Understanding information sources and gaps among Afghan, Chin, and Rohingya refugees in India

This snapshot focuses on access to information about migration routes, destinations, costs, and risks among Afghan, Chin and Rohingya refugees in India, both prior to their departure and once en route. It provides insights on the role that information plays in migration decision making, including the primary sources of information accessed, the means used to obtain information, and identified knowledge gaps. This snapshot follows MMC's two previous snapshots on the same topic focusing on Afghan, Chin and Rohingya refugees in Malaysia and Thailand.[1]

Key findings

- Over half of all respondents (55%) did not access information prior to their migration, as well as after departure. This was particularly prevalent among Chin respondents (with 66% reporting not having accessed information prior to their migration, and 76% during) .

- Family and friends emerged not only as the most frequently mentioned sources of information, but also as the most reliable.

- Significant information gaps exist with only 6% of all respondents indicating that they had all the necessary information for their migration.

- Information gaps varied between respondents from Myanmar and Afghans. Among Chin and Rohingya, more information was required about their journey conditions, reflecting the complex irregular overland routes they take. For Afghans more information was needed about their rights and access to services at destination.

- The potential impact of information on migration decision making varied. For Rohingya, a better understanding of the journey may have led many to reconsider their decision to migrate (with 42% reporting they would not have migrated knowing what they now know).

- In contrast, for Chin and Afghan respondents, better access to information might still have resulted in a decision to migrate (with 96% and 78%, respectively, reporting they would have still migrated, knowing what they now know).

Profiles

This snapshot is based on 799 surveys collected between November 2023 and April 2024 with Afghan (35%), Chin (36%) and Rohingya (29%) in India. The respondents were spread across multiple locations in India, predominantly in Delhi (53%), Mizoram (13%), Hyderabad (11%), Haryana (4%), and Jaipur (4%). While the overall gender distribution among respondents was relatively balanced, there were variations among different groups (see Figure 1). Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents fell within the 18-35 age group, with average ages of 35, 38, and 28 among Afghan, Chin and Rohingya, respectively. Respondents across the groups had diverse educational backgrounds – for example 43% of Afghan respondents reported holding a university degree,[2] while just over half (54%) of Rohingya reported having no formal education at all. In terms of migration status, the majority of respondents were either refugees (53%) or asylum seekers (33%).

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1   MMC (2023) Understanding information sources and gaps among Afghan, Chin and Rohingya refugees in Malaysia; MMC (2024) Understanding information sources and gaps among Rohingya in Thailand

2   This aligns with the finding in MMC (2017) Afghan Displacement Summary: Migration to India, which indicates that Afghan migration to India is predominantly a middle-class phenomenon involving Afghans from urban areas with predominantly higher educational backgrounds.
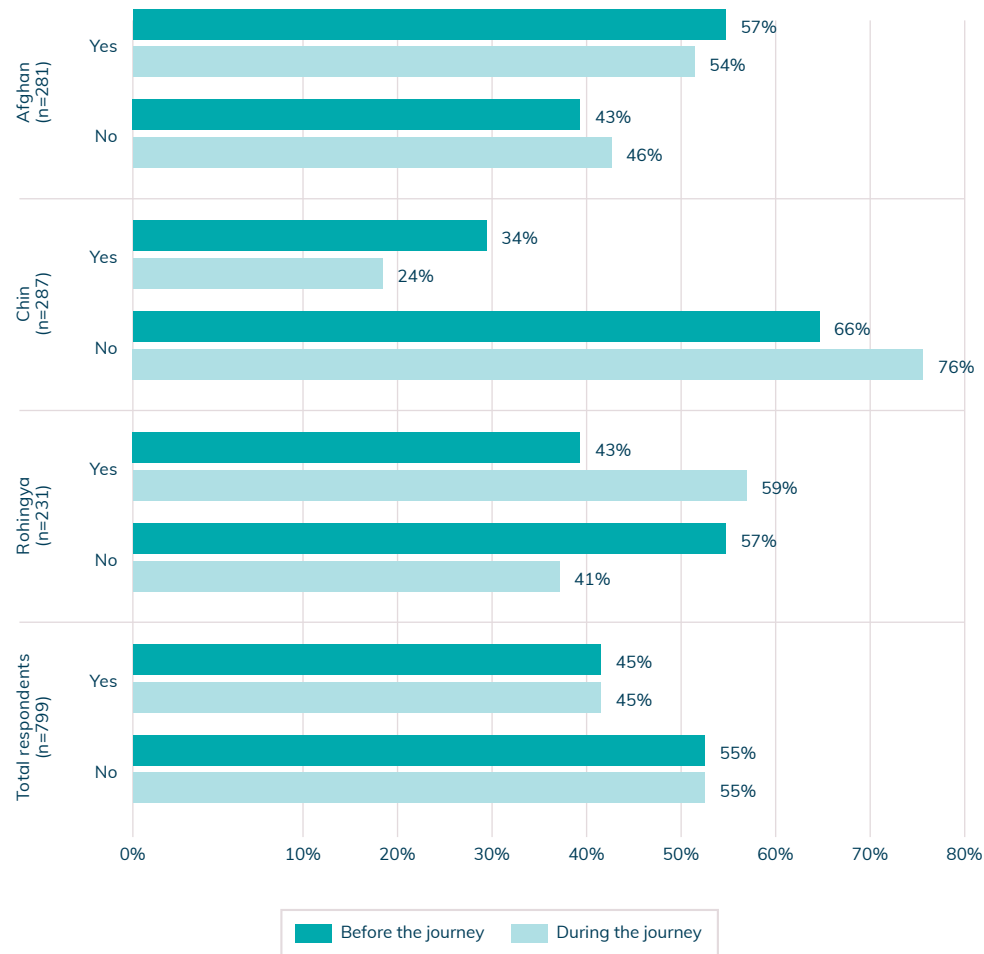
Figure 1. Profile of respondents[3]

		Afghan (n=281)	Chin (n=287)	Rohingya (n=231)	Total (n=799)
Gender	Women	47%	59%	33%	47%
	Men	53%	41%	67%	53%
	Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Age group	18-25	18%	19%	59%	30%
	26-35	45%	28%	26%	33%
	36-45	21%	29%	9%	20%
	46-55	9%	13%	3%	9%
	55+	7%	12%	3%	8%
	Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Education level	Did not complete any schooling	7%	5%	54%	20%
	Primary school	6%	20%	25%	17%
	Secondary or high school	33%	53%	19%	36%
	University degree	43%	20%	2%	23%
	Vocational training	10%	2%	0%	4%
	Total	**99%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Migration status	Asylum seeker	35%	41%	21%	33%
	Irregular/no legal documents to stay in this country	1%	20%	0%	7%
	Refugee	61%	23%	79%	53%
	Temporary protection	0%	16%	0%	6%
	Temporary resident (with permit/visa)	4%	0%	0%	1%
	Total	**101%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

3   Some aggregates may not total 100% due to rounding.

Over half of all respondents did not access information prior to their migration, and after departure

More than half of all respondents (55%) did not access any information concerning routes, destinations, costs, and risk both prior to, and during their journeys (see Figure 2). Among Chin respondents, access to information was even more limited, with 66% reporting not having accessed information prior to departure and 76% during their journey. This is in contrast to Rohingya respondents where 57% reported not obtaining information before the journey, and 41% during. Despite originating from the same country of origin, this discrepancy is likely attributed to the divergent routes taken and the circumstances surrounding departure. All Chin respondents embarked on a direct route to India from Myanmar, with 99% departing after the military seizure of power in February 2021. The urgency to leave Myanmar may have resulted in insufficient time to gather information prior to departure. In contrast, all Rohingya respondents transited through Bangladesh before reaching India, with an average protracted stay of 5.7 years in Bangladesh. Rohingya respondents' protracted stay in Bangladesh may account for the higher proportion of Rohingya who reported obtaining information during the journey as compared to before the journey.

Figure 2. Did you obtain information about routes, destinations, costs, risks, etc. before and during your journey?
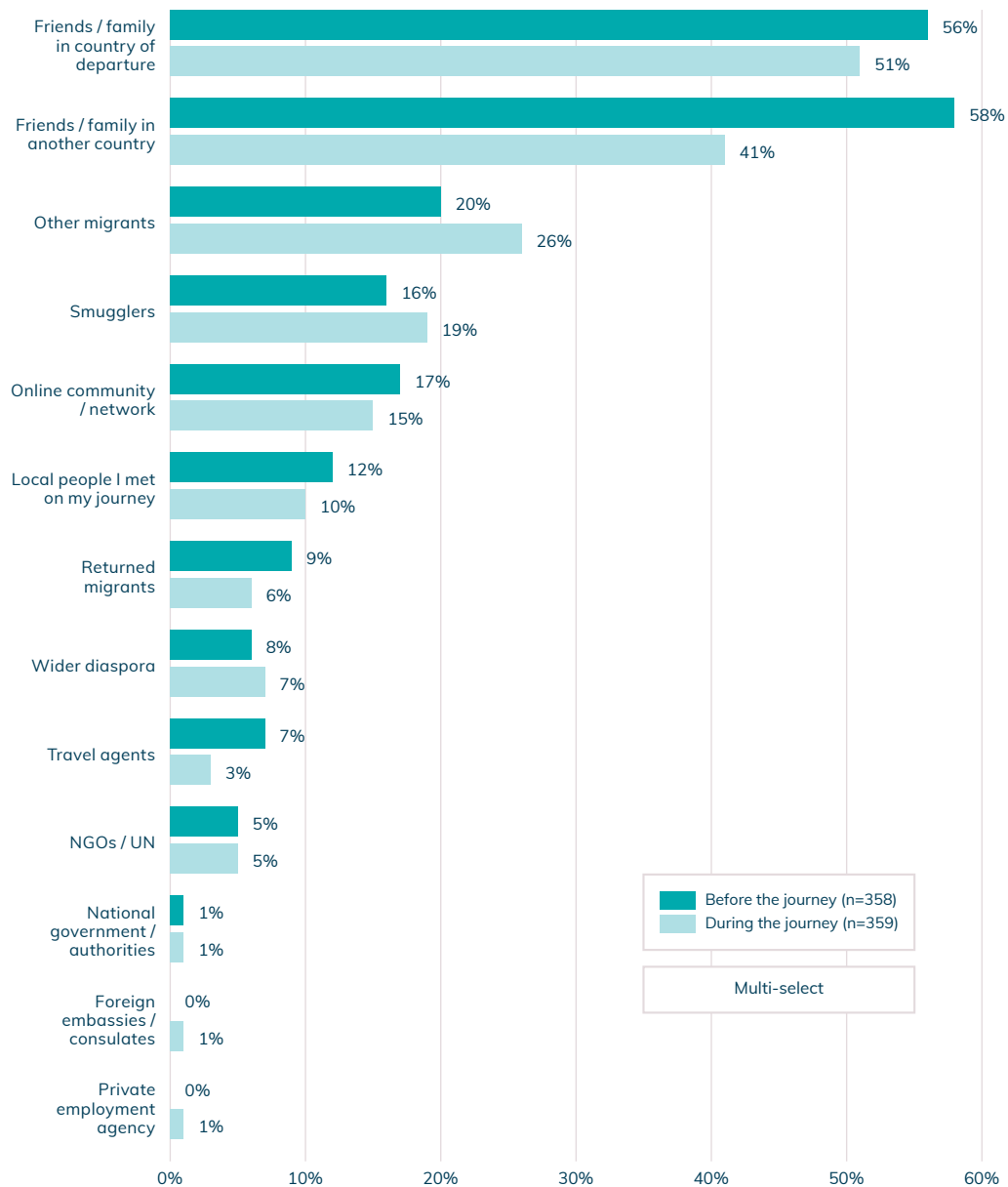

	Before the journey	During the journey
Afghan (n=281) Yes	57%	54%
Afghan (n=281) No	43%	46%
Chin (n=287) Yes	34%	24%
Chin (n=287) No	66%	76%
Rohingya (n=231) Yes	43%	59%
Rohingya (n=231) No	57%	41%
Total respondents (n=799) Yes	45%	45%
Total respondents (n=799) No	55%	55%

Legend: Before the journey · During the journey

Family and friends are a primary source of information and also considered the most reliable

Among those who did obtain information prior to departure and once en route, friends and family – both those in their departure country and abroad - were reported as the primary sources of information (see Figure 3). The majority obtained this information through phone calls (79% before the journey and 71% during the journey) or in-person interactions (64% before the journey and 69% during the journey). These findings are consistent among Afghan, Rohingya and Chin respondents, underscoring the crucial role of personal networks in providing information across all respondent groups. A noteworthy distinction between respondent groups in terms of sources of information is that only Afghan respondents reported accessing information from official sources such as NGOs or the UN (11% before the journey and 12% during the journey), national governments or authorities (2% before the journey and 3% during the journey), and foreign embassies or consulates (1% before the journey and 2% during the journey),[4] while no respondents from other groups accessed these sources. This raises question about whether this disparity stems from issues of accessibility, availability, or other underlying factors, and prompts the need for further investigation.
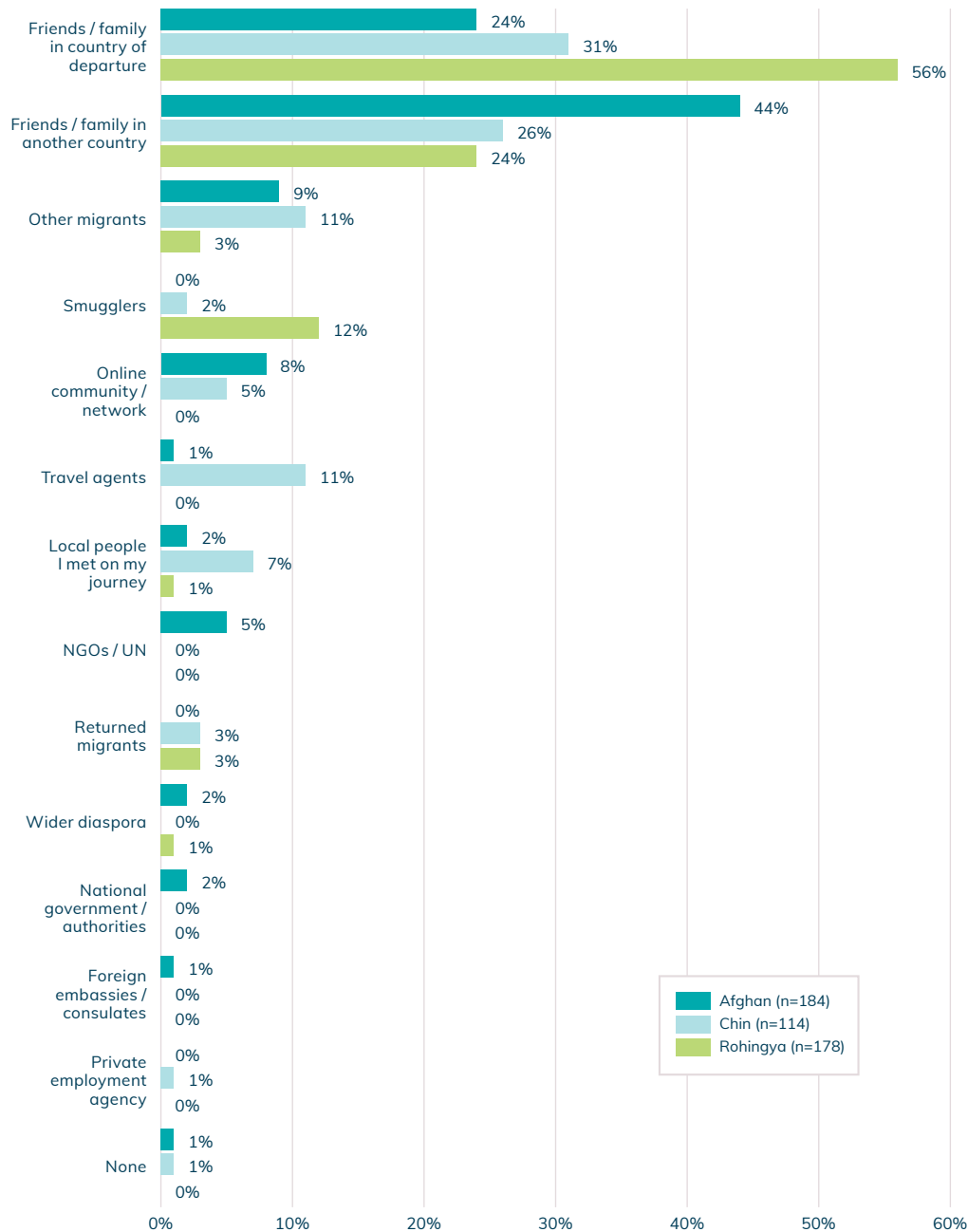
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4   One such example is the Migrant Resource Centre, an initiative funded by European Union. It offers services to prospective migrants, migrant workers, returnees, Afghans living abroad, students and family members of migrants, including provision of information to help them make informed decisions about migration.

Figure 3. What were your sources of information about routes, destinations, costs, risks, etc. before and during your journey?

Source	Before the journey (n=358)	During the journey (n=359)
Friends / family in country of departure	56%	51%
Friends / family in another country	58%	41%
Other migrants	20%	26%
Smugglers	16%	19%
Online community / network	17%	15%
Local people I met on my journey	12%	10%
Returned migrants	9%	6%
Wider diaspora	8%	7%
Travel agents	7%	3%
NGOs / UN	5%	5%
National government / authorities	1%	1%
Foreign embassies / consulates	0%	1%
Private employment agency	0%	1%

Multi-select

Family and friends emerged not only as the most frequently mentioned sources of information but also as the most reliable as reported by respondents across all groups (see Figure 4). Friends and family in another country were particularly trusted among Afghan respondents (44%), while for Rohingya, friends and family in their country of departure were particularly trusted (56%). Interestingly, around one in ten Rohingya (12%) respondents also identified smugglers as a reliable source of information, compared to 2% of Chin and no Afghan respondents. This corresponds to the use of smugglers across three groups - 84% Rohingya, 23% Chin, and 1% Afghan reported using a smuggler/smugglers for their journey. These findings suggest smugglers play a role in providing information to individuals from Myanmar particularly Rohingya, although not to Afghans. Additionally, around one in ten Chin respondents (11%) also included travel agents as a reliable source of information. While these "travel agents" were not perceived as smugglers by respondents, they often facilitate irregular migration by providing fraudulent travel or identity documents in order to facilitate entry into India, as noted by one of the enumerators.

Figure 4. Of all sources, what has been the most reliable source of information overall?

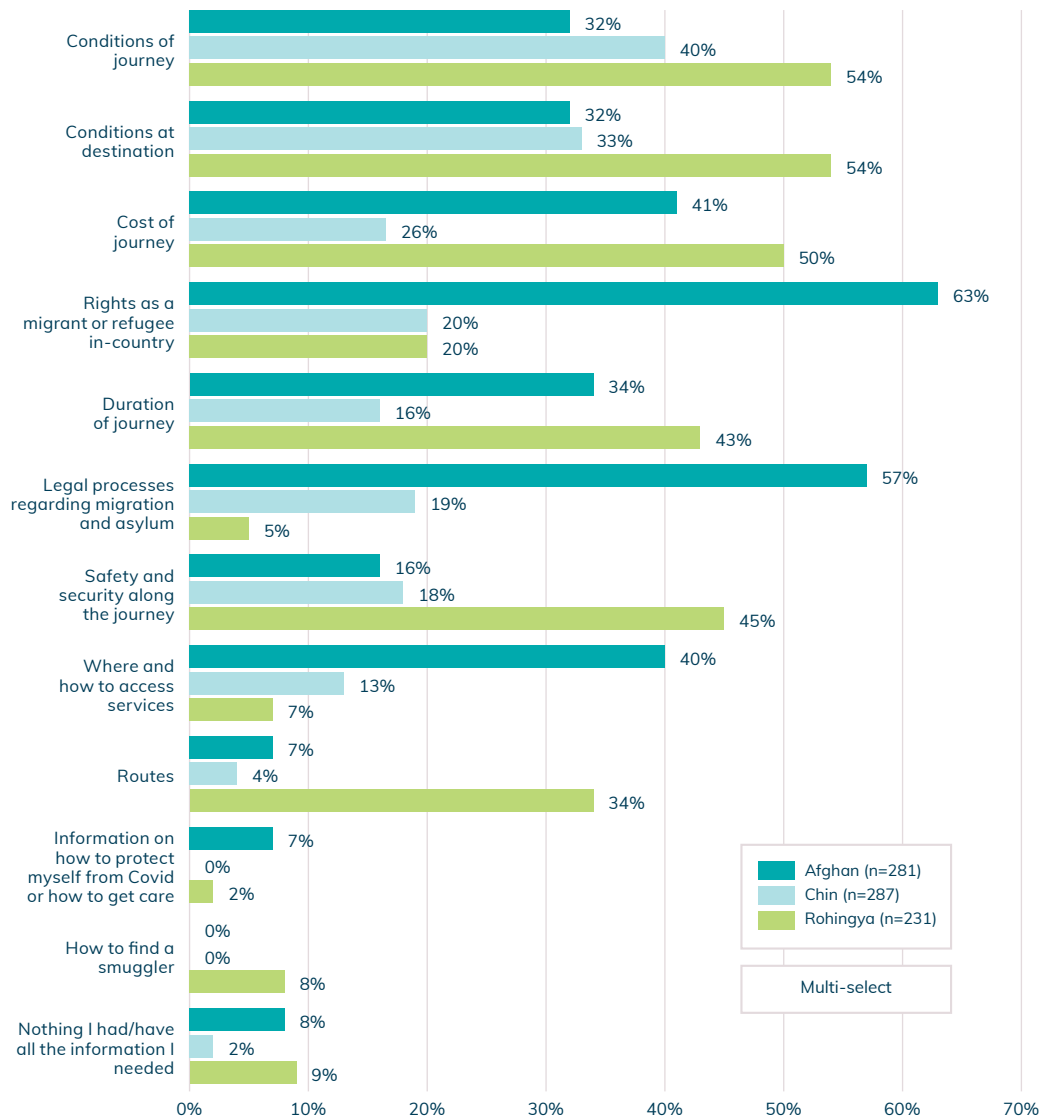| Source	Afghan (n=184)	Chin (n=114)	Rohingya (n=178)
Friends / family in country of departure	24%	31%	56%
Friends / family in another country	44%	26%	24%
Other migrants	9%	11%	3%
Smugglers	0%	2%	12%
Online community / network	8%	5%	0%
Travel agents	1%	11%	0%
Local people I met on my journey	2%	7%	1%
NGOs / UN	5%	0%	0%
Returned migrants	0%	3%	3%
Wider diaspora	2%	0%	1%
National government / authorities	2%	0%	0%
Foreign embassies / consulates	1%	0%	0%
Private employment agency	0%	1%	0%
None	1%	1%	0%

Significant information gaps exist, although specific needs vary between groups

Overall, only 6% of all respondents indicated that they had all the necessary information, highlighting a persistent and urgent gap in information for prospective migrants and people on the move. However, specific informational needs varied among groups (see Figure 5). Respondents from Myanmar identified their top three information needs as information regarding the conditions of the journey (54% Rohingya and 40% Chin), conditions at the destination (54% Rohingya and 33% Chin), and the cost of the journey (50% Rohingya and 26% Chin). In contrast, Afghan respondents reported their information needs as including information about rights as a migrant or refugee in-country (63%), legal processes regarding migration and asylum (57%), and where and how to access services (40%). These differences are likely attributed to the nature of the journeys undertaken by these groups. Chin and Rohingya respondents predominantly entered India irregularly overland, which is often uncertain and risky, making information about the journey's conditions and costs critical. The risks of overland irregular journeys are highlighted further by Rohingya respondents, with 45% also reporting information gap related to safety and security along the journey. Their longer journey via Bangladesh is particularly perilous, with frequent reports of exploitation and protection incidents along this route.[5] Conversely, all Afghan respondents entered India via air, a comparatively safer method of travel, reducing their need for information about journey conditions and allowing them to focus on information about their rights, legal processes, and available services upon arrival.

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5   MMC (2019) Rohingya migration to India: patterns, drivers and experiences

Figure 5. What information would have been most useful that you did not receive?

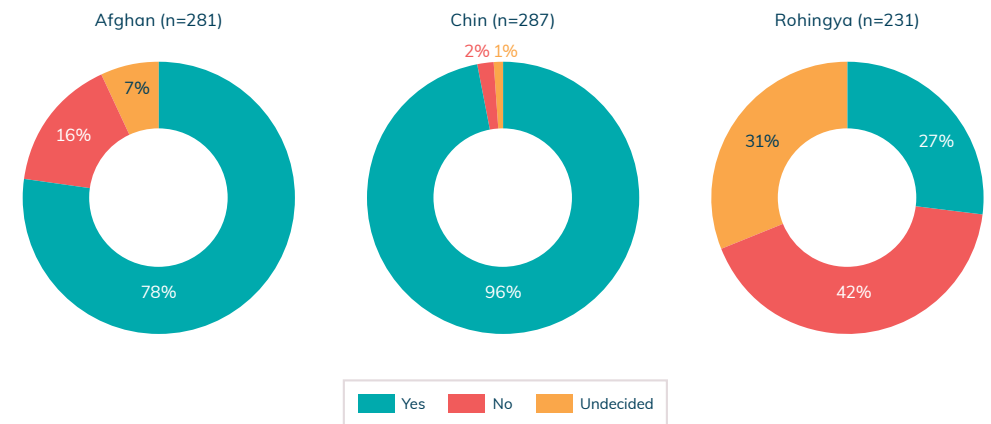| Category	Afghan (n=281)	Chin (n=287)	Rohingya (n=231)
Conditions of journey	32%	40%	54%
Conditions at destination	32%	33%	54%
Cost of journey	41%	26%	50%
Rights as a migrant or refugee in-country	63%	20%	20%
Duration of journey	34%	16%	43%
Legal processes regarding migration and asylum	57%	19%	5%
Safety and security along the journey	16%	18%	45%
Where and how to access services	40%	13%	7%
Routes	7%	4%	34%
Information on how to protect myself from Covid or how to get care	7%	0%	2%
How to find a smuggler	0%	0%	8%
Nothing I had/have all the information I needed	8%	2%	9%

Multi-select

Greater access to information may have impacted the decision to migrate for Rohingya respondents, although less so for Chin and Afghans

Respondents were asked if they would still embark on their journey given what they currently know now. Responses varied with almost all Chin (96%), and 78% of Afghans answering 'yes', (see Figure 6). This is compared to only 27% of Rohingya who said they would still migrate to India knowing what they currently know now. Despite having the most access to information among respondent groups during the journey, almost half (42%) of Rohingya respondents said they would not migrate to India knowing what they now know. This indicates potential gaps in the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information Rohingya accessed prior to and during their journey.

The varied potential impact of information access on migration decision underscores the complex nature of the decision-making process, shaped by a multitude of factors. For Rohingya, a better understanding of the journey may have led many to reconsider their decision to migrate. In contrast, for Afghan and Chin, better access to information might still have resulted in a decision to migrate, but they would likely have been better equipped to navigate their journeys.

Figure 6. Would you have started this journey knowing what you know now?[6]

Afghan (n=281): Yes 78%, No 16%, Undecided 7%
Chin (n=287): Yes 96%, No 2%, Undecided 1%
Rohingya (n=231): Yes 27%, No 42%, Undecided 31%

Yes | No | Undecided

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6   Some aggregates may not total 100% due to rounding.

Protecting Refugees in Asia
- towards a coordinated regional approach

Protecting Refugees in Asia (PRiA) is a three-year ECHO-funded initiative launched in 2021 to address protection risks and needs of refugees in Southeast Asia. Phase II (2023-24) of the joint project of the Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA), Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), HOST International Malaysia, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Indonesia, and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) combines evidence-based research, programmatic and advocacy expertise to inform integrated regional protection responses in support of refugees. PRiA targets 65 local, 20 international, and 27 regional organisations with a particular focus on Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India.

Access other publications under the PRiA Project here:

- [Profiles and drivers of Rohingya moving to Malaysia](#)

- [Protection risks for Rohingya women and children: from departure country to arrival in Malaysia](#)

- [Journeys to Indonesia for Rohingya refugees](#)

- [Protection risks of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia](#)

- [Rohingya refugees in Indonesia: a focus on smuggling, information, and financing](#)

- [Rohingya refugees in Thailand: Profiles, drivers of migration and access to assistance](#)

- [Understanding information sources and gaps among Afghan, Chin, and Rohingya refugees in Malaysia](#)

- [Understanding information sources and gaps among Rohingya in Thailand](#)

4Mi data collection

[4Mi](#) is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with migrants in Eastern and Southern Africa, North Africa, West Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at: www.mixedmigration.org/4mi