

Trend Analysis: Migrant Resource Centre - Afghanistan

May – August 2022

Introduction

By offering personal counselling to thousands of Afghans in the country, region and on the move about migration aspects, the Remote Migration Resource Centre (MRC) is uniquely positioned to identify the changes in migration aspirations and trends from Afghanistan as they develop. This information brief covers the period of May – August 2022 and presents the latest developments related to migration interest among Afghans reflected in the data collected by the MRC, and contextualises these evolving patterns with the ongoing economic and political situation in the country and internationally, to indicate emerging migration trends.

MRC outreach

Indicator	May	June	July	August
Total number of people counselled	1117	2739	2813	2683
Percentage of people counselled (male)	87%	86.5%	87%	87%
Percentage of people counselled (female)	13%	13%	13%	13%

Top three queries (May-Aug 2022)



1201 Queries received

On protection options for military and civilian workers from previous regime



1176 Queries received

On asylum options for irregular migrants (especially by Afghans already on the move)



926 Queries received

On general information about MRC's function and mandate, and guidance on migration options



Situational overview

The takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2021 following the US withdrawal from the country resulted in a scenario of widespread displacement and desperate migration of Afghans attempting to leave the country. One year on, the crisis has been ensued with subsequent predicaments such as rising poverty, mass unemployment, malnutrition¹, and disruption in health and educational services, resulting not only from the policies of the new regime, but also as a consequence of the international sanctions put on the country, the initial disruption in international aid flows, and the US chokehold on the assets for the Afghan central bank,² which disrupted the banking system and directly affected trade and inflation levels – the impact of which is direly borne by the common people of Afghanistan.³ Adding to the misery, natural and climate-related disasters such as the earthquake in June 2022, torrential rains and flash floods in July 2022, and prolonged droughts have further displaced some already vulnerable population groups, and pushed many into severe poverty and despair.

The exact number of Afghans who left as a result of the Taliban takeover is inconclusive. The US reportedly evacuated about 113,500 until August 30, 2021.⁴ About 21,000 were evacuated by the United Kingdom, against evacuation applications ranging from 75,000 to 150,000 in number.⁵ The EU member states committed to offer humanitarian admissions to about 36,000 Afghans at risk, however, as of September 2022, the commitment has fallen short with about 28,700 Afghans received in the EU, the majority in Germany.⁶ Evacuations were provided largely for those Afghans who had served directly on projects and operations of the respective countries in Afghanistan, and thus do not cover the entirety of Afghans at risk, desperate to leave Afghanistan. Some member states, including Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Austria and Poland, had declared that they will not be accepting additional refugees from Afghanistan.⁷

1. United Nations, "Afghanistan: Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Threaten 'an Entire Generation,'" n.d., <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113982>.
2. The US announced recently that about \$3,5 billion of the \$7 billion of Afghan reserves would be moved to a newly created Afghan fund in Switzerland, however, the Taliban will not have the authority in disbursement. This announcement has been denounced by the Taliban as unacceptable. Ayaz Gul, "Taliban Rebuke US for Afghan Assets' Transfer to Swiss-Based Trust Fund," Voice of America, September 16, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/taliban-rebuke-us-for-afghan-assets-transfer-to-swiss-based-trust-fund/6750232.html>.
3. Christina Goldbaum and Yaqoob Akbary, "Over a Million Flee as Afghanistan's Economy Collapses," NY Times, February 2, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/02/world/asia/afghanistan-migration-refugees.html>.
4. "Afghanistan: How Many People Has the UK Resettled?," BBC, August 13, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-58245684>.
5. "Afghanistan: How Many People Has the UK Resettled?"
6. ECRE, "Joint Statement: One Year after the Country's Takeover by the Taliban – How Did Europe Welcome Afghans in Need of Protection?," September 9, 2022, <https://ecre.org/joint-statement-one-year-after-the-countrys-takeover-by-the-taliban-how-did-europe-welcome-afghans-in-need-of-protection/>.
7. European Parliament, "Evacuation of Afghan Nationals to EU Member States," November 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698776/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)698776_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698776/EPRS_BRI(2021)698776_EN.pdf).



113,500

Evacuated by the U.S. until August 30, 2021



21,000

Evacuated by the United Kingdom

Against evacuation applications ranging from **75,000** to **150,000** in number.



36,000

Afghans at risk were committed to get humanitarian admissions by the EU Member states

However, as of **September 2022**, the commitment has fallen short with about **28,700** Afghans received in the EU, the majority in Germany.

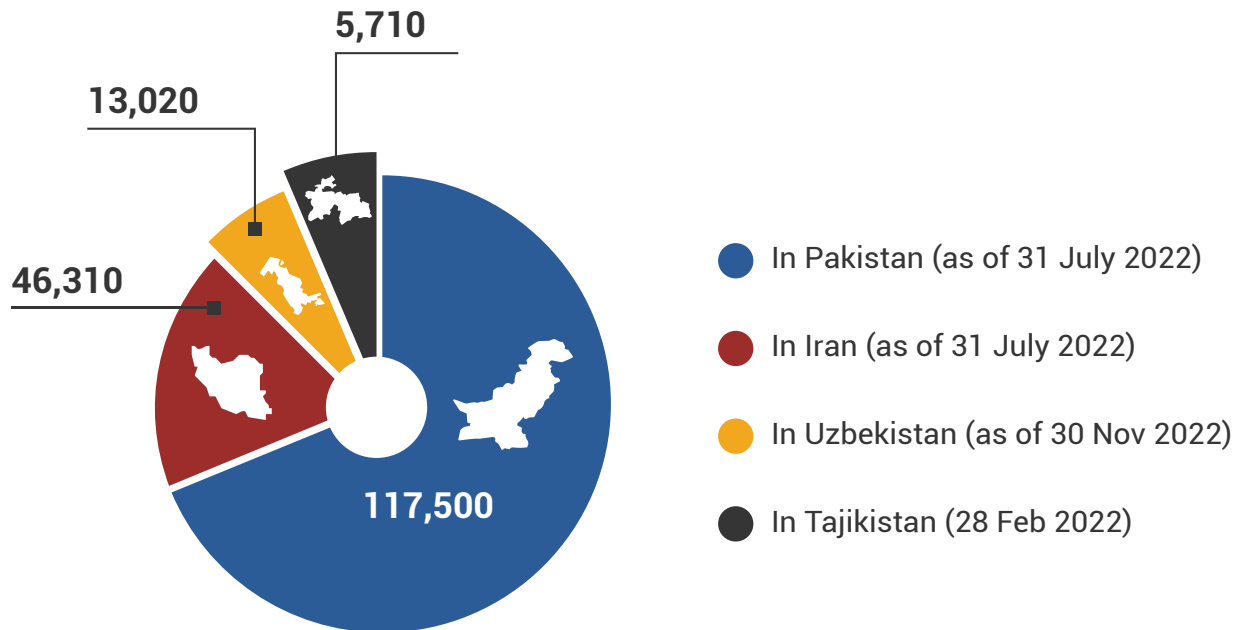
Afghan Support Scheme

	EU Member State	Pledged Resettlement	Pledged Humanitarian Assistance
	Belgium	0	425
	Finland	610	386
	France	0	2500
	Germany	0	23,833
	Italy	0	500
	Latvia	0	99
	Lithuania	0	54
	Luxembourg	0	90
	Malta	1	0
	The Netherlands	0	3,159
	Portugal	0	800
	Romania	0	132
	Slovakia	0	22
	Spain	0	2500
	Sweden	500	1500
	Total	1111	36,000

Source: European Union ⁸

8. European Union, "Overview of Pledges for Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission of Afghans, 2021- 2022," 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/questions/reponses_qe/2022/001707/P9_RE\(2022\)001707\(ANN01\)_XL.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/questions/reponses_qe/2022/001707/P9_RE(2022)001707(ANN01)_XL.pdf).

The UNHCR reports that since January 2021, the number of newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection to neighbouring countries is about 182,590, while noting that this figure probably underestimates the number of Afghans who are on the move and/or who require protection.⁹ The Government of Pakistan reports that more than 250,000 Afghans have entered Pakistan since August 2021, and the Government of Iran estimates that between 500,000 to 1,000,000 Afghans have crossed the border into Iran since January 2021. This is additional to the 2.3 million Afghan refugees that were already present in the neighbouring countries up until December 2021. Estimates also state that about 300,000 Afghans have travelled through the two neighbouring countries to Turkey.¹⁰



Source: UNHCR (2022)¹¹

UNHCR data also shows that about 3.5 million people are internally displaced in Afghanistan due to conflict as of December 2021.

Additionally, in 2022, ensuing poverty has replaced conflict as the top most reason for displacement, as per an assessment conducted by the UKAID and USAID.¹² Socioeconomic vulnerabilities are rising, with high unemployment, limited livelihood opportunities, and high food inflation leading to rising debts. Between July 2021 and March 2022, the number of Afghans experiencing acute hunger rose from 14 million to 23 million and about six million people are at the risk of famine in Afghanistan.¹³

9. UNHCR, "Operations Data Portal: Afghanistan Situation (July 2022)," 2022, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan>.

10. Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "I Will Reach Europe or Die': Three Stories of Afghan Refugees in Turkey," The Guardian, September 7, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/07/i-will-reach-europe-or-die-three-stories-of-afghan-refugees-in-turkey>.

11. UNHCR, "Operations Data Portal: Afghanistan Situation (July 2022)."

12. UKAID and USAID, "Evolving Drivers and Needs in Afghanistan - Whole of Afghanistan (WoA) Mid-Year 2022 Key Findings," 2022, https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/36a27d95/REACH_AFG_Key-Findings-Presentation-to-ICCT_Mid-year-WoAA-2022_Share.pdf.

13. Al Jazeera, "UN Says Six Million Afghans Are at Risk of Famine as Crises Grow," 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/30/un-warns-6-million-afghans-at-risk-of-famine-as-crises-grow>; Aaqib Khan, "For Desperate Afghans, Risky Crossings into Iran Are Worth Chancing," The New Humanitarian, May 17, 2022, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/News-feature/2022/05/17/Afghans-risky-crossings-Iran>.



One year on since the Taliban takeover, the plight of Afghans seems to be overshadowed by other crises around the world, particularly the war in Ukraine. While the West, including the EU and its member states, prioritised evacuation of Afghan personnel associated on their projects, there were mounting concerns about irregular entries of Afghans into the EU. The EU pledged €1 billion in October 2021 as Afghan Support Programme to Afghan people and the neighbouring countries, with the aim of preventing migrant smuggling.¹⁴ This is despite the fact that legal options to migrate for Afghans are direly limited, and even more restricted since the Taliban takeover as consular operations by many countries have been halted. The Henley Passport Index 2022 ranks the Afghan passport the weakest in the world.¹⁵ Only a small percentage of Afghan population possesses a passport,¹⁶ and even those who possess one experience numerous challenges in acquiring a visa for travel. The passport issuing department in Afghanistan claims that since last year, 700,000 new passports have been issued to Afghans.¹⁷

— Afghan asylum seekers in Europe —

Between 2020 and 2021, the number of first-time asylum applicants from Afghanistan to the EU almost doubled from 44,285 in 2020 to 84,555 in 2021.¹⁸ Despite the surge in numbers in 2021, first time asylum applications remained well below the 2015-16 levels (175,440 in 2015 and 179,860 in 2016).¹⁹ Monthly data reveals that since the Taliban takeover, the number of first time applicants peaked in September when about 14,400 applied and thereafter declined. The aggregate number of first time asylum applicants from Afghanistan to EU27 is available up until June 2022, but published updates from some countries indicate that the trend remains overall similar, however, with slight increase in asylum applications in France and slight decrease in Germany over July and August.

Over this time, the top countries of first time asylum applications have been Germany, France and Austria. Data also reveals that reported asylum claims by unaccompanied minors also increased from 1,140 in July 2021 to 1,515 in August 2021, and rose to about 1,980 in November 2021 before declining again. In June 2022, the number of applications by unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan was recorded to be 1,450,²⁰ amounting to more than 16% of all applicants from Afghanistan.²¹

14. European Commission, "Afghanistan: Commission Announces €1 Billion Afghan Support Package," 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5208.

15. "The Henley Passport Index," 2022, <https://www.henleyglobal.com/passport-index>.

16. Samuel Hall and Norwegian Refugee Council, "Access to Tazkera and Other Civil Documentation in Afghanistan," n.d.

17. Akmal Dawi, "Taliban Make Millions From Passports Issued to Fleeing Afghans," VOA News, 2022.

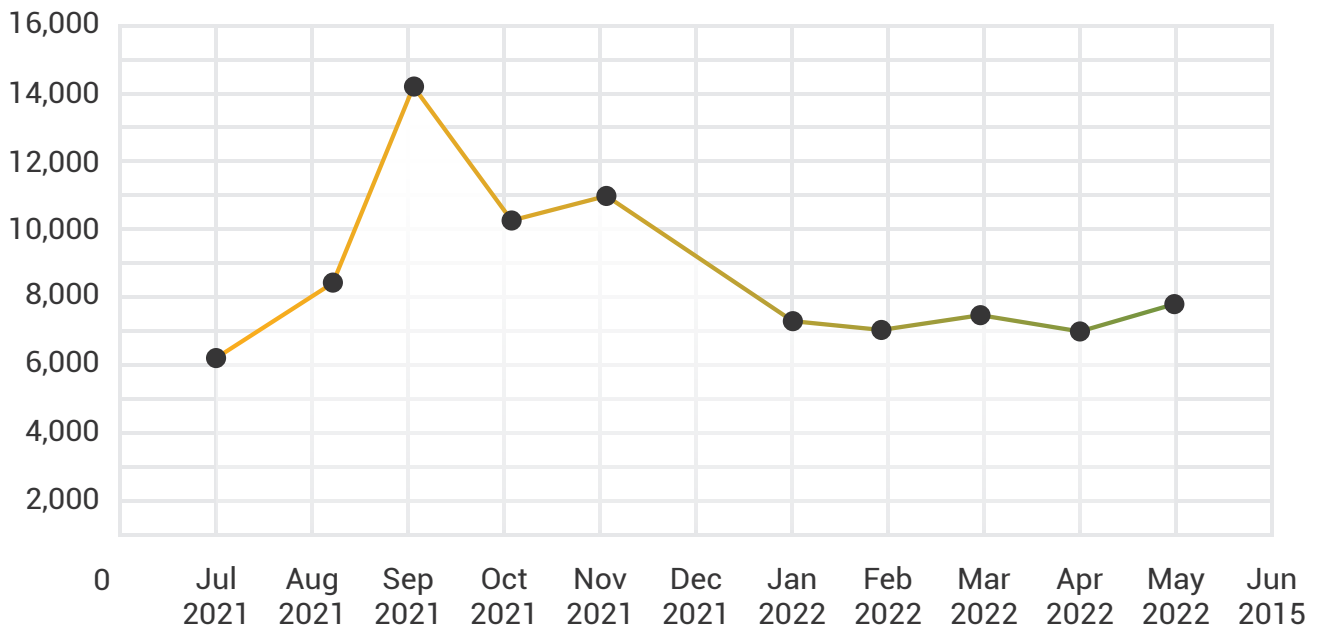
18. The figures in 2020 could also reflect impact of COVID-19 on mobility flows. In 2019, the number of first time asylum applicants from Afghanistan was 54,300

19. Eurostat, "Asylum Applicants by Type of Applicant, Citizenship, Age and Sex - Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded)," Dataset, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA__custom_3277574/default/table?lang=en.

20. Eurostat, "Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Applicants by Type of Applicant, Citizenship, Age and Sex - Monthly Data (Rounded)," Dataset, 2022.

21. EASO, "Latest Asylum Trends," 2022, <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-asylum>.

First time asylum applicants from Afghanistan in the EU (monthly data)



Source: Eurostat 2022

Moreover, comparing quarterly data shows that the number of rejections for Afghan asylum applicants slightly decreased from 4,270 rejections in 2021-Q1 to 3,025 in 2022-Q1.

A bigger difference is observed between the 2021-Q1 and 2021-Q4 when the rejections reduced to 1,880. Available data from 2022-Q2 (2,780) show that the number of rejections have almost halved if compared to 2021-Q2 (4,510).²²



Additionally, in 2021, the number of Afghans resettled to EU Member States increased. In 2020, only 140 Afghans were resettled in EU Member States with 100 in Sweden and 40 in Germany. In 2021, 6,750 Afghans were resettled in EU Member States, with the majority settling in Italy (4,780), followed by Sweden (1,310) as per Eurostat data.²³

22. Eurostat, "Asylum Applicants by Type of Applicant, Citizenship, Age and Sex - Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded)."

23. Eurostat, "Resettled Persons by Age, Sex and Citizenship - Annual Data (Rounded) (Migr_asyresa)," 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migration-asylum/asylum/database>.

Gallup's World Poll data shows that since 2017, there has been increasing aspiration among Afghans to permanently move to another country. In fact, in 2021, the percentage of people aspiring to move away permanently was higher than those willing to stay in Afghanistan – a trend not observed since Gallup started collecting this data in 2008. In 2008, 34% people reported that they would like to move to another country permanently, while 64% reported that they would prefer to stay. In 2012, only 18% reported that they would like to move against 80% who shared their preference to stay in Afghanistan.²⁴

The latest figures from August and September 2021 show that as many as 53% of the Afghans interviewed would prefer to migrate, compared to 46% who reported that they would like to stay. This reflects a 15 percentage point increase in the aspiration to migrate away compared to last year. Although the desire to migrate rose across all population groups, demographically, this aspiration is most pronounced among unmarried (57%), young boys and men (15-29 years), with at least secondary level of education, belonging to the lowest income quintile and living in rural areas. While the preference to move away is recorded higher among men, 50% of the women included in the survey also shared their aspiration to migrate permanently.



53%

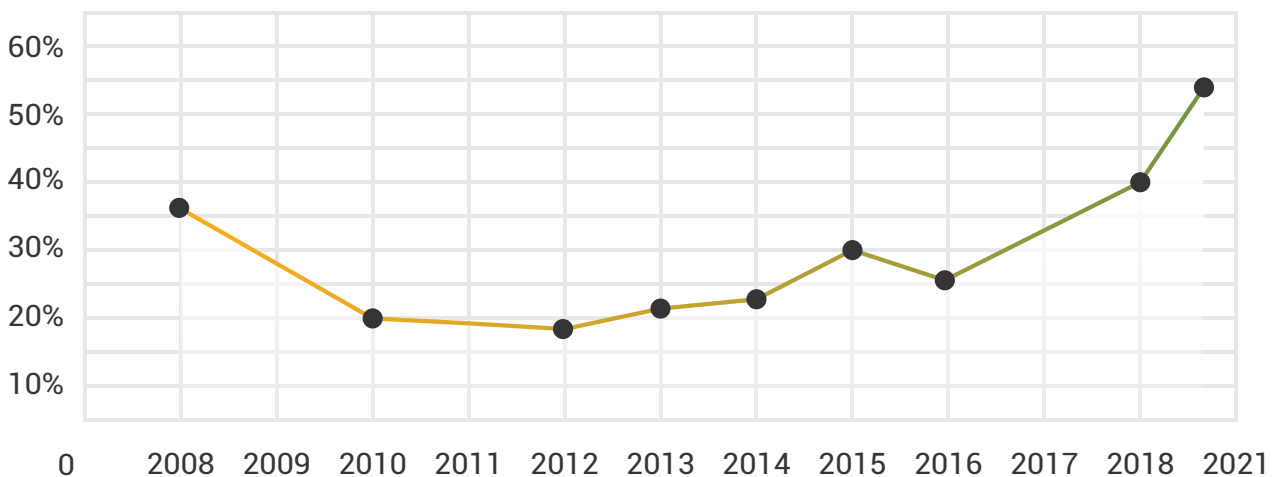
Afghans would prefer to migrate



46%

Afghans would like to stay

Percentage of Afghans who would like to move away permanently, if given the opportunity

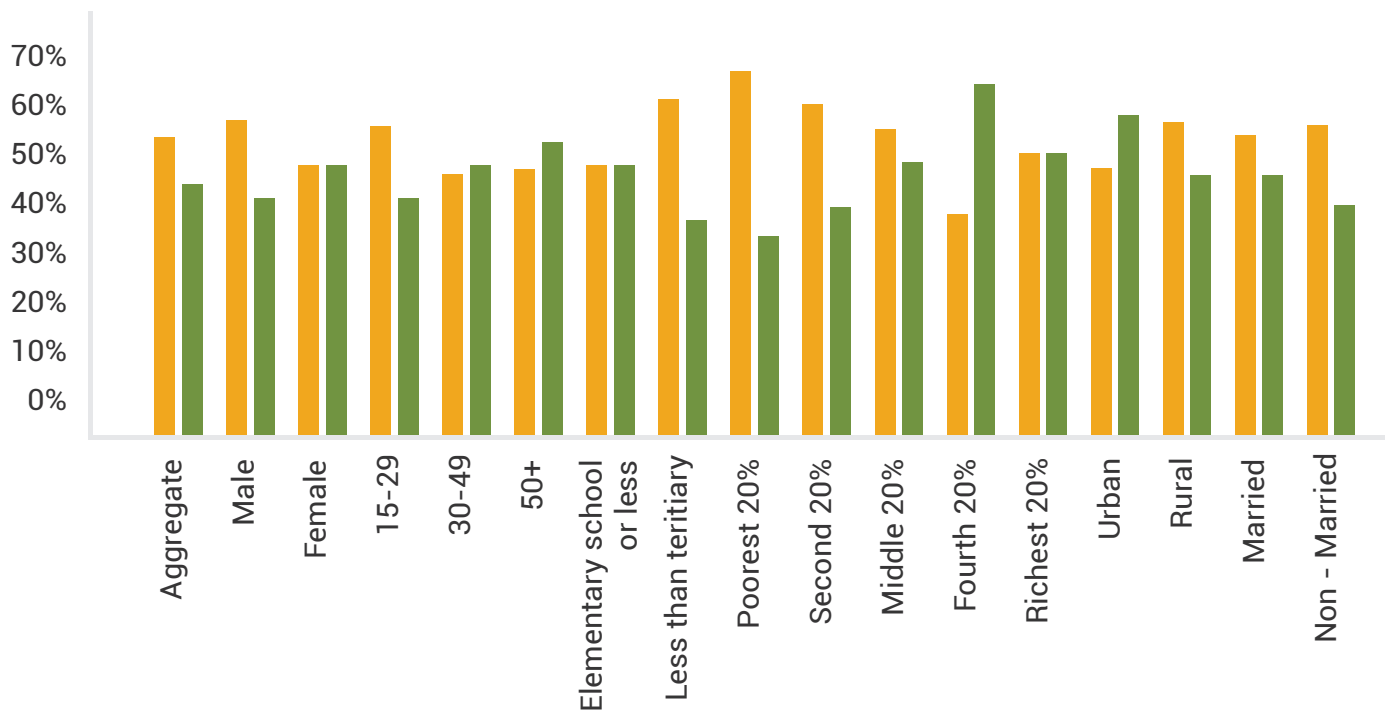


Source: Gallup World Poll 2021²⁵

24. 2% responded "Don't Know" or refused to answer.

25. Question asked: Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move PERMANENTLY to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country?

Demographics of Afghans willing to migrate 2021



Source: Gallup World Poll 2021

- Like to move to another country permanently
- Like to continue living in Afghanistan

MRC's response

ICMPD's Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Kabul was set up in May 2018, housed at the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the MRC office was closed, but the operations were relaunched on digital platforms in November 2021.

The Remote MRC Afghanistan helps people make informed decisions when considering to migrate, or are already on the move by virtually providing relevant information and guidance. It provides potential and intending migrants with information and counselling on: resettlement and humanitarian visa programmes, humanitarian aid programmes in the respective country and the dangers and consequences of irregular migration.

The most common modes of providing counselling are social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Once a week, the MRC also hosts a live session on Facebook to collectively answer the most commonly asked questions and respond to direct queries received during the session.

Between May and August 2022, the MRC counselled a total of 9,352 individuals. It is important to highlight that this number does not include the number of recurring queries by the same individual. The highest number of counselling sessions were given in the month of July during which 2,813 people were counselled.

Gender disaggregated data shows that between May and August, about 87% individuals seeking counselling were men (8,124), while 13% were women (1,228). WhatsApp is the most commonly used mode of seeking individual counselling with 990 sessions in May which increased to a total of 2,163 sessions in August. WhatsApp is the most commonly used mode of seeking individual counselling with 990 sessions in May which increased to a total of 2,163 sessions in August.



87%

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13%

individuals seeking counselling were women (1,228)

As a remote MRC, social media is the most important tool to increase outreach and offer counselling to individuals. There has been an increase in the total reach of MRC on all social media combined, from 555,997 number of people reached in May and 1,949,317 people reached in August 2022 owing to the increase in followers and subscribers over the past few months. Within different social media platforms, Facebook has been the most common one with maximum reach²⁶ and engagement²⁷. Total engagement on Facebook has doubled between May and August 2022 from 48,336 to 94,641. Instagram and Telegram are also important channels, especially for Afghans in Iran, where Facebook is blocked. On average, the MRC has produced about 105 social media posts per month between May and August 2022.



555,997 Total reach
Combined on all social media platforms in May 2022



1,949,317 Total reach
Combined on all social media platforms in August 2022



48,336 Total engagement
On facebook in May 2022



94,641 Total engagement
On facebook in August 2022

105 social media posts per month

MRC outreach

Indicator	May	June	July	August
Total number of people counselled	1117	2739	2813	2683
Percentage of people counselled (male)	87%	86.5%	87%	87%
Percentage of people counselled (female)	13%	13%	13%	13%

26. Reach refers to the total number of people who have seen the post or activity.

27. Social media engagement is the measurement of comments, likes, and shares

Top three queries (May-Aug 2022)



1201 Queries received

On protection options for military and civilian workers from previous regime



1176 Queries received

On asylum options for irregular migrants (especially by Afghans already on the move)



926 Queries received

On general information about MRC's function and mandate, and guidance on migration options

Emerging developments

Increased vulnerability to exploitation and torture

Drawing on the nature of queries and help sought by Afghans on the move, it appears that the risk of exploitation of Afghan migrants is on the rise, especially along the Iran-Turkey border. In May 2022, an MRC client reported that his brother, who was attempting to migrate from Iran to Turkey was kidnapped by robbers on the way. Video footage of his torture and abuse were sent to the family in order to blackmail them to send as much as \$12,000. This incident also matches others that have been reported by the news where migrants and their relatives are extorted for bribes even by border guards and law enforcement authorities before they are allowed to continue on their journey. Videos of abuse by not only border guards and Iranian police, but mistreatment of Afghans by civilians have also surfaced on social media, highlighting this grave issue.²⁸

While these stories of abuse and torture of migrants are not new, the risk is higher as more Afghans escape the country to seek refuge elsewhere, amid inhospitable attitudes by neighbouring countries.

Destination choices

Gallup data also shows that in August 2021, the most desired destinations among Afghans included



25%
Turkey



15%
Germany



12%
Canada



10%
U.S.

Source: Gallup World Poll 2021²⁹

28. Abubakar Siddique, "New Videos Put Spotlight On Mistreatment Of Afghan Refugees In Iran," Gandhara, April 8, 2022, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/videos-show-mistreatment-afghan-refugees-iran/31793242.html>; Khan, "For Desperate Afghans, Risky Crossings into Iran Are Worth Chancing."

29. Gallup, "Taliban Returns, Majority of Afghans Seek an Exit," World Poll, 2021, <https://ga.gallup.com/Article.aspx>.

30. Australian Government, "Commitment to Afghanistan Increased," Home Affairs, January 21, 2022.



Recent data based on queries received at the remote MRC shows that most queries have been asked for the EU countries as a destination, followed by Turkey. An interesting trend to note is also ad-hoc queries received for migration options to Russia, as a means to reaching Europe. This trend emerged in May and continued up until early September 2022. MRC counsellor relates this to information being shared on smuggling networks that Russia is giving visas to Afghans. Moreover, the fact that Russian Embassy in Kabul did not shut down following the American withdrawal and the Taliban takeover could have also played a role in increased number of queries received for this route. Those interested to know more about migration pathways to Russia are generally interested to reach European countries such as Germany, France and Sweden.

Queries related to Australia and Canada were also common, likely due to the humanitarian visa option that these countries offer to Afghans. In January 2022, Australia had announced 15,000 places for Afghans to move to Australia through the Humanitarian and Family Visa Programmes (10,000 under the Humanitarian Visa Programme and 5,000 under the Family Visa Programme).³⁰ The Canadian Humanitarian Visa option includes two streams for Afghan people: i) government assisted refugees; and ii) privately sponsored refugees.³¹ For all these destination, the number of queries were highest in July before declining slightly in August, whereas queries related to migration to the Gulf region were minimal.

On the other hand, queries related to Brazil, which were popular until April 2022, experienced a decline, especially during the months of July and August. One major reason could be that Brazil has stopped issuing humanitarian visa directly in Afghanistan, rather it now has the option open through international organisations such as IOM, or in other countries e.g. Afghans in Pakistan, Iran or Turkey. As of March 2022, about 1,237 Afghans had acquired the right to live in Brazil.³² However, the Afghans who receive the humanitarian visa have to bear the costs of travel to Brazil themselves, and those who have reached Brazil are experiencing numerous difficulties in accessing employment, owing to the high domestic unemployment rate, limited financial support available for them and restrictions in access to the job market due to language barriers. Some reports say that Afghans who do not have sufficient resources or social contacts in the country have nowhere to stay and are often stranded at airports for days as shelters are overbooked.³³ Many of those Afghans who have recently arrived in Brazil on the humanitarian visa are in the process of finding means to migrate to the US and Canada.³⁴

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31. Government of Canada, "Humanitarian Program for Afghan Nationals in Need of Resettlement: How the Program Works," 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/special-measures/how-humanitarian-program.html>.
 32. Eduardo Campos Lima, "Afghan Refugees Struggle in Brazil," Arab News, March 1, 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2033946/world>.
 33. "Afghan Families Spend Days and Nights at An Airport in Brazil Waiting for Shelter," Folha De S.Paulo, April 14, 2022, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/world/2022/04/afghan-families-spend-days-and-nights-at-an-airport-in-brazil-waiting-for-shelter.shtml>.
 34. Lima, "Afghan Refugees Struggle in Brazil."

Profile of aspiring migrants contacting MRCs

MRC data shows that the profile of MRC clients has experienced a change since the government toppled. Besides businesses and private sector that have gravely suffered, employers including the public sector and civil society organisations have been unable to pay salaries without the inflow of international aid.³⁵ An increasing number of clients includes public servants and former bureaucrats who worked with the previous regime in Afghanistan and were seeking options to migrate out of the country. Those who could not be evacuated are thus seeking avenues to get out of Afghanistan through other means as they fear persecution from the Taliban rulers. This is reflected in terms of the profile of clients that reach out to the remote MRC. This trend has been gaining momentum since January 2021, prior to which more queries were received for labour migration options.

For instance, an Afghan formerly engaged with the US military service in Afghanistan set out on an irregular journey from Afghanistan through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey to Europe. He had received the green signal to embark on the evacuation flight from Afghanistan on 26th August 2021, but was unable to do so because of the airport attack witnessed that day. Fearing his life, he decided to leave Afghanistan through the irregular route.³⁶

Special Immigration Visa (SIV) programme related queries

Inquiries related to the SIV and US humanitarian parole have remained high but relatively stable over the past few months, with on average about 200 queries per month. The slow processing rates and high rate of rejections could be the reasons for the large number of inquiries with applicants who are awaiting response trying to get an answer through MRC.

Data from the US State Department shows that between October 2021 and March 2022, the US issued SIV to 389 principal Afghan applicants, and 1,086 derivative applicants. As of March 2022, about 16,379 principal applicants from Afghanistan for SIV were still awaiting their acceptance.³⁷ The US Citizenship and Immigration Services has received \$20 million for processing these applications as filing fees (about \$575 per applicant), yet the rate of acceptance and pace of processing the applications is extremely slow³⁸. There is also wide discrimination against the Afghans in approval of SIVs. Compared to Afghans, about 60,000 Ukrainian refugees have been granted permission to enter

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35. Mohib Iqbal and Marie McAuliffe, "The ' Eighth Phase ' of Afghan Displacement: Situating the Top Ten Issues for Policymakers," Migration Research Series (Geneva, 2022).
36. Abdul-Ahad, "I Will Reach Europe or Die': Three Stories of Afghan Refugees in Turkey."
37. US Department of State, "Report to Congress on Joint Department of State/Department of Homeland Security Report: Status of the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program," 2022, file:///C:/Users/qaisrania/Work Folders/My Documents/AFG MRC trend analysis/Afghan-Public-Quarterly-Report-Q1-January-2022.pdf.
38. Beth Bailey, "Biden Administration Fails to Respond on Ukraine-Afghan Refugee Double Standards," The Washington Examiner, May 22, 2022, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/equality-not-elitism/biden-administration-fails-to-respond-on-ukraine-afghan-refugee-double-standards>.
39. Michal Kranz, "Afghans in US Immigration Limbo Watch Ukrainians Breeze Through," Al Jazeera, July 20, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/20/afghans-in-us-immigration-limbo-watch-ukrainians-breeze-through>.

Moreover, recent updates show that the US has changed the eligibility criteria for the Afghan applicants after Afghans had already submitted their applications, leading to high number of refusals and indefinite delays. Starting from October 1, 2022, the humanitarian parole scheme is expected to end and the remaining applicants are required to exhibit family ties in the US, a connection with the US military, or that they are among the most vulnerable applicants to the US refugee program.⁴⁰ The change in policy also puts many of the 85,000 Afghans who were evacuated last year at risk as they have to ensure another immigration pathway to stay in the US. Hence, this may have increased the number of queries received by the MRC for the SIV scheme.

— Outlook: What to expect between September and December 2022 —

- In the upcoming months, an important aspect to keep an eye on would be the decision regarding the Afghan central bank reserves. The longer the disagreement over the disbursement of the reserves continues between the US government and the Taliban regime, the economic turmoil is expected to worsen amid continuing sanctions, driving more people to consider finding their way out of the country.
- Afghans seeking to migrate out of the country continue to face challenges in accessing travel documents to undertake legal migration journeys. Only a limited number of countries still have their embassies/consulates operative in Afghanistan. Other countries are offering consular services through the nearest offices in Islamabad, Pakistan.
- The increase in violent incidents on the border crossings and the rise in forced returns of Afghans from Iran and Turkey through security interceptions may also alter migration patterns in the upcoming months. Afghans attempting to migrate irregularly may choose riskier journeys to avoid law enforcement personnel.
- Harsh weather conditions may compound the difficulties for both internally displaced and those Afghans attempting to migrate through irregular routes.
- Protests are erupting again in Afghan refugee camps in the UAE (called Emirates Humanitarian City), among those Afghans who are awaiting resettlement to the US. In February 2022, the US had promised that all Afghans in the UAE camps would be resettled by August 2022, however the process has been slow.⁴¹
- Canadian government recently announced that it plans to resettle more Afghans to Canada, above the pledge of 40,000 Afghan individuals to be resettled to Canada by 2023. So far, Canada has resettled about 20,000 Afghan refugees to Canada.⁴² This may spike queries received at the MRC regarding migration to Canada.

40. Rebecca Beitsch, "US Curtails One Immigration Pathway for Afghan Evacuees, Shifting to Long-Term Strategy," The Hill, September 1, 2022, <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/3624268-us-ends-one-immigration-pathway-for-afghan-evacuees-shifting-to-long-term-strategy/>.

41. Middle East Eye, "Afghan Refugees in UAE Protest against Uncertainty and 'prison-like' Conditions," August 24, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/afghanistan-refugees-protest-uae-uncertainty-prison-like-conditions>.

42. Nicholas Keung, "Canada's Immigration Minister Leaves Door Open to Extending Afghan Resettlement Programs," Toronto Star, September 22, 2022, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/09/22/canadas-immigration-minister-leaves-door-open-to-extending-afghan-resettlement-programs.html>.

Trend Analysis: Migrant Resource Centre - Afghanistan

May - August 2022

Migrant Resource Centre Pakistan

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