



THIS IS WHO WE ARE

A study of the profile, experiences
and reasons for flight of unaccompanied
or separated children from Afghanistan
seeking asylum in Sweden in 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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In collaboration with



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ABBREVIATIONS

EU – The European Union

JIPS – The Joint IDP Profiling Service

SMA – The Swedish Migration Agency

UASC – Unaccompanied and separated children

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amidst the unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe in 2015 there was also a high number of unaccompanied and separated children (hereafter UASC). Perceiving no alternatives for reaching safety, these girls and boys found it necessary to flee on their own. The unaccompanied youth were exposed to perils along the way. More than half of the UASC who arrived in Europe were Afghan nationals. Half of these Afghan UASC chose Sweden as their final destination.

This study aims to provide an overview of who these Afghan UASC are, what made them decide to undertake such a long and difficult journey, what happened along the way, and why they ultimately chose Sweden as their destination. The study presents the findings of a profiling exercise that was conducted by UNHCR in collaboration with partners, to collect information on the background of these UASC in order to begin addressing the information gaps concerning this group of displaced children. The information gathered will inform UNHCR's response programming in the countries along the journey from Afghanistan to Sweden. This exercise also aims to provide a significant step towards building an evidence-base for an informed discourse on possible solutions for these children.

In total 240 individual interviews were carried out between March and May 2016 during the course of the profiling survey conducted in Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm, and an additional 34 Afghan UASC participated in the focus group discussions. Additionally, previous studies on the movement of Afghan UASC were consulted in both the design of this study and in the review of the findings.

During the focus group discussions, the participating children were given the opportunity to give recommendations about how the movement of Afghan UASC children could be addressed. **THESE ARE THEIR WORDS:**

“ The situation in Afghanistan must be improved, so that young people are not forced to leave their country.”



SOME MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REPORT ARE:

- Around three quarters of the UASC identified themselves as **Shia Muslims of Hazara origin**. The majority of the UASC had only **completed primary school**, while two-thirds reported they had **worked for more than six months in the past year**, which had prevented them from attending school.
- Most of the UASC **lived with their nuclear family** prior to undertaking the journey. Half of the UASC participants reported that their **father is deceased** or that they do not know where he is.
- Around three-quarters of those who lived in Iran before reported that they did not have access to documentation.
- Overall, the Afghan UASC stressed that they had **primarily left their countries of main residence for protection reasons**, irrespective of whether they had been staying in Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan. While UASC leaving from Afghanistan stated **security-related reasons, including conflict and violence, as their primary reason for leaving**, UASC leaving from Iran primarily referred to **discrimination and lack of documentation**. Economic reasons were only mentioned by a small fraction of all UASC interviewed.
- The UASC reported experiencing **acute distress and severe protection incidents** in Iran, Turkey and throughout the Balkan route as well as undertaking a **long and hazardous journey facilitated mainly by smugglers**.
- The UASC's journeys were **financed mainly through borrowed money**, implying an expectation of repayment. However, only a small number of UASC indicated that they have sent or currently send money back to Afghanistan or Iran.
- The interviewed UASC chose to apply for asylum in Sweden, as they perceived that Sweden offers **good education opportunities, respects human rights**, has a **fair and efficient asylum procedure**, and provides **opportunities for economic development**.

“ Possibilities to travel legally should be made available, so that dangerous journeys could be prevented.”

“ Protection measures must be put in place at the borders, to prevent the loss of lives.”

“ More support should be provided by humanitarian organizations to young persons on the move.”

1 INTRODUCTION

“ We wish that the situation of Afghanistan improves and that no one is forced to leave their country. We all play with our lives until arriving in Greece and if our country was secure, nobody would be ready to take this high risk.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹

1.1 CONTEXT

Unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants arrived at the shores of Greece and Italy in 2015. A fifth of those arriving were Afghan nationals, who packed as many belongings as they could carry back in Afghanistan or in Iran to depart on the dangerous journey. The Afghans were not only single men; an increasing number of women and children embarked on the tumultuous journey towards Europe. Amidst it all were also a high number of unaccompanied and separated girls and boys, who were especially exposed to perils as they travelled.

Of the overall UASC population in Europe, Afghans are by far the majority. Asylum applications submitted by Afghan UASC comprised almost 15 percent of all asylum applications in 2015.² This is especially noticeable in Sweden; this Scandinavian country has received over half of all Afghan UASC in Europe. All actors – local and Governmental, as well as NGO and humanitarian – are united in their need to better understand the experiences of these children, both in what they have been through and in the ways they most need help.

While the phenomenon of UASC arrivals has been ongoing for some years, only limited evidence has been collected on the UASC who arrived in 2015. Very little is known about who they are, what made them decide to undertake such a long and difficult journey, what happened along the way and why they ultimately chose Sweden as their destination. To begin to address these information gaps, a profiling exercise was conducted to collect information on the background of these UASC as well as to inform response programming in the countries along the journey from Afghanistan to Sweden. This exercise is a significant step towards building an evidence-base for an informed discourse on possible solutions for these children.

¹ Statement made by a young Afghan boy during focus group discussions in Sweden.

² Eurostat, News release 44/2016, 4 March 2016, available at: <http://goo.gl/oCcCrJ>; SMA, Asylum applications 2015, available at: <http://goo.gl/vwtlz8>.



The profiling exercise administered a survey that focused on four main questions:

- ❓ Who are the Afghan UASC coming to Sweden?
- ❓ Why are Afghan UASC leaving their country of main residence?
- ❓ What do Afghan UASC experience on the journey?
- ❓ Why are Afghan UASC choosing Sweden as their country of destination?

Each chapter of this report relates to one of the four main questions that guided the exercise. To facilitate the usage of the report, the findings are presented in separate chapters, allowing the reader to read the full report or to access any given section. Additionally, the results are presented in two separate sections, with the key findings and analysis presented first for easy reference, followed by a more detailed presentation of the results including graphs and statistics.

The present study is part of a larger undertaking within which UNHCR strives to shed light on the protection situation of Afghan refugees globally, and to assist in finding durable solutions to their plight. Additionally, UNHCR hopes that the report will assist national authorities and other stakeholders in planning for an informed response to the needs identified and solutions suggested.

The profiling exercise is an empirical study that involved speaking with Afghan UASC applying for asylum in Sweden in 2015 in person. In that way, the study gives a voice to these UASC as they say – “*this is who we are*”.

1.2 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This empirical study employed structured, individual interviews as well as focus group discussions to better understand the backgrounds and preferences of the Afghan UASC in Sweden. The population interviewed consisted of Afghan UASC who had applied for asylum in Sweden during 2015 and who, at the time of the study, had not yet received their first-instance asylum decision. In total, 240 individual interviews were carried out between March and May 2016 and an additional 34 Afghan UASC participated in the focus group discussions. Additionally, previous studies on the movement of Afghan UASC were consulted both in the design of this study and in the review of the findings.³ This includes UNHCR data collection exercises, such as the profiling study with Afghan arrivals in Greece during spring 2016.⁴

Participants in the individual interviews were selected through a multi-staged cluster sampling method. The Swedish Migration Agency (hereafter the SMA) provided UNHCR with lists of pending asylum applications by Afghan UASC, from which the sample was drawn. However, due to the geographical spread of the Afghan UASC in Sweden and the relatively short timeframe of the survey, the sample frame was reduced to include only Afghan UASC living in the regions of Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm and looked only at zip codes of areas where at least 10 UASC were listed in the SMA database. These three regions were chosen because they are the most densely populated areas in Sweden and have received the largest numbers of UASC, allowing for efficient implementation of the survey. This sampling approach affects the representativeness of the sample, but this decision was taken to facilitate the work of the enumerators and to accommodate the time constraint.

The individual interviews were conducted by Dari/Farsi or Pashto-speaking enumerators, who had been hired and trained by UNHCR. Contact with the Afghan UASC selected for the individual interviews was made through their legal guardians. The Afghan UASC selected for the interview were also independently informed about the study by phone and given the possibility to choose if they wanted to participate in the study. Questions of a more sensitive nature, for example those concerning the reasons for the flight, protection incidents experienced and risks faced during the journey, were mainly addressed in the focus group discussions. The group discussions were facilitated in Dari by UNHCR staff members of Afghan origin with specific expertise in consultations with refugee youth. Participants in the focus group discussions were asked to participate through their legal guardians and care homes, and participation was open to all Afghan UASC with pending applications, who had not yet had their individual asylum interview with the SMA, and who were residing in the Stockholm or Uppsala regions.

Throughout the planning and implementation of the study, as well as during the drafting of the report, the best interests of the child remained a primary consideration. Among other measures, pilot interviews were held prior to implementation of the individual interviews and amendments were made in accordance with the feedback received. Additionally, the focus group discussions were planned and executed after the pilot interviews, as to establish a child-friendly setting for the more sensitive questions. UNHCR also ensured that the questionnaire was reviewed and vetted by psychologists, that the information describing the survey was conveyed in a child-friendly manner, and that each interview was conducted under terms as chosen by the child. Further all enumerators were trained by UNHCR including a training on interviewing children by a specialist from the SMA. UNHCR also established contact with the Swedish Save the Children hotline for psychosocial support. All children participating in the study were provided with information on how to contact the hotline to request assistance.

³ UNHCR, *Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey?*, December 2014, PDES/2014/03, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54994d984.html>, UNHCR, *Trees only move in the wind: a study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe*, June 2010, PDES/2010/05, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c21ae2a2.html>, UNHCR, *Voices of Afghan Children – A Study on Asylum-Seeking Children in Sweden*, June 2010, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c19ec7f2.html>.

⁴ UNHCR, 2016(a): *Profiling of Afghan arrivals on Greek islands in January 2016*; UNHCR, 2016(b): *Profiling of Afghan arrivals on Greek islands in February 2016*. The published fact sheets are available at <http://goo.gl/4zf9zs>.

1.3 LIMITATIONS

Important to note is that this report reflects the responses of the interviewed UASC. The data collected from the individual interviews presented in this study is statistically representative of the Afghan UASC population in Sweden that had asylum applications pending with the SMA at the time of the study, living in the regions of Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm. However, the sample design does not provide statistically representative findings for subpopulations, such as children who have been staying in either Afghanistan or Iran, and disaggregated findings at this level are thus only included to highlight trends that may be a subject for further research.

The qualitative results from the focus group discussions are anecdotal and based on the UASC's own experiences and knowledge of the current situation, and this information cannot be viewed as representative of the UASC Afghan population. However, the qualitative results help verify the information collected in the individual interviews and shed light on some of the more sensitive experiences of the Afghan UASC travelling to Europe, which was not appropriate to be included in the survey.

The study faced additional limitations. As the study was carried out within a short timeframe, there was insufficient time to inform various stakeholders of the study before implementation began. This proved to be a serious challenge during the data collection, as establishing contact and gaining approval for participation of the UASC selected for the interview proved time-consuming since the various stakeholders involved needed to be informed independently. It was particularly difficult to identify female UASC that would agree to participate in the study. Additionally, several of the UASC who had been randomly chosen to participate in the study could not be reached for various reasons.

Out of the children who participated in the study, UNHCR perceived that the majority did so out of a wish to contribute with information that could assist others in the same situation as themselves. Of those children who declined to participate, many mentioned interview-fatigue from talking to various authorities and stakeholders, or lacked the time or interest to participate.

Finally, as the survey sought to better understand the reasons that caused the UASC to leave Afghanistan or their country of residence, the study focused on UASC who were still in the asylum procedure during the period of the study. Having a pending asylum application could have limited the information that the UASC were willing to share with the interviewers. Nonetheless, the quantitative data collection is based on accepted research methodologies, and the findings, collected from a sample of the full group of asylum-seeking Afghan UASC in Sweden through an approach aimed at minimizing bias at each stage of the process, provide a detailed description of the movement of Afghan UASC to Sweden.

2 WHO ARE THE AFGHAN UASC COMING TO SWEDEN?

2.1 KEY FINDINGS

- ➊ The Afghan UASC applying for asylum in Sweden are **mostly ethnic Hazara** (74%), most of whom are of Shiite faith (71%). This stands in contrast to the results from the on-going profiling exercise of Afghan arrivals in Greece, where the findings on the religion and ethnicity of the Afghan arrivals overall demonstrate that half of the group report being Sunni and the other half Shiite and that one third each declare themselves to be of Tajik, Pashtun and Hazara ethnicity. For context, although reliable demographic data is not available in Afghanistan, estimates suggest that just over 10 per cent of the Afghan population are Hazara, and around 20 per cent are Shiite. **This suggests that those who reach Europe and Sweden as UASC are members of a small minority group.** The majority of the UASC interviewed were **between the ages of 16 and 17**, but some participants were as young as 8 years old.
- ➋ **The findings show that a high proportion of Afghan UASC who reach Sweden have been previously displaced.** One-third of the UASC have been internally displaced at some point in their lives, and one-third have been living most of their lives in Iran, despite more than eight out of ten being born in Afghanistan. It is also known that the rate of displacement increased during 2015.⁵
- ➌ Of the UASC interviewed, **a majority (84%) of those who departed directly from Afghanistan are literate**, with primary school being the most commonly achieved level of education for both UASC departing from Afghanistan and Iran. However, even though primary education attendance only differed slightly depending on whether the UASC had lived in Afghanistan or Iran prior to the flight, the **average literacy rate is higher among those who had lived in Iran, than amongst those that had been living in Afghanistan (92% and 79% respectively).**
- ➍ While a majority of the UASC interviewed had attended school at some point, **two-thirds reported they had worked for more than six months in the past year.** Half of the UASC participants who worked prior to the journey stated that **work had prevented them from attending school.**
- ➎ The most commonly reported sectors of work amongst the UASC interviewed were **agriculture, construction and food services.** These findings are also corroborated by the profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece, where the same sectors are represented.

⁵ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 6 August 2013, HCR/EG/AFG/13/01, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ffdca34.html>.



- ➔ Of the UASC interviewed, **most had lived with their nuclear family in their main country of residence**. However, half of the UASC participants reported that their **father is now deceased or that they currently do not know where he is**. A quarter reported **a similar situation with their mother**. This may indicate changes in the family composition as a contributing factor to flight.
- ➔ **The majority of the UASC interviewed do not have identity cards**. More than half of the UASC who had lived in Afghanistan, and more than three-quarters of those UASC who had lived outside of Afghanistan (in Iran or in Pakistan) did not have access to identity cards. From UNHCR's experience, it is less common to have identity cards in rural areas.
- ➔ Out of the UASC interviewed, the **majority are in contact with relatives or friends** in their country of origin, indicating that contact with the family is maintained when possible.
- ➔ Most of the UASC interviewed **do not have relatives who live in Sweden or in Europe**. This may indicate that their travel trajectory was influenced by other travellers and smugglers, as also corroborated by the UASC themselves.

2.2 DETAILED FINDINGS

This section presents the empirical findings from the individual interviews as well as the focus group discussions. The findings are based on information collected from Afghan UASC living in Gothenburg, Malmö, Stockholm and Uppsala at the time of the study. The data presented in this section expands on the key findings described above.

Socio-demographic background of Afghan UASC

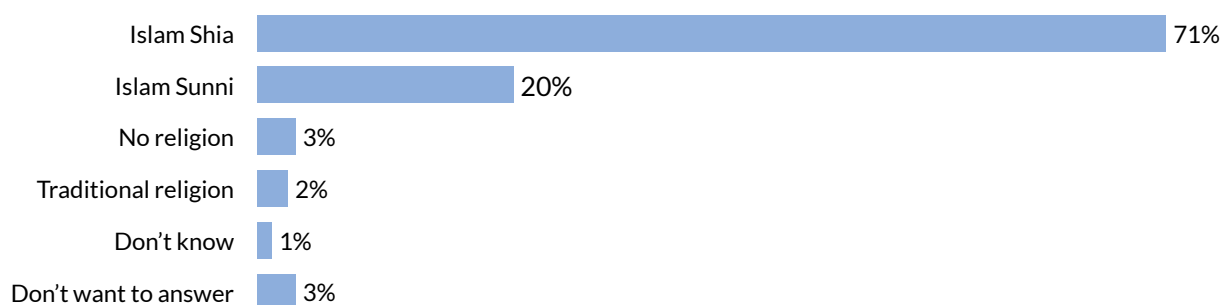
Out of the 240 UASC interviewed, all but two were male, with an average age of 15.5 years. While the vast majority of the UASC interviewed were between 16 and 17 years old (60%), a third of the UASC participants were between 14 and 15 (34%) at the time of the interview and a small portion were aged 8-13 (6%). This division of ages was mirrored in the focus group discussions where the vast majority of the participants were 16 or 17 years old. Three boys reported being married and one boy said he has a child.

GRAPH 1: Age distribution of the UASC interviewed



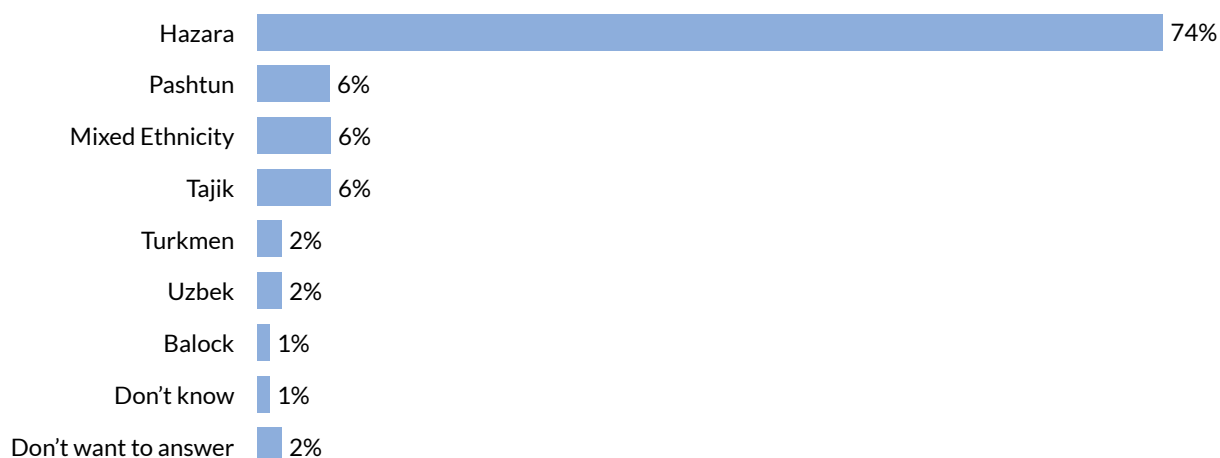
A majority of the UASC interviewed were ethnic Hazaras (74%), followed by Pashtuns (6%), Tajiks (6%) and participants of mixed ethnicity (6%). These three ethnicities also represent the three largest groups in the profiling on Afghan arrivals in Greece⁶ during spring 2016. The majority of all respondents in Sweden reported being Shiite Muslims (71%), while one-fifth reported being Sunni Muslims (20%). These results differ from the profiling in Greece, where the religious affiliation is evenly distributed between Shia and Sunni. Despite the potential sensitivity of the question, only a small percentage chose not to respond to the questions on ethnicity and religion (3% and 1% respectively).

GRAPH 2: Religion of the UASC interviewed



⁶ UNHCR, 2016(a); UNHCR, 2016(b).

GRAPH 3: Ethnicity of UASC interviewed



Two questions were asked to the UASC: “Where were you born?” and “Where did you live most of your life”. Those two questions differentiate between the place of birth and the main place of residence. A majority of the UASC interviewed were born in Afghanistan (84%), with a small portion of the UASC born in Iran (14%) or Pakistan (2%). These percentages are similar to the profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece, where 13 percent of the respondents in March 2016 reported that they were born in Iran.

However, just over half of the UASC interviewed said they had lived in Afghanistan for the majority of their lives (58%), while over a third of the UASC claimed to have lived mainly in Iran (37%), and a small minority reported that they had lived mainly in Pakistan (5%).

GRAPH 4: Place of birth of the UASC interviewed

Place of birth



GRAPH 5: Main place of residence of the UASC interviewed

Place of residence

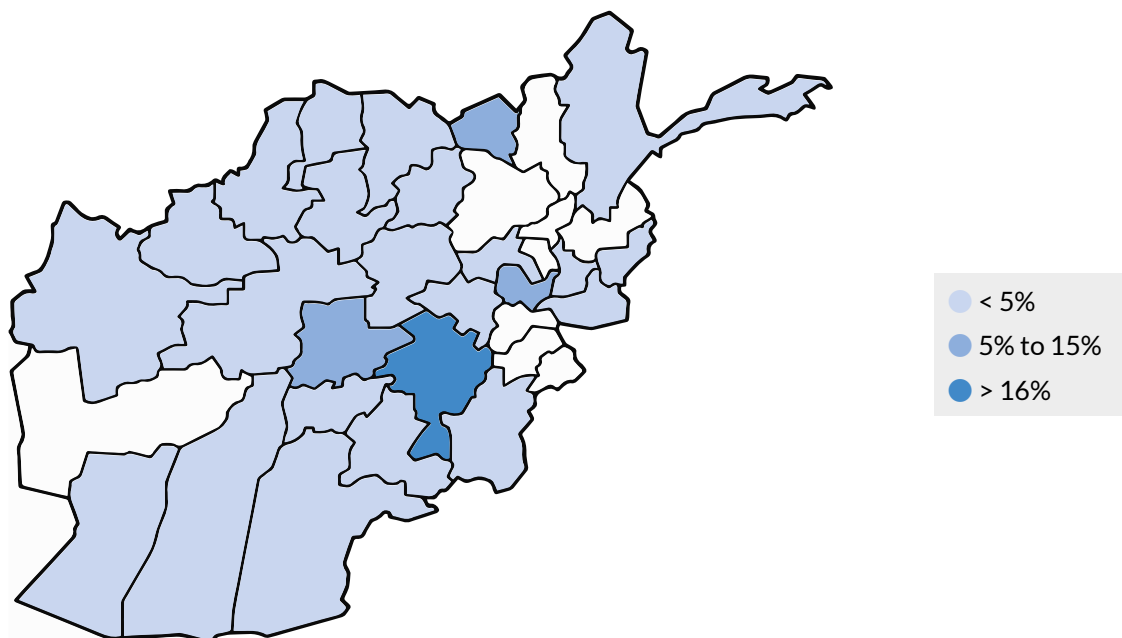


The majority of the interviewed UASC who had lived in Afghanistan had lived in Ghazni, Kabul and Kunduz. These findings were also confirmed by the focus group discussions. Those UASC participants who had mainly lived in Iran had primarily done so in Tehran, Isfahan and Qom.

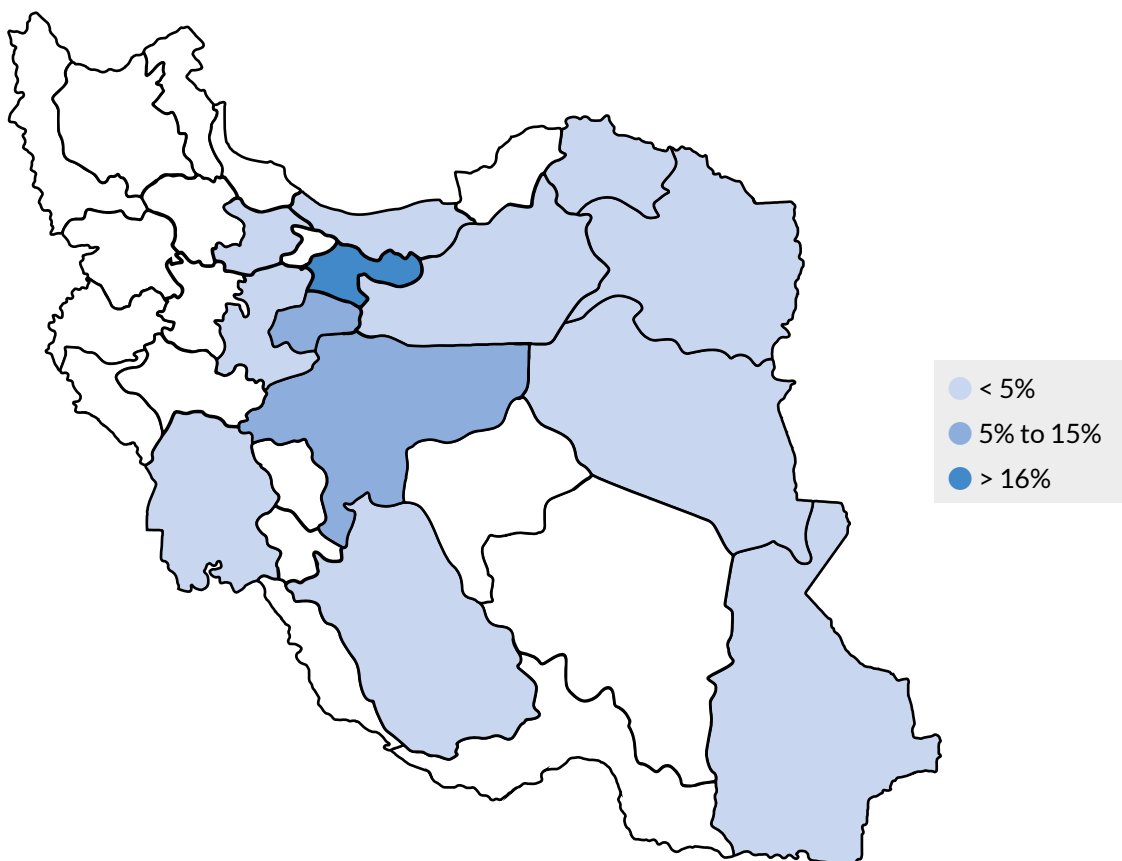
“ It is very unsafe in Ghazni. The Taliban have full control and I did not like living under their control. I knew I could no longer live in Afghanistan.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion⁷

MAP 1: Main province of origin of the UASC interviewed mainly living in Afghanistan



MAP 2: Main province of origin of the UASC interviewed mainly living in Iran

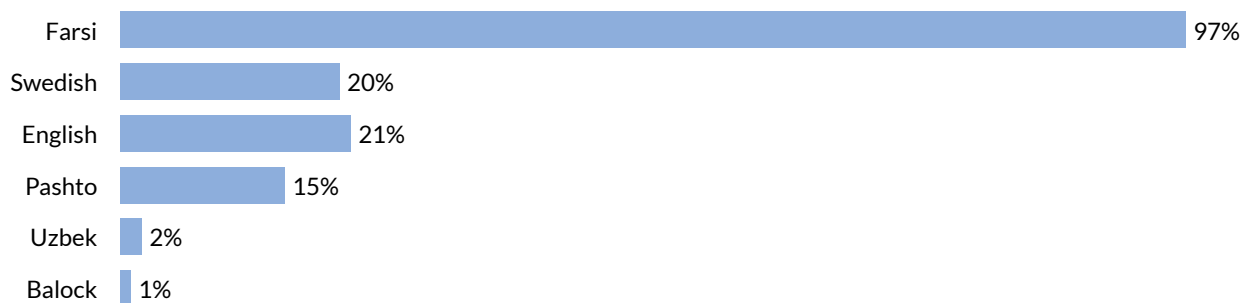


⁷ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

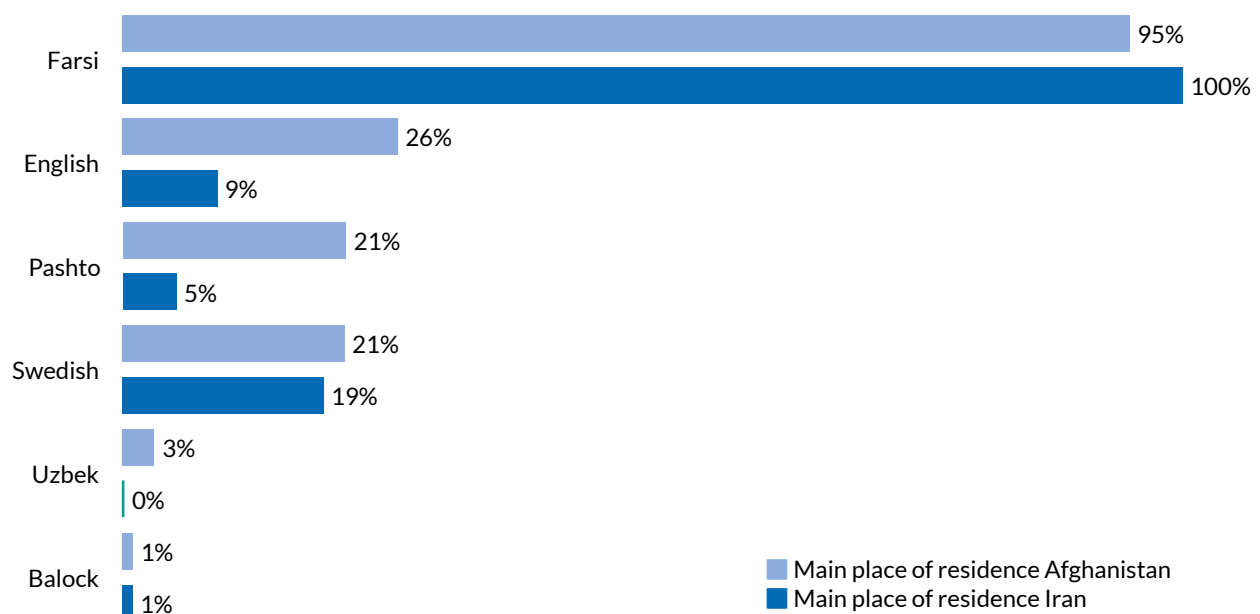
Almost all UASC interviewed speak Dari or Farsi (97%).

GRAPH 6 AND 7: Languages spoken by the UASC interviewed overall and by main place of residence

Languages spoken by the UASC interviewed overall



Languages spoken by the UASC interviewed by main place of residence



Education and economic activities prior to departure

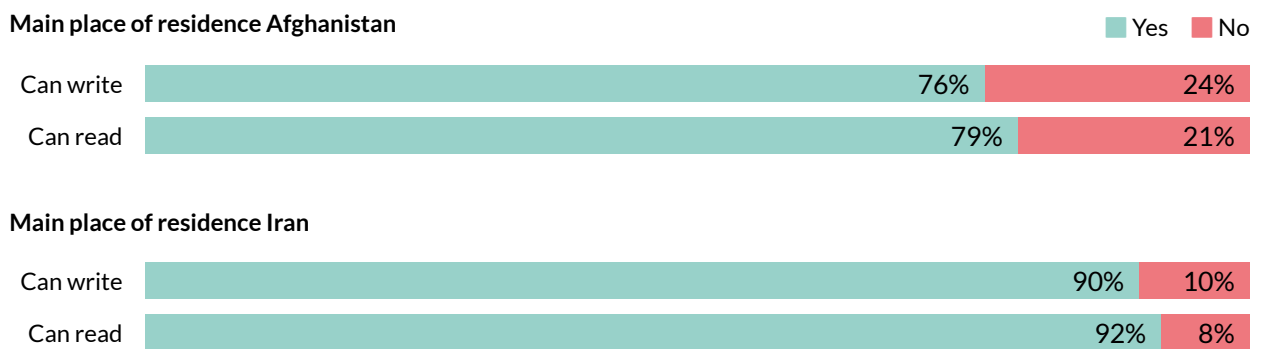
A majority of the UASC interviewed reported being able to read (84%) and write (82%), with a slightly higher proportion amongst those participants who had mainly lived in Iran.

GRAPH 8: Literacy rate of the UASC interviewed



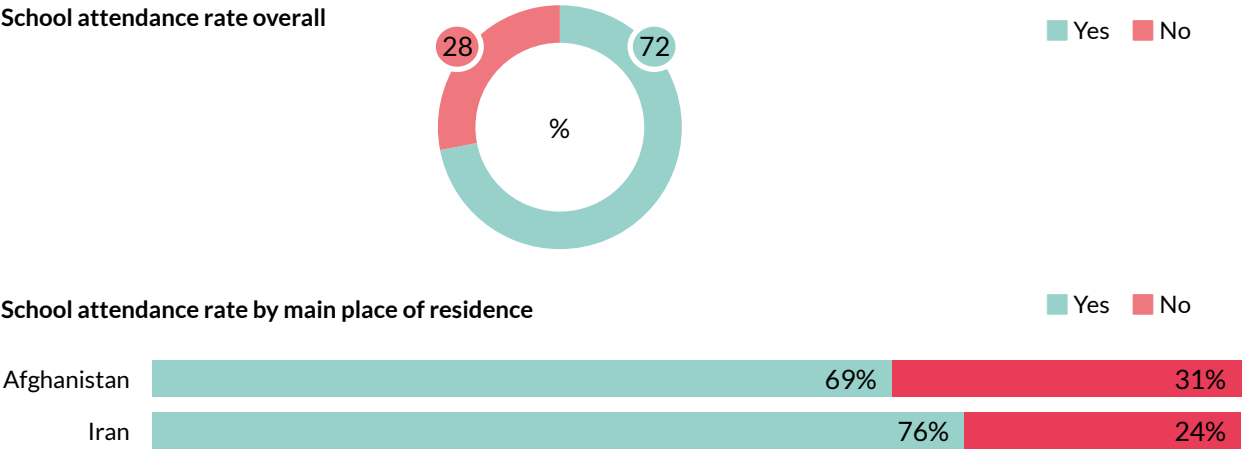


GRAPH 9: Literacy rate of the UASC interviewed by main place of residence



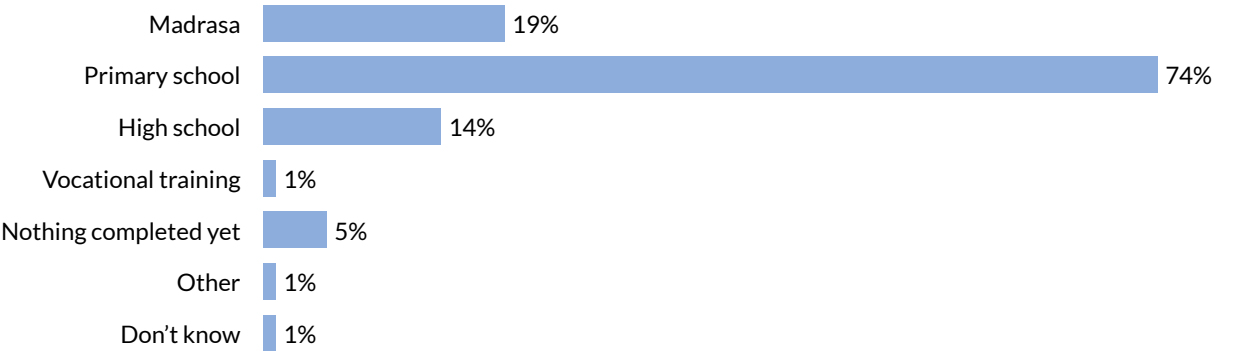
The majority of the participants (72%) had attended school prior to coming to Sweden, with the attendance rate being slightly higher amongst those participants who had lived mainly in Iran. However, only one-third reported that their schooling had been interrupted by the journey, indicating many UASC interviewed had not attended school immediately before leaving for Europe.

GRAPH 10 AND 11: School attendance of the UASC interviewed overall and by main place of residence



The most commonly achieved level of educational attainment was primary school (74%), followed by Madrasa (19%) and high school (14%). No noticeable differences of educational attainment could be seen between those participants who had mainly resided in Afghanistan compared to those who had mainly resided Iran. These levels of educational attainment are similar to those reported in the profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece during spring 2016, where primary school was the most commonly completed level.

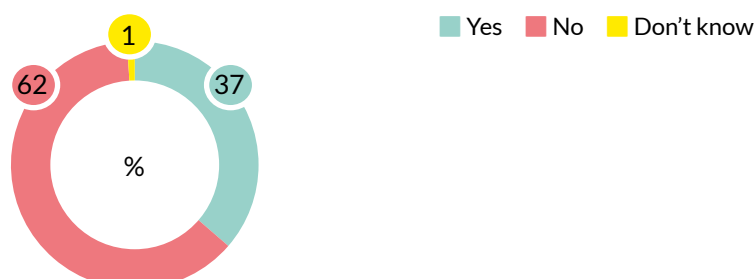
GRAPH 12: Level of educational attainment of the UASC interviewed



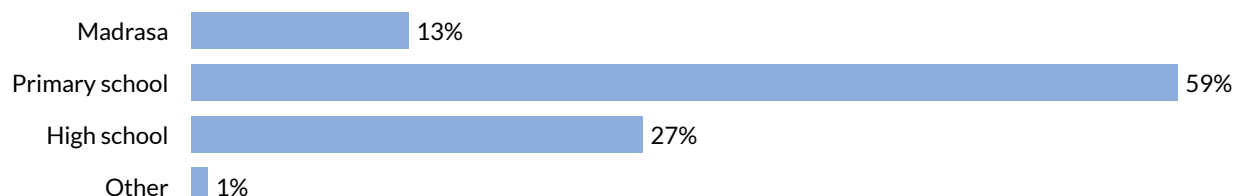
About one-third of the participants interviewed reported that the journey had interrupted their education. In this regard, there is no significant difference for those that lived mainly in Afghanistan or mainly in Iran. The levels of education that had been interrupted are primary school (59%), high school (27%) and Madrasa (13%).

GRAPH 13: Proportion of UASC interviewed whose school attendance was interrupted

School attendance was interrupted by journey



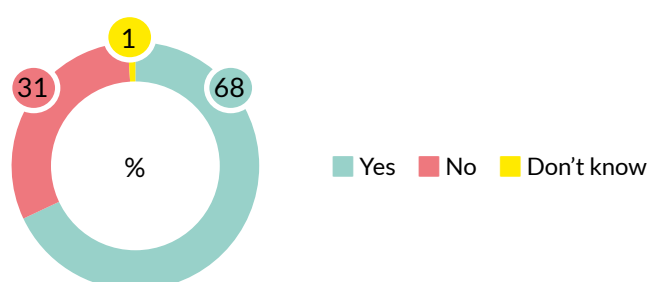
GRAPH 14: Level of education interrupted by the journey for the UASC interviewed, of those whose school attendance was interrupted



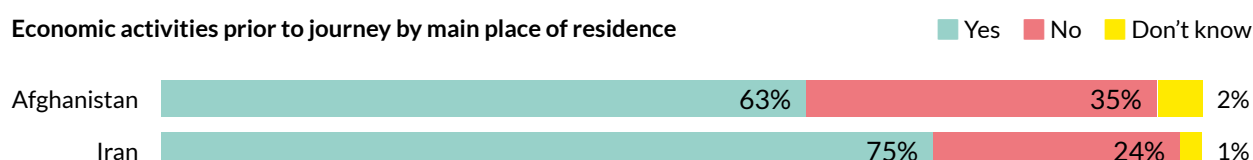
Two-thirds of all participants interviewed had worked for more than six months in the year before leaving for Europe. This number was slightly higher amongst the UASC who had mainly been living in Iran.

GRAPH 15 AND 16: Economic activities of the UASC interviewed prior to the journey overall and by main place of residence

Economic activities prior to journey overall

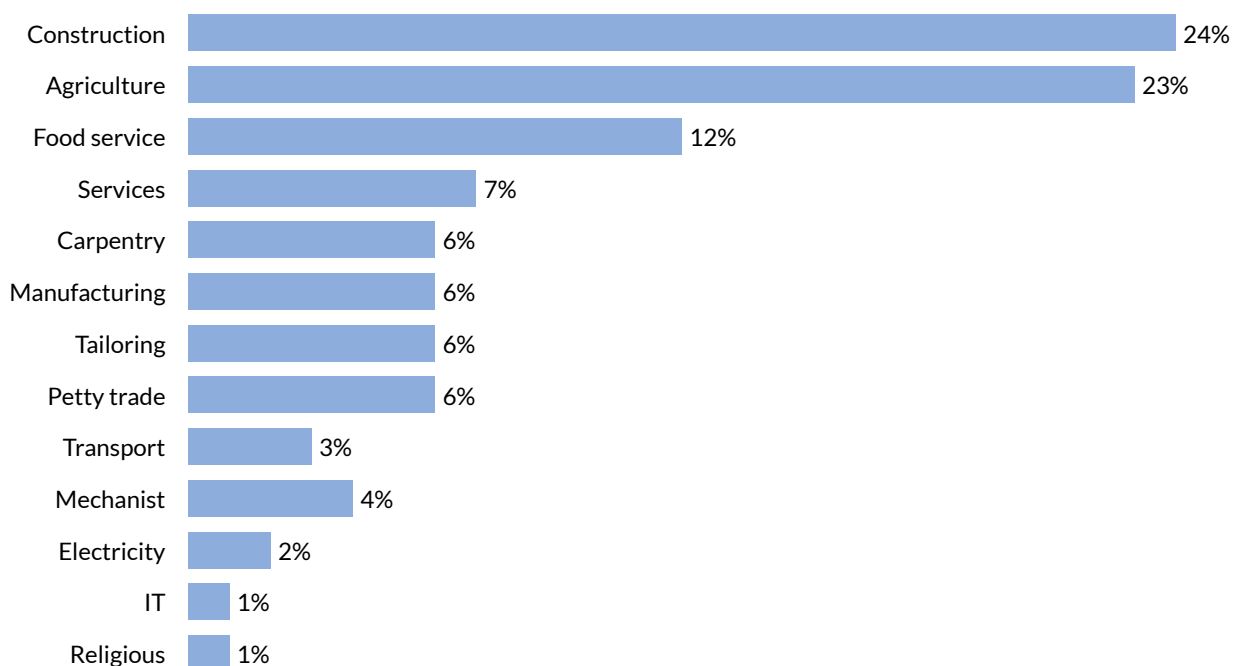


Economic activities prior to journey by main place of residence



The UASC interviewed mostly had worked in construction (24%), agriculture (23%) and food services (12%), with agriculture being more common amongst those who had mainly lived in Afghanistan, while construction was more common amongst those who had mainly lived in Iran.

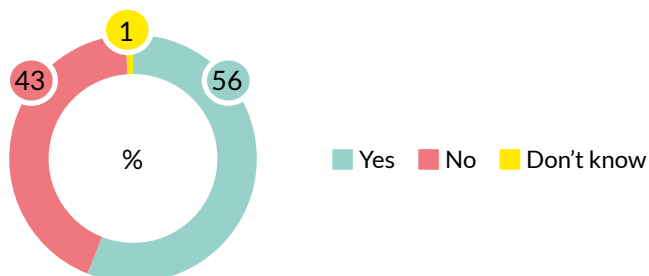
GRAPH 17: Economic sector of activity of the UASC interviewed



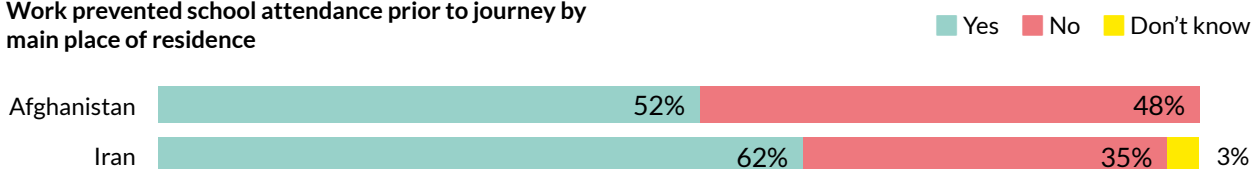
Out of those participants interviewed who had worked prior to the journey, a majority (56%) stated that the work had prevented them from attending school.

GRAPH 18 AND 19: Percentage of UASC interviewed reporting work prevented them from attending school prior to the journey overall and by main place of residence

Work prevented school attendance prior to journey overall



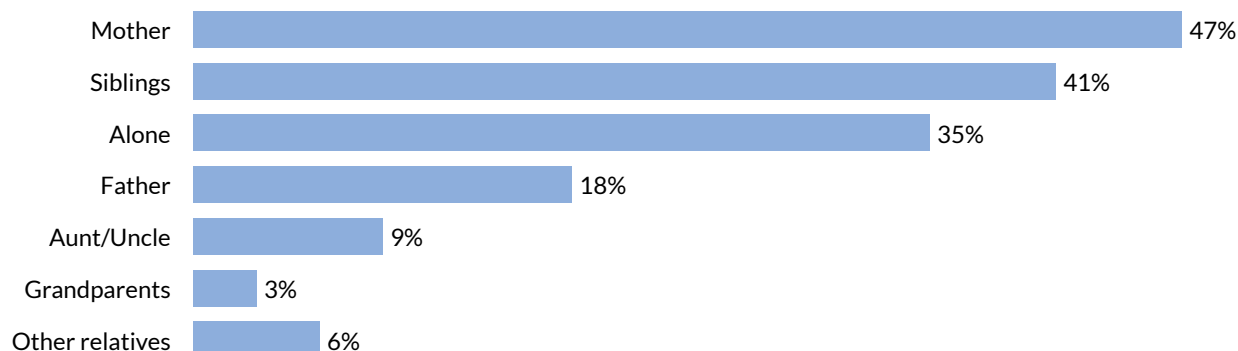
Work prevented school attendance prior to journey by main place of residence



Situation prior to flight

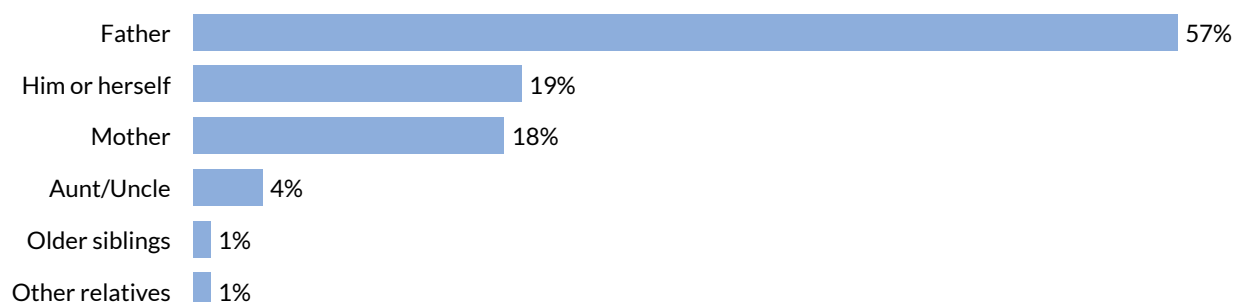
Most UASC interviewed had lived with their nuclear family, meaning with their mother (89%) and/or father (66%). A quarter of the UASC participants reported that they lived with only their mother (25%) while a majority had lived with both parents (63%). Many of the UASC participants had also lived with siblings (73%).

GRAPH 20: Persons with whom the UASC interviewed resided with in country of main residence



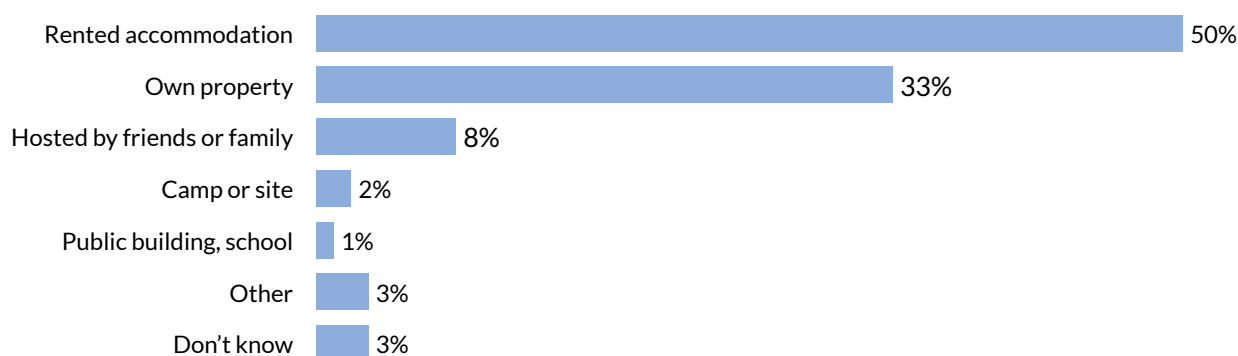
Around half of the UASC interviewed stated that their father had been the main caretaker in the place of residence (59%), while a minority had lived in a female-headed household with their mother as the main caretaker (19%). A small portion also reported that they themselves had been the main caretaker (18%).

GRAPH 21: Person responsible for taking care of the UASC interviewed in the country of main residence



Half of the UASC interviewed responded that they had been staying in rented accommodation in their main place of residence (50%), while one-third had been staying at their family's own property (33%). Some had also been staying with friends or in public buildings.

GRAPH 22: Housing in country of main residence of the UASC interviewed



Around one-third of the UASC interviewed had been internally displaced due to conflict (38%). During the focus group discussions, the risk of displacement due to the conflict spreading throughout Afghanistan was also brought up by the participating UASC. It became evident during the focus group discussions that many of the UASC participating were traumatized and would be in need of psychosocial support.

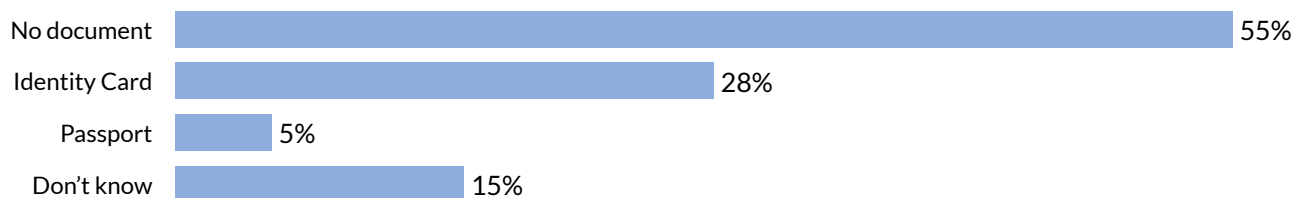
GRAPH 23: Internal displacement of the UASC interviewed before leaving their country of main residence



“Our parents did not have a good life in Afghanistan, therefore they wanted their children to find a better life.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion⁸

GRAPH 24: Identity documentation in Afghanistan of the UASC interviewed prior to flight

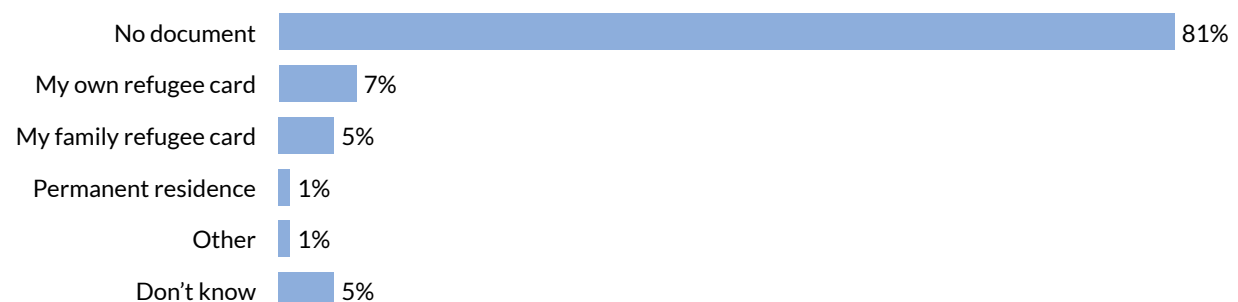


More than half of the UASC interviewed had no documentation in Afghanistan (55%). Out of the UASC interviewed who had lived mainly outside of Afghanistan the vast majority did not have any documentation (81%) and only a small percentage reported having had a refugee card (12%).

“There is major discrimination between Iranians and Afghans in Iran and they recently told Afghans, that if they want identity documents in Iran they must go to Syria to fight.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion⁹

GRAPH 25: Identity documentation prior to flight when main place of residence of the UASC interviewed is not Afghanistan



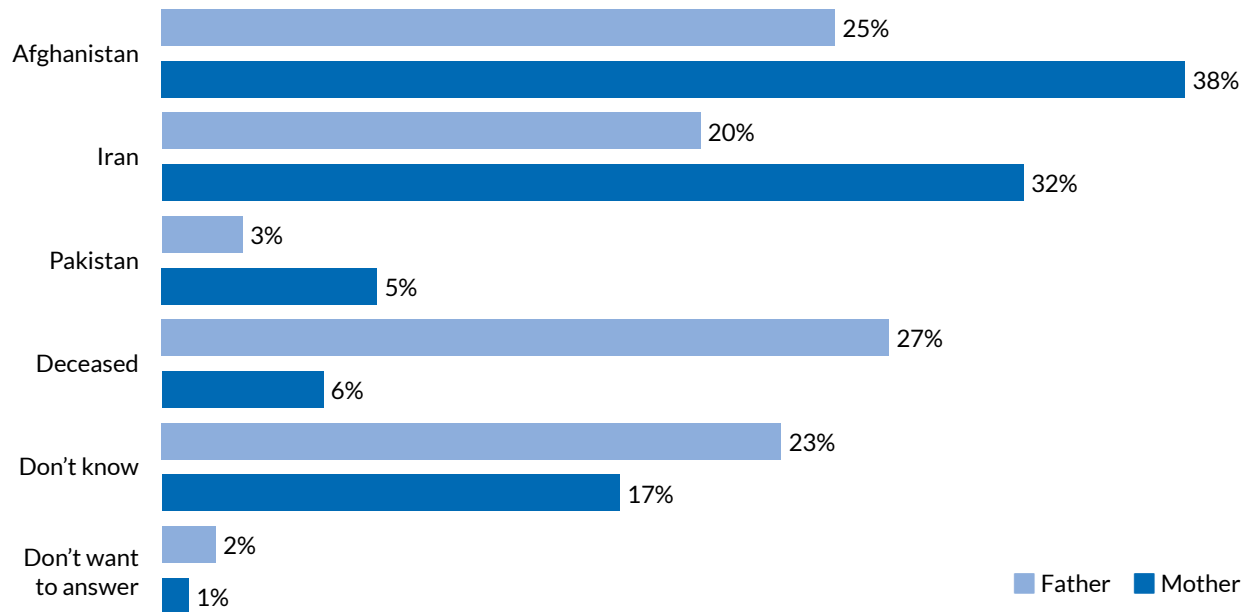
⁸ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

⁹ Ibid.

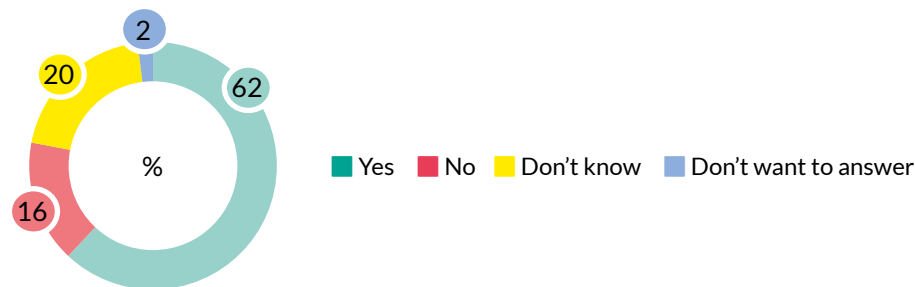
The parents of the UASC interviewed most commonly resided in either Afghanistan or Iran. However, half of the UASC either did not have a father (27%) or could not locate him (23%). Additionally, one-fifth of the UASC reported not knowing where their mother was (17%) or that the mother was deceased (6%). A majority of the participants with caretakers who lived outside of Afghanistan reported that their parents were currently staying irregularly in the country (34%) or that they did not know what their legal status was (48%).

GRAPH 26, 27 AND 28: Current location and status of caretaker of the UASC interviewed

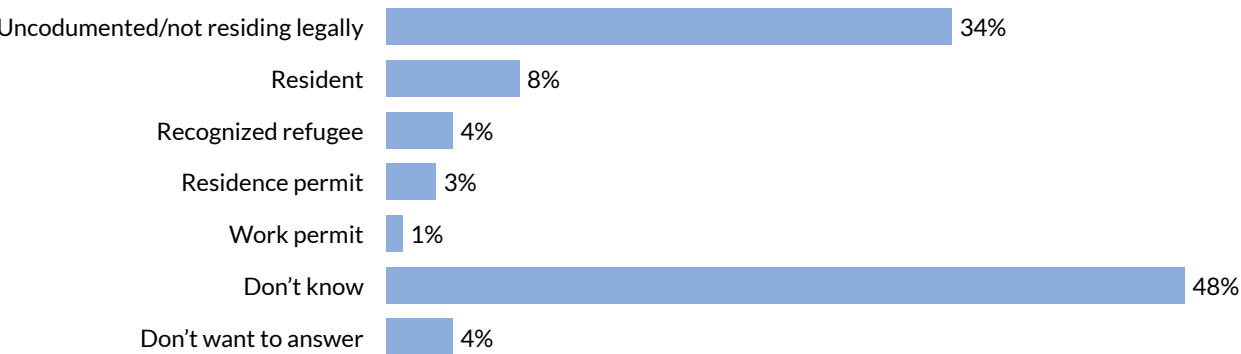
Current location of caretaker



Awareness of current location of caretaker



Status of caretaker in country outside of Afghanistan

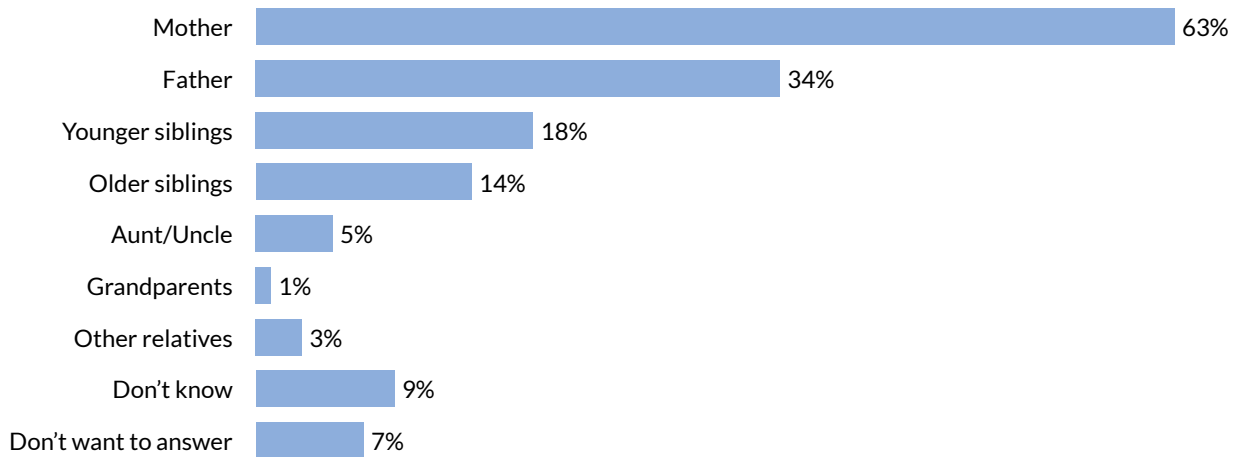


Communication with family

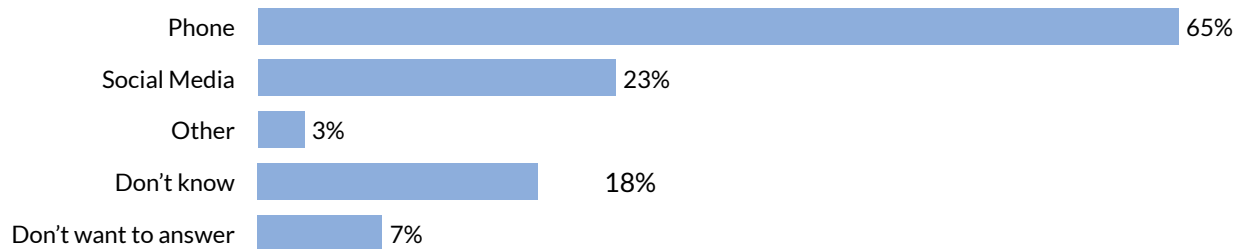
The majority of the UASC interviewed reported being in contact with their mother (63%), while one-third were in contact with their father (34%). This information is corroborated by the findings during the focus group discussions. In addition, some UASC said they had contact with siblings (32%). They most commonly communicated with their family by telephone (65%) and social media (23%).

GRAPH 29 AND 30: Persons the UASC interviewed are communicating with back home and means of communication

Who do you communicate with?



Means of communication





“ We get used to difficulties and these difficulties cannot be solved. I lived three years in Iran and the police there arrested me two or three times. There is war in Afghanistan and there was an attack in Kabul last week. My family is in Ghazni and I do not have any contact with them. When I left, I did not tell them because I knew they were against it. I have had no contact with them since I arrived here, I do not have their number and I have not even tried to contact them. I know they are there. We also did not have a telephone in my town. I hope they are still alive.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹⁰

¹⁰ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

3 WHY ARE AFGHAN UASC LEAVING THEIR COUNTRY OF MAIN RESIDENCE?

3.1 KEY FINDINGS

- ➔ Overall, the **Afghan UASC interviewed have primarily left their countries of main residence for protection reasons**, irrespective of whether the UASC came from Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan.
- ➔ The findings show that the reasons for leaving Afghanistan include a **lack of security** brought about by the deteriorating security situation and other types of violence, such as fighting that targeted specific ethnicities. The reasons why the UASC have left their country of residence are corroborated by the results from the overall profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece¹¹, where close to 80% of all Afghan arrivals interviewed over the last months indicated conflict and violence as their primary reasons for leaving their country of main residence.
- ➔ It could be concluded that **the deteriorating overall security situation, with strong ethnic dimensions, as well as conflict and violence** are the primary reasons for young Afghans to leave Afghanistan.
- ➔ Though access to education is also indicated as a reason for leaving Iran, and the main reasons cited there are **discrimination and a lack of documentation**.
- ➔ **Discrimination** was also among the problems often stressed by the UASC in their countries of residence, either as a Hazara in Afghanistan or as an Afghan in Iran. For the UASC who had resided in Iran without access to refugee cards or other documentation, it can be assumed that they did not have access to basic services, which could explain why they felt discriminated against and did not see a future in Iran.
- ➔ The **lack of identity documentation** was stated as a problem both in Afghanistan, and in Iran as two-thirds of the UASC interviewed who had resided in Iran indicated the lack of documentation as a reason for leaving Iran. It would appear from the findings that **a large part of those UASC who had resided in Iran were undocumented**.
- ➔ **Forced recruitment** is perceived as a real risk by a significant proportion of the UASC interviewed, who listed forced recruitment in Iran as a reason for leaving the country. The focus group discussions confirmed a fear of being recruited by force to fight in Syria in exchange for legalization of stay in Iran. The UASC who resided in Afghanistan also underlined the risk of forced recruitment by the parties in the conflict.

¹¹ UNHCR, 2016(a); UNHCR, 2016(b).

- ➊ **Lack of access to education** was also a reason for leaving Afghanistan for 21% of the UASC interviewed. Previous research and country of origin information show that the conflict and violence as well as ethnic discrimination obstruct access to education.¹²
- ➋ **Relatively few (9%) UASC indicated search for employment** as a reason for leaving their country of residence. This could be explained by the fact that most of the UASC had not finished secondary education or vocational training by the time of the survey, and that their main priority is to pursue an education. However, previous research demonstrates the negative impact of corruption, bad governance and ethnic discrimination on the possibility to obtain gainful employment as a driver of displacement.¹³

3.2 DETAILED FINDINGS

“When you decide to leave Afghanistan, you must consider the very high risk of dying. For me, life was not so important; I had to leave, as I did not have any hope, shelter or future in Afghanistan. It does not make any difference where I die.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹⁴

The main countries of residence of the individually interviewed UASC were Afghanistan and Iran. Out of the participants two-thirds had lived the majority of their lives in Afghanistan, while one-third had lived in Iran. Only five per cent claimed to have lived most part of their life in Pakistan.

“I have never been in Afghanistan, I have always lived in Iran and I just know Afghanistan from the TV-news. My family does not have any documentation and I have been staying in Iran for the last ten years. I wanted to go to Syria to fight, to obtain documentation [in Iran], but my mother told me go to Europe instead.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹⁵

The UASC interviewed stated that their most common reason for leaving their main country of residence was related to protection concerns. More than half of the reasons given for leaving were due to conflict, war or violence (52%), while one-fifth were due to other types of violence (22%), and one-quarter of the reasons were discrimination (27%). The category “other types of violence”, contains examples of discriminatory treatment the UASC had been subjected to; and the two findings may therefore overlap to an extent. Lack of education (21%) and lack of documentation (17%) were also frequently listed as reasons for leaving the country of main residence. The reasons for leaving the country of residence also varied depending on whether the UASC had lived primarily in Afghanistan or Iran. Conflict, war or violence, other types of violence and lack of access to education were most frequently reported as reasons for leaving amongst the UASC interviewed who had left from Afghanistan. The UASC who had left from Iran reported discrimination, lack of documentation and education and other types of violence as the most common reasons they had left the country.

¹² UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 6 August 2013, HCR/EG/AFG/13/01, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ffdca34.html>.

¹³ UNHCR, *Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey?*, December 2014, PDES/2014/03, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54994d984.html>, page 12.

¹⁴ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

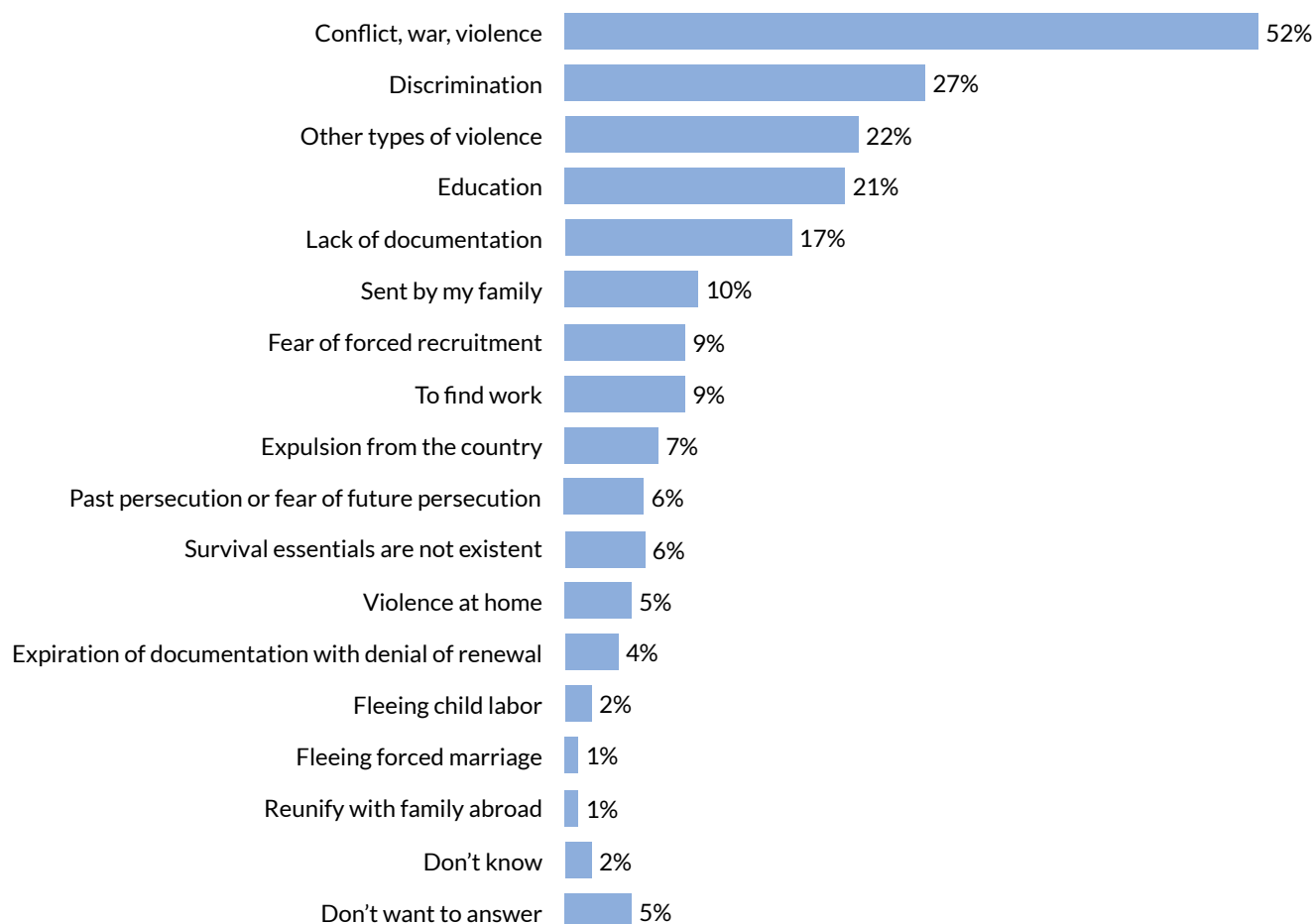
¹⁵ Ibid.

“ If I had only financial problems, I would have stayed there, but security is important to me and I was not secure there. Staff and students are killed there and there is no security. Therefore young people leave the country.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹⁶

These findings are also reinforced by the focus group discussions, where the UASC specifically mentioned the fragile security situation and general insecurity. Additional reasons given for leaving included the expansion of the Taliban and other anti-Government elements throughout the country, as well as the presence of the Taliban in their places of residence, together with insecurity on the highways and weak Government control of the territory, even in major cities. However, the focus group discussions also highlighted the discrimination of Hazara and other ethnic groups in Afghanistan as a particular reason for leaving the country. The participants in the focus group discussions also raised the problem that teachers, who as Government employees received threats from the Taliban, and therefore had to stop teaching.

GRAPH 31: Reasons the UASC interviewed left their country of main residence¹⁷



¹⁶ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

¹⁷ Because those interviewed could provide as many answers as applied, the percentages listed represent the proportion of those that selected that response compared to the proportion of those that did not select that response.



“ Look at Kabul, which is the capital of the country; there are a lot of security measures in place, but every day we hear that explosions and suicide bombings are happening.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹⁸

The participants in the focus group discussions also indicated leaving for Europe because the opportunity presented itself. Other participants stressed, however, that they had chosen to leave due to the deteriorating security situation in their country after the establishment of the National Unity Government, as well as after the expansion of anti-governmental entities' control.

“ We had long searched for a possibility to leave our country, and when it became possible, we took the chance.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion¹⁹

¹⁸ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

¹⁹ Ibid.

4 WHAT HAVE THE AFGHAN UASC EXPERIENCED DURING THE JOURNEY?

4.1 KEY FINDINGS

- ➡ The UASC experienced a **traumatizing and long journey, facilitated by smugglers and often with severe protection incidents** in Iran, Turkey and over the Balkan route.
- ➡ The information on the travel dates indicates that most of the Afghan UASC interviewed had started the journey between February and July 2015. Most of the UASC interviewed reached Sweden in October 2015, and Europe about two months before that. All UASC interviewed were thus **not necessarily influenced by the mass movement in summer 2015 but by their own individual situation**. This stands in contrast to the profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece²⁰ where the majority of people who arrived in February mentioned that they had left Afghanistan in 2016, thus not more than two months before. This could indicate either that the travel route has become faster, or that the UASC generally take more time for the route.
- ➡ The results indicate that most of the UASC interviewed **travelled alone**. This stands in contrast to the fact that most interviewed UASC **reported having traveled with smugglers**.
- ➡ The results from the interviews also indicate that **fellow travellers were the main source of information** for the UASC during the journey. This suggests that smugglers play a part in the decisions made during the journey. This also mirrors the results of the Greek profiling where over 80% of the Afghan arrivals consistently listed smugglers as their main source of information.
- ➡ Embarking on the journey to Europe entails a significant investment and risk to the UASC. The UASC who had borrowed money for the journey from outside of their families are **under pressure to pay back the money**. On the other hand, those UASC who had acquired money for the journey from their family or by selling assets are **facing pressure to meet the expectations of their relatives** in Afghanistan or Iran. These findings are similar to those of the profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece²¹ and can have an impact on the possibility of ensuring a durable return, should asylum not be granted.
- ➡ Only a very small number of the UASC participating in the study stated they are sending money back to their family.

²⁰ UNHCR, 2016(a); UNHCR, 2016(b).

²¹ UNHCR 2016(a).



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4.2 DETAILED FINDINGS

Journey to Europe and Sweden

“ The boat only fit thirty-seven persons, but there was fifty-seven of us on board. We tried to refuse, but the smugglers beat us and forced us to get on board. They gave us two telephone numbers for emergency situations, but none of the numbers worked as they are giving out false numbers. ”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²²

Based on information collected, the average journey to Europe took around a half a year for the UASC interviewed.

Out of all the UASC interviewed, only one-quarter had stayed in another so-called transit country during the journey for one month or more after starting the journey from their country of main residence. Out of this group, only half had stayed in a transit country for over six months. The vast majority of the UASC who had stayed in a transit country for more than a month had done so in Iran, while only a small proportion had stayed in Pakistan, Turkey or Greece.

²² Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

GRAPH 32: Number of the UASC interviewed who stayed in a transit country during the journey



“ I lived six months in Iran. The people in Iran were kind to me, they did not harass us, it was just the police who arrested and offended me.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²³

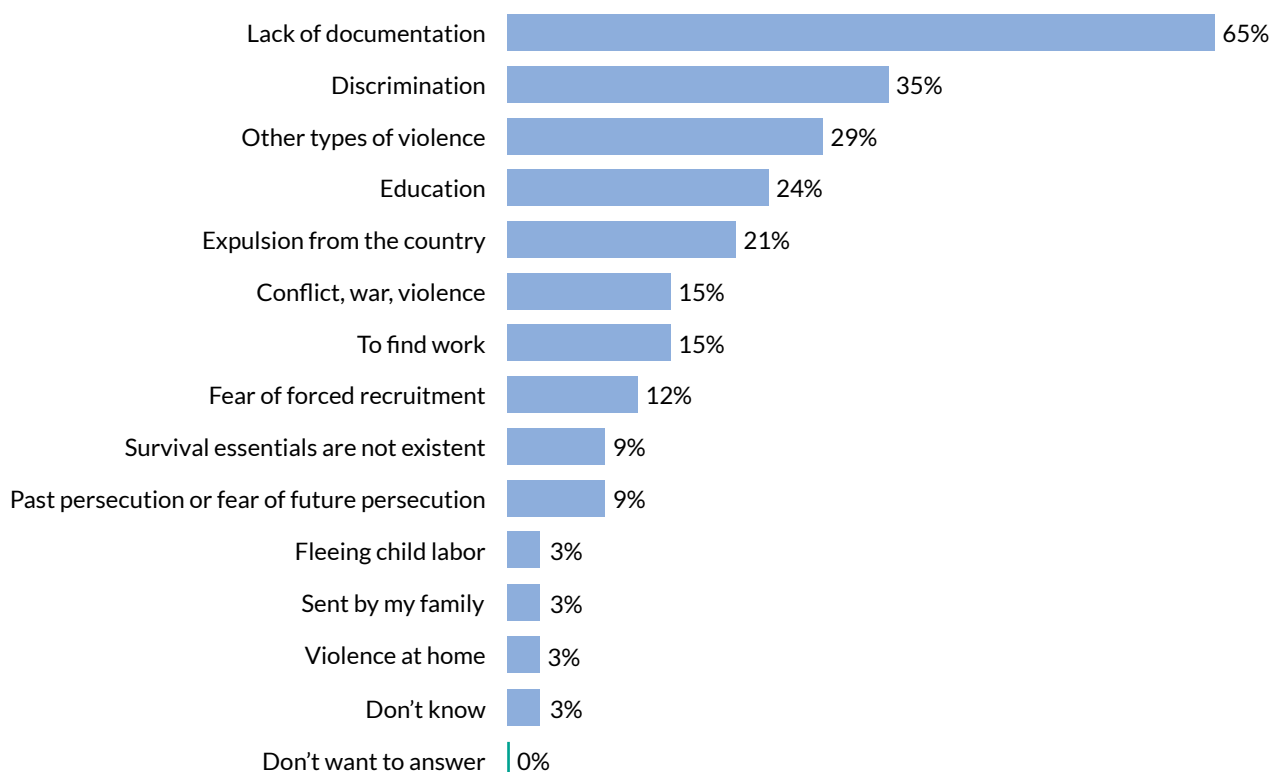
GRAPH 33: Transit country where the UASC interviewed stayed during the journey



The reasons for which the UASC had left the transit country are similar to the reasons for leaving stated by the UASC who had been living in Iran for the majority of their lives, with lack of documentation (65%), discrimination (35%), other types of violence (29%), lack of education (24%) and expulsion from the country (21%) as the most commonly stated reasons for leaving. However, it is difficult to draw any conclusions on the reasons for which the UASC had left the transit country, as the results are spread out between four countries and the number of responses was low.

²³ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

GRAPH 34: Reason for having left the transit country of the UASC interviewed



Nearly all UASC participating in the focus group discussions reported travelling through Europe using the Balkan route. The UASC generally walked or travelled in vans along this part of the route, but changed to train-travel after reaching central and northern Europe. Only a portion of the UASC interviewed had heard about alternatives to this route (18%). This information had mainly been provided by other travellers (36%) and by smugglers (14%).

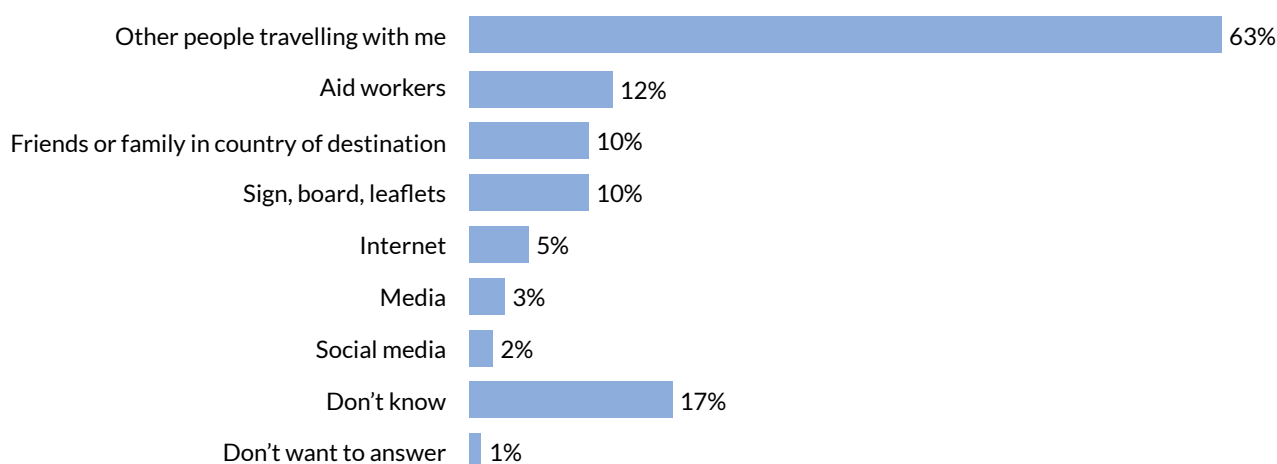
“ I started my journey from Afghanistan. I was arrested twice at the Iranian border and returned to Afghanistan but finally managed to pass at the Nimroz border. It was incredibly hard. I went to Tehran and stayed there for six months. The border between Iran and Turkey was also difficult to pass. We stayed there for six days and did not have enough food nor water. We thought that it is better to die trying to cross into Turkey, instead of dying from hunger while waiting. We managed to get into Turkey and we travelled to Van and Istanbul. One night we crossed the sea to Greece. The boat was designed to accommodate 60 people and it was overcrowded. We were lucky that our boat did not sink. Aboard there were young people, children and families. We were not sure if we would survive. While travelling, water entered into the boat and we did not know the reason. Then we arrived in Greece.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²⁴

²⁴ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

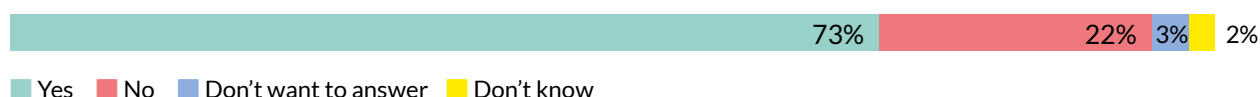
During the journey, the main sources of information for the UASC interviewed had been fellow travellers (63%), aid workers (12%), friends or family in the destination country (10%) and signs, boards or leaflets (10%). When asked about alternative ways of accessing the opportunities for seeking protection, for example in Sweden, the majority (80%) replied that they had not been made aware of any such possibilities.

GRAPH 35: Information sources during the journey for the UASC interviewed



The majority of the interviewed UASC reported that they had travelled with a smuggler (73%).²⁵ This was further elaborated in the focus group discussions, where all participants stated that they had used a smuggler during some part of the journey.

GRAPH 36: UASC interviewed who travelled with a smuggler



The travel to Sweden was reported to be dangerous, and all UASC who participated in the focus group discussions mentioned experiencing protection-related incidents during the journey. These incidents had occurred in various segments of the journey, including in Nimroz (Afghanistan), at the border between Afghanistan and Iran, at the border between Iran and Turkey, as well as in Izmir (Turkey). In Europe, protection incidents were mentioned to have occurred at the sea crossing, at the border of FYR Macedonia and in Hungary. As seen, border-crossings were frequently reported as especially dangerous.

²⁵ The term "guide" was used when introducing the question in the individual interviews, though it was intended and understood by the UASC to mean "smuggler".

“ Two of our friends were kidnapped at the border between Pakistan and Iran.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²⁶

The protection incidents described by the UASC included threats, violence, apprehension and physical abuse from border police and smugglers. Additionally, sexual abuse was said to have happened in several places, especially abuse perpetrated by the smugglers. The UASC also mentioned incidents where the smugglers had “sold” the individuals they were smuggling to other smugglers. One example given in a focus group discussion described an incident in which one smuggler tried to force another to pay back a debt by kidnapping the individuals he was smuggling.

“ I saw the dead body of a young girl on the border between Iran and Turkey.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²⁷

The protection incidents experienced during the journey also included dangerous and exhausting modes of travel, such as walking long distances, travelling in overcrowded vans and boats, and experiencing hunger and thirst throughout. It is also worth noting that the UASC participating in the focus group discussions mentioned that families travelling along the same route are in an even worse situation as young children and women are more likely to be raped and exploited.

“ We travelled with 15 persons in one vehicle intended for 5 persons. One person passed away during the travel between Tehran and the Turkish border due to lack of oxygen.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²⁸

Most children in the focus group discussions also witnessed people they travelled with dying during the journey and many saw corpses along the route. The trauma caused by the journey was evident during the discussions, and many of the UASC were stressed and showed signs of distress during the individual interviews and during the focus group discussions when questions relating to the journey were brought up.

“ I started my journey from Iran. At the border between Iran and Turkey, we were two or three families and around 40 young individuals. The weather was so cold, and one child died because of cold weather.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion²⁹

The below map shows a compilation of areas where the UASC who participated in the focus group discussions reported protection incidents. The map was used as a reference tool during the discussion, but only highlights the experiences of the participants in these sessions, and thus does not depict all areas where incidents may occur.

Greece was the first country of arrival in the European Union (hereafter EU) for the majority of the UASC interviewed (82%). A greater proportion of UASC had been travelling alone to that point in the journey (60%) than with a group of people, typically strangers (20%).

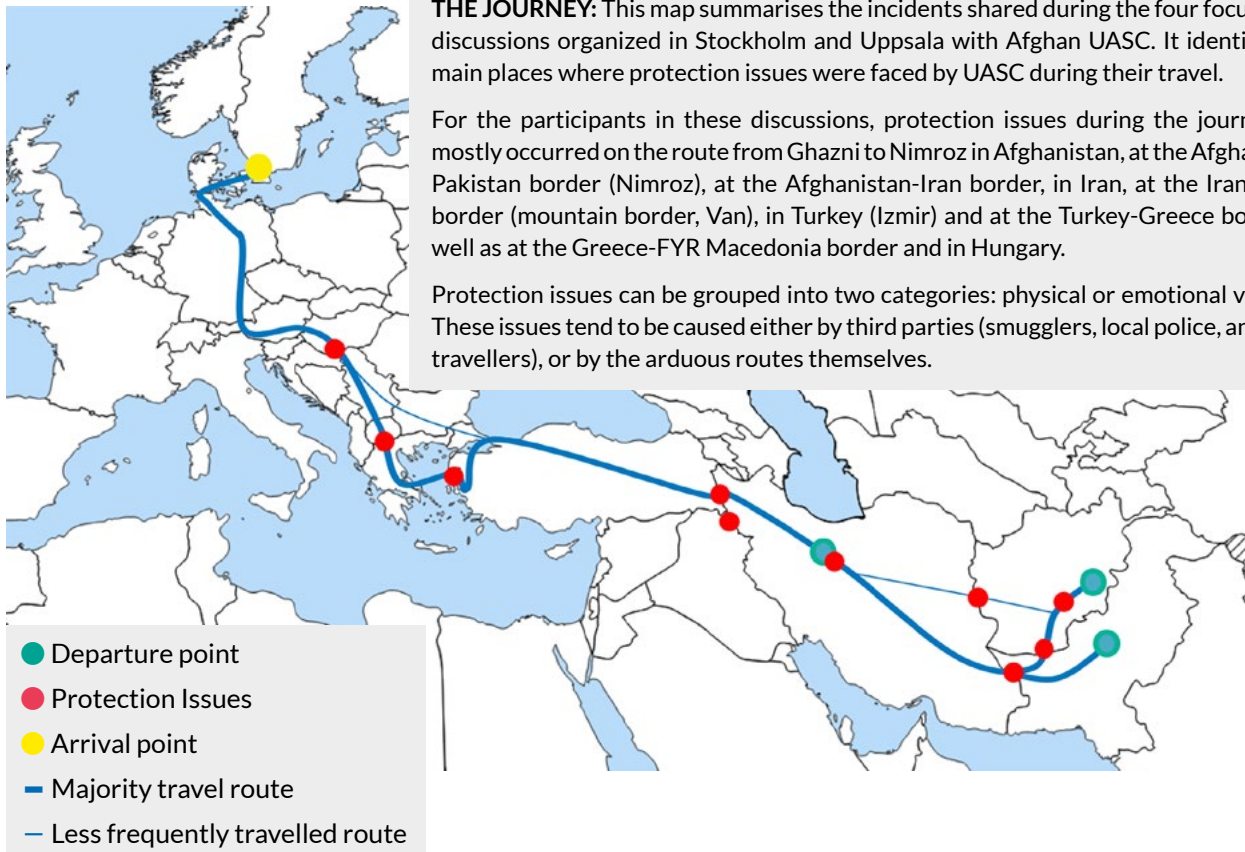
²⁶ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

MAP 3: Location of protection incidents mentioned along route

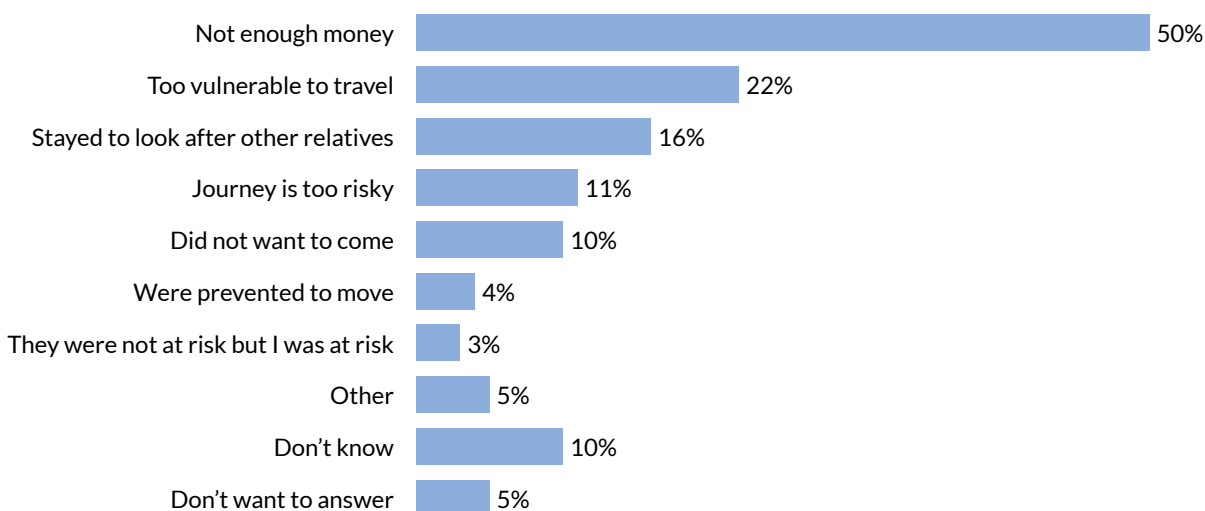


GRAPH 37: The first EU country reached by the UASC interviewed



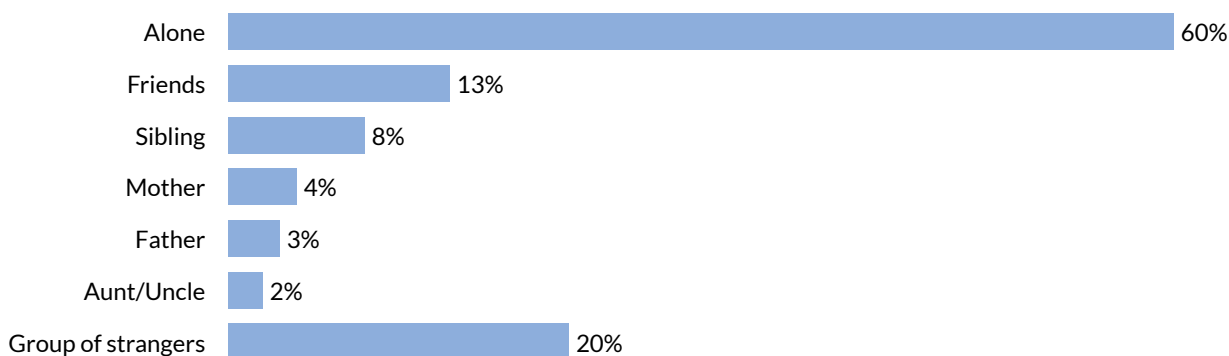
The reasons the UASC had left their main country of residence on their own without their family were mainly economic; the family could not afford to pay for the whole family to travel. Another reason was the vulnerability of family members, making them unfit for the strenuous journey.

GRAPH 38: Reasons the interviewed UASC have left the main country of residence on their own



Approximately one-tenth of the UASC interviewed had started the journey together with at least one other family member. Two-thirds out of this group said that they were separated from their family at some stage of the journey. The issue of separation during the journey also surfaced in several of the focus group discussions, where participants indicated that they or persons they knew were separated from their families, mainly while travelling through Turkey.

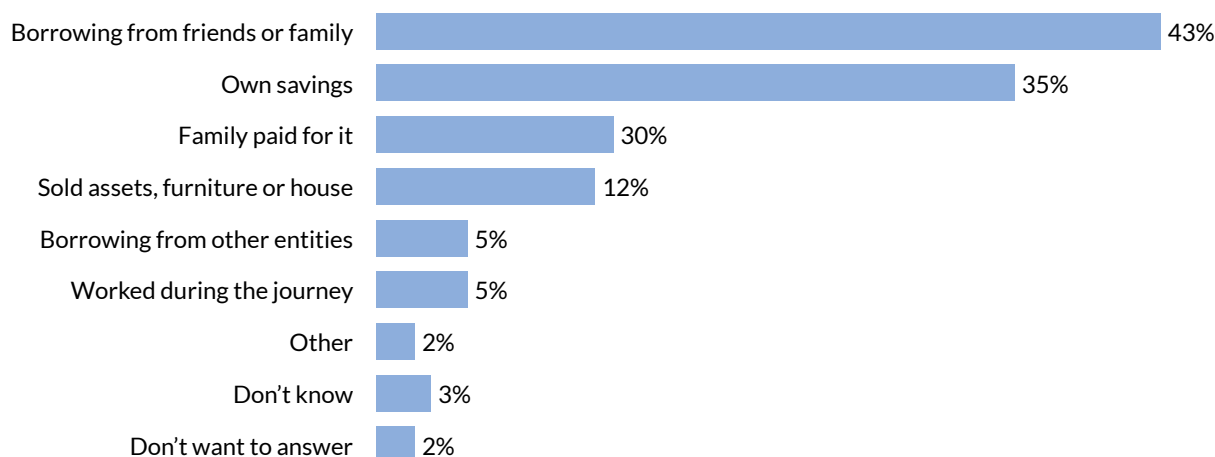
GRAPH 39: Composition of group the interviewed UASC travelled with



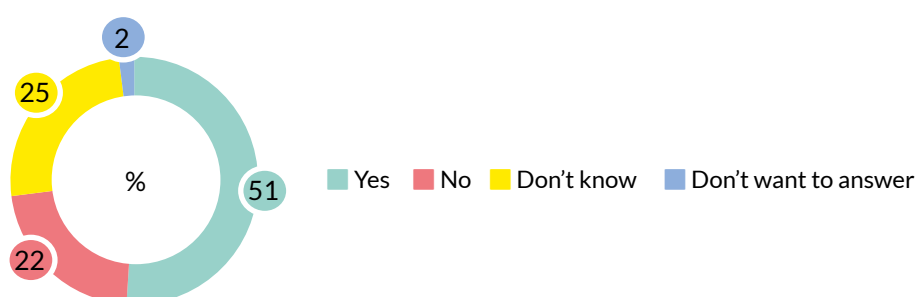
Financing of the journey

The UASC interviewed had either financed their journey through borrowing money from friends or family (43%), through their own savings (35%), through family (30%) or from selling assets (12%). Half of the UASC interviewed reported that they will have to pay the money back (51%), while over a quarter did not know or did not want to answer (27%). Only a small minority reported that the loan needs to be paid back within a year (3%), while most do not know (47%) or know that repayment does not have to be made within the near future (20%).

GRAPH 40: Financing of the journey of the UASC interviewed

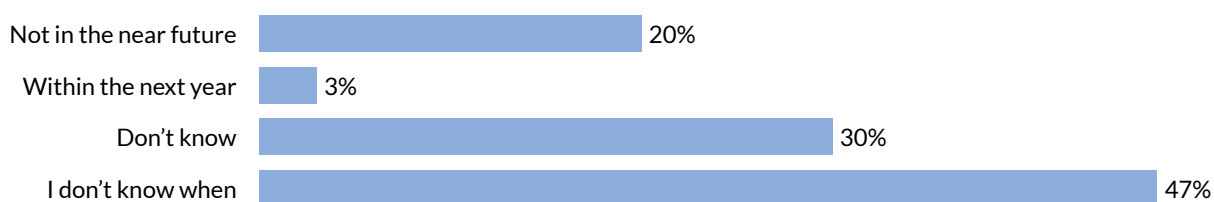


GRAPH 41: Need for UASC to repay cost of journey



The average sum paid for the travel to Sweden as reported by the UASC interviewed was USD 3.576 for those leaving from Afghanistan and USD 2.192 for those leaving from Iran.

GRAPH 42: Time frame for repayment of loan of the UASC interviewed



None of the UASC interviewed were at the moment of the interview receiving money from their families, and only a small minority (5%) were sending money back to their families.

5 WHY ARE AFGHAN UASC CHOOSING SWEDEN AS A DESTINATION COUNTRY?

5.1 KEY FINDINGS

- ➊ Based on the findings of this study, the Afghan UASC chose to come to Sweden to apply for asylum because Sweden is perceived to offer **good education opportunities**, to **respect human rights**, and to have a **fair and efficient asylum procedure**, as well as to provide **economic opportunities**. These perspectives correspond to the problems the UASC faced in their country of main residence that had, in some cases, prompted them to leave (see chapter 4 above).
- ➋ The fact that the majority of the UASC interviewed indicated education as the most common reason for choosing Sweden as destination country shows that the **Afghan UASC as a group are overall highly motivated to study and pursue an education**.
- ➌ Most of the UASC (81%) interviewed stated that **they themselves or their families had made the decision to come to Sweden**. However, a large group (16%) also indicated that the **group or the smugglers they had travelled with had chosen the destination on their behalf**. This, in connection with the trend that fellow travellers are the most common source of information during to journey, indicates a large influence of smugglers and hearsay during the journey as part of the decision on the route and destination.
- ➍ Given that education opportunities draw many of the UASC to Sweden, it could be expected that the Afghan UASC would have **strong entry points for integration and the ability to constructively contribute to the society where they have settled**. Notably, a high percentage (20%) of the UASC interviewed indicated that they speak Swedish.

5.2 DETAILED FINDINGS

“At the beginning we had no plan to come to Sweden, but on the way, after receiving information from some other travellers that Sweden is paying attention to the situation of children and that access to education is better in Sweden, we decided to come to Sweden.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion³⁰

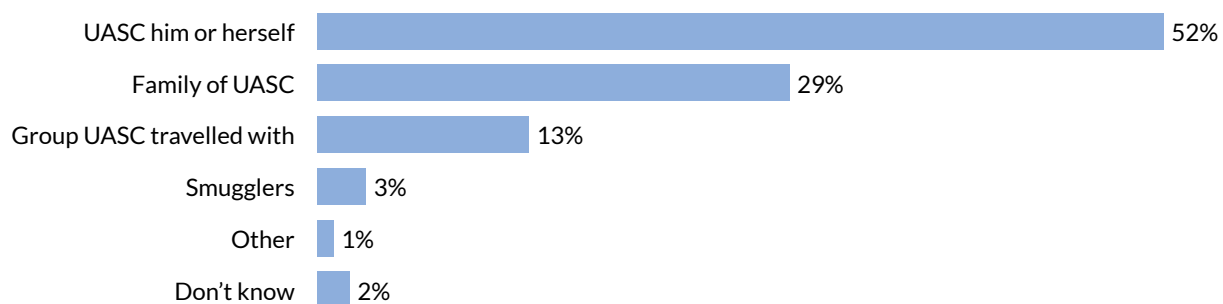
³⁰ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.



The choice of Sweden as a country of asylum

Over half of all UASC interviewed made the decision to come to Sweden themselves (52%), while a third reported that their family had made the decision for them (29%). By contrast, some reported that the group with which they travelled had decided on Sweden as their destination.

GRAPH 43: Decision-maker for country of destination (Sweden) for UASC interviewed



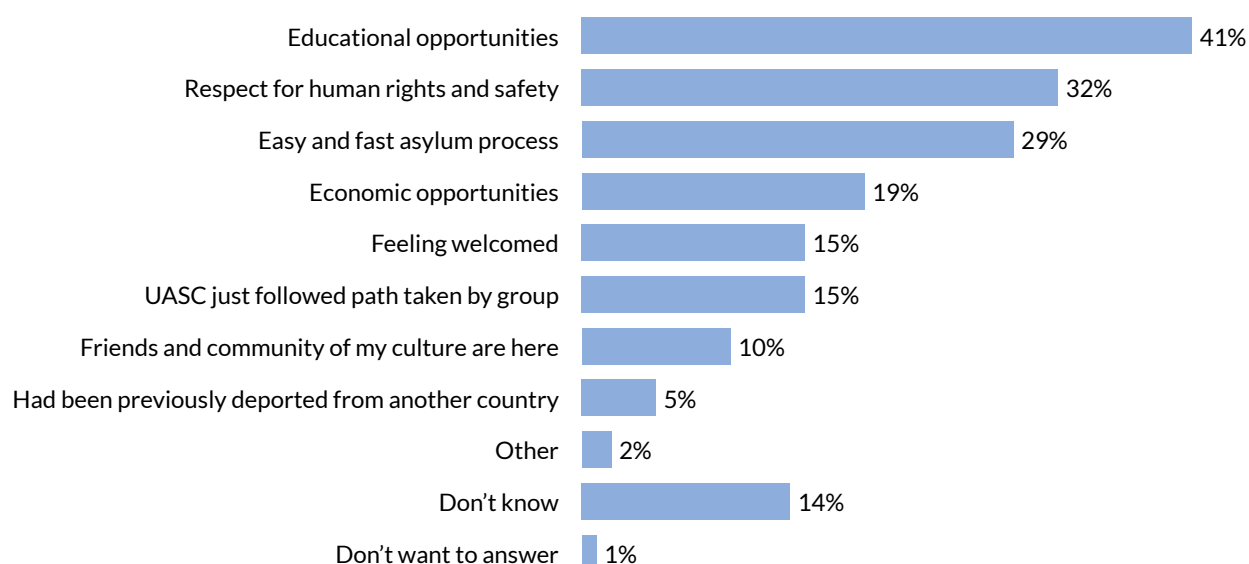
For the UASC participating in the focus group discussions, the decision to choose Sweden as a country of destination was not made until arrival in Europe. Information from other travellers and smugglers were key influences in the decision. These findings are also similar to the ones from the profiling of Afghan arrivals in Greece³¹, where in February nearly half of all interviewed Afghans said that they did not yet know where they would go.

Access to education was the most frequently indicated reason for choosing Sweden as a country of asylum (41%), followed by respect for human rights and safety (32%), easy and fast access to the asylum process (29%) and economic opportunities (19%). The focus group discussions demonstrated that the ability to pursue an education and to seek asylum were the primary motivations for choosing to go to Sweden, with one participant stating that he had been told:

“If you want to work go to Germany, if you want to study go to Sweden”.

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion³²

GRAPH 44: UASC's most frequently chosen reasons for travelling to Sweden

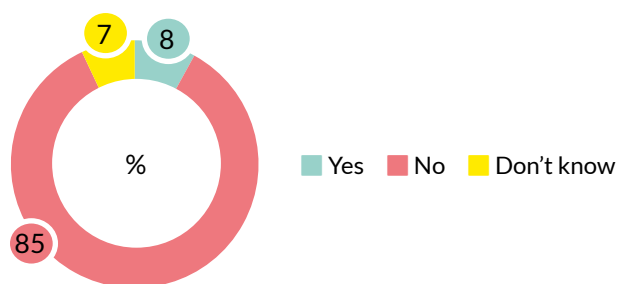


Only a small portion of the UASC interviewed had relatives living in Europe (8%), while the majority report they do not have relatives in Europe (85%) or that they do not know if relatives are currently in Europe (7%). Out of the small group of UASC who had relatives living in Europe, two-thirds reported that their relatives are living in Sweden.

³¹ UNHCR, 2016(b).

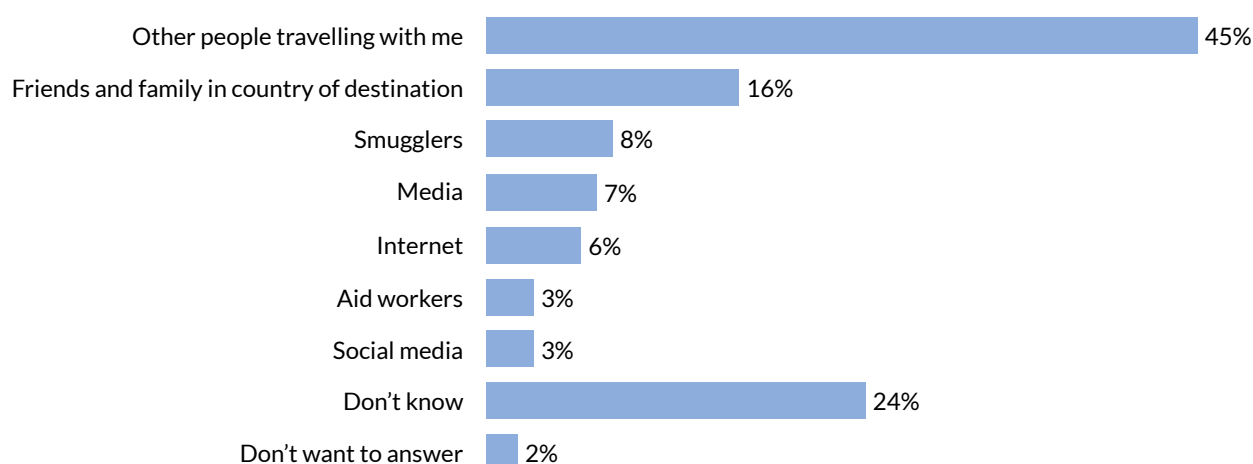
³² Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

GRAPH 45: UASC interviewed with relatives living in Europe



Of all possible sources of information on Sweden, the group with which the UASC were travelling was the most commonly available source (45% of information sources reported). Other information sources were also common: friends and family in the country of destination and social media/internet/general media were both 16% of information sources reported. Notably, only 8% of possible information sources reported were smugglers. In comparison, the profiling of Afghans in Greece³³, found that the vast majority of Afghan asylum-seekers rely on smugglers as their primary source of information.³⁴

GRAPH 46: Sources of information on Sweden for the UASC interviewed



“Here in Sweden they are good, they gave us a place to stay and clothes, and we can go to school here. We are happy that Europe has accepted us.”

Afghan teenager during a focus group discussion³⁵

³³ UNHCR, 2016(a); UNHCR, 2016(b).

³⁴ The findings are also corroborated by previous studies. See e.g. UNHCR, *Voices of Afghan Children – A Study on Asylum-Seeking Children in Sweden*, June 2010, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c19ec7f2.html>, where the general conclusion was that the decision on destination was usually made during journey based on information from other persons during the journey and that the vast majority of the UASC had stayed in Iran for a longer period of time and some had stayed in Pakistan.

³⁵ Statement made by Afghan teenager during focus group discussions in Sweden.

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF QUESTIONS

The following questions were included in the questionnaire that was used for the individual interviews.

QUESTIONNAIRE – PROFILING OF AFGHAN UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN SEEKING ASYLUM IN SWEDEN

Introduction: *Hi! My name is NN, and I work with UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today. As you know, a lot of people have arrived to Europe and Sweden over the past months. I would therefore like to talk to you about your situation to better understand the situation of the under 18-year-old Afghans who come to Sweden. You and around 400 others have been selected randomly to be interviewed for a study. The study will be anonymous – that means we will not record your name or address or any other information that could link the answers you give back to you. It also means that no one that reads your answers will know that it is you that gave them. These questions also have nothing to do with your asylum claim in Sweden, and nothing you say today will not have any impact on that process or the situation of your family. That is, the people that will interview you about your asylum claim here in Sweden will not know what you have said here today. I would like to point out that this interview is voluntary. That means that you do not have to answer questions that you do not want to answer and that you can end the interview at any time. At any point during the interview, if you feel like there are questions that you would not like to answer, please feel free to say so. You can also interrupt the interview at any point, if you want to do so. It is ok to say I don't know and I don't understand.*

I will be recording your answers on this mobile phone. Is that okay? We can have a look together so you can see what I write down as we move along.

Do you have any questions for me at this point?

Is it ok if I start asking questions now?

In **bold**, answers that trigger additional questions

A. METADATA				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
1.	Initials of the enumerator	Single	None	
2.	Location of the interview	Single	None	1) Göteborg 2) Malmö 3) Stockholm
3.	Do you agree to respond to my questions?	Single	None	1) Yes (continue the questionnaire) 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

Narrative: I would like to start by asking you some questions about school and work in your home country

B. EDUCATION & ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
4.	What languages do you speak?	Multiple	None	1) Swedish 2) English 3) Dari/Farsi 4) Pashto 5) Uzbeki 6) Balochi 7) Pashai 8) Pamiri 9) Other: _____
5.	Can you read?	Single	None	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
6.	Can you write?	Single	None	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
7.	Did you ever go to school before coming to Sweden?	Single	None	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
8.	If YES to Q7, what levels of education have you completed?	Multiple	If YES to Q7	1) Madrassa 2) Primary school 3) High school 4) University 5) Vocational training 6) Nothing completed (single response only) 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
9.	If went to SCHOOL (Q7), Were you in school/a student just before starting your journey to Sweden?	Single	If interviewee went to school: Q7	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
10.	If YES to Q9, what level of education?	Multiple	If YES to Q9	1) Madrasa 2) Primary school 3) High school 4) University 5) Vocational training 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
11.	Before starting your journey to Europe, did you work either for a salary or in a family business?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
12.	If YES to Q11, how many months did you work during the last year?	Single	If YES to Q11	#: ____ (Months)

13.	If YES to Q11, What type of work was that?	Multiple	If YES to Q11	1) Agriculture (farming, fishing, live stocks) 2) Carpentry 3) Construction 4) Electricity 5) Food Service 6) IT 7) Manufacturing 8) Mechanic 9) Religious 10) Service (housekeeping, gardening, etc.) 11) Tailoring 12) Transport 13) Vending 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
14.	If YES to work (Q11), Did this work prevent you from going to school on a regular basis?	Single	If YES to Q11	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

Narrative: Next I will be asking you some questions about where you come from, your home and where else have you lived. Remember that everything that you tell me is anonymous, this means I'm never going to give your name or location to anyone.

C. AFGHANISTAN OR OTHER HABITUAL COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
15.	Where were you born?	Single	NA	1) Afghanistan 2) India 3) Iran 4) Iraq 5) Jordan 6) Lebanon 7) Pakistan 8) Saudi Arabia 9) Syria 10) Tajikistan 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
16.	Where did you live most of your life?	Single	NA	1) Afghanistan 2) India 3) Iran 4) Iraq 5) Jordan 6) Lebanon 7) Pakistan 8) Saudi Arabia 9) Syria 10) Tajikistan 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
17.	Province/region/governorate of origin in the place where you lived the most (cf. Q16)?	Single	Country is based on Q16	Create list of regions/governorate. Write down information by hand.
18.	Do you have any identity documents from Afghanistan?	Single	NA	1) ID card (Taskera) 2) Passport 3) No document 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

19.	Who did you live with in your home in the country where you lived the most?	Single	Country is based on Q16	1) Myself (single response only) 2) Mother 3) Father 4) Older siblings 5) Younger siblings 6) Spouse 7) Aunt/Uncle 8) Grandparents 97) Other relatives: _____
20.	Who was mostly responsible for taking care of you and the family in the country where you lived the most?	Single	Country is based on Q16	1) Myself (single response only) 2) Mother 3) Father 4) Older siblings 5) Younger siblings 6) Spouse 7) Aunt/Uncle 8) Grandparents 97) Other relatives: _____
21.	What kind of housing did you mainly live in in the country where you lived the most?	Single	Country is based on Q16	1) Camp or site 2) Rented accommodation 3) Reception Centre 4) Hosted by friend or family 5) In the street – outdoors 6) Public building, school, religious structures 7) Own property 97) Other: _____
22.	What documentation did you have in the country where you lived the most? (you or the person responsible for you)	Multiple	Country is based on Q16	1) My own refugee card 2) My family/caretaker refugee card 3) Temporary document 4) Permanent residence 5) Study permit 6) Work permit 7) No document (single response only) 97) Other 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
23.	Before you left the country where you lived the most, were you or your family ever forced to leave your home to move to another location?	Single	Country is based on Q16	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
24.	Was this because there was conflict?	Single	Country is based on Q16. If YES to Q21.	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
25.	You said that you lived in {Country where you lived the most}, when did you leave?	Single	Country is based on Q16	___ months ago 98) Don't know

26.	What were the main reasons for leaving that country?	Multiple (up to 3 answers possible)	Country is based on Q16	1) Conflict-War-Violence 2) Violence at home 3) Other types of violence 4) To find work 5) Education 6) Expulsion 7) Fear of forced recruitment 8) Survival essentials are not existent 9) Reunify with family abroad 10) Past persecution or fear of future persecution 11) Discrimination 12) Fleeing forced marriage 13) Fleeing child labor 14) Sent by my family 15) Lack of documentation 16) Fear of expulsion 17) Expiration of documentation with denial of renewal 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
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Narrative: I know that there are a lot of questions, and I really appreciate that you are taking the time to answer these. *How is it going? Do you want to take a small break? Ok, so now we're going to discuss a little bit about other places where you stayed. I would like to talk to you about the other places where you stayed en route during your journey.*

D. LAST COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE (Country where the interviewee lived for 6 months or more)				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
27.	Did you live in another country than Afghanistan and your main country of residence during your journey?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
28.	Do you think you stayed for at least 6 months?	Single	If YES for Q27	1) Less than 6 months 2) More than 6 months 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
29.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, Which was the last country in which you stayed for 6 months or more?	Single	If YES to Q28	1) Afghanistan 2) India 3) Iran 4) Iraq 5) Jordan 6) Lebanon 7) Pakistan 8) Saudi Arabia 9) Syria 10) Tajikistan 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
30.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, Who did you live with there?	Multiple	If YES to Q28	1) Alone (single response only) 2) Mother 3) Father 4) Older siblings 5) Younger siblings 6) Spouse 7) Aunt/Uncle 8) Grandparents 97) Other relatives: _____
31.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, Who was responsible for taking care of you or your family? (wellbeing, using money, etc.)	Single	If YES to Q28	1) Myself (single response only) 2) Mother 3) Father 4) Older siblings 5) Younger siblings 6) Spouse 7) Aunt/Uncle 8) Grandparents 97) Other relatives: _____
32.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, What kind of housing did you mainly live in in {place where you lived the most}?	Single	If YES to Q28	1) Camp or site 2) Rented accommodation 3) Reception Centre 4) Hosted by friend or family 5) In the street -outdoors 6) Public building, school, religious structures 7) Own property 97) Other: _____

33.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, What personal documentation did you have there? (you or the person responsible for you)	Multiple	If YES to Q28	1) My own refugee card 2) My family/caretaker refugee card 3) Temporary document 4) Permanent residence 5) Study permit 6) Work permit 7) No document 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
34.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, When did you leave [that country]?	Single	If YES to Q28	___ months ago
35.	If "More than 6 months" to the Q28, Why did you leave that country?	Multiple (up to 3 answers possible)	If YES to Q28	1) Conflict-War-Violence 2) Violence at home 3) Other types of violence 4) To find work 5) Education 6) Expulsion 7) Fear of forced recruitment 8) Survival essentials are not existent 9) Reunify with family abroad 10) Past persecution or fear of future persecution 11) Discrimination 12) Fleeing forced marriage 13) Fleeing child labor 14) Sent by my family 15) Lack of documentation 16) Fear of expulsion 17) Expiration of documentation with denial of renewal 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

E. JOURNEY				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
36.	What is the first European country you reached?	Single	NA	Country: _____
37.	When did you reach the first European country?	Single	NA	____ months ago
38.	When did you reach Sweden?	Single	NA	____ months ago
39.	Who travelled with you during this journey to Europe?	Multiple	NA	1) Alone (single response only) 2) Mother 3) Father 4) Older siblings 5) Younger siblings 6) Spouse 7) Aunt/Uncle 8) Grandparents 9) Friends 10) Group of people I didn't know 97) Other relatives: _____
40.	Why did your parents/the person taking care of you stay behind?	Multiple	NA	1) Too vulnerable to travel (age, handicap, sick, pregnancy) 2) Not enough money 3) Did not want to come 4) Stayed to look after for other relatives 5) Were prevented to move (conflict, military, armed forces/groups) 6) Journey is too risky 7) They were not at risk, but I was at risk 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
41.	<i>If family members travelled with you (Q39), How many family members travelled with you during the journey to Europe?</i>	Single	<i>If family members travelled with you (Q39)</i>	#: _____ 98) Don't know
42.	<i>If family members travelled with you (Q39), Have you been separated from family members during the journey?</i>	Single	<i>If family members travelled with you (Q39)</i>	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
43.	Did you have a guide during your travel?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
44.	<i>If YES to Q43, How much did you pay that guide?</i>	Single	<i>If YES to Q43</i>	In dollars: _____ 98) Don't know

F. FINANCE				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
45.	How did you get the money for the travel?	Multiple	NA	1) Borrowing from bank 2) Borrowing from friend/family 3) Borrowing from other entities/people 4) Own savings 5) Family paid for it 6) Sold assets, furniture, house 7) Worked during journey 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
46.	<i>If money was borrowed or family paid for it in Q45, will you/your family need to pay the money back?</i>	Single	If money borrowed OR family paid for it in Q45	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
47.	If yes, when do you need to pay back	Single	If YES to Q45	1) Within the next month 2) Within the next year 3) I don't know when 4) Not in the near future 5) Don't have to pay back 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
48.	Do you send money to your family/caretaker?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
49.	Do you receive money from your family/caretaker?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

G. SWEDEN				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
50.	Who took the decision that you should come to Sweden?	SA	NA	1) Myself 2) My family 3) Group travelers 4) Smugglers 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
51.	Why did you/ the person who made the decision decide that you should come to Sweden?	Multiple (up to 3 answers possible)	NA	1) Economic opportunities (meeting basic needs through work) 2) Educational opportunities 3) Friends, community from my culture 4) Easier, faster access to asylum 5) Respect for human rights, I feel safe 6) Feel welcome there 7) I followed my group-guide-move 8) Deported from other countries 97) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
52.	Where did you/the person who decided on this get information on Sweden?	Multiple	NA	1) Aid worker 2) Friend or family in country of destination 3) Internet 4) Media (TV, radio, newspaper) 5) Other people travelling with me 6) Sign, board, leaflets 7) Social media (Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp) 8) Smuggler 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

Narrative: Thank you for sharing that with me. Like I mentioned, none of these answers will in any way be linked to you or your family – this is all done anonymously. We're now going to move to some questions on where other members of your family currently are.

H. FAMILY				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
53.	Do you know where your parents are now?	Single by parent	NA	MOTHER: 1) Country: _____ 2) Missing/Deceased 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer FATHER: 1) Country: _____ 2) Missing/Deceased 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
54.	In Afghanistan or in your country of residence, is the person who took care of you still there?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
55.	If NO to Q54, where is that person right now?	Single	If YES to Q54	1) Country: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
56.	If NOT AFGHANISTAN to Q55, what's the status of those people in the country he/she is currently living in?	Single	If NOT "AFGHAN-ISTAN" to Q55	1) Resident 2) Recognized refugee 3) Registered asylum-seeker 4) Residence permit 5) Work permit 6) Undocumented or not residing legally 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
57.	Who do you communicate with?	Multiple	NA	1) Mother 2) Father 3) Older siblings 4) Younger siblings 5) Spouse 6) Aunt/Uncle 7) Grandparents 97) Other relatives: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
58.	How do you communicate with your family/parents/caretakers?	Multiple	NA	1) Phone 2) Social app (Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp) 3) Email 4) Letter 5) Indirectly through other relatives 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
59.	Do you have other relatives living here in Sweden or in Europe?	Roster	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
60.	If yes to Q59, fill out the table below for each relative	Roster	If YES to Q59	

Relationship to you (circle the correct one – only one per line)	Current location of the missing relatives
My Parent / My Sibling minor alone / My sibling minor accompanied / My sibling (Adult) / My spouse / My child / My aunt/Uncle / My grandparents	Country: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
My Parent / My Sibling minor alone / My sibling minor accompanied / My sibling (Adult) / My spouse / My child / My aunt/Uncle / My grandparents	Country: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
My Parent / My Sibling minor alone / My sibling minor accompanied / My sibling (Adult) / My spouse / My child / My aunt/Uncle / My grandparents	Country: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
My Parent / My Sibling minor alone / My sibling minor accompanied / My sibling (Adult) / My spouse / My child / My aunt/Uncle / My grandparents	Country: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

Narrative: We're almost at the end of the questionnaire now. In the end I'd like to ask you a few questions about the information that you received during the trip or in Sweden. The reason for this is for us to know how we could improve communication and how to better share useful information with others that may be travelling the same route.

I. COMMUNICATION				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
61.	When you were traveling to Sweden, how did you find the information you needed during the trip?	Multiple	NA	1) Aid worker 2) Friend or family in country of destination 3) Internet 4) Media (TV, radio, newspaper) 5) Other people travelling with me 6) Sign, board, leaflets 7) Social media (Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp) 8) Smuggler 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
62.	Were other ways of coming to Sweden offered to you?	Single	NA	1) No 2) Yes, though family reunification 3) Yes, through relocation 4) Yes, offered by private persons 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
63.	If YES to Q62, how did you hear about those relocation programs?	Multiple	If YES to Q62	1) Aid worker 2) Friend or family in country of destination 3) Internet 4) Media (TV, radio, newspaper) 5) Other people travelling with me 6) Sign, board, leaflets 7) Social media (Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp) 8) Smuggler 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

J. BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD ASSESSMENT				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
64.	Since you arrived in Sweden, have you had an in-depth discussion with State authorities, or any other organization about your future?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
65.	If YES, to Q64, Do you know who that person was?	Single	If YES to Q64	1) Swedish Authorities 2) UNHCR 3) No 97) Other: _____ 99) Don't want to answer
66.	Did somebody have a similar discussion with you in other countries?	Single	NA	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
67.	If YES to Q66, How many similar discussions have you had since the start of your journey?	Single	If YES to Q66	98) Don't know

K. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
68.	OBSERVATIONS: Gender	Single	None	1) Male 2) Female 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
69.	How old are you?	Single	None	Age: ____
70.	Are you married?	Single	None	1) Single 2) Married/Union 3) Divorced/Separated 4) Widowed 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
71.	Do you have children?	Single	None	1) Yes 2) No 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer
72.	If YES to Q71, How many?	Single	If YES to Q71	#: ____
73.	What is your religion?	Single	None	1) Animism 2) Buddhism 3) Christian 4) Druze 5) Hinduism 6) No Religion 7) Islam: Alawites 8) Islam: Bekhtashi 9) Islam: Shia 10) Islam: Sunni 12) Judaism 13) Sikh 14) Yazidi 15) Other: _____ 98) Don't know 99) Don't want to answer

74.	What ethnic group do you belong to?	Single	None	1) Aimaq 3) Balock 5) Gujar 7) Pashayi 9) Qizibash 11) Turkmen 13) Mixed ethnicity 98) Don't know	2) Arab 4) Brahui 6) Hazara 8) Pashtun 10) Tajik 12) Uzbek 99) Don't want to answer
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L. END OF INTERVIEW: OBSERVATIONS				
#	Questions	Modality	Skip pattern	Responses
75.	Enumerator OBS: Special needs of the respondent	Single	NA	Pregnant: Yes – No – DK Lactating: Yes – No – DK Physically disabled: Yes – No – DK Person with severe medical conditions: Yes – No – DK
76.	Enumerator OBS: Reaction of the respondent to the questionnaire	Single	NA	1) Nothing special 2) Some hesitation, unease with some questions 3) Visible difficulties replying to some questions 4) Potential traumatic experiences triggered

Narrative: Thank you for your time and for answering all these questions. How do you feel now? Was anything difficult or hard for you to answer? Anything you would like to discuss more? Do you have any questions for me, now that we are done here? If you have questions later on you are welcome to contact me. What are you going to do now?

ANNEX 2 – FOCUS GROUP QUESTION GUIDE

THE JOURNEY

- **JOURNEY:** What countries do young Afghans usually cross to come here? (work out the typical route from Afghanistan or Iran to Sweden)
- **STOPS:** Do we usually stop at any point along the way for a long period of time? What are the reasons to stop on the way? (Stop in Turkey? Stop in European countries? Why?)
- **LENGTH:** How long does it take to travel from Afghanistan? (Leg by leg, before Europe, in Europe, Overall)
- **ASSISTANCE/OBSTRUCTION:** Who helps, who obstructs along the way?
- **MODALITIES:** How do young Afghans travel (group, transport) and with whom? If in a group, what was the group like? (Composition, internal dynamic, smuggler, etc.)

PROTECTION INDICENTS

- **PROTECTION INDICENTS:** During your journey from Afghanistan or Iran to Sweden, what are the main dangers and difficulties that young Afghans can face? When did you feel safe/unsafe (refer to mapping). Did anyone see anything difficult or sad on the way? Did you have enough food, water, and the right clothes for the journey? Did anything happen that you didn't expect? Has anyone made you suffer or hurt you?
- **PERPETRATORS and LOCATION:** Who put the travelers in danger and where (country and more precise location, if willing to share)?
- If someone that you know tells you that he/she is thinking of coming to Sweden, what advice would you give him/her?

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

- **PUSH FACTOR:** In general, could you tell me how young Afghans come to the decision to leave Afghanistan? Could you explain why you left?
- **PULL FACTOR:** Similarly, why (reasons to choose Sweden), how (decision makers) and when (before departure, during journey) do young Afghans decide to come to Sweden?
- **INFORMATION:** What kind of information did you have available along the way? And before you started the journey? What is the most trustworthy source of information in Afghanistan, and on the way?
- **FINANCE:** Who pays for the travel? Do you know how much is usually paid? By whom? To whom?
- **FUTURE:** How do you see the future of Afghan UASC?

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