

AFGHANISTAN

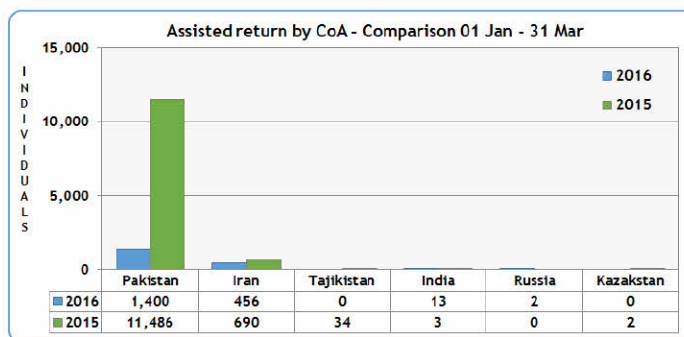
VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–31 March 2016

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In March 2016, a total of 1,227 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 905 came from Pakistan, 309 from Iran, and 13 from India. This figure is around 4 times higher compared to 263 returnees in February 2016. Return trends normally decline during winter season due to the harsh weather conditions in Afghanistan compared to several areas in Pakistan. The peak return season is normally between mid-April–Oct.

In the first three months of 2016, a total of 1,871 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR’s assisted return program, including 1,400 from Pakistan 456 from Iran, 13 from India and 2 from the Russian Federation. This figure is very low compared to 12,215 returnees during the same period in 2015 as well as lower (20%) than the total number of refugees returned (2,346) during same period in 2014, the year that recorded the lowest return figure since the start of the voluntary repatriation process in March 2002. The increase in the return figure in 2015 was mainly due to increased harassment, extortion, and other push factors faced by Afghans in Pakistan following the terrorist attack on Peshawar school in December 2014.

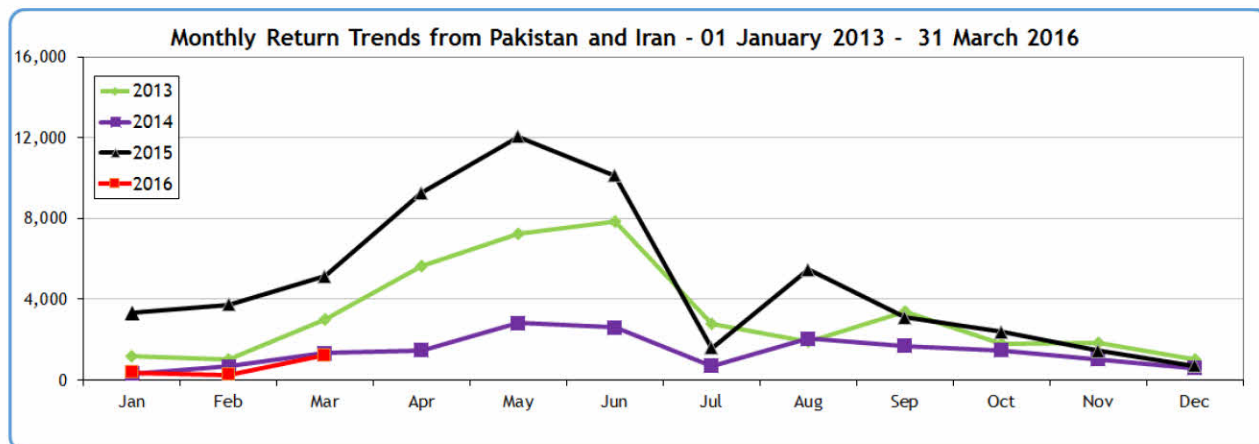


Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Mar 2016		Jan - Mar 2015	
	No.	%	No.	%
East	535	28.6%	4,306	35.3%
Central	493	26.3%	3,468	28.4%
North	249	13.3%	1,105	9.0%
Northeast	214	11.4%	1,568	12.8%
West	180	9.6%	396	3.2%
South	133	7.1%	452	3.7%
Southeast	50	2.7%	871	7.1%
Central Highlands	17	0.9%	49	0.4%
Total	1,871	100.0%	12,215	100.0%

The low return trend so far this year is largely due to the lack of pull factors in Afghanistan namely high levels of unemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities, limited access to land, shelter and basic services, particularly in areas of high return, coupled with increased insecurity. In addition, the majority of the remaining Afghan refugees in neighboring countries are second and third generations who have limited or weak ties to their ancestral communities. In the same time, however, the insecurity of their situation in neighboring countries, coupled by growing asylum fatigue of host governments have an impact on their decisions to return.

Based on returnee monitoring findings with newly arrived returnees so far this year, economic problems (such as lack of job or access to job market and high cost of living) and harassment by police/authorities are the leading push factors that influenced refugees’ decision for return. In contrast, improvement in the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan, UNHCR’s assistance package, perceived improved employment situation and the desire to reunion with families/relatives are the main pull factors.

Amongst the returnees from Pakistan this year, 81% returned from KPK and Baluchistan and the remaining returned from Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad. While 87% of returnees from Iran returned from Esfahan, Tehran, Khorasan, Kerman and Qom provinces. 1,202 (64% of total returnees) returned to Nangarhar, Kabul, Herat, Kunduz and Jawzjan provinces. Among those returned to these provinces, nearly 56% returned to 4 provincial capitals/urban centers (Kabul, Herat, Shiberghan and Jalalabad). Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz continue to be among the top five provinces of destination since 2002.



RETURN PROCESS

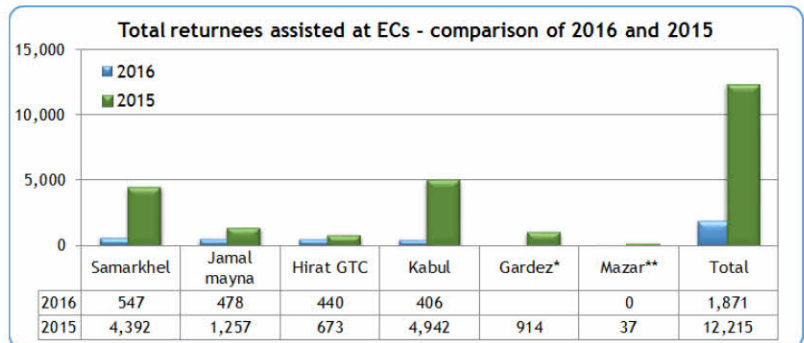
UNHCR’s Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) are processing refugees in the country of asylum willing to return to Afghanistan and issuing a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) for each family.

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

Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through So-leimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun.

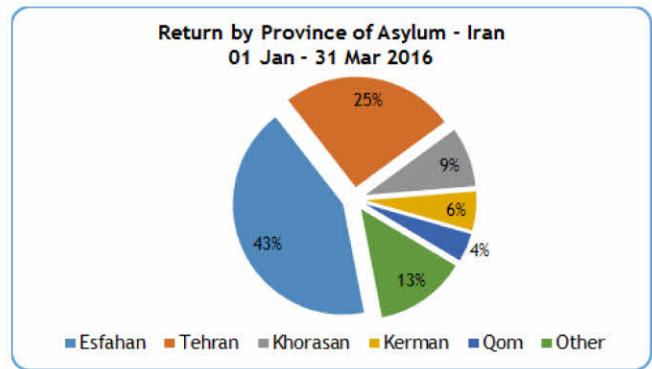
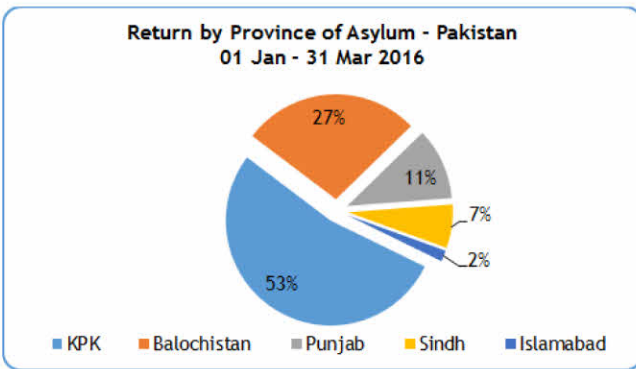
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at four Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.

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.

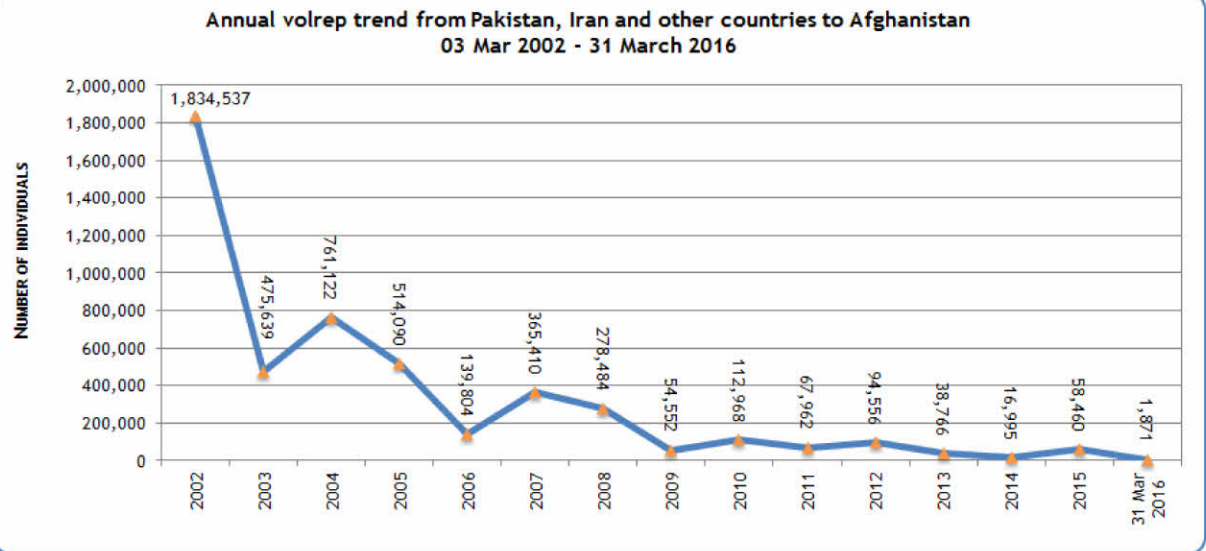


* Gardez EC ceased its activities at the end of 2015 because of budgetary constraints and refugees returning to the South-eastern Region will be referred to Kabul and Samarkhel ECs.

** 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.



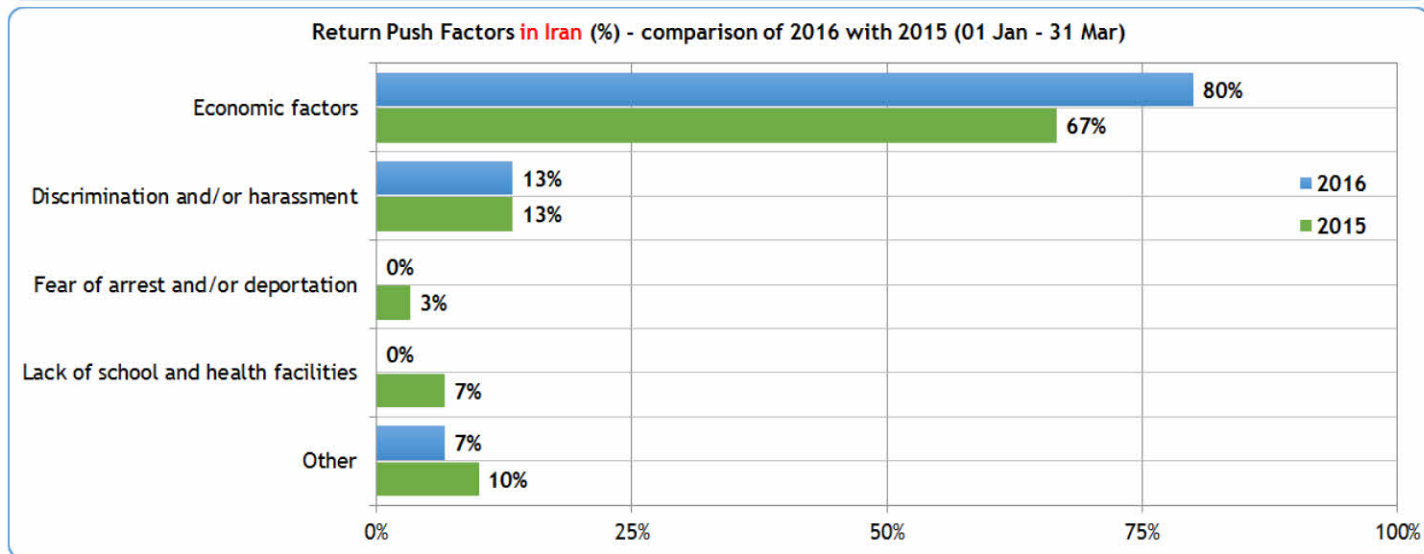
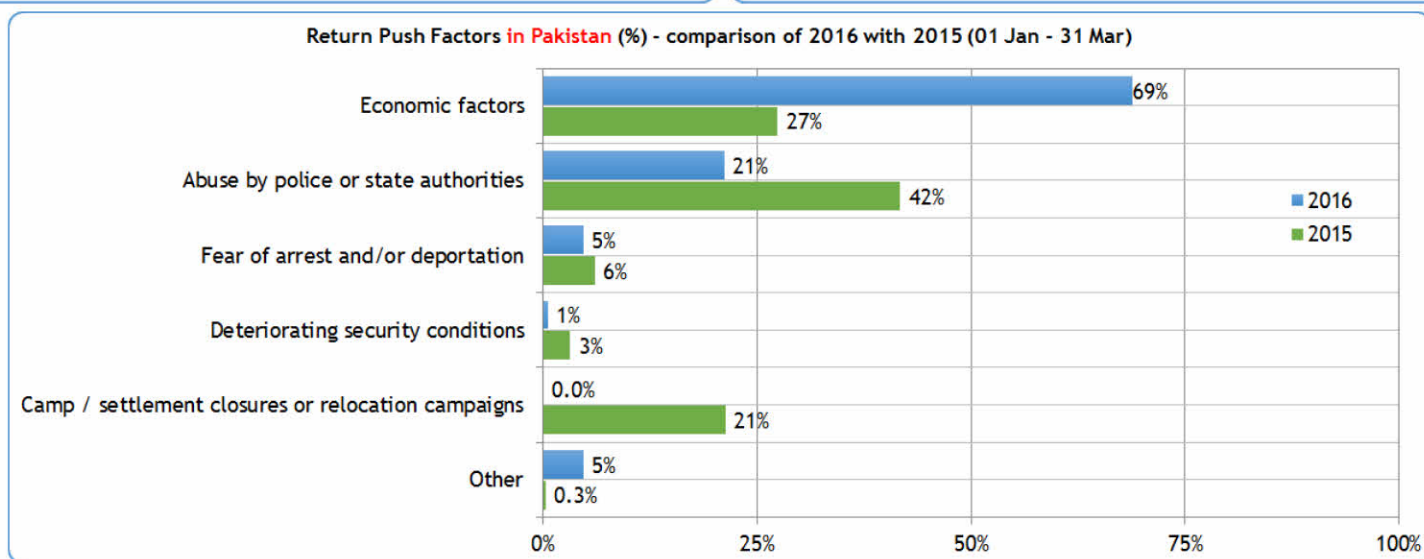
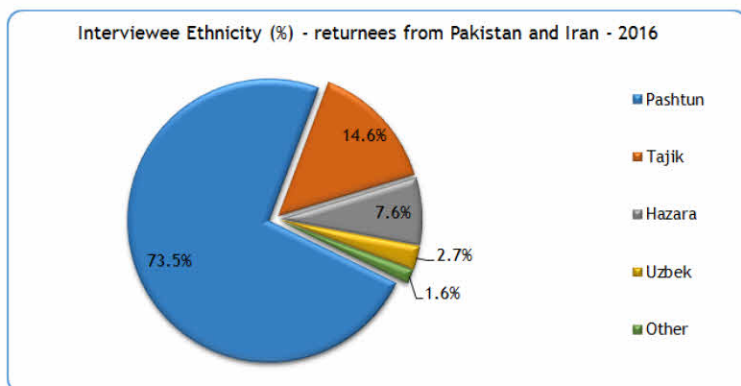
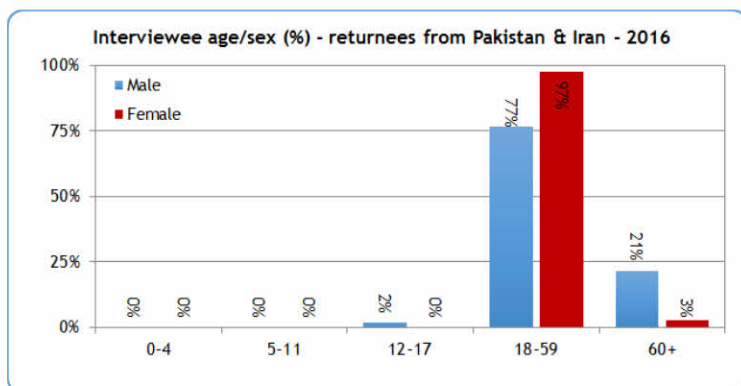
From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of March 2016, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, of whom over 4.8 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise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



ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

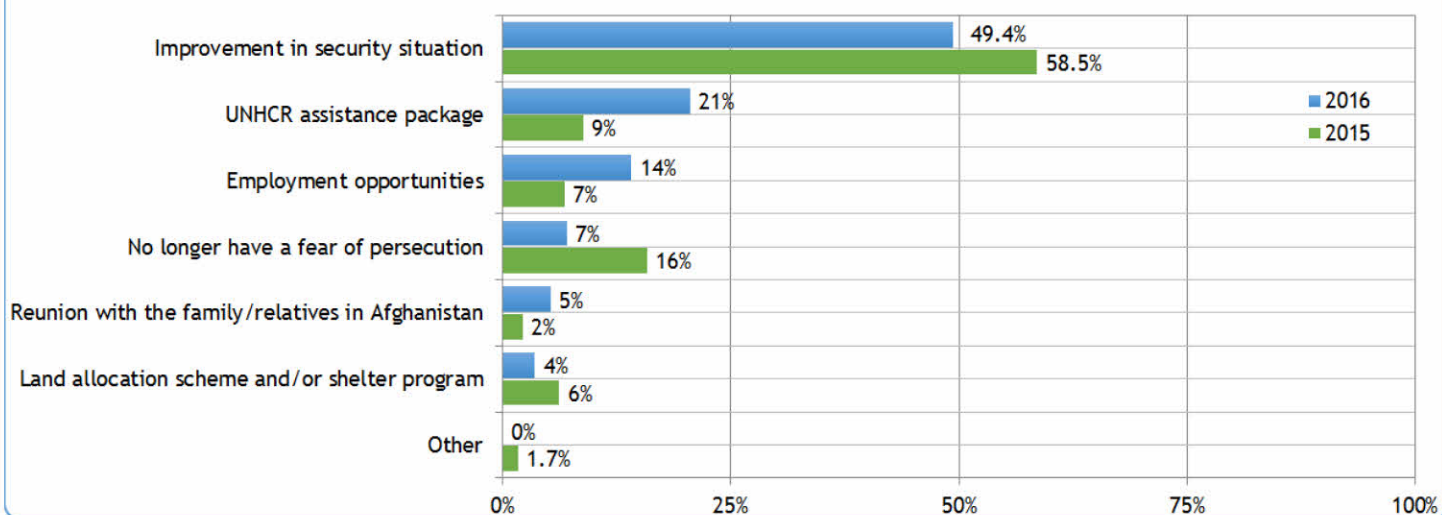
Between 1 January and 31 March 2016, a total of **185 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (170) and Iran (15). Interviewees were selected in two ways: randomly from the returning families (183) and purposively from those with protection concerns (2) at the first point of 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.

The small sample size among returnees from Iran is due to lower number of returnees from Iran among whom the majority are single individual students.

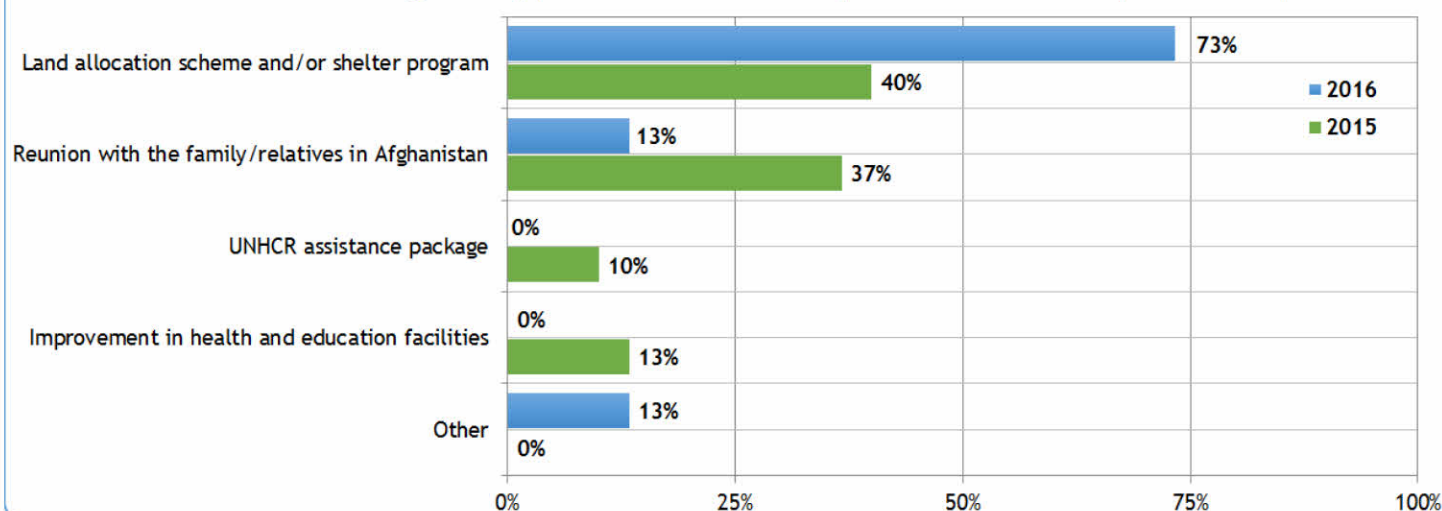


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

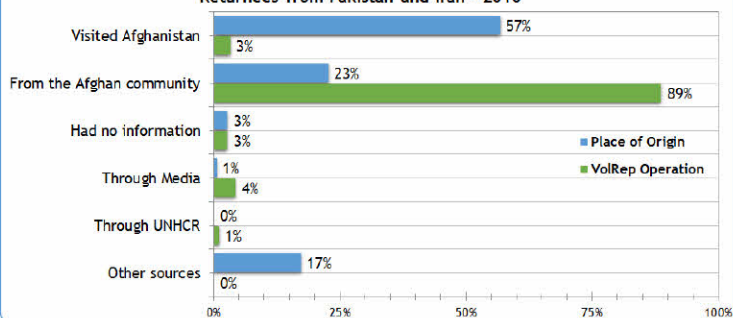
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 31 Mar)



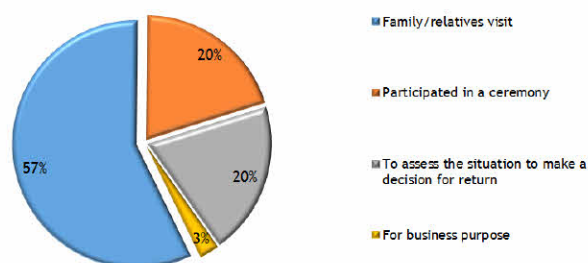
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - Returnees from Iran - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 31 Mar)



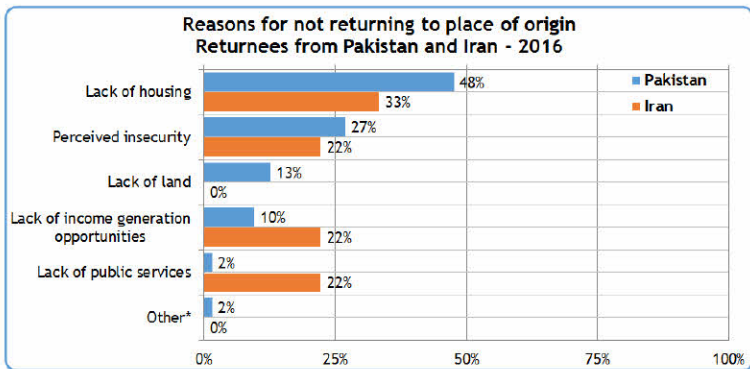
Sources of Information on Place of Origin and VolRep Program Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



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

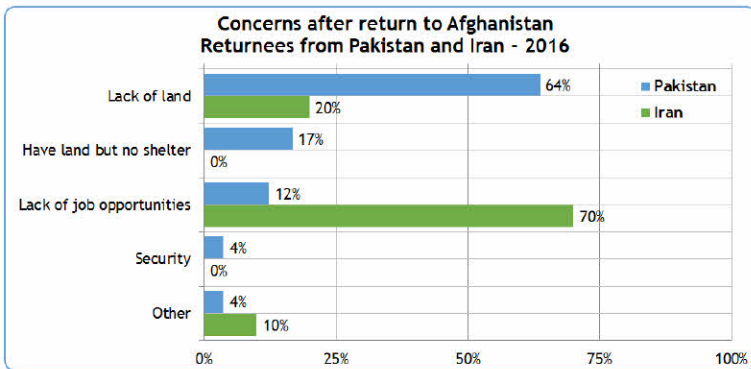


* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reasons for this discrepancy could include strict border control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



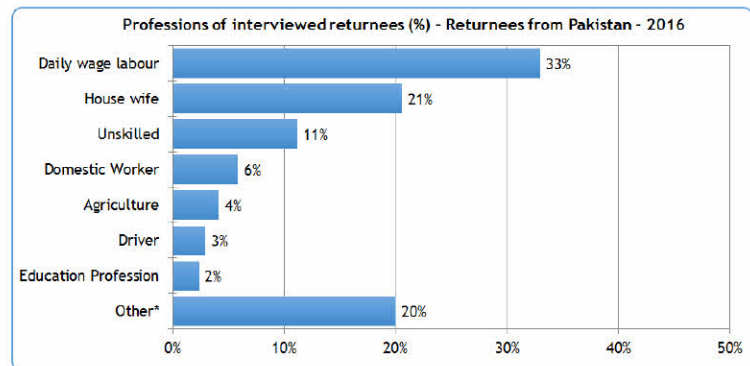
Out of 170 respondents, 63 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin.

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

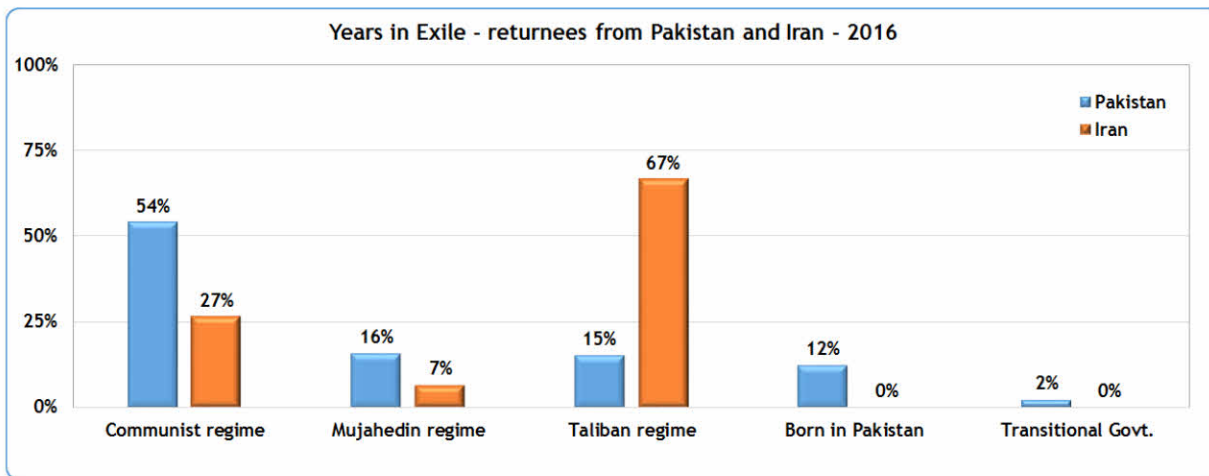
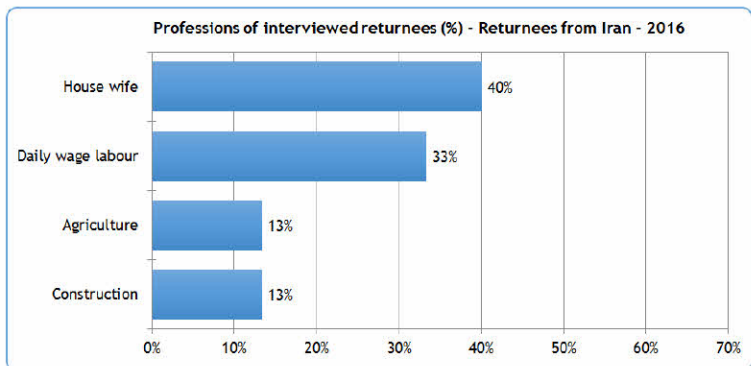


The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees from returning have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

**Other represents 6 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities.



*Other: 34 responses: included professions such as, engineer, carpet weaver, construction.



Alleged harassment and extortion in Pakistan

Newly arrived returnees in March raised concern about eviction notices and discontinuation of water and electricity as well as harassment by local authorities (police). Eviction notice was mainly impacted refugees in Monda camp (KPK) and Jhangi area of Abbottabad. Discontinuation of electricity and water was reported by returnees from Shamshatoo camp. In addition, around 15 newly arrived returnees families alleged that they were stopped enroute to VRC (Abbottabad, Charikas and Attock checkpoints) and Torkham. They alleged that they were stopped for the purpose of commodity search but later on were asked to pay bribe (ranging RS 300 3,500 / 3 -35 USD) in order to pass the check point(s). UNHCR Afghanistan shared the details of these incidents with UNHCR offices in Pakistan for necessary follow-up and intervention.

Deportation of registered Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan

23 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders/claimants) cases have been deported from Iran in 2016, including 1 case in March. Among these, 21 are families (consisting of 85 individuals) and 2 are 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. 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 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). These deportees are part of those Afghan families who are moving to Europe in search of better living/job opportunities and or asylum fatigue in Iran. 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.

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 Mar 2016: A total of 13,484 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported, via Islam Qala (53%) and Zaranj (47%), from Iran. This figure is 10% lower compared to 15,016 deportees during February 2016.

1 Jan–31 Mar 2016: In the first three months of 2016, a total of 45,414 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This figure is 7% lower compared to 49,071 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 Mar 2016	Zaranj	167	426	387	813	5,507	55	0	0	5,562	6,375
	Islam Qala	83	159	180	339	6,493	277	0	0	6,770	7,109
Total		250	585	567	1,152	12,000	332	0	0	12,332	13,484
01 Jan -31 Mar 2016	Zaranj	362	888	858	1,746	18,160	396	0	0	18,556	20,302
	Islam Qala	402	662	859	1,521	22,583	1,008	0	0	23,591	25,112
Total		764	1,550	1,717	3,267	40,743	1,404	0	0	42,147	45,414

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 Mar 2016: A total of 2,751 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (1,613) and Spin Boldak (1,138) border points. This figure is 10% higher compared to 2,505 deportees during February 2016.

1 January - 31 Mar 2016: In the last three months of 2016, a total of 4,228 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 7% lower compared to 4,519 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, 3,235 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 01 Jan and 31 Mar 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 - 31 Mar 2016	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,613	0	0	0	1,613	1,613
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	1,138	0	0	0	1,138	1,138
Total		0	0	0	0	2,751	0	0	0	2,751	2,751
01 Jan -31 Mar 2016	Torkham	1	3	2	5	4,223	0	0	0	4,223	4,228
	Spin Boldak	1	6	3	9	3,226	0	0	0	3,226	3,235
Total		2	9	5	14	7,449	0	0	0	7,449	7,463

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