UNHCR
ACNUR
La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados

Guatemala

POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING REPORT

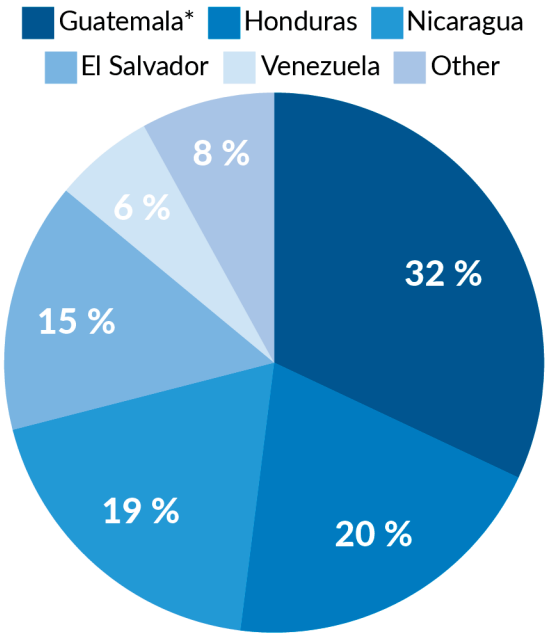
Post-distribution monitoring (PDM) is performed by UNHCR for cash assistance using corporate-defined methodology and tools. This exercise covers various aspects of the programme, including process, implementation, outcomes of cash usage, negative coping mechanisms, protection concerns, and communication/feedback mechanisms. This report covers households that received a CBI payment in the 3rd quarter of 2023.

Cash-Based Interventions in Guatemala

In 2023, UNHCR in Guatemala extended a lifeline of cash assistance to **4,127 individuals** across all **22 departments** of Guatemala. Among the beneficiaries, **755** were **asylum-seekers and refugees**, while **3,372** were **Guatemalans in need of international protection** through the Protection Transfer Arrangement and The Safe Mobility Initiative. **Women** made up **55%** of the beneficiaries, highlighting the critical support extended to female-headed households and vulnerable women. **Men** constituted the remaining **45%**, ensuring a balanced approach to aid distribution. Among families that received assistance, the age composition is as follows: 10% were young children aged 0 to 4, 35% were school-aged children and teenagers between 5 and 17, a majority of 52% were adults aged 18 to 59, and 3% were elderly individuals aged 60 and above. Each beneficiary received an average transfer value of **$510**, covering **65%** of the **Monthly Minimum Expenditure Basket**. Through these cash-based interventions, UNHCR in Guatemala addressed immediate needs and laid the groundwork for a more resilient and hopeful future for thousands of individuals.

Results of Cash Assistance

1. Asylum-Seekers and Refugees

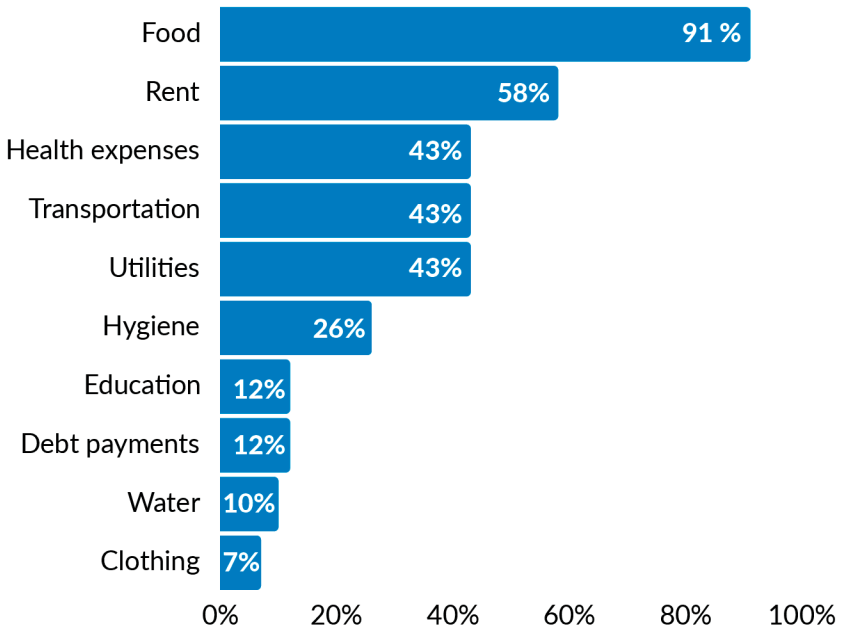


*It is important to note that these individuals are either children or partners of asylum-seekers and refugees who hold Guatemalan nationality.

In 2023, UNHCR in Guatemala's cash-based interventions reached **755 asylum-seekers** and refugees, a group marked by a balance of gender and a wide range of ages. Among these individuals, **51%** were men and **49%** were women, reflecting an almost equal distribution. Among families that received assistance, the age composition is as follows: **9%** were young children aged 0 to 4, **32%** were school-aged children and teenagers between 5 and 17, a significant **55%** were adults aged 18 to 59, and **4%** were elderly individuals aged 60 and above.

1.1 Expenditures

Asylum-seeker and refugee households primarily allocated their funds as follows:



This data highlights the urgent need for targeted assistance and support in food security, health, and efforts geared towards basic needs/rent.

1.2 Markets and Prices

The survey results reveal significant insights into the spending habits and economic impact on beneficiaries.

Among those beneficiaries surveyed, the majority of their assistance was spent on:

59%	55%	41%	2%	8%
Local permanent markets	Supermarkets	Various stores	Temporary markets	Other Types

These figures highlight the different economic activities and the need for specific support to meet the financial needs of these individuals. Their spending patterns show their efforts to integrate into local economies while managing limited resources.

1.3 Risks and problems

The survey results highlight safety and accessibility issues faced by beneficiaries receiving financial assistance. Notably, **14%** felt **unsafe** travelling to, during, or returning from the Financial Service Provider, citing risks of robbery, harassment, or assault. Only **5% felt secure safeguarding** their assistance at home. Importantly, no incidents were reported during the 2023 Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) exercise or throughout the year.

Technical difficulties also posed challenges, with **10%** of beneficiaries facing issues **receiving their assistance.** Common problems included bank staff being unfamiliar with the assistance program or its delivery process (5%) and the registered person for assistance being unavailable (5%). Additionally, **8%** of individuals **needed help accessing their Cash-Based Intervention** (CBI) due to limited mobility, inaccessible locations, lack of transportation funds, difficulty understanding instructions, security concerns, and bank issues (5%).
All individuals reported receiving help from UNHCR staff, bank personnel, family members, or friends.

1.4 Wellbeing

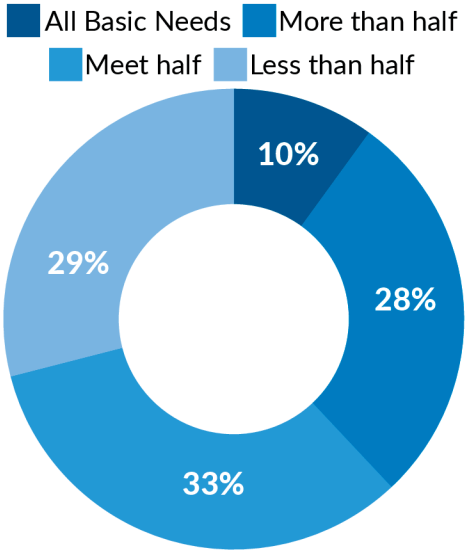
The survey results reveal the positive impact of the assistance programs on beneficiaries' well-being. An impressive **95%** of respondents reported moderate or significant **improvements in their living conditions**, highlighting the effectiveness of the support provided.

Equally important, **89%** of respondents experienced a **stress reduction and the same percentage reported a moderate or significant reduction in the need to resort to risky or harmful activities** to meet their basic needs, including child labor, begging, people engaged in the exchange or sale of sex as a coping mechanism, child marriage, and dangerous work. The reduction underscores the crucial role of assistance programs in providing safer and more sustainable means for beneficiaries to support themselves and their families.

1.5 Meeting Basic Needs

% of what families were able to cover with the assistance

The data underscores the urgent need for sustained and targeted aid to ensure that more individuals can achieve a level of self-sufficiency and security.



1.2 Negative Coping Mechanisms

The most common negative coping mechanisms reported include:

71 % of beneficiaries have had to resort to negative coping mechanisms to meet their basic needs. This alarming statistic highlights the severe impact of economic hardship on vulnerable households.

The prevalence of negative coping mechanisms highlights the difficult circumstances many households face, often leading to negative consequences. In the face of these challenges, households have been forced to make tough decisions to survive.

- 57% of families have had to **cut back** on essential expenses, sacrificing hygiene, water, baby products, health, or education just to meet their basic needs.
- 47% nearly half of the households, have **depleted their savings**, leaving them with no financial cushion for the future.
- 33% of households have **ceased paying rent**, risking eviction, while another 33% have **taken on debt**, potentially trapping them in a cycle of financial instability.
- 22% of families have **sold their livelihoods** or personal belongings, stripping away their means of future income.
- 17% of households have experienced a profound impact on their living conditions, relocating to more affordable housing that is **often less safe or sanitary**.
- 16% of families, even more distressing, have resorted **to begging for money**, a stark indicator of their dire circumstances.

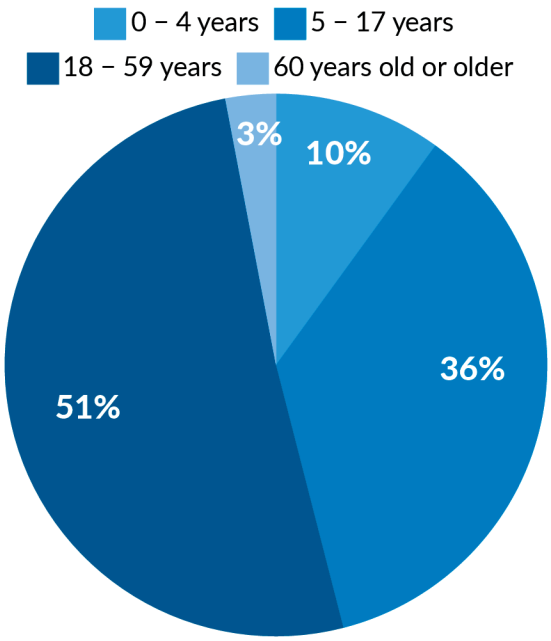
- **14%** of homes have experienced **compromised food security**, having to reduce the quality, quantity, or frequency of their meals, ask for food, or prioritise feeding their children over themselves.
- **7%** have even engaged in risky activities, **participating in survival sex or collecting food scraps to survive**. The strain on family dynamics is evident, as 5% of households have sent family members away to live and work elsewhere.
- **3%** have resorted to **child labor**.

Despite these extreme measures, no households have stopped sending their children to school, highlighting the importance they place on education.

2. Guatemalans in need of international protection

In the past year, the need for international protection for Guatemalans has become increasingly evident. Among the **3,372 individuals** who received cash assistance, **56%** were women and **44%** were **men.** This gender disparity highlights the unique challenges faced by women, such as increased vulnerability to violence, economic instability, and limited access to essential services.

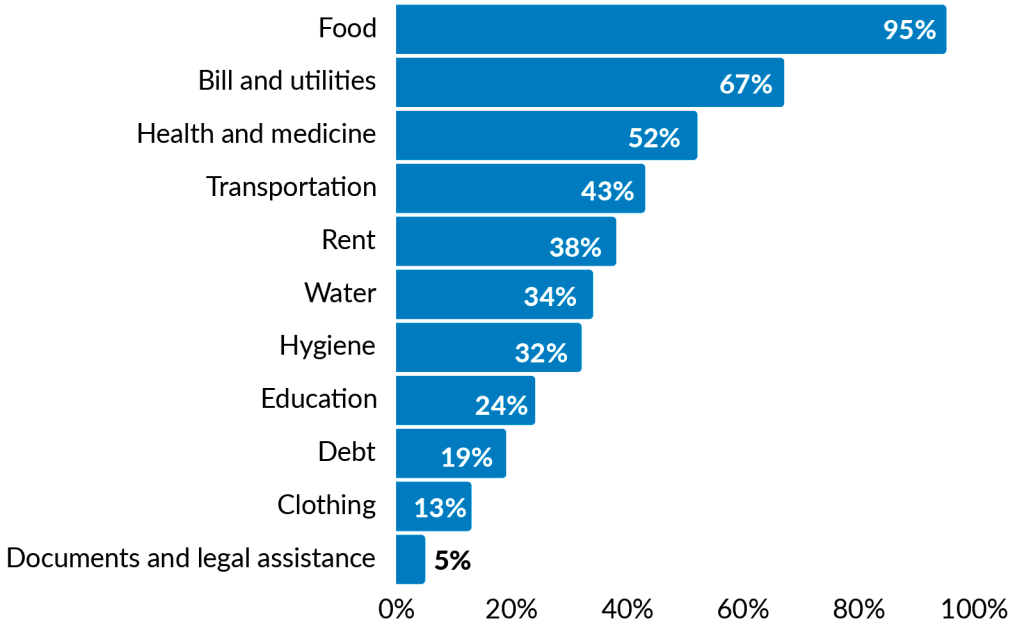
Among families that received assistance, the age composition is as follows:



The high representation of women and children among the beneficiaries underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to address gender-specific vulnerabilities and support the development of young people. Economic hardships faced by working-age adults require comprehensive strategies to improve employment opportunities and economic stability. Ensuring access to healthcare and social services for the elderly is crucial to their protection and quality of life.

2.1 Expenditures

Guatemalans in need of international protection reported allocated their funds as follows:



The data highlight the urgent need for comprehensive support that addresses both immediate survival needs and long-term stability. By understanding the spending patterns of Guatemalans in need of international protection, stakeholders can better tailor their interventions to provide effective and holistic support, ultimately enhancing the well-being and resilience of this vulnerable population.

2.2 Markets and Prices

Among the surveyed Guatemalan beneficiaries, the majority of their assistance was spent on:

78%	58%	18%	6%	16%
Local permanent markets	Supermarkets	Various stores	Temporary markets	Other Types

86% indicated they could always find what they needed, while **7%** mentioned they could find what they needed most of the time, and **5%** couldn't provide an answer since the assistance was used solely to pay for debt or rent. Only **2%** couldn't find what they needed, which was meat, medicine, and baby products.

86% of beneficiaries also reported an increase in products in the 4 weeks before the monitoring exercise.

2.3 Risks and problems

33% reported **feeling unsafe** while traveling to, during, or returning from the Financial Service Provider, due to fears of robbery, harassment, or assault.

6% reported **feeling secure** while safeguarding their assistance at home. No incidents were reported during the 2023 PDM exercise or throughout the year.

41% experienced **technical problems when receiving their assistance**. The most common issues were:

- The bank was unfamiliar with the assistance program or how to deliver it (**32%**) and the registered person for assistance was unavailable (**7%**).
- **15%** of people needed assistance during the process of withdrawing their cash assistance due to: limited mobility (**4%**), inaccessibility of the financial service provider's location (**1%**), and other reasons (**6%**) such as security concerns and bank issues.

All individuals reported receiving help from UNHCR staff, bank personnel, family members, or friends.

2.4 Wellbeing

An overwhelming **98%** of respondents reported moderate or significant improvements in their living conditions, demonstrating the effectiveness of the support provided. Additionally, **96%** of beneficiaries noted a stress reduction, indicating the assistance programs' positive impact on mental health and well-being.

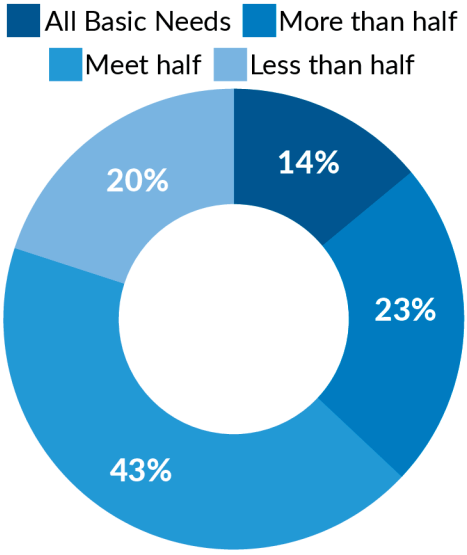
Equally important, **78%** of respondents reported a reduction in the need to resort to risky or harmful activities to meet their basic needs. These activities, which include child labor, begging for food or money, people engaged in the exchange or sale of sex as a coping mechanism, child marriage, and dangerous work, pose severe risks to individuals' safety and dignity. The reduction in such activities highlights the crucial role of assistance programs in providing safer and more sustainable means for beneficiaries to support themselves and their families.

These findings underscore the impact of targeted assistance in improving the quality of life for beneficiaries, reducing stress, and mitigating the need for harmful coping mechanisms. The data clearly illustrates the importance of continued support and intervention to foster a safer, healthier, and more dignified existence for those in need.

1.5 Meeting Basic Needs

% of what families were able to cover with the assistance

These figures show that only 43% of beneficiaries receiving cash assistance can cover their basic needs. This highlights the need for ongoing, targeted aid to help more people become self-sufficient and secure.



1.2 Negative Coping Mechanisms

The most common negative coping mechanisms reported include:

79 % In Guatemala, a significant percentage of beneficiaries have resorted to negative coping mechanisms to navigate their challenging circumstances.

In Guatemala, many families face severe hardships that force them to make difficult and often painful survival decisions.

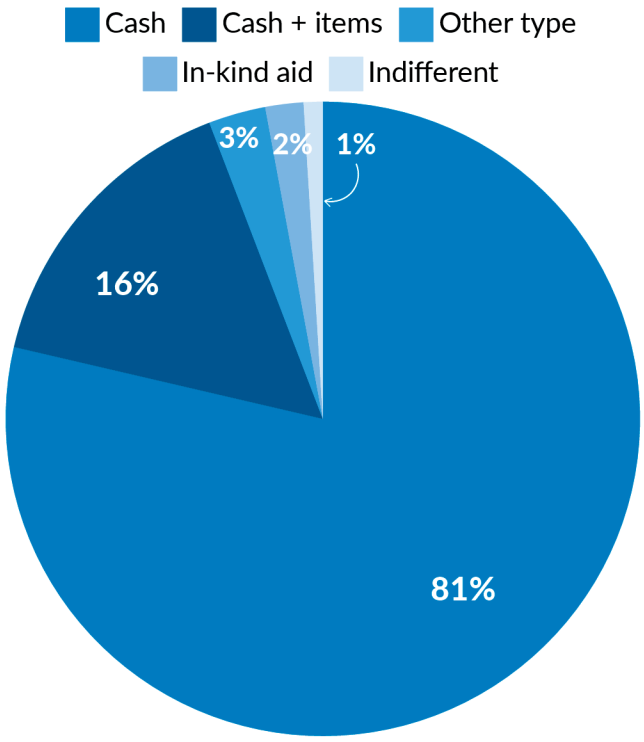
- 52% are forced to **reduce spending on essential items** such as hygiene products, water, baby supplies, health, and education. These sacrifices are made to meet their basic needs.
- 47% of families have had to **deplete their savings**, eroding the financial safety net they once had for emergencies.
- 29% of respondents have resorted to **selling their livelihoods** or personal belongings to generate the necessary funds.
- 23% of the population has **stopped paying rent** in a desperate attempt to reallocate resources, putting their shelter at risk.
- 18% of households have **taken on debt**, borrowing money to make ends meet.
- 18% have relocated to more affordable housing to reduce living costs.
- 2% of the population has turned to **begging** as a last resort.
- 2% of households **rely on their children to contribute financially**.

Accountability to affected persons

The cash assistance program offers two formal **Complaints and Response Mechanisms (CRM)** through a toll-free Banrural hotline (bank used to distribute the cash assistance) and UNHCR's all-purpose hotline.

The latest survey found that **76%** of **beneficiaries** knew how to make complaints or provide feedback about the program, up to **67%** in the previous survey. This improvement reflects a better understanding among beneficiaries of the available channels. Moreover, **98%** felt safe providing complaints or feedback.

The surveyed people have indicated a preference for cash assistance:

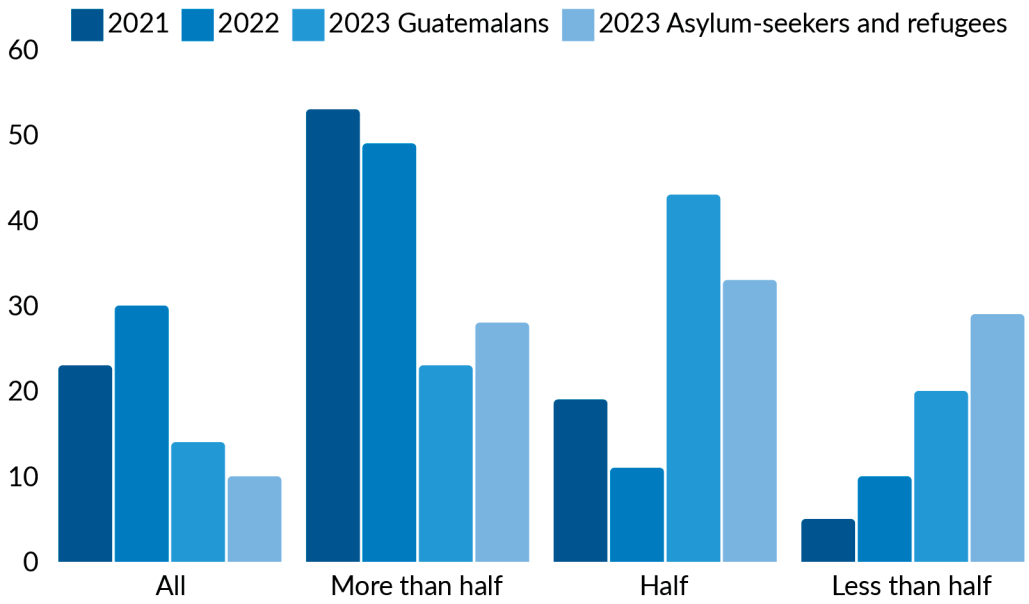


81% of survey respondents preferred cash assistance, while **19%** preferred a combination of cash and other types of aid.

Finally, to prevent misinformation, UNHCR verifies information from other sources and distributes official printed or electronic materials for easy dissemination among the population.

Challenges

Compared to previous years, fewer people were able to fulfil all or more than half of their basic needs, with decreases of **27%** and **24%** respectively. More people can now cover only half of their basic needs, with increases of **27%**, and those who can cover less than half of their needs have increased by **14%**.



A significant portion of beneficiaries resorted to coping mechanisms to meet their basic needs. At least **16%** of asylum-seekers and refugees, and **10%** of Guatemalans used extreme coping mechanisms.

This trend can be explained by the reduced assistance provided. Previously, **100%** of the minimum survival basket was provided, but for 2023, only **65%** of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) was provided due to budgetary constraints and **14%** yearly inflation.

Health-related expenses are also significant, with more than half of Guatemalans and over a third of asylum-seekers and refugees using their assistance for health. This suggests a need for targeted support.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) assessment evaluated two groups: **refugees** and **asylum-seekers**, and **Guatemalans needing international protection**.

The Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) program met its goals, helping most beneficiaries cover at least half of their essential needs, improving living conditions, and reducing stress.

Beneficiaries used the cash for essentials like food, utilities, health, and hygiene, with rent being a major expense for refugees and asylum-seekers. However, recent price increases posed challenges.

The CBI program improved beneficiaries' well-being by meeting basic needs and providing stability. Yet, price hikes risk pushing families to negative coping mechanisms such as cutting essential expenses, using savings, or incurring debt. To sustain positive outcomes, the following recommendations are crucial:

- **Increase Assistance Duration and Transfer Value:** Extend assistance duration and increase transfer value to help beneficiaries cope with rising prices and avoid negative coping mechanisms.
- **Monitor Market Prices:** Regularly monitor market prices to adjust assistance provided and match the cost of living, ensuring beneficiaries can meet their essential needs.
- **Provide Financial Literacy Training:** Offer training on budgeting and financial management to empower beneficiaries to make the most of their cash assistance.
- **Strengthen Community Support Networks:** Encourage the development of community support networks to provide additional resources and emotional support for beneficiaries.

Implementing these recommendations will help the CBI program continue improving the lives of refugees, asylum-seekers, and Guatemalans in need of protection. These actions will enhance the program's ability to provide stability, reduce reliance on harmful coping mechanisms, and foster resilience within these communities.

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