

# Choice of destination country: evidence from refugees in Australia and potential asylum seekers in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

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## Research questions

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Did potential asylum seekers from origin countries and refugees in Australia have a destination country of preference?

If yes, why was a destination country preferred?

What are the key sources of information?

Does destination country policy influence country choice?



## **Literature**

Context & methodology

Findings

Implications

## Literature

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Theoretical: Little weight given to destination country choice among refugees (Kunz 1973; Richmond 1993).

Empirical: Case-studies are mixed with respect to whether refugees select a destination country; large macro models suggest that refugees do choose destination countries.

Limitations of approaches;

- Case-studies (small n) focus on agency in the absence of scale.
- Macro level studies (large N) focus on scale in the absence of agency.



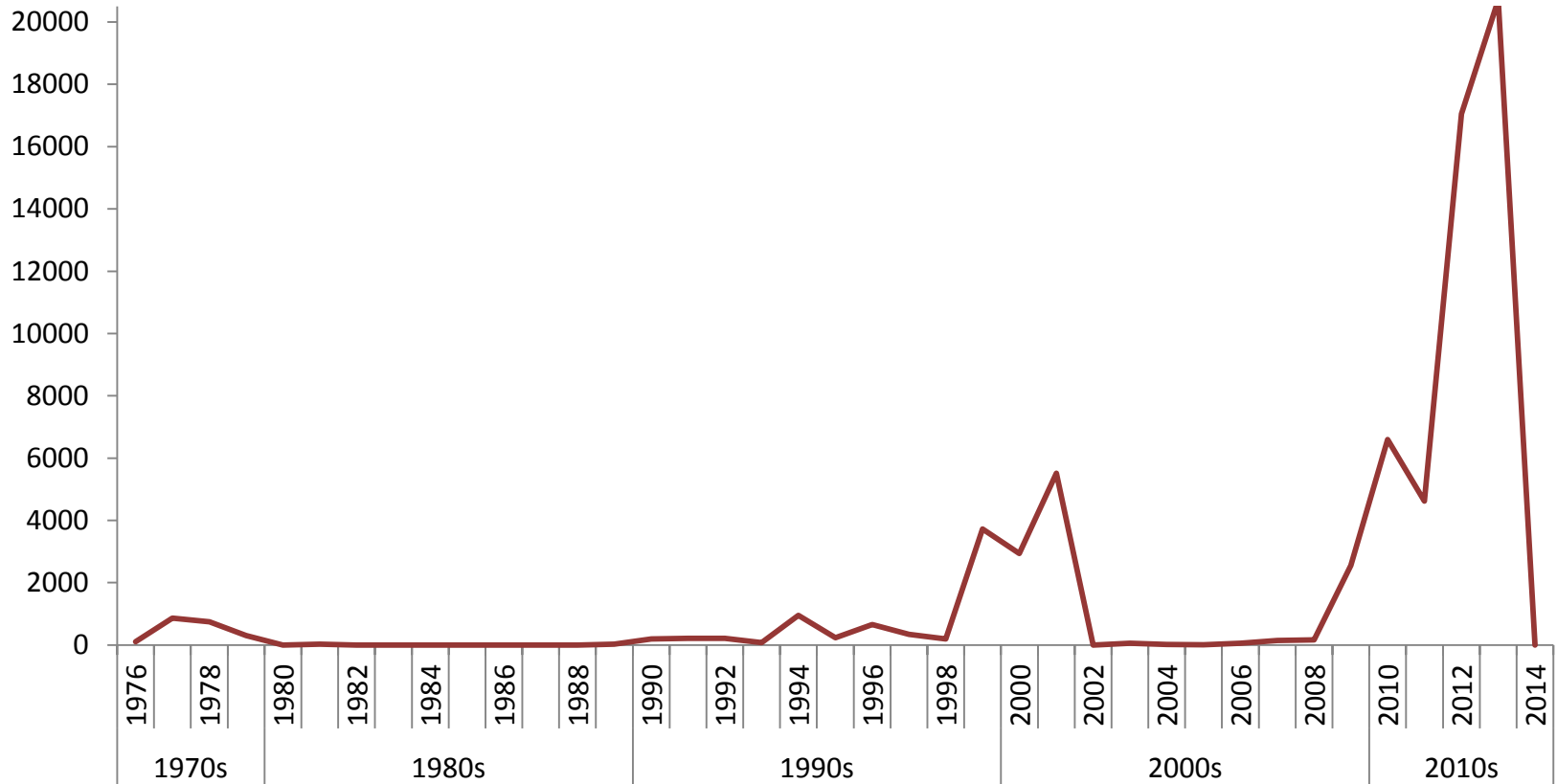
Literature

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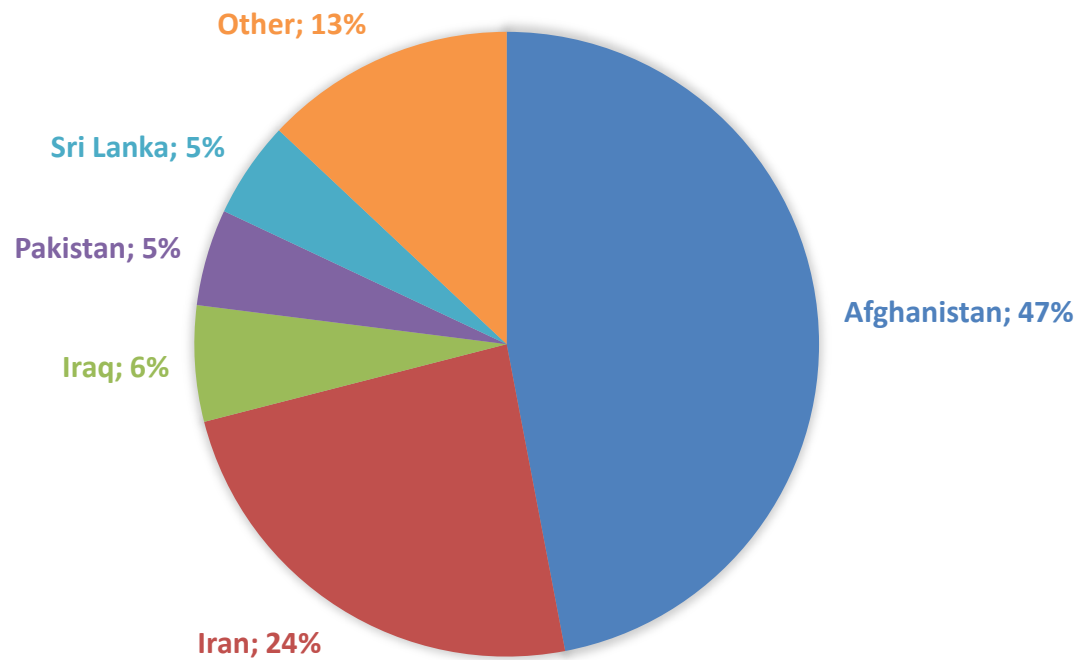
Implications

# Number of irregular maritime arrivals to Australia (1976–2014)



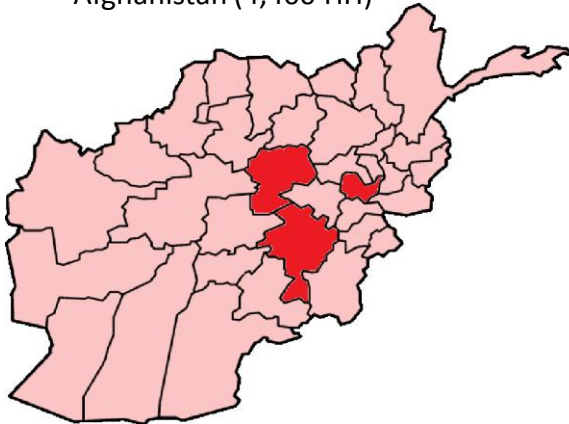
## Refugees surveyed in Australia

- Sample frame were irregular maritime arrivals who had been issued a protection visa between 6 July 2011 and 31 December 2012.
- Survey undertaken in 2013.



# Areas surveyed in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (2014)

Afghanistan (4,400 HH)



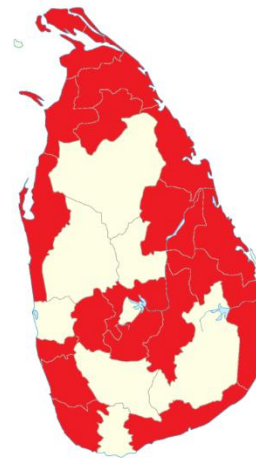
Bangladesh (4,700 HH)



Pakistan (4,400 HH)

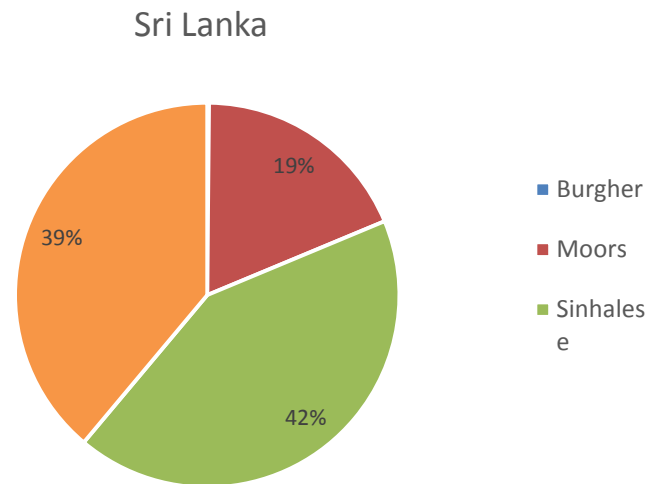
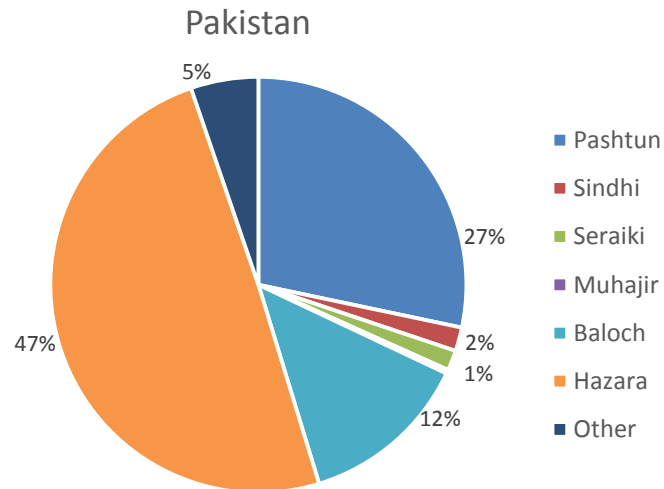
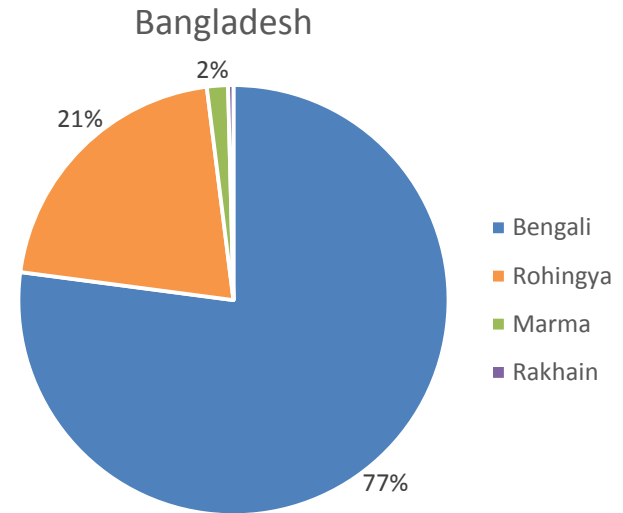
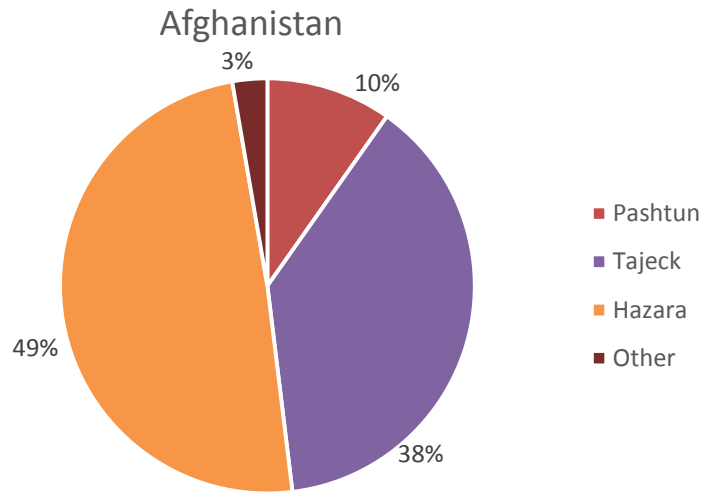


Sri Lanka (20,632 HH)





# Main ethnic groups by country sample



## Methodological similarities across all 5 surveys

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- Questionnaire design based on literature review, input from migration experts and in-country experts.
- Back-translation with specialist review.
- Cognitive testing.
- Pilot surveys.
- Tablet devices used to collect data.
  - Confidentiality
  - Ongoing data review (surveys outside Australia)
  - Answers to sensitive questions
- Probability proportionate to size sampling (Bangladesh and Sri Lanka); Simple random sampling (Pakistan and Afghanistan).



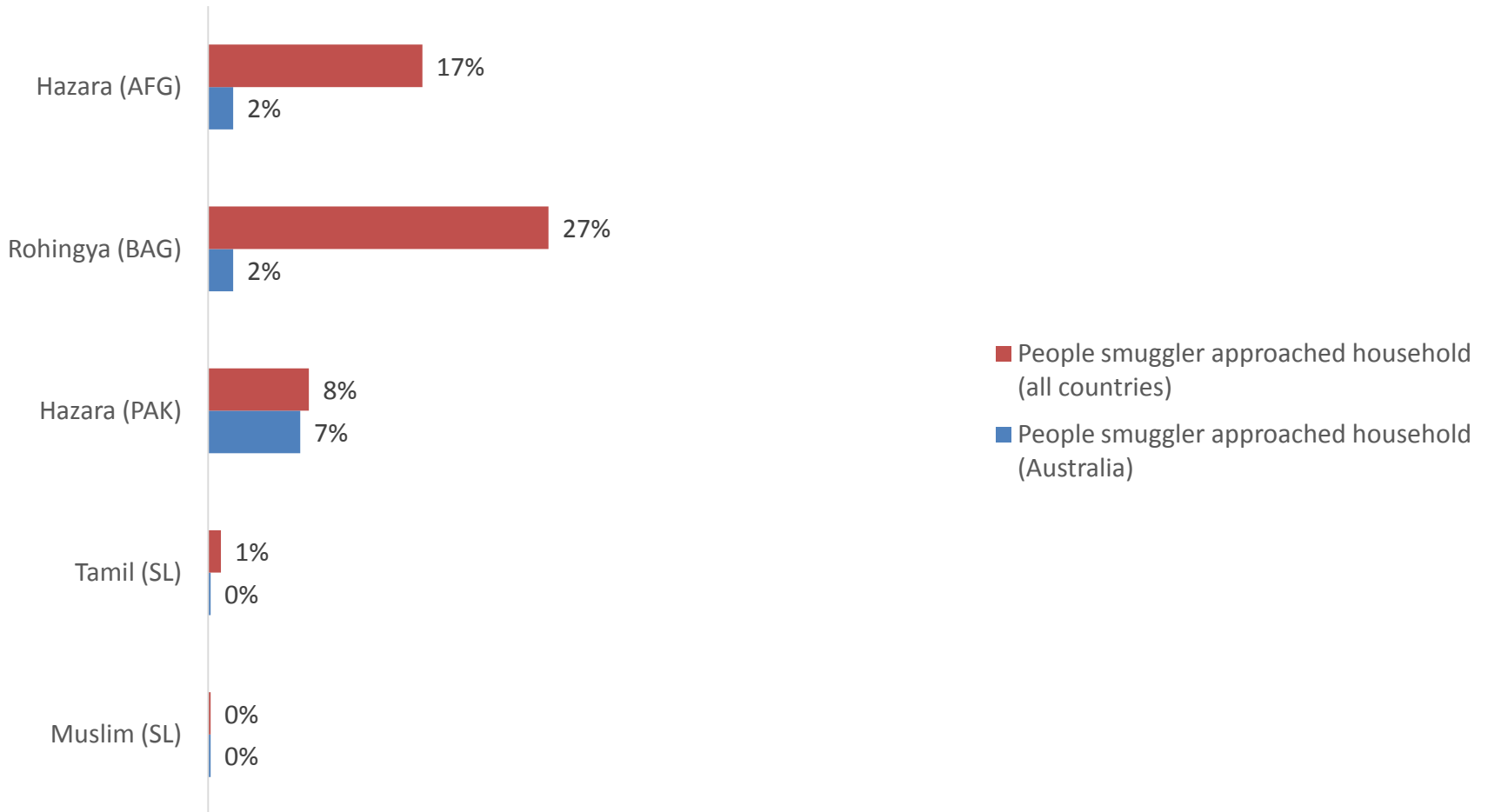
Literature

Context & methodology

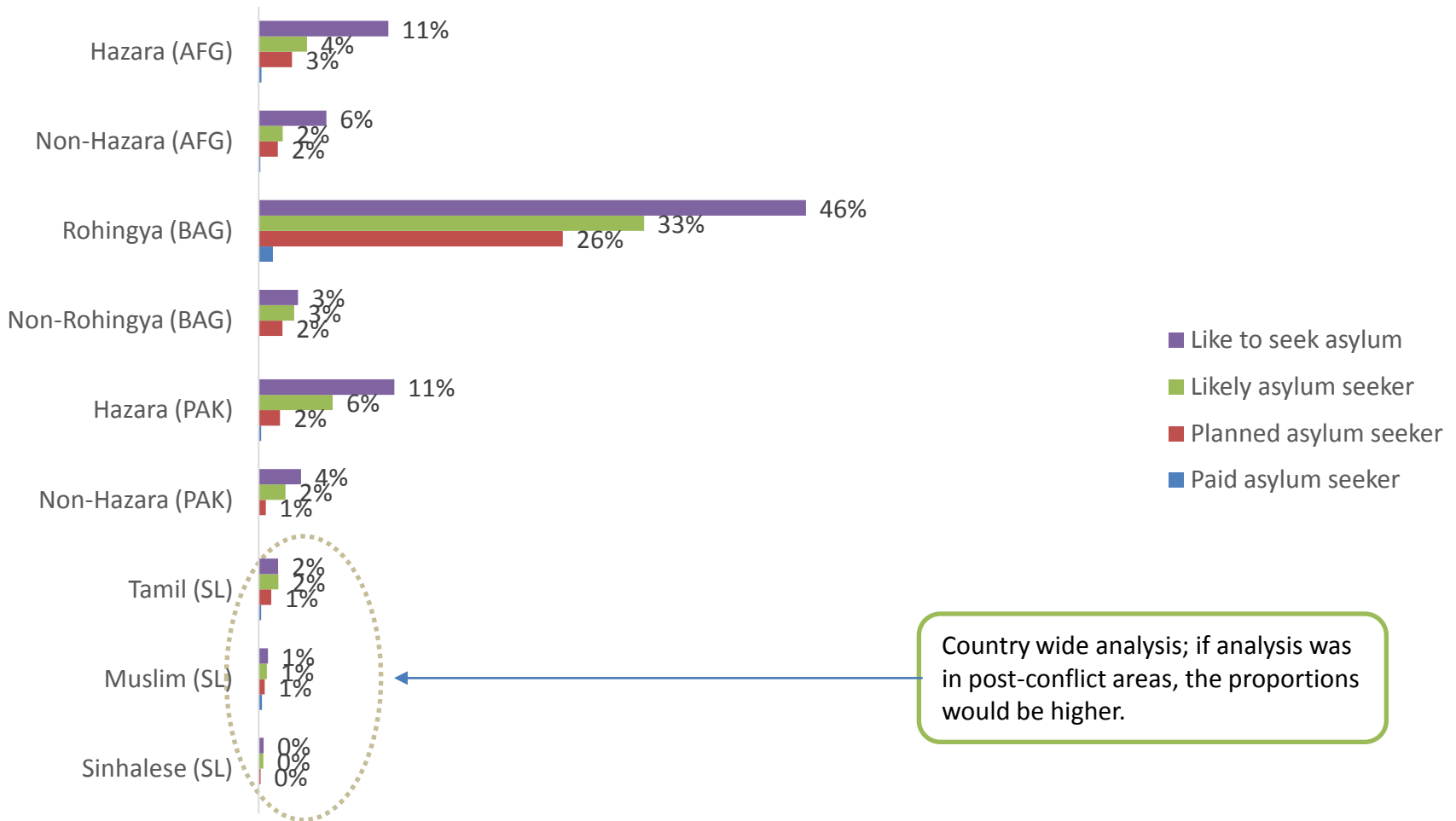
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# Proportion of households approached by people smugglers (origin countries)



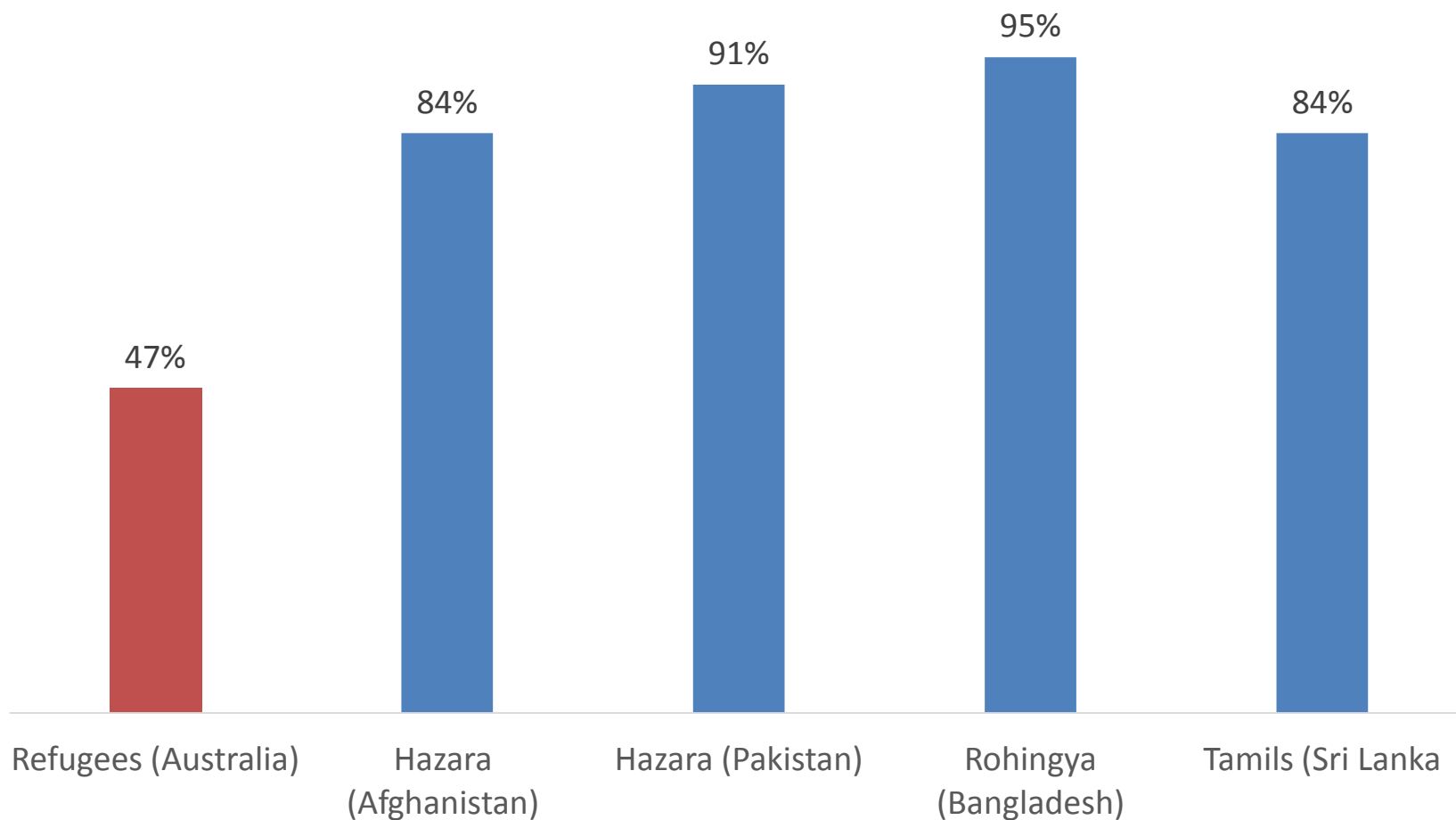
# Aspirations for asylum seeking (potential asylum seekers)



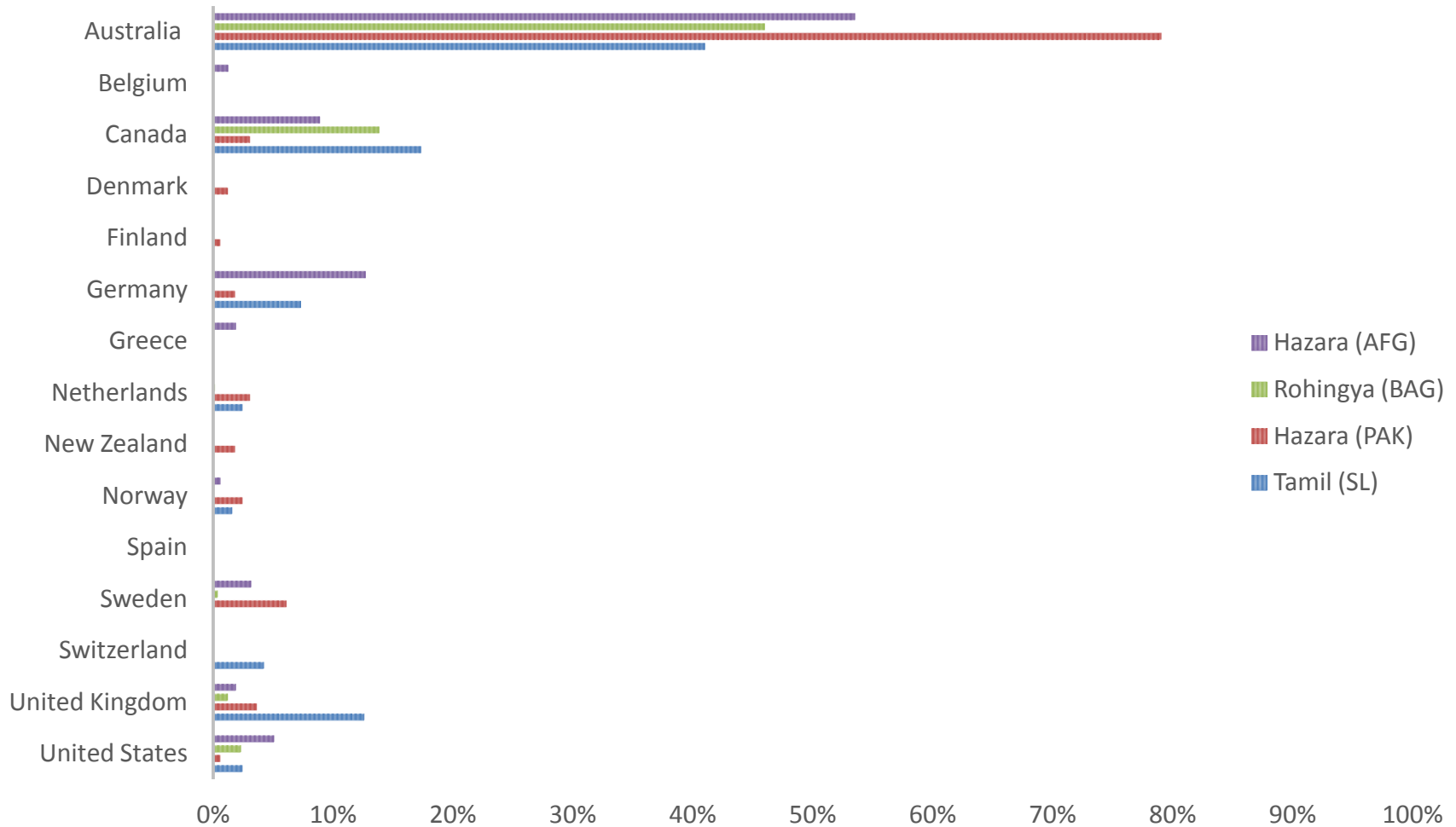
## Key sources of information varied among refugees, potential asylum seekers and between ethnic groups

- Refugees in Australia
  - Family in origin country (25%).
  - People smugglers (15%).
  
- Potential asylum seekers in Afghanistan (Hazara)
  - TV (25%).
  - Friends in other countries (19%).
  
- Potential asylum seekers in Pakistan (Hazara)
  - Friends in other countries (20%).
  - Internet (19%).
  
- Potential asylum seekers in Bangladesh (Rohingya)
  - Family in Bangladesh (59%).
  - Family in other countries (9%).

## Did refugees and potential asylum seekers have a destination country of preference?

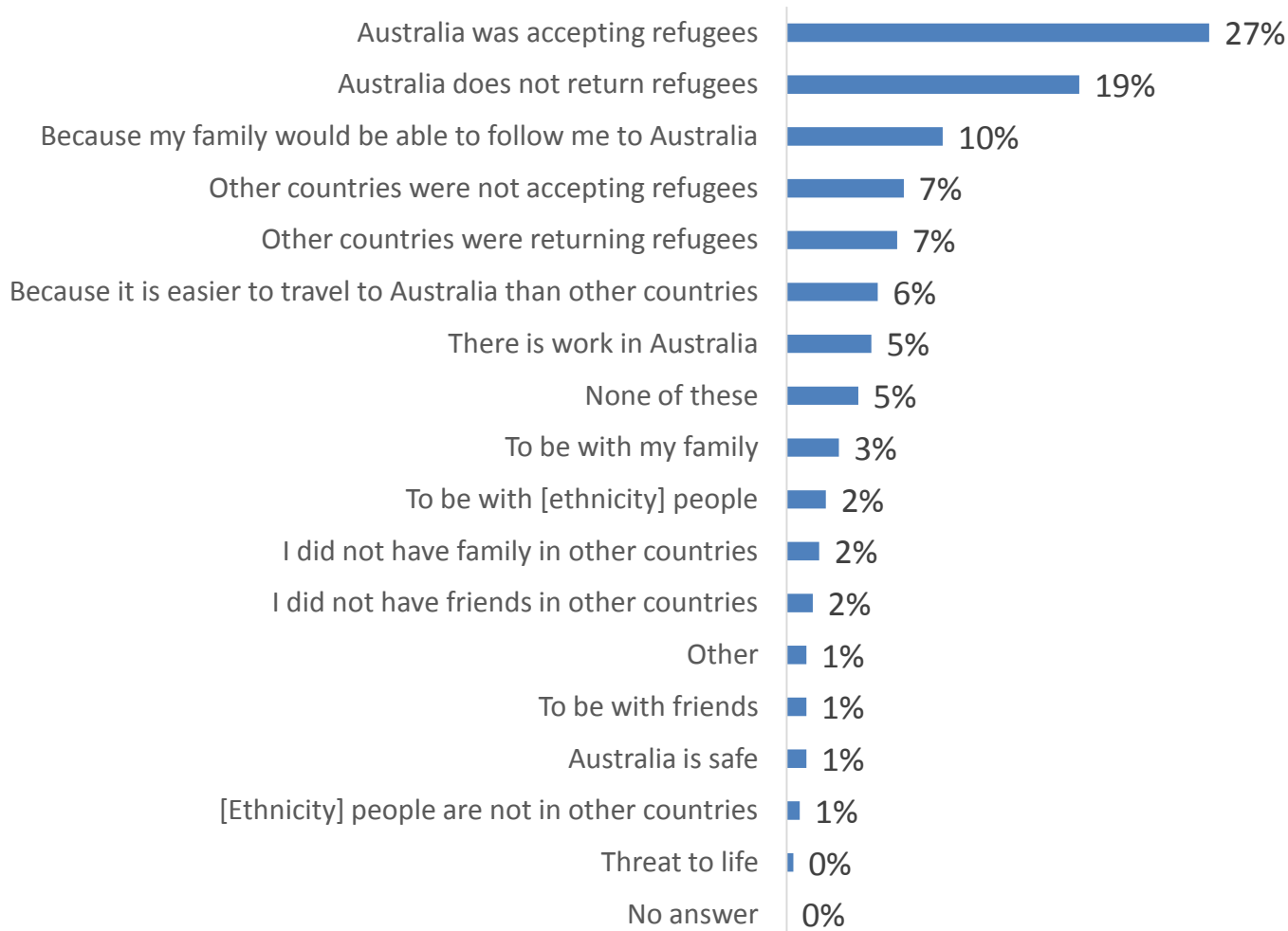


# Australia was the preferred destination country among surveyed potential asylum seekers

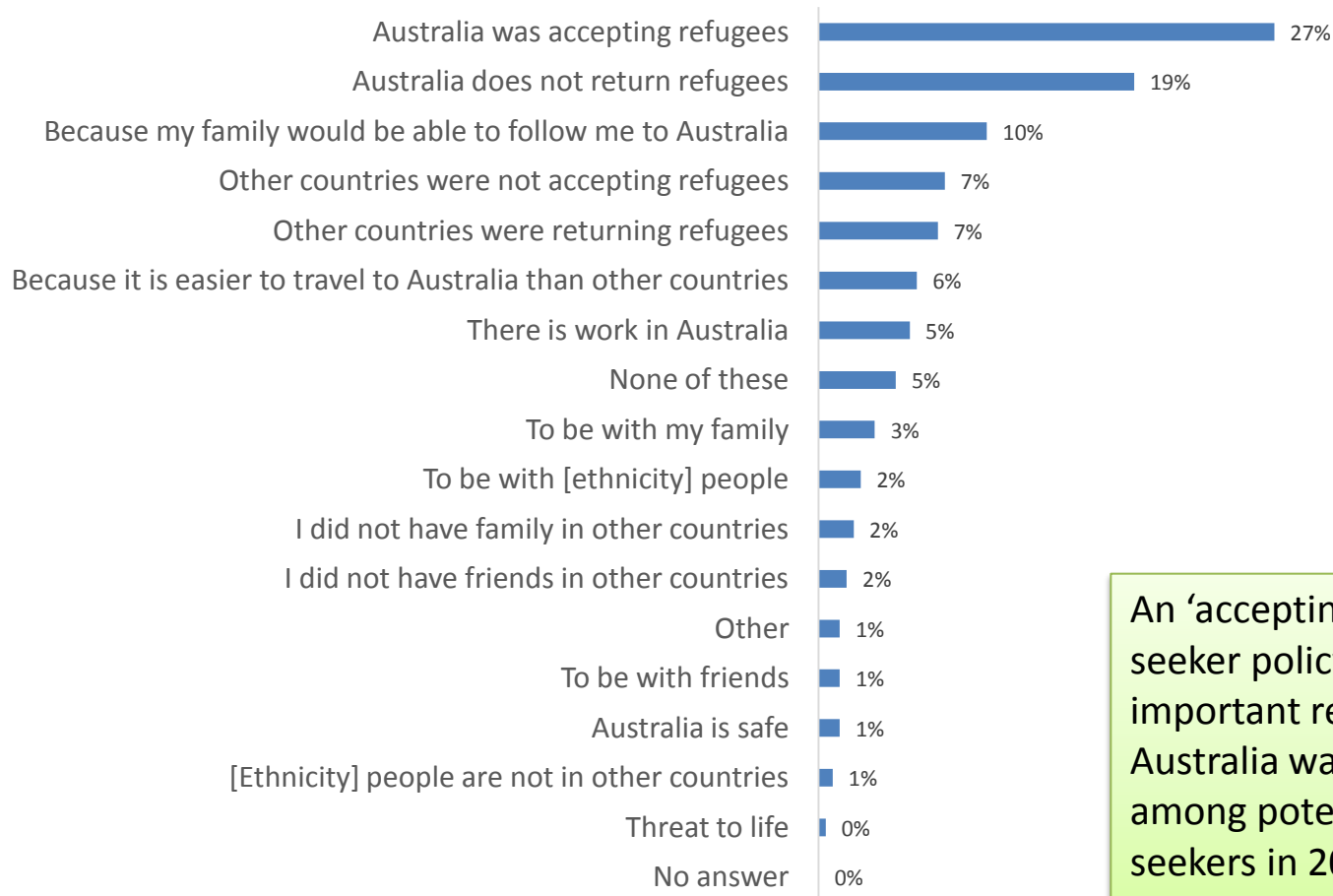




## In 2011 and 2012, refugees who selected Australia as a destination country did so primarily because Australia was accepting refugees



## In 2013 survey, refugees who selected Australia as a destination country did so primarily because Australia was accepting refugees

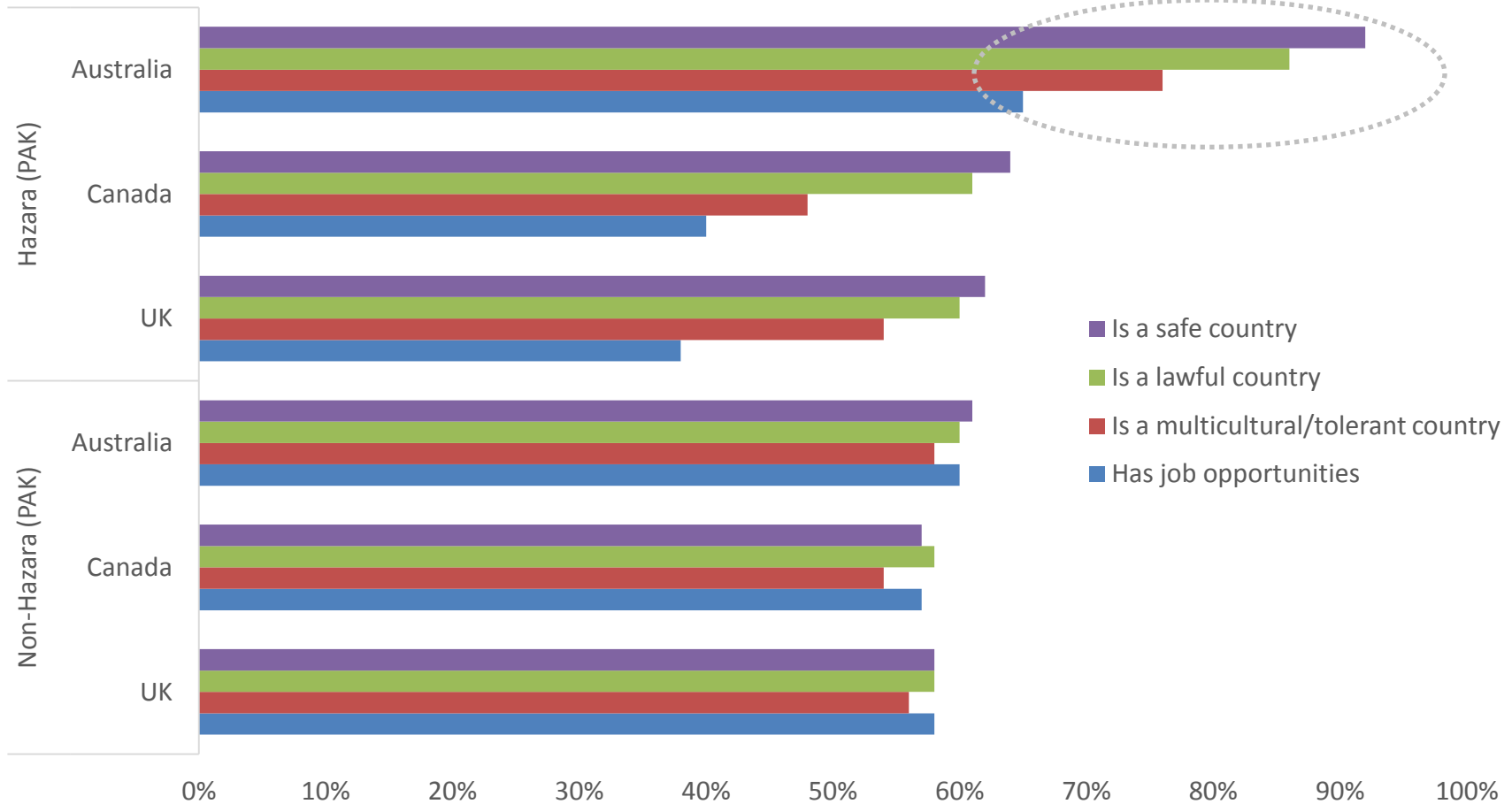


An 'accepting' asylum seeker policy was not an important reason why Australia was preferred among potential asylum seekers in 2014.

## Australia was preferred over other countries for varying reasons

- Afghanistan (Hazara)
  - Due to the country's job opportunities (57%).
  - Previous asylum seekers in those countries send money back (39%).
  
- Pakistan (Hazara)
  - Because the country is safe (87%).
  - Due to the country's job opportunities (38%).
  
- Bangladesh (Rohingya)
  - They can earn more money in Australia relative to other countries (88%).
  - Because the country is safe (79%).

# Australia may be preferred due to perceptions relative to other countries





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- Evidence that proactive potential asylum seekers (as opposed to acute potential asylum seekers) do have destination country preference.
- Potential asylum seekers appear aware of aspects of immigration policy in destination countries.
- Information sources for potential asylum seekers vary considerably.
- Broader perceptions of destination countries varied substantially.

## Future potential

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- Data collection using tablet devices facilitates timely feedback to policy makers.
- Further surveys of potential migrants can build on existing data.
- Model can be replicated in different geographic locations.
- Further empirical evidence to inform policy and operational deliberations.
- Highlight extremely vulnerable communities, aspects of smuggling networks as well as potential migrants' views.
- Qualitative approaches to further explore smuggling dynamics and decision making processes.

Questions?