

Lebanon

Key findings: UNHCR Facilitated Return Feedback and Post-Distribution Monitoring Survey of Syrian Refugee Returnees

Background

Following the opening of new prospects for voluntary returns to Syria at the end of 2024, the General Security Office (GSO) waived administrative fines and the re-entry ban for refugees returning to Syria as of 1 July 2025, and UNHCR launched its facilitated Voluntary Return (VolRep) programme. Under this, refugees receive counselling, support with civil documentation, \$100 return cash grant/person, and a Repatriation Form accepted as an identity document for cash assistance collection at financial service provider (FSP) outlets countrywide. Refugees can choose to return in a:

- **Self-Organized** manner, where the household organizes their own logistics including transport.
- **Organized (UNHCR-IOM)** manner, where the household benefits from transportation of the family members and luggage by IOM.

Refugees can also choose to return in a **spontaneous** manner, without support.

In 2025, UNHCR inactivated **501,603** refugees as having returned to Syria, of whom **54,673** were supported under UNHCR's VolRep Program. 95% (51,793) returned in a self-organized manner and 5% (2,880) in an organised manner. This report presents the findings from UNHCR's January 2026 survey of a representative sample of Syrians supported through UNHCR's VolRep programme in 2025, including post-distribution monitoring of the return cash grant. ***It does not include those returning spontaneously.***

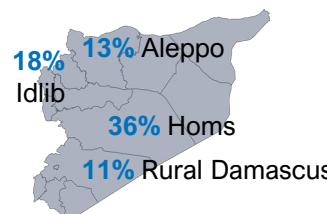
Methodology

1,281 returnees contacted via WhatsApp. Survey sample was based on the intended area of return.

839 participated in a WhatsApp interview and KoBo assessment

87% Self-organized
12% Organized

78% Head of household | **22%** Other adult
88% Lebanese number | **12%** Syrian number



Presence and Intentions

The vast majority of respondents reported an intention to remain in Syria with all family members who returned under the VolRep programme, with most having returned to their areas of origin. Among those who reported challenges returning to their district of origin, the main issues cited were related to housing unavailability and insecurity.



99%

Confirmed return and intent to permanently remain in Syria

Of the remaining 1%, the situation and underlying reasons reported included:

Not yet returned (remain in Lebanon)

- 1 Change in the security situation in Syria
- 2 Barriers in Lebanon (debt, judicial warrants)
- 3 Could not secure housing/shelter in Syria
- 4 Medical issues of a family member
- 5 Detention of a family member in Syria

Temporarily staying in Syria

- 1 Visiting family before return to Lebanon
- 2 Assessing conditions for permanent return
- 3 Limited livelihoods and living hardships
- 4 Security situation in Aleppo



97%

Report all returned family members remain in Syria

Of the remaining 3%, the situation and underlying reasons reported included:

Changed family composition post-return

- 1 Unique situation (i.e. death, divorce) (2%)
- 2 Family member re-entered Lebanon (1%)
- 3 Moved to a third county (0.1%)



80% Returned to their district of origin in Syria

Of those who did not return to their district of origin, main reasons reported included

- 1 Housing unavailability
- 2 Insecurity in the district of origin

VolRep decision-making

Most respondents underscored the voluntariness of their return decision, noting that the process generally involved—though did not always guarantee—a consultative family process. Three-quarters reported having sufficient information to make an informed decision, while highlighting the need for more detailed information on services, housing, and security in intended areas of return.

Decision making process



97% Noted their decision was voluntary and collective



84% Noted the decision was made jointly with family

Access to information



74% Had sufficient information to make a return decision

Key information needs

- 1 Services in the intended area of return
- 2 Availability of housing, land, and property
- 3 Security conditions
- 4 Humanitarian assistance and services
- 5 Access to education
- 6 Access to healthcare
- 7 Government assistance/services

Additional information needs: employment opportunities, cost of living and challenges related to utilities and infrastructure.

VolRep Programmes

Most respondents reported satisfaction with UNHCR's VolRep programme, including the information provided on available return options and smooth facilitation at border crossing points.

Information on the VolRep programmes



88%

Felt UNHCR gave sufficient information on its VolRep programme

Impression of the VolRep programmes



97%

Were highly satisfied with UNHCR-facilitated return

Of the remaining 3%:

Feedback on the VolRep programme included

- 1 Insufficient cash grant value
- 2 Delays in collection of cash grants
- 3 Need for timely post-return support



99%

Were satisfied with the organized movements



In parallel, **26%** underlined the need for an increased luggage allowance



84%

Noted the Repatriation Form was helpful at the border, for redeeming cash, and for movement within Lebanon

Border facilitation



97%

Reported using official border crossing points (47% Arida, 26% Al Qaa, 24% Masnaa)



97%

Noted the GSO border provisions facilitated safe and dignified return



Return Cash Assistance

Nearly all respondents reported receiving their return cash grant from UNHCR via a financial service provider (FSP), with the majority using it to cover return-related needs such as transport. Nonetheless, a significant proportion noted relying on personal resources to supplement the grant to meet overall return expenses.

Accessibility of the return cash grant



99.5% Received the cash grant pre-departure

Of the four respondents (0.5%) who did not receive a return cash grant prior to departure:

Barriers to receiving the cash grant included:

- 1 No SMS notification (3)
- 2 Urgent need to return before distribution (1)



100% Confirmed receiving sufficient guidance on cash redemption



98% Successfully redeemed their cash on their first visit to the FSP

Of the 2% who were unable to redeem the grant at first attempt, all successfully redeemed it later:

Challenges to redemption:

- 1 Documentation requests by FSP
- 2 Operational/liquidity issues at FSP

Avenue for resolving redemption challenges:

- 1 Contact the UNHCR National Call Center
- 2 Approach another FSP branch

Use of the return cash grant

Of the 99.5% who received a return cash grant:



89%

Used the grant for transport needs

Other main expenses:

- 1 Food and basic needs (15%)
- 2 Debt repayment (10%)
- 3 Household items (9%)
- 4 Shelter/housing materials (9%)
- 5 Accommodation in Syria (7%)
- 6 Savings for post-return (7%)
- 7 Health expenses (4%)

Sufficiency of the return cash grant



30%

Used personal funds to supplement the return grant

Of those 30%, half reported spending an additional **USD 200**, primarily on return transport (69%), followed by shelter or housing material (16%), accommodation in Syria (12%), and household items (11%).

Perceptions of the cash grant process



97%

Were satisfied with the assistance process

Of the 3% who were partially or not satisfied:

Concerns around the cash grant process:

- 1 Insufficient value per returnee
- 2 Need further support to cover basic needs
- 3 Difficulties withdrawing from FSP



Children exercise in a child-friendly space in the staging point ahead of an organized movement, 4 December 2025 © UNHCR/Marion Morgan