

# After assisted return from Germany: A study on long-term reintegration

StarthilfePlus Study II accompanying the German federal programme StarthilfePlus (2023)

**Programme – StarthilfePlus:** In February 2017, the Federal Government introduced the StarthilfePlus reintegration assistance programme as a complement to the Federal programme Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-seekers in Germany/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (REAG/GARP). The programme supports destitute migrants, including those who are obliged to leave the country, with flexible support services for return to selected receiving countries.

## Study II – StarthilfePlus:

- Explores migrant reintegration experiences in their countries and communities of origin from structural, economic and psychosocial perspectives.
- Provides insights into the links between received StarthilfePlus assistance and reintegration experiences.
- Is based on a longitudinal study design with the participation of 906 returnees, eight months and three years after their return, in nine countries: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.\*
- Is based on a mixed-methods approach and includes 20 interviews with women returnees in Armenia, Iraq and Lebanon.

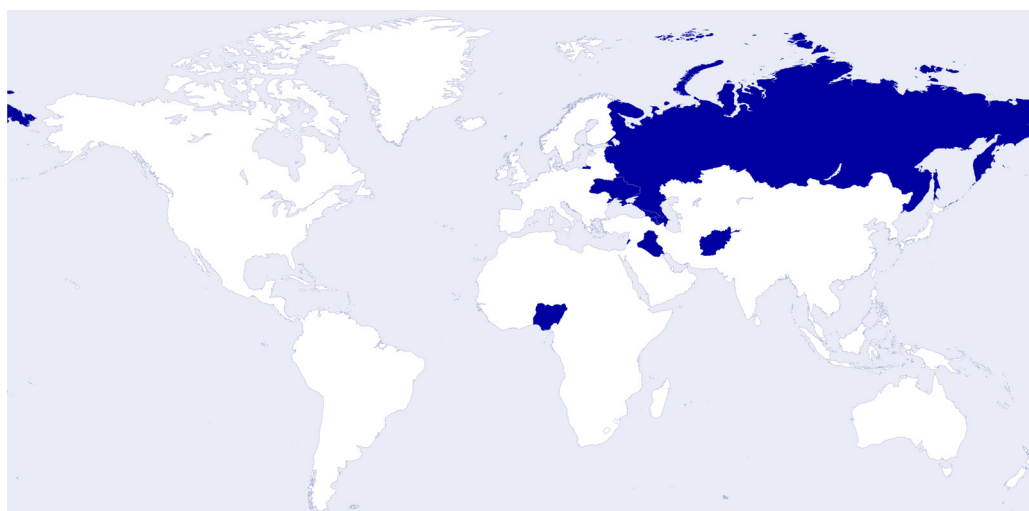
## RESEARCH DESIGN

Return (2017–2018)

First survey  
(approx. 8 months post-return)

Second survey  
(approx. 3 years post-return)

Source: StarthilfePlus Study II, own depiction.



Source: IOM, 2023.\*\*

**Note:** This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

\* In some countries, the living conditions have changed significantly since the time of data collection, such as in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

\*\* Countries of return included in the StarthilfePlus Study II are shaded in blue. This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.


The StarthilfePlus Study II focuses on longer-term reintegration experiences of returnees. For this, 906 returnees who returned with StarthilfePlus assistance in 2017–2018 participated in two surveys; the first took place approximately eight months, and the second about three years after return. All responses are weighted.



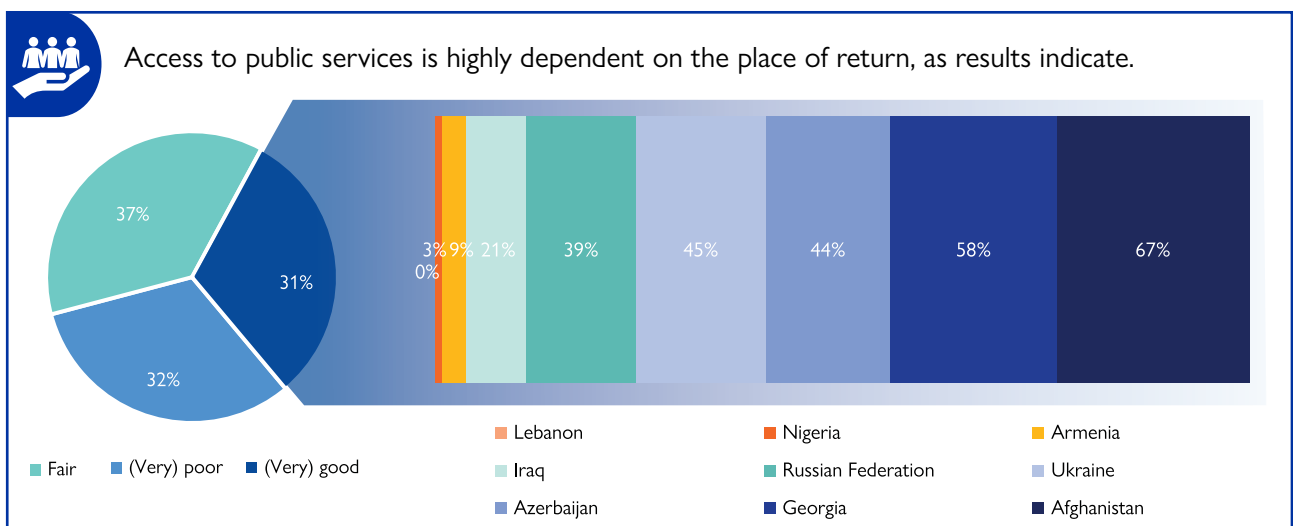
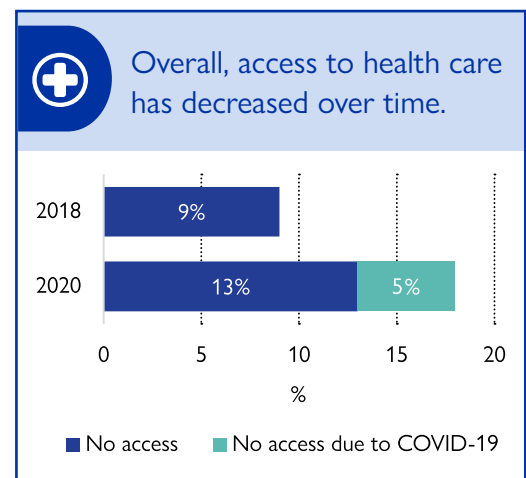
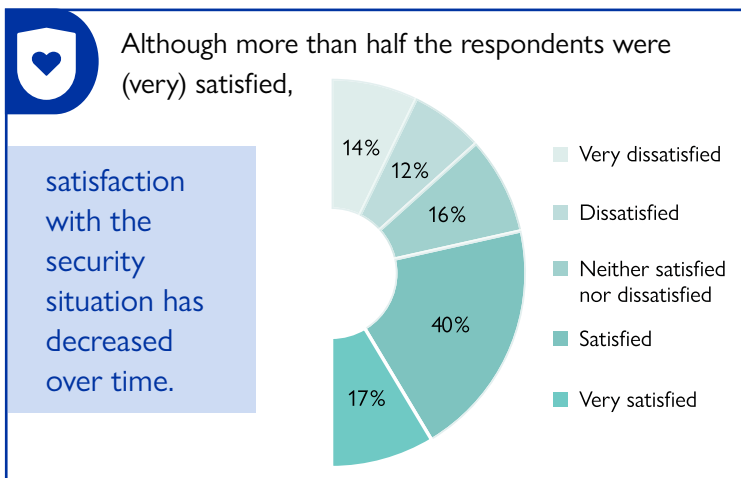
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The first survey, conducted between 2018 and 2019, focused on the motives and factors influencing return decisions, how returnees used the financial assistance and how they rated this assistance overall. The responses of over 1,300 returnees were communicated in the StarthilfePlus Study I.

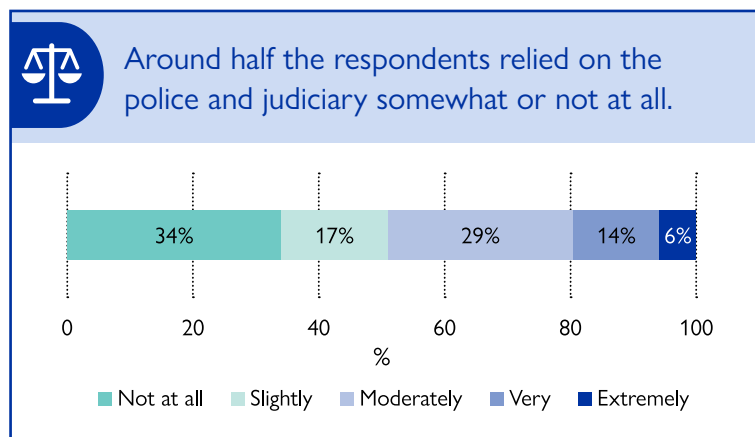
The second survey was conducted between 2020 and 2021 and examined reintegration experiences approximately three years after return. That is, whether returnees were able to establish the economic, structural and psychosocial relationships necessary to secure life, livelihood and dignity, as well as participation in society. This includes the living conditions, further mobility, the use of and satisfaction with the assistance, as well as additional needs.

 To date, women have not been equally represented in return and reintegration research and practice. To gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges women faced during reintegration, in-depth guided interviews were conducted with women returnees.

### STRUCTURAL REINTEGRATION




## AFTER ASSISTED RETURN FROM GERMANY: A STUDY ON LONG-TERM REINTEGRATION



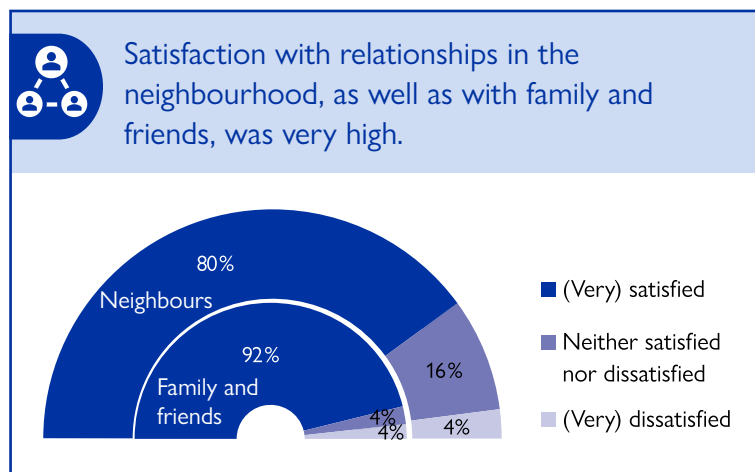
 Three in four respondents rated their housing situation as satisfactory.





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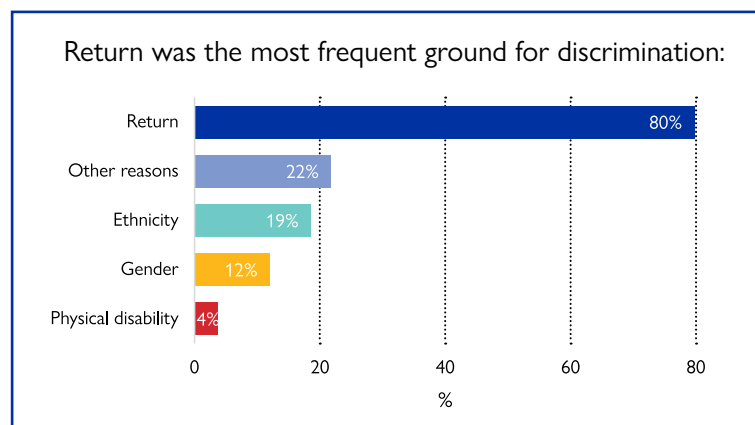
 Returnees' opportunities in reintegration may be limited if structural barriers persist. Integration measures that improve access to health care, including psychological support, as well as education and trainings, are of great importance.


## PSYCHOSOCIAL REINTEGRATION



 30 per cent have experienced discrimination after their return sometime, often or very often.

38 per cent of the study participants felt little or no sense of belonging to the community at the place of return.



 Around one in four respondents reported the wish for specialized psychological support.

34 per cent of women indicated a wish for psychological support, while among male respondents, this concerned only 19 per cent.

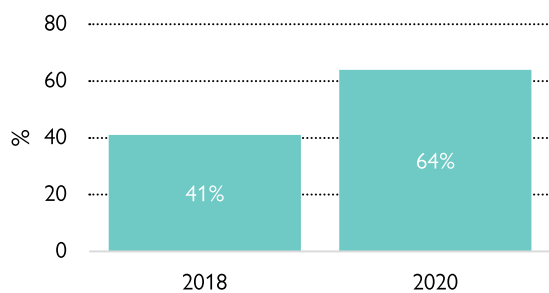


Reducing discrimination and stigmatization of returnees and promoting equal opportunities through dialogue initiatives on migration and return should be strengthened. Civil society organizations could contribute to social cohesion through awareness-raising programmes on the rights and needs of returnees and local community alike.

## ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION



The share of people with occupation between 18 and under 65 years of age increased over time:



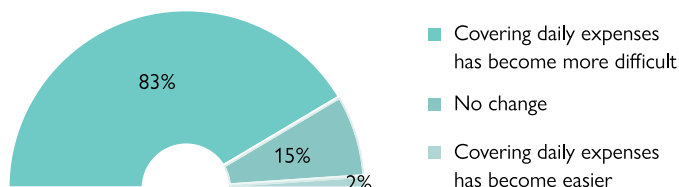
Around half the respondents with occupation were searching for different employment.

The main reason given was dissatisfaction with salary.



The COVID-19 pandemic had a strong impact on the economic situation of returnees.

Over 70 per cent of respondents have lost income since the outbreak of the pandemic.



75 per cent of respondents had difficulties covering their daily needs, even when generating income.



Overall, more than a third of respondents said they could borrow money if needed.

However, this differed significantly depending on gender, with women (26%) having less access to loans than men (39%).



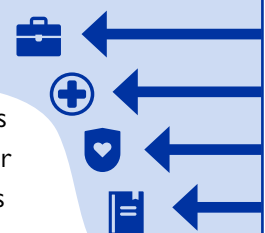
Income-generating measures such as the promotion of employment in return regions and promotion of self-employment combined with access to microcredit should be further developed.

## MOTIVES FOR ONWARD MIGRATION



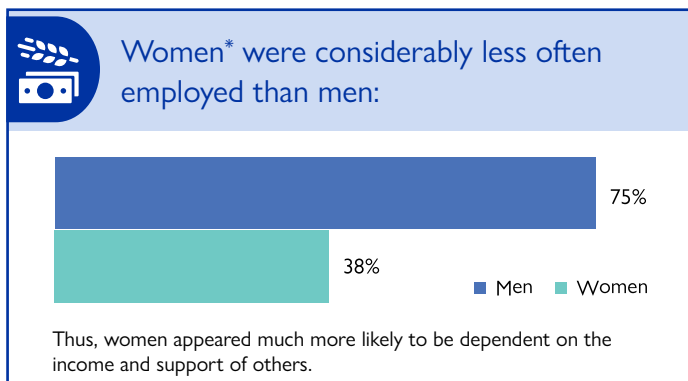
For respondents who have thought about onward migration, economic factors were among the most frequently cited reasons.

Especially if the income was not sufficient to cover the cost of living, study participants hoped for better employment prospects elsewhere. Structural conditions such as poor health care or sensing a lack of security were other reasons. Educational opportunities abroad were also an important reason for considering onward migration.

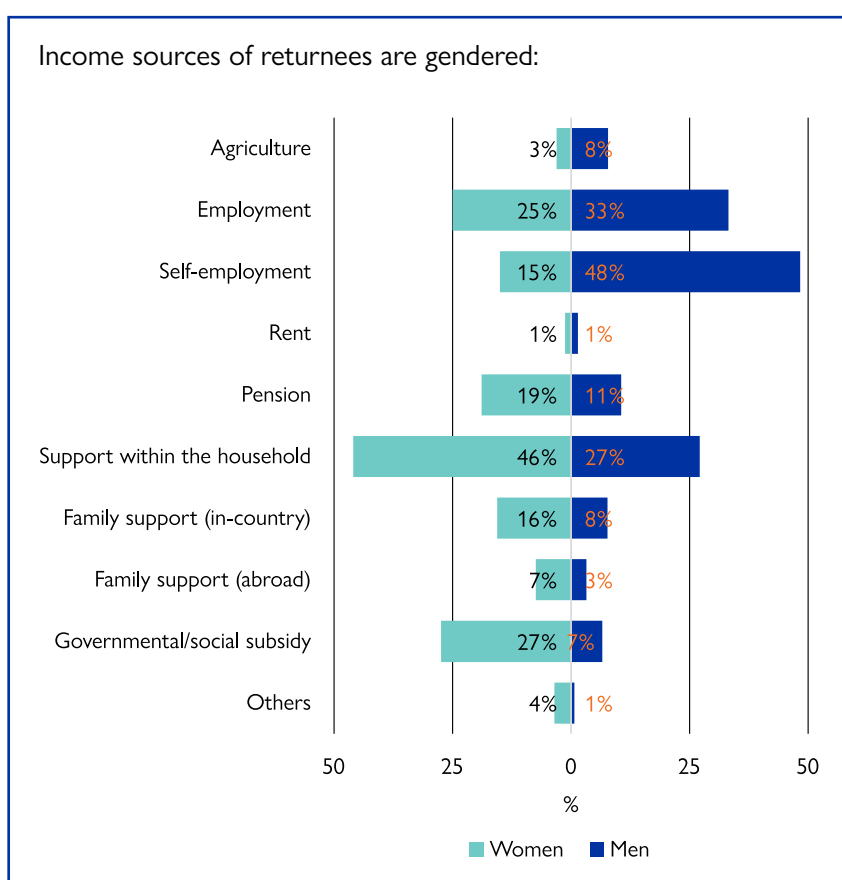


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### WOMEN EXPERIENCE GENDER-SPECIFIC REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES



“ I wanted to finish my studies, but I could not. I also wanted to work. The first year, I worked in a tailor shop and was fired. I have a son. There was no one to look after him when I was working, so I took him to work with me all the time, every day. That was the reason for the dismissal. ”



Barriers to women's reintegration into the labour market arise from lack of opportunities, as well as from (unpaid) work in the home, childcare or caring for sick family members. Women working in the service industry or in sales frequently lost their jobs due to business closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

 Women returnees had less access to health care than men, in part due to restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women returnees predominantly cared for the health of their children, partners or close relatives. Faced with the high cost of medical care, the women interviewed tended to put their own medical needs on the back-burner and did not seek medical care at all or sought it at a later stage.



\* The approach of this study employs binary gender categories and therefore does not depict the full diversity of gender.



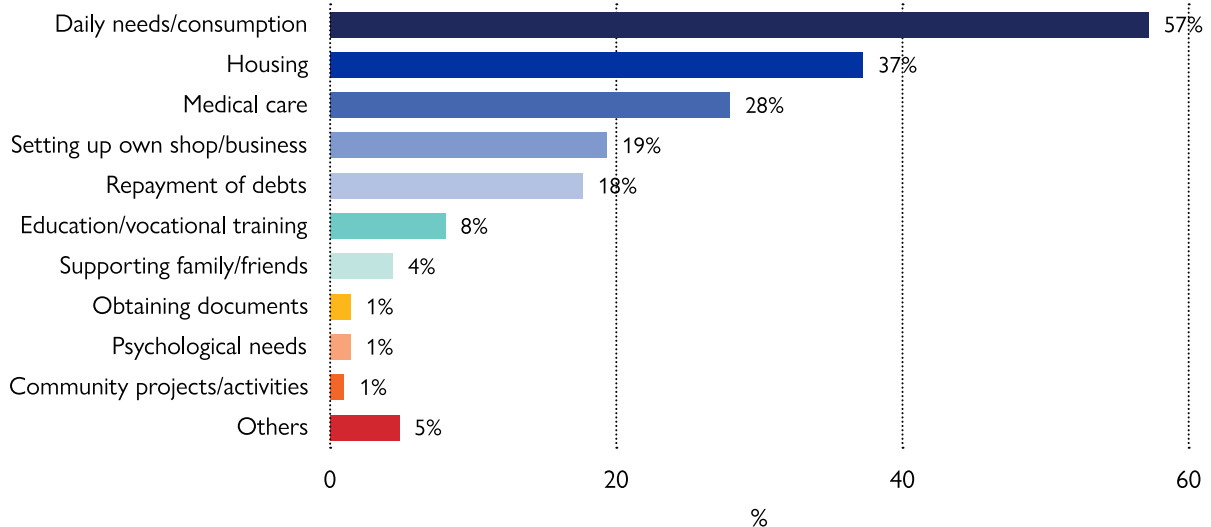
Barriers to the participation in the labour market and the community of returning women should be identified and addressed through programme components. Women's participation is an important priority in the context of international cooperation, and returning women should be given greater consideration in transnational and regional efforts in the field of migration.

## SATISFACTION WITH THE STARTHILFEPLUS ASSISTANCE



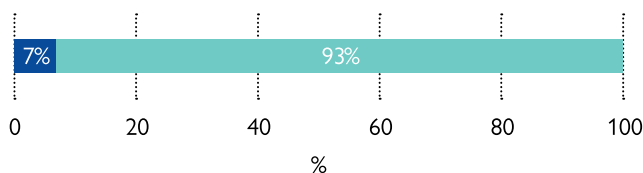
Approximately three years after return, 85 per cent of respondents continued to be satisfied with the assistance received through the programme.

The financial assistance provided by the StarthilfePlus programme was important for most respondents to cover daily needs:



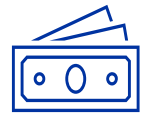
Despite the high level of satisfaction with the assistance, additional needs remain.

Among respondents that voiced the need for additional assistance, more than half indicated income and/or income-generating support.



■ No further support needed ■ Further support needed

87% Cash



59% Business establishment



54% Finding employment



## AFTER ASSISTED RETURN FROM GERMANY: A STUDY ON LONG-TERM REINTEGRATION



Strengthening regional coordination on reintegration can promote long-term reintegration prospects. A process-oriented holistic approach can also improve assistance throughout the return and reintegration continuum.

### REINTEGRATION CANNOT BE REDUCED TO INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

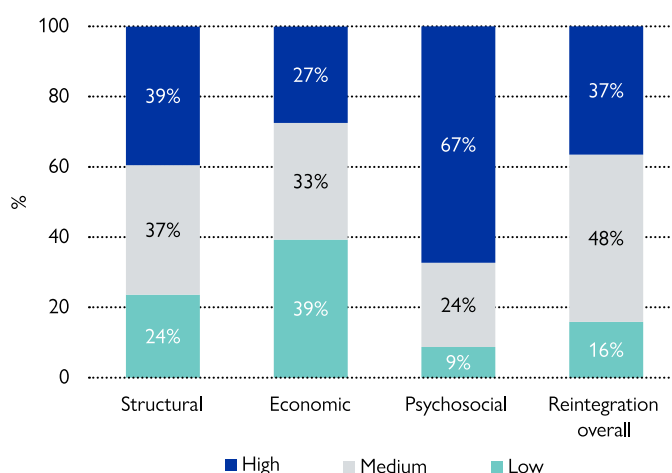
Approximately three years after return, more than one third of participants have achieved a high reintegration level.

The reintegration level differs both between and within national contexts.



Addressing specific target groups such as women, older persons or people living in rural areas could improve the added value of return and reintegration programmes.

The reintegration index\* depicts different results across the three dimensions:



\* An index calculated on the basis of 16 indicators (see QR code for the full report).

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