

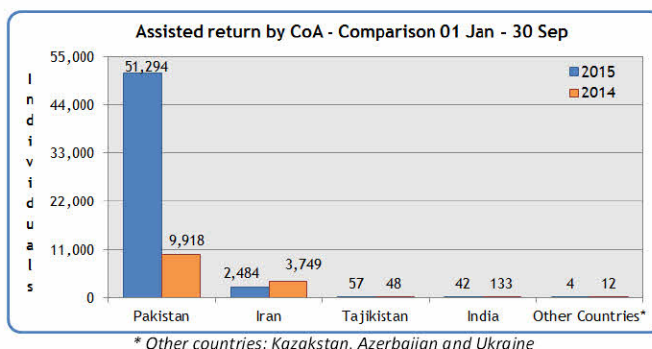
# AFGHANISTAN

## VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–30 September 2015

### VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In September 2015, a total of **3,118** Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 2,653 came from Pakistan, 440 from Iran, 14 from India, 9 from Tajikistan and 2 from Azerbaijan. **This figure is 43% lower** compared to **5,476** returnees in August 2015. The lower return figure in September is may be due to the celebration of Eid-ul Adah holidays during which the return operation temporarily suspended between 23 – 27 September as well as insecurity in some of the areas to which returnees would be returning (such as Kunduz).



In the first nine months of 2015, a total of **53,881** Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program. The majority of returnees (**51,294**) came from Pakistan, while **2,484** returned from Iran. **The return trend this year represents a substantial increase, already surpassing the total return in 2014 (16,995),** though it should be noted that the return trend from Iran is 34% lower as compared to the same period in 2015.

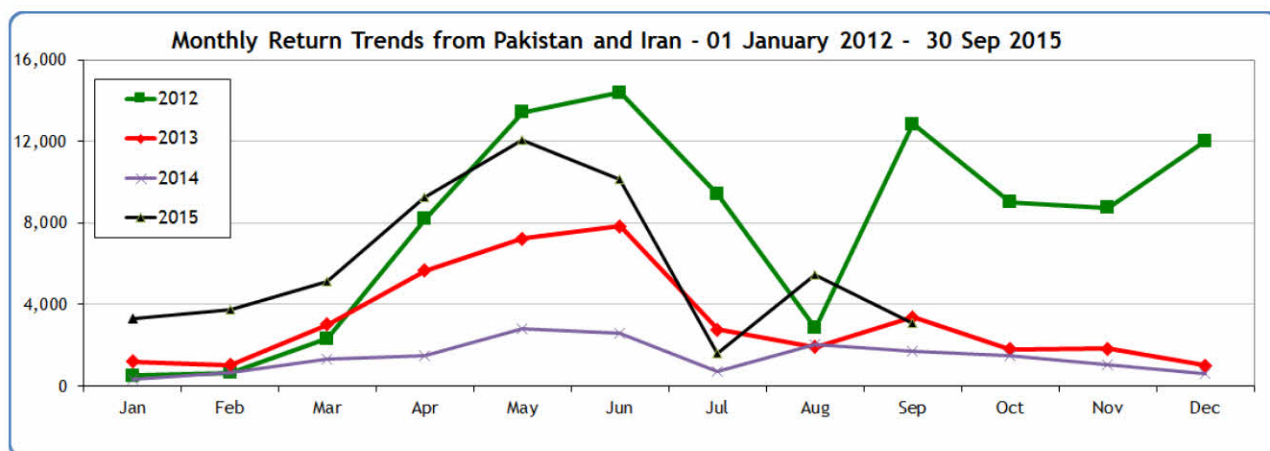
Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Sep 2015		Jan - Sep 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	16,618	30.8%	3,925	28.3%
Northeast	12,265	22.8%	2,535	18.3%
East	10,125	18.8%	1,721	12.4%
North	5,684	10.5%	1,815	13.1%
Southeast	4,876	9.0%	632	4.6%
West	2,068	3.8%	1,313	9.5%
South	1,965	3.6%	1,716	12.4%
Central Highlands	280	0.5%	203	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,881</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>13,860</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The return trend normally increases from mid-April, which marks the start of return season, and continues until end October. Based on return monitoring in the Encashment centers in Afghanistan, however, conditions in different parts of Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab, continues to play a role in the decision to return. In general, eviction notices by the authorities, harassment, intimidation, movement limitations, economic factors, settlement closure/consolidation and fear of arrest and/or deportation were mentioned by interviewed returnees as the main push factors of return from Pakistan so far this year.

Some **73%** of repatriating refugees returned from KPK (**50%**) and Punjab (**23%**). **12%** of repatriating refugees returned from Baluchistan. Overall, **72%** of returnees have arrived from urban areas.

The top urban areas in Pakistan from which returnees have left in 2015 are Peshawar and Haripur (KPK), Karachi, Chakwal, Attock, Gujrat and Sialkot (Punjab), Mihrpur (Azad Kashmir), Quetta and Pishin (Baluchistan). The top five rural return areas (camps) for 2015 are Azakhel, Panian, Khaki, Thall and Old Akora, all of them located in KPK.

Kabul, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Logar, and Baghlan provinces in Afghanistan are the top five province of destination and have received **64%** of total returnees from Pakistan so far this year. Meantime, Kabul, Herat, Bamyán, Balkh and Baghlan provinces are among the top five provinces of destination and have received **81%** of total returnees from Iran. Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz are among the top five provinces of return since 2002.



## RETURN PROCESS

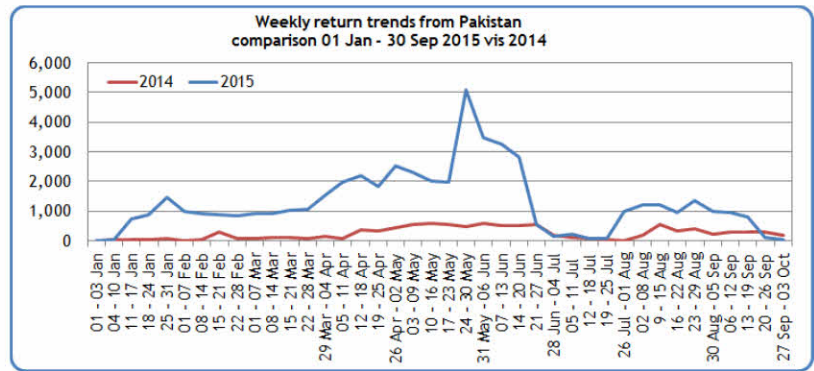
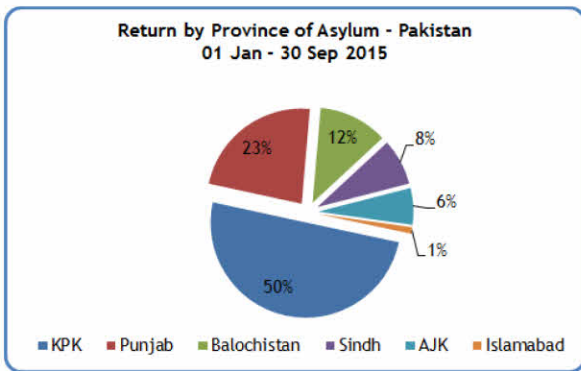
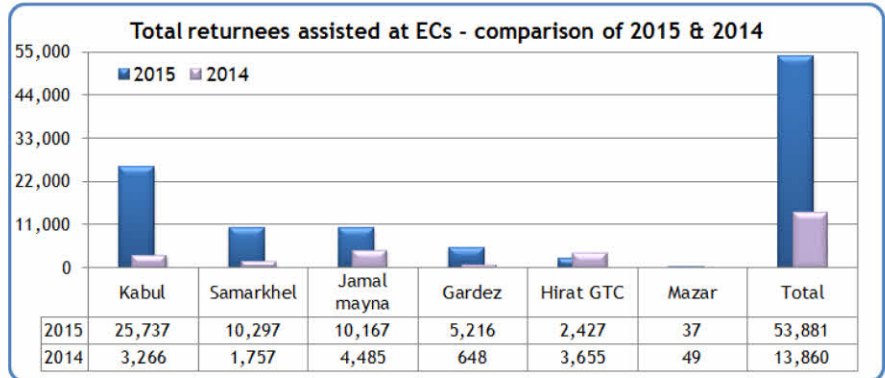
UNHCR’s Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) are processing refugees in the country of asylum willing to return to Afghanistan and issuing a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) for each family.

Two VRCs are in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli in Quetta (Baluchistan).

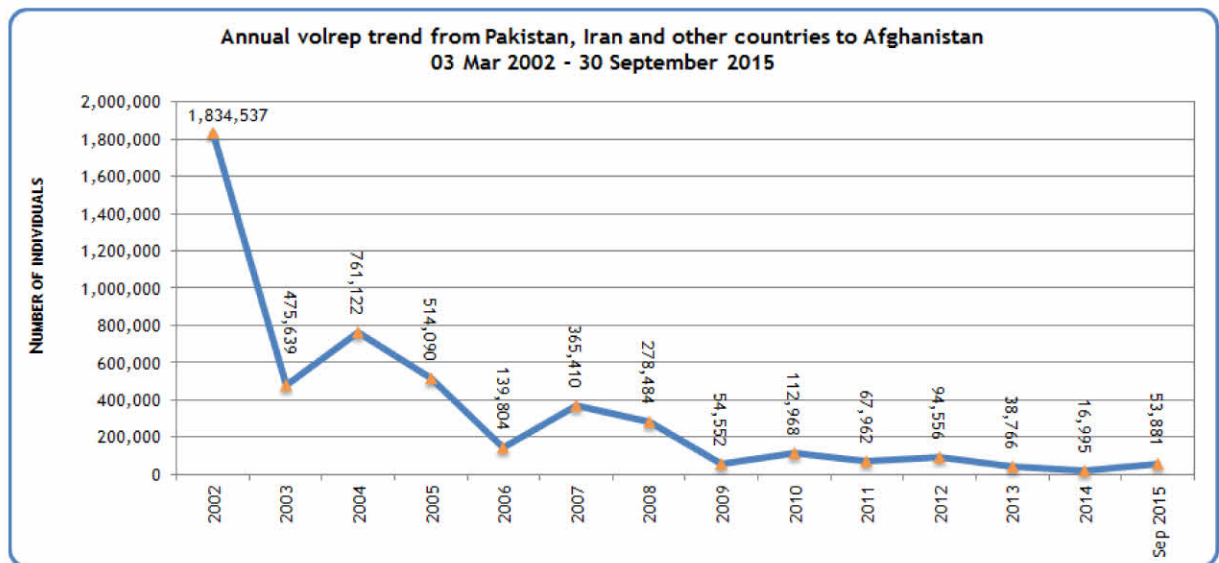
Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through Soleimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun.

Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.

At the ECs, depending on the province of origin, all Afghan returnees with VRFs receive on average US\$ 200 per person (between US\$30 - US\$70 for transport and US\$150 as a short-term integration grant). The transportation grant varies according to the distance from the areas of asylum to the areas of origin. Returning refugees are also briefed on mine awareness and education procedures in Afghanistan at the EC. They can benefit from transit facilities for overnight stay and basic health services. All children under the age of five are vaccinated for polio and measles.



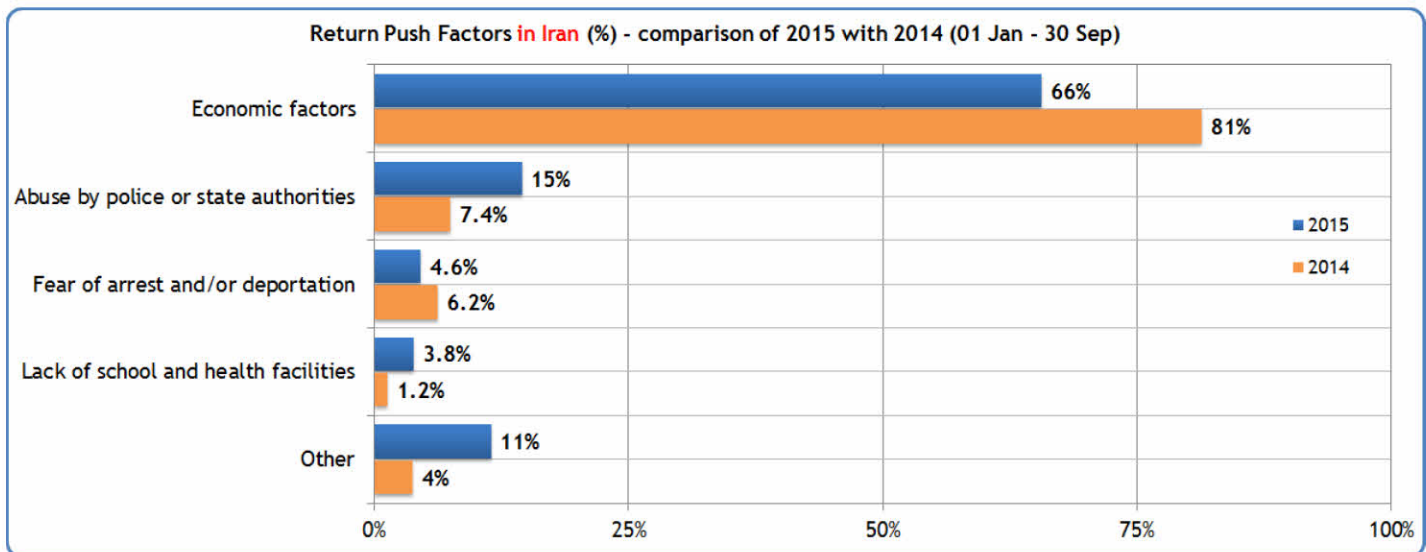
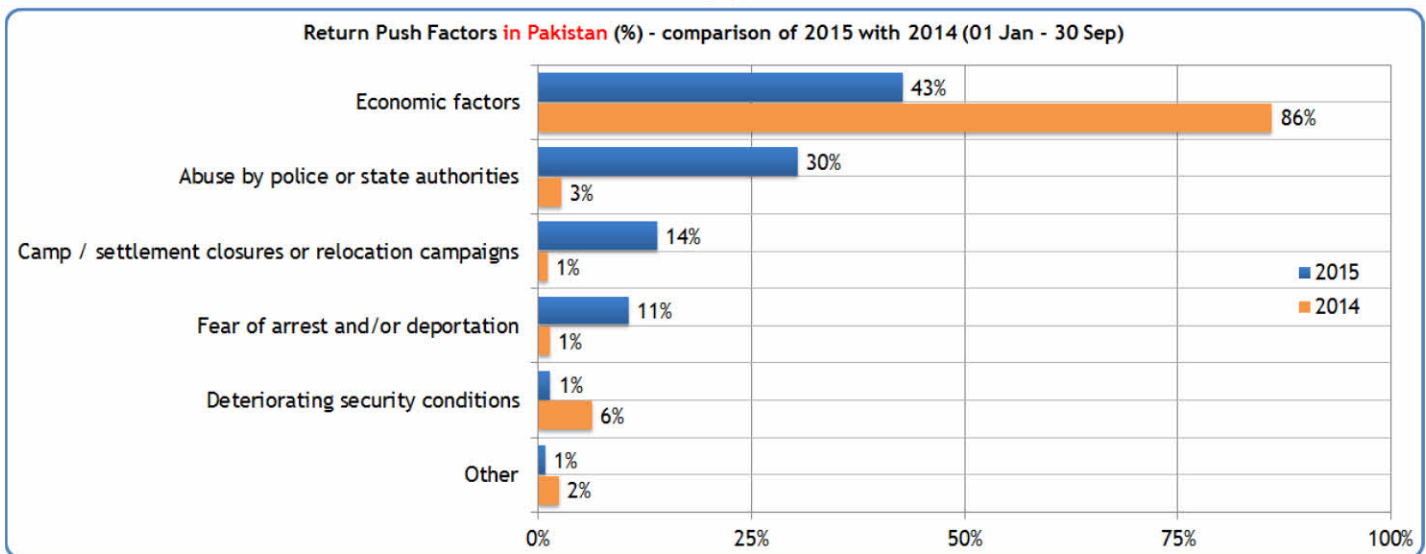
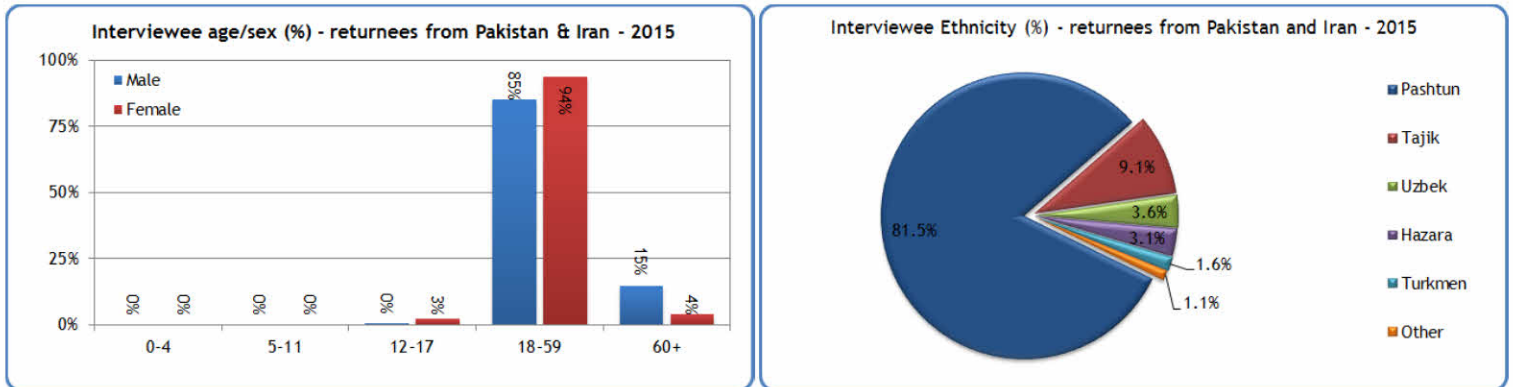
From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of September 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise 20% of the Afghanistan’s population.



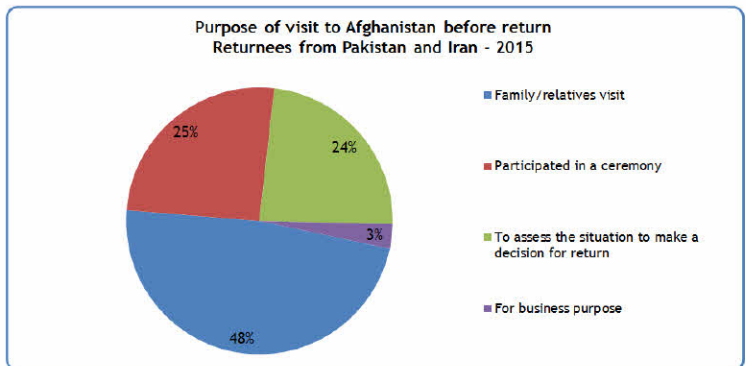
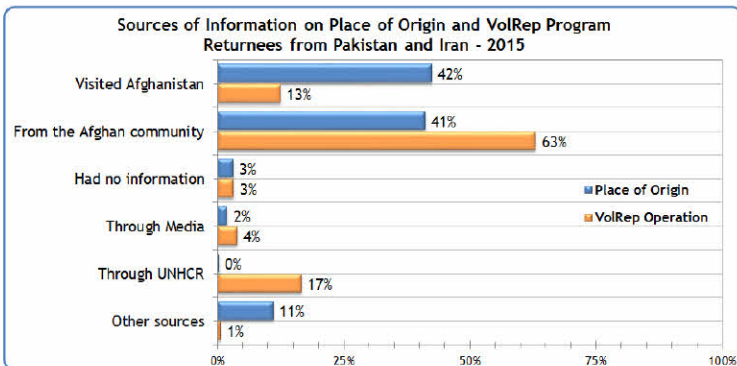
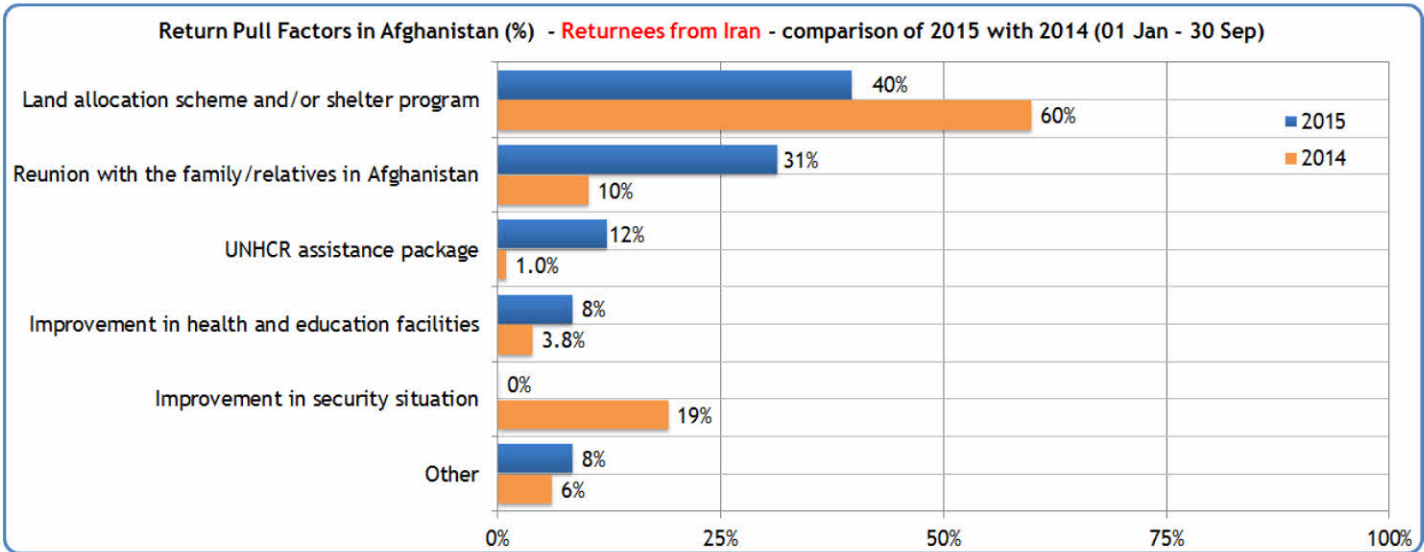
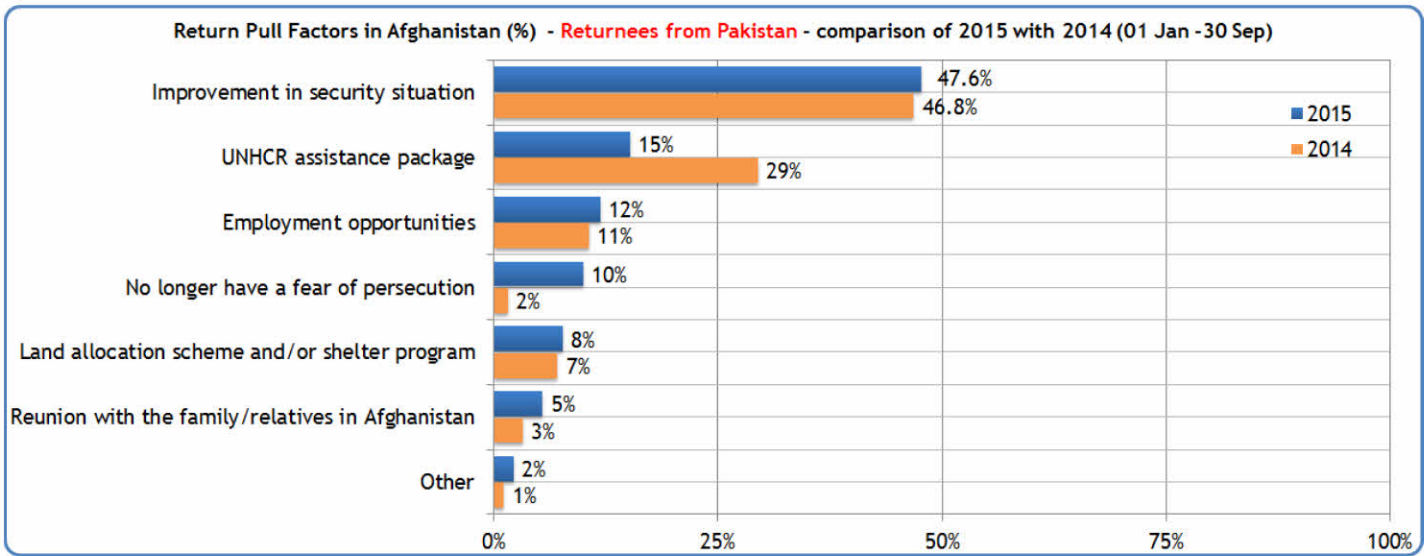


## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 30 September 2015, a total of **2,740 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (2,609) and Iran (131). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (2,249) and from those with protection concerns (491) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR/DoRR Encashment Centres. This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR to identify return trends, push/pull factors and check on the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.



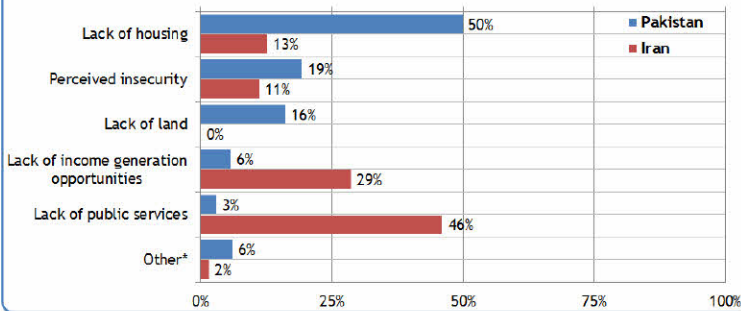
## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING



\* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reasons for this discrepancy could include strict border control by Iran and longer distances.



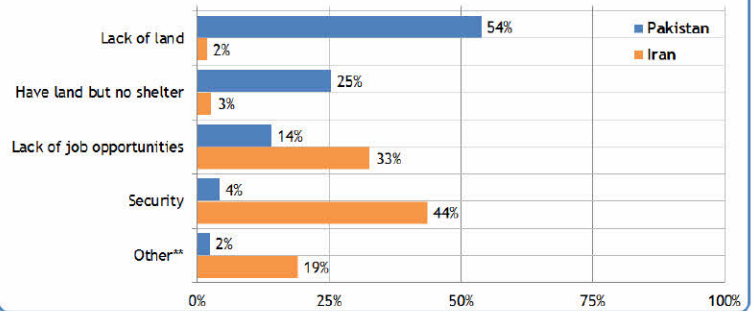
**Reasons for not returning to place of origin  
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015**



Out of a total of 2,740 respondents, 1,065 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

\*Other represents 61 interviews; responses provided included personal dispute, fear of persecution, lack of quality education and health facilities

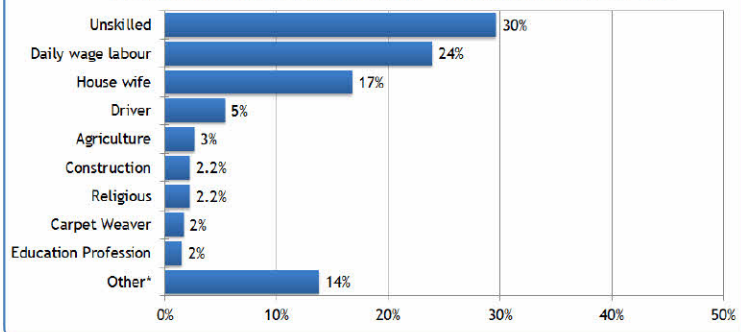
**Concerns after return to Afghanistan  
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015**



The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

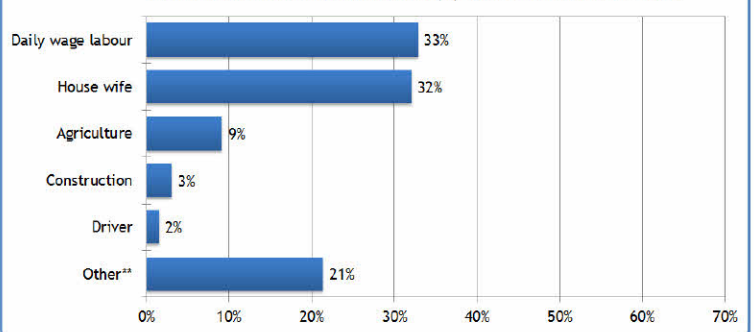
\*\*Other represents 71 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities

**Professions of interviewed returnees (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - 2015**



\* Responses included domestic worker, businessman, engineer, medical and artisan. Businessman are those who had small scale business i.e. shopkeeper

**Professions of interviewed returnees (%) - Returnees from Iran - 2015**



\*\* Other: responses included unskilled workers and businessman. The later is mainly those who had small scale business i.e. shopkeeper

### Alleged arrest/detention and extortion in Pakistan

Monitoring findings with the newly arrived returnees from Pakistan shows that the pace of negative push factors, particularly harassment, intimidations and extortions by the local authorities were significantly reduced as compared to April–June. However, they reported that registered Afghans are stopped in a number of police checkpoints/mobile teams and in some occasions their PoR cards were not considered as a valid document. They alleged that they could manage to pass the checkpoint after they paid some amount of money.

During September, returnees from Punjab, Islamabad and Peshawar reported confiscation of original PoR cards by the police. Interviewed returnees stated that it is a new phenomenon which normally takes place at night during a search operations by the police or in some instances at police checkpoints. They alleged that after confiscation of PoR cards, refugees were accused of illegal stay in Pakistan and were referred to judiciary. Returnees reported that the judiciary released them after they presented a copy of their PoR cards in the court, but after spending several nights in police custody. They also confirmed that their original PoR cards were returned by the police, but only after they paid Pakistani Rupees of 2,000 (approximately \$20)

During September, reported cases of extortion/bribery incidents in Samarkhel EC in Nangarhar province shows an increase compared to August. Reports shows that the main areas where the harassment and extortion incidents were took place are Charikas, Tool Plaza, Attock and Hassan Abdal checkpoints (in Punjab province/on the way to VRC) as well as Karkhano, Jamrud and Dry ditch area (on the way to Torkham). Returning refugees alleged that they were stopped for unknown reasons and could only manage to pass the checkpoint after paying some amount of money ranging Pakistani Rupees 300– 8,700 (approximately \$3–87).

### Deportation of registered Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan

A total of 54 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders) have been deported from Iran so far this year including 35 cases only in September which shows a sharp increase compared to August. UNHCR /UNHCR partners record these deportation cases to understand the circumstances and to advocate (if required) for possible re-admission/family reunification back in Iran. Among these 54 cases, only one case (disabled and chronically ill unaccompanied minor) was re-admitted by the Iranian authorities and joined his family back in Iran. Other cases were not considered for re-admission given that they were arrested while trying to illegally cross the Uromyeh border (between Iran and Turkey) or for failure to present their Amayesh cards when requested or as a result of being found in non-designated (“no-go”) areas for which they had failed to obtain movement authorization from the local authorities. UNHCR/UNHCR partners provide deported Afghan refugees with necessary assistance at the UNHCR encashment/transit center in Herat. Deported refugees can also benefit from the assistance provided by IOM if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Similarly, 20 registered Afghan refugees (PoR card holders) were also deported from Pakistan (via Spin Boldak) so far this year including 3 refugees only in September. Deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan is a new trend which has occurred following the new measures put in place by the authorities in Pakistan after the terrorist attack on a school in Peshawar in December 2014. The circumstances of these deportations from Baluchistan where there are no reports of push factors are not yet known. According to the border monitors, deported Afghan refugees immediately returned (from the border area) to Pakistan to join their families. Thus it is difficult to obtain more details about the reason of these deportations. UNHCR is following this matter. There have been no reports about the deportation of registered refugees via Torkham despite greater push factors in KPK.



## BORDER MONITORING

### DEPORTATION OF UNDOCUMENTED AFGHAN NATIONALS (NON-REFUGEES)

*Undocumented Afghan nationals returning from Iran or Pakistan due to eviction, conflict, military operations, natural disasters, or other reasons do not fall under UNHCR's mandate, and all international response to their needs will be led by IOM. However, UNHCR, in coordination with other protection actors, monitors their protection situation to ensure that registered refugees are not deported.*

#### IRAN:

**1 - 30 Sep 2015:** A total of 28,192 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, via Islam Qala (74%) and Zaranj (26%), from Iran. This figure is 15% higher compared to 24,476 deportees during August 2015.

**1 Jan–30 Sep 2015:** A total of 178,956 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This is 17% higher compared to 153,191 Afghans were deported during the same period in 2014.

A total number of 206,149 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2014.

The vast majority of deportees (98%) were single males who entered Iran illegally, to look for work.

Since April 2009, IOM has been present in Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossing points and has procedures in place to identify vulnerable deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees).

IOM provides vulnerable cases with transportation, transit and health services at the border and assists with their transportation costs from the cities of Herat and Zaranj to their final destinations.

Deportations from Iran											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			Total
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 30 Sep 2015	Zaranj	161	473	443	916	6,209	82	0	0	6,291	7,207
	Islam Qala	440	1,049	1,240	2,289	18,503	188	5	0	18,696	20,985
<b>Total</b>		<b>601</b>	<b>1,522</b>	<b>1,683</b>	<b>3,205</b>	<b>24,712</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24,987</b>	<b>28,192</b>
01 Jan - 30 Sep 2015	Zaranj	1,695	4,010	4,175	8,185	64,876	387	0	0	65,263	73,448
	Islam Qala	1,088	2,222	2,878	5,100	99,380	1,023	5	0	100,408	105,508
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,783</b>	<b>6,232</b>	<b>7,053</b>	<b>13,285</b>	<b>164,256</b>	<b>1,410</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>165,671</b>	<b>178,956</b>

#### PAKISTAN:

**1 - 30 Sep 2015:** A total of 974 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (800) and Spin Boldak (174) border points. This figure is 36% lower compared to 1,514 deportees during August 2015.

**1 January - 30 Sep 2015:** A total of 9,922 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 2,310 deportees (via Torkham) during same period in 2014.

Since November 2012, IOM has established a transit centre in Torkham to identify and assist vulnerable deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees). IOM provides vulnerable cases with NFIs and free transportation from Torkham to their final destination.

In addition, 3,045 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 22 Feb and 31 August 2015.

A total of 9,592 Afghans were deported from Pakistan via Torkham (3,800) and Spin Boldak (5,792) in 2014.

Deportations from Pakistan											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			Total
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 30 Sep 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	800	0	0	0	800	800
	Spin Boldak*	0	0	0	0	174	0	0	0	174	174
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>974</b>
01 Jan - 30 Sep 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	9,922	0	0	0	9,922	9,922
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	3,045	0	0	0	3,045	3,045
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,967</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,967</b>	<b>12,967</b>

\* Border monitoring activities were resumed in Spin Boldak on 21 February 2015.

UNHCR would like to extend its deep appreciation for the continuing support and generous contributions of donors to its operation in Afghanistan.

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# Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

## Return by Province of Destination - 01 January - 30 September 2015

