



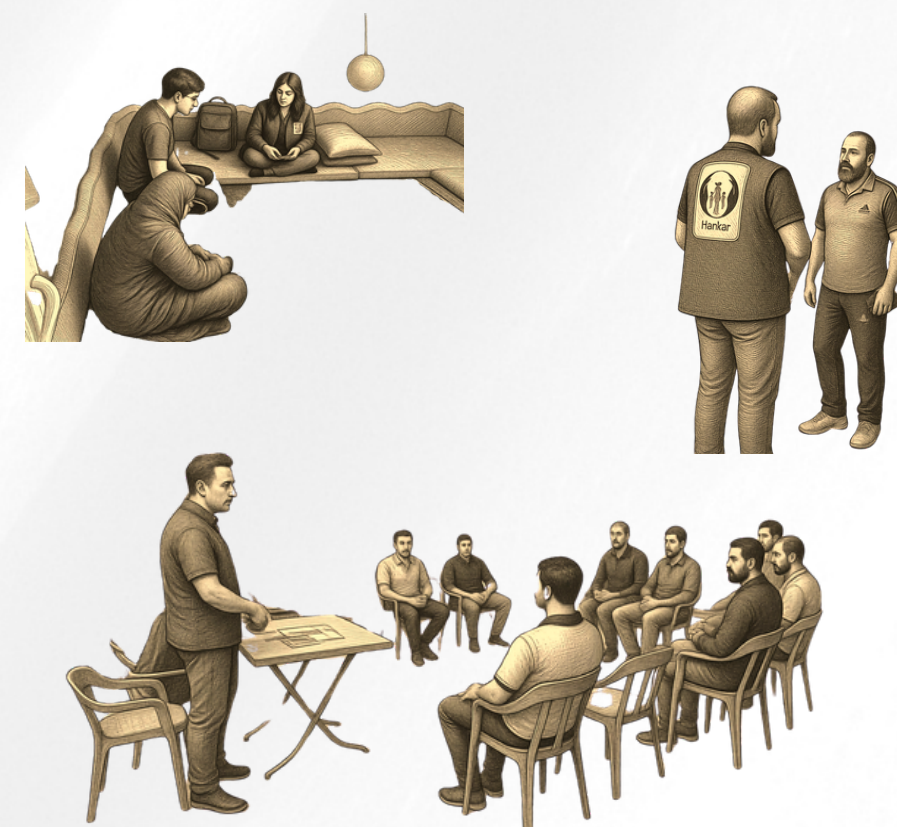
Harikar NGO in Partnership with UNHCR

PROTECTION MONITORING EXERCISE 2026

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Duhok governorate and Zakho Independent Administration

June - August 2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 Refugee Protection Monitoring exercise was implemented by Harikar NGO in Duhok Governorate and Zakho Independent Administration with UNHCR support. The exercise combined household assessments (HH assessments), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to strengthen the evidence base on protection conditions, access to services, emerging risks and community perspectives.

Against the agreed target of 230 household, 248 household assessments were completed, representing 107.83% of target. The sampling frame provided by UNHCR comprised 484 households, of which (51.2%) were interviewed. In addition, all 8 planned KIIs and all 4 planned FGDs were completed.

The dataset shows that the completed household interviews were concentrated in Sumel (especially Domiz 1 and 2 camps), Zakho and Bardarash (Gawilan Camp). Field observations made by Harikar staff provided important qualitative context, including difficulties in reaching some selected households, and challenges associated with the design and content of some FGD/KII. From the refugees' perspective: limited access to some services, information gaps, and continued reliance on assistance were also reported.

Sampling list HH	HH target	HH assessments completed	HH assessment achievement %	KIIs	FGDs
484 families	230	248	107.80%	8	4



Background, Purpose and Methodology

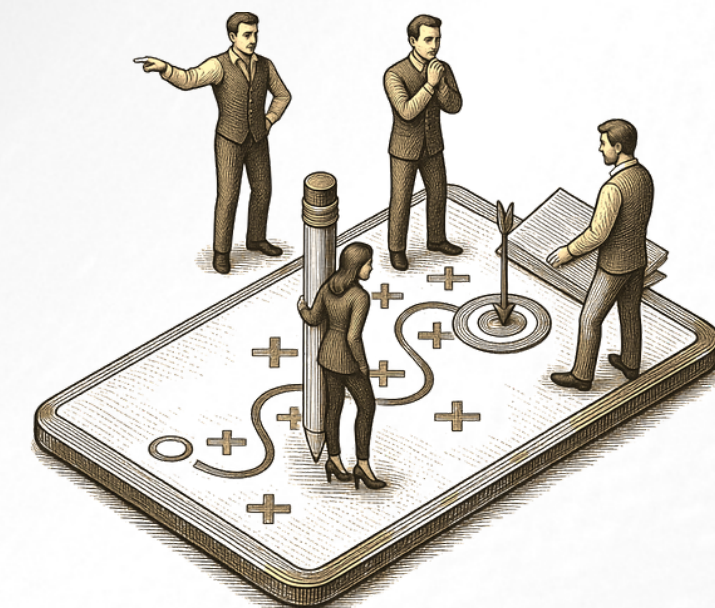
The 2026 exercise can be described as a consolidated monitoring assessment intended to provide a baseline snapshot following operational changes over the past two years, and also to inform 2027 planning. Its objectives include assessing current protection needs, measuring the impact of operational changes, identifying emerging risks and coping strategies, and re-establishing an evidence base for prioritization, advocacy and future programming.

The methodology uses three complementary tools to collect information on a variety of protection themes via KoBo; household-level assessments, KIIs and FGDs:

- Household surveys focus on protection themes including service access, priority risks, return intentions, coping mechanisms and access to information and feedback channels.
- KIIs provide contextual information from community leaders, government and non-governmental actors.
- FGDs provide a deeper exploration of community needs by engaging participants from different age groups, locations and nationalities.

The protection monitoring exercise primarily aimed to understand the protection environment of refugees. However, enumerators also provided information on how to access UNHCR through the Helpline and relevant government helplines. In addition, with the individual's consent, critical protection cases involving serious or immediate harm identified during home visits were promptly referred to UNHCR.

Before field deployment, Harikar Protection Monitoring Team was briefed about the activity by Harikar Senior Management and also received training from UNHCR, conducted internal questionnaire reviews, practice sessions and simulated interviews. Once the sampling list was received from UNHCR, the contact details were verified, followed by the data collection phase which commenced on 28th June and continued until 30th July 2026.



Data collection Phase

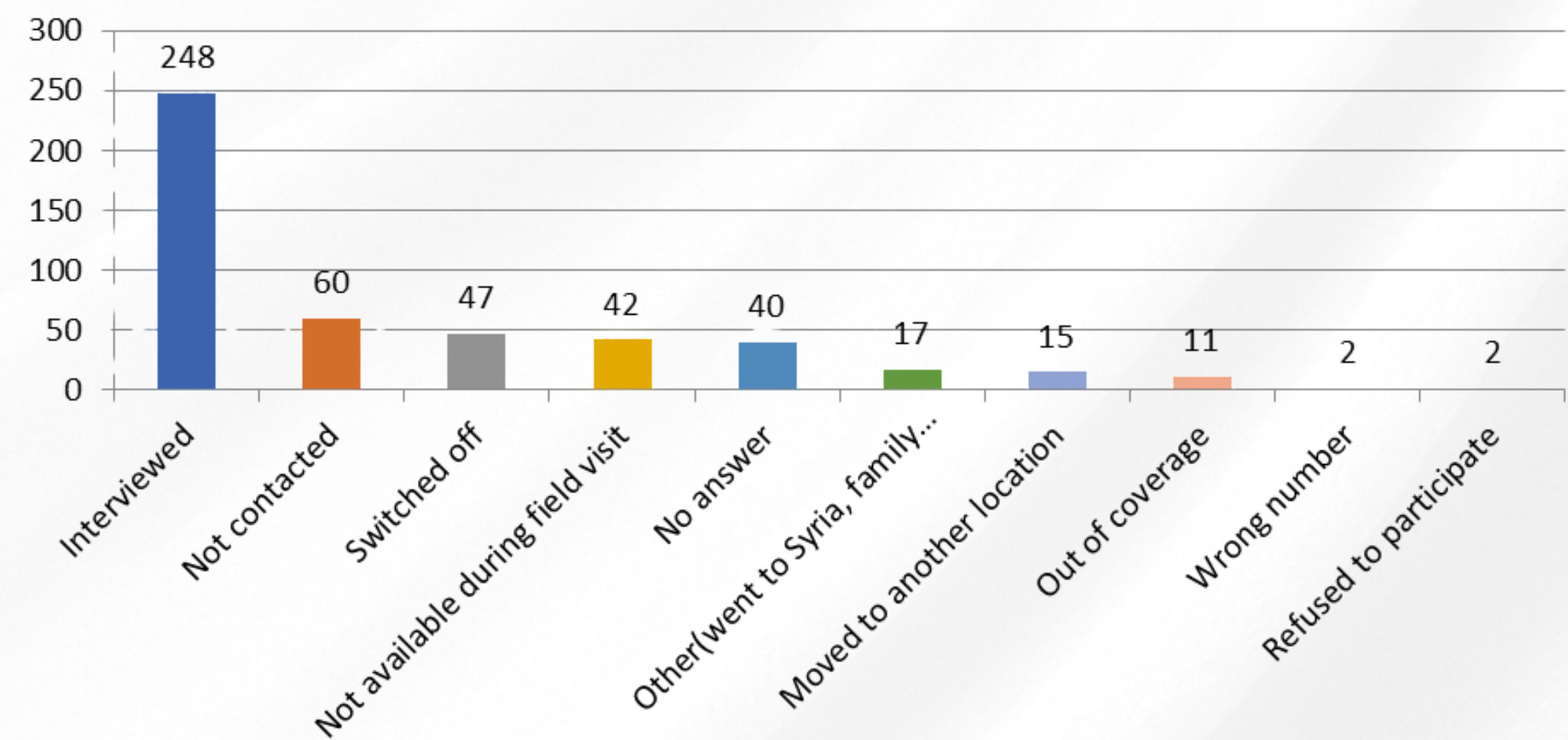
Four enumerators (two males and two females) were assigned to conduct HH assessments, with an average of 3–4 assessments completed per day by each enumerator. The HH assessments component exceeded the agreed target of 230 households, with a total of 248 assessments completed, representing 18 assessments above the target.

Eight KIIs and four FGDs were conducted in parallel with the HH assessments by the Protection Officer. Both KIIs and FGDs achieved 100% implementation against the agreed targets.

The profiles of KII participants and FGD participants were jointly identified and selected by Harikar and UNHCR staff to ensure appropriate representation and diversity. KII participants included representatives from government and non-government actors, community members, and judicial authorities. For the FGDs, participants were selected to reflect diversity in terms of age groups, geographical locations, and nationalities, allowing the assessment to capture a broad range of perspectives and protection concerns.



Household Sample Disposition and Contactability

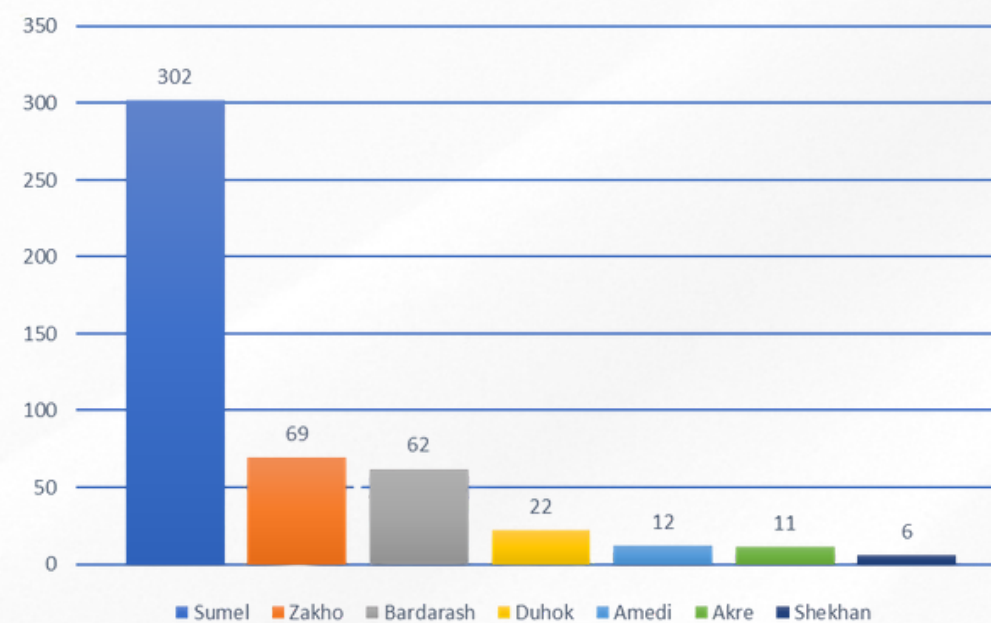


Of the 484 records in the sampling frame provided by UNHCR, 248 were marked as interviewed. Some 176 records contained an explicit unsuccessful-contact or other non-interview remark, while 60 records have not been contacted.

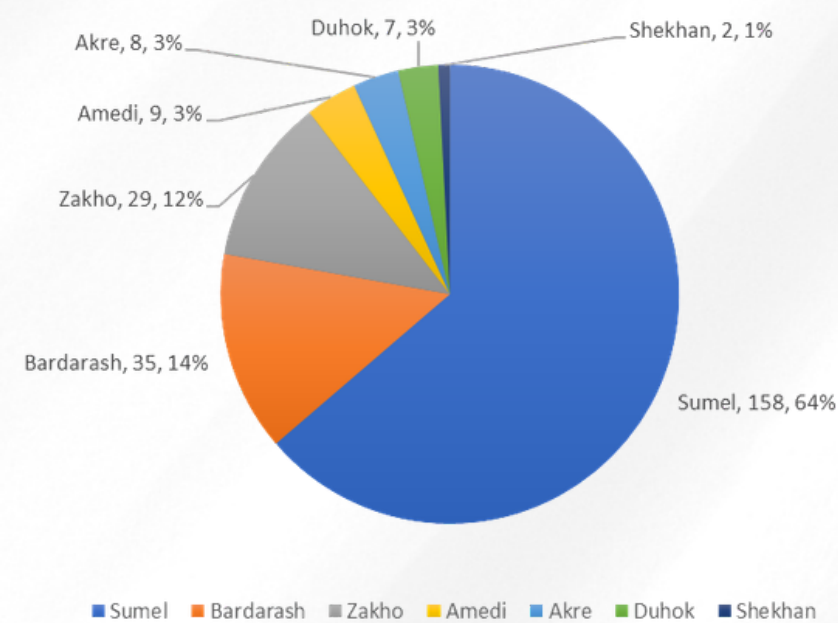
The most frequently documented barriers were switched-off phones (47), not available (42), and no answer (40). Additional barriers included movement to another location (15), lack of network coverage (11), wrong numbers (2), and refusal (2). These patterns indicate that difficulties in contacting households were a significant operational constraint during household data collection.



Sampling Coverage and Representation



The sampling list received was heavily concentrated in Sumel with (302 records) reflecting the presence of the two large refugee camps (Domiz 1 & 2). This was followed by Zakho (69 records) and Bardarash (62 records). The completed interviews followed a similar pattern, with 158 interviews in Sumel.



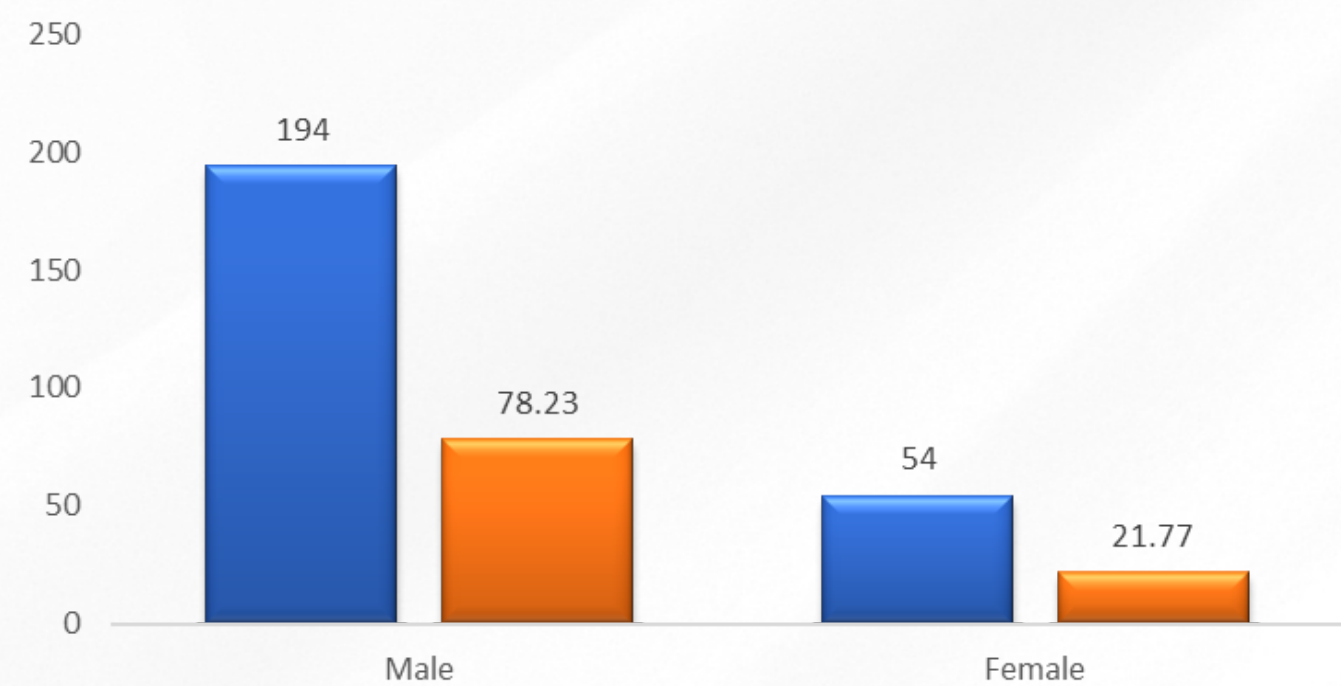
Household interviewing rates varied substantially by district, with Sumel and Bardarash recording the highest rates in the supplied sampling frame, while Shekhan and Duhok recorded lower rates. However, these differences should be interpreted with caution, as several districts had relatively small sample sizes.

KII and FGDs

The qualitative component achieved full completion (8/8 KIIs and 4/4 FGDs), generating perspectives from government/service providers, legal actors, camp/community sources, and refugee groups. FGDs engaged 41 participants, including Syrian and Turkish refugees, adult women and men, mixed groups, and children, strengthening the diversity of perspectives captured. The selected locations for FGDs were Domiz 1 Camp, Gawilan Camp, Husseniya, and Zakho.

Profile of Completed Household Interviews

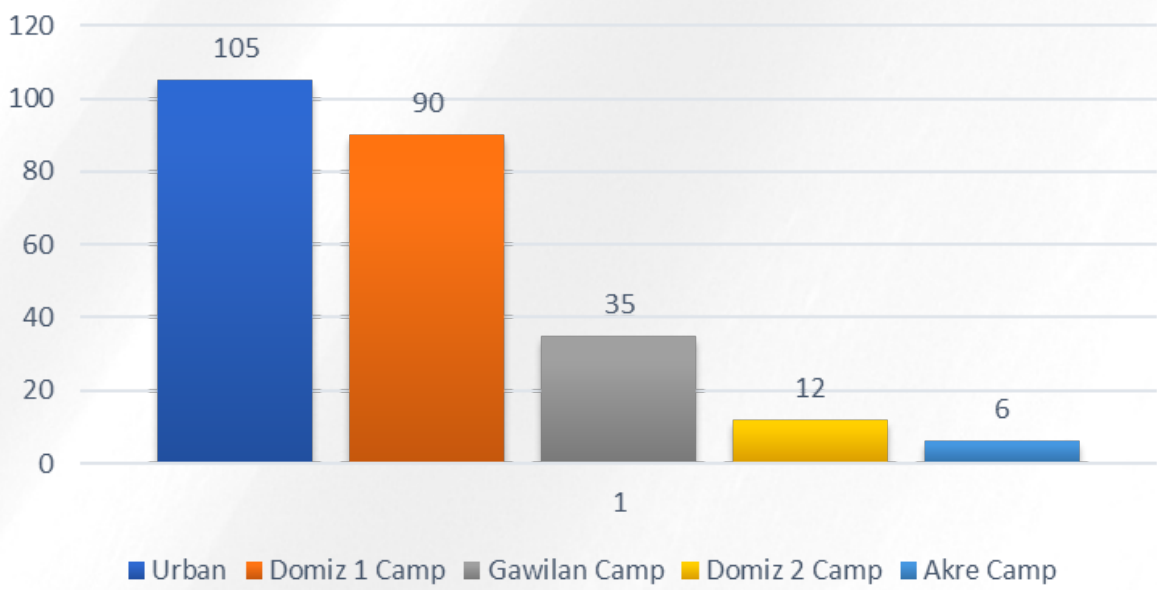
Household Interviewees by Gender



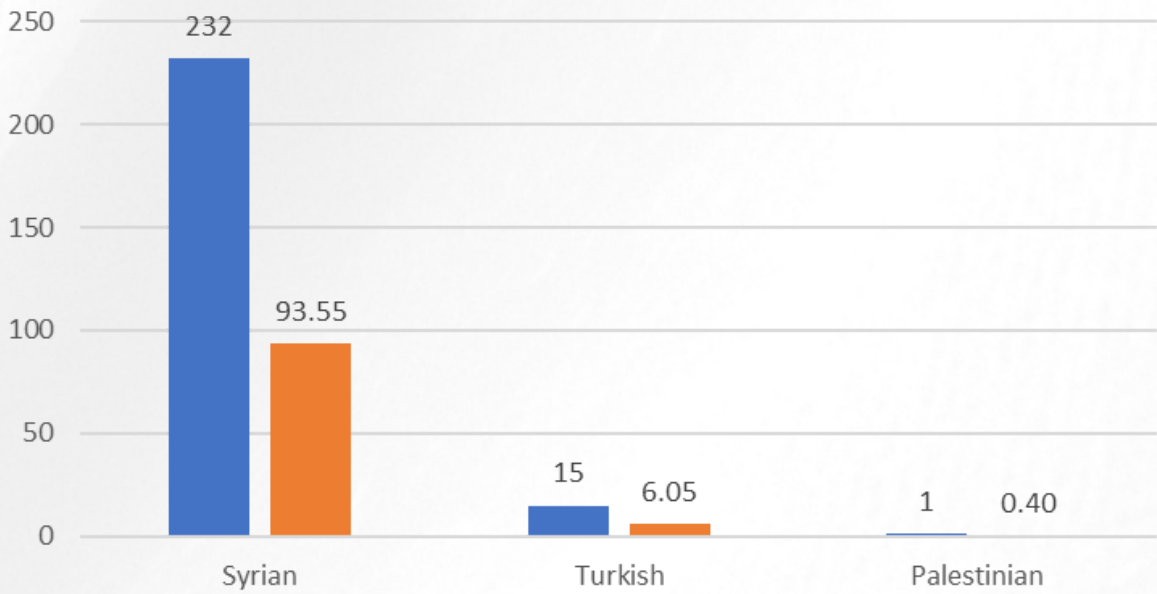
The completed interviews comprised 194 male and 54 female respondents, representing 78.2% and 21.8% of respondents, respectively. The gender distribution reflects the household-level interview methodology, whereby the designated head of household was generally interviewed as the primary respondent. As household heads were predominantly male, this resulted in a higher proportion of male respondents. Therefore, the distribution should be understood as a characteristic of the respondent selection approach rather than as a direct representation of the gender composition of the surveyed households.

The gender distribution presented in this analysis is based on the sampling framework provided to the enumerators rather than on the actual gender of the respondents interviewed. Consequently, it may differ from the data submitted to the UNHCR which reflects the gender of the respondents who were actually interviewed. This methodological difference may also affect the interpretation of other variables included in the analysis.

Coverage by Location



Nationality



By location type, completed interviews included 105 out-of-camp cases, 90 in Domiz Camp, 35 in Gawilan Camp, 12 in Domiz Camp 2 and 6 in Akre Settlement. The completed sample included 232 Syrian, 15 Turkish and 1 Palestinian respondent; 231 were recorded as asylum-seekers and 17 as refugees.

Field Observations and Key Issues Identified

The remarks listed are descriptive information solely based on the team's observations during data collection; they do not constitute an analysis of the raw responses collected from interviewees.

	Access to services	Observed difficulties included limited access to hospitals and health centres, particularly for some camp residents, as well as gaps in child protection and community services for women.
	Information and communication	Some refugees reportedly lacked information on UNHCR helpline numbers; sharing the helpline information during activities was described as useful and positively received.
	Livelihoods and assistance dependency	Field observations indicated that many of the visited households continued to rely on humanitarian assistance and expressed expectations of continued NGO support, including food assistance.
	Freedom of movement and documentation	Field observations indicated that many Turkish refugees encountered challenges related to Iraqi identification documentation, with reported implications for freedom of movement and access to employment/livelihood opportunities.
	Data collection and questionnaire design for FGDs and KII	Mixed-gender child FGDs were challenging because of participants' age and the complexity of some thematic questions. Some KII questions were considered difficult when they fell outside the informant's technical area.
	Contactability and representativeness	The observations highlighted that some targeted cases could not be reached because of unanswered/switched-off phones, network limitations or relocation. Central Duhok was specifically noted as an area where the achieved interviews were substantially below the assigned sample.



Recommendations for Future Monitoring Exercise

- Strengthen contact verification and scheduling before field visits, prioritizing records with switched-off phones, no-answer histories and known network-coverage constraints.
- Review the questionnaire for age appropriateness, especially for child FGDs, and simplify complex terminology where feasible.
- Align KII questions more closely with the informant's area of expertise, while retaining cross-sector prompts only where contextual knowledge is expected.
- Continue integrating helpline and referral information into monitoring interactions, subject to consent and the established protection/referral framework.
- For urban FGDs, provision of small amount of cash as transportation fees or providing transportation means would ease active attendance.



Thank you for reviewing the report...