

AFGHANISTAN

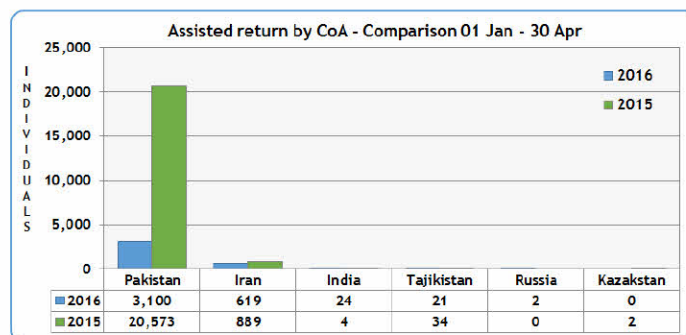
VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE

01 January–30 April 2016

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

In April 2016, a total of **1,895** Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. 1,700 came from Pakistan, 163 from Iran, 21 from Tajikistan and 11 from India. **This figure is 54 higher** compared to 1,227 returnees in March 2016. Normally return trends slightly increase in April and the figure increases until mid-October as the return season gains momentum.

In the first four months of 2016, a total of 3,766 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program, including 3,100 from Pakistan 619 from Iran, 24 from India, 21 from Tajikistan and 2 from the Russian Federation. This figure is very low compared to 21,502 returnees during the same period in 2015 as well as slightly lower than the total number of refugees returned (3,862) 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.

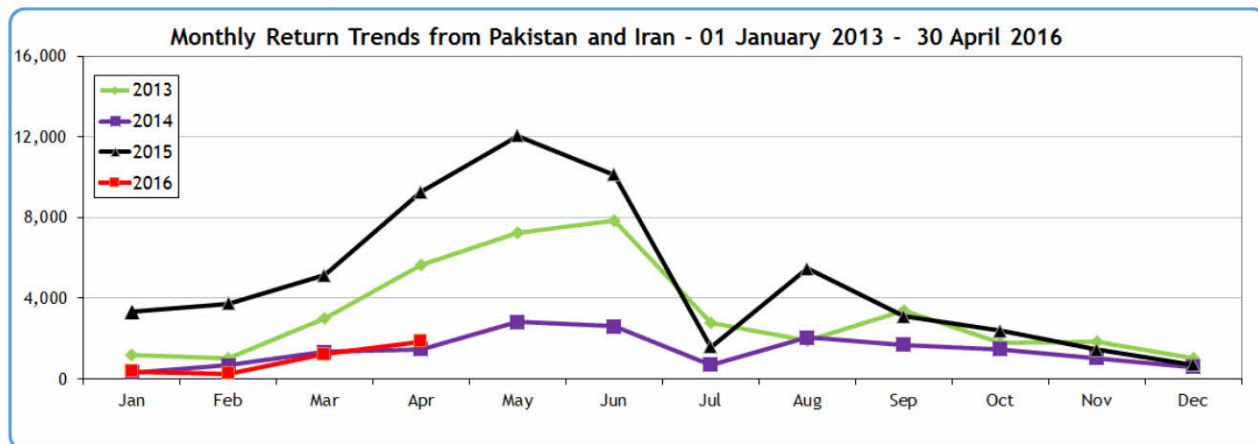


Assisted returns by region of destination in Afghanistan 2016 and 2015				
Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Apr 2016		Jan - Apr 2015	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	1,111	29.5%	5,622	26.1%
East	866	23.0%	6,152	28.6%
Northeast	605	16.1%	3,986	18.5%
North	483	12.8%	2,046	9.5%
South	251	6.7%	901	4.2%
West	234	6.2%	1,049	4.9%
Southeast	185	4.9%	1,671	7.8%
Central Highlands	31	0.8%	75	0.3%
Total	3,766	100.0%	21,502	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, **80%** returned from KPK and Baluchistan and the remaining returned from Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad. While **86%** of returnees from Iran returned from Esfahan, Tehran, Khorasan, Kerman and Qom provinces. 2,285 (61% of total returnees) returned to Kabul, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Herat and Jawzjan provinces. Among those returned to these provinces, nearly 60% returned to 5 provincial capitals/urban centers (Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, Shiberghan and Kunduz). Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz continue to be among the top five provinces of destination since 2002.



RETURN PROCESS

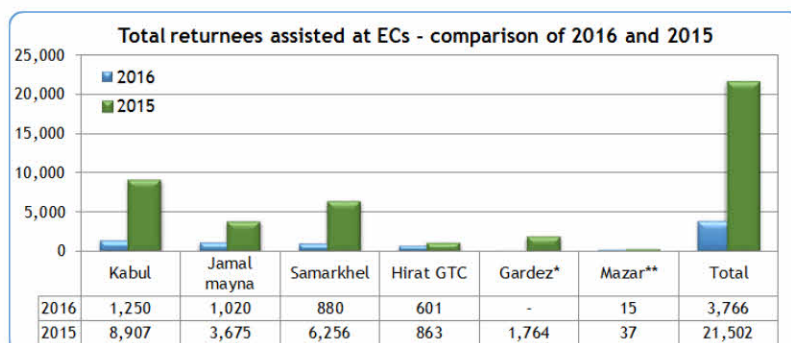
UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) are processing refugees in the country of asylum willing to return to Afghanistan and issuing a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF) for each family.

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

Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through all UNHCR Offices including the VRC in Soleimankhani and the UNHCR Office at Dogharoun.

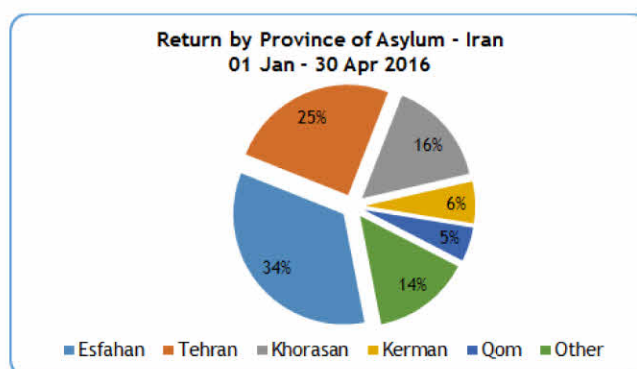
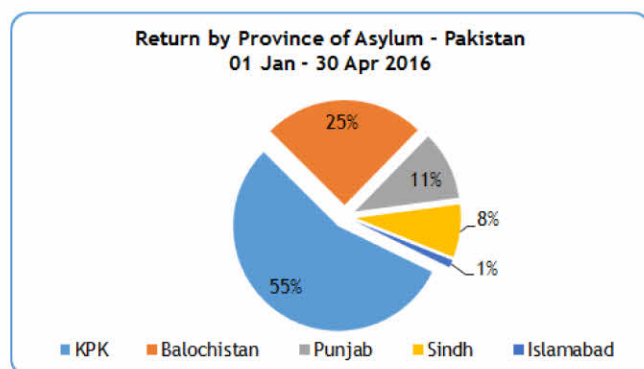
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at four Encashment Centers (ECs): Kabul, Samarkhel (Nangarhar), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat.

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.

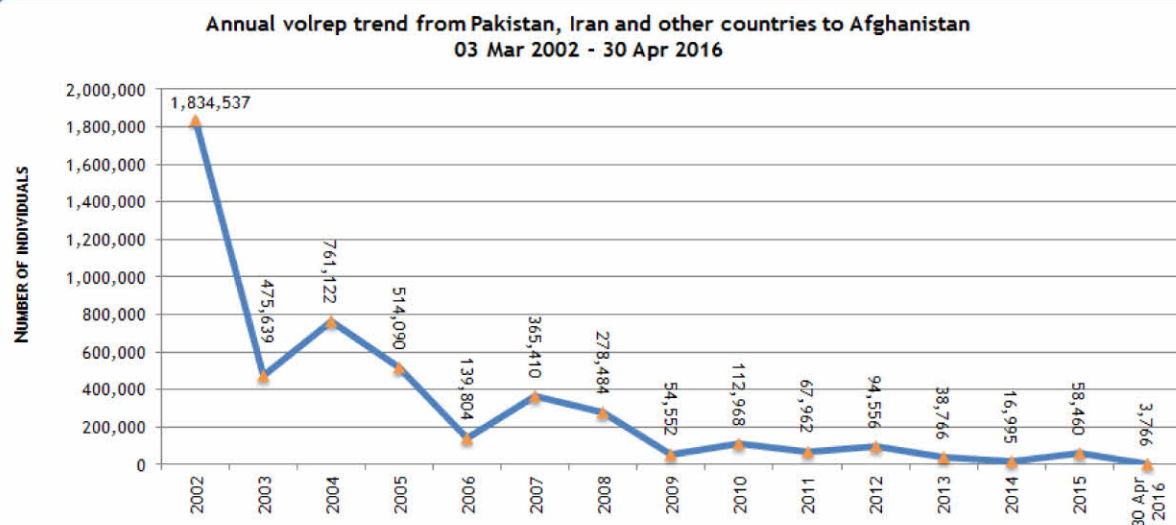


* Gardez EC ceased its activities at the end of 2015 because of budgetary constraints and refugees returning to the South-eastern Region will be referred to Kabul and Samarkhel ECs.

** 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 April 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.

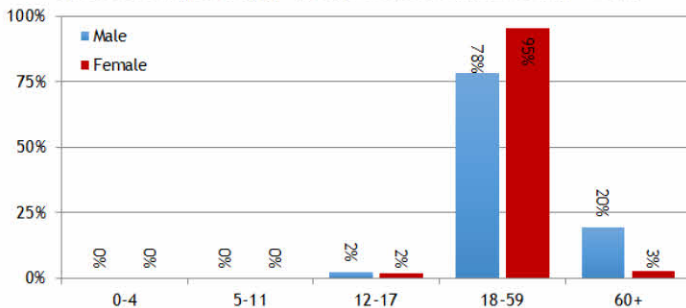


ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

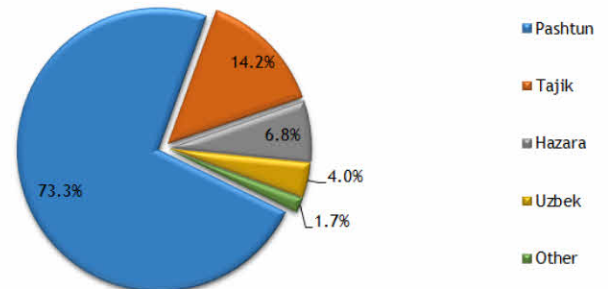
Between 1 January and 30 April 2016, a total of **352 interviews** were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (322) and Iran (30). Interviewees were selected in two ways: randomly from the returning families (344) and purposively from those with protection concerns (8) at the first point of 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.

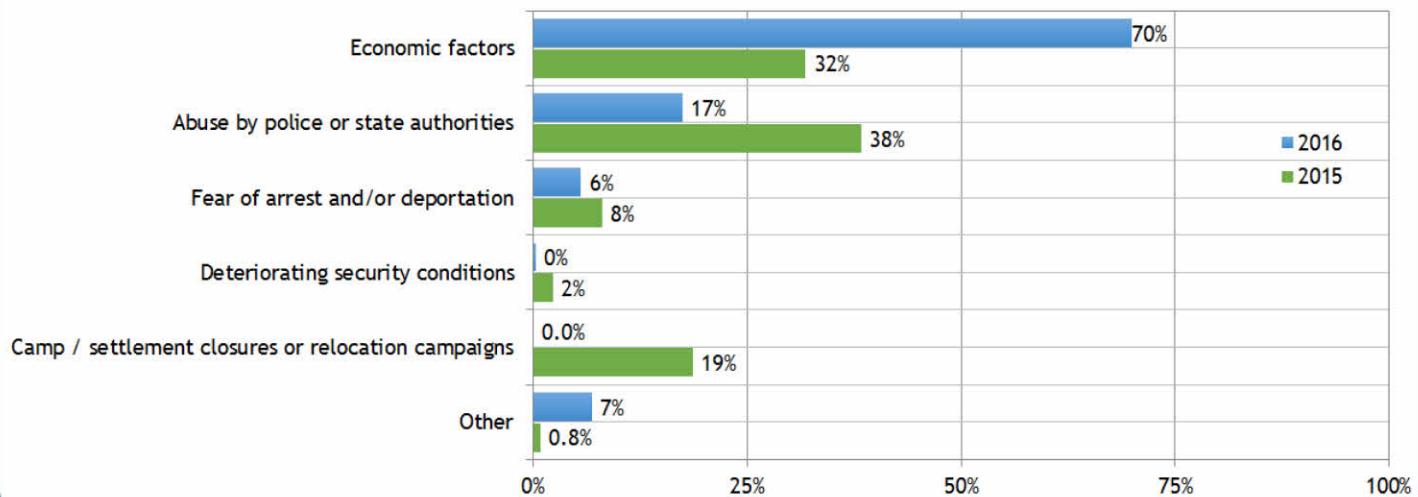
Interviewee age/sex (%) - returnees from Pakistan & Iran - 2016



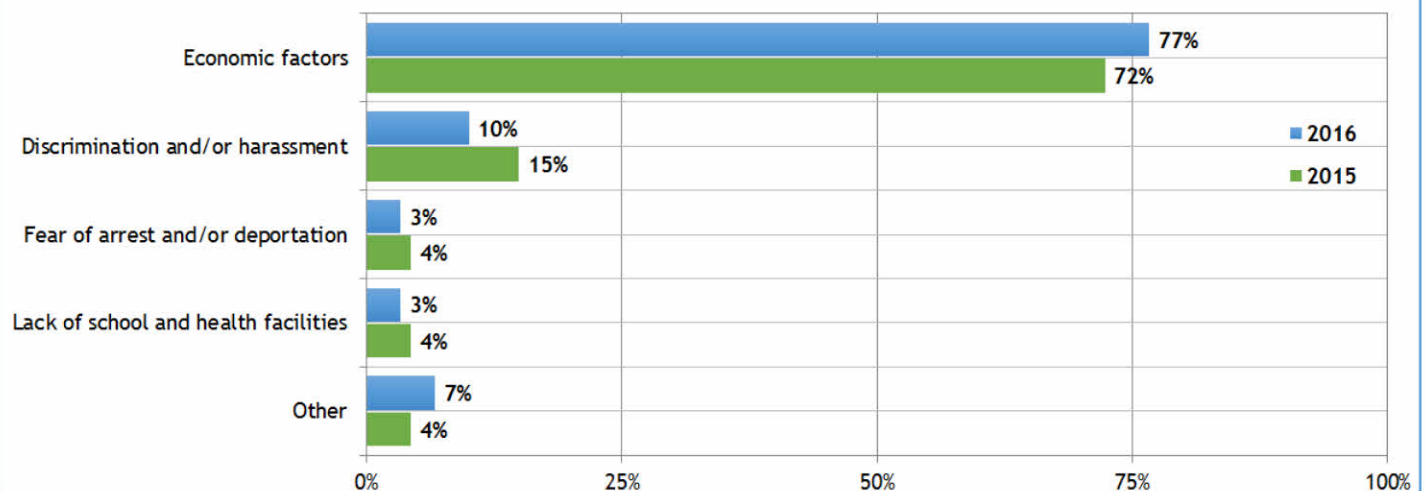
Interviewee Ethnicity (%) - returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



Return Push Factors in Pakistan (%) - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 30 Apr)

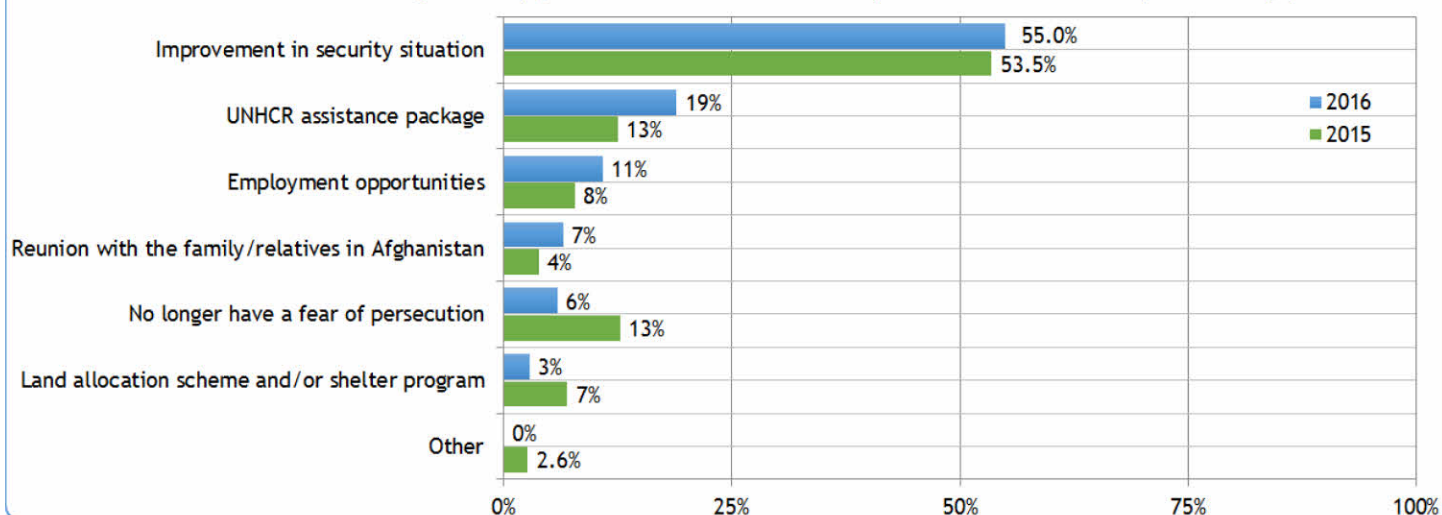


Return Push Factors in Iran (%) - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 30 Apr)

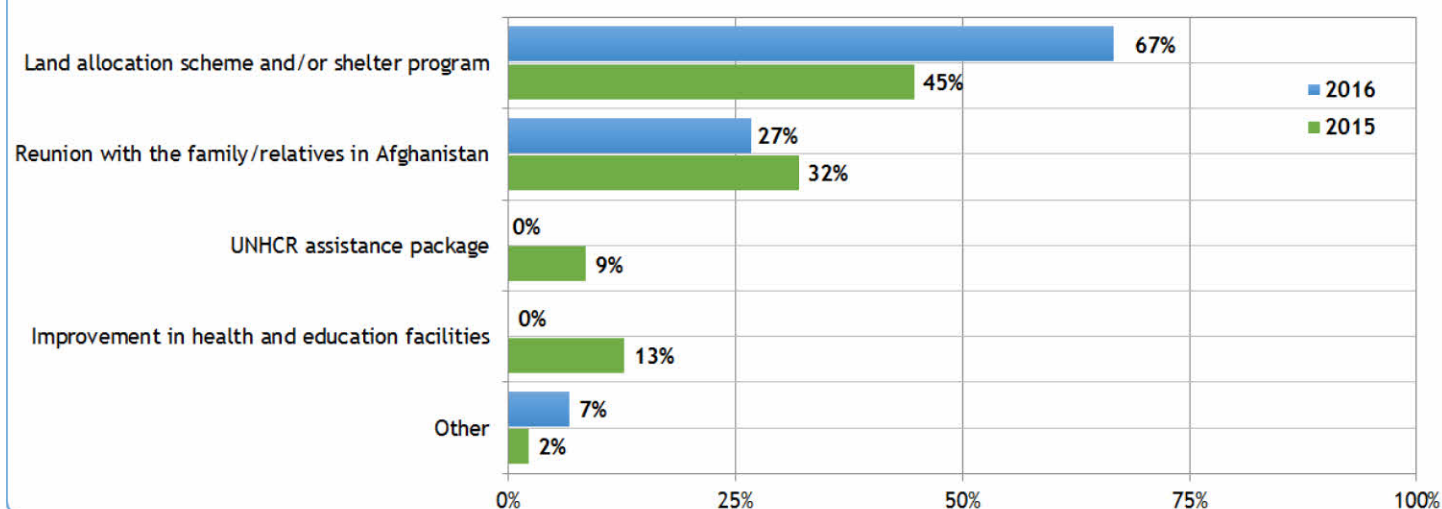


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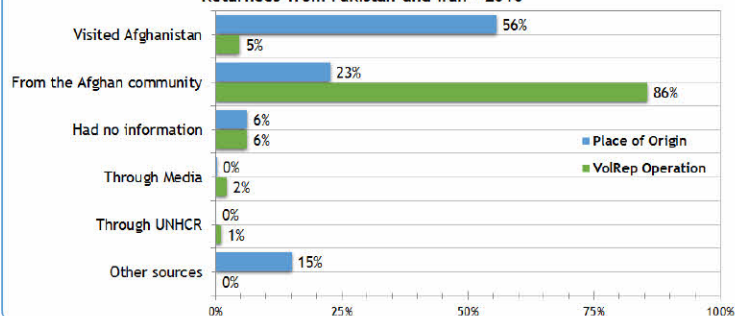
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - **Returnees from Pakistan** - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 30 Apr)



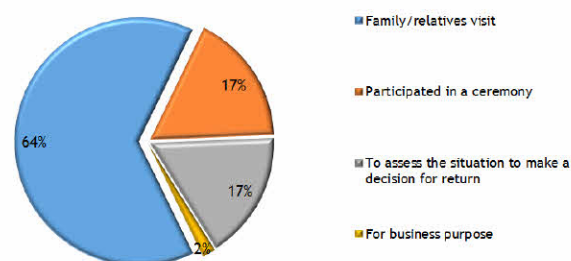
Return Pull Factors in Afghanistan (%) - **Returnees from Iran** - comparison of 2016 with 2015 (01 Jan - 30 Apr)



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

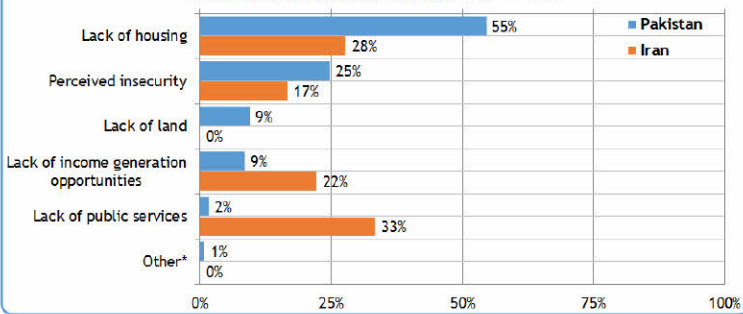


Purpose of visit to Afghanistan before return
Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



* 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.

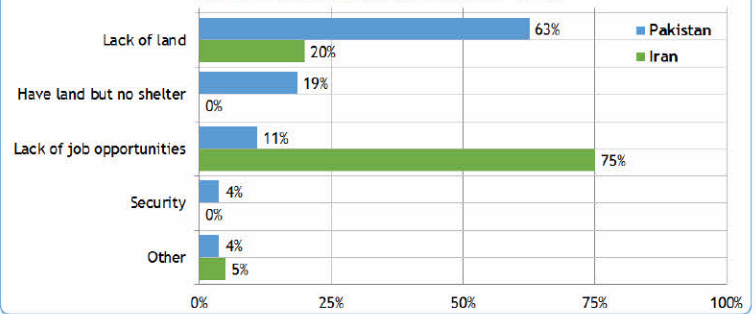
Reasons for not returning to place of origin Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



Out of 352 respondents, 135 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.

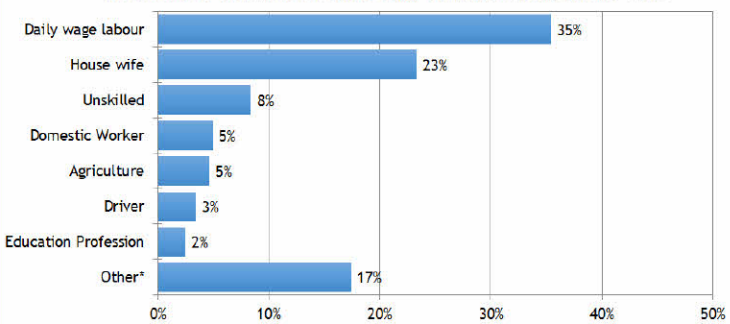
Concerns after return to Afghanistan Returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



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

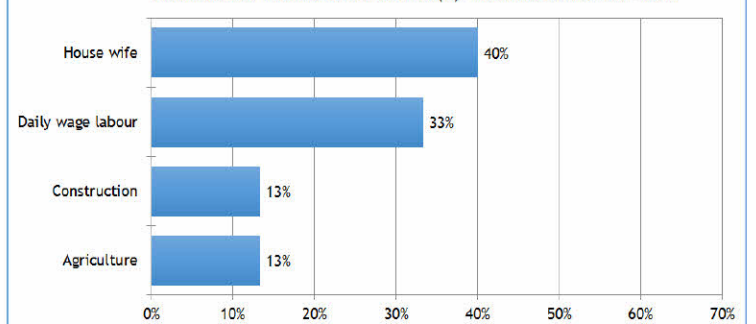
**Other represents 11 interviews; responses provided included lack of health care and education facilities.

Professions of interviewed returnees (%) - Returnees from Pakistan - 2016

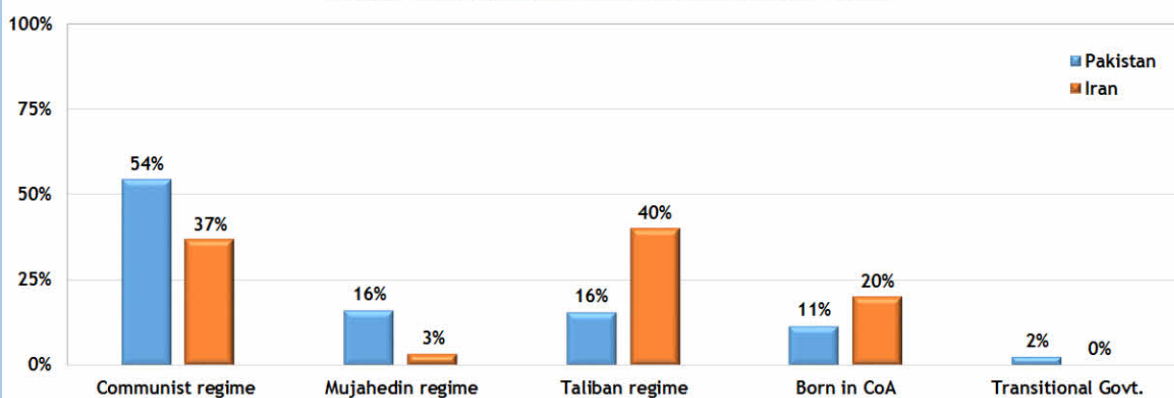


*Other: 56 responses: included professions such as, engineer, carpet weaver, construction and shopkeepers.

Professions of interviewed returnees (%) - Returnees from Iran - 2016



Years in Exile - returnees from Pakistan and Iran - 2016



Alleged harassment and extortion in Pakistan

Newly arrived returnees in April raised concern about discontinuation of water and electricity as well as harassment by local authorities (police). Discontinuation of electricity and water was reported by returnees from Shamshatoo and Ghulam Banda camps, both located in KPK. In addition, a number of newly arrived returnees families alleged that they were stopped en-route to VRC (Charikas and Attock checkpoints) and Torkham (dry ditch area). They alleged that they were stopped for the purpose of commodity search but later on were asked to pay bribe (ranging RS 300 1,500 / 3 -15 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

24 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders/claimants) cases have been deported from Iran in 2016, including 1 case in April. Among these, 22 are families (consisting of 87 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 - 30 Apr 2016: A total of 12,505 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Zaranj (55%) and Islam Qala (45%), from Iran. This figure is 7% lower compared to 13,484 deportees during March 2016.

1 Jan–30 April 2016: In the first four months of 2016, a total of 57,919 undocumented Afghans were deported from Iran. This figure is 3% lower compared to 59,498 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 - 30 Apr 2016	Zaranj	154	391	417	808	5,955	56	0	0	6,011	6,819
	Islam Qala	66	127	144	271	5,194	221	0	0	5,415	5,686
Total		220	518	561	1,079	11,149	277	0	0	11,426	12,505
01 Jan -30 Apr 2016	Zaranj	516	1,279	1,275	2,554	24,115	452	0	0	24,567	27,121
	Islam Qala	468	789	1,003	1,792	27,777	1,229	0	0	29,006	30,798
Total		984	2,068	2,278	4,346	51,892	1,681	0	0	53,573	57,919

PAKISTAN:

1 - 30 Apr 2016: A total of 3,172 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (2,258) and Spin Boldak (914) border points. This figure is 15% higher compared to 2,751 deportees during March 2016.

1 January - 30 Apr 2016: In the last four months of 2016, a total of 6,486 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 11% higher compared to 5,748 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, 4,149 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak between 01 Jan and 30 Apr 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 - 30 Apr 2016	Torkham	2	2	2	4	2,254	0	0	0	2,254	2,258
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	914	0	0	0	914	914
Total		2	2	2	4	3,168	0	0	0	3,168	3,172
01 Jan -30 Apr 2016	Torkham	3	5	4	9	6,477	0	0	0	6,477	6,486
	Spin Boldak	1	6	3	9	4,140	0	0	0	4,140	4,149
Total		4	11	7	18	10,617	0	0	0	10,617	10,635

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Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan Return by Province of Destination - 01 January - 30 April 2016

