

Syria: Figures analysis

Number of people displaced by conflict as of 31 December 2016: 6,326,000

New displacements associated with conflict in 2016: More than 824,000

Notes and caveats

Number of people displaced by conflict as of 31 December 2016

We estimate that there were 6,325,978 people displaced by conflict in Syria as of the end of 2016. The figure breaks down as follows:

Rural Damascus: 1,383,017

Aleppo: 1,002,023

Idlib: 908,929

Damascus: 651,000

Homs: 476,703

Lattakia: 388,495

Dar'a: 329,928

Hama: 261,350

Al Hasakeh: 231,951

Tartous: 217,565

Ar Raqqa: 193,846

Deir ez Zor: 181,915

Sweida: 51,770

Quneitra: 47,486

Primary source: OCHA's humanitarian needs overview, published at the end of 2016

Geographical and temporal coverage: OCHA's overview covers the whole of Syria as of 31 December 2016.

Description of source's methodology: OCHA relied on three datasets: the [Whole of Syria Assessment](#), a multi-partner exercise covering 217 sub-districts; its [governorates profile](#) covering 272 sub-districts; and LandScan satellite imagery for population estimates.

The Whole of Syria Assessment is a multi-hub and multi partner exercise in which clusters, operational partners and multi-sector data collection partners participate in the data collection and analysis process. The qualitative and quantitative data is analysed jointly by sector experts from all hubs and is owned by the humanitarian community. The process is facilitated by Syria information management and assessment working group (SIMAWG) in Amman and OCHA's country offices in Turkey, Jordan and Syria with help from sectors and operational partners.

New displacements associated with conflict in 2016

We estimate that there were at least 824,000 new displacements associated with conflict in Syria during the year. We consider the figure to be conservative.

Primary sources: UNHCR's flash updates

Geographical and temporal coverage: UNHCR's updates cover the whole of Syria between November 2015 and 19 December 2016. They are published daily, weekly or monthly, depending on the intensity of fighting and the scale of displacement.

Description of source's methodology: UNHCR's updates include most displacement events in Syria. They are published jointly by UNHCR and the CCCM, shelter/NFI and protection clusters. Information from other organisations such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is also included.

We added up all new displacements reported in UNHCR's 2016 updates, but we did not use its final figure, which covers new displacements between February and 19 December 2016, because it disregards IDPs who were displaced and returned during the year. It did not, for example, include 20,000 IDPs in Monin in Rural Damascus who were displaced for several days and then returned home; 65,000 IDPs in Al Hasakeh who returned home within two weeks; or 16,000 IDPs in Idlib city, who also returned.

Nor does the UNHCR figure include people at the "berm", whom it considers refugees. The berm is the border area between Syria and Jordan, where an estimated 75,000 people arrived in 2016. Some organisations consider them IDPs because they have not crossed the international border, but others consider them refugees because they have crossed the Syrian border and are staying in "no man's land" between the two countries.

UNHCR's figure for new displacements in southern Syria is likely to be an underestimate, given its irregular reporting on this part of the country. Levels of violence in the south are, however, much lower than in the north, and as such it is not thought to be significant issue.

Other published displacement data not used: OCHA estimates 2,048,329 new displacements, but we decided not to use its figure because it did not provide us with a clear explanation of its methodology. There is a significant discrepancy between its new displacement figure and its final stock figure of 6.3 million. The final stock figure decreased by 300,000 between 2015 and 2016, but new displacements increased by more than two million.

OCHA admits that flows of IDPs are likely to contain returnees, which inflates the new displacement figure. There is also a risk of double counting or worse because of the complexity of tracking displacement in urban areas. Our estimates differ most for new displacements in Aleppo and Idlib governorates. When there is an overlap of figures for the same place or event, OCHA reported the higher one, which may result in inflated figures.