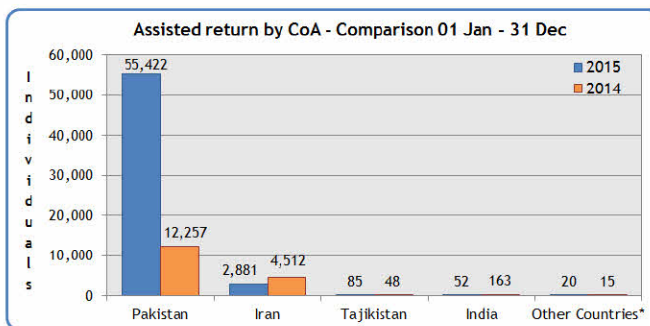


In December 2015, a total of 712 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 636 came from Pakistan, 69 from Iran, 4 from India and 3 from Kazakhstan. This figure is 51% lower compared to 1,453 returnees in November 2015. Return trends normally decline from mid-October until mid-April due to the harsh weather conditions in Afghanistan compared to several areas in Pakistan.

During 2015, a total of 58,460 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR’s assisted return program. The majority of returnees (55,422) came from Pakistan, while 2,881 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 36% lower as compared to 4,512 returnees during 2014.



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

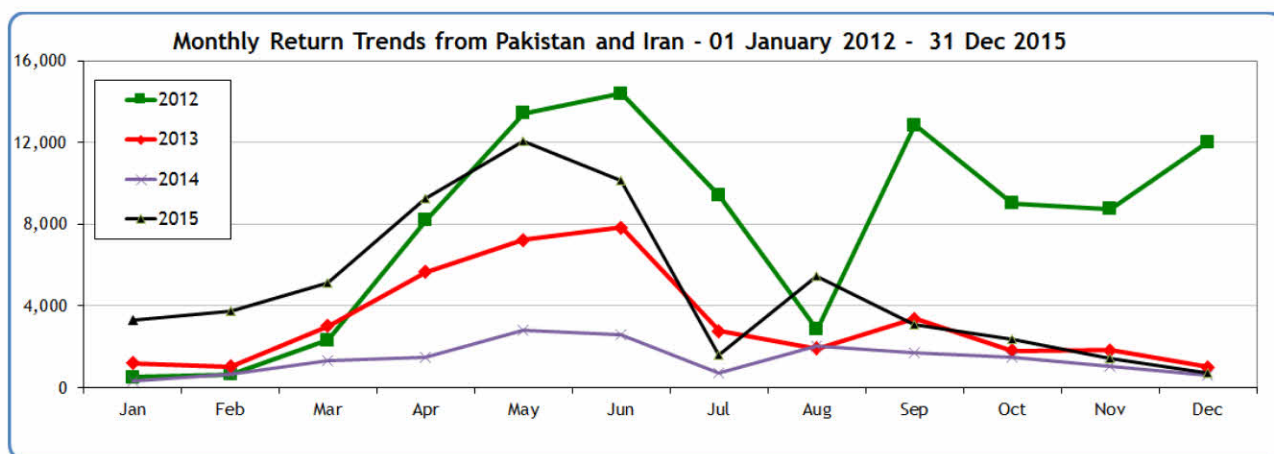
Assisted returns by region of destination in Afghanistan 2015 & 2014

Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Dec 2015		Jan - Dec 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	17,662	30.2%	4,626	27.2%
Northeast	12,815	21.9%	3,034	17.9%
East	11,414	19.5%	2,365	13.9%
North	6,147	10.5%	2,281	13.4%
Southeast	5,428	9.3%	662	3.9%
South	2,430	4.2%	2,300	13.5%
West	2,224	3.8%	1,468	8.6%
Central Highlands	340	0.6%	259	1.5%
Total	58,460	100.0%	16,995	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 72% of repatriated refugees returned from KPK (50%) and Punjab (22%). 13% of repatriated 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 in 2015. Similarly Kabul, Herat, Bamyan, Balkh and Baghlan are the top five provinces of destination and have received 81% of total returnees from Iran in 2015. Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz are among the top five provinces of return since 2002.



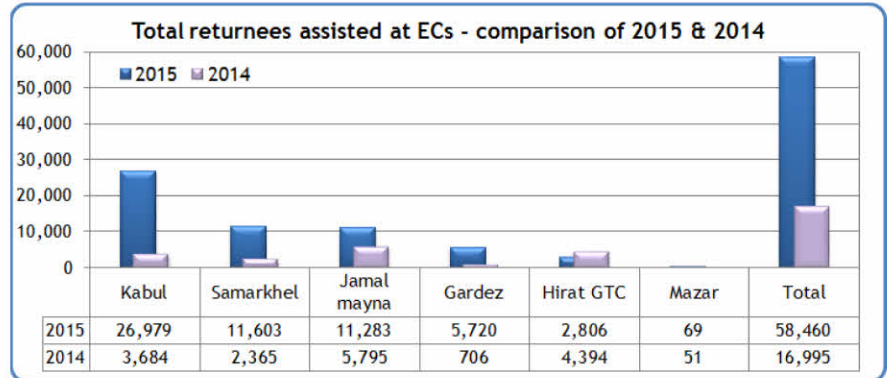
RETURN PROCESS

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.

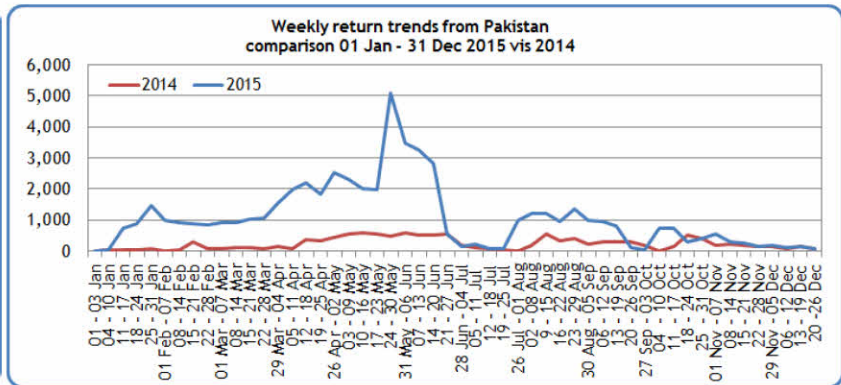
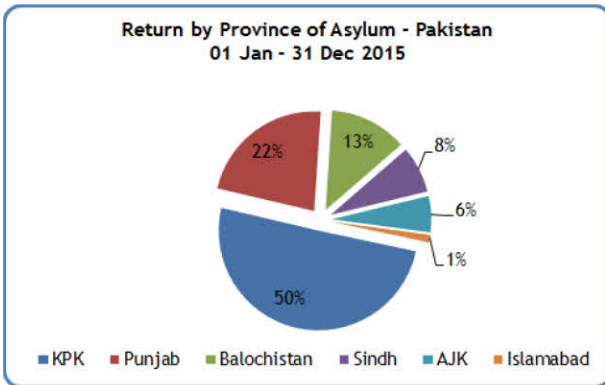
Two VRCs are located in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli in Quetta (Baluchistan).

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.

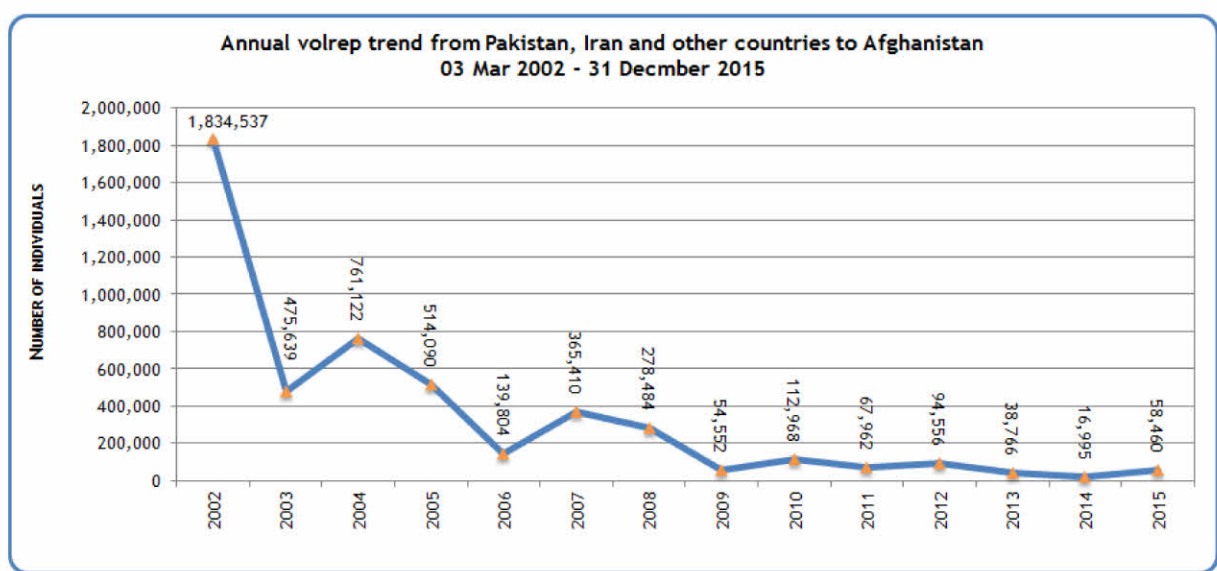
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.



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.

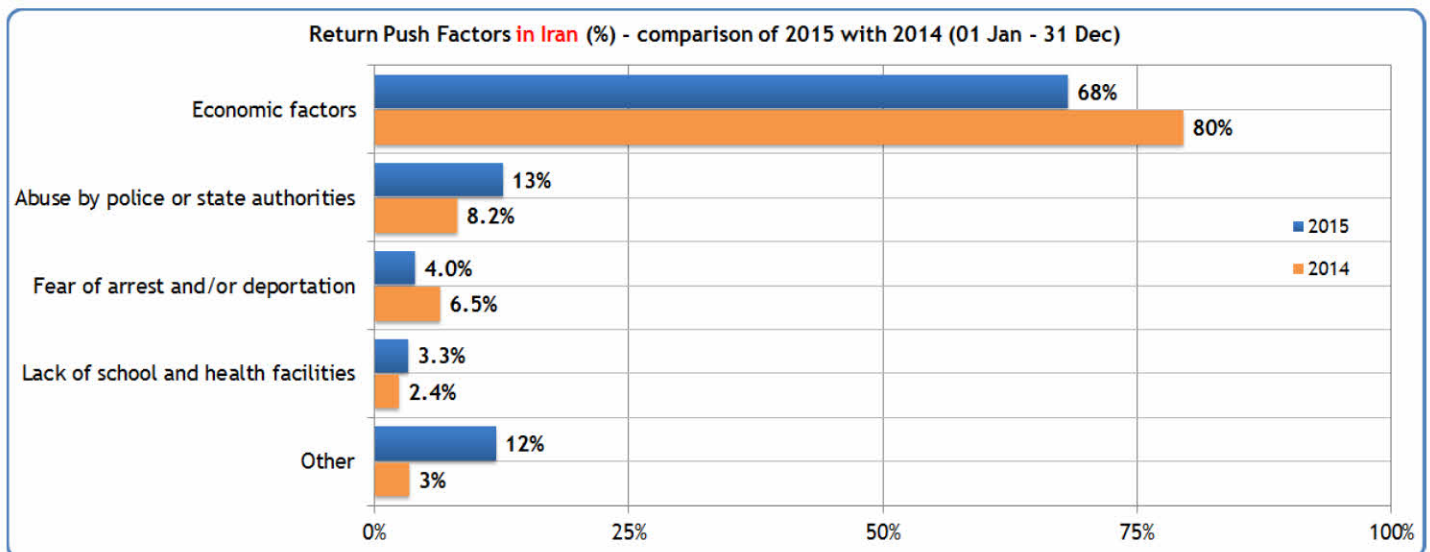
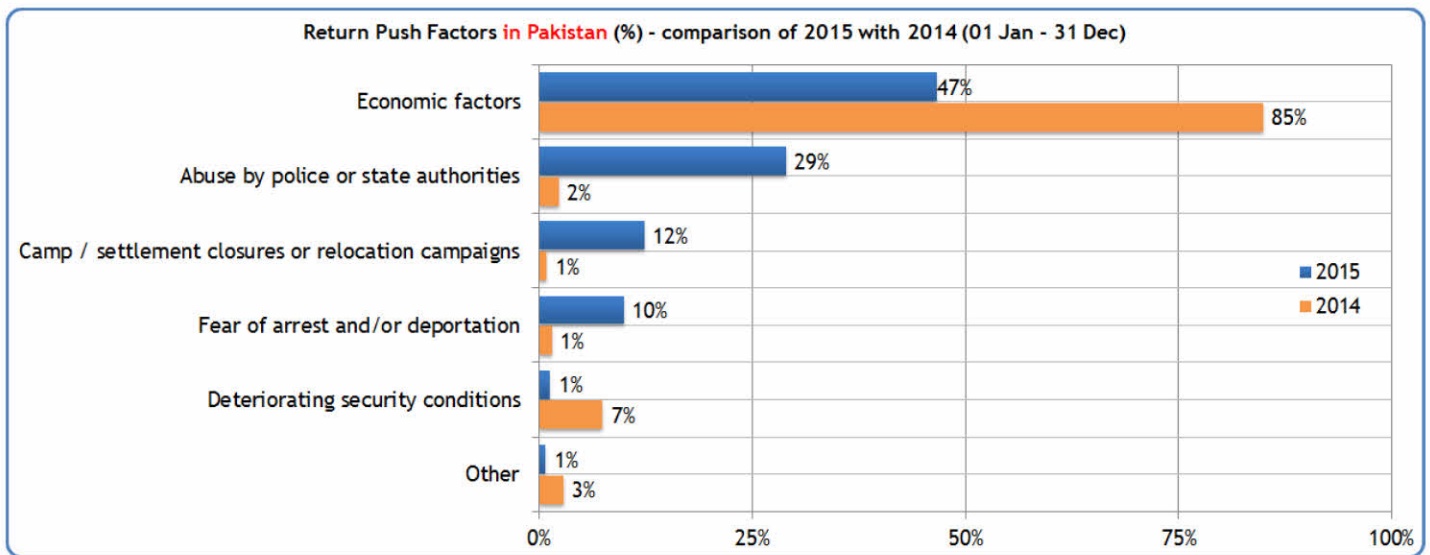
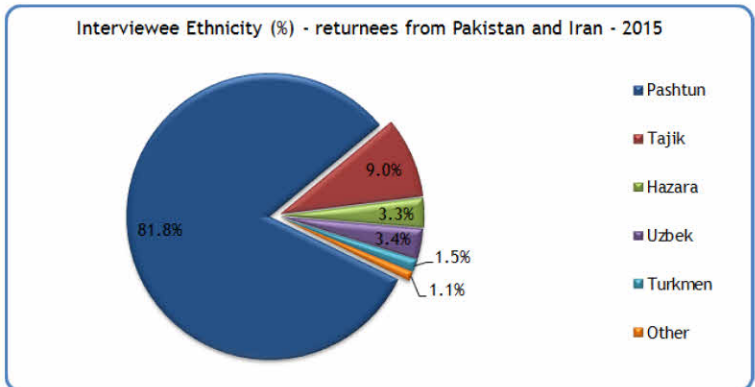
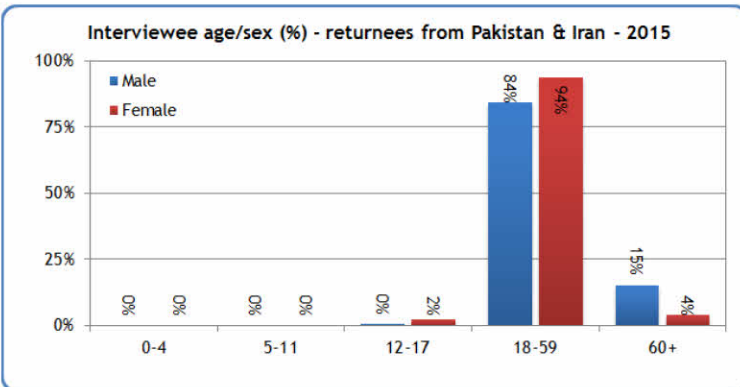


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of December 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees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



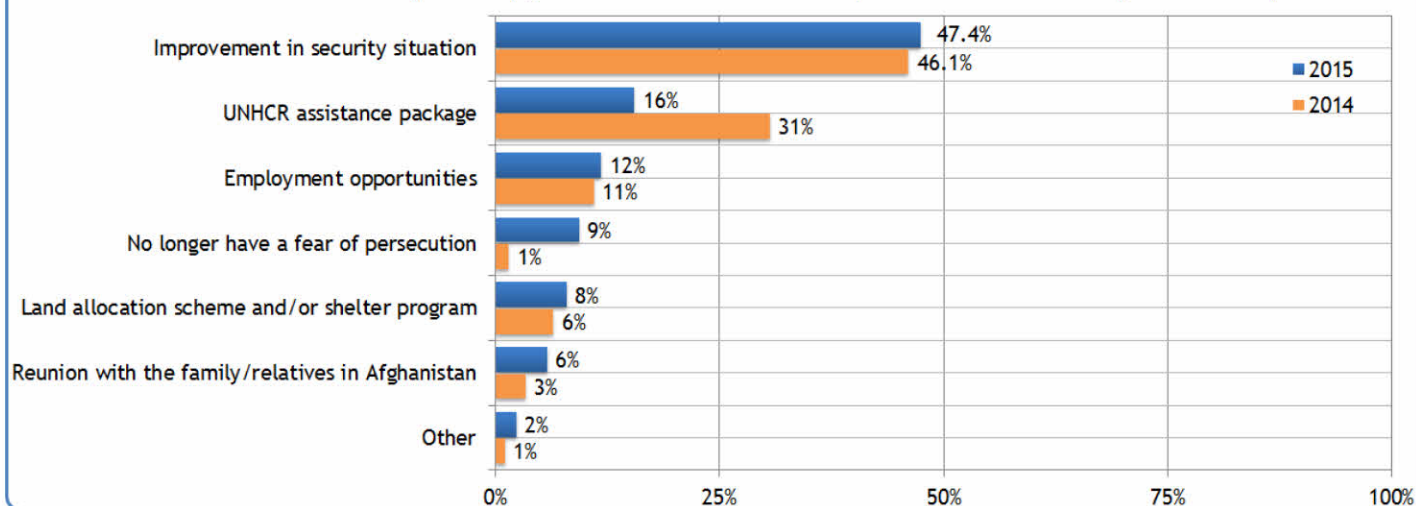
ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 December 2015, a total of **3,097 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (2,946) and Iran (151). Interviewees were selected in two ways: randomly from the returning families (2,600) 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.

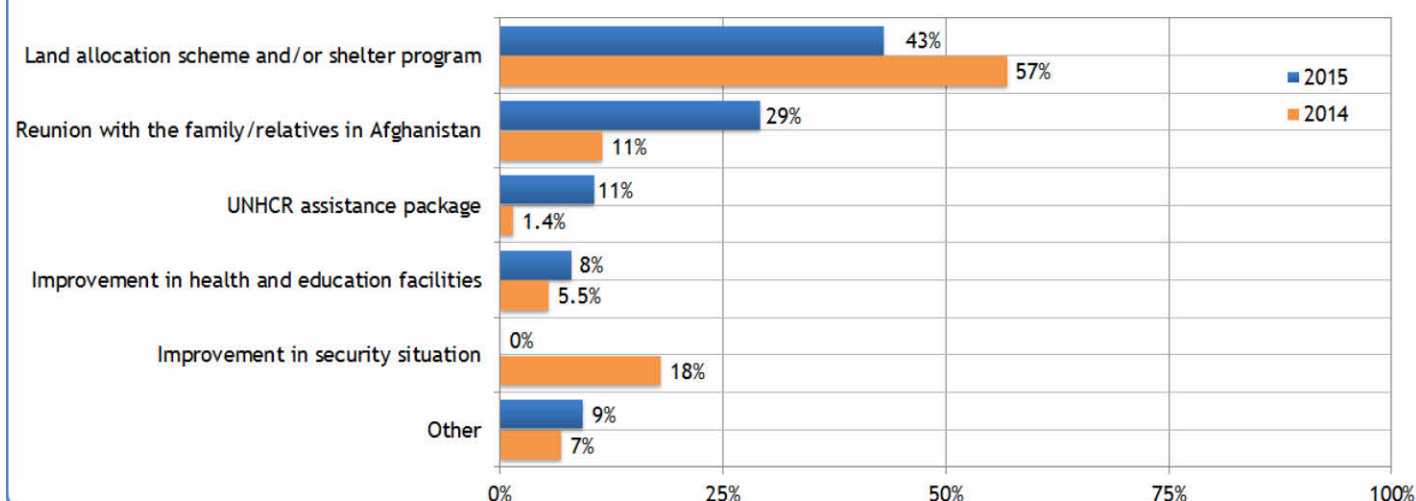


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

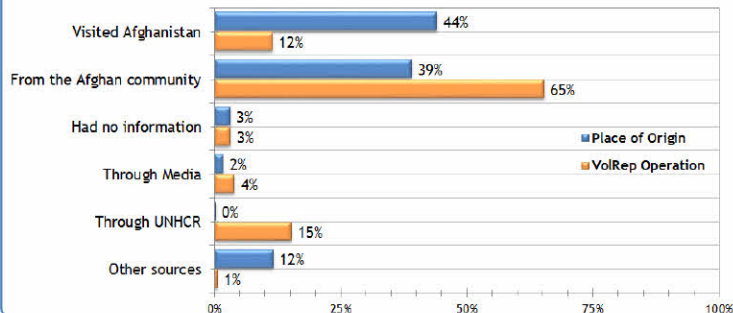
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 31 Dec)



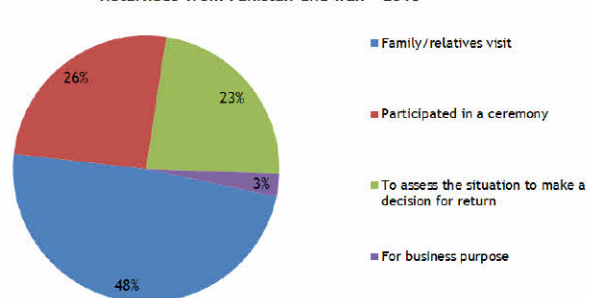
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Iran - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 31 Dec)



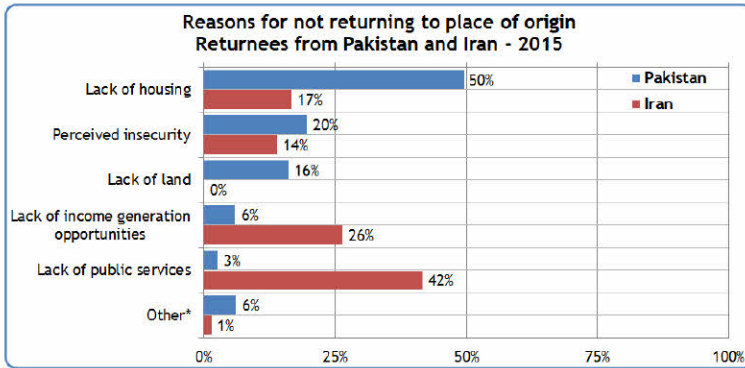
Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015



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

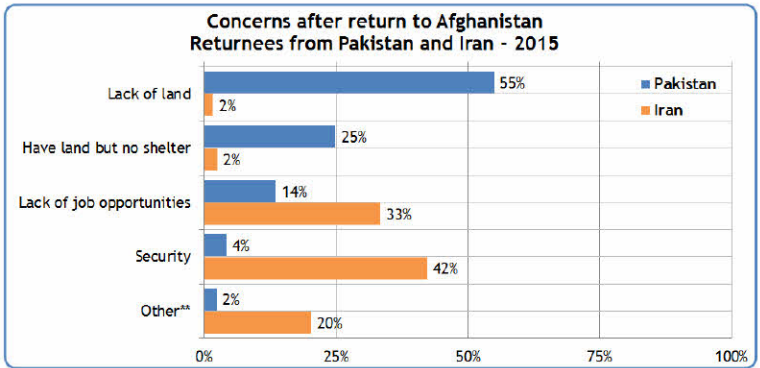


* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reasons for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



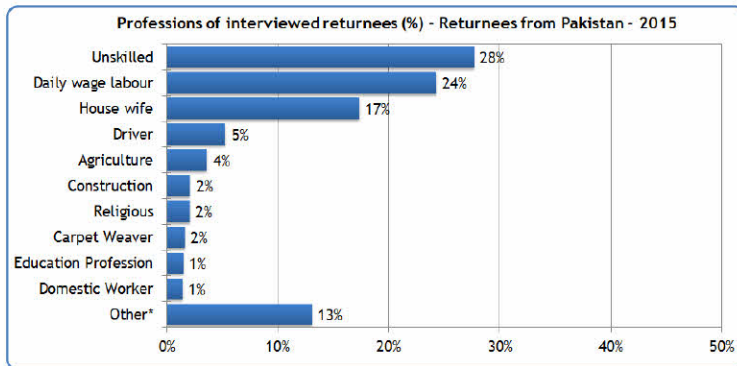
Out of 3,097 respondents, 1,200 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

*Other represents 70 interviews; responses provided included personal dispute, fear of persecution, lack of quality education and health facilities.

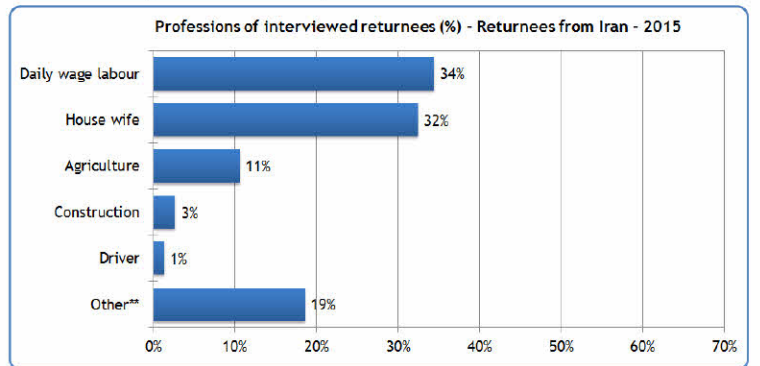


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

**Other represents 82 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-keeper



** 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

Following a terroristic attack in December 2014 on a school in Peshawar the local authorities put in place a number of measures which had an impact on Afghans including registered refugees who faced extra pressure to leave Pakistan and return to Afghanistan. In the first six months of 2016, during returnee monitoring in the encashment centers, returned refugees reported about increased negative push factors, particularly harassment, intimidation and extortion by the local authorities which influenced their decision for return. Returnees also reported that they were stopped by the police in several checkpoints while they were traveling from the Voluntary Repatriation Center to Torkham crossing point. However, such incidents were significantly reduced from mid-June (start of Ramadan month) and it was very minimal during November and December 2015. However, yet it remains a concern given some of the newly arrived returnees alleged 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(s) after they paid some amount of money.

Deportation of registered Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan

98 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders) cases have been deported from Iran in 2015 including 87 family cases and 12 single individuals. UNHCR and/or partners record these deportation cases to understand the circumstances and to advocate as required for possible re-admission/family reunification in Iran. Among these 98 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); 6 deportees during March - May and 20 deportees during July - October 2015. No deportation was recorded during November and December 2015. Deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan was a new trend which has occurred following the new measures put in place by the authorities in Pakistan after the terroristic attack in Peshawar in December 2014. The circumstances of these deportations from Baluchistan, where there were no reports of push factors, was not known. However, most probably these deported cases could be those Afghans who attempt to cross into Iran using Baluchistan route which may take shorter distance. According to the border monitors, deported Afghan refugees immediately returned from the border area to Pakistan to join their families. Thus it was difficult to obtain more details about the reason of these deportations. UNHCR Afghanistan shared necessary information with UNHCR Office in Quetta for necessary follow-up. There were no reports regarding 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 - 31 Dec 2015: A total of 14,902 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, via Islam Qala (60%) and Zaranj (40%), from Iran. This figure is 26% lower compared to 20,291 deportees during November 2015.

1 Jan–31 Dec 2015: A total of 239,992 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This is 16% higher compared to 206,149 Afghans were deported from Iran during 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 Dec 2015	Zaranj	140	361	339	700	5,048	279	0	0	5,327	6,027
	Islam Qala	113	204	433	637	8,106	132	0	0	8,238	8,875
Total		253	565	772	1,337	13,154	411	0	0	13,565	14,902
01 Jan - 31 Dec 2015	Zaranj	2,277	5,714	5,728	11,442	84,401	995	0	0	85,396	96,838
	Islam Qala	1,746	3,605	4,894	8,499	133,095	1,555	5	0	134,655	143,154
Total		4,023	9,319	10,622	19,941	217,496	2,550	5	0	220,051	239,992

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 Dec 2015: A total of 1,957 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (1,409) and Spin Boldak (548) border points. This figure is 34% lower compared to 2,977 deportees during November 2015.

1 January - 31 Dec 2015: A total of 13,323 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 3,800 deportees from Pakistan (via Torkham) 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, 6,007 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 22 Feb and 31 December 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 Dec 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,409	0	0	0	1,409	1,409
	Spin Boldak*	0	0	0	0	548	0	0	0	548	548
Total		0	0	0	0	1,957	0	0	0	1,957	1,957
01 Jan - 31 Dec 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	13,323	0	0	0	13,323	13,323
	Spin Boldak	3	6	7	13	5,994	0	0	0	5,994	6,007
Total		3	6	7	13	19,317	0	0	0	19,317	19,330

* 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 - 31 December 2015

