

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY- MAY 2025



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 Jalalabad, Nangarhar, Afghanistan. April 2025, © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production



58,325
Inflow & Outflow
Monitoring Interviews



42,440
73%

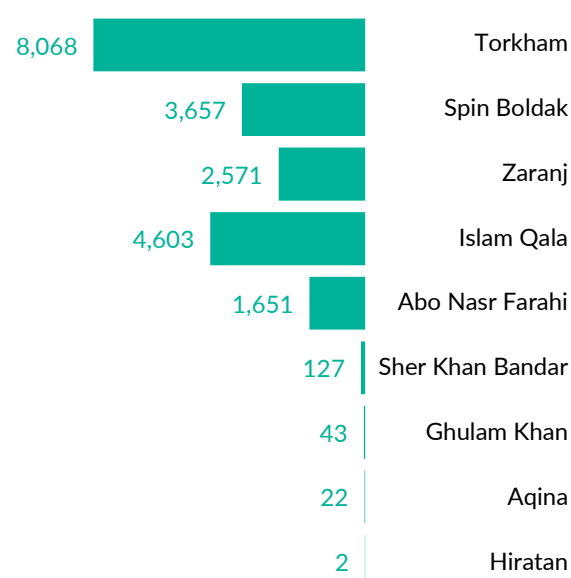


15,885
27%

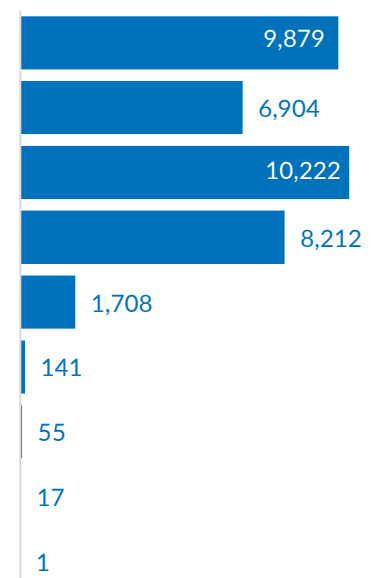
BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

- In line with UNHCR's protection monitoring objectives, UNHCR maintains strong presence through border monitoring partners at official and unofficial crossing points connecting Afghanistan with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. UNHCR conducts inflow and outflow monitoring interviews at both individual and household levels across nine official crossing points and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) across around 40-50 unofficial crossing points. The exercise is a protection centric activity and seeks to assess the triggers, intentions and motives behind Afghan cross-border movements, including for Afghans seeking protection, assess the scale of in and outflow movements as well as map out protection risks and human rights violations.
- Inflow and outflow monitoring teams select respondents using a systematic sampling approach, which can generate representative samples with a fixed skipping interval. The interval is determined by the average arrivals of the previous week.
- Between 1 January to 31 May 2025, UNHCR border monitoring partners conducted a total of 58,325 interviews including 20,744 outflow and 37,139 inflow monitoring at nine official crossing points and 442 KIIs at 42 unofficial crossing points. 59% of respondents were 18-34 years old, 37% were 35-59 years old, 1% were 12-17 years old, and 3% were 60 and above.
- The lower number of female respondents is primarily attributed to the profiles of individuals crossing the borders. Most of those crossing to/from Iran are single males, while on the Pakistan side, male heads of households respond on behalf of their families. At unofficial crossing points, interviews were largely conducted with male key informants due to difficulties in identifying female informants in remote areas. To enhance female participation, UNHCR and its partners continue to implement measures, including recruiting female staff and providing access to separate interview areas. These efforts helped to reach some 15,885 female respondents, accounting for 27% of the total sample (58,325), an increase from the 12% reached in 2024.

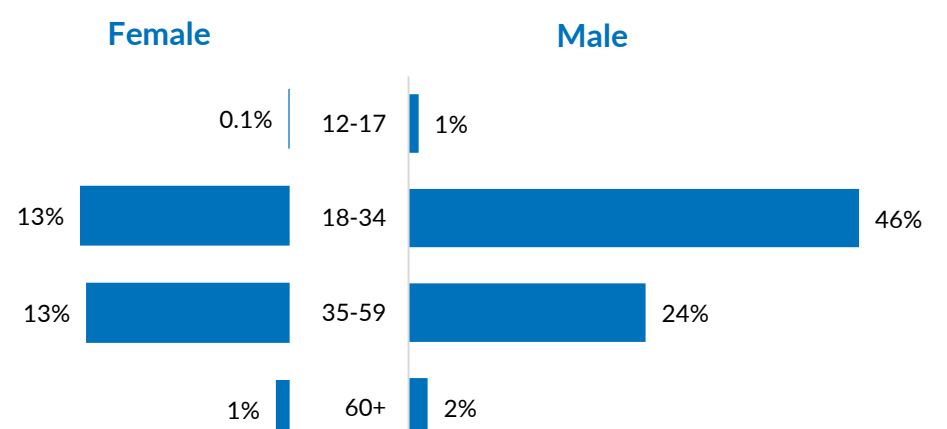
Outflow monitoring interviews by entry point



Inflow monitoring interviews by entry point



In and outflow monitoring respondents age and gender



UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2025 CROSS BORDER MONITORING

Outflow Monitoring



20,744
AFGHANS
4,200 families



19,673
95%



1,071
5%

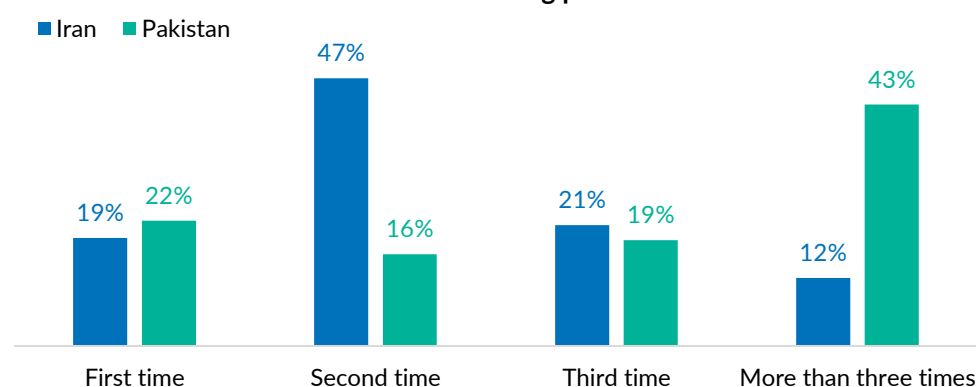
Summary findings

- Between 1 January and 31 May, an estimated 1.2 million Afghans moved to Iran and Pakistan via official and unofficial crossing points. Out of 1.2 million, an estimated 450,000 Afghans (an average of 2,964 individuals per day) moved to Iran via three official (Islam Qala, Zaranj, and Abo Nasri Farahi) and nine unofficial crossing points, and an estimated 722,000 Afghans (an average of 4,780 individuals per day) moved to Pakistan via two official (Torkham and Spin Boldak) and one unofficial crossing (Bahramcha in Helmand) point see chart on page 5. During the same period in 2024, an estimated 900,000 Afghans moved to Iran and Pakistan including 395,000 to Iran and 500,000 to Pakistan.
- Movements through unofficial points in Herat (to Iran) have been impacted due to increased deployment of checkpoints by the DfA and the construction of a barrier wall by the government of Iran. Similarly, since 18 January 2025, the Dak crossing in Nimroz which is known as the main hub for irregular movements, was closed by the DfA to pedestrian movements. There were no movements via unofficial points located in the eastern region (Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan provinces) bordering with Pakistan.
- Border monitoring findings reveal that most Afghans are traveling to Iran via unofficial crossing points mainly due to lack of travel documents and security concerns. This factor was also confirmed during inflow monitoring. Most (79%) Afghan returnees and deportees interviewed upon arrival stated that they fled Afghanistan to Iran via unofficial crossing points. This figure was 89% during 2024. The decline in irregular movement to Iran in 2025 is linked to the closure of the Dak crossing point in Nimroz province in January 2025. Additionally, the establishment of a barrier wall along bordering areas in the Herat province also impacted irregular movements.
- Afghans entering irregularly into Pakistan have historically been very low (below 1%) as the authorities in both sides allowed free movements of Afghanistan and Pakistan citizens without the need for passport and visa. However, after the implementation of visa requirements to travel to Pakistan since 2023, the intention of Afghans to move to Pakistan through irregular routes has risen to 21% in 2024. So far in 2025, 17% of returnees and deportees stated that they had entered Pakistan via unofficial crossing points.
- Most unofficial crossings are used by minority groups. Movements via unofficial crossing points have been historically facilitated by smugglers who currently charge around AFN 8,000 – 14,000 (around \$115 - \$200) per person. There is a slight increase in the requested amount compared to the amount charged by smugglers in 2024 (AFN 7,000 – 12,000 (around \$100 - \$170) per person).
- Outflow respondents indicated that Afghan travelers leaving through irregular routes are single males while some are traveling in family groups with women, elderly people and children. Both single males and families, encounter many challenges and risks during their journey. These challenges include access to potable water, food, healthcare, privacy, and accommodation, transportation hurdles, physical and verbal harassment, security issues (shooting by Iran/Pakistan border guards), extortion, robbery, etc. They also faced risks such as trafficking and ill-treatment from smugglers.
- Outflow movements from Afghanistan to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan remain very small and the trends recorded in 2025 are similar to that of 2024. Only Afghans in possession of valid passports and visas are allowed to travel to Central Asian countries.
- Due to a combination of restrictive measures and protection concerns, many Afghans are compelled to travel through irregular routes. Barriers such as the enforcement of the "mahram" requirement which limits the ability of unaccompanied women and girls to travel abroad along with financial constraints, limited access to visas, and the reduced presence of diplomatic missions in Afghanistan, have significantly restricted safe and legal movement options. Additionally, individuals with heightened protection risks, including members of minority groups and former government-affiliated staff, reportedly avoid official crossings due to fear of identification and potential arrest. These conditions underscore the urgent need for expanded access to safe, dignified, and regular pathways for those in need of international protection.
- During outflow interviews conducted at official crossing points, respondents provide several reasons for leaving Afghanistan, including protection concerns (9% of responses), such as persecution and/or violation of their rights, lack of freedom of speech, movement barriers for women and girls, or membership of a political group not accepted by DfA, were indicated as the primary reason. Others underline fear of arbitrary arrest/detention, ban on female education and work. An average of 19% of the respondents who went to Iran and Pakistan mentioned lack of livelihood opportunities as their main reason for departure (particularly to Iran), while majority of the travelers to Pakistan said they move to access quality health services or to visit family members. Protection monitoring teams are enhancing efforts, including conducting interviews in confidential and protection-sensitive settings. However, individuals with heightened protection risks may not feel safe to fully disclose the reasons for their flight as interviews are conducted at the border before leaving Afghanistan. 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.](#)

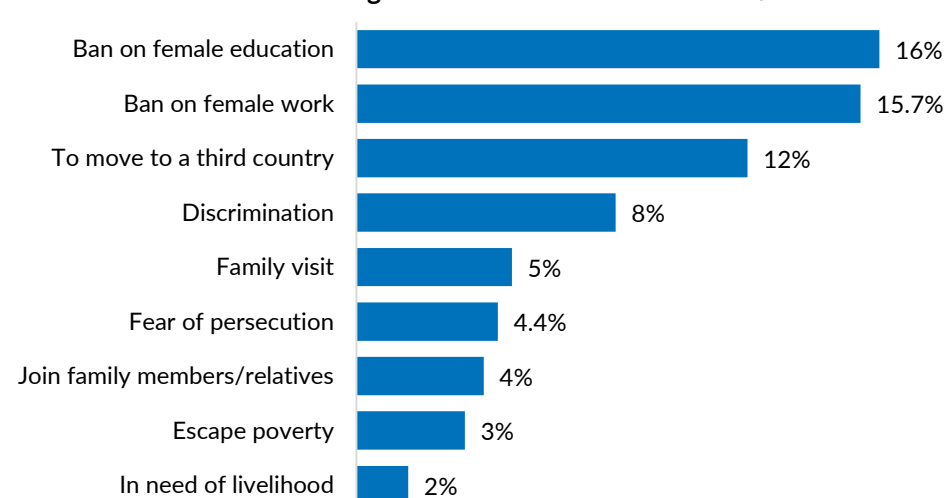
Pendular Movements

- Among 8,800 respondents that travelled to Iran, 80% had visited the country before: 47% said they are traveling for the second time to Iran, 21% for the third, and 12% had traveled more than three times. Only 19% were first-time visitors. By contrast, among 11,770 respondents traveling to Pakistan, 78% reported multiple visits, with 16% on their second, 19% on their third, and 43% more than three visits while 22% were first timers. Compared to 2024, the proportion of frequent visitors to Iran increased slightly (from 75% to 80%) and to Pakistan also dropped from 81% to 75%. These findings represent a subset of travelers crossing through official crossing points, whereby about 380,000 traveled to Iran and 582,000 to Pakistan, with an estimated 60,000–70,000 undocumented individuals entering Iran and 140,000 entering Pakistan via unofficial crossings.
- Since 2024, UNHCR has also been monitoring the movement of Afghans who have returned or been deported under the government of Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP).
- Out of 20,744 outflow respondents, only 47 respondents (all interviewed at Torkham) reported that they had previously been returned or deported from Pakistan after the IFRP implementation but were now going back to Pakistan for a second or third time. An additional 224 respondents (3 percent of respondents interviewed at Torkham and Spin Boldak) said they had observed that their relatives or community members who were returned or deported after the IFRP, have traveled back to Pakistan.
- Meanwhile out of 442 key informants (KIs) 25 reported observing smaller groups of people (ranging from 1-50 and 51-100 individuals) including their relatives or community members who returned after IFRP are traveling back into Pakistan for a second or third time.
- Reasons for moving back to Pakistan for the second/third time are mainly linked to protection concerns in Afghanistan such as ban on female education, ban on female work, discrimination, fear of persecution, resettlement to a third country, family visits, joining family members/relatives, escaping poverty, and searching for a better livelihood opportunity.

Movement frequency of passport holders via official crossing points



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





37,140
AFGHANS
17,260 families



22,323
60%



14,816
40%

Summary findings

- 50% of respondents who returned/were deported from Iran and 80% of those from Pakistan stated that they had no information about the risks of irregular movement to Iran/Pakistan and onward movement.
- The risk of trafficking, physical violence perpetrated by smugglers, lack of food and water, and instances of robbery, were reported as the primary challenges encountered by travelers during the journey via irregular routes to Iran and Pakistan.
- The reasons cited by returnees and deportees for leaving Afghanistan reflect a complex and multifaceted situation. Nearly 10% of respondents from Pakistan and Iran identified protection concerns such as widespread violence, fear of persecution, restrictions on female education and employment, and systemic discrimination in Afghanistan as their main motivations for departure. Others mentioned that they went to Iran and Pakistan in search for improved living conditions or access to healthcare. However, capturing the full scope of reasons for departure remains challenging. Interviews are conducted within Afghanistan which may limit individuals, particularly those potentially in need of international protection, from openly sharing their protection concerns. For instance, see media updates: [“Young Afghan woman dies by suicide in Islamabad”](#) or [“Former Afghan Army Pilot dies by suicide in Iran after facing deportation”](#).
- Returnees from Iran and Pakistan, including those with head-count slips and others regardless of legal status, reported that their return to Afghanistan was largely driven by growing protection concerns in Iran and Pakistan. These included fear of harassment, intensified police operations and frequent police raids, and increasing cases of arrest and forced expulsion by authorities. In addition, severe economic hardship, marked by limited employment opportunities and rising living costs in both countries, contributed to their decision. Simultaneously, many deportations were attributed to irregular border crossings and lack of legal documentation, further highlighting the complexity of mobility dynamics in the region.
- Returnees and deportees from Pakistan highlighted that the measures imposed by the authorities have severely restricted their freedom of movement and daily life. Many were also forced to abandon or sell their homes, businesses, and other assets at a loss, leading to significant financial loss and contributing to their decision to return to Afghanistan.
- Anti-Afghan sentiment in Iran and Pakistan also emerged as a key factor of returns since early 2024. This was marked by discriminatory practices from the authorities and host communities. This includes measures such as landlords either under official instruction or acting independently refusing to renew rental contracts, neighbors reporting Afghans to the authorities, and employers withholding wages or refusing to hire Afghan workers. These create an increasingly unwelcoming environment, pressuring Afghans to return despite the risks and hardships awaiting them in Afghanistan.
- Interviewed returnees/deportees expressed concerns about the lack of services in their areas of return, including shelter, food, livelihoods, documentation, education, healthcare (including MHPSS), water, sanitation, and transportation. Some also cited security risks and reported adopting coping strategies such as staying indoors, avoiding contact, or frequent relocation to reduce exposure to threats.

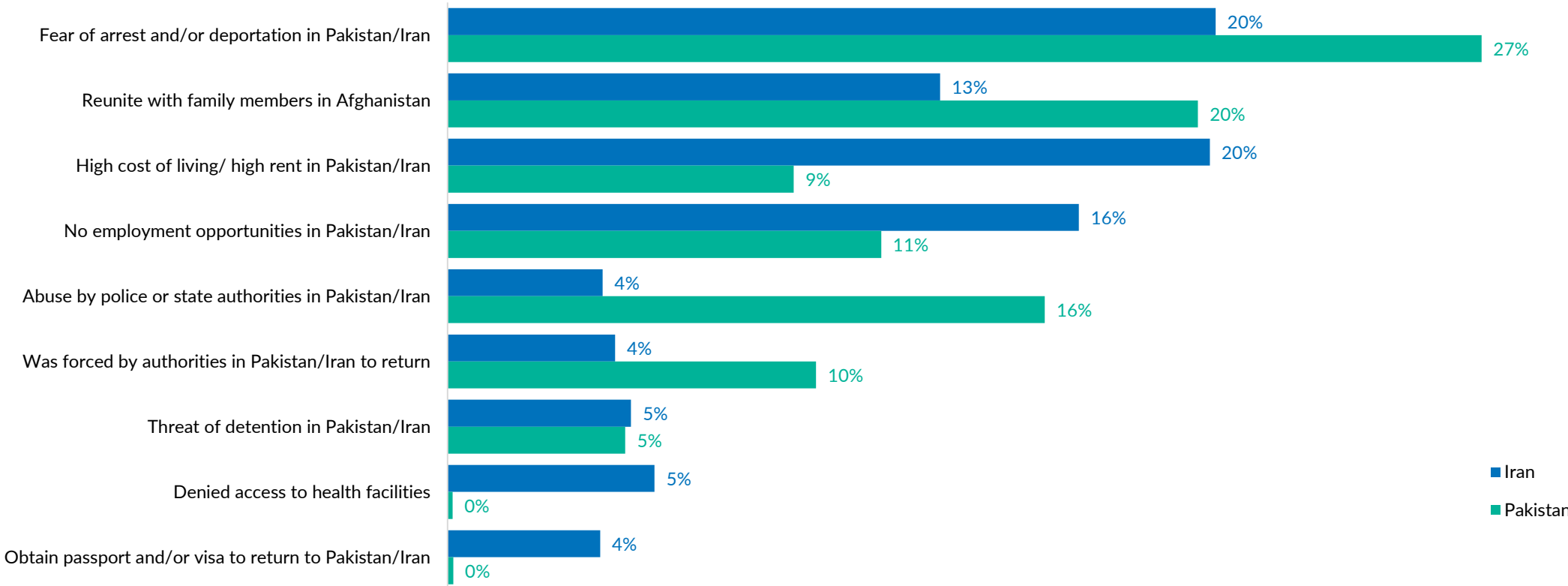
Deportations

- From Iran:** Between January and May 2025, an estimated 365,000 Afghans, mostly undocumented, were deported from Iran through the Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossings, averaging over 2,416 individuals per day. This represents a slight increase compared to 320,000 deportations during the same period in 2024. Deportations of documented Afghans holding Amayesh cards, rose significantly with 215 deportations so far in 2025 compared to only 14 deportations in the same period in 2024. Deportations were linked to failure to present documents during arrest or movement to restricted areas. Additionally, approximately 46,500 Afghans identified as head-counted slip holders (persons in a refugee-like situation) were either deported or returned, marking a slight increase from 2024. The deportation of head-counted slip holders has intensified in April and May 2025 following a policy change by Iranian authorities to initiate deportation of this particular group starting from April 2025. In response, UNHCR scaled up its presence along the Iran-Afghanistan border, including establishing a new facility at the Islam Qala reception center and expanding monitoring to Abo Nasri Farahi crossing in Farah province. UNHCR provides protection assistance including cash grants for documented returnees/deportees as well as those at heightened protection risk among undocumented returnees/deportees.
- Deportees consistently reported serious human rights violations in Iranian detention centers, such as physical abuse, inadequate food, poor sanitation, overcrowding, separation from family members, and loss of personal belongings, underscoring the urgent protection needs of returnees.
- From Pakistan:** On 7 March 2025, the Government of Pakistan officially announced the resumption of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP), extending it to include all Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) holders, who were instructed to return to Afghanistan by 31 March or face deportation from 1 April onwards. Between 15 September 2023 and 31 May 2025, over one million Afghans returned or were deported to Afghanistan, with approximately 274,300 individuals crossing back between January and May 2025 alone. Of these, nearly 45,400 were deported primarily through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border points. Most of the overall movement (226,300) occurred in April and May, marking the highest monthly total since the IFRP launch in November 2023.
- Between January and May 2025, UNHCR provided cash assistance to 28,056 returnees and deportees in 2025, including individuals holding Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, UNHCR-issued slips, or asylum certificates. Since mid-September 2023, UNHCR has assisted over 144,500 individuals with cash assistance, including more than 91,100 PoR card holders through encashment centers in Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad, providing vital support amid increasing returns.
- From Tajikistan:** Since early December 2024, the situation for Afghan refugees in Tajikistan has significantly worsened, with authorities intensifying arrest operations that have targeted even registered refugees. In 2025 alone, 264 deportations have been recorded, nearly double the 79 deportations that occurred in the last two months of 2024. This marks a significant increase as no deportations were reported between January and October 2024. According to information gathered during border monitoring interviews, deportees were arrested at public spaces without any explanation, apprehended at homes and markets, and exposed to verbal and physical harassment while in detention. UNHCR's partner team at the Sher Khan Bandar crossing point conducted screening and interviews upon arrival, referring affected individuals to UNHCR encashment centers, where they received support including cash assistance following a detailed protection assessment.

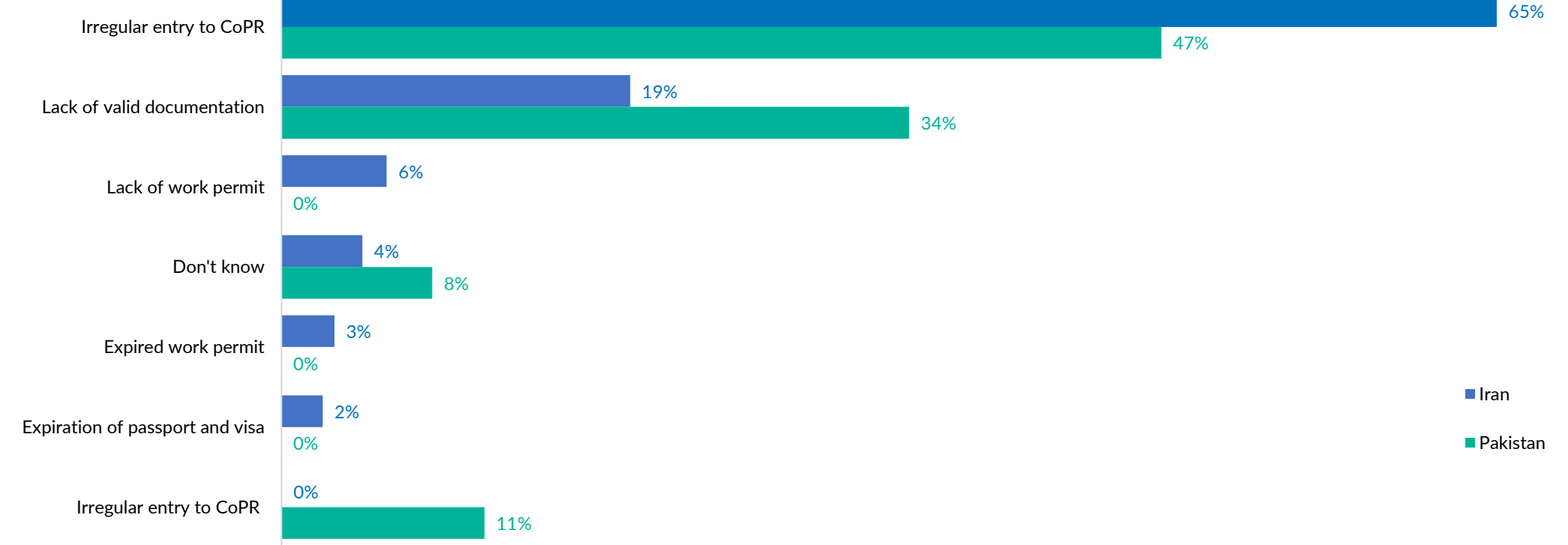


UNHCR Afghanistan Representative during an interview with returnees from Pakistan, Torkham crossing point, Nangarhar, Afghanistan, April 2025, © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

Reasons for return to Afghanistan

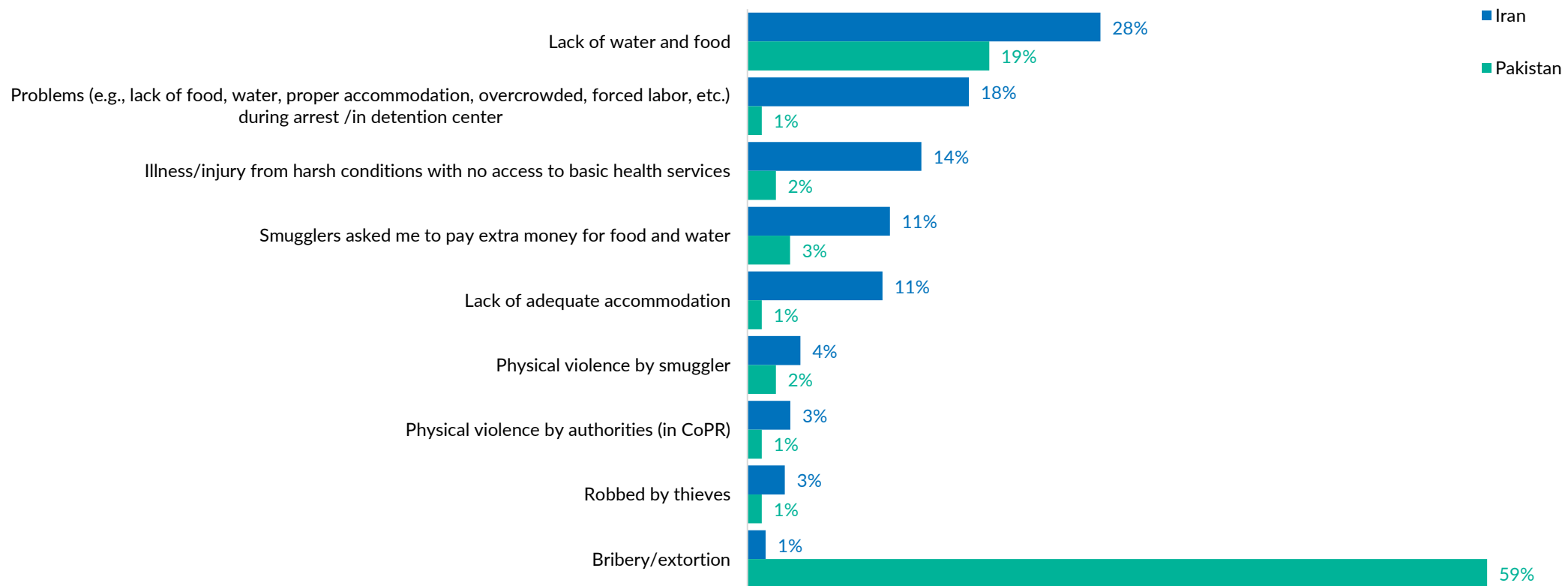


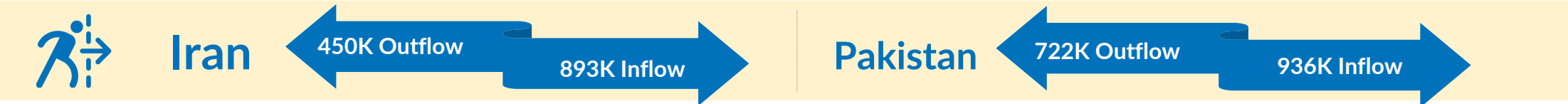
Reasons of deportation



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

Problems faced during the journey through unofficial crossing points



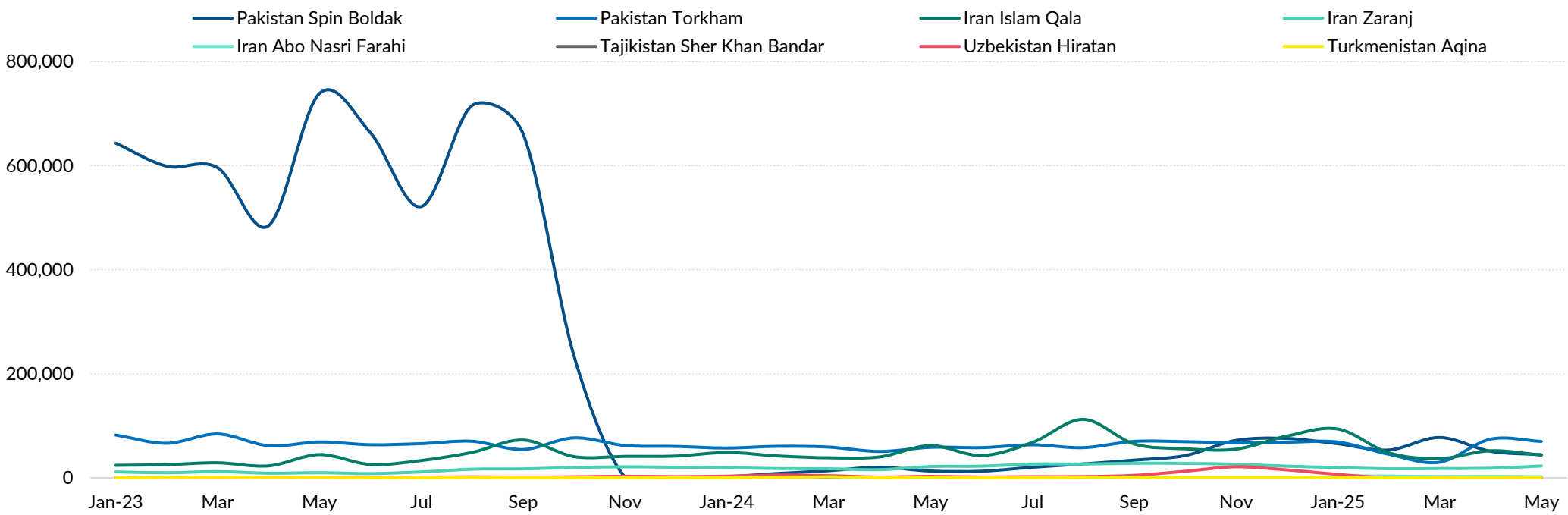


UNHCR partners collected estimated inflow and outflow figures at official and unofficial crossing points. **So far in 2025, an estimated 3 million Afghans, moved either way to/from Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.** The majority of these movements occurred via official crossing points i.e., Islam Qala, Zaranj and Abo Nasri Farahi (to/from Iran), Torkham, and Spin Boldak (Pakistan), and smaller numbers via Hiratan (Uzbekistan), Aqina (Turkmenistan), and Sher Khan Bander (Tajikistan). This includes 280,000 individuals moved to/from Pakistan via Bahramchah unofficial crossing point and around 60,000 - 70,000 moved to Iran via unofficial crossing points.

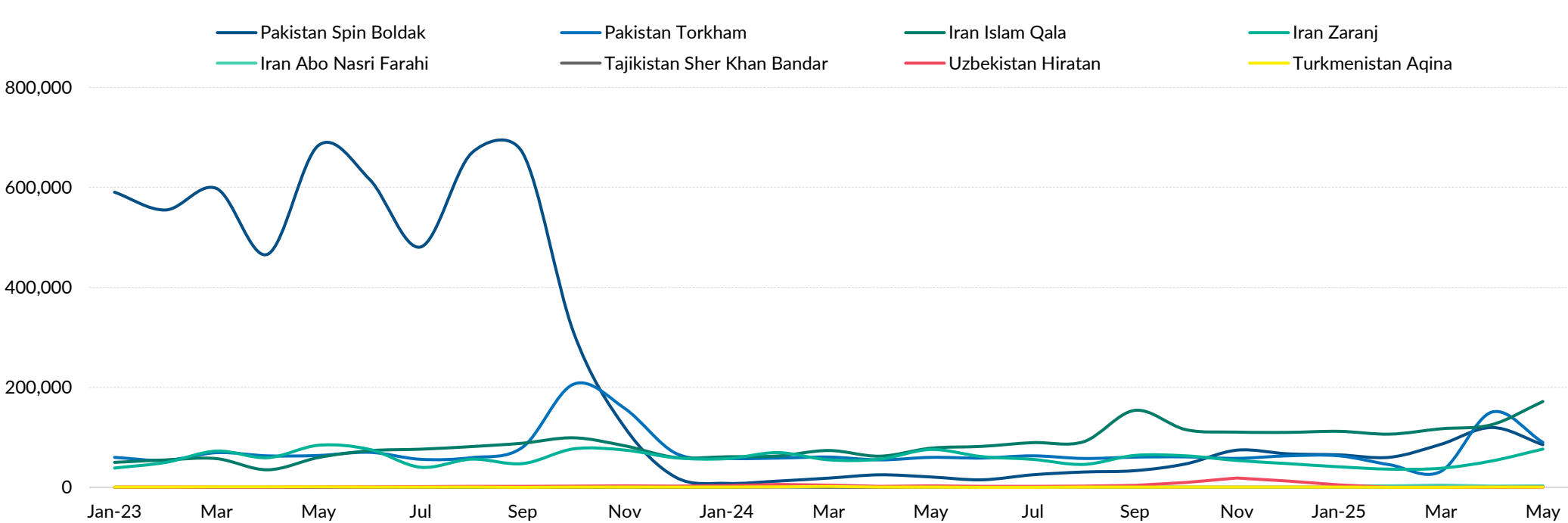
Population Movement per entry point - 01 January - 31 May 2025									
Movement type	Spin Boldak	Torkham	Islam Qala	Zaranj	Abo Nasri Farahi	Sher Khan Bandar	Hiratan	Aqina	Total
Outflow total (A)	292,400	288,800	275,100	96,900	15,000	2,000	6,800	2,000	979,000
Outflow Monthly Average	58,470	57,800	55,000	19,400	3,000	400	1,360	400	195,800
Inflow total (B)	416,100	380,300	632,600	244,800	15,500	1,300	4,800	1,800	1,697,200
Inflow Monthly Average	83,200	76,100	126,500	48,950	3,100	270	970	370	339,460

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 2023 - 31 May 2025)



Estimated Monthly **Inflow** Movement – Individuals - (1 January 2023 - 31 May 2025)



Deportation of undocumented Afghans from Iran
(1 January 2023 to 31 May 2025)

