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## THE LEFT BEHIND AFGHANS

### FOCUS ON WOMEN

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# THE LEFT BEHIND AFGHANS - FOCUS ON WOMEN

This is the second report in our continuing series reporting on the current situation in Afghanistan. The Association of Wartime Allies (AWA) publishes a quarterly report on the findings of surveys sent out to the population of over 18,000 principal applicants (representing an estimated 81,000 people when family members are included) that AWA serves and who remain in Afghanistan. AWA is a nonprofit organization that assists individual applicants on how to best navigate the Special Immigrant Visa program for immigration to the United States. AWA also actively interacts with government agencies as an advocate to correct and strengthen the Special Immigration Visa (SIV) program, which has historically failed to process these applications in a timely manner.

For this report, AWA added gender-based questions for those identifying as female in our survey as we seek to understand how the conditions for women have changed since the US withdrawal on 30 August 2021. AWA collaborated with the President George W. Bush Institute and Mina's List for advice and expertise on the gender components of our survey.

## SIV PROGRAM

Congress created the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program in 2006 to offer protection and a pathway to both lawful permanent residency and United States citizenship to all qualified Iraqis and Afghans employed by the U.S. government in their respective country. The SIV program represents a promise that the U.S. made to its allies.

Following through on that promise is vital to maintaining the perception that the United States can be trusted and is still a leader in the world. Backlogs and processing delays, a functional shuttering of the Iraqi SIV program, and the US evacuation from Afghanistan, have caused the SIV program to falter, leaving many interpreters and translators at grave risk.

The U.S. issued over 23,000 visas to Afghans since the program's inception. Our previous surveys rendered estimates that over 76,000 SIV applicants (principals and dependents) remain left behind in Afghanistan. These applicants continue to search for an exit from Taliban rule. In April 2022, the Department of State [released data](#) that reflects a total of over 50,000 SIV principal applicants currently in the pipeline – **indicating almost a tripling of the total number of principal applicants since August 2021. If one estimates for dependents, the number of individuals currently in the SIV pipeline increases to 160,000.**

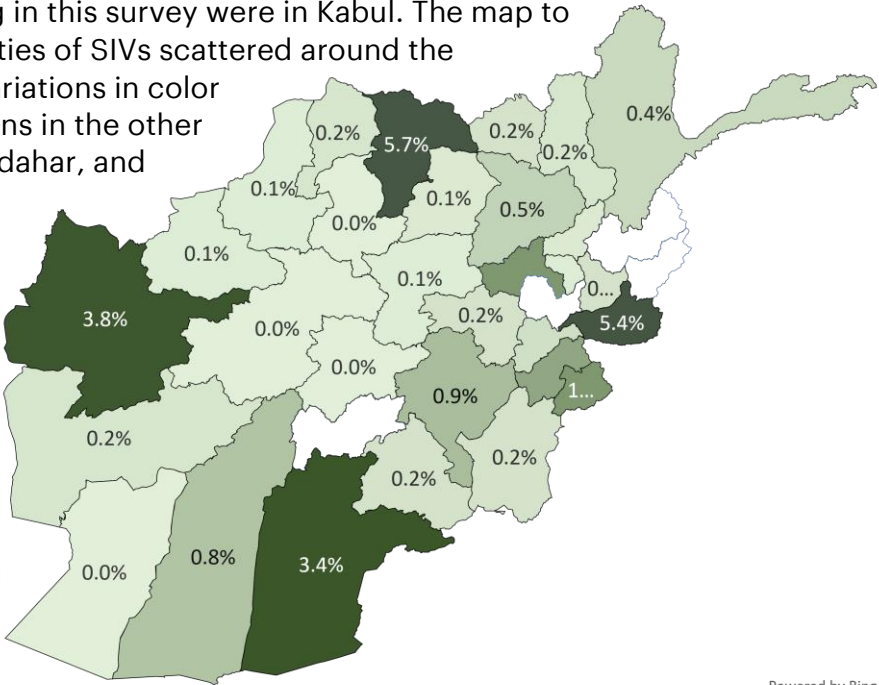
Since our last report the findings of our survey on the conditions of those still in Afghanistan have not improved and in some cases have worsened.

# POPULATION STATISTICS

AWA received 1,934 survey responses (down from 3,988) but key findings on demographic information and economics have stayed statistically true - validating our general findings. We speculate the decreased response rate is due to survey fatigue given personal feedback we received.

Of those responding 6.43% were women, which is consistent with previous reporting and other reports showing that women comprised about 7-10% of respondents of the SIV population. The average age of respondents was 35 years old (35 Male, 39 Female). The average length of service for respondents was four years.

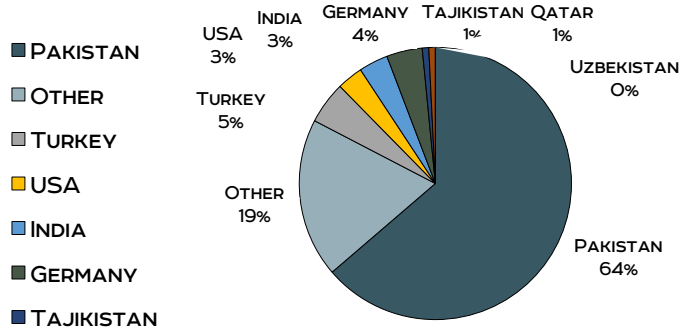
The majority (71.7%) of SIVs reporting in this survey were in Kabul. The map to the right shows the population densities of SIVs scattered around the country, excluding Kabul (to show variations in color gradient), with heaviest concentrations in the other major population areas of Herat, Kandahar, and Mazar-i-Sharif. That said, AWA is still tracking SIV applicants in some of the most remote regions of Afghanistan with SIVs Applicants in nearly every Afghan Province.



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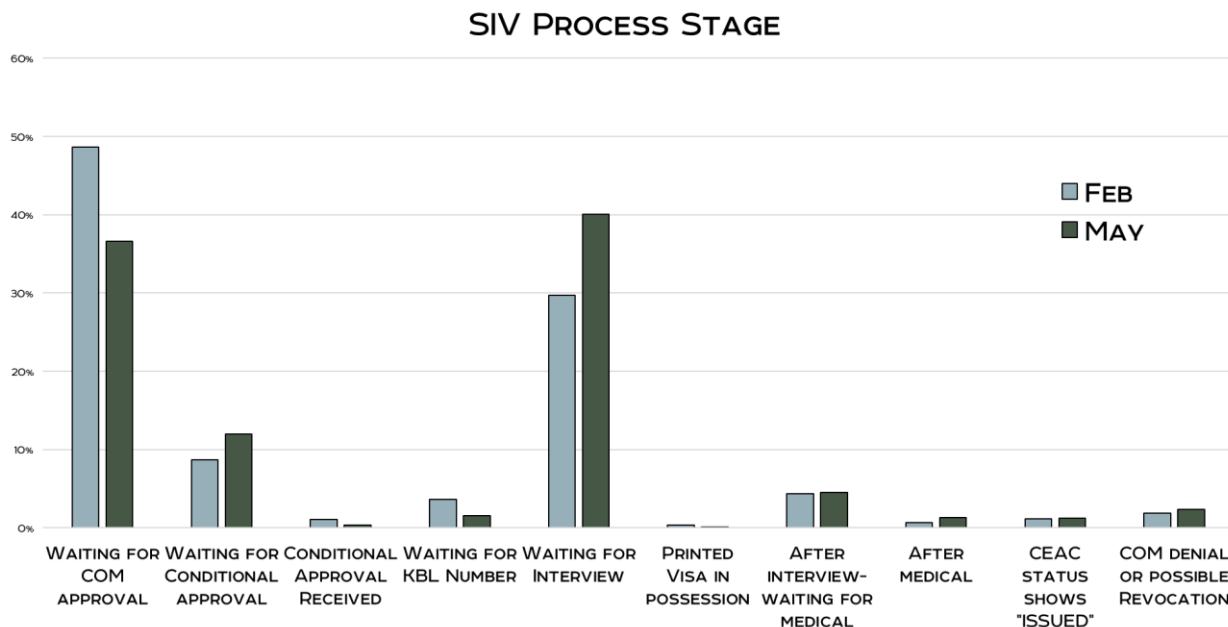
Of Males and Females reporting, 29% said they had been imprisoned by the Taliban at some point and 51% of Males and Females reported that they had been questioned or detained by the Taliban. 92% of Males and Females reported loss of a Job since the US Evacuation – up from 88% in February.

97% fear leaving their home and 86% have skipped medical treatment as such. In most cases, those reporting are facing dire and worsening circumstances due to the US evacuation from Afghanistan.



AWA is also tracking SIV Applicants around the world. These applicants currently have a better chance of getting to the United States due to increasing restrictions placed on SIVs still in Afghanistan. *Nota Bene: Applicants in locations other than Afghanistan are excluded from all other data statistics to drive accurate reporting from within Afghanistan.*

On a positive note, the SIV program in recent months has processed individuals through the system with fewer respondents waiting for COM approval and more in later stages of the SIV pipeline. However, those waiting for an interview have increased. **Without a functioning embassy in Kabul, many will be stuck in this stage for the foreseeable future.** To quote Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Border & Immigration Adam Hunter, “[The United States] is currently not processing parole applications in Afghanistan because we currently don’t have a presence there.” Unless the State Department finds a way to conduct the interview remotely, from a US embassy in a country other than Afghanistan, or by some other means, we fear the interview stage will become the place where all SIV applications get stuck indefinitely.



## MAJOR FINDINGS

### WOMEN FACING UNPRECEDENTED HARDSHIP

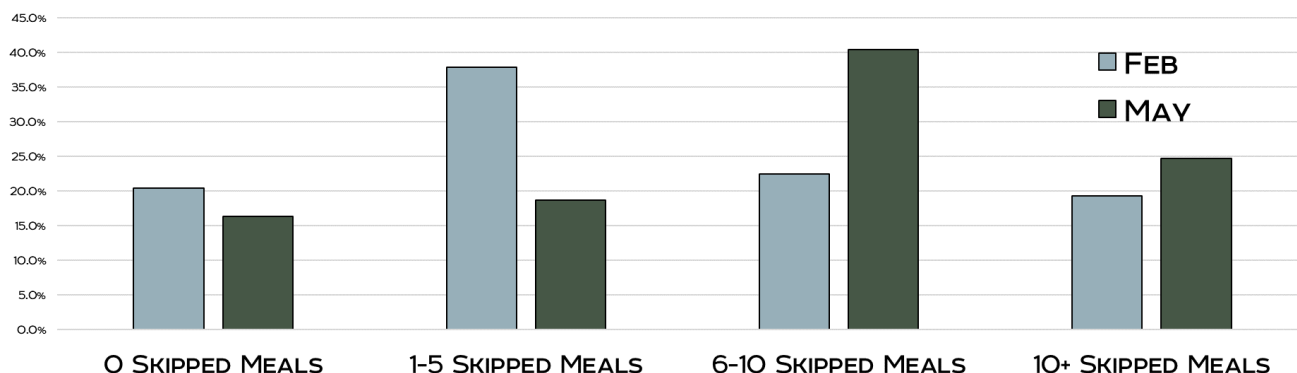
We asked women specifically about their conditions and the treatment they received based on their gender and how that treatment has changed since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Of those SIVs reporting:

- 98.2% of women report loss of economic opportunity based on their gender
- 88% of women report they were the primary breadwinner of their household
- 94.5% of women report loss of educational opportunity based on their gender
- 96.3% of women report loss of freedom of movement
- 96.3% of women report they are forced to change how they dress
- 86.9% of women report they have experienced violence
- 48.6% of women report diminished health care services
- 83.2% of women report loss of access to feminine hygiene products or prefer not to answer
- 34.5% of women report that they, or a female member of their family, have been sexually propositioned by a member of the Taliban

The situation for Women in Afghanistan is already at crisis levels - especially for those that served the United States during its 20-year engagement.

### ESCALATING FOOD AND NUTRITION CRISIS:

#### PROPORTION OF RESPONDANTS WHO REPORTED TIMES THEY SKIPPED MEALS IN THE PAST MONTH



Food security continues to rapidly deteriorate in Afghanistan. Nearly twice as many respondents reported going without food over six times in the last month. Those reporting that they lost a job increased from 88% to 92%, further exacerbating their inability to afford food. 97% of respondents reported facing economic hardship, up from 94%. Fear of leaving one's home increased to 97% from 95%. Finally, 86% of respondents reported they had to skip medical treatment due to lack of funds.

## SELECTED QUOTES

I am a single mother of 20 months old daughter. I was a teacher before Taliban took over Afghanistan. I have lost my source of income and have no place to stay and no food to eat. I had Family violence with my husband and his family. I am hiding from him. if he finds me and my daughter out, he will take my baby away from me and he will sell the baby. i have been changing my place since last year. As i single mother i am very oppressed mom in this world. as a woman i dont have any rights in Afghanistan to defend myself and fight for my baby. My rest of family have been evacuated from Afghanistan. My mom lives in USA and she has applied for me 4 years ago. My case got approved and i have KBL number. I do have my approval and passport with me. Please i am begging you to save my live and my baby's live. PLEASE!!!! ~ Masoma, 26

I have changed my house and destroyed all my documents which is shown that I was working women. ~Palwasha, 32

I have marriage case my husband now he is in USA I stack in Afghanistan with hard time ~Nagina, 21

I'm a women with two kids and have no income, hiding from Taliban. My husband worked in previous government central police department, appointed by US embassy. We are running out of resources, and got no support yet. I hope the evacuation process will start soon. ~ Nadia, 36

My husband received threats letter from the Taliban due to his supports US Mission in Afghanistan. Currently we life in in different area and changing our to another house, because Taliban are starting searching door to door in kabul and provinces, we were with my husband in kabul when Taliban start searching door to door in kabul, we came back to GHAZNI to our Uncle home. No work ,no duties, no income ,always live with fear. On day the taliban will arrest my husband. Because a man is compelled to work and get out for work. Otherwise we will die because of food. Taliban swear to kill those who support US government in Afghanistan. ~Hakima, 24

Since the return of the Taliban regime, I am living in hiding in Kabul, have lost my job, my spouse has lost his job, my father in law supports us financially only for bread, water and some other basic necessities. I can not disclose the information that I am still in Afghanistan cause my several countrymen and relatives have joined the Taliban years ago and they searched a lot to find me but now they are convinced that I have left the country while in reality I am still stuck in Kabul and the fear of getting caught, tortured or slaughtered is immense. I didn't choose to be in this situation nor I am responsible for it so I beg you to please help me and do something before it is too late. Thank you ~Frozan, 32

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