

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY- DECEMBER 2024



UNHCR scales up presence at official border crossings and encashment centers to respond to Afghans returning from Pakistan and Iran. Returnee families are heading to their intended destination after receiving assistance at Encashment Center in Kandahar, Kandahar, Afghanistan. © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production



146,600
Inflow & Outflow
Monitoring Interviews



128,670
88%



17,920
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 - 31 December 2024. UNHCR engaged local NGO partners in this exercise to underline 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 in April/ May 2024 to capture information in line with the emerging protection context in the region. Furthermore, in November 2024, UNHCR expanded protection/border monitoring activities including inflow and outflow monitoring at *Abo Nasr-i-Farahi* crossing point in Farah province bordering with Iran. Since July 2024, the Iranian authorities have been emphasizing the return/deportation of approximately two million undocumented Afghans from Iran by March 2025. As a result, they may deport Afghans through the Abo Nasri Farahi crossing point into Afghanistan. Additionally, due to significant controls imposed by both the Iranian authorities and DfA at unofficial crossing points in Herat and Nimroz provinces, travelers and smugglers may consider using the crossing point in Farah to travel to Iran.
- 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 - 31 December 2024, 146,594 outflow and inflow monitoring interviews were conducted, involving 128,675 male and 17,919 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 17,919 respondents). In 2023, the female sample size was 11% i.e., 17,406 interviews have been conducted among a total of 165,376 respondents.



62,000
AFGHANS
15,000 families



58,370
94%



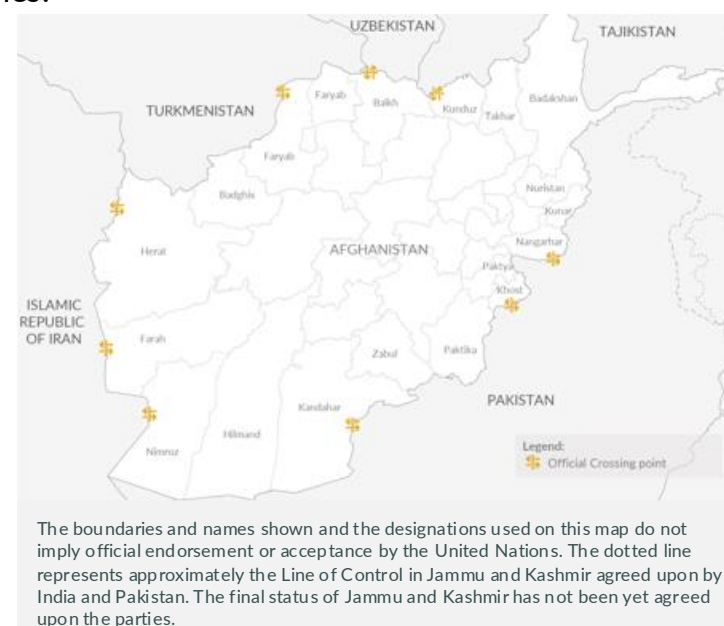
3,630
6%

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- 62,007 Afghans (58,375 males and 3,632 females) were interviewed prior to their departure to Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This includes 42,825 interviews with single individuals and 15,065 interviews with the families including 2,870 with families headed by a female, and 4,117 interviews with medical cases. 57 percent of the respondents were 18-34 years old, 40 percent were 35-59 years old, one percent 12-17 years old, and two percent were 60 and above.
- UNHCR border monitoring partners conducted 1,057 KIs. A large majority (89 percent) of Afghan returnees and deportees interviewed upon arrival stated that they fled 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 21 percent in 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, shooting, 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 mentioned 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 work 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 2024, 2,545 respondents in family groups with women and girls crossed to Iran which is slightly lower as compared to 3,183 respondents who went to Iran in family groups with women and girls during the same time last year. Similarly, a total of 12,093 respondents in family groups went to Pakistan which is significantly low as compared to 25,955 respondents in family groups went to Pakistan during 2023.
- Close to 50 percent of respondents who travelled to Iran and 11 percent to Pakistan cited that they experienced feelings of stress affecting their day-to-day life mainly due to economic hardship, uncertainty about future, food insecurity, health problem, ban on education for females, tension in the community, child labor, family separation, arrest/detention 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 allowing 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. 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 more outflow movements to Pakistan via unofficial crossing points i.e. an average of 6,400 people on a weekly basis in 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 2024 (close to one million individuals, an average of 2,700 individuals daily) represents a significant increase compared to the estimated 619,500 individuals (an average of 1,697 daily) recorded in 2023. Outflow movement of undocumented Afghans to Iran via unofficial crossing points in Herat (2,600 – 3,000 individuals weekly) 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) in 2024. The movements via unofficial crossing points were facilitated by the smugglers who reportedly charge around AFN 7,000 – 12,000 (around \$100 – \$170) per person. Outflow movement from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan remains similar to the trends recorded in 2023. Only Afghans in possession of valid passport and visa can travel to Central Asian countries.

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 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, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, India, Turkey, and the Russian Federation.





Pendular movements trends

- UNHCR partners, undertaking border monitoring, report pendular movements between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The outflow respondents (62,007 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 (24,754) who wanted to travel to Iran, 41 percent reported it was their second time visiting the country, while 23 percent mentioned it was their third time. Some 11 percent mentioned they went to Iran more than three times, while the remaining 25 percent stated it was their first time traveling to Iran. Conversely, 81 percent of respondents (36,115) who travelled to Pakistan reported multiple visits. Among them, 26 percent mentioned it was their second visit, 29 percent stated it was their third visit, and 25 percent mentioned that they went to Pakistan more than three times, while the remaining 19 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 (988,000 individuals) and Pakistan (1 million 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/ were 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.
 - Between 15 June – 31 December 2024, the monitoring teams conducted a total of 20,922 outflow monitoring interviews with Afghans who went to Pakistan. Out of 20,922 respondent, close to 1 percent (or 169 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 visa to travel to Pakistan.
 - 4 percent (or 744 respondents) indicated observing a number of Afghans, including their relatives and community members, who returned/were deported post October 2023 due to IFRP, went back to Pakistan for a second/third time.
 - Close to 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they went back to Pakistan due to violation of human rights and challenging protection environment particularly the ban on female education and work. Additionally fear of arbitrary arrest/detention, limited ability to express opinion/advocate for right, discrimination and violence in Afghanistan were also reported.
- The same questions have been posed to a total of 356 key informants that were interviewed between 15 June – 31 December. Out of 356, 29 KIs including 14 in Dak crossing point in Nimroz province, 11 in Badini (in Zabul), five in Dangam (in Kunar) and 20 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 29 KIs in Dak, eight KI said he witnessed that small number (1-10 individuals) are going back to Pakistan; 21 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.
- 13 KIs were not able to provide a number.
- As provided by the KIs, these individuals went back to Pakistan to avoid the ban on females accessing education and work in Afghanistan.
- 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.
- Based on media reports, on 21 December 2024, the DfA Supreme Leader [issued a decree](#) and asked the Ministry of Interior to apprehend traffickers, involved in smuggling Afghans out of Afghanistan, and hand them over to military courts for prosecution. Subsequently, on 23 December, the DfA Governor for Nimroz province [announced the closure](#) of Dak crossing point in Chahar Burjak district of Nimroz province which is near Afghanistan's border with Pakistan/Iran. The decree was accompanied by [a call of the DfA Supreme Leader](#) to concerned ministries and agencies to take measures to combat the issue and raise public awareness regarding its dangers. Based on KIs interviewed by the UNHCR border monitoring partner (as of 18 January 2025), Dak crossing point have been closed for pedestrian movements.

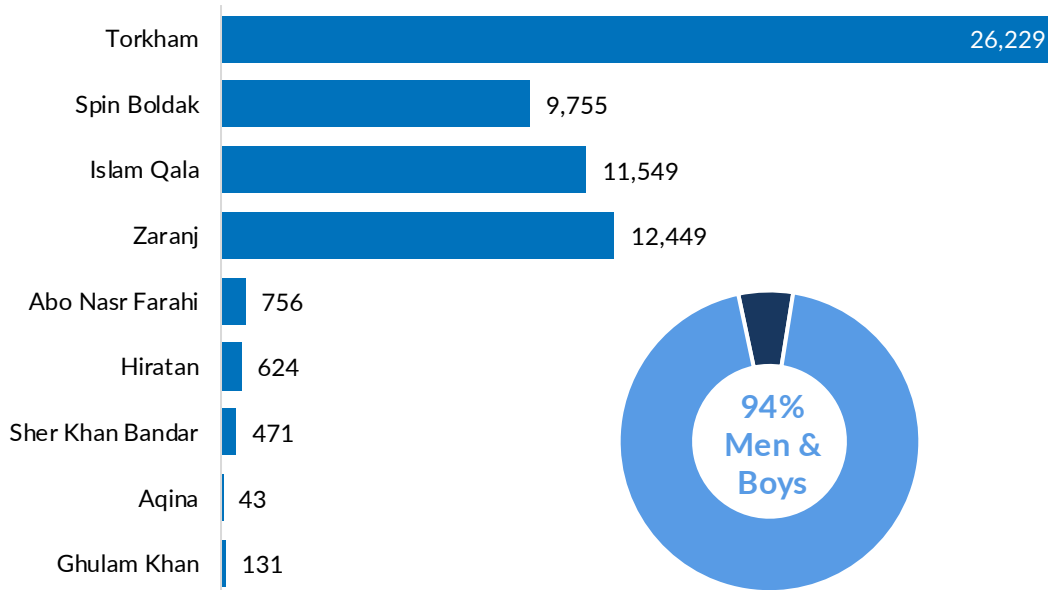


A returnee family from Pakistan receiving healthcare in Kandahar Encashment Center, Kandahar, Afghanistan
© UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

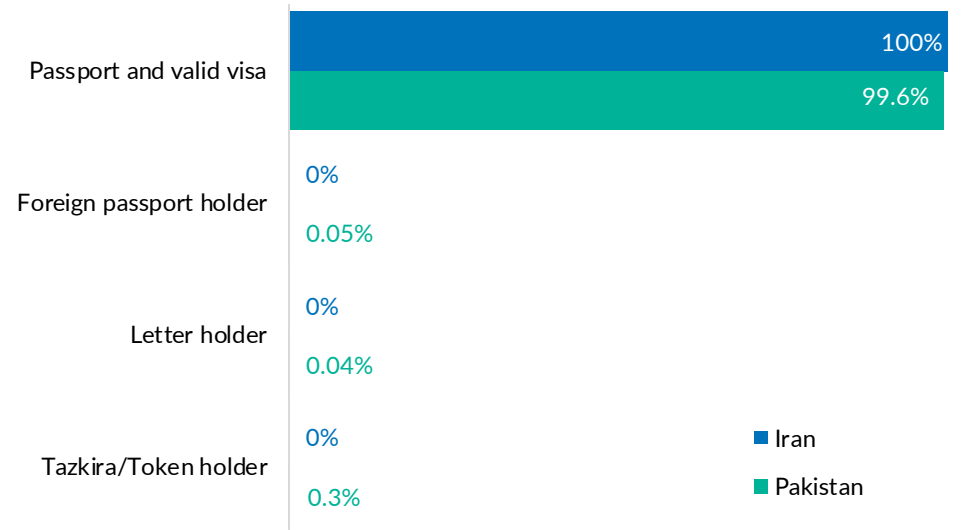


Summary Findings: Official Crossing Points

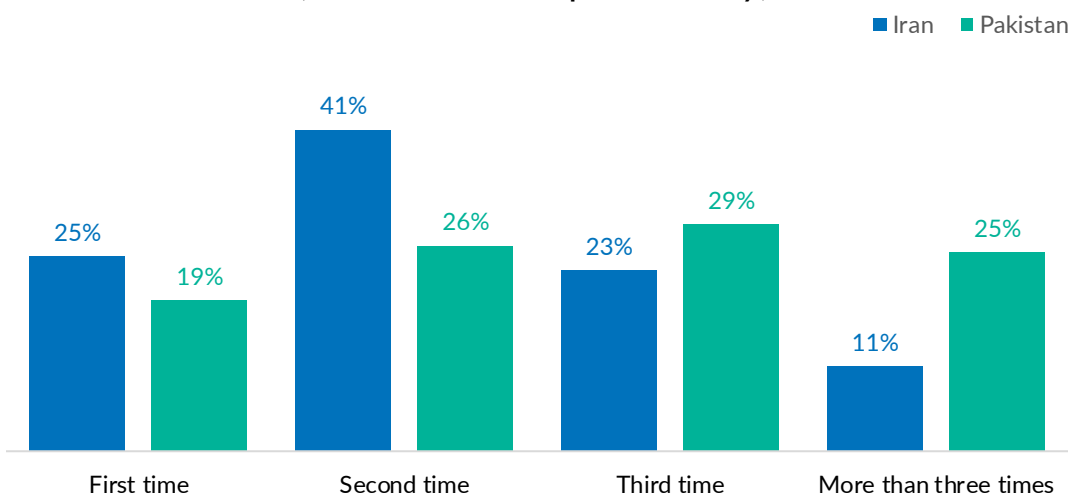
Interviews by entry point



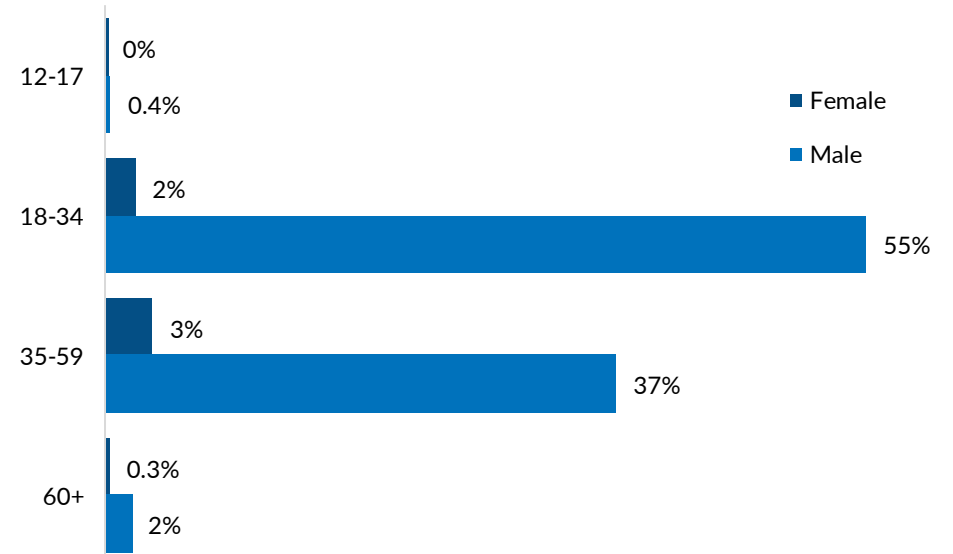
Documentation status of respondents



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

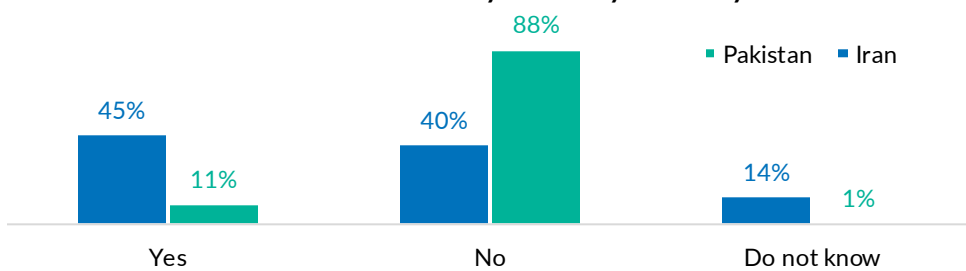


Respondents age and gender

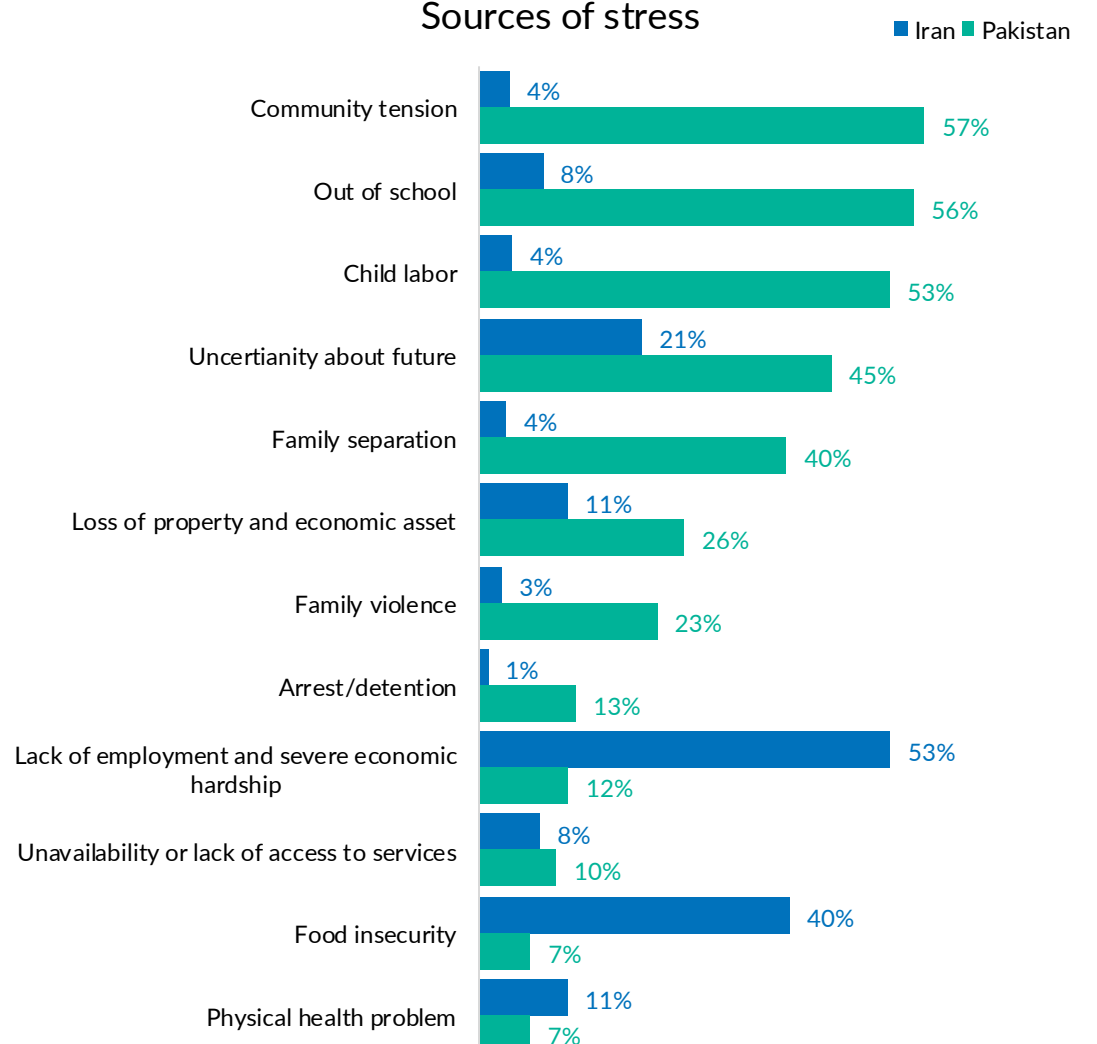


*Movement frequency only refers to movers who were traveling to Iran and Pakistan via official crossing points and hold passports. Based on information collected at unofficial crossing points, more than half of Afghans fleeing to Iran are undocumented and flee Afghanistan through unofficial crossing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

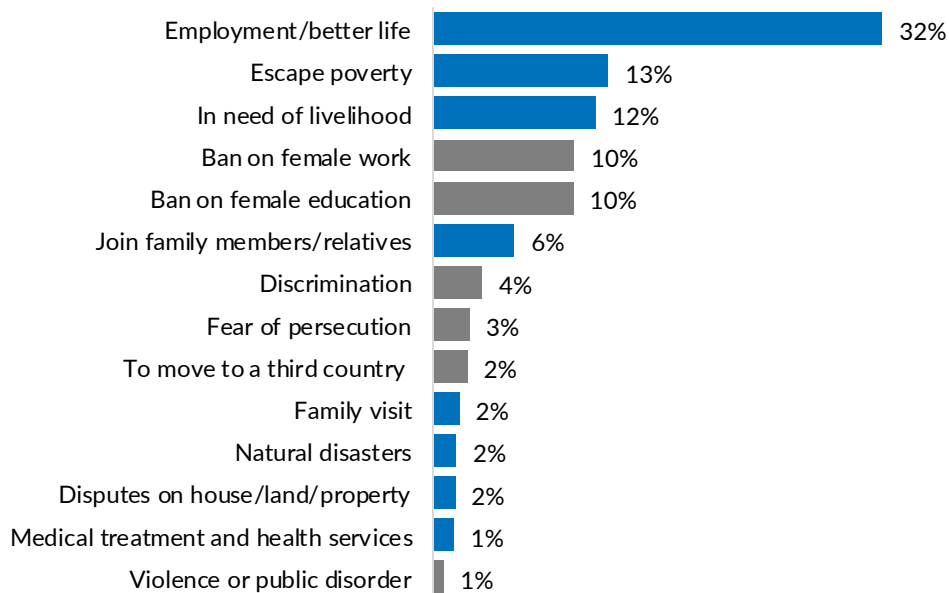
Have you or your family experienced feelings of stress that affected your day-to-day life?



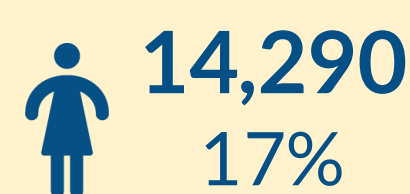
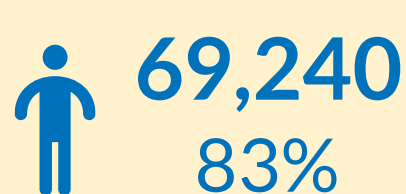
Sources of stress



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



** Reasons provided by the respondents who were interviewed from 15 June -31 December 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.



SUMMARY FINDINGS

- 83,530 Afghans – 69,243 male (83 percent) and 14,287 female (17 percent) – were interviewed in 2024 upon arrival in Afghanistan. This includes 54,249 single individuals and 29,281 families. 55,688 interviews were conducted with returnees and 27,842 with deportees. However, Afghans who returned/ were deported from Pakistan in 2024 were mainly families with women, children making up 80 percent of the returns (50 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.
- 61 percent of the respondents were 18-34 years old, while 35 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 (75 percent) of respondents from Iran were undocumented while most (58 percent) respondents from Pakistan were passport holders. However, since 15 September 2023 – 31 December 2024, some 806,000 Afghans including refugees and those in refugee-like situations, have had to return from Pakistan, including over 38,300 deportations.
- Interview findings in 2024 reveal that more people are traveling to Iran and Pakistan via unofficial crossing points compared to 2023. 89 percent of the returnees and deportees interviewed in 2024, including women and children, traveled to Iran via unofficial crossing points. This percentage was lower in 2023 (81 percent). In contrast, 79 percent of Afghan respondents went to Pakistan via official crossing points in 2024, 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, 25 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, some respondents from Pakistan and Iran mentioned protection risks in Afghanistan as the primary reason of their departure to Iran and Pakistan i.e., overall violence, fear of persecution, ban on female education and work, and discrimination in Afghanistan. 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 some 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 in Afghanistan.
- Following the implementation of the IFRP by the government of Pakistan in November 2023, and the announcement by the Iranian authorities in 2024 to deport approximately 2 million undocumented Afghans, UNHCR has scaled up protection response capacity at border crossing points in order to identify and assist persons/ families with sensitive protection backgrounds.
- 40 percent of respondents returning from Iran and 86 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 2024, 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 2024 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. In parallel, 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 2024 however, new arrivals generally reported an improvement in the protection situation compared to previous months.
- In 2024, 46 percent of respondents (27,825) who returned to Afghanistan or deported from Iran and 21 percent of the respondents (30,853) 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.





Deportation Trends Jan – Dec 2024

Iran

2024: ~ 764,000 deportation

2023: ~ 690,000 deportation



Pakistan

2024: ~ 9,000 deportation

2023: ~ 29,300 deportation



FROM IRAN

- Based on estimations provided by UNHCR's border monitoring partners, in 2024, an estimated **764,000 Afghans (majority undocumented) were deported from Iran through Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points**. This represents a daily average of 2,088 individuals. The deportation figures for undocumented Afghans are approximately 11 percent higher compared to an estimated 690,000 deportees during the same period in 2023.
- Among those deported, UNHCR border monitoring identified around 288 individuals in possession of Amayesh cards. 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 no-go areas in border regions between Iran and Turkey, without obtaining necessary movement permits from authorities. In 2023, UNHCR's border monitoring team recorded the deportation of 231 individuals in possession of Amayesh cards.
- Furthermore, border monitoring teams at Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points identified an estimated 89,700 Afghans who declared themselves as headcount slip holders, indicating a refugee-like situation. This group consisted of approximately 47,000 regular returnees and 42,700 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 assistance including cash assistance 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 expanded its border monitoring activities on the borders with Iran. This includes deploying monitoring teams to Abo 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 in the detention centers in Iran, 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

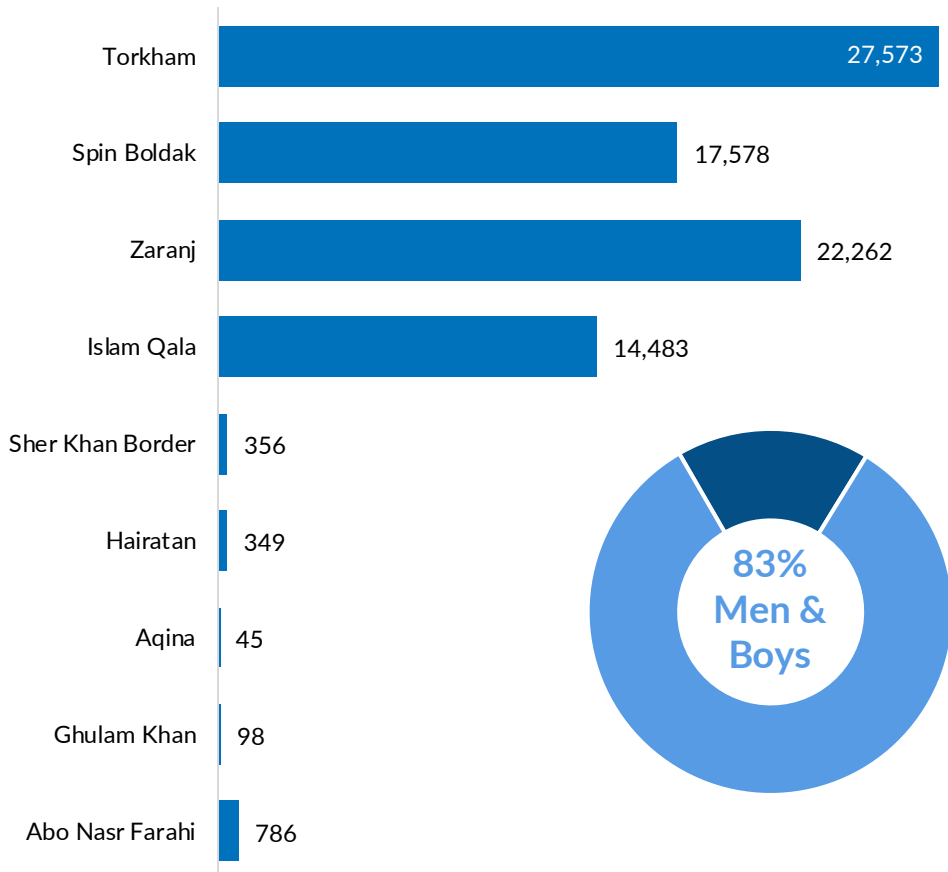
- The announcement and implementation of the IFRP by the Government of Pakistan in October 2023 led to an increase in the number of Afghans (documented and undocumented) returning or being deported. Prior to the announcement, the average daily number of undocumented Afghans returning from Pakistan through 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 – 31 December 2024, close to 806,000 Afghans have returned/deported to Afghanistan including over 324,000 in 2024. Out of 806,000, nearly 38,300 were deported including close to 9,000 in 2024 predominantly through Torkham and Spin Boldak. Out of 9,000 deportees, 535 were identified by UNHCR as slip (303) and PoR (Proof of Registration) card holders (340). Among the returned or deported Afghans, UNHCR identified and assisted a total of 117,717 individuals, including Afghan refugees holding PoR cards, as well as individuals in refugee-like situations, such as holders of UNHCR's Slip/Asylum Certificate and Protection Cases. Out of 117,717, a total of 53,610 individuals have been assisted during 2024. Out of 117,717, 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 2023, 24 POR card holders were recorded to have been deported from Pakistan.

FROM TAJIKISTAN

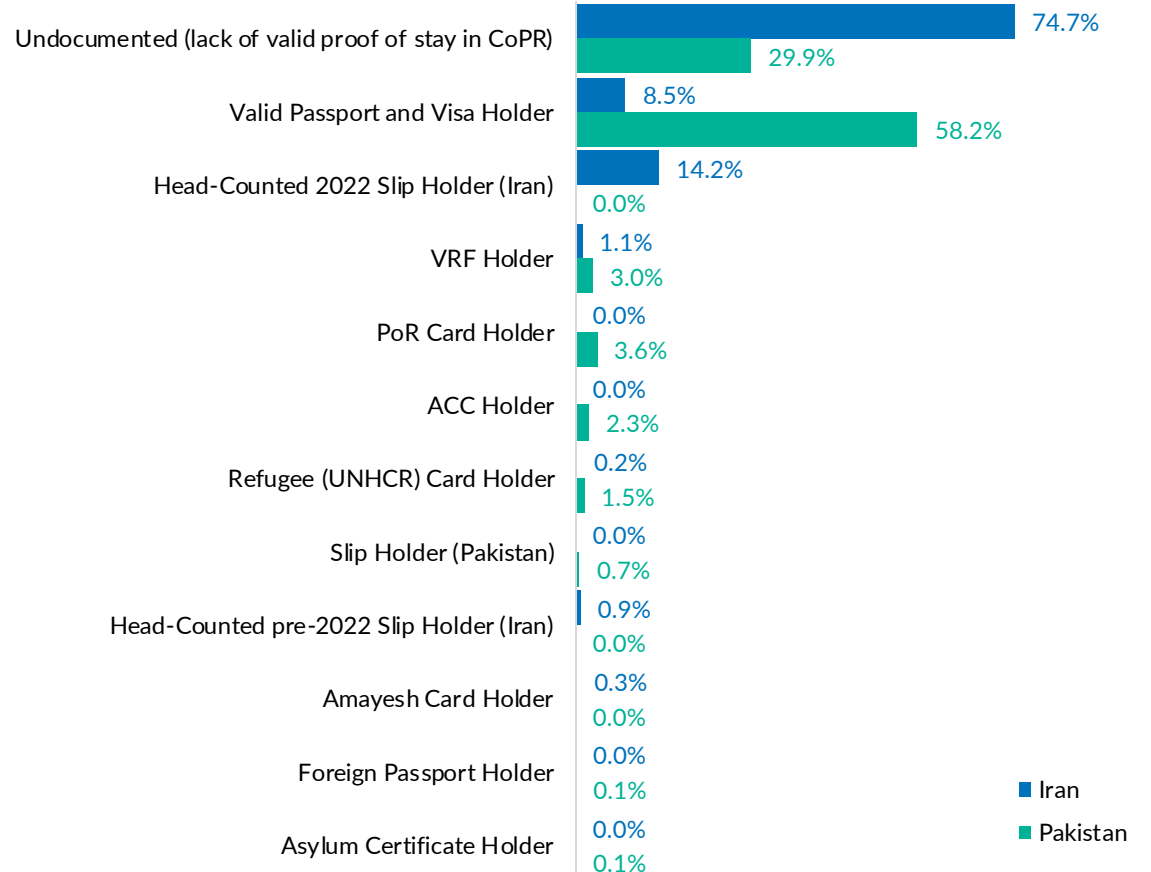
- During 2024, a total of 79 Afghans, including refugees and asylum seekers, were deported from Tajikistan including one family/three individuals in November and 76 in December. Of the 79, some 59 were individuals whose families remained behind in Tajikistan. The remaining 19 individuals (4 families), including 6 women, 6 boys and girls, were deported as family groups. Reportedly, Tajikistan police arrested them at local markets, in their residences, and the streets, deporting them without any explanation. They claimed to have experienced both verbal and physical harassment during their detention in Tajikistan. The UNHCR partner border monitoring team at the Sher Khan Bandar crossing point screened and interviewed the deportees, referring them to UNHCR encashment centers, where they received assistance, including cash support, after a thorough protection assessment. UNHCR has shared concerns with the Tajikistan authorities on the forcible return of refugees and has advocated for their re-admission. It is to be noted that, according to UNHCR Tajikistan records, a total of 99 Afghans, including 83 refugees and asylum-seekers, were deported from Tajikistan in November (3) and December (96) 2024. However, 79 deportees have been received and interviewed by UNHCR in Afghanistan. Less number of deportees received and interviewed in Afghanistan may be due to the fact that some have chosen to not approach UNHCR.
- Around 12 Afghan refugees were deported from Tajikistan and were assisted by UNHCR in 2023.



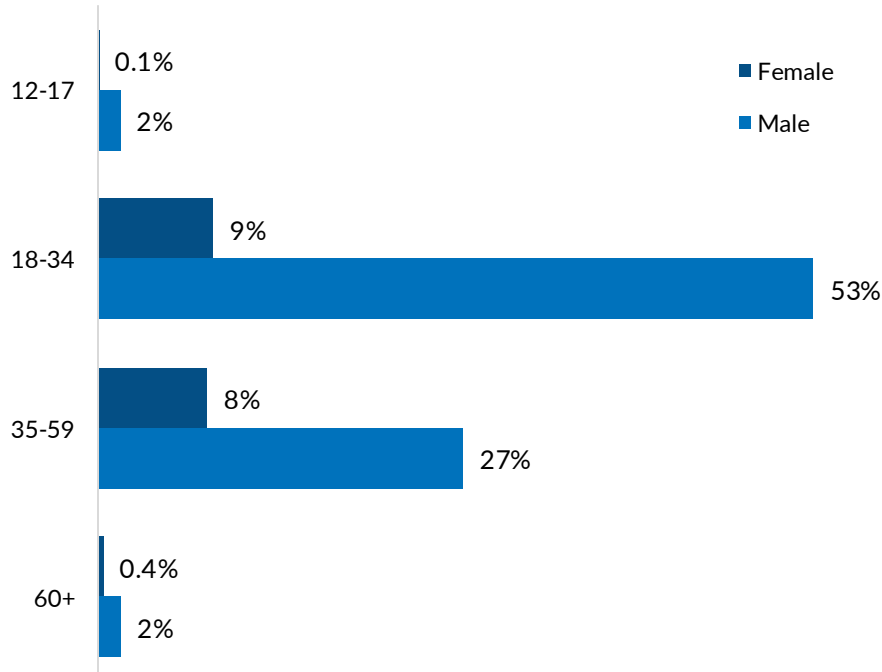
Number of interviews by official entry point



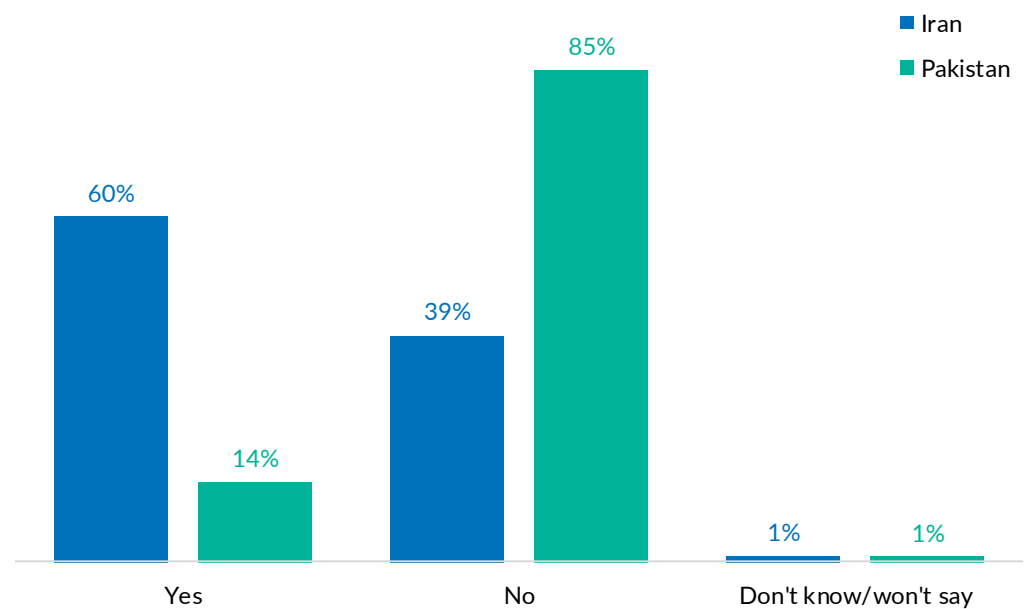
Documentation status of respondents



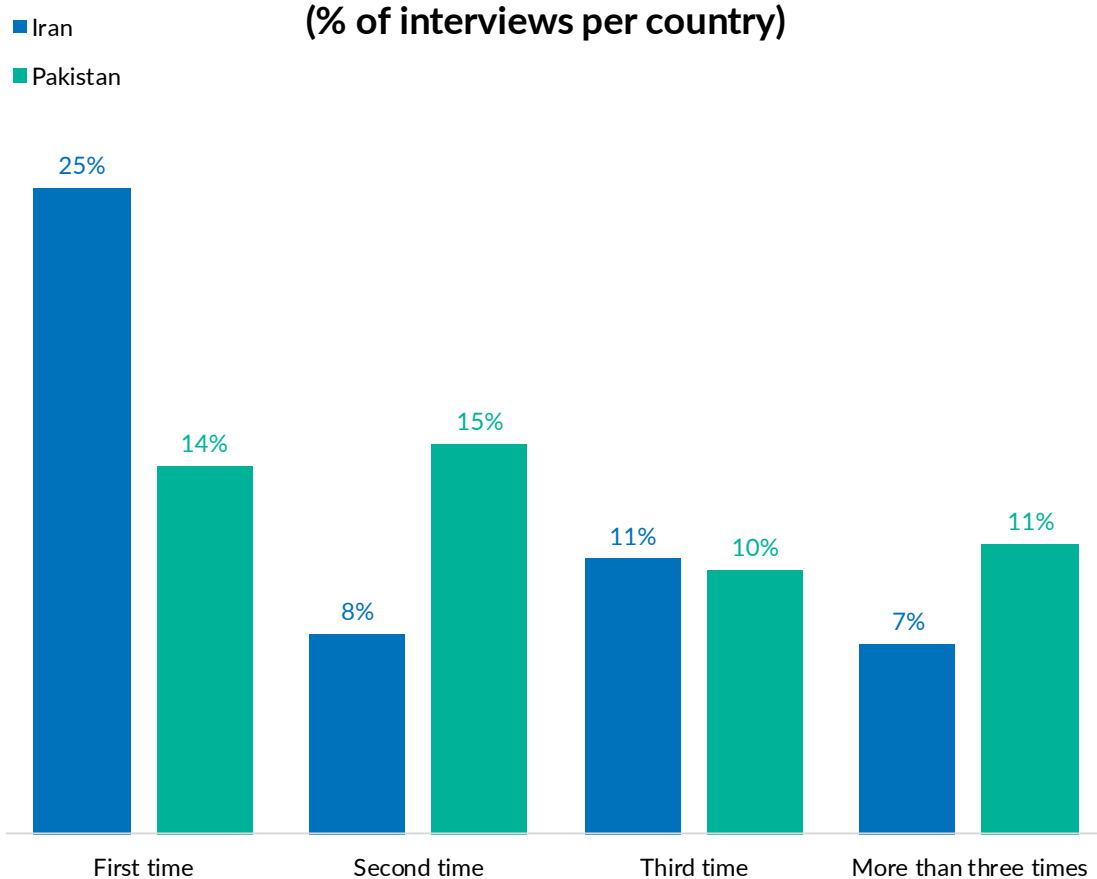
Respondents (by age and gender)



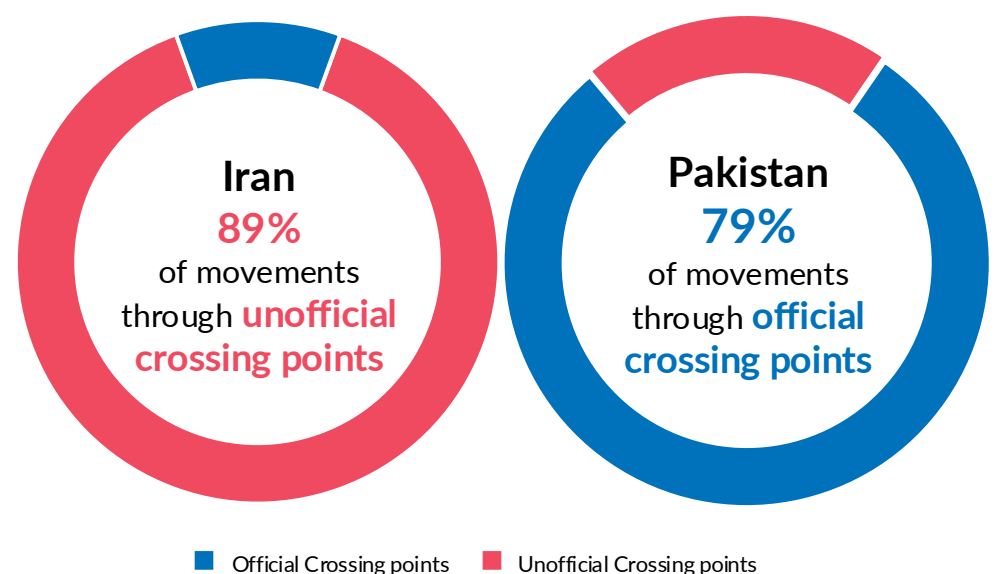
Awareness of interviewed returnees/deportees about the potential protection risks



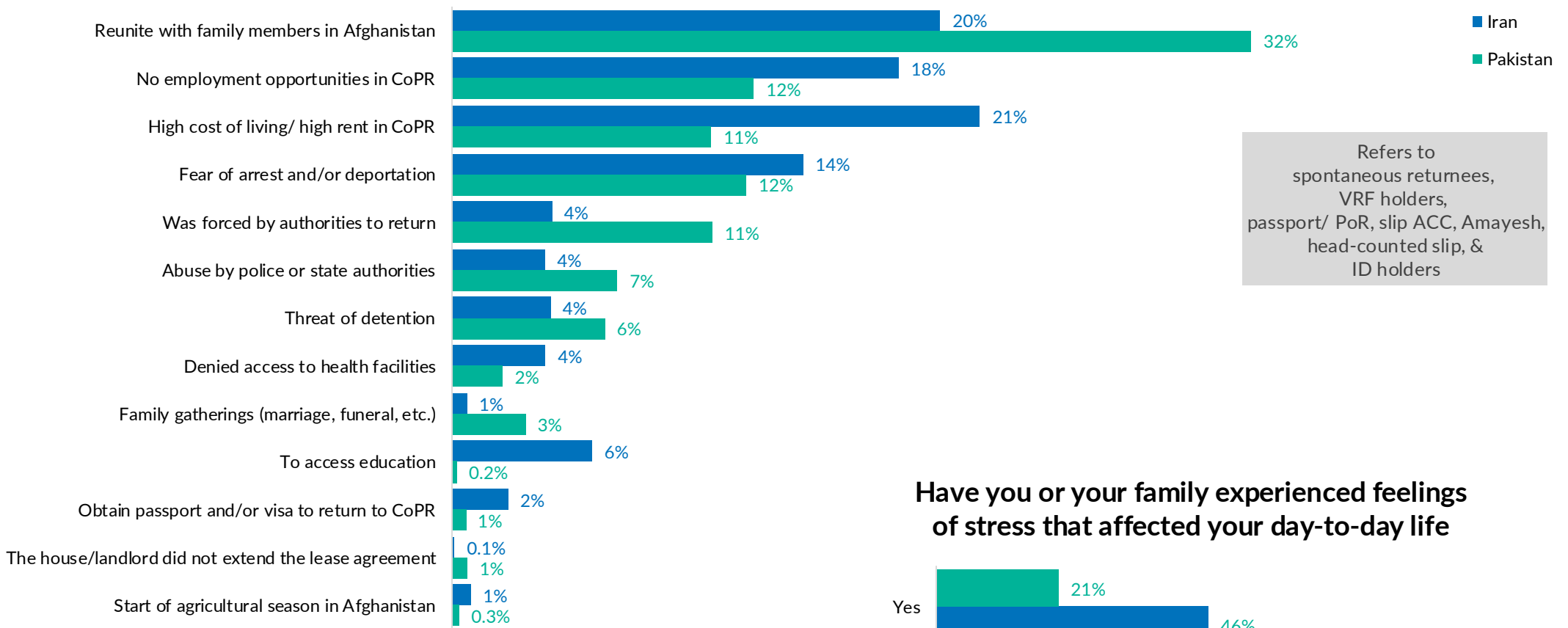
Movement frequency of passport holding respondents via official crossing points (% of interviews per country)



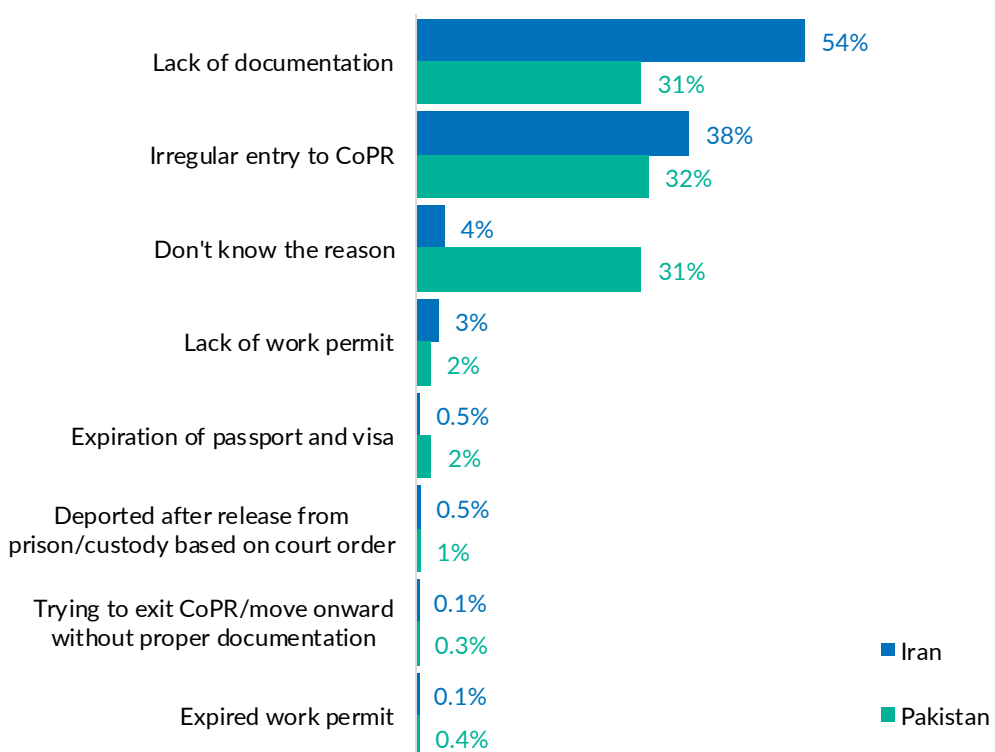
Type of movement



Reasons for return to Afghanistan (spontaneous returnees)

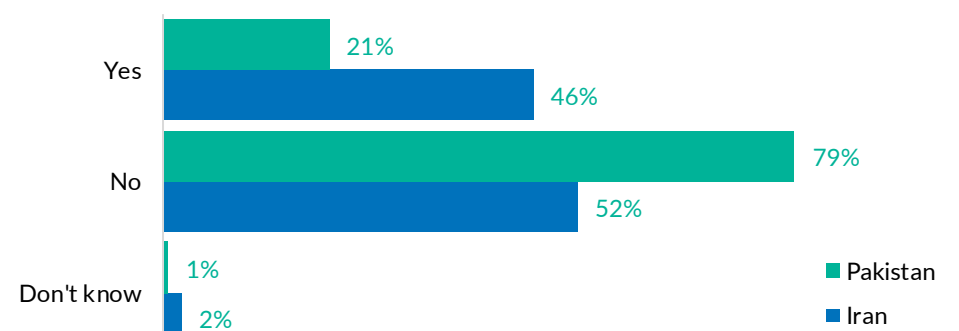


Reasons of deportation

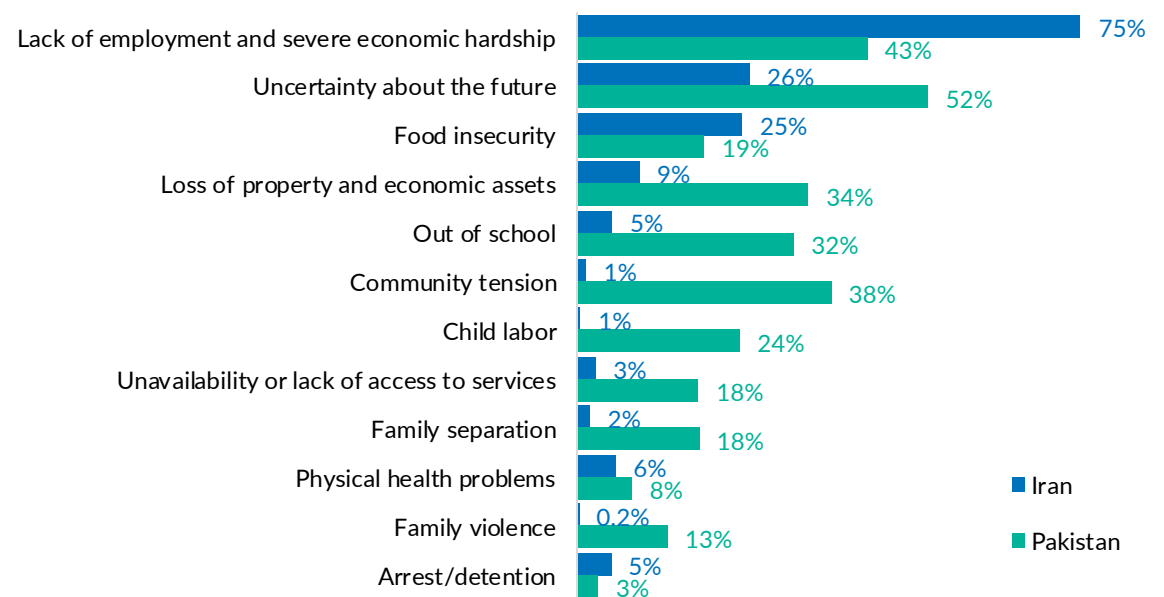


The vast majority of deportees are crossing through unofficial crossing points to Iran.

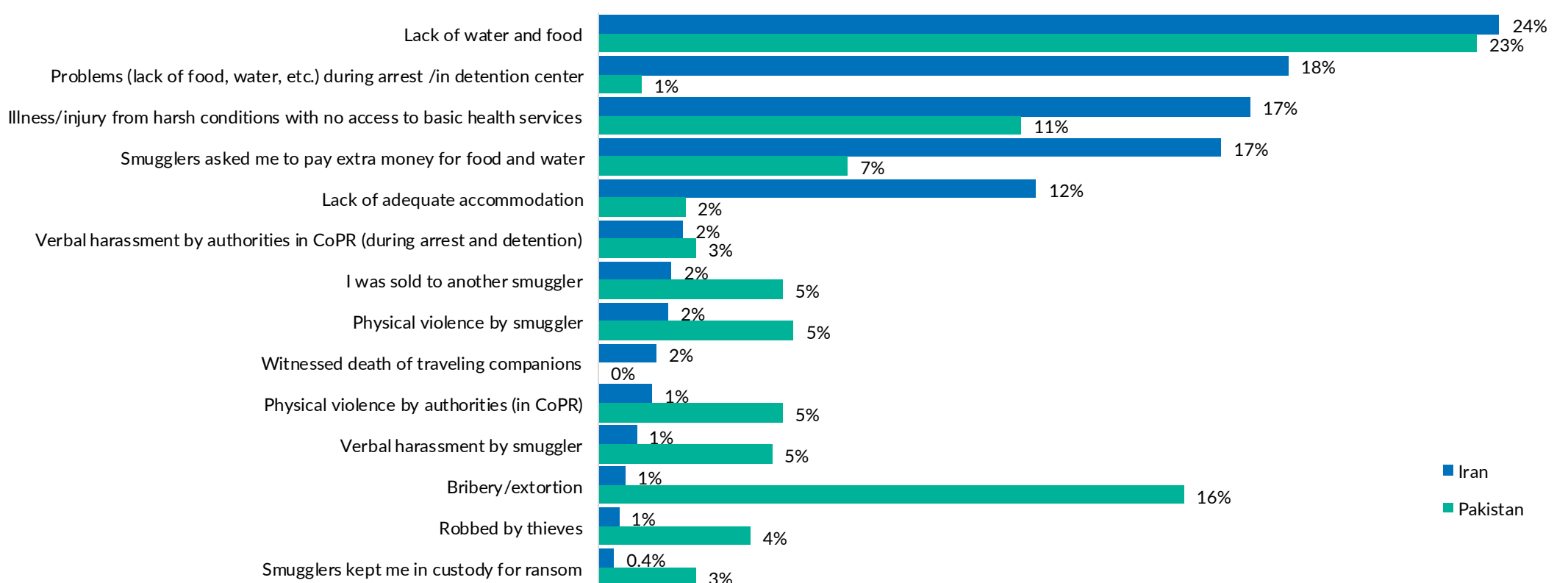
Have you or your family experienced feelings of stress that affected your day-to-day life



Sources of stress



Problems faced during the journey through unofficial crossing points





- UNHCR partners collected estimated inflow and outflow figures at official and unofficial crossing points. **During 2024, an estimated 5.1 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 988,000 Afghans travelled to Iran with valid travel documents through official crossing points during 2024. This represented an average of 2,700 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 1.3 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 26 December 2024, an estimated 2,600 – 3,000 individuals crossed to Iran via the unofficial crossings in Herat. The reported figure is similar to an estimated 2,400 – 3,000 individuals crossed to Iran during the week of 29 September 2024.
- From January to early June 2024, 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 26 December 2024 an estimated 4,900 individuals went to Pakistan/Iran via "Dak" crossing point in Nimroz province. During the week of 29 September 2024 an estimated 3,500 individuals went to Pakistan/Iran via "Dak" crossing point. 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. As of 18 January 2025, Dak crossing was closed by the DfA for pedestrian movements.
- 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 1,085,000 outflow movements through official crossing points (an average of 2,964 individuals per day). The majority, around 742,000 individuals, occurred via Torkham (an average of 2,026 individuals per day), followed by approximately 343,000 via Spin Boldak (an average of 933 individuals per day). During previous 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, during the week of 26 December 2024, an estimated 1,400 Afghans traveled to Pakistan via 'Bahramcha' unofficial crossing point in Helmand province. 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. Other crossing points located in several provinces in the south and south-eastern regions were closed since April/June 2024. 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) during 2024.

IRAN - INFLOW MOVEMENTS

- In 2024, an estimated 1.8 million Afghans either returned to Afghanistan or were deported from Iran. This marks an increase of 16 percent from an estimated 1.55 million Afghans who returned/deported during 2023. Out of 1.8 million people, approximately 1 million (averaging 2,826 daily) were regular cross-border movers, while 764,000 were deportation movements, averaging around 2,088 daily.

PAKISTAN - INFLOW MOVEMENTS

- In 2024, there were an estimated 1,090,000 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 806,000 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 315,000 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 in 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. Some 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.

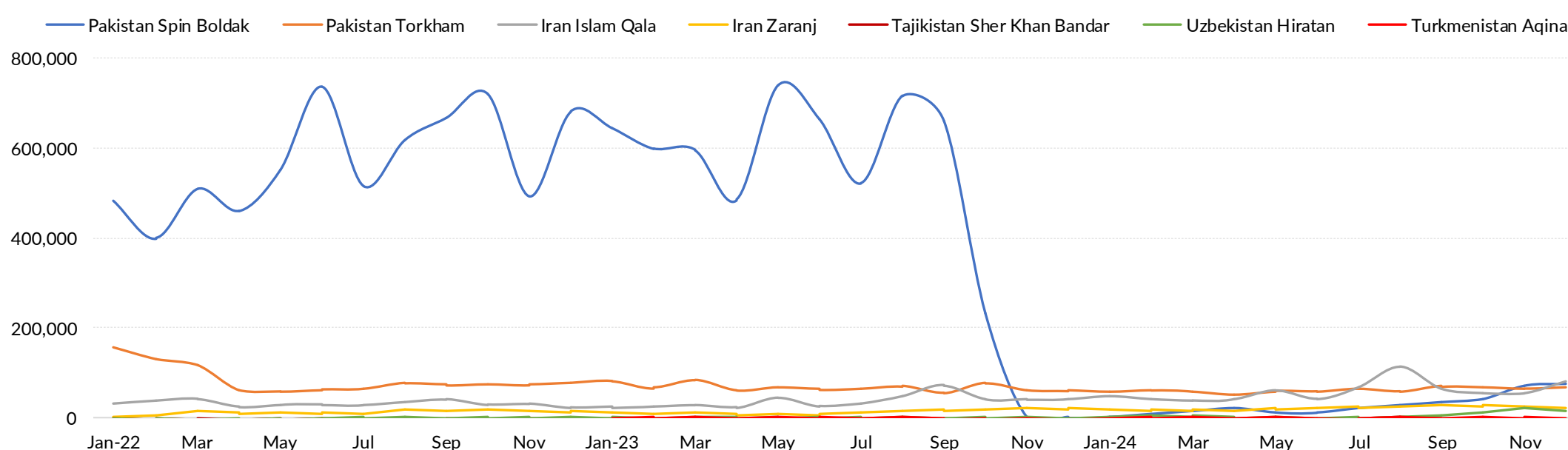
Population Movements to Central Asia (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan)

- UZBEKISTAN:** The border in Hiratan is restricted to commercial movements and visa holders only. An estimated 78,500 individuals, mainly railway staff, drivers from Uzbekistan, and diplomats, as well as Afghan visa holders travelled to Uzbekistan while an estimated 69,500 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 7,700 individuals, primarily railway staff and drivers from Turkmenistan, along with a small number of Afghan visa holders, traveled to Turkmenistan. Similarly, approximately 6,900 individuals with a similar profile returned to Afghanistan through the same border.
- TAJIKISTAN:** The border in Sherkhan-Bandar remains open. An estimated 4,000 Afghans and foreigners with valid visas, gate passes, or permission documents travelled to Tajikistan while an estimated 3,100 individuals returned to Afghanistan.

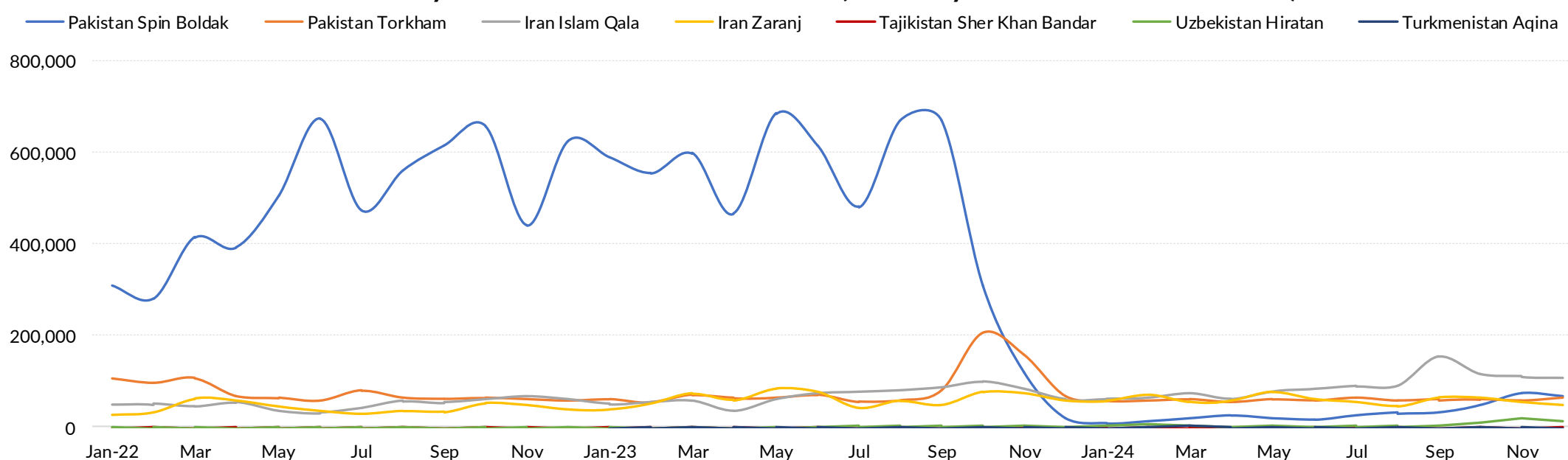
Population movement per entry point 1 January - 31 December 2024								
Movement type	Spin Boldak	Torkham	Islam Qala	Zaranj	Sher Khan Bandar	Hiratan	Aqina	Total
Outflow total (A)	343,000	742,000	712,000	273,000	4,000	78,500	7,700	2,160,200
Outflow Monthly Average	28,585	61,821	59,325	22,744	332	6,544	644	179,994
Inflow total (B)	376,900	713,300	1,090,300	704,800	3,100	69,450	6,900	2,964,750
Inflow Monthly Average	31,406	59,442	90,860	58,733	259	5,788	577	247,065
Total (A+B)	719,900	1,455,300	1,802,300	977,800	7,100	147,950	14,600	5,124,950

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, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

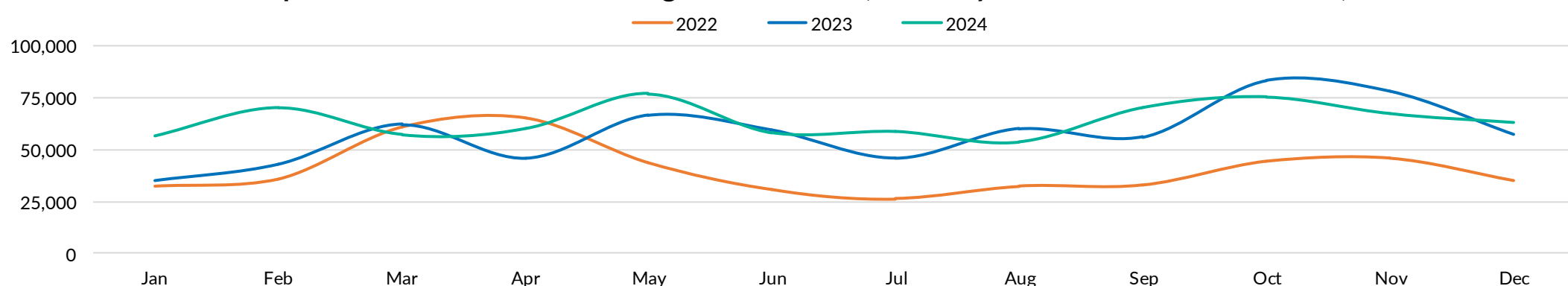
Estimated Monthly Outflow Movement - Individuals (1 January 2022- 31 December 2024)



Estimated Monthly Inflow Movement - Individuals (1 January 2022- 31 December 2024)



Deportation of undocumented Afghans from Iran (1 January 2022 to 31 December 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.
- Call all neighboring countries to grant UNHCR access to Afghan nationals who are at risk of deportation to Afghanistan. This access is essential to safeguard the rights and dignity of affected individuals, to ensure that these states uphold their international obligations (non-refoulement) and that UNHCR can effectively fulfil its mandate to monitor compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- 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.



A returnee family at the Encashment Centre in Herat, where families returning through UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme receive assistance to help meet their basic needs and begin rebuilding their lives in Afghanistan. @UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production, December 2024.

UNHCR scaled up protection presence at the borders with Iran and Encashment Centers to assess protection needs and concerns, helping to guide UNHCR's response.

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:

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