

Official Crossing Points Status Weekly Update - as of 29 September 2021

Spin Boldak/Chaman, Kandahar province – crossing point with Pakistan

Inflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for all persons without any restrictions. The border is open from 7:30 - 15:30. On 13 September 1 family (8 individuals) returned under UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation (VolRep) Programme.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Outflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The crossing point remains open for Afghans possessing national identity cards (Tazkira holders of Spin Boldak district and Kandahar province) as well as Pakistani (NID holders) Afghans (PoR, ACC and border pass holders) and patients with severe medical conditions. At times, persons without documents are also able to cross.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Observations/Comments

- The Border is open from 7:30 - 15:30 (KBL Time) for outflow and inflow movement of pedestrians as well as for cargo trucks from both sides of the border, however on 26 September, the authorities on both side of the border agreed that the border would be open until 6pm for cargo trucks. The authorities do not issue visas (yet) although persons are crossing using visas issued by the previous Government.
- On 4 September 2021, Pakistan reopened its Consulate in Kandahar province, however, it has not started issuing visas.
- As per a 7 September 2021 official notification by the authorities to taxi operators, people from Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces can travel to Spin Boldak while people from other provinces are not allowed. However, a flexible approach is being taken.
- On 22 September 2021, an alternative separate route was opened for the cross-border movement of small smugglers known as "Lagharies", therefore, from 23 September from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm Lagharies have been permitted to cross the border. This arrangement has decreased the crowds at the border and people are now more easily crossing the border on both sides.
- The overall situation at Spin Boldak remains calm and the main road between Spin Boldak-Kandahar is open.

Torkham, Nangarhar province - crossing point with Pakistan

Inflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for all persons without any restrictions.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Outflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for persons holding passports and visas as well as support letters provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan on request of embassies based in Islamabad. The latter group stay close to the zero point without proactively approaching the authorities. They cross once the Pakistani authorities come forward with a list and call people forward in order to cross into Pakistan.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions

Khost – Ghulam Khan crossing point with Pakistan

Inflow

Pedestrian:	Closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian movement is not permitted.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for commercial trucks.

Outflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for visa holders.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for commercial trucks.

Islam Qala/Dogharoon, Herat province - crossing point with Iran

Inflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for all persons without any restrictions. VolRep of refugee returnees continues but the number is small. Since August, a total of 41 refugees returned including 18 in August and 23 in September.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Outflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afghans with a valid passport and visa are allowed to cross into Iran.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Zaranj/Milak, Nimroz province - crossing point with Iran

Inflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for all persons without any restrictions.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Outflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for businessmen who have business passports and visas. UNHCR's partner is physically present at the border, including female staff (since 28 August 2021), and continues to monitor cross-border movements.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Sher Khan Bandar, Kunduz province - crossing point with Tajikistan

Inflow

Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for all persons without any restrictions.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Outflow		
Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open only for passport and visa holders but no movements are reported. However, movements strictly monitored by the Tajikistan authorities for the passports and visa holders. UNHCR do not have direct contact with border officials. However, UNHCR SO Mazar is in the process to start border monitoring activities soon.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.
Hiratan, Balkh province - crossing point with Uzbekistan		
Inflow		
Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open for all persons without any restrictions.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.
Outflow		
Pedestrian:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The border is open since 20 August 2021 only for persons holding educational, business, and diplomatic visas. Movement of tourist visa holders to Uzbekistan is suspended due to COVID-19 and the political situation in Afghanistan. UNHCR do not have direct contact with border officials. However, UNHCR SO Mazar is in the process to start border monitoring activities soon.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.
Akina, Faryab province - crossing point with Turkminstan		
Inflow		
Pedestrian:	Closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian movement is not permitted.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.
Outflow		
Pedestrian:	Closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian movement is not permitted.
Commercial:	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions.

Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation of Refugee Returnees

- VolRep was suspended for a short period in August during which a total of 23 refugees returned. The trend slightly increased in September (31 returnees as of 23 September). The returnees are mainly coming from Iran, with the exception of one VolRep case who returned from Pakistan (Baluchistan through Spin Boldak on 13 September).
- Cumulatively a total of 1,264 refugees have returned in 2021 (633 M and 631 F), with the majority from Iran (800) followed by Pakistan (413) and other countries (51). This figure is 63% lower compared to the same period in 2020 (3,408 returnees including 1,736 from Iran, 1,505 from Pakistan, and 167 from other countries).
- Nearly 60% of refugee returnees from Iran are returnee students who return to Afghanistan for a temporary period to obtain a passport and visa to return to Iran to continue their tertiary education in Iranian universities.
- All refugee returnees are assisted at Encashment Centres (ECs) upon arrival with a package, including, an average USD 250 cash grant, and other services including awareness about COVID-19.
- During 2021, the top five provinces of return in Afghanistan are Herat (with 396 returnees), Kabul (228), Saripul (127), Kunduz (109), and Balkh (72).
- A total of 203 household level interviews were conducted with newly arrived returnees (randomly selected). The findings of EC monitoring and details of VolRep trends is presented through the [VolRep quarterly report](#).

Border Outflow Monitoring Report 01 April - 28 September 2021

In view of a change in the security and political context in Afghanistan, as of 01 April 2021 UNHCR Afghanistan enhanced its border monitoring activities and introduced outflow monitoring interviews (using a harmonized online Kobo form) at all four official entry points with Iran and Pakistan. The aim is to understand the triggers/intentions/reasons of Afghan movements to Pakistan and Iran and assess access to the territory and “the right to seek asylum” and challenges and barriers that hinder movement of people fleeing persecution and who may be in need of international protection.

Between 01 April – 28 September 2021, outflow interviews were conducted by UNHCR through partners with a total of 10,757 Afghans including 8,764 males and 1,993 females prior to their departure to Pakistan through the crossing points at Torkham (1,710) and Spin Boldak (7,105), and Iran, at Islam Qala (1,302) and Zaranj (640). These were consisting of 4,973 single individuals and 3,207 families. The variation in the sample size at the four official crossing points is due the temporary closure of the official crossing points with Iran and Pakistan due to COVID-19 (from 29 April until late June) as well as the escalation of the conflict in early July as a result of which UNHCR border monitoring partners were not able to operate until 21 August 2021.

Outflow monitoring findings (01 April – 28 September)

Respondents moving to Iran (1,942)

Respondents moving to Pakistan (8,815)

Type of Documentation

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All were Passport Holders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 74% Tazkira/token holders (1% increase compared to last week) 15% passport holders (3% decrease compared to last week) 6% border pass holders (2% increase compared to last week) 5% Other (PoR and ACC holders) |
|---|---|

Family Situation

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93% were single male Individuals vs 7% family cases 89% married and 11% single | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58% were single male Individuals vs 42% family cases 87% married, 11% single, 2% widowed and divorced |
|---|--|

Reasons of Departure

- 59% move for business (2% increase compared to last week)
- 10% in search of employment (2% decrease)
- 10% family visit (2% increase)
- 8% for medical treatment (1% decrease)
- 7% move to join other family members (1% decrease)
- 4% to continue education (1% decrease)
- 2% other reasons including conflict in Afghanistan

- 57% for medical treatment (5% decrease compared to last week)
- 18% family visit (5% increase)
- 7% in search of employment (2% decrease)
- 5% to move to a third country (1% increase)
- 3% move for business (2.5% increase)
- 3% due to conflict and fear of persecution in Afghanistan (1% decrease)
- 2% move to join other family members
- 5% other reasons including for business and to attend a gathering

▪ The difference in the number of single male individuals (the majority of the respondents) versus the marital status of these individuals is explained by the fact that many single males may be holding passport and visas because they have need to move back forth to Iran/Pakistan for job opportunities or business purposes through the official crossing points. Reports have been received that some advise their families to cross into Iran and Pakistan through the unofficial crossing points, presumably due to lack of passport and visa, and to join them in Iran/Pakistan.

Trends in August

- Prior to August, most respondents stated that they were moving to Iran and Pakistan to access jobs, medical services and business. However, in August, the percentage of those who stated that they moved to Pakistan due to conflict and fear of persecution in Afghanistan substantially increased (during which conflict intensified across the country), though the number of interviews were low compared to the previous months. However, this trend declined in September.
- Out of a total of 340 interviews conducted with Afghans at Spin Boldak crossing prior to their departure to Pakistan during August, the majority of respondents (164 respondents – 48%) stated that they left Afghanistan due to conflict (137 respondents) and fear of persecution (27 respondents) in Afghanistan. These respondents stated that they were from Kandahar (20%), Ghazni (10%), Helmand (8%), Uruzgan (7%), Zabul (7%), Kabul (5%), Nangarhar (5%), Paktya (4%), Farha (4%), and Baghlan (3%) provinces.
- However, this trend among Afghans who were interviewed at Zaranj and Islam Qala crossing points prior to their departure to Iran during August remained similar to the trends reported prior August and did not show an increase in reasons related to conflict or persecution.

Trends in September

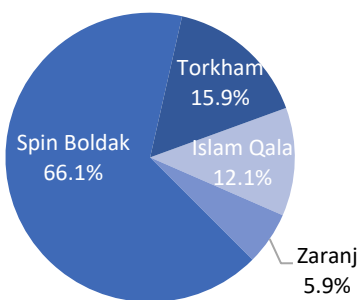
- Compared to August, however, the number of those who stated that they left Afghanistan due to conflict reduced in September. During the first three weeks of September, out of a total of 3,912 interviews conducted at all four crossing points, 421 respondents who were interviewed at Torkham (400) and Spin Boldak (21) stated that they were moving to Pakistan in order to move to a third country. This new trend is linked to the new initiative by a number of embassies based in Islamabad who are requesting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan to issue letters to facilitate the movement of people (who were stuck in Afghanistan) to Pakistan. This trend was not visible among Afghans who were interviewed at Zaranj and Islam Qala crossing points where trends remained similar to previous months. (see below chart and table).
- Therein September, there is also an increase in the number of respondents who stated that they are moving to Iran/Pakistan for business, family visits, medical treatment and education purposes, which are consistent with the normal trends recorded prior to July and August.

Movement Periodicity

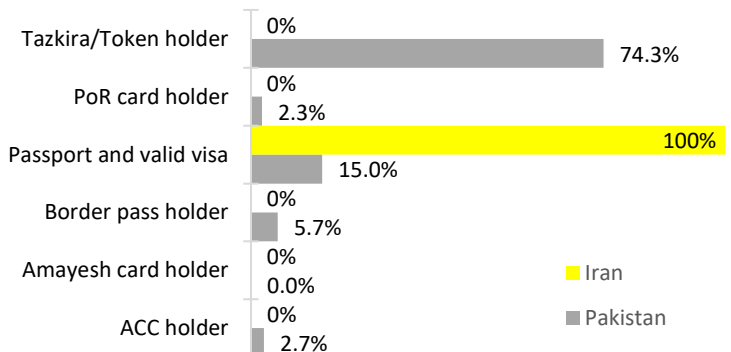
- 25% stated that this is their first time moving to Iran
- 5% stated that they are moving for the second time
- 2% for third time
- 68% were regular movers (business owners)

- 35% stated that they are moving for the first time
- 18% for the second time
- 46% for third time
- 1% were regular movers (business owners)

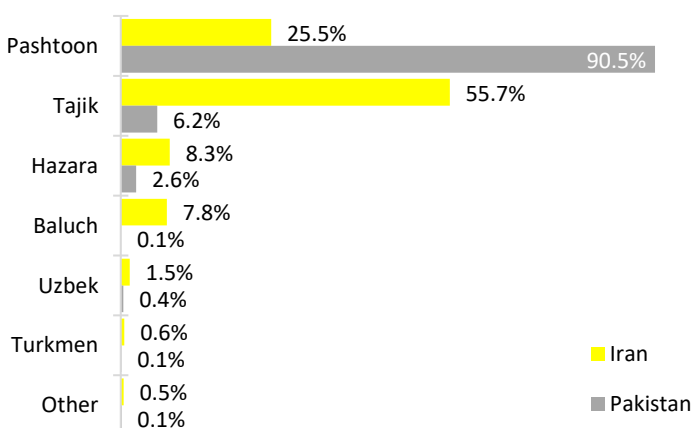
Number of Interviews by Entry Point



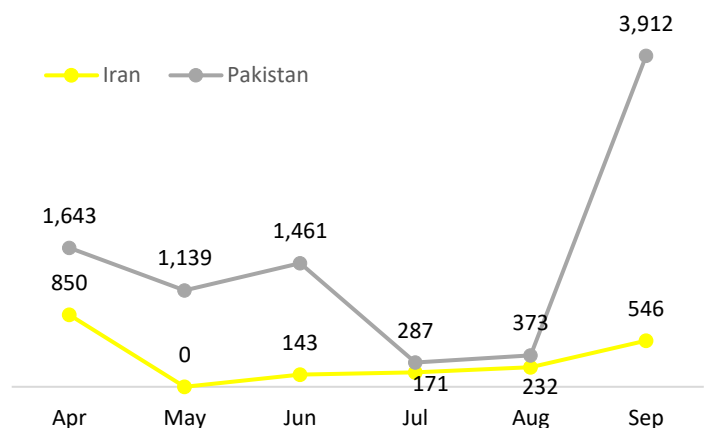
Documentation status of respondents



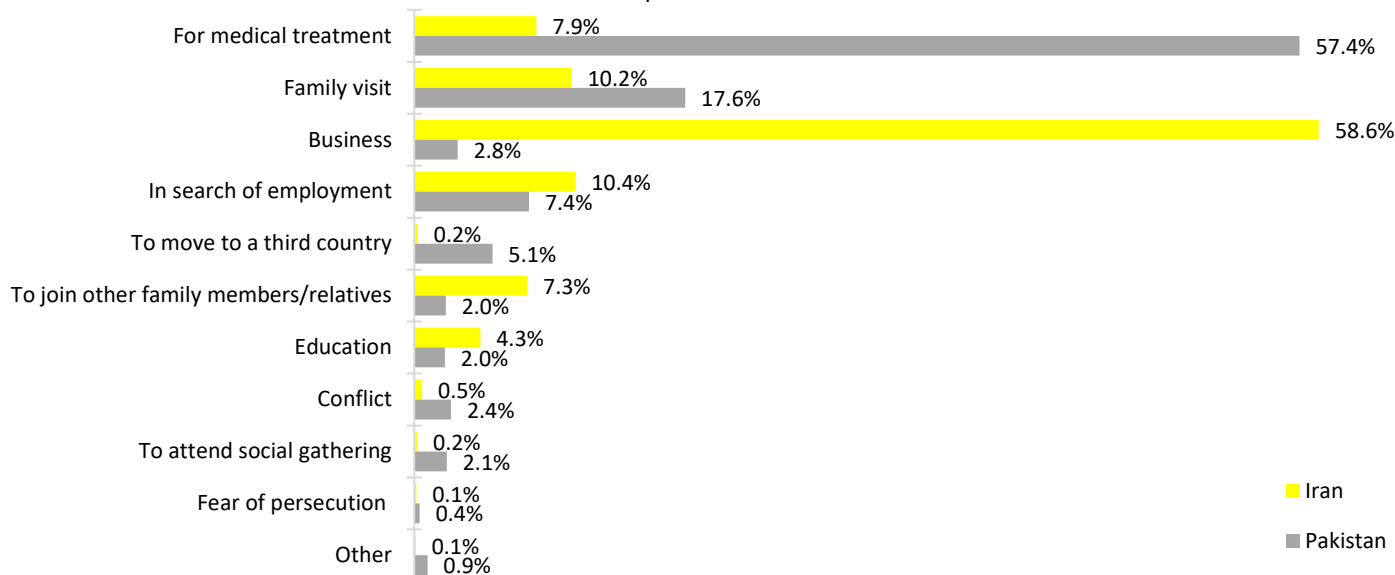
Ethnicity of the respondents



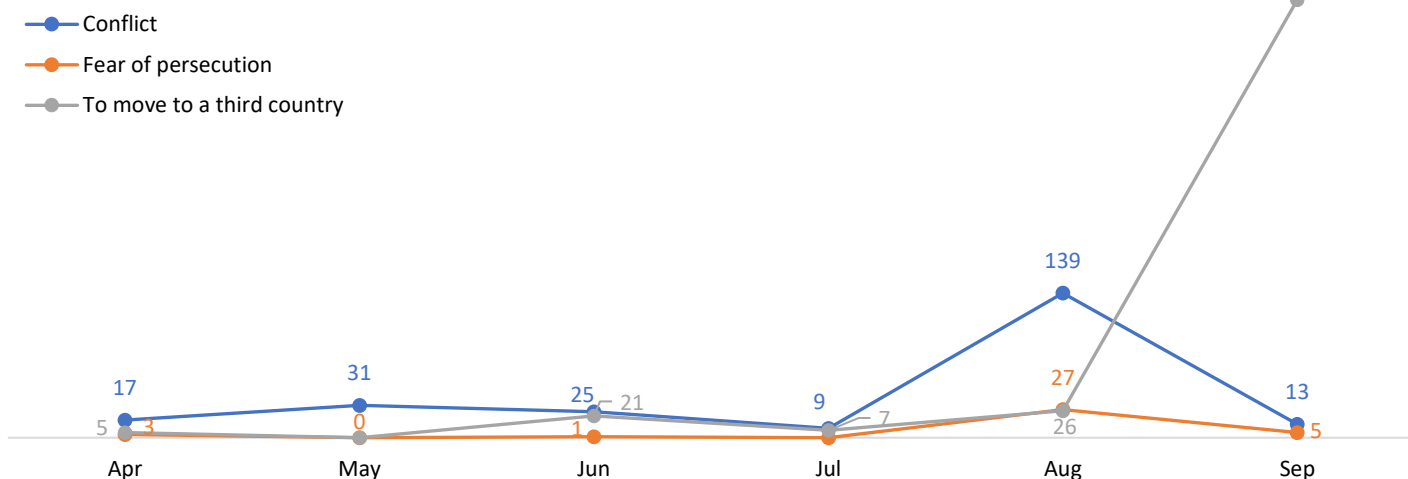
Number of interviews by month



Reasons of departure to Pakistan and Iran



Monthly trends - respondents who left Afghanistan due to conflict, fear of persecution, and intention to move to a third country



Reasons of departure from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran – monthly breakdown

Reasons of departure (multiple response)	Pakistan							Iran							Total
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total	
For medical treatment	1,109	893	1,143	178	94	1,954	5,371	100	0	23	24	8	15	170	5,541
Family visit	256	158	161	22	38	1,009	1,644	81	0	3	9	41	85	219	1,863
Business	64	10	5	0	1	183	263	435	0	74	107	180	462	1,258	1,521
In search of employment	183	91	118	20	74	210	696	159	0	11	8	40	6	224	920
To move to a third country	2	0	20	7	25	421	475	3	0	1	0	1	0	5	480
To join other family members/relatives	14	36	55	7	14	65	191	90	0	13	17	6	31	157	348
Education	19	5	7	50	0	104	185	35	0	18	7	11	21	92	277
Conflict	9	31	25	8	137	13	223	8	0	0	1	2	0	11	234
To attend social gathering	32	2	0	0	0	163	197	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	201
Fear of persecution	1	0	0	0	27	5	33	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	36
Other	41	9	2	0	8	20	80	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	82
Total	1,730	1,235	1,536	292	418	4,147	9,358	918	0	144	174	289	620	2,145	11,503

Note: The figures presented in the above chart shows the multiple responses provided by a respondent, hence the monthly figures are not corresponding with the total interviewed conducted in a month