

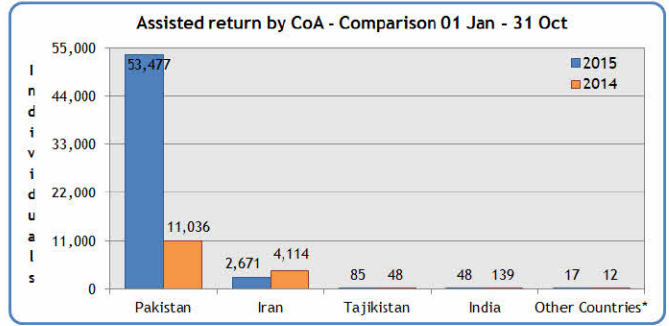
# AFGHANISTAN

## VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–31 October 2015

### VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In October 2015, a total of **2,417** Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 2,183 came from Pakistan, 187 from Iran, 28 from Tajikistan, 9 from Kyrgyzstan, 6 from India and 4 from Azerbaijan. **This figure is 22% lower** compared to **3,118** returnees in September 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 current complex political environment between Afghanistan and Pakistan and uncertainty about the extension of the PoR cards may still cause a spike in returns during the winter months.



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

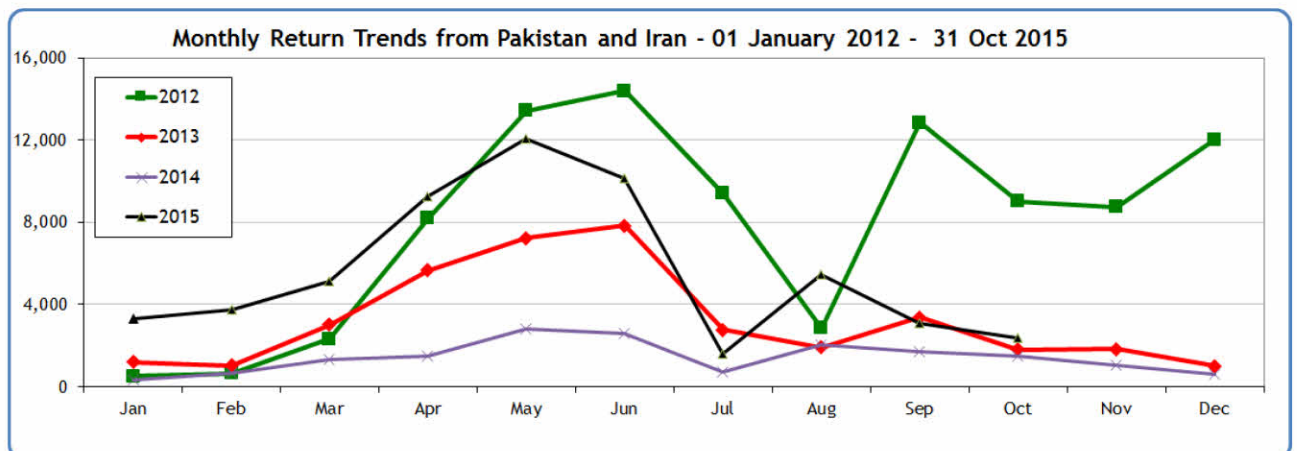
In the first 10 months of 2015, a total of **56,298** Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program. The majority of returnees (**53,477**) came from Pakistan, while **2,671** returned from Iran. **The return trend this year represents a substantial increase, far surpassing the total return in 2014 (16,995),** though it should 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 - Oct 2015		Jan - Oct 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	17,154	30.5%	4,330	28.2%
Northeast	12,503	22.2%	2,819	18.4%
East	10,875	19.3%	1,975	12.9%
North	5,921	10.5%	2,065	13.5%
Southeast	5,140	9.1%	654	4.3%
South	2,238	4.0%	1,904	12.4%
West	2,161	3.8%	1,375	9.0%
Central Highlands	306	0.5%	227	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56,298</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>15,349</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Based on return monitoring in the Encashment centers in Afghanistan, 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 addition, political developments in Afghanistan, to some extent, have impacted the decision of refugees who took a wait and see approach in 2014. 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 of return.

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 Baghlan provinces in Afghanistan are the top five province of destination and have received **63%** of total returnees so far this year. Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz are among the top five provinces of return since 2002.



## RETURN PROCESS

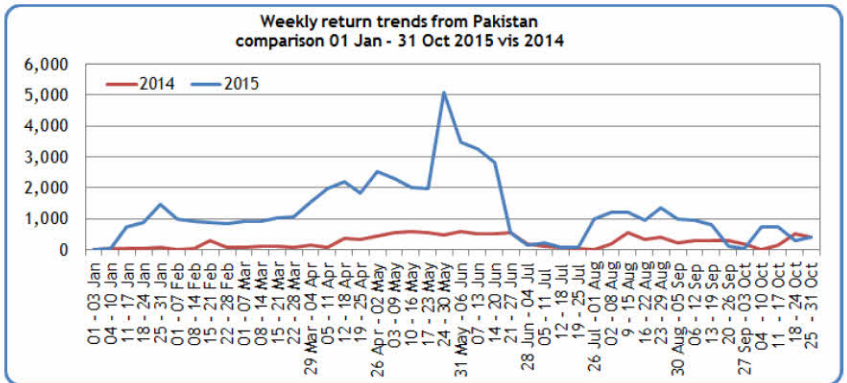
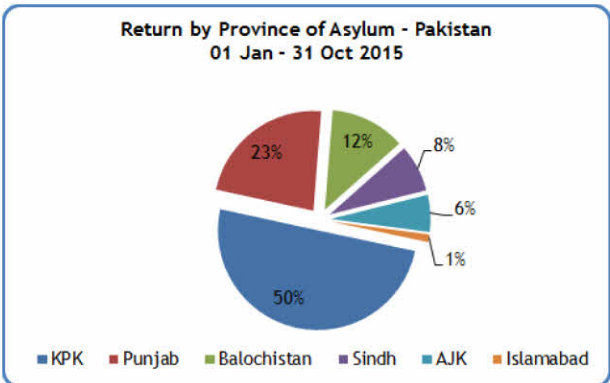
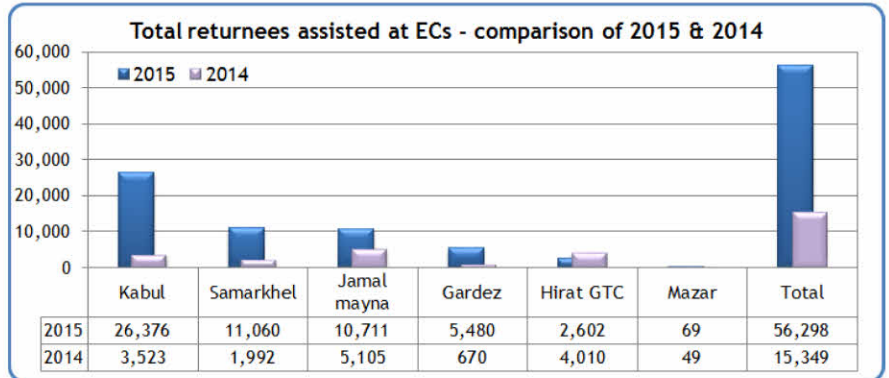
UNHCR’s Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) are processing refugees in the country of asylum willing to return to Afghanistan and issuing a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) for each family.

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

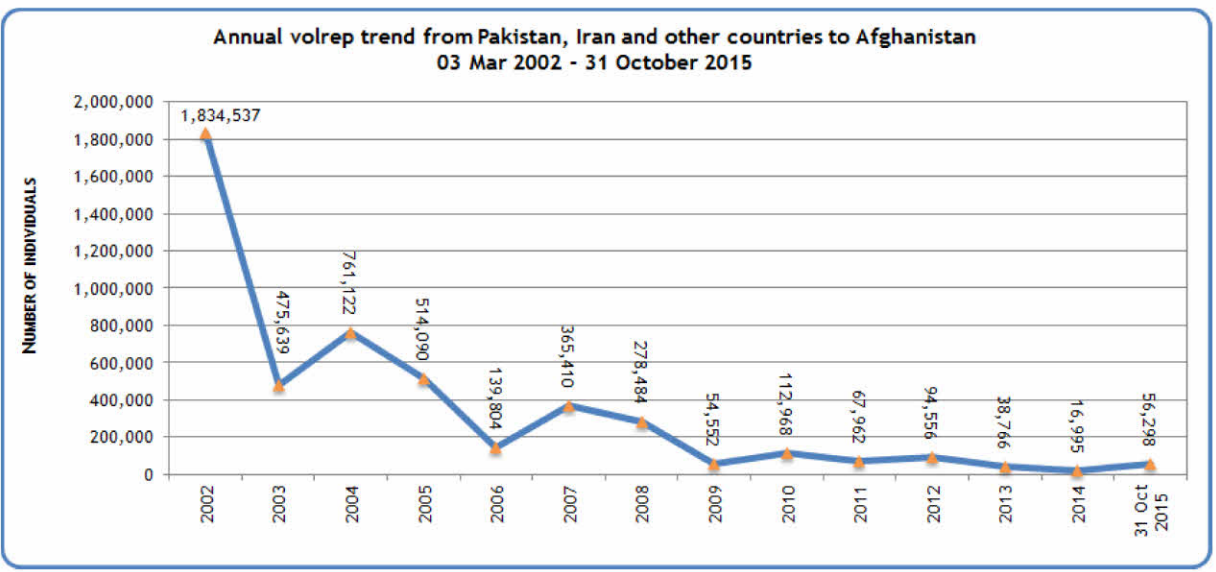
Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through Soleimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun.

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.

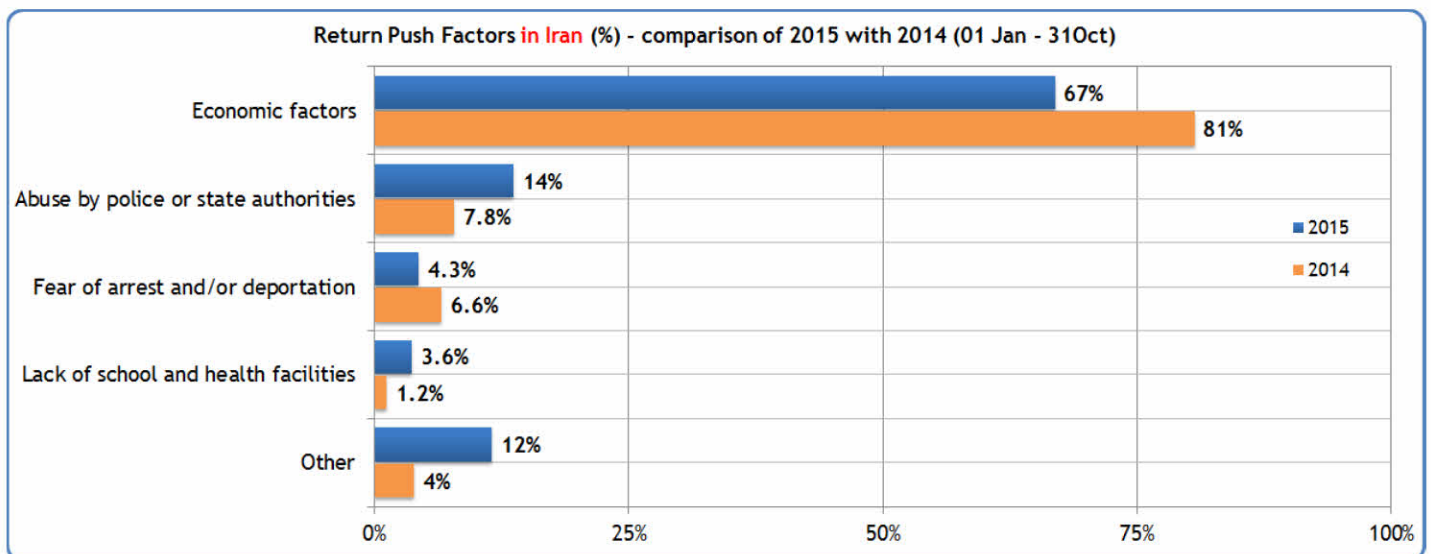
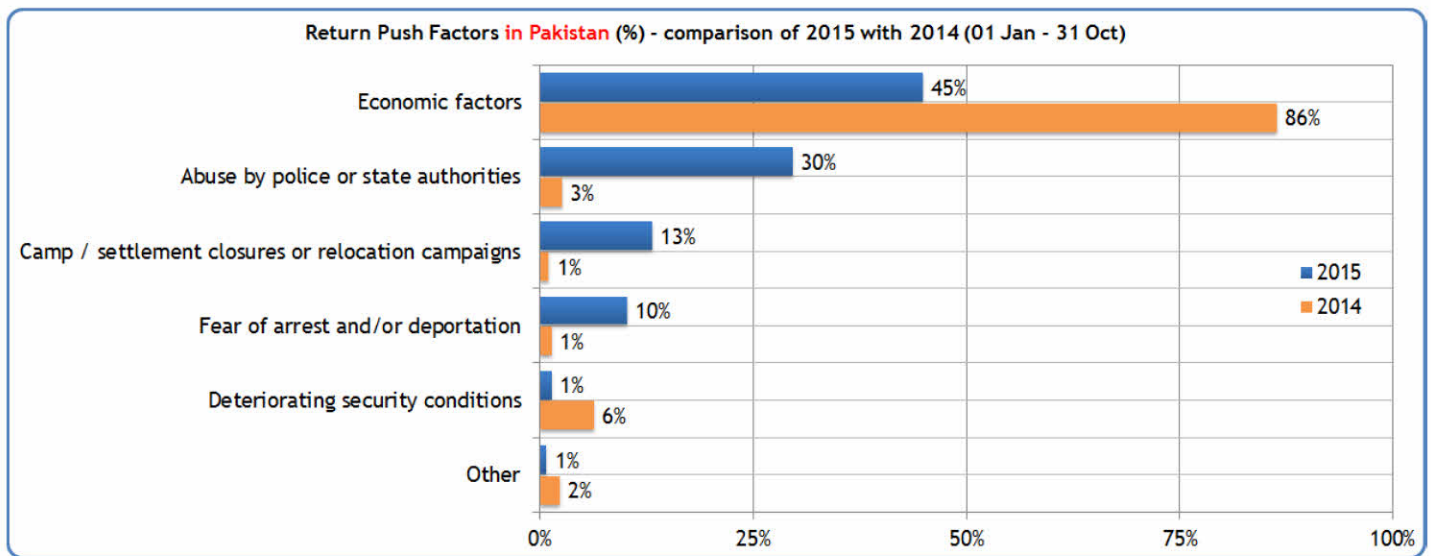
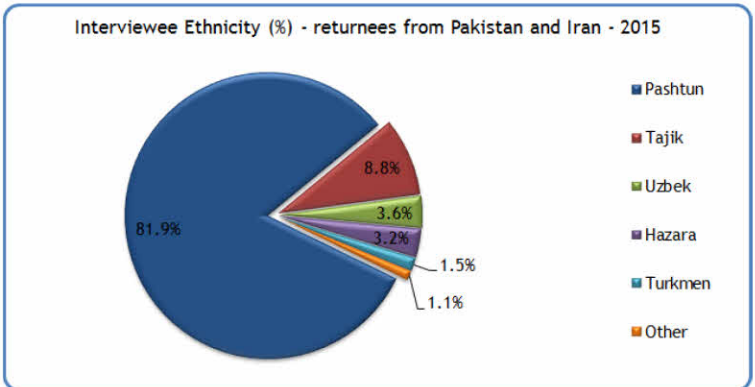
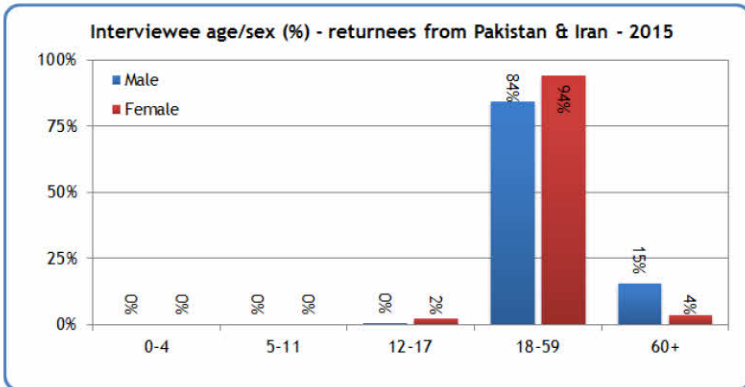


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of October 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees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

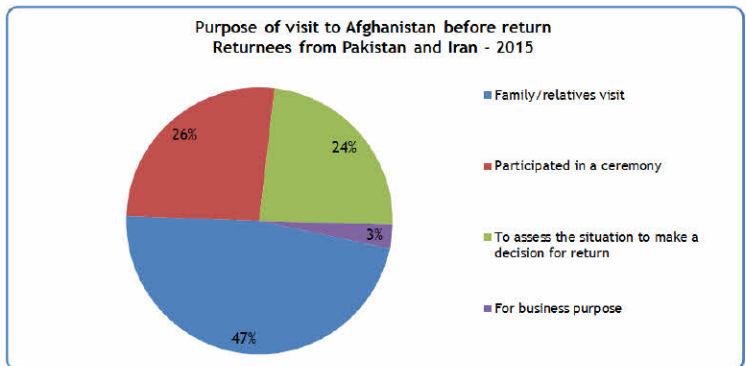
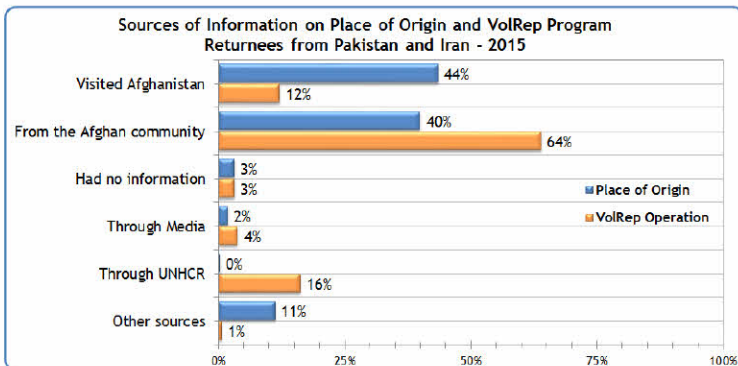
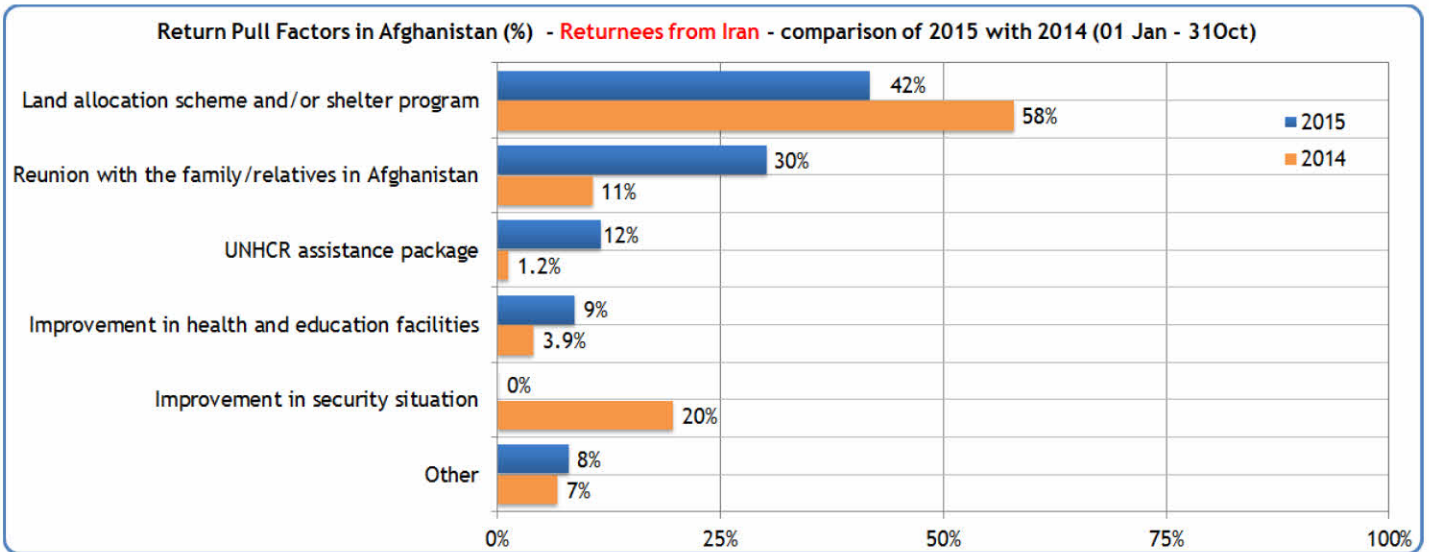
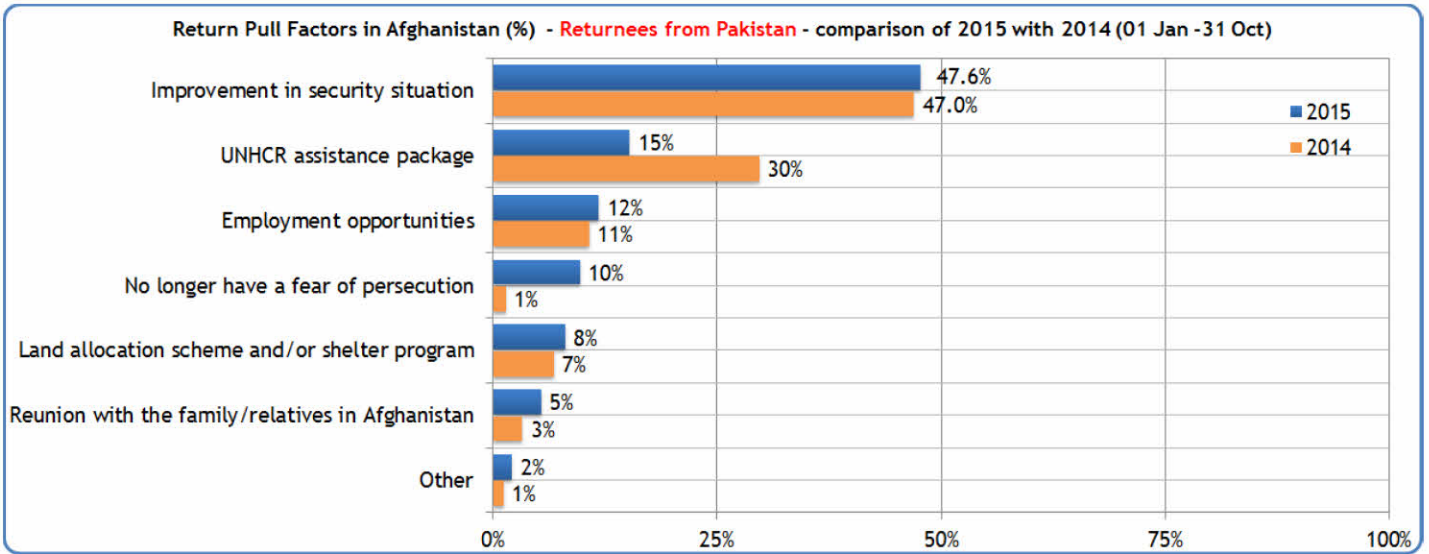


## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

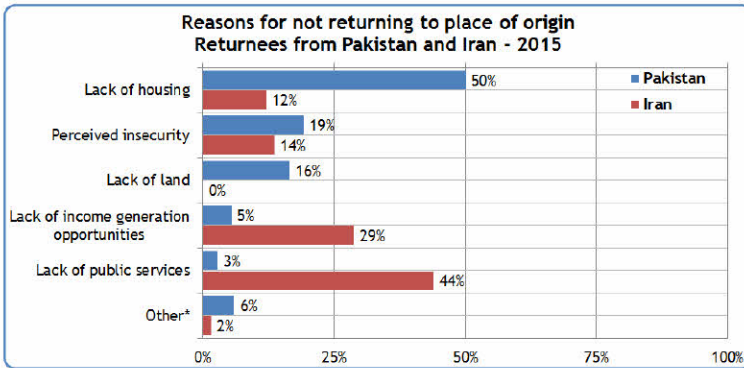
Between 1 January and 31 October 2015, a total of **2,899 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (2,760) and Iran (139). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (2,403) and from those with protection concerns (496) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the 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

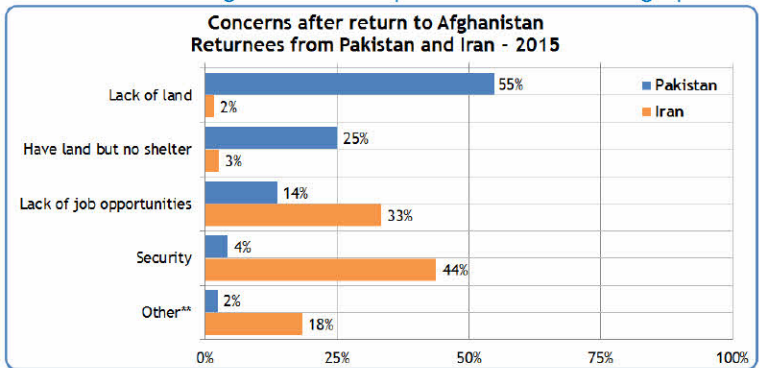


\* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reasons for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



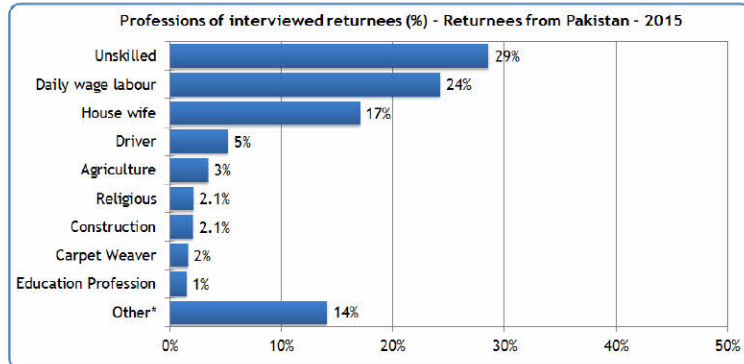
Out of a total of 2,899 respondents, 1,122 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

\*Other represents 64 interviews; responses provided included personal dispute, fear of persecution, lack of quality education and health facilities.

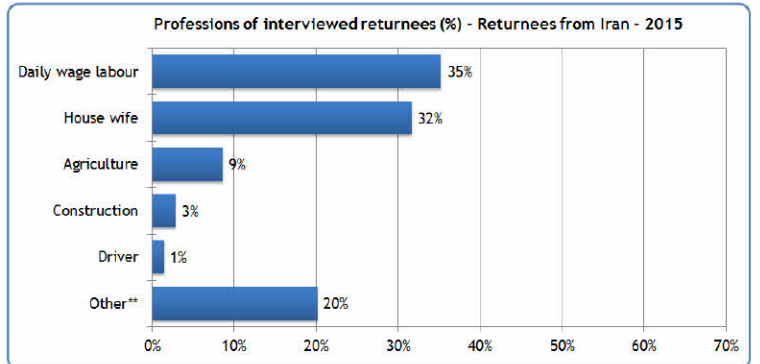


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

\*\*Other represents 74 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities and fear of persecution.



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



\*\* 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 at a number of police checkpoints/mobile teams and that on some occasions their PoR cards were not considered as valid documents. They alleged that they could only manage to pass the checkpoint after they paid some amount of money.

EC monitoring reports in October show a sharp decrease in money extortion incidents compared to the previous months. However, it is still a concern. During October around 10 complaints were reported by the returnee families who were stopped on the way (Karkhano and Dry ditch area) to Torkham entry point or on the way (at Kohat city, Motor way and Peshawar-moor area of Rawul Pendi) to VRC. The families alleged that their trucks were stopped by the police in the above mentioned areas for a search and later on were asked to pay some money if they want to pass the check point(s). The families alleged that they managed to pass the check point(s) after they paid Pakistani rupees of 1,000-4,000 (approximately USD 10– 40).

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

A total of 68 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders) have been deported from Iran so far this year including 14 cases only in October which is 60% lower compared to 35 deportation cases during September. 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 68 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, 26 registered Afghan refugees (PoR card holders) were also deported from Pakistan (via Spin Boldak) so far this year including 6 refugees in October. 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 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 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 - 31 Oct 2015:** A total of 26,104 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, via Islam Qala (68%) and Zaranj (32%), from Iran. This figure is 7% lower compared to 28,192 deportees during September 2015.

**1 Jan–31 Oct 2015:** A total of 204,871 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This is 22% higher compared to 168,267 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 - 31 Oct 2015	Zaranj	209	606	545	1,151	7,155	121	0	0	7,276	8,427
	Islam Qala	313	722	941	1,663	15,845	169	0	0	16,014	17,677
<b>Total</b>		<b>522</b>	<b>1,328</b>	<b>1,486</b>	<b>2,814</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,290</b>	<b>26,104</b>
01 Jan - 31 Oct 2015	Zaranj	1,904	4,616	4,720	9,336	72,031	508	0	0	72,539	81,875
	Islam Qala	1,401	2,944	3,819	6,763	115,036	1,192	5	0	116,233	122,996
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,305</b>	<b>7,560</b>	<b>8,539</b>	<b>16,099</b>	<b>187,067</b>	<b>1,700</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>188,772</b>	<b>204,871</b>

#### PAKISTAN:

**1 - 31 Oct 2015:** A total of 1,429 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (853) and Spin Boldak (576) border points. This figure is 47% higher compared to 974 deportees during September 2015.

**1 January - 31 Oct 2015:** A total of 10,775 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 2,825 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, 3,621 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 22 Feb and 31 October 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 - 31 Oct 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	853	0	0	0	853	853
	Spin Boldak*	3	6	7	13	563	0	0	0	563	576
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>1,429</b>
01 Jan - 31 Oct 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	10,775	0	0	0	10,775	10,775
	Spin Boldak	3	6	7	13	3,608	0	0	0	3,608	3,621
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14,383</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14,383</b>	<b>14,396</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.

#### Contact for suggestion and queries:

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# Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

## Return by Province of Destination - 01 January - 31 October 2015

