UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2021 MULTI SECTORIAL RAPID ASSESSMENTS ANALYSIS

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2021 MULTI SECTORIAL RAPID ASSESSMENTS
Analysis

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 Methodology
03 Key Findings
04 Extent of the Assessments
05 Background
05 Key Demographic Data
06 Overall Humanitarian Needs
07 Humanitarian Needs: Shelter, Non-Food Items and Health
08 Documentation
09 Coping Strategies
10 Coping Strategies – regional variations by status and gender
11 Intentions and Trends
12 Feedback Channels

METHODOLOGY

From 10 October to 31 December 2021, UNHCR conducted 142,182 household-level multi-sectorial rapid assessments in 314 districts in all 34 provinces with the goal of identifying families in need of UNHCR assistance.

Due to the dynamic situation and lack of a complete sampling frame, rapid assessments were implemented using convenience sampling. Selection of the areas to conduct assessments was based on information coming from the Community-Based Protection Monitoring and UNHCR's key informants. Interagency joint assessments data was also used in some locations.

Considering the magnitude and scale of the exercise, the quality of responses, and the interview techniques employed using a solid questionnaire, UNHCR considers the resulting information to contain valuable responses. This data analysis focuses on findings received from the population reached and does not make inferences about the total population. Though the sampling does not produce representative findings, the report still helps to provide information on the challenges IDPs and IDP returnees, in particular, face in Afghanistan.

[1] *Cover photo credits: Mohammad Sadiq 58, pictured with some of his children. Mohammed has 12 in his family. As Mohammed has no work they are behind on the rent but cash help and from UNHCR has helped. But says he needs a lot more, as "I am old man and no one will employ me." © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell*

KEY FINDINGS

PROTECTION RISKS

- One of the main protection risks is linked to the prevailing economic crisis in Afghanistan. Households have lost income and are struggling to survive resulting in families resorting to harmful coping mechanisms. Such a severe socio-economic situation triggers psychosocial problems, gender-based violence and serious child protection issues including child labour, exploitation, and inhibits access to education as children may be forced to work or beg.
- Another major protection risk is the constant threat of eviction as households may be unable to afford rental payments.
- Vulnerability also stems from disability-related factors. There is a need for tailored support in order to mitigate specific protection risks and address the specific needs of households that may be a result of Afghanistan's economic crisis.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

- Findings on future intentions suggest that the vast majority of IDPs (89 per cent) prefer to remain in their current locations for at least the next 30 days.
- The situation of IDP returnees requires specific attention. Only five per cent of IDP returnees indicated having received assistance while their needs are sometimes greater, particularly amongst female headed households. IDP return support needs to be carefully tailored considering the specific protection risks and humanitarian needs of this population group.

AAP/CwC

- With regard to feedback channels, there is a clear preference for direct communication, rather than via community leaders and representatives. Therefore, communication channels need to be diversified, particularly to reach women, persons with disabilities, and other specific groups, through community outreach and community-based protection mechanisms.

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

2021 MULTI SECTORIAL RAPID ASSESSMENTS

Analysis

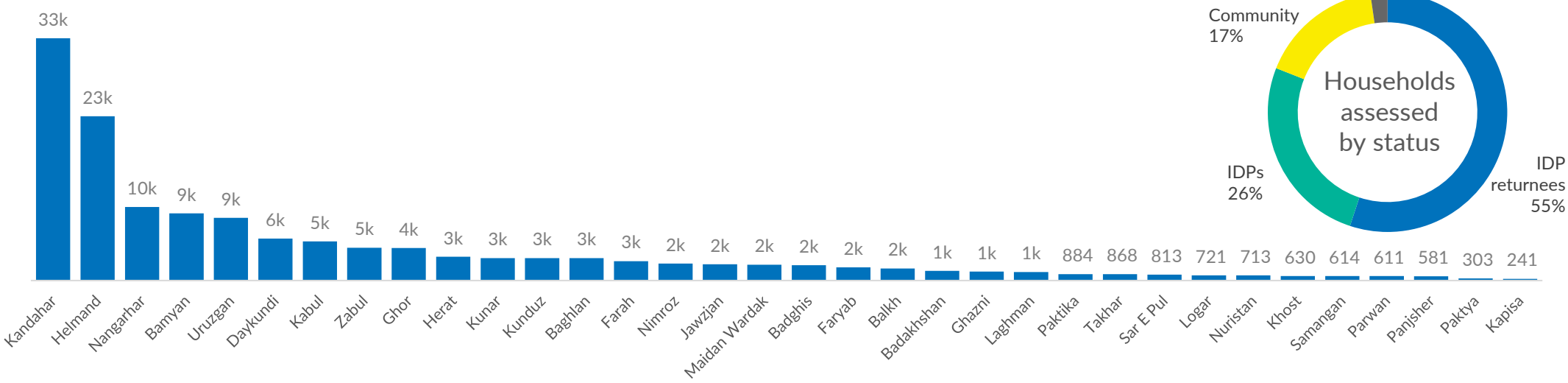
EXTENT OF THE ASSESSMENTS

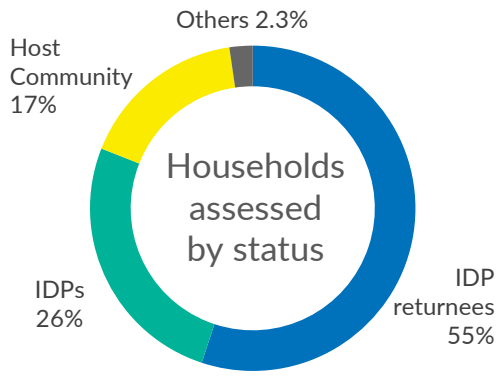
142,182
Total Assessments

34 out of 34
Provinces reached

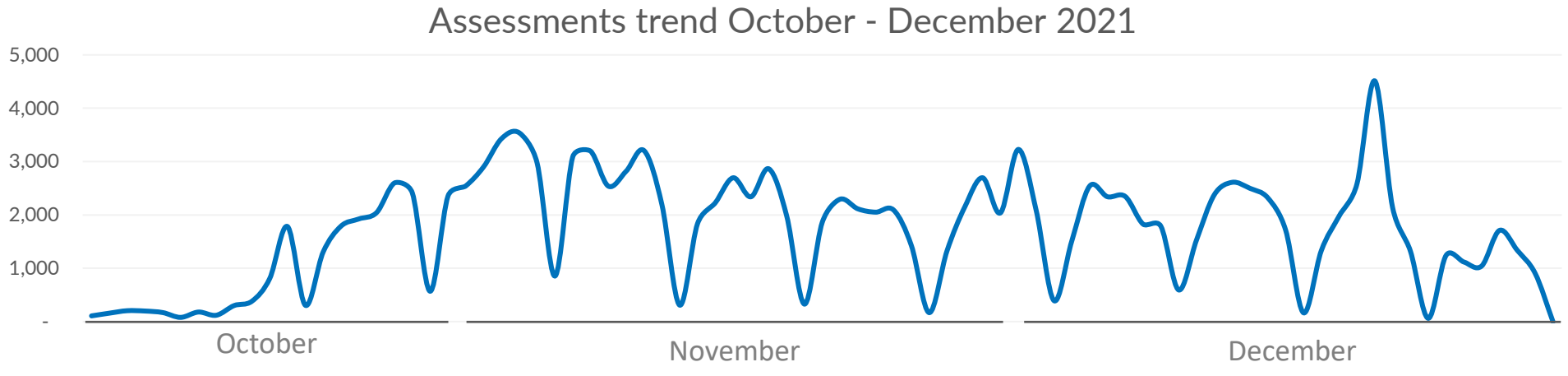
314 out of 401
Districts covered

Number of assessments by province

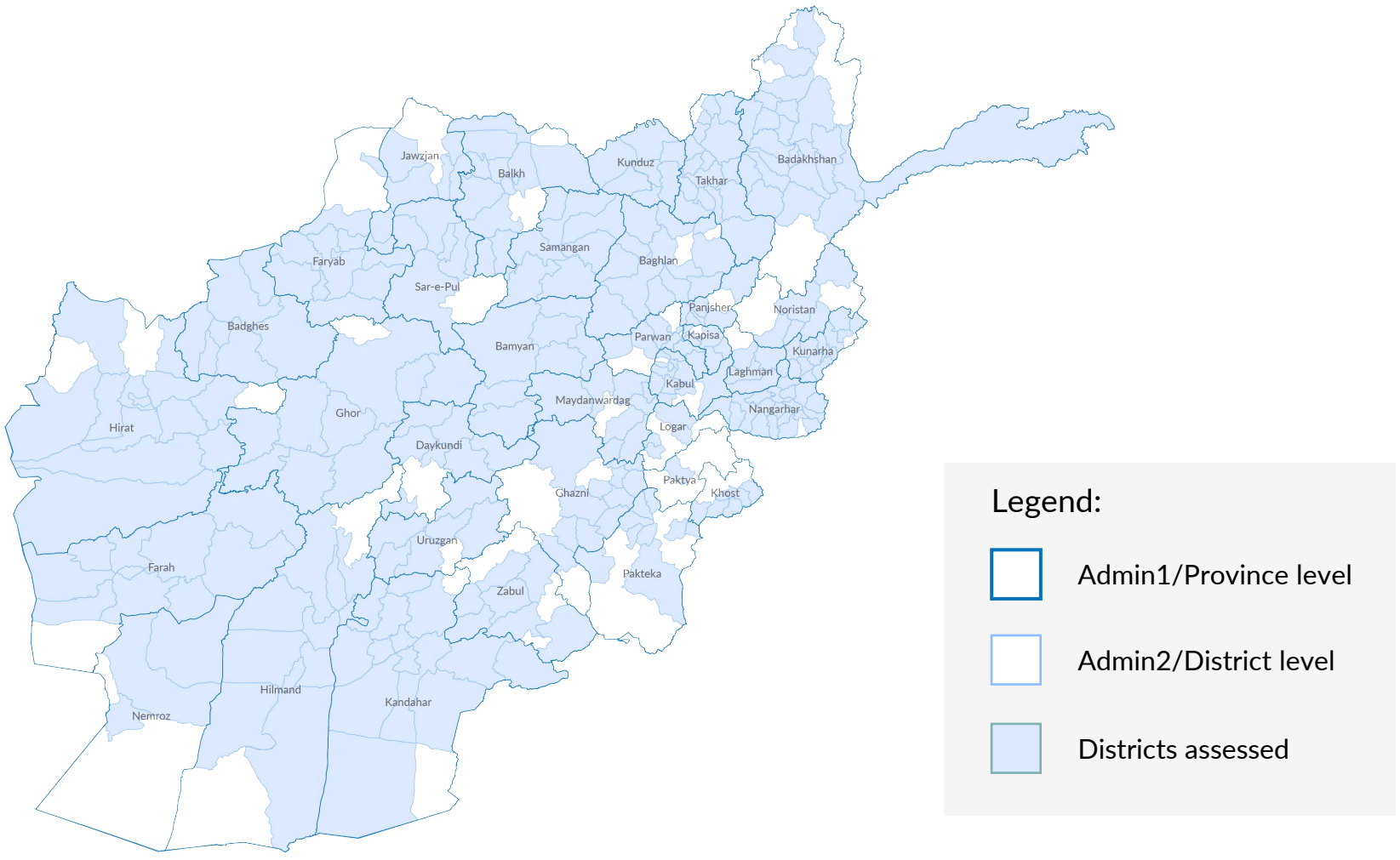




The majority of the assessments were conducted in the Southern Region due to the fact that conflict increased over June-July 2021 in the South and people were displaced into urban areas and could not be reached. When the fighting subsided following the change in authority on 15 August 2021, many families immediately returned to their places of origin. As their needs were assumed to be high, they were prioritized for assessment.



DISTRICTS ASSESSED



BACKGROUND

Following the change in authority in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 and the resulting declaration of a Level 3 emergency, UNHCR introduced a rapid assessment methodology to quickly assess humanitarian and protection needs throughout the country as part of scale-up by UNHCR to respond to the unfolding crisis. The assessments were carried out between October - December 2021.

The primary focus of the assessments were IDPs and IDP returnees who account for the majority of the households interviewed in these assessments. Nonetheless, as UNHCR takes a whole-of-community approach in its assistance programme, vulnerable host community members were also assessed, alongside a small number of refugee returnees, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as deported and spontaneous returnees under an area-based approach. Seventeen national NGO partners conducted the rapid assessments, as well as UNHCR's own workforce.

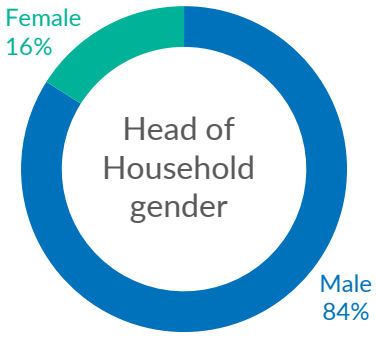
KEY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

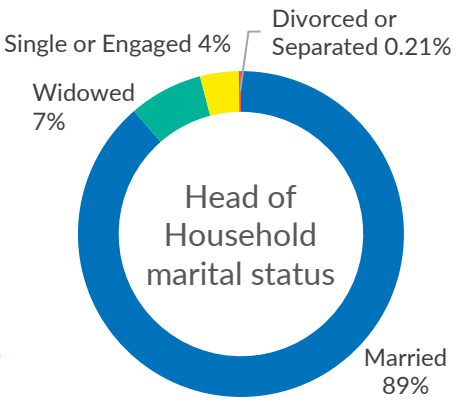
Key findings on vulnerability and protection concerns

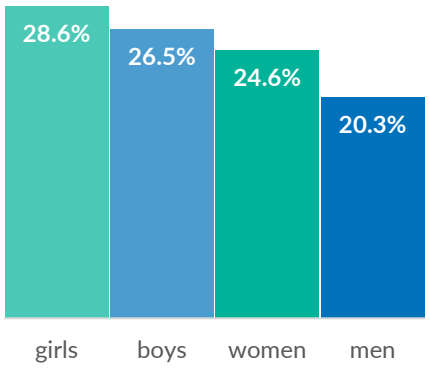
Overall, 95 per cent of male heads of household are married, however, amongst female headed households only 54 per cent are married. Some **43 per cent of female headed households were found to be headed by widows** and amongst IDP returnees alone, the figure rises to 56 per cent. The high number of female-headed households denotes serious protection concerns, considering the current restrictions on women, including in relation to employment, freedom of movement and community participation.

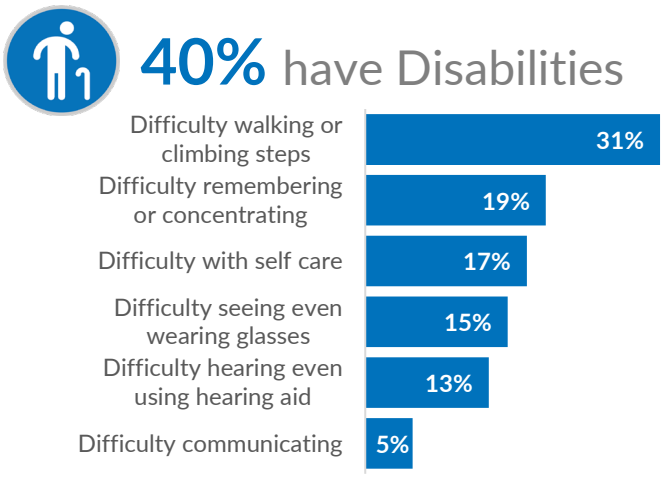
A small percentage of households, overall, were found to be headed by persons above 60 years as well as some headed by persons below 18 years. **Child-headed households and older persons without family support or households headed by older persons require specific support and should be prioritised**.

Households, including persons with disabilities or mobility problems, experience particular vulnerability. The prevalence of households indicating family members with vulnerabilities (based on the Washington Group Disability Statistics questions) was found to be higher than the assumed average (16 per cent in the WoA 2021, 18 per cent based on UNHCR's community-based protection monitoring data). However, it is noted that the assessment was not aimed at generating a representative sample and hence the data should be considered as indicative. Moreover, the variation is primarily in relation to those that indicated difficulty with walking or climbing steps, with the other indicators showing not too much divergence. Amongst male-headed households, 39 per cent include a family member with disabilities or mobility issues, while amongst female headed households the figure is 42 per cent. Amongst female headed IDP returnee families, the figure is 46 per cent, indicating a greater level of vulnerability amongst IDP returnees. Women-headed households, as indicated by this data, face a multitude of challenges and need particular support due the multiple vulnerabilities present in their families.





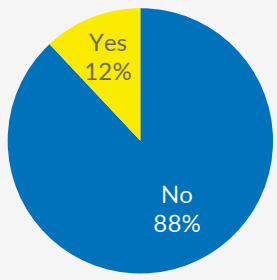




OVERALL HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Unsurprisingly, food tops the lists of needs, however, there is also an evident need for non-food items, fuel (considering the assessments were conducted during the winter), rent (considering the assessments targeted IDPs), and health care. Amongst IDPs and IDP returnee female headed households, overall, fuel was indicated as the 2nd priority need, while amongst male households, rent was prioritised 4th, with non-food items indicated as their 2nd priority. Amongst male headed IDP returnee families, shelter rehabilitation enters the top five needs, while overall that was found to be the 6th priority need.

Overall assistance previously received

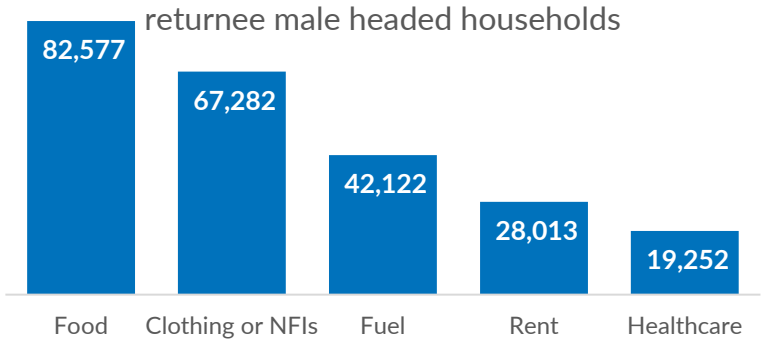


The majority of households assessed indicated not having received humanitarian assistance at the time of survey. Of those that had received assistance, the majority (53 per cent) indicated having received assistance more than three months previously, and that that was primarily in the form of food with cash assistance (which could be used to cover a multitude of other basic needs), provided only for 10 per cent of overall assessed households.

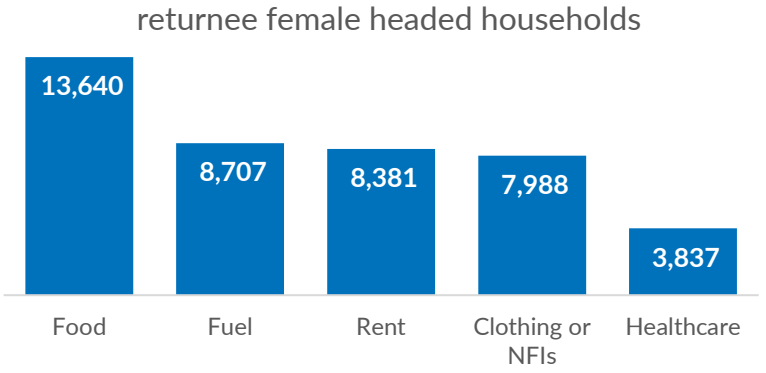
However, the findings show that amongst those households that had received assistance, 20 per cent of female headed households were targeted for assistance as compared to 10 per cent of male headed households, indicating that attempts are being made to assist families based on vulnerability linked to specific needs of female headed households.

Nevertheless, while there are evidently significant humanitarian needs amongst IDP returnees, they have been targeted less often with humanitarian assistance, as only five per cent indicated have receiving aid.

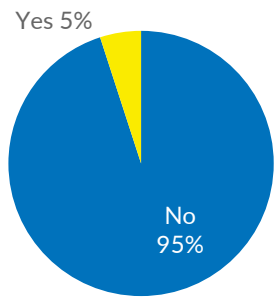
Overall assistance needs: IDP & IDP returnee male headed households



Overall assistance needs: IDP & IDP returnee female headed households



IDP returnees - assistance previously received



Mohammad Nabi family in Bolan area of Helmand, near Lashkar Gah city. The area saw heavy fighting at various points during the conflict, including in July 2021 when much of the Nabi family compound was destroyed. Mohammed Nabi and family returned home after the Taliban took over and says he has run up a 350,000 Afghani debt fixing up his home and covering food and other essentials.. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS: SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

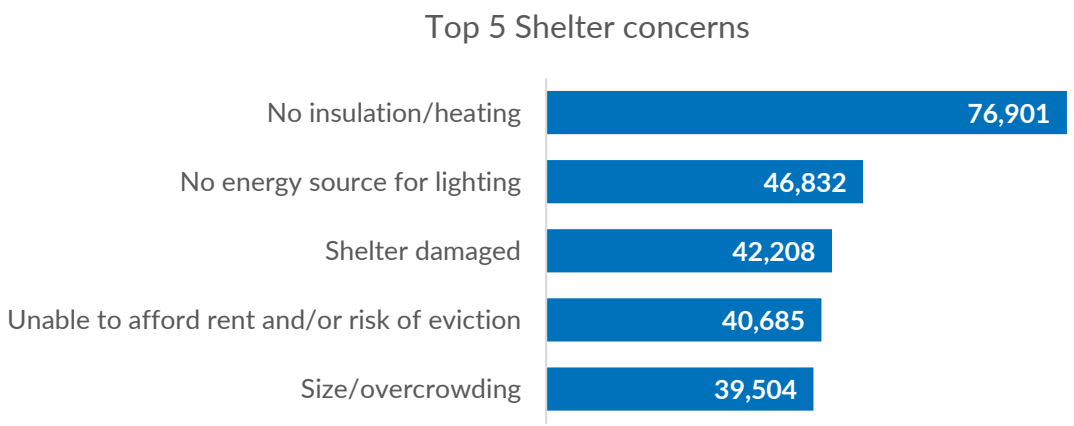
Key protection considerations relating to shelter and Non-Food Items

Some 84 per cent of IDPs indicated that they are renting shelters. IDP returnees (24%) are also renting accommodation in their place of origin upon return. Evidently, given that shelters may have been damaged by conflict, IDP returnees have needs pertaining to shelter rental. Qualitative findings from UNHCR's CBPM have found that the presence of IDPs who rent homes drives-up rental prices and contributes to community tensions. The rapid assessment data shows that 20 per cent of host community members are also renting shelters, creating a protection concern linked to the issue of rent, beyond just individual needs.

Amongst the top five overall shelter concerns, in addition to those relating to the condition of shelters, two issues that also give rise to protection concerns relate to the threat of eviction owing to non-ability to pay rent and overcrowding. The threat of eviction is the 2nd priority concern raised by female headed households, while, unsurprisingly, it is the primary concern for IDP households (both male and female). In general terms overcrowding is also an issue, particularly in relation to privacy, especially for women and girls. Seventy per cent of households indicated having 1 – 10 persons in the household, with 27 per cent indicating between 11 – 20 members and 3 per cent indicating 21 or more members. Another factor relates to the location of shelters. Although overall 38 per cent reported being in shelters in remote locations with no access to basic services, amongst IDPs the figure is higher (49 per cent), as well as amongst IDP returnees (40 per cent). In this regard, overall, 34 per cent of IDPs and 40 per cent of IDP returnees indicated not having a water source less than 500 meters distance.

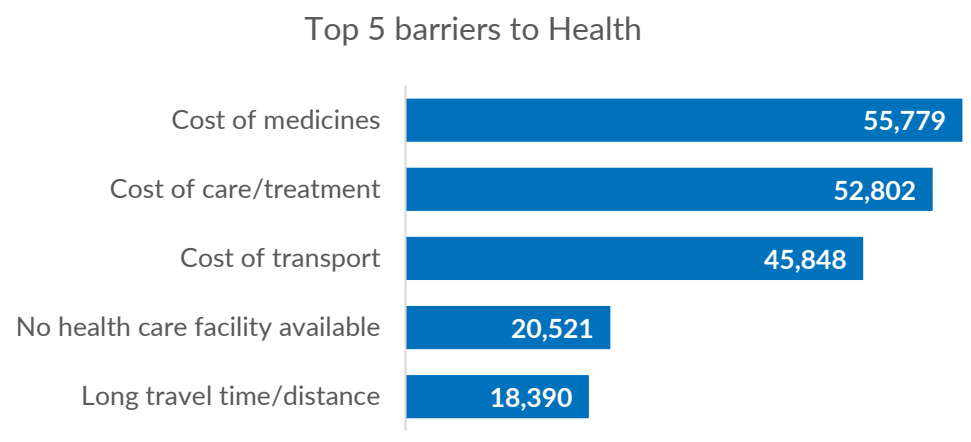
In relation to non-food items there is a clear need for basic household items. Of note also is the need for undergarments for women and girls, as well as sanitary items, which was raised by both male and female headed households amongst needed items. This is noteworthy as the inclusion of these items in assistance packages has resulted in some sensitivity following the change in authority in August 2021.

An additional consideration, which also links to the durability of solutions, is that 74 per cent indicated that their dwellings are mud-houses, which are likely to be highly susceptible to natural disasters and deterioration due to precipitation.



Access to healthcare

A number of considerations arise in relation to accessing healthcare. With the public health system on the verge of collapse, costs related obtaining medicines and treatment emerge as significant problems. Costs of transport to access health facilities, distance and availability of clinics are additional barriers in accessing to health care. These problems are largely similar between male and female headed households and IDPs and IDP returnees.



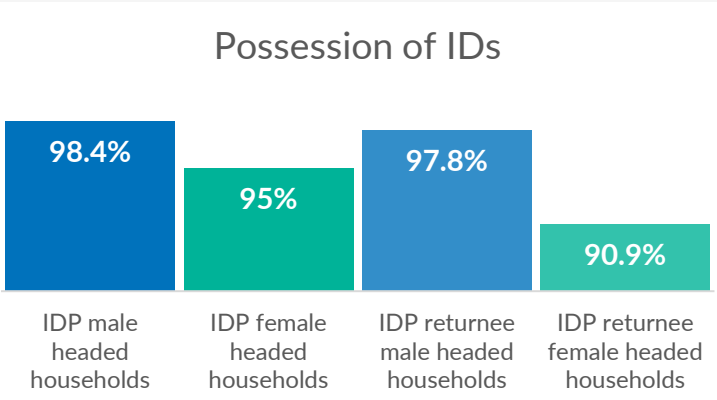
DOCUMENTATION

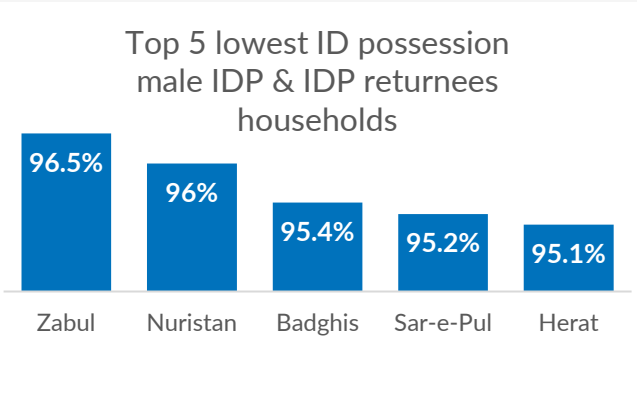
Most respondents possess civil documentation, with 97.5 per cent of male and female headed IDPs and IDP returnee households having documents. UNHCR's community-based protection monitoring (CBPM) in 2021 indicated lower levels of possessing documentation (78 per cent amongst men and 68 per cent amongst women). The WoA 2021 indicates that two per cent of HHs indicated no member having a Tazkira and three per cent of HHs overall indicating a need for information pertaining to legal issues including on how to obtain a Tazkira.

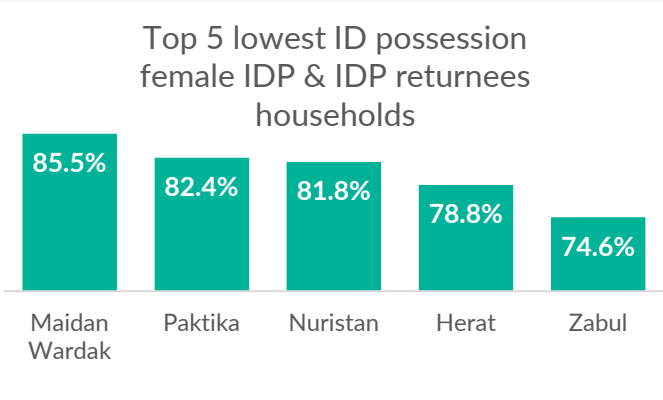
An analysis by province also does not show a great variation, but it should be recalled that the assessments were not aimed at generating statistical representation and in some provinces the number of IDP and IDP returnee households assessed were few.

Furthermore, UNHCR's 2021 CBPM findings indicated that only 9 per cent of HHs indicated not being able to access humanitarian assistance owing to lack of documentation. The major concern, however, is that of those who indicated lacking documentation during CBPM, 64 per cent indicated being unable to access basic services owing to a lack of documentation.

Access to civil documentation, including birth registration, is a basic human right. Improving availability of documentation requires further attention and possible intervention considering the findings that many thousands of households lack such documents.







Mohammad Sarwar, 66, a former farmer from Laghman Province, arrived in Kabul with his family seeking safety and support. Following increasing armed clashes across Afghanistan, in early August 2021, thousands of Afghans fled the provinces to seek refuge in the capital, Kabul. Some of these displaced persons were residing in makeshift shelters in the city's parks, with little or no resources to cater to their basic needs. © UNHCR/Tony Aseh

COPING STRATEGIES

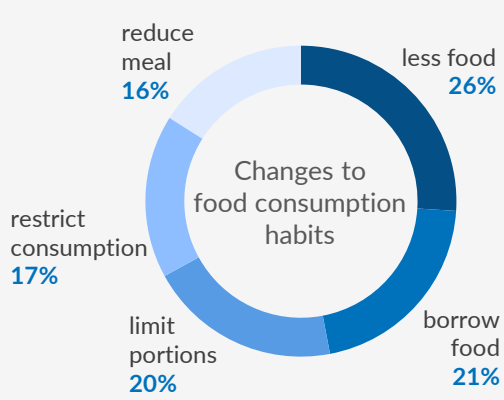
Key protection considerations

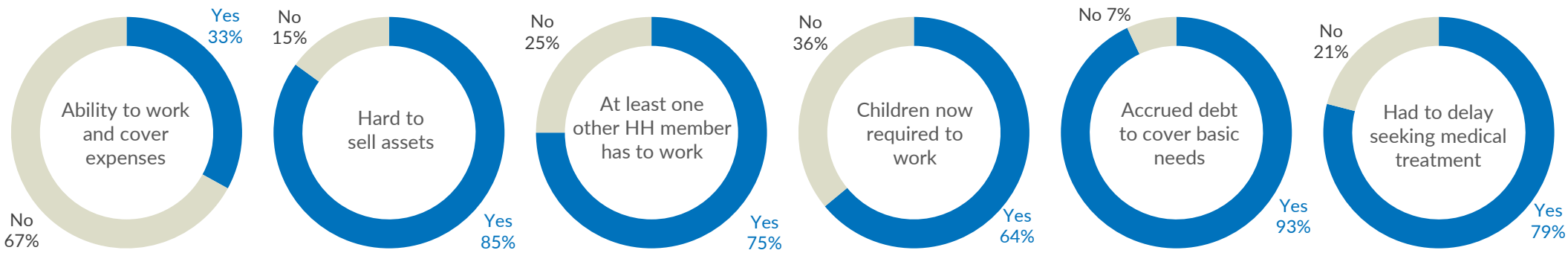
The findings from the assessments clearly show that households are in desperate economic straits, which is considered to have worsened since the change in authority in August 2021.

Consequently, households have had to engage in harmful coping strategies, which include changing food consumption habits, accruing debt, selling assets, requiring additional family members – including children – to work, and having to delay expenditure for medical treatment. Given the nature of the rapid assessment and concern to do no harm in a situation of a worsening protection environment, the assessment did not seek to capture in depth whether the more pernicious forms of harmful coping mechanisms, which include forced or early marriage – including of girl children – child selling and the selling of vital organs, which have been highlighted elsewhere are occurring. It is, nonetheless, likely that these practices are taking place, based on reports, including by a number of credible media outlets.

Moreover, findings from UNHCR's CBPM post-August 15 does indicate 4 per cent of households having resorted to child selling and 2 per cent engaging in early marriage. This, however, requires further protection assessment beyond the scope of this rapid assessment.

The findings, when comparing male and female headed households and IDP and IDP returnee families, are mostly similar although the situation is marginally worse for female headed households and more pronounced for IDP returnee households that are headed by females.





Mullah Mohammed and his children sort through wood that he has just purchased using UNHCR cash for winterization. Families received $265 from UNHCR. Vulnerable families were provided with cash assistance to meet additional needs during the coldest months, such as fuel for heating. Mullah Mohammed and his wife and nine children fled their home in Jalalabad. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

COPING STRATEGIES - REGIONAL VARIATIONS BY STATUS AND GENDER

Key protection findings

Overall, 63 per cent of IDP and IDP returnee households, headed both by males and females indicated an inability to work and cover daily expenses in the period following the change of authority, so mid-August 2021 marks the kick-off of more widespread engagement in harmful coping mechanisms. Accordingly, there is a strong correlation between the two as depicted in the preceding page.

At the same time, it is important to be cognisant of the fact that some provinces are in a worse situation than others and the variations are further marked by the population status group and whether households are headed by males or females. The data clearly confirms that female headed household are more vulnerable than male headed households in both categories of IDPs and IDP returnees.

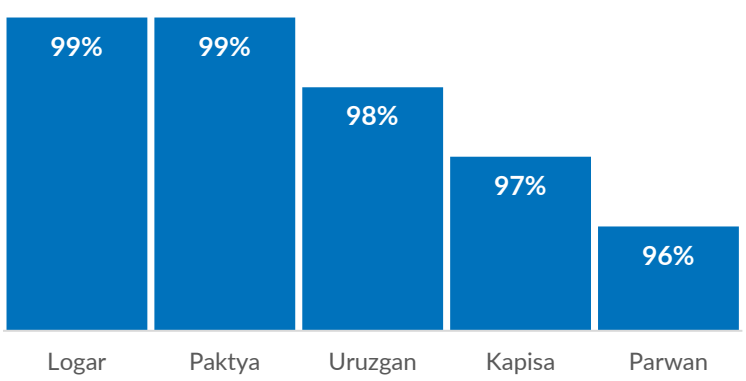
On average 72 per cent of male-headed IDP households indicated not being able to work and cover daily expenses while amongst female-headed households the number leaped to 81 per cent. Similarly, amongst IDP returnee households, the rates are 68 per cent and 76 per cent, respectively.

The figures suggest that persons in displacement have greater difficulty in working and covering their daily expenses compared to IDP returnees.

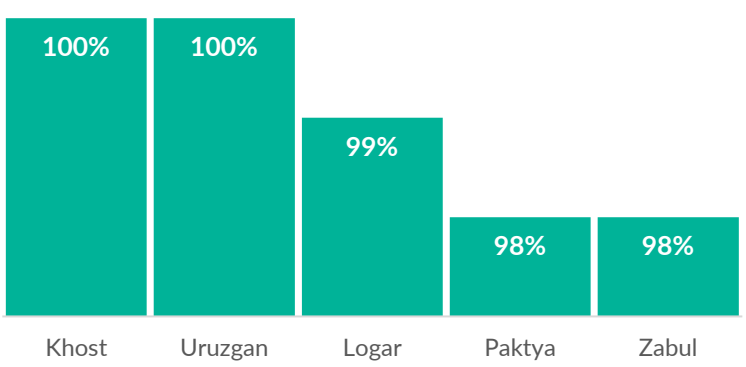
The provinces showing the lowest values indicating an inability to work and cover expenses, are Sar-Pul (52 per cent) with regard to IDP males, Baghlan (52 per cent) for IDP women, and Sar-e-Pul for both IDP returnee males (34 per cent) and IDP returnee women (33 per cent).

Top 5 provinces showing inability to work cover daily expenses

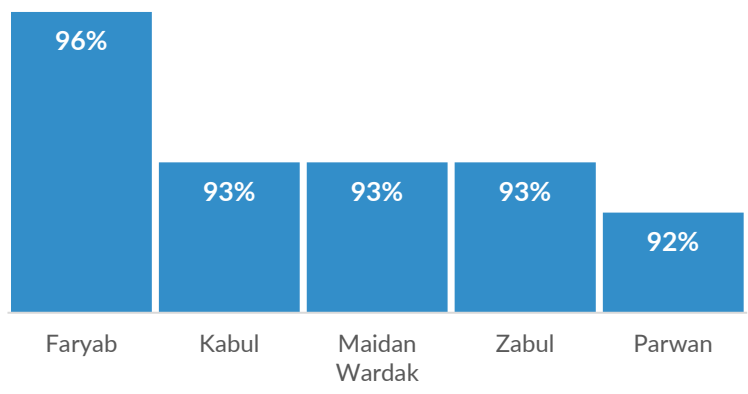
IDP male headed households



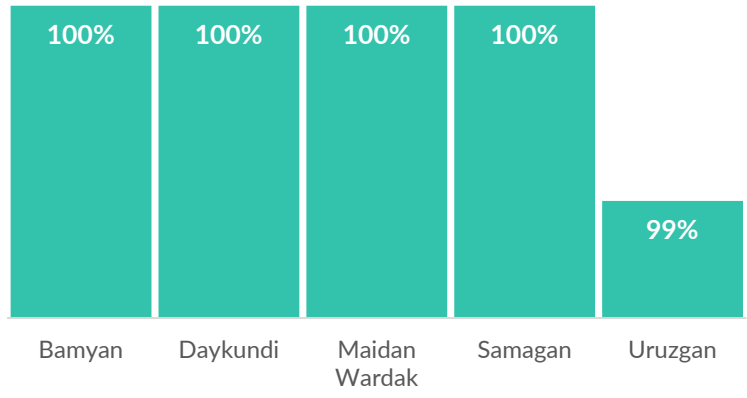
IDP female headed households



IDP returnees male headed households



IDP returnees female headed households



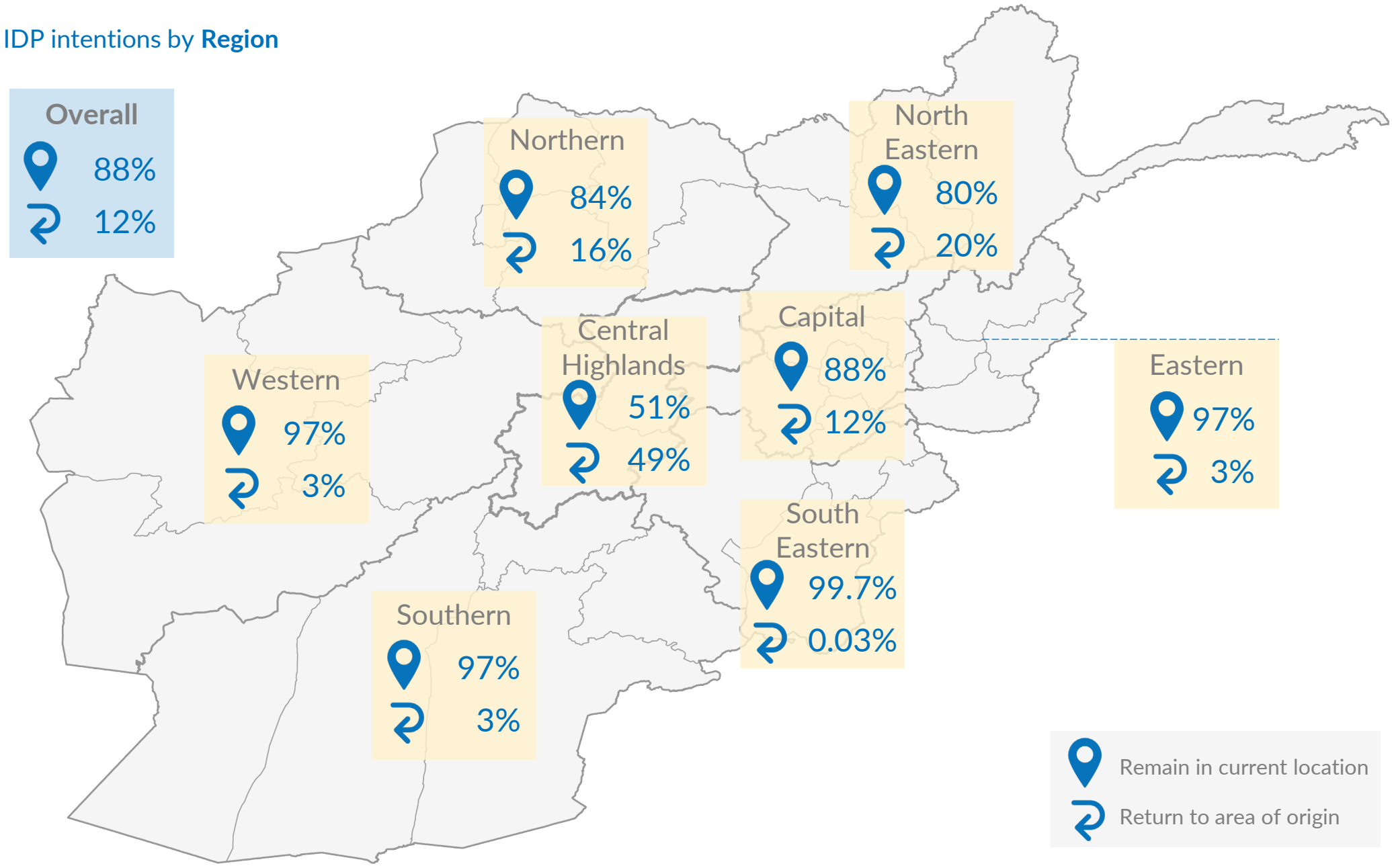
INTENTIONS AND TRENDS

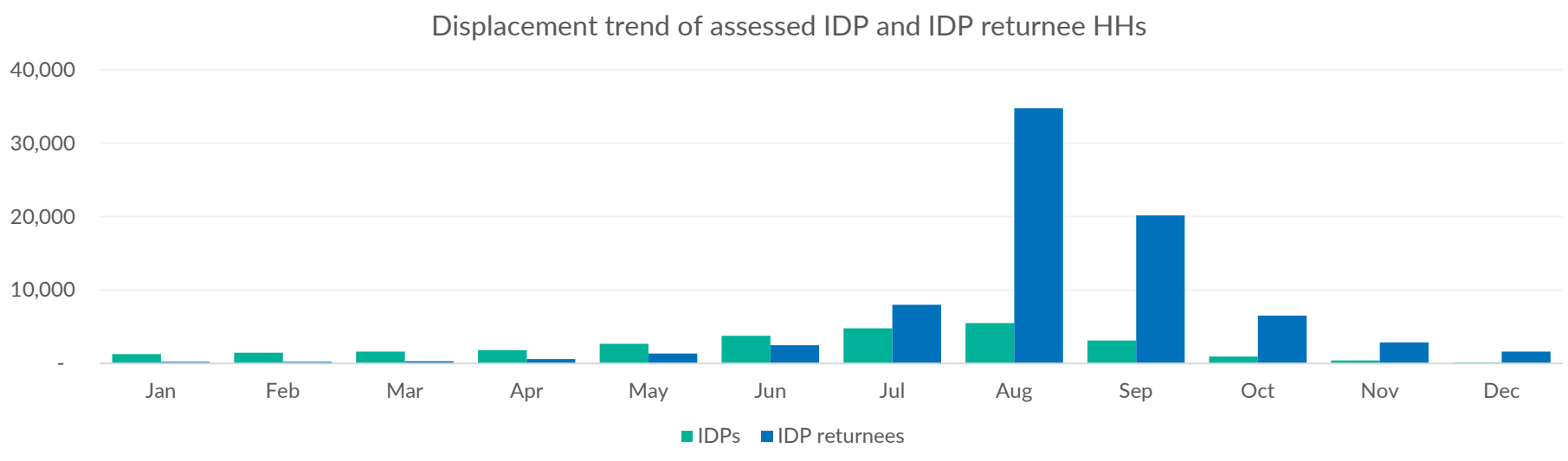
Key trends

Overall, 88 per cent of IDPs assessed indicated an intention to remain in their location of displacement in the next 30 days. However, it is evident that there is significant variance amongst the different provinces, meaning that whether or not IDPs intend to return is location-specific. Owing to the nature of the rapid assessment, reasons as to why IDPs intended to remain in displacement, or what they would require in order to consider returning from displacement, were not captured. It would therefore be essential to conduct dedicated intention surveys as part of processes to explore durable solutions for IDPs.

The reason why high numbers of IDP returnees have been assessed is that, particularly in the southern provinces, massive displacement took place leading up to 15th August as fighting intensified in urban areas. Post mid-August, the majority of these IDPs immediately returned.

IDP intentions by **Region**



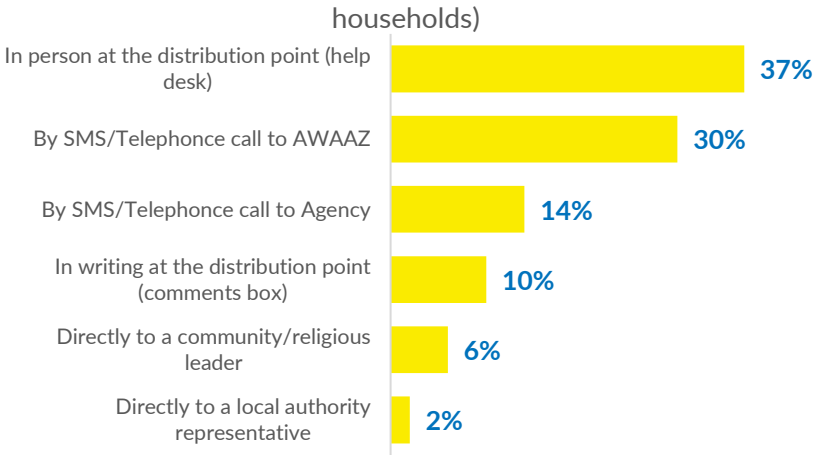


FEEDBACK CHANNELS

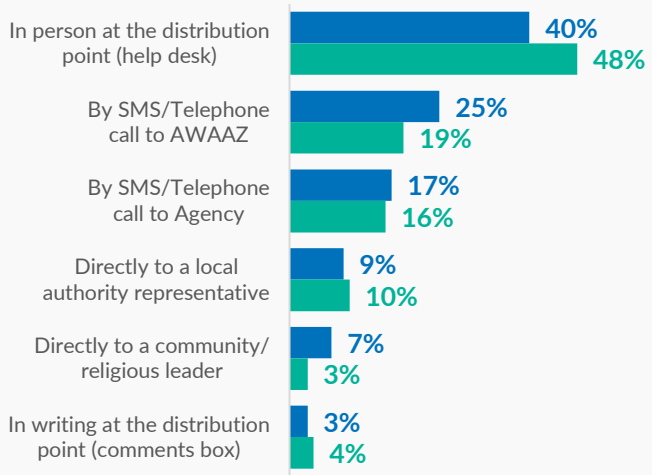
Assessed households indicated **a clear preference for in-person feedback at distribution point (help desk)** followed by utilization of Awaaz and hotlines. Feedback through community representatives and leaders, evidently is not favoured. The value of comments boxes is also not evident, based on the findings. However, these overall metrics are further influenced by gender preferences and population group status. Female headed IDP households, for instance, prefer in-person feedback, with less preference for using hotlines (including Awaaz) and communicating through community/religious leaders. These findings are largely similar amongst IDP returnee households.

Nevertheless, the importance of hotlines, especially Awaaz, was indicated.

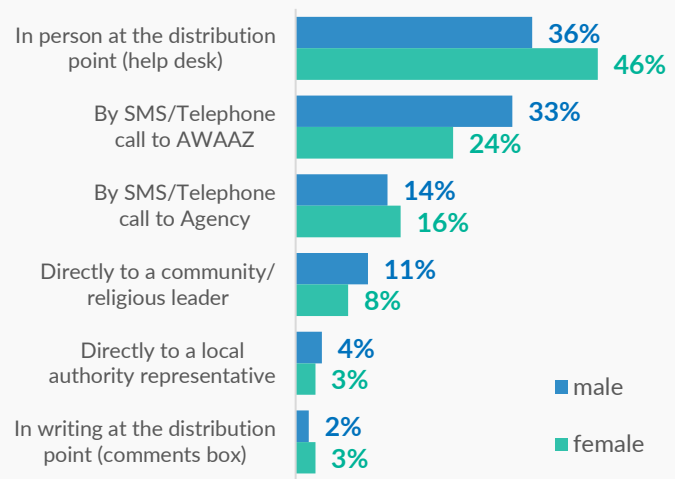
Overall feedback channel preferences
IDPs & IDP returnees (male & female headed households)



IDPs: feedback channel preferences



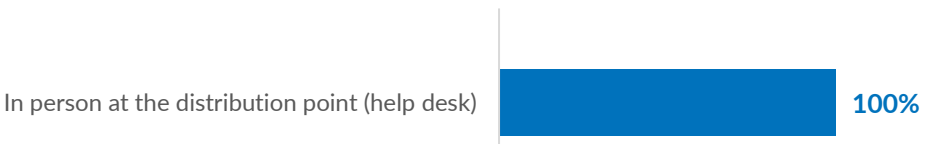
IDP returnees: feedback channel preferences



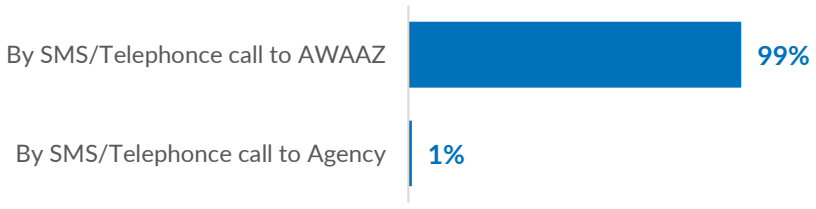
Geographical variance: Analysis by province, throws up a mixed picture (as illustrated by the below charts), which confirms the essential need for tailored approaches per provinces with some basic standardization in place.

Feedback preferences of IDPs & IDP returnees (male & female headed households) by **Province:**

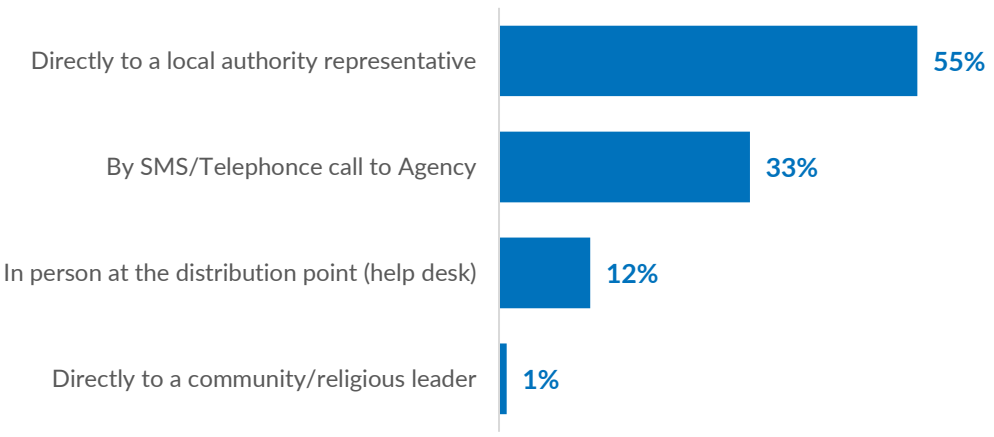
Daykundi



Uruzgan



Nimroz



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency