

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY - JUNE 2021



A refugee returnee youth during returnee monitoring interview with UNHCR partner staff UNHCR's Encashment Center, Herat, Afghanistan, April 2021

1,143

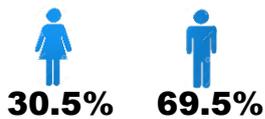
AFGHAN REFUGEES RETURNED TO AFGHANISTAN

607,939

UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS RETURNED / DEPORTED FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN

42,198

INFLOW INTERVIEWS WITH RETURNEES FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN



5,236

OUTFLOW INTERVIEWS



74%

RESPONDENTS WERE NOT AWARE OF THE RISK OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In line with UNHCR's protection monitoring objectives and noting with concern the increasing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cross-border movements to/from Afghanistan, in April 2020, UNHCR made the decision to expand its protection and return monitoring activities to the official entry points with Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak crossing points) and Pakistan (Spin Boldak/Chaman and Torkham) by establishing border monitoring activities mostly focusing on inflows. Through regular and consistent presence at these 'zero' points, UNHCR aims to ensure efficient, timely and systematic collection and analysis of protection related information from Afghan returnees irrespective of their status. Border monitoring also helps to assess access to the territory and "the right to asylum" for people fleeing persecution who may be in need of international protection. It also aims at assessing the right to return for Afghan refugees and other Afghans amidst possible limitations imposed by the pandemic.

As a recent improvement and in view of the current context in Afghanistan, in 2021 UNHCR revised its border (inflow) monitoring tool in order to include **outflow monitoring** at all four official entry points with Iran and Pakistan. The new tools were launched as of **01 April 2021** with the purpose of understanding the triggers/intentions/reasons of Afghan's movements to Pakistan and Iran. Outflows monitoring also enables assessment of access to the territory and "the right to seek asylum" for people leaving Afghanistan and who may be in need of international protection.

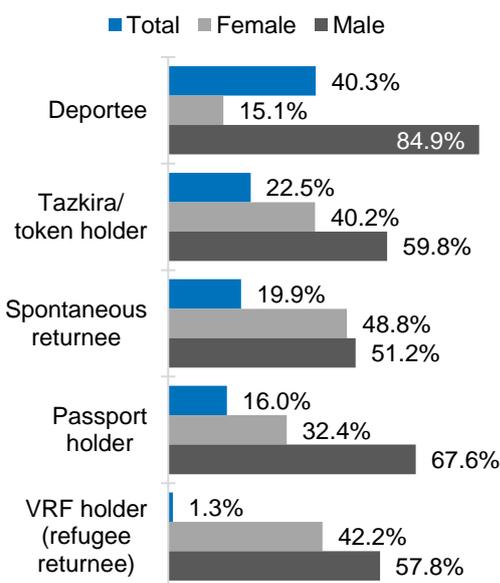
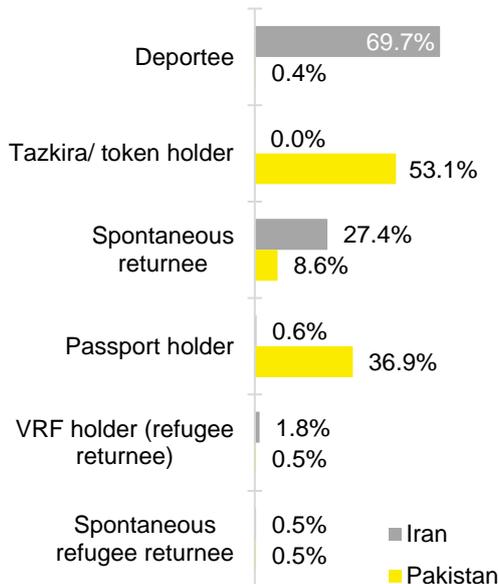
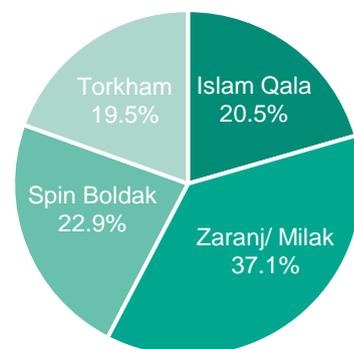
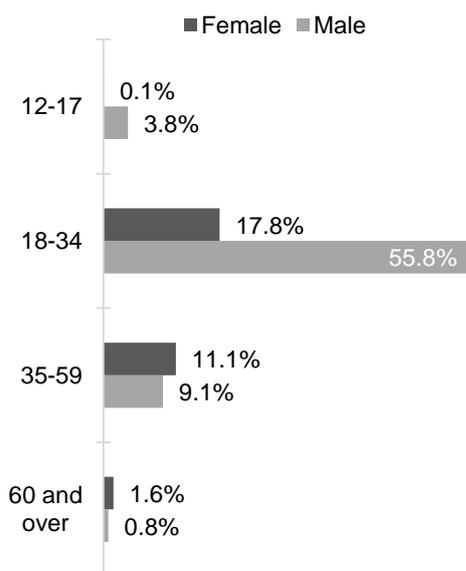
In June, UNHCR assisted the return of **191** Afghan refugees from Pakistan (**112**), Iran (**71**) and other countries (**8**). Cumulatively since the beginning of 2021, UNHCR has assisted the return of **1,143** Afghan refugees from Iran (**706**), Pakistan (**400**) and other countries (**37**) under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. These returns were **202%** higher than the **377** Afghans who returned during the same period in 2020. Refugee returnees continue to receive a multi-purpose cash grant upon arrival (an average of USD 250 per person) and other multisector assistance services at Encashment Centers located in Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Nangarhar provinces. UNHCR's cash grants to refugees upon return to Afghanistan intend to address their immediate needs to prevent, reduce, and respond to protection risks and vulnerabilities. More details about assisted refugee return is available in **UNHCR's 2nd Quarterly Report as of 30 June 2021**.

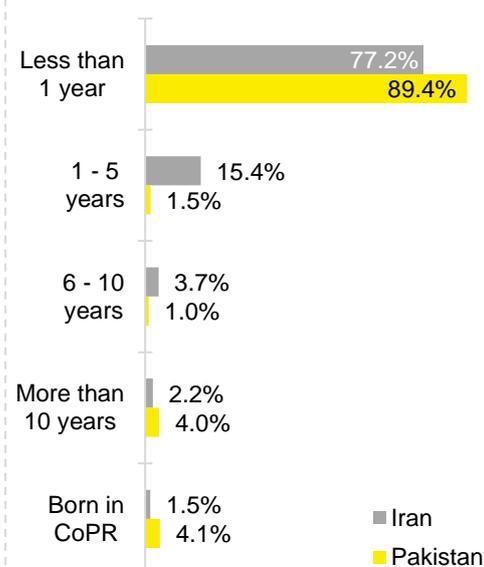
In addition to refugee returnees and in the context of coordinated activities at entry points, a total number of **112,184** undocumented returnees/deportees have been recorded in June, according to MoRR/IOM. This includes **110,835** from Iran (**58,395** spontaneous returnees and **52,440** deportees) and **1,349** from Pakistan (**1,312** spontaneous returnees and **37** deportees). Cumulatively since 01 January, the total number of undocumented returnees/deportees stands at **607,939** individuals, including **601,154** from Iran (**323,620** deportees and **277,534** spontaneous returnees) and **6,785** from Pakistan (**6,259** spontaneous returnees and **526** deportees).

Individual and household level **inflow** interviews conducted by UNHCR through partners as part of border monitoring activities randomly reached a total of **6,799** returnees and deportees including **4,628 males and 2,171 females** (representing **6%** of total returnees/deportees in June). Cumulatively since January 2021, a total of **42,198** interviews (representing **7%** of total returnees/deportees) were conducted by the UNHCR border monitoring partners with returnees/deportees of various status (**29,307 males and 12,891 females**) upon return from Iran at Zaranj/Milak (**15,655**) and Islam Qala (**8,660**), and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak/Chaman (**9,658**) and Torkham (**8,225**). These include **28,219** single individuals and **13,979** heads of households who returned with their families. In general, the majority of returnees/deportees from Iran are single males, while it is not the case among returnees/deportees from Pakistan.

Similarly, during April – 30 June 2021, **outflow** interviews were conducted by UNHCR through partners with a total of **5,236** Afghans including **3,385 males and 1,851 females** prior to their departure to Pakistan – through Torkham (**878**) and Spin Boldak (**3,365**), and Iran – through Islam Qala (**721**) and Zaranj (**272**) crossing points. These were consisting of **2,945** single individuals and **2,291** families. Outflow monitoring interviews were impacted due to mitigating measures linked to COVID-19 imposed by the government of Iran at Islam Qala (29 April – 23 June) while outflow movements remained suspended through Zaranj/Milak (29 April to date). Similarly, the outflow movements were suspended due to mitigating measures linked to COVID-19 imposed by the government of Pakistan, through Spin Boldak (05 – 20 May), while movements remained suspended through Torkham since 05 May to date. However, inflow movements continued through all entry points.

Main Findings of the Border (Inflow) Monitoring – January to June 2021

Respondents' Return Status by Gender

Respondents' Return Status by CoPR

Respondents (%) by Entry Point

Respondents' Age and Gender

Reason for entry to CoPR

Years Spent in the CoPR


Situation in Country of Prior Residence (CoPR) - Iran and Pakistan

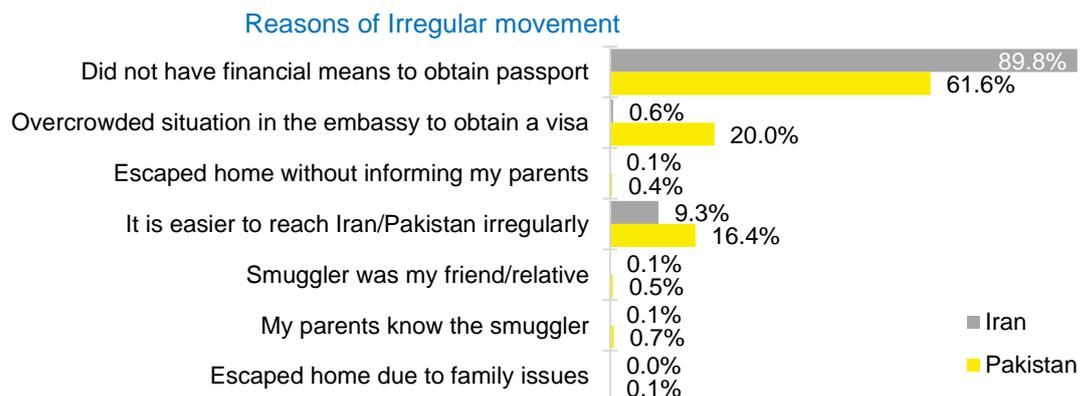
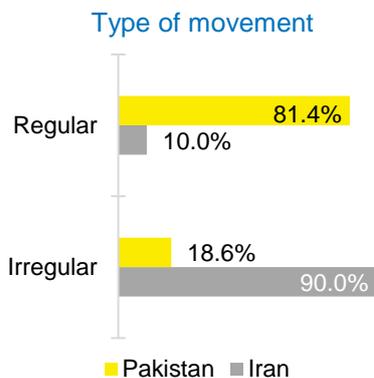
Findings from Interviews with Returnees and Deportees from Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak):

- Respondents include: 70% deportees, 27% spontaneous returnees (migrants), 2% VRF holders (refugee returnees), & 1% passport holders;
- 45% of the interviewed VRF holders, 38% of spontaneous returnees, and 18% of deportees were females;
- 80% of the respondents returned from 5 provinces in Iran: Tehran, Sistan va Baluchestan, Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, and Fars. These areas were among the top provinces from where many Afghans returned and/or were deported in 2020;
- 77% of the respondents spent less than one year in Iran, among whom 21% spent less than a week, 36% around a month, 23% 1-6 months, and 20% over 6 months;
- 90% of the respondents moved to Iran irregularly, among whom 95% paid a smuggler and 5% moved on their own arrangements;
- 90% of the respondents moved irregularly to Iran due to lack of financial means to obtain passports and visas, 9% said that it was easier to reach Iran irregularly, 0.6% due to overcrowded situation at the embassy of Iran to obtain a visa, and 0.4% due to other reasons;
- 67% stated that they were not aware about the risks of irregular migration, including 89% males and 11% females. The lower percentage among females is due to the low female sample size; The Majority of the returnees and deportees from Iran were single male individuals;
- 33% said that they had information about the risks of irregular migration, including 53% females and 47% males. Information was mainly obtained through the media and from friends/relatives;

- 70% of the respondents went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities, 19% due to conflict, 7% to visit family/relatives, 1% for medical treatment, and 3% for other reasons. The percentage (average) of those respondents who cited conflict as the main reason for leaving Afghanistan (19%) decreased slightly compared to May (21%). In 2020, this figure was 15% among the total sample size (40,861 interviews with returnees and deportees from Iran);
- 67% of the respondents who went to Iran due to conflict in Afghanistan were originally from 10 provinces: Herat, Takhar, Kunduz, Faryab, Ghor, Ghazni, Balkh, Baghlan Badghis, and Badakhshan;
- 32% of the respondents returned to Afghanistan due to economic problems including lack of employment opportunities (26%) and high cost of living (6%) in CoPR; 28% to reunite with family members in Afghanistan, 18% due to fear of COVID-19, 5% to obtain passports and visas to return to CoPR, 4% due to being denied access to health facilities, 3% to attend family gatherings (marriage, funeral), and 10% due to other reasons;
- 62% of the respondents stated that they had moved to Iran for the first time, 6% for the second time, 1% for the third time, 15% more than three times, 15% said that they were seasonal works, and 1% said that they are regularly moving because they live in Afghanistan and have business in Iran or vice versa. This findings point out that approximately 40% of the interviewed returnees and deportees (4,054 respondents) were recyclers, though it is to be noted that this information was collected since 01 April 2021 and the percentage of recyclers may fluctuate over time;
- 33% of the respondents including 57% deportees and 43% spontaneous returnees had to pay a municipality (return) tax (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/approximately USD 5 - 25);
- 16% of respondents faced problems during return: high transportation/travel costs, overcrowded situation at the bus stations, fee charged at detention center, bribe required to pass police check point, and limited transportation services to reach the border;
- 36% of respondents faced problems due to mitigating measures imposed to avoid the spread of COVID-19, these included lost work/wages, lack of access to markets, discrimination/ stigmatization by local communities, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, lack of access to medical services, and pressure by authorities to leave for Afghanistan;
- Close to 100% of the respondents received information about COVID-19 in Iran through TV, radio and local communities.

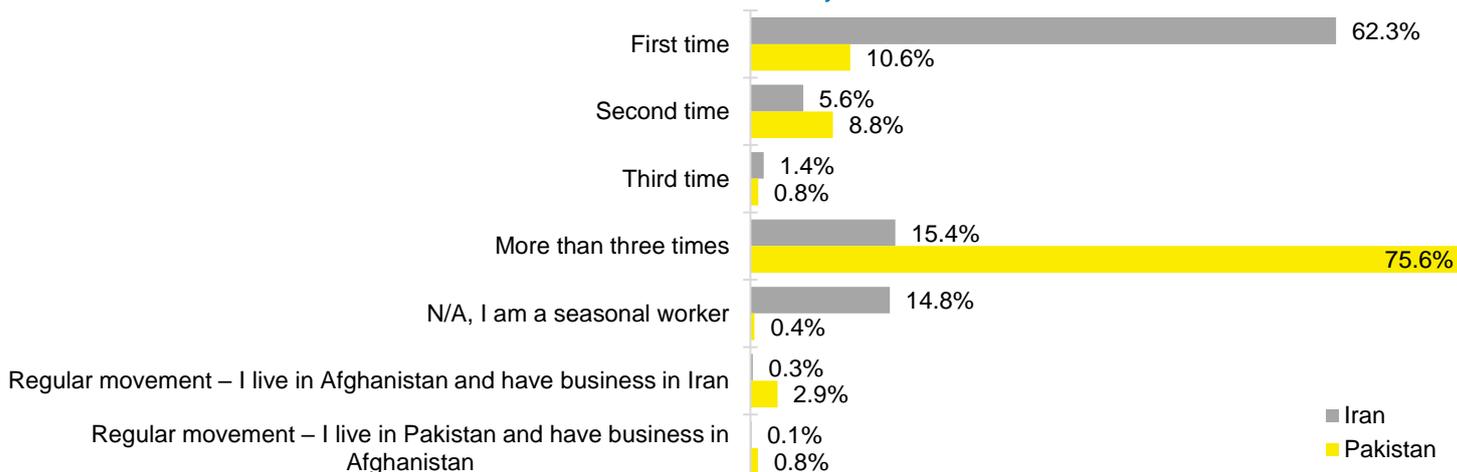
Findings of Interviews with Returnees and Deportees from Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham):

- Respondents include Tazkira/token holders (53%)¹, passport holders (37%), spontaneous returnees (9%), VRF holders and deportees (1% both);
- 90% of the interviewed spontaneous returnees, 39% of Tazkira/token holders, 33% of VRF holders & 30% of passport holders were females;
- 48% of the respondents returned from Baluchistan, 36% from KPK, 6% Sindh, 6% Punjab, and 4% from Islamabad;
- 89% of the respondents spent less than a year in Pakistan, among whom 23% stated that they spent less than a week, 50% around a month, 24% 1-6 months, and 3% over 6 months;
- 18% of the respondents moved to Pakistan irregularly; 13% moved on their own arrangements, 10% paid bribes to border police;
- 62% of the respondents moved irregularly to Pakistan due to lack of financial means to obtain passports and visas, 20% due to overcrowded situation at the embassy of Pakistan to obtain a visa, 16% said that it was easier to reach Pakistan irregularly, and 2% due to other reasons;
- 87% stated that they were not aware about the risks of irregular migration, including 56% males and 44% females;
- 13% said that they had information about the risks of irregular migration, including 90% males and 10% females. Information was mainly obtained through the media, friends/relatives, community elders, and parents;
- 52% of the respondents went to Pakistan for medical treatment, 16% to visit family/relatives, 13% in search of livelihoods opportunities, 6% due to conflict, 2% for business purpose, and 11% cited other reasons;
- 67% of the interviewed returnees returned to Afghanistan to reunite with family members, 10% due to lack of employment opportunities and 12% due to being denied access to health facilities, and 11% due other reasons;
- 24% of the respondents faced problems during return. The problems included, among others, overcrowded bus stations, bribe required to pass police check points, and high transportation/ travel costs;
- 23% of the respondents faced problems due to mitigating measures imposed to avoid the spread of COVID-19, these included mainly lost work/wages, movement restrictions due to the lockdown, lack of access to markets, and lack of access to medical services;
- 68% of the respondents had received information about COVID-19 in Pakistan, mainly through TV, radio, mosque/ religious leaders and local communities. This figure slightly increased compared to April 2021 (60%).

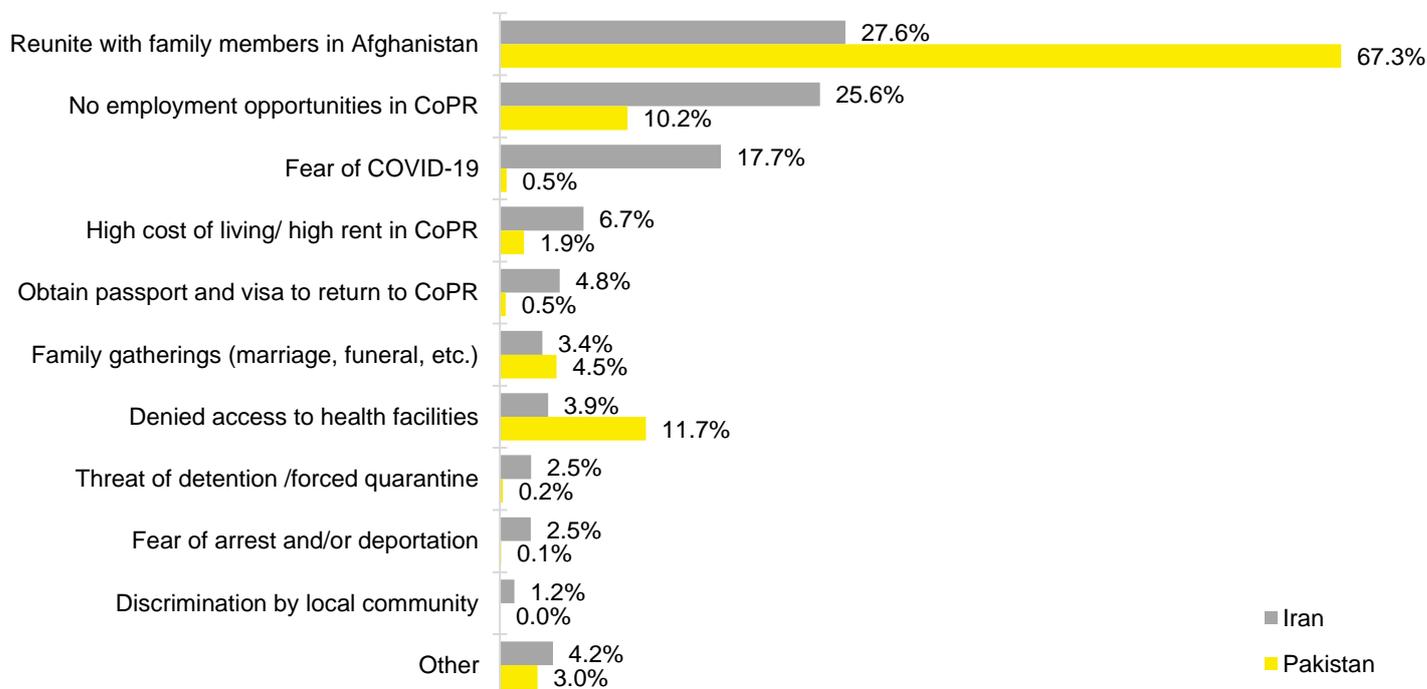


¹ This category are those Afghans who live along the border area in Afghanistan and normally move back and forth to Pakistan and Afghanistan frequently.

Movement Periodicity



Reasons for Return to Afghanistan (Spontaneous returnees, VRF holders, and Passport/ID holders)



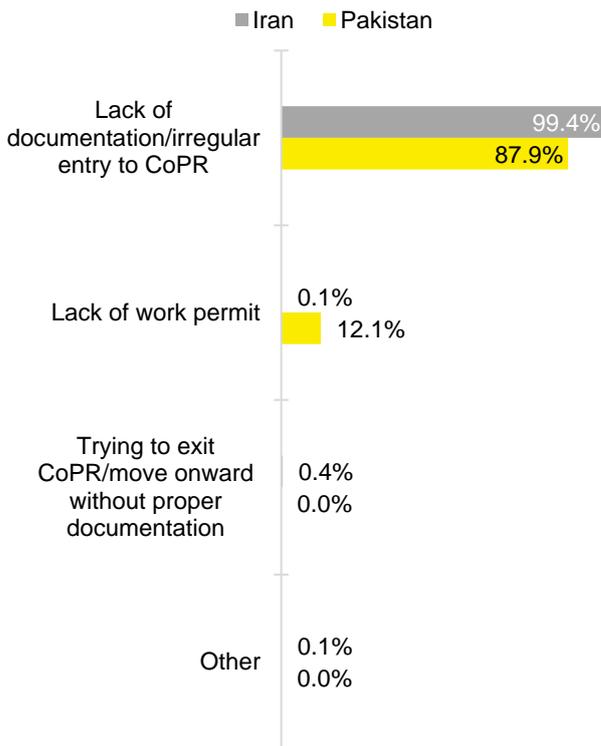
Incident Monitoring/ Challenges

- No refoulement cases were reported during June, while a total of 8 cases refoulement cases (8 refugee families/Amayesh holders) were reported during April (2) and May (6).
- Outflow movement of Afghans to Iran through Islam Qala crossing, which was suspended due to COVID-19 mitigating measures imposed by the government of Iran (29 April – 23 June), resumed on 24 June while outflow movements through Zaranj/Milak crossing point remained suspended, with exception for Afghan passport holders with serious medical conditions. There were no restrictions for inflow movements from Iran to Afghanistan.
- Similarly, outflow movements through Torkham crossing point remained suspended (since 05 May to date) due to COVID-19 mitigating measure imposed by the Government of Pakistan. However, Pakistani citizens and Afghans with serious medical conditions could enter into Pakistan after going through a screening process conducted by health officials inside Pakistan. Outflow movement resumed through Spin Boldak on 20 May. There were no restrictions for inflow movements from Pakistan to Afghanistan.
- The deterioration of the security situation (beginning of July) impacted border monitoring activities by UNHCR's partners at Islam Qala and Spin Boldak crossing points. The partners are still present at Zaranj/Milak and Torkham crossing points and border monitoring activities by UNHCR's partners are on-going. Updates about the situation at Islam Qala and Spin Boldak crossing points will be reported in the July monthly report.

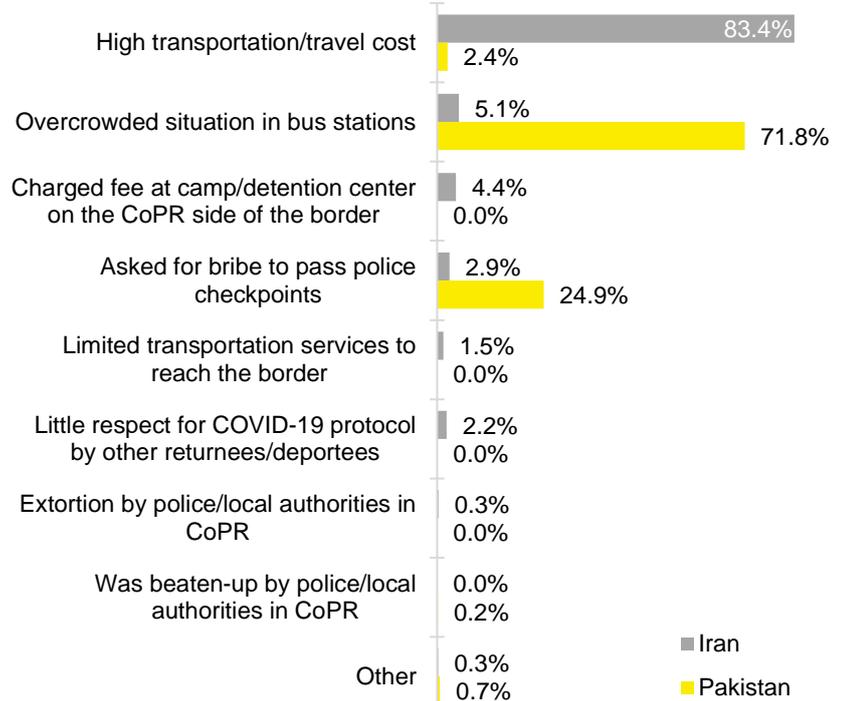
Reasons for Deportation to Afghanistan

- Between 01 January – 30 June 2021, a total of **17,013** interviews were conducted with deportees (**14,446 M and 2,567 F**), including **16,946** from Iran and **67** from Pakistan. The latter figure is small due to the low number of reported deportations from Pakistan.
- Almost all of the interviewed deportees from Iran (99.4%) and Pakistan (88%)** cited that lack of documentation / irregular entry to CoPR as the reasons provided to them for their deportation. Despite no legal barriers for Afghans to obtain a valid Afghan passport and Iranian/Pakistani visa in Afghanistan, respondents stated that they had financial constraints to bear the cost to obtain a passport and visa.
- 12%** of interviewed deportees (4 respondents) from Pakistan and **0.1%** (24 respondents) from Iran were deported due to lack of a work permit. In 2020, the figure was **0.9%** among all interviewed deportees from Iran, while it was not reported by the interviewed deportees from Pakistan.
- Almost all of the interviewed deportees from Iran and Pakistan stated that they were deported in the absence of a court order. Only 33 deportees from Iran (19) and Pakistan (14) stated that they were deported following a court order.

Reasons of Deportation from CoPR



Types of problems faced during return (in the CoPR)



Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination) and Intentions after Return

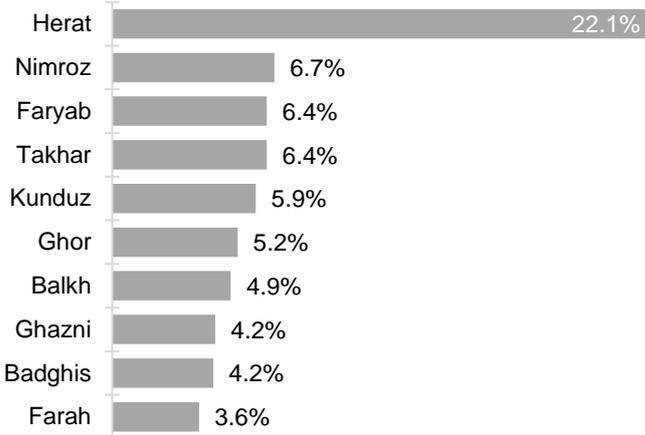


93%

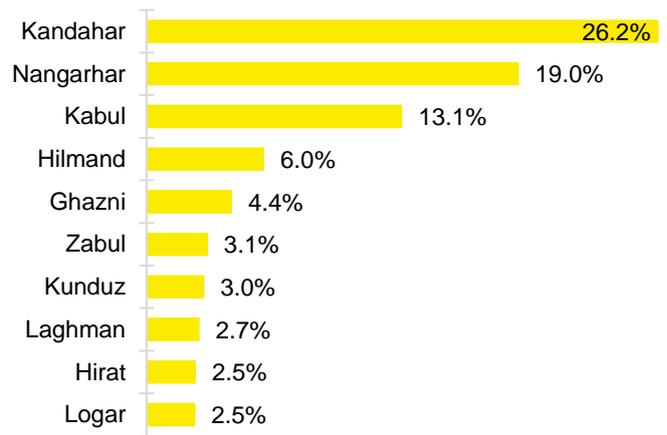
OF THE INTERVIEWED
 RETURNEES FROM IRAN
 AND PAKISTAN INTEND
 TO RETURN TO THEIR
 AREAS OF ORIGIN

- 7%** do not return to their areas of origin due to lack of livelihood opportunities, perceived insecurity, lack of basic services including schools, reunification with family/relatives, and lack of housing/shelter.
- Interviewed returnees from Iran were travelling to 34 provinces, with the majority (**70%**) intending to return to Herat, Faryab, Nimroz, Takhar, Kunduz, Ghor, Balkh, Ghazni, Badghis, and Farah, provinces.
- Interviewed returnees from Pakistan were travelling to 34 provinces, with the majority (**84%**) intending to return to Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kabul, Helmand, Ghazni, Zabul, Kunduz, Herat, Laghman and Uruzgan, provinces.
- 86%** of the respondents confirmed that they own a Tazkira (**90%** of male respondents and **76%** of female respondents).
- 67%** of the interviewed returnees/deportees have no education, (**78% female and 63% male**). **10%** have minimal education (up to grade 6), **9%** up to grade 9, **8%** up to grade 12, **3%** went to madrasa, and **3%** went to university.
- 82%** stated that they will stay in their own house, nearly **10%** will stay with relatives, and **8%** intend to rent a house.
- 67%** of the interviewed returnees/deportees from Iran and **17%** from Pakistan stated that they will try to find a job in their province of origin.
- 35%** of respondents from Pakistan and **5%** from Iran intend to go back to the CoPR, for employment, to join family, to continue education, or to collect property.

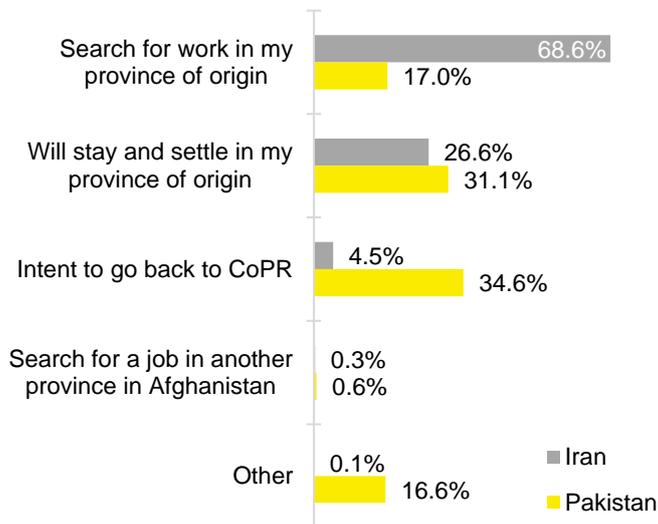
Top 10 Provinces of Intended Destination Returnees and Deportees from Iran



Top 10 Provinces of Intended Destination Returnees and Deportees from Pakistan

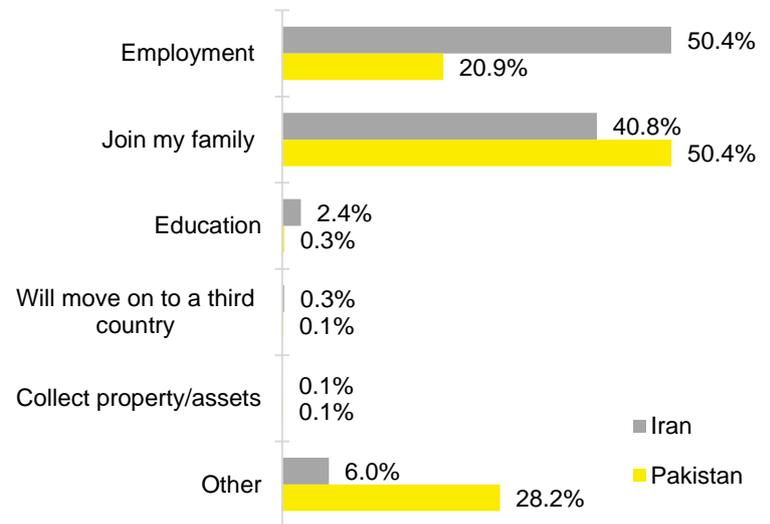


Intention after return/deportation



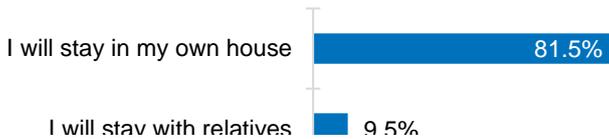
Other category includes: will stay with family, start small business, continue my education

Reasons for going back to CoPR

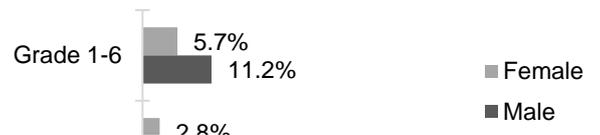


Other category includes: family visit, medical treatment, and business.

Living arrangements after return



Education Level - Returnees from Iran & Pakistan



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