UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Syria: Protection and Reintegration Insights

Voices of returnees and host communities across Syria

April – June 2026

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Purpose of the Report 4

Methodology and Scope 4

Returnee and Host Communities Profiles 5

Return Trends 8

1. Returnee's Family Composition 9
2. Modality of Return 9
3. Factors Influencing Return 10
5. Returnees' Intentions 12
6. Access to Information Prior to Return 12

Protection Risk Analysis 13

1. Safety and Security Considerations 13
   - 1.1 Safety and Security Concerns 13
   - 1.2 Freedom of movement 14
   - 1.3 Explosive Ordnance Contamination 14
2. Legal Barriers 15
   - 2.1 Legal Barriers Lack of civil documentation 15
   - 2.2 Housing, Land and Property Concerns 17
3. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support 18
4. Gender-Related Protection Risk 19
5. Children-at-Risk 20
6. Risks to Social Cohesion 21
7. Adoption of Harmful Coping Mechanisms 22
8. Unmet basic needs 23
9. Protection Risk Analysis Across Regions 24
   - 9.1 North-East Region (Ar-Raqqa, Hasakeh and Deir-ez-Zor) 24
   - 9.2 North-West Region (Aleppo and Idlib) 24
   - 9.3 Coastal Region (Tartous and Latakia) 24
   - 9.4 Central Region (Homs and Hama) 24
   - 9.5 Southern Region (As-Sweida, Daraa and Quneitra) 25
   - 9.6 Damascus and Rural Damascus 25

Recommended Actions for Protection Partners 25

UNHCR Response to Returns 26

Executive Summary

Syria continues to experience significant **return movements**, with over 1.7 million Syrian refugees and nearly 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) having returned since December 2024, according to official figures. However, return movements slowed during the second quarter of 2026, reflecting increasingly complex conditions shaping return decisions. While most returnees reported intending to remain in their current locations, sustainable reintegration continues to be constrained by persistent protection, legal, socioeconomic, housing, and basic service-related challenges.

This report presents **findings from 9,038 household interviews** conducted across 14 governorates and 157 sub-districts, complemented by focus group discussions with communities and partners. The analysis provides a nationwide snapshot of protection conditions affecting refugee returnees, IDP returnees, and host communities during the second quarter of 2026.

The findings highlight a **strong relationship between socioeconomic vulnerability and protection risks**. Households experiencing unemployment, housing insecurity, and limited access to basic services were more likely to report financial stress and negative coping strategies. Refugee returnees were disproportionately affected by these challenges, while women continued to face structural barriers to economic participation.

Survey findings also point to **improved perceptions of personal safety alongside persistent protection concerns**. Localized insecurity, explosive ordnance (EO) contamination, documentation gaps, and barriers to livelihoods and essential services continue to undermine protection outcomes and constrain sustainable reintegration.

Legal and documentation challenges remain a significant obstacle to reintegration. Many surveyed returnees reported lacking civil documentation and housing, land and property (HLP) documents, limiting access to education, services, livelihoods, and the exercise of legal rights. While efforts to strengthen documentation processes continue, administrative capacity constraints and limited awareness of procedures continue to affect access.

Mental health and psychosocial needs also remain substantial and are closely linked to economic hardship, displacement, and exposure to conflict or insecurity. Respondents consistently identified financial pressures as a key driver of household stress, negative coping mechanisms, social tensions, and heightened protection risks, particularly for women and children. At the same time, financial barriers, limited service availability, and information gaps also continue to restrict access to specialized protection and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services.

Achieving durable solutions will require integrated, area-based investments that combine legal assistance, livelihoods, housing, basic services, mental health and psychosocial support, and community-based protection in priority return areas.

Continued protection monitoring remains essential to track evolving trends, identify emerging risks, inform evidence-based programming, and support principled humanitarian and recovery responses.

Purpose of the Report

The report provides a protection-focused analysis of return trends, returnee profiles, alongside the risks and challenges affecting reintegration and impacting communities across Syria. It aims to inform decision-making and operational responses, while enhancing understanding of evolving protection trends and priorities.

Methodology and Scope

The findings in this report are based on 9,038 structured household interviews with refugee and IDP returnees, and host community members, including internally displaced persons, conducted by 12 partners during the second quarter of 2026.

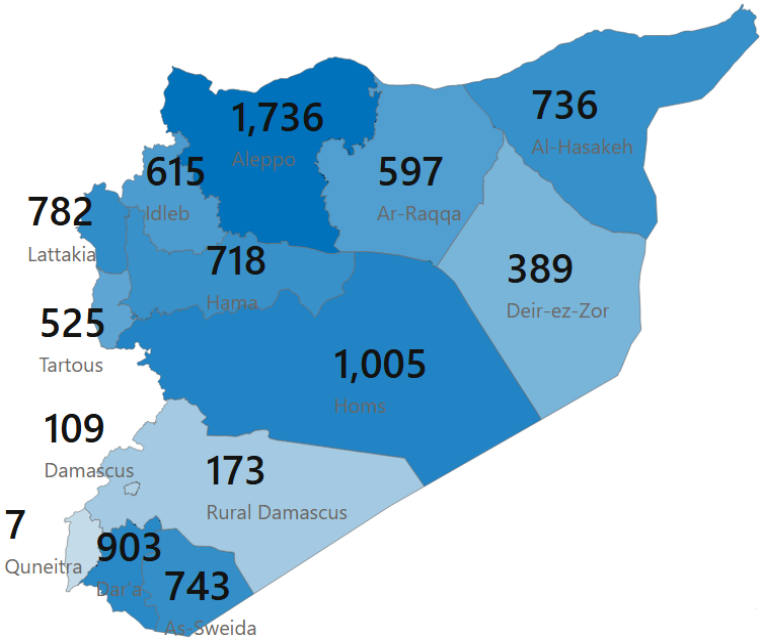
The sampling methodology applied a random selection of interviewees through UNHCR-supported Community Centres and Outreach Volunteers, following an Age, Gender, and Diversity approach.

Covering all the **14** Governorates in Syria and **157** sub-districts[1], this report findings are representative at the governorate level[2], with the exception of Quneitra. Of the households interviewed, 52% were refugee returnees, 26% IDP returnees, and 22% host community members. In addition, 54% of households were located in rural areas, while 46% were in urban areas.

To enhance understanding of the protection context nationwide, focus group discussions were also conducted with communities and partners across the country.

While the analysis provides a robust snapshot of key protection trends and priorities, limitations in coverage, representativeness, and access to informal crossing points should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Geographical distribution of interviews by governorate

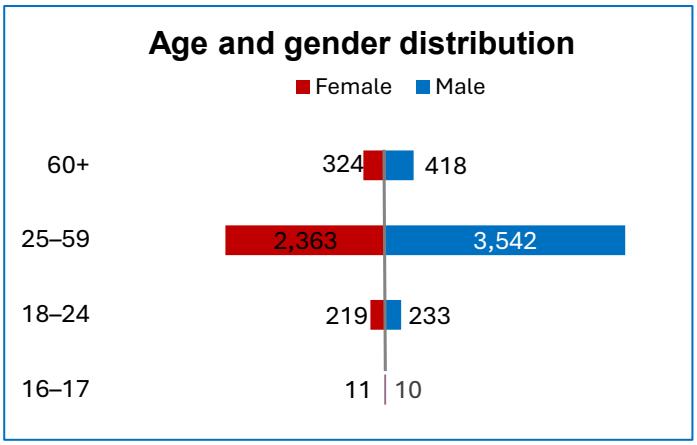


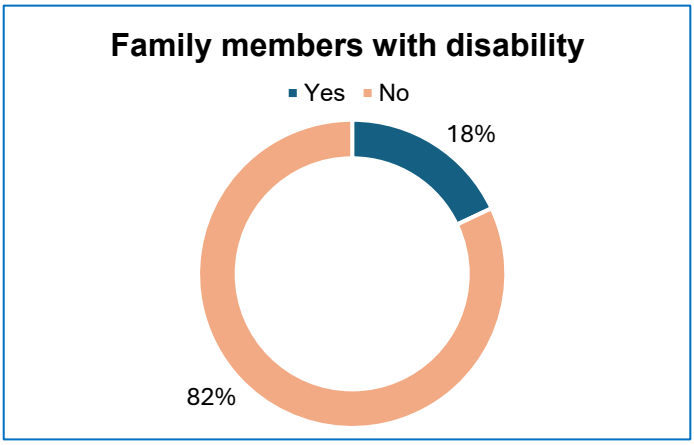
[1] There is a total of 270 sub-districts in Syria.
[2] A sample of 350 household interviews at governorate level is required to ensure representative results.

Returnee and Host Communities Profiles

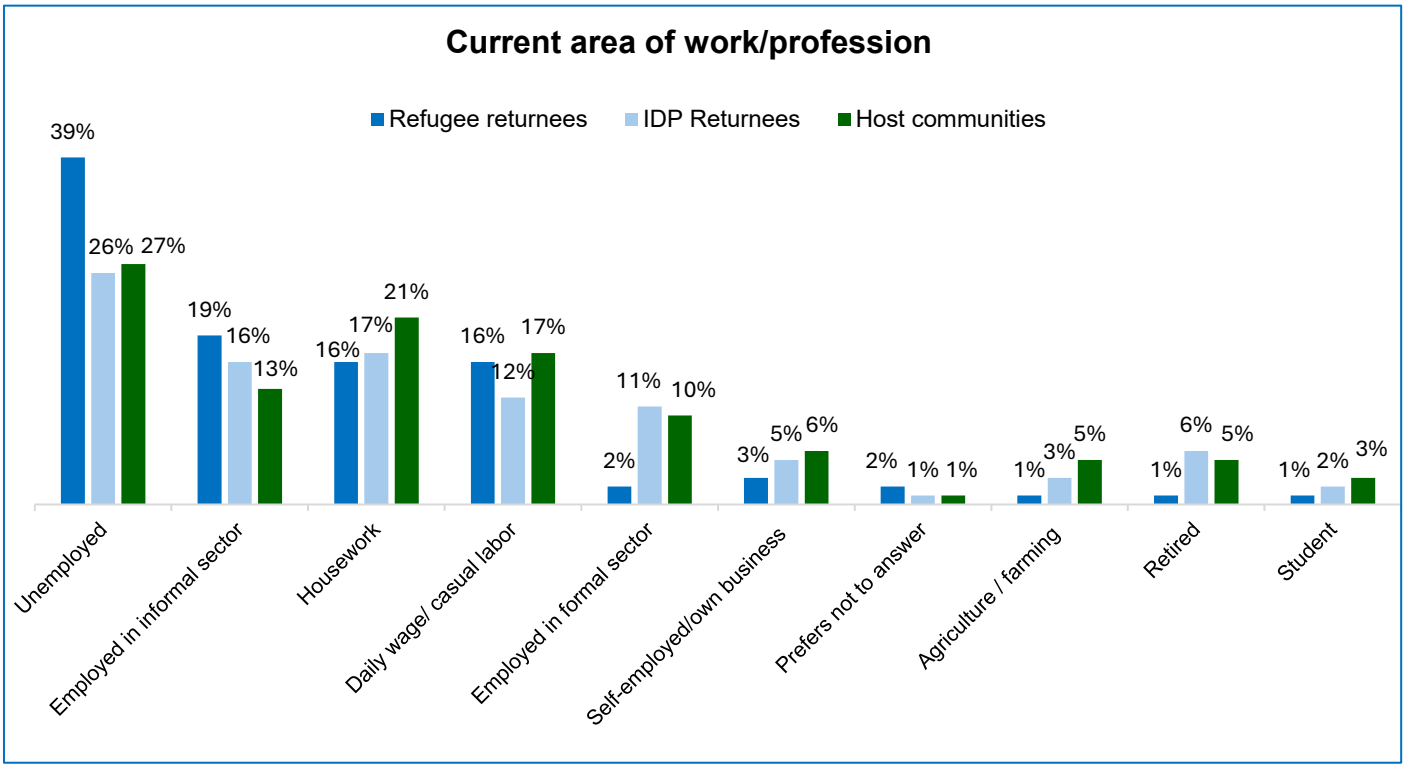
Among the **9,038** households interviewed, 52% were refugee returnees, 26% IDP returnees, and 22% host community members. Moreover, 57% of respondents were men and 43% were women, of whom 60% identified as heads of household. In terms of age distribution, 82% of respondents were between 25 and 59 years of age, 11% were aged 60 years or older, and 7% were between 18 and 24 years.

Nearly one in five respondents (18%) reported having a family member with a disability. Among these cases, physical disabilities were most commonly reported (66%), followed by sensory disabilities—including hearing or visual impairments (27%), intellectual disabilities (18%), and mental or psychosocial disabilities (6%).

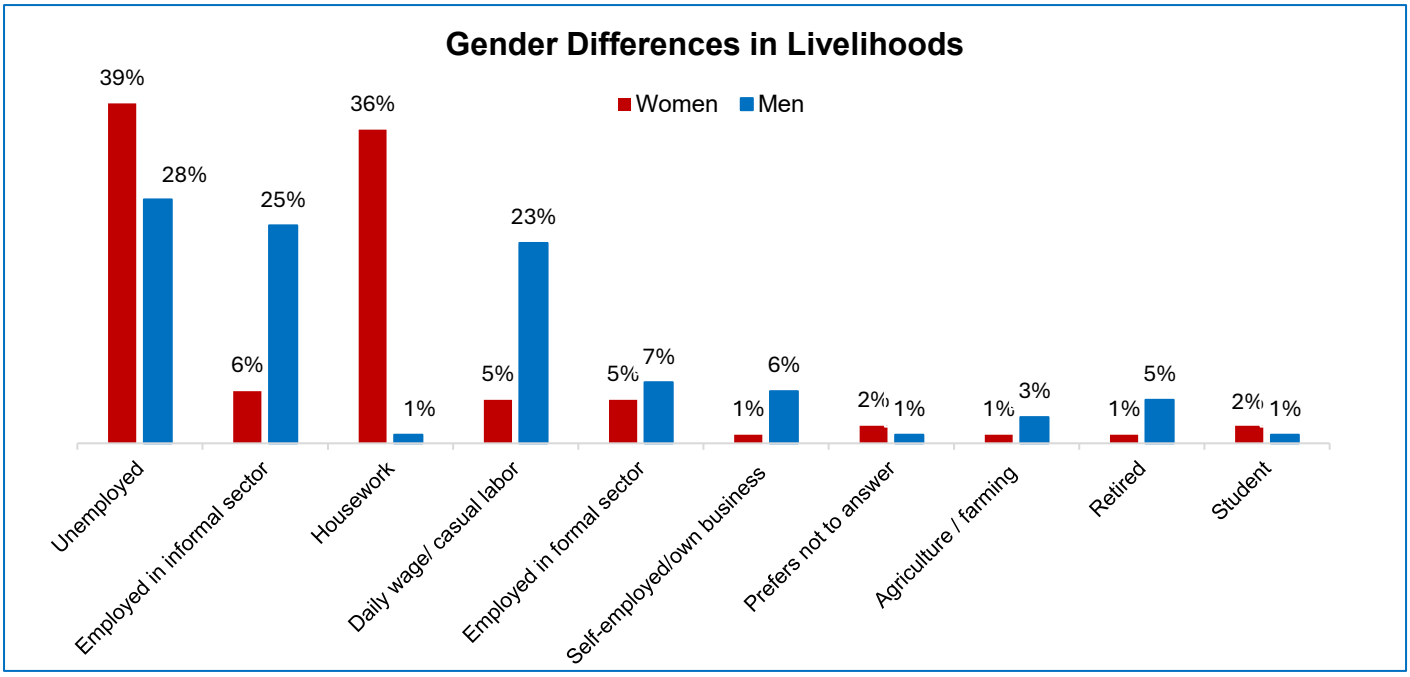




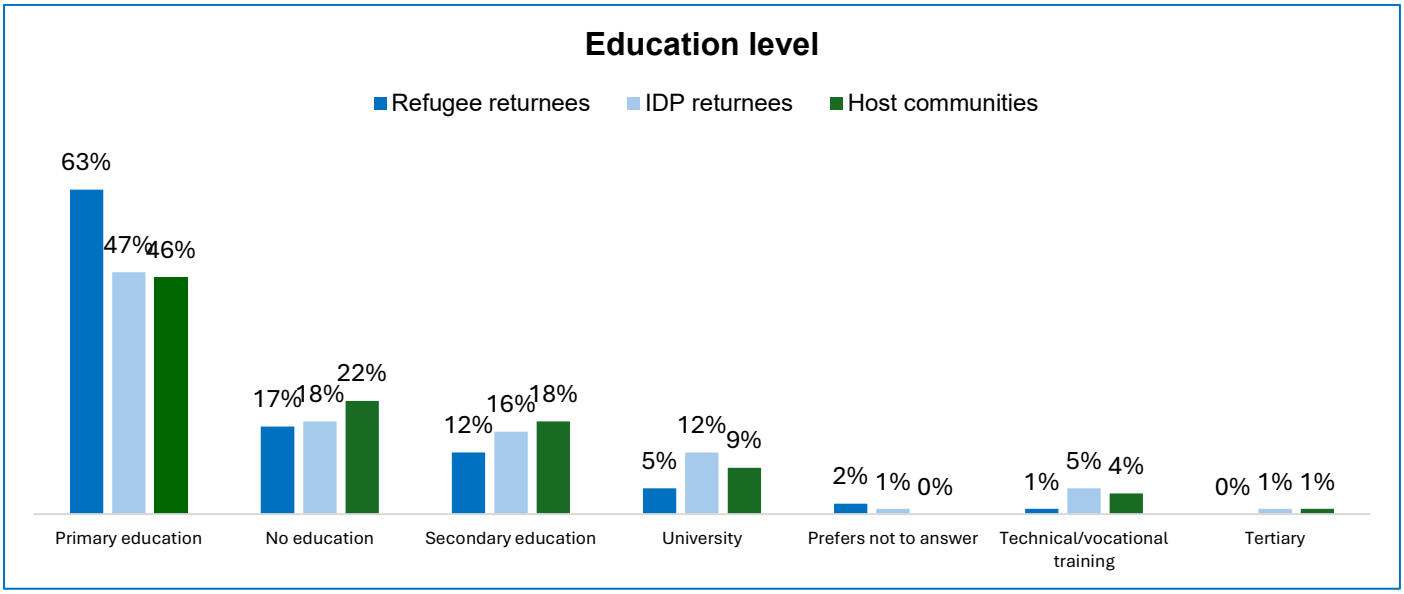
Livelihood findings remain broadly consistent with Q1, with high unemployment affecting 33% of working-age respondents. Refugee returnees are the most impacted, with 39% unemployed. Access to formal employment remains very limited (2–11%), with higher participation among IDP returnees and host communities than refugee returnees, illustrating the lack of viable pathways to stable income.



Gender disparities continue to shape economic participation, with women experiencing substantially higher unemployment (39%) than men (28%). Employment patterns also remain strongly gendered: men are predominantly engaged in informal employment (25%) and daily wage or casual labour (23%), while women are primarily engaged in unpaid domestic work (36%), with only limited participation in informal employment (6%) or casual labour (5%). These trends reflect persistent structural barriers and entrenched gender norms that continue to limit women's access to diverse, secure, and sustainable livelihood opportunities across both returnee and host community populations.

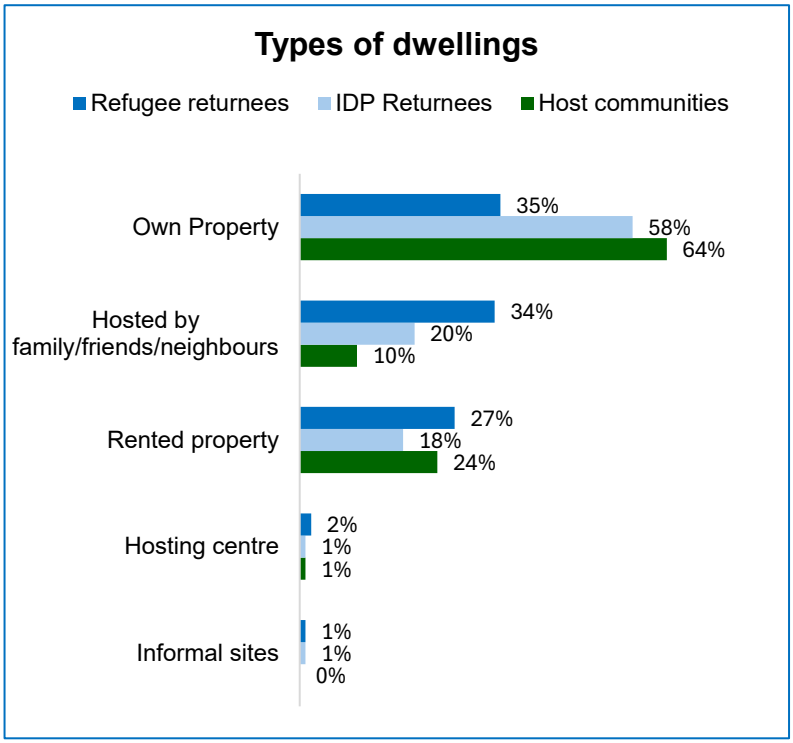


Education findings in Q2 indicate a slight decline in primary-level education attainment among IDP returnees (from 57% to 47%), while refugee returnees remained broadly stable (64% to 63%). In contrast, host community respondents showed a slight increase from 40% in Q1 to 46% in Q2. Secondary and higher education levels in Q2 were more prevalent among IDP returnees and host community members than among refugee returnees. The proportion of respondents reporting no formal education also increased slightly across all groups in Q2.



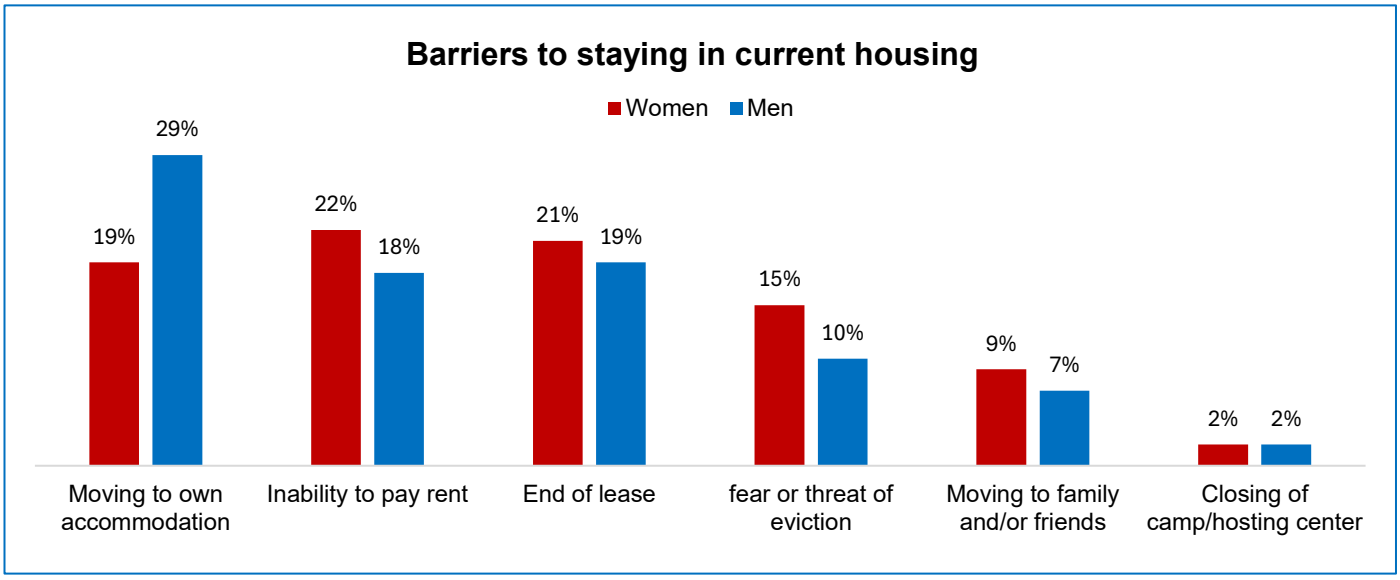
Housing conditions continue to be less stable among returnees than host communities, although property ownership among IDP returnees has improved, increasing to 58% from 49% in the first quarter. Most host community households continue to reside in their own homes (64%), while refugee returnees remain the most housing-insecure, relying more heavily on hosting arrangements with family or friends (34%). Rental accommodation also remains common among all population groups.

However, property ownership does not necessarily equate to adequate housing conditions. Many households continue to require shelter rehabilitation to meet minimum habitability standards, as well as support in obtaining HLP documentation to secure tenure and reduce the risk of future displacement.



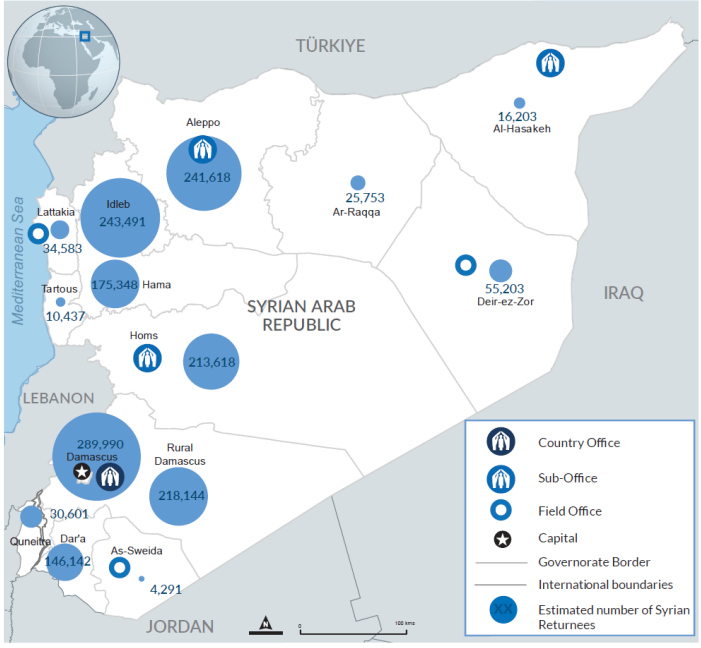
When asked about their ability to remain in their current accommodation over the next six months, 71% of respondents reported that they could stay, 4% said no or preferred not to answer, and 25% remained uncertain. Among those unable to stay, the main drivers include plans to move into their own accommodation, inability to pay rent and end of lease, followed by smaller proportions citing fear or threat of eviction, moving to family or friends, and closure of camps or hosting centres.

Gender differences in housing transitions remain pronounced. Compared with Q1, male respondents increasingly reported moving as part of a positive housing transition, with relocation to their own accommodation emerging as the primary reason for moving (29%). In contrast, female respondents continued to be more affected by housing-related constraints, particularly the inability to afford rent (22%) and the end of a lease agreement (15%).



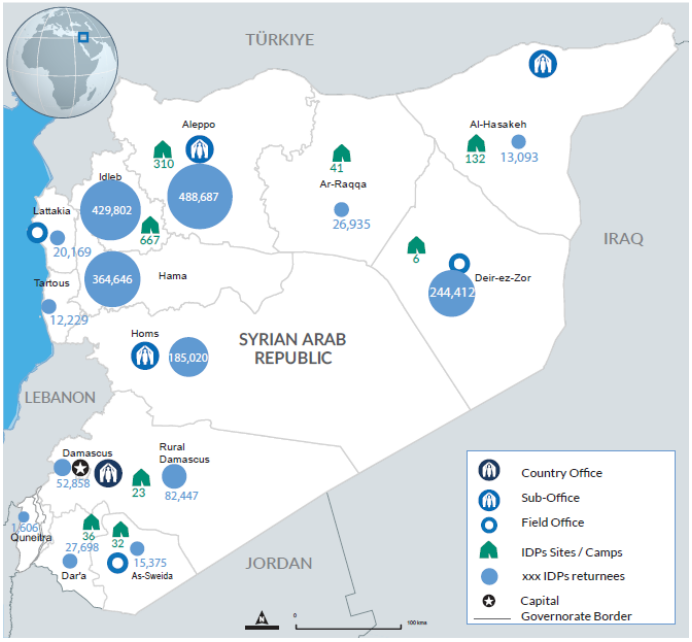
Return Trends

Based on official figures from the Syrian General Authority for Borders and Customs, over 1.7 million Syrian refugees have returned since the fall of the previous regime on 8 December 2024. This includes more than 268,000 returns during the first quarter of 2026 and approximately 131,000 during the second quarter, indicating a slowdown in the pace of returns[3]. Since December 2024, most refugee returnees have come from Lebanon (40%) and Türkiye (39%), followed by Jordan (17%), with smaller numbers returning from Iraq (2%), Egypt (2%), and other countries. Damascus, Idleb, Aleppo, Rural Damascus, and Homs continue to be the main governorates of return (see map).



Cross-border movements from Lebanon—including Syrian refugees and, to a lesser extent, Lebanese nationals with family links to Syria—returned to pre-escalation levels in May following the surge triggered by the escalation of hostilities in early March. According to the Syrian authorities, 739,183 people crossed from Lebanon into Syria between March and the reporting date, including 581,409 Syrian nationals (79%), 152,969 Lebanese nationals (21%), and 4,805 Palestine refugees from Syria (less than 1%). Among the Syrian nationals registered at the border, 134,940 (23%) indicated their intention to return permanently to Syria.

According to the OCHA-led Population Task Force, more than 5.5 million people remain internally displaced across Syria, including over 851,000 IDPs residing in displacement sites. Since December 2024, nearly 2 million IDPs have returned to their areas of origin, including almost 1.2 million who departed displacement sites. Departures from sites have continued steadily, with nearly 200,000 recorded during the second quarter of 2026. Returns have continued to originate primarily from Idleb, Rural Damascus, and Aleppo governorates, while Aleppo, Idleb, and Hama remain the main governorates of return (see map).

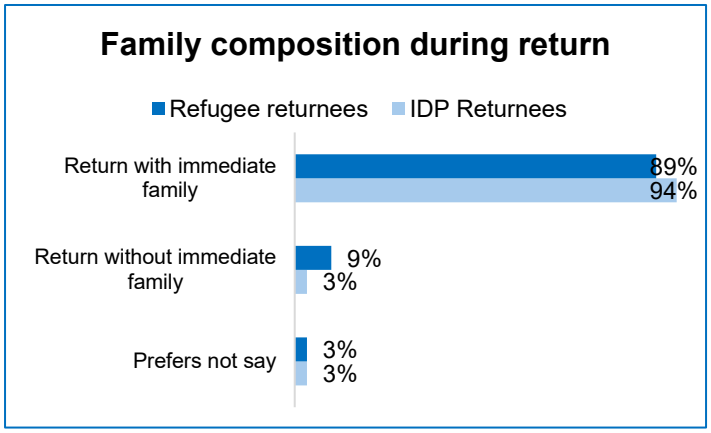


Most returnees returned to their area of origin. Among refugee returnees, 76% returned to the location where they had lived before displacement, while 21% settled elsewhere and 2% preferred not to answer. The pattern was even more pronounced among IDP returnees, with 82% returning to their pre-displacement location, compared with 14% who settled elsewhere; the remaining respondents either did not know or preferred not to answer.

[3] For more information on return trends, please visit UNHCR Data Portal

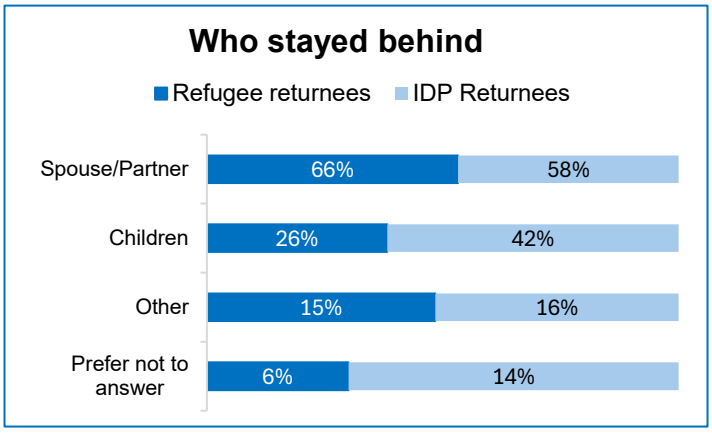
1. Returnee's Family Composition

Family composition patterns remain broadly consistent, with the vast majority of both refugee and IDP returnees returning alongside their immediate family members. However, this pattern is slightly less pronounced among refugee returnees (89%) than among IDP returnees (94%).



Among refugee returnees who did not return with their immediate families, spouses—predominantly women—and children were the family members most commonly left behind, followed by other relatives, including adult children and dependent siblings. This reflects the continued prevalence of staggered or split-household return.

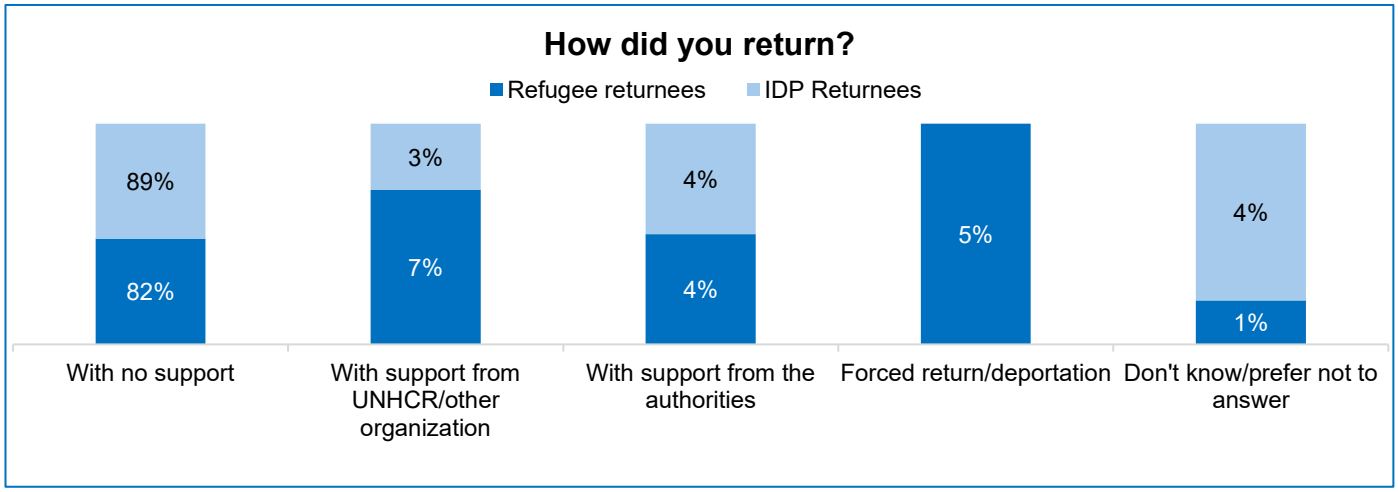
The pattern was particularly evident among returnees from Lebanon and Jordan, where 74% and 73%, respectively, reported leaving a spouse behind, while 16% and 27% left one or more children in the country of asylum.



While family-based return remains the predominant pattern across all groups, refugee returnees are more likely than IDP returnees to undertake phased household returns, reflecting the greater economic, logistical, and protection-related constraints associated with returning from abroad.

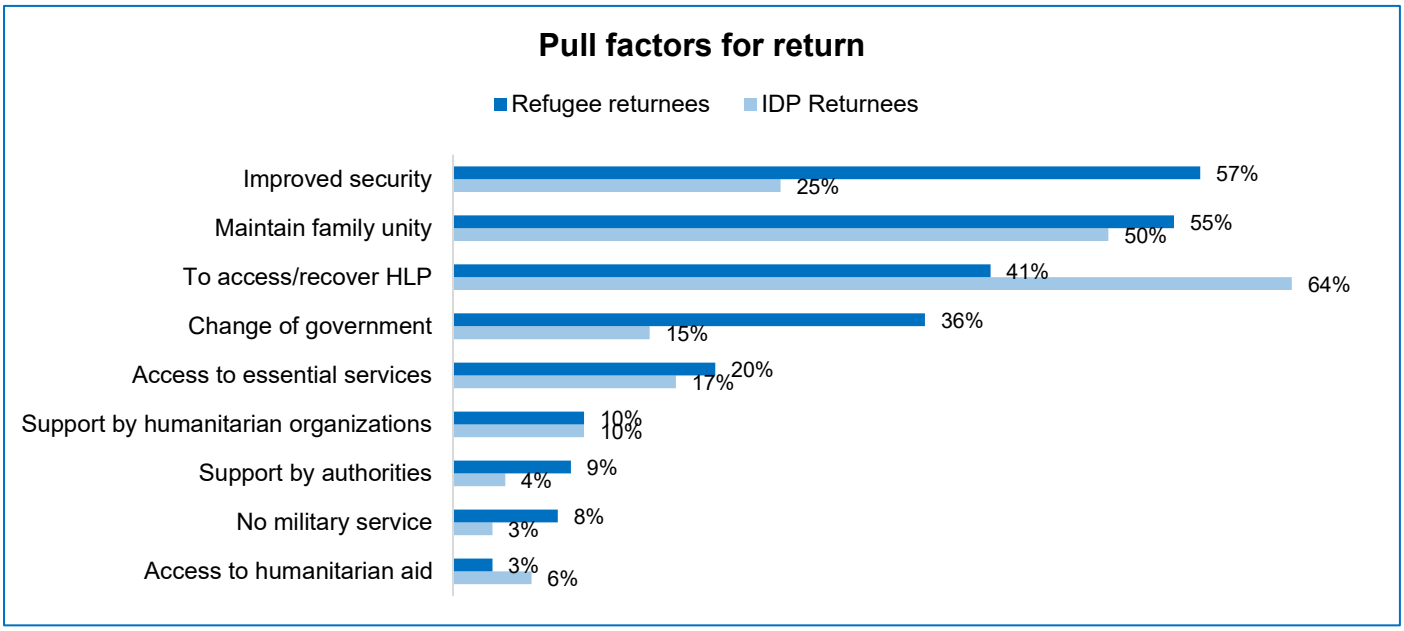
2. Modality of Return

Return modalities remain mainly spontaneous across both groups, with slightly higher levels among IDP returnees (around 89%) compared to refugees (82%, up from 77% in Q1). A small proportion of refugee returnees described their return as involuntary or linked to deportation, based on self-reported survey responses; this proportion was lower when compared with Insight Report 2026 Q1.

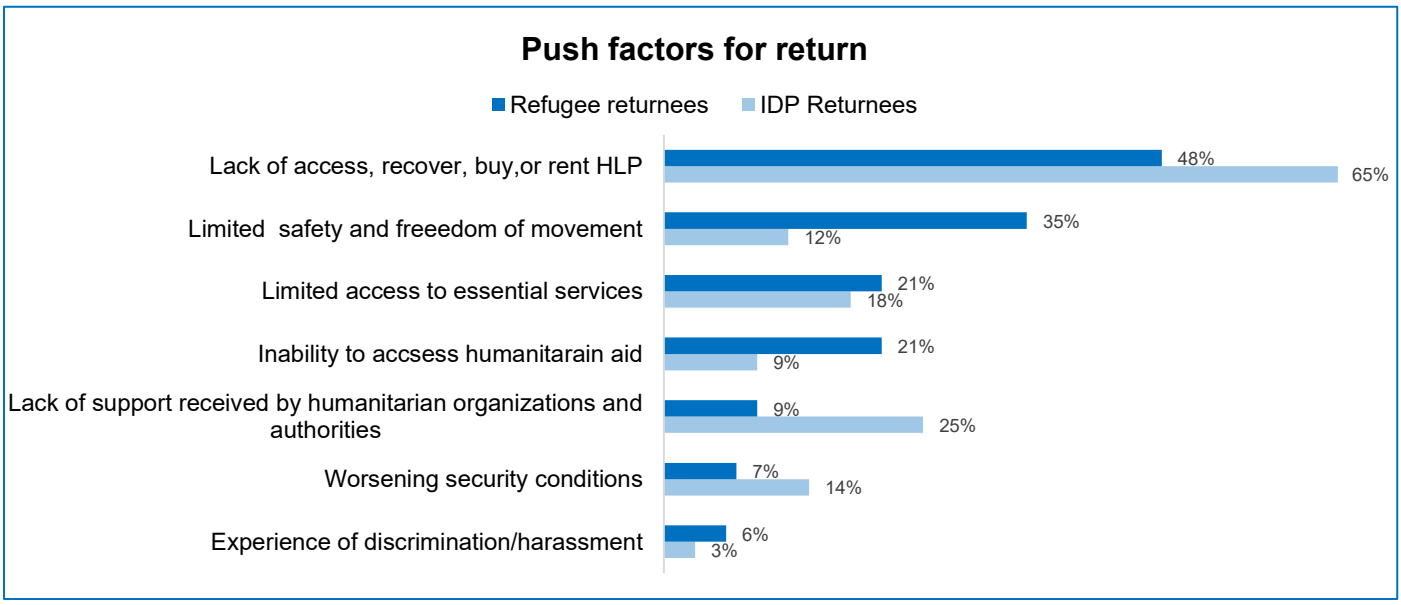


3. Factors Influencing Return

The main drivers of return remained broadly consistent in Q2, centred on improved security, family reunification, and access to or recovery of housing, land and property (HLP). However, clear differences persist between population groups. Refugee returnees were primarily motivated by improved security (57%) and family unity (55%), whereas IDP returnees were more likely to cite HLP considerations (64%) as their principal reason for return, followed by family unity (50%). Refugee returnees also more frequently reported changes in governance (36% versus 13%) and access to essential services (20% versus 17%) as influencing their decision to return.

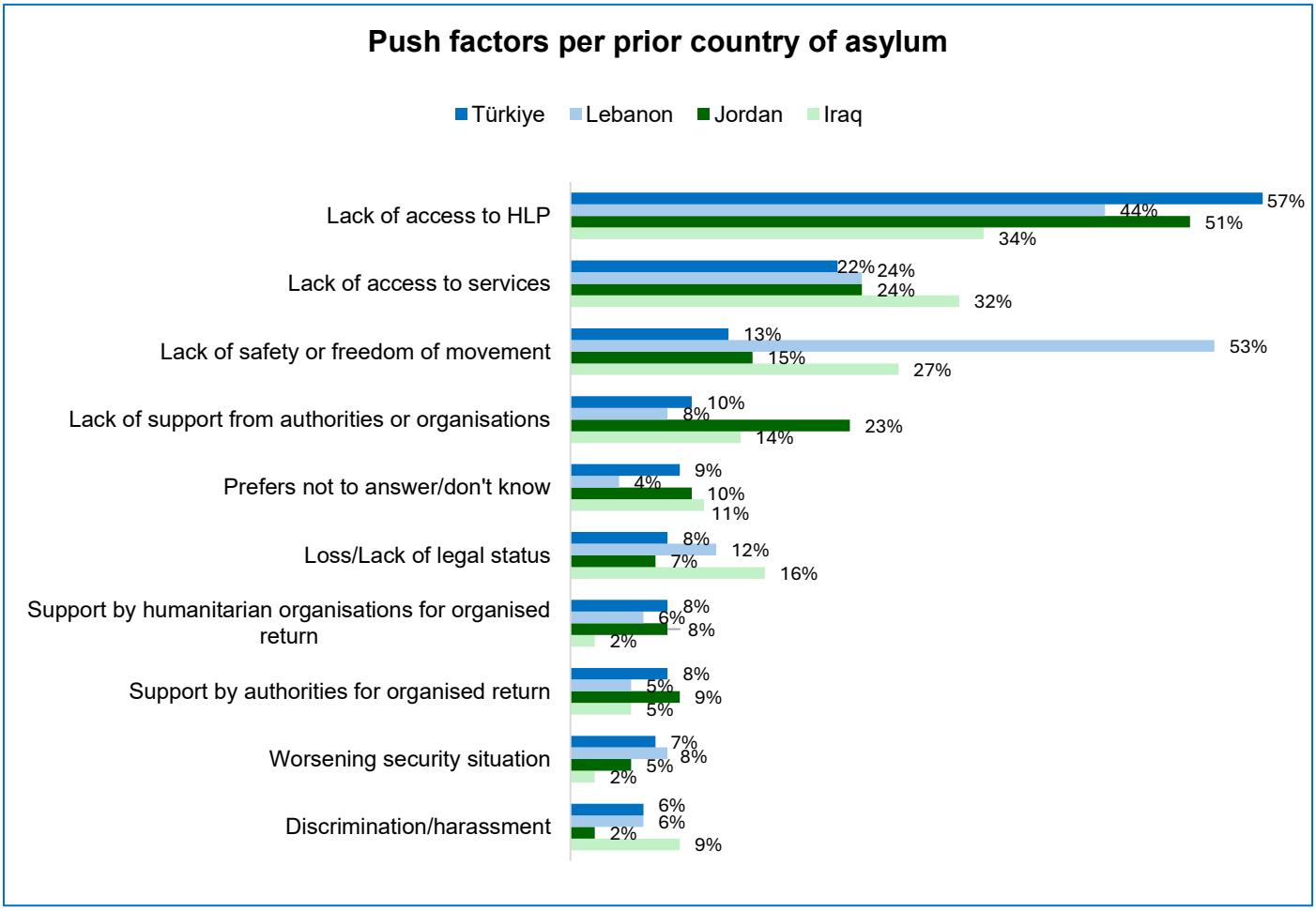


When examining push factors in areas of displacement, lack of access, recover or buy/rent HLP was reported as the main push factor for both refugee and IDP returnees. Moreover, while IDP returnees more often cited lack of support from organizations or authorities, while refugee returnees more frequently cited limited safety, freedom of movement, and access to humanitarian aid.



Analysis of responses by country of asylum also reveals distinct push factors influencing refugee returns. Returnees from **Türkiye** and **Jordan** reported similar patterns, with HLP-related constraints emerging as the primary driver of return (57% and 51%, respectively), followed by limited access to basic services. This suggests that housing/shelter challenges and deteriorating living conditions were among the main factors influencing return decisions in both countries.

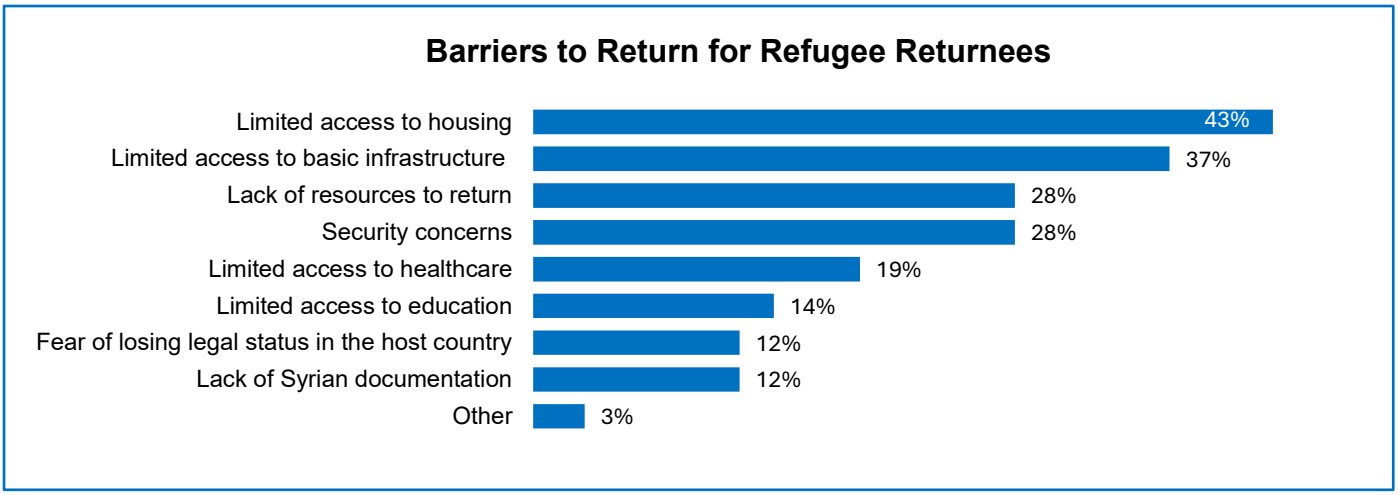
In contrast, returnees from **Lebanon** most frequently cited safety and freedom of movement concerns (53%), reflecting the deterioration of the security environment following the escalation of hostilities in March. Returnees from **Iraq** reported a more balanced range of drivers, with HLP-related constraints (34%), limited access to basic services (32%), and safety and freedom of movement concerns (27%) all contributing to return decisions. They also reported comparatively higher levels of legal and documentation-related pressures than returnees from other countries.



4. Barriers to Return

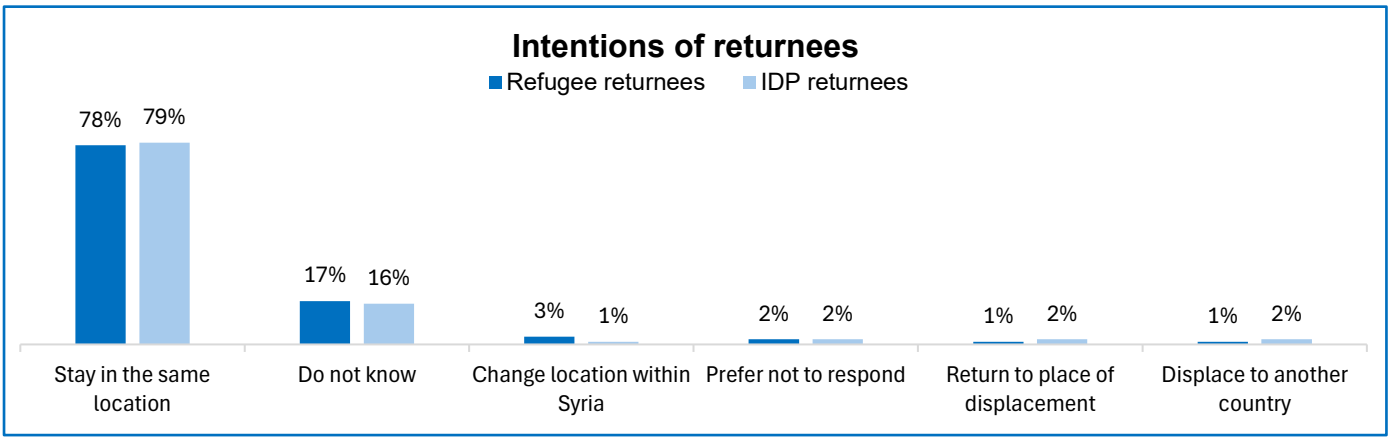
Barriers to return remain significant. When asked about the **main factors preventing Syrian refugees from returning**, respondents most frequently cited limited access to housing and basic infrastructure (including electricity and water), alongside resource constraints and ongoing security concerns.

While the majority of refugee and IDP returnees continue to report having returned to their areas of origin (76% and 82%, respectively), a smaller proportion were unable to do so. Among those unable to return, the main barriers were broadly consistent across both groups and included damage or destruction of property, limited employment and livelihood opportunities, prevailing security concerns, and insufficient access to essential services.



5. Returnees' Intentions

When asked about their prospects over the next six months, 78% of refugee returnees and 79% of IDP returnees reported plans to remain in their current location, reflecting a slight decline compared to Q1 (82% for both groups). In contrast, 17% of refugee returnees and 16% of IDP returnees were uncertain, while smaller proportions indicating intentions to change location in Syria, return to their previous place of displacement, or displace to another country. Findings continue to indicate a strong intention to remain, with uncertainty and potential mobility gradually emerging among a segment of returnees.

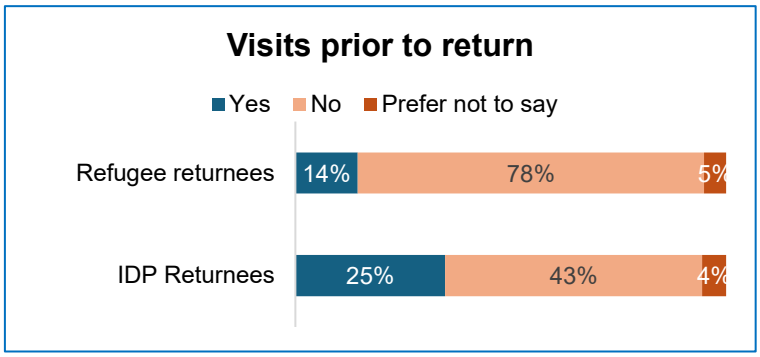


Among refugee returnees, intentions to remain were strongest among those returning from Türkiye (84%) and Jordan (80%), compared with Lebanon (75%) and Iraq (63%), while uncertainty was highest among returnees from Iraq (26%) and Lebanon (22%). Findings continue to indicate a strong intention to remain, although uncertainty and, to a lesser extent, intentions to relocate within Syria are gradually emerging among a segment of returnees.

6. Access to Information Prior to Return

Most returnee households reported having enough information to inform their decision to return, with reported higher levels among IDP returnees (83%) than refugee returnees (75%). As in Insight Report 2026 Q1, information was obtained primarily through family and community networks, social media, and prior visits. Among households reporting information gaps, the main unmet needs related to security conditions, livelihood opportunities, and the availability of essential services.

However, pre-return visits were less common, particularly among refugee returnees, meaning that decisions were often informed through family and community networks, social media, or other indirect sources.



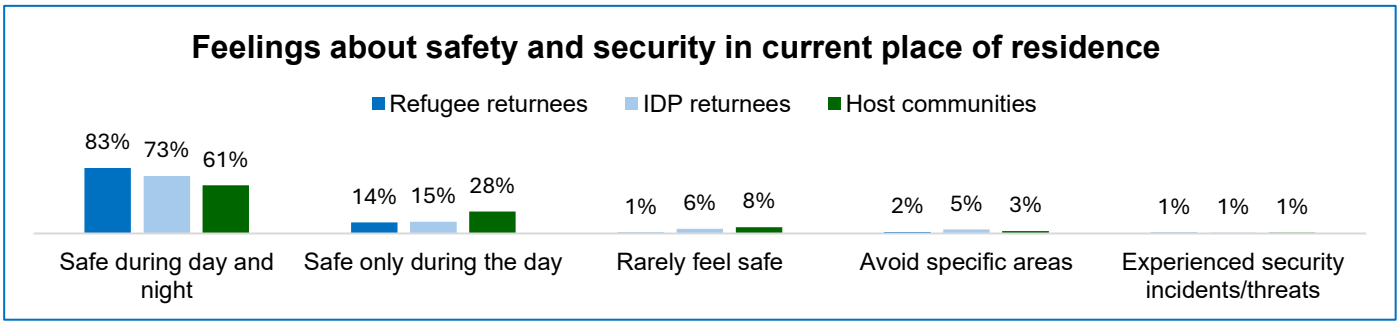
Most refugee returnees (78%) did not visit Syria before returning, whereas 43% of IDP returnees had undertaken a pre-return visit. Compared with Q1, however, pre-return visits declined markedly—from 85% to 25% among IDPs and from 22% to 14% among refugee returnees—although they remained highly influential: 88% of refugee and 95% of IDP returnees who visited Syria reported that the visit informed their decision to return permanently.

Protection Risk Analysis

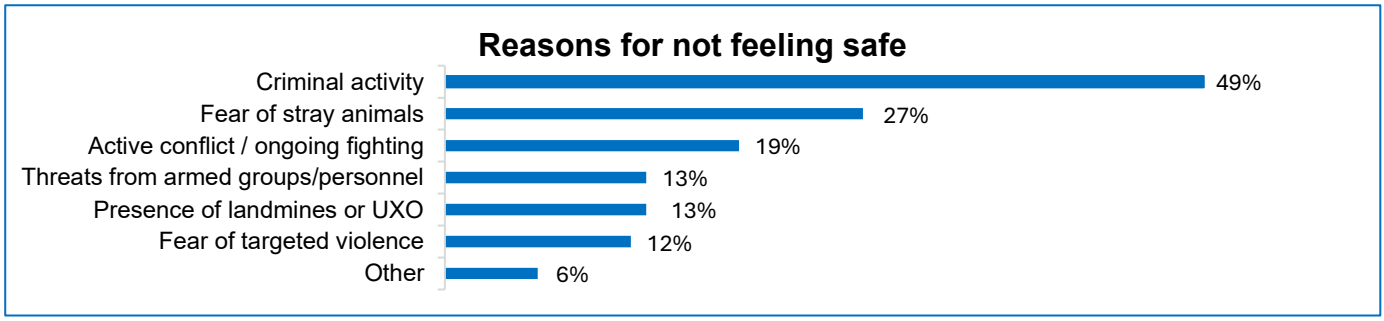
1. Safety and Security Considerations

1.1 Safety and Security Concerns

Perceptions of safety improved compared with Insight Report 2026 Q1, although localized security concerns continued to affect daily life in specific areas, including criminality, conflict-related risks, explosive ordnance contamination, and restrictions on freedom of movement. Overall, 83% of refugee returnees, 73% of IDP returnees, and 61% of host community members reported feeling safe during both the day and night, compared with 77%, 69%, and 51%, respectively, in Q1.



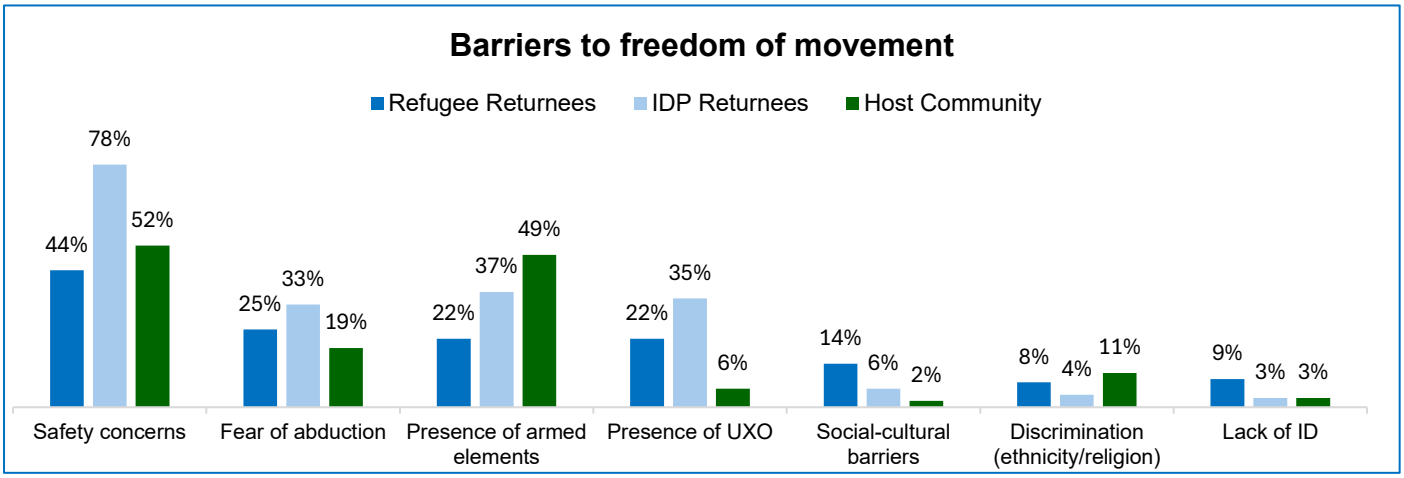
Among the 6% of total respondents who did not feel safe, criminal activity was the most commonly cited concern (49%), followed by fear of stray animals (27%), active conflict (19%), threats from armed groups (13%), and the presence of landmines or unexploded ordnance (13%). Survey findings indicate that criminality was more frequently reported in Damascus and Tartous, while conflict-related insecurity was reported more often in As-Sweida.



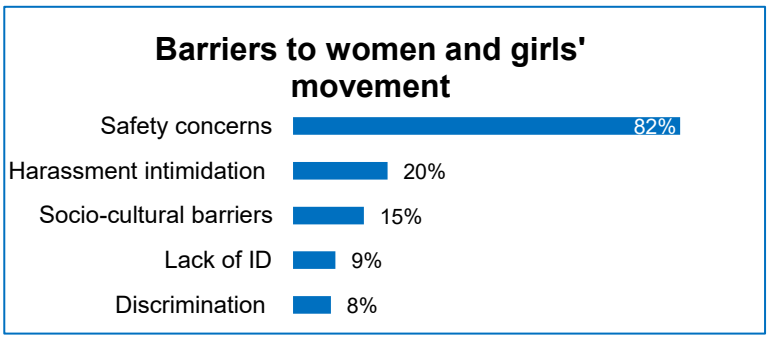
1.2 Freedom of movement

Most respondents reported being able to move freely within their area of residence, including 97% of refugee returnees and 89% of IDP returnees, compared with 83% of host community members. Restrictions on freedom of movement were reported by 3% of refugee returnees, 11% of IDP returnees, and 17% of host community members, broadly consistent with Q1.

Among respondents reporting movement restrictions, safety and security concerns were the main constraint, followed by the presence of armed elements, fear of abduction, and UXO contamination. IDP returnees reported comparatively higher levels of security-related concerns, particularly regarding safety, UXO contamination, and fear of abduction. In contrast, host community members more frequently cited the presence of armed elements and discrimination, while refugee returnees reported relatively fewer security-related concerns but comparatively greater social and documentation-related barriers.



When asked about factors limiting women's and girls' freedom of movement, safety concerns remained the primary (82%), followed by harassment and intimidation (20%). Compared to Q1, safety concerns have declined (91% to 82%), while other barriers have increased, including harassment and intimidation (16% to 20%), socio-cultural norms (7% to 15%), lack of civil documentation (5% to 9%), and discrimination (7% to 8%).



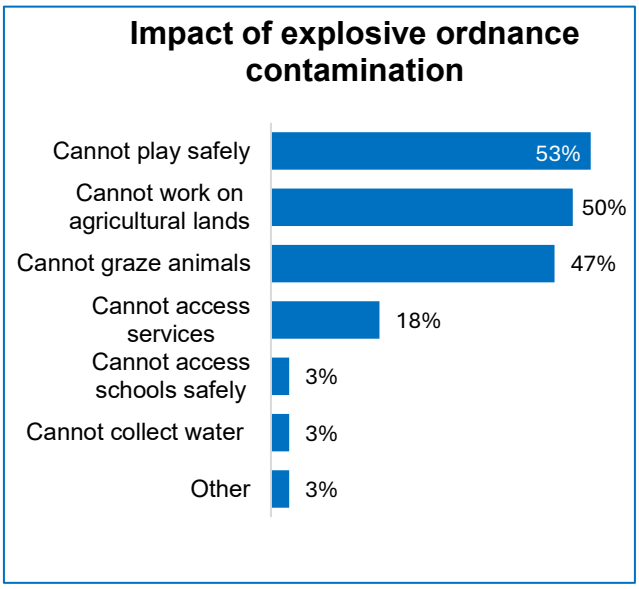
1.3 Explosive Ordnance Contamination

Explosive ordnance (EO) contamination continued to threaten civilian safety across Syria, with incidents reported almost daily. As returns to unclear areas increase, returnees face heightened exposure to EO-related risks.

According to the Mine Action Area of Responsibility, 150 EO incidents affected 204 people during Q2 2026, resulting in 62 fatalities and 142 injuries—a 37% reduction in incidents and a 55% decline in people affected compared with Q1 (239 incidents and 452 people affected). Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo, and Idleb continued to record the highest numbers of fatalities, while most incidents occurred on agricultural and grazing land, highlighting the persistent risks to civilians pursuing livelihoods.

The report findings further illustrate the impact of EO contamination. While 64% of respondents reported no EO contamination in their area, 9% confirmed its presence and 27% were unsure, indicating continued uncertainty about local contamination. Among affected households, the main impacts included restrictions on children's safe play, inability to cultivate agricultural land, limitations on livestock grazing, and reduced access to services.

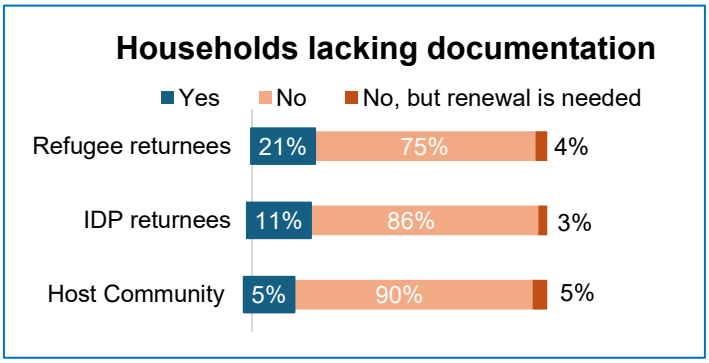
Most respondents reported that contaminated areas were marked (77%) and knew how to report EO contamination (78%). However, around one quarter reported unmarked hazardous areas (23%) or were unaware of reporting mechanisms (22%), underscoring the need to expand explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and strengthen community awareness.

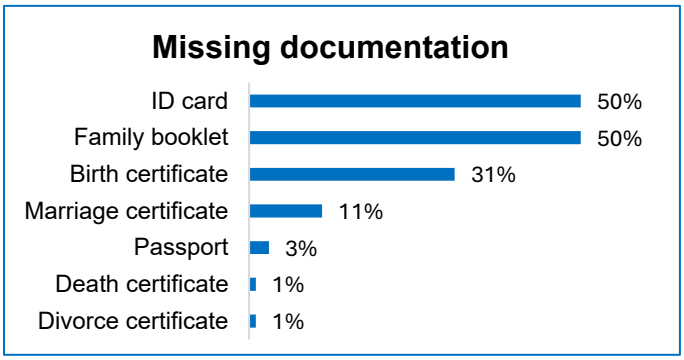


2. Legal Barriers

2.1 Legal Barriers Lack of civil documentation

Access to civil documentation remains a key element shaping return and reintegration prospects. Findings show a slight increase in documentation gaps among refugee returnee households with a member lacking documentation (from 19% to 21%), while rates remained stable among IDP returnees (11%) and host communities (5%). Across all groups, ID cards, family booklets, and birth certificates continue to be the most commonly missing documents.

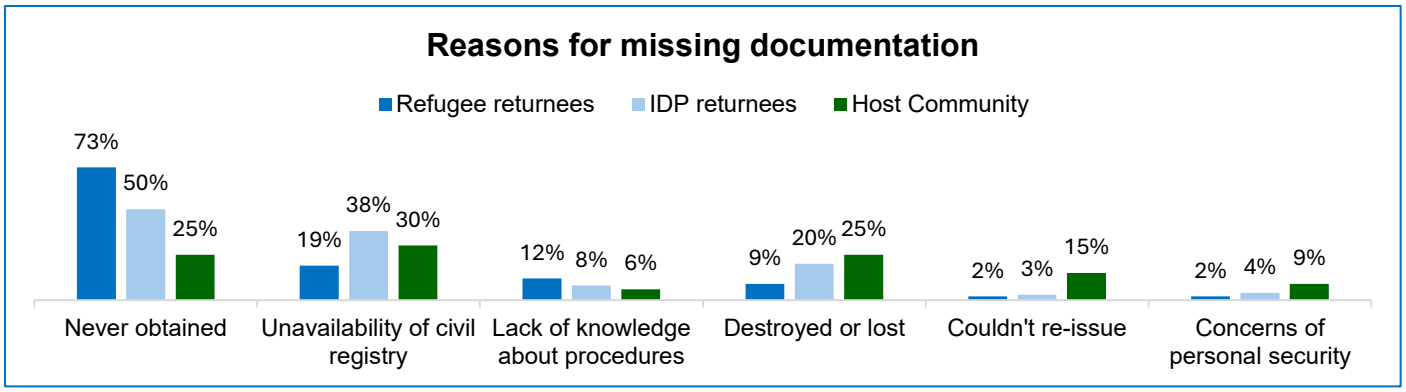




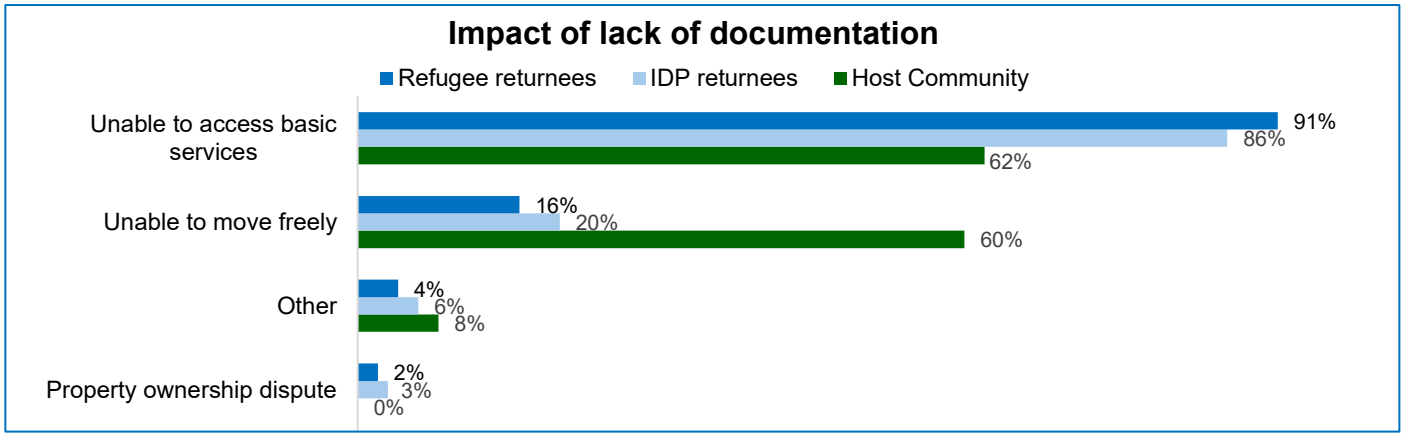
Among affected households, 73% of refugee returnees and half of IDP returnees reported that the required documents had never been obtained, mainly due to the absence of functioning civil registries, loss or destruction of documents, and limited awareness of

registration procedures.

These challenges are compounded by limited civil registry capacity, particularly in Ar-Raqqa, Hassakeh, and parts of Deir ez-Zor, where limited operational capacity and documentation backlogs continue to affect timely access to civil registration services. According to information provided by Civil Affairs authorities, around 80 civil registries are currently operational nationwide.



While legal assistance and advocacy efforts remain ongoing, barriers such as high consular fees for refugee returnees and limited knowledge of procedures continue to restrict access, particularly for vulnerable households. Among affected households, the main reported consequence was reduced access to basic services, particularly for refugee returnees (91%) and IDP returnees (86%), while host community members more frequently reported restrictions on freedom of movement (60%).

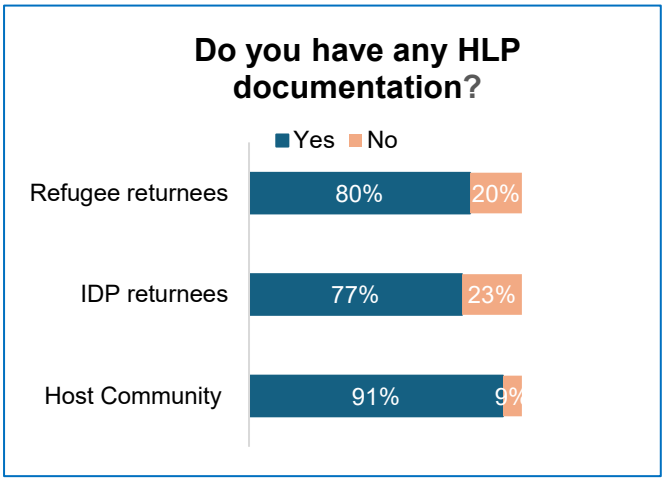


These findings underscore the need for sustained investment in civil registration systems and legal aid to address persistent documentation barriers.

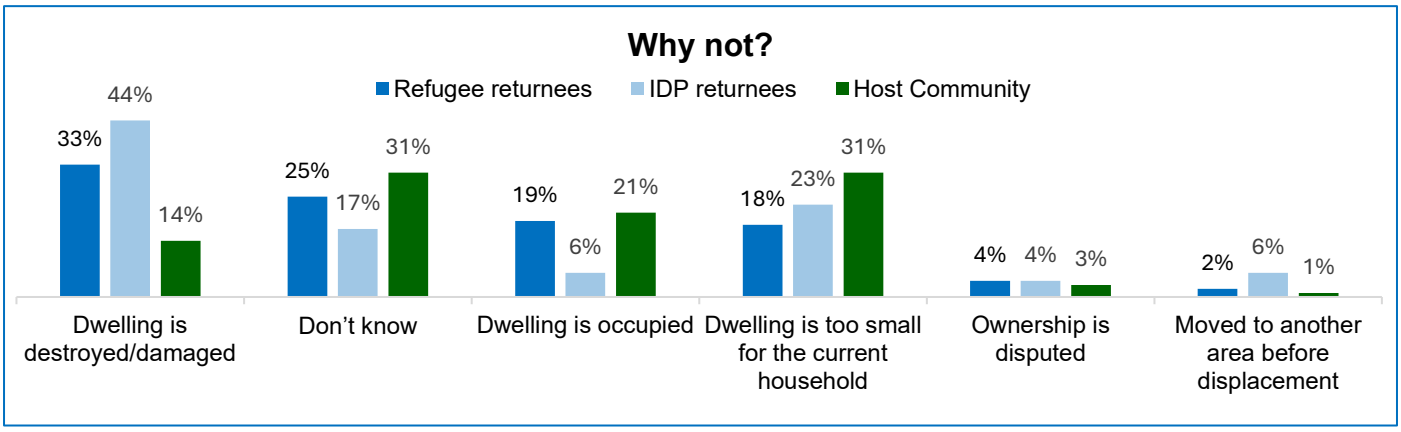
2.2 Housing, Land and Property Concerns

HLP documentation gaps remain broadly consistent across population groups. Around one quarter of both refugee and IDP returnees reported lacking such documentation, compared to lower levels among host community households (9%).

While most respondents reported holding some form of documentation proving ownership or tenure of housing, land, and property, this does not necessarily imply the existence of formally registered documentation in the cadastral system. Nevertheless, such documentation may still support claims, facilitate dispute resolution, and contribute to future formalization processes.



Among those without documentation, the underlying reasons remain largely unchanged from Q1, with destroyed or damaged dwellings most frequently cited, followed by dwelling size issues, occupation of the property, disputed ownership, and having moved prior to displacement.

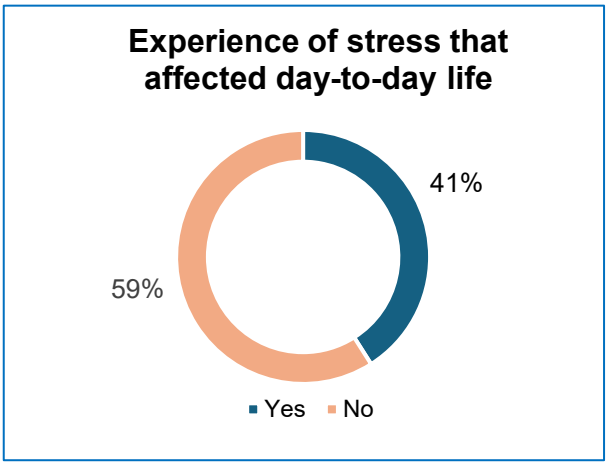


When asked about additional HLP-related challenges, 90% of respondents reported none, while 10% indicated experiencing further issues. Among those reporting HLP concerns, housing damage or destruction was the most frequently cited problem, disproportionately affecting returnees—73% of refugee returnees and 67% of IDP returnees—compared to 22% of host community households. In contrast, host community members were significantly more affected by inheritance-related issues, with around half reporting this as a key concern.

Persistent HLP-related challenges point to the need for continued support to scale up shelter rehabilitation and legal assistance for the restoration of documentation, alongside reinforcing community-based dispute resolution to address issues at the local level and reduce reliance on formal courts.

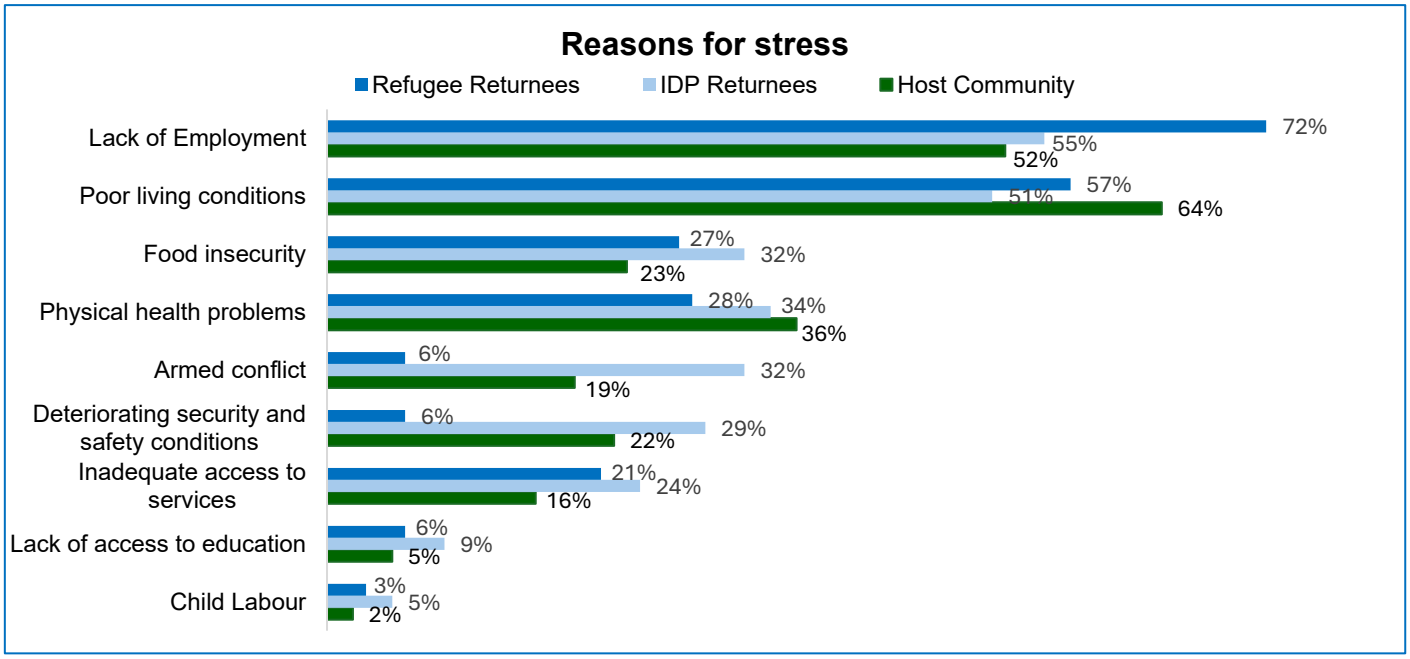
3. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial needs remained widespread across Syria in 2026, with 41% of respondents reporting stress-related symptoms, a 6% decline compared with Insight Report 2026 Q1. Needs were reported as particularly acute among some newly arrived returnees from Lebanon, reflecting repeated displacement, difficult living conditions, and exposure to conflict-related stressors.



Nearly 21% of respondents reported negative behavioural or emotional changes among household members over the previous three months, a 6% decrease compared with Q1. The most common changes included stress or sadness, disordered eating, and aggressive behaviour, and, in a small number of cases, self-harm.

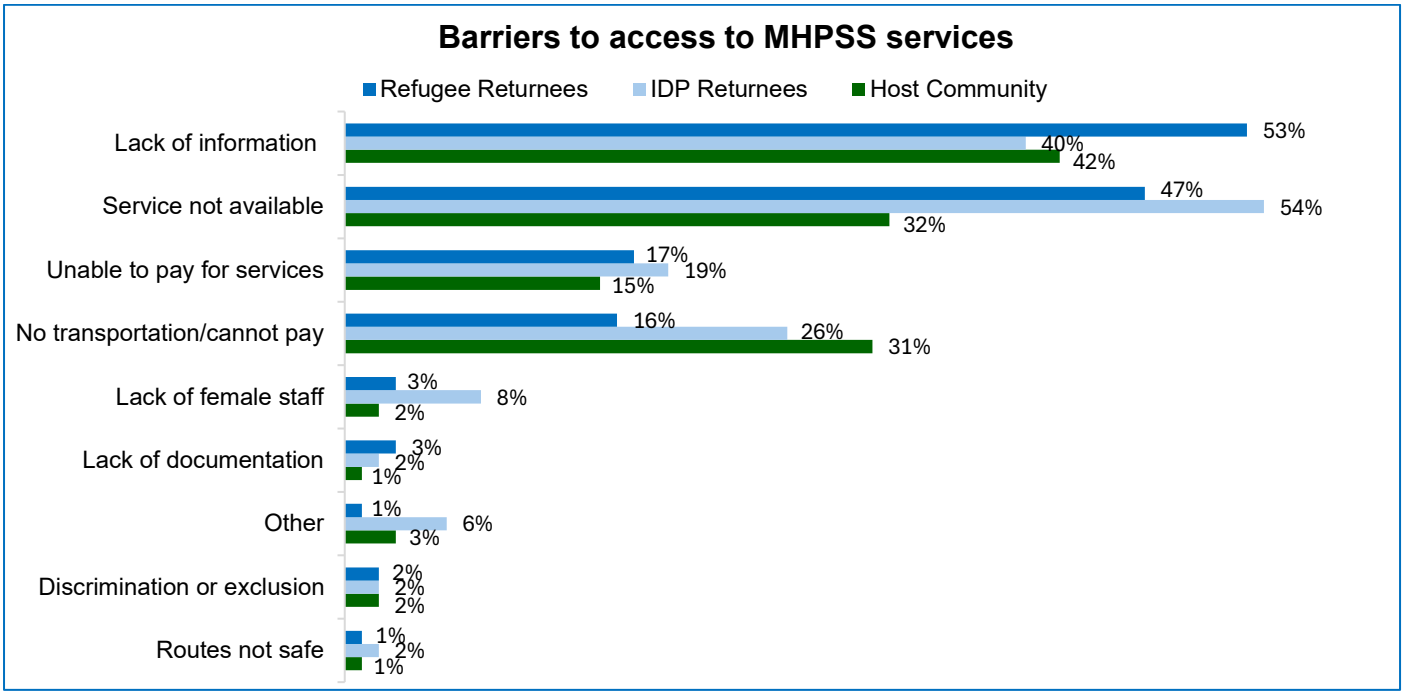
Economic hardship continued to be the primary driver of psychosocial distress across all population groups. Lack of employment was the most frequently cited stressor, particularly among refugee returnees (72%), while poor living conditions were more prominent among host communities (64%). IDP returnees and host communities also more frequently reported stress related to physical health, insecurity, armed conflict, and limited access to services.



Despite these needs, 32% of respondents reported being unable to access psychosocial support. Access barriers were most pronounced among women (70%) and girls (45%), followed by men and boys (around one-third), older persons (16%), and persons with disabilities (8%).

The main barriers to accessing MHPSS were limited awareness of available services and insufficient service availability, remaining consistent with Q1 findings. Lack of awareness was most pronounced among refugee returnees (53%), while service shortages were reported most frequently by IDP returnees (54%). Affordability and transport-related constraints also remained significant, particularly among IDP returnees and host

communities, with 15–31% of respondents reporting financial or mobility barriers to accessing services. Documentation requirements (1–3%) and the absence of female staff (3–8%) were reported less frequently but remain relevant considerations for gender-sensitive service delivery.



The findings underscore the need to expand access to MHPSS by addressing financial, informational, and service availability barriers, while strengthening the availability of specialised mental health care and integrated services to meet growing needs.

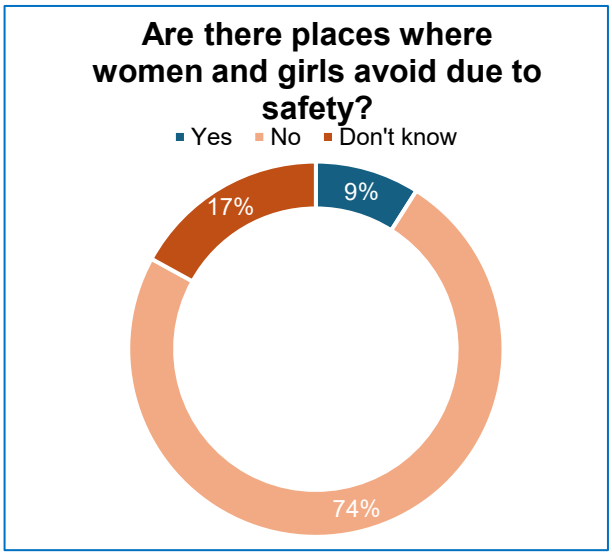
4. Gender-Related Protection Risk

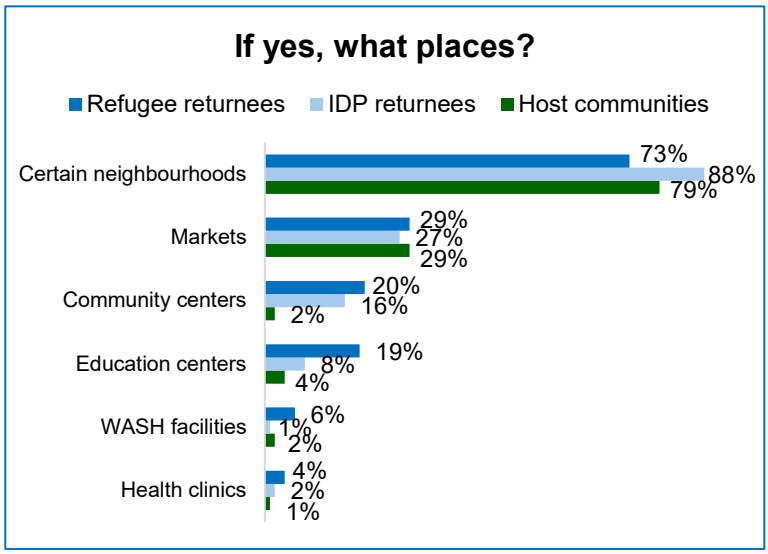
Community engagement findings continue to reflect longstanding GBV patterns across Syria. Reported concerns primarily affected women and girls and most commonly involved intimate partners or other family members. Emotional abuse and denial of access to resources remained the most frequently reported forms of violence. Economic hardship, poverty, and overcrowded living conditions continued to exacerbate household stress, reduce privacy, and increase GBV risks. In some areas, refugee returnee women also faced heightened risks linked to stigma and negative community perceptions.

Nonetheless, inconsistent access to comprehensive GBV services—particularly livelihood support and other reintegration opportunities—continues to undermine survivors' recovery, increase dependency, and heighten the risk of further harm.

Female-headed households remain common, with women comprising 43% of respondents and 60% of female respondents identifying as heads of household. Female-headed households may face heightened economic and protection-related challenges, according to protection monitoring findings.

Most respondents (74%) did not identify locations within their communities that were unsafe for women and girls. Among the 9% who did, specific neighbourhoods were by far the most frequently cited locations across all population groups (73–88%), followed by markets and, to a lesser extent, community and educational spaces.

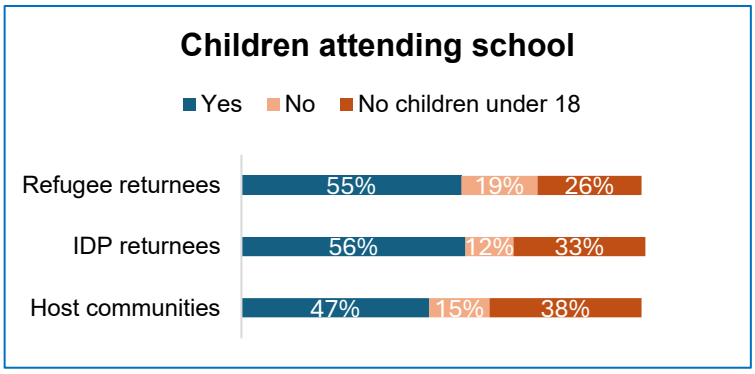




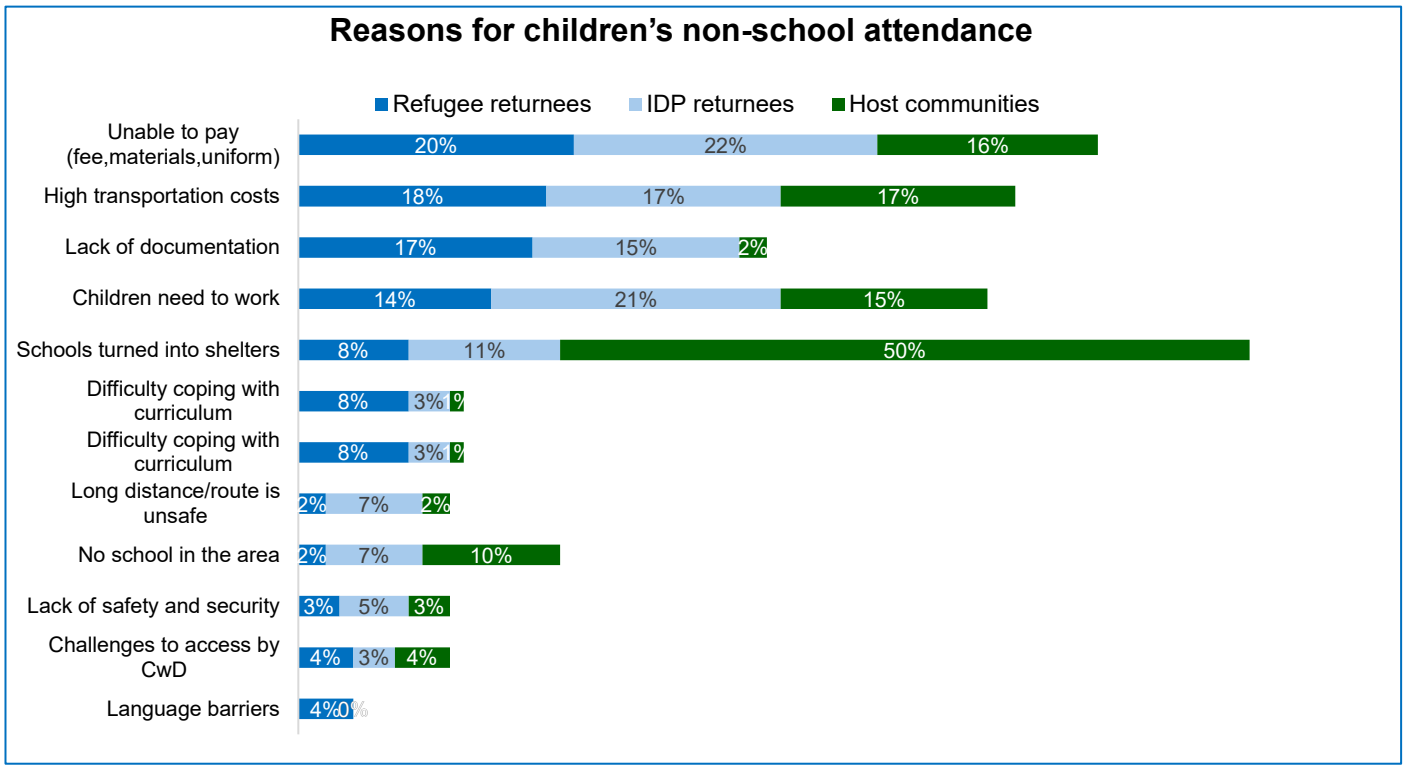
5. Children-at-Risk

Community engagement findings continue to highlight persistent child protection concerns across Syria. Economic hardship, including inflation, unemployment, and limited access to assistance, is driving increased reliance on negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and child marriage. At the same time, children continue to experience psychosocial distress linked to conflict, disrupted support networks, and the challenges of return and reintegration.

School attendance remains uneven across population groups. In Q2, households reporting that not all children attended school included 19% of refugee returnees, 12% of IDP returnees, and 15% of host community members. Compared with Q1, non-attendance increased among refugee returnees (14% to 19%) and IDP returnees (9% to 12%), while declining among host communities (19% to 15%).



The barriers to education vary by population group but are predominantly economic. Refugee and IDP returnees most frequently cited school-related costs (20% and 22%), transportation costs (18% and 17%), and child labour (14% and 21%). Host communities were more affected by schools being used as collective shelters (50%) and the absence of nearby schools (10%). Lack of civil documentation also remained a significant barrier for refugees (17%) and IDP returnees (15%), compared with host communities (2%). Curriculum differences, language barriers, and administrative requirements further impede access to education, increasing the risk of exclusion, learning loss, and school dropout.



In Sweida, access to education continues to be disrupted by the limited availability of national examination centres in areas administered by the local authorities, marking the second consecutive year of restricted access[4][5]. As national examinations are required to progress to secondary and tertiary education, Respondents and community consultations indicate that these challenges may disrupt educational progression and increase the risk of interrupted schooling among affected students. While some students have been able to sit examinations in Rural Damascus, most have been unable to do so due to insecurity, movement constraints, and financial hardship, increasing the risk of interrupted education and school dropout.

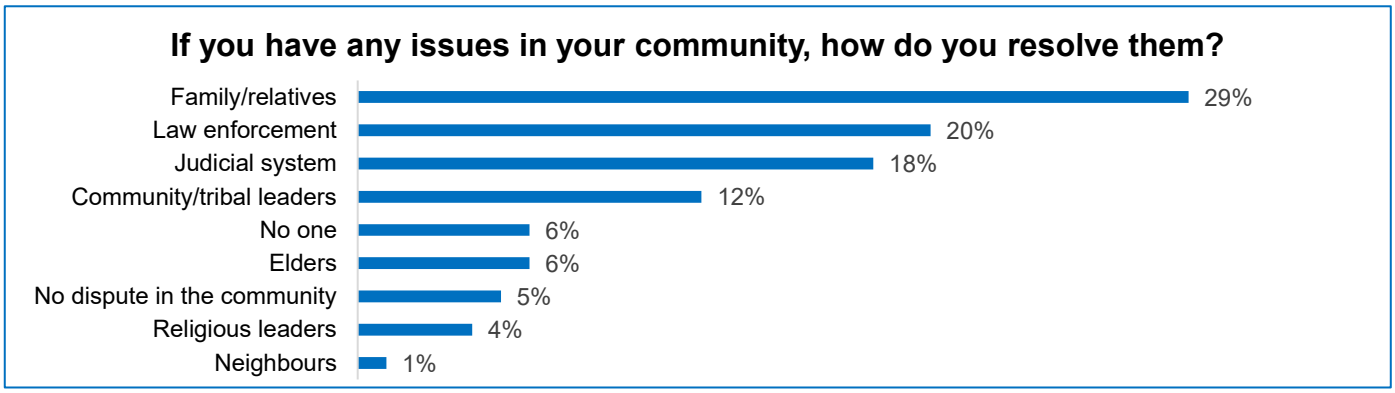
Addressing these challenges will require continued integrated child protection interventions that combine psychosocial support, livelihood assistance for caregivers, inclusive education, language support, and community-based protection to reduce protection risks and support children's successful reintegration.

6. Risks to Social Cohesion

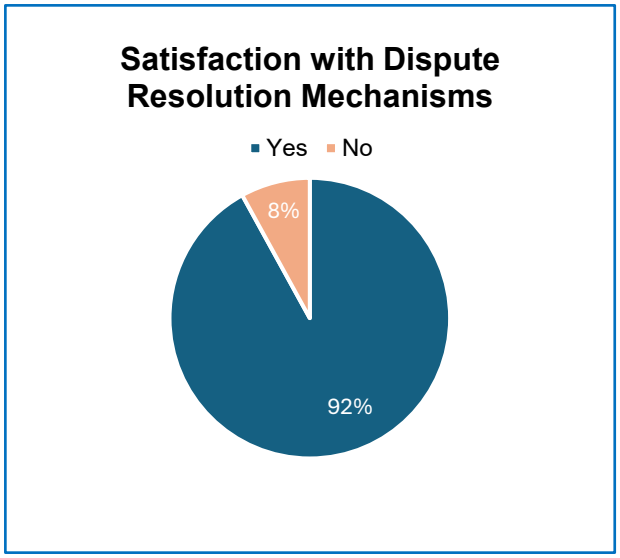
Community engagement findings suggest increasing social cohesion pressures in some areas experiencing high levels of return. Respondents most frequently associated these pressures with limited livelihood opportunities, competition for services, and constrained access to assistance. In some areas, particularly Damascus, Homs and Hama, community consultations highlighted reintegration challenges between host communities and some recent returnees, including differing social norms and expectations.

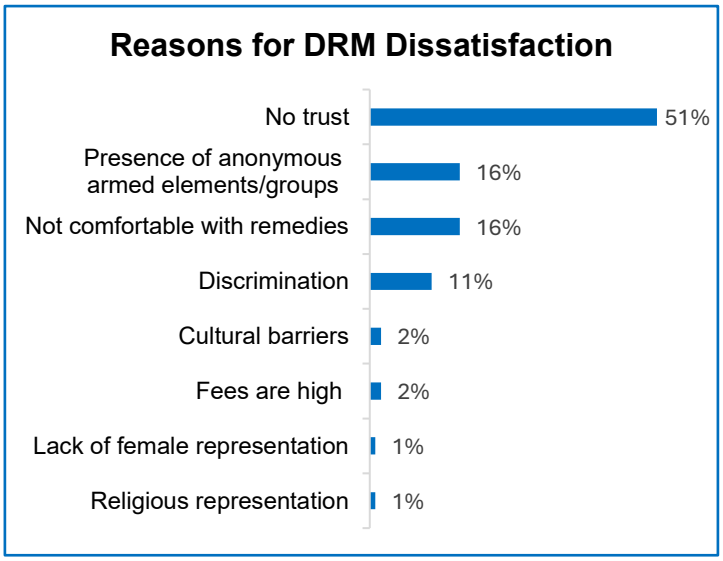
[4] National Examination in Sweida (SANA)
[5] MOE. Circular on Relocation of Public Examinations for Sweida Students.jpg

When addressing community disputes, both returnees and host community members most frequently relied on family or relatives (29%), followed by law enforcement, the justice system, and community or tribal leaders. Only 5% of the respondents reported no issues in the community.



Among respondents who used community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, 92% reported being satisfied, while 8% expressed dissatisfaction. Compared to Insights Report 2026 Q1, findings show respondents reported lower confidence in some dispute-resolution mechanisms, with respondents citing lack of confidence in these mechanisms increasing (41% to 51%). At the same time, concerns related to the presence of anonymous armed groups (21% to 16%) and discomfort with the dispute resolution process (25% to 16%) declined, suggesting shifting perceptions of risk and acceptability of available remedies.





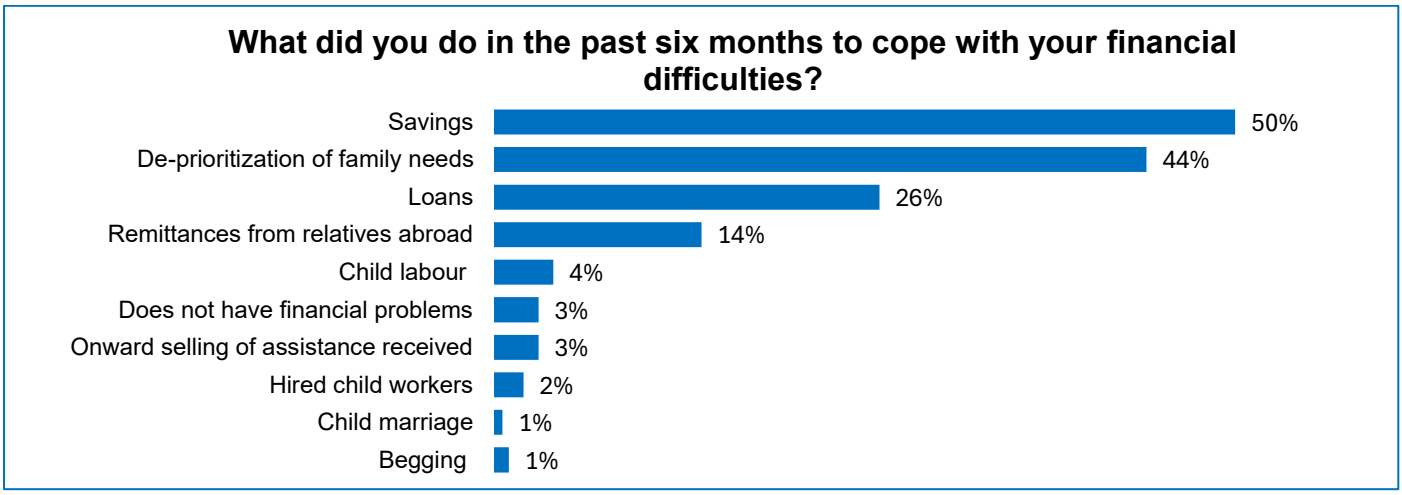
Tackling challenges to social cohesion calls for interventions that are rooted in local contexts, inclusive in approach, and responsive to identified needs, ensuring fair access to services while reinforcing reliable and trusted dispute-resolution systems. It is equally important to strengthen community-led protection and cohesion efforts in areas experiencing heightened pressure on services, housing, and job opportunities. This can be achieved by promoting inclusive support, encouraging open community dialogue, and reducing risks of tension, exploitation, and violence.

7. Adoption of Harmful Coping Mechanisms

Findings point to continued reliance on negative coping mechanisms to manage financial hardship, reflecting sustained economic vulnerability and associated protection risks. As in Q1, a large share of households reported depleting savings (50%) and deprioritizing essential needs (44%), indicating continued erosion of

resilience. Others rely on loans (26%) and remittances (14%), highlighting limited access to stable income sources.

Concerningly, harmful coping strategies persist, including the onward sale of assistance (3%), child labour (4%), and, to a lesser extent, begging and child marriage (1% each). These practices expose households—particularly women and children—to heightened risks of exploitation, dependency, and reduced access to basic services and education, underscoring the continuous link between economic hardship and protection vulnerabilities.

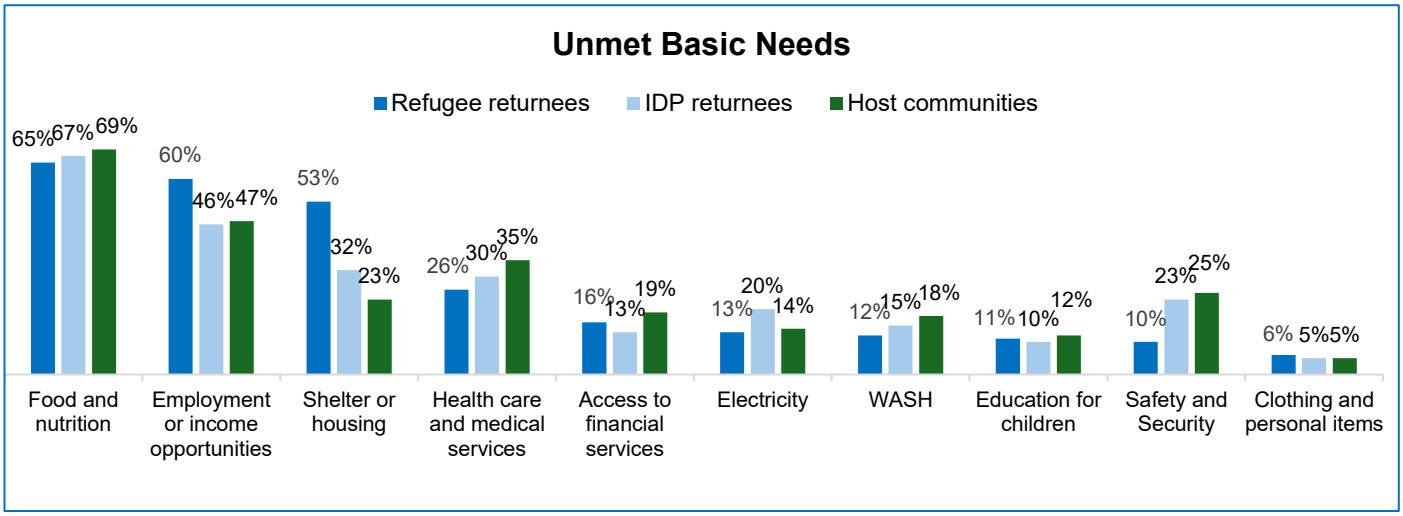


8. Unmet basic needs

Unmet needs remain concentrated around food, livelihoods, and shelter, with some variation across groups. When compared to Q1, food and nutrition remain the most common need across all populations, though levels declined among refugee returnees (72% to 65%) and IDP returnees (72% to 67%), while increasing among host communities (65% to 69%).

Refugee returnees report notably higher needs for employment (60%) and shelter (53%), indicating continued challenges in restoring income and securing adequate housing. In contrast, IDP returnees and host communities report relatively lower shelter needs but higher levels across other sectors, including health care, WASH, and education.

Overall, the data points to persistent economic vulnerability, with a more acute concentration of livelihood and shelter pressures among refugee returnees. Communication with the community in Deir ez-Zor highlighted emerging risks, particularly recent flooding along the Euphrates River, which has damaged housing conditions, agricultural land, and livelihoods, contributing to increased shelter insecurity and overcrowding, and significantly affecting populations including returnees.



Access to humanitarian assistance remains limited, with 33% of households reporting access, down from 45% in Q1, while those unable to access support increased from 55% to 67%. Assistance is primarily provided by NGOs and community groups (38% and 37%, respectively), followed by UN agencies (20%) and government actors (6%).

Among households unable to access assistance, the main barriers are the unavailability of services (63%, unchanged), lack of information (31%, up from 23%), and absence of service providers (24%, up from 17%), indicating widening gaps in both service availability and outreach. The findings show declining access to assistance alongside continued return movements. Further analysis would be required to determine the relationship between these trends.

9. Protection Risk Analysis Across Regions

9.1 North-East Region (Ar-Raqqa, Hasakeh and Deir-ez-Zor)

In the North-East, survey findings indicate persistent barriers to civil documentation, humanitarian needs, and explosive ordnance (EO) risks. Documentation challenges, disrupted education, and damaged infrastructure continue to constrain access to services and sustainable reintegration, while Deir-ez-Zor remains the governorate most affected by EO-related incidents and fatalities.

9.2 North-West Region (Aleppo and Idlib)

The North-West remains the primary area of return, with increasing population movements placing additional strain on already fragile services. Survey findings indicate that reintegration continues to be constrained by documentation gaps, limited housing and livelihood opportunities, significant humanitarian needs, and persistent explosive ordnance (EO) contamination.

9.3 Coastal Region (Tartous and Latakia)

Community consultations in the Coastal Region highlighted concerns related to social cohesion, psychosocial distress, and insecurity. Poor living conditions, unemployment, sectarian tensions, and criminal activity continue to affect community relations, freedom of movement, and mental well-being.

9.4 Central Region (Homs and Hama)

The Central Region shows greater population stability than other parts of Syria, with most households intending to remain. However, survey findings show that unresolved housing, land and property issues,

psychosocial distress, and fragile social cohesion continue to hinder durable recovery and community resilience.

9.5 Southern Region (As-Sweida, Daraa and Quneitra)

Respondents in the Southern Region reported insecurity, movement restrictions, and localized safety incidents. These conditions are contributing to a heightened sense of insecurity, disrupting access to education, limiting freedom of movement, increasing psychosocial needs, and constraining access to essential services.

9.6 Damascus and Rural Damascus

Damascus and Rural Damascus continue to receive increasing numbers of returnees, placing additional pressure on housing, livelihoods, and basic services. Economic hardship remains the primary driver of psychosocial distress, while concerns related to criminality continue to affect perceptions of safety and everyday movement.

Recommended Actions for Protection Partners

Two consecutive rounds of nationwide protection monitoring confirm that key protection risks remain persistent, although continued monitoring is needed to better understand evolving trends and emerging needs. While some indicators have shown improvement, survey findings indicate that challenges related to civil documentation, housing, livelihood and access to essential services continue to constrain sustainable reintegration in many areas of return.

1. Accelerate integrated reintegration support through livelihoods, basic services and protection

Economic insecurity remains the principal driver of protection risks, psychosocial distress, harmful coping mechanisms, and social tensions. Humanitarian partners should therefore scale up integrated livelihoods, cash assistance, and access to food, shelter, health, education and WASH in priority return areas, ensuring protection services are systematically linked through functional referral pathways. Area-based programming should prioritize locations experiencing sustained return movements, as well as affected areas, and increasing pressure on local services, while strengthening coordination between protection and early recovery actors.

2. Expand legal assistance and strengthen access to civil documentation and HLP services

Persistent documentation and HLP barriers continue to restrict access to rights, housing, education, livelihoods, and public services. Protection partners should expand mobile legal services, legal counselling, and institutional support while strengthening referral pathways for documentation, HLP, GBV and child protection cases. Continued investment in the operational capacity of civil registries, cadastral offices and local justice institutions remains essential to respond to increasing demand in return areas and facilitate sustainable reintegration.

3. Scale up community-based and specialized MHPSS services

Although reported psychosocial distress declined slightly compared with Q1, findings confirm that mental health needs remain widespread and are closely linked to economic hardship, displacement and conflict exposure. Partners should significantly expand community-based and specialized MHPSS services, strengthen outreach and awareness, and integrate psychosocial support across health, education, livelihoods and protection programmes. Particular attention should be given to recently arrived refugee returnees from Lebanon and to reducing persistent barriers related to information, affordability and service availability.

4. Strengthen integrated prevention and response for GBV and child protection

The persistence of economic stress, overcrowding housing conditions, and psychosocial distress continues to increase exposure to GBV, violence against children, child labour and other harmful coping mechanisms. Rather than expanding standalone services, partners should strengthen integrated case management, prevention, parenting support, legal assistance, education support, livelihoods for caregivers and survivor-centred referral pathways. Reintegration programming should systematically incorporate protection measures that reduce household vulnerability and negative coping strategies.

5. Intensify explosive ordnance risk mitigation in return areas

As return movements continue into contaminated areas, EO remains a major obstacle to safe movement, access to livelihoods and sustainable return. Partners should further scale up EO risk education, prioritize newly accessible and high-return locations, strengthen community-based dissemination through local structures and outreach volunteers, and continue advocating for sustained investment in survey and clearance operations alongside victim assistance.

6. Invest in community resilience, information provision and social cohesion

The findings increasingly demonstrate that reintegration challenges extend beyond individual households and require stronger community-based responses. Protection partners should expand trusted information services, community engagement, accountability mechanisms and local dispute-resolution initiatives while strengthening community protection structures capable of identifying protection risks, supporting referrals and mitigating tensions related to housing, employment and access to services. Particular attention should be given to areas experiencing sustained return movements and increasing pressure on local resources.

7. Strengthen protection monitoring, referrals and evidence-based targeting

With two quarters of nationwide data now confirming consistent protection trends, partners should use protection monitoring, community feedback and referral data to guide geographic prioritization, resource allocation and programme adaptation. Strengthening referral systems and interoperable service mapping will help ensure that individuals with protection needs can access timely, multi-sectoral assistance while enabling partners to monitor evolving reintegration outcomes and emerging protection risks.

UNHCR Response to Returns

In response to the growing numbers of returning refugees and IDPs, and in line with its protection mandate, UNHCR continues to strengthen protection and border monitoring, community-based outreach, legal aid, referrals, and targeted assistance to support voluntary, safe, and dignified returns.

For more information on UNHCR's response in Syria, please visit UNHCR Portal, and the UNHCR Syria Protection Factsheet June 2026.