RAPID ASSESSMENT ROUND 2

NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL RETURN MIGRANTS IN BANGLADESH

REGIONAL EVIDENCE FOR MIGRATION ANALYSIS AND POLICY (REMAP)
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)

Funded by the European Union

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DEFINITIONS

Returnee: The term “returnee” in this document refers to former Bangladeshi migrants who returned to their point of departure within Bangladesh during the survey period. This could be within the territorial boundaries of Bangladesh or between a country of destination or transit and Bangladesh.

ACRONYMS

BDT: Bangladeshi Taka

DTM: Displacement Tracking Matrix

IOM: International Organization for Migration

MFI: Microfinace institution

NGO: Non-governmental organization

NPM: Needs and Population Monitoring

REMAP: Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy

USD: United States Dollar

Statistical Notes:
When the label “Multiple answers possible” appears above a graph, it means that a single respondent was allowed to provide more than one answer. For this reason, totals may not add up to 100 per cent.

An asterisk (*) denotes when a statistic is based off a sample size less than 10.

DISCLAIMER

This report is part of the outputs under the European Union funded project “Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (REMAP)”. The objective of DTM REMAP is to strengthen the evidence-based formulation and implementation of humanitarian and development policy and programming on migration and forced displacement in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan through the use of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM, its Member States, the Government of Bangladesh, the European Union or other donors. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the work do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of IOM and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment or the Government of Bangladesh as a whole.

Secretary
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare &
Overseas Employment
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

সচিব
প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ও বৈদেশিক কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

FOREWORD

It is my immense pleasure to write this foreword for the report entitled "Rapid Assessment (Round 2)- Needs and Vulnerabilities of Internal and International Return Migrants in Bangladesh".

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted people on the move, including millions of Bangladeshi migrants. Many migrant workers that returned after the COVID-19 outbreak have faced reintegration challenges related to finding employment, social dislocation and issues with social inclusion, and repayment of debt burdens. In response to these urgent needs, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment took many initiatives for returnees impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, these included- i) financial packages on arrival at the airport ii) re-skilling, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and skills training, and iii) arranging loans to enable returnees to pursue viable income generating activities in 11 sectors. Migrants are the frontline soldiers of our national development therefore in order to support the families of migrants we have focused on supporting migrant families with access to affordable loan schemes through the Probashi Kallyan Bank and set the cost of COVID-19 PCR testing to BDT 300 for outgoing migrants.

It is always our priority to ensure the safety and security of migrant workers affected by the pandemic. During the celebration of International Migrants Day 2020, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on relevant ministries and government agencies to ensure that migrants had access to legitimate employment opportunities and that women migrants especially were protected and supported. The Honourable Prime Minister emphasized the importance of registering migrant workers and ensuring that migrants and all stakeholders had access to verified and reliable information throughout the migration cycle. We encourage the collection, presentation and analysis of disaggregated data to support the development of evidence-based responses/programming. The findings of this report will support the development of return and reintegration programming for international return migrants.

I must thank IOM for undertaking this initiative to provide us with a longitudinal assessment of the needs and vulnerabilities of internal and international return migrants impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. I also thank the European Union for supporting this research.

Dr. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen
Secretary
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment

FOREWORD BY IOM BANGLADESH CHIEF OF MISSION

The continuation of the COVID-19 crisis and border restrictions have continued to have an adverse effect on human mobility. There has been a drop of almost seventy per cent of outward migration from Bangladesh as only 21,7699 Bangladeshis migrated (as per the BMET) in 2020 compared to 70,0159 migrants in 2019. This has also reinforced the need to strengthen migration governance and international cooperation adhering to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) implementation. Bangladesh is one of the 15 GCM champion countries. In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh UN Network on Migration (BDUNNM) is coordinating to ensure that migrants have access to basic healthcare and education. The government of Bangladesh has implemented a broad range of measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, which are aligned with the GCM. To comply with the guiding principle of "leave no one behind" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to develop appropriate policies and programs to provide specific support to vulnerable groups of migrants including internal migrants and internally displaced people and to address medium- and long-term migration challenges. I am happy to share that the present research includes needs and vulnerabilities of internal migrants as well.

As the Coordinator and Secretariat of the Bangladesh UN Migration Network, IOM has been coordinating and conducting various studies. With the support from the European Union, and under the guidance of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, IOM conducted a rapid assessment of the needs and vulnerabilities of internal and international migrants returning to their communities of origin in Bangladesh. The first round of the rapid assessment was conducted in May-June 2020 and the report was published in July 2020. IOM conducted a second round of data collection among the same respondents in 12 high migration-prone districts to further enhance the understanding of changing needs and vulnerabilities related to COVID-19 and how returning migrants are coping with the challenges.

We hope that the findings will support key stakeholders to develop migrant-centered policies and programs with updated information. Such evidence-based programming would respond to the immediate and long-term needs and ensure the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants, their families, and communities and the data can also play a key role in designing recovery effort for migrants.

Giorgi Gigauri
Chief of Mission
IOM Bangladesh

BACKGROUND

Seven months after the first cases of COVID-19 emerged in Bangladesh, the pandemic continues to impact mobility, security and socioeconomic stability within the country and on a global scale. As a result, migrant returnees remain vulnerable to a number of challenges, including severely limited employment access, mobility restrictions, health concerns, debt repayment, and, as participants of a mobile population, social stigmas related to return. The situation, however, has not remained static. On 30 May 2020, the Government of Bangladesh lifted the general lockdown that had been in place since March 2020 in response to the deteriorating economic situation, allowing business operations and public transport to resume across the country.[1] By 1 September 2020, restrictions on public transport capacities and curfews had also been lifted on the condition of maintaining precautionary health measures such as social distancing and mask wearing.[2] There are no restrictions on intercity or interstate travel, and the government has authorized the resumption of limited international commercial flights.[3] In October 2020, Bangladesh saw over 1,000 new cases of COVID-19 per day, with Dhaka city recording the highest rates of new infections across the country.[4]

In May and June 2020, IOM, supported by the European Union under the regional program REMAP and in coordination with the Research and Policy unit of the Bangladeshi Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, along with the NPM team based in Cox's Bazar, conducted a data collection exercise among 2,765 Bangladeshi international and internal return migrants in order to rapidly assess their immediate needs and vulnerabilities in the wake of COVID-19. This sample was made up of 1,486 international return migrants and 1,279 internal return migrants. Based on the findings of this first data collection exercise (Round 1), IOM conducted a second round of data collection (Round 2) among the same respondents to further enhance the understanding of economic impacts and relevant challenges related to COVID-19 in Bangladesh while focusing on a longitudinal perspective and analysis. The sample for Round 2 was drawn from the list of Round 1 respondents; every respondent was re-contacted via phone and asked to participate in a second interview. Enumerators had five attempts to reach each potential respondent, after which point the respondent was dropped from the Round 2 sample. Respondents who were both reachable by phone and who consented to being interviewed for Round 2 were only included in the new sample if: 1) they had not re-migrated since Round 1 OR 2) they had re-migrated to a different district in Bangladesh BUT were still unemployed. Respondents from Round 1 who had re-migrated abroad or re-migrated to a different district in Bangladesh and were employed at the time of contact were not included in the Round 2 sample. Based on this criteria, the final sample for Round 2 was 1,584 returnees.

ROUND 2 BREAKDOWN

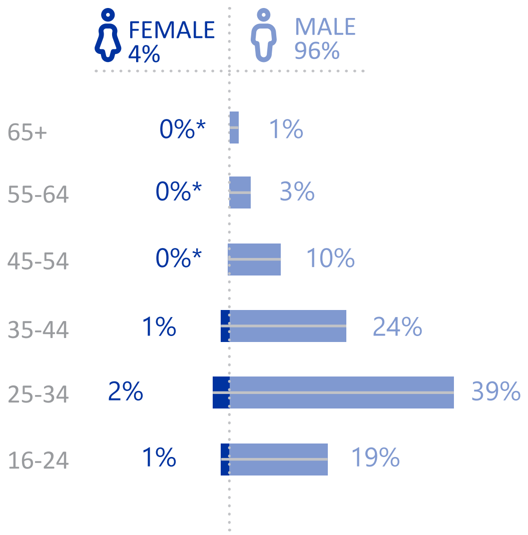
Total respondents	International returnees	Internal returnees
1,584	875	709

In Round 1, returnees were categorized as either international, having returned from outside Bangladesh, or internal, having returned to their home district from another district in Bangladesh. Each respondent maintained the same categorization in Round 2 as they had in Round 1. Due to the sampling method, the survey is non-probabilistic, meaning that the sample is not necessarily representative of the returnee population of Bangladesh. Additionally, the number of female respondents was low, so the report does not necessarily represent the needs and vulnerabilities of female returnees.

Of the respondents re-contacted from Round 1, 30 had re-migrated abroad, 80 per cent of whom cited returning to their former job as the main reason for their re-migration to a particular country. A further 313 respondents from Round 1 had re-migrated within Bangladesh, 50 per cent of whom relocated to Dhaka. Sixty-three per cent of those who had re-migrated internally had joined the formal labour sector, while 35 per cent joined the informal labour sector. When asked why they re-migrated to a particular district, 63 per cent reported that they had returned to their former job, 28 per cent had obtained a new job in that district and 8 per cent went to a particular district to look for job opportunities. Seven out of the 313 respondents from Round 1 who had re-migrated internally remained unemployed, and were therefore included in the Round 2 sample.

The Round 2 Rapid Assessment report highlights that, although the employment situation has slightly improved for both internal and international return migrants since Round 1, respondents report higher debt and increased challenges compared to three months prior. Respondents are equally as eager to re-migrate as they were in Round 1, however, there is greater uncertainty regarding the possibility of re-migration in the near future, especially among international returnees, who generally want to re-migrate abroad. In the following report, when comparisons are made between Round 1 and Round 2, analysis only includes those that participated in both rounds; participants that did not respond to Round 2 were excluded.

[1] Bangladesh Won't Extend Covid-19 Lockdown Post May 30: Report. Hindustan Times, 28 May 2020, www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/bangladesh-won-t-extend-covid-19-lockdown-post-may-30-report/story-R9UoxhhwAmAHeUHylwVkyJ.html. NOTE: Easing of the general lockdown on May 30 included maintaining restrictions such as curfew and limited capacity on public transports.
[2] COVID-19 Alert: Bangladesh Eases Domestic Restrictions. WorldAware, 1 Sept. 2020, www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-bangladesh-eases-domestic-restrictions.
[3] COVID-19 Information. U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh, 7 Sept. 2020, bd.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/.
[4] COVID-19 Situation Updates. IEDCR, 16 Oct. 2020, iedcr.gov.bd/covid-19/covid-19-situation-updates.

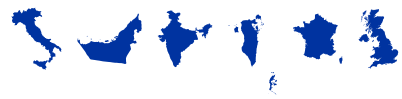


INTERNAL MIGRATION

Top 6 districts of re-migration among Round 1 respondents (313 individuals)

1. Dhaka 50%
2. Chattogram 11%
3. Gazipur 7%
4. Narayanganj 4%
5. Cumilla 3%
6. Barisal 3%

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION



Top 6 countries of re-migration among Round 1 respondents (30 individuals)

1. Italy 30%*
2. United Arab Emirates 17%*
3. India 10%*
4. Bahrain 10%*
5. France 10%*
6. UK 10%*

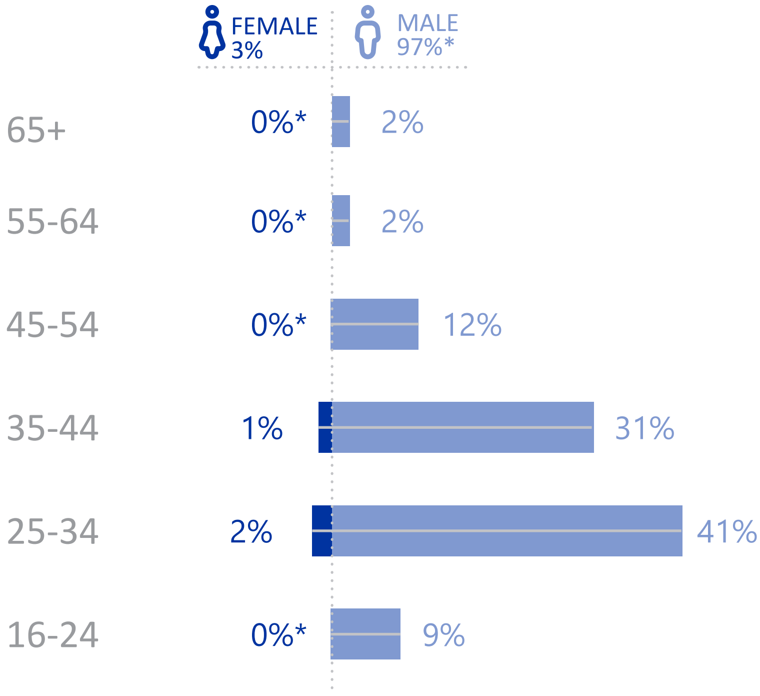
SAMPLE POPULATION BY DISTRICT

	Total respondents	International returnees	Internal returnees	Female	Male
Brahamanbaria	93	93	0	6	87
Chattogram	152	144	8	2	150
Chuadanga	57	57	0	1	56
Cox's Bazar	266	101	165	12	254
Cumilla	53	53	0	1	52
Dhaka	104	104	0	10	94
Jessore	35	35	0	4	31
Kurigram	280	10	270	17	263
Narsingdi	42	42	0	1	41
Satkhira	466	210	256	17	448
Sylhet	17	7	10	2	15
Tangail	19	19	0	0	19

INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

POPULATION PYRAMID



Average household size among respondents: **6.1**

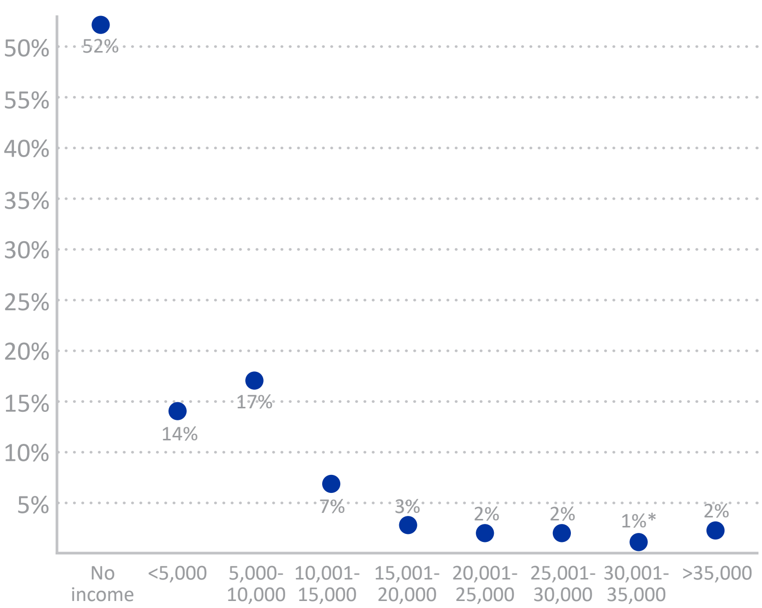
The majority of participants in the Round 2 international returnee sample were men between 25 and 44 years old. Households among international returnee respondents included an average of 6.1 members.

Respondents were most frequently earning no income at the time of the Round 2 survey (38%). However, this proportion has decreased since Round 1 (52%). In general, the income distribution has shifted slightly upwards, with more respondents reporting themselves in higher income brackets during Round 2 as compared to Round 1.

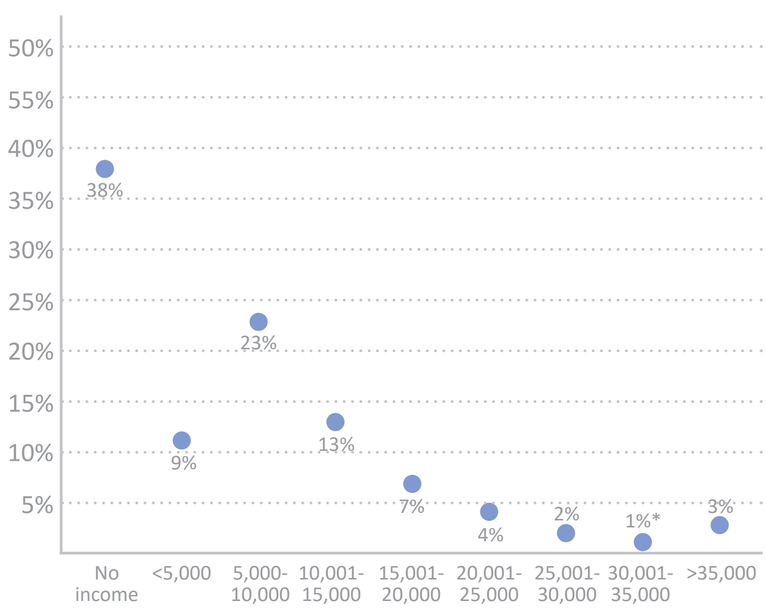
Respondents were also asked whether their income level had changed over the last 3 months to determine participants' perceptions of their economic situation. Notably, a majority of respondents reported that their income was lower compared to the last 3 months (77%), despite the aggregate upward trend of reported income brackets. This contradiction reflects how respondents' perceptions of their income may differ from other income indicators. While acknowledging the value of respondent perceptions, results should be interpreted carefully, as perceptions may be affected by situational biases.

INCOME

ROUND 1 average total household monthly income in BDT



ROUND 2 average total household monthly income in BDT



Has your personal income level changed in the last 3 months?

By the time they were interviewed for Round 2, 79 per cent of international returnee respondents had already received their wages from their work outside Bangladesh. This is an increase from Round 1, during which only 72 per cent of international returnee respondents reported having received their wages from their work outside Bangladesh. This suggests that more respondents had been paid their last wages sometime between Round 1 (May - June 2020) and Round 2 (August - September 2020).

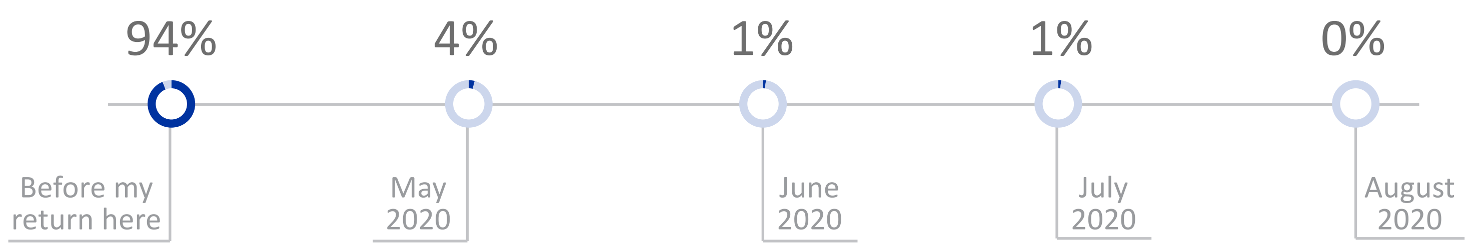
Of the respondents who had already received their wages by Round 2, nearly all had received them prior to returning to Bangladesh (94%).

Twenty-one per cent of respondents had not yet received their last wages by Round 2. When asked about their expectations for being paid eventually, nearly half of those respondents reported that they do not anticipate receiving those wages in the future (48%). Alternatively, 42 per cent of respondents responded that they would be paid once they returned to work for the same employer who owed them said wage (42%). This may be indicative of a common intention to re-migrate, specifically to respondents' previous place of employment.

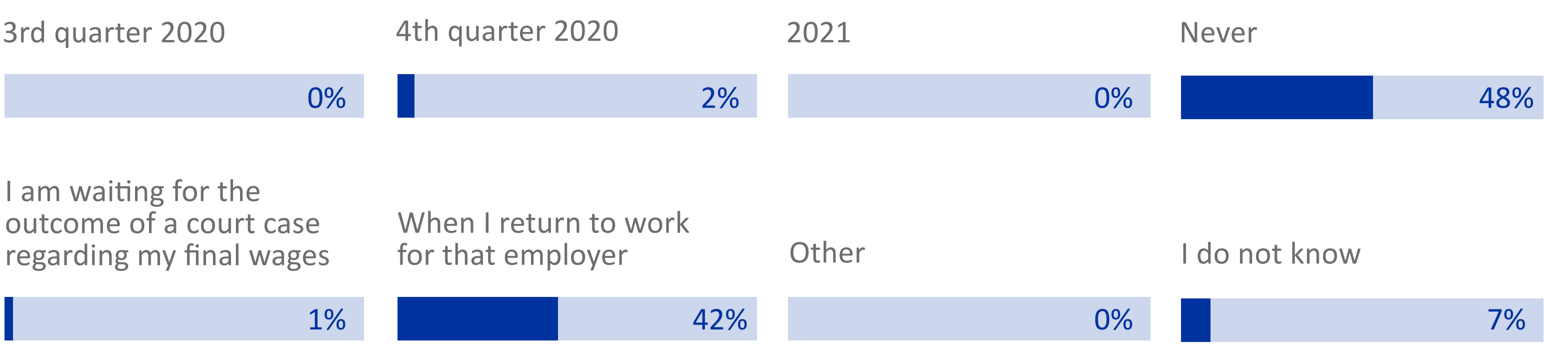
DID YOU RECEIVE YOUR LAST WAGES THAT YOUR EMPLOYER OWED YOU BEFORE RETURNING TO THIS DISTRICT?

LAST WAGES RECEPTION

If you **already received** your last wages, when did you receive them?



If you **have not yet received** your last wages, when do you expect to receive them?

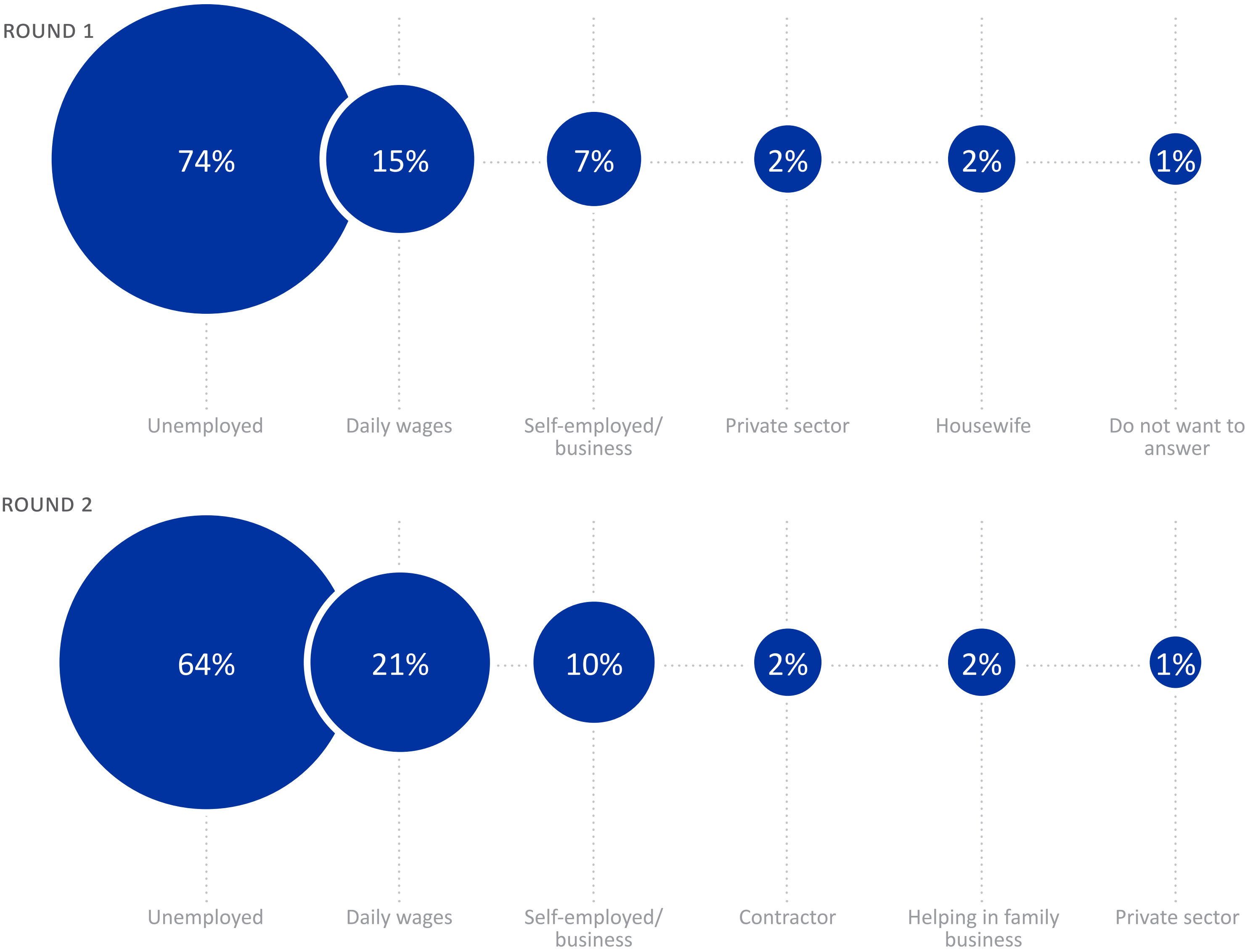


EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

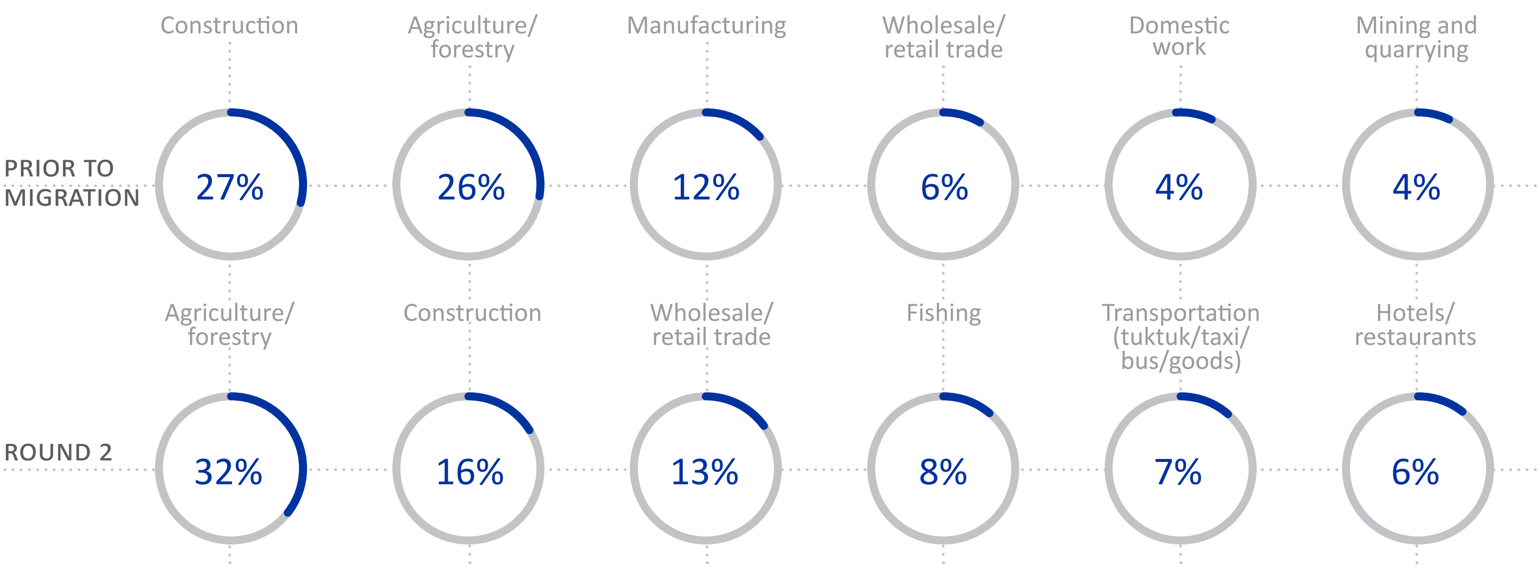
Although the persistence of high unemployment rates among respondents continues to reflect livelihood challenges in the wake of COVID-19, there has been a slight improvement in the unemployment situation as compared to three months ago. Seventy-four per cent of international returnee respondents reported being unemployed in Round 1 as opposed to sixty-four per cent in Round 2. This ten per cent drop in unemployment may be attributed at least partially to the easing of lockdown measures at the end of May and lifting of general business curfews and other restrictions at the beginning of September. Nevertheless, unemployment among respondents remains high.

Employment earning daily wages and as self-employed or business owners has increased slightly since Round 1, with a six per cent increase in daily wage owners and a three per cent increase in business owners/self employment. Contracting work and helping in family businesses has likewise increased in comparison to Round 1, each representing two per cent of international returnee respondents in Round 2.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS (top 6 answers, multiple answers possible)

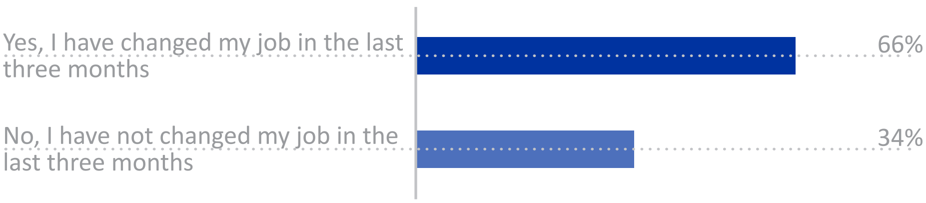


OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR (top 7 answers, multiple answers possible)

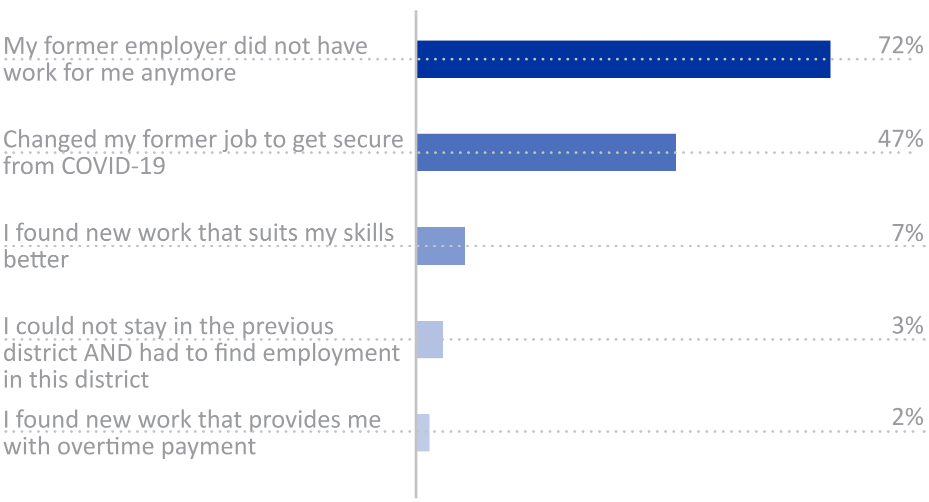


EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

If you are currently employed, have you changed your job in the last three months?



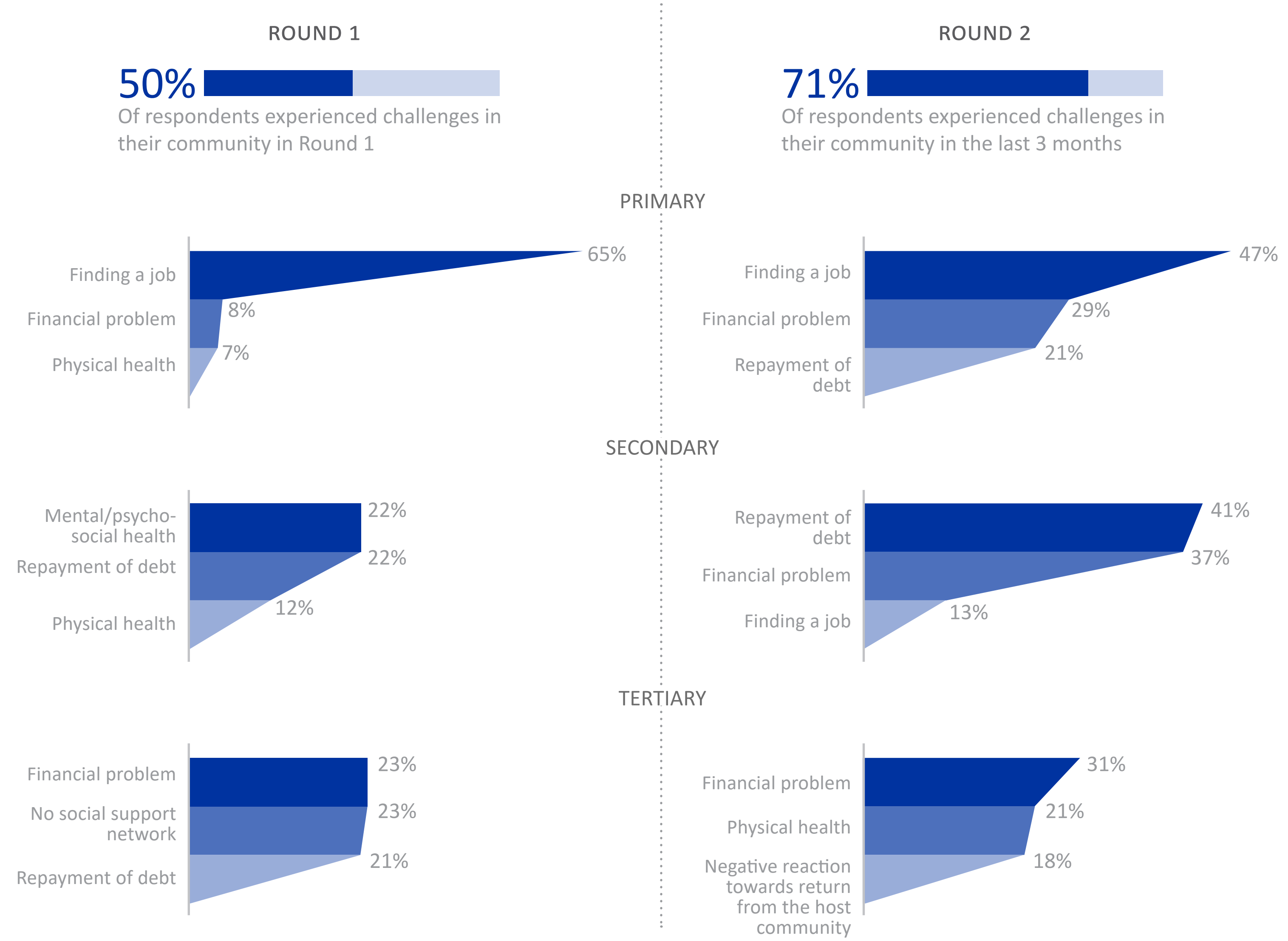
If yes, why did you change jobs? (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)



In order to observe shifts between pre- and post-COVID-19 domestic occupational sectors, the current occupational distribution of international returnee respondents in Round 2 was analyzed in comparison to the occupational distribution of the same respondents prior to migration. While construction and agriculture were equally common sectors prior to migration, together accounting for over 50 per cent of respondent occupations, agriculture alone counted for a third of all respondent occupations in Round 2 (32%). Respondents in the construction sector dropped to 16 per cent. Manufacturing, domestic work and mining and quarrying decreased in prevalence among respondents in favor of wholesale and retail trade, fishing, transportation and hotel and restaurant services. It is important to note that in Round 2, the “Wholesale/retail trade” industry was further specified in the survey to include street vendors, small grocery shops and roadside tea.

Respondents were also asked whether they had changed jobs in the last three months and why. Two out of every three respondents had changed their jobs, and the two most prominent reasons included not finding work with their former employer (72%) and changing jobs due to COVID-19 insecurities (47%). These two reasons reflect the prevailing impacts of COVID-19 on livelihood trends.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES



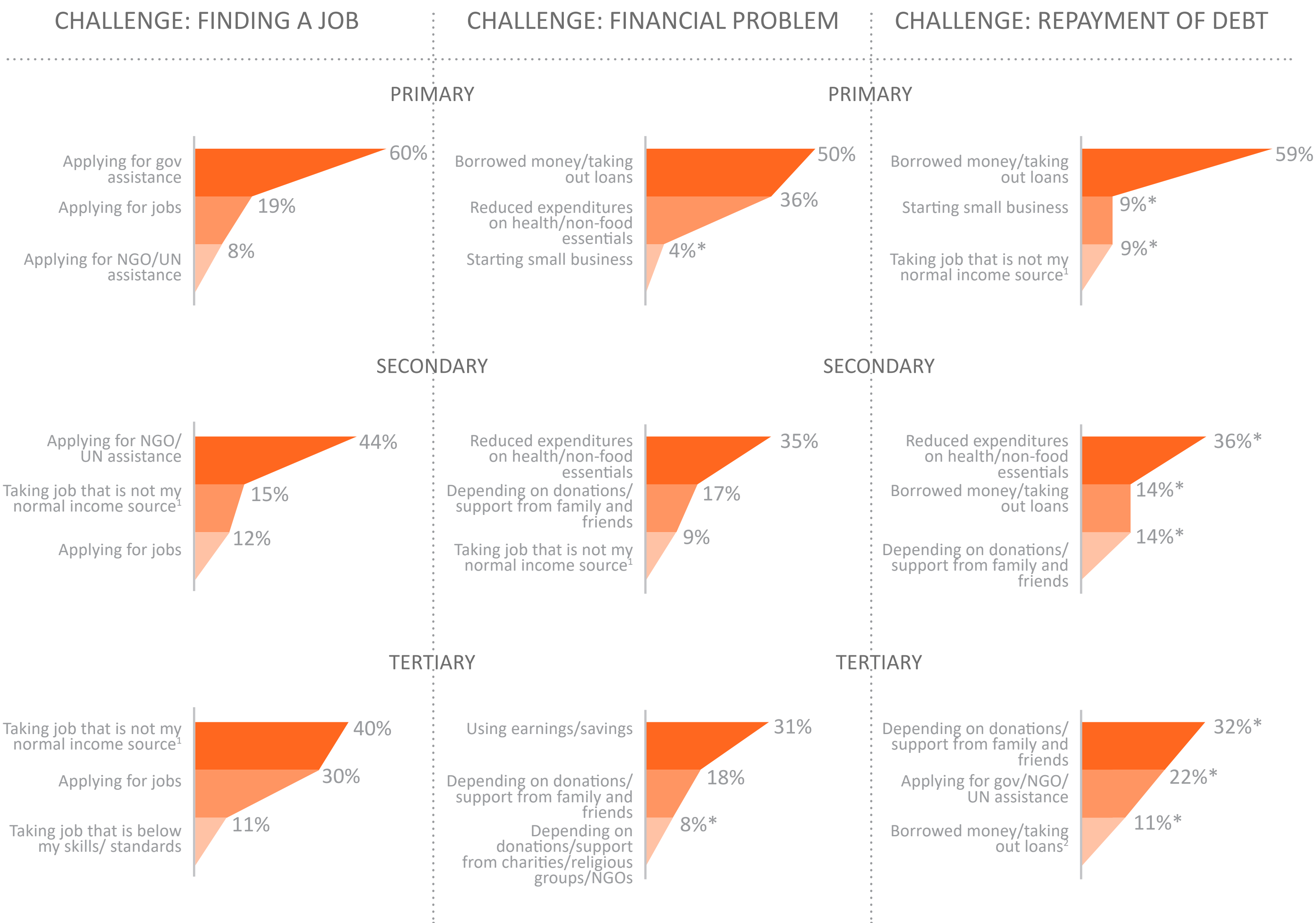
Despite eases on lockdowns and lifts of restrictions, challenges among respondents have not only persisted but increased in frequency. Seventy-one per cent of international returnee respondents experienced challenges in their community in the three months prior to Round 2, as opposed to 50 per cent in Round 1.

Neverthless, finding a job has become a slightly less prominent primary challenge (47% in Round 2 as opposed to 65% in Round 1), which is reflected in employment data among respondents. However, financial problems (29%) and repayment of debts (21%) have become notably more common as primary challenges. In fact, financial problems appear in the top three challenges at both the secondary and tertiary levels, indicating persistently difficult economic circumstances despite some improvements in the domestic job market.

Health-related challenges seem to have fallen in prominence between Round 1 and Round 2. Mental and psychosocial health challenges have decreased in frequency from being one of the most common secondary-level challenges in Round 1 to scarcely being reported in Round 2, with only one per cent of respondents citing them as a secondary level challenge and seven per cent as a tertiary level challenge. At the same time, challenges with physical health have fallen from being key primary and secondary level challenges in Round 1 to being a common tertiary level challenge in Round 2 (21%).

Social challenges also shifted. Twenty-three per cent of international returnee respondents cited a lack of a social support network in Bangladesh as a tertiary level challenge in Round 1, while zero per cent of respondents identified the same challenge in Round 2. Instead, 18 per cent of respondents in Round 2 reported experiencing negative reactions towards their return from the host community as a tertiary level challenge. While this challenge was also present in Round 1, it is important to note its persistence in Round 2, considering returnees have been residing with their host communities for a longer period of time since Round 1.

COPING MECHANISMS



Respondents were asked about the coping mechanisms they used to overcome specific challenges they reported in Round 2. The above visualization focuses on coping mechanisms used in response to the top three primary challenges experienced by international returnees in Round 2.

Coping mechanisms related to challenges with finding a job most commonly involved applying for assistance, applying for jobs, and taking jobs that respondents would not normally take. The most common primary coping mechanism was to apply for government assistance (60%). Applying for NGO/UN assistance was cited most frequently as a secondary coping mechanism (44%), while taking a job that was not the respondent's normal income source was the most common tertiary coping mechanism (40%).

Coping mechanisms for financial problems and debt repayment were similar to one another and most frequently revolved around borrowing money, reducing expenditures, and depending on donations. Half of all respondents who experienced financial problems as a primary challenge coped by borrowing money or taking out loans, and nearly 60 per cent of respondents used the same method to cope with debt repayment. While the urgent nature of these challenges may necessitate regressive coping mechanisms such as borrowing money or using earnings/savings (cited by 31% of respondents as a tertiary level coping mechanism against financial problems), their prevalence indicates a self-perpetuating state of vulnerability among respondents. Likewise, the frequency of reducing expenditures on health and other non-food essentials in response to both financial problems and debt repayment issues demonstrate crisis-level coping strategies that may advance critical vulnerabilities.

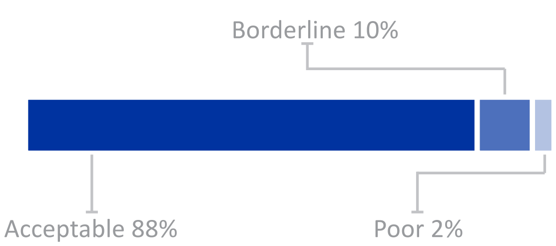
[1] "Not my normal income source" includes crop harvesting, collecting and selling firewood, daily wages, crafts, services and domestic work
[2] 11% of respondents also took a job that is below their skills or standards, reduced expenditures on health and other non-food essentials and depended on donations/support from charities, religious groups, and NGOS

The average number of daily meals consumed by households increased in Round 2, with 18 per cent more respondents regularly eating 3 meals a day than did in Round 1. Correspondingly, the proportion of respondents who ate fewer than 3 meals a day fell by 18 per cent.

According to respondents, however, when asked how often out of the past 7 days they had eaten a particularly type of food, most food types were less frequently eaten in Round 2 than they had been in Round 1. The exceptions were cereals and tubers and pulses, nuts and seeds, which remained at the same frequency of consumption in both rounds (6.7 and 3.7 days, respectively), and oils and fats, which increased from 6.0 to 6.2 days from Round 1 to Round 2. The largest drop in food type consumption was in milk and dairy products and fruits, which fell by .8 days each in Round 2, though it is important to note that neither was consumed relatively frequently in Round 1.

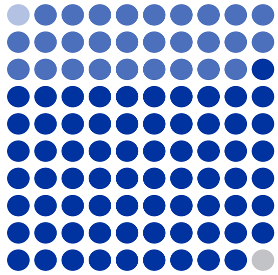
The food type frequency is used to calculate the Food Consumption Score, which indicates households' dietary diversity and nutrition intake. The majority of respondents indicated an acceptable Food Consumption Score (88%). This proportion represents a negligible drop since Round 1, when 89 per cent of respondents indicated an acceptable Food Consumption Score. Ten per cent of respondents' dietary diversity and nutrition was rated as borderline, while the remaining two per cent were rated as poor.

FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE



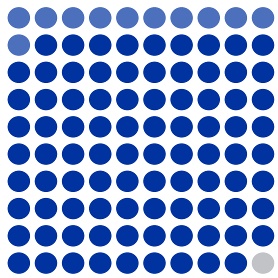
AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY MEALS CONSUMED BY HOUSEHOLD

ROUND 1



1	1%
2	28%
3	70%
>3	1%

ROUND 2



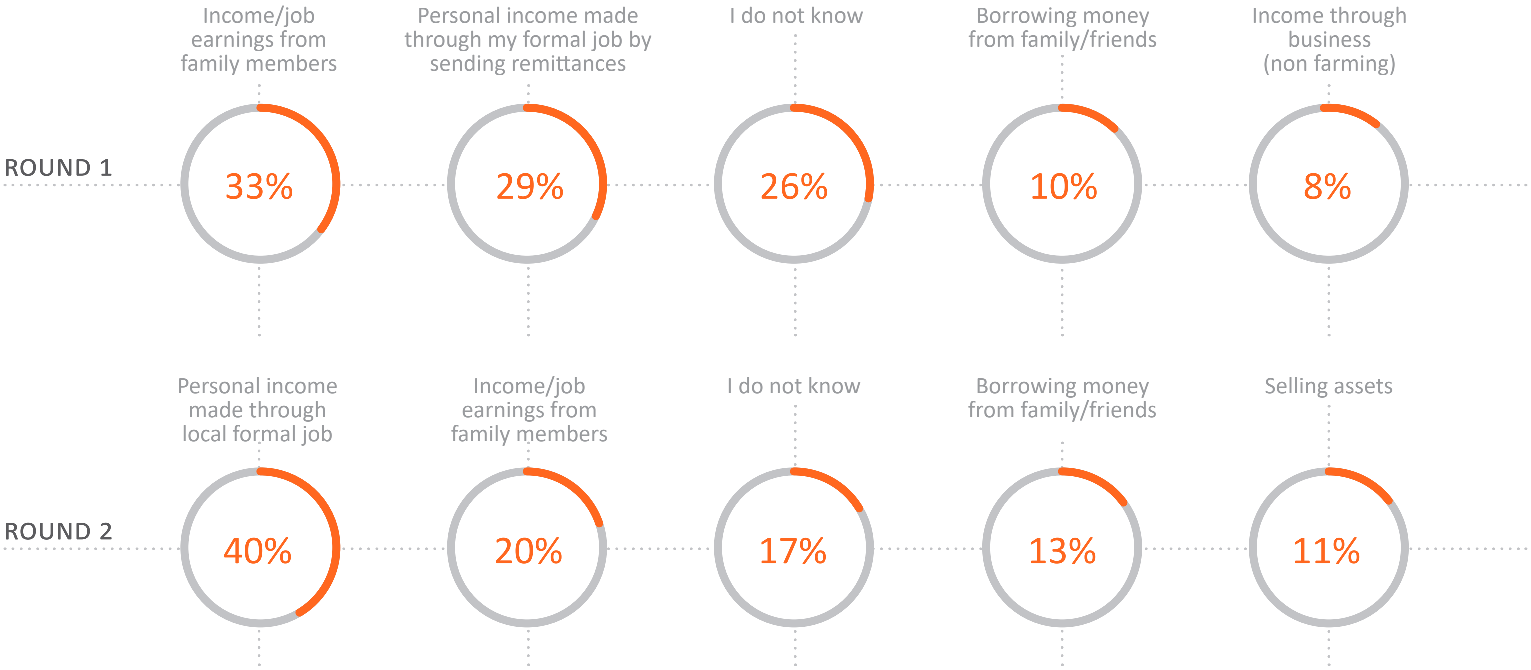
1	0%
2	11%
3	88%
>3	1%

FOOD TYPE FREQUENCY - 7 DAY AVERAGE

ROUND 1	ROUND 2	CHANGE	
6.7	6.7	—	Cereals and tubers
6.0	6.2	↑	Oil and fats
5.1	4.7	↓	Vegetables
4.5	4.3	↓	Spices and condiments
3.9	3.7	↓	Meat or fish
2.5	1.7	↓	Fruits
3.7	3.7	—	Pulses, nuts and seeds
2.7	1.9	↓	Milk and dairy products
2.5	1.9	↓	Sweets and sugar

DEBT AMONG INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO REPAY YOUR DEBT? (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

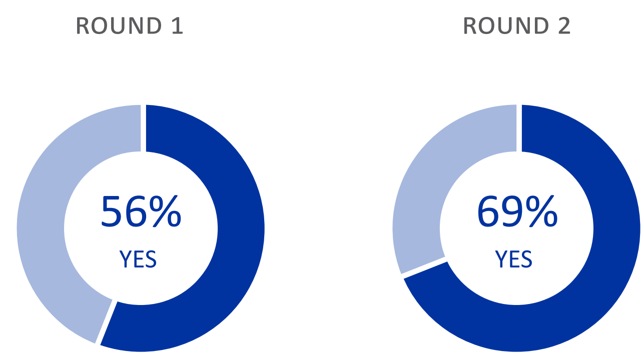


The percentage of respondents who reported having debt increased by 13 per cent from Round 1 to Round 2. When asked about their debt amounts, 28 per cent reported having debts of higher than 200,000 BDT in Round 2, as opposed to 22 per cent during Round 1. In both Round 1 and Round 2, over 50 per cent of international returnee respondents had debt amounts over 100,000 BDT.

When asked whether they thought their debt was higher, equal to, or lower than it was three months ago, over half reported that it was higher (58%). These findings align with data on challenges and coping mechanisms which emphasize problems with debt repayment as well as the frequency of borrowing money and taking loans as a coping strategy.

Debt repayment methods shifted slightly in the three months between Round 1 and Round 2. Respondents in Round 1 planned to rely most heavily on earning from family members (33%), followed by their own personal income from remittances (29%). The latter method suggests that respondents anticipated re-migrating relatively soon in order to begin re-generating remittances. By Round 2, 40 per cent of respondents plan to pay their debts with their personal income, not from remittances, but rather, from their local formal jobs. Only 12 total international returnee respondents in Round 2 reported that they would re-migrate in order to pay back their debts. This may reflect a growing uncertainty in the possibility of re-migration. Meanwhile, respondents are more heavily relying on their own incomes in Round 2 as opposed to those of family members.

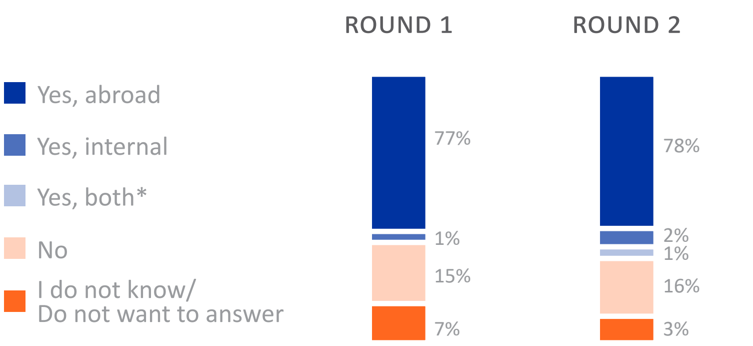
DO YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD OWE ANY DEBT?



FUTURE MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RETURNEES

Among international returnee respondents, a large proportion still want to re-migrate abroad. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents wanted to re-migrate internationally in Round 1, and 78 per cent wanted to in Round 2. Similarly, proportions between Round 1 and Round 2 representing respondents who did not want to re-migrate were nearly equivalent (15% and 16%, respectively).

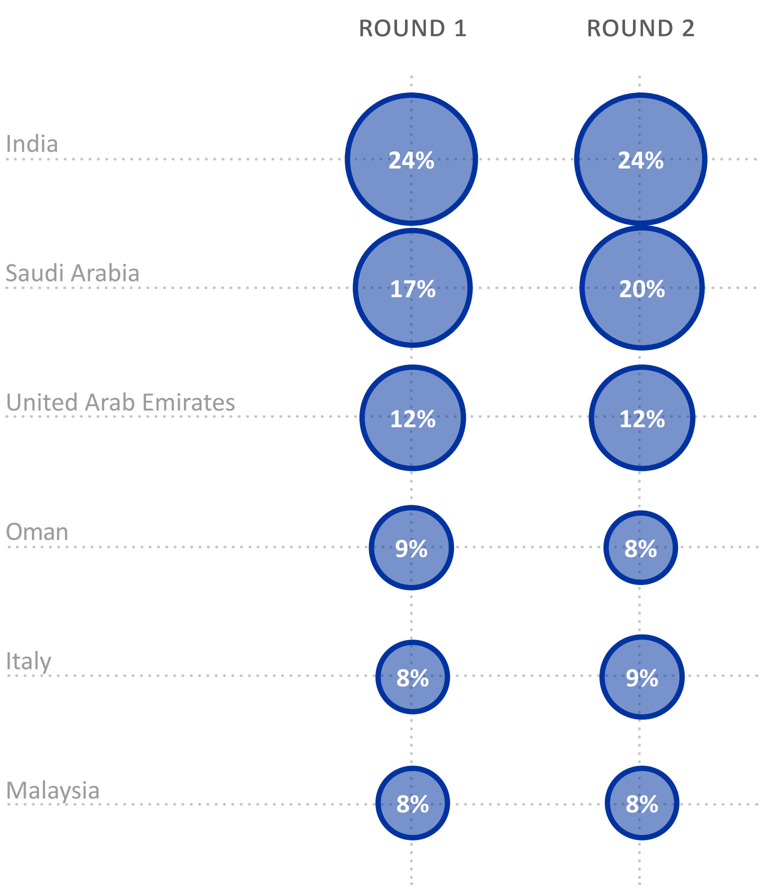
DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE?



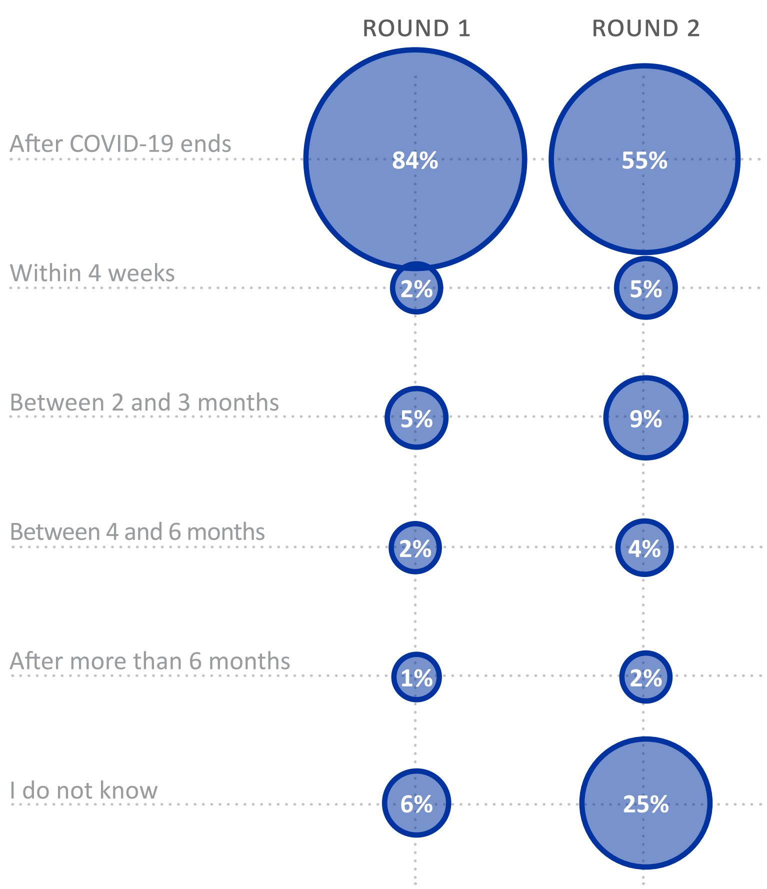
Intended destinations for respondents who wanted to re-migrate abroad were generally the same as in Round 1. Twenty four per cent of respondents in both Round 1 and Round 2 preferred to re-migrate to India, signifiying the most consistently common potential destination. This was followed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Italy and Malaysia, the latter three within one per cent of each other in both rounds.

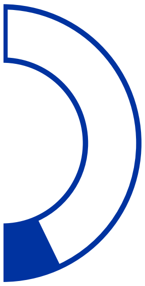
Intended timelines for re-migration changed slightly between Round 1 and Round 2. Eighty-four per cent of international returnee respondents had intended to re-migrate after COVID-19 ends in Round 1, however, that proportion decreased to 55 per cent by Round 2. Conversely, the proportion of respondents who were unsure about their re-migration timeline, answering "I do not know" when asked when they plan to migrate, increased from six per cent to twenty-five per cent between Round 1 and Round 2. These two inverse shifts may reflect a wider recognition of the apparent and perhaps un-anticipated longevity and impact of the global pandemic, especially for those who want to re-migrate across persistently restrictive international borders.

IF YES, WHERE?



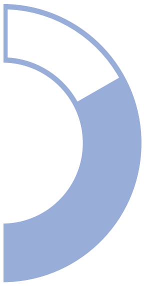
IF YES, WHEN?





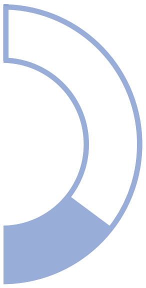
9%

Of respondents changed their mind about re-migrating



67%

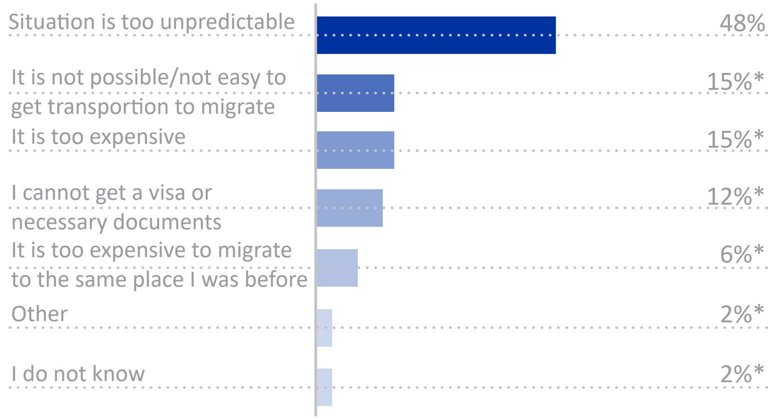
Wanted to migrate then, but DO NOT want to migrate now



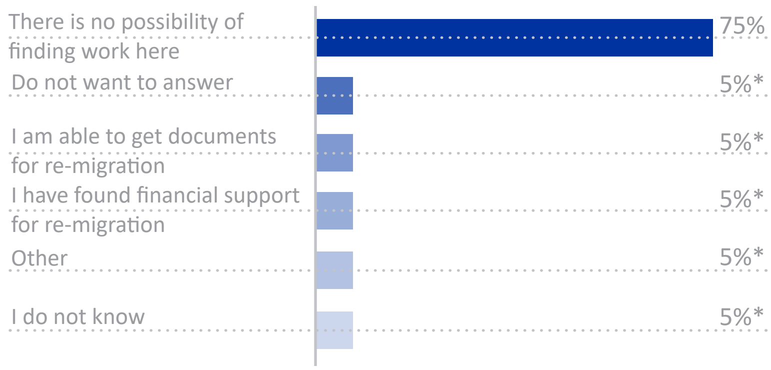
31%

Did not want to migrate then, but DO want to migrate now

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU NO LONGER WANT TO MIGRATE?



WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU WANT TO MIGRATE NOW?



Respondents in Round 2 were asked to explain any changes in their decision to re-migrate in order to shed light on present situations or factors that had become compelling enough in the last three months to change respondents' minds. Nine per cent of respondents changed their minds about re-migrating since Round 1. Of those, 67 per cent had wanted to migrate in Round 1 but no longer want to migrate and 31 per cent did not want to migrate in Round 1 but do want to migrate now. The remaining proportion did not know or did not want to answer.

When asked to detail these decision changes, the most common response among respondents who no longer wanted to migrate in Round 2 was that the situation is too unpredictable. The volatility and uncertainty of migration during COVID-19, especially across international borders, remains an enduring deterrent to mobility on both the individual and national level. The latter is reflected in the difficulty of migration despite best efforts: 15 per cent of respondents cited that getting transportion is too difficult or not possible for re-migration, 15 per cent reported that re-migration would be too expensive and 12 per cent responded that they could not get a visa or the necessary documentation to migrate. It is important to note that, while the question in the survey is framed as, "What is the main reason you no longer want to migrate?" the answers cited by respondents evoke situational barriers to migration. Therefore, respondents in this category may still have a desire to migrate, but due to circumstance, cannot do so, and therefore answer accordingly.

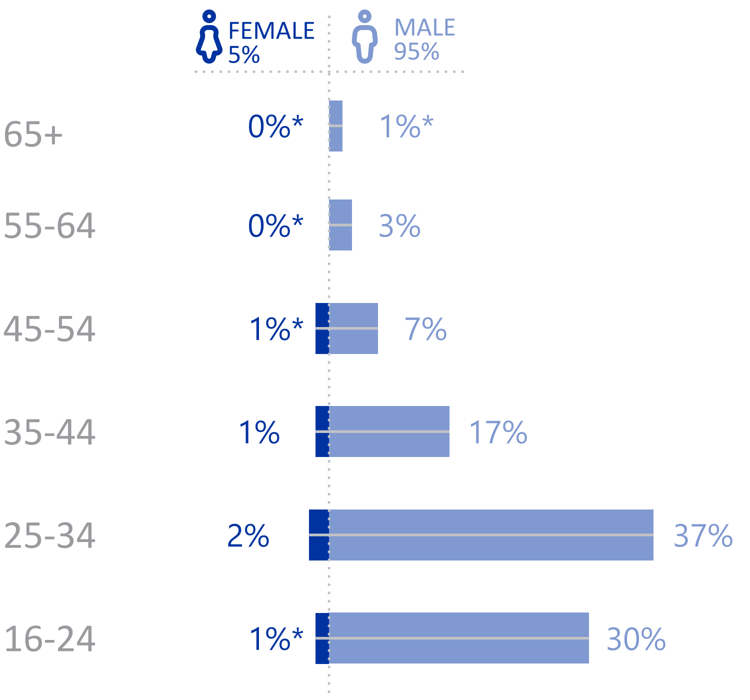
Six per cent no longer want to migrate because it is too expensive to migrate to the same place they were before, indicating that some respondents are only committed to re-migrating if they can return to the same place they were before arriving back in Bangladesh. The desire to re-migrate to the same place was also present in Round 1 findings.

The main reason for respondents changing their mind to wanting to migrate in Round 2 is the dearth of work opportunities in their current situations in Bangladesh. This discord between an internal livelihood and income crisis and the unpredictability of international migration, both of which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, characterizes the core vulnerability of international returnee respondents.

INTERNAL RETURNEES

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF INTERNAL RETURNEES

POPULATION PYRAMID



Average household size among respondents: **5.4**

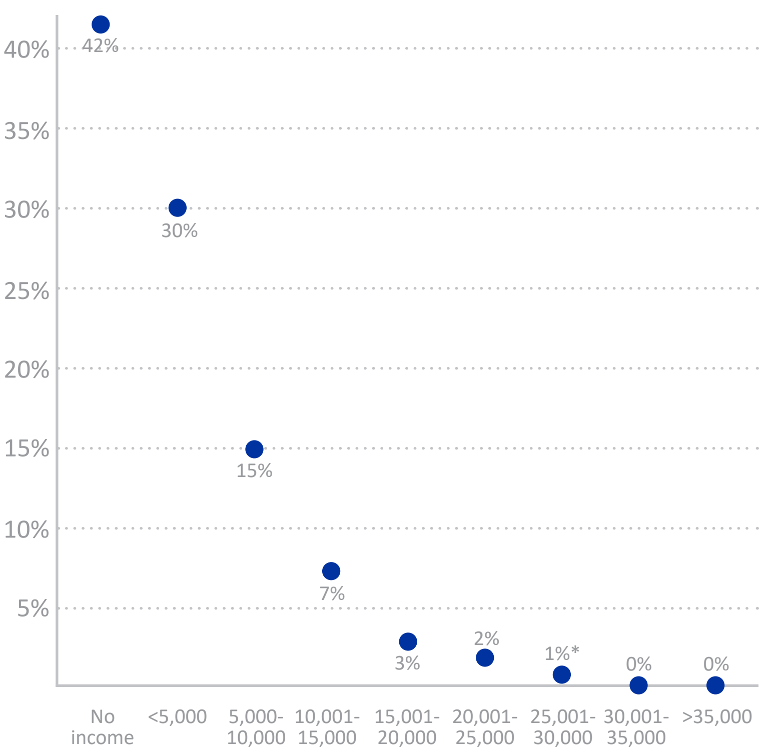
The majority of participants in the internal returnee sample were men between 16 and 34 years old, which is slightly younger than the main age demographic of international returnee respondents. Households among internal returnee respondents included an average of 5.4 members.

Respondents were most frequently earning between 5,000 and 10,000 BDT per month during the Round 2 survey (37%). This reflects a significant shift from Round 1, during which respondents were most frequently earning no income (42%). Similarly to international returnee respondents, the aggregate shift of income distributions for internal returnee respondents has trended upwards in the last three months.

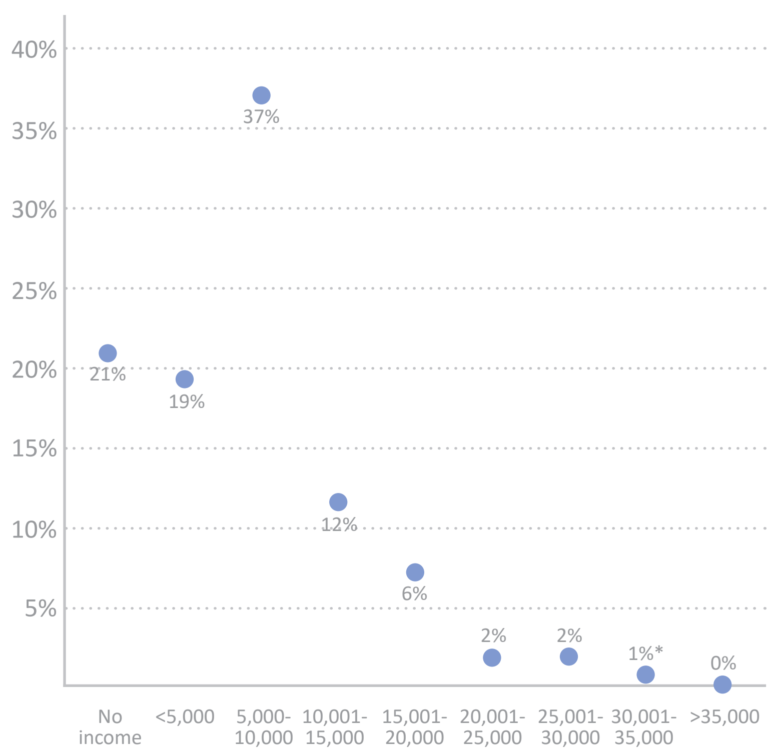
When asked about perceptions regarding income level changes, however, the majority of internal returnee respondents reported that their incomes were lower in Round 2 than they were during Round 1 (84%). These conflicting indicators on income situations are consistent for both international and internal returnee respondents.

INCOME

ROUND 1 average total household monthly income in BDT



ROUND 2 average total household monthly income in BDT



By the time they were interviewed for Round 2, 74 per cent of internal returnee respondents had already received their wages from their work in a different district. This is an increase from Round 1, during which only 59 per cent of internal returnee respondents reported having received their wages from their work in a different district. This suggests that more respondents had been paid their last wages sometime between Round 1 (May - June 2020) and Round 2 (August - September 2020).

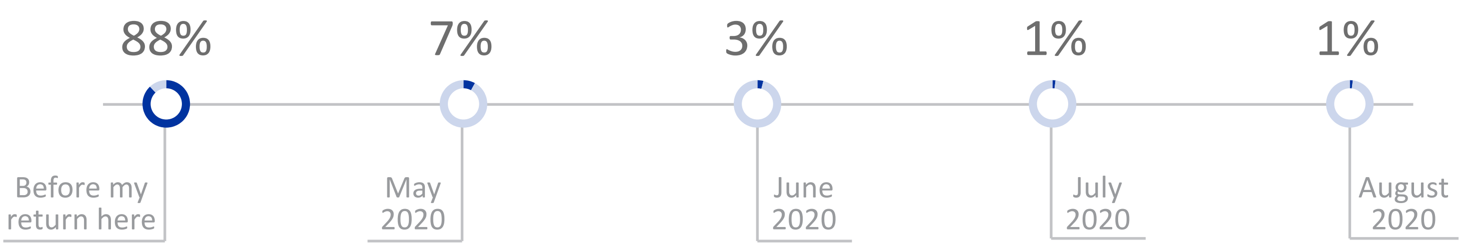
Of the respondents who had already received their wages by Round 2, a majority had received them prior to returning to their home district (88%).

Twenty-six per cent of respondents had not yet received their last wages by Round 2. When asked about their expectations for being paid eventually, nearly half of those respondents reported that they do not anticipate ever receiving those wages in the future (47%). On the other hand, 30 per cent of respondents responded that they would be paid once they returned to work for the same employer who owed them said wage. Similarly to international returnee respondents, this may be indicative of a common intention to re-migrate, specifically to internal respondents' previous place of employment.

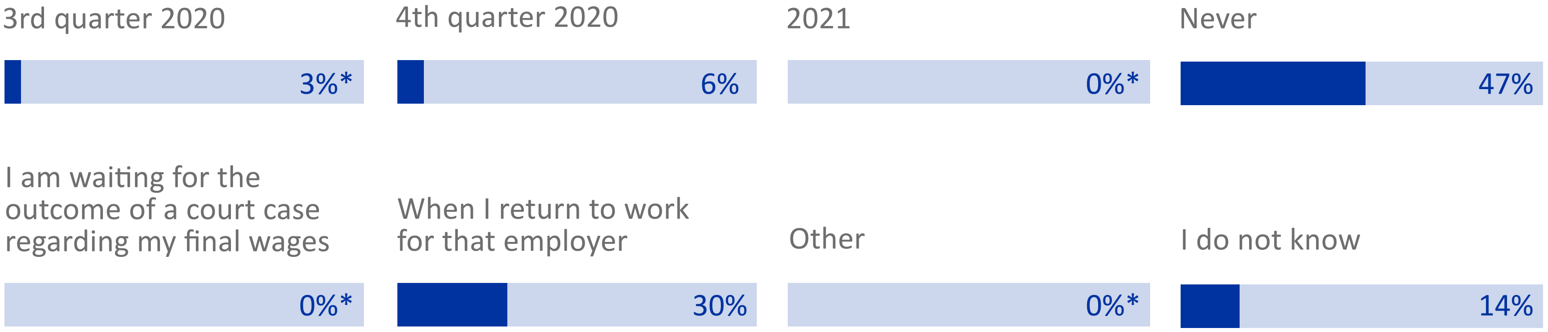
DID YOU RECEIVE YOUR LAST WAGES THAT YOUR EMPLOYER OWED YOU BEFORE RETURNING TO THIS DISTRICT?

LAST WAGES RECEPTION

If you **already received** your last wages, when did you receive them?



If you **have not yet received** your last wages, when do you expect to receive them?



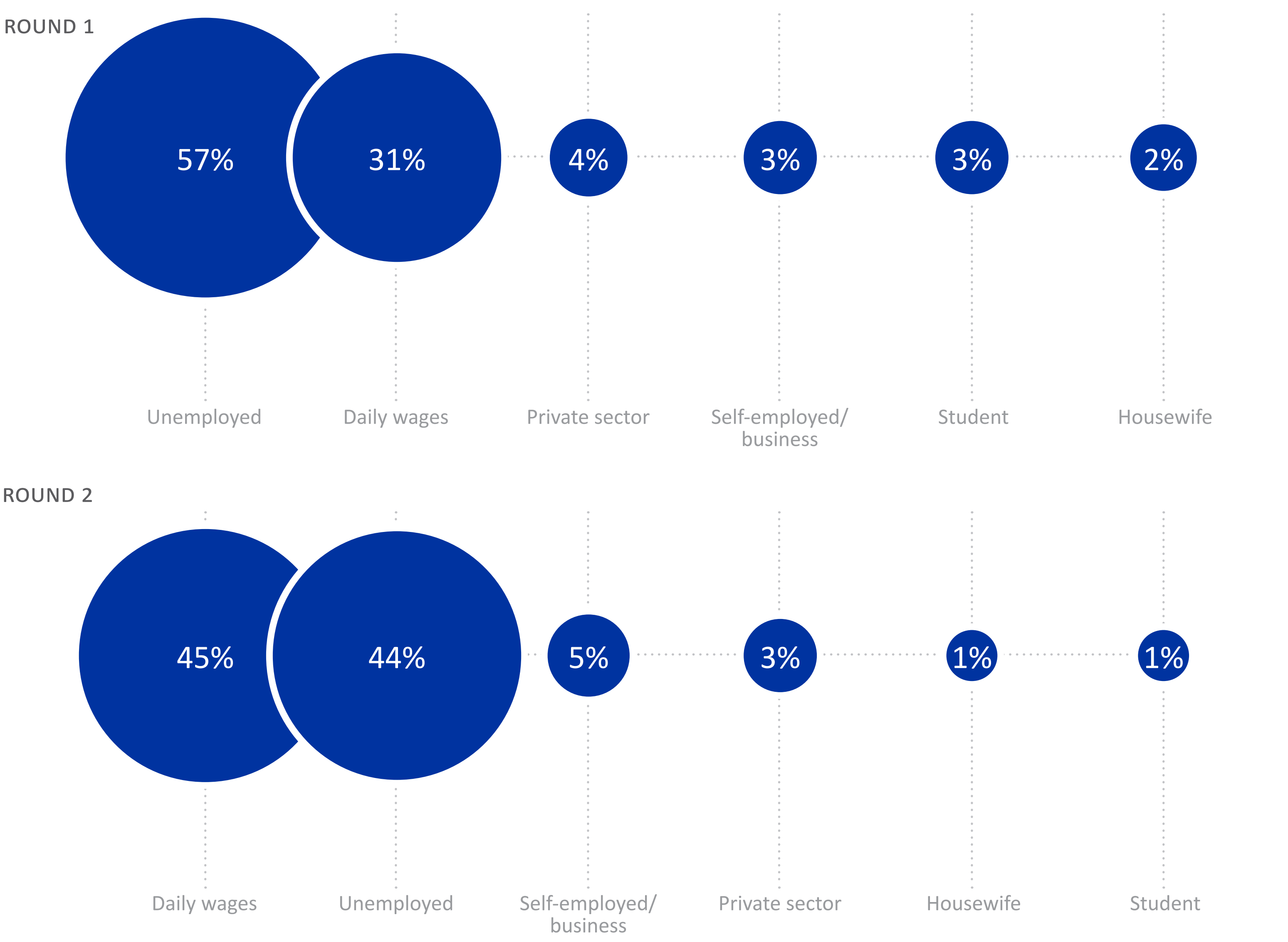
EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNAL RETURNEES

While the unemployment rate was still high among internal returnee respondents during Round 2, it had decreased by over 10 per cent since Round 1. In fact, unemployment was no longer the dominant employment status among internal returnee respondents in Round 2, with those working for daily wages (45%) slightly outnumbering those who were unemployed (44%). This demonstrates a slight improvement in the unemployment situation as compared to three months ago. This drop in unemployment may be attributed at least partially to the easing of lockdown measures at the end of May and the lifting of other restrictions at the beginning of September.

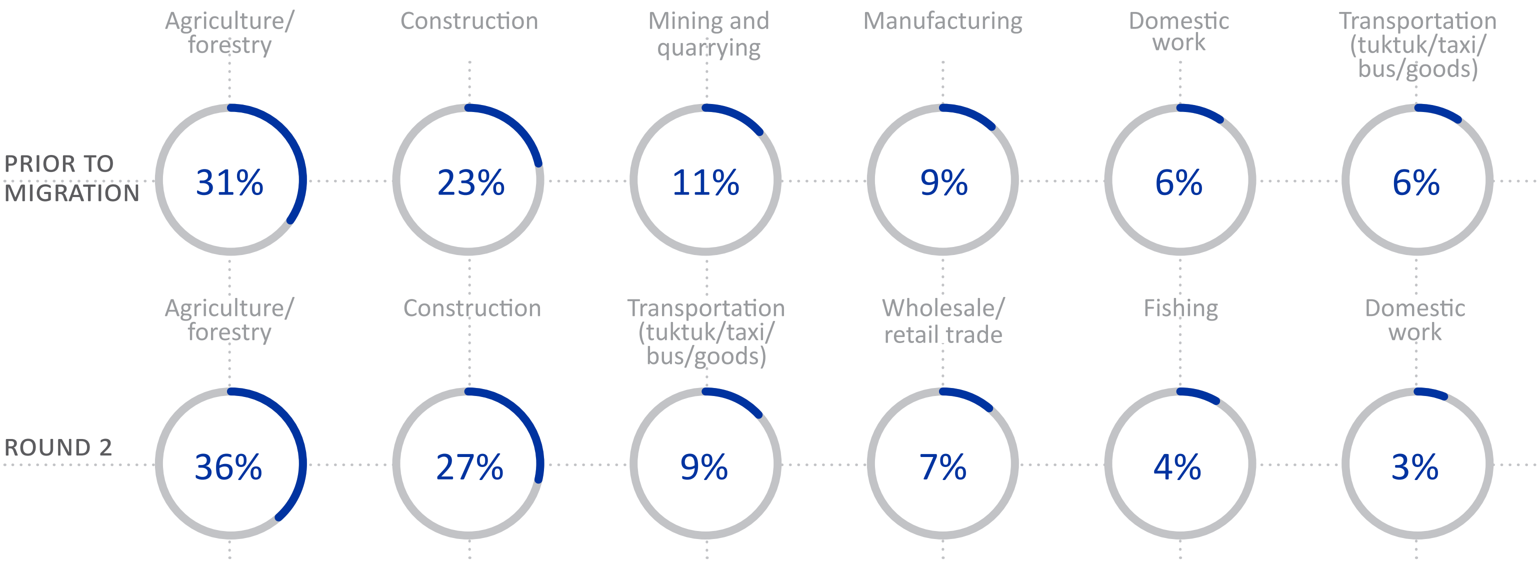
Employment such as working in the private sector, being self-employed, being a student or being a housewife stayed relatively consistent from Round 1 to Round 2, only experiencing slight shifts in distributions.

The Round 2 unemployment rates for internal returnee respondents were also significantly lower than Round 2 unemployment rates for international return respondents (by 20%).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS (top 6 answers, multiple answers possible)

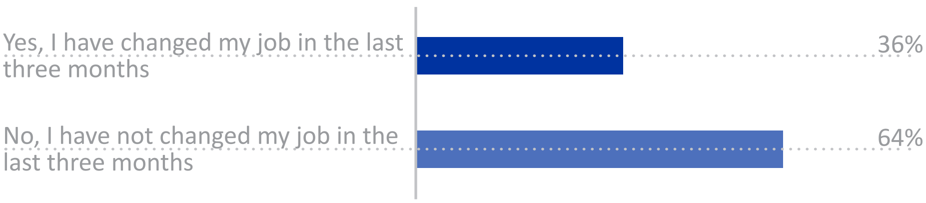


OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR (top 6 answers, multiple answers possible)

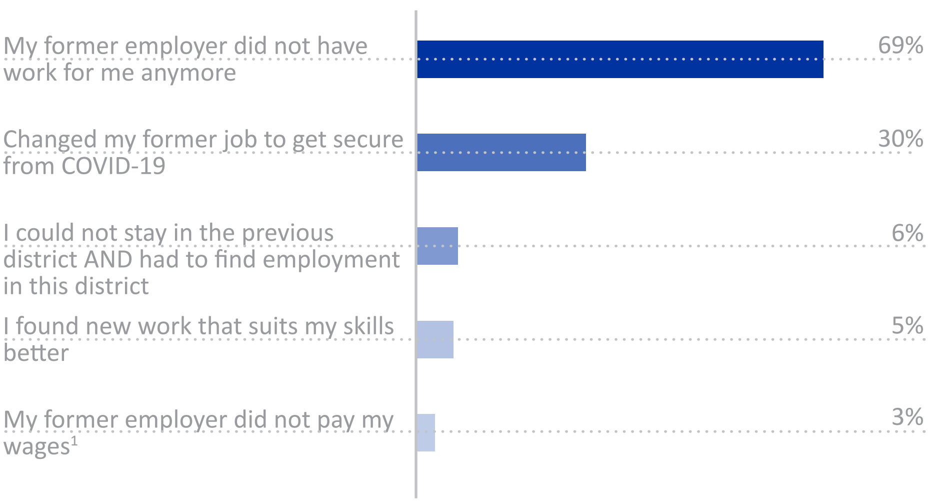


EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

If you are currently employed, have you changed your job in the last three months?



If yes, why did you change jobs? (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

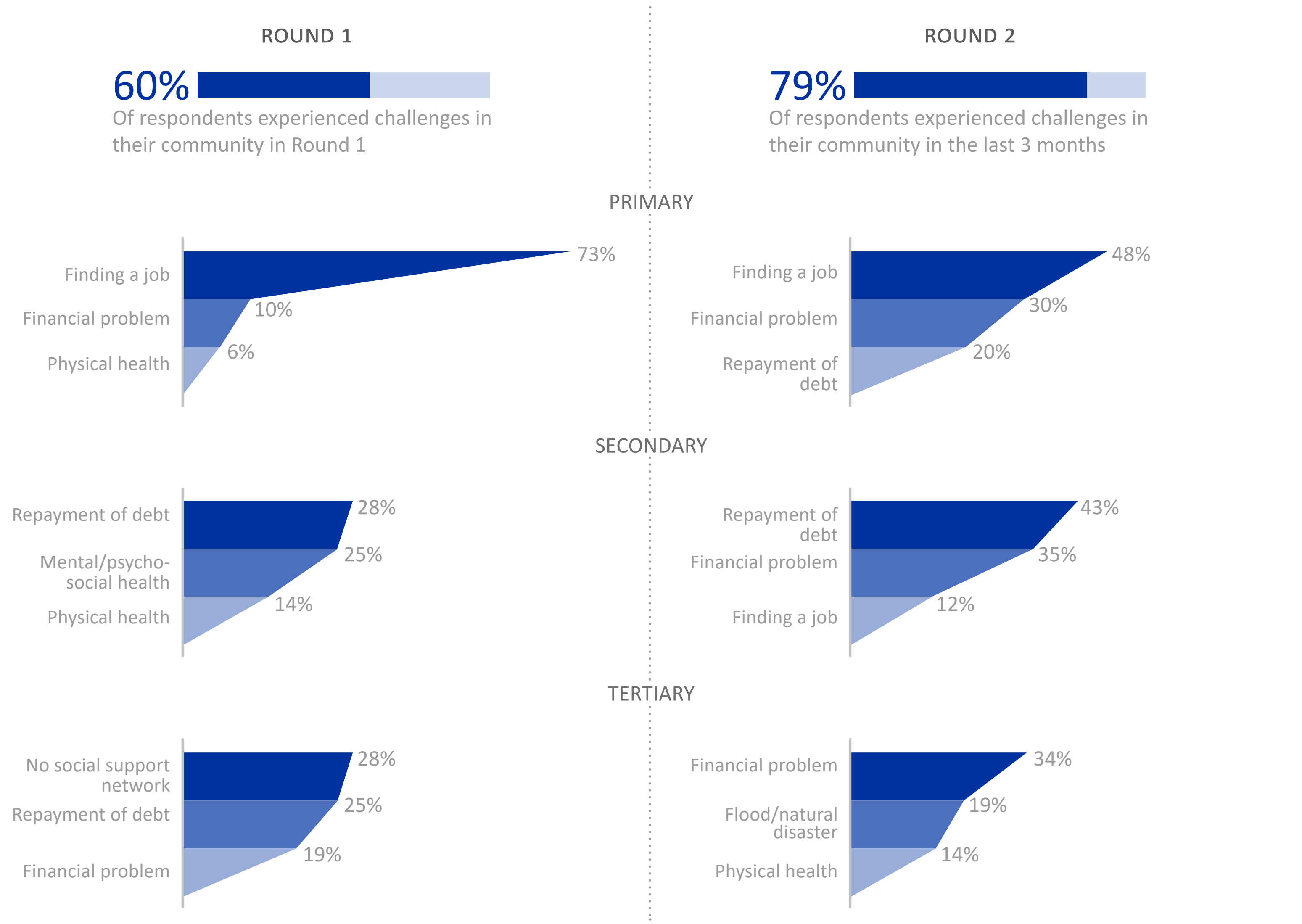


In order to observe shifts between pre- and post-COVID-19 domestic occupational sectors, the current occupational distribution of internal returnee respondents in Round 2 was analyzed in comparison to the occupational distribution of the same respondents prior to migration. Similarly to international returnee respondents, construction and agriculture were the most common sectors for internal returnee respondents prior to migration, together accounting for over 50 per cent of respondent occupations. Unlike international returnee respondents, however, occupational sectors remained relatively consistent from Round 1 to Round 2, despite a slight increase in respondents employed in the agriculture and construction industry in Round 2. It is important to note that in Round 2, the "Wholesale/retail trade" industry was further specified in the survey to include street vendors, small grocery shops, and roadside tea.

Respondents were also asked whether they had changed jobs in the last three months and why. Two thirds responded that they had not changed jobs, which starkly contrasts with international returnee respondents, among which two thirds had changed jobs. The reasons for which internal returnee respondents changed jobs, however, were similar to those cited by international returnee respondents: their former employer did not have work for them (69%) or they wanted to get secure from COVID-19 (30%).

[1] 3% also reported that they found new work that provides overtime payment.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY INTERNAL RETURNEES



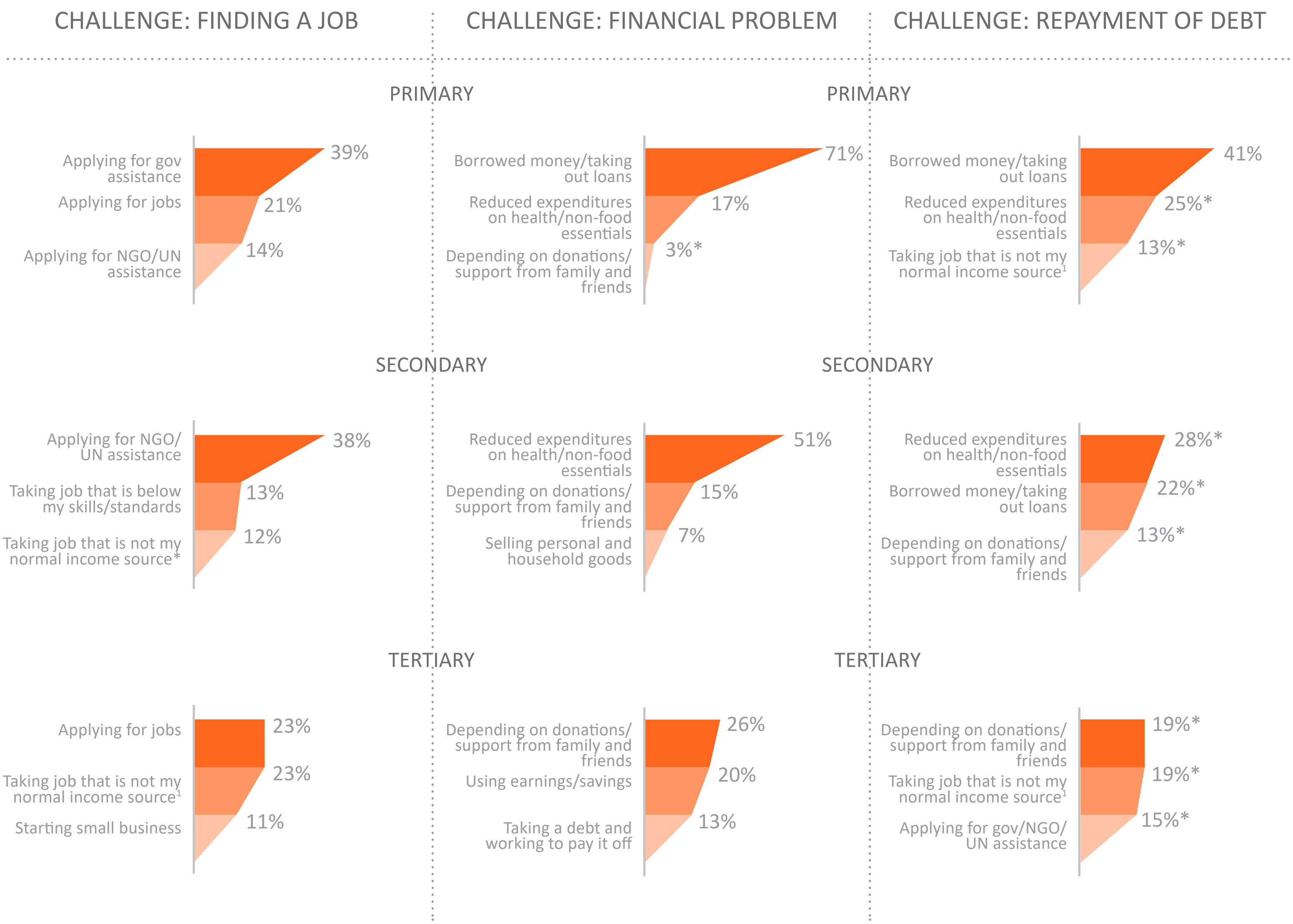
Among all respondents, challenges have increased despite the easing of lockdowns and restrictions. Seventy-nine per cent of internal returnee respondents experienced challenges in their community in the three months prior to Round 2, as opposed to 60 per cent in Round 1.

As has been established in data on employment rates, however, finding a job has become a less prominent primary challenge (48% in Round 2 as opposed to 73% in Round 1). Nevertheless, financial problems (30%) and repayment of debts (20%) have become notably more common as primary challenges. In fact, financial problems appear in the top three challenges at both the secondary and tertiary levels as well, indicating persistently difficult economic circumstances despite some improvements in the domestic job market.

Health-related challenges have fallen in prominence between Round 1 and Round 2. Mental and psychosocial health challenges have decreased in frequency from being one of the most prevalent secondary-level challenges in Round 1 to being reported in low numbers in Round 2. At the same time, challenges with physical health have fallen from being key primary and secondary level challenges in Round 1 to being a common tertiary level challenge in Round 2 (14%). Trends in both employment and health-related challenges mirror those among international returnee respondents.

While social support network challenges were the most common tertiary level challenge in Round 1 (28%), they were reported far less frequently in Round 2. Instead, internal returnee respondents identified financial problems (34%), floods and natural disasters (19%) and physical health (14%) as key tertiary level challenges.

COPING MECHANISMS



Respondents were asked about the coping mechanisms they used to overcome specific challenges they reported in Round 2. The above visualization illustrates coping mechanisms used in response to the top three primary challenges experienced by internal returnees in Round 2.

Coping mechanisms related to challenges with finding a job most commonly involved applying for assistance, applying for jobs, and taking jobs that respondents would not normally take. The most common primary coping mechanism among both internal and international returnee respondents was to apply for government assistance, though it was less prominent among internal returnee respondents (39% compared to 60%). Applying for NGO/UN assistance was cited most frequently as a secondary coping mechanism (38%), while applying for jobs was the most common tertiary coping mechanism (23%).

Coping mechanisms for financial problems and debt repayment were similar to one another and most frequently revolved around borrowing money, reducing expenditures, and depending on donations. Seventy-one per cent of respondents who experienced financial problems as a primary challenge coped by borrowing money or taking out loans, and forty-one per cent of respondents used the same method to cope with debt repayment. This confirms that both international and internal returnee respondents use regressive coping strategies, despite the risks of exacerbating one's vulnerabilities. This can also be seen in the prominence of reducing expenditures on health and other non-food essentials as a coping mechanism, a measure that indicates crisis-level urgencies as well as growing risks and vulnerabilities.

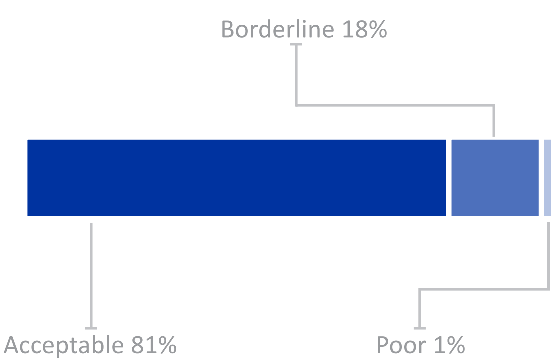
[1] "Not my normal income source" includes crop harvesting, collecting and selling firewood, daily wages, crafts, services and domestic work

The frequency of food consumption among internal returnee respondents increased drastically from Round 1 to Round 2. Nearly all respondent households consumed three meals a day (92%) in Round 2 as compared to only half doing so in Round 1 (49%). Correspondingly, the proportion of respondents who ate fewer than three meals a day fell by 45 per cent.

Food type frequencies shifted slightly from Round 1 to Round 2. Cereals and tubers, oils and fats and pulses, nuts and seeds were consumed more frequently than in Round 1, but vegetables, fruits, milk and dairy products and sweets and sugar decreased in consumption frequency.

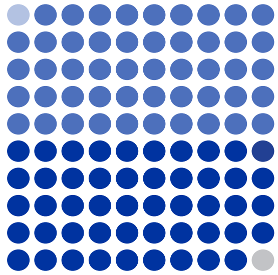
The food type frequency is used to calculate the Food Consumption Score, which indicates households' dietary diversity and nutrition intake. The majority of internal returnee respondents indicated an acceptable Food Consumption Score (81%), although this is a slightly smaller proportion compared to international returnee respondents (88%). Similarly to international returnee respondents, there was negligible change in the proportion of internal returnee respondents who had an acceptable food score from Round 1 (80%) to Round 2. Eighteen per cent of respondents' dietary diversity and nutrition was rated as borderline, while the remaining one per cent were rated as poor.

FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE



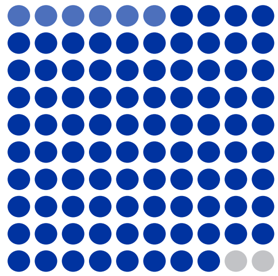
AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY MEALS CONSUMED BY HOUSEHOLD

ROUND 1



1	1%
2	49%
3	49%
>3	1%

ROUND 2



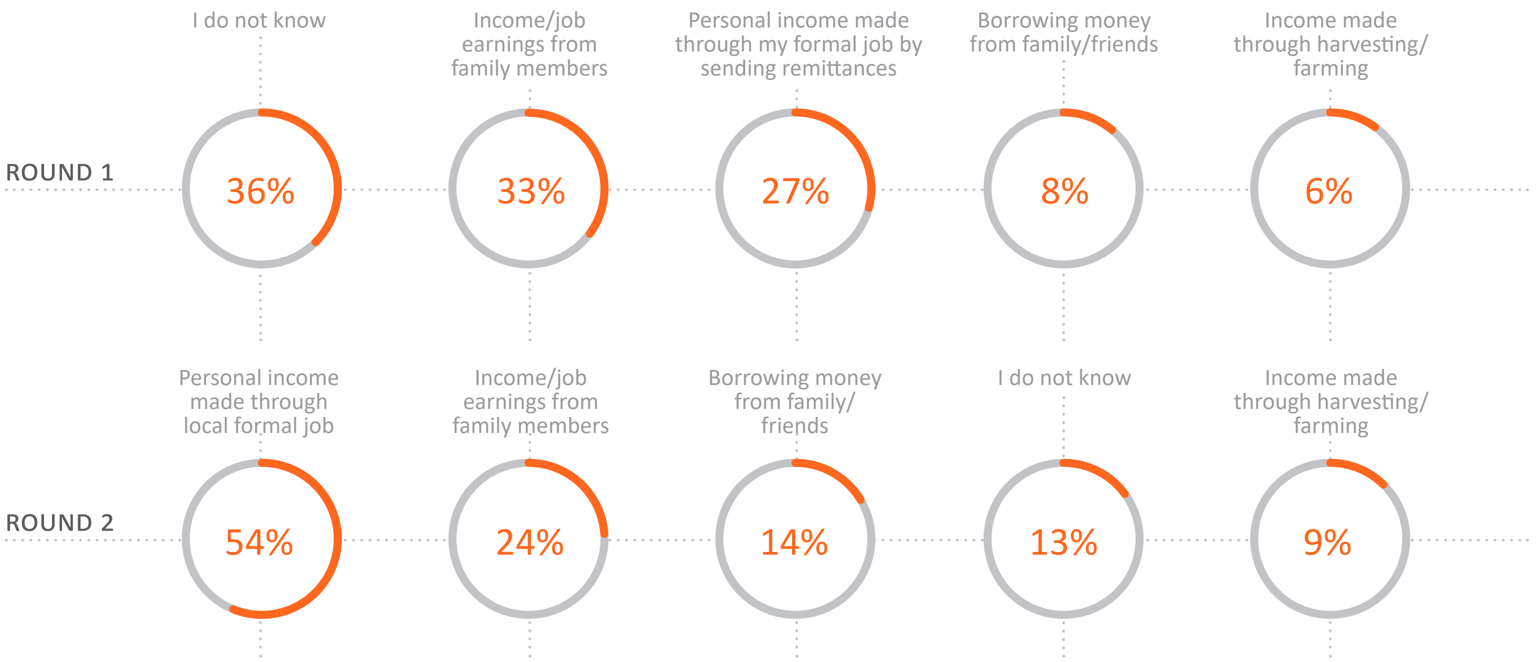
1	0%
2	6%
3	92%
>3	2%

FOOD TYPE FREQUENCY

ROUND 1	ROUND 2	CHANGE	
6.8	6.9	↑	Cereals and tubers
6.2	6.3	↑	Oil and fats
5.2	4.8	↓	Vegetables
4.6	4.6	—	Spices and condiments
3.4	3.4	—	Meat or fish
1.7	1.2	↓	Fruits
3.6	3.7	↑	Pulses, nuts and seeds
1.9	1.3	↓	Milk and dairy products
2.0	1.4	↓	Sweets and sugar

DEBT AMONG INTERNAL RETURNEES

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO REPAY YOUR DEBT? (top 5 answers, multiple answers possible)

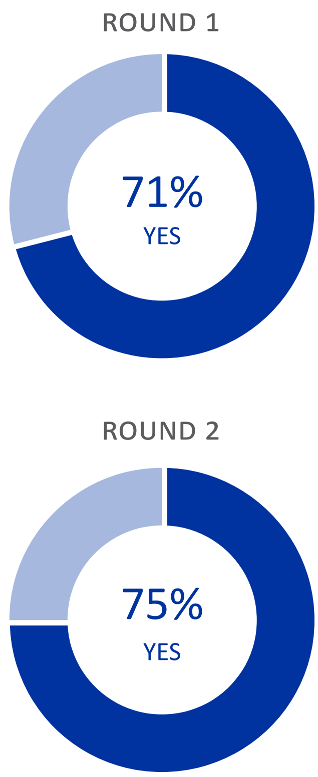


The percentage of respondents who reported having debt increased by four per cent from Round 1 to Round 2.

When asked whether they thought their debt was higher, equal to, or lower than it was three months ago, over half reported that it was higher (53%), 18 per cent reported that it was equal and 27 per cent reported that their amount of debt had decreased. These findings align with data on challenges and coping mechanisms which emphasize problems with debt repayment as well as the frequency of borrowing money and taking loans as a coping strategy. However, the proportion of internal returnee respondents reporting lower debt is notably higher than that of international returnee respondents.

Respondents also reported on the amount of debt they currently owed to compare debt ranges with Round 1 data. Debt repayment methods changed in the three months between Round 1 and Round 2. While more than a third of respondents expressed uncertainty about how they would repay their debts in Round 1 (36%), over half of respondents in Round 2 plan to rely on their own income made through a local formal job (54%). This may be supported by data on a slightly improved employment rate, though appears at odds with high percentages of respondents reporting challenges with debt repayment. It is important to note that being employed does not completely mitigate the challenges of debt repayment, especially if debt in question is increasing and if the job does not pay sufficiently.

DO YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD OWE ANY DEBT?



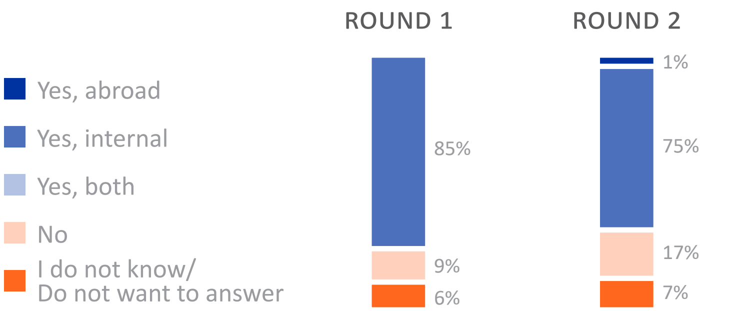
FUTURE MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS OF INTERNAL RETURNEES

While a large proportion of internal returnee respondents still want to re-migrate in Round 2, there has been a notable drop since Round 1. Eighty-five per cent of respondents wanted to re-migrate internally in Round 1, but only 75 per cent wanted to in Round 2. The percentage of respondents who did not want to re-migrate increased slightly from Round 1 (9%) to Round 2 (17%). Uncertainty of re-migration remained largely the same, with only a one per cent difference in internal returnee migrants answering “I do not know” or “Do not want to answer” between Round 1 and Round 2.

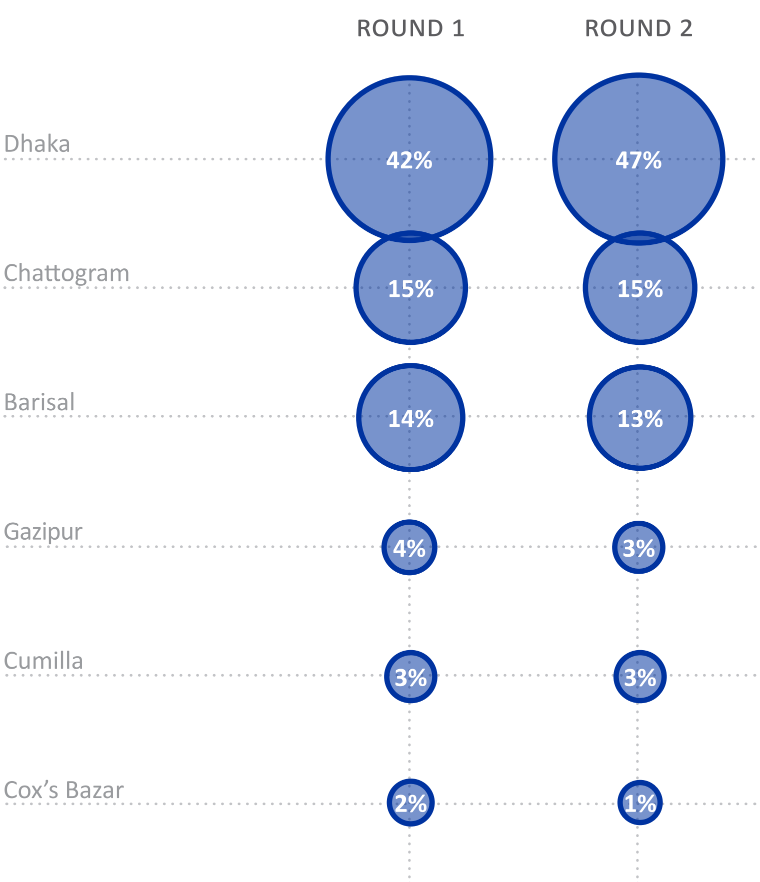
Intended destinations for respondents who want to re-migrate abroad were generally the same as in Round 1. Dhaka was the most popular potential destination, with almost half of all respondents preferring to re-migrate there in Round 2 (47%). This was followed by Chattogram (15%) and Barisal (13%).

Intended timelines for re-migration changed between Round 1 and Round 2. Seventy-five per cent of internal returnee respondents had intended to re-migrate after COVID-19 ends in Round 1, however, that proportion decreased to 33 per cent in Round 2. Conversely, the proportion of respondents who were unsure about their re-migration timeline, answering “I do not know” when asked when they plan to migrate, increased from six per cent to 17 per cent between Round 1 and Round 2. These inverse shifts mirror similar trends among international returnee respondents. However, a greater proportion of internal returnee respondents appear to have more concrete timelines for re-migration than international returnee respondents. Twenty-eight per cent plan to re-migrate between two and three months and 18 per cent within four weeks. Since internal returnee migrants largely intend to re-migrate internally, the higher proportion of concrete timelines may be attributed to the lack of regulation regarding interstate travel within Bangladesh, as opposed to the limited nature of international travel from Bangladesh.

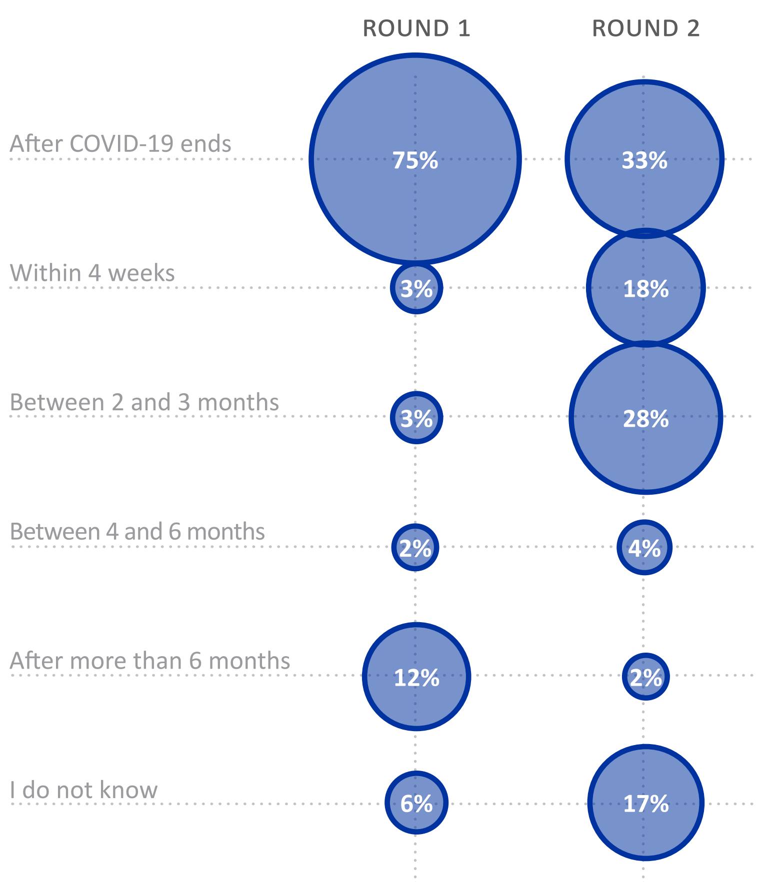
DO YOU WANT TO RE-MIGRATE?



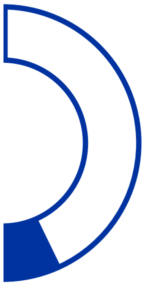
IF YES, WHERE?



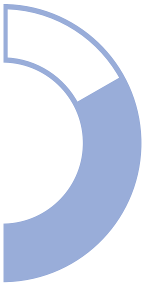
IF YES, WHEN?



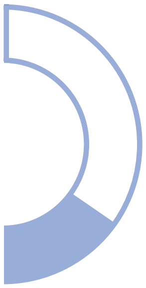
Note: 2% of respondents in Round 2 wanted to go to Narayanganj. This proportion was the same in Round 1.



9%
Of respondents changed their mind about re-migrating

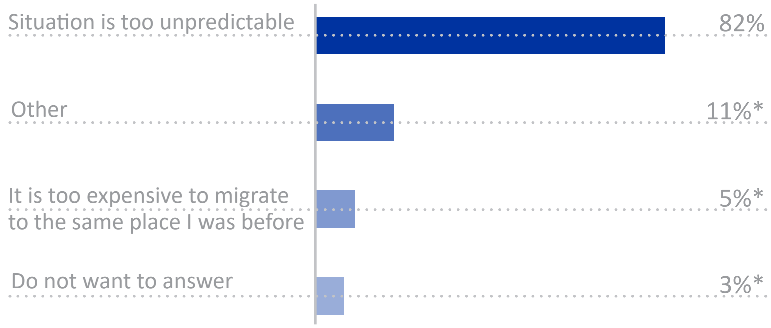


67%
Wanted to migrate then, but DO NOT want to migrate now

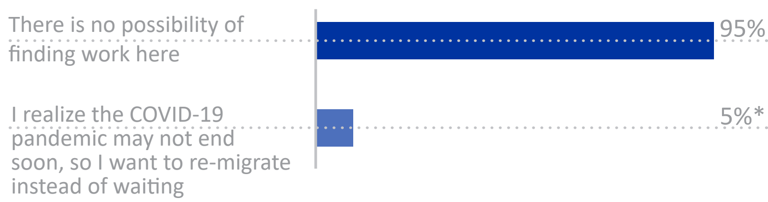


33%
Did not want to migrate then, but DO want to migrate now

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU NO LONGER WANT TO MIGRATE?



WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU WANT TO MIGRATE NOW?



Respondents in Round 2 were asked to explain any changes in their decisions to re-migrate in order to shed light on present situations or factors that had become compelling enough in the last three months to change respondents' minds. Nine per cent of respondents changed their mind about re-migrating since Round 1. Of those, 67 per cent had wanted to migrate in Round 1 but no longer want to migrate and 33 per cent did not want to migrate in Round 1 but do want to migrate now.

When asked to elaborate on these decision changes, 82 per cent of respondents who no longer want to migrate in Round 2 responded that the situation is too unpredictable. Despite a lack of restrictions regarding intra-country travel, internal returnee migrants, who mostly prefer to re-migrate internally, are still deterred by the uncertainty of mobility and safety during COVID-19. It is important to note that, while the question in the survey is framed as, "What is the main reason you no longer want to migrate?" respondents in this category may still have a desire to migrate, but due to circumstance, cannot do so, and therefore answer accordingly.

Almost all respondents cited the lack of possibilities for work in their current situations as the main reason for changing their mind in favor of re-migration (95%). Although unemployment rates have generally decreased, the data reflects an enduring perception of employment insecurity. Compounded by the indefinite situational uncertainty of the pandemic, internal returnee respondents face critical vulnerabilities. Unlike international returnee respondents, however, since travel within Bangladesh is not restricted, respondents who want to re-migrate internally will most likely face fewer logistical barriers than those who want to re-migrate internationally. As a result, internal re-migration is more possible. Hundreds of respondents from Round 1 have already re-migrated, half of whom went to Dhaka, where COVID-19 rates are highest, but almost all of whom are employed now. Half of the respondents who want to re-migrate internally in Round 2 also want to go to Dhaka.

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