



Separated Families – who stays, who goes and why?

Key messages

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Why separated families?

- Quantitative data on **who** arrives in Europe and who seeks asylum is already available - we know family separation is widespread
- However, limited qualitative data is available to understand how decisions are made **within families**, and how migration affects the situation, needs, intentions and aspirations of those who stay

Approach

What? Qualitative research on the experience of families separated by migration, in which one or more members is in the EU while others stayed behind. Specifically:

- How do families decide who stays and who goes?
- How does migration affect those left behind?

Methodology

Who? Top three nationalities among recent migrants to Europe: Afghan, Iraqi, and Syrian families

How? 90 individual interviews with purposively selected family members “left behind” in five Middle Eastern countries.

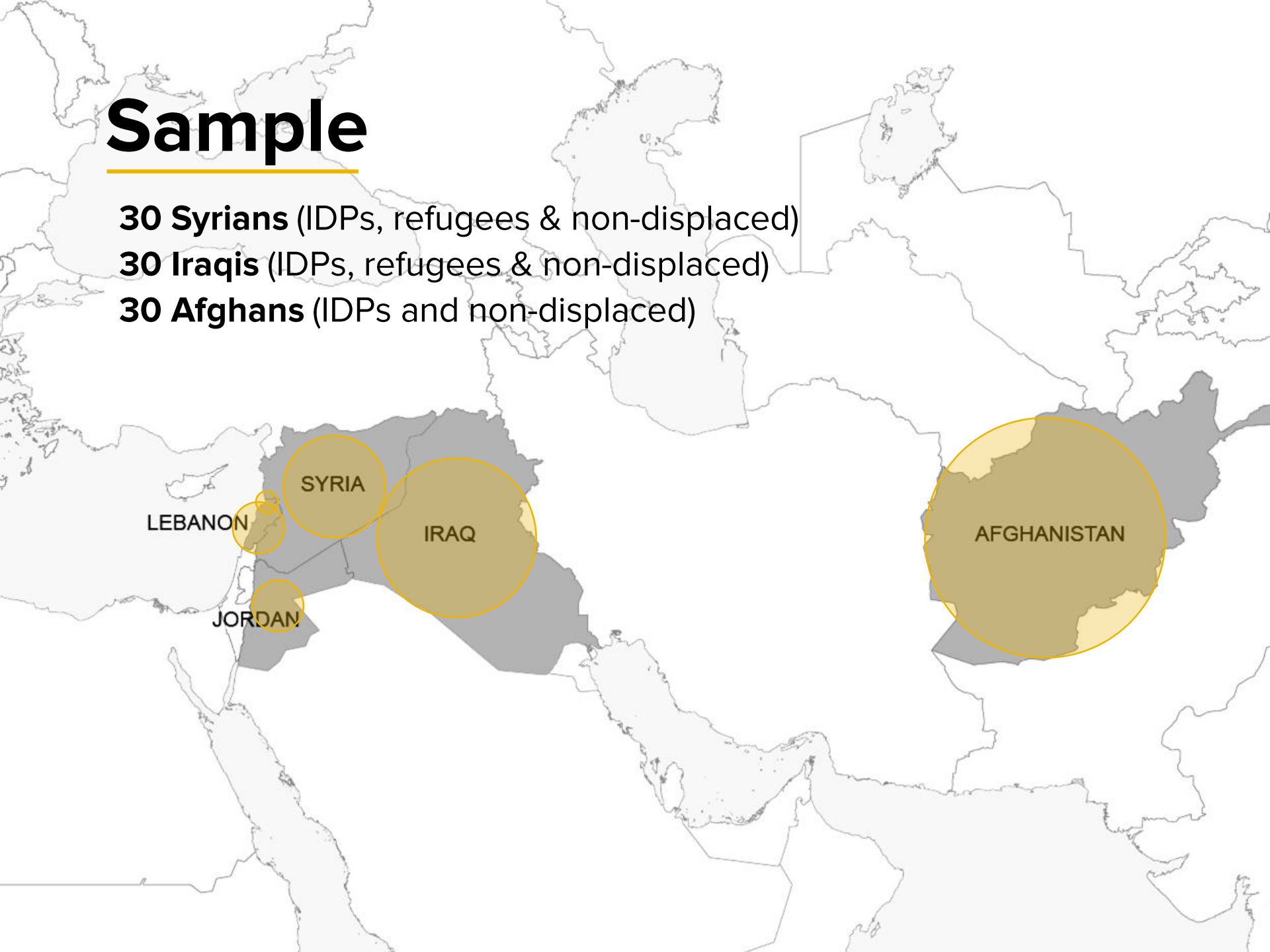
Limitations: Qualitative research; focus on departures from 2013-2016; Turkey not included.

Sample

30 Syrians (IDPs, refugees & non-displaced)

30 Iraqis (IDPs, refugees & non-displaced)

30 Afghans (IDPs and non-displaced)



The decision to migrate

- **Irregular migration is a coping strategy and last resort** made in response to a multiple, often overlapping challenges, to minimise risk as much as possible
- **Drivers of migration are multiple and inter-related**, while the decision to stay is often made at an individual level
- **Not everyone who migrates to Europe plans to reunify with family**. Some families plan for a temporary separation others always intended to stay
- **Decisions within families were mostly joint**, even if not all members of the family ever intended to leave, and migration strategies are developed with care to limit risk as much as possible

Effects on those left behind

- **Contingency planning** plays a crucial role in determining the well-being of those who remained, yet timeframes are frequently underestimated
- When the **main bread-winner or head of family leaves**, those left behind are generally more vulnerable than prior to migration. Some individuals within families often suffer disproportionately.
- **Families intending to rely on remittances** from Europe can easily wait two years before support arrives
- **Family migration strategies are influenced by an understanding of policy and risk.** Slow processing times and sudden changes can prolong separation and have negative consequences on those who remain.

Thank you

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