

AFGHANISTAN

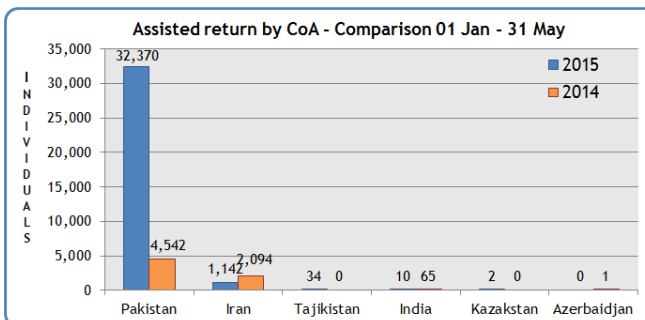
VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–31 May 2015

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In May 2015, a total of 12,053 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 11,794 came from Pakistan, 253 from Iran, and 6 from India. This figure is more than four times the 2,840 returnees who returned in May 2014, and is also 30% higher compared to 9,287 returnees in April 2015.

In the first five months of 2015, a total of 33,558 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program.



The majority of returnees (32,370) came from Pakistan, while 1,142 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 55% lower as compared to the same period in 2015. The return trend normally increases from mid-April, which marks the start of return season. Based on return monitoring, however, conditions in different parts of Pakistan, particularly in KPK and Punjab, continues to play a role in the decision to return.

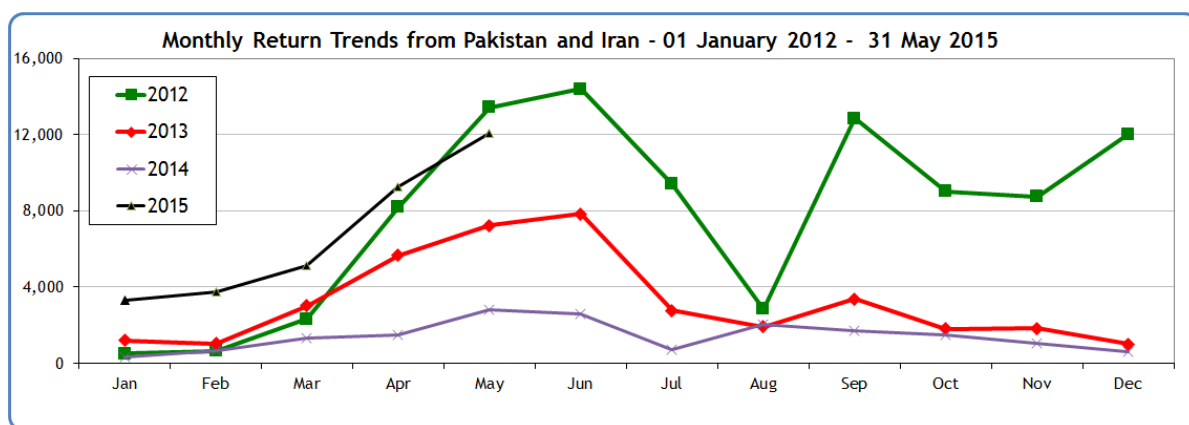
Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - May 2015		Jan - May 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	10,623	31.7%	1,733	25.9%
East	7,512	22.4%	944	14.1%
Northeast	6,759	20.1%	1,173	17.5%
Southeast	3,065	9.1%	356	5.3%
North	3,016	9.0%	663	9.9%
West	1,260	3.8%	964	14.4%
South	1,228	3.7%	790	11.8%
Central Highlands	95	0.3%	79	1.2%
Total	33,558	100.0%	6,702	100.0%

Since January 2015, the return trends from Pakistan have markedly increased following the terrorist attack against the school in Peshawar (KPK). This incident triggered a series of measures by the Pakistani authorities which had an impact on both documented and undocumented Afghans. Reportedly, refugees are facing increasing challenges such as arrests, detention, termination of lease agreements by local landowners, closure of business, evictions, extortion and harassment by local police. Some 75% of repatriating refugees returned from KPK (52%) and Punjab (23%). Overall, 72% 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), Mithrpur (Azad Kashmir), Karachi, Chakwal (Punjab),

Quetta and Pishin (Baluchistan). The top five rural return areas (camps) for 2015 are Azakhel, Panian, Thall, Khaki and Old Akora, all of them located in KPK.

Returnees arriving in April and May from KPK reported increased pressure (eviction notices/closure of refugee settlements) by local authorities in several parts of KPK. In mid-May the refugee families in Azakhel refugee village received an eviction notice from local authorities. As a result, over 600 families have returned to Khoshi district of Logar province. The majority of the refugee population in Azakhel are originally from Logar province. It is not yet clear whether the remaining families from Azakhel have relocated to other areas of Pakistan or are planning to return to Afghanistan.

Eviction notices by the authorities are cited as the primary push factor that influenced Afghan refugees to return from Pakistan. Discrimination, harassment, movement limitations, economic factors, settlement closure and fear of arrest or deportation are mentioned as additional reasons for return from Pakistan in 2015.



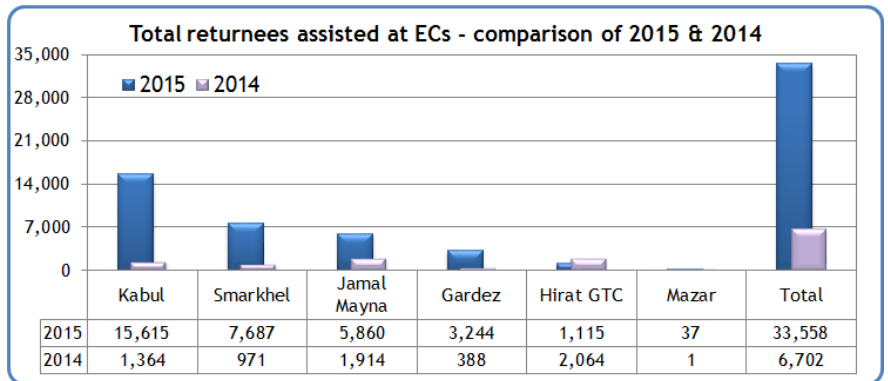
RETURN PROCESS

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.

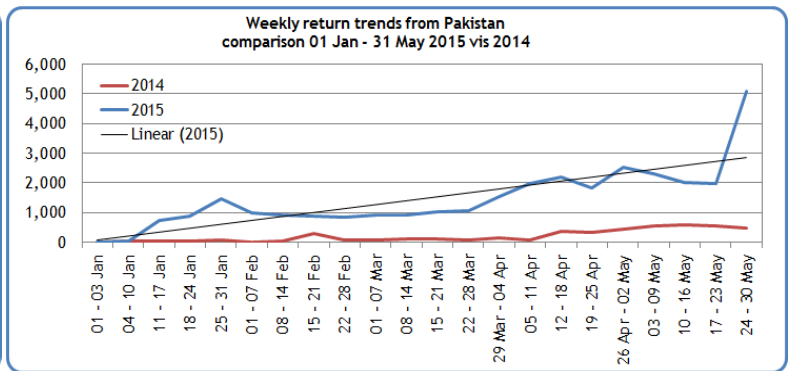
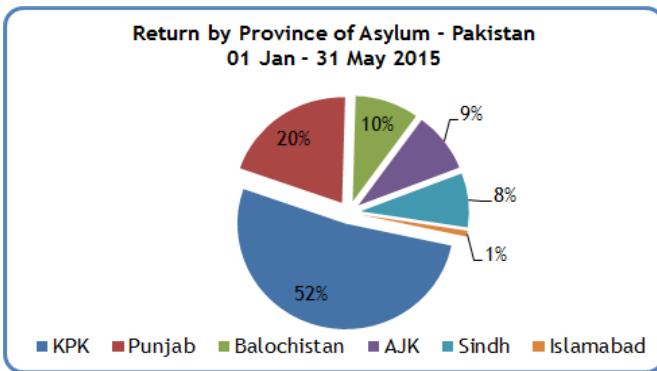
Two VRCs are in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli Quetta in Baluchistan.

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.

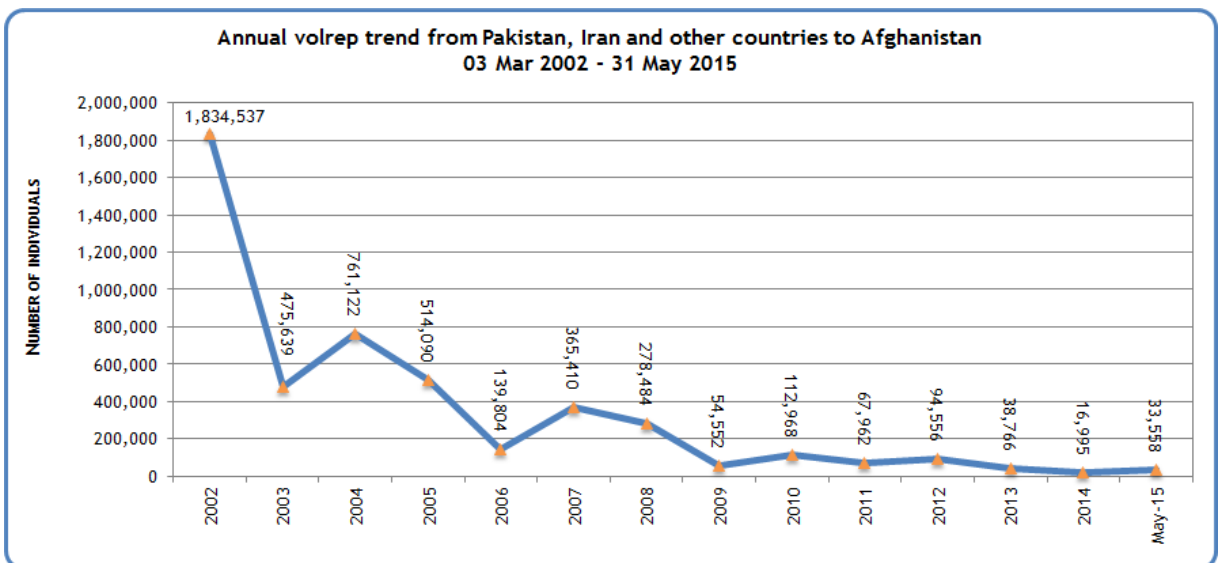
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.



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.

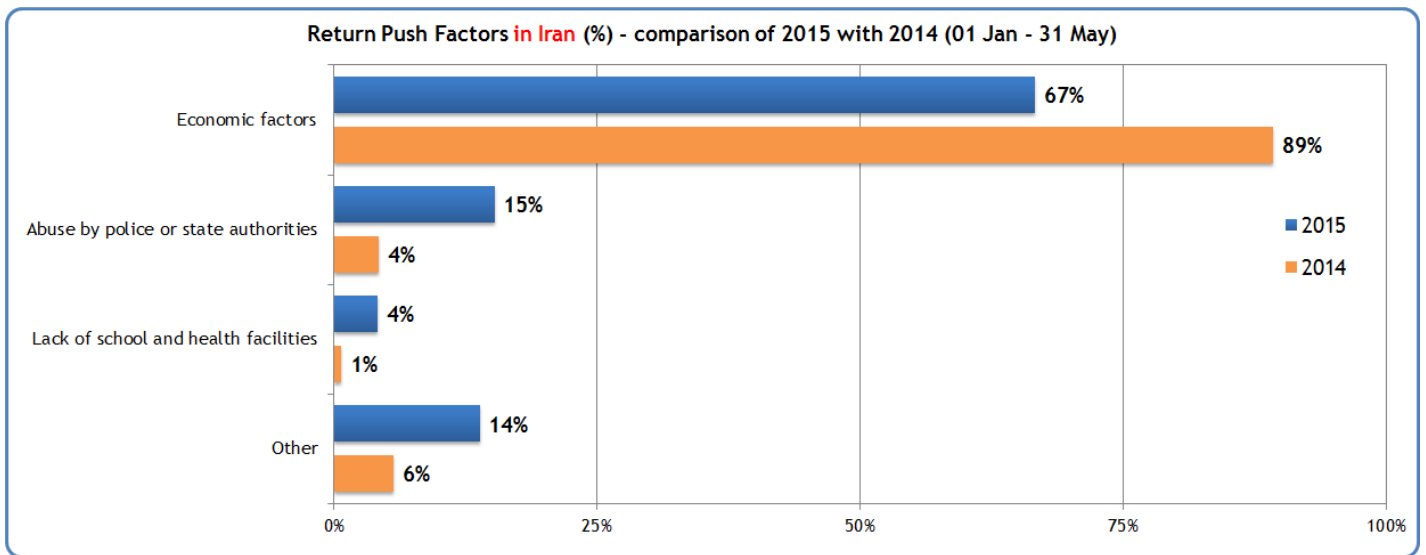
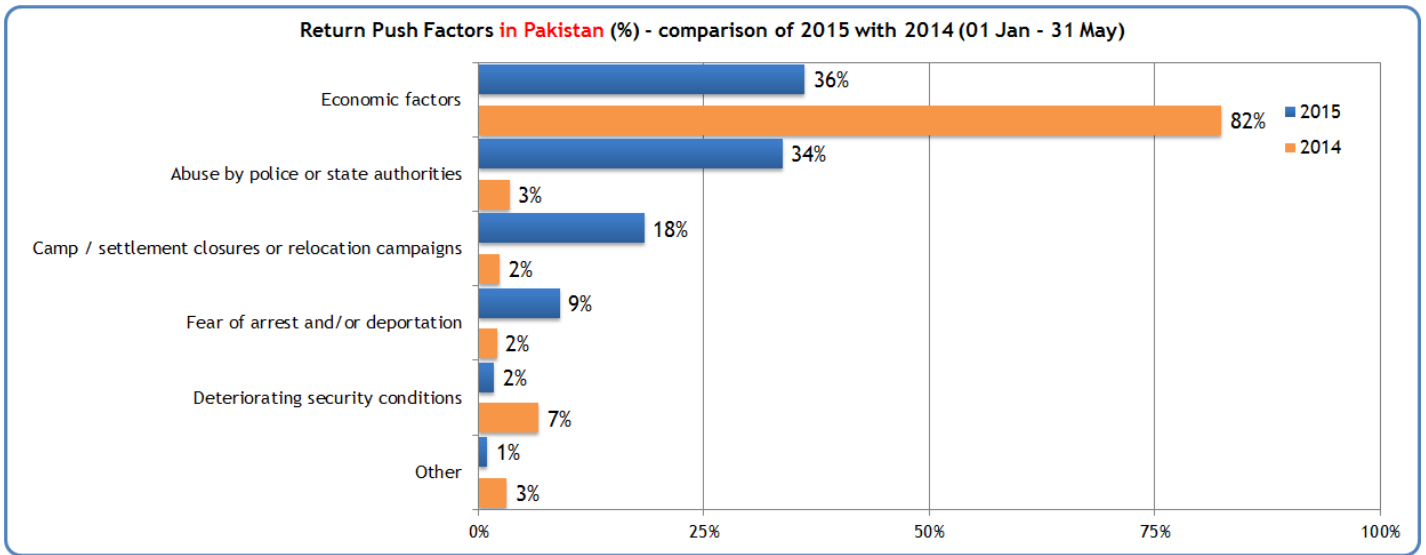
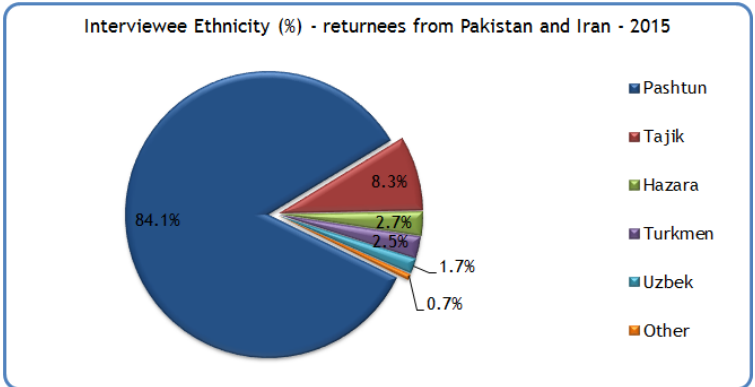
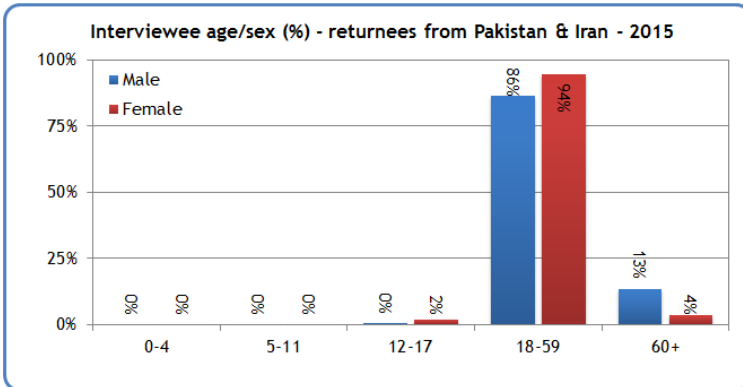


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of May 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise 20% of the Afghanistan’s population.

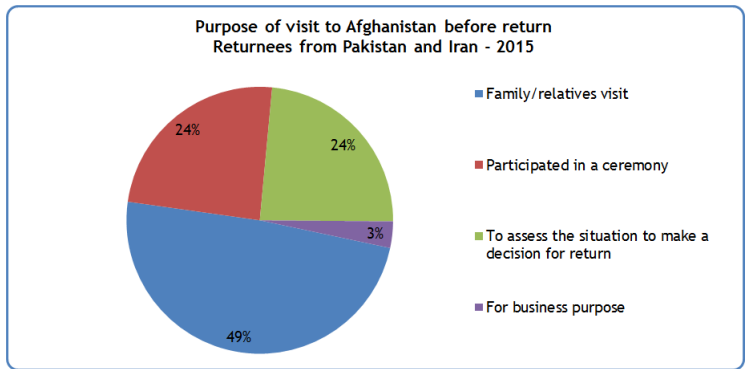
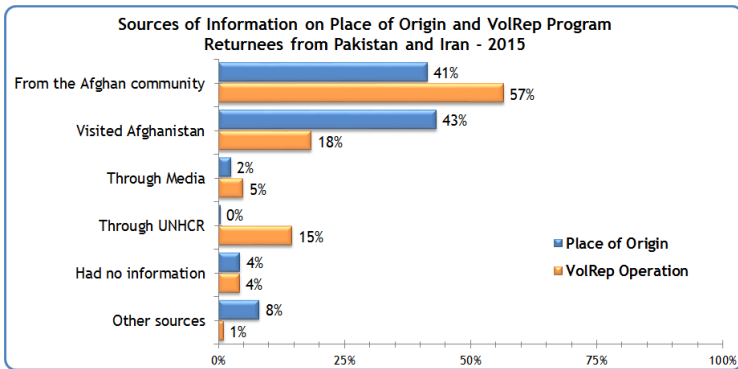
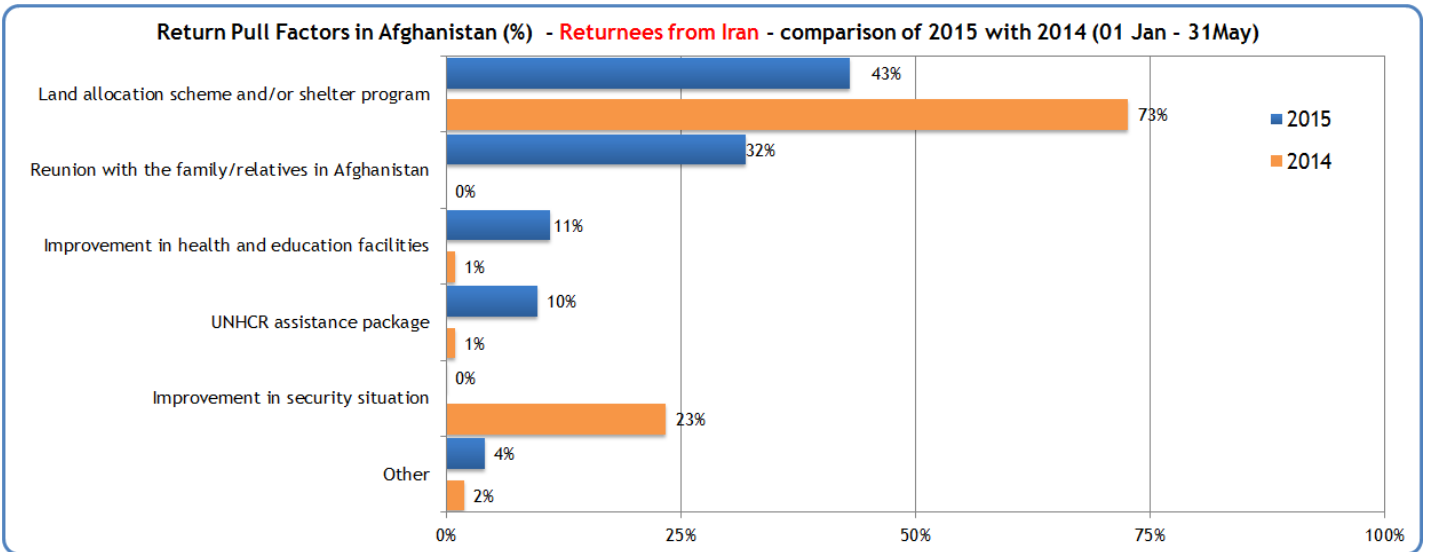
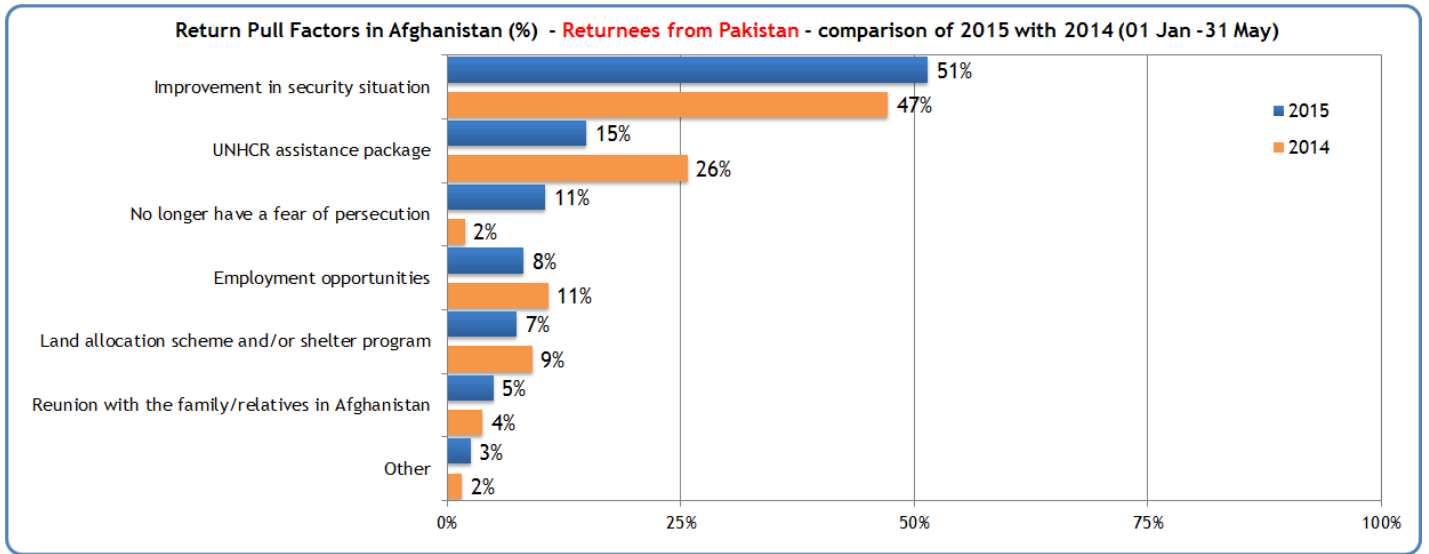


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

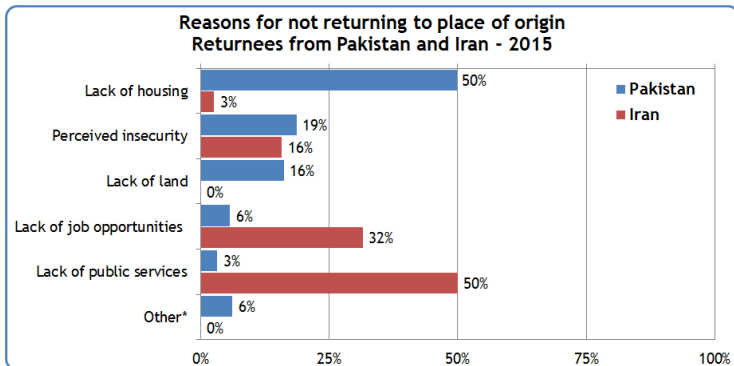
Between 1 January and 31 May 2015, a total of **1,669 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (1,597) and Iran (72). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (1,237) and from those with protection concerns (432) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR/DoRR 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

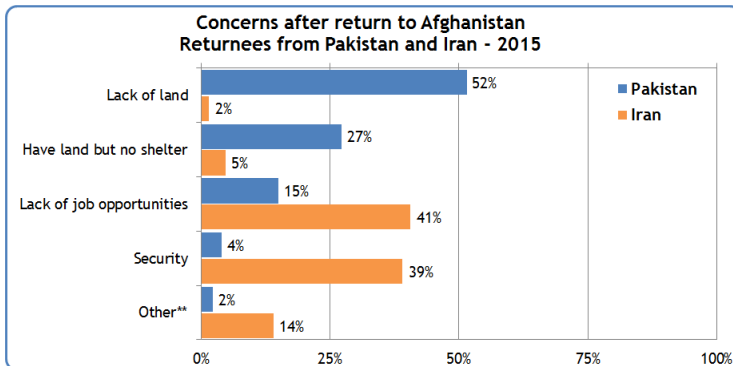


* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reason for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



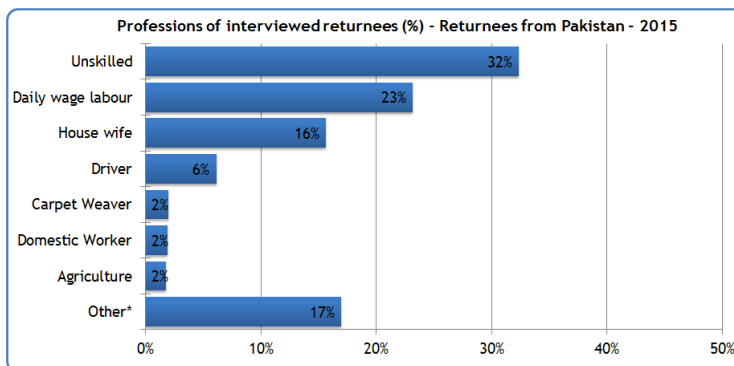
Out of a total of 1,669 respondents, 717 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

*Other represents 42 interviews; responses provided included personal dispute, fear of persecution, lack of quality education and health facilities

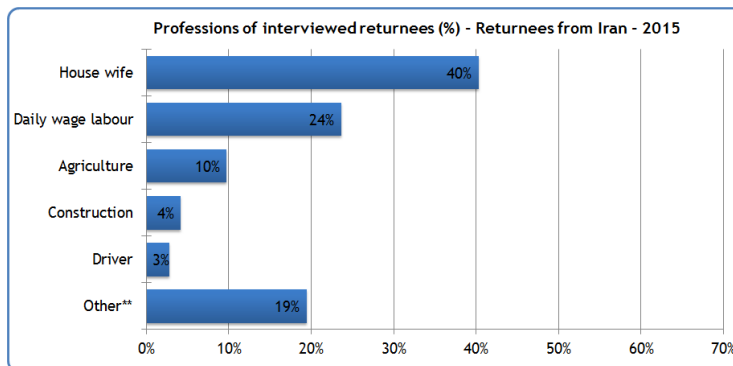


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

**Other represents 37 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities



*Other: responses included construction worker, teachers, domestic worker, agriculture, businessman, security, engineer, artisan, medical and legal profession.



** Other: responses included unskilled labour and businessman

Alleged arrest/detention and extortion in Pakistan

Returnee monitoring findings shows a general reduction in the pattern of harassment and intimidations by the local authorities in the main cities and in areas with high density of refugees in KPK and Punjab. However, returnees alleged that the Police and authorities continue to extort returnees, both on their way to the VRCs and between the VRC to Torkham. Some interviewed families reported that, despite having necessary documents obtained from UNHCR’s VRC in Peshawar (i.e., the Voluntary Repatriation Forms), their trucks and vehicles have been stopped by police/Khasadars for a search of their luggage. Reportedly, requests to pay bribes to pass the check point(s) were not uncommon. Returnees alleged that they paid up to 500 - 40,000 Pakistani RS (i.e. from 5 to 400 USD) to avoid long delays at the checkpoints and border crossing and reach their destination in Afghanistan before evening.

UNHCR Afghanistan is constantly sharing this information with UNHCR offices in Pakistan for necessary advocacy and follow-up with governmental authorities in Pakistan.



Credit: UNHCR/ M. Haroon



Credit: UNHCR/ M. Haroon

Recent returnee families from Pakistan—Kabul Encashment Center, April 2015

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 ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN:

1 - 31 May 2015: A total of 12,429 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Islam Qala from Iran.

1 Jan–31 May 2015: A total of 45,646 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran via Islam Qala. *In addition, between 01 Jan–31 Mar 2015, a total of 26,281 were also deported from Iran via Zaranj*.*

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.

Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			Total
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 May 2015	Zaranj*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Islam Qala	78	131	184	315	12,002	112	0	0	12,114	12,429
Total		78	131	184	315	12,002	112	0	0	12,114	12,429
01 Jan - 31 Mar 2015	Zaranj*	693	1,363	1,492	2,855	23,368	58	0	0	23,426	26,281
01 Jan - 31 May 2015	Islam Qala	229	408	521	929	44,306	411	0	0	44,717	45,646
Total		922	1,771	2,013	3,784	67,674	469	0	0	68,143	71,927

* Deportation figure via Zaranj entry point is not available for the month of April and May

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 May 2015: A total of 1,655 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (1,120) and Spin Boldak (535) border points. This figure is similar to the total figure in April (1,656) 2015.

1 January - 31 May 2015: A total of 6,868 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 1,217 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, 1,817 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 22 Feb and 31 May 2015.

A total number of 9,592 Afghans were deported from Pakistan via Torkham (3,800) and Spin Boldak (5,792) in 2014.

Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			Total
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 May 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,120	0	0	0	1,120	1,120
	Spin Boldak*	0	0	0	0	535	0	0	0	535	535
Total		0	0	0	0	1,655	0	0	0	1,655	1,655
01 Jan -31	Torkham	0	0	0	0	6,868	0	0	0	6,868	6,868
May 2015	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	1,817	0	0	0	1,817	1,817
Total		0	0	0	0	8,685	0	0	0	8,685	8,685

* 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 May 2015

