

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Syria


January - December 2022

13,122
refugees


5,529
asylum-seekers

1,020 new individuals
registered
243 individuals recognized
as refugees

Population Demographics


8% of refugees are elderly



44% of refugees are children

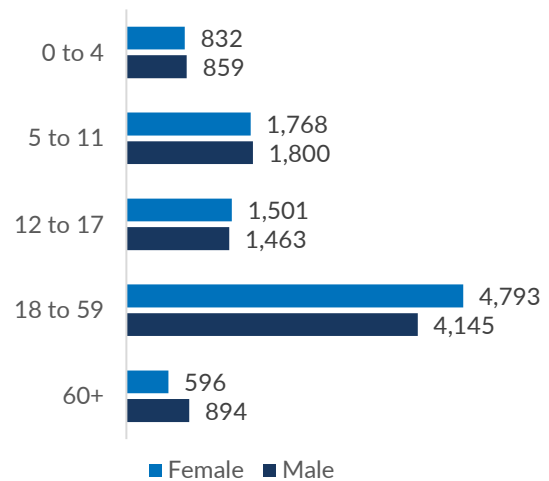


18,651
Total population

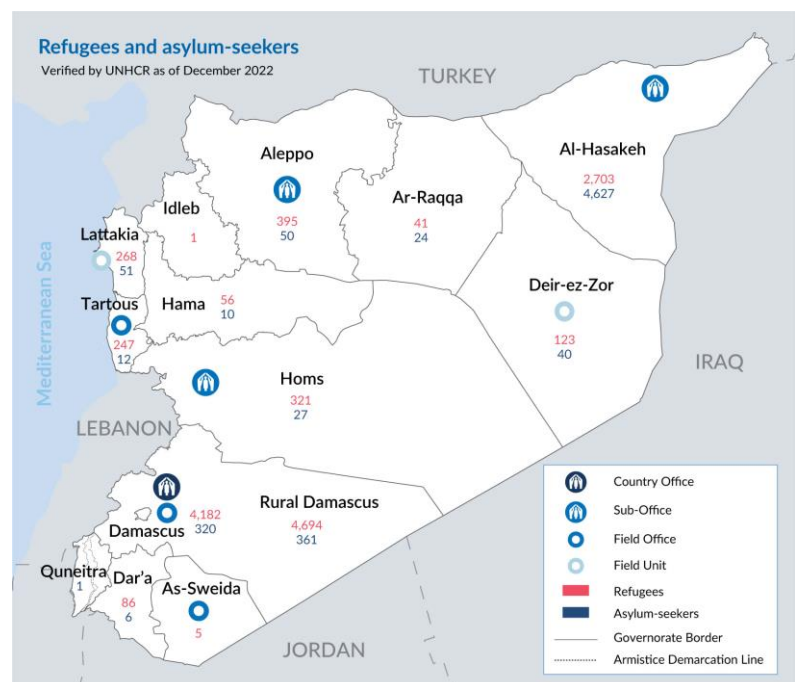
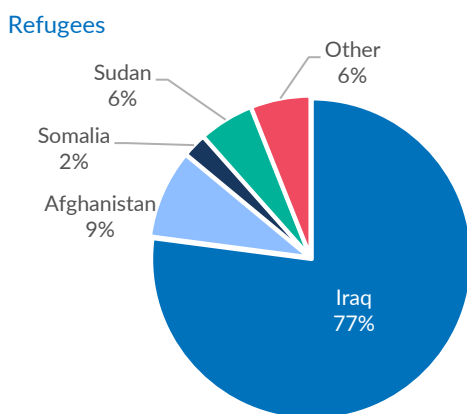


52% of refugees have special needs

Age Distribution



Country of Origin





Registration and Identity Management

Registration of people seeking international protection is critical, as it enables the **early identification of individuals with specific needs** and their **referral to available protection responses**. Additionally, registration provides comprehensive population data needed for programme planning, including for shelter, food, health, water and sanitation, cash-based interventions and other forms of assistance.

UNHCR Syria aligned its refugee biometrics systems with the global UNHCR Biometrics and Identity Management System (BIMS). UNHCR identification cards provided to refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR constitute proof of legal identity, can prevent arbitrary arrest and *refoulement*, and **facilitate greater freedom of movement**. The cards also enable refugees and asylum-seekers to apply for **legal residency, register vital events** (particularly birth registration) and access basic assistance in Syria.

In 2022, UNHCR registered **1,020 new individuals** and issued **16,815 identification cards**. The registration helpline received 11,370 calls in 2022.



Refugee Status Determination

Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is the legal or administrative process by which governments or UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law. RSD is often a **vital process in helping refugees realize their rights under international law**. In agreement with the Government of Syria, UNHCR conducts RSD for asylum-seekers in the country.

In 2022, interviews were conducted for **118 cases (236 individuals)**, **151 cases (356 individuals)** were submitted for review, and **162 cases (376 individuals)** were reviewed. Decisions were taken for **156 cases (359 individuals)**, out of which **102 cases (243 individuals)** were recognized as refugees, and **53 cases (115 individuals)** were rejected, while **one case (one individual)** had their refugee status maintained after cessation procedures.

An **RSD helpline** is fully operational, providing counselling on the process and status to asylum-seekers and refugees on their individual cases. In 2022, the RSD helpline received over **560** calls relating primarily to the status of individual cases and requests for cash assistance.



Resettlement

UNHCR Syria identifies and submits a few cases for resettlement including highly vulnerable refugees. In 2022, **22** refugees were submitted to resettlement countries under the unallocated quota. **Five** refugees were accepted to four countries. In addition, UNHCR facilitated the departure of **40** individuals under resettlement, privately sponsored refugee programmes and humanitarian visas.

As many refugees are keen on resettlement, although resettlement opportunities remain very limited, the resettlement hotline offers regular counselling to refugees, providing accurate information on the status of individual cases and trying to manage expectations. In 2022, a total of **1,001 individuals** were counselled about their resettlement cases.

 **Community-based protection**

As of end-2022, there were **127** UNHCR-supported **community centres**, of which **two** centres were established and implemented under the leadership of the community groups and located in north-east Syria, where many refugees and asylum seekers reside. UNHCR-supported community centres are designed as a “one-stop shop” which is critical to reach to the people in need, particularly in remote areas where availability of services is scarce. Moreover, community centres cooperate with other facilities and service providers to ensure complementarity in service provision. Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to all UNHCR-supported community centres and can benefit from a wide variety of protection interventions.

UNHCR also engages **113** **refugee outreach volunteers** (RORVs) of different nationalities in Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Latakia and Tartous Governorates. The RORVs promote community engagement and empower youth to design and lead community-based projects. Additionally, through follow-ups and home visits, the volunteers identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable households either directly or through referrals to community centres, other service providers including charity and local organizations or government entities.

 **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**

During the reporting period, **571** refugees and asylum-seekers received **mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS)**, including individual and group counselling, with a smaller number referred to specialized mental health services such as psychiatrists and psychotherapists.

A total of **65** persons with disabilities and **184** older persons received services and support from home-based programmes that enhance their independence, provide them with household services, and connect them with activities organised at community centres such as educational and social/recreational activities.

UNHCR distributed medical and general in-kind assistance to **1,704** refugees and asylum-seekers, for instance wheelchairs and hearing aids, to help restore their sense of dignity, prevent harmful coping mechanisms, and reduce the financial burden on them and their caregivers.

UNHCR has identified the lack of adult diapers as one of the most pressing needs, with high numbers of marginalized older persons and persons with disabilities requesting support. In 2022, UNHCR distributed adult diapers to **602** refugees and asylum-seekers.

 **Child Protection**

UNHCR and partners conducted **253** awareness-raising sessions in Damascus as well as in Al-Hol camp and Tel Hamees in Al-Hasakeh Governorate targeting **5,825** refugee children and their caregivers. The awareness sessions covered topics on various child protection risks. As a result of the awareness raising sessions, a positive impact was observed on the children’s capacities and skillsets, especially in areas where there is a lack of schools.

Seven refugee and asylum-seeking children clubs and child welfare committees were established in Damascus, Al-Hol camp and Tal Hamees in Al-Hasakeh Governorate. The members of the child welfare committees and children’s clubs received several trainings,

including on their role in the communities as well as child protection basics and referral mechanisms.

A total of **410** refugee and asylum-seeking children received tailored case management services. The main identified risks in north-east Syria were child labour, child neglect, and child maltreatment. In Damascus the top risks were school drop-out and lack of documentation. Consequently, of the provided services, positive improvements on the children's daily life, relationships with their families, friends at home and school, and psychosocial well-being were observed.



Gender-based violence

Since the beginning of 2022, UNHCR and partners identified and supported **226** refugee and asylum-seeker survivors of **gender-based violence (GBV)** with psychosocial services, livelihood opportunities, legal aid and material assistance. Outreach volunteers helped link the survivors with support networks within their communities.

Additionally, UNHCR conducted **288** GBV awareness sessions on psychological violence, deprivation of resources, opportunities and services, child marriage, sexual harassment, and physical violence, targeting **5,650** adolescent and adult women in Rural Damascus as well as in Al-Hol camp and Tal Hamees in Al-Hasakeh Governorate where a large number of refugee communities are located. As a result of the awareness-raising sessions on behavioural change, higher levels of awareness and implementation of prevention measures designed by the communities were observed.

UNHCR distributed risk reduction kits (including hygiene materials and other items), which enhanced the dignity of the beneficiaries and provided them with essential items necessary for their safety and personal hygiene. UNHCR distributed **1,200** risk reduction kits in 2022.

In 2022, **two** refugee **women's committees** were established in north-east Syria to enhance the role of women in decision-making and designing activities inside refugee camps.



Cash assistance

Cash assistance continues to be the most efficient and dignified way to allow the people under UNHCR's mandate to meet their basic needs, especially in the prevailing economic situation. In 2022, cash assistance to refugees was provided in the form of multi-purpose cash grants (MPCG), winterization cash assistance, education grants, and exceptional financial assistance (for urgent and unforeseen protection needs). MPCG targeted refugee families who were prioritized based on demographics and specific needs, while winterization cash assistance targeted both refugees and asylum-seekers. The assistance was provided in cash over the counter.

In 2022, **monthly multi-purpose cash grants** were provided to **4,610** households (**12,854 individuals**). In addition, **3,287** refugee children (**1,569 households**) aged between 5 to 18 benefitted from the one-time education grant. A total of **6,055** households (**17,059 individuals**) including both refugees and asylum-seekers received winterization cash assistance.



Legal Assistance

Lack of identity and travel documents, irregular status, and limited knowledge on national legislation and procedures are the main legal challenges encountered by refugees and asylum-seekers in Syria, affecting their ability to secure residency and register vital events, as well as limiting their freedom of movement and access to basic rights and services.

In response to some of these challenges, UNHCR provides **legal assistance** on a range of issues such as *refoulement*, civil documentation, registration of vital events (particularly birth registration), exit visas, prevention and response to GBV, and child protection issues.

The legal assistance includes counselling and support for legal interventions before courts and administrative bodies as well as awareness raising activities conducted either through direct sessions or printed materials to disseminate information and raise the awareness of refugees and asylum-seekers on the applicable laws and procedures. In this regard, UNHCR updated and disseminated a brochure on residency in Syria to raise awareness on Law No. 12/2022 issued in March 2022. This law amended the Residency Law No. 2/2014, regulating the residency and entry of non-Syrians to Syria, and increasing the fees of residency permits in Syria as well as the imposed fines for exceeding the period of the residency permit.

In total during 2022, **4,892** refugees and asylum-seekers benefitted from UNHCR legal assistance programmes.

Legal advocacy

On 21 December 2022, **Legislative Decree 24/2022** was issued granting a general amnesty for some crimes committed prior to the date of issuance. The amnesty waived penalties for some military service crimes, misdemeanours and offences. However, many crimes as well as certain penalties of financial nature were excluded. In response, UNHCR is advocating with the Directorate of Civil Affairs and the Directorate of Immigration and Passports to waive fines through the scope of this amnesty related to the delayed registration of vital events, for both Syrians and refugees inside Syria.