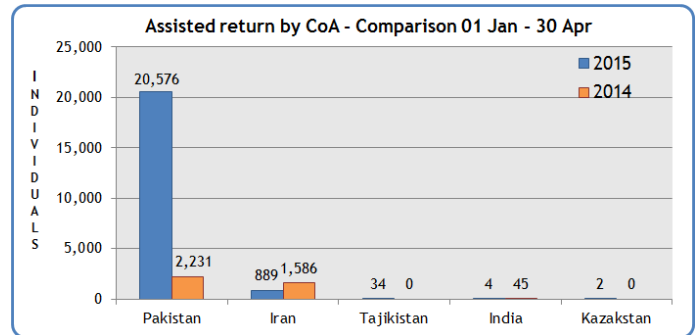


In April 2015, a total of **9,287** Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 9,087 came from Pakistan 199 from Iran and 1 from India. This figure is nearly **5 times higher** compared to April 2014, and is also 80% higher compared to 5,173 returnees in March 2015.

In the first four months of 2015, a total of **21,505** Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program.

The majority (20,576) came from Pakistan and 889 from Iran. The return trend this year represents a substantial increase and already passed the total number of return in 2014 (16,995). The return trend normally increase from mid-April marking the start of return season. However, the deterioration of the environment in different parts of Pakistan, particularly in KPK and Punjab, continues to play a role in the decision to return.



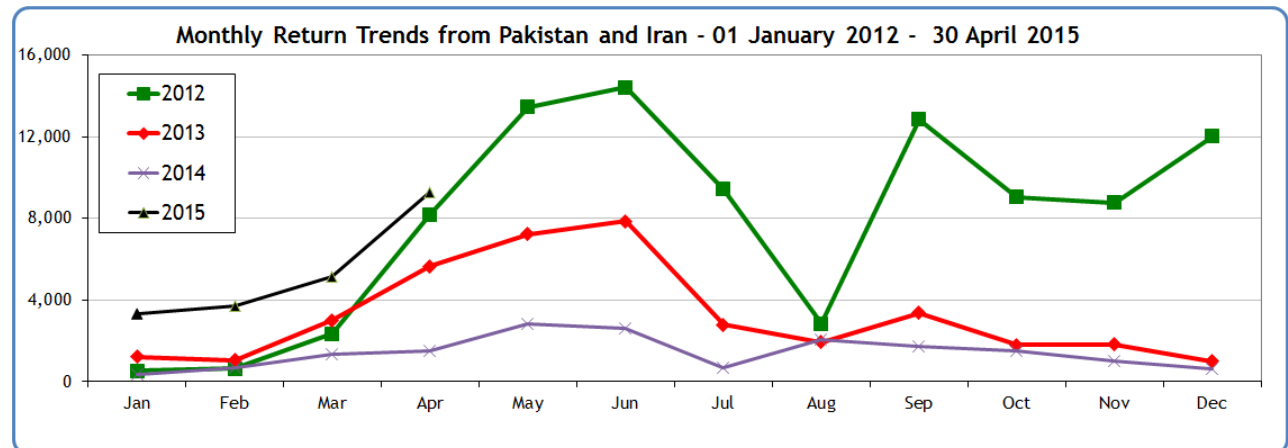
Since January 2015, the return trends from Pakistan have markedly increased following the terrorist attack against the school in Peshawar (KPK). This incident triggered a series of measures by the Pakistani authorities which had an impact on undocumented Afghans and affected also refugees. Reportedly 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. The most affected areas are KPK, Punjab and Azad Jamu Kashmir/AJK. Newly arrived returnees (in April) from KPK had reported increased pressure (eviction notices/closure of refugee settlements) by local authorities in several parts of KPK particularly in **Azakhel and Jabba Jheel areas**.

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.

The return trend from Iran in 2015 (889) is 44% lower compared to 1,586 returnees during Jan - Apr 2014.

12 groups (around 2,400 Afghan refugee families) approached UNHCR Offices in Pakistan and expressed their willingness for a **group return** with the condition to be provided with land and shelter, water and livelihoods after their return to Afghanistan. These groups are living mainly in KPK and are willing to return to Nangarhar (majority) and Kunar provinces in the East. UNHCR Afghanistan made an initial assessment to understand whether their return is feasible or not. While provision of livelihood and land is challenging, provision of shelter and water is depending on extra resources that this year had decreased.

Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Apr 2015		Jan - Apr 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
East	6,152	28.6%	682	17.7%
Central	5,622	26.1%	948	24.5%
Northeast	3,986	18.5%	468	12.1%
North	2,046	9.5%	299	7.7%
Southeast	1,674	7.8%	152	3.9%
West	1,049	4.9%	778	20.1%
South	901	4.2%	477	12.4%
Central Highlands	75	0.3%	58	1.5%
Total	21,505	100.0%	3,862	100.0%



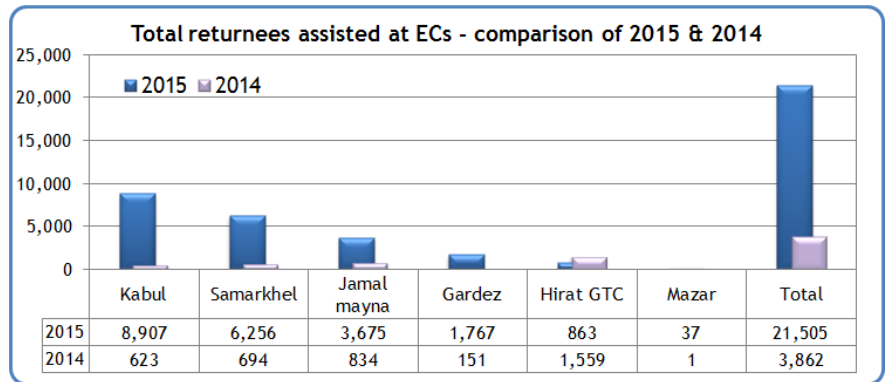
RETURN PROCESS

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.

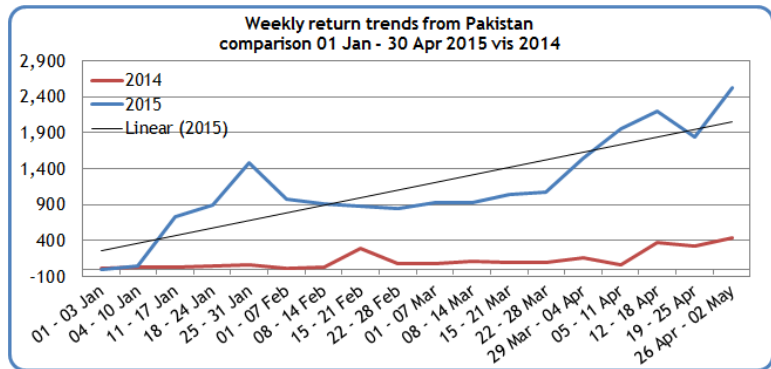
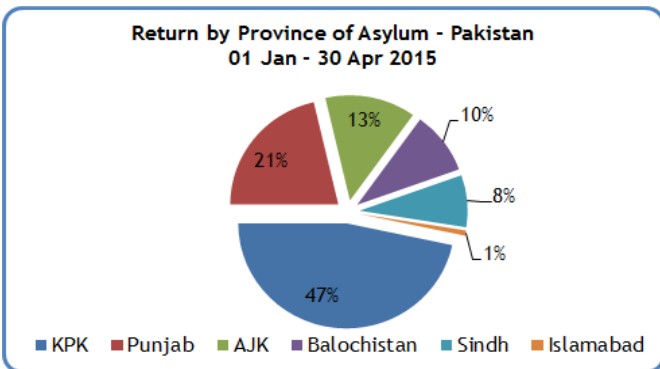
Two VRCs are in Pakistan: Chamkani in Peshawar (KPK) and Baleli Quetta in Baluchistan.

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.

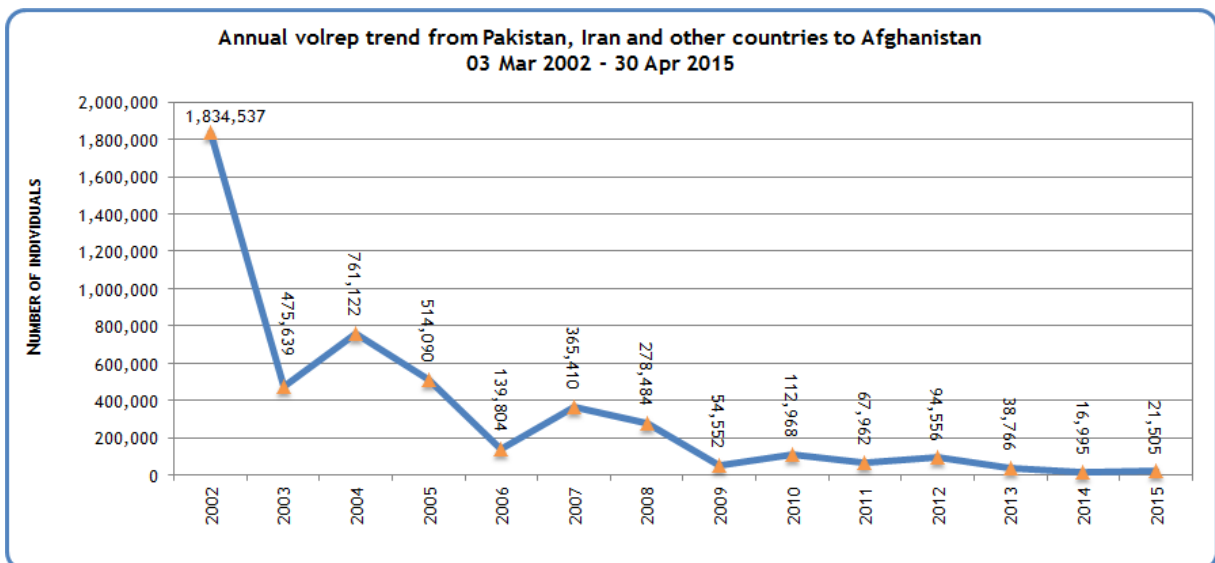
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.



At the ECs, depending on the province of origin, all Afghan returnees with VRFs received approximately 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. Returnees are briefed also on how to access legal aid, if required.

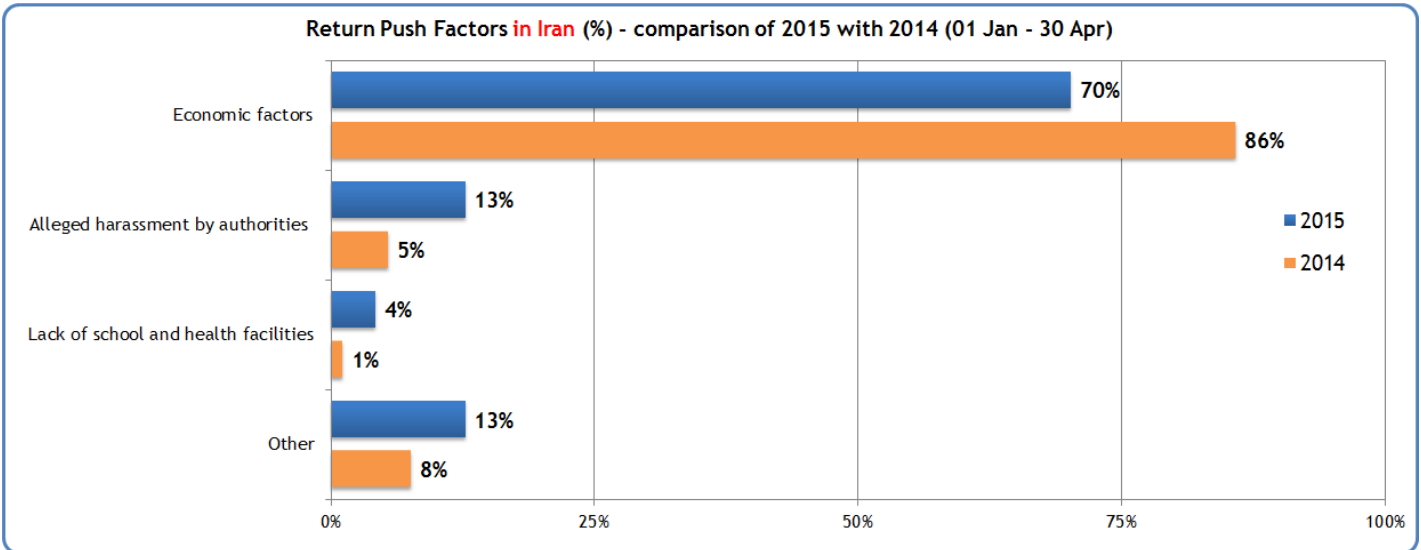
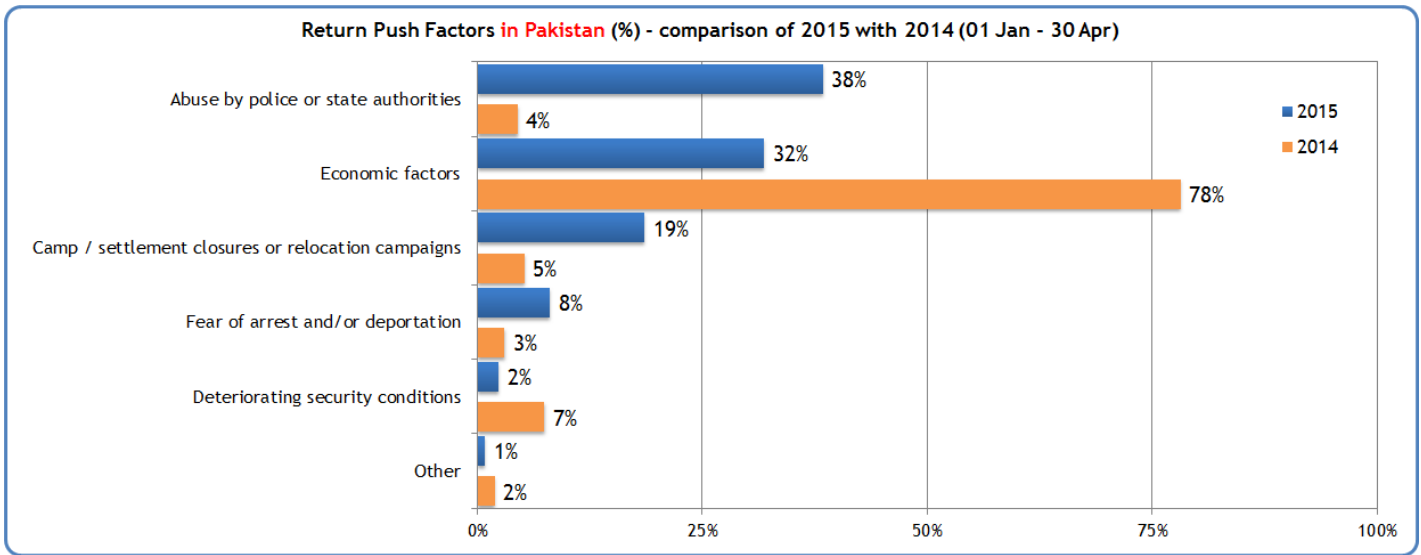
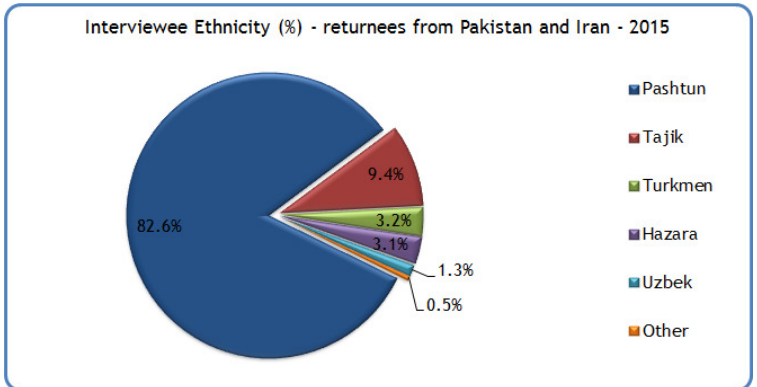
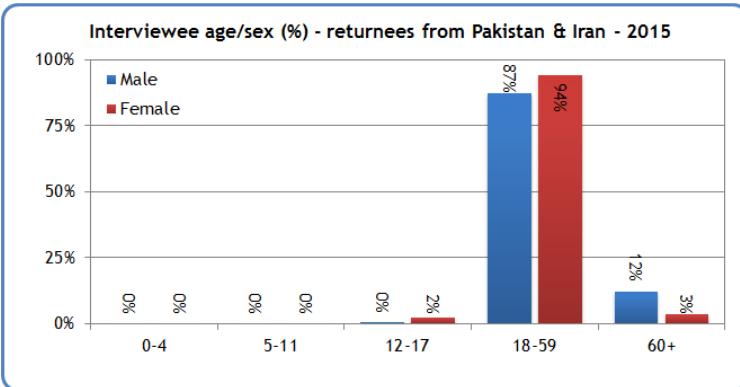


From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of April 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise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



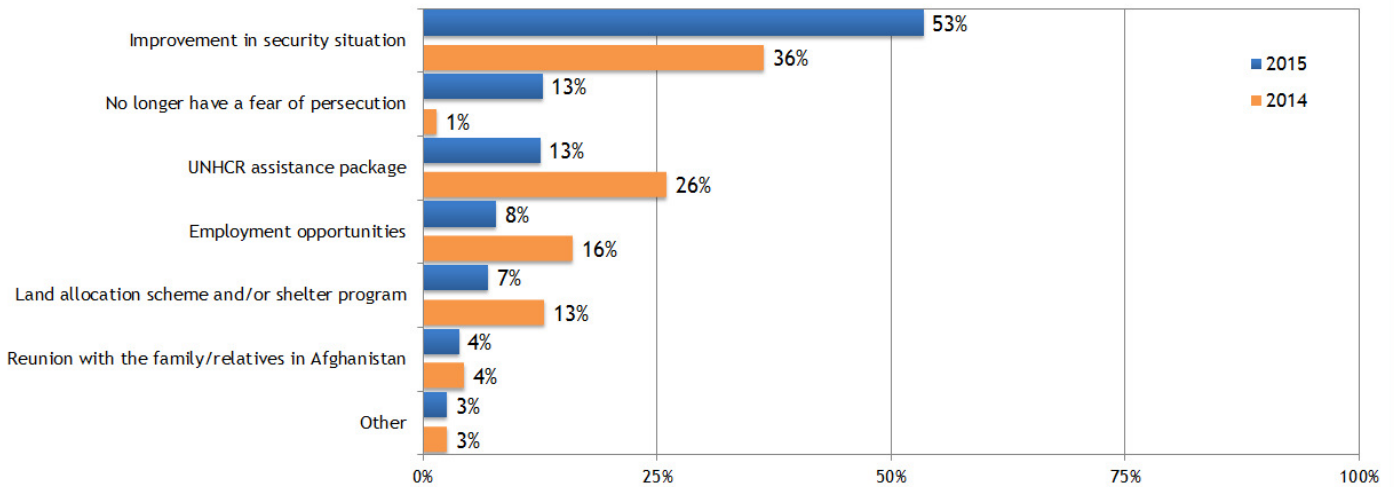
ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January - 30 April 2015, a total of **1,165 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (1,118) and Iran (47). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (810) and from those with protection concerns (355) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Samarkhel), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Herat (GTC). 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.

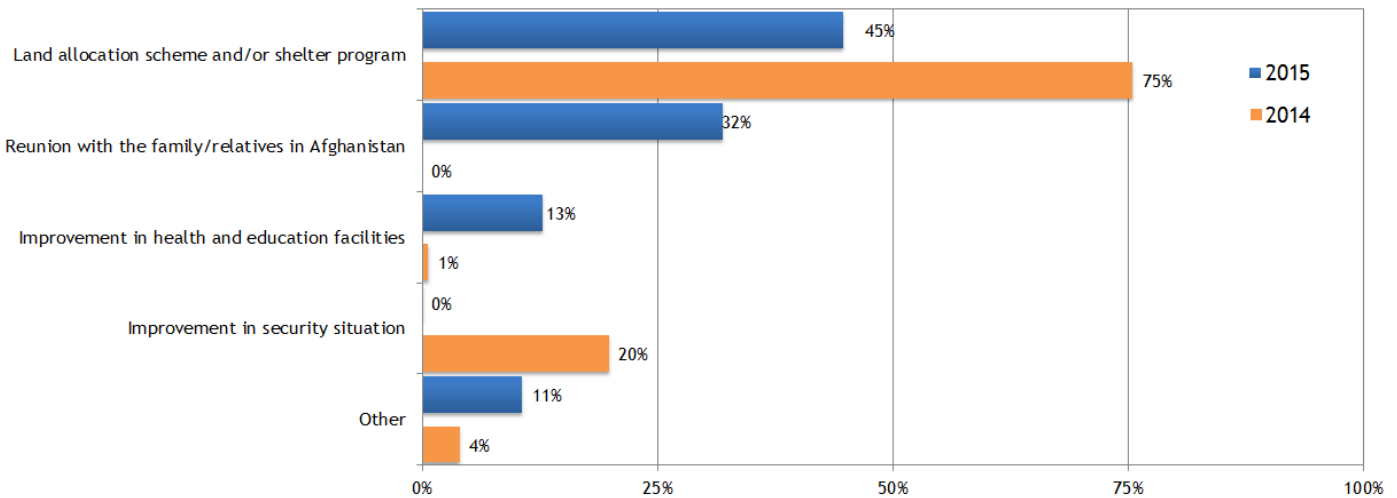


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

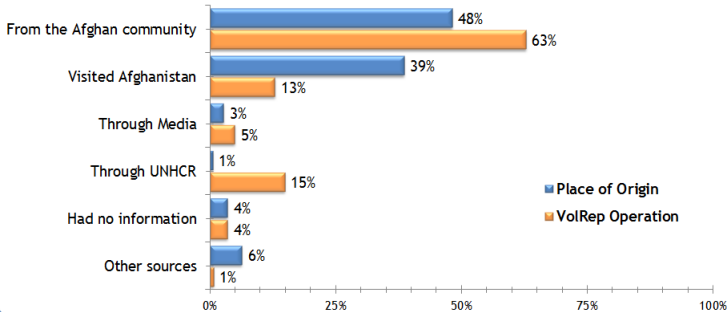
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 30 Apr)



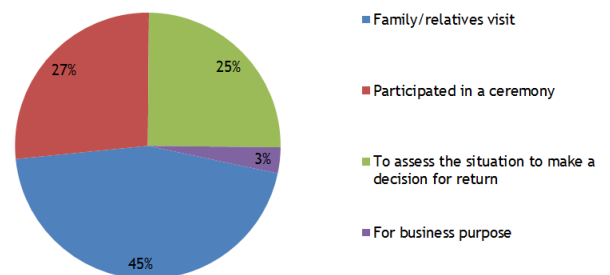
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Iran - comparison of 2015 with 2014 (01 Jan - 30 Apr)



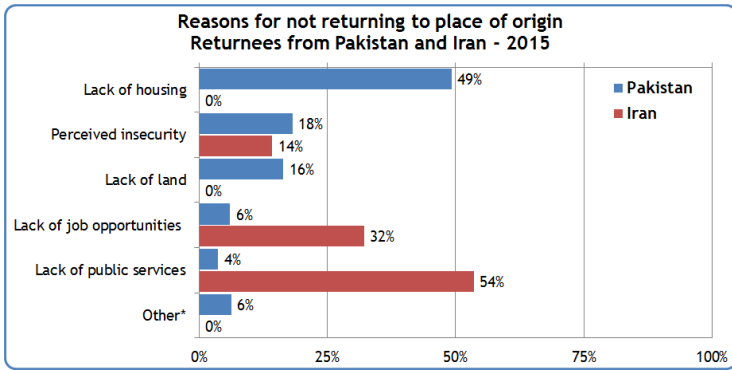
Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2015



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

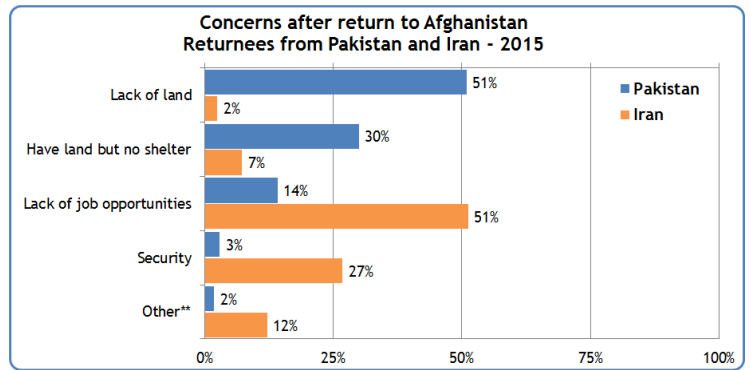


* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reason for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



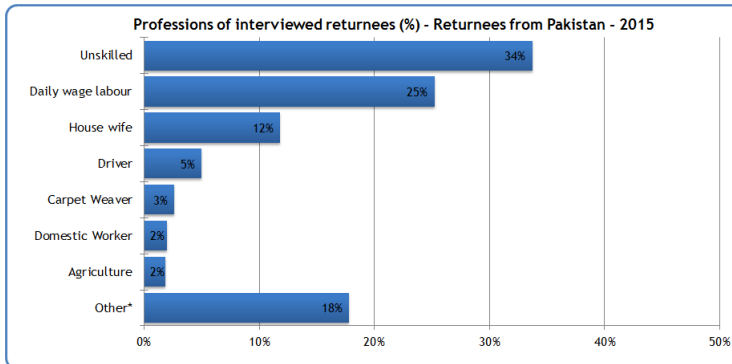
Out of a total of 1,165 respondents, 539 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

*Other represents 32 interviews; responses provided included lack of quality education and health facilities

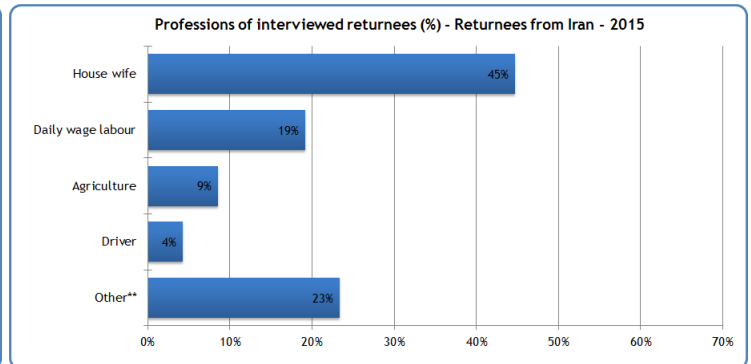


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

**Other represents 21 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities



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



** Other: responses included construction worker and businessman

Alleged arrest/detention and extortion in Pakistan

Interviewed returnees have stated that episodes of harassment, including cases of arrests and detention, markedly increased in the aftermath of the Peshawar attack, after the government of Pakistan informed Afghan refugees on the necessity to leave urban/rural areas and settle in designated camps/settlements through announcements in the media and through villages' mosques. Some 80 (7%) of the total interviewed returnees from Pakistan (1,118) specifically stated that they were arrested/detained in KPK and Punjab. Interviewed returnees alleged that several times their family members were stopped and harassed by police during their movement in cities during their movement when they were looking for job in the market or reporting to their duty stations. They also added that their PoR cards were confiscated by the Police and could received it back and released from Police custody after they paid some money (Pakistani Rupee 500 - 2,000 / approximately USD 5 - 20).

In addition to the reported harassment by authorities, many of the interviewed returnee families stated that they were stopped at different check points on the way to the VRC in KPK as well as from the VRC up to Torkham border crossing point. Some returnee 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.



Recent returnee families from Azad Jamu and Kashmir of Pakistan to Qarabagh district of Kabul, 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 co-ordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN:

1 - 30 April 2015: A total of 10,427 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Islam Qala from Iran.

1 Jan–30 April 2015: A total of 33,217 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 screen and 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	Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 30 Apr 2015	Zaranj*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Islam Qala	70	124	161	285	10,102	40	0	0	10,142	10,427
Total		70	124	161	285	10,102	40	0	0	10,142	10,427
01 Jan - 31 Mar 2015	Zaranj*	693	1,363	1,492	2,855	23,368	58	0	0	23,426	26,281
01 Jan - 30 Apr 2015	Islam Qala	151	277	337	614	32,304	299	0	0	32,603	33,217
Total		844	1,640	1,829	3,469	55,672	357	0	0	56,029	59,498

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

PAKISTAN:

1 - 30 April 2015: A total of 1,656 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (1,229) and Spin Boldak (427) border points. This figure reflect 21% decrease compared to 2,092 deportees in March 2015.

1 January - 30 April 2015: A total of 5,748 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure shows a substantial increase compared to 989 deportees (via Torkham) during same period in 2014.

Recent measures taken by the Pakistani authorities following a terrorist attack on a school in Peshawar, KPK seems to be driving the high number of deportees in 2015.

Since November 2012, IOM has established a transit centre in Torkham to screen, 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, 1,282 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB) between 22 Feb and 30 April 2015.

A total number 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	Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 30 Apr 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,229	0	0	0	1,229	1,229
	Spin Boldak*	0	0	0	0	427	0	0	0	427	427
Total		0	0	0	0	1,656	0	0	0	1,656	1,656
01 Jan - 30 Apr 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	5,748	0	0	0	5,748	5,748
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	1,282	0	0	0	1,282	1,282
Total		0	0	0	0	7,030	0	0	0	7,030	7,030

* 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:

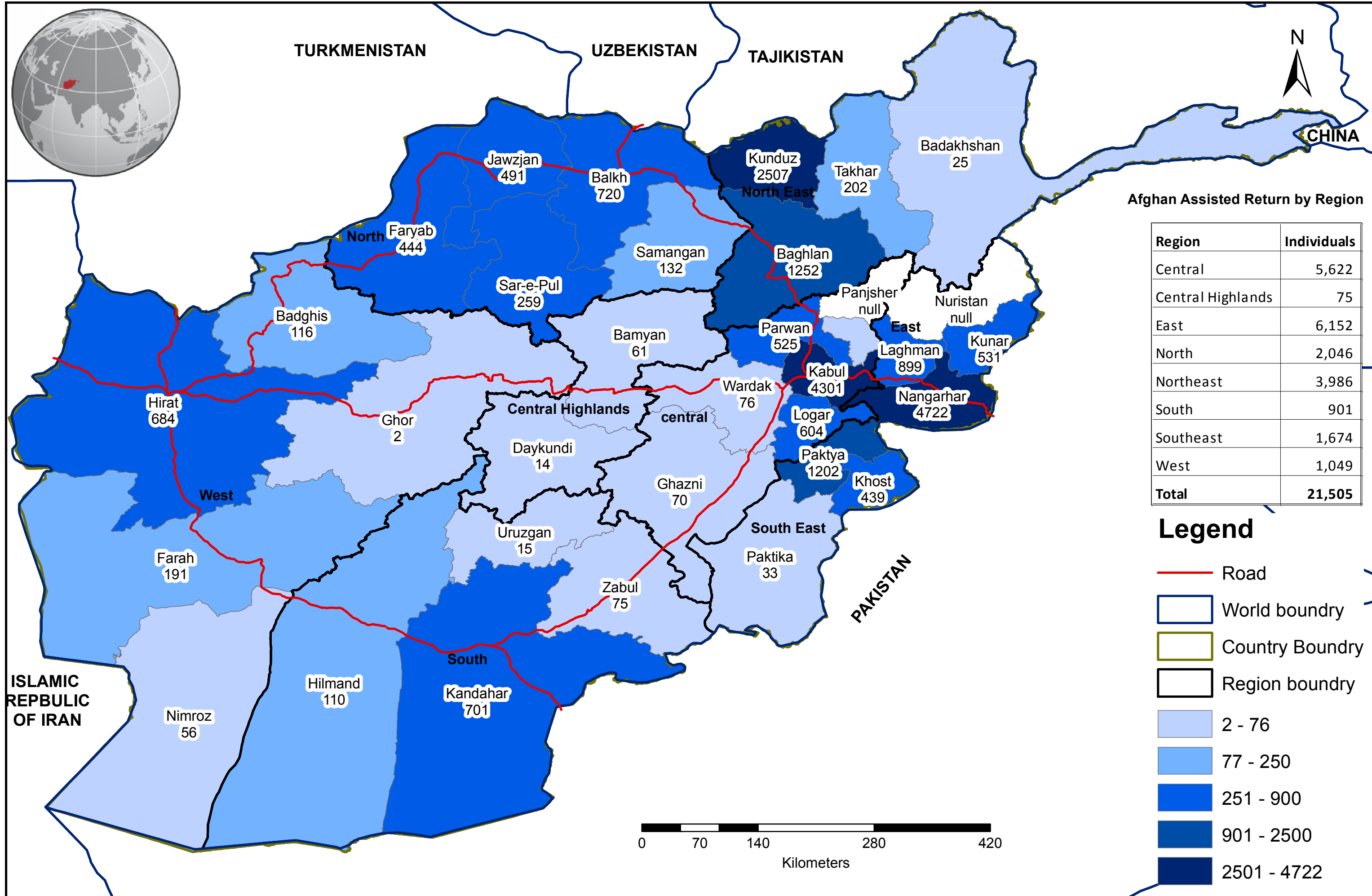
Pierfrancesco Maria Natta, Assistant Representative (Protection), UNHCR CO Kabul, natta@unhcr.org

Angela Moore, Protection Officer, UNHCR CO Kabul, moorea@unhcr.org

Mohammad Haroon, Assistant Repatriation Officer, UNHCR CO Kabul, haroon@unhcr.org

Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

Return by Province of Destination - 01 January - 30 April 2015



Afghan Assisted Return by Region

Region	Individuals
Central	5,622
Central Highlands	75
East	6,152
North	2,046
Northeast	3,986
South	901
Southeast	1,674
West	1,049
Total	21,505

Legend

- Road
- World boundary
- Country Boundry
- Region boundry
- 2 - 76
- 77 - 250
- 251 - 900
- 901 - 2500
- 2501 - 4722