

# GLOBAL TRENDS

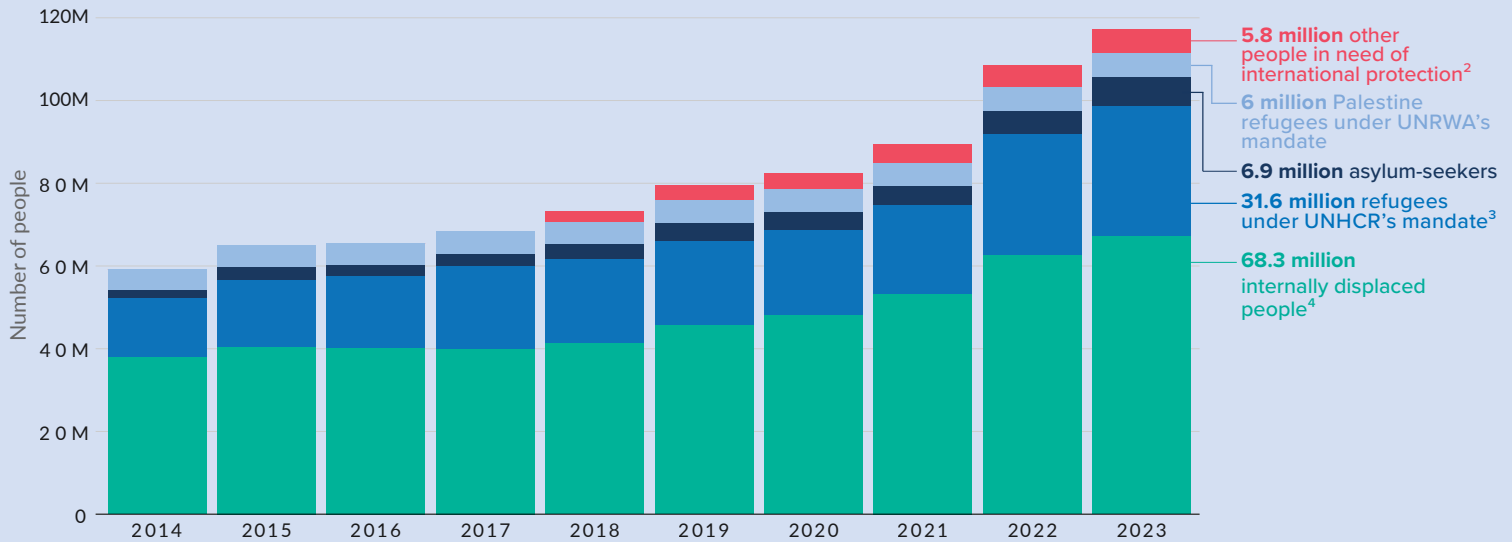
## FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN 2023



# Trends at a Glance

## 117.3 MILLION FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE<sup>1</sup>

at the end of 2023 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



## 75% HOSTED IN LOW-AND MIDDLE- INCOME COUNTRIES

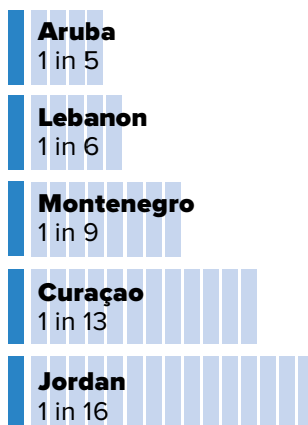
Low- and middle-income countries hosted 75 per cent of the world's refugees and other people in need of international protection.<sup>5</sup> The Least Developed Countries provided asylum to 21 per cent of the total.

## 69% HOSTED IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

69 per cent of refugees and other people in need of international protection lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin.

## 1 IN 5 ARE DISPLACED

Relative to their national populations,<sup>6</sup> the island of Aruba (1 in 5) and Lebanon (1 in 6) hosted the largest number of refugees and other people in need of international protection, followed by Montenegro (1 in 9), Curaçao (1 in 13) and Jordan (1 in 16).<sup>7</sup>



## 3.6 MILLION NEW CLAIMS

The United States of America was the world's largest recipient of new individual applications.

**United States of America**  
1.2 million

**Germany**  
329,100

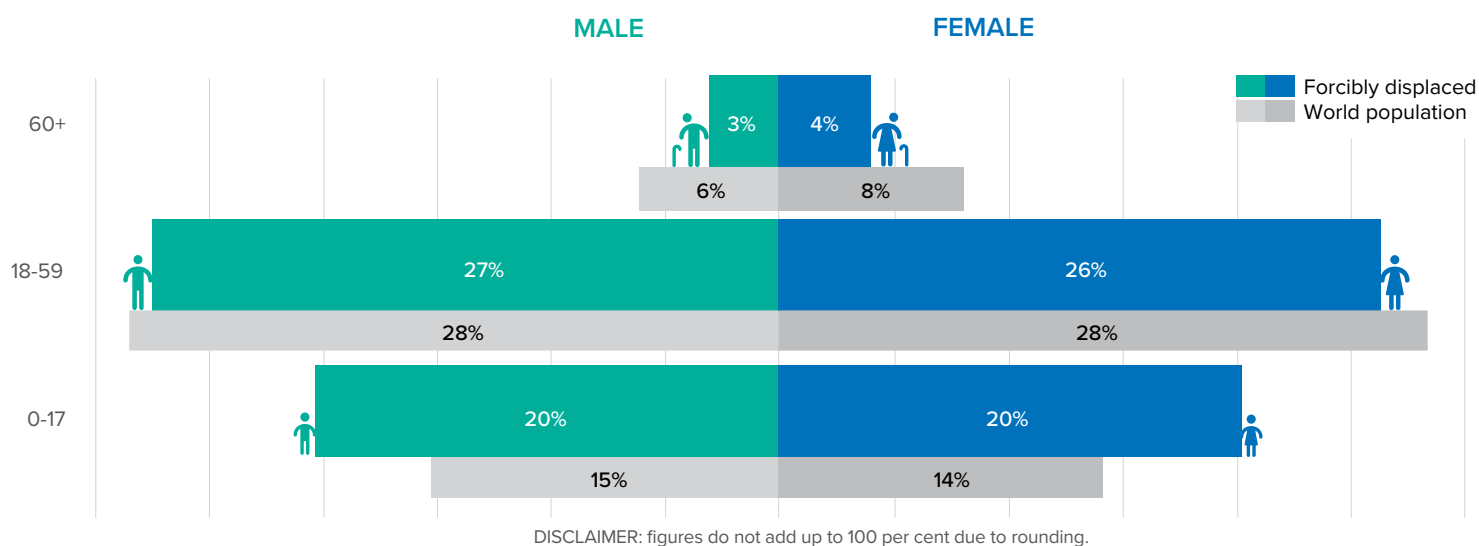
**Egypt**  
183,100

**Spain**  
163,200

**Canada**  
146,800

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN FORCIBLY DISPLACED END-2023

Children account for 30 per cent of the world's population, but 40 per cent of all forcibly displaced people.<sup>8</sup>



## SOLUTIONS

**6.1** MILLION  
DISPLACED PEOPLE  
RETURNED

6.1 million displaced people returned to their areas or countries of origin in 2023, including 5.1 million internally displaced people and over 1 million refugees.

**158,700**  
REFUGEES  
RESETTLED

158,700 refugees were resettled in 2023, according to government statistics. UNHCR submitted 155,500 refugees to States for resettlement.

**32,200**  
STATELESS PEOPLE  
RECEIVED  
CITIZENSHIP

32,200 stateless people had their nationality confirmed or acquired citizenship during the year.

- The total number of people forcibly displaced is calculated using statistics by UNHCR, UNRWA and IDMC. See [UNHCR population groups explained](#) for more information. UNRWA estimates that 70 per cent of the 1.7 million IDPs in the Gaza Strip at end-2023 were Palestine refugees under its mandate. These internally displaced refugees under UNRWA's mandate are only counted once in the global forced displacement total.
- See the [definition of other people in need of international protection on the Refugee Data Finder](#).
- All references in this infographic to refugees under UNHCR's mandate includes people in refugee-like situations.
- Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).
- See [Key facts for countries hosting the world's refugees](#).
- Limited to countries hosting at least 10,000 people. Excludes Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate.
- Lebanon continues to be the highest, per capita, host country for refugees globally, with a government estimate of 1.5 million Syrians (some 785,000 registered by UNHCR) and 11,200 asylum-seekers and refugees of other nationalities. When the 492,800 Palestine refugees in Lebanon and 2.4 million Palestine refugees in Jordan registered with UNRWA are included, the proportions in Lebanon and Jordan increase to one in three. Refugee population estimates in Montenegro will be updated in 2024 once the census results are published.
- Sources: Estimation of IDP demographics (IDMC); Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate (UNRWA); Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation, asylum-seekers and other people in need of international protection are based on the available data (UNHCR) and World Population estimates (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

# Statistics for forcibly displaced and all other people protected/assisted by UNHCR

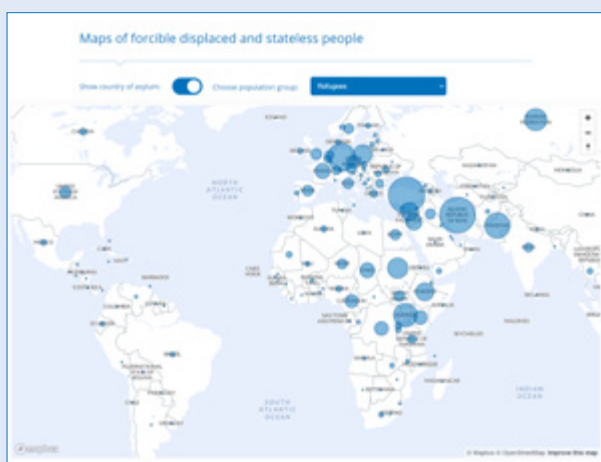
This report’s main focus is the analysis of changes and trends in forced displacement from January to December 2023 among people covered by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency’s mandate.<sup>9</sup> The data presented are based on information received as of 17 May 2024 unless otherwise indicated.

At the end of 2023, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was estimated at **117.3 million**.<sup>10</sup> This figure encompasses refugees under UNHCR’s mandate as well as Palestine refugees under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)’s mandate, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) and other people in need of international protection.

UNHCR also estimates the population that UNHCR protects and/or assists. This includes those who have been forcibly displaced (refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people and other people in need of international protection); those who have returned home within the previous year; those who are stateless (most of whom are not forcibly displaced); and other groups to whom UNHCR has extended its protection or provided assistance on a humanitarian basis. At the end of 2023 this figure stood at **122.6 million** people.

These two categorizations are compared graphically below. A detailed breakdown of the population that UNHCR protects and/or assists is provided in the [Annex Tables](#) by category and country.

The figures in this report are based on data reported by governments, non-governmental organizations and UNHCR. Numbers are rounded to the closest hundred or thousand. As some adjustments may appear later in the year in the Refugee Data Finder,<sup>11</sup> figures contained in this report should be considered as provisional and subject to change. Unless otherwise specified, the report does not refer to events occurring after 31 December 2023.



[View maps showing totals by population group and country.](#)

The figure is a table titled 'Annex 3 - Populations protected and / or assisted by UNHCR by country/territory of origin'. It includes a legend for 'Choose area' and 'Year of data'. The table has columns for 'Location', 'UNHCR Code', 'Refugees', 'Asylum seekers', 'Other people in need of international protection', 'Returned refugees', 'Returned IDPs', 'Persons under UNHCR's mandate', 'Other people in need of international protection', and 'Total number of people protected and / or assisted by UNHCR'. The table lists various countries and territories, such as Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, and others, with corresponding numerical data for each category.

[View annex tables by category and country.](#)

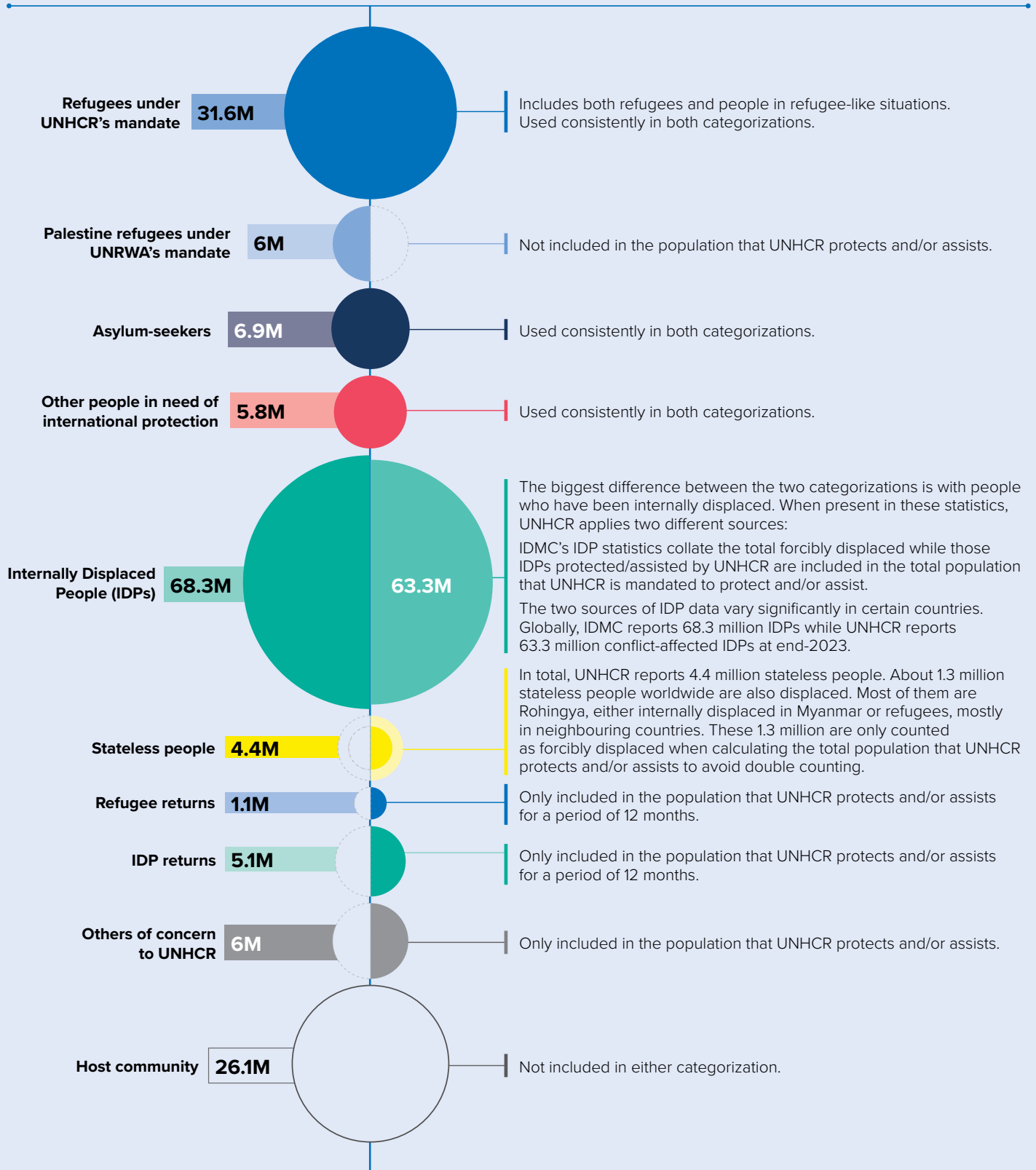
<sup>9</sup> See the [Methodology](#) page of UNHCR’s Refugee Data Finder for a definition of each population group.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>11</sup> See UNHCR’s [Refugee Data Finder](#).

**Forcibly displaced people 117.3 million<sup>12</sup>**

**Population UNHCR protects and/or assists 122.6 million**



<sup>12</sup> See footnote 1.

## CHAPTER 1

# Global Forced Displacement

“ Behind these stark and rising numbers lie countless human tragedies. That suffering must galvanize the international community to act urgently to tackle the root causes of forced displacement. ”

**Filippo Grandi**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

An estimated **117.3 million** people remained forcibly displaced at the end of 2023, having been forced to flee persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order.<sup>13</sup> This constitutes a rise of 8 per cent or 8.8 million people compared to the end of 2022 and continues a series of year-on-year increases over the last 12 years. One in 69 people globally or 1.5 per cent of the entire world’s population was forcibly displaced, nearly double the one in 125 people a decade ago. Based on operational data, UNHCR estimates that forced displacement has continued to increase in the first four months of 2024 and by the end of April 2024 is likely to have exceeded **120 million**.<sup>14</sup>

During the year, the global refugee population increased by 7 per cent to reach **43.4 million**. This reflects new displacement, primarily from Sudan, as well as revised refugee population figures in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Germany.<sup>15</sup> The end-year total includes **5.8 million** other people in need of international protection, predominantly from Venezuela, half a million people more than at end-2022, as Government population estimates in Colombia and Brazil were revised upwards. It also includes **6 million** Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s mandate.

The number of new individual asylum applications surged during the year, with 3.6 million recorded. However, there was a 17 per cent drop in the overall number of people seeking international protection in

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>14</sup> This estimation is based on UNHCR’s nowcasting for refugees and asylum-seekers, UNRWA’s estimates of Palestine refugees under their mandate at the end of March 2024 as well as operational data from countries with large numbers of people who are internally displaced using IDMC’s end-2023 figures as a baseline.

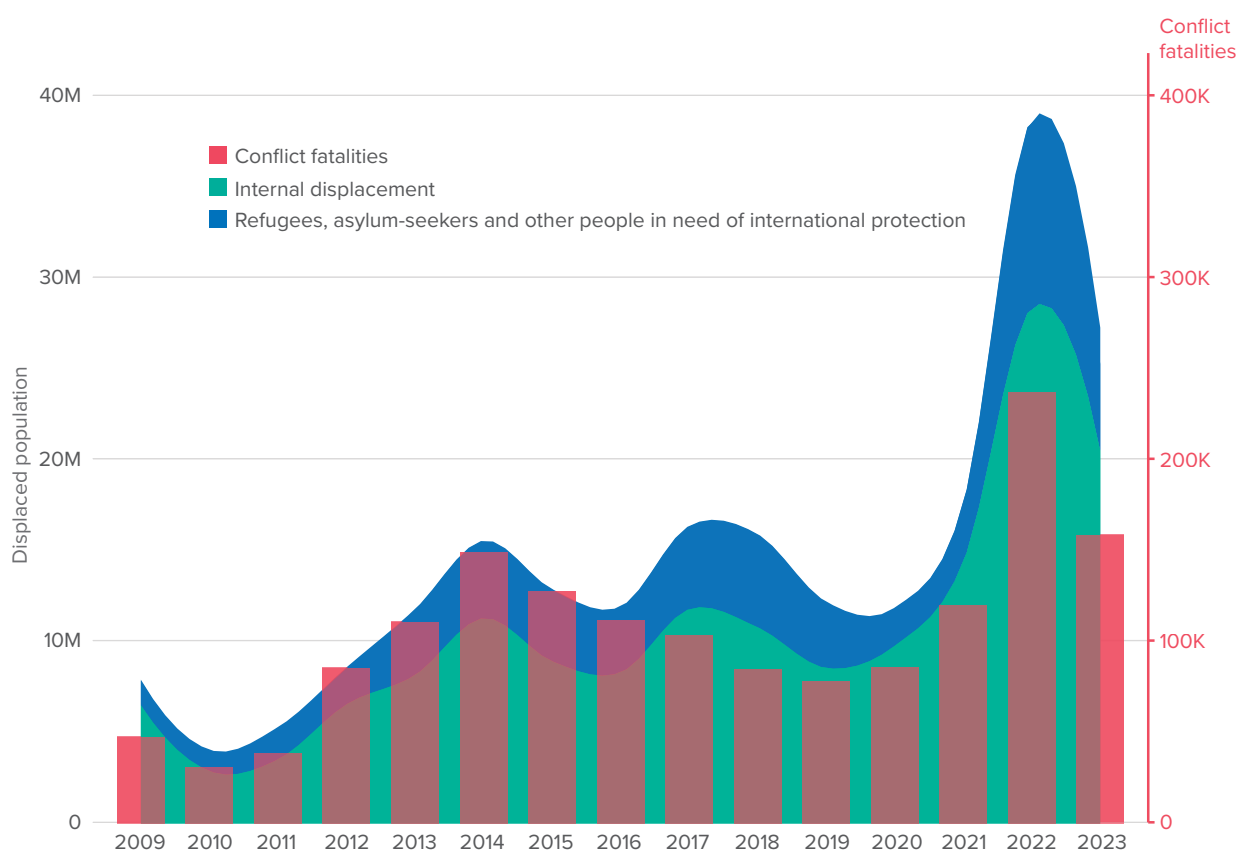
<sup>15</sup> Following verification and registration exercises, the number of Afghans classified as people in refugee-like situations was revised in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. In Germany, refugees in the process of permit renewal were re-included in the country’s refugee population, reversing a temporary methodological change in 2022.

2023 to 5.6 million,<sup>16</sup> primarily due to lower numbers of refugees from Ukraine applying for and being granted temporary protection, mainly in European countries. The total number of asylum-seekers waiting for a decision by the end of the year rose by 26 per cent to **6.9 million** as new individual asylum applications outpaced substantive decisions on these. According to data by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the number of internally displaced people due to conflicts grew sharply by 5.8 million to reach **68.3 million** at the end of 2023.

Forced displacement is a consequence of the failure to uphold peace and security. The frequency, extent, duration and intensity of conflicts as measured by

conflict-related fatalities<sup>17</sup> is closely correlated with the number of people forced to flee in each year, both within their own countries as well as to other countries.<sup>18</sup> In total, at least **27.2 million** people were forced to flee during 2023,<sup>19</sup> with one in four fleeing to another country. As shown in figure 1, as conflict-related fatalities have increased, so too has the number of people forced to flee. During the last 25 years, the average number of people forced to flee in a year has been 14.3 million, while between 2021 and 2023 alone, this average has exceeded 27.8 million, nearly double the 25-year average. Clearly, the intensity of recent conflicts has grown.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 1 | **Comparing conflict-related fatalities with the number of internally displaced people, refugees,<sup>21</sup> asylum-seekers and other people in need of international protection forced to flee during each year | 2009 - 2023**



<sup>16</sup> Includes new individual asylum applications and people receiving recognition through group procedures as well as those granted temporary protection.

<sup>17</sup> Conflict-related deaths provided by the [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#). Data for 2023 is sourced from the UCDP Candidate Event Dataset, with conflict events with the highest degree of uncertainty excluded (code status equals "Check"). Fatalities combine State-based violence, non-State violence and one-sided violence.

<sup>18</sup> Including as refugees, asylum-seekers and other people in need of international protection.

<sup>19</sup> This figure includes estimates of new internal displacements. These refer to movements, and are a comprehensive cumulative figure of displacement. Depending on certain situations the same people can be displaced several times over a given period and would therefore be reported multiple times in the cumulative figures.

<sup>20</sup> See [Armed Conflict Survey 2023](#), IISS.

<sup>21</sup> Including people in refugee-like situations.

## Key displacement situations in 2023

Conflict in **Sudan** broke out in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, causing one of the largest humanitarian and displacement crises in the world. As escalating violence quickly spread from the capital, Khartoum, to other parts of the country, more than 6 million people in Sudan had been forced to flee by the end of the year, with a further 1.2 million fleeing to neighbouring countries. The number of Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers globally increased by at least 826,800 during the year to reach 1.8 million, almost all of whom were hosted by neighbouring countries, including the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan. In these countries, national legal and policy frameworks include refugees in public services, such as documentation, education, health care and social housing despite still under-developed systems, access barriers and different standards in some situations. In total, 10.8 million Sudanese remained forcibly displaced at end-year. As the conflict rages on, thousands are still being displaced daily, more than one year after it began.<sup>22</sup> As of May 2024, operational data indicates the number of new displacements since April 2023 has risen to more than 7.1 million within the country, with a further 1.9 million people arriving in neighbouring countries.<sup>23</sup>

Prior to the war, the country was already facing a dire humanitarian situation, with 3.6 million people internally displaced. This figure rose to 9.1 million, the largest number of people ever recorded to have remained displaced within their own country at end-year. Hunger is widespread in the country, with more than 20 million people (42 per cent of the entire population) facing acute food insecurity, especially in conflict areas that are hard to reach.<sup>24</sup> One million refugees also lived in Sudan prior to the latest conflict, primarily from Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Many have

now been forced to return to their home countries prematurely or move on to other countries, often arriving in remote and difficult-to-access locations that lack essential services. For example, estimates indicate that the conflict forced nearly 400,000 South Sudanese refugees to leave Sudan and return to South Sudan. Even as refugees were forced to leave Sudan, several hundred thousand refugees remained in Sudan - the country they had sought refuge in. This includes those who have been repeatedly displaced within the country as the conflict unfolded.

Conflict in the Gaza Strip in the **State of Palestine** has had a devastating toll on the Palestinian civilian population.<sup>25</sup> The humanitarian situation is extremely dire, with levels of hunger so widespread with all of the 2.2 million inhabitants facing acute food insecurity and an imminent threat of famine.<sup>26</sup> UNRWA estimates that between October and December 2023, up to 1.7 million people (or over 75 per cent of the population) have been displaced within the Gaza Strip, with some having been forced to flee multiple times.<sup>27</sup> By the end of 2023, there were 6 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate, 1.6 million of whom were in the Gaza Strip.<sup>28</sup> UNRWA estimates that two-thirds of the Palestine refugees under its mandate in the Gaza Strip have become internally displaced in 2023, compounding existing vulnerabilities.

More than 1.3 million people have been displaced within **Myanmar** in 2023 by escalating violence following the military takeover in February 2021, bringing the total number of IDPs in the country to more than 2.6 million by the end of 2023. An additional 1.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar were hosted in other countries. Nearly one million are stateless Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled Myanmar seven years ago. Most live in Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh, where dependency on humanitarian aid is widespread and the security situation is deteriorating.<sup>29</sup> Desperation in these camps is driving Rohingya refugees to risk their lives on dangerous sea routes to Indonesia and Malaysia, which have been described as among

<sup>22</sup> See [Thousands still fleeing Sudan daily, after one year of war](#), UNHCR.

<sup>23</sup> See [Operational Data Portal - Sudan Situation](#), UNHCR.

<sup>24</sup> See [2024 Global Report on Food Crisis](#), Food Security Information Network.

<sup>25</sup> See [Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#), UNHCR.

<sup>26</sup> See [2024 Global Report on Food Crisis: Focus Gaza Strip](#), Food Security Information Network.

<sup>27</sup> See [Situation Report #67](#), UNRWA.

<sup>28</sup> The 6 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate are in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In addition, there are 41,100 Palestinian refugees under UNHCR's mandate in other countries. This represents a decrease of 63,300 from end-2022 as the estimated number of Palestinian refugees under UNHCR's mandate in Egypt was revised downwards. UNRWA defines Palestine refugees as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." See [Who we are](#), UNRWA.

<sup>29</sup> See [2024 Joint Response Plan Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis](#), UNHCR.



the deadliest in the world. Estimates show that one Rohingya died or went missing for every eight who attempted the journey in 2023.<sup>30</sup>

Globally, nearly 10.9 million **Afghans** remained displaced, almost all within their country or in neighbouring countries. In 2023, the number of Afghan refugees<sup>31</sup> reported globally increased by 741,400 to reach 6.4 million, mostly reflecting new population estimates reported by both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Opportunities for sustainable return remain limited, as almost half the population of more than 40 million people in Afghanistan face acute food insecurity, and millions remain displaced from their homes within the country.

After the escalation of the war in 2022, displacement within and from **Ukraine** continued, albeit at a slower rate than during the previous year. Approximately three-quarters of a million people became newly internally displaced, primarily in eastern and southern Ukraine, where fighting was most intense during 2023. Reflecting revised estimation methodologies, as well as return movements, the number of people remaining internally displaced in Ukraine by the end of 2023 decreased to 3.7 million. The number of Ukrainian refugees and asylum-seekers increased by 275,500 to 6 million. At the end of the year, an estimated one-sixth of the Ukrainian pre-war population had fled abroad. Whilst new estimates indicate that up to 1.3 million internally displaced people and at least 324,600 refugees returned during 2023, it remains highly challenging to accurately quantify such movements. At end-year, a total of 9.7 million Ukrainians remained forcibly displaced.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, a resurgence of fighting in the eastern part of the country has exacerbated a humanitarian emergency where large-scale forced displacement started nearly two decades ago. During the year, 3.8 million people were newly internally displaced, while 1.8 million IDPs were estimated to have returned during the same period, and 6.7 million people remained internally displaced in the country at the end of 2023.

**Somalia** continued to experience persistent insecurity in 2023 as well as weather extremes, with flash floods in April 2023, after five consecutive failed rainy seasons. During the year, 673,000 Somalis were displaced within

their country due to conflict, with a further 2 million new internal displacements caused by disasters. Some 20 countries around the world, hosting millions of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people, are experiencing increasing risks of climate-related hazards as well as conflicts (see “Forced displacement in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and conflict” on page 23). In Somalia, 3.9 million people remained displaced in the country at end-year, and the number of Somalis who sought international protection also rose by 177,600 to 1 million, most of whom were in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Elsewhere, indiscriminate gang violence in **Haiti** has caused a surge in human rights violations, with 311,000 people remaining displaced within their country at the end of the year. Nearly half of the country’s 11.4 million people require humanitarian assistance.<sup>32</sup> The number of Haitian refugees and asylum-seekers rose sharply by 68 per cent to 350,600. Hostilities in **Syria** flared up in 2023, with the number of people displaced within the country growing by 174,000 to stand at 7.2 million at end-year. Including 6.5 million Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers, a total of 13.8 million Syrians remained forcibly displaced in 137 countries at end-year. A further 141,900 refugees fled to **Armenia**, with most of them arriving after renewed armed conflict in the South Caucasus region in September 2023.

## The importance of data in providing solutions for those forced to flee

Most forcibly displaced people remain within their country (58 per cent at end-2023). Of those seeking protection in another country, most remain in countries neighbouring their home country (69 per cent of refugees at end-2023). However, some refugees and asylum-seekers residing in such countries do not find sufficient protection and access to rights, national services and labour markets and therefore choose to move onward. As described in box 2 below, UNHCR is taking a **route-based approach** to strengthen protection and solutions for refugees and migrants in the context of mixed and onward movements along routes.

<sup>30</sup> See [Urgent action needed to address dramatic rise in Rohingya deaths at sea](#), UNHCR.

<sup>31</sup> Including people in refugee-like situations.

<sup>32</sup> See [In 2024, approximately 5.5 million Haitians require humanitarian assistance](#), OCHA.

Better data on those forced to flee, and richer analysis of this data, is also key to support interventions that help them find relevant solutions. Such data may include detailed figures on population flows, including information on protection needs

and vulnerabilities. UNHCR is delivering on its commitment to further strengthen its role as a trusted leader on data and information related to refugees and other affected populations<sup>33</sup> by leading initiatives such as the **Forced Displacement Survey** (see box 1).

## BOX 1 - UNHCR'S FORCED DISPLACEMENT SURVEY

The UNHCR Forced Displacement Survey (FDS) is a multi-topic, nationally representative household survey designed for low- and lower-middle-income refugee-hosting countries. It generates standardized high-quality socio-economic data on refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as their host community. Other population groups can also be included as needed, such as refugee returnees or internally displaced people. The FDS covers a broad range of topics, such as living conditions, self-reliance, social inclusion and access to services, among others.

The FDS is aligned with internationally recognized survey programmes to ensure its quality meets international standards and its data is comparable with data collected by other key survey programmes. All statistical outputs of the FDS will be published in UNHCR's Microdata Library.<sup>34</sup>

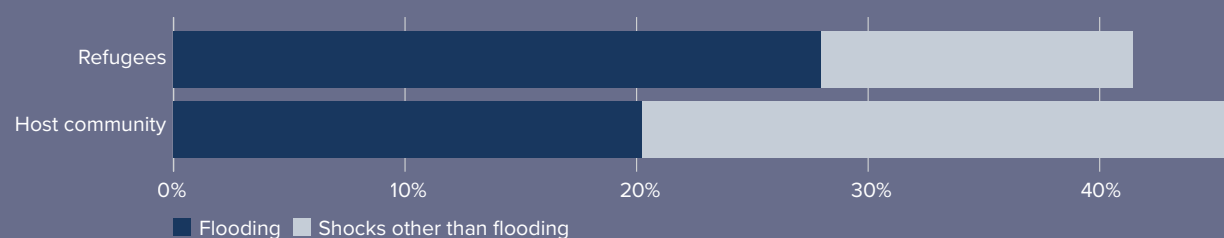
UNHCR also collaborates with National Statistical Offices to promote the statistical inclusion of forcibly displaced people into national statistical systems. The FDS socio-economic data will also support the inclusion of refugees into national development plans and the reporting towards international commitments.

The first FDS was conducted in South Sudan in 2023, prior to the large influx of refugees and returnees from Sudan which commenced in April 2023. In total, 3,100 households were enumerated in five states, including both refugee and host communities as well as a small experimental sample of refugee returnee

households. The findings presented below show households' experience of shocks, including disasters and hazards such as floods, the death or illness of a household member, deteriorating livelihood or financial circumstances and the households' strategies for coping with these shocks. The full FDS report for South Sudan will be published later in 2024. Currently, FDS fieldwork is underway in Pakistan and Cameroon and planning is well advanced for the FDS in Zambia.

Figure 2 shows that during the previous 12 months refugees in the north of South Sudan have generally experienced similar level of shocks (42 per cent) compared to the host community (46 per cent) in the same region.<sup>35</sup> The most common type of shock experienced by both refugees and the host community was flooding, which is common in the north of South Sudan.<sup>36</sup> Most of the refugee and host community households in the north reported that they did not have any coping strategies to respond to such adverse events (see figure 3). Of those households that did, many of the reported ways of coping were not sustainable, such as reducing consumption and borrowing money. Humanitarian and development actors can use the FDS findings to work together with the Government of South Sudan and design sustainable interventions to assist the most vulnerable households in both refugee and host communities, helping to build their resilience and self-reliance.

Figure 2 | **Shocks experienced by households in the north of South Sudan | 2022 - 2023**



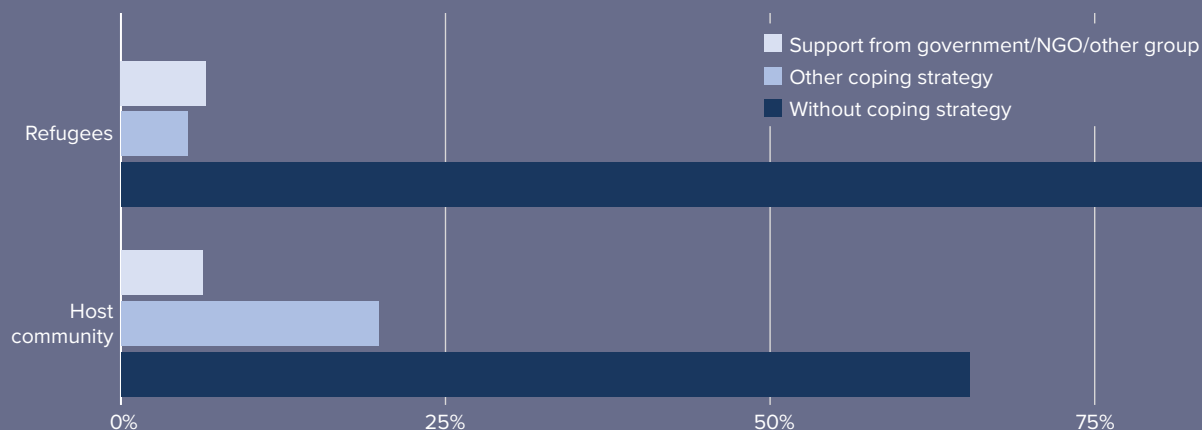
<sup>33</sup> See UNHCR's Data Transformation Strategy 2020 – 2025.

<sup>34</sup> See the UNHCR Microdata Library as well as the FDS website for more information and countries covered by the new UNHCR programme.

<sup>35</sup> Only refugees and the host communities in the north are presented in this analysis although the FDS also collected data for refugees in the south, since refugees in the north account for around 90 per cent of the refugee population in South Sudan.

<sup>36</sup> See *Rising from the Depths* (2023), the World Bank.

Figure 3 | Households' strategies for coping with the shocks experienced in the north of South Sudan | 2022 - 2023



Notes: Only the households that experienced a shock in the previous 12 months were asked for coping strategies. Multiple answers were allowed, thus the sum of percentages of all categories may be higher than 100.

Pledges to improve data also featured strongly in the second **Global Refugee Forum (GRF)**, which took place in Geneva in December 2023. Some 1,750 pledges and commitments, including financial pledges totalling USD 2.2 billion, were made reflecting the GRF's objectives: easing the pressure on countries hosting refugees; enhancing refugees' self-reliance; expanding third country solutions available to refugees; and improving conditions in countries of origin to enable voluntary and sustainable returns.<sup>37</sup> For example, commitments included a multi-stakeholder pledge on advancing the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national statistics, which comprised 102 financial, technical, material, and policy support pledges.<sup>38</sup> States and international organizations aimed to reinforce the identification or inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems, in national censuses or nationally representative surveys.<sup>39</sup>

The GRF took place against the backdrop of a year when durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and

stateless people were, once again, only available to a tiny fraction of those in need of them. In 2023, 1.2 million refugees returned to their home country, were resettled to a third country or became citizens of their host nation. However, most of these refugees either returned to Ukraine, despite the ongoing international armed conflict, or to South Sudan, to escape the escalating conflict in Sudan. Essential services and economic opportunities in the communities receiving these returns remain insufficient. As a result, the potential for refugees to rebuild their lives will remain unfulfilled.

The GRF 2023 commitments have set an ambitious benchmark for improving policies to truly change the lives of the millions of forcibly displaced and stateless people, as well as the communities that host them. The implementation of these commitments in the coming years will be a measure of what the international community can achieve when working with and for forcibly displaced and stateless people around the world.

<sup>37</sup> See [Outcomes Global Refugee Forum 2023](#), UNHCR.

<sup>38</sup> See [Multistakeholder Pledge: Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons in National Statistical Systems and Surveys](#).

<sup>39</sup> See [Inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national statistics](#), UNHCR

## BOX 2 - UNDERSTANDING DATA IN THE CONTEXT OF STRENGTHENING PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS UNDER THE ROUTE-BASED APPROACH

### Lessons learnt from the routes leading to North African countries and the Central Mediterranean Sea.

The **route-based approach** aims to strengthen protection and solutions for refugees and migrants in the context of mixed and onwards movements along routes.<sup>40</sup> Refugees fleeing persecution, war, conflict or generalized violence in their country of origin, may move onwards from their host country travelling alongside migrants, often irregularly. Onwards movements of refugees may be driven by crises in host countries, such as poor governance, political, economic, social and environmental conditions, lack of access to rights and services, insecurity, the effects of climate change or by a search for better opportunities. While the rights of, and solutions for, refugees and migrants are distinct, those using the same routes face similar vulnerabilities and risks along the way.

Data can shed light on the risks faced by refugees and migrants along key routes. Between November 2019 and March 2023, interviews were conducted by the Mixed Migration Centre with 31,500 refugees and migrants (of whom 34 per cent were female) along the Central Mediterranean route. The predominant risks reported included severe threats to life, rape and sexual violence, torture and physical violence, kidnapping for ransom, arbitrary detention, robbery, human trafficking and collective expulsions.<sup>41</sup> The dangers along some routes are especially high in hard-to-reach places, where humanitarian organizations are not present, including because they are not granted access or because of the prevailing insecurity. In total, over 950 people are known to have died while crossing the Sahara Desert between 2021 and 2023, but due to its enormous size and inaccessibility, the actual number is believed to be much higher. During the same period, around 7,600 people on the move were reported to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>42</sup>

The immediate services refugees and migrants need along these routes are similar. Responding more effectively and predictably to the challenges of mixed and onward movements requires a broader, whole-of-route approach. At the core of this approach is a shift towards more humane and effective responses that ensure international protection for refugees all along the routes, and delivering better outcomes for all those on the move – both refugees and migrants, affected communities and States alike. For example, humanitarian partners working with local authorities can locate protection services where they are most needed and provide needed information on risks, services, procedures and opportunities along the routes. This requires data to be collected, analysed and acted upon.

A route-based approach to mixed movements of refugees and migrants must be informed by data and based on evidence collected through operational partnerships, research and analysis. Without investment in these areas to gain up-to-date knowledge of challenges and opportunities, responses may instead be driven by immediate political imperatives. This can give rise to restrictive policies and practices or fuel anti-foreigner or anti-refugee rhetoric and populist narratives based on misinformation.

While a route-based approach can be considered for all mixed and onwards movement of refugees and migrants, UNHCR is initially working with partners on a few selected routes, such as the Central Mediterranean route and the movements towards South Africa. A hemispheric approach is also applied in the Americas, encompassing strategies to address root causes of displacement in countries of origin, respond to humanitarian and protection needs of people in transit, and strengthen protection, inclusion

<sup>40</sup> This term covers people travelling as part of mixed movements with different needs and profiles and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, stateless persons, and migrants (including migrants in irregular situations or migrants in vulnerable situations). Some refugees are moving from their country of origin, or onwards from a country of asylum. For a definition of mixed movements see the [UNHCR Glossary](#).

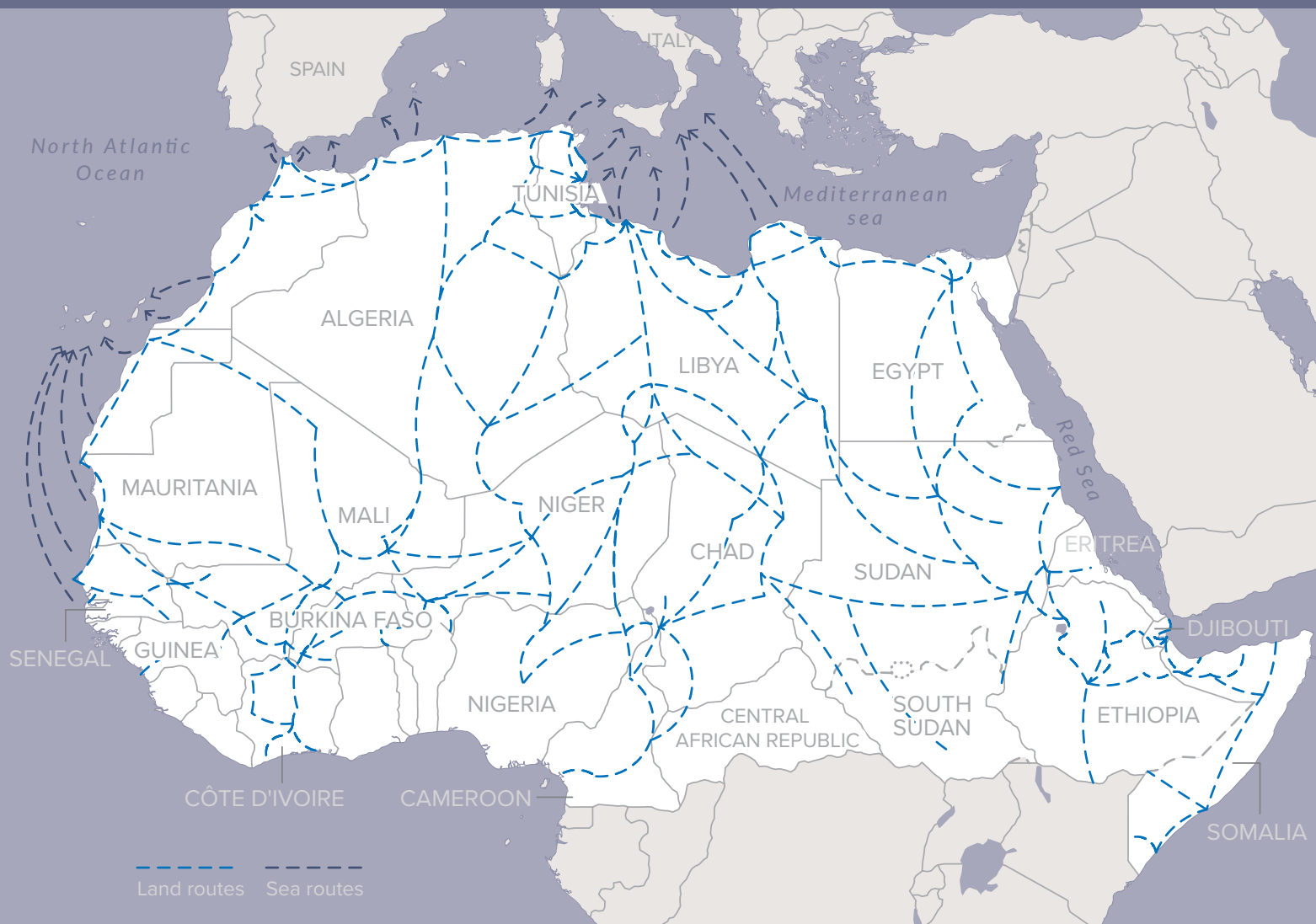
<sup>41</sup> See [4Mi interactive data direct from migrants](#), Mixed Migration Centre.

<sup>42</sup> See [Missing Migrants Project](#), IOM.

and solutions in destination countries.<sup>43</sup> Along the routes leading to the Central Mediterranean Sea, for example, data from the Mixed Migration Centre, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR shows the geography and the typology of the protection risks that refugees and migrants face (see

map 1 and figure 4).<sup>44</sup> While most incidents have been reported in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger and Sudan, the locations where most monitoring is conducted are also within these countries. Protection services along other parts of the route remain unavailable.

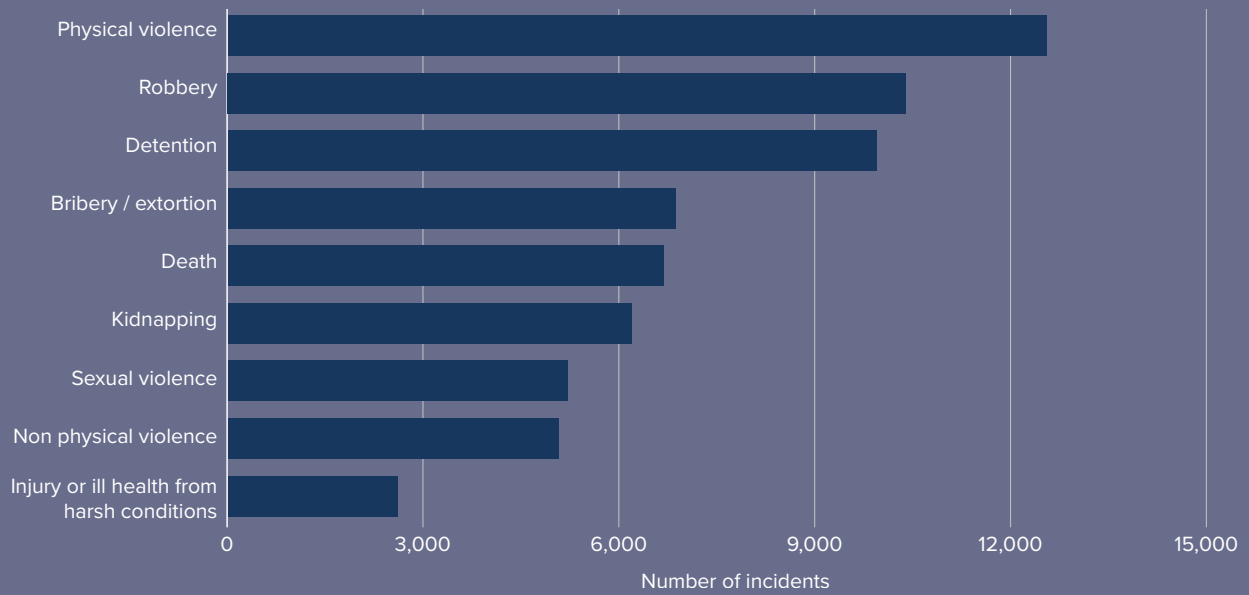
Map 1 | Routes leading to the Central Mediterranean Sea | November 2019 - March 2023



<sup>43</sup> See [Los Angeles Declaration: UNHCR redoubles commitment, calls for coordinated hemispheric approach to respond to forced displacement in the Americas](#).

<sup>44</sup> See [Mapping of Protection Services: a route-based approach to protection services along mixed movement routes](#), UNHCR. Source for the routes: IOM and UNHCR. Source of protection risks: the [Mixed Migration Centre](#).

Figure 4 | Protection risks along the Central Mediterranean Route | November 2019 - March 2023



Key to a route-based approach is detailed data on **population flows**, including the means of movement, composition of flows (i.e. age, sex, country of origin, etc.) and details about arrival destinations. Such data may include estimations of the percentage moving by land, sea or air. This data should also differentiate between those arriving regularly versus those arriving irregularly - even if their journey may have started as a regular movement. It can also include understanding the specific risks facing certain profiles (such as unaccompanied and separated children) or distinguishing between arrivals directly from countries of origin and onwards movement from third countries.

UNHCR assists States to regularly undertake verification exercises for camp or urban refugee populations to confirm the number of refugees present on their territories, whether those who are no longer present have returned, moved onwards or have relocated in the country of asylum. UNHCR has provided estimates of onwards movements across the African continent in countries where the organization’s registration system is used for the registration of refugees and asylum-seekers. However, as some refugees embarking on secondary journeys do not necessarily register again in countries using UNHCR’s system, data gaps also persist in these instances.

Drivers contributing to onward movements are different from country to country and from community

to community. Qualitative data about refugees and migrants can help understand these key drivers as well as the enabling factors, pull factors and movement constraints. To capture key movement drivers, the Mixed Migration Centre has developed a longitudinal approach which can highlight whether people have moved or not, and for what reasons.<sup>45</sup> This methodology has the potential to enable more qualitative planning along the routes by estimating the percentage of refugees and migrants who are settled in a country along the route, versus those on the move.

However, not all mixed movements generate the same attention. Those highly mediated and dramatic movements by sea attract far more attention than deadly journeys by land. Movements to the North of Africa and across the sea to Europe also receive more coverage than those by land within Africa or across the Gulf of Aden. Yet, they deserve equal attention and response. While the emphasis is often on more data, adapting policy and pragmatic responses, including preparedness, do not necessarily require more data, but a better combination of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as better and regular analysis of the trends and drivers over time, including forecasting where possible. Not doing this could lead to conflating economic migration and refugee movements potentially resulting in poor or ineffective responses and in the absence of international protection where it is needed.

<sup>45</sup> See [What Changes over the Course of the Migration Journey?: Results from piloting longitudinal 4Mi](#).

## CHAPTER 2

# Refugees

## 43.4 MILLION

refugees at the end of 2023 (+7 per cent) including **5.9 million** people in refugee-like situations (+15 per cent), **5.8 million** other people in need of international protection (+10 per cent) and **6 million** Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

## 73%

of refugees under UNHCR's mandate originate from just five countries.

## 6.4 MILLION

refugees were from Afghanistan, once again the largest country of origin.

Most refugees have remained displaced for many years, and globally, the total number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate reached 37.4 million at the end of 2023, 2.7 million (+8 per cent) more than at the end of the previous year. This included refugees escaping rapid escalations of conflict in Sudan and gang-related violence in Haiti as well as further forced displacement from countries including Afghanistan and Ukraine. Compared to a decade ago, the total number of refugees globally has more than tripled. The global total included 5.9 million people in refugee-like situations and 5.8 million other people in need of international protection. **All further references to refugees in this chapter include all three of these population groups, unless otherwise stated.**<sup>46</sup>

During 2023, more than 2.8 million people were granted international protection including 823,800

who had made an individual asylum claim, 891,000 recognized on a group basis and a further 1.1 million people who received temporary protection (see "How is refugee status granted?" on page 30). The total number of people granted international protection in 2023 represents a decrease from the 4.9 million people in the previous year. In 2023, a further 486,500 people in refugee-like situations were estimated to have been displaced during the year.<sup>47</sup>

As in recent years, the burden of hosting refugees is not equally distributed across countries. The Gini coefficient – which measures inequality across host countries – highlights that the current status quo remains extremely unbalanced (see section on burden and responsibility sharing of refugee hosting countries below).

<sup>46</sup> This does not include Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

<sup>47</sup> See [UNHCR's forced displacement flow dataset](#). Most people in a refugee-like situation were Afghan or Ukrainian. In 2023, Brazil reported 95,800 people in a refugee-like situation, primarily Haitian nationals (87,400), who have been granted a humanitarian residency permit.

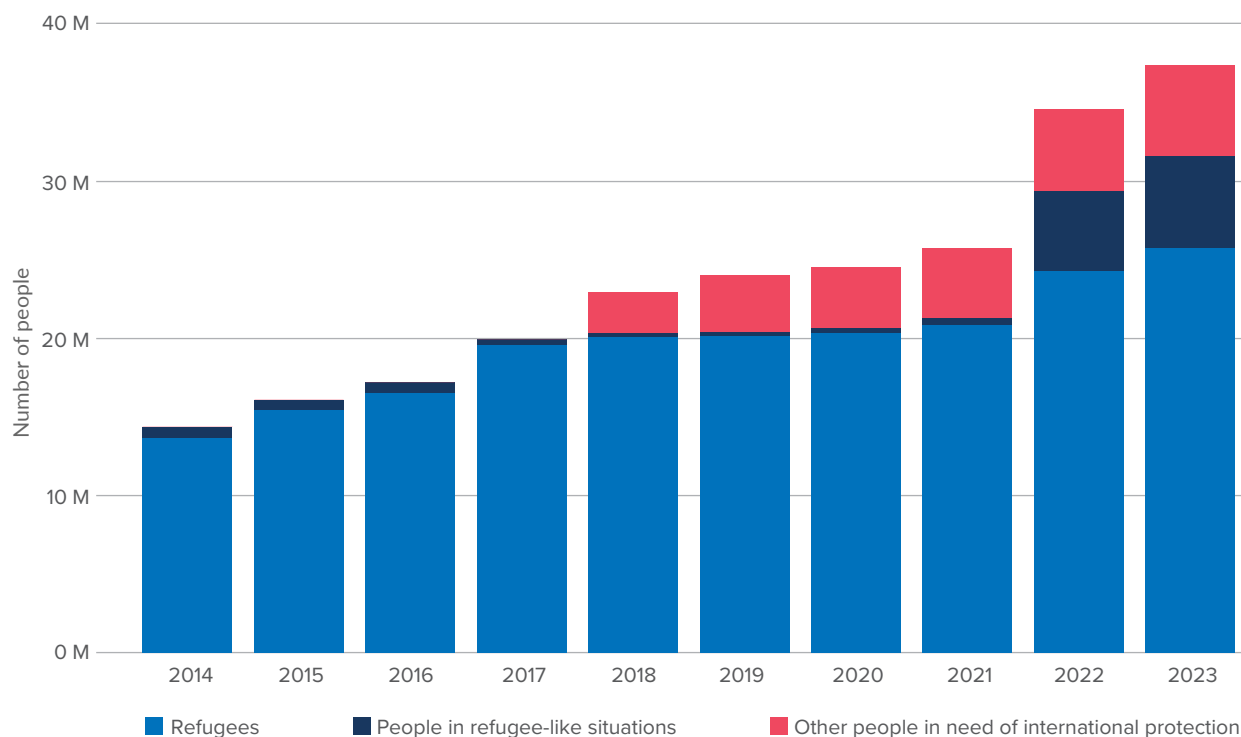
**BULGARIA.** Oleksander, a Ukrainian refugee, is shown here in the corridors of an accommodation centre for refugees near Burgas. He and his partner fled the conflict in Ukraine in 2022, taking their pet cat with them. Oleksander said that he is grateful to Bulgaria for hosting them, and he expressed his hope to return to Ukraine one day.

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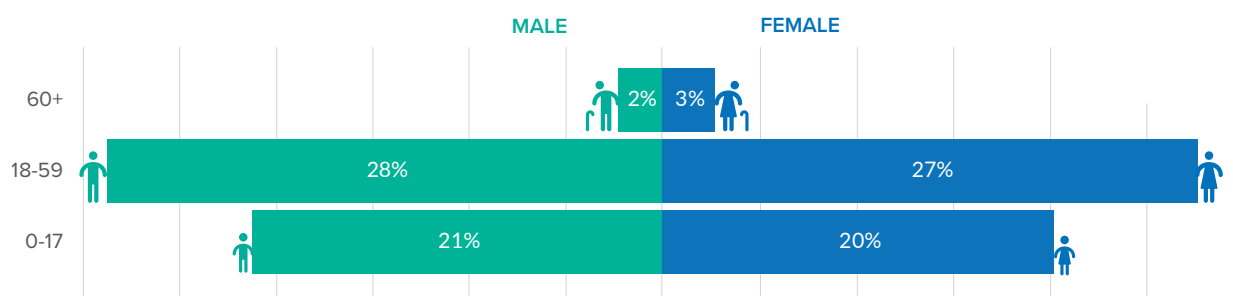


Figure 5 | Refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection | 2014 - 2023



## Estimated demographic composition of refugees

Figure 6 | Estimated demographics of refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection | end-2023



Disclaimer: Figures are rounded, and therefore may not add up to 100.

UNHCR compiles data annually on the combined sex- and age-distribution of the populations that UNHCR is mandated to protect and/or assist. At end-2023, demographic data by age and sex was available for 77 per cent of refugees and people in refugee-like situations, and disaggregation by sex only was available for a further 6 per cent. Coverage

of demographic data for other people in need of international protection has increased from 50 per cent in 2022 to 68 per cent, with sex-disaggregated data available for a further 20 per cent of them.

To fill these data gaps, statistical modelling is applied to impute the sex- and age-distribution of populations

with missing demographic data.<sup>48</sup> The estimated percentage of refugees, people in refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection who are children was 40 per cent, and women and girls account for 49 per cent.

To estimate the global number of children born into refugee status, UNHCR calculated estimates by imputing missing birth data for the years between 2018 to 2023.<sup>49</sup> During this period, approximately half of the data on how many children were born into refugee status was missing in the reported statistics. Using statistical modelling to mitigate these gaps, UNHCR estimates that more than 2 million children were born as refugees between 2018 and 2023, equivalent to some 339,000 children per year. In 32 countries globally, the children of refugees born in the host country have the right to attain that country's citizenship<sup>50</sup> and are therefore not included in these estimates. As this imputation is based on several broad statistical assumptions, the results should be considered as estimates and not precise figures.

## By country of origin

Almost three in four refugees (73 per cent) originated from just five countries, and 87 per cent of them are from just 10 countries, consistent with the previous year. The largest refugee population globally were **Afghans**, constituting one in six of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate. Slightly more than 6.4 million Afghans were hosted in 108 countries, an increase of 741,400 or 13 per cent from the previous year. This was predominantly due to the increase of Afghans in refugee-like situations in the Islamic Republic of Iran (+327,300) and Pakistan (+189,800). As in previous

years 90 per cent of all Afghan refugees were hosted in the Islamic Republic of Iran (3.8 million) and Pakistan (2 million).

The number of refugees from **Syria** stood at 6.4 million at end-year, a slight decrease from the previous year. Almost three-quarters (73 per cent), were hosted in neighbouring countries including Türkiye (3.2 million), Lebanon (784,900)<sup>51</sup> and Jordan (649,100).

Almost all of the reported 6.1 million **Venezuelans** have remained in Latin American countries (97 per cent), particularly in Colombia (2.9 million), Peru (1 million), Ecuador (471,400) and Chile (435,800). Overall, the total has increased from 5.4 million at end-2022.

As the Russian Federation's war on Ukraine continued, the number of refugees from **Ukraine** stood at 6 million at the end of the year. This represents an increase of 5 per cent from end-2022, and 25 times more than a decade ago. Around 2.6 million Ukrainians were hosted in neighbouring countries (44 per cent), with a further 3.4 million in other European countries and beyond.

In 2023, after the outbreak of war in **Sudan**, the number of Sudanese refugees surged by 79 per cent to 1.5 million. Approximately six in seven (86 per cent) are hosted in neighbouring Chad (923,300) and South Sudan (359,600). Prior to the outbreak of the war, Sudan also hosted a substantial Syrian refugee population. With obstacles to obtaining valid documents, the number of Syrian refugees in Sudan decreased from 93,500 in 2022 to 26,600 in 2023 as many moved onwards to other countries.

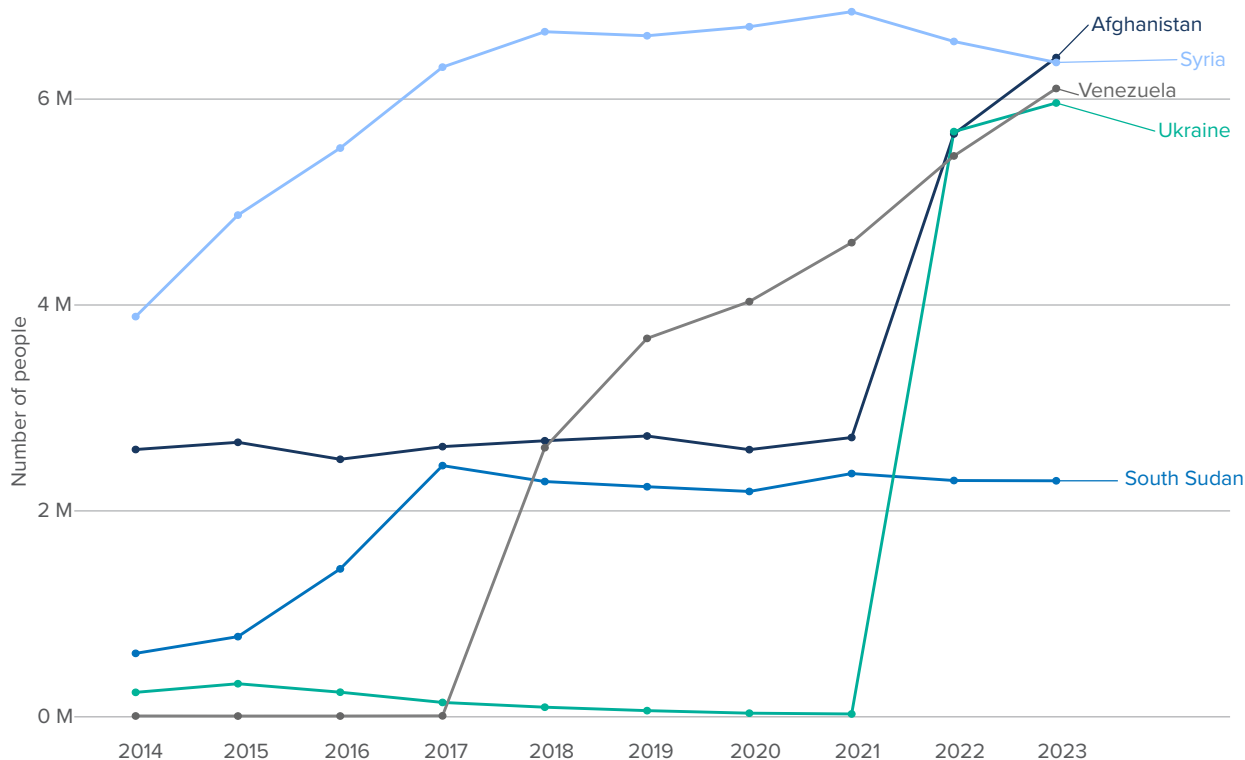
<sup>48</sup> These models are generated using the available demographic data for a country of origin as a starting point. Where data for a particular country of asylum is missing, the values are estimated using statistical modelling from the available data for the same origin country in nearby countries of asylum. The margin of error by sex and age groups is the highest for males aged 18-59 (1 per cent) and the lowest for girls aged 0-4 (0.2 per cent).

<sup>49</sup> A key assumption in the estimates is that forced displacement is likely to impact the fertility pattern of refugees. Refugees face a situation that is drastically different from that of people remaining in their country of origin, and birth rates in the country of origin are not necessarily indicative of refugee populations that have fled these same countries.

<sup>50</sup> See the definition of *jus soli* in the [UNHCR glossary](#).

<sup>51</sup> See footnote 7.

Figure 7 | Refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection by major country of origin | 2014-2023

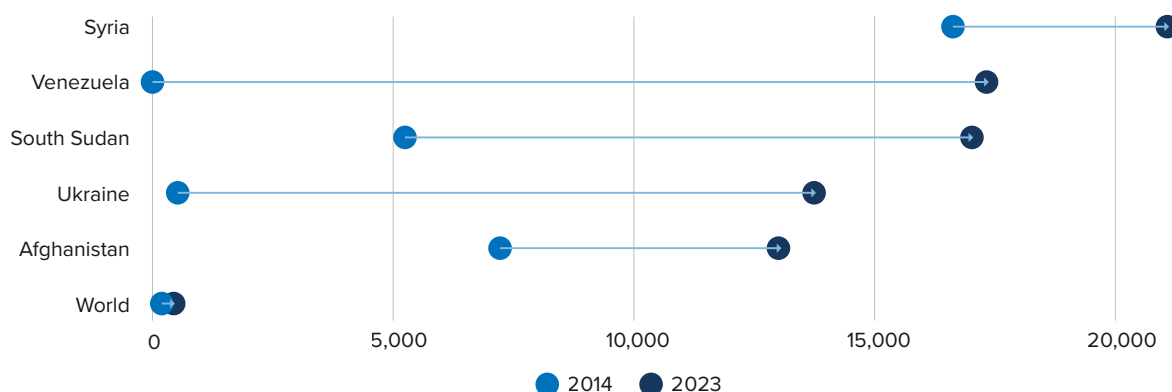


## Sustainable Development Goals – Indicator 10.7.4

SDG Indicator 10.7.4 identifies the proportion of a country’s population who become refugees.<sup>52</sup> Syria (21,100 people per 100,000 inhabitants) has seen the

greatest proportion of its national population become refugees. Over the last decade, the proportion of refugees per inhabitants has increased in all the countries presented in figure 8. For example, the proportion of Ukrainian refugees has increased from 530 in 2014 to 13,700 in 2023. Globally there are 460 refugees per 100,000 people.

Figure 8 | SDG Indicator 10.7.4: Refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection per 100,000 national population | 2014 and 2023



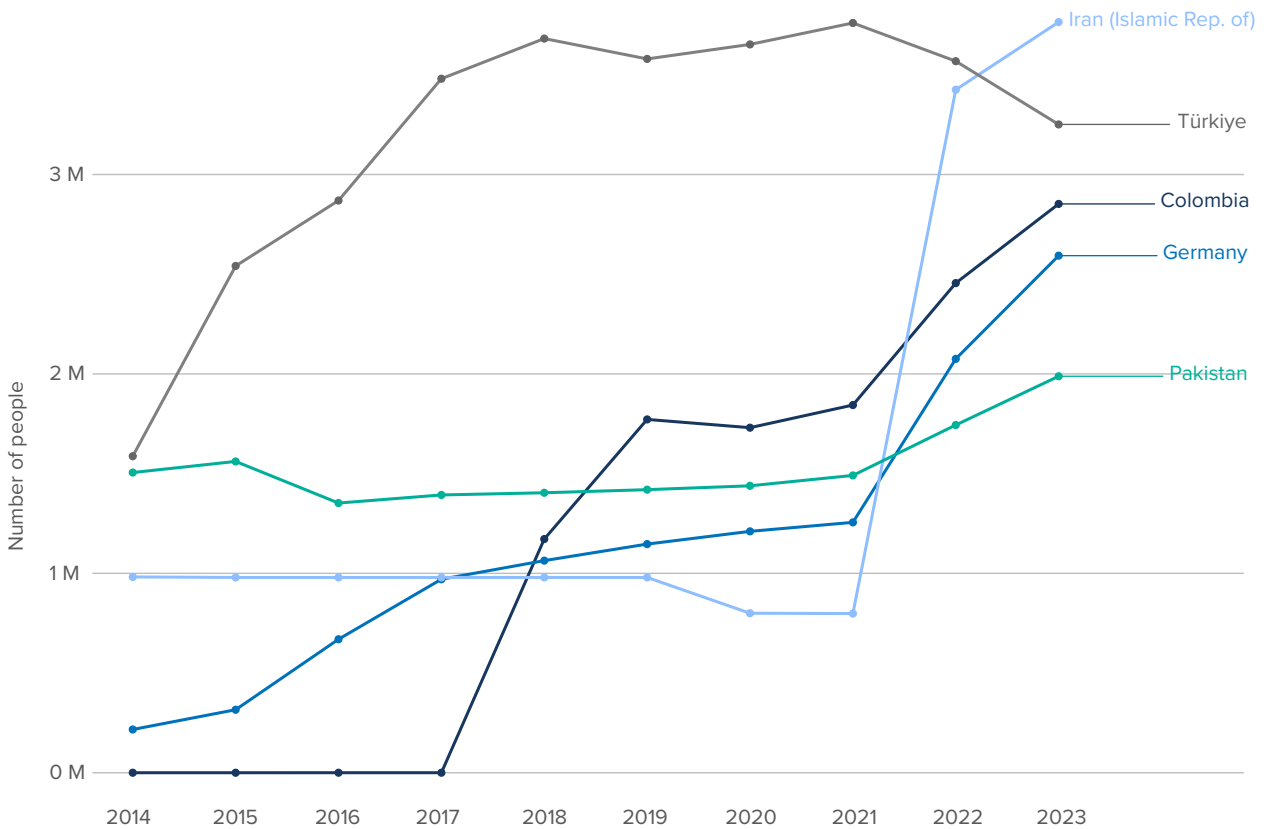
<sup>52</sup> See [the metadata of SDG Indicator 10.7.4](#). The indicator is computed as follows:  $[\text{Number of refugees by country of origin at end-year} / (\text{End-year population in country of origin} + \text{number of refugees by country of origin at end-year})] * 100,000$ . For this report, refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection have been included. The indicator excludes Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s mandate.

## By country of asylum

Globally, the Islamic Republic of Iran (3.8 million), Türkiye (3.3 million), Colombia (2.9 million), Germany (2.6 million) and Pakistan (2 million) hosted the largest refugee populations, including other people in need of international protection (see figure 9). Almost all refugees hosted in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan are Afghans and similarly nearly all refugees in Türkiye are Syrians. Over the last decade, the numbers of refugees in those major host countries

have all increased, except for Türkiye where numbers have dropped by 14 per cent since 2021. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the increase by 339,400 refugees in 2023 was mainly due to the inclusion of additional estimates of Afghans.<sup>53</sup> Among the countries shown in figure 9, Germany was the only country which does not share a border with the major refugee source countries it hosted. Most refugees in Germany were from Ukraine (1.1 million), Syria (705,800), Afghanistan (255,100) and Iraq (146,500) at end-year.

Figure 9 | Refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection by major country of asylum | 2014-2023



<sup>53</sup> An additional 365,000 undocumented Afghans in a refugee-like situation are estimated to be in the Islamic Republic of Iran as of end-2023. Prior to this in 2022, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran conducted a recount of the previously “head counted” population and extended the scope of this scheme to all undocumented Afghans residing in the country, including those who had newly arrived due to the Taliban takeover in 2021 in Afghanistan. It is reported that 2.6 million Afghans enrolled in this exercise.

Table 1 | **Key facts for countries hosting refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection, by country of asylum | end-2023**

<p><b>69 per cent were hosted by neighbouring countries.</b></p>	<p>Most people fleeing conflict and persecution remain near their country of origin. By the end of 2023, 69 per cent of refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries, remaining at a similar level to the previous year.</p>
<p><b>75 per cent were hosted by low- and middle-income countries.</b></p>	<p>Low-income countries continued to host a disproportionately large share of the world's displaced people, both in terms of their population size and the resources available to them. These countries represent 9 per cent of the global population and only 0.5 per cent of global gross domestic product, yet they hosted 17 per cent of refugees. This included very large refugee populations in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. A further 28 per cent were hosted by lower-middle-income countries such as Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and Pakistan. This was higher than in 2022 (26 per cent), primarily as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan hosted more Afghans. Upper-middle-income countries, including Colombia, Jordan and Türkiye, hosted 30 per cent of all refugees, a decrease from 33 per cent one year prior. High-income countries, which account for most of global wealth,<sup>54</sup> hosted 25 per cent of refugees at end-2023.</p>
<p><b>21 per cent were hosted by the Least Developed Countries.<sup>55</sup></b></p>	<p>The Least Developed Countries consist of 45 countries, including Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen. Together, they account for less than 1.4 per cent of global gross domestic product, yet they were responsible for hosting more than 21 per cent of all refugees worldwide.<sup>56</sup> This is up from 20 per cent in 2022. At the end of 2023, the number of refugees in Least Developed Countries stood at 7.7 million.</p>
<p><b>66 per cent were in protracted situations.</b></p>	<p>Protracted situations are defined as those where more than 25,000 refugees from the same country of origin have been in exile in a given low- or middle-income host country for at least five consecutive years.<sup>57</sup> This definition should be seen as a reflection of the situation as a whole and does not refer to circumstances of individual refugees.</p> <p>At the end of 2023, an estimated 24.9 million refugees and other people in need of international protection were in 58 protracted situations, in 37 host countries, 1.6 million people more than the previous year. Some situations are only recently reported, while others such as the Somali refugees in Kenya have been protracted for several decades.</p>

<sup>54</sup> High-income countries account for 60 per cent of global gross domestic product (Source: World Bank GDP statistics). This compares with 0.5 per cent, 8 per cent and 30 per cent for low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries respectively (data is unavailable for 1.5 per cent).

<sup>55</sup> There are [45 Least Developed Countries](#) classified by the United Nations Statistics Division. These are typically low- or lower-middle-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. The list of countries is revised every three years.

<sup>56</sup> Data sources of gross domestic product (in current US dollars) in 2022 is the [World Bank](#), accessed on 16 May 2024.

<sup>57</sup> Includes people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection. Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate are excluded from this analysis.

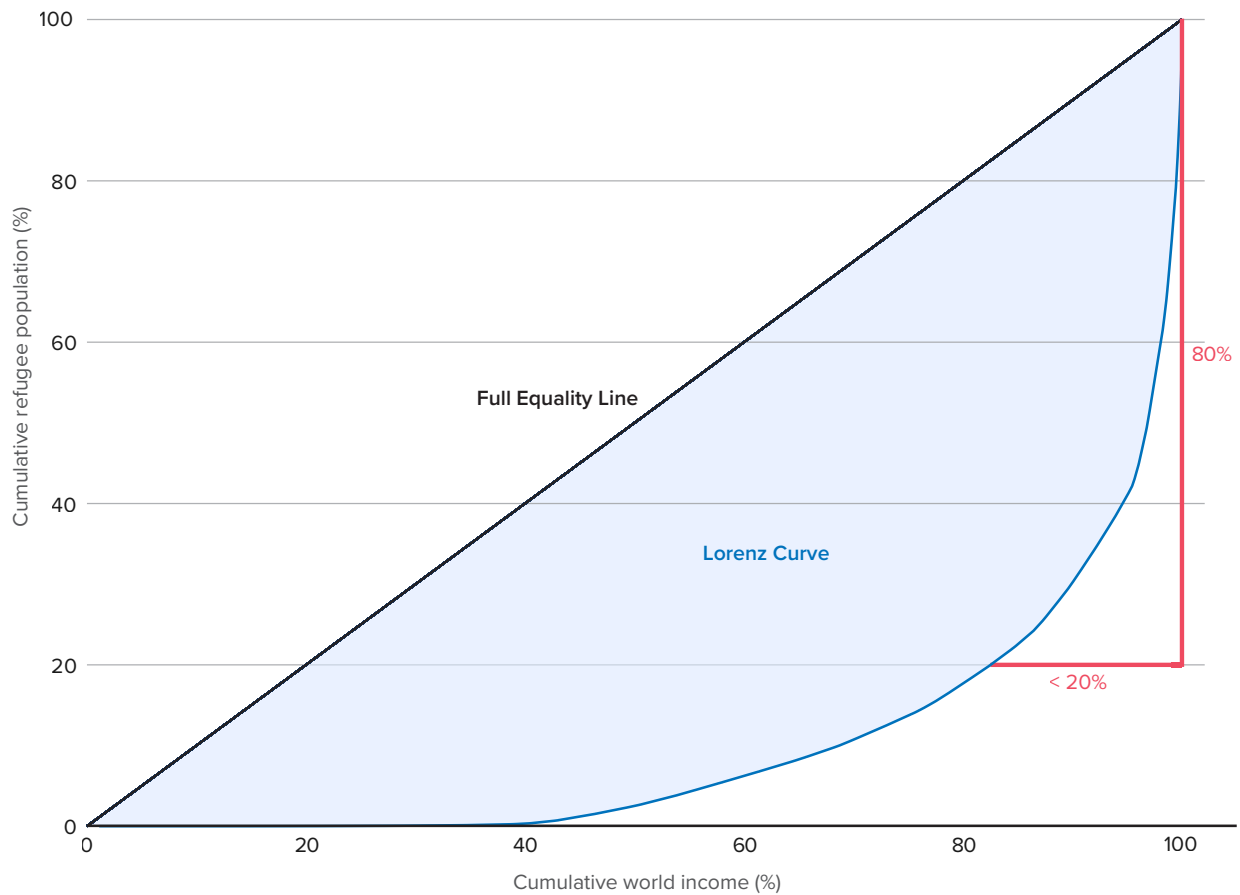
## Burden and responsibility sharing of refugee hosting countries

Introduced in the Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2023, UNHCR has developed a measure to assess and understand how countries are sharing the burden and responsibility of hosting refugees.<sup>58</sup> The Gini coefficient is a statistical index commonly used to measure inequality such as inequality of income or wealth. In this case, it measures the disparities between countries hosting refugees relative to each country’s population size, the wealth of the resident population<sup>59</sup> and thirdly, the Human Development Index (HDI). The resulting index is expressed by values between 0 and 1, with 0 representing perfect equality (where the burden and responsibility to host refugees is equitably

shared) and 1 representing complete inequality (where only one country hosts all refugees globally). A Gini coefficient of 0.4 or higher indicates significant inequality, whereas lower values indicate a more equal distribution.

Based on the global distribution of 37.4 million refugees, people in refugee-like situations and others in need of international protection by the end of 2023, the estimate for the distribution of refugees relative to the population size of the hosting countries is 0.81, to the income level of countries is 0.80 and to the HDI is 0.75.<sup>60</sup> All three measurements indicate a significant imbalance in the distribution of refugees with a small number of countries shouldering much of the responsibility. For example, eighty per cent of the world’s refugee population was hosted by countries that together produced less than 20 per cent of the world’s income.

Figure 10 | Lorenz curve of the distribution of refugees across the global income | 2023



<sup>58</sup> See [the Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2023](#), UNHCR.

<sup>59</sup> As measured by the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita adjusted to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

<sup>60</sup> The calculation is slightly different from the Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2023 by using the data without applying the statistical disclosure process and including all countries, whether they host refugees or not. The measures by GNI per capita and the HDI are also adjusted with populations in this report. The data source of [GNI per capita](#) is the World Bank (data available until 2022), and the data source of the [HDI](#) is the United Nations Development Programme (data available until 2022).

## FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT<sup>61</sup>

In many contexts that are home or host to forcibly displaced people, the adverse effects of climate change and disasters are often seen together with other pre-existing vulnerabilities and drivers of displacement, including conflict, violence, poverty, food insecurity, poor governance, or inequalities. Climate change is exacerbating the protection needs and risks for forcibly displaced people and contributing to new, onward and protracted displacement. For example, through the impacts of extreme weather events and scarcer natural resources, such as dwindling access to water and failed crops or the loss of livestock, through the increased exposure of women to violence during disasters and the flaring of communal tensions. Without urgent adaptation, mitigation and measures to address loss and damage, climate change impacts are expected to increasingly, and disproportionately, affect climate vulnerable States and communities, including forcibly displaced people, particularly where fragile and conflict-affected conditions serve to amplify climate vulnerability.

Whereas most people whose displacement is related to the adverse effects of climate change and disasters remain within their own countries, in some cases they flee across borders. In specific circumstances, when they cross borders in search of safety, international refugee law may apply and they may be eligible for refugee status. Where this is not the case, they might still be in need of international protection. They might then be protected under international human rights law notably where there is a real risk for them of being subjected to serious harm, or when no other option is available, through temporary protection or stay arrangements especially after a sudden onset disaster.

**At the end of 2023, almost three-quarters of forcibly displaced people were living in countries with high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards.<sup>62</sup> Nearly half of all forcibly displaced people were living in countries where they remained exposed to conflict<sup>63</sup> as well as these same climate-related hazards.** Extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods and extreme heat, are becoming more frequent and more intense. These have often impacted countries experiencing new or escalating conflicts. In these situations where capacities to adapt are severely limited, climate-related hazards are exacerbating vulnerabilities such as poverty, triggering harmful coping strategies. They are also hindering the enjoyment of human rights, increasing protection risks, particularly for women and children, leading to a loss of livelihoods, straining peaceful relations between communities and, ultimately, increasing fragility across all levels of society.

Countries experiencing high, severe or extreme levels of climate-related hazards, as well as conflict include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Sudan, in particular, is the country where the largest number of forcibly displaced people are exposed both to climate-related hazards and conflict. Map 2 shows where exposure to climate-related hazards overlaps with countries reporting the most conflict-related deaths per capita, and shows the number of forcibly displaced people living in these countries. While estimates are at the national level, the risks that forcibly displaced people face will vary depending on their location within the country. In Cameroon, for example, the Far North region faces intercommunal conflicts triggered by the diminishing of water resources, and the area has already suffered from recurring droughts, floods

<sup>61</sup> Produced in conjunction with the Alliance of Bioversity International/CIAT and a related joint research paper will be published in 2024. For the first time, UNHCR and the Alliance of Bioversity International/CIAT developed a tailored composite index to assess climate-related impacts on displaced people worldwide, revealing their current and future exposure to compounding effects of heat, flood and drought hazards when co-occurring.

<sup>62</sup> This tailored climate-related hazard index reflects the adverse effects of drought, heat and flood caused by their co-occurrence. Climate data are sourced from the 6th Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP6). To represent “current climate conditions”, the average climate for the period spanning 1981 to 2010 was used. An average of several recent years is selected as weather patterns can fluctuate significantly on an annual basis, making individual years an unreliable indicator of current conditions. Climate-related hazard values are scaled between 0 and 1 and categorized into five equally divided classes: low, moderate, high, severe and extreme.

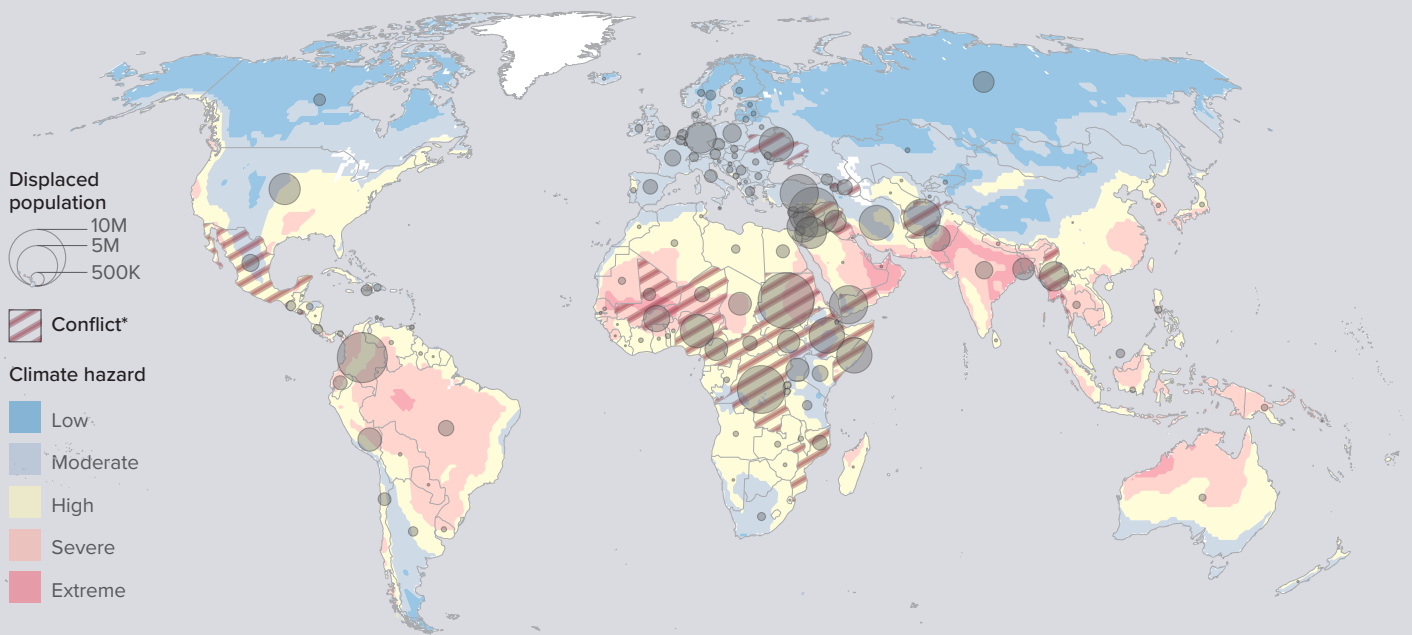
<sup>63</sup> Conflict data is sourced from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) using the estimated number of deaths. It is presented as a ratio of the 2022 Revision of World Population Prospects by the United Nations Population Division. Countries with more than one estimated conflict-related death per 100,000 national population in 2022 have been included. These range from 229 per 100,000 in Ukraine to 1.1 per 100,000 in Israel.

and violence,<sup>64</sup> whereas the North-West and South-West regions have been affected largely by armed conflict.<sup>65</sup>

In displacement settings in such countries, protection risks and humanitarian needs are more likely to escalate and local integration as a safe and sustainable solution for forcibly displaced people may become a more challenging option. Without

measures to reduce risks related to climate-related hazards, for example by strengthening the capacity of States responding to climate-related hazards and increasing the resilience of forcibly displaced people and their hosts, the risks of new, protracted or recurrent displacement, or onward movements are amplified and may include people with needs for international protection.

Map 2 | Climate-related hazards,<sup>66</sup> countries with more than one conflict-related death per 100,000 (2022) and the number of forcibly displaced people per country (2023)<sup>67</sup>



Soon to be published research,<sup>68</sup> including the forecasting of climate-related hazards, shows that the hazards are likely to increase over time across a range of countries, particularly in Central America, West and East Africa and Southern Asia. To safeguard the lives, well-being and human rights of millions of forcibly displaced people worldwide in the years to come, comprehensive and ambitious action is needed. An integrated approach, which strengthens adaptive capacities and prepares for foreseeable yet unavoidable climate-related hazards, will help to reduce the vulnerability of forcibly displaced people. Extreme weather events and other adverse effects of climate change on safety and security in areas of return will need to be considered to achieve durable solutions. For example, solutions will need to provide climate resilient access to food, water, livelihoods and health care, as well as wider peace and stability.

<sup>64</sup> See *Curbing Feuds over Water in Cameroon's Far North*, International Crisis Group.

<sup>65</sup> See *Cameroon: North-West and South-West – Situation Report No. 60*, OCHA.

<sup>66</sup> See footnote 61 for an explanation of how the baseline climate estimates are calculated.

<sup>67</sup> The map presents the correlation between climate-related hazards and conflict without implying causation.

<sup>68</sup> See footnote 60.



## CHAPTER 3

# Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

**63.3**  
MILLION

people remained internally displaced due to conflict or violence at end-2023, a 10 per cent increase compared to the end of 2022.

**9.1**  
MILLION

IDPs were reported in Sudan, the largest internally displaced population ever reported. At end-year, 7.2 million IDPs remained displaced in Syria and there were 6.9 million in Colombia.

**13.7**  
MILLION

new displacements due to conflict or violence occurred in 2023. 87 per cent of these occurred in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and Syria.

**5.1**  
MILLION

IDPs returned to their place of origin, 39 per cent less than in 2022. Most returns were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine and Ethiopia (see the Solutions chapter for details).

## WHO IS INCLUDED IN STATISTICS ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT?

People forced to flee due to armed conflicts, generalized violence, or human rights violations and who remain within their own countries are known as internally displaced people (IDPs).

The two most commonly reported statistical measures of internal displacement are the number of people remaining displaced at a particular point in time, such as the end of the year, and the number of new internal displacements during a period of time, such as a calendar year. As new internal displacements refer to movements, and is a comprehensive cumulative figure of displacement, depending on certain situations the same people can be displaced several times over a given period and would therefore be reported multiple times in the cumulative figures.<sup>69</sup>

As of the end of 2023, IDMC reported 75.9 million IDPs, of which 68.3 million remained displaced due to conflict and violence, and 7.7 million due to disasters.

UNHCR reported on internal displacement situations in 37 countries with a total of 63.3 million people internally displaced at end-year. The figures exclude people displaced within their countries solely due to disasters and the effects of climate change. The figures in this chapter relate to IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>69</sup> See IDMC's video on [measuring internal displacement](#).

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO.** *Fighting between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the March 23 Movement has caused thousands of people to flee the Masisi territory. When fleeing clashes and violence in Kitshanga, Salama was separated from her child and mother Antoinette. After arriving at the Rusayo camp for internally displaced persons in North Kivu, she was reunited with them. Most of the displaced in the camp are women and children.*

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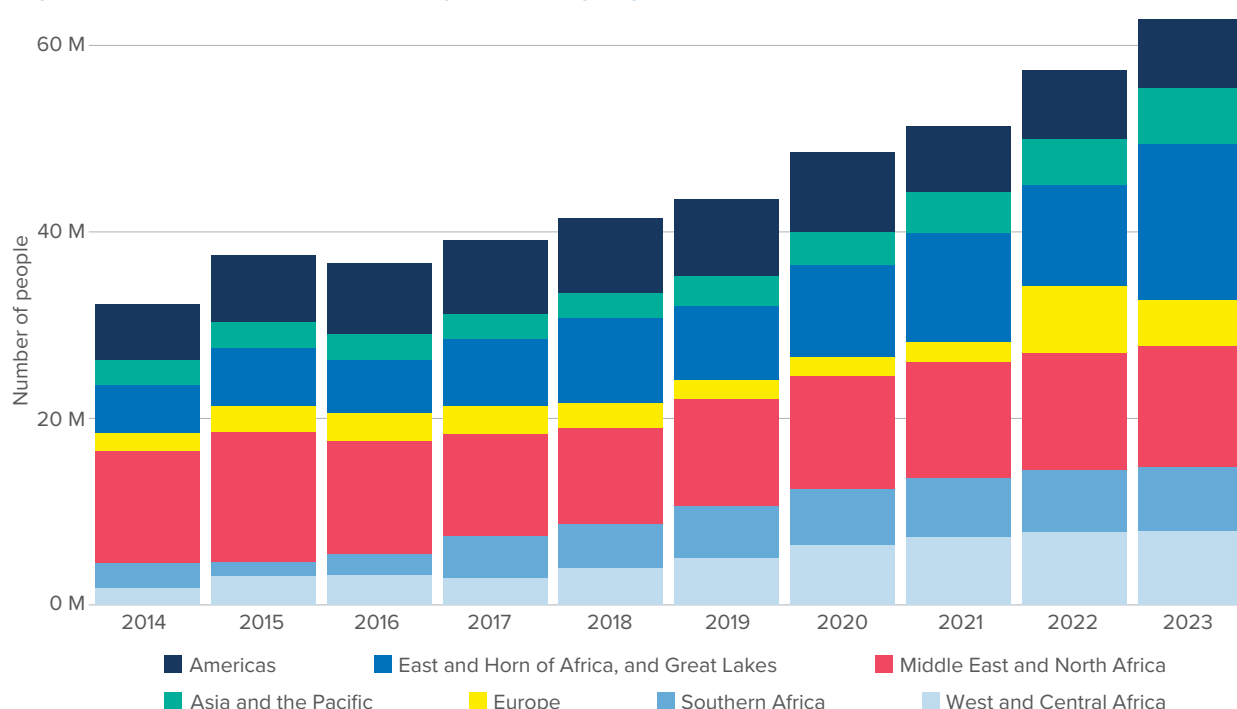


## Internal displacement overview

As in recent years, most forcibly displaced people remained within the borders of their own countries. The number of IDPs grew by 10 per cent compared to the previous year to reach 63.3 million at end-year, reflecting a continuing rise in the global total for seven years. More than 80 per cent of them were reported in just 10 of the 37 countries where UNHCR

is engaged with IDPs, slightly higher than previous years. This is primarily due to the surge in the number of people displaced within Sudan following the outbreak of conflict in the country in April 2023. At end-year, Sudan (9.1 million), Syria (7.2 million), Colombia<sup>70</sup> (6.9 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (6.3 million) and Yemen (4.5 million) reported the largest number of people displaced within their own countries.

Figure 11 | IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR by region | 2014 – 2023



## Key changes by country

During 2023, the most significant changes in internal displacement occurred in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Syria and Ukraine.

In **Sudan**, at least 5.8 million people were forced to flee their homes during the year following the outbreak of conflict between the Sudanese Army Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in April 2023.

The fighting has been concentrated around the capital Khartoum and in the Darfur region, although other regions such as Kordofan and States such as Aj Jazirah have also been affected. At end-year, 9.1 million Sudanese remained displaced in their own country, including displaced people from previous conflict episodes. As such, Sudan constitutes the largest IDP population ever reported, as the humanitarian context in the country further deteriorated.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The National Victims Registry of Colombia contains the historical accumulated figure of the number of victims of displacement which continues to increase, with new displacements that continue to be registered. The total number of persons recognized as victims of displacement (more than 8.6 million), includes the number of IDPs who are subject to attention and/or reparation, i.e. those who meet the requirements to access the measures of attention and reparation established in Colombian Law 1448 (6.9 million). The number of victims of displacement who are deceased, direct victims of forced disappearance and homicide, and other victims who, for various reasons, cannot effectively access these measures, are identified as not being subject to attention or reparation and therefore not included in the figure of 6.9 million. Source: [unidad victimas](#) as of 31 December 2023.

<sup>71</sup> See [As Sudan conflict fuels epic suffering, UN launches humanitarian and refugee response plans for 2024](#).

The situation in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** continued to worsen during 2023, as fighting between armed groups and the Congolese armed forces intensified in North and South Kivu and Ituri provinces. This escalation in violence compounded the already dire humanitarian crisis, resulting in nearly 2.8 million people displaced in 2023, with the number of people remaining displaced at the end of the year growing to 6.3 million.<sup>72</sup>

In **Myanmar**, widespread violence escalated in several regions, further exacerbating the humanitarian and human rights situation in the country.<sup>73</sup> In 2023, over 1.3 million people were compelled to flee their homes and 2.6 million individuals remained displaced in Myanmar at end-year.

**Somalia** continued to experience persistent insecurity in 2023 as well as extreme weather phenomena, with flash floods in April 2023, after five consecutive failed rainy seasons. As a consequence, nearly 40 per cent of the population do not have enough to eat each day.<sup>74</sup> During the year, 1.1 million people were displaced due to conflict, with 3.9 million people remaining displaced at end-year.

In Syria, the number of IDPs grew by 467,200 to reach 7.2 million people at end-year. Similarly, as the war in **Ukraine** ground on, approximately 714,900 new displacements were reported during the year, and 3.7 million people were estimated to still be displaced by the end of the year.<sup>75</sup>

Conflict-related internal displacement situations were reported by UNHCR for the first time in 2023 in Benin and Togo. In the case of **Haiti**, since the assassination of the president in July 2021, insecurity and gang violence has escalated. In 2023, an estimated 158,700 people were newly displaced, with an estimated 155,200 already displaced previously, bringing the total remaining displaced at end-year to 313,900.

## Demographics of IDPs

Accurate demographic and sub-national estimates of the number of people forcibly displaced within their countries are crucial to guide the operational response by UNHCR and its partners to protect and assist IDPs. In 2023, sub-national data on IDPs was reported for 32 countries, five more than the previous year. Urban areas were home to nearly 3 in 5 IDPs (58 per cent) based on the available data. It is likely that this proportion will increase given that most IDPs are likely to be in urban areas in the countries with missing data.

The availability of age- and sex-disaggregation for IDPs improved in 2023 and such data was available for 21 countries (8 more than in the previous year). This represents 57 per cent of the IDP population reported by UNHCR, while sex disaggregation was available for 66 per cent of them.

Women and girls constituted 51 per cent of all IDPs, with significant variations observed between countries (as low as 44 per cent in Haiti and as high as 58 per cent in Ukraine). Approximately 49 per cent of IDPs were children. Countries with the highest proportion of children in the IDP population included Somalia (66 per cent), Afghanistan (62 per cent), Niger (58 per cent) and Burkina Faso (56 per cent), while the smallest proportions of children were reported in countries including Colombia (20 per cent), Ukraine (24 per cent)<sup>76</sup> and Azerbaijan (26 per cent).

<sup>72</sup> The number of IDPs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo only refers to those displaced by conflict. This figure differs from the 6.5 million reported by OCHA which includes IDPs displaced by conflict and disasters.

<sup>73</sup> See [Myanmar: Human rights situation worsens as military lashes out indiscriminately amid losses](#).

<sup>74</sup> See [Global Report on Food Crises 2024](#), Food Security Information Network. In Somalia, 39 per cent of the population in the country are in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) / Cadre Harmonisé (CH) Phase 3 or above.

<sup>75</sup> In 2023, 734,600 people in Ukraine were estimated to have been newly displaced, while 1.3 million returned. At the same time the IOM DTM methodology was revised using updated baseline population estimate for the overall Ukrainian population. This revision resulted in a lower estimate of the number of IDPs reported in 2023 by around 2.2 million. The share of IDPs out of the total estimated resident population in Ukraine decreased from 12.4 per cent at the beginning of the year to 11.1 per cent at end-year.

<sup>76</sup> Of note is the fact that the proportion of children among people displaced internally in Ukraine (24 per cent) is significantly higher than the proportion among the Ukrainian population as a whole (18 per cent).

## HOW CAN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BETTER ENGAGE IN SITUATIONS OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND ACHIEVE LASTING SOLUTIONS?

There is a growing and urgent need to reimagine humanitarian action. At the same time, resources continue to dwindle, and situations are becoming far more complex and protracted. Several recent initiatives have collectively highlighted that humanitarian responses in situations of internal displacement have been too slow and process oriented.<sup>77</sup> There has been insufficient investment in solutions to internal displacement and limited government ownership of these solutions. In June 2022, for example, the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda (SG Action Agenda) on Internal Displacement<sup>78</sup> stated, "*More of the same is not good enough*".

Promising practices to improve community engagement in IDP situations include the Emergency Relief Coordinator Flagship Initiative,<sup>79</sup> which was launched in early 2023. It seeks to empower the leadership of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators to develop tailored coordination and response solutions that are driven by the priorities of the affected communities. The SG's Action Agenda has also helped to bring a renewed sense of commitment towards the collective search for solutions to internal displacement, including committed investment and engagement from development actors and member states.

Such initiatives will help to ensure a more predictable response by humanitarian and development actors. They will also help capacitate governments in owning and leading interventions, which is crucial in the search for solutions for internally displaced people. All these initiatives hinge on improving the quality of the available data to inform decision-making. This includes enhancing socio-economic data of displacement-affected communities, with increased participation of IDPs and much greater national ownership. Understanding the intentions of displaced populations to return or find alternative types of solutions forms an integral part of building the evidence.

Capitalizing on its long-standing experience and expertise in this regard, including in refugee situations, UNHCR will continue to strengthen the evidence through its survey work<sup>80</sup> as well as its protection analysis, registration expertise, profiling exercises with partners such as JIPS,<sup>81</sup> and its support for the implementation of the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics.<sup>82</sup>

Moving forward there is a growing expectation that the outcomes and findings of ongoing initiatives will contribute to concerted and agile action from humanitarian actors. This will allow for a systematic and smooth transition into investment from development entities informed by IDPs' expressed needs and intentions, and strengthened government ownership towards achieving solutions.

<sup>77</sup> See [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Independent Review of Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement](#), efforts by the Office of the Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement, and the [Evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement \(2019–2023\)](#).

<sup>78</sup> See the [SG Action Agenda](#).

<sup>79</sup> See the [ERC Flagship Initiative](#), OCHA.

<sup>80</sup> See [UNHCR's intention surveys](#).

<sup>81</sup> See [Joint IDP Profiling Service](#), JIPS.

<sup>82</sup> See the [International Recommendations on IDP Statistics](#), EGRIS.

**CHAPTER 4**

# Asylum trends

**5.6** MILLION

- 3.6 million new individual asylum applications were registered (+40 per cent).
- 891,000 were recognized on a group basis (a 3-fold increase).
- 1.1 million received temporary protection (-72 per cent).

**823,800**

people were granted refugee status through individual status determination procedures (+15 per cent).

**6.9** MILLION

asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims at end-2023 (+26 per cent).

**59%**

was the total protection rate in 2023.

## HOW IS REFUGEE STATUS GRANTED?

Fair and efficient asylum systems are essential to assess the asylum claims of those seeking international protection against the legal criteria set out in international, regional and national law. Effective procedures and prompt decisions on refugee claims allow those recognized as refugees to find protection where they are and find better pathways towards socio-economic inclusion. Prompt decision-making also facilitates the safe, dignified and rights-based return of those found not to be in need of international protection and reduces the incentive to legalize stay through asylum procedures when international protection needs are not present.

The process of making such assessments, known as Refugee Status Determination (RSD), is the responsibility of, and conducted primarily by, governments. In the absence of a fair and efficient national asylum system UNHCR may conduct RSD under its mandate to facilitate protection and solutions. However, its priority is supporting States to effectively assume their RSD responsibilities.

**ARMENIA.** *In 2023, Anna arrived in Armenia with her 3-year-old son. She recounted: “We were so scared! We were hungry all the way to Armenia, and I had no sweets for my son, so he was crying all the way to Goris.” At the end of September 2023, renewed hostilities triggered the arrival of over 100,000 refugees in Armenia. “Please find a way for me to stay in Goris; I don’t want to live far,” Anna said.*

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Refugee status can be determined through either individual or group procedures, and the result of such recognition is the same. **Individual RSD** procedures start with the applicant registering their asylum claim for the first time in a country – a new asylum application. Once their claim is processed, applicants will either:

- Receive a substantive decision on their case. Such decisions include the grant of Convention status, complementary and other forms of protection, and rejected cases.
- Or their case will be closed for administrative reasons, which means a decision is not made on the case's merits. Examples of a case being closed for administrative reasons includes the death of the applicant, withdrawal of the application, abandonment of the claim, or the determination that another country is responsible for the claim.
- If applications are rejected, applicants should have the right to appeal this decision by applying for a review by administrative appellate bodies or the courts (or both). Statistical information on the filing and outcomes of asylum appeals and court proceedings, especially at secondary or higher appeals, is under-reported in UNHCR's statistics, as this type of data is often either not collected by States or not published.

**Recognition through group procedures, often referred to as *prima facie* procedures,** most commonly takes place when there are readily apparent, objective circumstances in a country of origin which suggest that most individuals fleeing from that country are likely to be refugees. In most cases, those being granted refugee status on a group basis will be directly registered as refugees, as opposed to those recognized on an individual basis who will first be registered as an asylum-seeker. This is why individuals undergoing group determination will normally not be counted in the "asylum application" total. Individual procedures primarily take place in the Americas and Europe, while most group refugee procedures are conducted in Africa.

In addition to group and individual refugee protection, in some circumstances individuals that would otherwise apply for refugee status instead apply for, and are granted, **temporary protection**. Temporary protection is considered to be complementary to the international refugee protection regime. It can be an effective tool to use in the context of large-scale displacement to provide immediate protection from refoulement, access to legal status and rights in host countries.

## Overview

In 2023, 5.6 million people applied for asylum on an individual basis, were recognized through group procedures or were granted temporary protection, 17 per cent less than in the previous year. While the number of new individual asylum applications (3.6 million) and recognitions from group procedures (891,000) grew from 2022, the number of people receiving temporary protection (1.1 million) dropped sharply, largely due to fewer people fleeing from Ukraine.

In addition to the 3.6 million new individual asylum applications, 268,900 repeat or appeal applications were made for review by courts or other appellate

bodies (–19 per cent from 2022), bringing the total to 3.9 million individual asylum applications registered in 160 countries by States or UNHCR worldwide.<sup>83</sup> This is the largest number of individual asylum applications ever recorded and represents a one-third increase from the 2.9 million individual applications in 2022.

Over half of all new individual asylum applications globally were received in just five countries: the United States of America (1.2 million), Germany (329,100), Egypt (183,100), Spain (163,200) and Canada (146,800). Most new individual applications were by nationals of Venezuela (314,200), Colombia (209,900), Syria (201,000), Sudan (194,900) and Afghanistan (169,600).

<sup>83</sup> In Bulgaria, Japan, South Africa, Slovakia and Yemen, the data on asylum applications is provided together without distinction between new, repeat and appeal applications.

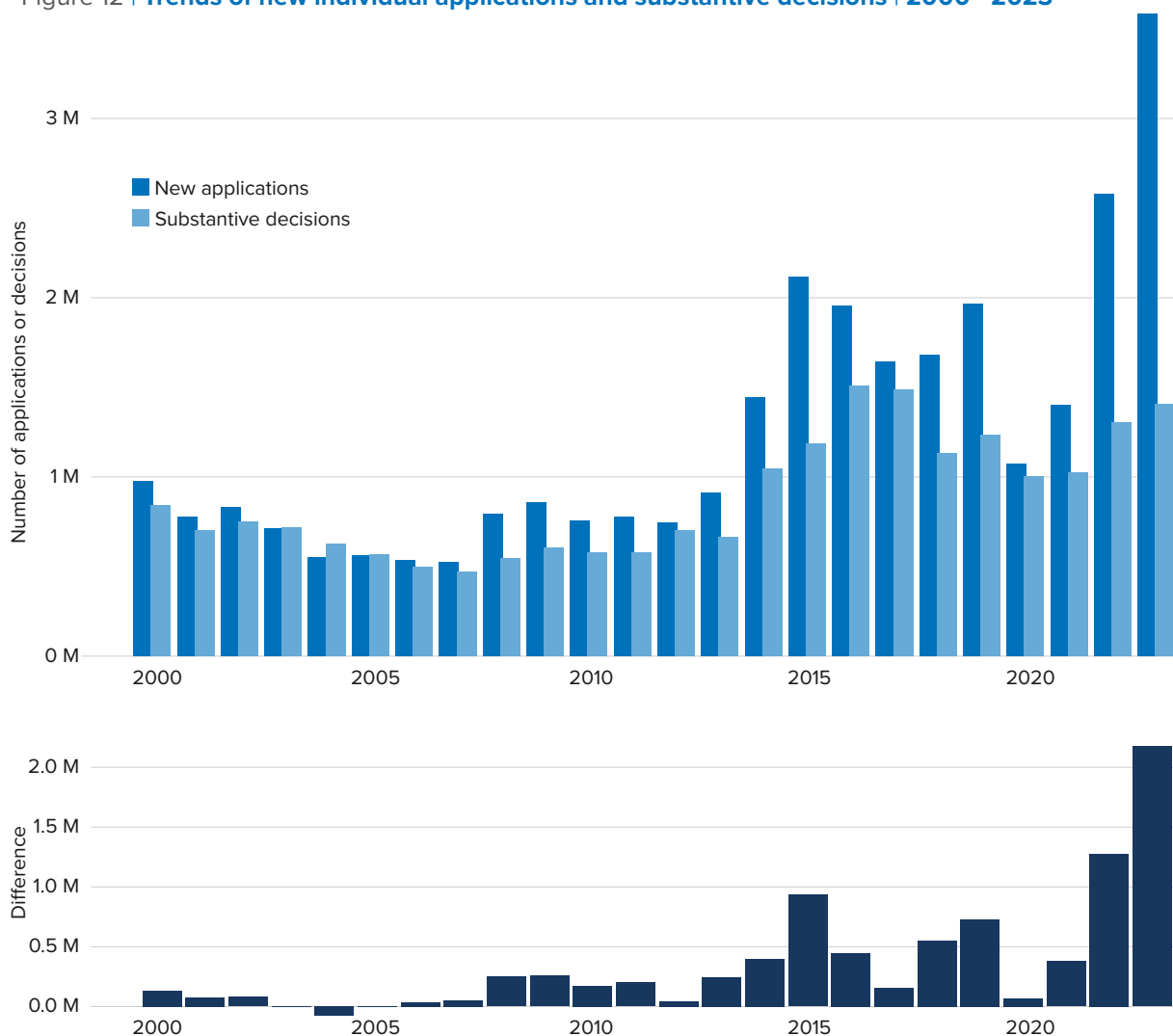


In 2023, 1.7 million individuals were granted refugee status, either on an individual or a group basis, an increase of 63 per cent compared to the previous year. The number of people who were granted international protection on a group basis almost tripled from 336,800 in 2022 to 891,000. Much of this increase can be attributed to refugees fleeing from Sudan to neighbouring countries, notably Chad (491,000), South Sudan (65,400), Ethiopia (27,900) and the Central African Republic (21,300) which all recognized Sudanese refugees using prima facie approaches.<sup>84</sup>

Also, 1.1 million people were granted temporary protection in 2023, 72 per cent fewer than in the previous year. Temporary protection was most commonly granted to refugees from Ukraine in European countries.

In 2023, 1.4 million people received substantive decisions on their individual asylum applications, 8 per cent more than during the previous year and 37 per cent more than in 2021. This increase in decision-making demonstrates that asylum authorities are taking steps to introduce efficiencies and ensure that applicants receive a decision as soon as possible. Despite the increase in the number of decisions, the number of asylum-seekers waiting for a decision on their individual applications continued to grow and stood at 6.9 million by the end of 2023. This represents the highest such number ever recorded and was a sharp increase of 26 per cent from 5.4 million at the end of 2022. Figure 12 shows that new individual asylum applications have exceeded the number of substantive decisions since 2006.

Figure 12 | Trends of new individual applications and substantive decisions | 2000 - 2023



<sup>84</sup> People fleeing from Sudan to Egypt applied for individual asylum rather than receiving refugee recognition on a group basis.

## Key asylum flows

The Russian Federation's war on Ukraine continued to cause people to flee. In 2023, a further 924,800 refugees from Ukraine received temporary protection, mainly in European countries, compared to 3.8 million during the previous year. During 2023, Ukrainians were granted temporary protection primarily in Poland (228,300, 76 per cent fewer than in 2022), followed by Germany (144,900, -82 per cent), Czechia (98,500, -77 per cent) and Romania (46,500, -53 per cent).<sup>85</sup>

Since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023, at least 810,100 Sudanese have fled their country in 2023 and sought international protection, primarily in neighbouring countries. This is 14 times more than during the previous year, when 56,500 Sudanese sought international protection. In 2023, most of them received protection on a prima facie (group) basis. Recognition through group procedures, along with other types of simplified and accelerated modalities, is an effective way of processing a large number of claims in an efficient manner and is in line with global good practice. Neighbouring countries that received Sudanese fleeing their country included Chad (491,000, 27 times higher than during 2022), Egypt (152,800, an almost 10-fold increase from the previous

year),<sup>86</sup> South Sudan (65,400, increased from zero in 2022), Ethiopia (27,900, increased from 500 in 2022) and the Central African Republic (21,300, increased from zero in 2022).

One-third of all new individual applications, some 1.2 million, were lodged in the United States of America in 2023, a 61 per cent increase from the previous year. As in previous years, most new individual asylum applications in the United States of America were from nationals of Latin America and the Caribbean countries, notably Venezuelans (185,300, +34 per cent), Colombians (128,100, four times more than 2022), Cubans (99,400, +37 per cent), Nicaraguans (90,800, three times more than 2022) and Haitians (75,900, +81 per cent).

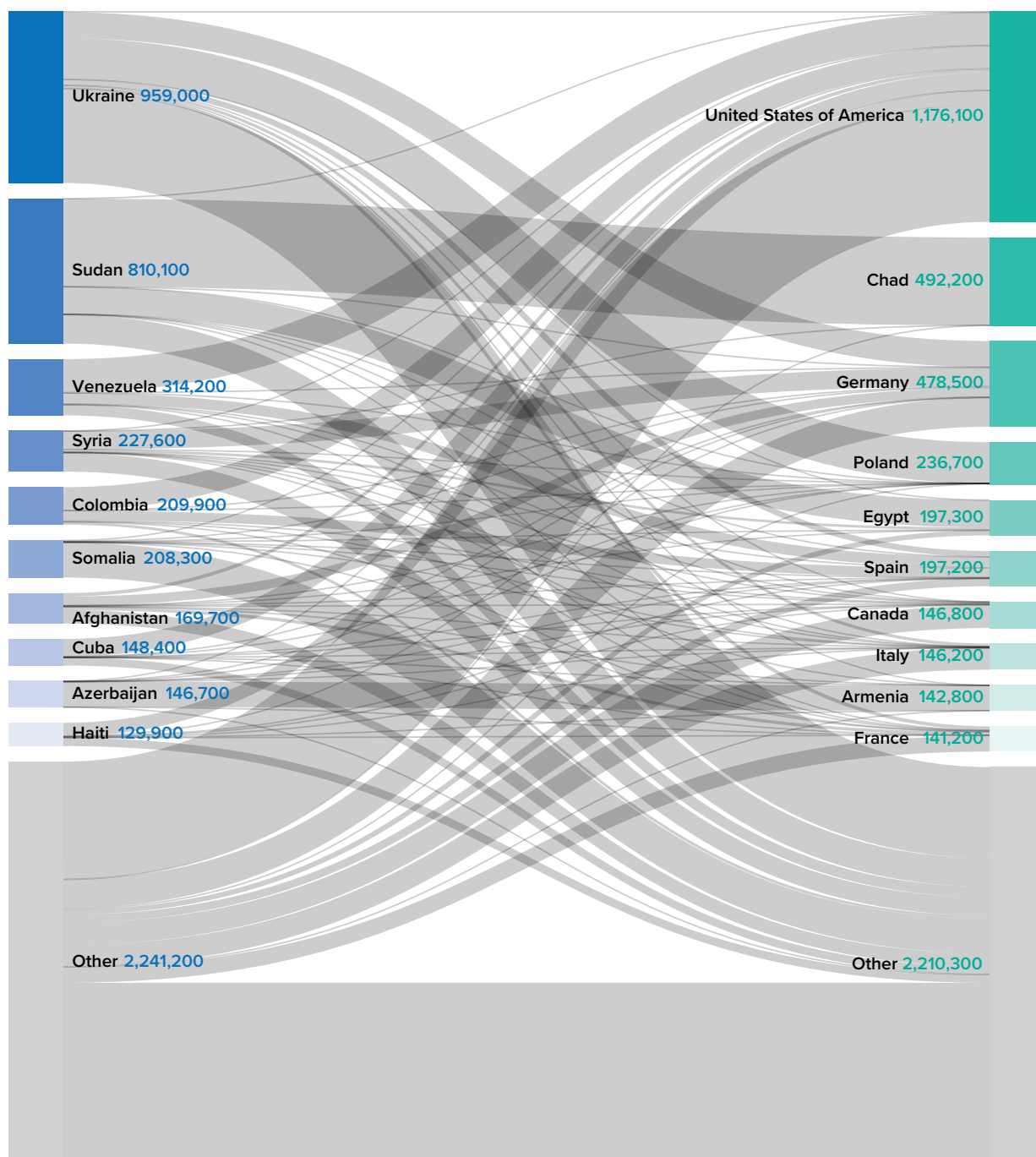
During the year, 141,900 people received temporary protection in Armenia, with most arriving following renewed armed conflict in the South Caucasus region in September 2023.<sup>87</sup> In addition, 227,600 Syrians and 169,700 Afghans were newly registered as asylum-seekers, most in European countries, notably Germany. Some 208,300 Somalis fled their country, with most registered as asylum-seekers in neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia.

<sup>85</sup> Temporary protection granted to Ukrainians does not necessarily mean new displacement since it could include reapplications or reactivations from the refugees who were already granted refugee status following temporary visits to Ukraine as well as duplicated registrations across countries. See [Ukraine Refugee Situation: Population movements, Factsheet #1](#), UNHCR.

<sup>86</sup> In 2023, 152,800 Sudanese were registered by UNHCR in Egypt as asylum-seekers. Of this number, 125,600 were new arrivals who had fled the recent conflict, with an additional 22,000 pending registration with UNHCR by end-year. The Government of Egypt reported 370,000 Sudanese people having arrived in the country since the onset of the crisis. See also the [Sudan Situation](#) on the Operational Data Portal.

<sup>87</sup> The figure of 141,900 includes 26,700 people who fled to Armenia and remained there, following the previous armed conflict which lasted from September to November 2020.

Figure 13 | Key flows of people registered for new individual asylum applications, recognized on a group basis or granted temporary protection | 2023



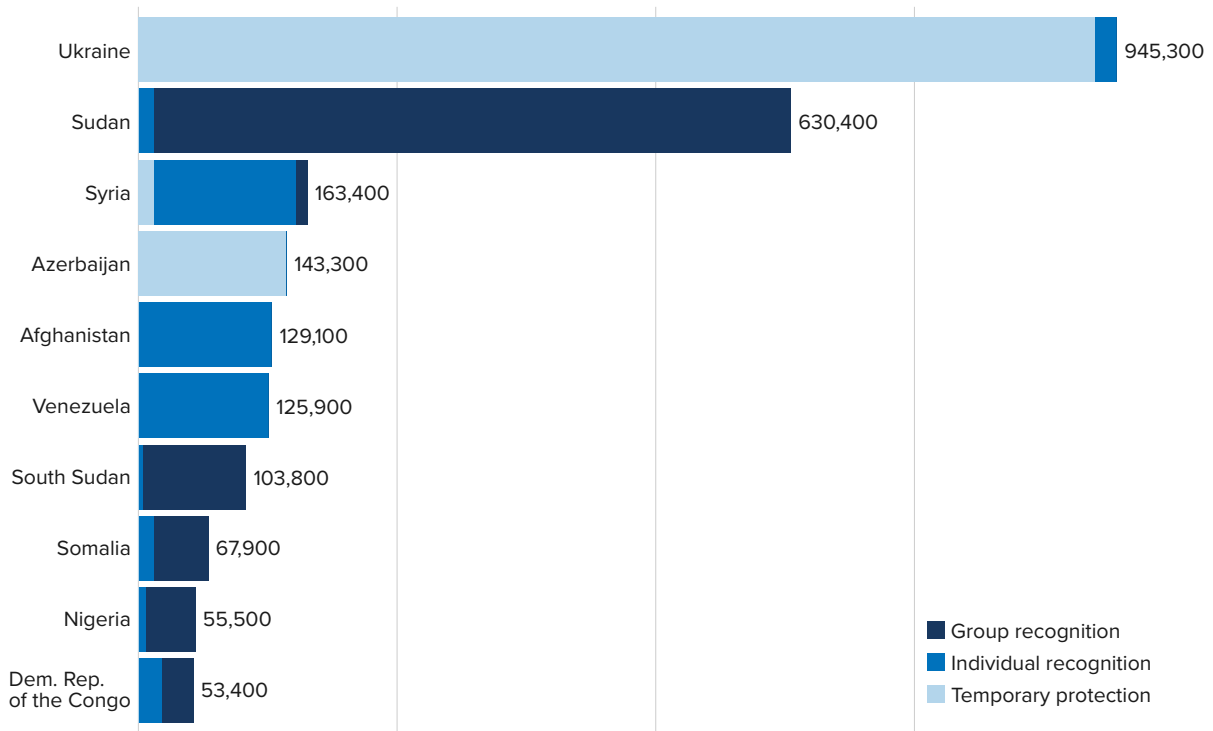
## Decisions on asylum applications and temporary protection

In 2023, 1.4 million substantive decisions were made on individual asylum applications. The global Total Protection Rate,<sup>88</sup> which measures the percentage of

substantive decisions that resulted in some form of international protection, increased to 59 per cent in 2023 from 55 per cent in the previous year.

Figure 14 provides an overview of individual and group recognitions as well as people granted temporary protection by the major source countries.

Figure 14 | Type of recognition by major source countries | 2023



Refugees who are recognized on a group basis are predominantly from and hosted in African countries. For example, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda, granted refugee status on a group basis to 615,200 Sudanese who were seeking asylum. Other nationalities receiving group recognition included 99,500 South Sudanese, primarily in Uganda, Sudan and Kenya, as well as 52,900 Somalis, mainly in Ethiopia and Yemen, 48,100 Nigerians most commonly in Niger and Cameroon and 30,100 nationals of the Democratic Republic of

the Congo predominantly in Uganda and the Republic of the Congo.

Of those granted temporary protection, 85 per cent were Ukrainians (924,800). A further 13 per cent (142,700) received temporary protection in Armenia, with most arriving following renewed armed conflict in the South Caucasus region.

What is useful to note in this regard is that the vast majority of claims from individuals originating from these countries are dealt with through group

<sup>88</sup> UNHCR uses two rates to compute the proportion of refugee claims accepted. The Refugee Recognition Rate is the proportion of asylum-seekers accorded refugee status out of the total number of substantive decisions (Convention status, complementary protection and rejected cases). The Total Protection Rate is the proportion of asylum-seekers accorded refugee status or a complementary form of protection relative to the total number of substantive decisions. Non-substantive decisions are, to the extent possible, excluded from both calculations. For the purposes of global comparability, UNHCR uses only these two rates and does not report rates calculated by national authorities.

recognitions or temporary protection. This helps to ease the strain on asylum systems resulting from high levels of displacement avoiding what would otherwise be pending asylum applications.

## Pending asylum claims

The total number of asylum-seekers waiting for a decision at the end of 2023 stood at 6.9 million, an increase of 26 per cent from the end of 2022. The backlog has grown as, despite increases in productivity, new individual asylum applications have continued to outpace substantive decisions. While the number of substantive decisions made in 2023 grew by 8 per cent compared to the previous year, reaching 1.4 million, the number of new individual applications in 2023 reached 3.6 million, 40 per cent more than in 2022.

Globally, the United States of America reported the largest number of pending applications, 2.6 million, which was 45 per cent more than at the end of the previous year (1.8 million). Other countries with many pending asylum applications were Peru (508,400, +5 per cent), Germany (361,500, +38 per cent), Mexico (257,400, +22 per cent) and Egypt (232,400, +263 per cent). The Central African Republic (32,500, 69-fold increase) presented the most rapid growth in

asylum applications. This was mainly due to the influx of Chadians caused by the intercommunal conflict involving an armed group, which commenced in March 2023. Other countries reporting rapid growth in asylum applications registered on their territories included Ethiopia (63,800, a 29-fold increase), Rwanda (12,700, a 26-fold increase) and Nigeria (34,200, a 21-fold increase).

It is evident from the increased use of group recognitions and substantive decisions, that some States are taking measures to implement differentiated case processing modalities and reinforce their systems. However, core issues remain in many systems including weak institutions, cumbersome decision-making structures, weak case management, and under-resourced or poorly capacitated workforces. With more people on the move and increasingly complex drivers of movements, it will be important that asylum system strengthening efforts are embedded into a comprehensive, route-based approach to addressing mixed and onward movement. This will help to ensure that refugees can find protection early after displacement and will help prevent asylum systems being used to regularize stay for people without international protection needs, in the absence of adequate migration management systems.

*CAMEROON. Local associations, together with internally displaced women, combated desertification by planting 2,000 trees in the Bogo site for internally displaced persons in northern Cameroon.*

© UNHCR/©EUGENE SIBOMANA





*MEXICO. Makendy and Lourdes fled Haiti due to the dire humanitarian situation, and they are now part of a local integration programme initiative in Mexico. As part of this initiative, they were relocated from Chiapas to Aguascalientes and found permanent jobs at the Japanese automotive parts manufacturing company, Exedy Dynax. They worked on alternating shifts and took turns taking care of their son. "The day they called me to let me know that I had been hired at Exedy Dynax, I was so happy." Makendy and Lourdes have rebuilt their lives, and their dream is to reunite with their other children. "If I could bring my children who are still in Haiti, I would buy a house and a car here in Mexico. I want to live here."*

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+ See also the [explanation of solutions](#) on the Refugee Data finder.

## CHAPTER 5

# Solutions

## 6.1 MILLION

forcibly displaced people returned in 2023:

- Over 1 million refugees returned to their countries of origin (-304,200, 22 per cent less than in 2022).
- 5.1 million IDPs returned to their place of origin (-3.2 million, 39 per cent less than during 2022).

## 158,700

refugees were resettled (+44,400, +39 per cent).

## 30,800

refugees naturalized (-19,500, -39 per cent).

### WHAT ARE DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES AND IDPS?

A solution is achieved when the situation of forcibly displaced and stateless people is satisfactorily and permanently resolved through ensuring national protection for their civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. Durable solutions are part of UNHCR's mandate and are a strategic priority for UNHCR and the humanitarian community, as set out in the Global Compact on Refugees and the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.<sup>89</sup> Durable solutions continue to remain a reality for very few people.

For refugees, durable solutions can be achieved through voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement to a third country. They could also be progressively attained through complementary pathways opportunities in third countries and family reunification:

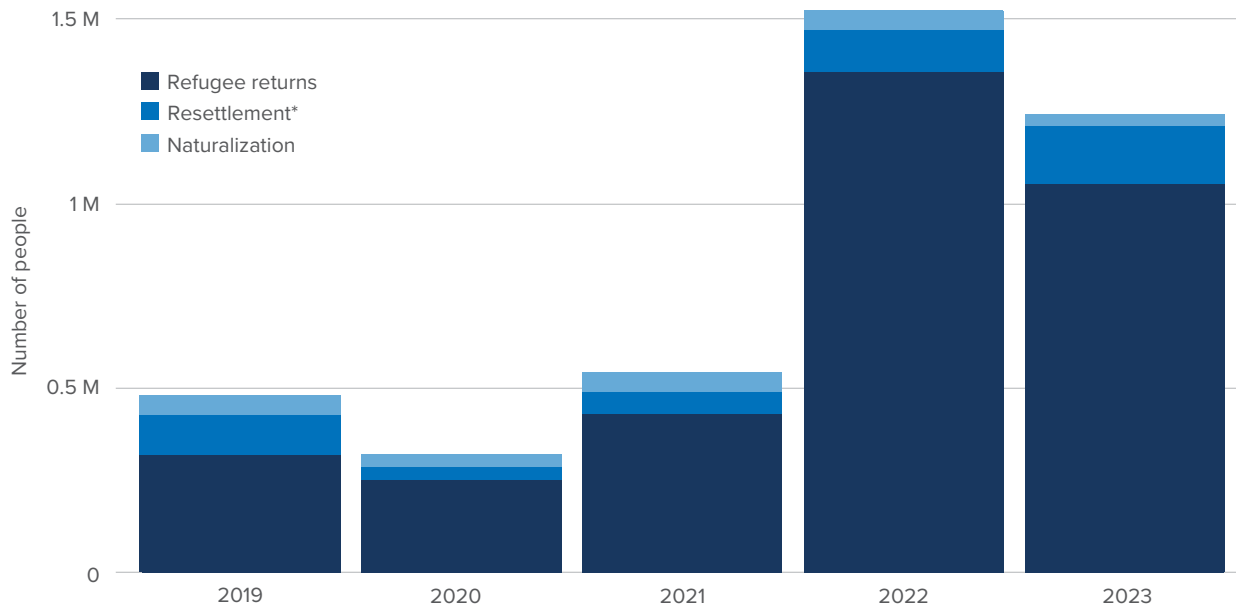
- For most refugees, **returning to their home country** in safety and dignity based on a free and informed choice would be a preferred solution to bring their temporary status as refugees to an end.

<sup>89</sup> See also [the explanation of solutions on the Refugee Data finder](#).

- **Resettlement to third countries** is a crucial protection tool and a solution for refugees who face urgent or specific risks, and for populations in protracted situations. Offering resettlement opportunities, allows States to share responsibility with those countries of asylum who welcome large numbers of refugees.
- **Local integration** helps ensure that refugees can build new lives in host countries. However, statistics on local integration are rarely available. Naturalization – the process by which a person can obtain citizenship in their host country – is used by UNHCR as an imperfect proxy to more comprehensive statistics on local integration. Even such statistics are only available for a limited number of countries. Other metrics also have limitations, such as the number of refugees that have been granted long-term or permanent residency, although such statistics are more widely published.
- **Complementary pathways** can lead to solutions, ease pressure on host countries and enhance refugees’ self-reliance, including through education pathways or labour mobility.<sup>90</sup>
- **Family reunification**, is a procedure ensuring access to the right to family unity - that is regulated by national, regional and international law - allowing refugees and asylum-seekers to enjoy their right to family life, and start new lives together.

For IDPs, assessing and reporting on whether they have overcome their displacement-related vulnerabilities requires a multi-faceted, comprehensive approach, as set out in the International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics (IRIS).<sup>91</sup> This can take place in IDPs’ place of habitual residence (i.e. after return), in their current place of displacement, or after settling elsewhere in their country. In almost all countries in which people have been internally displaced, the availability of data to inform this approach remains extremely limited and efforts to generate and improve such data to better measure durable solutions for IDPs continue. In the meantime, UNHCR continues to report on IDPs that have returned to their place of origin.

Figure 15 | Durable solutions for refugees | 2019 - 2023<sup>92</sup>



\* Resettlement figures are according to government statistics.

<sup>90</sup> See [Safe Pathways for Refugees IV](#), OECD and UNHCR.

<sup>91</sup> See [International Recommendations on IDP Statistics \(IRIS\)](#), EGRIS.

<sup>92</sup> Figures for refugee returns to Ukraine have been updated retrospectively for 2022 – see footnote 92.



## Refugee returns

In 2023, nearly 1.1 million refugees from 39 countries of origin returned from a total of 93 countries of asylum (see figure 16). Four out of five of those returning were Ukrainian or South Sudanese. Most spontaneous returns that took place during the year occurred in contexts not entirely conducive to return in safety and dignity, and they may not be sustainable.

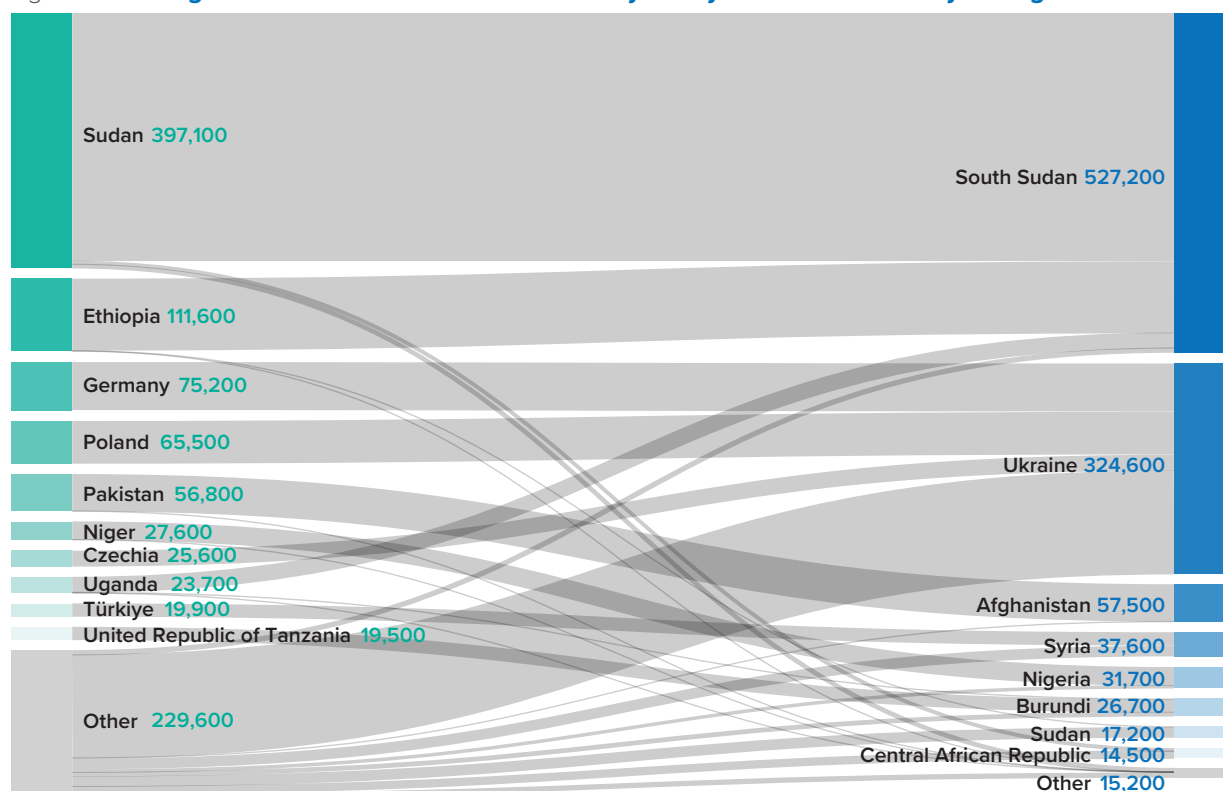
The return of over 527,200 refugees to **South Sudan**, primarily from conflict-affected Sudan, was three times higher (+376,000) than during the previous year. Most returns (99 per cent) were from neighbouring countries including Sudan (386,800), Ethiopia (111,100) and Uganda (22,300).

Taking account of updated statistics for returns to Ukraine in 2022,<sup>93</sup> the number of refugees returning to **Ukraine** in 2023 declined by 68 per cent

compared to the previous year. During 2023, nearly 324,600 refugees returned to Ukraine,<sup>94</sup> with most returning from Germany (75,200), Poland (65,500) and Czechia (25,600).

Among the 57,500 refugees returning to **Afghanistan**, 99 per cent (56,800), returned from Pakistan.<sup>95</sup> There was a notable surge in the number of Afghans returning from Pakistan in 2023 overall, including through deportation, primarily driven by the implementation of the government's illegal foreigners' repatriation plan put in place in October 2023.<sup>96</sup> Of the 37,600 refugee returnees to **Syria**,<sup>97</sup> the majority made their journey back from Türkiye (19,900) and Lebanon (10,100) while of the 31,700 returnees to **Nigeria**, most (87 per cent) returned from Niger (27,600).

Figure 16 | Refugee returns from their former country of asylum to their country of origin | 2023



<sup>93</sup> The number of refugee returns to Ukraine is estimated using the [IOM DTM data Round 13](#). The report estimates that 861,000 refugees have returned for three months or more, which may (in light of the high frequency of pendular movements between Ukraine and host countries) indicate an intention for a stable return. Of these, 158,000 have returned for between three and six months and are reported in 2023 statistics, while 703,000 returned more than six months ago and are reported retroactively in 2022. In addition, 353,000 refugees have returned to locations in Ukraine that are not their place of origin. UNHCR estimates that 39,000 of them returned in early 2023, with 314,000 having returned in 2022.

<sup>94</sup> The IOM survey estimates a total of 4,455,000 refugee and IDP returnees since February 2022, an estimated 26 per cent of whom are refugee returns and 28 per cent of returns occurred in 2023 (see [IOM DTM round 15](#)).

<sup>95</sup> Includes people in a refugee-like situation.

<sup>96</sup> See [Pakistan-Afghanistan - Returns Emergency Response #15](#), UNHCR.

<sup>97</sup> See also the regional response for [durable solutions for Syrian refugees](#).

## Refugee resettlement and complementary pathways

According to official government data, 158,700 arrivals through resettlement, community sponsorship and other third-country solution programmes were reported by 24 countries during 2023, representing 39 per cent more (44,400) than during the previous year. Despite the uptick in numbers, the total still only accounted for 8 per cent of the estimated 2 million individuals globally identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement.<sup>98</sup>

The United States of America received the largest number of resettled refugees, totalling 75,100, with the majority originating from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (22,100), followed by Syria (14,700), Afghanistan (8,600) and Myanmar (6,600). Canada resettled nearly 51,100 refugees, primarily from Afghanistan (16,600), Eritrea (9,200), Syria (8,400) and Somalia (4,300). Germany welcomed 4,500 refugees, 3,300 of whom were from Syria.

Based on 2022 data, complementary pathways and family reunification have steadily expanded since 2010, when more comprehensive data collection commenced. UNHCR has continued its collaboration with the OECD to gather, analyse and publish indicative data. According to the latest report,<sup>99</sup> OECD countries and Brazil issued approximately 214,800 residence permits to Afghan, Eritrean, Iranian, Iraqi, Somali, Syrian and Venezuelan refugees for the purposes of family reunification, education or employment opportunities in 2022. Family reunification was the most important legal pathway for refugees during the year, representing 57 per cent of all permits issued.

## Refugee local integration

According to the data received from 24 refugee hosting countries in 2023, approximately 30,800 refugees acquired citizenship, originating from 131 countries. This represents 39 per cent fewer (-19,500) than during 2022. Due to limited data availability, these statistics should be viewed as indicative only. Refugees who obtained their host country’s citizenship or were granted permanent residence were mainly from Syria (8,900), Eritrea (2,500) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (1,900).

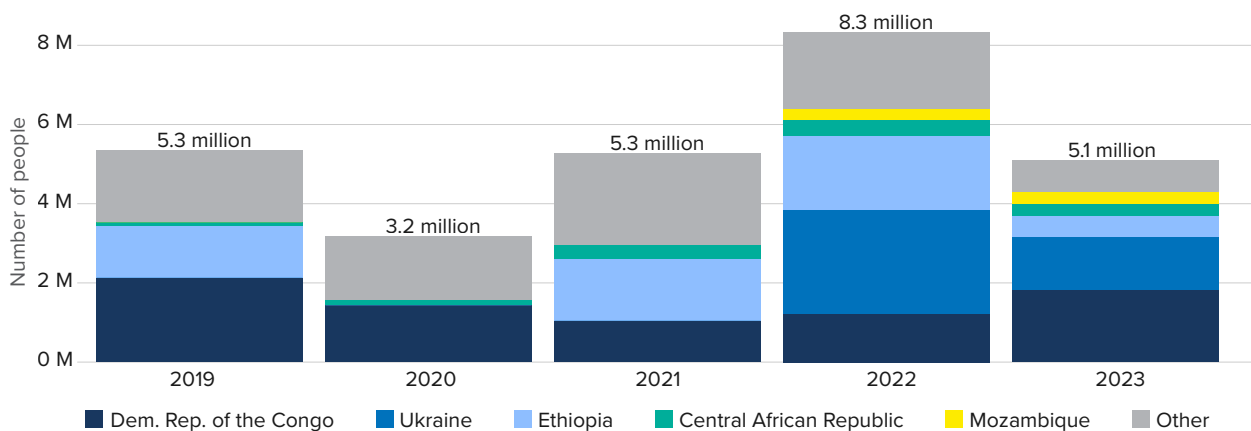
In 2023, almost half of the refugees who naturalized (14,900) were reported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, predominantly Syrians (7,700) and Eritreans (2,400). Canada and France also reported 9,400 and 2,500 refugees naturalizing respectively.

## Return of IDPs

During 2023, nearly 5.1 million internally displaced people are estimated to have returned to their place of origin. This is a 60 per cent drop from the previous year but remains generally consistent with earlier years (see figure 17).

Nearly 62 per cent of all IDP returns were within the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.8 million) and Ukraine (1.3 million).<sup>100</sup> About 534,300 people displaced in northern Ethiopia returned to their homes during 2023 after a peace agreement was signed in November 2022. A further 325,900 IDPs in the Central African Republic and 281,000 IDPs in Mozambique returned during the year.

Figure 17 | Returns of IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR | 2019 - 2023



<sup>98</sup> See [Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2023](#), UNHCR.

<sup>99</sup> See footnote 89.

<sup>100</sup> The number of IDP returns in Ukraine is based on an IOM survey estimate of a total of 4,455,000 IDP and refugee returnees since 2022, 74 per cent of whom were IDPs and 40 per cent of whom returned within the previous 12 months (see [IOM DTM round 15](#)).

## CHAPTER 6

# Stateless people

## 4.4 MILLION

Are estimated to be stateless at the end of 2023, and the true number is likely to be much higher.

## 565,900

Stateless people have acquired citizenship since the launch of UNHCR's #IBelong Campaign in 2014.

### Overview

The global stateless population was estimated at 4.4 million by the end of 2023. This figure includes people who were either stateless or of undetermined nationality.<sup>101</sup> The estimate of 4.4 million is based on data for 95 countries reported to UNHCR by governments and collected from other sources such as quantitative and qualitative studies by UNHCR and its partners. The number of countries providing statistics on stateless populations to UNHCR has increased slightly during the last decade. Approximately half of all countries do not report any data on statelessness, including many countries with known large stateless populations. Additionally, some countries only report statistics for parts of the known

stateless population in the country. It is therefore likely that the true global stateless population is considerably larger than reported. The continued improvements in the quality and coverage of data on statelessness are welcomed steps towards closing the data gap.

Approximately one third of the global stateless population are also displaced. The largest displaced stateless populations are Rohingya refugees in countries neighbouring Myanmar, predominantly Bangladesh (971,900). An additional 155,500 stateless Rohingya are internally displaced in Myanmar. The largest non-displaced stateless populations were registered in Côte d'Ivoire (931,000)<sup>102</sup> and Thailand (586,500).<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See [definitions of stateless and undetermined nationality](#) on the Refugee Data Finder.

<sup>102</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, stateless people do not have a nationality due to historical reasons and a lack of safeguards in the nationality legislation to prevent children born in the country being rendered stateless.

<sup>103</sup> The stateless people in Thailand are mainly from ethnic minorities.

*KAZAKHSTAN. Veronika is stateless, as her mother Natalya was undocumented and could not register her birth. Twenty years ago, when Natalya had not yet confirmed her citizenship of the recently independent Kazakhstan, she lost her passport, which had been issued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. As a result, she found herself stateless, but with the help of a UNHCR partner, the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, Natalya and Veronika are now in the process of having their Kazakh citizenship confirmed.*

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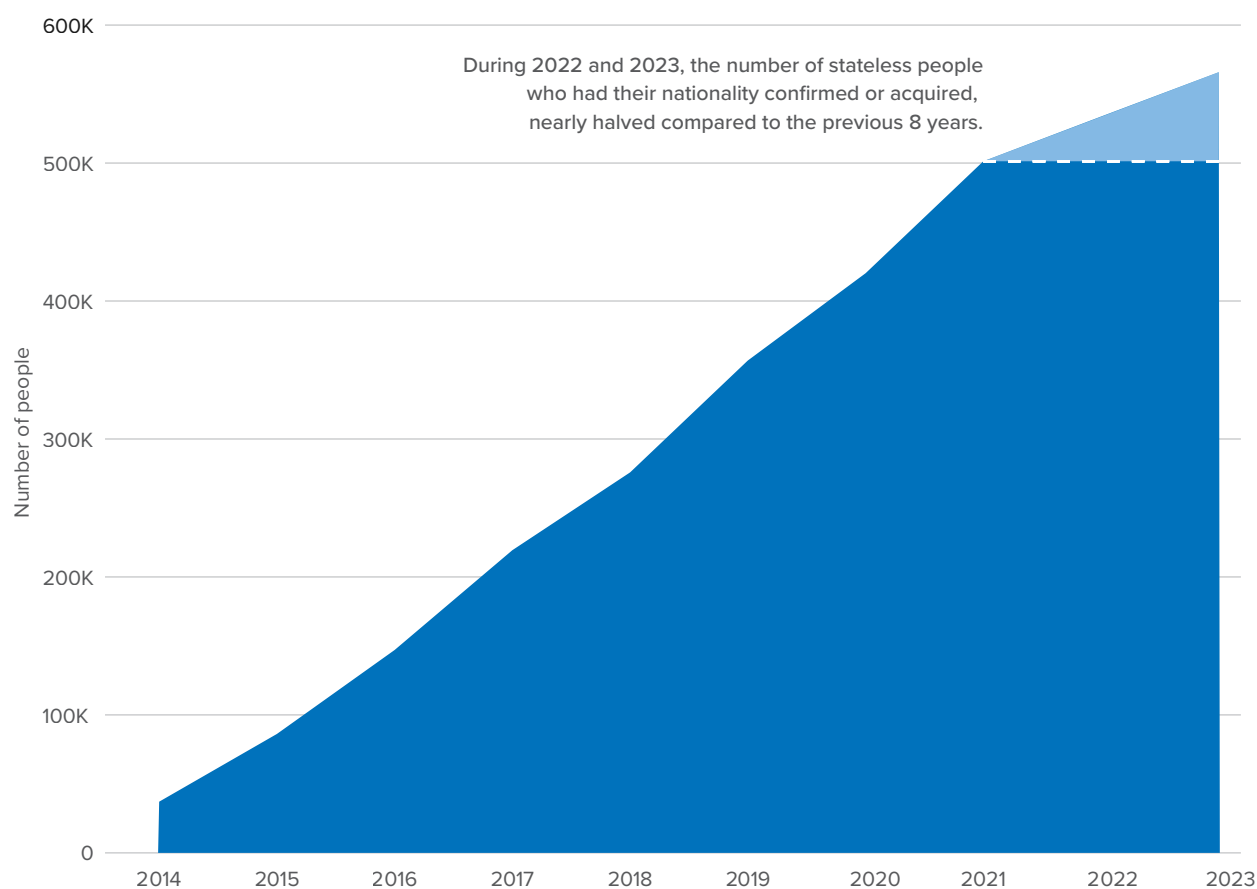
Demographic information, which is available for 79 per cent of the 4.4 million stateless people, indicates that among adult stateless people women account for a slightly larger share of the population (53 per cent).<sup>104</sup> Further improvements in the availability of demographics for stateless data is essential to develop age- and sex-specific responses to statelessness, especially considering linkages between statelessness and discrimination due to a person's gender.

## Acquisition and confirmation of nationality

In 2023, 32,200 people acquired citizenship or had their nationality confirmed in 29 countries. This figure is slightly higher than in 2022 but is still lower

than reported in previous years. However, many countries made important strides in 2023 to resolve statelessness. For example, following its recognition as nationals of the members of the Makonde and Shona communities in the previous years, Kenya made further progress to resolve statelessness in the country by granting 6,969 stateless individuals from the Pemba community Kenyan nationality. Similarly, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan continued their efforts to reduce statelessness, each recognizing thousands of stateless individuals or those of undetermined nationality as nationals. Since the beginning of UNHCR's #IBelong Campaign (2014-2024), nearly 565,900 stateless people have acquired citizenship. In the final year of the campaign in 2024, UNHCR calls on States to accelerate efforts to provide definitive solutions to statelessness through the grant of nationality.

Figure 18 | Cumulative number of people who had their nationality confirmed or acquired citizenship | 2014 - 2023



<sup>104</sup> Data disaggregated by both sex and age was reported for 76 per cent of the population.

## Strategic plan 2023-2026: redoubling efforts on statelessness

In 2023, UNHCR launched the “Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Redoubling Our Efforts on Ending Statelessness” with the aim to achieve transformative and measurable changes by 2026 in the reduction and prevention of statelessness and the protection of stateless people.<sup>105</sup> To this end, UNHCR has intensified policy and public advocacy to encourage country-level action for legislative and policy reforms to grant nationality to stateless populations and to prevent statelessness.

Multi-stakeholder engagement and coalition-building is a key element of the strategic plan. In this regard, work is underway to establish a Global Alliance to End Statelessness, a new multi-stakeholder platform which will bring together Member States, regional organizations, UN entities, stateless-led organizations and other civil society actors. The Alliance is designed to advance action and solutions at the country level, including by supporting pledge implementation. The Alliance will also work to accelerate change on thematic issues such as gender discrimination and childhood statelessness. During the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, 24 entities, including 11 States, along with 13 organizations, have already committed to joining the Global Alliance which will be launched in October 2024.

### Policy improvements during 2023

Causes of statelessness are different across situations, with common denominators relating to gaps in nationality laws or discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion or language, excluding people and entire communities from access to citizenship. As a result, stateless people are often denied enjoyment of their human rights, such as education, healthcare, civil and political participation, as well as access to essential public services and the formal labour market. Statelessness may also

perpetuate across generations and new cases may be created, if safeguards are not in place to ensure that every child can acquire a nationality at birth, regardless of their parent’s nationality status.

States have the power and responsibility for legal and policy reforms that are necessary to effectively address statelessness. In 2023, 14 States improved their laws, policies and procedures to prevent and reduce statelessness. Several countries, including the **Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan** and **the Bahamas**, introduced legal amendments to ensure that children are not born into statelessness and do not inherit it from their parents. **Brazil’s** constitutional amendment prevents the loss of Brazilian nationality when acquiring another and safeguards against statelessness resulting from renunciation of nationality. The **United States of America** put into effect new policy guidance to identify and assist stateless individuals, while **Portugal** approved legal amendments with a view to establishing a statelessness determination procedure. At regional level, an important milestone was reached as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights Relating to the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa was adopted by the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs in December 2023. It was subsequently submitted for adoption by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2024.

Improved statistics, data collection and reporting mechanisms play an essential role in addressing statelessness. A more accurate understanding of statelessness worldwide is required, evidenced by data, including the identification of the protection needs and living conditions of those affected by it and the barriers to solutions for stateless people. The International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics (IROSS)<sup>106</sup> are guiding recommendations, developed by the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS) to improve the production, coordination and dissemination of statelessness statistics at a national and international level. Endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2023, the recommendations are being used to inform important data collection

<sup>105</sup> See [Redoubling Our Efforts on Ending Statelessness: UNHCR’s Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#).

<sup>106</sup> See [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics](#), led by the [Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics](#).

exercises on statelessness. For example, in Rwanda the IROSS was used to guide relevant identification questions in its recent population and housing census. Using the census results, areas where populations that may be stateless or at risk reside could be mapped. Targeted surveys are planned in these areas to obtain more detailed information about the profiles of the populations and the causes and risk factors of statelessness. This information is critical for policy formulation and implementation to address the issues.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>107</sup> See [2023 Annual Report 2023](#), EGRIS.



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# GLOBAL TRENDS

## FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN 2023

PRODUCED BY UNHCR  
(13 JUNE 2024)

### FRONT COVER

**THE SUDAN.** *Habiba fled her home in the Blue Nile and became internally displaced. She is now a community representative for women and children in a camp for internally displaced persons in the Sudan.*

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This document along with further information on  
global displacement is available on UNHCR's  
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