



COMING HOME:

ONE YEAR INTO SYRIA'S TRANSITION

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Background

The fall of the Assad government in December 2024 and Syria's political transition marked a historic turning point, ending 14 years of conflict and renewing hope for resolving one of the world's largest displacement crises. As a result, voluntary return has become a real possibility for millions of Syrians displaced within the country, across the region and beyond.

The response from Syrians in the region to this new political reality was immediate. As of mid-December 2024, a spontaneous and gradual movement of Syrians back across land borders was evident, with others arriving from North Africa, the Gulf and Europe, transiting through some neighbouring countries. UNHCR reinforced its community engagement through well-established networks with refugee communities, including help lines, community centres, outreach volunteers, return monitoring and focus group discussions,¹ and launched systematic perception and intention surveys to better quantify interest in return and capture refugees' concerns. Refugees expressed hope and optimism, tempered by caution about how the situation in Syria would develop. Many adopted a 'wait and see approach', while others explicitly requested support from UNHCR, national authorities and the broader humanitarian community to facilitate returns, particularly assistance to regularize civil documentation, cover transportation costs, and access reintegration support upon arrival in Syria.²

One year into the transition, UNHCR has recorded the return of over 1.2 million Syrians from abroad and 1.9 million IDPs within Syria, with the majority returning using their own resources and enabled by support from host governments in the immediate region, and by the Government of Syria.

At the same time, Syria continues to face significant challenges across the security, political and economic spheres. Security remains fluid in some parts of the country, with incidents of localized violence or instability. Politically, efforts to consolidate governance and implement transitional justice are progressing. While economic sanctions have largely been removed or suspended, secondary sanctions against third parties doing business with Syria continue to hinder investment and rebuilding efforts. Widespread destruction of homes and critical infrastructure, high unemployment, and limited access to basic services further hamper economic recovery. These overlapping challenges not only complicate prospects for sustainable return and reintegration but also demand continued attention, coordinated action, and long-term support.



In October 2025, Fatima, a mother of four, returned to her hometown of Hass in southern Idlib through a UNHCR-supported voluntary return convoy, one of 165 families making the journey that day. After years of displacement in northern Idlib, she chose to go home in the hope of rebuilding her family's life.

Their house is severely damaged and services in Hass remain limited, but returning still feels right. "This is our home," she says.

Photo © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

¹ UNHCR, *Regional Refugee Community Feedback on Developments in Syria*, 19 December 2024.

² See *Refugee Voices* section, below.

In response to the fundamental political changes inside Syria and recognizing the ongoing needs of refugees in host countries, UNHCR:

1. Issued its Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic, December 2024.

This position addressed key issues, including UNHCR's stance regarding facilitating voluntary returns and emerging international protection needs. It further urged States to continue granting civilians fleeing Syria access to their territories, uphold the right to seek asylum, and ensure full respect for the principle of non-refoulement.

Into 2025 and 2026, while the risk of persecution by the former government has ceased, other risks persist or have become more pronounced, including for individuals with previously identified risk profiles. UNHCR will issue an updated Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic in 2026.

2. Developed a UNHCR Operational Framework: Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs³ in February 2025.

The Operational Framework set-out a strategic and principled approach to address the increasing number of Syrians returning home.

The Framework projected up to 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 2 million IDPs returning in 2025. It covered all stages of engagement, from preparations in host countries, counselling, and protection services, to the provision of return transport grants and ramping up reintegration programmes for both returning refugees and IDPs inside Syria.

While acknowledging that many Syrians would return in a self-organized manner,⁴ the Operational Framework envisaged a phased expansion of assistance programmes to support voluntary returns, in close collaboration with host countries and the Government of Syria.

3. Reinforced existing regional and country-level inter-agency coordination, monitoring, Communication with Communities, preparedness and response.

Through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (3RP), UNHCR bolstered inter-agency coordination at both regional and country levels and included strengthening Durable Solutions Working Groups (DSWG) in host countries. Between December 2024 and March 2025, inter-agency consultations led to the issuance of an updated 3RP Strategy and Appeal in April 2025, incorporating inter-agency return programming from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.

Inside Syria, UNHCR, UNDP and IOM established a Solutions Working Group aimed at bringing together UN Agencies, NGOs, humanitarian and development actors, to consolidate efforts and support the Government in creating conditions conducive for safe and dignified returns, and comprehensive solutions for returning refugees and IDPs.

Monitoring systems were further refined over the course of 2025, covering border and return movement monitoring; counselling and assessments of the voluntary character of return in host countries; refugee perception and intention surveys; and protection monitoring inside Syria. Additionally, a joint World Bank–UNHCR socio-economic assessment in Syria was conducted in September and October 2025, with results to be made available in early 2026.

³ Hereinafter referred to as the "Operational Framework".

⁴ Self-organized returns refer to refugees who return to Syria on their own initiative and by their own means.

Access to reliable and up-to-date information was identified as a key for people to make an informed decision about their return to Syria. In March 2025, UNHCR launched [Syria is Home](#), a platform that offers refugees and internally displaced Syrians clear information about their rights, answers common questions about voluntary return and provides guidance on how to access support and services available in Syria. Over 85,000 visitors from across Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Türkiye and further abroad have accessed the site. It continues to be updated with new information on return processes, incorporating relevant information from other agencies and based on feedback from users.

This report takes stock of the dynamics around refugee returns throughout 2025 and outlines how UNHCR and partners have responded to the needs of returning refugees and IDPs, as well as those choosing or needing to remain in host countries. It also presents observations which could make refugee returns more sustainable, grounded in protection and informed by the choices of refugee men, women, girls and boys.



"We wanted to come back. Syria is the most beautiful place, and for me, Zabadani is the most beautiful of all," he said.

Mohamed returned with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, hoping to rebuild their lives back home.

After years of displacement, he is now looking to rent a house and settle again in Syria.

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

Key recommendations

1. Significant numbers of Syrians have already opted to return home. However, the needs inside the country remain immense. To ensure the sustainability of these and future returns, increased donor engagement and greater investments inside Syria are urgently needed to improve conditions in areas of return and support reintegration.

2. To ensure that returns are safe, voluntary, and dignified, multi-sectoral, protection-focused interventions inside Syria need to be strengthened. These should include explosive ordnance risk mitigation and clearance, restoration of civil registries and provision of legal aid, expansion of mental health and gender-based violence (GBV) services, integrated shelter and livelihoods programmes, and principled support to strengthen the Government of Syria's law enforcement capacity. With the right support, those returning can begin rebuilding not just their homes but also their sense of security and hope.

3. Voluntary return operations should be framed within a multi-year comprehensive regional approach to solutions. Recognizing that, while over 1.2 million Syrians have returned, refugees in host countries still need time and support as they consider when or whether to return. While refugee returns will continue, and the vast majority of refugees in neighbouring countries want to return one day, current intention surveys show that most displaced Syrians do not plan to return in the next year, waiting to see whether greater investment and reconstruction inside Syria materialize. It will take several years before the majority of Syrian refugees return, while some may never be able to return, requiring alternative solutions. While investing inside Syria is essential, it is equally critical to maintain protection space and sustain refugee programmes in host countries, not least to ensure returns to Syria are voluntary and free from push factors, while in parallel pursuing other solutions such as resettlement and complementary pathways.

4. While host governments and the Government of Syria have individually put into place measures that enable the voluntary return of refugees, further support is needed for Syria's development and implementation of its Recovery Plan. This plan should include components to structure IDP and refugee returns and reintegration, providing a framework for donors, UN agencies and NGOs to engage and support a Syrian-led initiative.



After years in displacement, including time in Egypt, Ali has recently returned to Darayya with his two sons, hoping for a fresh start. To help families like Ali's through the winter, UNHCR and partners are providing essential relief items to newly returned households.

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

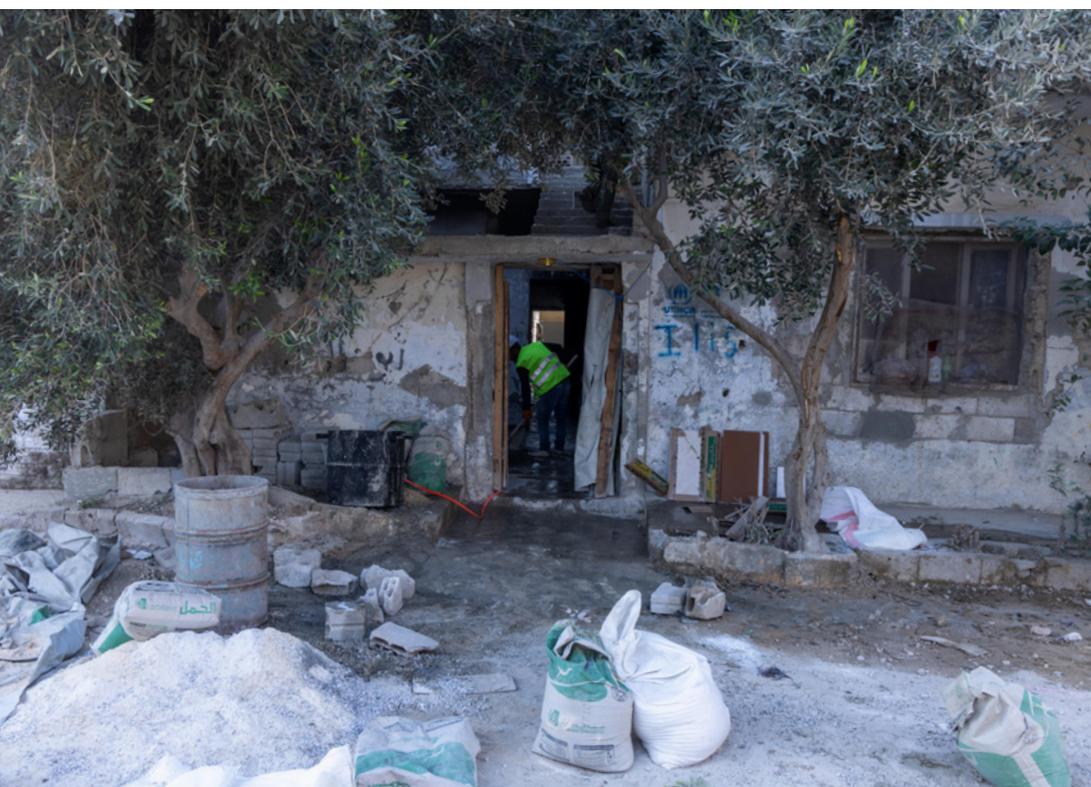
Developments in 2025

Since the fall of the former government in December 2024, Syria has entered a period of profound transformation. A transitional political process is underway, the country has opened up its economy, and while economic sanctions have not yet been fully lifted, they have largely been suspended, creating space for renewed trade, investment and reconstruction. A transitional justice framework is beginning to take shape, aiming to address past and current human rights violations and promote reconciliation. New measures are easing access to education, offering hope to millions of children and youth whose schooling was disrupted by years of conflict. Long-awaited legal reforms are also on the horizon, with the potential to simplify housing, land, and property transactions, critical steps toward restoring rights and enabling displaced Syrians to reclaim homes and rebuild their lives.

Yet fourteen years of war have left deep scars. Syria has experienced massive destruction and damage to homes and basic infrastructure, including water and power stations, fuel plants, medical facilities, and farmland, which are continuing to disrupt essential services, limiting access to water, electricity, and healthcare across many parts of the country. According to WHO, only 57% of hospitals and 37%

of primary healthcare centres are fully operational, leaving some 7.4 million people with reduced access to essential medicines and treatment. Education has also been heavily impacted: one in three schools is unusable due to damage or use as shelters for displaced families, while an estimated 2.5 million children are out of school and another one million risks dropping out. Even in areas less affected by direct conflict, infrastructure remains severely degraded and often non-functional. Syria remains one of the largest humanitarian emergencies globally, with 90% of the population living in poverty and 16.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2024, more than nine million people were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity, and acute food insecurity is expected to worsen due to severe drought, localized violence, economic fragility, and critical funding gaps. As of September 2025, the monthly minimum wage covered only one-third of households' essential needs.

The host governments of Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, alongside the Government of Syria, have played an active and responsible role in enabling refugee returns, while largely reaffirming that such returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified. These approaches are detailed in the Host Country snapshots below.



Al Qusayr District, Homs Governorate, 2025: Shelter repairs are underway to support newly returned families.

Photo © UNHCR/Ayham Al Kady

A crucial step has been the easing or lifting of economic sanctions on Syria by several governments and entities. For instance, on 28 May 2025, the EU formally adopted legal acts removing all economic restrictive measures on Syria (energy, trade, banking, financial restrictions etc.), except those based on security grounds.⁵ On 30 June 2025, the U.S. Treasury (via Office of Foreign Assets Control — OFAC) implemented a presidential order revoking the U.S. “Syria Sanctions Program”, eliminating broad list-based sanctions that had targeted numerous Syrian individuals and entities.⁶ Among other measures by the Government of Syria, these steps could significantly facilitate private sector and development investments inside Syria.

While many donor countries have stepped-up to support programmes that facilitate refugee returns from the region and assist the reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs inside Syria, the scale and sustainability of these return operations have been constrained by broader global cuts to humanitarian and development aid. As of Q3 2025, funding for the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) remains critically low, with US\$ 1.08 billion received against requirements of US\$ 4.7 billion, making the plan 23% funded so far in 2025. Similarly, the 2025 Humanitarian Response Priorities, which seeks US\$ 3.19 billion to support 10.3 million of

the most vulnerable, is currently only 29% funded, leaving significant gaps in basic services and recovery efforts.

Of particular concern is the reduction of funding and the scaling down of many UN and NGO assistance programmes in refugee-hosting countries. For instance, in Jordan, regular cash assistance programmes have been reduced, and the health sector faces a funding shortfall of more than US\$ 48 million in 2025, jeopardizing essential health services for Syrian and Palestinian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. In Lebanon, UNHCR was forced to completely curtail support to refugee access to primary and secondary healthcare, affecting tens of thousands of people including safe delivery for mothers, while over 80,000 people lost shelter support, and life-saving cash programmes have been reduced by 60%. Similar cuts have affected refugee programmes in Türkiye, Iraq and Egypt.

Even under the most optimistic scenario inside Syria, refugee and IDP returns will take years. A failure to invest at scale, both in host countries and inside Syria, not only compromises the sustainability of current returns but also risks creating push factors that could lead to premature or unsafe returns, undermining the principle of voluntariness and protection standards.



UNHCR's Director of the Division of External Relations, Dominique Hyde, visited Al Qusair District to observe shelter repair efforts supporting newly returned families.

Photo © UNHCR/Ayham Al Kady

⁵ [Council of the EU, Syria: EU adopts legal acts to lift economic sanctions on Syria, enacting recent political agreement, May 2025.](#)

⁶ [US Department of The Treasury, Press release, 30th June 2025.](#)

Refugee voices

Rasha (42)



Rasha returned to Homs in 2025 after 14 years in Lebanon.

“ We are tired of being displaced far from our country. Nothing compares to this feeling. These are tears of happiness. I’ve been away for 14 years. ”

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

Jassim (103)



After more than a decade in exile in Lebanon, Jassim returned to Syria with his family, only to find their home destroyed.

“ It was a bittersweet moment. I was happy to return to the place where I was born and raised, but devastated to see my home destroyed. I felt like I was starting from zero. ”

Photo © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

Haifa (9)



Haifa was born in Syria. She was only five months old when her family was forced to flee to Lebanon in 2016, leaving their home in the Al-Khalidiya neighborhood of Homs behind. Today, she is nine years old.

“ I’m happy to be back in my country, the place where I was born and the one I love, because Mama and Papa always shared beautiful stories about it with me. ”

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

Mahdi



Mahdi fled from Hama to Jordan in 2011 and has since built a new life in Amman with his four children.

“ I dream of Syria recovering and becoming stronger than before, but for now, I have no plans to return. I am prioritizing stability for his children while conditions inside Syria remain uncertain. ”

Photo © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

Hisham (35)



Hisham is a father of four. He left Syria in 2018 and has now returned with plans to enroll his children in school.

“ I’m planning to look for work, and for now, we’ll stay at my parents’ house. I’m really happy to be back. We’re all very happy, especially because I’ll be able to register my children in school. ”

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

The needs and intentions of Syrians must guide the humanitarian community's planning and programming. In 2025, a series of UNHCR intention surveys sought to ensure Syrian voices remain central to response strategies.

Recent intention surveys conducted by UNHCR in partnership with the World Bank, including the [Enhanced Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria \(eRPIS\)](#) published in February and September 2025, revealed both strong hopes and deep hesitations among Syrians. Across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, eight in ten refugees expressed hope to return to Syria one day, a dramatic increase when compared with only three in ten refugees surveyed in June 2024. At the same time, 18% surveyed for the September 2025 report planned to do so within the next year, a reduction from 27% earlier in the year. Similar findings have been recorded in Türkiye through different surveys, including the Community Pulse. The next round of the UNHCR eRPIS will be issued in early 2026.

This reflects two realities: some families have already returned, while others are waiting and watching conditions inside Syria before deciding. Most who plan to return hope to go back as entire

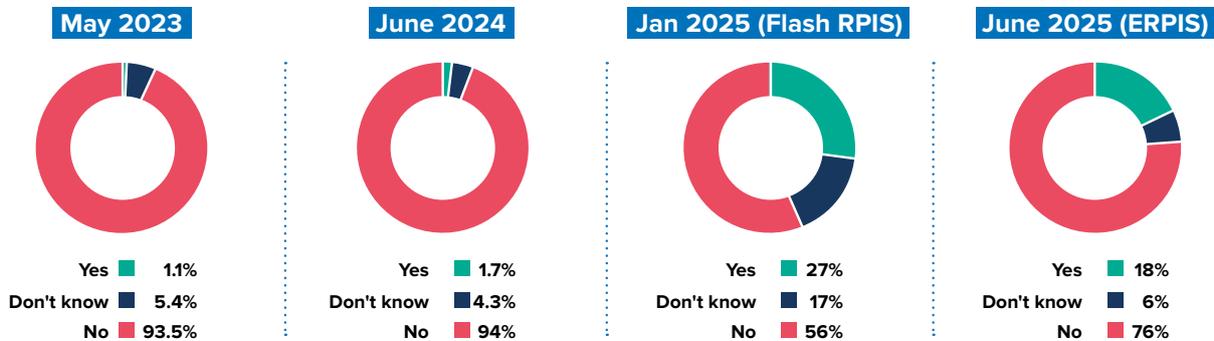
families, to the places they once called home. For returns to continue in 2026 at the same pace and for current and future returns to be sustainable, a significant injection of both humanitarian and development support is needed.

Inside Syria, an intention survey⁷ of displaced people living in IDP sites (targeting 4,663 households) found that **one in four hope to return to their own towns or villages within the next 12 months.** Common areas of return include Kafr Nobol, Madiq Castle, and Maarrat AlNuman. Still, over half of respondents plan to remain where they are, and nearly one in five are unsure. Many who stay describe their living conditions as average or poor, citing the lack of basic services, electricity, water, healthcare, affordable housing, and job opportunities. Increased support for IDPs is urgently needed for them to be able to return home.

Together, these findings paint a picture of cautious optimism. Syrians' desire to return home remains strong, but for many, hope alone is not enough, it must be supported by tangible investments inside Syria: restoring essential services, rebuilding homes and livelihoods, and ensuring safety and dignity for those returning.

Percentage of Syrian refugees intending to return within 12 months (Regional)

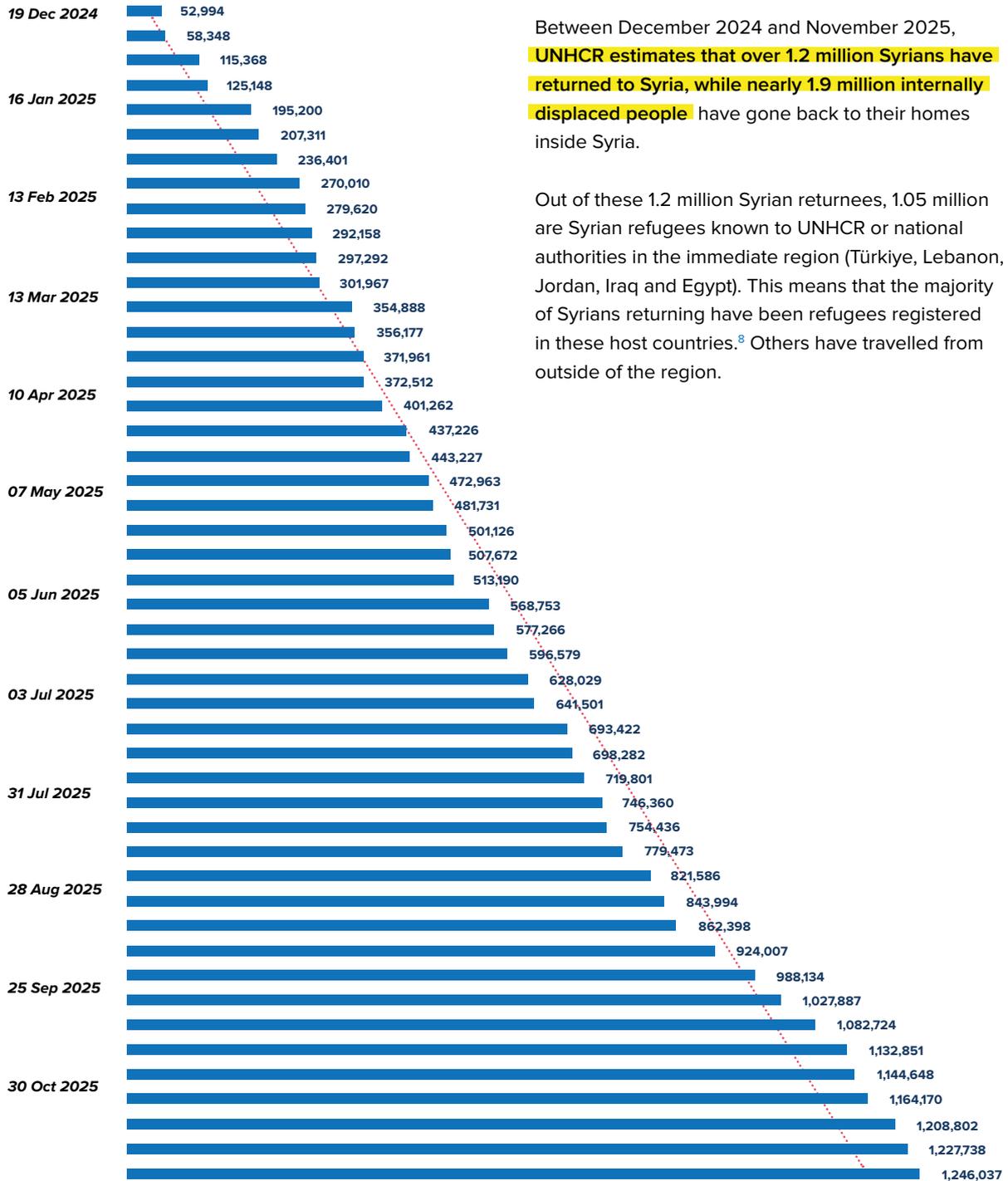
(Data source: Enhanced Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria, published September 2025)



⁷ [Syria IDP Movement Intentions Survey, November 2025.](#)

Population movements and trends

Syrian returnees trends



Between December 2024 and November 2025, UNHCR estimates that over 1.2 million Syrians have returned to Syria, while nearly 1.9 million internally displaced people have gone back to their homes inside Syria.

Out of these 1.2 million Syrian returnees, 1.05 million are Syrian refugees known to UNHCR or national authorities in the immediate region (Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt). This means that the majority of Syrians returning have been refugees registered in these host countries.⁸ Others have travelled from outside of the region.

⁸ For details by country, see Host Country Spotlights below.

Key observations and monitoring findings include:

1. **Consistent with refugee feedback to UNHCR in host countries, return rates in 2025 were influenced by calendar events.** These included the end of Ramadan in March/April and in particular the beginning of the school year in Syria in early September, the latter corresponding with an observed increase in returns. By contrast, it is expected that the winter months into 2026 will witness relatively lower numbers of returns.
2. **The rate of return has also been influenced by security conditions in areas of return or transit.** For instance, in July, refugees in Jordan expressed concerns about security incidents in As-Sweida Governorate and Israeli military actions in southern Syria, which coincided with a slight decrease or postponement of return movements during that period. Similarly, matching refugee intentions survey results, returns from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq were heavily influenced by ongoing tensions and intermittent military clashes in northeastern Syria.
3. **According to UNHCR protection monitoring,⁹ returns to areas of origin are still the most common,** with 81% of refugee returnees and 83% of IDP returnees going mainly to Aleppo, Damascus, Idleb, Homs, and Rural Damascus. Persistent barriers, including property damage, insecurity, limited livelihoods, and lack of essential services, continue to hinder safe and sustainable returns.
4. **The majority of refugee returnees (76%) did not visit their area of origin prior to returning.** Around 17% visited once, while 6% made multiple visits before returning, and a small portion (2%) preferred not to disclose this information.
5. **On family composition during return,** 87% of refugee returnees reported returning with immediate family members (spouse, parents, and/or children), 11% returned without them, and 2% preferred not to answer. Among those who did not return with their immediate family, 68% reported leaving their spouse or partner behind, and 21% reported leaving their children.
6. **81% of refugee returnees and 85% of IDP returnees plan to stay in their current location over the next six months,** indicating relative stability among returnee populations.



Asaliya recently returned to Flitah, Syria, after more than a decade in Lebanon. Through a UNHCR cash grant and business training, she launched a clothing shop, her family's only income. Rebuilding is still difficult, but livelihoods support is helping returnees like her regain independence and stability.

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

⁹ See *Protection Context in Syria* below.

UNHCR CORE: SYRIA GOVERNORATES OF RETURN OVERVIEW

As of 27 November 2025

Key figures

This map is prepared using data from population movement reporting and border monitoring tool. It includes the movements of Syrians who returned primarily through the border crossing points since 08 December 2024.



1,260,240

individuals who returned to Syria since 08 Dec 2024

Age and gender breakdown (Estimated)

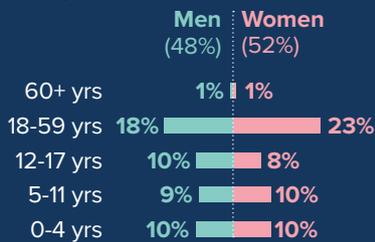


605,716
male

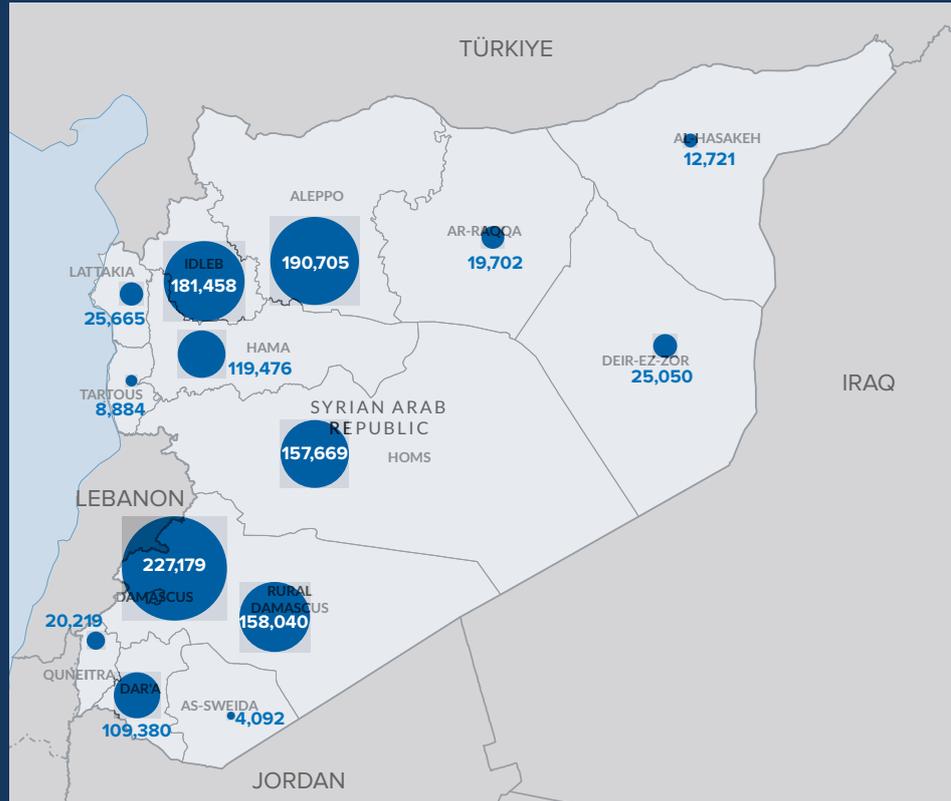


654,524
female

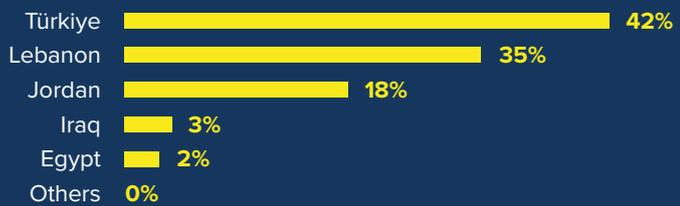
Age group



Intended locations of return by governorates



Country of departure



Please see the [UNHCR CORE: Syria governorates of return overview](#)

Protection context inside Syria

With the fall of the former government, risks associated with its military, security, and intelligence agencies have largely ended. Military conscription, a key factor driving men of military age to flee the country over the past decade, has also been abolished. Overall, freedom of movement has improved in many parts of Syria over the past year. However, new risks have emerged or become more pronounced either due to localized conflict or affecting specific groups of Syrians, resulting in new internal and external displacement. As of December 2025, over 100,000 Syrians fled Syria and crossed into Lebanon, the majority immediately following the fall of the Assad government, while others fled in March 2025 pre-empting or amid violence in the coastal areas. Similarly, clashes between different groups in As-Sweida Governorate in southern Syria in July 2025 displaced over 186,000 persons internally. Tensions and intermittent military conflict in the northeast have displaced over 41,500 people since the end of November 2024, a region already sheltering over 600,000 displaced persons. Additional risks include weak law enforcement and rising levels of criminal activity in some urban areas, as well as the widespread presence of explosive ordnance, which continues to pose a grave threat to civilians, particularly children, and disrupts livelihoods.

Since early 2025, UNHCR has rolled out an enhanced Protection Monitoring system inside Syria, using a standardized methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative interviews with returning refugees, IDPs, and host communities in areas of return.¹⁰ By November 2025, over 27,500 households were interviewed, providing critical insights into protection risks and living conditions.

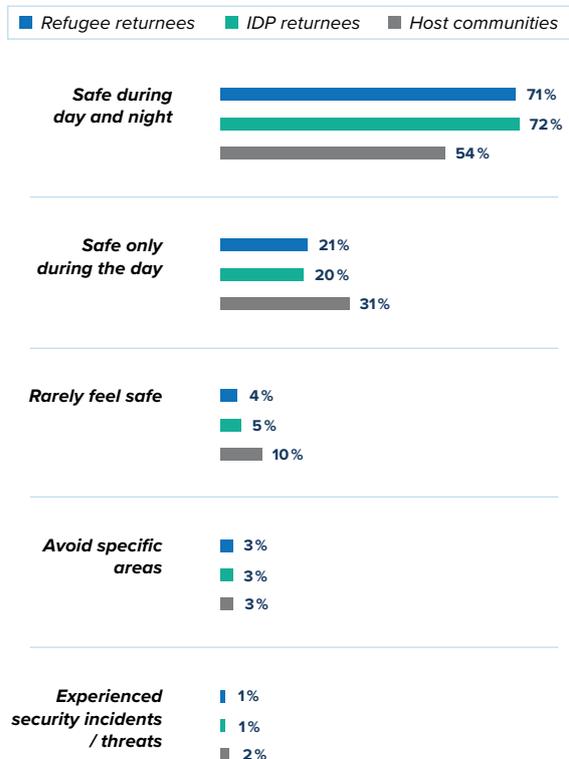
¹⁰ The sampling methodology applies a random selection of returnees and members of host communities registered at UNHCR-supported Community Centres or identified by Outreach Volunteers (ORVs), in both cases following an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach.

Key findings include:

1. Freedom of Movement and Security:

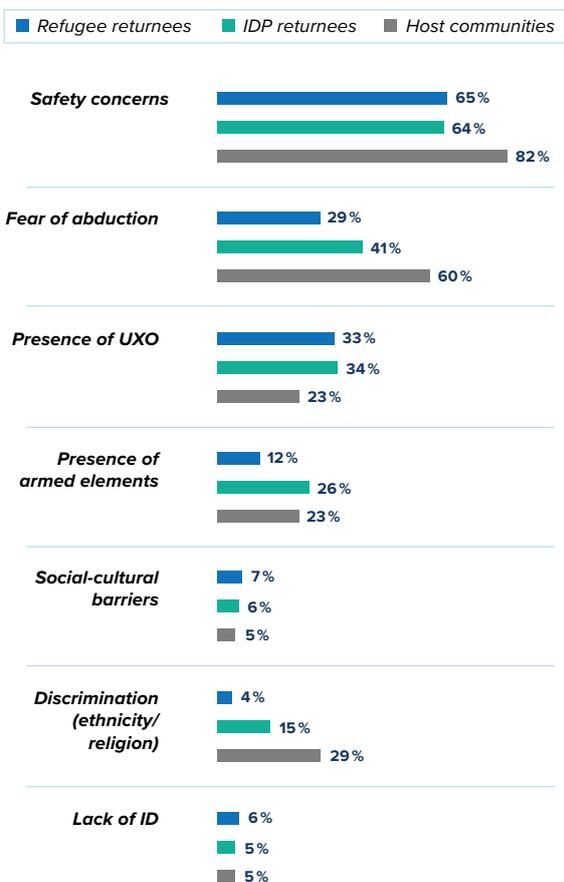
There have been **major improvements in security conditions and freedom of movement over the last year**. Most returnees, 71% of refugees and 72% of IDPs surveyed, reported feeling safe during the day and night. However, a smaller proportion, 22% of refugees and 20% of IDPs, expressed feeling unsafe during the night in certain areas. Feelings of insecurity are more pronounced among host community members. A much smaller number of respondents indicated that they never feel safe and must avoid very specific areas.

Feelings about safety and security in current place of residence



Some households identified safety concerns as the primary barrier to freedom of movement, affecting both returnees and host communities. Host community members in specific areas reported higher levels of safety concerns, including fear of abduction, presence of armed elements, and experiences of discrimination.

Feelings about safety and security in current place of residence



Specific areas across Syria have experienced an increase in criminal activity. For instance, monitoring indicates incidents of violence, killings, kidnappings, armed robberies, and property theft in Damascus, Rural Damascus, the southern region, and coastal areas.

2. Explosive ordnance contamination:

Widespread contamination from explosive ordnance (EO) remains one of the gravest risks, particularly for returnees. Between December 2024 and end November 2025, 865 incidents were recorded, **causing 585 deaths and 1007 injuries.**¹¹ Most casualties occurred in Deir-ez-Zor, Idlib, Homs, Aleppo, and Hama, with new contamination spreading to Sweida and Dara'a. These hidden dangers limit freedom of movement, sense of physical security, access to homes, productive land and services, and opportunities to rebuild livelihoods.

3. Lack of civil documentation remains a major obstacle to sustainable returns.

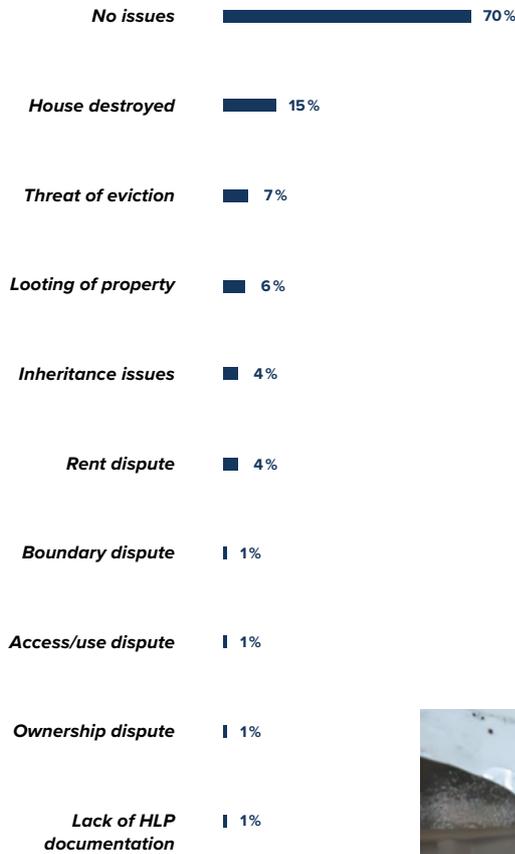
Approximately 25% of refugee returnees and 15% of IDP returnees lack at least one key civil document. Civil registries have been reactivated in mid-2025 but many of the civil registry offices are not functioning today, leaving many without proof of identity, property, or family status. For some families, this means children cannot go to school, with one in four returnee households citing missing documents as the main reason for school exclusion. Rebuilding and capacitating these systems is urgent.

4. Housing, Land and Property:

Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) challenges persist, compounded by limited registration capacity within the General Directorate of Cadastral Affairs and the widespread prevalence of informal housing arrangements, making property claims and dispute resolution challenging. Among those facing issues, the destruction of houses is the primary HLP challenge reported, followed by threat of eviction, looting of property and inheritance, rent and boundary disputes.

¹¹ [Syria Mine Action AoR: 2025 - A year in review info-sheet, 8 December 2025.](#)

Reported issues related to HLP



5. Psychosocial distress is widespread.

42% of refugees and IDP returnees report stress-related symptoms affecting daily life, yet more than one third cannot access mental health or psychosocial support due to limited services.

6. Women, girls, and children face heightened vulnerabilities:

Female-headed households represent 43% of surveyed households, many of whom struggle with economic hardship and insecurity. Women and girls reported growing restrictions on movement and dress, rising GBV risks, and limited participation in social and economic life in certain areas of the country. Children face school dropouts, child labour, language barriers, and heightened psychosocial distress across Syria.

Ataa, 16, leads cyber-safety sessions for girls in Azraq Camp. After joining computer and cybersecurity trainings, Ataa now teaches other girls how to stay safe online, helping them navigate risks with confidence and knowledge. **“The internet offers opportunities, but it also carries risks, especially for girls,”** she says.

Photo © UNHCR/Hasan Alabdallah



Voluntary return programmes

While the majority of refugee returns in 2025 have been voluntary and resourced by refugees themselves ('self-organized'), UNHCR received in parallel a large number of requests from refugees for assistance to return. Many refugees who expressed an intention to return to Syria were unable to cover associated costs or need some assistance to enable their return including legal aid, support to access documentation, cash assistance, or transportation.

In response to the requests, and in line with its [Operational Framework for Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs](#), UNHCR has gradually established or supported national voluntary repatriation programmes in coordination with authorities and partners. These programmes have been implemented in a phased manner and will progressively enable the return of those who need assistance, all while self-organized returns continue.

Refugees can enroll in host government and UNHCR voluntary repatriation programmes. UNHCR conducts assessment of the voluntary character of return and provides counselling, and they can be referred to receive support such as cash or

transport assistance. UNHCR identity management systems in host countries and inside Syria allow for the secure and encrypted de-duplication of records and case closures as refugees return, in line with data protection standards. Inside Syria, returnees may also receive transportation from the border crossings to their home areas and a reintegration grant by UNHCR. Returnees, refugees, IDPs and host communities can access available local services and assistance provided by local and humanitarian actors in their communities and UN Sister Agencies, including UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP ILO and UN Habitat.

Into 2026, it is expected that there will continue to be a mixture of self-organized returns and returnees supported through forms of assisted voluntary repatriation programmes. While noting each host country's context is different, UNHCR will aim at progressively harmonizing procedures between countries, in coordination with national authorities. Assistance will continue to focus on legal aid, documentation, voluntariness assessment, cash assistance and/or transportation for refugees with specific needs, followed by inter-agency reintegration support inside Syria.



Qasem's four-year-old Mousa smiles at the camera, a sign of relief and renewed stability as the family begins rebuilding life at home. Qasem returned to Adra with his wife and children after years of displacement in Lebanon. Their house was badly damaged, but after repairs, the family can live in it again.

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

Host country spotlights

TÜRKIYE

Context:

Türkiye is the largest Syrian refugee hosting country, with 2.9 million Syrian refugees under its Temporary Protection regime at the beginning of 2025. Following 8 December 2024, voluntary returns from Türkiye have gained significant momentum. The Presidency of Migration Management, the central government authority responsible for managing all aspects of migration and international protection, continues to lead on return procedures, while UNHCR plays a key role by monitoring returns and verifying that they are voluntary. The Turkish authorities have publicly referred to UNHCR as their “third eye” in ensuring adequate implementation of the process.

Between January and July 2025, Türkiye authorized “Go and See” visits for Syrian nationals benefitting from Temporary Protection and later extended facilitation measures to enable cross-border travel for Syrian university students during semester breaks. In July, procedures were simplified for dual nationals and Syrian spouses of Turkish citizens, while customs regulations were amended to allow the crossing of belongings, valuables, and vehicles. From August, Syrian nationals holding third-country passports were permitted to enter and exit through most land borders. Türkiye has repeatedly underlined its commitment to ensuring that all returns are voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly.

Further, Türkiye has been initiating coordination with different Syrian line ministries, including with education-related institutions to facilitate recognition of education records.

Trends and data:

As of 3 November 2025, the Ministry of Interior reported that 557,702 Syrians had returned voluntarily from Türkiye since December 2024. Returns are processed across all provinces, key airports, and seven land border crossings. UNHCR has monitored more than 400,000 returns (73% of total returns), conducting interviews in 23 Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) offices, at six border gates, and at three airports. More recently, UNHCR and PMM have been exploring a modality for remote interviews in some provinces to enhance the presence of UNHCR at return processing locations.

Returnees are broadly gender-balanced, largely of working age, and often cite political, improved security, or family reasons for returning. Most head to northern Syria, particularly Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, and Hama Governorates, where they have homes, land, or family networks. The majority possess Syrian-issued ID cards, family booklets, or passports. After return, many expect to rely on daily labour, self-employment, or family support. About one-third had children attending school in Türkiye, with most obtaining official proof of education prior to departure.

UNHCR's engagement:

UNHCR continues to play a unique role by monitoring returns, conducting interviews, identifying protection needs, and providing technical support to PMM. To help refugees make informed decisions, UNHCR strengthened community engagement and communications channels with refugees by providing updated information related to return. Additionally, UNHCR assists with legal aid to address documentation and civil law barriers, and update personal data before returning. It also supports NGOs with training on protection-sensitive return, particularly for women and children - practical steps that help families prepare for

a safe and dignified journey home. UNHCR also coordinates with local institutions, other agencies and partners to ensure those who stay continue to receive tailored support.

Through an EU-funded programme, UNHCR and PMM have begun providing targeted cash assistance, based on vulnerability criteria, to help refugees cover transportation and other essential return-related costs. The cash programme implementation has not triggered any increase in returns.

Next steps:

Voluntary returns are expected to continue as conditions in Syria evolve. However, many Syrians are likely to remain in Türkiye due to ongoing protection needs (related to international protection, legal challenges, or other individual specific needs), as well as deep community ties and socio-economic integration. Ensuring an adequate protection environment is essential to support informed and voluntary decisions regarding return. Continued access to protection mechanisms, basic services, and legal assistance, including support to address legal barriers to return, remains fundamental. Assistance to meet unmet basic needs is equally critical. Emerging vulnerabilities must also be considered, such as households that have become separated when the primary income earner returned to Syria while the family remained in Türkiye. Without targeted support, these families risk falling into destitution. Certain profiles, including female-headed households and students who stayed behind to complete their studies, may face increasing levels of need and require tailored interventions. Resources are

needed to expand opportunities for self-reliance and vocational training in Türkiye, benefiting both refugees who intend to remain and those preparing for return. This includes strengthening coordination, job-matching initiatives, and pre-return preparation activities. Finally, increased funding for voluntary repatriation support, including to ensure adequate processing capacity, legal counselling and cash assistance for return, will enable UNHCR and partners to respond more effectively to refugees' ongoing requests.

Türkiye has reaffirmed, at the highest level, its continued commitment to hosting and supporting those who choose not to return, ensuring continued access to basic services such as education and healthcare, as well as livelihoods. Continued international responsibility-sharing and donor support remain essential both to sustain protection and services for those staying and to enable safe, voluntary, and dignified returns for those who choose to return.

LEBANON

Context:

At the start of 2025, 1.4 million Syrian refugees were known to UNHCR in Lebanon. The UNHCR-led Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG) developed the 2025 Inter-Agency Voluntary Return Action Plan and the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) Return Chapter. These frameworks established a common blueprint for return between UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, donors and the Government of Lebanon, culminating in the Council of Ministers adoption of a Return Policy aimed at facilitating the safe and dignified return of up to 400,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2025. The Return Plan was officially launched on 1 July 2025, introducing new facilitation measures, including waiving exit fees, fines, and re-entry bans until 31 December 2025.

Trends and data:

By end November 2025, taking into account departures and new arrivals, 1.2 million Syrian refugees continue to be known to UNHCR in Lebanon. The files of 379,103 Syrian refugees have been inactivated due to confirmed or presumed returns, 88% through self-organized return and some 12% (or 45,195 individuals) supported through UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme. Among those assessed by UNHCR, 85% are returning to their areas of origin in Syria: 36% to Homs, 19% to Idlib, 13% to Damascus and Rural Damascus, 13%

to Aleppo and 10% to Hama. 52% of those supported to return are women and girls, and 60% are children. Most returns (83%) occur in complete family units, while of the 17% who are remaining in Lebanon, the majority (75%) are adult men staying for livelihood purposes. Over 74,000 Syrian refugees have expressed interest and remain in the pipeline for UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme. It is projected that some 400,000 Syrian refugees will have returned to Syria from Lebanon by the end of 2025.

UNHCR's engagement:

Since the launch of the Return Plan, UNHCR has played a central protection role. Syrian refugees in Lebanon register their interest in facilitated return through the UNHCR National Call Centre and are then contacted by UNHCR to conduct a voluntariness assessment. Where required, referrals are made to Child Protection and Legal partners for support with access to civil and academic documentation or best interest assessments. Refugees also approach one of six

designated Return Spaces across Lebanon to confirm their family composition and to be issued with a Repatriation Form. Returning families also benefit from US\$ 100 per returning individual and may choose to self-organize their transport or partake in a UNHCR and IOM organized return to Syria. Since July, as of early December, eleven UNHCR-IOM organized movements have supported 2,499 Syrians, with more movements planned in the near future.

SPOTLIGHT: LEBANON **Next steps:**

UNHCR's Community Dialogue with Syrian refugees in April 2025 revealed that while many expressed strong emotional ties and hope to return to Syria, significant obstacles remain. In ongoing dialogue with refugees, access to shelter, basic services, education, health and employment were the most commonly cited barriers. Women highlighted concerns related to children's safety and education, availability of basic services and fear of restrictive gender norms. Older persons and persons with disabilities cited access to services and family and community support as key considerations. Syrian youth were hesitant to return without

community ties and adequate education and livelihood opportunities. Nevertheless, returns, both self-organized and organized are set to continue from Lebanon in 2026. At the same time, it is clear during this transition phase that Lebanon will continue to host significant numbers of refugees, who need help and support. Given the multiple shocks, conflict and instability that Lebanon has faced in the recent past, refugee vulnerabilities continue to be exacerbated and strong funding support is still needed to ensure that returns remain voluntary and not driven primarily by loss of support in Lebanon.



Jaziyah Al Jaban and her children crossed the Jdeidat/Yabous border, beginning their return from Lebanon to Raqqa after years in exile.

“We want to rebuild our lives at home,” she says, hopeful yet aware of the challenges ahead.

Families like hers receive support to ensure their return is voluntary, safe, and dignified, including counselling, cash assistance, legal support, and onward transportation.

As organized and self-organized returns continue from Lebanon, sustained investment is needed to help returnees regain stability and reconnect with services upon arrival.

Photo © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

JORDAN

Context:

Jordan has a long history of hosting refugees of different nationalities, including Syrians. Following developments in Syria in December 2024, many refugees decided to return, and, by 30 November 2025, 427,000 Syrian refugees remained registered with UNHCR in Jordan. Over 80% live among host communities, while the rest reside in camps. While refugees have access to essential services such as education and healthcare, the high cost of these services continues to limit access for many. Poverty rates among refugee populations have risen in recent years, as a result of reductions in humanitarian funding, and unemployment remains high, particularly among youth and women. The Government of Jordan remains steadfast in its commitment for refugee returns to be voluntary, working with UNHCR through a dedicated task force to address barriers while facilitating returns via customs exemptions and exit and re-entry permits for specific categories of Syrians.

Trends and data:

Over 173,000 UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees returned between 8 December 2024 and the end of November 2025. Return movements peaked in June and July, with the lowest numbers recorded in March. These trends were influenced by seasonal and contextual factors, including Ramadan, the academic year, security incidents in Syria's coastal area and As-Sweida in the south, and limited livelihood opportunities in both countries. Family reunification was the primary driver of return, while financial constraints, such as the need to repay debts in

Jordan, cover transportation costs, and secure sufficient savings for reintegration, were among the main barriers. The demographic profile of returnees remained consistent throughout the year, with women and girls comprising approximately 49%, children 43%, and men aged 18–40 around 19%. 24% of those who returned were from the refugee camps. 57% returned as complete family units, while in the rest of the cases one or more family members returned, leaving the rest of the family behind. The area of origin of most returnees was Dara'a, followed by Homs and Rural Damascus.



At the border in Dara'a, Taysir embraces his sister for the first time in 13 years, after she returned from exile in Jordan.

Photo © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

UNHCR's engagement:

UNHCR has strengthened its protection and facilitation role throughout 2025. Expanded community engagement, through outreach, focus groups, help lines, and the UNHCR Help website, ensures refugees have as accurate and timely information as possible to make informed decisions. The first voluntary repatriation assistance, launched in January, has supported over 10,000 refugees with pre-return counseling and transportation.¹³ In September, a pilot cash grant of US\$ 100 per person was introduced for refugees in Azraq and Zaatari camps to help families cover essential return-related expenses, including the repayment of small debts. The scale of both programmes remains contingent on available funding. UNHCR also verifies voluntariness through individual interviews and offers refugees legal assistance for solving administrative, legal and documentation-related

issues prior to return. UNHCR maintains a border presence to monitor returns, facilitate exit formalities and ensure upholding of protection standards (such as ensuring that separated children do not cross the border without appropriate guardianship arrangements).

Coordination remains central to Jordan's response. UNHCR works closely with NGOs, UN agencies, and donors through the Jordan Durable Solutions Working Group, and the Operational Durable Solutions Working Group comprising of 16 partners, including IOM, ILO, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP and 12 INGOs/NGOs. The latter group was established in 2025 as a platform for targeted discussion and coordination among partners actively engaged in durable solutions programming in Jordan.

Next steps:

With 78% of refugees indicating in mid-2025 that they do not plan to return within the next year, continued support inside Jordan is essential. This includes ensuring access to basic services, legal assistance, and assistance to cover basic needs, including so that those choosing to return can do so voluntarily. Emerging needs, such as for separated households, where the main income earner has returned to Syria leaving the family behind, must also be addressed to avoid destitution. Investments are needed to

strengthen opportunities for self-reliance and vocational training in Jordan that can benefit both refugees who stay in Jordan and those preparing to return to Syria, including through coordination, job matching and pre-return preparations. Funding to scale up voluntary repatriation assistance, including legal counseling and cash assistance for return, will allow UNHCR to respond to persistent calls from refugees to scale up assistance.

¹³ An additional 995 refugees benefited from IOM-assisted transportation from Azraq Camp.

IRAQ

Context:

Iraq continues to host more than 304,000 Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers, most of whom are of Kurdish ethnicity and originally from Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, and Damascus Governorates. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) hosts 82% of this population, with the majority living in urban areas and about 30% residing in nine refugee camps. Return intentions remain low compared to other countries in the region. UNHCR's June 2025 survey shows that only 4% of refugees plan to return to Syria within the next year, down from 12% in January 2025. Despite low short-term return intentions, long-term hopes persist: more than half of refugees aspire to return one day. Security concerns, cited by 53% of respondents, remain the primary barrier to return, followed by economic challenges and destroyed housing. Refugees report that improved security and livelihoods inside Syria would be the strongest incentives for considering return.

Trends and data:

Despite relatively low near-term intentions, returns continue. Since December 2024 and as of 30 November, over 6,811 refugees have returned to Syria, with most returning to Aleppo and Al-Hasakeh Governorates.

As of mid-June, the Kurdistan Regional Government granted a 60-day waiver on overstay fines for Syrian refugees, easing the process for those wishing to return home and helping others regularize their stay in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This measure was identified as one of the key drivers behind the increase in returns during the mid-year period, as many refugees had cited overstay fines as a major return barrier. Returns gradually decreased after the end of August.

UNHCR's engagement:

UNHCR Iraq has maintained its role in providing reliable information to Syrian refugees considering return. Throughout the year, UNHCR has ensured consistent communication with refugee communities through its Help page, Helpline, social media channels, and a dedicated WhatsApp platform, enabling refugees to access accurate, up-to-date information.

UNHCR is working closely with the Government of Iraq to establish coordinated joint return procedures. This system will streamline departure formalities for refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR or the government. Under this arrangement, UNHCR will verify voluntariness, provide counselling, and issue repatriation forms, while government authorities will facilitate exit procedures. To date, the Derabon Return Centre near the Peshkhabour border crossing remains the main processing site for voluntary returns. Under the new system, return procedures will be completed at UNHCR's registration centers in urban areas, where refugees can receive counselling and complete procedures prior to departure.

Next steps:

Looking ahead, UNHCR will prioritize operationalizing the joint return procedures and launching a pilot cash assistance programme, offering US\$ 100 per person to help cover transportation and other return-related expenses. Robust monitoring and regular coordination with government partners will facilitate the process functions effectively while safeguarding protection standards.



A refugee receiving legal support from UNHCR in Gawilan Refugee Camp in Duhok Governorate.

Photo © UNHCR/Rasheed Hussein Rasheed

EGYPT

Context:

As of November 2025, Egypt hosts approximately 119,000 registered Syrian refugees, representing 11% of the total registered refugee population in the country. Since 8 December 2024, UNHCR Egypt has seen a significant increase in Syrian refugees exploring the possibility of return. Although short-term intention to return declined from 42% in January to 29% in June, Syrians in Egypt still express the highest long-term desire to return among the surveyed countries in the MENA region, with 86% hoping to return one day. This interest is driven both by political developments in Damascus and increasingly difficult living conditions in Egypt. However, Egypt's lack of a land border with Syria and the continued suspension of direct flights make return costly and logistically complex, discouraging many from moving forward.

Trends and data:

Between December 2024 and November 2025, 27,254 refugees closed their UNHCR files, highlighting their intention to return to Syria. File closure is a prerequisite for self-organized return. Of these, 8,945 individuals had specific protection needs, including legal and physical protection concerns and children at risk. Most who departed originated from Damascus/Rural Damascus (67%), followed by Homs (13%), Aleppo

(8%), and other governorates (12%). File closures increased steadily until June, peaking at over 4,000 in one month, but have since slowed due to fluctuating security conditions, worsening socio-economic pressures, and concerns shared by returnees with refugees remaining in Egypt. With the school year now having started, there are fewer departures, as families seek to avoid disrupting children's education.

UNHCR's engagement:

As interest in returning to Syria has grown, UNHCR Egypt has expanded its engagement with Syrian refugee communities to better understand their priorities, concerns and decision-making processes. Between January and November 2025, UNHCR Egypt held 152 refugee community dialogues. These discussions included focus groups with community

leaders, female heads of households, minority groups, refugees preparing to close their files, and individuals who returned to Syria but subsequently came back to Egypt. Through these exchanges, UNHCR has gathered critical insights into the factors shaping return decisions and the challenges refugees face. To support informed decision-making, UNHCR continues to

SPOTLIGHT: EGYPT 

strengthen communication with refugees. This includes UNHCR's Help website (the second most visited globally), social media platforms, and individual counselling. Refugees attending file-closure interviews receive tailored guidance on procedures and requirements, including exit visa processes, and are issued Voluntary Repatriation Forms.

In November 2025, UNHCR Egypt launched a pilot cash assistance programme targeting 700 Syrian refugees preparing to return. The first phase was successfully completed, achieving its full target. As additional funding became available, the pilot for this unrestricted cash disbursement was extended towards the end of the year to reach an additional 1,000 individuals.

Next steps:

UNHCR will continue strengthening return procedures and plans to scale up cash support for voluntary returns into 2026, subject to further funding. UNHCR Egypt will also maintain robust communication with communities to ensure they have accurate, timely information to make informed decisions about their future.



Mahmoud Salah Hamadeh, 36, returned to Darayya with his wife and two daughters after spending five years in Egypt. Now working as a carpenter and renting a small home, he is determined to rebuild his life despite the challenges.

Photo © UNHCR/Vivian Tou'meh

Protection and Reintegration Response inside Syria

In response to the growing number of refugees and IDPs returning to their areas of origin, and in line with its protection mandate, UNHCR has expanded its role to facilitate voluntary, safe, and dignified returns, guided by the Operational Framework.

The Government has made significant efforts to facilitate and support the return and reintegration of refugees. The number of functional road border crossings has increased, and the physical conditions of border reception has greatly improved, offering safe and welcoming environments for Syrians to return with dignity. Voluntary Returnee windows have been set up at all active land border crossings by the General Authorities of Ports and Customs (formerly the General Authorities for Land and Sea Ports), where information about services available in areas of return is provided and additional information regarding intended areas of return and priority needs is collected from consenting returnee households to support access to these services, post-return follow-

up and inform programmatic planning. Waivers for customs fees and simplified entry requirements have been introduced for returning refugees, with UNHCR-issued return documents accepted as proof of status. UNHCR has been working in close coordination and collaboration with line ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior to support their efforts in enhancing the legal, administrative, and socio-economic conditions necessary for safe, dignified, and sustainable returns.

UNHCR Syria continues to provide a broad and expanding range of protection services and reintegration assistance to returnees. These include transportation, legal aid for the issuance and recovery of civil and HLP documentation, psychosocial support, cash assistance, housing repair, livelihoods support, and the distribution of core relief items (CRIs) to the most vulnerable families.

As winter sets in, displaced and returnee families in rural Aleppo continue to face freezing temperatures in damaged shelters. UNHCR provides essential winter assistance, including blankets, warm clothing, plastic sheeting and cash for heating.

Photo © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf



UNHCR also facilitates the safe and dignified return by providing transportation and other logistical assistance at key border crossing points (BCPs), including Bab Al-Hawa (Idleb-Türkiye), Al-Salama (Aleppo-Türkiye), and Joussieh (Homs-Lebanon). Transportation assistance will be extended to most BCPs by the end of 2025. To date, over 36,290 refugee returnees have received transportation assistance from UNHCR.

UNHCR continues to support a total of 71 community centres across the 14 Syrian governorates, complemented by 81 mobile units and a network of 1,545 outreach volunteers (ORVs). However, the closure of 49 community centres in June 2025 due to funding cuts led to a significant reduction in ORVs and mobile units overall.

Despite these challenges, over 600,000 refugee and IDP returnees, as well as host community members, benefited from protection services provided through UNHCR-supported community centres. These services include legal aid for the issuance and recovery of civil and HLP documentation; psychosocial support; and gender-based violence and child protection case management. Community centres offer a safe space where returnees can reconnect with their communities, share experiences and access support, either through services offered at the centres or via referrals to other service providers in the area.

UNHCR's shelter programme addresses one of the main concerns for forcibly displaced Syrians considering return. The programme includes multiple activities to support both refugee and IDP returnees, as well as host communities. During 2025, 5,373 households are benefitting from the rehabilitation of damaged homes, with 1,698 already completed and 3,675 under implementation.

To support refugee returnees during the initial phase of reintegration, UNHCR has provided return and reintegration grants to 36,360 families (116,707 individuals), with an additional 3-4,000 families expected to be supported by year's end. UNHCR

also distributes core-relief items (CRI) to returnees and other affected families, reaching over 130,000 families (over 650,000 individuals) with CRI kits.

UNHCR implements livelihood interventions to promote reintegration and self-reliance in both urban and rural areas. Activities include entrepreneurship and business training, in-kind and cash start-up grants, and rehabilitation of key economic infrastructure in return communities. To help achieve sustainability of returns, UNHCR leads the interagency response through bilateral partnerships with other UN Agencies and its co-chairing in the Solutions Working Group (together with UNDP and IOM), a platform engaging a range of stakeholders across different sectors, pursuing coordinated and complementary actions that contribute to conditions that will be conducive to safe, dignified and comprehensive solutions for returning IDPs and refugees through area-based approaches.

UNHCR also fosters partnerships with development actors and the private sector, supporting returnees' long-term access to national financial systems and economic opportunities. Together with the World Bank, UNHCR is investing in comparable socio-economic data for refugee returnees, IDPs, IDP returnees, and host communities across all governorates in Syria. The data exercise is part of a wider effort to understand the socio-economic outcomes by displacement status inside Syria and inform evidence-based responses. UNHCR is also consulting with Syria's Planning and Statistics Authority to ensure both displaced and non-displaced Syrians are equally included in national statistics exercises going forward.

As part of efforts to foster engagement with private sector and business leaders, UNHCR is engaging in strategic discussions with various partners including the Syrian Business Association based in Jordan (SIBA), the Syrian American Alliance for Peace and Prosperity, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and other private sector partners. UNHCR and IFC convened a workshop in June 2025 to explore areas of engagement inside Syria. Building on this meeting,



In Babekkeh, rural Aleppo, Al-Nour Camp was created to support families with visual impairments, with nearly every household including at least one blind person. Among them is Eihab, a 37-year-old father of four from rural Idleb, who received winter assistance from UNHCR to help keep his family safe and warm. "The assistance came at the perfect time," he says.

Photo © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

access to finance was identified. IFC is conducting a mapping and will host a session in the first quarter of 2026 with Syrian financial service providers to explore opportunities for expanding Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) financing for entrepreneurs. This initiative aims to improve access to finance for displaced and returning populations, fostering economic recovery and resilience.

In parallel, a comprehensive skills-needs mapping exercise has been launched to identify priority gaps for Syrian and foreign companies planning to enter or restart operations in Syria. Building on this, UNHCR and IFC have established a partnership to match refugee skills, and potential skilling programmes, to market demands. An apprenticeship programme is also being designed to equip refugees with practical skills prior to their return, ensuring they are prepared to contribute effectively to rebuilding efforts and local economies.

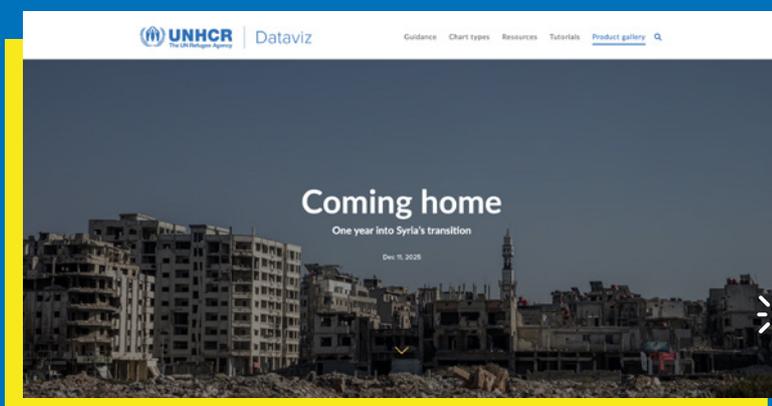
Since 2022–2023, UNHCR and UNDP, under the framework of the Technical Working Group on Return and Reintegration (within the UNCT/HCT umbrella), have been advancing the Area-Based Return Support (ABRS) approach, in collaboration with a broad range

of UN agencies, INGOs, and local stakeholders. This Technical Working Group has since evolved into the Solutions Working Group (SWG), now co-chaired by UNHCR, UNDP, and IOM, with active participation from 11 UN agencies, INGOs, national NGOs, and relevant government authorities. ABRS is a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, participatory recovery framework led by the Area Humanitarian Coordination Teams (AHCTs) at the field level. It delivers integrated recovery and reintegration packages that address the priority needs of returnees, IDPs, and host communities, responding to urgent requirements while investing in longer-term recovery priorities and actively engaging affected communities in their own recovery pathways.

ABRS locations have been selected across nine governorates: Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Daraa, Raqqa, and Idleb and most recently, Ma'arat al-Numan (Idleb), which hosts IDPs returning from camps in northwest Syria and refugees primarily returning from Lebanon and Türkiye. This approach focuses on community-led joint programming that supports refugee returns in a sustainable and coordinated manner.

Also see:

Coming home: One year into Syria's transition



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