

7.6.6. Patterns of return

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Due to the conflict in autumn 2024, at least 350 000 Syrians crossed from Lebanon into Syria between September and November 2024[768] in successive waves.[769] Many of those who returned to Syria were not previously known to UNHCR Lebanon. Airstrikes at the Masnaa crossing point in late October/early November 2024 and temporary closures of some official crossings temporarily reduced the flow of people at several border points, although irregular crossings continued. The cross-border flow then increased following an announcement by General Security to ease the exit of Syrians (and Palestinians) irrespective of their legal status or conditions at initial entry.[770] Meanwhile, it was recorded that 44 % of all UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees who had left returned to Lebanon within three months of the November 2024 ceasefire, frequently citing insecurity and lack of housing and economic prospects in Syria.[771]

Following the collapse of the Assad government, 238 120 individuals known to UNHCR were confirmed or presumed to have returned from Lebanon to Syria between January and early September 2025.[772] Many Syrians undertook short-term visits to Syria to evaluate conditions in their places of origin. These cross-border movements have been occurring both through official border crossings (mainly Al-Masnaa and Qaa) and unofficial ones, often utilising the services of smugglers.[773] The large numbers of irregular movements across Lebanon’s long, fairly porous border with Syria made it difficult to estimate the real number of returns to Syria since the collapse of the Assad government.[774]

Meanwhile, Lebanon witnessed a significant number of new arrivals of Syrians[775] (around 100 000 individuals),[776] including from Syria’s Alawite, Shiite and Christian minorities, arriving in two major waves in late 2024 and March 2025.[777]

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