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# Seeking the views of irregular migrants: Decision making, drivers and migration journeys

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\* Please note that the views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department.

This paper is one of a series of occasional papers produced as part of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's Irregular Migration Research Program (Research Program).

The Research Program is intended to strengthen the evidence base on irregular migration, and is built on research framed in an open, inquiring manner that is objective and non-partisan. More information about the Research Program can be found at: <http://www.immi.gov.au/business-services/irregular-migration-research/>

The Occasional Paper Series aims to provide information on, and analysis of, specific irregular migration issues of relevance to Australia, within a broader migration and/or global context.

The opinions, comments and analyses expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the views of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In August 2012, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) established an Irregular Migration Research Program (Research Program) to identify and address the knowledge gaps in irregular migration research, with a particular focus on placing Australia's experience in a broader global and migration context.
2. An innovative quantitative survey of irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs)<sup>1</sup> who have been granted a permanent visa in Australia has been undertaken as part of this Research Program. This survey is the first of its kind in the Australian context. The results provide a useful empirical evidence base on IMA decision making, and highlight the complex and multi-faceted factors and processes underpinning why and how people travel to Australia as IMAs.
3. Occasional paper number four in the series, *Seeking the views of irregular migrants: Survey background, rationale and methodology*, discusses the survey rationale and methodology, including details of the innovative survey delivery employed. It is recommended that the paper on survey methodology be read in conjunction with this paper. Understanding the survey rationale and methodology allows for a greater appreciation of the survey results.
4. Results from the survey provide valuable insights into the role of migrants and non-migrants in decision making, migrants' perceptions of Australia, and the experiences of IMAs in the transit phase of their journey to Australia. While further analytical papers drawing on the survey results are planned, this paper provides an initial analysis of results.
5. A key finding of the survey is that the overwhelming majority of irregular migrants surveyed were motivated by multiple factors. The public discourse of 'economic migrants' and 'genuine refugees' tends to be polarised and potentially unhelpful in light of the survey results, which show that a range of factors underpin movement to Australia such as those related to protection, employment, education services, housing, health services, poverty, corruption, geography and family/community links. The most prominent factors related primarily to protection. This is unsurprising given that the survey population comprised people who travelled as IMAs and had been granted protection in Australia.
6. The survey results found that a substantial minority (over one-third) of the sample had been 'hosted' in a country other than their birth country; the majority of Afghan respondents (57%) had lived in a host country prior to travelling to Australia.
7. Hosted respondents reported that they had worked illegally (60%) while residing in a host country, with 19% having indicated that they worked legally. Just over one in 10 indicated that they had been deported by their host country at least once. Around 30% of hosted respondents indicated that they had travelled back to their country of birth at least once. This was most common among Afghans (31%), and is likely to have involved both forced and voluntary movement in light of the deportation results.
8. The survey results showed that respondents had a reasonable social proximity to migration prior to leaving their origin country to travel to Australia, although this tended to diminish the closer the respondent was in social terms to the actual migrant group. For example, around a third of respondents indicated that it was common for people to travel to another country for

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'irregular maritime arrival' has been used in this paper given that the survey participants were, at the time of their arrival, referred to as IMAs. The current term is 'unauthorised maritime arrival'.

work (32%), and that the majority of their ethnic group travelled to other countries for work (34%), compared to friends (17%) and family members (13%) who had migrated for work.

9. Around 22% of respondents indicated that they had relatives in Australia before they left their origin country. When other social links to Australia were examined, 37% of respondents had relatives, friends, or friends of relatives/friends in Australia prior to their departure. When examined by citizenship, Afghans (43%) were more likely than Iranians (25%) to have links to Australia.
10. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that there were many problems facing them, that these problems were varied in nature, and involved both protection and non-protection issues. This was also true for their reasons for leaving their origin country. The vast majority of respondents (85%) indicated that they faced both protection and non-protection related problems in their country of origin and/or left their origin country for both protection and non-protection reasons.
11. The most common reasons for considering Australia as a destination were that 'Australia was accepting refugees' (65%) and that 'Australia does not return refugees' (46%). 'Other countries were not accepting refugees' (18%) and 'other countries were returning refugees' (17%) ranked fourth and fifth respectively. The third ranked response was 'because my family would be able to follow me to Australia' (24%). The attractiveness of Australia as a 'pull' factor, however, appeared to lessen when respondents were asked about the main reasons they ended up travelling to Australia: 'Australia was accepting refugees' dropped to 33% and 'Australia does not return refugees' dropped to 22%, although they were still highly ranked. In addition, these two response options also featured when respondents were asked about the decision to leave their country of origin (see Table 3).
12. A not insubstantial proportion of respondents indicated that they themselves were *not* involved in the final decision to leave (13%); 80% were themselves involved. Responses in relation to the involvement of friends/family in the decision varied with respect to their geographic location. Twenty-nine per cent responded that friends/family located in their origin country were involved in the decision, compared to four per cent for friends/family in other countries, and six per cent for friends/family in Australia.
13. Respondents most commonly reported that they relied on friends and family in their origin country (23%) and people who helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers)<sup>2</sup> (15%) for information about Australia prior to making the final decision that Australia would be their destination. In relation to information sources from Australia, 12% of respondents reported using official information from the Australian Government, and only seven per cent on friends/family in Australia.
14. Consistent with anecdotal information, the journey to Australia, for many respondents, involved crossing multiple borders, spending time in countries with no legal status and relying on strangers to progress to the next stage of their journey. This suggested a high degree of risk, fear and uncertainty for those who made the journey, as evident from the survey results. For example, 55% of respondents reported having used the services of someone who helps people travel (e.g. people smuggler), with around half of those having indicated that this had made them feel very or quite unsafe.

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<sup>2</sup> The survey used the phrase 'people who helped you travel (e.g. people smugglers)' to encompass agents who may or may not be smugglers. This phrase has been used in this paper to accurately reflect the survey questions.

15. In reflecting on the journey to Australia, the vast majority of respondents indicated that it was more difficult or much more difficult (83%) than they had expected. Very few respondents (less than one per cent) indicated that the journey was easier or much easier than expected. The implications of the disparity between potential migrants' views of what the migration journey is likely to entail compared to the reality of the journey are potentially profound.
16. It would be useful to examine this issue and others in more detail, noting that some IMA citizenship/ethnic groups undertake lengthier, more complex journeys, involving more dealings with smugglers and necessitating a greater degree of unlawful practices compared to, for example, migrants able to travel more or less directly. Further analysis of survey data, supplemented with qualitative research would enhance the understanding of migrants' journeys, which in turn would assist in developing effective policy responses, including in relation to enhancing integrity, improving informed choice of migrants, reducing vulnerability and improving protection en route.
17. Overall, the survey results offer insights into a range of areas in which further research activity would be valuable for creating a solid base of measurement and analysis to inform policy and program considerations. Future surveys conducted on an annual basis would assist in improved analysis of changes in dynamics over time.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In August 2012, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) established an Irregular Migration Research Program (Research Program) to identify and address the knowledge gaps in irregular migration research, with a particular focus on placing Australia's experience in a broader global and migration context. An underlying principle of the Research Program is that the research be framed in an open, inquiring manner that is objective and non-partisan.

The Research Program has been established as a multi-layered and integrated program including in-house research and analysis, commissioned research, a small grants program, a multi-year research partnership arrangement with the Australian National University and a series of occasional papers. The first occasional paper *Establishing an Evidence-Base for Future Policy Development on Irregular Migration to Australia* identified specific research gaps in the Australian context and made recommendations about how to fill these gaps, drawing on international experience.<sup>3</sup> In the first occasional paper, the authors highlighted the lack of research in Australia (and limited research internationally) on migrant decision making,<sup>4</sup> recommending that further research be undertaken on decision making particularly as it relates to leaving origin countries and choosing a destination.

With these research priorities in mind, a cornerstone of the commissioned research component of the Research Program is the IMA Survey – a large-scale quantitative survey conducted by McNair Ingenuity Research in 2013 on behalf of the department. The survey sought the views of IMAs who were granted protection visas between July 2011 and December 2012. By drawing on the personal experiences of people who had undertaken the journey to Australia by sea, the survey was intended to provide a better understanding of why and how people decided to leave their countries of origin and travel to Australia, including in relation to economic, family, protection and other reasons.

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<sup>3</sup> Koser and McAuliffe (2013).

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this paper, migrant decision making is limited to international migration. It does not relate to internal migration.

In seeking the views of migrants who have undertaken irregular maritime migration, and the sensitive nature of having engaged in challenging and potentially high risk activities, the department's survey team sought to employ innovative technology to overcome a range of methodological challenges.

The IMA Survey methodology is discussed in detail in occasional paper number four *Seeking the views of irregular migrants: Survey background, rationale and methodology*.<sup>5</sup> It is recommended that the paper on survey methodology be read in conjunction with this paper. Overall, the use of technology enabled the survey respondents to provide frank answers to sensitive questions, including on decision making, being smuggled, life in host countries and the journey to Australia. Understanding the survey rationale and methodology allows for a greater appreciation of the survey results.

Further analytical papers on the IMA Survey results, including on specific demographic groups, are planned as part of the occasional paper series. A tabular summary of the survey results is at Appendix A.

This paper has been primarily written as a means of reporting the survey results. The second section below refers to some of the literature on migrant decision making, including in relation the current, dominant 'push-pull' theory as it relates to (irregular) migration, and highlights some of the non-linear dynamics that underpin irregular migration to further explain the breadth and complexity of the factors involved. The third section briefly discusses key findings from the survey. The fourth section, before the paper concludes, provides analysis of key survey results.

## 2. MIGRANT DECISION MAKING

Research indicates that a number of complex, interrelated factors impact on the movement of irregular asylum and non-asylum migration flows.<sup>6</sup> In some of the literature<sup>7</sup> the factors related to asylum seeker migration have been characterised as either 'push' or 'pull' factors, both in terms of the decision to migrate as well as choice of destination country.

Generally, push factors from the country of origin include:

- the political and security situation in-country (home and/or host country);<sup>8</sup>
- the state of the economy, and access to income;<sup>9</sup>
- the outlook for the future, and in particular the prevailing pessimism.

Pull factors include:

- asylum seeker policies in destination countries;<sup>10</sup>
- how welcoming destination countries are perceived to be;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> McAuliffe (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Castles (2013), de Haas (2011), Koser (2011), Middleton (2005), Neumayer (2004), Havinga and Böcker (1999).

<sup>7</sup> Neumayer (2004), Havinga and BöckerBöcker (1999), Zimmermann (1996).

<sup>8</sup> Hatton (2012).

<sup>9</sup> Adhikari (2013), Hatton (2012), Theilemann (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Neumayer (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Theilemann (2006), Neumayer (2004).

- perceptions of destination countries' acceptance of refugees;<sup>12</sup>
- the state of economies of destination countries;<sup>13</sup> and
- existence of diaspora and communities in destination countries.<sup>14</sup>

There is also a range of 'enabling' factors that act to facilitate flows, and that are less understood in the literature.<sup>15</sup> These enabling factors cannot be characterised by the linear push-pull construct but act to facilitate or underpin movement.

Enabling factors include:

- geography and the ease of travelling to specific destination countries;<sup>16</sup>
- the ability to travel through transit countries (e.g. facilitative visa arrangements) and proximity to established migration networks (and, in some cases, a related lack of ability to gain visas for lawful entry to destination countries);
- diaspora populations with the ability and resources to assist others in their communities around the world to migrate;<sup>17</sup>
- an increased ability to self-fund travel as human development and greater access to resources increases;<sup>18</sup>
- enhanced 'real time' communications technology to provide better information for decision making both of potential irregular immigrants and people smugglers (e.g. blogs, social media, news reporting of events); and
- a global asylum system that was established decades ago to address a particular set of circumstances, and may not have evolved sufficiently to reflect significant changes in the environment (e.g. refusal of countries to accept the return of their nationals, and the lack of any ability to make countries accept the return of their citizens).<sup>19</sup>

The number of factors impacting on decision making highlights the complex nature of irregular migration. It is also important to acknowledge that none of the factors are likely to be static, and some of them can change decisively and rapidly, undoubtedly adding to the complexity of migrant decision making.

As highlighted in the first occasional paper, there is a body of literature on decision making by asylum seekers and potential asylum seekers, however, there are two important points to note about the research that has been conducted so far on this topic.<sup>20</sup> Firstly, the focus of this research has been largely limited to 'choice of destination', with very little examination of the decision making processes associated with the decision to leave a country of origin. On the one hand, this is partly due to a view that in relation to asylum seekers forced migration is occurring; the associated assumption being that asylum seekers have a lack of agency, thereby effectively rendering research on this aspect of

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<sup>12</sup> Toshkov (2012), Theilemann (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Hatton (2012), Theilemann (2006), Neumayer (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Neumayer (2004), Koser and Pinkerton (2002), Koser (1997).

<sup>15</sup> One exception being de Haas (2010).

<sup>16</sup> Monsutti (2010), Havinga and Böcker (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Doraï (2011), Koser and Pinkerton (2002).

<sup>18</sup> De Haas (2010).

<sup>19</sup> Hamlin (2012), Hatton (2011), Jones (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Koser and McAuliffe (2013).

decision making as largely irrelevant.<sup>21</sup> Forced migration is characterised as being driven by ‘push’ factors, so that when situations in countries become intolerable asylum seekers are compelled to move across borders.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the forced migration perspective, the primary focus on choice of destination as opposed to the decision to leave origin countries is likely to be related to the broader policy and political environment of the time. This is especially so in the European context, where much of the research on asylum seeker decision making has been situated.<sup>23</sup> Neumayer, for example, summarises:

Asylum seekers coming to Western Europe have preferred some destination countries over others. Austria, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland were the main destination countries relative to their population size in the 1980s and 1990s, whereas Finland, Italy, Portugal and Spain took on very few asylum seekers. Sharing the burden of hosting asylum seekers has long since been on the political agenda of West European countries (Hailbronner, 2000). Vink (2002: 204) calls it the ‘most salient aspect’ of European Union immigration politics in the 1990s...The objective of this article is not to come up with a formula for a fair burden-sharing and to judge to what extent reality complies with such an ideal formula. Rather, the objective is to explain the choice amongst the various countries on offer as their destination for those asylum seekers coming to Western Europe. I want to explore to what extent one can explain the relative attractiveness of destination countries.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, given that much of the research on decision making is European, it is not able to adequately account for the particularities of the Australian situation, especially Australia’s geography and lack of proximity to similar destination countries. That is not to say that the European research is not relevant, for many aspects undoubtedly are. It is, however, prudent to be cautious about aspects of its applicability to the Australia context. In an absence of Australian empirical research, there has been a tendency for researchers and commentators to apply European research findings to the Australian context. In a recent paper published by the Australian Parliamentary Library, for example, Spinks stated that ‘...decisions about where to go are not always made by refugees themselves but rather are often determined, or at least heavily influenced, by others. In some cases the decision is made by a family member, but for many the destination is chosen by the ‘agent’ or people smuggler engaged to get them to a place (any place) of safety’.<sup>25</sup> The evidence provided by the survey results calls this into question. Table 6, for example, shows that 79% of respondents reported being involved in the final decision to travel to Australia, and that 16% of respondents reported that people who helped with travel (e.g. people smugglers) were involved in the final decision to travel to Australia.

The significant influence of agents is highlighted in European research on asylum seekers’ decision making,<sup>26</sup> and it is possible that the entrenched smuggling networks that have supported irregular migration flows into Europe for decades may render potential migrants less able to exercise agency in terms of where to travel, particularly given the many countries smugglers can ultimately send migrants. This would appear to be less relevant in the Australian context, however, given that Australia is effectively at the ‘end of the line’. As highlighted by Koser and McAuliffe, ‘[for] IMAs in Australia, who have undertaken long and relatively expensive journeys from their origin countries, and transited other countries where they might have remained in an irregular situation...the choice of Australia for most...appears to be deliberate’.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, it is useful to acknowledge Johansson’s distinction

<sup>21</sup> Robinson and Segrott (2002), Spinks (2013), Koser and Pinkerton (2002), McAuliffe (2013).

<sup>22</sup> Robinson and Segrott (2002), p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Neumayer (2004), Brekke and Aarset (2009), Robinson and Segrott (2002), van Liempt and Doomerik (2006).

<sup>24</sup> Neumayer (2004), p. 156.

<sup>25</sup> Spinks (2013), p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Robinson and Segrott (2002), van Liempt and Doomerik (2006), Koser (2008).

<sup>27</sup> Koser and McAuliffe (2013), p. 13.

between anticipatory refugee movement and acute or spontaneous movements.<sup>28</sup> When examining asylum seeker movement to Australia, much of the movement in recent years has been anticipatory rather than acute. This, in turn, and given the substantial distances travelled from source through (multiple) transit countries to Australia, means that both the decision to leave and the choice of destination are highly relevant topics of research in the Australian context.

As the first quantitative empirical research in Australia that has sought the views of IMAs, it has drawn on the existing European research but also reflects the different dynamics that the Australian context presents. Seeking irregular migrants' views on the decision making processes related to both the decision to leave and the choice of destination are key aspects of the survey, as are the roles of people other than the migrant in decision making (including agents).

### 3. KEY FINDINGS

One of the most significant findings of the IMA Survey is that it clearly shows that IMAs are not a homogenous group. While there may well be some similarities in respect of some specific demographic characteristics, for example in relation to sex, the IMA Survey results show that there are very substantial differences in both the demographic characteristics and the experiences of different groups of IMAs. This paper has highlighted some of the substantial differences in patterns and processes of different IMA groups, mainly by citizenship – for example, Afghans and Pakistanis reported greater links to Australia prior to travel; Iranians and Sri Lankans reported greater involvement of agents who helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers); Iranians tended to travel with family members, while Afghans predominantly travelled without family or friends.

A more nuanced understanding of the very different migration processes experienced by different groups of irregular migrants, including in relation to decision making, has implications for policy deliberations. For example, the extent and nature of collective decision making has potential implications for decision making in relation to the promotion and take up of assisted voluntary return packages for those found not to be in need of protection. Information on return packages, for example, could also be usefully communicated to others involved in decision making.

One of the notable differences between citizenship groups was the likelihood of having lived in a host country prior to migrating. Overall, a 'hosted' respondent was typically an Afghan born in Afghanistan, having lived in Pakistan or Iran for many years (with some moving between Afghanistan and their host country), and who was likely to have worked illegally and not have had any contact with UNHCR. These characteristics accord with research on Afghan migration survival strategies, and the tendency of particular groups to engage in circular migratory patterns through the region as a means of economic and cultural survival. Monsutti, for example, has argued that in relation to Hazaras, no hard and fast distinction can be made between refugees and economic migrants and that a 'migration continuum' exists that has developed as part of a broader strategy of survival.<sup>29</sup> Further, he states that 'Afghans give different and usually plural reasons for their decision to migrate: perhaps an outbreak of fighting, a threat from a personal enemy, the danger of bombing or compulsory conscription; perhaps the search for work or opportunities to trade, the need for medical treatment, or the undertaking of a pilgrimage'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Johansson (1990).

<sup>29</sup> Monsutti (2005), p. 168-9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

For the ‘hosted’ respondents, it is important to acknowledge that a lack of contact with UNHCR is unlikely to be related to their ‘refugee-ness’ or otherwise. The circumstances in which Afghans live in host countries Iran and Afghanistan – see the discussion in occasional paper number three *Migration and Displacement Impacts of Afghan Transitions in 2014: Implications for Australia* – and the gradual and systematic reduction in support and assistance to Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan over many years will undoubtedly have had an impact on the capacity and/or willingness of Afghans to seek UNHCR’s assistance in host countries. Survey respondents, as IMAs granted protection in the second half of 2011 and calendar year 2012, would have been likely to have travelled prior to 2012, and so a point in time aspect needs to be taken into consideration. It is possible that the profile of a typically ‘hosted’ respondent may be different in future IMA surveys, including in relation to respondents’ status in host countries.<sup>31</sup>

Another key finding of the survey is that the overwhelming majority of irregular migrants surveyed were motivated by multiple factors. The public discourse about ‘economic migrants’ and ‘genuine refugees’ is limited and potentially unhelpful in light of the survey results, which show that a range of factors underpin movement to Australia, such as those related to protection, employment, education services, housing, health services, poverty, corruption, geography and family/community links. The most prominent factors related primarily to protection. This is unsurprising given that the survey population comprised people who travelled as IMAs and had been granted protection in Australia.

Problems facing respondents prior to their departure overwhelmingly related to protection issues. Non-protection problems, such as poverty, corruption, poor education facilities, unemployment were also highlighted by respondents, which is also unsurprising when broader human development issues facing people in some countries of origin are taken into account; an issue that is even more profound for those with marginalised status in host countries.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of reasons for leaving their country of origin and the problems they faced prior to departure, 85% of respondents indicated that both protection and non-protection issues were involved. A much smaller nine per cent indicated that they had faced or left because of protection issues only.<sup>33</sup> This would appear to indicate that broader quality of life issues, such as corruption, education services, health services, and lack of economic opportunity, are being considered during decision making, and are among the factors potential migrants (and their families and others) take into account when assessing and re-assessing migration options.

Reasons for leaving as well as reasons for choosing Australia included ‘pull factors’, most particularly Australia’s perceived acceptance of refugees and treatment of asylum seekers. These two factors would appear to be part of decision making processes as they relate to leaving *and* choosing a destination, and appeared to be more important than for other ‘pull’ factors (e.g. Australia’s economic prosperity). It may be that the distinction between decision making as it relates to ‘leaving’ and ‘destination’ masks more complex realities, and that (potential) migrants and their families, are likely to be continually assessing and re-assessing their migration options, and that these assessments involve a range of complex interrelated and perhaps conflicting factors that have to be carefully balanced

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<sup>31</sup> There could be possible changes in UNHCR engagement, for example, following on from Australia’s additional resettlement quotas and support to UNHCR, including for acceptance of Afghan Hazara refugees from Pakistan, in order to provide a safe and legal avenue for entry to Australia.

<sup>32</sup> UNDP (2013).

<sup>33</sup> There was a small proportion of respondents (three per cent) who indicated that they did not face protection-related problems in their origin country *and* who indicated that they had left their country of origin for non-protection reasons only.

within dynamic environments. That a high proportion of respondents indicated that their migration was 'triggered' by an event or situation resonates with this notion.

It is possible that Monsutti's analysis of Afghan migration as 'partially blurring the boundary between forced migration and voluntary migration'<sup>34</sup> may have wider implications for other groups of people. As the IMA Survey has shown, respondents with protection issues are more often than not involved in making decisions about whether to migrate and where to migrate including for a range of non-protection reasons. This also accords with Neumayer's citing of Efonayi-Mader et al that 'such a decision is likely to be the result of a multitude of complex and mutually non-exclusive factors, whose relative importance can differ across origin countries as well as across individuals from the same country of origin'.<sup>35</sup>

The survey results also highlight the utility in conducting further research on decision making of potential migrants who decide not to migrate, including in relation to those who may be facing protection issues. Adhikari's research on the impact of a range of factors on potential refugees' decision making in Nepal highlights that individual decision making, even in extreme conflict situations, is based on more than just the threat to one's life and includes factors related to economic livelihoods and social networks.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Monsutti (2008), p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Neumayer (2004), p. 163, citing a German publication by Efonayi-Mader et al. (2001).

<sup>36</sup> Adhikari (2013).

## 4. SURVEY RESULTS

A quantitative survey of IMAs, with a specific focus on pre-arrival experiences, was considered an important means to build an aspect of the evidence base. Surveys of this nature are able to identify patterns, including by determining how widely certain processes are undertaken or characteristics feature in a particular process.<sup>37</sup> Information on the survey rationale and methodology are discussed in occasional paper number four, *Seeking the views of irregular migrants: Survey background, rationale and methodology*.

This section provides a summary of the key results of the survey. The results in this paper are primarily reported at the aggregate level; that is all respondents, rather than sub-samples with particular characteristics. Selected results by some citizenship groups (Afghans, Iranians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans)<sup>38</sup> as well as age have been included to highlight specific demographic differences. Further examination of results by these and other demographic variables is likely to provide additional insights.

The survey comprised 44 multi-part questions on respondents':

- host country experiences;
- circumstances in home and/or host country;
- decisions to leave;
- choice of destination;
- travel to Australia;
- Australian experiences; and
- demographic characteristics.

Further analytical papers drawing on the results of the IMA Survey, including on specific demographic groups, are currently being developed as part of the occasional paper series.

A tabular summary of the survey results is at Appendix A.

### 4.1 Host country experiences

To better understand the experiences of survey participants it was important to identify their migration histories. People who commenced their journey to Australia from their country of birth would be likely to have a different set of experiences to those who had spent time in host or transit countries, noting that the distinction between 'host' and transit' can be blurry, and is largely based on a time dimension. Respondents who indicated they had spent at least 12 months in a country other than their country of birth were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to their experiences in that country. This sub-sample comprised 327 respondents, or almost one-third of the sample. Discussion of survey results in this sub-section (4.1) is limited to the sub-sample, not the entire sample, and has been referred to as 'host' country experiences.

The main host countries identified by respondents were Pakistan (60%) and Iran (24%). Other, less prominent countries included Indonesia (4%), India (3%), and Iraq (3%). These results appear to be directly related to the citizenship composition of the 'hosted' sub-sample: the majority of Afghans

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<sup>37</sup> Sayer (1992), p. 243.

<sup>38</sup> A sufficient sub-sample of Iraqis was not able to be obtained. Iraqis have been included in the 'other' category.

(57%) indicated they had lived in a country other than their birth country prior to travelling to Australia. Iranian respondents reported very low levels of having lived in a host country (5%). These results accord with the UNHCR data on hosted refugee populations.<sup>39</sup>

These results show that of the four main citizenship groups (Afghans, Iranians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans), all groups reported 90% or more having been born in their stated country of citizenship. Small proportions of Afghan respondents reported that they were born in Pakistan (3%) and Iran (2%). Seven per cent of Pakistani citizens reported having been born in Afghanistan. The results indicate, for example, that most Afghan respondents were born in Afghanistan and had been living in a host country prior to travelling to Australia.

The average time spent in a host country was 20.5 years. Eleven per cent had spent 5 years or less in a host country, with almost half (44%) having spent more than 20 years in a host country. The vast majority (82%) indicated that they had had no contact with UNHCR while living in a host country, with just three per cent having indicated that they had been recognised as a refugee.

The majority of the host country sub-sample (60%) reported that they had worked illegally while residing in a host country, with 19% having indicated that they worked legally. While not necessarily related, this more or less aligned with the response to questions about their legal status in a host country, with 19% indicating that they had some form of legal status (e.g. registration with UNHCR); while the overwhelming majority (79%) advised that they had no legal status. In addition, just over one in 10 indicated they had been deported by their host country at least once. Around 30% of hosted respondents indicated they had travelled back to their country of birth at least once. This was most common among Afghans (31%), and is likely to have involved both voluntary and involuntary movement in light of the deportation results. This is consistent with recognised circulatory migration patterns of Hazaras in the region.<sup>40</sup>

## 4.2 Circumstances in country of origin

The survey sought respondents' views on three specific aspects of their lives in their country of origin: their 'social proximity'<sup>41</sup> to migration (including direct migration experiences as well as those of family, friends and others in their communities); the extent of their links to diaspora in Australia; and the problems they faced prior to leaving. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'origin country' has been used to encompass both 'home' countries (i.e. relevant to people residing in their country of citizenship prior to travel) and 'host' countries (i.e. relevant to people residing in countries other than their country of citizenship). In the survey, 'residence' was defined as being 12 months or more (not including time spent in detention).

### 4.2.1 Social proximity to migration

The survey results showed that respondents had, on average, a reasonable social proximity to migration prior to leaving their home or host country to travel to Australia. In other words, social proximity related to the extent to which respondents knew of people who had migrated (or attempted to), or had previously migrated themselves (or attempted to).

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR (2013).

<sup>40</sup> Monsutti (2005) pp. 168-9

<sup>41</sup> Fussell and Massey (2003).

Social proximity to migration tended to diminish the closer the respondent was in social terms to the actual migrant group. For example, around a third of respondents indicated that it was common for people to travel to another country for work (32%), and that their ethnic group travelled to other countries for work (34%), compared to friends (17%) and family members (13%) who had migrated for work.

As shown in Table 1, respondents were less sure about being able to answer the more general questions (28-31% chose the 'not sure' option), compared to more specific questions on friends (10% not sure) and family (5% not sure) who had travelled to another country for work.

Table 1: Social proximity to migration and travel for work

Measure	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	No answer (%)	Total (%)
In [origin country], was it common for people to travel to another country to find work?	32	36	31	1	100
Did the majority of [your ethnic] community travel to another country to find work?	34	38	29	1	100
Did you have any friends who travelled to another country to find work?	17	73	10	1	100
Did you have any family members who travelled to another country to find work?	13	83	5	1	100
Prior to leaving [origin country], had you ever applied for a visa to travel to any other country?	9	87	3	0	100
Prior to leaving [origin country], did you know of people who had travelled to another country without a visa?	18	68	14	1	100

Source: IMA Survey, questions 22 & 20. (n=1,008).  
 Note: Totals may add up to more than 100% due to rounding.

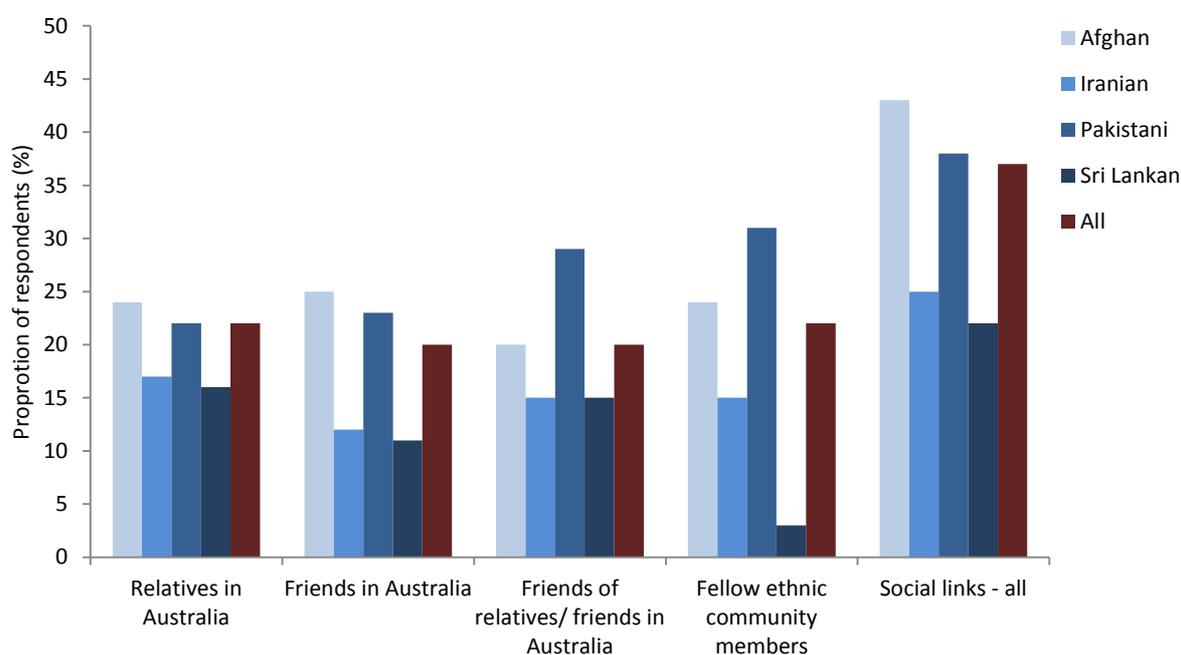
When results were examined by the four citizenship groups, there was not much variation in relation to family members who had travelled to another country to find work, nor in relation to applying for visas themselves. There was, however, variation in response to the more general questions about 'ethnic groups' and 'people', with Sri Lankans having reported much higher responses against these two groups (65% and 73% respectively). Sri Lankans were also less likely to report having had friends who had travelled (2%).

In regards to knowing people who had travelled to other countries without a visa, Afghans were more likely to report this (23%), and Sri Lankans and Pakistanis much less likely (2% and 3% respectively). Afghans reported that the countries people travelled to in these circumstances included Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Australia.

### 4.2.2 Links to diaspora in Australia

Another factor with the potential to affect decision making is the extent to which potential migrants had personal links to family members, friends and others in destination countries. Results showed that around 22% of respondents indicated that they had relatives in Australia before they left their origin country. When other social links to Australia were examined, the results showed that 37% had relatives, friends, friends of relatives/friends or fellow ethnic community members in Australia prior to their departure. When examined by citizenship, Afghans (43%) and Pakistanis (38%) were more likely than Iranians (24%) to have links to Australia.<sup>42</sup> Further breakdowns by citizenship group are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Respondents' links to Australia prior to departing origin country



Source: IMA Survey 24 (n = 1008).

Note: 'Social links – all' includes relatives, friends, friends of relatives/friends or fellow ethnic community members in Australia.

### 4.2.3 Prevailing conditions

When asked about the problems faced in their country of origin, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated there were many problems facing them, and that these problems were varied in nature and involved protection and non-protection problems. The most prominent problems included ethnic-based discrimination (62%), general insecurity (60%), religious discrimination (59%), serious harassment (53%), persecution (51%), political oppression (40%), corruption (34%), poor education facilities (30%), lack of job opportunities (27%), unemployment (27%), and poverty (23%).

Respondents' reporting of the top three problems facing them provided further clarity of the severity of the multitude of problems facing them, with protection-based reasons featuring heavily (see Table 2). Non-protection reasons also featured, and included general insecurity (32%), widespread violence (10%), unemployment (8%), lack of job opportunities (7%), and loss of home (6%).

<sup>42</sup> Note that estimates for Pakistanis and Sri Lankans are based on small sample sizes and should be treated with some caution.

When examined by citizenship, for example, Pakistanis and Afghans were more likely to report religious discrimination than others (85% and 74% respectively), and Sri Lankans and Afghans were more likely to report persecution on the basis of ethnicity (89% and 80% respectively). Sri Lankans were also much more likely than others to report 'eviction/loss of home/nowhere to live' as a problem (69%). Further analysis of these results is likely to reveal a complex picture that will vary by citizenship and ethnicity. This would be further enhanced through the completion of future surveys so that changes over time could be analysed.

Table 2: Problems faced by respondents in country of origin prior to travel: protection and non-protection

	ALL (%)	Afghans (%)	Iranians (%)	Pakistanis <sup>(2)</sup> (%)	Sri Lankans <sup>(2)</sup> (%)
<b>Protection</b>					
Discrimination against [ethnicity] people	62	80	22	66	89
Religious discrimination	59	74	42	85	60
Serious harassment	53	59	52	24	72
Persecution	51	55	41	42	71
Political oppression	40	32	57	41	73
Torture	39	39	41	28	81
<b>Non-protection<sup>(1)</sup></b>					
General insecurity	60	63	54	54	83
Widespread violence	39	38	36	38	68
Unemployment	27	20	27	3*	16*
Poor education facilities	30	29	20	13*	30
Lack of job opportunities	27	18	29	2*	26
Eviction/loss of home/nowhere to live	20	18	8	<1*	69
Corruption	34	31	38	17*	42
Poverty	23	18	16	2*	25
Poor health facilities	22	22	10	3*	38
<b>Other</b>					
Other	2	1*	2*	1*	<1*
Threat to life <sup>(3)</sup>	<1*	<1*	<1*	0	0
Prefer not to say	<1*	0	<1*	0	0

Source: IMA Survey, question 25. (n=1,008). Multiple response question.

Note (1): It is possible that some 'non-protection' factors (e.g. eviction/loss of home/nowhere to live') could be protection-related, depending on the exact nature of claims made. For the purposes of this paper, these factors have been interpreted as being non-protection factors.

Note (2): These citizenship groups have low sample sizes and results for these groups should be treated with caution.

Note (3): 'Threat to life' was coded based on open responses from the 'Other' field. For the purposes of this analysis, it is considered as a protection factor.

Note (4): Estimates based on less than 20 unweighted responses have been asterisked (see Appendix A in the Survey methodology paper for discussion).

Respondents' reporting of the top three problems facing them provided further clarity of the severity of the multitude of problems facing them, with protection-based reasons featuring heavily. Non-protection reasons also featured, and included general insecurity (32%), widespread violence (10%), unemployment (8%), lack of job opportunities (7%), and loss of home (6%).

### 4.3 Decision making

To better understand the range of factors involved in irregular migration decision making processes, the survey asked questions about both the decision to leave and the choice of destination. It asked respondents about their involvement, the involvement of other people, and the sources of information used in these decisions.

The survey also asked respondents about the reasons they left their country of origin to travel to Australia, and about any specific events that triggered their departure. Noting that all respondents had been granted protection in Australia, responses related to different forms of persecution ranked highly. The range of reasons for leaving selected by respondents, however, appears to indicate the complexity involved in the decision to leave, particularly in light of the prevalence of both protection and non-protection reasons for leaving origin countries.

Overall, responses showed that both 'push' and 'pull' factors were taken into account in decision making, and that both 'protection' and 'non-protection' reasons for movement applied.

Responses to questions about people involved the decision to leave and choice of destination indicate that there are some differences in these decision making processes, including in relation to the involvement of specific groups of people such as friends and family in origin countries, and people who help with travel (e.g. people smugglers). The differences in results are discussed below.

#### *4.3.1 Reasons for leaving country of origin*

The most common reasons respondents selected for leaving their country of origin were religious persecution (51%), persecution against people of the respondent's ethnicity (52%) and general insecurity/conflict (42%). General persecution (32%), political persecution (25%), an issue with the origin country's authorities (16%) and persecution against women (14%) also featured (see Table 3).

Many respondents also reported 'pull' factors among their reasons for leaving to travel to Australia, particularly perceptions of Australia's attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees, with 30% selecting 'Australia treats asylum seekers well' and 23% selecting 'Australia accepts refugees'.

Twenty four per cent responded that they left to travel to Australia for 'a better life'. This response option was imprecise in that it is likely to refer to a range of protection and/or non-protection reasons, and may also encompass both 'push' and/or 'pull' factors. However, it was included in the survey because it is a phrase that is often used by migrants themselves.<sup>43</sup> Further analysis of this variable against other variables is likely to be of interest.

Of the non-protection reasons, the most common reason for leaving was for general insecurity/conflict (42%). Other non-protection reasons included 'better education services' (15%), 'better health services' (9%), 'lack of economic opportunity' (9%), 'better health services' (9%), 'to get Australian citizenship' (9%), 'better housing' (8%) and 'to work' (7%).

Consistent with results on problems faced in origin countries, when the reasons for leaving were examined by citizenship, Pakistanis and Afghans were more likely to report religious persecution than others (82% and 68% respectively), and Sri Lankans and Afghans were more likely to report persecution on the basis of ethnicity (84% and 69% respectively). Sri Lankans and Iranians were also

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<sup>43</sup> Farah, Zafar, and Nawaz (2012).

more likely than other groups to report political persecution (70% and 49% respectively) as a reason for leaving.

Respondents' reporting of the top three reasons for leaving provided further clarity, with protection-based reasons featuring heavily. Non-protection reasons also featured, and included general insecurity (30%), 'Australia treats asylum seekers well' (15%), 'for a better life' (13%), issue with the country's authorities (10%), and better education services (seven per cent).

**Table 3: Reasons for leaving country of origin: protection and non-protection**

	ALL (%)	Afghans (%)	Iranians (%)	Pakistanis <sup>(2)</sup> (%)	Sri Lankans <sup>(2)</sup> (%)
<b>Protection</b>					
Persecution against [Ethnicity] people	52	69	18	63	84
Religious persecution	51	68	33	82	45
General persecution	32	28	35	24*	64
Political persecution	25	11	49	23*	70
Australia accepts refugees	23	24	12	25*	19*
Persecution based against women	14	7	21	6*	59
<b>Non-protection<sup>(1)</sup></b>					
General insecurity/conflict	42	41	40	43	69
Australia treats asylum seekers well	30	30	21	32	20
For a better life	24	18	24	13*	12*
Issue with the country's authorities	16	7	32	1*	40
For better education services	15	12	14	4*	8*
To get Australian citizenship	9	5*	3*	0	4*
To work	7	4*	4*	1*	2*
For better health services	9	5	5*	1*	2*
Lack of economic opportunity	9	5	11	2*	14*
For better housing	8	6	2*	2*	<1*
To join family/community	3	2*	<1*	0	3*
Australia is safe	<1*	<1*	0	0	<1*
<b>Other</b>					
I don't know, I was a child	<1*	<1*	<1*	0	0
Other	3	3*	2*	1*	0
Threat to life <sup>(3)</sup>	3	4*	0	3*	0
None of these	3	3*	5*	0	3*

Source: IMA Survey, question 26. (n=1,008). Multiple response question.

Note (1): It is possible that some 'non-protection' factors (e.g. issue with country's authorities) could be protection-related, depending on the exact nature of claims made. For the purposes of this paper, these factors have been interpreted as being non-protection factors.

Note (2): These citizenship groups have low sample sizes and results for these groups should be treated with caution.

Note (3): 'Threat to life' was coded based on open responses from the 'Other' field. For the purposes of this analysis, it is considered as a protection factor.

Note (4): Estimates based on less than 20 unweighted responses have been asterisked (see Appendix A in the Survey methodology paper for discussion).

The vast majority of respondents (85%) indicated that they faced both protection and non-protection-related problems in their country of origin and/or left their origin country for both protection and non-protection reasons (see Table 4).

When examined by citizenship, the results show that there was not a great deal of variation between citizenship groups, the exception being Sri Lankan respondents, who were more likely to have reported both protection and non-protection factors (96%).

**Table 4: Problems faced in origin country and/or reasons for leaving country of origin: Protection and non-protection factors<sup>(1)</sup>**

	ALL (%)	Afghans (%)	Iranians (%)	Pakistanis <sup>(3)</sup> (%)	Sri Lankans <sup>(3)</sup> (%)
Both protection and non-protection	85	86	81	85	96
Protection only	9	11	8	15*	0
Non-protection only <sup>(2)</sup>	3	1*	4*	0	2*
Other/none/no answer	3	2*	7*	0	2*
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: IMA Survey, questions 25.1 and 26.1 (n=1,008). See Appendix A for the questions asked.

Note (1): Protection problems and reasons included: all forms of persecution, religious discrimination, ethnic discrimination, serious harassment, political oppression, torture, 'Australia accepts refugees', 'threat to life'. Non-protection problems and reasons included: lack of economic/job opportunity; unemployment; general insecurity/conflict; widespread violence, corruption, poverty, for better housing; eviction/loss of home; to work; to join family/community; poor/better health services; poor/better education services; for a better life; issue with country's authorities; to get Australian citizenship; 'Australia treats asylum seekers well'.

Note (2): It is possible that some 'non-protection' reasons could have been protection-related, depending on the exact nature of claims made. For the purposes of the survey, the problems/reasons in note 2 have been interpreted as being non-protection.

Note (3): These citizenship groups have low sample sizes and results for these groups should be treated with caution. Estimates based on less than 20 unweighted responses have been asterisked (see Appendix A in the Survey methodology paper for discussion).

#### 4.3.2 Departure triggers

Acknowledging that decision making factors are not static and can change decisively and rapidly, the survey asked respondents whether any particular events triggered their departure. The results suggest that while the underlying reasons respondents decided to leave may have been present for a period of time, in most instances a specific incident triggered their departure.

Sixty-eight per cent responded that a significant security threat or incident triggered their departure. Events affecting respondents' family and friends, namely a threat against family/children (31%) and the loss of a close family member/friend (18%) ranked second and third respectively.

The next most common responses were the imminent threat of deportation (18%), loss, or threat of losing home or shelter (14%) and loss, or threat of losing job or income (11%). In relation to the role of people smugglers, three per cent of respondents answered that being approached by an agent (e.g. people smuggler) was a trigger.

### 4.3.3 People involved in the decision to leave

The responses to questions about the people involved in the final decision to leave indicated that friends and/or family in the country of origin played an important role and that, to a lesser extent, people smugglers were involved.

A not insubstantial proportion of respondents indicated that they themselves were *not* involved in the final decision to leave (12%). Eighty-two per cent responded that they were themselves involved in the final decision. When examined by citizenship, Iranians were more likely to not have been involved (19%), along with Afghans (11%) compared to Sri Lankans (four per cent). In light of the survey results on who respondents travelled with (see subsection 4.5) - which show that Iranian respondents were more likely to have travelled in family groups - the higher Iranian results may be related to the age and/or sex of the respondents.

Responses to questions on the involvement of friends and family in the decision to leave varied with respect to location. Forty per cent indicated that friends/family in their country of origin were involved in the decision, with only six per cent having indicated that friends/family in other countries were involved and five per cent that friends/family in Australia were involved.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, 11% of respondents indicated that people who helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers) were involved in the decision to leave. Sri Lankans were more likely to report the involvement of people smugglers (20%).

## 4.4 The choice of destination

The survey sought respondents' perspectives on Australia as a destination country and the reasons they travelled to Australia, with questions about their consideration of destination countries, as well as the sources of information and methods of access they used when making the decision.

### 4.4.1 Consideration of destination countries

When asked to select the countries they considered travelling to, 47% of respondents selected Australia, and 33% selected the option, 'I did not consider any particular countries'. Canada and the United Kingdom (6% and 5% respectively) were the next most common responses.

Respondents who selected Australia were then asked about the reasons they considered travelling to Australia over other possible countries (see Table 5). The most common responses were that 'Australia was accepting refugees' (65%) and that it 'does not return refugees' (46%). The responses 'other countries were not accepting refugees' (18%) and 'other countries were returning refugees' (17%) ranked fourth and fifth respectively. The third ranked response was 'because my family would be able to follow me to Australia' (24%). Table 5 provides the full list of responses.

The survey also asked respondents about the main reasons they ended up travelling to Australia from their origin country (as opposed to selecting Australia relative to another country). The attractiveness of Australia appeared to lessen: 'Australia was accepting refugees' dropped to 33% and 'Australia does not return refugees' dropped to 22%, although they were still highly ranked. Despite similarity to the reasons given for considering Australia, the results to this question indicate that there are different

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that 43% indicated that they did not have family/friends in Australia, and 30% indicated that they did not have family/friends in other countries.

dynamics involved in this aspect of decision making. Forty per cent indicated that none of the response options applied.<sup>45</sup> While it is extremely difficult to speculate about the reasons that did apply and were not reflected in the survey question, it is possible that the impact of people assisting with travel (e.g. people smugglers) could be a reason, noting that respondents indicated that these people were more involved in the decision about where to migrate than the decision to leave the origin country.

Table 5: Respondents' consideration of Australia as a destination country and reasons for travelling to Australia

Reason	Why did you consider travelling to Australia over other countries?	What were the main reasons you ended up travelling to Australia?
Australia was accepting refugees	65	31
Australia does not return refugees	46	22
Because my family would be able to follow me to Australia	24	9
Other countries were not accepting refugees	18	8
Other countries were returning refugees	17	7
There is work in Australia	13	4
Because it is easier to travel to Australia than other countries	14	7
To be with my family	8	2
To be with [ethnicity] people	6	4
I did not have family in other countries	5	4
I did not have friends in other countries	4	3
Australia is safe	3	2
To be with friends	3	1
[Ethnicity] people are not in other countries	2	1
Threat to life	1	3
Other	3	6
None of these	11	40
No answer	0	5

Source: IMA Survey, questions 30 and 31 (n=454; n=554).

These responses indicate there would be value in further research into Australia's position as a destination country in the complex global migration context, including how Australia is perceived in comparison to other destination countries.

#### *4.4.2 People involved in the decision that Australia would be the final destination*

Using questions structured in the same way as those about the decision to leave (see 4.3.3, above) the survey asked about the people involved in *the choice of destination*, including the role of friends and family in origin countries, diaspora and agents (e.g. people smugglers).

<sup>45</sup> The results indicate that this question essentially failed. It would have been expected to have been highlighted during cognitive testing, however, it did not emerge as an issue.

Seventy-nine per cent responded that they were themselves involved in the final decision that Australia would be the final destination, while 13% responded that they were not involved.<sup>46</sup> This is similar to the result on respondent involvement in the final decision to *leave* (12% were not involved), and again Iranians were more likely to have indicated that they were not involved in the destination decision (19%).

The involvement of friends/family in the decision again varied with respect to location. Twenty-nine per cent responded that friends/family in origin countries were involved in the final decision, while six per cent responded that friends/family in Australia were involved and four per cent responded that friends/family in other countries were involved.<sup>47</sup>

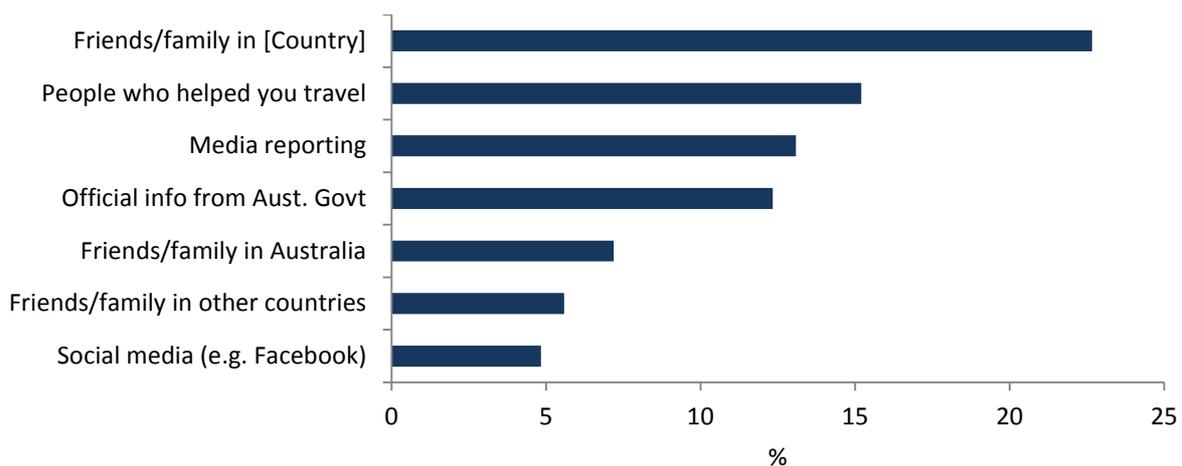
Overall, 15% of respondents indicated that people who helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers) were involved in the decision that Australia would be their final destination. Iranians were more likely to have reported the involvement of these people (25%), and Afghans less likely (9%).

#### 4.4.3 Sources of information about Australia

Respondents most commonly reported that they relied on friends and family in their country of origin (23%) and people who helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers) (15%) for information about Australia prior to making the final decision that Australia would be their final destination. Only five per cent responded that they relied on social media (e.g. Facebook) for information, with 47% indicating that they did not use social media. Similar to other results, Iranian respondents (24%) were more likely to have reported reliance on people who helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers).

In relation to information sources from Australia, 12% of respondents reported relying on official information from the Australian Government, and seven per cent on friends/family in Australia.<sup>48</sup>

Figure 2: Sources of information relied upon when making the final decision that Australia would be the destination



Source: IMA Survey, question 33. (n=1,008).

<sup>46</sup> The remainder responded that they were unsure or did not answer.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that 39% indicated that they did not have family/friends in Australia, and 31% indicated that they did not have family/friends in other countries.

<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that 42% indicated that they did not have family/friends in Australia.

4.4.4 Differences in decision making processes: the decision to leave and choice of destination

The survey responses indicated that there were some differences in decision making processes in relation to the decision to leave the country of origin and the choice of destination. For example, friends/family in origin countries were more likely to have been involved in the decision to leave than they were in the choice of destination, while the opposite is true for people who helped the respondents to travel (e.g. people smugglers).

Table 6: People involved in decision making processes

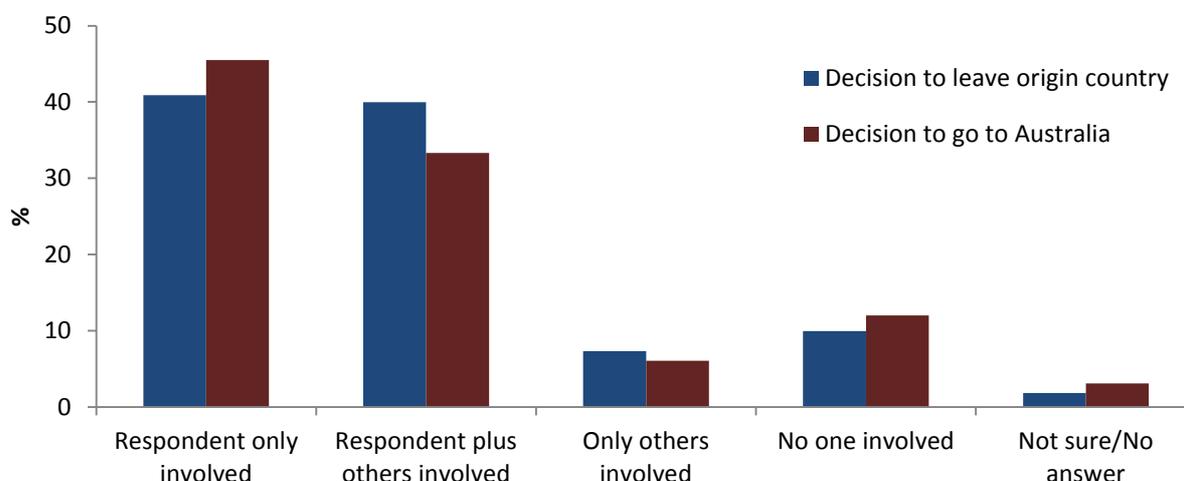
	Decision to leave origin country (%)	Decision to go to Australia (%)
Respondent	82	79
Friends/family in origin country	40	28
Friends/family in Australia*	5	6
Friends/family in other countries*	6	4
People who helped with travel (e.g. people smugglers)*	11	15

Source: IMA Survey, questions 28 and 32. (n=1,008).

Note: \*Some respondents indicated that some circumstances did not apply (e.g. they did not have family/friends in Australia). The percentages are based on the total responses, and do not exclude those that indicated that circumstances did not apply. See Appendix A for a detailed breakdown of responses.

There were also some differences in decision making processes when individual and collective decision making was examined. As shown in Figure 3, a higher proportion of respondents indicated that they made the decision to travel to Australia by themselves compared to the decision to leave the country of origin.

Figure 3: Individual and collective decision making: Decision to leave and decision to travel to Australia



Source: IMA Survey, questions 28 and 32. (n=1,008).

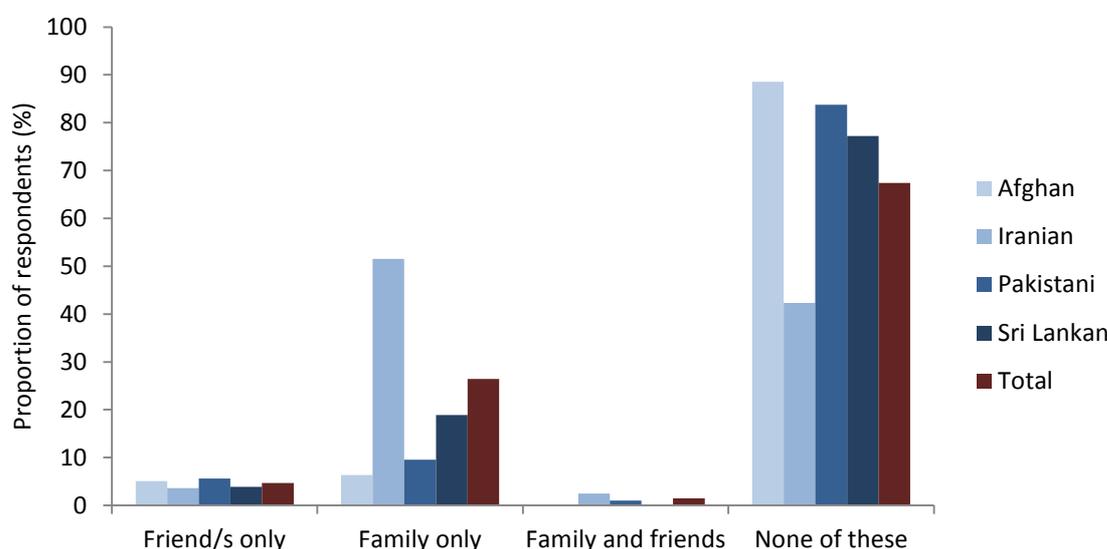
Additional research into the circumstances in which people are not involved in the final decision to leave would provide a better understanding of the role of collective decision making on migration, and may also provide insights into issues of potential vulnerability involved in irregular migration.

#### 4.5 Travelling to Australia

The survey also explored respondents' experiences of their journey to Australia. The questions examined connections to a range of different groups, such as people who had helped them travel (e.g. people smugglers) as well as practices they adopted en route and how safe these practices made respondents feel while travelling.

Almost two thirds of respondents travelled without friends or family, and around 30% reported having travelled with family. There was significant variation by citizenship, as shown in Figure 4, with Iranians much more likely to have reported having travelled with family (54%) compared to other citizenship groups: Afghans (6%); Pakistanis (11%); Sri Lankans (19%).

Figure 4: Respondents' travelling companions

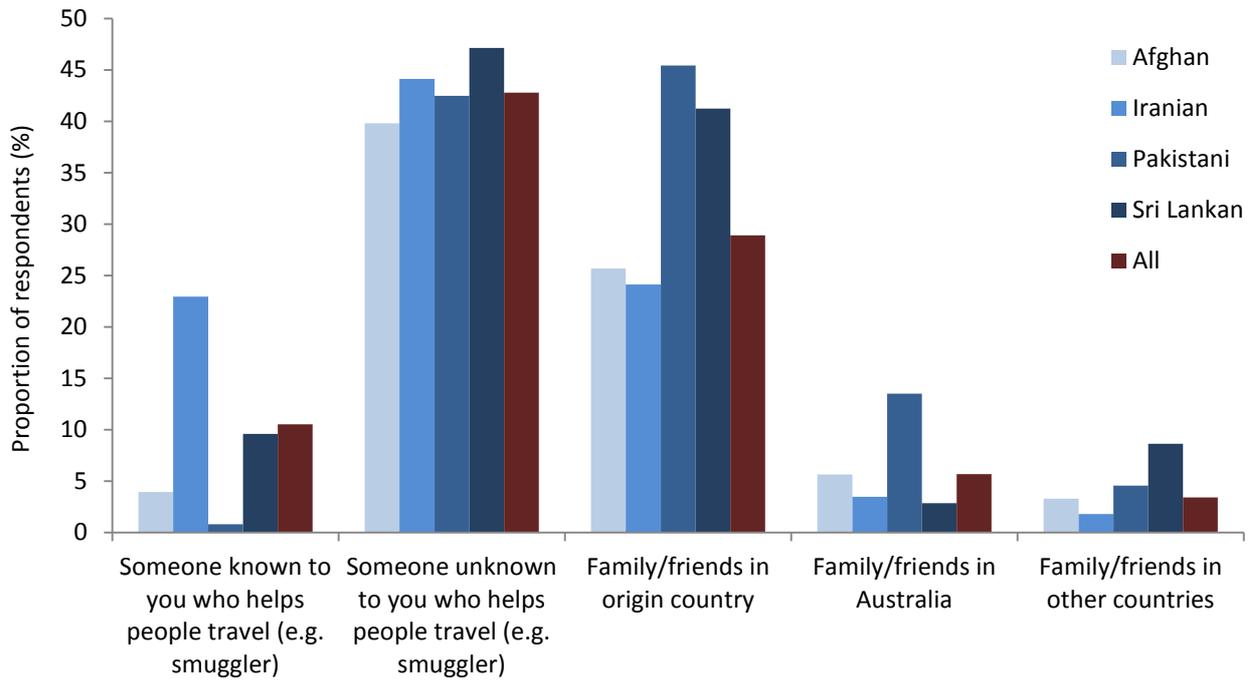


Source: IMA Survey question 6 (n = 1008).

In terms of assistance respondents received to travel to Australia, agents (e.g. people smugglers) previously unknown to the respondent provided the most help (43% of respondents received help). Friends and family in origin countries also provided assistance, although there was variation by citizenship with Pakistanis and Sri Lankans reporting greater assistance from this group (45% and 41% respectively). See Figure 5.

Assistance was also provided by agents (e.g. people smugglers) previously known to the respondent, although this was more common for Iranians. Respondents indicated that family/friends in Australia and other countries did not tend to help with travel (six per cent and three per cent respectively).

Figure 5: Assistance respondents' received to travel to Australia

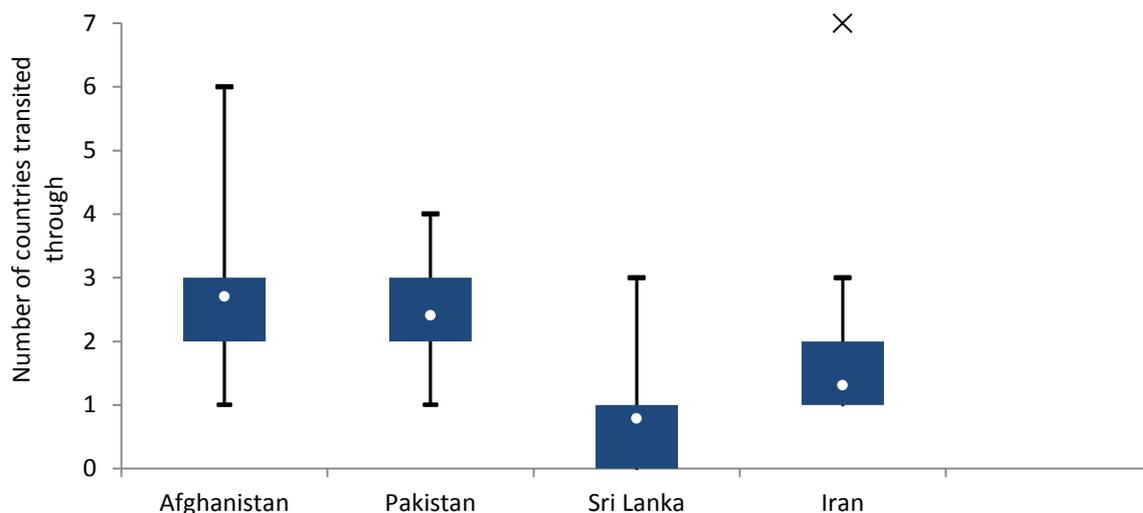


Source: IMA Survey question 35 (n = 1008).

The average amount invested in travel to Australia was around USD 12 600, with some marginal variation by citizenship: USD 13 500 for Afghans; USD 12 200 for Iranians; USD 11 000 for Pakistanis; USD 9 200 for Sri Lankans. Travel was predominantly funded by respondents' immediate families (including self-funding) (82%); 10% had been funded by family/friends in their origin country, and two per cent by family/friends in Australia. Eighteen per cent indicated that they (or their families) were still in debt, although Sri Lankans were more likely to report this (36%).

Most respondents (91%) indicated that they had travelled through Indonesia on their way to Australia; 55% transited Malaysia, 23% transited Thailand, 13% transited Pakistan and eight per cent transited the United Arab Emirates. Only three per cent of respondents indicated that they had travelled directly to Australia. When examined by citizenship, as shown in Figure 6, many Pakistanis and Afghans indicated that they had travelled to Australia via multiple transit countries, whereas nearly half of the Sri Lankans indicated that they had travelled directly.

Figure 6: Number of transit countries by citizenship



Source: IMA Survey, question 38 (n = 1008).

Notes:

- is the mean number of transit countries.

- x refers to an outlier.

The blue box represents the interquartile range (the 25th to 75th percentile). The black line represents the minimum and maximum values.

#### 4.5.1 Practices en route

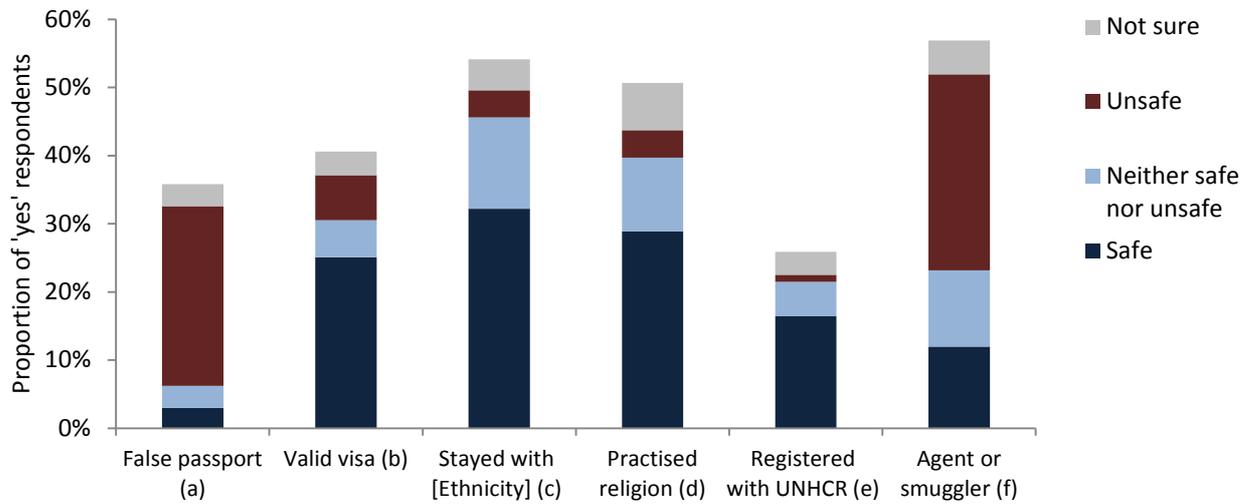
Consistent with anecdotal information, the journey to Australia, for many respondents, involved crossing multiple borders, spending time in countries with no legal status and relying on strangers to progress the next stage of their journey. This suggests a high degree of risk, fear and uncertainty for those who made the journey, as evident from the survey results.

Fifty-four per cent of all respondents indicated that they were smuggled across other countries' borders at some stage of their journey. When the results are examined by citizenship group, substantial differences emerged with 73% of Afghans and 70% of Pakistanis having reported being smuggled. The results were much lower for Iranians (24%) and Sri Lankans (four per cent), noting that around half of the Sri Lankan respondents reported having travelled directly to Australia.

Nineteen per cent of respondents reported having paid bribes to officials, however, this was much higher among Iranians (39%) compared to other citizenship groups (10% for Pakistanis and Afghans).

Many respondents (41%) reported having travelled on a false passport at some stage during their journey to Australia (a further 17% were not sure if their passport was valid or false), with 74% of those indicating that using a false passport had made them feel very or quite unsafe. In contrast, and not surprisingly, of those who had valid visas to enter transit countries (39%), the majority reported that this had made them feel very or quite safe (62%).

Figure 7: Aspects of feeling safe during journey to Australia



Source: IMA Survey, question 40. (n=1,008).

- (a) Used a false passport during your journey to Australia (n=357)
- (b) Had a visa to validly enter a transit country during your journey to Australia (n=399)
- (c) Stayed with [Ethnicity] people during your journey to Australia (n=537)
- (d) Able to practice your religion in transit countries during your journey to Australia (n=501)
- (e) Registered with UNHCR during your journey to Australia (n=257)
- (f) Used the services of someone who helps people to travel during your journey to Australia (n=557).

Some practices appeared to increase the sense of safety during the journey, such as contact with members of their ethnic community (59% felt very or quite safe), or practising their religion (57% felt very or quite safe).

Just over one quarter of respondents registered with UNHCR during the journey to Australia. Overall this provided a sense of safety (63% felt very or quite safe). Four per cent of those registered with UNHCR reported this had made them feel unsafe.

A majority of respondents (56%) indicated that they had used the services of someone who helps people travel (e.g. people smuggler) during their journey. Around half of these respondents indicated that this had made them feel quite or very unsafe during their journey to Australia.

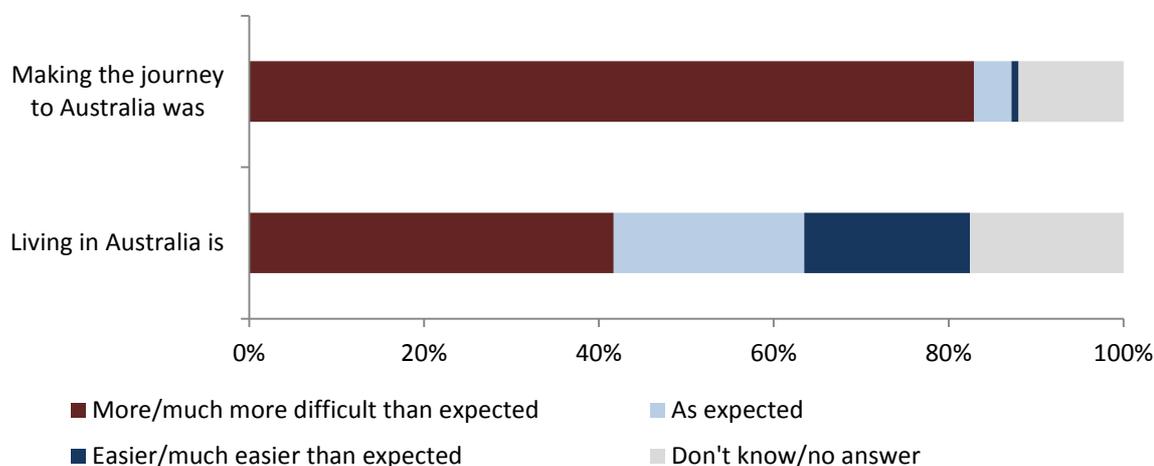
#### 4.6 Australian experiences

The survey sought the views of respondents on whether they engaged in specific activities after arriving in Australia, including communicating with family and friends in various locations, travelling back to their origin country to visit, and providing remittances (see Table 7). Forty per cent indicated that they did not undertake any such activities, and nine per cent chose not to respond. The most prevalent activity reported was the provision of money to family and/or friends in their home country (35%), with seven per cent having indicated that they send money to people in other countries.

In reflecting on the journey to Australia, the vast majority of respondents indicated that the journey to Australia was more difficult or much more difficult (83%) than they had expected – see Figure 8. Very few respondents (one per cent) indicated than the journey was easier or much easier than expected. This accorded with respondents’ reported experiences en route, particularly in relation to how unsafe they felt during their journey when using a people smuggler(s). The implications of the disparity between potential migrants’ views of what the migration journey is likely to entail compared to the reality of the journey are potentially profound.

It would be useful to examine this issue in more detail, noting there was not significant variation between citizenship groups, the notable exception being Sri Lankans, 96% of whom reported that the journey was much more difficult than expected (with another 3% reporting it was more difficult than expected). Further analysis of survey data, supplemented with qualitative research, would enhance the understanding of migrants’ journeys, which in turn would assist in enhancing informed choice of migrants and reducing vulnerability en route.

Figure 8: Experiences of the journey to, and life in, Australia

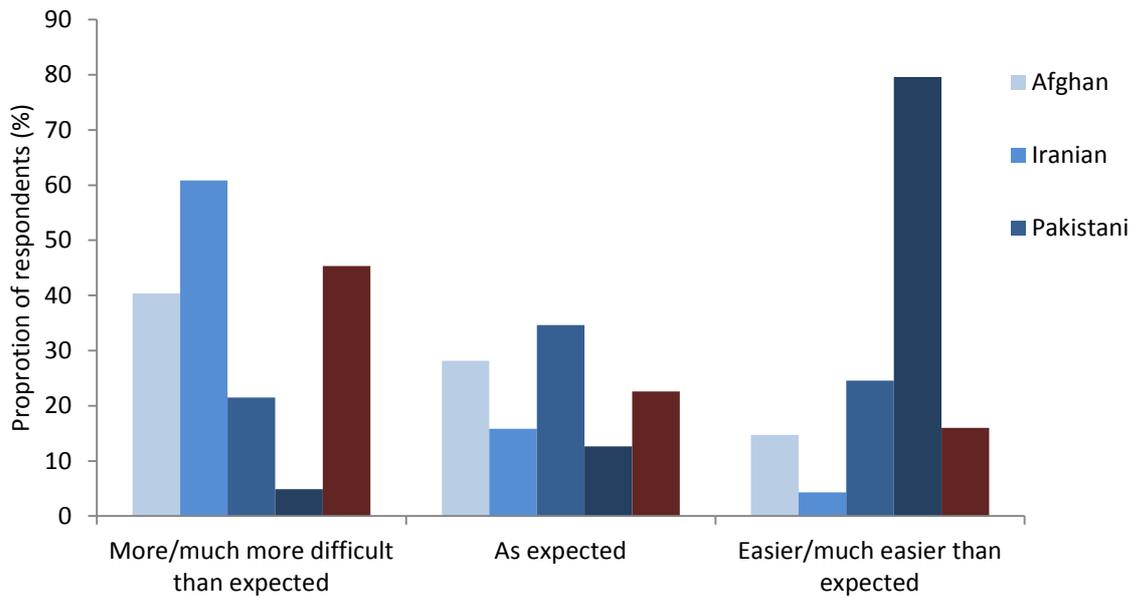


Source: IMA Survey, questions 43 and 44. (n=1,008).

A slightly higher proportion of respondents (45%) found that living in Australia was more difficult or much more difficult than expected compared to those that found it as expected, easier or much easier (39%). There was significant variation by citizenship group.

As shown in Figure 9, Sri Lankans were more likely to have reported life in Australia as being easier or much easier (80%) compared to Iranians (4%), Afghans (15%) and Pakistanis (25%).

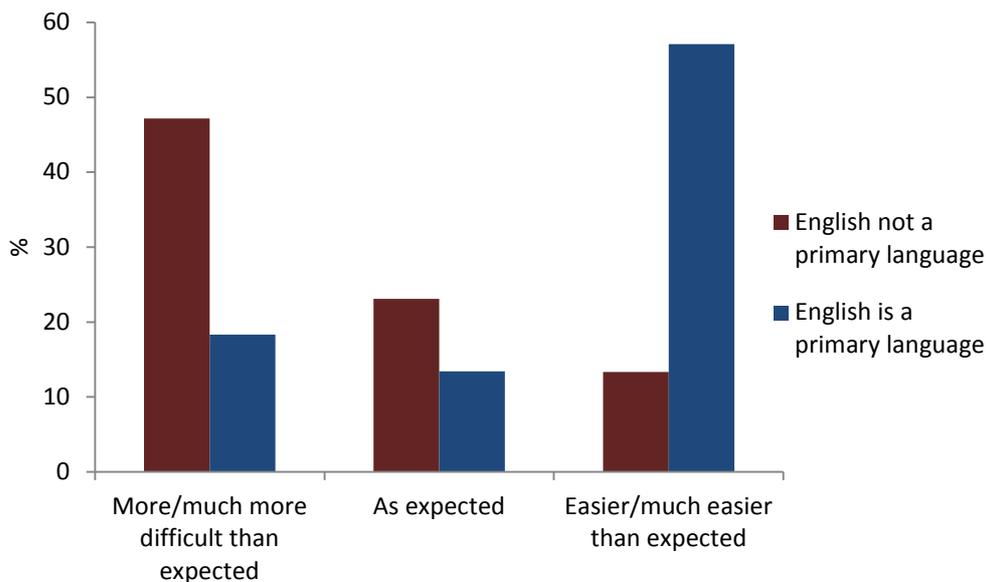
Figure 9: Respondents' perceptions of living in Australia



Source: IMA Survey question 44 (n = 1008).

The fact that most Sri Lankans found living in Australia easier than expected may be related to their English language ability. Eighty-one per cent of Sri Lankan respondents stated that English was their primary language, compared with less than one per cent for Afghans, and five per cent for both Iranians and Pakistanis. Figure 10 shows that there is a correlation between respondents who perceived living in Australia to be easier than expected and those who stated that English is one of their primary languages.<sup>49</sup>

Figure 10 : Respondents' perceptions of living in Australia by primary language



Source: IMA Survey question 44 (n = 980)

<sup>49</sup> The survey asked respondents to list their 'primary language(s).' It did not take into account actual competency levels, or those who spoke English but did not consider English as a primary language.

Further examination of respondents' perceptions of life in Australia showed no correlation with the existence of social links to Australia, or being employed in Australia.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

As one of the first commissioned research projects undertaken as part of the Research Program, and the first quantitative survey of first-hand experiences of IMAs to Australia, the IMA Survey provides an empirical evidence base to assist in the development of improved understanding of decision making of irregular maritime arrivals to Australia. It is an important addition to the small but growing evidence base on migrant decision making. The occasional paper 'Placing recent Sri Lankan maritime arrivals in a broader migration context' draws, in part, on surveys conducted in Sri Lanka of potential irregular migrants, and their views of Australia as a destination country. Further quantitative and qualitative research in source and transit countries is also underway as part of the Research Program.

The IMA Survey results offer insights into a range of areas in which further analysis and research activity would be valuable for creating a solid base of measurement and analysis to inform policy and program considerations. For example, in looking at the differences between how citizenship groups answer questions, future analysis of the final survey results can seek to identify the gaps in our current understanding of the reasons for these differences. This may in turn inform research activities that are tailored to specific citizenship groups. Additional surveys conducted on an annual basis would assist in improved analysis of changes in dynamics over time, noting that further occasional papers drawing on the results of this survey are planned.

The findings on the extent to which IMAs access official information and media reporting demonstrate the need for more research into communication networks at the different stages of the journey to Australia, and how information campaigns can be better targeted, including through friends and family in origin countries, to encourage people to not travel to Australia irregularly. Finally, greater understanding of the experiences of IMAs during the transit phase of the journey to Australia could have a significant bearing on bilateral arrangements between destination and transit countries, enabling a greater level of discussion about issues such as voluntary and involuntary returns than perhaps is currently enjoyed.

There is no doubt that as an evidence base the IMA Survey results will be useful and relevant in a number of research areas and in policy deliberations. Ideally, future qualitative research will supplement the survey results, including to help explain some of the results, particularly as they relate to specific demographic groups.

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