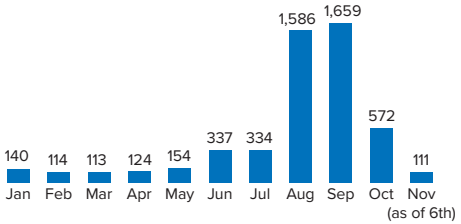
IRAN NEW ARRIVALS FROM AFGHANISTAN

as of 6 November 2021

The situation in Afghanistan remains highly volatile. Over half a million of Afghans have been displaced in their country due to conflict this year alone, while UNHCR in Iran has seen an increase in the number of approaches by newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection in the past months. Most Afghans fleeing to Iran are doing so irregularly through unofficial border crossings and with the help of smugglers, as official borders remain closed for persons without valid passports and visas intending to seek asylum. The actual numbers of new arrivals to Iran are likely to be much higher than presented in this document; different government officials at various times and events have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals may range between 100,000-300,000. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralized registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas. As such, UNHCR is only able to report on newly arrived persons who have reached us through our hotlines and receptions, and is not able to confirm trends and figures. UNHCR has issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan on 16 August, calling on governments to halt the return of Afghans, and continues to call on countries to keep their borders open for Afghans seeking international protection, as well as for resettlement spaces to be allocated to Afghan refugees currently in Iran, with flexible criteria.

5,244

newly arrived heads of household approached UNHCR (on behalf of 21,389 individuals)[1]

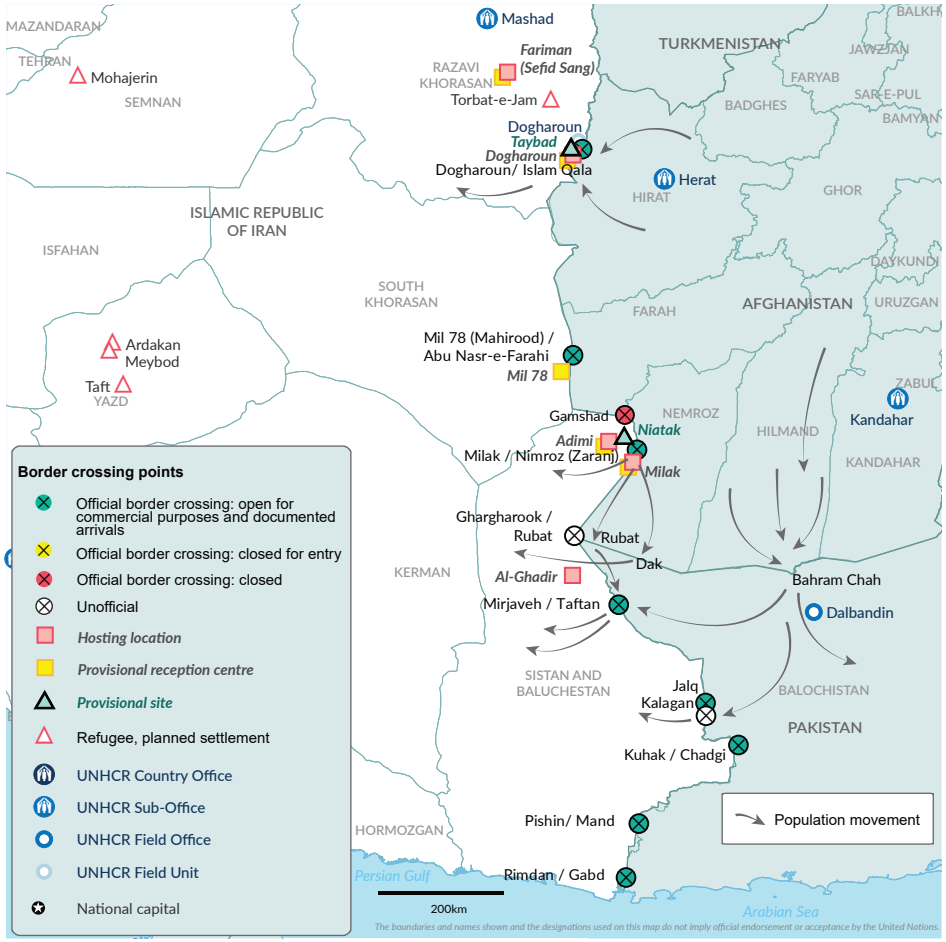


601

out of 3,648 newly arrived individuals remaining in Iran (as officially communicated by BAFIA)[2]

According to official figures shared by the Government of Iran to UNHCR, most of the 3,648 persons have returned to Afghanistan. Of the remaining persons, 101 individuals are currently being held in Al-Ghadir, in Sistan and Baluchistan province; an additional 500 individuals remain in Sefid Sang, in Khorasan Razavi province – this is a decrease from the previously reported 700 by the Government. It remains difficult for UNHCR to receive systematic updates on the number of newly arrived Afghans being held in border areas. Moreover, it remains challenging to ascertain whether the international protection needs of new arrivals are being assessed by the Government, and if so, if the assessment lives up to minimum standards, not to mention whether the reported returns to Afghanistan are indeed voluntary.

MAP OF BORDER CROSSINGS AND PROVISIONAL SITES AS OF 6 NOV



Borders between Iran and Afghanistan remain officially closed for asylum-seekers, with only Afghan passport-holders with valid visas for Iran being allowed into the country. UNHCR calls on countries to keep their borders open for Afghans fleeing their country. UNHCR and other actors are involved in discussions with BAFIA on developing and rehabilitating sites and transit centres in border areas that could host new arrivals from Afghanistan.

PROTECTION SCREENING OF NEWLY ARRIVED FAMILIES (17 AUG - 6 NOV)

1,267

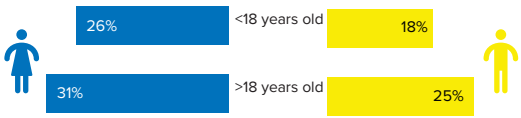
newly arrived heads of household screened (on behalf of 5,100 individuals)[3]

23% are female-headed households. In terms of ethnicity, 41% are Hazaras and 38% are Tajiks. 27% of all arrivals do not have any identity documents, and 21% crossed officially using passports with valid visas. This sample is not representative of all Afghans arriving in Iran, but provides insight into the profiles of new arrivals that are approaching UNHCR.

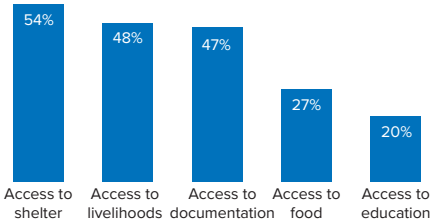
100%

fled due to general security situation and/or specific security threats, 17% fled due to discrimination

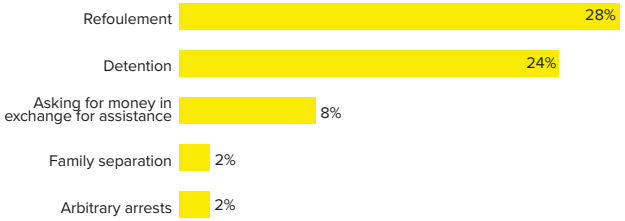
Age/Gender breakdown



Top 5 needs reported in Iran[4]



Top 5 concerns reported by new arrivals in Iran[4]



Sources: UNHCR Iran. Updated: Nov 2021. For more information please contact: Farha Bhoyroo, Communications Officer, bhoyroo@unhcr.org.

1. Number of newly arrived households who approached UNHCR offices since 1 January, from ProGres and daily registration Excel file. 2. Newly arrived people as officially communicated by provincial BAFIAs to each field/sub office. 3. Based on Protection Screening of newly arrived families conducted by UNHCR frontline staff. These 1,267 households screened constitute a sub-section of the 5,244 households who approached UNHCR. 4. These charts are based on multiple choice questions, which may make them add up to more than 100%. 5. Any State conduct leading to the removal or transfer of persons, regardless of their status, to a place where they would be at risk of persecution or other serious human rights violation.