PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

Returns Emergency Response

as of 4 April 2024

Key figures

546,800 total returns[1]

83,000 UNHCR-assisted

30,300 deportations

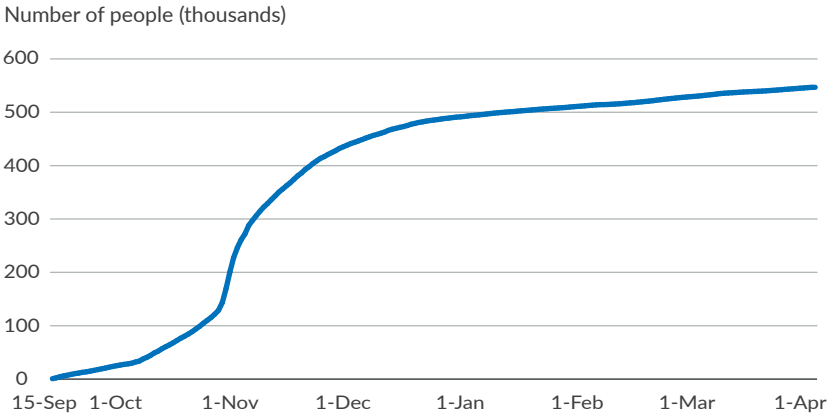
377,300 — 69%

78,600 — 95%

28,900 — 96%

The **blue figures** above correspond to the period 15 September 2023 to 4 April 2024, while the **navy figures** refer only to those who arrived from 1 November 2023 to 4 April 2024.

Total returns since 15 September 2023[2]



Context

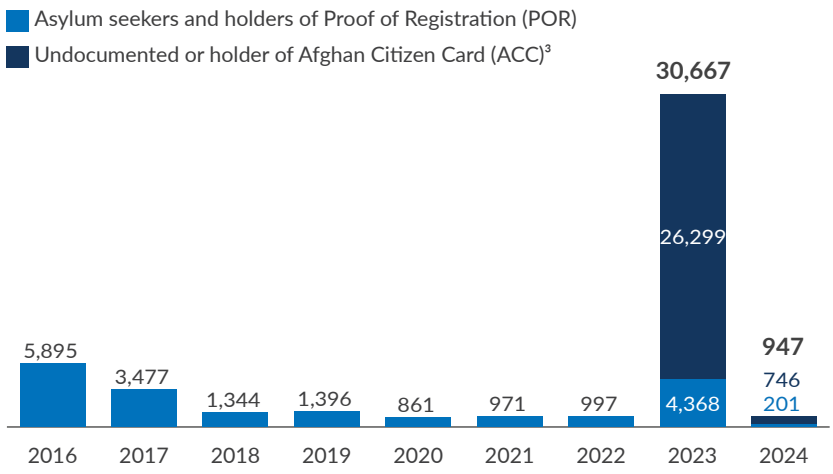
On 3 October, Pakistan's national Apex Committee endorsed a plan to repatriate over a million foreigners without valid documents, largely Afghans, requiring them to leave the country by 1 November.

Since 15 September, **close to 550,000 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan**. Most of this movement took place during the month of November.

Since 15 September, **UNHCR has assisted some 83,000 individuals**, including 47,600 PoR cardholders, of which 28,000 were assisted via UNHCR voluntary repatriation programme.

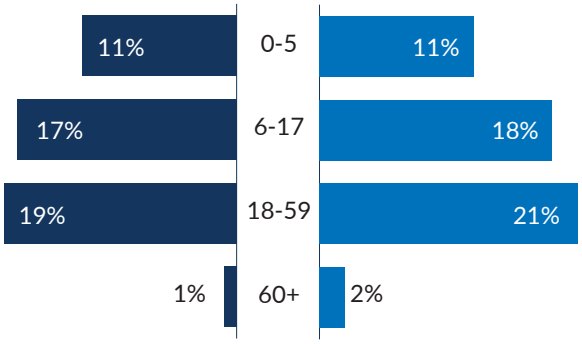
The past month of March saw the **overall reported rates of arrest and detention increase by 121 per cent** in comparison to February. In March 2024, the rate of arrest and detention was almost four times higher for ACC holders and undocumented Afghans than it was for PoR holders and asylum-seekers.

Arrests and detentions (from 2016 up to 31 Mar. 2024)



Returns assisted by UNHCR Afghanistan
by Demographic profile

48% of assisted are **Women** | **52%** of assisted are **Men**



Gender breakdown of head of households

27% are **Women** | **73%** are **Men**

Situation map

[1] *An umbrella term that includes all returns including deportations, assisted Voluntary Repatriation (VolRep) and other returns of Afghans of all statuses such as PoR cardholders, ACC holders, and the undocumented.*
[2] *Return figures from 1 April 2024 onwards may fluctuate till validation process is concluded.*
[3] *Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals.*

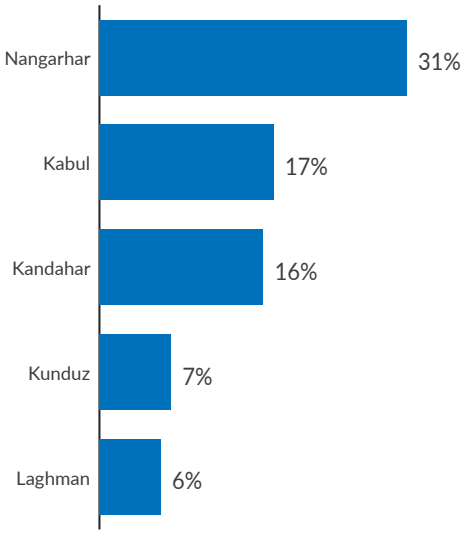
Sources: UNHCR, IOM

Returns assisted by UNHCR Afghanistan

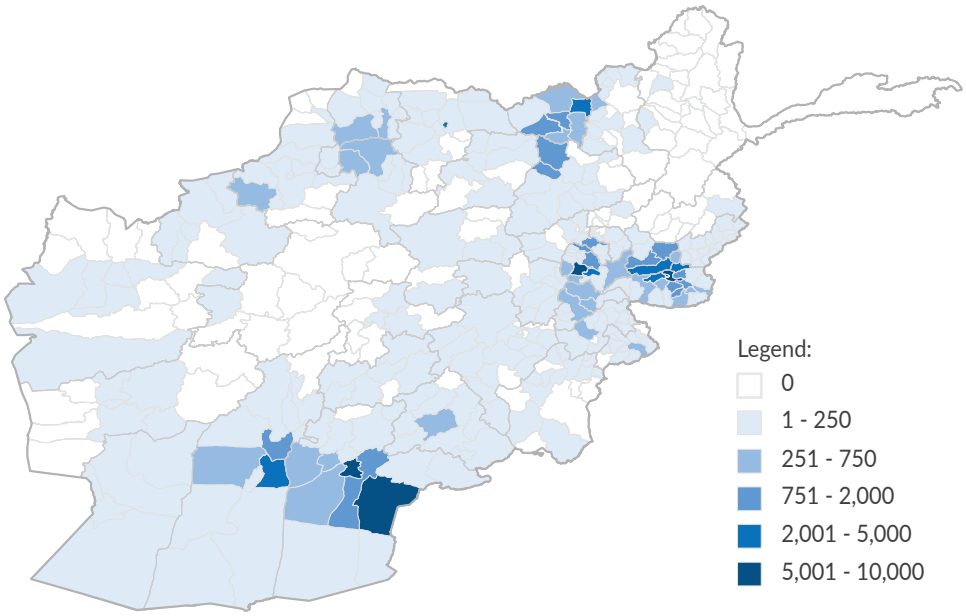
In Afghanistan, UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance to PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum seeker certificate holders and other Protection referrals. Since 15 September 2023, some 83,000 individuals returning from Pakistan have been provided with cash assistance in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad encashment centres, including over 47,600 PoR cardholders. Out of the assisted, some 2.4% are individuals with disabilities and some 3,000 PoR card holders, UNHCR slip holders and Asylum certificate holders were deported.

At least one in four households assisted are headed by women. 33% of them intend to return to five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Lashkargah and Mazar-e-Sharif).

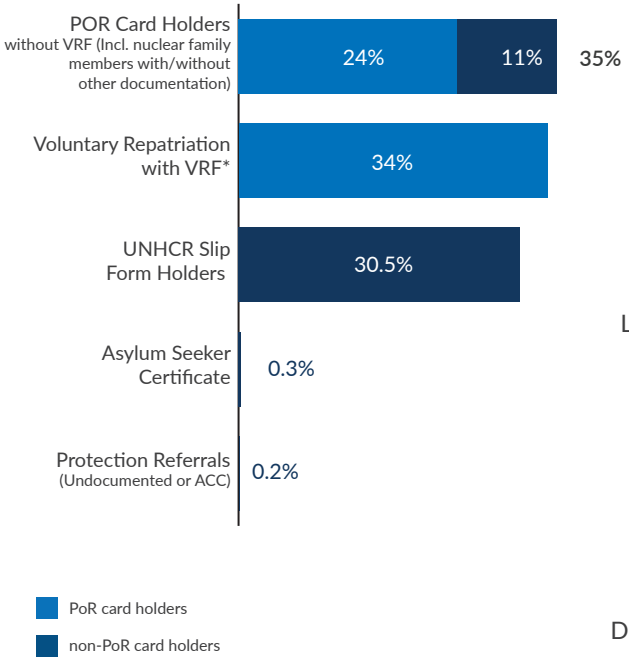
Top 5 provinces of intended destination



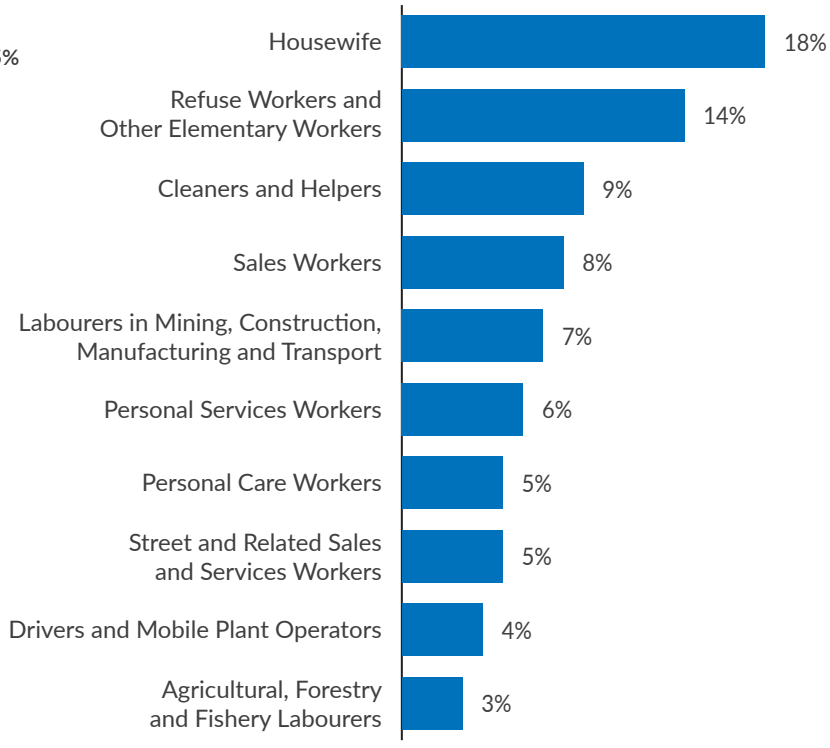
Intended districts of destination



Documentation status



Top 10 occupation of the head of households



** Voluntary Repatriation Form.*

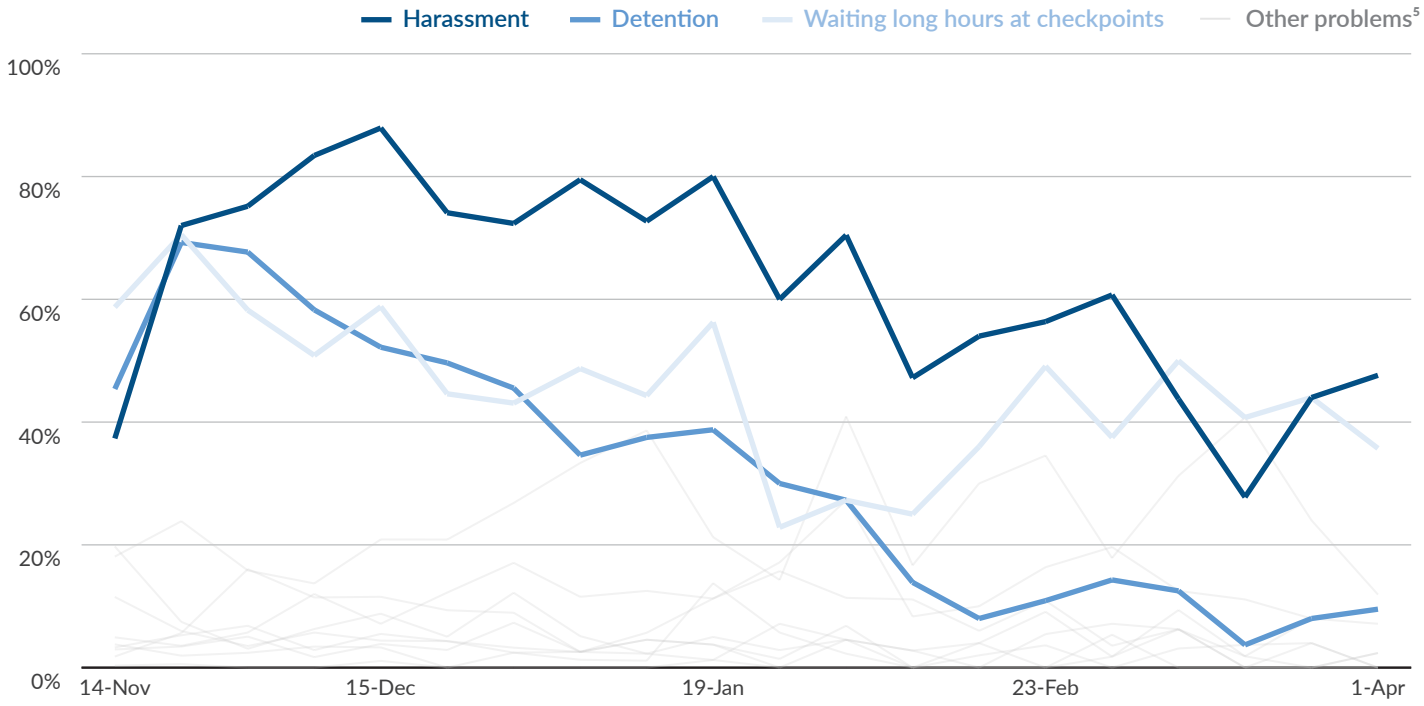
Border Protection Monitoring

UNHCR and its partner Wadan in Afghanistan have scaled up protection activities at the border. Daily presence consists of Border Protection monitoring through interviews with returnees including deportees in order to identify protection concerns and risks, as well as their intended areas of return in Afghanistan. Five help desks have been set up to boost protection screening interviews, identification and referral of individuals to be assisted by UNHCR.

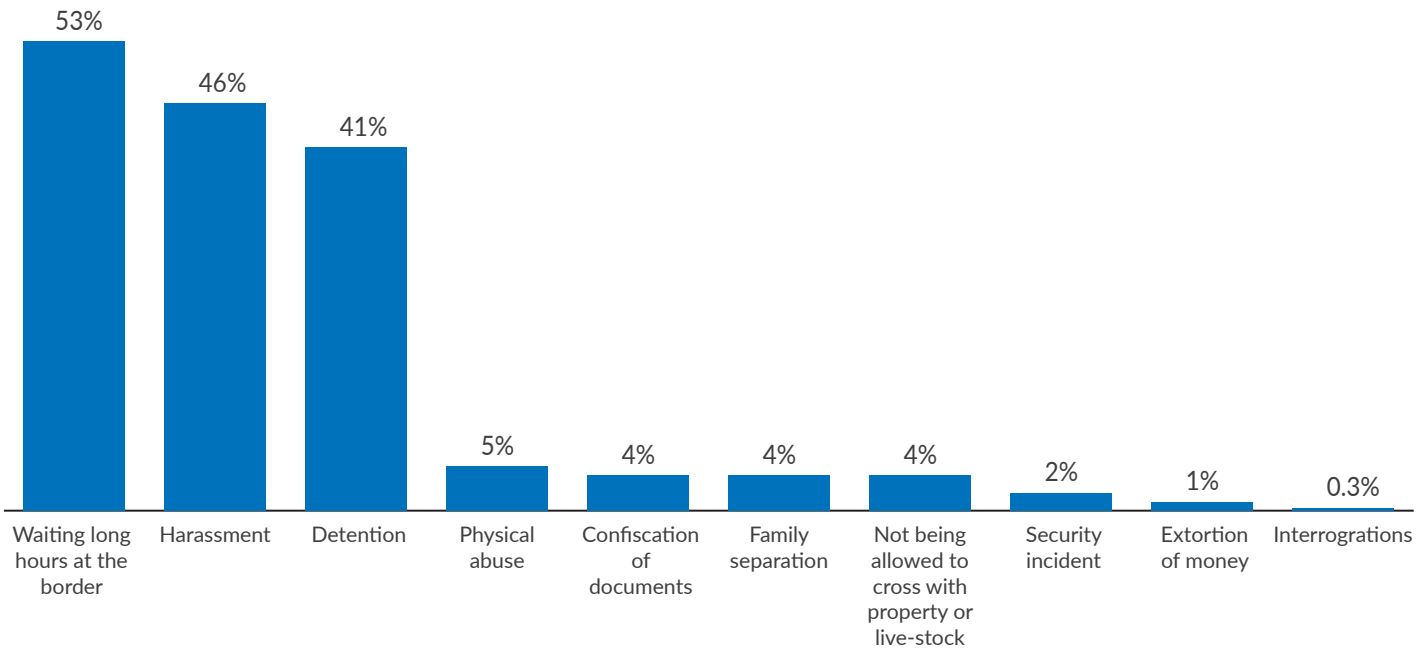
Since 12 November, the most reported problems experienced prior to the cross-border movement have consistently been harassment, waiting long hours at checkpoints and detention. Interrogations has continued to be the least reported issue.

Problems experienced in Pakistan prior to the cross-border movement[4]

Percentage interviews per week reporting problems

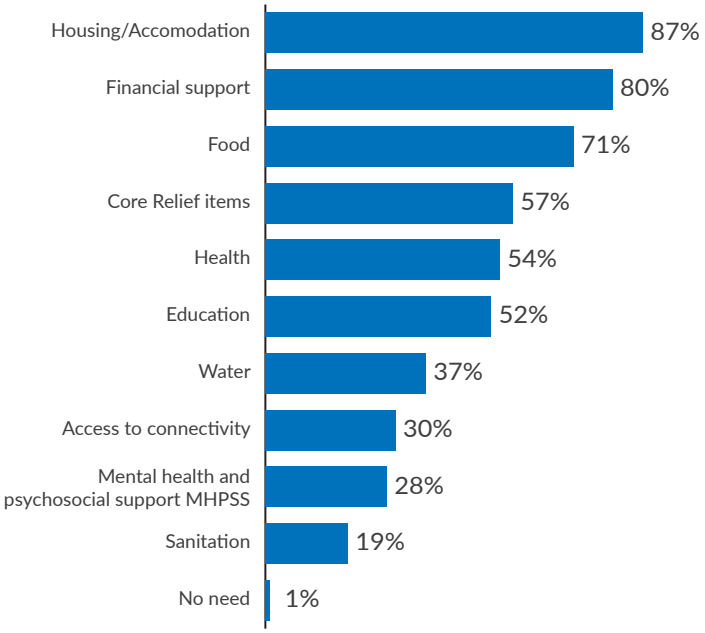


Problems experienced at the Pakistan border point[4]

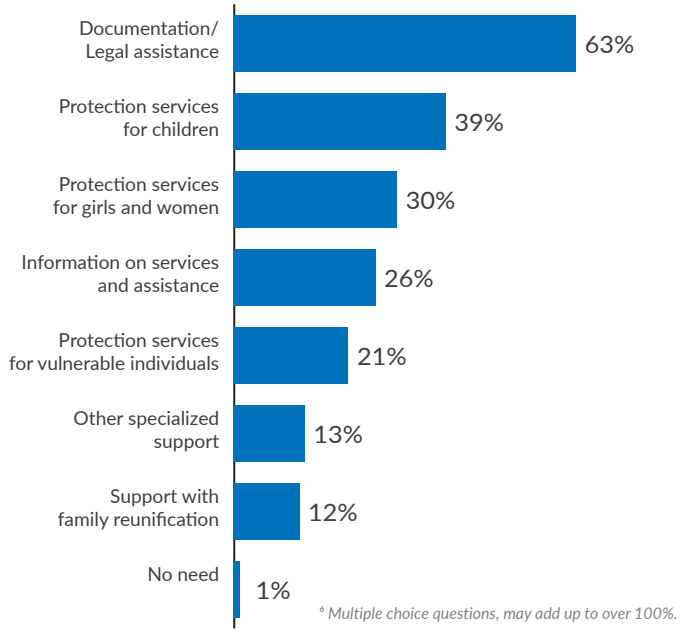


[4] *Multiple choice questions, may add up to over 100%.*
[5] *Other problems include: confiscation of documents, money extorsion, family separation, interrogations, lease not extended, not being allowed to cross with property or livestock, paid bribe to pass police checkpoints, physical abuse and security incident.*

Needs upon arrival in final destination[6]



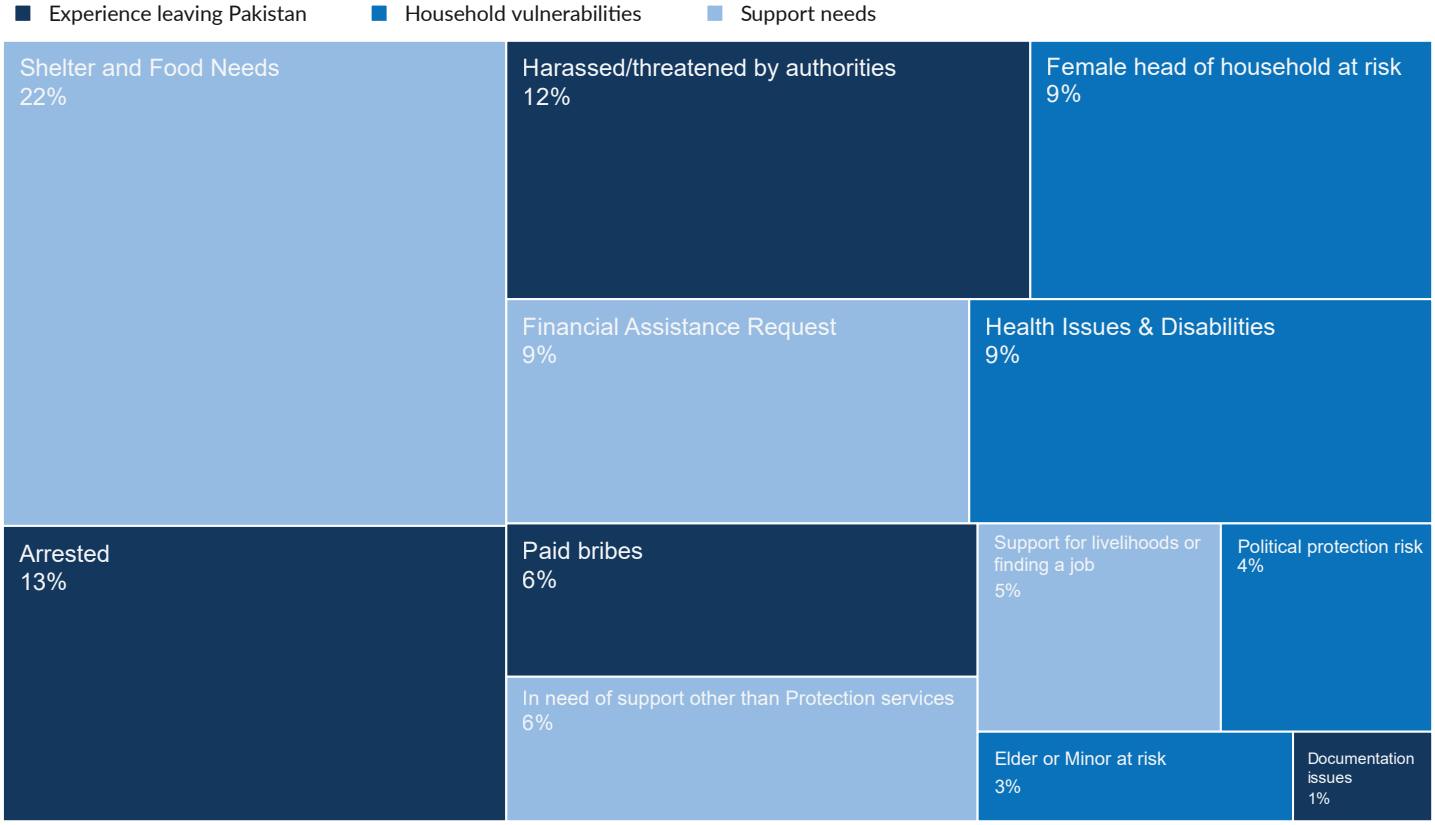
Protection services required in final destination[6]



[6] *Multiple choice questions, may add up to over 100%.*

Protection Analysis - using natural language processing

In addition to the border monitoring interviews, returnees who are enrolled and provided with cash assistance are asked to elaborate on topics that they would like to highlight to UNHCR. The descriptive experiences and perceptions shared were analyzed with Artificial Intelligence using natural language processing for semantic similarities and patterns.

The analysis done with a word count of over 29,402, found 12 detailed clusters shown in the diagram below. These 12 clusters can be broadly categorized into experiences leaving Pakistan, specific vulnerabilities in the household and requests for support to meet needs in Afghanistan. Amongst the 12 clusters, shelter and food needs, experiences of being arrested, harassment by authorities, and request for financial assistance were the top four most highlighted, compared to, shelter and food needs, support needs out of existing protection services, financial needs, and experiences being arrested in mid March.

The top highlighted clusters vary with documentation status. For UNHCR Slip holders specifically, paying of bribes was the most common cluster followed by shelter and food needs. For those without documentation, in need of support other than Protection services was the most common.