

# GLOBAL TRENDS

FORCED  
DISPLACEMENT  
IN **2025**



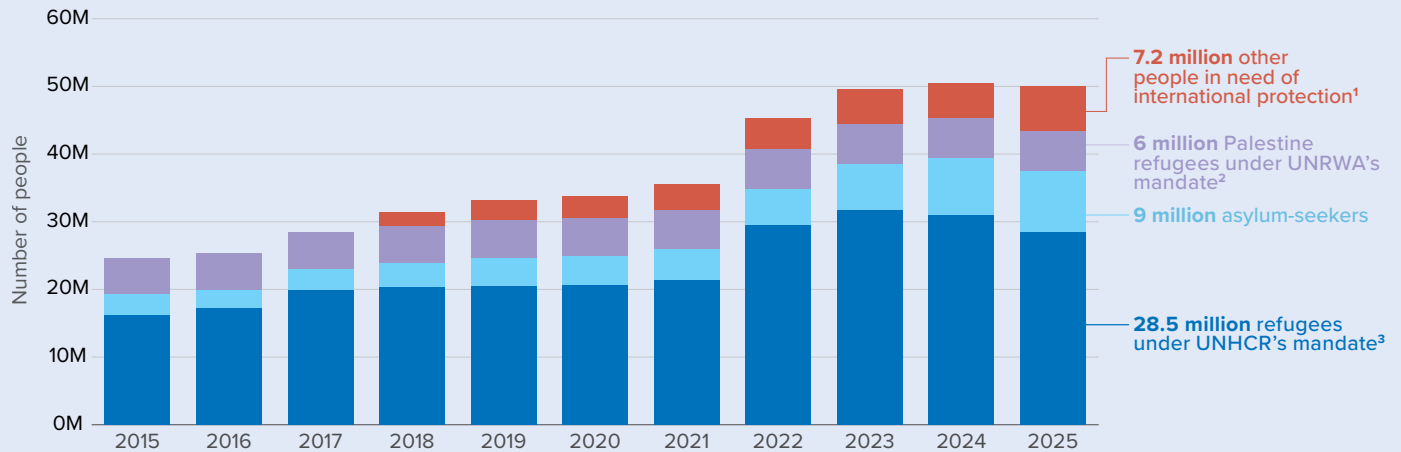
# Trends at a Glance

## 41.6 million are refugees

This includes 35.6 million refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection under UNHCR's mandate, as well as 6 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate at the end of 2025.

## 9 million are asylum-seekers

pending a decision on their asylum claims at the end of 2025.



DISCLAIMER: Figures may not add up to totals per category due to rounding.

## PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE ACROSS BORDERS AND RETURNING REFUGEES IN 2025

### 5.4 MILLION FORCED TO FLEE ACROSS BORDERS

Almost 5.4 million people were forced to flee and seek safety in other, predominantly neighbouring, countries in 2025.<sup>4</sup>

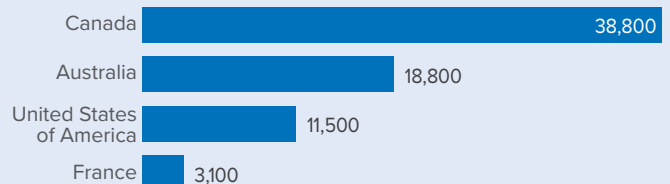
### 4.4 MILLION REFUGEES RETURNED

Nearly 4.4 million refugees returned to their countries of origin in 2025.<sup>5</sup> Many returns have occurred under adverse circumstances and to areas where insecurity persists. Over 90 per cent went back to just three countries: Afghanistan (1.9 million), Syria (1.3 million) and Sudan (651,500).

## RESETTLEMENT DURING 2025

### 81,800 RESETTLED OR THROUGH SPONSORSHIP PATHWAYS

The number of refugees who arrived through resettlement or sponsorship pathways fell by more than half from the 188,800 recorded in 2024.<sup>6</sup> UNHCR submitted 35,000 refugees to states for resettlement in 2025. The main countries of resettlement in 2025 were Australia, Canada, France and the United States of America.

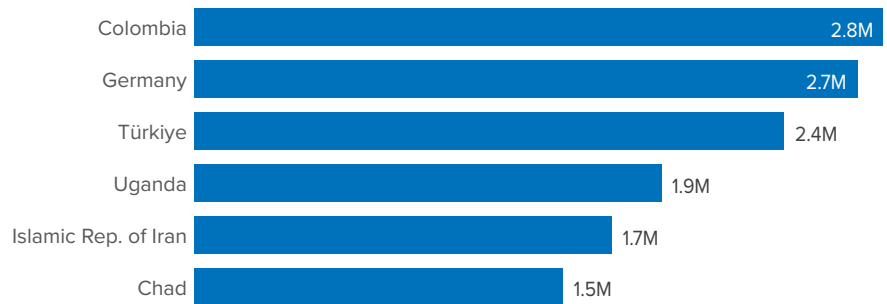


# REFUGEES, PEOPLE IN A REFUGEE-LIKE SITUATION AND OTHER PEOPLE IN NEED OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION UNDER UNHCR'S MANDATE AT END-2025

**35.6** MILLION  
WERE REFUGEES

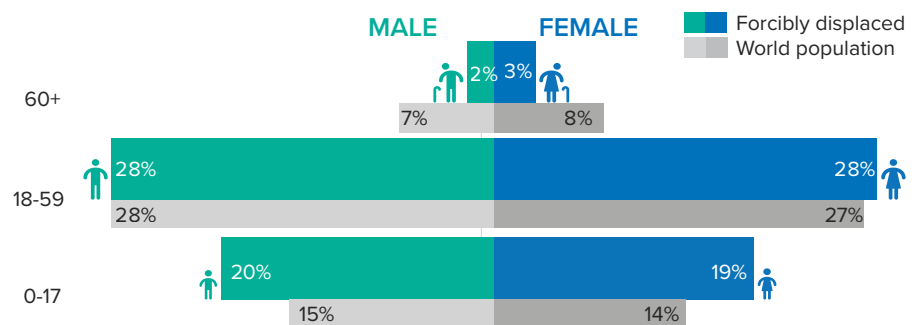
This includes 27 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate, 1.5 million people in a refugee-like situation and 7.2 million other people in need of international protection.

**36%** HOSTED IN 6 COUNTRIES



**39%** ARE  
CHILDREN

Children account for 29 per cent of the world's population, but 39 per cent of refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection.<sup>7</sup>



DISCLAIMER: figures do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

**26%** HOSTED IN  
THE LEAST DEVELOPED  
COUNTRIES

The Least Developed Countries provided asylum to 9.4 million of the world's refugees and other people in need of international protection. Low- and middle-income countries hosted 68 per cent of the total.<sup>8</sup>

**70%** WERE  
IN PROTRACTED  
SITUATIONS

Protracted situations are defined as those where refugees have been in exile for five years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions.

**65%** HOSTED  
IN NEIGHBOURING  
COUNTRIES

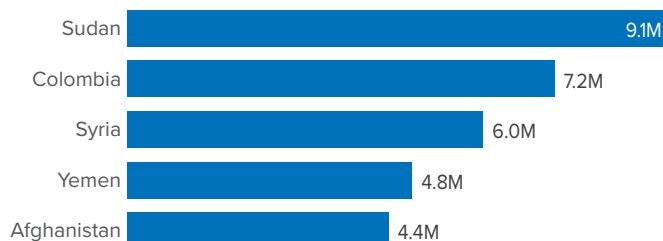
65 per cent of refugees and other people in need of international protection lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin.

## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE\*

**68.7** MILLION INTERNALLY  
DISPLACED PEOPLE

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), the number of internally displaced people due to conflict or violence is estimated at 68.7 million as of end-2025. IDPs have not crossed an international border — they remain within their own countries, often in extremely precarious conditions and without the formal protections accorded to refugees.

**46%** OF IDPs ARE  
FROM 5 COUNTRIES

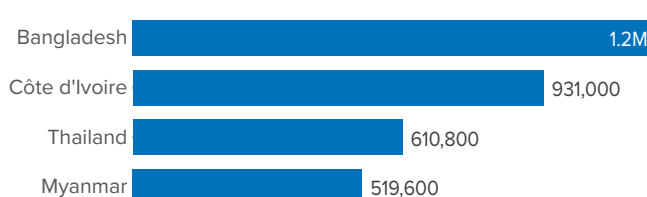


## STATELESS PEOPLE

**4.5** MILLION PEOPLE  
ARE STATELESS

4.5 million people are estimated to be stateless at end-2025. The true number is likely to be much higher — many stateless populations are unregistered and invisible to official statistics.

**7 in 10** STATELESS PEOPLE  
LIVE IN JUST FOUR COUNTRIES



**46,100** STATELESS  
PEOPLE RECEIVED CITIZENSHIP

46,100 stateless people acquired a nationality during 2025 through naturalization, legal reform, or dedicated statelessness determination procedures — a step toward the goal of ending statelessness.

**Rohingya** ARE THE  
WORLD'S LARGEST STATELESS GROUP

1.8 million Rohingya constituted 41 per cent of the reported global stateless population at end-2025. Of the 1.8 million, approximately 1.2 million are hosted as refugees in Bangladesh, having fled persecution in Myanmar.

- 1 See [Methodology, Refugee Data Finder](#), UNHCR, for a definition of each population group.
- 2 See [Palestinian population in Lebanon: findings from UNRWA's digital identity verification](#), October 2025, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA's methodology for estimating the number of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon has been revised and now distinguishes between the registered and resident Palestinian population. 228,300 Palestine Refugees were found to be residing in Lebanon at end-2025. The decrease from the reported number of 486,300 Palestine Refugees registered in the country the year before is a result of the change in methodology. In the same time period, the overall number of Palestine Refugees globally has increased by 1 per cent.
- 3 All references in this infographic to refugees under UNHCR's mandate includes people in a refugee-like situation.
- 4 This figure includes those that applied for asylum on an individual basis (2.8 million), were registered as asylum-seekers (108,000), were recognized through group procedures (945,600) or were granted temporary protection (930,100). It also includes new arrivals of people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection. See the [Forced displacement flow dataset](#), UNHCR.
- 5 The reported refugee returns may include the return of registered

refugees as well as other people that had been forced to leave their country of origin. In large scale return movements, it is often extremely challenging to differentiate returnees based on their legal status in their country of displacement.

- 6 Arrivals through resettlement or sponsorship pathways are according to official government data on resettlement arrivals and UNHCR statistics on resettlement departures. See also the [UNHCR master glossary of terms](#), UNHCR (accessed 01 May 2026). Sponsorship pathways are mainly reported by Australia and Canada. See also [Safe pathways for refugees, 2026 update](#) OECD-UNHCR safe pathways for refugees V, June 2026, UNHCR for more details about complementary pathways, including sponsorship pathways.
- 7 Sources: Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection are based on the available data (UNHCR) and World Population estimates (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs).
- 8 See [Key facts for countries hosting the world's refugees](#), UNHCR. High income countries hosted 29 per cent of refugees. Note that the figures do not add up to 100 per cent, as several countries, notably Ethiopia and Venezuela, did not receive an [income group classification for 2025](#).
- 9 Source: [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#).

# Statistics for forcibly displaced and all other people protected and/or assisted by UNHCR

This report analyses changes and trends in forced displacement from January to December 2025 among people covered by the mandate of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.<sup>10</sup> The data presented are based on information received as of 1 May 2026 unless otherwise indicated.

At the end of 2025, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was estimated at **117.8 million**.<sup>11</sup> This figure encompasses refugees under UNHCR’s mandate, Palestine refugees under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East’s (UNRWA) mandate, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) and other people in need of international protection.

UNHCR also estimates the population that it protects and/or assists. This includes those who have been forcibly displaced (refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and other people in need of international protection); those who have returned home within the previous year; those who are stateless (most of whom are not forcibly displaced); and other groups to whom UNHCR has extended its protection or provided assistance on a humanitarian basis. At the end of 2025, this figure stood at **129.4 million** people.

These two categorizations are compared in the graphic below. A detailed breakdown of the population that UNHCR protects and/or assists is provided in the [annex tables](#) by category and country.

The statistics in this report have been produced following UNHCR’s Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics.<sup>12</sup> The figures are based on data reported by governments, non-governmental organizations, UNHCR and other United Nations (UN) agencies. Statistics were received or compiled for 190 countries, two more than at the end of 2024.

The supervisory role of UNHCR concerning the application of refugee law instruments involves, inter alia, obtaining from governments information and statistical data concerning the condition of refugees.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the mandate of UNHCR to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless people “encourages States which are in possession of statistics on stateless persons or individuals with undetermined nationality to share those statistics with UNHCR and calls on UNHCR to establish a more formal, systematic methodology for information gathering, updating and sharing”.<sup>14</sup>

The numbers presented are rounded to the closest hundred or thousand. As some adjustments may appear later in the year in the Refugee Data Finder,<sup>15</sup> figures contained in this report should be considered provisional and subject to change. Unless otherwise specified, the report does not refer to events occurring after 31 December 2025.

After the closure of its Regional Bureau for Southern Africa,<sup>16</sup> UNHCR has six regional bureaux (see chart below).<sup>17</sup> Countries within the Americas region (22.8 million) host the largest number of forcibly displaced people, followed by countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (22.7 million), the Middle East and North Africa (21.8 million), Europe (18.1 million), West and Central Africa (16.4 million) and the Asia and Pacific region (15.5 million).

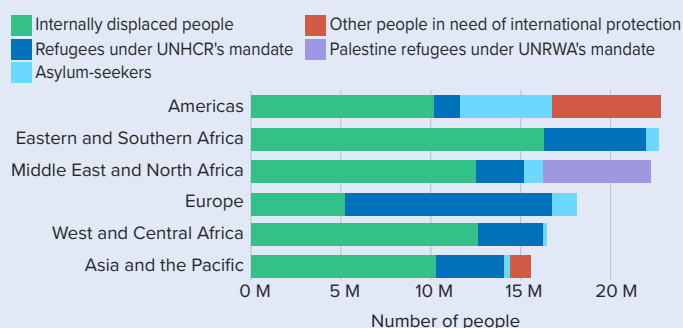
## UNHCR’s new Refugee Data Portal is coming soon!

In the third quarter of 2026, UNHCR will launch a new **Refugee Data Portal**, which will integrate UNHCR population statistics with quality-assured socio-economic and protection indicators for the first time. For UNHCR and its partners, this will mark a transformation of official statistics on forcibly displaced and stateless people such that they not only describe the scale of displacement challenges, but also inform effective sustainable responses to them, enabling more effective coordination of humanitarian, development and government action through reliable interoperable open data. The portal is being developed with the support of the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center. Read more about the [new Refugee Data Portal](#).



[View maps showing totals by population group and country.](#)

[View annex tables by category and country.](#)



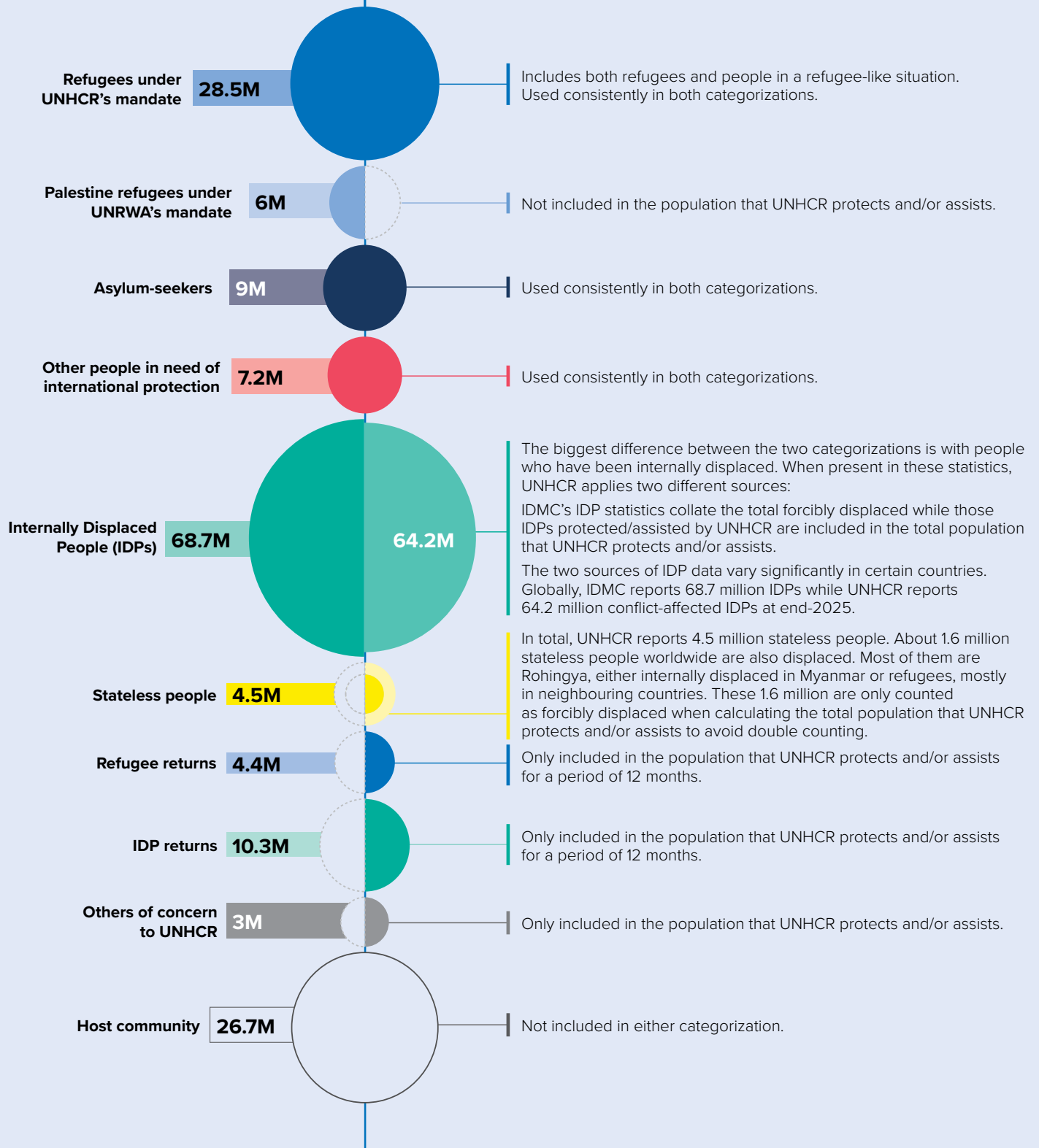
<sup>10</sup> See [Methodology, Refugee Data Finder](#), UNHCR, for a definition of each population group.  
<sup>11</sup> See [What is the difference between population statistics for forcibly displaced and the population that UNHCR protects and/or assists?](#), UNHCR.  
<sup>12</sup> See [Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics](#), UNHCR.  
<sup>13</sup> See [Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), 1951, Article 35, paragraph 2, UNHCR.  
<sup>14</sup> See [A Thematic Compilation of Executive Committee Conclusions](#), 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 2014, UNHCR.  
<sup>15</sup> See [Refugee Data Finder](#), UNHCR.  
<sup>16</sup> See [UNHCR announces closure of its Southern Africa Bureau as part of realignment review](#), September 2025, UNHCR.  
<sup>17</sup> See the updated regions in [Annex 18: Countries and regions](#), UNHCR.

## Forcibly displaced people 117.8 million<sup>18</sup>

This figure encompasses refugees under UNHCR's mandate, Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate, asylum-seekers, IDPs and other people in need of international protection.

## Population UNHCR protects and/or assists 129.4 million

This includes those who have been forcibly displaced (refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and other people in need of international protection); those who have returned home within the previous year; those who are stateless; and other groups to whom UNHCR has extended its protection or provided assistance on a humanitarian basis.



<sup>18</sup> See [What is the difference between population statistics for forcibly displaced and the population that UNHCR protects and/or assists?](#), UNHCR. UNRWA estimates that 70 per cent of the 2 million IDPs in the Gaza Strip at end-2025 were Palestine refugees under its mandate. These internally displaced refugees under UNRWA's mandate are only counted once in the global forcibly displaced total.



*UKRAINE. Tetiana lives in Kramtorsk in the Donetsk region, a town where the sound of shelling has become a daily reality. Her home was damaged by shelling that shattered windows and destroyed her stove, her only source of heating. With support from UNHCR partner Angels of Salvation, she received emergency materials and a mobile team then conducted urgent repairs which restored her windows and stove, ensuring she could heat her home and stay warm.*

*Since 2022, over 13 per cent – 2.5 million Ukrainian homes – have been damaged or destroyed. More than 400 homes have been repaired since 2024.*

*© ANGELS OF SALVATION/OLEKSIY GUTNYK*

## CHAPTER 1

# Global forced displacement

“ For too many refugees, displacement starts as a lifeline but lasts a lifetime. Humanitarian aid saves lives, but it is not the end point and does not enable refugees to become active agents in control of their futures. We need a paradigm shift that creates a new sense of hope and opportunity for people fleeing war and persecution. ”

**Barham Salih** UN High Commissioner for Refugees

## Overview

Global forced displacement fell during 2025, for the first time in a decade. This change reflects a sharp increase in the returns of refugees and IDPs in some of the world's largest displacement situations, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Syria. However, many of the returns occurred under adverse circumstances to fragile contexts where the reintegration conditions remain extremely challenging. Based on the reported statistics, the number of people worldwide forced to flee persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order and who remained displaced at the end of 2025 dropped to **117.8 million**. This represents 5.4 million fewer people remaining displaced than at the end of 2024, a decline of 4 per cent. One in 70 people globally were forcibly displaced at the end of 2025.

The number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate, including people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection, fell by nearly 1.2 million people to **35.6 million** at end-2025. In addition, almost **6 million** refugees were under

the mandate of the UNRWA. New individual asylum applications during the year outpaced the number of decisions on those asylum claims, with the estimated number of asylum-seekers awaiting decisions on their claims growing by 645,300 to almost **9 million**. IDPs accounted for 58 per cent of all those forced to flee, with **68.7 million** remaining in displacement, 7 per cent, or 4.9 million, fewer than at the end of 2024.<sup>19</sup>

During 2025, almost **5.4 million people** were forced to flee and seek safety in other, predominantly neighbouring, countries.<sup>20</sup> Eight countries accounted for nearly six in ten of them in 2025: Sudan (952,700), Ukraine (788,100),<sup>21</sup> Venezuela (455,300), South Sudan (232,800), Burkina Faso (221,300), Afghanistan (191,400), Mali (177,200) and Myanmar (165,400).<sup>22</sup>

Returns of refugees and IDPs increased by 50 per cent compared to 2024, reaching just over 14.7 million and constituted one of the highest return periods on record.<sup>23</sup> However, most of the returns have occurred under adverse circumstances and to areas where

<sup>19</sup> Source: [IDMC](#).

<sup>20</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>21</sup> Temporary protection granted to Ukrainians does not necessarily reflect new displacement since it could include reapplications or reactivations from those refugees who were already granted refugee status following temporary visits to Ukraine as well as duplicated registrations across countries. Furthermore, Ukrainians that have been granted temporary protection may also have lodged individual asylum applications. See [Ukraine population movements: factsheet 3, May 2026](#), UNHCR.

<sup>22</sup> The increase in Bangladesh can be largely attributed to enhanced biometric enrolment of Rohingya, including for individuals who arrived in earlier years.

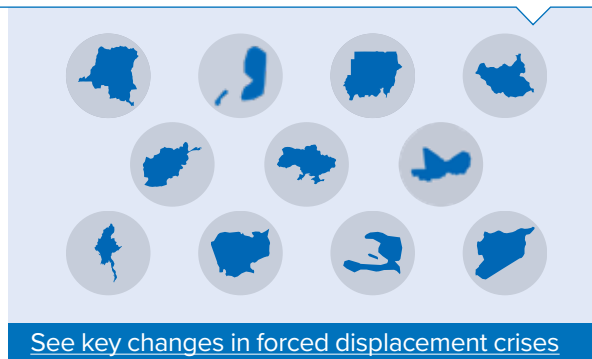
<sup>23</sup> The reported refugee returns may include the return of registered refugees as well as other people that had been forced to leave their country of origin. In large-scale return movements, it is often extremely challenging to differentiate returnees based on their legal status in their country of displacement.

insecurity persists, access to basic services is lacking or severely limited and infrastructure is damaged, raising concerns about their sustainability and protection risks upon return.<sup>24</sup> Refugee returns to, and IDP returns within, six countries – the Democratic Republic of the Congo (3.6 million), Sudan (3.6 million),<sup>25</sup> Syria (3.3 million), Afghanistan (2 million), Ukraine (718,300) and Myanmar (415,200) – accounted for 92 per cent of all returns of forcibly displaced people during 2025.

While the number of refugees that arrived through resettlement or sponsorship pathways<sup>26</sup> in 2024 was the highest for at least four decades, that momentum has not been sustained. In 2025, reported arrivals through resettlement or sponsorship pathways fell by more than half to 81,800, as there were fewer arrivals in major resettlement countries, particularly the United States of America.<sup>27</sup> This sharp decline comes at a time when UNHCR estimated that 2.9 million refugees needed resettlement in 2025, underscoring the growing gap between needs and available solutions.<sup>28</sup>

## How is global forced displacement changing in 2026?

In early 2026, several major developments have affected global forced displacement trends. Since late February 2026, escalating hostilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon have already generated widespread displacement, civilian casualties and large-scale damage to homes and civilian infrastructure. There are an estimated **1 million IDPs in Lebanon** at the time of writing this report and **3.2 million temporarily displaced in the Islamic Republic of Iran** as of the end of March 2026.<sup>29</sup> A fragile ceasefire in the Islamic Republic of Iran was agreed in early April and subsequently extended, while in Lebanon, notwithstanding the cessation of hostilities agreed in mid-April, significant military activity and forced evacuation orders have continued. It remains unclear whether displaced populations will be able to return home in the near future, with displacement likely to be prolonged. The conflict has also weakened the protection environment



for refugees in both Lebanon and the Islamic Republic of Iran and triggered significant humanitarian needs, leading to increased returns under adverse circumstances. By mid-May 2026, around **549,800 Syrians** and **678,500 Afghans** had returned to their countries of origin from several host countries.<sup>30</sup> Many reportedly returned due to the deteriorating security situation in their country of asylum. The decrease has also been observed in UNHCR's nowcasting estimates of refugees and asylum-seekers,<sup>31</sup> which combines data from UNHCR's registration system and available government statistics.

In **Venezuela**, there has also been an increase in spontaneous returns, as well as returns facilitated through State mechanisms, amid perceptions that conditions in the country are improving. According to publicly available figures, the government estimates that more than 1.2 million individuals have returned to the country since 2018. In **Mali**, the security situation deteriorated sharply. The partial blockade of Bamako by insurgent groups at the end of April 2026 is expected to drive further displacement.<sup>32</sup> Updated statistics on internal displacement are also available for key situations, including a further decrease of approximately 200,000 in Sudan.<sup>33</sup>

As of end-April 2026, UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement has remained at a similar level to, or slightly lower than end-2025 (i.e., approximately 117 to 118 million people).

<sup>24</sup> See the [insight on refugee returns](#) and the [IDP returns section](#) in the Solutions chapter for details.

<sup>25</sup> Figures relating to the movement of Sudanese nationals from Egypt are based on various sources and include self-organised returns, including in adverse circumstances, as well as pendular movements. In addition, this number may include deportations or forced returns of Sudanese nationals. See [UNHCR guidance note on the international protection needs of people fleeing Sudan](#), paragraph 22, April 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>26</sup> See the definition of sponsorship pathways in the [UNHCR master glossary of terms](#), UNHCR (accessed 01 May 2026).

<sup>27</sup> Arrivals were impacted following Executive Order 14163 signed on 20 January, 2025, which suspended the entry of most refugees through the USA's resettlement programme.

<sup>28</sup> See [Projected global resettlement needs 2025](#), June 2024, UNHCR.

<sup>29</sup> See [Middle East situation](#), Operational Data Portal (accessed 01 May 2026) and [UNHCR: Up to 3.2 million Iranians temporarily displaced in Iran as conflict intensifies](#), March 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>30</sup> See [Middle East situation](#), Operational Data Portal (accessed 20 May 2026) and [Comprehensive overview of refugee returnees dashboard](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>31</sup> See [Nowcasting of refugee and asylum-seeker statistics](#), UNHCR.

<sup>32</sup> See [Mali: Guterres calls for international solutions to curb spread of violent extremism in the Sahel](#), April 2026, UN News.

<sup>33</sup> See the [Sudan country page](#) on the operational data portal, UNHCR.

## Protracted refugee situations

### Protracted refugee situation definition

Almost seven in ten refugees globally are in protracted situations,<sup>34</sup> based on UNHCR’s definition of protracted refugee situations:

**Protracted situations are defined as those where refugees have been in exile for five years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions.**

While this definition should still be seen as a reflection of the situation as a whole as it does not refer to the circumstances of individual refugees, it includes all refugees in protracted situations.<sup>35</sup>

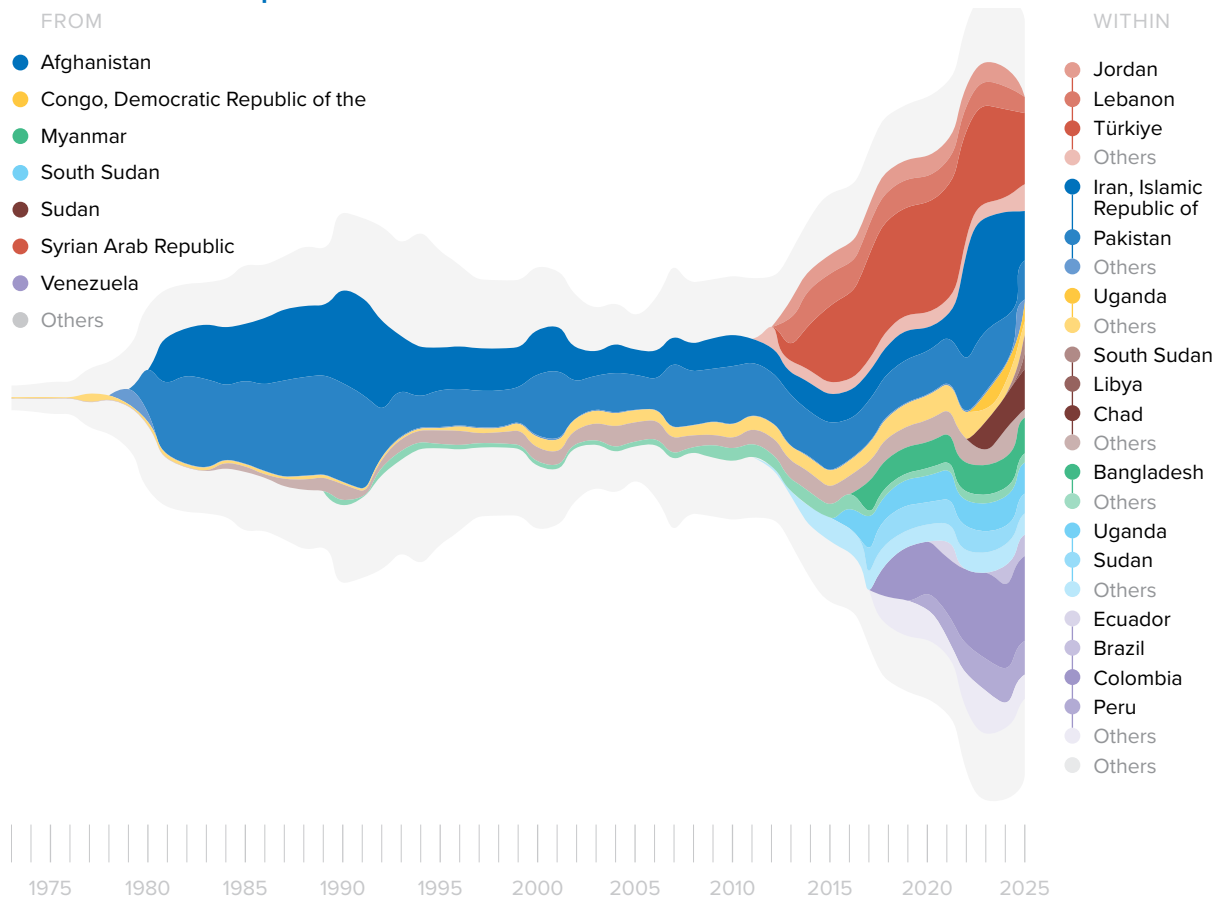
The present analysis focuses on low- and middle-income countries in light of the particular pressures that large and prolonged refugee situations may place on communities with comparatively more limited resources. Nonetheless, protracted refugee situations remain relevant in high-income countries where refugees may

also continue to face long-term protection, inclusion and solutions challenges.

Previously, a threshold of 25,000 refugees was also considered to classify the situation as protracted. However, this excluded situations with refugees falling below it. For example, in 2025, the 24,800 Eritreans hosted in Egypt or the 23,200 Rwandans in Uganda would have been excluded. This is despite the fact that refugees from these countries of origin have been present in these host countries for decades.

The largest protracted situations are shown below in figure 1, and in 2025, eight in ten refugees in a protracted situation came from just seven countries. It is also clear that, as the total number of refugees has grown over the years as new crises have erupted, most of the situations have remained unresolved. Hence the number of refugees in protracted situations has grown at a similar pace. In light of the adjusted definition, there were 24.9 million refugees in just over 1,300 protracted situations worldwide in 2025. By comparison, 9.2 million refugees were in about 500 protracted situations in 2000, rising to 14.2 million refugees in about 1,000 protracted situations by 2016.

Figure 1 | **Protracted situations of refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection | 1975 - 2025**



<sup>34</sup> Includes people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection. Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s mandate are excluded from this analysis.  
<sup>35</sup> See the definition in the [Conclusion on protracted refugee situations, No. 109 \(LXI\) – 2009](#), December 2009, UNHCR.

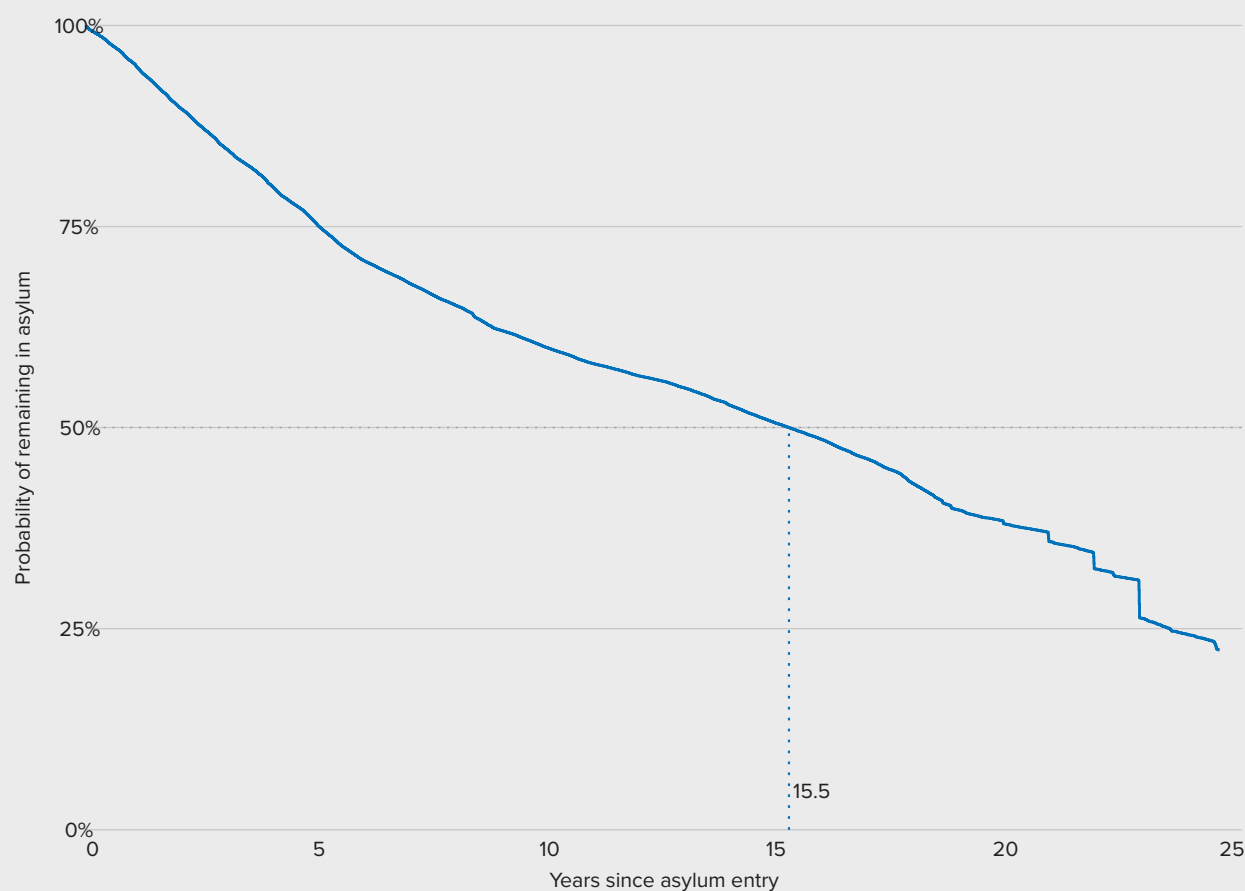
### How long do individuals remain as refugees or asylum-seekers?

Recent analysis by UNHCR in the Eastern and Southern Africa region highlights how long individual refugees and asylum-seekers remain displaced.<sup>36</sup> The analysis uses the data UNHCR maintains in its case management system about refugees and asylum-seekers. This includes the events recorded from the day of a person's first registration in the system until their case closes, whether through a durable solution, a change in legal status, death or for an administrative reason. Often these changes are only identified during verification exercises or reviews of registration data quality. For the purpose of this analysis, the data was filtered to include cases recorded during the last 25 years in the region. At the end of 2025, 6.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers were recorded in UNHCR's

registration system in the region. Refugees and asylum-seeker statistics for most countries within the region are sourced from UNHCR's system.

Overall, the median time spent in asylum by people registered as refugees or asylum-seekers in Eastern and Southern Africa between 2001 and 2025 was just under 16 years (see figure 2). Most de-registering of refugees and asylum-seekers occurs in the first five years of their displacement, followed by a slower, steady decline for the next 15 years. The estimates for the first 15 years are derived from millions of records. By contrast, estimates beyond 20 years are derived from a smaller subset of records, where the refugees and asylum-seekers have been in the system long enough to be observed. Given these factors, these longer-term estimates are best considered as indicative rather than precise.

Figure 2 | Time spent in asylum for refugees and asylum-seekers in Eastern and Southern Africa | 2001 - 2025



<sup>36</sup> See [The long horizon of displacement in Eastern and Southern Africa](#), June 2026, UNHCR and see also [Global Trends 2021](#), June 2022, UNHCR, page 20: "How long do refugees remain displaced in protracted situations?".

Within the overall figure, there is significant variation by age, sex, family size and for specific nationalities in countries of asylum. Those registered before they reach five years old stay longer than any other group, equivalent to their entire childhood within the asylum system. The median duration decreases with each successive age cohort to just under 11 years for refugees and asylum-seekers who are over 60 years old. Family size matters more than the sex or age of refugees and asylum-seekers. Families of five or more stay almost 19 years while single person households remain in exile for less than six years. Men and boys remain refugees and asylum-seekers for just over 14 years, while for women and girls it is nearly 17 years.

What is clear from the analysis is that asylum in Eastern and Southern Africa is not a short-term event that can be managed effectively along emergency timelines. The median duration is closer to a generation than a few seasons. Education systems serving refugee children therefore need to plan for cohorts that will pass through primary, secondary and tertiary stages while remaining in asylum. Access to civil registry documentation, freedom of movement, the right to work and other socio-economic rights need to be guaranteed beyond the

emergency phase, as the emergency phase is not where refugees and asylum-seekers spend most of their time in displacement.

When asylum lasts a generation, achieving a durable solution cannot depend on short-term assistance or limited access to third-country pathways. It requires systematic investment in expanding and sustaining inclusion in national systems, including access to trusted identity credentials, facilitated access to labour markets and the right to work and access to national social protection benefits. These efforts should be complemented by area-based development approaches that enable refugees to (re)gain dignity, foster self-reliance and participate in local economies alongside their host communities. At the same time, the failure to access meaningful opportunities and safe alternatives remains a key factor prompting individuals to undertake onward journeys, which are often exploitative and dangerous. Together, these measures enable refugees to make informed choices regarding durable solutions in their country of origin when conditions are conducive, in their country of asylum or through regular admission pathways to a third country, as appropriate.

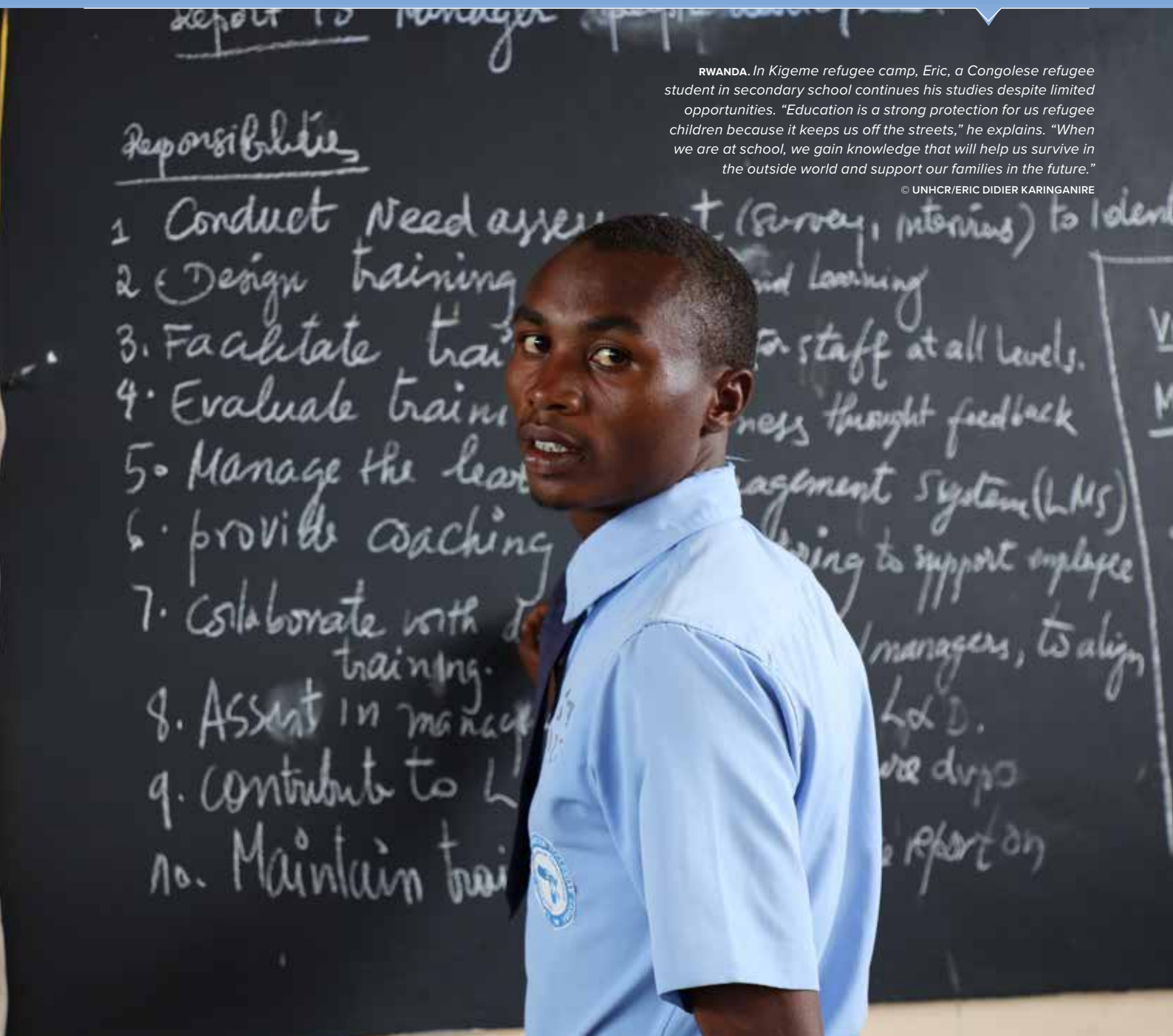
*ZAMBIA. Aged 7, William fled from Angola. Now 60, he has built a life in Mayukwayukwa refugee settlement, raising a family and supporting them through his business. Yet his former refugee status still restricts his movement, making it difficult for him to sustain his business. His children also face an uncertain future, neither recognized as Zambian nor Angolan, leaving them at risk of statelessness. "I have lived here for 60 years - Zambia is my home. If I were to go back to Angola, I would have no home there," he reflects. "Zambians are my friends. We go to church together, we live together, and our children go to school together." UNHCR and partners continue to support refugees' self-reliance and local integration efforts.*

© UNHCR/CHARITY NZOMO



**RWANDA.** In Kigeme refugee camp, Eric, a Congolese refugee student in secondary school continues his studies despite limited opportunities. "Education is a strong protection for us refugee children because it keeps us off the streets," he explains. "When we are at school, we gain knowledge that will help us survive in the outside world and support our families in the future."

© UNHCR/ERIC DIDIER KARINGANIRE



## INSIGHT 1

### The High Commissioner's 50 by 35: Dignity and Solutions initiative to reduce aid dependency and expand solutions

Long-term displacement has become a defining feature of the global refugee landscape, with most refugees remaining in host countries for extended periods. In this context, humanitarian support is not sufficient and advancing self-reliance and durable solutions, alongside continued protection, is essential to moving beyond cycles of prolonged aid dependency and achieving more

sustainable outcomes for refugees and for the countries that host them.

UNHCR aims to support States and partners in halving, by 2035, the number of refugees and other people in need of international protection in protracted displacement who are unable to meet their basic needs

without external humanitarian assistance.<sup>37</sup> It will do this by working with international financial institutions, development and humanitarian partners, the private sector, civil society and refugees themselves. By accelerating sustainable responses that promote self-reliance and durable solutions, this approach brings greater scale and consistency to existing efforts. It also translates commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees and many pledges made in successive Global Refugee Forums into a single, measurable objective.<sup>38</sup>

This is not a call to withdraw aid, but to ensure that, over time, fewer people need to depend on humanitarian assistance. At its core, the vision is to enable refugees to live in dignity and security, realise their potential, and contribute to the communities and economies that host them. Strengthening self-reliance also builds skills, assets, and social capital that refugees can carry with them if and when return becomes possible. This, in turn, supports reconstruction, revitalizes local economies, and fosters stability in their countries of origin.

It builds on the foundations of the international refugee system. Access to asylum and protection remain non-negotiable, and targeted humanitarian assistance will continue wherever it is needed. The focus is to expand opportunities for self-reliance and durable solutions, enabling refugees to move beyond prolonged need on humanitarian assistance while supporting host countries to plan their responses with greater predictability of support.

Progress toward the target is measured using a simple, transparent benchmark grounded in a broad global consensus on poverty measurement and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>39</sup> A refugee is considered not self-reliant, or aid-dependent, if:

Their level of consumption, excluding the value of humanitarian assistance (including in-kind and cash transfers), is below the national poverty line of the host country.

Measuring the 50 by 35 target depends on reliable, comparable evidence over time. Progress is tracked using nationally owned data from representative surveys; the same tools governments and development partners use to assess economic vulnerability. This requires sustained investment in national statistical inclusion so that refugees are systematically counted in official data systems and poverty assessments. The target is based on a single indicator for comparability and consistency. However, a range of complementary metrics will help monitor why change happens in certain locations and not in others and help anchor refugee responses in national development frameworks.

Reaching the 50 by 35 target depends on four pathways. Voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution where it is safe and dignified, supported by stability, access to documentation, housing, national services and livelihood opportunities in areas of origin. In countries of asylum, access to livelihood opportunities, as well as inclusion in national systems (education, health, and social protection), enable refugees to build self-reliance. Third-country pathways, including resettlement, international labour mobility and family reunification, are an essential expression of international responsibility-sharing and help ease pressure on major hosting states. Finally, local integration and alternative legal pathways in some contexts provide a durable pathway out of prolonged dependency.

Achieving the 50 by 35 goal is ultimately a shared political and economic endeavour. With leadership from governments, sustained international financing in support of host countries, and expanded global responsibility-sharing, reducing aid dependency is achievable and will be transformative for refugees and the communities that host them. The 2035 target is anchored in today's situation, while also signalling a shift in how responses can be shaped from the outset of a new crisis. Going forwards, earlier inclusion, stronger self-reliance, upstream political efforts to prevent and reduce displacement, and sustained progress toward durable solutions over time will be core priorities.

<sup>37</sup> The 50 by 35 target is focused on low- and middle-income countries in light of the particular pressures that large and prolonged refugee situations may place on communities with comparatively more limited resources. Nonetheless, protracted refugee situations remain relevant in high-income countries where refugees may continue to face long-term protection, inclusion and solutions challenges, and where important commitments have been made under successive Global Refugee Forums in support of sustainable responses.

<sup>38</sup> See the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), 2018, UNHCR and the [Global Refugee Forum](#), UNHCR.

<sup>39</sup> See the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), UN.

**SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC.** Rabab stands in her destroyed Al Tadamon neighbourhood of Damascus, after returning home from a decade of displacement in the Azraq refugee camp in Jordan. For years, her family lived in a small caravan, surviving on humanitarian assistance and borrowed money. The neighbourhood is in ruins, and opportunities are scarce. "I used to dream every day of returning to my country," Rabab says. "And today, I hope my children can find job opportunities to help rebuild our lives again."

© UNHCR/VIVIAN TOUMEH



## INSIGHT 2

# Refugee returns in 2025 were mostly under adverse circumstances and/or to fragile contexts

## Overview

In 2025, 14.7 million people returned to their country or place of origin. Most had not left their own country, with IDP returns increasing by 25 per cent from the previous year to just over 10.3 million. Nearly 4.4 million refugee returns were also reported in 2025, nearly three times more than during 2024. This represents the second highest annual reported refugee returns since UNHCR records began in 1965.

As revealed in the regular intention surveys among refugees,<sup>40</sup> most have a strong desire to return and rebuild their lives in their home country given adequate safety and stability, access to rights and

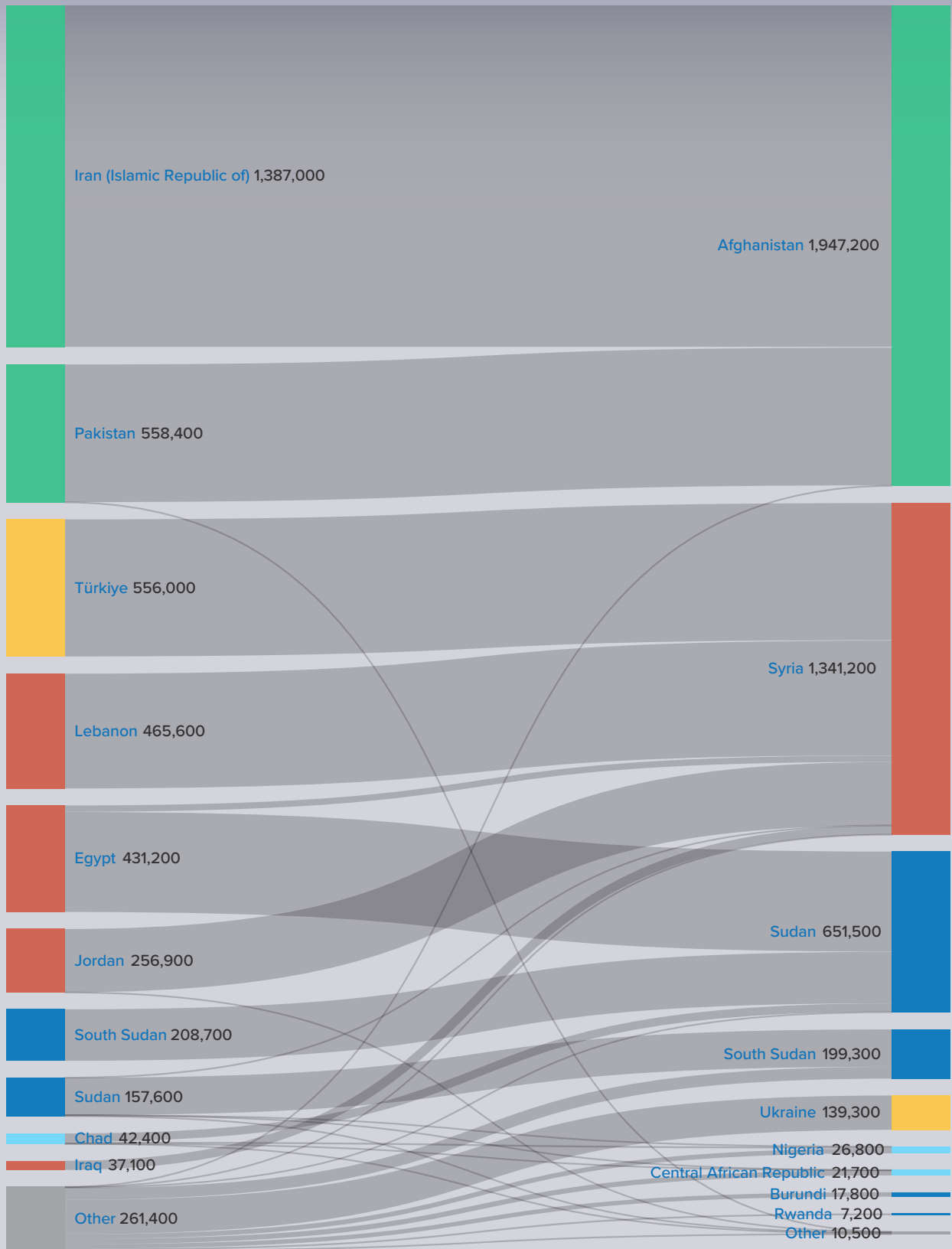
livelihoods. While some refugees and IDPs returned home during the year with the genuine hope to rebuild their lives after years of displacement, many of those returning in 2025 did so under adverse circumstances, driven by mounting pressures in countries of asylum.<sup>41</sup> Many also returned to extremely fragile situations, where the reintegration conditions remain extremely challenging.

This insight focuses on the nine largest refugee return movements in 2025 which together comprise almost all (99.8 per cent) of the reported refugee returns during 2025 (see figure 3). Operational data shows that returns have continued at scale in the first few months of 2026.

<sup>40</sup> For the most recent surveys, see [Intention surveys](#), UNHCR.

<sup>41</sup> See footnote 23.

Figure 3 | Refugee returnees by former country of asylum and origin | 2025



## Afghan returns under adverse circumstances and to an extremely fragile situation

Approximately 2.9 million Afghans returned,<sup>42</sup> including 1.9 million refugees,<sup>43</sup> the largest refugee return movement in 2025. Most refugees returned due to changes in the policies of host countries neighbouring Afghanistan with most returns assessed as involuntary in nature. The scale of returns has profoundly reduced the number of Afghan refugees globally. Having stood at 5.8 million at the end of 2024, its number fell to 3.7 million at the end of 2025.

More than four decades ago, Afghans first fled to neighbouring countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Both countries welcomed Afghans who had been forced to escape war, violence and persecution in their country in successive waves. However, restrictive government policies towards Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran<sup>44</sup> and Pakistan<sup>45</sup> have been introduced and applied. The resultant scale of returns to Afghanistan in 2025 was almost unprecedented. Out of 2.9 million Afghans reported to have returned, 1.9 million were refugees, a five-fold increase compared to the previous year. Many had lived in the Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan for prolonged periods, while some were born in those countries. Most returnees reported that they had little or no choice in their decision to return to Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> The pressure to return triggered abrupt departures with limited time to prepare, loss of assets, heightened the risk of involuntary family separation, further deepening existing vulnerabilities. Irrespective of their legal status, Afghans continue to face serious protection risks in Afghanistan amid the prevailing human rights situation, particularly women and girls, while struggling with socio-economic vulnerability, poor services and low levels of absorption capacity in their areas of return.<sup>47</sup>

From the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1.9 million Afghans returned during 2025, including 1.4 million refugees. The conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel in June 2025 exacerbated the already deteriorating protection environment as border enforcement tightened and deportations increased.<sup>48</sup> As a result, in July 2025, returns sometimes exceeded 40,000 people per day.

From Pakistan, approximately 1 million Afghans returned during 2025.<sup>49</sup> Four-fifths of Afghan returnees from Pakistan were women and children. UNHCR has called on the Government of Pakistan to exempt Afghans at heightened risk of harm upon return from the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan given their continued international protection needs and the fragile conditions for return in Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup> A further 2,000 Afghans were deported from Tajikistan.<sup>51</sup> In Türkiye, no official figures have been released, making it difficult to assess the full scale of returns; charter flights returning Afghan nationals continued in 2025 even though deportations appear to have declined compared with previous years.

According to consultations conducted by UNHCR, Afghan returnees face significant challenges. Many of those who returned in 2025 had weak ties to Afghanistan with limited social networks given the length of their displacement. Immediate assistance requirements include food, access to housing, restoration of property and access to basic services, particularly health and education. The long-term sustainability of returns remains uncertain given the extremely limited infrastructure, resources and economic opportunities in Afghanistan. Access to education for returnee children is more limited than for those Afghans that remained in their country, particularly for girls: only two-thirds of boys and less than half of girls reported that they had the same access to education as other Afghans. More than one-third of returnee households stated they could not access required medical services

<sup>42</sup> The total return figure encompasses deportations, assisted voluntary repatriations and other returns of Afghans of all statuses, including Proof of Registration cardholders, Afghan Citizenship Card holders, Amayesh card holders, headcount slip holders and the undocumented. It excludes passport/visa holders. See also [Returns to Afghanistan dashboard](#), UNHCR (accessed 20 May 2026).

<sup>43</sup> This includes refugees under UNHCR's mandate, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection. All further references to refugees in this chapter include all three population groups.

<sup>44</sup> The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran introduced a policy not to renew the headcount slips held by over 2 million Afghans and following the expiry of headcount slips on 20 March 2025 launched a regularization/return scheme for affected Afghans where the majority were expected to return to Afghanistan by the Government deadline of 6 July 2025 or face deportation. The scheme also provided for, inter alia, profiles at risk or vulnerable individuals to be assessed and allowed to stay.

<sup>45</sup> On 7 March 2025, the Government of Pakistan announced the resumption of the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan', initially targeting Afghan Citizenship Card holders, who were instructed to leave voluntarily by 31 March or face deportation from 1 April. On 31 July 2025, the Government applied more restrictive elements of the plan to also include Afghan refugees holding Proof of Registration cards. See [Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan, 2023, Laws and policies, Pakistan](#), April 2025, Rights Mapping and Analysis Platform (accessed 17 April 2026).

<sup>46</sup> See [2025 Afghan returns: One year recap](#), February 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>47</sup> See [Guidance note on Afghanistan – Update II](#), September 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>48</sup> See [2025 Afghan returns: One year recap](#), February 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>49</sup> This includes an estimated 558,400 refugee returnees.

<sup>50</sup> See [UNHCR expresses concern over the denotification of refugee villages and forced returns of Afghan refugees](#), October 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>51</sup> See [2025 Afghan returns: One year recap](#), February 2026, UNHCR.

during the previous six months. Food security remained an additional concern with more than four out of five returnee households reporting having to skip at least one meal a day. Only 60 per cent of returnees stated that they have an income source with respondents highlighting a stark gender imbalance. While two-thirds of men reported to be able to generate an income, this was only possible for one-quarter of returnee women.<sup>52</sup>

In 2026, returns of Afghans have continued, including as a result of deportations. Up until mid-May, the estimated total has reached 678,500.<sup>53</sup> Returns of Afghans have been driven both by the shrinking protection space in neighbouring countries and following the renewed onset of war in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which recommenced in February 2026.

### Fragile hope for Syrians

Syria has been one of the largest forced displacement situations for more than a decade. At the end of 2024, the total number of refugees stood around 6 million. However, the circumstances drastically changed in December 2024 following the fall of the Assad Government.

During 2025, around 1.3 million Syrians returned from abroad – nearly three times the figure recorded the previous year – while 2 million Syrian IDPs headed back to their places of origin.<sup>54</sup> Most refugees returned from Türkiye (556,000), Lebanon (465,600), Jordan (256,700), Iraq (37,100) and Egypt (25,600). While new displacement continued, as a result of the large scale of returns, the global Syrian refugee population decreased to 4.9 million by the end of 2025.

Many returnees express cautious hope as they face substantial challenges in rebuilding their lives, including continued insecurity, widespread destruction, a fragile socio-economic situation, depleted services and limited livelihood prospects. Sporadic violence persists in some parts of the country, with hostilities continuing in the north, south and coastal areas.<sup>55</sup> In March 2025, hostilities resulted in at least 1,400 civilian deaths, while some

40,000 individuals fled to Lebanon.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in July 2025, violent clashes in As-Sweida led to 1,700 deaths and displaced more than 162,500 people.<sup>57</sup> Explosive ordnance continues to pose daily dangers and has caused 590 deaths and more than a thousand injuries during the year to November 2025. Despite these risks, more than seven in ten Syrian returnees report improvements in the security conditions and their freedom of movement.<sup>58</sup>

Syria continues to be affected by one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. In 2026, some 15.6 million people – over six in ten of the estimated 25.6 million inhabitants – require humanitarian assistance.<sup>59</sup> Socio-economic conditions remain extremely fragile: according to the United Nations Development Programme, 90 per cent of Syrians lived in poverty and one-quarter were unemployed in 2025. Fourteen years of civil war have cost the country an estimated 800 billion USD in lost Gross Domestic Product,<sup>60</sup> and the availability of basic services, including healthcare, education, judicial and administrative institutions, remains extremely limited across Syria, as years of conflict, economic decline, and infrastructure damage continue to undermine service delivery at scale.<sup>61</sup>

Legal documentation is another major challenge: one-quarter of refugee returnees and 15 per cent of IDP returnees lack civil papers. Many civil registry offices are only partially operational, constraining access to documents and services.<sup>62</sup> This, in turn, complicates the restitution of housing, land and property rights, amid widespread destruction of homes, risks of eviction, looting and unresolved property disputes. Nearly half of Syrian refugees reported owning land or property, yet only one tenth considered their home habitable.<sup>63</sup> Access to housing, land and property, including documentation, is a key determinant shaping the timing and feasibility of returns.

Psychosocial needs are substantial: more than two-fifths of refugees and IDP returnees report stress-related symptoms linked to their displacement, yet access to mental health support remains limited. Female-headed

<sup>52</sup> See [Afghanistan post-return monitoring survey report](#), December 2025, UNHCR and [Afghan returns: experiences, challenges and prospects for reintegration](#), August 2025, Mixed Migration Centre.

<sup>53</sup> See the [Returns to Afghanistan dashboard](#), up to 16 May 2026, UNHCR (accessed 20 May 2026).

<sup>54</sup> The scale of Syrian returns in 2025 was approximately in line with the projected level of 1.5 million refugees and 2 million IDPs that was estimated in early 2025. See [Global trends: Forced displacement in 2024](#), June 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>55</sup> See [Humanitarian response priorities: Syrian Arab Republic, January to December 2025](#), July 2025, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

<sup>56</sup> See [International Protection Considerations with Regard to Asylum-Seekers from the Syrian Arab Republic](#), May 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>57</sup> See [UN Commission documents grave violations in July 2025 escalation in Sweida](#), March 2026, UN.

<sup>58</sup> See [Coming home: One year into Syria's transition](#), December 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>59</sup> See [Syrian Arab Republic](#), OCHA (accessed 17 April 2026).

<sup>60</sup> See [Accelerating economic recovery is critical to reversing Syria's decline and restoring stability](#), February 2025, UNDP.

<sup>61</sup> See [Coming home: One year into Syria's transition](#), December 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Includes refugee and IDP returnees that did not possess at least one key civil document.

<sup>63</sup> See [Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria, Wave 2](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

households face more limited access to economic opportunities, while returnee children are at higher risk of school dropout and engagement in child labour. Girls face additional barriers, including restrictions on movement and dress and elevated risks of gender-based violence.<sup>64</sup>

The return dynamics remain complex. Despite a decline in short-term return intentions, movements have continued. Survey data shows that the proportion of Syrians intending to return within one year rose from fewer than 2 per cent in late 2024 to 27 per cent in January 2025, before declining to 14 per cent in December 2025.<sup>65</sup> The decline during 2025 points to a shift in timelines rather than a reduced willingness to return. In fact, actual returns have continued at scale and the long-term prospects for more Syrians to return remains strong, with around 77 per cent of respondents expressing a desire to return eventually.

While respondents expressed cautious optimism about recovery prospects inside Syria, their decisions to return are also shaped by the conditions in host countries. Notably, most recent returns occurred among households that had not previously indicated short-term intentions, underscoring how quickly decisions can change as circumstances evolve. For example, in 2026 returns have accelerated, with 549,800 as of mid-May, driven largely by the deteriorating protection environment in Lebanon.<sup>66</sup>

## Sudanese and South Sudanese returns

As the conflict in Sudan enters its fourth year, Sudanese refugees and IDPs have returned to areas where fighting has subsided. In 2025, 651,500 Sudanese refugees and 2.9 million IDPs were reported to have returned to their country or place of origin. Almost all Sudanese returns were from neighbouring countries, notably Egypt (405,700) and South Sudan (208,700).<sup>67</sup> Most returnees headed to Al Jazirah and Sennar States, as well as Khartoum, even though conditions in these locations are not yet conducive for longer term reintegration.<sup>68</sup> Many Sudanese refugees have begun returning to rebuild their

lives. Even those settling in relatively safer areas face extremely challenging conditions. Basic services are largely non-functional, infrastructure is heavily degraded, contamination from explosive ordnance represents a serious risk in major urban areas, houses have been damaged and economic opportunities remain extremely limited. The socio-economic factors were compounded by extreme weather and disease outbreaks, including cholera.<sup>69</sup>

The dire situation in Sudan has also triggered a reversal of movements of South Sudanese refugees who had previously fled to Sudan and who were forced to return to their country, driven by the escalating levels of violence and insecurity in Sudan, compounded by food insecurity and the collapse of livelihoods.<sup>70</sup> Around 199,300 South Sudanese refugees returned to their country during 2025, including 151,600 from Sudan. These occurred even while the situation in South Sudan worsened, with growing violence and deepening political and inter-communal tensions.<sup>71</sup> Despite the deteriorating and extremely volatile situation in South Sudan, a further 42,400 South Sudanese refugees have returned from Sudan during 2026.<sup>72</sup>

## Ukrainian returns

As the international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation ground on, the ability of Ukrainian refugees to return remained significantly constrained. Yet an estimated 139,300 Ukrainian refugees did return in 2025, largely from Poland (32,000), Germany (25,000) and Bulgaria (17,000).<sup>73</sup> As Ukraine advances recovery planning amid the ongoing war, UNHCR, in partnership with Brunel University of London, has developed an agent-based model to simulate potential refugee return patterns under a range of plausible future scenarios. Across all scenarios, the strongest determinants of returns are security, housing availability and perceived economic opportunities.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See [Coming home: One year into Syria's transition](#), December 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>65</sup> See [Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria, Wave 2](#), April 2026, UNHCR and [Enhanced regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria](#), September 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>66</sup> See [Middle East situation](#), Operational Data Portal (accessed 20 May 2026) and [Comprehensive overview of refugee returnees dashboard](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>67</sup> See footnote 25.

<sup>68</sup> See [Three years on, war-weary Sudanese remain on the move](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>69</sup> See [The Sudan emergency: Three years on, 2025 update](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>70</sup> See [South Sudan: Overview of spontaneous refugee returns](#), June 2025, UNHCR.

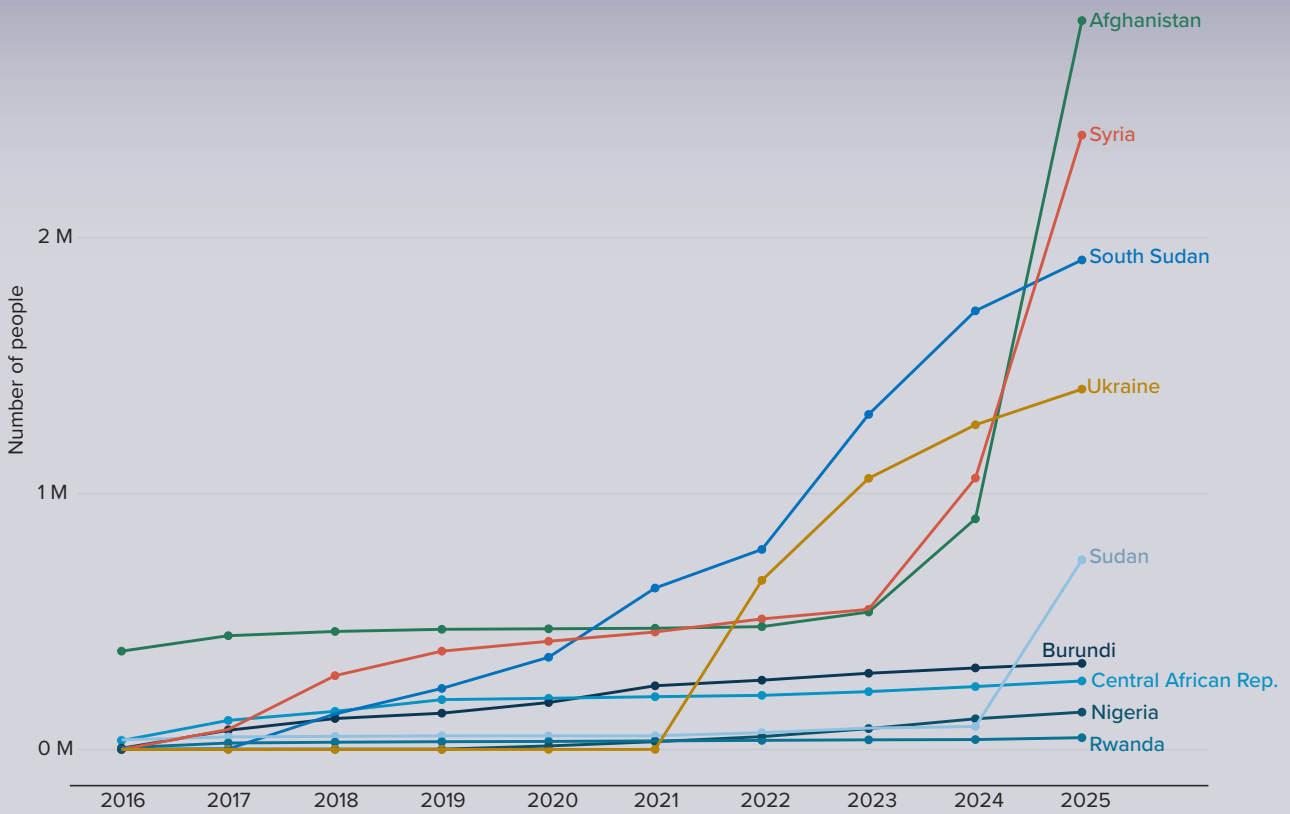
<sup>71</sup> See [Stakes rise for South Sudan: What's happening, and why it matters](#), November 2025, UN.

<sup>72</sup> See [South Sudan situation population dashboard](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>73</sup> The number of refugee returns to Ukraine is estimated using [Ukraine — Returns Report — General Population Survey Round 22](#), January 2026, International Organization for Migration (IOM).

<sup>74</sup> See [Forecasting refugee return to Ukraine amid ongoing war and uncertainty](#), January 2026, UNHCR.

Figure 4 | Cumulative refugee returns by country of origin | 2016-2025



**Burundi, Central African Republic, Nigeria and Rwanda**

Elsewhere, refugees did return voluntarily and returns took place under conditions that were more conducive to sustainable reintegration in their country of origin. Yet taken together, returns to Nigeria (26,800), the Central African Republic (21,700), Burundi (17,800) and Rwanda (7,200) constituted just 2 per cent of all refugee returns in 2025.

Most returns to these countries received support to repatriate, in safety and dignity, from UNHCR, the governments in their former countries of asylum and the refugees’ country of origin. However, returnees still faced challenges. For example, while improved stability in Burundi enabled 17,800 refugees to return in 2025, some were compelled to do so under adverse circumstances, raising concerns related to refoulement. Reports from early 2026 indicate that certain returnees experienced the demolition of shelters or mistreatment, prompting premature movement to already overcrowded departure centres.<sup>75</sup>

**Many refugees hope to return, investment is urgently needed**

Decisions to return are complex and highly individualised. They are shaped by conditions in host countries, clarity on legal status upon return, the extent of continued access to rights, perceptions of security in areas of return and prospects of sustainable reintegration, including economic opportunities.<sup>76</sup> Many refugees who have chosen to return show determination and hope to rebuild their lives and contribute to the recovery of their countries. However, in 2025, most refugee returns have been as a result of adverse circumstances in countries of asylum or to fragile situations in their country of origin (see figure 4 above).

As such, without critical investment in reintegration — including support to restore livelihood and basic services and to promote recovery and development in conflict-affected countries — the sustainability of such returns are at risk.

<sup>75</sup> See [UNHCR calls for urgent support to sustain refugee protection and returnee reintegration in Burundi](#), UNHCR.  
<sup>76</sup> See [Forecasting refugee return to Ukraine amid ongoing war and uncertainty](#), January 2026, UNHCR.

Investment is also required in countries of asylum to enable refugees to sustain themselves and their families, as well as to contribute meaningfully to their country of asylum until the conditions in their country of origin allow their safe and dignified return. For example, a recent study on the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees highlights how un- and underemployment limits potential GDP contributions and refugee self-reliance.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, it is imperative that countries of asylum uphold their international protection obligations. These include the principle of non-refoulement, ensuring access to territory and to fair and efficient asylum procedures, preserving asylum space, and refraining from policies

and practices that generate or exacerbate involuntary return while international protection needs persist.

Adequate resources combined with accurate and timely data are essential to assess the situation of refugees, returnees and those who remained in their country. Robust evidence helps to strengthen the understanding of their needs, to identify challenges and opportunities for practical solutions, to enable more targeted support to those most at risk and to allocate resources more efficiently.



**KENYA.** *Mirera, a Burundian refugee from Kakuma camp, (fourth from right), voluntarily returns home with her children to reunite with her husband after years of being displaced. "I am glad to be going back, and I look forward to continuing my grocery business to provide for my children" she said. She setup her business after arriving in Kakuma in 2017.*

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<sup>77</sup> See [Labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees in Europe: Employment gaps, skill mismatches and economic gains](#), January 2026, UNHCR.

TÜRKİYE. Hala, a refugee from the Syrian Arab Republic (left), Hibeel, and Raffif spend several hours daily crocheting toys for the Bebemoss project. The initiative not only links Turkish and Syrian refugee women through traditional crafts but also fosters emotional connections and a shared sense of purpose. In a world where displacement often leads to isolation, this project aims to celebrate the strength, creativity, and resilience that emerge when women come together across cultures.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Refugees

**41.6** MILLION

refugees at the end of 2025 (-3 per cent) including:

- 27 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate.
- 1.5 million people in a refugee-like situation.
- 7.2 million other people in need of international protection.
- 6 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

**7** IN **10**

refugees under UNHCR's mandate originate from just six countries.

## Overview

The global refugee number declined slightly during 2025 by 3 per cent to reach 41.6 million at the end of the year, including Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate. The number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate, including people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection, stood at 35.6 million, also 3 per cent lower than end-2024 (see figure 5). The overall decrease was mainly due to the large number of returns during the year, particularly to Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria (see the [insight on refugee returns](#)). The total also included a sharp drop in the number of people in a refugee-like situation, to 1.5 million, and an increase in the number of other people in need of international protection, to 7.2 million. This is primarily due to the reclassification of specific groups of Afghans hosted in the Islamic Republic of Iran and

Pakistan.<sup>78</sup> All further references to refugees in this chapter include the 27 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate, as well as people in a refugee-like situation (1.5 million) and other people in need of international protection (7.2 million), unless otherwise stated.

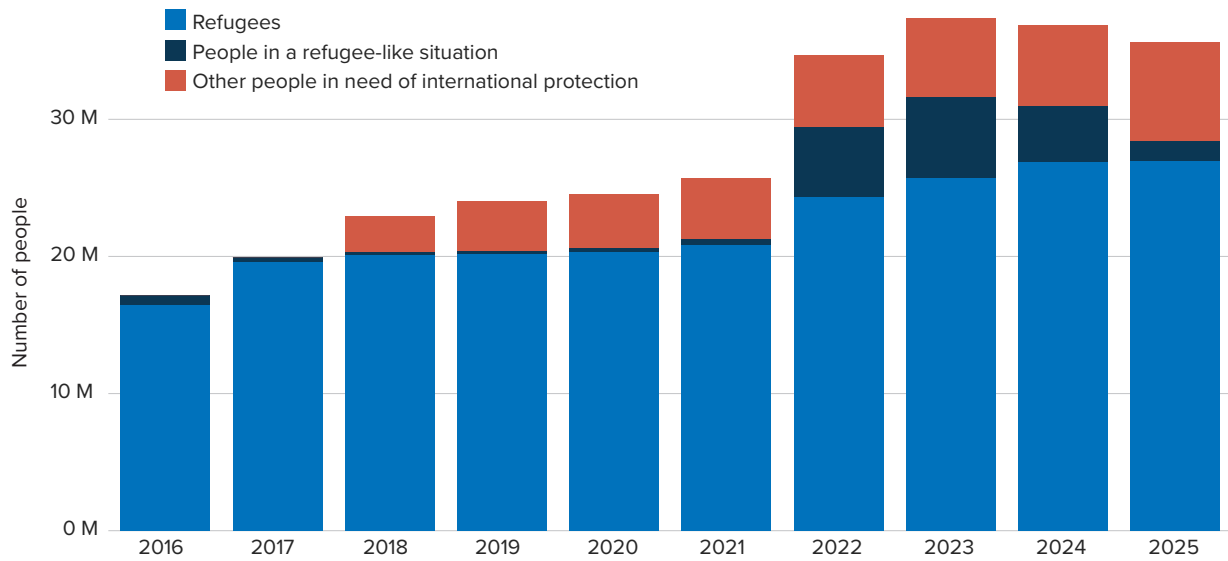
During 2025, 2.6 million people were granted international protection including 682,100 who were recognized as refugees on an individual basis, 945,600 recognized on a group basis and 930,200 people who received temporary protection.<sup>79</sup> The total number of people granted international protection in 2025 was slightly lower than the previous year. A further 432,500 people were estimated to have been displaced during 2025 and were reported as people in a refugee-like situation.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> At end-2025, 1 million Afghans were, for the first time, reported as other people in need of international protection in five countries. Previously, these Afghans had been reported as people in a refugee-like situation. The reclassification includes some 879,500 people in the Islamic Republic of Iran who are Movaqat holders, family passport holders or former headcount slip holders and an estimated population of undocumented Afghans. It also includes 41,000 undocumented Afghans in Pakistan. In Pakistan, 100,000 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders are also included who were previously reported as others of concern to UNHCR and are reclassified to better reflect their international protection needs. Similar adjustments were made for 3,200 Afghans in Turkmenistan and 7,700 in Uzbekistan. In addition to Afghans, people in a refugee-like situation were reclassified as other people in need of international protection in Kyrgyzstan (53,900), Kazakhstan (48,400) and Tajikistan (1,600). With the recategorization of most Afghans, people in a refugee-like situation most commonly included Ukrainians (643,600), Sudanese (550,100), nationals of Myanmar (130,800) and Haitians (112,000).

<sup>79</sup> See [How is refugee status granted?](#), UNHCR, and the [Asylum trends chapter](#) of this report for more details.

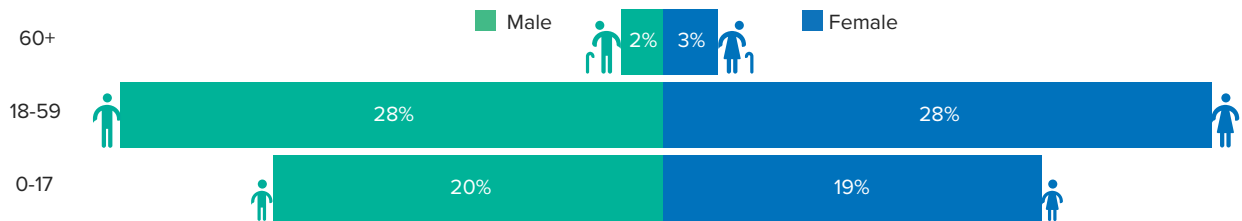
<sup>80</sup> See [UNHCR's forced displacement flow dataset](#).

Figure 5 | Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection | 2016 - 2025



## Estimated demographic composition of refugees

Figure 6 | Estimated demographics of refugees | end-2025<sup>81</sup>



UNHCR compiles data annually on the combined age and sex distribution of the populations that UNHCR protects and/or assists. At end-2025, demographic data by age and sex was available for 80 per cent of refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection, and disaggregation by sex only was available for a further 7 per cent.

To fill these data gaps, statistical modelling is applied to impute the age and sex distribution of populations with missing demographic data.<sup>82</sup> Of refugees, people

in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection, it is estimated that 39 per cent are children, and women and girls account for 50 per cent. Compared to the previous year, these two proportions remain similar despite large changes in the number of refugees from Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan.

To estimate the global number of children born into refugee status, UNHCR calculated estimates by imputing missing birth data for the years between 2018 to 2025.<sup>83</sup> Between 2018 and 2025, approximately half of the data on how many children were born into refugee status

<sup>81</sup> Disclaimer: Figures are rounded and therefore may not add up to 100.

<sup>82</sup> These models are generated using the available demographic data for a country of origin as a starting point. Where data for a particular country of asylum is missing, the values are estimated using statistical modelling from the available data for the same origin country in nearby countries of asylum.

<sup>83</sup> A key assumption in the estimates is that forced displacement is likely to impact the fertility pattern of refugees. Refugees face a situation that is drastically different from that of people remaining in their country of origin, and birth rates in the country of origin are not necessarily indicative of refugee populations that have fled these same countries.

was missing in the reported statistics. Using statistical modelling, UNHCR estimates that more than 2.4 million children were born as refugees between 2018 and 2025, equivalent to some 305,000 children per year. In 32 host countries globally, the children of refugees born in the country have the right to attain the citizenship of that country and are therefore not included in these estimates.<sup>84</sup> As this imputation is based on several broad statistical assumptions, the results should be considered as estimates and not precise figures.

## By country of origin

More than seven in ten refugees and other people in need of international protection originated from the same six countries in 2025 as in 2024: Afghanistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela. The number of Afghan and Syrian refugees fell, while increases were observed in the reported statistics for refugees from South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine and Venezuela, including other people in need of international protection (see figure 7).

The number of **Venezuelans** that were refugees or other people in need of international protection at end-2025, increased by 3 per cent from the previous year. By the end of 2025, there were 417,000 refugees and 6 million other people in need of international protection from Venezuela, the majority of whom have been granted residence permits and regular stay documentation.<sup>85</sup> As in previous years, nearly all of them (97 per cent) have remained in Latin American or Caribbean countries, mainly in Colombia (2.8 million), Peru (1.1 million), Brazil (699,000), Chile (662,600) and Ecuador (435,800).

The number of **Ukrainian** refugees increased slightly by 2 per cent to 5.2 million at end-2025. Around 95 per cent of Ukrainian refugees are located in Europe, with most hosted in Germany (1.2 million), Poland (972,300),

Czechia (393,000), the United Kingdom (270,500) and Spain (251,300).<sup>86</sup>

Globally, the number of **Syrian** refugees fell by 18 per cent from 2024 to 4.9 million at end-2025. The decrease was driven primarily by the estimated 1.3 million Syrians that returned to their country during 2025.<sup>87</sup> The number of registered Syrian refugees fell in most host countries, with most continuing to live in Türkiye (2.3 million), Germany (668,600), Lebanon (532,400),<sup>88</sup> Jordan (420,800) and Iraq (308,200).

At end-2025, there were some 3.7 million **Afghan** refugees or other people in need of international protection, a decrease of 36 per cent from the previous year. Restrictive government policies towards Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan have been introduced and applied during the year.<sup>89</sup> At end-2025, despite the scale of refugee returns during the year, these two countries still hosted four in five Afghan refugees or other people in need of international protection: 1.6 million in the Islamic Republic of Iran and 1.3 million in Pakistan. Other countries with important Afghan refugee populations were Germany (288,300), France (104,400) and the United Kingdom (64,200).

By the end of 2025, the number of refugees from **Sudan** grew to 2.8 million, an increase of 35 per cent from 2024, even as a significant number of Sudanese refugees returned.<sup>90</sup> Sudanese refugees were mostly hosted in neighbouring countries including Chad (1.3 million), South Sudan (571,100), Libya (551,700)<sup>91</sup> and Ethiopia (98,500), as well as in nearby Uganda (92,700).<sup>92</sup>

**South Sudanese** refugees were also mostly hosted in neighbouring countries, including Uganda (1 million), Sudan (635,000), Ethiopia (422,900) and Kenya (202,800). By the end of 2025, the global population had grown to 2.4 million, an increase of 4 per cent.

<sup>84</sup> See the definition of *jus soli* in the [UNHCR glossary](#).

<sup>85</sup> Cumulatively, over 5.2 million permits have been granted. See [Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela](#), R4V.

<sup>86</sup> In addition, since February 2022, a number of Ukrainians have reached countries beyond Europe, where they are staying under various legal statuses. See the [Ukraine Situation](#), UNHCR, for up-to date statistics of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe and beyond.

<sup>87</sup> See the [insight on refugee returns](#).

<sup>88</sup> Lebanon continues to be the highest, per capita, host country for refugees globally, with a government estimate of 1.12 million Syrians (some 532,400 registered by UNHCR) and 10,500 asylum-seekers and refugees of other nationalities. When the 228,300 Palestine refugees in Lebanon and 2.4 million Palestine refugees in Jordan registered with UNRWA are included, the proportions in Jordan and Lebanon increase to one in four and one in eight.

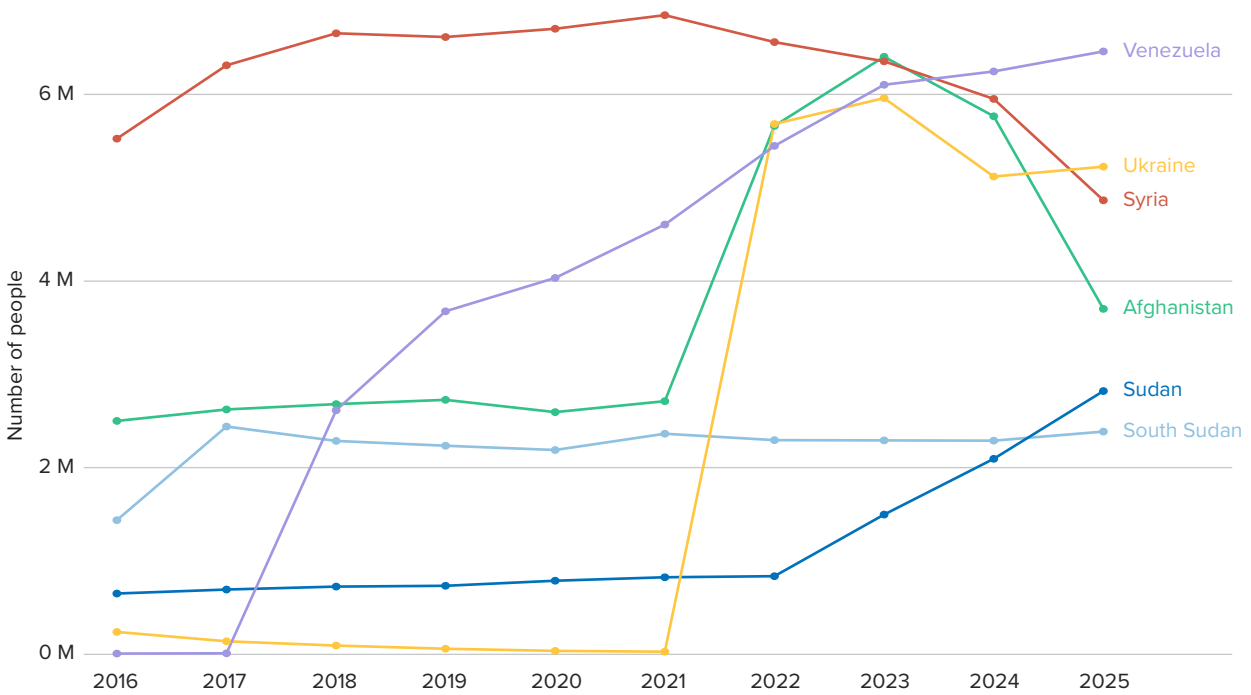
<sup>89</sup> See the [insight on refugee returns](#).

<sup>90</sup> See the [insight on refugee returns](#).

<sup>91</sup> The increase in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya is due to the arrival in 2025 of a total of 388,100 Sudanese. Just over 36,100 of them were registered as asylum-seekers by UNHCR in 2025. A further 352,000 Sudanese are reported as people in a refugee-like situation based on estimates derived from the issuance of health cards in areas outside of Tripoli.

<sup>92</sup> At end-2025, 834,200 Sudanese were registered by UNHCR in Egypt as refugees or asylum-seekers, including 264,700 who newly submitted their applications during the year. The Government of Egypt reported 1.5 million Sudanese people having arrived in the country since the onset of the crisis. See also [Sudan Situation](#), UNHCR (accessed 01 May 2026).

Figure 7 | Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection by major country of origin | 2016-2025 (end-year)

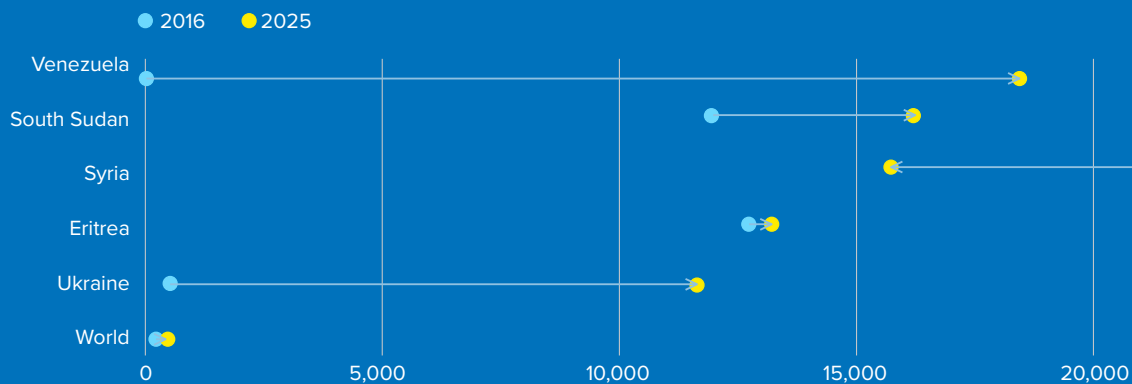


**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – INDICATOR 10.7.4**

SDG Indicator 10.7.4 identifies the proportion of a country’s population who become refugees or other people in need of international protection.<sup>93</sup> Venezuela (18,400 people per 100,000 inhabitants), South Sudan (16,200 people per 100,000 inhabitants) and Syria (15,700 people per 100,000 inhabitants) have seen the greatest proportion of their national population become refugees. Over the last decade, the proportion of refugees per inhabitants has decreased in Syria from 22,300 in 2016 to 15,700 in 2025, while it has increased in all other countries presented in figure 8. Globally there are 430 refugees per 100,000 people.



Figure 8 | SDG Indicator 10.7.4, Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection per 100,000 national population | 2016 and 2025



<sup>93</sup> See the metadata of SDG Indicator 10.7.4. The indicator is computed as follows:  $[\text{Number of refugees by country of origin at end-year} / (\text{End-year population in country of origin} + \text{number of refugees by country of origin at end-year})] \times 100,000$ . For this report, refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection have been included. The indicator excludes Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s mandate.

## By country of asylum

The countries which hosted the largest number of refugees and other people in need of international protection in 2025 were Colombia (2.8 million), Germany (2.7 million), Türkiye (2.4 million), Uganda (1.9 million), the Islamic Republic of Iran (1.7 million), Chad (1.5 million) and Pakistan (1.3 million).

Almost all refugees or other people in need of international protection in Colombia were Venezuelans, with a slight increase of 1 per cent reported. Nearly all (98 per cent) of refugees hosted in Türkiye were Syrians. Due to significant Syrian voluntary returns, there was a 19 per cent decrease in the total number of refugees hosted in Türkiye at end-2025 compared to end-2024.

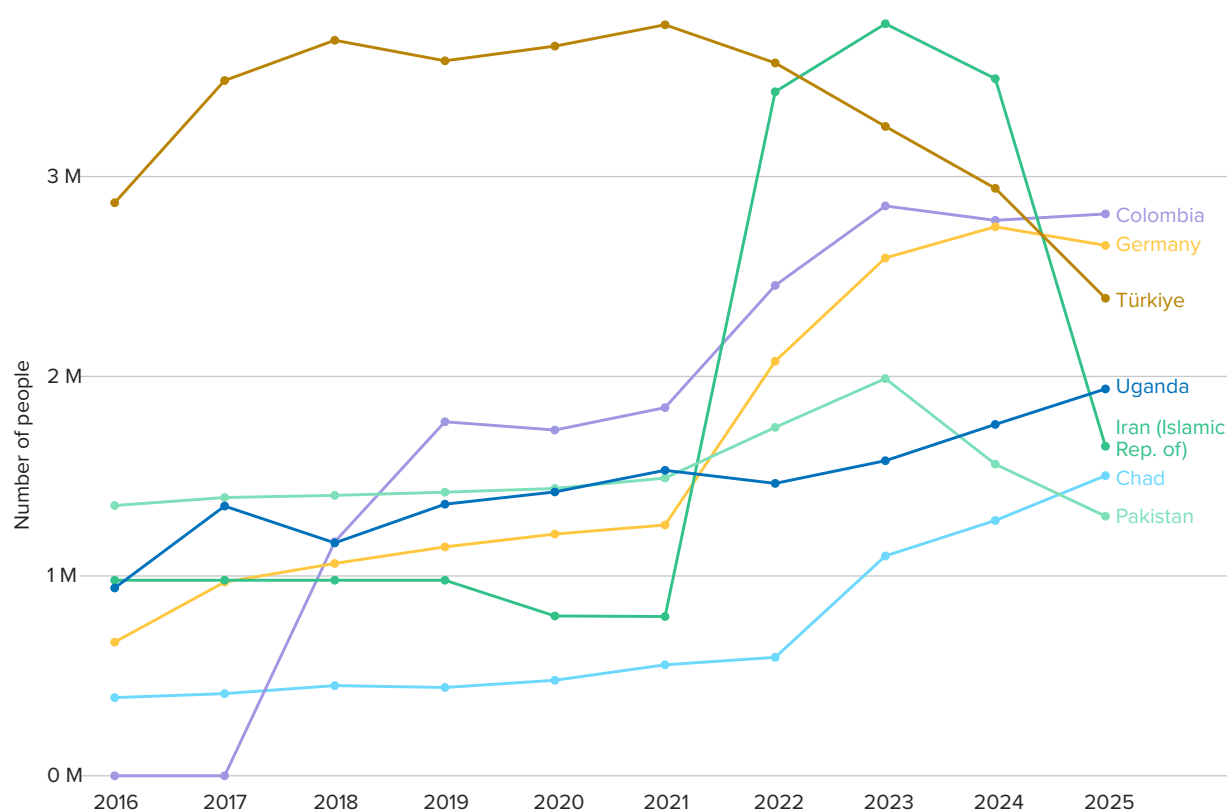
In Germany, most refugees were Ukrainians (1.2 million, -3 per cent compared to the previous year), Syrians

(668,600, -8 per cent) and Afghans (288,300, +3 per cent). The total number of refugees in the country fell during 2025 by 3 per cent.<sup>94</sup>

Uganda has welcomed refugees for decades and continued to host 1.9 million refugees at end-2025.<sup>95</sup> Most of them originated from South Sudan (1 million, +6 per cent) and Sudan (92,700, +42 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (644,500, +16 per cent), Somalia (48,300, -2 per cent) and Burundi (43,700, +5 per cent). Chad also hosted 1.5 million refugees, nine in ten of whom were Sudanese (1.3 million).

Almost all refugees and other people in need of international protection in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan were Afghans. In 2025, the fall in the number of Afghan refugees was driven by a sharp 53 per cent drop in the former and a 17 per cent decrease in the latter.

Figure 9 | Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection by major country of asylum | 2016-2025 (end-year)



<sup>94</sup> Since 2022, the total number of refugees from Ukraine in Germany has included individuals who arrived from Ukraine after 24 February 2022 but who were still waiting for a decision regarding their temporary protection application as well as those who had not yet formally applied for temporary protection or refugee status. The reason to include them was linked to the high number of arrivals of people fleeing Ukraine into Germany, and the resulting prolonged waiting periods to process applications. Given that the number of applications has decreased over time, as well as changes in the national legal framework, UNHCR considers that it is no longer reasonable to continue including these individuals in the figures of total refugees present in the country.

<sup>95</sup> See [A welcoming haven for those feeling strife and insecurity: Uganda's unique refugee policy](#), March 2024, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

Table 1 | **Key facts for countries hosting refugees, people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection, by country of asylum | end-2025**

<p><b>65 per cent</b> were hosted by neighbouring countries.</p>	<p>Most people fleeing conflict and persecution and crossing borders remain near their country of origin. At the end of 2025, 65 per cent of refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries, consistent with previous years.</p>
<p><b>68 per cent</b> were hosted by low- and middle-income countries.<sup>96</sup></p>	<p>Low-income countries continued to host a disproportionately large share of the world's displaced people, in terms of their population and the resources available to them. These countries represent 8 per cent of the global population and only 0.3 per cent of global domestic product, yet they hosted 18 per cent of refugees. This included very large refugee populations in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. The share of refugees hosted in lower-middle-income countries, including Bangladesh, Lebanon and Pakistan, remained at 17 per cent by end-2025. The percentage of refugees hosted in upper-middle-income countries decreased to 33 per cent from 37 per cent at end-2024, mainly due to the decrease of refugees or other people in need of international protection in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Other upper-middle-income countries hosting large number of refugees are Türkiye, Colombia and Peru. High-income countries, which account for most of the global wealth,<sup>97</sup> hosted 29 per cent of refugees at end-2025. This was 2 per cent more than at end-2024. A further 3 per cent of refugees were hosted in countries whose income group was not classified in 2025.</p>
<p><b>26 per cent</b> were hosted by the Least Developed Countries.<sup>98</sup></p>	<p>The Least Developed Countries consist of 44 countries, including Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen. Together, they account for 1.4 per cent of global gross domestic product, yet they were responsible for hosting nearly 26 per cent of all refugees worldwide.<sup>99</sup> At the end of 2025, the number of refugees in Least Developed Countries stood at 9.4 million, 12 per cent more than at end-2024 (8.4 million).</p>
<p><b>70 per cent</b> were in protracted situations.</p>	<p>Protracted situations are defined as those where refugees have been in exile for five years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions.<sup>100</sup> This definition should be seen as a reflection of the situation as a whole and does not refer to circumstances of individual refugees. The present analysis focuses on low- and middle-income countries in light of the particular pressures that large and prolonged refugee situations may place on communities with comparatively more limited resources.</p> <p>At the end of 2025, an estimated 24.9 million refugees and other people in need of international protection were in a protracted situation. This represents a decrease of 6 per cent compared to end-2024 with the revised definition. At end-2025, there were just over 1,300 protracted situations in 99 host countries.</p>

<sup>96</sup> See [World Bank country and lending groups](#), World Bank (accessed 07 May 2026). Venezuela and Ethiopia were not classified. Effective from 1 July 2025, Cabo Verde and Samoa were reclassified from lower-middle- to upper-middle-income countries, Costa Rica from upper-middle- to high-income countries and Namibia from upper-middle- to lower-middle-income countries. See [FY26 updated country income classification for analytical purposes](#), June 2025, World Bank.

<sup>97</sup> High-income countries account for 64 per cent of global gross domestic product. This compares with 0.3 per cent, 7 per cent and 28 per cent for low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries respectively. Classifications are unavailable for further 0.2 per cent. Data source of gross domestic product (in current US dollars) in 2024 is the [World Bank](#).

<sup>98</sup> There are [44 Least Developed Countries](#) classified by the United Nations Statistics Division. These are typically low- or lower-middle-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. The list of countries is revised every three years.

<sup>99</sup> Data sources of gross domestic product (in current US dollars) in 2024 is the [World Bank](#).

<sup>100</sup> See [Conclusion on protracted refugee situations, No. 109 \(LXI\) – 2009](#), December 2009, UNHCR for the definition. For more details on the definition of protracted situations, see the [Protracted situation subsection](#) in the Global forced displacement chapter. These estimates include people in a refugee-like situation and other people in need of international protection. Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate are excluded from this analysis.

## CHAPTER 3

# Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

## 68.7

MILLION

people were estimated to remain internally displaced due to conflict or violence as of end-2025, a 7 per cent decrease from end-2024.<sup>101</sup>

## 9.1

MILLION

people in Sudan remained displaced within the country at the end of 2025, 2.4 million people less than at end-2024. Sudan remains the largest internal displacement crisis globally.

## 10.3

MILLION

IDPs returned to their place of origin, 25 per cent more than in 2024. Most returns were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Syria (see the [Solutions chapter](#) for details)

## WHO IS INCLUDED IN STATISTICS ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT?

### Internal displacement overview

UNHCR reported on internal displacement situations in 40 countries. This included the first official estimate of the number of IDPs in Guatemala. The figure of 573,000 IDPs is derived from the 2023 National Living Conditions Survey.<sup>102</sup> It also included new estimates for the number of IDPs in Cambodia<sup>103</sup> and revised estimates of the number of IDPs in Honduras.<sup>104</sup> Including these, by the end of 2025, the number of people remaining internally

displaced as a result of armed conflicts, generalized violence or human rights violations in these countries has decreased to 64.2 million (see figure 10).<sup>105</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the figures in this chapter refer to IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR.

IDMC also reported on new internal displacement worldwide during 2025. Overall, some 18.6 million new displacements took place in 33 of the 40 countries in which UNHCR reported on internal displacement.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Source: IDMC.

<sup>102</sup> See [El INE y ACNUR presentaron datos sobre desplazamiento interno en Guatemala](#) (the Instituto Nacional de Estadística and UNHCR presented data on internal displacement in Guatemala), September 2025, Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

<sup>103</sup> See [Humanitarian Response Forum \(HRF\) - Situation Report 13: Cambodia-Thailand Border Situation](#), January 2026, HRF.

<sup>104</sup> See [Características de la población desplazada internamente en Honduras](#), 2024, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Honduras.

<sup>105</sup> See [Who is included in statistics on internal displacement?](#), UNHCR, and [What is the difference between population statistics for forcibly displaced and the population that UNHCR protects and/or assists?](#), UNHCR.

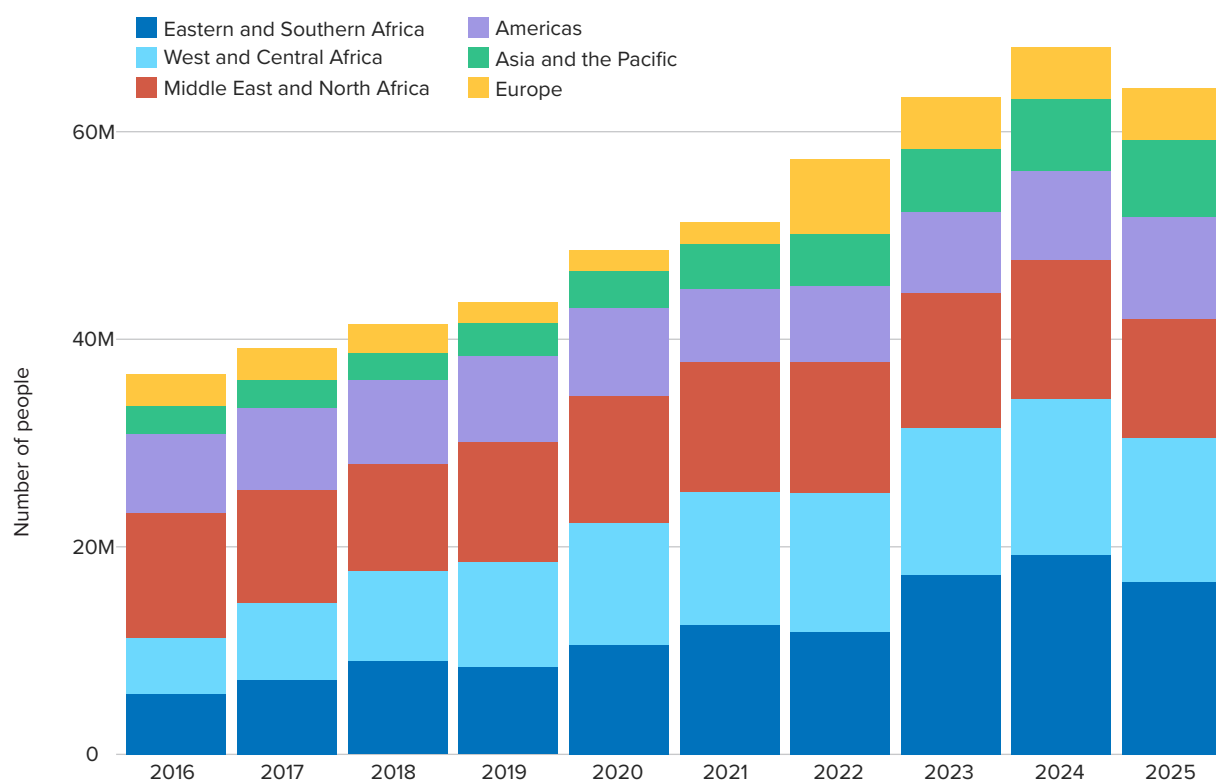
<sup>106</sup> Source: IDMC. When calculating people newly internally displaced, UNHCR attempts to report the number of people who were newly displaced, instead of individual movements. As such, multiple or repeat movements are counted only once when possible. This approach differs from IDMC's calculation of new displacement (32.3 million were reported in 2025). See also [IDMC main metrics and indicators. About our data](#), IDMC (accessed 30 April 2026). In the 40 countries in which UNHCR reported on internal displacement, UNHCR estimates that 8.1 million people were newly displaced during the year while IDMC reports 18.6 million new displacements.



**THE SUDAN.** Internally displaced persons arriving in White Nile State receive essential relief items after fleeing escalating violence in West Kordofan since October 2025. Many have reported widespread destruction and serious protection risks, forcing families to undertake dangerous journeys on foot with few belongings. The continued influx is increasing the pressure on already limited services and capacity to provide humanitarian assistance in the area.

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Figure 10 | IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR by region | 2016-2025 (end-year)



## Key changes in internal displacement by country

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, 3.9 million people were newly displaced during the year due to the deteriorating security situation and ongoing conflict in the eastern provinces.<sup>107</sup> Waves of displacements and returns occurred, mostly in South Kivu and North Kivu, particularly during the first and last quarters of the year.<sup>108</sup> However, the number of IDPs remaining displaced dropped by 1.2 million (-18 per cent) from end-2024 to 5.7 million, primarily as 3.6 million IDPs returned during the year. Many of the returns were involuntary, prompted by the forced closure of IDP settlements around Goma and Nyiragongo by the de facto authorities who took control over Goma and the nearby region in January 2025.<sup>109</sup> The peace agreement signed in June 2025 in Washington between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and the agreement

in November 2025 between the Congolese authorities and the non-state armed group M23 in Doha, still have to translate into real improvements on the ground for the civilian population, particularly those internally displaced. For example, renewed fighting spread across South Kivu during December.<sup>110</sup>

Since the end of 2024, the number of IDPs in **Sudan** has fallen from 11.6 to 9.1 million (a drop of 21 per cent or 2.4 million). This marked decline can be attributed to the return of 2.9 million IDPs to their places of origin, largely in the east of the country and in Khartoum after the capital returned under the control of the Sudanese Armed Forces.<sup>111</sup> Approximately 84 per cent of the returns occurred in the eastern regions, notably in Khartoum, as well as Gedaref, River Nile and Kassala.<sup>112</sup> While some Sudanese IDPs returned, in other areas the conflict intensified, displacing approximately 492,400 people during the year. The intensification of the conflict in North Darfur led to a sustained movement of IDPs to

<sup>107</sup> See footnote 106.

<sup>108</sup> See [République démocratique du Congo : Personnes déplacées internes et retournées \(Février 2026\)](#), March 2026, OCHA.

<sup>109</sup> See [DR Congo crisis: Thousands of displaced in Goma forced to flee again](#), February 2025, UN News.

<sup>110</sup> See [DRC: Peace deals fail to end human rights abuses](#), December 2025, Amnesty International.

<sup>111</sup> See [Three years on, war-weary Sudanese remain on the move](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>112</sup> East region includes Al Jazirah, Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Khartoum, Red Sea, River Nile, Sennar and White Nile.

El Fasher, which by September had become a haven for IDPs. In October 2025, after having laid a siege lasting for 18 months, which deliberately exacerbated civilian suffering inside the city, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured El Fasher through unlawful acts resulting in suffering, physical and psychological harm to tens of thousands of civilians.<sup>113</sup> The Darfur region hosts over three in five Sudanese IDPs (5.7 million out of 9.1 million).<sup>114</sup> Globally, Sudan remains the country with the most IDPs.

IDP returns in **Syria** surged to nearly 2 million during the year, with the overall number of IDPs reducing by 25 per cent from end-2024 to 5.5 million. Despite the large scale of returns after the fall of the Assad Government, Syria still ranks among the countries with the highest numbers of IDPs worldwide. At the same time, new displacement continued: an additional 162,500 people were reported to have been uprooted during the year, largely due to the worsening security in the coastal areas in March 2025 and in As-Sweida in July 2025.<sup>115</sup>

After four years of international armed conflict in **Ukraine**, 3.7 million IDPs remained displaced at end-2025, similar to the year before, as a resolution to the conflict remained out of reach and the displacement becomes increasingly protracted. During the year, an estimated 668,000 Ukrainians were newly displaced within the country while 579,000 IDPs returned to their place of origin.<sup>116</sup>

Following major military confrontations between Cambodia and Thailand in July and December 2025, 649,200 people were newly displaced within **Cambodia** across several north-western and western provinces. Although nearly 131,600 returns were reported by the end of the year, tensions between the two countries have remained high.<sup>117</sup> At end-2025, 517,600 remained displaced within Cambodia.

In **Myanmar**, the number of IDPs stood at 3.6 million at the end of 2025, 3 per cent more than at the end of the previous year. During 2025, generalized violence, human rights violations, localized intercommunal tensions and institutionalized discrimination led to 532,400 people being newly displaced, although

415,100 returned.<sup>118</sup> The already severe humanitarian crisis in the country was further aggravated by the powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake in March 2025.<sup>119</sup>

Throughout 2025, in **Haiti**, gang-related violence, civil unrest, targeted attacks on civilians and violent confrontations over territorial control continued to escalate, particularly in Port-au-Prince and neighbouring communes.<sup>120</sup> Just over 574,300 Haitians were newly displaced during the year within the country. As a result, the number of IDPs increased sharply by 38 per cent to 1.4 million at end-2025. Haiti has become increasingly insecure, marked by widespread human rights violations and alarmingly high levels of gender-based violence.<sup>121</sup> In response, in October 2025, a Gang Suppression Force was established through a Security Council Resolution to combat gang violence and improve security for millions of Haitians.<sup>122</sup>

The number of IDPs in **South Sudan** increased slightly by 3 per cent and stood at 1.3 million at end-2025. The security and political situation in the country deteriorated significantly during 2025. A combination of conflict, political tensions, floods and increasing arrivals of returnees from Sudan has contributed to a sharp deterioration of the situation in the country, which already overstretched humanitarian services are struggling to address. Clashes between state and non-state actors, as well as intercommunal conflicts, displaced 332,900 people. Armed conflict has been concentrated primarily in Upper Nile State and Jonglei State. However, new internal displacements due to conflict and violence have been reported in seven of the ten states within the country, with the majority of IDPs seeking safety elsewhere within their own state.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>113</sup> See [RSF massacres left Sudanese city 'a slaughterhouse', satellite images show](#), The Guardian, December 2025 and [Sudan: 'Hallmarks of genocide' found in El Fasher, UN investigators detail mass killings and ethnic targeting](#), February 2026, UN News.

<sup>114</sup> Darfur region includes Central Darfur, East Darfur, North Darfur, South Darfur and West Darfur.

<sup>115</sup> See [Syrian Arab Republic, Population mobility and baseline assessment, Round 11](#), December 2025, IOM.

<sup>116</sup> See [Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 22](#), January 2026, IOM.

<sup>117</sup> See [Public health situation analysis, Cambodia: Thailand border conflict](#), December 2025, World Health Organization (WHO).

<sup>118</sup> See [Myanmar humanitarian update no.51](#), March 2026, OCHA.

<sup>119</sup> See [Myanmar Earthquake: six-month impact report](#), October 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>120</sup> See [The polycrisis for children in Haiti](#), October 2025, the UN agency for children (UNICEF).

<sup>121</sup> See [Green light for gang suppression force tells Haitians 'they are not alone', Security Council hears](#), October 2025, UN News, and [World news in brief: Violence against Haitian women](#), November 2025, UN News.

<sup>122</sup> See [UN Security Council approves new 'suppression force' for Haiti amid spiraling gang violence](#), September 2025, UN News.

<sup>123</sup> See [South Sudan, Event tracking summary, January - December 2025](#), IOM, December 2025.

## Location and demographics of IDPs

Reliable demographic and subnational estimates of IDPs are critical to inform and support efforts by governments, UNHCR and partners to protect and assist displaced populations. In 2025, subnational data on IDPs was reported for 27 countries and covered almost all (93 per cent) of the IDP population protected/assisted by UNHCR. Based on the available data, at least 29 per cent of IDPs resided in urban areas,<sup>124</sup> and approximately one-quarter lived in settlements, including camps, both in urban and rural settings.<sup>125</sup>

Age- and sex-disaggregated data for IDPs was available for 14 countries, one fewer than the previous year. This represents 55 per cent of the IDP population reported by UNHCR. Sex-disaggregated data was reported in a further six countries, accounting for 58 per cent of the IDP population.

Based on the available demographic data, 53 per cent of IDPs were women and girls, while children accounted for 42 per cent. The countries with the highest proportion of internally displaced children included Afghanistan (62 per cent) and Somalia (61 per cent), while those with the lowest proportion included Colombia (18 per cent) and Mexico (19 per cent).<sup>126</sup>

## Displacement in the context of disasters

In addition to conflict and violence, people were displaced within their countries due to disasters. This included people displaced due to extreme weather events, such as floods and storms, and those displaced due to geophysical events, such as earthquakes. Global forced displacement as reported by UNHCR does not include people displaced due to disasters although displacement due to disasters is often in contexts affected by conflict that are extremely fragile. The figures in this section are based on IDMC data.

During the year, almost 30 million internal displacements due to disasters were reported, with 13.6 million people remaining displaced at the end of 2025, according to the IDMC.<sup>127</sup> Disaster-related internal displacement accounted for 48 per cent of all new displacements in 2025. Almost 60 per cent of all disaster-related displacements were triggered by storms.

Two-thirds of all new displacements due to disasters occurred in low- and middle-income countries in 2025. More than one-third of all new displacements due to disasters (10.7 million) occurred in just one country, the Philippines, in 2025. Floods and landslides also caused 3 million displacements in **Pakistan** and 1.5 million in **Indonesia** in 2025.

Disasters in 2025 caused people that were already displaced due to conflict to flee again. In 42 of the 48 countries and territories (88 per cent) where new internal displacements due to conflict and violence were reported by IDMC, new displacements due to disasters were also reported. While conflict remains the main cause of displacement in **South Sudan**, displacements due to flooding accounted for 36 per cent of all new displacements. Flooding displaced many IDPs, compounding their vulnerability, and hindered humanitarian access.

A series of earthquakes and flash floods triggered over 252,800 new displacements in **Afghanistan** bringing the total remaining displaced at end-2025 to 2.6 million. Meanwhile, in **Myanmar**, 405,600 new displacements were triggered by the March 2025 earthquake, as well as floods and storms,<sup>128</sup> with 281,000 people remaining displaced at year end. In **Sudan**, between April and November 2025, flooding and heavy rains across 11 states displaced nearly 30,200 people, including many conflict-affected IDPs.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>124</sup> In the reported data, 58 per cent of locations are classified as “various”, i.e., they include both urban and rural locations. Based on the countries in which these are reported, it is likely that the actual proportion of IDPs in urban areas is higher than the reported 29 per cent. See the summary by urban and rural location in [annex 15](#).

<sup>125</sup> See [settlement typologies in emergencies](#), the [definitions of settlement types](#) and the summary by accommodation type in [annex 14](#). The proportion in camps or settlements includes formal settlements, informal settlements, collective centres and transit centres. The type of accommodation is reported as ‘unknown’ for approximately 26 per cent of the global IDP population. UNHCR estimates that where the accommodation type is unknown, it is less likely that the IDPs are in settlements, which typically have centralized, managed services.

<sup>126</sup> The demographic estimate for Mexico is from the 2020 census. See [El Censo de Población y Vivienda del INEGI](#), INEGI.

<sup>127</sup> Source: [IDMC](#).

<sup>128</sup> See [Myanmar, floods typhoon Yagi, Final Report](#), March 2026, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

<sup>129</sup> See [DTM Sudan natural hazard displacement overview 2025](#), December 2025, IOM.

**LIBYA.** Asma, an asylum-seeker from the Sudan, smiles with her baby girl, before boarding an evacuation flight to Rwanda through the Emergency Transit Mechanism. In 2025, asylum-seekers from Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Sudan were evacuated from Libya to Rwanda with the support of partners, offering them a pathway to safety and possibility of longer-term solutions.

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## CHAPTER 4

# Asylum trends

## 4.7 MILLION

people sought international protection in 2025 (-4 per cent compared to 2024).

- **2.8 million** new individual asylum applications were reported as registered (-8 per cent).
- **945,600** people were recognized as refugees on a group basis (+13 per cent).
- **930,200** people received temporary protection (-3 per cent).

## 682,100

people were granted refugee status through individual status determination procedures (-12 per cent).

## 9 MILLION

asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims at end-2025 (+8 per cent).

## 43%

was the total protection rate in individual procedures in 2025.<sup>130</sup>

### [HOW IS REFUGEE STATUS GRANTED?](#)

## Overview

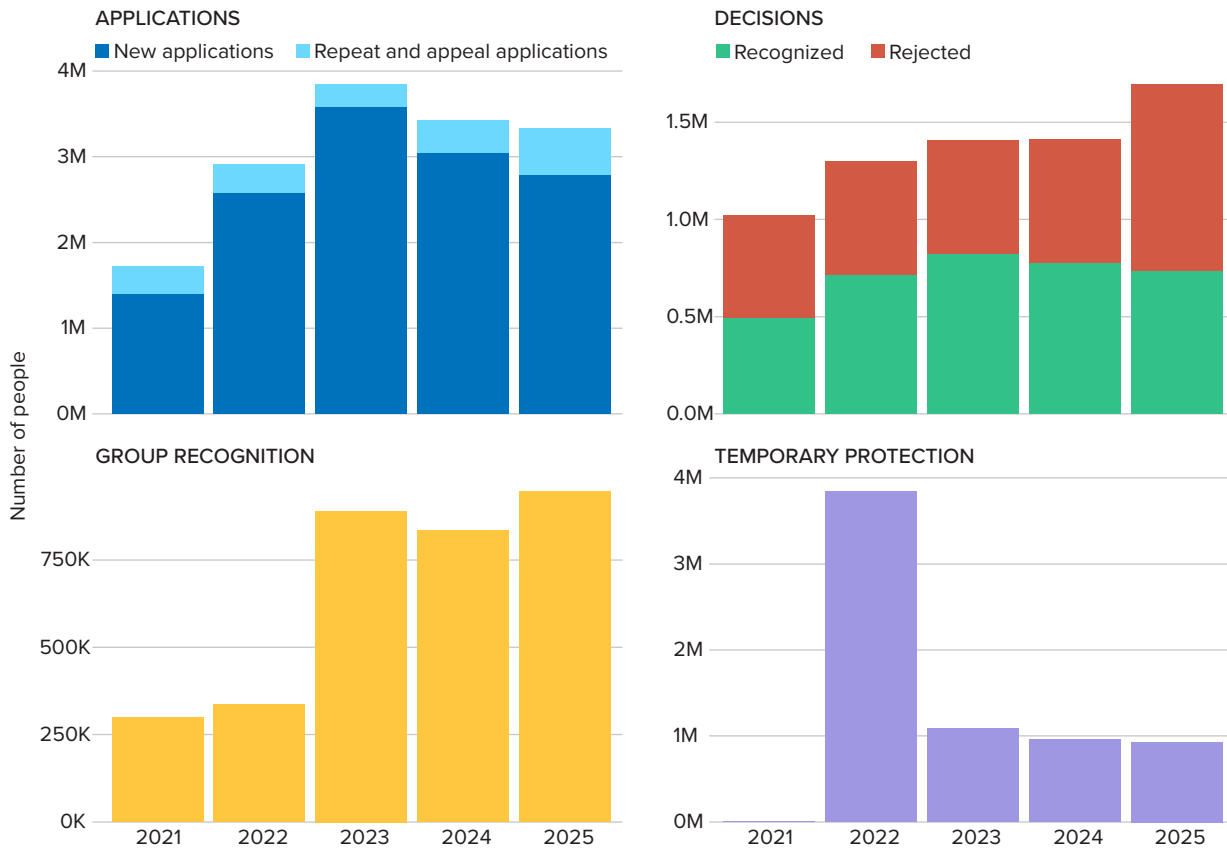
During 2025, 4.7 million people were reported to have applied for asylum on an individual basis, were recognized as refugees through group procedures or were granted temporary protection. Overall, this represents a 4 per cent decrease compared to the previous year.

Some 2.8 million new individual applications for asylum were lodged in 2025, 8 per cent fewer than the previous year. Including the 548,800 repeat or appeal applications that were submitted for review by courts or other appellate bodies, a total of 3.3 million asylum applications were registered in 149 countries by States or UNHCR worldwide.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>130</sup> See [How are asylum indicators calculated?](#) UNHCR.

<sup>131</sup> In Australia, Bulgaria, Japan, Nigeria, Slovakia, South Africa and Yemen, the data on asylum applications is provided together without distinction between new, repeat and appeal applications.

Figure 11 | Trends in asylum applications, decisions, group recognition and temporary protections | 2021-2025



Since 2023, the reported number of new individual asylum applications has declined slightly (see figure 11). In 2025, the United States of America received 912,000 new asylum applications.<sup>132</sup> Egypt received the second highest number and the reported total of 292,000 new individual asylum applications was one-third less than during 2024. Just over one in five new individual applications in 2025 were submitted by nationals of Sudan (307,000) and Venezuela (305,000).

In addition, 945,600 people (+13 per cent) were recognized through group procedures in 24 countries in Africa and the Middle East during the year. In figure 11, the increase in prima facie procedures shown in 2023 was due to the surge in Sudanese refugees arriving in several countries where recognition on a group basis was applied. In 2025, recognition on a group basis continued to be most commonly granted to Sudanese nationals (293,700), however, the overall number of Sudanese newly seeking international protection decreased by 32 per cent in 2025 compared to the previous year. While

there was a sharp drop in Sudanese people who were granted refugee status on a group basis, the number of Burkinabe (190,300), Malians (154,600), South Sudanese (135,700), Congolese (92,000) and Nigeriens (43,100) that were granted refugee status on a group basis all doubled compared to the previous year. For nationalities which are likely to be refugees, like Sudanese, simplified procedures like group or prima facie procedures are encouraged as they are more efficient than individual case processing and can significantly reduce the time individuals spend in situations of uncertainty. Such uncertainty is often cited as a key factor prompting onward movements among people in need of international protection.

The number of people who were granted temporary protection decreased by 3 per cent to 930,200 at end-2025. Temporary protection continued to be mainly granted to Ukrainian nationals (717,300, -14 per cent), as has been the case since the escalation of the international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in 2022. As a consequence, almost 85 per

<sup>132</sup> Statistics for the United States of America in 2025 are based on official data published by the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) and the [Executive Office for Immigration Review \(EOIR\)](#). EOIR data covers the full year. USCIS data is reported as cases from January to September 2025, on this basis UNHCR counts one person per case. USCIS data does not include the applicants' nationality for new asylum applications.

cent of the global total (788,700) were granted temporary protection in Europe during the year.

For the fifth consecutive year, the total number of substantive decisions on individual asylum applications has continued to rise, reaching 1.6 million in 2025 (see figure 11) suggesting positive gains in asylum system productivity. During the year, 682,100 people were granted refugee status through individual status determination procedures, a decrease of 12 per cent. A total of 930,600 asylum applications were rejected during the same period.

The Total Protection Rate (TPR) measures the percentage of substantive decisions in individual procedures that resulted in providing international protection.<sup>133</sup> Due to the way that UNHCR has historically collected statistics, asylum applications that are processed through group procedures are not included when calculating the TPR. Starting in 2026, UNHCR will include refugees recognized through group procedures in its asylum statistics as well as its reporting of the protection rate. Based on individual asylum statistics alone, the TPR decreased from 55 per cent in 2024 to 42 per cent in 2025. If group recognition were included in the TPR, it would have been 72 per cent in 2024 and 64 per cent in 2025.

Taking the number of people granted refugee status on an individual or group basis, as well as the high numbers of people granted temporary protection, most individuals seeking asylum have international protection needs. However, the TPR also reflects that there are many situations where those found not to have international protection needs submit applications, underscoring the needs for States to put in place fast and fair procedures to effectively address unfounded claims.

The number of pending individual asylum applications grew by 8 per cent during 2025 to nearly 9 million. While overall growth slowed (between 2023 and 2024, the increase was 22 per cent), the rising backlog highlights the pressures on asylum systems amid multiple humanitarian emergencies and the consequent need for international protection by people forced to flee their countries.

## Key asylum trends

Figure 12 shows the flows of new individual asylum applicants, people recognized on a group basis as well as those people granted temporary protection from countries of origin to receiving countries. In 2025, there were seven major trends.

### *Ukrainians continued to receive temporary protection*

As in 2024, Ukrainians remained the largest group seeking international protection in 2025, although the total number decreased on a year-on-year basis by 14 per cent to 754,300. Most were granted temporary protection (717,300, -14 per cent), with a further 36,800 (-14 per cent) lodging individual asylum applications.<sup>134</sup> Most Ukrainians sought international protection in Germany (172,400, -24 per cent), Poland (159,500, -7 per cent) and Czechia (89,500, +16 per cent).

### *Forced displacement from Sudan to neighbouring countries fell, while displacement from South Sudan increased.*

Fewer Sudanese nationals sought asylum in 2025 than the previous year although the total remained elevated compared to before the onset of the conflict in the country in 2023. The lower numbers of Sudanese seeking international protection reflected increasing border restrictions.<sup>135</sup> Nearly 1 million Sudanese (989,200) who fled the ongoing conflict in their country were reported as people in a refugee-like situation (352,000, +78 per cent), received refugee status through group procedures (293,700, -32 per cent), lodged individual asylum applications (307,000, -30 per cent) or were registered as asylum-seekers (36,400, +15 per cent). Most were reported in Libya (388,100, +70 per cent), Egypt (264,700, -34 per cent), Chad (181,700, -25 per cent), South Sudan (76,000, -41 per cent) and Uganda (27,600, -44 per cent).

Nearly 232,800 South Sudanese also sought international protection in 2025, more than double than during the previous year. Almost all (95 per cent) fled to neighbouring countries, most commonly Sudan (79,500, an eight-fold increase), Ethiopia (51,600, a 38-fold increase), Uganda (47,800, +64 per cent) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (33,600, a six-fold increase).

<sup>133</sup> See [How are asylum indicators calculated?](#), UNHCR.

<sup>134</sup> See footnote 21.

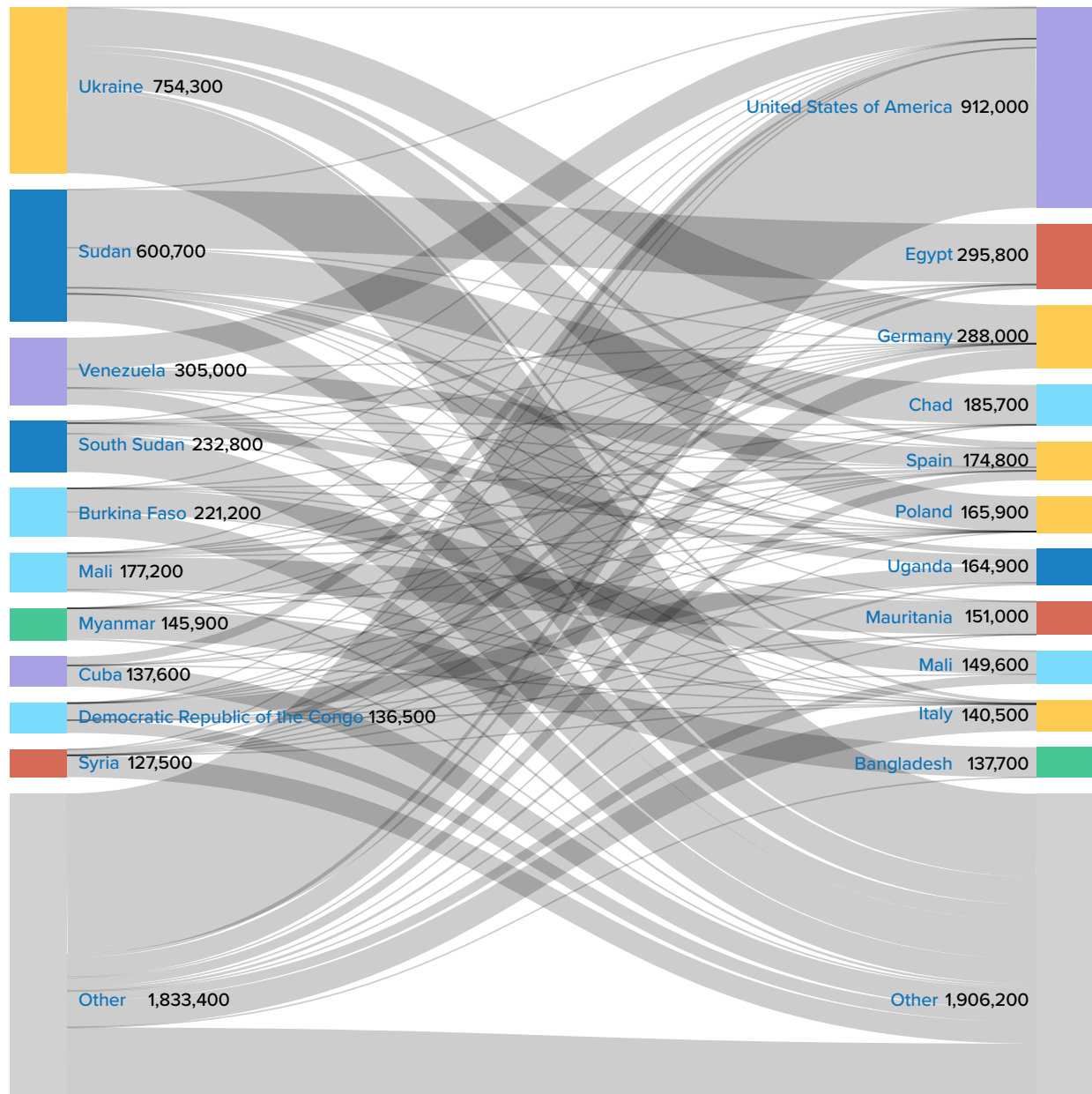
<sup>135</sup> See [Flash Update #49 New Sudanese Refugee Influx into Chad](#), March 2026, UNHCR.

### Forced displacement from the Central Sahel grew

In 2025, 465,800 people from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in the Central Sahel sought international protection, up by 86 per cent from 2024. The number of Malians seeking international protection nearly doubled from the previous year to 177,200, with most granted

refugee status on a group basis in Mauritania (148,400, a four-fold increase). At the same time, Burkinabe and Nigeriens most commonly sought international protection in Mali (106,400 and 43,100 respectively). Notably, in Côte d'Ivoire, a total of 72,100 people were granted refugee status on a group basis during the year, with most from Burkina Faso (70,600) and Mali (1,500).<sup>136</sup>

Figure 12 | Number of people registering new individual asylum applications, recognized on a group basis or granted temporary protection | 2025



<sup>136</sup> See [Press release on the granting of refugee status to asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso and Mali by the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire](#), November 2025, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

### *New asylum applications from the Americas continued to represent a significant proportion of the global total*

At least 987,700 individuals from the Americas sought international protection in 2025, constituting more than one in five of the global total. In 2025, seven in ten of them were Venezuelan (305,000), Cuban (137,600), Mexican (91,700), Haitian (84,600) or Colombian (84,500). New individual asylum applications in the Americas were received mainly in the United States of America (912,000), Canada (115,800, -33 per cent), Brazil (75,600, +11 per cent) and Mexico (70,500, -11 per cent).

### *The number of Rohingya seeking international protection increased*

A total of 145,900 Rohingya from Myanmar were reported as seeking international protection. Almost all of them (136,500 or 94 per cent) were biometrically identified following a decision by the Government of Bangladesh to allow them to remain in the camps and access assistance. The majority arrived during 2024 and 2025.

### *Fewer Syrians claimed asylum*

Fewer Syrians sought international protection since the fall of the Assad Government in December 2024. In 2025, 127,500 Syrians sought international protection, 56 per cent less than during the previous year. The decrease was most notable in the number of new individual asylum applications lodged in European countries, such as Germany (23,300, -70 per cent) and Austria (4,400, -67 per cent).

### *The Democratic Republic of the Congo was both a significant country of asylum and origin*

In 2025, the Democratic Republic of the Congo received 99,400 asylum-seekers, a 15-fold increase from the previous year, with most arriving in the northern provinces. Almost all were from the Central African Republic (65,000, up from 71 during the previous year) or South Sudan (33,600, a five-fold increase). At the same time, as the situation in the east of the country deteriorated, some 136,500 Congolese refugees and asylum-seekers sought safety in nearby

countries, notably Uganda (77,300, +87 per cent) and Burundi (19,600, a five-fold increase).

## Decisions on individual asylum applications

Globally, 682,100 people were granted refugee status on an individual basis during the year, 12 per cent fewer than during 2024. Recognition on an individual basis was granted primarily to nationals of Afghanistan (113,500, +3 per cent compared to 2024), Venezuela (74,100, +41 per cent) and Sudan (41,000, +59 per cent).

Around 1.6 million substantive decisions were made during 2025, an increase of 14 per cent.<sup>137</sup> In addition, 1.2 million applications were closed without a decision for administrative reasons. Almost all substantive decisions (98 per cent) were made by governments, with the remainder made by UNHCR under its mandate. The number of countries in which UNHCR conducts asylum procedures where at least one asylum application was registered decreased from 51 countries in 2024 to 42 in 2025.

As noted in the overview, the Total Protection Rate (TPR) of those asylum-seekers in individual procedures decreased from 55 per cent in 2024 to 42 per cent in 2025.<sup>138</sup> The drop in the TPR from 2024 is due to lower numbers of decisions on cases by nationalities which have historically had high acceptance rates. For example, the number of decisions on Syrian cases fell from 151,100 in 2024 to 35,300 in 2025, as most European Union countries temporarily paused the processing of Syrian asylum claims. In the same period, the number of substantive decisions on cases by nationalities with much lower acceptance rates increased, including from Colombia (60,900, +37 per cent) and Bangladesh (58,900, +36 per cent). The decrease in the TPR also reflects that the profiles for which decisions have been made have changed for major nationalities in 2025. For example, the lower recognition rate among Syrian applicants was largely driven by procedural factors.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> See [How is refugee status granted?](#), UNHCR.

<sup>138</sup> See [How are asylum indicators calculated?](#), UNHCR.

<sup>139</sup> See [Latest asylum trends 2025: annual analysis](#), European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

## Pending asylum claims

At end-2025, the number of pending asylum applications reached nearly 9 million, 8 per cent higher than at end-2024. Year-on-year, the growth in the number of pending individual asylum applications has been slower since 2023. Nevertheless, the backlog of pending applications has increased for nine consecutive years since 2016 as new individual asylum applications have consistently exceeded the number of substantive decisions on those claims.

Based on the reported statistics, 3.7 million asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their cases in the United States of America at the end of 2025.<sup>140</sup> Other countries with large backlogs include Egypt (878,300, +37 per cent), Peru (556,800, +3 per cent), Canada (314,500, +8 per cent) and Germany (297,600, -15 per cent). By country of origin, Venezuelans (1.2 million, -13 per cent) and Sudanese (940,300, +38 per cent) were the two largest groups awaiting a decision on their asylum applications at end-2025, in addition to 1.6 million people without reported nationalities.



**PERU.** Thiago\* a Venezuelan child who was forced to flee with his family, proudly holds his newly issued residency card, received in December 2025. Without legal documentation, he was unable to access essential services, including healthcare in Lima. Today, his mother can seek medical care for him when needed, marking an important step towards stability and inclusion.

© UNHCR/JAIME GIMÉNEZ

<sup>140</sup> Statistics for the United States of America in 2025 are based on official available data published by the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) and the [Executive Office for Immigration Review \(EOIR\)](#). Based on statistics published by the United States of America, this represents an increase of 9 per cent from end-2024.



- + [Refugee returns](#)
- + [Resettlement arrivals](#)
- + [Naturalization](#)
- + [IDP returns](#)

## CHAPTER 5

# Solutions

## 14.7 MILLION

forcibly displaced people returned during 2025:

- **4.4 million** refugees returned to their countries of origin (+2.7 million, three times higher than during 2024).
- **10.3 million** IDPs returned to their place of origin (+2.1 million, +25 per cent).

## 81,800

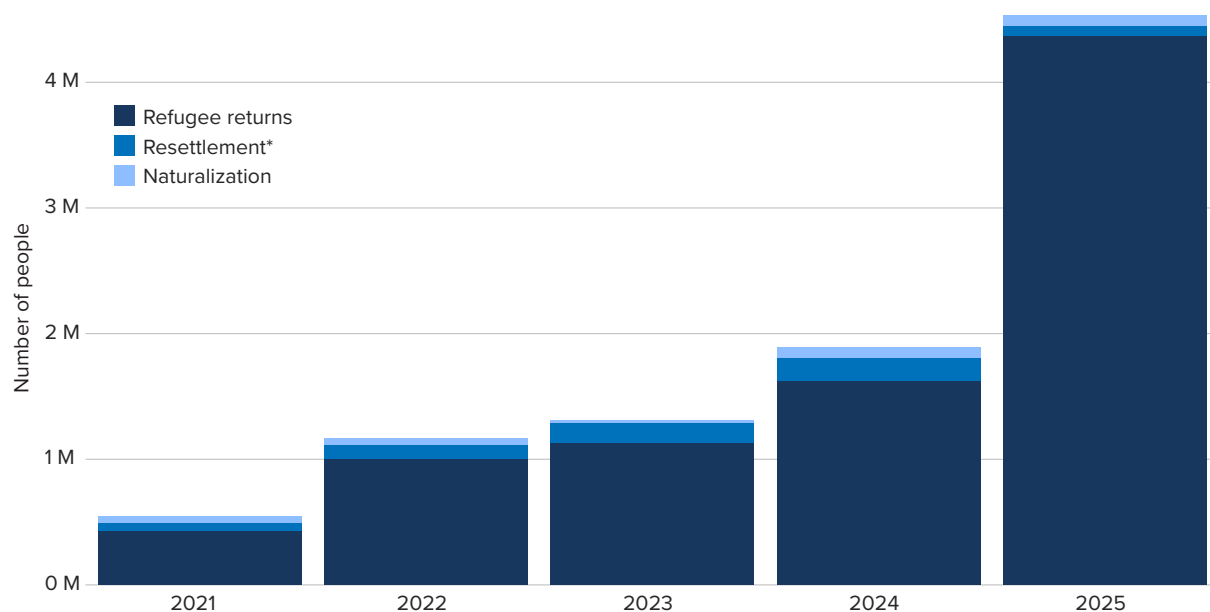
refugees were resettled or arrived via sponsorship pathways (-107,000, -57 per cent).<sup>141</sup>

## 93,500

refugees were naturalized or granted permanent residency (+4,600, +5 per cent).

### WHAT ARE DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES AND IDPS?

Figure 13 | **Solutions for refugees** | 2021 - 2025



\* Resettlement figures are according to government statistics and include those who arrived via sponsorship pathways.

<sup>141</sup> See the definition of sponsorship pathways in the [UNHCR master glossary of terms](#), UNHCR (accessed 01 May 2026).

*MALAYSIA. Rohingya refugee children attend classes at a learning centre run by a UNHCR partner, which provides education aligned with national standards. The programme aims to equip learners with skills to contribute to their own communities and to the host society. However, funding cuts in 2025 have resulted in a 30 per cent drop in enrolment and closure of one centre leaving 150 children out of school.*

© UNHCR/AZWAN RAHIM



## Overview

During 2025, the reported statistics on returns of refugees and IDPs, as well as refugees who have found solutions through resettlement or sponsorship pathways, were noticeably different from recent years (see figure 13). IDP returns during the year were the highest since UNHCR records on this measure began in 1997. Refugee returns were the second highest since UNHCR first reported return statistics in 1965. By contrast, refugees who found solutions through resettlement or sponsorship pathways fell to levels similar to those reported in 2011.<sup>142</sup>

In total, 14.7 million people returned to their place or country of origin in 2025, representing a 49 per cent increase compared to 2024. However, most returns in 2025 occurred due to adverse circumstances in their former country of asylum or place of displacement or were to extremely fragile situations in their country or place of origin. Afghan refugees were often compelled to return as a result of the introduction and application of restrictive policies in their host countries, while Congolese IDPs were forced to leave following the forced closure of settlements. Many Syrian and Sudanese refugees and IDPs returned despite insecurity, inadequate basic services and limited livelihood opportunities. These movements often occur in conditions that fall short of the standards for safe, voluntary, and dignified return, reflecting a combination of constrained choices, heightened pressures in host countries or areas, and enduring barriers to sustainable reintegration. See the [Insight on refugee returns](#) above for more details.

During the same period, according to government statistics, the number of people arriving through resettlement programmes or sponsorship pathways dropped by more than half to 81,800 in 2025.

A slight increase of 5 per cent was observed in the reported number of refugees who acquired citizenship in their host countries or were granted permanent residency, which reached 93,500 in 2025.

## Refugee returns

In 2025, almost 4.4 million refugees returned to 72 countries of origin from 71 former countries of asylum. Of these, over 90 per cent went back to just three countries of origin: Afghanistan (1.9 million), Syria (1.3 million) and Sudan (651,500). See the [Insight on refugee returns](#) for more details.

There are no official statistics on returns of Venezuelan refugees and other people in need of international protection. However, the Venezuelan authorities have reported more than 1.2 million Venezuelans have returned since 2018 through the government-sponsored Plan Vuelta a la Patria,<sup>143</sup> while others have spontaneously returned to Venezuela over the last few years.

## Refugee resettlement and sponsorship pathways

During 2025, 24 countries reported 81,800 arrivals through resettlement and sponsorship pathways.<sup>144</sup> The total constitutes less than half of the arrivals reported during the previous year and accounted for only 3 per cent of the 2.9 million individuals globally identified by UNHCR in 2025 as in need of resettlement.<sup>145</sup>

Three countries accounted for 84 per cent of all arrivals via resettlement or sponsorship pathways in 2025: Canada (38,800, -21 per cent from 2024), Australia (18,800, +9 per cent) and the United States of America (11,500, -89 per cent). In 2025, refugees were also resettled in France (3,100), Germany (2,200), the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1,500) and the United Kingdom (1,000). Most refugees arriving via resettlement or sponsorship pathways were from Afghanistan (17,900, -50 per cent), Eritrea (11,700, -38 per cent), Syria (8,700, -66 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5,800, -77 per cent) and Somalia (4,900, -57 per cent).

Just under half of the 81,800 refugees resettled globally were supported through UNHCR's resettlement programme, with the remainder finding solutions through sponsorship pathways or other resettlement channels. Of all cases submitted by UNHCR to States in 2025, 93 per cent of resettlement submissions

<sup>142</sup> This excludes 2020 and 2021 when resettlement programmes were heavily curtailed due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

<sup>143</sup> See [Ministro Gil: Más de 1 millón 200.000 venezolanos han retornado con el Plan Vuelta a la Patria](#), March 2025, Radio Nacional de Venezuela.

<sup>144</sup> See the definition of sponsorship pathways in the [UNHCR master glossary of terms](#), UNHCR (accessed 01 May 2026).

<sup>145</sup> See [Projected global resettlement needs 2025](#), June 2024, UNHCR.

concerned survivors of torture and/or violence, people with legal and physical protection needs and particularly vulnerable women and girls. As in 2024, submissions by children accounted for 47 per cent of all resettlement submissions facilitated by UNHCR in 2025.<sup>146</sup>

## Refugee local integration

Data on local integration remains limited and is inconsistent between countries, making comparable analysis of the data very challenging. In the absence of reliable and comparable local integration data for host countries, statistics on naturalization of refugees and the granting of permanent residence permits are used as proxies to assess local integration outcomes. In 2025, 29 countries (three more than in 2024) reported naturalization or long-term residence permits granted to refugees from 179 countries of origin.

In total, 93,500 refugees were reported to have naturalized or been granted permanent residence permits. More than four in five of the total were reported by just five countries. In Armenia, 21,800 refugees were granted Armenian nationality, a four-fold increase from 2024. Canada granted 20,400 permanent residence permits (-26 per cent). Other countries in which refugees were naturalized included the Kingdom of the Netherlands (13,700, -28 per cent), Sweden (10,500, -50 per cent), Australia (10,000, a 77-fold increase) and Norway (8,400, +5 per cent). Most of the refugees who naturalized or obtained permanent residence permits were from Azerbaijan (21,900, a four-fold increase), Syria (14,700, -17 per cent), the Islamic Republic of Iran (6,600, +35 per cent) and Afghanistan (5,800, -27 per cent).

## Return of IDPs

Whether a formerly displaced person has been able to overcome their displacement-related vulnerabilities is not necessarily indicated by the process of their return to their place of origin. If returns occur under adverse circumstances forcing them to prematurely and involuntarily leave their displacement areas, or if their areas of origin remain unstable, or if their prospects for reintegration are limited, the risk of renewed displacement remains high.<sup>147</sup> In 2025, 16 countries reported 10.3 million IDP returnees, an increase of 25 per cent from 2024. Over four in five of them occurred in just three countries (see figure 14).

Nearly 3.6 million IDPs returned to their places of origin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Conflict has intensified since 2024, and IDP settlements around Goma were forced to close by M23 after they took control of the city and surrounding areas. Returnees faced severe protection risks, including gender-based violence, forced recruitment, extortion and exploitation.<sup>148</sup> Many returned to areas of origin still marred by active conflict or relocated to other areas with limited or no humanitarian aid.<sup>149</sup>

In Sudan, 2.9 million IDPs returned to areas no longer affected by active conflict. While in Syria, 2 million IDPs returned, as a growing number of Syrians have aspired to return home following the fall of the Assad Government in December 2024. Nevertheless, the situation in both countries remains extremely fragile with insecurity and very limited basic services and infrastructure. Elsewhere, large number of returns were reported in Ukraine (579,000) and Myanmar (415,100).

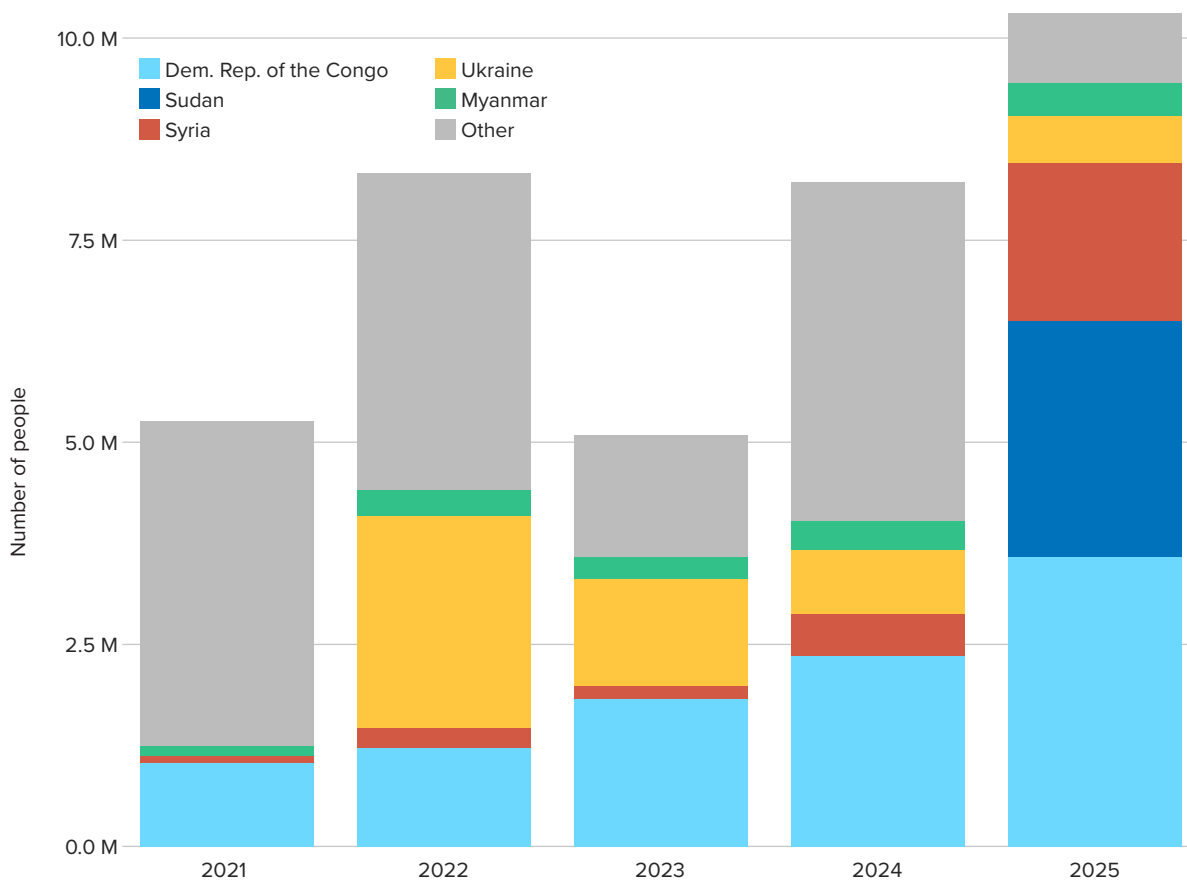
<sup>146</sup> See [UNHCR official statistics on resettlement](#), UNHCR.

<sup>147</sup> See [What are durable solutions for refugees and IDPs?](#), UNHCR, and [Guidance on solutions to internal displacement](#), February 2025, Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

<sup>148</sup> See [Democratic Republic of Congo, Population movement, Operation update #5](#), IFRC.

<sup>149</sup> See [Back to ruins: The displaced Congolese forced home by M23 rebels](#), July 2025, The New Humanitarian.

Figure 14 | Returns of IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR | 2021-2025



AFGHANISTAN. Ahmad and his younger brother Sahil are waiting at the Torkham border with their family. Tens of thousands of families crossed back into Afghanistan from Pakistan, due to increased pressure and deportations. They arrive exhausted, often with only what they can carry, facing an uncertain future. Many have never lived in Afghanistan, a country still reeling from over 40 years of conflict, where over half the population relies on humanitarian aid.

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*PHILIPPINES. In the Province of Basilan, mothers and children of the Sama Bajau community wait eagerly to receive their newly issued birth certificates. Their joyful smiles reflect their hopes for recognition, opportunity and a brighter future. UNHCR and partners are supporting efforts to increase birth registration in the Sama Bajau communities.*

© UNHCR/GIA LUGA

## CHAPTER 6

# Stateless people

## 4.5 MILLION

Are estimated to be stateless at end-2025 and the true number is likely to be much higher.

## 46,100

Stateless people acquired citizenship in 2025 across 24 countries.

## Overview

An estimated 4.5 million stateless people were reported globally at end-2025, 3 per cent more than a year earlier. Stateless people are individuals who are not recognized as a national by any country. In line with UNHCR's global statistical framework, this estimate also includes people of undetermined nationality, defined as those who lack proof of nationality and have links to multiple states or are treated by the country of residence as having potential claims to nationality elsewhere.

This global estimate is derived from data reported from 100 countries, one less than in 2024. The estimate draws on information provided by governments as well as quantitative and qualitative studies conducted by UNHCR and partners. However, a significant proportion

of countries do not report any data on statelessness to UNHCR, including some countries with a known stateless population. Therefore, the true global number of stateless people is likely to be much higher.

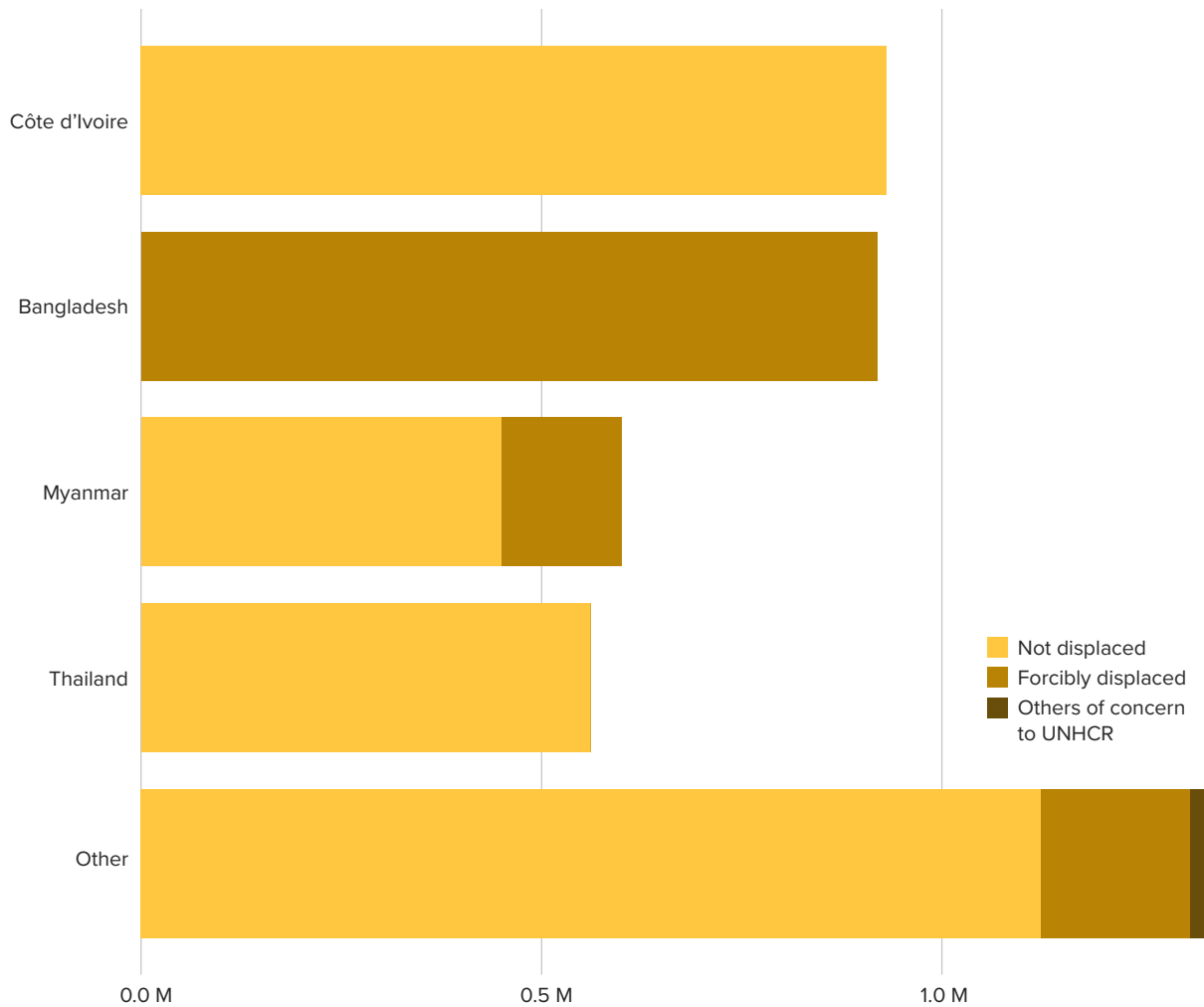
**Rohingya** constituted 41 per cent of the reported global stateless population, representing approximately 1.8 million individuals by the end of 2025. Of this population, an estimated 84 per cent were forcibly displaced, with 1.2 million of them hosted as refugees in Bangladesh. The Rohingya have suffered decades of persecution and discrimination, which intensified in August 2017 following a large-scale outbreak of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Due to the ongoing conflict in Myanmar, many have been forced to flee to Bangladesh.<sup>150</sup> In 2025, the reporting includes new arrivals from Myanmar to Bangladesh that have been identified through biometric enrolment in 2025, and who were primarily displaced

<sup>150</sup> See [A route-based snapshot: data & trends for refugees from Myanmar, March 2026](#), April 2026, UNHCR.

following an upsurge in violence in 2024 but have arrived since February 2021,<sup>151</sup> almost all of whom are stateless. Stateless Rohingya were also reported in Malaysia (125,500), India (22,700) and Indonesia (2,600) at end-2025. Within Myanmar, an estimated 225,200 stateless Rohingya were internally displaced, 43 per cent of the 519,600 stateless people reported in the

country. Around seven in ten of the global reported stateless population reside in just four countries, namely Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Thailand and Myanmar (see figure 15). The largest non-displaced stateless populations were registered in Côte d'Ivoire (931,000) and Thailand (610,300).

Figure 15 | Largest stateless populations | 2025



Over the last decade, the stateless population in the major countries reporting statelessness have remained relatively stable (see figure 16). In 2025, it is notable that while fewer stateless people were reported in Myanmar, there were increases in Bangladesh and Malaysia during the same period, primarily reflecting enhanced biometric enrolment and registration efforts, respectively, including

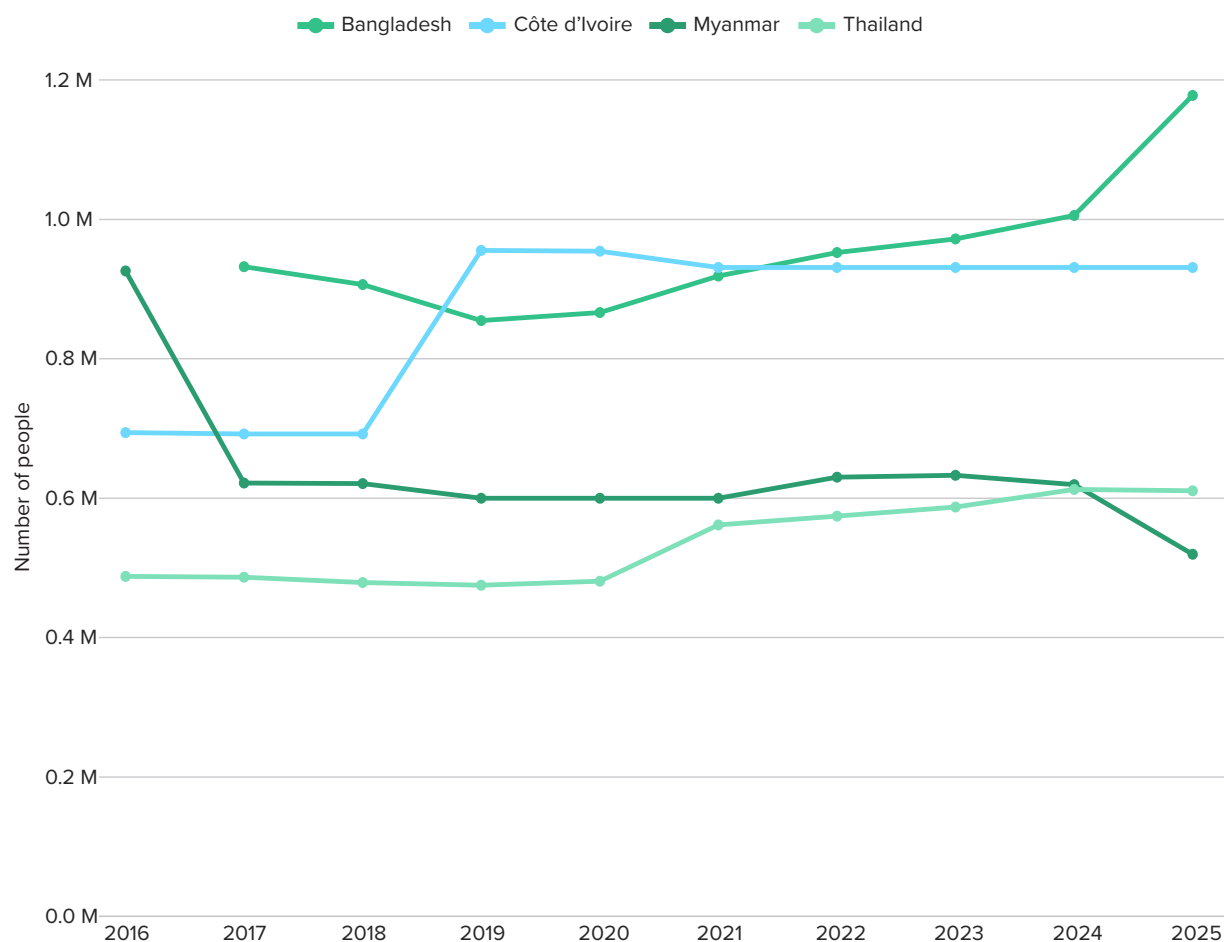
for individuals who had arrived in earlier years. In Thailand, the total figure has remained consistent for several years. But it is important to note that there have been both increases due to more people being registered as stateless, and decreases, due to grants of nationality, as part of conscious efforts to address statelessness.

<sup>151</sup> New arrivals biometrically identified by the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR. See [Myanmar situation](#), UNHCR (accessed 27 April 2026).

Demographic data disaggregated by both sex and age was available for 74 per cent of the estimated total stateless population, across 29 countries. Data disaggregated only by sex was available for a further

5 per cent of the known stateless population. Based on this data, children accounted for 46 per cent of the stateless population and 51 per cent of the population were women and girls.

Figure 16 | **Largest stateless populations** | 2016-2025



## Acquisition and confirmation of nationality

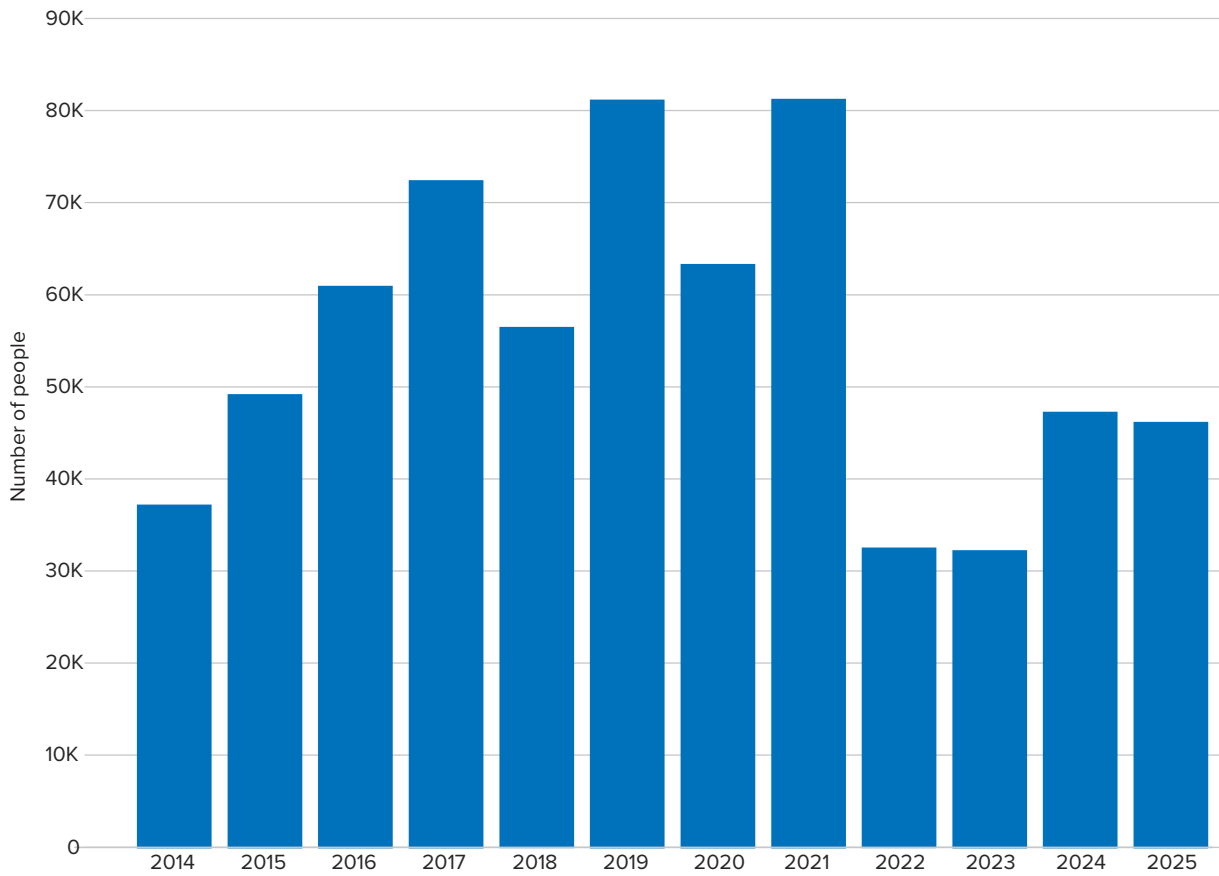
In 2025, 46,100 stateless people or those of undetermined nationality acquired a nationality or had it confirmed in 24 countries, notably in Thailand (19,200), South Sudan (17,700) and the Russia Federation (2,400). This brings the total to 659,100 stateless people that

have acquired a nationality or had their nationality confirmed since 2014 (see figure 17).

UNHCR expects that more people in South Sudan will need help confirming their nationality in the future. Therefore, at the end of 2025, about 60,600 additional people are estimated to be in need of this support.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>152</sup> These figures do not represent the number of stateless people, but rather those UNHCR expects to assist in confirming their nationality.

Figure 17 | **Number of stateless people who have had their nationality confirmed or who acquired citizenship | 2014-2025**



## Legal and policy improvements in 2025

Across the globe, several governments continued to make tangible progress in addressing statelessness through legal, policy and administrative reforms. These efforts reflect growing commitments to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness and improve the protection of stateless people.

The Government of **North Macedonia** became the first country in the Balkans to resolve all known cases of statelessness linked to the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>153</sup> During the year, **Slovenia** acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, building on the country’s commitment as party to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.<sup>154</sup> This accession fulfilled Slovenia’s pledge at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and is a key step

towards improving legal and policy frameworks on statelessness in the country.

In **Viet Nam**, the National Assembly approved an amendment to the Nationality Law aimed at preventing statelessness among Vietnamese living abroad. The reform simplifies and waives procedural requirements for the restoration of Vietnamese nationality.<sup>155</sup> In **Thailand**, the implementation of the 2024 Cabinet Resolution began, which seeks to accelerate pathways to nationality and permanent residence for long-term residents and their children. In 2025, 19,200 stateless individuals secured Thai nationality and some 87,700 obtained permanent residence, which provides a pathway to nationality after five years and enables access to a wide range of rights.

<sup>153</sup> See [North Macedonia ends statelessness caused by Yugoslavia’s dissolution](#), July 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>154</sup> See [Slovenia sets positive example in defending rights by acceding to Statelessness Convention](#), March 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>155</sup> See [Spotlight on statelessness January-June 2025](#), September 2025, UNHCR.

**Mali** adopted groundbreaking legislation dedicated to the protection of stateless people's rights, building on the country's accession to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions in 2016. This legislation comprises 28 articles, providing a definition of a stateless person, outlining their rights and providing a pathway to Malian nationality.<sup>156</sup>

Concrete progress in civil registration and documentation was also recorded in several countries. In the **Dominican Republic**, 450 individuals obtained birth certificates under Law 169-14 (Group B), which provides a pathway to naturalization for those born in the country before 2007 to foreign parents without residence permits. These individuals were among the first of 799 naturalized individuals to gain formal recognition of Dominican nationality. In **Burkina Faso**, 25,800 birth certificates were issued to people at risk of statelessness, reflecting substantial efforts to improve access to birth registration and identity documentation. Similarly, in the **Philippines**, the births of over 25,000 individuals at risk of statelessness were registered across 40 priority municipalities, establishing legal identity and access to rights.<sup>157</sup>

UNHCR and the **Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE)** jointly published a report encouraging the adoption of effective national measures to prevent childhood statelessness, including universal birth registration and child-sensitive nationality legislation. It outlined the applicable international legal frameworks and documented good practice implemented by selected OSCE-participating States, providing practical guidance for strengthening protection of stateless children.<sup>158</sup>

In the Americas, UNHCR supported the **Latin American and Caribbean Council for Civil Registration, Identity, and Vital Statistics (CLARCIEV)** in organizing a campaign where 32,200 births were registered, reflecting sustained regional efforts to expand access to civil registration and legal identity. A total of 11 countries participated, including Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Peru. Activities were supported by field service teams who prioritized rural, remote and hard-to-reach places, where barriers to access civil registration services remain most pronounced.<sup>159</sup>

In 2025, the **Global Alliance to End Statelessness** marked its first anniversary,<sup>160</sup> providing an opportunity to take stock of progress.<sup>161</sup> During the first year, the Alliance expanded significantly, bringing together more than 180 members. These included 28 governments, five UN agencies and 12 regional intergovernmental organizations, alongside numerous civil society and stateless-led organizations and academic institutions.

In addition, UNHCR launched a report which made clear that addressing statelessness and securing the right to nationality is integral to the development of countries and societies and ensuring that no one is left behind.<sup>162</sup>

Many stateless people and those with undetermined nationality continue to face barriers to access essential services, secure legal identity and fully exercise their human rights. However, there have been many positive developments that have been set in motion during 2025 that have helped stateless people find solutions to their situation and will also prevent new cases of statelessness. To measure further progress and inform effective responses, accurate, timely and comprehensive data remains critical, guided by the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>156</sup> See [UNHCR applauds Mali's adoption of landmark to protect stateless people](#), June 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>157</sup> See [Spotlight on statelessness July-December 2025](#), March 2026, UNHCR.

<sup>158</sup> See [Opening doors for children: prevention of childhood statelessness good practices in the OSCE area](#), July 2025, UNHCR and OSCE.

<sup>159</sup> See [Latin American and Caribbean civil registration week](#), Global Alliance to End Statelessness (accessed 15 April 2026).

<sup>160</sup> See [One year of collective action to end statelessness](#), Global Alliance to End Statelessness (accessed 16 April 2026).

<sup>161</sup> The Global Alliance to End Statelessness is a multistakeholder alliance, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to equip each other with the necessary tools for focused and effective collaboration to address statelessness. See [Global Alliance to End Statelessness](#) (accessed 17 April 2026).

<sup>162</sup> See [Leaving no one behind: Statelessness and the Sustainable Development Goals](#), October 2025, UNHCR.

<sup>163</sup> See [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics](#), 2023, Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS) and [Aligning UNHCR's statistics with the IRRS, IRIS, and IROSS](#), May 2026, UNHCR.



**BANGLADESH.** A young man looks out of his shelter in Kutupalong camp, the world's largest refugee camp located in Cox's Bazar district. More than one million Rohingya refugees live there, most having fled Myanmar in 2017 due to persecution and violence. Living in overcrowded temporary shelters, families depend on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs and remain highly exposed to natural hazards, including storms, floods and landslides.

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## Who is included in UNHCR statistics?

UNHCR collates population data relating to people who are forcibly displaced or stateless. The data is sourced primarily from governments and also from UNHCR operations. See <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/methodology/> for the detailed description and definitions of who is included in these statistics.

## Annex tables

Annex tables can be downloaded from the UNHCR website at: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/annexes/trends-annexes.html>.

All data are provisional and subject to change.

Data is available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.



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# GLOBAL TRENDS

## FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN 2025

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### FRONT COVER

**AFGHANISTAN.** *An Afghan family returns through the Torkham border, exhausted but resilient, among thousands crossing from Pakistan amid intensified pressure and deportations. Many are women and girls facing growing restrictions on access to education, livelihoods and their freedom. Their future remains uncertain in a country impacted by decades of conflict, where more than half the population depends on humanitarian assistance.*

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This document along with further information on global displacement is available on UNHCR's statistics website:

<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>

