Since 01 January, UNHCR assisted the return of 740 Afghan refugees from Iran (574), Pakistan (117) and other countries (49) including Tajikistan, India, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation, under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. After a temporary suspension of voluntary repatriation between 04 March and 29 April due to COVID-19, UNHCR resumed its facilitated voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran as of 30 April and from Pakistan and other countries as of 10 August.

Refugee returnees receive a multi-purpose cash grant (on average USD 250 per person) and other services at Encashment Centers (ECs) located in Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Nangarhar provinces. UNHCR’s cash grants to refugee returnees are intended to prevent, reduce, and respond to immediate protection risks and vulnerabilities upon return to Afghanistan.

According to MoRR/IOM, during the weeks of 30 August - 05 September, the total number of undocumented returnees from Iran was 16,664 (8,501 deportees and 8,163 spontaneous returnees) and from Pakistan was 803 (776 spontaneous returnees and 27 deportees). Since 01 January, the total number of undocumented returnees is 506,045 individuals, including 502,263 from Iran (328,803 spontaneous returnees and 173,460 deportees) and 3,782 from Pakistan (3,611 spontaneous returnees and 171 deportees).

Between 30 August - 05 September 2020, a total of 150,965 Afghans crossed through Spin Boldak into Afghanistan, while 151,003 people crossed into Pakistan. Torkham border was opened for pedestrian movement on 05 September during which a total of 8,770 stranded Afghans crossed into Afghanistan and 1,623 stranded Pakistanis crossed into Pakistan.

As of 21 August, Spin Boldak crossing point will be open seven days a week for pedestrians and commercial trucks. In addition, as of 25 August, Torkham border is open on Mondays and Tuesdays for refugee returnee’s movement to Afghanistan, while it will continue to be open once a week (on Saturdays) for undocumented returnees and other pedestrian movements.
Between 30 August – 05 September, 1,745 interviews, including 1,054 male and 691 female respondents, were carried out with returnees from Iran (1,000) and Pakistan (745). Since the start of border monitoring on 05 April, a total of 22,889 returnees (18,016 M and 4,873 F) were interviewed as they entered Afghanistan from Iran at Zaranj/Milak (10,171) and Islam Qala (9,978), and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak/Chaman (2,241) and Torkham (499), including 17,252 single individuals and 5,637 heads of households who returned with their families. It should be noted that because of the border restrictions, returnees from Pakistan are mainly passport/ID holders.

Note: The female sample size is small because there is a high proportion of single males among the returnees/deportees from Iran.

### Respondents’ Return Status

- Deportee: 46.6%
- Spontaneous returnee: 35.5%
- Passport holder: 8.9%
- Tazkira/ token holder: 8.4%
- VRF holder: 0.5%

### Respondents (%) by Entry Point

- Islam Qala: 43.6%
- Spin Boldak: 9.8%
- Torkham: 2.2%
- Zaranj/ Milak: 44.4%

### Respondents’ Age and Gender

- 12-17: 6.2% (Female), 0.2% (Male)
- 18-34: 61.1% (Female), 35.5% (Male)
- 35-59: 5.8% (Female), 8.9% (Male)
- 60 and over: 0.9% (Female), 46.6% (Male)

### Years Spent in the CoPR

- Less than 1 year: 66.4% (Iran), 87.8% (Pakistan)
- 1 - 5 years: 25.7% (Iran), 3.6% (Pakistan)
- 6 - 10 years: 3.5% (Iran), 2.2% (Pakistan)
- More than 10 years: 3.5% (Iran), 3.5% (Pakistan)

### Reason for entry to CoPR

- In search of employment: 83.2% (Iran), 47.5% (Pakistan)
- Conflict: 6.6% (Iran), 27.7% (Pakistan)
- Family visit: 4.1% (Iran), 30.0% (Pakistan)
- Drought: 2.0% (Iran), 14.3% (Pakistan)
- To move to Turkey & onward to Europe: 1.6% (Iran), 12.9% (Pakistan)
- For medical treatment: 0.9% (Iran), 14.3% (Pakistan)
- Business: 5.2% (Iran), 0.3% (Pakistan)
- Other: 0.5% (Iran), 9.7% (Pakistan)

### Sources of Information about COVID-19 in Iran & Pakistan

- TV: 47.5% (Iran), 27.7% (Pakistan)
- Radio: 31.3% (Iran), 30.0% (Pakistan)
- Mosque/ religious leaders: 13.1% (Iran), 13.4% (Pakistan)
- Local community: 6.4% (Iran), 14.3% (Pakistan)
- Community leaders: 1.3% (Iran), 12.9% (Pakistan)
- Information leaflet: 0.3% (Iran), 1.4% (Pakistan)
- Other: 0.1% (Iran), 0.3% (Pakistan)
Situation in Country of Prior Residence (CoPR) - Iran and Pakistan

Interviewed Returnees from Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak):

- 53% deportees, 38% spontaneous returnees, 8% passport holders and 1% VRF holders;
- 30% of the interviewed VRF holders, 24% spontaneous returnees, 14% of deportees, and 6% of passport holders were female;
- 94% of the interviewed returnees stated that they returned from nine provinces in Iran: Tehran, Sistan va Baluchestan, Kerman, Fars, Khuzistan, Esfahan, Khorasan Razavi, Yazd, and Hormozgan; 66% spent less than one year in Iran;
- 83% went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities, 7% due to conflict, 4% to visit family/relatives, 2% due to drought, 2% (mainly deportees) to move to Turkey and onward to Europe, 1% for medical treatment, and 1% for other reasons;
- 32% (6,515 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak, such as lost work/wages, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, lack of access to medical services, discrimination/stigmatization by local communities, pressure by authorities to leave for Afghanistan, and lack of access to markets;
- 93% of the respondents stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Iran through TV, radio and local communities;
- 11% of interviewed deportees stated that they did not receive information about COVID-19 in Iran; this figure is much lower among passport holders (4%), spontaneous returnees (1%) and VRF holders (1%);
- 42% (8,546 respondents) claimed that they had paid a municipality (return) tax (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/ approximately USD 7-35);
- 21% claimed that they faced problems during return: high transportation/ travel costs, fee charged at detention center, limited transportation services to reach the border, overcrowded situation in the bus stations, or bribe required to pass police check point.
- Since early May, Iranian health officials in Dogharoun have been conducting a health screening process and providing returning refugees and passport holders with a health certificate issued after a temperature check and interview focused on possible COVID-19 symptoms. This practice was put in place after a request for screening by Afghanistan's MoPH.

Interviewed Returnees from Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham):

- 70% were Tazkira/token holders, 18% spontaneous returnees, and 12% passport holders;
- 92% of the interviewed spontaneous returnees, 50% of Tazkira/token holders, and 16% of passport holders were female;
- 71% of the interviewed returnees stated that they returned from Baluchistan, 15% from KPK, 10% Sindh, 3% Punjab, and 1% from Islamabad; 88% spent less than a year in Pakistan;
- 34% went to Pakistan to visit family/relatives, 27% for medical treatment, 14% in search of livelihoods opportunities, 6% due to conflict, 5% for business purpose, 2% due to drought, and 12% cited other reasons;
- 37% (1,012 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak, such as lost work/wages, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, lack of access to medical services, discrimination/stigmatization by local communities, pressure by authorities to leave for Afghanistan, and lack of access to markets;
- 93% of the respondents stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Pakistan through TV, radio and local communities;
- 11% of interviewed deportees stated that they did not receive information about COVID-19 in Pakistan; this figure is much lower among passport holders (4%), spontaneous returnees (1%) and VRF holders (1%);
- 42% (8,546 respondents) claimed that they had paid a municipality (return) tax (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/ approximately USD 7-35);
- 21% claimed that they faced problems during return: high transportation/ travel costs, fee charged at detention center, limited transportation services to reach the border, overcrowded situation in the bus stations, or bribe required to pass police check point.

Reasons for Return to Afghanistan (Spontaneous returnees, VRF holders, and Passport/ID holders)

- Reunite with family members in Afghanistan: 43.0%
- No employment opportunities in CoPR: 17.1%
- Fear of COVID-19: 14.6%
- High cost of living/ high rent in CoPR: 7.4%
- Denied access to health facilities: 4.4%
- Threat of detention /forced quarantine: 4.4%
- Discrimination by local community: 3.6%
- Fear of arrest and/or deportation: 3.6%
- Abuse by police or state authorities: 1.1%
- Other: 11.4%

This category are those Afghans who live along the border area in Afghanistan and normally move back and forth to Pakistan and Afghanistan frequently.
The border monitoring data shows that there was a sharp increase in the number of deportees in June/July as compared to May. This trend has continued in August. In order to better assess these trends, UNHCR revised its border monitoring tool to collect deportation reasons as well as intentions of returnees and deportees after their arrival in Afghanistan. The revised tool has been implemented as of 04 July in all entry points and since then a total of 12,418 interviews were conducted, including 5,583 interviews with deportees (4,757 M and 826 F).

The majority of interviewed deportees (close to 96%) cited lack of documentation and irregular entry to CoPR as the reasons provided to them for their deportation.

Nearly 2% of interviewed deportees (111 respondents, including 73 single individuals and 38 family cases) stated that they were arrested and deported following their attempt to leave Iran and move onward to a third country in the absence of proper documentation.

1% (68 respondents) of the interviewed deportees (5,583) stated that they went through a legal procedure and were deported after receiving a court order, while 99% of the interviewed deportees stated that they were deported in the absence of a court order.

Note: “No Go Areas” are specific provinces in Iran where foreign nationals including Afghans are not allowed to travel and work.

### Reason Provided for Deportation (only deportees from Iran)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason Provided</th>
<th>Interviewed Deportees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of documentation</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular entry to CoPR</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to exit CoPR/move onward without proper documentation</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of work permit</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling/Working in “No Go Area”</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deported after release from prison/custody</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expiration of passport/visa</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expiration of my work permit</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not present documentation at the time of arrest</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Information Dissemination in Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Did you receive information upon arrival in Afghanistan?</th>
<th>Did you receive any information about COVID-19 while you were in your CoPR?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islam Qala</td>
<td>87.0% Yes 13.0% No</td>
<td>97.6% Yes 2.4% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaranj/ Milak</td>
<td>91.5% Yes 8.5% No</td>
<td>88.9% Yes 11.1% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spin Boldak</td>
<td>55.6% Yes 44.4% No</td>
<td>80.9% Yes 19.1% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torkham</td>
<td>25.3% Yes 74.7% Yes</td>
<td>92.6% Yes 7.4% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (all entry points)</td>
<td>84.6% Yes 15.4% No</td>
<td>92.0% Yes 8.0% No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in previous updates, the gap in information dissemination in Torkham is mainly the result of the limited opening of the border for pedestrian movements, which creates an overcrowded situation as thousands of people try to cross at once, with little attention to services provided by partners, including health screening and information dissemination about COVID-19. However, it should be noted that 93% of the interviewed returnees in Torkham confirmed that they received information about COVID-19 in the CoPR. The information gap in Spin Boldak has slightly increased since the re-opening of the border (21 August) and increased population movement to/from Afghanistan. This gap is related to overcrowded situation and the fact that returnees are not focused on services, including awareness raising about COVID-19. UNHCR is planning to raise this matter with partners. Overall, the provision of information, upon arrival in the border entry points, has improved (from 70% to nearly 85%) since May/June.
Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination) and Intentions after Return

- 96% of the interviewed returnees from Iran and Pakistan declared during the interview that they are returning to their areas of origin.

- 4% do not return to their areas of origin due to lack of livelihood opportunities, reunification with family/relatives, lack of housing/shelter, and perceived insecurity.

- Interviewed returnees from Iran were travelling to all 34 provinces across the country, with the majority (69%) intending to return to Herat, Faryab, Nimroz, Takhar, Kunduz, Ghor, Farah, Balkh, Badghis, and Badakhshan provinces.

- Interviewed returnees from Pakistan were travelling to 33 provinces, with the majority (89%) intending to return to Kandahar, Kabul, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Helmand, Zabul, Kunduz, Uruzgan, Paktya, and Paktika provinces.

- 80% of the respondents confirmed that they own a Tazkira (84% of male respondents and 66% of female respondents).

- 74% of the interviewed returnees/deportees stated that they have no education. 9% stated that they have minimal education (up to grade 6), 6% up to grade 9, 7% up to grade 12, 2% went to madrasa, and 1% went to university.

- 82.5% stated that they will stay in their own house, 12% stated that they will rent a house, and 4.5% will stay with relatives.

- 93% of the interviewed returnees/deportees from Iran and 61% from Pakistan stated that they will try to find a job in their province of origin.

- 6% of respondents from Iran and 28% from Pakistan stated that they intend to go back to the CoPR: for employment, to join family or to collect property. 6% of the respondents from Iran stated that they intend to go back to move on to a third country.

### Intention after return/deportation

- **Iran**
  - Will search for work in my province of origin: 92.9%
  - Want to go back to CoPR: 6.0%
  - Will search for a job in another province in Afghanistan: 0.9%
  - Will join the police/army: 0.2%
  - Other: 0.0%

- **Pakistan**
  - Will search for work in my province of origin: 61.4%
  - Want to go back to CoPR: 27.7%
  - Will search for a job in another province in Afghanistan: 10.7%
  - Will join the police/army: 0.0%
  - Other: 0.2%

### Reasons for going back to CoPR

- **Iran**
  - Employment: 46.2%
  - Join my family: 21.9%
  - Collect property/assets: 22.8%
  - Will move on to a third country: 5.9%
  - Other: 1.0%

- **Pakistan**
  - Employment: 77.4%
  - Join my family: 77.4%
  - Collect property/assets: 0.1%
  - Will move on to a third country: 0.2%
  - Other: 0.4%

### Living arrangements after return

- **Iran**
  - I will stay in my own house: 82.5%
  - I will rent a house: 12.1%
  - I will stay with relatives: 4.5%
  - I will stay in a makeshift shelter: 0.3%
  - I will buy a house: 0.4%
  - I will stay in an open area: 0.1%
  - I will stay in a tent: 0.1%
  - Other: 0.1%

- **Pakistan**
  - I will stay in my own house: 9.7%
  - I will rent a house: 9.2%
  - I will stay with relatives: 6.6%
  - I will stay in a makeshift shelter: 8.0%
  - I will buy a house: 5.2%
  - I will stay in an open area: 1.2%
  - I will stay in a tent: 0.2%
  - Other: 0.4%

### Education Level - Returnees from Iran & Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1-6</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7-9</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10-12</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasa</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Vocational Training</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Us

Angela Moore, Sr. Protection Officer | Tel.: +93 791990160 | Email: moorea@unhcr.org

Mohammad Haroon, Assistant Repatriation Officer | Tel.: +93 791990019 | Email: haroon@unhcr.org