

Spain

February 2021

Spain has ranked among the three EU countries receiving most asylum claims since 2018. Despite COVID-19 impact on access to territory and asylum procedure, applications remained high in 2020.

In 2020, 84% of applicants came from Latin American countries. The protection rate remained at 5%. Challenges on quality and access to asylum procedure and reception conditions are gradually being improved.

With a change in migratory sea routes in 2020, **the Canary Islands** have become the main entry point for mixed flows of refugees and migrants, including of unaccompanied children.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees*	81,222
Asylum-seekers	117,975
Stateless persons	4,890

*Includes 57,581 persons who were granted authorization to stay based on humanitarian reasons

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Venezuela	57,481	Colombia	35,630
Syrian Arab Rep.	14,491	Venezuela	17,995
State of Palestine	1,192	Honduras	10,240

Data source: UNHCR 2020 Mid-Year Statistical report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR has supported authorities in identifying COVID-19-related protection needs and shared technical recommendations to address them.

Inclusion of persons of concern: Refugees and asylum seekers are included in **COVID-19 response and vaccination plans** in the country, benefiting from universal health coverage. UNHCR has assessed through an [online survey](#) risks and challenges faced by persons of concern in accessing rights and services during the confinement.

Communication with Communities: UNHCR has provided **COVID-19 related information** to persons of concern through informative sessions, Refugee Focal Point Volunteers, HELP website, helplines in several cities, and an online legal information session on unemployment benefits, layoffs proceedings, access to public aid or the cessation of the eviction.

HIGHLIGHTS

Land borders

Have remained closed between the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla and Morocco since March 2020.

88,762

Persons mainly from Venezuela, Colombia and Honduras applied for asylum, 25% less than in 2019, mainly due to COVID-19. 97% applied in the territory; 2%, at the border

26,739

Persons from Mali, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, arrived from October 2020 to February 2021, mostly to the Canary Islands, where UNHCR has established a presence in January 2021. Many are vulnerable or fleeing violence.

The HC's visit

In February 2021 was an opportunity to discuss global and national protection challenges with Heads of State and Government and key Ministers.



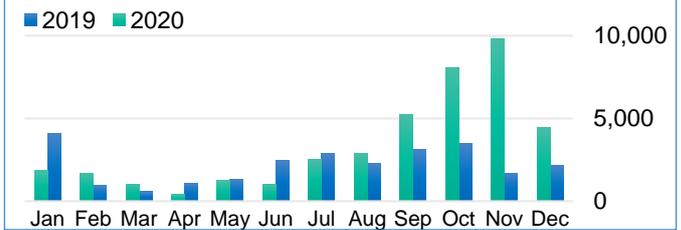
Stateless no longer

At the age of 74, [Sergio Chekaloff](#) was finally granted stateless status in Spain in 2019. This [video](#) released in 2020 tells his story.

Key Priorities

- Access to asylum** UNHCR advocates for improvement of the overall protection environment. By law, UNHCR has a monitoring role in the asylum procedure to improve its quality, supporting authorities in enhancing access to protection and documentation, and identification, referral and follow-up related to persons with specific needs. Exchanges with partners, including the National Police, the Office of Asylum, the judiciary and NGOs, and delivering capacity building are key to the office's strategy. UNHCR conducts field monitoring, advocates with authorities to enhance access to territory and provides support in managing sea and land arrivals.
- Reception conditions:** UNHCR supports authorities' efforts in reforming the national reception system, providing **recommendations** and expert advice.
- Integration:** UNHCR advocates for access to **rights and social protection**, supporting refugees' socioeconomic inclusion through initiatives linked to employability and enhanced participation with local communities, through sports and mentoring projects. In February, UNHCR launched CONTIGO, mentoring project that promotes the integration of 25 young beneficiaries of international protection, in collaboration with an NGO, a university and the private sector.
- Resettlement and Complementary Pathways:** The National Resettlement Program has a 2021 quota of 1,200 persons. Since 2015, mostly Syrian refugees from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have been resettled under this program. A 2016 pilot **community sponsorship** initiative is implemented in the **Basque Country** and was expanded to **Valencia in 2020**. The 10 Syrian families resettled in 10 municipalities are supported by local sponsor groups and GRSI.
- Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance:** Workshops and trainings for persons of concern on social entrepreneurship and economic inclusion provide information and tools to set up refugee-led organizations or initiatives. A Refugee Reference Group has been created connect former refugee volunteers to UNHCR for consultations, participatory assessments, and outreach.

MONTHLY SEA ARRIVALS SPAIN



Source and more information: [UNHCR Data Portal](#)

Working with Partners

- External Engagement:** UNHCR's work with relevant authorities, lawmakers, the judiciary, UN agencies, media, refugees and other allies aim at broadening the protection environment and counteracting racist and xenophobic narratives. UNHCR also works to mobilize international cooperation funds with the central Government and liaises with España con ACNUR, the globally strongest UNHCR national association for mutual support.
- Persons with special needs:** UNHCR collaborates with institutions and networks dedicated to the protection of children, LGTBIQ+ community, persons with disabilities and survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence.

Statelessness

- Spain acceded to the 1954 Statelessness Convention in 1997 and to the 1961 Convention in 2018. The statelessness determination procedure is in place since 2001. In July 2020, the Supreme Court, in line with UNHCR positions, granted the right to initiate the procedure at border posts. 9,332 statelessness applications have been registered since 2015, the highest number in Europe. UNHCR advocates to improve the determination procedure and reduce the period required to access nationality from 10 to 5 years.

UNHCR Presence in Spain

Staff:

31 National Staff
 2 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Madrid
 1 Field Unit in Melilla
 3 Field Presences in Algeciras, Las Palmas and Malaga

Financial information* 28 February 2021

*Information relates to the Representation for Spain and Andorra

Financial requirements
USD 4 M



UNHCR is grateful to the major donors of unearmarked contributions* to the 2021 global programmes (USD, as of 28 February):

Norway 80 M | Sweden 66.9 M | Netherlands 36.1 M | Denmark 34.6 M | Germany 22.1 M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Ireland 12.5 M | Belgium 11.9 M

*Unearmarked contributions allow UNHCR for critical flexibility to best reach populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Above are donors of USD 10 million or more.

UNHCR Spain is grateful for 2021 contributions from the Government of Spain to the office, which are not included in the left hand chart.