UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | CORE

PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

Returns Emergency Response

as of 4 January 2024

Key figures

493,300 total returns[1]

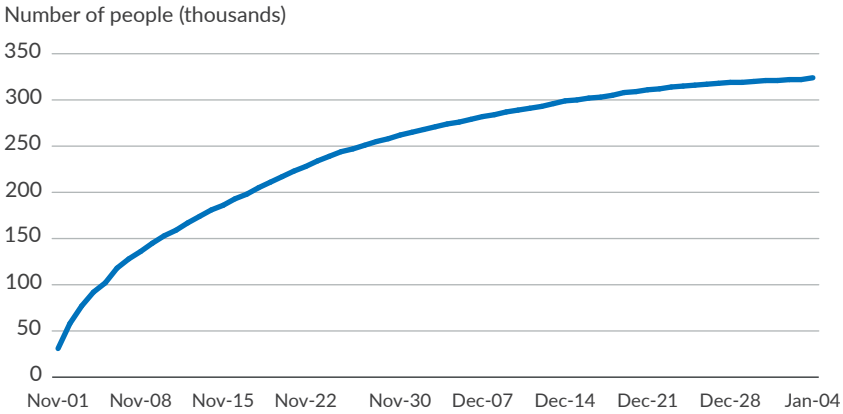
25,200 assisted VolRep

29,300 deportations

323,600	20,800	28,000
66%	83%	95%

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

Total returns (cumulative since 1 Nov. 2023)[2]



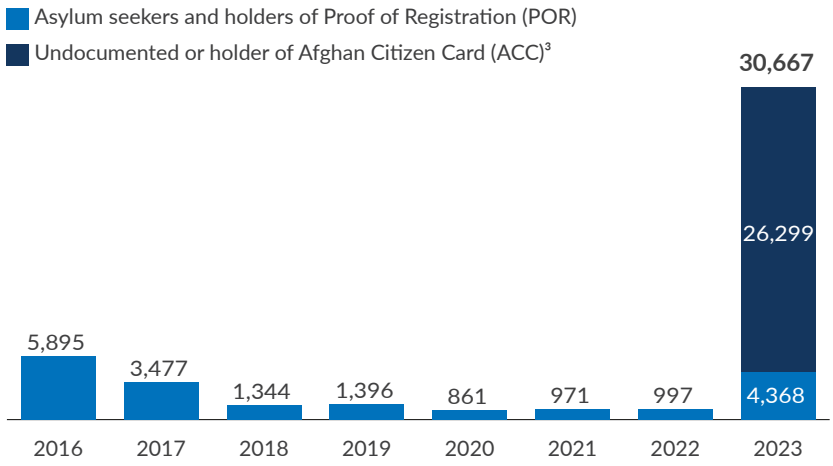
Context

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, some 493,300 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan. In January over 20 deportations have been registered, compared to some 3,500 in December, 24,500 deportations in November and 960 in October. Most movements took place through Torkham and Spin Boldak-Chaman official borders, although Badini, Ghulam Khan and Bahramcha are also being used.

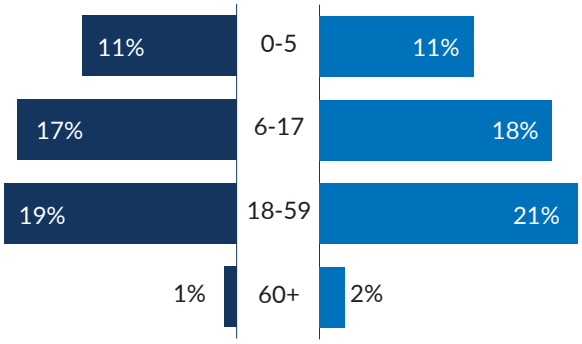
As of 31 December, over 30,600 individuals have been arrested/detained in 2023. This represents a over nine-fold increase in arrests/detentions as compared to the 2023 total as of the end of October.

Arrests and detentions (from 2016 up to 31 Dec. 2023)



Returns assisted by UNHCR
by Demographic profile

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



Gender breakdown of head of households

30% are **Women** | **70%** are **Men**

Situation map

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

[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 31 December 2023 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.*

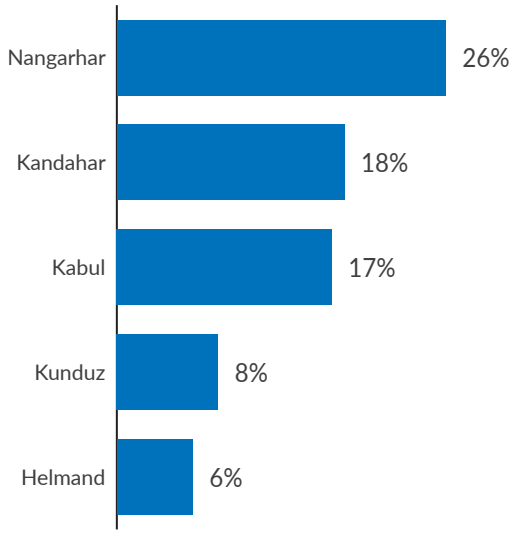
Sources: UNHCR, IOM

Returns assisted by UNHCR

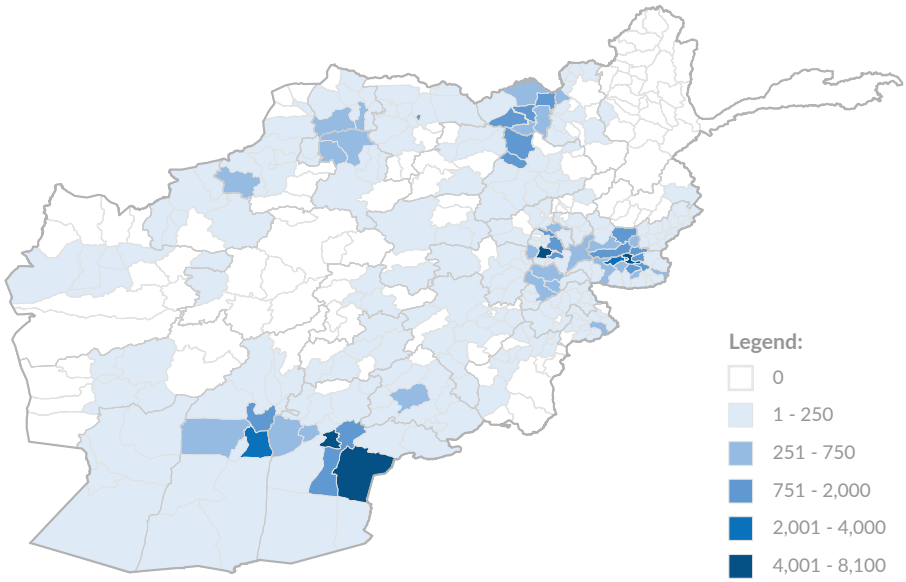
In Afghanistan, UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance to PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum seeker certificate holders and other Protection referrals. Since 15 September 2023, some 65,300 individuals returning from Pakistan have been provided with cash assistance in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad Encashment centres, including over 43,400 PoR cardholders. Out of the assisted, some 3% are individuals with disabilities and over 2,500 PoR card holders, UNHCR slip holders and Asylum certificate holders were deported.

At least one in four households assisted are headed by women. 34% of them intend to return to five provincial capitals (Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Lashkargah and Mazar-e-Sharif).

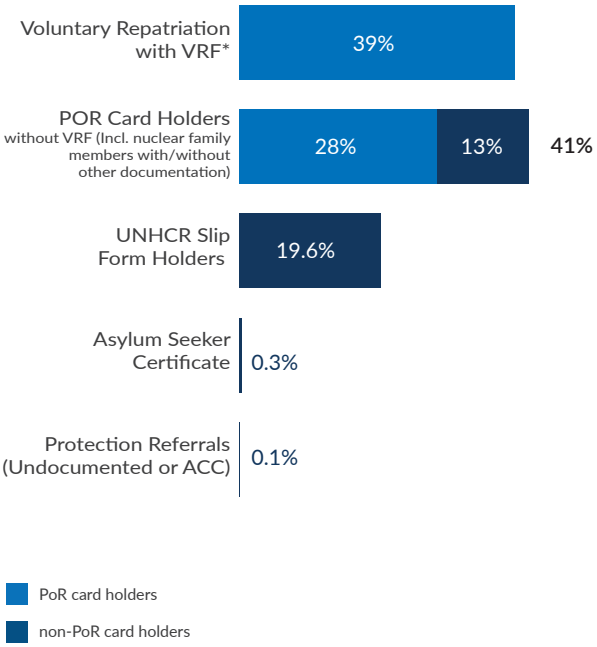
Top 5 provinces of intended destination



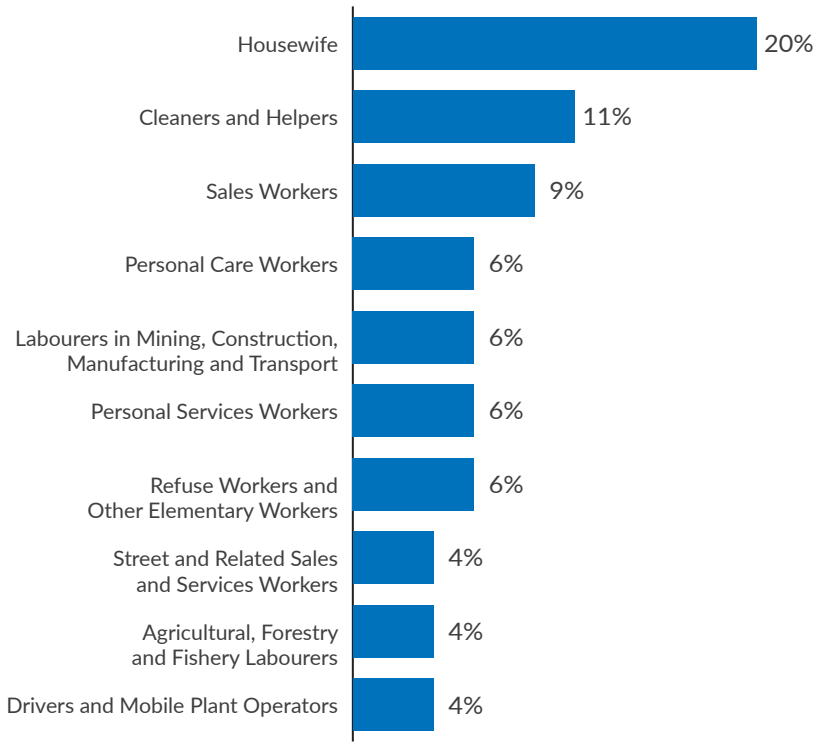
Intended districts of destination



Documentation status



Top 10 occupation of the head of households



** Voluntary Repatriation Form.*

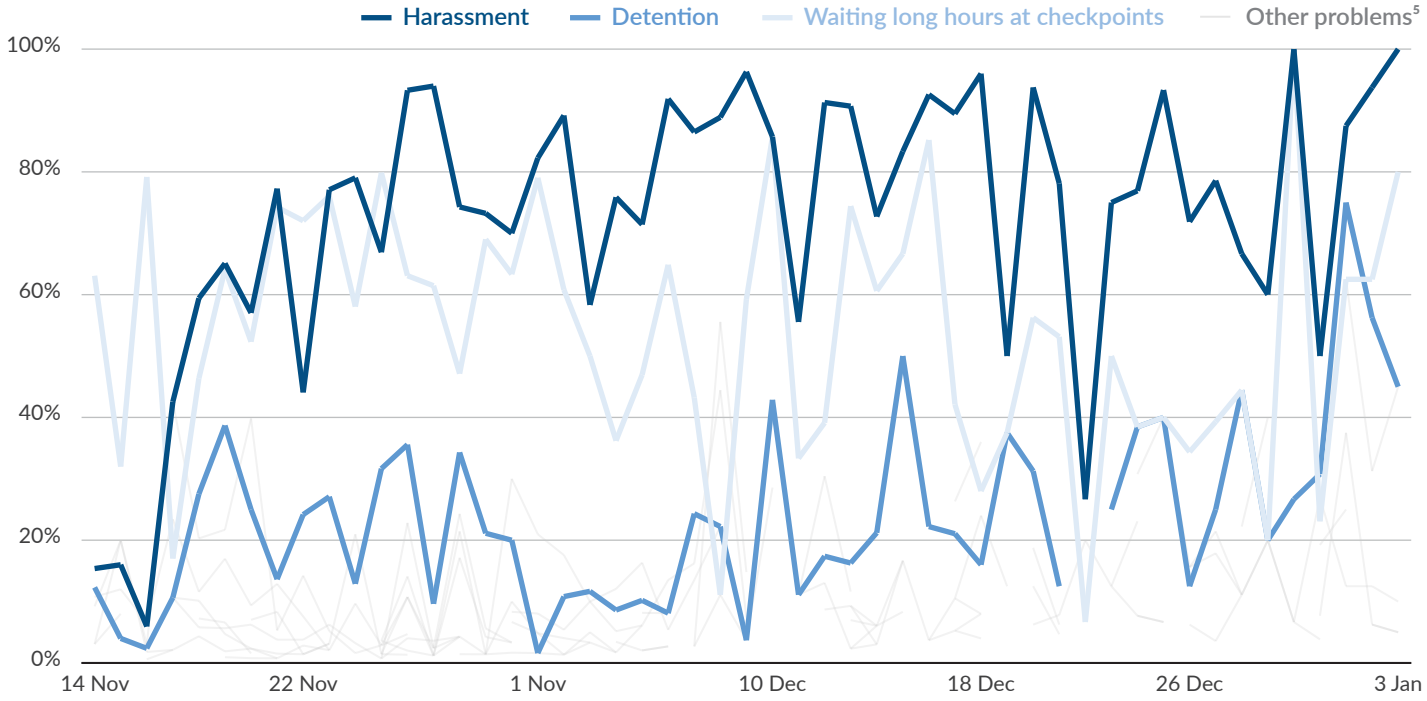
Border Protection Monitoring

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.

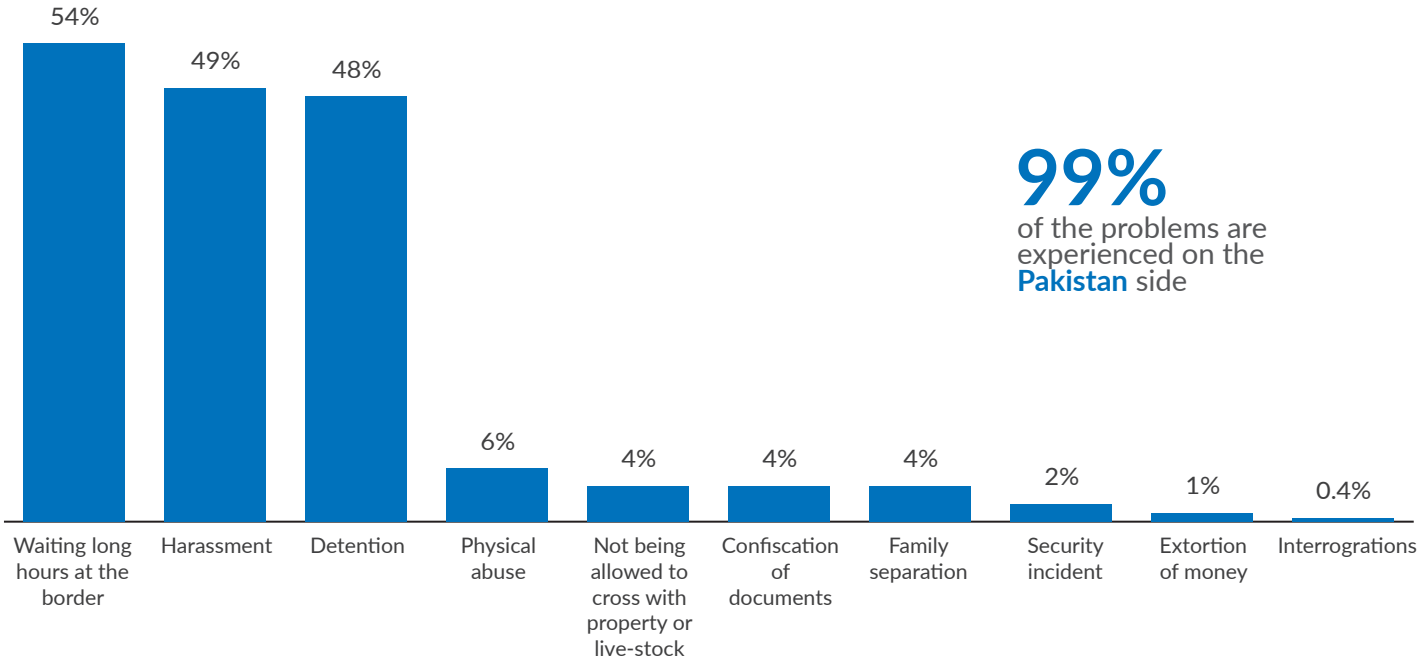
Since 12 November, the most reported problems experienced prior to the cross-border movement have consistently been harassment, waiting long hours at checkpoints and detention. Interrogations has continued to be the least reported issue.

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

Percentage interviews per day reporting problems

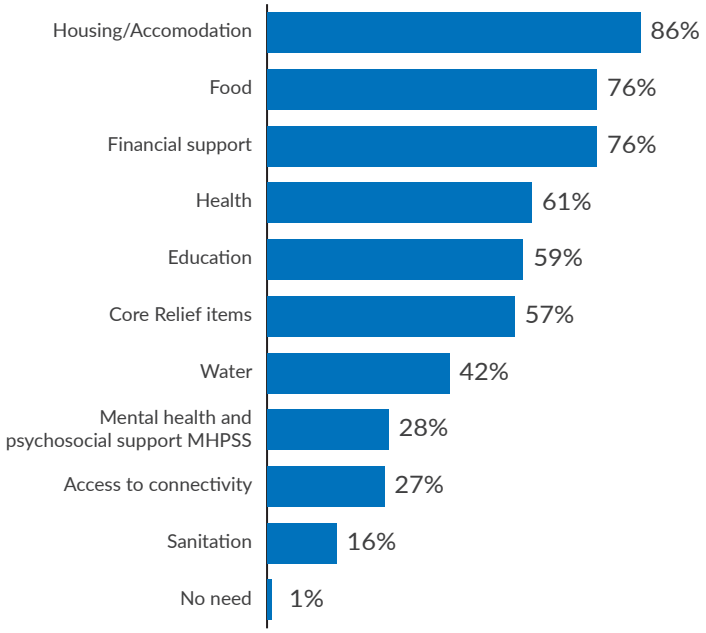


Problems experienced at the border point on Pakistan and Afghanistan side[4]

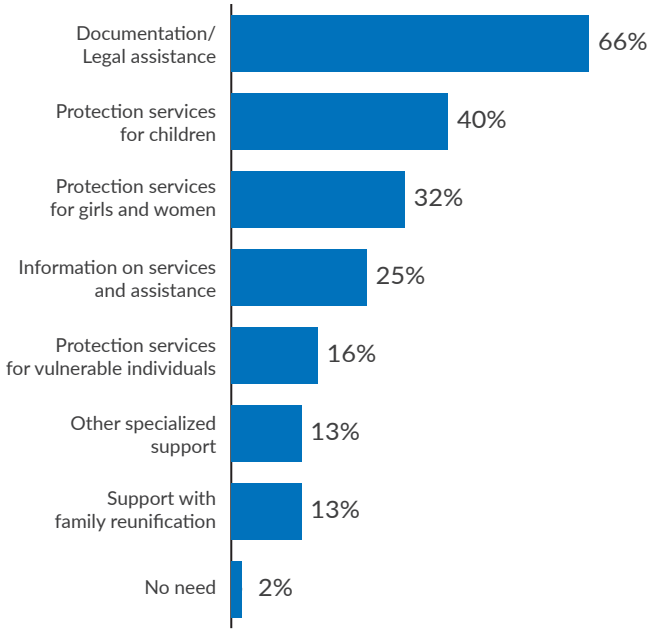


[4] *Multiple choice questions, may add up to over 100%.*
[5] *Other problems include: confiscation of documents, money extorsion, family separation, interrogations, lease not extended, not being allowed to cross with property or livestock, paid bribe to pass police checkpoints, physical abuse and security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

Needs upon arrival in final destination[6]



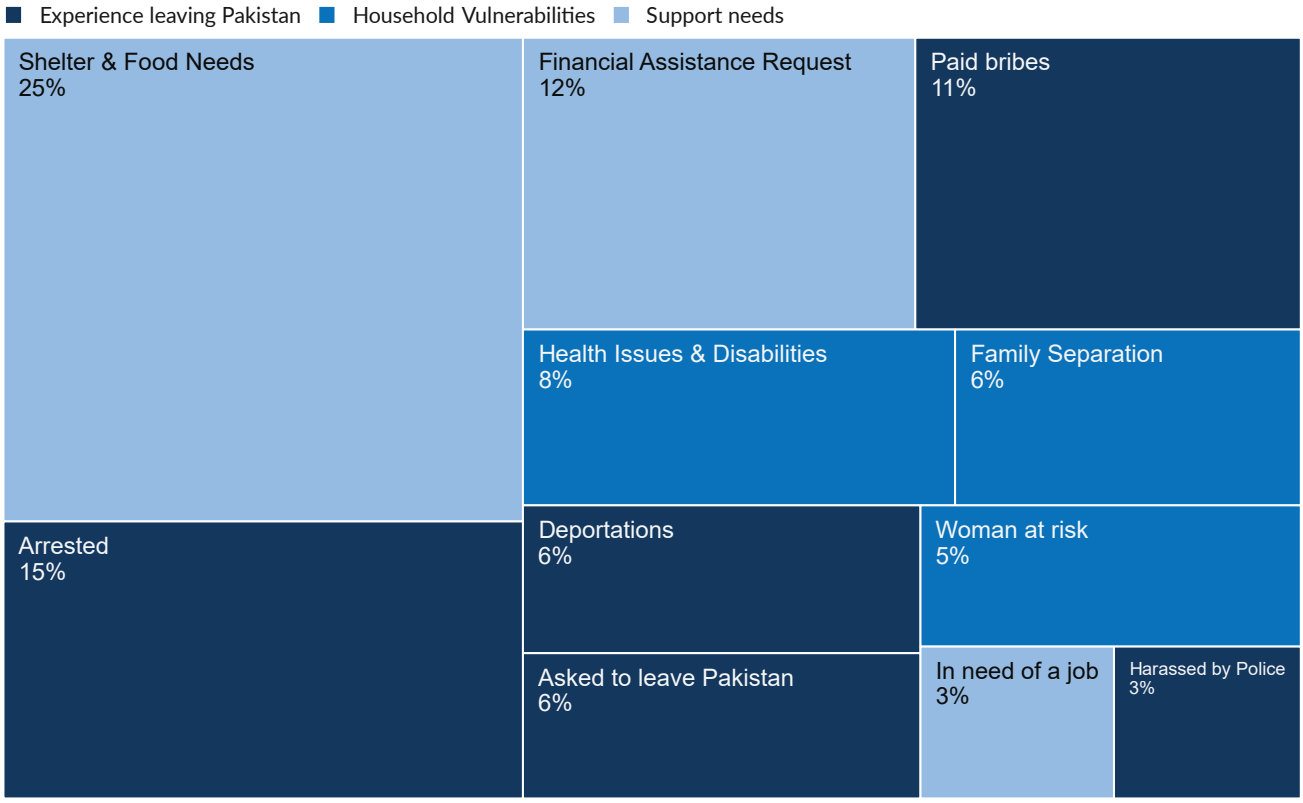
Protection services required in final destination[6]



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 analysed with Artificial intelligence using natural language processing for semantic similarities and patterns.

The analysis done with a word count of over 11,000, found 11 detailed clusters shown in the diagram below. These 11 clusters can be broadly categorized into experiences with police in Pakistan, specific vulnerabilities in the family and requests for support to meet needs in Afghanistan. Within the 11 clusters, shelter and food needs, arrests in Pakistan, financial assistance requirements and paying bribes were the top four most highlighted. The top highlighted clusters vary with documentation status. For UNHCR Slip holders specifically, health issues and disabilities was highlighted within the top four clusters instead of financial assistance.



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