4 MIGRATION

SUMMARY. Until the overturn of the Taliban regime the complex migration situation of Afghanistan has been dominated by displacement flows – either within Afghanistan or across borders. The year 2002 marked the start of a ten-year period in which return from displacement was the main motive for migration: in this period 39 percent of internal migrants and even 82 percent of immigrants moved for this reason. Overall, Kabul was the destination of half of the internal migrants (almost 500 thousand people) in the ten years after 2002. In international perspective, Pakistan was the country where most immigrants – 63 percent – came from and Kabul was by far the most important destination province, accommodating almost half the immigrant stock: 45 percent (almost 600 thousand people) of all immigrants since 2002.

In more recent years, the migration patterns have changed substantially. Afghanistan has turned again from a net immigration country to a net emigration country. The ALCS information suggests that in recent years emigration is larger than immigration by more than 100 thousand persons per year. This would imply a negative annual migration rate of 0.4 percent. Return from displacement is reduced to a minor reason for internal migration in the period 2012 to 2014 and for immigrants this reason is reduced to only 39 percent. With the returnee flows going down, labour migration becomes a leading motive for migration, and is by far the most important reason for emigration. Kabul remains the most important destination for internal migrants, but the proportion of 25 percent moving there is only half of that going to Kabul in the ten years before 2012. This may be related to the deteriorating employment situation in the capital. In international migration, Iran has taken over the leading position from Pakistan, both as destination country for emigrants (61 percent) and as origin country for immigrants (63 percent). The Gulf states gain a prominent place, as they generated 7 percent of immigrants into Afghanistan between 2012 and 2014, and received 18 percent of emigrants in the last year before the survey.

Kabul and its immediately surrounding provinces form the main internal migration system in the country, with Kabul acting as a strong gravitation centre for migrants from particularly Parwan, Panshjer and Wardak. Close to half of all migrations within Afghanistan happen in this area. In absolute numbers, Kabul has by far the largest overall net gain due to migration, adding close to 900 thousand people to its population. Also Balkh, Herat and Nangarhar have substantial net migration gains of around 100 thousand persons each. On the other hand, Laghman and Wardak are the provinces with the largest net population loss due to migration, losing well over 100 thousand persons each. In relative terms Kabul and Nimroz are the provinces with the largest population gain, each increasing with around one quarter due to migration. Panshjer is the province that lost relatively most population: it would have had 28 percent more population without migration. Internal migration and immigration are strongly directed toward urban areas. Compared to an urban proportion of 24 percent in the total population, 50 percent of the immigrants live in urban areas, 82 percent of internal life-time migrants and 67 percent of recent migrants.

The survey also indicated that for Afghans migration is more often a family event than an individual act. Family migration usually occurs when returning from displacement, but apparently families also often move together if one or some household members seek employment elsewhere. The exception is emigration, which almost exclusively consists of adult working-age males.

The living conditions of persons and households that returned from displacement seem to be somewhat better than those of non-returnees. Literacy among returnees is significantly higher, as is the proportion with completed secondary and tertiary education. Also labour force participation is higher among returnees, although the rate of returnee women that is gainfully employed is somewhat lower. Housing quality and access to improved water and sanitation is also better for returnee households than for non-returnee households.

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Afghanistan’s migration context

The migration context of Afghanistan is particularly complex. Regular and traditional migrant flows feature both internal and cross-border movements, permanent, seasonal and circularly migration – including remaining nomadism of a
sizable part of the population – and migration patterns that are highly gender-specific and very different for the short and long distance (CSO 2014). These flows have become mixed with the effects of one of the world’s largest and most protracted refugee situations, the largest volume of returnees in recent history, large-scale internal displacement and newly emerging destinations for labour migrants and asylum seekers. The number of Afghans involved in international migration – and more particularly the number of refugees and returnees – is so large that it is critical to the population equation in national estimates. However, displacement and other forms of internal and international migration are so intertwined that the government of Afghanistan is now taking the first steps in developing a migration policy that is going beyond refugee migration.

The ALCS 2013-14 included two modules on migration. The general migration module asked questions about the place of usual residence at three different points in time: at birth, in 2002 (Shamsi calendar 1380) and two years before the survey (mostly 2012, Shamsi calender 1391). The year 2002 marks the moment of the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the change from large-scale refugee flows to large-scale return flows. The question on place of residence two years before the survey was included to assess possible recent changes in migration. Although the survey is not primarily designed as a migration survey, the information collected is relevant to add to the limited body of information on migrants and migration flows. The information collected refers to migrant stocks. Consequently, information provided about the volume of migration flows is an underestimation to the extent that people had other places of residence in addition to those recorded on the questionnaire. It should be also emphasised that the strength of the ALCS migration information is more in revealing patterns than in specifying absolute numbers.

This chapter dissects the migration analysis into information about internal migration (migration between provinces in Afghanistan; section 4.2) and that about international migration (migration crossing international borders; section 4.3). For these two types of migration, the number of migrants are estimated, their origins and destinations, their main characteristics and the reasons for migration. Specific attention is also paid to the urbanisation effect of migration. Section 4.4 attempts to assess the overall effect of migration on the population distribution in Afghanistan. Separate sections of this report are devoted to main migrant types in terms of reasons for migration. A section on labour migration is included in the next chapter on labour outcomes (section 5.4), while section 4.5 of this chapter elaborates on returned refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), which were the dominant migrant types in the first decade of this century. The second section of this introduction, however, continues with an explanation of the main migration concepts that are used in this chapter.

4.1.2 Migration concepts

Migration is defined by the act of crossing a border and going to live elsewhere for at least a year. Crossing the international border between two countries represents international migration. People who enter a country are immigrants and those who leave a country are emigrants. Crossing (administrative) boundaries within a country represents internal migration. Persons moving into an area from within the same country are labelled in-migrants; those who move to another area within the country are labelled out-migrants. Internal migration can be measured at different levels, such as province-, district- or even municipality level. The ALCS 2013-14 was designed to measure migration between the provinces of Afghanistan.

In this report, migration analysis distinguishes three different time dimensions, which can apply to both internal and international migration.

- **Life-time migration** indicates a difference between the place of birth and the place of current residence. It gives the net result of all moves a person has made during his or her life, and may conceal possible consecutive migrations during the person’s life time. At the aggregate level, it gives an indication of net loss and gain of the population in specific areas.
- **Intermediate-time migration** in this report refers to a difference between the place of residence in 2002 and the place of current residence and gives the net result of all moves a person has made in the twelve years between 2002 and the survey. The year 2002 was chosen as it is a landmark in the migration history of Afghanistan, marking the onset of large returnee flows after the overthrow of the Taliban regime.
- **Recent migration** is measured as migration in the two years preceding the survey and gives the net result of all moves a person has made in these two years. Measuring recent migration allows to detect possible new migration patterns.
Current residence is the place of residence at the time of the ALCS 2013-14.

Refugee: A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP): A person who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave his or her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.

Although the absolute number of migrants provide relevant information, an equally relevant indicator is this number in relation to the total population of the migrant-receiving area or to the population of the migrant-sending area. These indicators are expressed as, respectively, migration rates and ratios. For definitions of these indicators, see Text box Migration rates and ratios below.

### 4.2 Internal migration in Afghanistan

This section looks at the internal migrant stocks across the provinces of Afghanistan; international migration is covered in more detail in section 4.3. The key question of this section is where internal migrants go to and where they come from. In order to discover the main migration patterns, attention is paid to absolute numbers, but more specifically to migration ratios – for the proportion of migrants in the resident population – and rates – for the proportion of migrants who moved away from the place of origin. This information is provided for three episodes in people’s lives in the next three sub-sections: migration since birth (life-time migration), migration since 2002 when the regime change occurred in Afghanistan (labelled intermediate-time migration), and migration in the two years before the survey (recent migration). For detailed definitions of these concepts, see section 4.1.2.

#### 4.2.1 Internal life-time migrants

Around 1.6 million residents in Afghanistan were born in another province than where they were living at the time of the survey. This number of life-time migrants implies that at least 6 percent of the total population of Afghanistan now lives in another province than where they were born. Zooming in from the national to the province level, a large variation in this proportion of internal life-time migrants can be observed (Figure 4.1). Kabul stands out with 869 thousand life-time migrants in its population, which is more than half (55 percent) of all life-time migrants in the country. Also in relative terms, Kabul stands out with a proportion of 21 percent of the population who were born elsewhere in the country. Surprisingly, Nimroz is the province with the next-highest in-migration ratio (13 percent), but the absolute number of internal life-time migrants in this province is small (19 thousand).
A second group of provinces with above-average in-migration ratios includes Balkh and Bamyan (each with around 10 percent life-time in-migrants in the population, and Nangarhar and Parwan (8 and 7 percent, respectively). It is likely the presence of major towns (Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad) in some of these provinces that attracts migrants who look for employment and education opportunities. On the other hand, there is quite a large group of provinces that has very low in-migration ratios. This group includes provinces like Badakhshan, Daykundi and Nooristan, which are not attractive to move to because of their remoteness and few opportunities for livelihoods. Very low proportions of migrants in Wardak, Paktika, Urozgan and Helmand may also be related to the security situation in those provinces.

The provinces where internal life-time migrants come from are very different from the main destination provinces\textsuperscript{26}. Due to its total population size, Kabul generated one of the largest numbers of out-migrants (105 thousand), but four other – in terms of population much smaller – provinces had even more out-migrants, ranging from 122 to 183 thousand persons. However, it is not so much the absolute numbers, but the out-migration rates that provide the key to understanding out-migration. Figure 4.2 shows that the highest rates are found for provinces immediately surrounding Kabul, an indication of the very strong pull force of the capital. Panshjer has the highest out-migration rate, with 34 percent, meaning that of all persons born in Panshjer more than one third now live elsewhere. Also Laghman and Logar have very high out-migration rates of more than 20 percent (28 and 21 percent, respectively), which is, however, much affected by Kuchi migration. But without the Kuchi migration component the out-migration rates of these provinces are still double the national average. Close-to-Kabul Wardak, Parwan and Kapisa have relatively high rates as well (18, 17 and 11 percent, respectively). On the other hand, there is also a group of provinces with very low out-migration, indicating that people tend to stay within the province because either the province itself has sufficient to offer – like probably Kunduz and Herat – or because of a strong connection with the place of origin. Kabul is among the provinces with the lowest out-migration rates (3 percent only).

\textsuperscript{26} It should be noted that information in this section only includes internal migrants, as no information is available about place of birth of persons who emigrated.
Figure 4.1: Life-time in-migration ratio, by province (in percentages)

Figure 4.2: Life-time out-migration rate, by province (in percentages)
**4.2.2 Internal intermediate-time migrants**

The number of persons who had a province of residence in 2002 different from that at the time of the ALCS was 1.0 million. The number of internal intermediate-time migrants implies an average out-migration rate of more than 6 percent. The provincial rates follow closely the pattern of life-time migration, again indicating a strong pull from Kabul on the immediately surrounding provinces and again with the same provinces that generate little out-migration (Figure 4.4). This strong similarity is an indication that the mechanisms underlying life-time and intermediate time migration within Afghanistan have not much changed over time. The one exception is Panjshir. Whereas life-time out-migration was already very high – with an out-migration rate of 34 percent – the intermediate-time rate is exceptionally high at 56 percent. Of the 213 thousand persons living in Panjshir in 2002, 119 thousand were currently living elsewhere – mostly in Kabul and Parwan. This is likely a result of the leading role of the province in the regime change in 2002 and the subsequent increased access to administration positions and employment in Kabul.

Also the importance of the destination provinces closely follows the life-time migration pattern (Figure 4.3), with Kabul absorbing by far the largest number of internal intermediate-time migrants from other provinces in Afghanistan: 499 thousand or 49 percent of all internal migrants. The in-migration ratio of 21 percent implies that more than one in five Kabul residents born before 2002 lived somewhere else in 2002. One major deviation from the life-time pattern is presented by Parwan, which has an exceptionally high intermediate-time in-migration ratio of 47 percent, implying that close to half of the persons born before 2002 lived somewhere else in 2002. Equal shares of 40 percent of this in-migrant group in Parwan lived in Kabul and Panjshir in 2002. Circumstantial evidence – the difference in the life-time and intermediate-time migration patterns for Parwan, the time reference of the migration indicators and the strong migration links with Panjshir – suggest that a significant share of Parwan’s population went to Panjshir during the Taliban regime and later returned to their place of origin when the Taliban were removed from power.

The out-migration rates of intermediate-time migrants show widespread out-migration for almost all provinces (Figure 4.4). However, a general pattern that emerges is that the pull of Kabul as the country’s main magnet of attraction is stronger felt the closer the province of out-migration is to Kabul.
Figure 4.3: Intermediate-time in-migration ratio, by province (in percentages)

Percent of intermediate-time in-migrants:
- 10.0 and more
- 6.5 - 9.9
- 1.5 - 6.4
- Less than 1.5

National average: 6.5

Percentage of the currently resident population arrived since 2002, that was born in another province

Figure 4.4: Intermediate-time out-migration rate, by province (in percentages)

Percent of intermediate-time out-migrants:
- 10.0 and more
- 6.5 - 9.9
- 1.5 - 6.4
- Less than 1.5

National average: 6.5

Percentage of the population leaving the province since 2002 and currently living in another province
4.2.3 Internal recent migrants

The stock of internal recent migrants – those who migrated in the two years before the survey – is much smaller than that of the life-time and intermediate-time migrants (388 thousand), but their information allows the detection of recent changes in migration patterns and can also give an indication of changes in the intensity of migration.

Although Kabul is the most preferred destination for recent migrants as well, it is far less dominant than for less-recent migration. Some 25 percent of internal recent migrants choose to come to Kabul, which was followed by Nangarhar and Ghor as the main destination provinces (accommodating 19 and 12 percent of all internal recent migrants, respectively). This recent migration information implies that, relative to the size of the resident population, Kabul drops down the list of destinations. With a recent in-migration ratio of just over 2 percent, it is far below Bamiyan that tops the list with close to 8 percent, and Zabul and Ghor, each with over 7 percent (see Figure 4.5). In-migration has also become significantly less pronounced in Parwan and Nimroz. More in-depth analysis will be required to identify the causes of these shifts, but they are likely to include the receding effect of return from internal displacement and the slow-down of the economy, which especially affects the labour absorption capacity of Kabul.

Also for out-migration significant changes in the pattern across the country are observed, compared to less-recent migration. Besides Logar, Wardak, Panjsher and Laghman that maintained relatively high levels of out-migration, Nimroz, Sar-e-Pul, Helmand and Kandahar have risen into the top-eight provinces with the highest out-migration rates, with heavy out-migration from the south-western provinces (Figure 4.6). Wardak and Kandahar closely follow Kabul as the largest provider of internal migrants, with both 40 thousand recent out-migrants, compared to Kabul with 46 thousand. Helmand and Logar each generated around 30 thousand migrants. As all these provinces – except Kabul – face severe security problems, this might be a common cause for high out-migration from these areas.
Figure 4.5: Recent in-migration ratio, by province (in percentages)

Figure 4.6: Recent out-migration rate, by province (in percentages)
4.2.4 Urban-rural linkages

Besides moving from one province to another, internal migration often also implies a change of residence in terms of urban and rural environment. According to the ALCS data, internal migration is a strong factor in the urbanisation of society. The percentage of the sedentary population that lived in urban areas at the time of their birth was 20 percent, whereas the current residence distribution has close to 25 percent urban dwellers.

The largest share – 64 percent – of inter-province life-time migration is rural-to-urban migration (Table 4.1), whereas the opposite urban-to-rural migration is only 3 percent of total life-time migration. The net effect is an increase of 677 thousand urban population and the corresponding loss of rural dwellers.

Table 4.1: Life-time and recent internal migrants, by current residence, and by residence at respective moments in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence at specified moment</th>
<th>Current residence</th>
<th>a. In thousands</th>
<th>b. In percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Residence at birth (life-time migrants)</td>
<td>1,109.0</td>
<td>909.9</td>
<td>199.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>876.6</td>
<td>712.3</td>
<td>164.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>232.5</td>
<td>197.6</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Residence at two years before survey (recent migrants)</td>
<td>175.7</td>
<td>118.6</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>115.0</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, migration between rural areas and that between urban areas is of less importance (15 and 18 percent of all internal life-time migrations). However, for migrants born in urban areas, another urban area is the destination of 85 percent. For rural-born migrants, an urban area is the destination of 81 percent.

Recent migration has been considerably less urban-oriented. Two-thirds (67 percent) of all recent migrants moved to an urban area, compared to 82 percent of all life-time migrants. Compared to life-time migration, rural-to-urban migration is less prominent (49 percent of all recent migrations) and urban-to-rural migration is higher (16 percent). Reduced job opportunities in the urban economy (see section 5.3) could be one factor for the explanation of the decreasing pace of urbanisation.

Whereas the ALCS questionnaire was designed to estimate inter-province and international migration, to some extent it also allows the identification of intra-province migration. The specification of residence at birth and two years before the survey allows to measure rural-urban and urban-rural migration within the province, but not rural-rural and urban-urban migration. This exercise shows that the volume of rural-to-urban life-time migration within the province is three times larger than the opposite urban-to-rural migration (data not shown) and added 474 thousand persons to the urban population, at the expense of the rural population. As with inter-provincial migration, recent urban-rural population exchange within the province is less urban oriented, although not as much: 61 percent of the exchange was towards urban areas and 39 percent towards rural areas.

4.2.5 Who are the internal migrants?

The profile of migrants is strongly related to the reason for migration. In general, migration research finds that labour migrants tend to be young – more often male – adults, while persons seeking education are mostly youth in the age group 15 to 24. Refugees and IDPs tend to more resemble the total resident population, although often women and children are often overrepresented here. Figure 4.7 compares the age- and sex profiles of internal migrants – life-time and recent – with that of the total resident population. It is evident that the life-time migrants are much more concentrated in the primary working ages 15-64 (68 percent, compared to 49 percent in the total population).

27 This section covers only the sedentary population, excluding the nomadic Kuchi.
The age-sex distribution of recent migrants, more closely resembles the total population profile. Another quite surprising finding – in international comparison – is that the sex distribution of both migrant populations is very close to that of the total population, and no overrepresentation of males is encountered. The specific context of Afghanistan, in which people tend to marry at a young age and in which there is reluctance to leave women unattended, may be a clue to this phenomenon. This would also help explaining the large presence of migrant children, who would generally move with the parents. This supposition is supported by the reasons given for recent migration: being a dependent migrant – either as wife or as child – was a primary reason for moving.

In terms of economic activity status, all internal migrant groups – life-time, intermediate-time and recent – are quite similar to the profile of the general population. To the extent that differences can be observed, migrants are slightly better-off, with generally a little higher labour-force participation and a little lower un- and under-employment. Thus, it seems that internal migration is to a limited extent an effective strategy for finding employment. A more detailed analysis on the association between labour-market participation and migration is provided in section 5.4.

With regard to educational attainment, life-time and intermediate-time migrants perform better than the general population. Adults of 18 years and older of these two groups less often lack any education (54 and 57 percent respectively against 64 percent in the general adult population), 14 percent has completed upper secondary education against 11 percent in the total population, and 9 and 7 percent, respectively, have obtained a university degree, compared to only 3 percent generally. Recent adult migrants, however, more resemble the general population in terms of educational attainment.

4.2.6 Why do internal migrants move?

The ALCS allowed to identify the reasons for migration in two different periods, that between 2002 and 2012, and since two years before the survey, which is mostly the period 2012 to 2014. For both periods, the most important reason was ‘Moving with parents or the family’, which usually refers to dependent children who accompany their parents and dependent wives accompanying their husbands (Figure 4.8). For the underlying motive of the migration, the reasons of the independent migrants can provide clues. In the period between 2002 and 2012, the two most important of these other reasons were ‘Returning from displacement’ and ‘Looking for work’, with 24 and 18 percent, respectively. Assuming that the category of dependent migrants could be distributed pro rato to the other categories, these shares would even be 39 and 29 percent.

The picture that emerges from these results is that internal migration flows in the decade following the overturn of the Taliban regime were to a large extent shaped by IDPs’ returning to their place of residence before displacement. Kabul and Pansjher together generated half of the returning IDPs, with about equal shares. Another quarter came from Baghlan, Balkh, Herat and Nangarhar. Kabul and Parwan were the most important destinations of these returnees.

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28 The youngest age category 0-5 years is truncated, because for children younger than two years of age the place of residence two years before the survey cannot be given.
In the recent period 2012 to 2014, the share of returning IDPs was much smaller with 6 percent (9 percent if adding dependent migrants). Migration for employment was about as important as in the decade before. For the surprisingly high proportion of migrants who moved to join the family is no ready explanation.

In both periods, new violence-related IDP flows were generated, which accounted for 7 percent of all internal migrants. Most of these fled from Wardak, but in 2012-2014, Ghor and Laghman also became important origins of IDPs. Kabul is the most important destination of these new IDPs, receiving close to 40 percent of them in both periods.

**Figure 4.8: Internal migrants, by period of migration, and by reason for migration (in percentages)**

4.3 International migration

Refugee and subsequent returnee flows have dominated the international migration landscape of Afghanistan since the 1970s. The violent situation in Afghanistan during the successive periods of Soviet occupation, mujadiheen fights and Taliban rule generated massive movements to particularly Iran and Pakistan, and to a lesser extent further abroad to EU countries, North America and Australia. However, moving to Pakistan and Iran was partly an extension of the more traditional migration system between the three countries and did not only involve refugees (Kronenfeld 2008, Monsutti 2008). Strong migration connections with Iran and Pakistan existed for centuries, both for the nomadic Kuchi, whose migration routes frequently crossed borders, as well as for the sedentary population, who had cultural ties in the neighbouring countries and frequently moved for family and livelihood purposes.

From 2002 onwards, after the removal of the Taliban regime, large return migration materialised from refugees living in Pakistan and Iran. Afghanistan is the largest repatriation operation in the world, despite the fact that the rates of return have dropped since the peak years 2002-2008 (UNHCR 2015). However, there are reasons to believe that an unknown but relevant share of these returnees did not permanently settle in Afghanistan, but returned again the country of previous refuge or have developed a lifestyle that is anchored in both countries (e.g. Monsutti 2008).

Next to the impact of return, the more traditional exchange between the neighbour countries by migratory Afghans continues to exist and includes large-scale labour migration. In addition, newly emerging destinations, especially in the Gulf, attract an increasing amount of Afghan labour. In the last few years, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan may have generated new displacement to other countries. The information on international migration from the ALCS confirms many of the above elements.
4.3.1 Immigrants and immigration

How many, where and where from?

Over 570 thousand people in Afghanistan – 2 percent of the total population – were born abroad. Two thirds of them were born in Pakistan and one third in Iran, with a remaining 1 percent of them born in other countries. However, in 2002, at the time the Taliban were removed from power and large-scale return of refugees started, 8 percent of the current Afghanistan population\(^{29}\) lived abroad. Pakistan and Iran were the countries of residence of, respectively, 63 percent and 37 percent of the currently resident Afghans who lived abroad in 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of residence</th>
<th>Born abroad</th>
<th>Living abroad in 2002</th>
<th>Living abroad in 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other country</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scale of return migration has decreased in the most recent years, which is likely related to the fact that the pool of Afghans in Pakistan and Iran – and especially those willing to return – is greatly reduced, and to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. The estimated number of currently resident people that lived abroad two years before the survey is 112 thousand, less than half a percent of the total population. To the extent that this reflects the volume of immigration and immigration can be equally divided between the two years, the annual immigration ratio for the period 2012 to 2014 can be calculated as 0.2 percent.

Among this recently-immigrated population, Iran has taken over the position of Pakistan as the country generating the most immigrants (63 percent), partly also as the result of the country’s policy of forced return in the last few years. Pakistan generated 30 percent of all recent immigrants, and an increasing share – 7 percent – arrived from (and mostly returned from) other countries. Especially the Gulf states gained importance as the region where migrants arrived from.

This trend was expected, as these countries recently attracted more labour from Afghanistan (see also section 5.4.1), and where emigration occurs, usually also return migration emerges.

With regard to the province where immigrants settle, Kabul dominates the scene by accommodating almost half the immigrant stock (45 percent or 595 thousand people) that immigrated since 2002. In Kabul, the share of immigrants from Pakistan (53 percent) was higher than the corresponding share of immigrants from Iran (33 percent), as the latter tended to settle relatively more in the western provinces of Farah, Herat, Fayab and Nimroz, and in Bakh and Bamyan. Relative to the resident population, Nimroz received the most immigrants (16 percent of the total population), followed by Kabul, Farah and Panwan (see Figure 4.9). Nationally, the stock of immigrants that has arrived is estimated at 5 percent of the total resident population.

Immigration is not only concentrated in specific provinces, it also strongly amplifies the urbanisation process. Exactly half of the immigrants live in urban areas, whereas nationally the urban population represents only 24 percent.

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29 Referring to the population born before 2002.
Who are the immigrants?

The age and sex composition of the total immigrant population is fairly similar to that of the total resident population, although men are somewhat more represented than women (58 against 42 percent) (Figure 4.10). This profile indicates that immigration is more often a family event than an individual act, which is typical for returnee populations.

30 Young children are underrepresented, as they were not as much exposed to the risk of immigration as older persons.
**Why do immigrants come to Afghanistan?**

The years between 2002 and 2012 were the period of returning refugees. For the majority of 60 percent of immigrants in this period, the main reason for immigration was return from displacement to another country before 2002 (Figure 4.11). This figure would even be 82 percent if the share of dependents from the category who moved with their parents or family were added to these returnees. Other immigration reasons were of minor importance in this period. There were no major gender differences in the reason for immigration into Afghanistan.

In the more recent period since 2012, return from displacement abroad has declined as the principal reason for immigration, representing only 33 percent of immigrants. If the category of persons moving with their parents or family were added, this figure rises to 39 percent. However, it could well be that the newly emerging category of persons who joined their family (31 percent) consisted of family members who stayed behind and followed in a later stage when the returning family vanguard had successfully settled in Afghanistan. If so, this category could also be considered part of the returning refugee population and, consequently, the percentage of return from displacement would rise to 62 percent. The other single important reason for recent immigration was looking for work (10 percent).

![Figure 4.11: Immigrants since 2002, by reason for immigration, and by period of immigration (in percentages)](image)

Similar to internal migrants, adult immigrants on average have attained a higher level of education. The proportion of immigrants aged 18 and over without any completed education is 62 percent, compared to 76 percent in the corresponding non-immigrant population. The complementary proportions of adults with completed primary, secondary and tertiary education are all larger for the immigrant population and the effect is somewhat stronger for women than for men. More in-depth analysis is required to answer the question whether the better educational performance of immigrants is because better-educated persons have a higher propensity to migrate to Afghanistan or because people abroad – mostly in Pakistan and Iran – had better access to education.

The labour force characteristics of immigrants are not very different from those of the non-immigrant population, although the situation differs somewhat for women. Their labour force participation rate is somewhat higher (33 against 29 percent), but more of these economically active women remain unemployed (40 against 35 percent).

**4.3.2 Emigrants and emigration**

ALCS 2013-14 also collected information about emigrants and emigration. Since – by definition – emigrants are not available to answer information about their moves, resident households are probed for information of previous household members who left the household in the last 12 months. This indirect method produced a number of 161 thousand emigrants in the last year. This would imply an annual emigration rate of 0.6 percent. It should be noticed that emigration assessed in this way is an under-estimation to the extent that complete households have moved away.
Noticeable is that Iran is by far the most important foreign destination of Afghans (receiving 98 thousand emigrants in the 12 months before the survey, 61 percent of the total), whereas the traditional top destination of Pakistan hardly figures among the mentioned countries (Figure 4.12). Similarly noticeable is the importance of the Gulf states, which received 27 thousand people, one out of six emigrants. More particularly this refers to the role of the UAE, receiving 18 thousand Afghans.

The leading destination position of Iran also explains why this country has become the main country of return migration to Afghanistan (see section 4.3.1), compared to earlier periods. This also explains the emergence of the Gulf states in the immigration statistics, even though still less prominent than Iran.

The 14 thousand emigrants to European countries – particularly the United Kingdom and Germany – matches closely with the EU immigration statistics of 15 thousand in 2013 (Eurostat 2015), which lends some credibility to the present findings.

The emigrant population is almost exclusively (94 percent) composed of men, and heavily concentrated (for 93 percent) in the young adult ages 15 to 39 (Figure 4.13). This is the typical age-sex profile – although in extreme form – of labour migration. Indeed, for 91 percent of the male emigrants, employment was the main reason for departure, whereas for the few female emigrants, marriage and joining the family were the main motives, together for 82 percent. As of yet, no significant outflow of people fleeing from insecurity can be identified, as for only 2 percent of the emigrants this reason was given. However, since refugees often move with the entire family, these will often be missed out from a survey in the origin country.

Just over 6 percent of households in Afghanistan had one or more household members who departed in the year preceding the survey. Households from which emigrants departed are substantially larger than non-emigrant households: 8.2 against 7.4 household members. It is likely that many emigrating men have left their wives and children behind in the household of their parents, a supposition that is supported by the finding that emigrant households have relatively more grandchildren and daughters-in-law.
4.4 The migration balance

Altogether, the ALCS 2013-14 suggest that some 3.0 million of the resident population ever migrated, either internally between provinces or across international borders. This number represents 11 percent of the total population. Together these migrants moved some 4.8 million times.

The reason for migration that was most reported – for 40 percent of migrations – was moving because the parents or family moved. This high proportion is not surprising given the large number of dependent children in Afghan families. The second main reason mentioned was return from displacement (25 percent), followed by employment-related reasons (13 percent). Assuming that dependents who moved because their families moved can be redistributed to the primary reasons of those families, the displacement return category would actually be 42 percent of migration motives. Together with 10 percent moves that were caused by violence or conflict, this means that more than half of the moves that Afghan people made were related to violence-related displacement. Looking for work would be the second main reason for changing the place of residence (22 percent of the migrations). Although marriage is a very important reason for changing the place of residence, especially for women, at the level of international and inter-province migration, this is only a minor reason. Most of marriage-related moves occur within the province (CSO 2014).

The combined effect of internal migration and immigration on the populations in the provinces of Afghanistan is presented in Figure 4.14. It clearly shows the migration system of Kabul and its immediate surrounding provinces as, respectively, absorber and suppliers of internal migrants. Also provinces along the borders of Pakistan and Iran, and those with large urban centres prominently figure as areas with population gains from either immigration or internal migration.
The net relative impact of migration was largest in Kabul and Nimroz, where the population grew with around one quarter due to the difference between people entering and leaving. Balkh followed at a third place with a net gain of just below 10 percent. Pansjher is the province that lost relatively most population: it would have had 28 percent more population without migration. Parwan, Logar, Wardak and Laghman would have had between 10 and 19 percent more people.

In absolute numbers, Kabul had by far the largest net gain due to migration: close to 900 thousand people. Also Balkh, Herat and Nangarhar had substantial net migration gains of around 100 thousand persons each, while Khost, Kunduz Nimroz and Kunhara had between 30 thousand and 50 thousand more people coming in than going out. On the other hand, Laghman and Wardak had a net loss of well over 100 thousand population each, and Parwan and Logar between 80 and 90 thousand.

To the extent that the assumptions for the calculation of the annual immigration and emigration rate are valid (sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, respectively), the annual population loss in the two years before the survey would be 105 thousand persons. This corresponds with a negative annual migration rate of 0.4 percent.

4.5 Return from displacement

4.5.1 Origins and destinations of returnees

The migrant population that returned from displacement consists for three quarters of refugees returning from abroad and for one quarter of returning IDPs. The returning refugees originated for about two thirds from Pakistan and for one third from Iran. The residence type in these host countries differed markedly. Whereas in Iran the large majority of 83 percent lived in urban areas and the remaining mostly in rural areas, in Pakistan the place of residence was more equally distributed between urban areas (44 percent), refugee camps (33 percent) and rural villages (23 percent) (Figure 4.15).
The province that provided refuge to the largest number of internally displaced households was Kabul (for 35 percent), followed by Pansjher (10 percent) and Balkh (9 percent).

The province where most households returning from displacement – former refugee- and IDP households – ended up is Kabul, now the residence of 37 percent of all returnee households. Almost half (47 percent) of the returned refugee households now live in Kabul. Other provinces with large shares of returnee households are Parwan (18 percent), Balkh (10 percent) and Farah (7 percent).

Figure 4.16 shows the timing of displacement and return of households that were displaced internally or abroad and have returned. The figure indicates that initially seeking refuge abroad was the strategy of most of these households and internal displacement occurred on a large scale only in the 1990s. The year 2002 marks a period of massive return. At a smaller scale, refugees continue to return, but the pool of IDP households that has not yet returned seems to have diminished. About one third of returned refugee households reported to have been assisted by UNHCR or another agency in their return to Afghanistan. The majority of them, however, mentioned to have returned spontaneously and 7 percent mentioned to have been deported from the hosting country. Returning IDP households almost all returned spontaneously.

Figure 4.15: Returned refugees, by country of refuge, and by residence in country of refuge (in percentages)
4.5.2 Living conditions of returnees

A relevant question is how the living situation of returnees relate to that of people that did not experience displacement and subsequent return. Figures 4.17a and b present selected development indicators at, respectively, individual and household level. With regard to education-related indicators, the situation of returnees is better than that of non-returnees, whereas regarding labour-force indicators the performance is mixed (Figure 4.17a). Returnees of both sexes and of all age groups are on average better able to read and write, resulting in a substantial overall difference in the literacy rate of 47 against 34 percent in favour of returnees. Regarding education attendance rates, that of primary attendance is more or less similar for both populations. The rates of secondary and tertiary attendance are significantly better among the returnees, although the difference is almost exclusively caused by education attendance of boys.

The labour force participation is higher among returnees than among non-returnees (61 against 55 percent), especially caused by higher female participation rates. However, these economically active returnee women are to a somewhat higher degree not gainfully employed (either being unemployed or underemployed): 56 percent against 50 percent for the non-returnee female labour force. For the – much larger – male labour force, there is no difference, which results in an overall non-gainfully employment rate that is similar for returnees and non-returnees (40 and 39 percent, respectively). The one individual-level indicator that is clearly not in favour of returnees is that of child labour: just over one quarter of non-returnee children are in child labour, compared to almost one third of returnee children.
Figure 4.17: Selected (a) individual-level and (b) household-level indicators, by returnee status (in percentages)

a. Individual-level indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Returnees</th>
<th>Other population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net primary attendance rate</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net secondary attendance rate</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net tertiary attendance rate</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force participation rate</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not gainfully employment rate</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labour rate</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Household-level indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Returnee households</th>
<th>Other households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to improved sanitation</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to improved drinking water</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete or tiled floor</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty rate</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic situation improved</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most household-level variables indicate better living conditions for returnee households than for other households (Figure 4.17b). Household facilities like improved sanitation and drinking water, as well as the higher dwelling quality expressed in terms of a floor sealed with tiles or concrete are significantly more available to returnee households than to non-returnee households. Importantly, the poverty rate that covers many aspects of material wellbeing shows a better situation for people in returnee households than for those in non-returnee households.

It is likely that the type of residence is an important explanatory factor for the generally better situation of returnees, as they live almost twice as often in urban areas than non-returnees.