



IOM International Organization for Migration



AFGHANISTAN

MAPPING EXERCISE
LONDON, FEBRUARY 2007



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The aim of this Mapping Report is to guide IOM's outreach activities and communications strategies. The report does not purport to be exhaustive. The mapping consultant who conducted the exercise and wrote the report on behalf of IOM has taken every effort to ensure accuracy in his/her reporting and the views expressed in this report are his/hers. IOM cannot be held responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies.

INTRODUCTION

AIM, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE MAPPING EXERCISE

The aim of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), in carrying out this mapping exercise, was to identify the location of potential beneficiaries of IOM's voluntary return programmes, which are open to asylum seekers and irregular migrants, as well as identify the main channels of information used by them. The ultimate goal of the mapping exercise is to help IOM improve its communications with foreign language communities in the United Kingdom through media articles, advertisements and presentations to community groups. The target group for this particular exercise was the Afghan diaspora living in the UK.

In order to carry out the mapping exercise, IOM designed a questionnaire with nineteen questions divided into two sections. The first section asks about media channels and other sources of information (e.g. voluntary organisations, religious centres, and festivals) that are available to Afghan communities living in the UK. The second section of the questionnaire requests specific baseline data from individual respondents about their age, gender, and length of residence.

An Afghan national was recruited on a part-time basis as a mapping consultant to engage directly with the Afghan community and collect information. The skills and background of the mapping consultant, such as his inside knowledge of the community and his established links with Afghans across the UK, proved to be an essential resource for the mapping exercise.

The mapping exercise was conducted using a variety of approaches to data collection. Information was gathered using in-depth interviews with multipliers¹ and other individuals, face-to-face and over the telephone, and by distributing questionnaires. During the initial phase of the project, the emphasis was on the multipliers as the main source of information. However, based on previous experience of working with the Afghan diaspora, it was decided that, although multipliers play a crucial role in the community, interviewing individuals should become the main target. As discussed later in the "Afghan diaspora in the UK" section, the political nature of community organisations means that people are less inclined to use their services.

¹ This term is used to indicate individuals or organisations that are well known amongst diaspora groups and can therefore play a key role in delivering valuable information.

Extensive networking was carried out to identify media, community organisations, mosques, temples and individuals who interact with Afghans and were prepared to distribute the questionnaire. The fieldwork took place between early October and December 2006. During this period, the consultant distributed 330 questionnaires, but only 50 questionnaires were completed. This number is made up of forty-seven individuals, including face to face interviews, and three multipliers who filled in the questionnaires. Despite the relatively low number of questionnaires received, the in-depth interviews proved to be a particularly rich vein of information. Questionnaires were disseminated in both Dari and Pashto.

The mapping exercise tried to gather a representative set of opinions from the questionnaires, in line with IOM's guidelines. But the nature of the Afghan community, and of community organisations, made it very difficult to reach everyone. Moreover, some of the community organisations are unknown to the Afghans living in their localities. In other cases, Afghans are reluctant to approach their community organisations. Both factors made it difficult to distribute the questionnaires. Nonetheless, the consultant did interview both individuals and multipliers, although most of the interviews with multipliers were by telephone.

This report includes charts and tables with all of the questionnaires' results. Additionally, IOM created a list of contacts which merges data gathered directly from completed questionnaires with information provided by the multipliers during in-depth interviews. This resource will be used by the Information team at IOM to disseminate information on the voluntary return programmes to Afghans across the UK².

²This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

1.1 COUNTRY PROFILE

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is landlocked, with thirty-four provinces which share borders with China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan³. The constitution adopted in 2004 provides that other minority languages should be recognised alongside Dari and Pashto.

Afghanistan entered a period of continuous civil war, and experienced various new regimes, after the overthrow of King Zahir Shah in the 1970s. The Soviet Union invaded the country in 1979 and installed its communist government. The Soviet Union was opposed by the US-backed Mujaheddin and eventually withdrew in 1989. The communist Afghan regime, itself, was toppled in 1992 after a prolonged war, which continued with a new wave of civil war between the Mujaheddin factions which took over government after the fall of the communists.

Taliban militia (conservative Islamic students) emerged from the civil war as the new power and took control of the country in 1996. The US launched a military campaign against them in 2001, overthrowing the Taliban. The 2001-2004 Transitional Administration, led by Hamid Karzai, adopted a new constitution in early 2004. The first elections were held in 2004 and Karzai became the first elected president of his country.

1.2 THE AFGHAN DIASPORA IN THE UK

There have been three waves of Afghan migration to the UK. The first began in the 1980s, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. It is estimated that the number of Afghans were considerably lower compared to other immigrant communities in the UK at that time.

The second wave began in the 1990s after the collapse of the communist regime and the beginning of the civil war, increasing the number of Afghans in the UK considerably. The third wave started with the emergence of the Taliban regime as the new government of the country.

The 2001 census estimated the total number of Afghans in the UK at around 15,000. IOM's mapping exercise estimated the number of Afghans living in the UK in the year 2006 at around 20,000. They either had a permanent status or their asylum applications were under consideration. There has also been a recent trend of Afghans staying in the UK illegally once their asylum case has been refused. Although the influx of Afghan immigration increased at the turn of century, just after the defeat of the Taliban, Afghans have now also started returning home.

Since 2002, IOM has, through its voluntary return programmes, assisted 1392 Afghans to return home. In a recent BBC online article, "Afghans resisting leaving UK", the number of Afghans living in the UK was said to have risen to around 36,000 since 1994⁴. However, the figures can not be verified as there is no official information on numbers of Afghans in this country. The majority of Afghans live in London, while others are scattered all over the UK.

Unlike other diaspora groups, Afghans as an immigrant community cannot be regarded as a well established ethnic minority group in the UK. Although numerous, they do not possess a communal structure. This has been exacerbated by the UK Government's dispersal policy over the past 5 years.

³ Home Office Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan October 2006: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

⁴ "Afghans resisting leaving UK" http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6212156.stm

Afghans have not, so far, set up popular media for accessing information. Most, if not all, other diaspora groups have at least a selection of media, magazines, newspapers, radio or television. The fact that the community is in exile from Afghanistan does not lead to cohesion – just as at home they are divided along ideological, regional and linguistic lines. Afghan community organisations are formed along the lines of ethnic, religious and political segregation. There is also generational conflict within the community. Afghans who arrived and settled in this country at a younger age have a strong inclination to integrate and use mainstream services but the older generation of Afghans, who are less inclined to use mainstream services, are faced with numerous problems.

As the population of Afghans in the UK increased, so did the number of community-based organisations. Several patterns in the formation of community organisations can be found -- socio-political, religious, and refugee-orientated. The first form of community organisation is predominantly political, with some social functions. They pursue their own political agenda, as well as celebrating cultural events and festivals. On the other hand, some have an almost purely social agenda, celebrating cultural and religious festivals and events. In addition, they are established on a local or regional basis. For example, the Afghan Youth and Family Association in Birmingham was established only for Afghan families living in the greater Birmingham area, and is designed to provide a venue for Afghan cultural exchange, as well as a support centre for the community as whole. It is important to note that some, if not all, of these organisations are run voluntarily or with limited funding.

A new trend has developed to establish religious organisations. For instance, the Afghan Islamic and Cultural Centre (London) has recently been formed with the intention of promoting religion among Afghans.

Finally, there are the refugee community organisations, such as the Afghan Refugee Welfare Centre, formed by Afghan asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK. These, and other types of organisations, have been formed in areas with a high concentration of Afghans. The Afghan community is disorganised and divided and there is not one single organisation, either an institution or an umbrella organisation, that has jurisdiction over all Afghans living in the UK.



2 MAPPING EXERCISE OUTCOMES

INFORMATION CHANNELS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to identify the main channels of information used by Afghans in the UK. The questions were divided into three categories: media; other sources of information; and information on other community groups. For all of these categories, the answers have been grouped. The contact details mentioned by the respondents in the questionnaire, or in interviews, about media, organisations, mosques, schools, restaurants, and shops, were merged and organised in a structured way, together with the contact details provided by multipliers⁵. The contact list should be regarded as an important element in any action plan for IOM to raise awareness about voluntary return programmes amongst the Afghan community in the UK⁶.

A closely related aim was also served whilst conducting the mapping exercise: to both inform and raise interest amongst Afghan community leaders and organisations about on-going IOM programmes. This becomes clear in subsequent sections of this report. The Afghan community in the UK is, on the whole, well-informed about IOM's programmes, since large numbers of the Afghan diaspora have used its services. That said, disseminating information on IOM programmes in the course of the mapping exercise has also provided an opportunity to clarify some misunderstanding about IOM's projects and policies.

2.2 MEDIA COMPREHENSION

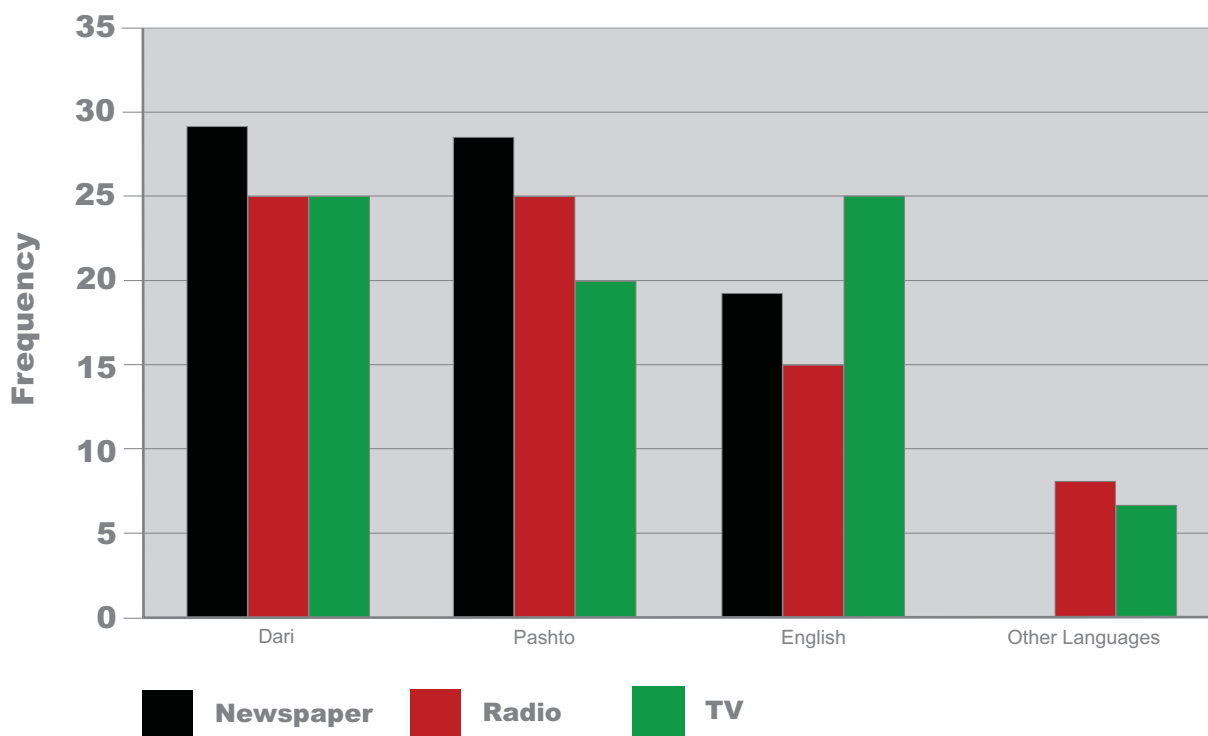
It is important to highlight two significant issues that arose during the in-depth interviews with individual participants and multipliers. First, there is a huge generational gap among Afghans living in the UK. The younger generation is more inclined to integrate in society by learning English and using mainstream services. By contrast, the older generation is less likely to integrate and is reluctant to learn English. They access information mostly in their own language. This is reflected in the first section of the questionnaire.

The second issue is literacy. A number of the individuals who were interviewed asked the consultant to complete the questionnaires for them, because they could not read. Most Afghans who are unable to read or write are from the older generation but there are also some young people who cannot. It would seem that getting a job rather than an education is their main priority.

⁵ This term is used to indicate individuals or organisations that are well known amongst diaspora groups and could therefore play a key role in delivering information.

⁶ This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

Figure 1: Media Comprehension



Television

Figure 1 shows that 71% of respondents watch television in the English language. This group of respondents are mostly young Afghans, who have either been educated in the UK or are in the process of settling down here.

As the chart shows, 71% of participants understand television in Dari as well. The only Dari-speaking television channels are the two *Ariana* channels (satellite channels from Kabul and the US). The data in the table also suggests that over 50% of respondents also understand television programmes in Pashto.

Respondents were also asked to identify other languages that they would understand. Only 11% of participants answered, highlighting Arabic, Russian, Urdu or Hindi as their second preferred language for understanding various kinds of media.

Radio

The results in figure 1 suggest that 71% of Afghans listen to radio in the Dari and Pashto languages. *BBC Radio Dari* and *BBC Radio Pashto* seem to be the primary source of radio in those languages. Significant numbers (43%) listened to radio in English. Some respondents (15%) listen to radio in other languages than those cited in the questionnaires, for example in Arabic, Russian and Urdu.

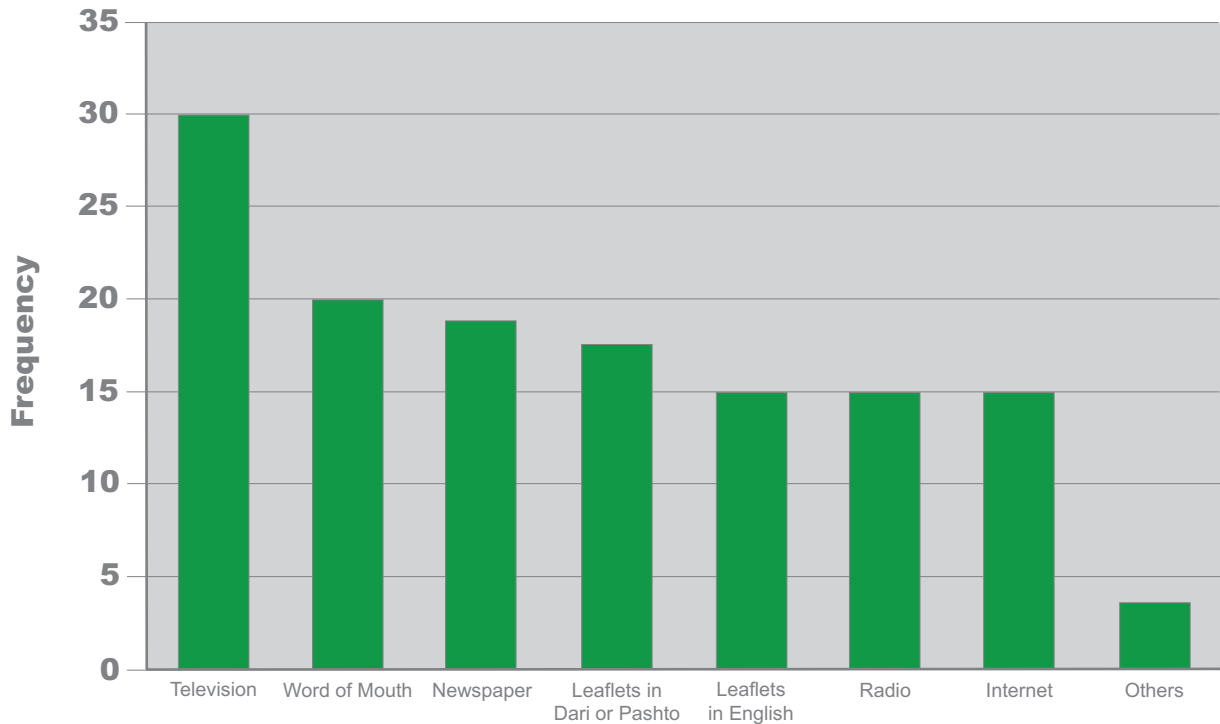
Newspapers

Newspapers as a source of information were comparatively more popular than radio in the Dari (82%) and Pashto (80%) languages. Respondents read online newspapers such as *BBC Pashto/Persian* (www.bbc.pashto/persian.com) or *Afghan Daily* (www.afghandaily.com). Just over 50% of the respondents suggested that they could read and understand English language newspapers.

2.3 MOST COMMON SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Respondents were asked how they usually obtained information.

Figure 2: Common Source of Information



According to figure 2, respondents consider television to be their main source of information (85%). Just over 57% of respondents believe that word of mouth is a good channel of information. Most of them rely for this on friends or family.

43% of respondents preferred to consult leaflets in English and 49% supported leaflets in Dari and Pashto. The radio and the Internet are the least favoured option for accessing information. 42% of the respondents regard them as a regular source of information.

More than 50% of respondents believe newspapers are an effective way to communicate information. Afghan community organisations also featured as a source of information for people who have recently arrived in this country, and who are unfamiliar with other services available to refugees and asylum seekers.

2.4 FREQUENCY OF CONSULTING MEDIA

Readership of Newspapers and Other Publications

According to the questionnaires results, 67% of the participants read newspapers or other publications every day. Only a small minority said that they often, not very often or never read newspapers. Some of the newspapers or magazines they read most frequently are: *The Sun*; *The Times*; the *Mirror*; the *Guardian*; *Metro*; *Jang London* (an Urdu newspaper); and *Ibtikar* or *Initiative* (a community group magazine). Moreover, they access online journals or newspapers, such as [www.afghannewsdaily](http://www.afghannewsdaily.com), www.bbc.pashto.co.uk or www.hewad.com.

Radio

56% of the respondents who took part in completing the questionnaires listened to radio every day. However, 16% never listen to radio and only 10% often listen to radio. *BBC World Service Dari* and *BBC World Service Pashto* were the radio stations most often mentioned by the respondents.

TV

The most popular source of information is television. 89% of the respondents watched television everyday and 9% watched television often (11% did not watch very often and 16% never watched it). The preferred television channels were:

- *BBC* (*BBC1*, *BBC2*, *World Service News 24*);
- *Channel 4*;
- *Sky TV*;
- *Al Jazeera* (*Arabic and English*);
- *Ariana Afghan* (*Kabul*); and
- *Ariana Afghan* (*USA*).

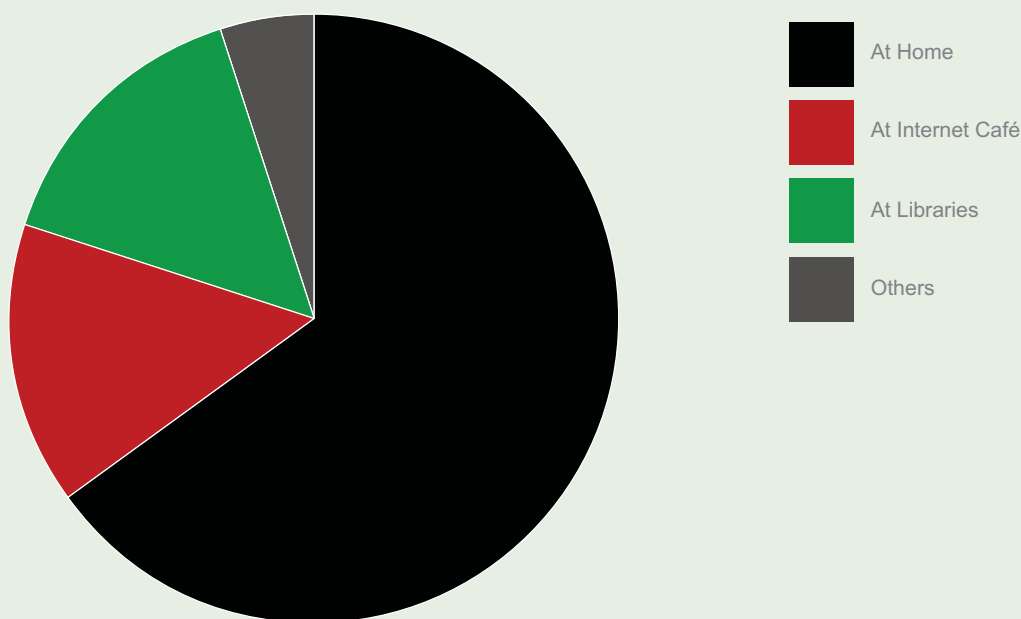
Internet

The questionnaire also asked participants about their access to the Internet and their use of it to obtain information. According to the questionnaires, 80% of the interviewees can use the Internet. Only 20% said they had no access to the Internet. The following websites seem to be popular within the Afghan diaspora:

www.bbc.pashto.co.uk;
www.bbc.persian.co.uk;
www.afghanonline.com;
www.afghaninfo.com;
www.arya.com;
www.farad.com;
www.mashal.com;
www.banawa.com;
www.sabawoon.com;
www.hewad.com;
www.afghandaily.com;
www.virtualafghan.com; and
www.mastana.net.

It is important to note that most of these websites are operated or managed outside the UK.

Figure 3: Location for Using Internet



The questionnaire also asked the participants where they access the Internet: whether they have access at home, or use Internet cafés, libraries or other places. Figure 3 suggests that the majority of those using the Internet can go online at home. Internet cafés are the second most popular venue for access, libraries third, followed by other places such as school, college or work.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

- The findings indicate that the Afghan community in the UK does not have an independent media, hence making it difficult for IOM to publicise its programmes.
- Community organisations, although not respondents' preference, can serve the purpose of disseminating information about IOM projects through newsletters or articles. For example, the Afghan Community Organisation, based in Lewisham, publishes *Ibtikar* every three months and distributes it to the addresses of over 500 Afghans around the UK.
- Afghan websites are another outlet worth approaching. They are largely European or American managed websites but most of them are commercial sites with advertisements. It may also be helpful for IOM to include web-links in the community organisation websites based in the UK.
- IOM should continue to publish information in English, Dari and Pashto about its Afghanistan programmes.
- IOM should explore the option of advertising on the Afghan satellite television channel *Ariana* because many Afghans living in the UK watch this channel. This satellite TV station started broadcasting in 2006.
- *Jang London* (a Pakistani Urdu newspaper published in London) is considered to be widely read among failed Afghan asylum seekers. Hence, IOM should advertise in this particular newspaper.

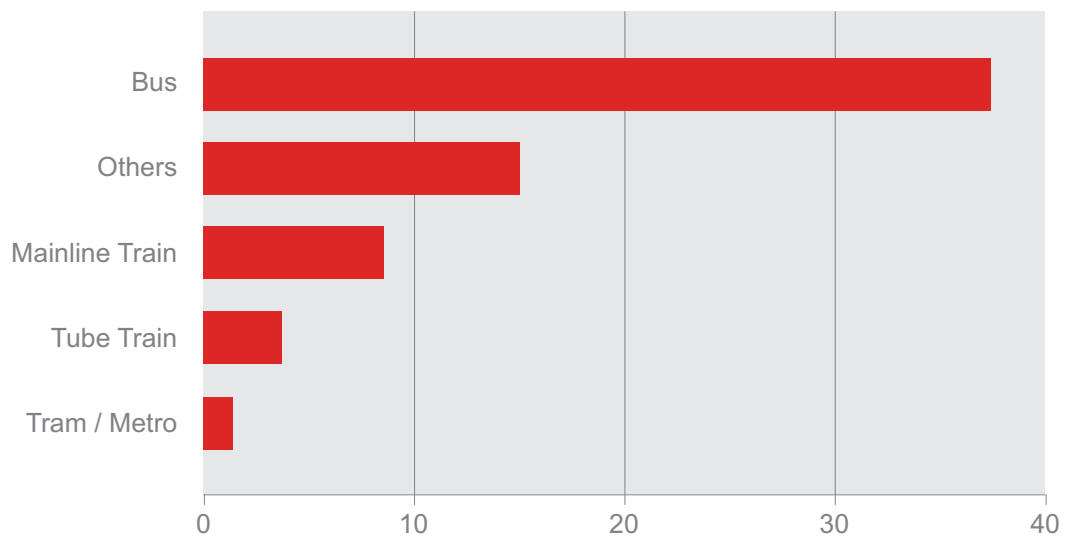


ashito

3 USE OF SERVICES

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to gather information about different types of transport as well as respondents' use of the telephone and of local services. The questions were included to investigate where IOM could advertise its Afghan-focused programmes in order to reach as many Afghans as possible.

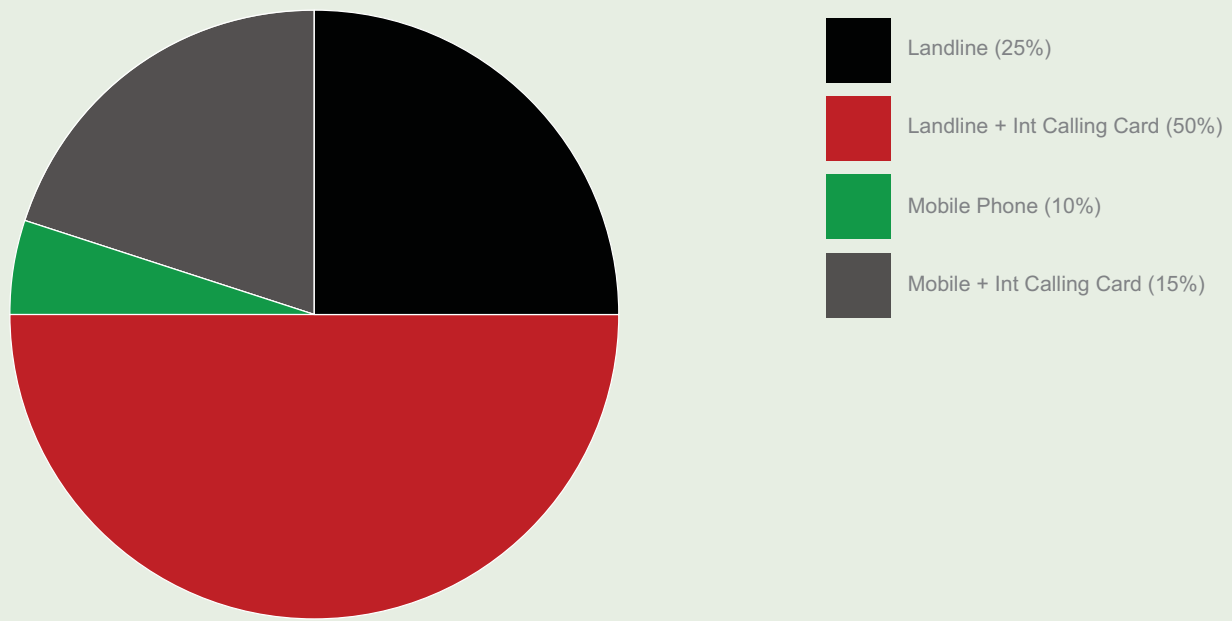
Figure 4: Means of Transport



Means of Transport

Buses are the most widely used means of transport, highlighted by 38% of the respondents. Mainline trains were used by 9% of respondents and 4% used the Tube. Another 2% of the interviewees used the tram or metro. Within "others", 38% of those who filled in the questionnaires used their own private car.

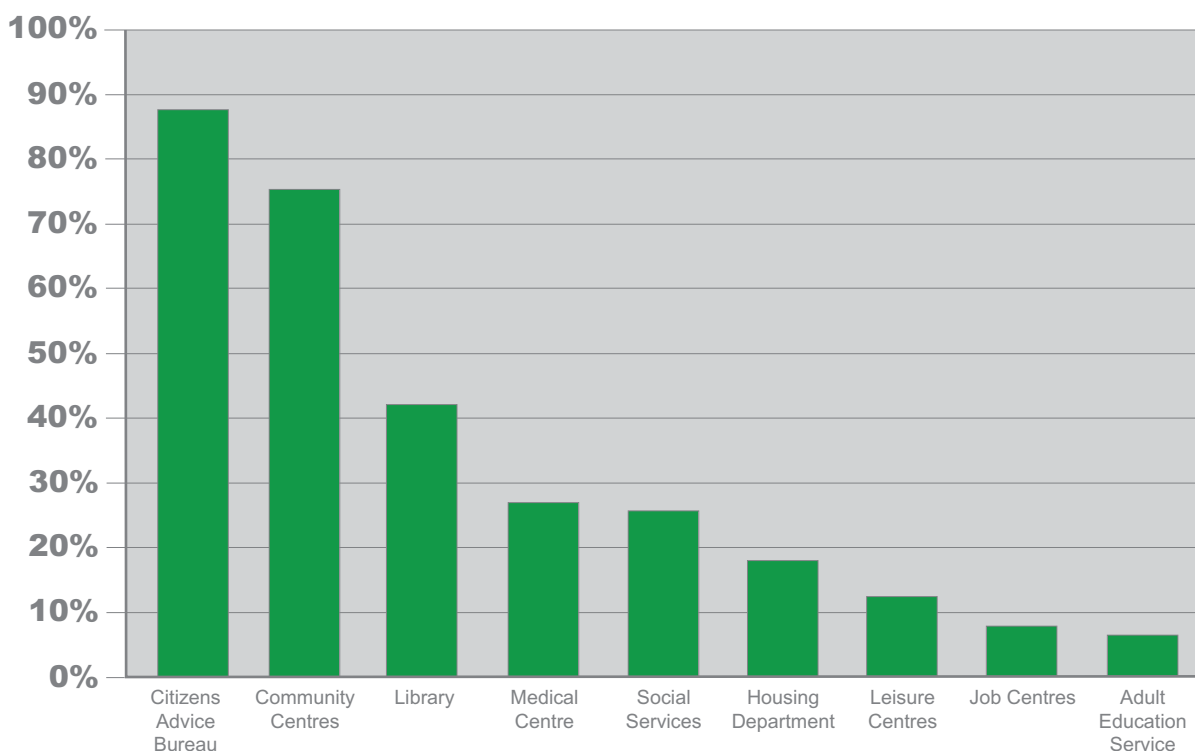
Figure 5: Telephone Usage



Telephone

Figure 5 suggests that the majority of the respondents (50%) prefer to call from their landline phone using international calling cards. 25% use their landline to call their family members but do not use a card. Significant numbers use a mobile phone (10%) or a mobile phone with an international calling card (15%). The most commonly used international calling cards within the Afghan diaspora are: *Global Talk*; *Go mad Banana*; *Speak & Save*; *Alpha Blue*; *Matrix*; and *Talk Asia*.

Figure 6: Local Services



Local Services

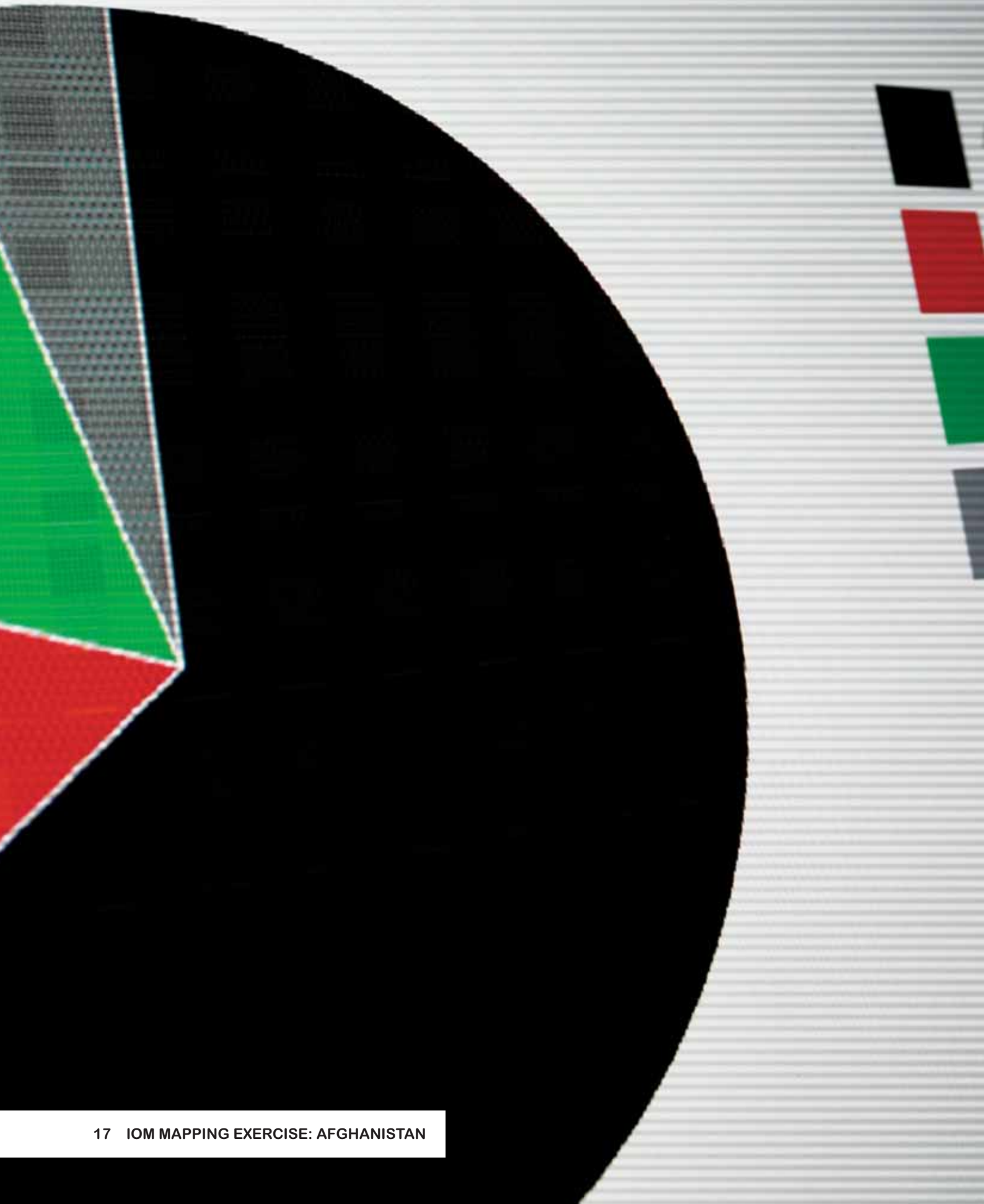
The Afghans interviewed by IOM used different local services depending on their status as residents. Afghan asylum seekers and refugees, who are not familiar with local services, are more likely to use refugee services. They approach organisations such as the Refugee Council, local Refugee Legal Centres, solicitors, community groups and other non-governmental organisations or charities.

Afghans who are more familiar with local services are more inclined to use them rather than other agencies (see figure 6). Around 88% approach the local Citizens Advice Bureau with their problems. Community groups come second in participants' preference: 75% of respondents use them. Other local services, such as social services (26%), libraries (41%), medical centres (28%), the housing department (19%), leisure centres (12.5%), education services (9%) and Job Centres (6%), seem to be less popular. Respondents also mentioned local schools, colleges and other educational organisations as services that were often used.

Conclusion and Recommendations

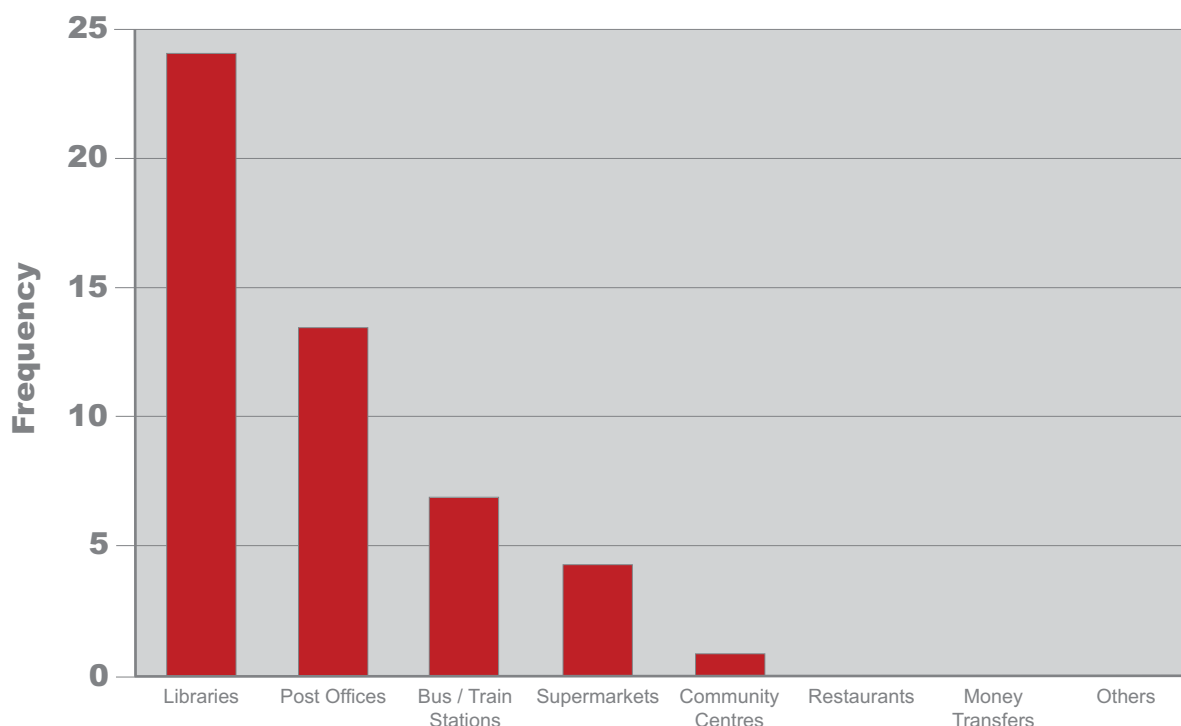
- The findings suggest that buses are the main source of transport. Bus stops should be considered as sites for publicising information.
- IOM should endeavour to use international calling cards for advertisements.
- Citizens Advice Bureaux are used by many in the Afghan diaspora.
- IOM should continue to organise information workshops in collaboration with local organisations working with refugees within the Afghan diaspora.
- IOM should target further education colleges, especially ESOL classes, because most of the newly-arrived Afghans attend English language classes. Local schools are sometimes a good venue for publicising and disseminating information.

of Using Internet



4 PREFERRED SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Figure 7: Preferred Places for Publicity



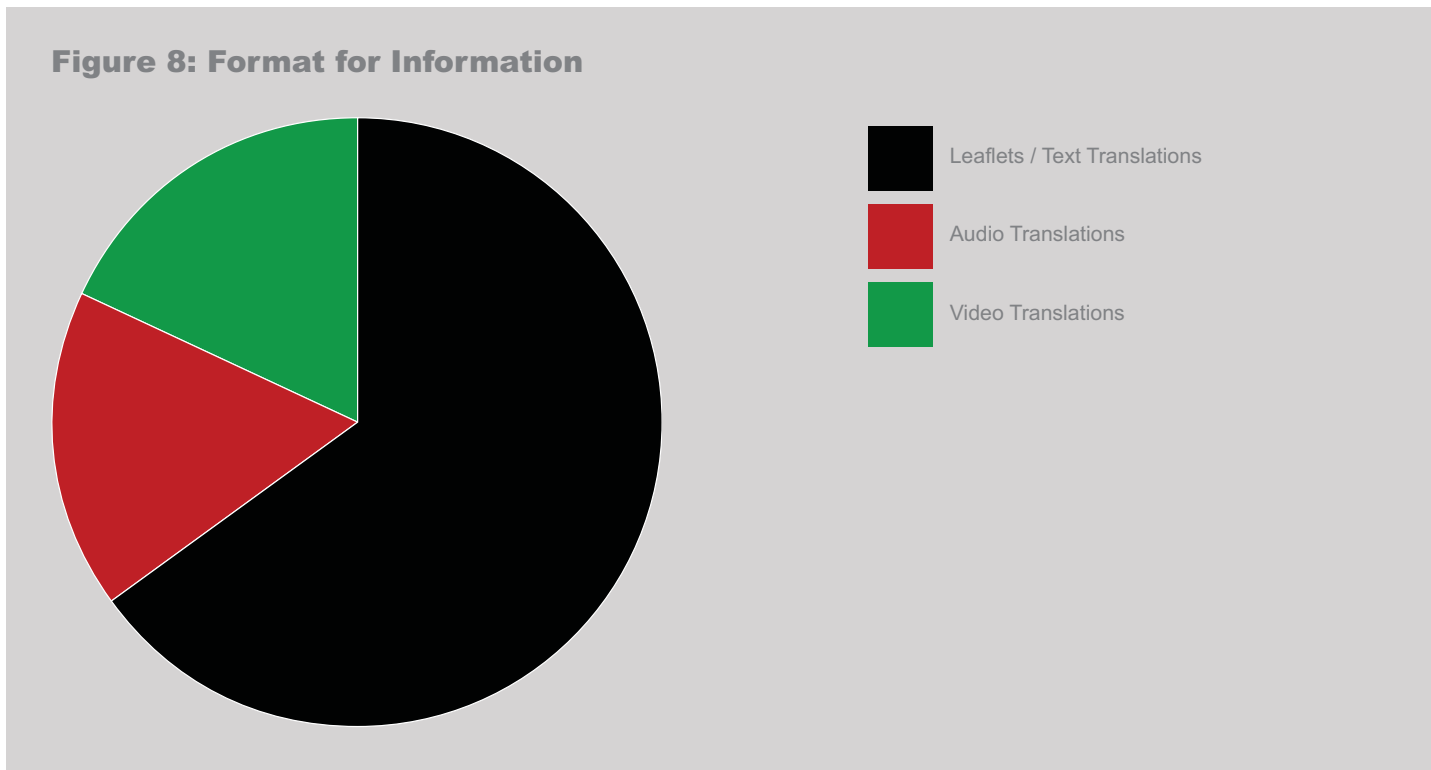
96% of respondents suggest IOM publicise information in libraries. This was a common view amongst young participants, who often use libraries for their studies. It was also suggested that young people should be informed if IOM were to run publicity sessions and distribute literature about their projects in local colleges and schools. Multipliers rejected the idea on the grounds that Afghans in schools or colleges would not be a target for IOM programmes. They are settled in this country and engaging with them would be unproductive for IOM.

Post offices were the second most popular option (52%) as a place for accessing information on IOM's projects. Only 28% of respondents suggested bus or train stations as a primary location for information. Supermarkets were suggested by only 16%. Respondents who did suggest supermarkets specified local Afghan grocers in different parts of the country.

Religious institutions, such as mosques and *daramsal* (Hindu temples) were considered to be options for publicity. Afghan Hindus have established their *daramsal* in Southall as the Afghan Ekta Society. The Afghan diaspora has established an independent mosque in Willesden, the Afghan Cultural and Islamic Centre.

4.1 BEST FORMAT FOR INFORMATION

Respondents were asked which format they preferred for information in their own language. The graph in figure 8 suggests that translated leaflets were favoured by almost 60% of participants. 20% said that they preferred audio and video translations.



Conclusion and Recommendations

- IOM should continue to translate and distribute leaflets and posters both in the Afghan languages and English.
- IOM should focus on distributing information to various local services, in particular libraries, post offices, and refugee and community organisations.
- Advertising in local shops can be quite controversial. Some shopkeepers are reluctant to display IOM's posters or leaflets in their shops.





5 COMMUNITY GROUPS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Respondents said that the following places would be their first point of contact for support and advice:

- Citizens Advice Bureau;
- Solicitors;
- Refugee Organisations (such as the Refugee Council);
- Voluntary organisations; and
- Social Services.

Religious Centres

Mosques are the only religious centres that Muslims visit. They do not seem to favour one mosque over another. However, since the new mosque has been created by the Afghan Cultural and Islamic Centre in London, most Afghan Muslims attend religious festivals there, such as *Eid* and Friday prayers.

Afghani Hindus have established their first ever *daramsal* (temple) in Southall (within the Afghan Ekta Society). They celebrate *Dewali* and other religious ceremonies there. But it is important to emphasise that until the establishment of this *daramsal*, Afghan Hindus would attend various Hindu temples.



6 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The second section of the questionnaire asked about the gender, age and length of residence of each participant. Only one respondent was a woman. Figure 9 shows the ages of the respondents. Figure 10 shows the range of periods for which the respondents have lived in the UK.

Figure 9

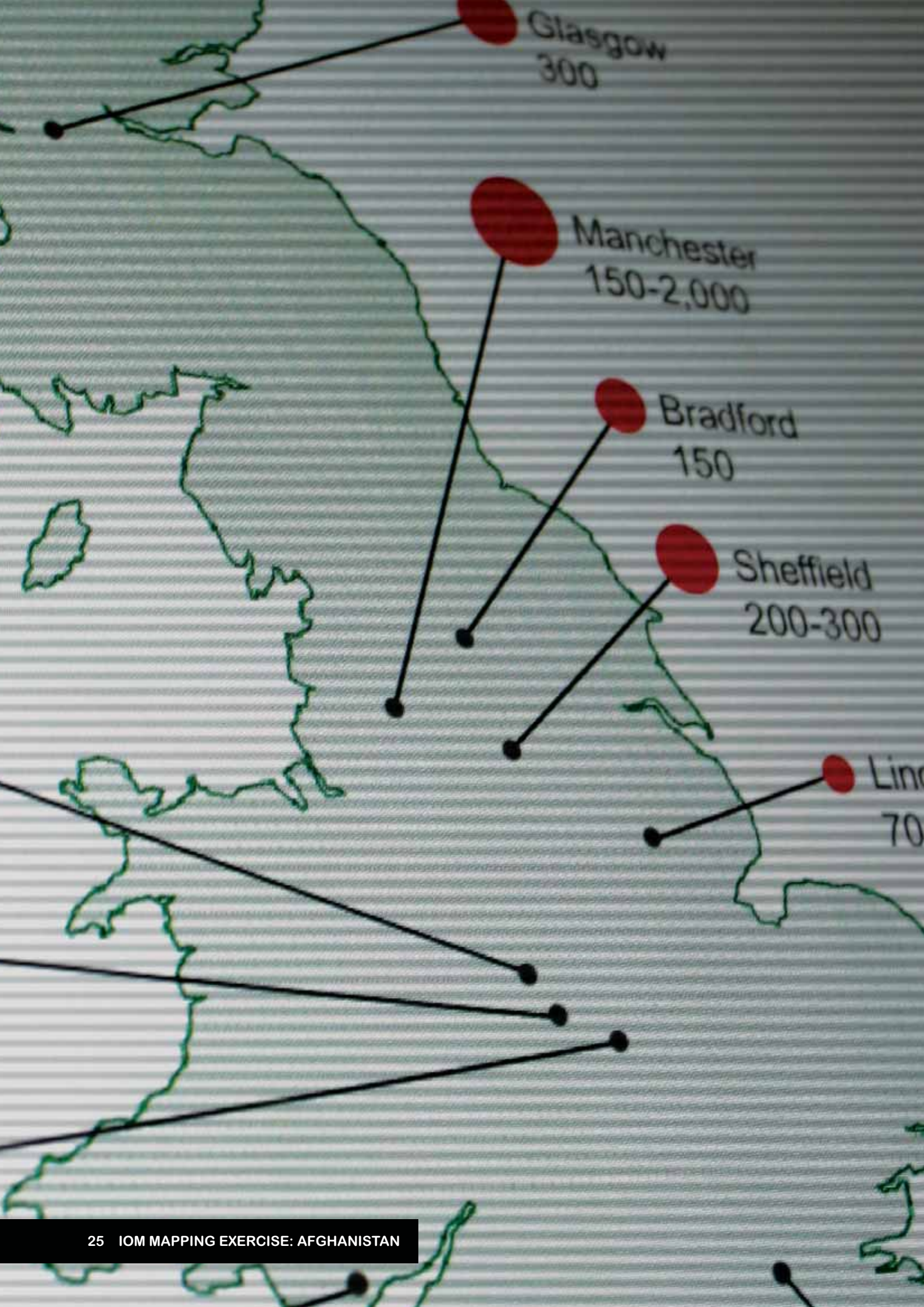
Age group	Numbers
Under 18	8
18 -24	13
25 – 34	10
35 - 44	8
45 - 54	2
55 - 64	1
65 and over	2
No Answer	0

Total: 47

Figure 10

Period of time lived in the UK	Number of respondent
Less than 12 months	3
1 year but less than 3	9
3 years but less than 5	13
5 years but less than 10	17
10 years or more	2
No answer	0

Total: 44



7 GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY

There is no official information on the size of the Afghan population in the UK and it was rather difficult to gather data on the numbers and geographical locations of Afghan communities across the UK. The estimates varied between agencies and organisations.

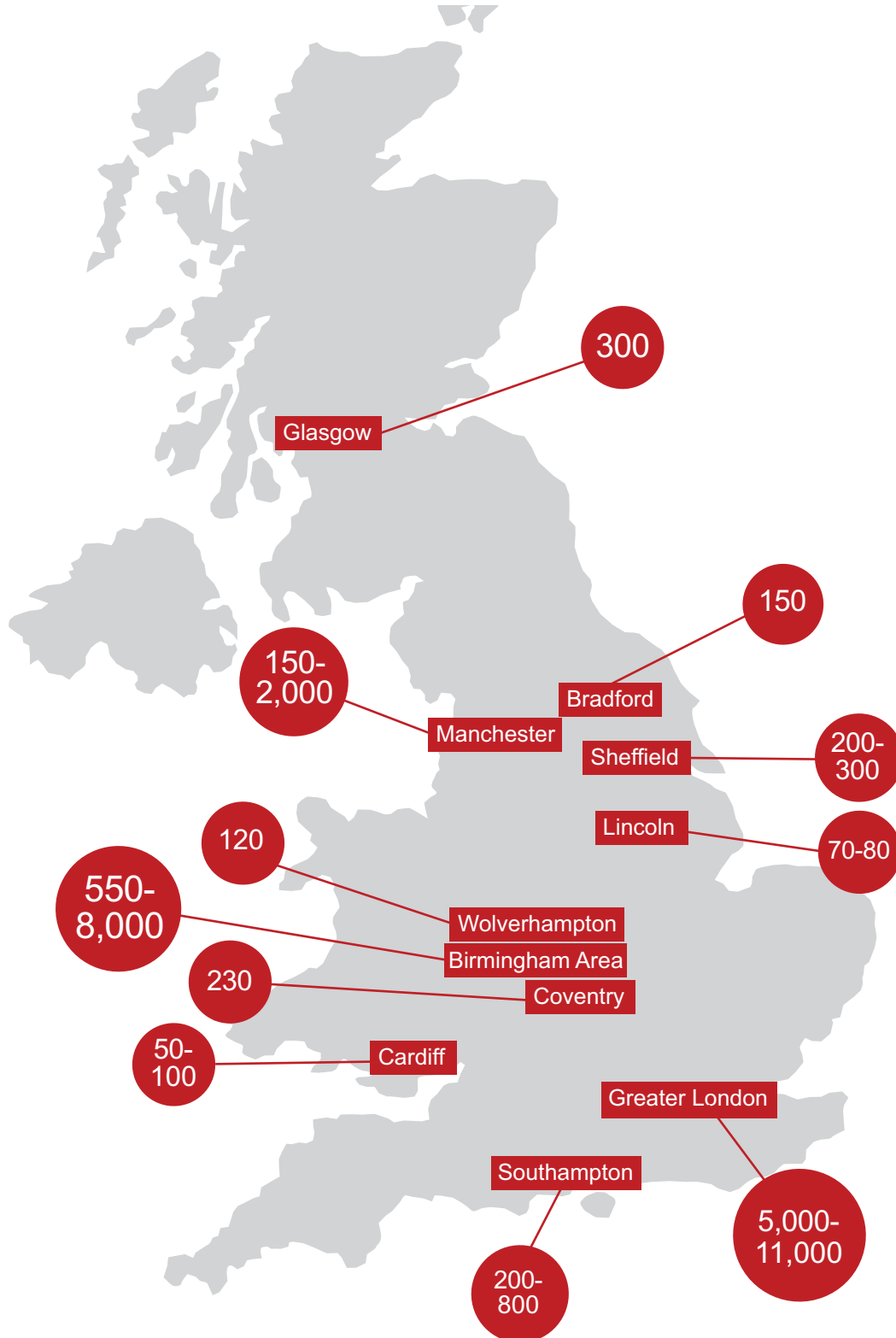
Most of the data that was identified was either an estimate or limited to a geographical area. Afghan diaspora community organisations do not collect such information. Sarah Kyambi of the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) puts the total number of Afghans living in this country in 2001 at 14,890, based on the 2001 census. According to her, the majority of them live in London (11,000), in Birmingham (550), and Manchester (150). The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) in the UK puts the figure of Afghans in Sheffield at about 300 and in Southampton at 800.

Figure 11 shows the location and size of the Afghan diaspora living in the UK, based on the findings of the mapping exercise. The numbers in brackets are those taken from the questionnaires. According to these estimates, the total number of Afghans living in this country could be around 20,000. However this can be verified neither by the UK government nor the Afghan diaspora community organisations.

Figure 11

Location	Size
Croydon	(400)
Brantford	(15/20)
Southampton	(200/300) 800
Birmingham	550 (5000/ 8000)
Manchester	150 (2000)
Wolverhampton	120
Coventry	230
Glasgow	300
Bradford	150
Sheffield	200, 300
Cardiff	50, 100
London (Southall, Hayes, Harrow, Ealing, Acton, Wembley, Barnet, New Cross, Wood Green, Golders Green, Finchley, Dollis Hill, Kingston, Uxbridge, Hillingdon, Brent, Hanwell, Slough, Edmonton, Greenford and Walthamstow)	11,000 (5000)
Lincoln	(70/ 80)
Total	13,435 - 17,5000

Geographical Spread of the Afghan Community in the UK, 2007



Based on estimates supplied by Community Leaders

8 CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 CONSTRAINTS

The mapping exercise faced considerable delays and difficulties. Initially, it was thought that a great deal of information existed about the diaspora and that there were many Afghan community organisations. However, this was not the case. The community is dispersed all over the country and community organisations were mostly reluctant to answer questions. It was difficult to reach the great majority of Afghans living in the UK. Out of the 330 questionnaires which were sent out, only 50 were returned.

Community organisations were reluctant to co-operate and were sceptical about the mapping exercise. On the other hand, they made considerable demands before committing themselves to assisting with this project.

8.2 SUMMARY OF ALL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- No approach stands out as being best for advertising to Afghans in the UK but IOM should continue to place advertisements in English, Dari and Pashto wherever it can.
- IOM should continue to translate and produce leaflets and posters in Dari, Pashto, and English.
- IOM should focus on disseminating information through various local services, in particular libraries, post offices, and refugee and community organisations.
- Advertising in local shops can be quite controversial because some shopkeepers are reluctant to place IOM's posters or leaflets in their shops.
- The findings suggest that the bus is the main source of transport and bus stops should be considered as a potential place for publicising information.
- IOM should endeavour to use international telephone cards for advertisements.
- The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) was the main local service that most respondents used. IOM should work with CABx to promote and publicise its programmes.
- IOM should continue to organise information workshops in collaboration with local Afghan organisations that help refugees.
- IOM should target further education colleges, especially ESOL classes, because most newly-arrived Afghans attend English language classes. In some circumstances, and in some areas, local schools can be a good location for publicising and disseminating information.

- Community organisations, although not the most popular, can serve the purpose of disseminating information about IOM projects as newsletters or articles (e.g. *Ibtikar*).
- Afghan websites offer a further opportunity. Most of them are commercial and carry advertisements, even though they are mostly European or American managed websites. It may also be helpful for IOM to include web-links in the community organisation websites based in the UK.
- IOM should continue publishing information in English, Dari and Pashto about its Afghanistan programmes.
- IOM should explore the option of advertising in the Afghan satellite television channel *Ariana*, broadcasting from Kabul, since a great number of Afghans living in the UK watch this channel.

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IOM International Organization for Migration



Actions co-financed
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