EU-IOM KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT HUB

Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites Series

Knowledge Bite #6 | December 2022

Longitudinal Evidence on Sustainable Reintegration Outcomes

A quantitative study on sustainable reintegration outcomes using data of the DTM REMAP's Returnee Longitudinal Survey from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan.

Rationale of the Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites Series

The Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites Series aims to present findings pertaining to sustainable reintegration outcomes. The series has so far focused on analyses based on the Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS) data and other monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data collected in the framework of Return and Reintegration Programmes. This Knowledge Bite focuses on the analysis of the Returnee Longitudinal Survey (RLS), which was developed under IOM's project "Displacement Tracking Matrix Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (DTM REMAP)" funded by the European Union (EU). This series is designed to bring such findings to the attention of reintegration practitioners and policymakers worldwide, as well as to inform and disseminate good practices, lessons learned and recommendations.

Specifically, this series of Knowledge Bites attempts to: (i) empirically explain cross-country, cross-regional and cross-programme patterns on sustainable reintegration outcomes, (ii) assess the effectiveness of reintegration assistance in terms of achieving reintegration sustainability, (iii) determine which type(s) of reintegration support measures have proven to be the most impactful on each of the three dimensions of reintegration – economic, social and psychosocial, and (iv) investigate which are the external/structural factors affecting sustainable reintegration outcomes.

EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub

The development and production of this series is supported by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH), which was established in September 2017 under the EU-funded Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable Community-Based Reintegration in Southern Africa. The KMH aims at supporting the implementation of the EU-IOM Actions addressing migrant protection and sustainable reintegration in Africa and Asia by ensuring coherent voluntary return and reintegration approaches, harmonising M&E activities, setting up knowledge management tools, and producing knowledge products.

IOM UN MIGRATION

Project funded by the European Union
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SUMMARY

This sixth Knowledge Bite focuses on the analysis of the DTM REMAP's Returnee Longitudinal Survey (RLS). The RLS was conducted in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan based on three rounds of data collection in each country. The analysis follows previous Knowledge Bites that relied on the Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS) and focuses on four reintegration scores of returnees: economic, social, psychosocial and a composite one. The RLS was collected from 2020 to 2022. As such, the dynamics reported in this Knowledge Bite should be interpreted in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and in the case of Afghanistan, the political transition by the De Facto Authorities (DFA) and its economic impact on the country.

The results suggest that there are substantial differences in scores for returnees based on the country and dimension explored. However, there are several patterns that can be identified:

- There are improvements over time in the reintegration scores for those returning to Bangladesh, and a deterioration for those returning to the other three countries.
- These trends are largely driven by differences in the economic dimension. Returnees to Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan have experienced a reduction in the economic dimension scores from the first to the third round of the survey, while there has been an improvement in this dimension for returnees to Bangladesh.
- The reduction in economic dimension scores for Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan is also reflected in lack of advancement in several individual economic indicators such as satisfaction with current economic conditions, food security and borrowing money. Yet, respondents in Iraq and Pakistan are slightly more likely to be in employment by the third round of the survey which suggests mixed economic reintegration patterns for those returning to these countries.
- Among all countries, migrants returning to Afghanistan display the lowest composite reintegration scores. This should be seen in the light of the political transition by the De Facto Authorities (DFA) and the economic impact this has had on the economy of the country.
- The analysis also shows that border and airport closures in the context of COVID-19 had a negative relationship with the reintegration scores.

1. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) definition of sustainable reintegration[1] highlights the multi-dimensional nature of a reintegration process – economic, social and psychosocial – and the need to approach migrant reintegration in a comprehensive manner, considering the factors that can affect reintegration at the individual, community and structural levels.

Based on this definition, the Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS), a tool to measure reintegration sustainability, was developed.[2] The RSS is based on 15 indicators and 30 measurement elements relating to the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration. The economic dimension covers aspects of reintegration contributing to economic

[1] The International Organization for Migration (IOM) views reintegration to be sustainable when "returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity". See IOM (2017), Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the context of Return

[2] See IOM - Migration Policy Practice special issue on Return and Reintegration, "Measuring sustainable reintegration" N. Nozarian and N. Majidi – Page 30 and Samuel Hall/IOM (2018), Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration.

self-sufficiency with the related indicators covering income source, the reliability and adequacy of employment or income-generating activity, debt-to-spending ratio, food security and a self-assessment of satisfaction with the economic situation. The social dimension reflects the extent to which returnees have reached social stability within the community, with the related indicators including access to basic services and infrastructure in connection with housing, education, justice, health and other public services. The psychosocial dimension encompasses the emotional, mental and psychological elements of reintegration, with the related indicators including the sense of belonging, participation in social activities, the ability to rely on a support network, and potential tensions, conflicts and signs of distress.

In October 2020, the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH) launched the Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites series, which aims to present findings pertaining to sustainable reintegration outcomes emerging from the analyses of RSS data and other monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data available. The Knowledge Bites series are designed to bring these findings to the attention of reintegration practitioners and policymakers worldwide, as well as to inform and disseminate good practices, lessons learned and recommendations.

The first Knowledge Bite[3] analysed the different factors influencing the sustainability of reintegration outcomes with the notable result that the provision of economic reintegration assistance contributes to returnees' higher average sustainable reintegration scores. The second Knowledge Bite[4] explored additional factors that contribute to higher levels of sustainable reintegration and found that returnees who received at least one reintegration activity through referrals had lower reintegration sustainability scores and displayed lower levels of satisfaction with the reintegration assistance received. The third Knowledge Bite[5] explored the reintegration outcomes and satisfaction levels of migrants assisted to return from South Africa to Mozambique and Malawi under the Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration funded by the European Union and implemented by IOM. The fourth Knowledge Bite[6] sought to complement the findings from the second Knowledge Bite by collecting qualitative information to provide insights into the reasons behind the negative effect of referrals on reintegration sustainability outcomes and satisfaction. Finally, the fifth Knowledge Bite[7] aimed to explore returnees' satisfaction with different types of reintegration assistance and whether there is a statistically significant relationship – positive or negative – between reintegration assistance received at different levels and respondents' individual reintegration outcomes.

In an ongoing effort to expand the knowledge on reintegration outcomes and the factors contributing to sustainable reintegration, this sixth Knowledge Bite uses data collected through the Returnee Longitudinal Survey (RLS) in four countries of return, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan, over the course of three years. The RLS was developed by IOM under the European Union (EU) funded project "Displacement Tracking Matrix Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (DTM REMAP)". Drawing from the RSS and its underlying definition of sustainable reintegration, the RLS monitors sustainable reintegration outcomes based on the economic, social and psychosocial self-assessed conditions of returnees, in addition to understanding the demographic profiles as well as assessing their living conditions.

While the findings of previous Knowledge Bites provided cross-sectional insights into reintegration outcomes, the analysis of RLS data, allows to develop a layer of in-depth knowledge on the evolution of sustainability of reintegration in the short and medium term, by measuring changes of reintegration outcomes at the individual returnee level over time. The findings from this study help better understand migrants' reintegration sustainability pathways in addition to producing relevant longitudinal evidence on reintegration outcomes that support practitioners with the design of new policies and improving sustainability

[3-7] See the previous publications of the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub's Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites Series: Knowledge Bite #1 – Introduction to the Series; Knowledge Bite #2 – Sustainable Reintegration Outcomes: Following Referrals for Reintegration Support; Knowledge Bite #3 – Insights from the Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration; Knowledge Bite #4 – Qualitative Study on Outwards Referrals; Knowledge Bite #5 – Types of Reintegration Assistance and Sustainable Reintegration Outcomes.

of reintegration programmes.

1.1 The Returnee Longitudinal Survey (RLS)

The RLS was developed to better understand the demographic profiles, living conditions and reintegration processes of returnees. The RLS is based on i) IOM's DTM REMAP methodology and ii) the RSS.

RLS collects data on the profiles, vulnerabilities and needs of returnees, as well as on sustainable reintegration outcomes. Respondents were interviewed in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan as countries of return. The sample includes returnees who were assisted through IOM's Return and Reintegration programmes. The types of reintegration assistance received by returnees varied substantially across countries and periods – see the Annex (Section 5.4).

Table 1 includes the RLS sampling criteria for each country. The samples include those who returned from 2018 onwards, hence, the focus is on recent returnees. There is variation in the countries where individuals are returning from, but all four samples include those returning from Greece.

Table 1. Sampling criteria for each country of origin

Country of origin	Host country	Period of return	Re-migration intentions
Afghanistan	Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece and Türkiye	2018-2021	Those who intend to stay in Afghanistan instead of re-migrating
Bangladesh	Greece and Libya	2019-2020	Not included as a criterion
Iraq	Germany, Greece and Finland	2019-2020	Not included as a criterion
Pakistan	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany and Greece	2019-2020	Not included as a criterion

The goal was to interview all returnees three times (i.e., three rounds of the survey) with an interval of several months between each round, nonetheless, there were dropouts between rounds of data collection. Table 2 reports the exact fieldwork dates for each country. The period of data collection started in August 2020 (Iraq) and finished in July 2022 (Afghanistan). As such, the dynamics reported in this Knowledge Bite should be interpreted in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2. Dates of data collection of the RLS per round and country

Country of Origin	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3	
	From	To	From	To	From	To
Afghanistan	30/05/2021	09/08/2021	04/12/2021	01/01/2022	18/06/2022	16/07/2022
Bangladesh	05/09/2020	21/02/2021	18/05/2021	28/09/2021	08/01/2022	06/04/2022
Iraq	17/08/2020	10/09/2020	20/01/2021	18/02/2021	05/09/2021	16/09/2021
Pakistan	05/01/2021	07/04/2021	11/08/2021	07/10/2021	21/02/2022	14/04/2022

Table 3 includes the number of observations used for each country and round for the analysis in this Knowledge Bite. The sample in round 1 was substantially larger in Afghanistan than in other countries, but the share of individuals dropping from the sample was also higher in this country (close to 40%). In some estimations the sample is restricted further, and this is indicated in the respective section.

Table 3. Sample rounds 1,2 and 3 by country of origin

Country of Origin	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	TOTAL
Afghanistan	991	660	581	**2,232**
Bangladesh	630	571	520	**1,721**
Iraq	492	466	418	**1,376**
Pakistan	416	392	370	**1,178**
TOTAL	**2,529**	**2,089**	**1,889**	**6,507**

1.2 Creating sustainable reintegration scores for the RLS

The previous Knowledge Bites based on the RSS data rely on a methodology that assigns weights to variables related to the economic, social and psychosocial factors in order to create reintegration scores across these three dimensions – i.e. dimensional scores, and a combined one - i.e. composite score.[8] The weights indicate each variable's relative importance to the sustainability of the reintegration process. The weights used in the RSS were determined through a statistical analysis of the RSS dataset[9] and adjusted following the qualitative findings of the field.

The RLS and RSS[10] have substantial overlap in terms of questions and data collected but are overall different. There are also slight variations in the RLS questionnaire across countries and periods. Therefore, there is a need to adjust the scores from the RSS to work for the variables available in the RLS across countries. In order to meet the purpose of this study, the weights were adjusted based on variables available in all four RLS countries but are constructed to be as comparable as possible to those using the RSS. In addition, to maximise comparability, in the composite score the overall weights given to each dimension (i.e., economic, social, and psychosocial) are similar to those in the RSS-based methodology.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE DIMENSIONAL AND COMPOSITE SCORES

Chart 1 reports the average values of the dimensional and composite scores of each round for all countries combined. The psychosocial reintegration scores tend to be higher, followed by the social scores and lastly the economic scores. This ranking of the scores is stable and is maintained across rounds of the survey. The composite score increases from the first to the second round of the survey (0.55 to 0.58) but decreases in the third round (0.56). However, even in this case the reintegration scores are relatively stable over time.

[8] See Knowledge Bite #1 – Introduction to the Series.

[9] A comprehensive variable reduction technique – the Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was used to generate a smaller set of most meaningful variables (components) from an original list of over 60 indicators. This shorter list became the basis for the indicators in the scoring survey, maximizing variability and non-correlation (independence) of the variables.

[10] The RLS will be made available online in the future. The RSS is available online – See Monitoring and Evaluation Tools for Return and Reintegration Programmes.

Chart 1. Average dimensional and composite reintegration scores for all countries combined

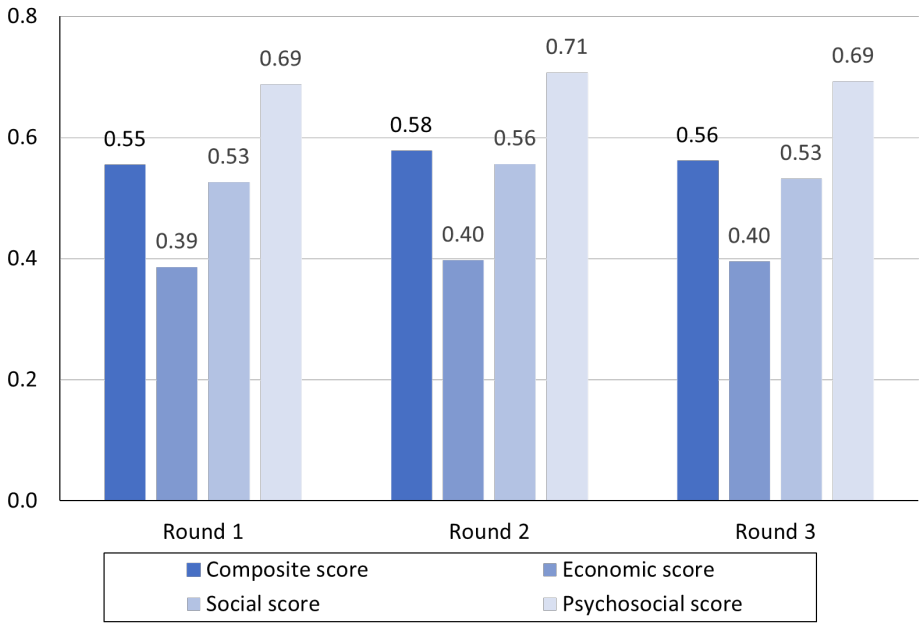


Chart 2 reports these scores separately for each country. Looking at the countries separately we can explore if the stability in reintegration scores and rankings for the whole sample are also present for each country. Chart 2 suggests that there is more variation across periods when looking at individual countries.

Bangladesh is the only country for which average composite reintegration scores increased consistently across time (0.60 in the first round, 0.66 in the third round). Overall, the composite reintegration scores are higher in Bangladesh and Pakistan, compared to Afghanistan and Iraq and we can note that the economic dimension plays a key role in these differences in composite reintegration scores across countries. Noteworthy are the average economic reintegration scores for Afghanistan. In fact, returnees in Afghanistan recorded on average the lowest economic reintegration score across countries in the first round of the survey (0.30), and their economic situation further exacerbates from the first round to the third round of the survey ending at 0.23, which is almost 55 per cent lower compared to Bangladesh's average economic reintegration score at the end point (0.51). The dramatic results for Afghanistan in the economic dimension can be put in more perspective when looking at the political events the country experienced in 2021, which led to complex economic impacts on the country. High inflation and the depreciation of the Afghan currency have worsened hard-hitting economic realities, such as country-wide job insecurity and high unemployment, realities that also affect the returnee population of the country.[11]

[11] The World Bank, Afghanistan Economic Monitor (May 2022).

Chart 2. Average dimension and composite reintegration scores for each country

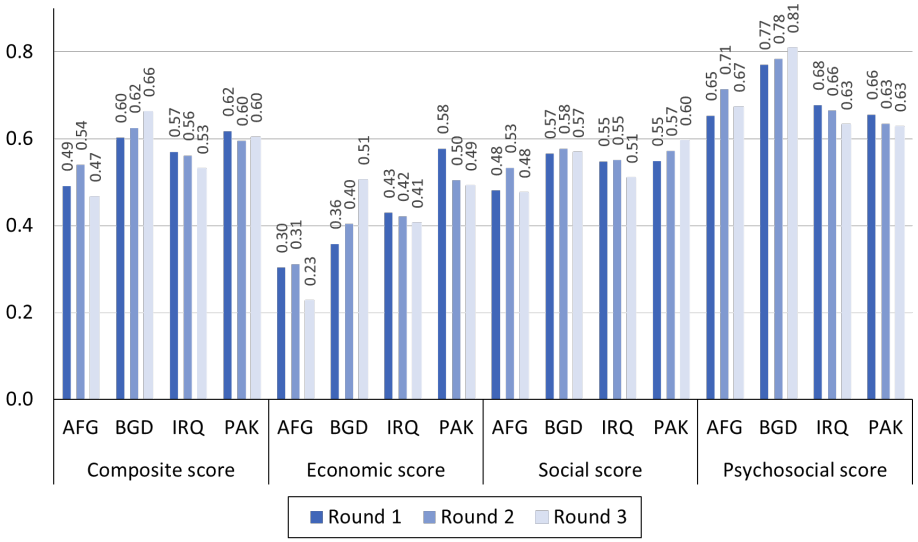
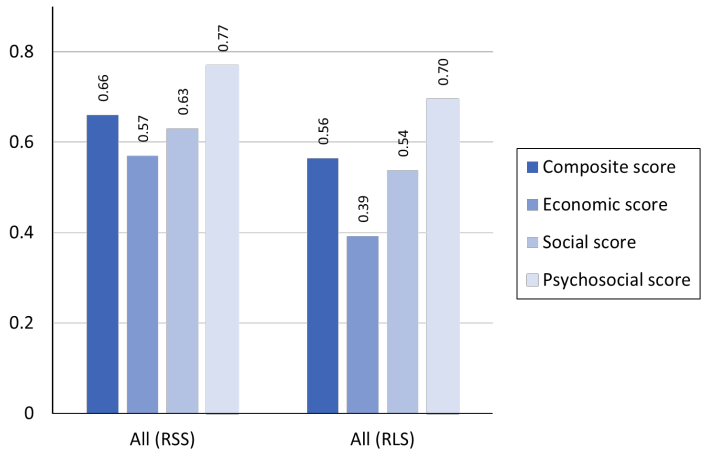


Chart 3 presents the dimension and composite scores for the countries in the RLS along with the equivalent scores estimated in previous Knowledge Bites using the RSS for other countries (see Knowledge Bite #1). The RLS scores represent the average score across the three rounds of the survey. Note that while it is not possible to provide a one-to-one comparison between the RSS and RLS scores, as some of the variables used are different, the order of the dimension rankings are similar, with the psychosocial dimension ranking the highest, followed by the social dimension and lastly the economic dimension. This confirms the validity of the weighting system chosen and applied to the RLS data. The countries in the RLS display lower scores than those in the RSS for all dimensions, with the economic dimension holding the larger gap. There are multiple factors that could explain the lower scores of the RLS, in addition to the differences in countries of return between the two surveys. As explained above, the RLS data was collected in the context of the COVD-19 pandemic and the political situation in Afghanistan affected the reintegration scores for this country.

Chart 3. Comparison of average reintegration scores from RSS and RLS



Note: Scores from RSS come from Knowledge Bite #1.[12]

[12] See Knowledge Bite #1 – Introduction to the Series.

3. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Finding 1

The average social and psychosocial reintegration outcomes improved from the first to the second round of the survey, but this improvement disappears by the third round. No improvement is recorded in the average economic reintegration outcomes.

The previous section presented useful information on the average dimension and composite scores across countries and rounds of data collection. This section takes advantage of the rich information available in the RLS to conduct an analysis of the differences in the scores as we account for individual characteristics of the respondents in the sample, such as age, pre-migration experiences and length of absence.

The first estimation explores how the reintegration sustainability scores presented above change across rounds of the survey. See the Annex (Section 5.1) for details of the estimations.

Chart 4 presents the results of the estimation. These results present differences between the first round of the survey, represented by the zero line, and the subsequent two rounds. If the solid line is above the zero line for a given round, it means that the reintegration score has improved relative to the first round (i.e., average reintegration outcomes have improved). The opposite is the case if the solid line is below the zero line (i.e., average reintegration outcomes have deteriorated). The direction of the results can change across rounds of the survey. It is possible for the reintegration outcomes to improve in the second round, but to decrease in the third round or to decrease in the second round and improve in the third round.

The dotted lines provide information on the statistical significance of the results.[13] If both dashed lines are above or below the zero line, then the estimated change in the relative reintegration score from the first round to second and/or third round is statistically different from zero.

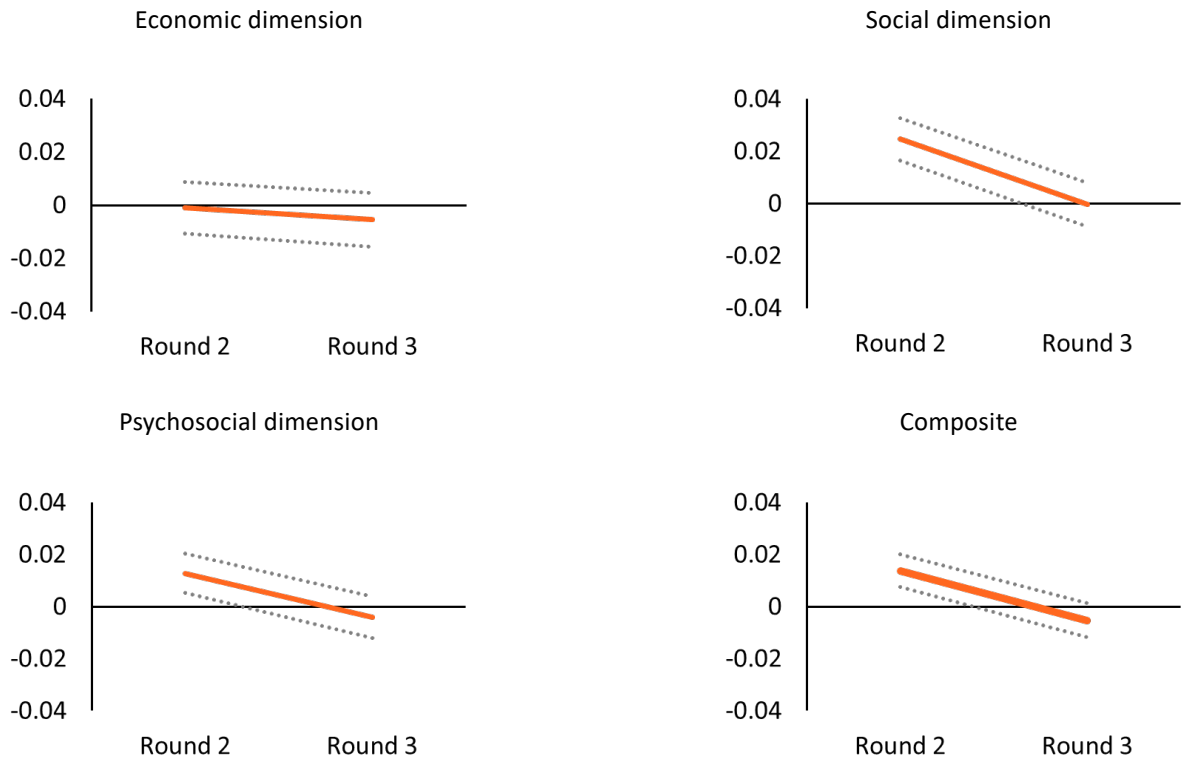
Looking at the average sustainable reintegration scores for all countries in the sample in Chart 4, we can see that there is no statistically significant difference across rounds of the survey in the economic dimension (i.e., the zero line is between the dotted lines). In other words, there is no statistical evidence of improvement or deterioration in this score for the whole sample. The dynamics for the social dimension, psychosocial dimension and the composite scores are different: while there was an improvement in these scores from the first to the second round of the survey, the improvement was short lived and disappeared by the third round.

The results in Chart 4 suggests that the reintegration process is not linear and comes with ups and downs. IOM (2017) described these fluctuations in reintegration outcomes as *The W Model of Reintegration Experiences*[14] and highlights the need to address the low points and build on the high points to render reintegration sustainable.

[13] Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

[14] See IOM - Migration Policy Practice special issue on Return and Reintegration, "Measuring sustainable reintegration" N. Nozarian and N. Majidi – Page 30 and Samuel Hall/IOM (2018), Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration.

Chart 4. Differences in reintegration scores between the first round of the survey (represented by the zero line) and the next two rounds of the survey (estimation for all countries)



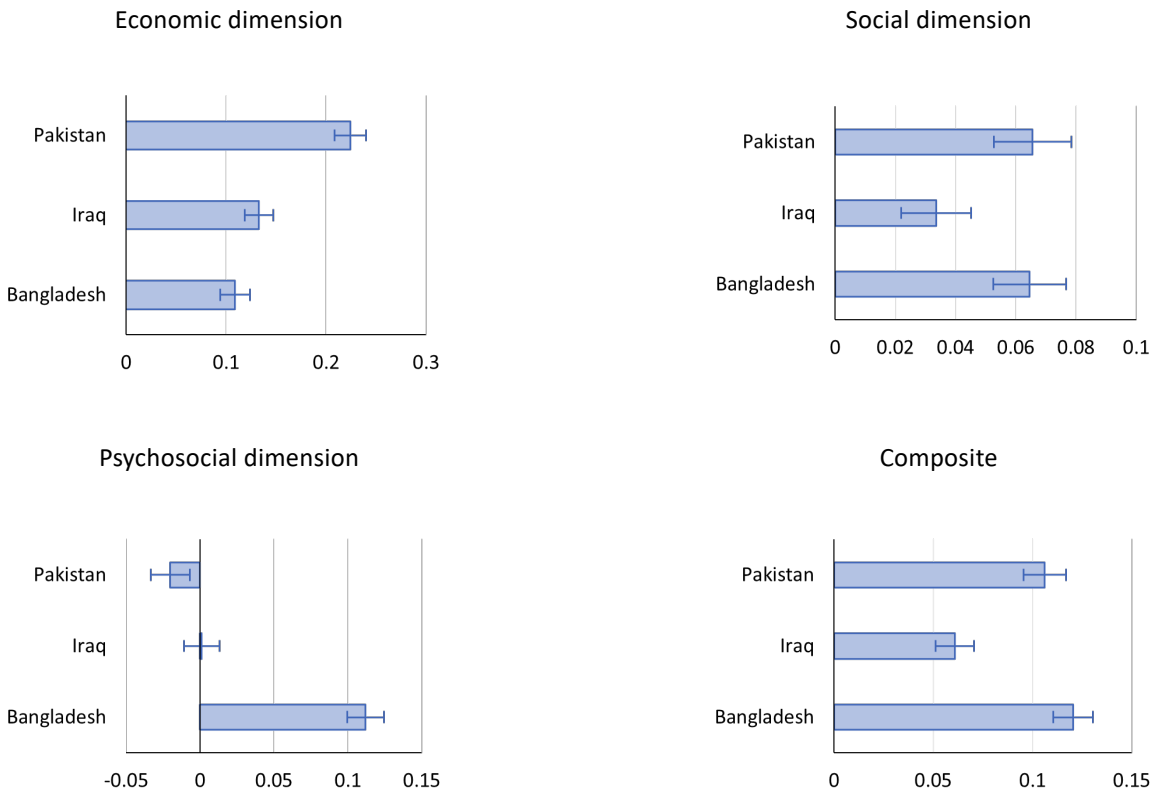
Note: dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

The second estimation aims to understand differences across countries in the reintegration scores and how factors such as length of residence abroad, conditions before migration and demographic factors affect the reintegration outcomes. In chart 5, we present a comparison of returnees in the different countries. In this case, the results are presented in relation to those returning to Afghanistan which is represented by the zero line. If the values for a given country are positive (i.e., to the right of the zero line), then the average reintegration scores for that country are higher as compared to Afghanistan. The opposite is true if the values for a given country are negative (i.e., to the left of the zero line).

In the economic and social dimensions, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan display higher reintegration outcomes, indicating that returnees to these countries have on average achieved more sustainable economic self-sufficiency and social stability compared to returnees to Afghanistan during the considered period. On the other hand, the psychosocial dimension displays different results. While on average returnees in Iraq display similar psychosocial outcomes as returnees to Afghanistan, returnees in Pakistan displayed lower psychosocial reintegration outcomes. Contrarily, returnees to Bangladesh recorded higher psychosocial reintegration outcomes.

Finally, when all dimensions are aggregated in the composite score, returnees in all countries fare better than those in Afghanistan. The difference is larger for Bangladesh, with an average 0.12 points higher composite reintegration score.

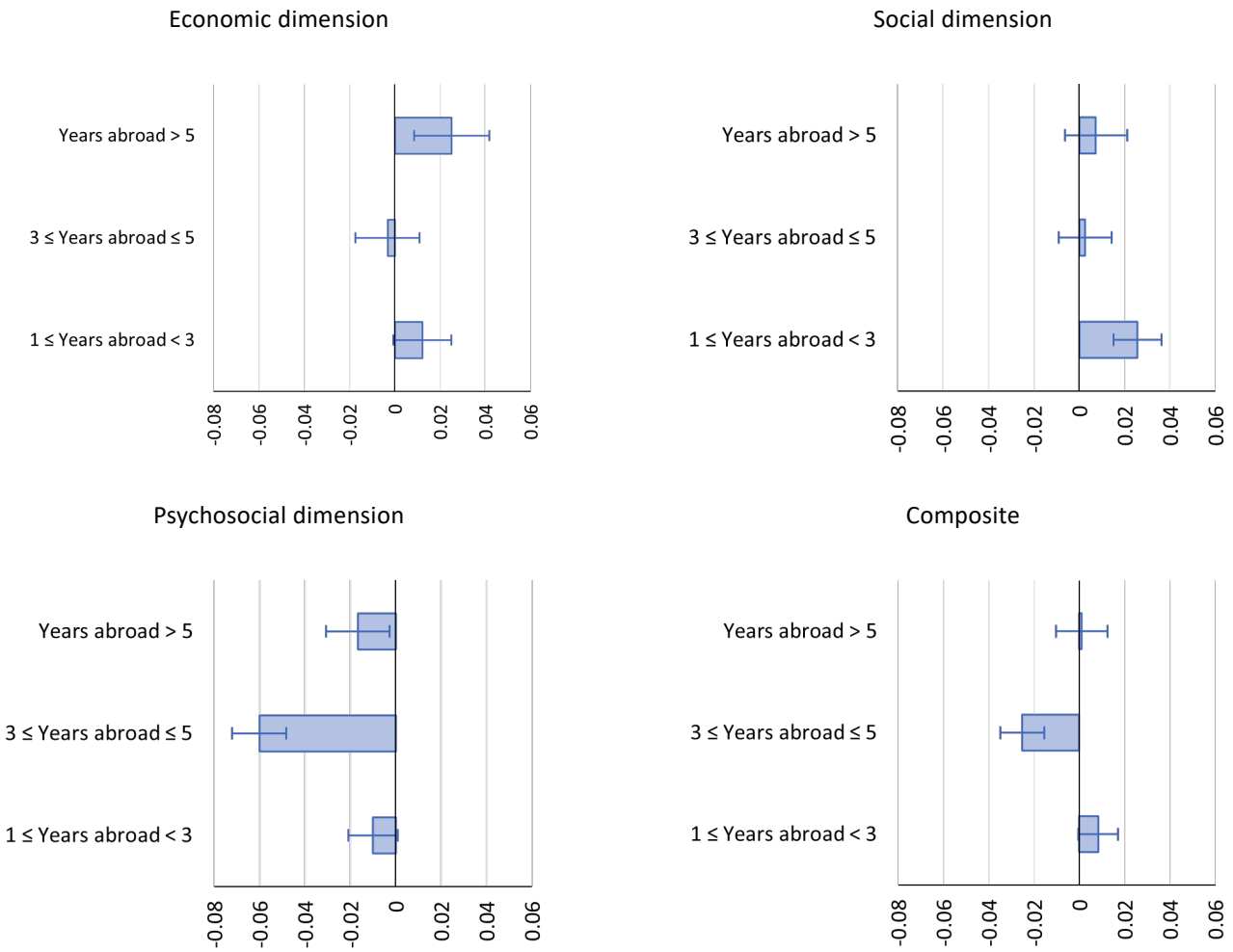
Chart 5. Differences in reintegration scores between Afghanistan (represented by the zero line) and the other three countries



Note: the error bars represent a 95% confidence interval.

Chart 6 reports the effect of length of residence abroad on reintegration outcomes. The comparison is with those who resided for less than a year abroad, who are represented by the zero line. There is a variety of results regarding the length of residence abroad and it is difficult to identify a general trend. For instance, those who spent over five years abroad tend to do better on the economic dimension, but not in the other dimensions. This might suggest that returnees that spent longer time abroad might have for example been exposed to more employment opportunities, translating into higher economic self-sufficiency. Yet, when we focus on the psychosocial dimension, we notice that the length of absence negatively affects the psychosocial well-being of returnees. The lowest scores are recorded for those who spent three to five years abroad, who tend to fare worse than those who spent less than a year abroad. This suggests that longer absences affect the extent to which the returnees are able to sustainably reintegrate in their community of return as well as their sense of belonging. Finally, when we look at the social dimension, interestingly the results show that those who spent over one year abroad tend to fare better, with a peak between one and three years. Further analysis would be needed to substantiate these assumptions and to further interpret the effects of the length of absence on reintegration outcomes.

Chart 6. Differences in reintegration scores between those who spent less than a year abroad and those who spent longer abroad

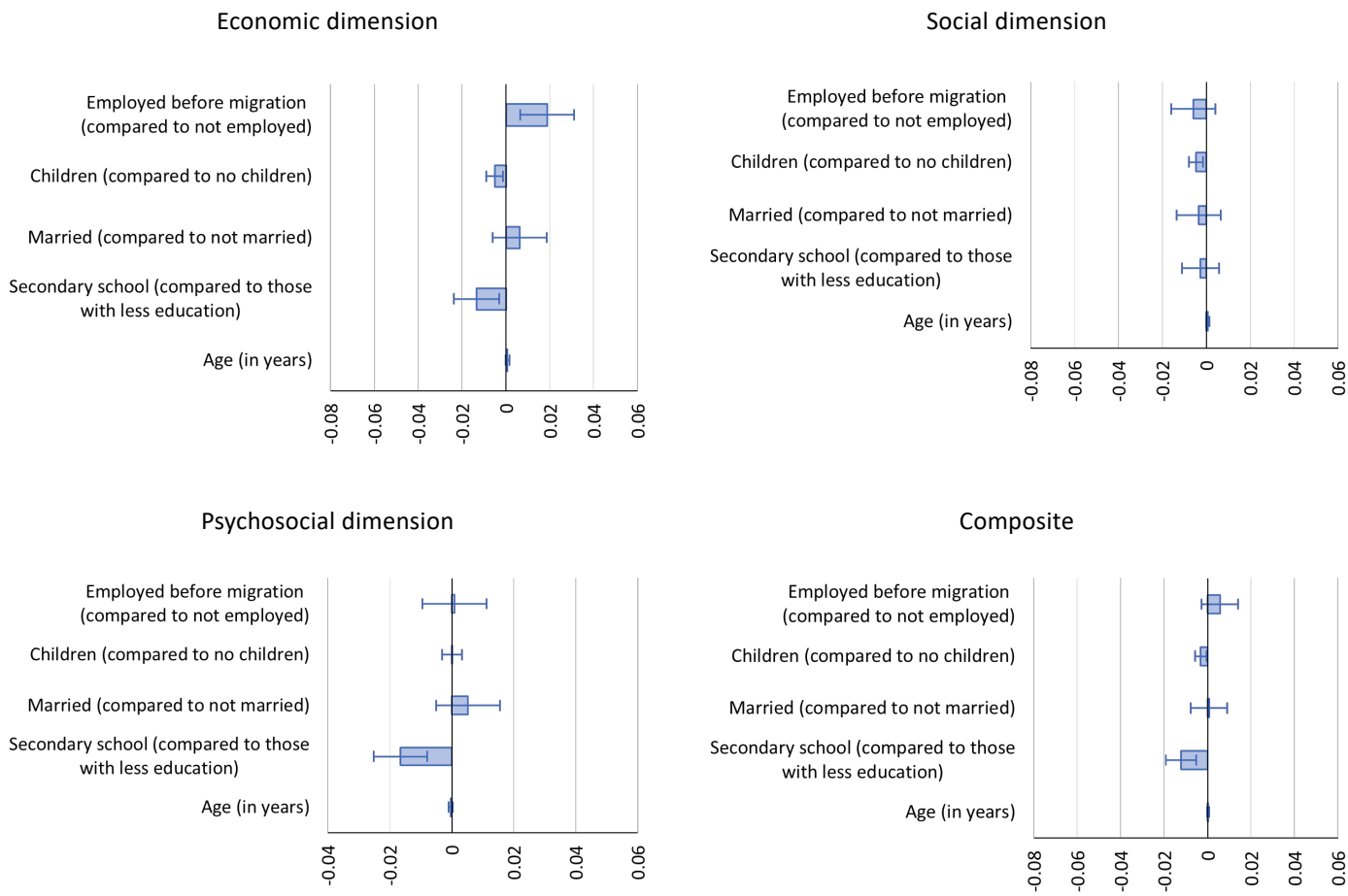


Note: the error bars represent a 95% confidence interval.

Chart 7 reports the results of the effects of conditions before migration and demographic factors on reintegration outcomes. Looking at the composite score we see that the socio-demographic variable that is significant in most estimations is having secondary schooling. In this case, the estimation compares those with secondary education with those who have less education. According to the results, those with higher levels of education are the ones faring worse across all reintegration scores, with the biggest difference recorded in the psychosocial score. This may suggest that the level of education affect the self-reported perception and satisfaction with their economic, social and psychosocial reintegration. The results also show that those who were in employment before migration tend to do better in the economic dimension upon return.

Looking at the role of length of residence abroad, conditions before migration and socio-demographic factors for each country separately, most of the estimated differences are statistically insignificant for the individual countries. However, it is important to highlight that the results regarding secondary education (i.e., negative effect) is present for returnees in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Chart 7. Differences in reintegration scores across sociodemographic characteristics



Note: the error bars represent a 95% confidence interval.

3.2 Finding 2

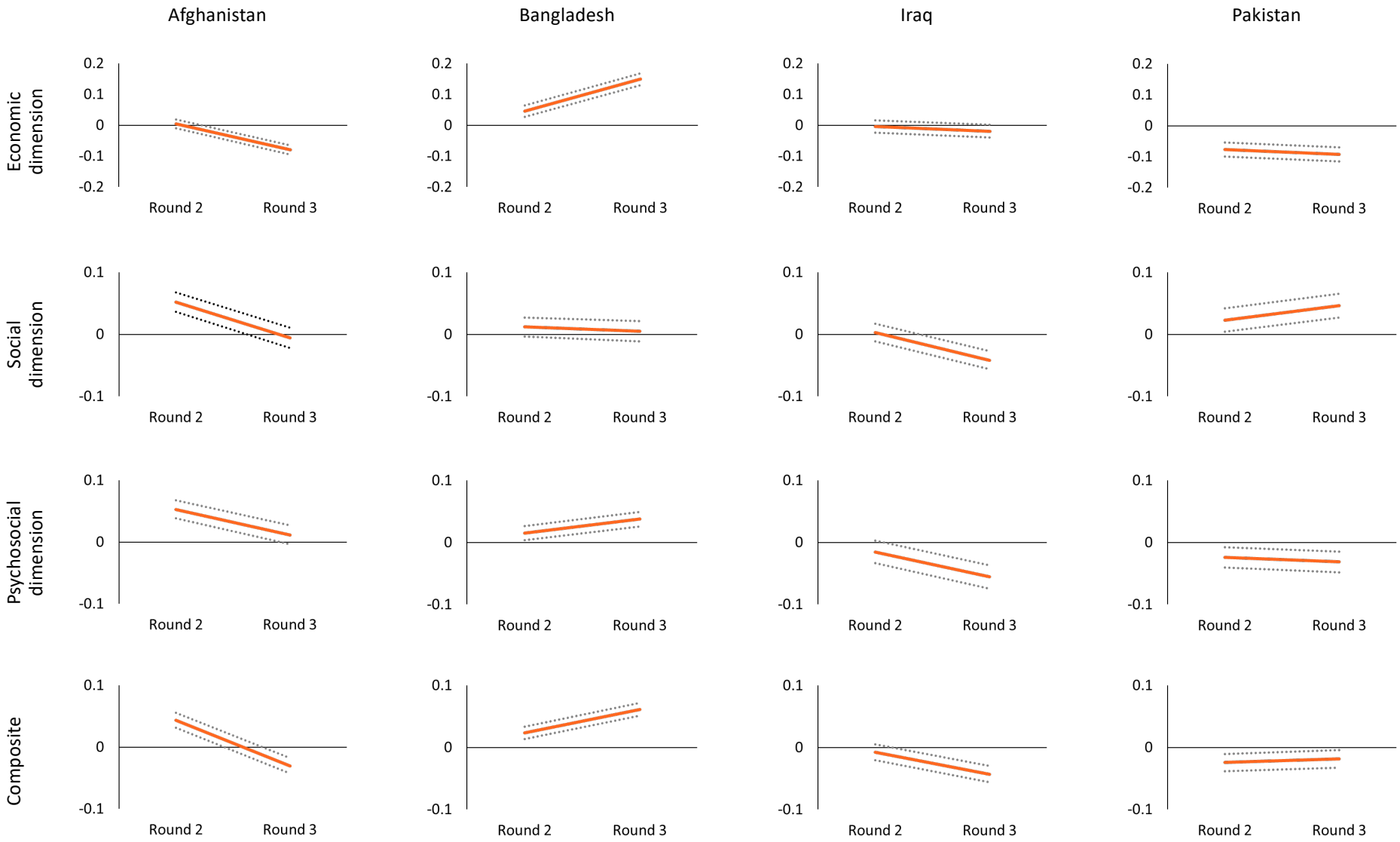
Scores have mainly improved for those returning to Bangladesh, but not for those returning to the other three countries

Chart 8 presents changes in reintegration outcomes across time when the estimation is limited to one country at the time. For instance, the results for the Afghanistan column only include returnees in this country. Returnees in Afghanistan experienced a slight improvement in the psychosocial and social dimensions in the second round of the survey, but this improvement disappeared by the third round. They also experienced a decrease in the economic dimension between the first and third round of the survey.

Returnees in Bangladesh experienced an improvement in all dimensions with the exception of the social score, for which there was no significant change from the first round of the survey. Returnees in Iraq experienced a deterioration in the social and psychosocial dimensions, but no changes in the economic dimension. Returnees in Pakistan experienced an improvement in the social dimension over time, but a deterioration in the economic and psychosocial dimensions.

Overall, the results suggest substantial differences in trends across countries and dimensions. However, there is a pattern of improvements for those returning to Bangladesh, and lack of advancement for those returning to the other three countries.

Chart 8. Differences in reintegration scores between the first round of the survey (represented by the zero line) and the next two rounds of the survey by country



Note: dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

3.3 Finding 3

The lack of improvement in the economic dimension for Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan is also present for other economic indicators (satisfaction with current economic conditions, food security and borrowing money).

As discussed in the previous section, the economic reintegration outcomes did not improve for returnees in three out of the four countries studied. In order to understand this dynamic better, this section explores each of the elements used to construct the economic dimension score. The purpose is to understand if there is a particular aspect related to economic conditions that is driving the gap observed in economic scores across rounds of the survey. The economic score combined eight different indicators, which are presented in Table 4. See the Annex (Section 5.2) for details of the constructions of these variables.

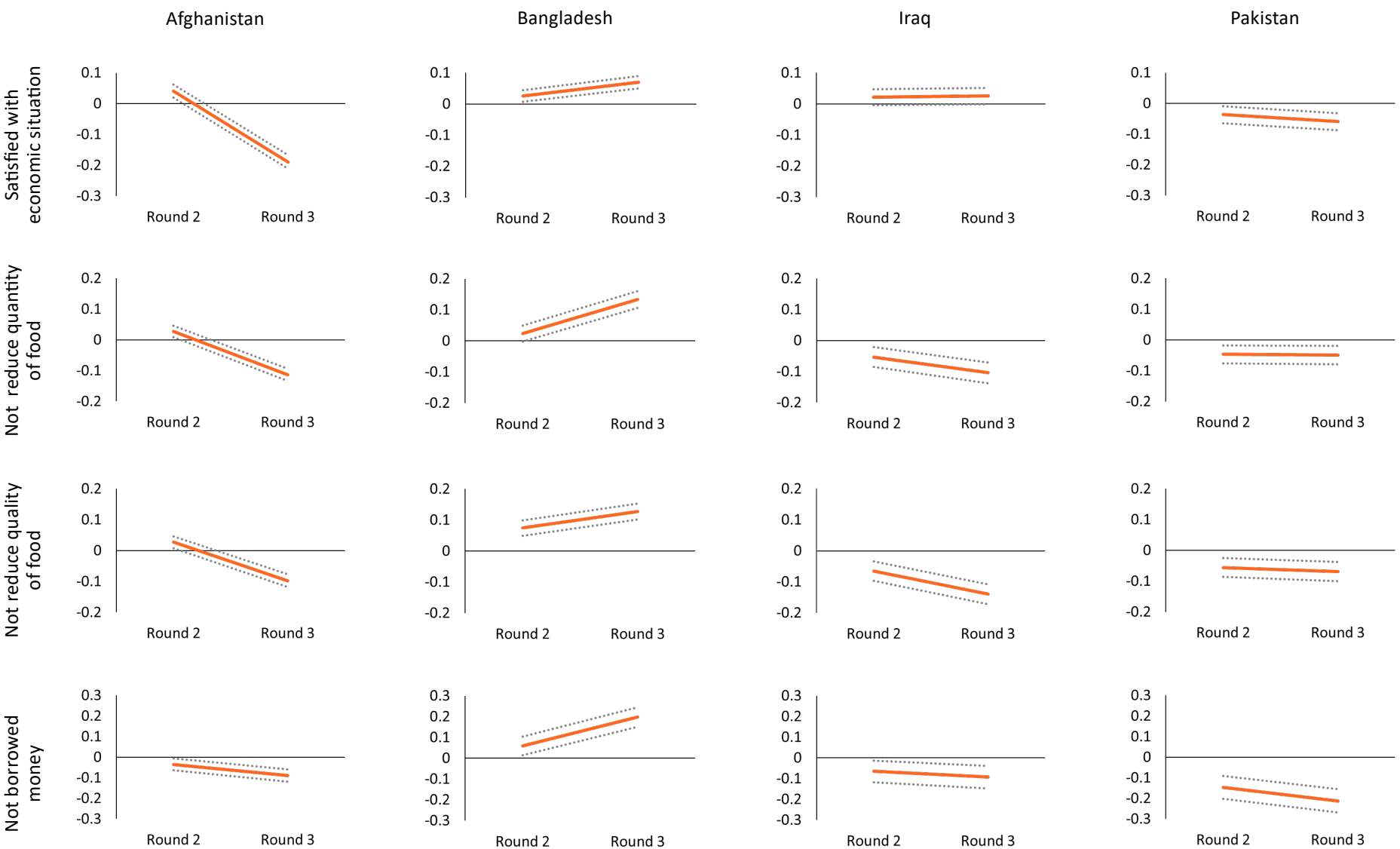
Table 4. Indicators used to create the economic dimension scores

Respondent is satisfied with current economic situation.
Respondent did not reduce the quantity of food consumed during the last six months because of its cost.
Respondent did not reduce the quality of food consumed during the last six months because of its cost.
Respondent did not borrow money to cover monthly expenses.
Respondent spending is larger than debt during the last six months.
Respondent is employed.
Respondent has another source of income.
Respondent is not looking for another job.

Chart 9A and 9B report the results when we look at these indicators individually. The overall story suggests that returnees in Bangladesh tend to do better in most of these indicators over time, while returnees in the other countries tend to do worse or see no improvement over time, confirming results presented in previous sections. This dynamic is present for indicators related to satisfaction with current economic conditions, food security, and borrowing money. For instance, the indicator regarding borrowing money, broadly suggests that those in Afghanistan are 9 percentage points more likely to have borrowed money by the third round of the survey compared to the first round. This corresponds well to the analysis based on the economic reintegration scores presented above.

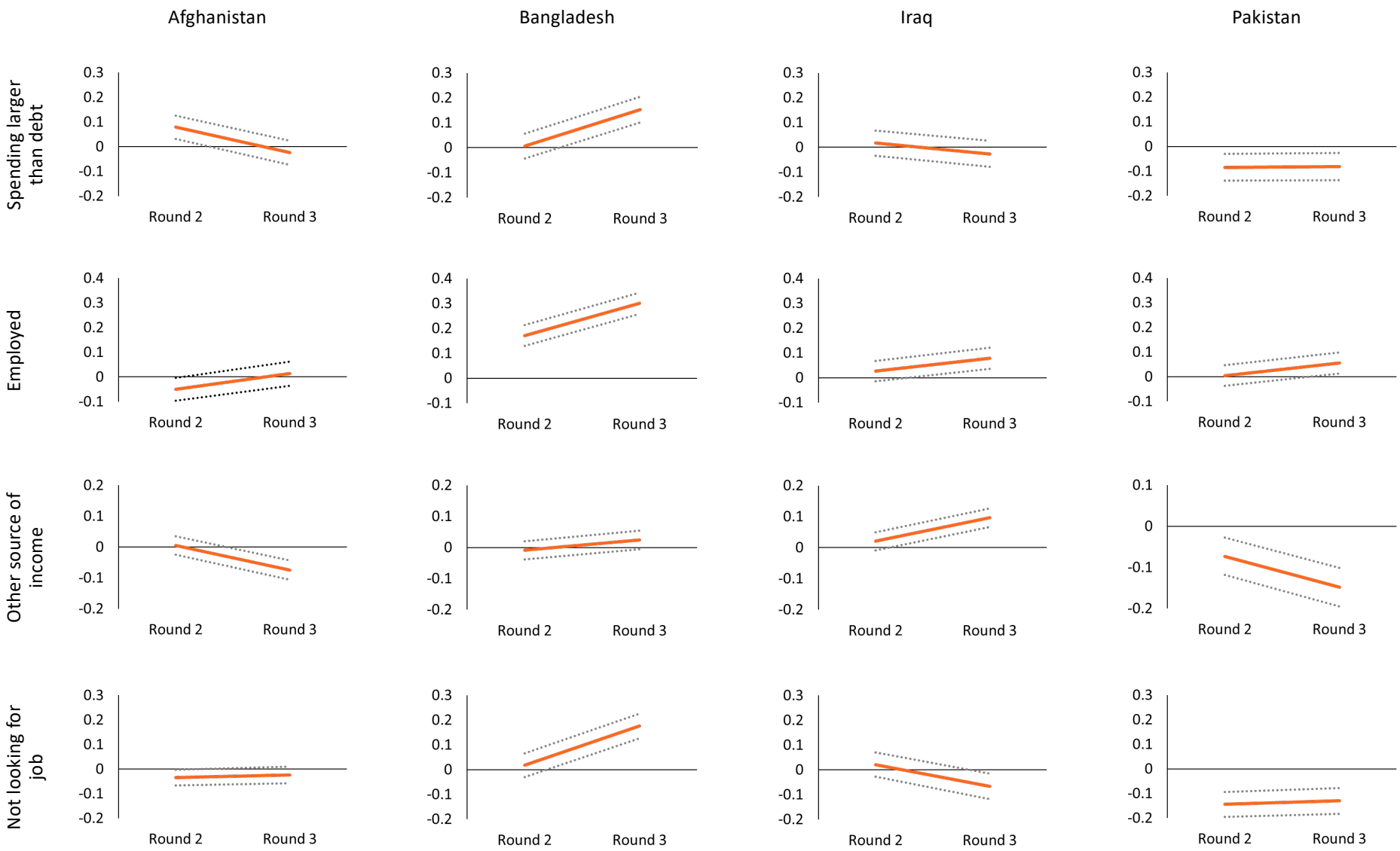
The results are consistent across indicators, suggesting that the results are not driven by a particular indicator. However, there are some small improvements in some of the indicators for Iraq and Pakistan. For instance, in both cases returnees have a slightly higher likelihood of employment in the third round of the survey compared to the first round. A broad interpretation of the results would suggest that those in Iraq are 8 percentage points more likely to be in employment by the third round of the survey (compared to the first round), while those in Pakistan are 6 percentage more likely. By comparison those in Bangladesh are 30 percentage points more likely to be in employment by the third round of the survey.

Chart 9A. Differences in various economic indicators between the first round of the survey (represented by the zero line) and the next two rounds of the survey, by country



Note: dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

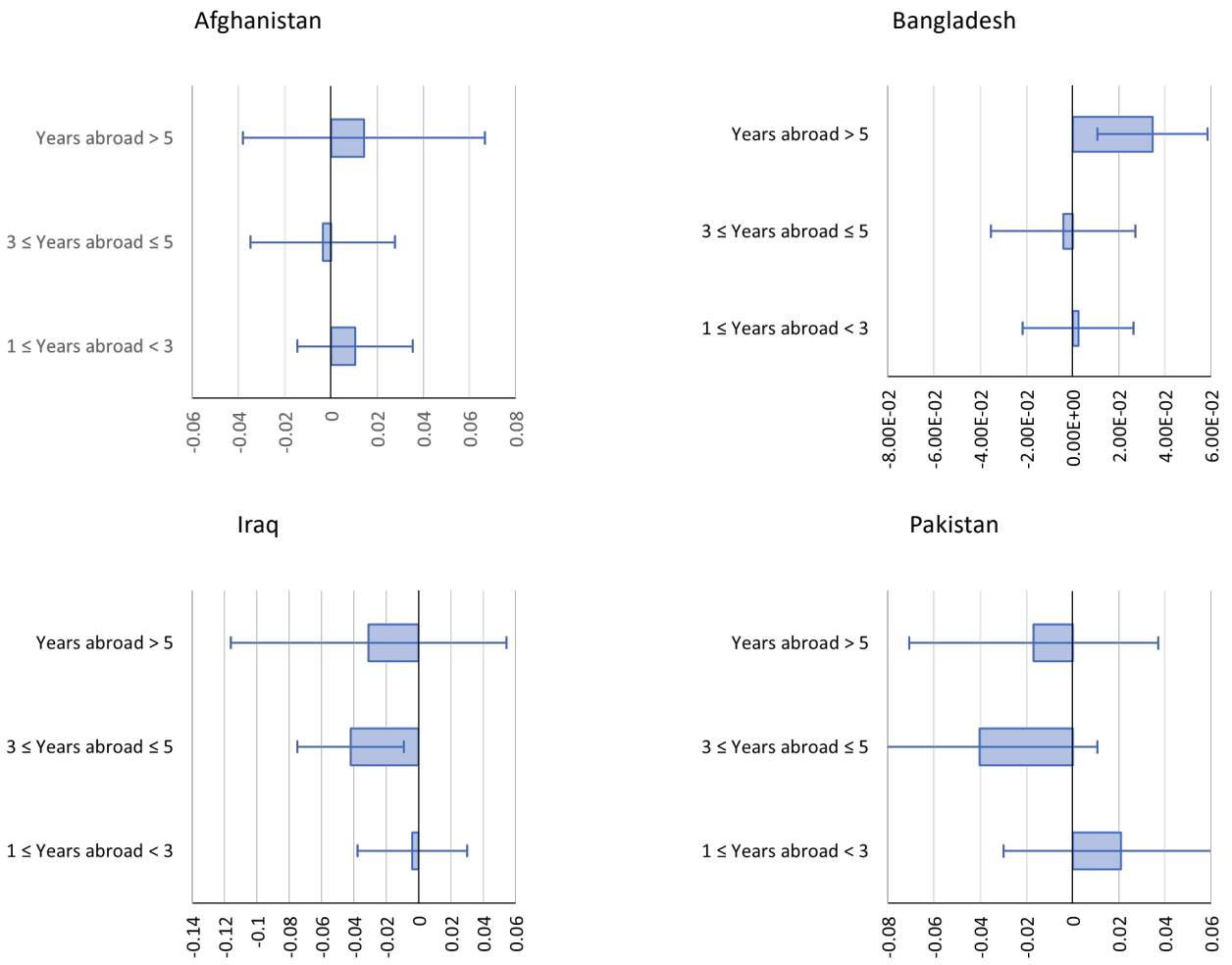
Chart 9B. Differences in various economic indicators between the first round of the survey (represented by the zero line) and the next two rounds of the survey, by country



Note: dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Chart 10 provides information on differences in satisfaction with current economic conditions between those who spent less than a year abroad and those who spent longer abroad. Those in Bangladesh who spent over five years abroad tend to have a higher likelihood of being satisfied with current economic conditions than those who spent less than a year abroad. Those in Iraq who spent three to five years abroad have a lower likelihood of being satisfied with current economic conditions. The results for other countries are not statistically significant.

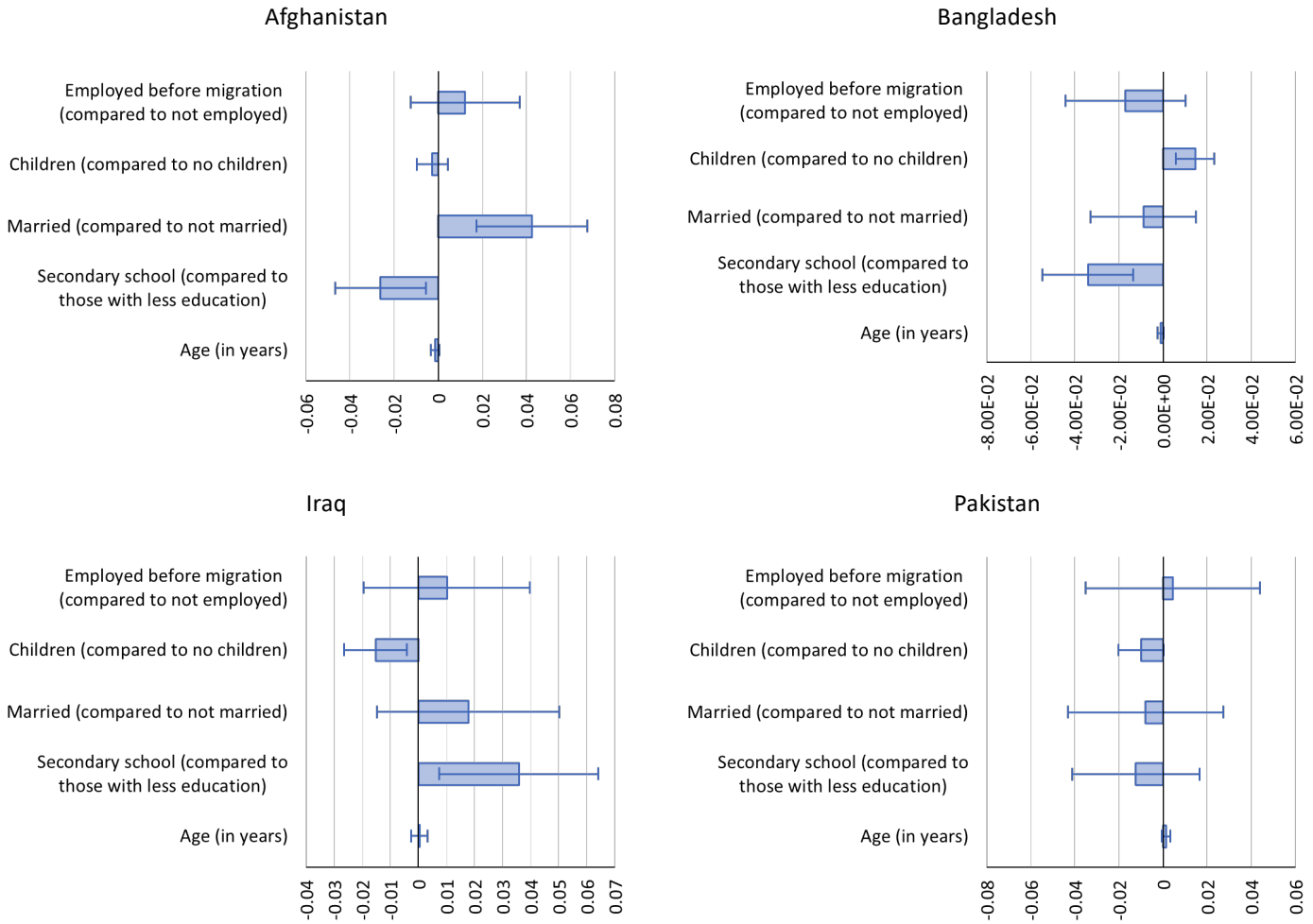
Chart 10. Differences in satisfaction with economic conditions between those who spent less than a year abroad and those who spent longer abroad, by country



Note: the error bars represent a 95% confidence interval.

Chart 11 reports on differences in satisfaction with current economic conditions across sociodemographic characteristics. It is still the case that secondary education is the variable for which we get more statistical significance across estimations. In Afghanistan and Bangladesh those with secondary education tend to be less satisfied with current economic conditions compared to those with less education. The opposite is true in Iraq, where those with secondary education tend to be more satisfied with current economic conditions. Other demographic indicators are statistically significant for some countries (for example, being married in Afghanistan, children in Iraq) and further analysis would be needed to uncover the mechanisms behind these results for each of the countries.

Chart 11. Differences in satisfaction with economic conditions across sociodemographic characteristics, by country



Note: the error bars represent a 95% confidence interval.

3.4 Finding 4

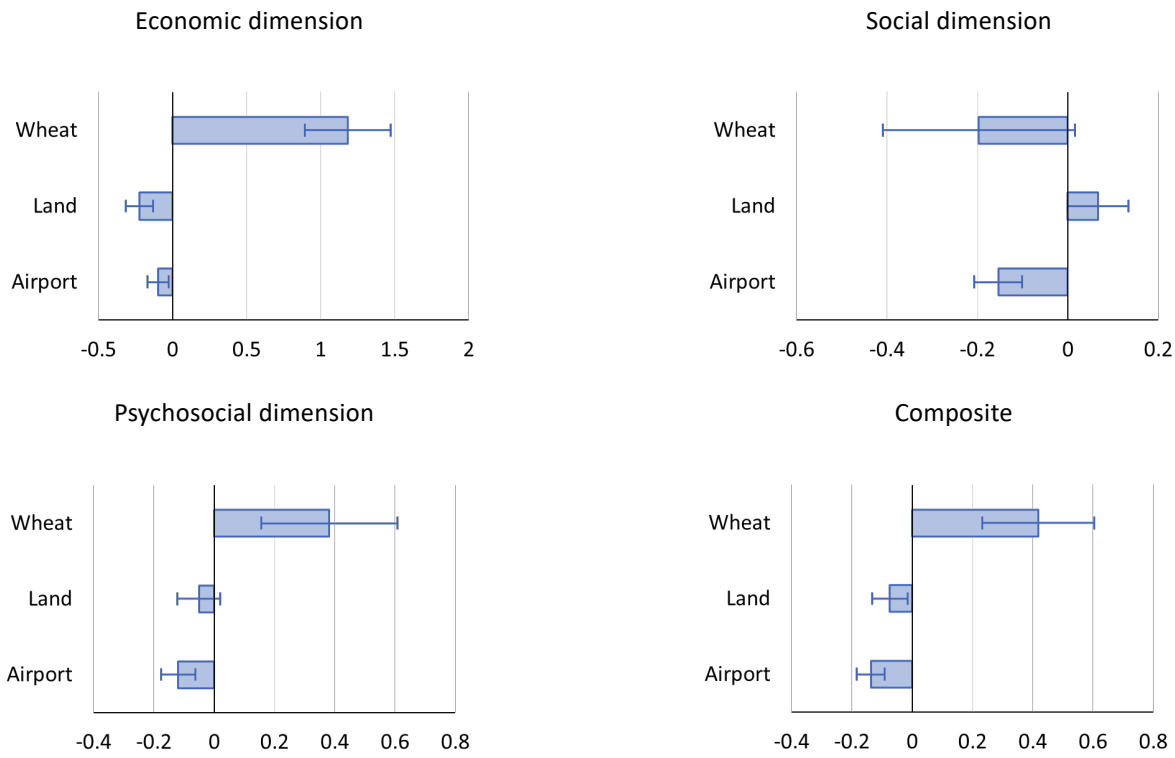
Closures of land borders and airports during the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the scores of returnees

This section explores the role of COVID-19 border closures and travelling restrictions in affecting the reintegration scores of returning migrants. The longitudinal nature of the RLS makes it a very useful dataset for this purpose.

In order to explore this aspect, we combine the RLS with IOM's Points of Entry (PoE) Database. The PoE Database collects information on the status of airports and border crossing points on a frequent basis. In particular, each point of entry is categorised as fully operational, partially operational and fully closed. The analysis relies on indicators which reflects the share of entry points (i.e., airports or land borders) that are closed in a given country and month. In this analysis, we also add information on monthly wheat flour prices per country from the World Food Programme (WFP) as food prices is another factor that changed substantially during the COVID-19 crisis. Unfortunately, the collection of information on the situation of points of entry in Afghanistan was seriously affected by the political situation of the country. Therefore, this country is excluded from the analysis in this section.

As suggested by Chart 12, the results indicate that closures of land borders and airports had a negative impact on the reintegration scores. Land border closures are more relevant for the economic dimension, while airport closures are more important for the social and psychosocial dimensions. However, when looking at the composite scores, both variables have a negative effect. Surprisingly, the effect of the wheat flour prices is positive. This could reflect broader dynamics in which this price level might reflect economic conditions (e.g., export markets).

Chart 12. Role of COVID-19 closures in airports and land borders



Note: the error bars represent a 95% confidence interval.

3.5 Limitations: weights, COVID-19 and sample decrease

The analysis has several limitations, including conceptual and practical issues. First, the study focuses on the nation state as the unit of analysis and is open to the criticism of methodological nationalism.[15] This unit of analysis was selected as the data collection was based on country of return. Second, the weights used were originally designed for the RSS and adjusted to the data available in the RLS. An alternative approach would have been to create new weights based on the RLS, but this would imply a loss of comparability with previous Knowledge Bites which rely on the RSS. Third, all results are influenced by the pandemic, and in the case of Afghanistan, the political transition by the De Facto Authorities (DFA) and its economic impact on the country. It is therefore not possible to speculate about alternative scenarios in a different local and global context. Finally, the sample decreases substantially for all three rounds of the survey and it is not possible to determine if those missing from the later rounds followed a different path than those retained in the sample.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the RLS indicates that there are substantial differences in the dimensional and composite scores of returnees in the different countries across the rounds of the survey. Moreover, for some dimensions and countries the changes were not linear, with an improvement in the second round being reversed in the third one. This highlights the need for a longitudinal perspective on sustainable reintegration outcomes and corresponding data collection efforts. A cross-sectional focus, looking at just one point in time, would miss many of these dynamics.

- **Recommendation 1: Increase efforts to collect longitudinal data on returnees, to provide a clearer picture on reintegration dynamics.**

The results also highlight the difficult situation that many returnees are experiencing in Afghanistan, particularly, in the economic dimension. However, the economic scores also deteriorated in Iraq and Pakistan, which calls for further interrogation of the reasons behind the dynamics for these countries. The results suggest that the deterioration in economic scores is reflected in the lack of progress in a broad range of economic indicators including satisfaction with current economic conditions, food security, and borrowing money. Those in Iraq and Pakistan are more likely to be in employment by the third round of the survey which suggests mixed economic reintegration patterns for those returning to these countries.

- **Recommendation 2: Increase focus on economic aspects of reintegration, as this dimension lags well behind other dimensions.**

There is also confirmation that the pandemic and, in particular, border and airport closures had a negative effect on the reintegration of returnees. While there was an expectation that this was the case based on reports from the field, there is scarce statistical evidence confirming the point. Border and airport closures could affect family reunification and livelihoods among many other factors. However, there is a need for further research in order to understand the mechanisms by which border closures affected returnees.

- **Recommendation 3: Increase research efforts to understand the link between airport/land borer closures and the well-being of returnees.**

Overall, it is clear that returnees need substantial support upon returning to their country of origin. Difficulties faced during the first years after return can have long-term consequences affecting the whole reintegration process and consequently the extent to which their reintegration will be sustained over time. Further surveys with returnees affected by the pandemic, will allow to determine if the results presented in this Knowledge Bite are merely a reflection of the COVID-19 context and if

[15] For more information, see https://www.jstor.org/stable/30037750

those affected will have different reintegration paths in the future.

- **Recommendation 4: Conduct additional rounds of the RLS and/or similar surveys which can shed light on the long-term implications of COVID-19 for the reintegration pathways of those who returned home in the context of the pandemic.**

While the results paint a grim picture of sustainable reintegration prospects, it is important to note that the results of this study might not be applicable to other circumstances, as we look at countries that are experiencing important political transformations and in the context of the pandemic. The reintegration process could be different in other situations and periods that allow greater emphasis on development cooperation. In this regard it is important to complement the reintegration process with other initiatives in the country of return, such as initiatives to measure poverty.

- **Recommendation 5: Strengthen the link between structural level reintegration and development cooperation in general**

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5. ANNEX

5.1 Regression equations

For chart 4, the analysis relies on the results from Equation (1). Here y_it is one of the dimension scores or the composite score, while α_i is the individual effect. This estimation takes advantage of the panel nature of the data and estimates fixed effects regressions which include as independent variables dummies for Round 2 (R2) and Round 3 (R3) of data collection. The estimation was conducted using all countries. In this case, the coefficients ρ_2 and ρ_3 provide information on the change in the score as we move across rounds of the survey (both relative to Round 1).

$$y_{it} = \alpha_i + \rho_2 R2_t + \rho_3 R3_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

The analysis continues with regressions without the individual effects, but that include other factors such as country of origin (BGD = Bangladesh, IRQ = Iraq, PAK = Pakistan) and sociodemographic factors (X_it):

$$y_{it} = \rho_2 R2_t + \rho_2 R3_i + \gamma_2 BGD_i + \gamma_3 IRQ_i + \gamma_4 PAK_i + \mathrm{B}X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

Chart 5, 6 and 7 present the results of estimating Equation (2) focusing on differences across countries (i.e., coefficients γ_2, γ_3 and γ_4) and sociodemographic factors, respectively.

For Chart 9, we conduct an estimation similar to that presented in (1), but replacing the dependent variable with one of the economic indicators and limiting the sample to one country at a time.

For Charts 10 and 11, we conduct an estimation similar to that presented in (3), but replacing the dependent variable with the indicator of satisfaction with the current economic situation and limiting the sample to one country at a time.

Finally, we add the information on land border closures, airport closures and wheat flour prices, and conduct an estimation similar to Equation (2) but with these additional independent variables and excluding Afghanistan from the sample (Chart 12). That is:

$$y_{it} = \rho_2 R2_t + \rho_2 R3_i + \gamma_2 BGD_i + \gamma_3 IRQ_i + \gamma_4 PAK_i + \emptyset_1 L_{it} + \emptyset_2 A_{it} + \emptyset_3 W_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (5)$$

Where L_it reflects land border closures, A_it reflects airport closures and W_it reflect wheat flour prices.

5.2 Definition of variables used

Table 5. Definition of variables used

Variables	Definition	Source
Age	In years.	RLS
Airport closures	Original variable was coded as: fully closed = 0, partially operational = 0.5 and fully operational = 1. Then all values for a given month were aggregated.	IOM PoE Database
Country	Dummies for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan.	RLS
Economic indicator 1: Satisfied economic situation	Original question: In your opinion, how satisfied are you with your current economic situation? Coding: "very satisfied" = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = "very unsatisfied".	RLS
Economic indicator 2: Not reduce quantity of food	Original question: During the last 6 months: how often have you had to reduce the quantity of food you eat because of its cost? Coding: "never" = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = "very often".	RLS
Economic indicator 3: Not reduce quality of food	Original question: During the last 6 months: how often have you had to reduce the quality of food you eat because of its cost? Coding: "never" = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = "very often".	RLS
Economic indicator 4: Not borrowed money	Original question: In the past 6 months, have you borrowed money to cover monthly expenses? Coding: No = 1, Yes = 0.	RLS
Economic indicator 5: Spending larger than debt	Original question: During the last 6 months in your country: which amount is bigger: your spending or your debt? Coding: "spending is larger" = 1, "debt is larger" = 0.	RLS
Economic indicator 6: Employed	Original question: What is your current employment status? Options: Employed (private sector), Employed (public sector/government), Daily wages, Contractor, Self-employed, Unemployed (looking for work), inactive (not looking for work) Student, Student and work (combine d), Housewife, Other (please specify, open answer), Do not want to answer, Don't know. Coding: Employed = 1, Otherwise = 0.	RLS
Economic indicator 7: Other source of income	Original question: Do you have another source of income? Coding: Yes = 1, No = 0.	
Economic indicator 8: Looking for a job	Original question: Are you currently looking for a job? Coding: No = 1, Yes = 0.	
Employed before migration	Yes = 1, otherwise = 0.	
Land border closures	Original variable was coded as: fully closed = 0, partially operational = 0.5 and fully operational = 1. Then all values for a given month were aggregated.	
Length of stay abroad	Dummies for different lengths: 1-3, 3-5, 5+	RLS
Marital status	Married = 1, otherwise = 0.	RLS
Round	Dummies for round of the survey.	RLS
Secondary schooling	Secondary level education and above= 1, otherwise = 0.	RLS
Wheat flour	Price per KG. Original value was in local currency and then standardised to US dollars using monthly exchange rates.	WFP

Notes: * "I do not know" and "I do not want to answer" = 0.5 for all economic indicators.

5.3 Regression tables

Table 6 - Estimates for Chart 4

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)
	Economic
Round 1	-0.0011
	(0.0049)
Round 2	-0.0055
	(0.0051)
	Social
Round 1	0.0246***
	(0.0041)
Round 2	-0.0003
	(0.0042)
	Psychosocial
Round 1	0.0128***
	(0.0038)
Round 2	-0.0040
	(0.0040)
	Composite
Round 1	0.0138***
	(0.0031)
Round 2	-0.0052
	(0.0032)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.

Table 7 - Estimates for Chart 5, 6 and 7

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)			
	Economic	Social	Psychosocial	Composite
Bangladesh	0.1090***	0.0646***	0.1120***	0.1205***
	(0.0075)	(0.0062)	(0.0063)	(0.0051)
Iraq	0.1330***	0.0335***	0.0012	0.0609***
	(0.0072)	(0.0059)	(0.0061)	(0.0049)
Pakistan	0.2241***	0.0656***	-0.0202***	0.1062***
	(0.0080)	(0.0066)	(0.0067)	(0.0054)
Age	0.0007*	0.0007**	-0.0004	0.0002
	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Secondary school	-0.0135***	-0.0027	-0.0165***	-0.0123***
	(0.0052)	(0.0043)	(0.0044)	(0.0036)
Married	0.0062	-0.0036	0.0052	0.0006
	(0.0062)	(0.0051)	(0.0052)	(0.0042)
Children	-0.0051***	-0.0047***	0.0002	-0.0032**
	(0.0019)	(0.0016)	(0.0016)	(0.0013)
Employed before	0.0188***	-0.0060	0.0009	0.0057
	(0.0063)	(0.0052)	(0.0053)	(0.0043)
Abroad 1 to 3	0.0123*	0.0256***	-0.0100*	0.0084*
	(0.0065)	(0.0054)	(0.0055)	(0.0044)
Abroad 3 to 5	-0.0031	0.0026	-0.0601***	-0.0252***
	(0.0072)	(0.0060)	(0.0061)	(0.0049)
Abroad 5+	0.0252***	0.0074	-0.0167**	0.0011
	(0.0085)	(0.0070)	(0.0071)	(0.0058)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.

Table 8 - Estimates for Chart 8

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)			
	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Iraq	Pakistan
	Economic			
Round 1	0.0049	0.0458***	-0.0035	-0.0767***
	(0.0072)	(0.0095)	(0.0102)	(0.0114)
Round 2	-0.0799***	0.1493***	-0.0192*	-0.0923***
	(0.0076)	(0.0099)	(0.0106)	(0.0116)
	Social			
Round 1	0.0519***	0.0119	0.0028	0.0231**
	(0.0079)	(0.0078)	(0.0071)	(0.0094)
Round 2	-0.0055	0.0051	-0.0416***	0.0463***
	(0.0083)	(0.0081)	(0.0074)	(0.0096)
	Psychosocial			
Round 1	0.0528***	0.0148***	-0.0155*	-0.0237***
	(0.0075)	(0.0057)	(0.0092)	(0.0082)
Round 2	0.0117	0.0377***	-0.0554***	-0.0314***
	(0.0078)	(0.0060)	(0.0096)	(0.0084)
	Composite			
Round 1	0.0435***	0.0233***	-0.0076	-0.0244***
	(0.0060)	(0.0049)	(0.0064)	(0.0070)
Round 2	-0.0303***	0.0613***	-0.0428***	-0.0182**
	(0.4942)	(0.0051)	(0.0067)	(0.0072)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.

Table 9. Estimates for Chart 9

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)			
	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Iraq	Pakistan
	Satisfied economic situation			
Round 1	0.0409***	0.0253 ***	0.0219*	-0.0367***
	(0.0108)	(0.0096)	(0.0128)	(0.0139)
Round 2	-0.1893 ***	0.0701***	0.0256*	-0.0595 ***
	(0.0113)	(0.0099)	(0.0133)	(0.0142)
	Not reduce quantity of food			
Round 1	0.0272 ***	0.0245*	-0.0531***	-0.0466***
	(0.0095)	(0.0130)	(0.0163)	(0.0148)
Round 2	-0.1128***	0.1331***	-0.1040***	-0.0494***
	(0.0100)	(0.0135)	(0.0170)	(0.0152)
	Not reduce quality of food			
Round 1	0.0268 ***	0.0744***	-0.0654***	-0.0556***
	(0.0098)	(0.0125)	(0.0158)	(0.0156)
Round 2	-0.0971***	0.1278***	-0.1397***	-0.0694***
	(0.0103)	(0.0130)	(0.0165)	(0.0159)
	Not borrowed money			
Round 1	-0.0348**	0.0595***	-0.0654**	-0.1458***
	(0.0144)	(0.0228)	(0.0265)	(0.0282)
Round 2	-0.0897***	0.1980***	-0.0931***	-0.2123***
	(0.0151)	(0.0237)	(0.0277)	(0.0288)
	Spending larger than debt			
Round 1	0.0787***	0.0070	0.0171	-0.0843***
	(0.0237)	(0.0253)	(0.0258)	(0.0278)
Round 2	-0.0242	0.1535***	-0.0261	-0.0814***
	(0.0249)	(0.0262)	(0.0269)	(0.0284)
	Employed			
Round 1	-0.0500**	0.1716 ***	0.0268	0.0051
	(0.0239)	(0.0209)	(0.0207)	(0.0213)
Round 2	0.0132	0.3002***	0.0786***	0.0553**
	(0.0251)	(0.0217)	(0.0216)	(0.0218)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.

Table 9. Continued

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)			
	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Iraq	Pakistan
	Other source of income			
Round 1	0.0045	-0.0087	0.0203	-0.0729***
	(0.0152)	(0.0148)	(0.0148)	(0.0232)
Round 2	-0.0751***	0.0239	0.0963***	0.0232***
	(0.0159)	(0.0153)	(0.0154)	(0.0237)
	Looking for job			
Round 1	-0.0348**	0.0175	0.0214	-0.1444***
	(0.0163)	(0.0245)	(0.0249)	(0.0261)
Round 2	-0.0243	0.1760***	-0.0664**	-0.1298***
	(0.0171)	(0.0254)	(0.0260)	(0.0267)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.

Table 10. Estimates for Chart 10 and 11

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)			
	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Iraq	Pakistan
Age	-0.0014	-0.001	0.0004	0.0013
	(0.0009)	(0.001)	(0.0015)	(0.0010)
Secondary school	-0.0262**	-0.034***	0.0358**	-0.0123
	(0.0104)	(0.010)	(0.0145)	(0.0147)
Married	0.0425***	-0.009	0.0177	-0.0079
	(0.0128)	(0.012)	(0.0166)	(0.0180)
Children	-0.0027	0.015***	-0.0153***	-0.0099*
	(0.0037)	(0.004)	(0.0057)	(0.0052)
Employed before	0.0122	-0.017	0.0102	0.0044
	(0.0126)	(0.014)	(0.0151)	(0.0202)
Abroad 1 to 3	0.0104	0.002	-0.0039	0.0211
	(0.0127)	(0.012)	(0.0172)	(0.0260)
Abroad 3 to 5	-0.0036	-0.004	-0.0422**	-0.0403
	(0.0159)	(0.016)	(0.0169)	(0.0261)
Abroad 5+	0.0143	0.035***	-0.0309	-0.0168
	(0.0268)	(0.012)	(0.0435)	(0.0275)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%

Table 11. Estimates for Chart 12

Variables	Coefficient (standard error)			
	Economics	Social	Psychosocial	Composite
Airport closure	-0.0988***	-0.1536***	-0.1192***	-0.1373***
	(0.0367)	(0.0269)	(0.0287)	(0.0236)
Land closure	-0.2231***	0.0664*	-0.0505	-0.0745**
	(0.0466)	0.0342)	(0.0365)	(0.0300)
Wheat flour price	1.1850***	-0.1968*	0.3822***	0.4179***
	(0.1477)	(0.1085)	(0.1157)	(0.0950)

Notes: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.

5.4 Reintegration assistance provided in each of the countries

Table 12. Reintegration assistance provided in each of the countries

Country of origin	Returns from	Reintegration assistance
Bangladesh	Greece	Cash assistance
	Libya	
Pakistan	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Cash assistance upon arrival and/or depending on the returnees' reintegration needs in kind assistance (e.g. dairy cattle, equipment for business)
	Germany	
	Greece	
Iraq	Finland	Cash assistance
	Greece	In-kind: small businesses, job-placement, education, medical (treatment or medication), housing (rent or housing material)
	Germany	Cash assistance and/or in kind which varied across projects.
Afghanistan	Austria	Cash assistance and/or in kind which varied across projects.
	Belgium	
	Germany	
	Greece	
	Türkiye	