

7.6. Syrians in Lebanon

7.6.1. Legal status and demographics

Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol[674] and lacks a comprehensive national legal framework and policy on refugees.[675] As new registrations of refugees from Syria by UNHCR were suspended by the government in 2015[676] and the possibility of alternative informal registration with UNHCR was not used by many newly arriving Syrians,[677] the actual number of refugees is unknown.[678] As of 30 June 2025, the Lebanese government estimated the number of displaced Syrians in the country at 1.4 million, of whom 716 312 were registered with UNHCR.[679] Syrian refugees are not eligible for Lebanese citizenship and lack political rights.[680]

Legal residency in Lebanon can be obtained on various grounds, including possession of a UNHCR registration certificate[681] (only issued until 2015),[682] sponsorship, courtesy (spouses and children of Lebanese citizens), study purposes, property ownership, or possession of a work permit.[683] However, the majority of Syrians lacked access to legal residency in the country[684] due to high fees and administrative obstacles involved in obtaining it.[685] While UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) jointly noted that the rate of legal residency among Syrians had increased by 3.3 % between 2021 and 2023 (from 16.4 % to 19.7 %),[686] that rate dropped back to 18 % in 2024. At Governorate level, legal residency rates in 2024 were highest in Nabatieh (30 %), Beirut (28 %) and South Lebanon (26 %) and lowest in Akkar and Bekaa (10 and 15 %, respectively).[687] For holders of legal residency, the renewal of residence permits involved major challenges, with reports of delays in handling extension applications at the office of the General Directorate of the General Security, along with difficulties related to the payment of renewal fees.[688]

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