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# 1. Global overview of the field of asylum in 2019



Forced displacement due to conflict, persecution, human rights violations, natural disasters and degrading ecosystems is a reality for millions of people across the globe who flee their homes in search of security. Over the past few years, major population displacements were caused by conflict, extreme violence and severe political instability in several regions of the world.

Among persons affected by displacement, a ‘refugee’ by definition is someone who has been forced to flee his/her country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. ‘Internally displaced persons’ have not crossed the border of their country but may still find themselves in a vulnerable situation.

In the context of Europe, international protection encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status. The latter refers to persons, who do not qualify for refugee status but are eligible for protection because they run the risk of serious harm, consisting of the death penalty or execution; torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the country of origin; or serious and individual threat to their life due to indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict.

Nationals from Syria accounted for one-third of the global refugee population, with 6.6 million who have fled their country.

In June 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported a total population of concern of 79.4 million people, including 20.2 million refugees, 3.7 million asylum-seekers, 531 000 returned refugees, 43.9 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 2.3 million returned IDPs and 3.9 million stateless people under UNHCR's mandate.

The 6.6 million refugees from Syria made up approximately one-third of the global refugee population, followed by Afghanistan and South Sudan, with 2.7 million and 2.2 million respectively. For those seeking protection, the largest group of asylum applicants in 2019 were Venezuelan nationals.

Countries neighbouring the epicentre of a crisis are often the first in line to accommodate displaced persons. In 2019, in absolute terms, Turkey by far hosted the highest numbers of refugees, followed by Pakistan, Uganda, Germany and Sudan. In relative terms, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey hosted the highest shares of refugees in relation to their population sizes.

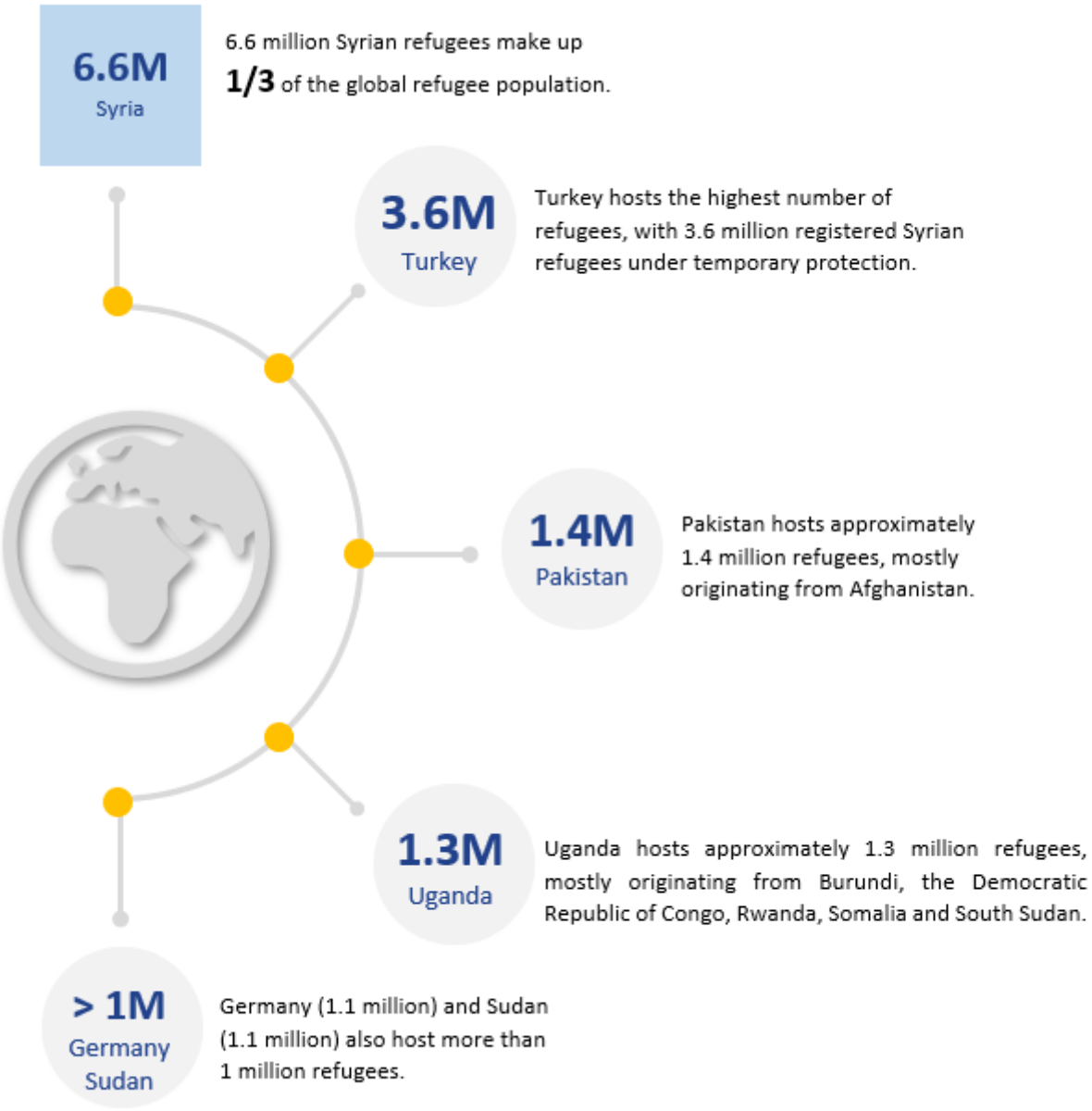
As the number of displaced persons continues to grow globally, governments, international organisations and civil society organisations are developing strategies to respond effectively to complex challenges presented by forced displacement. The first Global Refugee Forum took place in December 2019 to monitor developments and review progress on the action plan set under the Global Compact for Refugees in 2018. The compact addresses, among others, sharing responsibility, the reception of refugees, and supporting host communities in a sustainable way.

New initiatives continue to surface globally, allowing various areas of forced migration to be pushed to the forefront and addressed within wider audiences. Two topics which attracted increased attention in 2019 are statelessness and mobility due to climate- and environment-related reasons.

An often overlooked aspect of forced migration, statelessness has gained more notice over 2019 as the scope of the issue became more evident. In October 2019, an international High-Level Segment on Statelessness marked the mid-point of the #IBelong campaign, an initiative launched by UNHCR in 2014 to end statelessness by 2024. The event assessed the achievements made to date on the 10 goals of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.

While the impact of climate disasters on population displacement is not a new phenomenon, it is gaining a more central place in humanitarian, policy and legislative discourse surrounding displacement. The growing recognition of the impact of environmental factors on human mobility has triggered policy discussions, both at regional and global levels, to address its impact.

## Share of refugees and host countries globally, 2019

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*Source: EASO and UNHCR.*



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