

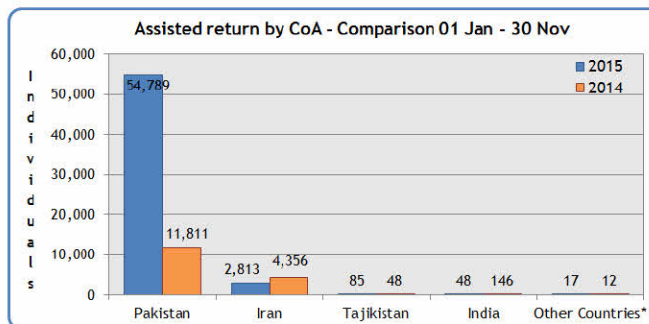
AFGHANISTAN

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–30 November 2015

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In November 2015, a total of **1,454** Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 1,312 came from Pakistan and 142 from Iran. **This figure is 40% lower** compared to **2,417** returnees in October 2015. Return trends normally decline from mid-October until mid-April due to the harsh weather conditions in Afghanistan compared to several areas in Pakistan. It should be noted, however, that the uncertainty about the extension of the PoR cards by the Government of Pakistan and the timing of the extension may still cause a spike in returns during the winter months.



* Other countries: Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and the Russian Federation

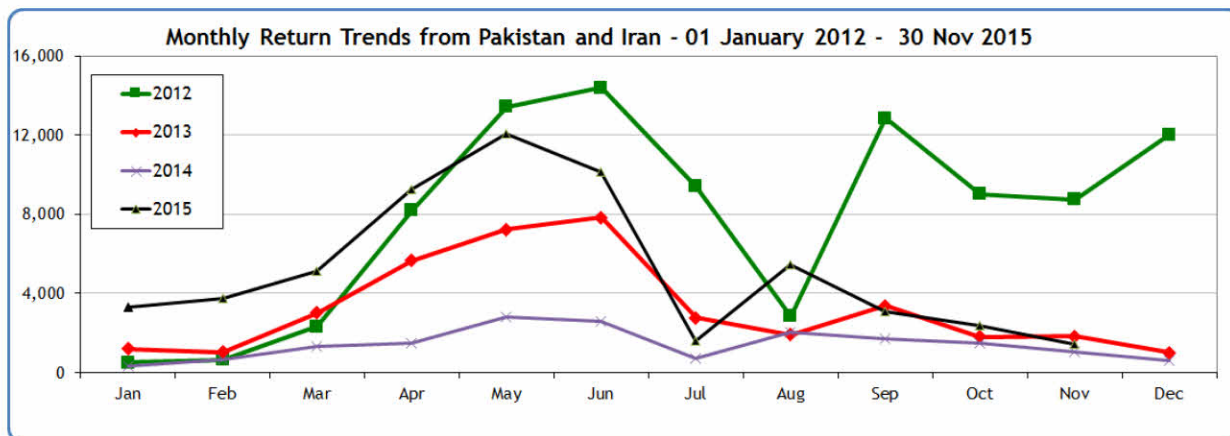
In the first 11 months of 2015, as many as **57,752** Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program. The majority of returnees (**54,789**) came from Pakistan, while **2,813** returned from Iran. **The return trends in 2015 represent a substantial increase, far surpassing the 2014 figures (16,995).** It should however be noted that the return trend from Iran is **35% lower** as compared to the same period in 2015.

Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Nov 2015		Jan - Nov 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	17,483	30.3%	4,511	27.6%
Northeast	12,755	22.1%	2,989	18.3%
East	11,284	19.5%	2,196	13.4%
North	6,057	10.5%	2,187	13.4%
Southeast	5,286	9.2%	662	4.0%
South	2,354	4.1%	2,148	13.1%
West	2,201	3.8%	1,431	8.7%
Central Highlands	332	0.6%	249	1.5%
Total	57,752	100.0%	16,373	100.0%

Based on return monitoring in the Encashment centers in Afghanistan, the asylum conditions in different parts of Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Punjab and Azad Kashmir, including arrests, detentions and evictions, played a role in decision to return in 2015. In addition, it is known that in 2014 political developments in Afghanistan had to some extent impacted the decision of refugees who took a "wait-and-see" approach. In general, economic problems, harassment, intimidation, eviction notices, movement restrictions and fear of arrest and deportation were mentioned by interviewed returnees as primary push factors. At the same time, the improvement in the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan, UNHCR's assistance package, improved employment opportunities and reduced fear of persecution were mentioned as the main pull factors by the interviewed returnees.

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 mainly; Peshawar, Karachi, Chakwal (Punjab), Quetta and Mirpur. While **28%** returned from rural areas (refugee villages/settlements) mainly; Azakhel, Panian, Khaki, Thall and Old Shamshatoo, all of them located in KPK.

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



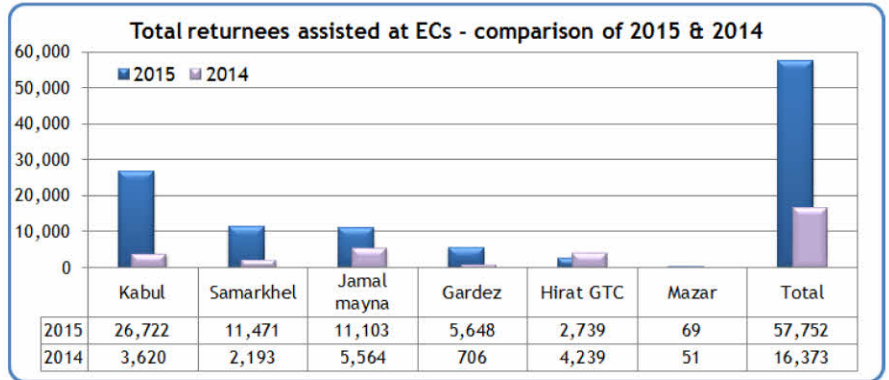
RETURN PROCESS

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.

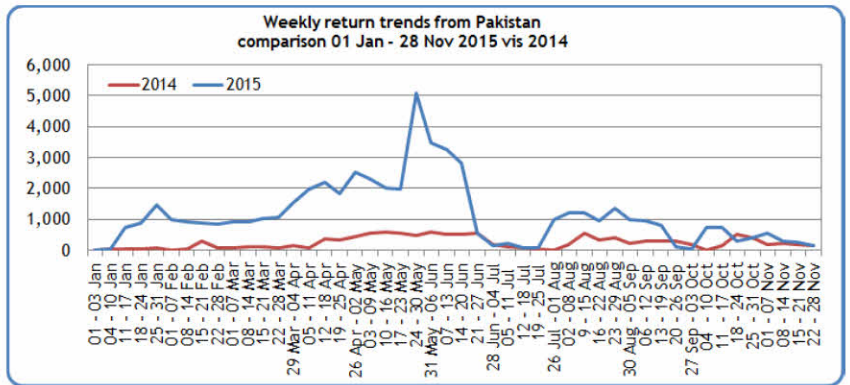
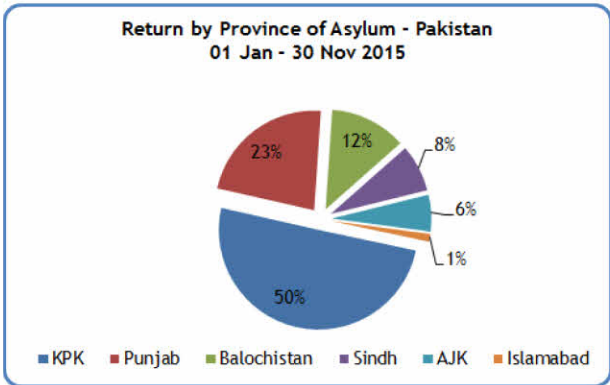
Two VRCs are located in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli in Quetta (Baluchistan).

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.

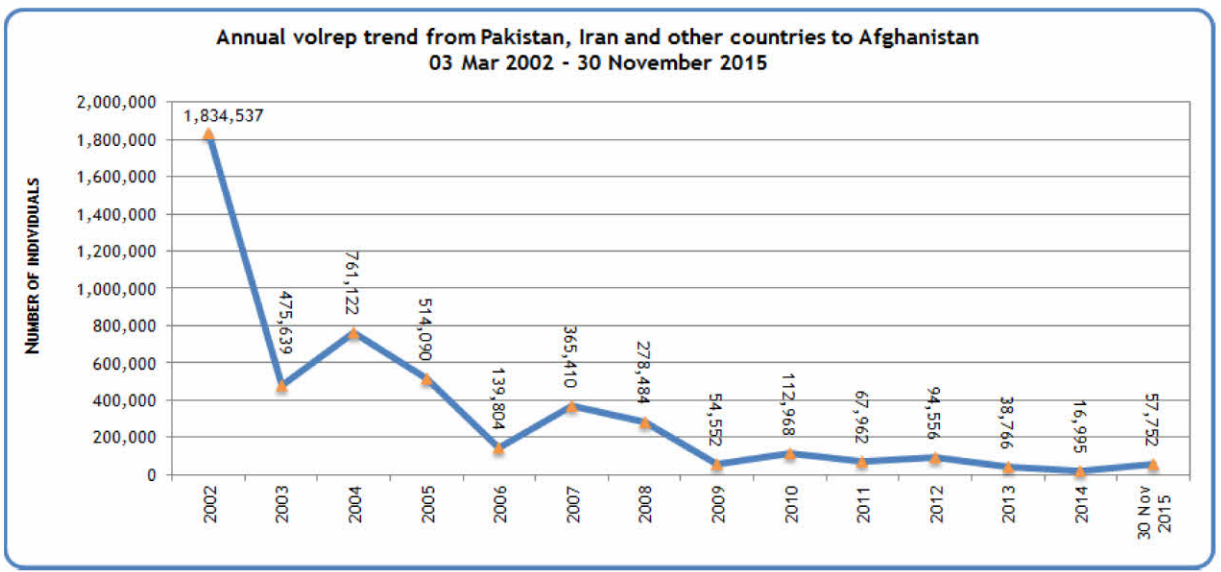
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.



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 residence in the country of asylum to the areas of origin in Afghanistan. At the EC, returning refugees are also briefed on mine awareness and access to education in Afghanistan. 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.

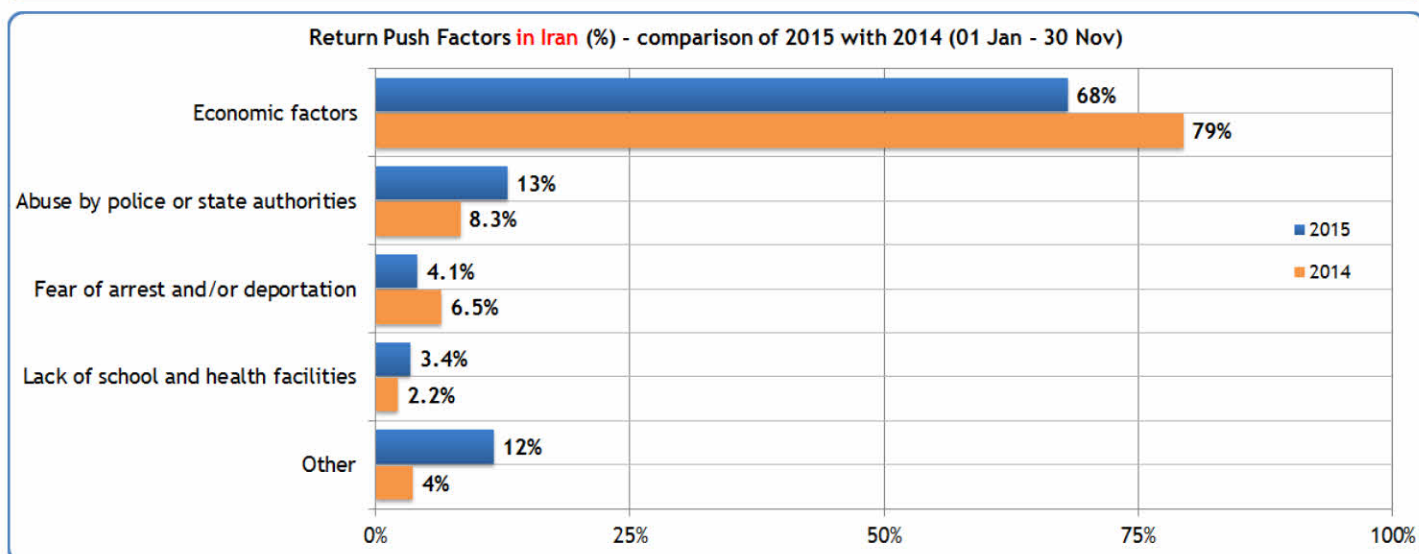
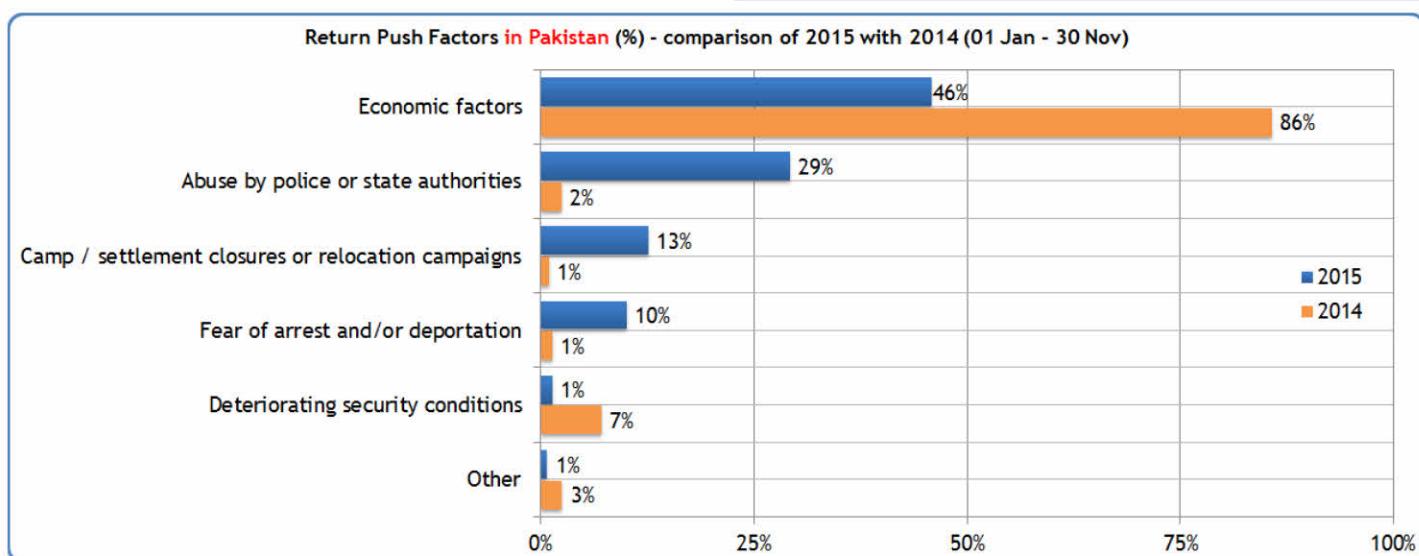
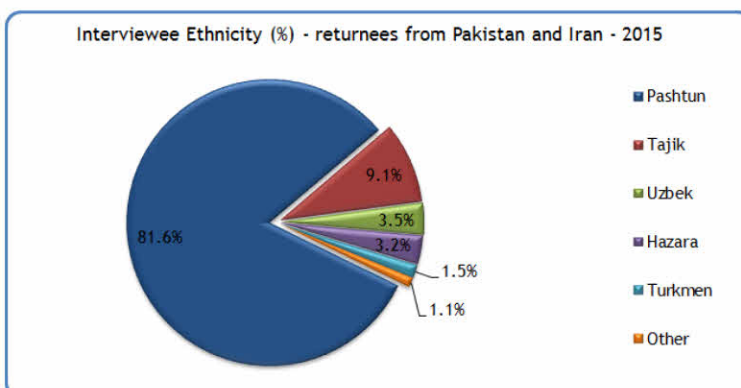
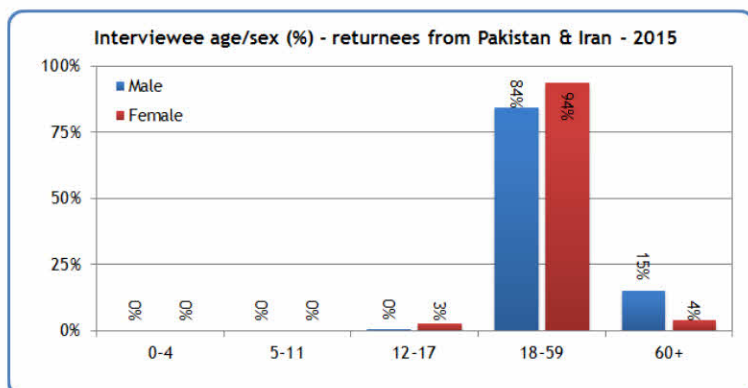


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of November 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees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



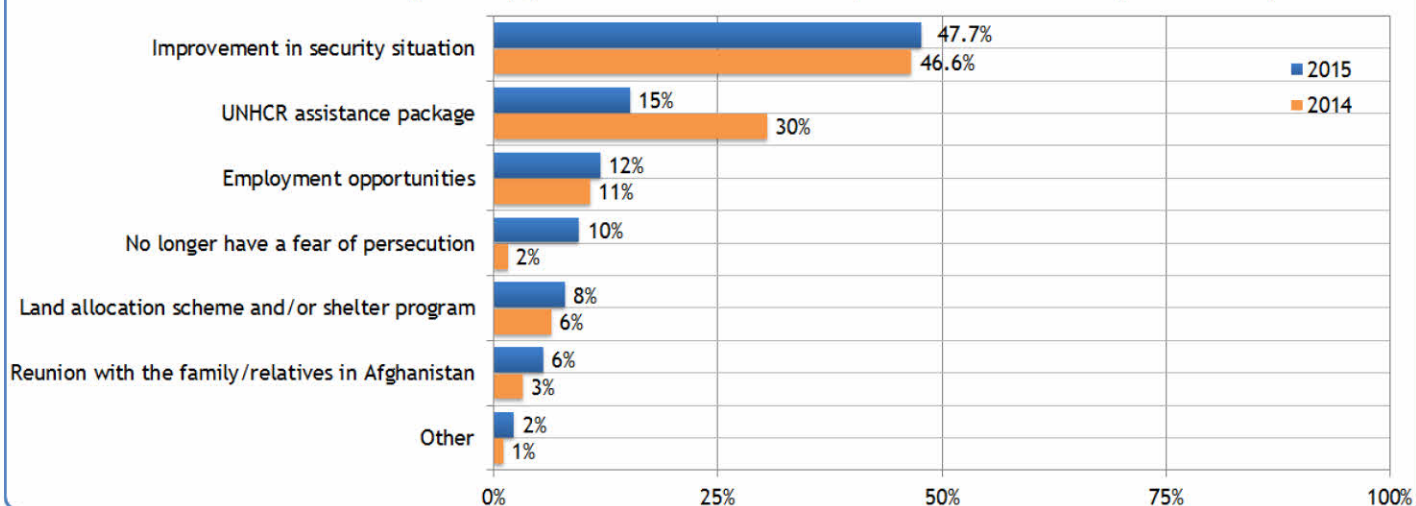
ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 30 November 2015, a total of **3,019 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (2,872) and Iran (147). Interviewees were selected in two ways: randomly from the returning families (2,522) and purposively from those with protection concerns (497) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, i.e. the UNHCR/DoRR Encashment Centres. This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR to identify return trends, push/pull factors and assess the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.

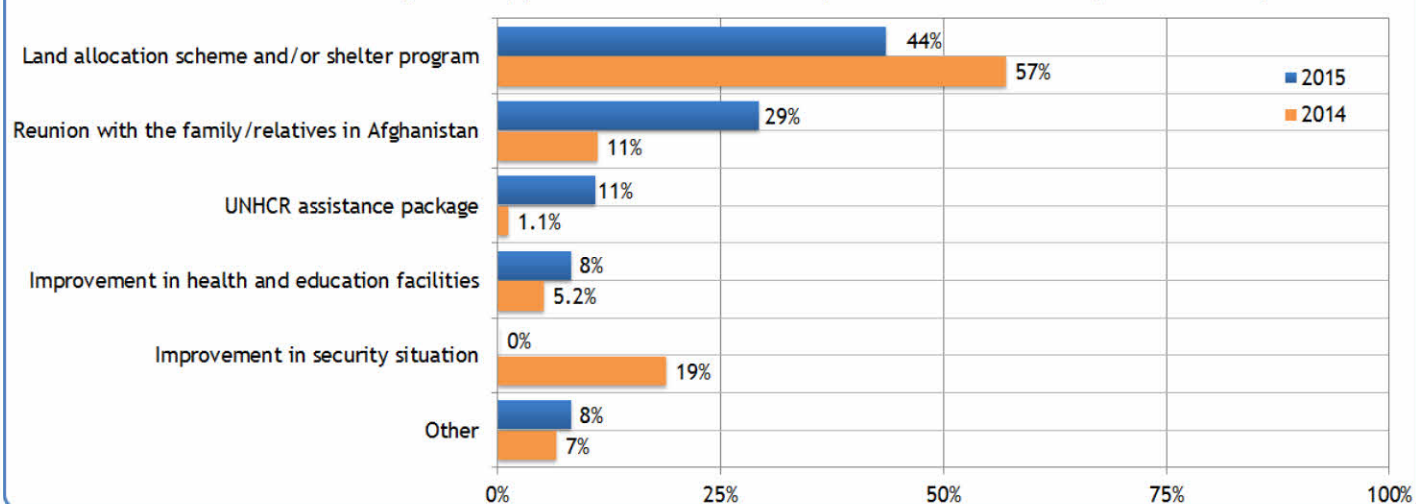


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

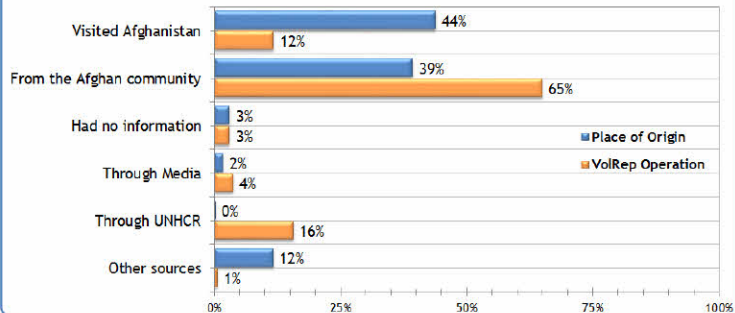
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 30 Nov)



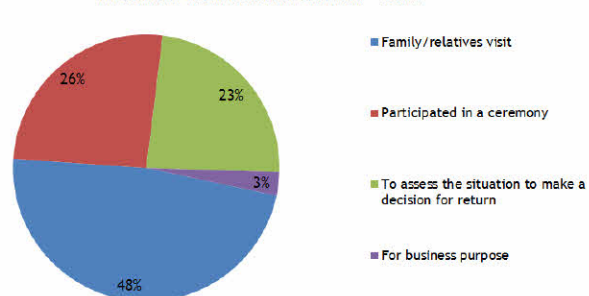
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Iran - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 30 Nov)



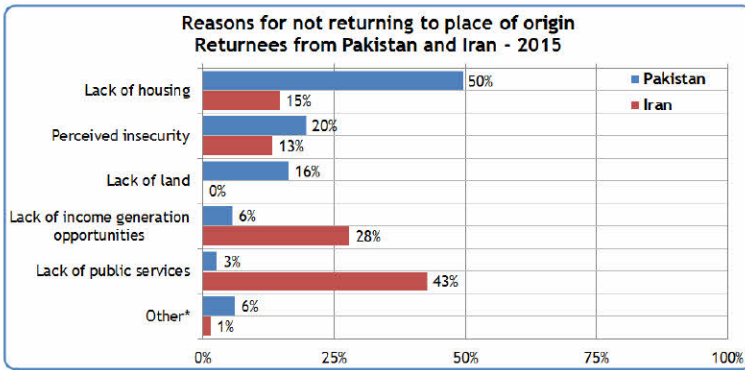
Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015



Purpose of visit to Afghanistan before return Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015

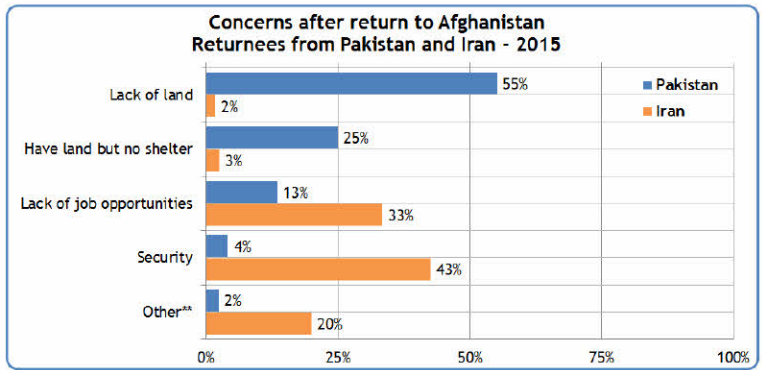


* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reasons for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



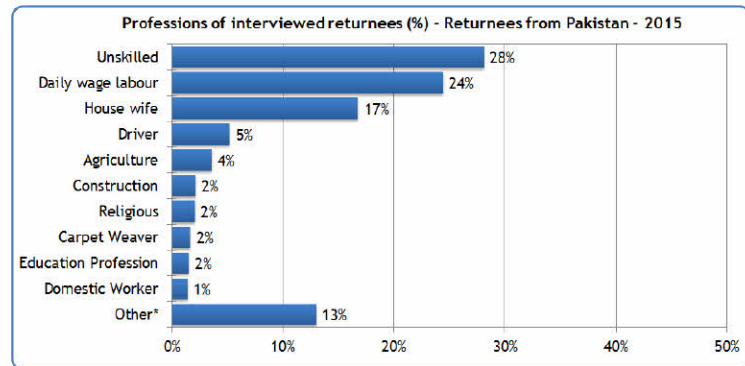
Out of 3,019 respondents, 1,164 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

*Other represents 68 interviews; responses provided included personal dispute, fear of persecution, lack of quality education and health facilities.

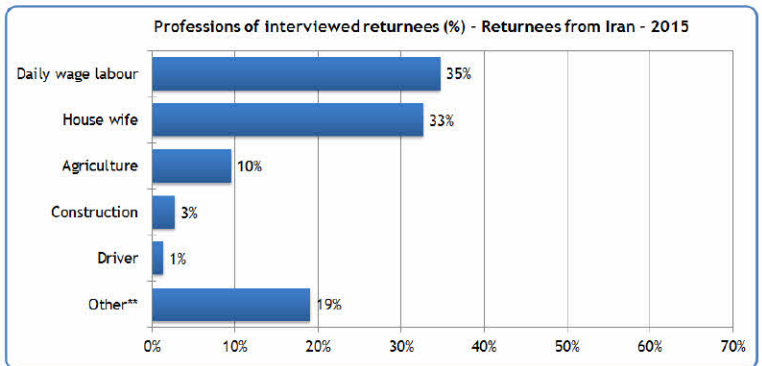


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

**Other represents 81 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities and security concerns.



*Other: Responses included professions such as businessman, engineer, medical staff, artisan and legal practitioner. Businessman is intended the owner of small scale business i.e. shop-



** Other: responses included unskilled workers and businessman. The latter is mainly intended the owner of 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 incidence of negative push factors, particularly harassment, intimidation and extortion by the local authorities were significantly reduced as compared to the period between April and June. However, it remains a concern the persistent reports by returned refugees that registered Afghan refugees are still stopped at a number of police checkpoints or by mobile Police teams and that on some occasions their PoR cards were not considered as valid documents. Returnees alleged that they could only manage to pass the checkpoint after they paid some amount of money.

During November, five returned families complained that they were stopped by the Pakistan Police en-route to Torkham entry point (Dry ditch area) as well as in Charikas, Attock and Hassan Abdal (Burhan) checkpoints of Punjab province for what were announced to them as regular commodity search. Yet, the families were later asked to pay money to the Officers to be able to pass the check points. The families alleged that they had paid (300-4,000 Rupees = USD 3–40) in order to continue their journey. UNHCR Afghanistan regularly shares these information with UNHCR offices in Pakistan for necessary follow-up and intervention.

Deportation of registered Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan

89 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders) have been deported from Iran so far this year including 21 cases only in November which is 50% higher compared to 14 deportation cases during October. UNHCR /UNHCR partners record these deportation cases to understand the circumstances and to advocate as required for possible re-admission/family reunification in Iran. Among these 68 cases, only one case (unaccompanied minor with disability and chronic illness) was re-admitted by the Iranian authorities and joined his family back in Iran. Other cases were not considered for re-admission, on grounds that they were arrested while trying to illegally cross the Uromyeh border (between Iran and Turkey); or failure to present their Amayesh cards when requested by Officials; 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 (BAFIA). UNHCR and partners provide deported Afghan refugees with the 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, 26 registered Afghan refugees (PoR card holders) were also deported from Pakistan (via Spin Boldak) so far this year. No deportation was recorded during November. 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 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 Afghanistan is following this matter with UNHCR sub office in Quetta. There have been no reports about the deportation of registered refugees via Torkham, despite the generally higher push factors reported 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 Nov 2015: A total of 20,219 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, via Islam Qala (56%) and Zaranj (44%), from Iran. This figure is 23% lower compared to 26,104 deportees during October 2015.

1 Jan–30 Nov 2015: A total of 225,090 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This is 19% higher compared to 188,899 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 Nov 2015	Zaranj	233	737	669	1,406	7,322	208	0	0	7,530	8,936
	Islam Qala	232	457	642	1,099	9,953	231	0	0	10,184	11,283
Total		465	1,194	1,311	2,505	17,275	439	0	0	17,714	20,219
01 Jan - 30 Nov 2015	Zaranj	2,137	5,353	5,389	10,742	79,353	716	0	0	80,069	90,811
	Islam Qala	1,633	3,401	4,461	7,862	124,989	1,423	5	0	126,417	134,279
Total		3,770	8,754	9,850	18,604	204,342	2,139	5	0	206,486	225,090

PAKISTAN:

1 - 30 Nov 2015: A total of 2,977 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (1,139) and Spin Boldak (1,838) border points. This figure is 108% higher compared to 1,429 deportees during October 2015.

1 January - 30 Nov 2015: A total of 11,914 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 3,199 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, 5,459 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 22 Feb and 30 November 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 Nov 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,139	0	0	0	1,139	1,139
	Spin Boldak*	0	0	0	0	1,838	0	0	0	1,838	1,838
Total		0	0	0	0	2,977	0	0	0	2,977	2,977
01 Jan - 30 Nov 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	11,914	0	0	0	11,914	11,914
	Spin Boldak	3	6	7	13	5,446	0	0	0	5,446	5,459
Total		3	6	7	13	17,360	0	0	0	17,360	17,373

* 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 November 2015

