UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

MID-YEAR ANALYSIS ON RETURNS TO SYRIA FROM JORDAN

JANUARY-JUNE 2025

Returns Trends

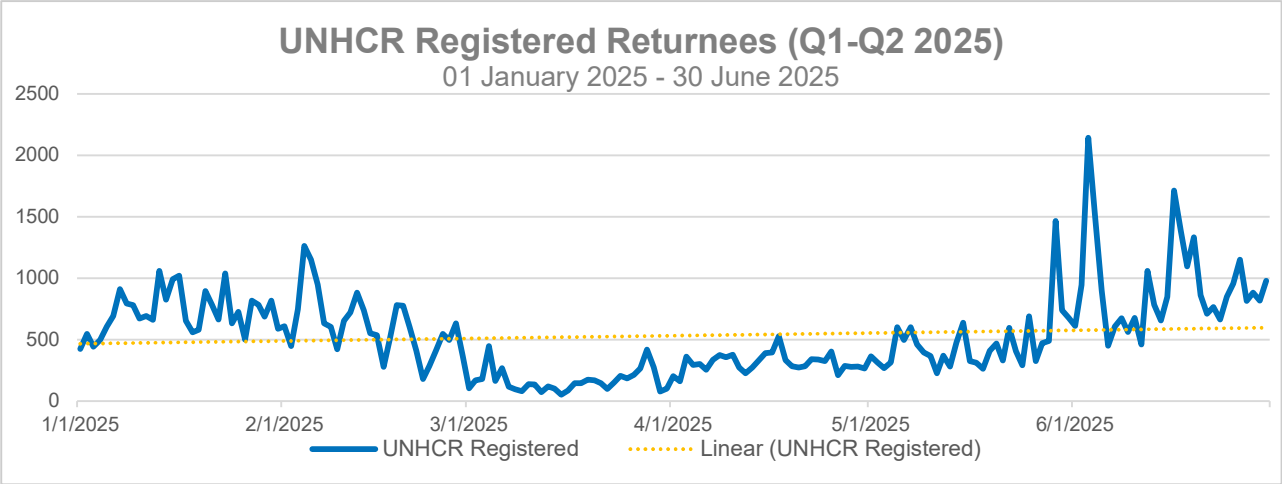
Following the fall of the Assad Government on 8 December 2024, UNHCR observed a marked increase in both refugee returns to Syria and intentions to return. **A Flash Regional Perception and Intention Survey conducted in January 2025 found that 40% of Syrian refugees in Jordan expressed plans to return within the year.** Despite this, many refugees continued to cite ongoing concerns about security conditions and limited livelihood opportunities in Syria.

Initial reactions to the political change were marked by cautious optimism, with **many refugees expressing hope for the possibility of return for the first time in over a decade**. However, as they began to assess the practical realities on the ground, this optimism was tempered, including by a series of major security incidents which contributed to a noticeable slowdown in returns. The unpredictability of the situation and has led to fluctuating return trends throughout the first half of 2025.

In the first quarter (Q1) of 2025, approximately 45,000 UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees returned. January and February saw the highest return levels, averaging around 700 individuals crossing daily. In March, return numbers declined to below 200 per day, largely due to Ramadan. This downward trend continued through April and May before rising sharply in June, coinciding with the end of the academic year - *a factor frequently mentioned by refugees in discussions with UNHCR and partners.* **Approximately 51,000 returns were recorded in Q2**.

From **08 December 2024 to 30 June 2025, more than 100,000 UNHCR registered Syrian refugees returned home**.[1] Of these, **56%** returned as full families, while **44%** returned through staggered or partial family movements. While UNHCR encourages families to return together, it recognizes that phased returns may support reintegration depending on individual circumstances. These dynamics naturally raise questions around the protection of children. Available data suggests that the number of children temporarily left behind is low, though verification is continuing. UNHCR's child protection teams work closely with authorities to ensure that any child remaining behind has a legally documented guardian, typically registered through Sharia courts.

[1] Returns figures are regularly updated to reflect current movement patterns and may change from earlier reports as some Syrians are allowed to re-enter Jordan as per approval from the Government of Jordan. The reported number reflects those who have departed Jordan and remain outside the country as of the most recently updated data.



Since December 2024, UNHCR's durable solutions team has enhanced its outreach in the community, increasing the number of information sessions and focus group discussions (FGDs) to keep up with the rapidly evolving situation and information needs.

Across the first half of 2025, UNHCR **conducted 40 information sessions across Jordan, reaching over 1,100 participants.**

Key findings from UNHCR's outreach sessions:

- Throughout the first half of 2025, **refugee communities reported taking a cautious approach to return planning, with many adopting a 'wait-and-see' approach**. Refugees commonly linked their return decisions to specific conditions or timelines - such as the end of the school year, the ability to save sufficient funds, or the stabilization of the political situation in Syria.
- **Family reunification remains the primary 'pull factor' motivating return**. However, financial constraints, including the need to repay debts, cover transportation costs, and secure enough savings for reintegration, continue to pose significant barriers.
- Refugees consistently request support from UNHCR and humanitarian partners to **facilitate return**. Key areas of requested assistance include cash grants, transportation arrangements, debt management, and support for livelihoods and reintegration inside Syria.
- **In 96% of sessions**, participants cited **safety and security as the main factors influencing return decisions**. While concerns before December 2024 largely focused on arrest and detention, forced recruitment, and fear of persecution from the previous regime, current fears include landmines and unexploded ordnance, the potential for renewed conflict, uncertainty about the future, and a lack of clarity how the new government will function.
- **Some older refugees are more open to returning to Syria**. However, their children, particularly those born or raised in Jordan, often prefer to stay, citing limited personal ties to Syria and stronger connections to life in Jordan.
- **Women report lower short-term intentions to return compared to men**, citing concerns about security, limited economic opportunities, and shifting gender roles. Many have **gained increased autonomy and awareness of their rights while in Jordan** and fear these gains may not be sustained in Syria, making the decision to return more difficult.

Helpline

In addition to direct outreach, UNHCR utilizes its Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Helpline as a key communication tool with refugees throughout Jordan. Throughout the first six months of 2025, UNHCR has handled **approximately 6,000 calls to its helpline from refugees seeking information related to returns to Syria**. Of these, 2,600 calls (43%) were related to general return inquiries, including procedures, documentation requirements, outstanding debts, and refugees' status with UNHCR following return to Syria. The remaining 3,400 calls (57%) inquired about the returns assistance project implemented through the JETT bus company.

Between the first and second quarters of 2025, the helpline experienced a significant increase in call volume. **Total calls rose by 50% from Q1 to Q2**. This included a 60% increase in calls related to the returns assistance project, and a 40% increase in general return inquiries.

Returnee Profiles

48% Women and Girls

52% Men and Boys

43% Children

57% Adults

23% Camp

77% Urban

56% Full Family Returns

44% Staggered family Returns

Overview of Basic Needs Assistance Eligibility in the Context of Returns

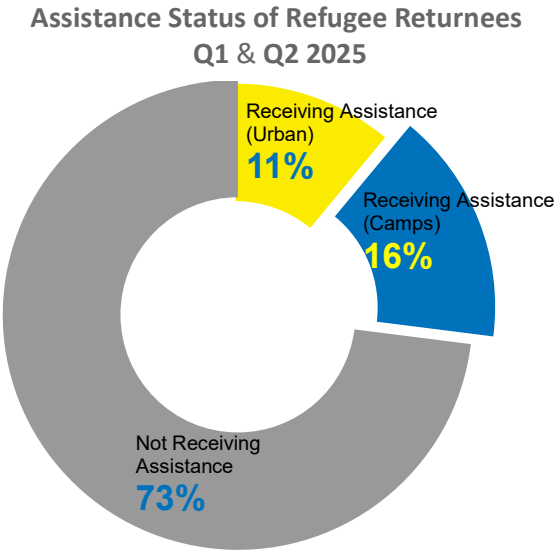
10,800

Refugees in urban communities who received basic needs assistance at some point in Q1 and Q2 have since returned to Syria and no longer receive assistance.

15,400

Refugees in camps who received basic needs assistance at some point in Q1 and Q2 have since returned and no longer receive assistance.

Note: Once a refugee returns to their home country, they are no longer eligible to receive assistance inside Jordan.



Skills and Employment

In the first two quarters of 2025, **over 52,000 working-age refugees (aged 18–64) returned to Syria**, comprising 54% of the total returnee population during this period. Of these, approximately 77% participated in WFP-UNHCR Skills Mapping Data (collected in 2023). The findings below are based on this subset of returnees and should not be interpreted as representative of the entire returnee population.

EDUCATION

Among surveyed returnees, **16.3% reported having completed secondary education**. This is notably lower than the 23% observed among the broader refugee population still residing in Jordan, suggesting that returnees may generally have lower educational attainment.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Over **1,700 returnees indicated they had completed tertiary education**, representing 4.5% of the surveyed working-age returnee group. This aligns with the proportion of tertiary-educated individuals in the overall registered refugee population, indicating no significant difference in higher education attainment between returnees and those still displaced.

FIELDS INCLUDE

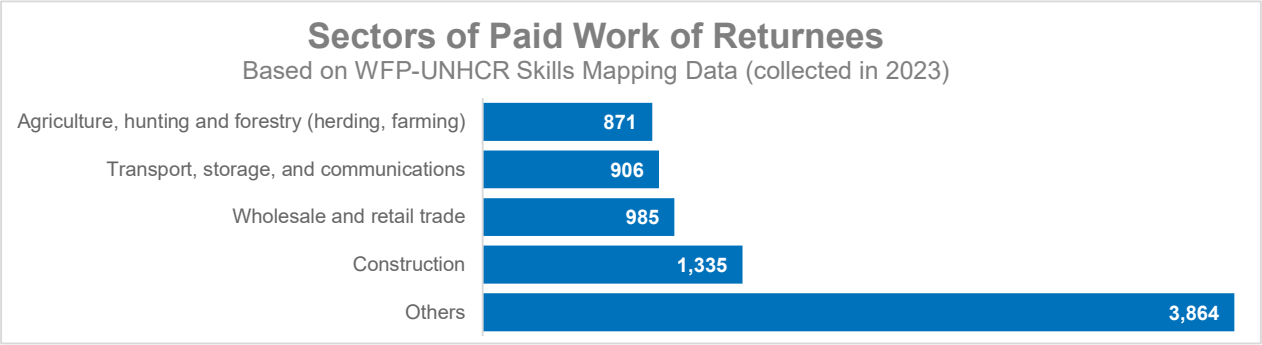
Among returnees who completed tertiary education, the most commonly reported fields of study included **education, agriculture, social sciences, journalism, and information and communication technology**.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Nearly **3,400 returnees reported receiving vocational training while in Jordan**. Training was concentrated in sectors such as mechanics, sewing, health education, beauty and cosmetics, nursing, and manufacturing. Given Syria's current labor market needs, especially in health and education, these skills may offer meaningful livelihood opportunities and support returnees' reintegration.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Approximately 8,000 returnees - around **15% of survey respondents - reported participating in paid work or income-generating activities at the time of the survey**.



Specific Needs

27%
of returnees had specific needs as noted in UNHCR's registration database

14%
of returnees reported having a serious medical condition

8%
of returnees reported having a disability

3%
of returnees had reported a specific legal or physical protection need while in Jordan

Transportation Support

Throughout Q1 and Q2 2025, UNHCR, in partnership with **JETT** bus company, have supported refugees with **facilitated transportation arrangements** to Syria.

From the start of UNHCR's facilitated support on 20 January 2025 until the end of Q2, nearly **4,100 refugees have benefited from this initiative** (around **3%** of overall returns during the same period), including:

Departure Point	# of Buses	# of Pax
Amman	41	1559
Azraq Camp	48	1608
EJC	16	680
Irbid	8	383
Total	**113**	**4129**

Refugees seeking to access UNHCR's transportation assistance to return to Syria must first contact UNHCR through the helpline to express their intention to return and undergo a voluntary repatriation interview. This process helps UNHCR assess their motivations, return plans, and perceptions on return. In addition, it allows UNHCR to provide tailored counseling and information on the returns process and available services inside Syria.

When asked about their main reasons for return, **76%** of refugees interviewed as part of UNHCR's facilitated transportation program **cited improved security conditions in Syria as a main driver for return**. Nearly half also mentioned a desire to **reunite with family** in Syria as another motivating factor. However, 37% indicated that their return decision was influenced by **challenges in Jordan**, particularly limited livelihood opportunities and reduced access to financial assistance.

Despite their interest in returning to Syria, around one-quarter of those interviewed stated that they had specific concerns or fears related to returning to Syria, with the most common concerns being around **economic challenges and safety and security**.

A strong reliance on family networks was evident in the interviews. **95% reported having relatives** in Syria who would support their reintegration, primarily through housing and initial assistance. Additionally, nearly 75% had relatives who had already returned to Syria from abroad, with 40% reporting positive reintegration experiences and 57% describing mixed (both positive and negative experiences).

Refugees generally described the assistance as safe and dependable, and expressed appreciation for the support provided. However, many noted that the **assistance fell short of covering all their needs for the return journey**, with common requests including an increased luggage allowance and additional cash assistance to better facilitate their return. UNHCR Jordan's transportation arrangements were coordinated closely with UNHCR Syria teams, who were frequently present to receive returnees both at the Nasib Border and at their destinations

Returns Coordination

GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

UNHCR continues to work closely with the Government of Jordan, whose cooperation has been instrumental in upholding the voluntary nature of returns, coordinating border movements, and enabling flexible documentation requirements - supported through a joint task force that meets regularly to ensure effective collaboration.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS WORKING GROUP (DSWG)

A meeting focused on general updates, trends, and challenges around durable solutions in Jordan for a broad group of NGO partners, embassies, and UN agencies. Two meetings of the DSWG were held in Q1 2025, and one meeting in Q2 2025, with regular updates shared to the list-serv over e-mail, including frequently asked questions and community pulse reports.

OPERATIONAL DURABLE SOLUTIONS WORKING GROUP (OPS-DSWG)

Given the broad nature of the DSWG, the Ops-DSWG was established to provide a more technical forum for organizations directly engaging in durable solutions in Jordan. The Ops-DSWG consists of 17 partner organizations and has held four meetings in Q1 2025 and three in Q2 2025.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

In addition to Jordan-specific coordination forums, the Regional Durable Solutions Working Group (RDSWG), led by UNHCR's Regional Bureau, convenes regularly to coordinate voluntary repatriation and return preparedness at the regional level under the framework of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). UNHCR's engagement is further guided by the Operational Framework for the Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs (2025).