

OPINIONS AND CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS **INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS** ON SYRIA

SURVEY STUDY :: NOVEMBER 2016





**Opinions and Current Attitudes
Towards International Agreements on Syria**

Survey study

November 2016



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The Day After is a Syrian organization working to support democratic transition in Syria. Its work focuses on the following areas: rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, the design of electoral systems, election of the constituent assembly, constitutional design, economic reform, and social policy.

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Introduction

Since 2010, Arab peoples from Tunisia to Syria came out in popular revolts calling for the fall of corrupt dictatorial regimes and their replacement by civil-democratic governments based on freedom, equality, and justice. In each one of these revolutions the international community and external forces played a role in the process of change, though the manner of dealing with them differed from one country to another. While this process has led to the downfall of regimes in most of the countries in which revolutions emerged, it did not contribute to creating secure democratic alternatives until now (perhaps with the exception of Tunisia, to some extent). The peoples who toppled their regimes were not allowed to play a constructive role taking part in the adoption of fateful decisions concerning their future and the future of their country. The result has been a state of devastation, killings, kidnappings and torture, insecurity, and displacement. All this has been accompanied by hesitation and indifference from the rest of the world, which has helped increase the influence of extremist organizations like “Daesh” or the Fatah al-Sham (formerly Nusra Front) , enabling these groups to control large areas of the country.

In February 2016, after more than five years of violent conflict in Syria, an agreement brokered by international powers was reached on a ceasefire implemented disparately across Syria excluding the the Fatah al-Sham and the Islamic State (ISIS) but not excluding any of the forces and militias having a connection with the regime who have participated in and continue to kill hundreds of thousands of Syrians. As such, the Jihadist extremist organizations became a pretext to strike any region in Syria and to commit the most heinous massacres against the population with international silence and blessing. With the conclusion of the military build-up and preparations by pro-regime militias at the gates of Aleppo, US Secretary of State John Kerry openly acknowledged the difficulty in distinguishing between the opposition and the Nusra Front while regime planes and its allies bombed the city day and night^[1]. All of this led to the deterioration of the Geneva negotiations, that aimed to reach a political solution for a democratic transition in Syria. Democratic presidential election was also set to take place a year and a half after the launch of these negotiations, as agreed by the sponsoring countries.

This research aims to identify the most prominent opinions in Syria concerning these international agreements which will enable us to understand some of their consequences as well as their direct and indirect effects. Furthermore, these studies will contribute to the conveyance of the voice of those Syrians unaccounted for at the decision-making table.

This research is divided into three chapters:

The first section presents respondents’ opinions on the Cessation of Hostilities.

The second section presents their opinions on the Geneva III negotiations and their anticipated results.

In the third and final section we present their opinions on the planned presidential election to be held under the auspices of the United Nations.

1-Kerry warns that Russian reinforcements near Aleppo, Syria threaten the truce in the New York Times.

Goodman, Peter (APRIL 2016 ,22) **Russian Military Buildup Near Aleppo, Syria, Threatens Truce, Kerry Warns**. By S. The New York Times.

Operating Terms and Definitions

Truce: the agreements that have taken place in many areas between the regime and armed forces which in some way ensure the cessation of bombing and military operations under certain conditions varying from region to region.

Ceasefire: the agreement to “cease hostile operations” in various zones in Syria which entered into force on the 27th of February 2016. Major powers still say that it continues despite incessant bombing from Russian planes in some regions and the killing and displacement of their inhabitants.

Regime areas: Areas under regime control other than besieged areas or those under the truce agreement.

Opposition areas: Areas under the control of forces not affiliated with the regime (Arab or Kurdish) other than besieged areas or those under the truce agreement or those under control of “Daesh”.

Truce areas: Areas subject to the truce agreement between the regime and the opposition.

Besieged areas: Areas besieged by one of the military forces, whichever it may be. However, in this research, areas besieged by Syrian regime forces and its allies are meant specifically, as our sample only covered these areas.

Fighters leaving after a truce agreement: After the signing of a truce agreement, a number of fighters are usually allowed leave to other areas. The interview with the fighters was administered after leaving to the new place of residence.

(Civilian) relative of a fighter: i.e. father/mother, brother/sister, husband/wife or son/daughter of a fighter who left after the truce agreement and was also forced to leave his hometown. The interview was administered in his/her new place of residence.

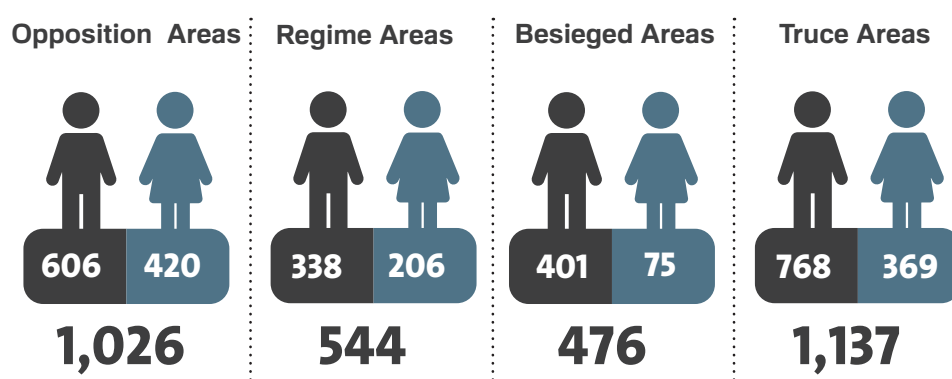
Civilian leaving after a truce agreement: Individuals who left after the truce agreement and emigrated to another area. The interview was administered in their new places of residence.

Methodology and Sample

During the period between March 1st and April 19th 2016, The Day After completed a survey with the goal of identifying the most prominent opinions and current attitudes towards the international agreements for the political solution in Syria. The trained field research team conducted face-to-face interviews with 3,183 individuals: 2,113 men and 1,070 women.

The circumstances of war and displacement lived by the country make it impossible to obtain a representative sample, but we managed to obtain samples having a diverse and sufficient composition allowing us to make comparisons between different demographic and social variables able to provide us with important data on the most prominent opinions and attitudes towards the current international agreements on Syria (ceasefire, Geneva III negotiations, presidential elections). Furthermore, we took into consideration the very uneven living conditions and circumstances under which Syrians have been living for years in an ongoing war. We distinguished between besieged areas, those under the truce, and those under the control of opposition or regime forces. Furthermore, we gave particular attention to the opinions of those who had experienced treaties and earlier agreements similar to the ceasefire that began on February 27, 2016 (civilians or combatants and their families who were forced to leave their area following the signing of the truce agreement). Figure (1) demonstrates the general distribution of the total sample and Figures (2-7) show the distribution in detail².

Figure 1: the distribution of the total sample and partial samples



2- The number of women in the besieged areas was small compared to others. This is due to the large numbers of women who left those areas because of the siege, the lack of basic services and conditions of life. The situation became very difficult for children and women.

Figure 2: Besieged Areas according to province (No. Respondents)

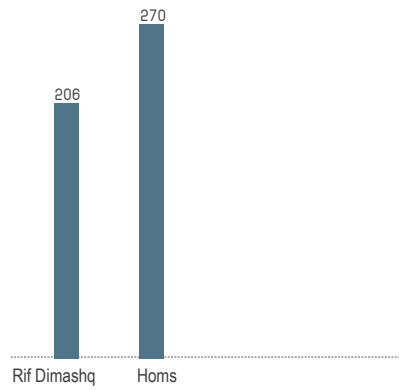


Figure 3: Truce Areas according to province (No. Respondents)

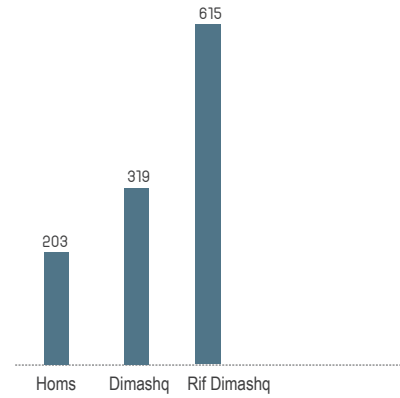


Figure 4: Regime Areas according to province (No. Respondents)

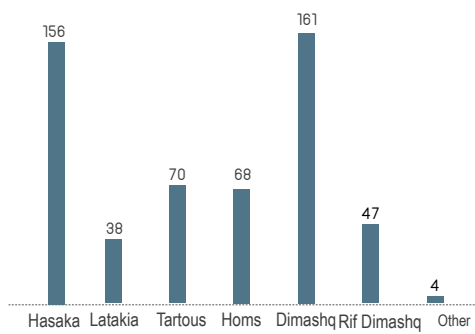


Figure 5: Opposition Areas according to province (by number)

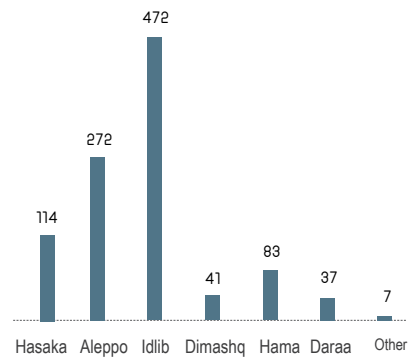


Figure 6: Fighters and civilians who were forced to leave after truce agreement

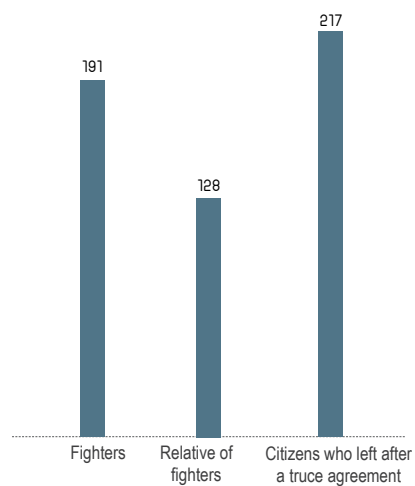
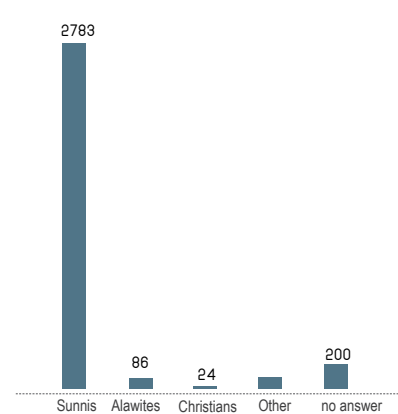


Figure 7: Religion - the sect

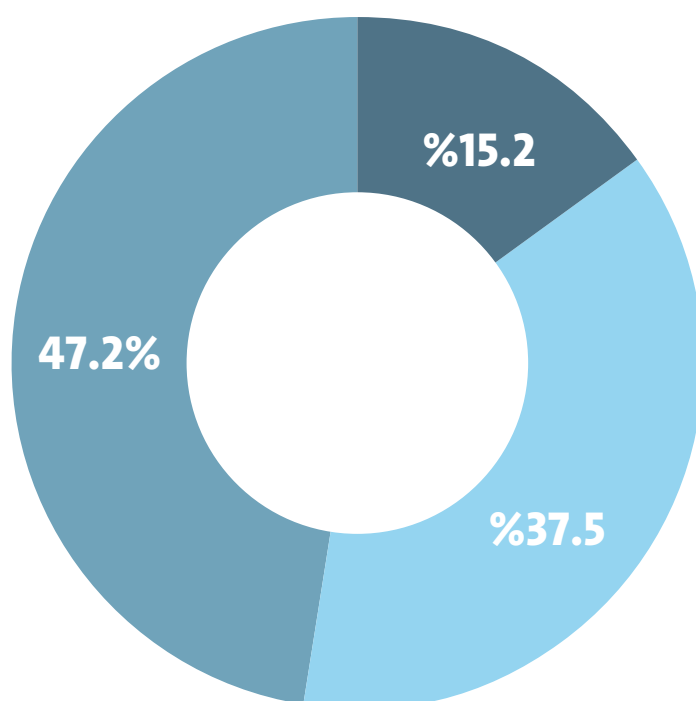


Part 1: Ceasefire

In your opinion, is the achievement of peace in Syria possible by means of the ceasefire which was announced on February 27th, 2016?

Figure 8: The possibility of achieving peace by means of the ceasefire announced Feb. 27th, 2016

■ No, it's not possible ■ Yes, it's possible ■ Don't know

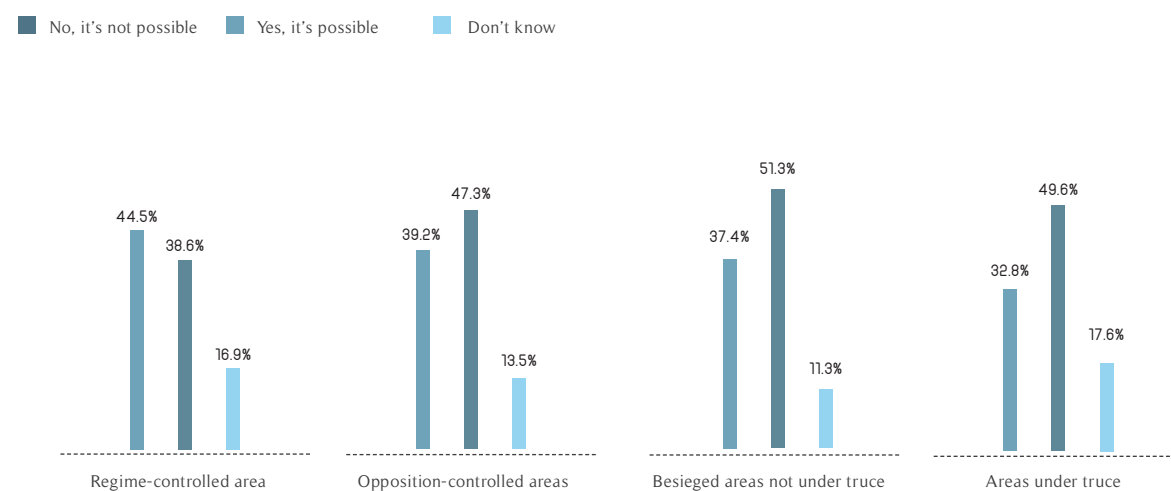


The first question about the ceasefire was as follows: In your opinion, is the achievement of peace in Syria possible by means of the ceasefire which was announced on February 27th, 2016?

Roughly half of the respondents (47.2%) said that it is impossible to achieve peace in Syria by means of the ceasefire which accompanied the launch of the Geneva III talks, compared with (37.5%) who answered affirmatively (Figure 8). Despite the fact that the ceasefire might help to renew hopes for the possibility of ending the war in Syria, the greater part of the respondents continue to believe that the fate of this initiative will not be better than its predecessors which all failed.

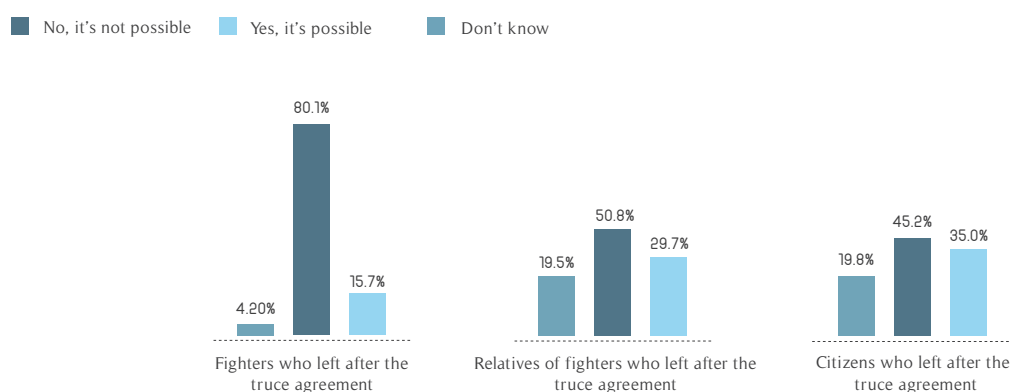
Looking at the responses according to area, we notice that the hope for the ceasefire being the beginning of the end of the war in Syria increases in areas under regime control, against the rest of the areas. Roughly half of the respondents in areas under opposition control (47.3%) ,in besieged areas (51.3%), or areas under truce (49.6%) answered negatively, whereas the percentage fell to (38.6%) in areas under regime control. The reason may be linked to the extent of significant improvement in the lives of residents in these areas after the ceasefire agreement took effect.

Figure 9: The possibility of achieving peace according to area



Analysis based on the current situation of the respondent (previous experience with truce) shows that there is almost a consensus among the fighters who were forced to leave and roughly half of the respondents from the families of civilian fighters that this ceasefire cannot lead to peace. The other citizens who left after the former truce agreement tend towards the same answer, if to a lesser extent: 45.2% of them answered negatively, versus 35.0% who answered affirmatively.

Figure 10: Possibility of achieving peace according to the respondent's situation



But what kind of peace are we talking about? To answer this we turned to the following question: *In your opinion, will the current ceasefire permit a shift in the military balance of power?*

It appears that the largest percentage of respondents believe that a ceasefire will be to the regime's advantage (40.5%) or that it will not shift the existing military balance (37.1%). A small percentage said that it would be to the opposition's advantage, and a very small number said that it would be to the advantage of the Islamic State "Daesh" (Figure 12).

Roughly half of the respondents who said that the current ceasefire will not lead to peace, said that it will help to shift the balance of power in favor of the regime, while only 5.8% said that it would be in favor of the opposition. (Figure 11) Only 16% of those who believe that the ceasefire will lead to peace said that it would be in favor of the opposition (Figure 11).

It appears that confidence in the ability of the ceasefire to end the war, indicated by roughly one-third of the respondents who say that it will lead to peace, is predicated on the belief that peace will restore the regime's control (about 13% of the total respondents) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Possibility of shifting the balance of power and achieving peace through the ceasefire

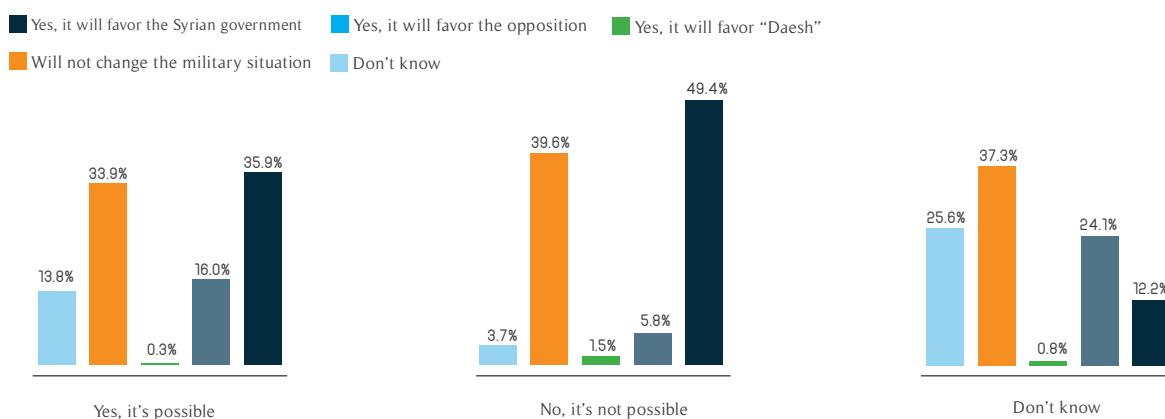
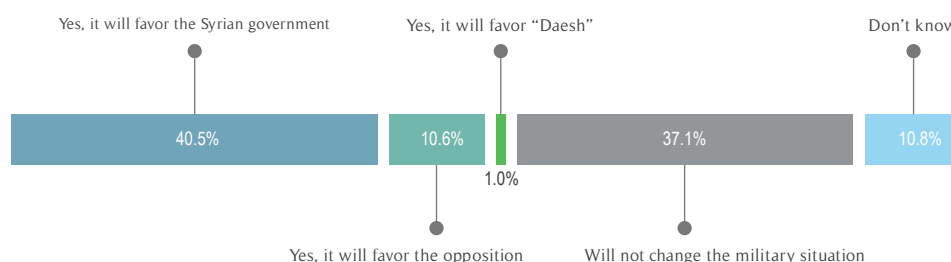


Figure 12: Possibility of shifting the balance of power



Truce or ceasefire mean a cessation of hostilities which may end or continue. Conciliation and settlement mean an end to the conflict and a move toward a new situation. We found that the identification of the label used by the population helps us to identify their orientation. Therefore we asked them: which label do you usually use when talking about the agreements which have occurred between the Syrian government and the military factions?

There seems to be almost a consensus among respondents in describing the agreements which have taken place between the regime and the opposition on the truce and ceasefire. Only 14.7% described them as a settlement or reconciliation (Figure 13, 15), and it seems that these latter two designations are prevalent in regime-controlled areas.

This might reflect the desire of the regime to popularize these two words to show that it is in the process of ending the “crisis” and returning to the previous situation and, conversely, the great rejection of these terms in opposition-controlled areas may reflect their insistence on further resistance.

Figure 13: Labels used

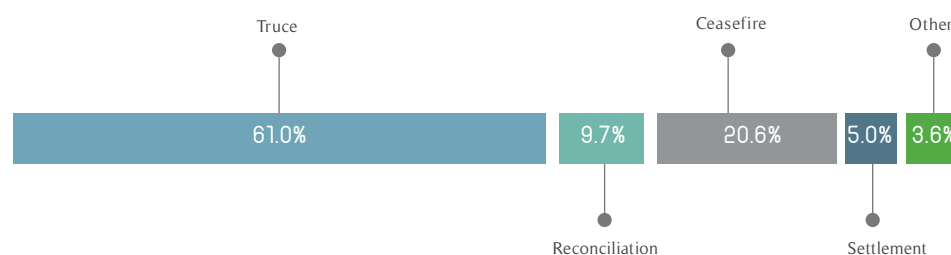


Figure 14: Labels according to area

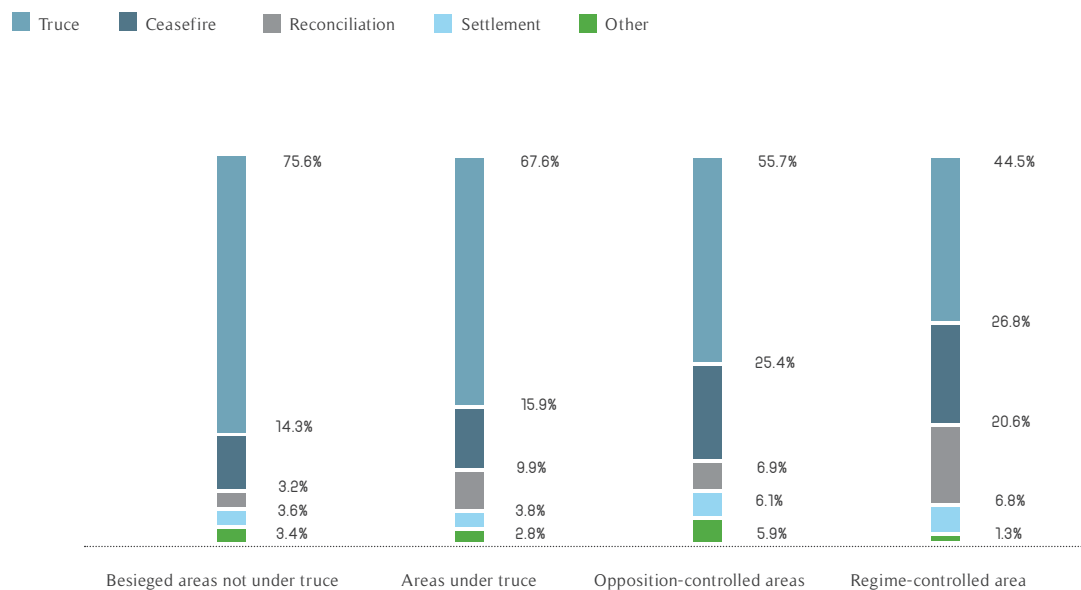
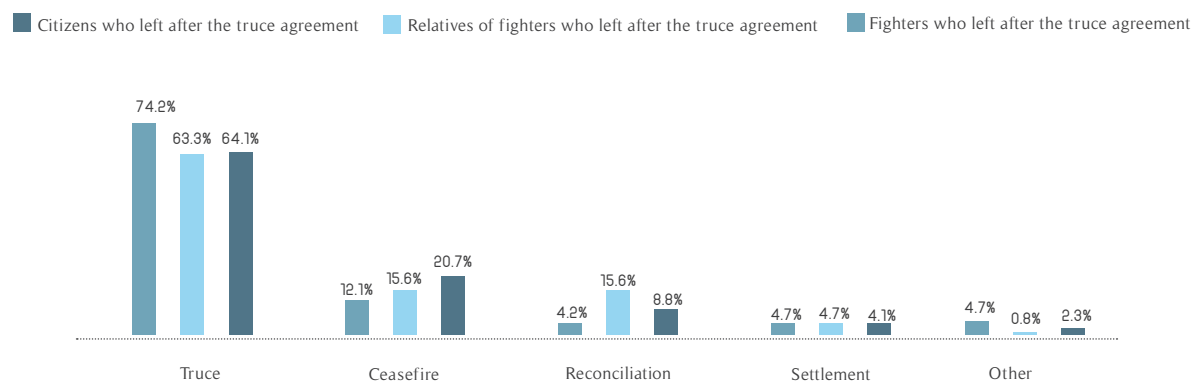


Figure 15: Label according to respondent's current situation



Why did the people accept a ceasefire? Is it because of the general conviction that “the political solution is the only possible solution,” as alleged by most Western diplomats, or are there other reasons? And how do these reasons differ from one region to another? To this end we turned to the following question where respondents were able to choose more than one answer: What are the reasons which compel people to accept the current ceasefire?

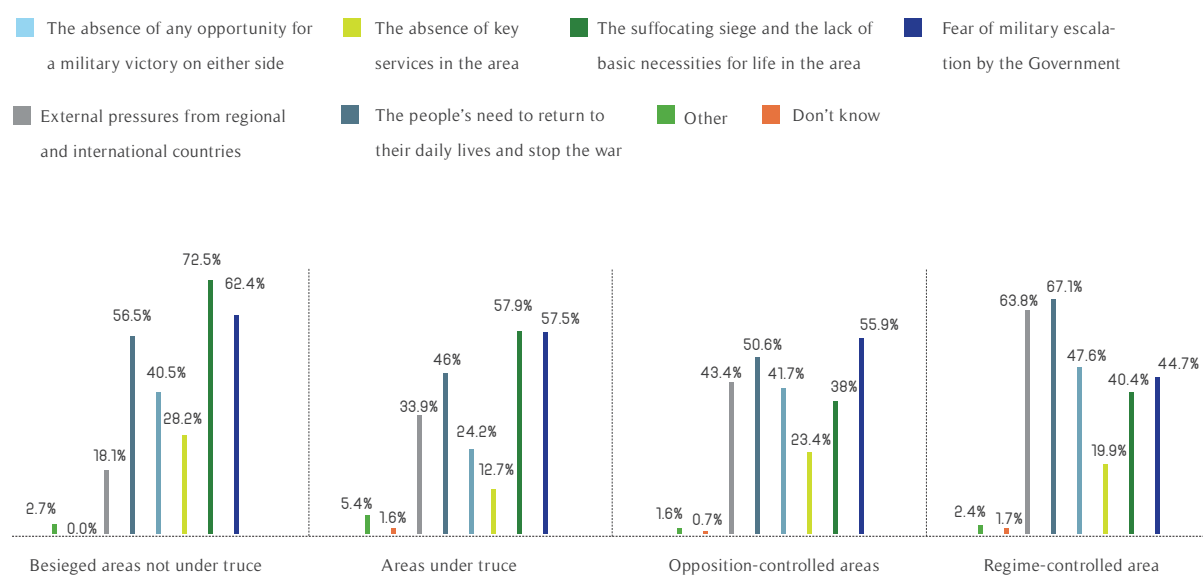
Fear of military escalation by the regime and its allies emerged as the leading reason (55.5%) which compelled people to accept the ceasefire agreement. The second reason was the people’s need to return to their normal lives, followed by the suffocating siege. Despair over the possibility of a military victory came at a much lower ranking (penultimate) of 36.3% (Figure 16).

Figure 16: What are the reasons which compelled people to accept the current ceasefire?



Reasons vary according to area: in regime-controlled areas, the primary reason was the people's need to return to their normal lives, followed by external pressures. This latter reason came in last in another list from besieged areas, where the primary reason was the suffocating siege (72.5%) and the fear of military escalation by the regime and its allies (62.4%). Yet it is noted that both of these reasons are also present in the lead on the list from truce areas, which means that truces have kept the door open for the return of the siege as well as bombing and destruction. Fear of military escalation and the people's need to return to their normal lives were the two leading reasons in opposition-controlled areas, as they were mentioned by more than half of the respondents in these areas. (Figure 17)

Figure 17: What are the reasons which compelled people to accept the current ceasefire according to area.

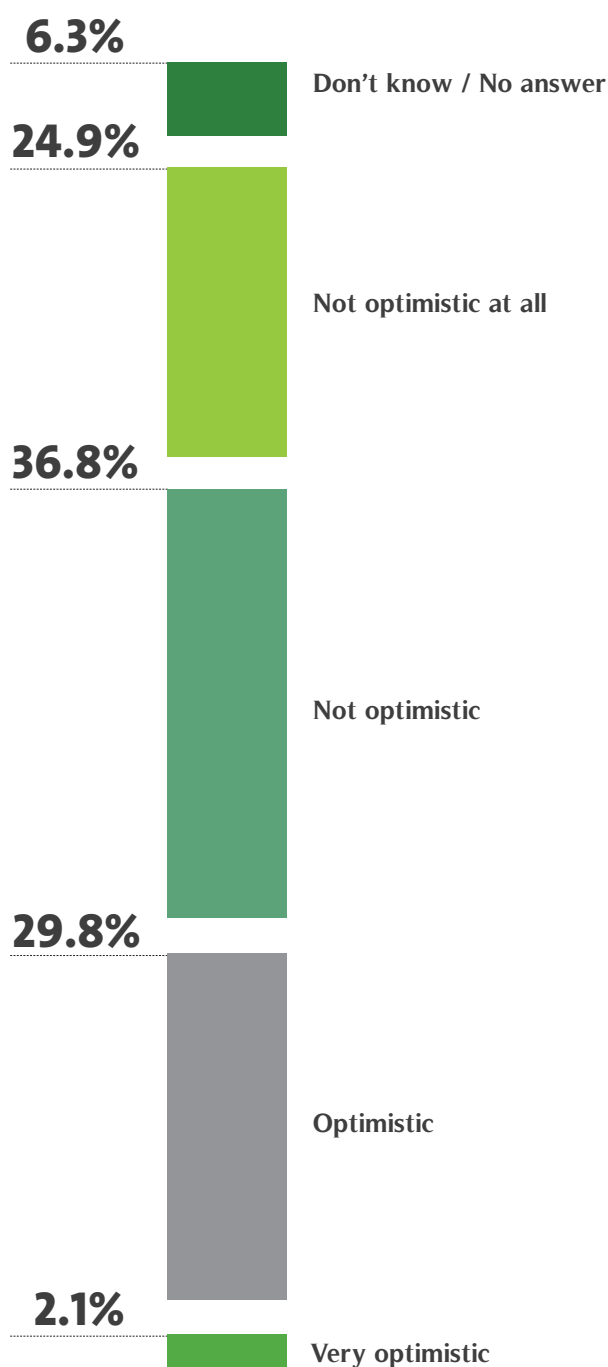


Part 2:

Geneva Negotiations

To what extent are you optimistic about the success of the current negotiations in Geneva?

Figure 18: Optimism concerning the success of the Geneva negotiations 2016



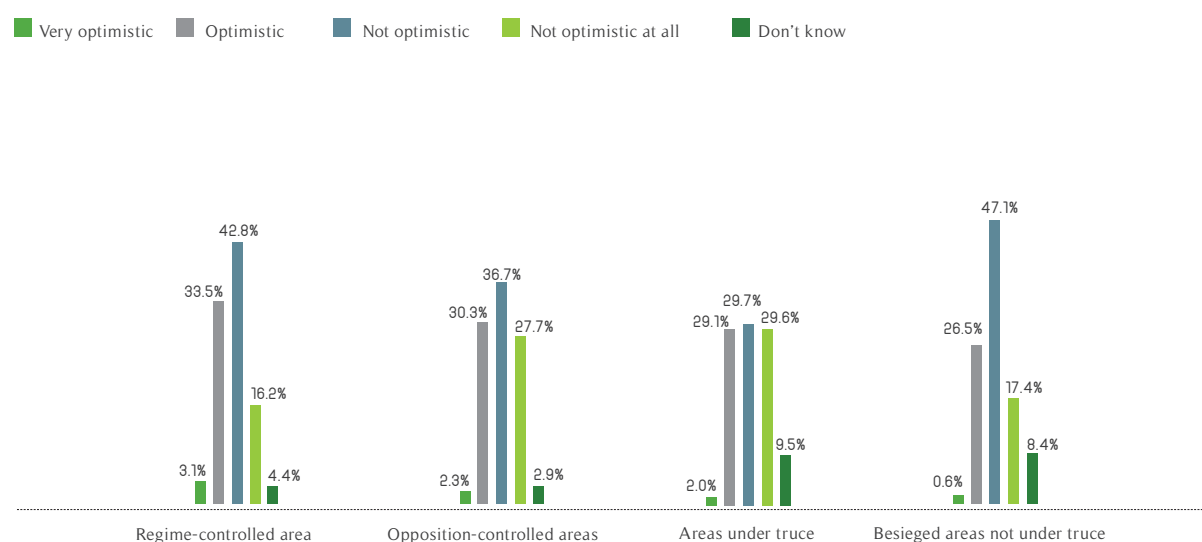
Leading up to Geneva III it was marketed as the last hope to end the Syrian war and find a political solution to the Syrian crisis which might lead to a democratic transition, but how do the respondents view it and what hopes do they have for it? To identify their positions we asked them:

To what extent are you optimistic about the success of the current negotiations in Geneva?

Less than a third of the respondents have hope for the possibility of success of the Geneva III negotiations. The largest percentage in areas under regime control or areas under truce say that they are not optimistic or not optimistic at all (up to 59.0%) (Figure 19), and despite the convergence of proportions in these areas, an elevated percentage was noted among those who said that they were not optimistic at all in areas under truce as compared with areas under regime control (29.6% and 16.2%, respectively) (Figure 19)

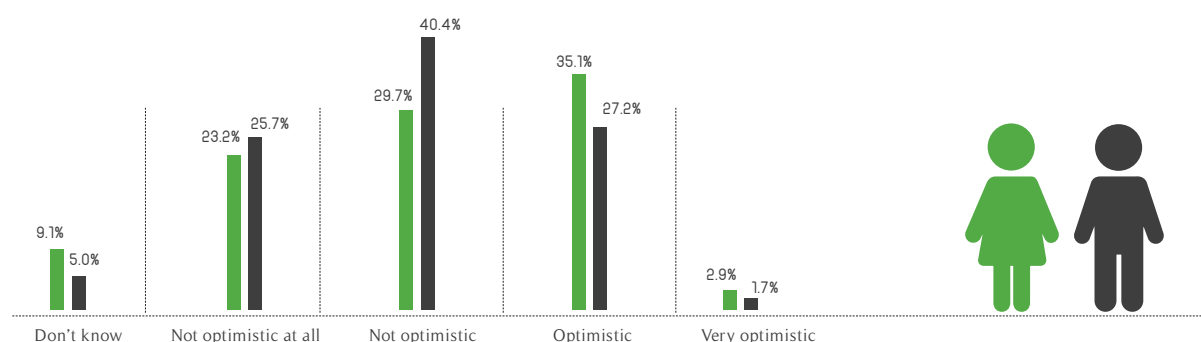
In opposition-controlled or besieged areas the results were in some ways similar, whereas around 64.5% said that they were not optimistic or not optimistic at all. The decreased percentage of those who said they were not optimistic at all in the besieged areas was noted, compared with the opposition-controlled areas, where it was 17.4% and 27.7%, respectively. (Figure 19)

Figure 19: Optimism concerning the success of the negotiations according to area



Although the majority of men and women say that they are not optimistic or not optimistic at all, it seems the women are more optimistic than the men in our sample about the Geneva negotiations' potential for success. (38.0% and 28.9%, respectively) (Figure 20)

Figure 20: Optimism concerning the success of the negotiations according to gender



It does not appear that respondents carry high hopes for the claim of the international powers and the United Nations that the Geneva negotiations are the gateway for a Syrian democratic transition. Only 8.5% said that, post-Geneva, Syria will enter a phase of democratic transition or that it will become a united, democratic country, whereas almost half of the respondents chose pessimistic answers about the future of Syria after Geneva, saying: things will become worse, or the situation will return to its pre-revolutionary state, or the situation will remain the same, or that Syria will become a divided country.

Less than a third of the respondents have modest hopes for the negotiations, saying things will improve somewhat but conflicts would continue in disparate areas of the country. (Figure 21)

Figure 21: How will things change in Syria after Geneva?



But what are the reasons for this pessimistic view towards Geneva III and who is responsible for it? To answer this question we turned to those who chose pessimistic responses about Syria post-Geneva with another question designed to find out what is responsible for Syria's worsening situation in the future. The regime and its regional allies came in the lead with 69.1%, followed by Russia (48.7%) and the United States (37.8%). 20.6% said that all are responsible. (Figure 22)

If we look at respondents' prior experience with truces, we notice that all primarily blamed the regime and its regional allies, then secondly Russia and thirdly the United States, with the exception of the fighters who left after the truce agreement, who primarily blamed the regime and its regional allies, but the second position went to the United States and Russia together. These percentages were very close, being mentioned by 38.8% and 39.8%, respectively. (Figure 23)

Looking at the results according to area we find that the percentage who blame the United States in opposition-controlled areas, besieged areas, and areas under truce (up to 40%) was greater than the percentage who blamed the US in regime-controlled areas, where it reached 27.5%. (Figure 24)

Figure 22: Parties responsible for Syria's misfortune after Geneva

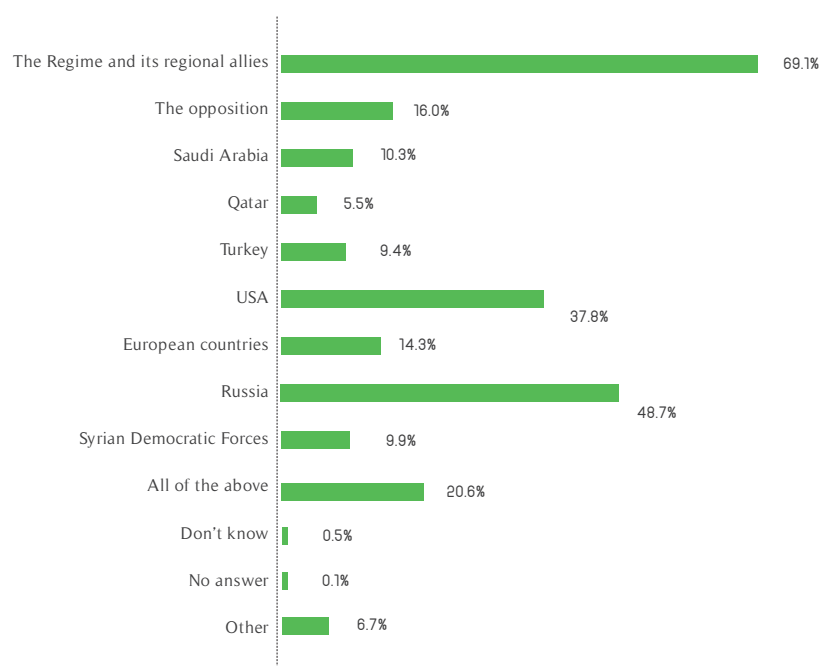


Figure 23: Parties responsible for Syria's misfortune after Geneva according to respondent's situation

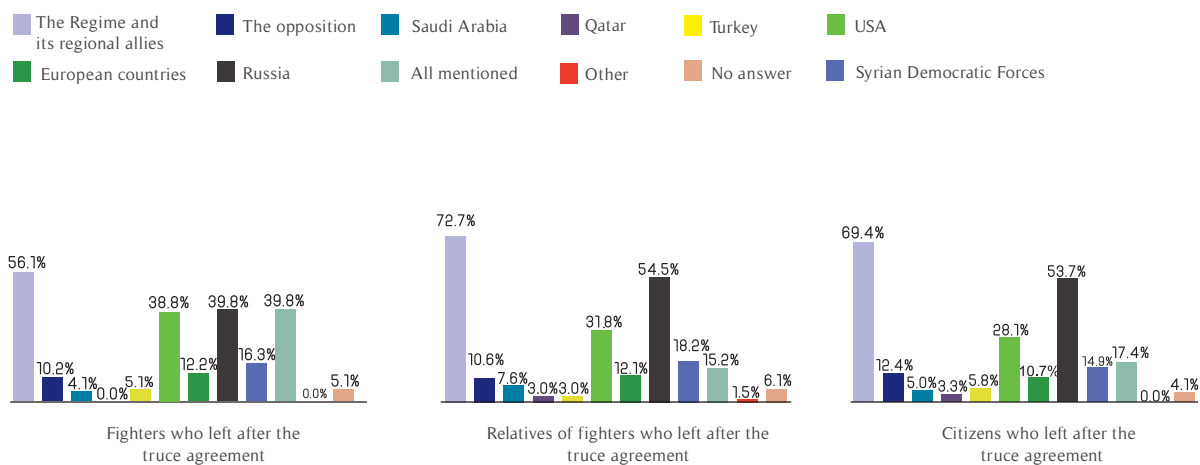
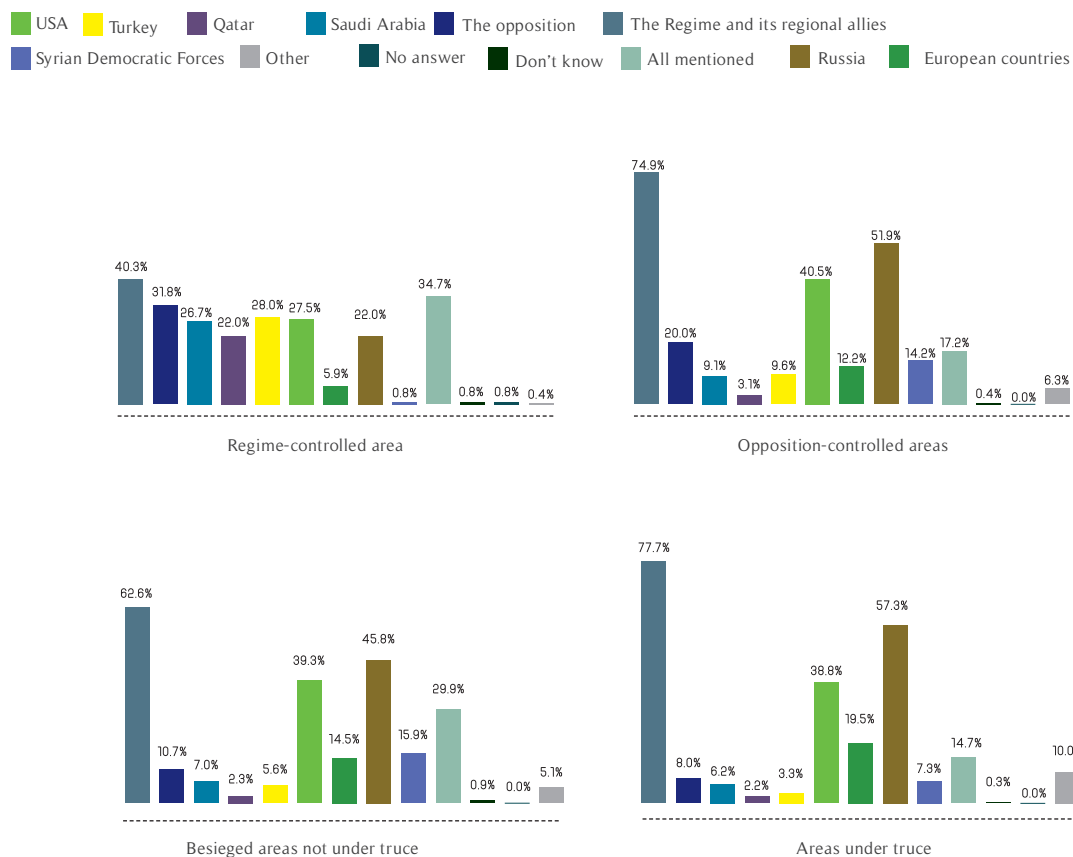


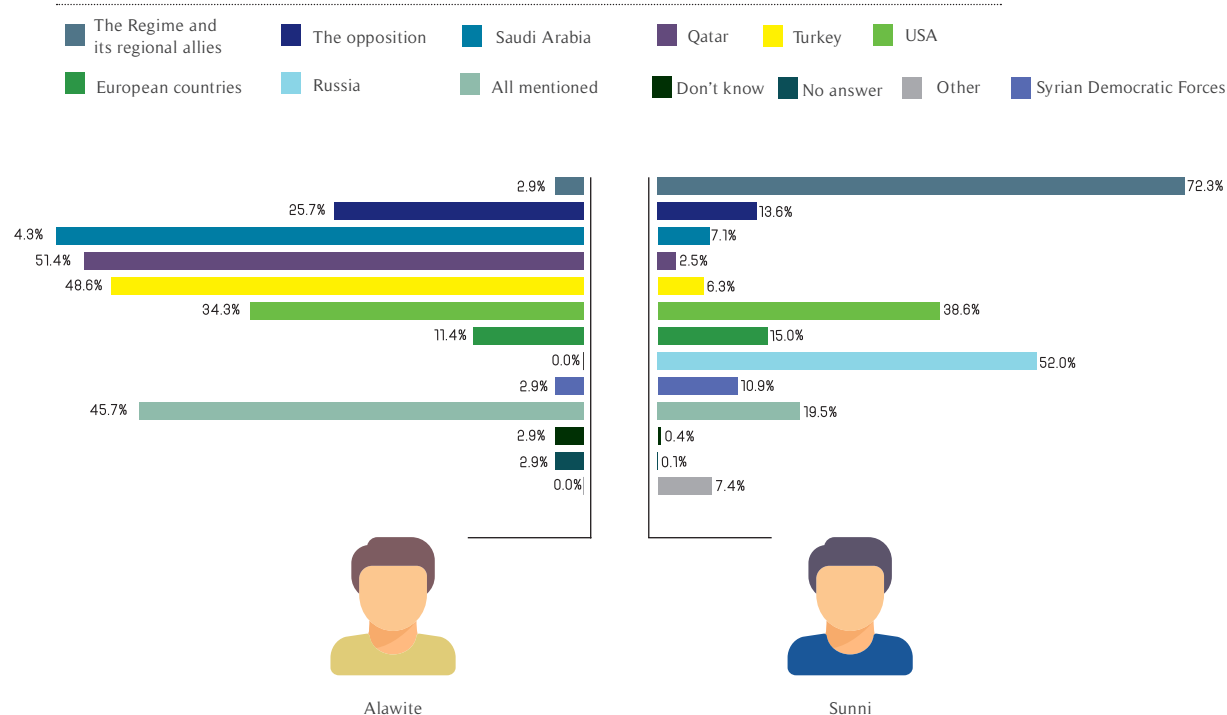
Figure 24: Parties responsible for Syria's misfortune after Geneva according to area



Most Sunnis who expressed a pessimistic view about the future of Syria mentioned the regime and its regional allies as being primarily responsible. More than half of them mentioned Russia, followed by the United States, mentioned by 38.6% of them. 19.5% said that all were responsible. (Figure 25)

A large percentage of Alawites¹³¹ assign partial responsibility to the regime, whereas 45.7% said that all are responsible, and 3% mentioned the regime and its regional allies directly. Around half of them mentioned Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey as well. Approximately a third named the United States, whereas none of them mentioned Russia as a directly responsible party. Russia seems to enjoy a great confidence among Alawites, unlike the United States, whose role seems to have become questionable to Sunnis and Alawites. (Figure 25)

Figure 25: Parties responsible for Syria's misfortune after Geneva according to denomination

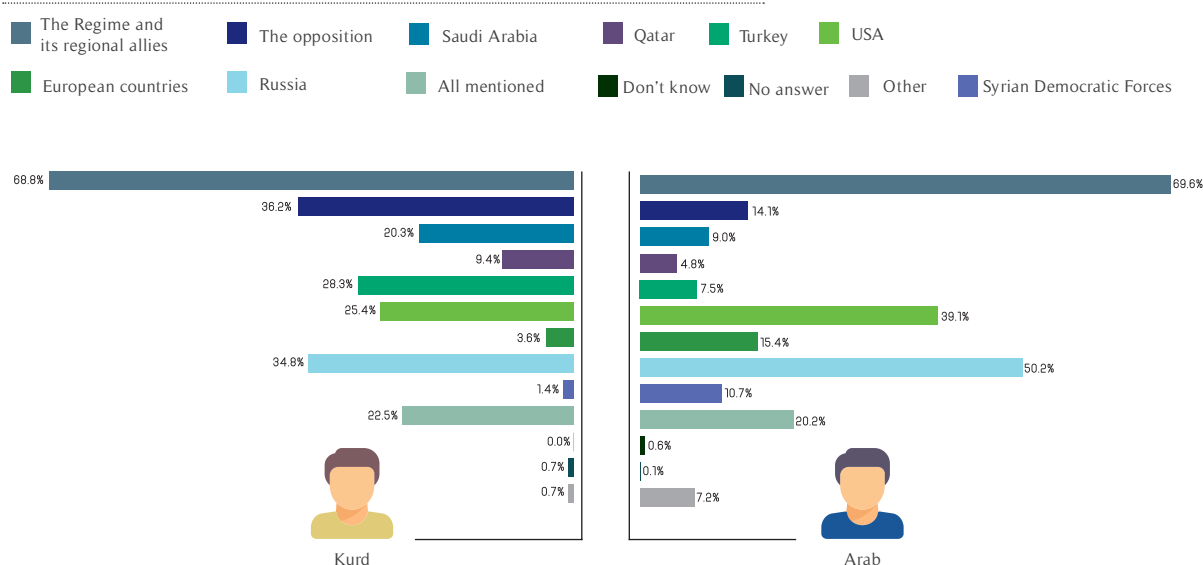


Both Kurds and Arabs¹⁴¹ blamed the regime and its regional allies directly, except that the percentage who blamed the opposition was higher with Kurds than with Arabs. (36.2% and 14.1%, respectively) (Figure 26) It seems that Arabs are more wary of the role of the United States and Russia compared with the Kurds. And 10.7% of the Arabs blamed the Syrian Democratic Forces, which was only mentioned by 14% of the Kurds. (Figure 26).

3 - The number of Sunni respondents was 2783, Alawite 86

4 - The number of Arab respondents was 2879, Kurd 244

Figure 26: Parties responsible for Syria's misfortune according to ethnicity



As shown in Figure 27, the regime and its regional allies come in first place in all areas as being responsible for Syria's disastrous fate, followed by Russia and the United States. Blame attributed to the opposition is generally relatively low but it rises to about a quarter in Idlib and more than two-thirds in Hasaka, and roughly a quarter of respondents in this latter province mentioned Turkey.

In Damascus, Deraa, and Aleppo, the percentage who blamed the United States was greater than that which blamed Russia, which exceeded 50% and reached its peak in Aleppo where 56.6% of respondents blamed the United States, compared with 52.7% who blamed Russia.

Figure 27: Parties responsible for Syria's misfortune after Geneva according to province

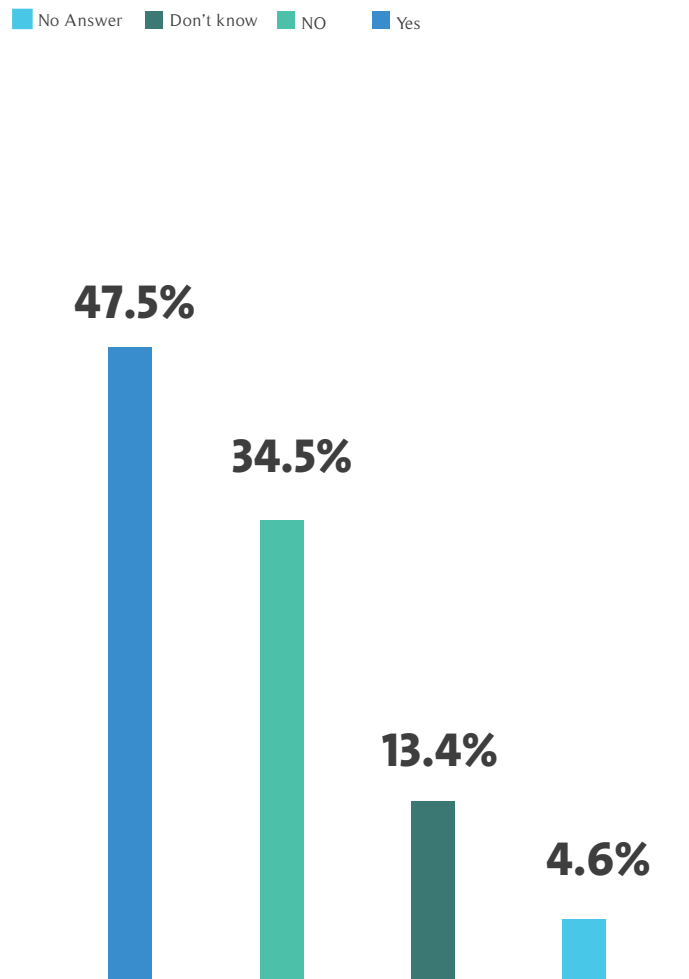


Part 3:

Presidential Elections ^[5]

Would you participate in the election or not?

Figure 28: Participation in elections after Geneva



5 - We again point out that our goal here is not to find out the exact percentages of participation in these elections, as they would occur after a very long time from now and following major conflicts and constantly changing circumstances. Apart from that, we don't have any previous data on the behavior of Syrian electors as there have never been free elections in Syria before. Our goal is to identify the variation in answers according to some demographic variables as well as to identify the most prominent reasons for refraining from participation and the extent of people's confidence in initiatives established in the name of the United Nations.

According to the major powers and the United Nations, it was decided that Syria will see a “democratic presidential election” after one-and-a-half years. To find out respondents’ positions on this matter, we asked them whether or not they would participate in the election.

47.5% of respondents said that they would participate in these elections (Figure 28). More than a third said that they would not participate. Most Alawites in our sample said that they would participate (70.9%), whereas the percentage decreased to 46.1% among Sunnis, of whom a third expressed their refusal to participate. Only 2.3% of Alawites said that they would not participate. (Figure 29)

It also seems that the rate of participation increases with age. The young people in our sample (less than 25 years of age) mostly rejected these elections: 41.3% compared with 10.2% of those who exceeded 56 years of age. (Figure 30)

Figure 29: Participation in elections according to denomination (Alawites-Sunnis)

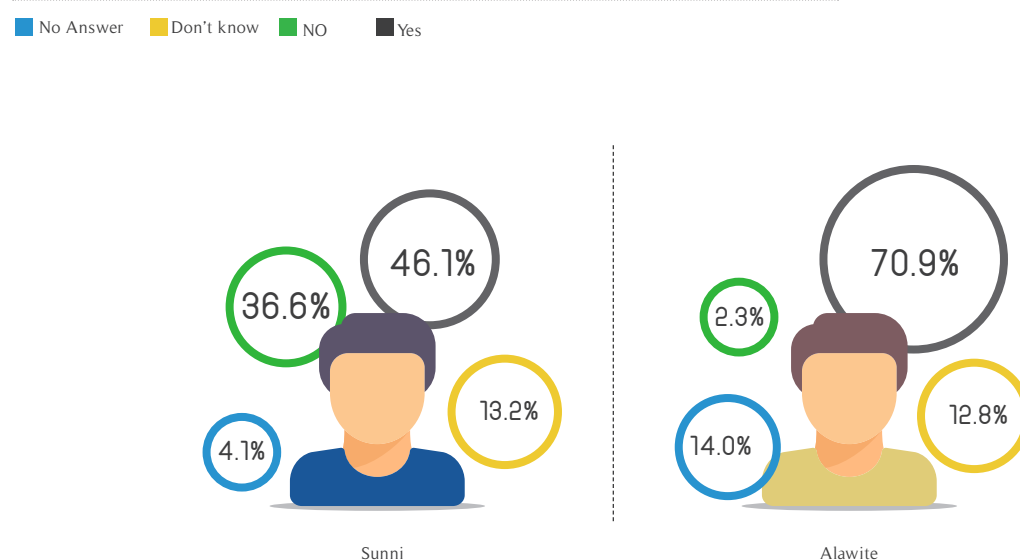
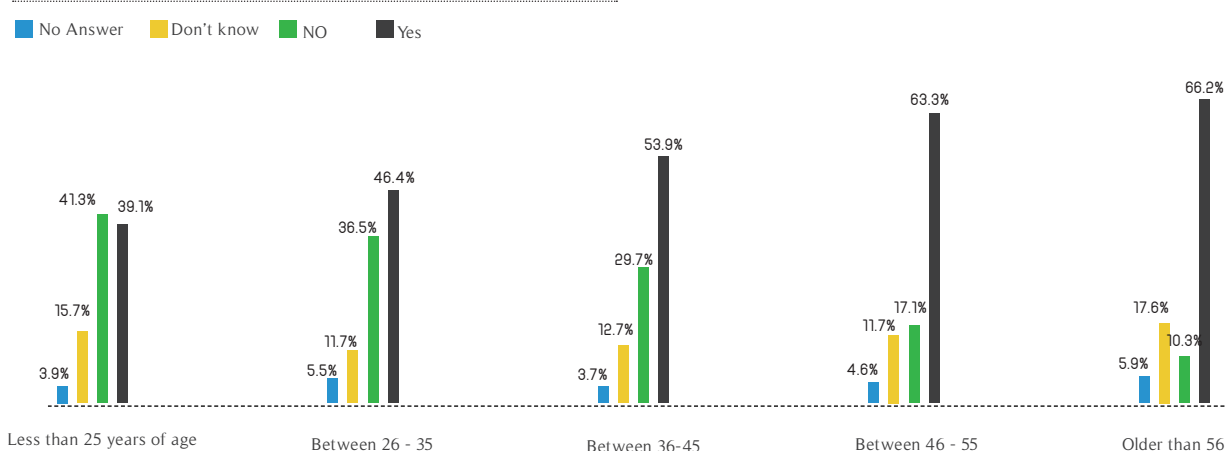


Figure 30: Participation in elections according to age group



But what are the reasons for refusing to participate in the elections? Is there a relation between this refusal and demographic variables like area, age, income, etc.?

To identify the reason for refusal to participate, we turned to another question only for those who expressed their refusal to participate in the elections.

The greatest percentage said that the reason was that these elections aim at “maintaining the current regime and quelling the revolution.” (44.0%) The second reason was the lack of any political force representing the respondent (32.5%), and those who chose the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) made up 6.5%. (Figure 31) However, this percentage increased with the young people in our sample, reaching 11.1%, whereas it did not exceed 5% with the rest of the age groups. This could be a sign of increasing religious extremism among young people in Syria now. (Figure 32)

Figure 31: Reasons for refraining from participation in the elections (%)

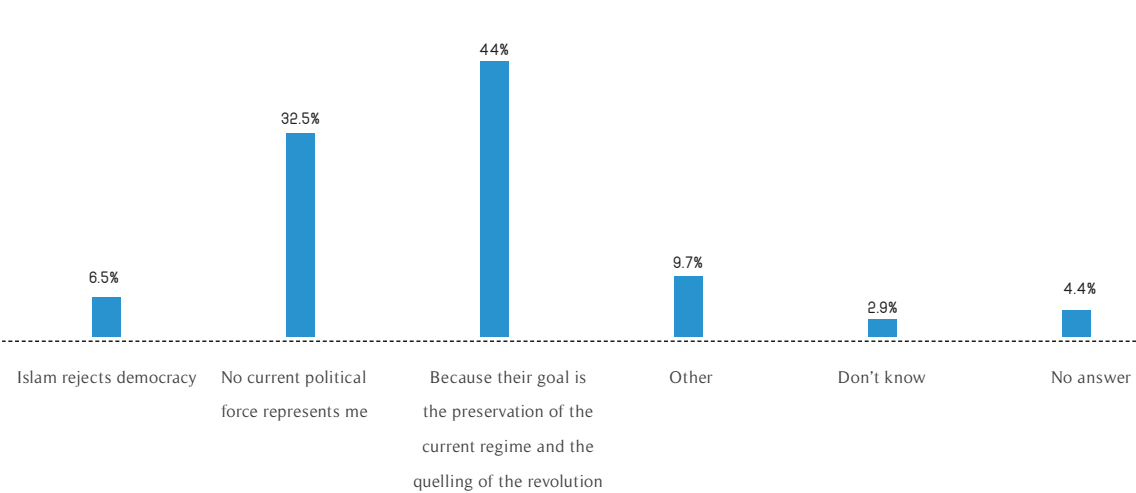
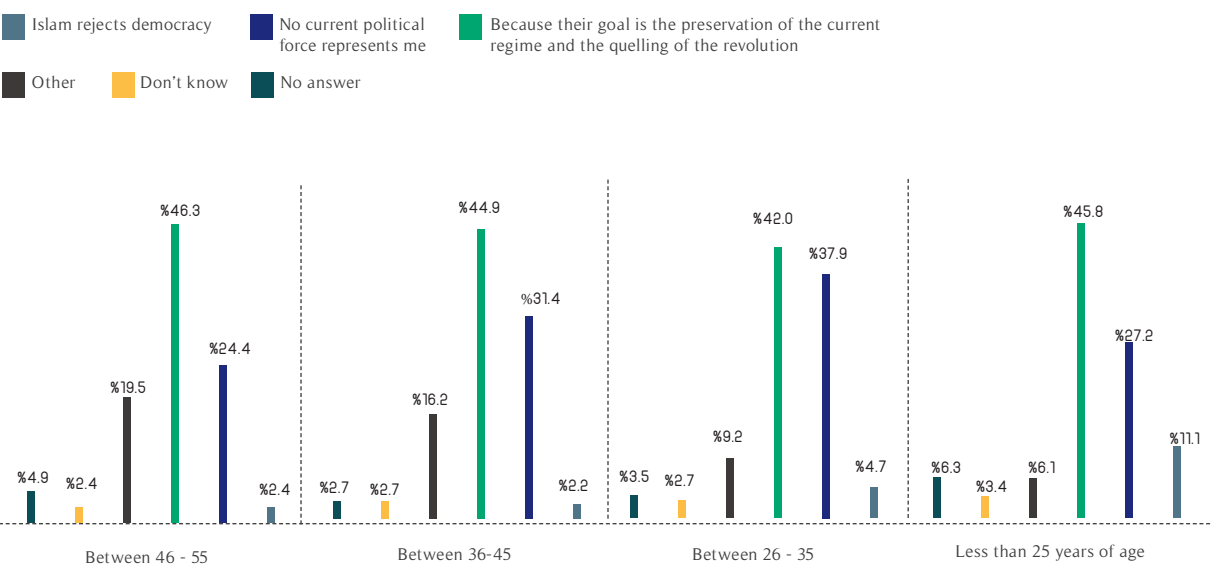


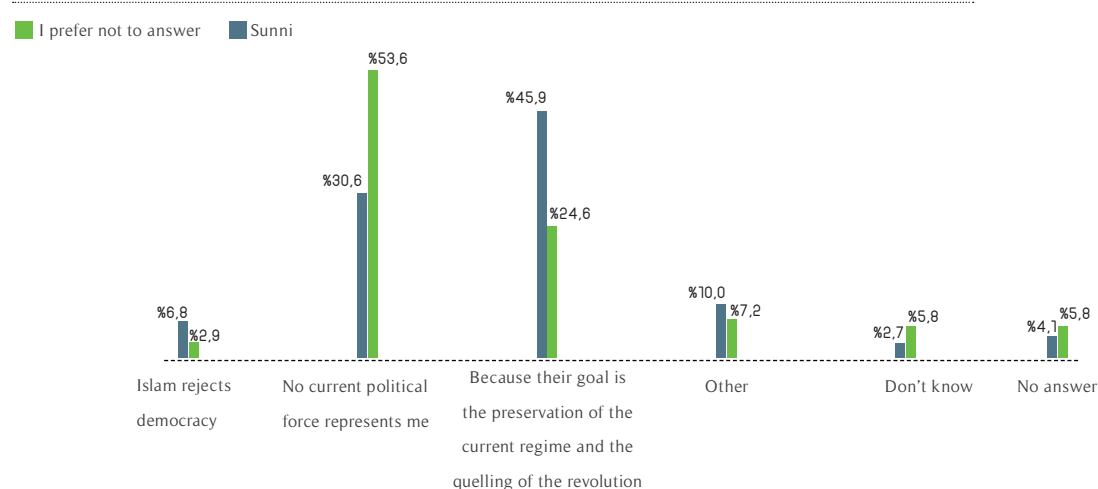
Figure 32: Reasons for refraining from participation in the elections according to age-group



The percentage of boycotting among non-Sunnis is very small and almost non-existent among Alawites. With Figure 33, we are trying to identify the reasons for the boycott among Sunnis. It seems that the greatest percentage look askance at these elections, viewing their objective as the elimination of the revolution and preservation of the existing regime.

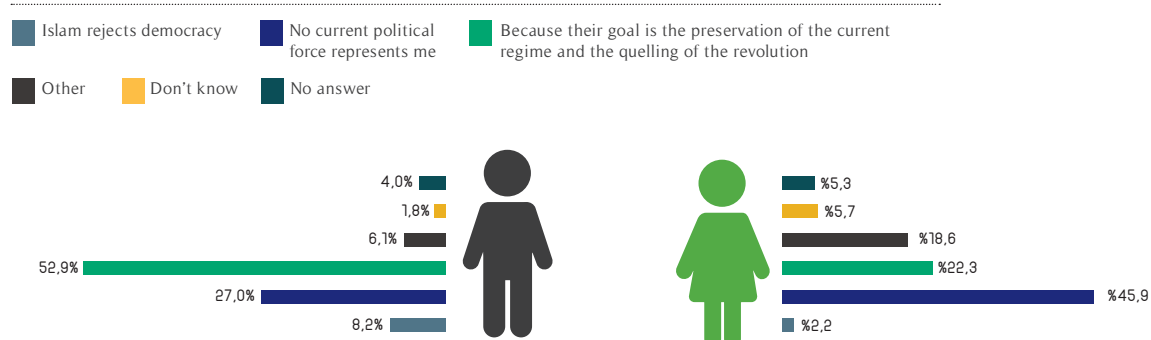
Highlighting once again the crisis of political representation⁶, 30.6% said that there was no political force representing them. (Figure 33) This last reason increases significantly among women compared with men. (45.9% and 27.0%, respectively). It is noted that the percentage of “religious extremism” (Islam rejects democracy) falls from 8.2% among men to only 2.2% among women. (Figure 34)

Figure 33: Reason for refraining from participation in the elections according to denomination*



*We do not display the results among the rest of the denominations due to their very small numbers which would not permit a statistical analysis

Figure 34: Reasons for refraining from participation in the elections according to gender



6 - See our previous study: [“TDA Survey: Negotiating a Political Solution in Syria”](#), The Day After, June 2015, which revealed a great crisis of political representation in the previous negotiations. It does not seem that the organizers of the current negotiations were interested in remedying this problem.

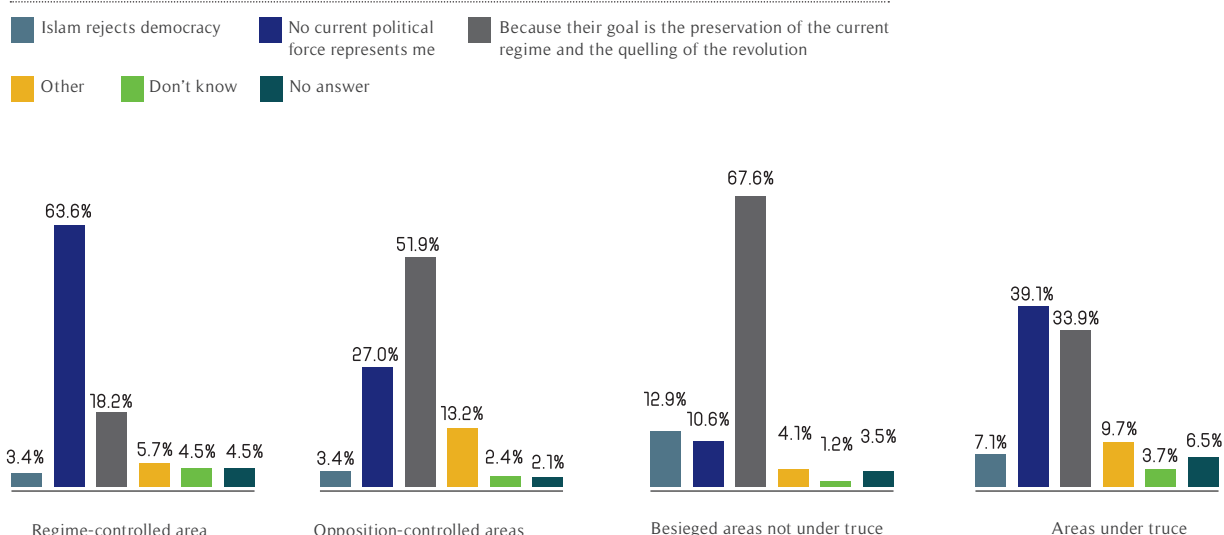
Looking at the results by area, we notice a difference in the reasons for boycotting the elections. (Figure 35)

- In opposition-controlled areas, the main reason is doubt about the intentions of the major powers and the United Nations who sponsor these elections believing that the objective is to preserve the regime and quell the revolution. (Roughly half of the respondents refused to participate in the elections)
- In regime-controlled areas the main reason was political representation, as the respondents did not find that any of the existing political forces represented them or expressed their interests.
- In besieged areas, most of the respondents refused to participate in the elections, having no confidence about the intentions of the major powers and the United Nations who also sponsor them. They said that their objective is to quell the revolution and maintain the current regime. However, it is noted that the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) is higher here compared with other areas.
- In areas under truce, answers were divided among two major tendencies. The first is rejection based on the fear that the primary goal of the elections is the preservation of the regime and the quelling of the revolution. The second is due to the problem of political representation.

Looking at income, a concern with the revolution and the fall of the regime comes with those having a low-income (less than 25,000 Syrian lira) and middle-income (between 25,000 and 75,000 Syrian lira). While this falls to second place among those with high-incomes, the issue of political representation comes first. Half of them chose this answer, but only ¹⁷¹ 30% of those with lower incomes chose the same.

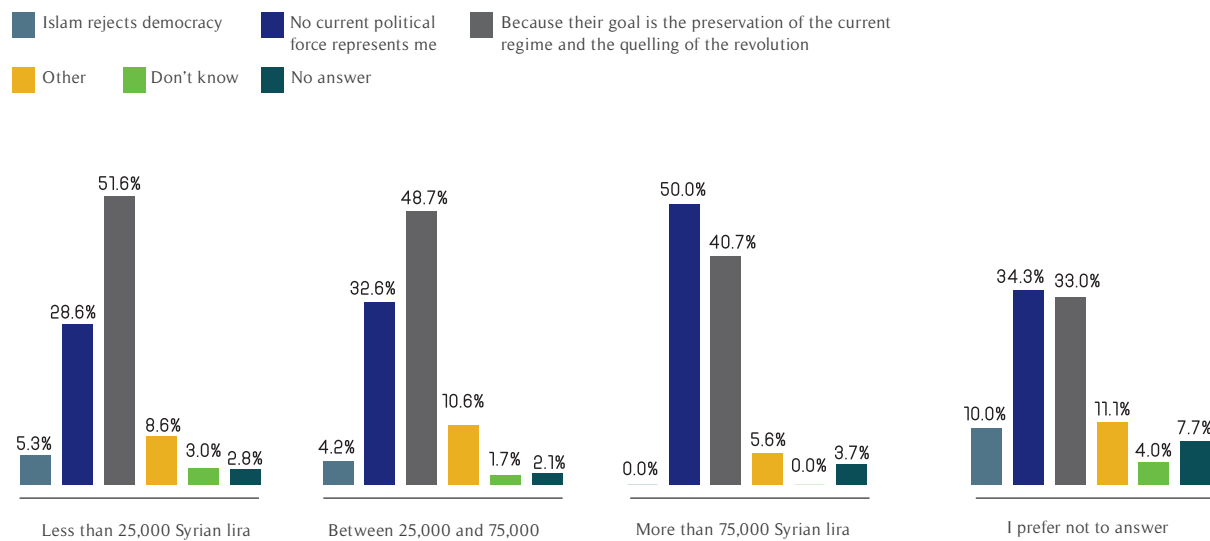
We also find a drop in choosing the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) as we move from lower to higher incomes, disappearing completely with high-income earners.

Figure 35: Reasons for refraining from participation in the elections according to area



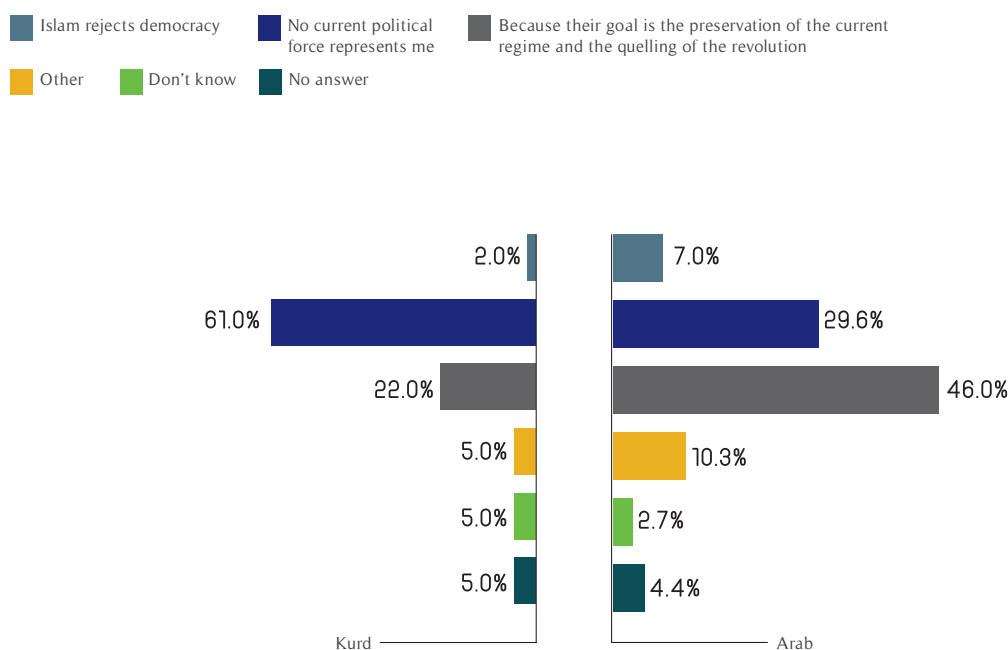
7-The numbers were as follows: 1073 respondents earning less than 25,000 Syrian lira, 895 respondents with incomes ranging between 25,000 and 75,000 Syrian lira, and 238 with an income higher than 75,000 Syrian lira.

Figure 36: Reasons for refraining from participation in the elections according to income



A majority of Kurds said that the reason for boycotting the elections is the absence of any political forces which represent them. The second reason was concern for the revolution and the fall of the regime. Among Arabs, this latter reason is prominent (46.0%) and the problem of political representation falls to second place (29.6%) It is noted that the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) falls from 7.0% among Arabs to 2.0% among Kurds. (Figure 37)

Figure 37: Reasons for refraining from participation in the elections according to ethnicity



Conclusion and Recommendations

Respondents do not have high hopes for the current international agreements (ceasefire, Geneva III negotiations, and the presidential elections). It does not seem that they are convinced by the claims of the countries sponsoring the Geneva negotiations that they will move the country toward a democracy. Only 8.5% of them are convinced of the validity of these claims, and the greatest percentage of them (around half) see that things would either remain the same, become worse, or lead to partition.

Thus, the Syrians in our sample are not waiting for Western political leaders to announce after so many years, “what we did in Syria was a mistake and led to disastrous consequences.” It seems many of them have lost their confidence in the international community and a significant proportion of them see the elections under the auspices of the United Nations as simply a tool of their objective to “preserve the regime and quell the revolution” and they don’t see any representative for themselves and their interests. Respondents primarily blamed the regime and its regional allies, and Russia and the United States secondly. The latter comes before Russia for respondents in Damascus, Deraa, and Aleppo. As for European countries, even though percentages were lower they reached about a quarter of the respondents in some areas. (Deraa, Rif Dimashq, and Aleppo).¹⁸

However, a significant percentage said that all are responsible, including European countries. These percentages may be somewhat lower due to the role these countries played in the reception of refugees, especially that of Germany, though recent indications suggest that Europe is in the process of retreating from this policy. Furthermore, the results of this study suggests the need for further studies in order to explore new political and ideological orientations in Syria, especially among young people.

The results of this study have shown that “religious extremism” may be in a state of escalation, but have also revealed some of its social roots: it increases in besieged areas compared with other regions, with low-income earners compared with those with high incomes, and with men compared with women.

This study also recommends that political opposition be seriously concerned with the issue of representation of women (beyond the step taken by the international envoy to Syria Steffan de Mistura, who founded the Women’s Advisory Council) and contribute effectively to the representation of women in the negotiation process itself. A dialogue must be opened with the Kurds to reach an agreement which truly ensures their representation in any further talks about the future of the country.¹⁹

8- Our previous study “[Negotiating a Political Solution in Syria](#)”. The Day After. June 2015, produced similar results: roughly half of the respondents said that “the absence of an international desire to end the conflict” was the reason for the failure to reach a solution through negotiations.

9- Compare with our previous study “[Syria: opinions and attitudes in federal and decentralized democracy and the experience of democratic self-administration](#).” The Day After. April 2016

According to the total sample, the problem of lack of confidence in international forces and the United Nations precedes the problem of political representation among those who said they would not participate in the elections, saying that the elections scheduled after Geneva III were intended to preserve the regime and quell the revolution. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that the total sample was biased in favor of men over women¹⁰¹, whose number is relatively low compared with men. This does not reflect the actual percentage of them contributing to the mitigation of the problem of political representation in this sample. A representative sample could mean a greater emphasis of this problem, because as we saw, the percentage of those who mentioned these problems increased among women compared with men.

The ongoing crisis of political representation and the absence of confidence in the international community and bodies could mean opening the floodgates for others to fill the void of confidence and representation.

Perhaps that explains the rise of religious extremism (Islam rejects democracy) among young people (under 25 years) more than others, as mentioned above. This study, which is part of a series of studies undertaken by The Day After, shows that so far the preferred option supported by the greatest proportion of Syrians is the option of a state of citizenship and equality¹¹¹ under a locally¹¹² elected administration¹¹² with extensive powers.¹¹³

However, the results of this study show that the proportion of supporters of this option may be in steady decline in favor of more radical tendencies able to employ the feelings of disappointment, betrayal, and injustice after years of direct or indirect exposure to the worst kinds of insults, humiliation, and affronts to human dignity.¹¹⁴

The “War on Terror” cannot be taken seriously if it does not take into consideration the circumstances which generated this terror; above all this war itself, its mechanisms, policies, and international agreements which came with it. The only way to effect real change is to start now by adopting serious and practical measures to end the Syrian tragedy and support the country’s transition to democracy. Most importantly, these measures must be able to convince Syrians of their objectives and usefulness. This must start today and not tomorrow.

10- The number of men was about double the number of women in the total sample.-

11- [“Syrian opinions and attitudes towards Sectarianism in Syria- Survey Study.”](#) The Day After. February 2016.

12-“Syrian Local Councils in the Eyes of their Communities”. The Day After. Publishing soon.

13- Reference mentioned above “Syria: Opinions and Attitudes on Federalism, Decentralization, and the experience of the Democratic Self-Administration “.

14- The magnitude of violations were so great that most Sunni respondents had been subjected or knew relatives who had been subjected to human rights violations. Only about %22 of Alawites say they have not been exposed to any violation (see: [“Pilot survey on transitional justice.”](#) The Day After. December 2014.

Summary of Results

Part 1: Ceasefire

1. About half of the respondents (47.2%) said that it is impossible to achieve peace in Syria by means of the ceasefire which accompanied the launch of the Geneva III negotiations, compared with 37.5% who said it is possible.
2. There is an increased hope in regime-controlled areas that a ceasefire is the beginning of the end of the war in Syria, compared with the rest of the areas. About half of the respondents answered in the negative in opposition-controlled areas (47.3%), besieged areas (51.3%) and in areas under truce (49.6%), while the percentage fell to 38.6% in regime-controlled areas.
3. There is a near consensus among the fighters who left after the truce agreement that this ceasefire cannot lead to peace, and about half of the respondents from the families of fighters concurred. Civilians who left after a previous truce agreement tended toward the same answer, though to a lesser extent, 45.2%, compared with 35.0% who answered affirmatively.
4. The largest percentage of respondents believe that the ceasefire would be in favor of the regime (40.5%) or that it would not change the existing military balance (37.1%). A small percentage said that it would be in favor of the opposition.
5. It seems that, among roughly a third of the respondents who said that the ceasefire agreement would lead to peace, confidence in its ability to end the war is linked to the belief that peace will be restored under regime control (about 13% of total respondents).
6. There is almost a consensus on the description of the agreements which have taken place between the regime and the opposition on the truce or ceasefire. Only 147% describe it as settlement of reconciliation, and it seems that these latter two designation are principally spread amongst areas under regime control.
7. Fear of military escalation by the regime and its allies (55.5%) was foremost among the reasons which led people to accept the ceasefire. The second was the people's need to return to their normal lives, followed by the suffocating siege. Despair over the possibility of a military victory came much later (penultimate), with 36.3%.
8. The reasons for the people's acceptance of the current ceasefire agreement vary according to area. In regime-controlled areas, the primary reason was the people's need to return to their normal lives, the second was external pressures. This latter reason came in last in besieged areas, where the foremost reasons were the suffocating blockade (72.5%) and the fear of military escalation by the regime and its allies (62.4%). It is noted, however, that these two reasons also figured prominently in areas under truce, which means that the truce left the door open for a return of the blockade and a return of bombing and destruction.

Part 2: The Geneva Negotiations

1. The largest percentage in regime-controlled areas and areas under truce say that they are not optimistic or not optimistic at all (up to 59.0%) about the possibility of success for the Geneva III negotiations.
2. The results were similar in opposition-controlled and besieged areas where about 64.5% said that they are not optimistic or not optimistic at all about the possibility of success for the Geneva III negotiations.
3. Although the majority of men and women say that they are not optimistic or not optimistic at all about the possibility of success for the Geneva III, it seems that women are more optimistic than men in our sample concerning the possibility of success of these negotiations. (38.0% and 28.9%, respectively)
4. It does not seem that the respondents carry high hopes for the claims of the international powers and the United Nations that the Geneva negotiations will be the gateway for a Syrian democratic transition. Only 8.5% said that Syria, post-Geneva, will enter into a phase of democratic transition or become a united and democratic country, whereas almost half of the respondents chose pessimistic answers about Syria's future after Geneva: saying that things would become worse, or return to a pre-revolutionary state, or would stay the same, or that Syria would become a divided country. Less than a third of the respondents have modest hopes for the Geneva negotiations, saying that things will improve somewhat but conflicts will continue in disparate areas of the country.
5. The regime and its regional allies came foremost among those responsible for respondents' pessimistic view about the future of the country, with 69.1%, then followed by Russia (48.7%) and the United States (37.8%). 20.6% said that all are responsible.
6. The percentage of those who hold the United States responsible for Syria's bad fate in opposition-controlled areas, besieged areas, and areas under truce (up to 40%) was greater than the percentage of those who hold them responsible in regime-controlled areas, which stood at 27.
7. Most Sunnis who expressed a pessimistic view about the future of Syria mentioned the regime and its regional allies as being primarily responsible. More than half of them mentioned Russia, as well as the United States (38.6%). 19.5% said that all are responsible.
8. A large portion of Alawites hold the regime and its regional allies partly responsible for Syria's bad fate. 45.7% said that all are responsible and around 3% mentioned the regime and its regional allies directly. Roughly half of them mentioned Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey.
9. About one-third of them mentioned the United States, whereas none of them mentioned Russia as a directly responsible party. It seems that Russia has the confidence of the Alawites, unlike the United States, whose role seems to have become questionable for Sunnis and Alawites.

10. Most Kurds and Arabs hold the regime directly responsible, but the percentage of those who hold the opposition responsible rises among Kurds compared with Arabs (36.2% and 14.1%, respectively). Arabs also seem to be more wary of the role of the United States and Russia compared with Kurds. 107% of Arabs hold the Syrian Democratic Forces responsible, whereas only 14% of Kurds mentioned them.
11. The regime and its regional allies came in first place in all areas as being responsible for Syria's disastrous fate, followed by both Russia and the United States. Blame for the opposition is generally relatively low, except that it exceeds two-thirds in Hasaka and about a quarter of the respondents in this province mentioned Turkey.
12. In Damascus, Deraa, and Aleppo, the percentage who held the United States responsible for Syria's bad fate was greater than the percentage who held Russia responsible. The percentage exceeded 50%, reaching its peak in Aleppo where 56.6% of respondents hold the United States responsible compared with 52.7% who hold Russia responsible.
3. The rate of participation in the presidential elections scheduled for a year and a half after the launch of Geneva III increased with age, as most young people (less than 25 years old) in our sample rejected these elections 41.3% compared with 10.2% among those exceeding 56 years of age.
4. The largest percentage of respondents who said they would not participate in the presidential elections to be held one and a half years after the launch of the Geneva negotiations, said that the aim of these elections is "to preserve the regime and quell the revolution" (44.0%), the second reason was the lack of any political forces representing the respondent (32.5%). Those who chose the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) accounted for 6.5%.
5. Among the reasons for refusing to participate in the presidential elections, the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) increases among the young people in our sample where it reaches 11.1% while not exceeding 5% among the remaining age groups. This might be an indication of growing religious extremism among young people in Syria now.

Part 3: presidential elections

1. 47.5% of respondents said that they will participate in the presidential elections scheduled to be held one-and-a-half years after the launch of Geneva III, and more than a third said they will not.
2. Most Alawites (70.9%) in our sample said that they would participate in the presidential elections a year and a half after the launch of Geneva III. This percentage dropped to 46.1% among Sunnis.
6. The greatest percentage of respondents who said they would boycott the presidential elections scheduled for one and a half years after the launch of Geneva III view it with suspicion and see its goal as the elimination of the revolution and preservation of the current regime. Once again highlighting the crisis of political representation, 30.6% said that there is no political force representing them.
7. The presence of the crisis of political representation as a reason to reject participation in the elections increases significantly

among women compared with men (45.9% and 27.0%, respectively). It is also noted that the religious factor (Islam rejects democracy) falls from 8.2% among men to only 2.2% among women.

8. In opposition-controlled areas, the main reason for refusing to participate in the elections is the desire to preserve the revolution and to overthrow the regime (about half of the participants who refuse to participate in the elections).
9. In the besieged areas, most of the respondents who refused to participate in the elections do not trust what appears to be the intentions of the major powers and the United Nations who sponsor them, saying that their goal is to quell the revolution and to preserve the existing regime. An increase in the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) is noted here compared with the other areas.
10. In areas under truce, answers are divided between two main currents: the first rejects the elections out of fear that their main objective is to preserve the regime and to quell the revolution, the second due to the problem of political representation.
11. Concern for the revolution and overthrowing the regime comes as the first reason among those having lower (less than 25,000 Syrian lira) and middle incomes (between 25,000 and 75,000 Syrian lira). This falls to second place with those having high incomes, among whom resolving the issue of political representation comes first: half of them chose this answer whereas only 30% of those with lesser incomes. We also find the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) receding when moving from lower to higher incomes, and completely disappearing among high-income earners.
12. The majority of Kurds said that the main reason to boycott the elections is the absence of any political power representing them. The second reason is a concern for the revolution and overthrowing the regime. Among Arabs, this latter reason was foremost (46.0%) and the problem of political representation fell to second place (29.6%). Also noted was the low percentage of the religious reason (Islam rejects democracy) with 7.0% among Arabs and 2.0% among Kurds.

Questionnaire

1. In your opinion, is it possible to achieve peace in Syria by means of the ceasefire announced February 27th, 2016?

- ☐ Yes, it's possible.
- ☐ No, it's not possible.
- ☐ Don't know.

2. In your opinion, will the current ceasefire allow a shift in the military balance of power?

- ☐ Yes, it will favor the Syrian government.
- ☐ Yes, it will favor the opposition.
- ☐ Yes, it will favor "Daesh".
- ☐ It won't change the military situation.
- ☐ Don't know.

3. What are the reasons which compelled people to accept the current ceasefire agreement?

- ☐ Fear of military escalation by the Government (*air strikes, artillery shelling, incursions, fear of displacement, etc.*)
- ☐ The suffocating siege and the lack of basic necessities for life in the area.
- ☐ The absence of key services in the area
- ☐ The absence of any opportunity for a military victory on either side.
- ☐ The people's need to return to a normal life and stop the war.
- ☐ External pressures from regional and international countries.
- ☐ Don't know.
- ☐ Other.

4. Which label do you usually use when talking about the agreements which have occurred between the Syrian government and the military factions.

- ☐ Truce
- ☐ Conciliation
- ☐ Settlement
- ☐ Ceasefire
- ☐ Other

5. To what extent are you optimistic about the success of the current negotiations in Geneva?

- ☐ Very optimistic.
- ☐ Optimistic.
- ☐ Not optimistic.
- ☐ Not optimistic at all.
- ☐ Don't know / No answer.

6. According to the major powers and the United Nations, Syria will see a democratic presidential election after one-and-a-half years. Where do you see Syria at the end of this period?

- ☐ Things will worsen into war and more destruction.
- ☐ The situation will return to how it was prior to 2011.
- ☐ The current situation will remain as it is.
- ☐ Things will improve somewhat but conflict will continue here and there .
- ☐ Syria will enter into a phase of democratic transition
- ☐ Syria will become a united and democratic country
- ☐ Syria will be a partitioned country
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ No answer

7. Who is responsible for this?

- ☐ The regime and its regional allies
- ☐ The opposition
- ☐ Saudi Arabia
- ☐ Qatar
- ☐ Turkey
- ☐ The United States
- ☐ European countries
- ☐ Russia
- ☐ Syrian Democratic Forces
- ☐ Other
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ No answer

8. In the event that these elections, planned to take place in a year and a half, occur, will you participate?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ No answer

9. What is the reason?

- ☐ Islam rejects democracy
- ☐ None of the current political forces represent me
- ☐ Because their goal is the preservation of the current regime and the quelling of the revolution
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ No answer

10. Sex

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

11. Age

12. What is your average monthly income?

- ☐ Less than 25,000 Syrian lira
- ☐ Between 25,000 and 75,000 Syrian lira
- ☐ More than 75,000 Syrian lira
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

13. Religion — Denomination

- ☐ Sunni
- ☐ Shi'a
- ☐ Alawite
- ☐ Isma'ili
- ☐ Druze
- ☐ Yazidi
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Murshid
- ☐ Prefer not to answer



Opinions and Current Attitudes
Towards International Agreements on Syria

Survey study

November 2016

This study reveals that the respondents do not carry high hopes for the claims of the international powers and the United Nations that the Geneva negotiations will be the gateway for a Syrian democratic transition. When people were asked who was responsible for such a bleak future, the regime was blamed by 69 per cent of respondents, Russia by 49 per cent and the US by 38 per cent.

