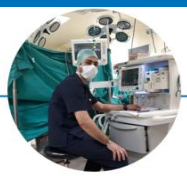
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REBUILDING LIVES IN TÜRKİYE

UNHCR in Türkiye
April 2026

55,000 Syrian students enrolled in Turkish universities (**nearly half of them are female**) .

Over 2,500 students have received DAFI scholarships in Türkiye since 2014. **647** students received DAFI scholarships in 2026.

12 per cent of the refugee students in Türkiye enrolled in tertiary education, compared to the global avarage of 9 per cent.



Being part of the healthcare field, where I can contribute to helping people, is rewarding. My profession makes helping people a must. (…) Certainly, the DAFI scholarship has helped me a lot. If it were not for this scholarship, I would have gone through a difficult education process. I have a message for all students who want to continue their education and to those who never stop fighting to reach their goals. There is always a helping hand, including the DAFI Scholarship.
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Mr Hamid, one of the recipients of the DAFI Scholarship.

Context

Ms Ghufran - one of the refugee students supported through the DAFI Scholarship.

Refugees' access to higher education plays a pivotal role in sustainable development. It directly contributes to the self-reliance, protection environment, resilience and economic prospects of refugees and their communities. Education empowers young refugees to become agents of change, promoting social cohesion and contributing to more stable and prosperous societies. Refugees with higher education are more likely to contribute meaningfully to the host communities in which they live or to the economic and social reconstruction of their home countries when they can return home. A high rate of refugee students find formal employment following graduation.

In line with UNHCR's global education strategy, the Global Compact on Refugees, and Sustainable Development Goals, the education strategy of the UNHCR Türkiye operation focuses on promoting access to quality education for refugee youth and adults, leading to their effective inclusion in the labour market as well as social inclusion. These efforts, implemented in collaboration with national institutions, enhance refugees' contributions to economic growth and sustainable development. Investing in refugee education accelerates human capital development, drives innovation, and strengthens communities, fostering more inclusive and prosperous societies.

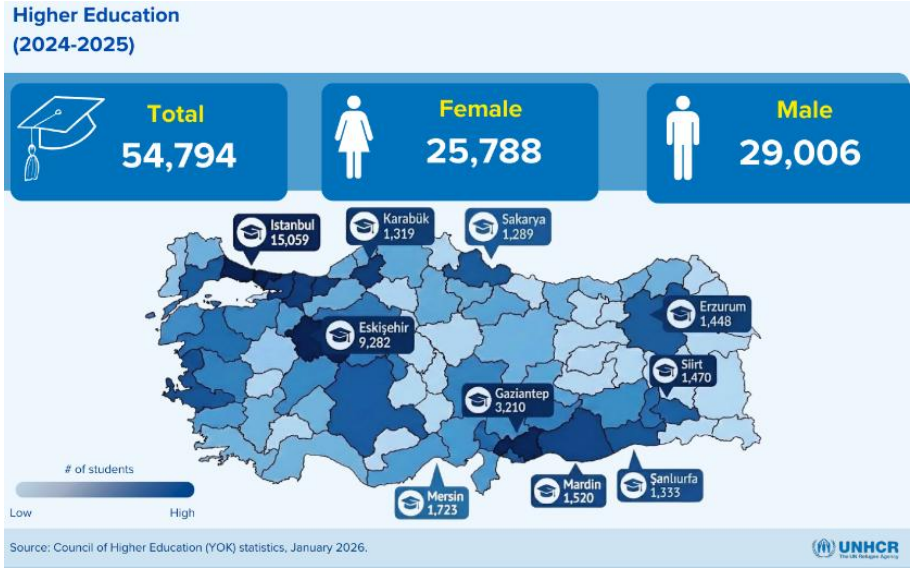
Working in Partnership

Formal and informal education for refugee children and adults in Türkiye is led and coordinated by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) play a key role in facilitating refugees' access to higher education. UNHCR works closely with YTB to provide scholarships and grants and engage in other activities.

Higher Education for Refugees

Through the German Albert Einstein Refugee Academic Initiative (DAFI) programme, UNHCR has provided scholarships for refugee students globally for over twenty years. The DAFI programme was introduced in Türkiye in 2014. Since then, it has grown to be the most extensive DAFI programme worldwide, implemented in partnership with YTB. The DAFI scholarship covers the academic tuition fees, accommodation, books and living expenses in the country of asylum. Scholarships are awarded for undergraduate programmes between two and four years, and the award is renewed annually based on satisfactory academic performance.

In addition to the DAFI Scholarship, UNHCR offers cash grants to refugee students to pursue higher education. UNHCR also provided training for trainers on conflict resolution and transition to work to youth from refugee and host communities. Furthermore, UNHCR supports YTB for the development of online learning opportunities. The informal courses aim to increase the academic and communication skills of all refugee youth.



The enrolment landscape for the 2024–2025 academic year reflects the continued inclusion of Syrian students in **higher education** across Türkiye, with **54,794** students currently enrolled. A positive marker of equitable access is the balanced gender distribution: **25,788 female students** account for nearly half of total enrolment, indicating that higher education opportunities are reaching diverse groups.

While enrolment remains concentrated in major hubs such as **İstanbul (15,059)** and **Eskişehir (9,282)**, the distribution also points to participation beyond these centres and across different regions. Alongside provinces in the Southeast such as **Gaziantep (3,210)**, enrolment is also recorded in provinces like **Sakarya** and **Erzurum**, illustrating a broader geographic spread. This pattern suggests that higher education access is increasingly taking place across diverse provincial contexts, which can help strengthen locally relevant education-to-employment pathways.

Working in partnership with:

YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM KURULU
COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

YTB

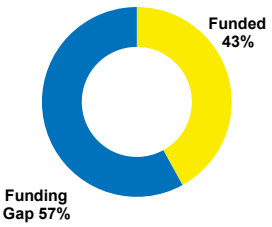
unicef

ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Funding Information

UNHCR is grateful for generous contributions from its donors, who have provided both earmarked and flexible funding to support its operations in Türkiye.

US$ 210 million
UNHCR requested for the operation in Türkiye for 2026.



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