

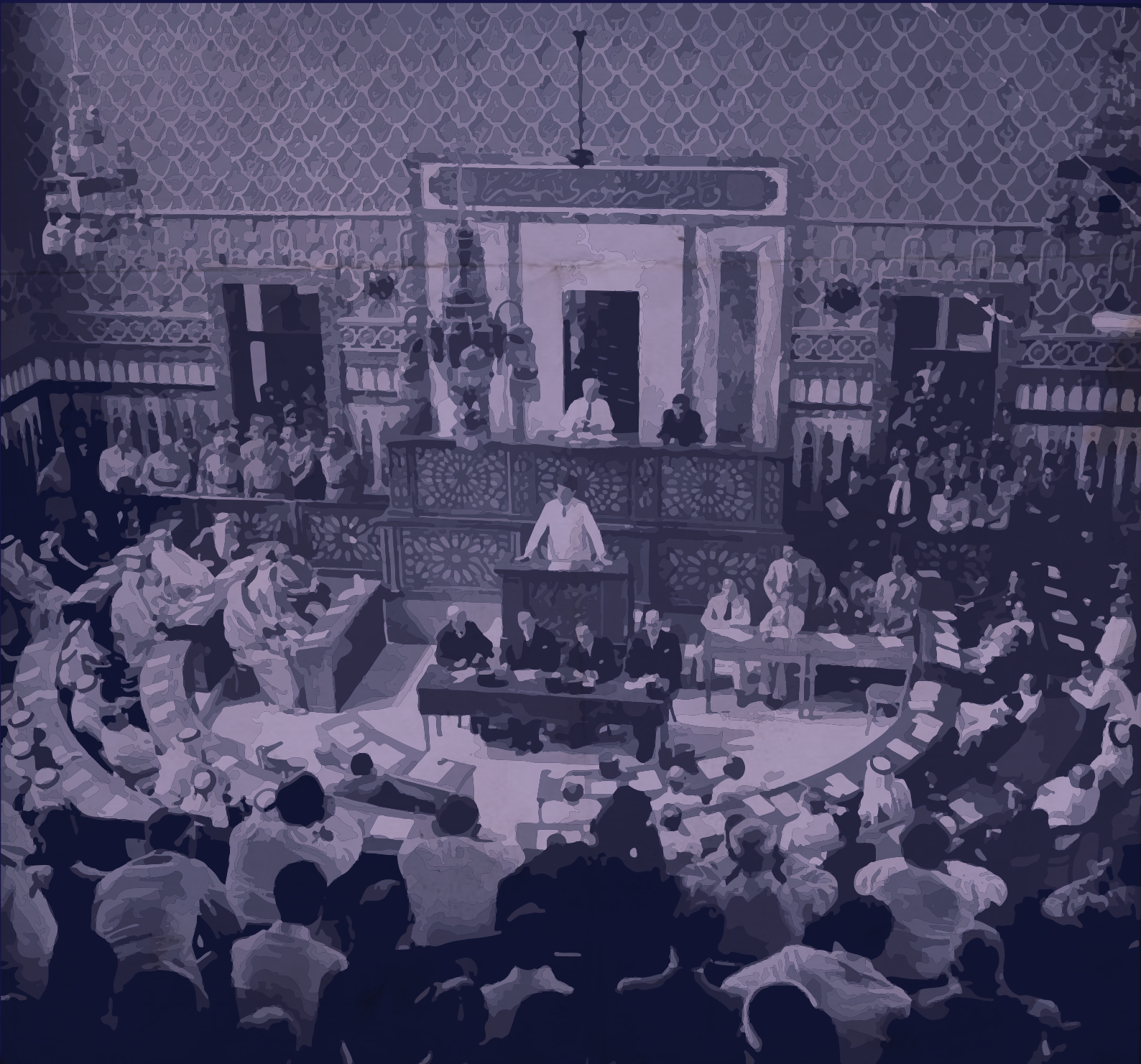


THE DAY AFTER

Supporting Democratic Transition In Syria

## Survey

# Which Constitution Does Syria Need ?



## Survey

**Which Constitution does Syria need?**



Survey: Which Constitution does Syria need?

July 2018

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The Day After organization (TDA) is a Syrian organization working in support of the democratic transition in Syria, with a focus on the following points: Rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, design of electoral systems and election of a Constituent Assembly, constitutional design, economic reform and social policies.

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## Introduction

The constitution is the fundamental law that shapes the political system of a country and acts as a check upon the government's behavior. It is based on established principles agreed upon by all components of society through social contract as well as a political contract between society and government. Despite the differences between constitutions, most list a description of the political system structure, regulations of inter-authority relations, and restrictions on different government administration positions by way of limiting the scope and manner of government's sovereign reach. Modern constitutions define the boundaries and practices of political authorities by incorporating institutional tools to protect all citizens' interests, freedoms, and rights including minorities.

The issue of the Syrian constitution today is one of the most problematic issues. The political orientations of some of the major powers remain the same in terms of their disregard for Syrians and their exclusion of them from participating in shaping the future of their country and determining the precepts of the transitional phase. So much was evident with the Russian leadership's preparation of a draft constitution guaranteeing the head of state's continued control of the army and security forces. As a result, 40 Syrian organizations and bodies signed a statement confirming that Syrians themselves must write their country's constitution and reject any talk of a completed constitution for the current phase. They called for the preparation of a constitutional declaration or a temporary constitution focusing on constitutional principles and precepts governing the transitional period.<sup>1</sup> The issue of the constitution remained one of the most prominent topics of the Syrian talks in all rounds of negotiations in Geneva as one of the four baskets which the Special Envoy identified as the axes of negotiation between the opposition and the Syrian regime.

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<sup>1</sup> See "[Statement: It is the Syrians Who Write Their Constitution](#)", The Day After (TDA), February 1, 2017

A document presented by the United States, Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan to the United Nations special envoy Stefan de Mistura for discussion during the Vienna negotiations earlier this year was leaked. Proposals included “constitutional reforms” that would limit the president’s authority, divide executive powers between the president and prime minister, transfer some executive powers to local councils, establish a second chamber of parliament, stress the neutrality of the military and security institutions, and lastly demand the withdrawal of all foreign militias.

In its never-ending attempts to establish itself as a leader of the peace talks based on the Geneva accord and UN resolutions, in particular 2254, Russia held the Syrian national dialogue conference in Sochi. Official Syrian opposition refused to participate in the conference, leading Russia to lower the outcome expectations and create a constitutional committee from the attendees to be expanded by the UN envoy and incorporated into his constitutional “basket”. The second point the Russians pushed was employing the 2012 constitution as a starting point -- in which the regime made some concessions but kept all articles that guarantee the continued rule of the head of the regime and manipulated certain articles so that it would be impossible to propose a replacement to him. In short, discussions about the new constitution are central to any political dialogue regarding Syria’s future.

Nevertheless, what do the Syrians want for the transitional phase or which permanent constitution does Syria need? This survey aims to contribute to providing answers to these two questions. Recognizing these orientations and perspectives contributes to:

- Strengthening Syrian participation in the drafting and preparation of their country’s constitution, and not only at a later stage of referendum.
- Enabling the drafting committee of the next constitution to arrive at agreements which take the views and positions of Syrians into account, respecting their wishes and aspirations and ensuring the establishment of a state of rights and laws, for which Syrians have given everything.
- Enabling political forces and civic bodies to organize effective campaigns to garner the widest possible support for the constitution when it comes to referendum.

This part is divided into five axes:

The first: seeks to identify the the most important priorities upon which the negotiations should focus, in the opinion of the respondents, and try to determine the status of the constitution among them, in addition to identifying the general orientation regarding the aforementioned dispute (permanent constitution/ constitutional declaration in the transitional period) as well as the path which should be followed in writing the constitution.

Second: seeks to explore the respondents' preferred system of government (parliamentary, parliamentary-presidential, presidential)

Third: this chapter discusses controversial issues regarding the relationship of religion to the State and its identity.

Fourth: examines the issue of decentralization in the future of Syria and its presence in the next constitution.

Fifth and final: it seeks to determine the general principles and precepts that should guide the work of the next constitution-drafting committee.

## Methodology and sample

In order to identify Syrians' views and orientations towards the constitution, "The Next Day" conducted a social survey of 1958 respondents (924 men and 1034 women) during the period between February 24th and May 11th, 2017. A team of field researchers conducted face-to-face interviews using the questionnaire in six Syrian provinces and in Turkey. Despite the numerous difficulties faced during the data-collection phase of fieldwork under the conditions of Syria's current, ongoing war and population displacement, we were able to draw a multi-staged stratified sample using proportional allocation (men/women). For the analysis of data, we conducted statistical analysis: to reject or accept the null hypothesis  $H_0$  (no statistically significant relationship or difference between two or more variables), we used mainly the Chi-square scale with levels of significance being less than / equal to 0.05.

In Daraa and al-Suwayda, the team was forced to stop the collection of data due to fighting and the general security situation at the time of this work in these two provinces, causing their omission in the sample. Thus, intent on guaranteeing their presence, we returned as soon as conditions permitted (after entering southern Syria during a de-escalation agreement) and drew a

new sample<sup>2</sup> from these two provinces only. This was between September 14<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. This new sample included 303 respondents: 198 men and 105 women from Daraa and al-Suwayda. These will be treated separately from the main sample (the first) and we will present their results only when comparing the data between sites where interviews were conducted (provinces inside Syria and in Istanbul and Gaziantep in Turkey), which we will clearly indicate by referring to it as “the second sample”.

<b>Phases of drawing the main sample (the first sample)*</b>	
<u>The first phase</u>	<u>The second phase</u>
<p><b>Total population in Syria : 18 215 868</b>            Level of confidence : 95%            Margin of error : 2.3%            Maximum heterogeneity : p=q            Required sample size : 1816</p>	<p><b>Total number of males in Syria : 9 214 866</b>            %95 : confidence of Level            Margin of error : 3.3%            Maximum heterogeneity : p=q            Required sample size : 882  <b>Total number of females in Syria : 9 001 002</b>            %95 : confidence of Level            Margin of error : 3.2%            Maximum heterogeneity : p=q            Required sample size : 938</p>
<u>The third phase</u>	
<p>Here, a random cluster sample was employed according to the regions and provinces, bearing in mind the religious and ethnic distribution (except for the sample of Turkey, which is composed of workers in Syrian civil society organizations located in the Turkish cities of Istanbul and Gaziantep). As is clear in Table 1 and the map, the sample does not contain any regions under the control of the Islamic State “Daesh”. It is worth noting that we worked with inductive samples in this phase, which helped us to better understand the subject of our research via comparison among various demographic and social categories, but the results should not be generalized for these regions or religious or ethnic categories.</p>	

\*These are population estimates from 2015, since there are no precise statistics (see <http://countrymeters.info/en/Syria>)

<sup>2</sup> Here we employed a quota sample: 300 respondents distributed between Daraa and al-Suwayda: 150 and 153, respectively.



Table 1: Distribution of the main sample (the first)\*

Area	Number	Level of education	Number	Employee in a civil society organization	Number
Regime-controlled area	694	Illiterate	27	Director with a high-position	17
Opposition-controlled area	742	Primary	192	Director with a mid-level position	36
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	275	Preparatory	391	Program Administrator	17
Truce area	166	Secondary	623	General employee	71
Turkey	81	University	684	<b>** Ideology</b>	
<b>Province</b>		Post-graduate	41	Extreme secularism	254
Damascus (neighborhoods in areas under regime control)	255	<b>Civil status</b>		Secularism	335
Damascus suburb	476	Single	527	Middle	795
Aleppo	220	Married	1260	Islamic	539
Homs	312	Widow	102	Extreme political Islam	35
al-Hasakah (areas under control of DFNS)	275	Divorced	69	<b>Age</b>	
Idlib	339	<b>Profession</b>		25 years and below	374
Outside of Syria: (Turkey: Istanbul, Gaziantep)	81	Judge	7	26-35 years old	760
<b>Religious sect</b>		Lawyer	34	36-45 years old	460
Sunni	1558	Government employee	189	46-55 years old	269
Shia	30	Employee in a private business	141	56 years and above	95
Alawite	57	Employee in a civil society organization	141	<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>	
Ismaili	37	Liberal profession	316	Less than 25,000 Syrian lira	343
Druze	17	Student	169	25,000-75,000 Syrian lira	727
Murshid	17	Housewife	400	More than 75,000 Syrian lira	316
Christian	30	Journalist	13	Prefers not to answer	572
Prefers not to answer	209	Teacher	180	<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>	
Other	3	Fighter	102	Arab	1648
		Unemployed	96	Kurd	208
		Agriculturalist	44	Turkman	30
		Laborer	59	Circassian	2
		Other	67	Armenian	2
				Assyrian	3
				Prefers not to answer	63
				Other	2

\*Low numbers or omissions of some sects (or ethnic groups) from the table does not mean that they are not present. A large percentage of them, most likely, are among those who preferred not to answer the question. Our previous study (*Sectarianism in Syria, The Day After*, Jan 2016) has shown how the greatest percentage of those who refuse to answer the question of belonging to a particular sect came from regions supposed to have a prominent minority presence (e.g. al-Suwayda) or having religious or ethnic plurality (e.g. al-Hasakah or Homs). However, we preserved the small numbers for their usefulness in comparison. In the case of sample numbers of less than 30, we mention the number instead of the percentage to avoid any misunderstandings which might result from small samples.

\*\*For information on ideology, we depended on respondents' self-assessment when presented with an evaluative scale from 0-10 (0 being maximum secularism and 10 being maximum political Islamism), asking the respondents to determine the position closest to their orientation. Afterwards, we recoded the information as follows: 0 maximum secularism, 1,2,3 secularism, 4,5,6 central, 7,8,9 Islamism, 10 maximum political Islam.

Map: Sample distribution

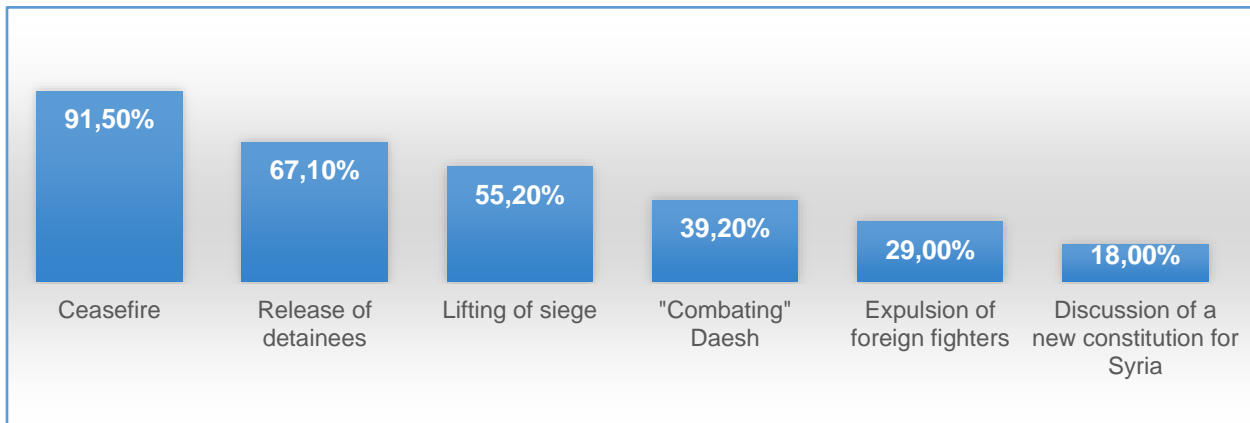


## Part 1: A constitution for the transitional phase?

### The ranking of the constitution among priorities

In order to identify the extent of significance of the constitution as a fundamental issue for the respondents, we raised six prominent issues and asked them to choose the three most important to them (those which must be present at the decision-making table for negotiations on setting up the transitional phase). Figure (1) shows how discussion of a new Syrian constitution does not constitute any of these priorities, but placed at the end of the list of the six suggested issues (chosen by only 18% of the respondents). The three chosen issues were ‘ceasefire’ (91.5%), followed by ‘the release of detainees’ (67.1%), then ‘the lifting of siege’ (55.2%).

Figure 1: What are the three most important topics to be focused on in the next phase of negotiations \*



\*It is important to remember that all data in figures and tables belong to the main sample. When presenting any data from the second sample, we will indicate this clearly, noting that the sample data (2) will be used only when comparing the data based on the location of the interview (provinces inside of Syria as well as in Istanbul and Gaziantep, Turkey)

This result shows maturity and realism among respondents regarding the nation’s status quo. We may have expected different outcomes during earlier stages of the Syrian revolution when a sooner fall of the regime was expected, making the need for a new constitution a priority for Syrians. But the current reality shows other priorities are taking precedence, the highest of which is an end to the bloodshed even if under the premise of a cease fire. Another reason discussions of a new constitution are going on the back burner is the perceived fecklessness of the political process taking place in Geneva despite the designation of such discussions as a priority by Staffan de Mistura, the international envoy, and his team. Not only did he place those discussions in one of his four proposed baskets, but also made them a central point of his unilateral discussions with

the Syrian opposition. However, the regime's refusal to discuss this matter before "defeating terrorists" across Syria shows a lack of seriousness towards the negotiation process in its entirety

Even when looking at the results according to the controlled-areas or provinces (Fig 2 and Table 2) the issue of discussing a new constitution for Syria remains far removed from the priorities of the respondents. The first issue is always ceasefire in all areas (except for truce areas, where the first demand is to lift the siege). However, the ranking is different with the second and third: In regime-controlled areas ('ceasefire' first, 'combating "Daesh"' second, and 'expulsion of foreign fighters' third), areas under DFNS control ('ceasefire' first, 'release of detainees' second, and the 'lifting of siege' third) and opposition-controlled areas ('ceasefire' first, 'release of detainees' second, and the 'lifting of siege' third).

Asked about their priorities, all respondents in the three areas -regime control, self-administration, and opposition control- agree that a ceasefire is at the top. But before we move on to the second priority in each area, commenting on the ceasefire priority of respondents in the regime controlled areas may provide some insight. The realistic interpretation of this choice of priority says that residents in these areas don't feel completely safe without a ceasefire, as seen in the sacrifices they made that they want a ceasefire despite the relative security in their areas. As for residents in areas of self-administration and opposition control, they are practically in a continuous state of war. First, despite United States support of the Syrian Democratic Forces, there is a general sense in areas of self-administration of looming threats from different sources: Remaining ISIS fighters, Turkish forces who thwart any attempt at autonomy across their southern borders, and lastly, some locals -especially Arab tribes- who are unlikely to accept Kurdish administration over areas where they believe themselves to be the majority. As for opposition-controlled areas, they are the main target of attacks by the regime and its Russian and Iranian backers. The regime proceeded with its plans to recapture those areas and displace scores of their people despite the Astana agreements in which certain armed factions participated per Turkey's request.

The reason a ceasefire is not a top priority for residents in "truce" areas is the fact that these areas already have ceasefires in place. What they desperately need is for the siege to be lifted in order to have access to essentials like food and medicine. The regime's use of starvation as a weapon of war to subdue some areas drove them into truce agreements with the regime to save the lives of their residents.

The second most important issue for regime-controlled areas was the fight against ISIS; an understandable choice for areas that are mostly not suffering, are not under siege, and where public life enjoys the stability that often comes with tyranny. Naturally, the fight against ISIS is closely associated with the demand that all foreign troops leave the country since many ISIS members are foreigners. But it was unclear whether or not respondents considered sectarian militias fighting alongside the regime as foreign fighters. Results from regime-controlled areas show that demands for releasing detainees and breaking the siege of besieged areas garnered similar percentages of the vote, just under 40%, indicating the direct impact of these issues on a large segment of area residents and a great awareness of the need to address them.

Respondents in areas of self-administration and opposition-control agree that the second priority is releasing detainees, a matter that residents feel is important because of its direct impact on many of them. This shows the breadth of reach of this issue and the residents' awareness of the real dangers of a prolonged detention upon the detainees.

Figure 2: The three most important issues according to controlled-area

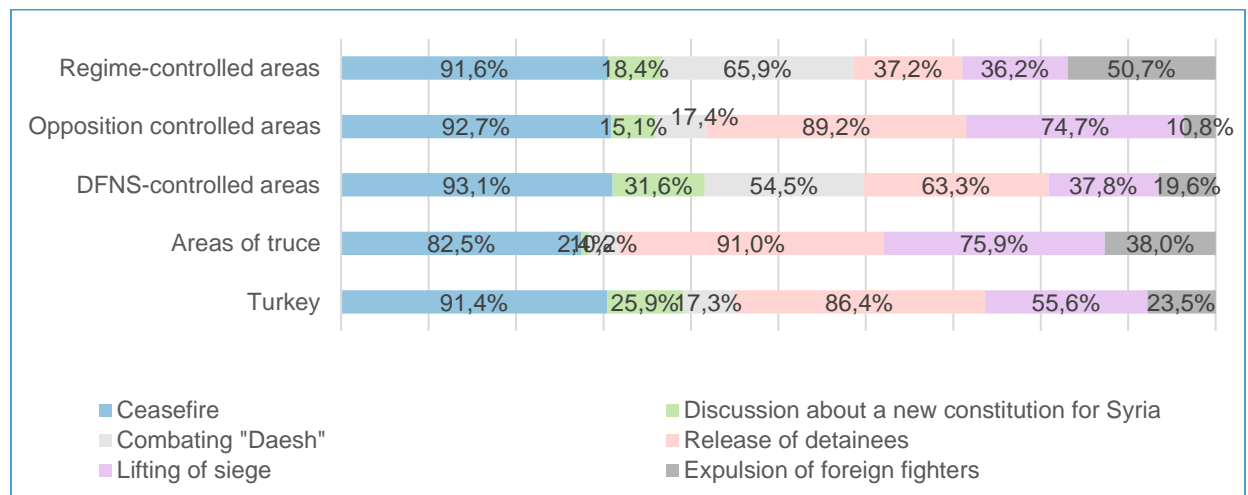


Table 2: The three most important issues according to province

	The second sample		The First sample						
	al-Suwayda	Daraa	Damascus	Damascus suburb	Aleppo	Homs	al-Hasakah	Idlib	Turkey
Ceasefire	52,6%	82,0%	85,9%	88,7%	88,6%	99,7%	93,1%	92,6%	91,3%
Discussion about a new constitution for Syria	35,1%	37,3%	33,7%	10,7%	13,6%	8,0%	31,6%	15,3%	26,3%
Combating "Daesh"	74,0%	26,7%	61,6%	34,9%	39,5%	49,5%	54,5%	11,5%	17,5%
Release of detainees	64,3%	82,7%	34,1%	67,4%	87,7%	54,0%	63,3%	88,8%	86,3%
Lifting of siege	10,4%	18,7%	39,2%	52,9%	65,5%	58,5%	37,8%	74,6%	55,0%
Expulsion of foreign fighters	63,6%	53,3%	45,5%	45,4%	5,0%	30,2%	19,6%	17,1%	23,8%

Analysis of the results shows an important distinction in the evaluation of priorities among sects: With respect to Sunnis, ‘ceasefire’ (91.0%), then ‘release of detainees’ (74.3%), then ‘lifting of siege’ (60.7%). However, concerning religious minorities, it is ‘ceasefire’, ‘combating “Daesh”’, and ‘expulsion of foreign fighters’ (Fig 3). The ranking of these priorities also varies between Arabs and Kurds (Fig 4). In all cases, ‘discussion about a new constitution for Syria’ remains far from these priorities.

Here, too, the responses correlate with the realities of what different communities see as their priorities. For the Sunni community, which represents the vast majority of the population, their main priority is a ceasefire since security and safety are typically the primary demands of war zone residents. The escalation and increased complexity of the Syrian conflict that came with the introduction of regional and international powers led all warring parties to lower their expectations regarding their ability to end this conflict in their favor. Since the Sunnis suffered the most in detention and siege, it is no surprise for these issues to come second and third on their list of demands.

As for religious minorities, fighting ISIS and the departure of foreign forces are their top priorities given that many of them believe ISIS is going after them; a point the regime capitalized on to convince minorities that it is their “savior” and that any change will mean an existential threat to these minorities. Of course, these fears are justified considering what ISIS did with Yazidis and Christians in Syria and Iraq, which played into the fear mongering narrative of the regime and some closely associated minority leaders. From a minority’s prospective, many ISIS fighters are foreigners. It makes sense, therefore, that the departure of foreigners is the third top priority for minority respondents. It remains unclear, however, whether or not their demand that foreigners leave also applies to the sectarian militias fighting alongside the regime which now outnumber the official Syrian forces.

Figure 3: The three most important issues according to sect

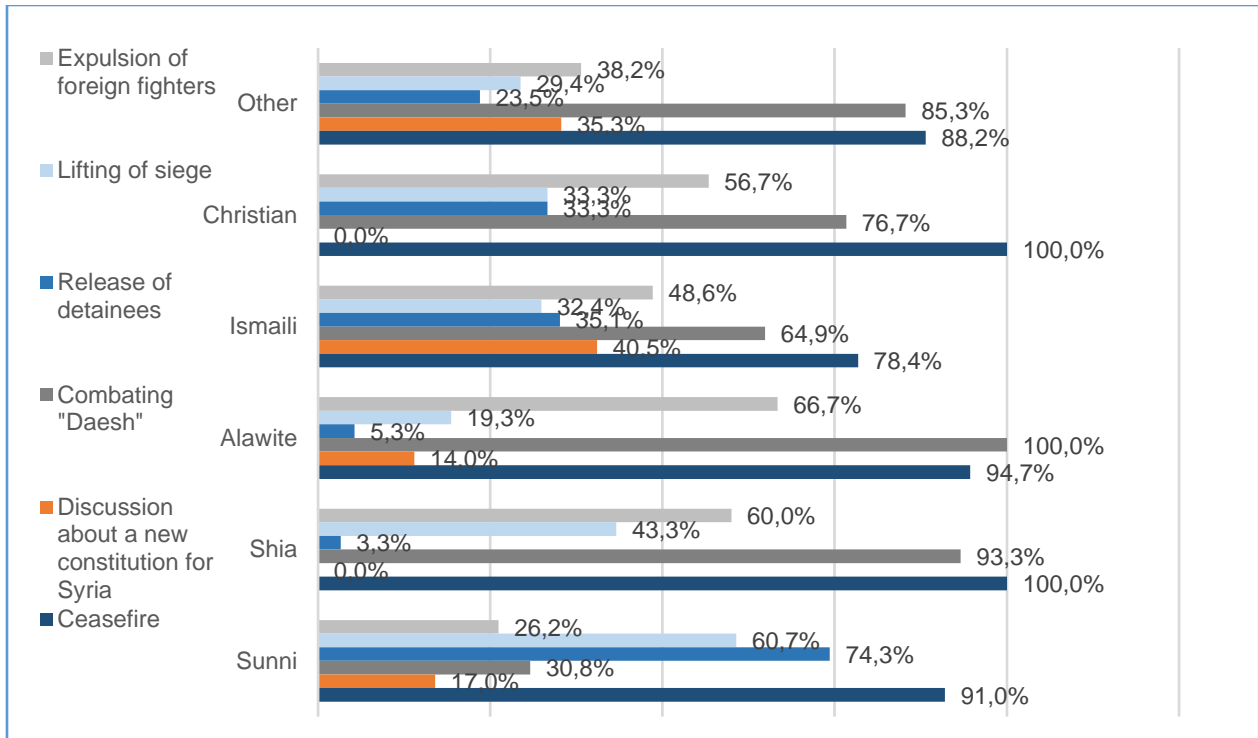
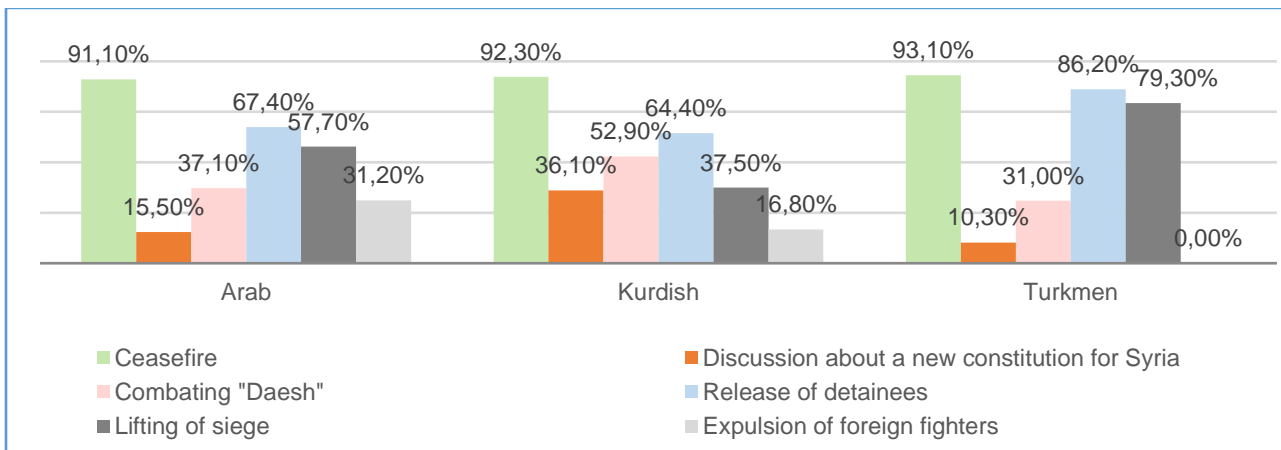


Figure 4: The three most important issues according to Ethnicity/nationalism



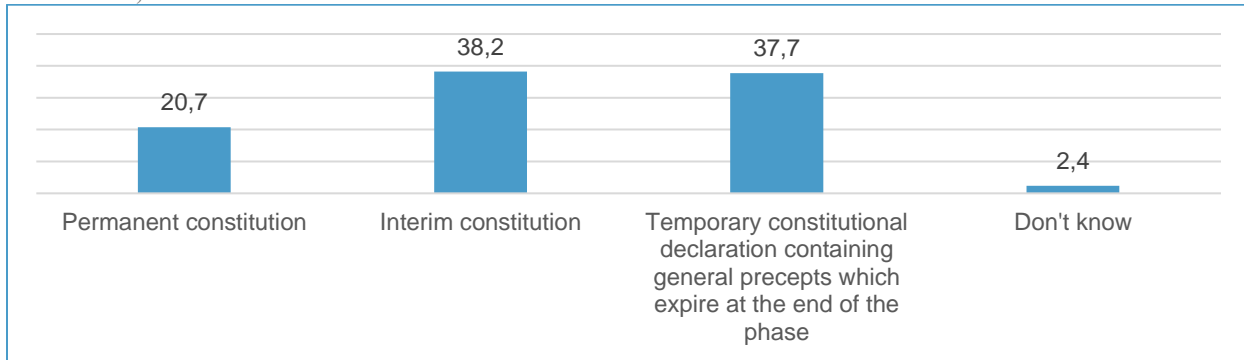
### Constitution or constitutional declaration?

In order to identify the position of respondents on current discussions about Syria's need for a new constitution, with a transitional phase or not, we asked the following question: *There has been discussion for some time about the constitution in Syria, where some tend to support writing*

a new constitution and others reject discussions on this matter at the current stage. In your opinion, what is the most appropriate option at this time?

Figure (5) shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents reject the idea of writing a permanent constitution in the current phase, being divided among (1) a constitutional declaration containing general precepts which expire at the end of the transitional phase, and (2) an interim constitution: 37.7% and 38.2%, respectively.

Figure 5: The most appropriate option for the current phase: permanent constitution, constitutional declaration, or interim constitution



The answers here also reflect respondent awareness of the fact that current conditions do not allow for drafting a permanent constitution, making it an answer that supports prioritization of a ceasefire, release of detainees, lifting the siege, and defeating ISIS. Supporters of an alternative to writing an interim constitution are equally split into those who believe a constitutional declaration to be sufficient for the transition phase and those who believe a temporary constitution can be adopted.

The lack of support for a permanent constitution at this stage may be due to the belief that reaching the high level of national consensus needed to agree on a permanent constitution requires a comprehensive national dialogue, which may only be facilitated by entering a transition phase regulated by temporary constitutional arrangements to ensure state institutions remain operational and avoid any vacuum.

### Who prepares the constitution?

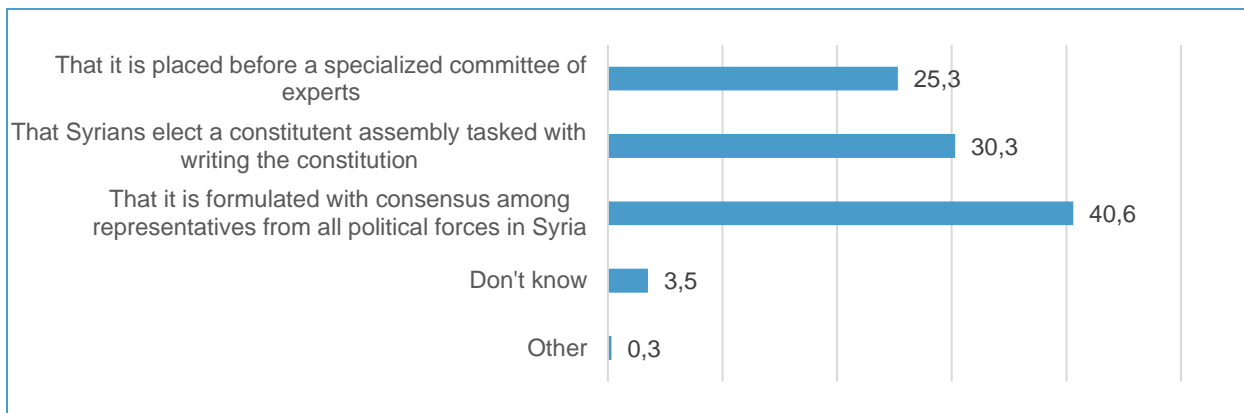
There are a number of ways to write constitutions before bringing them to referendum, ranging from those focusing on consensus, to others on election or through a committee of experts.



For the purpose of identifying the manner which Syrians want to adopt for writing the constitution of their country, we posed the following question to respondents: *What is the best method for drafting the constitution, in your opinion, before submitting it to the popular referendum?*

The analysis of results shows that the greatest percentage of respondents want to employ a method which ensures compatibility between all political forces, with 40.6% saying that they want it to be formulated on the basis of consensus among representatives of all political forces in Syria before submitting it to the popular referendum. The second method, gaining approval from 30.3%, was that of election of a constituent assembly. Only a quarter of respondents were satisfied with the committee of experts option (Fig 6).

**Figure 6: What is the best method for drafting the constitution before submitting it to the popular referendum? (%)**



Addressing the best practices of drafting a constitution before presenting it in a referendum shows a deep understanding of the significance of national reconciliation as part of the process of drafting the constitution. This is in line with the conviction held by many that national reconciliation is a precondition for entering a political process -of which drafting a constitution is part of- that requires national consensus of the political and social forces. Tunisia's and Egypt's experiences in political transitions, where national reconciliation was present in the former and absent in the latter, proved such reconciliation to be the foundation of success, and its absence a cause of failure. Electing a Constituent Assembly as a second option does not conflict with national reconciliation if the main task of said Constituent Assembly is to prepare a constitution for the country. The primary elements to finding a path towards national reconciliation are in details such as the electoral law adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The more inclusive the electoral law is

of all societal, ethnic, religious, political and gender components, the more successful we will be in achieving the state of national reconciliation most respondents agreed is important.

However, for drafting a constitution by an expert committee to come as a third priority, supported only by a quarter of respondents, indicates concern that this method may cause reconciliation to be overlooked or dictated by external powers. This is not to say that reconciliation goes against utilizing experts -which is desirable- but that respondents are concerned reconciliation would be overlooked if experts were to do the draft.

## Part 2: Authorities and System of Governance

### The legislative power

One of the current proposed solutions to overcome sectarian and regional problems is that the next Syrian parliament be composed of two chambers instead of one<sup>3</sup>, where the second house monitors the first and verifies that the approved legislation does not conflict with the interests of any of the local groups. We therefore posed the following question to the respondents: *It has been proposed that the next Syrian parliament be composed of two chambers. This means that the first chamber would be composed of members elected by the people and would have the power of legislation. The second would be charged with an oversight function over the work of the first, and its members would be the notables, dignitaries, and local leaders who represent the social components in the various regions. What would be your position if such a parliamentary system is adopted?*

Figure 7: Do you know what is meant by ‘the legislative power’?(%)

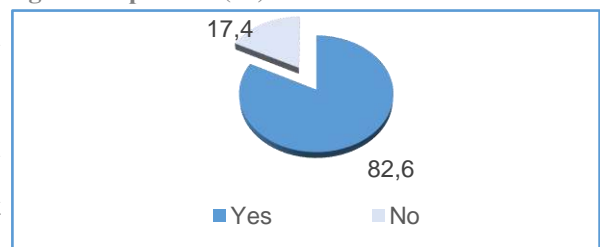
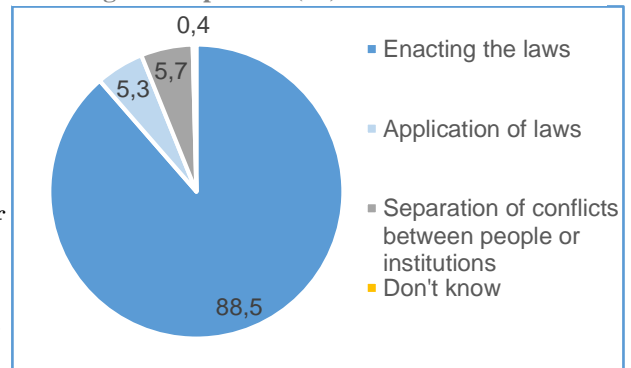


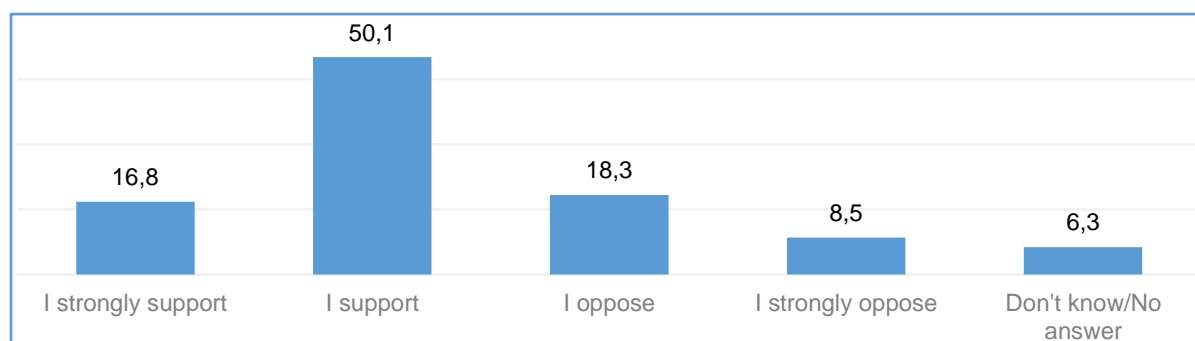
Figure 8: Which of the following is the primary task of the legislative power? (%)



<sup>3</sup> See: Jihad Yazji, No Going Back: No going back: Why decentralisation is the future for Syria. September 2016, European Council on Foreign Relations. (Arabic translation of a study issued by the European Council on Foreign Relations)

Before that, however, we had to ascertain the extent to which the respondent was aware of the parliament's work. As shown in Figures (7) and (8), the vast majority of respondents were aware of the basic task of the legislative power. Only those who said they know what is meant by 'the legislative power', saying that its main task is to enact the laws, were posed the aforementioned question. The majority (66.9%) agreed that the next parliament would be two-chambered and only around a quarter of the respondents opposed this suggestion (Fig 9).

Figure 9: Two-chambered parliamentary system (%)



In order to ensure the greatest possible support for the success of this proposal in case it is the choice adopted by the constitution drafting committee, we tried to identify the variables which are related to the position toward it. We found that the percentage of those rejecting it reached the highest levels in each of the following categories compared with others; workers and the unemployed; the oldest (age); those with the highest incomes; minorities; Kurds; those in Homs, Damascus, and Idlib; those in regime-controlled areas and DFNS-controlled areas; those in Turkey. Table (3) summarizes these variables in detail.

Table 3: Position toward the proposal of a two-chambered parliament based on some demographic and social variables.

	No clear position	Reject	Agree
<b>Occupation</b>			
Employed	6,4%	30,4%	63,1%
Student	5,2%	14,8%	80,0%
Housewife	4,1%	14,9%	81,0%
Unemployed	14,3%	33,9%	51,8%
<b>Age</b>			
25 years and below	5,6%	16,8%	77,7%

26-35 years old	9,0%	22,8%	68,2%
36-45 years old	5,2%	30,8%	64,0%
46-55 years old	2,8%	36,8%	60,4%
56 years and above	1,4%	40,5%	58,1%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>			
less than 25,000	10,4%	12,8%	76,8%
between 25,000-75,000	5,5%	32,2%	62,3%
more than 75,000	2,8%	34,0%	63,2%
<b>Religious sect</b>			
Sunni	7,1%	20,4%	72,5%
Shia	0,0%	70,8%	29,2%
Alawite	0,0%	87,0%	13,0%
Ismaili	0,0%	50,0%	50,0%
Christian	0,0%	50,0%	50,0%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>			
Arab	6,2%	26,1%	67,7%
Kurd	8,9%	36,6%	54,5%
Turkman	0,0%	7,7%	92,3%
<b>Province</b>			
Damascus	0,5%	33,6%	65,9%
Damascus suburbs	15,0%	19,7%	65,3%
Aleppo	13,3%	15,3%	71,4%
Homs	0,0%	33,3%	66,7%
al-Hasakah	7,9%	29,5%	62,6%
Idlib	12,7%	38,1%	49,2%
<b>The second sample</b>			
Daraa	0,0%	19,7%	80,3%
al-Suwayda	49,5%	27,1%	23,4%
<b>Area</b>			
Regime-controlled area	0,2%	38,4%	61,4%
Opposition-controlled area	3,8%	17,6%	78,6%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	7,9%	29,3%	62,9%

Truce area	31,4%	14,1%	54,5%
Turkey	12,7%	38,1%	49,2%

Answers in this section indicate several points summarized as follows:

First, for a people not accustomed to practicing legislative authority through a proper parliament, the understanding of the vast majority of respondents of the legislative authority’s main task is encouraging in terms of political awareness.

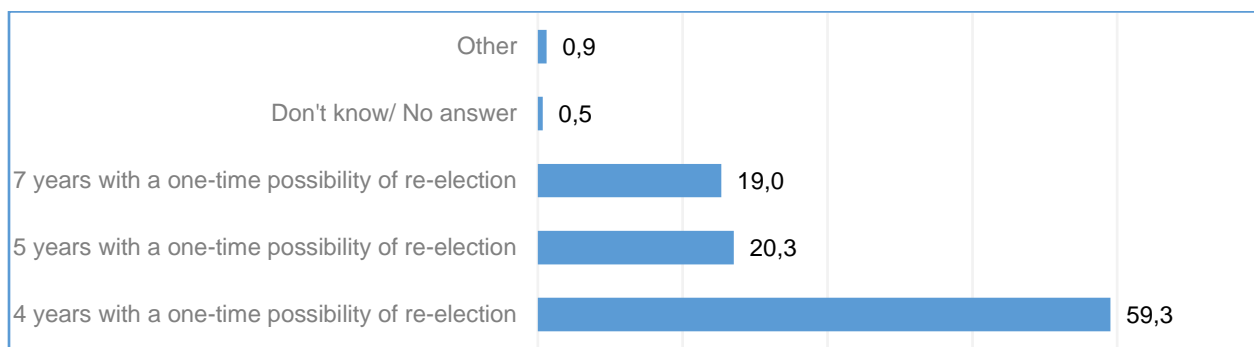
Second, the fact that a majority of (66.9) percent agrees to adding a second chamber to parliament to represent the interests of the country’s constituents means that they want larger representation even though the regime in Syria did not practice this model since the country attained independence. Supporting a two-chamber parliament indicates several possibilities that may complement each other. The first is that respondents observed two-chamber parliament countries and thought it more representative. The second possibility is that there is a trend among many to support some kind of decentralization enhanced by a second chamber that protects local interests. The third possibility is that the regime’s withdrawal from areas of opposition and self-administration instilled local governance and created an awareness of local priorities and demands that may be attained through a second chamber. This would strike a balance between local priorities and demands and those of the central legislative authority. Finally, it is likely that Syrians seem to prefer more institutions out of their desire for distribution of power after more than four decades of power being centralized in the hands of a few.

Third, it is not surprising that the highest percentage of opponents come from certain minorities and social groups, though it is high amongst Kurds and in areas of self-administration. In regime-controlled areas, especially among Alawites where we see the highest percentage of opposition, these numbers may indicate acceptance of regime proposals and opposition to any institutional change out of fear of any changes. In regards to the Kurds and residents in areas of self-administration, though the majority still supports this proposal, the high numbers may be that this institutional change is not enough to meet their demands. Some think pursuing the highest possible demands at a time of division and central weakness is conducive to attaining the highest demands on the path to self-determination.

## The executive power

The president's mandate and powers constitute one of the most controversial issues in Syrian circles. To identify the preferred term of the presidential mandate in the opinion of the respondents, we asked about the mandate, proposing a gradual period beginning with four years and ending with seven, with a one-time possibility of re-election (i.e. one new mandate). It seems the majority of respondents tended to reduce the term of the president's mandate, 59.3% of whom said that the best term period is only four years (Fig 10).

Figure 10. What is the preferred period for the president to remain in office?



To delve deeper into this issue, we tried to identify the nature of the system of governance favored by respondents (presidential, parliamentary-presidential, and parliamentary) by asking about the key to understanding these systems (i.e. concentrating the powers in the hand of the president or the parliament). Our question was as follows: *What is the best way, in your opinion, to determine executive powers?* (Fig 13).

Before doing this, we had to make sure that the respondent knew the meaning of executive power and had knowledge of its main task (Figs 11 and 12). Only those who said that they know what is meant by 'executive power' and said that its main task is to apply the laws addressed to them were asked the aforementioned question.

It seems that the majority of the respondents leaned toward the parliamentary-presidential system (44.1%), followed, with a slight margin, by the parliamentary system (39.7%). The presidential system appears to be very far from the respondents' orientation, with only 15.8% choosing this option.

But who are those who want a presidential system in Syria? To answer this question, we will examine the demographic and social backgrounds of those who chose this system in the following lines.

Figure 11. Do you know what is meant by the executive power?

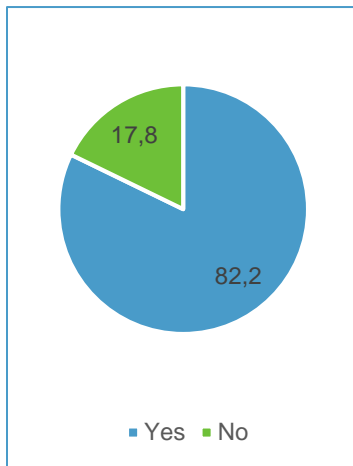


Figure 12: Which of the following is the main task of the executive power?

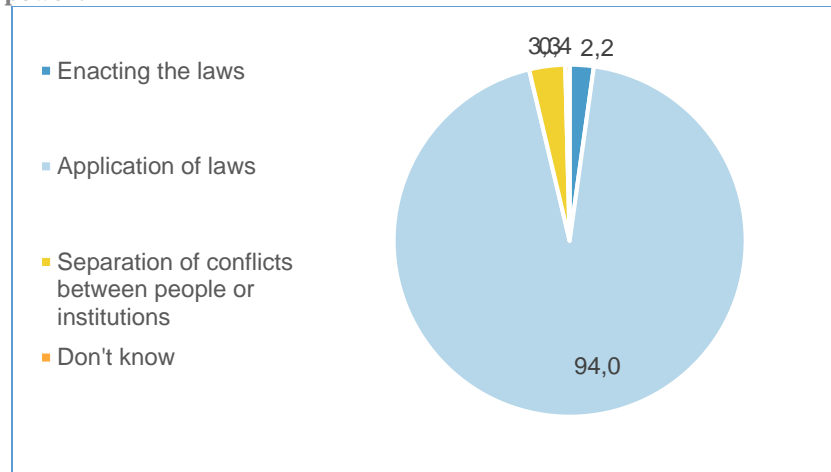


Figure 13: The best way to determine the executive powers

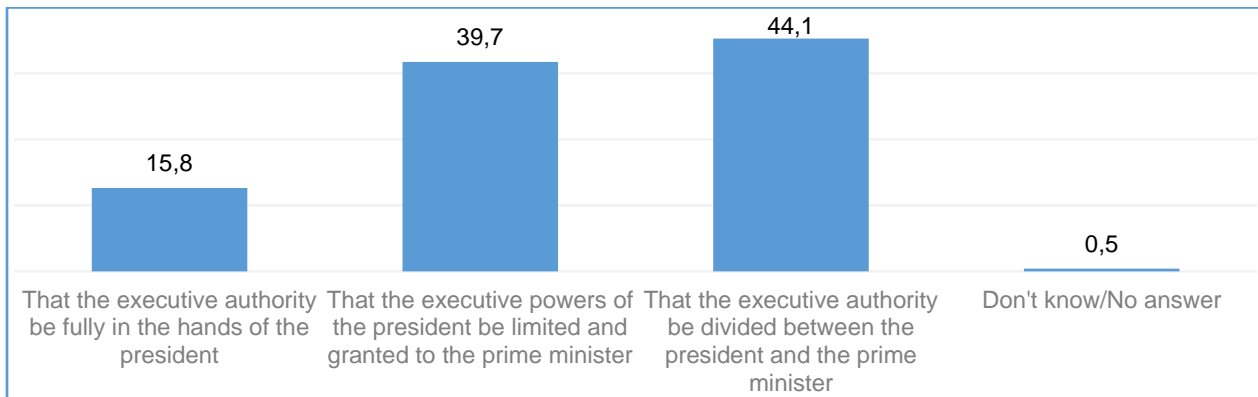


Table 4 summarizes the variables which we found to be related to the position of determining the powers of the executive authority. In short, the percentage of those who chose the presidential system is the highest in each of the following categories as compared with others: secularists; those between 36-55 years old; those having incomes ranging between 25-75 thousand; Alawites; Arabs more so than Kurds; in Daraa, Damascus, and Damascus suburbs; regime-controlled areas; and those with only preparatory or secondary education.

**Table 4: The best way to determine executive powers according to some demographic and social variables**

	Don't know/No answer	That the executive authority be divided between the president and the prime minister	That the executive powers of the president be limited and granted to the prime minister	That the executive authority be fully in the hands of the president
<b>Ideology</b>				
Maximum secularism	0,5%	37,6%	30,7%	31,2%
Secularism	0,8%	54,5%	19,9%	24,8%
Middle	0,5%	43,5%	45,1%	10,9%
Islamism	0,0%	43,0%	46,4%	10,7%
Maximum political Islam	4,5%	18,2%	54,5%	22,7%
<b>Age</b>				
25 years and below	0,4%	38,4%	43,9%	17,3%
26-35 years old	0,6%	47,7%	42,9%	8,8%
36-45 years old	0,0%	42,2%	36,7%	21,1%
46-55 years old	0,9%	44,0%	29,6%	25,5%
56 years and above	0,0%	43,6%	43,6%	15,4%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>				
less than 25,000	0,5%	44,0%	42,0%	13,5%
between 25,000-75,000	0,2%	44,3%	33,2%	22,3%
more than 75,000	0,7%	43,3%	44,0%	12,0%
<b>Religious sect</b>				
Sunni	0,6%	44,4%	44,3%	10,8%
Shia	0,0%	58,3%	0,0%	41,7%
Alawite	0,0%	13,0%	0,0%	87,0%
Ismaili	0,0%	17,2%	51,7%	31,0%
Christian	0,0%	37,9%	20,7%	41,4%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>				
Arab	0,4%	41,6%	40,7%	17,3%
Kurd	0,9%	59,1%	34,8%	5,2%
Turkman (by number)	0	11	4	1
<b>Province</b>				



Damascus	0,0%	23,0%	44,7%	32,3%
Damascus suburbs	0,0%	38,8%	35,2%	26,0%
Aleppo	3,6%	55,4%	35,7%	5,4%
Homs	0,0%	67,4%	17,4%	15,2%
Al-Hasakah	0,7%	62,7%	31,7%	4,9%
Idlib	0,0%	33,1%	64,8%	2,1%
	The second sample			
Daraa	0,0%	37,5%	26,6%	35,9%
Al-Suwayda	0,0%	41,0%	43,6%	15,4%
<b>Area</b>				
Regime-controlled area	0,0%	36,2%	30,6%	33,2%
Opposition-controlled area	0,7%	44,3%	52,5%	2,4%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	0,7%	62,9%	31,5%	4,9%
Truce area	0,0%	57,4%	31,6%	11,0%
Turkey	2,9%	41,4%	54,3%	1,4%
<b>Level of education</b>				
Primary	3,2%	47,6%	39,7%	9,5%
Preparatory	0,0%	38,7%	44,6%	16,6%
Secondary	0,2%	43,3%	35,5%	21,1%
University and above	0,6%	46,5%	41,2%	11,7%

The executive branch is the centerpiece of the desired change in a new constitution for a future Syria. Survey results show that the majority wants a democratic state that checks executive power, since most Syrians have had enough of its tyranny, abuse, and the lack of institutional checks to restrict it. However, there seems to be some confusion that perhaps stems from the respondents' lack of experience and awareness of the nuances of how political systems work, be it parliamentary, presidential, or dual (semi presidential). The confusion manifests as follows:

- 1) Most respondents wanted to shorten the presidential term from seven to four years, which is consistent with the strong desire to move away from the Assad regimes (of father and son) that ruled for seven years at a time with no limits, and adopted a single candidate approach to

elections, meaning a rule for life. Though Assad junior proposed to limit the presidency to two terms in the draft constitution of 2012, he still kept the seven-year duration of each term.

- 2) The majority of respondents expressed a desire to drop the presidential system, which is consistent with the wish to reduce the duration of a presidency term and limit it to two. This confirms that -to them- the presidential system as implemented since the arrival of Assad to power in 1970 is akin to tyranny and corruption, thus the strong desire to adopt a new one.
- 3) It seems the primary preference for a parliamentary system, and a parliamentary-presidential one as a second, is more about wanting an alternative to the presidential system that is tied to the two Assads rule. Some long for a time when they enjoyed a “moment” of rich parliamentary rule and diverse political parties whose members were a mix of nationalists, Islamists, and leftists.
- 4) It seems contradictory to want a parliamentary system *and* a shorter presidency limited to two terms since the president’s authority in a parliamentary system is limited and the true executive power is in the hands of both the prime minister and a government -elected by parliament majority- that may stay in power as long as it maintains the parliament’s trust. As such, it is unnecessary to focus on limiting and reducing the presidency term unless we were talking about the dual system, or the semi presidential system, where the president is elected directly by the people while the prime minister and the parliament-trusted government hold executive power. In this case, respondents’ preference for reducing the presidential term to two would make sense and is supported by the fact that most people do not want the president to hold all executive power exclusively, but rather share power with a government headed by a prime minister chosen by parliament majority.

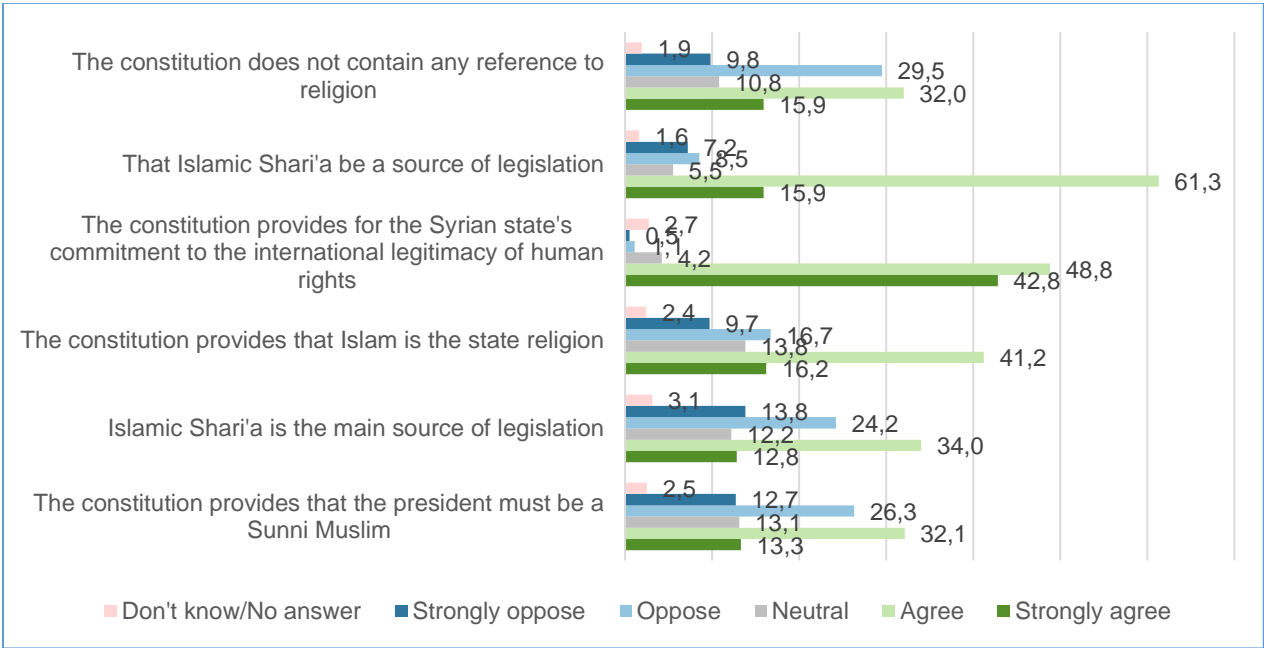
As for those who supported keeping executive powers exclusively in the president’s hands, it was striking that secularists (ideology), especially hard-liners, and Alawites (religion) were the most supportive of this option. In both groups, the preference may be due to: Wanting a purely presidential system, which makes the two groups the minority; or that they do not think the concentration of executive power in the hands of the president is responsible for the dictatorship and the abuse of power the country suffered from for more than four decades, or that they think a strong presidential system in Syria protects it from religiously-charged political movements which may otherwise climb to power in a parliamentary system and revoke all rights and benefits currently enjoyed by these two groups.

# Part 3: Religion, the State, and State-identity

## Religion and the constitution

We presented respondents with the most prominent possibilities that are generally raised about the presence of religion in constitutions in many Arab and Islamic countries. As is evident in Figure (14), an important percentage of the opposition appears in most cases noteworthy, except in two cases where there is almost unanimity among the respondents: that the constitution provides for the Syrian state’s commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights, and that Islamic Shari’a should be a source of legislation: 91.6% and 77.9%, respectively. It appears that the state’s commitment to human rights is the first demand, where the percentage of those who said that they “strongly” agree reached 42.8%.

Figure 14: Religion and the constitution



## Arab/Islamic identity and minorities

Interestingly, the firmness toward the need to include an Arab identity in the constitution is greater than that of an Islamic one (77.8% and 54.0%, respectively). The proposal to remove the word ‘Arab’ from the name of the republic was rejected by the majority (around 67.0%) (Fig 15).

When asked about the need to recognize the cultural rights of minorities, the overwhelming majority (80.1%) supported it, but there appears to be a split over the proposal that Kurdish necessarily be recognized as a second language in the country in the next constitution, although the largest proportion, about one-third, opposed (Fig 16). It also appears that the majority of respondents wanting the presence of an Arab or Islamic identity do not believe there is a conflict between their position and the assurance of the rights of religious, ethnic and national minorities (Table 5).

Figure 15: Arab/Islamic identity (%)

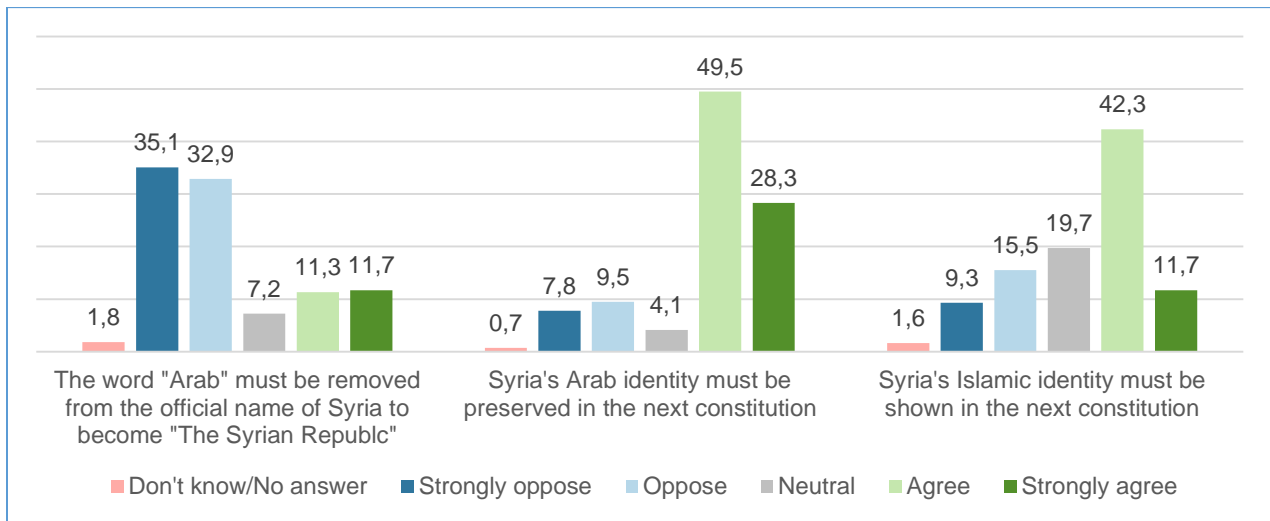
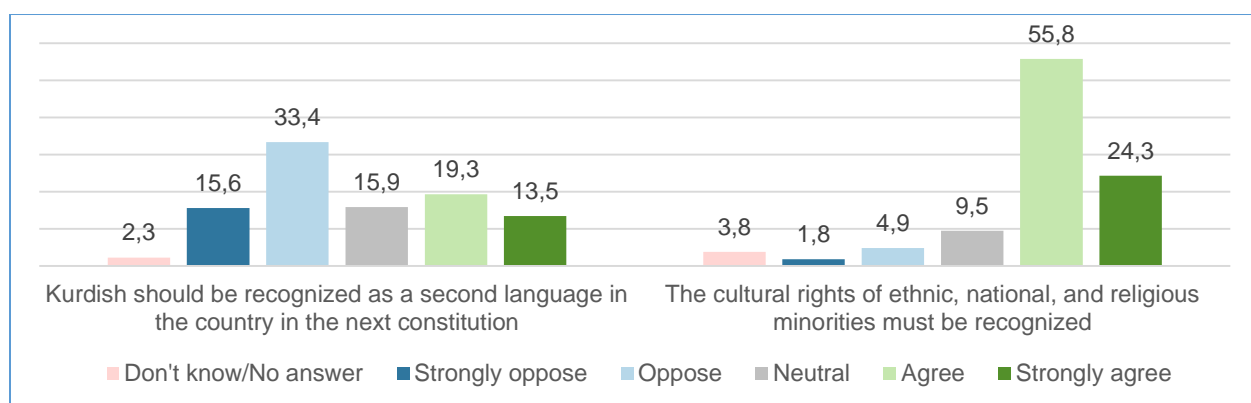


Table 5: Position on recognizing cultural minority rights according to the position on Arab/Islamic identity (%)

	The cultural rights of ethnic, national, and religious minorities must be recognized		
	Reject	Neutral or no clear position	Support
<b>Syria's Arab identity must be preserved in the next constitution (%)</b>			
Support	8,0%	15,2%	76,8%
Neutral or no clear position	4,8%	16,9%	78,3%
Reject	1,3%	3,7%	95,0%
<b>Syria's Islamic identity must be shown in the next constitution (%)</b>			
Support	9,8%	14,9%	75,3%
Neutral or no clear position	3,8%	23,0%	73,2%
Reject	2,3%	1,4%	96,2%

Figure 16: Minority rights



To find out more about the social and demographic background of those who refuse to remove “Arab” from the official name of Syria, we looked for the variables related to this position. We found that the proportion of opposition reached its highest levels in each of the following categories: Islamists; those older than 46 years old; students and housewives; those having incomes between 25-75 thousand; Shiites and Alawites; Sunnis; Arabs more so than Kurds; in Damascus and its suburbs, Homs, Idlib, and Al-Suwayda; in regime-controlled areas and truce areas; those having (only) a preparatory or secondary level of education; and among women more so than men (Table 6).

Table 6: The word “Arab” must be removed from the official name of Syria

	Reject	Neutral or no clear position	Support
<b>Ideology</b>			
Maximum secularism	29,5%	5,9%	64,6%
Secularism	58,4%	10,5%	31,1%
Middle	78,6%	8,8%	12,6%
Islamism	81,4%	10,0%	8,6%
Maximum political Islam	78,1%	12,5%	9,4%
<b>Age</b>			
25 years and below	67,9%	9,4%	22,6%
26-35 years old	67,4%	10,9%	21,7%
36-45 years old	63,2%	9,5%	27,3%

46-55 years old	75,1%	5,3%	19,6%
56 years and above	73,1%	3,2%	23,7%
<b>Occupation</b>			
Employed	66,2%	9,6%	24,3%
Student	74,0%	5,7%	20,3%
Housewife	75,3%	7,4%	17,4%
Unemployed	60,0%	11,6%	28,4%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>			
less than 25 thousand	62,1%	8,1%	29,9%
between 25-75 thousand	73,3%	9,0%	17,8%
more than 75 thousand	64,9%	8,9%	26,3%
<b>Religious sect</b>			
Sunni	74,2%	10,3%	15,5%
Shia	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Alawite	78,9%	3,5%	17,5%
Ismaili	54,1%	5,4%	40,5%
Christian	66,7%	3,3%	30,0%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>			
Arab	80,7%	9,3%	10,0%
Kurd	3,4%	3,4%	93,3%
<b>Province</b>			
Damascus	77,6%	5,5%	16,9%
Damascus suburb	91,6%	4,0%	4,4%
Aleppo	37,7%	32,7%	29,5%
Homs	98,1%	0,0%	1,9%
Al-Hasakah	11,3%	5,5%	83,3%
Idlib	90,2%	8,2%	1,6%
	The second sample		
Daraa	70,7%	22,0%	7,3%
Al-Suwaydah	85,1%	7,8%	7,1%
<b>Area</b>			
Regime-controlled area	88,5%	2,3%	9,2%
Opposition-controlled area	67,2%	19,2%	13,6%

Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	11,3%	5,1%	83,6%
Truce area	90,3%	7,9%	1,8%
Turkey	43,2%	18,5%	38,3%
<b>Level of education</b>			
Illiterate (by number)	10	6	11
Primary	62,2%	13,4%	24,4%
Preparatory	75,8%	9,6%	14,6%
Secondary	74,3%	5,7%	20,0%
University	62,4%	9,4%	28,2%
Post-graduate	50,0%	15,8%	34,2%
<b>Gender</b>			
Men	63,4%	10,7%	26,0%
Women	72,8%	7,3%	19,9%

Table (7) summarizes the variables related to the position on the presence of Islam as an identity for Syria in the next constitution. In short, the percentage of those supporting this statement is the highest in each of the following categories when compared to others: Islamists; the unemployed and housewives; those older than 46 years; those having an income between 25-75 thousand; Sunni and Shia; Arabs; in Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, and Daraa; in opposition-controlled areas; and the less educated.

**Table 7: Syria's Islamic identity must be shown in the next constitution**

	Oppose	Neutral or no clear position	Support
<b>Ideology</b>			
Maximum secularism	87,0%	9,8%	3,1%
Secularism	40,1%	22,8%	37,1%
Middle	8,1%	31,6%	60,3%
Islamism	2,9%	8,0%	89,1%
Maximum political Islam	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
<b>Occupation</b>			
Employed	26,3%	21,1%	52,6%
Student	28,5%	33,3%	38,2%

Housewife	16,4%	16,7%	66,9%
Unemployed	16,4%	16,7%	66,9%
<b>Age</b>			
25 years and below	22,6%	23,0%	54,4%
26-35 years old	21,3%	29,8%	48,9%
36-45 years old	30,4%	15,7%	53,9%
46-55 years old	27,2%	12,1%	60,8%
56 years and above	23,7%	7,5%	68,8%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>			
less than 25 thousand	20,5%	32,9%	46,6%
between 25-75 thousand	25,1%	16,6%	58,4%
more than 75 thousand	34,8%	21,2%	44,0%
<b>Religious sect</b>			
Sunni	12,7%	23,7%	63,6%
Shia	13,3%	0,0%	86,7%
Alawite	91,2%	1,8%	7,0%
Ismaili	81,1%	0,0%	18,9%
Christian	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>			
Arab	18,3%	21,0%	60,7%
Kurd	59,6%	23,1%	17,3%
<b>Province</b>			
Damascus	38,4%	2,7%	58,8%
Damascus suburbs	19,7%	27,5%	52,8%
Aleppo	0,5%	24,5%	75,0%
Homs	30,4%	1,9%	67,7%
Al-Hasakah	53,8%	22,5%	23,6%
Idlib	3,9%	33,7%	62,4%
	<b>The second sample</b>		
Daraa	18,0%	20,0%	62,0%
Al-Suwayda	93,5%	2,6%	3,9%
<b>Area</b>			
Regime-controlled area	32,7%	8,4%	58,9%



Opposition-controlled area	3,0%	29,2%	67,8%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	54,0%	22,3%	23,7%
Truce area	5,5%	45,5%	49,1%
Turkey	33,3%	29,6%	37,0%
<b>Level of education</b>			
Illiterate (by number)	4	4	19
Primary	11,6%	25,0%	63,4%
Preparatory	15,5%	15,2%	69,3%
Secondary	24,8%	20,0%	55,3%
University	32,7%	25,3%	41,9%
Post-graduate	39,5%	13,2%	47,4%
<b>Civil status</b>			
Single	32,8%	24,7%	42,5%
Married	22,5%	20,0%	57,5%
Widow	17,6%	24,7%	57,6%
Divorced	18,8%	15,6%	65,6%

What is the demographic and social background of those who oppose the recognition of Kurdish as a second language in the country? Practically no Kurd opposed this proposal, the following results summarized in Table (8), are specific to the sample of Arab respondents.

The percentage of opposition to this proposal is highest in each of the following categories when compared to others: Islamists; students and housewives; Shia and Alawites; in Homs and the Damascus suburbs; and in both regime- and opposition-controlled areas.

It is noted that enthusiasm for support of this proposal increases among those older than 46, as well as with more income and those with education beyond the primary phase.

It is striking that between all of the religious sects covered by this survey, the Ismailis alone support this demand (63.9%) and Christians are to some extent divided.

**Table 8: Kurdish must be recognized as a second language in the country**

	Oppose	Neutral or no clear position	Support
<b>Ideology</b>			
Maximum secularism	44,3%	3,1%	52,6%
Secularism	54,4%	23,4%	22,3%
Middle	61,4%	24,1%	14,5%
Islamism	58,2%	17,3%	24,5%
Maximum political Islam	62,1%	20,7%	17,2%
<b>Age</b>			
25 years and below	57,1%	24,6%	18,3%
between 26-35 years old	57,4%	27,0%	15,6%
between 36-45 years old	60,6%	16,9%	22,5%
between 46-55 years old	58,2%	10,7%	31,1%
56 years and above	55,8%	11,7%	32,5%
<b>Occupation</b>			
Employed	56,5%	20,2%	23,3%
Student	67,3%	24,8%	7,9%
Housewife	63,6%	19,0%	17,4%
Unemployed	48,6%	31,1%	20,3%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>			
less than 25 thousand	62,5%	27,3%	10,2%
between 25-75 thousand	60,7%	16,4%	22,8%
more than 75 thousand	56,6%	14,7%	28,7%
<b>Religious sect</b>			
Sunni	59,1%	23,3%	17,6%
Shia	70,0%	3,3%	26,7%
Alawite	70,2%	5,3%	24,6%
Ismaili	25,0%	11,1%	63,9%
Christian	47,8%	0,0%	52,2%
<b>Province</b>			
Damascus	40,2%	9,1%	50,6%
Damascus suburbs	59,3%	24,8%	15,9%
Aleppo	43,4%	51,2%	5,4%

Homs	74,5%	3,8%	21,7%
Al-Hasakah (by number)	5	14	8
Idlib	35,8%	22,4%	41,8%
	The second sample		
Daraa	22,0%	47,3%	30,7%
Al-Suwayda	52,6%	38,3%	9,1%
<b>Area</b>			
Regime-controlled area	61,2%	7,5%	31,3%
Opposition-controlled area	64,5%	27,3%	8,2%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	5	14	8
Truce area	42,1%	51,2%	6,7%
Turkey	35,8%	22,4%	41,8%
<b>Level of education</b>			
(numbers by) Illiterate	19	8	3
Primary	56,5%	36,2%	7,2%
Preparatory	58,0%	17,1%	24,8%
Secondary	60,7%	18,1%	21,2%
University	57,9%	20,3%	21,8%
Post-graduate (by number)	11	7	10

The general trends on identity can be summarized as follows:

First, it is obvious that the largest consensus is on state commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights to be in the constitution. This issue may be one of the principles of the new national reconciliation. The vast majority's support of this demand, more than (91) percent, is indicative of the importance of freedoms and rights in the next constitution. Syrian citizens born after 1963 only experienced the single party and single-person rule, never experiencing free and dignified citizenship. And even though freedoms and rights are mentioned in the 1973 constitution, they were stripped away by a state of emergency declared in 1963 and by the regime's oppressive practices; thus the longing Syrians feel to a political life with a constitution that protects people's basic freedoms and rights in keeping with one of the highest standards: The International Bill of Human Rights.

Second, it may be surprising that the percentage of those who support a future constitution that cites Islamic law as a source of legislation is as high as 77.9 percent. A few possible reasons behind it are that: 1) This percentage is close to the percentage of those who support a similar proposal in most Arab countries per the surveys conducted in past years; 2) All Syrian constitutions -from 1950 till 2012 including Hafez al-Assad's constitution in 1973- had stated that "Islamic jurisprudence" is a source of legislation; 3) The issue for the supporters may be more about identity than legislation, considering that legislation practices in Syria's political stage did not allow Islamic Sharia a vital role, especially during the Baath party rule beginning in 1963; 4) The high percentage of supporters may be a reflection of a general trend that prevailed in recent years of the Syrian revolution towards a more religious community, especially among Arab Sunnis, as a means of resistance against the worst humanitarian catastrophe since World War II.

Third, it is not surprising that the call for preserving Arab identity is widely supported by nearly 77.8 percent of people as that percentage happens to be close to the actual percentage of Arabs in the population, about 80 percent. The Kurdish minority as represented by their parties and political powers struggled in past years to reclaim their basic rights that were stolen from them by a tyrannical regime that peddles an Arab nationalist narrative and marginalizes non-Arab minorities. One of the demands of the Kurdish political bodies was affirming the identity and cultural and political rights of all components of the Syrian society. Such rights include unbiased in political documents and agreements that may become the foundation of a future constitution that favors Arabs. The demands of the Kurdish minority, including the demand to drop "Arab" from the country's name, are not expected to get much support from the Arab majority since there is a belief that the Kurds are attempting to push the issue at a time when war threatens to break up the country. Additionally, the practices of the Kurdish dominated self-administration in Kurds-controlled areas did not seem reassuring to Arabs, which further polarized Kurds and Arabs and ended any objective and calm conversation between them. The response to the extreme approach in demanding fairness is expected to be extreme itself, as when Arabs refuse to drop the word "Arab" from the constitution or to acknowledge the Kurdish language as the country's second language. As such, it is expected that this will be a thorny issue in drafting the next constitution of Syria, which would only pass if the political powers in Syria acted with a high sense of patriotism and a spirit of agreement and mutual compromise.

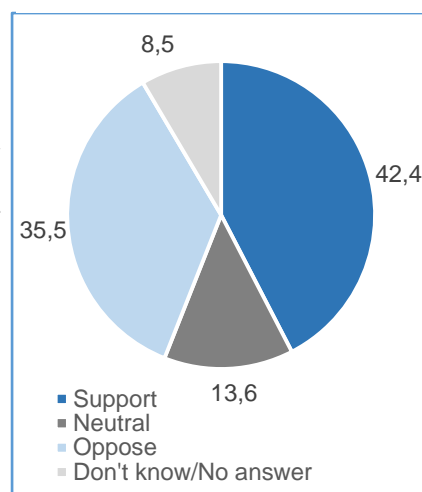
Fourth, as we mentioned before, the issue of Syria's Islamic identity garnered less support than did Arab identity, which was expected. It is normal for Islamic blocs among Sunni Arabs to support an Islamic identity, and for Secularists and minorities to oppose it. However, the amount of support for Islamic law as a source of legislation in the upcoming constitution is considered high in comparison to the weight of Islamic groups, which means that most think such a role would emphasize the Islamic identity. The other interesting point is Islamists' strong support of an Arab identity; a trend noted among Islamists across the Arab region.

Fifth, a positive aspect was evident in the identity survey. Results showed that despite differences between Arabs and Kurds on Arab identity, a majority of respondents support minority rights. This will help all groups realize that this is a fundamental issue that complements the demand for the future state to abide by the International Bill of Human Rights. This issue may lay the groundwork for reaching a fair and comfortable balance between the majority's demand to acknowledge their identity and reassuring minorities in principle and practice, beginning with the majority's acknowledgement of minority rights and equality in the eyes of the law.

## Part 4: Decentralization

Decentralization has occupied a wide spectrum of ongoing political debate in Syria today with strongly divergent views. In order to identify the position of the respondents on this matter in the next constitution, we put forward the following statement: “*Syria must adopt a decentralized political system based on granting broad administrative powers to local authorities.*” We sought their opinion whether they supported or opposed the statement. The greatest percentage of respondents supported it (42.4%) and around a third (35.5%) opposed it (Fig 17). But who supports decentralization and who opposes it? The analysis of the results shows a relationship between each of the following variables mentioned in Table (9) and the position on decentralization. In general, rejection increases in each of the following categories when compared with others: students and those employed; those older than 36; those having an average income (between 25-75 thousand Syrian lira); Shia and Alawite; Arabs; in Homs, Damascus and Damascus suburbs; regime-controlled areas; and those having only a secondary education.

**Figure 17: “Syria must adopt a decentralized political system based on granting broad administrative powers to local authorities.”**



**Table 9: Position on decentralization according to some demographic and social variables**

	Don't know/No answer	Oppose	Neutral	Support
<b>Ideology</b>				
Maximum secularism	5,5%	29,1%	2,8%	62,6%
Secularism	9,3%	40,9%	5,4%	44,5%
Middle	9,9%	41,0%	16,1%	33,0%
Islamic	7,2%	26,7%	19,3%	46,8%
Maximum political Islam	8,6%	45,7%	20,0%	25,7%
<b>Occupation</b>				
Employed	6,7%	36,1%	10,5%	46,7%
Student	5,3%	39,6%	21,3%	33,7%

Housewife	15,5%	33,8%	18,5%	32,3%
Unemployed	9,4%	29,2%	18,8%	42,7%
<b>Age</b>				
25 years and below	12,8%	33,2%	19,0%	35,0%
between 26-35 years old	7,6%	30,5%	15,9%	45,9%
between 36-45 years old	7,8%	36,1%	10,9%	45,2%
between 46-55 years old	5,9%	46,8%	7,1%	40,1%
56 years and above	8,4%	51,6%	3,2%	36,8%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>				
less than 25 thousand	17,2%	34,1%	16,6%	32,1%
between 25-75 thousand	5,5%	42,8%	10,3%	41,4%
more than 75 thousand	2,5%	38,0%	5,7%	53,8%
<b>Religious sect</b>				
Sunni	9,2%	32,2%	16,5%	42,1%
Shia	0,0%	91,2%	0,0%	3,3%
Alawite	0,0%	91,2%	0,0%	8,8%
Ismaili	0,0%	51,4%	0,0%	48,6%
Christian	0,0%	56,7%	3,3%	40,0%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>				
Arab	7,7%	40,4%	15,0%	36,9%
Kurd	12,5%	10,1%	4,8%	72,6%
Turkman (by number)	6	0	3	20
<b>Province</b>				
Damascus	0,0%	49,0%	2,4%	48,6%
Damascus suburb	5,0%	48,6%	20,5%	25,8%
Aleppo	35,0%	6,4%	10,0%	48,6%
Homs	3,8%	47,4%	12,2%	36,5%
al-Hasakah	12,7%	12,7%	6,9%	67,6%
Idlib	5,3%	39,8%	20,9%	33,9%
	The second sample			

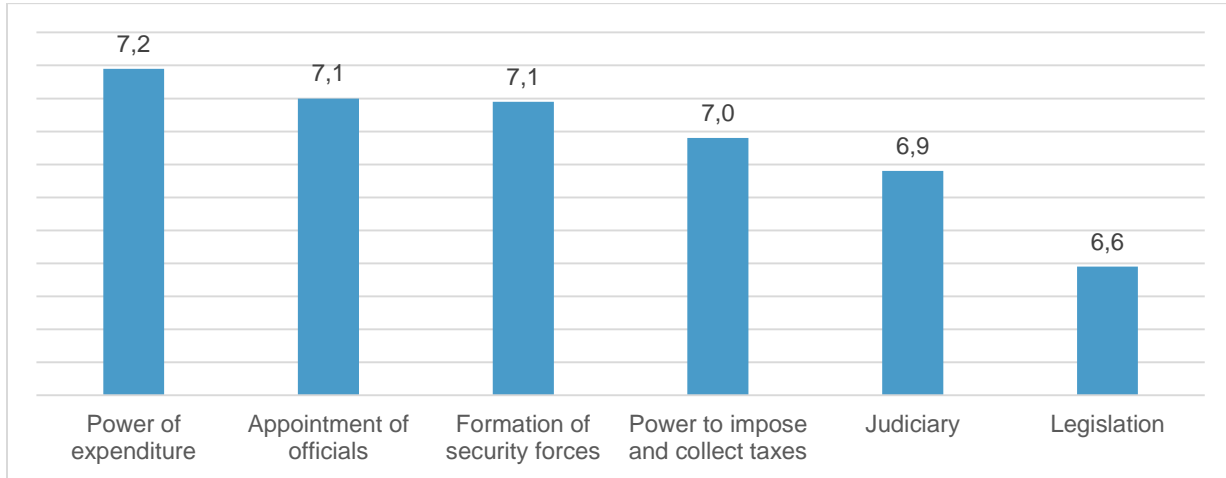
Daraa	0,0%	6,7%	11,3%	82,0%
al-Suwayda	15,6%	20,1%	14,9%	49,4%
<b>Area</b>				
Regime-controlled area	2,0%	65,3%	4,5%	28,2%
Opposition-controlled area	13,2%	20,9%	18,1%	47,8%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	12,7%	12,7%	6,9%	67,6%
Truce area	11,4%	27,7%	42,2%	18,7%
Turkey	0,0%	9,9%	12,3%	77,8%
<b>Level of education</b>				
(numbers by) Illiterate	18	4	0	5
Primary	27,6%	26,6%	18,2%	27,6%
Preparatory	11,0%	35,3%	14,1%	39,6%
Secondary	5,6%	42,4%	16,2%	35,8%
University	2,5%	33,5%	9,8%	54,2%
Post-graduate	0,0%	26,8%	14,6%	58,5%
<b>Gender</b>				
Men	8,1%	35,8%	9,0%	47,1%
Women	8,8%	35,4%	17,5%	38,4%

In order to better understand their orientations with respect the size of the powers that must be vested in the local authority, we put forth several aspects: finance (collection of taxes and spending), administration (appointment of officials), security (formation of security forces), as well as legislation and judiciary. The question was as follows: “*How much power should be vested in the local authority in your opinion? From 0 to 10, where 0 is complete subjugation to the central authority, and 10 is complete independence from the central authority.*” This question was reserved only for those who did not oppose the previous statement on decentralization. As Figure (18) shows, legislation and the judiciary came at the end of the list with an average rating of (6,9-6,6) and the rest of the dimensions obtained an average rating of 7,0 or slightly more. But how do these results differ between Arabs and Kurds? And what is the position of the respondents on



granting areas under DFNS control a special status with greater powers than others? We will try to answer these questions in the following lines.

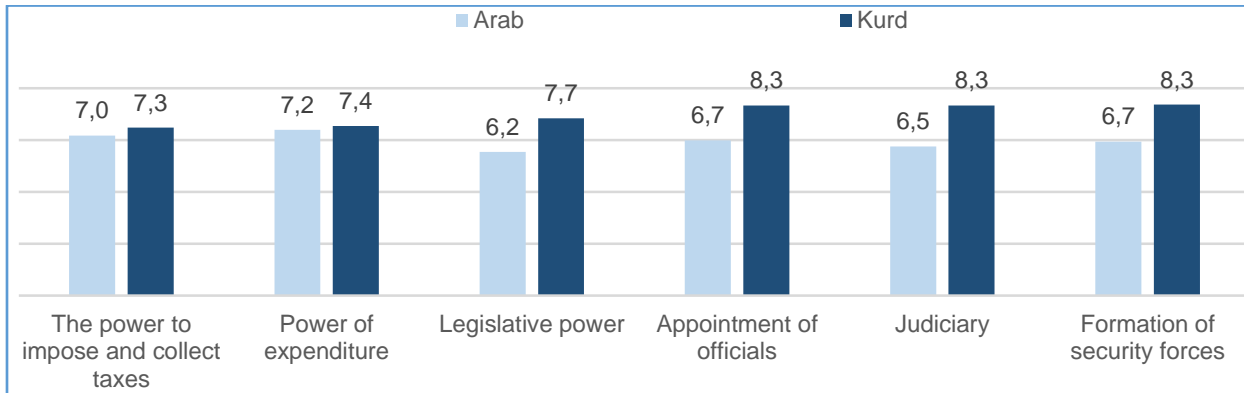
Figure 18: The size of the powers that must be in the hands of the local authority (arithmetic mean)



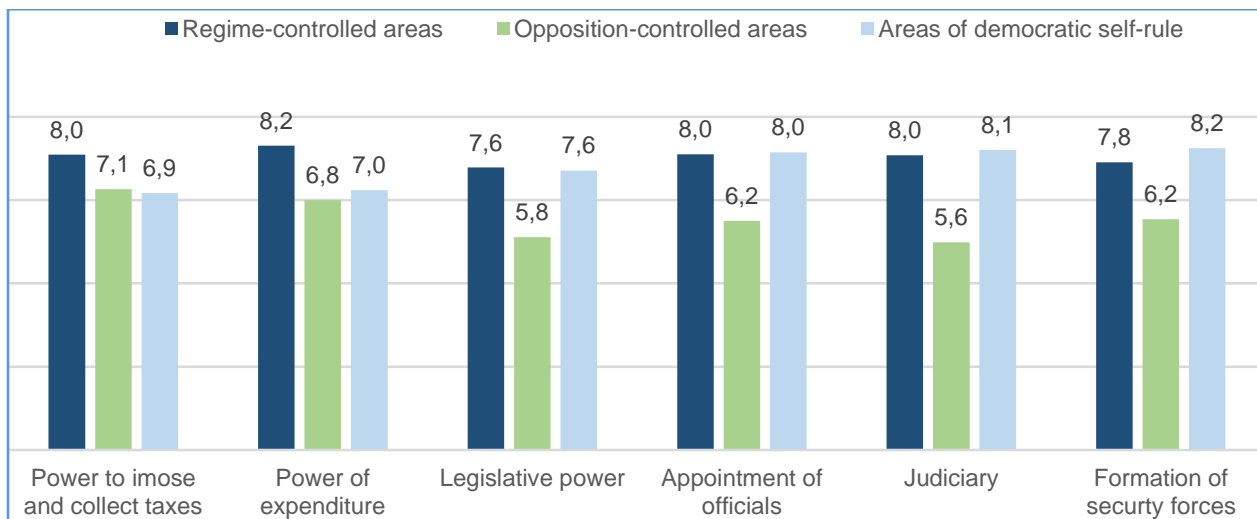
By comparing the results between Arabs and Kurds, the difference shows the average, with the highest levels in all cases among Kurds when compared with Arabs, but the difference becomes great for legislation, the appointment of officials, the judiciary, and the formation of security forces. With respect to finance (collecting taxes and spending), the difference diminishes (Fig 19).

When comparing between areas of control, we find that those supporting decentralization in regime-controlled areas and areas under DFNS control want to place broader powers in the local authority than those who reside in opposition-controlled areas, except with respect to financial issues, where they converge (Fig 20). However, it is worth mentioning that a small percentage in regime-controlled areas support decentralization compared with opposition-controlled areas and DFNS-controlled areas. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents rejected the proposal to grant DFNS-controlled areas a special status of greater authority than others, supported by about a quarter (Fig 21).

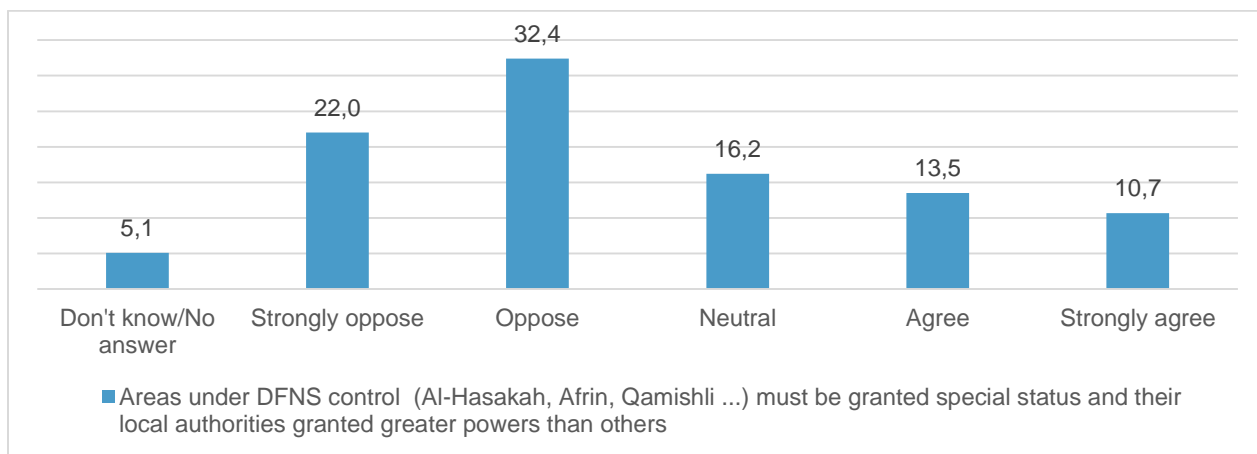
**Figure 19: The size of the powers that must be in the hands of the local authority between Arabs and Kurds who support decentralization (arithmetic mean)**



**Figure 20: The size of powers which must be in the hands of the local authority according to area of local control among those who support decentralization (arithmetic mean)**



**Figure 21: A special status for DFNS-controlled areas? (%)**



The results are seemingly unsurprising here. For one, there is a considerable percentage of people that supports decentralization, though it is not very far from the percentage of opponents. There are two possible interpretations for this result. The first says that the fact that more than 42 percent of respondents support administrative decentralization is consistent with the general trend to minimize centralization of authority. This is a positive aspect that supports the demands of committing to the International Bill of Human Rights, preventing centralization of executive power in the presidents' hands, supporting a two-chamber parliamentary system, and supporting minority rights. In short, Syrians want a new political system with a new structure that ensures more participation, accountability, and follow up, and offers institutional checks to limit abuse of power. The second interpretation is that the one third of respondents who opposed administrative decentralization may have done so out of wanting to keep the country united, especially in light of certain calls and practices that many fear were targeted towards division.

The results in terms of supporters and opposers of decentralization were as expected. Kurds as a minority supported decentralization, while other minorities and the majority were divided on the issue. What is interesting is that the percentage of Shia and Alawites who opposed decentralization was very high, more than (90) percent. This may be due to their belief that potential risks, including the break-up of the country, warrant such a stance. Therefore, it wasn't surprising to find the majority of decentralization supporters were in areas of self-administration, opposition control, and in Turkey as compared to those in regime-controlled areas. Inhabitants of areas in the first category have experienced varied degrees of decentralization which made them realize its benefits and that it may be the right way to maintain a centralized government and a unified country, but with less administrative authority.

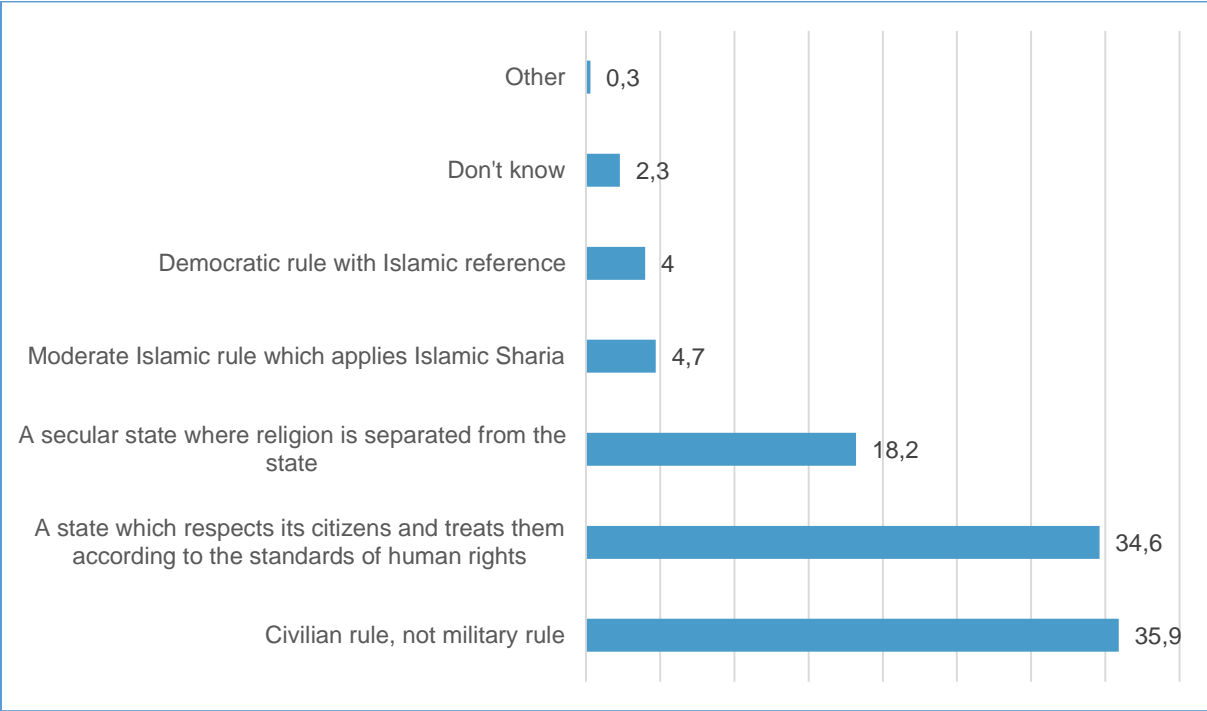
Finally, the fact that most are opposed to giving this region more authority -except for respondents in areas of self-administration- is a reflection of the majority's rejection of any one region imposing a certain model or announcing a certain type of decentralization (such as declaring a federal state on their own).

# Part 5: Principles and general precepts

## Form of governance

With the onset of the Arab revolutions in 2010, a new term emerged which has been used in peaceful demonstrations in many Arab countries, namely, the “civil state”. At the time, it seemed like a vague term subject to many interpretations, but it was useful in defusing ideological and religious differences and divisions among political forces in Arab societies. We tried here to identify the meaning, or meanings, most common among respondents to enable us to determine the features of the state called for by demonstrators in the Syrian squares and for which they spared no effort. Figure (22) shows “civilian rule, and not military rule” and “a state which respects its citizens and treats them according to the standards of human rights” are the most widespread definitions of the civil state. Even those who said “other” espoused views closer to these two definitions, such as “a state that respects the dignity and rights of people”, “democratic state”, “state of citizenship and justice”, and “state of law and institutions”.

Figure 22: What do you understand by the term “civil state”?



By comparing the different demographic and social categories (Table 10), we will try to more thoroughly identify the nature of the distribution of these two definitions:

- The view of the civil state as the state which respects its citizens is highest among the following groups as compared to others: secularists; those with the highest incomes; Shia and Ismailis; Kurds; in Turkey (workers in civil society organization); DFNS-controlled areas; Aleppo and al-Hasakah; the most educated; men more so than women; and the oldest.
- The view of the civil state as “civilian rule, and not military rule” is highest in each of the following categories as compared to others: Islamists, those with the lowest incomes; Sunnis; Arabs; opposition-controlled and truce areas; Homs, Idlib, al-Suwayda, Daraa; the least educated; women more so than men; and the youngest.

**Table 10: Understanding the civil state according to some demographic and social variables.**

	Other	I don't know	Secular state where religion is separated from the state	State which respects its citizens and treats them according to the standards of human rights	Moderate Islamic rule which applies Islamic Sharia	Democratic rule with Islamic reference	Civilian rule and not military rule
<b>Ideology</b>							
Maximum secularism	0,4%	3,9%	39,0%	40,9%	0,4%	0,8%	14,6%
Secularism	0,0%	1,2%	19,1%	51,6%	0,3%	0,3%	27,5%
Middle	0,6%	2,6%	17,0%	39,6%	3,1%	3,1%	33,8%
Islamic	0,0%	1,9%	9,8%	15,2%	10,6%	7,8%	54,7%
Maximum political Islam	0,0%	0,0%	20,0%	14,3%	22,9%	20,0%	22,9%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>							
less than 25 thousand	0,0%	5,0%	14,0%	27,4%	2,3%	1,7%	49,6%
between 25-75 thousand	0,3%	2,1%	18,4%	39,2%	5,1%	4,7%	30,3%
more than 75 thousand	0,6%	0,6%	30,1%	41,1%	4,4%	5,4%	17,7%
<b>Religious sect</b>							
Sunni	0,3%	2,2%	14,3%	31,6%	5,9%	4,7%	40,8%
Shia	0,0%	0,0%	20,0%	70,0%	0,0%	0,0%	10,0%

Alawite	0,0%	0,0%	54,4%	40,4%	0,0%	0,0%	5,3%
Ismaili	0,0%	0,0%	37,8%	51,4%	0,0%	0,0%	10,8%
Christian	0,0%	0,0%	63,3%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	3,3%
<b>Area</b>							
Regime-controlled area	0,0%	0,1%	25,9%	36,2%	5,2%	4,9%	27,7%
Opposition-controlled area	0,7%	3,5%	9,6%	29,2%	6,1%	3,2%	47,7%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	0,0%	6,2%	15,3%	44,4%	0,7%	3,6%	29,8%
Truce area	0,6%	0,0%	26,5%	25,3%	3,6%	4,8%	38,6%
Turkey	0,0%	0,0%	25,9%	58,0%	3,7%	1,2%	11,1%
<b>Province</b>							
Damascus	0,0%	0,0%	23,9%	30,2%	9,0%	8,6%	28,2%
Damascus suburbs	0,6%	0,2%	25,8%	28,9%	4,0%	5,0%	35,4%
Aleppo	0,9%	11,4%	3,2%	46,8%	5,9%	5,5%	26,4%
Homs	0,0%	0,3%	13,8%	33,0%	0,3%	0,0%	52,6%
Al-Hasakah	0,0%	6,2%	15,3%	44,7%	0,7%	3,6%	29,5%
Idlib	0,3%	0,3%	18,0%	26,3%	9,1%	2,4%	43,7%
	The second sample						
Daraa	0,0%	0,7%	15,3%	16,7%	2,7%	20,7%	44,0%
Al-Suwayda	0,0%	1,3%	2,6%	35,7%	4,5%	1,3%	54,5%
<b>Level of education</b>							
Illiterate (by number)	0	4	4	9	0	0	10
Primary	0,0%	10,4%	9,4%	27,1%	5,2%	3,1%	44,8%
Preparatory	0,0%	1,8%	13,6%	24,3%	7,9%	6,9%	45,5%
Secondary	0,3%	1,3%	19,6%	32,7%	5,0%	4,5%	36,6%
University	0,6%	0,9%	21,9%	43,3%	2,9%	2,2%	28,2%
Post-graduate	0,0%	0,0%	26,8%	56,1%	0,0%	2,4%	14,6%
<b>Gender</b>							
Men	0,6%	2,6%	17,6%	41,5%	5,6%	5,1%	26,9%
Women	0,0%	2,0%	18,8%	28,6%	3,9%	2,9%	43,8%
<b>Age</b>							

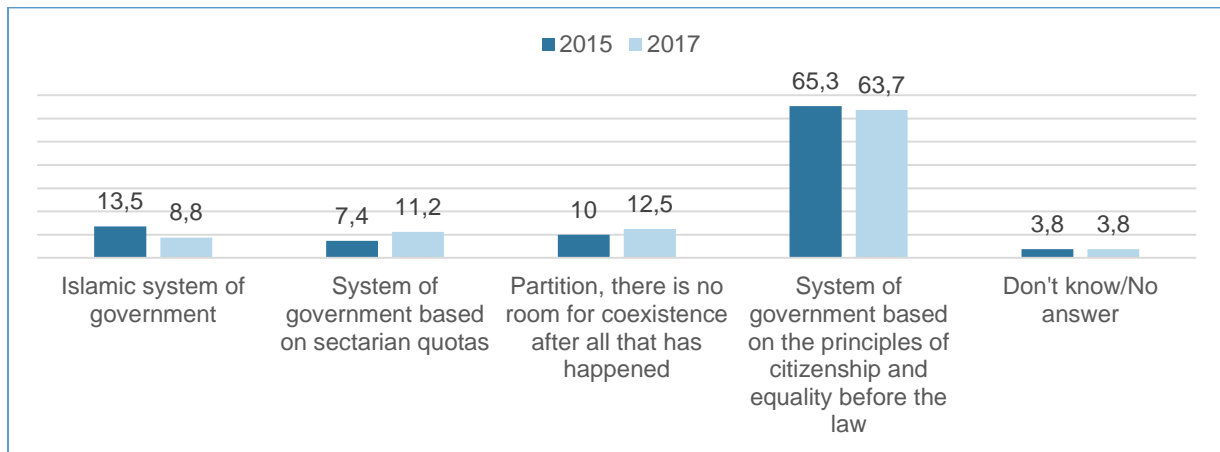
25 years and below	0,3%	4,3%	17,1%	27,0%	5,3%	1,9%	44,1%
between 26-35 years old	0,5%	2,1%	19,2%	32,0%	3,3%	3,6%	39,3%
years 45-36 between old	0,2%	1,7%	18,7%	37,4%	5,2%	3,3%	33,5%
between 46-55 years old	0,0%	0,7%	17,5%	45,7%	6,3%	5,9%	23,8%
56 years and above	0,0%	3,2%	15,8%	42,1%	6,3%	12,6%	20,0%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>							
Arab	0,2%	1,6%	18,8%	32,8%	5,4%	4,4%	36,8%
Kurd	0,0%	6,3%	16,8%	43,8%	0,5%	1,9%	30,8%

Syrian Islamists were perhaps the first to enter the term “civil state” into mainstream conversation. It was used in Syrian Muslim Brotherhood literature in early 2001 and in the political initiative they proposed in 2004 as well. It seems that the Brotherhood’s use of the term was -on the one hand- an attempt to sidestep having to use the term “secular state”, and to indicate that they did not back away from their commitment to an Islamic State and Sharia law on the other. It is therefore not surprising that most Islamists define a civil state not as a secular state, or even one that respects its citizens or observes human rights with them, but rather as the antithesis of a military state. And although this definition is not quite in line with other proposed definitions, it still insinuates a preference for “civilian” rule rather than the military one in Syria which has been akin to dictatorship and corruption. On the other hand, secularist and centrist answers ranged from a civil state being one that respects its citizens and applies human rights, to a secular state being one that separates between religion and state as is the case with hard-liner secularists. Such discrepancies indicate there is a need for a serious and composed conversation on the meaning of a civil state and the role of religion in it. This is a thorny issue in Syrian society and one that all countries of the Arab Spring faced. While some dealt with it successfully, others saw the democratic transition process fail due to Islamists and secularists failing to come to agreement on the rules of democratic governance, which include agreeing on the dynamics of religion and state

The issue of sectarianism constitutes one of the most complex problems facing Syria in the future. In order to overcome them, various forms of government are generally put forward, such as sectarian quotas, partitions, and the state of citizenship. We raised all of these possibilities in a previous survey on sectarianism conducted in 2015, and we prepared the same question in the

current survey to identify the changes in positions during these two years. As shown in Figure (23), there are no significant changes in these attitudes: the majority still adheres to the option of a system of government based on the principle of citizenship and equality before the law.

Figure 23: What is the most appropriate form of government to overcome the sectarian problem in your opinion? (%)



Analysis of the results shows that there is a relationship between each of the variables summarized in Table 11 and the position on the most appropriate form of government for overcoming the sectarian problem:

- Support for the principle of citizenship is lowest in each of the following categories compared with others: Islamists; the unemployed and housewives; those with incomes less than 25 thousand; Sunni; Kurds; Damascus, Damascus suburbs, and al-Hasakah; areas of truce, DFNS-controlled areas, and regime-controlled areas; and the less educated.
- Support for partition reaches its highest levels in each of the following categories: maximum secularism; the unemployed and housewives; Alawites; Kurds; in al-Hasakah, Daraa, and al-Suwayda; DFNS-controlled areas; and the less educated.
- Support for Islamic rule is the highest in each of the following categories: Islamists, Sunnis; Arabs; Damascus and Idlib; regime-controlled areas, truce areas, opposition-controlled areas, and Turkey; those with (only) preparatory-level education; men more so than women.
- Support for sectarian quotas is highest in each of the following categories: those in the middle between secularists and Islamists; those with the lowest incomes; Ismailis and Sunni; Arabs; in Damascus and al-Suwayda; in regime-controlled areas and truce areas; those having (only) preparatory- and secondary-level education.



**Table 11: The most appropriate form of governance to overcome the sectarian problem according to some demographic and social variables**

	No answer/ Don't know	System of governance based on the principles of citizenship and equality before the law	Partition, there is no room for coexistence after all that has happened	System of governance based on sectarian quotas	System of Islamic governance
<b>Ideology</b>					
Maximum secularism	3,9%	67,7%	28,0%	0,4%	0,0%
Secularism	7,5%	73,7%	13,7%	3,9%	1,2%
Middle	3,3%	67,5%	8,4%	18,1%	2,6%
Islamism	2,6%	52,7%	11,3%	11,1%	22,3%
Maximum political Islam	0,0%	17,1%	2,9%	5,7%	74,3%
<b>Occupation</b>					
Employed	3,0%	65,2%	11,5%	10,8%	9,5%
Student	5,3%	67,5%	10,7%	10,1%	6,5%
Houswife	5,8%	59,5%	15,3%	12,8%	6,8%
Unemployed	4,2%	53,1%	18,8%	13,5%	10,4%
<b>Monthly income (in Syrian lira)</b>					
less than 25 thousand	8,2%	54,2%	13,4%	16,0%	8,2%
between 25-75 thousand	2,8%	65,2%	11,3%	12,1%	8,7%
more than 75 thousand	1,9%	66,1%	13,9%	8,5%	9,5%
<b>Religious sect</b>					
Sunni	3,8%	62,4%	9,2%	13,7%	11,0%
Shia	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Alawite	1,8%	71,9%	24,6%	1,8%	0,0%
Ismaili	0,0%	75,7%	13,5%	10,8%	0,0%
Christian	0,0%	96,7%	3,3%	0,0%	0,0%
<b>Ethnicity/nationalism</b>					
Arab	3,2%	64,5%	9,0%	13,1%	10,1%

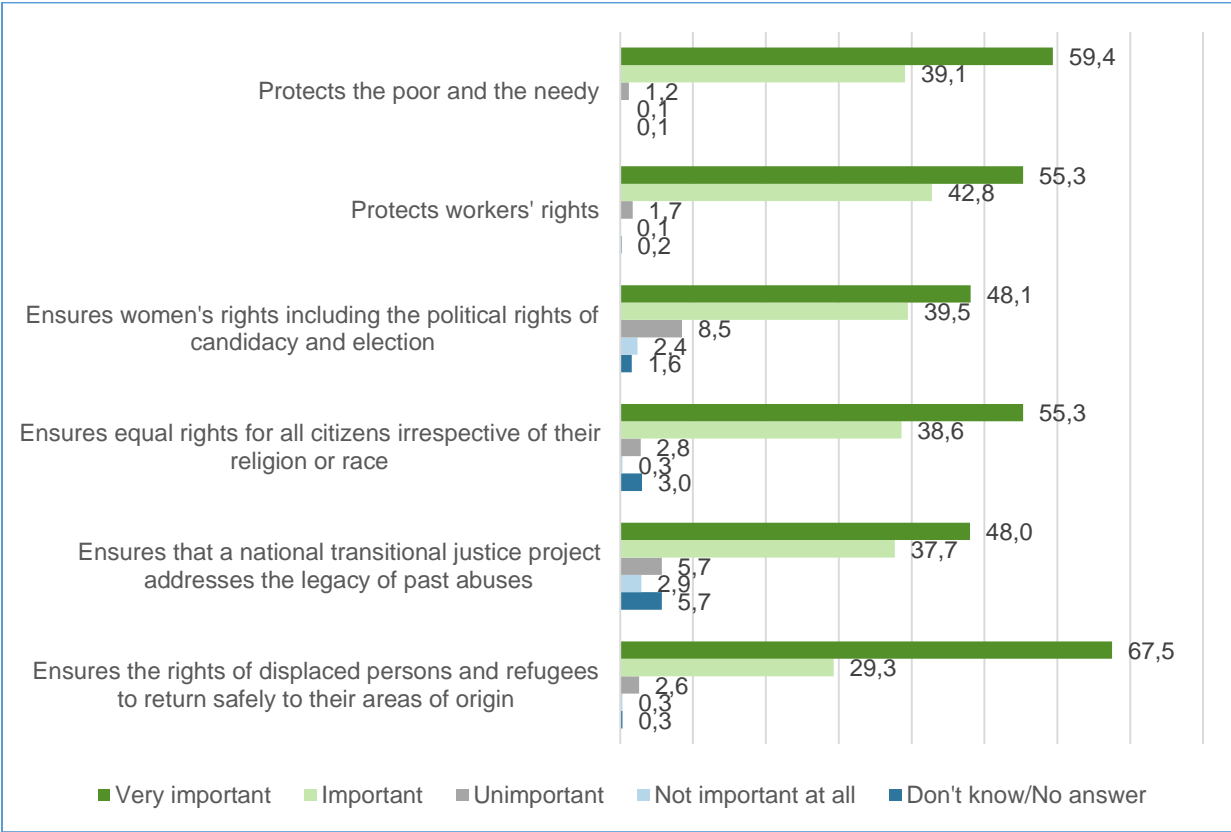
Kurd	8,2%	49,0%	41,3%	1,0%	0,5%
Turkman	13,8%	79,3%	3,4%	0,0%	3,4%
<b>Province</b>					
Damascus	0,4%	46,7%	18,4%	16,1%	18,4%
Damascus suburb	1,7%	51,2%	12,2%	26,8%	8,2%
Aleppo	14,1%	61,8%	10,5%	6,4%	7,3%
Homs	1,3%	93,6%	2,6%	1,6%	1,0%
al-Hasakah	8,0%	54,5%	33,5%	0,4%	3,6%
Idlib	2,7%	70,8%	4,1%	8,3%	14,2%
	The second sample				
Daraa	2,7%	53,3%	26,0%	7,3%	10,7%
al-Suwayda	13,0%	44,2%	25,3%	17,5%	0,0%
<b>Area</b>					
Regime-controlled area	0,4%	58,5%	12,8%	18,4%	9,8%
Opposition-controlled area	5,5%	72,6%	6,1%	6,6%	9,2%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	8,0%	54,5%	33,5%	0,4%	3,6%
Truce area	5,4%	51,2%	9,6%	23,5%	10,2%
Turkey	0,0%	81,5%	4,9%	3,7%	9,9%
<b>Level of education</b>					
Illiterate (by number)	3	13	8	2	1
Primary	11,5%	49,5%	24,5%	7,8%	6,8%
Preparatory	4,9%	49,1%	16,9%	13,6%	15,6%
Secondary	3,0%	62,8%	11,4%	13,6%	9,1%
University	1,6%	76,2%	7,5%	9,4%	5,4%
Post-graduate	2,4%	82,9%	7,3%	2,4%	4,9%
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	4,1%	61,7%	12,3%	9,8%	12,0%
Women	3,6%	65,4%	12,8%	12,5%	5,8%

One important finding here in regards to dealing with sectarianism is that most groups, except political Islam hard-liners, believe the best way to deal with sectarian division is through a system of governance based on citizenship and equality in the eyes of the law. Most surveyed hard-liners of political Islam believe an Islamic state is the solution, whereas one third of hard-liner secularists believe the solution is in dividing the country. In general, the majority -constituted of secularists, Islamists, and self-proclaimed centrists- hold that the solution is a state of citizenship and equality.

### Rights which the constitution must guarantee

In order to identify respondents' attitudes regarding the rights which must be guaranteed by the next Syrian constitution, we presented them with a set of basic rights, in addition to what is known as the 'rights of the vulnerable' (presented in Fig 24 in detail). We found there is almost a consensus on all of them without exception. There is some small opposition in the case of women's rights and the demand for a National project for transnational justice.

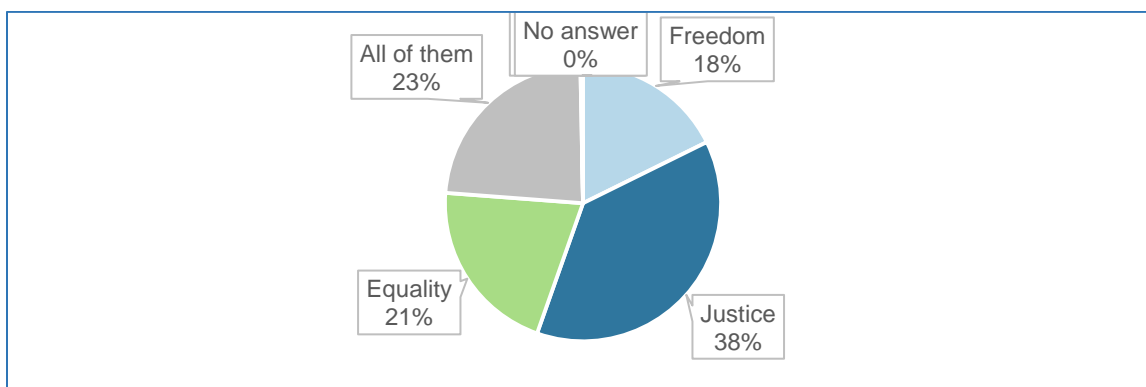
Figure 24: Rights which the constitution must guarantee



## Values of justice, equality, and freedom

At the beginning of the Syrian revolution, demonstrators raised their voices for freedom. Undoubtedly, after seven years of various forms of suffering and isolation in separate geographical areas, the war has torn the fabric of Syrian society and given rise to different interests and priorities. But how is this reflected in values? Are they also different? We presented respondents with three key values that are relevant to democracy and various models of governance and therefore a fundamental focus of the constitution. We then asked them to choose only one of them. It seems that the central value (i.e. the most often chosen) is justice. As Figure (25) shows, the greatest percentage of respondents chose justice (37.7%), followed by equality (20.8%), then freedom (17.7%).

Figure 25. If you had to choose between each of the following, which one would you choose?



Looking at values according to some demographic and social variables, we find that justice remains the central value in most cases with differences in proportions. However, there are some important differences: the demand for freedom increases in Aleppo, Damascus, and Daraa compared with other provinces and among Ismailis compared with other sects (freedom is the central value among Ismaili respondents). The demand for equality increases among Shia and Christians compared with other sects and among women compared with men (Table 12).

Table 12: Values according to some demographic and social variables for those who chose one of the proposed values

	Equality	Justice	Freedom
Regime-controlled area	29,1%	42,5%	28,4%

Opposition-controlled area	22,8%	53,4%	23,8%
Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)-controlled area	30,7%	51,1%	18,2%
Truce area	34,1%	52,4%	13,4%
Turkey	18,8%	68,8%	12,5%
<b>Province</b>			
Damascus	26,3%	39,4%	34,3%
Damascus suburbs	32,7%	41,0%	26,3%
Aleppo	10,5%	44,8%	44,8%
Homs	37,2%	58,5%	4,3%
al-Hasakah	30,5%	51,4%	18,1%
Idlib	20,8%	65,0%	14,2%
	<b>The second sample</b>		
Daraa	27,8%	40,7%	31,5%
al-Suwayda	38,3%	51,3%	10,4%
<b>Religious sect</b>			
Sunni	26,1%	49,7%	24,2%
Shia	52,0%	48,0%	0,0%
Alawite	30,2%	56,6%	13,2%
Ismaili	27,8%	22,2%	50,0%
Christian	44,8%	34,5%	20,7%
<b>Level of education</b>			
Illiterate (by number)	4	15	3
Primary	24,2%	52,8%	23,0%
Preparatory	28,0%	51,4%	20,7%
Secondary	31,5%	41,9%	26,6%
University	23,9%	53,8%	22,4%
Post-graduate (by number)	6	14	5
<b>Gender</b>			
Men	22,1%	53,7%	24,2%
Women	32,1%	45,5%	22,4%

## Summary and recommendations

### Part 1: A constitution for the transitional phase?

- The constitution is not one of the main priorities for Syrians today, and this applies to all demographic categories covered by the survey. The priorities of the Syrians appear to be primarily the ceasefire, the release of detainees and the lifting of siege. The results differ between some regions or social categories where the fight against “Daesh” and the expulsion of foreign fighters are among the first three priorities, but not the constitution.
- Respondents rejected the idea of a permanent constitution in the transitional phase, preferring for this phase either an interim constitution or a constitutional declaration which expires at the end of this phase. This position is consistent with the position expressed by civil society organizations in the aforementioned statement and with the positions of their employees (Turkish sample).
- Regarding the writing of the country’s constitution before its submission to referendum, the respondents mainly sided with the method of consensus between all political forces (after the transitional period). This position reflects a deep awareness of the sensitivity of the Syrian situation, after a brutal war, which requires consensus and the participation of all political forces. The second option was the election of a constituent assembly.

#### Therefore,

The international community and the sponsors of the Geneva negotiations must focus on the main issues of concern to Syrians: ceasefire, the release of detainees, the lifting of siege, fighting “Daesh”, the expulsion of foreign fighters, and the arrival of an interim constitution or a constitutional declaration. They must also stop trying to circumvent them by raising issues far removed from their needs and aspirations in the current phase, such as discussing the issue of a new constitution. The latter must be done through the consensus of all Syrian political forces, after surpassing the transitional phase, or through the election of a constituent assembly.

Regarding the powers and specific parties involved in the drafting of the next constitution (after the transitional phase has passed), it is recommended to discuss two possibilities: the first is consensus among representatives of the political forces and parties, and the second is the election of a constituent assembly which is then put to referendum. The option of the committee of experts should be excluded, as it was the option which seemed to garner the least support. In short, these forces should consider two principles: firstly, consensus and, secondly, the widest possible participation by citizens.

## Part 2: Authorities and system of governance

The vast majority of Syrians know, at least basically, the main tasks of the work of the authorities and show a remarkable political awareness:

- The majority of respondents supported the proposal of a two-chambered parliament, where the second monitors the work of the first.
- The general trend is to limit the powers of the President of the Republic: the greatest percentage of respondents (44.1%) said that they want “legislative authority to be divided between the President of the country and the Prime Minister.” There was a general rejection of the idea that the legislative authority be fully in the hands of the president, chosen by only 15.8% of respondents.
- It appears that there is a tendency to reduce the term of the President of the Republic: the majority of respondents (59.3%) chose the shortest term among the options presented to them (i.e. “4 years with the one-time possibility of re-election”).

Therefore,

It appears that the parliamentary-presidential system or the parliamentary system and the limitation of the president’s term to the shortest term possible are closest to the attitudes of Syrians. Regarding the two-chambered parliamentary option, although supported by the majority, it may be necessary to clarify its benefits and objectives through the organization of campaigns and discussion sessions. To this end, we presented a list showing the demographic or social categories which were reluctant or dismissive of this option. It would also be useful to look further into: the

mechanisms for selecting the members of the second chamber, the extent of its powers, and the organization of its relationship with the first chamber.

### Part 3: Religion, the State, and State-identity

- The most widely-supported and least-opposed option was “that the constitution provide for the Syrian state’s commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights and not to pass any law or legislation violating these rights, regardless of the justification” (only 1.6% opposed) and “that Islamic Sharia be a source of legislation” (15.7% opposed). The rest of the options incurred a good proportion of the opposition (over 30%): “The constitution does not make any reference to religion including Islam”, or “the constitution provides that the President must be a Sunni Muslim”, or “that Islamic Sharia be the main source of legislation”, or “that the constitution provides that the state religion is Islam”.
- There is an insistence on the Arab identity of Syria in the constitution and, to a lesser extent, the Islamic identity. The option to remove the word “Arab” from the official name of Syria was largely rejected (68.0%).
- There is a consensus that the cultural rights of ethnic, national and religious minorities be recognized, and at the same time a split on the recognition of Kurdish as a second language in the country with the next constitution.
- It seems that the majority of respondents wanting the presence of Arab or Islamic identity do not see any conflict between their position and the rights of religious, ethnic, and national minorities.

Therefore,

Consensus on the option that “the constitution provides for the Syrian state’s commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights and that it not pass any law or legislation violating these rights, regardless of the justification” is a fundamental source which could make the presence of any Islamic or Arab identity in the constitution symbolic (the insistence on Arab identity being



much greater than that of an Islamic one).<sup>4</sup> We have presented a list showing the regions and groups that are most supportive of the presence of the Arab-Islamic identity and most opposed to recognizing the Kurdish as a second language, which may contribute to the organization and planning of any campaigns or awareness programs aimed at influencing these trends. However, this work must begin now.

It is clear that there are fears among the majority (specifically Arab) about their identity, despite their support for the recognition of minority rights. Therefore, it is necessary to seek a model of cultural interaction in Syria that recognizes these rights and at the same time takes these concerns into account.<sup>5</sup>

#### Part 4: Decentralization

- The highest percentage of respondents (42.4%) supported the statement that “Syria must adopt a decentralized political system based on granting local authorities broad administrative powers.” Generally speaking, support drops to its lowest level among the following categories compared with others: those espousing maximum political Islam, students, housewives, young people, those older than 56, those with low incomes compared with those with high incomes, Shia, and Alawites; Arabs compared with Kurds; Damascus

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the Constitution of Norway provides for an official state religion and that the president must be a follower of this religion. “*The King shall at all times profess the Evangelical-Lutheran religion*” without this leading to any violation or discrimination in the rights and duties of the citizens. We agree here with the proposals of the National Agenda for the Future of Syria with respect to religion, which assures that “*it should not be believed that any reference to religion precludes respect for human rights. The symbolic reference to God and the majority religion in the preamble to the constitution does not, by itself, lead to negative effects if there are no other practical provisions that lead to discrimination in the rights or duties of citizens of the State.*” (Constitutional Options for Syria, National Agenda for the Future of Syria. The National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme, ESCWA, 2017)

<sup>5</sup> This situation (mutual fear and distrust) is reminiscent of the on-going debates in Quebec rejecting the multiculturalism model in Canada due to the majority’s concern about their francophone culture in its anglophone surroundings. For this reason, Quebec turned to ‘interculturalism’. This means taking these concerns into consideration while acknowledging the principle of recognizing the legitimate demands of minorities, as presented by Taylor in his famous work “The Politics of Recognition”.

C. Taylor, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, in A. Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism; Examining the Politics of Recognition*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994

The most prominent contributions in the framework of interculturalism can be found in Bouchard’s work:

Bouchard, G. (2011). *Qu’est ce que l’interculturalisme?/What is interculturalism?*. McGill Law Journal/Revue de droit de McGill, 56(2), 395-468.

suburbs, regime-controlled areas; those having only a secondary education compared with higher degree-holders; and women compared with men.

- The legislative and judicial powers have the lowest average on the evaluative scale (0-10, where 0 is complete subjugation to central authority, and 10 is complete independence from this authority). Comparing the results between Arabs and Kurds shows the average difference, with the highest levels in all cases among Kurds compared with Arabs, but the difference becomes great in the cases of legislation, the appointment of officials, the judiciary, and the formation of security forces. Regarding finance (tax collection and spending), the differences diminishes.
- More than half of the respondents opposed the proposal to grant areas under DFNS control a special status with broader powers than others.

Therefore,

Our previous survey on federalism and decentralization in Syria has already noted cautious attitudes in opposition areas, great support in DFNS-controlled areas, and significant opposition in regime-controlled areas. Here, we pointed out the gravity of the political discourse and activities of the time and the manner in which a federal system in Rmeilan was singularly declared. This new study confirms these earlier findings and, as such, it seems useful to mention what was formerly determined:

*Decentralization retains a reasonable amount of support that could possibly be amplified by: political practice and speech, securing guarantees that contribute to enhancing the positive perceptions around it that are prevalent among the respondents (especially in opposition and Democratic Self-Administration areas[DFNS-controlled areas]), and working on dispelling concerns and disadvantages, particularly those associated with fears of separatism.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Syria: Opinions and Attitudes on Federalism, Decentralization, and the experience of the Democratic Self-Administration. The Day After. May, 2016.

Opposition to granting a special status to areas currently under DFNS-control may be linked to the caution drawn from the experience of this kind of administration more than any other consideration.<sup>7</sup>

## Part 5: Principles and general precepts

### 1. Form of governance

Rejection of military rule and a state which respects its citizens and treats them according to the standards of human rights, are the two most prominent definitions of the slogan “the civil state” which demonstrators chanted in the Syrian squares. The majority of Syrians want a system of governance based on the principles of citizenship and equality before the law (the results were very close between (2015) and the current findings (2017): 65.3% and 63.7%, respectively).

### 2. Rights to be guaranteed by the constitution

The vast majority of respondents stressed the importance of each of the following regarding the rights to be guaranteed by the next Syrian constitution:

- Ensure the right of the displaced and refugees to return safely to their areas of origin
- Ensure the establishment of a National project for transnational justice to address the legacy of past abuses
- Ensure equal rights for all citizens regardless of their religion or race
- Ensure women’s rights, including the political rights of candidacy and election
- Protection of workers’ rights
- Protection of the poor and needy

### 3. The central value: between justice, freedom, and equality

Justice remains the central (most chosen) value in most cases. However, there are some differences: the demand for freedom increases in Aleppo and Damascus compared with other places and among Ismailis compared with other sects (Freedom is the central value among Ismaili respondents). The demand for equality increases among Shia and Christians compared with other sects, and among women compared with men.

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<sup>7</sup> There seems to be considerable opposition to the experience of the DFNS in regime- and opposition-controlled areas, where a large percentage (exceeding 40%) say that they are “strongly opposed”. In DFNS-controlled areas themselves, opposition reached more than a third. (See: *ibid*, p. 14).

Therefore,

In addition to the necessity for the next constitution to be based on citizenship, human rights, and the rights of the vulnerable, it must also address the issue of justice in its general form as well as transitional justice. Justice seems to be the central value which Syrians hold today, and the vast majority of them want the establishment of a National project for transnational justice to address the legacy of past violations and ensure the right of the displaced and refugees to return safely to their areas of origin.

In conclusion,

It remains to be said that this is the first time that important aspects of Syrian political culture have been identified by means of a questionnaire at a national level. It is necessary to continue collecting quantitative data and periodically monitoring shifts in this culture. This will contribute to the sketching of guidelines for social policies in the future based on field data.

# Questionnaire

**1. Please, what are the three most important issues on which the next phase of negotiations should focus?**

- Ceasefire
- Discussing a new constitution for Syria
- Combating “Daesh”
- Release of detainees
- Lifting of siege
- Expulsion of foreign fighters

**2. There has been discussion for some time about the constitution in Syria, where some tend to support writing a new constitution and others reject discussions on this matter at the current stage. In your opinion, what is the most appropriate option at this time?**

- Permanent constitution
- Interim constitution
- Constitutional declaration containing general precepts which expire at the end of the transitional phase
- Don't know
- No answer

**3. What is the best method for drafting the constitution, in your opinion, before submitting it to referendum?**

- That it is placed before a committee of experts
- That Syrians elect a constituent assembly tasked with writing the constitution
- That it is formulated with consensus among representatives from all political forces in Syria
- Don't know
- Other

**4. What is your position in each of the following cases?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly oppose
The constitution does not make any reference to religion					
The constitution provides that the president					

must be a Sunni Muslim					
That Islamic Sharia be a source among sources of legislation					
That Islamic Sharia be the main source of legislation					
That the constitution provides that Islam is the state religion					
That the constitution provide for the Syrian state's commitment to the International Bill of Human Rights and not to pass any law or legislation violating these rights, regardless of the justification					

**5. To your knowledge, what is the preferred period for the president to remain in office?**

- 4 years with a one-time possibility for re-election
- 5 years with a one-time possibility for re-election
- 7 years with a one-time possibility for re-election
- Don't know/No answer
- Other Other

**6. The following list presents some things which need to be taken into consideration when writing a constitution, and we would like to know what is important to you**

	Very important	Important	Not important	Not important at all	Don't know/No answer
Protection of the poor and needy					
Protection of workers' rights					
Ensuring women's rights including the political rights of candidacy and election					
Ensuring equal rights for all citizens regardless of their religion or race					
Ensuring the establishment of a National project for transnational justice to address the legacy of past violations					
Ensure the right of displaced persons and refugees to return safely to their areas of origin					

**7. What do you understand by the term “civil state”?**

- Civilian rule and not military rule
- Democratic rule with Islamic reference
- Moderate Islamic rule which applies Islamic Sharia
- A state which respects its citizens and treats them according to the standards of human rights
- A secular state where religion is separated from the state
- Don't know
- Other

**8. What is the most appropriate form of governance to overcome the sectarian problem, in your opinion?**

- Islamic system of government
- System of government based on sectarian quotas
- Partition, there is no room for coexistence after all that has happened
- System of government based on the principles of citizenship and equality before the law
- Don't know/No answer

**9. What do you think of the following statement?: “Syria must adopt a decentralized political system based on granting local authorities broad administrative powers.”**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Oppose (to question 11)
- Strongly oppose (to question 11)
- Don't know/No answer

**10. What is the size of the powers which must be in the hands of the local authorities, in your opinion? From 0 to 10, where 0 is complete deference to the central authority and 10 is complete independence from the central authority.**

- Power to impose and collect taxes
- Power of expenditure
- Legislation
- Appointment of officials
- Judiciary
- Formation of security forces

**11. What is your position on the following statements?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know/No answer
Syria's Arab identity must be preserved in the next constitution						
Syria's Islamic identity must be shown in the next constitution						
Kurdish must be recognized as a second language in the country in the next constitution						
The word "Arab" must be removed from the official name of Syria to become "The Syrian Republic"						
The cultural and intellectual rights of ethnic, national, and religious minorities in Syria must be recognized						
Areas under Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (al-Hasakah, Afrin, al-Qamishli ...) must be granted a special status and their local authorities granted greater powers than others						

**12. If you had to choose between each of the following, which would you choose?**

- Freedom
- Justice
- Equality
- All of them (Do not read)
- Don't know
- No answer

**13. Do you know what is meant by the legislative power?**

- Yes
- No (to question 16)

**14. Which of the following is the main task of the legislative power?**

- Enacting laws
- Applying laws (to question 16)
- Separation of conflicts between people or institutions (to question 16)
- Don't know (to question 16)

**15. It has been proposed that the next Syrian parliament be composed of two chambers. This means that the first chamber would be composed of members elected by the people and would have the power of legislation. The second would be charged with an oversight function over the work of the first, and its members would be the notables, dignitaries, and local leaders who represent the social components in the various regions. What would be your position if such a parliamentary system is adopted?**

- Strongly support
- Support

- Neutral
- Oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know/No answer

**16. Do you know what is meant by the executive power?**

- Yes
- No (to question 19)

**17. Which of the following is the basic task of the executive?**

- Enacting laws (to question 19)
- Applying laws
- Separation of conflicts between people or institutions (to question 19)
- Don't know (to question 19)

**18. What is the best way to determine the executive powers?**

- That the executive authority be fully in the hands of the president
- That the executive powers of the president be limited and granted to the prime minister
- That the executive authority be divided between the president and the prime minister
- Don't know/No answer

**19. Gender**

- Man
- Woman

**20. Age**

(...)

**21. Civil status**

- Single
- Married
- Widow
- Divorced

**22. Level of education**

- Illiterate
- Primary
- Preparatory
- Secondary
- University
- Post-graduate

**23. Current occupation**

- Judge
- Attorney
- Government employee
- Employee in a private company
- Employee in a civil society organization (to question 23.1)
- Liberal profession
- Student
- Housewife
- Journalist
- Teacher
- Fighter
- Unemployed
- Agriculturalist
- Laborer
- Other

**23.1. Work?**

- Director with a high-position
- Director with a mid-level position
- Program Administrator
- General employee

**24. Religious sect**

- Sunni
- Shia
- Alawite
- Ismaili
- Druze
- Murshid
- Christian
- Prefer not to answer

- Other

**25. What is your average monthly income?**

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

**26. Ethnicity/nationalism**

- Arab
- Kurd
- Turkman
- Circassian
- Armenian
- Assyrian
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

**27. Province**

- Damascus
- Damascus suburb
- Aleppo
- Homs
- Hama
- Deir al zour
- al-Hasakah
- Raqqa
- Daraa
- Idlib
- al-Suwayda
- Tartus
- Quneitra
- Camp inside Syria
- Turkey
- Jordan
- Lebanon

**28. Interview area**

- Area controlled by the Syrian government
- Area controlled by the Syrian opposition
- Area controlled by the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS)
- Truce area
- Outside of Syria



**29. When talking about politics and the form of the next state in Syria, we are talking about two main political tendencies: secularists who want to separate religion from the state, and political Islam groups who want to establish a religious state. The following are a set of numbers from 0 to 10, where 0 is maximum secularism and 10 is maximum political Islam. In which position do you find yourself?**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10