PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

Returns Emergency Response

as of 23 May 2024

Key figures

595,200 total returns[1]

90,700 UNHCR-assisted

30,900 deportations

425,500 — 71%

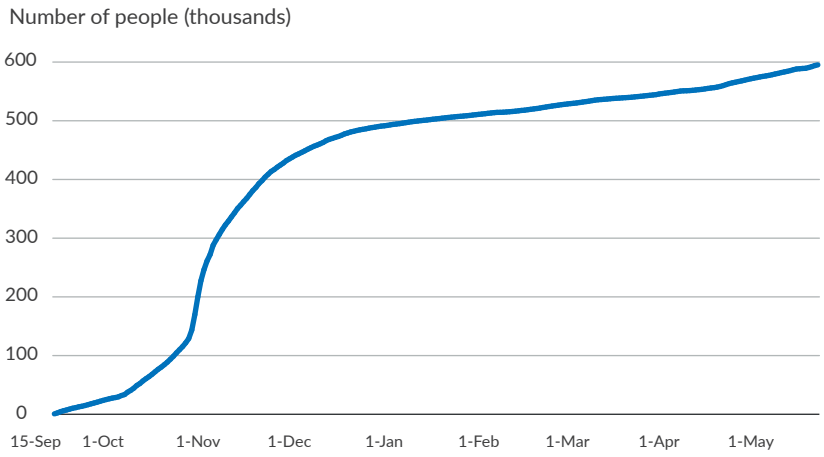
86,400 — 95%

29,700 — 96%

Out of the overall returns **49%** are female, of which **29%** are girls. **59%** are children.

Blue figures above correspond to the period of 15 September 2023 to 9 May 2024, while the **navy figures** refer only to those who arrived from 1 November 2023 to 23 May 2024.

Total returns since 15 September 2023[2]



Context

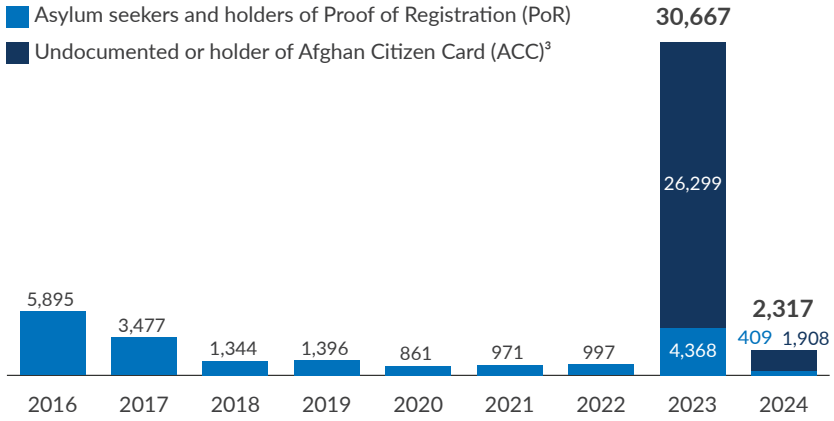
On 3 October, Pakistan's national Apex Committee endorsed a plan to repatriate over a million foreigners without valid documents, largely Afghans, requiring them to leave the country by 1 November.

Since 15 September, **over 595,000 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan**, of which over 104,000 have returned in 2024. Returns have been steadily increasing since March, with **50% of the 2024 returns taking place in April and so far in May**.

UNHCR has assisted over 90,700 individuals, including some 54,000 PoR cardholders, of which 32,700 were assisted via UNHCR voluntary repatriation programme.

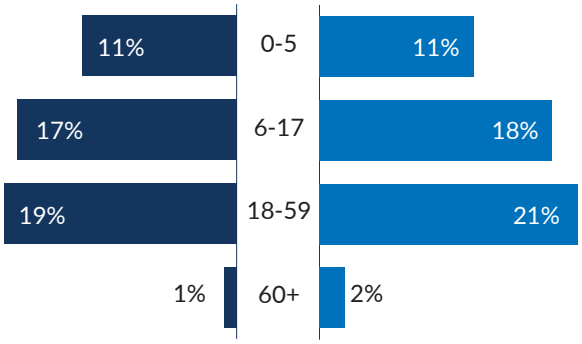
The last two weeks saw the overall reported rate of arrest and detention decrease by approximately 40 per cent, compared to the previous two weeks.

Arrests and detentions (from 2016 up to 18 May 2024)



Returns assisted by UNHCR Afghanistan
by Demographic profile

48% of assisted are **Female** | **52%** of assisted are **Male**



Out of those assisted **2.4%** have disabilities

Gender breakdown of head of households

28% are **Female** | **72%** are **Male**

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 18 May 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.

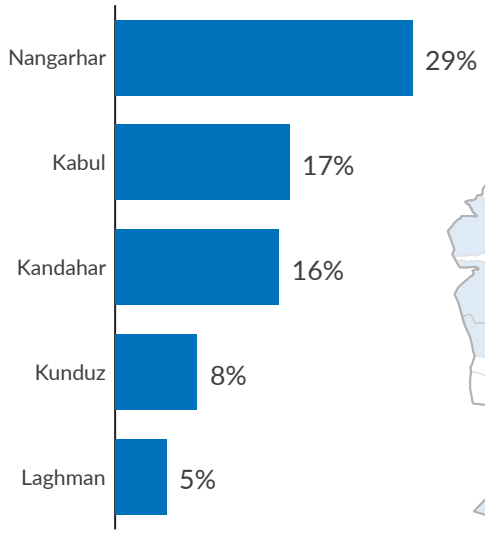
Sources: UNHCR, IOM

Returns assisted by UNHCR Afghanistan

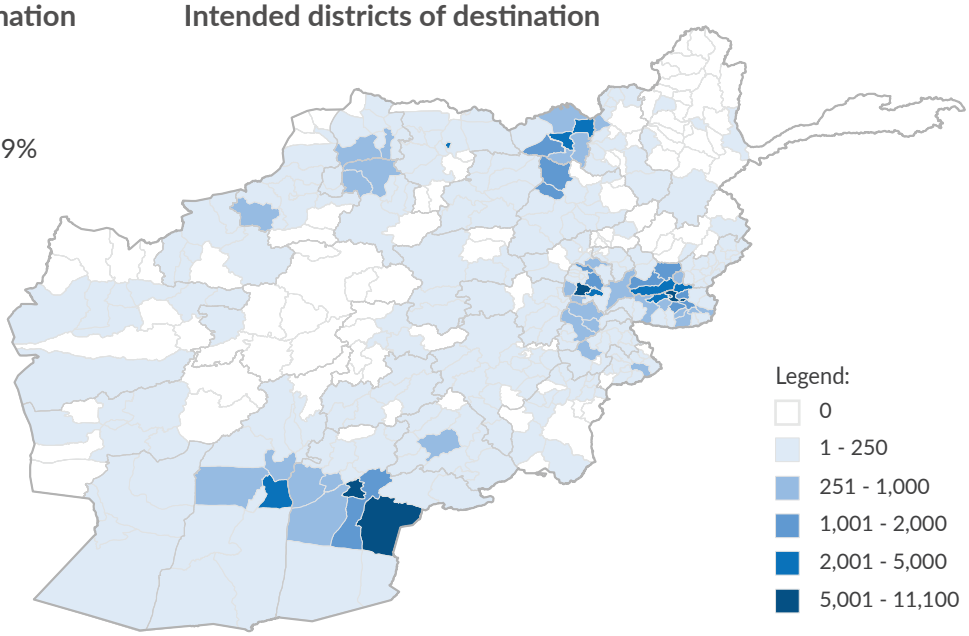
In Afghanistan, UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance to PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum seeker certificate holders and other Protection referrals. Since 15 September 2023, some 90,700 individuals returning from Pakistan have been provided with cash assistance in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad encashment centres, including over 54,000 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).

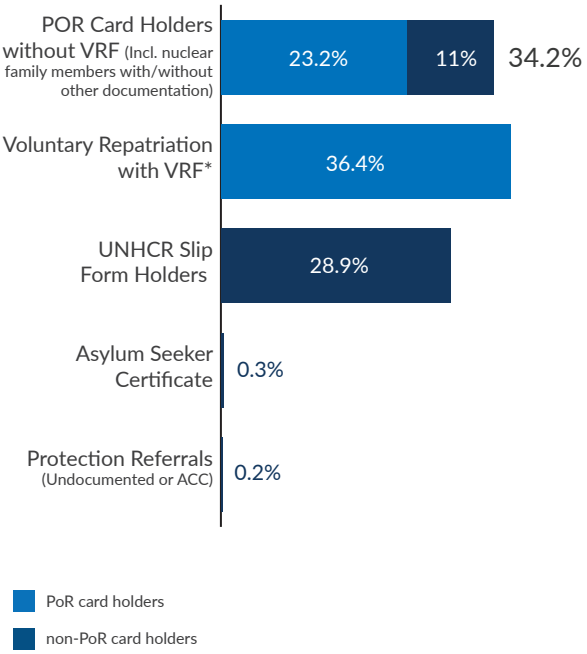
Top 5 provinces of intended destination



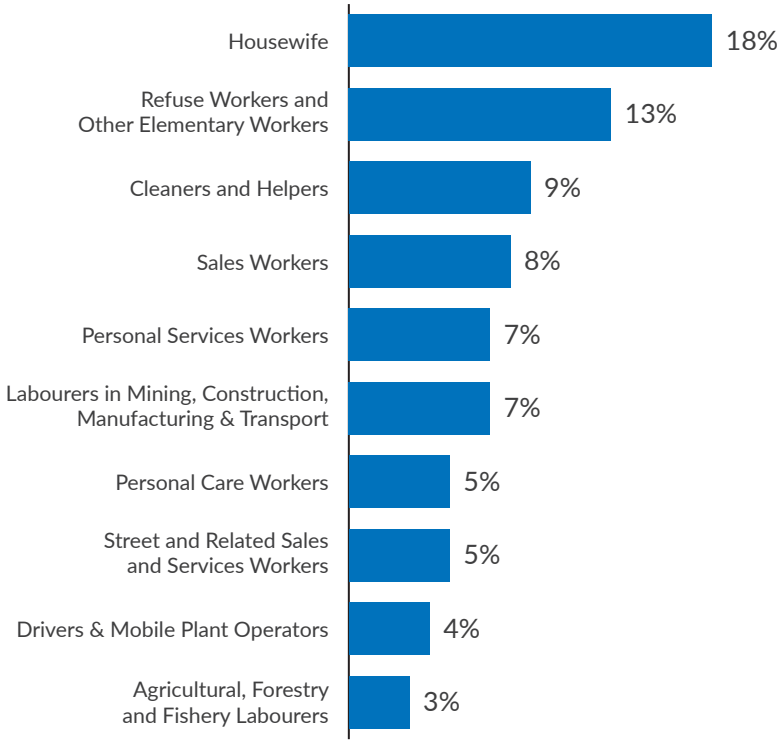
Intended districts of destination



Documentation status



Top 10 occupation of the head of households

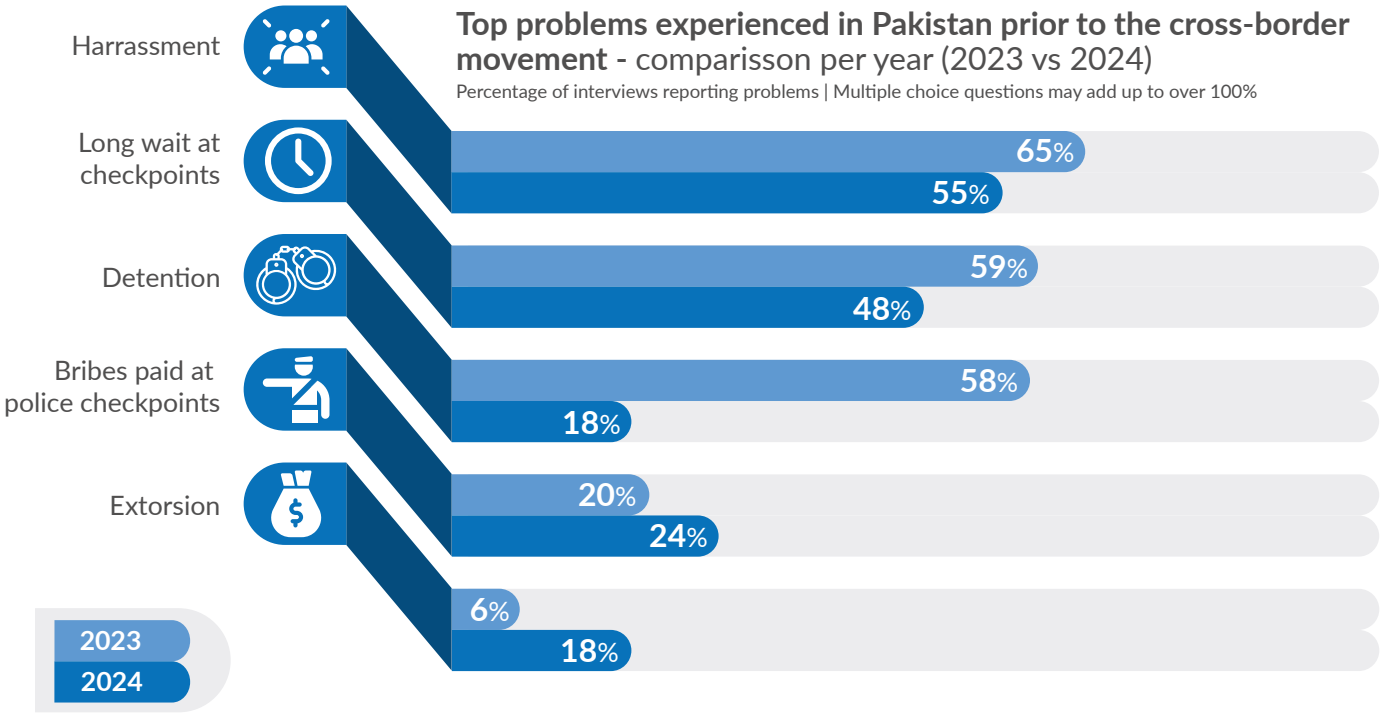


** Voluntary Repatriation Form.*

Border Protection Monitoring

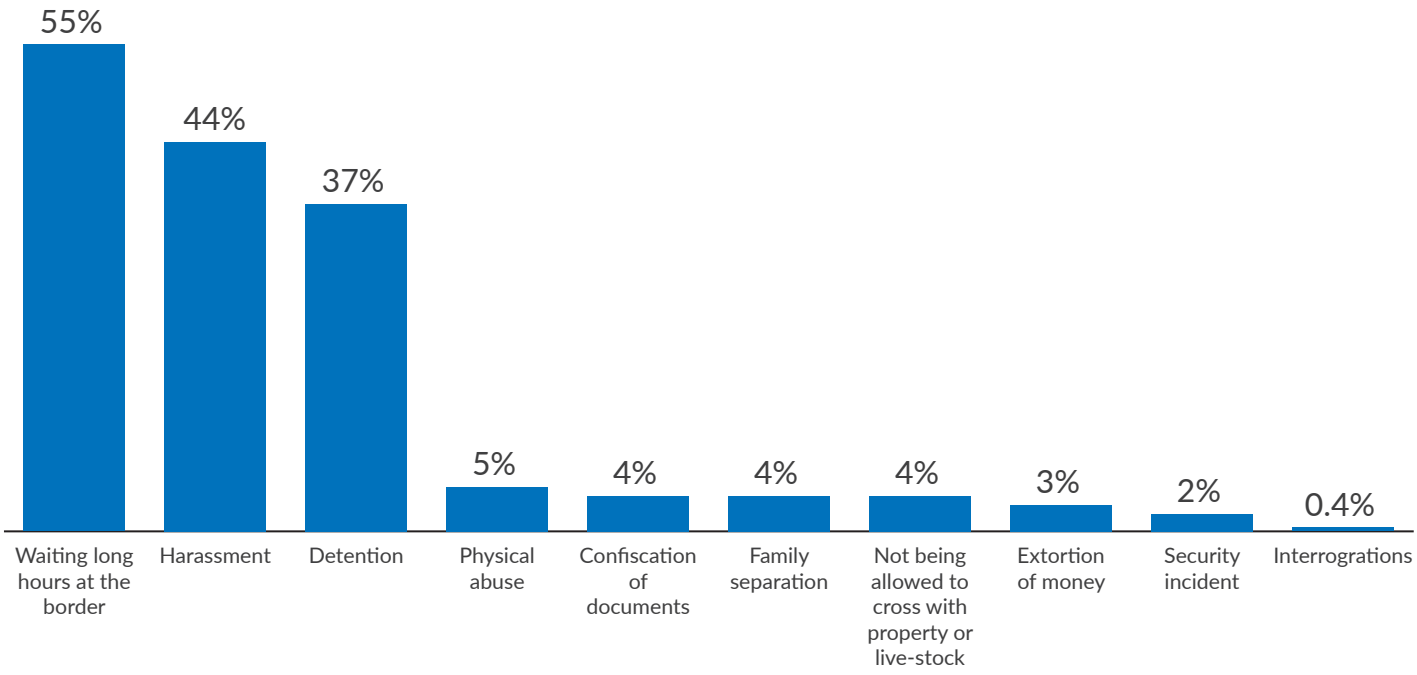
UNHCR and its partner Wadan in Afghanistan have scaled up protection activities at the border. Daily presence consists of Border Protection monitoring through interviews with returnees including deportees in order to identify protection concerns and risks, as well as their intended areas of return in 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.



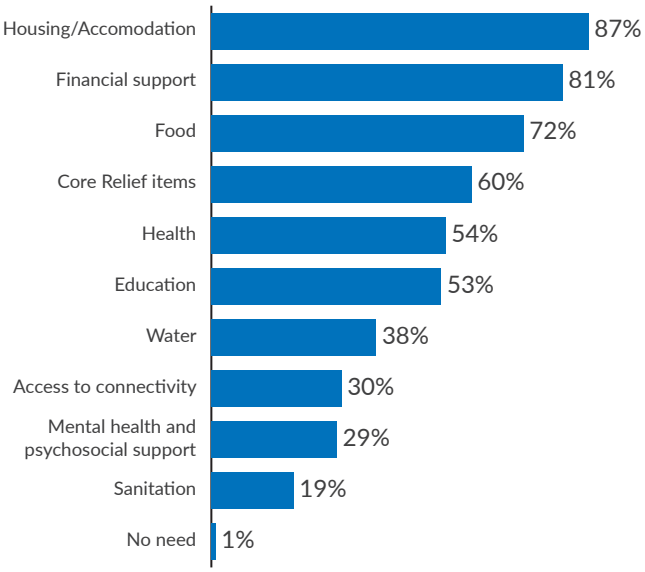
Problems experienced at the Pakistan border point

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



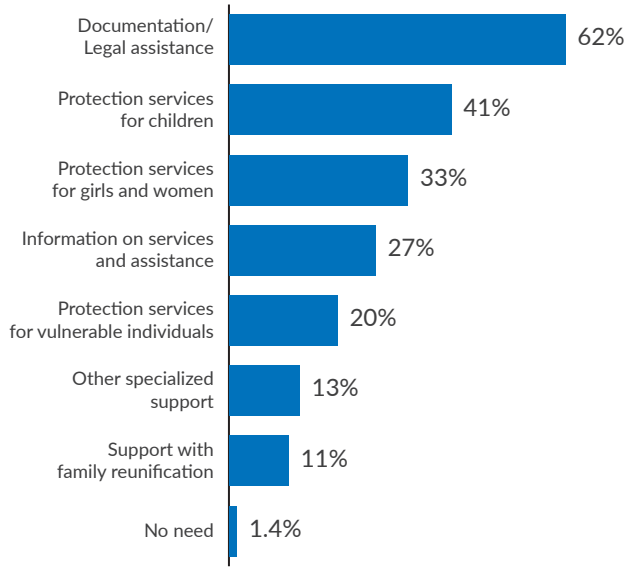
Needs upon arrival in final destination

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



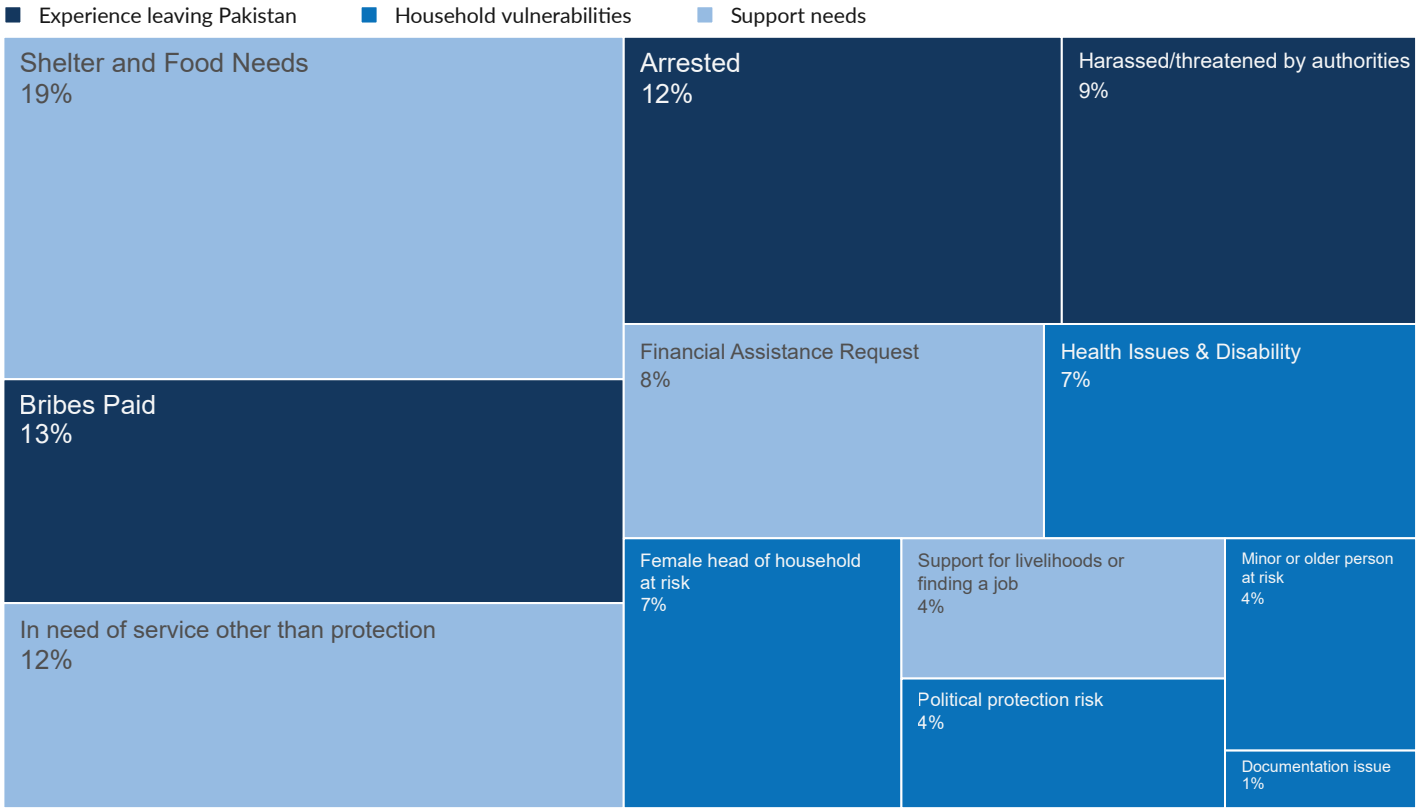
Protection services required in final destination

Percentage of interviews | 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 analysed with Artificial Intelligence using natural language processing for semantic similarities and patterns.

The analysis done with a word count of over 34,554, 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, bribes paid, need for services other than protection and experiences of being arrested, were the top four most highlighted, compared to, shelter and food needs, experiences of being arrested, need for services other than protection and harassment by authorities in early May.

The top highlighted clusters vary with documentation status. For UNHCR Slip holders specifically, paying bribes was the most highlighted cluster followed by shelter and food needs and experiences of being arrested. For those without documentation, in need of support other than Protection services was the most frequently mentioned followed by female heads of households at risk. The later was also the most frequently mentioned by all women heads of household.