

# BORDER MONITORING REPORT

MAY 2021



UNHCR border monitoring partner staff during interview with a returnee woman, Zaranj/Milak crossing point, Nimroz, Afghanistan, May 2021

**952**

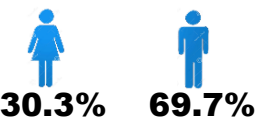
AFGHAN REFUGEES RETURNED TO AFGHANISTAN

**495,755**

UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS RETURNED / DEPORTED FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN

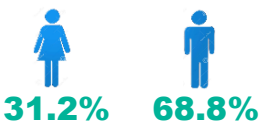
**35,399**

INFLOW INTERVIEWS WITH RETURNEES FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN



**3,632**

OUTFLOW INTERVIEWS



**65%**

RESPONDENTS WERE NOT AWARE OF THE RISK OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In line with UNHCR's protection monitoring objectives and noting with concern the increasing impact of COVID-19 pandemic on cross-border movements in Afghanistan, in April 2020, UNHCR made the decision to expand its protection and return monitoring activities to the official entry points with Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak crossing points) and Pakistan (Spin Boldak/Chaman and Torkham) by establishing border monitoring activities mostly focusing on inflows. Through regular and consistent presence at these zero points, UNHCR aims to ensure efficient, timely and systematic collection and analysis of protection related information from Afghan returnees irrespective of their status. Border monitoring also helps to assess access to the territory and "the right to asylum" for people fleeing persecution who may be in need of international protection. It also aims at assessing the right to return for Afghan refugees and other nationals amidst possible limitations imposed by the pandemic.

As a recent improvement and in view of the current context in Afghanistan, UNHCR, in 2021, in consultation with UNHCR offices in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, revised its border (inflow) monitoring tool to include **outflow monitoring** in all four official entry points with Iran and Pakistan. The new tools were launched as of **01 April 2021** with the purpose to understand the triggers/intentions/reasons of Afghans movements to Pakistan and Iran. Outflows monitoring will also enable to assess access to the territory and "the right to seek asylum" for people fleeing persecution (in Afghanistan) who may be in need of international protection i.e. in Iran and / or Pakistan.

In May, UNHCR assisted the return of **178** Afghan refugees from Iran (**99**), Pakistan (**62**) and other countries (**17**). Cumulatively since the beginning of 2021, UNHCR assisted the return of **952** Afghan refugees from Iran (**635**), Pakistan (**288**) and other countries (**29**) under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. The figure is **178%** higher compared to 2020 figures at the same period when **342** refugees returned. Refugee returnees continue to receive upon arrival a multi-purpose cash grant (an average of USD 250 per person) and other multisector assistance services at Encashment Centers located in Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Nangarhar provinces. UNHCR's cash grants to refugees upon return to Afghanistan intend to address their immediate needs to prevent, reduce, and respond to protection risks and vulnerabilities.

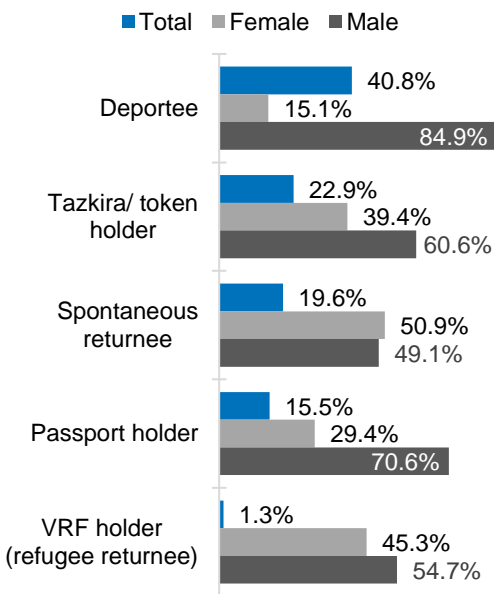
In addition to refugee returnees and in the context of coordinated activities at entry points, a total number of **127,349** undocumented returnees/deportees have been recorded in May, according to MoRR/IOM. This include **126,377** from Iran (**67,419** deportees and **58,958** spontaneous returnees) and **972** from Pakistan (**873** spontaneous returnees and **99** deportees). Cumulatively since 01 January, the total number of undocumented returnees/deportees stands at **495,755** individuals, including **490,319** from Iran (**271,180** deportees and **219,139** spontaneous returnees) and **5,436** from Pakistan (**4,947** spontaneous returnees and **489** deportees).

Individual and household level **inflow** interviews conducted by UNHCR through partners as part of border monitoring activities randomly reached a total of **6,913** returnees and deportees including **4,783 males and 2,130 females** (representing **5%** of total returnees/deportees in May). Cumulatively since January 2021, a total of **35,399** interviews (representing **7%** of total returnees/deportees) were conducted with returnees/deportees of various status (**24,679 males and 10,720 females**) upon return from Iran at Zaranj/Milak (**13,117**) and Islam Qala (**7,180**), and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak/Chaman (**8,654**) and Torkham (**6,448**). These include **23,790** single individuals and **11,609** heads of households who returned with their families. In general, the majority of returnees/deportees from Iran are single males, while it is not the case among returnees/deportees from Pakistan.

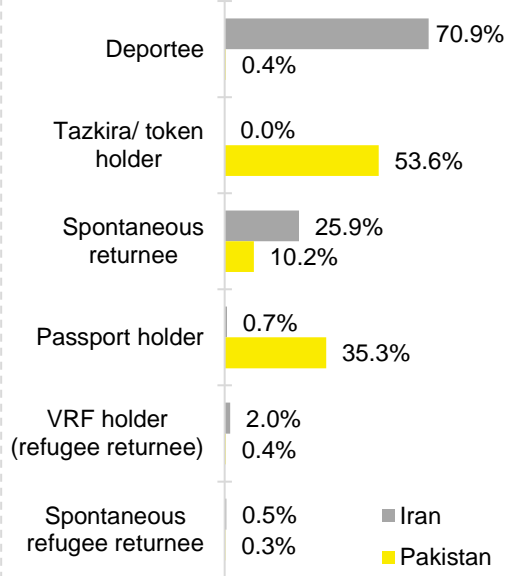
Similarly, during April 2021, **outflow** interviews were conducted by UNHCR through partners with a total of **3,632** Afghans including **2,498 males and 1,134 females** prior to their departure to Pakistan - through Torkham (**571**) and Spin Boldak (**2,211**) - and Iran - through Islam Qala (**578**) and Zaranj (**272**) crossing points. These were consisting of **2,210** single individuals and **1,422** families. Outflow monitoring was not carried out at Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points since 29 April when the Government of Iran imposed restriction on population movement from Afghanistan to Iran to avoid the transmission of the new type of COVID-19. Similarly outflow monitoring was also not carried out at Torkham (since 05 May) and Spin Boldak (only 05 - 20 May) due to the same restriction imposed by the Government of Pakistan. Outflow monitoring do not cover unofficial entry points which are not accessible by the humanitarian organizations where reportedly irregular cross-border movements are taking place.

## Main Findings of the Border (Inflow) Monitoring

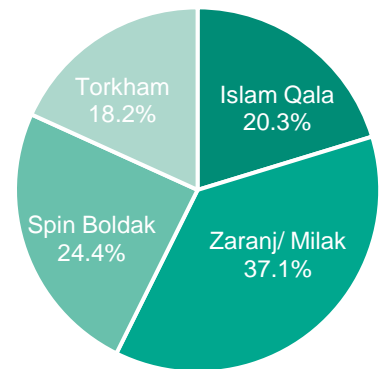
### Respondents' Return Status by Gender



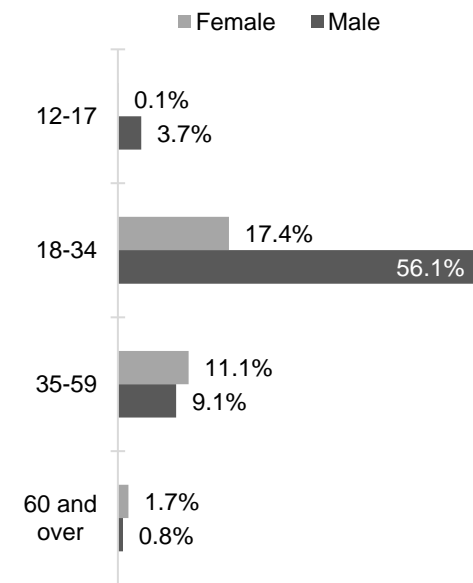
### Respondents' Return Status by CoPR



### Respondents (%) by Entry Point



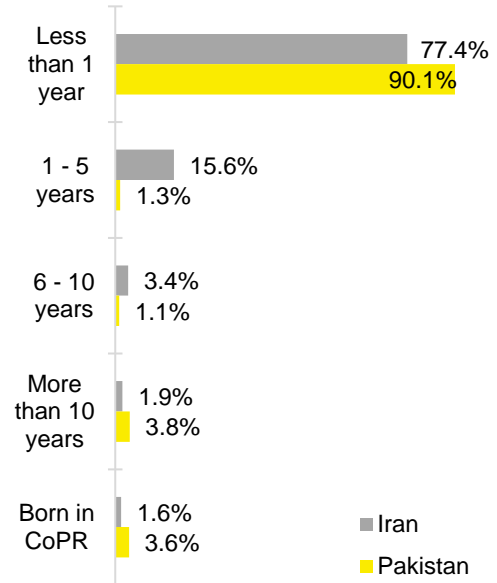
### Respondents' Age and Gender



### Reason for entry to CoPR



### Years Spent in the CoPR



## Situation in Country of Prior Residence (CoPR) - Iran and Pakistan

### Findings of Interviews with Returnees and Deportees from Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak):

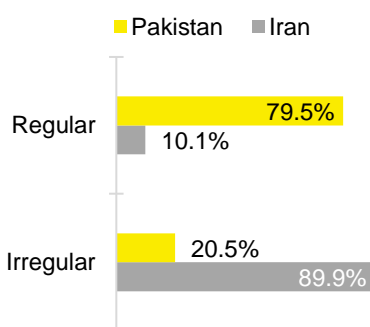
- Respondents include: 71% deportees, 26% spontaneous returnees (migrants), 2% VRF holders (refugee returnees), & 1% passport holders;
- 47% of the interviewed VRF holders, 40% of spontaneous returnees, and 15% of deportees were females;
- 81% of the respondents returned from 5 provinces in Iran: Sistan va Baluchestan, Teheran, Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, and Fars. These areas were among the top provinces from where many Afghans returned and/ or deported in 2020;
- 77% of the respondents spent less than one year in Iran, among whom 22% spent less than a week, 36% around a month, 23% 1-6 months, and 19% over 6 months;
- 90% of the respondents moved to Iran irregularly, among whom the majority/95% paid a smuggler and 5% moved on their own arrangements;
- 88% of the respondents moved irregularly to Iran due to lack of financial means to obtain passport and visa, 10% said that it is easier to reach Iran irregularly, 1% due to overcrowded situation in the embassy of Iran to obtain a visa, and 1% due to other reasons;
- 66% stated that they were not aware about the risks of irregular migration, including 89% males and 11% females. The lower percentage among females is due to the low female sample size. Majority of the returnees and deportees from Iran were single male individuals;
- 34% said that they had information about the risks of irregular migration, including 55% females and 45% males. Information was mainly obtained through the media and from friends/relatives;

- 69% of the respondents went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities, 21% due to conflict, 7% to visit family/relatives, 1% for medical treatment, and 2% for other reasons. The percentage (average) of those respondents who cited conflict as the main reason for leaving Afghanistan (21%) has slightly decreased compared to last month (April 24%). In 2020, this figure was 15% among the total sample size (40,861 interviews with returnees and deportees from Iran);
- 65% of the respondents who went to Iran due to conflict in Afghanistan were originally from 10 provinces: Herat, Faryab, Ghor, Kunduz, Takhar, Ghazni, Balkh, Badakhshan, Badghis, and Baghlan;
- 32% of the respondents returned to Afghanistan due to economic problems including lack of employment opportunities (26%) and high cost of living (6%) in CoPR; 27% to reunite with family members in Afghanistan, 18% due to fear of COVID-19, 5% to obtain passport and visa to return to CoPR, 4% to attend family gatherings (marriage, funeral), 4% due to denied access to health facilities, and 10% due to other reasons;
- 64% of the respondents stated that they had moved to Iran for the first time, 6% for the second time, 2% for the third time, 12% for more than three times, 15% said that they were seasonal workers, and 1% said that they are regularly moving because they live in Afghanistan and have business in Iran or vice versa. This finding points out that approximately 40% of the interviewed returnees and deportees (2,394 respondents) were recyclers, though it is to be noted that this information was collected since 01 April 2021 and the percentage of recyclers may fluctuate over time;
- 33% of the respondents including 58% deportees and 42% spontaneous returnees had to pay a municipality (return) tax (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/approximately USD 5 - 25);
- 16% of respondents faced problems during return: high transportation/travel costs, overcrowded situation in the bus stations, fee charged at detention center, limited transportation services to reach the border, and bribe required to pass police check point;
- 36% of respondents faced problems due to mitigating measures imposed to avoid the spread of COVID-19, these include lost work/wages, discrimination/stigmatization by local communities, lack of access to markets, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, lack of access to medical services, and pressure by authorities to leave for Afghanistan;
- Close to 100% of the respondents received information about COVID-19 in Iran through TV, radio and local communities.

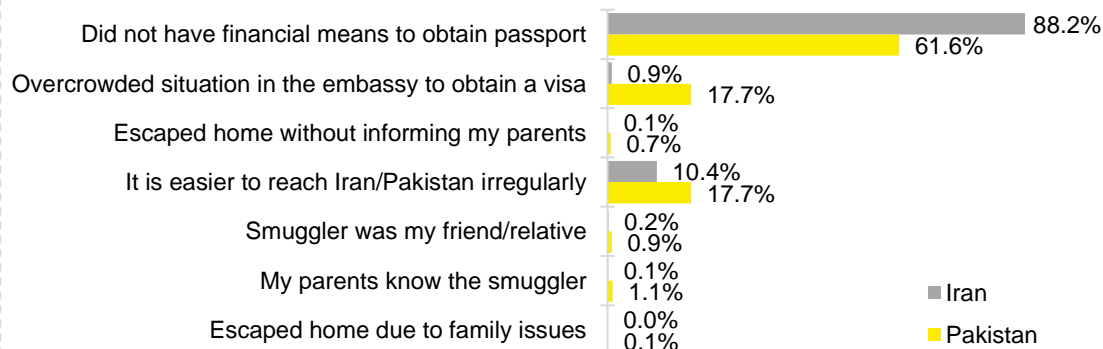
### Findings of Interviews with Returnees and Deportees from Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham):

- Respondents include Tazkira/token holders (54%)<sup>1</sup>, passport holders (35%), spontaneous returnees (10%), VRF holders and deportees (1% both);
- 90% of the interviewed spontaneous returnees, 39% of Tazkira/token holders, 33% of VRF holders & 30% of passport holders were females;
- 51% of the respondents returned from Baluchistan, 35% from KPK, 6% Sindh, 5% Punjab, and 3% from Islamabad;
- 90% of the respondents spent less than a year in Pakistan, among whom 24% stated that they spent less than a week, 53% around a month, 21% 1-6 months, and 2% over 6 months;
- 21% of the respondents moved to Pakistan irregularly; 13% moved on their own arrangements, 10% paid bribe to border police;
- 62% of the respondents moved irregularly to Pakistan due to lack of financial means to obtain passport and visa, 18% said that it is easier to reach Pakistan irregularly, 18% due to overcrowded situation in the embassy of Pakistan to obtain a visa, and 2% due to other reasons;
- 85% stated that they were not aware about the risks of irregular migration, including 60% males and 40% females;
- 15% said that they had information about the risks of irregular migration, including 86% males and 14% females. Information was mainly obtained through the media, friends/relatives, community elders, and parents;
- 54% of the respondents went to Pakistan for medical treatment, 16% to visit family/relatives, 13% in search of livelihoods opportunities, 6% due to conflict, 2% for business purpose, and 9% cited other reasons;
- 67% of the interviewed returnees returned to Afghanistan to reunite with family members, 12% due to lack of employment opportunities and 12% due to denied access to health facilities, and 9% due to other reasons;
- 28% of the respondents faced problems during return. The problems include, among others, overcrowded bus stations, bribe required to pass police check points, and high transportation/ travel costs;
- 23% of the respondents faced problems due to mitigating measures imposed to avoid the spread of COVID-19, these include mainly lost work/wages, movement restrictions due to the lockdown, lack of access to markets, and lack of access to medical services;
- 65% of the respondents had received information about COVID-19 in Pakistan, mainly through TV, radio, mosque/ religious leaders and local communities. This figure slightly increased compared to April 2021 (60%).

#### Type of movement

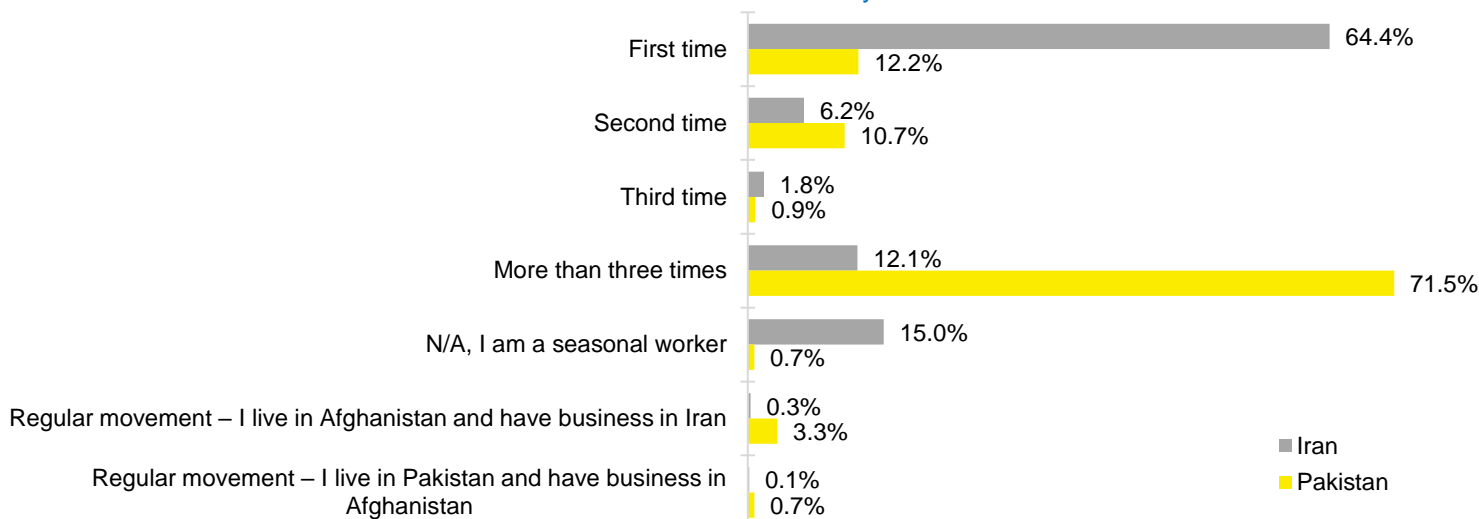


#### Reasons of Irregular movement

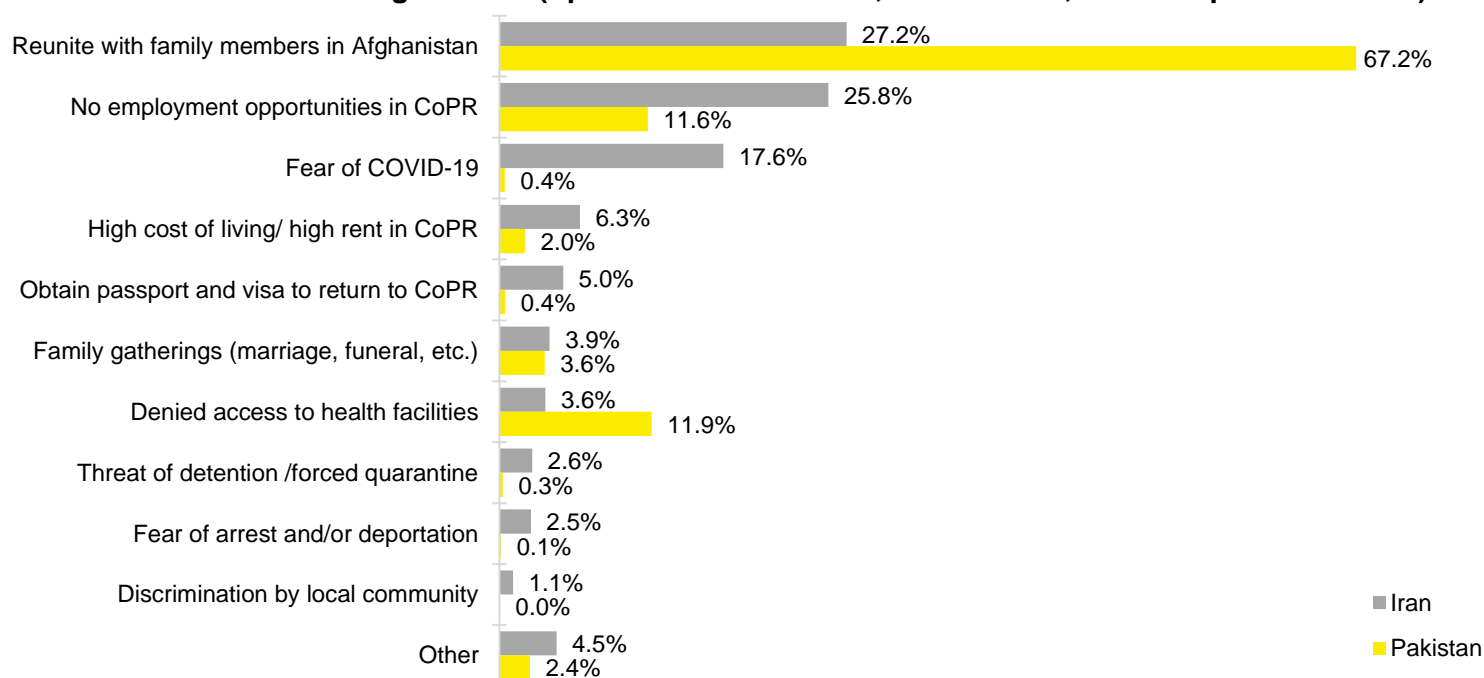


<sup>1</sup> This category are those Afghans who live along the border area in Afghanistan and normally move back and forth to Pakistan and Afghanistan frequently.

### Movement Periodicity



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



### Incident Monitoring/ Challenges

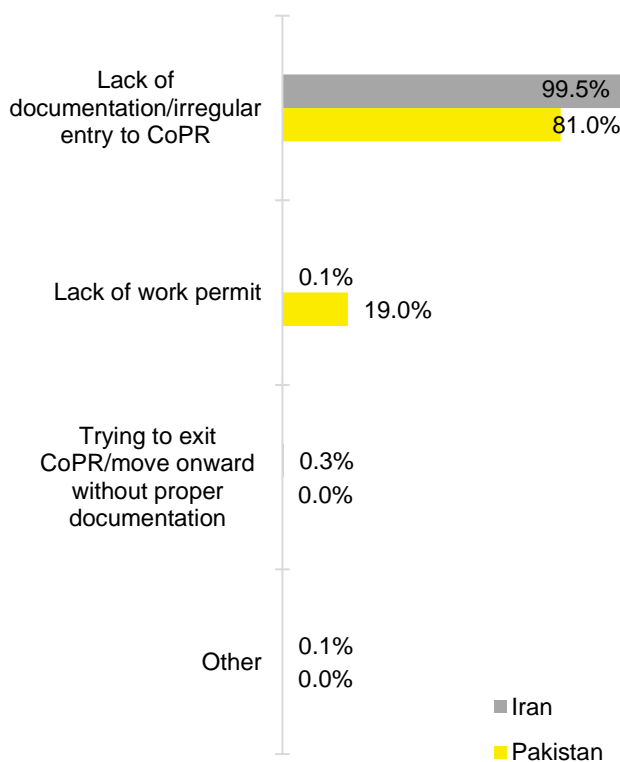
- The suspension of outflow movement of Afghans to Iran**, which was imposed as of 29 April, as a preventive measure to avoid the transmission of new type of COVID-19 identified in India continues. On 05 May, similar measure was imposed by the Government of Pakistan at Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points impacting outflow movement to Pakistan except movement of Pakistani citizens and Afghans with serious medical conditions can enter into Pakistan after going through a screening process conducted by health officials inside Pakistan. However, outflow movement was resumed through Spin Boldak on 20 May while the restriction in Torkham is still in place.
- A total of 8 cases of **deportation of 8 refugee families** (Amayesh holders looking like refoulement) were reported during April (2) and May (6). All of the 8 refugee families were arrested by Iranian police while attempting to cross from Iran to Turkey irregularly through Oromia border crossing point which is among the “No Go Areas” for Afghans. These cases were referred to UNHCR’s reception center in Herat to receive necessary assistance. This issue was also shared with UNHCR office in Iran for possible advocacy and follow-up with the authorities in Iran. It is recalled that as per the regulations in Iran, Afghans who need to travel to No Go Areas are required to obtain a movement permit from the authorities.
- 3% of interviewed returnees from Iran and 25% from Pakistan reported to have been subject to **extortion/bribery** to pass police check points.
- Even though the number of cases reported remains low, less than 1% of interviewed returnees from Iran and Pakistan reported to have faced **physical assault** perpetrated by the police or local authorities in CoPR.



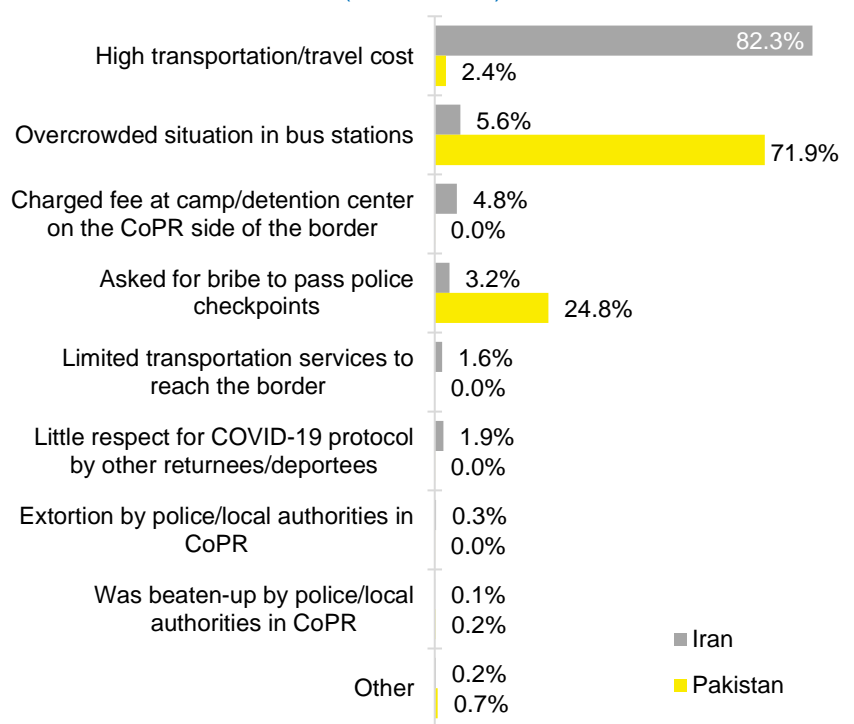
## Reasons for Deportation to Afghanistan

- A total of **14,440** interviews were conducted with deportees (**12,258 M and 2,182 F**), including **14,385** from Iran and **55** from Pakistan. The latter figure is small due to the low number of reported deportations from Pakistan.
- Almost all of the interviewed deportees from Iran (99.5%) and Pakistan (81%)** cited that lack of documentation / irregular entry to CoPR as the reasons provided to them for their deportation. Despite no legal barriers for Afghans to obtain a valid Afghan passport and Iranian/Pakistani visa in Afghanistan, respondents stated that they have financial constraints to bear the cost to obtain a passport and visa. It is expected that the ongoing efforts by the governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan aiming at documenting Afghans in Iran and Pakistan could contribute to address this issue.
- Close to 19%** of interviewed deportees (4 respondents) from Pakistan and **0.1%** (24 respondents) from Iran were deported due to lack of a work permit. In 2020, the figure was **0.9%** among all interviewed deportees from Iran, while it was not reported by the interviewed deportees from Pakistan.
- Almost all of the interviewed deportees from Iran and Pakistan stated that they were deported in the absence of a court order. Only 22 deportees from Iran (17) and Pakistan (5) stated that they were deported following a court order.

### Reasons of Deportation from CoPR



### Types of problems faced during the return (in the CoPR)



## Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination) and Intentions after Return

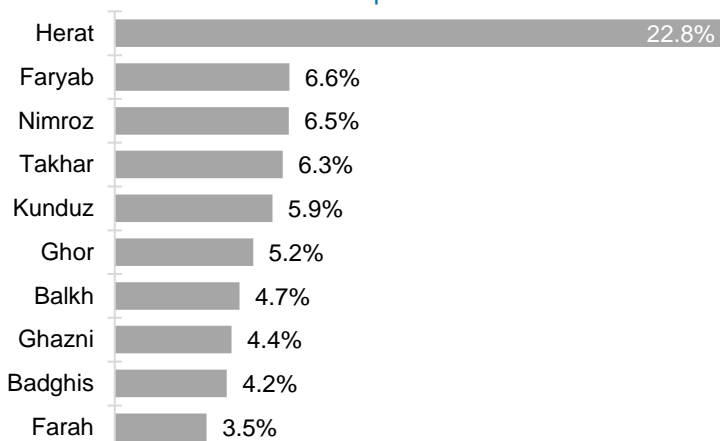


# 93%

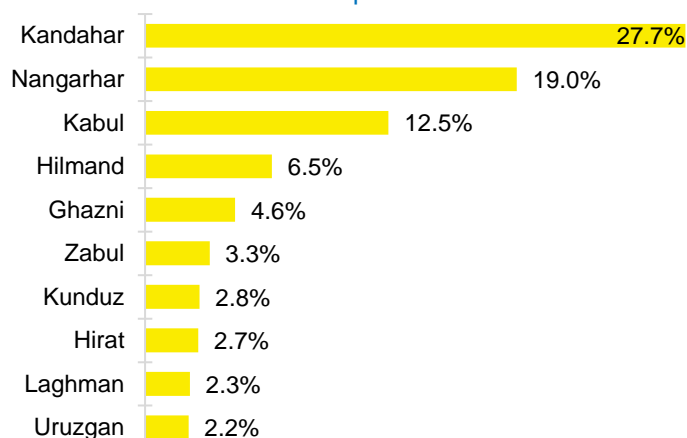
OF THE INTERVIEWED  
 RETURNEES FROM IRAN  
 AND PAKISTAN INTEND  
 TO RETURN TO THEIR  
 AREAS OF ORIGIN

- 7%** do not return to their areas of origin due to lack of livelihood opportunities, perceived insecurity, lack of basic services including schools, reunification with family/relatives, and lack of housing/shelter.
- Interviewed returnees from Iran were travelling to 34 provinces, with the majority (**70%**) intend to return to Herat, Faryab, Nimroz, Takhar, Kunduz, Ghor, Balkh, Ghazni, Badghis, and Farah, provinces.
- Interviewed returnees from Pakistan were travelling to **34** provinces, with the majority (**84%**) intending to return to Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kabul, Helmand, Ghazni, Zabul, Kunduz, Herat, Laghman and Uruzgan, provinces.
- 84%** of the respondents confirmed that they own a Tazkira (**89%** of male respondents and **73%** of female respondents).
- 68%** of the interviewed returnees/deportees have no education, (**78% female and 64% male**). **9%** have minimal education (up to grade 6), **9%** up to grade 9, **7%** up to grade 12, **3%** went to madrasa, and **3%** went to university.
- 82%** stated that they will stay in their own house, nearly **9%** will stay with relatives, and **8%** intend to rent a house.
- 75%** of the interviewed returnees/deportees from Iran and **21%** from Pakistan stated that they will try to find a job in their province of origin.
- 37%** of respondents from Pakistan and **4%** from Iran intend to go back to the CoPR: for employment, to join family, to continue education, or to collect property.

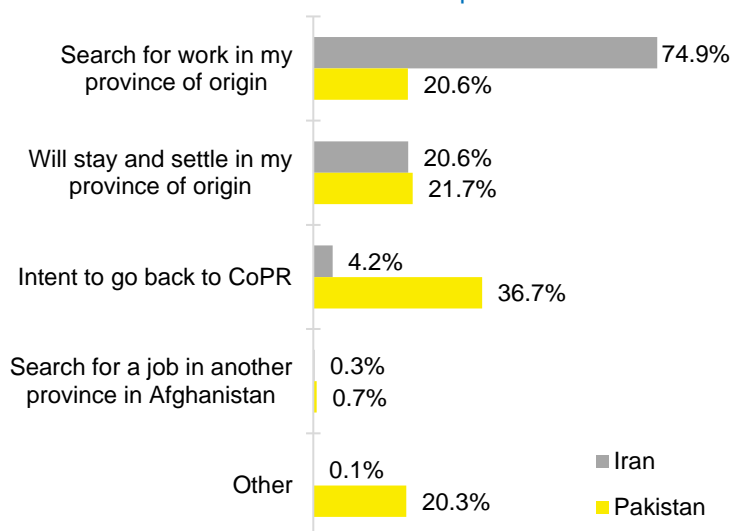
### Top 10 Provinces of Intended Destination Returnees and Deportees from Iran



### Top 10 Provinces of Intended Destination Returnees and Deportees from Pakistan

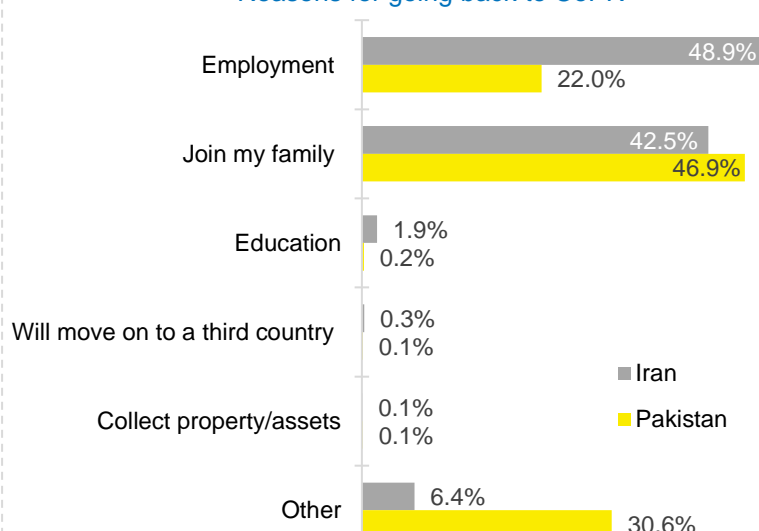


### Intention after return/deportation



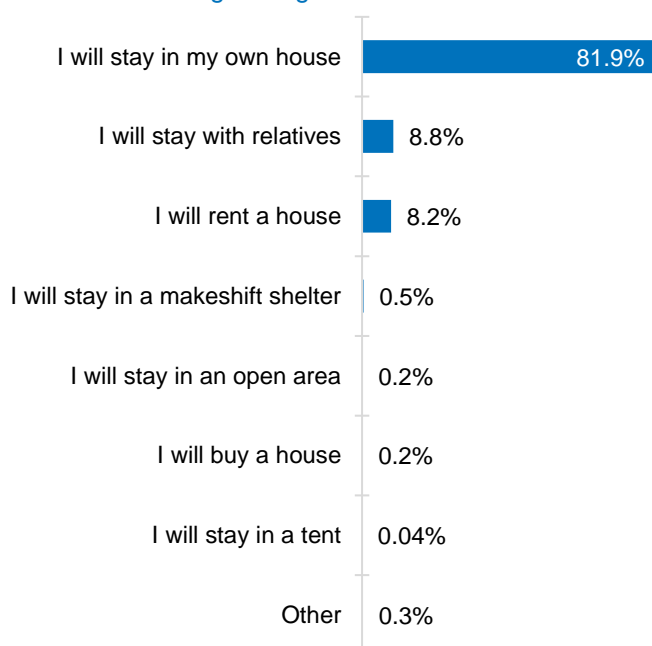
Other category includes: will stay with family, start small business, continue my education

### Reasons for going back to CoPR

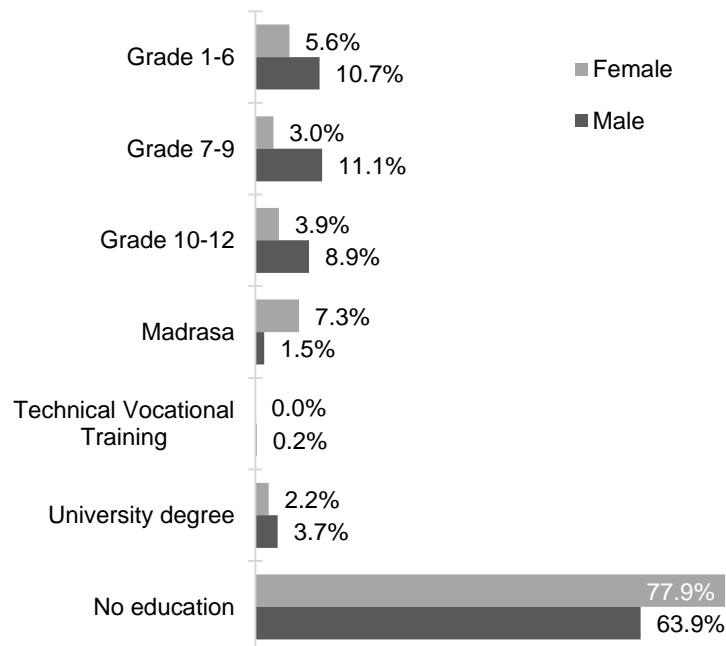


Other category includes: family visit, medical treatment, education and business.

### Living arrangements after return



### Education Level - Returnees from Iran & Pakistan



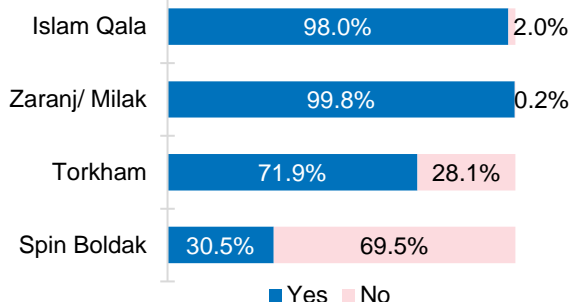
## Information Dissemination on COVID-19 in Afghanistan and CoPR



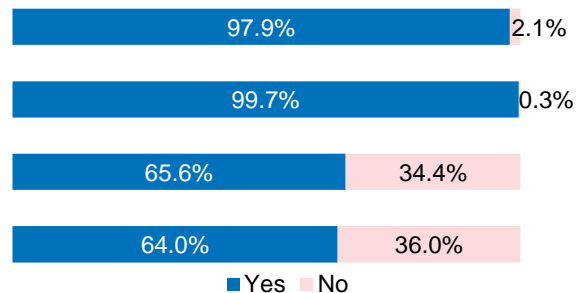
# 78%

OF INTERVIEWED RETURNEES RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 UPON ARRIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

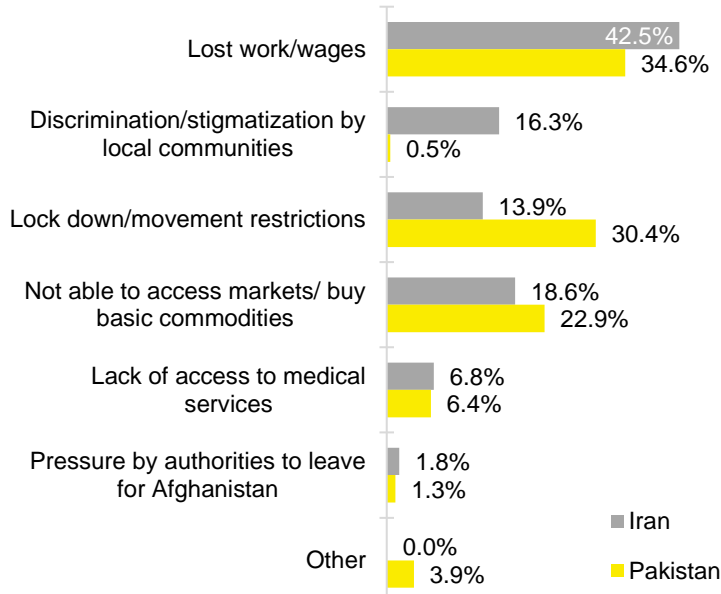
Did you receive information upon arrival in Afghanistan?



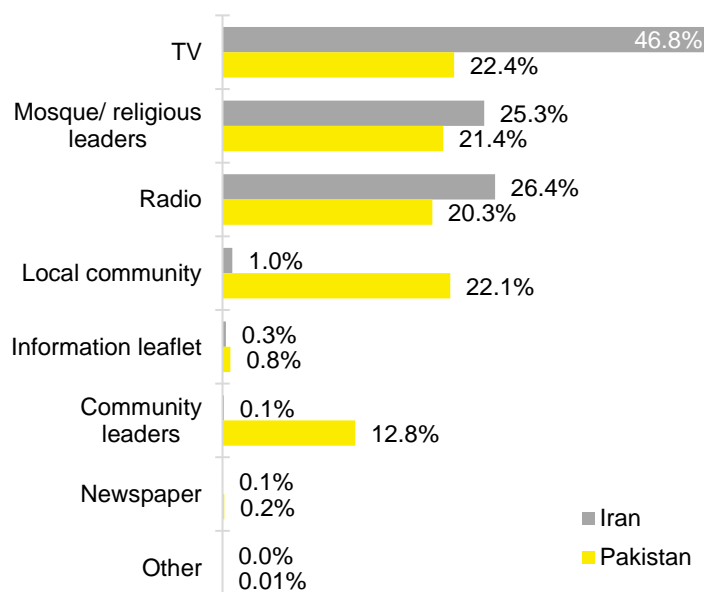
Did you receive any information about COVID-19 while you were in your CoPR?



Types of Problems faced by Afghans during COVID-19 in CoPR



Sources of Information about COVID-19 in Iran & Pakistan



## Outflow monitoring findings

### Respondents moving to Iran (850)

### Respondents moving to Pakistan (2,782)

#### Type of Documentation

- All were Passport Holders

- 78% Tazkira/Token holders
- 21% Passport holders
- 1% Other (PoR, ACC and border pass holders)

#### Family Situation

- 94% were single male Individuals vs 6% family cases
- 86% married and 14% single

- 51% were single Individuals vs 49% family cases
- 85% married, 11% single, 4% widow

#### Reasons of Departure

- 47% move for business
- 17% in search of employment
- 11% for medical treatment
- 10% move to join other family members
- 9% family visit
- 4% to continue education
- 2% other reasons including close to 1% due to conflict in AFG

- 68% for medical treatment
- 14% family visit
- 9% in search of employment
- 3% for business
- 1% to attend social gathering (funeral, wedding)
- 1% to continue education
- 4% other reasons including close to 2% due to conflict in AFG

#### Movement Periodicity

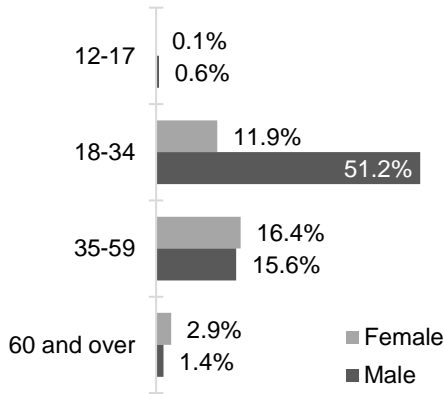
- 33% stated that this is their first time moving to Iran
- 7% stated that they are moving for the second time
- 3% for third time
- 57% were regular movers (business owners)

- 32% stated that they are moving for the first time
- 22% for the second time
- 42% for third time
- 4% were regular movers (business owners)

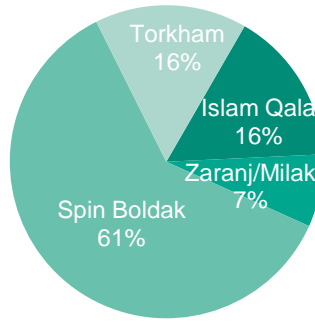
### Expected Duration of Stay

- 17% stated that they will stay in Iran for one week
  - 31% for 1 month
  - 13% up to 6 months
  - 7% up to one year
  - 3% more than one year
  - 21% regularly move to Iran
  - 8% did not provide a response
- 59% stated that they will stay in Pakistan for one week
  - 28% for one month
  - 6% up to 6 months
  - 1% up to one year
  - 1% regularly move to Pakistan
  - 5% did not provide a response

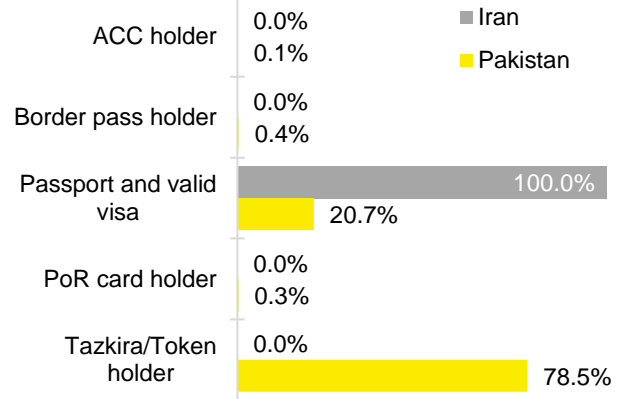
Respondents' Age and Gender



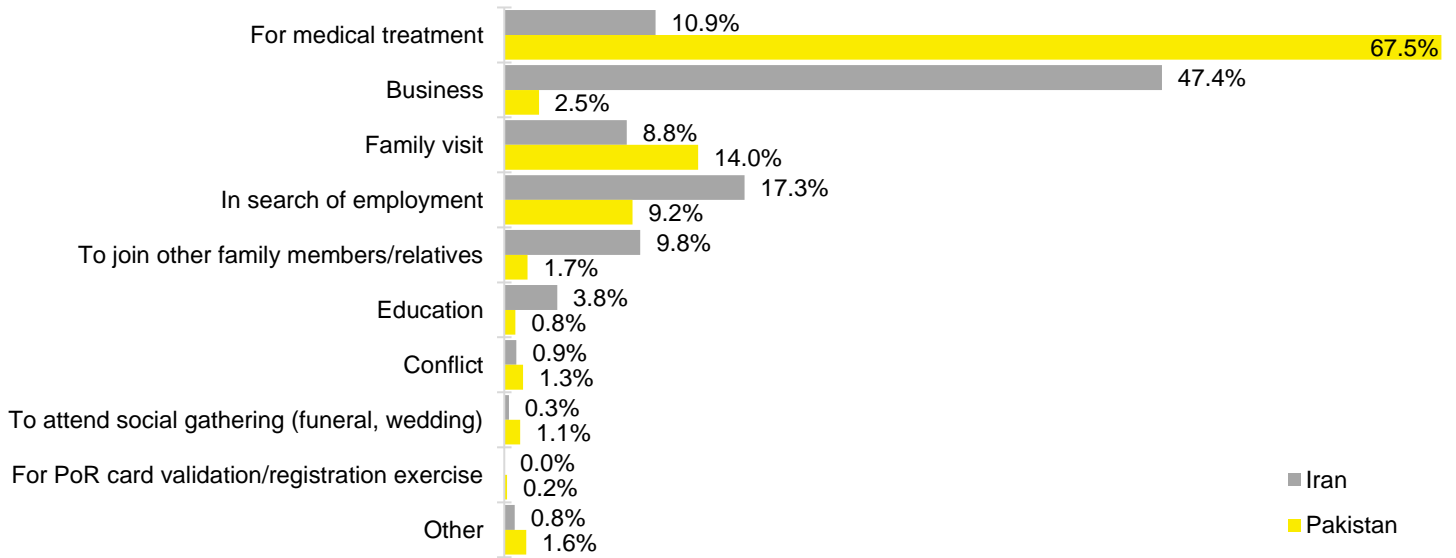
Respondents (%) by Exit Point



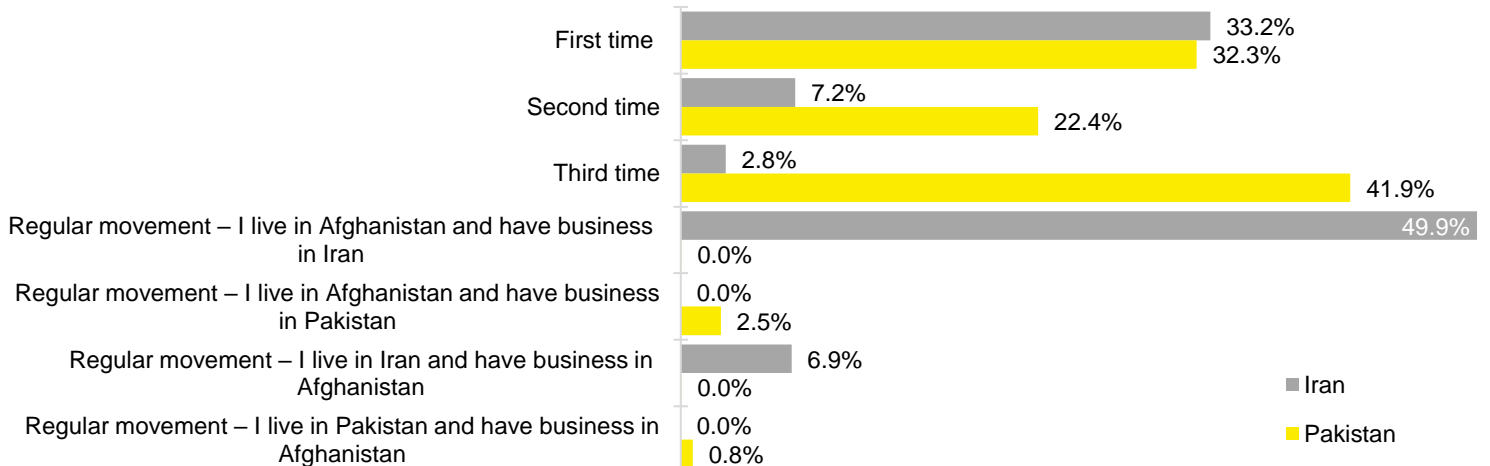
Documentation Type



Reasons of departure

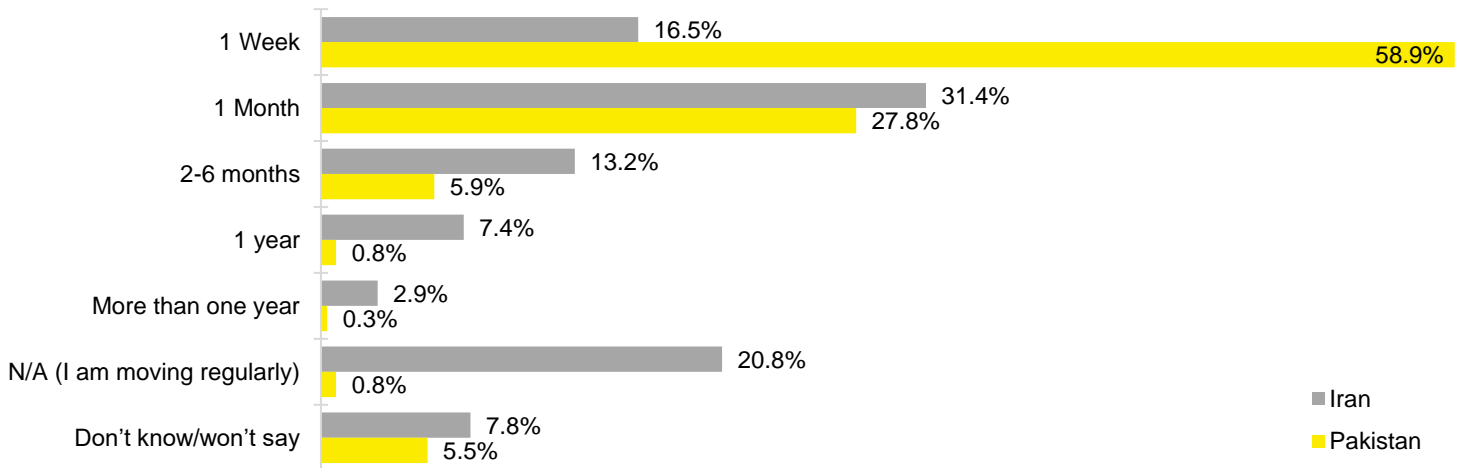


Movement periodicity





### Expected duration of stay



- Although the security situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating, findings of outflow monitoring interviews shows that insecurity is not the main driver of population movement from Afghanistan to Iran and Pakistan. Only **0.9%** (out of a total of **850** interviewed Afghans who were traveling to Iran) and **1.3%** (out of a total of **2,782** interviewed Afghans who were traveling to Pakistan during) stated that they are leaving Afghanistan due to conflict. The majority stated that they are moving to Pakistan and Iran for a temporary duration ranging from **1 week to 1 month**, mainly for medical reasons, business, family visits and to access job opportunities.
- 100%** of the movers to Iran had a valid passport and visa that could be justified by the very rigid immigration policies in place in Islam Qala and Zaranj crossing points with Iran as compared to Pakistan given only **21%** of the movers were holding a passport and visa.
- The majority of the outflow movements Afghanistan to Pakistan are justified by medical treatment (**68%**), and family visit (**14%**); while those moving to Iran were principally for business (**47%**) and in search for employment opportunities (**17%**).
- Nearly **50%** of the outflow movers (Afghans) stated that they are regularly moving back and forth to Iran because they live in **Afghanistan**, but have a business in **Iran** while **7%** of the outflow movers stated that they live in **Iran** but have a business in **Afghanistan**. In contrast, the percentage of regular movers to Pakistan is very low - only **3%** stated that they live in Afghanistan, but have a business in Pakistan and **0.8%** stated that they live in Pakistan but have business in Afghanistan.
- An average of **10%** stated that they are moving to Iran and Pakistan for the **second time** (**7% and 22% respectively**). This figure is slightly low compared to the inflow monitoring respondents (**an average of 9%**) from Iran and Pakistan (**6% and 11% respectively**).
- Majority of the outflow monitoring respondents were single male individuals (**94% traveling to Iran vs 51% traveling to Pakistan**).

## Contacts

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