In 2023, 5,836 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan (94% from Pakistan), with the second quarter alone registering 4,467 returns. The 2023 overall return figure, is five times higher than the one recorded during the same period in 2022 (1,237 individuals). 2022 registered a total 6,424 Afghan refugee returns (which was five time higher than the overall returns in 2021).

Returnees stated as the main reasons behind return movements from Iran and Pakistan the cost of living and lack of employment opportunities in host countries, improved security situation in Afghanistan and reunification with family. In 2023, 57% of the refugee returned to 5 provinces: Kabul (21%), Kunduz (13%), Kandahar (10%), Nangarhar (7%) and Jawzjan (6%). Furthermore, 72% of the returnees were in the country of asylum for over ten years and 25% were born in the country of asylum.

At Encashment Centres in Afghanistan, returning refugees receive a cash grant of USD 375 per individual. As of 1 August 2022, UNHCR adjusted the cash grant amount from USD 250 to USD 375 per person due to increase in living/transportation costs in Afghanistan. In addition, due to the current economic instability in Afghanistan, refugee families returned after 1 January 2023 will receive a one-time supplemental reintegration cash grant approximately 3 months after arrival in their areas of origin/intended destination. This grant is intended to support reintegration by extending financial support for three additional months. Returnee families receive $700 (for a family of two or more people) or $350 (for single individuals, or if part of the family arrived, the remaining $350 will be issued, if and when the rest of the family arrive.). Returnees may also access programmes and projects implemented by UNHCR in priority areas of return and reintegration.

USD 1.7M was provided in cash assistance to returnees at ECs in Q2 of 2023. A total of USD 2.23M was provided in 2023.

Beside cash grants, returning refugees receive basic health care and overnight accommodation when needed. They may also receive other services, provided by other partners present in each EC.
AFGHANISTAN SITUATION
Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees | Quarterly Update

REASONS AND INTENTIONS RELATED TO RETURN

Top 5 reasons for leaving Iran and Pakistan

- High costs of living/ high rent: 90%
- No employment opportunities: 83%
- Strict border entry requirements: 52%
- Fear of arrest and/or deportation: 25%
- Seasonal weather conditions: 9%

Top 5 reasons for not returning to Area of Origin

- To reunite with relatives: 24%
- Lack of housing/shelter: 17%
- Lack of income opportunities: 16%
- Lack of land: 15%
- Lack of basic services: 5%

Upon return, how the cash grant will be spent

- Buy food and other commodities: 75%
- Paying transportation cost: 59%
- Rent accommodation: 35%
- Investment in livelihoods: 27%
- Payback loans: 15%

Living arrangements upon return

- I will stay in my own house: 23%
- I will stay with relatives: 11%
- I will rent a house: 45%
- Other: 1%

Top 5 reasons for return to Afghanistan

- Improvement in security situation: 82%
- Reunion with family/relatives in Afghanistan: 69%
- Land allocation scheme and/or shelter program: 27%
- No longer have a fear of persecution: 7%
- Family matters (marriage, funeral): 5%

Concerns related to the return to Afghanistan

- Lack of shelter: 57%
- Lack of job opportunities: 46%
- N/A: I don't have any concerns: 33%
- Lack of land: 32%
- Lack of document (ID/Tazkera): 16%

After cash grant is spent, how you plan to support your family?

- Rely on daily wage work: 73%
- Rely on extended family: 22%
- Open a small business: 4%
- Other: 7%

Interviewed returnees' skills/qualifications

- Tailoring: 23%
- No skill: 22%
- No skill: 21%
- Unskilled daily wage labor: 14%
- Shop keeper: 12%
- Agriculture (Farming): 10%
- Embroidery: 7%
- Masonry (semi-skilled): 4%
- Teaching: 4%
- Transport / driver: 3%
- Carpet weaving: 3%

REGISTERED VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION TO AFGHANISTAN 2002-2023

REGISTERED VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION (zoomed in 2020-2023)

Source: UNHCR's returnee monitoring conducted at ECs. Timeframe: Findings from Jan. to June 2023. Multiple answer questions may add up to over 100%.

For further information please visit the Afghanistan Situation Operational Portal or please contact RBAPDIMA@unhcr.org.