PAKISTAN

FLOW MONITORING OF UNDOCUMENTED AFGHAN MIGRANTS

SUMMARY REPORT 2021

REGIONAL EVIDENCE FOR MIGRATION ANALYSIS AND POLICY (REMAP)
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)

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DTM
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I. INTRODUCTION

Human mobility was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions imposed by national authorities to contain the spread of the virus. In Pakistan, there was a decrease in the return of undocumented Afghan nationals from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Border closures and curtails caused by COVID-19 in 2020 prevented many undocumented Afghan nationals from being able to access border crossings and return to their home country. In 2021, returnees were allowed to return, yet border closures were imposed intermittently. Alongside the return process resuming, IOM Pakistan automatically re-activated its Flow Monitoring (FM) component.

FM is a component of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodology, which is used in Pakistan to assess the flows of migrant groups and individuals at transit locations in two official border crossings between Pakistan and Afghanistan: the Torkham and Chaman border crossings. At these locations, information on the numbers, socio-economic profiles and vulnerabilities of undocumented Afghan returnees and Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holder returnees is collected, analyzed and regularly disseminated through bi-weekly and quarterly reports.

This yearly summary report, in addition to bi-weekly and quartely reports, aims to contribute to a better understanding of return movements of undocumented Afghan returnees by conducting more in-depth analysis on the data that was collected in 2021.

The report is divided into two main sections. The first section starts with a description of the methodology and includes the research method, sampling information and limitations. The second section presents the findings of the data that was collected in 2021. The second section is further subdivided into six subsections. The first subsection displays the demographics and socio-economic profiles of the undocumented Afghan returnees. This is followed by a subsection on the specific documentation statuses of the returnees. The third subsection explores the reasons cited to return to Afghanistan, both in terms of push factors (the reasons to leave Pakistan) and pull factors (the reasons to return to Afghanistan). In the next subsection, the travel conditions are examined, followed by an exploration of the type of settlement that Afghan nationals were living in in Pakistan and what type of settlement they expect to live in in Afghanistan, as well as their settlement priorities in Afghanistan. Finally, the last subsection looks into the most commonly reported areas of origin (Pakistan) and destination (Afghanistan).

II. KEY FINDINGS

The analysis of the data indicates that the number of returnees has increased more than four times as compared to 2020. However, the number of returns in 2021 could have been higher especially if the Chaman border had not been closed due to security reasons in Afghanistan. Numbers of returns were six times higher in months when the border was open (November and December), compared to when the border was closed (October). In general, in 2021, the steep increase in return movements is attributed to the relaxation of border restrictions, even during different COVID-19 waves, which allowed people to more easily cross the border as compared to the previous year.

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1 Research and Sampling Method

The report is based on data collected in 2021 through the Flow Monitoring (FM) methodology. FM is a component of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which was developed to track the flows of groups and individuals through key points of origin, transit and destination. The purpose of FM is to provide regularly updated information on the scale of population flows and profiles of mobile populations.

The FM exercise in Pakistan provides key insights into the overall return migration trends of undocumented Afghan migrants, as well as an overview of the situation of Afghan returnees and their mobility patterns, exploring routes, vulnerabilities, demographic and social characteristics. The exercise also helps to identify gaps and priorities in the provision of assistance along migration routes and upon destination.

The DTM team and authorities on the ground identify strategic locations for the establishment of monitoring locations/points where data collection will take place. IOM's DTM team in Pakistan identified two key transit locations at Torkham and Chaman border points, which are located near entry/exit points. DTM teams collect data on daily basis at the selected official border crossing to gather information on Afghan returnees and provide analysis through bi-weekly, quarterly and yearly reports.

These surveys collect information on the number, demographic breakdown, vulnerabilities, migration intentions, reasons for migration and nationality of migrants.

In 2021, the DTM identified 27,829 undocumented Afghan returnees at two border crossings. However, it may not reflect the total number of undocumented Afghan returnees. For this study, only the head of household or representative of the family were interviewed. This means that the number of interviews conducted by the enumerators is lower than the number of returnees recorded by DTM. In 2021, Border Monitors interviewed 2,946 respondents.

To reduce potential biases, data quality checks are rigorously conducted by the team during the data collection, pre-processing and analysis phases.

1.2 Limitations

As this analysis is only based on data collected at the Tokham and Chaman border crossings, the data should not be generalized, and may not represent a full picture of inter- and intra-regional migration in the country.

It should be also noted that most of the visualizations are only representative for the respondents to the survey as interviews were only conducted with the head of the family. This will be clearly indicated in the visualization/question with an asterisk (*).

The COVID-19 pandemic also affected operations at the border. Due to COVID-19 precautionary measures on maintaining safe distance, border monitor teams were unable to verify the information that was obtained during the interviews as done in previous years.

TOTAL AFGHAN RETURNEES FROM PAKISTAN TO AFGHANISTAN

27,829

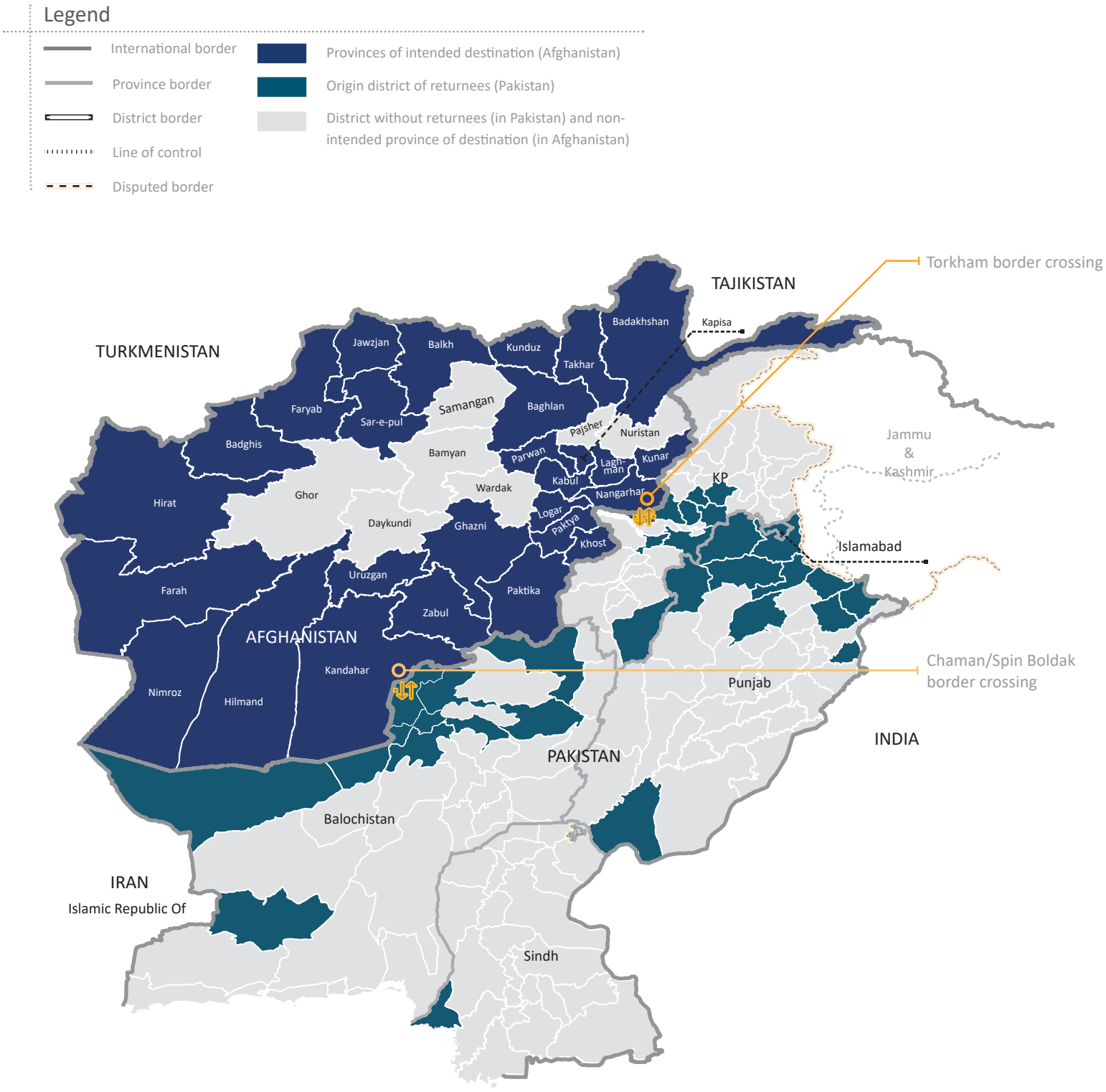
Undocumented migrants returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

2,946

Respondents to the flow monitoring survey in 2021

Pprovince and district map of Afghanistan and Pakistan



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The dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM or United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Demographics and socio-economic profiles

The survey comprises face-to-face interviews carried out in 2021 with 2,946 heads and representatives of the households at the Torkham and Chaman border crossings. Overall, 27,829 undocumented returnees were reported to have crossed the two borders, out of which 14,185 were females and 13,644 were males. Additionally, border authorities facilitated the return of 1,740 individuals due to the lack of legal documentation to remain in Pakistan. Therefore, information concerning these 1,740 individuals is not included in the report analysis.

In 2021, a majority of 22,978 Afghan migrants (83%) returned through the Chaman border crossing. Only 4,851 (17%) Afghan migrants returned through the Torkham border crossing. The proportion of female (51%) and male (49%) returnees was similar across the two border crossings, with Chaman reporting 49 per cent male and 51 per cent female individuals, whereas Torkham 48 per cent male and 52 per cent female individuals. The number of returnees at the Torkham border was lower because of the custom duty regulations on the border that was applied to the household items and luggage of the outgoing individuals. Previously, undocumented families were exempt from this custom duty. During 2021, both border points were intermittently closed for certain intervals due to COVID-19 restrictions, security challenges and border movement standard operating procedures (SOPs) imposed by Afghanistan and/or Pakistan. The most important border closures happened in February, July, August and October.

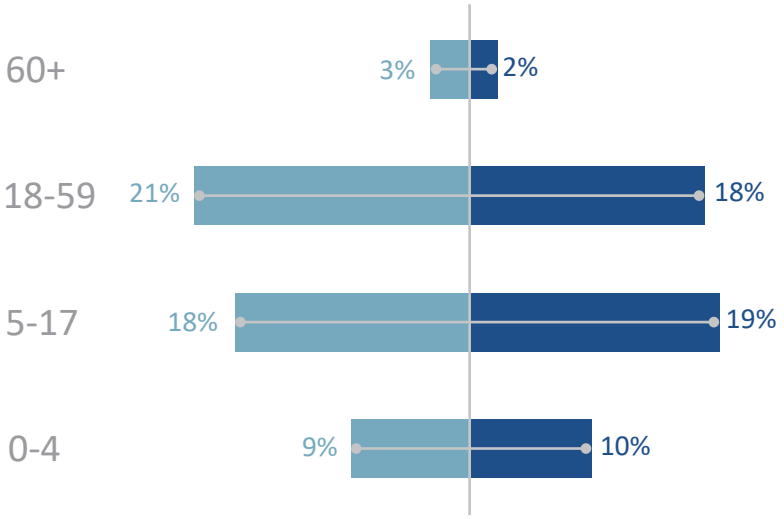
The average household size was eight people. The highest proportion of returnee were under 18-59 years of age (39%), followed by adults between the ages of 5-17 years old (37%) and children under 5 years old (19%).

27,829
UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES

FEMALE
14,185 individuals

MALE
13,644 individuals

POPULATION PYRAMID OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES

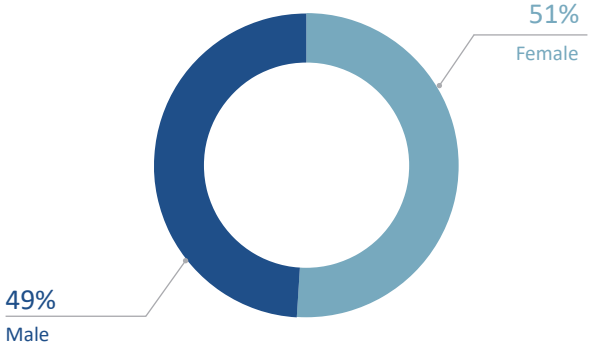


8
Average household size among respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES BY BORDER CROSSING

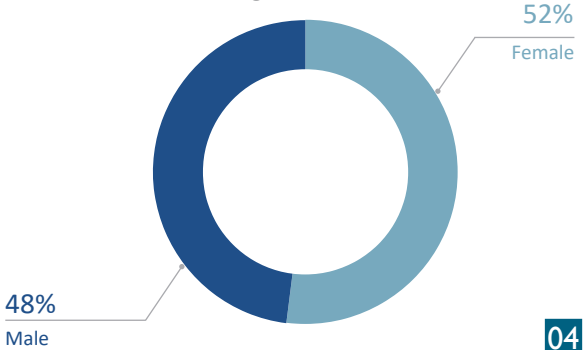
Chaman

22,978
Undocumented returnees travelled through Chaman



Torkham

4,851
Undocumented returnees travelled through Torkham

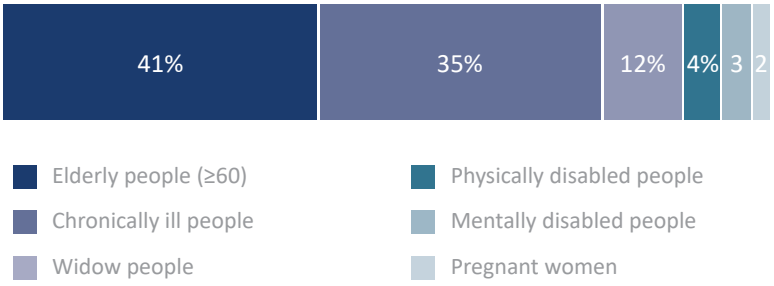


The data analysis at both borders indicates that the returnees categorized as vulnerable persons decreased from 21 per cent in 2020 to 9 per cent in 2021. The top three vulnerable groups were elderly people (41%), chronically ill people (35%) and widowed people (12%). The top three compositions found in 2020 were elderly people (71%), chronically ill people (16%) and widowed people (6%).

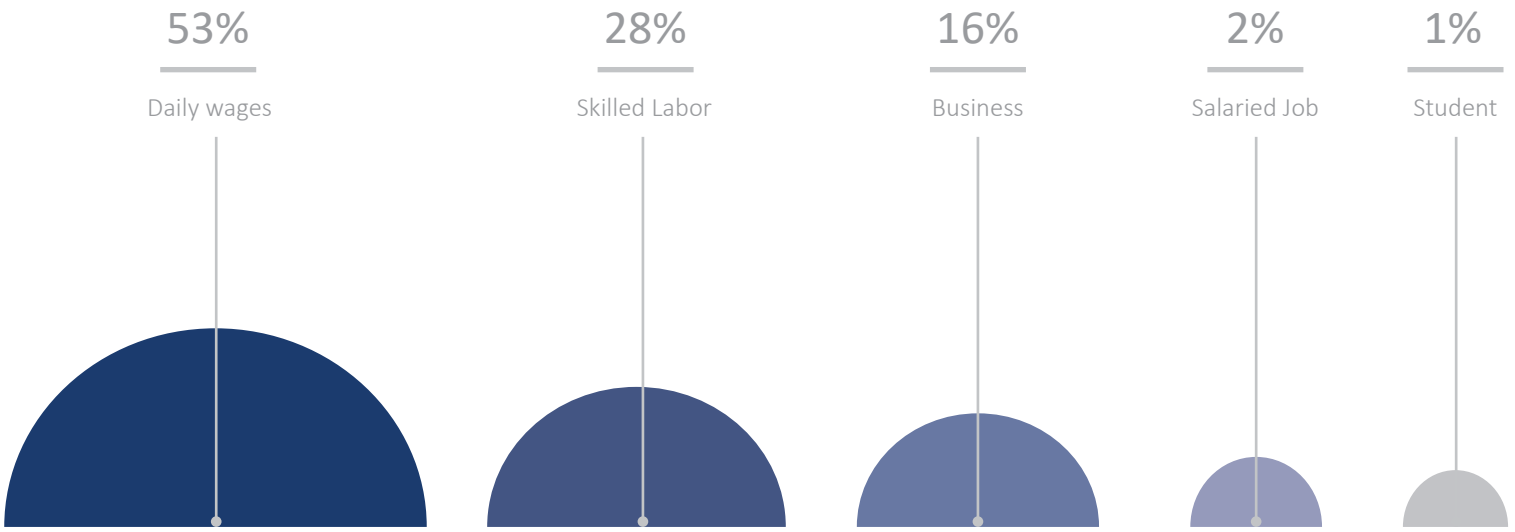
The analysis shows that 99 per cent of respondents were employed when they were in Pakistan. This number rose from 95 per cent in 2020 and 74 per cent in 2019. In 2021, most respondents were working as daily wagers (53%), skilled labourers (28%) and in the business sector (16%). A small percentage of returnees were working for salaried jobs (2%). The remaining returnees who did not have a job in Pakistan were students (1%).

VULNERABILITIES OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES

9% Vulnerable undocumented returnees

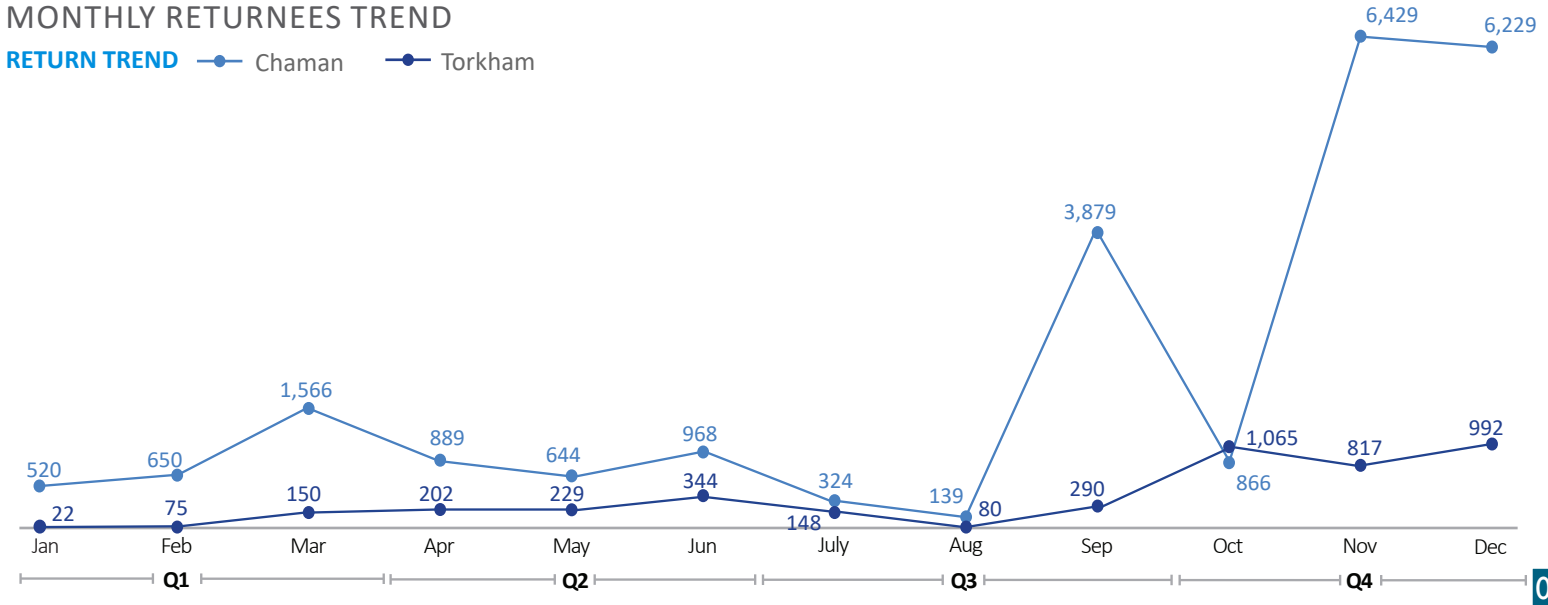


TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF RETURNEES*



*This question was only answered by the head of the family.

MONTHLY RETURNEES TREND



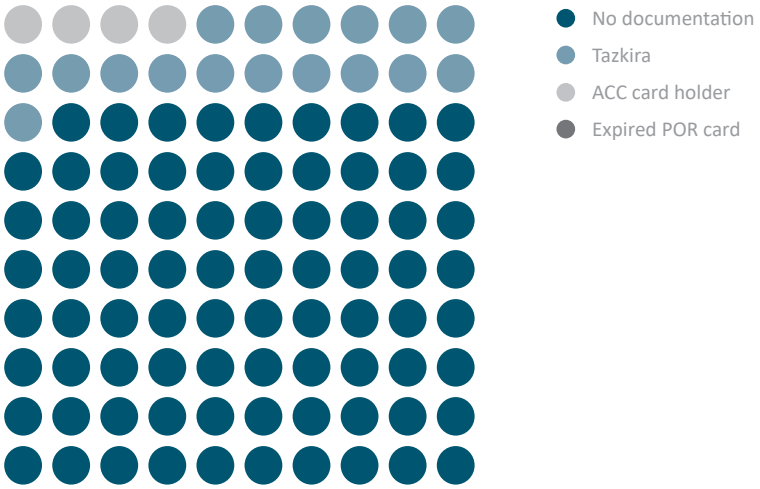
2.2 Documentation status

Seventy-nine per cent of the returnees recorded by DTM in Pakistan in 2021 did not possess any legal documentation, which is one per cent lower than in 2020. The remaining 21 per cent were made up of Afghan returnees with some sort of documentation, including a Tazkira, an Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) or an expired Proof of Registration (PoR) Card. Among returnees with documentation, returnees with a Tazkira represented the largest group (17%). The second largest group were returnees with an ACC card (4%). Returnees with expired PoR cards, ACC tokens (proof of registration) and expired visas consist of less than one percent of the total returnees in 2021.

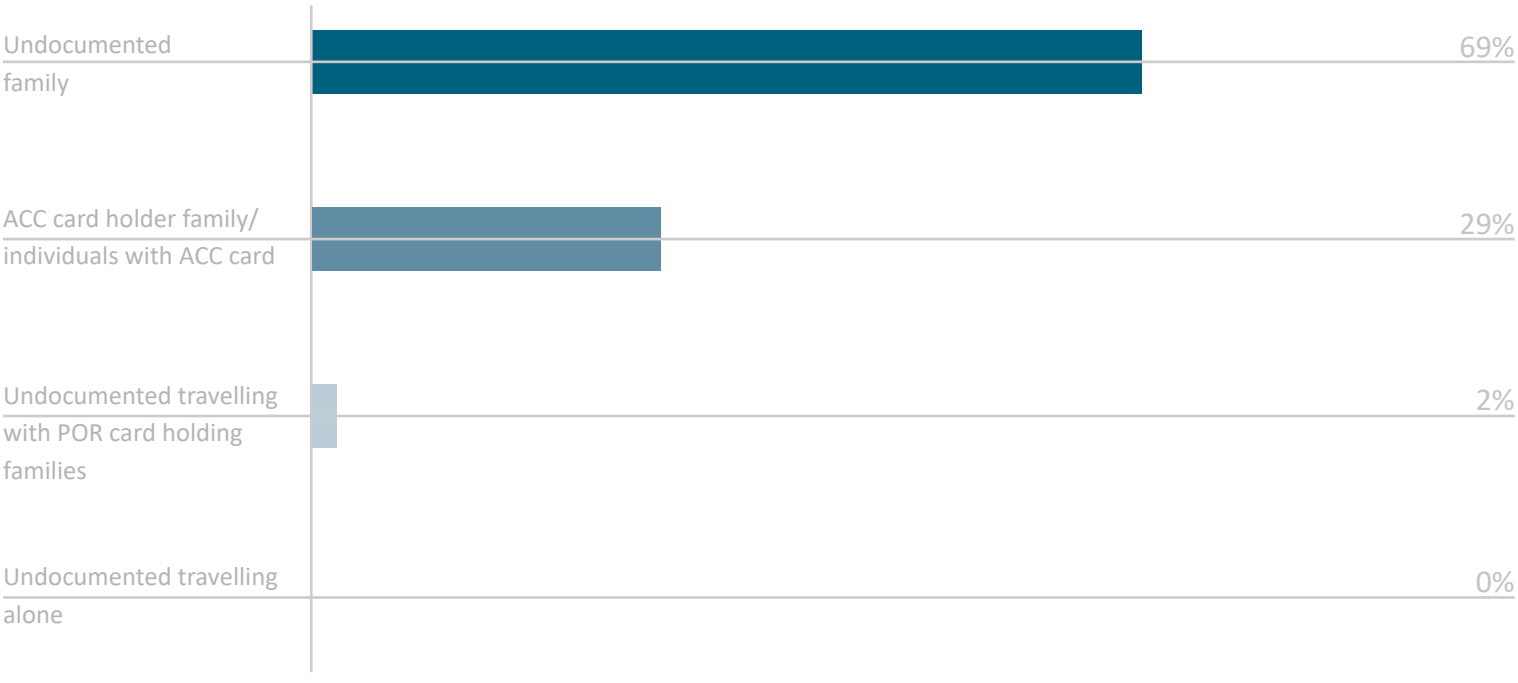
At the family level, undocumented families made up the largest group (69%), followed by families or individuals with ACC card (29%) and undocumented individuals travelling with documented families (2%). There were only five undocumented individuals who were travelling alone.

DOCUMENTATION STATUS OF AFGHAN RETURNEES

79% Of respondents had no documentation



DOCUMENTATION STATUS OF UNDOCUMENTED FAMILIES*



*This question was only answered by the head of the family.

2.3 Reasons and drivers of return

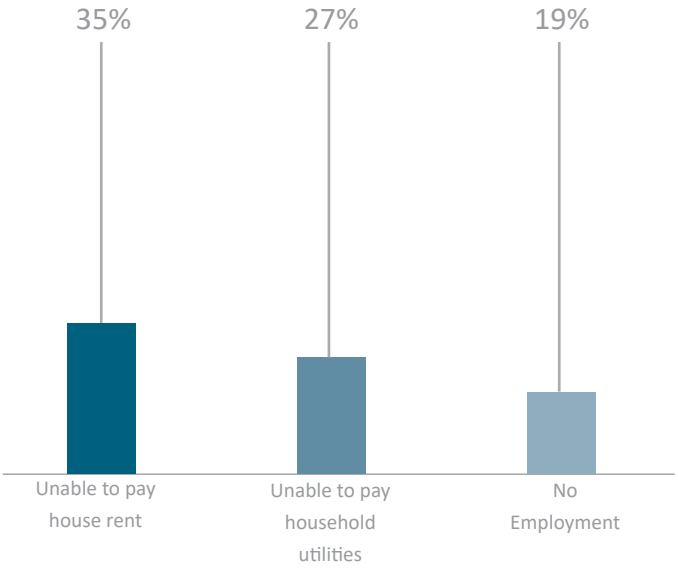
This section examines the reasons for return by analyzing the pull factors, the reasons that encourage Afghan nationals to return to Afghanistan, and the push factors, the reasons that encourage Afghan nationals to leave Pakistan.

With regard to the push factors, thirty-five per cent of returnees interviewed by DTM reported that the inability to pay house rent was the main factor that had driven them to leave Pakistan. Twenty-seven per cent indicated that they returned because they were unable to pay household utilities in Pakistan. Other reasons for return were no employment (19%) and business reasons (12%).

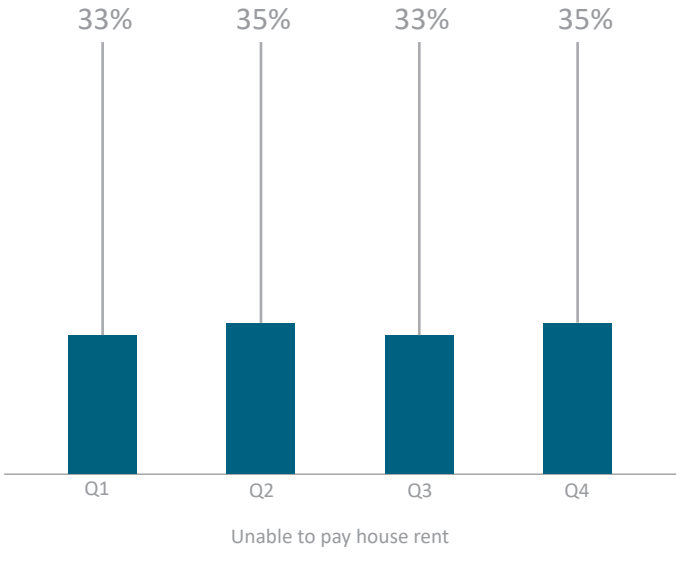
Regarding pull factors, 49 per cent of returnees interviewed stated that reunion with family and relatives was the main reason that encouraged them to return to Afghanistan, the same percentage stated availability of assistance in Afghanistan to be the reason for their return, and only two per cent of the respondents wanted to return because of improvements in the security situation in Afghanistan.

MAIN REASONS FOR RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES* (multiple answers possible)

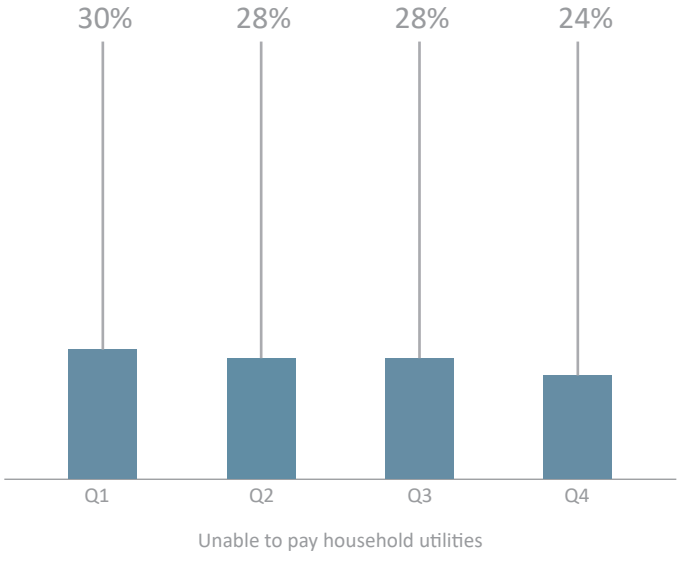
Push factors (top 3 answers only)



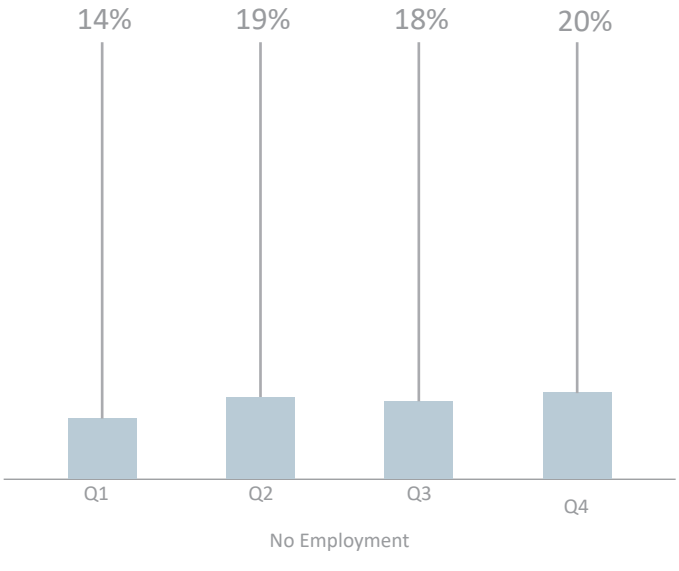
Yearly - 2021



Quarterly - 2021



Quarterly - 2021

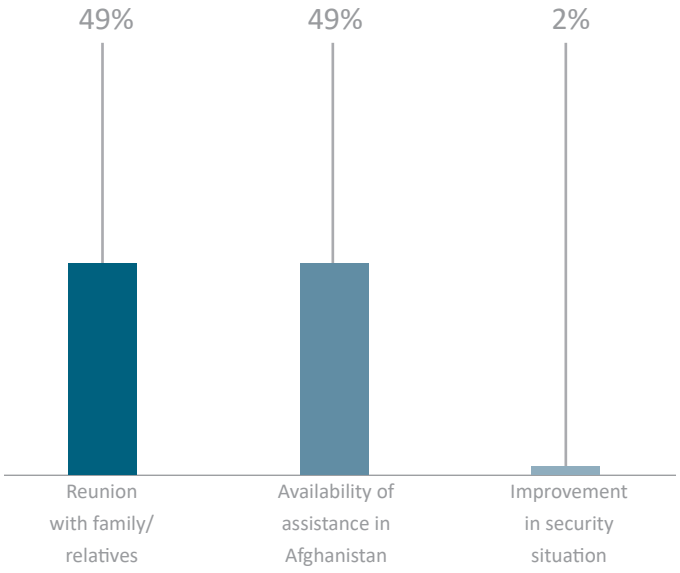


Quarterly - 2021

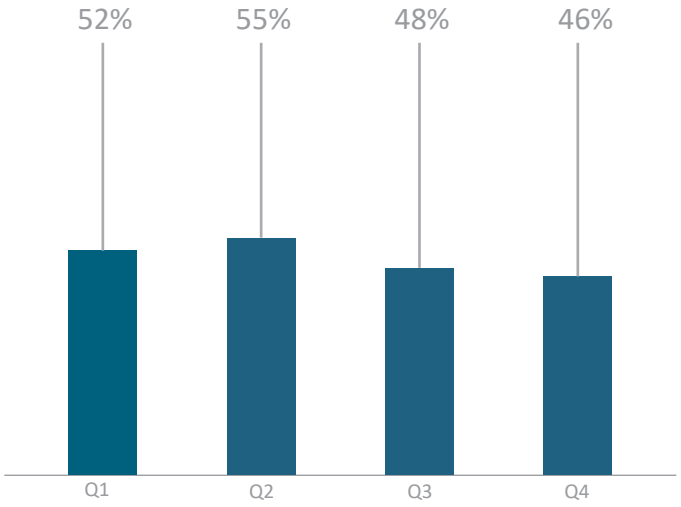
*This question was only answered by the head of the family.

MAIN REASONS FOR RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES* (multiple answers possible)

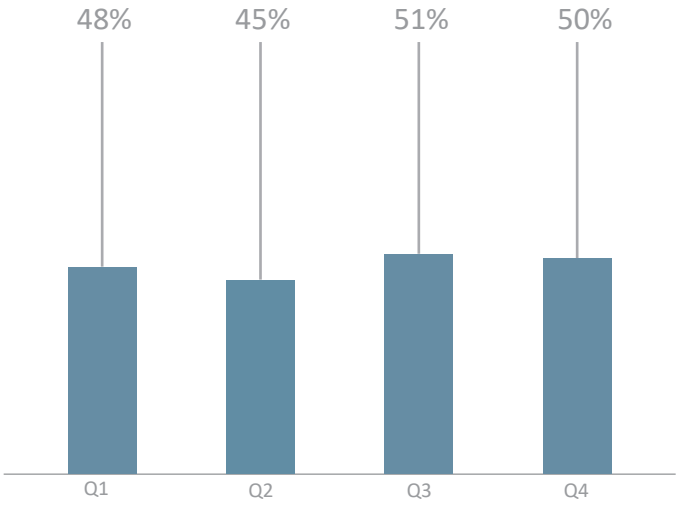
Pull factors (top 3 answers only)



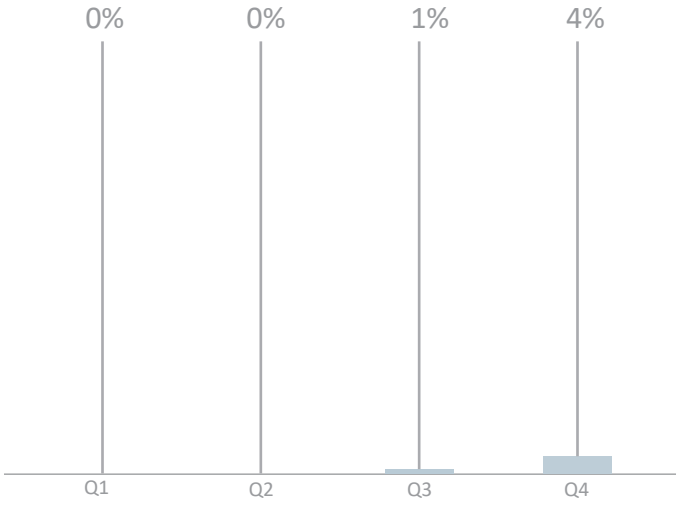
Yearly - 2021



Quarterly - 2021



Quarterly - 2021



Quarterly - 2021

2.4 Travel conditions

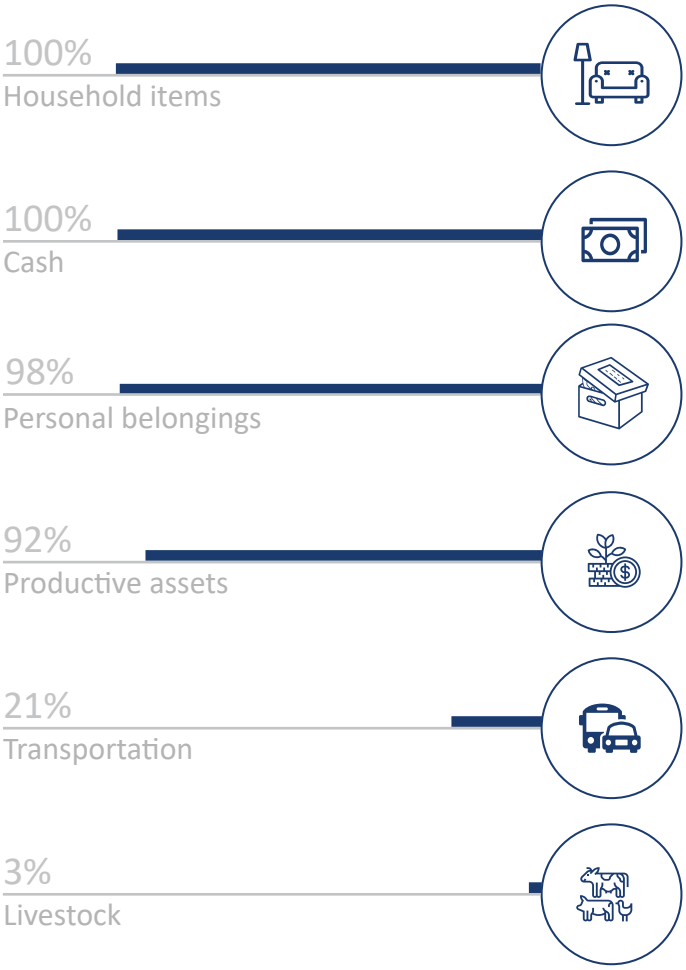
The means of transportation used by the returning families from Pakistan to the border and from the border to their destination in Afghanistan remained the same across the two journeys. This year, the major source of transporation used was truck (51%), followed by pickup (33%) and bus (16%). In 2020, the preferred forms of transport were pickup (42%), truck (32%) and bus (26%).

All of the returnees interviewed by DTM teams brought household items and cash back to Afghanistan, while 98 per cent brought personal belongings, 92 per cent productive assets, 21 per cent transportation vehicles and only 3 per cent brought livestock back to Afghanistan.

The total average cost for transportation from origin district in Pakistan to destination district in Afghanistan was 19,584 PKR (USD 109)** per family. The average cost of travel from the individuals place of origin in Pakistan to the border point was 9,639 PKR per family, while from the border point to the destination in Afghanistan was 9,945 PKR per family. The traveling cost is directly proportional to the distance from origin district in Pakistan to the border point and from border to destination in Afghanistan. The lowest transportation cost recorded in Pakistan from different areas of Killa Abdullah to Chaman border point was 2,000 PKR and the highest from Karachi & Chaghi to Chaman border point was 60,000 PKR. Similarly, the lowest transportation cost in Afghanistan was from Chaman border point to different areas of Spin Boldak (2,000 PKR) and the highest was from Chaman border point to Dasht-e-Archi district of Kunduz (100,000 PKR).

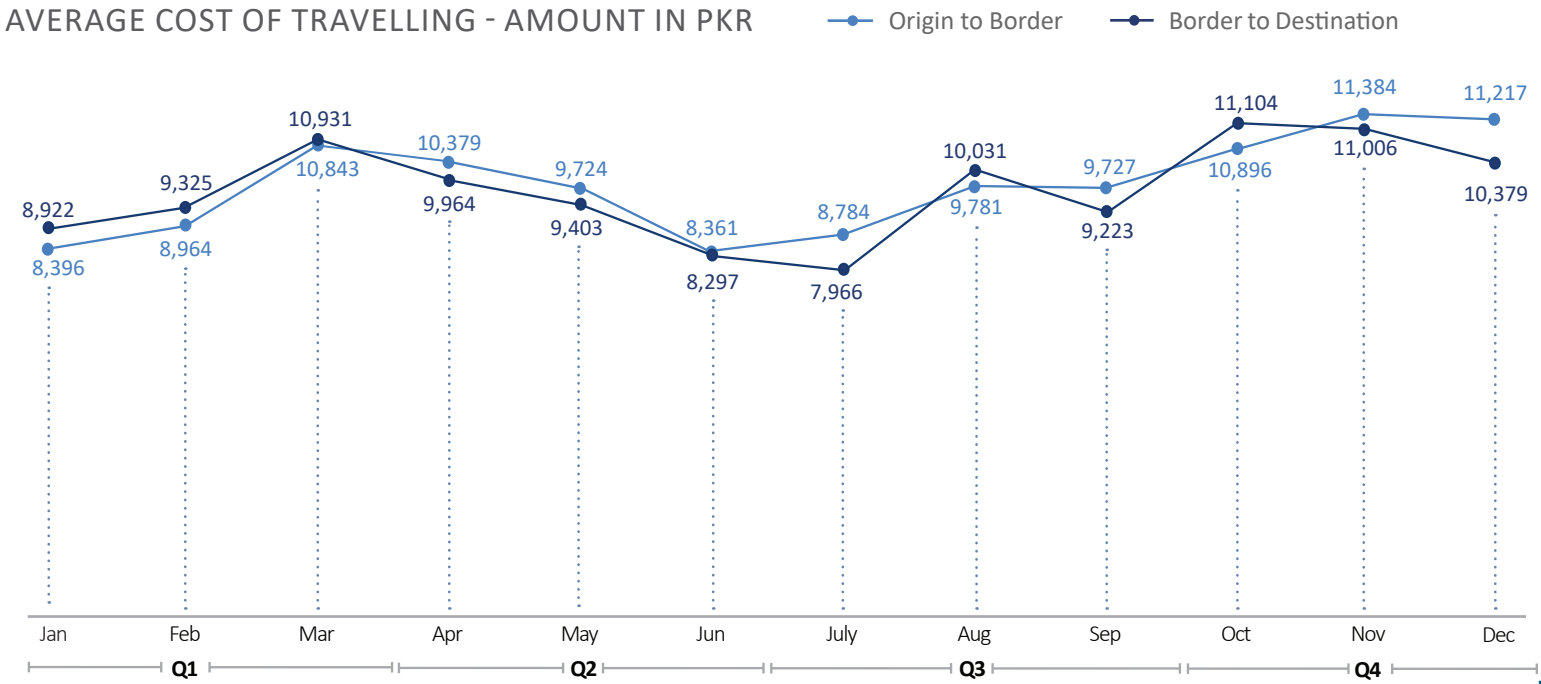
GOODS BROUGHT BACK TO AFGHANISTAN*

(multiple answers possible)



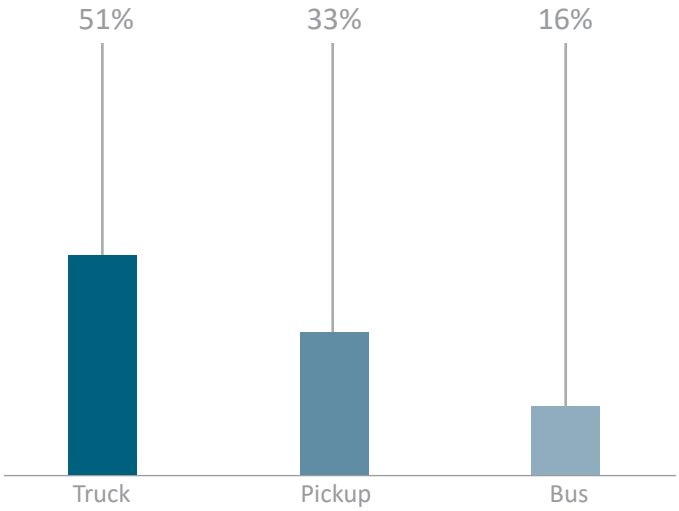
*This question was only answered by the head of the family.

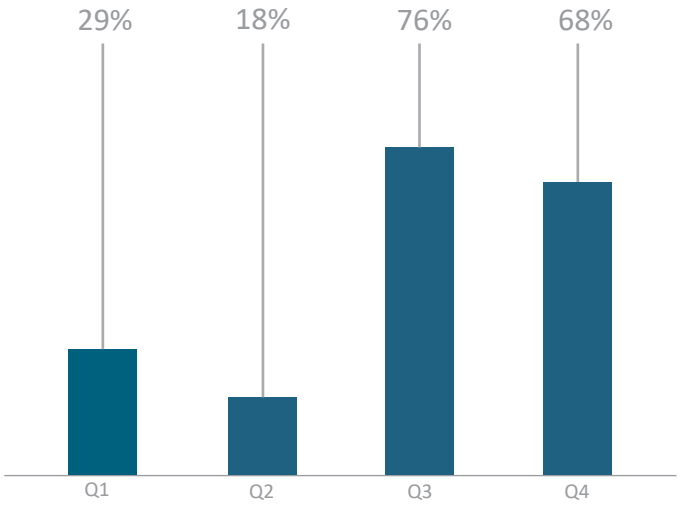
AVERAGE COST OF TRAVELLING - AMOUNT IN PKR

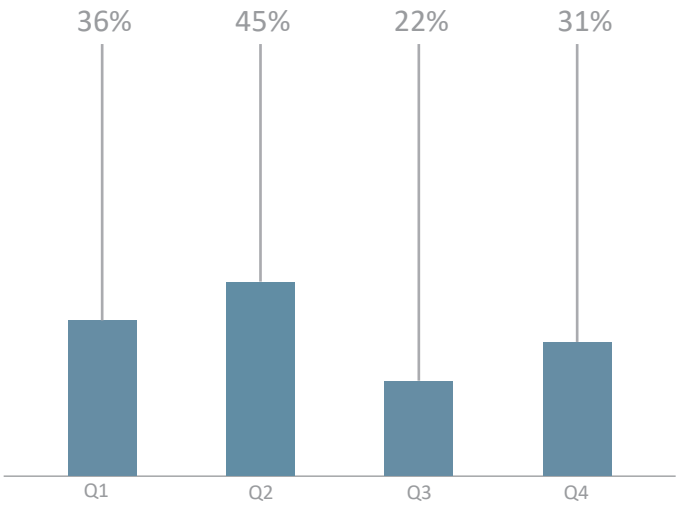


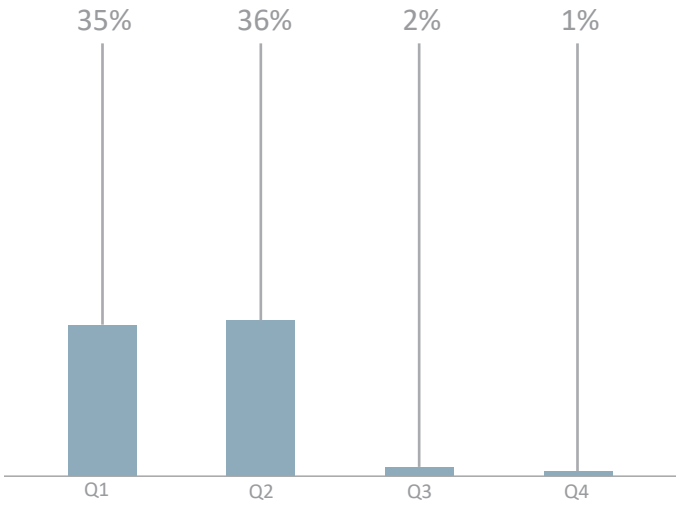
**Exchange rates are 179.75 PKR to 1 USD according to the UN Operational Rates of Exchange in December 2021.

MODE OF TRANSPORTATION OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES









2.5 Type of settlement and settlement priorities

While residing in Pakistan, the highest proportion of respondents reported living in rented houses (96%). Four per cent were living in camps or camp-like settings. Rented houses were also the most reported type of settlement in 2020 (93%). Other types of settlements reported in 2020 were residing with relatives in Pakistan and residing in temporary settlements, which was not expressed by returnees in 2021.

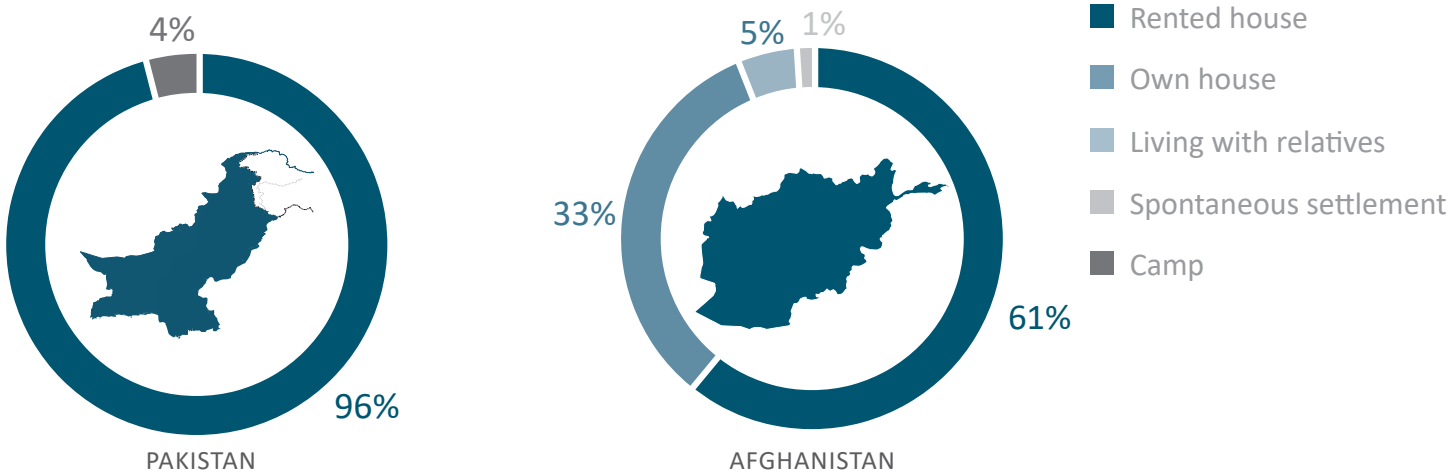
When asked about their expected types of settlement back in Afghanistan, more than half of returnees specified that they intended to rent a house after arrival in their city of destination (61%). This percentage is 11 per cent higher compared to 2020 (50%). The second most common expected type of settlement specified by returnees in 2021 was to live in their own houses (33%), which decreased by five per cent when compared to the percentage from 2020. Another type of settlement option mentioned by returnees in 2021 was the plan to reside with their relatives (5%), which is five per cent less than reported in 2020.

The interviewed returnees indicated they would have different settling priorities while living back in Afghanistan. All of the returnees planned to resettle in new city and arrange for livelihood, followed by 98 per cent who planned to look for income opportunities and 62 per cent to arrange for shelter. Other settlement priorities described by returnees were education (7%), availability of medicine and health facilities (1%), security challenges (1%) and availability of clean drinking water (1%).

SETTLEMENT PRIORITIES OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES* (multiple answers possible)

Resettle in a new city	100%
Arrange for livelihood	100%
Income opportunities	98%
Arrange for shelter	62%
Education	7%
Availability of medicine and health facilities	1%
Security challenges	1%
Availability of clean drinking water	1%

TYPE OF SETTLEMENT IN PAKISTAN AND EXPECTED TYPE OF SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES*



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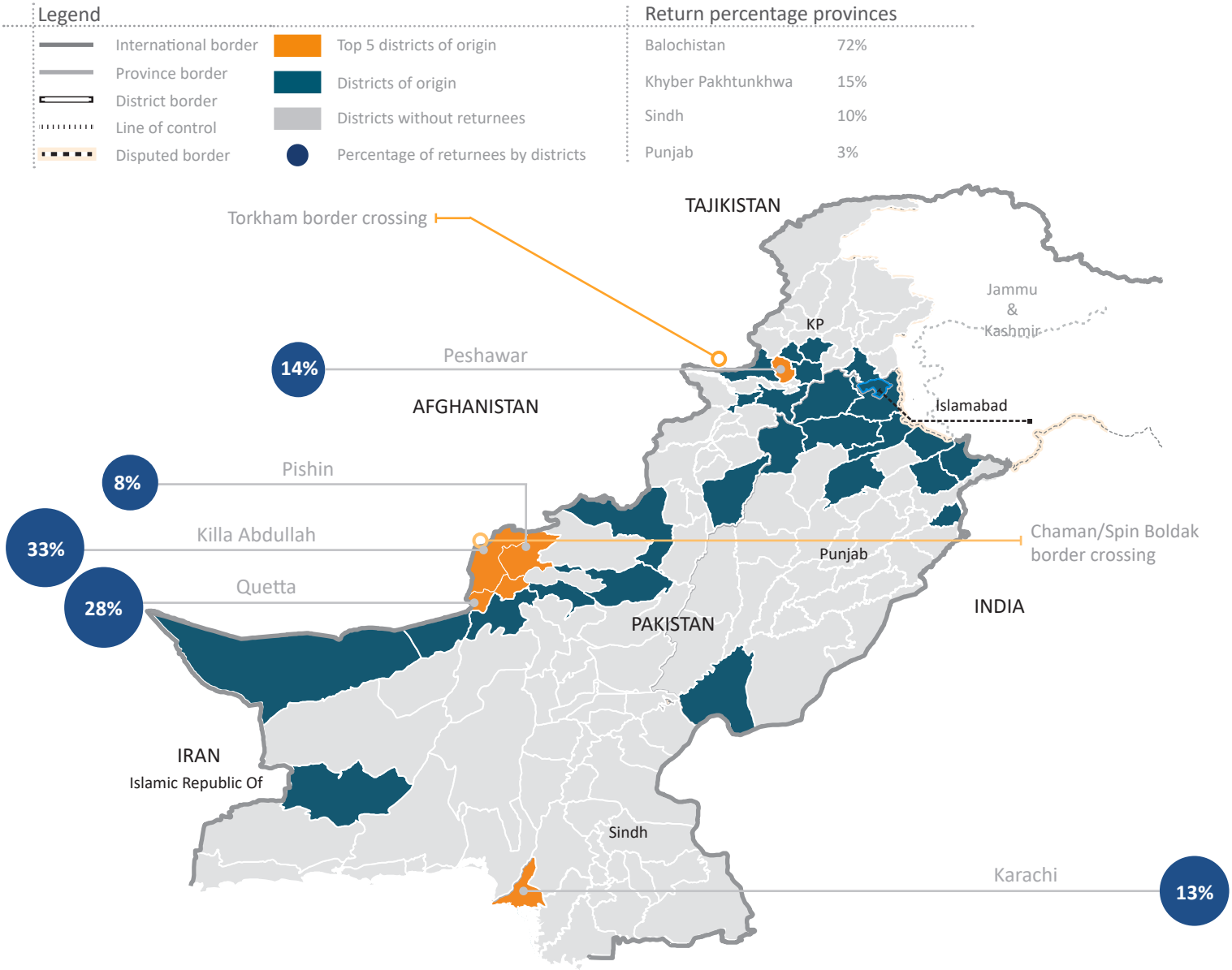
2.6 Areas of origin and destination

In 2021, returnees reported living in four provinces in Pakistan prior to their return to Afghanistan: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh. Few returnees were also living in Islamabad and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The highest number of returnees in 2021 departed from Balochistan (72%), followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (15%), Sindh (10%) and Punjab (3%). This finding is similar to the trend seen in 2020. The reported low number of returnees who returned to Afghanistan through the Torkham border crossing is due to the fact that a custom duty was imposed by authorities on luggage of the outgoing undocumented families.

In most of the cases, these families were unable to pay the custom duty. Due to this restriction, the outflow at the Chaman border crossing was very high as compared to Torkham. At the district level, the top five districts of origin in Pakistan were Killa Abullah (33%), Quetta (28%), Peshawar (14%), Karachi (13%) and Pishin (8%).

Mobility at both borders was affected by COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and by border closures implemented as security measures and as a response to the new political developments in Afghanistan since August 2021.

PROVINCES AND DISTRICTS OF ORIGIN IN PAKISTAN OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES



Disclaimer:
Dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM or United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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INTENDED DESTINATION IN AFGHANISTAN OF UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES (Top 5 answers)

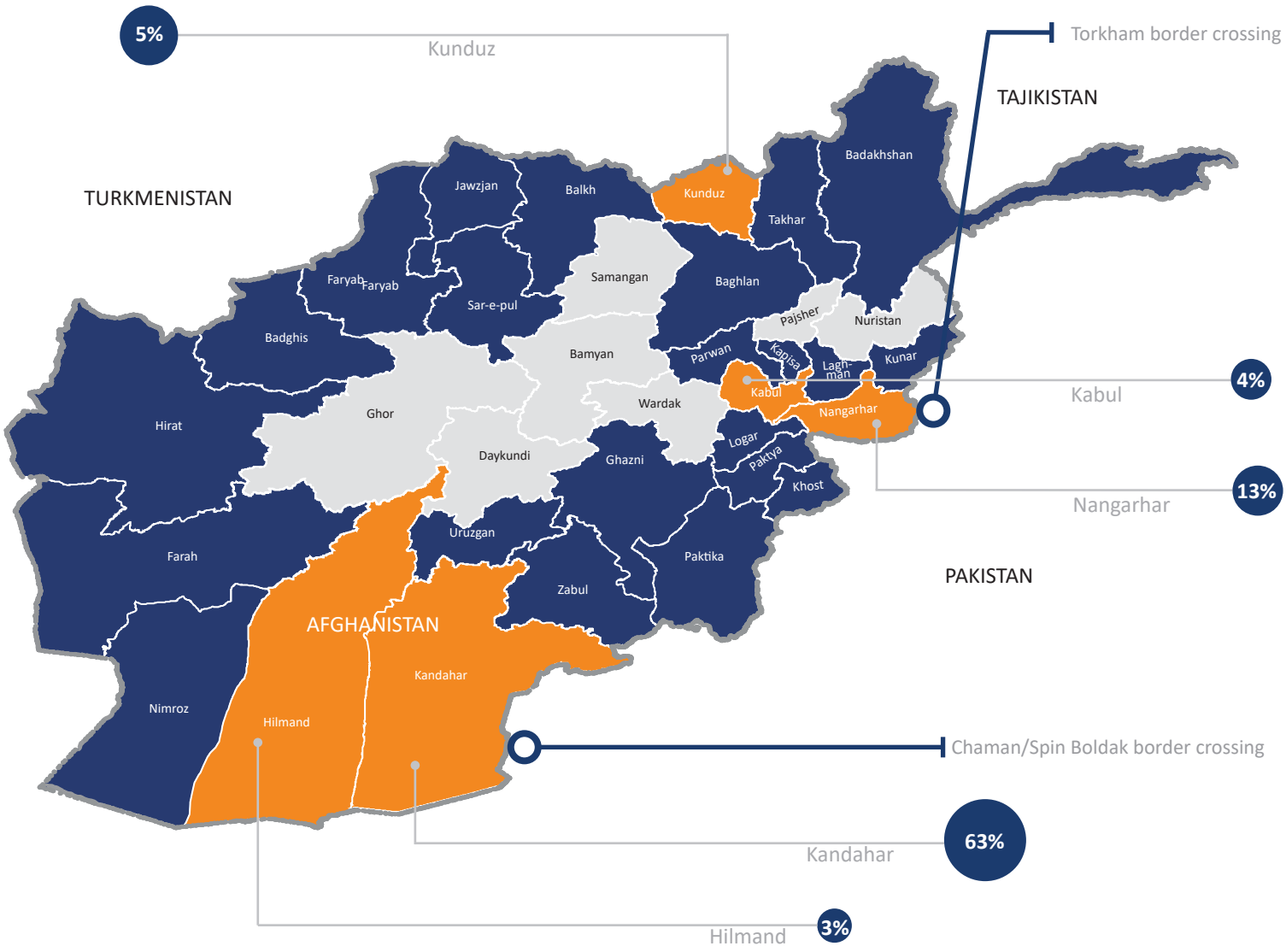
More than half of returnees (63%) in 2021 reported that Kandahar was their province of intended destination in Afghanistan. Four other major provinces of intended destination of returnees were Nangarhar (13%), Kunduz (5%), Kabul (4%) and Hilmand (3%). The composition of provinces of intended destination in 2021 is similar to findings in 2020, though the percentage of returnees to these provinces only slightly changed. In 2020, the top intended destinations in Afghanistan were Kandahar (57%), Nangarhar (6%), Kunduz (8%), Kabul (6%) and Hilmand (6%).

Legend

- International border
- Province border
- Top 5 provinces of intended destination
- Other provinces of intended destination
- Non-intended provinces of destination
- Percentage of returnees by province

Top 5 provinces of intended destination

Kandahar	63%
Nangarhar	13%
Kunduz	5%
Kabul	4%
Hilmand	3%



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