

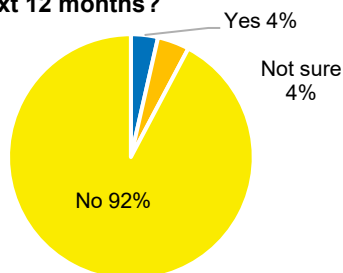
Syrian Refugees in Iraq Intention to Return

Results from Regional Intention Survey | June 2025

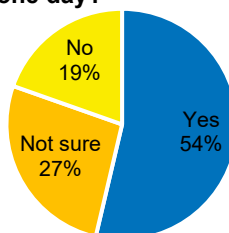
As part of the regional intention survey conducted in June 2025, some **746 Syrian refugees** were surveyed through phone calls in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and **41 Syrian refugees** in central and southern governorates of Iraq.¹

4% of Syrian refugees in Iraq say that they would be interested in return in the next 12 months. This compares to 12% who expressed interested in return in the subsequent 12 months during the intention survey conducted in January 2025.

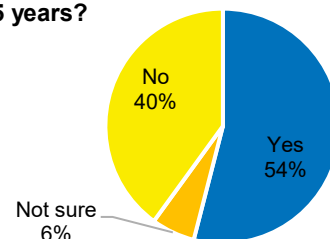
Are you planning to return to Syria in the next 12 months?



Among those not planning to return in the next 12 months, do you have a hope to return one day?



Among those planning to return one day, do you have a hope to return in the next 5 years?



Main barriers to return

These were the main reasons cited by those not intending to return in the next 12 months. One respondent was able to choose more than one option.

- 53%** Security concerns
- 52%** Economic challenges
- 48%** Homes destroyed or damaged beyond repair
- 17%** Concerns about service availability in Syria

Main reasons influencing future decisions on return

These were the main reasons cited by those currently not intending to return, as reasons which may influence their future decisions. One respondent was able to choose more than one option.

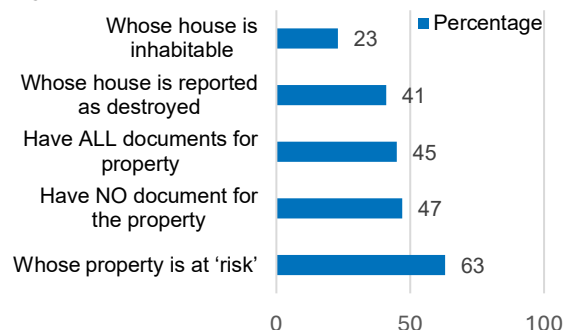
- 35%** Improved security situation
- 34%** Livelihood opportunities
- 23%** Desire to access to personal property in Syria
- 16%** Availability of services in areas of return

Property and housing, employment status and sources of income

The intention survey also examined additional factors of Syrian refugees in Iraq influencing their ability to return.

- **97%** possess valid Syrian civil documents.
- **90%** have family members (including extended family) in Syria
- **45%** have visited Syria since fleeing to Iraq
- **68%** of those not planning to return, rate employment opportunities in Syria as poor
- **47%** of those not planning to return, maintain frequent communication with Syria
- **25%** reported owning a property in Syria. Gaps in documentation, combined with widespread destruction, highlight persistent challenges related to Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights, which have been widely cited by refugees and returnees as barriers to return. In addition, a lack of availability of water and electricity at their places of origin was also cited as a challenge.

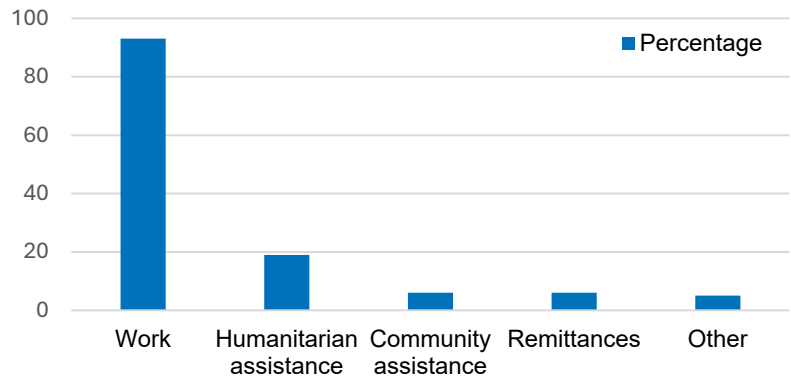
Property ownership & housing stock in Syria



¹ The Enhanced Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey (ERPIS) examines Syrian refugees' return intentions and tracks perception changes across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. The 2025 survey, strengthened by World Bank partnership and expanded socio-economic data, uses a panel design for robust policy analysis and includes a representative sample of Syrian refugees in Iraq.

- **93%** reported that the household's main income came from someone working.
- **19%** report receiving humanitarian assistance in the past three months as a source of income.
- Among those working, **62%** of Syrian refugees said they were day laborers, followed by **16%** earning a salary in the private sector.

Top 5 sources of income for household



Insights from Focus Group Discussions

To complement intention surveys in June, UNHCR in Iraq conducted community consultations with Syrian refugees in Dohuk Governorate to gather qualitative insights on return perspectives to Syria. This follows focus group discussions held in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah earlier in the year. UNHCR and partners held 10 Focus Group Discussions and 3 Key Informant Interviews, involving 85 participants (35 men and 50 women) across Domiz camp, Gawilan camp, Akre settlement, and urban/peri-urban areas (Dohuk, Sumail, Al-Amadiya). Participants originated from Aleppo, Al-Hasakah, Damascus, Idlib, and other areas.

Perceptions of the situation in Syria

- **Insecurity and Armed Conflict:** Refugees described Syria as unsafe due to ongoing conflict, militia activity, kidnappings, and forced recruitment, including of minors. Participants of Kurdish ethnicity highlighted targeted violence and discrimination.
- **Lack of Basic Services:** Widespread shortages of water, electricity, healthcare, and education were cited. Participants described Syria as lacking functioning infrastructure and essential services.
- **Specific Risks:** Refugees of Kurdish ethnicity expressed fears of ethnic discrimination and denial of rights.

Factors influencing intention to return

- **Safety Concerns:** Participants cited insecurity as the primary barrier to return, including fears of forced conscription and militia violence.
- **Destroyed Housing and Infrastructure:** A large majority of participants reported their homes in Syria were destroyed or uninhabitable.
- **Education Opportunities:** Many refugees emphasized the importance of preserving their children's education in Iraq, noting language and curriculum differences in Syria.
- **Financial Barriers:** High transportation costs (15,000–50,000 IQD per person) and border fees were cited as significant obstacles.

Support cited by refugees in Iraq needed for return

- **Safety and Protection:** Cessation of conflict, demilitarization, along with guarantees against forced conscription.
- **Financial and Legal Assistance:** Subsidies for transportation and help with renewing or obtaining Syrian documentation.
- **Housing and basic services:** Support for early recovery, shelter reconstruction, and access to water, electricity and health care upon return to Syria.
- **Education continuity:** Recognition of Iraqi school certificates and support for language transition.