UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | CORE

IRAN-AFGHANISTAN

Returns Emergency Response

as of 13 December 2025

Key figures

1,840,500
total returns[1]

1,227,300
deportations

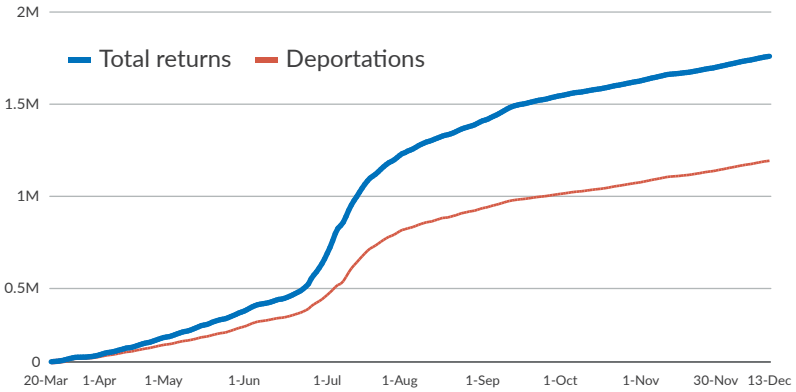
1,658,700
90%

67%
of total returns are **deportations**

The **blue figures** above correspond to the period 1 January 2025 to 13 Dec. 2025. While the **navy figures** refer only to those who arrived from 20 March 2025 to 13 Dec. 2025.

Total returns (cumulative since 20 March 2025)

Number of people in millions



Context

Following headcount slip expiry on 20 March 2025, the Government of Iran launched a regularization/return scheme for the two million affected Afghans. Slip holders must undergo government assessments to determine whether they are allowed to remain.

Daily returns rose sharply mid-June, with 4 July registering over 39,400 returns in a single day. Since then, the trend has declined. **Between 7 to 13 December the average daily returns was 2,900 in line with the previous week.** The current level remains above the first quarter of 2025, when the daily average was approximately 2,300.

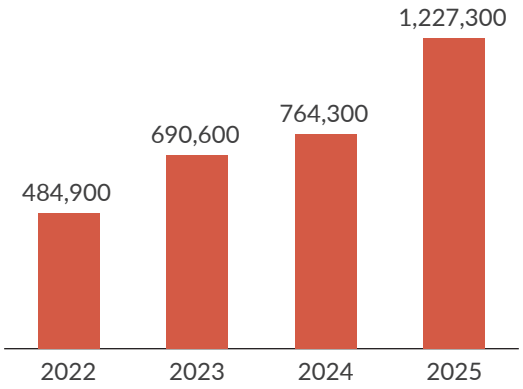
As of 13 December, close to 1.7 million Afghans returned from Iran since 20 March 2025, and over **1.8 million since the beginning of the year** bringing the total returns from both Iran and Pakistan in 2025 to some 2.8 million.

UNHCR reiterates concern that many Afghans —regardless of status—face serious protection risks in Afghanistan due to the current human rights situation, especially women and girls.

Deportations

In 2025, 1.2 million returns — or 67% of the total — were deportations. Of these, some 852,800 Afghans were deported after 13 June.

Yearly deportations (as of 13 December 2025)



Returns by documentation status

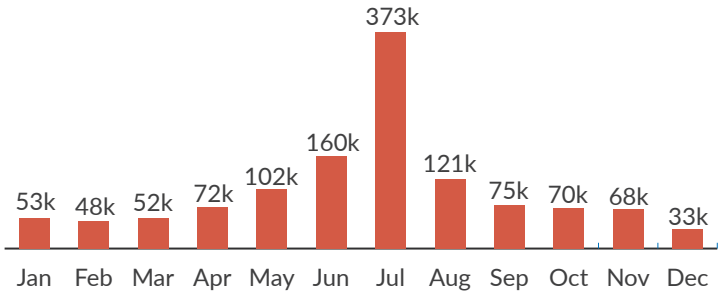
From 7 December 2025, headcounted slip holders made up 15% of total returnees, with **13% of total deportees being headcounted slip holders**. Looking at the broader period since 20 March 2025, approximately 51% of total returnees and 48% of total deportees are headcount slip holders.

Monthly deportations in 2025

July 2025 recorded the highest monthly deportation figures in the past three years, with a total of 373,000 individuals deported.

During the reporting period from 7 to 13 December, over 17,900 individuals were deported, 46% of whom crossed through the Islam Qala border point and 5% through Zaranj border point. The proportion of deportees out of the total returns in the reporting week was 89%.

Number of people deported in thousands as of 13 December 2025



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

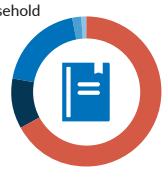
Returns profiles (since 20 March 2025)

Since the beginning of 2025, there have been **significant shifts in the proportion of returnees traveling as families rather than individuals.** The percentage of family returns rose substantially from 14% in Q1 to 41% between April and 12 June. During the conflict period from 13 to 24 June, family returns increased sharply to 62%, **continuing to rise to 80% after the ceasefire** on 25 June. In December, **57% of returnees were travelling as families.**

57% have returned as **families**

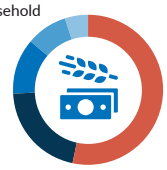
- Hazara (13%)
- Pashtoon (25%)
- Tajik (50%)
- Uzbek (9%)
- Others (3%)

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



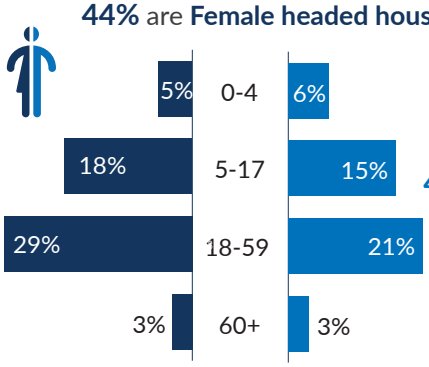
- No skills (52%)
- Unskilled daily wage labour (22%)
- Masonry (11%)
- Agriculture (10%)
- Tailoring (5%)

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.

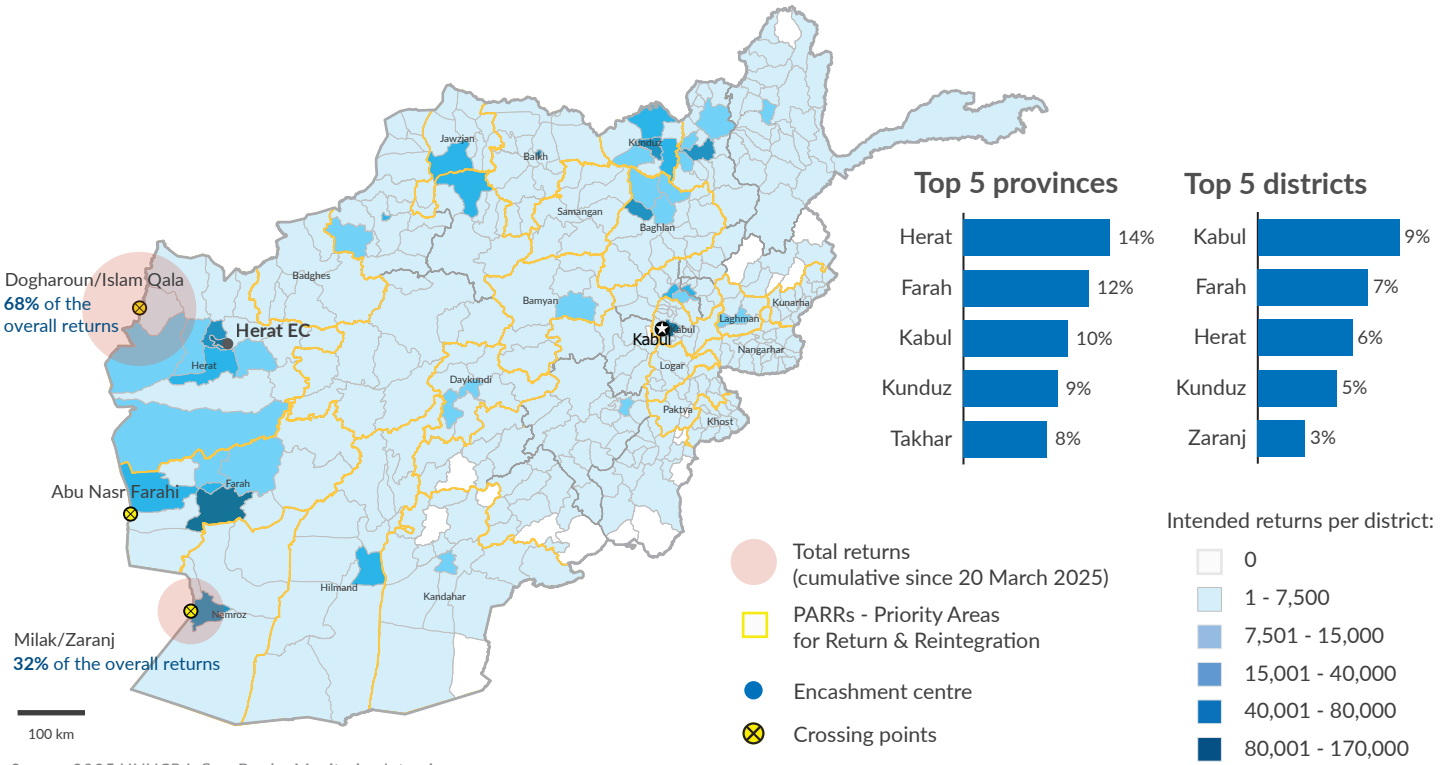
In addition to the cash assistance, UNHCR supports the returnees with emergency relief items including blankets, plastic sheet, kitchen set, jerry cans, hygiene kits and hot meals in Islam Qala. **From 27 June to 18 December, some 32,700 returning households covering 228,300 Afghan returnees were supported with Core Relief Items (CRIs) and 172,300 received hot meals. Some 31,250 returnees were assisted with transportation from Islam Qala and Zaranj to main provinces of return.**

76% of assisted are **women & children**
44% are **Female headed households**



Out of those assisted
4.2% have disabilities

Afghanistan map - overall returns intended districts of destination



Top 5 provinces

Top 5 districts

Source: 2025 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.

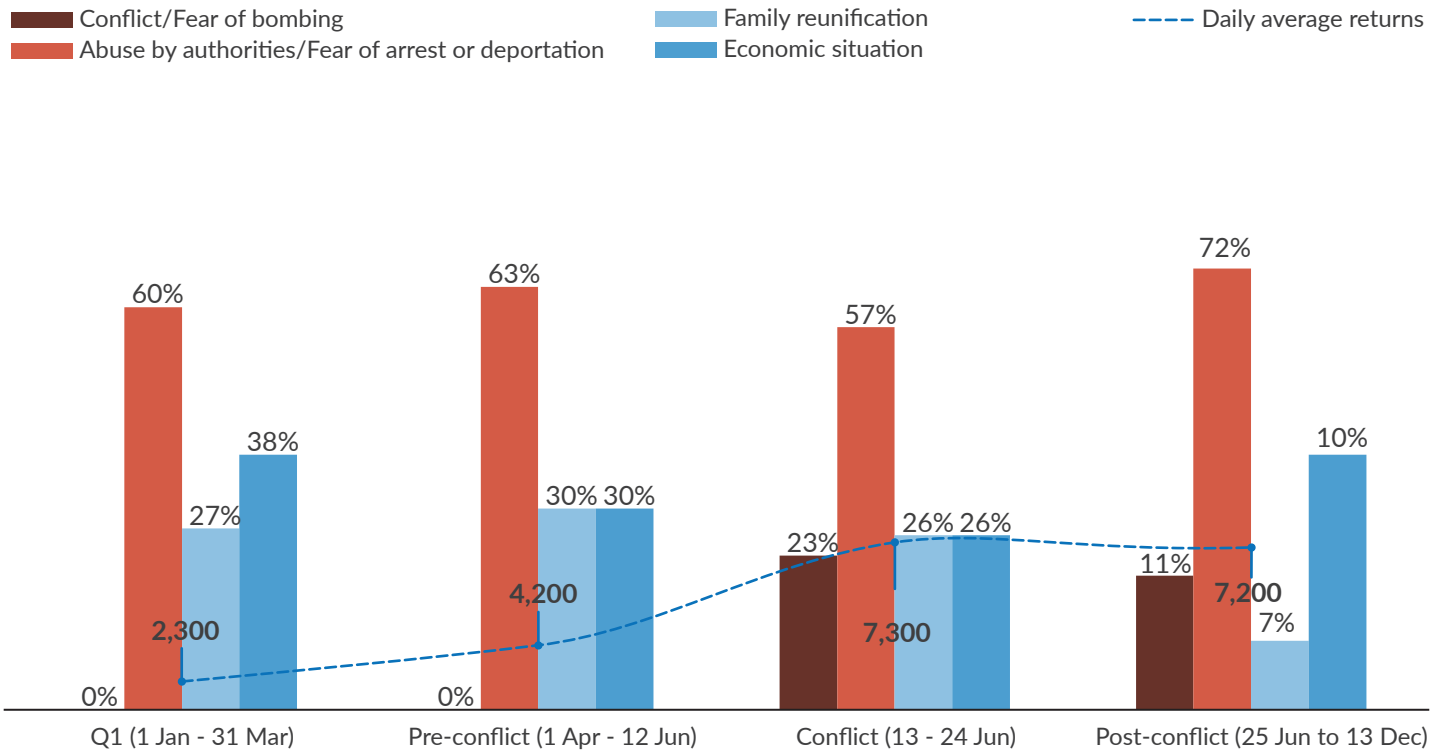
Border Protection Monitoring

UNHCR and its border partners WADAN and CHA in Afghanistan have scaled up protection activities at the border (Islam Qala, Zaranj and Abo Nasr Farahi) with Iran. Daily presence consists of Border Protection Monitoring through interviews with returnees and deportees in order to identify protection concerns and risks, as well as their intended areas of return in Afghanistan. Help Desks have been set up to boost protection screening interviews, identification and referral of individuals to be assisted by UNHCR at the border and in the Encashment Centers. Since 13 June, deportations from Iran increased, also coinciding with a Government-announced 6 July deadline for holders of expired Headcount slips to exit Iran.

Despite the significant decrease in the daily average number of returns compared to previous weeks, border protection monitoring in Afghanistan continues to highlight serious protection challenges faced in Iran by those Afghan returnees. Returnees continue to report instances of discrimination and mistreatment, including instances of inflated prices for Afghan customers, increased harassment of Afghan children in local communities, and verbal abuse in detention centres. Employment discrimination also persists, with job advertisements offering different salary scales based on nationality.

Reasons for leaving Iran

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



Top 3 Needs upon arrival

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

- **89%** Food
- **83%** Housing/Accommodation
- **82%** Financial support

Top 3 Protection services requested in Afghanistan

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

- **66%** Documentation / Legal assistance
- **28%** Support with family reunification
- **14%** Information on services and assistance