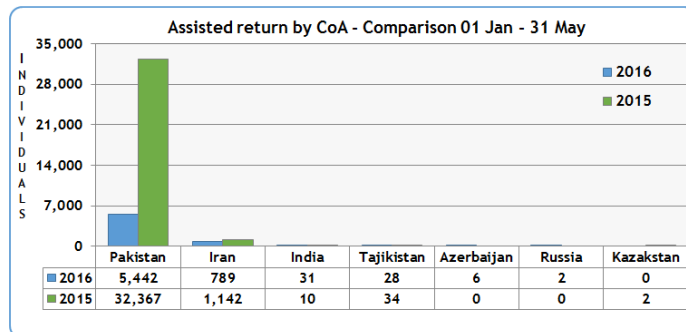


### VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In May 2016, a total of 2,532 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 2,342 came from Pakistan, 170 from Iran, 7 from Tajikistan, 7 from India and 6 from Azerbaijan. This figure is 34% higher compared to 1,895 returnees in April 2016. The increase in the return figure during May is in line with trends as the return season gains momentum.

In the first five months of 2016, a total of 6,298 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation program, including 5,442 individuals from Pakistan, 789 from Iran, 31 from India, 28 from Tajikistan, 6 from Azerbaijan and 2 from the Russian Federation. This figure is comparatively low compared to 33,555 returnees during the same period in 2015. It mirrors the number of refugees (6,702) returned during the same period in 2014, the year that recorded the lowest return figure since the start of the voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002. The increase in the return figure in 2015 was mainly due to the adverse environment and retaliations against Afghan citizens in Pakistan following the terrorist attack on the Peshawar school in December 2014.

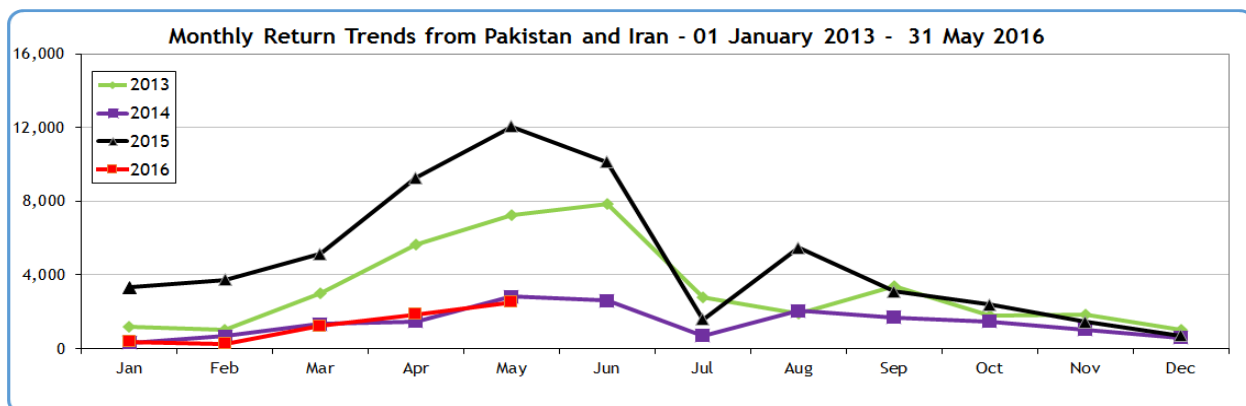


Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - May 2016		Jan - May 2015	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	1,808	28.7%	10,623	31.7%
East	1,231	19.5%	7,512	22.4%
Northeast	1,184	18.8%	6,759	20.1%
North	927	14.7%	3,016	9.0%
Southeast	408	6.5%	3,062	9.1%
South	388	6.2%	1,228	3.7%
West	308	4.9%	1,260	3.8%
Central Highlands	44	0.7%	95	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,298</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>33,555</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The low return trend so far this year is largely imputed to the perceived discouraging situation in Afghanistan, with high levels of unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities, limited access to land, shelter and basic services, particularly in areas of high return, coupled with continuous insecurity. Another factor is the prevalence of second and third generation refugees in neighboring countries, who have limited or weak ties to their ancestral communities. While in principle they may be disinterested in return, their precarious situation in neighboring countries, coupled with the growing asylum fatigue of host governments may eventually have an impact on their decisions to return.

Based on returnee monitoring findings with newly arrived returnees in 2016, economic problems linked to poor access to job market, increasing cost of living, as well as harassment routinely experienced by the Police and other Law enforcement authorities in country of asylum are leading push factors influencing refugees' decision to return. In contrast, improvement in the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan, UNHCR's assistance package, perceived opportunities in the employment situation and the desire to reunion with families/relatives are the main pull factors.

Amongst the returnees repatriated from Pakistan this year, 80% returned from KPK and Baluchistan, while the remaining returned from Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad. 86% of returnees from Iran returned from Esfahan, Tehran, Khorasan, Kerman and Qom provinces. 3,696 (59% of total returnees) returned to Kabul, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Baghlan and Balkh provinces. Among those returned to these provinces, nearly 50% returned to the five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kunduz, Pul-e-Khumri and Mazar-e-Sharif). Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz continue to be among the top five provinces of destination since 2002.



## RETURN PROCESS

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

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

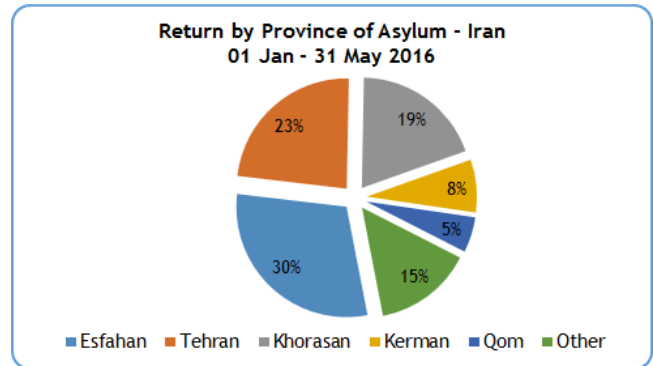
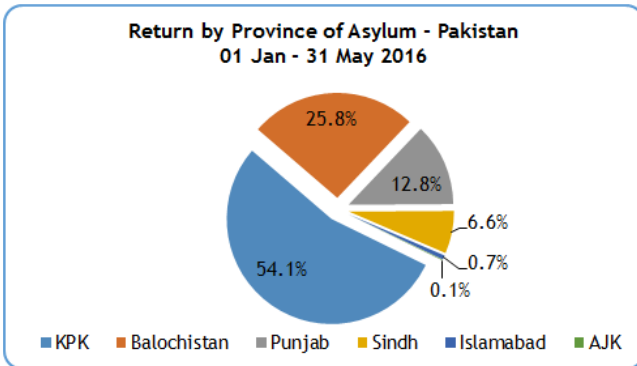
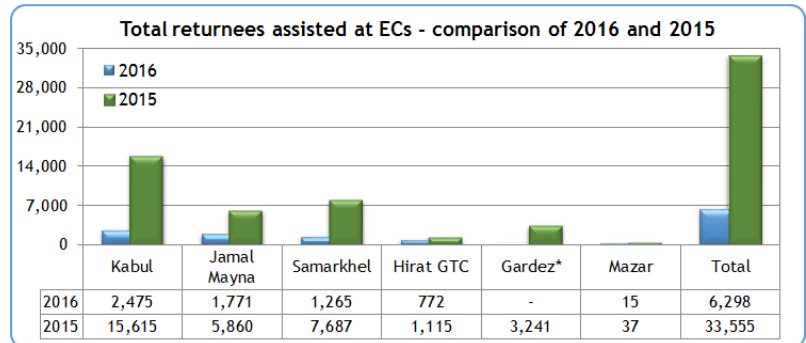
Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through all UNHCR Offices including the VRC in Soleimankhani and the UNHCR Office at Dogharoun.

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

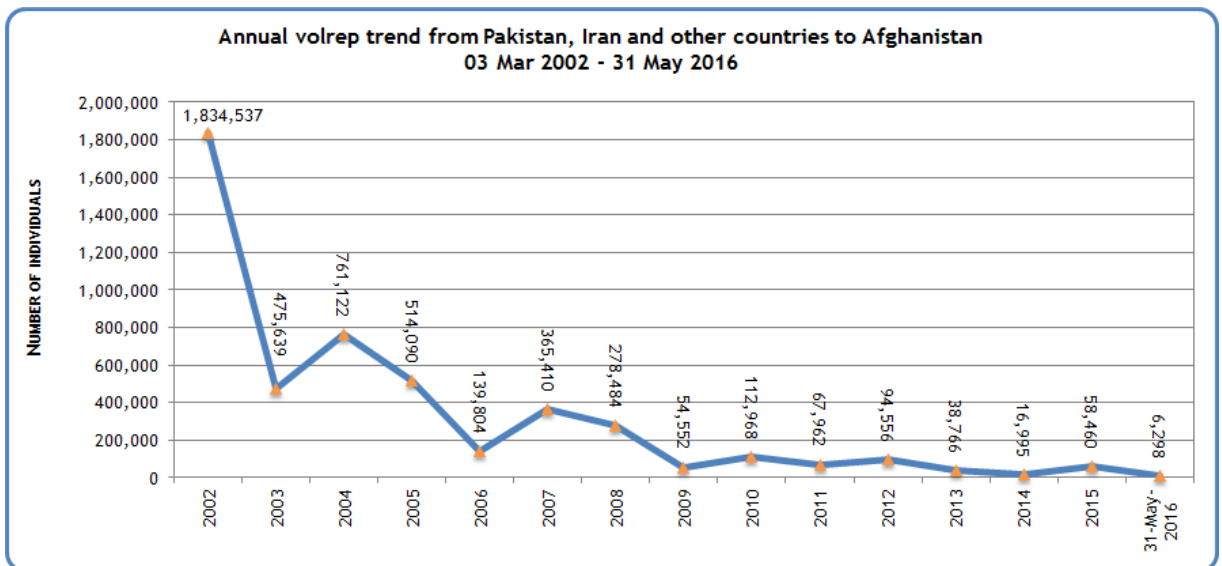
Depending on the province of origin, at the EC all Afghan returnees with a valid VRFs receive a grant of US\$ 200 per person on average (between US\$30 - US\$70 for transport and US\$150 as an initial reintegration grant). The transportation grant varies according to the distance from the areas of residence 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 against polio and measles.

\* Gardez EC ceased its activities at the end of 2015 because of budgetary constraints and refugees returning to the South-eastern Region will be referred to Kabul and Samarkhel ECs.

\*\* There is no EC in Mazar, returnees from Tajikistan and other central Asian countries receive their repatriation assistance at UNHCR Office in Mazar or in Kunduz.

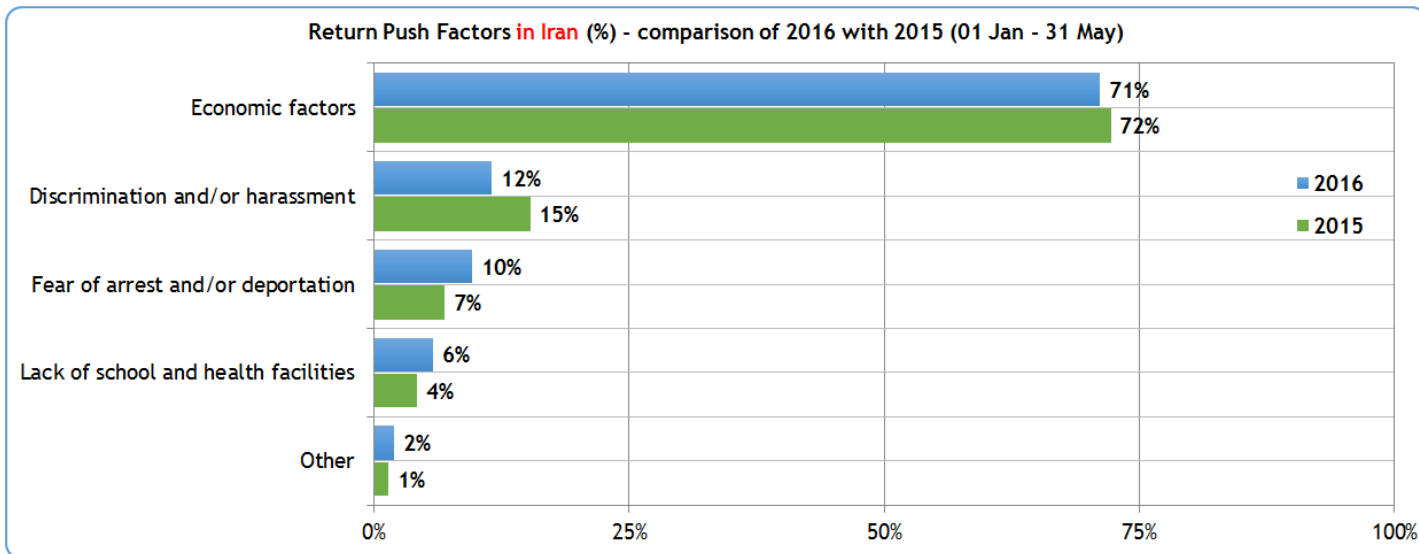
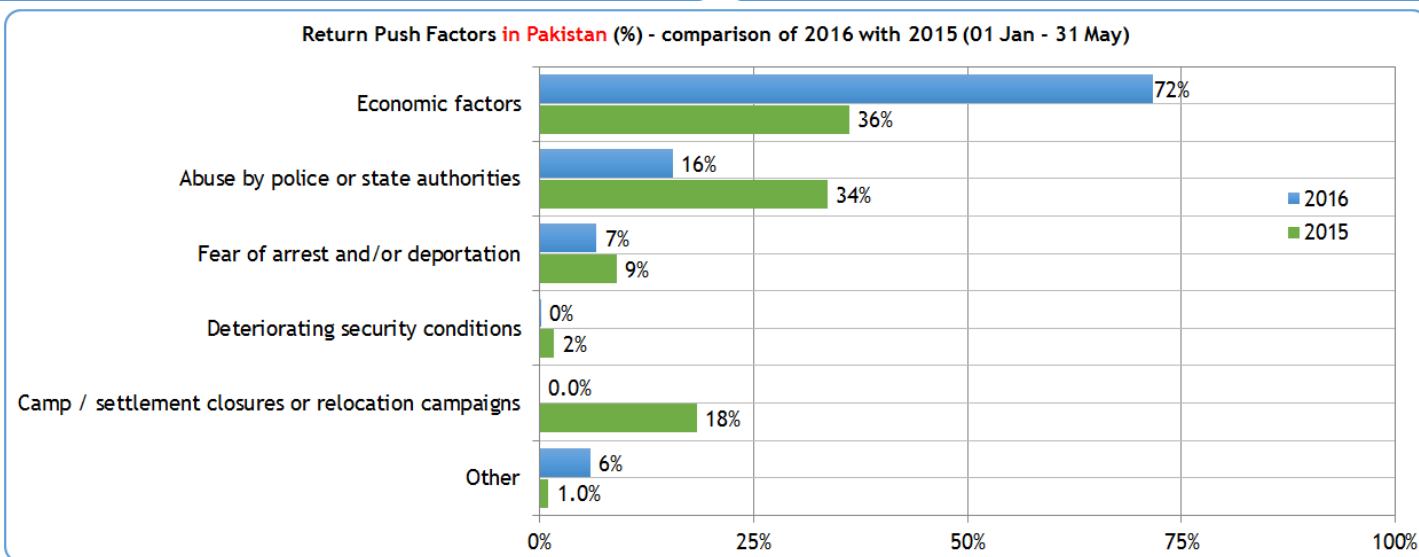
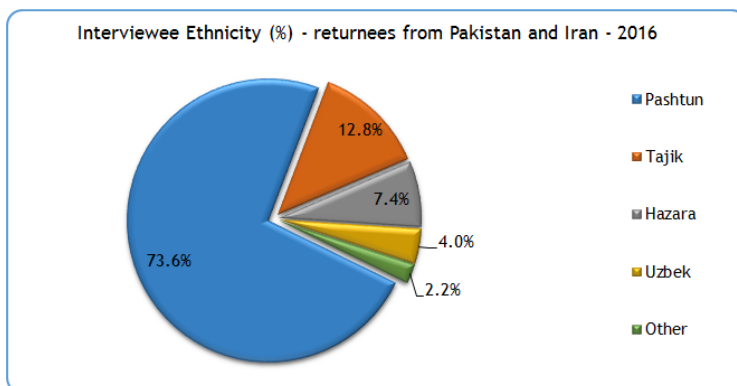
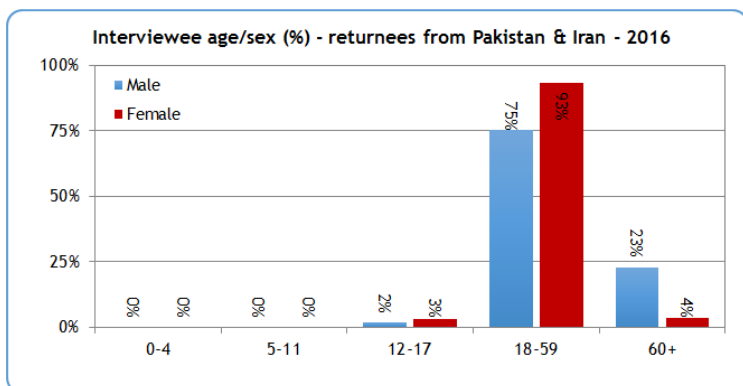


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of May 2016, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. It is estimated that returnees comprise 20% of the Afghanistan population.



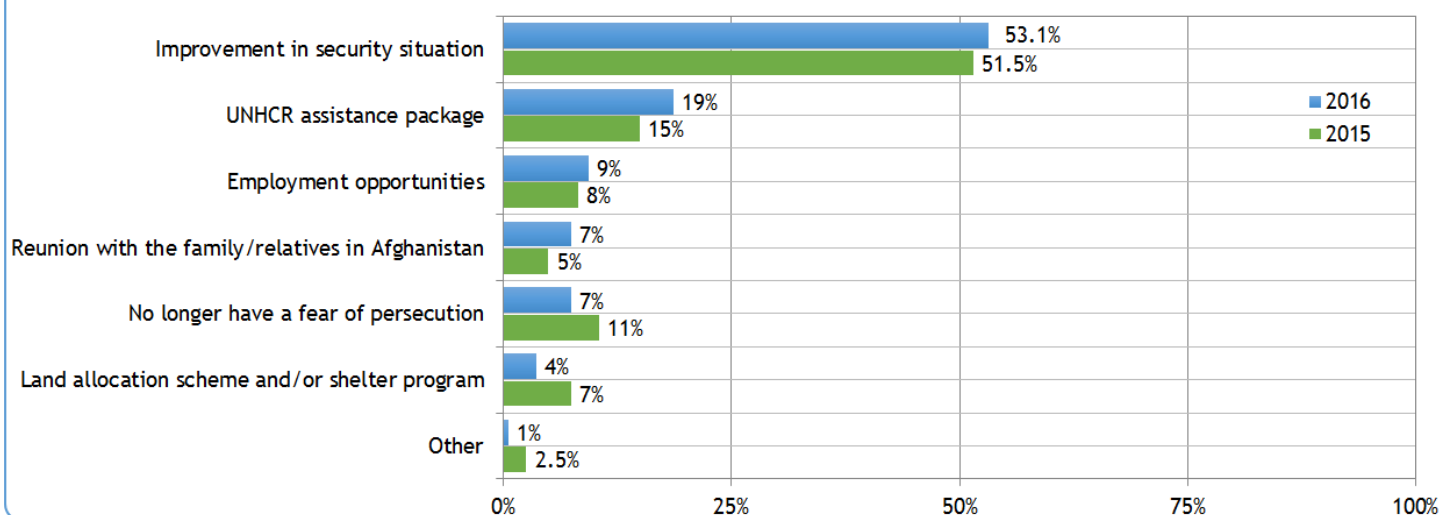
## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 May 2016, a total of **579 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (527) and Iran (52) at the various Encashment Centres managed by UNHCR/DoRR. Interviewees were selected in two ways: randomly from the returning families (564) and purposively from returnees reporting some protection concerns (15) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, i.e. the Encashment Centres. This regular monitoring exercise helps UNHCR to identify return trends, push/pull factors and assess the level of information that returnees received to make an informed choice to return home. It also helps to detect episodes of harassment and violations that UNHCR then brings to the attention of the allegedly responsible authorities.

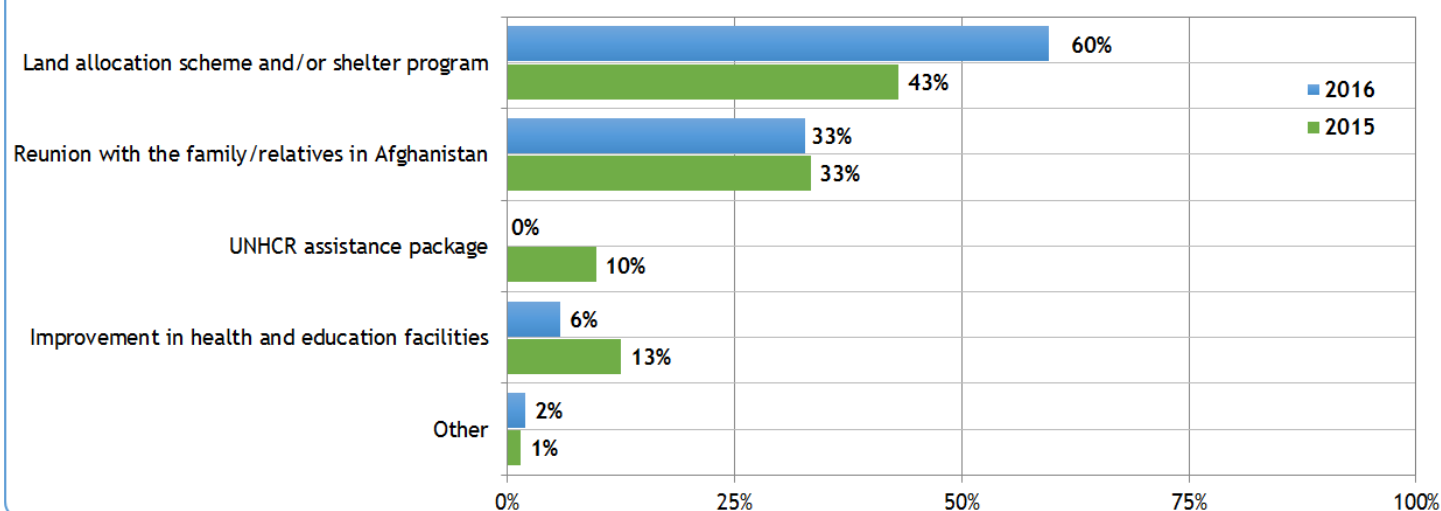


## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

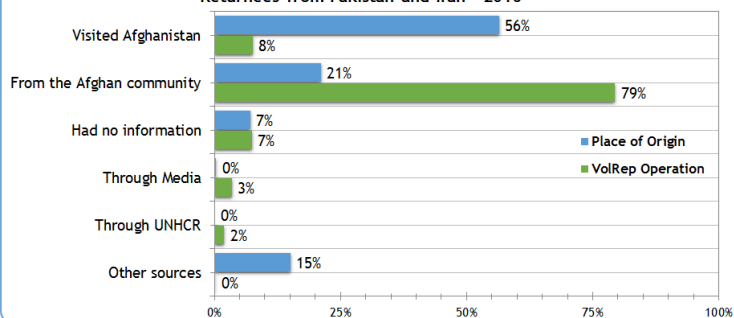
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 31 May)



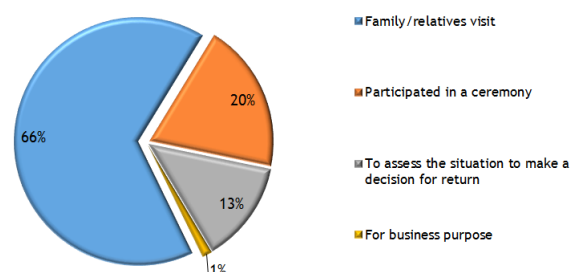
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Iran - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 31 May)



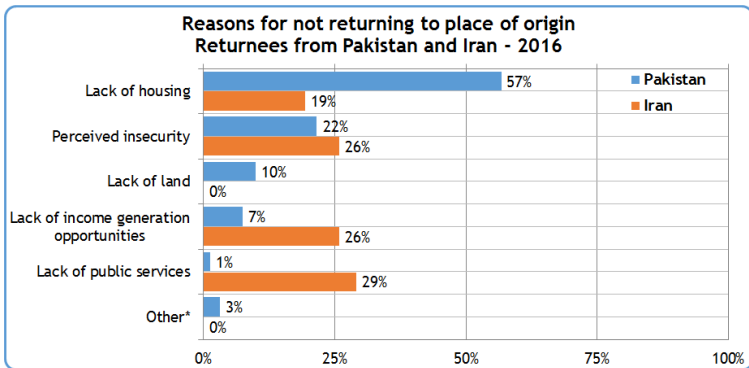
Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



Purpose of visit to Afghanistan before return Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016

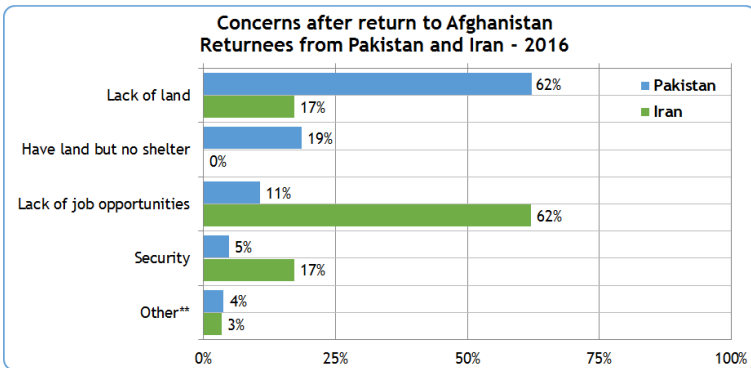


\* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reasons for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



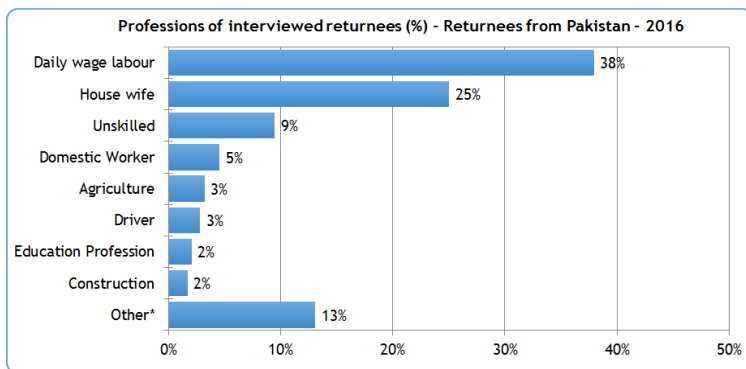
Out of 579 respondents, 193 returnees stated that they do not intend to return to their place of origin.

\*Other; responses provided included lack of quality education and health facilities.

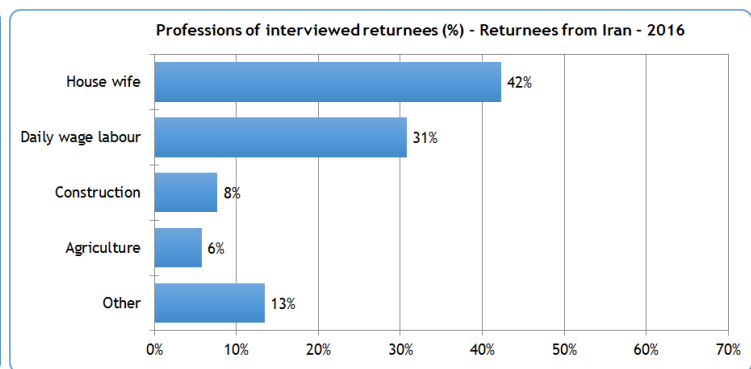


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

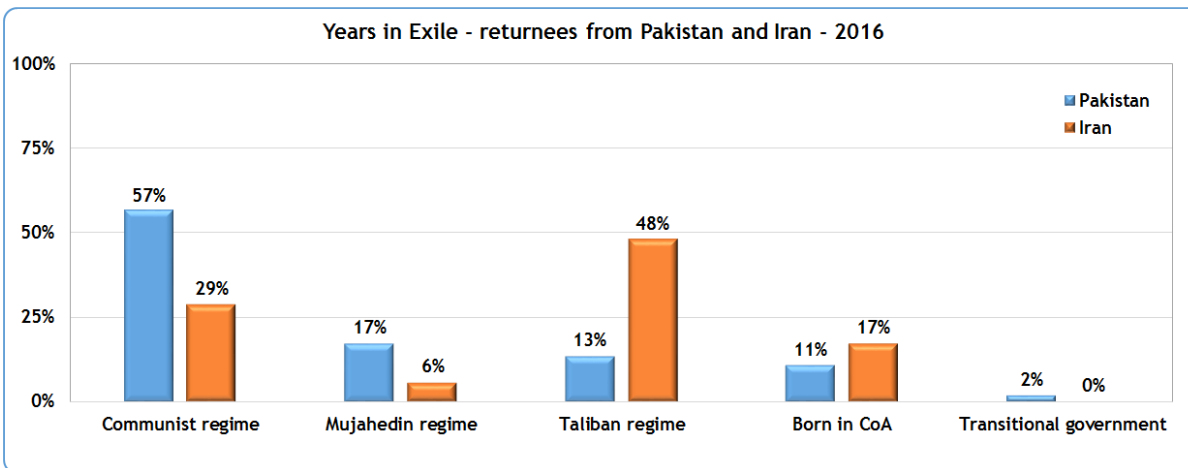
\*\*Other represents 17 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities.



\*Other: 69 responses: included professions such as engineer, carpet weaver, medical doctor, and shopkeeper.



\*Other: 7 responses: included professions such as carpet weaver and shopkeeper.



### Challenges for refugees in Pakistan

During the month of May, newly arrived returnees raised concern about the discontinuation of water and electricity in Jalala, Baraki, Old Shamshato, Ghulam Banda, Gandaf, Khaki, Hangu, and Badabera, all located in KPK Province in Pakistan. In addition, returnees also alleged that the level of harassment in form of unnoticed search by the Military and Police, arbitrary arrest, detention, intimidation and extortion by local authorities/police slightly increased compared to February and March. According to returnees, Punjab and KPK are the provinces where the episodes occur more frequently. Furthermore, returnees alleged that they were stopped at a Police check-posts close to the Torkham gate where they were allowed to pass only after the payment of a certain sum of money. However, the level of reported extortion and other incidents were lower if compared to April.

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

30 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders/claimants) have been deported from Iran in 2016, including 4 cases in May. Among these, 25 are families (overall 98 individuals) and 5 are single individuals. UNHCR and/or partners record these deportation cases to understand the circumstances of the event and to advocate with the Iranian authorities a possible re-admission/family reunification in Iran. The majority of the arrested 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 were apprehended due to the 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 prior 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 and other undocumented Afghans can also benefit from the assistance provided by IOM if they meet the eligibility criteria.

## 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 May 2016:** A total of 12,445 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Zaranj (57%) and Islam Qala (43%), from Iran. This figure is slightly lower compared to 12,505 deportees during April 2016.

**1 Jan–31 May 2016:** In the first five months of 2016, a total of 70,364 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This figure is 22% lower compared to 90,053 Afghans were deported from Iran during the same period in 2015.

A total number of 239,992 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2015.

The vast majority of deportees (90-95%) were single males who entered Iran illegally, to look for work and or move to Europe.

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

IOM provides extremely 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 May 2016	Zaranj	204	473	433	906	5,980	160	0	0	6,140	7,046
	Islam Qala	62	120	136	256	4,934	209	0	0	5,143	5,399
<b>Total</b>		<b>266</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>10,914</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11,283</b>	<b>12,445</b>
01 Jan -31 May 2016	Zaranj	720	1,752	1,708	3,460	30,095	612	0	0	30,707	34,167
	Islam Qala	530	909	1,139	2,048	32,711	1,438	0	0	34,149	36,197
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,250</b>	<b>2,661</b>	<b>2,847</b>	<b>5,508</b>	<b>62,806</b>	<b>2,050</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64,856</b>	<b>70,364</b>

#### PAKISTAN:

**1 - 31 May 2016:** A total of 2,440 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (1,121) and Spin Boldak (1,319) border points. This figure is 23% lower compared to 3,172 deportees during April 2016.

**1 January - 31 May 2016:** In the last five months of 2016, a total of 7,607 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 11% higher compared to 6,868 deportees from Pakistan (via Torkham) during the same period in 2015.

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, 5,468 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 01 Jan and 31 May 2016.

A total of 19,330 Afghans were deported from Pakistan via Torkham (13,323) and Spin Boldak (6,007) in 2015.

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 Apr 2016	Torkham	2	2	2	4	2,254	0	0	0	2,254	2,258
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	914	0	0	0	914	914
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3,168</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,168</b>	<b>3,172</b>
01 Jan -30 Apr 2016	Torkham	3	5	4	9	6,477	0	0	0	6,477	6,486
	Spin Boldak	1	6	3	9	4,140	0	0	0	4,140	4,149
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10,617</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,617</b>	<b>10,635</b>

#### Contact for suggestion and queries:

Alexander Mundt, Assistant Representative (Protection), UNHCR CO Kabul, [mundt@unhcr.org](mailto:mundt@unhcr.org)

Mohammad Haroon, Assistant Repatriation Officer, UNHCR CO Kabul, [haroon@unhcr.org](mailto:haroon@unhcr.org)

# Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

## Return by Province of Destination - 01 January - 31 May 2016

