UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY- SEPTEMBER 2024

UNHCR scales up presence at official border crossings and encashment centers as tens of thousands of Afghans arrive from Pakistan
Returnee female HoH receiving basic health care at Encashment Center in Jalalabad, Nangarhar, Afghanistan. © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

110,030
Inflow & Outflow Monitoring Interviews

97,030
88%

12,900
12%

BACKGROUND

- UNHCR's border monitoring seeks to assess people's access to the right to return and map potential protection risks and human rights violations faced across official crossing points. UNHCR conducts inflow and outflow monitoring interviews at both individual and household levels across all eight official crossing points, including Afghanistan's borders with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. UNHCR's inflow and outflow monitoring interviews select respondents using a systemic sampling approach, which can generate representative samples with a fixed skipping interval. The interval is determined by the average arrivals of previous week. In addition, UNHCR conducts border monitoring Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) at unofficial crossing points. The findings help UNHCR to identify trends and protection concerns and inform programmatic and advocacy interventions.
- This report presents the findings of outflow and inflow border monitoring interviews conducted with Afghans by UNHCR's partners, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), The Welfare Associate for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN), Watan Social and Technical Services Association (WSTA), and Women for Afghan Women (WAW) at eight official crossing points, along with discussions with KIIs in around 50 unofficial crossing points between 1 January – 30 September 2024. The engagement of local NGO partners in this exercise also underlines UNHCR's commitment to localization.
- UNHCR Afghanistan in consultation with UNHCR operations in Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan and UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP) revised its border monitoring tools to capture information in line with the emerging protection context in the region. The new tools were deployed in all crossing points as of 1 May 2024. Furthermore, in early 2024, UNHCR received reports through KIs about pedestrian inflow and outflow movements via *Abu Nasr-i-Farahi* crossing point (Farah province) bordering with Iran; and *Turghondi* crossing point (Herat province) bordering with Turkmenistan. In view of these developments, UNHCR will expand its border monitoring activities at these two locations from October 2024.
- UNHCR's border monitoring is protection centric, and seeks to evaluate the triggers, intentions and motives behind Afghan cross-border movements. It assesses access to territory and the right to seek asylum, while also identifying barriers impeding the movement of individuals who may be in need of international protection. Between 1 January – 30 September 2024, **110,031** outflow and inflow monitoring interviews were conducted, involving **97,131** male and **12,900** female respondents. Given that a significant portion of those crossing the border were men, the majority of interviews were conducted with male respondents. At unofficial crossing points, interviews were primarily conducted with male key informants due to the remote locations and challenges in identifying female key informants.
- Despite the challenges with access of UNHCR and partners female staff, UNHCR and UNHCR partners conducted interviews with female respondents in separate interview areas, which allows to capture protection concerns reported by female respondents (**12% or 12,900 respondents**). In 2023, the female sample size was 11% i.e., 17,406 interviews have been conducted among a total of 165,376 respondents.

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2024 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Outflow Monitoring

45,000 AFGHANS

10,900 families

42,200 93.8%

2,800 6.2%

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- **45,015** Afghans (**42,222** males and **2,793** females) were interviewed prior to their departure to Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This includes **31,613 interviews** with single individuals and **10,910 interviews** with the families including **2,325 with families headed by a female**, and **2,492 interviews** with medical cases. **60 percent** of the respondents were 18-34 years old, **38 percent** were 35-59 years old, **one percent** 12-17 years old, and **one percent** were 60 and above.
- UNHCR border monitoring partners conducted **775 KIIs**. A large majority (**91 percent**) of Afghans are fleeing Afghanistan to Iran via unofficial crossing points. Those interviewed mentioned having entered irregularly into Pakistan, and while these figures have historically been very low (below **1 percent**), the trend has risen to **18 percent** in 2023 and **22 percent** during the first nine months of 2024. Furthermore, according to accounts by witnesses the majority of unofficial crossings are used by minority groups. Respondents shared many challenges encountered during their movement, ranging from a scarcity of portable water, food, healthcare, privacy, accommodation, transportation hurdles, physical and verbal harassment, extortion, robbery, etc. Additionally, some reported that they sustained severe injuries during flight including burns, fractured bones, wounds. They also faced risks such as trafficking and ill-treatment from smugglers. Of particular concern were the vulnerabilities faced by children, women, including pregnant / lactating women, medical patients, and older persons, who were especially at risk.
- Capturing reasons of movement during border monitoring interviews is complex at both official and unofficial crossings points. During the interviews at the official crossing points, Afghans are presented with a list of reasons (including protection reasons) they can select from. Respondents provide different reasons for leaving Afghanistan including protection concerns, i.e., some mention persecution and/or violation of their rights such as freedom of speech, movement, with membership of a political group not accepted by DfA, being the primary reason. Others underline fear of arbitrary arrest/detention, ban on female education and lack of livelihood opportunities as their main reasons for departure and some are moving to access improved quality of life or family unification. However, these interviews are conducted in Afghanistan, which makes it difficult for responses, particularly those in need of international protection, to express their concerns. For unofficial crossings, the data is collected through the key informants who may be less at risk, expressing secondary reasons for Afghans leaving the country. It is essential not to overlook the ongoing human rights violations in the country. While Afghans may initially prioritize immediate needs for *survival*, a comprehensive assessment of their international protection needs remains imperative for Afghan asylum seekers. UNHCR also considers Afghan women and girls to be likely in need of international refugee protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, given the stringent measures imposed by the DfA. See Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan. During the first nine months of 2024, 2,325 respondents in family groups with women and girls crossed to Iran which is slightly lower as compared to 2,409 respondents who went to Iran in family groups with women and girls during the same time last year. Similarly, a total of 8,796 respondents in family groups went to Pakistan which is significantly low as compared to 20,799 respondents in family groups went to Pakistan during the same period in 2023.
- **54 percent** of respondents who travelled to Iran and **8 percent** to Pakistan cited that they experienced feelings of stress affecting their day-to-day life mainly due to economic hardship, food insecurity, uncertainty about future, health problem, ban on education for females, tension in the community, child labor, and unavailability or lack of access to services.
- The outflow movement from Afghanistan to Pakistan via official crossing points declined notably following the announcement made by the Pakistani Government on 3 October 2023, regarding the "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" (IFRP) to repatriate foreigners without valid documents, primarily an estimated 1.3 million undocumented Afghans. Following the announcement, the government of Pakistan only allowed Afghans in possession of valid passport and visa to travel to Pakistan via Spin Boldak. "One document (passport/visa) regime" has been introduced in Torkham prior to the announcement of IFRP. So far in 2024, the outflow movement from Afghanistan to Pakistan via official crossing points remains similar to the trends recorded since October 2023. Only Afghans in possession of valid passport and visa can travel to Pakistan. However, the monitoring teams observed a slight increase in the number of outflow movements to Pakistan via unofficial crossing points i.e. an average of 4,500- 5,000 people on a weekly basis during the first nine months of 2024 vs an average of 5,000 – 6,000 people on a weekly basis during 2023. Outflow of passport holders via official crossing points with Iran so far in 2024 (**717,000 individuals, an average of 2,616 individuals daily**) represents a significant increase compared to the estimated **433,800 individuals (an average of 1,589 daily)** recorded over the same period in 2023. Outflow movement of undocumented Afghans to Iran via unofficial crossing points in Herat (**2,400 – 3,000 individuals weekly**) so far in 2024 has also increased as compared to an estimated weekly figure of 1,200 to 1,500 individuals in 2023. An estimated **200,000-300,000** undocumented Afghans went to Iran via unofficial points (further details on page nine below) so far in 2024**.** The movements via unofficial crossing points were facilitated by the smugglers who charge around AFN 7,000 – 12,000 (around $110 - $180) per person. The cost of travel charged by the smugglers have increased compared to previous months which was around AFN 3,000 – 10,000 (around $45 - $150) per person.

Barriers to leaving Afghanistan:

- According to KIs, the erection of a border wall by the government of Iran is ongoing in the bordering areas in Herat province. The wall aims of preventing the irregular movements of Afghan nationals, smuggling of goods, livestock and drugs to/from Iran.
- Since last quarter of 2023 and so far in 2024, the DfA increased patrols near unofficial points aimed to prevent the movement of people to Iran particularly minority groups.
- The "mahram" (the male chaperone) requirement that prevents women/girls from travelling abroad unless accompanied by a male chaperone (husband, father, brother, son) continues to be in place in Afghanistan. This approach is a particular challenge for women with medical issues, female students who managed to secure enrolment in universities abroad including scholarships and other vulnerable women and girls to leave the country.
- Challenges have been reported by the respondents in obtaining a visa for the neighboring countries such as lengthy waiting time for a Pakistani and Iranian visa and suspension of visa processing by the diplomatic missions present in Afghanistan i.e., Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, India, Turkey, and the Russian Federation.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not been yet agreed upon the parties.

Pendular movements trends

- UNHCR partners, undertaking border monitoring, report pendular movements between Afghanistan and Iran and Pakistan. The outflow respondents (**45,015 including male and female)** who have gone to Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan were Afghans with national passports. They reported staying in both Iran and Pakistan for approximately a month, usually in accommodation provided by relatives. Within the respondents (**19,085**) who wanted to travel to Iran, **42 percent** reported it was their second time visiting the country, while **25 percent** mentioned it was their third time. A small percentage (**10 percent**) mentioned they went to Iran more than three times, while the remaining **23 percent** stated it was their first time traveling to Iran. Conversely, **80 percent** of respondents (**25,145**) who travelled to Pakistan reported multiple visits. Among them, **29 percent** mentioned it was their second visit, **31 percent** stated it was their third visit, and **20 percent** mentioned that they went to Pakistan more than three times, while the remaining **20 percent** mentioned it was their first time traveling to Pakistan. This trend differs slightly from the 2022 and 2023 findings. In 2023, **73 percent** of the respondents traveling to Iran and **88 percent** to Pakistan, reported multiple visits while **26 and 12 percent** respectively, stated it was their first visit to Iran and Pakistan. In 2022, around **51 percent** of respondents traveling to Iran reported multiple visits, while **49 percent** stated it was their first time. For those traveling to Pakistan, **84 percent** reported multiple visits, with **16 percent** stating it was their first time visiting. However, this represents a subset of those traveling to Iran (717,000 individuals) and Pakistan (689,000 individuals) via official crossing points as an estimated 200,000 – 300,000 of those fleeing to Iran are undocumented, based on the information collected at unofficial crossing points.
- In April/May 2024, UNHCR received anecdotal information about circular movement of Afghans particularly those who returned/deported from Pakistan after the implementation of IFRP. In view of this, since 15 June 2024, new questions have been included in the outflow monitoring tools used at official and unofficial crossing points to monitor the circular movements to Pakistan and Iran. Below are the preliminary findings collected from a small number of respondents.
  - Between 15 June – 30 September 2024, the monitoring teams conducted a total of **9,952** outflow monitoring interviews with Afghans who went to Pakistan. Out of **9,952** respondent, **1 percent (or 119 respondents, who went to Pakistan via Torkham crossing point)** confirmed that they have returned/deported from Pakistan after the announcement of IFRP in October 2023, but they are traveling to Pakistan for the second/third time. This means that these respondents have obtained a passport and Pakistani visa and have gone back to Pakistan because the officials only authorize individuals in possession of valid passport and vista to travel to Pakistan.
  - **5 percent (or 468 respondents)** indicated that they observed that a number of Afghans including their relatives and community members who returned/deported post October 2023 due to IFRP, went back to Pakistan for a second/third time. The top five reasons of departure, reported by the respondents, includes multiple reasons:
    - Economic challenges such as lack of livelihood opportunities and poverty (30 percent) and 19 percent due to violation of rights i.e., the ban on female education and work as well as discrimination and violence in Afghanistan.
    - To access a better life (32 percent).
    - Some also mentioned that their relatives went back to Pakistan due to fear of arbitrary arrest/detention, to travel/seek asylum to another (third) country, while some of them left Afghanistan due to the loss of property, natural disasters, land/property disputes.
- The same questions have been posed to a total of **330 Key Informants** that were interviewed between 15 June – 30 September. Out of 330, **25 KIs including 14** in Dak crossing point in Nimroz province, **four** in Dangam (in Kunar) and **six** in other locations stated that they observed movement of **few individuals** including their relatives/community members crossing into Pakistan for the second/third time, after their return to Afghanistan post October 2023 due to IFRP.
  - Out of 14 KIs in Dak, four KI said he witnessed that small number (**1-10 individuals**) are going back to Pakistan; eight KIs witnessed the movement of people in different groups (11-20, 21-50 and 100+ people).
  - Four KIs interviewed in three unofficial crossings in Kunar province witnessed that people in small group (1-10) went back to Pakistan.
  - Nine KIS were not able to provide a number
  - As provided by the KIs, these individuals went back to Pakistan due to multiple reasons:
    - To avoid the ban of females accessing education and work in some sectors
    - Lack of livelihood, basic services in Afghanistan.
    - Drought/natural disaster in Afghanistan.
    - To travel to another (third country).
    - To visit family members and for business purposes.

A returnee family from Pakistan in Torkham crossing Nangarhar, Afghanistan © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

- It is worth noting that Dak crossing point is the main hub for irregular movements to Pakistan/Iran including for local residence of Nimroz (and Dak area) who are engaged in daily business. People traveling from Dak crossing point are first moving to Pakistan. Some remains in Pakistan while some continue their journey to Iran.

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

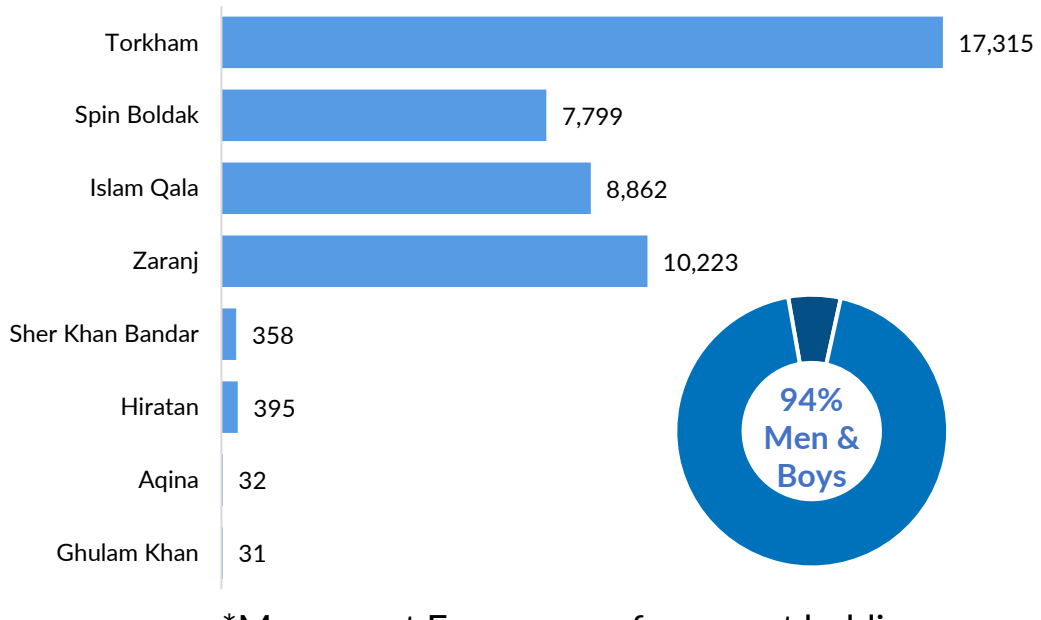
2024 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Outflow Monitoring

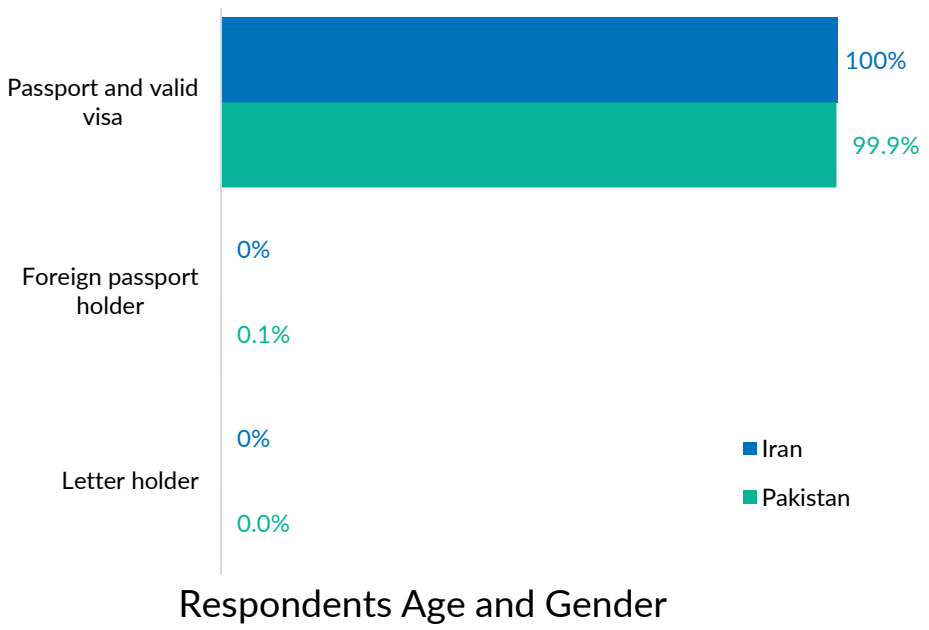
UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

Summary Findings: Official Crossing Points

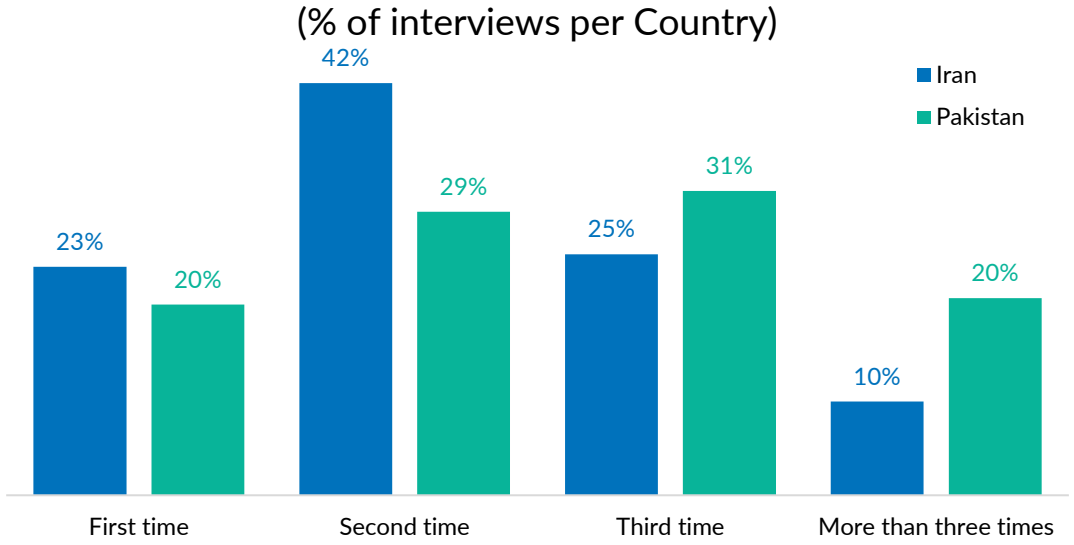
Interviews by Entry Point



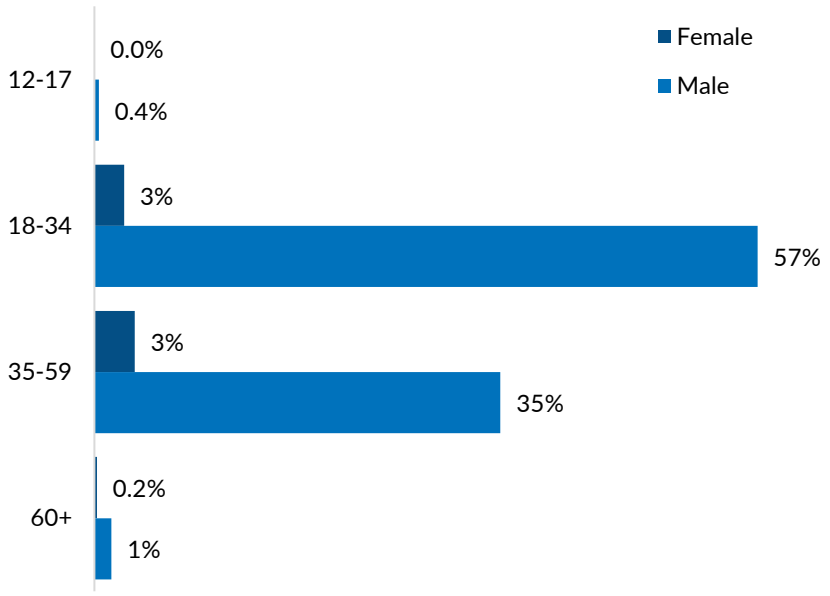
Documentation Status of Respondents



*Movement Frequency of passport holding respondents via official crossing points (% of interviews per Country)

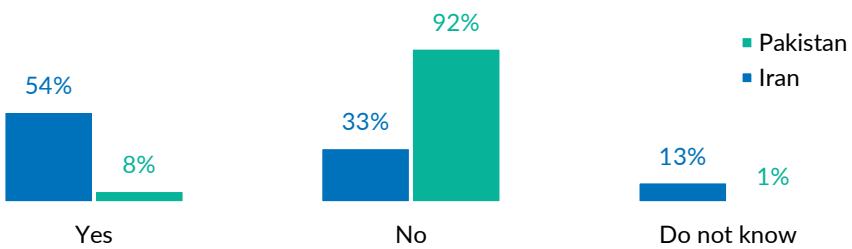


Respondents Age and Gender

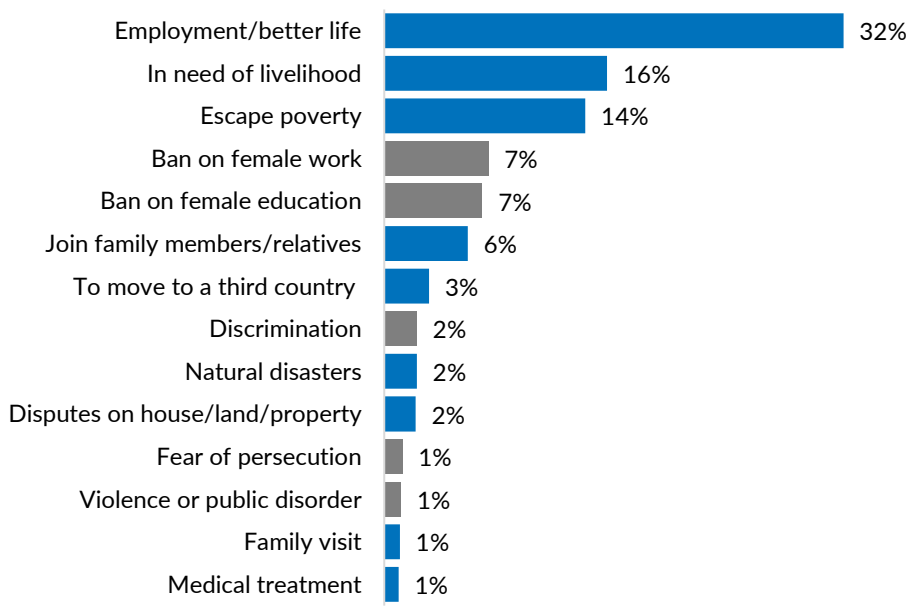


*Movement frequency only refers to movers who were traveling to Iran and Pakistan via official crossing points and hold passports. Based on information collected at unofficial crossing points, more than half of Afghans fleeing to Iran are undocumented and flee Afghanistan through unofficial crossing points.

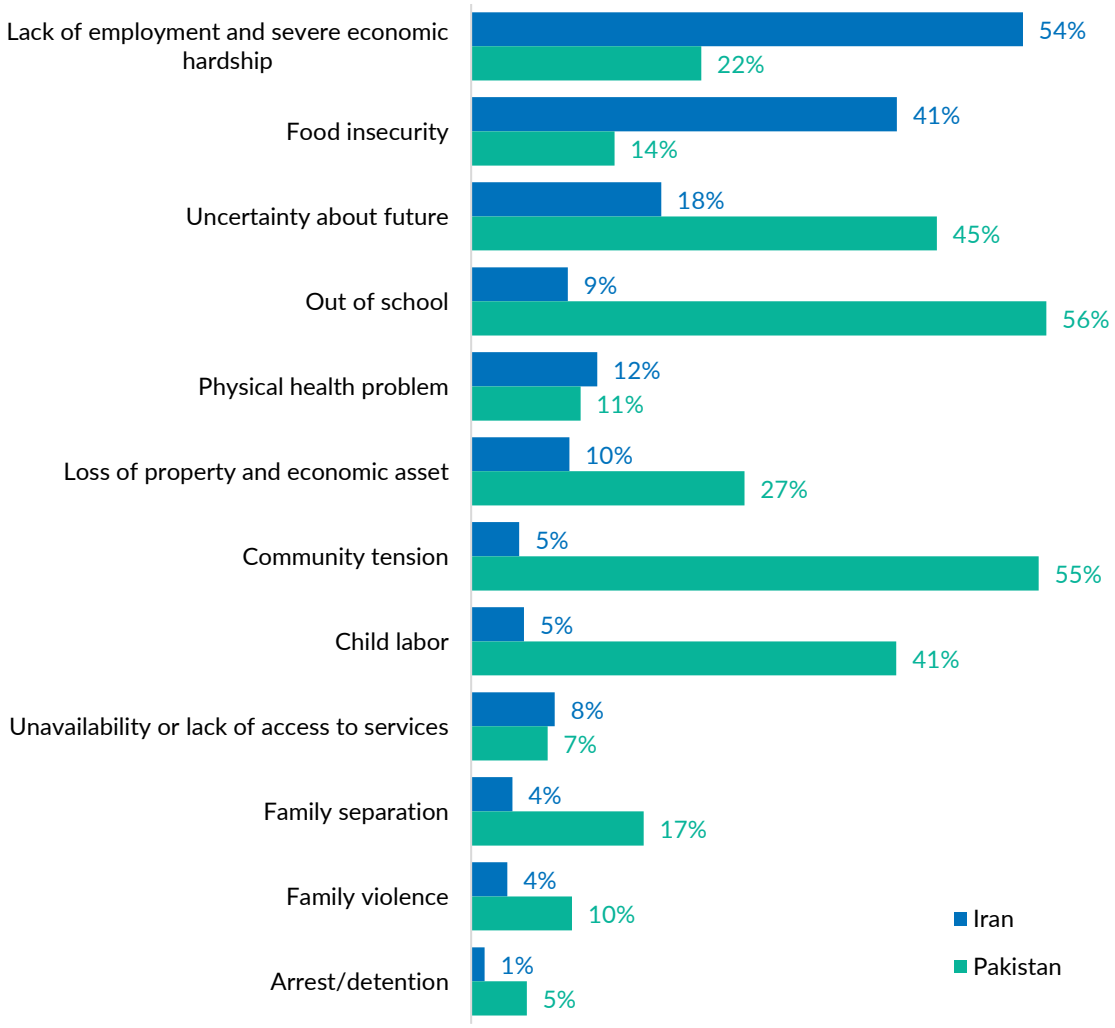
Have you or your family experienced feelings of stress that affected your day-to-day life?



**Reasons for moving back to Pakistan for the second/third time



Sources of Stress



** Reasons provided by the respondents who were interviewed from 15 June –30 September 2024, prior to their departure to Pakistan via Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing point, who confirmed that they have returned/deported from Pakistan after the announcement of IFRP in October 2023, but they are traveling back to Pakistan for the second/third time.

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2024 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Inflow Monitoring

64,240
AFGHANS
22,500 families

54,130
84%

10,110
16%

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- **64,241 Afghans** – **54,134** male (**84 percent**) and **10,107** female (**16 percent**) – were interviewed upon arrival in Afghanistan. This includes **41,744** single individuals and **22,497** families. **41,439** interviews were conducted with spontaneous returnees and **22,802** with deportees. However, Afghans who returned/deported from Pakistan since November 2023 were mainly families with women, children making up **76 percent** of the returns (**47 percent** women and girls). UNHCR continues to receive inquiries from women, seeking support for education and expressing concerns about women protection. These cases involve allegation about forced marriages, denial of job opportunities, and other forms of gender discrimination. Women have also reported that their livelihoods have been detrimentally impacted by DfA policies.
- **63 percent** of the respondents were 18-34 years old, while **33 percent** were 35-59 years old, only **two percent** minors (12-17 years old), and **two percent** were older persons (60 and above).
- A majority (**79 percent**) of respondents from Iran were undocumented while most (**57 percent**) respondents from Pakistan were passport holders. However, since 15 September 2023, over **733,000** Afghans including refugees and those in refugee-like situations, have had to return from Pakistan.
- Interview findings in 2024 reveals that more people are traveling to Iran and Pakistan via unofficial crossing points compared to 2023. **91 percent** of the respondents (returnees and deportees) including women and children traveled to Iran via unofficial crossing points. This percentage was lower in 2023 (**81 percent**). In contrast, **78 percent** of Afghan respondents went to Pakistan via official crossing points, while in 2023, **92 percent** of the respondents stated that they went to Pakistan via official points. Of respondents moving to Iran via official border crossings, **24 percent** crossed for the first time. This was the case for **14 percent** moving to Pakistan.
- Returnees and deportees were asked to mention their reasons for leaving Afghanistan. In 2024, nearly **20 percent** of the respondents mentioned protection risks in Afghanistan as the primary reason of their departure to Iran and Pakistan i.e., overall violence (**10 percent**), fear of persecution (**5 percent**), ban on female education and work, discrimination, and house and property dispute (**2 percent**) in Afghanistan. In contrast, some **80 percent** of the respondents mentioned that they went to Iran and Pakistan to escape poverty (**27 percent**) in Afghanistan, to access livelihood (**18 percent**), better living condition (**16 percent**), and medical treatment (**5 percent**) in Iran and Pakistan. In comparison search of better living conditions or employment opportunities and medical treatment were reported as the primary reasons of departure from Afghanistan to Pakistan by the respondents in 2023. While most respondents said that they departed to Iran and Pakistan in search of better living condition, or healthcare services, capturing reasons for movement is complex as interviews are conducted in Afghanistan making it difficult for respondents, particularly those in need of international protection, to express concerns. The list of reasons provided is not exhaustive and may not capture all motivations as Afghans may initially prioritize immediate needs for survival. UNHCR also considers Afghan women and girls to be likely in need of international refugee protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, given the stringent measures imposed by the DfA.
- Following implementation of IFRP by the government of Pakistan in November 2023, UNHCR has scaled up protection response capacity at border crossing points in order to identify and assist persons/ families with sensitive protection backgrounds.
- **34 percent** of respondents returning from Iran and **89 percent** of those returning from Pakistan stated that they had no information about the risks of irregular migration to Iran and Pakistan and onward movement.
- The risk of trafficking, physical violence perpetrated by smugglers, lack of food, water, and instances of robbery, were reported as the primary challenges encountered by travelers during the journey via irregular routes.
- From January – June, socio-economic challenges (high cost of living, inflation, limited job opportunities) in Iran were reported by Afghans who returned spontaneously from Iran, including both documented and undocumented as the main reasons of return. However, returnees who came back since June/July reported their fear of potential arrest and expulsion by authorities in addition to severe economic difficulties including limited job opportunities and high costs of living in Iran being among the reasons for their decision to return. Conversely, irregular entry and lack of documentation were cited as the main reasons for deportation.
- Returnees from Pakistan cited various factors influencing their decision to return, primarily revolving around serious protection issues, including fear of arrest and deportation and experiences of abuse at the hands of police or State authorities. Although Afghans are still facing protection challenges in some parts of Punjab, Sindh, Islamabad, KPK and Baluchistan, since June however, new arrivals generally reported an improvement in the protection situation compared to previous months.
- In 2024, **53 percent** of respondents (**20,259**) who returned to Afghanistan or deported from Iran and **22 percent** of the respondents (**19,341**) who returned/deported from Pakistan cited that they are experiencing stress which affects their day-to-day life. The causes of stress includes economic hardship including lose of assets, uncertainty about future, food insecurity, health problem, community tension, risk of arrest and detention and no education for females in Afghanistan.

Two female HoH heading to assistance desk to collect protection assistance at Jalalabad Encashment Center, Nangarhar, Afghanistan © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

Child Friendly Space, UNHCR Encashment Center in Kandahar, Afghanistan, © UNHCR//Oxygen Empire Media Production

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2024 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Inflow Monitoring

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

Deportation Trends January – June 2024

Iran

2024: ~ 560,000 deportation

2023: ~ 472,000 deportation

Pakistan

2024: ~ 5,400 deportation

2023: ~ 29,300 deportation

FROM IRAN

- Based on estimations provided by UNHCR's border monitoring partners, during nine months in 2024, an estimated **559,000 (undocumented Afghans** were deported from Iran through Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points. This represents a daily average of **2,040 individuals**. The deportation figures for undocumented Afghans are approximately **18 percent higher** compared to an estimated **472,000** deportees during the same period in 2023.
- Among those deported, UNHCR border monitoring identified **around 61 deportation cases (173 individuals)** of Amayesh card holders. Reasons for deportation varied; some were apprehended due to drug-related offenses, while others were deported for lacking Amayesh cards during their arrest and subsequent movement to "no-go areas," notably border regions between Iran and Turkey, without obtaining necessary movement permits from authorities. In 2023, UNHCR's border monitoring team recorded the deportation of **63 cases/231** individuals. Amayesh card holders from Iran via Islam Qala and Zaranj.
- Furthermore, border monitoring teams at Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points identified an estimated **64,000** Afghans who declared themselves as headcount slip holders, indicating a refugee-like situation. This group consisted of approximately **34,700** regular returnees and **29,400** deportees. The deported individuals were reportedly arrested at various locations, including their workplaces. Some were apprehended because they did not possess the headcount slip at the time of arrest, while others were detained for moving to different areas without a movement permit. Some alleged that the police disregarded the importance of the headcount slip.
- UNHCR conducted protection monitoring interviews and delivered support to refoulment cases while IOM provided assistance to vulnerable undocumented deportees and returnees from Iran.
- In view of increased return and deportation from Iran, UNHCR expands its border monitoring activities on the border with Iran. This includes deploying monitoring teams to Abu Nasri Farahi crossing point in Farah province and increasing response capacity in the encashment centers, particularly the encashment center in Herat to register and assist deported Amayesh card holders from Iran, in addition to refugees (Amayesh card holders) returning under UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme.
- The vast majority of deportees are undocumented Afghans. Among them, deportation without a court order or/and not having access to formal complain mechanism is reported. As a result, these deportees had no opportunity to raise concerns about potential protection risks in Afghanistan before being deported.
- Deportees consistently report numerous human rights violations, including physical violence, lack of access to adequate food, water, and sanitation, insufficient healthcare, verbal abuse and insults, overcrowded conditions, family separation, and loss of assets and money, among other issues.

FROM PAKISTAN

- The announcement and implementation of the IFRP by the Government of Pakistan led to an increase in the number of undocumented Afghans returning or being deported. Prior to the announcement, the average daily number of undocumented Afghans returning from Pakistan through Spin Boldak (Kandahar) and Torkham (Nangarhar) was approximately **260 individuals**. However, the figures saw a significant increase since 15 September 2023, with the peak occurring in early November 2023. Since January 2024, the number of individuals crossing these official border points has steadily decreased, although it remains significantly higher than the numbers observed before 15 September 2023.
- Since 15 September 2023 – 30 September 2024, some **733,300** Afghans have returned/deported to Afghanistan including over **242,700** in 2024. Out of **733,300**, nearly **35,000** were deported including 54,00 in 2024 predominantly through Torkham and Spin Boldak. Among the returned or deported Afghans, UNHCR identified and assisted a total of **111,700** individuals, including Afghan refugees holding PoR (Proof of Registration) cards, as well as individuals in refugee-like situations, such as holders of UNHCR's Slip/Asylum Certificate and Protection Cases. Out of **111,700**, a total of **47,600** individuals have been assisted during the nine months of 2024. Out **111,700**, some **2.5 percent** are individuals with disabilities and over **3,000** PoR card holders, UNHCR slip holders and Asylum certificate holders were deported.
- In 2022, an estimated **2,372 undocumented Afghans were arrested** and deported on charges of infringing the 1946 Foreigners Act.
- No deportations of PoR (Proof of Registration) cardholders were recorded in 2022. However, in 2023, 24 POR card holders were recorded to have been deported prior to August (i.e. March, May and July) 2023.

FROM TAJIKISTAN

- No deportation recorded so far in 2024. Around **12 Afghan refugees were deported** from Tajikistan and were assisted by UNHCR in 2023, and an estimated **100** Afghans were deported from Tajikistan in 2022.

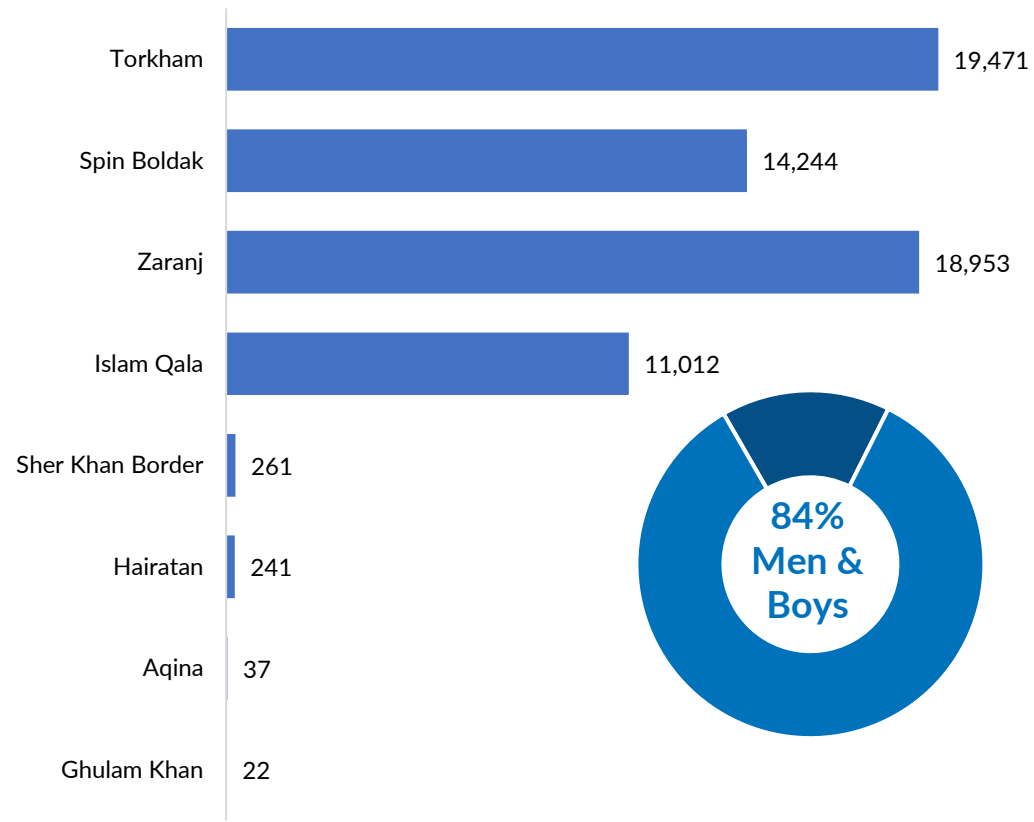
UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2023 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

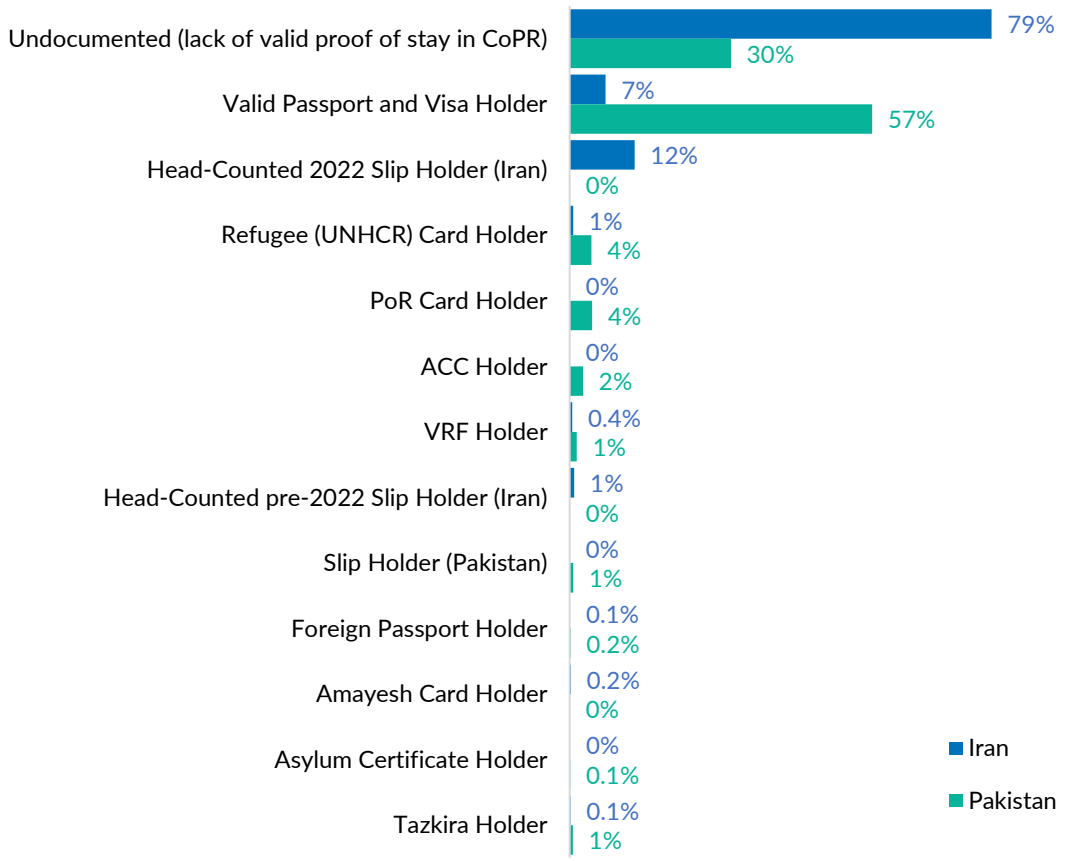
Inflow Monitoring

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

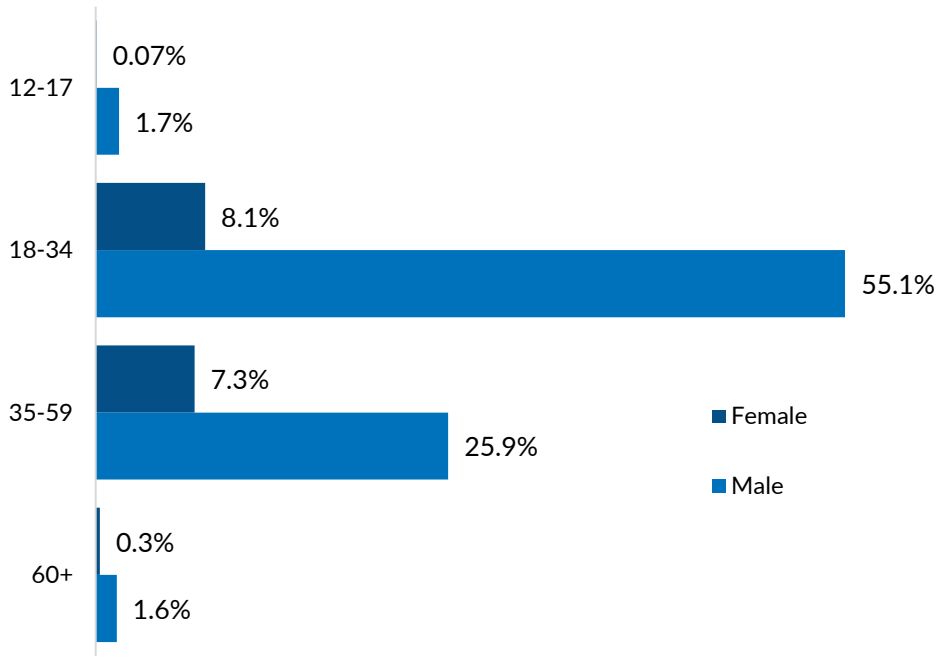
Number of Interviews by Official Entry Point



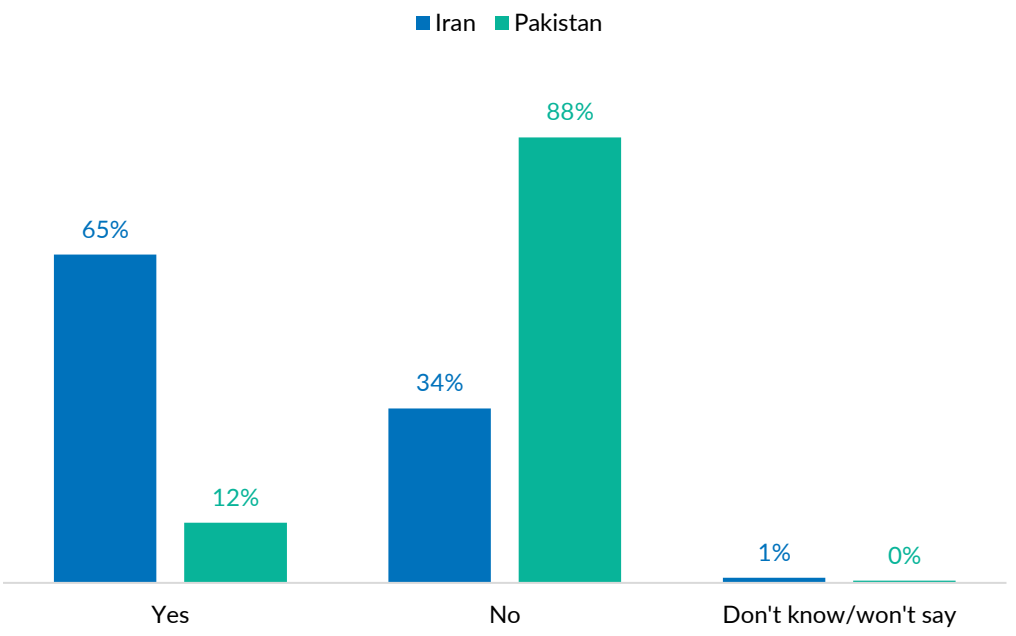
Documentation Status of Respondents



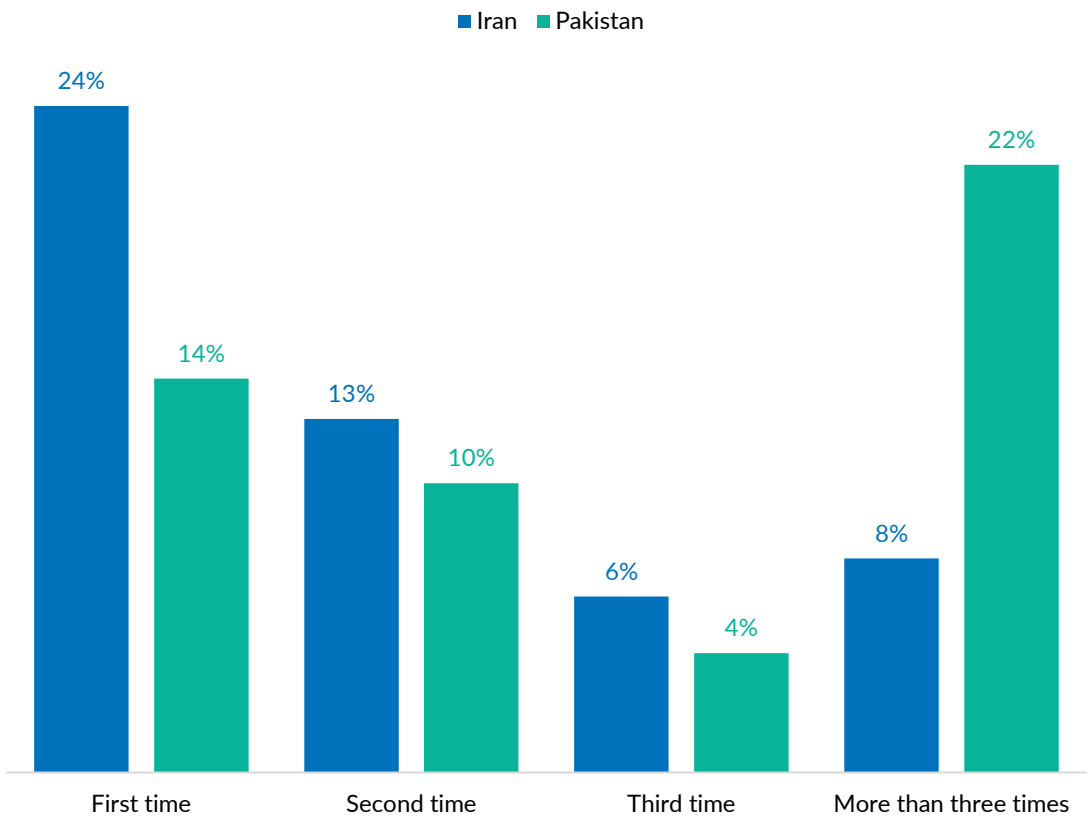
Respondents Age and Gender



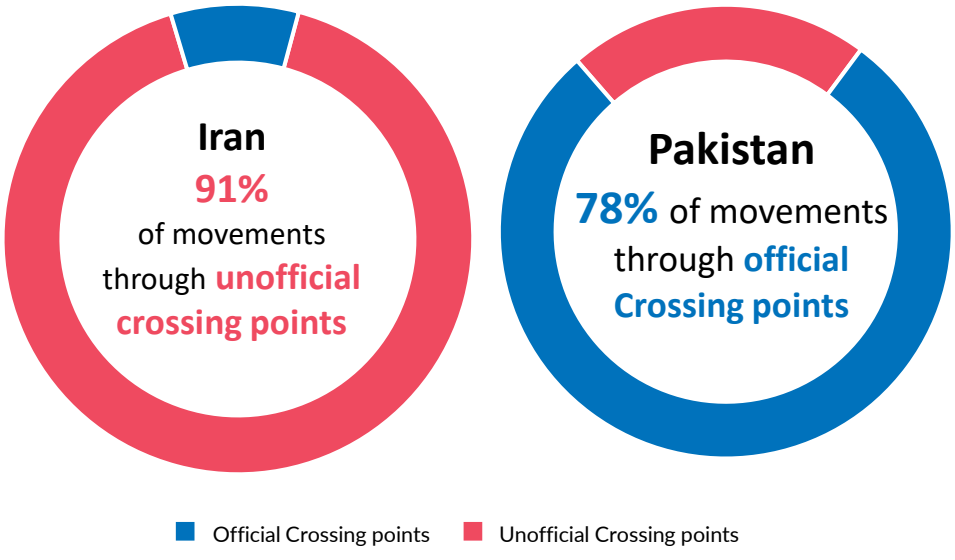
Awareness of Interviewed Returnees/Deportees about the Potential Protection Risks



Movement frequency of passport holding respondents via official crossing points (% of interviews per Country)



Type of Movement



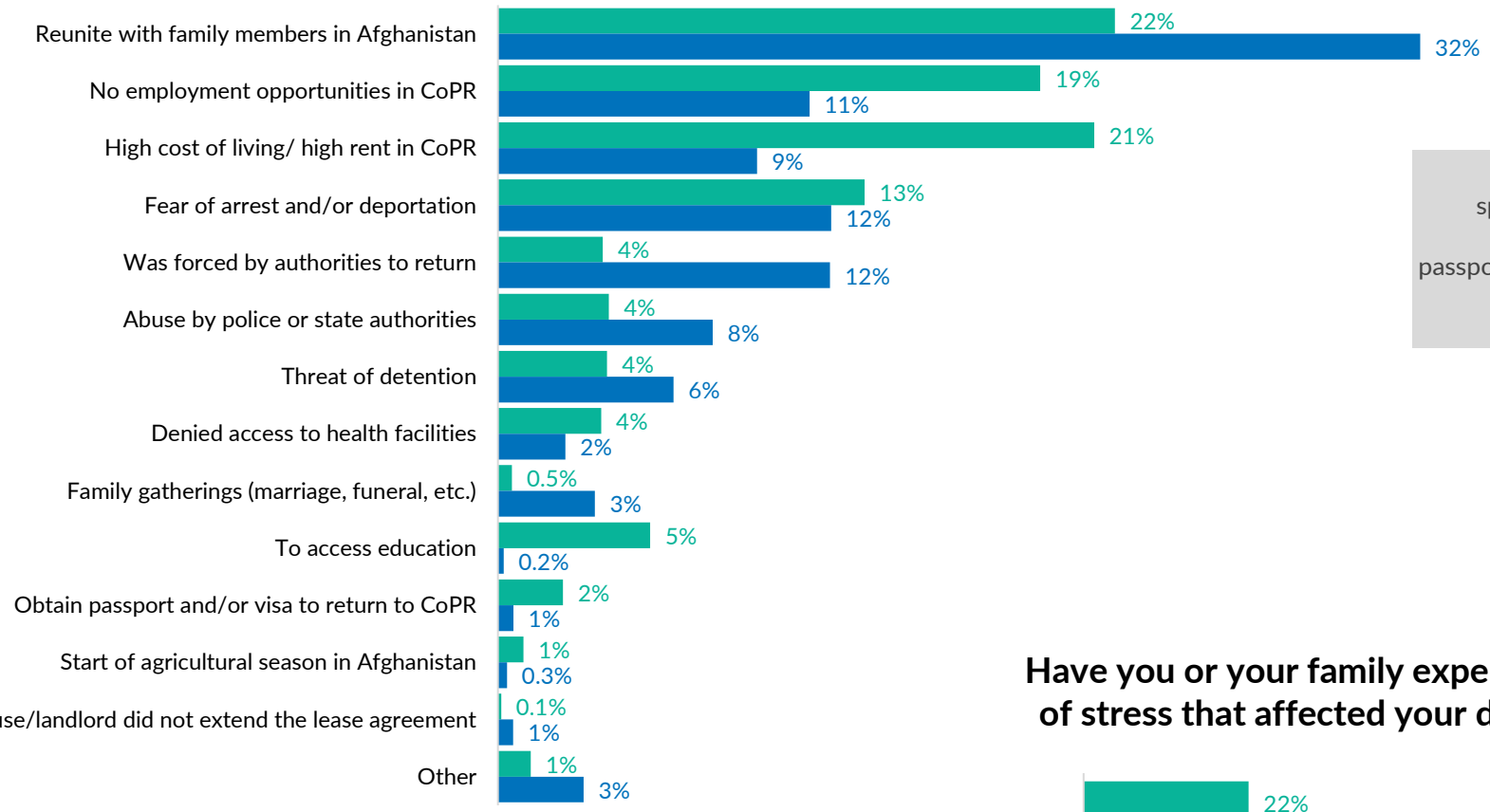
UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2023 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Inflow Monitoring

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

Reasons for Return to Afghanistan (Spontaneous Returnees)

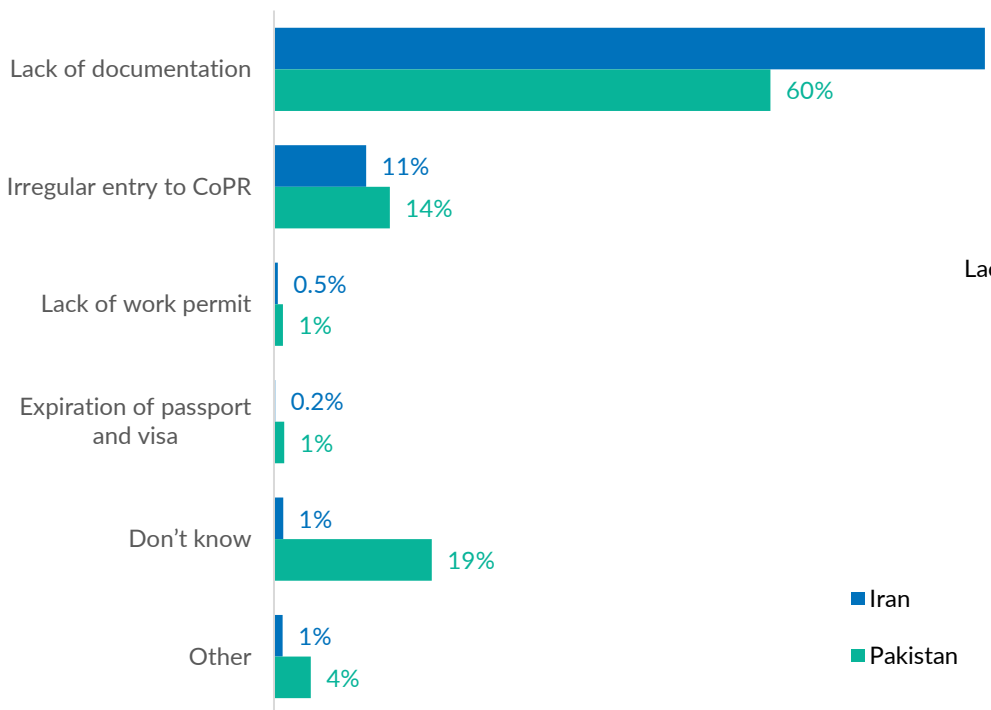


Refers to spontaneous returnees, VRF holders, passport/ PoR, slip ACC, Amayesh, head-counted slip, & ID holders

Iran

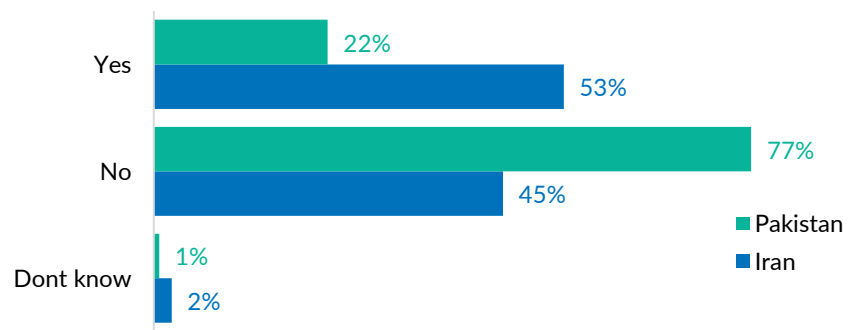
Pakistan

Reasons of Deportation

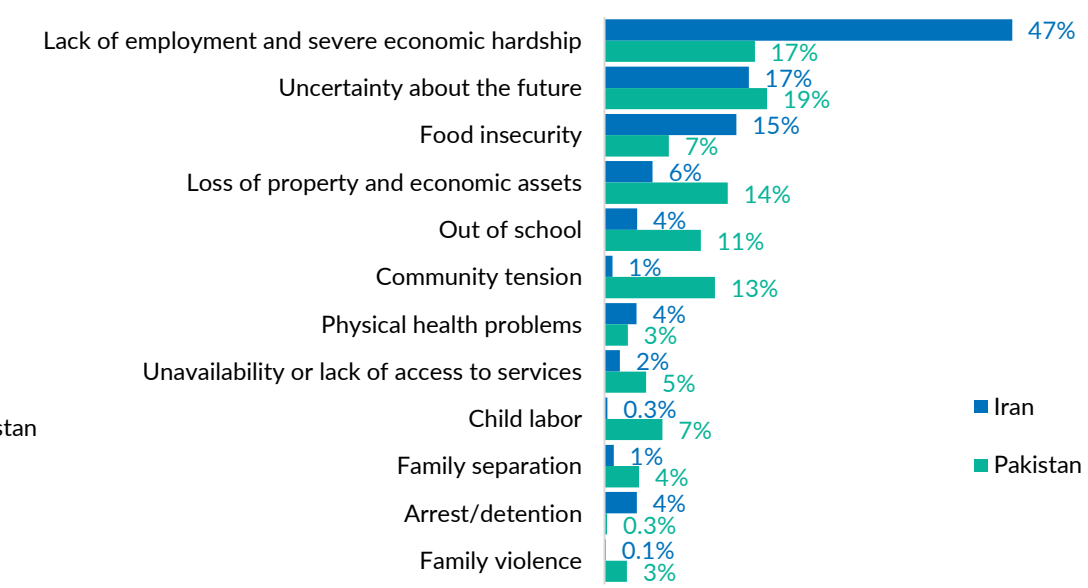


The vast majority of deportation are crossing through unofficial points to Iran.

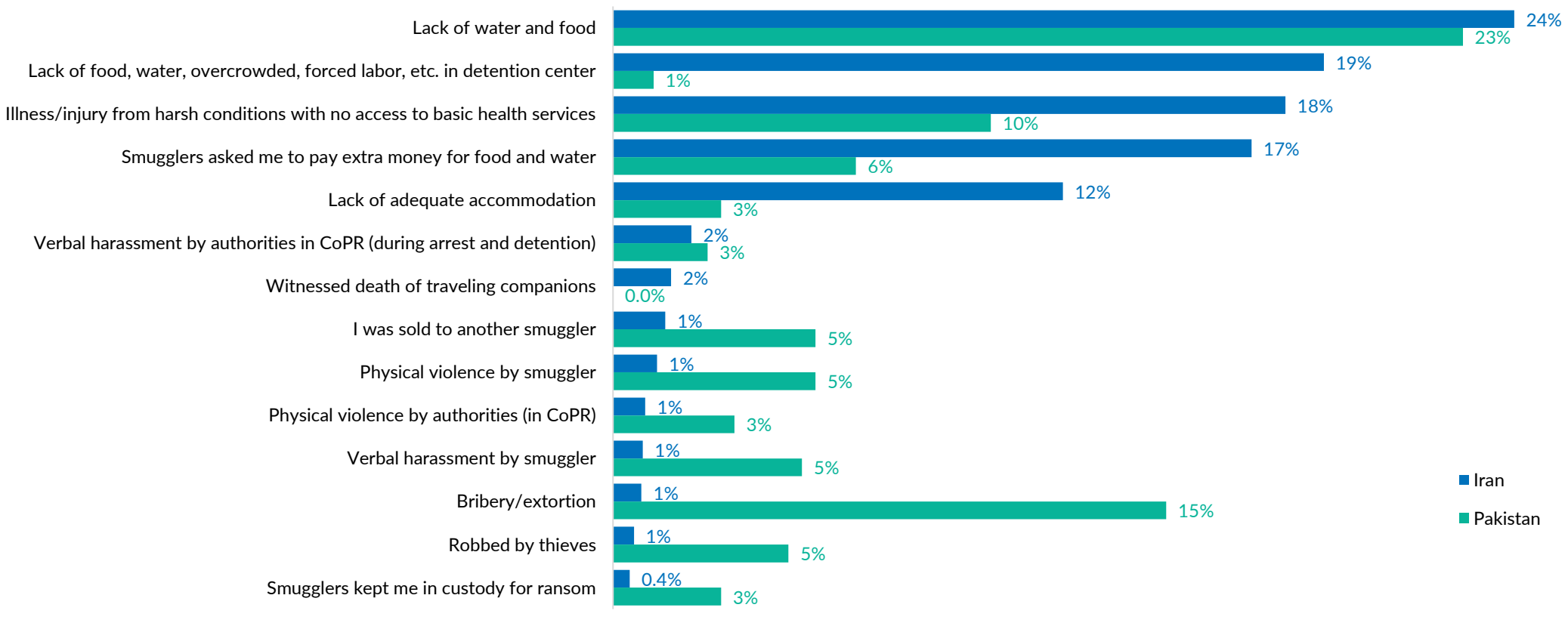
Have you or your family experienced feelings of stress that affected your day-to-day life?



Sources of Stress



Problems Faced during the Journey through Unofficial Crossing Points



UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2024 CROSS BORDER MONITORING (January to June)

Overview of Population Movements to Iran and Pakistan

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

Iran — 1.3 million Inflow / 1 million Outflow

Pakistan — 720,000 Inflow / 690,000 Outflow

- UNHCR partners collected estimated inflow and outflow figures at official and unofficial crossing points. During nine months of 2024, an estimated **3.5 million individuals**, predominantly Afghans, moved to or from Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The majority of these movements occurred via official crossing points i.e., Islam Qala and Zaranj (to Iran), Torkham, and Spin Boldak (to Pakistan), and smaller numbers via Hiratan (to Uzbekistan), Aqina (to Turkmenistan), and Sher Khan Bander (to Tajikistan). The outflow movements to Pakistan through official border crossings experienced a **significant decline since October 2023** due to the government of Pakistan's decision to only permit individuals holding passports and visas to cross into Pakistan.

IRAN - OUTFLOW MOVEMENTS

- An estimated **717,000 Afghans** travelled to Iran with valid travel documents through official crossing points during the first nine months of 2024. This represented an average of **2,616** individuals per day. In addition, an estimated **200,000-300,000 Afghans** went to Iran via unofficial points, as witnessed by the KIs. This means that an estimated **1 million + Afghans** went to Iran in 2024.
- Based on KIs, people's movement through unofficial points in Herat (to Iran) has increased despite increased deployment of checkpoints by the DfA and the establishment of barrier wall by the government of Iran . During the week of 29 September 2024, an estimated **2,400 – 3,000** individuals crossed to Iran via the unofficial crossings in Herat. The reported figure is high compared to an estimated **1,100 – 1,950** individuals crossed to Iran during the week of 14 June 2024.
- From January to early June, an estimated **800 to 2,500** individuals have crossed into Iran on weekly basis via unofficial crossing points in Herat province. In addition, during the week of 29 September 2024 an estimated **3,500** individuals went to Pakistan/Iran via “Dak” crossing point in Nimroz province. An estimated **300 – 2,500** went to Pakistan/Iran through Dak unofficial point during the week of 14 June 2024. According to KIs, prior mid-June 2024, an estimated **280 to 5,000** individuals have crossed via the "Dak" crossing point in Nimroz province. Afghans traveling via Dak initially enter Pakistan before continuing their journey to Iran. Reportedly more people including those with sensitive protection backgrounds travel through unofficial crossing points in Herat and Dak in Nimroz. Those who travel through Dak, first enter Pakistan where they split into groups – some continue their travel to Iran and some remain in Pakistan with the intention of traveling to Islamabad, KPK, etc., to attend an interview or to submit asylum application with UNHCR’ legal partners in Pakistan.
- Financial challenges in obtaining passports and visas and overcrowded situation at respective embassies or consulates continues to limit individuals’ ability to obtain documents and motivates more people to rely on irregular movement channels. All movements through unofficial crossing points were reportedly facilitated by smugglers.

PAKISTAN – OUTFLOW MOVEMENTS

- In 2024, there were an estimated **689,000** outflow movements through official crossing points (**an average of 2,286 individuals per day**). The majority, around **536,500 individuals**, occurred via Torkham (**an average of 1,959 individuals per day**), followed by approximately **152,500** via Spin Boldak (**an average of 557 individuals per day**). During pervious years and prior the implementation of IFRP the bulk of the population movements were occurred via Spin Boldak. They were primarily holders of Tazkira, border pass tokens, PoR, ACC, and passports, mainly from Kandahar province. They were small business owners who resided on one side of the border and conduct business on the other side. In addition, patients were able to travel without passport and visa. However, outflow movements via Torkham were Afghans from different provinces with valid passports and visas.
- In addition, an estimated **4,500** Afghans traveled to Pakistan via unofficial crossing points located in several provinces in the south and south-eastern regions on a weekly basis. This group primarily consisted of local individuals who were able to travel back and forth for business, medical treatment, and family visit purposes in the absence of passport and visa. Currently Afghan pedestrians, including local people can cross into Pakistan if they possess valid passport and visa. There were no movements via unofficial points located in the eastern region (Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan provinces).

IRAN - INFLOW MOVEMENTS

- In 2024, an estimated **1.3 million** Afghans either returned to Afghanistan or were deported from Iran. This marks an increase of **17 percent** from an estimated **1.1 million Afghans** who returned/deported during the same period in 2023. Out of **1.3 million people**, approximately **736,000 (averaging 2,687 daily)** were regular cross-border movers, while **559,000** were deportation movements, **averaging around 2,040 daily**. The deportation figures represent an increase of **18 percent** from the estimated **472,000** recorded during the same period in 2023.

PAKISTAN – INFLOW MOVEMENTS

- In 2024, there were an estimated **720,000 Afghans** came to Afghanistan from Pakistan (including passport holders, businessmen, patients, ACC, PoR card holders and undocumented Afghans) mainly via Torkham. Prior to the announcement by the government of Pakistan in October 2023, inflow movements from Pakistan to Afghanistan via official crossing points were minimal, averaging only **260 individuals** daily. The inflow movements significantly increased after the implementation of IFRP by the government of Pakistan. Since 15 September 2023, nearly **733,300** Afghans including women, girls and boys, particularly undocumented Afghans as well as refugees and those in refugee-like situations, returned/deported from Pakistan including nearly **242,700** Afghans in 2024. The main driver for this increase was the implementation of IFRP by the government of Pakistan.
- Among the refugees and people in refugee like situation assisted by UNHCR, at least one in four families are headed by women. **58 percent** were girls and boys, and some **2.5 percent** are individuals with disabilities. Returnees and deportees reported that problems experienced prior to the cross-border movement have consistently been harassment, waiting long hours at checkpoints and detention. Returnees interviewed by UNHCR were concerned about the lack of shelter/housing, food, financial support/livelihoods, documentation, education, water and sanitation, health care including MHPSS, services in return areas, as well as difficulties in meeting their basic needs such as food and access to transportation. Returnees have also underscored significant concerns regarding security threats and have employed various coping mechanisms (such as maintaining a low profile, staying indoors, avoiding contact with others, relocating within their province or to another province) to mitigate further risks. However, the limited support available has resulted in individuals at risk and their families enduring harsh living conditions, severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and access to livelihoods, and a lack of access to basic services, thereby restricting the exercise of rights.

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2024 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Overview of Population Movements 2024

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

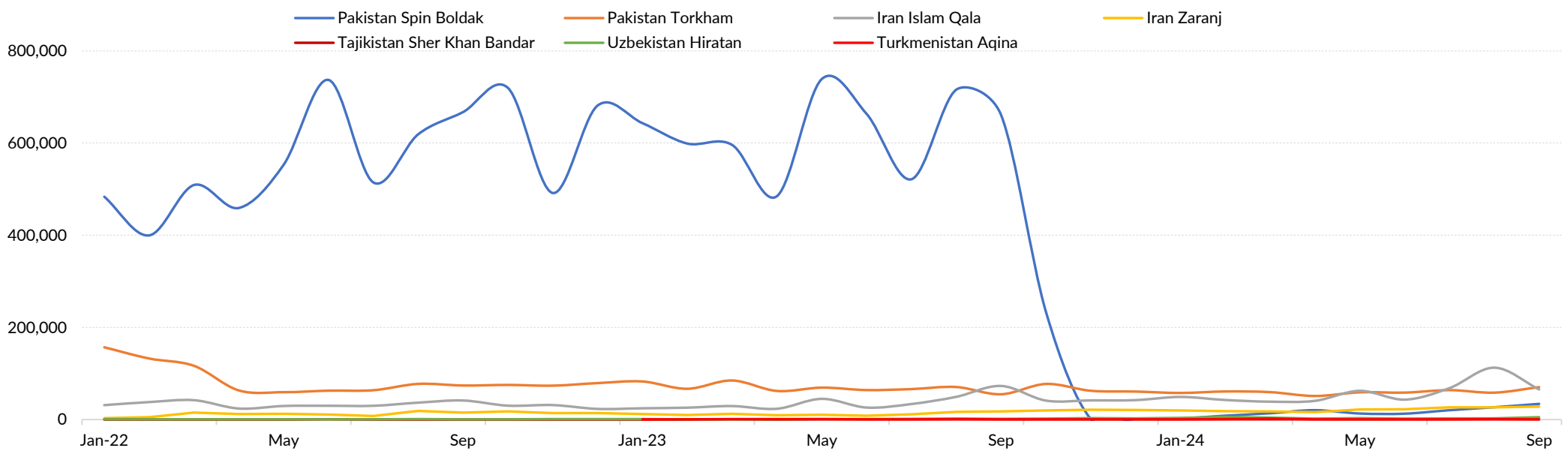
Population Movements to Central Asia Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan– January- June 2024

- **UZBEKISTAN:** The border in Hiratan is restricted to commercial movements and visa holders only. An estimated **29,100** individuals, mainly railway staff, drivers from Uzbekistan, and diplomats, as well as Afghan visa holders travelled to Uzbekistan while an estimated **28,200** individuals with a similar profile returned to Afghanistan. To be able to cross the border, Afghans were required to present resident permits, business/education documents or an official letter from the Government of Uzbekistan.
- **TURKMENISTAN:** In 2024, the Aqina border was exclusively open for commercial movements and visa holders. An estimated **5,600** individuals, primarily railway staff and drivers from Turkmenistan, along with a small number of Afghan visa holders, traveled to Turkmenistan. Similarly, approximately **5,100** individuals with a similar profile returned to Afghanistan through the same border.
- **TAJIKISTAN:** The border in Sherkhan-Bandar remains open. An estimated **2,900** Afghans and foreigners with valid visas, gate passes, or permission documents travelled to Tajikistan while an estimated **2,200** individuals returned to Afghanistan.

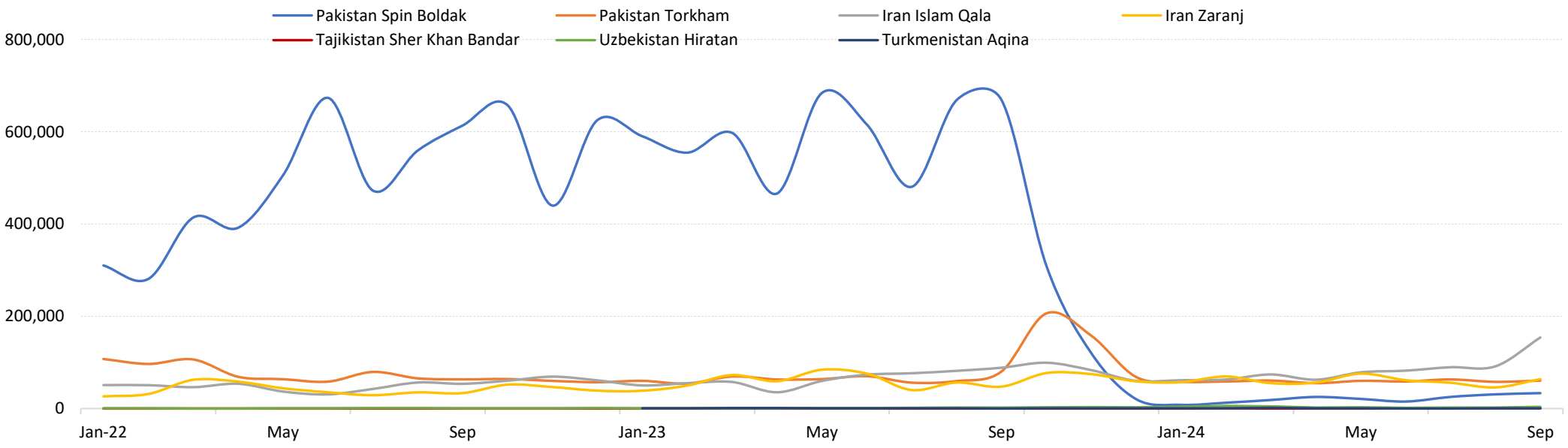
Population Movement per entry point - 1 January - 30 September 2024								
Movement type	**Spin Boldak**	**Torkham**	**Islam Qala**	**Zaranj**	**Sher Khan Bandar**	**Hiratan**	**Aqina**	**Total**
Outflow total (A)	152,500	536,600	520,450	196,400	2,880	29,100	5,620	1,443,600
Outflow Monthly Average	16,944	59,627	57,828	21,820	320	3,234	625	160,399
Inflow total (B)	188,700	531,400	754,600	540,700	2,240	28,230	5,110	2,051,000
Inflow Monthly Average	20,967	59,048	83,845	60,076	249	3,137	568	227,890
Total (A+B)	**341,200**	**1,068,000**	**1,275,000**	**737,000**	**5,120**	**57,340**	**10,730**	**3,494,600**

Note: the figures of in/outflow movements, in the below charts, are estimates and do not represent actual figures of Afghans moving either way to Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

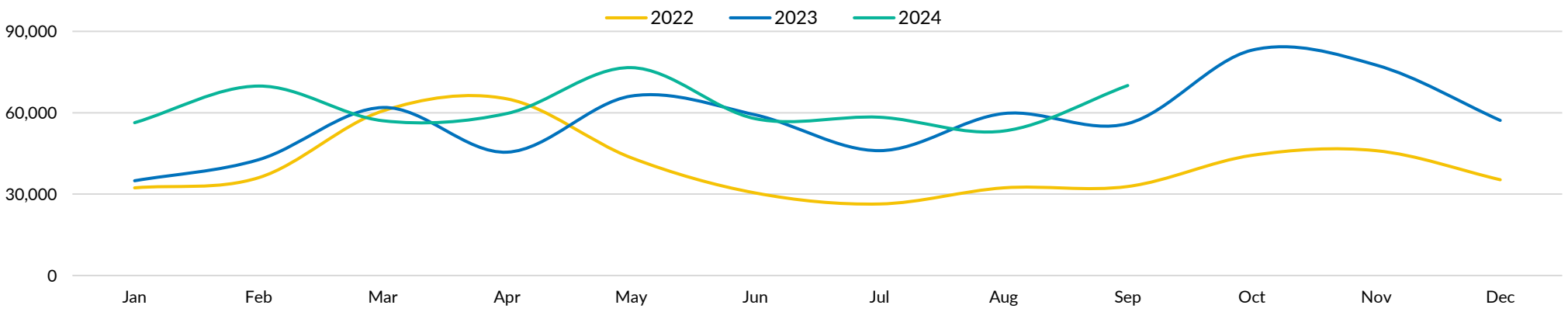
Estimated Monthly Outflow Movement – Individuals (1 January 2022 - 30 September 2024)



Estimated Monthly Inflow Movement – Individuals - (1 January 2022 - 30 September 2024)



Deportation of Undocumented Afghans from Iran (1 January 2022 to 30 September 2024)



- Continue advocacy with the DFA to reverse the bans on female humanitarian workers.
- Call for advocacy with the DFA to resume unconditional access to safe passage for any civilians wishing to leave the country. No impediments should be placed on movement of Afghans fleeing the country and freedom of movement should be facilitated (access to passports, removal of 'reason for leaving' request and male accompaniment requirement for women etc.)
- Call on neighboring, transit and destination States to respect the non-refoulement principle and UNHCR return advisory and halt all pushbacks and deportations to Afghanistan.
- Iran and Pakistan should continue to be commended for their decades-long history of providing asylum and protection to displaced Afghans and should be encouraged to continue to do so, All states are called on to allow access to territory for people fleeing war and persecution.
- Advocate for neighbouring and transit States to transparently investigate reports of human rights violations against civilians at border crossings, provide for access to justice for survivors, and protection of civilians from harm.
- Advocate for unhindered access for humanitarian assistance, and for non- interference in humanitarian activities.
- With the support of donors, humanitarian stakeholders should redouble their efforts to address needs and provide comprehensive response at border points.
- Call on all States to uphold their obligations under international law and facilitate legal and complementary pathways of access for Afghans so that they can move in safety and dignity without having to undertake dangerous journeys.
- Humanitarian stakeholders to scale up protection response and maintain systematic monitoring at border points to ensure timely emergency response - including in case of further increase of returns/deportations from Pakistan and Iran, particularly for persons with specific needs, children at risk, including unaccompanied/separated children, women particularly single females and female heads of households, survivors of gender-based violence (male and female), older persons and persons with disabilities.

Mine awareness session for refugee returnees from Pakistan, Kandahar Encashment Center, Afghanistan © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by the donors who contributed to UNHCR's response in Afghanistan in 2024, as well as those who contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funds which allow us to respond in an agile manner where the needs are greatest:

Bulgaria | Canada | China | Czech Republic | Denmark | European Union | Finland | France | Islamic Development Bank | Japan | Luxemburg | Norway | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Sweden | Switzerland | United States of America | Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund | Central Emergency Response Fund | Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan

Private donors: Qatar Charity | Other private donors from Australia, Egypt, France, Hong Kong, Italy, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and USA.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

For further information or any questions please visit the Afghanistan ODP page or www.unhcr.org/Afghanistan.