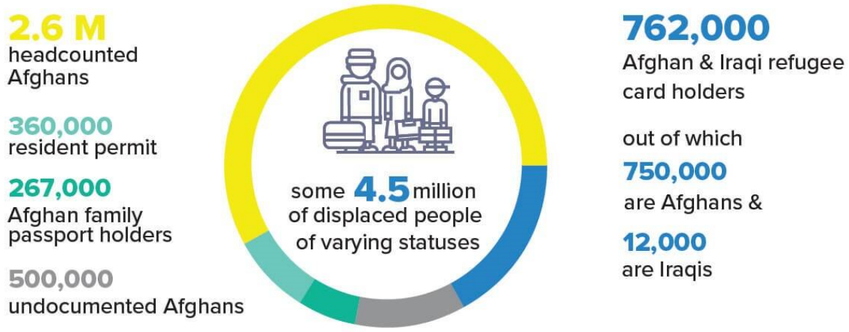
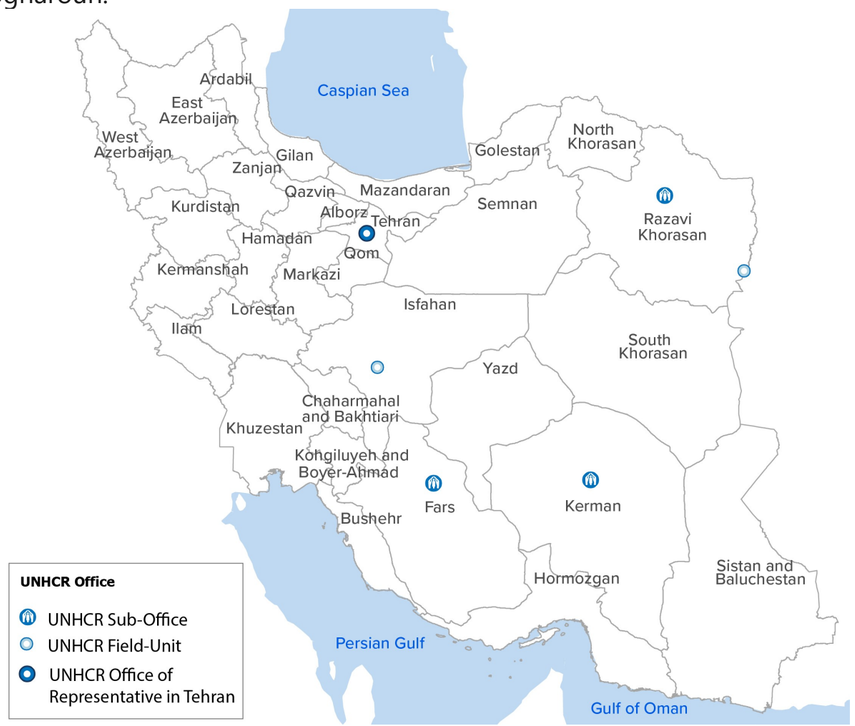
Protection Achievements - Jan to Sep 2023

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosts the largest refugee population globally (alongside Türkiye) predominantly comprised of Afghan refugees but also Iraqi refugees. Since 1984, UNHCR has worked closely with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, national and international NGO's and UN agencies providing a multitude of services to asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless persons in Iran. There is an undetermined number of stateless persons in Iran whom UNHCR continues to strive to find solutions for their situation.



The Islamic Republic of Iran acceded to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol on 28 July 1976 and cooperates with UNHCR to facilitate its duty of supervising the application of the provisions of the 1951 Convention. UNHCR opened its first office in Iran in 1984 and has since maintained an uninterrupted field presence countrywide in coordination and cooperation with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR's central country office is based in Tehran along with Tehran's field office. Three sub-offices are located in Mashhad, Kerman and Shiraz and two field units are located in both Esfahan and Dogharoun.



As part of its protection mandate, UNHCR continues to advocate for an open and accessible asylum system for all Afghans in Iran and for the extension of temporary protection and documentation schemes to Afghans unwilling or unable to return, in particular those most at risk.
Since August 2021, UNHCR has maintained a non-return advisory for Afghanistan calling for a halt on forced returns of Afghan nationals. This advisory was reaffirmed in February 2023 in the Guidance Note on International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan (Update 1).
In Iran, UNHCR provides protection through the provision of legal assistance, communicating with communities through helplines and receptions centers, cash-based interventions, psycho-social support, gender-based violence prevention and response services, child protection services, facilitation of voluntary repatriation and other durable solutions.

Achievements

51,141	**new individuals recorded in proGres database**
439,223	**users visited the Help website**
2,875	**requests received and processed through the protection mailbox**
522	**children were assisted**
8,149	**households received cash**
930	**individuals received psychosocial support**
8,426	**received legal support (combined both UHL and DSC)**
418	**who voluntarily repatriated**
3,114	**individuals submitted for resettlement**

For more information please contact **Patricia Delis-Gomez** at delis@unhcr.org.

Reception Activities - Jan to Sep 2023

UNHCR's reception and counseling facilities provide an accessible and easy way for refugees and asylum seekers in need to connect with UNHCR and receive assistance for any challenges impacting their lives. In Iran, these facilities go above and beyond by offering counseling services, identifying cases, and referrals, as well as hosting information-sharing sessions and focus group discussions as required. These facilities are instrumental in ensuring the safety and protection of asylum seekers and refugees, as they continually monitor their concerns and priorities, leveraging their feedback to enhance the UNHCR program and provide the best possible support.

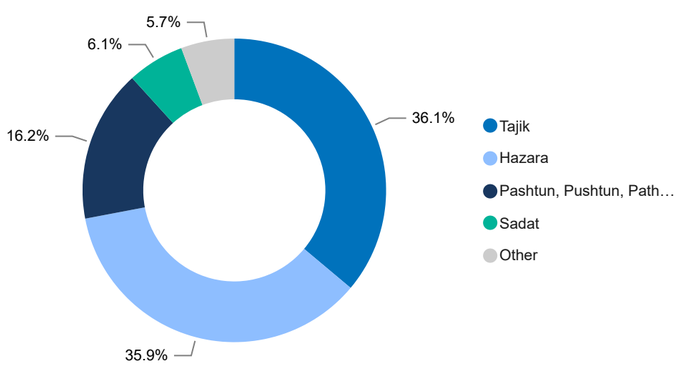
Number of households recorded

11,349

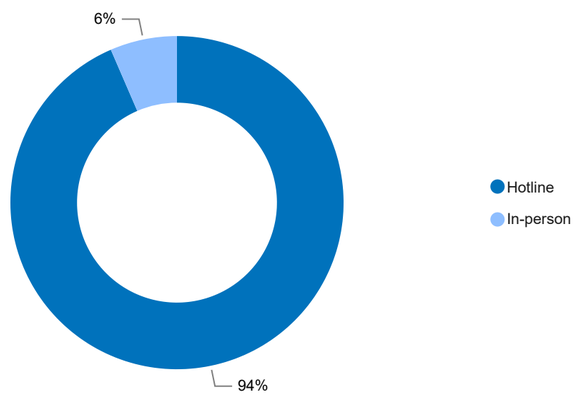
Number of individuals recorded

51,141

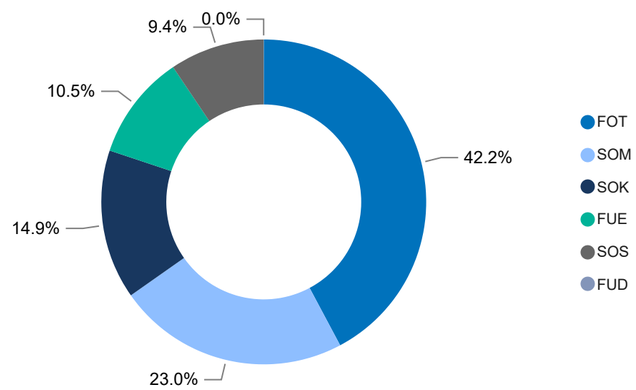
Ethnicity disaggregation (top 5)



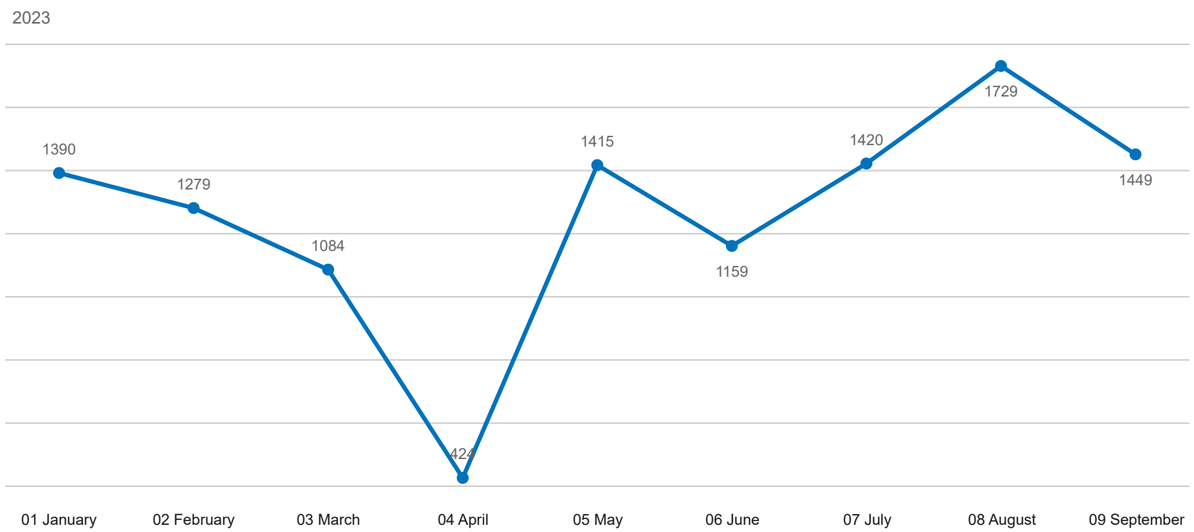
Hotline vs. in-person



Records by office

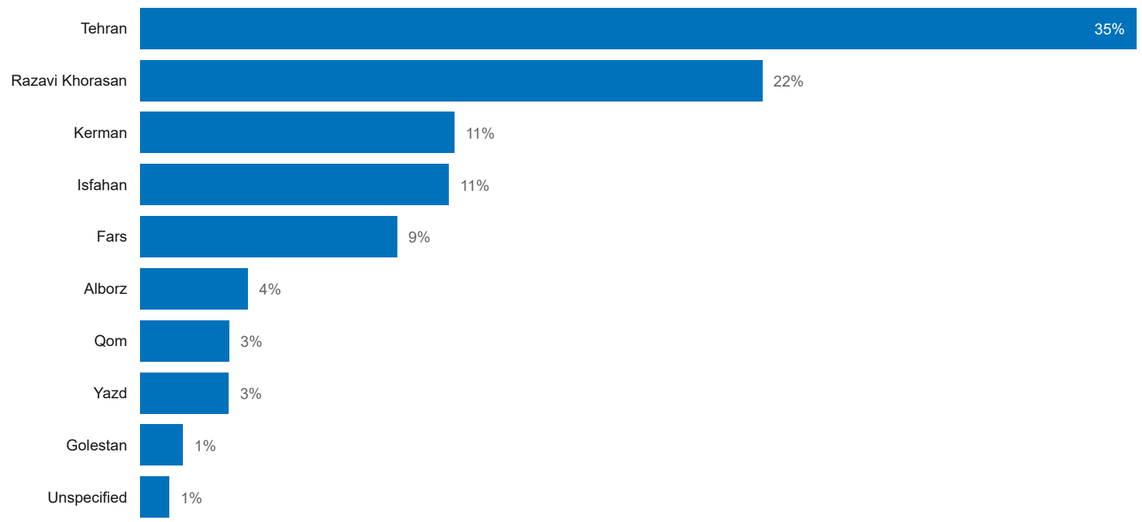


Records by month



Note: April 2023, proGres Cloud downtime period thus no "reception" records were created.

Reception records by province (top 10)



For more information please contact **Parisa Masjedi** at masjedi@unhcr.org.

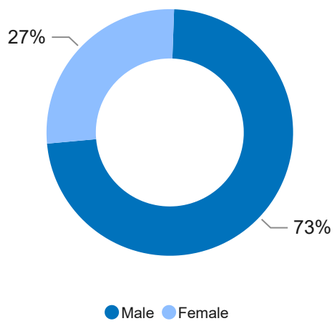
The Community-Based Protection (CBP) aims to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are empowered to attain their rights safely and with dignity. This approach involves meaningful consulting and involving these communities in all programs that affect them, giving them a leading role in change. Therefore, UNHCR ensures that CBP is integrated in all phases of humanitarian response programs in a systematic and continuous way as analysts, evaluators, and implementers for their own protection, thereby ensuring adherence to the principle of Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD), Do-No Harm (DNH), and Accountability to the affected population (AAP).

Help website analytics

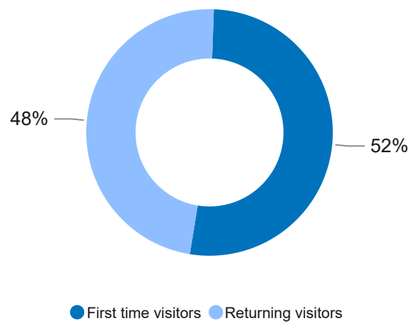
439,223
users visited the Help website

Since the launch in August 2021, 912,477 users visited it, with the Arrival page receiving the highest views (14%). 439,223 users visited from January to September of 2023, which shows a 43% increase in the number of visits compared to the same period last year (305,985). The announcement on the latest news page was the most visited post on the website during this period.

Visitors' gender



Returning vs. new visitors



Communications

103,648 communications were made by CBP colleagues, of which **10,070** were the result of in-person communications while **93,578** were made by other means including voice calls, and email.

Cash based intervention

CBP staff conducted **11,193** CBI assessment interviews and filled prioritized vulnerability scorecards. Based on the assessments conducted, cases that met the criteria were provided assistance; **8,149** cases under multi-purpose cash, cash for protection, and for disability relief items.

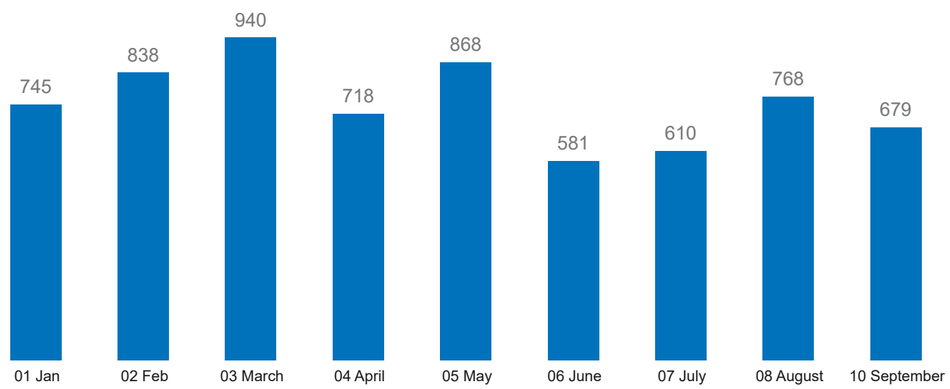
Distributed items

24,940 items including sanitary materials, masks, walkers, hygiene packs and stationary were distributed for different health and hygiene purposes.

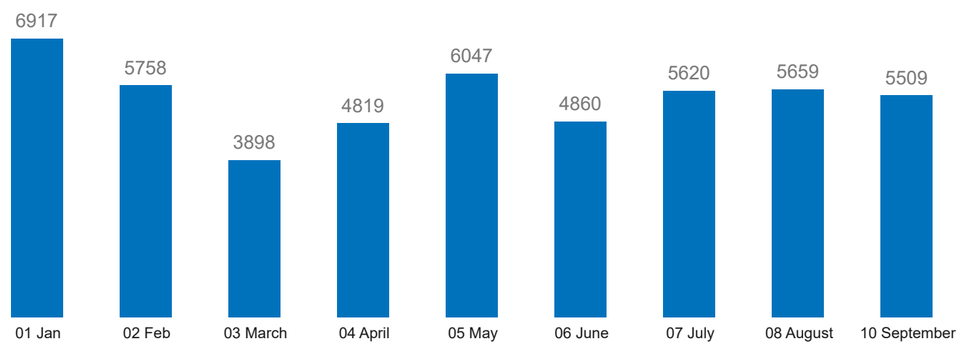
Group counseling at the reception center

49,087
refugees and asylum seekers received counselling through 6,747 sessions by UNHCR CBP staff.

Group counseling sessions by month



Individual refugees/asylum seekers reached out through group counselling



Correspondence received through Protection Mailbox

Awareness raising sessions by offices

Refugees/asylum seekers benefited from awareness raising sessions

The Support desk

Established at the Persian Gulf center, in collaboration with BAFIA, is now fully operational at the field office in Tehran. With UNHCR's presence twice a week, we are able to conduct outreach activities and reach out to the refugee population. Our main objective is to identify vulnerable protection cases and refer them for the necessary action, whether within UNHCR or through BAFIA. Since May until September, we have already reached out to 1606 individuals through the UNHCR support desk services.

Awareness raising sessions

During the reporting period different awareness sessions were conducted by offices to ensure that refugees are well informed and sensitized on the issues such as sensitization on their rights and responsibilities in the country of asylum, parenting skills, adolescent life skills awareness raising session, improve up social-emotional skills focusing on anger control, aggression, and high-risk behaviors during adolescence, importance of education for women and young girls, amongst others.

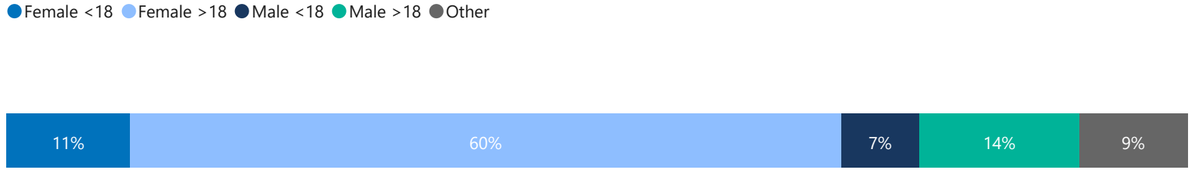
Capacity-building for staff

During the reporting period the Protection Unit conducted 16 capacity building and training sessions throughout the country. The topics covered included Community-Based Protection (CBP), Communication with Communities (CWC), Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Sexual Harassment (SH), Accountability to Affected Population (AAP), Registration, Legal matters, Enrolment for solution, Interviewing techniques, Training for Reception SOP (TOT), Protection of LGBTQI+ and more.

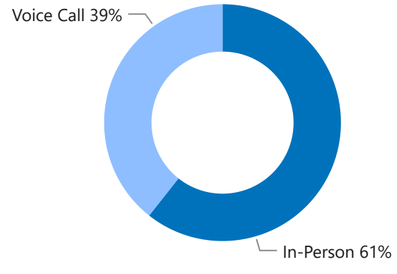
Psycho-social counselling

The 5 psycho-social counsellors hired in UNHCR offices in Iran attended to a total of **930** refugees (**669** woman, **235** men and **106** from other genders), providing a total of **1797** individual counselling sessions and **140** group counselling sessions. In this period, **1126** sessions were held in person, while **823** were online. Priority is given to GBV survivors, resulting in **126** GBV cases received psycho-social counselling. Among those receiving the psycho-social counselling, majority of the sessions were addressing non-clinical issues (**3,165**), such as parenting skills (**284**), communication skills (**509**), and anger management (**183**). Among the clinical issues, the sessions focused on depressive disorder (**966**), anxiety (**827**) and self-harm/suicide (**129**).
Additionally, **492** refugees were referred externally for further follow-up, and **275** were referred internally to UNHCR to receive additional services.

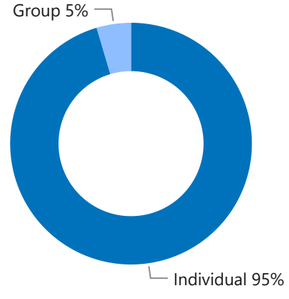
Age and gender breakdown



In-person vs online



Group-counselling vs individual-counselling



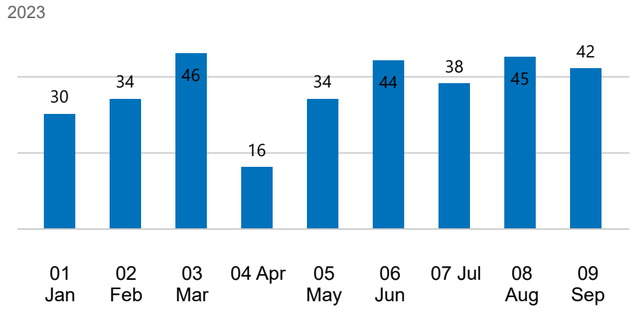
For more information please contact **Suprity Timilsina** at timilsis@unhcr.org.

Child Protection - Jan to Sep 2023

Forced displacement and emergencies can have a devastating impact on children's lives, especially on those who are vulnerable due to their age and social status. UNHCR Iran aims to develop an effective child protection system that can identify and support children at risk. This system's primary objective is to provide non-discriminatory access to adequate and quality services, including comprehensive child protection case management services such as psychosocial support, cash and legal assistance, and durable solutions. The international humanitarian system also recognizes child protection as a life-saving priority and emphasizes the need to establish child protection mechanisms right from the onset of an emergency.

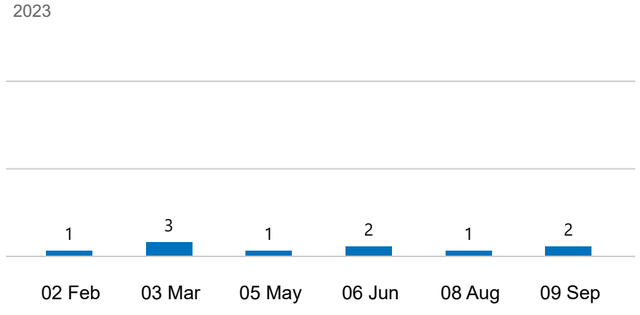
Best interest assessment

329



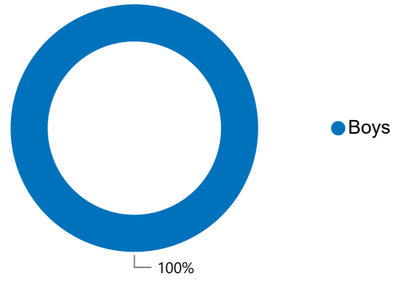
Best interest determination

11



Unaccompanied or separated children

60



Child Protection assistance: Identified children at risk referred and assisted

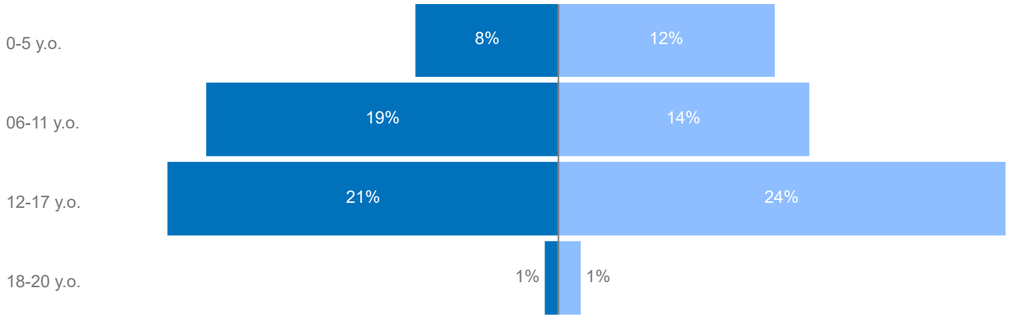
Children assisted

522

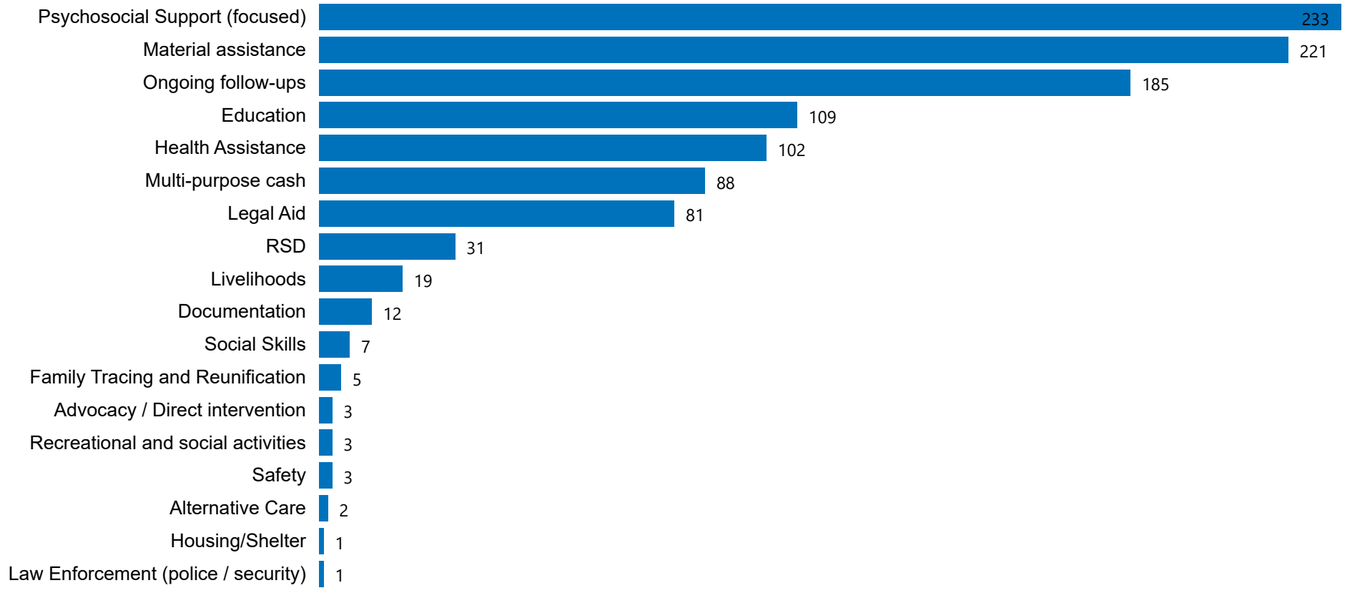
Interventions

1106

Age/gender breakdown of children assisted



Child Protection assistance/interventions



For more information please contact **Marzieh Shafieihanjani** at shafieih@unhcr.org.

Cash Program: All | Office: All | Date: 1/1/2023 – 9/30/2023

IRAN, Islamic Republic of

Cash Based Interventions - Jan to Sep 2023

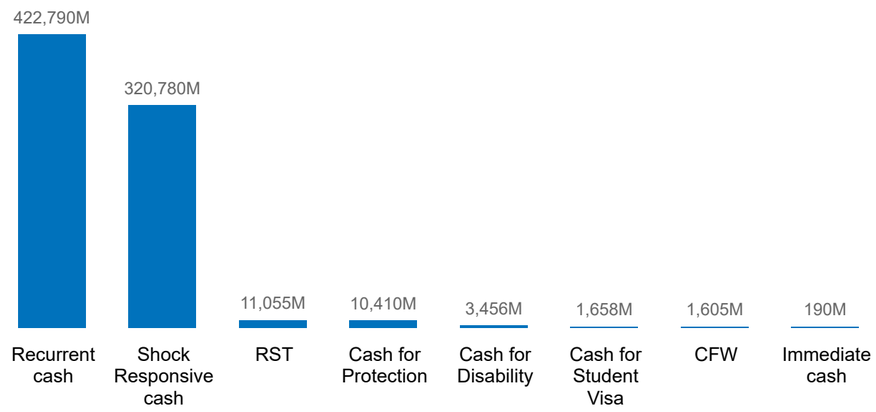
UNHCR utilizes Cash-based Interventions (CBI) to extend protection, assistance, and services to the most vulnerable individuals. CBI employs cash as a means to address both basic necessities like food and shelter, as well as specific needs. This approach offers a higher level of dignity, allowing refugees to promptly prioritize and choose what they require. By implementing CBIs, the displaced population is less likely to resort to harmful coping strategies, including child labor. Furthermore, these interventions directly contribute to the local economy through the purchase of goods and services, fostering peaceful coexistence with host communities

38,754
unique individuals

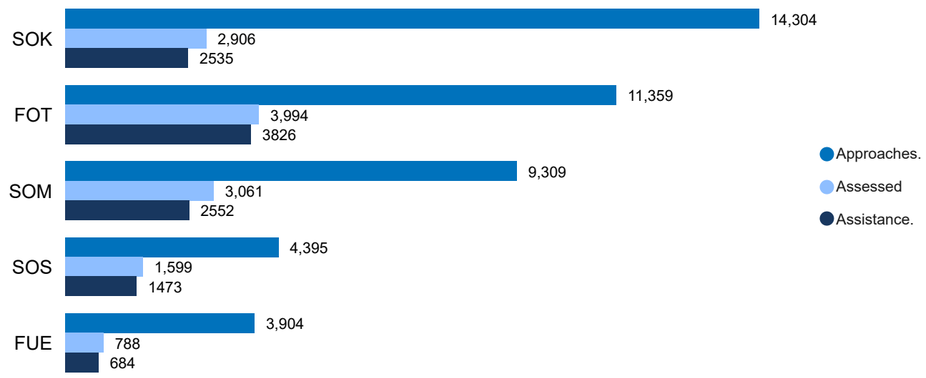
8,149
unique households

IRR 772bn
total amount disbursed

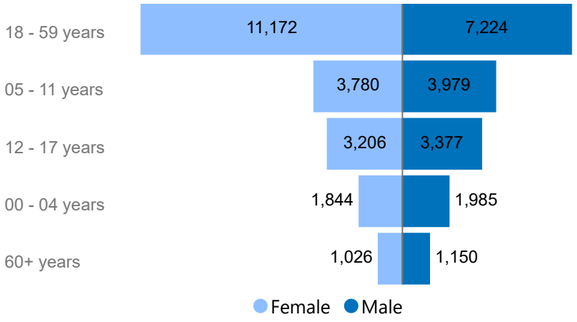
Expenditures by Cash Program (IRR)



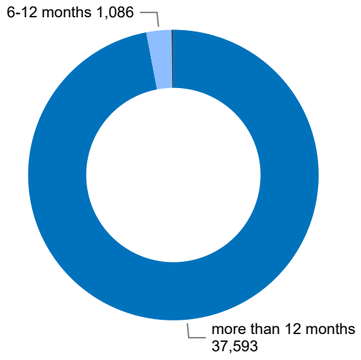
Request, Assessment, Assistance



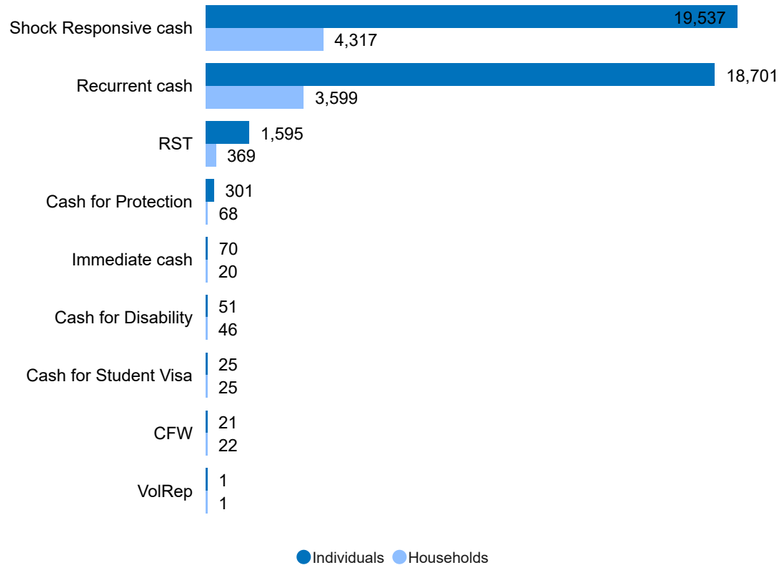
Beneficiaries by Age and Gender



Assisted refugees by time of arrival



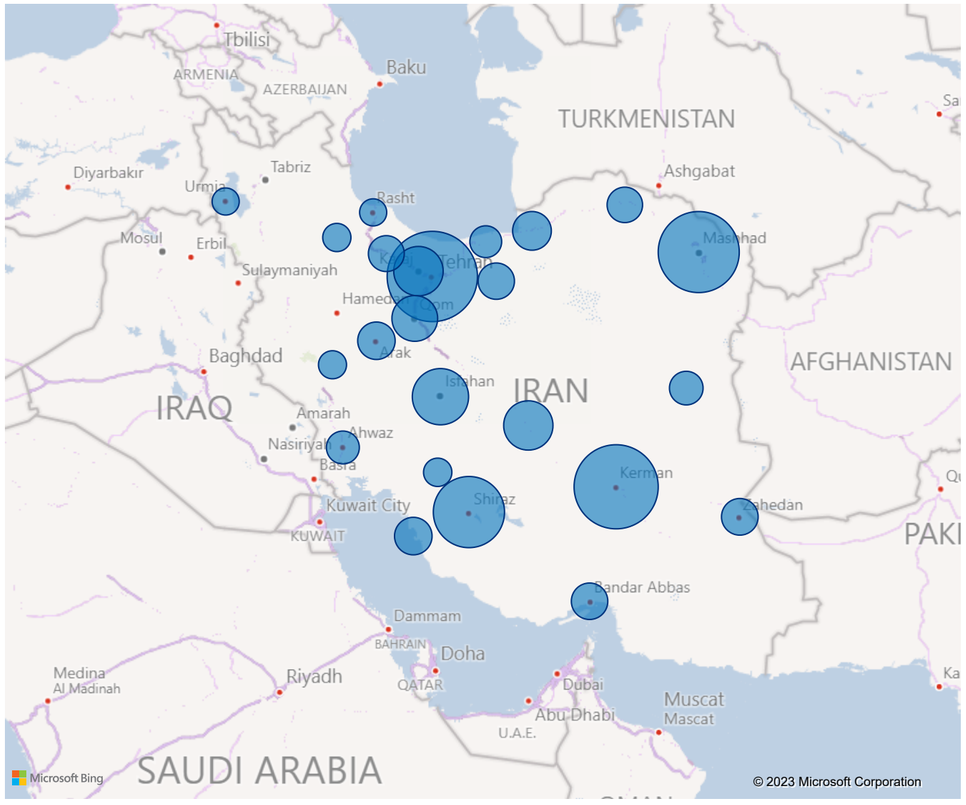
Beneficiaries by Intervention Type



81 % of all assisted refugees have multiple vulnerabilities.

A total of **88 %** of households have received assistance via bank transfer and **12 %** via gift card.

Refugees Assisted by Location

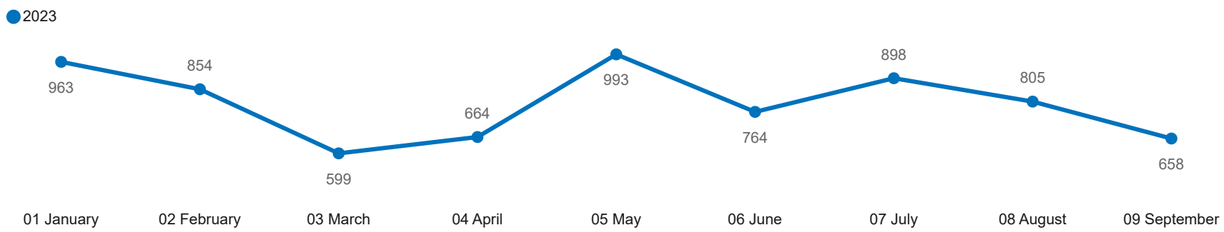


For more information please contact: **Nastaran Adelian**, adelian@unhcr.org

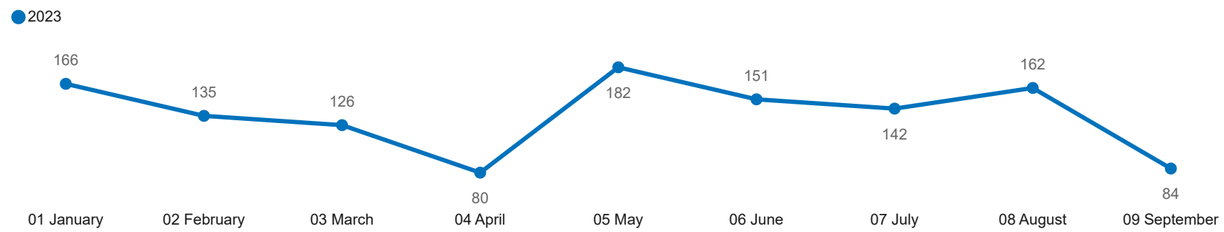
Legal Support - Jan to Sep 2023

UNHCR operates a Legal Services Project (LSP). The LSP components include 16 Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) and 17 UNHCR Hired Lawyers (UHLs). The DSCs are an alternative dispute resolution mechanism that provides refugees with an easily accessible forum where issues can be resolved expeditiously and free of charge compared to the formal legal system. The decisions of the DSCs are reached amicably and whilst they are not binding, most refugees -and Iranian nationals involved in the dispute- do abide by them. UHLs were originally contracted to take part in the DSCs and to monitor their activities on behalf of UNHCR. Their role has been expanded into providing free legal counseling, aid and at times legal representation to asylum seekers, refugees and stateless populations in need. By the end of September 2023, UHLs provided consultations to **7,198** forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The majority of the cases that UHLs supported concerned Family, Civil and financial, and Criminal disputes.
DSCs provided services to **1,228** forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The majority of the cases that DSCs supported concerned Family, Financial and Employment disputes.

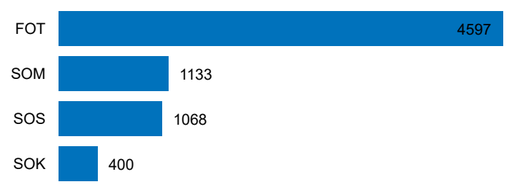
UHL services by month and year



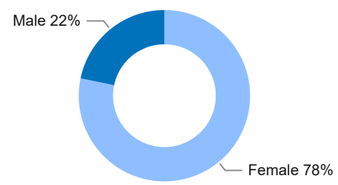
DSC services by month and year



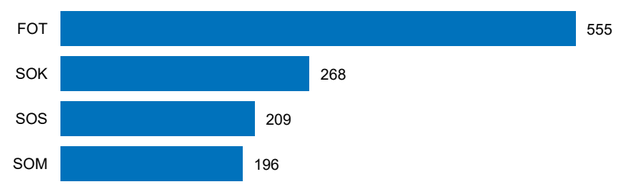
UHL cases by offices



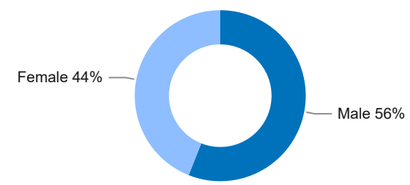
UHL cases by gender



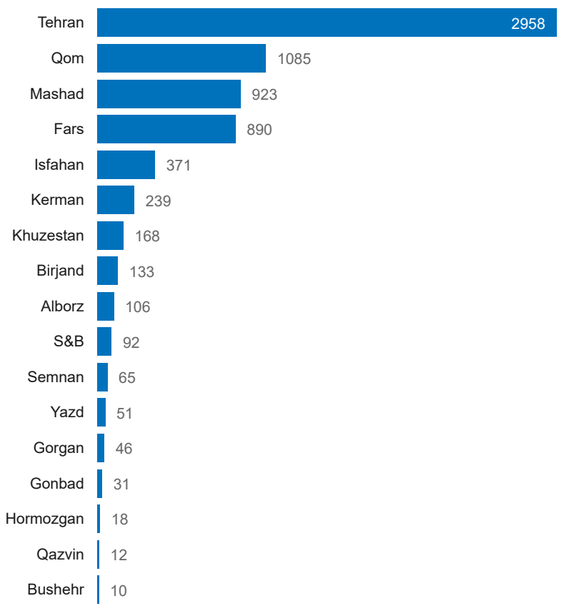
DSC cases by offices



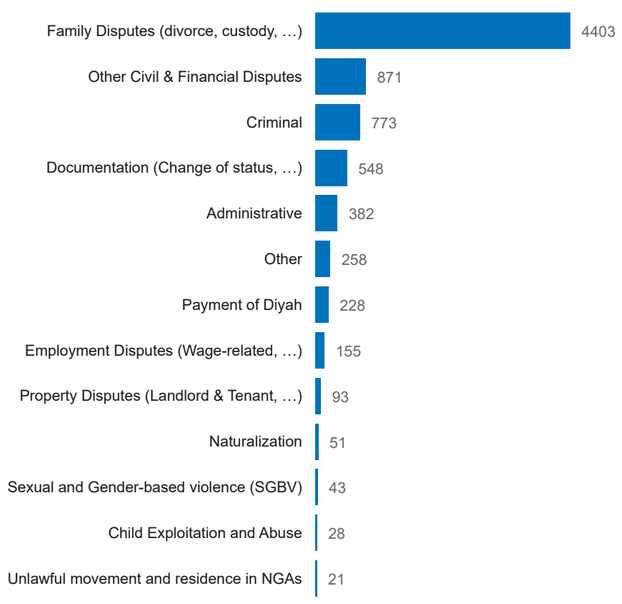
DSC cases by gender



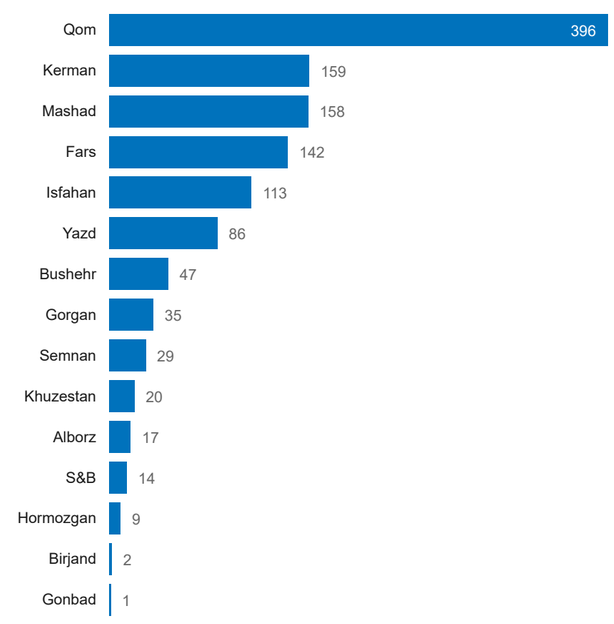
UHL cases by province



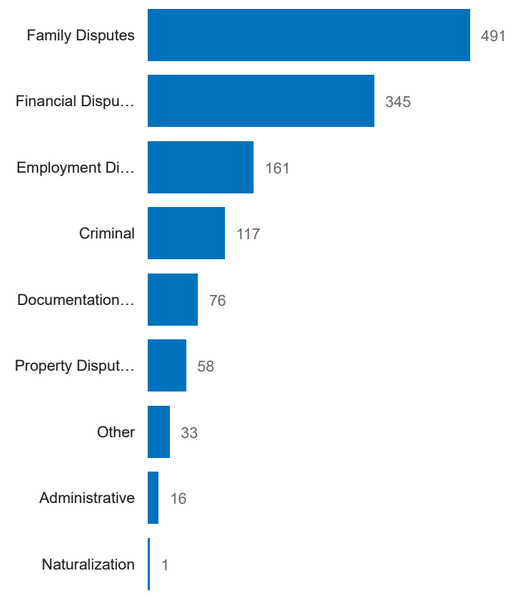
UHL types of cases



DSC cases by province



DSC types of cases



ADD incidents reported to UNHCR directly by affected refugees and asylum seekers (or relatives on their behalf) represent a minimal portion of the total number of ADD incidents taking place in Iran. During the reporting period, only **101** ADD incidents concerning **158** individuals were reported to UNHCR mainly on grounds of lack of valid documentation and accusation of committing crimes. **21** were not informed/ were unaware of the reason behind their arrest, detention and/or deportation. Lack of valid documentation can lead to arrest, detention and deportation. Additionally, it is required for *Amayesh* card holders to obtain a Laissez-Passer (travel permit) from BAFIA authorities for traveling outside their designated province of residence. During the reporting period, round up operations mainly targeted undocumented foreign nationals and those not carrying their documentation at the time of apprehension.

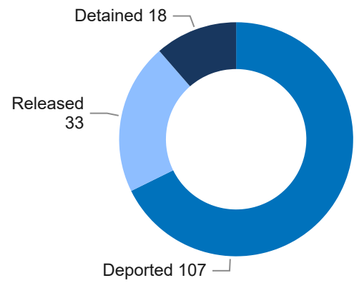
Number of ADD incidents

101

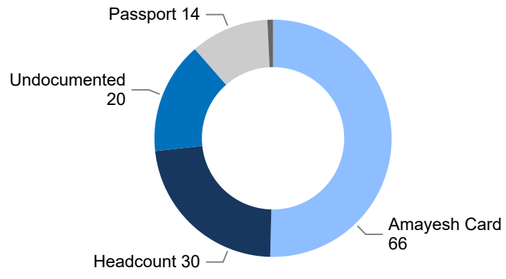
Number of ADD individuals

158

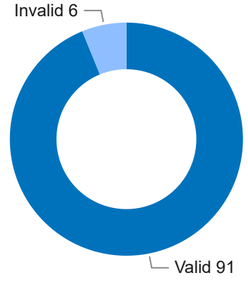
Last reported status



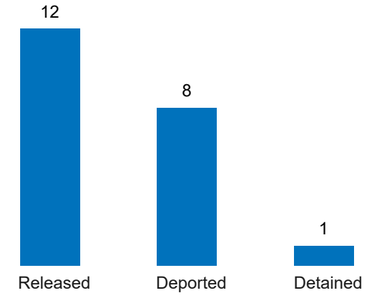
Documentation status



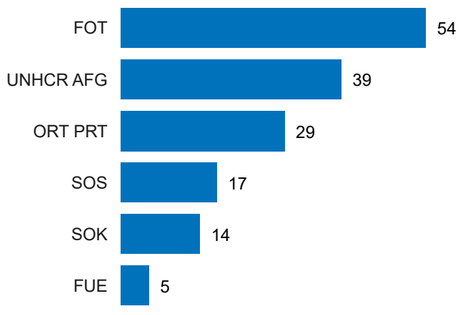
Documentation validity



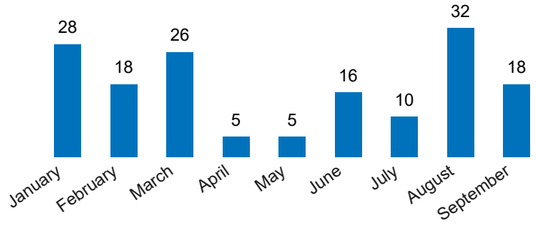
Children alone status



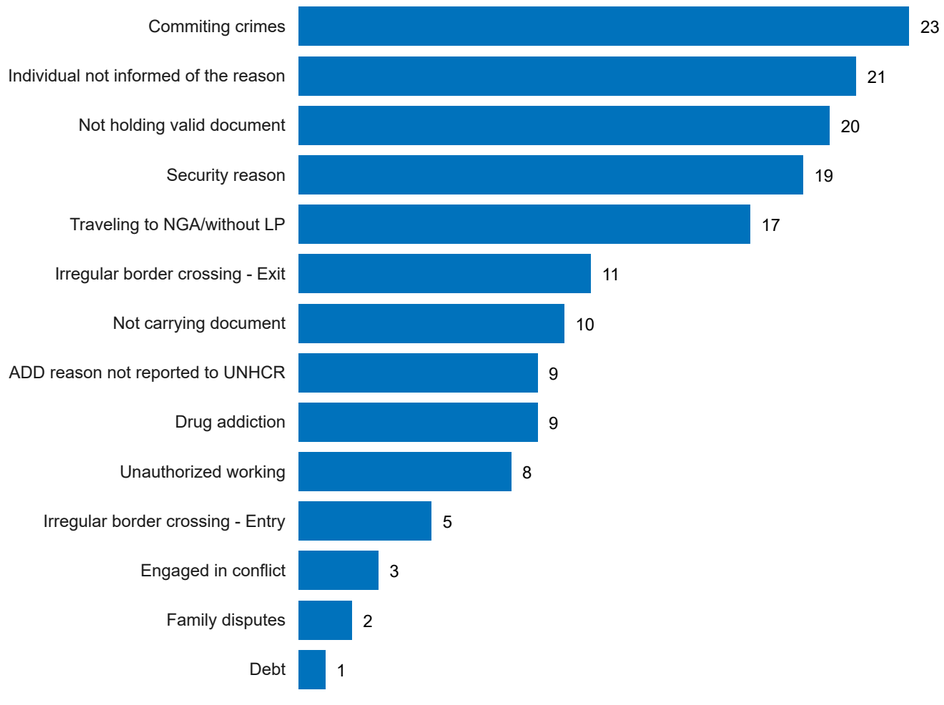
Reporting office



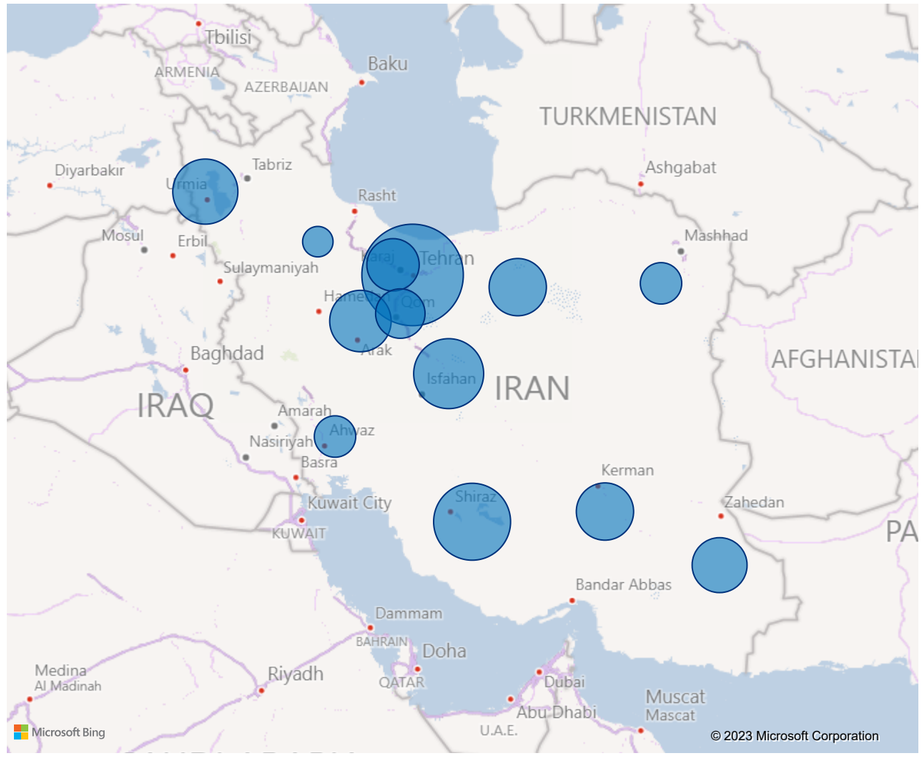
ADD monthly trend



ADD reason



Arrest location



Date

1/1/2023 9/30/2023

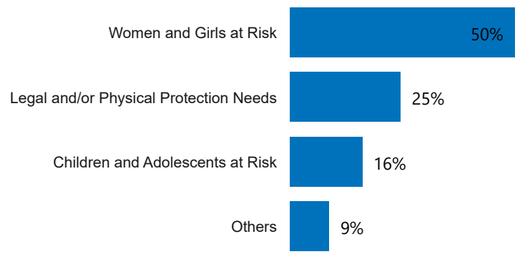
Iran, Islamic Republic of

Resettlement - Jan to Sep 2023

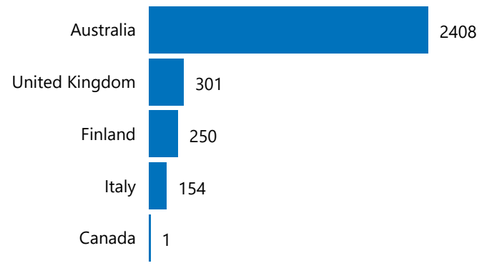
3114

Individuals submitted for resettlement

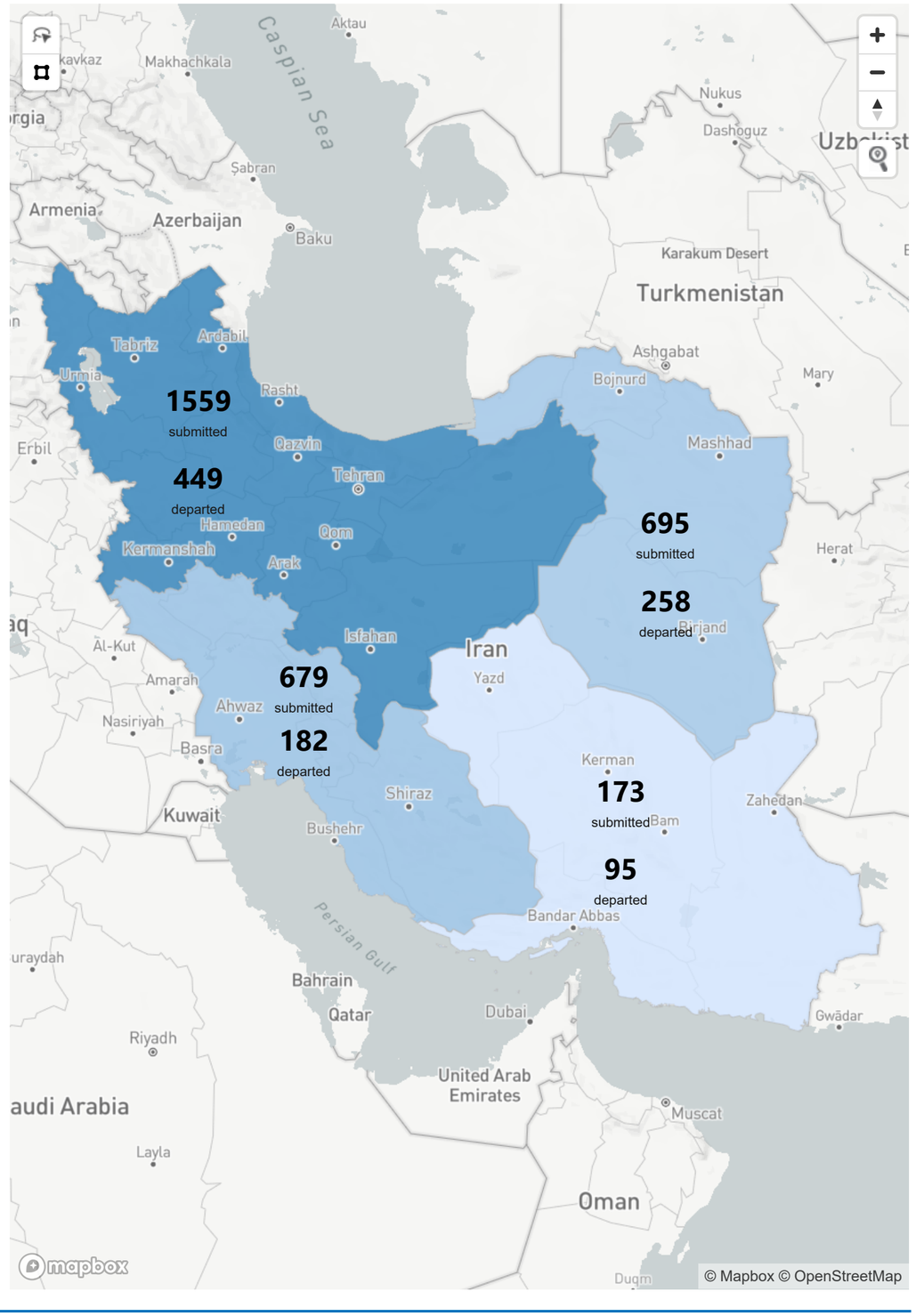
Primary submission categories



Submissions by countries



Submissions and departures



Submitted individuals age and gender

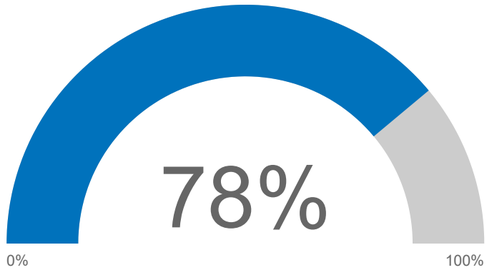
66.3% Female adult.

0.1% Female children.

33.4% Male adult.

0.1% Male children.

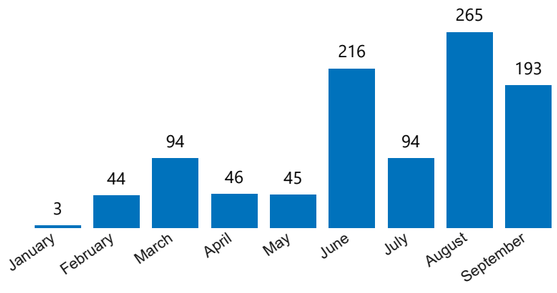
2023 submissions



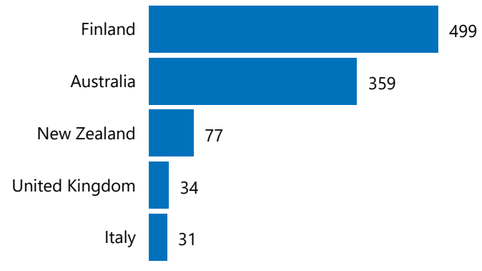
1000

Individuals departed for resettlement

Departure by month



Departures by countries



Departed individuals age and gender

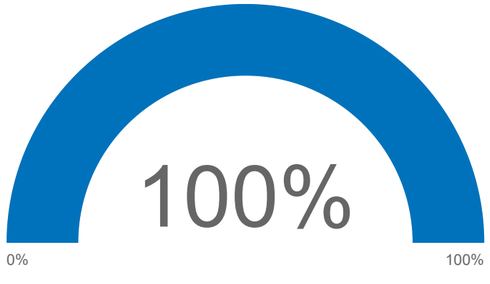
43.2% Female adult

21.5% Female children

13.1% Male adult

22.1% Male children

2023 depurtures



Voluntary Repatriation - Jan to Sep 2023

418

Individuals repatriated

Since 2002, UNHCR Iran has supported nearly 1 million refugees to voluntary repatriate in safety and dignity to Afghanistan and Iraq, taking into account the UNHCR Non-Return Advisory[1] and UNHCR Global Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan[2]. However, as the situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, only a small number of Afghan refugees in Iran have shown willingness to return to their home country. Repatriation of Afghan students to obtain visas to continue their studies in Iran has significantly declined to 10% of the repatriates in 2023. UNHCR supports the Iranian Government in providing Afghans with health, education and livelihoods opportunities. Individuals who are healthy, educated and have marketable-skills are typically more likely to return and feel capable of rebuilding their lives. Nonetheless, ultimately, a longer-term, political solution for Afghanistan's protracted crisis is the only way to ensure safe, sustainable and voluntarily return of refugees.

12

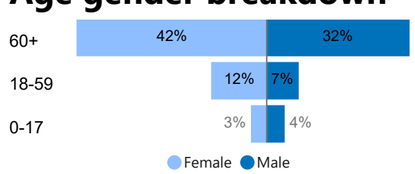
Persons with specific needs

UNHCR helps returnees with specific needs including unaccompanied or separated children and elderly persons.

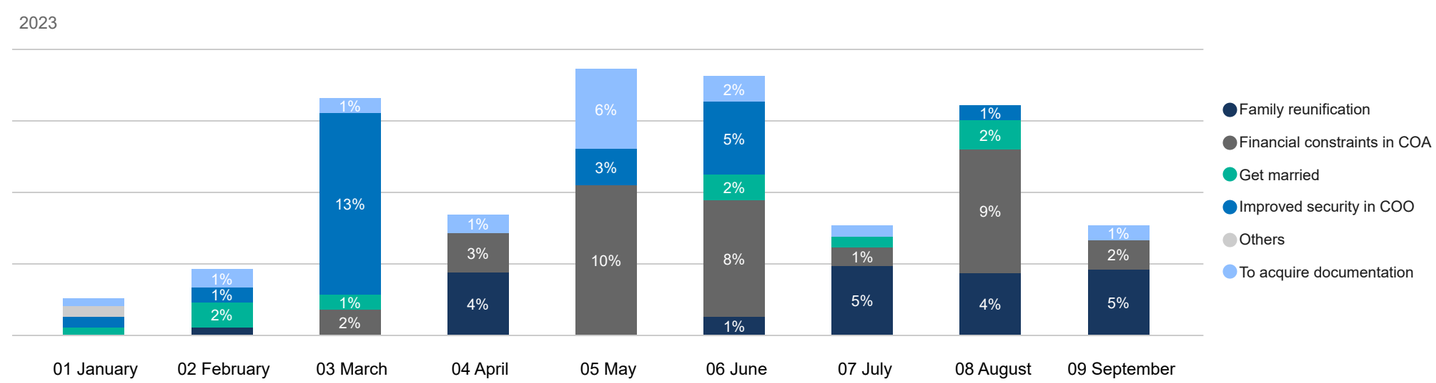
58%

Females

Age gender breakdown

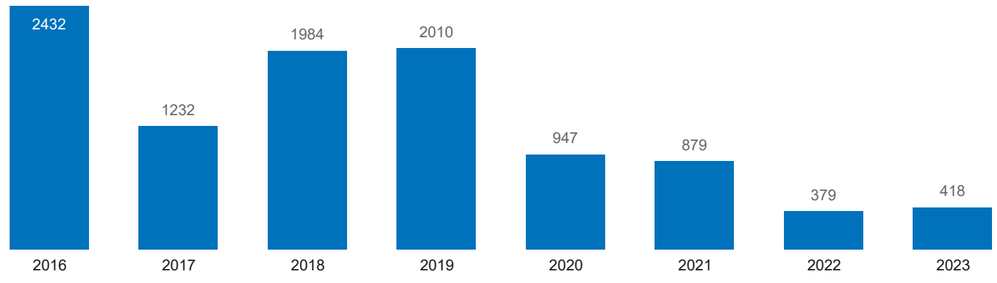


Top 5 reason of return to Afghanistan by month (% of individuals)

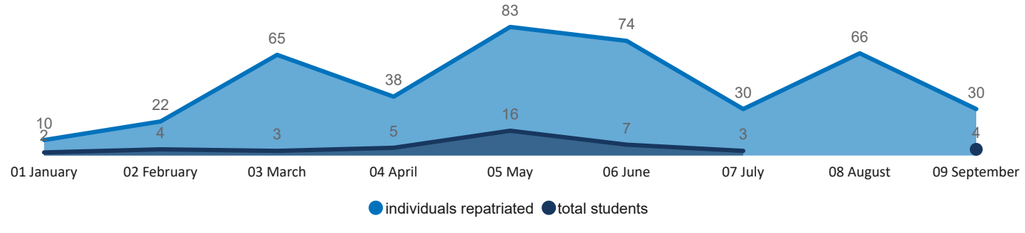


As of end of September 2023, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of 418 individuals which includes 416 Afghans and 2 Iraqis – 30 individuals repatriated in the month of September. This represents a 47% increase compared to the same period in 2022. Amongst the main reasons for return, returnees stated facing financial difficulties in Iran, and family reunification.

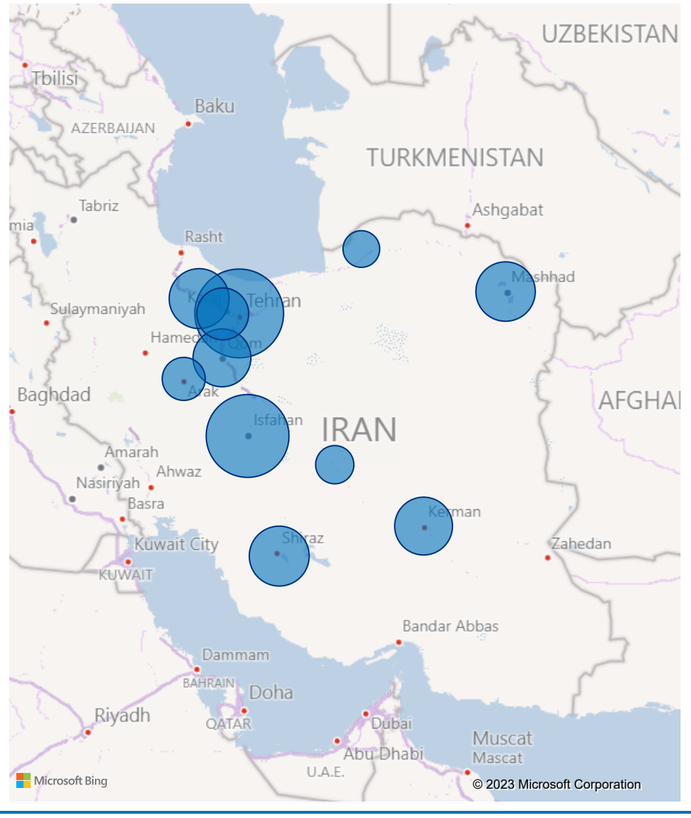
Trend over the years (2016-2023)



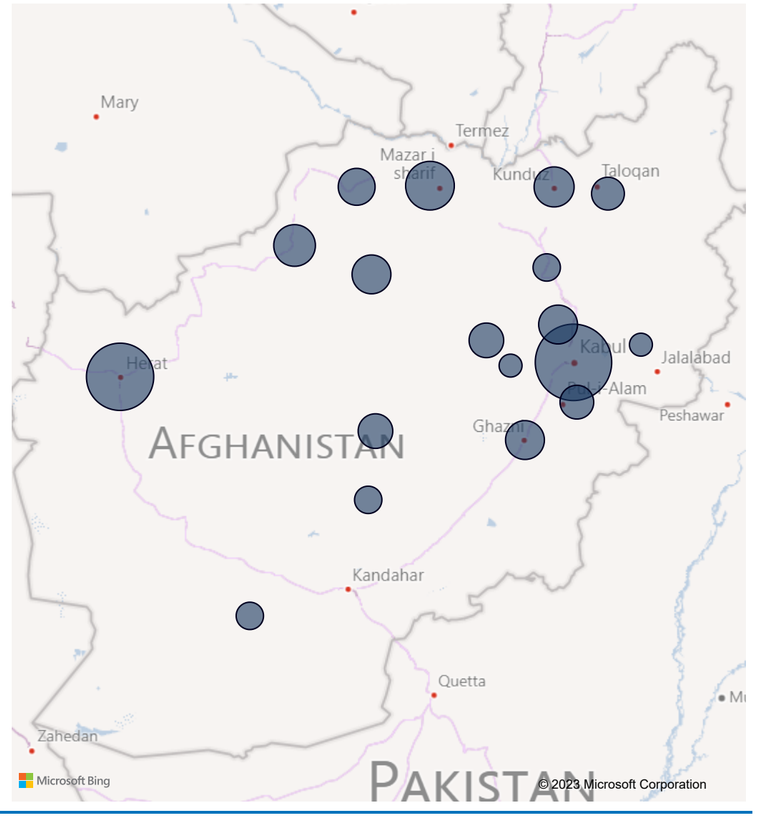
2023 monthly trend



Province of residence in Iran



Intended return province in Afghanistan



For more information please contact **Patricia Delis-Gomez** at delis@unhcr.org.

[1] UNHCR, *UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan*, August 2021, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/611a4c5c4.html;

[2] UNHCR, *UNHCR Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan*, February 2023, available at: https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/63e0cb714.pdf.