

# MOBILITY DYNAMICS AT AFGHANISTAN'S BORDERS

FLOW MONITORING QUARTERLY REPORT: JANUARY-MARCH 2024  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)



GLOBAL DATA INSTITUTE  
DISPLACEMENT  
TRACKING MATRIX



## INTRODUCTION

Over the course of decades marked by conflict, Afghanistan has experienced significant movement across its borders with neighboring countries the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. This movement, influenced by linguistic, geographical, and economic factors, has played a crucial role in shaping regional dynamics and fostering cultural ties between these countries. With 4.5 million Afghan nationals currently living in the Islamic Republic of Iran and 3.2 million currently living in Pakistan<sup>1</sup>, Afghan nationals not only seek economic opportunities, international protection and safety in these countries, but often visit family or participate in short-term travel for health and other reasons. In late 2023, policies and statements by officials in both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan called for the expulsion of undocumented foreigners, the majority of whom are Afghan nationals. Developments such as these recent policies targeting Afghan migrants have impacted movements to Afghanistan, as seen late last year when returns from Pakistan increased following the announcement of the “Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan (IFRP),” setting a deadline for unregistered or undocumented foreigners to voluntarily return to their countries or face deportation.

In response to these recent movements, IOM Afghanistan re-launched its DTM Flow Monitoring (FM) activity at the beginning of 2024 to provide critical insights into current mobility dynamics at Afghanistan’s borders. Flow Monitoring is designed to track the scale and characteristics of human mobility along the borders, including volume, intended destinations, reasons for movement, and intended lengths of stay. **From January to the end of March 2024, DTM counted 567,411 individuals entering Afghanistan, 406,919 leaving Afghanistan, and interviewed 49,441** regarding their reasons for movement and intentions. The following report provides findings from DTM’s Flow Monitoring exercises for the first three months of data collection, examining trends and profiles among inflow and outflow groups to inform better targeted response mechanisms.

The report is structured in four sections. The first section, “Cumulative Flow Trends,” gives an overview of the total inflow and outflow numbers and trends between January and March. This section is linked to DTM’s Flow Monitoring Counting exercise (see details in “Methodology and Limitations”). The second and third sections, “Mobility Dynamics: The Islamic Republic of Iran” and “Mobility Dynamics: Pakistan” explore findings from interviews with people leaving and entering Afghanistan via borders with the Islamic Republic of Iran and with Pakistan, respectively. These sections are followed by “Mobility Dynamics: Conclusions” which summarizes and analyzes the findings from the interviews. These last three sections are linked to DTM’s Flow Monitoring Surveys exercise (see details in “Methodology and Limitations”).

DISCLAIMER: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

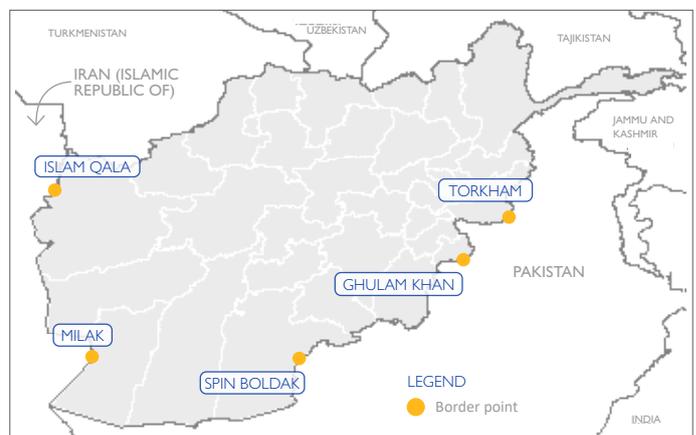
1 UNHCR Operational Data Portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan>

## METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

As of the end of March 2024, DTM operates at five key border points with the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRN) and Pakistan (PAK) to conduct two interlinked Flow Monitoring exercises. The first is a headcount of all individuals entering or leaving Afghanistan (including returnees), also called Flow Monitoring Counting (FMC), to gauge flow volume. The second is a survey of randomly selected Afghan national individuals or groups entering or leaving Afghanistan, also called the Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS), to understand the profiles, motivations, and vulnerabilities of the target population. FMC requires DTM field staff to count all individuals entering and leaving Afghanistan at targeted border points during active hours every day to have an accurate picture of inflow and outflow volumes on an hourly basis. Field staff also record how many individuals are males over five years old, females over five years old, males under five years old, and females under five years old. The FMS tool, on the other hand, is used to interview incoming and outgoing individuals, capturing details on migration profiles and intentions. Individuals or groups of Afghan nationals are randomly selected for interview by field staff at the border crossing points and aim to interview as many as possible throughout the working day (as opposed to being given a quota based on representative sampling). In groups where children are present, their parent or an accompanying adult answer on their behalf. FMC and FMS are conducted simultaneously at each selected border point every day.

FMS interviews were conducted at border crossing points with respondents while they were traveling. As a result, information gathered relies on the answers and perceptions of respondents in transit, with a degree of variability due to limited measures of verification and time allowances. Additionally, certain indicators may be under- or over-reported due to the subjectivity and perceptions of participants (especially “social desirability bias” – the documented tendency of people to provide what they perceive to be the “right answers to certain questions”). These factors should be taken into consideration when interpreting findings.

MAP 1: FLOW MONITORING POINTS AS OF 31 MARCH 2024





## CUMULATIVE FLOW TRENDS

IOM DTM Afghanistan was able to count just under one million individuals entering or leaving Afghanistan via five of its border points with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Demographic trends saw flows at the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran heavily dominated by males over five years old, while flows with Pakistan were slightly more diverse. Analysis from FMS findings shows that movements between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran were more economically motivated compared to those with Pakistan, which more frequently included movements related to family. Afghan nationals working in both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan are most often employed in construction and agriculture sectors as well as low-skilled jobs.<sup>1,2</sup> Considering the general segregation of labour markets, wherein many economic sectors are available to men but women workers are often constrained to service or domestic work,<sup>3</sup> it follows that economically-dominated flows may be correlated with higher presence of males at these particular borders.

Temporal trends show that, on average at all border points, flows tend to be highest in the first half of the week before dropping off sharply on Fridays. This trend was more stark at border points

with the Islamic Republic of Iran compared to with Pakistan. On a daily basis at all border points, flows generally increase throughout the morning before dropping off around noon, after which they increase again. Inflows from the Islamic Republic of Iran were consistently higher than outflows, while inflows and outflows were more equivalent at the border with Pakistan. FMS data indicates that inflows from the Islamic Republic of Iran were driven more heavily by deportations compared to those from Pakistan, which tends to be more voluntary in nature. This may have an impact on the ratio of inflows to outflows. Additionally, in December last year, the Islamic Republic of Iran imposed a ban on Afghan nationals' entry to 16 provinces in the country, which may also have an decreasing affect on outflows.<sup>4</sup>

For information on flow trends and profiles on weekly basis, the Flow Monitoring Weekly Snapshots can be found on the [DTM website](#) in English, Dari, and Pashto. Additionally, the interactive Flow Monitoring Dashboard, which allows users to filter information on trends and profiles by date and crossing point depending on their needs, can be found at [this link](#).

|                       |                     |                        |                      |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| TOTAL INFLOW: 567,411 |                     | TOTAL OUTFLOW: 406,919 |                      |
| IRN INFLOW: 350,955   | PAK INFLOW: 216,456 | IRN OUTFLOW: 207,224   | PAK OUTFLOW: 199,695 |

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDDOWN

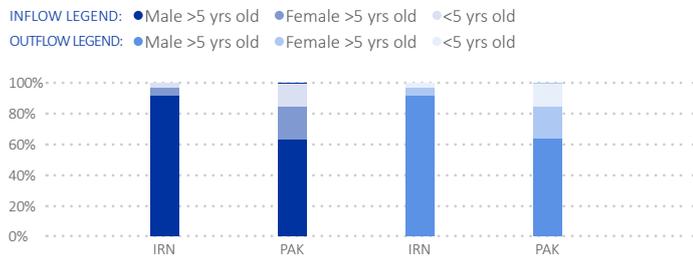


TABLE 2: WEEKLY INFLOW TRENDS

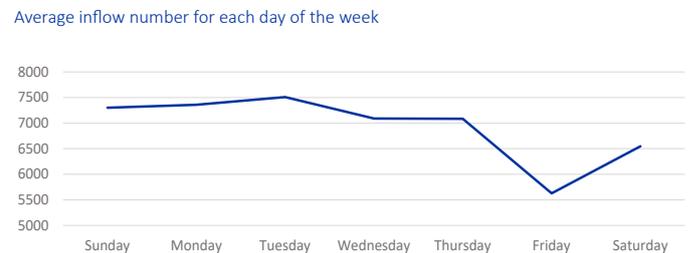


CHART 1: INFLOW & OUTFLOW TRENDS TO AND FROM THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

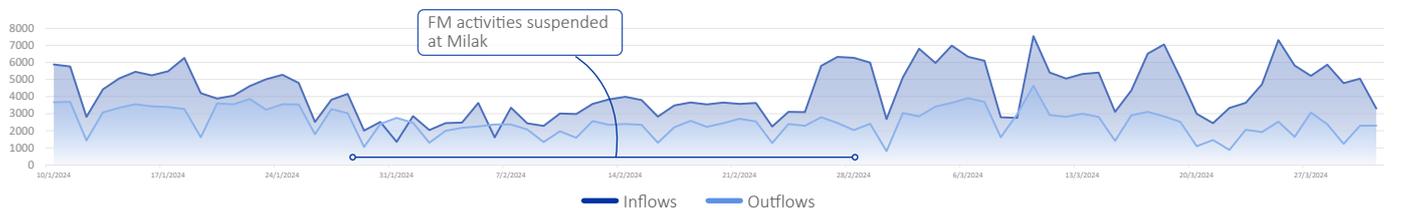


CHART 2: INFLOW & OUTFLOW TRENDS TO AND FROM PAKISTAN



1 Market Systems Analysis for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan. International Labour Organization. [ilostat.ilo.org/data](https://ilostat.ilo.org/data).  
 2 "Afghan Community in Iran: Five Decades On." Italian Institute for International Political Studies. 26 February 2024. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/afghan-community-in-iran-five-decades-on-165046>.  
 3 "Women and men migrant workers: Moving towards equal rights and opportunities." International Labour Organization. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_101118.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@gender/documents/publication/wcms_101118.pdf)  
 4 Afghans Banned From 16 Provinces In Iran As Forced Exodus Continues. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 4 December 2023. <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-afghans-banned-provinces/32713320.html>

## MOBILITY DYNAMICS: THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

### INFLOWS

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 20,497

MALE RESPONDENTS: 80%

FEMALE RESPONDENTS: 20%

### REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

Bans barring Afghans from living in, traveling to, or seeking employment in half of the Islamic Republic of Iran's provinces as of December 2023 follow statements from Iranian officials in October declaring intentions to deport all undocumented Afghan migrants in the country.<sup>1</sup> These deportation operations had already pushed back hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals in 2023,<sup>2</sup> and FMS respondent interviews in 2024 at the Islam Qala and Milak border points in Herat and Nimroz provinces, respectively, revealed that deportation was still the most common reason for return (67%). This was followed by economic reasons (47%), which most likely refers to return after finishing employment in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and voluntary/spontaneous return (32%). Feeling unsafe at their place of stay in the Islamic Republic of Iran was also cited by a fifth of respondents, a higher proportion than among those coming from Pakistan (see page 7). Around one per cent of the sample population were transiting through the Islamic Republic of Iran from another country, mainly Türkiye, citing deportation as their most common reason for movement. While Türkiye often uses special flights to deport Afghan nationals, there are also reports of Turkish authorities pushing Afghans into the Islamic Republic of Iran as a method of deportation.<sup>3</sup>

The age and gender profile among respondents did not vary greatly depending on their reason for movement; overall, adults under 60 years old made up over 80 per cent of the sample, with the average age being 25 years old. However, those who reported deportation as their reason for movement were younger than those who reported other major reasons, especially women, 39 per cent of whom were under 18 years old. On the opposite spectrum, those who cited health reasons were older on average, with 9 per cent of them being over 60 years old. There were minor differences between male and female respondents regarding their

reasons for movement; economic reasons and deportations were marginally higher among male respondents while voluntary or spontaneous return was slightly higher among female respondents. The frequency of feeling unsafe at their place of origin as a reason for travel was equal between the two groups. When analyzing for specific vulnerabilities, individuals belonging to female-headed-households more commonly responded feeling unsafe compared to individuals belonging to male-headed-households (26%).

Half of respondents reported having stayed a year or longer (**long-term**) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while 24 per cent reported staying over 3 months to a year (**medium-term**), and 26 per cent reported staying less than 3 months (**short-term**). Long-term stays in the Islamic Republic of Iran were most common among those who reported feeling unsafe in that country as a reason for movement (61%), and least common among those who reported health reasons (29%).

Overall, three-quarters of respondents answered "I do not know" when asked how long they intend to stay in Afghanistan upon return. This uncertainty was highest among those who cited economic reasons as their reason for travel (94%), feeling unsafe at their location in the Islamic Republic of Iran (90%), voluntary or spontaneous return (80%), and deportation (77%). Pushback campaigns, such as the mass deportations and announcements to ban Afghan nationals from several provinces, may play a role in the high level of uncertainty reported by respondents, especially among those who would eventually like to return to the Islamic Republic of Iran sometime in the future. Reasons like education, family-related visits, events/tourism, and transit/visa-related movements saw higher rates of individuals intending to stay in Afghanistan short-term only.

TABLE 3: REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Deportation                    | 67% |
| Economic reasons               | 47% |
| Return (voluntary/spontaneous) | 32% |
| Felt unsafe at origin location | 18% |
| Family-related visit           | 6%  |
| Events/tourism                 | 3%  |
| Health reasons                 | 2%  |
| Transit/visa reasons           | 1%  |

CHART 3: TOP 3 REASONS - LENGTH OF STAY ABROAD

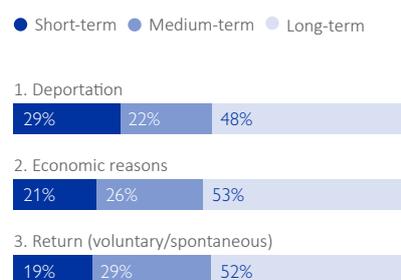
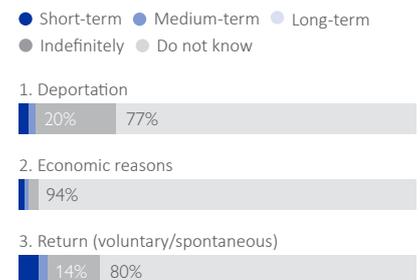


CHART 4: TOP 3 REASONS - PLANNED LENGTH OF STAY UPON RETURN



1 Afghans Banned From 16 Provinces In Iran As Forced Exodus Continues. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 4 December 2023. <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-afghans-banned-provinces/32713320.html>

2 Kotokey, Dr. Angana. The Deportation of the Afghan Refugees from Iran. 28 December 2023. <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2023/december/28/the-deportation-of-the-afghan-refugees-from-iran>

3 D'Souza, Shanthie Mariet. The Plight of Deported Afghans. 15 January 2024. <https://thediomat.com/2024/01/the-plight-of-deported-afghans/>

TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

Among respondents surveyed by DTM, the majority of Afghan nationals (87%) entering Afghanistan from the Islamic Republic of Iran did not carry a passport or Iranian visa. Specifically, 95 per cent those who had stayed in the Islamic Republic of Iran long-term, 78 per cent of those who had stayed medium-term, and 78 per cent of those who had stayed short-term lacked a travel documents. Likewise, individuals planning to stay long-term in Afghanistan were more like to lack travel documents than those planning to stay shorter-term. Incoming Afghan nationals without a passport or visa are largely part of two groups<sup>1</sup>: completely undocumented, meaning they hold no official documentation whatsoever, and those in possession of official residence or registration documents, like an Amayesh card or similar. Amayesh cards grant registered Afghan refugees conditional freedom of movement, temporary work permits, and access to the national education and healthcare systems, and must be renewed annually. A similar document is the Hoshmand card, a smart card meant to eventually replace the Amayesh.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, longer-term inflow movements are correlated with lower possession of passports and visas. Those possessing passports and visas, on the other hand, participated more frequently in short-term circular movements across the border, with 45 per cent having stayed for less than three months in the Islamic Republic of Iran (compared to 23% among

non-visa holders) and 11 per cent intending to stay for less than three months in Afghanistan (compared to 2% among non-visa holders). Additionally, visa holders were more likely to respond “I do not know” when asked about their intended length of stay in Afghanistan compared to non-visa holders (85% versus 76%, respectively), while non-visa holders were more definitive; 21 per cent answered that they intended to stay in Afghanistan indefinitely compared to two per cent of visa holders.

Most respondents who cited feeling unsafe at their place of stay in the Islamic Republic of Iran (98%), deportation (97%), and economic reasons (89%) as their reasons for travel did not have a passport, and similar percentages did not have visas. A little over a quarter (27%) of those who reported leaving the Islamic Republic of Iran due to voluntary or spontaneous return, however, did possess valid visas, as did nearly half (47%) of those traveling for health reasons. Possession of valid visas was also more common among those citing reasons such as education, family-related visits, and events/tourism.

Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to hold passports, visas, and Afghan identification cards (Tazkiras).

CHART 5: PERCENTAGE WITH VALID VISAS BY LENGTH OF STAY ABROAD AND PLANNED LENGTH OF STAY

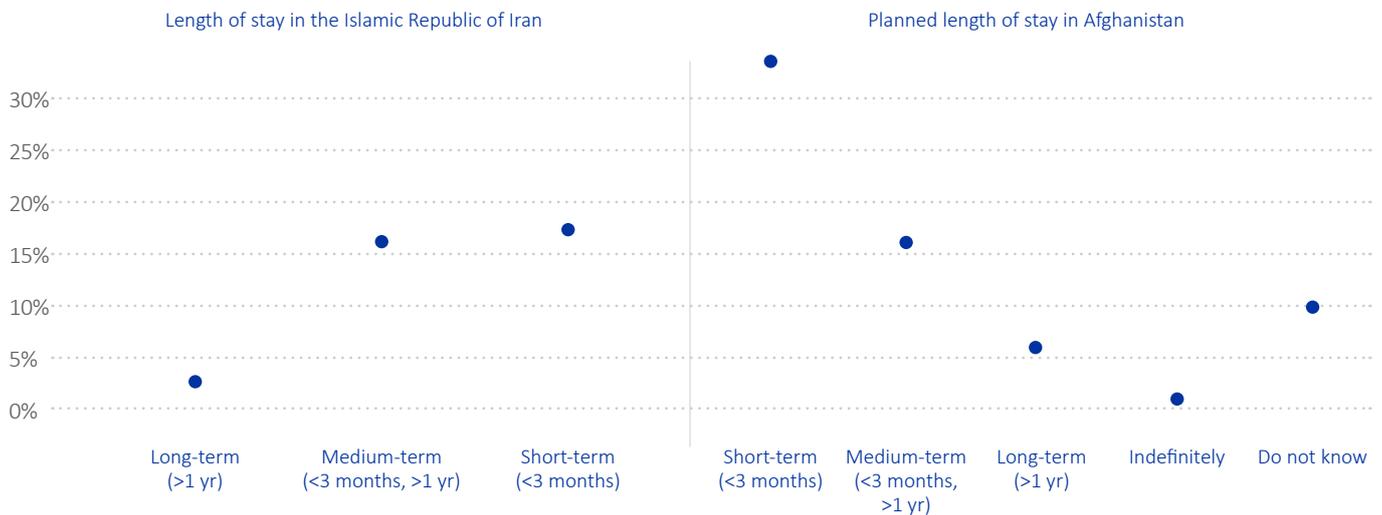


TABLE 4: DOCUMENTATION BY SEX OF RESPONDENTS

|        | HAS A VALID PASSPORT | HAS A VALID VISA | HAS A VALID AFGHAN ID |
|--------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| FEMALE | 6%                   | 5%               | 60%                   |
| MALE   | 13%                  | 11%              | 62%                   |

1 At some border crossings, children under 7 years old who are accompanied by other adult family members are permitted to cross without documentation.  
2 Country Analysis: Iran. ACAPS. <https://www.acaps.org/en/countries/iran#>.

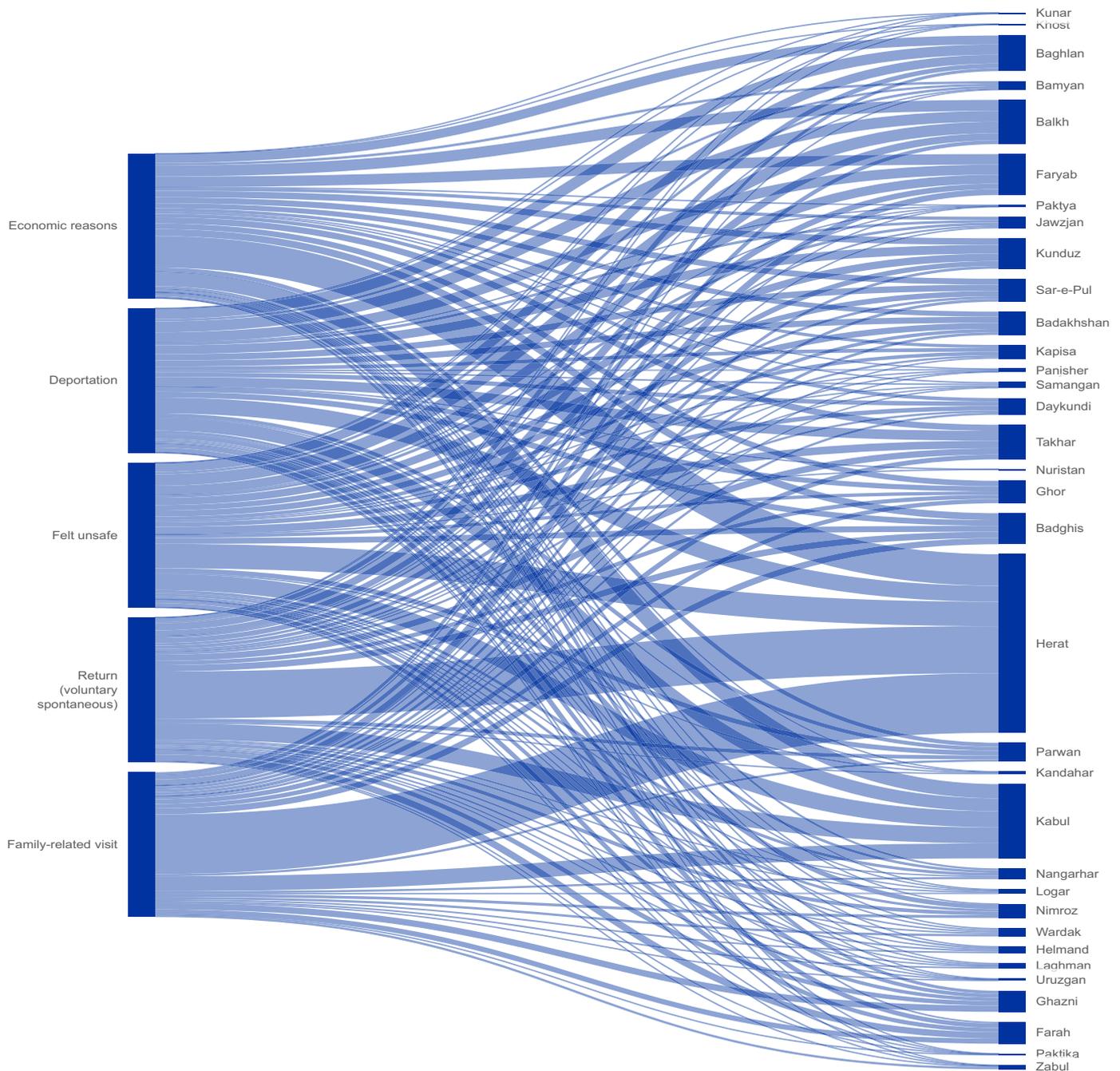


DESTINATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

The primary destination among surveyed individuals coming from the Islamic Republic of Iran is Herat province, which can be at least partially attributed to Herat being one of the major economic centers in Afghanistan as well as the border province where Islam Qala is located. At Islam Qala, respondents' primary destinations are Herat (24%) and Kabul (10%). Respondents at Milak, on the other hand, have more diverse intended destinations, with 10 per cent heading to neighboring province Farah, nine per cent to Nimroz (where Milak is located), eight per cent to Kabul, seven per cent to Kunduz, and only six per cent to Herat. In a similar pattern, non-visa holders saw a higher level of variation in their intended destinations compared to valid visa

holders. Nearly half (45%) of the latter's intended destination was Herat, while intended destinations among the former were spread between Herat (14%), Kabul (10%), Balkh (7%), Takhar (7%), and others. Those who reported intentions to stay long-term in Afghanistan were also less likely to cite Herat as their intended destination province compared to those who wanted to stay short-term. Among the main reasons for migration, those motivated by deportation had the most diverse responses regarding their intended provinces, while those who reported voluntary or spontaneous return were most likely to choose Herat.

CHART 6: DESTINATION PROVINCES BY REASONS FOR MOVEMENT



## OUTFLOWS

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 4,811

MALE RESPONDENTS: 89%

FEMALE RESPONDENTS: 11%

### REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

Reasons for movement among individuals leaving Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran were heavily concentrated in economic motivations (61%) and family-related visits (31%), with small percentages also dedicated to health reasons (9%), events/tourism (5%), and traveling to the place of residence (4%). Declining population growth and a sizeable labour demand has motivated the migration of Afghan nationals to the Islamic Republic of Iran as supplementary workforce for decades, which, along with other drivers of migration, has created diaspora communities that motivate family visits such as the ones maintained by respondents.<sup>2</sup> All respondents interviewed at Islam Qala or Milak crossing points reported their final destination as the Islamic Republic of Iran; none indicated an intention to travel to a third country.

In terms of age profiles, the age of outgoing respondents was higher than that of incoming respondents by several years, averaging at 32 years old. Individuals travelling for economic reasons were younger compared to those travelling for other reasons, like health and traveling to their country of residence.

Discrepancies between male and female respondents and their reasons for migration were more apparent among outgoing migrants compared to incoming ones. Female respondents were much more likely to be traveling for family related or health reasons (77% and 19%) compared to male respondents (25% and 8%), while male respondents constituted almost the entirety of the respondent cohort traveling for economic reasons (almost 100%).

Sixty one per cent of respondents had never left Afghanistan prior to being interviewed. However, those going for family visits were more likely to be leaving Afghanistan for the first time

(83%) compared to those going for economic reasons (47%). Those visiting family were more likely to plan short-term stays in the Islamic Republic of Iran (46%) compared to those going for economic reasons (29%), who were more likely to plan medium-term stays (64%). Neither group had a large percentage of individuals planning to stay long-term and no respondents planned to stay abroad indefinitely. Movements at Milak were more economically motivated compared to those at Islam Qala (82% versus 54%, respectively), which had higher percentages of those traveling for family visits (37% versus 14%, respectively).

### TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

In stark contrast to incoming individuals, almost all outgoing individuals to the Islamic Republic of Iran reported holding a passport and visa. Afghan citizens are mandated to carry a visa and passport to enter the Islamic Republic of Iran at formal border points.<sup>1</sup> Notably, 11 per cent of outgoing respondents did not possess a Tazkira.

CHART 7: TOP 3 REASONS FOR MOVEMENT



CHART 8: TOP 3 REASONS - PLANNED LENGTH OF A STAY

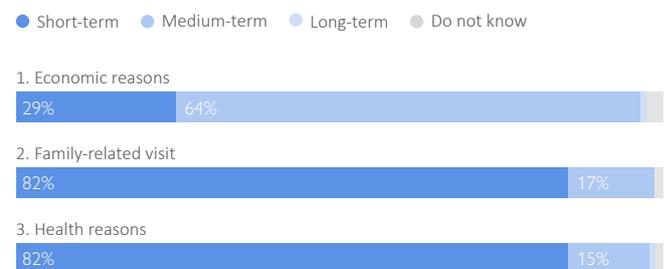


Photo: Islam Qala border point, Herat province. © IOM 2024/NOORI Sayed Nazir

1 Iran: New Arrivals from Afghanistan - since 2021 (End of December 2023). Relief Web. <https://reliefweb.int/report/iran-islamic-republic/iran-new-arrivals-afghanistan-2021-end-december-2023>

2 D'Souza, Shanthie Mariet. An Iranian Reversal on Afghan Refugees The Diplomat. 14 November 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/an-iranian-reversal-on-afghan-refugees>.

## MOBILITY DYNAMICS: PAKISTAN

### INFLOWS

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 13,642

MALE RESPONDENTS: 78%

FEMALE RESPONDENTS: 22%

### REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

The Government of Pakistan's announcement in October 2023 decreeing its "Illegal Foreigner's Repatriation Plan" caused unprecedented waves of returnees to Afghanistan. According to the Border Consortium, Torkham and Spin Boldak had historically received a daily influx of around 260 undocumented Afghans per day in 2022 and 2023. This increased to around 4,500 Afghans (documented and undocumented) per day since 15 September 2023. The majority of these returns are characterized as voluntary,<sup>1</sup> though motivated by the fear of deportation. In 2024, DTM's FMS exercise found that the most common reason for travel was voluntary or spontaneous return (85%), followed by family-related visits (30%). Feeling unsafe at their place of stay in Pakistan was also cited by eight per cent of respondents signaling a shift in trends from the last quarter of 2023.

Overall, incoming respondents from Pakistan were older than incoming respondents from the Islamic Republic of Iran (an average of 31 years versus 25 years), however, the age and gender profile among incoming respondents from Pakistan differed depending on reason for movement. In particular, those who cited feeling unsafe in their location of origin as a reason for movement were younger than those citing voluntary return or family visits, with 39 per cent of that group being under 18 years old. In all groups, male respondents were older than female respondents on average. Reasons for movement among male and female respondents were largely similar except for those who reported feeling unsafe in their place of origin, among which female respondents accounted for the majority. Nearly a fifth (17%) of female respondents cited this reason while five per cent of male respondents cited the same. Likewise, individuals belonging to female-headed-households were more likely to feeling unsafe compared to those belonging to male-headed-households (13% versus 8%).

While most of those traveling for health reasons and transit/visa reasons had predictably stayed short-term in Pakistan (90% and 93%, respectively), those reporting education as a reason for travel were also more likely to constitute short-term movements

(87%). This differs from respondents at the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran who were traveling for education purposes, as they generally stayed abroad longer-term before re-entering Afghanistan. This illuminates unique mobility dynamics at the border with Pakistan that allow for more frequent movement across the border, including for students. Indeed, more than half of those who cited voluntary or spontaneous return (66%) and family visits (64%) had stayed in Pakistan for three months or less. The only major exception was those who had cited feeling unsafe as a reason for movement, 94 per cent of whom had stayed in Pakistan long-term before arriving to Afghanistan.

Similarly to those arriving from the Islamic Republic of Iran, uncertainty regarding planned length of stay in Afghanistan was high among those coming from Pakistan. Three-quarters of those who travelled due to deportation or voluntary return responded "do not know" when ask how long they planned to stay in Afghanistan. In addition to the first announcement of the IFRP in October last year, plans to repatriate Afghan Citizen Card holders have also been announced for April 2024.<sup>2</sup> These policies likely contribute to returning Afghan nationals' uncertainty about the future and the potential to remigrate to Pakistan eventually. The only major exceptions included those travelling for economic reasons or education, who were generally more definitive about desires to stay only short-term in Afghanistan (56% and 90%, respectively).

The starkest difference between the formal border points and Ghulam Khan was that formal border points were used mainly by people citing voluntary return as a reason for movement, while the same reason made up only 9 per cent of those traveling through Ghulam Khan. Health and family-related visits were more prevalent at Ghulam Khan, suggesting that while short-term movements were more prevalent at borders with Pakistan compared to borders with the Islamic Republic of Iran, they are perhaps more prevalent at informal border points like Ghulam Khan.

TABLE 5: REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Return (voluntary/spontaneous) | 85% |
| Family-related visit           | 30% |
| Felt unsafe at origin location | 8%  |
| Events/tourism                 | 4%  |
| Health reasons                 | 4%  |
| Transit/visa reasons           | 2%  |
| Economic reasons               | 1%  |
| Education                      | 1%  |

CHART 9: TOP 3 REASONS - LENGTH OF STAY ABROAD

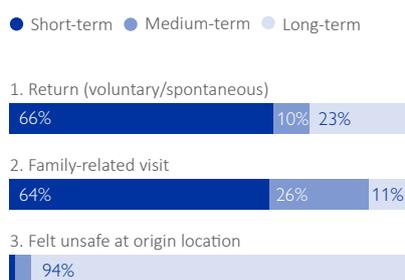
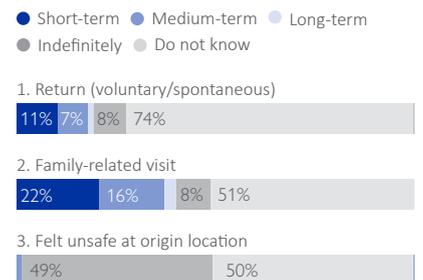


CHART 10: TOP 3 REASONS - PLANNED LENGTH OF STAY



<sup>1</sup> Border Consortium Appeal. Danish Refugee Council, International Organization for Migration, Norwegian Refugee Council, et al. 8 November 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/border-consortium-appeal>  
<sup>2</sup> Pakistan: Government must stop ignoring global calls to halt unlawful deportation of Afghan refugees. Amnesty International. 4 April 2024. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/pakistan-government-must-halt-deportation-of-afghan-refugees/>

TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

Incoming respondents from Pakistan were fairly split between holding and not holding a valid Pakistan visa. A little over half were carrying valid visas (52%), while four per cent were carrying expired ones, and 44 per cent carried none at all. The passport situation was similar, with 57 per cent holding a valid passport and 42 per cent not. Like the findings among those coming from the Islamic Republic of Iran, longer-term stays abroad were correlated with lower ownership of valid travel documentations. Specifically, nearly all respondents who had stayed in Pakistan long-term did not carry visas (94%), while the same demographic accounted for 83 per cent of those who stayed medium-term and 21 per cent of those who stayed short-term. Incoming Afghan nationals from Pakistan without a passport or visa are largely part of two groups<sup>1</sup>: completely undocumented, meaning they hold no official documentation whatsoever, and those in possession of official residence or registration documents, like a Proof of Registration (PoR) card or an Afghan Citizen Card (ACC).<sup>2</sup> Visa holders appeared to participate more frequently in short-term movements across the border, with 24 per cent intending to stay for less than three months in Afghanistan (compared to 10% among non-visa holders). Only one per cent of visa holders planned to stay in Afghanistan indefinitely, compared to 14 per cent of non-visa holders.

The majority of those who moved for reasons related to deportation (98%), feeling unsafe at their place of stay in Pakistan (95%), and health reasons (93%) did not have a passport, and similar percentages did not have visas. In the case of those moving because of deportation, it is likely they are completely undocumented, hence being deported. Those moving for health reasons were concentrated at Ghulam Khan border point (see "Destinations in Afghanistan" on page 9), and are likely part of circular movements for medical traveling, for which Pakistan is the most popular destination for Afghans.<sup>3</sup> Those returning because they felt unsafe in Pakistan, on the other hand, may be undocumented or may have an official residence or registration card, like the PoR or ACC. Their reasons for feeling unsafe could have been tied to general security concerns or feeling pressured by Pakistan's IFRP, regardless of documentation status. Percentages without visas were lower among those traveling for economic reasons (56%), family-related visits (44%), voluntary or spontaneous return (42%), and events/tourism (33%). Individuals with travel documentation were likely traveling on tourist or work visas.

Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to hold passports, visas, and Afghan identification cards (Tazkiras).

CHART 11: PERCENTAGE WITH VALID VISAS BY LENGTH OF STAY ABROAD AND PLANNED LENGTH OF STAY

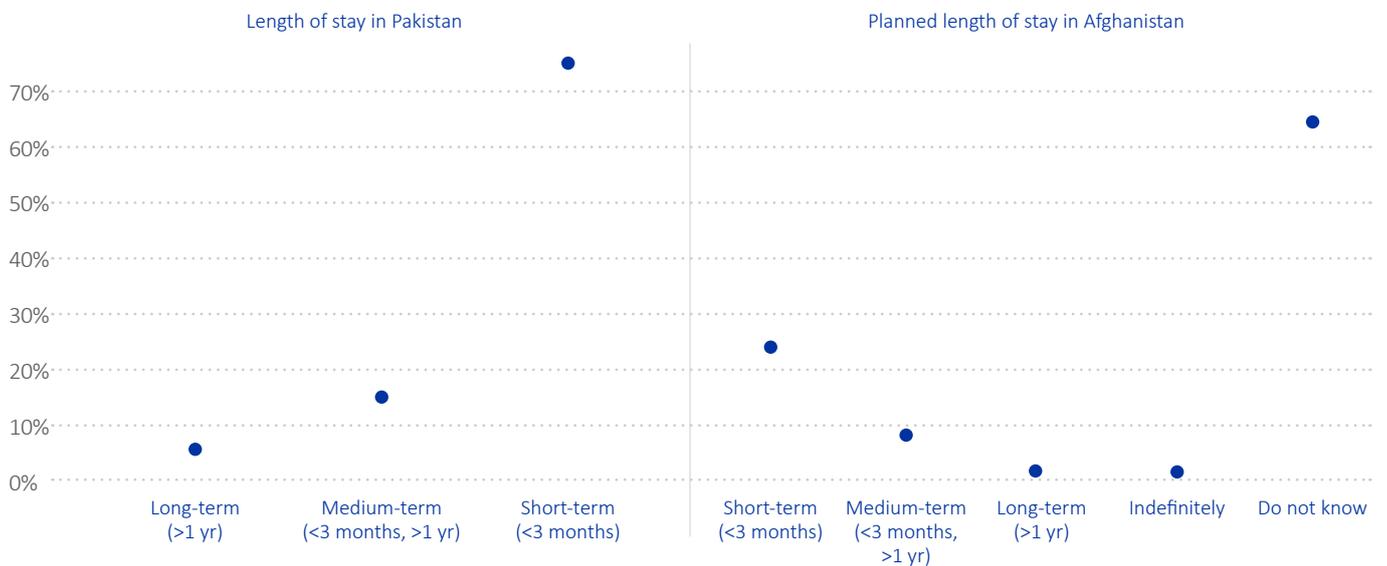


TABLE 6: DOCUMENTATION BY SEX OF RESPONDENTS

|        | HAS A VALID PASSPORT | HAS A VALID VISA | HAS A VALID TAZKIRA |
|--------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| FEMALE | 37%                  | 34%              | 63%                 |
| MALE   | 63%                  | 57%              | 82%                 |

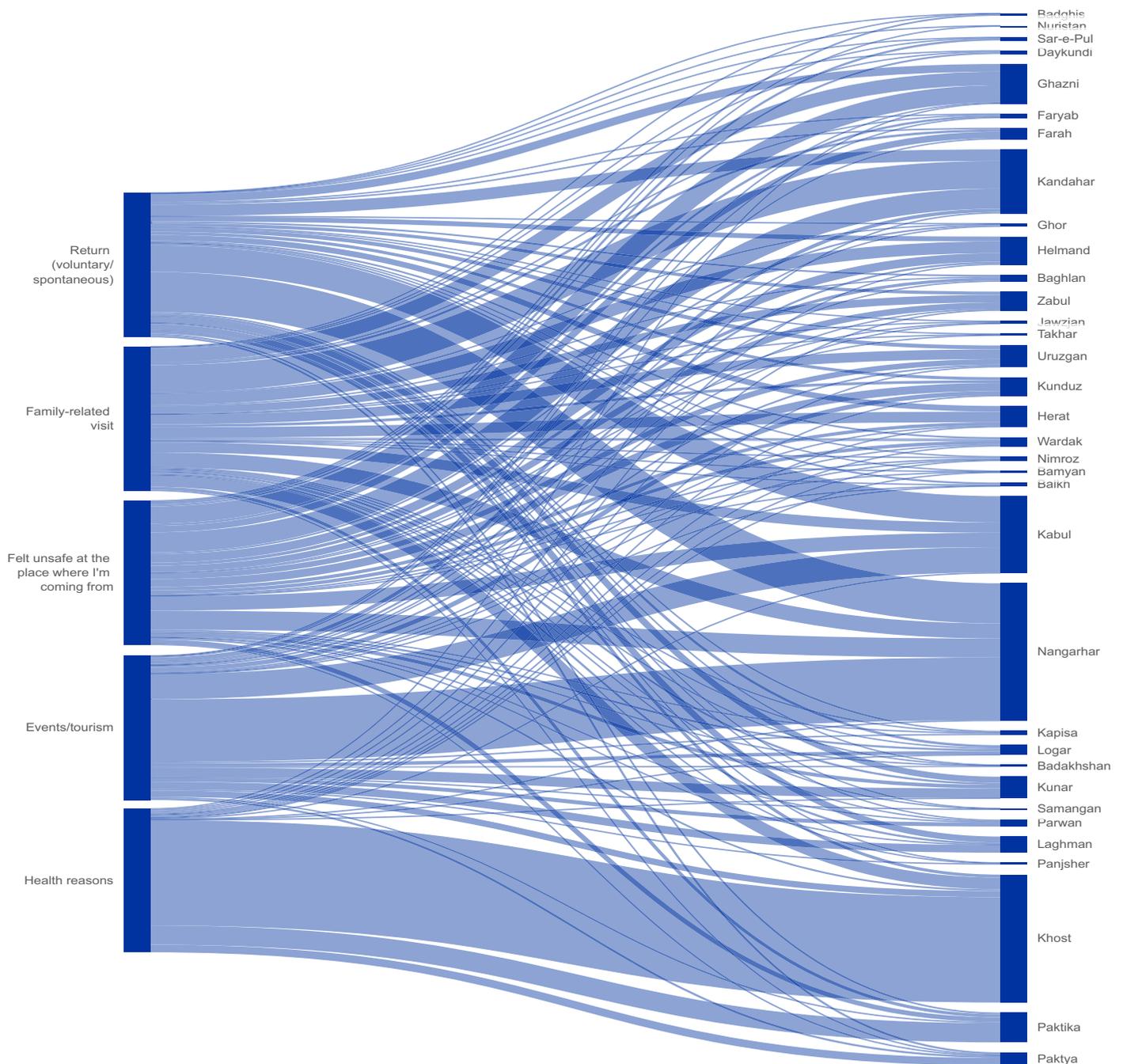
1 At some border crossings, children under 7 years old who are accompanied by other adult family members are permitted to cross without documentation.  
2 The profiles of individuals with these and other documentation types will be further explored in future rounds of Flow Monitoring data collection and analysis.  
3 Hakimi, Hameed and Dr. Price, Gareth. Reconnecting Afghanistan: Lessons from Cross-Border Engagement. Chatham House. 8 July 2019.

DESTINATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

The primary destinations among surveyed individuals coming from Pakistan are Nangarhar, Khost, and Kandahar, which can be attributed mainly to these provinces being where Torkham, Ghulam Khan, and Spin Boldak border points are located, respectively. Among all three, however, those crossing at Kandahar have the most diverse destination locations, with a quarter going to Kandahar but 14 per cent going to Ghazni, 10 per cent to Helmand, and 9 per cent to Herat. Much of the respondent flow at Torkham goes towards Nangarhar (42%) and Kabul (24%), while three-quarters of those entering at Ghulam Khan stay in Khost and 19 per cent go to Paktika. Unlike at the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran, visa and non-visa

holders saw a relatively similar level of variety in their intended destinations, with any differences being mainly determined by which border crossing point they were using. Border crossing location appeared to be an indicative factor regarding intended destination in Afghanistan. For example, the majority of those going through Ghulam Khan, regardless of their reason for movement, intended to stay in Khost. See the chart below, where most individuals travelling for health reasons are going towards Khost; 93 per cent of health-related travel went through Ghulam Khan.

CHART 12: DESTINATION PROVINCES BY REASONS FOR MOVEMENT





**OUTFLOWS**

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 10,491

MALE RESPONDENTS: 78%

FEMALE RESPONDENTS: 22%

**REASONS FOR MOVEMENT**

Reasons for movement among individuals leaving Afghanistan to Pakistan were mainly health reasons (55%) and family-related visits (44%), with smaller percentages also dedicated to economic reasons (12%), events/tourism (10%) and traveling to the place of residence (7%). Pakistan is considered one of the most popular destinations for Afghan medical travelers despite higher costs for treatment. In particular, the Pakistani city of Peshawar across from Nangarhar province, which hosts a large number of Afghan diaspora after the Soviet invasion in 1979, sees high volumes of Afghans seeking medical treatment.<sup>1</sup> The diaspora, which is currently estimated at 3.7 million Afghan nationals in Pakistan, is a main driver for family-related visits.<sup>2</sup> All respondents interviewed at the border with Pakistan reported their final destination as Pakistan; no one indicated intention to travel to a third country.

The average age among outgoing individuals was 33 years old, relatively close to that of incoming individuals. Nearly all (99%) male respondents leaving for economic reasons were adults younger than 60 years old, while 17 per cent of female respondents leaving for the same reason were under 18 years old. Respondents crossing the border for other reasons saw similar proportions between male and female ages.

Discrepancies between male and female respondents and their reasons for migration were more apparent among outgoing migrants compared to incoming ones. Similarly to those leaving Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, female respondents leaving to Pakistan were more likely to be traveling for family related reasons (55%) compared to male respondents (41%), while male respondents constituted almost the entirety of the respondent cohort traveling for economic reasons (96%). Half of respondents had never left Afghanistan prior to being

interviewed (51%). This proportion stayed relatively consistent among respondents going for different reasons, with only those traveling for events/tourism and those traveling to their country of residence (moving to Pakistan, in this case) being slightly less likely to have left the country before (43% and 29%, respectively). Regardless of their reason for movement, most students, workers, medical tourists, and family visitors intended to stay in Pakistan for less than three months, emphasizing the frequency of short-term movements around the Pakistan border compared to the Iranian.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION**

In contrast to incoming individuals, most individuals leaving for Pakistan reported holding a passport and visa (87%). Three-quarters (72%) of those not carrying a visa crossed at Ghulam Khan, an informal border point.

CHART 13: TOP 3 REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

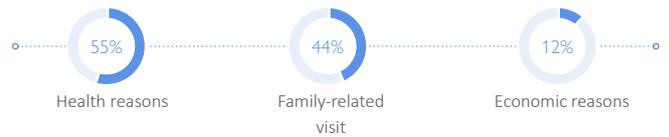


CHART 14: TOP 3 REASONS - PLANNED LENGTH OF A STAY

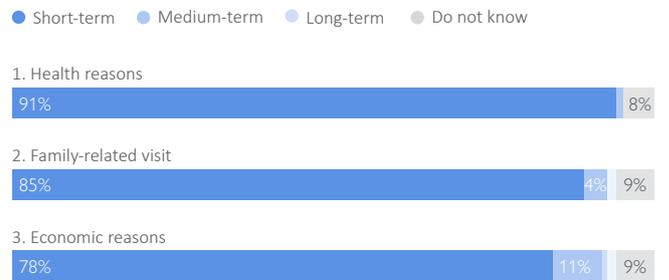


Photo: Spin Boldak border point, Kandahar province. © IOM 2023/Leo TORRETON

1 Hakimi, Hameed and Dr. Price, Gareth. Reconnecting Afghanistan: Lessons from Cross-Border Engagement. Chatham House. 8 July 2019.  
2 Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023. UNHCR.



## MOBILITY DYNAMICS: CONCLUSION

- Short-term movements were more common along the border with Pakistan compared to the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran, suggesting some prevalence of circular movements across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. One demographic who appeared not to participate in short-term movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan, however, were respondents who cited feeling unsafe in Pakistan as their reason for travelling to Afghanistan. Most of these people had stayed in Pakistan for over a year and intended to stay in Afghanistan long-term.
- Reasons for movement among inflows from the Islamic Republic of Iran were primarily deportation, economic reasons, and voluntary or spontaneous return. Among inflows from Pakistan in the first quarter of 2024, they were mainly voluntary or spontaneous return and family-related visits. These reasons align with short-term movements being more common along the border with Pakistan and long-term movements being more common along the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Feeling unsafe at the place of origin was also cited by a fifth of respondents coming from the Islamic Republic of Iran and eight per cent of respondents coming from Pakistan.
- Discrepancies between male and female respondents and their reasons for migration were more apparent among outgoing migrants compared to incoming ones at both borders. Female respondents most often left Afghanistan for health or family-related visits, while male respondents made up almost the entire portion of individuals traveling for economic reasons. This also ties into findings from the FMC exercise, where males dominated the flow at border points with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which FMS data characterizes as more economically motivated.
- Respondents arriving to Afghanistan faced high levels of uncertainty regarding their planned length of stay in the country, with the majority at both borders responding “I do not know” when asked how long they intended to stay in Afghanistan. Intentions may be affected by migration policies in both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan that have seen higher rates of deportation and calls for Afghan nationals to return to Afghanistan. Among those who potentially want to remigrate abroad, planning a timeline for their remigration may be challenging.
- Destination provinces among inflows from the Islamic Republic of Iran and from Pakistan were mainly correlated with the border province in which each respective border point is located (along with Kabul). For example, Herat and Kabul were the most popular destinations among people entering through the Islam Qala border point from the Islamic Republic of Iran, while Nangarhar and Kabul were the primary destinations among those entering through the Torkham border point from Pakistan. The majority of those coming through Ghulam Khan border point planned to stay in Khost province or neighbouring Paktika province. Milak and Spin Boldak border points, however, saw more variety in the intended destinations of respondents. Those at Milak cited Farah, Nimroz, Kunduz, and Kabul as their main destinations, while those at Spin Boldak cited Kandahar, Ghazni, Helmand, and Herat. This also relates to reasons for movement, since certain reasons for inflow movements were more common at specific border points compared to others. For example, economically-motivated travel was more common at Islam Qala and travel for health reasons was more common at Ghulam Khan. As a result, individuals from the former group are more likely to intend to go to Herat, and individuals from the latter to Khost. On the other hand, those who reported feeling unsafe in their origin location as a reason for movement often entered through Spin Boldak and accordingly cited more diverse destination provinces.
- Individuals entering Afghanistan from the Islamic Republic of Iran were less likely to be carrying a passport or visa compared to individuals arriving from Pakistan, though possession of travel documents was significantly more common among individuals leaving Afghanistan compared to those entering.
- Among incoming individuals, possession of a passport a visa was more common among those making short-term movements (staying abroad for less than three months and intending to stay in Afghanistan for less than three months).
- **Expectations:** With plans to repatriate ACC holders having been announced for April 2024, a second surge of inflows from Pakistan is expected within the coming weeks. With more ACC holders returning to Afghanistan, overall profiles of inflows may shift slightly. Deportations from the Islamic Republic of Iran are expected to continue.