

AFGHANISTAN

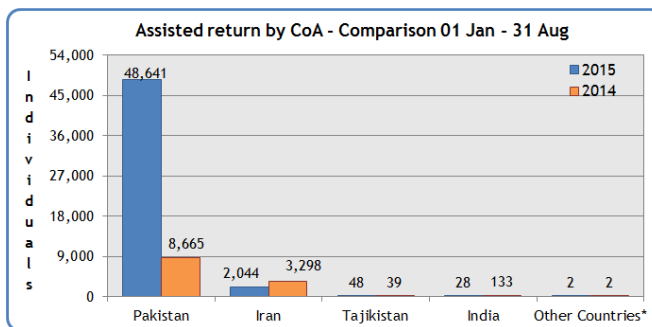
VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–31 August 2015

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In August 2015, a total of **5,476** Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 5,103 came from Pakistan, 359 from Iran and 14 from India. This figure is two times higher compared to 1,592 returnees in July 2015. The lower return figure in July is largely due to the holy month of Ramadan during which the return trend normally declines.

In the first eight months of 2015, a total of **50,763** Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program. The majority of returnees (48,641) came from Pakistan, while 2,044 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 38% lower as compared to the same period in 2015.

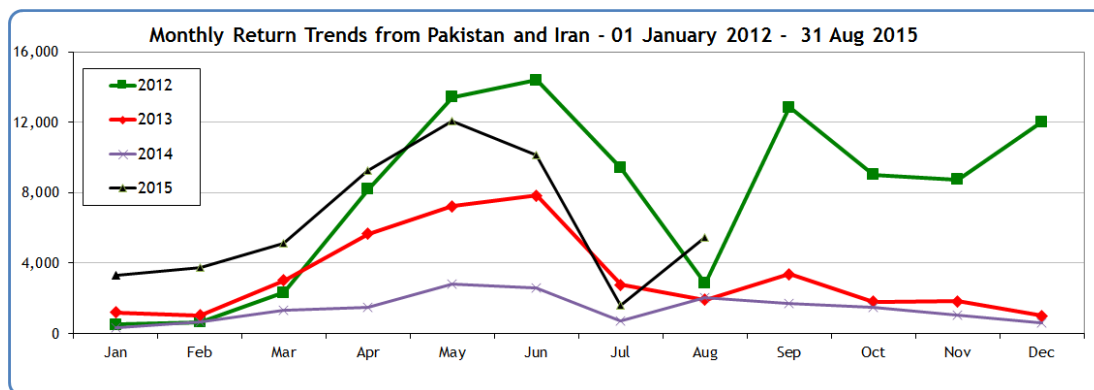


Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Aug 2015		Jan - Aug 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	15,894	31.3%	3,405	28.1%
Northeast	11,541	22.7%	2,289	18.9%
East	9,494	18.7%	1,475	12.2%
North	5,176	10.2%	1,530	12.6%
Southeast	4,706	9.3%	588	4.8%
West	1,921	3.8%	1,239	10.2%
South	1,814	3.6%	1,433	11.8%
Central Highlands	217	0.4%	178	1.5%
Total	50,763	100.0%	12,137	100.0%

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%). 11% of repatriating refugees returned from Baluchistan. Overall, 71% 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 (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 65% of total returnees so far this year. Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz are among the top five provinces of return since 2002.

The 17th Tripartite Commission meeting (between Governments of Iran and Afghanistan and UNHCR) as well as 26th TPCM between (Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and UNHCR) were held in Kabul on 17 and 21 August respectively. The meetings were hosted and chaired by the GoIRA and delegations from GoIRI and GoIRP along with representatives from UNHCR Offices in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan have attended the meetings. Parties reiterated their commitment to the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, in safety and with dignity, based on considerations regarding the absorption capacity of Afghanistan. They stressed that voluntary repatriation continues to be the preferred durable solution for Afghan refugees. The GoIRA and GoIRP presented their draft Strategies on Afghan refugees and their sustainable return and reintegration in Afghanistan which were welcomed by the parties to the TPCM*.



* Conclusions of the meetings are available upon request

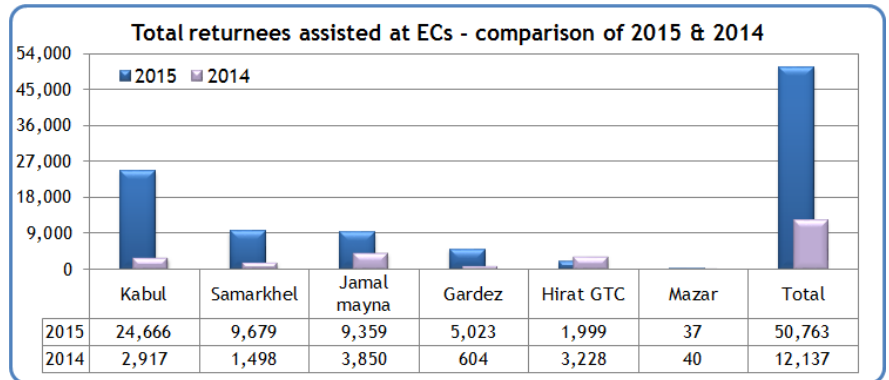
RETURN PROCESS

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.

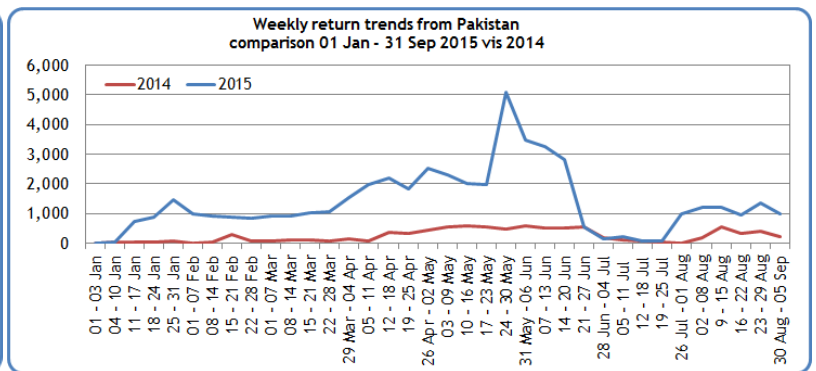
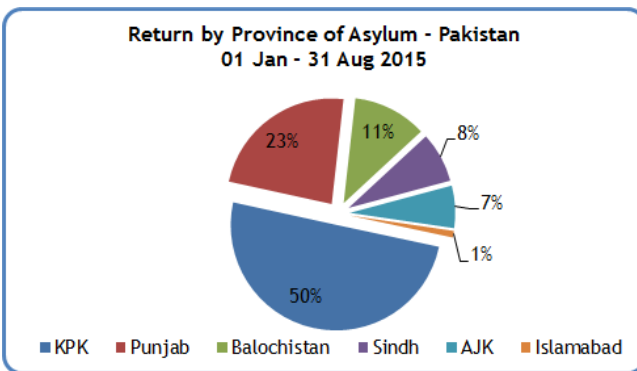
Two VRCs are in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli in Quetta (Baluchistan).

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.

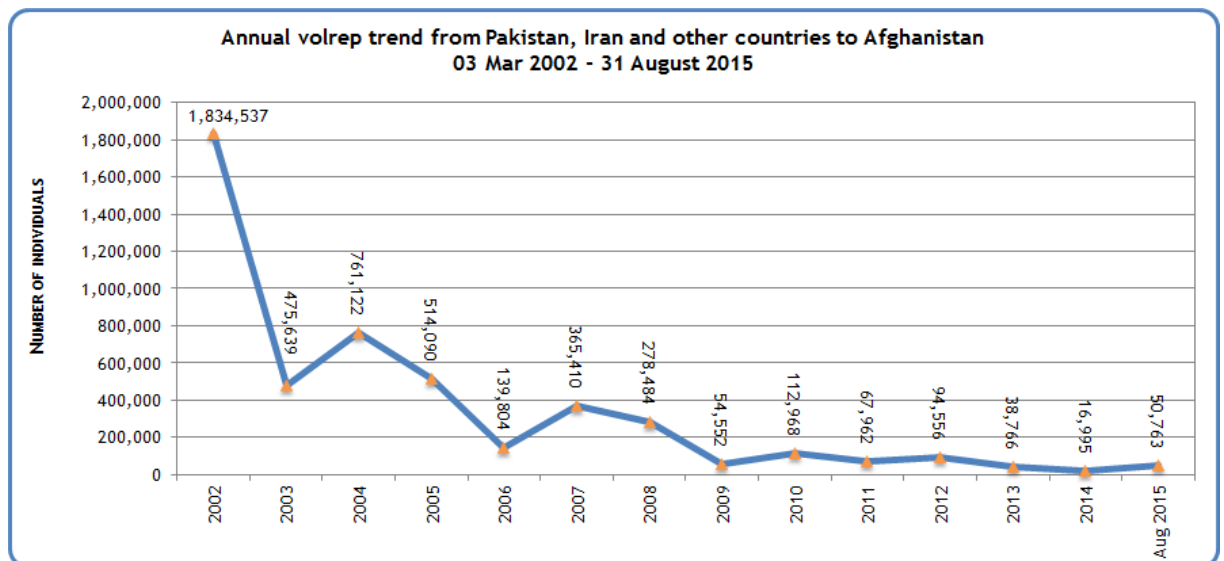
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.



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.

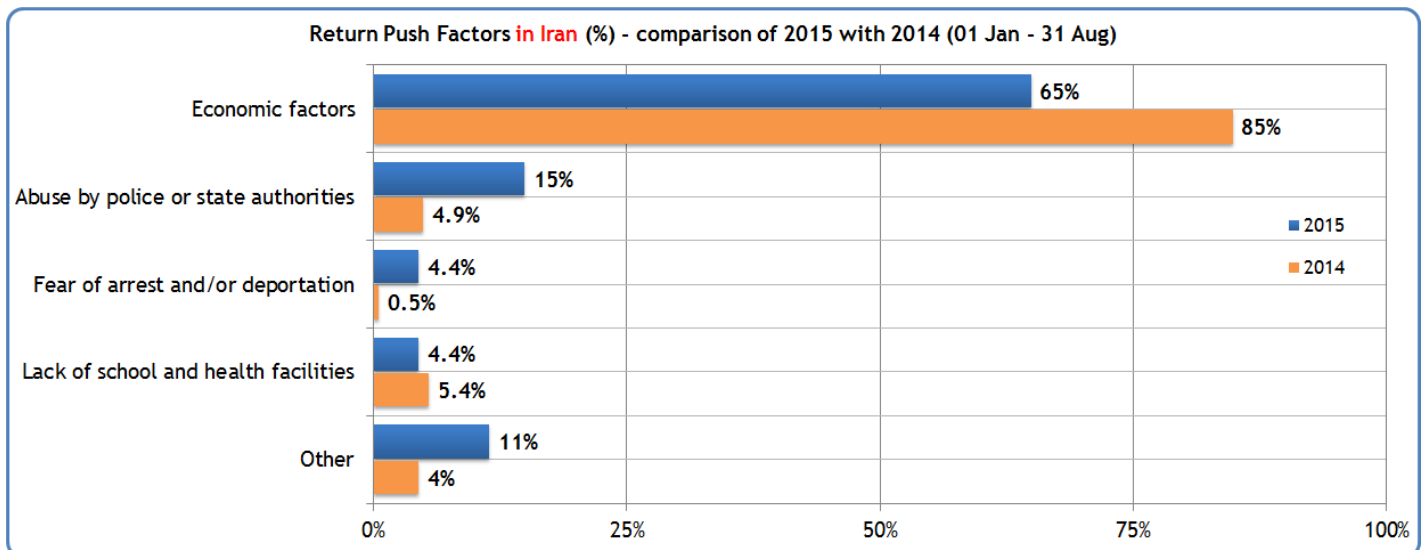
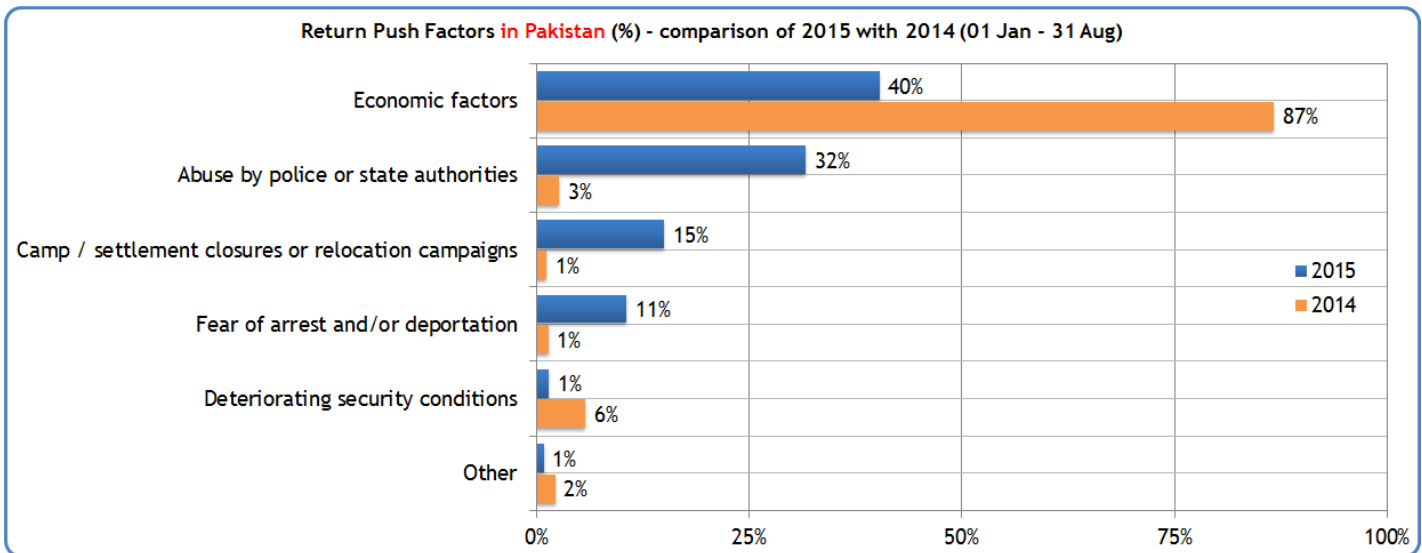
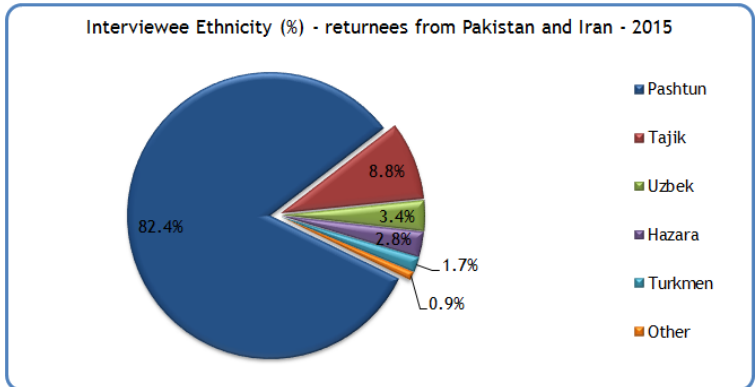
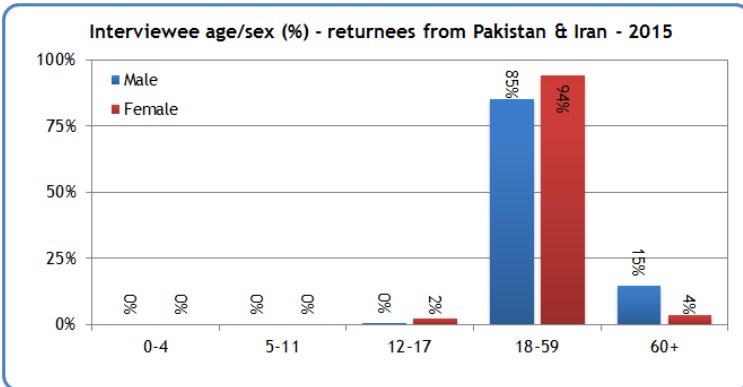


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of August 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise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



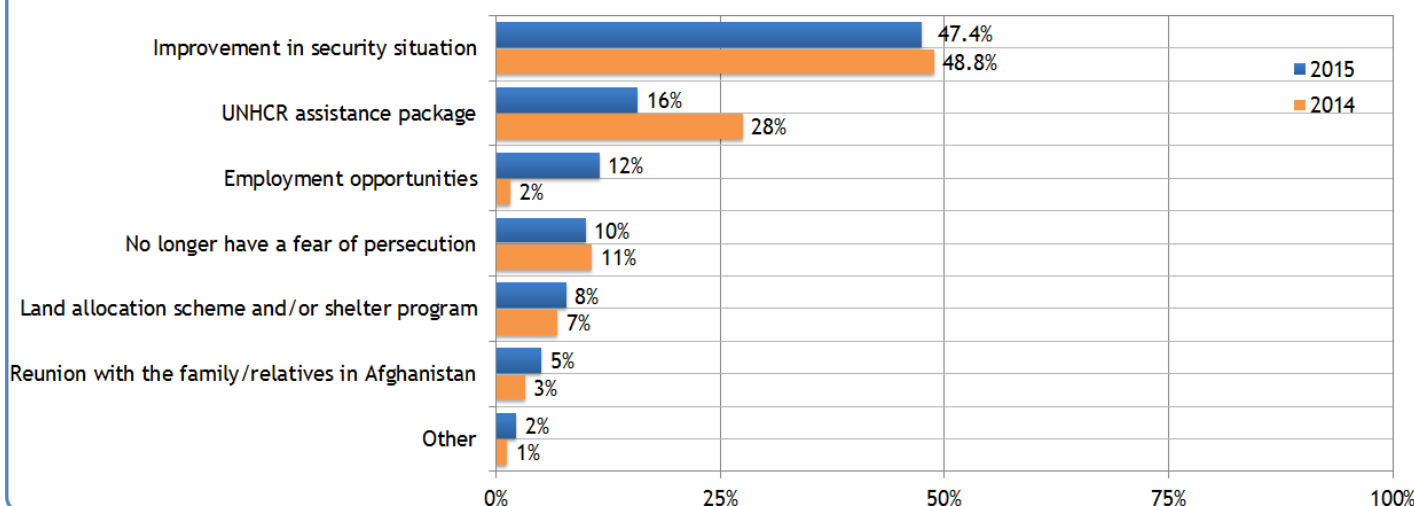
ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 August 2015, a total of **2,533 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (2,419) and Iran (114). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (2,048) and from those with protection concerns (485) 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.

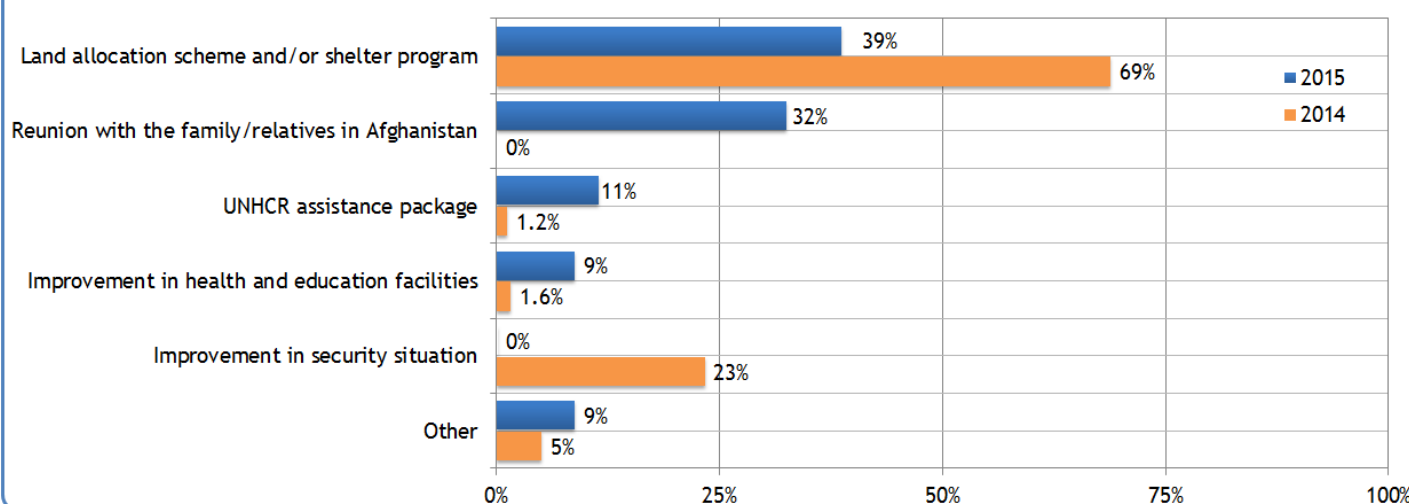


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

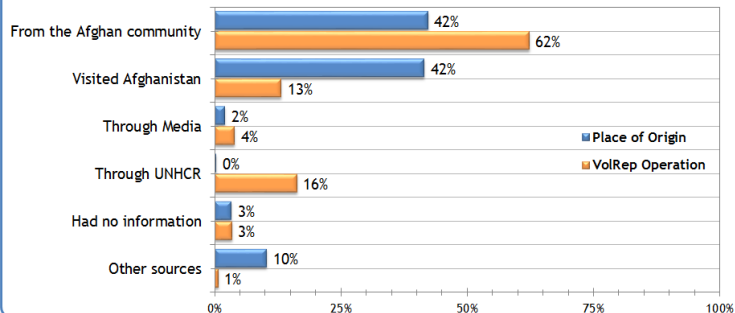
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 31 Aug)



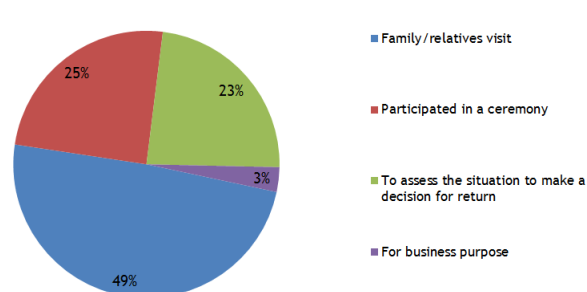
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Iran - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 31 Aug)



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

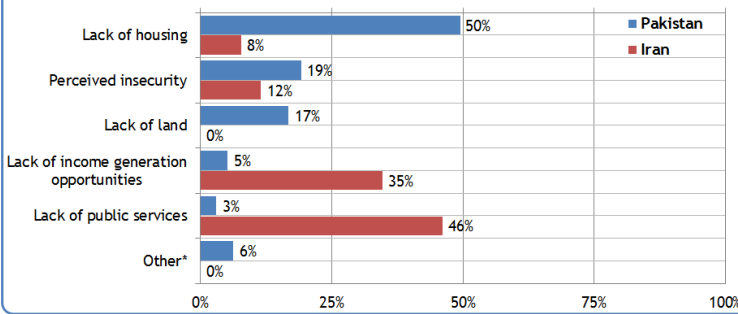


Purpose of visit to Afghanistan before return Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015



* 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 reason for this discrepancy could include strict border control by Iran and longer distances.

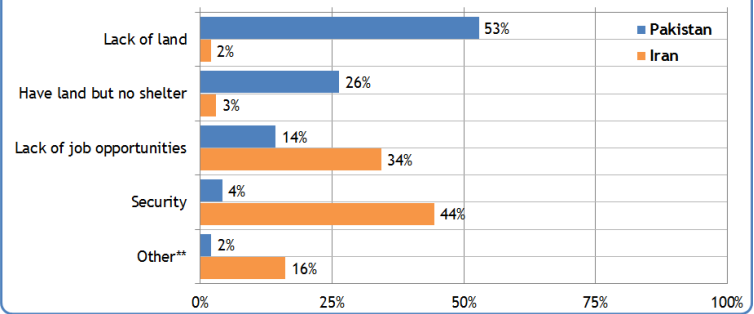
**Reasons for not returning to place of origin
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015**



Out of a total of 2,533 respondents, 975 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

*Other represents 58 interviews; responses provided included personal dispute, fear of persecution, lack of quality education and health facilities

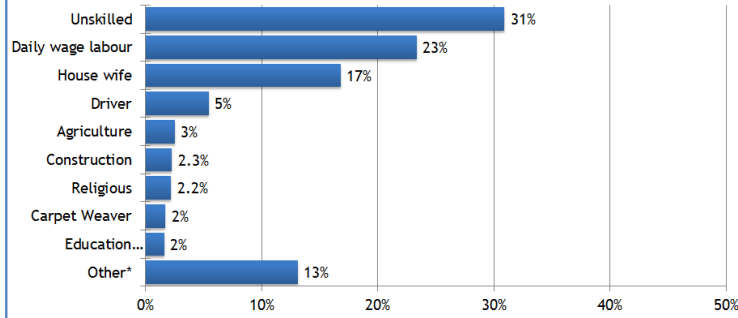
**Concerns after return to Afghanistan
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015**



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

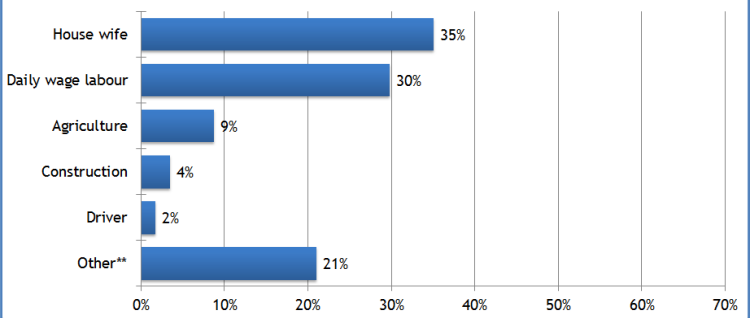
**Other represents 58 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities

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

Despite a significant reduction in the incidence of negative push factors, particularly harassment and intimidations by the local authorities, newly arrived returnees reported that registered Afghans are facing harassment and intimidations in several parts of Pakistan, in particular in Punjab and KPK. Returnees stated that they were stopped by the Pakistani Police on the way to home or home to workstation/main markets while they were in search of job. They added that though they presented their Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, it was not considered by the local authorities to be a valid document and they could only pass the check point(s) after they paid some amount of money (100-500 Pak R.s). Returnees from Punjab also reported that Afghan refugees were facing problems in renewing lease agreements. As per a new decision by the Federal Government, Afghan refugees must obtain the guarantee of a Pakistani citizen in order to renew a lease agreement. Newly arrived returnees also reported about harassment and extortion incidents during their journey to VRC and from VRC to Torkham crossing point. Returnees from Punjab and Haripor have mentioned police checkpoints at Charikas (on the way to VRC), Ring road (in Peshawar), and Dry Ditch (on the way to Torkham) as the most critical areas. They complained that they were stopped for unknown reasons and could only manage to pass the checkpoint after paying some amount of money.

Following the tripartite commission meeting, UNHCR BO Islamabad together with CO Kabul (Protection) visited Kabul Encashment Centre (on 22 August). The visit and discussion was aimed to strengthen information sharing between the two operations, particularly protection concerns reported by newly arrived returnees. This will help to inform advocacy, intervention and follow-up with authorities by UNHCR offices in Pakistan.

Deportation of registered Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan

A total of nine (19) registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders) have been deported from Iran so far this year including 9 refugees only in 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 19 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 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, seven (17) registered Afghan refugees (PoR card holders) were also deported from Pakistan (via Spin Boldak) so far this year including 10 refugees only in August. 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 are not yet known, but UNHCR is following the issue. According to the border monitors, deported Afghan refugees immediately returned to Pakistan to join their families. 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 Aug 2015: A total of 24,476 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, via Islam Qala (62%) and Zaranj (38%), from Iran.

1 Jan–31 Aug 2015: A total of 150,764 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This is 13% higher compared to 133,542 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 Aug 2015	Zaranj	226	605	563	1,168	7,952	159	0	0	8,111	9,279
	Islam Qala	205	382	588	970	14,038	189	0	0	14,227	15,197
Total		431	987	1,151	2,138	21,990	348	0	0	22,338	24,476
01 Jan - 31 Aug 2015	Zaranj	1,534	3,537	3,732	7,269	58,667	305	0	0	58,972	66,241
	Islam Qala	648	1,173	1,638	2,811	80,877	835	0	0	81,712	84,523
Total		2,182	4,710	5,370	10,080	139,544	1,140	0	0	140,684	150,764

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 Aug 2015: A total of 1,514 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (914) and Spin Boldak (600) border points. This figure is 95% higher compared to 776 deportees during July 2015.

1 January - 31 Aug 2015: A total of 9,122 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 1,848 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, 2,871 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 - 31 Aug 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	914	0	0	0	914	914
	Spin Boldak*	0	0	0	0	600	0	0	0	600	600
Total		0	0	0	0	1,514	0	0	0	1,514	1,514
01 Jan -31 Aug 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	9,122	0	0	0	9,122	9,122
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	2,871	0	0	0	2,871	2,871
Total		0	0	0	0	11,993	0	0	0	11,993	11,993

* 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:

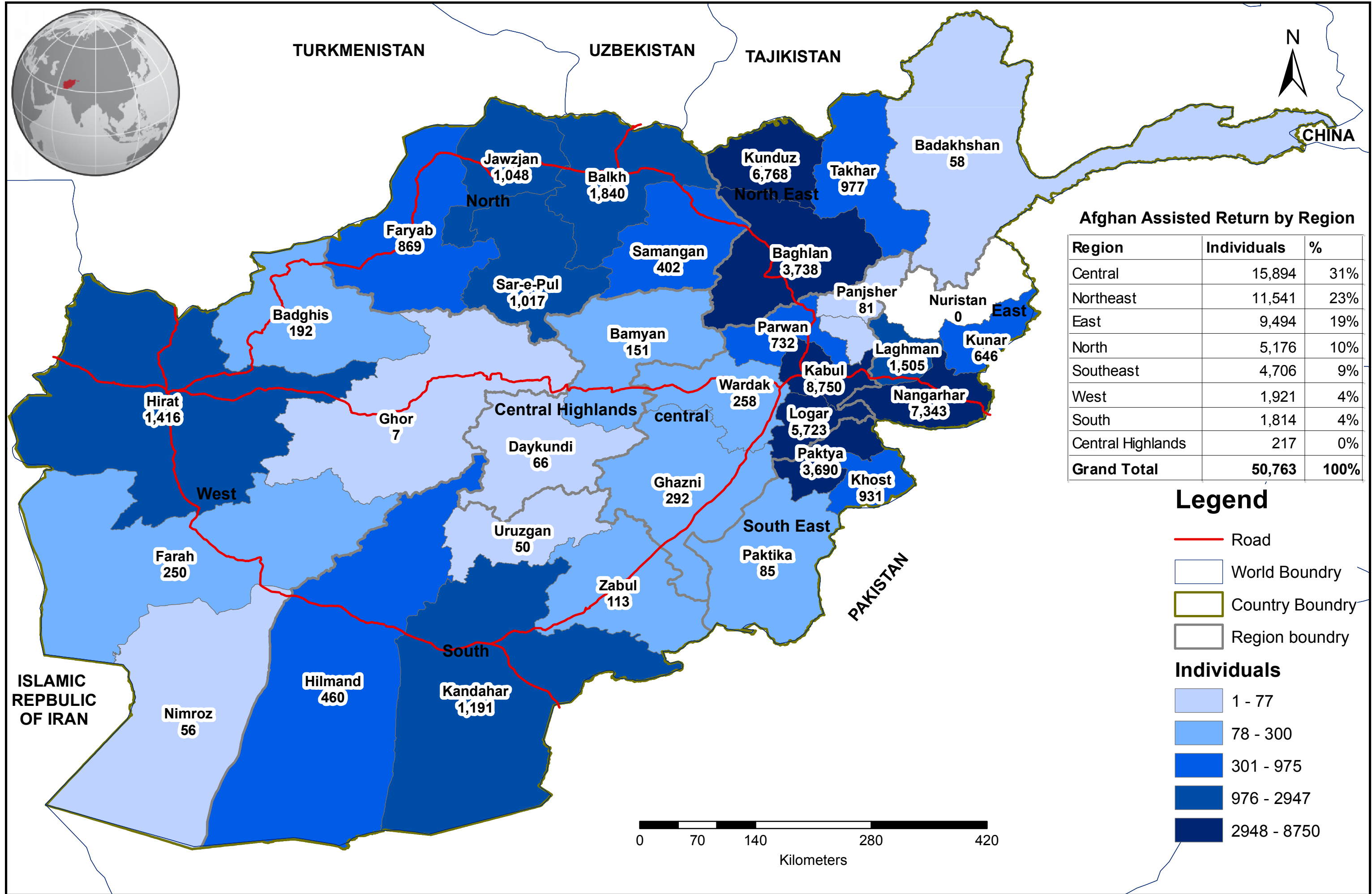
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Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

Return by Province of Destination - 01 January - 31 August 2015



Afghan Assisted Return by Region

Region	Individuals	%
Central	15,894	31%
Northeast	11,541	23%
East	9,494	19%
North	5,176	10%
Southeast	4,706	9%
West	1,921	4%
South	1,814	4%
Central Highlands	217	0%
Grand Total	50,763	100%

Legend

- Road
- World Boundry
- Country Boundry
- Region boundry

Individuals

- 1 - 77
- 78 - 300
- 301 - 975
- 976 - 2947
- 2948 - 8750

0 70 140 280 420
Kilometers