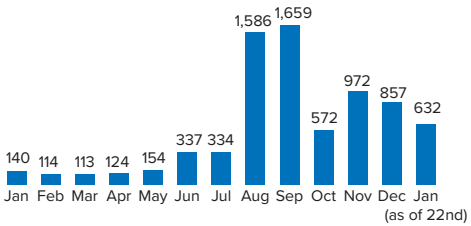
IRAN NEW ARRIVALS FROM AFGHANISTAN

as of 22 January 2022

The situation in Afghanistan remains highly volatile. Over half a million of Afghans have been displaced in their country due to conflict and violence this year alone, amid what is now a humanitarian emergency of internal displacement. While Iran has not yet witnessed a major influx of refugees, UNHCR has seen an increase in the number of approaches by newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection . Most Afghans fleeing to Iran are doing so in an irregular manner through unofficial border crossings and with the help of smugglers, as official border points remain closed for entry to 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 – however, UNHCR currently lacks access to border areas and is only able to report on newly arrived persons of concern who have reached us through our hotlines and receptions. Therefore, UNHCR is not able to confidently confirm trends and figures. UNHCR has issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan on 16 August, calling on governments to halt returns of Afghan nationals, including asylum-seekers who have had their claims rejected. UNHCR calls 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.

7,594

newly arrived heads of household approached UNHCR (on behalf of 30,503 individuals)[1]



738

out of 3,785 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 3,754 persons have returned to Afghanistan. Of the remaining persons, 138 individuals are currently being held in Al-Ghadir, in Sistan and Baluchistan province; an additional 600 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.

PROTECTION SCREENING OF NEWLY ARRIVED FAMILIES (17 AUG 2021 - 22 JAN 2022)

2,580

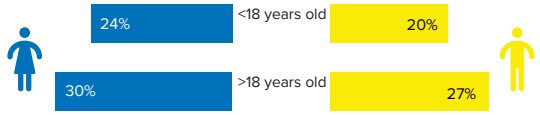
newly arrived heads of household screened (on behalf of 9,863 individuals)[3]

24% are female-headed households. In terms of ethnicity, 39% are Hazaras and 36% are Tajiks. 23% of all arrivals do not have any identity documents, and 28% 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.

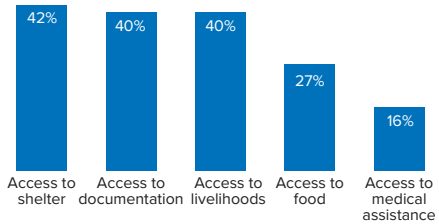
100%

fled due to general security situation and/or specific security threats, 30% fled due to discrimination

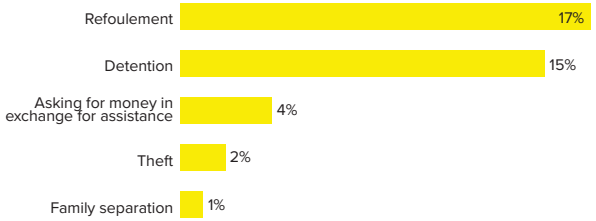
Age/Gender breakdown



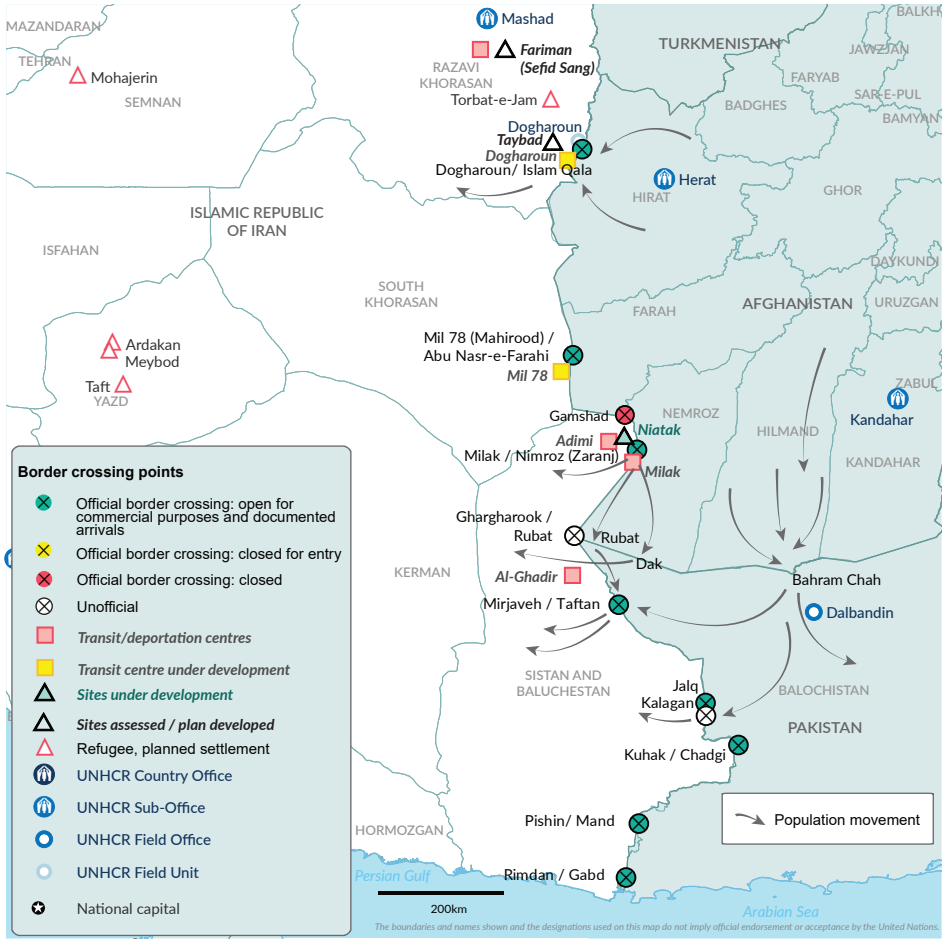
Top 5 needs reported in Iran[4]



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



MAP OF BORDER CROSSINGS AND PROVISIONAL SITES AS OF 22 JAN



While borders between Iran and Afghanistan were officially closed from 16 August, they are now open only for Afghan passport-holders with valid visas for Iran. The Government does not allow the entry of undocumented persons. UNHCR calls on countries to keep their borders open for Afghans fleeing the country. UNHCR and other actors are involved in discussions with BAFIA on developing potential sites in border areas that could host new arrivals for short periods of time.

Sources: UNHCR Iran. Updated: Jan 2022. 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 2021, 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 2,580 households screened constitute a sub-section of the 7,594 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.