2025 Overall figures

1.9M
total returns[1]

1.26M
deportations

2026 Key figures

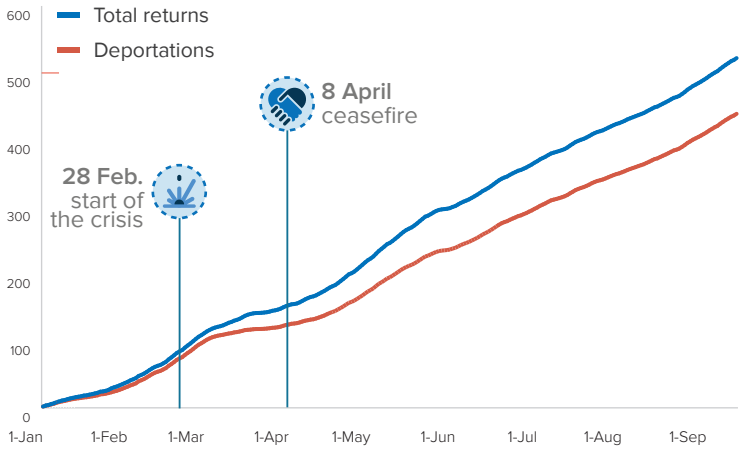
522,200
total returns[1]
416,000
80%

439,000
deportations
344,700
79%

84% of total returns are **deportations**

Blue figures above correspond to the period of 1 January 2026 to 12 September 2026, while the **navy figures** refer only to those who arrived from 28 February to 12 September 2026.

Total returns (cumulative since 1 January 2026)
Number of people in thousands



Context

On 20 March 2025, headcount slips for an estimated 2 million Afghans in Iran expired, after which the Government introduced a regularization and return scheme, requiring slip holders to undergo assessments to determine whether they can remain.

Since then, returns have increased significantly. **In 2025, more than 1.9 million Afghans returned or were deported from Iran** – many not by choice. **In 2026, a further 522,200 Afghans have returned**. These large-scale returns are placing pressure on basic services, housing and livelihoods in Afghanistan, straining host communities and increasing the risks of instability and onward movement.

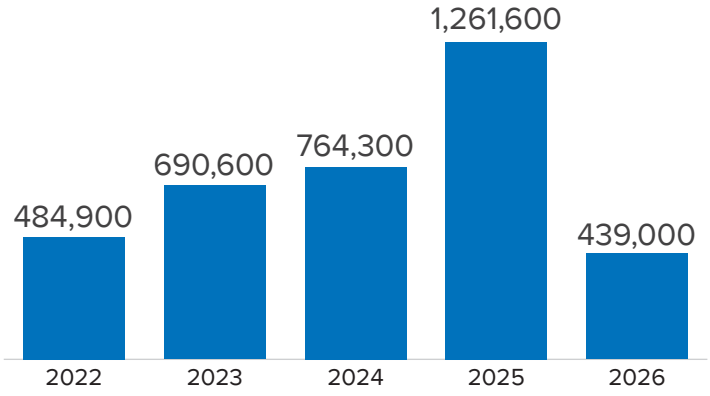
At the same time, hostilities across Asia and the Middle East since 28 February 2026 have further compounded the situation. As one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the region, Iran is facing growing pressure amid rising humanitarian needs, highlighting the need for flexible and sustained support.

Deportations

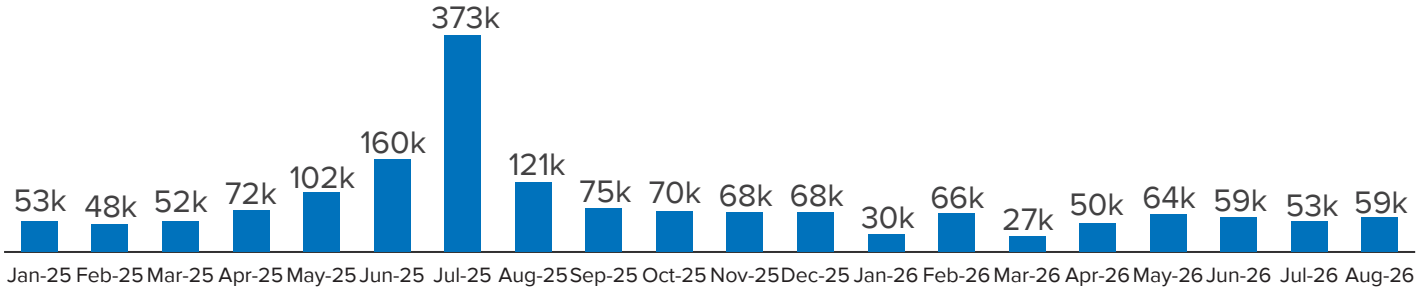
In 2026, over 439,000 Afghans have been deported from Iran, representing 84% of the total returns. In 2025, some 1.9 million Afghans have returned, out of which 67% were deportations. Of these, some 852,800 Afghans were deported after 13 June.

In 2026, prior to the onset of the crisis, 89% of returns from Iran were deportations; this proportion has since decreased to 83%

Yearly deportations (as of 12 September 2026)



Monthly deportations since 2025
Number of people deported in thousands as of 31 August 2026



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

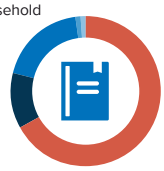
Out of the total returns since 1 January 2025,
39% are women and children,
27% are children, and
45% are families

Ethnicity



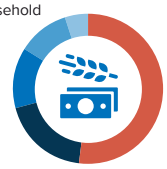
- Hazara (8%)
- Pashtoon (30%)
- Tajik (45%)
- Uzbek (8%)
- Others (9%)

Education levels
head of household



- No education (67%)
- Primary school (Grades 1 - 6) (12%)
- Secondary school (Grades 7 - 14) (19%)
- University degree (1%)
- Madrasa (1%)

Occupational skills
head of household



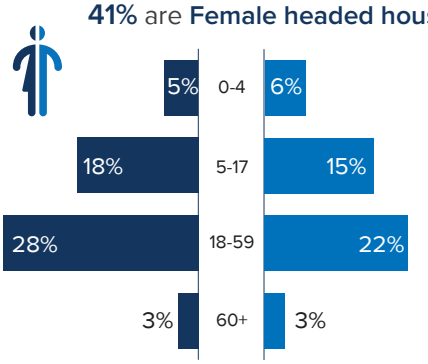
- No skills (52%)
- Unskilled daily wage labour (19%)
- Masonry (13%)
- Agriculture (11%)
- Tailoring (5%)

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.

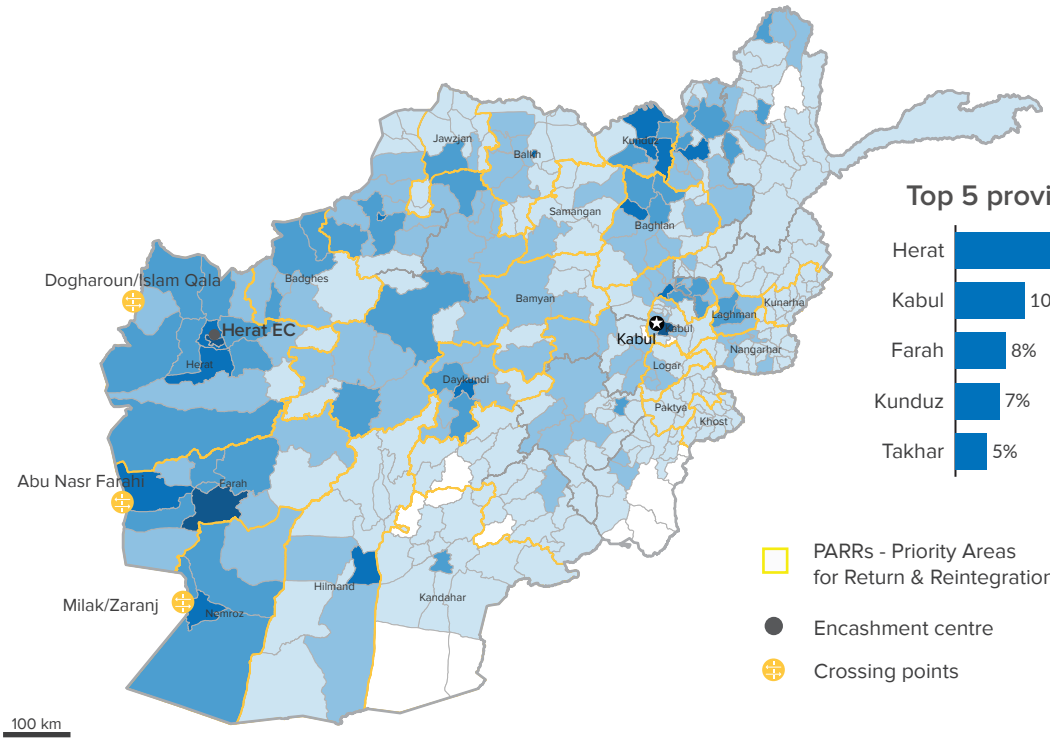
In addition to the cash assistance, UNHCR supports the returnees with emergency relief items and hot meals in Islam Qala. So far in 2026, over 29,500 returning households were assisted, Transportation support was provided to 874 individuals, while 2,345 families received Core Relief Items (CRIs). In addition, 205,658 individuals benefited from hot meals.

77% of assisted are **women & children**
41% are **Female headed households**



13% of households with at least one person with disabilities

Afghanistan map - 2026 overall returns from Iran by intended district of destination

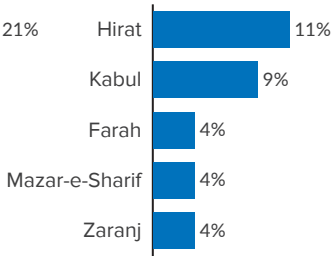


Crossing points:
from Iran
- Dogharoun-Islam Qala (53%)
- Milak-Zaranj (47%)

No returns captured in 2026 crossing from Abu Nasr Farahi.

Top 5 provinces

Top 5 districts



- PARRs - Priority Areas for Return & Reintegration
- Encashment centre
- Crossing points

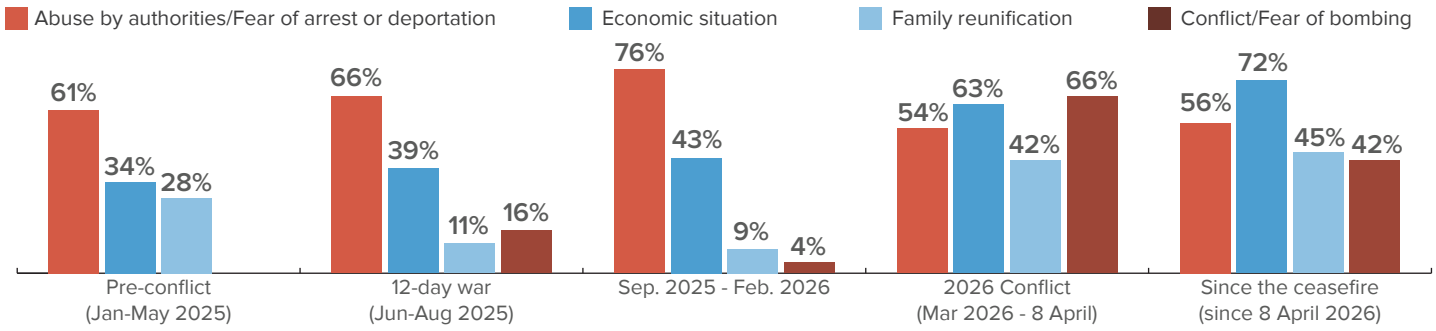
Intended returns per district:
- 0
- 1 - 500
- 501 - 1,500
- 1,501 - 5,000
- 5,001 - 20,000
- 20,001 - 60,000

Source: 2026 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 | Reasons for leaving Iran to Afghanistan

Source: 2025-26 UNHCR Inflow Border Monitoring Interviews

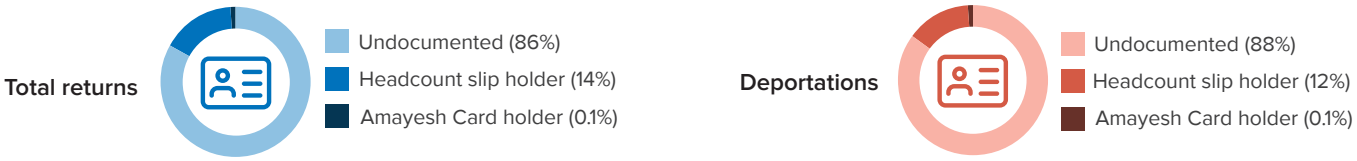
Percentage of interviews reporting reasons | Multiple choice questions may add up to over 100%



Returns by documentation status

From 1 January 2026, headcounted slip holders made up 14% of total returnees, with 12% of total deportees being headcounted slip holders.

2026 returns by status (as of 12 September 2026)



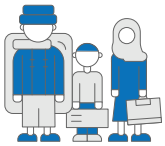
2026 Middle East Crisis

Despite the volatile situation, refugees continue to approach UNHCR offices, which are operating at limited capacity due to security constraints. Across its offices in Tehran, Esfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz, and Kerman, UNHCR supports access to essential health, education, and social protection services for refugees and host communities. Reception centres and helplines remain open, providing counselling, information, and assistance to those in need. UNHCR's latest Protection Overview of Afghan Refugees in Iran highlights that despite increasing insecurity and hardship, remaining in Iran is consistently identified as the preferred option.

With partner resources severely stretched, an Inter-Agency Flash Refugee Response Plan was launched on 26 March, seeking $80 million to scale up the protection response and deliver life-saving assistance to 2.8 million people from March to May 2026. UNHCR's requirements stand at $36.23 million.

The number of people temporarily relocated internally in Iran due to the hostilities is under review since increasing numbers of people are likely returning to their places of habitual residence.

Key figures



1.65 Million

Refugees and others in need of international protection in Iran

Source: UNHCR

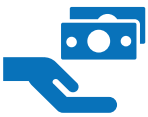
UNHCR assistance since 28 February 2026



295,100

Afghan refugees have received assistance

out of which:



9,230

refugees received multi-purpose cash assistance



62,000

individual counselling (in-person and/or helpline)