to Iran, but many were born in Iran and lived in Iran for their entire lives. There are already several generations of Afghans in Iran. Nevertheless, they are considered immigrants—or at least people with an immigration background.

Migration means a permanent change of locality (i.e., moving from one place in which one lives to another place to live there for a longer period), usually for more than one year. Globally, most migration takes place due to economic, family or study reasons, and this *voluntary migration* is influenced by pushing and pulling factors. Nevertheless, there is also *forced migration*, in which the migrant is obliged to leave his or her place of residence because of insecurity and hopelessness about continuing to live there.

In practice, the contemporary migration types are increasingly mixed (see Scheel & Squire 2014). The earlier rigid division between voluntary and forced dimensions of migration has blurred, reflecting the spectrum of the experiences of the migrants. To leave or remain is a very complex issue among migrants and those seeking migration. In addition, while the initial start can be voluntary (or forced), the subsequent choices along the migration journey(s), consisting of stages of mobility and immobility, might be of different character than the initial choice (Olsaretti 1998; Collyer 2007; Erdal & Oeppen 2018). Forced and voluntary are poles of a continuum with economic, political, environmental and social factors shaping people's decisions to migrate. In addition, people with different migration reasons often use the same routes (Scheel & Squire 2014).

Similarly, the factors influencing people's migration decisions and migration processes combine to become various drivers that enable and constrain the activities of social actors (i.e., individual migrant's freedom of choice within the social environment and structural conditions). The drivers shape the broader context within which the migrants' aspirations and desires to migrate are formed and in which people become (or do not become) migrants (i.e., they migrate or remain immobile). Despite some commonalities in details, the drivers operate differently in different locations, timeframes and scales (Van Hear et al. 2018). There are 'root causes' (both real and perceived push and pull factors) for migration, such as social and political conditions inducing migration, and more nuanced mechanisms that produce migration outcomes (Carling & Talleraas 2016).

Usually, the place of residence and its change require a formal registration by the authorities (i.e., the formal change of one's official street address). The actualization of individual migration leads into a *migration pattern*. While migration patterns can be identified and discussed as regards an entire population, such as Afghans in Iran, migration is diverse when looking at individual levels in detail, as well as inside the whole population. Various background factors (gender, education, skills, family and employment status, as well as local, national and international contexts and structures, are influences.

Migration has evolved in the early 21st century, resulting in various kinds of mobility that no longer easily fit the traditional definition of migration as a permanent change of residence. People might simultaneously live and share their main activities in many places. They might also move more often than just once

per year and remain undefined periods in one place. In addition, not all people register their changes of residence. Therefore, it is less and less possible to cover migration by following *regular migration*, which is the formal registered migration based on changes in an individual's formal registration in one place (and address where one is registered and lives).

An increasing share of migration is *irregular migration*, in which the authorities are not (entirely) aware of the mobility of people. An irregular migrant is a person who resides in a country without the full legal right to do so and whose presence the country's authorities do not accept: the entry or the stay has become unauthorized. International irregular migration means people cross the border of the destination country without the proper consent of the authorities or the legal entry becomes unauthorized residency because of breaking the rules of stay. These irregular migrants are thus, in some aspects, illegally in the territory of a foreign country. These migrants are called by various terms, such as illegal migrants, unauthorized migrants, undocumented migrants, clandestine migrants, et cetera (Gonzales 2019). Irregular migration is a permanent phenomenon in all countries, and it cannot be entirely avoided. The illegality of such migration is the result of changing policies and practices.

Migration aspirations and motivations for migration are also becoming increasingly blurred. Earlier, it was easier to recognize the individual's main (and often only) motivation to migrate (leaving is better than staying) and to categorize the migrants along such motivations. The subjects' relation to migration possibilities were economic (such as employment), political (such as asylum) or social (such as family-related). The categorized determinants, causes or drivers (with nuanced differences in the meaning of these words) can also be amended with other aspects, for example, environmental causes (such as drought, pollution, etc.) that usually connect to some of the earlier mentioned main aspects. People, thus, seek migration connected to real and imagined push and pull factors. Nowadays, various pushing (triggering to leave one's country) and pulling (triggering to arrive at another country) factors combine. Economic, social and political issues are increasingly connected with aspirations resulting in *mixed migration* (van Hear et al. 2018). Collins (2018) argued an individual's interest in migration only exists within a particular social context. Mobility, as such, is rarely the main motivation to migrate, but the migration is a tool to achieve something when the actual mobility ends (Carling & Collins 2018).

Currently, *asylum-related migration* mix many real and perceived political, economic and social issues at micro-, meso- and macro-levels. The above-mentioned blurring of reasons and aspirations is also seen in the international migration of Afghans. Many Afghans who arrive at the EU ask for asylum (i.e., political reason), but they have many kinds of economic, social and environmental reasons, and these are not all strictly related to political threads. These Afghans

can be defined as asylum-related migrants, that is, people who have left their country of origin (Afghanistan) or permanent residence (Iran) due to political, economic and/or social (such as religious, cultural and ethnic aspects) insecurity to seek safety in another country (see Jauhiainen et al. 2019). The current definitions of migrants, irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are dichotomized and reinforce the problematic foundations of these categories (Crawley & Skleparis 2018).

Furthermore, in some cases migrants may express one reason over another because of the potential advantage. For example, many non-EU migrants, such as Afghans, who arrive at the EU ask for asylum because they cannot directly get a visa, residence permit or working permit. An asylum seeker, a person who is officially seeking asylum, safety and protection from authorities of a country other than that of his or her nationality or habitual residence, has the right to remain in that country. Usually she or he receives the right to work after a few months of arrival. Later, this person can try to get a residence permit through this employment. Meanwhile, during the asylum process, she or he receives help and subsidies for accommodations and a monthly subsidy for running costs (the amount varies amongst the EU member states). In this case, the asylum process is used as an entry instrument to get inside the EU, and then the person tries to fulfil the initial motivation by gaining access to employment, for example. The manipulation of the asylum system and the self-resettlement of asylum seekers (or irregular migrants or refugees) are part of the activities of asylum-related migrants, even if they are in precarious conditions during several stages of their journeys (see Collyer 2010; Ehrkamp 2017; Triandafyllidou 2017). Such manipulation of the asylum system makes asylum-related migrants (at least some) active agents in their everyday lives.

A straight-forward *linear migration* from place 'A' (country of origin in the case of international migration) to place 'B' (destination country in the case of international migration) still exists. However, in many cases the migration trajectory consists of breaks—lengthier stays along the migration journeys (in plural, to indicate their variety) in the so-called transit countries. Iran or Turkey can be a transit country, in which an Afghan stays for a few months along the trajectory to the EU (Dimitriadi 2018). However, instead of such *transit migration*, some will continue to remain in the initial transit country that then transforms to their destination country. Furthermore, this linear model of migration is one-directional. In many cases, people might return to the country of origin or move to another country, and then move back to the initial destination country. Especially in *forced migration* (i.e., migration that is not voluntary), the migrant sometimes returns back (pushed back or deported by the authorities of the destination country) to the initial place (the country of origin), but she or he might soon again start another journey either to the initial destination country

or another country practicing *circular migration*. From 2015–2016, the EU received an exceptionally many asylum seekers, of whom the majority did not receive asylum or residence permit in the EU member states. Some of these rejected asylum-related migrants returned voluntarily to their countries of origin, supported technically and financially by the International Organization of Migration (IOM). Nevertheless, these people might restart their migration journeys, for example, towards the EU. Other migrants were sent back by force and received a temporary ban of entry to the EU for some period. However, many refused to return and remained hidden in the EU countries as irregular (undocumented) migrants.

1.4 Research highlights

- More than 3 million Afghans were in Iran in 2019. They included officially recognized refugees (around 1 million people), authorized regular immigrants with visas and residence permits in Iran (around 0.5 million people) and unauthorized irregular immigrants (around 1.5–2 million people) without the proper right to reside in Iran. The number of Afghan refugees has remained stable in Iran, but the number of regular migrants has grown (because some former refugees become migrants) and the number of irregular migrants varies considerably depending on the seasons (e.g., agriculture) and the economic conditions in Afghanistan and Iran.
- Afghans in Iran are a significant community, whose migration patterns and aspirations (to and in Iran, to Afghanistan and on to third countries, including those of the EU) are of local, national and international interests.
- The migration aspirations and the actual migration of Afghans in, to and from Iran are influenced by many drivers, such as (in)security in Afghanistan; economic conditions in Afghanistan and Iran; possibilities for reasonable employment, education and life career in Iran and the access of Afghans to Turkey and the EU.
- The majority of Afghans in Iran live in urban areas, including large urban regions, such as Tehran, Mashhad and Isfahan—however, Afghans are also in rural areas, especially seasonal labour migrants.
- The intention to remain in Iran varies among Afghans: of the Afghan respondents, two out of five Afghan refugees in guest settlements, three out of 10 refugees living elsewhere in Iran and one out of four regular and irregular Afghan migrants thought they would most likely live the rest of their lives in Iran. The desire to stay in Iran was higher if the respondents were satisfied with their current accommodations and social networks and if they had good relations with their neighbours.

- Those Afghan respondents who stated that they would likely stay the rest of their lives in Iran were often 50–64 years old (usually they came to Iran more than 20 years prior from Afghan villages and had family members in Iran); younger Afghans (particularly from towns and cities, had been in Iran for 10–20 years and lived in refugee guest settlements with their spouses and children); or the oldest regular and irregular migrants.
- A slight majority of responding Afghans intended to migrate within Iran: the most preferred locations were Mashhad and Tehran; almost all Afghan respondents currently in Mashhad in Razavi Khorasan would like to remain there.
- Roughly two out of five Afghan refugee respondents in guest settlements and one out of four Afghan refugee respondents elsewhere in Iran agreed that they would like to go back to Afghanistan, and so answered one out of three Afghan regular migrant respondents and half of the Afghan irregular migrants—however, fewer actually plan to return. Those who particularly aspire migration to Afghanistan were the oldest, employed and married irregular migrants. Those who least wished to migrate to Afghanistan were unmarried, 30–49 years old and women refugees from guest settlements.
- One out of eight Afghan refugee and regular migrant respondents and one out of five irregular migrant respondents—especially young adult single men—plan to migrate from Iran to Turkey, however, such aspirations may not be realized. Very few consider Turkey as their destination country but see it as a transition country to migrate to the EU.
- Roughly one out of three Afghan respondents plan to migrate from Iran to the EU—typically they are single employed men from cities—but such aspiration might not result in actual migration.
- The younger an Afghan in Iran is, the more likely she or he wants to migrate abroad, but very few younger Afghans want to migrate to Afghanistan, which they perceive as insecure. Of the Afghan respondents who have attended university, three out of four see themselves outside Iran in the next three years: for many, the EU is a more attractive destination than Afghanistan or Turkey.
- International geopolitical issues also influence the migration and migration aspirations of Afghans. International sanctions on Iran in 2018 (resulting in a loss of the value of Iran’s national currency) created challenges for Afghans in Iran. In 2019, almost two out of three (62–64%) Afghan respondents were affirmative (fully or partly) that, after the currency devaluation, they started to think of migrating from Iran to another country. However, a higher salary would be a significant pulling factor to stay in Iran, especially

for married Afghan respondents with an urban background and family and friends in Iran.

- It is challenging to extrapolate the actual migration potential of all Afghans in Iran from the migration aspirations of Afghans in Iran expressed in the survey results. Afghans' have desires, aspirations and plans to migrate but from them cannot be straightforward claimed that they will migrate. However, of the current 640,000 (at least 15 years old) Afghan refugees in Iran, about 84,000 (13%) plan to migrate to Afghanistan (3,200 from refugee camps and 80,600 from elsewhere in Iran), and of the remaining Afghan refugees in Iran (i.e., excluding those who plan to migrate to Afghanistan), 143,000 plan to migrate to the EU (2,300 from refugee camps and 140,700 from elsewhere in Iran). Of the current (at least 15 years old) 350,000 regular Afghan migrants in Iran, about 80,500 (23%) plan to migrate to Afghanistan, and of the remaining regular Afghan migrants in Iran, 66,200 plan to migrate to the EU. Of the current 1.2 million (at least 15 years old) irregular Afghan migrants in Iran, about 428,000 (36%) plan to migrate to Afghanistan, and of the remaining irregular Afghan migrants in Iran, at least 203,200 plan to migrate to the EU.
- In conclusion, about 0.85–1 million of all 2.2 million (at least 15 years old) Afghans in Iran plan to migrate out of Iran. Of them, about 0.6 million plan to migrate to Afghanistan and a further 0.28–0.4 million to the EU, and their children's migration depends on them. However, whether plans lead to actual migration of Afghans from Iran depends on many external factors. Around 1.6–1.85 million Afghans (including their 0.4–0.5 million children) are more prone to remain in Iran, or they do not express plans to leave Iran.
- In 2020, besides economic pressures, also geopolitical tensions have grown in Iran. Their joint impact on Afghans' migration aspirations and migration is still to be seen. However, if political tensions rise and the economic situation in Iran becomes more challenging for Afghans, it will decrease their labour-related irregular migration from Afghanistan to Iran. In addition, Afghans may increasingly start to migrate from Iran. If Afghanistan is (perceived) economically and politically insecure among Afghans in Iran, they—especially younger adults—try to migrate through Turkey to the EU.
- The research-based results about the Afghans in Iran can support Iranian officials in designing efficient evidence-based policies that have a successful impact on Afghan individuals, communities and the Iranian society as a whole; thus, research about the migration and migration aspirations of Afghans should be continued.

2. MIGRATION OF AFGHANS IN IRAN

Iran is, after Pakistan, the largest country hosting Afghan migrants—more than 3 million inhabitants. The majority of Afghans in Iran live in larger cities (such as Tehran and Mashhad) but also in many smaller towns and rural areas. According to the Iran's Population Census of 2016, almost four out of five (78.5%) Afghans lived in urban areas, and the remaining fifth (21.5%) lived in rural areas (Statistical Centre of Iran 2016). Regulations prevent Afghans from living in many provinces and sites in Iran.

Iran, with almost 1 million (973,000 people) refugees, is globally one of the countries with the highest number of refugees (UNHCR 2019). Afghans—70% of them are Hazara and Tajik populations (Westerby et al. 2013, 58)—make up almost 98% of these refugees. Few (3%, approximately 30,000 people) refugees reside in 19 guest settlements in different parts of the country (UNHCR 2017b). The remaining 900,000 (or more) registered refugees (97%) live elsewhere in Iran, mostly in urban areas but some are also in the countryside.

In addition, about 0.5 million Afghan passport holders are legal temporary residents in Iran, 30,000 Afghans as otherwise legal permanent residents and 1.5–2 million are irregular Afghan migrants. Based on UNHCR (2019) and IOM and UNHCR (2019) references to Iran's governmental sources, “according to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are 1.5 to 2 million undocumented Afghans in the country at any given time, including 850,000 persons who participated in a headcount exercise [for registration of undocumented Afghans in Iran] in 2017” (IOM & UNHCR 2019, 4). The exact number of irregular (undocumented) Afghan migrants in Iran is a continuous subject of debate.

In Chapter 2 is discussed the contemporary migration of Afghans in relation to Iran and its connection to national and international contexts (Fig. 2.1). The initiation of this migration took place in the late 1970s when the political regime of Afghanistan changed, and the Soviet troops invaded the country. At the same period, political and religious changes took place in Iran. These two processes resulted in a situation in which the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran welcomed Afghan migrants (*mohajerin*) to stay in Iran—soon there were millions of Afghans in Iran. This ‘open door’ policy later developed into a more focused refugee policy.

The early 21st century has witnessed different approaches on Afghans in Iran. On the one hand, there have been continuous attempts to repatriate Afghans from Iran to Afghanistan, often supported by the UNCHR and other international organizations. This policy has also included the forced deportation of unauthorized Afghan irregular migrants from Iran to Afghanistan. On the other hand, policies have been targeted to those Afghans who have opted to stay in Iran. There have been attempts to separate and segregate Afghans in the Iranian society. More recently, policies and practices have appeared that facilitate their

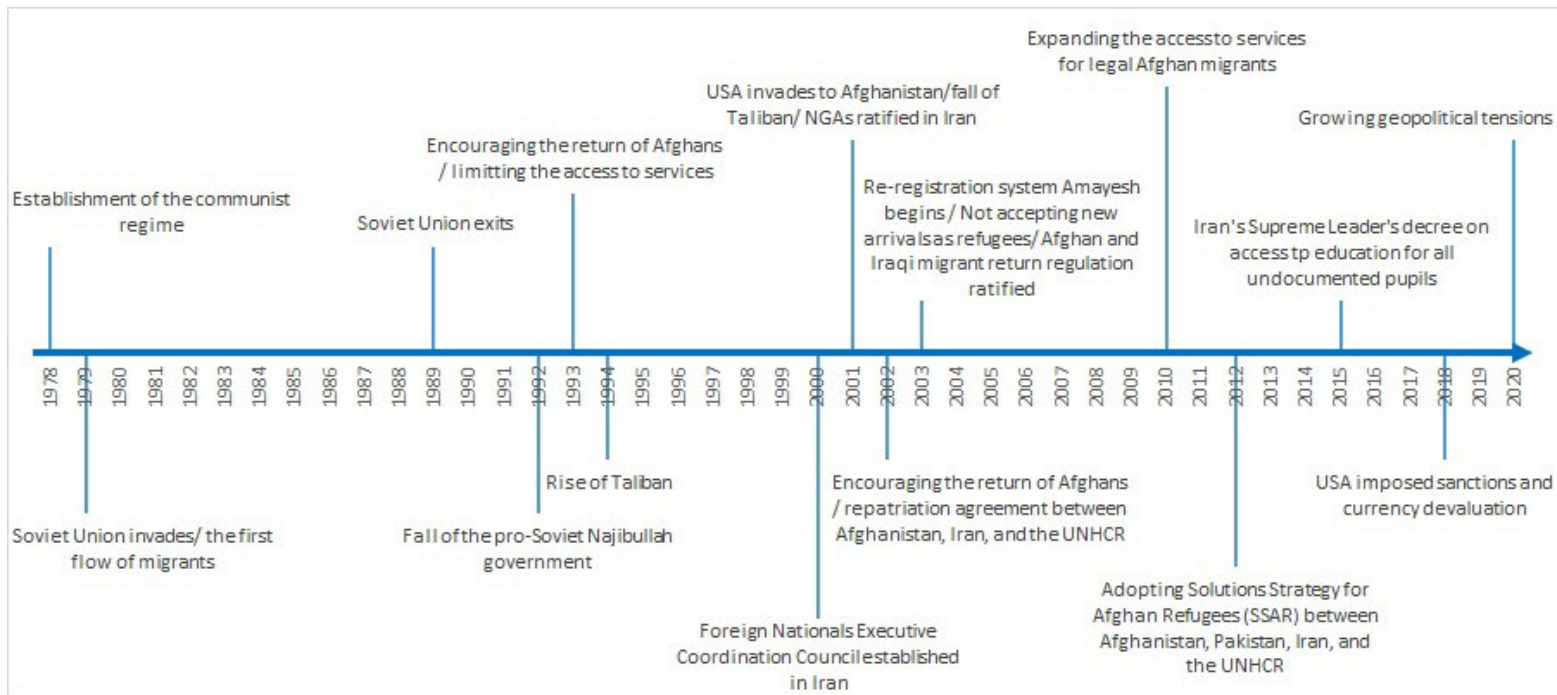


Figure 2.1. Timeline of the contemporary migration between Iran and Afghanistan.

economic and social integration to the Iranian society. International political regimes play a substantial role in the migration of Afghans as well. These include political and military interventions and withdrawals in Afghanistan, as well as imposed international sanctions on Iran that negatively influence the economic development of the country. Various drivers influence, push and pull Afghans to and from Iran and the aspirations behind such migration.

2.1 From 'open doors' to focused refugee policies

Afghan refugees have been hosted in Iran for decades. Following the 1978 coup d'état in Afghanistan, the establishment of a communist regime there and the military invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, Afghans started to escape to Iran in large numbers. War and insecurity pushed for such migration. Afghans were welcomed by the government of Iran. The early arrival of Afghan refugees was connected to the ongoing political, religious and economic issues and the 'open door' policy of the recently established Islamic Republic of Iran. In practice, Afghans had the same access as Iranian citizens to subsidized food, healthcare and free primary and secondary education in Iran. However, the right to work of Afghans was mostly limited to low-wage positions in agriculture and construction (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008). Besides religious issues pulling Afghans' migration to Iran, a more advanced economy in Iran and possibilities to have employment and services were influences as well. Therefore, the migration of Afghans to Iran had elements of mixed migration combined with political and economic reasons. However, for many it was linear migration from one country to another.

By the mid-1980s (i.e., in less than a decade), the number of Afghan immigrants in Iran rose from 0.5 to 2 million (Hugo et al. 2012, 265). Before and after 1978, there were also Afghans migrating to Iran for economic reasons, such as when a drought in the 1970s devastated agriculture in Afghanistan and when the growing oil extraction boom in Iran necessitated a labour force (Stigter 2006; Saito 2009). Subsequently, in the 1980–1990s, the Afghan migrants in Iran mostly belonged to the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups mostly from rural areas in the west and north of Afghanistan (UNHCR 2000; Turton & Marsden 2002, 11). Most Afghan Pashtuns fled from Afghanistan to Pashtun-dominated regions in Pakistan and settled there in 300 refugee camps and Afghan Refugee Villages created by the UNHCR (Saito 2009, 3–4). In 1990, more than 6.3 million Afghan refugees were in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, including 3.3 million in Pakistan and 3 million in Iran (UNHCR 2000).

Until the early 1990s, most Afghan refugees entering Iran were called *mohajerin*, and they were given the right to remain in Iran indefinitely. *Mohajerin* means a religious Muslim migrant and "recalls the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in order to escape prosecution" (Yarbakhsh 2018). Until

1992, Iran provided 'blue cards' for Afghans who entered the country, indicating their status as involuntary migrants (*mohajerin*) and not refugees (*panahandegan*; Rajaei 2000). Furthermore, 'white cards' had been issued in the pre-revolutionary period (before 1979) for refugees (*panahandegan*). White cards offered greater advantages than blue cards, such as exemption from taxes, the right to work and to obtain Convention travel documents (issued to a person in difficulties in gaining a travel document from their country of origin). However, after the Islamic Revolution, white cards were issued mostly to highly educated individuals, in particular to Iraqis (Frelick 1999). Many Afghans were integrated into the Iranian labour market, occupying low-qualification jobs in construction, industrial mills, quarries and agriculture (Monsutti & Balci 2014).

After the 1992 fall of the pro-Soviet Najibullah government of Afghanistan, the 'open door' policy of Iran (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2005) changed. The earlier policy of welcoming *mohajerin* Afghans transformed into a more focused refugee policy in which Afghans were defined as *panahandegan* (Rajaei 2000, 56–58). The government of Iran no longer automatically granted Afghans permanent residence rights and refugee statuses. Such change and the consequent consideration of Afghans as guests, visitors, refugees, resident foreigners and irregular unauthorized migrants have been discussed by Yarkbakhsh (2018) and Kasimis (2019). They point out the complexity of providing long-term unconditional hospitality and practicing particular forms of (un)hospitality that sustain the differences between hosts and guests and between hosts and other people who are not considered either hosts or guests (see also Dimitriadi 2018, 140–145). According to Naseh et al. (2018), there were also more practical reasons such as financial and security costs of maintaining nearly two million refugees in the aftermath of Iran's baby boom, the expensive war with Iraq, and economic sanctions (see also Rajaei 2000).

In the 1990s, up to 300,000 Afghans were in refugee camps, and the remaining 2.5 million mostly lived in urban areas. The policy in Iran was to accommodate Afghans mostly outside of specific refugee camps (Strand et al. 2004). Additionally, the relocation of Afghans to some geographic areas, such as northeast Iran, was encouraged by the government of Iran (Rajaei 2000). In addition, Iran started to restrict the Afghans' access to public services, especially educational and medical services (Abbasi-Shavazi & Sadeghi 2015, 24). Furthermore, the government of Iran "started to issue temporary registration cards" for undocumented and documented Afghan migrants (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008, 15).

New Afghan migrants who came to Iran were granted with refugee status (Strand et al. 2004, 2). However, the government of Iran started to encourage Afghans to return to Afghanistan to redevelop their country of origin. Concurrently, through a tripartite agreement between Afghanistan, Iran and the UNHCR, the government of Iran negotiated the immediate repatriation of up to

700,000 Afghans. The repatriation policy from 1993–2001 faced a large challenge due to conflicts between the returning *mohajerin* groups and the rise of the fundamentalist Taliban movement. The unrest in Afghanistan led to a civil war, and later, the Taliban controlled most of Afghanistan. In addition, there was not enough financial support to operationalize the repatriation to the extent it had been planned (Calabrese 2016, 138). The Afghans continued to arrive in Iran, which the Iranian authorities tolerated. However, the initial straight linear migration from Afghanistan to Iran started to have features of transit migration when some Afghans migrated to third countries. Also, circular migration existed between Afghanistan and Iran.

2.2 Repatriation vs. separation or integration policies

In the 21st century, Iran has implemented, in principle, two policies regarding Afghans. The first policy is to repatriate Afghans from Iran to Afghanistan. The aim is to reduce the amount of Afghans in Iran. The second policy is to design the position of those Afghans who remain in Iran. This latter policy has gone through various stages. In general, policies were implemented in the early 2000s to separate Afghans from Iranians. However, in the 2010s, policies enhanced the integration of Afghans to the Iranian society.

As regards the ‘internal policy’ towards Afghans, Iran started in 2000 to regulate foreign nationals in Iran, based on Iran’s Third Development Plan 2000–2004. According to article 180, the Executive Coordination Council for Foreign Nationals was established in the Ministry of Interior to coordinate foreign national affairs. In 2001, Iran’s government ratified a law which restricted the movement and residency of foreign nationals (including Afghans) in Iran. The reasons mentioned were national security, public interest and health (Farzin & Jadali 2013). Of the 31 provinces in Iran, 17 became full no-go areas (NGA) for foreigners (including Afghans), and 11 became partial NGAs (see also Figure 3.2 in Section 3.2). This policy has been implemented since 2007. These areas have been called ‘Afghan-free zones’, in which Afghans (as well as other foreign nationals) were prohibited from residing or visiting, or where their presence was strongly regulated and restricted.

Afghans were authorized to move freely within their designated provinces of residence. This also necessitated the establishment of new refugee settlements where Afghans were clustered in many provinces. Being constrained to live in such settlements caused trouble and unhappiness for some Afghans, who had earlier lived rather freely in Iran. The mobility of Afghans also became regulated. To travel to other provinces, Afghan refugees were required to inform the authorities and obtain travel permits before their travel. In addition, Afghan refugees were only allowed to work within their areas of residence and in specific jobs. The limitations in the free spatial and occupational mobility of Afghan

refugees in Iran were implemented as if they were agreed upon internationally in the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees. Iran made reservations in the Convention's Articles 17 (employment) and 26 (freedom of movement of refugees; Farzin & Jadali 2013).

Furthermore, in the early 2000s, Iran restricted services for Afghans, including their access to Iranian schools. Then, Afghan pupils continued their educations in self-regulated schools, generally managed by Afghans. A few years later, this policy changed, and documented Afghan regular migrants could attend public Iranian schools; but, irregular undocumented Afghan pupils had to study in self-regulated schools. Abbasi Shavazi et al. (2008, 19) argued that, in 2002, the self-regulated schools were declared illegal by the government of Iran to encourage Afghans to return to Afghanistan (Hoodfar 2010, 146). Subsequently, hundreds of self-regulated schools closed in several cities in Iran.

In 2003, Iran established a new integrated 'Amayesh' registration system for Afghans. The Amayesh card was issued for all Afghans who had been granted residency rights in Iran based simply on their Afghan nationality in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e., during the 'open door' policy). These Afghans were granted short-term residence permits they needed to extend regularly by the authorities, paying for such services. These registration cards replaced all other previously issued documents for Afghans and became the only valid refugee documentation in Iran (Naseh et al. 2018). The new arriving Afghans no longer receive refugee status. Only new born Afghans, whose parents have refugee statuses in Iran, are granted an Amayesh card and the related refugee status. Subsequently, the number of refugees in Iran has been approximately 1 million. Therefore, Yarbakhsh (2018, 6) claims that despite "Iran has obligations under international law to process asylum claims, in practice few number of Afghans could be able to lodge such claims." Amayesh is a census conducted by BAFIA for identifying refugees in Iran. Consequently, an Amayesh card is issued for refugees and such card needs to be extended annually (in 2019 was issued the Amayesh number 14).

Furthermore, Iran approved the policy document entitled "regulations about accelerating repatriating of Afghans" in 2003. This regulation emphasizes the repatriation of Afghan migrants through the strict control of Iran's eastern borders and roads (article 1); combat against smuggling and strict penalty for smugglers (article 2); restrictions on hiring Afghan workers without working permission and punishment for employers who hire them (article 3); restrictions on access to specific public services for Afghans (except Afghans with passports and valid visas), which include services that extend their presence in Iran, such as prohibition of all social, cultural and political activities of Afghan groups and parties, prohibition of opening new bank accounts and restriction in insurance services (article 4); encouraging of repatriation and warning Iranian employers to avoid hiring Afghans without working permission through Iran's national TV pro-

grams (article 5); restriction in renting houses for Afghans (except for Afghans with passport and valid visa), and they should ask permission from provincial BAFIA Offices (article 8); and focus on budget devoted to rebuild Afghanistan with projects that facilitate the resettlement of returnees in Afghanistan (article 9). It was considered that such limitations in the everyday life of Afghans in Iran would make Afghans think of migrating to Afghanistan or on third countries. However, in the 2010s, the number of returning Afghan refugees from Iran to Afghanistan has remained small, 2,000–10,000 persons annually. In 2018, under the UNHCR's facilitated voluntary repatriation program, around 2,000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran to Afghanistan and around 800 Afghans in January–June, 2019 (UNHCR 2019b).

As regards the 'external policy' towards Afghans in Iran, the voluntary and forced repatriation of Afghans became a significant activity. As mentioned, Afghanistan, Iran and the UNHCR signed an agreement in 2002 for the repatriation of Afghans. Since then, the UNHCR has assisted in repatriating almost 1 million Afghan refugees from Iran. Most returned in 2002–2005 (UNHCR 2017a), and also hundreds of thousands of Afghans returned without the assistance of the UNHCR. However, the worsening security in Afghanistan substantially diminished the number of Afghan refugee returners down to a few thousand annually. In 2012, the governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and the UNHCR adopted the *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries* (SSAR). The SSAR outlines the need for increased voluntary repatriation and also for enhanced resettlement (Westerby et al. 2013, 57). Again, the fragility of security in Afghanistan prevented many Afghans migrating from Iran to Afghanistan. At the end of the 2010s, 88% of Afghan refugees live in Pakistan and Iran (UNHCR 2018).

The majority of Afghan refugees and other migrants reside in Iran and Pakistan; thus, the majority of returnees originated from these countries. Different factors affect migrants' decisions to return to Afghanistan. "Fears of deportation and uncertain legal status in the case of Pakistan and economic difficulty and integration concerns in the case of Iran" (The Mixed Migration Centre 2019) have been the most important factors in the past few years. The UNHCR facilitates the voluntary repatriation of Afghan migrants but "does not promote returns due to the prevailing security situation in Afghanistan" (IOM & UNHCR 2019).

According to the IOM (2019), from 2012–2018, there were 1.9 million voluntary returns by undocumented Afghan migrants from Iran to Afghanistan and 1.8 million deportations of undocumented Afghans from Iran to Afghanistan; in total 3.7 million migrations crossed the border (Table 2.1). The number of irregular Afghan returnees from Iran have varied considerably in the 2010s. According to IOM (2016), "The decrease in returns from Iran in 2016 can be partially attributed to an overall decrease in [Afghans'] arrivals in Europe compared with

2015. In addition, the decrease can be linked to an improvement in the Iranian economy following the relaxing of international financial sanctions, resulting in the need for more Afghan laborers”. In total, 75% of returnees from Iran in 2016 were men, while 25% were women (IOM 2016). The lowest number of voluntary Afghan returnees was 194,000 in 2017, and the highest was 356,000 in 2018. The lowest number of deported undocumented irregular Afghans from Iran was 195,000 in 2016, and the highest number was 412,000 in 2018 (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Voluntary returns and forced deportations of Afghan irregular migrants from Iran, 2012–2018.

	Spontaneous returnees	Deportees	Total
2012	279 012	250 731	529 743
2013	217 483	220 846	438 329
2014	286 222	218 565	504 791
2015	316 415	227 601	544 016
2016	248 764	194 763	443 527
2017	194 321	271 982	466 303
2018	355 523	412 140	767 663
Total	1 897 740	1 796 628	3 694 368

Source: IOM (2015); IOM (2016); IOM (2017); IOM (2018).

In 2018, the number of voluntary returns and forced deportations of irregular Afghan migrants rose rapidly in Iran. This was driven by “recent political and economic issues in Iran including massive currency devaluation ... as Afghans primarily work in the informal economy in Iran the demand for this type of work is drastically reduced.” The geographical distribution of returnees shows that “29% of the undocumented Afghans returning from Iran returned from Tehran, 25% from Fars, 16% from Razavi Khorasan and the remaining [30%] from other provinces”. On the other hand, irregular migrant returnees from Iran went mostly to the northern provinces of Afghanistan, including Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh and Bamyán. Based on IOM’s weekly report on returnees, 2019, the number of Afghan irregular migrant returnees from Iran to Afghanistan decreased by 39% compared with 2018. This is, again, an average annual number of returnees in the 2010s (IOM 2018; IOM 2019).

Voluntary or forced returning from Iran to Afghanistan can be a challenge for Afghans. However, much of the ‘returning’ is actually an exercise of cyclical migration (i.e., people travel back and forth between Afghanistan and Iran). In fact, UNHCR and IOM (2019) declare in their report that most Afghans “move back and forth between neighboring countries, particularly Iran for employment, trade or other temporary reasons and it is unclear to estimate how much of these returnees represent sustainable returns or it is ongoing cross border

movement". Generally, "return patterns from Iran tend to be cyclical in nature, with the same individual crossing the border and returning multiple times in one year"(IOM 2016). Therefore, the migration between Iran and Afghanistan could be seen as more of a cyclical cross-border mobility than migration. A permanent return to Afghanistan can be challenging, if not dangerous. Many recent returnees to Afghanistan face challenges in "food insecurity, shelter, land, livelihoods and access to services including civil documentation" (IOM & UNHCR 2019). There are also psychological problems (well-being) and lack of support and access to aid after Afghans return (The Mixed Migration Centre 2019). Furthermore, Majidi (2018) notes that "deportees may find themselves in situations of greater threat in Afghanistan than they experienced before their migration, so it adds to their reasons to leave again".

Nevertheless, to facilitate the repatriation policy, Iran focused on 'changing refugee status to passport' and 'exit and return program'. The first is to reduce the number of Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders) through providing some services only for regular Afghan migrants (i.e., those with Afghan passports and valid visas), particularly for Afghans who want to study at university. In the early years of this policy, Afghan students with refugee statuses, who had graduated from an Iranian university, had to leave Iran (presumably to Afghanistan) after graduation. The current policy is that Afghan students with Amayesh cards can get extendable 'normal visas', but they have to change their statuses from refugees to Afghan nationals (Afghan passport holders). For this, male Afghan refugee students residing in Iran have to leave Iran and get passports and visas in Afghanistan. Female Afghan students can visit Kish Island in southern Iran to get visas or receive the visas in Afghanistan, similar to the male students (BA-FIA Tehran 2019). Some of these practices provide a chance for the second- and third-generation Afghans in Iran to visit Afghanistan. Furthermore, as Afghans are restricted to work in few specific employment fields in Iran, some Afghan students cannot work in Iran in their fields of study, and they are encouraged to return to Afghanistan.

Changing the refugee status to a regular migrant position with an Afghan passport and visa is also followed by administrative procedures regarding marriage. According to the interviews, an Afghan refugee (Amayesh card holder) who wants to marry an Afghan migrant (holder of an Afghan passport) should renounce his or her refugee status and become a regular migrant. In addition, most second- and third-generation Afghans who need to travel to other countries (including pilgrims to Mecca-Hajj) or need to move more freely inside Iran prefer to change their statuses from refugees to regular migrants, particularly persons dealing with business.

The second aspect is to facilitate visiting Afghanistan by the 'exit and return' policy. From 2018, Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders), as well as regular

Afghan migrants (Afghan passport holders with temporary 6-month valid visas), can visit Afghanistan for one month and then return to Iran. This provides a chance for Afghan refugees to visit their relatives in Afghanistan or to do their administrative works there without losing their refugee statuses in Iran (Embassy of Afghanistan in Tehran 2018). Again, this also provides an opportunity to consider return migration to Afghanistan. For almost all younger Afghans, this would not be a true return migration because they have never lived in Afghanistan. It would be migration to a country of which they have heard but of which they do not have any first-hand experience.

It does not seem plausible that all Afghans would migrate from Iran to Afghanistan (see Section 1.4 and Chapter 4). A strong divisive policy leading into segregation of Afghans in Iran could limit the beneficial opportunities emerging from millions of Afghans in Iran. It seems the policies in the early 2000s that focused on the separation and segregation of Afghans were gradually changing in the 2010s into policies also considering integration aspects (see also Yarkbakhsh 2018; Kasimis 2019). For instance, several regulations passed to facilitate Afghans' (holders of Amayesh cards or Afghan passports) social and economic integrations to Iran. For example, access to services for regular Afghan migrants was expanded in 2010s. The general access to public schools for all Afghan children, including irregular undocumented Afghan migrants, started in 2015, after Iran's Supreme Leader's decree (see NRC 2017). Many Afghans had studied in self-regulated schools, and they had to attend the entrance exams before being able to enter public schools. The Iranian education system does not accept the quality of education and documents issued by self-regulated schools. Furthermore, due to the lack of basic documents for Afghan students, the poor economic conditions of the families and cultural barriers, some could not study in schools or had to dropout from school, particularly Afghan girls. The Afghans' access to basic education is crucial because, according to the Iran Population Census in 2016, of 1.3 million (over 10 years old) foreign nationals, more than a third (37%; 480,000 persons) were illiterate (Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare 2018).

Irregular Afghans have also been legalized through a 'headcount program'. Each undocumented family receives a common code entitled 'headcount code' and each family member a separate code entitled 'dedicated code'. It is the similar to the Amayesh card holders' family or household codes. The refugees' family or household codes are the same for all family members, and the dedicated code is specific for each Amayesh card holder.

Two headcount practices were conducted in 2017. Based on BAFIA's announcement, in the first headcount exercise, three groups of irregular Afghans could be registered (UNHCR 2019), including families who have pupils registered in school (in accordance with the Iran's Supreme Leader's decree in 2015, as men-

tioned above); undocumented foreign nationals who married Iranian nationals; and spouses and children of documented Afghan refugees (holders of valid Amayesh cards). Through registration of their children in a school, an irregular Afghan could receive a headcount code (in Farsi: کد سرشماری) that allows the pupil and his or her family members to stay in Iran. These families should register their children in school annually after receiving a permission letter from Kefalat offices. In July 2017, another headcount program was conducted for those irregular Afghans who could not attend the first phase. This phase focused on undocumented Afghans, including holders of invalid Amayesh cards (Amayesh number 1 to 9) and Afghan passport holders with expired visas or other invalid documents, as well as Afghans who missed the first phase of registration (BAFIA 2019). In the 2010s, Iran has implemented a relaxed policy to extend Amayesh cards to refugees who forgot or missed the deadline of extending their cards.

Also, other practical relaxations of earlier regulations have taken place. For example, the access of Afghans (both Afghan passport and Amayesh card holders) to obtain a driving license has recently been relaxed. In addition, Afghan refugees' access to online bank services is another supportive policy change for Afghan refugees in Iran. Before, Afghan refugees were not allowed to use online or electronic services of their bank accounts. Furthermore, from 2019 onward, children born in Iran from mixed marriages between Afghan husbands and Iranian wives have legal rights to acquire the citizenship of Iran before they are 18 years old age. In the earlier law, it was possible to acquire citizenship after they were 18 years old. This influences the lives of thousands of children born from Iranian mothers and non-Iranian (e.g., Afghan) fathers (Parliament of Iran 2019).

2.3 Impact of international regimes and policies

The contemporary (since the 1970s) migration between Afghanistan and Iran is partly a regional issue. The two neighbouring countries have certain cultural similarities, but Iran is wealthier, more developed and more stable than Afghanistan. Therefore, the traditional push and pull factors explain part of the migration of Afghans to Iran; that is, Afghans can get access to better livelihoods in Iran and support themselves in Iran and potentially also their families and relatives in Afghanistan through remittances. Monsutti (2008) claims that, for Afghans, back-and-forth movements between Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and beyond is a key mobility-based livelihood strategy.

However, international politics have also had a significant impact on migration. As discussed, the Soviet invasion and the support for the communist regime in Afghanistan in the late 1970s and 1980s triggered the massive migration from Afghanistan to Iran. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the country's tension with the United States and the West exacerbated, which "probably ex-

plains why Iran did not, at least initially, seek international assistance in dealing with the influx of refugees” (Turton & Marsden 2002, 11). Compared with Pakistan, Iran only received a little international support (Kamal 2010, 188). The UNHCR refers explicitly to the unfair distribution of international funds devoted to Pakistan and Iran for the Afghan refugee issue (UNHCR 2000, 117–119):

The level of international assistance provided to the refugees in Pakistan and Iran also differed markedly. While donors contributed vast sums of money to assist Afghan refugees in Pakistan during the 1980s, they provided little for Afghans in Iran—even though the Afghan refugees in Iran comprised one of the world’s largest refugee populations at the time.

The disparity in expenditures between Pakistan and Iran remained substantial throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Between 1979 and 1997, UNHCR spent more than US\$1 billion on Afghan refugees in Pakistan, but only US\$150 million on those in Iran.

In Iran, a similar project was set up in the late 1980s in the South Khorasan rangeland ... as with other projects in Iran, however, donors were less willing to provide funds for the project. Of the US\$18 million initially requested by UNHCR and IFAD [International Fund for Agricultural Development] for this project, only a third was forthcoming during the project’s first five years.

Political and military interventions of the United States, the NATO and the EU in Afghanistan in the early 21st century had an impact, for example, establishing and destructing political and military stability in Afghanistan. The political (in) stability, especially the impact of the Taliban, created and constrained opportunities for development in Afghanistan. Afghans had to move from their home areas to other parts of Afghanistan, to the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan and further to the third countries, including those in the EU. However, the Afghan refugee resettlements to the United States have been limited due to political reasons (Micinski 2018).

As mentioned, since the early 21st century, the mobility of Afghans between Afghanistan and Iran has been an efficient livelihood strategy, allowing for many to send remittances from Iran to Afghanistan. This has been a key contribution to the economy of Afghanistan and has also helped the lives of many families in Afghanistan (Stigter & Monsutti 2005). Such mobility is affected by the economic situations in Afghanistan and Iran, as discussed with the example of the recent international sanctions on Iran.

The lives of Afghans have been affected by sanctions imposed by the United States and the EU, particularly in the 2010s. According to Christiansen (2016, 23), since 2012, the United States and the EU’s imposed “economic sanctions [on Iran] have affected the Afghan refugees tremendously; both in terms of their fi-

nancial situation, and in terms of levels of discrimination and the amount of international aid and humanitarian assistance they have been able to receive”. The Joint Comprehensive Plan for Action (JCPOA) agreement between Iran and the P5+1 countries (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) in 2015 resulted in the withdrawal of sanctions against Iran, and the economic condition of Iran improved. This led to a “decrease in the number of Afghan undocumented returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2016 due to relaxing of international financial sanctions” (IOM 2016). The growing economy in Iran created a demand for labour, including in construction which is a field occupied by many Afghans. Improved employment opportunities for Afghans in Iran also supported the labour-related migration.

However, political changes took place after the presidential elections in the United States in 2016. The United States withdrew from the agreement in mid-2018 and launched new economic sanctions against Iran. This led to an economic downturn in Iran and a significant devaluation of the national currency. It affected Afghans in Iran, and it was an especially challenging situation for those Afghans who had come to Iran to send remittances to Afghanistan. A particularly large number of Afghans returned from Iran to Afghanistan in 2018 (see, e.g., IOM & UNHCR 2019). The consequences of the economic sanctions for the migration of Afghans in Iran are discussed more in detail in Section 3.2.

International geopolitical tensions, initiated by the actions of the United States, have grown in 2020 in the Middle East, and especially in Iran. The joint impact of growing geopolitical and economic pressures on Afghans’ migration aspirations and migration is still to be seen. However, the situation in Iran may become increasingly challenging and insecure for Afghans. This would decrease their labour-related irregular migration from Afghanistan to Iran, especially in the fields affected by these tensions, however, to a lesser extent in agriculture in which many irregular Afghans work in rural areas. Growing tensions may accelerate the outmigration of Afghans from Iran. The migration destinations depend on (perceived) opportunities and possibilities to cross the borders—mostly either to Afghanistan or toward the EU through Turkey.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS ABOUT AFGHANS IN IRAN

Chapter 3 discusses the survey respondents' backgrounds and analyses Afghan refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants' migration to and within Iran, as well as their migration aspirations to Afghanistan and third countries. Approximately three out of four Afghans have experienced some form of displacement during their lifetimes (IOM 2016b). Therefore, migration is part of life for many Afghans. Over the last few decades, millions of Afghans have migrated to Iran. Some have remained there, while others have moved to third countries. Many also returned to Afghanistan.

In 2019, more than 3 million Afghans lived in Iran. All Afghans in Iran have a connection to the Afghan culture that varies over time among them. Living in Iran for extended periods has distanced some from Afghanistan, a country that many younger Afghans have never visited. They have heard many old stories and more recent pessimistic information about Afghanistan. Therefore, for many, 'returning' to Afghanistan would mean moving to a new country. If Iran is not the country in which they desire to spend the rest of their lives, and if Afghanistan is not perceived as having a secure future, where do Afghans in Iran aim to migrate? Their migration aspirations are of international interest. Migration is challenging, so many Afghans aspire to migrate within Iran. Difficulties in everyday life can be relieved by thinking about migration without the need to move away. However, migration aspirations can trigger decisive actions such as moving to another country.

As discussed in Section 1.3, straightforward, linear migration is transforming into various kinds of mobility. Many Afghans utilised and continue to utilise cross-border mobility to gain the advantages of moving to Iran, returning to Afghanistan and continuing such back-and-forth mobility. Often, the same people and families engage in this practice (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2005; Glazebrook & Abbasi-Shavazi 2007; Saito 2009). Bagheri and Fluri (2019) claimed that the circular migration of young Afghan men to Iran is, besides a form of functional economic migration, also a rite of passage in the process of becoming a man within one's home community. However, if perceived and real conditions change in Afghanistan or Iran, such back-and forth mobility can quickly become migration with permanent move from one country to another.

3.1 Afghan respondents' backgrounds

The survey respondents comprised 2,009 Afghans in Iran who were at least 15 years old. The respondents included 1,207 (60%) officially designated Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders recognised by the Iranian authorities and the UNHCR), 445 (23%) authorised Afghan regular migrants (Afghan passport holders with the required Iranian residency visa) and 344 (17%) unauthorised irregular

Afghan migrants (those living in Iran without the required documents or the consent of the Iranian authorities). The analysis mainly utilised the following categories: Afghan refugees in refugee settlements, Afghan refugees outside refugee settlements in large urban regions, Afghan regular migrants and Afghan irregular migrants.

Of the respondents, 1,365 persons (68%) lived in the larger urban regions of Tehran (590 persons, 43%), Mashhad (240 persons, 18%), Isfahan (346 persons, 25%) and Kerman (189 persons, 14%). These sites are referred to in the report as 'larger cities'. In addition, 546 persons (27%) lived in the refugee guest settlements of Bani Najjar, Bardsir, Rafsanjan and Torbat-e Jam (called 'guest settlements' in this report), and 98 persons (5%) lived in villages and suburban areas in Kerman and Razavi Khorasan provinces (called 'other areas' in this report). The precise location of the sites is explained in Section 1.2 (see also Figure 1.1).

However, the respondents' categorisation as Afghan refugees, regular migrants or irregular migrants is not fixed. Some respondents possessed Amayesh cards that had expired or temporarily lost their validity. They still counted as refugees but could not necessarily use all refugee services. Some current regular migrants were previously refugees, and some former regular migrants had received legal permission to enter Iran and reside there. However, for various reasons, they failed to extend their residence permits or did so too late, so they temporarily became irregular migrants whose presence in Iran was unauthorised. In addition, recent changes to Iranian law meant that some respondents, such as children born to Iranian mothers and Afghan fathers or specific talented Afghans, could apply for Iranian citizenship. Thereafter, they would become Iranian citizens with Afghan backgrounds.

Irregular migrants' situations might change as well. Irregular Afghan migrants included many kinds of people, such as Afghans who entered Iran illegally for seasonal work (often in agriculture) or for long-term work (often in construction, clothing or industries). Some planned to stay only for a few months, then return to Afghanistan. Others had lived in Iran for several years and intended to remain in Iran permanently. Some, however, planned to leave Iran for the EU. In the forthcoming 'Afghan headcount' processes, some irregular migrants might be regularised.

As discussed above, no reliable, detailed information about all Afghans in Iran exists. The 2016 census covered 1.6 million Afghans. Roughly one third (35%) of Afghans were younger than 15 years old, another third (33%) were 15–29 years old and the remaining third (33%) were 30 years old or older (Table 3.1). In other words, two thirds of all Afghans counted in Iran's 2016 census were younger than 30 years of age. However, the census probably covered only half of Afghans in Iran, and especially few irregular Afghan migrants. The census did not ask about

the resident status of foreign nationals, including that of Afghans, so it is impossible to distinguish Afghan refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants based on census data.

Table 3.1. Iran's 2016 Population Census of 1.6 million Afghans in Iran.

Gender Age	Total		Men		Women		Urban areas		Rural areas	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	550,470	34.8	283,191	33.5	267,279	36.2	432,712	34.8	117,718	34.5
15-29	515,156	32.5	268,725	31.8	246,431	33.4	401,905	32.4	112,868	33.1
30-44	304,529	19.2	167,166	19.8	137,363	18.6	239,624	19.3	64,740	19.0
45-59	150,377	9.5	86,029	10.2	64,348	8.7	118,672	9.6	31,624	9.3
60-74	51,610	3.3	32,412	3.8	19,198	2.6	40,169	3.2	11,435	3.4
75+	11,837	0.7	7,744	0.9	4,093	0.6	9,250	0.7	2,583	0.8
Total	1,583,979	100	845,267	100	738,712	100	1,242,332	100	340,968	100

Source: Statistical Center of Iran (2016)

As regards the gender of Afghan survey respondents, slightly more than half (52%) were male, and slightly fewer than half (48%) were female. These numbers resemble those of the 2016 Iran Population Census, in which 53% of Afghans were men and 47% were women (Statistical Center of Iran 2016). However, irregular Afghan migrants were not covered entirely by the census. In the survey, men outnumbered women among regular and irregular migrants (Table 3.2). In 2018, among irregular Afghan migrants who returned from Iran to Afghanistan, 75% were men and 25% were women. Male irregular Afghan immigrants engage in much more back-and-forth and circular migration than Afghan women do (IOM 2018). However, the genders are more balanced among irregular migrants who remain in Iran than among those who frequently cross the border between Iran and Afghanistan illegally. Such travel can be very demanding, and it is not always suitable for women travelling alone.

The survey respondents' age distribution was as follows: 15-18 years of age (10%); 19-29 years (43%); 30-49 years (33%); 50-64 years (11%); and 65 years or older (3%; see Table 3.2). According to the 2016 Iran Population Census, among Afghans ages 15 and older, 15-29-year-olds made up 49.8% of the population; 30-44-year-olds accounted for 29.5%; 45-59-year-olds made up 14.6%; 60-74-year-olds represented 5.0%; and at those least 75 years old comprised 1.1% (see Table 3.1; Statistical Center of Iran 2016). In general, among irregular Afghan migrants, the vast majority are younger adults, and the proportion of older individuals is smaller than among regular Afghan migrants and refugees. The share of young adults (less than 30 years of age) is slightly higher among Afghan migrants compared with Afghan refugees. Likewise, the share of older (over 50 years of age) Afghans is lower among migrants compared with refugees.

Table 3.2. Demographic backgrounds of Afghan respondents (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement			Refugees elsewhere			Regular migrants			Irregular migrants			All respondents		
	wom-		all	wom-		all	wom-		all	wom-		all	wom-		all
	man	an		man	an		man	an		man	an		man	an	
15–18 years	15	10	13	6	12	9	5	11	8	10	12	10	9	11	10
19–29 years	24	34	29	38	54	46	49	57	53	47	43	46	39	48	43
30–49 years	36	45	40	35	27	30	34	27	30	30	29	30	34	32	33
50–64 years	16	9	12	17	6	12	8	3	6	11	14	12	13	7	11
65+ years	9	2	6	4	1	3	4	2	3	2	2	2	5	2	3
Total	50	50	100	48	52	100	48	52	100	69	31	100	52	48	100

In the 2016 Iran Population Census, 78% of Afghans in Iran lived in urban areas, and 22% lived in rural areas (Statistical Center of Iran 2016). There is a considerable difference in urban–rural distribution among Afghans in Iran. According to the 2016 Iran Population Census, the proportion of Afghans in urban areas was the highest in South Khorasan (93%), Qom (92%) and Isfahan (91%) provinces and lowest in Golestan (47%), West Azerbaijan (54%), Sistan and Baluchistan (54%) and Mazandaran (54%) provinces. The latter provinces are also those with lowest urbanisation rates in Iran (Statistical Centre of Iran 2016).

Two out of three survey respondents (68%) lived in larger Iranian cities. A further one out of four (27%) lived in urban or semi-urban refugee guest settlements that were usually located a bit further from the existing towns. The remaining few (5%) respondents lived in rural or semi-rural areas. In all, the survey sample represents the gender and age distribution of Afghans in Iran, as well as their urban–rural and geographical distribution.

The urban–rural distribution of Afghans in Iran can also be explored based on their origins and where they have lived most of their lives. Some Afghans in Iran originate from urban areas, and others come from rural areas. About two thirds (69%) of all respondents had lived most of their lives in towns, cities or urban areas, and about one third (31%) had lived in rural areas or villages. Three out of five (62%) Afghanistan-born respondents originated from cities, as did four out of five (81%) Iran-born Afghans. Two groups with the largest share of respondents with urban backgrounds were married, employed men over 30 years old who came to Iran before 2003 and young, single women born in Iran. Those with rural backgrounds are often employed men born in Afghanistan who have low education levels and families in Iran.

Urban–rural differences exist regarding the status of Afghans in Iran. Among Afghan refugee respondents born in Afghanistan, almost two out of five (38%) had lived most of their lives in rural areas or villages, and slightly over three out of five (62%) lived in towns, cities and urban areas. Far fewer Afghan refugees born in Iran (one out of five, 19%) mentioned that they had lived most of their lives in rural areas or villages, and four out of five (81%) reported living in towns,

cities and urban areas. Large differences exist also among Afghan migrant respondents in terms of their country of origin. Of Afghan regular migrants (45% born in Afghanistan and 55% born in Iran), two out of five (20%) had lived most of their lives in rural areas or villages, and four out of five (80%) lived in towns, cities and urban areas. Many more (over two out of five, 45%) irregular Afghan migrants (65% born in Afghanistan and 35% born in Iran) had lived most of their lives in rural areas or villages, and, consequently, far fewer (a slight majority, 55%) lived in towns, cities and urban areas. The respondents' backgrounds vary among larger groups of Afghans such as refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants.

3.2 Afghan respondents' migration to and within Iran

3.2.1. Migration of Afghans to Iran

Some Afghan respondents had stayed in Iran for decades, whereas others had arrived only recently (see Table 3.3). Two out of three respondents (67%) were born in Afghanistan, and one out of three (33%) were born in Iran. As discussed in Chapter 2, most Afghans could obtain refugee status in Iran until 2003. Almost all refugee respondents born in Afghanistan (97%) came to Iran prior to 2003. In other words, most have stayed in Iran for decades. After 2003, in practice, new Afghan refugees in Iran are limited to children born to Afghan refugees already in Iran. Afghan refugees have been 'stuck' in Iran because they were not allowed travel abroad until 2018, when they were granted the legal right to make short visits to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, a few refugees have travelled without the proper consent of the Iranian authorities between Iran and Afghanistan or even to third countries, including those in the EU, without losing their refugee status. Refugees must renew their Amayesh cards annually, so they can stay outside Iran for almost two years without losing their status if their travel goes unnoticed by the Iranian authorities.

Three out of four regular migrants (73%) came to Iran before 2003. These include also Afghans who previously had refugee status in Iran but later obtained Afghan passports and Iranian residence permits and thus became regular migrants. In general, irregular migrants came to Iran later than Afghan refugees and regular migrants. One out of four (25%) irregular migrant respondents came to Iran before 2003. They may have had refugee status previously, but later lost it, or they may have been regular migrants who failed to extend their legal stay in Iran. After almost two decades in Iran, they are not yet regularised. Among irregular migrants living in large cities, substantially more (over one out of three, 35%) came to Iran less than five years ago (2015–2019). Far fewer regular migrants living in large cities (9%) came to Iran less than five years ago, and almost no refugees did so (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Afghan respondents' time of migration to Iran (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement		Refugees elsewhere		Regular migrants		Irregular migrants	
	all	N	all	N	all	N	all	N
2018–2019			0	0	8	9	10	22
2015–2017	0	0	1	1	4	5	28	59
2010–2014	1	1	3	6	8	9	26	54
2004–2009	2	5	1	1	6	7	10	20
1990–2003	21	53	54	110	47	55	16	34
1979–1989	69	172	35	71	21	24	8	16
Before 1979	7	17	6	13	6	7	2	4
Total	100	248	100	202	100	116	100	209

Afghans' arrival years and age relate to the development of different generations of Afghans in Iran, of which four already exist. The first generation of Afghans came to Iran as adults, mostly in the 1980s and 1990s, during the 'open door' policy. Many were from rural Afghanistan and had rather modest educational backgrounds. Some had children, often young ones, who were born in Afghanistan. Later, while staying in Iran, many first-generation Afghans had children who became the second-generation Afghans, almost all of whom were initially refugees (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2012).

Most second-generation Afghans were born to Afghan parent(s) in Iran during the period 1977–1992. In other words, they were 27–42 years old in 2019. These second-generation Afghans could receive refugee status in Iran because they were born in Iran to recognised refugees. In recent years, some younger second-generation Afghans changed their status to that of regular Afghan migrants to study at Iranian universities. Some also preferred to acquire Afghan passports to be able to visit other countries.

According to Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2008), the values and economic aspirations of first- and second-generation Afghans in Iran differ. First-generation Afghans had direct experiences in Afghanistan in the 1970s and even several decades before that. Many came to Iran in the 1980s and 1990s when the situation of Afghans and attitudes towards them were different in Iran compared with the situations in the early 21st century. Second-generation Afghans were brought up in Iran. In general, they experienced a more liberal social and religious environment than the first generation, but exceptions exist (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2012). Nevertheless, second-generation Afghans in Iran seldom have direct experiences of life in Afghanistan. If they do, it is often connected to years of major conflict in Afghanistan.

Third- and fourth- generation Afghans already reside in Iran. The third generation of Afghan migrants comprises the children of those Afghans who were very young when they came to Iran (usually with their parents or relatives) or who were born in Iran to Afghan parents. Third-generation Afghans were all

born in Iran between 1993 and 2015 and their parents were also born in Iran in some cases. In 2019, the oldest third-generation Afghans were around 25 years old, but the majority were younger, and the youngest were pre-school age. Some had direct connections to Afghanistan, and a few had visited the country, but the majority had not. As discussed above, to study in Iran, refugees must become regular migrants, so an increasing number of third-generation Afghans do so. Some third-generation Afghans, specifically those born to mixed marriages between Afghans and Iranians, can and have become Iranian citizens.

Looking forward to the 2020s, the fourth generation of Afghan migrants in Iran are the grandchildren of those Afghans who were very young in the late 1970s or who were born in Iran in the 1980s. Fourth-generation Afghans were born in the 2010s in Iran, so in 2019, they were babies or very young children. They were born into a world with widespread Internet access, so they will grow up with digital access to Afghanistan and other countries. This might make their experiences and attitudes different than those of the earlier generations of Afghans in Iran.

Afghans' intentions in coming to Iran also differed. Some aimed from the beginning to remain in Iran permanently. Others aimed to stay in Iran for a period and return to Afghanistan later. Some Afghans also intended to transit through Iran to a third country. In general, in all studied groups, a slight majority (51–58% of respondents) initially intended to stay in Iran for a time and then to return to Afghanistan (see Table 3.4). These respondents included individuals who arrived in Iran during the period 1979–2003 and thus could easily receive refugee status. However, after several decades, they remain in Iran. Almost two out of five (38%) current refugees who decided to migrate to Iran before 2003 intended to remain permanently in Iran from the beginning. In general, few respondents came to Iran with the intention of moving to a third country (i.e. not Iran or Afghanistan). If such migrants did come to Iran, many had probably already left the country by 2019. The proportion of such respondents was largest (22%) among irregular migrants consider moving further—and many of these migrants came to Iran only recently.

Table 3.4. Afghan respondents' migration intentions after deciding to come to Iran (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement		Refugees elsewhere		Regular migrants		Irregular migrants	
	all	N	all	N	all	N	all	N
To stay in Iran			38	82	28	44	28	54
To stay in Iran and then return to Afghanistan			51	110	58	92	52	105
To move to other country than Iran			12	27	16	26	22	45

In an open question, almost half (46%) of respondents mentioned war and insecurity in Afghanistan as their main reasons for coming to Iran. Other main

reasons included unemployment, poverty and Afghanistan's generally unfavourable financial situation (13%); the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (10%); and family-related issues (4%). Political reasons drove most Afghans to move to Iran. However, some Afghans indicated mixed reasons for migration, including political, economic and social factors. Economic reasons for migrating to Iran were most common among the majority (52%) of irregular migrants.

Afghans expressed various economic, social and political reasons for choosing Iran over other countries when asked about this topic in a structural question (see Table 3.5). All Afghan groups described the same most significant factors (having very much or much importance) for migrating to Iran: war and insecurity in Afghanistan. The family's decision to move to Iran was very significant for three out of five (60%) Afghan refugees. However, compelling reasons to migrate to Iran differed among Afghan groups. For refugees living outside the guest settlements in Iran, the most significant factors were cultural and linguistic similarities between Afghanistan and Iran, which facilitated their migration and residence in Iran. For regular migrants, factors included having the same religion as Iranians. This was a very important topic for the majority of current refugees living in large cities in Iran. For irregular migrants, the most significant factor was the possibility of earning better salaries in Iran. Cultural or religious similarities had less importance for a much larger share (23–31%) of irregular migrants than for regular migrants (8–15%) or refugees (7–8%). Access to more amenities or better education opportunities also had less importance among irregular migrants compared with regular migrants and refugees.

Table 3.5. Importance of reasons for Afghan respondents' migration to Iran instead of another country (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	VM	M	S	No	VM	M	S	No	VM	M	S	No	VM	M	S	No
Have better earning possibilities					24	23	26	27	31	21	26	22	39	26	21	14
Access amenities, better education					29	26	24	21	27	27	27	19	17	20	23	40
Same religion with Iranians					58	22	12	8	45	25	15	15	31	17	21	31
Cultural and linguistic similarities					53	28	12	7	43	29	20	8	29	24	24	23
Having family or relatives in Iran					35	24	19	22	32	22	20	26	23	21	30	26
Family decided to move to Iran					60	17	10	13	54	17	10	19	29	14	10	47
Unemployment in Afghanistan					24	16	21	39	24	22	20	34	38	22	14	26
War and insecurity in Afghanistan					82	15	2	1	69	17	7	7	67	13	6	14

VM = very much important; M = much important; S = slightly important; No = not important

Thinking about remaining in Iran or aspiring to migrate elsewhere did not necessarily lead to action. However, these attitudes reflect Afghan migrants' thoughts as regards the continuity of their presence in Iran at the time of the survey (in 2019 for Afghans living in large cities and in 2017 for Afghans living in the guest settlements and other areas).

The respondents had different thoughts regarding whether to remain in Iran for the rest of their lives. Among all respondents, almost one out of three (30%) agreed that they will likely live in Iran for the rest of their lives, one out of three (34%) did not know how to answer this question and slightly more than one out of three (36%) disagreed with this statement. Answers also varied by gender, age, employment, legal status in Afghanistan, etc. (see Table 3.6). Comparing respondents (in 2019) agreeing to stay for the rest of their lives in Iran with those who did not agree on it, those who agreed had more often at least one Iranian friend among their close friends (65% vs. 59%), felt more often Iranians friendly toward him/her (49% vs. 31%) and well-treated in his/her current place in Iran (40% vs. 19%). Furthermore, comparing those respondents who agreed with those who did not agree to stay in Iran, of those, whose aim was to stay for the rest of their lives in Iran, more (30% vs. 12%) searched from the Internet and social media about places where to live in the future in Iran. Of these who think to stay in Iran, substantially fewer (27% vs. 56%) searched about places to live in Europe through the Internet and social media and fewer (42% vs. 57%) used these tools to follow the current situation in Afghanistan.

However, economic reasons were important. Grawert and Mielke (2018) highlighted how mobility and migration are unnecessary for those lower-class Afghans who can rely on translocal networks in Iran as a livelihood option. Various activities such as remittances, information exchanges about local (labour market) circumstances, hosting relatives and guiding them through necessary administrative and other activities help migrants' maintain their way of life in Iran without the need to migrate abroad.

To believe to remain in Iran for the rest of their lives (40% of refugees in guest settlements; 29% of refugees elsewhere; 25% of regular migrants; 24% of irregular migrants) was most commonly answered among employed but poorly educated refugees who came to Iran before 2003 and who did not leave immediate family members behind in Afghanistan. In addition, among the oldest (65 years or older) respondents, almost all refugees (94–97%) think they will remain in Iran, as do a great many (83%) of the oldest regular migrants. Furthermore, having friends, feeling treated well and considering Iranians friendly also matters for Afghans thinking to stay or not to stay in Iran.

Those who disagreed that they would remain in Iran for the rest of their lives (and therefore think that they will migrate away from Iran) comprised 25% of refugees in the guest settlements, 32% of refugees elsewhere, 41% of regular mi-

grants, and 53% of irregular migrants. They were most often relatively young, employed irregular male migrants who resided in large cities and had family in Afghanistan. Another group was young, single, childless Afghan women who originated in cities and had no family in Afghanistan. Many of them were employed, one third attended university and most came to Iran before 2003. Among irregular young adult immigrants, five out of six (83%) did not think they would remain in Iran. Most such respondents intended to travel either to Afghanistan (see Section 3.2.2) or to the EU (see Section 3.2.3).

Table 3.6. Afghan respondents who think they will live in Iran for the rest of their lives (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N
Total	40	35	25	503	29	39	32	652	25	34	41	433	24	23	53	338
Men	40	32	28	255	28	39	33	309	26	33	41	210	22	18	60	231
Women	40	37	23	248	28	41	31	338	24	35	41	222	28	35	37	105
15–18 years	23	42	35	65	21	39	40	57	20	51	29	35	19	26	55	38
19–29 years	36	33	31	146	21	41	38	301	22	28	50	230	23	20	57	153
30–49 years	37	36	27	198	32	42	26	197	24	41	35	130	19	29	52	99
50–64 years	61	32	7	62	47	28	25	76	48	28	24	25	45	22	33	40
65+ years	68	29	3	31	61	33	6	18	58	25	17	12	0	17	83	6
Unmarried	32	47	31	202	22	36	42	288	17	33	50	221	18	21	61	143
Married	46	26	22	287	34	42	24	360	32	36	32	211	28	25	47	193
With children in Iran	48	31	21	258	39	38	23	163	29	41	30	59	45	22	33	78
With family in Afghanistan					26	44	30	196	21	37	42	164	13	23	64	208
Employed	37	33	30	279	26	39	35	344	24	32	44	238	24	22	54	230
Unemployed / inactive					32	39	29	282	25	36	39	176	18	26	56	93
Only elementary education					34	39	27	143	31	38	31	78	19	21	60	101
Attended university	32	34	34	35	17	46	37	65	19	27	54	177	11	29	60	28

A = agree; DK = don't know; D = disagree; N = number of respondents

In the 2019 survey, respondents were asked whether higher salaries than they currently receive would make them want to stay in Iran. In general, a higher salary was not a key trigger for the majority of Afghans to remain in Iran. Slightly more than two out of five (43%) employed respondents agreed that a higher salary would make them want to stay in Iran, one out of four (24%) did not know to answer this question and one out of three (33%) disagreed with this statement. Those for whom a higher salary would be a significant compelling factor to stay in Iran included married Afghan respondents with urban backgrounds and family, friends and education in Iran.

Almost half of refugees living outside the refugee settlements (48%) agreed that a higher than salary would make them want to stay in Iran; one out of four (25%) did not know, and one out of four (27%) disagreed with this statement. Among regular migrants, slightly more than two out of five (43%) agreed, one

out of four (26%) did not know and almost one out of three (31%) disagreed. Among irregular migrants, slightly more than two out of five (44%) agreed, one out of six (17%) did not know and two out of five (39%) disagreed.

The Iranian currency lost value against the Afghan currency in 2018. In January 2018, one Afghan Afghani was worth 630 Iranian Rial, but the rate was one to 1,440 in December 2018 and one to 1,700 in December 2019—then the worth of Rial was 37% of that of Afghani two years before. The currency devaluation impacted many Afghans living in Iran rather strongly because it became more difficult to earn enough to send remittances from Iran to Afghanistan. In 2019, almost two out of three (total 64%; 37% fully; 27% partly) refugee respondents agreed that they considered moving from Iran to another country after the currency devaluation. Opinions were similar among regular migrants (total 64%; fully 35%; partly 29%) and irregular migrants (total 62%; fully 39%; partly 23%).

The currency devaluation in 2018 had the largest impact on consideration of outmigration from Iran among unmarried young adult employed Afghans originating from cities. Another group consisted of married Afghan men over 30 years of age who came to Iran before 2003 and had low education levels. The currency devaluation had the least impact on married, childless Afghan refugees who were born in Iran, lived in large Iranian cities and had low education levels. Another such group consisted of employed regular and irregular migrants who were younger than 50 years old and lived in Iran without children. Many of them had attended university.

Some Afghans decided to migrate from Iran eventually. They described various different reasons and impacts when making their migration decisions (see Table 3.7). However, their decisions have not yet been actualised, i.e. all respondents still live in Iran. For Afghan irregular migrants who decided to migrate from Iran, the most commonly expressed reason (85% yes; 10% partly) for leaving Iran was difficulty securing an Iranian residence permit. Finding a job with a better salary in a new destination country was a compelling factor expressed by many (83% yes; 8% partly) such respondents. Many current irregular Afghans would like to become permanently regularised in Iran and have sufficient employment to sustain their lives in Iran. The least important reason for them was having immediate family in the country abroad (26%, supposedly most did not have family there).

For Afghan regular migrants who decided to migrate from Iran, the most commonly expressed important reason for doing so (77% yes; 18% partly) was difficulty in securing an Iranian residence permit. Having higher income in the destination country was mentioned by many (80% yes, 13% partly) such respondents. The least important reason was having immediate family in that country (27%, i.e. they most likely did not have family there). For Afghan refugees who decided to migrate from Iran, the most commonly expressed important reason

(80% yes; 13% partly) was to provide a better future for their children in the destination country. Half of them also mentioned having immediate family in the destination country (34% yes; 18% partly). The least important reason was having friends and relatives in the destination country (32% yes; 29% partly).

Table 3.7. Importance of reasons for Afghan respondents' decision to migrate from Iran (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	Yes	Partly	No	N	Yes	Partly	No	N	Yes	Partly	No	N	Yes	Partly	No	N
Difficulties in residence permit in Iran				80	14	6	598	77	18	5	410	85	10	5	240	
Better future for my children in the destination country				80	13	7	589	81	11	8	407	74	14	12	236	
Find a job with better revenue in the destination country				81	13	6	598	80	13	7	407	83	8	9	236	
My immediate family (parents, brother/sister or children) in the destination country				34	18	48	586	27	18	55	402	26	17	57	236	
Having friends and relatives in the destination country				32	29	39	577	31	24	45	391	28	21	51	236	

Yes = important; Partly = partially important; No = not important; N = number of respondents

3.2.2. Migration of Afghans within Iran

A major structural condition that regulates the location of all Afghans in Iran is the designation of provinces and areas in which Afghans can and cannot reside (see Figure 3.1). Furthermore, general national policies direct the Afghan population's migration, creating factors that push and pull them towards specific urban and rural areas. Afghan refugees and regular migrants can choose their location in Iran, but only within areas designated by the law. In addition, the migration of Afghan refugees living in guest settlements is strongly regulated. For example, in some guest settlements, refugees need permission to move in or out. In others, the inhabitants can leave the settlement freely but need permission to leave the province or Iran (usually to travel to Afghanistan). However, Afghans living in guest settlements account for only 2–3% of all Afghans in Iran.

It is challenging to study the actual migration of all Afghans in Iran because the majority are irregular migrants about whom the authorities have less information. Seasonal labour migrants (workers) from Afghanistan migrate for weeks to months to specific sites in Iran where their workforce is in demand—for example, during harvest seasons. Migration also affects areas in need of workers in heavy industries and construction, such as large cities.



Figure 3.1. Restricted areas (“no-go areas”) in Iran, in which Afghans and other foreign nationals are not entitled to live or travel without specific permission.

According to the 2016 Iran Population Census, the Afghan population accounted for 2.0% of Iran’s total population and 95.7% of all foreigners in Iran (see Table 3.8). The largest Afghan population lived in Tehran province (515,567; 33% of all Afghans

and 31% of those younger than 15 years old counted in the census). This was followed by Razavi Khorasan (219,442; 14% of all Afghans and 13% of young Afghans in Iran), Isfahan (183,124; 12% of all Afghans and 13% of young Afghans in Iran) and Kerman (125,411; 8% of all Afghans and 9% of young Afghans in Iran). The remaining third (33%) of Afghans lived in other provinces (Statistical Center of Iran 2016). Due to regulations restricting the presence of foreign nationals in many areas of Iran, almost no Afghans lived in 13 out of 31 provinces. The share of Afghans counted in the census was 1–3% in seven provinces and over 3% in six provinces; the proportion was highest in Qom (7.5%; Table 3.8). Qom hosts a Shia Muslim holy shrine and religious schools (Hawza) in which some Afghans study. According to the 2016 Iran Population Census, from 2011 to 2016, the number of Afghans in Iran rose by 9.1% (131,466 persons), including an 11.3% increase in Tehran (52,377 persons). However, this census probably accounts for less than half of all Afghans in Iran. In addition, it does not provide information about the migration of Afghans within Iran.

Table 3.8. Afghans in Iran according to Iran's Population Census of 2016.

Province	Total population	Foreign nationals	Afghan nationals	Afghans' share of population	Afghans' share of foreigners
Alborz	2,712,400	84,805	84,321	3.1	99.4
Ardabil	1,270,420	74	35	0.0	47.3
Bushehr	1,163,400	30,286	29,691	2.6	98.0
Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari	947,763	106	91	0.0	85.8
East Azarbaijan	3,909,652	342	139	0.0	40.6
Fars	4,851,274	110,098	109,247	2.3	99.2
Gilan	2,530,696	425	309	0.0	72.7
Golestan	1,868,819	18,782	18,273	1.0	97.3
Hamedan	1,738,234	444	217	0.0	48.9
Hormozgan	1,776,415	26,107	24,195	1.4	92.7
Ilam	580,158	1734	29	0.0	1.7
Isfahan	5,120,850	186,390	183,124	3.6	98.2
Kerman	3,164,718	126,106	125,411	4.0	99.4
Kermanshah	1,952,434	883	47	0.0	5.3
Khuzestan	4,710,509	11,432	6,290	0.1	55.0
Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad	713,052	1,559	1,503	0.2	96.4
Kurdistan	1,603,011	450	18	0.0	4.0
Lorestan	1,760,649	331	99	0.0	29.9
Markazi	1,429,475	29,650	29,257	2.0	98.7
Mazandaran	3,283,582	2,749	2,623	0.1	95.4
North Khorasan	863,092	127	93	0.0	73.2
Qazvin	1,273,761	18,686	18,401	1.4	98.5
Qom	1,292,283	120,028	96,367	7.5	80.3
Razavi Khorasan	6,434,501	232,671	219,442	3.4	94.3
Semnan	702,360	35,544	35,409	5.0	99.6
Sistan and Baluchestan	2,775,014	29,676	26,846	1.0	90.5
South Khorasan	768,898	5,075	5,045	0.7	99.4
Tehran	13,267,637	525,033	515,567	3.9	98.2
West Azarbaijan	3,265,219	951	107	0.0	11.3
Yazd	1,138,533	53,643	51,743	4.5	96.5
Zanjan	1,057,461	201	40	0.0	19.9
Total	79,926,270	1,654,388	1,583,979	2.0	95.7

Source: Statistical Centre of Iran (2016).

Among all survey respondents, few Afghans did not plan to migrate to Afghanistan or elsewhere abroad. Three groups were keen on staying in Iran. One consisted of Afghans who have settled their lives firmly in Iran. These respondents were 50–64 years old, came to Iran more than 20 years ago from Afghan villages, and had family members in Iran. Another group consisted of younger family-oriented Afghans with spouses and children in Iran. Most originated from cities and had spent 10–20 years in Iran. The third group consisted of irregular migrants who came to Iran after 2003, had low education levels and had immediate family in Afghanistan whom they needed to support by being (working) in Iran.

Despite strong regulations regarding the provinces and areas in which Afghans can reside, Afghans migrate and aspire to migrate within Iran. Only a slight majority (54%) of respondents preferred to remain in the Iranian province in which they lived at the time of survey (2017 or 2019). The survey analysed the migration aspirations of Afghans in Iran in various ways.

First, the migration aspirations from one Iranian province to another were measured by counting the share of respondents who preferred to live in the same or a different province than where they lived at the time of the survey. The smallest outmigration potential of Afghans (by respondents' preferred provinces) was in the Razavi Khorasan province, which three out of four (77%) respondents mentioned is their most preferred province in Iran. The largest outmigration potential was among respondents who lived in the Kerman province, with three out of four (77%) respondents indicating a province other than Kerman as their most preferred province in Iran.

Second, respondents indicated their most-preferred provinces and cities. For the provinces in Iran, one out of three (34%) respondents mentioned Tehran, followed by Razavi Khorasan (33%) and Isfahan (11%). For the cities in Iran, one out of three (33%) mentioned Tehran, followed by Mashhad (31%) and Isfahan (10%). Refugees living in guest settlements most often mentioned Mashhad (36%), followed by Tehran (16%), Isfahan (6%) and Ahvaz (6%). The respondents living in large Iranian cities most often mentioned Tehran (41%), Mashhad (29%) and Isfahan (11%). The respondents living in other areas (mostly rural regions) most often mentioned Mashhad (38%), followed by Tehran (14%).

Third, the Afghans responded where they would like to be in three years (i.e., 2020 for the 2017 respondents in guest settlements and mostly rural places and 2022 for the 2019 respondents in large cities). This was a question about their near-term futures. Of all the Afghans who responded to this question, two out of five (38%) mentioned Iran. Those who mentioned a particular destination in Iran, most often named Mashhad: it was the preferred future destination for one out of three (33%).

Fourth, Afghans selected from a list of Iranian cities as potential living places (Table 3.9). The most-desired cities for living (answering “yes” to the ques-

tion) were Mashhad (64%), Tehran (55%) and Isfahan (33%). The cities most often mentioned as places the respondents would not like to live (answer “no”) were Birjand (73%), Semnan (69%) and Tabriz (68%; see Table 3.9). The respondents’ current provinces impacted the answers because many mentioned cities that were in the same provinces where they lived.

For Afghan refugees in guest settlements, the cities they most wished to live in Iran were Mashhad (73%), Tehran (45%) and Shiraz (42%). For Afghan refugees elsewhere in Iran, these were Mashhad (59%), Tehran (58%) and Isfahan (34%). For regular Afghan migrants, these were Mashhad (63%), Tehran (62%) and Isfahan (36%). For irregular Afghan migrants, these were Mashhad (61%), Tehran (60%) and Isfahan (32%). Of those respondents who lived in the Mashhad urban region, almost all (94%) a wish to live in Mashhad. Of those respondents who lived in the Tehran urban region, six out of seven (85%) expressed a wish to live in Tehran. Of those respondents who lived in the Isfahan urban region, four out of five (79%) expressed a wish to live in Isfahan. Of those respondents who lived in the Kerman urban region, two out of five (41%) expressed a wish to live in Kerman.

Table 3.9. Afghan respondents’ wishes to live in selected cities in Iran (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement					Refugees elsewhere					Regular migrants					Irregular migrants				
	Y	M	No	DK	N	Y	M	No	DK	N	Y	M	No	DK	N	Y	M	No	DK	N
Mashhad	73	4	21	2	513	59	15	21	5	594	63	15	18	4	400	61	11	21	7	318
Tehran	45	12	38	5	501	58	16	23	3	610	62	16	21	1	407	60	10	27	3	325
Isfahan	32	13	46	9	492	34	13	46	8	567	36	17	39	8	374	32	11	46	11	304
Shiraz	42	8	41	9	497	17	14	55	14	561	22	18	48	12	374	24	10	53	13	305
Karaj	18	13	54	15	488	16	16	58	10	554	23	19	47	11	378	14	12	59	15	301
Kerman	22	9	60	9	493	8	6	72	14	569	9	7	71	13	373	21	4	60	15	299
Tabriz	10	12	62	16	492	6	8	73	13	555	8	10	68	14	376	4	7	71	18	300
Ahvaz	28	11	46	15	490	5	5	76	14	553	4	6	76	14	371	6	4	72	18	299
Yazd						4	6	75	15	536	5	7	75	13	374	6	6	71	17	230
Saveh						5	9	69	17	534	5	11	70	14	373	4	10	69	17	231
Semnan	23	9	55	13	498	4	6	76	14	554	3	7	76	14	374	4	6	70	20	301
Birjand	8	7	66	19	490	2	6	76	16	553	2	6	77	15	375	4	7	70	19	298

Y = yes; M = maybe; No = No; DK = don’t know; N=number of respondents

Fifth, the respondents answered whether they would like to move to the capital, Tehran. Large capital cities usually attract immigrants. Of all the Afghan respondents living outside Tehran, one out of three (31%) agreed they would like to move to Tehran, whereas a half of the respondents (50%) disagreed. Young adults (19–29 years old) aspired migration to Tehran slightly more than other age groups. In particular, 50–64 and 19–29-year-old refugees from guest settlements wished to migrate to Tehran. Those who least wished to move to Tehran were the oldest regular migrants and the refugees living elsewhere than in guest settlements (see Table 3.10). Again, migration aspirations do not necessarily mean that the respondents would move to Tehran.

Thus, Afghans living in Mashhad did not aspire to move to other places in Iran and very few of those living in the Tehran urban region. The majority of Afghans living outside Tehran did not aspire to migrate to Tehran. However, the major Afghan migration potential to Tehran was from the smaller Iranian cities, towns and rural areas but not from Mashhad and not much from Isfahan.

Table 3.10. Afghan respondents wishing to move to Tehran (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N
15–18 years	38	14	48	69	21	21	58	33	30	5	65	20	33	15	52	27
19–29 years	44	14	42	153	20	30	50	180	27	22	51	133	32	16	52	99
30–49 years	39	12	49	203	20	19	61	113	25	20	55	69	29	31	40	67
50–64 years	53	12	35	60	26	19	55	42	42	25	33	12	19	19	62	26
65+ years	37	10	53	30	9	36	55	11	0	80	20	5	25	50	25	4
Total	42	13	45	515	21	25	54	379	27	21	52	239	30	21	49	223

A = agree; DK = don't know; D = disagree; N = number of respondents

3.3 Afghan respondents' (return) migration and migration aspirations to Afghanistan

3.3.1. Migration to Afghanistan

Afghans living in Iran make 3–4% of the total population in Iran and they would be 8–9% of that in Afghanistan. It is nationally and locally important to consider their migration aspirations (i.e., whether refugee, regular or irregular Afghan migrants in Iran migrate and/or aspire to migrate to Afghanistan). For Afghans in Iran, migration to Afghanistan is one possibility when considering migration out of Iran.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Afghans' migration from Iran to Afghanistan takes place in various authorised and unauthorised ways, which are influenced by their legal categories in Iran. Overall, in recent years, around half a million Afghans have migrated annually from Afghanistan to Iran and almost the same amount of Afghans from Iran to Afghanistan (IOM 2019). Most of this is irregular migration, and some is repetitive cross-border mobility. Some is linear straight-forward migration from one country to another. Other, especially irregular migration, is circular, consisting of migration back and forth between Iran and Afghanistan.

As regards Afghan refugees in Iran, only a few thousand have migrated annually from Iran to Afghanistan in recent years assisted by the UNHCR program (UNHCR 2019b). Yearly, this is less than 1% of all Afghan refugees in Iran. So far such outmigration, 5–20 persons daily on average, had no major impact on their numbers in Iran. A larger impact on the number of Afghan refugees has been the current situation in which Afghan refugees acquire Afghan passports and change their statuses in Iran from refugees to regular migrants. The reason usu-

ally relates to the better possibilities to study in Iran, to be employed in Iran or Afghanistan or to get married in Iran. The balance between the factors to remain in Iran or to move to Afghanistan favours staying in Iran.

In practice, those Afghans who have migrated from Afghanistan to Iran after 2003 have not received refugee statuses. Therefore, by the time of the survey in 2019, the Afghan refugees in Iran who had lived in Afghanistan were at least 16 years of age. The majority of Afghanistan-born refugees in Iran were 35–55 years of age. The Afghan refugee return migrants must be at least 16 years old, and the majority are middle-aged or older. Other Afghan refugee (those born in Iran) migrants from Iran to Afghanistan are not return migrants because they have never lived in Afghanistan.

Until recently, it was not possible for Afghan refugees to officially visit Afghanistan from Iran without the fear of losing their refugee statuses. Therefore, only a very few risked their stable refugee positions by visiting Afghanistan. If they visited Afghanistan, they preferred to do it without notifying the authorities. Limited contacts and possibilities to gain direct knowledge and experiences of the current life in Afghanistan influence migration aspirations and constrain the migration decisions of these Afghans. With the new legislation, visits by Afghan refugees from Iran to Afghanistan are now possible. In general and until recently, only a few pushing factors have triggered such migrations.

Regular migration due to functional purposes takes place between Iran and Afghanistan as between many other neighbouring countries. An Afghan can migrate to Iran to study or work there and return to Afghanistan when studies and employment are over or when the temporary residence permit expires. It can be estimated that during the 2010s, more Afghans with residence permits have arrived in Iran than left the country. However, only very limited public information exists about such migration. In March 2017–March 2018, Iran issued 7,900 work-related visas for all foreign nationals (Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare 2018). On average, this would make 20–30 daily work-related arrivals by foreign nationals (including Afghans) with visas in Iran.

While the regular migrations of Afghans and the migrations of Afghan refugees have been very small, a considerable forced or voluntary migration of irregular Afghans has taken place during recent years, approximately 400,000–500,000 annually. On average, 1,000–1,500 irregular Afghan migrants leave Iran daily, roughly equally between voluntary return migrants and migrants deported by the authorities. From 2012–2018, 3.7 million migrations occurred by irregular Afghans from Iran to Afghanistan (see Table 2.1; IOM 2015; IOM 2016; IOM 2017; IOM 2018). This does not mean the same number of Afghans would have migrated because some migrated from Iran to Afghanistan (and back to Iran) several times during these years. Nevertheless, the overall number of irregular Afghan migrants did not fundamentally change in these years. There is

a considerable unauthorised immigration of Afghans to Iran, on the average of 1,000–1,500 persons daily.

3.3.2. Migration aspirations to Afghanistan

As regards Afghans' migration aspirations, the respondents answered whether, when and where they would like to migrate (go back) to Afghanistan and whether they planned it. They also expressed their migration intentions, for example, their most preferred country and potential pushing and pulling factors for migration. The respondents living in larger cities in 2019 also mentioned whether the loss of Iran's currency value from 2018–2019 had an impact on their migration intentions.

Of the respondents, more than one out of three (36%) would like to go back to Afghanistan, one out of four (26%) did not know about it and more than one out of three (38%) preferred not to go back to Afghanistan. The oldest, employed and married irregular migrants most commonly agreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan. Most respondents who disagreed were refugees from guest settlements: unmarried, 30–49 years old and/or women (see Table 3.11).

From the refugee respondents living in guest settlements, those who most agreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (38% of respondents) were employed, married men having spouses and child(ren). Usually they had rural origins, low education levels and they did not like to live in their current provinces in Iran. Of refugees living elsewhere in Iran (outside the refugee settlements), those who most agreed with a wish to migrate to Afghanistan (28% of respondents) were unemployed young women of urban origins, who were without children and who came to Iran before 2003. Another group consisted of employed married men more than 30 years of age, who came to Iran before 2003. Initially, they did not come to Iran to move to a third country or stay in Iran but to return to Afghanistan—however, they still lived in Iran.

Regular migrants usually need to go back to Afghanistan because of temporary residence permits in Iran. However, many can extend their residence permitting visas for nearly unlimited times. Of regular migrants, those who most agreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (35% of respondents) were well-educated, unmarried young adults (female and male) with urban backgrounds. They do not want to stay in Iran and also might consider the EU as a migration destination. Of the irregular migrants, those who most agreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (50% of respondents) were relatively young employed men, the majority of whom originated from villages in Afghanistan and who came to Iran after 2003. They had family back in Afghanistan, and, initially, they came to Iran with motivations to return home (see Table 3.11).

On the contrary, from the refugee respondents living in guest settlements, those who most disagreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (i.e., they would

not like to migrate to Afghanistan; 46% of respondents) were usually women from urban backgrounds without relatives in Afghanistan. They were satisfied with the Iranian provinces where they lived. Their initial ideas to migrate to Iran were to settle down, facilitated by a similar culture and religion in Iran. Of the refugees living elsewhere in Iran, those who most disagreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (39% of respondents) were young, single, childless adults without families in Afghanistan. They equally considered Iran and the EU as possible future destinations. Of regular migrants, most disagreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (34% of respondents) were young childless Afghans born in Iranian cities—a third of them had attended university in Iran. Of irregular migrants, those who most disagreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan (28% of respondents) were young, employed, Afghanistan-born men, who had immediate family back in Afghanistan and who came to Iran after 2003 (see Table 3.11).

Table 3.11. Afghan respondents who would like to go back to Afghanistan (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N
Total	38	16	46	516	28	33	39	645	35	31	34	413	50	22	28	338
Men	43	13	44	261	28	33	39	304	34	30	36	205	54	19	27	233
Women	34	19	47	255	28	33	39	335	36	31	33	207	40	29	31	103
15–18 years	42	21	37	65	28	28	44	58	21	32	47	34	50	13	37	38
19–29 years	36	20	44	152	28	33	39	298	38	29	33	219	48	21	31	155
30–49 years	34	16	50	206	27	32	41	193	35	33	32	124	53	27	20	97
50–64 years	47	7	46	61	32	33	35	75	22	39	39	23	52	23	25	40
65+ years	53	7	40	30	39	39	22	18	42	25	33	12	83	17	0	6
Unmarried	30	19	51	208	28	32	40	284	37	31	32	215	43	22	34	143
Married	45	13	42	293	20	32	38	357	33	30	37	197	55	22	23	193
With children in Iran	43	12	45	263	28	28	44	159	33	29	38	55	48	25	27	77
With children in Afghanistan					38	35	27	190	43	29	28	156	49	26	25	207
Employed	38	16	46	285	26	34	40	337	33	34	33	233	55	20	25	230
Unemployed / inactive					31	32	37	282	39	26	35	168	40	29	31	94
Only elementary education					34	32	34	139	31	29	40	70	51	21	28	99
Attended university	50	28	22	36	28	46	26	65	42	30	28	174	24	35	41	29

A = agree; DK = don't know; D = disagree; N = number of respondents

Planning to migrate to Afghanistan is a further step towards actual migration. From the Afghan refugee respondents in guest settlements, almost one out of three (31%) planned to return to Afghanistan, while just under half (48%) did not. Much fewer (one out of seven, 14%) of the refugee respondents living elsewhere in Iran planned to return to Afghanistan, while the majority (56%) did not. Of the regular migrants, one out of four (24%) planned to return to Afghanistan, while two out of five (43%) did not. From the irregular migrants, more than a third (36%) planned to return to Afghanistan, and the same amount (36%) did

not. From the respondents in Tehran, one out of five (19%) planned to return to Afghanistan, while a half (48%) did not. Finally, from those in Mashhad, one out of seven (14%) planned to return to Afghanistan, while three out of five (59%) did not. The Internet and social media are tools connected to migration aspirations and planning. There is a slight difference among the Internet-using respondents as regards their migration aspirations to Afghanistan (i.e., between those who plan vs. do not plan to migrate to Afghanistan). Of those respondents, who plan to migrate to Afghanistan, substantially more (63% vs. 41%) agreed that they search information from the Internet and social media about the current situation in Afghanistan (23% vs. 36% disagreed to search such information and 14% vs. 23% did not know how to answer on this).

From the refugee respondents in guest settlements, those who most often planned to return to Afghanistan were married women with children in Iran. They originated from the countryside and were unsatisfied with the Iranian provinces in which they lived. Of the refugees living elsewhere in Iran, men with especially high education levels and originating from cities planned to go back to Afghanistan. They were pushed to Iran by war and family-related reasons, having initial ideas to later return to Afghanistan. They did not want to migrate to the EU nor stay in Iran, but higher salaries might motivate them to remain in Iran. Of the regular migrants, those who most often planned the return to Afghanistan were Iranian-born, employed, childless, young adults originating from cities and having high education levels. Very few considered staying the rest of their lives in Iran. Of the irregular migrants, Afghanistan-born, employed, married men, who originated from the countryside, most often planned to return to Afghanistan. They came to Iran due to unemployment in Afghanistan and possibilities of better earnings in Iran. They had families in Afghanistan and did not wish to remain in Iran or migrate to the EU (see Table 3.12).

On the contrary, from the refugee respondents living in guest settlements, those who did not plan to return to Afghanistan were employed men, who were more than 30 years old with low education levels. They thought to stay in Iran or migrate further to the EU. Of the refugees living elsewhere in Iran, those with such thoughts were most often childless, employed, urban-origin women with low to medium education levels. They were satisfied with their current provinces and did not have families in Afghanistan. Of the regular migrants, the fewest who planned to return to Afghanistan were Iran-born, employed, young adult refugees with high education levels. They were satisfied with their provinces and considered Iran and the EU as possible options for the future. Of the irregular migrants, the fewest who planned to return to Afghanistan were young, employed men originating from cities. They came to Iran to remain there or to migrate to another country, especially the EU. They were highly satisfied with their provinces, such as Mashhad and Tehran (see Table 3.12).

Table 3.12. Afghan respondents who plan to return to Afghanistan (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N
Total	32	21	47	276	14	30	56	648	24	33	43	430	36	28	36	309
Men	28	22	50	144	15	30	55	308	24	31	45	208	41	25	34	216
Women	36	20	44	132	12	30	58	334	23	36	41	222	25	33	42	91
15–18 years	44	33	22	9	15	26	59	58	14	29	57	35	27	15	58	33
19–29 years	36	15	49	47	13	33	53	297	25	34	41	228	42	24	34	135
30–49 years	27	21	52	141	14	25	61	197	26	33	41	130	37	33	30	92
50–64 years	33	22	45	54	16	36	48	75	20	32	48	25	22	34	44	41
65+ years	33	34	33	24	17	11	72	18	10	45	45	11	50	50	0	6
Unmarried	20	15	65	80	14	28	58	283	23	36	41	219	33	27	40	129
Married	36	24	40	186	14	31	55	361	24	31	45	210	38	28	34	178
With children in Iran	34	23	43	177	14	26	60	162	17	37	46	57	20	45	35	69
With children in Afghanistan					18	40	42	194	26	38	36	163	38	28	34	209
Employed	24	20	56	168	15	29	56	343	25	31	44	235	41	27	32	206
Unemployed / inactive					14	32	54	281	23	37	40	176	26	30	44	92
Only elementary education					16	29	55	143	25	19	56	75	41	21	38	101
Attended university	56	16	28	18	23	31	46	64	23	42	35	179	27	38	35	26

Y=Yes plan to return; M=maybe plan to return; No=Not plan to return; N=number of respondents

If an Afghan respondent planned to go back to Afghanistan, she or he also more often liked such a return. Of those respondents who planned to go back to Afghanistan, five out of six (84%) also agreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan; a few (7%) disagreed, and the remaining few (9%) did not know his or her feeling about it. On the other hand, of those respondents who agreed with wanting to go back to Afghanistan, slightly more than half (53%) planned such a return, one out of three (32%) maybe considered it and one out of six (15%) did not plan to go back to Afghanistan. Many would have liked to migrate to Afghanistan, but fewer planned it.

Migrating to Afghanistan connects to one's preferences. Of all the respondents, one out of five (19%) mentioned Afghanistan as the country in which he or she would most prefer to live in the world. Of the respondents with such opinions, four out of five (78%) agreed with a wish to go back to Afghanistan, and every second (51%) respondent planned to do so. Those, to whom Afghanistan was the most preferred country and who planned to return there, were most often irregular migrants or refugees. Typically, they were employed men, who were more than 30 years old and originated from the countryside. Many were married and had immediate family in Afghanistan. Most came to Iran with the intention to one day return to Afghanistan and did not consider remaining in Iran or migrating to the EU. The majority of them were unsatisfied with the provinces in which they lived.

The aspirations to stay in Iran or to migrate to Afghanistan also relate to different generations of Afghans in Iran, but there are also differences inside gener-

ations. Of the second- or third-generation Afghans, much fewer were interested in moving to Afghanistan. In general, of the young Afghan adult (15–29 years old) respondents, one out of seven mentioned Iran (13%) or Afghanistan (15%) as their most preferred country. Of these young Afghan adults, even fewer of those born in Iran mentioned Iran (10%) or Afghanistan (11%) as their preferred country. They were also less interested in migrating to Afghanistan or remaining in Iran, but three out of four (74%) considered, or may consider, the EU as a possible destination for living in the future.

However, of the respondents older than 50 years, approximately one out of three preferred Iran (31%) or Afghanistan (35%)—substantially more than the younger respondents. The majority were men, who originated from the countryside. They were often married, had children, and (part of) immediate families were in Afghanistan. Many were employed, and three out of four had very low education levels. Nevertheless, four out of five (81%) of these older respondents thought they would possibly—or for sure—stay the rest of their lives in Iran.

Of the respondents (in 2019) who planned to return to Afghanistan, few (35%) said exactly when they would return, which indicates they have not concretely thought about it or the return depends on many issues upon which they cannot decide. Of those, one out of five (19%) thought they would return to Afghanistan within one year, three out of five (60%) within 1–5 years and one out of five (21%) after 5 years.

Migration aspirations also connected the Afghan respondents' visits to Afghanistan in recent years. Of the respondents living in large urban areas in Iran, very few had visited Afghanistan more than twice (5%) in the last five years. One out of five (21%) had visited the country once, and three out of four (74%) had not visited Afghanistan in the past five years at all. The more often the respondent had visited Afghanistan, the more likely she or he planned to return to Afghanistan. Of those who had visited Afghanistan more than five times in the past five years, the majority (56%) planned to return to Afghanistan, and one out of four (25%) did not plan to return there. Of those who had not visited Afghanistan in the past five years, one out of five (19%) planned to return to Afghanistan, and the majority (52%) did not plan to return there (see Table 3.13).

Table 3.13. Migration aspirations of Afghans vs. visits to Afghanistan (%).

Visit to Afghanistan in the past 5 years	Migration to Afghanistan				Migration to the EU				Migration outside Iran			
	Yes	Maybe	No	N	Yes	Maybe	No	N	Yes	D know	No	N
Over 5 times	56	19	25	16	35	30	35	20	63	26	11	19
2-5 times	40	34	26	62	36	32	32	62	59	29	12	63
Once	27	37	36	267	29	39	32	268	50	33	17	266
No	19	29	52	957	34	30	36	967	36	36	27	965
Total	22	31	47	1302	33	32	35	1317	24	35	41	1313

3.4 Afghan respondents' migration and migration aspirations to elsewhere than Afghanistan or Iran

Afghans' migration from Iran to other countries than Afghanistan is complex. For most countries, Afghans need visas that are difficult to obtain. Therefore, Afghans' migrations to third countries are mostly irregular. There is, though, considerable (regular and irregular) migration of Afghans from Iran to Pakistan and back. Such circular migration (also between Iran and Afghanistan) is common as a survival strategy for many low-skilled Afghans in these mostly remote and peripheral areas (Mirlofti & Jahantigh 2016). Besides such mobility between neighbouring countries, Afghans are involved in asylum-related migration, especially to the EU. Scalettaris et al. (2019) argue that international (asylum-related) migration of Afghan young adults has become, among their community, a respected passage to adulthood.

Globally, Afghans are among the nations having a proportionally large share of population living outside the titular country. As mentioned, most live in Iran (approximately 3 million persons) and Pakistan (2.5 million persons). However, according to various sources and estimations, they also live in other nearby countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (0.3 million persons), Turkey (0.2 million persons) and Russia (0.15 million persons) and in many EU member states (0.5 million persons, including 0.26 million in Germany) and North America (0.2 million persons). Therefore, it is relevant to study the migration aspirations of Afghans in Iran, as regards Turkey, the EU and other Western countries. In 2015–2018, 445,600 asylum applications were presented in the EU member states by Afghans, making them the second largest group in the EU (Eurostat 2016; Eurostat 2019). It is unclear how many of them were Afghans from Iran.

Since the large asylum migration to the EU in 2015–2016, Afghans' migration experiences in their journeys to Europe have been addressed in many studies (see, e.g., IMO 2016b; Dimitriadi 2018; Scalettaris et al. 2019). The journeys of Afghans from Iran to the EU are very complex. Afghans have to illegally cross borders, and many have to use smugglers and subject themselves to various dangers (Dimitriadi 2018). Their intentions might be linear migration, for example, from Tehran to Berlin. Many kinds of migrants use the same routes to Turkey, and some continue further to Greece. However, many have immobile stages along the journeys. The initial transit country (such as Turkey) might become a destination, even for years (Jauhiainen & Vorobeva 2020). In these journeys, there are different Afghans mixed: those from Afghanistan with those from Iran or Pakistan. Some flee war and insecurity, others aim for better livelihoods and there are also migrants wishing to join their families and friends who already made the journeys, for example, to the EU. Some fail in the asylum process, return to Iran and later restart the journey. Others manage to do this journey within 1–2

years without losing their refugee statuses in Iran and finally decide to remain in Iran due to the impossibility of receiving asylum or residence permits in the EU.

In the latter 2010s, people of Afghan origin became the second-largest group of asylum seekers in the EU (Eurostat 2016; Eurostat 2019). Estimations and speculations have been presented about the migration potential of Afghans from Iran to the EU. For example, Iran's Minister of Interior, Rahmani-Fazli, claimed in September 2016 that, based on the surveys conducted by the ministry, 60% of Afghans in Iran wanted to migrate to European countries (Mehr News Agency 2016). It is unclear how wide and representative this survey was and whether it considered all kinds of Afghans in Iran, namely refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants.

In another study, Abbasi Shavazi et al. (2016) studied the intention of irregular migration to Europe among Afghans in Iran in 2010 and 2015. Based on a sample of 1,201 respondents, they claimed that "35% of them did not have any intention to migrate to other countries and preferred either to stay in Iran or return to Afghanistan. Around 39% of respondents considered European Countries for migration followed by Australia (22%)". Based on a survey in 2017 with 644 Afghan refugees and irregular migrants in Iran, Jauhiainen and Eyvazlu (2018) mentioned almost half of them hoped to migrate abroad, mainly to Europe and, to a lesser extent, Australia or Canada. However, their study focused mostly on Afghans in refugee settlements in Iran.

Leaving out the potential migration to Pakistan or other poorer countries close to Iran, Turkey could be a migration target for Afghans in Iran. In fact, in the latter 2010s, many Afghans migrated to Turkey. Some went there having Turkey as their migration destination, others considered it as a transit country towards on-migration to the EU. In 2019, of the Afghan refugee respondents living in Iran outside the refugee settlements, one out of eight (12%) planned to migrate to Turkey, one out of four (27%) maybe considered it and three out of five (61%) were not planning it (see Table 3.14). Of the regular Afghan migrants, the same amount (12%) planned to migrate to Turkey, three out of ten (30%) maybe considered it and three out of five (60%) were not planning it. Irregular migrants had the largest (one out of five; 20%) share of planning to migrate to Turkey; one out of four (25%) maybe considered it and slightly more than half (55%) were not planning it.

From all the survey respondents in 2019, approximately two out of five (43%) considered migration to Turkey (19% yes, 24% maybe, 40% no and 17% did not answer). Young, unmarried irregular migrants were the most keen to migrate to Turkey; whereas, very few of the respondents 50 years or older would migrate to Turkey. Of those who planned to migrate to Turkey, three out of five (61%) had family or friends in Turkey. Of those Afghan respondents who had family or friends in Turkey, one out of five (20%) for sure planned to move there, more

than one out of three (36%) maybe considered it and more than two out of five (44%) did not plan to move there even if they had family or friends there.

However, the abovementioned answers do not directly indicate if Turkey is the aspired destination because the main route to the EU for Afghans goes through Turkey. Of those respondents who were definitely planning to migrate to Turkey, more than three out of four (78%) planned for sure to migrate to the EU, one out of eight (13%) maybe considered it and a few (9%) did not plan to migrate to the EU. The overwhelming majority (91%) expressed that they could use Turkey as a transit country to the EU. Of those who maybe planned to migrate to Turkey, two out of four (39%) planned for sure to migrate to the EU, more than half (53%) maybe considered it and a few (9%) did not plan to migrate to the EU. Of all the Afghan respondents, only a few (4%) planned to migrate to Turkey and to remain there for sure.

Table 3.14. Afghan respondents planning to migrate to Turkey (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N
Total					12	27	61	627	12	30	58	433	20	25	55	268
Men					11	29	60	294	13	29	58	209	21	23	56	181
Women					12	26	62	328	11	31	58	223	19	28	53	85
15–18 years					14	22	64	58	17	36	47	36	33	15	52	27
19–29 years					14	31	55	297	14	29	57	229	28	28	44	116
30–49 years					8	28	64	184	8	34	58	130	15	28	57	82
50–64 years					12	18	70	68	8	24	68	25	6	14	80	36
65+ years					0	18	82	17	0	0	100	12	0	17	83	6
Unmarried					13	31	56	286	12	34	54	221	29	26	45	113
Married					10	25	65	337	11	27	62	211	14	23	63	153
With children in Iran					14	16	70	139	8	33	59	58	10	28	62	47
With family in Afghanistan					14	27	59	196	13	34	53	163	20	26	54	208
Employed					12	31	57	319	16	31	53	237	19	27	54	166
Unemployed / inactive					11	25	64	285	7	28	65	176	22	21	57	94
Only elementary education					13	24	63	142	14	31	55	77	16	27	57	100
Attended university					11	25	64	63	9	34	57	178	31	27	42	26

Y = Yes plan to migrate; M = maybe plan to migrate; No = Not plan to migrate; N = number of respondents

The migration of Afghans to the EU has been on the international agenda, especially from 2015 onward, when 1.26 million asylum applications were presented in the EU member states. Most Afghans travelled through Turkey to Greece, and many continued further to Germany. In 2015, in 13 of the 28 EU member states—including Germany, Finland and Sweden—Afghans were among the three largest groups to arrive (Eurostat 2016). In 2018, Afghans were among the three largest groups to arrive in nine EU member states, and the second largest group in the EU in total (Eurostat 2019).

Of the Afghan refugee respondents living in the refugee settlements in Iran, slightly more than one out of three (36%) planned (in 2017) to migrate to the EU, one out of five (20%) maybe considered doing so and more than two out of five (44%) were not planning to do so. Of the refugee respondents living elsewhere in Iran, almost one out of three (31%) planned (in 2019) to migrate to the EU (32% maybe; 37% not). Of regular migrant respondents, one out of three (34%) planned (in 2019) to migrate to the EU (37% maybe; 29% not). Of irregular migrant respondents, one out of three (33%) planned (in 2019) to migrate to the EU (20% maybe; 47% not; see Table 3.15). In all, about one out three Afghans thus planned to migrate to the EU; however, the future will show if these plans transform into a real migration.

In general, the largest share of those planning to migrate to the EU was among refugees and irregular migrants with high education levels, and young unmarried adults, as well as middle-aged men in guest settlements. The lowest share was among respondents 50 years or older, irregular migrants having children in Iran and refugees with high education levels living outside guest settlements. The intention to work in the EU is a main target for many who aspire to migrate there.

Table 3.15. Afghan respondents planning to migrate to the European Union (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N	Y	M	No	N
Total	36	20	44	523	31	32	37	654	34	37	29	430	33	20	47	337
Men	40	21	39	261	34	35	32	309	34	35	31	208	35	19	46	231
Women	33	18	49	262	28	31	41	340	34	38	28	221	28	22	50	104
15–18 years	36	15	49	66	36	31	33	58	31	40	29	35	33	11	56	36
19–29 years	36	27	37	150	34	36	30	300	39	39	22	228	45	21	34	154
30–49 years	44	21	35	211	28	29	43	200	31	36	33	129	23	27	50	100
50–64 years	22	9	69	64	23	31	46	75	24	32	44	25	15	13	72	39
65+ years	17	3	80	30	17	17	66	18	0	8	92	12	0	17	83	6
Unmarried	40	18	42	209	36	35	29	287	36	43	21	218	44	19	37	140
Married	33	21	46	297	27	30	43	363	31	31	38	211	25	21	54	195
With children in Iran	35	15	50	269	28	24	48	162	28	36	36	58	20	13	67	80
With children in Afghanistan					27	33	40	197	33	35	32	162	35	22	43	206
Employed	39	25	36	289	31	34	35	341	38	36	26	236	32	22	46	228
Unemployed / inactive					31	30	39	286	32	38	30	175	35	18	47	94
Only elementary education					29	28	43	143	30	30	40	76	33	21	46	100
Attended university	46	28	26	35	21	43	36	63	32	48	20	178	54	32	14	28

Y = Yes plan to migrate; M = maybe plan to migrate; No = Not plan to migrate; N = number of respondents

Comparing respondents agreeing to plan to migrate to the EU with those who did not agree on it, those who plan the migration to the EU felt less often that Iranians are friendly toward him/her (26% vs. 46%) and well-treated in his/her

current place in Iran (20% vs. 33%). However, both groups had almost equally at least one Iranian friend among their close friends (61% vs. 60%). Of the respondents, who plan to migrate to the EU, almost two out of three (64%) agreed that they search information from the Internet and social media about places to live in future in Europe (12% disagreed to search such information and 24% did not know how to answer on this). Of the respondents, who use the Internet but disagreed to plan to migrate to the EU, much fewer (one out of five, 19%) agreed that they search information from the Internet and social media about places to live in future in Europe (58% disagreed to search such information and 23% did not know how to answer on this). The Internet and social media are thus important for many Afghans in considering the potential migration to the EU.

The Afghan respondents said where they would like to be in three years from the time of the survey (i.e., in 2020 for refugees in refugee settlements and in 2022 for refugees elsewhere in Iran, regular migrants and irregular migrants). Of those who responded, almost two out of three (63%) mentioned a locality or country outside of Iran. Such locality or country was mentioned by over two out of three (71%) irregular migrants and slightly less refugees in guest settlements (60%), refugees elsewhere (61%) and regular migrants (62%).

Of those respondents who wanted to be abroad after three years (but not in Afghanistan), almost every second (46%) wanted to move to Europe (39% of the refugees in guest settlements, 48% of the refugees elsewhere, 50% of the regular migrants and 54% of the irregular migrants), one out of ten (10%) to Australia (20% of the refugees in guest settlements, 7% of the refugees elsewhere, 6% of the regular migrants and 5% of the irregular migrants), a few (8%) to North America (3% of the refugees in guest settlements, 11% of the refugees elsewhere, 13% of the regular migrants and 5% of the irregular migrants) and the rest, one out of four (26%), to another location abroad (34% of the refugees in guest settlements, 26% of the refugees elsewhere, 22% of the regular migrants and 18% of the irregular migrants). By another location abroad, the respondents mentioned geographically unspecified locations such as “an Islamic country”, “away from the current location”, “where I would have a job”, “anywhere”, etc.

Afghan respondents also indicated if they would seek residence permits in Finland, where Afghans make up the second-largest refugee community (see Table 3.16). Of all the respondents, almost one out of three (31%) answered yes to this question, more than two out of five (44%) said maybe, one out of five (21%) said no and a few (4%) did not answer. The respondents, who most often responded in the affirmative, were young, employed, Afghan men with some education levels. Half of them preferred European countries as destinations and planned migrations to the EU. Two out of five, nevertheless, said higher salaries would motivate them to stay in Iran. Of those who would potentially seek residence permits in Finland, five out of six (84%) hoped to work in Europe. In

addition, three out of five (62%) had at least some command of English, and a third (33%) had studied at universities. Furthermore, two out of five (40%) used the Internet on a daily basis in Iran, one out of five (21%) did so at least weekly but one out of five (22%) did not use the Internet in Iran at all, especially in the guest settlements. Those who did not consider seeking residence permits in Finland were married men with immediate family in Afghanistan. Of them, one out of two would like to return back to Afghanistan, and one out of three planned it. Nevertheless, more than two out of five (44%) considered staying in Iran and only one out of six (16%) wanted to migrate to the EU. Iran (33%) and Afghanistan (31%) were among the most preferred countries. The majority stated that higher salaries could motivate them to stay in Iran.

Table 3.16. Finland is a country in which the respondent might seek a resident permit (%).

	Refugees in guest settlement				Refugees elsewhere				Regular migrants				Irregular migrants			
	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N	A	DK	D	N
Total	44	36	20	511	27	53	20	645	31	53	16	426	26	39	35	338
Men	50	32	18	261	30	50	20	305	32	55	13	208	28	35	37	232
Women	38	41	21	250	26	55	19	334	31	51	18	217	22	46	32	104
15–18 years	36	46	18	67	36	41	23	58	43	46	11	35	14	46	40	37
19–29 years	50	35	15	151	29	51	20	299	31	55	14	225	30	38	32	155
30–49 years	49	35	16	203	25	60	15	193	31	50	19	129	29	34	37	98
50–64 years	38	30	32	60	22	55	23	74	25	63	12	24	15	50	35	40
65+ years	21	38	41	29	17	39	44	18	16	42	42	12	0	33	67	6
Unmarried	42	41	17	209	33	51	16	287	33	53	14	219	30	38	32	142
Married	47	32	21	286	23	55	23	354	30	52	18	206	22	40	38	194
With children in Iran	43	34	23	258	21	57	22	161	35	44	21	57	26	34	40	78
With children in Afghanistan					27	50	23	194	32	51	17	158	25	42	33	206
Employed	45	38	17	285	30	52	18	338	33	53	14	236	27	40	33	232
Unemployed / inactive					25	54	21	280	29	54	17	172	26	33	41	92
Only elementary education					24	55	21	141	31	55	14	75	26	44	30	99
Attended university	67	22	11	36	34	43	23	62	32	54	14	176	32	36	32	28

A = agree; DK = don't know; D = disagree; N = number of respondents

4. CONCLUSIONS

Afghans in Iran are of international, national and local interest. They include approximately 1 million officially recognised refugees, around 0.5 million authorised regular immigrants with visas and residence permits in Iran and around 1.5–2 million unauthorised irregular immigrants without proper rights to reside in Iran (UNHCR 2019). These Afghans make 3–4% of the population in Iran and would be 8–9% of the population in Afghanistan. It is important to consider whether refugee, regular and irregular Afghan migrants in Iran aspire to migrate and eventually migrate inside Iran, to Afghanistan or to third countries.

This research analysed the migration patterns of Afghan refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants in Iran and their migration aspirations inside Iran, to Afghanistan and to third countries. The empirical research is based on surveys with 2,009 Afghans in large urban regions, semi-urban and rural areas in Iran, as well as in guest settlements for Afghan refugees. The research was conducted by the scholars at the University of Turku (Finland), the Shahid Beheshti University (Iran) and the Sharif Policy Research Institute's Iran Migration Observatory at the Sharif University of Technology (Iran).

During the past few decades, the policies regarding Afghans have varied in Iran. The 'open door' policy welcomed Afghans to Iran since the late 1970s, but it later changed to a more selective refugee policy. In the early 2000s, the policies emphasising separation and segregation of Afghans in Iran evolved towards the policies in the 2010s supporting the Afghans' presence and integration into Iranian society and the access to public services in Iran.

International and national policies stabilised the number of Afghan refugees in Iran during the last two decades. However, the number of regular migrants has grown, mainly because former Afghan refugees became regular migrants with Afghan passports and visas for Iran. The number of irregular migrants considerably depends on the seasons (e.g., agriculture) and years (security and employment opportunities in Afghanistan and economy and employment opportunities in Iran). Much of the irregular migration is cyclical—people cross the border between Afghanistan and Iran and travel back and forth.

The migration of Afghans in Iran is mostly unknown because it is not properly documented. The population census measures the number of Afghans in Iranian provinces. However, the census does not indicate the Afghans' origins—Iran, Afghanistan or third countries—and which legal statuses these Afghans have in Iran. The 2016 Iran Population Census counted 1.6 million Afghans in Iran, while they might have been twice as many.

The majority of Afghans in Iran live in urban areas, such as the large urban regions of Tehran and Mashhad. The number of Afghans has grown substantially in the Tehran urban region. However, Afghans are also in rural areas, especially irregular seasonal labour migrants. A slight majority of the Afghans who

responded to the survey intended to migrate within Iran. Their most preferred locations were Mashhad and Tehran. Almost all Afghan respondents in Mashhad and Razavi Khorazan would like to remain there. From a list of major cities in Iran, the respondents were least interested to live in Birjand, Semnan and Tabriz.

Two out of five Afghan refugees in guest settlements thought they would live the rest of their lives in Iran, as did three out of ten refugees elsewhere in Iran and one out of four regular and irregular Afghan migrants. They were often 50–64 years old (usually they had family members in Iran and came to Iran from Afghan villages more than 20 years prior); young Afghan adults (particularly those with urban origins, living in refugee guest settlements with their spouses and children and having been in Iran for 10–20 years) or older regular and irregular migrants.

If Afghans aspire or need to migrate from Iran, they can consider Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and wealthier countries in the EU and elsewhere as migration destinations. However, such migration is challenging. Of the Afghan refugees in guest settlements, about two out of five and one out of four elsewhere in Iran would like to migrate to Afghanistan, and so answered one out of three Afghan regular migrants and a half of the Afghan irregular migrants. However, fewer respondents planned to migrate to Afghanistan, and even fewer will actualise this migration. The younger an Afghan in Iran is, the more likely she or he wants to migrate abroad, but very few younger Afghans want to migrate to Afghanistan, which they perceive as insecure.

The migration of Afghans to the EU is of international interest. Afghans have been the second largest community asking for asylum in the EU in recent years. Approximately one out of three Afghan respondents agreed that they plan to migrate to the EU, while slightly fewer did not agree with planning to migrate and the rest did not know about their plans. Proportionally, a high share of Afghan refugees and irregular migrants with high education levels, young unmarried adults and middle-aged men in guest settlements planned the migration to the EU. Very few wished to migrate to Turkey as their final destination country. Again, these migration aspirations and plans might not result in actual migration. Aspirations are time and place sensitive: positive developments in Iran reduce the migration of Afghans from Iran. Restrictive migration and asylum policies in Turkey, and especially in the EU, reduce the migration of Afghans and also how many of them reach the EU.

In conclusion, about 0.85–1 million (of all 2.2 million at least 15 years of age) Afghans in Iran plan to migrate out of Iran. About 0.6 million plan to migrate to Afghanistan and a further 0.28–0.4 million to the EU. Many of them have young children in Iran who will follow their parents' migration patterns. However, whether their plans will lead to actual migration from Iran depends on many

external factors, such as security and economic situations in Afghanistan, economic development in Iran and possibilities of reaching the EU. Around 1.6–1.85 million Afghans (including their 0.4–0.5 million children) are more prone to remain in Iran, or they do not express plans to leave Iran.

However, external factors push many Afghans to migrate out of Iran. For example, in 2018–2019, the international sanctions on Iran led to a substantial loss in the value of Iran’s currency and created economic challenges for many Afghans in Iran. In 2019, almost two out of three (62–64%) Afghan respondents were fully or partly affirmative that the currency devaluation outcomes made them think of migrating from Iran to another country. The devaluation had the largest pushing impact to outmigration among young, unmarried, employed Afghan adults originating from cities. Those, to whom higher salaries would be a significant pulling factor to stay in Iran, were married Afghans with urban backgrounds and family, friends and education in Iran. Furthermore, the growing geopolitical tensions in Iran in 2020 have an impact on Afghans migration aspirations, and eventually on their migration if these geopolitical situations aggravate.

The research-based results about Afghans in Iran are important to support Iranian authorities when designing efficient evidence-based policies that have a successful impact on enhancing the situations of Afghan individuals, their communities and the Iranian society as a whole; thus, research about the migration and migration aspirations of Afghans should be continued.

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6. AFGHANS IN IRAN: MIGRATION PATTERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Davood Eyvazlu
& Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh (jusaja@utu.fi)

More than 3 million Afghans—refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants—reside in Iran. They are a significant community whose migration and migration aspirations are of international, national and local interest and impact.

The research “Afghans in Iran: Migration Patterns and Aspirations” was conducted in cooperation with the University of Turku (Finland), the Shahid Beheshti University (Iran) and the Sharif Policy Research Institute’s Iran Migration Observatory at the Sharif University of Technology (Iran). Important support from Iran’s Ministry of the Interior, the Dean of the Sharif Policy Research Institute and the International Affairs Office of the Sharif University of Technology is acknowledged, as is the financial support of the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland (URMI research consortium, www.urmi.fi) and the Geography Section of the University of Turku.

The study’s main research questions are as follows: What are the migration patterns of Afghans in Iran, and what are the migration aspirations of Afghans—refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants in Iran—inside Iran, to Afghanistan and to third countries?

The analysis is based on earlier research findings, as well as on specific surveys and interviews conducted for this research in Iran in October 2017 and June–September 2019. In total, 2,009 persons with Afghan backgrounds (refugees, regular migrants and irregular migrants aged 15 years and older) responded to the surveys, and 116 Afghans and 54 stakeholders related to Afghans were interviewed.

In 2017, 644 persons with Afghan backgrounds from the Kerman, Razavi Khorasan and Khuzestan provinces responded anonymously to the survey. Of these Afghans, 546 lived in the Bani Najjar, Bardsir, Rafsanjan and Torbat-e Jam refugee guest settlements, and 98 lived elsewhere in the Kerman and Razavi Khorasan provinces. In addition, 72 Afghan refugees and irregular migrants were interviewed.

In 2019, 1,365 persons with Afghan backgrounds from the Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan and Kerman urban regions responded to the survey. In addition, 44 Afghans active in sociocultural and economic issues in Iran, such as students, businesspersons and NGO managers, were interviewed.

Furthermore, in 2017, interviews were also conducted with 54 stakeholders, such as representatives of the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA; located in Razavi Khorasan and Khuzestan) of the Ministry of the Inte-

rior and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; office in Mashhad), as well as public authorities in districts, municipalities and villages of the study areas, managers and council members in the four studied refugee guest settlements and other public authorities and private sector representatives.

All ethical research guidelines were followed rigorously, and all survey respondents remained anonymous. We are grateful to all the people who responded to our survey and allowed us to interview them. Research assistants helped collect and analyse the research material. The main researchers responsible for this report are Professor Jussi S. Jauhiainen (University of Turku), Dr Davood Eyvazlu (Sharif Policy Research Institute at the Sharif University of Technology) and Dr Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh (Sharif Policy Research Institute at the Sharif University of Technology).

According to the survey results, Afghans' intentions regarding living in Iran for the rest of their lives vary: two out of five Afghan refugees in guest settlements, three out of ten refugees living elsewhere in Iran, and one out of four regular and irregular Afghan migrants intended to stay. Among the respondents who aspired to stay in Iran, most were 50–64-year-old Afghans who came to Iran from Afghan villages more than 20 years prior and who have family members in Iran; young Afghan adults who lived in guest settlements with their spouses and children and who have spent 10–20 years in Iran; and the oldest regular and irregular migrants.

A slight majority of respondents intended to migrate within Iran, mostly to Mashhad or Tehran. Almost all respondents from Mashhad in the Razavi Khorasan province wanted to remain in their current location, as did five out of six respondents living in the Tehran urban region. However, international sanctions on Iran, which have resulted in the devaluation of the national currency, made almost two out of three Afghans in Iran think about migrating from Iran.

Roughly two out of five Afghan refugee respondents in guest settlements and one out of four Afghan refugee respondents elsewhere in Iran would like to migrate to Afghanistan. This is also the case for one out of three respondents among Afghan regular migrants and half of Afghan irregular migrants. However, fewer actually plan to return. In particular, the oldest employed and married irregular migrants aspire to migrate to Afghanistan. Those who least aspire to migrate to Afghanistan included unmarried, 30–49-year-olds and women refugees living in guest settlements.

Roughly one out of three Afghans hoped to move from Iran to Europe—typically single, employed Afghan men from Iranian cities—but such migration aspirations might not result in actual migration. Very few mentioned Turkey as their preferred destination. Younger Afghans in Iran are more likely to desire to migrate abroad, but very few young Afghan adults want to migrate to Afghanistan, which they perceive as insecure.

Among Afghans in Iran, around 1.6–1.85 million (including 0.4–0.5 million children) are likely to remain in Iran or did not express plans to leave Iran. Among Afghans in Iran (aged 15 years and older), about 0.85–1 million plan to migrate out of Iran. About 0.6 million would like to migrate to Afghanistan, and 0.28–0.4 million intend to migrate to the EU. Many of these potential migrants have young children in Iran whose migration depends on what their parents do. However, whether such plans lead to actual migration from Iran depends on many external factors.

International geopolitical tensions have grown in Iran in 2020, especially following the actions of the United States in Iraq in January 2020. The growing geopolitical and economic pressures on in Iran may make the country increasingly challenging and insecure for Afghans. This would decrease labour-related irregular migration from Afghanistan to Iran. The challenges in Iran increase the migration aspirations of Afghans to leave Iran. The potential migration destinations depend on Afghans' (perceived) opportunities. If Afghanistan is considered a viable option, more will aim to (return) migrate there. If Afghanistan is (perceived) economically and politically insecure, more Afghans—especially younger adults—will opt for migration through Turkey to the EU.

These research-based results about Afghans in Iran can support the design of efficient evidence-based policies that successfully impact individuals, communities and Iranian society as a whole, so research about the migration and migration aspirations of Afghans should be continued.

7. AFGAANIT IRANISSA: MUUTTOLIIKE JA MUUTTOHALUKKUUS

Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Davood Eyvazlu
& Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh (jusaja@utu.fi)

Yli kolme miljoonaa afgaania (pakolaisia, maahanmuuttajia ja ilman viranomaisten lupaa oleskelevia siirtolaisia) asuu Iranissa. He muodostavat merkittävän yhteisön, jonka muuttoliikkeellä ja muuttohalukkuudella on kansainvälistä, kansallista ja paikallista mielenkiintoa ja merkitystä.

Tutkimus “Afghans in Iran: Migration Patterns and Aspirations” (Afgaanit Iranissa: muuttoliike ja muuttohalukkuus) toteutettiin yhteistyössä Turun yliopiston (Suomi), Shahid Beheshti yliopiston (Iran) and Sharif teknologiayliopiston politiikan tutkimuslaitoksen Iranin muuttoliikeobservatorion (Iran) välillä. Hanketta tukivat Iranin sisäministeriö, Sharif teknologiayliopiston politiikan tutkimuslaitoksen dekaani ja Sharif teknologiayliopiston kansainvälisten asioiden osasto sekä taloudellista tukea antoivat Suomen Akatemian strategisen tutkimuksen neuvosto (tutkimuskonsortio URMI www.urmi.fi) ja Turun yliopiston maantieteen osasto.

Tutkimuksen pääkysymyksinä olivat: mitkä ovat afgaanien muuttoliikkeen muodot Iranissa ja mikä on Iranissa olevien afgaanien (pakolaiset, maahanmuuttajat ja luvattomat siirtolaiset) muuttohalukkuus Iranin sisällä, Afganistaniin ja kolmansiin maihin?

Analyysi perustuu aiempiin tutkimuksiin sekä kyselyihin ja haastatteluihin, jotka tehtiin tätä tutkimusta varten Iranissa lokakuussa 2017 ja kesä-syyskuussa 2019. Yhteensä 2009 taustoiltaan erilaista afgaania (vähintään 15-vuotiaat pakolaiset, maahanmuuttajat ja luvattomat siirtolaiset) vastasi kyselyyn, ja lisäksi haastateltiin 116 afgaania ja 54 muuta toimijaa, joiden toimenkuvaan afgaanit Iranissa kuuluivat.

Vuonna 2017 644 afgaania vastasi nimettöminä kyselyyn kolmessa Iranin maakunnassa (Kerman, Razavi Khorasan ja Khuzestan). Vastanneista 546 asui pakolaisille suunnatuissa erityisissä asuinpaikoissa (Bani Najjar, Bardsir, Rafsanjan ja Torbat-e Jam) ja 98 asui muualla Kermanin ja Razavi Khorasanin maakunnissa. Lisäksi haastateltiin 72 afgaanipakolaista ja luvatonta siirtolaista.

Vuonna 2019 kyselyyn vastasi 1365 afgaania Iranin suurilta kaupunkiseuduilta (Teheran, Mashhad, Isfahan ja Kerman). Lisäksi haastateltiin 44 afgaania, jotka ovat aktiivisia afgaanien yhteiskunnallisissa ja taloudellisissa asioissa Iranissa, kuten opiskelijoita, yrittäjiä ja järjestöjen edustajia.

Lisäksi vuonna 2017 haastateltiin myös 54 viranomaista ja muuta afgaaneihin liittyvää toimijaa. Heitä olivat muun muassa edustajat organisaatioista BAFIA (Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs: yksiköt Razavi Khorasanissa ja Khuzestanissa), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

yksikkö Mashhadissa) sekä julkisen ja yksityisen sektorin edustajia, pakolaiskeskusten johtajia ja niiden valtuuston jäseniä.

Tutkimuksessa noudatettiin tarkasti kaikkia eettisiä ohjeita, ja kaikki vastasivat kyselyyn nimettöminä. Olemme kiitollisia kyselyyn vastanneille ja haastatelluille. Tutkimusavustajat auttoivat aineiston keräämisessä ja analyysissä. Päättäjöinä tätä raporttia varten olivat professori Jussi S. Jauhiainen (Turun yliopisto), tohtori Davood Eyvazlu (Sharif teknologiayliopisto, politiikan tutkimuslaitos) ja tohtori Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh (Sharif teknologiayliopisto, politiikan tutkimuslaitos).

Kyselymme mukaan afgaanien halukkuus jäädä Iraniin loppuiäkseen vaihtelee. Tätä haluaa kaksi viidestä afgaanipakolaisesta pakolaiskeskuksissa, kolme kymmenestä pakolaisesta muualla Iranissa, ja joka neljäs afgaanimaahanmuuttaja tai luvaton siirtolainen. Ne afgaanit, jotka aikovat jäädä Iraniin loppuelämäkseen ovat useimmin 50–64-vuotiaita, jotka tulivat Iraniin Afganistanin maaseudulta yli 20 vuotta sitten ja joilla on nykyään perhe ja sukulaisia Iranissa. Toinen ryhmä koostuu afgaaneista, jotka ovat useimmin kotoisin kaupungeista, jotka ovat olleet Iranissa 10–20 vuotta ja elävät vaimon ja lasten kanssa pakolaiskeskuksissa. Kolmantena ryhmänä ovat iäkkäät maahanmuuttajat ja luvattomat siirtolaiset.

Hienoinen enemmistö vastaajista aikoo muuttaa Iranin sisällä, eniten suurkaupunkeihin Mashhadiin tai Teheraniin. Lähes kaikki vastaajat halusivat pysyä nykyisillä asuinalueillaan Mashhadissa Razavi Khorasanin maakunnassa ja näin toivoi viisi kuudesta vastanneesta Teheranin kaupunkiseudulta. Iraniin kohdistuneet kansainväliset pakotteet ovat aiheuttaneet Iranin valuutan arvon alenemisen, minkä seurauksena lähes kaksi kolmesta afgaanista Iranissa on alkanut miettiä muuttoa pois Iranista.

Noin kaksi viidestä vastaajasta pakolaiskeskuksissa ja yksi neljästä pakolaisesta muualla Iranissa halusi muuttaa Afganistaniin. Näin toivoi joka kolmas afgaanimaahanmuuttaja ja joka toinen luvattomista siirtolaisista. Vastanneista vähemmän kuitenkin suunnittelee muuttoa Afganistaniin. Erityisesti iäkkäät, työssäkäyvät ja avioituneet laittomat siirtolaiset haluavat muuttaa Afganistaniin. Vähiten muuttoa Afganistaniin halusivat pakolaiskeskuksissa asuvat naimattomat, 30–49-vuotiaat ja afgaaninaiset.

Noin joka kolmas afgaani haluaisi muuttaa Iranista Eurooppaan. Tyypillisesti he olivat naimattomia työssäkäyviä afgaanimiehiä Iranin kaupungeista. Muuttohalukkuus ei välttämättä johda muuttoon pois Iranista. Hyvin harvat mainitsivat Turkin toivottuna muuttokohteena. Afgaaneista nuoret aikuiset haluavat muita ryhmiä enemmän muuttaa pois Iranista, mutta harvoin turvattomaksi miellettyyn Afganistaniin.

Noin 1,6–1,85 miljoonaa (mukaan lukien 0,4–0,5 miljoonaa heidän lastaan) afgaania Iranissa aikoo jäädä Iraniin tai he eivät ainakaan ilmaise suunnitelmiaan

muuttaa pois sieltä. Iranissa asuvista vähintään 15-vuotiaista afgaaneista noin 0,85–1,0 miljoonaa henkilöä suunnittelee muuttoa pois Iranista. Heistä noin 0,6 miljoonaa haluaisi muuttaa Afganistaniin ja 0,28–0,4 miljoonaa pyrkii muuttamaan Euroopan unioniin. Monilla mahdollisista muuttajista on lapsia Iranissa, ja heidän muuttoonsa vaikuttaa se, mitä heidän vanhempansa tekevät. Yleises-tikin muuttosuunnitelmien toteutumiseen vaikuttavat monet ulkoiset tekijät.

Tutkimustulokset koskien afgaaneja Iranissa auttavat suunnittelemaan tutki-mustuloksiin tukeutuvaa tehokasta politiikkaa, jonka tuloksilla on myönteinen vaikutus afgaaniyksilöihin ja -yhteisöihin ja laajemmin Iranin yhteiskuntaan, joten tutkimusta koskien afgaanien muuttoliikettä ja muuttohalukkuutta tulee jatkaa.

8. مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران: الگوها و تمایلات مهاجرتی

یوسی اس. یاوهیانین؛ داود عیوضلو و بهرام صلواتی سرچشمه

(jusaja@utu.fi)

تعداد مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران (شامل پناهندگان، مهاجران نامتعارف و مهاجران متعارف) بیش از سه میلیون نفر می‌باشد. مهاجرت و تمایلات مهاجرتی جامعه مهاجران افغانستانی در مقیاس بین‌المللی، ملی و محلی دارای اهمیت و اثرات قابل توجهی است.

تحقیق "مهاجران افغان در ایران: الگوها و تمایلات مهاجرتی" با همکاری مشترک دانشگاه تورکو فنلاند با دانشگاه شهید بهشتی (ایران) در سال ۱۳۹۶ و پژوهشکده سیاستگذاری دانشگاه صنعتی شریف (رصدخانه مهاجرت ایران) (ایران) در سال ۱۳۹۸ انجام شده است. به منظور انجام این تحقیق حمایت‌های زیادی از سوی وزارت کشور ایران و همچنین امور بین‌الملل دانشگاه صنعتی شریف و رئیس پژوهشکده سیاستگذاری دانشگاه صنعتی شریف صورت گرفت. بعلاوه، حمایت‌های مالی این طرح تحقیقاتی از طرف شورای تحقیقات استراتژیک در آکادمی فنلاند (کنسرسیوم تحقیقاتی URMI: www.urmi.fi) و گروه جغرافیا دانشگاه تورکو فنلاند انجام شده است.

سوالات اصلی این تحقیق عبارتند از: الگوهای مهاجرتی مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران چه بوده است؟ تمایلات مهاجرتی مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران چیست؟ بطور دقیق‌تر، تمایلات پناهندگان، مهاجران متعارف و مهاجران نامتعارف افغانستانی ساکن ایران در ارتباط با مهاجرت آنها در ایران، به افغانستان و به کشورهای دیگر چیست؟

تحلیل‌های این طرح تحقیقاتی بر پایه‌ی یافته‌های مطالعات گذشته و بعلاوه یافته‌های حاصل از پیمایش میدانی و مصاحبه‌های این تحقیق در مهر ماه ۱۳۹۶ و خرداد تا شهریور ۱۳۹۸ است. در مجموع، ۲۰۰۷ نفر از مهاجران افغانستانی (حداقل ۱۵ ساله پناهنده، مهاجر متعارف و مهاجر نامتعارف افغانستانی) به سوالات پرسشنامه تحقیق پاسخ داده و در مجموع با ۱۱۶ نفر از مهاجران افغانستانی و ۵۴ نفر از ذی‌نفعان و مسئولان مرتبط با مهاجران افغانستانی مصاحبه انجام گرفت.

در پیمایش سال ۱۳۹۶، ۶۴۴ نفر از مهاجران افغانستانی در استان‌های کرمان، خراسان رضوی و خوزستان بدون ذکر نام خود به سوالات تحقیق پاسخ دادند. از مجموع این افراد ۵۴۶ نفر ساکن سکونتگاه‌های پناهندگان (مهمانشهر) بنی نجر، بردسیر، رفسنجان و تربت جام بوده و ۹۸ نفر از پاسخ‌دهندگان به پرسشنامه در سایر مناطق (اغلب روستایی) در استان‌های کرمان و خراسان رضوی سکونت داشتند. بعلاوه، ۷۲ پناهنده و مهاجر نامتعارف افغانستانی در سال ۱۳۹۶ مورد مصاحبه قرار گرفتند.

در سال ۱۳۹۸، ۱۳۶۵ مهاجر افغانستانی در مناطق شهری تهران، مشهد، اصفهان و کرمان به سوالات پرسشنامه پاسخ دادند. همچنین، ۴۴ نفر از فعالان اجتماعی - فرهنگی و اقتصادی افغانستانی در ایران، از جمله دانشجویان، فعالان اقتصادی، مدیران سازمان‌های مردم‌نهاد (NGO) و غیره مورد مصاحبه قرار گرفتند.

در سال ۲۰۱۷ همچنین با ۵۴ نفر از ذی‌نفعان و مسئولان از جمله مسئولان اداره کل امور اتباع و مهاجرین خارجی در استان خراسان رضوی و خوزستان و نماینده دفتر کمیساریای عالی سازمان ملل متحد برای پناهندگان (UNHCR) در شهر مشهد و همچنین با مسئولان شهرستانی و شهرداری و روستایی در مناطق مورد مطالعه، اعضای شورای مهاجران در مهمانشهرها و دیگر مسئولان دولتی و نمایندگان بخش خصوصی مصاحبه انجام گرفت.

تمام جنبه‌های مرتبط با اخلاق تحقیق بطور جدی مورد توجه قرار گرفت و تمام پاسخ‌دهندگان بدون ذکر نام خود به پرسشنامه‌ها پاسخ دادند. ما از تمام افرادی که به سوالات پرسشنامه پاسخ داده و یا اجازه مصاحبه را دادند قدردانی می‌نماییم. دستیاران تحقیق در جمع‌آوری و تحلیل یافته‌های تحقیق کمک نمودند. پژوهشگران اصلی برای انجام این تحقیق پروفسور یوسی اس. یاوهاینین (دانشگاه تورکو)، دکتر داود عیوضلو و دکتر بهرام صلواتی سرچشمه (رصدخانه مهاجرت ایران، پژوهشکده سیاستگذاری دانشگاه صنعتی شریف) هستند.

براساس یافته‌های پیمایش، تمایل به زندگی تا پایان عمر در ایران در میان گروه‌های مختلف مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران متفاوت است: دو پنجم (دو نفر از سه نفر) پناهندگان افغانستانی در مهمانشهرها، سه نفر از هر ۱۰ پناهنده ساکن در سایر مناطق ایران، و یک نفر از هر چهار نفر از مهاجران متعارف و نامتعارف افغانستانی در ایران اعلام کرده‌اند که تمایل دارند تا پایان عمر خود در ایران زندگی کنند. بیشترین افرادی که تمایل به ماندن در ایران را دارند افراد بین ۵۰ تا ۶۴ سال هستند که حدود ۲۰ سال پیش از مناطق روستایی افغانستان به ایران مهاجرت کرده و دارای خانواده در ایران هستند. همچنین مهاجران جوان افغانستانی که در مهمانشهرها با همسر و فرزندان خود زندگی می‌کنند و حدود ۱۰ تا ۲۰ سال در ایران زندگی کرده‌اند و همچنین افراد سالخورده مهاجر متعارف و نامتعارف افغانستانی نیز تمایل بیشتری برای زندگی تا پایان عمر در ایران دارند.

کمی بیش از نصف مهاجران افغانستانی که به سوالات پرسشنامه پاسخ دادند تمایل به مهاجرت در داخل ایران را دارند: اغلب به شهرهای مشهد و تهران. تقریباً تمام پاسخگویان در شهر مشهد در استان خراسان رضوی تمایل دارند تا در این شهر به زندگی ادامه دهند و از هر شش نفر پاسخ دهنده ساکن در مناطق شهری تهران، پنج نفر تمایل به زندگی در همان محل سکونت فعلی خود را دارند. تحریم‌های بین‌المللی علیه ایران (که منجر به کاهش ارزش پول ملی ایران شد) منجر به این شده است که دو سوم مهاجران افغانستانی ساکن در ایران به مهاجرت از ایران به دیگر کشورها فکر کنند.

تقریباً دو پنجم پاسخگویان پناهنده افغانستانی در مهمانشهرها و یک چهارم پاسخگویان پناهنده در سایر مناطق (اغلب مناطق روستایی) در ایران تمایل دارند به کشور افغانستان مهاجرت کنند. همچنین یک سوم پاسخگویان مهاجر متعارف و نصف پاسخگویان مهاجر نامتعارف در ایران تمایل به مهاجرت به کشور افغانستان را داشته‌اند اما در واقع تعداد کمتری از آنها برنامه‌ای برای بازگشت دارند. بطور خاص، تمایل به مهاجرت به افغانستان در میان افراد سالخورده، شاغل و متاهل مهاجر نامتعارف افغانستانی بیشتر است. از طرف دیگر پناهندگان مجرد، زنان پناهنده بین ۳۰ تا ۴۹ سال که در مهمانشهرها ساکن هستند تمایل کمتری برای بازگشت به کشور افغانستان را دارند.

در حدود یک سوم مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران تمایل دارند تا از ایران به کشورهای اروپایی مهاجرت کنند. میل به مهاجرت به کشورهای اروپایی بخصوص در میان مهاجران مرد مجرد شاغل افغانستانی ساکن در مناطق شهری ایران بیشتر از دیگر مهاجران است؛ اما در عمل ممکن است همه افراد متمایل به مهاجرت اقدام به مهاجرت واقعی نمایند. تعداد کمی از پاسخگویان، کشور ترکیه را به عنوان کشور مقصد خود برای مهاجرت اعلام کردند. مهاجران جوان افغانستانی در ایران تمایل به مهاجرت بیشتری به خارج از ایران را دارند اما تعداد کمی از این مهاجران جوان تمایل به بازگشت به کشور افغانستان را دارند؛ بخاطر اینکه آنجا را نا امن تصور می‌کنند.

در صورت تعمیم یافته‌های تحقیق به کل مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران (شامل حدود ۳ میلیون مهاجر متعارف و نامتعارف و پناهندگان)، ۱.۶ تا ۱.۸۵ میلیون نفر آنها (شامل ۰.۴ تا ۰.۵ میلیون فرزندان آنها) تمایل به ماندن در ایران دارند و یا اینکه تمایلی به مهاجرت از ایران را ندارند. از کل مهاجران بالای ۱۵ سال افغانستانی در ایران، ۰.۸۵ تا ۱ میلیون نفر تمایل به مهاجرت از ایران را دارند که از میان آنها ۰.۶ میلیون نفر تمایل به بازگشت به افغانستان را داشته و بین ۰.۲۸ تا ۰.۴ میلیون نفر آنها تمایل به مهاجرت به کشورهای اروپایی را دارند. بسیاری از آنها دارای فرزندان خردسالی هستند که مهاجرت آنها بستگی به تصمیم والدین آنها برای مهاجرت دارد. در مجموع، برنامه مهاجرت مهاجران افغانستانی ساکن در ایران برای عملی شدن به عوامل متعدد بیرونی بستگی دارد.

نتایج حاصل از تحقیقات در ارتباط با مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران می‌تواند در طراحی و به کارگیری سیاست‌های مبتنی بر شواهد مفید واقع شده و اثرات مفیدی بر روی جامعه مهاجران و جامعه ایرانی داشته باشد. از اینرو پیشنهاد می‌گردد تا انجام تحقیقات در ارتباط با مهاجرت و تمایلات مهاجرتی مهاجران افغانستانی در ایران ادامه داشته باشد.

9. المهاجرون الأفغان في إيران: أنماط الهجرة ودوافعها

جوسي س. جواهينين، داوود إيفازلو، بهرام سالافاتي سارشيشمه (jusaja@utu.fi)

يبلغ عدد المهاجرين الأفغان – اللاجئين الشرعيين والمهاجرين غير الشرعيين - أكثر من 3 مليون شخص في إيران. ويشكلون مجتمعًا هامًا ذات دوافع للهجرة مبنية على مصلحة وتأثير دولي ووطني ومحلي.

تم إجراء هذا البحث "المهاجرون الأفغان في إيران: أنماط الهجرة ودوافعها" بالتعاون بين جامعة توركو (فنلندا) وجامعة شهيد بهشتي (إيران) ومرصد الهجرة الإيراني التابع لمعهد شريف لبحوث السياسات بجامعة شريف للتكنولوجيا (إيران). يعود فضل القيام بهذا البحث في إيران، إلى الدعم الكبير من الوزارة الداخلية الإيرانية وعميد معهد شريف لبحوث السياسات ومكتب الشؤون الدولية بجامعة شريف للتكنولوجيا، وأيضًا إلى الدعم المالي المقدم من مجلس البحوث الاستراتيجية في الأكاديمية من فنلندا (اتحاد البحوث URMI، www.urmi.fi) وكذلك لدعم قسم الجغرافيا بجامعة توركو أيضًا.

الأسئلة الرئيسية في البحث هي: ما هي أنماط هجرة الأفغان في إيران؟ وما هي دوافع هجرة الأفغان المتواجدين في إيران - بالتحديد اللاجئين الأفغان والمهاجرين النظاميين والمهاجرين غير الشرعيين؟

يعتمد التحليل في هذا البحث على نتائج البحوث السابقة وكذلك على استبيانات ومقابلات أجريت في إيران في شهر أكتوبر من عام 2017، وفي شهري يونيو وسبتمبر من عام 2019. تجاوب مع أسئلة الاستبيانات 2007 شخص من أصول أفغانية (لا يقل عمرهم عن 15 عامًا، من اللاجئين والمهاجرين النظاميين والمهاجرين غير الشرعيين)، وتمت مقابلة 116 أفغانيا و54 من أصحاب المصلحة ذو ارتباط بالأفغان.

في عام 2017، استجاب 644 شخصًا من أصول أفغانية إلى الاستبيان دون الكشف عن هويتهم، يقطنون في مقاطعات كرمان ورزوي خراسان وخوزستان. من بين هؤلاء، يعيش 546 أفغانيًا في مستوطنات اللاجئين في بني نجار وبرديسر ورفسانجان وترت جام، و 98 آخرون يعيشون في أماكن مختلفة في مقاطعتي كرمان ورزوي خراسان. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تمت مقابلة 72 لاجئ أفغاني ومهاجر غير شرعي.

في عام 2019، قام 1356 شخصًا من أصول أفغانية بالتجاوب مع الاستبيان يعيشون في طهران ومشهد وأصفهان وكيرمان. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تمت مقابلة 44 أفغانيًا ناشطين في القضايا الاجتماعية والثقافية والاقتصادية في إيران، من طلاب ورجال أعمال ومديري المنظمات غير حكومية، وغيره.

في عام 2017، أجريت أيضًا مقابلات مع 54 من أصحاب المصلحة، مثل ممثلي مكتب الأجانب وشؤون المهاجرين الأجانب (BAFIA)؛ الموجود في رضوي خراسان وخوزستان) من وزارة الداخلية ومفوضية الأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين (مفوضية الأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين، مكتب في مشهد) وكذلك السلطات العامة في المقاطعات والبلديات والقرى في مناطق الدراسة والمديرين وأعضاء المجلس في مستوطنات ضيف اللاجئين الأربعة المدروسة وغيرها من السلطات العامة ومثلي القطاع الخاص.

في عام 2017، أجريت أيضًا مقابلات مع 54 شخصًا من أصحاب المصلحة، مثل ممثلي مكتب الأجانب وشؤون المهاجرين الأجانب (BAFIA)؛ الموجود في رضوي خراسان وخوزستان) التابع لوزارة الداخلية، وأشخاص من مفوضية الأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين (مفوضية الأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين في مشهد)، وكذلك أشخاص من السلطات العامة في المقاطعات والبلديات والقرى داخل نطاق دراسة البحث، ومديرين وأعضاء المجلس في مستوطنات اللاجئين الأربعة التي تم عليها البحث، وغيرهم من السلطات العامة ومثلي القطاع الخاص.

تم الالتزام بجميع القضايا الأخلاقية المتعلقة بالبحث بدقة ولم يتم الكشف عن هوية أي من المشاركين في هذه الدراسة الاستقصائية. نحن ممنون لجميع الأشخاص الذين استجابوا لاستبياننا وأعطونا الفرصة لمقابلتهم.

ساهم مساعده البحث في جمع وتحليل مواد البحث. الباحثون الرئيسيون المسؤولون عن هذا التقرير هم الأستاذ جوسي س. جواهينين (جامعة توركو) ، والدكتور داود إيفازلو (جامعة شريف للتكنولوجيا) والدكتور بهرام سالافاتي سار شيشمه (جامعة شريف للتكنولوجيا).

وفقاً لنتائج الاستبيان، فإن نية المكوث لبقية حياتهم في إيران تتنوع بين الأفغان: إذ يعتقد ذلك اثنان من كل خمسة من اللاجئين الأفغان المتواجدين في المستوطنات، وثلاثة من كل عشرة لاجئين يعيشون في أماكن أخرى في إيران، وواحد من كل أربعة مهاجرين أفغان شرعيين وغير شرعيين. معظم الذين يطمحون للبقاء في إيران تبلغ أعمارهم بين 50 إلى 64 عاماً وقد قدموا إلى إيران قبل أكثر من 20 عاماً من قرى أفغانية ولديهم أفراد من العائلة في إيران؛ وأيضاً فئة الشباب الأفغاني الذين عاشوا في مستوطنات اللاجئين مع أزواجهم وأطفالهم وأمضوا 10-20 سنة في إيران؛ وأيضاً أقدم المهاجرين الأفغان الشرعيين وغير الشرعيين المتواجدين في إيران.

الغالبية العظمى من الأفغان الذين شاركوا في الاستبيان يريدون الهجرة داخل إيران: معظمهم إما إلى مشهد أو إلى طهران. أراد معظم المشاركين من منطقة مشهد في محافظة رضوي خراسان أن يعيشوا هناك وخمسة من كل ستة من المشاركين الذين يعيشون في طهران. ومع ذلك، فإن العقوبات الدولية المفروضة على إيران (التي أدت إلى تخفيض قيمة العملة الوطنية) جعلت ما يقارب اثنان من بين كل ثلاثة أفغان في إيران يفكرون في الهجرة من إيران إلى بلد آخر.

ما يقارب اثنان من بين خمسة من المشاركين من اللاجئين الأفغان في مستوطنات اللجوء وواحد من بين كل أربعة مشاركين بشكل عام من اللاجئين الأفغان في أماكن أخرى في إيران يريدون العودة إلى أفغانستان، ووافق ذلك واحد من كل ثلاثة من المشاركين الأفغان النظاميين ونصف المهاجرين الأفغان غير النظاميين أرادوا العودة - ولكن، أعداد قليلة تخطط للعودة. أولئك الذين يريدون العودة إلى أفغانستان هم على نحو خاص من الكبار في السن والعاطلين عن العمل والمهاجرين غير الشرعيين من المتزوجين. أما أولئك الذين لا يتطلعون إلى العودة إلى أفغانستان، هم من غير المتزوجين وتتراوح أعمارهم بين 30 و 49 عاماً، ومن النساء اللاجئات من يعشن في المستوطنات.

ما يقارب واحد من بين كل ثلاثة أفغان يأمل في الانتقال من إيران إلى أوروبا - عادة من الرجال الأفغان الغير مرتبطين ولديهم وظائف ويعيشون في المدن الإيرانية - ولكن مثل هذا الرغبة في الهجرة قد لا تنتج إلى هجرة حقيقية. وذكر عدد قليل جداً على أن تركيا هي الوجهة المفضلة لديهم. وكلما كان السن أصغر بالنسبة للأفغان المتواجدون في إيران، كلما كانت رغبته في الهجرة إلى الخارج أكبر، والقليل من الأفغان من هذه الفئة العمرية يرغبون في العودة إلى أفغانستان، لأنهم يعتقدون أنها بلد غير آمنة.

من بين الأفغان المقيمين في إيران، هناك حوالي 1.6 - 1.85 مليون (بما في ذلك 0.4 - 0.5 مليون طفل منهم) عرضة للبقاء في إيران، أو أنهم لا يريدون عن أي رغبة لمغادرة إيران. ومن الأفغان الذين عاشوا ما لا يقل عن 15 عاماً في إيران، يخطط منهم حوالي 0.85 - 1 مليون للهجرة خارج إيران. ومن بينهم حوالي 0.6 مليون من يخطط للعودة إلى أفغانستان و0.28-0.4 من يخطط للهجرة إلى دول الاتحاد الأوروبي. الكثير منهم ممن يعيش في إيران يمتلك أطفالاً صغاراً، وتعتمد هجرتهم وتنقلهم على ما سيفعله أبائهم. ومع ذلك، فإن أي خطة لهجرة فعلية خارج إيران تعتمد على عوامل كثيرة خارجية.

يمكن لهذه النتائج المستندة إلى أبحاث ودراسات عن وضع المهاجرين الأفغان في إيران أن تقدم دعماً لتشكيل سياسات فعالة قائمة على الأدلة والتي لها تأثير ناجح على الأفراد والجماعات والمجتمع الإيراني ككل، لذلك يجب مواصلة الأبحاث عن هجرة الأفغان ودوافع هجرتهم.



**TURUN YLIOPISTON MAANTIETEEN JA GEOLOGIAN LAITOKSEN JULKAISUJA
PUBLICATIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF TURKU**

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