

Implications of the Taliban takeover on Afghan women's migration to Türkiye

Since August 2021, Taliban rule in Afghanistan has severely restricted women's rights, impacting their freedom of movement, access to education and healthcare, and right to work. This has made life for women incredibly challenging, alongside increased food insecurity, and rising poverty. Türkiye currently hosts 139,333 Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, 35% of whom are women and girls.¹ This snapshot examines the effects of the Taliban takeover on migration dynamics among Afghan women, focusing on the drivers of migration, the routes taken to reach Türkiye, protection risks faced en route and access to assistance. It aims to contribute to a solid evidence base that can inform targeted responses that enhance protection for Afghan women along mixed migration routes.

Key findings

- Deprivation of rights and freedoms was more commonly reported as a driver of migration among women who left Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover (41%, compared to 29% before).
- Sexual discrimination, in particular, was cited more commonly among respondents leaving after August 2021 (74% of those who reported leaving due to deprivation of rights and freedoms, compared to 51% before).
- Since the Taliban takeover, women respondents reported an increased reliance on land routes as compared to before August 2021 (76% post-August 2021 compared to 66% pre-August). This is likely due to the Taliban's prohibition on Afghan women from boarding flights unaccompanied by a male guardian.
- Protection risks were reported as high among those departing Afghanistan before and after August 2021. However, some risks were even more commonly reported by respondents leaving post-August 2021, including detention (44% compared to 31% before) and physical violence (44% compared to 38% before).

- Gaps in assistance prevail, with respondents highlighting critical needs for legal and resettlement assistance in Türkiye, in particular.

Profiles

This snapshot is based on 994 interviews conducted with Afghan women migrants between August 2021 and September 2023. Of those interviewed, 496 respondents arrived in Türkiye before August 2021, and 498 arrived after. The demographic of both groups was similar, with the majority falling within the age group of 18-30 years and reporting to have completed secondary school. In terms of migration status, the majority of those who arrived before August 2021 reported having regular status, as asylum seekers (39%), refugees (15%), and permanent or temporary residents (22%). In contrast, almost half (47%) of those who arrived after August 2021 reported holding an irregular status.

¹ Based on the latest data as of 2023, retrieved from [Refugee Data Finder](#)

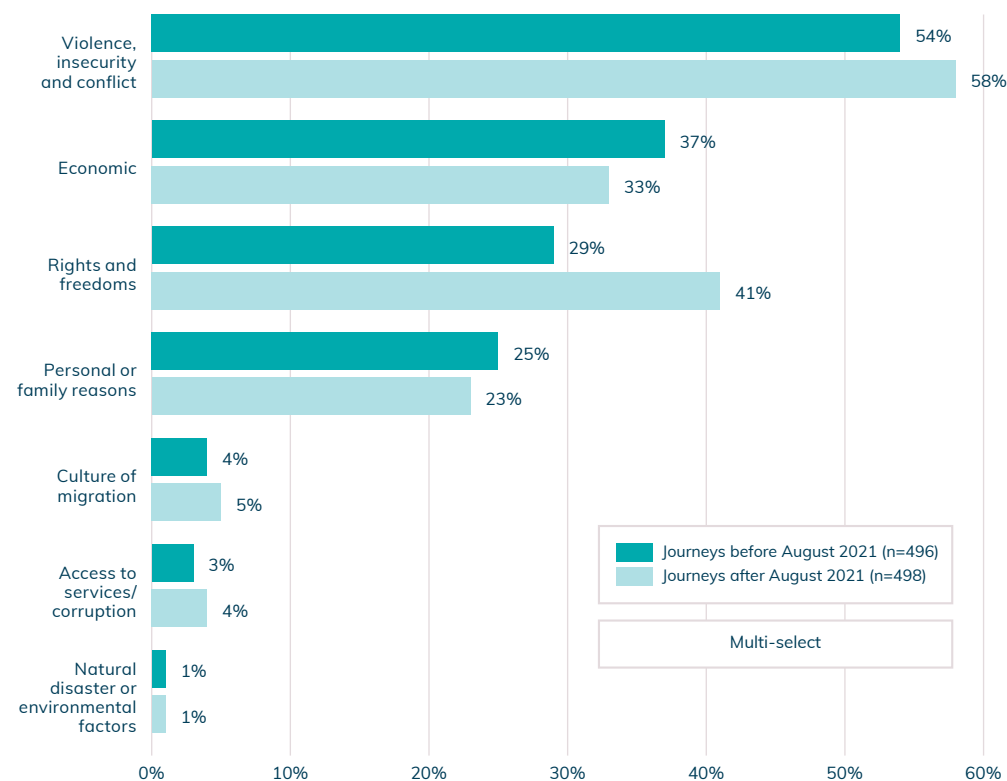
Table 1. Profile of respondents

		Arrived before Aug 2021 (n=496)	Arrived after Aug 2021 (n=498)	Total (n=994)
Age group	18-30	66%	68%	67%
	31-40	24%	24%	24%
	40+	10%	8%	9%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Education level	Did not complete any schooling	18%	18%	18%
	Primary school	17%	20%	18%
	Secondary or high school	40%	38%	39%
	University degree	23%	23%	23%
	Vocational training	2%	2%	2%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Current migration/ legal status	Irregular/no legal documents	19%	47%	33%
	Asylum seeker	39%	23%	31%
	Refugee	15%	6%	10%
	Permanent or temporary resident (with permit/visa)	22%	18%	20%
	Other	5%	6%	6%
	Refused	0%	1%	0%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Deprivation of rights and freedoms more commonly reported as a driver of migration post-Taliban takeover

Drivers of migration were largely similar regardless of departure date: violence and insecurity (61%), lack of access to rights and freedoms (35%) and economic factors (35%) were the top three. However, the share of those reporting deprivation of rights and freedoms as a driver increased from 29% to 41% post-Taliban takeover (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. For what reasons did you leave Afghanistan?



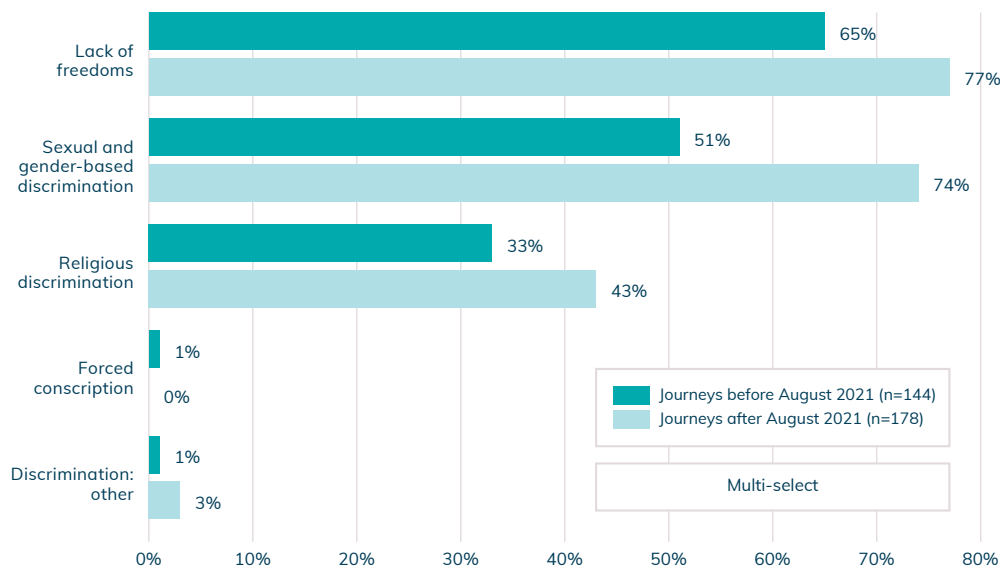
Sexual and gender-based discrimination more commonly reported post-Taliban takeover

Among women who cited rights and freedoms as a reason for leaving Afghanistan, a majority specified a lack of freedom, and sexual and gender-based discrimination, and many also reported religious discrimination, regardless of departure date (see Figure 2). Nonetheless, among those who left after August 2021, all three of these responses were reported more commonly. A particular jump was observed for sexual and gender-based discrimination, which increased from 51% to 74%. These responses are reflective of the worsening situation for women under Taliban rule, including being barred from accessing education, employment, public services, and justice, and having severe restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement.²

I was suffocating in the house with no school, no work, no joy. All my dreams fade away in an instant. It was like our house became our cage. Everyone was bullying us, even little boys were mocking us on the streets saying that our days are over.

Afghan woman, 21 years old, interviewed in Konya

Figure 2. What kind of reasons relating to rights and freedoms?

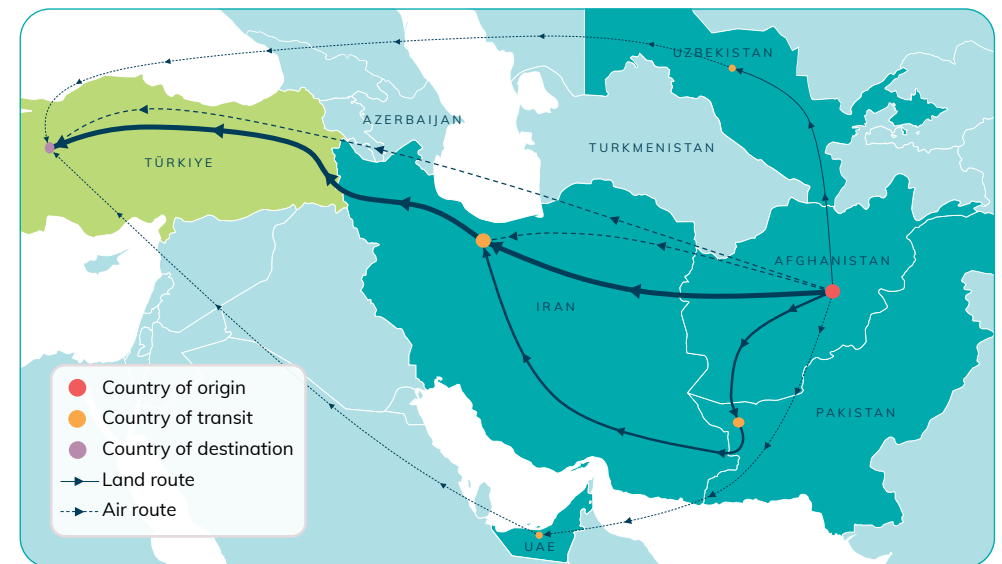


² Mohammadi, A., Bhat, S., & Lewis, T. (2023) [Afghan Women and Migration in the Era of Restrictions](#)

Greater reliance on land travel following the Taliban takeover, likely impacted by imposed travel restrictions for women

When comparing respondents who left Afghanistan before and after August 2021, the share of those taking direct flights from Afghanistan to Türkiye decreased from 28% pre-August 2021 to 19% post-August 2021. Correspondingly, a higher proportion of respondents who departed post-August 2021 reported taking overland journeys (81% compared to 72% of those who departed before August 2021). This shift is likely attributable to the temporary suspension of commercial airline services post-Taliban takeover, along with inflated flight ticket prices. DRC protection monitoring data also revealed that the cessation of passport issuance by the Department of Foreign Affairs post-Taliban takeover further disrupted air travel possibilities. Additionally, the Taliban's prohibition on Afghan women from travelling in public spaces or boarding flights without a male guardian exemplifies the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by Afghan women and may have prompted more individuals to opt for land routes, despite them being longer and often more perilous.³

Figure 3. Routes taken by Afghan women to reach Türkiye



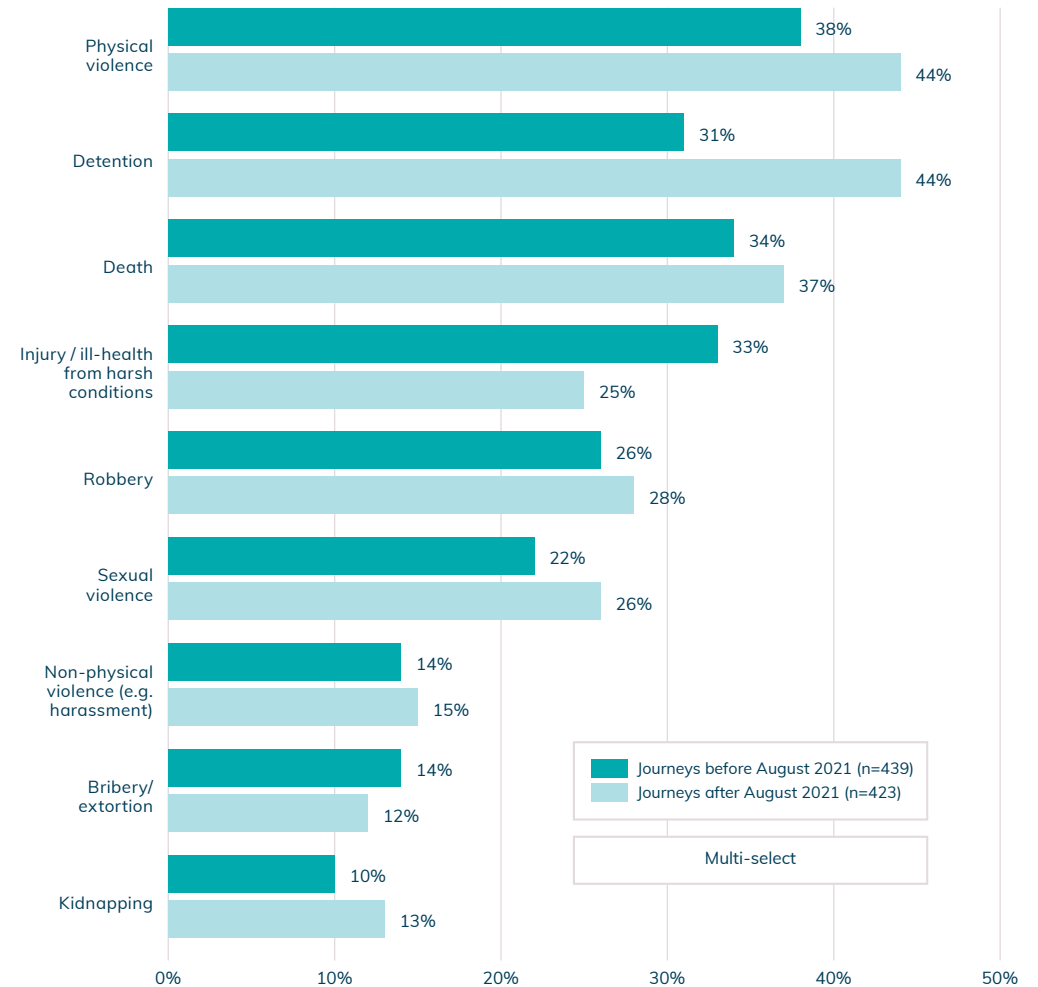
³ France24 (2022) [Taliban ban Afghan women from flying without male relative](#); Alcini, C. & Malekian, S. (2023) [Female Afghan students stopped by Taliban on way to Dubai](#)

Perceived protection risks en route have increased since the Taliban takeover

Most respondents (85%) who departed Afghanistan before August 2021 reported dangers en route, with a slightly higher share observed among those who left after (90%), likely linked to the increase in the number of respondents travelling via land, as discussed in the previous section. This aligns with the findings indicating that individuals undertaking overland routes were more likely to report risks en route compared to those who travelled by air. Specifically, before August 2021, 92% of those who travelled overland reported risks, compared to 79% who travelled by air; after August 2021, 87% of those who travelled overland reported risks, compared to 75% who travelled by air.

In terms of the types of risks reported, the proportion of respondents who reported the risk of detention increased among those leaving post-August 2021 (31% pre-August 2021, 44% post), consistent with the rise in crackdowns and pushbacks against Afghans in Iran and Türkiye after the Taliban takeover.⁴ There were also increased reports of physical violence (38% pre-August 2021, 44% post), and death (34% pre-August 2021, 37% post) among those departing after the Taliban takeover. Injury or ill health from harsh conditions and bribery or extortion were the only two risks reported less commonly by respondents departing after the Taliban takeover. These findings indicate that women have not only become more vulnerable within Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover but that the perceived protection risks en route have also increased.

Figure 4. What were the main risks?⁵

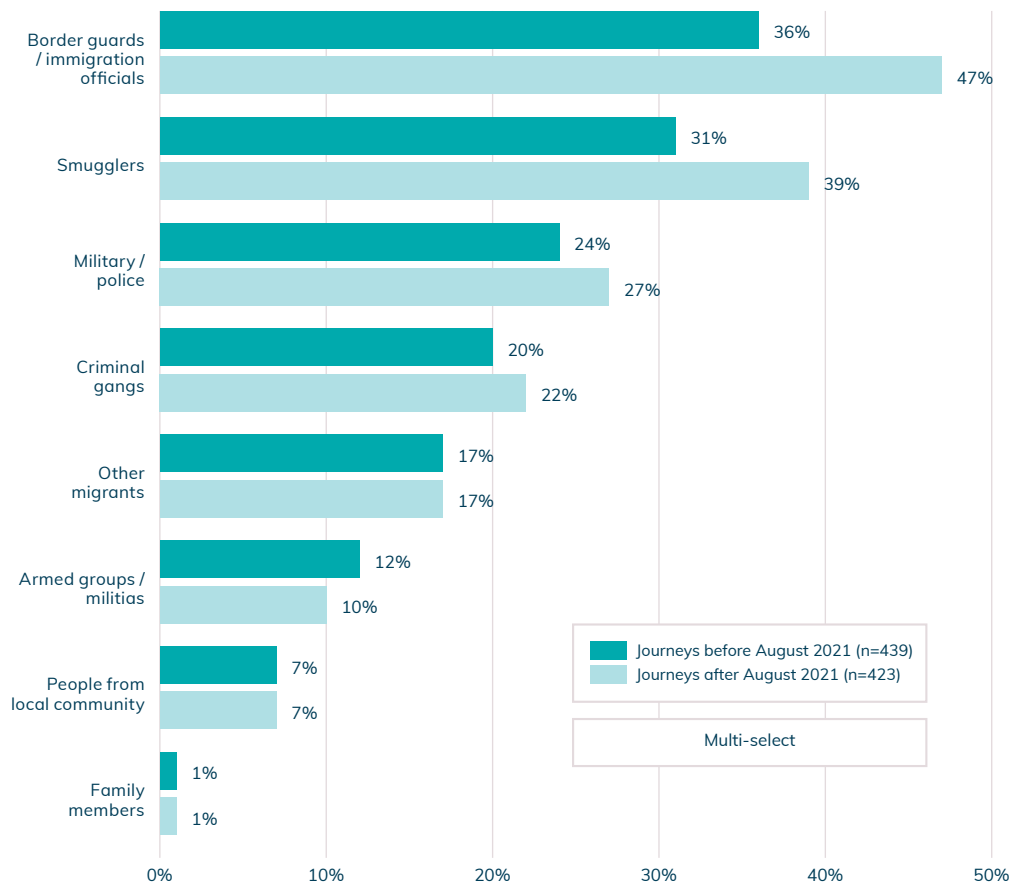


While border guards or immigration officials, smugglers, and military or police remained the top three most reported perpetrators of these protection risks, the proportion reporting them as perpetrators was higher among those who left following the Taliban takeover.

4 Amnesty International (2022) [Iran/Turkey: Fleeing Afghans unlawfully returned after coming under fire at borders](#); Human Rights Watch (2022) ["No One Asked Me Why I Left Afghanistan": Pushbacks and Deportations of Afghans from Turkey](#)

5 Note: This data is based on participants who reported a dangerous location on the journey, and on the first location mentioned.

Figure 5. Who was likely to be perpetrating such protection incidents?



Assistance needs en route remain high for women interviewed

Overall, access to assistance en route to Türkiye was limited, with most respondents reporting not receiving any assistance during their journey (77% among those departing prior to August 2021, and 83% among those departing after). Among the minority of all respondents who did receive assistance, (19%, n=188), essentials like water (67%), food (61%), and shelter (19%) were the main forms of assistance received. This assistance primarily came from fellow migrants (34%), local communities or volunteers (31%), and

family or friends (28%), with only 5% of respondents reporting assistance from UN agencies or NGOs. While the reliance on informal support networks for assistance among this minority reflects the importance of mutual aid, it also underscores the pressing need to address assistance gaps through formal institutions.

Assistance needs among women persist upon arrival to Türkiye

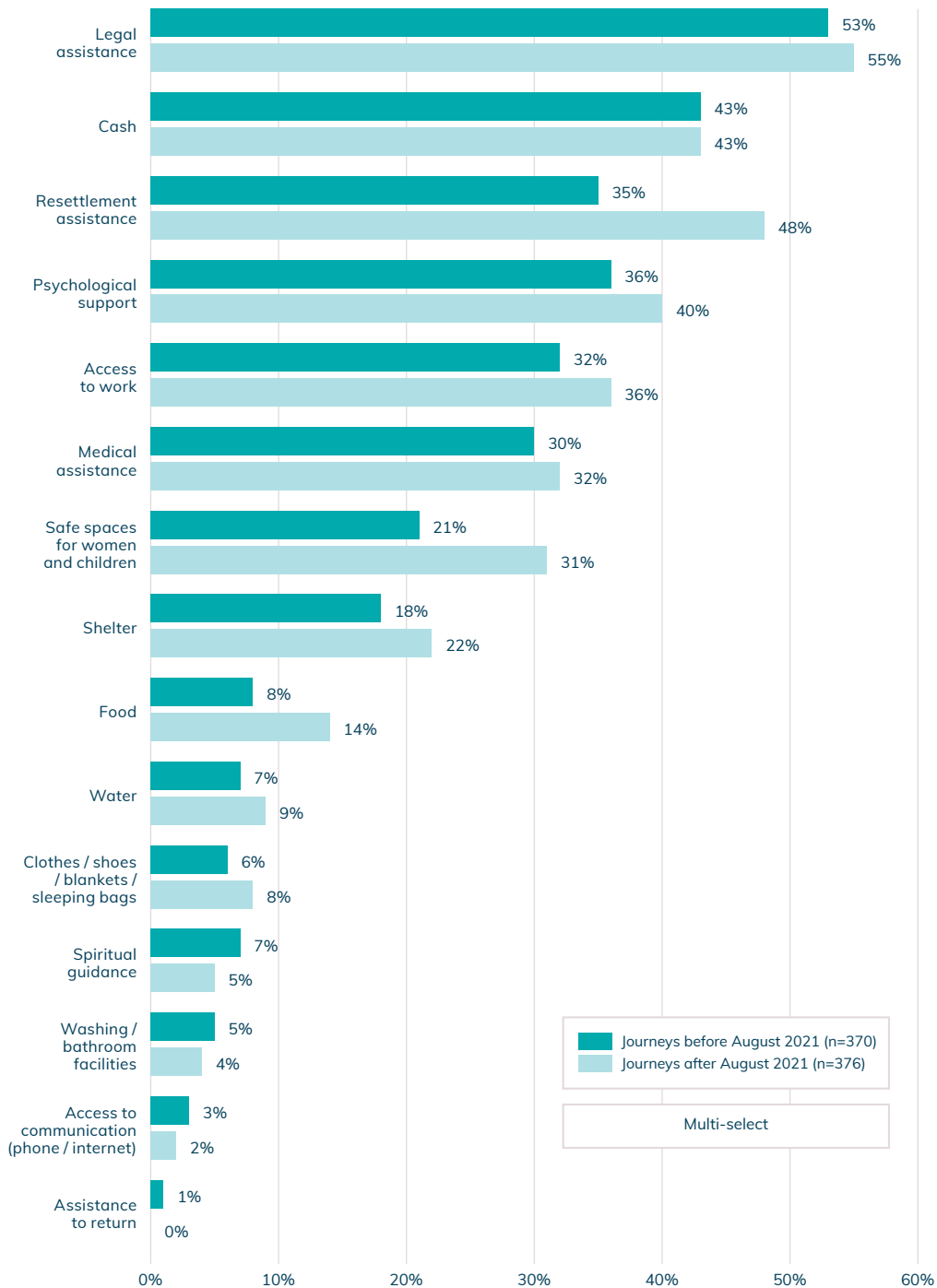
While the percentages of respondents indicating a need for assistance at the time of interview in Türkiye remained similar pre-August (75%) and post-August (76%), there was an increase in the types of assistance needed, except for spiritual guidance, washroom or bathroom facilities, access to communication, and assistance to return (see Figure 6). The most notable rise in assistance needs was observed in safe spaces for women and children (the share of respondents reporting this need increased from 21% pre-August 2021 to 31% post-August 2021), and resettlement assistance (the share of respondents reporting this need increased from 35% pre-August 2021 to 48% post-August 2021). This corresponds to the observation on the ground by MMC's 4Mi enumerators based in Türkiye, who note an increased demand for legal and resettlement assistance following the Taliban takeover, as more Afghan women are seeking protection from entities like UNHCR or Directorate General of Migration Management in Türkiye. Consequently, there is a greater need for legal support during their asylum application process. The high reported need for legal assistance is also likely related to lengthy resettlement processes for applicants in Türkiye.⁶

I submitted all the documents to the Embassy for relocation to Germany except for my Tazkira [national ID card] as I lost it on the way. And the Embassy has stopped processing my case unless I present my Tazkira... it's been three months that I'm knocking every door and begging everyone to find a solution.

Afghan woman, 32 years old, interviewed in Ankara

⁶ Paimani, F. & Noorzai R. (2023) [Afghan Refugees in Turkey Hope for Relocation, Fear Deportation](#).

Figure 6. What kind of assistance do you need now?



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4Mi data collection

4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre’s flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with migrants in Eastern and Southern Africa, North Africa, West Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at:

www.mixedmigration.org/4mi