Returns Emergency Response

as of 31 March 2026

2025 Overall figures

1.9M
total returns[1]

1.26M
deportations

2026 Key figures

152,100
total returns[1]

46,000
30%

120,400
deportations

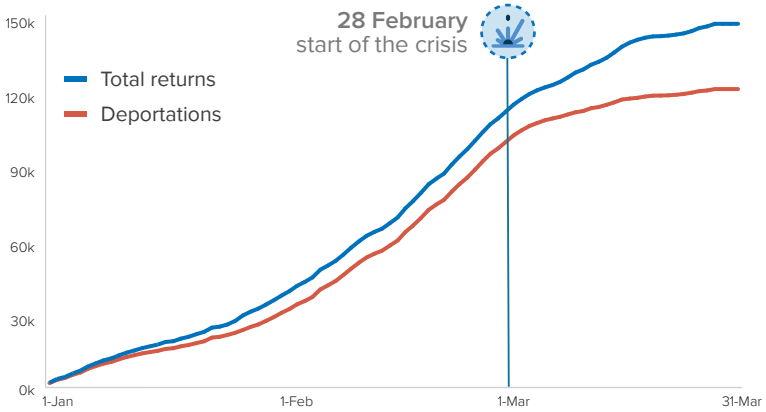
26,100
22%

79% of total returns are **deportations**

Blue figures above correspond to the period of 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026, while the **navy figures** refer only to those who arrived from 28 February to 31 March 2026.

Total returns (cumulative since 1 January 2026)

Number of people in thousands



Context

On 20 March 2025, headcount slips for an estimated 2 million Afghans in Iran expired, after which the Government introduced a regularization and return scheme, requiring slip holders to undergo assessments to determine whether they can remain.

Since then, returns have increased significantly. **In 2025, more than 1.9 million Afghans returned or were deported from Iran** – many not by choice. **In 2026, a further 152,100 Afghans have returned**. These large-scale returns are placing pressure on basic services, housing and livelihoods in Afghanistan, straining host communities and increasing the risks of instability and onward movement.

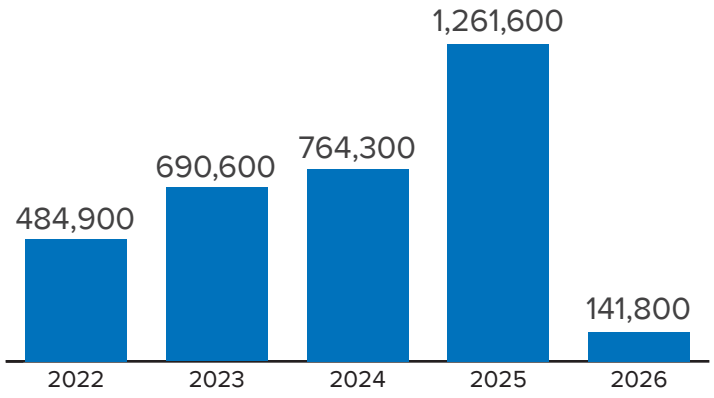
At the same time, escalating hostilities across Asia and the Middle East since 28 February 2026 have further compounded the situation. Government estimates that up to 3.2 million individuals have temporarily left their homes in search of safety. As one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the region, Iran is facing growing pressure amid rising humanitarian needs, highlighting the need for flexible and sustained support.

Deportations

In 2026, over 120,400 Afghans have been deported from Iran, representing 79% of the total returns. In 2025, some 1.9 million Afghans have returned, out of which 67% were deportations. Of these, some 852,800 Afghans were deported after 13 June.

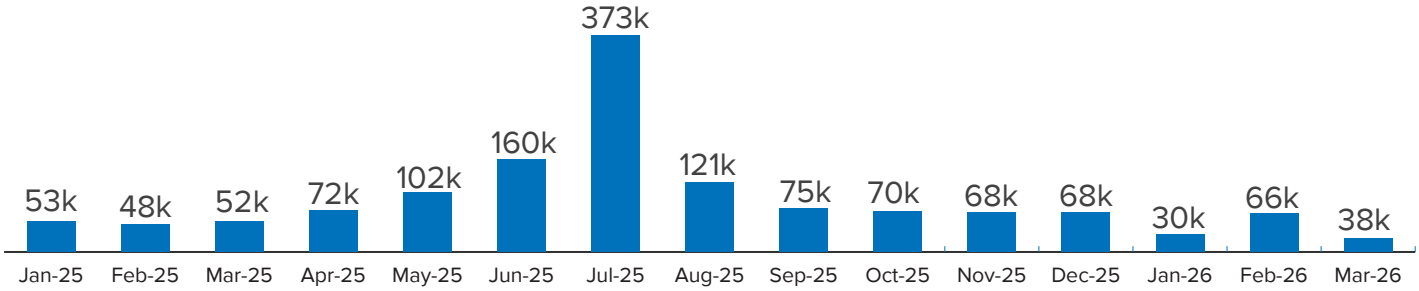
Since the start of the crisis (28 February 2026), there was a reduction of 40% on deportations compared to the previous month of February.

Yearly deportations (as of 31 March 2026)



Monthly deportations since 2025

Number of people deported in thousands as of 31 March 2026



The UN in Afghanistan, including UNHCR, has adopted a harmonized approach to reporting returnee figures, using consolidated data and country-of-arrival figures. The change in UNHCR figures reflects this joint methodology, effective October 2025. Data cleaning efforts undertaken by the participating agencies may result in minor retroactive adjustments to previously reported data.

[1] Includes deportations, assisted VolRep and other returns of Afghans of all statuses such as Amayesh cardholders and the undocumented, excluding passport holders.

Sources: UNHCR, IOM

Returns profiles

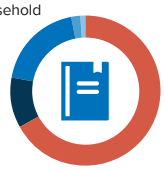
Out of the total returns from 1 April 2025,
52% are women and children, and
58% are families

Ethnicity

- Hazara (11%)
- Pashtoon (27%)
- Tajik (45%)
- Uzbek (8%)
- Others (7%)

Education levels

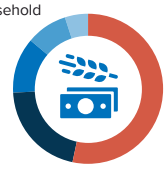
head of household



- No education (67%)
- Primary school (Grades 1 - 6) (11%)
- Secondary school (Grades 7 - 14) (19%)
- University degree (2%)
- Madrasa (1%)

Occupational skills

head of household



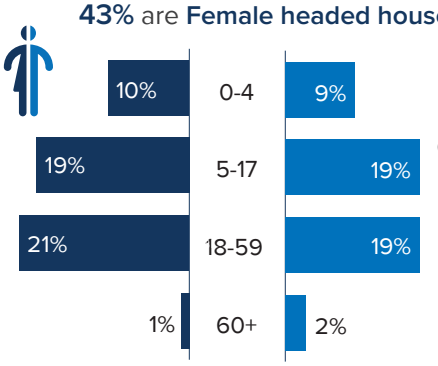
- No skills (51%)
- Unskilled daily wage labour (19%)
- Masonry (14%)
- Agriculture (12%)
- Tailoring (4%)

Returns assisted by UNHCR Afghanistan

UNHCR Afghanistan has scaled up its response capacity at the Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossings. First line protection and humanitarian response delivered by UNHCR teams include protection assistance, referrals to specialized services, transportation, and core relief items. Cash assistance is also provided by UNHCR's supplier HesabPay, ensuring that returnees can access emergency cash assistance immediately on arrival, and avoiding the need to travel to nearest UNHCR Encashment Centers.

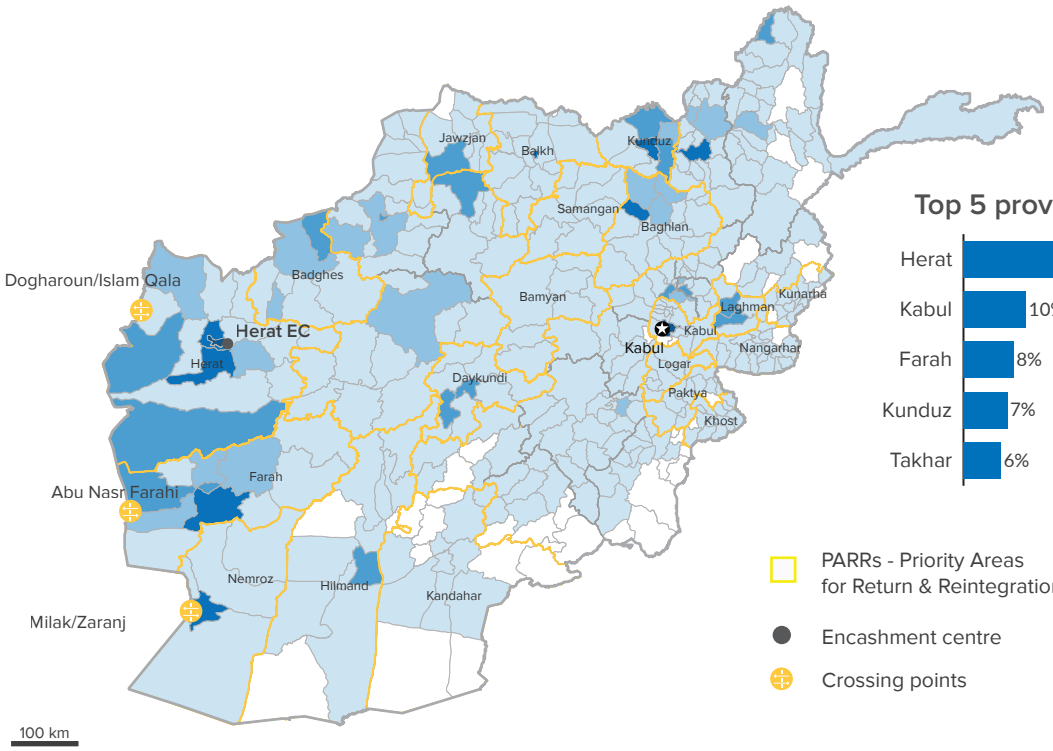
In addition to the cash assistance, UNHCR supports the returnees with emergency relief items including blankets, plastic sheet, kitchen set, jerry cans, hygiene kits and hot meals in Islam Qala. So far in 2026, over 1,702 returning households covering 11,914 Afghan returnees were supported with Core Relief Items (CRIs) and 9,660 received hot meals.

79% of assisted are **women & children**
43% are **Female headed households**



Out of those assisted
1% have disabilities

Afghanistan map - 2026 overall returns from Iran by intended district of destination

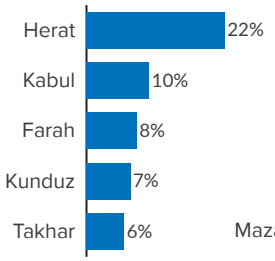


Crossing points:

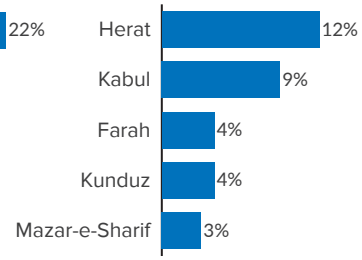
from Iran
- Dogharoun-Islam Qala (53%)
- Milak-Zaranj (47%)

No returns captured in 2026 crossing from Abu Nasr Farahi.

Top 5 provinces



Top 5 districts



- PARRs - Priority Areas for Return & Reintegration
- Encashment centre
- Crossing points

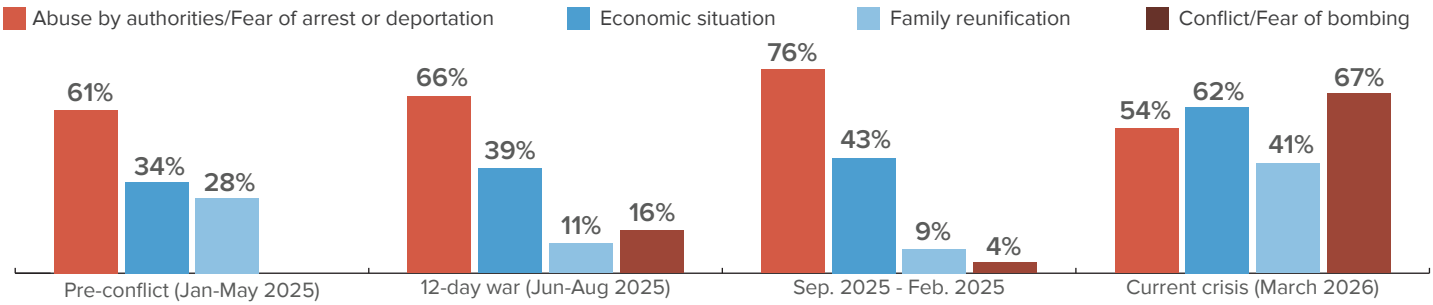
Intended returns per district:
- 0
- 1 - 500
- 501 - 1,000
- 1,001 - 2,500
- 2,501 - 7,500
- 7,501 - 20,000

Source: 2026 UNHCR Inflow Border Monitoring Interviews
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Border Protection Monitoring | Reasons for leaving Iran

Source: 2025-26 UNHCR Inflow Border Monitoring Interviews

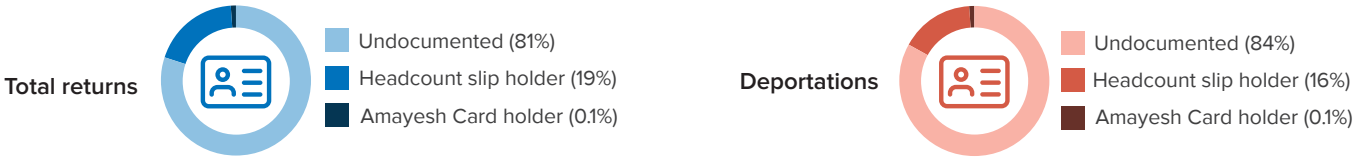
Percentage of interviews reporting reasons | Multiple choice questions may add up to over 100%



Returns by documentation status

From 1 January 2026, headcounted slip holders made up 19% of total returnees, with 16% of total deportees being headcounted slip holders.

2026 returns by status (as of 31 March 2026)



2026 Middle East Crisis

Since the start of the conflict, most movements have been from Tehran and other major urban centres towards northern and rural areas, remaining primarily internal and temporary although on a significant scale.

Despite the volatile situation, refugees continue to approach UNHCR offices, which are operating at limited capacity due to security constraints. Across its offices in Tehran, Esfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz, and Kerman, UNHCR supports access to essential health, education, and social protection services for refugees and host communities. Reception centres and helplines remain open, providing counselling, information, and assistance to those in need.

With partner resources severely stretched, an Inter-Agency Flash Refugee Response Plan was launched on 26 March, seeking $80 million to scale up the protection response and deliver life-saving assistance to 2.8 million people from March to May 2026. UNHCR's requirements stand at $36.23 million.

Key figures

1.65 Million
Refugees and others in need of international protection
Source: UNHCR

up to 3.2 Million
Temporarily relocated countrywide in Iran in 2026
Source: Government of Iran

UNHCR assistance since 28 February 2026

45,300
Afghan refugees assisted in the first month of the response

out of which:

9,230
refugees received multi-purpose cash assistance

5,200
individual counselling (in-person and/or helpline)